THE PERSON AND WORKS OF MARIA VALTORTA

Birth and Childhood.

Maria Valtorta was born on the 14th of March 1897 in Caserta where her parents, originally from the Lombard region, were in temporary residence. Her father, Joseph, born in Mantova in 1862, was a serving non-commissioned officer in the 19th Cavalry Regiment. Her mother, Iside Fioravanzi, born in Cremona in 1861, was a French teacher. After brushing with death during her birth, Maria remained an only child, having as wet-nurse a wretched mercenary".

When she was hardly eighteen months old, the family moved to Faenza in Romagna, and a few years later, in 1901, transferred yet again to Milan where Maria was placed in the Ursuline Sisters' kindergarten located in Via Lanzone. Here, at the age of four and a half, Maria began to experience "the desire to console Jesus by becoming like Him in sorrow voluntarily borne out of love". .

In October 1904, at seven years of age, she was enrolled in the Institute of the Marcellienne Sisters, located in Via Venti Settembre, where she initiated elementary studies, achieving from the start scholastic recognition as first in her class. On the 30th of May 1905, in the Via Quadronno center of the same Institute, she was confirmed by the holy Cardinal Andrea Ferrari whose touch "truly infused the Spirit of love into her".

Subject once again to professional transfer, in September 1907 her father took the family to Voghera where Maria frequented public schools. The French lessons, held every Thursday by a religious order exiled from France on account of the Combes law, served to place her soul "in communion with God" once again, and at Casteggio, on the first Sunday of October 1908, Maria received her First Holy Communion. But she was deeply grieved at the absence of her father whom she loved so much: her mother, an extremely severe woman, had judged his presence at the ceremony as -unnecessary".

In a Boarding-School at Monza.

Due to the habitual despotic attitude of her mother, to which her father responded with meek docility, Maria was painfully obliged to leave her home, in March 1909, at twelve years of age to go to a

(*) Translation of the preface written originally in Italian by Emilio Pisani with citations rendered in third person from the Autobiography and other of Maria Valtorta's manuscripts.

boarding-school. But since it was the beautiful Bianconi College of Monza, of the Sisters of Charity Mary, she ended up by finding herself at home. Her "generous, firm, strong and faithful" character brought her to be nicknamed "Valtortino". Her love for study, order and obedience gave her the reputation of being "exemplary". But her mother decided that she should follow a technical course of studies, and Maria, quite inapt in mathematics, could not avoid failing her examination badly She later made up for the time she had lost by means of intensive study and completed the classical course "in which she had always succeeded so well".

After "five terrible scholastic years and four solar years", it was again her mother who decreed that she should leave college in February 1913. She had to leave "that nest of peace", and her r heart, presaging the future awaiting her so tormentingly, trembled with fear and grief ". From the last spiritual exercises in which she participated at the college, given by the bishop Msgr. Cazzani, Maria wanted "to obtain an enduring fruit for all her immediate life in the world and a program for what would be her future life". And the

Lord, once again, did not fail to reveal Himself to her soul, bringing her to understand "what was to be her life in God, in relation to God, wanted by God".

In Florence.

In springtime of 1913, the Valtorta family moved to Florence, this time not to follow the Regiment, but because Joseph retired for health reasons. Maria often visited the city with her father, and on her own account continued to lead the life of a schoolgirl despite the "free lessons in religious indifference" which her mother did not fail to provide.

In Florence, Maria met Robert. "He was handsome, wealthy and cultured. He was also good, serious and calm". They loved each other, "a silent, patient and respectful love". But Maria's mother wanted to terminate the budding friendly affection. A similar circumstance was to take place nine years later in Maria's engagement to Mario, a winsome motherless youth, needful of care and affection in order to become "a good fellow, a valiant officer".

For Maria, "to love was an intransgressible condition to be able to live"; but she was to go to God "after seeing how tenuous are human affections".

A Dream.

In the spring of 1916, "during a tremendous period of desperation and desire", the Lord returned to attract her to Himself by means of a dream which was to remain "vivid" in Maria throughout her life. In an evangelical vision, which seemed to anticipate the waking visions of her literary work, Jesus aided Maria with words of admonishment and piety, as well as a gesture of absolution and blessing, which for Maria were "a cleansing which completely purified her". And she awoke "with her soul, enlightened by something which was not of this world".

Samaritan Nurse.

But her withdrawal from the world was still remote. In 1917 Maria entered the ranks of the Samaritan Nurses and for eighteen months offered her service at the military hospital in Florence, having requested assignment with soldiers and not with officers "to serve those who suffered and not to flirt or find a husband". In exercising this charity, she felt as if she were "sweetly obliged to draw ever closer to God".

Struck in the Back.

It was an act of thoughtless violence which marked the beginning of her gradual immolation. It happened on the 17th of March 1920. She was walking along a street accompanied by her mother when she "was struck in the back by a young delinquent. With an iron bar stripped from a bed, he came from behind and struck her with all his might". She remained confined to bed for three months, just a sample of what was to be her future complete infirmity.

At Reggio Calabria.

In October of the same year, she went with her parents to Reggio Calabria as a guest of her cousins Belfanti, who were hotel proprietors. The splendour of nature in this region revived her spirit" and the "most beautiful collection of books" belonging to her cousin Clotilde gave respite to her wholesome desire for learning. And this time the Lord made use of a book to give her yet another vigourous push". The Saint by Antonio Fogazzaro engraved an indelible sign in her heart; and it was a good sign".

At Reggio Calabria, Maria experienced certain psychic perceptions in a more conscious way, whereas in the preceding years she had considered them as "premonitions" and other "strange things". At Reggio, her rapture for Saint Francis reflourished as well, and it was to remain an immutable characteristic of her spirituality. At Reggio, alas, she saw her mother's scheming arts destroy her engagement to Mario.

She returned to Florence on the 2nd of August 1922 and remained there for two years, crushed by "bitter memories".

At Viareggio.

In September 1924, the Valtorta family moved definitively to Viareggio where they settled down in the newly purchased "little house" on October 23rd.

Here, Maria continued to lead a life of solitude, except for "some short excursions to the seaside and pine-forest" and the "daily shopping" which allowed her to "visit Jesus in the Most Holy Sacrament, without attracting her mother's thunderbolts". But for her "a new and different period in her life" had begun "in which she progressively matured in God".

Offering to Love.

Attracted by the example of Saint Theresa of the Child Jesus, whose Autobiography she had read at one sitting, Maria offered herself as victim to the merciful Love (28th January 1925), renewing thereafter "every day" this act of offering. From that moment she grew to extraordinary heights in her love of Jesus, even to feeling His presence in her own words and actions.

Longing for Apostolate.

Urged by a longing to serve the Lord, she wished to enter the Company of Saint Paul, but she had to satisfy herself with carrying out "a humble, hidden apostolate, known only to God, nurtured more through suffering than action". Beginning in December 1929, however, when she was admitted to Catholic Action as youth cultural delegate, she was quick to take on enthusiastic activity, organizing conferences which attracted large audiences, progressively more numerous "even among nonpractising Catholics".

Offering to Justice and Complete Infirmity.

In the meantime, the decision was maturing in her to offer herself also as victim to divine Justice; for which she was preparing "with a life ever more pure and sacrificial". For some time now she had already pronounced the vows of virginity, poverty and obedience, renewing her offering on the 1st of July 1931, while her suffering, both physical and spiritual, was spared her less and less.

The 4th of January 1933 was the last day on which Maria, walking with extraordinary fatigue, was able to leave her house. And from the 1st of April 1934, she was no longer able to leave her bed, which was the beginning - in an "intense rapture of love" - of her long and active infirmity. She became "the instrument in the hands of God". Her mission was "to suffer, to expiate, to love".

The Death of her Father.

Martha Diciotti entered the Valtorta household on the 24th of May 1935. She was to become Maria's faithful companion, the "listener" of her writings, the one who would lovingly assist and care for her up to her death.

Just one month later, however, after having received the consolation of the constant presence of a friend, Maria was to suffer the painful blow of her father's death on the 30th of June. "He had always fulfilled his duty with patience, sweetness and love, forgiving all offenses, returning good for evil, overcoming the sorrows caused by those who continuously misjudged and hurt him". The pain of not being able to assist him in his last moments, and of not even seeing his body after his death, brought Maria to feel "between death and life". Her mother, after the "stupid scenes of tardy love", became even more callous and despotic. "Finding herself absolute mistress had touched her mind".

And in her sick-bed Maria continued to suffer and to love, becoming ever more disposed to the will of God, consoling the afflicted, correcting those in spiritual darkness, receiving painful' premonitions about the gravity of the times, always revealing the virile strength of her character and the clear intelligence of a mind fixed on God.

Father Migliorini and the Initial Manuscripts.

It was in 1942 that she was visited by a pious missionary priest, Fr. Rornuald M. Migliorini of the Servants of Mary, who was her spiritual director for four years. At his request, in 1943, she agreed to write her Autobiography, on condition that she would be allowed to tell "all the good and all the bad", in an authentic display of her soul.

Industrious, intelligent and gifted, Maria was inclined to be interested in everything; not even her imposed illness impeded her from working and writing. To her multiple aptitudes, particularly feminine, she added the gift of being a born writer. And she was to put exactly this distinguished ability at the complete disposition of God, Whom she loved to the point of self-immolation.

Prodded by supernatural impulse, on Good Friday, the 23rd of April of the same year 1943, she began writing the "dictations" after having completed the Autobiography.

The Death of her Mother.

A few months later, on the 4th of October, unaware of her daughter's sublime undertaking, Maria's mother died. Maria had "loved her with a love that not even her harshness had been able to tire or diminish".

At home, now there were just Maria and Martha.

Mystical Writer.

Her activity as writer reached intensity from 1943 to 1947, and continued, diminishing progressively, until 1953. Maria thus wrote above all in time of war and in very difficult conditions, including evacuation, whereby on the 24th of April 1944 she was obliged to move to St. Andrew of Compito (section of the borough of Capannori in the province of Lucca). She returned to her dear home at Viareggio on the 23rd of December that same year.

She used to write in an almost sitting position in bed, in ordinary school notebooks which she supported with a piece of cardboard held on her bent knees. She would write at any time, by day or by night, even when she was exhausted by fatigue or tormenting pains. She wrote effortlessly, naturally and without revision. If interrupted, she could leave off writing and then resume later On with ease. She did not consult books, except for the Bible and the catechism of Pope Pius X..

Her mission as writer did not isolate her from the world. She was concerned for the persons near her, assisting them in their lives and worries with enlightened counsel and, when necessary, -with secret and heroic sacrifices which miraculously solved painful cases. Neither was she indifferent to the fate of her country which she loved so much, nor did she forego her civil duties, even to the point of having herself transported by ambulance to the polling station on the 18th of April 1948.

During her continuous work, her living and constant prayer, her suffering embraced with the joy of the redeemers, Maria begged, God not to concede her external signs of her intense participation in Christ, Who used her as faithful "spokesman" and "pen", manifesting Himself in the richness of the "visions" and in the depth of the "dictations".

The Works.

The notebooks written by Maria Valtorta include almost fifteen thousand pages. Little less than two-thirds of this astounding literary production concerns the monumental work on the Life of Jesus (The Poem of the Man-God). The minor works include extensive commentaries on biblical texts, doctrinal lessons, histories of the first Christians and martyrs, and pious compositions.

"I can affirm" - one of Valtorta's declarations reads - "that I have had no human source to be able to know what I write, and what, even while writing, I often do not understand".

Besides the highly inspired productions, of which she did not consider herself the author, Maria Valtorta has left us interesting autobiographical writings and a rich correspondence which display her strong human personality, voluntarily offered in heroic and holy service to God for the good of all.

Offering of her Intelligence.

On the 18th of April 1949, Maria offered to God the sacrifice of not seeing the ecclesiastic approval of the Work, and she added also the precious gift of her own intelligence. The Lord must have taken her at her word because, after seeing the Work "blocked", Maria began a slow process of withdrawal into a kind of psychological isolation which started perhaps in 1956.

One of the first signs of this condition was the exaggerated use of capital letters in her personal correspondence. Thereafter, followed the mania of filling holy cards, and in general any piece of paper she happened to have at hand, with ejaculations such as "Jesus, I confide in You", which at times she computed in terms of indulgences obtained.

And Maria, who either writing, or working or praying had never idled in bed, ended up by being completely inactive. She began responding mistakenly in her conversations, and at times evidenced her congenial wit without considering its convenience. But she progressively spoke less, to the point of limiting herself to the mechanical repetition of a greeting, or of the final words of a phrase addressed to her, frustrating all attempts at dialogue. From time to time she would shout or exclaim: "How bright the sun is there!"

Her eyes, however, remained clear, and her attitude tranquil. She never asked for anything, and she allowed herself to be fed like a child. When interrogated because of some serious circumstance regarding her writings, she responded briefly and exactly, as if temporarily shaken out of her state of incommunicability.

Death and Burial.

On the 16th of September 1961, due to her deteriorated health, Maria was taken by ambulance to Pisa and was admitted to the Clinic of the Servants of Maria Dolorosa, where she remained until the end of the month.

Without any signs of recovery, she was taken back to her room at Viareggio where she died on the 12th of October 1961, at 10:35 a.m., the 65th year of her life and the 28th of her infirmity. The rector of the Third Order of the Servants of Mary, Fr. Innocenzo M. Rovetti, was called to assist her at her deathbed. She had belonged to this Third Order as well as to the Third Order Franciscans. At the very moment the priest recited the words: Proficiscere, anima christiana, de hoc mundo (Depart, o -Christian soul, from this world), Maria breathed her last. It seemed to be her final act of obedience.

From a manuscript of 1944, we know that Jesus had said to her: "How happy you will be when you realise that you are in world forever, and that you have come there from the miserable world without even having been aware of it, passing from a vision to reality, just like a child dreaming of his mother awakens to find her embracing him. That is how I will behave with you".

Her body was laid in her own room on the very bed which had witnessed the sufferings, industrious activity, acts of offering and pious death of the infirm author, who several years earlier had selected her burial attire, the baptismal veil which was to cover her head, and the phrase to be printed in her memory: "I have finished suffering, but I will go on loving". The few, solemn visitors were able to admire the brightness of her right hand (the one which had been defined as "pen of the Lord") while her left hand was turning livid. And her knees, which had served as her desk, were visibly bent under her white dress, even now that she was laid down in the repose of death.

The funeral took place on the 14th of October in early morning and with great simplicity, just as Maria had requested some tine before. Following the celebration of the sacred rite in the parish of St. Paolino, a small procession of motor cars accompanied the deceased to the Mercy Cemetery where the burial took place.

Exhumation and Priviliged Sepulcher.,

Ten years later on the 12th of October 1971, her mortal remains were exhumed from the earth and placed in the family niche. On the 2nd of July 1973, however, with civil and ecclesiastic permissions, they were transferred from Viareggio to Florence to be entombed in the Capitular Chapel in the Grand Cloister of Basilica of the Most Holy Annunciation, where the tomb of Met, Valtorta is still venerated.

Diffusion of the Manuscripts.,

The first editions of Maria Valtorta's writings began to be published without her name during the last years of her life. They quickly received an extensive welcome in the world, with diffusion in Italy as well as abroad, even to distant lands, and all without publicity, but with the sole impact of their message of truth and love which win over men's hearts, changing them for the better.

In the "dictation" of the 23rd of August 1943, we find the following words of Jesus addressed to the writer: "Good sense is needed to use My gift. Not an open and noisy diffusion, but a slow expansion progressively wider and without any name. When your hand is stilled in peace, in the expectation of the glorious resurrection, then and only then will your name be mentioned".

"The Poem of the Man-God".

The major work is a great Life of Jesus, the narration of which extends from the birth and childhood of the Virgin Mary to Her assumption into Heaven.

Defined in the Valtortian writings as "The Gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ as it was revealed to Little John", the work received the simpler title "The Poem of Jesus" which was preferred for the first edition. Later, the editor was requested to rectify this title because it had already been applied to a small volume of poetry published elsewhere, and the revised title read as "The Poem of the Man-God", as it remains to this day.

Nevertheless, it is a "gospel" which neither substitutes nor changes the Gospel, but rather narrates it, integrating and illuminating it, with the declared purpose of reviving in men's hearts the love for Christ and His Mother.

And it was "revealed" to Maria Valtorta, called "Little John". John, to place her close to the Evangelist who was the favourite disciple. Little, because of the dependence of her Work, although quite extensive, on those of the Evangelists who, in short manuscripts, enclosed what is essential.

THE POEM OF THE MAN-GOD

(Consisting of seven parts in five volumes)

The Hidden Life

The first year of the Public Life'

The second year of the Public Life

The third year of the Public Life

Preparation for the Passion

The Passion

The Glorification

Maria Valtorta

THE POEM OF THE MAN-GOD

Translated from Italian by Nicandro Picozzi, M.A., D.D.

Revised by Patrick McLaughlin, M.A.

VOLUME ONE

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THE HIDDEN LIFE

« God created Me when His purpose first unfolded. »
(Prov. 8,22.)

1. Introduction.

22nd August 1944.

Jesus orders me: « Take a completely new notebook. Write down on the first page what I dictated on August the 16th. She will be spoken of in this book. »

I obey and I write.

16th August 1944.

Jesus says:

« Today write only this. Purity has such a value, that the womb of a creature can contain the Uncontainable One, because She possessed the greatest purity that a creature of God could have.

The Most Holy Trinity descended with Its perfections, inhabited with Its Three Persons, enclosed Its infinity in a small space. But It did not debase Itself by doing so, because the love of the Virgin and the will of God widened this space until they rendered it a Heaven. And the Most Holy Trinity made Itself known by Its characteristics:

The Father, being once again the Creator of the creature, as on the sixth day of Creation, had a real, worthy daughter fashioned to His perfect image. The mark of God was impressed so completely and exactly on Mary, that only in the First-Born was it greater. Mary can be called the Second-born of the Father because, owing to the perfection granted to Her and preserved by Her, and to Her dignity of Spouse and Mother of God and Queen of Heaven, She comes second after the Son of the Father and second in His eternal thought, which ab aeterno took delight in Her.

The Son, being also "Her Son", did teach Her, by the mystery of Grace, His truth and wisdom, when He was but an Embryo, growing in Her womb.

The Holy Spirit appeared amongst men, for an anticipated prolonged Pentecost: Love for "Her Whom He loved", Consolation to men because of the Fruit of Her Womb, Sanctification on account of the Maternity of the Holy One.

God, to reveal Himself to men in the new and complete form, which starts the Redemption era, did not select for His throne a star in the sky, nor the palace of a powerful man. Neither did He want the wings of angels as the base of His feet. He wanted a spotless womb.

Also Eve had been created spotless. But she wanted to become corrupt of her own free will. Mary, Who lived in a corrupt world Eve was in a pure world - did not wish to violate Her purity, not even with one thought remotely connected with sin. She knew that sin

exists. She saw its various and horrible forms and implications. She saw them all, including the most hideous one: deicide. But She knew them solely to expiate them and to be, for ever, the Woman who has mercy on sinners and prays for their redemption.

This thought will be the introduction to other holy things that I will give for your benefit and the welfare of many people. »

2. Joachim and Anne Make a Vow to the Lord.

22nd August 1944.

I see the inside of a house. In it there is an elderly woman sitting at a loom. I would say, noting that her hair, which formerly was certainly jet black, is now quite grey and her face, though not wrinkled, has the gravity that comes with age, that she must be fifty-five years old. Not more.

In estimating a woman's age, I found my calculations upon my mother's face, whose image is more than ever present to me in these times which remind me of her final days at my bedside… The day after tomorrow it will be a year since I had my last look at her… My mother had a very youthful face, but was prematurely grey. When she was fifty she was as grey as at the end of her life. But, apart from the maturity of her appearance, nothing betrayed her age. I could therefore be mistaken in estimating the age of an elderly woman.

The woman I see weaving in a room, bright with the light coming from a door wide open on to a large garden - a small holding I would call it because it smoothly extends up and down a green slope - the woman is beautiful in her definite Jewish features. Her eyes are black and deep and while I do not know why, they remind me of the Baptist's. But, although they are as proud as the eyes of a queen, they are also sweet, as if a veil of blue had been laid on the flash of an eagle: sweet and somewhat sad, as of a person who thinks of and regrets lost things. Her skin is brown, but not excessively so. Her mouth, slightly large, is well formed and is motionless in an austere setting, which, however, is not a hard one. Her nose is long and thin, slightly drooping, an aquiline nose, which suits her eyes. She is well built, but not fat, well proportioned and I think tall, judging her in a sitting position.

I think she is weaving a curtain or a carpet. The many-coloured shuttles move fast on the brown coloured weft, and what has already been woven shows a pretty plaited work of Greek frets and rosettes in which green, yellow, red and deep blue interweave and blend as in a mosaic.

The woman is wearing a very plain dark dress, a red violet colour, the hue of a special species of pansy.

She stands up when she hears someone knocking at the door.

She is really tall. She opens the door.

A woman asks her: « Anne, will you give me your amphora? (1) I will fill it for you. »

The woman has a lovely five year old child with her, who at once clings to Anne's dress, and she caresses him while going into another room, and returns with a beautiful copper amphora which she hands to the woman saying: « You are always good to old Anne, indeed you are. May God reward you with this son and the other children you will have, you fortunate one! » Anne sighs.

The woman looks at her and does not know what to say in the circumstances. To divert attention from the distressing situation of which she is aware, she remarks: « I am leaving Alphaeus with you, if you do not mind, so that I will be quicker and I will fill many jars and jugs for you. »

Alphaeus is very pleased to stay and the reason is clear. As soon as his mother is gone, Anne picks him up and takes him into the orchard, lifts him up to a pergola (2) of grapes as golden as a topaz and says to him: « Eat, eat, because they are good », and she kisses him on his little face soiled with the juice of the grapes which the child eats avidly. Then she laughs heartily and at once looks younger on account of the lovely set of teeth she displays, and the joy that shines on her face, dispelling her years, as the child asks: « And what are you going to give me now? » and he gazes at her with large wide open eyes of a deep grey-blue colour. She laughs and plays with him bending on her knees and goes on: « What will you give me if I give you?… if I give you?… guess! » And the child, clapping his little hands, 'with a big smile responds: « Kisses, kisses I will give you, nice Anne, good Anne, mamma Anne!… »

Anne, when she hears him say: « mamma Anne », gives out a real cry of joyful love and cuddles the little one declaring: «My darling! Dear! Dear! Dear! » At each « dear » a kiss descends upon the rosy cheeks.

Then they go to a cupboard and from a plate she takes some honey cakes. « made them for you, darling of poor Anne, because You love me. But tell me, how much do you love me? » And the child, thinking of what has impressed him most, says: « As much as the Temple of the Lord. » Anne kisses him again on his lively little eyes, his little red lips and the child cuddles against her like a kitten.

His mother goes back and forth with a full jar and smiles without saying anything. She leaves them to their effusiveness.

An elderly man comes in from the orchard. He is a little smaller than Anne, and his thick hair is completely white. His face is of a

(1) Amphora: a two-handled jar commonly used by the Greeks and Romans.

(2) Pergola: grape vines supported by poles and forming a kind of roof with their leaves.

clear complexion with a squarely cut beard; his eyes are like blue turquoises and his eyelashes are light brown, almost fair. His robe is dark brown.

Anne does not see him because her back is turned to the door and he approaches her from behind questioning: « And nothing for me? » Anne turns round and says: « Joachim! Have you finished your work? » At the same time little Alphaeus runs to the elderly man's knees exclaiming: « Also to you, also to you. » And when the man bends down to kiss him, the child clings to his neck, ruffling his beard with his little hands and his kisses.

Joachim also has his gift. He brings his left hand from behind his back and offers the child such a beautiful apple, that it seems made of the finest porcelain. Smiling he says to the child who is holding his hands out eagerly: « Wait, I will cut it for you! You cannot take it as it is. It is bigger than you! », With a small pruning knife, which he carries on his belt, he cuts the fruit into small slices. He seems to be feeding a nestling, such is the care with which he puts the morsels into the little wide open mouth that munches and chews.

« Look at his eyes, Joachim! Don't they look like two little wavelets of the Sea of Galilee when the evening wind draws a veil of cloud over the sky? » Anne is speaking, resting one hand on her husband's shoulder, and she is leaning slightly on him, too: an attitude revealing the deep love of a wife, a love still perfect after many years of marriage.

And Joachim looks at her lovingly and agrees, saying: « Most beautiful! And His curls? Aren't they the colour of crops dried in the sun? Look: in them there is a mixture of gold and copper. »

« Ah! If we had had a child, I would have liked him thus: with these eyes and this hair… » Anne has bent down, in fact she is on her knees and with a deep sigh she kisses the two large grey-blue eyes.

Joachim, too, sighs. But he wishes to comfort her. He puts his hand on her thick curly grey hair and whispers to her: « We must continue to hope. God can do everything. While we are alive, the miracle may happen, particularly when we love Him and we love each other. » Joachim stresses the final phrase.

But Anne is silent, dejected, and she is standing, her head bowed, to conceal two tears streaming down her face. Only little Alphaeus sees them and he is confounded and grieved that his great friend is crying, as he sometimes does. He lifts his hands and wipes the tears.

« Don't cry, Anne! We are happy just the same. At least I am, because I have you. »

« Also I have you. But I have not given you a child… I think I have distressed the Lord, because He has made my womb

barren… »

« O my wife! How can you have distressed Him, you holy woman? Listen. Let us go once more to the Temple. For this reason. Not only for the Tabernacles! Let us say a long prayer… Perhaps it will happen to you as it did to Sarah… as it happened to Anne of Elkanah. They waited for a long time and they considered themselves dejected because they were barren. Instead a holy son was maturing for them in the Heavens of God. Smile, my wife. Your crying is a greater sorrow to me than being without offspring… We shall take Alphaeus with us. We shall make him pray, since he is innocent… and God will hear his prayer and ours together and will grant it. »

« Yes, let us make a vow to the Lord. The offspring will be His. As long as He grants it. Oh! to hear me being called "mamma"! »

And Alphaeus, an astonished and innocent spectator, exclaims: « I will call you so! »

« Yes, my darling… but you have your mummy, and I have no baby… »

The vision ceases here.

I understand that Mary's birth cycle has begun. And I am very happy because I wanted it so much. And I think that you (3) will be happy, too.

Before I began to write I heard Mother say to me: « So, My dear daughter, write about Me. All your grief will be comforted. » And while saying so She laid Her hand on my head caressing me kindly. Then the vision began. But at first, that is, until I heard the fifty-year-old woman being called by name, I did not realise that I was in the presence of Mother's mother and consequently of the grace of Her birth.

(3) It is to be noted that Maria Valtorta often addresses her spiritual Father in the course of her work.

3. Anne, Praying in the Temple, Has Her Wish Fulfilled.

23rd August 1944.

Before writing the following, I wish to make a note.

The house did not seem to me the well known one of Nazareth. The location, at least, is quite different. Also the orchard garden is larger and beyond it fields can be seen, not many, but they are there. Later, when Mary is married, there is only the orchard, large, but not more than an orchard: and I have never seen in other visions the room that I saw. I do not know whether for financial reasons Mary's parents disposed of part of their property or whether Mary, when she left the Temple, moved into another house given to her perhaps by Joseph. I do not remember whether

in past visions and instructions I had a clear sign that the house of Nazareth was the house where she was born.

My head is very heavy with fatigue. And then, particularly with dictations, I forget the words at once, although the commands remain recorded in my mind and illuminate my soul. But details fade away immediately. If after one hour I had to repeat what I heard, with the exception of one or two main sentences, I would not know anything else. Visions, on the contrary, remain clear in my mind because I had to watch them myself. I hear dictations but I see visions. Therefore they remain clear in my mind which functioned in following them through their various phases.

I was hoping there would be a declaration on yesterday's vision. Instead nothing.

I am beginning to see and I write.

Outside the walls of Jerusalem, on the hills and among the olive trees, there is a large crowd. It looks like a large market. But there are no booths. There are no shouting charlatans or pedlars. No games. There are coarse wool tents, certainly proof against water, hanging on posts fixed to the ground, and tied to the posts there are green branches, providing both ornamental decoration and practical coolness. Other tents, instead, are made entirely of branches fixed to the ground and tied in ridge fashion, thus forming small green tunnels. Under each tent there are people of every age and condition, speaking quietly and earnestly, with the cry of a child breaking the quietness now and again.

It is nightfall and the lights of small oil lamps are glittering here and there throughout the odd camp. Around the lights some families are taking their supper on the ground, the mothers holding the little ones in their laps. Many of these tired infants fall asleep holding pieces of bread in their tiny pink fingers while their small heads fall on their mothers' breasts, like little chicks under hens. The mothers finish their meals, as best they can, each with only one hand free, while the other hand is holding the child against her heart. Meanwhile other families are not yet supping and are talking in the dimness of twilight, waiting for the food to be ready for eating. Small fires are lit here and there and women are busy around them. Slow somewhat plaintive lullabies soothe children who are having difficulty in going to sleep.

High above is a beautiful clear sky, which is becoming a deeper and deeper blue until it looks like an enormous black-bluish soft velvet velarium. On this cloth, a little at a time, invisible craftsmen and decorators fix gems and night lights, some isolated, some in odd geometrical patterns, amongst which stand out the Great Bear and the Little Bear, in the shape of a cart, with its shaft resting on the ground after the oxen have been freed from the yoke. The Pole Star is smiling in all its brightness.

I realise it is October because the loud voice of a man says so: « This month of October is beautiful as very rarely in past years! »

Here is Anne coming from a fire with something in her hands, spread over a loaf of bread which is large and flat like a cake and serves also as a tray. Little Alphaeus is holding on to her skirt and is prattling in his little voice. Joachim, when he sees Anne approaching, hastens to light his lamp; he is at the entrance of his little hut made of branches and is speaking to a man about thirty years old, whom Alphaeus greets from a distance in his shrill voice saying:« Daddy. »

Anne in her stately walk passes along the rows of huts. She is stately, yet humble. She is not haughty with anyone. She picks up the child of a very poor woman, as the urchin had fallen at her feet while running like a little scamp. Since he has dirtied his face and is crying, Anne cleans him, comforts him and hands him to his mother who has run towards them and is apologising. Anne says to her: « Oh! It's nothing. I am glad he did not hurt himself. He is a lovely child. What age is he? »

« Three years. He is my second youngest and I am expecting another one shortly. I have six boys. Now I would like to have a girl… A girl is a lot for her mother… »

« The Most High has consoled you very much, woman! » sighs Anne.

And the woman goes on: « Yes. I am poor, but the children are our joy and the bigger ones already help with the work. And, Madam, (it is very obvious that Anne is of a higher social standing and the woman realises it), how many children have you got? »

« None. »

« None?! Isn't this one yours? »

« No, he is the son of a very good neighbour. He is my consolation… »

« Did yours die or… ? »

« I never had any. »

« Oh! » The poor woman looks at her pitifully.

Anne says goodbye to her, sighing very heavily, and goes to her hut.

« I have kept you waiting, Joachim. I was held up by a poor woman, the mother of six boys. Fancy that! And she is expecting another child shortly. »

Joachim sighs.

Alphaeus' father calls him, but he answers: « I am staying with Anne. I will help her. » Everybody laughs.

« Leave him. He does not disturb us. He is not bound by the Law yet. Here or there he is but a little bird eating » states Anne. And she sits down with the child in her lap and gives him some cake and, I think, some roasted fish. I can see that she does something

before giving it to him; perhaps she removes a fishbone. She has served her husband first. She eats last.

The night is more and more crowded with stars and the camp with lights. Then little by little many lights go out. They are the lamps of those who were the first to have supper and who now go to sleep. Also the buzzing slowly decreases. No more children's voices are heard. Only some babies still unweaned raise their lamb-like little voices seeking their mothers' milk. The night blows her breath over places and people and obliterates pains and memories, hopes and ill-feelings. Nay, perhaps these last two survive in dreams, although alleviated by sleep.

Anne says so to her husband while lulling Alphaeus who is falling asleep in her arms: « Last night I dreamt that next year I will be coming to the Holy City for two feasts, instead of one only. And one will be the offering of my creature to the Temple… Oh! Joachim!… »

« Do hope, Anne. Did you not perceive anything else? Did the Lord not whisper anything to your heart? »

« Nothing. Only a dream… »

« Tomorrow is the last day of prayer. All the offerings have already been made. But we will renew them again tomorrow, solemnly. We shall gain our favour from God by our faithful love. I always think that it will happen to you as it did to Anne of Elkanah. »

« May God grant it… and I wish I had someone say to me now: "Go in peace. The God of Israel has granted the grace you asked for!" »

« If the grace comes, your child will tell you turning over for the first time in your womb; and it will be the voice of an innocent, therefore the voice of God. »

The camp is now silent in darkness. Anne also takes Alphaeus to the adjoining hut, and puts him on the bed near his little brothers, who are already asleep. Then she lies down beside Joachim and their lamp also goes out: one of the little stars on earth. More beautiful, the stars in the vault of heaven remain watching over mankind asleep.

Jesus says:

« The just are always wise, because, as friends of God, they live in His company and are taught by Him, yes, by Him, Infinite Wisdom.

My grandparents were just and therefore they possessed wisdom. They could quote accurately from the Book, singing the praises of Wisdom from its context: "She it was I loved and searched for from my youth: I resolved to have her as my bride".

Anne of Aaron was the strong woman of whom our Ancestor

speaks. And Joachim, a descendant of king David, had not sought so much charm and wealth as virtue. Anne possessed a great virtue. All holy attributes joined together like a sweet-smelling bunch of flowers to become one beautiful thing that was: this exceptional Virtue. A real virtue, worthy of being set before the throne of God.

Joachim had therefore married wisdom twice, "loving her more than any other woman": the Wisdom of God enshrined in the heart of a just woman. Anne of Aaron had not sought anything else but to join her life to that of an upright man, certain that family joy lies in uprighteousness. And to be the embodiment of the "strong woman" she lacked only the crown of children, the glory of the married woman, the justification of marriage, the one of which Solomon speaks, as for her happiness she lacked children, the flowers of a tree that has become one thing with the adjoining tree and obtains thereof abundance of new fruit, in which the two good qualities blend into one, because she had never experienced any disappointment on account of her husband.

Although she was now approaching old age and had been Joachim's wife for many years, she was always for him "the .spouse of his youth, his joy, the most dear hind, the graceful fawn", whose caresses always had the fresh charm of the first nuptial evening and sweetly fascinated his love, keeping it as fresh as a flower sprinkled with dew, and as ardent as a fire continuously kept burning. Therefore, in their affliction, their childless state, they spoke to each other "words of consolation in their thoughts and troubles".

And eternal Wisdom, when the time came, besides teaching them in waking consciousness, enlightened them with dreams at night, visions of the poem of glory that was to come from them and was Most Holy Mary, My Mother. If their humility made them hesitant, their hearts trembled in hope at the first hint of God's promise. There was already certainty in Joachim's words: "Do hope… We shall gain our favour from God by our faithful love". They were dreaming of a child: they got the Mother of God.

The words of the book of Wisdom appear to be written for them: "By means of her I shall acquire glory before the people… by means of her, immortality shall be mine and I shall leave an everlasting memory to my successors". But to obtain all this they had to become masters of a true and lasting virtue which no event marred. Virtue of faith. Virtue of charity. Virtue of hope. Virtue of chastity. The chastity of a married couple! They possessed it, because it is not necessary to be virgins to be chaste. And chaste nuptial beds are guarded by angels and from them descend good children who make the virtue of their parents the rule of their lives.

But where are they now? Now children are not wanted, neither is chastity. I therefore say that love and marriage are desecrated. »

4. With a Canticle, Anne Announces that She Is a Mother.

24th August 1944.

I see Joachim and Anne's house once again. Nothing is changed inside, with the exception that there are many branches full of flowers, placed in amphoras here and there, certainly the fruit of the pruning of the trees in the orchard, all in bloom: a cloud varying from snow-white to the red of certain corals.

Also Anne's work is different. On the smaller of two looms she is weaving some lovely linen cloth and is singing, moving her feet to the rhythm of the song. She is singing and smiling. At whom? At herself, at something she is aware of in her inside.

I have written separately the slow and yet gay song, so that I might follow it, for she repeats it several times as if she rejoices in it. She sings it more and more loudly and with certainty, like someone who found a melody in her heart and at first whispers it softly and then, being sure, proceeds faster and in a higher tone. The slow and yet gay song (which I am transcribing because it is so sweet in' its simplicity) says:

« Glory to the Almighty Lord Who had love for the children of David. Glory to the Lord!
His supreme grace has visited me from Heaven
The old tree has borne a new branch and I am blessed.
At the Feast of Lights hope scattered the seed;
Now the fragrance of Nisan sees it germinating.
Like an almond-tree my flesh is adorned with flowers in spring.
In the evening she perceives she is bearing her fruit.
On that branch there is a rose, there is a most sweet apple.
There is a bright star, an innocent little child.
There is the joy of the house, of the husband and wife.
Praise be to God, to my Lord, Who had mercy on me.
His light said to me: "A star will come to you."
Glory, glory! Yours shall be the fruit of this tree.
The first and last, holy and pure as a gift of the Lord.
Yours it shall be and may joy and peace come upon the earth.
Fly, shuttle. Fasten the yarn for the infant's cloth.
The infant is about to be born. May the song of my heart rise to God singing hosannas. »

Joachim comes in when she is about to repeat her song for the fourth time. « Are you happy, Anne? You look like a bird in spring. What song is that? I have never heard anyone sing it. Where does it come from? »

« From my heart, Joachim. » Anne has got up and is now moving towards her husband, smiling happily. She looks younger and lovelier than ever.

« I did not know you were a poet » declares her husband looking at her with obvious admiration. They do not look like an elderly couple. In their glances there is the fondness of young couples. « I came from the other end of the orchard when I heard you singing. For years I had not heard your voice, that of a turtle-dove in love. Do you mind repeating that song for me? »

« I would repeat it even if you did not ask me. The children of Israel have always entrusted to songs the sincere cries of their hopes, joys and pains. I have entrusted to a song the task of telling myself and you a great joy. Yes, also of telling myself because it is such a great thing that although I am sure of it now, it does not yet seem to me to be true… » and she begins the song over again. But when she comes to the point: « On that branch there is a rose, there is a most sweet apple, a star… », her well tuned contralto voice at first trembles, then it breaks, and with a sob of joy she looks at Joachim and raising her arms she cries: « I am a mother, my darling! » And she takes refuge on his heart, between the arms that he has held out and has now clasped around his happy wife. This is the most chaste and happy embrace that I have ever seen in my life, chaste and ardent in its chastity.

And the sweet reproach is whispered over Anne's grey hair: « And you were not telling me? »

« Because I wanted to be sure. Old as I am… to know that I am a mother… I could not believe it was true… I did not want to give you the most bitter disappointment of all. Since the end of December I have perceived that my womb was becoming new and bearing, as I say, a new branch. But now on that branch the fruit is certain… See? That linen is for the one that is coming. »

« Is it not the linen that you bought in Jerusalem in October? »

« Yes, it is. I spun it while I was waiting… and hoping. I was hoping because the last day while I was praying in the Temple, as close as possible for a woman to be to the House of God, and it was already evening… remember that I was saying: "A little longer, a little more". I could not withdraw from the place without receiving the grace! Well, in the growing darkness, from inside the sacred place, where I was watching from the depth of my soul, to obtain assent from the everpresent God, I saw a light, a spark of beautiful light depart. It was as white as the moon and yet it had in itself all the brightness of all the pearls and gems that are in the world. It seemed that one of the precious stars of the Veil, the stars placed under the feet of the Cherubim had become detached and bright with a supernatural light… it seemed that beyond the sacred Veil, from the Glory itself, a fire started which came quickly towards

me and while cutting through the air, it sang with a heavenly voice chanting: "May what you asked for, come to you". That is why I sing: "A star will come to you". What child will ours ever be, since it reveals itself as the light of a star in the Temple and in the Feast of Lights says: "I am"? Did you perhaps foresee rightly when you thought I would be a new Anne of Elkanah? How shall we name our creature, whom I perceive talking to me in my womb as sweetly as the melody of waters, with its little heart beating repeatedly like the heart of a pretty turtle-dove held in one's hands? »

« If it is a boy we shall call him Samuel… If a girl, Star. The word that stopped your song to give me the joy of learning that I am a father. The form it took to reveal itself in the holy shade of the Temple. »

« Star. Our Star, because, I don't know why, but I think it is a girl. I think that such sweet caresses can only come from a most sweet daughter. Because I do not bear her, I have no pain. It is she who takes me on a blue flowery path, as if I were supported by holy angels and the earth was already far away… I have always heard women say that it is painful to conceive and to bear. But I have no pain. I feel strong, young, fresher than when I presented you with my virginity in my far away youth. Daughter of God because this creature born of a barren stump, is more of God than ours - she gives no pain to her mother. She only brings her peace and blessings: the fruits of God, her true Father. »

« Mary, then, we shall call her! Star of our sea, pearl, happiness. The name of the first great woman in Israel. But she will never sin against the Lord and to Him only she will give her songs, because she is offered to Him: a victim before being born. »

« Yes, she is offered to Him. Male or female, as it may be, after rejoicing for three years over our creature, we shall give it to the Lord. Victims ourselves with her, for the glory of God. »

I do not see or hear anything else.

Jesus says:

« Wisdom, after enlightening them with dreams at night, descended "breath of the power of God, pure emanation of the glory of the Almighty", and became Word for the barren one. He, who already saw His time for redemption close at hand: I, Christ, Anne's grandson, almost fifty years later, by means of the Word, will work miracles on barren, diseased, possessed, desolate women and on all the miseries of the world.

But in the meantime, for the joy of having a Mother, I whisper a mysterious word in the shade of the Temple that contained the hopes of Israel, of the Temple now at the end of its life, because a new and real Temple is about to come on earth, no longer containing the hopes of one people, but the certainty of Paradise for the

people of the whole world, and for centuries and centuries until the end of the world. And this Word works the miracle of making fertile what was barren. And also the miracle of giving me a Mother, Who not only had the best disposition, as was natural She should have, being born of two saints, but, unique creature, had not only a good soul as many others still have, not only a continuous increase of goodness because of Her good will, not only an immaculate body, but had an immaculate soul.

You have seen the continuous generation of souls from God. Now think what must have been the beauty of this soul which the Father looked fondly on before time existed, which formed the delight of the Trinity, which Trinity longed to adorn it with its gifts, to present it to Itself. Oh! Most Holy Mary that God created for Himself and then for the salvation of men! Bearer of the Saviour, You were the first salvation. Living Paradise, with Your smile You began to sanctify the world.

The soul created to be soul of the Mother of God! When this vital spark derived from the more lively throb of the Threefold Love of the Trinity, the angels rejoiced because Paradise had never seen a brighter light. Like a petal of a heavenly rose, a mystical and precious petal, that was a gem and a flame, the breath of God descended to give life to a body quite differently than for others. It descended so powerful in its ardour that Guilt could not contaminate it, it came through the heavens and enclosed itself in a holy womb.

The world had its Flower, but did not yet know, the true, unique Flower, that blooms eternally: lily and rose, sweet-smelling violet and jasmine, helianthus and cyclamen blended together and with them all the flowers on earth in one Flower only: Mary, in Whom every grace and virtue is gathered together.

In April the land of Palestine looked like a huge garden and the fragrance and colours delighted the hearts of men. But the most beautiful Rose was still unknown. She was already flowering to God in the secrecy of Her mother's womb, because my Mother loved since She was conceived. But only when the vine gives its blood to make wine and the sweet strong smells fill the yards and the nostrils, She would smile to God first and then to the world, saying with Her most innocent smile: "Here, the Vine that will give you the Bunch of grapes to be squeezed in the winepress, so that it will become eternal Medicine for your disease, is amongst you".

I said: "Mary loved since She was conceived!" What is it that gives light and knowledge to the soul? Grace. What is it that removes Grace? Original sin and the mortal one. Mary, the Immaculate, was never deprived of the remembrance of God, of His closeness, His love, His light, His wisdom. She was therefore able to understand and love when She was but flesh forming around an

immaculate soul that continued to love.

Later, I will let you contemplate mentally the depth of Mary's virginity. You will have a spell of heavenly ecstasy, as when I allowed you to consider our eternity. In the meantime consider how to bear a creature free from the Stain that deprives one of God, gives the mother a superior intelligence and makes a prophetess of her, although she has conceived in a natural and human way. The prophetess

of her daughter, whom she calls: "Daughter of God". And consider what would have happened if innocent children had been born of innocent First Parents, as God wanted.

Man, you state that you are setting out to be "superman", and with your vices are only setting out to be "superdemon". The possibility of existing and living without the contamination of Satan, leaving to God the administration of life, knowledge, and goodness, would have been the means to make you "superman", not wishing more than what God had given you and which was little less than infinite. And thus, in an evolution towards perfection, you would have been able to generate children, who should be men in their bodies and sons of the Intelligence in their souls: victors, strong, giants over Satan, who would have been vanquished so many thousand centuries before the hour, when he will be humiliated, and all his evil with him. »

5. Birth of the Virgin Mary.

26th August 1944.

I see Anne coming out of the garden. She is leaning on the arm of a relative, who is like her. She is obviously several months pregnant and she looks tired and her fatigue is not alleviated by the sultriness, just as this present heat is exhausting me.

Although the garden is shady, it is very hot and close. The air can be cut like a soft warm dough, it is so heavy. The sun's rays descend from a merciless blue sky and there is some dust making the atmosphere slightly dull. The weather must have been dry for a long time, because where there is no irrigation, the land is literally reduced to a very fine, almost white dust. Out in the open this shade of white is slightly pink, whereas it is a dark red-brown under the trees, where the soil is damp. Likewise the ground is moist along the small flower-beds, where rows of vegetables are growing, and around the rose bushes, the jasmines and other flowers, and particularly in the front of and along the beautiful pergola, which divides the orchard in two, up to the beginning of the fields, now stripped of their crops. The grass of the meadow, which marks the boundary of the property, is parched and thin. Only at its border, where there is a hedge of wild hawthorn, already completely studded with the rubies of its little fruits, is

the grass greener and thicker. There are some sheep thereabouts with a young shepherd seeking pasture and shade.

Joachim is working around the rows of vines and olive-trees. There are two men with him, helping him. Although an elderly man he is quick and works eagerly. They are opening little channels at the end of a field to give water to the dry plants, and this water makes its way gurgling between the grass and the dry land. The flow forms circles that for one moment resemble a yellowish crystal and seconds later are only rings of wet soil, around the overloaded vine branches and the olive-trees.

Along the shady pergola, under which golden bees are buzzing, greedy for the sugar of the golden grapes, Anne moves slowly towards Joachim, who hastens towards her as soon as he sees her.

« You came so far? »

« The house is as hot as an oven. »

« And you suffer from it. »

« The only suffering of this last hour is that of a pregnant woman. The natural suffering of everybody: man and beast. Don't get too warm, Joachim. »

« The water we have been hoping for, for such a long time, and that for fully three days seemed so close, has not yet come and the country is parched. We are lucky to have a spring so near and so rich in water. I have opened the channels. It is a measure of relief for the plants which have withering leaves and are covered with dust: just enough to keep them alive. If it would only rain… » Joachim, with the eagerness of all farmers, looks at the sky, while Anne, tired, cools herself with a fan that seems to be made of the dry leaf of a palm interwoven with many-coloured threads keeping it firm.

Anne's companion interrupts: « Over there, beyond the Great Hermon, fast clouds are arising. There is a northern wind. It will refreshen and perhaps bring rain. »

« The breeze has risen for three days and then it set's when the moon rises. It will do the same again. » Joachim is discouraged.

« Let us go back home. Even here one can hardly breathe, and in any case I think it is better to go back… » says Anne, who looks more olive-hued than usual, owing to a paleness which has come over her face.

« Are you in pain? »

« No. But I can feel the great peace that I experienced in the Temple when I was granted the grace, and which I felt once again when I knew I was pregnant. It is like an ecstasy, a sweet sleep of the body while the soul rejoices and calms itself in a peace that has no bodily parallel. I have loved and still do love you, Joachim, and when I entered your house and I said to myself: "I am the wife of a just man", I had peace: and I felt the same every time your provident

dent love took care of your Anne. But this peace is different. Understand: I think that the soul of our father Jacob was invaded by a similar peace, like the soothing given by oil that spreads and appeases, after he dreamt of the angels. And, possibly more accurately, it is like the joyful peace of the Tobiahs after Raphael appeared to them. If I absorb myself in this feeling, it grows more and more in strength while I enjoy it. It is as if I were ascending into the blue spaces of the sky… And furthennore, I don't know the reason for it, but since I have had this peaceful joy in me, I have a song in my heart: old Tobiah's song. I think it was written for this hour… for this joy… for the land of Israel that receives it… for Jerusalem-sinner and now forgiven… But do not laugh at the frenzy of a mother… but when I say: "Thank the Lord for your wealth and bless the God of centuries, that He may rebuild His Tabernacle in you", I think that He Who will rebuild the Tabernacle of the true God in Jerusalem will be This One who is about to be born… And I also think that the destiny of my creature was prophesied and not the fate of the Holy City, when the song says: "You shall shine with a bright light: all the peoples of the world will prostrate themselves before you: the nations will come bringing gifts: they will worship the Lord in you and will hold your land as sacred, because within you they invoke the Great Name. You will be happy on account of your children, because they will all be blessed and they will gather near the Lord. Blessed are those who love you and rejoice in your peace… " And I am the first to rejoice, her happy mother… »

Anne changes colour, when saying these words and she lights up like something brought from the paleness of moonlight to the brightness of a great fire and vice versa. Sweet tears, of which she is unaware, run down her cheeks and she smiles in her joy. And in the meantime she moves towards the house, walking between her husband and her relative, who listen and, deeply moved, are silent.

They make haste because clouds driven by a strong wind, rush across and gather in the sky, while the plain darkens and shudders at the warning of a storm. When they reach the threshold of the dwelling, a first livid flash of lightning crosses the sky and the rumble of the first peal of thunder sounds like the roll of a huge drum that mingles with the arpeggio (1) of the first drops on the parched leaves.

They all go in and Anne withdraws, while Joachim, standing at the door, talks with the workers, who have in the meantime joined him: the conversation is about the longed for water which is a blessing for the parched land. But their joy turns into fear because

(1) Arpeggio: the sounding of notes in rapid succession.

a very violent storm is approaching with lightning and clouds threatening hail. « If the cloud bursts, it will crush the grapes and the olives like a millstone. Poor me! »

Joachim is also anxious for his wife, whose time has come to give birth to her child. His relative reassures him that Anne is not suffering at all. But he is agitated, and every time his relative or any other woman, amongst whom is Alphaeus' mother, comes out of Anne's room and goes back in again with hot water and basins and linens dried near the blazing fireplace in the large kitchen, he goes and makes enquiries, but he does not calm down despite their reassurances. Also the lack of cries from Anne worries him. He says: « I am a man and I have never seen a child being born. But I remember hearing that the absence of throes is fatal. »

It is growing dark and the evening is preceded by a furious and very violent storm: it brings torrential rain, wind, lightning, everything, except hail, which has fallen elsewhere.

One of the workers notices the ferocity of the gale: « It looks as if Satan has come out of Gehenna with his demons. Look at those black clouds! You can smell sulphur in the air and you can hear whistling and hisses, and wailing and cursing voices. If it is him, he is furious this evening! »

The other worker laughs and scoffs: « A great prey must have escaped him, or Michael has struck him with a new thunderbolt from God, and he has had his horns and tail clipped and burnt. »

A woman passes by and shouts: « Joachim! It is coming. And it is happening quickly and well! » and she disappears with a small amphora in her hands.

The storm drops suddenly, after one last thunderbolt that is so violent that it throws the three men against the side wall; and in front of the house, in the garden, a black smoky cavity remains as its memory! Meanwhile a cry, one resembling the tiny plea of a little turtle-dove that for the very first time no longer peeps but cooes, is heard from beyond Anne's door. And at the same time a huge rainbow stretches its semicircle across the sky. It rises, or seems to rise, from the top of Hermon, which kissed by the sun, looks like a most delicate pinkish alabaster: it rises up in the clear September sky and through an atmosphere cleaned of all impurities, it crosses over the hills of Galilee and the plain to the South, and over another mountain, and seems to rest the other end on the distant horizon, where it drops from view behind a chain of high mountains.

« We have never seen anything like this! »

« Look, look! »

« It seems to enclose in a circle the whole of the land of Israel. And look! there is already a star in the sky while the sun has not yet set. What a star! It is shining like a huge diamond!… »

« And the moon, over there, is a full moon, three days early. But look how she is shining! »

The women arrive jubilant with a plump little baby wrapped in plain linens.

It is Mary, the Mother. A very tiny Mary, who could sleep in the arms of a child, a Mary as long, at most, as an arm, with a little head of ivory dyed pale pink. Her tiny carmine lips no longer cry but are set in the instinctive act of sucking: they are so small that one cannot understand how they will be able to take a teat. Her pretty little nose is between two tiny round cheeks, and when they get Her to open Her eyes, by teasing Her, they see two small parts of the sky, two innocent blue points that look but cannot see, between thin fair eyelashes. Also Her hair on Her little round head is a pinkish blond, like the colour of certain honeys which are almost white.

Her ears are two small shells, transparent, perfect. Her tiny hands… what are those two little things groping in the air and ending up in Her mouth? Closed, as they are now, they are two rose buds that split the green of their sepals and show their silk within. When they are open, as now, they are two ivory jewels, made of pink ivory and alabaster with five pale garnets as nails. How will those two tiny hands be able to dry so many tears?

And Her little feet? Where are they? For the time being they are just kicking, hidden in the linens. But now the relative sits down and uncovers Her… Oh, the little feet! They are about four centimetres long. Each sole is a coral shell, with a snow white top veined in blue. Her toes are masterpieces of Lilliputian sculpture: they, too, are crowned with small scales of pale garnet. But where will they find small sandals, when those little feet of a doll will take their first steps, sandals small enough to fit such tiny feet? And how will those little feet be able to go such a long way and bear so much pain under the cross?

But that for the time being is not known, and the onlookers smile and laugh at her kicking, at Her well shaped legs, at Her minute plumpish thighs that form dimples and rings, at Her little tummy, a cup turned upside-down, at Her tiny perfect chest. Under the skin of Her breast, as soft as fine silk, the movement of Her breathing can be seen and the beating of Her little heart can be heard, if, as Her happy father is doing now, one lays one's lips there for a kiss… This is the most beautiful little heart the world will ever know: the only immaculate heart of a human being.

And Her back? They are now turning Her over and they can see the curve of Her kidneys and then the plump shoulders and the pink nape of Her neck, which is so strong that the little head lifts itself up on the arch of the minute vertebrae. It looks like the little head of a bird that scans the new world that it views. She, the Pure and Chaste One, protests with a little cry at being thus exposed to the eyes of so many, She, Entirely Virgin, the Holy and Immaculate, Whom no man will ever see nude again, protests.

Cover, do cover this bud of a lily which will never be opened on earth and which, still remaining a bud, will bear its Flower, even more beautiful than Herself. Only in Heaven the Lily of the Trine Lord will open all its petals. Because up there, there is no particle of fault that may unwillingly profane its spotlessness. Because up there the Trine God is to be received, in the presence of the whole Empyrean, the Trine God that within a few years, hidden in a faultless heart, will be in Her: Father, Son, Spouse.

Here She is again, in Her linens, in the arms of Her earthly father, whom She resembles. Not at the moment. Now She is just a little human baby. I mean that She will be like him when She has grown into a woman. She has nothing of Her mother. She has Her father's

colour of complexion and eyes and certainly also his hair. His hair is now white, but when he was young it was certainly fair, as one can tell from his eyebrows. She has Her father's features, made more perfect and gentle, being a woman, but that special Woman. She has also the smile, the glance, the way of moving and height of Her father. Thinking of Jesus, as I see Him, I find Anne has given her height to her Grandson and her deep ivory colour to His skin. Mary, instead, has not the stateliness of Her mother: a tall and supple palm-tree, but She has the kindness of Her father.

Also the women are speaking of the storm and the unusual state of the moon, of the presence of the star and the rainbow. Along with Joachim they enter the happy mother's room and give her her baby.

Anne smiles at one of her thoughts: « She is the Star » she says. « Her sign is in Heaven. Mary, arch of peace! Mary, my Star! Mary, pure moon! Mary, our pearl! »

« Are you calling Her Mary? »

« Yes. Mary, star and pearl and light and peace… »

« But it means also bitterness… Are you not afraid of bringing Her misfortune? »

« God is with Her. She belongs to Him before She existed. He will lead Her along His ways and all bitterness will turn into heavenly honey. Now be of Your mummy… for a little longer, before being all of God… »

And the vision ends on the first sleep of Anne, a mother, and Mary, an infant.

27th August 1944.

Jesus says:

« Rise and make haste, My little friend. I am longing to take you with Me on the heavenly contemplation of Mary's Virginity. You

will emerge from this experience with your soul as fresh as if you too were created at the moment by the Father, a little Eve not yet aware of the flesh. You will emerge with your soul filled with light, because you will plunge into God's masterpiece. You will emerge with your whole being saturated in love, because you will have understood the degree to which God can love. To speak of the conception of Mary, the Immaculate, means to penetrate the sky, light, love.

Come and read Her glories in the Book of the Ancestor. "God possessed me at the beginning of His works, from the beginning, before the Creation. From everlasting I was firmly set, in the beginning, before earth came into being, the deep did not yet exist and I was already conceived. The springs did not yet gush with water and the mountains had not yet risen in their huge masses, neither were the hills jewels in the sun, when I came to birth. God had not yet made the earth, the rivers and the foundation of the world, and I was there. When He prepared the Heavens I was present, when with immutable laws He enclosed the deep under the surface, when He fixed the Heavens firm and He suspended there the springs of water, when He assigned the sea its boundaries and gave laws to the waters, when He ordered the waters not to invade the shore, when He laid down the foundations of the earth, I was with Him arranging everything. I always played joyfully in His presence, I played in the universe… " You applied these words to Wisdom, but they speak of Her: the beautiful Mother, the holy Mother, the Virgin Mother of Wisdom that I am, Who am now speaking to you.

I wanted you to write the first line of the song at the top of the book that speaks of Her, that She might be contemplated and the consolation and joy of God might be known; the reason for the constant, perfect, intimate delight of this God One and Trine, Who rules and loves you and Who received from man so many reasons for being sad; the reason why He perpetuated the human race, even when, at the first test, humanity deserved to be destroyed; the reason for the forgiveness you have received.

To have Mary that loved Him! Oh! It was well worth while creating Man and allowing him to exist and decreeing to forgive him, to have the Beautiful Virgin, the Holy Virgin, the Immaculate Virgin, the Loving Virgin, the Beloved Daughter, the Most Pure Mother, the Loving Spouse! God has given you so much and would have given you even more to possess the Creature of His delight, the Sun of His sun, the Flower of His garden. And He continues to give you so much on account of Her, at Her request, for Her joy, because Her joy flows into the joy of God and increases it with flashes that fill the light, the great light of Paradise with brilliant sparkles and every sparkle is a grace to the

universe, to mankind, to the blessed souls who reply with a jubilant cry of alleluia to each generation of divine miracle, created by the desire of the Blessed Trinity to see the sparkling smile of joy of the Virgin.

God desired to put a king in the universe that He had created out of nothing. A king, who by the nature of matter should be the first amongst all the creatures created with matter and endowed with matter. A king, who by nature of the spirit should be little less than divine, united to Grace as he was in his first innocent day. But the Supreme Mind, to Whom all the most remote events in centuries are known, incessantly sees what was, is and will be; and while It contemplates the past, and observes the present, It penetrates deeply with Its foresight into the most distant future and knows in every detail how the last man will die. Without confusion or discontinuity the Supreme Mind has always known that the king created to be demigod at Its side in Heaven, heir of the Father, would arrive adult in His Kingdom, after living in the house of his mother - the earth, with which he was made - during his childhood, as child of the Eternal Father for his day on earth. The Supreme Mind has always known that man would have committed against himself the crime of killing Grace in himself and the theft of robbing himself of Heaven.

Why then did He create him? Certainly many ask themselves why. Would you have preferred not to exist? Does this day not deserve, in itself, to be lived, although so poor and bare, and rendered harsh by your wickedness, so that you may know and admire the infinite Beauty that the hand of God has sown in the universe?

For whom would He have created the stars and planets that fly like thunderbolts and arrows, furrowing the vault of Heaven, or dash majestically in their rush of meteors, and yet seem slow, presenting you with light and seasons, eternally immutable and yet always mutable. They give you a new page to read on the sky, every evening, every month, every year, as if they wished to say: "Forget your restriction, forsake your printed matter which is full of obscure, putrid, dirty, poisonous, false, swearing, corrupting material and rise, at least with your eyes, to the unlimited freedom of the firmament, make your souls bright looking at so clear a sky. Build up a supply of light to take to your dark prison. Read the word that we write singing our sidereal chorus, which is more harmonious than the one drawn from a cathedral organ. The word that we write while shining, the word that we write while loving, because we always bear in mind Him Who gave us the joy of existing. And we love Him for giving us our existence, our brightness, our movement, our freedom, our beauty in the midst of the gentle azure, beyond which we can see an even more sublime

blue: Paradise. And we fulfill the second part of His commandment of love, by loving you, our universal neighbours, loving you by giving you guidance and light, warmth and beauty. Read the word we say, the one on which we modulate our singing, our brightness, our smile: God!"

For whom would He have made the blue sea, the mirror of the sky, the way to the land, the smile of waters, the voice of waves? The sea itself is a word that with the rustling of silk, with the smiles of happy girls, with the sighs of old people who remember and weep, with the clamour of violence, with clashes and roars always speaks and says: "God". The sea is for you, as the sky and the stars are. And with the sea, the lakes and the rivers, the ponds and the streams, the pure springs, all of which serve to nourish you, to quench your thirst, to clean you: and they serve you serving their Creator, without submerging you, as you deserve.

For whom would He have made the countless families of animals, the beautifully coloured birds, that fly singing, and other animals that like servants, run, work, nourish you and succour you, their kings?

For whom would He have created the countless families of plants and flowers that look like butterflies, like gems and motionless birds, and the families of fruits that are like jewels or jewels cases and are a carpet for your feet and the trees that form shelters for your heads, a welcome relaxation and joy to your minds, your limbs, your sight and smell?

For whom would He have made the minerals in the bowels of the earth and the salts dissolved in cold and boiling springs, the iodines and the bromines, unless one should enjoy them, one who was not God, but the son of God? One: man.

The joy of God lacked nothing: God had no need. He is sufficient in Himself. He has only to contemplate Himself to rejoice, to nourish Himself, to live, to rest. The whole creation has not increased by one atom His infinite joy, beauty, life, power. He made everything for the creature that He wanted to place as king in the work made by Him: that creature is man.

It is worth while living to see such a work of God and to be grateful to His power that gives you the opportunity. And you must be grateful to be alive. You should have been grateful even if you had to wait till Doomsday to be redeemed, because you have been prevaricators, proud, lascivious and murderers in your First Parents and you are still so individually. Yet God allows you to enjoy the beauty of the universe, the goodness of the universe: and He treats you as if you were good children, who are taught and granted everything so that their lives might be happier and more pleasant. What you know, you know by the light of God. What you discover, you discover through the guidance of God. In Goodness.

Other knowledge and discoveries that bear the mark of evil, come from the Supreme Evil: Satan.

The Supreme Mind, that knows everything, before man existed, knew that man would be a thief and self murderer. And as the Eternal Goodness has no limits in being good, before Guilt existed, He thought of the means to obliterate Guilt. The means: I, the Word. The instrument to render the means an efficient instrument: Mary. And the Virgin was created in the sublime mind of God.

Everything was created for Me, beloved Son of the Father. I-King should have had under my Divine Royal feet carpets and jewels such as no royal palace had, and songs and voices and servants and ministers around me as no sovereign ever possessed, and flowers and gems, all the sublime, the greatness, the kindness that may derive from the thought of a God.

But I was to be Flesh as well as Spirit. Flesh to save the flesh. Flesh to sublime the flesh, taking it to Heaven many centuries before its time. Because the flesh inhabited by the spirit is God's masterpiece and Heaven had already been made for it. In order to become flesh I needed a Mother. To be God it was necessary that the Father was God.

Then God created His Spouse and said to Her: "Come with Me. At My side see what I am doing for our Son. Look and rejoice, eternal Virgin, eternal Maiden and may Your smile fill this Empyrean and give the angels their starting note and teach Paradise celestial harmony. I am looking at You. And I see You as You will be, Immaculate Woman, Who are now only a spirit: the spirit in which I rejoice. I am looking at You and I give the sea and the firmament the blue of Your eyes, the holy corn the colour of Your hair, whiteness to the lily and a rosy colour to the rose, like Your silky skin. I copy the pearls from Your minute teeth, I make the sweet strawberries watching Your mouth and I give the nightingale Your notes and the turtle-doves Your weeping. And reading Your future thoughts and listening to the throbs of Your heart, I have the motive of guidance in creating. Come, My joy, have the worlds as a plaything as long as You will be the dancing light of My thought; have the worlds for Your smile, have wreaths and necklaces of stars; place the moon under Your gentle feet; make Galatea Your stellar scarf. The stars and planets are for You. Come and enjoy looking at the flowers that will be a childish joy for Your Baby and a pillow for the Son of Your womb. Come and see sheep and lambs, eagles and doves being created. Stay beside Me when I make the hollows of the seas and grooves of the rivers and I raise the mountains and I adorn them with snow and forests. Stay here while I sow fodders and trees and vines, and I make the olive-tree for You, My Peaceful One, and the vine for You, My Vine branch who will bear the Eucharistic Bunch of grapes. Run,

fly, rejoice, My Beauty. And may the universe which is created hour by hour learn from You to love Me, My Love, and may it become more beautiful owing to Your smile, Mother of My Son, Queen of My Paradise, Love of Your God". And again, seeing the Fault and admiring the Faultless One: "Come to Me, You Who wipe out the bitterness of human disobedience, of human fornication with Satan and of human ingratitude. I will take with You My revenge over Satan".

God, the Father Creator, had created man and woman with such a perfect law of love that you cannot even understand its perfection any longer. And you become lost in wondering how the human species would have come to be, if man had not-been taught by Satan how to obtain it.

Look at the fruit and seed plants. Do they produce seed and fruit by means of fornication, by means of one fecundation out of one hundred copulations? No. The pollen emerges from the male flower and driven by a complex of meteoric and magnetic laws it proceeds to the ovary of the female flower. The latter opens, receives it and produces. It does not pollute itself and then refuse it, as you do, to enjoy the same sensation the following day. It produces and until the new season, it does not get pollinated and when it does, it is only to produce.

Look at the animals. All of them. Have you ever seen a male animal and a female one approach each other for a sterile embrace and lascivious dealings? No. From near or far, they fly, crawl, jump or run, they go, when it is time, to the fecundation rite. Neither do they evade stopping at the pleasure, but they go further, to the serious and holy consequences of the offspring, the only reason that should cause a man, a demigod by his origin of Grace which I have made complete, to accept the animality of the act, necessary since you descended by one degree towards animals.

You do not act as plants and animals do. You had as your teacher Satan. You wanted him as your teacher and you still want him. And the works you do are what one would expect of the teacher you wanted. Had you been faithful to God, you would have had the joy of children, in a holy way, without pain, without exhausting yourselves in obscene and shameful intercourses, which even beasts are unacquainted with, although beasts are without a reasoning and spiritual soul.

To man and woman, corrupted by Satan, God decided to oppose the Man born of a Woman, Whom God had super-sublimed to such an extent that She generated without knowing man: a Flower that generates a Flower, without the need of seed, by a unique kiss of the Sun on the inviolated chalice of the Lily-Mary.

The revenge of God!

Hiss, O Satan, your hatred while She comes into the world! This

Child has beaten you! Before you were the Rebel, the Twister, the Corruptor, you were already beaten and She was your Conqueror. One thousand assembled armies are of no avail against your power, the arms of men fall before your scales, o Perennial One, and there is no wind capable of dispersing the stench of your breath. And yet, the heel of this Child, which is so rosy as to look like the inside of a rosy camellia, and is so smooth and soft that silk seems coarse in comparison, and is so small that it could enter the chalice of a tulip and make itself a tiny shoe with that vegetable satin, that heel is crushing your head without any fear and relegates you to your den. And Her cry causes you to flee away, although you are not afraid of armies. And Her breath purifies the world of your foul smell. You are defeated. Her name, Her look, Her purity are a lance, a thunderbolt that pierces you and demolishes you and imprisons you in your den in Hell, o Cursed One, who deprived God of the joy of being the Father of all men created!

In vain you have corrupted them, who had been created innocent, leading them to knowledge and conception by means of the sensuousness of lust, depriving God, in His beloved creature, of being the benefactor of the children according to rules, which, had they been respected, would have kept a balance on earth between sexes and races, a balance capable of averting wars between peoples and calamities between families.

By obeying, they would have also known love. Nay, only by obeying they would have known love and possessed it. A complete and peaceful possession of this gift from God, Who from the supernatural descends to the inferior, so that also the flesh may rejoice devoutly, since it is united to the spirit and created by Him Who created the spirit.

Now, men, what is your love, what are your loves? Either lewdness disguised as love or an incurable fear of losing the love of your partner through her or other people's lewdness. You are never sure of possessing the heart of your husband or wife, since lust entered the world. And you tremble and cry and become overwrought with jealousy, sometimes you kill to avenge a betrayal, sometimes you despair, and sometimes you lack will or even become insane.

This is what you have done, Satan, to the children of God. Those whom you have corrupted, would have known the joy of having children without suffering any pain and would have experienced the joy of being born without fear of dying. But now you are beaten in a Woman and by a Woman. From now on, whoever loves Her will become once again God's own, overcoming your temptations, to be able to look at Her immaculate purity. From now on mothers, though not able to conceive without pain, will find comfort

in Her. From now on She will be the guide of married women and the Mother of dying people, so that it will be sweet to die resting on that breast which is a shield against you, you Cursed One, and against the wrath of God.

Mary, little voice, you have seen the birth of the Virgin's Son and the assumption of the Virgin to Heaven. You have therefore seen that the faultless ones are unaware of the pain in giving birth as well as of the pain in dying. But if the Most Innocent Mother of God was granted the perfection of celestial gifts, all those who in the First Parents had remained innocent and sons of God, would have generated without throes as it was fair, having conceived without lust, and they would have died without anxiety.

The sublime victory of God over Satan's revenge was to raise the perfection of the beloved creature to a super-perfection that should annul at least in one person all recollection of humanity, liable to Satan's poison, so that the Son should be generated not by a man's chaste embrace, but by a divine embrace that causes the spirit to change colour in the ecstasy of the Fire.

The Virgin's Virginity!…

Come. Contemplate this deep virginity that gives ecstatic dizziness in its contemplation! What is the poor enforced virginity of a woman that no man married? Less than nothing. What is the virginity of a woman who wanted to be a virgin to belong to God, but is so in her body and not in her spirit, where she allows alien thoughts to enter and entertains allurements of human thoughts? It is a sham virginity. But still very little. What is the virginity of a cloistered nun who lives only for God? Very much. But it is never the perfect virginity when compared with My Mother's.

There has always been an association, also in the most holy one. The original association between spirit and fault. The one that only Baptism dissolves. It dissolves it, but as in the case of a woman separated from her husband by his death, it does not render virginity complete such as it was in the First Parents before Sin. A scar remains and hurts causing one to remember it, and it is always ready to become a sore like certain diseases that periodically are made worse by their virus. In the Virgin there is no sign of this dissolved association with the Fault. Her soul appears beautiful and intact as when the Father conceived Her, gathering all graces in Her.

She is the Virgin. She is the Only One. She is the Perfect One. The Complete One. Conceived as such. Generated as such. Remained such. Crowned such. Eternally such. She is the Virgin. She is the acme of intangibility, of purity, of grace that is lost in the Abyss from which it emerged: in God: most perfect Intangibility, Purity, Grace.

That is the revenge of the God Trine and One. Against creatures

desecrated He raises this Star to perfection. Against pernicious curiosity He raises this Coy Virgin, contented only with loving God. Against the science of evil, this sublime Innocent Virgin. In Her there is not only no knowledge of dejected love: there is not only non-acquaintance with the love that God had given to married people. Much more. In Her there is the absence of incentives, the inheritance of Sin. In Her there is only the icy and white-hot wisdom of divine love. A fire that strengthens the flesh with ice, so that it may be a transparent mirror at the altar where God married a Virgin and does not lower Himself because His perfection embraces Her perfection, which, as it becomes a bride, is only inferior to His by one point, subject to Him as a Woman, but without fault as He is. »

6. The Purification of Anne and the Offering of Mary.

28th August 1944.

In Jerusalem I see Joachim and Anne, together with Zacharias and Elizabeth, coming out from a house, which must belong to friends or relatives, and they are turning their steps towards the Temple for the ceremony of the Purification.

Anne is carrying the Baby, all wrapped up in swaddling clothes, nay, all tied up in a wide garment of light wool, which, however, must be soft and warm. It is impossible to describe how carefully and lovingly she carries and watches her little creature, lifting the edge of the fine warm cloth to see if Mary is breathing freely, and then she readjusts it to protect Her from the sharp air of a clear but cold winter day.

Elizabeth is holding some parcels in her hands. Joachim is pulling with a rope two big and very white lambs, that are more like rams than lambs. Zacharias has nothing in his hands. He is handsome in his linen garment, which can be seen under a white heavy woollen mantle. Zacharias, much younger than the one already seen at the birth of the Baptist, in his full manhood, as Elizabeth is a mature woman, but still fresh in her appearance: and she bends in ecstasy over the tiny sleeping face, every time Anne looks at the Baby. She also looks beautiful in her blue almost dark violet dress and in her veil that covers her head and then falls on her shoulders, and on the mantle which is darker than her dress.

But Joachim and Anne are certainly solemn in their best clothes. Unexpectedly, he is not wearing his dark brown tunic. Instead he has on a long garment of a very deep red, which we would now call St. Joseph's red, and the fringes attached to his mantle are new and beautiful. He, too, is wearing a kind of a rectangular veil on his head and it is secured with a leather band. Everything is new and of excellent quality.

Anne, oh! She is not wearing dark clothes to-day! Her dress is a very pale yellow, almost the colour of old ivory, tied at her waist, neck and wrists with a large belt that seems of silver and gold. Her head is covered by a very light damask veil, held at her forehead by a thin but precious plate. She has a filigree necklace round her neck and bracelets at her wrists. She is like a, queen, also because of the dignity with which she wears her dress, and particularly her cape, which is of a light yellow colour hemmed with a Greek fret beautifully embroidered in the same shade.

« You look exactly as the day you got married. I was just a little older than a girl, then, but I still remember how beautiful and happy you were » says Elizabeth.

« But now I am even more so… and I decided to wear the same dress for this rite. I had kept it for this… and I was no longer expecting to put it on for this. »

« The Lord has loved you very much… » says Elizabeth sighing.

« And that is why I am giving Him the thing I love most. This flower of mine. »

« How will you be able to tear it from your heart when the time comes? »

« Remembering that I did not have it and that God gave it to me. I shall always be happier now than then. When I know She is in the Temple I will say to myself: "She is praying near the Tabernacle, She is praying the God of Israel also for Her mummy" and I will have peace. And a greater peace I will have in saying: "She belongs entirely to Him. When these two old but happy parents, who received Her from Heaven, are no longer alive, He, the Eternal, will still be Her Father". Believe me, I am fully convinced, this little creature is not ours. I was not able to do anything more… He put Her in my bosom, a divine gift to wipe away my tears and fulfill our hopes and our prayers. That is why She belongs to Him. We are the happy guardians… and may He be blessed for this! »

They have now reached the walls of the Temple.

« While you go to Nicanor's Gate, I will go and inform the priest. And then I will come, too » Zacharias says. And he disappears behind an arch leading into a large yard surrounded by porches.

The group continues to proceed along the ensuing terraces. I do not know whether I have said this before: the enclosure wall of the Temple is not on level ground but it rises up higher and higher by means of successive terraces. Each terrace is reached by means of a flight of steps and on each terrace there are yards and porches and beautiful portals wrought in marble, bronze and gold.

Before reaching their destination they stop to take out the contents of the parcels: cakes, I think, which are wide and flat and very greasy, some white flour, two doves in a small wicker cage and some big silver coins: they are quite heavy but fortunately

garments did not have pockets in those days. They would have made holes in them.

Here is the beautiful Gate of Nicanor, all chiselled in heavy bronze silver plating. Zacharias is already there beside a stately priest dressed in linen.

Anne is sprinkled with what I suppose is lustral water and then she is instructed to move towards the altar of the sacrifice. The Child is no longer in her arms. Elizabeth, who has stopped at this side of the Gate, has taken Her.

Joachim, instead, enters behind his wife, dragging a miserable bleating lamb. And I… I do exactly what I did on the occasion of Mary's purification: I close my eyes not to see any slaughter.

Now Anne is purified.

Zacharias whispers something to his colleague, who nods smiling. He then approaches the group which has reassembled and congratulating the mother and father on their joy and their loyalty to the promises, he is given the second lamb, the flour and the cakes.

« So this daughter is sacred to the Lord? May His blessing be with Her and with you. Here Anna is coming. She will be one of Her teachers. Anna of Phanuel of the tribe of Asher. Come here, woman. This little one is offered to the Temple as a victim of praise. You will be Her teacher and She will grow holy under your guidance. »

Anna, already completely grey, fondles the Child, who has awakened and is looking with Her innocent and surprised eyes at all the white and gold lit up by the sun.

The ceremony must be over. I did not see any special rite for the offering of Mary. Perhaps it was sufficient to tell the priest, and above all God, at the sacred place.

« I would like to give the offering to the Temple and go over there where I saw the light last year »

They go accompanied by Anna of Phanuel. They do not enter the actual Temple; since they are women and it is the case of a little girl, it is understandable that they do not even go where Mary went to offer Her Son. But very close to the wide open door, they look into the half-dark inside from which sweet songs of girls can be heard and where precious lamps are lit and spread a golden light on two flower beds of white veiled heads: two real flowerbeds of lilies.

« In three years' time You will be there too, my Lily » promises Anne to Mary, Who looks fascinated at the inside and smiles at the slow song.

« You would say that She understands » says Anna of Phanuel. « She is a beautiful child! She will be as dear to me as if She were my own. I promise you, mother. If I shall be granted to be so. »

« You shall, woman » Zacharias says. « You will receive Her

amongst the sacred girls. I also shall be there. I want to be there that day to tell Her to pray for us from the very first moment… » and he looks at his wife who understands and sighs.

The ceremony is over and Anna of Phanuel withdraws, while the others leave the Temple speaking to one another.

I hear Joachim say: « Not only two lambs and the best, but I would have given all my lambs for this joy and to praise God! » I do not see anything else.

Jesus says:

« Solomon in his Wisdom says: "Whoever is a child, let him come to me". And really from the stronghold, from the walls of her city, Eternal Wisdom said to the Eternal Maiden: "Come to Me", longing to have Her. Later the Son of the Most Pure Maiden will say: "Let little children come to Me because the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs, and those who do not become like them will not have any part in My Kingdom". The voices follow one another and while the voice of Heaven cries to little Mary: "Come to Me", the voice of Man says, and thinks of His Mother in saying so: "Come to Me if you can be like children".

I give you My Mother as a model.

Here is the perfect Maiden with the pure and simple heart of a dove, here is the One Whom years and worldly contacts do not make defiant in the cruelty of a corrupted, twisted, false spirit. Because She does not want it. Come to Me, looking at Mary.

Since you see Her, tell me: Is Her glance as an infant very different from the one you saw She had at the foot of the Cross or in the delight of Pentecost or when Her eyelids closed upon Her innocent eyes for Her last sleep? No. Here is the uncertain and astonished glance of an infant, then it will be the amazed and modest look of the Annunciation, and then the happy one of the Mother in Bethlehem, then the worshipping glance of My first and sublime Disciple, then the tormented one of the Tortured Mother on Golgotha, then the radiant glance of Resurrection and Pentecost, then the veiled look of the ecstatic sleep of the last vision. But whether it opens at the first sight, or closes tired on the last light, after seeing so much of joy and horror, Her eye is the clear, pure, placid piece of the sky that always shines below Mary's forehead. Wrath, falsehood, pride, lewdness, hatred, curiosity never soil it with their smoky clouds.

It is the eye that looks at God lovingly, whether it cries or laughs, and that for God's sake fondles and forgives and bears everything, and by the love of God is rendered unassailable to the assaults of Evil, that so often makes use of the eye to penetrate the heart. It is the pure, restful, blessing eye that the pure, the saints, the lovers of God possess.

I said: "The lamp Of the body is the eye. If your eye is sound, your whole body will be filled with light. But if your eye is diseased, your whole body will be all darkness". Saints possessed this eye which is the light for the soul and salvation for the flesh, because like Mary throughout their lives they looked only at God. Een more: they remembered God.

I will explain to you, My little voice, the meaning of this word of Mine. »

7. The Son Has Put His Wisdom on His Mother's Lips.

29th August 1944.

I see Anne once again: since yesterday evening I see her thus: sitting at the entrance of the shady pergola, busy at her needlework. She is wearing a grey sand coloured dress, a very simple one and very wide, probably because of the great heat.

At the end of the pergola the mowers can be seen cutting the hay. But it cannot be first-crop hay because the grapes are almost golden coloured and the fruits of a large apple-tree are like shiny yellow and red wax. The cornfield is nothing but stubble with poppies waving like tiny flames and stiff and clear cornflowers shaped like stars and as blue as the eastern sky.

A little Mary comes forwards from the shady pergola: She is already quick and independent. Her short step is steady and Her white sandals do hot stumble amongst the pebbles. Her graceful gait already resembles the slightly undulating step of a dove, and She is all white - like a little dove - in Her linen dress which reachesdown to Her ankles. It is a wide dress curled at the neck by a blue ribbon and the short sleeves show rosy and plump forearms. She looks like a little angel: Her hair is silky and honey-blonde, not very curly but gracefully wavy ending in curls: Her eyes are sky blue, Her sweet little face is rosy and smiling. Also the breeze that through Her wide sleeves inflates the shoulders of Her linen dress helps to give Her the appearance of a little angel having his wings half-open ready to fly.

She has in Her hands poppies, cornflowers and other flowers that grow in cornfields, but I do not know their names. She is walking and when She is near Her mother She starts running, shouting joyfully and, like a little dove, She ends Her flight against Her mother's knees: she has opened them to receive Her. Anne has put her needlework aside so that She would not get pricked and has opened her arms to embrace Her.

So far yesterday evening. This morning She reappears and continues as follows.

« Mummy, Mummy! » The little white dove is completely in the nest of Her mother's knees, touching the short grass with Her little

feet and hiding Her face in Her mother's lap, so that only Her golden hair can be seen on the nape of Her neck over which Anne bends to kiss it fondly.

Then Se lifts Her head and offers Her mother flowers. They are all for Her mummy and of each one She tells the story She has invented.

This blue and big one, is a star which has come down from Heaven to bring the kiss of the Lord to My mummy. Here: kiss this little celestial flower there, on its heart, and you will see that it tastes of God.

This other one, instead, which is a paler blue, like daddy's eyes, has written on its leaves that the Lord loves daddy very much because he is good.

And this tiny little one, the only one to be found, (it is a myosote), is the one that God made to tell Mary that He loves Her.

And these red ones, does mummy know what they are? They are pieces of king David's dress, stained with the blood of the enemies of Israel and sown on the battlefields and the fields of victory. They originate from those strips of the heroic regal dress torn in the struggle for the Lord.

Instead this white and gentle one, that seems to be made with seven silk cups looking up to the sky, full of perfumes, and that was growing over there, near the spring - daddy picked it for Her amongst the thorns - is made with the dress of Solomon. He wore it, so many many years before, in the same month in which his little granddaughter was born, when he walked in the midst of the multitudes of Israel before the Ark and the Tabernacle, in the splendid majesty of his robes. And he rejoiced because of the cloud which returned to encircle his glory, and he sang the canticle and the prayer of his joy.

« I want to be always like this flower, and like the wise king I want to sing throughout My life canticles and prayers before the Tabernacle » ends Mary.

« How do You know these holy things, my darling? Who told You? Your father? »

« No. I do not know who it is. I think I have always known them. Perhaps there is one who tells Me and I do not see him. Perhaps one of the angels that God sends to speak to good people. Mummy, will you tell Me another story? »

« Oh, my dear! Which story do You wish to know? »

Mary is thinking, deeply absorbed in Her thoughts. Her expression should be immortalized in a portrait. The shadows of Her thoughts are reflected on Her childish face. There are smiles and sighs, sunshine and clouds, thinking of the history of Israel. Then She makes up Her mind: « Once again the story of Gabriel and Daniel, where Christ is promised. »

And She listens, with Her eyes closed, repeating in a low voice the words Her mother says, as if to rememer them better. When Anne comes to the end She asks: « How long will it be before we have the Immanuel? »

« About thirty years, my darling. »

« Such a long time! And I shall be in the Temple… Tell Me, if I should pray very hard, so hard, day and night, night and day, and I wanted to belong only to God, for all My life, for this purpose, would the Eternal Father grant Me the grace of sending the Messiah to His people sooner? »

« I do not know, my dear. The Prophet states: "Seventy weeks". I do not think a prophecy can be wrong. But the Lord is so good » she hastens to add, seeing tears appear on the fair eyelashes of her child, « the Lord is so good that I believe that if You do pray very hard, so hard, He will hear Your prayer. »

A smile appears once again on Her little face, which She has lifted up towards Her mother and the rays of the sun, filtering through the vine branches cause Her tears to shine like dew-drops on very thin stems of alpine moss.

« Then I will pray and I shall be a virgin for this. »

« But do you know what that means? »

« It means that one does not know human love, but only the love of God. It means that one has no other thought but for the Lord. It means to remain children in the flesh and angels in the heart. It means that one has no yes but to look at God, and ears to listen to Him, and a mouth to praise Him, hands to offer oneself as a victim, feet to follow Him fast, and a heart and a life to be given to Him. »

« May God bless You! But then You will never have any children, and yet You love babies and little lambs and doves so much… Do You know that? A baby is for his mother like a little white and curly lamb, he is like a little dove with silk feathers and coral mouth to be loved and kissed and heard say: "Mummy!" »

« It does not matter. I shall belong to God. I shall pray in the Temple. And perhaps one day I will see the Immanuel. The Virgin who is to be His Mother must be already born, as the great Prophet says, and She is in the Temple… I will be Her companion… and maidservant. Oh! Yes. If I could only meet Her, by God's light, I would like to serve Her, the Blessed One. And later, She would bring Me Her Son, She would take Me to Her Son, and I would serve Him too… Just think, mummy!… To serve the Messiah!! » Mary is overcome by this thought that exalts Her and makes Her totally humble at the same time. With Her hands crossed over Her breast and Her little head slightly bent forward and flushed with emotion, She is like an infantile reproduction of the Annunciation that I saw. She resumes: « But will the King of Israel, the Lord's Anointed, allow Me to serve Him? »

« Have no doubts about that. Does King Solomon not say: "There are sixty queens and eighty concubines and countless maidens?" You can see that in the King's palace there will be countless maidens serving the Lord. »

« Oh! You can see then that I must be a virgin? I must. If He wants a virgin as His Mother, it means that He loves virginity above all things. I want Him to love Me, His maiden, because of the virginity which will make Me somewhat like His beloved Mother… This is what I want… I would also like to be a sinner, a big sinner, if I were not afraid of offending the Lord… Tell Me, mummy, can one be a sinner out of love of God?. »

« But what are You saying, my dear? I don't understand You. »

« I mean: to commit a sin in order to be loved by God, Who becomes the Saviour. Who is lost, is saved. Isn't that so? I would like to be saved by the Saviour to receive His loving look. That is why I would like to sin, but not to commit a sin that would disgust Him. How can He save Me if I do not get lost? »

Anne is dumbfounded. She does not know what to say.

Joachim helps her. He has approached them walking noiselessly on the grass, behind the low hedge of vine-shoots. « He has saved You beforehand, because He knows that You love Him and You want to love Him only. So You are already redeemed and You can be a virgin as You wish » says Joachim.

« Is that true, daddy? » Mary embraces his knees and looks at him with Her clear blue eyes, so like Her father's and so happy because of this hope She gets from Her father.

« It is true, my little darling. Look! I was just bringing You this little sparrow, that at its first flight landed near the spring. I could have left it there but its weak wings did not have enough strength to fly off again, and its tiny legs could not hold it on to the slippery moss stones. It would have fallen into the water. But I did not wait for that. I took it and now I am giving it to You. You will do what you like with it. The fact is that it was saved before it fell into the danger. God has done the same with You. Now, tell me, Mary: have I loved the sparrow more by saving it beforehand, or would I have loved it more saving it afterwards? »

« You have loved it now, because you did not let it get hurt in the cold water. »

« And God has loved You more, because He has loved You before You sinned. »

« And I will love Him wholeheartedly. Wholeheartedly. My beautiful little sparrow, I am like you. The Lord has loved us both equally, by saving us… I will now rear you and then I will let you go. And you in the forest and I in the Temple will sing the praises of God, and we shall say: "Please send the One You promised to those who expect Him". Oh! Daddy, when are you taking Me to

the Temple? »

« Soon, my dear. But are You not sorry to leave Your father? »

« Yes, very much! But you will come… in any case, if it did not hurt, what sacrifice would it be? »

« And will You remember us? »

« I always will. After the prayer for the Immanuel I will pray for you. That God may give you joy and a long life… until the day He becomes the Saviour. Then I will ask Him to take you to the celestial Jerusalem. »

The vision ends with Mary tightly clasped in Her father's arms.

Jesus says:

« I can already hear the comments of the doctors with captious objections: "How can a little girl not yet three years old speak thus? It is an exaggeration". And they do not consider that they make a monster of Me by ascribing adults' actions to My own childhood.

Intelligence is not given to everybody in the same way and at the same time. The Church has fixed the age of reason at six years of age, because that is the age when even a backward child can tell good from evil, at least in basically important matters. But there are children who long before that age are capable of discerning and understanding and wanting with sufficiently developed discretion. Little Imelde Lambertini, Rosa da Viterbo, Nellie Organ, Nennolina, may give you confirmation, o difficult doctors, to believe that My Mother was able to think and speak like that. I have quoted four names at random amongst the thousands of holy children who populate My Paradise, after reasoning on earth as adults for possibly more or fewer years.

What is reason? A gift of God. God can therefore give it as He wishes, to whom He wishes and when He wishes. Reason in fact is one of the things that make you more like God, the Intelligent and Reasoning Spirit. Reason and intelligence were graces given by God to Man in the Earthly Paradise. How full of life they were, when Grace was alive, still intact and active in the spirit of the first two Parents!

In the Book of Jesus Ben Sirach it is stated: "All wisdom is from the Lord, and it is His own for ever". What wisdom, therefore, would men have had, had they remained children of God?

The gaps in your intelligence are the natural fruits of your fall from Grace and honesty. By losing Grace you banished Wisdom for centuries. As a meteor which is hidden behind masses of clouds, Wisdom no longer reached you with its bright flashes, but through Mist which your prevarications have rendered thicker and thicker.

Then Christ came and He restored Grace, the supreme gift of the love of God. But do you know how to keep this gem clear and pure?

No, you do not. When you do not crush it with your individual will in sinning, you soil it with your` continuous minor faults, your weaknesses, your attachment to vice. Such attempts, even if they are not a proper marriage with the septiform vice, are a weakening of the light of Grace and of its activity. And then, to weaken the magnificent light of intelligence that God had given the First Parents, you have centuries and centuries of corruption, which exert a harmful influence on the body and on the mind.

But Mary was not only the Pure, the new Eve created for the joy of God: She was the super Eve, the Masterpiece of the Most High, She was the Full of Grace, the Mother of the Word in the mind of God.

Jesus Ben Sirach says: "Source of Wisdom is the Word". Will the Son therefore not have put His wisdom on His Mother's lips?

If the mouth of a Prophet was purified with embers, because he had to repeat to men the words that the Word, the Wisdom, entrusted to Him, will Love not have cleansed and exalted the speech of his infant Spouse Who was to bear the Word, so that She should no longer speak as a little girl and then as a woman, but only and always as a celestial creature melted in the great light and wisdom of God?

The miracle is not in the superior intelligence shown by Mary in Her childhood, as afterwards it was by Me. The miracle is in containing the Infinite Intelligence, that dwelt there, within suitable bounds, so that crowds should not be startled and satanic attention should not be awakened.

I will talk again on this subject which is part of the "remembrance" which saints have of God. »

8. Mary Is Presented in the Temple.

30th August 1944.

I see Mary between Her father and mother walking in the streets in Jerusalem.

Passers-by stop to look at the beautiful Girl all dressed in white and wearing a very light mantle. The mantle, because of its design in branches and flowers, which are a little darker against the soft background, seems to be the same one that Anne was wearing on the day of her Purification. The only difference is that while it reached down to Anne's waist, in the case of Mary, Who is only a little girl, it reaches down to Her ankles and envelops Her in a small light and bright cloud of rare beauty.

Her fair hair, loose on Her shoulders, or rather, on Her gentle neck, shines through the veil where there is no pattern, but only the very light background. The veil is held on Her forehead by a very pale blue ribbon, on which small lilies are embroidered with

silver threads, certainly the work of Her mother.

As I said, the snow white dress reaches down to the ground, and Her little feet can just be seen, as She walks, in Her white sandals. Her hands are like two magnolia petals, peeping from the long sleeves. Apart from the blue ribbon, there is no other colour. It is all white. Mary seems to be dressed in snow.

Joachim is wearing the same garment he had on for the Purification. Anne, instead, is wearing a very dark violet dress. Also the mantle, which also covers her head, is dark violet. She is holding it lowered below her eyes. Two poor eyes of a mother, red with tears, that do not wish to weep and above all do not wish to be seen crying, but can but shed tears under the protection of the mantle, a protection that serves its purpose with regard to passersby and also to Joachim, whose eyes, usually clear, are to-day red and dull,

because of the tears he has shed and is still shedding. He is walking with a stoop, his head is covered by a veil worn in the fashion of a turban, 'with the folds hanging down along his face.

A very old Joachim. Whoever sees him, must think that he is the grandfather or the great grandfather of the little girl he is holding by the hand. The pain of losing Her causes the poor father to drag his feet and he is so weary that he looks twenty years older. He is so sad and tired that he looks like an old sick man. His mouth trembles slightly between the two wrinkles that at the sides of his nose are so deep today.

They are both endeavouring to conceal their tears. But if they are successful with many people, they are not with Mary, Who, because of Her height, sees them from below, and lifting Her head looks at Her father and mother alternately. They make an effort to smile at Her with their trembling mouths and they hold Her tiny hand tighter every time their little daughter looks at them and smiles. They must be thinking: « There. A smile to be seen one time less. »

They proceed slowly. Very slowly. They seem to be wishing to protract their journey for as long as possible. Everything serves as a pretext to stop… But a journey must come to an end! And this one is about to end. Up there, at the top of this last stretch of the road, there are the Temple walls. Anne utters a groan and holds Mary's hand tighter.

« Anne, my dear, I am here with you! » a voice utters, coming out from the shade of a low arch built over a cross-roads. And Elizabeth, who was waiting for them, approaches her and embraces her. And since Anne is crying she says: « Come into this friendly house for a little while. Then we shall go together. Also Zacharias is here. »

They all enter a low dark room where the only light is a big fire. The landlady, obviously a friend of Elizabeth's, but unknown to

Anne, kindly withdraws and leaves them alone.

« You must not think that I am repenting or I am giving my treasure to the Lord unwillingly » explains Anne crying, « but it's my heart… oh! how my heart aches, my old heart that is returning to its childless solitude! If you could only feel… »

« I know, my dear Anne… But you are good and God will console you in your solitude. Mary will pray for the peace of Her mother. Won't you, Mary? »

Mary caresses Her mother's hands and kisses them. She presses them to Her face to be caressed and Anne holds Her little face tightly in her hands and kisses it repeatedly. She is never tired of kissing Her.

Zacharias enters and greets them saying: « May the peace of the Lord be with the just. »

« Yes » replies Joachim, « implore peace for us, because our hearts are trembling in our offer, as Abraham's did, while he was climbing the mountain, but we shall not find another offer to replace this one. Neither do we want it, because we are faithful to the Lord. But we are suffering, Zacharias. Since you are a priest of God, please understand us and do not be perturbed. »

« Never. On the contrary, your sorrow which does not go beyond reasonable limits and does not shake your faith, teaches me how to love the Most High. But take heart. Anna, the prophetess, will take care of this flower of David and Aaron. At present She is the only lily of David's holy issue in the Temple and She will be taken care of as a royal pearl. Although we are approaching the time when the Messiah is to come, and the women belonging to the house of David should be anxious to consecrate their daughters to the Temple, because the Messiah will be born of a virgin of David's issue, yet, because of the general weakening of faith, the places of the virgins in the Temple are empty. They are too few and none of the royal offspring, since Sarah of Elisha left three years ago to get married. It is true that there are still thirty years to the appointed time, but… Well let us hope that Mary will be the first of many virgins of David's offspring before the Sacred Veil. And then… who knows… » Zacharias does not say anything else. But he looks at Mary thoughtfully. Then he resumes: « Also I will watch over Her. I am a priest and I have power in here. I will make use of it for this angel. And Elizabeth will often come to see Her. »

« Oh! Certainly! I am in such need of God that I will come and tell this little Girl, so that She may tell the Eternal One. »

Anne has taken heart again. To relieve her anxiety even more Elizabeth asks her: « Is this not the veil of your wedding? Or have you been weaving new byssus? »

« It is. I am consecrating it to the Lord with Her. My eyes are no longer so good… and also our wealth has been reduced by taxation

and misfortunes… I could not afford heavy expenses. I have only seen to Her clothing for the time She will be in the House of the Lord and afterwards… Because I do not think that I shall be there to dress Her for Her wedding… but I want it to be the hands of Her mummy, even if cold and motionless, which prepare Her for the wedding and weave Her linens and dresses. »

« Oh! Why think of that!? »

« I am old, my dear cousin. I have never felt it so much as I do now in my great pain. I have given the last ounce of strength in my life to this flower, to bear Her and to nourish Her, and now the pain of losing Her is drawing my last strength away and dispersing it. »

« Don't say that, for Joachim's sake. »

« Yes, you are quite right. I will try and live for my husband. »

Joachim pretends he has not heard, intent as he is on listening to Zacharias, but he has heard and he sighs deeply, his eyes shining with tears.

« It is between the third and the sixth hour. I think we ought to go » Zacharias says.

They all get up to put on their mantles and set off.

But before going out Mary kneels down on the threshold with Her arms stretched out: a little imploring cherub. « Father! Mother! Your blessing, please. »

She is not crying, the little brave girl. But Her lips are trembling and Her voice, broken by a sob, resembles more than ever the trembling cooing of a little dove. Her face is pale, and Her eyes have the look of resigned distress which I will see again on Calvary and in the Sepulchre, where it was so much more intense that it was impossible to look at Her without deep suffering.

Her parents bless Her and kiss Her: once, twice, ten times, they are never satisfied… Elizabeth is weeping silently and Zacharias, notwithstanding his efforts to conceal his tears, is deeply moved.

They go out. Mary is between Her father and mother as before. Zacharias and his wife are in front of them.

They are now inside the walls of the Temple. « I will go to the High Priest. You go to the Great Terrace. »

They go across three yards and through three halls, set one upon the other. They are now at the foot of the huge marble cube crowned with gold. Every dome, convex like a huge half orange, blazes in the sun, which now, at midday, is shining down directly on to the large yard surrounding the solemn building and is filling with its dazzling light the large square and the wide flight of steps leading up to the Temple. Only the porch facing the steps, along the facade, is in the shade and the very high bronze and gold door is even darker and more solemn looking in so much light.

Mary looks whiter than snow in so much sunshine. She is now at the foot of the steps, between Her father and Her mother. How

violently their hearts must be throbbing! Elizabeth is beside Anne, but a little behind her, about half a step.

Upon the blare of silver trumpets the door rotates on its hinges, which seem to be emitting the sound of a cithern, while turning on the bronze balls. The interior appears with its lamps in the far end and a procession is moving towards the door, a stately procession with silver trumpets, clouds of incense and lights.

It is now at the threshold. In front is the High Priest… a stately old man, dressed in very fine linen, and wearing over his linen dress a short linen tunic and on top of it a kind of chasuble, something multicoloured between a chasuble and a deacon's vestment: purple and gold, violet and white alternate and sparkle like gems in the sun: two real gems are shining more brightly at the top of his shoulders. Perhaps they are buckles with their precious settings. On his breast there is a large metal plate shining with gems and held by a gold chain. Pendants and trimmings gleam on the hem of his short tunic and gold shines above his forehead on his mitre, that reminds me of the mitre worn by Orthodox priests, a mitre shaped as a dome instead of being pointed like the Roman Catholic one.

The solemn personage moves forward, alone, as far as the beginning of the steps, in the golden sunshine that makes him look even more splendid. The others stand waiting under the shady porch, in a circle outside the door. On the left there is a group of girls, all dressed in white, with prophetess Anna and other elderly ladies, obviously teachers.

The High Priest looks at the little Girl and smiles. She must look very tiny at the foot of the flight of steps worthy of an Egyptian temple! He lifts his arms to the sky in prayer. They all bow their heads in perfect humility before the priestly majesty communicating with the Eternal Majesty.

Then, he beckons to Mary. And She departs from Her mother and father, and as if fascinated, climbs the steps. And She smiles. She smiles in the shade of the Temple, where the precious Veil is hanging… She is now at the top of the steps, at the feet of the High Priest, who imposes his hand on Her head. The victim has been accepted. Which purer victim had the Temple ever received?

Then he turns round and holding his hand on Her shoulder as if he were leading the immaculate little Lamb to the altar, he takes Her to the Temple door. Before letting Her in, he asks Her: « Mary of David, are You aware of Your vow? » When She replies « Yes » in Her silvery voice, he cries out: « Go in, then. Walk in my presence and be perfect. »

Mary enters and is swallowed up by the darkness. The group of virgins and teachers, then the Levites hide and isolate Her more and more… She can no longer be seen…

Also the door is now closing on its sweet-sounding hinges. Through the gap which is becoming narrower and narrower, the procession can be seen advancing towards the Holy of Holies. Now it is only a thread. Now it is no more: it is closed.

The last chord of the harmonious hinges is replied to by a sob from the two old parents and by a joint cry: « Mary! Daughter! » and then two groans, the one invoking the other: « Anne! » « Joachim! » and they finish whispering: « Let us give glory to the Lord Who is receiving Her in His House and is leading Her along His path. »

It all ends thus.

Jesus says:

« The High Priest had said: "Walk in my presence and be perfect". The High Priest did not know that he was speaking to the Woman Who is inferior in perfection only to God. But he was speaking in the name of God, and therefore his order was a sacred one. It is always sacred, particularly with regard to the Virgin Full of Wisdom.

Mary had deserved that "Wisdom should precede Her and show Itself to Her first", because "from the beginning of Her day She had watched at Its door, and wishing to be taught, out of love, She wanted to be pure to achieve perfect love and deserve to have Wisdom as Her teacher".

In Her humility She did not know that She possessed Wisdom before being born and that the union with Wisdom was but the continuation of the divine pulsations of Paradise. She could not imagine that. And when God whispered sublime words to Her in the depths of Her heart, in Her humility She considered them thoughts of pride and raising Her innocent heart to God, She besought Him: "Lord, have mercy on Thy Servant!"

Oh! It is true that the True Wise Virgin, the Eternal Virgin, has had only one thought from the dawn of Her day: to raise Her heart to God from the morning of life and to watch for the Lord, praying before the Most High, asking forgiveness for the weaknesses of Her heart, as Her humility convinced Her, and She was not aware that She was anticipating the request for forgiveness for sinners, which She would later make at the foot of the Cross, together with Her dying Son.

"When the great Lord will decide, She will be filled with the Spirit of intelligence" and will then understand Her great mission. For the time being She is only a child, who in the sacred peace of the Temple, establishes and re-establishes closer and closer connections, affections and memories with Her God.

This is for everybody.

But for you, My little Mary, has your Teacher nothing special to tell you? "Walk in My presence, be therefore perfect". I am slightly

modifying the sacred phrase and I am giving it to you as an order. Be perfect in love, perfect in generosity, perfect in suffering.

Look once again at Mother. And consider what so many ignore or wish to ignore, because sorrow is too irksome to their taste and their spirit. Sorrow. Mary suffered from the very first hour of Her life. To be perfect as She was, implied the possession of a perfect sensitivity. Consequently sacrifice was to be more piercing, And thus more meritorious. He who possesses purity possesses love, who possesses love possesses wisdom, who possesses wisdom possesses generosity and heroism, because he knows why he makes a sacrifice.

Raise your spirit, even if the cross bends you, breaks you and kills you. God is with you. »

9. Death of Joachim and Anne.

31st August 1944.

Jesus says:

« Like a quick winter twilight when an ice-cold wind gathers clouds in the sky, the lives of My grandparents had a quick decline, after the Sun of their lives was placed to shine before the Sacred Veil of the Temple.

But it is said:

"Wisdom brings up her own sons,
and cares for those who seek her.
Whoever loves her loves life,
those who wait on her will enjoy peace.
Those who serve her, minister to the Holy One
and the Lord loves those who love her.
If he trusts himself to her he will inherit her
and his descendants will remain in possession of her
because she accompanies him in his trials.
First of all she selects him,
then she brings fear and faintness on him,
ploughing him with her discipline,
until she has tested him in his thoughts
and she can trust him.
In the end she will make him firm,
will lead him back to the straight road
and make him happy.
She will reveal her secrets to him,
She will place in him treasures of science,
and knowledge of justice".

Yes, all this has been said. The books of wisdom may be applied to all men, who will find guidance in them and a light for their

behaviour. But happy are those who can be recognised amongst the spiritual lovers of Wisdom.

I surrounded Myself with wise people, in My human kinship. Anne, Joachim, Joseph, Zacharias, and even more Elizabeth, and then the Baptist, are they not real wise people? Not to mention My Mother, the abode of Wisdom.

Wisdom had inspired My grandparents how to live in a way which was agreeable to God, from their youth to their death, and like a tent protecting from the fury of the elements, Wisdom had protected them from the danger of sin. The sacred fear of God is the root of the tree of wisdom, that thrusts its branches far and wide to reach with its top tranquil love in its peace, peaceful love in its security, secure love in its faithfulness, faithful love in its intensity: the total, generous, effective love of saints.

"Who loves her, loves life and will inherit Life" says Ecclesiasticus. This sentence is linked with Mine: "Who loses his life for My sake, will save it". Because we are not referring to the poor life of this world, but to the eternal life, not to the joys of one hour, but to the immortal ones.

Joachim and Anne loved Wisdom thus. And Wisdom was with them in their trials.

How many trials they experienced, whilst you, men, do not want to have to suffer and cry, simply because you think that you are not completely wicked! How many trials these two just people suffered, and they deserved to have Mary as their daughter! Political persecutions had driven them out of the land of David, and made them excessively poor. They had felt sadness in seeing their years fading through without a flower that would say to them: "I shall be your continuation". And afterwards, the anxiety of having a daughter in their old age when they were certain they would never see Her grow into a woman. And then the obligation of tearing Her from their hearts to offer Her on the altar of God. And again: their life became an even more painful silence, now that they were accustomed to the chirping of their little dove, to the noise of Her little steps, to the smiles and kisses of their creature, having to wait for the hour of God, their only company being the memories of the past. And much more… Diseases, calamities of inclement weather, the arrogance of mighty ones of the earth… so many blows of battering rams on the weak castle of their modest possessions. And it is not enough: the pain for their far away creature, who was going to be left lonely and poor and, notwithstanding their cares and sacrifices, would get only the remains of Her father's property. And how will She find such remains, since they will be left uncultivated for many years, awaiting Her return? Fears, trials, temptations. And yet, loyalty to God for ever!

Their strongest temptation: not to deny their declining lives the

consolation of their daughter's presence. But children belong first to God and then to their parents. Every son can say what I said to My Mother: "Do you not know that I must be busy with My Father's affairs?" And every father, every mother must learn the attitude to be maintained looking at Mary and Joseph in the Temple, at Anne and Joachim in the house of Nazareth, a house which was becoming more and more forlorn and sad, but where one thing never diminished, but increased continuously: the holiness of two hearts, the holiness of a marriage.

What light is left to Joachim, an invalid, and to his sorrowful wife, in the long and silent nights of two old people who feel they are about to die? Only the little dresses, the first pair of little sandals, the simple toys of their little daughter, now far away, and memories of Her, memories… And peace when they say: "We are suffering, but we have done our duty of love towards God".

And then they were overcome by a supernatural joy shining with a celestial light, a joy unknown to the children of the world, a joy that does not fade away when heavy eyelashes close on two dying eyes: on the contrary, it shines brighter in the last hour, illuminating the truth that had been hidden within them throughout their lives. Like a butterfly in its cocoon, the truth in them gave faint indications of its presence, just soft flashes, whereas now it opens its wings to the sun and shows its beautiful decorations. And their lives passed away in the certainty of a happy future for themselves and their descendants, their trembling lips murmuring words of praise to God.

Such was the death of my grandparents. Such as their holy lives deserved. Because of their holiness, they deserved to be the first guardians of the Virgin Beloved by God, and only when a greater Sun showed itself at the end of their days, they realized the grace God had granted them.

Because of their holiness, Anne suffered no pain in giving birth to her child: it was the ecstasy of the bearer of the Faultless One. Neither of them suffered the throes of death, but only a weakness that fades away, as a star softly disappears when the sun rises at dawn. And if they did not have the consolation of having Me present, as Wisdom Incarnate, as Joseph had, I was invisibly present, whispering sublime words, bending over their pillows, to send them to sleep, awaiting their triumph.

Someone may ask: "Why did they not have to suffer when generating and dying, since they were children of Adam?" My answer is: "If the Baptist, who was a son of Adam, and had been conceived with the original sin, was presanctified by Me in his mother's womb, simply because I approached her, was no grace to be granted to the mother of the Holy and Faultless One, Who had been preserved by God and bore God in Her almost divine spirit,

in Her most pure heart, and was never separated from Him, since She was created by the Father and was conceived in a womb, and then received into Heaven to possess God in glory for ever and ever?" I also answer: "An upright conscience gives a peaceful death and the prayers of saints will obtain such a death for you".

Joachim and Anne had a whole life of upright conscience behind them and such a life rose like a beautiful landscape and led them to Heaven, while their Holy Daughter was praying before the Tabernacle of God for Her parents far away, whom She had postponed to God, Summum Bonum, and yet She loved them, as the law and Her feeling commanded, with a perfect supernatural love. »

10. Mary's Canticle Imploring the Coming of the Christ.

2nd September 1944.

Only yesterday evening, Friday, I began to see. I saw nothing but a very young Mary, twelve years old at most, Her face no longer roundish, as is typical of children, but already showing the future outlines of a woman in a perfect oval. Also Her hair is no longer falling loose on Her neck in soft curls, but it is plaited and two thick braids fall over Her shoulders down to Her waist. Her hair is a very pale gold colour, so light that it seems to be blended with silver. Her face is more pensive and mature, although it is the face of a young girl, a beautiful and pure girl, all dressed in white. She is sewing in a very small room, which is also completely white, and through the wide open window one can see the imposing central part of the Temple, the flights of steps of the yards and porches. Beyond the enclosure wall also the town can be seen with its streets, houses, gardens, and in the background the humped green top of the Mount of Olives.

Mary is sewing and singing in a low voice. I do not know whether it is a sacred song or not. It says:

« Like a star in clear water
a light is shining within My heart.
It has been with Me since My childhood
and it guides Me tenderly with love.
In the depths of My heart there is a song.
Where does it come from?
Man, you do not know.
It comes from where the Holy One rests.
I look at My clear star
And I do not want anything,
Not even the sweetest and dearest thing,
Except this sweet light that is all Mine.
You brought Me down from the Heavens above,
O star of Mine, into the womb of a mother,
Now You live in Me, but beyond the veil
I see Your glorious face, Father.
When will You grant Your servant the honour
Of being the humble maid of the Saviour?
Send us the Messiah from Heaven,
Accept, Holy Father, the offer of Mary. »

Mary is now quiet. She smiles and sighs, then She kneels down in prayer. Her little face is shining brightly. She is looking upwards, towards the clear blue summer sky and Her face seems to be absorbing and then radiating all the brightness in the air. Or rather, it looks as if from within Her a hidden sun is radiating its rays and lighting up Her face, colouring Her snow-white flesh with a light rosy hue. And the light from Her face spreads out towards the world and the sun shining on the world: a blessing and a promise of much good.

While Mary is getting up after Her prayer, with ecstatic brightness still on Her face, old Anna of Phanuel enters the room. She stands still, amazed or at least wondering at Mary's attitude and appearance.

Then she calls Her: « Mary! » and the Girl turns round with a smile, a different one but still so beautiful and says: « Peace to you, Anna. »

« Were You praying? Are Your prayers never enough for You? »

« My prayers would be enough. But I speak to God. Anna, you cannot imagine how close I feel Him. More than close, within My heart. May God forgive Me My pride. But I do not feel lonely. See? Over there, in that House of gold and snow, behind the double Curtain, there is the Holy of Holies. Nobody is ever allowed to look at the Propitiatory, on which the glory of the Lord rests, except the High Priest. But My worshipping soul does not need to look at the embroidered Curtain, which quivers at the songs of the virgins and Levites and is scented with precious incense, as if I wanted to pierce its fabric and see the Testimony shine through it. I do look at it! Do not think that I do not look at it with worshipping eyes like every son of Israel. Do not think that pride blinds Me making Me think what I will now tell you. I look at it and there is no humble servant amongst the people of God that looks more humbly at the House of the Lord than I do, because I am convinced that I am the least of all. But what do I see? A veil. What do I think there is behind the Veil? A Tabernacle. What is in it? If I listen to My heart, I see God shining in His loving glory and He says to Me: "I love You" and I reply to Him: "I love You" and I die and I am recreated at each beat of My heart in this reciprocal kiss… I am amongst you, My dear teachers and companions. But a circle of fire

isolates Me from you. Within the circle, God and Myself. And I see you through the Fire of God and so I love you… but I cannot love you according to the flesh, neither shall I ever be able to love anyone according to the flesh. I can only love Him Who loves Me, according to the spirit. This is My destiny. The secular Law of Israel wants every girl to be a wife, and every wife to be a mother. But, while obeying the Law, I must obey the Voice that whispers to Me: "I want You"; I am a virgin and a virgin I shall remain. How shall I succeed? This sweet invisible Presence that is with Me will help Me, because it is Its desire. I am not afraid. I have no longer My father and mother… and only God knows how My love for whatever human being belonged to Me was burnt in that pain. Now I have but God. I therefore obey Him unquestioningly… I would have done so also regardless of My father and mother, because I have been taught by the Voice that whoever wishes to follow It, must go beyond father and mother. Parents are loving patrols watching the hearts of their children, whom they wish to lead to happiness according to their plans… and they are not aware of other plans leading to infinite happiness… I would have left them My dresses and mantles, to follow the Voice that says to Me: "Come, My beloved Spouse". I would have left them everything, and the pearls of My tears, for I would have cried having to disobey them, and the instincts of My blood, because I would have defied even death to follow the Voice calling Me, would have told them that there is something greater and sweeter than the love of a father and mother and that is the Voice of God. But now, by His will, I am free from this tie of filial love. Nay, it would not have been a tie. My parents were two just people and God certainly spoke to them as He speaks to Me. They would have followed justice and truth. When I think of them, I imagine them in the quiet expectation among the Patriarchs and I hasten with My sacrifice the coming of the Messiah to open for them the gates of Heaven. I am My own guide on earth, or rather God guides His Poor servant giving Her His commands and I fulfill them because it is a joy for Me to obey. When the time comes, I will reveal My secret to the spouse… and he will accept it. »

« But, Mary… which words will You find to persuade him? You will have the love of a man, the Law and life against you. »

« I shall have God with Me… God will enlighten the heart of the Spouse… life will lose the incentives of the senses and become a pure flower with the fragrance of charity. The Law… Anna, don't call Me a blasphemer. I think the Law is about to be changed. By whom, do you think, if it is divine? By the Only One Who can change it. By God. The time is nearer than you think, I tell you. Because when I was reading Daniel, a great light came to Me from the depths of My heart and I understood the meaning of the

enigmatic word. The seventy weeks will be shortened because of the prayers of just people. Does this mean that the number of the years is being changed? No. A prophecy is never wrong. But the measure of the prophetic time is the course of the moon, not of the sun. Therefore I say: "Near is the hour when the Baby born of a Virgin will be heard crying". Oh! Since this Light that loves Me tells Me so many things, I wish it would tell Me where the happy mother is, that will give birth to the Son of God and Messiah of His people! Barefooted I would travel all over the world, neither cold nor frost, neither dust nor heat, nor wild beast nor hunger would prevent Me from reaching Her and I would say to Her: "Grant Your servant and the servant of the servants of Christ to live under Your roof. I will turn Your millstone and Your press, use Me as a slave to work Your millstone and to watch Your herds, make Me wash the napkins of Your Child… I will work in Your kitchen, at Your oven, wherever You wish… but receive Me. That I may see Him! And hear His voice! And receive His glance!" And if She did not want Me, I would live at Her doorstep like a beggar, in cold and hot weather, just to hear the voice of the Child Messiah and the echo of His laughter, and see Him passing by… And perhaps one day He would offer Me a piece of bread… Oh! If I were dying with hunger and I were fainting because of extensive fasting, I would not eat that bread. I would hold it close to My heart like a bag of precious pearls and I would kiss it to scent the perfume of Christ's hand and I would never be hungry or cold, because its touch would give Me ecstasy and heat, ecstasy and food… »

« You ought to be the Mother of the Christ, since You love Him so much! Is that why You wish to remain a virgin? »

« Oh! No. I am misery and dust. I dare not lift My eyes towards the Glory. That is why, rather than the double Veil, beyond which I know dwells the invisible Presence of Jehovah, I love looking into My heart. Over there, there is the terrible God of Sinai. Here, within Me, I see our Father, a loving Face that smiles and blesses Me, because I am small like a little bird, that the wind sustains without feeling its weight and I am weak like the stem of a lily of the valley, that can only bloom and smell sweetly and can present no other force to the wind but its scented and pure sweetness. God, My loving wind! Not because of that. But because the Son of God and of a Virgin, the Holy of the Most Holy One, can but like what in Heaven He chose as his Mother and what on the earth speaks to Him of His Heavenly Father: Purity. If the Law pondered that, if the rabbis, who have complicated the Law with all the quibbles of their teaching, turned their minds to higher horizons and aimed at supernatural things, deserting the human and lucrative affairs which cause them to forget the supreme End, they should, above all, make Purity the main subject of their teaching, so that the

King of Israel may find It when He comes. With the olive branches of the Peaceful One, with the Palms of the Triumpher, spread lilies, lilies, lilies… How much Blood the Saviour will have to shed to redeem us! How much indeed! From the thousands of wounds that Isaiah saw on the Man of Sorrows, a stream of Blood is falling, like dew from a porous vase. May this divine Blood not fall where there is desecration and blasphemy, but into chalices of fragrant purity that may receive it and gather it for the purpose of spreading it amongst the diseased and leprous souls and amongst those who are dead to God. Give lilies to wipe with their pure petals the sweat and the tears of Christ! Give lilies for His keen desire of Martyrdom! Oh! Where will that Lily be, that will bear You? Where is the Lily that will quench Your parching thirst, that will become red with Your Blood, will die for the pain of seeing You dying, and will cry over Your bloodless Body? Oh! Christ! Christ! My desire!… »

Mary is now silent, weeping and overwhelmed.

Anna is also silent for a little while and then with her clear voice of a deeply moved old woman, she asks: « Have You anything else to teach me, Mary? »

Mary rouses. She must think, in Her humility, that Her teacher is reproaching Her and She exclaims:« Oh! Forgive Me! You are My teacher. I am nothing. But this voice comes from My heart. I watch over it, to avoid speaking. But like a river that under the fury of water breaks its embankment, it has' now overcome Me and overflowed. Please pay no attention to My words and chastise My presumption. Words of mystery should remain in the depths of one's heart, which God helps in His goodness. I know. But this Invisible Presence is so sweet that I am filled with joy… Anna, please forgive your little servant! »

Anna embraces Her while tears shine on her old wrinkled trembling face. The tears run along her wrinkles, like water along an uneven ground that becomes a trembling swamp. But the old teacher does not provoke laughter, on the contrary her crying excites the deepest respect.

Mary is clasped in her arms, Her little face against Her teacher's breast. And it all finishes thus.

Jesus says:

« Mary remembered God. She dreamt of God. She thought She dreamt. She was only seeing again what She had seen in the splendour of God's Heaven, in the instant She was created to be united to the body conceived on the earth. She shared with God one of God's properties, although in a lesser degree, as was fitting. That is the property of remembering, seeing and foreseeing, which is an attribute of the mighty and perfect intelligence not impaired by

Fault.

Man was created in the image and likeness of God. One of the likenesses is the capability, for the soul, of remembering, seeing and foreseeing. This explains the faculty for reading into the future. This faculty sometimes comes directly, by God's will, sometimes it is a power of recollection, that rises like the sun in the morning, illuminating a point on the horizon of centuries, already seen in the vision of God.

Such mysteries are too deep to be fully understood by you. But consider.

Can the Supreme Intelligence, the Mind that knows everything, the Sight that sees everything, give you something different from Himself, having created you by an act of His will and a breath of His infinite love, and having made you His children both by your origin and your destination? He gives you it in an infinitesimal part, as the creature cannot contain the Creator. But that part is perfect and complete, although infinitesimal.

What treasure of intelligence God gave man, Adam! The Fall impaired it, but My sacrifice reinstates it and opens the splendour of Intelligence, its wealth, its science for you. How sublime is the human mind united to God by His grace, sharing with God the faculty of knowledge!… The human mind united to God by Grace.

There is no other way. Those who inquisitively seek ultrahuman secrets should remember that. All knowledge that does not come from a soul in grace - and is not in grace who is against God's Law, which is very clear in its commandments - such knowledge comes from Satan. It seldom corresponds to the truth when human matters are concerned, it never corresponds to the truth with regard to superhuman matters. The Demon is in fact the father of falsehood and can but lead on to the path of falsehood. There is no other method of knowing the truth, except the one that comes from God, Who speaks and says or reminds, as a father reminds his son of his paternal house and says to him: "Don't you remember when you used to do this with Me, you saw that, you heard something else? Don't you remember when I used to kiss you goodbye? Do you remember when you saw Me for the first time and you admired the bright light on My face shining on your virginal soul, which, having been just created by Me was still pure and free from the evil that later impaired you? Do you remember when you understood for the first time, in a throb of love, what Love is? Which is the mystery of our Being and Proceeding?" And what the limited capability of a man in grace cannot reach, the Spirit of science clarifies and teaches.

But to possess the Spirit, Grace is needed. To possess Truth and Science, Grace is required. To possess the Father, Grace is necessary. Grace is a tent in which the three Persons dwell, it is a

Propitiatory on which the Eternal Father rests and speaks, not from within a cloud, but revealing His face to His faithful children. Saints and just people remember God. They remember the words they heard in the Creating Mind and which the Supreme Goodness revives in their hearts to raise them like eagles to the contemplation of the Truth and to the knowledge of Time.

Mary was full of Grace. The whole One and Trine Grace was in Her. The whole One and Trine Grace prepared Her like a Bride for the Wedding, like a Nuptial Bed for the Offspring, like a Divine Person for Her Maternity and mission. She closes the cycle of the Prophetesses of the Old Testament and opens the period of the "spokesmen of God" of the New Testament.

True Ark of the Word of God, looking into Her immaculate heart, She discovered the words of eternal knowledge, which the finger of God had written there, and She remembered, as all saints do, that She had already heard them when Her immortal soul was being created by God Father, the Creator of all living beings… And if She did not remember everything of Her future mission, the reason is that God leaves some gaps in every human perfection, according to a Law of divine prudence, out of goodness and as a reward to creatures.

Mary, the second Eve, had to achieve Her part of merit in being the Mother of Christ, with a faithful good will, that God exacted also from His Christ to make Him a Redeemer.

The spirit of Mary was in Heaven. Her morale and Her body were on the earth and they had to tread on the earth and on the flesh to reach the spirit and join it to the Spirit in a fruitful embrace. »

A note of mine. All day yesterday I thought I was going to see the news of the death of Her parents being given to Mary by Zacharias, I do not know why. I also thought, in my way, that Jesus would have dealt with the point « remembrance of God by the saints ». This morning, when the vision started, I said to myself: « Here we are, they will now tell Her that She is an orphan » and my heart was already trembling because I would have experienced my own sadness of these past days. Instead there has been absolutely nothing of what I thought I was going to see or hear. Not even one word by mistake. I am very happy about this because it confirms that there is nothing of my own in this work, not even an honest suggestion with regard to one situation. It all comes from a different source. My continuous fear ceases… until the next time because I shall always be afraid of being deceived and deceiving.

11. Mary Will Confide Her Vow to the Spouse God Will Give Her.

3rd September 1944.

What a terrible night! It seemed that the demons were raiding the world. Cannon shots, thunder and lightning, dangers, fears, the suffering because I was lying on a bed which was not mine. And in the middle of all this, there was Mary, like a sweet white flower amongst fire and troubles. She looked a little older than in yesterday's vision, but still a young girl with Her plaits of fair hair over Her shoulders. Her dress was white and Her smile mild and coy: an intimate smile at the glorious mystery enclosed in Her heart. I spent the night comparing Her mild appearance with the ferocity of the world and meditating on Her words of yesterday morning, a song of living charity, as compared to the ferocious hatred of men…

This morning, in the quiet of my room, I saw the following scene.

Mary is still in the Temple. She is now coming out with other virgins from the inner part of the Temple.

There must have been a ceremony because there is the scent of incense in the air of a red sunset. It must be late October, because the sky, already serenely restful as is usual in clear October days, is bending over the gardens of Jerusalem, where the yellow ochre leaves about to fall add gold red spots to the silvery green of the olive-trees.

The crowd, nay the host of white dressed virgins, crosses the rear yard, then climbs the steps, goes through a porch and enters another square yard, not quite so splendid, without any other door except the one leading into it. It must be the yard allocated to the small dwellings of the virgins assigned to the Temple, because each girl moves towards her cell, like a little dove to its nest. They look like a flock of doves that separate after gathering together. They are all speaking in low but joyful voices, before separating. Mary is silent. Before leaving the other girls, She bids them goodbye affectionately and then goes to Her little room in a comer on the right hand side.

One of the teachers, an elderly lady, but not so old as Anna of Phanuel, joins Her. « Mary, the High Priest wants to see You. »

Mary looks at her somewhat surprised, but does not ask any question. She only replies: « I will go at once. »

I do not know whether the large hall, which She enters, is the house of the High Priest or whether it is part of the dwellings of the women assigned to the Temple. I know it is wide and bright, tastefully arranged. In addition to the High Priest, a stately man in his robes, there are also Zacharias and Anna of Phanuel.

Mary bows down on the threshold and does not enter until the High Priest says to Her: « Come in, Mary. Do not be afraid. » Mary

looks up again and slowly moves forward, not because She is unwilling, but because of a somewhat unintentional gravity, which makes Her look more of a woman.

Anna smiles at Her to encourage Her and Zacharias greets Her: « Peace to you, cousin. »

The High Priest observes Her very carefully and then he remarks to Zacharias: « She is obviously of the stock of David and Aaron… »

« My child, I am aware of Your grace and goodness, I know that every day You are growing in grace and knowledge before God and men. I know that the voice of God whispers His sweetest words to Your heart. I know that You are the Flower of God's Temple and that a third Cherub is before the Testimony since You were here. And I would like Your perfume to continue to rise with the incense every day. But the Law says differently. You are no longer a girl, but a woman. And every woman must be a wife in Israel to bear a son to the Lord. You shall follow the commandment of the Law. Do not be afraid, do not blush. I am aware of Your royalty. The Law that prescribes, that each man is to be given a woman of his own stock will protect You. But even if that were not the case, I would do so, so that Your magnificent blood might not be corrupted. Don't You know anyone of Your stock, Mary, who might be Your husband? »

Mary lifts Her face full of blushes. Her eyes are shining with tears which begin to appear and with a trembling voice She replies: « No, nobody. »

« It is not possible for Her to know anyone, because She came here in Her childhood and David's race has been struck too severely and scattered too widely to allow the various branches to gather like foliage around the royal palm » says Zacharias.

« We shall then leave the choice to God. »

The tears that Mary had restrained so far, gush out and fall on Her trembling mouth. She looks imploringly at Her teacher.

« Mary has consecrated Herself to the Lord for His glory and for the salvation of Israel. She was but a little child just learning to read and write and She had already made Her vow… » says Anne, helping Her.

« Is that why You are crying then? Not because You wish to resist the Law? »

« Just for that… nothing else. I shall obey you, Priest of God. »

« This confirms what I have always been told of You. How long have You been consecrated to the Lord? »

« I have always been, I think. I was not yet in this Temple, and I had already given Myself to the Lord. »

« But are You not the little one who came twelve years ago and asked me to be allowed to enter? »

« I am. »

« Well, then, how can You say that You already belonged to God then? »

« If I look back, I find I was consecrated… I do not remember when I was born, neither do I remember how I began to love My mother and to say to My father: "Father, I am your daughter"… But I remember that I gave My heart to God, although I do not know when it started. Perhaps it was with the first kiss that I was able to give, with the first word that I learned to say, with the first step that I took… Yes, I think I find My first recollection of love with My first steady step… My house… near the house there was a garden full of flowers… and there was an orchard and some fields… and there was a spring of water at the rear, under the hill, and the water gushed out from a hollow rock that formed a grotto… it was full of long and thin herbs that hung down forming small green waterfalls everywhere and they seemed to be weeping because the thin little leaves, that seemed an embroidery work, had tiny little drops of water on them and when the drops fell they tinkled like little bells. Also the spring seemed to be singing. And there were birds on the

olive and apple-trees above the spring and white doves used to come and wash in the clear water of the fountain… I was no longer thinking of all that, because I had put all My heart in God and, with the exception of My father and mother, whom I loved in life and in death, every other worldly thing had disappeared from My heart… But you have made Me think of it… I must find when I gave Myself to God… and the things of My first years come back to My mind… I loved that grotto, because I heard a voice sweeter than the song of the water and the warbling of the birds say to Me: "Come, My Beloved". I loved those herbs covered with tinkling and sparkling diamond drops, because I could see in them the sign of My Lord and I used to say to Myself: "O soul of Mine, see how great Your God is, He Who made the cedars of Lebanon for the eagles, has also made these little leaves that bend down under the weight of a little mosquito and He made them for the joy of Your eyes and as a protection for Your little feet". I loved that silence of pure things: the light breeze, the silvery water, the purity of the doves… I loved the peace that hovered over the little grotto, and descended from the apple and olive-trees, now full of blossoms, then laden with beautiful fruit… And I do not know… the voice seemed to be saying to Me, yes, just to Me: "Come, specious olive; come, sweet apple; come, sealed spring; come, My dove"… Sweet is the love of a father, sweet the love of a mother… sweet their voices calling Me… but this, this one! Oh! in the earthly Paradise I think that she, who became guilty, heard it thus, and I do not understand how she could prefer a hiss to this voice of love, how she could desire any other knowledge that was

not God… With My lips which still tasted of My mother's milk, but with My heart full of celestial honey, I then said: "Here I am. I am coming. I am Yours. No one will have My body, but You, My Lord, neither will My soul have any other love… " And while saying so, it seemed to Me that I was saying over again things already said and that I was fulfilling a rite already fulfilled, and the chosen Spouse was not a stranger to Me, because I already knew His ardour and My sight had been formed at His light and My capacity for loving had been fulfilled in His embrace… When? I do not know. Beyond life, I would say, because I feel I always had Him, and that He always had Me, and that I exist because He wanted Me for the joy of His Spirit and Mine… Now I obey you, O Priest. But please tell Me how I am to behave… I have neither father nor mother. Please be My guide. »

« God will give You Your husband and he will be a holy man, because You have entrusted Yourself to God. You will tell him Your vow. »

« And will he agree? »

« I hope so. Pray, my child, that he may understand Your heart. Go now. May God always accompany You. »

Mary withdraws with Anna. Zacharias stays with the High Priest.

The vision ends thus.

12. Joseph Is Appointed Husband of the Virgin.

4th September 1944.

I see a rich hall with a beautiful floor, curtains, carpets and inlaid furniture. It must be still part of the Temple: there are priests in it, including Zacharias, and many men of every age, from twenty to fifty approximately.

They are all talking in low but animated voices. They seem to be anxious about something I do not know. They are dressed in their best clothes, which seem to be new or just recently washed and they are obviously dressed for some special feast. Many have removed the piece of cloth covering their heads, others still wear it, particularly the elder ones, whereas the young people show their bare heads, some dark blond, some brown, some black, only one auburn. Their hair is mostly short, but some wear it long down to their shoulders. They do not all know one another, because they observe one another inquisitively. But they seem to be akin somehow, because it is clear that they are all concerned with the same matter.

In a corner I can see Joseph. He is talking to a hale and hearty elderly man. Joseph is about thirty years old. He is a handsome man with short and rather curly hair, dark brown like his beard

and his moustache, which cover a well shaped chin and rise towards his rosy-brown cheeks, which are not olive-coloured as is normal in most people with a brown complexion. His eyes are dark, kindly and deep, very serious and perhaps somewhat sad. But when he smiles, as he does now, they become gay and young looking. He is dressed in light brown, very simple but very tidy. A group of young Levites comes in and they take up position between the door and a long narrow table, which is against the same wall as the door, which is left wide open. A single curtain hanging down to about twenty centimetres from the floor is drawn to cover the empty space.

The curiosity of the group increases. It grows more so when a hand pulls the curtain to one side to admit a Levite, who is carrying in his arms a bundle of dry branches on which one in blossom is gently laid: it looks like a light foam of white petals, with a vague pinkish hue that spreads softer and softer from the centre to the top of the light petals. The Levite lays the bundle of branches on the table very gently to avoid detracting from the miracle of the branch full of flowers among so many dry ones.

Whispering spreads in the hall. They all stretch their necks and sharpen their eyes to see. Zacharias, who is near the table with the other priests, also endeavours to see. But he can see nothing.

Joseph, in his comer, gives a quick glance to the bundle of branches and when the man he was speaking to says something to him, he shakes his head in denial as if to say: Impossible and smiles.

A trumpet is heard beyond the curtain. They all become quiet and turn in an orderly way towards the door, which is now completely clear as the curtain has been pulled to one side. The High Priest enters surrounded by elders. They all make a deep bow. The Pontiff goes to the table and begins to speak, standing up.

« Men of the race of David, gathered here at my request, please listen. The Lord has spoken, glory be to Him! From His Glory a ray has descended and, like the sun in springtime, it has given life to a dry branch which has blossomed miraculously, whereas no other branch on earth is in bloom to-day, the last day of the Feast of Dedication, and the snow that fell on the mountains in Judah has not yet melted and everything is white between Zion and Bethany. God has spoken and has made Himself the father and the guardian of the Virgin of David Who has Him alone as Her protection. A holy girl, the glory of the Temple, She deserved the word of God to learn the name of a husband agreeable to the Eternal One. And he must be very just to be chosen by the Lord as the protector of the Virgin so dear to Him! For this reason our sorrow in losing Her is alleviated and all worries about Her destiny as a wife cease. And to the man appointed by God we entrust with full confidence the Virgin blessed by God and by ourselves. The name of the husband

is Joseph of Jacob of Bethlehem, of the tribe of David, a carpenter in Nazareth in Galilee. Joseph: come forward. It is an order of the High Priest… »

There is a lot of whispering. Heads move round, eyes cast inquisitive glances, hands make signs: there are expressions of disappointment and relief. Someone, particularly amongst the older people, must be happy that it was not his fate.

Joseph, blushing and embarrassed moves forward. He is now near the table, in front of the Pontiff, whom he has greeted reverently.

« Everyone must come here to see the name engraved on the branch. And everyone must take his own branch to make sure that there is no deception. »

The men obey. They look at the branch gently held by the High Priest and then each takes his own: some break it, some keep it. They all look at Joseph. Some look and are silent, others look and congratulate him. The elderly man to whom Joseph was speaking before, exclaims: « I told you, Joseph! Who feels less certain, is the one who wins the game! » They have all now passed before the Pontiff.

The High Priest gives Joseph his branch in bloom, he lays his hand on his shoulder and says to him: « The spouse the Lord has presented you with, is not rich, as you know. But all virtues are in Her. Be more and more worthy of Her. There is no flower in Israel as beautiful and pure as She is. Please, all go out now. You, Joseph, stay here. And you, Zacharias, since you are Her relative, please bring in the bride. »

They all go out, except the High Priest and Joseph. The curtain is drawn once again over the door.

Joseph is standing in a very humble attitude, near the Priest. There is silence, then the Priest says to Joseph: « Mary wishes to inform you of a vow She made. Please help Her shyness. Be good to Her, Who is so good. »

« I will put my strength and my manly authority at Her service and no sacrifice on Her behalf will be heavy for me. Be sure of that. »

Mary enters with Zacharias and Anna of Phanuel.

« Come, Mary » says the Pontiff. « Here is the spouse that God has destined to You. He is Joseph of Nazareth. You will therefore go back to Your own town. I will leave You now. May God give You His blessing. May the Lord protect You and bless You, may He show His face to You and have mercy on You. May He turn His face to You and give You peace. »

Zacharias goes out escorting the Pontiff. Anna congratulates Joseph and then she goes out, too.

The betrothed are now facing each other. Mary, full of blushes, is

standing with Her head bowed. Joseph, who is also red in the face, looks at Her and tries to find the first words to be said. He eventually finds them and a bright smile lights up his eyes. He says: « I welcome you, Mary. I saw You when You were a little baby, only a few days old… I was a friend of Your father's and I have a nephew, the son of my brother Alphaeus, who was a great friend of Your mother. He was her little friend, because he is only eighteen years old, and when You were not yet born, he was only a little boy and he cheered up Your sad mother who loved him so much. You do not know us because You were only a little girl when You came here. But everyone in Nazareth loves You and they all think and speak of Joachim's little Mary, Whose birth was a miracle of the Lord, Who made the barren old lady blossom wonderfully… And I remember the evening You were born… We all remember it because of the prodigy of a heavy rain that saved the country and of a violent storm during which the thunderbolts did not damage even a stem of heather and it ended with such a large and beautiful rainbow that the like has never been seen again. And then… who does not remember Joachim's happiness? He dandled You showing You to his neighbours… As if You were a flower that had descended from Heaven, he admired You and wanted everyone to admire You, a happy old father who died talking about his Mary, Who was so beautiful and good and Whose words were so full of wisdom and grace… He was quite right in admiring You and in saying that there is no other woman lovelier than You are! And Your mother? She filled Your house and the neighbourhood with her songs and she sang like a skylark in springtime when she was carrying You, and afterwards when she held You in her arms. I made a cradle for You. A tiny little cradle, with roses carved all over it, because Your mother wanted it like that. Perhaps it is still in the house… I am old, Mary. When You were born I was beginning to work. I was already working… I would never have believed that I was going to have You as a spouse! Perhaps Your parents would have died a happier death if they had known, because they were my friends. I buried Your father, mourning over his death with a sincere heart, because he was a good teacher to me. »

Mary raises Her face, little by little, taking heart, as She hears Joseph speak to Her thus, and when he mentions the cradle She smiles gently and when Joseph speaks of Her father, She holds out Her hand to him and says: « Thank you, Joseph. » A very timid and gentle « thank you. »

Joseph holds Her little jasmine hand in his short and strong hands of a carpenter and he caresses it with an affection that expresses more and more confidence. Perhaps he is waiting for more words. But Mary is silent once again. He then goes on: « As You know, Your house is still intact, with the exception of the part that

was demolished by order of the consul, to build a road for the waggons of the Romans. But the fields, what is left of them - You know that because of Your father's illness much of the property had to be disposed of - have been rather neglected. For over three years the trees and the vines have never been pruned and the land is untilled and hard. But the trees that saw You when You were a little girl are still there, and if You agree, I will at once take care of them. »

« Thank you, Joseph. But you have your work… »

« I will work in Your orchard in the morning and in the evening. The days are getting longer and longer. By springtime I want everything to be in order for Your happiness. Look: this is a branch of the almond tree near the house. I wanted to pick it - the hedge is so ruined that one can enter anywhere, but I will remake it solid and strong - I wanted to pick it, because I thought that if I should be the chosen one, You would have been pleased to have a flower from Your garden. But I was not expecting to be the chosen one as I am a Nazirite (1) and I have obeyed because it is an order of the Priest, not because I wish to get married. Here is the branch, Mary. With it I offer You my heart, that, like it, has bloomed up till now only for the Lord and is now blooming for You, my spouse »

Mary takes the branch. She is moved and looks at Joseph with a face that has become more and more confident and bright. She feels certain of him. When he says to Her « I am a Nazirite », Her face becomes bright and She takes courage: « Also I am all of the Lord, Joseph. I do not know whether the High Priest told you… »

« He only told me that You are good and pure, that You wish to inform me of a vow, and that I must be good to you. Speak, Mary. Your Joseph wants You to be happy in all Your desires. I do not love You my with body. I love You with my soul, holy girl given to me by God! Please see in me a father and a brother, in addition to a husband. And open Your heart to me as to a father and rely on me as on a brother… »

« Since My childhood I have consecrated Myself to the Lord. I know this is not the custom in Israel. But I heard a voice requesting My virginity as a sacrifice of love for the coming of the Messiah. Israel has been waiting for Him for such a long time!… It is not too much to forgo the joy of being a mother for that! »

Joseph gazes at Her as if he wanted to read Her heart, then he takes Her tiny hands which are still holding the branch in blossom and he says: « I will join my sacrifice to Yours and we shall love the Eternal Father so much with our chastity that He will send His Saviour to the world earlier, and will allow us to see His Light

(1) Hebrew who had taken special vows of abstinence, see Numbers, 6.

shining in the world. Come, Mary. Let us go before His House and take an oath that we shall love each other as the angels do. Then I will go to Nazareth to prepare everything for You, in Your house, if You wish to go there, or elsewhere if You wish so. »

« In My house… There was a grotto down at the bottom… Is it still there? »

« It is, but it is no longer Yours… But I will build another one for You where it will be cool and quiet during the hottest hours of the day. I will make it as much as possible identical to the older one. And tell me: whom do You want with You? »

« Nobody. I am not afraid. Alphaeus' mother, who has always come to see Me, will keep Me company during the day. At night I prefer to be alone. No harm can befall Me. »

« And now I am there, too. When shall I come and get You? »

« Whenever you wish, Joseph. »

« Then I will come as soon as the house is ready. I will not touch anything. I want You to find it as Your mother left it. But I want it to be bright and clean, to receive You without any sadness. Come, Mary. Let us go and tell the Most High that we bless Him. »

I do not see anything else. But I feel in my heart the sense of confidence that Mary feels.

13. Wedding of the Virgin and Joseph.

5th September 1944.

How beautiful Mary is dressed as a bride, among Her joyful friends and teachers! There is also Elizabeth amongst them.

She is dressed in snow-white linen, so soft and refined that it looks like precious silk. She is wearing round Her slender waist a burin wrought belt in gold and silver, made of medallions held together by little chains - each medallion is an embroidery of gold threads on heavy silver burnished by age. Probably because the belt is too long for Her, still a gentle girl, the last three medallions hang down in the front and fall amongst the folds of the very wide dress that is so long as to form a sort of train. On Her feet She is wearing white leather sandals with silver buckles.

Around Her neck the dress is held by a chain of small gold roses and silver filigree, reproducing on a smaller scale the design of the belt. Running through large holes on the loosely cut neck, the chain gathers the cloth and forms a kind of small frill. Mary's neck emerges from the white pleated cloth with the grace of a stem wrapped in a precious fabric and seems even more slender and whiter than ever, the stem of a lily ending in a lily-like face, which is even paler than usual for the excitement - and purer. The face of a most pure victim.

Her hair no longer hangs over Her shoulders. It is arranged in a

knot of plaits in a charming style, and precious burnished silver hairpins, all made with embroidered filigree at the top, hold it in position. Her mother's veil is placed over the plaits and it falls in beautiful folds under the precious thin plate that encircles Her snow-white forehead. The veil falls down Her sides and since Mary is not as tall as Her mother, it falls lower than Her hips, whereas it reached Anne's waist. She has nothing on Her hands, but is wearing bracelets on Her wrists. Her wrists are so thin that the heavy bracelets of Her mother cover the back of Her hands and would fall to the ground if She tossed Her hands.

Her friends gaze upon Her and admire Her. They twitter gaily like sparrows asking questions and expressing their admiration.

« Are they Your mother's? »

« They are antique, are they not? »

« How beautiful, Sarah, this belt is! »

« And what about this veil, Susan? How refined it is. Just look at those lilies woven in it! »

« Let me see Your bracelets, Mary. Were they Your mother's? »

« Yes, she wore them. But they are of My father's mother. »

« Oh! Look. They have the seal of Solomon interwoven with thin little branches of palm and olive-trees and amongst these there are lilies and roses. Oh! Who did such perfect and refined work? »

« They belong to the House of David » explains Mary. « The women of the family have worn them for centuries, when they get married and they are left in heritage to the heiress. »

« Certainly You are the heiress… »

« Did they bring You everything from Nazareth? »

« No, they did not. When My mother died, My cousin took My trousseau to her house to keep it safely. Now she has brought it back to Me. »

« Where is it? Where is it? Show it to Your friends. »

Mary does not know what to do… She would like to be kind, but she is not anxious to pull out all the things which are nicely laid in three heavy trunks.

Her teachers come to Her help: « The groom is about to arrive » they point out. « This is not the moment to cause confusion. Leave Mary alone. You are tiring Her. Go and get ready. »

The chattering group go away somewhat sulkily. Mary can now enjoy in peace the company of Her teachers who say words of praise and blessing to Her.

Also Elizabeth has come near. And as Mary, deeply moved, is crying because Anna of Phanuel has called Her « daughter » and has kissed Her with true motherly love, Elizabeth says to Her: « Mary, Your mother is not here, and yet she is present. Her soul is rejoicing with Yours. Look, the things that You are wearing are giving You her caresses once again. You can still find in them the flavour

of her kisses. One day, a long time ago, the day You came to the Temple, she said to me: "I have prepared Her dresses and Her trousseau, because I wish to be the one who weaves Her linens and makes Her bridal dresses, so that I shall not be absent on the day of Her joy". And listen. In the last days, when I was assisting her, every evening she wanted to caress Your first little dresses and the ones You are now wearing and she would say: "I can smell the jasmine perfume of my little one and I want Her to perceive here the kiss of Her mummy". How many kisses on this veil that is now shading Your forehead! There are more kisses than threads!… And when You will wear the cloth woven by her, just think that it was woven more by her motherly love than by the shuttle. And these jewels… Also in hard circumstances they were saved by Your father for You, that You might be beautiful in this hour, as befits a princess of the House of David. Be happy and cheerful, Mary. You are not an orphan, because Your parents are with You and Your husband is a father and a mother to You, such is his perfection… »

« Yes, that is true! I certainly cannot complain. In two months he has been here twice, and today he has come for the third time, facing the rain and the windy weather, to take orders from Me… Fancy: orders from Me who am a poor woman and much younger than he is! And he has denied Me nothing. He does not even wait for Me to ask. I think an angel must tell him what I want, because he tells Me before I can speak. The last time he said: "Mary, I think that You prefer to stay in Your father's house. Since You are a daughter heiress, You can do so, if that is Your wish. I will come to Your house. However, in order to accomplish the rite, You will go for one week to my brother Alphaeus' house. Mary already loves You so much. And from there the procession will start that will take You to Your house in the evening of the wedding day". Was that not very kind of him? It did not even matter to him if the people should say that he has not a house which I would like… I would have liked it, because he is there and he is so good. Certainly… I prefer My own house… because of memories… Oh! Joseph is so good! »

« What did he say about Your vow? You haven't told me yet. »

« He made no objection. On the contrary, when I told him the reasons, he said: "I will join my sacrifice to Yours". »

« He is a holy young man » says Anna of Phanuel.

The « holy young man » is coming in just now in the company of Zacharias.

He is really magnificent. All dressed in gold yellow he seems an eastern sovereign. A splendid belt supports his bag and his dagger, the former of morocco embroidered in gold, the latter with a morocco sheath and gold decorations. On his head he is wearing a turban, that is the usual piece of cloth worn like a hood, as is still

customary amongst certain people in Africa, such as the bedouins, and it is held by a precious ring, a thin wire of gold, to which there are tied some small bunches of myrtle. He has on a new mantle, with fringes, and he wears it with great dignity. He is sparkling with joy. He has in his hands small bunches of myrtle in bloom.

« Peace to you, my spouse! » he greets Her. « Peace to everyone. » When he has received a reply to his greetings, he says: « I saw Your joy the day I gave You a branch from Your garden. I thought I should bring You some myrtle which I picked near the grotto You love so much. I wanted to bring You some of the roses that are already beginning to bloom near Your house. But roses do not last long. After a journey of several days I would have arrived here with only the thorns. And I want to offer You, my dear, only roses and spread Your way with soft scented flowers, so that Your feet may rest on them without touching anything dirty or harsh. »

« Oh! Thank you, you are so good! But what did you do to keep it so fresh? »

« I tied a vase to the saddle and I put in it the branches of the flowers in bud. During the journey they have burst into flower. Here they are, Mary. May Your forehead be garlanded with purity, the symbol of a bride, which, however, is much inferior to the purity of Your heart. »

Elizabeth and the teachers adorn Mary with a little garland of flowers which they form attaching to the precious ring the little white bunches of myrtle and they insert small white roses which they take from a vase placed on a small chest.

Mary is on the point of taking Her large white mantle to put it on Her shoulders, but Joseph precedes Her and helps Her to fasten it at the top of Her shoulders with two silver buckles. The teachers then arrange the folds with loving care.

Everything is ready. While they are awaiting I do not know what, Joseph takes Mary to one side and says to Her: « I have pondered a lot on Your vow these last days. I told You that I will share it with You. But the more I think of it, the more I realise that a temporary Naziritism is not sufficient, even if renewed several times. I have understood You, Mary. I do not yet deserve the word of Light, but a murmur of it comes to me. And it causes me to read Your secret, at least in its main lines. I am a poor ignorant man, Mary. A poor workman. I know nothing of letters and I have no treasures. But I place at Your feet my treasure: my absolute chastity, for ever, to be worthy of being beside You, Virgin of God, "my sister spouse, enclosed garden, sealed fountain", as our Ancestor says, who perhaps wrote the Song of Songs seeing You… I shall be the guardian of this garden of spices in which are the most precious fruits and from which a spring of living water gushes out in a gentle surge: Your kindness, o spouse, has conquered my soul with

Your innocence, O most beautiful one. You are more beautiful than dawn, You are a sun that shines because Your heart shines, You are full of love for Your God and for the world, to which You wish to give a Saviour with Your sacrifice of a woman. Come, my beloved spouse » and he takes Her gently by the hand and leads Her towards the door. All the others follow them and outside the joyful companions, all dressed in white and wearing veils, join them.

They go through yards and porches, among the crowds that watch them, up to a point that is not the Temple, but seems to be a hall used for ceremonies, because there are lamps and rolls of parchment as in synagogues. They go as far as a tall lectern, almost a desk, and they wait. The others stand orderly behind them. Other priests and curious people gather at the end.

The High Priest enters solemnly.

There is whispering amongst the curious crowd: « Is he going to marry them? »

« Yes, because She is of royal and sacerdotal rank. A flower of David and Aaron, the bride is a virgin of the Temple. The groom is of the tribe of David. »

The Pontiff joins the right hand of the bride with the right hand of the groom and he blesses them solemnly: « May the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob be with you. May He join you and fulfill His blessing in you giving you His peace and numerous descendants with a long life and a happy death in the bosom of Abraham. » He then withdraws as solemn as when he entered.

The promise has been exchanged. Mary is Joseph's spouse. (2)

They all go out and they orderly move to a hall where they stipulate the wedding contract in which it is stated that Mary, the daughter heiress of Joachim of David and of Anne of Aaron gives Joseph, as Her dowry, Her house and the estate attached to it, Her personal property and what She has inherited from Her father.

It is now all over.

The betrothed go out into the yard and they move toward the exit near the dwellings of the women assigned to the Temple. A comfortable heavy waggon is waiting for them. A tent is laid over it as a shelter and Mary's heavy trunks are already loaded on it.

After farewell words, kisses and tears, blessings and advice, Mary gets into the waggon with Elizabeth, while Joseph and Zacharias sit in the front. They have taken off their best mantles

(2) In Israel, also at the time of Our Lady, a marriage comprised two phases: the engagement and the wedding. The rite of the engagement, by which the marriage was essentially established, implied that the young couple should be blessed by a priest while holding each other's right hand; a legal contract was made in regard to property and rights. During this first phase they did not live together. The wedding was the solemn accomplishment of the contract and the couple began to live together.

and are all wearing dark ones.

The waggon departs at the heavy trot of a big dark horse. The Temple walls and then the city walls are receding and here is the country, new, fresh, blooming in the early springtime sunshine, with the corn a few inches off the ground, its little leaves, which look like emeralds, waving at a gentle breeze, which carries the scent of peach and apple flowers, of clover flowers and of wild mint.

Mary is weeping silently, under Her veil, and now and again She removes the tent and looks at the far away Temple and the city She has left…

The vision ends thus.

Jesus says:

« What does the Book of Wisdom say, singing her praises? "Within wisdom is a spirit intelligent, holy, unique, manifold, subtle". And it goes on listing her endowments, ending the period with the words… "almighty, all-surveying, penetrating all intelligent, pure and most subtle spirits. She is so pure she pervades and permeates all things. She is a breath of the power of God, hence nothing impure can find a way into her… image of His goodness. Although alone she can do all, herself unchanging, she makes all things new, she passes into holy souls, she makes them friends of God and Prophets".

You have seen how Joseph, not by human culture, but by supernatural education can read in the sealed book of the Immaculate Virgin and how he borders upon prophetic truths by his "seeing" a superhuman mystery where others could only see a great virtue. Since he is imbued with this wisdom, which is a breath of the power of God and a definite emanation of the Almighty, he sails with a secure spirit the sea of this mystery of grace which is Mary. He penetrates with Her spiritual contacts, in which, rather than the lips, the two spirits speak to each other in the sacred silence of their souls, where God only can hear voices and those who are well liked by God, because they are His faithful servants and are full of Him.

The wisdom of the Just man, which increases by his union and Closeness to Mary, Full of Grace, prepares him to penetrate the deepest secrets of God and enables him to protect and defend them from the snares of man and demon. And in the meantime it invigorates him. It makes the just man a saint, and the saint the guardian of the Spouse and of the Son of God.

Without removing the seal of God, he, a chaste man, now elevating his chastity to angelical heroism, can read the word of fire written by God on the virginal diamond, and he reads what his wisdom does not repeat, but is greater than what Moses read on the stone tablets. And to prevent profane eyes from prying into the mystery, he places himself, seal upon the seal, as an archangel of fire on the threshold of Paradise, within which the Eternal Father takes His delight, "walking in the cool of the evening" and talking to Her Who is His love, Garden of lilies in bloom, Air scented with perfumes, fresh morning Breeze, lovely Star, Delight of God. The new Eve is there, in front of him, not bone from his bones, nor flesh from his flesh, but companion of his life, living Ark of God, Whom he receives in guardianship and Whom he must return to God as pure as he received Her.

"Spouse to God" was written in the immaculate pages of that mystical book… And when in the hour of trial suspicion hissed its torture, he suffered as a man and as a servant of God, as no man suffered, because of the suspected sacrilege. But this was to be the future trial. Now, in this time of grace, he sees and he puts himself at the most true service of God. Then the storm of the trial will come, as for all saints, to be tested and made coadjutors of God.

What do you read in Leviticus? "Tell Aaron, your brother, that he must not enter the sanctuary beyond the Veil in front of the Throne of mercy that is over the Ark, whenever he chooses. He may die; for I appear in a cloud on the Throne of mercy, unless he has done these things first: he will offer a young bull for a sacrifice for sin and a ram for holocaust, he is to wear a linen tunic and cover his nakedness with a linen girdle".

And Joseph really enters the sanctuary of God, when and as far as God wants, beyond the veil that conceals the Ark on which the Spirit of God hovers and he offers himself and will offer the Lamb, a holocaust for the sin of the world and in expiation of such sin. And he does that dressed in linen, and mortifying his virile limbs to abolish their faculty of sensation, which once, at the beginning of times, did triumph, impairing the rights of God on man and which will now be crushed in the Son, in the Mother and in the putative father, to lead men back to Grace and restore the right of God on man. He does that with his perpetual chastity.

Was Joseph not on Golgotha? Do you think he is not amongst the co-redeemers? I tell you solemnly that he was the first and therefore he is great in the eyes of God. Great for his sacrifice, his patience, his perseverance, his faith. Which faith is greater than this one that believed without seeing the miracles of the Messiah?

Praise be to My putative father, an example to you of what you lack most: purity, faithfulness and perfect love. Praise be to the magnificent reader of the sealed Book, imbued with Wisdom to be able to understand the mysteries of Grace and chosen to protect the Salvation of the world from the snares of all enemies. »

14. Joseph and Mary arrive in Nazareth.

6th September 1944.

A very blue sky of a mild February is over the hills of Galilee. The gentle hills that I have never seen in the early history of Mary, are now instead as familiar to me as if I were born there.

The main road is fresh looking because of last night's rain and it is neither dusty nor muddy. It is hard and clean as if were the street of a town and it runs between two hedges of hawthorn in bloom. The hedges are so white that they look like a snowfall. The scenery is broken by the monstrous conglomerations of cacti, with thick leaves like palettes, spiked with stings and decorated with the huge granades of their peculiar fruits, grown without stem on the top of the leaves. Because of their colour and shape, the cactus leaves always give me the impression of sea depths and coral reefs, of jellyfish and other deep sea animals.

Beyond the hedgerows, there is the country. The purpose of the hedges is to fence in the grounds of the various owners, and thus they stretch in every direction forming a strange geometrical design of curves and angles, lozenges, squares, semicircles and the most unbelievable acute and obtuse angled triangles, a design all sprayed with white, like a strange ribbon thrown over the country just for fun and over which hundreds and hundreds of birds fly, chirp, sing, in the joy of love, while working to build their nests. In the fields the corn is taller than in Judaea. The meadows are full of flowers and there are hundreds of fruit-trees all in full bloom, that look like clouds of vegetables white, red, pink, with all gradations of these colours: they seem to be an answer to the light clouds in the sky which the setting sun paints pink, light lilac, periwinkle violet, opal blue and coral orange.

With the light evening breeze the first petals fall from the trees in blossom and they seem a swarm of little butterflies searching for pollen on wild flowers. And from tree to tree there are festoons of vines still barren, except at the top of the festoons, where there is more sunshine, and the first little innocent, surprised, trembling leaves are beginning to open.

The sun is setting peacefully in the sky, which is so benign in its deep blue. The light makes it even more limpid and causes the snow on Mount Hermon and other far away mountain tops to shine.

A waggon is moving along the road. It is the waggon that is carrying Joseph, Mary and Her cousins. Their journey is at an end.

Mary is looking with the eagerness of those who want to know, nay want to recognise what they have already seen, but can no longer remember and they smile when a faint memory comes back to them and rests, like a light, on this or that thing, on this or that Point. Elizabeth, Zacharias and Joseph help Her to remember, pointing to various places and houses.

Nazareth is already showing its houses, spread out on the undulations of its hills. Lit up from the left by the setting sun, it shows the white of its low wide little houses bordered in pink and surmounted by terraces. Some of them, fully illuminated by the sun, seem to be near a fire, so red are the fronts of the houses because of the sun, that also lights up the water of the ponds and of the low wells, with practically no parapets, and from which squeaky pails of water are being pulled up for the houses as well as water-bags for the orchards.

Children and women rush to the side of the road and look into the waggon and greet Joseph who is well known to them. But they are somewhat embarrassed and shy with regard to the other three travellers.

But when the waggon enters the little town, there is no longer any embarrassment or shyness. Many people of all ages are gathered at the entrance of the village under a rustic arch of flowers and branches, and there is an outburst of shrill voices and a tossing of branches and flowers as soon as the waggon appears from behind the comer of the last house lying before it in the country. It is the women, girls and children of Nazareth greeting the bride. The men, more grave, are standing behind the excited and shouting crowd and they are greeting solemnly.

The waggon is not covered now by the tent, which was removed before reaching the village, both because the sun was no longer annoying them and to enable Mary to see Her native land. Mary thus appears in all the beauty of a lovely flower. White and blonde like an angel She smiles lovingly at everybody: at the children who throw Her flowers and kisses; at the girls of Her own age who call Her by name; at the elderly women who bless Her with their cheerful voices. She bows to the men and particularly to one who is perhaps the rabbi or the elder of the town.

The waggon proceeds slowly along the main road, followed for a considerable distance by the crowd, for whom the arrival is an event.

« There is Your house, Mary » says Joseph, pointing with his whip to a little house which is just under the edge of an undulation of the hill. Behind the house there is a lovely large kitchen garden all in bloom, at the end of which there is a small olive-grove. Behind the olive-grove there is the usual boundary hedge of hawthorn and cactus. The fields that once belonged to Joachim, are farther beyond…

« As You can see, very little is left for You » says Zacharias. « Your father's illness was a long and expensive one. Also the expenses to repair the damage done by the Romans were heavy. See? The road took away the three main rooms and the house was cut down in

size in order to enlarge it, without excessive expenses, a part of the mountain was adapted, where the grotto is. Joachim kept his supplies there and Anne her looms. You will do as You think best. »

« Oh! It does not matter if only little is left. It will be sufficient for Me. I will work… »

« No, Mary. » It is Joseph who is speaking. « I will work. You will do nothing but weave and sew things for the house. I am young and strong and I am Your husband. Please do not humiliate me with Your work. »

« I shall do as you wish. »

« Yes, in this case I do want it. In everything else Your wishes are the law. But not in regard to this. »

They have arrived. The waggon stops.

Two women and two men, about forty and fifty years of age respectively, are at the entrance and many children and young boys are with them. « May God give You peace, Mary » says the elder man and one of the women approaches Mary embracing and kissing Her.

« He is my brother Alphaeus and she is Mary, his wife, and these are their children. They have come to greet You and to tell You that their house is Yours if You wish so » says Joseph.

« Yes, come Mary, if it is painful for You to live by Yourself. The country is beautiful in springtime and our house is in the middle of fields full of flowers. And You will be the loveliest flower there » says Mary of Alphaeus.

« Thank you, Mary. I would come so willingly. But I am so anxious to see and recognise My own home. I left it when I was a little girl, and I have forgotten what it is like… Now I have found it again… and I feel I have found also My lost mother, My beloved father, and that I can hear the echo of their words… and I smell the perfume of their last breathing. I feel I am no longer an orphan, because once again I have around Me the embrace of these walls… Please understand Me, Mary. » Mary's voice trembles and Her eyes begin to shine with tears.

Mary of Alphaeus replies to Her: « As You wish, my dear. I want You to feel that I am Your sister and friend, and also a mother to You, since I am so much older than You are. »

The other woman has come forward: « Hello, Mary. I am Sarah, Your mother's friend. I saw You being born. And this is Alphaeus, Alphaeus' nephew, and a great friend of Your mother. What I did for Your mother, I am willing to do for You, if You wish so. See? My house is the nearest to Yours and Your fields are now ours. But if You want to come, come whenever You wish. We will open a passage through the hedge and we shall be together, yet each of us will be at home. This is my husband. »

« Thank you all and for everything. Thank you for all the good you did to My parents and for your love for Me. May God the Almighty bless you for it. »

The heavy trunks are unloaded and carried into the house. They go in. I now recognise the little house of Nazareth, as it was during the life of Jesus.

Joseph takes Mary by Her hand and they go in. On the threshold he says to Her: « And now, on this threshold, I want a promise from You. That whatever may happen to You, whatever You may need, there is no other friend whom to apply to but Joseph and that, for no reason whatsoever, may You worry all by Yourself. Remember that I am everything for You and it will be a joy for me to make Your life happy and, since happiness is not always in our power, I will at least make it peaceful and safe. »

« I do promise, Joseph. »

The door and windows are opened. The last searching rays of the sun enter.

Mary has now taken off Her mantle and veil, because, with the exception of the myrtle flowers, She has still Her bridal dress on. She then goes into the kitchen garden in bloom. She looks and smiles. Still held by the hand by Joseph, She goes round the garden. She looks as if She were taking possession of a lost place.

And Joseph shows Her his work: « See? I dug a hole here to gather the rain water, because these vines are always thirsty. I cut off the oldest branches of this olive tree to strengthen it and I transplanted these apple trees because two of them had withered. Over there I planted some fig trees. When they grow up they will shelter the house both from the excessive heat of the sun and from inquisitive people. The pergola is the old one. I only changed the rotten poles and I did some trimming. It will give You a lot of grapes, I hope. And here, look » and he leads Her proudly towards the side of the hill at the back of the house, which limits the northern side of the garden « there I dug a grotto and I have reinforced it and when these little plants take roots, it will be almost identical to the one You had. There is no spring… but I hope to convey a little stream there. I will work in the long summer evenings, when I come to see You… »

« What do you mean? » asks Alphaeus. « Are you not getting married this summer? »

« No. Mary wants to weave Her woollen clothes, the only things missing from Her trousseau. And I agree with Her. Mary is so young that it does not matter if we wait for a year or more. In the meantime She will get used to the house… »

« Well! You have always been somewhat different from other people and you still are. I do not know who would not be in a hurry to get married to a beautiful flower like Mary, and you are delaying things by months!… »

« A joy awaited for a long time is a joy to be taken delight in more intensely » replies Joseph with a gentle smile.

His brother shrugs his shoulders and asks: « Well, then, when are you thinking of getting married? »

« When Mary is sixteen. After the feast of the Tabernacles. The winter evenings will be sweet for the newly weds!… » and he smiles again looking at Mary. A smile of a gentle secret understanding. A smile of a brotherly chastity giving comfort. He then resumes his tour of the garden. « This is the big room under the mountain. If You agree, I will use it as a workshop when I come here. It is joined to the house, but not in the house. So I will not annoy You with noises and disorder. However, if You wish otherwise… »

« No, Joseph. That is perfectly all right. »

They go back into the house and light the lamps.

« Mary is tired » says Joseph. « Let us leave Her in peace with Her cousins. »

They all say goodbye and go out. Joseph stays for a few moments and speaks to Zacharias in a low voice.

« Your cousin is leaving Elizabeth with You for a little while. Are You happy? I am. Because she will help You… to become a perfect housewife. With her You will be able to arrange Your things and Your furniture, and I will come every evening to help You. With Elizabeth You can purchase the wool and whatever You may need. And I will see to the expenses. Remember, You have promised to come to me for everything. Goodbye, Mary. Sleep the first night as the landlady of this house and may the angel of God make Your sleep peaceful. May the Lord be always with You. »

« Goodbye, Joseph. May you also be under the wings of God's angel. Thank you, Joseph. For everything. As far as I can, I will requite your love with Mine. »

Joseph says goodbye to Her cousins and goes out.

And the vision ends with him.

15. Conclusion to the Pre-Gospel.

Jesus says:

« The cycle is over. It has been so sweet and gentle and with it your Jesus has taken you out of the turmoil of these days without any shock. Like a baby enveloped in soft woollen swaddling clothes and laid on soft cushions, you have been immersed in those blissful visions so that you might not perceive the cruelty of men who hate instead of loving one another, and be terrorised by such ferocity. You could no longer endure certain situations, and I do not want you to die because of them, because I take care of My "mouthpiece".

The reason why victims have been tortured by utter despair is about to cease in the world. Therefore, Mary, the time of your dreadful suffering for too many reasons in such strong contrast with your feelings, will come to an end as well. But your suffering will not cease: you are a victim. But part of it: the latter, will cease. Then the day will come when I will say to you, as I said to Mary of Magdala when she was dying: "Rest. It is now time for you to rest. Give Me your thorns. It is now time for roses. Rest and wait. I bless you, o blessed soul".

That is what I was saying to you, and it was a promise which you did not understand, as the time was approaching when you were to be immersed in, rolled over, chained and filled with thorns, in deepest darkness… I am repeating that to you now, With the joy which only the Love, Which I am, can feel when It can stop one of Its beloved from suffering. I am now telling you that that time of sacrifice is ceasing. And I, Who know, say to you, on behalf of the world which does not know, on behalf of Italy, of Viareggio, of this little village, where you brought Me - meditate on the meaning of these words - I say to you "thanks" as is due to holocausts for their sacrifices.

When I showed you Cecily, the virgin-spouse, I told you that she became impregnated with My perfumes, behind which she dragged her husband, brother-in-law, servants, relatives, friends. You played the role of Cecily in this mad world, and you do not know, but I am telling you, I Who know. You became saturated with Me, with My word, you informed people of My desires and the best among them understood and following you, a victim, many more have risen, and if your fatherland and the places dearer to you are not completely ruined, that is due to the fact that many victims have been consumed after your example and your ministry. Thank you, My blessed one. But go on. I have great need to save the earth, to buy the earth again, and you victims are the money.

May Wisdom, which taught saints and teaches you directly, elevate you more and more in the understanding of the Science of life and in its practice. Pitch your little tent near the house of the Lord. Nay, pitch the pegs of your own dwelling in the abode of Wisdom and live there without ever coming out. You will rest, under the protection of the Lord Who loves you, like a bird among flowery branches and He will shelter you from all spiritual storms and you will be in the light of the glory of God, from Whom words of peace and truth will descend for you.

Go in peace. I bless you, o blessed soul. »

Immediately afterwards Mary says:

« A present to Mary for her feast from Mother. A chain of presents. And if there are some thorns amongst them, do not complain to the Lord Who has loved you as He has loved few people.

I told you at the beginning: "Write about Me. All your sorrows will be comforted" - You can now see that it was true. This gift had been put aside for this time of excitement, because we do not take care only of the spirit, but we also look after matter, which is not the queen but a useful servant to the spirit in fulfilling its mission.

Be grateful to the Most High, Who is really a Father to you, also in an affectionately human sense, and lulls you with sweet ecstasies to conceal from you what would frighten you. Love Me more and more. I have led you into the secrecy of My early years. You now know everything about Mother. Love Me as daughter and sister in our destiny of victims. And love God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit with perfect love. The blessing of the Father, of the Son and of the Spirit passes through My hands, is scented with My motherly love for you and it descends and rests upon you. Be supernaturally happy. »

16. The Annunciation.

8th March 1944.

What I see. Mary, a very young girl: She looks fifteen years old, at most. She is in a small rectangular room: a room most suitable for a girl. Along one of the longer walls, there is a bed: a low bed, without bedstead, covered with thick mats or carpets, which appear to be laid on boards or cane-trellis, because they are very stiff and without any curve, as is usual with our beds. Against the other wall there is a kind of bookcase with an oil lamp, some rolls of parchment, some needlework carefully folded: it seems to be embroidery work.

Beside the bookcase, towards the door, which opens onto the kitchen garden and which is now covered by a curtain gently moved by a light breeze, there is the Virgin sitting on a low stool. She is spinning some linen which is as white as snow and as soft as silk. Her little hands, just a little darker than linen, are whirling the spindle very quickly. Her beautiful young face is slightly bent forward and She is smiling gently as if She were caressing or following some sweet thought.

There is a great silence in the little house and in the kitchen garden. There is a great peace both on Mary's face and in the surrounding place. There is peace and order. Everything is neat and tidy and the room, although very modest looking and very modestly furnished - it is almost as bare as a cell - has something austere and regal about it because of its cleanliness and the care With which everything is laid: the clothes on the bed, the rolls, the lamp, the copper pitcher near the lamp, with a bunch of branches in bloom in it. I do not know whether they are peach or pear branches. They are certainly branches of a fruit-tree, with pinkish white flowers.

Mary begins to sing in a low voice, then She raises Her voice slightly. But She does not sing loudly. Still, it is a voice vibrating in the little room and one can perceive the vibration of Her soul in it. I do not understand the words as they are spoken in Hebrew. But as now and again She repeats Jehovah I realize that it is a sacred song, perhaps a psalm. Mary is probably remembering the songs of the Temple. And it must be a happy memory because She lays Her hands in Her lap, while still holding the yarn and the spindle, and lifts Her head leaning against the wall: Her face is beautifully flushed and Her eyes are lost behind… I wonder what sweet thought. Her eyes are shining with tears, which appear but do not overflow and they make Her eyes look larger. And yet those eyes are smiling, they are smiling at a thought they can see and by which Mary is abstracted from the earthly world. Mary's face, flushed and girded by the plaits She wears rolled up like a crown round Her head, seems a beautiful flower, as it emerges from Her plain white dress.

The song changes into a prayer: « Most High Lord God, do not delay any longer in sending Your Servant to bring peace to the world. Grant us the favourable time and the pure and prolific virgin for the coming of Your Christ. Father, Holy Father, grant Me, Your servant to offer My life for this purpose. Grant Me to die after seeing Your Light and Your Justice on earth and after knowing that our Redemption has been accomplished. O Holy Father, send the Promise of the Prophets to the earth. Send the Redeemer to Your maidservant, so that in the hour of My death, Your abode may be opened to Me, as its gates have already been opened by Your Christ for all those who have hoped in You. Come, come, O Spirit of the Lord. Come to the faithful who are expecting You. Come, Prince of Peace!… » Mary remains absorbed thus…

The curtain moves fast, as if someone behind it ventilated it or shook it to draw it. And a pearl white light mixed with pure silver makes the slightly yellow walls clearer and makes the colours of the cloths brighter and Mary's raised face more spiritual. And in such

light, while the curtain is still drawn on the mystery to be accomplished, the Archangel prostrates himself: the curtain no longer moves: it is hanging stiff against the doorposts like a wall separating the inside from the outside.

The Angel must necessarily take a human appearance. But it is a transhumanised appearance. Of what flesh is this beautiful and gleaming figure made? With what substance did God form it to make it perceptible to the senses of the Virgin? Only God can possess such substances and use them so perfectly. It is a face, a body, eyes, a mouth, hair and hands like ours. But they are not our dull matter. It is a light that has taken the colour of flesh, of eyes, hair, lips, a light that moves and smiles, looks and speaks.

« Hail, Mary, full of Grace, Hail! » The voice is a sweet arpeggio as of pearls thrown on a precious metal plate.

Mary is startled and lowers Her head. And She is even more startled when She sees the shining creature kneeling at about a metre from Her and looking at Her with infinite veneration, his hands crossed over his chest.

Mary jumps to Her feet and She squeezes against the wall. She turns pale and red alternately. Her face shows surprise and fear. She subconsciously presses Her hands against Her breast hiding them under Her large sleeves. She stoops, endeavouring to conceal Her body as much as possible. An attitude of gentle modesty.

« No. Do not fear. The Lord is with You! You are blessed amongst all women! »

But Mary continues to be afraid. Where has that extraordinary being come from? Is he a messenger of God or of the Deceiver?

« Do not fear, Mary! » repeats the Archangel. « I am Gabriel, the Angel of God. My Lord has sent me to You. Do not be afraid, because You have found grace in the eyes of God. And You will conceive and bear a Son and You will call Him "Jesus": He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High (and such He will really be). And the Lord God will give Him the throne of His Ancestor David and He will rule over the House of Jacob for ever, and His reign will have no end. Understand, o Holy Virgin loved by God, Daughter blessed by Him, called to be the Mother of His Son, what Son You will generate »

« How can this come about, since I do not know man? Perhaps the Lord God will no longer accept the offer of His maidservant and does not want Me a Virgin for His love? »

« Not by deed of man You will be a mother, Mary. You are the Eternal Virgin, the Holy Virgin of God. The Holy Spirit will come upon You and the power of the Most High will cover You with its shadow. So the Child born of You will be called Holy and Son of God. Our Lord God can do everything. Elizabeth, the barren one, in her old age has conceived a son who will be the Prophet of Your Son, and will prepare His ways. The Lord has removed her disgrace and her memory will remain amongst peoples together with Your name, as the name of her creature will be joined to the name of Your Holy Son, and until the end of centuries you will be called blessed, because of the grace of the Lord which has come to You both and particularly to You, by means of Whom Grace has come to all peoples. Elizabeth is in her sixth month and her burden lifts her to joy, and will lift her even more when she hears of Your joy. Nothing is impossible to the Lord, Mary, full of Grace. What shall I tell my Lord? Let no thought whatsoever disturb You. He Will protect Your interests if You trust in Him. The world, Heaven, the Eternal Father are awaiting Your word! »

Mary crosses Her hands over Her breast and bowing down deeply, She says: « I am the handmaid of the Lord. Let what you have said be done to Me. »

The Angel shines out of joy. He kneels in adoration because he certainly sees the Spirit of God descend upon the Virgin bent down in assent, and he disappears without moving the curtain, but leaves it well drawn over the holy Mystery.

17. The Disobedience of Eve and the Obedience of Mary.

5th March 1944.

Jesus says:

«… Do we not read in Genesis that God made man the overlord of everything on the earth, that is everything except God and His angelical ministers? Do we not read that He made the woman the companion of man in his joy and his domination over all living beings? Do we not read that they were allowed to eat of everything with the exception of the tree of the knowledge of Good and Evil? Why? What is the meaning of the words "that he might rule"? And what is the meaning of the tree of the knowledge of Good and Evil? Have you ever asked these questions, you man, who ask so many useless ones and never ask your soul about heavenly truths? Your soul would tell you, if it were alive, because a soul in grace is held like a flower in the hands of your angel, and like a flower it is kissed by the sun and sprinkled with dew by the Holy Spirit, Who warms and illuminates it, sprays and decorates it with heavenly lights. How many truths your soul would tell you, if you only knew how to converse with it, if you loved your soul that makes you like God, Who is a spirit, as your soul is a spirit. What a great friend you would have if you loved your soul instead of hating it to the extent of killing it; what a great and sublime friend with whom you could talk of celestial matters, since you men are so eager to talk and you ruin one another with friendships which, if they are not unworthy ones (as sometimes they are), they are almost always useless and they turn into a vain and damaging tumult of worldly words.

Did I not say: "If anyone loves Me he will keep My word, and My Father will love him, and we shall come to him and make Our home with him"? The soul in grace possesses love, and by possessing love it possesses God, that is the Father Who preserves it, the Son Who teaches it, the Spirit Who illuminates it. It therefore possesses Knowledge, Science, Wisdom, Light. Consider therefore what sublime conversations your soul could hold with you. Such conversations filled the silence of prisons, the silence of cells, the silence of hermitages, the silence of the rooms of holy sick people.

Such conversations were the consolation of prisoners awaiting martyrdom, of cloistered monks and nuns searching for the Truth, of hermits longing for an advanced knowledge of God, of sick people in bearing, nay, in loving their crosses.

If you knew how to question your soul, you would be told that the true, extensive meaning - as comprehensive as creation itself - of the words "that he might rule" is this: "That man might dominate everything, that is his three states. The lower state, the animal one. The middle state, the moral one. The superior state, the spiritual one. And all three of them are to be directed to one sole aim: to possess God". To possess Him by deserving Him through a strict control which subdues all the power of one's ego and conveys it to one only purpose: to deserve to possess God. Your soul would tell you that God had forbidden the knowledge of good and evil, because He had already granted good to His creatures gratuitously, and He did not want you to know evil, because it is a sweet fruit to taste, but once its juice becomes part of your blood, it causes a fever that kills you and produces a parching thirst, so that the more one drinks of that false juice, the more thirsty one becomes.

You may object: "And why did He put it there?" Because evil is a force that originated by itself like certain monstrous diseases in the most wholesome body.

Lucifer was an angel, the most beautiful of all the angels, a perfect spirit, inferior only to God, and yet in his bright essence a vapour of pride arose and he did not scatter it. On the contrary, he condensed it by brooding over it. And Evil was born of this incubation. It existed before man. God had hurled him out of Paradise, the cursed incubator of Evil, who had desecrated Paradise. But he is the eternal incubator of Evil and as he can no longer soil Paradise, he has soiled the earth.

That metaphorical tree proves this truth. God had said to the man and the woman: "You know all the laws and the mysteries of creation. But do not infringe on My right of being the Creator of man. My love will suffice for the propagation of the human race and it will spread among you and will excite the new Adams of the race without any lust of the senses but with purely charitable pulsations. I have given you everything. I am only keeping for Myself this mystery of the formation of man".

Satan wanted to deprive man of this intellectual virginity and with his venomous tongue he blandished and caressed Eve's limbs and eyes, exciting reflections and a perspicacity which they did not have before, because malice had not yet intoxicated them.

She "saw". And seeing, she wanted to try. Her flesh was aroused. Oh! If she had called to God! If she had hurried to Him saying: "Father! The Serpent has caressed me and I am upset". The Father would have purified and healed her with His breath, which could have infused new innocence into her as it had infused life. And it would have made her forget the snake's poison, nay it would have engendered in her a disgust for the Serpent, as it happens in those who bear an instinctive dislike for diseases of which they have just been cured. But Eve does not go to the Father. Eve goes back to the Serpent. The sensation is a sweet one for her. "Seeing that the fruit of the tree was good to eat and pleasing and agreeable to the eye, she took it and ate it".

And "she understood". Now Malice was inside her and was gnawing at her intestines. She saw with new eyes and heard with new ears the habits and voices of beasts. And she craved for them with insane greed.

She began the sin by herself. She accomplished it with her companion. That is why a heavier sentence is laid on woman. Because of her, man has become rebellious towards God and has become acquainted with lewdness and death. Because of her, he was no longer capable of dominating his three reigns: the reign of the spirit, because he allowed the spirit to disobey God; the moral reign, because he allowed passions to master him; the reign of the flesh, because he lowered it down to the instinctive level of beasts. "The Serpent seduced me" says Eve. "The woman offered me the fruit and I ate of it" says Adam. And the triple greed has ruled the three dominions since then.

Only Grace can relax the hold of this ruthless monster. And if Grace is alive, nay thoroughly alive, and kept more and more alive by the good will of a faithful son, it will succeed in strangling the monster and will no longer have anything to fear. It will not be afraid of internal tyrants, which are the flesh and passions; neither will it be afraid of external tyrants, these are the world and the mighty ones on the earth. It will dread neither persecutions nor death. It is as Paul the Apostle says: "I fear none of these things, neither do I care for my life more than I care for myself, provided I carry out the mission and the ministry the Lord Jesus gave me, and that was to bear witness to the Good News of God's Grace".[…] »

8th March 1944.

Mary says:

« I obeyed in My joy, because when I understood the mission to which God called Me, I was full of joy, My heart opened like a closed lily and it shed that blood which was to become the soil for the Lord's Seed.

The joy of being a mother.

I had consecrated Myself to God since My childhood, because the light of the Most High had shown Me the cause of evil in the world

and, as far as it was in My power, I wanted to remove from Myself every trace of Satan.

I did not know I was without stain. I could not think I was. That simple thought would have been presumption and pride, because, since I was born of human parents, it was not right for Me to think that I was the Chosen One to be the Faultless One. The Spirit of God had informed Me of the pain of the Father because of the corruption of Eve, who had lowered herself to the level of inferior creatures, whereas she was a creature of grace. It was My intention to soothe that pain by remaining unprofaned by human thoughts, wishes and contacts and thus restoring an angelical purity in My body. The palpitations of My heart were to be only for Him, and only for Him My whole being.

But if there was no passion of the flesh in Me, there was still the sacrifice of not being a mother. Also Eve had been granted by the Father Creator the gift of maternity, a maternity devoid of what now degrades it. The sweet and pure maternity without a sensual burden! I experienced it! Of how much did Eve divest herself by giving up such wealth! More than immortality. And do not think that I am exaggerating. My Jesus and I, His Mother, with Him, have experienced the languor of death. I, the sweet languor of a tired person who falls asleep, Jesus, the intense languor of who dies sentenced to death. So we also experienced death. But only I, the new Eve, experienced maternity without any kind of profanation, that I might tell the world how sweet was the destiny of woman called to be a mother without any bodily pain. And the desire of such pure maternity was possible and actually existed in the Virgin wholly devoted to God, because that maternity is the glory of woman.

If you consider in what high esteem the Israelites held a mother, you will realise even more what sacrifice I had made when I consecrated Myself to virginity. Now the Eternal Good Father granted Me, His servant, this gift, without divesting Me of the purity I had clothed Myself in to be a flower on His throne. And I rejoiced with the double joy of being the mother of a man and the Mother of God.

The joy of being the Woman by means of Whom peace was reestablished between Heaven and earth.

Oh! What a joy to have desired this peace for the sake of God and of men and to know that it was coming to the world through Me, the poor handmaid of the Almighty! What a joy to say: "Men, do not cry any longer. I have in Me the secret that will make you happy. I cannot tell what it is because it is sealed in Me, in My heart, just as the Son is enclosed in My inviolate womb. But I am already bringing it to you, and the moment when you will see Him and hear His Holy name is getting nearer and nearer".

The joy of having made God happy: the joy of the believer for his God made happy.

Oh! The joy of removing from God's heart the bitterness of Eve's disobedience, pride and disbelief!

My Jesus explained the fault with which the first Couple got stained. I redeemed that sin by going up the same stages as they descended.

Disobedience was the beginning of the downfall: "Do not eat and do not touch of that tree" said God. And man and woman did not respect that prohibition, although as kings of creation they were allowed to touch and eat of everything except of that tree because God wanted them to be inferior only to angels.

The tree: the means to test their obedience. What does obedience to God's commands imply? It implies all possible good, because God commands nothing but good. What is disobedience? It is evil, because it brings about a rebellious mental state in which Satan can be active.

Eve goes toward the tree, which, if avoided, would have caused her welfare, if approached, would cause her ruin. She goes there led by the childish curiosity of seeing what is special about it, and by a rashness that makes her consider God's command a useless one since she is strong and pure, the queen of Eden, where everything is subject to her and nothing can hurt her. Her presumption is her ruin. Presumption is the yeast of pride.

At the tree she finds the Seducer, who sings his song of lies to her inexperience, to her beautiful virginal inexperience, to her badly guarded inexperience. "You think there is evil here? No, there isn't. God told you because He wants to keep you as slaves under His power. You think you are king and queen? You are not even as free as wild animals. Animals can love one another with true love. You cannot. Animals are granted the gift of being creators like God. Animals generate little ones and see their families grow as much as they like. You do not. You are denied this joy. Why make you man and woman if you have to live thus? Be gods. You do not know the joy of being two in one flesh, that creates a third one and many more. Do not believe God when He promised you the joy of posterity seeing your children forming new families, leaving their father and mother for their families. He has given you a sham life: real life is to know the laws of life. Then you will be like gods and will be able to say to God: 'We are equal to You' ".

And the allurement continued because there was no will to break it, on the contrary there was the will to continue it and to learn what did not belong to man. And the forbidden tree becomes really mortal for the human race because from its branches there hangs the fruit of bitter knowledge that comes from Satan. And the woman becomes a female and with the yeast of Satanic

knowledge in her heart, she moves on to corrupt Adam. With their bodies and souls degraded and their morals corrupted, they became acquainted with sorrow and the death of both their souls deprived of Grace and of their bodies divested of immortality. And Eve's wound engendered suffering, which will not subside until the last couple on earth are dead.

I went along the road of the two sinners, but in the opposite direction: I obeyed. I obeyed in every way. God inspired Me to be a virgin. I obeyed. When I loved virginity that made Me as pure as the first woman before she met Satan, God asked Me to get married. I obeyed, elevating marriage to the degree of purity intended by God when He created the First Parents. I was then convinced that My destiny was solitude in marriage and the contempt of people because of My holy sterility, when God asked Me to be a Mother. I obeyed. I believed that it was possible and that the word came from God, because I was filled with peace when I heard it. I did not think: "I deserved it". I did not say: "Now the world will admire Me, because I am like God, creating the flesh of God". No, I did not. I lowered Myself in My humility.

Joy gushed out of My heart like the stem of a rose. But it was soon decorated with sharp thorns and it was clenched in the tangle of sorrow, like branches enveloped by the bearbines of convolvuli (1). Sorrow for the pain of My spouse: it suffocated My joy. Sorrow for the pain of My Son: a thorn that pierced My joy.

Eve wanted pleasure, triumph, freedom. I accepted sorrow, humiliation, slavery. I gave up My peaceful life, the esteem of My spouse, My own freedom. I kept nothing for Myself. I became the maid of God in the flesh, in morals, in the spirit, relying on Him not only for the virginal conception, but also for the protection of My honour, for the consolation of My spouse, for the means suitable to elevate him also to the sublimation of marriage, so that we could restore man and woman to their lost dignity. I embraced the will of the Lord for Myself, My spouse and My Creature.

I said "Yes" for the whole three, as I was certain that God would not break His promise to assist Me in My sorrow of a spouse who realises she is considered guilty, and of a mother who knows she is generating a Son to deliver Him to sorrow. I said "Yes" and nothing else. That "Yes" cancelled Eve's "No" to God's command. "Yes, My Lord, as You wish. I will know what You want Me to know. I will live as You want Me to live. I will rejoice if You wish so. I will suffer for what You want Me to suffer. Yes, for ever, My Lord, from the moment Your ray made Me a Mother to the moment You called Me back to You. 'Yes', for ever 'Yes'. All the good voices of the flesh, all the good passions of the spirit were under

(1) A genus of climbing plants, including the bindweed.

the weight of My perpetual 'Yes'. And above, on a diamond pedestal, there was My spirit, lacking wings to fly to You, but it was the master of the whole 'ego' subdued and made Your servant. Servant in joy, servant in sorrow. But smile, o God. And be happy. Guilt has been defeated. It has been removed and destroyed. It lies under My heel, it was washed in My tears and destroyed by My obedience. The new Tree will be born of My bosom and it will bear the Fruit that knows all the evil because It suffered it all in Itself and will give all the good. All men will be able to come to It and I shall be happy if they take of It, even if they do not remember that It was born of Me. Providing man is saved and God is loved, let it be done to His handmaid what is done to a clod of earth on which a tree is planted: a step to ascend".

Mary, we must always be steps so that other people may ascend to God. It does not matter if they tread on us, providing they are successful in reaching the Cross. It is the new tree that has the knowledge of Good and Evil, because it tells man what is good and what is evil so that he may choose and live and at the same time it is a medicine that cures those who are intoxicated by the evil they wanted to taste. Let our hearts be under the feet of men, that the number of the redeemed may increase and the Blood of My Jesus not be shed fruitlessly. That is the destiny of the maids of God. But then we deserve to receive the holy Host in our hearts and to say at the foot of the Cross drenched with His Blood and our tears: "Here is, o Father, the immaculate Host which we offer to You for the salvation of the world. Look at us, Father, melted with It and give us Your blessing for Its infinite merits".

And I give you My caresses. Rest now, My dear daughter. The Lord is with you. »

Jesus says:

« My Mother's words should disperse all perplexity of thought also in the minds most confused and muddled by pseudo science I… I.

I said: "metaphorical tree". Now I will say: "symbolical tree". Perhaps you will understand better. Its symbol is clear: the inclination to good and to evil of the two children of God, would be understood by their behaviour towards the tree., Like 'aqua regia' that tests gold and the scales of the goldsmith that weigh its carats, that tree, by God's command, became a means of testing and it gave the measure of Adam's and Eve's symbolic metal purity.

I can already hear your objection: "Was the punishment not excessive and the means used to condemn them not childish?"

Not so. Actual disobedience in you, who are their heirs, is not so grave as if it were in them. You have been redeemed by Me. But Satan's poison is always ready to rise again, like certain diseases that never disappear completely in the blood. The First Parents possessed Grace without ever even nearing Disgrace. They were therefore stronger and more firmly supported by Grace that generated love and innocence. The gift given them by God was infinite. Much graver is therefore their fall notwithstanding that gift.

Also the fruit that was offered and eaten was symbolical. It was the fruit of an experience they wanted to have at Satan's instigation to break God's command. I had not forbidden men love. I only wanted them to love each other without malice; as I loved them in My holiness, they were to love each other in the holiness of affections unsoiled by lewdness.

It must not be forgotten that Grace is light, and whoever possesses it knows what is good and useful to know. Mary, Full of Grace, knew everything, because Wisdom taught Her, Wisdom that is Grace, and She knew how to live in a holy way. Also Eve knew what was good for her to know. But not more, because it is valueless to know what is not good. But she did not have faith in God's word, and was not faithful to her promise of obedience. She believed in Satan, she broke her promise, she wanted to know what was not good, she loved it without regret, she turned love into something corrupt and degraded, which I instead had permitted as something holy. A sullied angel, she wallowed in mud and litter, whereas she could have run happily amongst the flowers of the earthly Paradise and she could have seen her offspring flourish around her, like a plant that is covered with flowers without bending its leaves into the mire.

Do not be like the foolish children mentioned by Me in the Gospel; they heard other children sing and they stopped their ears, they heard them play the pipes and they did not dance, they heard them weep and they wanted to laugh. Do not be narrow-minded, do not be deniers. Accept the Light without malice and stubbornness, without irony and disbelief. Enough said about that.

To make you understand how grateful you must be to Him Who died to elevate you to Heaven and to defeat Satan's concupiscence, I wanted to speak to you, in this period of preparation for Easter, of what was the first link of the chain by which the Word of the Father was dragged to death, the Divine Lamb to the slaughterhouse. I wanted to speak to you about it, because at present ninety per cent of you are like Eve intoxicated by Lucifer's breath and words, and you do not live to love one another, but to glut yourselves with sensuality, you do not live for Heaven but for filth, you are no longer creatures gifted with soul and reason, but dogs without soul and without reason. You have killed your souls and perverted your reason. I solemnly tell you that brutes surpass you in the honesty of their love. »

18. The Annunciation of Elizabeth's Pregnancy to Joseph.

25th March 1944.

The little house of Nazareth appears to me with Mary in it. Mary, a young girl, as when the Angel of God appeared to Her. This simple sight fills my soul with the virginal perfume of the house. The scent still remains in the room where the Angel gently waved his golden wings. That divine perfume was all concentrated on Mary to make a mother of Her and it now emanates from Her.

It is evening, because shadows begin to invade the room into which so much heavenly light had descended.

Mary is kneeling near Her little bed and is praying with Her arms crossed over Her breast and Her face bowed down very low. She is still dressed as She was at the moment of the Annunciation. Everything is exactly as it was then. The flowery branch is in its vase, the furniture in the same position. Only the distaff and the spindle are now leaning in a corner, the former with its flax, the latter with its bright thread wrapped around it.

Mary stops praying and stands up, Her face is flushed as if it were lit up by a flame. Her lips are smiling, but Her eyes are shining with tears. She takes the oil lamp and lights it with a flint. She checks that everything is in good order in the room. She straightens up the blanket on the bed as it had been displaced. She adds some water to the vase containing the flowery branch and She places it outside, in the cool of the night. She then comes back in. She takes the folded embroidery from the bookcase and the lamp and goes out closing the door. She takes a few steps in the little kitchen garden, along the side of the house and then goes into the little room where I saw the parting goodbye of Jesus and Mary. I recognise it although some pieces of furniture which were there previously are now missing.

Mary disappears into another small adjoining room, taking the lamp with Her, and I am left alone in the company of the embroidery work laid on the corner of the table. I can hear Mary's light steps moving to and fro, She then makes a noise with water as if She were washing something. Then there is the noise of broken sticks and I understand that She is lighting the fire.

Then She comes back and goes into the little garden. She comes in once again with some apples and vegetables. She puts the apples on the table, on an engraved metal tray, possibly made of copper. She goes back into the kitchen, (for the kitchen is certainly over there). Now the flames of the fireplace are merrily casting light through the open door into this room and make dancing shadows on the wall.

Some time goes by and Mary comes in with a small brown loaf and a bowl of hot milk. She sits down and dips some small slices of bread into the milk. She eats them slowly. Then leaving half of the bowl of milk, She goes into the kitchen and comes back with the vegetables on which She pours some oil and She eats them with the bread. She quenches Her thirst with the milk. She then takes an apple and eats it. The meal of a little girl.

Mary eats and thinks, and She smiles at some inner thought. She looks up and all around the walls and seems to be telling them a secret. Now and again, She becomes serious, almost sad. But soon Her smile is back on Her lips again.

There is a knocking at the door. Mary gets up and opens it. Joseph comes in. They greet each other. Then Joseph sits on a stool in front of Mary, on the opposite side of the table.

Joseph is a handsome man in the prime of life. He must be thirty-five years old at most. His face is framed by his dark brown hair and a beard of the same colour and his eyes are very sweet and very dark, almost black. His forehead is large and smooth, his nose thin and slightly aquiline, his cheeks are roundish of a brown hue, but not olive-coloured, on the contrary they are rosy near the cheek-bones. He is not very tall, but he is strong and well built.

Before sitting down he has taken off his mantle and it is the first I have seen of its kind, because it is a full circle. It is held close at the neck by a kind of hook and it has a hood. The colour is light brown and it seems to be made of a cloth of coarse wool proof against water. It looks like the mantle of a mountaineer suitable to shelter from inclement weather.

Also before sitting down he offers Mary two eggs and a bunch of grapes, somewhat withered, but well preserved. And he smiles saying: « The grapes were brought to me from Cana. I was given the eggs by a Centurion for some repair work I did to his cart. A wheel was broken and their carpenter is ill. They are new laid. He took them from the hen house. Drink them. They will do You good. »

« Tomorrow, Joseph. I have just finished My meal. »

« But You can take the grapes. They are good, as sweet as honey. I carried them very carefully, so that they would not get spoiled. Eat them. There are plenty more. I'll bring them to-morrow in a little basket. I couldn't this evening, because I came straight from the Centurion's house. »

« Well, then, you have not had any supper yet. »

« No, I haven't, but it does not matter. »

Mary gets up at once and goes into the kitchen and She comes back with some milk, some olives and cheese. « I have nothing else » She says. « Take an egg. »

But Joseph does not want it. The eggs are for Mary. He eats with relish his bread and the cheese and he drinks the lukewarm milk. He then accepts an apple. And his supper is over.

Mary takes Her embroidery after cleaning the table and Joseph helps Her and he remains in the kitchen even when She comes back here. I can hear him putting things away. He pokes the fire because it is a cool evening. When he comes in, Mary thanks him.

They speak to each other. Joseph tells Her how he spent the day. He talks of his little nephews and he takes an interest in Mary's work and in Her flowers. He promises to bring Her some beautiful flowers which the Centurion has promised him. « They are flowers we haven't got here. They were brought from Rome. And he promised me some little plants. Now, when the moon is in the right quarter I will plant them for You. They have lovely colours and a beautiful scent. I saw them last year, because they bloom in summer. They will scent the whole house for You. Then I will prune the trees when the moon is right. It is time. »

Mary smiles and thanks him. Then there is silence. Joseph looks at Mary's fair head bowed over Her embroidery. A look of angelical love. Certainly, if an angel were to love a woman with the love of a husband, he would look at her thus.

Then Mary, as if She were taking a sudden decision, lays the embroidery on Her lap and says: « I also have something to tell you. I never have anything to say, because you know how retired I live. But today I have some news. I heard that our relative Elizabeth, Zacharias' wife, is about to have a child… »

Joseph opens his eyes wide and exclaims: « At her age? »

« At her age » replies Mary smiling. « The Lord can do everything, and now He is giving this joy to our relative. »

« How do you know? Is the news certain? »

« A messenger came. One who would not tell lies. I would like to go to Elizabeth's, to help her and tell her that I am rejoicing with her. If you will allow Me… »

« Mary, You are my lady and I Your servant. Whatever You do is well done. When would You like to go? »

« As soon as possible. But I shall be away for some months. »

« And I will count the days waiting for You. Go and don't worry. I will look after the house and Your little garden. You will find the flowers as beautiful as if You had taken care of them. Only… wait. Before Passover I must go to Jerusalem to buy certain things for my work. If You can wait for a few days, I will come with You as far as Jerusalem. I can't go any farther, because I must hurry back. But we can go there together. I will be happier if I know that You are not on the road by Yourself. When You want to come back, You can let me know and I will come and meet You. »

« You are so good, Joseph. May the Lord reward you with His blessings and keep sorrow away from you. I always pray Him for that. »

The chaste couple smile at each other angelically. There is silence again for a little while.

Then Joseph gets up. He puts his mantle on and he covers his head with the hood. He says goodbye to Mary Who has also got up, and he goes out.

Mary looks at him going out and She sighs rather sadly. She then lifts Her eyes to Heavens. She is certainly praying. She closes the door carefully. She folds the embroidery. She goes into the kitchen, puts out or covers up the fire. She makes sure that everything is in order. She then takes the oil lamp and goes out closing the door. With Her hand She shields the feeble flame that flickers in the cool evening breeze… She enters Her room and prays once again.

The vision ends thus.

Mary says:

« My dear daughter, when I came back to the reality of earthly life after the ecstasy that had filled Me with inexpressible joy, My first thought was for Joseph: a thought as sharp as a rose thorn, that pierced My heart enraptured among the roses of Divine Love, Who had become My Spouse only a few moments before.

By this time I loved My holy and provident guardian. Since the time when by the will of God, manifested to Me by the word of the Priest, I had become married to Joseph, I had the possibility of knowing and appreciating the holiness of that Just man. When I became united to him, My dismay at being an orphan disappeared and I no longer regretted the lost retreat of the Temple. He was as sweet as My deceased father. With him I felt as safe as with the Priest. All perplexity had disappeared, nay it had been forgotten, so far it was from My virginal heart. I had in fact understood that there was no reason whatsoever for hesitation or fear with regard to Joseph. My virginity entrusted to Joseph was safer than a child in his mother's arms.

But now, how could I tell him that I was a Mother? I endeavoured to find suitable words to give him the news. A difficult task, as I did not want to boast of God's gift and on the other hand there was no way of justifying My maternity without saying: "The Lord has loved Me amongst all women and has made Me, His servant, His Bride". Neither did I wish to deceive him by concealing My condition from him.

And while I was praying, the Spirit of Whom I was full, said to Me: "Be silent. Entrust Me with the task of justifying You with Your spouse". When? How? I did not ask. I had always relied upon God, and I had always allowed Myself to be led by Him exactly as a flower is led away by 'running water. The Eternal Father had never abandoned Me without His help. His hand had always supported, protected and guided Me so far. It would do so also now.

O My daughter, how beautiful and comforting is faith in our Eternal Good God! He holds us in His arms as in a cradle, like a boat He steers us into the bright harbour of Goodness, He warms our hearts, comforts and nourishes us, He bestows rest and happiness, light and guidance on us. Reliance in God is everything, and God grants everything to those who trust in Him: He gives Himself.

That evening I elevated to perfection My reliance as a creature. Now I was able to do so, because God was in Me. Before I had the confidence of a poor creature, such as I was: a mere nothing, even if I was so much loved as to be the Faultless One. But now I had a divine confidence, because God was Mine: My Spouse, My Son! Oh! What a joy! To be One with God. Not for My own glory, but to love Him with a total union and say to Him: "You, only You are in Me: please assist Me with Your Divine perfection in everything I do".

If He had not said to Me: "Be silent!", I would probably have dared say to Joseph, with My face bowed to the ground: "The Spirit has penetrated Me and now the Embryo of God is in Me", and he would have believed Me, because he held Me in high esteem and because like those who never lie, he could not believe that others lied. Yes, to avoid hurting his feelings in future, I would have overcome My reluctance to praise Myself. But I obeyed the divine command. And for months after that moment, I felt the first wound pierce My heart.

It was the first pain in My destiny of Co-Redeemer. I offered and suffered it in atonement and to give you a guidance for similar circumstances in life, when it is necessary to suffer in silence for an event that casts a bad light on you in relation to those who love you.

Entrust God with the protection of your reputation and affections. If you deserve God's protection with a holy life, you can proceed safely. Even if the whole world is against you, He will defend you with regard to those who love you and will cause the truth to be known.

Now rest, My dear, and be more and more My dear daughter. »

19. Mary and Joseph Set Out for Jerusalem.

27th March 1944.

I see their departure to go to St. Elizabeth's.

Joseph has come with two little donkeys to fetch Mary: one for himself, the other for Mary. One of the little animals has the usual saddle with a strange gadget attached to it. Later I gather that it is a kind of a luggage-rack on which Joseph fastens a small wooden casket, a small trunk we would call it nowadays, which he brought for Mary's clothes, to prevent them from getting wet.

I hear Mary thank Joseph wholeheartedly for the provident gift, in which She packs what She takes out of a parcel She had made

up previously.

They close the door of the house and start off. It is daybreak, for I can see the rosy dawn in the east. Nazareth is still asleep. The two early travellers meet only a shepherd who is driving forward his little sheep, which are trotting along, one against the other, jammed in close flock. They are all bleating. The little lambs with their shrill sharp voices bleat more than the others, and want their mothers' breasts even while moving. But the mothers are hurrying towards the pastures and with their louder bleatings they urge the little ones to follow them.

Mary looks and smiles and since She has stopped to let the herd go by, She bends on the saddle and caresses the mild little beasts that pass near Her donkey. When the shepherd arrives carrying a newly-born little lamb in his arms and he stops to speak to Mary, She smiles and caresses the pinkish little face of the lamb, that is bleating desperately and She exclaims: « It's looking for its mother. Here is your mother. She won't leave you, of course she won't, little lamb. » In fact the ewe rubs herself against the shepherd, then stands up on her hind legs and licks the face of her little one.

The herd passes by making the noise of water drops falling on leaves. Behind it there is the dust raised by the trotting feet of the sheep and the patterns of their footprints on the dusty road.

Joseph and Mary take to the road again. Joseph is wearing his large mantle, Mary has on a kind of a striped shawl, because it is a very cool morning.

They are now in the country and they are- proceeding one beside the other. They seldom speak. Joseph is thinking of his business, Mary is following Her own thoughts and in Her concentration She smiles at them. At times She looks around and smiles at the things She sees. Now and again She looks at Joseph and then an expression of sad gravity darkens Her face; then She smiles again, still looking at Her provident spouse who speaks so little and when he does speak it is only to ask Her whether She is comfortable and whether She needs anything.

By now there are many people on the road, particularly near and inside villages. But Mary and Joseph do not pay much attention to the people they meet. They proceed on their trotting donkeys, in the midst of the noise of the harness bells, and they stop only once in the shade of a thicket, to eat some bread and olives and to drink at a well that runs down from a grotto. They stop later to take shelter from a sudden heavy downpour from a very dark cloud.

They have taken cover under the mountain, against a protruding rock that protects them from most of the heavy rain. Joseph wants Mary to put on his big mantle, which is proof against water and he insists so much that Mary is obliged to yield to the insistence of Her spouse, who to reassure Her of his own immunity, covers his head and shoulders with a small grey blanket which was on the saddle. Probably the donkey's blanket. Now Mary looks like a little monk, with Her face framed by the hood and the mantle closed round Her neck and covering all Her body.

The shower slackens and turns into a tedious drizzling rain. Mary and Joseph start off again along a muddy road. But it is springtime and after a short while the sun makes the journey more comfortable. Also the two little donkeys are now trotting more happily along the road.

I do not see anything else because the vision ends here.

20. From Jerusalem to Zacharias' House.

28th March 1944.

We are in Jerusalem. I know the town very well now, with its streets and gates.

The first thing Mary and Joseph do is to go to the Temple. I recognise the stable where Joseph left his donkey on the day of Jesus' presentation in the Temple. Also now He leaves the two donkeys there, after feeding them, and then he goes with Mary to worship the Lord.

When they come out, they enter a house which apparently belongs to people they know. They take some refreshment there and Mary rests until Joseph comes back with a little old man. « This man is going Your way. You will not have to travel a long way by Yourself to get to Your relatives. You can trust him because I know him. »

They get on their donkeys again and Joseph goes with Mary as far as the Gate (it is not the one they entered but a different one) and they part there. Mary proceeds with the little old man who is as talkative as Joseph was silent and takes an interest in many things. Mary answers him patiently. In front of the saddle She has now the little trunk which Joseph's donkey had carried earlier and She is no longer wearing the large mantle. Neither has She on the shawl, which is folded on the trunk, and She is really beautiful in Her dark blue dress and white veil that protects Her from the sun. How beautiful She is!

The old man must be somewhat deaf, because Mary, Who is wont to speak in a very low voice, had to speak loudly to make Herself heard. And now he is tired. He has finished with all his questions and news and is dozing on the saddle, led by the donkey that is familiar with the road.

Mary takes advantage of this respite to collect Her thoughts and to pray. It must be a prayer that She sings in a low voice, looking at the blue sky, with Her arms crossed over Her breast, while Her face is bright and happy because of some internal emotion.

I see nothing else.

And even now that the vision is interrupted, as it happened yesterday, Lam left with Mother near me, visible to my internal sight so clearly that I can describe for you the light rosy hue of Her cheeks, not very chubby but gently soft, the bright red of Her little lips and Her clear blue eyes sweetly shining between Her darkblond eyelashes.

I can tell you how Her hair, divided into two on the crown of Her head, falls softly with three undulations on each side, as far down as to cover half of Her little rosy ears, and then disappears with its pale shiny gold behind the veil covering Her head (because I see Her with Her mantle over Her head, wearing a dress of paradisiac silk and a dark mantle, as thin as a veil, of the same cloth as the dress).

I can tell you that Her dress is tight round Her neck by means of a sheathing inside which runs a cord the ends of which form a knot in front at the base of Her neck. Likewise Her dress is gathered at Her waist by a thicker cord, also of white silk, hanging down Her side with two tassels.

I can even tell you that Her dress, tight as it is at Her neck and waist, forms seven round soft folds on Her breast, the only ornament of Her very modest garment.

I can inform you of the chastity emanating from all Her aspect, from Her so delicate and harmonious forms which make Her such an angelical woman.

And the more I look at Her the more I suffer thinking of how much they made Her suffer and I wonder how they could have had no mercy on Her, so meek and kind, so delicate also in Her physical appearance. I look at Her and I can hear once again all the shouting on Calvary, also against Her, all the mockery and insults, all the maledictions shouted against Her because She was the Mother of the Convict. Now I see Her beautiful and tranquil. But Her present countenance does not cancel the memory of Her tragical face during those hours of agony, or that of Her desolate face in the house in Jerusalem, after Jesus' death. And I would like to be able to caress and kiss Her cheek, so delicately rosy and soft, to remove with my kiss that remembrance of grievous tears, as She certainly remembers as I do.

You cannot believe how much peace it gives me to have Her near me. I think that to die seeing Her must be as sweet and even sweeter than the sweetest hour of one's lifetime. During the time that I did not see Her thus, all for myself, Her absence was a great sorrow to me, just like the absence of a mother. I now feel once again the ineffable joy which was my companion in December and early January. And I am happy, notwithstanding that the sight of the torture of the Passion casts a veil of grief on all my happiness.

It is difficult to explain and make you understand what I feel and what has been happening since February the eleventh, when in the evening I saw Jesus suffer in His Passion. That sight has changed me completely. Whether I die now or in one hundred years' time, that vision will always be the same in intensity and consequences. Previously I used to think of the sorrows of Christ, now I live them, because one word, or a glance at an image is enough to make me suffer all over again what I suffered that evening and be horrified at those tortures; and I grieve over His desolate sufferings, and even if nothing reminds me of them, their remembrance tears my heart.

Mary is beginning to speak and I become silent.

Mary says:

« I will not speak much, because You are very tired, My poor daughter. I only wish to draw Your attention and the attention of readers to the constant habit of Joseph and Mine of giving priority to prayer. Tiredness, haste, worries, occupations never hindered our prayer, on the contrary they helped it. It was always the queen of our occupations, our relief, our light, our hope. If in sad moments it was a consolation, in happy ones it was a song. But it was always the constant friend of our souls. It detached us from the earth, from our exile, and it raised us up towards Heaven, our Fatherland.

Not only I, Who by now had God with Me and I had but to look at My bosom to worship the Holy of Holies, but also Joseph felt united to God when he prayed, because our prayers were a true adoration of our whole beings, which melted with God by worshipping Him and by being embraced by Him.

And please note that not even I, although I had the Eternal God in Me, not even I felt exempted from respectful homage to the Temple. The deepest holiness does not exempt anyone from feeling a mere nothing with regard to God and from converting such nothingness into an endless hosanna to God's glory, since He allows us to do so.

Are you weak, poor, faulty? Invoke the holiness of the Lord: "Holy, Holy, Holy!" Invoke the Blessed Holy One to assist you in your misery. He will come and instil His holiness into you. Are you holy and rich in merits in the eyes of God? Invoke the holiness of the Lord just the same. It is infinite and will increase yours. The angels, who are superior to the weaknesses of mankind, do not cease singing their "Sanctus" not even for an instant, and their supernatural beauty increases with each invocation of the holiness of our God. Imitate the angels.

Never divest yourselves of the protection of prayer, which blunts the weapons of Satan, the malice of the world, the incentives of the flesh and mental pride. Never lay down this weapon, which causes Heaven to open and pour out Its graces and blessings.

The world needs a shower of prayers to be purified from the sins that draw punishments from God. And since only few people pray, those few must pray as if they were many. They must multiply their living prayers to make up the necessary amount to obtain graces. Prayers are living when they are flavoured with true love and sacrifice.

My dear daughter, it is a good thing, pleasing to God and meritorious, that you should suffer because of the sufferings of My Jesus and Mine, in addition to your own. Your sympathetic love is so dear to Me. But do you want to kiss Me? Kiss the wounds of My Son. Dress them with the balm of your love. I suffered spiritually the pangs of the scourges, of the thorns and the torture of the nails and of the cross. And likewise I feel spiritually all the caresses given to my Jesus, as they are as many kisses given to Me. And then come. I am the Queen of Heaven. But I am always the Mother… »

And I am happy.

21. Arrival at Zacharias' House.

1st April 1944.

I am now in a mountainous place. They are not high mountains, neither are they just hills. There are ridges and creeks as we see in our Apennines in Tuscany and Umbria. The vegetation is thick and beautiful and there is plenty fresh water, that keeps the pastures green and the orchards fruitful: apple and fig-trees are mostly cultivated in the orchards and grapes near the houses. It must be springtime because the grapes are rather big, about the size of vetch grains, and the apple-blossoms have already sprung and they look like so many little green pellets; on top of the fig branches the first fruits can be seen, still in the embryo stage, but already well formed. The meadows are real soft multicoloured carpets. Sheep are grazing or resting on them and they look like white spots on the emerald of the grass.

Mary on Her donkey is climbing up a rather well kept road, probably the main road. She is climbing because the village is higher up and it looks quite tidy. My internal warner says to me: « This place is Hebron. » You spoke to me of Montana. I cannot help it. It is indicated to me with this name. I do not know whether Hebron is the whole area or only the village. That is what I hear and that is what I say.

Mary is now entering the village. It is evening. Some women on their doorsteps watch the arrival of the stranger and gossip with one another. Their eyes follow Her and they are not happy until they see Her stop in front of one of the prettiest houses, in the centre of the village, with a kitchen garden in the front and rear and a well cultivated orchard around it. The orchard continues into a large meadow that rises and slopes according to the sinuosity of the mountain and ends in a wood of tall trees, beyond which I do not know what there is. The whole place is surrounded by a hedge of blackberries or wild roses. I cannot tell exactly which, because, if you remember, the flowers and leaves of these two thorny hedges are very much alike and until their branches bear fruit it is easy to confuse them. In front of the house, that is on the side that skirts the village, the place is enclosed by a small low white wall, on top of which there are rows of rose-bushes, at present without flowers, but already full of buds. In the centre there is an iron gate. It is easily understood that it is the house of a notable of the village or of a well-to-do family, because everything shows comfort and great order, if not riches and pomp.

Mary gets off the donkey and goes to the gate. She looks through the iron bars, but does not see anyone. She endeavours then to-make Herself heard. A little old woman, who more curious than the others has followed Her, shows Her a strange gadget that is used as a bell. It consists of two pieces of metal balanced on a kind of yoke, at the end of which there is a rope. When the rope is pulled, the two metal pieces strike each other and give the sound of a bell or gong.

Mary pulls the rope, but so gently, that there is only a faint tinkling, which no one hears. Then the little old woman, whose face is all nose and slipper'-chin and whose tongue is worth ten put together, gets hold of the rope and pulls it several times with all her might. She makes enough noise to raise a dead man! « That's how You do it, woman. Otherwise, how can they hear You? You know, Elizabeth is old and Zacharias also is old. Now he is also dumb, as well as deaf. Also the two servants are old, don't You know? Have You ever been here before? Don't You know Zacharias? Are You… »

Mary is rescued from the deluge of information and questions by a little old man who suddenly appears panting. He must be a gardener or a farmer, for he is holding a hoe in his hand and there is a pruning knife tied to his belt. He opens the gate and Mary enters thanking the little woman but… leaving her fairly recent question unanswered. What a disappointment for the curious soul!

As soon as She is inside Mary says: « I am Mary of Joachim and Anne, from Nazareth. I am your masters' cousin ».

The man bows down and welcomes Her, he then calls out in a loud voice: « Sarah! Sarah! » He opens the gate again to let in the

donkey that had been left outside. Mary, in fact, to get rid of the persistent little woman, had slipped inside very quickly and the gardener just as quickly had closed the gate in the face of the gossip. And while taking the donkey in, he exclaims: « Oh! What a great happiness and what an upheaval to this household! Heaven has granted a child to the barren one, may the Most High be blessed! But seven months ago, Zacharias came back dumb from Jerusalem. He now makes himself understood by gestures or by writing. Perhaps You already know. My landlady has longed so much for You in this joy and this travail! She always spoke to Sarah about You and she would say: "If I only had little Mary with Me! I wish She were still in the Temple! I would send Zacharias to fetch Her. But now the Lord wanted Her married to Joseph of Nazareth. She is the only one who can comfort me in my pain and help me to pray to God, because She is so good. And they all miss Her in the Temple. On the last feast day, the last time I went to Jerusalem with Zacharias to thank the Lord for the child He has given me, Her teachers said to me: 'The Temple seems to be without the Cherubim of the Glory since Mary's voice is no longer heard inside these walls' ". » He then shouts again: « Sarah, Sarah! My wife is a little deaf. But come, please, I'll show You the way. »

Instead of Sarah, a fairly old woman appears at the top of the staircase on one side of the house. Her face is all wrinkles and her hair is very grey. It must have been very black at one time because her eyelashes and eyebrows are still very dark and also from the colour of her face one can tell that she was swarthy. Her present very obvious pregnant condition is a strange contradiction to her evident old age, notwithstanding her wide and loose dress. She looks down shading her eyes with her hand. As soon as she recognizes Mary she raises her arms to the sky and utters an « Oh! » of joy and surprise. She then rushes, as fast as she can, towards Mary. Also Mary, who always moves very quietly, now runs, as swift as a little deer, and reaches the foot of the staircase at the same time as Elizabeth. And She embraces with great affection Her cousin who is crying with joy at seeing Her.

They remain embraced for an instant and then Elizabeth detaches herself exclaiming: « Ah! », an exclamation of mingled joy and sorrow and she places her hands on her enlarged abdomen. She bows her face and turns red and pale alternately. Mary and the servant hold out their hands to support her because she staggers, as if she were unwell. But Elizabeth, after a moment of concentration, lifts her face which is now so bright that she looks much younger. She then looks at Mary with evident veneration as if she sees an angel, she bows in a deep salutation exclaiming: « You are blessed amongst all women! Blessed is the Fruit of Your womb! (She says exactly that: two clearly separate sentences). How did I deserve that the Mother of my Lord should come to me, Your servant? There, at the sound of Your voice, the child leaped out of joy in my womb and when I embraced You, the Spirit of the Lord whispered deepest truths to my heart. You are blessed, because You believed that it was possible for God also what does not appear possible to the human mind! You are blessed, because by Your faith You will accomplish the things the Lord predicted to You and the Prophets foretold for our times! You are blessed, for the Salvation You have brought to the house of Jacob! You are blessed for the Holiness You have brought to my son, whom I feel leaping with joy, like a happy little kid, in my womb, because he feels free from the burden of guilt, and is called to be the Predecessor, sanctified before Redemption by the Holy One Who is growing within You! »

Mary, with two tears that run down like two pearls from Her sparkling eyes to Her smiling lips, with Her face raised to heaven and also Her arms raised up, in the attitude that Her Jesus will take so often, exclaims: « My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord » and She continues the canticle as it has been handed down to us. At the end, at the verse: « He has come to the help of Israel his servant etc. », she puts Her hands on Her breast, kneels down stooping to the ground, adoring God.

The servant, who quite wisely had disappeared when he realised that Elizabeth was not really physically unwell, on the contrary, she was confiding her thoughts to Mary, is now coming back from the orchard with a solemn old man, whose hair and beard are completely white, and who greets Mary from a distance with great gestures and loud guttural sounds.

Zacharias is arriving says Elizabeth, touching the shoulder of Mary, engrossed in prayer. « My Zacharias is dumb. God has punished him because he did not believe. I will tell You later. But now I hope that God will forgive him, because You have come. You, full of Grace. »

Mary rises and goes to meet Zacharias. She stoops to the ground in front of him, kissing the hem of his white robe that reaches down to the ground. It is a very wide robe, held tight to the waist by a large embroidered braid.

Zacharias welcomes Mary by gestures and they both move toward Elizabeth. They all enter a room on the ground floor. It is a wide room, tastefully arranged, where they make Mary sit down and they offer Her some new milk - there is still foam on it - and some small cakes.

Elizabeth gives some orders to the maid servant, who has appeared at last, her hands still covered with flour and her hair whiter than usually because of the flour dust on it. Perhaps she was baking bread. She gives orders also to the male servant, whose name I hear is Samuel, and tells him to take Mary's trunk to a room which she indicates to him. She thus fulfils her duties of a landlady towards her guest.

In the meantime Mary is replying to the questions Zacharias is asking Her, writing them on a wax tablet with a style. From Her answers I understand that he is asking Her about Joseph and Her married life with him. I also understand that Zacharias has been denied all supernatural light about Mary's state and Her condition of Mother of the Messiah. Elizabeth goes near her husband and laying her hand on his shoulder, in a loving attitude, as if she were caressing him chastely, she says to him: « Also Mary is a mother. Rejoice over Her happiness. » But she does not say anything else. She looks at Mary. And Mary looks at her but does not encourage her to say more and Elizabeth keeps silent.

A sweet, very sweet vision! It obliterates the horror of the sight of Judas' suicide.

Last night, before falling asleep, I saw Mary crying, bent over the unction stone, on the dead body of Our Redeemer. She was on His right-hand side, with Her back to the opening of the sepulchre grotto. The torches lit up Her face so that I could see Her poor face ravaged by sorrow and washed by tears. She would take Jesus' hand, caress it, warm it against her cheeks, kiss it, stretch its fingers out… kiss them one by one, those poor motionless fingers. Then She would caress His face, would bend down to kiss His open mouth, His half-open eyes, His wounded forehead. The reddish light of the torches made the wounds of the tortured body appear more real and rendered the cruelty of His torture and the realism of His death more true and real.

And I remained in contemplation until my mind was clear. When I came out of my sopor, I prayed and I lay down to go to sleep. Then the above vision began. But Mother said to me: « Don't move. Just look. You will write it tomorrow » In my sleep I dreamt it all over again. When I woke up at 6.30 I saw what I had already seen both when I was awake and in my sleep. And I wrote while I was seeing. Then you came and I asked you if I could add the following. They are various sketches of Mary's stay in Zacharias' house.

22. Mary and Elizabeth Speak of their Children.

2nd April 1944.

It is morning. I see Mary sewing, sitting in the room on the ground floor. Elizabeth is going to and fro, busy with the housework. And when she comes into Mary's room, she never fails to go and caress Her fair head, which looks even more fair against the rather dark walls and in the beautiful sun rays that enter through the door open on to the garden.

Elizabeth bends down to look at Mary's work - the embroidery She had in Nazareth - and she praises its beauty.

« I have also some linen to spin » says Mary.

« For your Child? »

« No. I had it already when I never thought… » Mary does not say anything else. But I understand: «… when I never thought I was to be the Mother of God »

« But now You will have to use it for Him. Is it good? Fine? Children, You know, need very soft material. »

« I know. »

« I had begun… Late, because I wanted to be sure that it was not a deception of the Evil One. Although… I felt such a joy within me, that it could not possibly come from Satan. After… I suffered so much. I am old, Mary, really old, to be in this state. I suffered so much. Don't You suffer… »

« No. I don't. I have never been so well. »

« Of course. Quite right. You… there is no stain in You, as God chose You for His Mother. And that is why You are not subject to Eve's sufferings. The One You bear is holy. »

« I feel as if I had a wing in My heart and not a burden. I seem to have within Me all the flowers and all the birds that sing in springtime, and all the honey and all the sunshine… Oh! I am so happy! »

« Blessed Mary! Neither do I feel any longer burden, tiredness or pain, since I saw You. I seem to be new, young, freed from the miseries of woman's flesh. My child, after leaping happily at the sound of Your voice, is now quiet in his joy. And I seem to have him, in me, as in a living cradle, and I see him sleeping satisfied and happy, breathing like a little bird under the wing of its mother… I will now start working. He will no longer be a weight. I cannot see very well, but… »

« Never mind, Elizabeth. I will see to the spinning and weaving both for you and for your baby. I am quick and My sight is very good. »

« But you will have to see to Your… »

« Oh! There will be plenty time!… First I will take care of you, since you are going to have your baby very shortly, and later I will see to My Jesus. »

It is beyond human possibility to tell you how sweet are Mary's expression and voice, how bright Her eyes are with sweet happy tears, and how She smiles in pronouncing that Name, looking at the clear blue sky. She seems to be enraptured simply saying: « Jesus ».

Elizabeth exclaims: « What a beautiful name! The name of the Son of God, of Our Redeemer! »

« Oh! Elizabeth! » Mary becomes sad and She seizes the hands of Her relative who had laid them across her enlarged abdomen. « Tell

Me, since you were illuminated by the Spirit of the Lord, when I came here, and you prophesied what the world does not know, tell Me: what will My Creature have to suffer to save the world? The Prophets… Oh! What do the Prophets say of the Saviour? Isaiah… Do you remember Isaiah? "He is the Man of sorrows. Through His wounds we are healed. He was pierced through for our faults, crushed for our sins. Yahweh has been pleased to crush Him with suffering. After being condemned He was lifted up… " What lifting is he referring to? They call Him the Lamb and I cannot help thinking of the lamb of the Passover, of the lamb of Moses, and I associate it with the serpent elevated by Moses on a cross. Elizabeth!… Elizabeth!… What will they do to My Creature? What will He have to suffer to save the world? » Mary is crying.

Elizabeth comforts Her. « Mary, don't cry. He is Your Son, but He is also the Son of God. God will see to His Son, and will look after You, His Mother . And if so many will be cruel to Him, so many will love Him. So many!… For ever and ever. The world will look at Your Son and will bless You with Him. They will bless You, for You are the Spring from which redemption gushes out. The destiny of Your Son! He will be raised to the rank of King of the whole creation. Just think of that, Mary. King, because He will redeem the whole creation, and as such, He will be universal King. And He will be loved also in the world, in its lifetime. My son will precede Yours and will love Him. The angel told Zacharias. And he wrote it down for me. How painful it is to see him dumb, my Zacharias! But I hope that when the baby is born also the father will be freed from his punishment. Will You pray, too, since You are the Seat of the Power of God and the Cause of delight in the world. To obtain this grace I make my offers to the Lord, as best I can. I offer my creature: because it belongs to Him, as He lent it to His servant to grant her the joy of being called "mother". It is the testimony of what God has done for me. I want his name to be "John". Isn't my son a grace? And didn't God grant me it? »

« And God, I am sure, will grant you the grace. I will pray… with you ».

« I suffer so much seeing him dumb!… » Elizabeth is crying. « When he writes, as he can no longer speak to me, there seem to be mountains and oceans between me and my Zacharias. After so many years of sweet conversation, now there is nothing but silence from his mouth. And particularly now, when it would be so nice to talk about who is about to come. I even refrain from speaking to avoid seeing him getting strained in his efforts to reply to me by gestures. I have cried so much! How much did I long for You! The people of the village watch, talk and criticise. Such is the world. But when one has a pain or a joy, one needs to be understood, not criticised. But now my life seems completely improved. I feel a joy in me since You came here. I feel that my test is about to end and that I will soon be completely happy. I am right, am I not? I have resigned myself to everything. But if God would only forgive my husband! If I could only hear him pray once again! »

Mary caresses and comforts her and in order to divert her attention, she invites her to take a little walk in the sunny garden.

They walk under a well cultivated pergola, as far as a little rustic tower, in the holes of which doves have nested.

Mary scatters the birdseed laughing, because the doves have rushed on Her, cooing loudly and flapping noisily, forming iridescent circles around Her. They alight on Her head, shoulders, arms and on Her hands, stretching their rosy beaks to snatch the grains from Her hands, gracefully pecking the Virgin's rosy lips and Her teeth that shine in the sun. Mary takes the golden corn from a little sack and She laughs in the middle of that tournament of intrusive greed.

« How fond they are of You! » points out Elizabeth. « You have only been here a few days and they love You more than me, although I have always taken care of them. »

They continue walking until they reach an enclosure, at the end of the orchard, where there are about twenty goats with their little kids.

« Have you come back from the pasture? » Mary asks a little shepherd, caressing him.

« Yes, because my father said to me: "Go home, because it is going to rain shortly and there are some sheep about to lamb. Make sure they have dry herb and litter". There he is, he is coming. » And he points to the wood, whence a continual trembling bleating can be heard.

Mary caresses a little kid, as fair as a child, which rubs itself against Her, and together with Elizabeth She drinks some new milk that the little shepherd offers them.

Then the sheep arrive led by a shepherd as hairy as a bear. But he is obviously a good man because he is carrying a groaning sheep on his shoulders. He puts her down gently and explains: « She is about to lamb. She can only walk with difficulty. I put her on my shoulders and I hurried all the way to get here in time. » The sheep, still limping painfully, is led into the fold by the boy.

Mary is sitting on a stone and is playing with the little kids and the lambs, offering clover flowers to their pretty rosy little faces. A black and white kid puts its little hooves on Her shoulder and smells Her hair. « It is not bread » says Mary laughing. « I will bring you some crumbs tomorrow. Be good, now. »

Once again cheerful, Elizabeth also laughs.

I see Mary Who is spinning very quickly under the pergola, where the grapes are growing bigger and bigger. Some time must have elapsed because the apples are beginning to redden on the trees and the bees are humming near the fig flowers already mature.

Elizabeth is now quite stout, and she is walking heavily. Mary looks at her carefully and lovingly. Also Mary's sides appear more round when She gets up to pick up the spindle which has fallen far away from Her. The expression on Her face has changed. It is more mature; before She was a girl, now She is a woman.

The women go into the house because it is now getting dark, and the lamps are lit in the room. While waiting for supper, Mary begins to weave.

« Does it never tire You? » asks Elizabeth, pointing to the loom.

« No, you can be sure of that. »

« I am exhausted by this heat. I have not suffered any longer, but now the weight is too heavy for my old kidneys. »

« Take courage. You will soon be free. How happy you will then be. I am longing to be a mother. My Child! My Jesus! What will He be like? »

« As beautiful as You are, Mary. »

« Oh no! More beautiful! He is God. I am His maid. What I meant is, will He be fair or dark? Will His eyes be like a clear sky, or like the eyes of a mountain deer? I imagine Him more beautiful than a cherub, with golden curly hair, His eyes the same colour as the Sea of Galilee when the stars begin to peep on the horizon, His tiny little mouth as red as a pomegranate that bursts when it matures in the sun, and His cheeks as pink as this pale rose, with two little hands that could be contained in the hollow of a lily, they are so small and tiny, and two tiny feet that I can hold in the hollow of My hand, so soft and smooth, even more so than the petal of a flower. See. The idea I form of Him is taken from all the beautiful things that nature suggests to Me. And I can hear His voice. When He cries - because My Child will cry a little when He is hungry or sleepy, and it will always be a great pain for His Mummy Whose heart will be pierced every time She hears Him cry - when He cries, His voice will be like the bleating that now comes from a little lamb, only a few hours old, when it seeks its mother's breast, and her warm maternal fleece to sleep. When He laughs - and My heart in love with my Creature will then be full of Heaven, for I can be in love with Him, because He is My God, and it will not be against My consecrated virginity to love Him as a lover - His voice when He laughs will be like the merry cooing of a happy little dove which is full and content in its cosy little nest. And I think of Him when He is taking His first steps… a little bird hopping on a flowery meadow. The meadow will be His Mother's heart, it will be laid under His tiny pink feet with all Her love, so that He may not tread on anything that may hurt Him. Oh, how I will love My Child! My Son! Also Joseph will love Him. »

« But You will have to tell Joseph. »

Mary's face darkens, and She sighs. « Yes, I will have to tell him… I wish Heaven would tell him, because it is so difficult to tell. »

« Shall I tell him? We will ask him to come for John's circumcision… »

« No. I have entrusted God with the task of informing him of his happy destiny of putative father of the Son of God, and He will do so. The Spirit said to Me that evening: "Be silent. Entrust Me with the task of justifying You". And He will do so. God never lies. It is a great trial, but with the help of the Eternal Father, it will be overcome. No one must learn from My mouth what the benignity of the Lord has done. Certainly you are the exception, because the Spirit revealed it to you. »

« I have not mentioned it to anybody, not even to Zacharias who would have been very happy. He thinks you are a mother according to nature. »

« I know. And I decided that out of prudence. The secrets of God are holy. The angel of the Lord did not reveal My divine maternity to Zacharias. He could have done so, if God had wanted, because God knew that the time for the Incarnation of His Word in Me was already imminent. But God hid this joyful light from Zacharias, who rejected your late maternity as something impossible. I have complied with the will of God, as you have seen. You perceived the secret living in Me. He did not perceive anything. Until the screen of his incredulity does not fall before the power of God, he will be separated from supernatural lights. »

Elizabeth sighs and becomes silent.

Zacharias comes in. He offers some parchment rolls to Mary. It is the hour of prayer before supper. Mary prays in a loud voice in place of Zacharias. Then they settle down at the table.

« When You are no longer with us, how we shall regret having no longer anyone to pray for us » says Elizabeth, looking at her dumb husband.

« You will pray then, Zacharias » says Mary.

He shakes his head and writes: « I will never be able to pray again for other people. I became unworthy when I doubted of my God. »

« Zacharias, you will pray. God forgives. »

The old man wipes a tear and sighs.

After supper, Mary goes back to the loom.

« That's enough! » says Elizabeth. « You will become too tired. »

« Your time is approaching, Elizabeth. I want to prepare for your child clothes worthy of him who will precede the King of the House of David. »

Zacharias writes: « Of whom will He be born? And where? »

Mary replies: « Where the Prophets said, and of whom the Eternal Father will choose. Whatever our Most High Lord does, is well done. »

Zacharias writes: « Well, in Bethlehem then! In Judah. We shall go and worship Him, woman. And You will come to Bethlehem, too, with Joseph. »

And Mary, bowing Her head over the loom says: « I will come. » The vision ends thus.

Mary says:

« The first charity towards our neighbours is to be exerted towards our neighbours. This must not seem a pun to you. There is charity towards God and charity towards our neighbours. Charity towards our neighbours comprises also charity towards ourselves. But if we love ourselves more than our neighbours, we are no longer charitable, we are selfish. Also in lawful matters, we must be so holy as to always give priority to the needs of our neighbour. Be sure, My children, that God provides for the generous by means of His power and His bounty.

It was this certainty that led Me to Hebron to assist My relative in her condition. And to My eagerness for human help, God, giving beyond measure as He is wont, added an unforeseen gift of supernatural assistance. I went to give material help and God sanctified My good intention by sanctifying, through it, the fruit of Elizabeth's womb, and by means of that sanctification, by which the Baptist was presanctified, He relieved the physical pain of the elderly daughter of Eve, who had conceived at an unusual age.

Elizabeth, a woman of fearless faith and confident submission to God's will, deserved to understand the mystery that was enclosed within Me. The Spirit spoke to her through the bouncing in her womb. The Baptist pronounced his first speech, as the Announcer of the Word, through the veils and the diaphragms of veins and flesh that separated and united him at the same time to his holy mother.

Neither did I deny My prerogative of being the Mother of the Lord, because she was worthy of the information and the Light had revealed Itself to her. To deny it would have meant denying God the praise that it was just should be given to Him, the praise that I bore in Me, and which, since I could not tell anyone, I repeated to the herbs, to the flowers, to the stars, to the sun, to the singing birds and the patient sheep, to the warbling waters, to the golden light that kissed Me descending from Heaven. But it is sweeter to pray together rather than say our prayers by ourselves, I would have liked all the world to know of My destiny, not for My own sake, but that they might join Me in praising My Lord.

Prudence forbade me to reveal the truth to Zacharias. That would have implied going beyond the work of God. And if I was His Spouse and Mother, I was still His servant, and I could not take the liberty of substituting Him and exceeding Him in a decree, simply because He had loved Me beyond measure.

Elizabeth in her holiness understood, and was silent. Because a holy person is always submissive and humble.

The gift of God must increase our goodness. The more we receive from Him, the more we must give. Because the more we receive, the more obvious it is that He is with us and within us. And the more He is with us and within us, the more we must endeavour to reach His perfection.

That is why I worked for Elizabeth, postponing My own work. I was not afraid that I would not have time. God is the master of time. He provides for those who hope in Him, also in normal things. Selfishness does not speed matters up, it delays them. Charity does not delay, it speeds up. Always bear that in mind.

How much peace there was in Elizabeth's house! If I had not been worried about Joseph and… and my Child, Who was the Redeemer of the world, I would have been happy, But the cross was already casting its shadow on My life and I heard the voices of the Prophets like a knell…

My name was Mary. Bitterness was always mingled with the sweetness that God poured into My heart. And it increased more and more until the death of My Son. But when God calls us, Mary, to the destiny of victims for His glory, oh! it is sweet to be ground like corn in the millstone, to convert our pain into a bread that can strengthen the weak and make them capable of reaching Heaven!

Now, it is enough. You are tired and happy. Rest now with My blessing »

23. The Birth of the Baptist.

3rd April 1944.

This vision of peace descends from Heaven, amid the disgusting things which the world nowadays offers us, and I do not know how that can be, because I am like a little twig at the mercy of the wind in my continuous conflicts with human wickedness so discordant with what lives within me.

We are still in Elizabeth's house. It is a beautiful summer evening, still clear in the last rays of the sun, and yet the sky is already decorated with a falcated moon that looks like a silver comma attached to a large deep blue cloth.

The rose-bushes give off strong perfume and the bees, like humming gold drops, are making their last flights in the quiet warm evening air. From the meadows, there is a strong smell of hay dried in the sun, it is almost like that of bread, of warm bread, just taken out of the oven. Perhaps it comes also from the many sheets hanging everywhere to dry, and which Sarah is now folding.

Mary is walking with Her cousin, linking arms with her. They go up and down very slowly, under the semi-dark pergola.

But Mary watches everything and, while taking care of Elizabeth, She sees that Sarah is ill at ease in folding a long sheet which she has taken off a hedge. « Sit down here, and wait for me » She says to her relative. And She goes to help the old servant, pulling the sheet to straighten it, and then folding it carefully. « They still smell of sun, they are warm » She says with a smile. And to make the old lady happy, She adds: « This sheet, after your bleaching, has become as beautiful as ever. You are the only one who knows how to do things so well. »

Sarah goes away, overjoyed, with her load of scented sheets.

Mary goes back to Elizabeth and says: « Let us take a few more steps. They will do you good. » And as Elizabeth is tired, and does not wish to move, Mary says to her: « Let us go only to see if your doves are all in their nests, and if the water in their tub is clear. We shall then come back home. »

Doves must be the favourite pets of Elizabeth. When they are in front of the rustic tower where all the doves are gathered, Elizabeth is deeply moved; in fact the hens are in the nests and the cocks are in front of them, but neither of them move, instead they all start cooing loudly when they see the two women: a gentle form of greeting. Elizabeth is overcome by the weakness of her condition and by fears which make her cry. She expresses her fears to her cousin. « If I should die… what will happen to my poor little doves? You will not be staying here. If You were to remain in my house, it would not matter if I died. I have had the greatest joy a woman can possibly have. The joy which I was no longer expecting to have, and I cannot even complain of death with the Lord, because He has overwhelmed me with His benignity, may He be blessed for it. But there is Zacharias-… and then there will be the child. An old man who would feel as though he were lost in a desert without his woman. And the other is so small, that he would be like a flower, condemned to die of cold because he is without his mother. Poor baby, without the caresses of his mother!… »

« But why are you so sad? God has given you the joy of being a mother, and He will not take it away from you when it is full. Little John will receive all the kisses of his mummy, and Zacharias all the attentions of his faithful wife until the very end of his long life. You are two branches of the same tree. One will not die, leaving the other alone. »

« You are good, and You comfort me. But I am so old to have a son. And now that I am about to have one, I am afraid. »

« Oh! No! There is Jesus here. We must not be afraid where there is Jesus. My Child relieved your pain, you said that yourself, when He was just a bud newly formed. Now that He is becoming more and more mature, and He already lives as My Creature - I can feel in My throat the beating of His little heart, and I feel as if a little nestling with a light pulsating heart were resting on My throat He will remove all dangers from you. You must have faith. »

« I have. But if I should die… don't leave Zacharias at once. I know that You are concerned with Your own house. But please remain here a little longer to help my husband in his first days of sorrow. »

« I shall stay to take delight in your joy and in the joy of your husband, and I will leave you when you are strong and happy. But now be quiet, Elizabeth. Everything will be all right. Nothing will happen to your household while you are suffering. Zacharias will be served by the most loving maid, your flowers will be looked after, and your doves will be attended to, and you will find them all beautiful and happy to rejoice with, when their loved mistress comes back. Let us go in now, because you are getting pale… »

« Yes, I think I am beginning to suffer again. Perhaps my time has come. Mary, pray for me. »

« I will support you with My prayer until your labour ends in joy. »

The two women slowly go back into the house.

Elizabeth withdraws to her rooms. Mary, a capable and provident woman, gives the necessary instructions, prepares everything that may be necessary, and at the same time, She comforts Zacharias who is worried.

In the house that is sleepless that night, and where one can hear the strange voices of women called in to help, Mary is watchful like a lighthouse on a stormy night. The whole house rotates around Her, and She sees to everything, smiling sweetly. And She prays. When She is not called for this or that matter, She concentrates in prayer. She is now in the room where they always gather for their meals and to work. Zacharias is with Her, and he sighs and walks up and down uneasily. They have already prayed together. Then Mary has continued to pray. Also now that the old man, being tired, has sat down on his big chair near the table, and is quiet and sleepy, She prays. And when She sees him sleeping with his head resting on his arms crossed on the table, She takes Her sandals off to make no noise and walks barefooted and, making less noise than a butterfly fluttering around the room, She takes Zacharias' mantle, and lays it on him so gently that he continues to sleep in the comfort of the woollen cloth that protects him from the cold air of the night that comes in, in gusts from the door, which is very often opened. Then She starts praying again, and She prays more and more intensely, kneeling down, raising Her arms, when the painful cries of Elizabeth become heart-rending.

Sarah comes in and invites Her to go out. Mary goes out barefooted into the garden. « My mistress wants You » she says.

« I am coming. » And Mary walks along the house, goes upstairs… She looks like a white angel, wandering in the peaceful starry night. She goes into Elizabeth's room.

« Oh! Mary! Mary! What a pain! I can't stand it any longer, Mary! How much pain one must suffer to be a mother! »

Mary caresses her lovingly, and kisses her.

« Mary! Mary! Let me put my hands on Your bosom! »

Mary takes the two wrinkled and swollen hands, and lays them on Her round abdomen, pressing them tightly with Her smooth, slender little hands. And She speaks in a low voice, now that they are alone: « Jesus is here, and He hears and sees you. Have faith, Elizabeth. His holy heart is beating more strongly because He is acting for your good. I can feel it throbbing as though I were holding it in My hands. And I understand the words that My Child says to Me. He is now saying: "Tell the woman not to be afraid. Only a little more pain. And then, with the first rays of the sun, among the many roses awaiting the morning's rays to open out on their stems, her house will have the most beautiful rose, and it will be John, My Predecessor". »

Elizabeth now presses also her face against Mary's bosom, and weeps gently.

Mary stands for some time in that attitude because the pain seems to ease giving a moment's relief. And she beckons everybody to be quiet. She remains standing, beautiful and white in the pale, faint light of an oil lamp, like an angel near a person who suffers. She is praying. I can see Her moving Her lips. But even if I did not see them move, I would understand that She is praying from the enraptured expression on Her face.

Some time goes by, and Elizabeth is in the throes once again. Mary kisses her again, and goes out . She goes downstairs very quickly in the moonlight, and goes to see if the old man is still sleeping. He is sleeping, and moaning in his sleep. Mary makes a gesture of compassion, and starts to pray once again.

More time passes. The old man awakes from his sleep and lifts up his head, and he is confused, because he does not recollect why he is there. Then he remembers, makes a gesture, and utters a guttural exclamation. He then writes: « Is he not born yet? » Mary shakes Her head in denial. Zacharias writes: « How much pain! Oh my poor woman! Will she manage without dying? »

Mary takes the hand of the old man, and reassures him: « At dawn, in a short while, the baby will be born. Everything will be all right. Elizabeth is strong. How beautiful this day will be - it will soon be daybreak - how beautiful this day will be when the child sees the light! It will be the nicest day of your life! The Lord has kept aside great graces for you and your child is the announcer of them. »

Zacharias shakes his head sadly, and points to his dumb mouth. He would like to say many things, but cannot.

Mary understands, and replies: « The Lord will complete your joy. Believe in Him completely, hope in Him indefinitely, love Him totally. The Most High will grant you more than you dare hope for. He wants this total faith from you, to wash out your past mistrust. Say in your heart with me: "I believe". Say it with every beat of your heart. The treasures of God are opened for those who believe in Him and in His powerful bounty. »

The light begins to filter in through the partly open door. Mary opens it. Dawn makes the dewy earth completely white. There is a strong smell of humid earth and green herbs, and the first chirping of the birds, calling one another from branch to branch, can be heard.

The old man and Mary move towards the door. They are pale because of the sleepless night, and the light at dawn makes them look even more pale. Mary puts on Her sandals, and goes to the foot of the staircase and listens. A woman looks out, nods, and then goes back in. Nothing yet.

Mary goes into the room, and comes back with some warm milk which She gives to the old man. She goes to the doves, comes back, and disappears into the same room. Perhaps it is the kitchen. She moves around watching. She looks as though She had slept the most perfect sleep, She is so quick and serene.

Zacharias is walking up and down the garden very nervously. Mary looks at him compassionately. She then goes again into the usual room, and kneeling near Her loom, She prays intensely, because the cries of Elizabeth are becoming sharper. She bows down to the ground imploring the Eternal Father. Zacharias comes back in, and seeing Her in this prostrate state, the poor old man cries. Mary gets up and takes him by the hand. She is so much younger than he is, but She looks as though She were the mother of the poor old desolate soul, and She pours Her consolation on him.

They are standing thus, one beside the other, in the sun that makes the morning air rosy, and it is thus that the joyful news reaches them: « He is born! He is born! It's a boy! Happy father! A boy as beautiful as a rose, as beautiful as the sun, as strong and good as his mother! Joy for you, father, blessed by the Lord Who gave you a son that you may offer him to the Temple! Glory to God, Who has granted posterity to this house! Blessed are you, and your son who was born to you! May his offspring perpetuate your name for centuries, from generation to generation, and may his descendants always be in union with the Eternal Lord. »

Mary blesses the Lord weeping for joy. Then the two receive the little one, who has been brought to the father, that he may bless him. Zacharias does not go to Elizabeth. He receives the child, who is screaming desperately, but he does not go to his wife.

Mary instead goes, carrying with love the little one, who becomes quiet, as soon as She takes him in Her arms. The woman who is following Her notices this, and she says to Elizabeth: « Woman, your child became quiet immediately, when She took him. Look how peacefully he is sleeping, and only Heaven knows how restless and strong he is. But look now! He seems a little dove. »

Mary lays the creature near his mother and caresses her, tidying up her grey hair. « The rose is born » She whispers in a low voice, « and you are alive. Zacharias is happy. »

« Does he speak? »

« Not yet. But hope in the Lord. Rest now. I am staying with you. »

Mary says:

« If My presence had sanctified the Baptist, it did not nullify for Elizabeth the sentence against Eve. "You shall give birth to your children in pain" the Eternal Father had said.

Only I, because I was without stain, and I had not had any human copulation, was exempted from generating with pain. Sadness and pain are fruits of fault. I, Who was the Innocent One, had to know also sorrow and sadness, because I was the CoRedeemer. But I did not know the torture of generating. No. I did not know that torture.

But believe Me, daughter, that there never was, and never will be a torture of puerpery like Mine as the Martyr of a spiritual Maternity, which was accomplished on the hardest of beds, the bed of My cross, at the foot of the scaffold of My dying Son. Which mother is compelled to generate thus? To blend the torture of Her bowels which contract spasmodically because of the death rattle of Her dying Creature, with the torture which tears Her bowels apart in the strain of overcoming the horror of having to say: "I love you, come to Me Who am your Mother" to each murderer of Her Son, born of the most sublime love that Heaven ever saw, of the love of a God with a virgin, of the kiss of Fire, of the embrace of Light which became Flesh, and made the womb of a woman the Tabernacle of God?

"How much pain to be a mother!" says Elizabeth. So much! But

nothing when compared to Mine.

“Let me press my hands on Your bosom". Oh, if you always asked Me for that when you suffer!

I am the Eternal Bearer of Jesus. He is in My womb, as you saw last year, like the Host in the monstrance. Who comes to Me, finds Him. Who leans on Me, touches Him. Who addresses Me, speaks to Him. I am His Dress. He is My Soul. My Son is united to His Mother more, much more now, than He was in the nine months that He was in My womb. And every pain is appeased, every hope flourishes and every grace flows for those who come to Me and rest their heads against My bosom.

I pray for you. Remember that. The beatitude of being in Heaven, living in the ray of God, does not cause Me to forget My children who are suffering on the earth. And I pray. And all Heaven prays, because Heaven loves. Heaven is living charity. And Charity has mercy on you. But even if I were all by Myself, My prayer would be sufficient for the needs of those who hope in God. Because I never stop praying for you all, for the holy and the wicked, to give joy to the holy, to give repentance to the wicked that they might be saved.

Come, come, o children of My sorrow. I am waiting for you at the foot of the Cross to grant you graces. »

24. The Circumcision of the Baptist.

4th April 1944.

I see the house rejoicing. It is the day of the circumcision.

Mary has made sure that everything is beautiful and in good order. The rooms are bright with light, the most beautiful cloths, the nicest furnishings are shining everywhere. There is a lot of people. Mary moves agile amongst the various groups. She is very beautiful in Her most beautiful white dress.

Elizabeth, respected by everybody as a matron, is enjoying most happily her feast. The child is laid on her lap sated with milk.

It is now the moment for the circumcision.

« We will call him Zacharias. You are old. It is only fair that the child be called after you » say the men.

« Not at all! » exclaims Elizabeth. « His name is John. His name must be the witness of the power of God. »

« But has there ever been a John in our kinship? »

« It does not matter, his name is to be John. »

« What do you say, Zacharias? You want your name, don't you? »

Zacharias shakes his head in denial. He takes his tablet and writes: « His name is John. » And as soon as he finishes writing, he adds, with his tongue now free: « because God has granted a great grace to me, his father, and to his mother, and to this new servant of His who will spend his life for the glory of the Lord, and will be called great for ever in the world and in the eyes of God, because he will give converted hearts to the Most High Lord. The angel said so, and I did not believe. But now I believe, and the Light is now in me. The Light is amongst us, but you do not see it. It is its destiny not to be seen, because the souls of men are encumbered and idle, but my son will see It, and will speak of It, and will turn to It the hearts of the just in Israel. Oh! Blessed are those who believe in It and will always believe in the Word of the Lord. And blessed be You, o Eternal Lord, God of Israel, because You have visited and redeemed Your people, and You have raised up for us a powerful Saviour in the house of Your servant David. As You promised by mouth of the holy Prophets from ancient times, that You would save us from our enemies, and from the hands of all who hate us, to show Your mercy to our ancestors, and thus remember Your holy covenant. This is the oath You swore to our father Abraham; that You would grant us, free from fear, deliverance from the hands of our enemies, to serve You in Heaven and thrive in Your presence all our days » and he continues to the end.

The people present are most surprised at the name, at the miracle, at the words of Zacharias.

Elizabeth, who at the first words of Zacharias had uttered a cry of joy, is now weeping, embracing Mary, Who is caressing her happily.

I do not see the circumcision. I only see them bring back John, who is screaming at the top of his voice. Not even his mother's breast can calm him down. He is kicking like a little colt. Then Mary takes him, and lulls him, and he becomes quiet, and lies down peacefully.

« Now just look! » says Sarah. « He is quiet only when She picks him up! »

The people begin to go away slowly. In the room now there are only Mary, holding the baby in Her arms, and Elizabeth who is most happy.

Zacharias comes in, and closes the door. He looks at Mary with his eyes full of tears. He wants to speak. Then he is silent. He moves forward. He kneels down in front of Mary. « Bless the poor servant of the Lord » he says to Her. « Bless him, because You can do so, since You are carrying Him in Your womb. The word of the Lord was spoken to me when I admitted my error and I believed everything I had been told. I see You, and Your happy destiny. I adore the God of Jacob in You. You are my first Temple, where once again a priest, I can pray the Eternal Father again. You are blessed, because You obtained grace for the world and You are now bringing the Saviour to it. Forgive Your servant if he did not see Your majesty before. When You came here, You brought us all the graces, because everywhere You go, o Full of Grace, God works His miracles, and holy are those walls which You enter, holy become the ears which listen to Your voice, and holy the flesh You touch. Holy the hearts, because You grant graces, Mother of the Most High, Virgin of the Prophets, expected to bring the Saviour to the people of God. »

Mary smiles, full of humility and She speaks: « Praise be to the Lord. To Him only. From Him, not from Me, comes every grace. And He grants it to you, that you may love Him, and that it may help you to reach perfection in the following years to deserve His Kingdom that My Son will open to the Patriarchs, to the Prophets, to the just of the Lord. And since you can now pray before the Holy, please pray for the maidservant of the Most High, because to be Mother of the Son of God is blissful, to be Mother of the Redeemer must be a destiny of deepest sorrow. Pray for Me, because I feel My weight of sorrow increasing from hour to hour. And I shall have to bear it all My life. And even if I do not see the details, I feel that it will be heavier than if the whole world were placed on My shoulders of a woman, and I were to offer it to Heaven. I, I alone, poor woman! My Child! My Son! Ah! Your son no longer cries if I lull him. But shall I be able to lull Mine, to soothe His pain?… Pray for Me, priest of God. My heart shudders like a flower in

a storm. I look at men, and I love them. But I see the Enemy appear behind their faces, and make them enemies of God, and of My Son Jesus… »

And the vision ends with the paleness of Mary, and Her tears, that cause Her eyes to shine brightly.

Mary says:

« God forgives him who acknowledges his sin, repents and confesses it with a humble and sincere heart, He does not only forgive, He rewards. Oh! How good is My Lord to those who are humble and sincere! To those who believe in Him, and trust in Him!

Clear your souls of what encumbers them and makes them insipid. Prepare your souls to receive the Light. As a light in darkness, It is a guide and a holy consolation.

O holy friendship with God, beatitude of His faithful ones, wealth unequalled by anything else, who possesses you is never alone, and never tastes the bitterness of despair. O holy friendship, you do not eradicate sorrow, because sorrow was the destiny of a God incarnate and can thus be the destiny of man. But you make this sorrow sweet in its bitterness, and you mingle with it a light and a caress which relieve the cross with a celestial touch.

And when Divine Bounty grants you graces, make use of the gift received to give glory to God. Do not be like foolish people who turn a good thing into a harmful weapon, or like lavish persons who convert their wealth into misery.

You give Me too much sorrow, My children, behind whose faces I see the Enemy appear, that is, he who hurls himself against My Jesus. Too much sorrow! I would like to be the Source of Grace for everybody. But too many among you do not want Grace. You ask for "graces", but with a soul devoid of Grace. How can Grace succour you if you are Her enemies?

The great mystery of Good Friday is approaching. It is commemorated and celebrated' in churches. But it is necessary to celebrate and commemorate it in your hearts, and to beat your breasts like those who were descending from Golgotha and say. "In truth, this Man was the Son of God, the Saviour", and say: "Jesus, for the sake of Your Name, save us", and say: "Father, forgive us", and finally say: "I am not worthy, but if You forgive me and come to me, my soul will be healed, and I no longer want to commit sin, because I no longer wish to be ill and hateful to You".

Pray, children, with the words of My Son. Say to the Father for your enemies: "Father, forgive them". Call the Father Who has withdrawn indignant at your errors: "Father, Father, why have You forsaken me? I am a sinner. But if You forsake me, I will perish. Come back, Holy Father, that I may be saved". Entrust your eternal good, your spirit, to the Only One Who can preserve it unhurt from the demons: "Father' into Your hands I commit my spirit". Oh! If with humility and love you surrender your spirit to God, He will lead it as a father leads his little one, neither will He allow anything to hurt your spirit.

Jesus, in His agony, prayed to teach you how to pray. I am reminding you of it in these days of His Passion.

And you, Mary, since you see My joy of a Mother and you are enraptured by it, consider and remember that I possessed God through an ever increasing sorrow. It descended into Me with the Seed of God and like a gigantic tree it has grown until it touched Heaven with its top, and hell with its roots, when I received on My lap the lifeless remains of the Flesh of My flesh, and I saw and counted His tortures, and I touched His torn Heart to consume My sorrow right until the last drop. »

25. The Presentation of the Baptist in the Temple.

5th and 6th April 1944.

This is what I see the night between the Wednesday and Thursday of the Holy Week.

I see Zacharias, Elizabeth, Mary and Samuel getting off a comfortable waggon, to which also Mary's little donkey is tied. Mary is holding little John in Her arms and Samuel has a lamb and a basket with a pigeon in it. They get off at the usual stable, which must be the halting place for all the pilgrims to the Temple, who leave their mounts there.

Mary calls to the owner and asks him whether anybody arrived from Nazareth the day before or early that morning. « Nobody, woman » replies the little old man. Mary is surprised, but does not say anything else.

She gets Samuel to fix her little donkey, and then She joins the two elderly parents, and She explains Joseph's delay: « He must have been held up by something. But he will certainly come today. » She takes the child again from Elizabeth to whom She had handed him before, and they all set out for the Temple.

Zacharias is received with honour by the guards, and is greeted and congratulated by other priests. He is very handsome today, in his priestly robes and his joy of happy fatherhood. He looks like a patriarch. I think that Abraham must have been like him when he rejoiced offering Isaac to the Lord.

I see the ceremony of the presentation of the new Israelite and the purification of his mother. The ceremony is more stately than Mary's, because the priests celebrate it solemnly for the son of another priest. They all rush round the group of women and the child, and are happily engaged with them.

Also some curious people have come near and I can hear their comments. Since Mary is holding the child in Her arms while they move to the appointed place, the people think She is the mother.

But a woman says: « It's not possible. Can't you see that She is pregnant? The baby is only a few days old and she is already with child. »

« And yet » points out another one « only She can be the mother. The other woman is old. She must be a relative. But she certainly cannot be the mother at her age. »

« Let us follow them, and we will see who is right. »

And their surprise becomes even greater when they see that it is Elizabeth who fulfils the purification rite: she offers the bleating lamb in holocaust and the pigeon for sin.

« She is the mother. Didn't I tell you? »

« No! »

« Yes. »

The people whisper, still incredulous. They whisper so much that a peremptory « Ssst! » comes from the group of priests present at the rite. They are silent for a moment, but start whispering even louder when Elizabeth, radiant with holy pride, takes the child and moves forward in the Temple to make the presentation to the Lord.

« It is she! »

« It's always the mother who makes the offering. »

« What miracle can this be? »

« .What will that child be, who has been granted to that woman at such an old age? »

« What sign can it be? »

« Don't you know? » says one, who has just arrived panting. « It's the son of Zacharias, the priest of the house of Aaron, the one who became dumb when he was offering incense in the Sanctuary. »

« It's a mystery! A mystery! And now he speaks once again! The birth of his son has untied his tongue. »

« I wonder what spirit spoke to him and paralysed his tongue to accustom him to be silent about the secrets of God! »

« It is a mystery! What secret truth does Zacharias know? »

« Will his son be the Messiah expected by Israel? »

« He was born in Judaea. Not in Bethlehem and not of a virgin. He can't be the Messiah! »

« Who is he, then? »

But the answer remains in the silence of God and the people are left to their curiosity.

The ceremony is over. The priests are now joyfully paying compliments to the mother and her child. The only one who is hardly noticed, nay, is avoided almost with disgust when they become aware of Her condition, is Mary.

After all the congratulations, most of them go out on to the road. Mary wants to go to the stable to see whether Joseph has arrived. He has not. Mary is disappointed and worried.

Elizabeth is anxious about Her. « We can stay until midday, then we must go, to be home before night. He is too young to be out at night. »

And Mary, calm and sad: « I will stay in one of the yards of the Temple. I will go to My teachers… I do not know. I will do something »

Zacharias puts forward a proposal which is immediately accepted as a good solution: « Let us go to Zebedee's relatives. Joseph will certainly look for You there. If he should not come there, it will be quite easy for You to find someone who will accompany You to Galilee, because the fishermen from Gennesaret are continuously going to and coming from that house. »

They take the little donkey, and go to Zebedee's relatives, who are the very same people with whom Joseph and Mary stayed four months before.

The time passes quickly, but there is no sign of Joseph. Mary controls Her grief lulling the baby, but it is obvious that She is worried. Although it is so warm that everybody is perspiring, She has not taken off Her mantle, concerned as She is to conceal Her condition.

At long last, Joseph is announced by a loud knocking at the door. Mary's face shines, cheerful again.

Joseph greets Her, because She is the first to go and meet him and greet him reverently. « The Lord's blessing on you, Mary! »

« And on you, Joseph. And praised be the Lord that you have come! Here, Zacharias and Elizabeth were about to leave, to be at home before night. »

« Your messenger arrived in Nazareth, when I was at Cana, working there. I was told the other evening. And I left at once. But although I have travelled without stopping, I am late, because the donkey lost one of his shoes. Please forgive me. »

« I am to be forgiven by you, because I have been away from Nazareth for such a long time! But see, they were so happy to have Me with them, that I decided to please them up till now. »

« You have done well, Woman. Where is the baby? »

They enter the room where Elizabeth is giving suck to little John, before departing. Joseph congratulates the parents on the sturdiness of the child, who screams and kicks, as if they were thrashing him, because he has been taken away from his mother's breast to be shown to Joseph. They all laugh at his protests. Also Zebedee's relatives, who have come in with fresh fruit, milk and bread for everybody, and a large tray of fish, laugh and join in the conversation.

Mary speaks very little. She is sitting quiet and silent in Her little comer, with Her hands on Her lap under Her mantle. Also when She drinks a cup of milk, and eats a bunch of golden grapes with a little bread, She speaks very little, and hardly moves. Her looks at Joseph are a mixture of pain and enquiry.

He also looks at Her. And after some time, bending over Her shoulder, he asks Her: « Are You tired or are You not well? You look pale and sad. »

« I am sorry I have to part from little John. I am very fond of him. I held him on My heart only a few minutes after he was born… »

Joseph does not ask any more questions.

It is time for Zacharias to depart. The waggon stops at the door and they all go towards it. The two cousins embrace each other fondly. Mary kisses the baby many times before putting him in the lap of his mother, who is already sitting in the waggon. She then says goodbye to Zacharias, and asks him to bless Her. When kneeling before the priest, Her mantle slips off Her shoulders, and Her figure appears in the bright light of the summer afternoon. I do not know whether Joseph notices Her figure at this moment, because he is intent on saying goodbye to Elizabeth. The waggon leaves.

Joseph goes back into the house with Mary, Who sits down again in the dim comer. « If You do not mind travelling by night, I would suggest we leave at sunset. It is very warm during the day. The night instead is cool and quiet. I am saying that for You, because I don't want You to get sunstroke. It makes no difference to me to be in a scorching sun. But You… »

« As you wish, Joseph. I also think it is better to travel by night. »

« The house has been all tidied up. And the little orchard. The flowers are beautiful, as You will see. You are arriving just in time to see them all in bloom. The apple-tree, the fig-tree, the vines are laden with fruit as was never seen before, and I had to put a support for the pomegranate, because its branches were so heavily laden with fruit already fully grown, a thing which has never been seen before at this time of the year. The olive-tree… You will have plenty oil. It blossomed in a miraculous way, and not one flower was lost. All the flowers are now little olives. When they are mature, the tree will seem full of dark pearls. There isn't another orchard as beautiful in the whole of Nazareth. Also Your relatives are surprised. Alphaeus says it is a miracle. »

« Your hands have worked it! »

« Oh! no! Poor me! What can I have done? I took care of the trees and I gave some water to the flowers… Do You know? I built a fountain for You down at the end, near the grotto, and I put a large basin there. So You will not have to go out to get water. I brought the water down from the spring which is above Matthew's olivegrove. It is pure and plentiful. I brought a little stream down to You. I dug a small duct in the ground, I covered it properly, and now the water comes down, singing like a harp. I was not happy that You should go to the village fountain, and then carry back home the jars full of water. »

« Thank you, Joseph. You are so good! »

Joseph and Mary are now silent, as if they were tired. And Joseph is also dozing. Mary is praying.

It is now evening. The host insists that they should eat something before leaving. Joseph, in fact, eats some bread and fish, while Mary takes only some milk and fruit.

They then depart. They get on their donkeys. Joseph has fastened Mary's little trunk to his saddle, as he had done when coming to Jerusalem. And before She gets on Her donkey, he makes sure that Her saddle is properly fastened. I see that Joseph looks at Mary when she mounts Her saddle. But he does not say anything. Their journey starts when the first stars begin to twinkle in the sky.

They hurry to the town gates to reach them before they close. When they come out of Jerusalem, and they take the main road towards Galilee, the clear sky is already crowded with stars. There is solemn quietness in the country. One can hear only a few nightingales singing, and the beating of the hooves of the two donkeys on the hard road, baked by the sun.

Mary says:

« It is the eve of Maundy Thursday. Some people may think that this vision is out of place. But your grief of lover of My Jesus Crucified is in your heart and will remain there even if a sweet vision is shown to you. It is like the tepidity emanating from a flame, which is still fire but is no longer fire. The flame is fire, not its tepidity which comes from it. No beatific or peaceful vision will be able to remove that grief from your heart. And regard it as something precious, more precious than your own life. Because it is the greatest gift that God can grant a believer in His Son. Further, my vision is not discordant, in all its peace, with the commemorations of this week.

Also My Joseph suffered his passion. It began in Jerusalem when he noticed My condition. And it lasted several days, exactly as it had happened to Jesus and to Me. Neither was it less painful for his soul. And only because of the holiness of My just spouse, it was contained in such a dignified and secret form, that it has been hardly noticed throughout centuries.

Oh! Our first Passion! Who can feel its intimate and silent intensity? Who can describe My pain when I realised that Heaven had not yet heard My prayer by revealing the mystery to Joseph?

I understood that he was not aware of it when I saw that he was respectful to Me as usual. If he had known that I bore in Me the Word of God, he would have adored that Word enclosed in My womb, with the acts of veneration which are due to God and which he would not have failed to accomplish, as I would not have refused to receive, not for My own sake, but for Him Who was within Me and that I bore, as the Ark of the Alliance carried the stone code and the vases of manna.

Who can measure My struggle against the dismay that endeavoured to overwhelm Me in order to convince Me that I had hoped in vain in the Lord? Oh! I think it was the furious rage of Satan! I perceived doubt rising behind My back, and stretching its icy claws to imprison My soul and prevent it from praying. Doubt is so dangerous and lethal to the spirit. It is lethal because it is the first agent of the deadly disease called "despair", against which we must react with all our strength, so that our souls may not perish, and we may not lose God.

Who can truly tell Joseph's pain, his thoughts, the perturbation of his feelings? Like a little boat caught in a great storm, he was in a vortex of conflicting ideas, in a turmoil of reflections, of which one was more piercing and painful than the other. He was, to all appearances, a man betrayed by his wife. He saw his good reputation and the esteem of his world collapse around him; because of Her he saw scornful fingers pointed at himself and felt pitied by the village people. Above all, he perceived that his love and esteem for Me had fallen, struck to death, before the evidence of a deed.

In this respect, his holiness shines brighter than Mine. And I give this witness with the affection of a spouse, because I want you to love My Joseph, this wise, prudent, patient and good man, who is not separated from the mystery of Redemption, on the contrary, he is closely connected to it, because he suffered for it, consuming himself in sorrow for it, saving your Saviour at the cost of his own sacrifice because of his holiness.

Had he not been so holy, he would have acted in a human way, denouncing Me as an adulteress so that I should be stoned, and the Son of My sin should perish with Me. If he had been less holy, God would not have granted him His light as guidance in his trial. But Joseph was holy. His pure spirit lived in God. His charity was ardent and strong. And out of charity he saved your Saviour for you, both when he refrained from accusing Me to the elders, and when he saved Jesus in Egypt, leaving everything with prompt obedience.

The three days of Joseph's passion were short in number, but deep in intensity. And they were tremendous also for Me, those days of My first passion. Because I was aware of his suffering, which I could not alleviate, in fact I had to obey God's command Who had said to Me: "Be silent!"

And when, after we arrived in Nazareth, I saw him go away with a laconic goodbye, and bent as if he had aged in a short time, and I noticed that he no longer came to see Me in the evening as he used to do, then I tell you, My children, that My heart wept very bitterly. Closed in My house, all alone, in the house where everything reminded Me of the Annunciation and the Incarnation, and where everything reminded Me of Joseph, married to Me wit h spotless virginity, I had to fight despair and Satan's insinuation, and hope, hope, hope. And pray, pray, pray. And forgive, forgive, forgive Joseph's suspicion, his disturbance and just despair.

My children: it is necessary to hope, to pray, to forgive to obtain God's intervention in our favour. You must live your passions, because you deserved them with your sins. I can teach you how to overcome them and turn them into joy. Hope beyond measure. Pray with confidence. Forgive to be forgiven. God's forgiveness will be the peace you desire, My children.

I will not say anything else for the time being. There will be silence until after the Easter triumph. It is Passion time. Have pity on your Redeemer. Listen to His cries, and count His wounds and tears. The former were suffered, the latter shed for you. Let every other vision disappear before that one which reminds you of the Redemption accomplished on your behalf. »

26. Mary of Nazareth Clarifies the Matter with Joseph.

31st May 1944.

After fifty-three days Mother shows Herself again in this vision which She tells me to put in this book. Joy is renewed in me. Because to see Mary is to possess joy.

I see the little orchard in Nazareth. Mary is spinning in the shade of a very thick apple-tree overloaded with apples which begin to redden and are so rosy and round that they look like so many cheeks of children.

But Mary is not rosy at all. The beautiful colour that brightened Her cheeks at Hebron has disappeared. Her face is as pale as ivory, only Her lips are a curve of pale coral. Under Her lowered eyelashes there are two dark shadows and Her eyes are swollen as if She had cried. I cannot see Her eyes, because Her head is bowed, intent on Her work and even more on a thought which is obviously distressing Her, in fact I can hear Her sighing like a person sad at heart.

She is all dressed in white, in white linen, because it is very warm, notwithstanding that the freshness, still intact, of the flowers makes me understand that it is morning. Her head is uncovered, and the sun playing among the apple-tree leaves, which are stirred by a very gentle breeze, filters with its thin rays down to the dark brown earth of the flower-beds and forms small circles of light on Her blond head, so that Her hair looks like pure gold.

There is no noise whatsoever from the house or from the neighbourhood. One can only hear the babbling of the tiny stream of water that runs down into the large basin at the bottom of the orchard.

Mary starts at a loud resolute knocking at the door. She lays the distaff and spindle down and rises to go and open. Although Her dress is loose and wide it does not conceal the rotundity of Her pelvis.

Joseph is standing in front of Her. Mary turns pale, also in Her lips. Her face is so bloodless that it looks like a host. Mary looks at Joseph with sad enquiring eyes. Joseph looks at Her with imploring ones. They are both silent, looking at each other. Then Mary says: « At this time, Joseph? Is there anything you need? What do you want to tell Me? Come in. »

Joseph enters and closes the door. He is still silent.

« Speak, Joseph. What is it you want from Me? »

« I want You to forgive me. » Joseph bends down as if he wanted to kneel down. But Mary, Who is always so reserved in touching him, seizes him resolutely by his shoulders and stops him.

Mary's face blushes and blanches in rapid succession, one moment it is all red and immediately afterwards it is as white as snow, as it was before. « You want Me to forgive you? I have nothing to forgive you, Joseph. I can but thank you once again for everything you have done here while I was away and for your love for Me. »

Joseph looks at Her, and I can see two large tears welling up in the cavity of his deep eyes, they remain there as if they were on the rim of a vase, and they then roll down on to his cheeks and his beard. « Forgive me, Mary. I mistrusted You. Now I know. I am not worthy of having such a treasure. I lacked in charity, I accused You in my heart, I accused You unfairly, because I did not ask You to tell me the truth. I sinned against God's law, because I did not love You as I loved myself… »

« Oh! no! You have not sinned! »

« Yes, I have, Mary. If I had been accused of such a crime, I would have defended myself. But You… I was not giving You the possibility of defending Yourself, because I was about to take a decision without questioning You. I have been unfair to You, because I offended You with my suspicion. Also a single suspicion is an offence, Mary. Who suspects does not know. And I did not know You as I should have done. But for the torment I suffered… three days of torture, forgive me, Mary. »

« I have nothing for which to forgive you. On the contrary, I ask you to forgive Me for the pain I caused you. »

« Oh! Yes, it was a great pain! What a torture! Look! I was told this morning that my temples are white haired and my face wrinkled. These past days have been more than ten years of my life! But why, Mary, have You been so humble as to conceal Your glory from me, Your spouse, and thus allow me to suspect You? »

Joseph is not on his knees, but he is bent so low that he is as good as kneeling down, and Mary lays Her tiny hand on his head and smiles. She seems to be absolving him. And She whispers: « If I had not been humble in the most perfect manner, I would not have deserved to conceive the Expected One, Who is coming to pay for the sin of pride that ruined man. And then I obeyed… God had requested such obedience. It cost Me so much… because of you, because of the pain that you were to suffer. But I could but obey. I am the Handmaid of the Lord, -and servants do not discuss the orders they receive. They fulfill them, Joseph, even if they cause bitter tears. » Mary weeps quietly while speaking. So quietly that Joseph, bent down as he is, does not notice it until a tear falls on the floor.

He then lifts his head and - it is the first time I see him do this he presses Mary's little hands in his dark strong ones and he kisses the tips of the rosy slender fingers that protrude like fresh buds of a peach-tree from the circle formed by his own hands.

« Now we shall have to arrange for… » Joseph does not say anything else, but he looks at Mary's body and She becomes purple

and sits suddenly, to avoid Her figure being exposed to eyes watching Her. « We shall have to make haste. I will come here… We will complete the wedding… Next week. Is that all right? »

« Whatever you do is all right, Joseph. You are the head of the family, I am your servant. »

« No. I am Your servant. I am the happy servant of my Lord Who is growing in Your womb. You are blessed amongst all the women of Israel. This evening I will warn my relatives. And after… when I am here, we will work to prepare everything to receive… Oh! How can I receive God in my house? God… in my arms? I will die of joy!… I will never dare touch Him! I will never be able… ! »

« You will be able, as I will, by the grace of God. »

« But You are… I am a poor man, the poorest of God's children!… »

« Jesus is coming to us, poor people, to make us rich in God, He is coming to us two, because we are the poorest and we admit it. Rejoice, Joseph. The House of David has the King long waited for and our home will become more splendid than Solomon's palace, because Heaven will be here and we shall share with God the secret of peace that men will be acquainted with later. He will grow among us, our arms will be the cradle for the Redeemer and our work will procure bread for Him… Oh! Joseph! We will hear the voice of God calling us "father and Mother!" Oh!… » Mary cries with joy. Such happy tears!

And Joseph, who is now kneeling at Her feet, is weeping with his head almost hidden in Mary's wide dress, which falls in folds on to the plain pavement of the room.

The vision ends here.

Mary says:

« No one must interpret My pallor erroneously. It was not caused by human fear. From a human point of view I should have expected to be stoned to death. But I was not afraid because of that. I was suffering because of Joseph's pain. Neither was I upset by the thought that he might accuse Me. I was only sorry and afraid that he might be lacking in charity if he should insist in his accusation. That is why all My blood rushed to My heart when I saw him. It was the moment when even a just man might have offended Justice by offending charity. And I would have been extremely upset if a just man were to commit an error since he never erred.

Had I not been humble to the very extreme limit, as I told Joseph, I would not have deserved to bear within Me Him Who was lowering Himself: God, to the humiliation of being a man in order to make reparation for the pride of the human race.

I have shown you that scene which is not described by any of the Gospels, because I want to draw the excessively misguided attention of men to the conditions which are essential to please God and receive His continuous calls to your hearts.

Faith: Joseph believed the heavenly messenger's words unquestioningly. He wanted but to believe, because he was sincerely convinced that God is good and that since he had hoped in the Lord, the Lord would not have reserved for him the torture of being betrayed, disappointed and sneered at by his neighbours. He asked for nothing, but to believe in Me, because, being honest, it was painful for him to think that other people were not honest. He lived according to the Law and the Law says: "Love your neighbour as you love yourself ". We love ourselves so much that we think we are perfect even when we are not. Can we therefore not love our neighbour simply because we think he is faulty?

Unrestricted Charity. A charity that knows how to forgive, that wants to forgive, and forgive in advance excusing wholeheartedly the imperfections of our neighbours. It is necessary to forgive immediately, accepting every extenuating circumstance.

Humility, as unrestricted as charity. You must admit that you can be faulty even in simple thoughts, and you must not be so proud as to refuse to say: "I made a mistake", because such pride would be more harmful than the previous fault. Everybody makes mistakes, with the exception of God. Who can say: "I am never wrong" ? And there is a more difficult humility: the one that knows how to keep silent about God's wonderful things in us, when it is not necessary to proclaim them for His glory, so that we might not discourage our neighbour who has not received such special gifts from God. If He wants, oh! if He only wants, God reveals Himself in His servant! Elizabeth "saw" Me for what I was, My spouse knew Me for what I was, when it was time for him to know.

Leave to the Lord the care of proclaiming you His servants. He is anxious to do so, because every creature that rises to a particular mission, is a new glory which is added to His infinite glory, and is a witness of what man is, as God wanted him to be: a lesser perfection that reflects its Author. Remain in shadow and silence, you who are beloved by Grace, so that you may hear the only words of "life", that you may deserve to have on you and in you the Sun that shines eternally.

Oh! Most Blessed Light, God, joy of Your servants, do shine on those servants of Yours that they may exult in their humility, praising You, only You, because You disperse the proud but raise the humble, who love You, to the splendour of Your Kingdom. »

27. The Census Edict.

4th June 1944.

I see the house in Nazareth once again: the little room where Mary usually takes Her meals. She is now working at a white piece

of cloth. She lays Her work down to light a lamp, because it is getting dark, and She can no longer see well in the greenish light which comes in through the door half open on to the orchard. She closes the door, too.

Her abdomen is now very big. But She is still so beautiful. Her pace is always agile and all Her gestures are gentle. There is none of the heavy awkward movements which are generally noticed in a woman when she is about to give birth to her child. Only Her face has changed. Now She is « the woman ». Before, at the time of the Annunciation, She was a young girl with the serene innocent face of a child. Afterwards, in Elizabeth's house, when the Baptist was born, Her face had become more refined and gracefully mature. Now it is the serene but sweetly majestic face of a woman who has reached her full perfection in maternity.

She no longer resembles the « Annunciation » of Florence, so dear to you, Father. When She was a girl, I saw the resemblance. Her face is now longer and thinner, Her eyes are more pensive and larger. In brief, it is like what Mary is now in Heaven. Because Her countenance and age are once again as they were when the Saviour was born. Her youth is the eternal youth which not only has not known the corruption of death, but has not even experienced the withering of age. Time has not touched our Queen and Mother of the Lord Who created time; and if in Her torture at the time of Passion - a torture which had begun for Her a long time previously, I could say since Jesus began to evangelise - She looked old, such aging was like a veil cast over Her incorruptible person.

In fact since the moment that She sees Jesus risen, She becomes once again the fresh perfect creature She was before such torture, as if by kissing His Most Holy Wounds She had drunk a balm of youth which cancels the action of time, and even more so, of sorrow. In fact even eight days ago, when I saw the descent of the Holy Spirit on Whitsunday, I saw that Mary was "beautiful, most beautiful and all of a sudden looked younger" as I wrote and had written previously: "She looks like a blue angel". Angels do not grow old. They are eternally beautiful, because they reflect the eternal youth and the eternal present of God. The angelical youth of Mary, blue angel, is perfected now, but not in the secrecy of a room unknown to the world and with only one archangel as witness. It reaches the perfect age which She took with Her to Heaven and which She will keep for ever in Her holy glorified body, when the Spirit adorns Her with the bridal ring and crowns Her in the presence of everybody.

I wanted to make this digression because I thought that it was necessary. I will now revert to the description.

Mary, thus, is now really a « Woman » full of dignity and grace. Also Her smile has gained in sweetness and majesty. How beautiful She is!

Joseph comes in. He seems to be coming from the village, because he comes in through the main door, not from the workshop. Mary lifts Her head and smiles at him. Also Joseph smiles. But his smile seems to be a forced one, as if he were worried. Mary looks at him inquisitively. She then gets up to take the mantle that Joseph is taking off and She folds it and lays it on a chest.

Joseph sits at the table. He rests one elbow on it and lays his head on one hand, while with the other hand, absentmindedly, he combs and ruffles his beard with alternate strokes.

« Is there anything worrying you? » asks Mary. « Can I help you? »

« You always comfort me, Mary. But this time, I have a big problem… that concerns You. »

« Me, Joseph. And what is it? »

« They have posted an edict on the synagogue door. It orders the census of all Palestinians. And everybody must go and register in his place of origin. We must go to Bethlehem… »

« Oh! » exclaims Mary, interrupting him and putting one hand on Her bosom.

« It's a shock, isn't it? And a sad one. I know »

« No, Joseph. That's not it. I am thinking… I am thinking of the Holy Scriptures: Rachel, Benjamin's mother and Jacob's wife of whom the Star will be born: the Saviour. Rachel buried in Bethlehem, of which it is said: "But you, Bethlehem, Ephrathah, the least of the clans of Judah, out of you will be born the Ruler". The Ruler who was promised to the House of David. He will be born there… »

« Do You… do You think it is already the time?… Oh! What shall we do? » Joseph is completely dismayed. He looks at Mary with two pitiful eyes.

She realises this and smiles. But She smiles more at Herself than at him. A smile that seems to say: « He is a man, a just man, but a man. And he sees as a man. He thinks as a man. Have pity on him, o soul of Mine, and guide him so that he may see as a spirit. » But Her kindness induces Her to reassure him. She is not untruthful. She simply diverts his anxiety. « I do not know, Joseph. My time is very close. But could the Lord not delay it to relieve you from this worry? He can do everything. Don't fear. »

« But the journey!… Think of the crowds. Will we find good lodgings? Will we be in time to come back? And if… if You are to become a Mother there, what will we do? We have no home there… We do not know anybody any longer. »

« Don't be afraid. Everything will be all right. God finds a shelter for the animal about to give birth. Do you think He will not find one for His Messiah? We trust in Him, don't we? We always trust in Him. The harder the trial, the more we trust. Like two children we put our hands in His fatherly ones. He is our guide. We rely entirely on Him. Consider how He has led us with love so far. A father, even the best of fathers, could not do it with greater care. We are His children and His servants. We fulfill His will. No harm can befall us. Also this edict is His will. What is Caesar after all? An instrument in the hands of God. Since the time when the Father decided to forgive man, He pre-arranged the events so that His Christ may be born in Bethlehem. Bethlehem, the smallest town in Judah did not yet exist and its glory was already destined. And there… a powerful man has risen, very far from here, and he conquered us, and now he wants to know all his subjects, now, while the world is in peace… so that the glory of Bethlehem may be accomplished and the word of God may not be belied, - as it would be if the Messiah were to be born elsewhere. Oh! What is our small trouble if we consider the beauty of this moment of peace? Just think, Joseph: a period of time when there is no hatred in the world! Can there be a happier hour for the rising of the "Star", the light of which is divine and its influence is redemption? Oh! Do not be afraid, Joseph. If the roads are not safe, if the crowds will make the journey a difficult one, the angels will defend and protect us. Not us: but their King. If we find no accommodation, their wings will be our tents. No mishap will befall us. It cannot: God is with us. »

Joseph looks at Her and listens to Her, happy. The wrinkles on his forehead smooth away. He gets up, no longer tired or worried. He smiles. « You are blessed, Sun of my soul! You are blessed, because You see everything through the Grace, of which You are full! Don't let us waste time, then. Because we must leave as soon as possible, and come back as soon as possible, because everything is ready here for the… for the… »

« For our Son, Joseph. He must be such in the eyes of the world, remember that. The Father has covered His coming with the veil of mystery and we must not lift that veil. Jesus will do it, when the time comes… »

The beauty of Mary's face, look, expression and voice, when She says this « Jesus » cannot be described. It is already an ecstasy. And the vision ends on it.

Mary says:

« I will not add much more, because My words are already a lesson.

But I wish to draw the attention of wives to one point. Too many marriages break up through the fault of women, who do not possess that love, which is everything: kindness, pity and solace to their husbands. The physical suffering that lies heavy on women

does not lie heavily on men. But all the moral worries do: necessities of work, decisions to be taken, responsibilities before the established authorities and one's own family… oh! how many things weigh on man! And how much comfort he also needs! And yet, a woman's selfishness is such that she adds the weight of useless and sometimes unfair complaints to the burden of her tired, disheartened, worried husband. And all this because she is selfish. She does not love. Love is not the satisfaction of one's senses and utility. To love is to satisfy him whom we love, beyond senses and utility, giving him the help he needs so that he may always be able to keep his wings open in the skies of hope and peace.

There is another point to which I wish to draw you attention. I have already spoken of it. But I wish to insist: trust in God. Trust summarises the theological virtues. Who trusts has faith. Who trusts hopes. Who trusts loves. When we love, we hope, we believe in a person, we trust. Otherwise we do not. God deserves our trust. If we trust poor men who may fail, why should we not trust God Who can never fail?

Trust is also humility. The proud man says: "I will do it by myself. I do not trust him because he is an incapable man, a liar, an overbearing fellow… " The humble man says: "I trust him. Why should I not? Why should I think that I am better than he is?" And more rightly he says of God: "Why should I mistrust Him Who is so good? Why should I think that I can do it by myself?" God gives Himself to the humble, but withdraws from the proud.

Trust is also obedience. And God loves the obedient man. Obedience implies that we acknowledge ourselves as His children and we acknowledge God as our Father. And a father can but love when he is a real father. God is our real Father and a perfect Father.

The third point I want you to consider. It is always based on trust. No event can happen unless God allows it. Are you powerful? You became so, because God permitted it. Are you a subject? You are such, because God permitted it. Endeavour, therefore, powerful one, not to turn your-power to your own detriment. It would always be "your detriment", even if at the beginning, it may appear detrimental to others. Because if God allows, He does not over-allow, and if you go beyond the mark, He will strike you and crush you. Endeavour, therefore, o subject, to make of your condition a magnet that will draw the protection of Heaven upon You. And never curse anyone. Leave that to God's care. It is for Him, the Lord of all, to bless and curse His creatures.

Go in peace. »

28. The Journey to Bethlehem.

5th June 1944.

I see a main road which is very crowded. Little donkeys, loaded with goods and chattels or with people, are going one way. Other little donkeys are going the opposite way. The people are spurring their mounts and those on foot are walking fast because it is cold.

The air is clear and dry. The sky is serene, but everywhere there is the sharp atmosphere common to winter days. The barren country seems vaster, the short grass in the pastures has been nipped by the winter winds; on the grazing ground, the sheep are looking for some grass and they are also looking for some sunshine, as the sun is rising very slowly. They are standing very close together one against the other, because they also are cold, and they bleat, lifting their heads and looking at the sun as if they were saying: « Come quick because it is cold! » The ground is undulating and its undulations are becoming clearer and clearer. It is a real hilly place. There are valleys and slopes covered with grass, and ridges. The road runs through the centre and goes south-east.

Mary is on a little grey donkey. She is all enveloped in a heavy mantle. In front of the saddle there is the fitting already seen in Her journey to Hebron, and on it there is the little trunk with the basic essential things.

Joseph is walking on the side holding the reins. « Are you tired? » he asks Her now and again.

Mary looks at him smiling and replies: « No, I am not. » The third time She adds: « You must be tired walking. »

« Oh! Me! It's nothing for me. I was only thinking that if I had found another donkey You would have been more comfortable, and we could have travelled faster. But I just could not find another one. Everybody needs a mount nowadays. But take heart. We shall soon be in Bethlehem. Ephrathah is beyond that mountain. »

They are both silent. The Virgin, when She does not speak, seems to concentrate on internal prayer. She smiles mildly at one of Her thoughts and if She looks at the crowd, She does not seem to see it for what it is: a man, a woman, an old man, a shepherd, a rich or a poor man, but only for what She sees.

« Are you cold? » asks Joseph when the wind starts blowing.

« No, thank you. »

But Joseph is not too happy. He touches Her feet, which are shod in sandals and are hanging down along the side of the donkey and can hardly be seen coming out from under Her long dress, and he must feel them cold, because he shakes his head and takes a blanket which he has across his shoulders and envelops Mary's legs in it and he spreads it also on Her lap, so that Her hands may be kept warm, being covered by the blanket and Her mantle.

They meet a shepherd, who cuts across the road with his herd, moving from the grazing ground on the right-hand side of the road to the one of the left-hand side. Joseph bends down to say something to him. The shepherd nods in assent. Joseph takes the donkey and drags it behind the herd into the grazing ground. The shepherd pulls a coarse bowl out of his knapsack, he milks a big sheep with swollen udders and hands the bowl to Joseph who offers it to Mary.

« May God bless you both » exclaims Mary. « You for your love, and you for your kindness. I will pray for you. »

« Are you coming from far? »

« From Nazareth » replies Joseph.

« And where are you going? »

« To Bethlehem. »

« A long journey for a woman in Her state. Is She your wife? »

« Yes, She is. »

« Have you got a place where to go? »

« No, we haven't. »

« That's bad! Bethlehem is overcrowded with people who have come from all over to register there, or are on their way to register elsewhere. I don't know whether you will find lodgings. Are you familiar with the place? »

« Not very. »

« Well… I will explain it to you… for Her… (and he points to Mary). Find the hotel, but it will be full. But I will tell you just the same, to guide you. It's in the square, in the largest one. This main road will take you to it. You can't miss it. There is a fountain in front of it, it is a long and low building with a very big door. It will be full. But if you do not find room in the hotel, or in any of the houses, go round to the back of the hotel, towards the country. There are some stables in the mountain, which are used sometimes by merchants to keep their animals there, on their way to Jerusalem, when they don't find room in the hotel. They are stables, you know, in the mountain: they are damp and cold and there are no doors. But they are always a shelter, because your wife She can't be left on the road. Perhaps you will find room there and some hay to sleep on and for the donkey. And may God guide you. »

« And may God give you joy » answers Mary. Joseph instead replies: « Peace be with you. »

They take to the road again. A wider valley can be seen from the crest they have climbed over. In the valley, up and down the soft slopes surrounding it, there are many houses. It is Bethlehem.

« Here we are in David's land, Mary. Now You will be able to rest. You look so tired »

« No. I was thinking I think… » Mary gets hold of Joseph's hand and says to him with a blissful smile: « I really think that the time has come. »

« O Lord of mercy! What shall we do? »

« Don't be afraid, Joseph. Be steady. See how calm I am? »

« But You must be suffering a lot. »

« Oh! No. I am full of joy. Such a joy, so great, so beautiful, so uncontainable, that My heart is thumping and thumping and it is whispering to Me: "He is coming! He is coming!" It says so at each beat. It is My Child knocking at My heart and saying: "Mother, I am here and I am coming to give You the kiss of God". Oh! What a joy, My dear Joseph! »

But Joseph is not joyful. He is thinking of the urgent need to find a shelter and he quickens his pace. He goes from door to door asking for a room. Nothing. They are all full. They reach the hotel. Even the rustic porches surrounding the large inner yard are full of campers.

Joseph leaves Mary on the donkey inside the yard and he goes out looking in other houses. He comes back thoroughly disheartened. He has not found anything. The fast winter twilight is beginning to spread its shadows. Joseph implores the hotel-keeper. He implores also some of the travellers. He points out that they are all healthy men, that there is a woman about to give birth to a child. He begs them to have mercy. Nothing.

There is a rich Pharisee who looks at them with obvious contempt and when Mary goes near him, he steps aside as if he had been approached by a leper. Joseph looks at him and his face blushes with disdain. Mary lays Her hand on his wrist to calm him and says: « Don't insist. Let us go. God will provide. »

They go out and they follow the wall of the hotel. They turn into a little street which runs between the hotel and some poor houses. They then turn behind the hotel. They look for the stables. At last, here are some grottos, a kind of cellars, I would say, rather than stables, because they are so low and damp. The best have already been taken. Joseph is utterly disheartened.

« Ehi! Galilean! » an old man shouts. « Down there, at the end, under those ruins, there is a den. Perhaps there is nobody in it yet. »

They hurry to the « den ». It is really a den. Among the ruins of an old building there is a hole, beyond which there is a grotto, an excavation in the mountain, rather than a grotto. It seems to consist of the foundations of the old building, with the roof formed by rubble supported by coarse tree trunks.

There is hardly any light, and to see better Joseph pulls out .tinder and flint and he lights a little lamp that he takes out of the knapsack he is carrying across his shoulders. He goes in and is greeted by a bellow. « Come in, Mary. It is empty. There is only an ox. » Joseph smiles. « It's better than nothing!… »

Mary dismounts from Her donkey and goes in.

Joseph has hung the little lamp on a nail of one of the supporting trunks. They see the vault covered with cobwebs, the soil stamped ramshackle earth, with holes, rubbish, excrement - the soil is strewn With straw. In the rear, an ox turns its head round and looks with his large quiet eyes while some hay is hanging from its lips. There is a rough seat and two big stones in a comer near a loop-hole. The blackness in that comer is a clear sign that a fire is generally lit there.

Mary, goes near the ox. She is cold. She puts Her hands on its neck to feel its warmth. The ox bellows but does not stir. It seems to understand. Also when Joseph pushes it aside to take a large quantity of hay from the manger and make a bed for Mary, the ox remains calm and quiet. The manger is a double one: that is, there is one out of which the ox eats, and above it there is a kind of a shelf, with some spare hay, which Joseph pulls down. The ox makes room also for the little donkey that, tired and hungry as it is, starts eating at once.

Joseph discovers also a battered bucket, turned upside down. He goes out, because he saw a little stream outside, and he comes back with some water for the little donkey. He then takes possession of a bunch of twigs in a comer and he tries to sweep the floor with it. He next spreads the hay and makes a bed with it near the ox, in the most sheltered and dry comer. But he realizes that the poor hay is damp, and he sighs. He then lights a fire, and with the patience of Job, he dries the hay, a handful at the time, holding it near the fire.

Mary is sitting on the stool, She is tired, She watches and smiles. The hay is now ready. Mary sits down more comfortably on the soft hay, with Her back leaning against one of the tree trunks. Joseph completes… the furnishings hanging his mantle as a curtain on the hole that serves as a door. It is a makeshift protection. He then offers some bread and cheese to the Virgin, and he gives Her some water out of a flask.

« Sleep now » he says. « I will, sit up and watch that the fire does not go out. There is some wood fortunately, let us hope that it will bum and last. Thus I will be able to save the oil of the lamp. »

Mary lies down obediently. Joseph covers Her with Her own mantle and with the blanket that She had round Her feet earlier.

« But you… you will be cold. »

« No, Mary. I'll be near the fire. Try and rest now. Things will be better tomorrow. »

Mary closes Her eyes without insisting. Joseph creeps into his little comer, sits on the stool, with some dry shoot near him. They are very few. I do not think they will last long.

They are placed as follows: Mary is on the right hand side, with Her back to the… door, half hidden by the tree trunk and the ox which has lain down on the litter. Joseph is on the left side, towards the door, and since he is facing the fire, his back is turned towards Mary. But he turns round now and again to look at Her, and he sees She is lying quietly, as if She were sleeping. He breaks the little sticks as noiselessly as possible and throws them one at a time on to the little fire, so that it may not go out and may give some light and yet make the wood last longer. There is only the dim light of the fire: at times bright at times very faint. The lamp in fact has been put out and in the half light only the whiteness of the ox and of Joseph's hands and face can be seen. All the rest is a confused mass in the dull dim light.

« There is no dictation » says Mary. « The vision speaks by itself. It is for you to understand the lesson of charity, humility and purity emanating from it. Rest. Rest watching, as I used to keep watch waiting for Jesus. He will come to bring you His peace.' »

29. The Birth of Our Lord Jesus.

6th June 1944.

I still see the inside of the poor stony shelter, where Mary and Joseph have found refuge, sharing the lot of some animals.

The little fire is dozing together with its guardian. Mary lifts Her head slowly from Her bed and looks round. She sees that Joseph's head is bowed over his chest, as if he were meditating, and She thinks that his good intention to remain awake has been overcome by tiredness. She smiles lovingly and making less noise than a butterfly alighting on a rose, She sits up and then goes on Her knees. She prays with a blissful smile on Her face. She prays with Her arms stretched out, almost in the shape of a cross, with the palms of Her hands facing up and forward, and She never seems to tire in that position. She then prostrates Herself with Her face on the hay, in an even more ardent prayer. A long prayer.

Joseph rouses. He notices that the fire is almost out and the stable almost -dark. He throws a handful of very slender heath on to the fire and the flames are revived, he then adds some thicker twigs and finally some sticks, because the cold is really biting: the cold of a serene winter night that comes into the ruins from everywhere. Poor Joseph must be frozen sitting as he is near the door, if we can call a door the hole where Joseph's mantle serves as a curtain. He warms his hands near the fire, then takes his sandals off and warms his feet. When the fire is gaily blazing and its light is steady, he turns round. But he does not see anything, not even Mary's white veil that formed a clear line on the dark hay. He gets up and slowly moves towards Her pallet.

« Are You not sleeping, Mary? » he asks.

He asks Her three times until She turns round and replies: « I am praying. »

« Is there anything you need? »

« No, Joseph. »

« Try and sleep a little. At least try and rest. »

« I will try. But I don't get tired praying. »

« God be with You, Mary. »

« And with you, Joseph. »

Mary resumes Her position. Joseph to avoid falling asleep, goes on his knees near the fire and prays. He prays with his hands pressed against his face. He removes them now and again to feed the fire and then he resumes his ardent prayer. Apart from the noise of the crackling sticks and the noise made now and again by the donkey stamping its hooves on the ground, no other sound is heard.

A thin ray of moonlight creeps in through a crack in the vault and it seems a blade of unearthly silver looking for Mary. It stretches in length as the moon climbs higher in the sky and at last reaches Her. It is now on Her head, where it forms a halo of pure light.

Mary lifts Her head, as if She had a celestial call, and She gets up and goes on to Her knees again. Oh! How beautiful it is here now! She raises Her head, and Her face shines in the white moonlight and becomes transfigured by a supernatural smile. What does She see? What does She hear? What does She feel? She is the only one who can tell what She saw, heard and felt in the refulgent hour of Her Maternity. I can only see that the light around Her is increasing more and more. It seems to come down from Heaven, to arise from the poor things around Her, above all it seems to originate from Herself.

Her deep blue dress now seems of a pale myosotis blue, and Her hands and face are becoming clear blue as if they were placed under the glare of a huge pale sapphire. This hue is spreading more and more on the things around Her, it covers them, purifies them and brightens everything. It reminds me, although it is somewhat softer, of the hue I see in the vision of holy Paradise, and also of the colour I saw in the visit of the Wise Men.

The light is given off more and more intensely from Mary's body, it absorbs the moonlight. She seems to be drawing to Herself all the light that can descend from Heaven. She is now the Depository of the Light. She is to give this Light to the world. And this blissful, uncontainable, immeasurable, eternal, divine Light which is about to be given, is heralded by a dawn, a morning star, a chorus of atoms of Light that increase continuously like a tide, and rise more and more like incense, and descend like a large stream

and stretch out like veils…

The vault, full of crevices, of cobwebs, of protruding rubble balanced by a miracle of physics, the dark, smoky repellent vault, now seems the ceiling of a royal hall. Each boulder is a block of silver, each crack an opal flash, each cobweb a most precious canopy interwoven with silver and diamonds. A huge green lizard, hibernating between two stones, seems an emerald jewel forgotten there by a queen: and a bunch of hibernating bats is like a precious onyx chandelier. The hay from the upper manger is no longer grass blades: it is pure silver wires quivering in the air with the grace of loose hair.

The dark wood of the lower manger is a block of burnished silver. The walls are covered with a brocade in which the white silk disappears under the pearly embroidery of the relief, and the soil… what is the soil now? It is a crystal lit tip by a white light. Its protrusions are like roses thrown in homage of the soil; the holes are precious cups from which perfumes and scents are to arise.

And the light increases more and more. It is now unbearable to the eye. And the Virgin disappears in so much light, as if She had been absorbed by an incandescent curtain… and the Mother emerges.

Yes. When the light becomes endurable once again to my eyes, I see Mary with the new-born Son in Her arms. A little Baby, rosy and plump, bustling with His little hands as big as rose buds and kicking with His tiny feet that could be contained in the hollow of the heart of a rose: and is crying with a thin trembling voice, just like a new-born little lamb, opening His pretty little mouth that resembles a wild strawberry, and showing a tiny tongue that trembles against the rosy roof of His mouth. And He moves His little head that is so blond that it seems without any hair, a little round head that His Mummy holds in the hollow of Her hand, while She looks at Her Baby and adores Him weeping and smiling at the same time, and She bends down to kiss Him not on His innocent head, but on the centre of His chest, where underneath there is His little heart beating for us… where one day there will be the Wound. And His Mother is doctoring that wound in advance, with Her immaculate kiss.

The ox, woken up by the dazzling light, gets up with a great noise of hooves and bellows, the donkey turns its head round and brays. It is the light that rouses them but I love to think that they wanted to greet their Creator, both for themselves and on behalf of all the animals.

Also Joseph, who almost enraptured, was praying so ardently as to be isolated from what was around him, now rouses and he sees a strange light filter through the fingers of his hands pressed against his face. He removes his hands, lifts his head and turns round. The ox, standing as it is, hides Mary. But She calls him: « Joseph, come. »

Joseph rushes. And when he sees, he stops, struck by reverence, and he is about to fall on his knees where he is. But Mary insists: « Come, Joseph » and She leans on the hay with Her left hand and, holding the Child close to Her heart with Her right one, She gets up and moves towards Joseph, who is walking embarrassed, because of a conflict in him between his desire to go and his fear of being irreverent.

They meet at the foot of the straw bed and they look at each other, weeping blissfully.

« Come, let us offer Jesus to the Father » says Mary. And while Joseph kneels down, She stands up between two trunks supporting the vault, She lifts up Her Creature in Her arms and says: « Here I am. On His behalf, O God, I speak these words to You: here I am to do Your will. And I, Mary, and My spouse, Joseph, with Him. Here are Your servants, O Lord. May Your will always be done by us, in every hour, in every event, for Your glory and Your love. »

Then Mary bends down and says: « Here, Joseph, take Him », and offers him the Child.

« What! I?… Me?… Oh, no! I am not worthy! » Joseph is utterly dumbfounded at the idea of having to touch God.

But Mary insists smiling: « You are well worthy. No one is more worthy than you are, and that is why the Most High chose you. Take Him, Joseph, and hold Him while I look for the linens. »

Joseph, blushing almost purple, stretches his arms out and takes the Baby, Who is screaming because of the cold and when he has Him in his arms, he no longer persists in the intention of holding Him far from himself, out of respect, but he presses Him to his heart and bursts into tears exclaiming: « Oh! Lord! My God! » And he bends down to kiss His tiny feet and feels them cold. He then sits on the ground, and holds Him close to his chest and with his brown tunic and his hands he tries to cover Him, and warm Him, defending Him from the bitterly cold wind of the night. He would like to go near the fire, but there is a cold draft there coming in from the door. It is better to stay where he is. No, it is better to go between the two animals which serve as a protection against the air and give out warmth. Thus, he goes between the ox and the donkey, with his back to the door, bending over the New-Born to form with his body a shelter, the two sides of which are a grey head with long ears, and a huge white muzzle with a steaming nose and two gentle soft eyes.

Mary has opened the trunk and has pulled out the linens and swaddling clothes. She has been near the fire warming them. She now moves towards Joseph and envelops the Baby with lukewarm linen and then with Her veil to protect His little head. « Where shall we put Him now? » She asks.

Joseph looks round, thinking… « Wait » he says. « Let us move the animals and their hay over here, we will then pull down that hay up there and arrange it in here. The wood on the side will protect Him from the air, the hay will serve as a pillow and the ox will warm Him a little with its breath. The ox is better than the donkey. It is more patient and quiet. » And he bustles about, while Mary is lulling the Baby, holding Him close to Her heart, and laying Her cheek on His tiny head to warm it.

Joseph makes up the fire, without economy this time, to have a good blaze, and he warms the hay and as it dries up, he keeps it near his chest, so that it will not get cold. Then, when he has gathered enough to make a little mattress for the Child, he goes to the manger and sorts it out as if it were a cradle. « It is ready » he says. « Now we would need a blanket, because the hay stings, and also to cover Him. »

« Take My mantle » says Mary.

« You will be cold. »

« Oh! It does not matter! The blanket is too coarse. The mantle is soft and warm. I am not cold at all. Don't let Him suffer any longer! »

Joseph takes the wide mantle of soft dark blue wool, he double folds it and lays it on the hay, leaving a strip hanging out of the manger. The first bed for the Saviour is ready.

And the Mother, with Her sweet, graceful gait, moves to the manger, lays Him in it, and covers Him with the strip of Her mantle. She arranges it also around His bare head, almost completely covered by the hay, from which it is protected only by Mary's thin veil. Only

His little face, the size of a man's fist, is left uncovered. Mary and Joseph, bending over the manger, are blissfully happy watching Him sleep His first sleep, because the warmth of the clothes and of the hay has appeased His crying, and made Him sleepy.

Mary says:

« I promised you that He would come to bring you His peace. Do you remember the peace you enjoyed at Christmas! When you saw Me with My Child? Then it was your time of peace. Now it is your time of pain. But you know by now. It is by means of pain that we achieve peace and every grace for ourselves and our neighbours. Jesus-Man became Jesus-God again, after the tremendous suffering of His Passion. He became Peace, once more. Peace from Heaven, from where He had come and from where He now pours out His peace for those who love Him in the world. But in the hours of His Passion, He, Peace of the world, was deprived of that peace. He would not have suffered if He had had it. And He had to suffer: and to suffer excruciatingly, to the very end.

I, Mary, redeemed woman by means of My divine Maternity. But that was only the beginning of woman's redemption. By refusing a human marriage in accordance with My vow of virginity, I had rejected all lustful satisfactions, deserving thus grace from God.

But it was not yet sufficient, because Eve's sin was a four branched tree: pride, avarice, gluttony and lust. And all four were to be cut off, before making the roots of the tree sterile.

By deeply humiliating Myself, I defeated pride.

I abased Myself before everybody. I am not referring to My humility towards God. Such humility is due to the Most High by every creature. Even His Word had it. It was necessary for Me, a woman, to have it. But have you ever considered what humiliation I had to suffer from men, without defending Myself in any way?

Even Joseph, who was a just man, had accused Me in his heart. The others, who were not just, had committed a sin of disparagement with regard to My condition, and the rumour of their words had come like a bitter wave to break up against My humanity. And they were the first of the infinite humiliations I was to suffer in My life as Mother of Jesus and of mankind.

Humiliations of poverty, of a refugee, humiliations for reproaches of relatives and friends who, being unaware of the truth, judged Me a weak woman with regard to My behaviour as a Mother towards Jesus, when He was a young man, humiliations during the three years of His public life, cruel humiliations in the hour of Calvary, humiliation in having to admit that I could not afford to buy a place and the perfumes for the burial of my Son.

I overcame the avarice of the First Parents renouncing My Creature before the time.

A mother never renounces her creature unless she is forced to. Whether her heart is asked to renounce her creature by her country or by the love of a spouse or even by God Himself, she will resent and struggle against the separation. It is natural. A son grows in our womb and the tie that links him to us can never be completely broken. Even if the umbilical cord is cut, there is a nerve that always remains: it departs from the mother's heart and is grafted into the son's heart: it is a spiritual nerve, more lively and sensitive than a physical one. And a mother feels it stretching even to exceedingly severe pangs if the love of God or of a creature or the need of the country take her son away from her. And it breaks, tearing her heart, if death snatches her son from her.

And I renounced My Son from the very moment I had Him. I gave Him to God. I gave Him to you. I deprived Myself of the Fruit of My womb to make amends for Eve's theft of God's fruit.

I defeated gluttony, both of knowledge and of enjoyment, by agreeing to know only what God wanted Me to know, without asking Myself or Him more than what I was told. I believed unquestioningly. I overcame the innate personal delight of enjoyment because I denied Myself every sensual pleasure. I confined flesh, the instrument of Satan, together with Satan, under My heel and made of them a step to rise towards Heaven. Heaven! My aim. Where God was. My only hunger. A hunger which is not gluttony, but a necessity blessed by God, Who wants us to crave for Him.

I defeated lust, which is gluttony carried to the extreme of greed. Because every unrestrained vice leads to a bigger vice. And Eve's gluttony, which was already blameworthy, led her to lust. It was no longer enough for her to enjoy pleasure by herself. She wanted to take her crime to a refined intensity and thus she became acquainted with lust and was a mistress of lust for her companion.

I reversed the terms and instead of descending I have always ascended. Instead of causing other people to descend, I have always attracted them towards Heaven: of My honest companion, I made an angel.

Now that I possessed God and His infinite wealth with Him, I hastened to divest Myself of it saying: "Here I am: may Your will be done for Him and by Him". He is chaste who chastises not only his flesh but also his affections and his thoughts. I had to be the Chaste One in order to annul the One who had been Unchaste in her flesh, her heart and her mind. And I never abandoned My reservedness, not even by saying of My Son: "He is Mine, I want Him", since He belonged only to Me on earth, as He belonged only to God in Heaven.

And yet all this was not sufficient to achieve for woman the peace lost by Eve. I obtained that for you at the foot of the Cross: when I saw Him dying, Whom you saw being born. When I felt My bowels being torn apart by the cry of My dying Creature, I became void of all femininity. I was no longer flesh, but an angel. Mary, the Virgin Spouse of the Spirit, died that moment. The Mother of Grace remained, Who gave you the Grace She generated from Her torture. The female reconsecrated "woman" by me on Christmas night, achieved at the foot of the Cross the means to become a creature of Heaven.

This I did for you, depriving Myself of all satisfactions, even of holy ones. And whereas you had been reduced by Eve to females not superior to the mates of animals, I made of you, if you only wish so, saints of God. I ascended for you. As I had done for Joseph, I lifted you higher up. The 'rock of Calvary is My Mount of Olives. From there I took My leap to carry to Heaven the resanctified soul of woman together with My flesh, now glorified because it had borne the Word of God and had destroyed in Me the very last trace of Eve. It had destroyed the last root of that tree with four poisonous branches, a root stuck in the sensuality that had dragged mankind to fall and that will go on biting at your intestines until the end of time and to the last woman. From there, where I now shine in the ray of Love, I call you and I show you the Medicine to control yourselves: the Grace of My Lord and the Blood of My Son.

And you, My voice, rest your soul in the light of this dawn of Jesus, to gain strength for the future crucifixions which will not be spared you, because we want you here and one comes here through pain, because we want you here and the higher one comes the more one has suffered to obtain Grace for the world.

Go in peace. I am with you. »

30. The Adoration of the Shepherds.

7th June 1944. Eve of Corpus Christi.

I am writing in the presence of my Jesus-Master. He is here for me, all for me. He has come back, after such a long time, all for me.

You will say: « How? You have been hearing and seeing for almost a month and you say that He is with you after a long time? »

I will reply once again telling you what I have already told you several times both by word of mouth and in writing.

There is a difference between seeing and hearing. And above all there is a difference between seeing and hearing on behalf of other people, and seeing and hearing all for myself, exclusively for myself. In the former case I am a spectator and I repeat what I see and hear, but if that gives me joy because they are always things which bring great joy, it is also true that it is, so to say, an external joy. The word is a bad expression of what I feel so clearly. But I cannot find a better one. In brief, just imagine that my joy is like that of one who reads a lovely book or sees a beautiful scene. One is moved, enjoys it, admires its harmony and thinks: « How lovely it is to be in the place of this person! » Instead in the latter case, that' is, when I hear and see for myself, then I am « that person.- » The word that I hear is for me, the person I see is for me. It is He and I, Mary and I, John and I. Alive, real, true, close to each other. Not in front of me, as if I were watching a film being shown, but beside my bed, or moving about my room, or leaning on pieces of furniture, or sitting, or standing, like real people alive, as my guests, which is quite different from a vision on behalf of everybody. In a word all that « is mine ».

And Jesus is here today, in actual fact He has been here since Yesterday afternoon, in His usual white woollen garment, which is rather ivory-white, and is so different in weight and shade from the magnificent one which He wears in Heaven and which seems to be made of immaterial linen, and is so white that it seems to be woven with yarn as clear as light. He is here with His long tapering fingers which are white verging to old ivory, with His handsome long pale face in which His dominating sweet eyes of dark sapphire shine between His thick brown eyelashes sparkling with blond-red reflections. He is here with His long soft hair, which is brighter blond-red where exposed to light and darker in the deep folds. He is here! He is here! And He is smiling at me while I write about Him. As He used to do at Viareggio… and as He stopped doing as from the Holy Week… causing all the distress which almost became a fever of despair, when in addition to the grief of being deprived of Him I was also bereft of the comfort of living where at least I had seen Him and I could say: « He used to lean there, to sit down here, here He bent to lay His hand on my head » and where my relatives had died.

Oh! unless one has experienced that, one cannot understand! It is not a question of pretending to have all that. We know very well that they are gratuitous graces and that we do not deserve them, neither can we expect them to last when they are granted to us. We know that. And the more they are given to us, the more we lower ourselves in humility, acknowledging our disgusting misery as compared with the Infinite Beauty and Divine Wealth which bestows itself upon us. But what do you think, Father? Does a son not wish to see his father and mother? Or a wife her husband? And when death or a long absence prevents them from seeing their dear ones, do they not suffer and do they not find comfort by living where they lived, and if they have to leave that place, do they not suffer twice as much, as they lose also the place where their love was reciprocated by the absent relative? Can those who suffer thus be reproached? No. And what about me? Is Jesus not my Father and Spouse? Dearer, much dearer than the dearest father and spouse?

And that He is such to me, you can judge by how I behaved at my mother's death. I suffered, you know? I still weep, because I loved her, notwithstanding her character. But you know how I got over that difficult hour. Jesus was there. And He was dearer to me than my mother. Shall I tell you something? I suffered and I am suffering more now because of my mother's death, which took place eight months ago, than I suffered then . Because during these last two months I have been without Jesus for me and without Mary for me, and also now, if They leave me for a moment, I feel more than ever the desolation of being a sick orphan and I fall again into the deep human grief of those cruel days.

I am writing while Jesus is looking at me and therefore I am not exaggerating or distorting anything. In any case it is not my custom, and even if it were, it would be impossible to persist in it while He is watching me.

I have written this here, where it is not my habit to do so, because with regard to Mary's visions I never interpose my poor ego, as I already know that I must continue describing Her glories. Was Her Maternity not a crown of glories every moment? I am very ill and it is burdensome for me to write. And afterwards I feel extremely weak. But in order to make Her known, so that She may be loved more, I disregard everything. Are my shoulders aching? Is my heart giving in? Am I suffering from a racking headache? Is my temperature rising? It does not matter! Let Mary be known, beautiful and dear as I see Her through God's kindness and Hers, and that is enough for me.

Later I see a very wide country. The moon is at its zenith and she is sailing smoothly in a sky crowded with stars. They look like diamond studs fixed to a huge canopy of dark blue velvet and the moon is smiling in the middle of them with her big white face, from which streams of light descend and make the earth white. The barren trees seem taller and darker against so white a ground, whereas the low walls which rise here and there on the boundaries, look as white as milk and a little house far away seems a block of Carrara marble.

On my right I see a place enclosed by a thorn-bush hedge on two sides and by a low rugged wall on the other two. The wall supports a kind of low wide shed, which inside the enclosure is built in masonry and part in wood, as if in summer the wooden part should be removed and the shed should become a porch. From the enclosure intermittent short bleatings can be heard now and again. It must be the little sheep which dream or perhaps sense that it is almost daybreak because of the very bright moonlight. The brightness is intense to an excessive -degree and it is increasing more and more as if the planet were coming near the earth or were sparkling because of a mysterious fire.

A shepherd looks out of the door, and lifting one arm to his forehead to shield his eyes, he looks up. It seems improbable that one should protect one's eyes from moonlight. But the moonlight in this case is so bright that it blinds people, particularly those who come out from a dark enclosure. Everything is calm. But the bright moonlight is surprising. The shepherd calls his companions. They all come to the door: a group of hairy men of various ages. Some are just teenagers, some are already white haired, They comment on the strange event and the younger ones are afraid. One in particular, a boy about twelve years old, starts crying, and the older shepherds jeer at him.

« What are you afraid of,, you fool? » the oldest man says to him. « Can't you see that the air is very quiet? Have you never seen clear

moonlight? You have always been tied to your mother's apronstrings, haven't you? But there are many things for you to see! Once, I had gone as far as the Lebanon mountains, even farther. High up. I was young, and walking was a pleasure. And I was also rich, then… one night I saw such a bright light that I thought Elijah was about to come back in his chariot of fire. And an old man he was the old man then - said to me: "A great adventure is about to take place in the world". It was for us a misadventure, because the Roman soldiers came. Oh! Many things you will see, if you live… long enough. »

But the little shepherd is no longer listening to him. He looks as if he is no longer frightened, because he leaves the threshold and steals from behind the shoulders of a brawny herdsman, behind whom he had previously sought shelter, and goes out on to the grassy fold in front of the shed. He looks up and walks about like a sleep-walker or one hypnotised by something that compellingly attracts him. At a certain moment he shouts: « Oh! » and remains petrified with his arms slightly stretched out. His mates look at one another dumbfounded.

« But what is the matter with the fool? » says one.

« I will send him back to his mother tomorrow. I don't want mad people as guardians of the sheep » says another.

And the old man who had spoken earlier says: « Let us go and see before we judge him. Call also the others who are sleeping and bring your sticks. It might be a wild animal or some robber… »

They go in, they call the other shepherds and they come out with torches and clubs. They join the boy.

« There, there » he whispers smiling. « Above the tree, look at the light that is coming. It seems to be coming on the ray of the moon. There it is, it is coming near. How beautiful it is! »

« I can only see a rather brighter light. »

« So can I. »

« So can I » say the others.

« No. I see something like a body » says one whom I recognise to be the shepherd who gave the milk to Mary.

« It is… it is an angel » shouts the boy. « Here he is, he is coming down, he is coming near… Down! On your knees before the angel of God! »

A long and venerable « Oh! » comes from the group of shepherds, who fall down face to the ground and the older they are, the more they appear to be crushed by the refulgent apparition. The young ones are on their knees, looking at the angel who is coming nearer and nearer, and then he stops mid-air above the enclosure wall, waving his large wings, a pearly brightness in the white moonlight surrounding him.

« Do not fear. I am not bringing you misfortune. I announce you a great joy for the people of Israel and for all the people of the world. » The angelic voice is the harmony of a harp and of singing nightingales.

« Today, in the City of David, the Saviour has been born. » In saying so, the angel spreads out his wings wider and wider, moving them as a sign of overwhelming joy, and a stream of golden sparks and precious stones seem to fall from them: a real rainbow describing a triumphal arch above the poor shed.

«… the Saviour, Who is Christ. » The angel shines with a brighter light. His two wings, now motionless, pointed upright towards the sky like two still sails on the sapphire of the sea, seem two bright flames ascending to Heaven.

«… Christ, the Lord! » The angel gathers his sparkling wings and covers himself with them as if they were a coat of diamonds on a dress of pearls, he bows down in adoration, with his arms crossed over his heart, while his head bent down as it is, disappears in the shade of the tops of the folded wings. Only an oblong bright motionless form can be seen for a few moments.

But now he stirs. He spreads out his wings, lifts his head, bright with a heavenly smile, and says: « You will recognise Him from the following signs: in a poor stable, behind Bethlehem, you will find a baby in swaddling clothes, in a manger for animals, because no roof was found for the Messiah in the city of David. » The angel becomes grave, almost sad, in saying that.

But from the Heavens many angels - oh! how many! - come down, all like him - a ladder of angels descending and rejoicing and dimming the moonlight with their heavenly brightness. They all gather round the announcing angel, fluttering their wings, exhaling perfumes, playing notes in which the most beautiful voices of creation find a recollection, but elevated to uniform perfection. If painting is the expression of matter to become light, here melody is the expression of music to give men a hint of the beauty of God. To hear this melody is to know Paradise, where everything is harmony of love which emanates from God to make the blessed souls happy, and then from them returns to God to say to Him: « We love You! »

The angelical « Glory » spreads throughout the quiet country in wider and wider circles and the bright light with it. And the birds join their singing to greet the early light, and the sheep add their bleatings for the early sun. But, as previously in, the grotto for the ox and the donkey, I love to believe that the animals are greeting their Creator, Who has come down among them to love them both as a Man and as God.

The singing slowly fades away, as well as the light, and the angels ascend to Heaven…

The shepherds come back to reality.

« Did you hear? »

« Shall we go and see? »

« And what about the animals? »

« Oh! Nothing will happen to them! We are going to obey God's word!… »

« But where shall we go? »

« Didn't he say that He was born today? And that they did not find lodgings in Bethlehem? » It's the shepherd who gave the milk, who is speaking now. « Come with me, I know where He is. I saw the woman and I felt sorry for Her. I told them where to go, for Her sake, because I thought they might not find lodgings, and I gave the man some milk for Her. She is so young and beautiful, and She must be as good and kind as the angel who spoke to us. Come. Let us go and get some milk, cheese, lambs and tanned hides. They

must be very poor… and I wonder how cold He must be Whose name I dare not mention! And imagine! I spoke to the Mother as I would have spoken to a poor wife!… »

They go into the shed and they come out shortly afterwards, some with little flasks of milk, some with little nets interwoven with esparto containing small whole round cheeses, some with baskets, each containing a little bleating lamb and some with tanned hides.

« I am taking them a sheep. She lambed a month ago. Her milk is very good. It will be useful if the woman should have no milk. She seemed a young girl to me and so pale! A jasmine face in moonlight » says the shepherd who gave the milk. And he leads them.

They set out in the moonlight aided by their torches, after closing the shed and the enclosure. They go along country paths, among thorn-bush hedges stripped by winter.

They go round Bethlehem. They reach the stable not the way Mary came, but from the opposite direction, so that they do not pass in front of the better stables, instead they find this one first. They go near the hole.

« Go in! »

« I wouldn't dare! »

« You go in! »

« No. »

« At least have a look. »

« You, Levi, who saw the angel first, obviously because you are better than we are, look in. » Before they said he was mad… but now it suits them if he dare what they do not.

The boy hesitates, but then he makes up his mind. He goes near the hole, pulls the mantle a little to one side, looks… and remains enraptured.

« What can you see? » they ask him anxiously in low voices.

« I can see a beautiful young woman and a man bending over a manger and I can hear… I can hear a little baby crying, and the woman is speaking to Him in a voice… oh! what a voice! »

« What is She saying? »

« She is saying: "Jesus, little one! Jesus, love of Your Mummy! Don't cry, little Son". She is saying: "Oh! If I could only say to You: 'Take some milk, little one'. But I have not got any yet". She says: "You are so cold, My love! And the hay is stinging You! How painful it is for Your Mummy to hear You crying so, without being able to help You!" She says: "Sleep, soul of Mine! Because it breaks My heart to hear You crying and see Your tears!" and She kisses Him, and She must be warming His little feet with Her hands, because She is bent with Her arms in the manger. »

« Call Her! Let them hear you. »

« I won't. You should call Her, because you brought us here and you know Her! »

The shepherd opens his mouth, but he only utters a faint moaning noise.

Joseph turns round and comes to the door. « Who are you? »

« Shepherds. We brought you some food and some wool. We have come to worship the Saviour. »

« Come in. »

They go in, and the stable becomes brighter because of the light of the torches. The older men push the young ones in front of them.

Mary turns round and smiles. « Come » She says. « Come! », and She invites them with Her hand and Her smile, and She takes the boy who saw the angel and She draws him to Herself, against the manger. And the boy looks, and is happy.

The others, invited also by Joseph, move forward with their gifts and they place them at Mary's feet with few deep-felt words. They then look at the Baby Who is weeping a little and they smile moved and happy.

And one of them, somewhat bolder than the rest, says: « Mother, take this wool. It's soft and clean. I prepared it for my child who is about to be born. But I offer it to You. Lay your Son in this wool. It will be soft and warm. » And he offers the sheep hide, a beautiful hide, well covered with white soft wool.

Mary lifts Jesus, and puts it round Him. And She shows Him to the shepherds, who, kneeling on the hay on the ground, look at Him ecstatically!

They become bolder, and one suggests: « He should be given a mouthful of milk, better still, some water and honey. But we have no honey. We give it to little babies. I have seven children, and I know… »

« There is some milk here. Take it, Woman. »

« But it is cold. It should be warm. Where is Elias? He has the sheep. »

Elias must be the shepherd who gave the milk. But he is not there. He remained outside and is looking from the hole, but he cannot be seen in the dark night.

« Who led you here? »

« An angel told us to come, and Elias showed us the way. But where is he now? »

The sheep declares his presence with a bleat.

« Come in. You are wanted. »

He enters with his sheep, embarrassed because they all look at him.

« It's you! » says Joseph, who recognizes him, and Mary smiles at him saying: « You are good. »

They milk the sheep and with the hem of a piece of linen dipped into the warm creamy milk, Mary moistens the lips of the Baby Who sucks the sweet cream. They all smile, and even more so, when Jesus falls asleep in the warmth of the wool, with the little bit of linen still between His lips.

« But You can't stay here. It's cold and damp. And… there is too strong a smell of animals. It's not good… it's not good for the Saviour. »

« I know » replies Mary with a deep sigh. « But there is no room for us in Bethlehem. »

« Take heart, Woman. We will look for a house for You. »

« I will tell my mistress » says Elias. « She is good. She will receive You, even if she had to give You her own room. As soon as it is daylight, I will tell her. Her house is full of people. But she will find room for You. »

« For My Child, at least. Joseph and I can lie also on the floor. But for the Little One… »

« Don't worry, Woman. I will see to it. And we will tell many people what we were told. You will lack nothing. For the time being, take what our poverty can give You. We are shepherds… »

« We are poor, too. And we cannot reward you » says Joseph.

« Oh! We don't want it. Even if You could afford it, we would not want it. The Lord has already rewarded us. He promised peace to everybody. The angels said- "Peace to men of good will". But He has already given it to us, because the angel said that this Child is the Saviour, Who is Christ, the Lord. We are poor and ignorant, but we know that the Prophets say that the Saviour will be the Prince of Peace. And he told us to come and adore Him. That is why He gave us His peace. Glory be to God in the Most High Heaven and glory to His Christ here, and You are blessed, Woman, Who gave birth to Him: You are holy, because You deserved to bear Him! Give us orders as our Queen, because we will be happy to serve You. What can we do for You? »

« You can love My Son, and always cherish the same thoughts as you have now. »

« But what about You? Is there anything You wish? Have You no relatives whom You would like to inform that He has been born? »

« Yes, I have them. But they are far away. They are at Hebron… »

« I will go » says Elias. « Who are they? »

« Zacharias, the priest, and My cousin Elizabeth. »

« Zacharias? Oh! I know him well. In summer I go up those mountains because the pastures are rich and beautiful, and I am a friend of his shepherd. When I know you are settled, I will go to Zacharias. »

« Thank you, Elias. »

« You need not thank me. It is a great honour for me, a poor shepherd, to go and speak to the priest and say to him: "The Saviour has been born". »

« No. You must say to him: "Your cousin, Mary of Nazareth, has said that Jesus has been born, and that you should come to Bethlehem". »

« I will say that. »

« May God reward You. I will remember you, Elias, and every one of you. »

« Will You tell Your Baby about us? »

« I certainly will. »

« I am Elias. »

« And I am Levi. »

« And I am Samuel. »

« And I Jonah. »

« And I Isaac. »

« And I Tobias. »

« And I Jonathan. »

« And I Daniel. »

« And I Simeon. »

« My name is John. »

« I am Joseph and my brother Benjamin, we are twins. »

« I will remember your names. »

« We must go… But we will come back… And we will bring others to worship Him. »

« How can we go back to the sheep-fold, leaving the Child? »

« Glory be to God Who has shown Him to us! »

« Will You let us kiss His dress? » asks Levi, with an angelic smile.

And Mary lifts Jesus slowly, and sitting on the hay, envelops the tiny little feet in a linen, and offers them to be kissed. And the shepherds bow down to the ground and kiss the tiny feet, veiled by the linen. Those with a beard clean it first; almost everyone is crying, and when they have to go, they walk out backwards, leaving their hearts there…

The vision ends thus, with Mary sitting on the straw with the Child on Her lap and Joseph who, leaning with his elbow on the manger, looks and adores.

Jesus says:

« I will speak today. You are very tired, but have a little more patience. It is the eve of Corpus Christi. I could speak to you about the Eucharist and the saints who became apostles of Its cult, as I spoke to you of the saints who were apostles of the Sacred Heart. But I want to speak to you of something else and of a class of worshippers of My Body who are the forerunners of Its cult. That is: the shepherds. They were the first worshippers of My Body of the Word, Who had become Man.

Once I told you and also My Church says this, the Holy Innocents are the protomartyrs of Christ. Now I tell you that the shepherds are the first worshippers of the Body of God. And they have all the qualifications to be the worshippers of My Body, o Eucharistic souls.

Firm faith: they believe the angel promptly and unquestioningly.

Generosity: they give all their wealth to their Lord.

Humility: they approach people, who from the human point of view, are poorer than they, and they do so with a modest attitude that does not humiliate them, and they profess themselves their servants.

Desire: what they are unable to offer, they endeavour to obtain by means of charitable work.

Prompt obedience: Mary wishes to inform Zacharias and Elias goes at once. He does not postpone the matter.

Love finally: they suffer in departing from the grotto and you say: "They leave their hearts there". And you are right.

But should the same not happen with My Sacrament?

And there is another point, an d it is entirely for you: note to whom the angel reveals himself first and who deserves to hear Mary's love effusions. Levi: the boy. God shows Himself to those who have a child's soul and He shows them also His mysteries and allows them to hear His divine words and Mary's. And those with a child's soul have also Levi's holy daring and they say: "Let us kiss Jesus' dress". They say that to Mary. Because it is always Mary Who gives you Jesus.

She is the Bearer of the Eucharist. She is the Living Pyx. Who goes to Mary, finds Me. Who asks Her for Me receives Me from Her. When a creature says to Mary: "Give me Your Jesus that I may love Him", My Mother's smile causes Heaven's colours to change into a more lively brightness because of its greater delight.

Say, therefore, to Her: "Let me kiss Jesus' dress, let me kiss His wounds". And dare even more: "Let me rest my head on Your Jesus' Heart, that I may delight in It". Come. And rest. Like Jesus in His cradle, between Jesus and Mary. »

31. Zacharias' Visit.

8th June 1944.

I see the big room where I have already seen the meeting of the Magi with Jesus and their adoration. I understand that I am in the hospitable house where the Holy Family has been received. And I see Zacharias' arrival. Elizabeth is not there.

The landlady runs out into the lobby to meet the arriving guest and she shows him to a door. She knocks, and then withdraws discreetly.

Joseph opens the door, and he utters a cry of joy when he sees Zacharias. He takes him into a little room, as small as a corridor. « Mary is suckling the Child. She will not be long. Sit down, you must be tired. » And he makes room for his guest on his couch, and sits beside him.

I hear Joseph asking after little John and Zacharias replies: « He is growing as strong as a little colt. But he is teething now and he is suffering a little. That is why we did not want to bring him. It is very cold, and that is why Elizabeth did not come either. She could not leave him without milk. She was very upset, but the season is so rigorous! »

« It is rigorous indeed » replies Joseph.

« The man you sent me told me that you were homeless when He was born. You must have suffered a lot. »

« Yes, quite a lot. But our fears were greater than our discomfort. We were afraid the Child's health might be injured. And we had to stay there for the first days. We lacked nothing, for ourselves, because the shepherds gave the good news to the people of Bethlehem, and many of them brought us gifts. But we had no house, not even a decent room, a bed… and Jesus cried so much, particularly at night, because the wind was blowing in from all directions. I used to light a little fire. Only a little one, because the smoke made Jesus cough… and it was still cold in any case. Two animals do not give out much heat, especially when the cold air comes in from all directions! We had no warm water to wash Him, nor dry clothes to change Him. Yes, He suffered quite a lot! And Mary suffered seeing Him suffer. I suffered… so you can imagine His Mother's anguish! She fed Him with milk and tears, milk and love… Now here it is much better. I had made for Him such a comfortable cradle and Mary had fitted it with a soft little mattress. But it is in Nazareth! Ah! If He were born there, it would have been different! »

« But Christ was to be born in Bethlehem. It was prophesied. »

Mary comes in, She heard their voices. She is all dressed in white wool. She has taken off the dark dress She was wearing during the journey and in the grotto, and She is all white, as I have seen Her dressed before. She is not wearing anything on Her head, and She is holding Jesus in Her arms: He is sleeping, sated with milk, in His pure white swaddling clothes.

Zacharias stands up reverently and bows down in veneration. He then goes nearer, and looks at Jesus with the greatest respect. He bends down, not so much to see Him better, as to pay Him homage. Mary offers the Child to him, and Zacharias takes Him with such adoration that he seems to be holding up a monstrance. It is in fact the Host that he takes in his hands, the Host already offered and that will be sacrificed after being given to men as a nourishment of love and redemption. Zacharias hands Jesus back to Mary.

They all sit down, and Zacharias explains once again to Mary the reason why Elizabeth has not come and how upset she was. « During the past months she has prepared some linens for Your blessed Son. I have brought them to You. They are downstairs in the waggon. »

He rises and goes out, then comes back with a large parcel and a smaller one. Joseph relieves him of the heavier one and Zacharias starts pulling his gifts from both of them: a soft handwoven woollen blanket, some linens and little dresses. Then from the other one, some honey, some snow-white flour, butter, apples for Mary and cakes baked by Elizabeth and many more little things which are a token of the motherly love of the grateful cousin for the young Mother.

« Please tell Elizabeth that I am very grateful to her, as I am grateful to you, too. I would have been so happy to see her, but I understand the situation. And I would also have loved to see little John… »

« But You will see him in spring. We will come and see You. »

« Nazareth is too far away » remarks Joseph.

« Nazareth? But you must stay here. The Messiah must grow up in Bethlehem. It is David's town. The Most High, through Caesar's will, brought Him to the town in David's land, the holy land of Judaea. Why take Him to Nazareth? You know in what opinion the Jews hold the Nazarenes. This Child is to be in future years the Saviour of His people. The capital town must not scorn its King because He comes from a despised land. You know as well as I do how captious the Sanhedrin is and how disdainful its three main castes are… And then, here, near me, I will be able to help you somehow, and put everything I have, not so much in the way of material things, but of moral gifts, at the service of this New-Born Baby. And when He is old enough to understand, I will be very happy to be His teacher, as I will be for my own son, so that later, when He is grown up, He will bless me. We must consider that He is destined for great things and, consequently, He must be in a position to present Himself to the world with all the necessary means to win His game. He will certainly possess Wisdom. But also the simple fact that He was educated by a priest, will make Him more agreeable to the difficult Pharisees and Scribes and will render His mission easier. »

Mary looks at Joseph, and Joseph looks at Mary. Above the rosy innocent head of the Child, sleeping unaware of it all, there is a silent exchange of questions. And they are questions full of sadness. Mary is thinking of Her little house, Joseph is concerned about his work. Here, where only a few days ago they were completely unknown, they must start from scratch. Here they have none of the dear things they left at home, and which they had prepared with so much love for the Child.

And Mary says so: « How can we do that? We have left everything there. Joseph had worked so hard for My Jesus, without sparing labour or money. He worked at night, so that during the day he could work for other people and thus earn enough to buy the best wood, the softest wool, the finest linen, and prepare everything for Jesus. He built beehives, and he even worked as a mason to make certain modifications in the house, so that the cradle could be placed in My room and remain there until Jesus had grown up and the cradle could then be replaced by a bed, because Jesus will stay with Me until He is an adolescent »

« Joseph can go and get what you left there »

« And where will we put it? You know, Zacharias, that we are poor. We have only our work and our home. And they both enable us to live without starving. But here… perhaps we will find some work. But we will always have the problem of a house. This good woman cannot give us hospitality for ever. And I cannot sacrifice Joseph more than he has already sacrificed himself for My sake! »

« Oh! Me! It's nothing for me! I am concerned with Mary's grief. Her grief in not living in Her own house… »

Two big tears well from Mary's eyes.

« I think that house must be as dear to Her as Paradise, because of the mystery which was accomplished in it. I speak little, but I understand a lot. If it wasn't for that, I would not be upset. I will work twice as much, that's all. I am young and strong enough to work twice as much as I used to and see to everything. And if Mary does not suffer too much… and if you say that we must do so… well, here I am. I will do whatever you think is best. Provided that it will help Jesus. »

« It will certainly help. Think it over, and you will see the reasons. »

« It is also said that the Messiah will be called Nazarene… » objects Mary.

« True. But at least, until He is grown up, let Him grow up in Judaea. The Prophet says: "And you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, will be the greatest, because out of you will come the Saviour". He does not speak of Nazareth. Perhaps that title was given to Him for some reason unknown to us. But this is His land. »

« You say so, you, priest, and we… we listen to you with sad hearts, and we believe you. But how painful it is!… When shall I see that house where I became a Mother? » Mary is weeping, silently. And I understand Her grief. Oh! I do understand.

The vision ends on Mary's weeping.

Mary then says:

« I know that you understand. But you will see Me crying more bitterly. For the time being, I want to relieve your spirit by showing you Joseph's holiness. He was a man, that is, he had no other help for his spirit, except his holiness. I had all the gifts of God, in My condition of Immaculate. I did not know I was such. But the gifts were active in My soul, and gave Me spiritual strength. But he was not immaculate. Humanity was in him with all its heavy weight and he had to rise towards perfection with all that burden, at the cost of continuous efforts of all his faculties to reach perfection and be agreeable to God.

Oh! My holy spouse! Holy in everything, also in the most humble things in life. Holy for his angelical chastity. Holy for his human honesty. Holy for his patience, his activity, for his constant serenity, for his modesty, for everything. His holiness shines also in this event. A priest says to him: "You ought to settle here" and he replies, fully aware of the greater hardships he would have to face: "It is nothing for Me. I am concerned with Mary's grief. If it was not for that, I would not be upset. Provided that it will help Jesus". Jesus, Mary: his angelical loves. My holy spouse loved nothing else on earth. And he sacrificed himself to that love.

They elected him protector of Christian families, of workers and many other categories. But he should be appointed protector not only of dying people, of married couples, of workmen, but also of those consecrated to God. Who, of all the people in the world consecrated to the service of God, has consecrated himself as he did, to the service of his God, accepting everything, foregoing everything, bearing everything, fulfilling everything with quickness, with a cheerful mind, a constant humour? There is no one like him.

And I wish to draw your attention to another point, nay two points.

Zacharias is a priest. Joseph is not. But you must note how he,

who is not a priest, has a more heavenly soul than the priest. Zacharias thinks in a human way, and in a human way he expounds the Scriptures because he allows himself to be led by his good human sense, and it is not the first time he does so. And he was punished for it. But he relapses, although less gravely. With regard to John's birth he said: "How can that happen, if I am old, and my wife is barren?" Now he says: "To smooth His way, Christ is to be brought up here." And with that subtle root of pride that persists also in the best people, he thinks that he can be useful to Jesus. Not useful in the sense that Joseph wanted to be, by serving Him, but by teaching Him… God forgave him, because of his good intention. But did the "Master" need teachers?

I endeavoured to make him see the truth of the prophecies. But he felt he was more learned than I was and made use of such feeling in his own way. I could have insisted and outdone him. But this is the other point I wanted to draw your attention to - I respected the priest because of his dignity, not because of his knowledge.

In general, a priest is always enlightened by God. I said: "in general". He is enlightened when he is a real priest. It is not his robe that consecrates him: it is his soul. To judge whether one is a real priest, one must consider what comes out of his soul. As My Jesus said, the things that sanctify or contaminate come out from the soul, and they characterise the whole behaviour of a person. So, when one is a real priest, he is generally inspired by God. We must have a supernatural charity and pray for the others, who are not such.

But My Son has already placed you at the service of this redemption, so I will say no more. Be happy to suffer, so that the number of real priests may increase. And rely peacefully on the word of him who guides you. And believe and obey his advice. Obedience always saves you, even if the advice given to you is not completely perfect.

As you know, we obeyed. And we did well. It is true that Herod confined the slaughter of the children to Bethlehem and its surroundings. But could Satan not have spread and propagated such hatred much farther and wider and have induced all the mighty ones in Palestine to commit a similar crime in order to kill the future King of the Jews? He could have done that and it would have happened in Christ's early days, when the repeated miracles had drawn the attention of both the crowds and of those in power. If such an event had taken place, how could we have crossed the whole of Palestine, to go from Nazareth to Egypt, the hospitable land for persecuted Jews, and make such a journey with a little child, and while persecution was raging? It was easier to flee from Bethlehem, even if the flight was equally painful.

Obedience always saves you. Remember that. And respect for a priest is always a sign of a Christian education. Woe to those priests who lose their apostolic ardour! Also Jesus said that. But woe also to those who think that they are right in despising them! Because they consecrate and hand out the True Bread that descends from Heaven. And that contact makes them holy, just like a sacred chalice, even if they are not totally holy. They will answer to God for it. You must consider them as such and not worry about anything else. You must not be more strict than your Lord Jesus, Who, at their command, leaves Heaven and descends to be raised by their hands. You must learn from Him. And if they are blind, if they are deaf, if their souls are paralysed and their thoughts are unsound, if they are lepers full of faults in strong contrast with their mission, if they are like corpses in sepulchres, then call Jesus that He may heal them and revive them.

Call Him with your prayers, and your suffering, o victim souls. To save a soul is to predestine one's own soul to Heaven. But to save the soul of a priest is to save a large number of souls, because every holy priest is a net that drags souls to God. And to save a priest, that is to sanctify: re-sanctify, is to create this mystical net. Each prey is a light to be added to your eternal crown.

Go in peace. »

32. Presentation of Jesus in the Temple.

1st February 1944.

I see a couple of people departing from a very modest house. A very young mother comes down an outside staircase holding in her arms a child enveloped in a white cloth.

I recognise our Mother. She is always the same: pale and blonde, agile and so kind in Her behaviour. She is dressed in white, with a pale blue mantle and a white veil on Her head. She is carrying Her Child so carefully.

Joseph is waiting for Her at the foot of the steps with a little grey donkey. Joseph is dressed entirely in light brown: both his tunic and his mantle being the same colour. He looks at Mary and smiles at Her. When Mary arrives near the little donkey, Joseph places the animal's bridle on his left arm, he takes for a moment the Child, Who is sleeping peacefully, and thus allows Mary to sit more comfortably on the donkey's saddle. He then hands Jesus back to Her and they set out.

Joseph is walking beside Mary, holding the bridle all the time and ensuring that the donkey goes straight on without stumbling. Mary is holding Jesus in Her lap, and lest He might feel cold, She spreads the edge of Her mantle over Him. Joseph and Mary speak very little but they often smile at each other.

The road, which is not a model road, winds along a country made barren by the season of the year. Only a few other travellers meet them on the road or overtake them.

Then I see some houses and the walls around a town. They go in through a gate and start walking on the pavement which is all broken up, and very irregular. Progress is now much more difficult, both because the traffic causes the donkey to stop every moment and because the holes where stones are missing make the poor animal jerk continuously and thus Mary and the Child are also disturbed.

The road is not flat. It is uphill, although but slightly. It is a narrow road running between high houses with small narrow low doors and only a few windows on the road. High above, the sky can be seen peeping with many thin blue strips between the houses, nay between the terraces. Down in the street there are many people and much shouting. They meet other people on foot or riding donkeys or leading loaded donkeys and a crowd following a cumbersome camel caravan. At a certain moment, a patrol of Roman legionaries passes by with a great noise of hooves and arms and they disappear beyond an arch built across a narrow stony road.

Joseph turns left along a wider and more pleasant road. I can see the embattled town walls, with which I am already familiar, at the end of the street.

Mary dismounts from the little donkey near a gate where there is a kind of stall for other donkeys. I say « stall » because it is a kind of shed, or better still, a kind of shed, spread with straw; there are also some poles with rings to which the animals are tied.

Joseph gives some coins to a little man who has gone up to him and with them he buys some hay and he draws a pail of water from a rustic well in the comer. He then feeds the donkey. He joins Mary and they both enter the enclosure of the Temple.

At first, they turn their steps towards an arcade where the merchants are, to whom Jesus later will give a good lashing: the vendors of lambs and doves and the money-changers. Joseph buys two little white pigeons. He does not change any money: he obviously has what is required.

They then make for a side door, with eight steps, as all the doors seem to have, because the centre of the Temple is raised above the surrounding ground. The door opens into a great hall like the doors of our houses in towns, to give you an idea, only this one is larger and more ornate. In the hall there are on the right and on the left two kinds of altars, that is two rectangular constructions, the purpose of which I do not understand at first. They are like low basins, because the internal part is lower than the external rim, which is a few centimetres higher.

A priest approaches them, I do not know whether he was called by Joseph or whether he did so of his own accord. Mary offers Her two little pigeons and since I know their fate, I turn my eyes elsewhere. I watch the decorations of the very heavy portal, of the ceiling and of the hall. But I get the impression, by a side glance, that the priest sprays Mary with some water. It must be water, because I do not see any stains on Her dress. Then Mary, Who had given the priest a handful of coins together with the two pigeons (I had forgotten to mention that), goes into the real Temple, in the company of the priest.

I am watching everything. It is a most ornate place. Sculptured angels' heads, palms and decorations adorn the columns, the walls and the ceiling. Light comes in through strange long narrow windows, obviously without panes, built diagonally with regard to the walls. I suppose the idea is to keep the rain out.

Mary moves forward to a certain point. She then stops. A few metres from Her, there are more steps on top of which there is a kind of altar, beyond which there is another construction.

I now realise that I thought I was in the Temple, instead I was in the part surrounding the real Temple, that is the Holy, beyond which no one can proceed, apparently, except the priests. What I therefore thought was the Temple, is but an enclosed vestibule, which on three sides encircles the Temple, in which the Tabernacle is enclosed. I do not know whether I have made myself understood. But I am neither an architect nor an engineer.

Mary offers the Child, Who has woken up and is turning His innocent eyes towards the priest, with the astonished look of infants a few days old. The priest takes Him in his arms and raises Him, with arms fully stretched out, towards the Temple, standing against the kind of altar placed on top of the steps. The rite is over. The Child is handed back to His Mother and the priest goes away.

There is a group of onlookers. Amongst them a little old man, bent with age and limping, makes his way leaning on a stick. He must be very old, I would say over eighty. He goes near Mary, and asks Her to give him the Child for one moment. Mary satisfies him, smiling.

Simeon, whom I always thought belonged to the sacerdotal class, and is instead a simple believer, at least according to his garments, takes the Child and kisses Him. Jesus smiles at him with the typical smile of sucklings. He seems to watch him inquisitively, because the old man is crying and laughing at the same time and his tears form a sparkling embroidery running along his wrinkles and beading his long white beard, towards which Jesus stretches His little hands. He is Jesus, but still a child, and whatever moves in front of Him, draws His attention so that He wants to get hold of it to see what it is. Mary and Joseph smile and so do all the others who praise the beauty of the Child.

I hear the words of the holy old man and I see the astonished gaze of Joseph, the deeply moved look of Mary as well as the glances of the little crowd, partly surprised and moved, partly laughing at the words of the old man. Amongst the latter there are some bearded and conceited members of the Sanhedrin, who shake their heads giving Simeon an ironic pitying look. They must think he is a dotard.

Mary’s smile fades into paleness when Simeon mentions sorrow. Although She knows, that word pierces Her soul. She goes closer to Joseph, to be comforted, She presses Her Child to Her breast passionately and like a thirsty soul, She takes in the words of Anna of Phanuel, who being a woman, has mercy on Her suffering and promises Her that the Eternal Father will soothe the hour of sorrow with a supernatural strength. « Woman, He Who gave a Saviour to His people, will not lack the power to send His angel to console Your tears. The great women of Israel never lacked the help of the Lord and You are far greater than Judith and Jael. Our God will give You a heart of the most pure gold to withstand the storm of sorrow, so that You will be the greatest woman in Creation: the Mother. And You, Child, remember me in the hour of Your mission. »

And the vision ends here.

2nd February 1944.

Jesus says:

« Two teachings, applicable to everybody, derive from the description given by you.

The former: truth is not revealed to a priest engrossed in rites, but absent with his spirit, it is instead revealed to a simple believer.

The priest, always in contact with Divinity, devoted to what concerns God and to everything which is above the flesh, should have realised at once who was the Child Who was being offered that morning in the Temple. But it was necessary for him to have a living spirit, in order to realise it. A mere robe covering a drowsy spirit, if not a dead spirit, was not sufficient.

The Spirit of God can thunder if It wants, and rouse like a thunderbolt and shake like an earthquake the dullest spirit. It can. But generally, as It is an orderly Spirit, as God is Order in each Person and way of acting, It inspires and speaks, not where there is sufficient merit to deserve its effusion - in which case Its effusions would be most rare and not even you would know their light - but where It sees the "good will" to deserve such effusion.

How is such will exerted? With a life devoted, as far as possible, entirely to God: in faith, obedience, purity, charity, generosity

and in prayer. Not in practices: in prayer. There is less difference between night and day than there is between practices and prayer. The latter is communion of the spirit with God, from which you emerge with fresh strength and a decision to belong more and more to God. The former are common habit exerted for various purposes, which are always selfish, and they leave you exactly as you were, nay, they aggravate your burden with the faults of falsehood and sluggishness.

Simeon had such good will. He had not been spared troubles and trials in his life. But he had not lost his good will. Age and misfortunes had not impaired or shaken his faith in the Lord and in His promises, neither did his good will to be more and more worthy of God tire or falter. And God sent Him the ray of the Spirit to guide him to the Temple, that he might see the Light that had

come to the world, before his eyes of a faithful servant closed to the light of the sun, awaiting to be reopened to the Sun of God glowing in the Heavens, which I had reopened when I ascended after my Martyrdom.

"Prompted by the Holy Spirit" says the Gospel. Oh! If men only knew what a perfect Friend the Holy Spirit is! What Guide, what Teacher! If they only loved and invoked Him, this love of the Most Holy Trinity, this Light of Light, this Fire of Fire, this Intelligence, this Wisdom! How much more they would know of what is necessary to know!

Look, Mary; listen, My children. Simeon waited all his long life before "seeing the Light" and before knowing that God's promise was fulfilled. But he never doubted. He never said to himself: 'It is useless to persevere in hoping and praying". He just persevered. And he deserved "to see" what neither the priest nor the proud and dull members of the Sanhedrin saw: the Son of God, the Messiah, the Saviour in the flesh of a Child Who warmed him and smiled at him. He received the smile of God from the lips of a Child, his first reward for an honest and pious life.

The other lesson: the words of Anna. She also, a prophetess, saw in Me, a new-born Baby, the Messiah. And this is quite natural, considering her prophetic prerogative. But listen to what she says to My Mother, moved by faith and charity. And use her words as a light for your souls that quiver in these days of darkness and in this Feast of Light. "Who gave a Saviour will not lack the power to send His angel to console Your tears".

Consider that God gave Himself to obliterate Satan's work in your souls. And will He not be able now to defeat the satans that torture you? Will He not be able to wipe your tears routing these satans and sending you once again the peace of His Christ? Why do you not ask Him with faith? A real overbearing faith, a faith before which the rigour of God, indignant at your many faults,

may turn into a smile and He may grant you His forgiveness, which is relief, and His blessing which will be a rainbow in this world submerged in a deluge of blood which you wanted yourselves.

Remember: the Father, after punishing men with the Deluge, said to Himself and to His Patriarch: "Never again will I curse the earth because of man, because his heart contrives evil from his infancy. Never again will I strike down every living thing as I have done". And He has been faithful to His word. He has not sent a Deluge again. But how many times have you said to yourselves and to God: "If we are spared this time, if You save us, we shall never make wars again, never again", and after, you have always made more terrifying ones? How many times, o false men, who have no respect either for God or for your own word? And yet God would help you once again, only if the large mass of the faithful would invoke Him with faith and ardent love.

Lay your worries at the feet of God: you who are too few to counterbalance the many who keep God's rigour alive, you who have remained devoted to Him, notwithstanding the dreadful times which are increasing from day to day. He will send you His angel, as He sent the Saviour to the world. Do not be afraid. Be united to the Cross. It has always defeated the snares of the demon, who with the cruelties of men and the sadness of life endeavours to drive to desperation, that is, to separation from God, the hearts he cannot conquer in any other way. »

33. Lullaby of the Virgin.

28th November 1944.

This morning I woke up in the gentlest way. I was still dozing when I heard the most pure voice I have ever heard sing a slow lullaby very sweetly. The song was so slow and archaic that it sounded a Christmas pastoral. I followed the melody and the voice, enjoying them more and more until I awoke completely. I then understood fully what was taking place, and I said: « Hail, Mary, full of Grace! » because it was Mother singing. And She raised Her voice after saying to me: « I greet you, too. Come and be happy! »

And I saw Her… in the house in Bethlehem, in Her room, intent on lulling Jesus to sleep. In the room, there were Mary's loom and some needlework. I think Mary had stopped working to give the Child suck and change His swaddling bands, - I should say His clothes, because He was already a few months old. I would say six, or eight months at most. Perhaps Mary was thinking of resuming Her work after the Child had fallen asleep.

It was evening. The sun was setting and there were many small

golden clouds in the clear sky. Some herds were going back to their folds, browsing on the last grass of a flowery meadow and bleating with their heads uplifted.

The Child was about to fall asleep. He seemed a little restless, as if He had teething trouble, or some other minor pain of childhood.

I wrote the song on a piece of paper as well as I could, in the dim light of a very early morning, and I will now copy it.

« Little golden clouds - seem the herds of the Lord On the meadow full of flowers - another herd is watching. But if I had all the herds - that exist in the world,
The lambkin dearest to Me - You would always be.
Sleep, sleep, sleep, sleep,
Cry no more…
Many glittering stars - are twinkling in the sky. May Your sweet gentle eyes - shed no more tears. Your eyes of sapphire - are the stars of My heart. Your tears make Me cry - oh! cry no more.
Sleep, sleep, sleep, sleep,
Cry no more…
All the sparkling angels - that in Heaven be,
Form a wreath around You, innocent Child - enraptured by Your face.
But You're crying for Your Mummy - Mummy, Mummy, Mum. To sing Your lullaby - lulla, lulla, lu.
Sleep, sleep, sleep, sleep,
Cry no more…
The sky will soon be red - and dawn will soon be back, And Mummy had no rest - to ensure You do not cry. « Mamma » when awake You'll call Me - « Son » I will reply. A kiss of love and life - I'll give you with My breast.
Sleep, sleep, sleep, sleep,
Cry no more…
You do need Your Mummy - also if You dream of Heaven.
Come, do come! Under My veil - I will make You sleep.
My breast is Your pillow - Your cradle My arms,
Do not fear, My dear - I'm here with You…
Sleep, sleep, sleep, sleep,

Cry no more…
I'll always be with You - You're the life of My heart He is sleeping like a flower - Resting on My breast He is sleeping Be quiet! - His Father perhaps He sees,
And the sight wipes the tears - Of my sweet Jesus.
He Sleeps, sleeps, sleeps, sleeps,
And He cries no more… »

It is impossible to describe the graceful charm of the scene. It is only a mother lulling Her little one. But she is that Mother, and He is that Little One! You can therefore imagine what gracefulness, what love, what purity, what Paradise is in this little, great, sweet scene, the memory of which makes me so happy and is confirmed by the melody I continuously sing, so that you may also hear it. But I do not have the most pure silvery voice of Mary, the virginal voice of the Virgin!… And I will sound like a cracked organ. It does not matter. I will do my best. What a beautiful pastoral it would be, to be sung round the Crib at Christmas!

Mary at first rocked the wooden cradle very slowly. Afterwards, when She saw that Jesus was not calming down, She took Him in Her arms, sitting near the open window, with the cradle beside Her, and swinging lightly to the rhythm of the song, She repeated the lullaby twice, until Jesus closed His little eyes, He turned His head round on to His Mother's breast and fell asleep thus, His little face resting on the cosy warmth of His Mother's breast, one hand also on Her breast near His rosy cheek, the other one relaxed on Her lap. Mary's veil shaded Her Holy Creature.

Then Mary got up most carefully and laid Jesus in the cradle, She covered Him with small linens, She spread a veil to protect Him from flies and the fresh air, and She remained contemplating Her sleeping Treasure. She held one hand over Her heart, while the other was leaning on the cradle, ready to rock it if necessary, and She smiled happily, slightly bent while darkness and silence were falling on the earth and were invading Her little virginal room.

What peace! What beauty! I am so happy!

It is not a grand vision and it will perhaps be considered quite useless in the mass of the other visions, as it does not reveal anything special. I know. But it is a real grace to me and I consider it such, because it makes my spirit placid, pure, loving, as if it were created again by Mother's hands. I think that you will like it as well, in that sense. We are « little children ». Better thus! Jesus likes us. Let the others, who are learned and complicated, think what they like and let them say that we are « childish ». We do not mind, do we?

34. The Adoration of the Wise Men.

28th February- 1944.

My internal voice warns me:

« Call the contemplations you are about to receive and which I will tell you, "The Gospels of faith", because they will clarify for you and other people the power of faith and of its fruits and will confirm you in the faith in God. »

I see Bethlehem, small and white, gathered like a brood of chickens under the stars. Two main streets divide the town crosswise: one coming from beyond the town, and it is the main road that continues on the other side, the other road runs across the town, from one side to the other, but does not proceed further. There are other small streets dividing the town into many sections, without the slightest resemblance to a road scheme as we understand it. The roads are suited to both the ground, which is all gradients, and to the various houses built here and there, according to the vagaries of the ground and the whims of the builder. Some run to the right, others to the left, some at a corner with the road skirting them, which consequently seems a ribbon which unwinds tortuously instead of being a straight one running from one end to the other without any diversion. Now and again there is a little square serving either for a market, or a fountain, or because, owing to the total lack of a building scheme, there is a small piece of sloping ground, not suitable for any structure.

The place where I seem to be staying, appears to be exactly one of those peculiar little squares. It should be square, or at least rectangular. It is instead so strange a kind of trapezium that it looks like an obtuse angled triangle with a blunted vertex. On the longest side: the base of the triangle, there is a low wide building, the widest in the village. Outside, there is a smooth, bare, high wall, with only two doors, which at present are closed. Inside instead, in the large square, there are many windows on the first floor; underneath, instead, there are arcades surrounding yards strewn with straw and rubble, with drinking troughs for horses and other animals. Attached to the rustic pillars, there are rings to which the animals are tied, and on one side there is a large shed to shelter herds and mounts. I realise that it is the hotel of Bethlehem.

On the other two equal sides there are several houses, some large, some small, some with a little orchard, some without, because in some cases the front of the house looks on to the square, in other cases, it is in the rear of the house facing the square. On the narrow side, facing the caravanserai, there is only one little house, with an outside staircase, which reaches the first floor and leads into its rooms. All the rooms are closed because it is night. There is nobody in the streets, as it is so late.

I notice that the night light is increasing, it descends from a sky crowded with stars, which are so beautiful in the eastern sky: they are so bright and large and seemingly so near that it is possible to reach them and touch those flowers sparkling in the velvet of the vault of Heaven. I raise my eyes to see the source of the increasing light. A star of such unusual size that the moon seems small in comparison, is moving forward in the sky of Bethlehem. And all the others seem to vanish and make room for it, as maidservants do when their queen passes by: its brightness is such that it outshines them all. From the sphere, which looks like a huge pale sapphire lit up internally by a sun, a trail departs in which blond topazes, green emeralds, opalescent opals, blood-red flashes of rubies and gentle sparklings of amethysts mingle with the prevailing pale sapphire. All the stones on earth are in the trail that sweeps the sky with a fast and undulating movement as if it were alive. But the prevailing colour is the one emanating from the globe of the star: the heavenly pale sapphire hue which comes down and makes the houses, the streets, the ground of Bethlehem, the Saviour's cradle, look like blue silver. It is no longer the poor town, which by our standards is smaller than a country village. It is a fantastic town of a fairy tale, all in silver. And the water of the fountains and of the vessels is liquid diamond.

And with a brighter radiation of light the star stops over the little house on the narrowest side of the square. Neither the people dwelling in it, nor the people in Bethlehem see it, because they are all asleep in their closed houses, but the star quickens its shining pulsations and the trail vibrates and wavers faster and faster drawing a kind of semicircle in the sky. And the sky lights up because of the net of stars drawn by the trail, a net full of precious jewels which shine and colour all the other stars with the most graceful hues, as if they were communicating their own joy to them.

The little house is transfigured by the liquid fire of gems. The roof of the small terrace, the dark stone steps, the little door, are like a block of pure silver sprayed with diamond and pearl dust. No royal palace on earth has ever had or ever will have a staircase like this

one, built to be used by angels and by a Mother Who is the Mother of God. The little feet of the Immaculate Virgin can alight on that white splendour, the little feet which are destined to rest on the steps of God's throne.

But the Virgin does not know. She is awake near her Son's cradle and is praying. There are splendours in Her soul which outdo the splendour with which the star is decorating material things.

From the main road a cavalcade is approaching. Harnessed horses are led by hand, dromedaries and camels bear riders or are carrying loads. Their hooves make the sound of water that rustles and breaks against the stones of a torrent. When they reach the square, they all stop. The cavalcade, lit up by the star, is a fantasy of splendour. The harnesses of the most rich mounts, the clothes of the riders, their faces, their baggage, everything shines and the light of the star increases the splendour of metals, leathers, silks, gems, coats. Eyes are radiant and mouths smiling because another splendour shines in their hearts: the splendour of a supernatural joy.

While the servants move towards the caravanserai with the animals, three members of the caravan dismount from their mounts, which a servant takes away at once, and they walk towards the house. And they prostrate themselves, touching the ground with their foreheads, to kiss the soil. They are three personages of power as is quite obvious from their very rich attire. One of them, of a very dark complexion, who dismounts from a camel, envelops himself in a sciamma (1) of pure bright silk, held tight to his waist by a precious girdle, from which a dagger or sword hangs with a jewel-studded hilt. Of the other two, who dismount from two splendid horses, one is wearing a beautiful striped robe, the dominant colour of which is yellow, fashioned like a long domino with hood and cordon, which looks like a piece of gold filigree owing to the very rich golden embroidery. The third one is wearing a silk shirt puffing out of long large trousers, narrow at the ankles. He is enveloped in a very fine shawl which resembles a flowery garden, so bright are the flowers decorating it. On his head he has a turban held by a little chain covered with diamond settings.

After venerating the house where the Saviour is, they rise and go towards the caravanserai where the servants have knocked and had the door opened.

And the vision ends here. Its starts again, three hours later, with the scene of the Magi adoring Jesus.

It is daytime now. The sun is shining in the afternoon sky. One of the servants of the three Magi crosses the square and climbs the steps of the little house. He goes in. He comes out and goes back to the hotel.

The three Magi come out, each followed by his own servant. They cross the square. The occasional passers-by turn round to look at the stately personages who are walking very slowly and solemnly. A full quarter of an hour has elapsed since the servant came out and thus the inhabitants of the little house have had time to prepare to receive the guests.

The Magi are even more richly dressed than the night before. Their silks shine, the gems sparkle, a big bunch of precious feathers, covered with even more precious chips, quivers and shines on the head of the Wise Man wearing the turban.

One of the servants is carrying an inlaid coffer, the metal reinforcements of which are all engraved gold; the second servant is holding a beautifully wrought chalice covered with a pure gold lid which is even more finely finished; the third servant has a kind of wide low amphora, also in gold, the cover of which is shaped like a

(1) Ethiopian garment.

pyramid at the top of which there is a diamond. The gifts appear to be heavy, because the servants are carrying them with some effort, particularly the one with the coffer.

The Magi climb the steps and go in. They enter a room that extends from the road to the back of the house. The little kitchen garden at the back can be seen through a window which is open to the sun. There are doors in the other two walls, and the owners, that is a man, a woman and some boys and younger children cast sidelong glances through them.

Mary is sitting with the Child in Her lap and Joseph is standing near Her. But She also gets up and bows when She sees the Magi entering. She is all dressed in white. She is so beautiful in Her plain white dress which covers Her from Her neck down to Her feet, from Her shoulders to Her slender wrists. She is so beautiful with Her head crowned with Her blond plaits, Her face more rosy for the emotion, with Her eyes smiling so sweetly while Her mouth gives a greeting: « May God be with you », that the three Magi stop for a moment, completely astonished. They then proceed and prostrate themselves at Her feet. And they ask Her to sit down.

They do not sit down, although She asks them to do so. They remain kneeling, relaxing on their heels. Behind them, also on their knees, are the three servants. They are immediately after the threshold. They have placed the three gifts they were carrying in front of the Magi, and now they are waiting.

The three Wise Men contemplate the Child, Who I think must be nine to twelve months old, He is so lively and strong. He is sitting on His Mother's lap and smiles and prattles with a shrill voice like a little bird. He is all dressed in white like His Mother, with tiny sandals on His little feet. His dress is a very simple one: a small tunic, from which His restless feet protrude, and His plump little hands which would like to get hold of everything, and above all, a most beautiful little face in which two dark blue eyes shine, and a pretty mouth with dimples at the sides shows its first tiny teeth when it smiles. His pretty little curls are so bright and soft that they seem gold dust.

The oldest of the Magi speaks on behalf of them all. He explains to Mary that one night the previous December, they saw a new star of an unusual brightness appear in the sky. The maps of the sky had never shown or mentioned such a star. Its name was unknown because it had no name. Born out of the bosom of God, it had flourished to tell men a blessed truth, a secret of God. But men had not paid any attention to it, because their souls were steeped in mud. They did not lift their eyes to God neither could they read the words that He writes with stars of fire in the vault of Heaven. May He be blessed for ever.

They had seen it and had striven to understand its meaning. They were happy to give up the little sleep they usually granted themselves and forgetting even their food, they devoted themselves entirely to studying the zodiac. And the conjunctions of the stars, the time, the season, the calculation of the hours passed and of the astronomic combinations had told them the name and the secret of the star. Its name: Messiah. Its secret: « The Messiah had come to our world ». And they had set out to worship Him. Each of them unknown to the others. Over mountains, across deserts, along valleys and rivers, travelling by night they had come towards Palestine, because the star was moving in that direction. For each of them, from three different points on the earth, it was going in that direction. And then they met beyond the Dead Sea. God's will had gathered them there, and they then proceeded together, understanding one another, notwithstanding that each spoke his own language: by a miracle of the Eternal Father they were able to understand and speak the language of each country.

They had gone together to Jerusalem, because the Messiah was to be the King of Jerusalem, the King of the Jews. But over the sky of that city, the star had concealed itself and they felt their hearts breaking with pain and had examined themselves to ascertain whether they had failed to deserve God. But when their consciences reassured them, they had applied to king Herod and had asked him in which royal palace the King of the Jews was born because they had come to adore Him. And the king had gathered the chief priests and the scribes and had asked them where the Messiah might be born. And they had replied: « In Bethlehem, in Judah. »

And they had come towards Bethlehem and as soon as they left the Holy City, the star had reappeared to them, and the night before their arrival in Bethlehem its brightness had increased; the whole sky was ablaze. Then the star had stopped above this house engulfing all the light of the other stars in its ray. And they had understood that the Divine New-Born Baby was there. And now they were worshipping Him, offering their gifts, and above all, their hearts, which never cease thanking God for the grace granted to them; neither would they ever stop loving His Son Whose holy human body they had now seen. Later they intended to go back to king Herod, because he also wanted to adore Him.

« In the meantime, here is the gold which befits a king to possess, here is the incense which befits a God, and here, Mother, here is the myrrh because Your Child is a Man as well as God and He will experience the bitterness of the flesh and of human life as well as the inevitable law of death. Our souls, full as they are of love, would prefer not to utter those words and we would rather think that His flesh is also eternal as His Spirit. But. Woman, if our writings and above all our souls are right, He is Your Son, the Saviour, the Christ of God and consequently, to save the world, He will have to take upon Himself the evil of the world, of which one of the punishments is death. This myrrh is for that hour. That His holy flesh may not be subject to the rot of putrefaction, but may preserve its integrity until its resurrection. And on account of this gift, may He remember us and save His servants by allowing them to enter His Kingdom. In the meantime that we may be sanctified, will You, Mother, trust Your Little One to our love. That His heavenly blessing may descend upon us, while we kiss His feet. »

Mary, Who has overcome the fright caused by the words of the Wise Man, and has hidden with a smile the sadness of the doleful allusion, offers the Child. She lays Him in the arms of the oldest one, who kisses Him and receives His caress, and he then hands Him over to the other two.

Jesus smiles and plays with the little chains and fringes of the robes of the three Magi and He looks curiously at the open coffer, full of a yellow sparkling substance, and He smiles at the rainbow produced by the sun shining on the brilliant top of the lid of the myrrh.

They then hand back the Child to Mary and they stand up. Mary also gets up. They bow to one another, after the youngest has given an order to the servant, who goes out. The three Men go on speaking for a little while. They cannot make up their minds to depart from the house. Tears shine in their eyes. At last they move towards the door, accompanied by Mary and Joseph.

The Child wanted to get down and give His hand to the oldest of the three, and He walks thus, held by His hands by Mary and the Wise Man, both of whom bend down to steady Him. Jesus walks with a hesitant step, like all children, and He laughs kicking His little feet on the strip of the floor lit up by the sun.

When they reach the threshold - it must not be forgotten that the room is as long as the house - the Magi take leave kneeling down once again kissing Jesus' feet. Mary, bending down over the Child, takes His hand and guides it, in a blessing gesture over the head of each Wise Man. It is already a sign of the cross, traced by Jesus' little fingers, guided by Mary.

The three Men go down the steps. The caravan is already there waiting for them. The horses' studs shine in the setting sun. People have gathered in the little square watching the unusual sight.

Jesus laughs clapping His hands. His Mother has lifted Him up on the wide parapet of the landing and is holding Him against Her breast with an arm so that He may not fall. Joseph has gone down with the Magi and is holding the stirrup to each of them while they mount their horses and the camel.

Servants and masters are now all on horseback. The starting command is given. The three Men bow down as low as the necks of their mounts in a final gesture of homage. Joseph bows down. Also Mary bows and then She guides Jesus' hand again in a gesture of goodbye and blessing.

Jesus says:

« And now what shall I tell you, o souls who feel your faith is dying? Those Wise Men from the East had nothing to assure them of the truth. Nothing supernatural. All they had was an astronomic calculation and their own considerations made perfect by a strictly honest life. And yet they had faith. Faith in everything: in science, in their own conscience, in God's goodness.

Science made them believe in the sign of the new star, which could only be "the one" expected by mankind for centuries: the Messiah. Because of their consciences they had faith in the voices of their consciences, which heard heavenly "voices" saying to them: "That is the star announcing the advent of the Messiah". Because of God's goodness, they believed that God would not deceive them, and since their intention was honest, He would help them in every way to reach their aim.

And they were successful. Among so many people fond of studying signs, they were the only ones who understood that sign, because only their souls were anxious to know the words of God for an honest purpose, the main care of which was to praise and honour God immediately.

They did not seek any personal advantage. On the contrary, they have to face hardships and meet expenses but they do not ask for any human reward. They only ask God to remember them and save them for eternal life.

As they have no desire for any future human rewards, so they have no human worry, when they decide on their journey. You would have had hundreds of problems: "How will I be able to make such a long journey in countries and among peoples speaking different

languages? Will they believe me or will they put me in prison as a spy? What help will they give me to cross deserts, rivers and mountains?, And the heat? And the winds of the highlands? And the malarial fever along stagnant marshes? And the floods and heavy rains? And the different food? And the different languages? And… and… and… " That is how you reason. But they do not reason like that. With sincere, holy daring they say: "You, o God, can read our hearts and You see the purpose we are aiming at. We trust to Your hands. Grant us the superhuman joy of adoring Your Second Person, Who has become Flesh to save the world".

That is all. And they set out from the far away Indies. Jesus then tells me that when He says the Indies, He means meridional Asia where Turkey, Afghanistan and Persia are located in our geography. From the Mongolian chains of mountains which are the dominion of eagles and vultures, where God speaks with roars of winds and torrents and writes words of mystery on the immense pages of glaciers. From the land where the Nile rises and then flows with its green blue waters to the azure heart of the Mediterranean, neither mountains, nor woods, nor sands, dry oceans more dangerous than the seas, can stop them from proceeding. And the star shines upon them at night, preventing them from sleeping. When one seeks God, natural habits must yield to superhuman considerations and necessities.

The star guides them from the north, the east and the south, and by a miracle of God, it proceeds for the three of them towards one point. And by another miracle of God, after many miles it gathers them at that point and by a further miracle, it anticipates the Pentecost Wisdom, bestowing on them the gift of understanding and making themselves understood, as it happens in Paradise, where only one language is spoken: God's.

They are dismayed only for one moment, when the star disappears and since they are humble, because they are really great, they do not think it is due to the wickedness of other people, as the corrupted people of Jerusalem did not deserve to see the star of God. But they think they had failed to deserve God themselves, and they examine themselves with trepidation and contrition ready to beg forgiveness.

But their consciences reassure them. Their souls were accustomed to meditation and each of them had a most sensitive conscience, refined by constant attention, and by sharp introspection, which made of their interior a mirror on which even the slightest faults of daily actions are reflected. Their conscience has become their teacher, a voice that warns and cries not at the least error, but at the least inclination towards errors, at everything human, at the satisfaction of one's "ego". Consequently, when they place themselves before that teacher and that severe clean mirror, they know that it will not lie. It reassures them and gives them heart.

"Oh! How sweet it is to feel that there is nothing against God in us! To feel that He is kindly looking at the soul of His faithful son and blesses him. Faith, trust, hope, strength and patience are increased by such a feeling. The storm is raging just now. But it will Pass, because God loves me and He knows that I love Him, and He will not fail to help me again". That is how those speak who enjoy the peace that comes from an upright conscience, that is the queen of every action of theirs.

I said that they were "humble because they were really great." What happens, instead, in your lives? There a man is never humble not because he is great, but because he is more domineering and makes himself mighty by means of his arrogance and because of your silly idolatry. There are some wretched men who, simply because they are the butlers of some overbearing fellow, or ushers in some office, or officials in some small village, that is, servants of those who employed them, put on the airs of demigods. And they arouse pity!…

The three Wise Men were really great. Firstly, because of their supernatural virtues, secondly because of their science, last because of their wealth. But they feel that they are nothing: dust on the dust of the earth, in comparison with the Most High God, Who with a smile creates the worlds and scatters them like grains of corn to satisfy the eyes of the angels with the jewels of the stars.

They feel they are a mere nothing as compared to the Most High God Who created the planet on which they live and He made it most varied. An Infinite Sculptor of boundless works, with a touch of His thumb, He placed a ring of hills here, the bone structure of mountain ridges and peaks there, like vertebrae of the earth, of this enormous body, the veins of which are the rivers, its basins the lakes, its hearts the oceans, its dresses the forests, its veils the clouds, its decorations the crystal glaciers, its gems the turquoises and the emeralds, the opals and the beryls of all the waters that sing, with the woods and the winds, the great chorus of praise to their Lord.

But they feel they are nothing with regard to their wisdom as compared to the Most High God, from Whom their wisdom comes and Who gave them more powerful eyes than those two pupils by means of which they see things: the eyes of their souls, which know how to read in things the word not written by human hands, but engraved by God's thought.

And they feel they are nothing with regard to their wealth: an atom as compared to the wealth of the Owner of the universe, Who scatters metals and gems in the stars and planets and grants supernatural unexhausted riches to the hearts of those who love Him.

And when they arrive before the poor house, in the poorest town in Judah, they do not shake their heads saying: "Impossible", but they bend their backs, their knees, and above all their hearts and they adore. There, behind that poor wall, there is God. The God they have always invoked, but never had the least hope of seeing. And they invoke Him for the welfare of all mankind, and "their" eternal welfare. Oh! that was their only wish. To see Him, know Him, possess Him in the life where there are no more dawns and sunsets!

He is there, behind that poor wall. Will His heart of a Child, which is still the heart of a God, perceive those three hearts, which prostrated in the dust of the road are crying: "Holy, Holy, Holy, Blessed the Lord Our God. Glory to Him in the Highest Heaven and peace to His servants. Glory, glory, glory and blessings."?

They are wondering with loving tremor. And during the whole night and the following morning they prepare with the most ardent prayer their souls for the communion with the Child-God.

They do not go to that altar, which is the virginal lap holding the Divine Host, with their souls full of human worries, as you do. They forget to eat and to sleep, and if they wear the most beautiful robes, it is not for human ostentation, but to honour the King of kings. In royal palaces the dignitaries wear the most beautiful clothes. And should the Magi not go to that King in their best garments? Which greater opportunity is there for them?

Oh! In their far away countries, many a time they had to adorn themselves for men like themselves. To welcome and honour them. It is only fair, therefore, that they should prostrate purples and jewels, silks and precious feathers at the feet of the Supreme King. It is fair to put at His sweet little feet the fibres of the earth, the gems of the earth, the feathers of the earth, the metals of the earth - they are all His work - so that all these things of the earth may adore their Creator. And they would be happy if the Little Creature should order them to lie down on the ground and become a living carpet for His little baby steps, and if He trampled on them, since He left the stars to come down to them, who are but dust.

They were humble, generous and obedient to the "voices" from Above. They tell them to take gifts to the New-Born King. And they take gifts. They do not say: "He is rich and does not need them. He is God and will not die". They obey. And they are the first to help

the Saviour in His poverty. How useful that gold will be for Him Who is about to be a fugitive! How meaningful that myrrh is for Him Who will soon be killed! How pious that incense is for Him Who will have to smell the stench of human lewdness raging round His infinite purity!

They were humble, generous, obedient and respectful to one another. Virtues always generate other virtues. From the virtues directed to God, derive the virtues regarding our neighbours. Respect, which is charity. The oldest is entrusted with the task of speaking on behalf of them all, he is the first to receive the Saviour's kiss and to hold Him by His little hand. The others will be able to see Him again. He will not, because he is old and the day for his return to God is not far away. He will see Christ after His heart-rending death and will follow Him, together with the other blessed souls, in His return to Heaven. But he will never see Him again in this world. May, therefore, the warmth of His little hand entrusted to his wrinkled one, be a viaticum for him.

There is no envy in the others. On the contrary, their veneration for the old Wise Man increases. He certainly deserved more than they did, and for a longer period of time. The God-Infant knows.

The Word of the Father does not speak yet, but every action of His is a word. And may His innocent word be blessed, because it designated him as His favourite.

But, My dear children, there are two more lessons in this vision.

The behaviour of Joseph who knows how to keep "his" place. He is present as the guardian of Purity and Holiness. But not as the usurper of their rights. It is Mary with Jesus who receives the homage and the words. Joseph rejoices because of Her and does not grieve because he is a secondary figure. Joseph is a just man: he is the Just Man. And he is always just. Also at the present moment. The fumes of the feast do not go to his head. He remains humble and just.

He is happy for the gifts. Not for himself, but because he thinks that with them he will be able to make his Spouse's and the sweet Child's lives more comfortable. There is no greed in Joseph. He is a workman and will continue to work. But he is anxious that "They", his two loves, should be comfortable. Neither he nor the Magi know that those gifts serve for a flight and a life in exile, when riches vanish like clouds scattered by winds, as well as for their return to their country, where they have lost everything, customers and household furnishings, and where only the walls of their house have been saved, which were protected by God, because there He was united to the Virgin and became Flesh.

Joseph is humble, in fact, although he is the guardian of God and of the Mother of God and Spouse of the Most High, he holds the stirrups of these vassals of God. He is a poor carpenter, because sustained human pressures have deprived David's heirs of their royal wealth. But he is always the offspring of a king, and has the manners of a king. Also of him it must he said: "He was humble, because he was really great".

A last, kind, significant lesson.

It is Mary who takes the hand of Jesus, Who does not yet know how to bless, and She guides it in the holy gesture.

It is always Mary who takes Jesus' hand and guides it. Even now. Now Jesus knows how to bless. But sometimes His pierced hand falls down tired and disheartened, because He knows that it is useless to bless. You destroy My blessing. It falls also indignant, because you curse Me. It is Mary then Who removes the disdain from My hand with Her kisses. Oh! the kiss of My Mother! Who can resist that kiss? And then, with Her slender, but lovingly irresistible fingers, She takes My wrist and forces Me to bless. I cannot reject My Mother, but you must go to Her, and make Her your Advocate.

She is My Queen, before being yours, and Her love for you makes such allowances that no one can possibly imagine or understand.

And even without any word, but only with Her tears, and the memory of My Cross, the sign of which She makes Me trace in the air, She pleads your cause and exhorts Me: "You are the Saviour. Therefore save".

That is, My dear children, the "Gospel of faith" in the vision of the scene of the Magi. Meditate on it and imitate it. For your own good. »

35. The Flight into Egypt.

9th June 1944.

My spirit sees the following scene.

It is night. Joseph is sleeping in his little bed in his very small room: the peaceful sleep of a man after a hard day's honest and diligent work.

I can see him in the dark room, because a thin ray of moonlight filters in through the window shutters left ajar, either because Joseph is too warm in the little room or because he wants to be woken by the early rays of light at daybreak and get up at once. He is lying on one side and is smiling at some vision he sees in his dream.

But his smile turns into an expression of anxiety. He is now sighing deeply as if he had a nightmare and he awakes with a start. He sits up on his bed, rubs his eyes and looks around. He looks at the little window where the feeble light comes in. It is the dead of night but he grasps his robe which is lying at the bottom of the bed, and still sitting on the bed he pulls it on over the white shortsleeved tunic which he is wearing next to his skin. He pulls the blanket away, puts his feet on the floor and looks for his sandals. He puts them on and ties them. He stands up and goes towards the door facing his bed, not the one at the side of his bed leading into the big room where the Magi were received.

He knocks very gently, a very soft knocking with the tips of his fingers. He must have heard a voice asking him to enter because he opens the door carefully and sets it ajar without making any noise. Before going to the door he has lit a small one-flamed oil lamp, and lights his way with it. He goes in. The room is a little larger than his own, and there is a low bed in it, near a cradle, with a night lamp in a corner, the flickering flame of which seems a little star with a soft golden light that allows one to see without disturbing any sleeper.

But Mary is not sleeping. She is kneeling near the cradle in Her light dress and is praying, watching Jesus Who is sleeping Peacefully. Jesus is the same age as I saw Him in the vision of the Magi: a Child about one year old, beautiful, rosy and fair haired. He is sleeping with His curly head sunk in the pillow and a clenched fist under His chin.

« Are You not sleeping? » Joseph asks Her in a low surprised voice. « Why not? Is Jesus not well? »

« Oh, no! He is all right. I am praying. Later I will sleep. Why have you come, Joseph? » Mary speaks, kneeling on the same spot.

Joseph speaks in a very low voice lest he should awaken the Child, but it is an excited voice. « We must go away from here at once. It must be at once. Prepare the coffer and a sack with everything You can put in them. I'll prepare the rest, I'll take as much as I can… We will flee at dawn. I would go even sooner but I must speak to the landlady… »

« But why this flight? »

« I will tell You later. It's because of Jesus. An angel said to me: "Take the Child and His Mother and escape into Egypt." Don't waste any time. I'm going to prepare what I can. »

There is no need to tell Mary not to waste time. As soon as She heard Joseph mention an angel, Jesus and flight, She understood that Her Creature was in danger and She jumped to Her feet, Her face whiter than wax, holding one hand against Her heart, completely distressed. And She began to move about, quick and agile, laying the clothes in the coffer and in a large sack which She placed on Her bed still untouched. Although She is disheartened, She does not lose Her head: She acts quickly but orderly. Now and again, when passing near the cradle, She looks at the Child Who is sleeping calmly.

« Do you need help? » Joseph asks now and again, peeping into the room through the door ajar.

« No, thank you » replies Mary every time.

Only when Her sack is full, and it is obviously very heavy, She calls Joseph to help Her to close it and take it off the bed. But Joseph does not want any help, he prefers to do it himself, and he takes the long sack into his little room.

« Shall I take also the woollen blankets? » asks Mary.

« Take as much as You can. We will lose the rest. Do take as much as You can. Things will be useful because… because we will have to stay away for a long time, Mary!… » Joseph is very sad in saying so. And one can easily imagine how Mary feels. She folds Her blankets and Joseph's, sighing deeply. Joseph ties the blankets with a rope and while doing so, he says: « We will leave the quilts and the mats. Even if I take three donkeys I cannot overload them. We will have a long and uncomfortable journey, partly in the mountains and in the desert. Cover Jesus well. The nights will be cold both up in the mountains and in the desert. I have taken the gifts of the Magi because they will be very useful down there. I am going to spend all the money I have to buy two donkeys. We cannot send them back, so I will have to buy them. I'll go now, without awaiting dawn. I know where to find them. You finish preparing everything. » And he goes out.

Mary gathers a few more things, then, after looking at Jesus, She goes out and comes back with some little dresses which appear to be still damp: perhaps they were washed the day before. She folds them, wraps them up in a cloth, and adds them to the other things. There is nothing else. She looks round and in a corner She sees one of Jesus' toys: a little sheep carved in wood. She picks it up sobbing, and kisses it. On the wood there are traces of Jesus' little teeth and the ears of the little sheep are all nibbled. Mary caresses the thing without any value, a plain piece of light wood, which, however, is of great value to Her, because it tells Her of Joseph's love for Jesus and speaks to Her of Her Child. She adds it to the other things placed on the closed coffer.

Now there is really nothing else. Except Jesus in the little cradle. Mary thinks She ought also to prepare the Child. She goes to the cradle and shakes it a little to wake up the Baby. But He whimpers a little, turns round and continues to sleep. Mary pats His curls gently. Jesus opens His little mouth yawning. Mary bends down and kisses His cheek. Jesus wakes up completely. He opens His eyes, sees His Mother and smiles and stretches His little hands towards Her breast.

« Yes, love of Your Mummy. Yes, Your milk. Before the usual time… But You are always ready to suck Your Mummy's breast, My little holy Lamb! »

Jesus laughs and plays, kicking His little feet out of the blankets, moving His arms happily in a typical childish style, so beautiful to see. He pushes His feet against His Mummy's stomach, He arches His back leaning His fair head on Her breast, and then throws Himself back and laughs, holding with His hands the laces that tie Mary's dress to Her neck, endeavouring to open it. He looks most beautiful in His little linen shirt, plump and as rosy as- a flower.

Mary bends down and in that position, looking through the cradle, as if for protection, She smiles and cries at the same time, while the Child prattles, uttering words which are not the words of all little children; among them the word « Mummy » is repeated very clearly. He looks at Her, surprised to see Her crying. He stretches one little hand towards the shiny traces of tears and it gets wet while patting Her face. And, very gracefully, He leans once again on His Mother's breast, He clings to it and pats it with His hand.

Mary kisses His hair, takes Him up in Her arms, sits down and dresses Him. His little woollen dress has now been put on Him and His sandals have been tied on His feet. She nurses Him and Jesus avidly sucks His Mother's good milk, and when He feels that only a little is coming from Her right breast, He looks for the left one, laughing while doing so and looking up at His Mother. Then He falls asleep again on Her breast, His rosy round little cheek resting against Her white round breast.

Mary rises very slowly and lays Him on the quilt on Her bed. She covers Rim with Her mantle, She goes back to the cradle and folds its little blankets. She wonders whether She ought to take also the little mattress. It's so small. It can be taken. She puts it, together with the pillow, near the other things already on the coffer. And She cries over the empty cradle, poor Mother, persecuted in Her Little Creature.

Joseph comes back. « Are you ready? Is Jesus ready? Have You taken His blankets and His little bed? We can't take His cradle, but He must have at least His little mattress: poor Baby, Whose death they are seeking! »

« Joseph » shouts Mary, while She grasps his arm.

« Yes, Mary, His death. Herod wants Him dead… because he is afraid of Him, that filthy beast, because of his human kingdom he is afraid of this innocent Child. I do not know what he will do when he realises that He has escaped. But we will be far away by that time. I don't think he will revenge himself by seeking Him as far as Galilee. It would be very difficult for him to find out that we are Galileans, least of all that we are from Nazareth and who we are precisely. Unless Satan helps him to thank him for being his faithful servant. But… if that should happen… God will help us just the same. Don't cry, Mary. To see You crying is a greater pain for me than having to go into exile. »

« Forgive Me, Joseph. I am not crying for Myself, or for the few things I am losing. I am crying for you… You already have had to sacrifice yourself so much! And now once again you will have no customers, no home. How much I am costing you, Joseph! ».

« How much? No, Mary. You do not cost me. You comfort me. Always. Don't worry about the future. We have the gifts of the Magi. They will serve for the first days. Later I will find some work. A good clever workman will always make his way. You have seen what happened here. I haven't got enough time for all the work I have. »

« I know. But who will relieve your homesickness for your native land? »

« And what about You? Who will relieve Your longing for Your home which is so dear to You? »

« Jesus. Having Him, I have what I had there. »

« And I, having Jesus, have my native land, in which I had hope up to some months ago. I have my God. You can see that I lose nothing of what is dear to me above all things. The only important thing is to save Jesus, and then we have everything. Even if we should never see this sky again, or this country or the even dearer country of Galilee, we shall always have everything, because we shall have Him. Come, Mary, it is dawning. It is time to say goodbye to our hostess and load our things. Everything will be all right. »

Mary gets up obediently. She puts on Her mantle while Joseph makes up a last parcel and goes out with it.

Mary lifts the Child gently, envelops Him in a shawl and clasps Him to Her heart. She looks at the walls that have given Her hospitality for some months and She touches them caressingly with one hand. Happy house, that deserved to be loved and blessed by Mary!

She goes out. She goes through Joseph's little room, into the big room. The landlady, in tears, kisses Her goodbye and, lifting the edge of the shawl, she kisses the forehead of the Child Who is sleeping calmly. They go down the outside steps.

The first light of dawn enables them to see faintly. In the dim light, three little donkeys can be seen. The strongest is loaded with the goods and chattels. The other two are saddled. Joseph is busy fastening the coffer and bundles on the pack-saddle of the first one. I can see his carpenter's tools tied in a bundle on top of the sack. After more tears and goodbyes, Mary mounts the little donkey, while the landlady is holding Jesus in her arms, and kissing Him once again. She then hands Him back to Mary. Also Joseph mounts after tying his donkey to the one loaded with the goods, in order to be free to hold the reins of Mary's donkey.

The flight begins while Bethlehem, still dreaming of the phantasmagoric scene of the Magi, is sleeping peacefully, unaware of what is impending over it.

And the vision ends thus.

Jesus says:

« And also this series of visions ends thus. With the permission of exacting doctors we have been showing you the scenes which preceded, accompanied and followed My coming. And we did so, not for their own sake, as they are well known, although they have been distorted by elements superimposed throughout centuries, always as a consequence of the mentality of men, who in order to give greater praise to God - and are therefore forgiven - make unreal what would be so lovely to leave real. Such way of seeing things in their reality does not diminish My Humanity or Mary's, neither does it offend My Divinity or the Majesty of the Father or the Love of the Most Holy Trinity. On the contrary, the merits of My Mother and My perfect humility shine brightly and so does the omnipotent kindness of the Eternal Lord. But we have shown you these scenes in order to be able to apply to you and to other people the supernatural meaning deriving from them and give it to you as a rule of life.

The. Decalogue is the Law; and My Gospel is the Doctrine that makes the Law clearer for you and more loving to follow. The Law and My Doctrine would be sufficient to make saints of men.

But you are so hampered by your humanity - it really overwhelms your souls too much - that you cannot follow My ways and you fall; or you stop disheartened. You go on saying to yourselves and to those who would like to assist you, quoting the examples of the Gospel for you: "But Jesus, but Mary, but Joseph (and so on for all the saints) were not like us. They were strong, they were immediately comforted in their sorrow, also in the little sorrow which they experienced, they did not feel passions. They were already beings out of this world".

That little sorrow! They did not feel passions!

Sorrow has been our faithful friend and it had all the most varied forms and names.

Passions… do not use a word wrongly, by calling passions the vices which mislead you. Be sincere and call them "vices", and capital ones in addition. It is not true that we did not know them. We had eyes to see and ears to hear, and Satan caused those vices to dance in front of us and around us, showing them to us with their heap of filth in action, or tempting us with his insinuations. But, since we firmly wanted to please God, his filth and insinuations, instead of achieving the purpose intended by Satan, obtained the very opposite. And the more he worked, the more we took shelter in the light of God, disgusted as we were with the muddy darkness which he showed to the eyes of our bodies and of our souls.

But we did not ignore in our hearts passions, in their philosophical setting. We loved our country, and in our country we loved our little Nazareth above every other town in Palestine. We were fond of our house, of our relatives and friends. Why should we not? We did not become slaves to our feelings because nothing is to be our master except God. But our feelings were our good companions.

My Mother uttered a cry of joy when, after about four years, She went back to Nazareth and entered Her house, and kissed the walls where Her "yes" had opened Her bosom to receive the Son of God. Joseph joyfully greeted his relatives and his little nephews, who had grown in numbers and in years, and he rejoiced when he saw that his fellow citizens remembered him and they sought him because of his ability. I Myself appreciated friendship and because of Judas' betrayal, I suffered as for a moral crucifixion. And why not? Neither My Mother nor Joseph ever placed more love for their home or their relatives before the will of God.

And I never spared a word, if it was to be said, capable of drawing upon Me the hatred of the Jews and the animosity of Judas. I

knew, and I could have brought it about, that some money would be sufficient to subject him to Me. Not to Me, a Redeemer: to Me, a rich man. I had multiplied the loaves of bread and if I wanted, I could multiply also money. But I did not come to obtain human satisfactions to anybody. Least of all to the ones I had called. I had preached sacrifice, detachment, a pure life, humble positions. "'hat kind of a Master would I have been and what Just man, if I had given money to one of them for his mental and physical satisfaction, only because that was the means to keep him?

Those who make themselves "small" are great in My Kingdom. Those who wish to be "great" in the eyes of the world are not suitable to reign in My Kingdom. They are straw for the beds of the demons. Because the greatness of the world is the antithesis of the Law of God.

The world calls "great" those who, by means which almost always are illicit, know how to get the best positions and to do so, they use their neighbour as a stool on which they then climb, crushing him. The world calls "great" those who know how to kill in order to reign, and they kill materially or morally, and they usurp positions and countries and fatten themselves, bleeding both individuals and communities. The world often calls "great" criminals. No. "Greatness" is not to be found in criminality. It is in goodness, in honesty, in love, in justice. You can see which poisonous fruit your "great ones" offer you, fruit which they have picked in the wicked devilish garden inside them!

I only wish to speak about the last vision, and omit the rest, because in any case, it is useless, as the world does not want to hear the truth concerning it. The last vision clarifies a detail quoted twice in the Gospel by Matthew, a sentence which is repeated twice: "Get up, take the Child and His Mother with you, and escape into Egypt"; "Get up, take the Child and His Mother with you and go back to the land of Israel". And you saw that Mary was by Herself in Her room with the Child.

Mary's virginity after Her delivery and Joseph's chastity have been strongly denied by those who being putrid mud themselves, are not prepared to admit that one like them can be as pure and clear as light. They are wretched people whose souls are so corrupted and their minds so prostituted to the flesh, that they are incapable of thinking that one like them can respect a woman seeing in her not her flesh but her soul, neither can they elevate themselves to live in a supernatural atmosphere, craving not for what is flesh, but only for what is God.

Well, I wish to tell those deniers of the most beautiful things, those worms incapable of becoming butterflies, those reptiles covered with the slaver of their own lewdness, incapable of understanding the beauty of a lily, I wish to tell them that Mary was and remained a virgin, and that only Her soul was married to Joseph, exactly as Her spirit was united only to the Spirit of God by Whose deed She conceived Her Only Son: I, Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son of the Father and of Mary.

This is not a tradition embellished afterwards, out of loving respect for the Blessed Virgin Who was My Mother. It is the truth and has been known since early times.

Matthew was not born after centuries. He was a contemporary of Mary. Matthew was not a poor ignorant man brought up in a forest and likely to believe any idle story. He was a clerk in the taxation office, as you would say nowadays, he was an excise man, as we said then. He could see, hear, understand, and tell the truth from the false. Matthew did not hear things reported by third parties. He heard them directly from Mary's lips to Whom he applied for information, prompted by his love for his Master and for the truth.

I do not believe that those repudiators of Mary's inviolability will dare think that She may have lied. My own relatives could have given Her the lie, had there been other children: James, Judas, Simon and Joseph were disciples together with Matthew. Therefore Matthew could have easily compared their versions, had there been more than one account.

But Matthew does not say: "Get up and take your wife". He says: "Take His Mother". Before he says: "A virgin betrothed to Joseph"; "Joseph Her spouse". Neither those repudiators of Purity should tell Me that it was a way of speaking particular to the Jews, as if to say "wife" was a disgrace. No, deniers of Purity. At the very beginning of the Bible we read: "And he will join himself to his wife". She is called "companion" up to the moment of the sensual consummation of the marriage, and afterwards she is called "wife" in various circumstances and in different chapters. And these are the expressions referred to the wives of the sons of Adam. And so Sarah is called the "wife" of Abraham: "Sarah your wife". And: "Take your wife and your two daughters" is said of Lot. And in the book of Ruth it is written: "The Moabitess, the wife of Mahalon". And in the first book of the Kings it is said: "Elkanah had two wives". And further on: "Elkanah then had intercourse with his wife Hannah". And again: "Eli blessed Elkanah and his wife". And again in the Book of the Kings it is said: "Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah the Hittite, became the wife of David and bore him a son". And what do you read in the blue book of Tobias, what the Church sings to you at your wedding, to advise you to be holy in your marriage? You read: "Now when Tobias arrived with his wife and his son… "; and again: "Tobias succeeded in escaping with his son and with his wife".

And in the Gospels, that is in times contemporary with Christ, when therefore they wrote in a modem style of language, as compared

to the ancient kind, and therefore no error of transcription could be suspected, it said and just by Matthew in Chapter 22: "… and the first, after marrying his wife died and left his wife to his brother". And Mark at Chapter 10: "The man who divorces his wife… And Luke called Elizabeth the wife of Zacharias for four times running, and in the eighth Chapter of his Gospel he says: "Johanna, the wife of Chuza".

As you can see, this name was not a word banished by those who walked in the ways of the Lord, it was not an impure word not worthy of being uttered and least of all written when there was a mention of God and of His wonderful work. And the angel, saying: "The Child and His Mother", proves to you that Mary was His real Mother. But She was not a wife of Joseph. She remained for ever: "The virgin betrothed to Joseph".

And this is the last teaching of the vision. And it is a halo which shines on the heads of Mary and Joseph. The Inviolate Virgin. The just and chaste man. The two lilies amongst whom I grew up, receiving only the perfume of purity.

I could speak to you, little John, about Mary's grief at being torn away from Her house and Her fatherland. But there is no need for words. You understand and you die of grief. Give Me your sorrow. That is all I want. It is greater than anything else you could give Me. It is Friday today, Mary. Think of My grief and of My Mother's on Golgotha in order to be able to bear your cross. Our peace and love remain with you. »

36. The Holy Family in Egypt.

25th January 1944 (at midnight).

The sweet vision of the Holy Family. The place is in Egypt. I have no doubt because I see the desert and a pyramid.

I see a small house with a single floor, a ground floor, completely white. A poor house of very poor people. The walls are just plastered and whitewashed. There are two doors, one near the other, leading into the only two rooms of the house which, for the time being, I do not enter. The little house is in the middle of a small piece of sandy ground, enclosed by a fence of canes fixed into the ground, a very weak protection against thieves; it can serve only as a protection against cats or stray dogs. On the other hand, who would think of stealing where it is quite visible that there is not even the shadow of riches?

The little piece of ground, enclosed by the cane hedge, has been patiently cultivated as a little garden, notwithstanding that the earth is arid and poor. In order to make the hedge a little thicker and less scanty, they have grown some creepers which appear to be modest convolvuli, only on one side there is a shrub of jasmine in full bloom and a bush of common roses. In the kitchen garden I see some very modest vegetables in the centre under a tall plant which I do not recognise and which gives some shade to the arid ground and to the little house. A little black and white goat is tied to the plant and it is browsing on the leaves of some branches thrown on the ground.

And nearby on a mat on the ground there is the Child Jesus. I think He must be two years old, or two and a half at the very most. He is playing with some little pieces of carved wood, which look like little sheep or little horses, and with some clear wood shavings, less curly than His golden curls. With His little plump hands He is trying to put those wooden necklaces onto the necks of His little animals.

He is quiet and smiling. Very beautiful. His little head is a mass of very thick little golden curls, His skin is clear and slightly rosy, His eyes are live and bright, of a deep blue colour. The expression of course, is different, but I recognise the colour of the eyes of my Jesus: two beautiful dark sapphires. He is wearing a kind of a long white shirt which must certainly be His tunic, with short sleeves. At present He has nothing on His feet. His tiny sandals are on the mat and they, too, are being used as a toy by the Child, Who is placing His little animals on the mat, and then pulls the sandal by the strap as if it were a little cart. The sandals are very simple: a sole and two straps one of which coming from the point and the other from the heel of the sole. The one coming from the point then splits at a certain point and one length passes through the eyelet of the strap from the heel, then goes round and is tied with the other piece, forming thus a ring at the ankle.

A little farther away, sitting also in the shade of the tree, there is Our Lady. She is weaving at a rustic loom and watching the Child. I can see Her white slender hands moving backwards and forwards throwing the shuttle on the weft while Her foot, shod in a sandal, is moving the pedal. She is wearing a tunic the colour of mallow flowers: a rosy violet like certain amethysts. She is bareheaded, and so I can see that Her hair is parted, forming two simple plaits which gather at the nape of Her neck. Her sleeves are long and rather narrow. She has no other ornament except Her beauty and Her most sweet expression. The colour of Her face, of Her hair and Her eyes, the form of Her face are always the same every time I see Her. She looks very young now. She looks about twenty years old.

At a certain moment She gets up, and bends over the Child, puts His sandals back on again and ties them carefully. She then pats Him and kisses His little head and His beautiful eyes. The Child prattles and She answers. But I do not understand the words. She then goes back to Her loom; She covers the fabric and the weft with a piece of cloth, picks up the stool on which She was sitting and takes it into the house. The Child follows Her with His eyes without troubling Her when She leaves Him alone.

Obviously Her work is finished, and it is almost evening. In fact, the sun is setting on the barren sand, and a huge fire invades the whole sky behind the far away pyramid.

Mary comes back. She takes Jesus by the hand and lifts Him from His mat. The Child obeys without any resistance. While His Mother picks up His toys and the mat and takes them into the house, He toddles on His well shaped little legs towards the little goat and throws His arms around her neck. The little goat bleats and rubs her head on Jesus' shoulder.

Mary comes back. Now She is wearing a long veil on Her head and is carrying an amphora in Her hand. She takes Jesus by the hand, and they both start walking, turning round the little house towards the other side.

I follow them admiring the gracefulness of the picture. Our Lady adjusts Her step to the Child's, and the Child toddles and trips along beside Her. I can see His rosy heels moving up and down, with the typical grace of children's steps, on the sand of the little path. I notice that His little tunic does not reach down to His feet, but only to half His calf. It is very clean and simple and it is held tight to His waist by a little white cord.

I see that on the front of the house the hedge is broken by a rustic gate, which Mary opens to go out onto the road. It is a poor road at the end of a town or a village, whatever it may be, where it ends up with the country that here is formed of sand and some other houses, as poor as this one, with some scanty kitchen gardens.

I do not see anybody. Mary looks towards the centre of the town not towards the country, as if She were waiting for someone; She then moves towards a vessel or well, whatever it may be, which is some ten metres further up, and on which some palm trees form a shady circle. Over there some green herbs can be seen on the ground.

I can now see a man coming along the road; he is not very tall, but is well built. I recognise Joseph, who is smiling. He looks younger than when I saw him in the vision of Paradise. He may be forty years old at most. His hair and beard are thick and black, his skin is rather tanned, his eyes are dark. An honest pleasant face, inspiring confidence.

When he sees Jesus and Mary, he quickens his step. On his left shoulder he has a kind of saw and a kind of plane, and he is holding in his hand other tools of his trade, not exactly like the ones we use now, but almost similar. He is probably coming back after working in somebody's house. He is wearing a tunic the colour of which is between hazel and dark brown; it is not very long - it reaches a

good bit up from his ankles - and its sleeves are short. I think he is wearing a leather belt at his waist. It is the proper tunic of a workman. On his feet he has sandals tied at his ankles.

Mary smiles and the Child utters cries of joy and He stretches out the hand which is free. When the three meet, Joseph bends down and offers the Child a fruit which I think is an apple, by its colour and shape. He then stretches his arms and the Child leaves His Mother, and cuddles in the arms of Joseph, bending His little head into the cavity of Joseph's neck; he kisses Him, and is kissed by Him. A scene full of loving grace.

I was forgetting to say that Mary had promptly taken Joseph's work tools, to leave him free to embrace the Child.

Then Joseph, who had crouched down to the ground to be at the same height as Jesus, stands up, takes his tools with his left hand and holds little Jesus tight to his strong chest with his right arm. And he moves towards the house, while Mary goes to the fountain to fill Her amphora.

After entering the enclosure of the house, Joseph puts the Child down, takes Mary's loom into the house, and then he milks the goat. Jesus watches all these activities carefully and in particular the closing up the little goat in a little closet in one side of the house.

It is now getting dark. I can see the red of the sunset becoming violet on the sands which seem to be trembling because of the heat. The pyramid looks darker.

Joseph goes into the house, into a room which must be his workshop, the kitchen, the dining room all in one. The other room is obviously the bedroom. But I do not go in there. The fire is lit in a low fireplace. There is a carpenter's bench, a small table, some stools, some shelves with two oil lamps and some kitchenware on them. In a corner, there is Mary's loom. And a great deal of order and cleanliness. A very poor dwelling, but very clean.

And this is a remark I wish to make: in all the visions concerning the human life of Jesus I have noticed that both He and Mary, as well as Joseph and John, are always tidy and clean both in their garments and their bodies. They wear modest' and simple garments, but they are so clean that they look like gentlemen in them.

Mary comes back with the amphora and the door is closed on the rapidly growing dusk. The room is illuminated by a lamp which Joseph has lit and placed on his bench, where he now starts working on some little boards, while Mary is preparing supper. Also the fire illuminates the room. Jesus, with His little hands leaning on the bench and His little head turned upwards, is watching what Joseph is doing.

They then sit down at the table after saying their prayers. Obviously they do not bless themselves with the sign of the cross, but they pray. It is Joseph who says the prayers, and Mary answers. I do not understand anything at all. It must be a psalm. But it is said in a language which is entirely unknown to me.

They then sit down at the table. The lamp is now on the table. Mary is holding Jesus in Her lap, and makes Him drink some of the goat's milk, into which She dips some small slices of bread which She has cut off a little round loaf. The crust of the loaf, as well as the inside, is very dark, it looks like rye bread or bread made with barley. It certainly contains a lot of bran, judging by its colour. In the meantime, Joseph eats some bread and cheese, a small slice of cheese and a lot of bread. Then Mary sits Jesus on a little stool near Her, and brings some cooked vegetables to the table - they appear to be boiled and dressed as we use them nowadays - and She also eats some of them after Joseph has helped himself. Jesus is nibbling happily at His apple, and He smiles displaying His little white teeth. Their supper ends with some olives or dates. I cannot tell exactly which because they appear to be too light to be olives and too hard to be dates. There is no wine. The supper of poor people.

But there is so much peace in this room that not even the sight of the most solemn royal palace could give me as much. And how much harmony!

Jesus does not speak this evening. He does not explain the scene. He has taught me with the gift of His vision and that is enough. May He be always and equally blessed.

26th January 1944.

Jesus says:

« The things you see teach you and others the lesson. It is a lesson of humility, resignation and good harmony. A lesson given as an example to all Christian families, and particularly to the Christian families in this especially sorrowful age.

You have seen a poor house. And what is more saddening, a poor house in a foreign country.

Many people, only because they are fairly good Catholics who pray and receive Me in the Holy Eucharist, and they pray and receive Me for "their" needs, not for the needs of their souls and for the Glory of God - because only seldom those who pray are not selfish - many people would pretend to have a prosperous, happy, easy material life, well-protected even from the least pain.

Joseph and Mary had Me, True God, as their Son, yet they did not even have the meagre satisfaction of being poor in their own country, where they were known, where at least there was their " own" little house and the problem of a dwelling did not add a harassing thought to their many problems, in the country where, as they were known, it was easier for them to find work and provide for the needs of their lives. They are two refugees just because they had Me. A different climate, a different country, so sad in comparison with the sweet countryside of Galilee, a different language, different habits, living amongst people who did not know them, and who generally distrusted refugees and people they did not know.

They are deprived of those comfortable and dear pieces of furniture of "their" little house, of so many humble and necessary things they had there, and which did not seem to be so necessary, whereas here, in the void that surrounds them, seem even beautiful like the luxurious things that make the houses of rich people so charming. And they felt nostalgia both for their country and for their home, they worried about the poor things they had left behind, about the little kitchen garden where probably no one would take care of their vines and their figs, and the other useful plants. And they had to provide every day for food, clothes, fire, and for Me, a Child, Whom they could not feed with the same food they took themselves. And they were sad at heart: because of their homesickness, because of the uncertainty of the future, and the lack of trust of people who are reluctant, particularly at first, to accept the offer of work of two unknown people.

And yet, as you have seen yourself, that house is pervaded with serenity, smiles, harmony, and by mutual consent they endeavour to make it more beautiful, even in its scanty little kitchen garden, that it may be more like the more comfortable one they had to leave behind. They have only one thought: that the land may be less hostile and less unpleasant for Me, since I come from God. It is the love of believers and relatives which reveals itself in many ways: from the little goat they purchased with many hours of extra work, to the little toys carved in scraps of wood, to the fruit purchased only for Me, while they denied themselves a morsel of food.

O beloved father of mine on the earth, how loved you have been by God, by God Father in the Most High Heavens, by God Son, Who became the Saviour on the earth!

In that house there is no quick temper, no sulkiness, no grim faces, neither is there any reproach against each other, and least of all against the God Who has not loaded them with material wealth. Joseph does not reproach Mary as being the cause of his discomfort, neither does Mary reproach Joseph because he is incapable of procuring greater worldly goods. They love each other in a holy way, that is all. And therefore they do not worry about their own comfort, but only about the comfort of their consort. True love is not selfish. And true love is always chaste, even if it is not perfect in chastity as the love of the two virgin spouses. Chastity united to

charity yields a suite of other virtues and therefore two people who love each other chastely become perfect.

The love of Mary and Joseph was perfect. Therefore it was an incentive to every other virtue and in particular to charity towards God, blessed every hour, notwithstanding His holy will is painful for the flesh and the heart, blessed because, above the flesh and above the heart, the spirit was more lively and stronger in the two saints, and they exalted the Lord with gratitude because they had been chosen as guardians of His Eternal Son.

In that house they prayed. You pray too little in your homes, nowadays. The sun rises and sets, you start your work, and you sit at the table without a thought for the Lord, Who has granted you to see a new day, and then to live and see a new night, Who has blessed your work and has made it the means for you to purchase the food, the fire, the clothes, the house which are so necessary for your human lives. Whatever comes from Good God is "good". Even if it is poor and meagre, love gives it flavour and body, the love that allows you to see in the Eternal Creator, the Father Who loves you.

In that house there is frugality and it would be there even if there was plenty money. They eat to live. They do not eat to satisfy their gluttony, with the insatiability of gluttons and the whims of epicures who fill themselves to the extent of being sick and squander fortunes on expensive food, without giving one thought to those who are without or with little food, without considering that if they were moderate, many people could be relieved of the pangs of hunger.

In that house they love work, and they would love it even if there was plenty money, because the working man obeys the command of God and frees himself from vice, which like tenacious ivy clenches and suffocates idle people, who are like immovable rocks. Food is good, rest is serene, hearts are happy, when you have worked well and you enjoy the resting time between one job and the next one. Neither in the houses nor in the minds of those who love work, can many-sided vice rise. And, in its absence, love, esteem, reciprocal respect prosper and tender children grow in a pure atmosphere and they thus become the origin of future holy families.

Humility reigns in that house. What a lesson of humility for the proud. Mary, from a human point of view, had a thousand reasons to be proud and to be adored by Her spouse. Many women are proud only because they are a little better educated, or of nobler birth, or of a wealthier family than their husbands. Mary is the Spouse and the Mother of God, and yet She serves - and does not expect to be served - Her consort, and She is full of love for him. Joseph is the head of the family, judged by God so worthy of being the head of a family, as to be entrusted by God with the guardianship of the Word Incarnate and the Spouse of the Eternal Spirit. And yet he is anxious to relieve Mary of Her work, and he takes care of the most humble jobs in the house so that Mary may not get tired, not only, but whenever he can he does his best to please Her and make Her house more comfortable and Her little garden more beautiful.

In that house order is respected: supernatural, moral, material. God is the Supreme Head and He is worshipped and loved: supernatural order. Joseph is the head of the family and he is loved, respected and obeyed: moral order. The house is a gift of God as well as the clothes and the furnishings. The Providence of God is shown in everything, of God Who supplied wool to sheep, feathers to birds, grass to meadows, hay to animals, grains and branches to birds, Who weaves the dress of the lily of the valley. The house, the dresses, the furnishings are accepted with gratitude, blessing the divine hand that supplies them, looking after them with respect as gifts of the Lord, without any bad humour because they are poor, without ill use, without abusing Divine Providence: material order.

You did not understand the words they exchanged in the dialect of Nazareth, neither did you understand the words of the prayer. But the things you saw are a great lesson. Meditate on them, you all who now suffer so much because you failed in so many things towards God, also in those things in which the holy Spouses never failed, the Spouses who were my Mother and father.

And you, rejoice remembering little Jesus, smile thinking of His little steps of a child. In a short time you will see Him walking under the Cross. And then it will be a vision of tears. »

37. The First Working Lesson Given to Jesus.

21st March 1944.

I see my little Jesus appear as sweet as a ray of sun on a rainy day; He is a little child about five years old, completely blond and most beautiful in His simple blue dress which reaches down to half His well-shaped calves. He is playing with some earth in the little kitchen garden. He makes little heaps with it and on top He plants little branches as if He were making a miniature forest, with little stones He builds little roads and then He would like to build a little lake at the foot of His tiny hills. He therefore takes the bottom part of an old pot and inters it up to its brim and then fills it with water with a pitcher which He dips into a vessel, which is certainly used either for washing purposes or to water the little garden. But the only result is that He wets His dress, particularly its sleeves.

The water runs out of the chipped pot which is probably also cracked and… the lake dries up.

Joseph appears at the door and for some time he stands very quietly watching the work of the Child and smiles. It is a sight, indeed, that makes one smile happily. Then, to prevent Jesus from getting more wet, he calls Him. Jesus turns round smiling, and when He sees Joseph, He runs towards him with His little arms stretched out. Joseph with the edge of his short working tunic dries the little hands which are soiled and wet, and kisses them. And then there is a sweet conversation between the two.

Jesus explains His work and His game and the difficulties He met in it. He wanted to make a lake like the lake of Gennesaret. (I therefore suppose that they have either spoken to Him about it or they had taken Him to see it.) He wanted to make a little one for His own delight. This was Tiberias, there was Magdala, over there Capernaum. This was the road that took to Nazareth going through Cana. He wanted to launch some little boats in the lake; these leaves are boats, and He wanted to go over to the other shore. But the water runs away…

Joseph watches and takes an interest as it were a very serious matter. He then proposes to make a small lake, the following day, but not with an old cracked pot, but with a small wooden basin, well coated with pitch and stucco, in which Jesus would be able to launch small real wooden boats which Joseph would teach Him how to make. Just then, he was bringing Him some small working tools, suitable for Him, that He might learn to use them, without any fatigue.

« So I will be able to help you! » Jesus says, smiling.

« So You will help me, and You will become a clever carpenter. Come and see them. »

And they go into the workshop. Joseph shows Him a small hammer, a tiny saw, some very small screwdrivers, a plane suitable for a doll, which are all lying on the bench of a budding carpenter: a bench suitable for little Jesus' size.

« See, to saw, You must put this piece of wood like that. You then take the saw like that, and making sure that You do not catch Your fingers, You start sawing. Try… »

And the lesson begins. And Jesus, blushing with the effort and pressing His lips together, saws the piece of wood carefully and then planes it, and although it is not perfectly straight, He thinks it is nice. Joseph praises Him and with patience and love teaches Him how to work.

Mary comes back. She had certainly gone out, and She looks in at the door. Joseph and Jesus do not see Her because She is behind them. Mother smiles seeing how zealously Jesus is working with the plane and how loving Joseph is in teaching Him.

But Jesus must have perceived Her smile. He turns round, sees His Mother and runs towards Her, showing Her the little piece of wood not yet finished. Mary admires it, and She bends down to kiss Jesus. She tidies up His ruffled curls, wipes the perspiration on His hot face, and listens with loving attention to Jesus, Who promises to make Her a little stool so that She will be more comfortable when working. Joseph standing near the tiny bench, with one hand resting on his side, looks and smiles.

I have thus been present at the first work lesson of my Jesus. And all the peace of this holy Family is within me.

Jesus says:

« I have consoled you, My dear soul, with a vision of My childhood, which was happy in its poverty, because it was surrounded by the love of two saints, the greatest the world ever had.

They say that Joseph was My foster-father. Oh! If, being a man, he could not feed Me with milk, as My Mother Mary did, he worked very hard indeed, to give Me bread and comfort and he had the loving kindness of a real mother. From him I learned - and never had a pupil a kinder teacher - I learned everything that makes a man of a child, and a man who is to earn his own bread.

If My intelligence, that of the Son of God was perfect, you must consider and believe that I did not want to deviate from the attributes and attainments of My own age group ostentatiously. Therefore, by lowering My divine intellectual perfection to that of a human intellectual perfection I submitted Myself to having a man as My teacher, and to the need of a teacher. If I learned quickly and willingly, that does not deprive Me of the merit of submitting Myself to man, neither does it deprive the just man of the merit of being the person who nourished My young mind with the ideas which are necessary to life.

Not even now that I am in Heaven can I forget the happy hours I spent beside Joseph, who, as if he were playing with Me, guided Me to the point of being capable of working. And when I look at My putative father, I see once again the little kitchen garden and the smoky workshop, and I still appear to see Mother peep in with Her beautiful smile which turned the place into Paradise and made us so happy.

How much families should learn from the perfection of this couple who loved each other as nobody else ever loved!

Joseph was the head of the family, and as such, his authority was undisputed and indisputable: before it the Spouse and Mother of God bent reverently and the Son of God submitted Himself willingly. Whatever Joseph decided to do, was well done: there were no discussions, no punctiliousness, no oppositions. His word was our little law. And yet, how much humility there was in him!

There never was any abuse of power, or any decision against reason only because he was the head of the family. His Spouse was his sweet adviser. And if in Her deep humility She considered Herself the servant of Her consort, he drew from Her wisdom of Full of Grace, light to guide him in all events.

And I grew like a flower protected by vigorous trees, between those two loves that interlaced above Me, to protect Me, and love Me.

No. As long as I was able to ignore the world because of My age, I did not regret being absent from Paradise. God the Father and the Holy Spirit were not absent, because Mary was full of Them. And the angels dwelt there, because nothing drove them away from that house. And one of them, I might say, had become flesh and was Joseph, an angelical soul freed from the burden of the flesh, intent only on serving God and His cause and loving Him as the seraphim love Him. Joseph's look! It was as placid and pure as the brightness of a star unaware of worldly concupiscence. It was our peace, and our strength.

Many think that I did not suffer as a human being when the holy glance of the guardian of our home was extinguished by death. If I was God, and as such I was aware of the happy destiny of Joseph, and consequently I was not sorry for his death, because after a short time in Limbo, I was going to open Heaven to him, as a Man I cried bitterly in the house now empty and deprived of his presence. I cried over My dead friend, and should I not have cried over My holy friend, on whose chest I had slept when I was a little boy, and from whom I had received so much love in so many years?

Finally I would like to draw the attention of parents to how Joseph made a clever workman of Me, without any help of pedagogical learning. As soon as I was old enough to handle tools, he did not let Me lead a life of idleness, but he started Me to work and he made use of My love for Mary as the means to spur Me to work. I was to make useful things for Mother. That is how he inculcated the respect which every son should have for his mother and the teaching for the future carpenter was based on that respectful and loving incentive.

Where are now the families in which the little ones are taught to love work as a means of pleasing their parents? Children, nowadays, are the tyrants of the house. They grow hard, indifferent, ill-mannered towards their parents. They consider their parents as their servants, their slaves. They do not love their parents and they are scarcely loved by them. The reason is that, while you allow your children to become objectionable overbearing fellows, you become detached from them with shameful indifference.

They are everybody's children, except yours, o parents of the twentieth century. They are the children of the nurse, of the governess, of the college, if you are rich people. They belong to their companions, they are the children of the streets, of the schools, if you are poor. But they are not yours. You, mothers, give birth to them and that is all. And you, fathers, do exactly the same. But a son is not only flesh. He has a mind, a heart, a soul. Believe Me, no one is more entitled and more obliged than a father and a mother to form that mind, that heart, that soul.

A family is necessary: it exists and must exist. There is no theory or progress capable of destroying this truth without causing ruin. A shattered family can but yield men and women who in future will be more perverted, and will cause greater and greater ruin. And I tell you most solemnly that it would be better if there were no more marriages and no more children on the earth, rather than have families less united than the tribes of monkeys, families which are not schools of virtue, of work, of love, of religion, but a babel in which everyone lives on his own like disengaged gears, which end up by breaking.

Broken families. You break up the most holy way of social living and you see and suffer the consequences. You may continue thus, if you so wish. But do not complain if this world is becoming a deeper and deeper hell, a dwelling place of monsters who devour families and nations. You want it. Let it be so. »

38. Mary the Teacher of Jesus, Judas and James.

29th October 1944.

Jesus says:

« Come, little John, and see. Held by My hand which will lead you, come back to the years of My childhood. And what you see will have to be included in the Gospel of My boyhood, where I want also the vision of the Family's stay in Egypt to be put. You will put them in this order: the Family in Egypt, then the first working lesson given to the Child Jesus, then this one which you are about to describe, the scene of My majority (promised today, 25th November), lastly the vision of Jesus among the doctors in the Temple at His twelfth Feast of Passover. What you are now going to see is not without a reason. On the contrary it enlightens details of My early years and relationship among relatives. And it is a present for you, in the feast of My Regality, as you feel the peace of the house in Nazareth being transfused into you whenever you see it. Write. »

I see the room where they usually take their meals and where Mary works at Her loom or needlework. The room is near Joseph's workshop and I can hear the sound of his working. Here instead there is silence. Mary is sewing some strips of wool which She has

certainly woven Herself; they are about a metre and a half wide and twice as long and I think they will be used to make a mantle for Joseph.

From the door which opens onto the kitchen garden, ruffled hedges of little daisies can be seen; their colour is violet blue and they are commonly called « Maries » or « starry Sky ». I do not know their botanical name. They are in full bloom and consequently it must be autumn. But the green is still thick and beautiful on the plants and from two beehives leaning against a sunny wall, bees are flying in the bright sunshine buzzing and dancing, going from a fig-tree to the vines, and then to a pomegranate-tree full of its round fruits, some of which have already burst from excessive growth and show the strings of juicy rubies, lined up inside the green-red casket divided into yellow sections.

Jesus is playing under the trees with two children who are about His own age. They have curly hair, but they are not blond. One, on the contrary, is very dark: a little head of a little black lamb which makes the skin of his little round face look even whiter, and two most beautiful large, wide open blue violet eyes. The other is less curly and his hair is dark brown, his eyes are brown and his complexion darker, but with a pinkish hue on his cheeks. Jesus' little blond head looks like a blaze of light. They are playing in perfect harmony with some little carts on which there are… various articles: leaves, little stones, wood shavings, little pieces of wood. They must be playing at shops, and Jesus is the one who buys things for His Mummy, to Whom He takes now one thing, then another one. Mary accepts all the purchases with a smile.

Then the game changes. One of the two children proposes: « Let us play at the Exodus from Egypt. Jesus will be Moses, I will be Aaron, and you… Mary. »

« But I am a boy! »

« It does not matter. It's just 'the same. You are Mary, and you shall dance before the golden calf, and the golden calf is that beehive over there. »

« I'm not going to dance. I am a man and I do not want to be a woman. I bin a faithful believer and I am not going to dance before an idol. »

Jesus interrupts them: « Don't let us play that part. Let us play this other one: when Joshua is elected Moses' successor. So there will be no terrible sin of idolatry and Judas will be happy to be a man and My successor. Are you happy? »

« Yes I am, Jesus. But then You will have to die, because Moses dies afterwards. But I do not want You to die; You have always been so fond of me. »

« Everybody dies… but before dying I shall bless Israel, and since you are the only ones here, I shall bless the whole of Israel in you. »

They agree. Then there is an argument: whether the people of Israel, after so much travelling, still had the same carts which they had when leaving Egypt. There is a difference of opinion.

They apply to Mary. « Mummy, I say that the Israelites still had the carts. James says they didn't. Judas does not know who is right. Do you know? »

« Yes, My Son. The nomadic people still had their carts. They repaired them when they stopped to rest. The weaker people travelled in them and also the foodstuffs, and the many things which were necessary for so many people were loaded into them. With the exception of the Ark, which was carried by hand, everything else was on the carts. »

The question is now solved. The children go down to the bottom of the orchard and from there, singing psalms, they come towards the house. Jesus is in front and He is singing some psalms in His gentle silvery voice. Behind Him, there come Judas and James holding a little cart which has been elevated to the rank of Tabernacle. But since they have to play also the part of the people, in addition to Aaron's and Joshua's, with their belts they have tied to their feet other miniature carts, and thus they proceed very seriously as if they were real actors.

They cover the whole length of the pergola, they pass in front of the door of Mary's room and Jesus says: « Mummy, hail the Ark when it passes by. » Mary stands up smiling, and She bows to Her Son Who passes by, radiant in the bright sunshine.

Then Jesus clambers up the side of the mountain that forms the boundary of the house, or rather the garden; He stands up straight on top of the little grotto, and speaks to… Israel. He repeats the orders and the promises of God, He appoints Joshua as the leader, calls him, and then Judas in his turn climbs up the cliff. He encourages and blesses him. He then asks for a… tablet (it is a large fig leaf) and He writes the canticle and reads it. It is not quite complete, but contains a large part of it, and He seems to be reading it from the leaf. He then dismisses Joshua who embraces Him crying, and He then climbs further up, right up to the edge of the cliff. And from there He blesses the whole of Israel, that is the two who are prostrated on the ground, He then lies down on the short grass, closes His eyes and… dies.

Mary, who has been watching from the doorstep smiling, when She sees Him lying still on the ground shouts: « Jesus, Jesus! Get up! Don't lie down like that! Your Mummy does not want to see You dead! »

Jesus gets up smiling, runs towards Her, and kisses Her. Also James and Judas come. They also receive Mary's caresses.

« How can Jesus remember that canticle which is so long and difficult and all those blessings? » asks James.

Mary smiles and answers: « His memory is very good and He pays a lot of attention when I read. »

« I too, at school, pay attention. But then I get sleepy with all the hubbub… shall I never learn then? »

« You will learn, be good. »

There is a knock at the door. Joseph walks quickly across the orchard and the room and opens it.

« Peace to you, Alphaeus and Mary! »

« And to you, and blessings. »

It is Joseph's brother with his wife. A rustic cart, drawn by a strong donkey, is outside in the street.

« Did you have a good trip? »

« Very good. And the children? »

« They are in the garden with Mary. »

But the children have already come to greet their mother. Also Mary comes, holding Jesus by the hand. The two sisters-in-law kiss each other.

« Have they been good? »

« Very good, and very dear. Are the relatives all well? »

« Yes they all are. They send You their regards, and they have sent You many presents from Cana. Grapes, apples, cheese, eggs, honey. And… Joseph? I have found just what you wanted for Jesus. It is on the cart, in the round basket. » Alphaeus' wife smiles. She bends over Jesus Who is looking at her with His eyes wide open, she kisses Him on those two strips of blue sky and says: « Do you know what I have for you? Guess. »

Jesus thinks, but He cannot guess. I doubt whether He does it deliberately, to give Joseph the joy of giving Him a surprise. Joseph in fact comes in, carrying a large round basket. He lays it down on the floor in front of Jesus, unties the rope which is holding the lid on, he lifts it… and a little white sheep, a real flock of foam, appears sleeping in the very clean hay.

Jesus utters an « Oh! » of surprise and happiness and He is about to rush towards the little animal, but then He turns round and runs to Joseph, who is still bent down as before, He embraces him, and kisses him, thanking him.

The two little cousins look with admiration at the little creature, which is now awake and is lifting its little rosy head bleating, looking for its mother. They take it out of the basket, they offer it a handful of clover. It browses while looking around with its mild eyes.

Jesus continues saying, « For me! For me! Thank you, father! »

« Do you like it so much! »

« Oh! Very much! White, clean… a little lamb… Oh! » and He throws His little arms round the sheep's neck, He lays His blond

head on its little head and remains thus, happy.

« I brought two, also for you » says Alphaeus to his sons. « But they are dark. You are not quite so tidy as Jesus and your sheep would always be untidy, if they were white. They will be your herd, you will keep them together and so you will no longer be loitering in the streets, you two little rascals, throwing stones at each other. »

The children run to the cart and look at the other two little animals which are more black than white.

Jesus has stayed behind with His sheep. He takes it into the garden, gives it water to drink and the little pet follows Him as if it had known Him for ever. Jesus beckons it. He calls it « Snow » and the little lamb replies bleating happily.

The guests are sitting at the table and Mary offers them bread, olives and cheese. She also puts a jug on the table with cider or water sweetened with honey, I do not know exactly which, I see that it is a very pale colour.

They speak while the children are playing with the three little animals that Jesus wanted gathered together so that He can give water and a name also to the others. « Yours, Judas, will be called "Star" because it has that mark on its forehead. And the name of yours will be "Flame" because it has the blazing colours of certain withering heathers. »

« Agreed. »

The elder people are talking and Alphaeus says: « I hope I have solved the matter of the boys' quarrels. I got the idea from your request, Joseph. I said to myself: "My brother wants a little sheep for Jesus, that He may have something to play with. I will get two, also for those naughty boys, to keep them quiet a little, and avoid continuous arguments with other parents with regard to bruised heads and skinned knees. What with the school and what with the sheep, I will manage to keep them quiet". But this year You also will have to send Jesus to school. It is time. »

« I will never send Jesus to school » says Mary resolutely. It is most unusual to hear Her talk thus and above all to hear Her talk before Joseph.

« Why? The Child must learn to be ready in good time to pass His exam when He comes of age… »

« The Child will be ready. But He will not go to school. That is quite definite. »

« You will be the only woman in Israel to do that. »

« I will be the only one. But that is what I am going to do. Isn't that right, Joseph? »

« Yes, that's correct. There is no need for Jesus to go to school. Mary was brought up in the Temple, and She knows the Law as well as any doctor. She will be His Teacher. That's what I want, too. »

« You are spoiling the Boy. »

« You cannot say that. He is the best boy in Nazareth. Have you ever heard Him cry, or be naughty, or be disobedient, or lack respect? »

« No. That's true. But He will do all that if You continue to spoil Him. »

« You do not necessarily spoil your children just because you keep them at home. To keep them at home implies loving them with good common sense and wholeheartedly. And that is how we love our Jesus, and since Mary is better educated than a teacher, She will be Jesus' Teacher. »

« And when Your Jesus is a Man, He will be like a silly little woman frightened even of flies. »

« He will not. Mary is a strong woman, and She will give Him a manly education. I am not a coward, and I can give Him man-like examples. Jesus is a creature without any physical or moral faults. He will grow, therefore, upright and strong, both in His body and in His spirit. You can be sure of that, Alphaeus. He will not be a disgrace to the family. In any case, that is what I have decided, and that is all. »

« Perhaps Mary has decided, and you… »

« And if it were so? Is it not fair that two, who love each other, should have the same thoughts and the same wishes, so that each may accept the wishes of the other as if they were his own? If Mary should wish silly things, I would say to Her: "No". But She is asking for something which is full of wisdom, and I agree, and I make it my own. We love each other, we do as we did the first day, and we shall go on doing so as long as we live. Is that right, Mary? »

« Yes, Joseph. And let us hope it will never happen, but when one should die without the other, we will still go on loving each other. »

Joseph pats Mary on the head as if She were a young daughter and She looks at him with Her serene loving eyes.

Her sister-in-law interferes: « You are quite right. I wish I could teach! Our children at school learn evil and good. At home they only learn what is good. But I do not know whether… if Mary… »

« What is it you want, My dear sister-in-law? Speak freely. You know that I love you and I am happy when I can do something that pleases you. »

« I was thinking… James and Judas are only a little older than Jesus. They are already going to school… for what they have learned! … Jesus instead already knows the Law so well… I would like… eh, I mean, if I asked You to take them as well, when You teach Jesus? I think they would behave better and be better educated. After all, they are cousins, and it is only fair that they should love one another like brothers. Oh! I would be so happy! »

« If Joseph wants, and your husband agrees, I am quite willing. It is the same to speak to one as to speak to three. And it is a joy to go through the whole Bible. Let them come. »

The three children, who have come in very quietly, are listening and are awaiting the final decision.

« They will drive You to despair, Mary » says Alphaeus.

« No! They are always good with Me. You will be good if I teach you, will you not? »

The two boys move near Mary, one on Her left side, the other on Her right, they place their arms around Her shoulders, they lean their little heads on Her shoulders, and they promise all the good in the world.

« Let them try, Alphaeus, and let Me try. I am sure you will not be dissatisfied with the test. They can come every day from the sixth hour until evening. It will be enough, believe Me. I know how to teach without tiring them. You must hold their attention and let them relax at the same time. You must understand them, love them, and be loved by them, if you wish to get good results. And you will love Me, will you not? »

Two big kisses are the answer.

« See? »

« I see. I can only say: "Thank You". And what will Jesus say, when He sees His Mummy busy with others? What do you say, Jesus? »

« I say: "Happy those who listen to Her and build their dwelling near Hers". As for Wisdom, happy are those who are My Mother's friends, and I am happy that those whom I love are Her friends. »

« But who puts such words on the lips of the Child » Alphaeus asks, astonished.

« Nobody, brother. Nobody in this world ».

The vision ends here.

Jesus says:

« And Mary was My teacher and the teacher of James and Judas. That is why we loved one another like brothers, not only because of our relationship, but for our science and the fact that we had grown up together, like three shoots supported by one pole only: My Mother. There was no other doctor in Israel like My sweet Mother. Seat of Wisdom, and of true Wisdom, She taught us for the world, and for Heaven. I say: "She taught us" because I was Her pupil exactly as My cousins. And the "seal" was kept on the secret of God against Satan's investigations, and it was safeguarded by the appearance of a normal life. Did you enjoy this sweet scene? Now be in peace. Jesus is with you. »

39. Preparations for Jesus' Coming of Age and Departure from Nazareth.

25th November 1944.

I have received a promise from Him. I was saying to Him: « Jesus, I would like to see the ceremony of Your majority! » And He replied: « I will give it to you as first thing as soon as we can be "ourselves" without upsetting the mystery. And you will put it after the scene of My Mother, My teacher and the teacher of Judas and James, shown to you recently (29th October). You will put it between this one and the Dispute in the Temple. »

19th December 1944.

I see Mary bending over a tub, rather an earthenware vessel, in which She stirs something that steams in the cool clear air which fills the kitchen garden in Nazareth.

It must be the depth of winter, because, with the exception of the olive-trees, all the plants and trees are bare and look like skeletons. High above, the sky is very clear and there is beautiful sunshine. But it does not mitigate the bitterly cold wind that shakes the bare boughs and the little green-grey branches of the olive-trees.

Our Lady is wearing a heavy dark-brown dress, which is so dark that it is almost black, and She has tied in front of it a rough piece of cloth, like an apron, to protect it. She takes out of the vessel the stick with which She was stirring its contents and I can see some beautiful ruby-red drops dripping from it. Mary looks at them, She wets Her finger with them, checks the colour against Her apron and seems satisfied.

She goes into the house and then comes out with a lot of skeins of snow-white wool. She dips them patiently and carefully into the vat, one by one.

While She is busy doing that, Her sister-in-law, Mary of Alphaeus, comes in, and she is coming from Joseph's workshop. They greet each other, and start conversing.

« Is it coming all right? » asks Mary of Alphaeus.

« I hope so. »

« That Gentile lady assured me that it is exactly the colour, and that is exactly how they do it in Rome. She gave it to me only because of You, because of the embroidery work You did for her. She said that not even in Rome is there anyone who can embroider so well. You must have become blind doing it… »

Mary smiles and shakes Her head as if to say: « It was a mere trifle! »

Her sister-in-law looks at the last skeins of wool, before handing them over to Mary. « How beautifully You have spun them! They are so thin and smooth that they look like hair. You do everything

so well. And You are so quick! Will these last ones be of a lighter colour? »

« Yes, they are for the tunic. The mantle is darker. »

The two women work together at the vat. They then pull out the skeins of a beautiful purple colour and they run quickly to dip them into the ice-cold water that fills the little vessel under the thin spring of water that tumbles babbling softly. They rinse them over and over again, then they lay the skeins on canes which they fasten to the branches of the trees.

« They will dry very well and rapidly in this wind » says Her sister-in-law.

« Let us go to Joseph. There is a fire in there. You must be frozen » says Our Blessed Lady. « It was very kind of you to help Me. I did it very quickly, and without working so much. I am very grateful to you. »

« Oh! Mary! What would I not do for You! To be near You is a great joy. And then… all this work is for Jesus. And He is such a dear, Your Son!… I will feel that He is also my Son, if I help You with His feast when He comes of age. »

The two women go into the workshop, which is full of the smell of planed wood, as is usual in carpenters' workshops.

And the vision comes to a halt… to start again with Jesus, Who is now twelve years old, setting out for Jerusalem.

He looks most handsome, and has grown so well that He looks like a younger brother of His very young Mother. He already reaches up to Her shoulders with His blond curly head, His hair is no longer short as in the first years of His life, but long down to His ears, and looks like a small golden helmet fully wrought in bright curls.

He is dressed in red: a beautiful light ruby-red. A long tunic hangs down to His ankles so that only His sandal clad feet can be seen. His tunic is loose, with long wide sleeves. Round His neck, at the end of His sleeves, at the hems, there is a Greek fret woven colour on colour, and it is most beautiful…

(When copying the vision, wait for the remainder which will be in a new copy-book).

20th December 1944.

I see Jesus with His Mother going into the dining room (let us call it so), in Nazareth.

Jesus is a handsome young boy, twelve years old, tall, well built, strong but not fat. He looks older than His years, because of His complexion. He is already tall, in fact He reaches up to the shoulders of His Mother. His face is the rosy round face of a child and later, in His youth and then in His manhood, it will get thinner and thinner and it will become colourless, the colour of certain

very delicate alabasters with a hue of yellowish pink.

Also His eyes are still the eyes of a child. They are large, wide open when looking, with a sparkle of joy lost in the seriousness of His glance. Later they will not be so wide open… His eyelashes will cover half of them to conceal the excessive wickedness which is in the world, from the Pure and Holy One. Only when working miracles, they will be open and bright, even brighter than now… to cast out demons and death, to heal diseases and sins. And they will no longer have that sparkle of happiness mingled with seriousness… death and sin will be more and more present and close, and with them the knowledge, also the human knowledge of the uselessness of His sacrifice, because of the unwillingness and aversion of man. Only in most rare moments of joy, when He is with faithful believers and particularly with pure people, mostly children, will His holy mild kind eyes shine again with happiness.

But now He is at home with His Mother, in front of Him there is Saint Joseph who is smiling lovingly, and there are His little cousins who admire Him, and His aunt Mary of Alphaeus who is patting Him… He is happy. My Jesus needs love to be happy. And in this moment He has it.

He is dressed in a loose woollen tunic which is a light ruby red colour. It is soft, perfectly woven in its compact thinness. Round the neck, in the front, at the ends of the long wide sleeves and at the bottom of the tunic which hangs down to the ground, so that only His feet can be seen, there is a Greek fret which is not embroidered, but woven in a darker colour into the ruby of the tunic. He is wearing new sandals which appear to be very well made, they are not just the usual soles tied to the feet by means of straps of leather. His tunic must be the work of His Mother because Her sister-in-law admires it, and praises it.

His lovely blond hair is already somewhat darker than when He was a little boy, with auburn reflections in the curls ending under His ears. They are no longer the soft graceful curls of His childhood. It is not yet the wavy long hair of His manhood, reaching down to His shoulders, ending there in a soft, big curl. But it already resembles more the latter in its colour and style.

« Here is our Son » says Mary lifting Her right hand which is holding Jesus' left one. She seems to be introducing Him to everybody and confirming the paternity of the Just man who is smiling. And She adds: « Bless Him, Joseph, before leaving for Jerusalem. There was no ritual blessing for His first step in life, because it was not necessary for Him to go to school. But now that He is going to the Temple to be proclaimed of age, please bless Him. And bless Me with Him. Your blessing… » (Mary sobs softly) « will fortify Him and give Me strength, to detach Myself a little more from Him… »

« Mary, Jesus will always be Yours. The formality will not affect our mutual relationship. Neither will I contend with You for this Son, so dear to us. No one deserves, as You do, to guide Him in life, o my Holy Spouse. »

Mary bends down and takes Joseph's hand and kisses it. She is the respectful, loving spouse of Her consort!

Joseph receives the sign of respect and love with dignity, he then lifts the hand which She has kissed and lays it on the head of his Spouse and says to Her: « Yes. I bless You, o Blessed One, and I bless Jesus with You. Come to me, my only joys, my honour and essence of my life. » Joseph is solemn. With his arms stretched out and the palms of his hands turned down above the two heads which are bent down, both equally blond and holy, he pronounces his blessing: « May the Lord look upon You and bless You. May He have mercy on You and give You peace. May the Lord give You His blessing.. » And then he says: « And now let us go. The hour is favourable for the journey. »

Mary takes a wide dark brown mantle and She drapes it on the body of Her Son. How She caresses Him in doing so!

They go out, they close up the house. They set off. Other pilgrims are going in the same direction. Outside the village the women separate from the men. The children go where they like. Jesus stays with His Mother.

The pilgrims go along through the country which is so beautiful in the happiest springtime, and they sing psalms most of-the time. The meadows are fresh and the crops are fresh, and the leaves on the trees have just begun to bloom. You can hear men singing -in the fields along the roads and birds singing their songs of love among the branches of the trees. Clear streams reflect like mirrors the flowers on the banks, while little lambs are jumping about near their mothers… Peace and happiness under the loveliest April sky.

The vision ends thus.

40. Jesus Examined in the Temple When He Is of Age.

21st December 1944.

The Temple on a feast day. People going in and coming out of the enclosure gates, crossing yards, halls and porches, disappearing in this or that building on the various floors, which form the bulk of the Temple.

Also the group of Jesus' family go in singing psalms in low voices. All the men are in front, the women come behind. Other people have joined them, perhaps from Nazareth, perhaps their friends in Jerusalem. I do not know.

Joseph, after worshipping the Most High with all the others at the point, obviously, where men were allowed to do so, (the women stopped on a lower landing), parts from the rest and with his Son goes back through some yards, he then moves to one side and enters a vast room which looks like a synagogue. I do not know why. Were there synagogues also in the Temple? He speaks to a Levite and the latter disappears behind a striped curtain, then comes back with some elder priests, I think they are priests, they are certainly masters in the knowledge of the Law, and they are therefore appointed to examine the believers.

Joseph introduces Jesus. First of all, they both bow down deeply to the ten doctors, who have sat down with dignity on low wooden stools. « Here » he says, « this in my Son. Three months and twelve days ago He reached the age which the Law prescribes to become of age. And I want Him to comply with the prescriptions of Israel. I would ask you to note that His constitution proves that He is no longer in His childhood or minority. And I ask you to examine Him kindly and fairly, to judge that what I here, His father, have stated, is the truth. I have prepared Him for this hour and for this dignity of son of the Law. He knows the precepts, the traditions, the decisions, the customs of the fringes and the phylacteries, He knows how to say the daily prayers and blessings. Therefore, since He knows the Law in Itself and in its three branches of Halascia, Midrasc and Aggada, He can behave as a man. Therefore I wish to be free from the responsibilities of His actions and of His sins. From now on, He must be subject to the precepts and He must pay Himself the penalty for His failures towards them. Examine Him. »

« We Will. Come forward, Child. What is Your name? »

« Jesus of Joseph, from Nazareth. »

« A Nazarene… can You therefore read? »

« Yes, rabbi, I can read the words which are written and those which are construed in the words themselves. »

« What do you mean? »

« I mean that I understand also the meaning of the allegory or of the symbol which is hidden under the appearance, as a pearl does not appear but it is inside an ugly closed shell. »

« A clever answer and a very wise one. We seldom hear that on the lips of adults; in a child, and a Nazarene in addition!… »

The attention of the ten has been awakened. Their eyes do not lose for an instant the beautiful blond Child, Who is looking at them sure of Himself, without boldness, but also without fear.

« You honour Your master, who, certainly, was deeply read. »

« The Wisdom of God was gathered in his just heart. »

« But listen to that! You are a happy man, father of such a Son! »

Joseph, who is at the end of the room, smiles and bows down.

They give Jesus three different rolls saying: « Read the one closed with the golden ribbon. »

Jesus opens the roll and reads. It is the Decalogue. But after the first few words, one of the judges takes the roll from Him saying: « Go on by heart. » Jesus continues so sure of Himself, that He seems to be reading. Every time He mentions the Lord, He bows down deeply.

« Who taught You that? Why do You do that? »

« Because that Name is holy and it is to be pronounced with a sign of internal and external respect. Subjects bow down to their king, who is king only for a short time and he is dust. To the King of kings, the Most High Lord of Israel, Who is present even if He is only visible to the spirit, shall not every creature bow down since every creature depends on Him with eternal subjection? »

« Very clever! Man: we advise you to have your Son educated either by Hillel or Gamaliel. He is a Nazarene… but His answers give us hope that He will become a new great doctor. »

« My Son is of age. He will decide according to His own will. If His decision is an honest one, I will not oppose it. »

« Listen, Child. You said: "Remember to sanctify feast days. Not only for yourself, but also for your son and your daughter, your servant and your maidservant, even for your horse it is said that they must not work on Sabbaths". Now tell me: if a hen lays an egg on a Sabbath or a sheep lambs on a Sabbath, will it be legal to use the fruit of its womb, or will it be considered as an opprobrium? »

« I know that many rabbis, Shammai is the last of them and is still alive, say that an egg laid on a Sabbath is against the precept. But I think that there is a difference between man and animals or whoever fulfils a natural act, such as giving birth. If I compel a horse to work I am responsible for its sin, because I force it to work with a whip. But if a hen lays an egg which has matured in its ovary or a sheep lambs a little one on a Sabbath, because it is ready to be born, no, such a deed is not a sin, neither is the egg laid or the lamb born on a Sabbath a sin in the eyes of God. »

« But why, if every kind of work is a sin on Sabbaths? »

« Because to conceive and give birth correspond to the will of the Creator and comply with the laws which He gave to every creature. Now, the hen does nothing but obey the law according to which after so many hours of growth an egg is complete and ready to be laid, and the sheep also obeys the laws laid by Him Who created everything, according to which laws twice a year when springtime is on the meadows in bloom, and when the trees in the forest lose their leaves and men muffle themselves up because of the intense cold, sheep should mate so that later they may give milk, meat and nourishing cheese, in the opposite seasons of the year, that is in the months when the toil for the crops is harder or the bleakness is more painful because of frostbite. If therefore a sheep, when its time is up, gives birth to a little lamb, oh! little lamb can certainly be sacred also on an altar, because it is the fruit of the obedience to the Creator. »

« I would not examine Him any further. His wisdom is greater than the wisdom of grown up people and is really surprising. »

« No. He said that He is capable of understanding also the symbols. Let us hear Him ».

« First, let Him say a psalm, the blessings and the prayers. »

« Also the precepts. »

« Yes. Repeat the Midrasciot. »

Jesus repeats a long litany of « Don't do this… don't do that… » without any hesitation. If we were still obliged to keep all those limitations, rebels as we are, I am sure that no one would be saved…

« That is enough. Open the roll with the green ribbon. »

Jesus opens it, and He is about to read.

« Further on, yes, further on. »

Jesus obeys.

« That is enough. Now read and explain it, if You think there is a symbol. »

« In the Holy Word, it is seldom missing. It is we who cannot see and apply it. I read: Fourth Book of the Kings, Chapter twenty-two, Verse ten: "Then Shaphan, the secretary, informed the king saying: 'Hilkiah, the High Priest, has given me a book'; and Shaphan read it aloud in the king's presence. On hearing the contents of the Law of God, the king tore his garments, and gave the following… »

« Read after all the names. »

« "… the following order: 'Go and consult Yahweh, on behalf of me and the people, on behalf of the whole of Judah, about the contents of this book that has been found. Great indeed must be the anger of Yahweh blazing out against us because our ancestors did not obey what this book says, by practising everything written in it… »

« That is enough. This happened many centuries ago. Which symbol do You find in an event of ancient history? »

« I find that time cannot be related to what is eternal. And God is eternal and our soul is eternal, and the relation between God and our soul is also eternal. Therefore the thing that gave rise to a punishment then, is the same thing that gives rise to punishment now, and the effects of the fault are the same. »

« That is? »

« Israel is no longer acquainted with the Wisdom, which comes from God. It is to Him, and not to poor men, that we must apply for light, and it is not possible to have light if there is no justice

and loyalty to God. That is why men sin, and God, in His anger, punishes them. »

« We are no longer acquainted? But what are You saying, Child? And the six hundred and thirteen precepts? »

« The precepts exist, but they are mere words. We know them but we do not practise them. That is why we are not acquainted with them. This is the symbol: every man, in every period of time, must consult the Lord to know His will and comply with it to avoid drawing His anger on himself. »

« The Child is perfect. Not even the trap of the tricky question has upset Him in His reply. Let us take Him to the real synagogue »

They go into a larger and more splendid room. The first thing they do there is to shorten His hair. His big curls are picked up by Joseph. They then tighten His red tunic with a long band turned several times round His waist, they tie some little fringes to His forehead, arm and mantle. They fix them on with a kind of studs. They then sing psalms, and Joseph praises the Lord with a long prayer invoking all blessings on his Son.

The ceremony is over. Jesus goes out with Joseph. They go back to where they came from, they join their male relatives, they buy and offer a lamb; then, with the slaughtered victim, they reach the women.

Mary kisses Her Jesus. It seems She has not seen Him for years. She looks at Him, now that He is more manly in His clothes and in the style of His hair, She pats Him…

They go out and it all ends here.

41. The Dispute of Jesus with the Doctors in the Temple.

28th January 1944.

I see Jesus. He is an adolescent. He is dressed in a tunic which I think is made of white linen, and it reaches down to His feet. Over it, He is wearing a pale red rectangular piece of cloth. He is bare headed, His long hair reaches down to half His ears and it is somewhat darker in hue than when I saw Him as a child. He is a strong boy and very tall for His age, which is still relatively young, as is obvious from His countenance.

He looks at me smiling and stretches His hands towards me. But His smile is already like the one I see in Him when He is a Man: mild but rather serious. He is by Himself. I do not see anything else for the time being. He is leaning against a low wall on a minor road which is all uphill and downhill, littered with stones and has a ditch in the middle which in bad weather must turn into a rivulet. But at present it is dry because the day is lovely.

I also seem to be going near the low wall and I look around and down, as Jesus is doing. I see a group of houses irregular in formation.

Some of the houses are tall, others are low, and they are scattered in all directions. They look like a handful of little white stones thrown down on dark soil: the comparison is a poor but good one. The streets and the lanes are like veins in all that whiteness. Here and there I see some plants protruding from the walls. Many are in bloom while others are already covered with new leaves. It must be springtime.

On my left, there is the massive structure of the Temple, on three sets of terraces covered with buildings and towers and yards and porches. In the centre, the highest most solemn and rich building rises with its, round domes, which shine in the sun as if they were covered with copper or gold. It is all enclosed by an embattled wall, the merlons of which are like those of a stronghold. A tower higher than the others, built over a rather narrow climbing road, commands a clear view of the huge building. It looks like a stern sentry.

Jesus stares at the place. He then turns round, leans back once again against the wall, as He had done before and looks at a hillock which is in front of the building, a hillock crowded with houses at its base, while the rest of it is bare. I see that a street ends over there in an arch, beyond which there is nothing but a road paved with square stones, which are loose and uneven. They are not too large, not like the stones of the Roman consular roads: they rather resemble the classic stones of the old pavements in Viareggio (I do not know whether there are any still left) but they are not joined together. A really rough road. Jesus' face becomes so serious that I look at the hillock endeavouring to find the cause of His sadness. But I do not see anything special. It is a bare hillock and nothing else. Instead I lose Jesus because when I turn round, He is no longer there. And I fall asleep with that vision.

… When I awake with its memory in my heart, after I have recovered some of my strength and my mind is at peace, because they are all asleep, I find myself in a place which I have never seen before. There are yards and fountains and porches and houses, or rather pavilions, because they look more like pavilions than houses. There is a large crowd of people dressed in the ancient style of the Jews, and there is a lot of bawling. When I look round I realise I am inside the large building which Jesus was looking at, because I see -the embattled wall surrounding it, the tower watching over it and the imposing building that rises in the centre, and round which there are beautiful and large porches, where many people are intent on activities.

I understand that I am in the enclosure of the Temple in Jerusalem. I see Pharisees in long flowing dresses, priests dressed in linen and wearing precious plates at the top of their chests and on their foreheads and with other sparkling points here and there on their varied robes, which are very wide and white, tied to their waists by precious belts. There are also others with fewer decorations, but they must still belong to the sacerdotal caste and are surrounded by younger disciples. I realise that they are the doctors of the Law.

Among all these people I am lost, because I do not know why or what I am doing there. I go near a group of doctors where they have just started a theological dispute. Many people do the same.

Amongst the « doctors » there is a group headed by one whose name is Gamaliel and by another old and almost blind man who is supporting Gamaliel in the dispute. This man, whose name I hear is Hillel (I am writing it with an 'h' because I hear an aspiration at the beginning of the name) seems to be a teacher or relative of Gamaliel, because the latter treats him with familiarity and respect at the same time. Gamaliel's group is more broad-minded, whereas another group, and it is more numerous, is led by one whose name in Shammai, and is noticeable for its conservative, resentful intolerance which the Gospel has clarified so well.

Gamaliel, surrounded by a compact group of disciples, is speaking of the coming of the Messiah, and founding his observations on Daniel's prophecy, he states that the Messiah must have already been born, because the seventy prophesied weeks, from the time the decree of the reconstruction of the Temple was issued, expired some ten years before. Shammai opposes him stating that, if it is true that the Temple has been rebuilt, it is also true that the slavery of Israel has increased and the peace, which He Whom the prophets called « Prince of Peace » was to bring, is quite far from being in the world and in particular is far from Jerusalem. The town is in fact

oppressed by an enemy who is so bold as to exert his domination inside the enclosure of the Temple, dominated by the Antonia Tower, full of Roman legionaries, ready to put down with their swords any riot which may break out for the independence of the country.

The dispute, full of captious objections, is dragged on endlessly. All the doctors show off their learning, not so much to beat their opponents as to display themselves to the admiration of the listeners. Their aims are quite obvious.

From the close group of the believers the clear voice of a boy is heard: « Gamaliel is right. »

There is a stir in the crowd and in the group of doctors. They look for the interrupter. But it is not necessary to search for him, because he does not hide. He makes his way through the crowd and goes near the group of the « rabbis ». I recognise my Jesus adolescent. He is sure of Himself and open-hearted, His eyes are sparkling with intelligence.

« Who are You? », they ask Him.

« I am a son of Israel, who has come to fulfill what the Law prescribes. »

His bold and frank reply is appreciated, and it gains Him smiles of approval and favour. They take an interest in the young Israelite.

« What is Your name? »

« Jesus of Nazareth. »

The feeling of benevolence fades away in Shammai's group. But Gamaliel, more benignly, continues his conversation with Hillel. It is indeed Gamaliel who with respect suggests to the old man: « Ask the boy something. »

« On what do You base Your certainty? » asks Hillel. (I will now put the names in front of the replies for the sake of brevity and clarity.)

Jesus: « On the prophecy which cannot be wrong about the time and the signs which took place at the time it came true. It is true that Caesar dominates us, but the world and Palestine were in such peace when the seventy weeks expired, that it was possible for Caesar to order the census in his dominions. Had there been wars in the Empire and riots in Palestine, he would not have been able to do so. As that time was completed, so the other period of sixty-two weeks plus one from the completion of the Temple is also being completed, so that the Messiah may be anointed and the remainder of the prophecy may come true for the people who did not want Him. Can you doubt that? Do you not remember the star that was seen by the Wise Men from the East and stopped over the sky in Bethlehem of Judah and that the prophecies and the visions, from Jacob onwards, indicate that place as the one destined as the birthplace of the Messiah, son of the son of Jacob's son, through David who was from Bethlehem? Do you not remember Balaam? "A Star will be born of Jacob". The Wise Men from the East, whose purity and faith opened their eyes and ears, saw the Star and understood its Name: "Messiah", and they came to worship the Light which had descended into the world. »

Shammai, glaring at Him: « Do you mean that the Messiah was born in Bethlehem-Ephrathah at the time of the Star? »

Jesus: « I do. »

Shammai: « Then he no longer is. Don't you know, Child, that Herod had all the born of woman, from one day up to the age of two years, slaughtered in Bethlehem and surroundings? You, Who are so wise in the Scriptures, must know also this: "A voice is heard in Ramah… it is Rachel weeping for her children". The valleys and the hills in Bethlehem, which gathered the tears of the dying Rachel, were left full of tears, and the mothers have wept again on their slaughtered children. Amongst them, there certainly was the Mother of the Messiah. »

Jesus: « You are wrong, old man. The weeping of Rachel turned into a hosanna, because there, where she gave birth to "the son of her sorrow", the new Rachel has given the world the Benjamin of the Heavenly Father, the Son of His right hand, Him Who is destined to gather the people of God under His sceptre and free it from the most dreadful slavery. »

Shammai: « How can that be, if He was killed? »

Jesus: « Have you not read about Elijah? He was carried off by the chariot of fire. And could the Lord God not have saved his Immanuel that He might be the Messiah of his people? He, Who parted the sea in front of Moses that Israel might walk on dry ground towards its land, could He not have sent His angels to save His Son, His Christ, from the ferocity of man? I solemnly tell you: the Christ is alive and is amongst you, and when His hour comes, He will show Himself in His power » Jesus, in saying these words, which I have underlined, has a sharp sound in His voice which fills the air. His eyes are brighter than ever, and with the gesture of command and promise He stretches out His right arm and hand and lowers them as if He were swearing. He is a boy, but is as solemn as a man.

Hillel: « Child, who taught you these words? »

Jesus: « The Spirit of God. I have no human teacher. This is the Word of the Lord Who speaks to you through My lips. »

Hillel: « Come near us that I may see You, Child, and my hope may be revived by Your faith and my soul enlightened by the brightness of Yours. »

And they make Jesus sit on a high stool between Gamaliel and Hillel and they give Him some rolls to read and explain. It is a proper examination. The people throng and listen.

Jesus reads in His clear voice: « Be consoled, my people. Speak to the heart of Jerusalem and call to her that her time of service is ended… A voice cries in the wilderness: "Prepare a way for the Lord… then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed… " »

Shammai: « See that, Nazarene. It refers here to an ended slavery, but never before have we been slaves as we are now. And there is the mention of a precursor. Where is he? You are talking nonsense. »

Jesus: « I tell you that the admonition of the Precursor should be addressed to you more than anyone else. To you and those like you. Otherwise you will not see the glory of the Lord, neither will you understand the word of God because meanness, pride and falsehood will prevent you from seeing and hearing. »

Shammai: « How dare You speak to a master like that? »

Jesus: « I speak thus. And thus I shall speak even to My death, because above Me there are the interests of the Lord and the love for Truth of which I am the Son. And I add, rabbi, that the slavery of which the Prophet speaks, and of which I am speaking, is not the one you think, neither is the royalty the one you consider. On the contrary, by the merits of the Messiah man will be made free from

the slavery of Evil, which separates him from God, and the sign of Christ will be on the spirits, freed from every yoke and made subjects of the eternal kingdom. All the nations will bend their heads, o household of David, before the Shoot born of you and which will grow into a tree that covers the whole world and rises up to Heaven. And in Heaven and on the earth every mouth will praise His Name and bend its knee before the Anointed of God, the Prince of Peace, the Leader, before Him Who by giving Himself will fill with joy and nourishment every disheartened and famishing soul, before the Holy One Who will establish an alliance between Heaven and earth. Not like the Covenant made with the Elders of Israel when God led them out of Egypt, treating them still as servants, but infusing a heavenly paternity into the souls of men with the Grace instilled once again by the merits of the Redeemer, through Whom all good people will know the Lord and the Sanctuary of God will no longer be demolished and destroyed. »

Shammai: « Do not blaspheme, Child! Remember Daniel. He states that after the death of Christ, the Temple and the Town will be destroyed by a people and a leader who will come from afar. And You hold that the sanctuary of God will no longer be demolished! Respect the Prophets! »

Jesus: « I solemnly tell you that there is Someone Who is above the Prophets, and you do not know Him and you will not know Him because you do not want to. And I tell you that what I said is true. The true Sanctuary will not be subject to death. But like its Sanctifier it will rise to eternal life and at the end of the world it will live in Heaven. »

Hillel: « Listen to me, Child. Haggai says: "… The One Expected by the nations will come… great then shall be the glory of this house, and of this last one more than of the previous one". Does he perhaps refer to the Sanctuary of which You are speaking? »

Jesus: « Yes, master. That is what he means. Your honesty leads You towards the Light and I tell you: when the sacrifice of Christ is accomplished, you shall have peace because you are an Israelite without wickedness. »

Gamaliel: « Tell me, Jesus. How can the peace of which the Prophets speak be hoped for, if destruction is going to come to this people by war? Speak and enlighten also me. »

Jesus: « Do you not remember, master, what those said who were present on the night of Christ's birth? That the angels sang: "Peace to men of good will" but this people is not of good will and will not have peace. It will not acknowledge its King, the Just Man, the

Saviour, because they expect Him to be a king with human power, whereas He is the King of the spirit. They will not love Him, because they will not like what Christ preaches. Christ will not defeat their enemies with their chariots and their horses, He will instead defeat the enemies of the soul, who endeavour to imprison in hell the heart of man which was created for the Lord. And this is not the victory which Israel is expecting from Him. Your King will come, Jerusalem, riding a "donkey and a colt", that is, the just people of Israel and the Gentiles. But I tell you, that the colt will be more faithful to Him and will follow Him preceding the donkey and will grow in the ways of Truth and Life. Because of its evil will, Israel will lose its peace and suffer for centuries and will cause its King to suffer and will make Him the King of sorrow of Whom Isaiah speaks. »

Shammai: « Your mouth tastes of milk and blasphemy at the same time, Nazarene. Tell me: where is the Precursor? When did we have him? »

Jesus: « He is. Does not Malachi say: "Here I am going to send My messenger to prepare the way before Me; and the Lord you are seeking will suddenly enter His Temple, and the angel of the Covenant Whom you are longing for"? Therefore the Precursor immediately precedes Christ. He already is, as Christ is. If years should elapse between him who prepares the ways for the Lord and Christ, all the ways would become obstructed and twisted again. God knows and arranges beforehand that the Precursor should precede the Master by one hour only. When you see this Precursor, you will be able to say: "The mission of Christ is beginning". And I say to you: Christ will open many eyes and many ears when He comes this way. But He will not open yours or those of people like you, because you will be putting to death Him Who is bringing you Life. But when the Redeemer sits on His throne and on His altar, higher up than this Temple, higher than the Tabernacle enclosed in the Holy of the Holies, higher up than the Glory supported by the Cherubim, maledictions for the deicides and life for the Gentiles will flow from His thousands and thousands of wounds, because He, o master who are unaware of it, is not, I repeat, is not the king of a human kingdom, but of a spiritual Kingdom and His subjects will be only those who for His sake will learn to regenerate in the spirit and, like Jonah, after being born, will learn to be born again, on other shores: "The shores of God", by means of a spiritual regeneration which will take place through Christ, Who will give humanity true Life. »

Shammai and his followers: « This Nazarene is Satan! »

Hillel and his followers: « No. This child is a Prophet of God.

Stay with me, Child. My old age will transfuse what I know into Your knowledge and You will be Master of the people of God. »

Jesus: « I solemnly tell you that if there were many like you, salvation would come to Israel. But My hour has not come. Voices from Heaven speak to Me and in solitude I must gather them until My hour comes. Then with My lips and My blood I will speak to Jerusalem, and the destiny of Prophets stoned and killed by her, will also be My destiny. But above My life there is the Lord God, to Whom I submit Myself as a faithful servant, to make of Myself a stool for His glory, waiting that He will make the world a stool at the feet of Christ. Wait for Me in My hour. These stones shall hear My voice again and vibrate hearing My last word. Blessed are ,those who in that voice will have heard God and believed in Him because of it. To them Christ will give that kingdom which your selfishness imagines to be a human one, whereas it is a heavenly one and therefore I say: "Here is Your servant, Lord, Who has come do to Your will. Let it be consummated, because I am eager to fulfill it". »

And here, with the vision of Jesus with His face burning with spiritual ardour and raised to Heaven, His arms stretched out, standing upright in the midst of the astonished doctors, the vision ends.

(and it is 3:30 on the 29th).

29th January 1944.

I have here two things to tell you and which will certainly be of interest to you. I had decided to write them as soon as I came out of my sopor. But as there is something more urgent, I will write them later. […]

What I wanted to tell you at the beginning is this. Today you were asking me how I had been able to find out the names of Hillel, Gamaliel and of Shammai.

It is the voice that I call « the second voice » which tells me these things. A voice even less audible than Jesus' and the voices of other people who dictate. These are voices, I have told you and I repeat it, which my spiritual hearing perceives as being identical to human

voices. I hear them as kind or angry voices, strong or weak, joyful or sad, as if one spoke very close to me. The « second voice », instead, is like a light, an intuition that speaks in my spirit. « In » not « to » my spirit. It is an indication.

So, while I was approaching the group of the disputant parties and I did not know who was the illustrious personage who was disputing so heatedly beside an old man, this internal " something" said to me: "Gamaliel - Hillel". Yes. First Gamaliel and then Hillel. I have no doubt about it. While I was wondering who they were, the internal monitor pointed out the third unpleasant individual to me, just as Gamaliel was calling him by name. And I was thus able to learn who was the man with the pharisaic appearance.

Today this internal monitor makes me understand that I was seeing the universe after its death. The same happens many times in visions. It is this monitor who makes me understand certain details which I would not be able to grasp by myself and which are necessary for comprehension. I do not know whether I have made myself clear.

But I am stopping because Jesus is beginning to speak. […]

22nd February 1944.

Jesus says:

« Little John, be patient. There is something else. And let us do it to please your spiritual Director and complete the work. I want this work to be handed in tomorrow: Ash Wednesday. I want you to complete this task because… I want you to suffer with Me.

Let us go back, far back. Let us go back to the Temple where I, a twelve year old boy, am disputing. Nay, let us go back to the roads which take one to Jerusalem and from Jerusalem to the Temple.

See Mary's distress, when She realised, after the groups of men and women had gathered together, that I was not with Joseph.

She does not reproach Her spouse bitterly. Every woman would have done that. You do so for much less, forgetting that man is still the head of the family. But the pain that appears on Mary's face pierces Joseph's heart more than any bitter reproach. Mary does not give vent to dramatic outbursts. You do so for much less because you love to be noticed and pitied. But Her repressed sorrow is so obvious: She starts trembling, Her face turns pale, Her eyes are wide open and thus She arouses pity more than any outburst of tears and cries.

She is no longer tired or hungry. And yet the journey was a long one and She has not taken any food for so many hours! But She leaves everything: the bed She was preparing and the food which was ready to be handed out. And She goes back. It is night, it is dark. It does not matter. Every step takes Her back to Jerusalem. She stops the caravans and pilgrims and questions them. Joseph follows Her and helps Her. A long day's walk back to Jerusalem and then the feverish search in town.

Where, where can Her Jesus be? And by God's provision for many hours She will not know where to look for Me. To look for a child in the Temple does not make sense. What could a child be doing in the Temple? At most, if he had got lost in town and his little steps had brought him back there, he would have cried for his mother and thus would have attracted the attention of people and of the priests, who would have taken the necessary steps to find the parents by means of announcements left at the gates. But there

was no announcement. No one in town knew anything of this Child. Beautiful? Blond? Strong? There are so many like that! It is too little to enable anyone to say: "I saw Him. He was there or there"!

Then, after three days, the symbol of three other days of future anguish, Mary, exhausted, enters the Temple, walks along the yards and the halls. Nothing. She runs, the poor Mother, whenever She hears the voice of a child. Even the bleating of the lambs give Her the impression that She hears Her Creature weeping and looking for Her. But Jesus is not weeping. He is teaching. All of a sudden, from beyond the barrier of a large group of people, She hears His voice saying: "These stones will vibrate… " She endeavours to make Her way through the crowd, and succeeds after much effort. There is Her Son, standing in the midst of the doctors with His arms stretched out.

Mary is the Prudent Virgin. But this time anxiety overcomes prudence. It is a hurricane that demolishes everything. She runs to Her Son, embraces Him, lifting Him off the stool and putting Him down on the ground and She exclaims: "Oh! Why have You done this to us? For three days we have been looking for You. Your Mummy is dying with pain, Son. Your father is exhausted with fatigue. Why, Jesus?"

You do not ask "why" of Him Who knows. "Why" He behaved in a certain way. You do not ask those with a vocation "why" they leave everything to follow the voice of God. I was Wisdom and I knew. I was "called" to a mission and I was fulfilling it. Above the earthly father and mother there is God, the Divine Father. His interests are above ours, His affections are superior to everything else. And I tell My Mother.

I finish teaching the doctors with the lesson to Mary, the Queen of doctors. And She has never forgotten it. The sun began to shine again in Her heart now that She had Me, humble and obedient, beside Her, but My words are deeply rooted in Her mind. There will be much sunshine and many clouds will gather in the sky during the next twenty-one years I will still be on the earth. And great joys and many tears will alternate in Her heart during the next twenty-one years. But never again will She ask: "My Son, why have You done this to us?"

Oh, insolent men, learn your lesson.

I directed and enlightened the vision, because you, little John, are not able to do anything further.

Now pay attention to what I say. I want this booklet to be made up as follows:

First sorrow: Presentation in the Temple. Second sorrow: stay in Egypt. Third sorrow: Jesus lost in the Temple. Fourth sorrow: the death of St. Joseph. Fifth sorrow: My departure from Nazareth.

Then the dictation dated 10th February 1944. Sixth sorrow: the description of the vision dated 13th February (4 points: the synagogue, the house in Nazareth, Jesus' sermon in the synagogue, the conversation with His Mother after escaping from Nazareth). Seventh sorrow: the vision dated 14th February. Then the dictation dated 15th February. Then the dictation dated 16th February. Eighth sorrow: the supper at Passover. Ninth sorrow: the Passion, taking the vision dated 11th February 1943 and connecting it with the one dated 18th February. Tenth sorrow: the burial of Jesus (19th February). Then the vision and dictation dated 21st February. Vision and dictation dated 22nd February as far as the point indicated. The other dictation on the finding of Jesus in the Temple is to be put in its place in the third sorrow.

First the Father will make the usual booklet for himself and for you and you will correct it so that there is not even one error in it. Then he will make the copies he wants for other people. Of course each vision is to be accompanied by its dictation. The Father wanted everything for Easter. I wanted it as preparation for Easter and I am having it handed to you today, because it is already 4:30 p.m. of Ash Wednesday, the first day of Lent.

Set to work, children and may you be blessed. And may those be blessed who will accept the gift with simple hearts and faith. The fire which the Father wished today will light up in them. The world will not change in its cruelty. It is too corrupt. But they will be comforted and they will feel the thirst for God, the incentive to holiness, rise within themselves.

Go in peace, little John. Your Jesus thanks you and blesses you. »

42. The Death of Saint Joseph..

5th February 1944, 1:30 p.m.

This vision appears to me imperiously, while I am busy correcting the copy-book, and precisely the dictation on pseudo-religions of present days. I will write it as I see it.

I see the inside of a carpenter's workshop. It looks as if two of the walls are formed by rocks, as if the builders had taken advantage of natural grottos converting them into rooms of a house. Here the northern and western walls are indeed the rocky ones, whereas the other two walls, the southern and eastern ones, are plastered, just like ours.

On the northern side, in the recess of the rock, they have built a rustic fireplace, on which there is a little pot with some paint or glue, I do not know exactly which. The wall there is so black that it seems to be covered with tar, because of the firewood which has been burnt there for many years. A hole in the wall, with a big large tile on top of it, takes the place of a chimney for letting out

the smoke. But it must have performed its duty very badly, because the other walls have also been blackened by the smoke, and even now there is a smoky mist all over the room.

Jesus is working at a large carpentry bench. He is planing some boards which He then rests against the wall behind Him. He then takes a kind of stool, clamped on two sides by a vice, He frees it from the vice, and He looks to see whether the job is perfect, He examines it from every angle, He then goes to the chimney, takes the little pot and stirs the contents with a little stick or brush, I am not sure; I can only see the part protruding from the pot and which is like a little stick.

Jesus is wearing a rather short tunic, the colour of which is dark hazelnut: the sleeves are rolled up to His elbows, and He is wearing a kind of apron on which He wipes His fingers after touching the little pot.

He is by Himself. He works diligently, but peacefully. No abrupt or impatient movement. He is precise and constant in His work. Nothing annoys Him: neither a knot in the wood which will not be planed, nor a screwdriver (I think it is a screwdriver) which falls twice from the bench, nor the smoke floating in the room which must irritate His eyes.

Now and again He raises His head and looks towards the southern wall, where there is a closed door, and He listens. At a certain moment He opens a door which is on the eastern side and opens on to the road, and He looks out. I can see a small portion of the dusty little road. He seems to be waiting for someone. He then goes back to His work. He is not sad, but very serious. He closes the door again and goes back to work.

While He is busy making something, which I think is part of a wheel, His Mother comes in. She comes in by the southern door. She rushes towards Jesus. She is dressed in dark blue and is bareheaded. Her simple tunic is held tight at Her waist by a cord of the same colour. She is worried when She calls Her Son, and leans with both Her hands on His arm in an attitude of prayer and sorrow. Jesus caresses Her, passing His arm over Her shoulder and comforts Her. He leaves His work, takes His apron off and goes out with Her.

I suppose you would like to know the exact words they said. Very few were spoken by Mary: « Oh! Jesus! Come, come. He is very ill! » They are uttered with trembling lips and tears shining in Her reddened and tired eyes. Jesus says only: « Mother! » but that word means everything.

They go into the adjoining room, full of bright sunshine coming from a door open onto the little kitchen garden, which is also full of light and green, and where doves are fluttering around near the clothes hanging out to dry and blowing in the wind. The room is

poor but tidy. There is a low bed, covered with small mattresses, (I say mattresses because they are thick and soft things, but the bed is not like ours). On it leaning on many cushions, there is Joseph. He is dying. It is obvious from the livid paleness of his face, his lifeless eyes, his panting chest, and the total relaxation of all his body.

Mary goes to his left-hand side, takes his wrinkled hand now livid near its nails, rubs it, caresses it, kisses it, She dries with a small piece of cloth the perspiration that forms shiny lines at his temples; She wipes a glassy tear in the comer of his eye; She moistens his lips with a piece of linen dipped into a liquid which I think is white wine.

Jesus goes to his right-hand side. He lifts quickly and carefully the body which has sunk, He straightens him onto the cushions which He then adjusts together with Mary. He caresses the forehead of the dying man and endeavours to encourage him.

Mary is weeping softly, without any noise, but She is weeping. Her large tears run down Her pale cheeks, right down to Her dark blue dress, and they look like bright sapphires.

Joseph recovers somewhat, and stares at Jesus, he takes His hand as if he wanted to say something and also to receive strength, for the last trial, from the divine contact. Jesus bends over that hand and kisses it. Joseph smiles. He then turns round and with his eyes he looks for Mary and smiles also at Her. Mary kneels down near the bed endeavouring to smile. But She does not succeed and She bends Her head. Joseph lays his hand on Her head with a chaste caress that looks like a blessing.

Only the fluttering and cooing of the doves, the rustling of the leaves, the warbling of the water can be heard outside, and the breathing of the dying man in the room.

Jesus goes round the bed, takes a stool and makes Mary sit on it, once again calling Her simply: « Mother ». He then goes back to His place and takes Joseph's hand into His own once again. The scene is so real that I can't help crying because of Mary's pain.

Then Jesus bending over the dying man, whispers a psalm. I know it is a psalm, but just now I cannot tell which one.

It begins thus: « "Look after me, o Lord, because I hoped in You…

In favour of his friends who live on his earth he has accomplished all my wishes in a wonderful way…

I will bless the Lord Who is my advisor…

The Lord is always before me. He is on my right-hand side that I may not fall.

Therefore my heart exults and my tongue rejoices and also my body will rest in hope.

Because You will not abandon my soul in the dwelling place of the dead, neither will You allow Your friend to see corruption.

You will reveal the path of light to me and will fill me with joy showing me Your face". »

Joseph cheers up a little and with a more lively look he smiles at Jesus and presses His fingers.

Jesus replies to the smile with a smile of His own and to the pressure on His fingers with a caress. And still bending over His putative father, He goes on softly: « "How I love your Tabernacles, o Lord.

My soul yearns and pines for the courts of the Lord.

Also the sparrow has found a home and the little dove a nest for its young. I am longing for your Altars, Lord.

Happy those who live in Your house… happy the man who finds his strength in You. He inspired into his heart the ascents from the valley of tears to the chosen place.

O Lord hear my prayer…

O God, turn Your eyes and look at the face of Your Anointed… »

Joseph sobbing, looks at Jesus and makes an effort to speak as if to bless Him. But he cannot. He obviously understands, but has an impediment in his speech. But he is happy and looks at his Jesus with liveliness and trust.

« "Oh! Lord" », goes on Jesus. « "You have favoured Your own country, You brought back the captives of Jacob…

Show us, o Lord, Your mercy and bring us back Your Saviour.

I want to listen to what the Lord is saying to me. He will certainly speak of peace to His people for His friends and for those who convert their hearts to Him.

Yes, His saving help is near… and the glory will live in our country. Love and loyalty have now met, righteousness and peace have now embraced. Loyalty reaches up from the earth and righteousness leans down from Heaven.

Yes, the Lord Himself bestows happiness and our soil gives its harvest. Righteousness will always precede Him and will leave its footprints on the path".

You have seen that hour, father and you have worked for it. You have cooperated in the formation of this hour and the Lord will reward you for it. I am telling you » adds Jesus, wiping a tear of joy which slowly runs down Joseph's cheek.

He then resumes: « "O Lord, remember David and all his kindness.

How he swore to the Lord: I will not enter my house, nor climb into the bed of my rest, nor allow my eyes to sleep, nor give rest to my eyelids, nor peace to my temples until I have found a place for the Lord, a home for the God of Jacob…

Rise, o Lord and come to Your resting place, You and Your Ark of holiness (Mary understands, and She bursts into tears).

May Your priests vest in virtue and Your devote shout for joy.

For the sake of Your servant David, do not deprive us of the face of Your Anointed.

The Lord swore to David and will remain true to His word: 'I will put on your throne the fruit of your womb'.

The Lord has chosen His home…

I will make a horn sprout for David, I will trim a lamp for My Anointed".

Thank you, My father on My-behalf and on behalf of My Mother. You have been a Just father to Me and the Eternal Father chose you as the guardian of His Christ and of His Ark. You have been the lamp trimmed for Him and for the Fruit of the holy womb you have had a loving heart. Go in peace, father. Your Widow will not be helpless. God has arranged that She must not be alone. Go peacefully to your rest. I tell You. »

Mary is crying with Her face bent down on the blankets (they look like mantles) which are stretched on Joseph's body, which is now getting cold. Jesus hastens to comfort him because he is breathing with great difficulty and his eyes are growing dim once again.

« "Happy the man who fears the Lord and joyfully keeps His commandments…

His righteousness will last for ever.

For the upright He shines like a lamp in the dark, He is merciful, tender-hearted, virtuous…

The just man will be remembered for ever. His justice is eternal and his power will rise and become a glory… "

You, father, will have that glory. I will soon come to take you, with the Patriarchs who have preceded you, to the glory which is waiting for you. May your spirit rejoice in My word.

"Who lives in the shelter of the Most High, lives under the protection of the God of Heaven".

You live there, o father.

"He rescued me from the snares of fowlers and from rough words.

He will cover you with His wings and under His feathers you will find shelter.

His truth will protect you like a shield and you need not fear the terrors of night…

No evil will come near you because He ordered His angels to guard you wherever you go.

They will support you on their hands so that you may not hurt your foot against stones.

You will tread on lions and adders, you will trample on savage lions and dragons.

Because you have hoped in the Lord, He says to you, o father, that He will free you and protect you.

Because you have lifted your voice to Him, He will hear you, He will be with you in your last affliction, He will glorify you after this life, showing you even now His Salvation". And in future life, He will let you enter, because of the Saviour Who is now comforting you and Who very soon, oh! I repeat it, He will come very soon and hold you in His divine embrace and take you, at the head of all the Patriarchs, where the dwelling place has been prepared for the Just man of God who was My blessed father.

Go before Me and tell the Patriarchs that the Saviour is in the world and the Kingdom of Heaven will soon be opened to them. Go, father. May My blessing accompany you. »

Jesus has raised His voice to reach the heart of Joseph, who is sinking into the mists of death. His end is impending. He is panting very painfully. Mary caresses him, Jesus sits on the edge of the little bed, embraces him and draws to Himself the dying man, who collapses, and passes away peacefully.

The scene is full of a solemn peace. Jesus lays the Patriarch down again and embraces Mary, Who at the last moment, broken-hearted, had gone near Jesus.

Jesus says:

« I exhort all wives who are tortured by pain, to imitate Mary in Her widowhood: to be united to Jesus.

Those who think that Mary's heart did not suffer any afflictions are mistaken. My Mother did suffer. Let that be known. She suffered in a holy way, because everything in Her was holy, but She suffered bitterly.

Those who think that Mary did not love Joseph deeply, only because he was the spouse of Her soul and not of Her flesh, are also mistaken. Mary did love Joseph deeply, and She devoted thirty years of faithful life to him. Joseph was Her father, Her spouse, Her brother, Her friend, Her protector.

Now She felt as lonely as the shoot of a vine when the tree to which it is tied is cut down. It was as if Her house had been struck by thunder. It was splitting. Before it was a unit in which the members supported one another. Now the main wall was missing and that was the first blow to the Family and a sign of the impending parting of Her beloved Jesus.

The will of the Eternal Father Who had asked Her to be a spouse and a Mother, was now imposing upon Her widowhood and separation from Her Creature. But Mary utters, shedding tears, one of Her most sublime remarks: "Yes. Yes, Lord, let it be done to Me according to Your word".

And to have enough strength for that hour, She drew close to Me. Mary was always united to God in the gravest hours of Her life: in the Temple, when She was asked to marry, at Nazareth when She

was called to Maternity, again at Nazareth when shedding the tears of a widow, at Nazareth in the dreadful separation of Her Son, on Calvary in the torture of seeing Me dying.

Learn, you who are crying. Learn, you who are dying. Learn, you who are living to die. Endeavour to deserve the words I said to Joseph. They will be your peace in the struggle of death. Learn, you who are dying, to deserve to have Jesus near you, comforting you. And if you have not deserved it, dare just the same, and call Me near you. I will come. With My hands full of graces and consolation, My Heart full of forgiveness and love, My lips full of words of absolution and encouragement.

Death loses its bitterness if it takes place between My arms. Believe Me. I cannot abolish death, but I can make it sweet for those who die trusting in Me.

Christ, on His Cross, said on behalf of you all: "Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit". He said that in His agony, thinking of your agonies, your terrors, your errors, your fears, your desire for forgiveness. He said it with His Heart pierced by extreme torture, before being pierced by the lance, a torture that was more spiritual than physical, so that the agonies of those who die thinking of Him might be relieved by the Lord and their spirits might pass from death to eternal Life, from sorrow to joy, for ever.

This, My little John, is your lesson for today. Be good and do not be afraid. My peace will always flow into you, through My words and through contemplation. Come. Just think that you are Joseph who has Jesus' chest as a cushion, and Mary as a nurse. Rest between us, like a child in his cradle. »

43. Conclusion of the Private Life.

10th June 1944.

Mary says:

« Before handing in these notebooks, I wish to add My blessing.

Now, only if you wish so, with a little patience, you can have a complete collection of the private life of My Jesus. From the Annunciation to the moment that He leaves Nazareth to start His public life, you have not only the dictations, but also the illustration of the facts that accompanied the family life of Jesus.

The infancy, childhood, adolescence and youth of my Son are only briefly mentioned in the vast picture of His life as described in the Gospels. There He is the Master. Here He is the Man. He is the God Who humiliates Himself for the sake of man. And He works miracles also in the humility of a common life. He works them in Me, because I feel that My soul reaches perfection by the contact with My Son Who is growing in My womb. He works them in the house of Zacharias by sanctifying the Baptist, by helping the

labour of Elizabeth and by giving speech and faith back to Zacharias. He works them in Joseph opening his spirit to the light of such a sublime truth which he could not understand by himself, although he was just. And after Me, Joseph is the most blessed by this shower of divine gifts.

Consider how much progress he makes, I mean spiritual progress, from the moment he comes into My house to the moment of the flight into Egypt. At the beginning he was but a just man of his times. Then by successive steps, he becomes the just man of Christian times. He acquires faith in Christ and he relies so securely on that faith that from the sentence he pronounced at the beginning of the journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem: "What shall we do?", a sentence which reveals the whole man with his human fears and his human worries, he passes on to hope. In the grotto, before the birth, he says: "It will be better tomorrow". Jesus Who is approaching already fortifies him with this hope which is one of the most magnificent gifts of God. And from this hope, when he is sanctified by

the contact with Jesus, he progresses on to daring. He always wanted to be guided by Me because of the venerable respect he felt for Me. Now he manages himself both spiritual and material matters, and as head of the Family, he decides when there is a decision to be taken. Not only, but in the painful hour of our flight, after that months of union with the Divine Son had filled him with holiness, it is he who comforts My affliction and says to Me: "Even if we should have nothing else, we shall always have everything, because we shall have Him".

My Jesus works His miracles of grace in the shepherds. The Angel goes where the shepherd is, whom a fleeting meeting with Me predisposes to Grace and leads him to Grace that he may be saved by It for eternal life.

He works them wherever He passes, both when in exile and when He came back to His little country in Nazareth. Because wherever He was, holiness spread out like oil on a linen fabric and the perfume of flowers in the air, and whoever was affected, if he was not a demon, became eager for holiness. Wherever this eagerness is, there is the root of eternal life, because who wants to be good will reach goodness and goodness leads to the Kingdom of God.

You have now the holy Humanity of My Son, seen through details which reflect different moments, from the beginning to the end. And if Father M. deems it useful, he can collect the various episodes into a unit in an orderly way, without any gap.

We could have given you everything in one lot. But Providence decided that it was better so. For your sake, My dear-soul. With every dictation we have given you the medicine for the wounds which were to be inflicted on you. We gave it to you in advance, in

order to prepare you. During a hailstorm nothing seems capable of protecting you. But it is not so. Humanity, which is sleeping buried under spiritual waters, is made to surface by the storm, which brings to the surface also the gems of a supernatural doctrine. Those gems had fallen into your hearts and are just waiting for the storm so that they may appear on the surface again and say to you: "We are here as well. Do not forget us".

Further, My dear soul, this procedure was not only the design of Providence, it was based also on kindness. In your present dejection, how could you have watched certain visions and listened to certain dictations? They would have wounded you to the extent of making you unable to carry out your mission of "mouthpiece". So we gave them first, avoiding to break your heart, because we are kind, and we used visions and words suitable to your sufferings, so that your grief would not grow into torture. Because we are not cruel, Mary. And we always act so that you may receive solace from us, not dismay and increased sorrow. All we need is that you trust us. It is enough if you say with Joseph: "If Jesus is left with me, I have everything" and we will come with heavenly gifts to comfort your spirits.

I do not promise you human gifts or human comfort. I promise you the same consolations as Joseph had: supernatural ones. Because, everybody should know, the gifts of the Wise Men, in the dire necessities of poor refugees, vanished as fast as lightning when we purchased a home and the bare essential household implements necessary for life, and the food which is also essential for life and could be procured only out of that source of income, until such time as we found work.

Jewish communities have always helped one another. But the community gathered in Egypt was formed almost exclusively of persecuted refugees, who therefore were almost as poor as we, who had come to join them. And a little share of that wealth, which we were anxious to keep for our Jesus when adult, and we had spared out of the expenses for settling in Egypt, was most useful for our return and just sufficient to reorganise our house and the workshop in Nazareth upon our return. Because times change, but human greed is always the same and it takes advantage of other people's necessities to suck its part in the most exorbitant way.

No. The fact that we had Jesus with us did not procure us any material wealth. Many amongst you expect that, when they are hardly united to Jesus. They forget what He said: "Set your hearts on things of the spirit". All the rest is unnecessary. God provides also food. For men as well as for birds. Because He knows that you need food while your flesh is the tabernacle of your soul. But first of all ask for His grace. First of all ask for things for your spirit. The rest will be given to you in addition.

All Joseph had from his union with Jesus, from a human point of view, were worries, fatigue, persecutions, starvation. He had nothing else. But as he aimed only at Jesus, all this was turned into spiritual peace and supernatural joy. I would like to take you to the point where My Spouse was when he said: "Even if we should have nothing else, we shall always have everything, because we have Jesus".

I know, your heart is broken. I know, your mind is becoming obscured. I know, your life is wasting away. But, Mary!… Do you belong to Jesus? Do you want to belong to Him? Where, how did Jesus die? My dear child, weep, but persevere bravely. Martyrdom does not consist of the form of torture, but in the constancy with which the martyr endures it. Thus death from a weapon is martyrdom and likewise moral grief is martyrdom, if it is suffered for the same purpose. You are suffering for My Son's sake. Whatever you do for your brothers is still love for Jesus Who wants them to be saved. Thus your suffering is martyrdom. Persevere in it. Do not wish to do anything by yourself. The pressure of pain is too severe and thus it is not possible for you to have sufficient strength to be your own guide and control your human nature preventing it from weeping: all you need do is to let grief torture you without rebelling against it. It is enough for you to say to Jesus: "Help me!" What you cannot do, He will do in you. Remain in Him, always in Him. Do not wish to come out of Him. If you do not want, you will not come out and even if your sorrow is so deep as to prevent you from seeing where you are, you will always be in Jesus.

I bless you. Say with Me: "Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit". Let it always be your cry, until you will repeat it in Heaven. May the grace of the Lord always be with you. »

THE FIRST YEAR OF THE PUBLIC LIFE

44. Farewell to His Mother and Departure from Nazareth.

9th February 1944, 9:30 a.m.

(begun during Holy Communion)

I see the interior of the house in Nazareth: a room which looks like a dining lounge, where the members of the Family take their meals and rest during the day. It is a very small room with a plain rectangular table near a chest, which is set against one of the walls. The chest also serves as a seat. Near the other walls there is a loom and a stool, and there are two more stools with a kind of bookcase on top of which there are oil lamps and other objects. A door is open onto the kitchen garden. It must be almost evening, because only some faint sun-rays are visible in the upper foliage of a tall tree, which is beginning to grow verdant in its first leaves.

Jesus is sitting at the table. He is eating, and Mary is serving Him, coming and going from a little door, which leads into the room where there is a fireplace, the light of which can be seen through the half-open door.

Two or three times Jesus tells Mary to sit down… and to eat with Him. But She does not want to, She shakes Her head, smiling sadly. After serving some boiled vegetables as a first course, She brings in some roast fish and then some rather soft cheese, like fresh cheese, round shaped, like the stones which can be seen in the beds of torrents, and some small dark olives. Some small, flat round loaves of bread - about the size of a plate - are already on the table. The bread is rather dark brown as if the bran had not been removed from the flour. Before Jesus there is an amphora with water, and a goblet. He is eating in silence, looking at His Mother sadly, but lovingly.

It is very obvious that Mary is sad at heart. She comes and goes, purely to occupy Herself. Although it is still daylight, She lights a lamp and puts it near Jesus, and while stretching out Her arm doing so, She subtly caresses Her Son's head. She then opens a nutbrown haversack, which I think is made of pure hand-woven wool, and therefore water-resistant, She searches inside it, goes out into the little kitchen garden, walks to the far end, where there is a kind of store-room. She comes out with some rather withered apples which have certainly been preserved from the previous summer, and She puts them into the haversack. She then takes a loaf of bread and a piece of cheese and puts them also into the haversack, although Jesus remarks that He does not want them, as there is already enough food in the satchel.

Mary then comes once again near the table, at the shorter side, on Jesus' left hand, and looks at Him eating. She looks at Him with love and adoration. Her face is more pale than usual and seems aged by pain; Her eyes are ringed, and thus seem bigger, an indication of tears already shed. They also seem clearer than normal, as if they were washed by the tears welling up within, ready to stream down Her face: two sorrowful tired eyes.

Jesus, Who is eating slowly, evidently against His will, only to please His Mother, and is more pensive than usual, lifts His head and looks at Her. Their eyes meet, and He notices that Hers are full of tears, and lowers His head to leave Her free to weep. He only takes Her slender hand which She is resting on the edge of the table. He takes it in His own left hand, lifts it to His cheek, rests His cheek on it and then rubs it against His face to feel the caress of the poor trembling little hand, which He kisses on its back with so much love and respect.

I see Mary taking Her free hand, Her left one, to Her mouth, as if to stifle a sob, and She then wipes with Her fingers a big tear, which has fallen from Her eye and is streaming down Her face.

Jesus resumes eating and Mary goes out quickly into the kitchen garden, where it is now almost dark, and She disappears. Jesus leans His left elbow on the table, rests His forehead on His hand, absorbed in thought. He stops eating.

He then listens and gets up. He also goes out into the kitchen garden, and after looking around, He moves towards the right-hand side of the house, and through an opening in the rocky wall, He goes into what I recognise as the carpenter's workshop. It is now very tidy, without any boards or shavings lying about, and also the fire is out. There is the large working bench, all the tools are laid aside, and there is nothing else.

Mary is weeping, bent over the bench. She looks like a child. Her head is resting on Her folded left arm and She is crying silently, but very grievously. Jesus enters quietly and approaches Her so softly, that She realises He is there, only when He lays His hand on Her lowered head, calling Her « Mother! »: in His voice there is the sound of a gentle loving reproach.

Mary lifts Her head and looks at Jesus through a veil of tears, and with both hands joined She leans on His right arm. Jesus wipes Her face with the hem of His large sleeve and then He embraces Her, clasping Her to His heart and kissing Her forehead. Jesus is majestic, He looks more manly than ever, whilst Mary looks more like a little girl, except for Her sorrow-stricken face.

« Come, Mother » Jesus says to Her, and holding Her close to Himself with His right arm, He walks into the kitchen garden, where they sit down on a bench against the wall of the house. The kitchen garden is now silent and dark, apart from the moonlight and the light coming from the house. The night is serene.

Jesus is speaking to Mary. At first I do not understand the words which are just whispered, and Mary nods Her head in assent.

Then I hear: « And get Your relatives to come. Don't stay here alone. I will be happier, Mother, and You know how I need peace of mind to fulfill My mission. You will not lack My love. I will come quite often and I will inform You in case I cannot come home when I am back in Galilee. Then You will come to Me, Mother. This hour was to come. It began when the Angel appeared to You; it is now striking, and we must live it, Mother, must we not? After we have overcome the trial, we shall have peace and joy. First, we must cross this desert as our Ancestors did, before entering the Promised Land. But the Lord God will help us as He helped them. And He will grant us His help as a spiritual manna to nourish our souls in the difficult moment of the trial. Let us say the Our Father together… » Jesus and Mary stand up and they look up to Heaven: two living victims shining in the darkness.

Jesus, slowly but with a clear voice, says the Lord's Prayer, stressing the words. He emphasizes the words: « Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done » spacing the two sentences from the others. He prays with His arms stretched out, not exactly crosswise, but as priests do when they say: « The Lord be with your. » Mary's hands are joined.

They then go back into the house, and Jesus, Whom I have never seen drink wine, from out of an amphora on the bookcase, pours some white wine into a goblet, and He puts it on the table. He then takes Mary by Her hand and makes Her sit beside Him and drink some of the wine, into which He dips a small slice of bread, which He gives Her to eat. His insistence is such that Mary yields. Jesus drinks the remaining wine. He then clasps His Mother to His side, and holds Her thus close to His heart. Neither Jesus nor Mary was lying down as was customary in rich banquets in those times, but they were sitting at the table as we do. They are both silent, waiting. Mary caresses Jesus' right hand and His knees, Jesus pats Mary's arm and Her head.

Then Jesus rises, and so does Mary. They embrace and kiss each other very fondly and repeatedly. They always seem to be on the point of separating and parting, but each time Mary embraces Her Creature over and over again. She is Our Lady, but She is still a mother, a mother who must part from Her Son, and is fully aware of the final destination of His departure. Do not tell me that Mary did not suffer! Before I had some slight misgivings, now I do not believe it at all.

Jesus takes His dark blue mantle, puts it on His shoulders, and Pulls the hood on to His head. He arranges His haversack across His back, in order to be free when walking. Mary helps Him, and She delays endlessly in sorting His tunic, mantle and hood, caressing Him in the meantime.

Jesus goes towards the door, after making a sign of blessing in the room. Mary follows Him and at the open door they kiss each other once again.

The road is silent and solitary, white in the moonlight. Jesus starts walking away. He turns round twice to look at His Mother, Who is leaning against the doorpost, paler than the moon's rays, Her eyes sparkling with silent tears. Jesus moves farther and farther away along the narrow white road. Mary is still weeping against the doorpost. Then Jesus disappears round a bend of the road.

His Evangelical journey, which will end on Golgotha, has just begun. Mary goes into the house shedding tears and closes the door. She also has started Her journey which will take Her to Golgotha. And for us…

Jesus says:

« This is the fourth sorrow of Mary, Mother of God. The first, was the presentation in the Temple; the second, the flight into Egypt; the third, the death of Joseph; the fourth, My separation from Her.

As I knew the desire of your spiritual Father, yesterday evening I told you that I will hasten the description of "our" sorrows, so that they may be known. But, as you see, some of My Mother's had already been illustrated. I explained the flight before the Presentation, because it was necessary to do so on that day. I know. You understand and you will explain the reason to the Father verbally.

I have planned to alternate your contemplations and My consequent clarifications, with true and proper dictations, to comfort you and your spirit, granting you the beatitude of seeing, and also because in this way the difference in style between your composing and Mine will be obvious.

Further, with so many books dealing with Me and which, after so many revisions, changes and fineries have become unreal, I want to give those who believe in Me a vision brought back to the truth of My mortal days. I am not diminished thereby, on the contrary I am made greater in My humility, which becomes substantial nourishment for you, to teach you to be humble and like Me, as I was a man like you and in My human life I bore the perfection of a God. I was to be your Model, and models must always be perfect.

In the contemplations I will not keep a chronological order corresponding to that of the Gospels. I will select the points which I find more useful on that day for you or for other people, following My own line of teaching and goodness.

The lesson of the contemplation of My separation is addressed especially to those parents and children, whom God's will calls to renounce one another for the sake of a greater love. It also applies to all those who have to face a painful renouncement.

How many such sorrowful situations you find in your lives! They are thorns on the earth and they pierce your hearts, I know. But for those who accept them with resignation - mind, I am not saying: "for those who wish them and accept them with joy", which is already perfection; I am saying: "with resignation" - they become eternal roses. But only few people resign themselves to accepting them. Like restive little donkeys, you recalcitrate against the Father's will, and you jib, and you even try at times to hit good God with spiritual kicks and bites, that is, with rebellion and blasphemy.

And do not say: "I had but this good thing and God took it away. I had but this affection, and God took it away!". Also Mary, a gentle woman, with perfect love, (because in the Virgin Full of Grace also affections and sensations were perfect), also Mary had but one good thing, and one love on the earth: Her Son. The only thing left to Her. Her parents had died a long time before. Joseph had died some years earlier. Only I was left to love Her and make Her feel She was not alone. Her relatives, because of Me, of Whose divine origin they were not aware, were somewhat hostile to Her, because they considered Her a mother incapable of imposing Herself on Her Son, Who did not behave according to good common sense, and turned down marriage proposals which could bring prestige to the family, as well as material help.

Her relatives reasoned according to common sense, to human sense - you call it good sense, but it is only human sense, that is selfishness - and they would have liked My life to comply with their usage. After all, they were always afraid that one day they might get into trouble because of Me, as I had already dared express certain ideas which they considered too idealistic and thought they might irritate the Synagogue. Hebrew history was full of teachings on the fate of Prophets. The Prophet's mission was not an easy one, and often brought about death for the prophet and trouble for his kinsfolk. And there was always the fear that one day they might have to take care of My Mother.

They were therefore irritated by the fact that She did not oppose Me in anything, nay, She seemed to be in perpetual adoration in front of Her Son. This conflict was to increase in the three years of My public life, when it culminated with open reproaches every time they met Me in the midst of crowds and were ashamed of what they considered My mania for vexing the powerful classes. And they rebuked Me and My poor Mother!

Mary was aware of the moods of Her relatives and was able to foresee their future tempers - they were not all like James, Judas and Simon or their mother Mary of Clopas - but although She knew what Her lot was going to be during the three years of My Public life, and was aware of Her destiny and Mine at the end of the three years, She did not recalcitrate, as you do. She cried. And which mother would not have cried because of the separation from a son who loved her as I loved Mine, or because of the prospect of long days devoid of My presence in a solitary house, or because of the dreary outlook of a Son doomed to butt against the malice of guilty people who took vengeance for their guilt by offending the Blameless One to the extent of killing Him?

She cried because She was the Co-Redeemer, and because She was the Mother of mankind who were being born once again to God. And She had to cry for all the mothers who are not able to turn their motherly sorrows into a crown of eternal glory.

How many mothers there are in the world, from whose arms death snatches their creatures! How many mothers there are, whose sons are torn away from their sides by a supernatural will! As the Mother of all Christians, Mary cried for all Her daughters, and in Her sorrow of a bereft Mother, She cried for all Her sisters. And She cried for all Her sons, who, born of woman, were to become apostles of God or martyrs for God's sake, because of their loyalty to God or because of man's cruelty.

My Blood and My Mother's tears are the mixture that fortifies those destined to a heroic fate, obliterates their imperfections and the sins they committed because of their weakness and, in addition to martyrdom, in whatever way suffered, it grants them the peace of God and then the glory of Heaven, if they suffered for God.

The missionary fathers find that mixture to be a flame that warms them in the regions covered by perpetual snow, and they find it to be a dew when the sun is scorching. Mary's tears originate 'from Her charity, and they gush out from Her heart of a lily. They therefore possess the fire of virginal Charity, the Spouse of Love, and the scented freshness of virginal Purity, like the drops of water which gather in the chalice of a lily on a dewy night.

Our mixture is found by those consecrated in the desert of a well understood monastic life: it is a desert because it only lives in communion with God, whilst all other affections fade away and become pure supernatural charity: towards relatives, friends, superiors and inferiors.

It is found by those consecrated to God in the world, in the world that neither understands nor loves them, a desert also for them, as they live in it as if they were alone, so much are they misunderstood and mocked for My sake.

Our mixture is found by My dear "victims", because Mary is the first victim for Jesus' love, and with Her hands of a Mother and a Doctor, She gives Her followers Her tears which refreshen and urge to a greater sacrifice. Holy tears of My Mother!

Mary prays. She does not object to praying because God had given Her sorrows. Remember that. She prays together with Jesus. She prays the Father: Ours and yours.

The first "Our Father" was said in the kitchen garden in Nazareth to console Mary's pain, to offer "our" wills to the Eternal Father, when a period of greater and greater sacrifices was about to begin for us, culminating with the sacrifice of My life and My Mother's acceptance of the death of Her Son.

And although we had nothing for which the Father should forgive us, just out of humility, we, the Faultless Ones, begged the Father's pardon that we might proceed worthily in our mission, after being forgiven and absolved of even a sigh. Because we wanted to teach you that the more you are in the grace of God, the more your mission is blessed and fruitful. We also wanted to teach you to respect God and be humble. Before God the Father, although a perfect Man and a perfect Woman, we felt we were nothing and we begged forgiveness. Exactly as we asked for our "daily bread".

Which was our bread? Oh! Not the bread made by the pure hands of Mary and baked in our little oven, for which I had so often prepared bundles of sticks and brushwood. Also that bread is necessary while man is on the earth. But "our" daily bread was to fulfill, day by day, our part of the mission: we begged God to grant us that every day, because to fulfill the mission that God gives us is the joy of "our" day, isn't it, My little John? You also say that a day is lost, as if it did not exist, if the Lord's bounty gives you a day without your mission of sorrow.

Mary prays together with Jesus. It is Jesus Who justifies you, My children. It is I Who make your prayers fruitful and agreeable to the Father. I said: "Anything you ask for from the Father, He will grant in My name", and the Church enhances her prayers saying: "Through Jesus Christ Our Lord".

When you pray, be always united to Me. I will pray for you in a loud voice, drowning your human voices with My voice of Man-God. I will take your prayers in My pierced hands and I will raise them to the Father. They will thus become victims of infinite value. My voice mingled with yours, will rise like a filial kiss to the Father and the purple of My wounds will make your prayers valuable ones. Be in Me if you want to have the Father in you, with you, for you.

You ended the narration saying: "And for us… " and you intended to say: "for us who are so ungrateful to those Two Who have climbed Calvary for us". You were quite right in writing those words. Add them every time I show you one of our sorrows. Let them be like the church bell that rings and calls men to meditate and repent.

It is enough now. Rest. May peace be with you. »

45. Jesus Is Baptised in the Jordan.

3rd February 1944, in the evening.

I see a bare, flat country, without any villages or vegetation. There are no cultivated fields, but a few odd plants are growing here and there in clusters, like vegetable families, where the deep soil is less parched. Imagine that the arid waste land is on my right-hand side, with my back turned to the north, and the harsh area stretches southwards.

On my left instead, I can see a river with very low banks, flowing slowly from north to south. The very slow flowing water makes me understand that there are no falls in the level of the riverbed and that it flows in such a flat country as to form a depression. The movement of the water is just sufficient to avoid the formation of marshes. The river is so shallow that the bottom can be seen: I would say the water is a metre deep, or a metre and a half, at most. It is as wide as the river Arno in the S. MiniatoEmpoli area: about twenty metres. However, I am not good at estimating. And yet its colour is blue with a light green hue near the banks, where on the humid soil, there is a strip of thick green vegetation, very pleasant to look at: the sight of the stony, sandy bleakness of the ground lying before it is, instead, a very monotonous one indeed.

The internal voice, which I told you I hear and tells me what I must take note of and know, is now warning me that I am looking at the Jordan valley. I am calling it a valley, because that is the name used to indicate the place where a river flows, but here it is incorrect to call it so, because a valley presupposes the presence of mountains, but I do not see any mountains in the neighbourhood. In any case, I am near the Jordan, and the waste land on my right is the desert of Judah.

If it is correct to call a desert a place where there are no houses or man's works, it is not so according to our idea of a desert. There are none of the undulating sands of the desert, as we understand it, but only bare ground strewn with stones and rubble, like alluvial grounds after a flood. There are hills in the distance.

And yet, near the Jordan, there is a great peace, something special and unusual, as one often feels on the shores of lake Trasimeno. It is a place which seems to be full of memories of angels' flights and celestial voices. I cannot describe exactly what I feel. But I feel that I am in a place that communicates with my soul.

While I am watching these things, I notice that the right bank of the Jordan (in respect to me) is becoming crowded with people. There are many men dressed in different fashions. Some seem ordinary people, some rich, and there are some who appear to be Pharisees, because their tunics are adorned with fringes and

braids.

In the midst of them, standing on a rock, there is a man whom I recognise at once to be the Baptist, although it is the first time I have seen him. He is speaking to the crowds, and I can assure you that his sermon is not a sweet one. Jesus called James and John « the sons of thunder ». Well then, what should we call this impetuous orator? John the Baptist deserves the names of thunderbolt, avalanche, earthquake, so impetuous and severe he is in his speech and gestures.

He is announcing the Messiah and exhorting the people to prepare their hearts for His coming, eradicating all obstructions and rectifying their thoughts. But it is a violent and harsh speech. The Precursor does not possess the light hand Jesus used to cure the wounds of hearts. He is a doctor who lays the wound bare, scrutinises it and cuts it mercilessly.

While I am listening - I am not repeating the words, because they are related by the Evangelists, but here they are amplified in impetuosity - I see my Jesus proceeding along a path, which is at the edge of the grassy shady strip coasting the Jordan. This rustic road - it is more a path than a road - seems to have been opened by the caravans and the people who throughout years and centuries, passed along it to reach a point where it is easy to wade, because the water is very shallow. The path continues on the other side of the river, and disappears from sight in the green strip of the other bank.

Jesus is alone. He is walking slowly, coming forward, behind the Baptist. He approaches noiselessly and listens to the thundering voice of the Penitent of the desert, as if He also were one of the many who came to John to be baptised and purified for the coming of the Messiah. There is nothing to distinguish Jesus from the others. His clothes are those of common people, but He has the bearing and handsomeness of a gentleman. There is no divine sign discriminating Him from the crowd.

But it would appear that John perceives a special spirituality emanate from Him. He turns round, and at once identifies the source of the emanation. He descends impulsively from the rocky pulpit and moves quickly towards Jesus, Who has stopped a few yards away from the crowd and is leaning against the trunk of a tree.

Jesus and John stare at each other for a moment: Jesus, with His very sweet blue eyes; John with his very severe black flashing ones. Seen from nearby, one is the antithesis of the other. They are both tall - their only resemblance - for all the rest, they differ immensely. Jesus is fair haired. His hair is long and tidy, His face is white ivory, His eyes blue, His garment simple, but majestic. John is hairy: his straight, black hair falls unevenly onto his shoulders, his sparse dark beard covers his face almost completely, but his cheeks, hollowed by fasting, are still noticeable, his feverish eyes are black, his complexion is dark, tanned by the sun and weather-beaten, his body is covered with hairs, he is half-naked in his camel-hair garment, which is tied to his waist by a leather belt and covers his trunk, reaching down to his thin sides, whilst his right side is uncovered and bare, completely weather-beaten. They look like a savage and an angel, seen close together.

John, after scrutinising Him with his piercing eyes, exclaims: « Here is the Lamb of God. How is it that my Lord comes to me? »

Jesus replies calmly: « To fulfill the penitential rite. »

« Never, my Lord. I must come to You to be sanctified, and You are coming to me? »

And Jesus, laying His hand on the head of John, who had bowed down in front of Him, replies: « Let it be done as I wish, that all justice may be fulfilled and your rite may become the beginning of a higher mystery and men may be informed that the Victim is in the world. »

John looks at Him with his eyes sweetened by tears and precedes Jesus towards the bank of the river. Jesus takes off His mantle and tunic, and is left with a kind of pair of short trousers. He then descends into the water, where there is John, who baptises Him, pouring on His head some water from the river by means of a cup, tied to his belt. It looks like a shell or a half pumpkin dried and emptied.

Jesus is really the Lamb. A Lamb in the whiteness of His flesh, in the modesty of His gestures, in the meekness of His look.

While Jesus climbs on to the bank and after putting on His clothes concentrates on praying, John points Him out to the crowd and testifies that he recognised Him by the sign that the Spirit of God had shown him as an infallible means to identify the Redeemer.

But I am enraptured in watching Jesus pray, and I can only see His bright figure against the green of the river bank.

4th February 1944.

Jesus says:

« John did not need any sign for himself. His soul, which had been presanctified in his mother's womb, possessed that penetration of supernatural intelligence which all men would have had, if Adam had not sinned.

If man had persevered in grace, innocence and loyalty to his Creator, he would have seen God through external appearance. In Genesis it is said that God used to speak to the innocent man in an informal way, and that man did not faint hearing His voice, neither was he deceived in discerning it. Such was the destiny of man: to see and understand God exactly as a son does his father. Then man sinned and he no longer dared look at God, he was no longer able to see and understand God. And now he is less and less able to do so.

But John, My cousin John, had been purified from fault, when the Full of Grace lovingly embraced Elizabeth who, after being barren, had become pregnant. The little child had leapt out of joy in her womb, because he felt the scales of sin falling from his soul, as a scab falls off a wound when the latter is healed. The Holy Spirit, Who had made Mary the Mother of the Saviour, started His mission of salvation on that child about to be born, through Mary, the living Tabernacle of Incarnate Salvation: the child was destined to be united to Me not so much by his blood, as by the mission, by which we were like the lips that express a word. John was the lips, I the Word. He was the Precursor both in the Gospel and in martyrdom; I, by means of My divine perfection, made perfect both the Gospel which John had started, and martyrdom, suffered to defend the Law of God.

John did not need any sign. But a sign was necessary for the darkness of spirit of other people. On what would John base his statement, but on an undeniable proof evident to the eyes and ears of backward and dull listeners?

Neither did I need to be baptised. But the wisdom of the Lord had chosen that moment and way for our meeting. And leading John out of his cave in the desert and Me from My home, He united us in that hour to open the Heavens above Me and He descended Himself, a divine Dove, on Him Who was to baptise men with that Dove, and His announcement was heard descending from Heaven, more powerful than the angel's, because it came from My Father: "This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased". So that man should have no excuse or doubt in following or not following Me.

The manifestations of Christ have been numerous. The first, after His Birth, was the Magi's, the second was in the Temple, the third on the bank of the Jordan. Then there was an endless number of them, which I will let you know, because My miracles are manifestations of My divine nature, down to the last ones: My Resurrection and Ascension into Heaven.

My fatherland was full of My manifestations. Like seed scattered to the four winds, they took place in every social condition and place in life: to shepherds, powerful people, scholars, sceptical men, sinners, priests, rulers, children, soldiers, Jews and Gentiles.

And they take place even now. But, as in the past, the world does not accept them. It does not accept the present manifestations and forgets the past ones. Well, I will not give up. I will repeat Myself to save you and to persuade you to have faith in Me.

Do you know, Mary, what you are doing? Or rather, what I am doing, in showing you the Gospel? Making a stronger attempt to bring men to Me. You yearned for it with your fervent prayers. I will no longer confine Myself to words. They tire men and detach them. It is a fault, but it is so. I will have recourse to visions, also of My Gospel, and I will explain them to make them more attractive and clear.

I give you the comfort of seeing them. I give everybody the possibility of wishing to know Me. And if it is of no avail, and like cruel children they should throw away the gift without understanding its value, you will be left with My present, and they with My indignation. I shall be able once again to repeat the old reproach: "We played for you and you would not dance; we sang dirges and you would not weep".

But it does not matter. Let them, the inconvertible ones, heap burning coals on their heads and let us turn to the little sheep seeking to become acquainted with their Shepherd. It is I, and you are the staff leading them to Me. »

As you can see, I have hastened to add these details which, being trifling matters, had escaped my notice, and were wanted by you. Today, reading the booklet, I noticed a sentence which may be a guide for you.

This morning you were saying that you cannot make my descriptions known because of their style and since I am terrified at the very thought of being known, I was very happy about it. But do you not think that that is against what the Master says in the last dictation in the booklet? « The more careful and precise you are (in describing what I see) the greater the number of those who will come to Me. » This implies that the description must be known, otherwise how can there be a number of souls going to Jesus, thanks to them? I am drawing your attention to this point, then you can do what you think is best, because, as far as I am concerned, I am indifferent. Nay, humanly speaking. I share your opinion. But in this case it is not a human matter and also the human side of the mouthpiece must disappear. Also in today's dictation Jesus says: «… in showing you the Gospel I make a stronger attempt to bring men to Me. I will no longer confine Myself to words… I will have recourse to visions and I will explain them to make them more attractive and clear. » So?

In the meantime, as I am a poor nonentity and by myself I retire to myself, I tell you that your remark has upset me, and the Envious One avails himself of the situation: I was so upset that I thought I should no longer describe what I see, but I should write the dictations only. He whispers in my ear: « You can see it yourself! Your famous visions serve no purpose whatsoever, except to make you pass off as mad. Which you really are. What is it that you see? The shams of your agitated mind. It takes much more to deserve to see Heaven! » He has tortured me all day today with his corrosive temptation. I can assure you that I have not suffered so much because of my bitter physical pain as I suffered and am suffering because of this. He wants to drive me mad. This Friday is a Friday of spiritual temptation for me. I am thinking of Jesus in the desert and of Jesus at Gethsemane…

I will not give up as I do not want this cunning demon to laugh, and fighting against him and against my weaker spiritual part, I am writing to you to inform you of my present joy and to assure you that, as far as I am concerned, I should be quite happy if Jesus deprived me of this gift of seeing, which is my greatest joy, providing He continues to love me and have mercy on me.

46. Jesus Is Tempted in the Desert by the Devil.

24th February 1944. Thursday following Ash Wednesday.

I see the solitary land which I already saw on my left-hand side in the vision of Jesus' baptism in the Jordan. But I must be some way inside the desert, because I neither see the beautiful, blue, slow flowing river, nor the green strips of vegetation which coast its banks, and are nourished by its waters. There is nothing here but solitude, stones and such a parched earth that it has become a yellowish dust, raised now and again by the wind in small eddies, which are so hot and dry that they seem to be the breath of a feverish mouth. And they are very troublesome because of the dust penetrating nostrils and throats. There are a very few small thorny bushes, strangely surviving in so much desolation. They look like small forelocks of surviving hair on a bald head. Above, there is a merciless blue sky; below, arid land; around, stones and silence. That is what I see as far as nature is concerned.

Leaning against a huge piece of overhanging rock which, because of its shape, forms a kind of a grotto, there is Jesus sitting on a stone that has been taken into the cave. That is how He protects Himself from the scorching sun. And my internal adviser informs me that the stone, on which He is now sitting, is also His kneeling-stool and pillow, when He takes a few hours rest, enveloped in His mantle, under a starry sky in the chill air of the night. Near Him, there is the haversack which I saw Him take before departing from Nazareth. It is all He has. And from the way it is folded, I realise it has been emptied of the little food Mary had Put into it.

Jesus is very thin and pale. He is sitting with His elbows resting on His knees, His forearms forward, His hands joined and His fingers interlaced. He is meditating. Now and again He looks up and around, then looks at the sun, almost perpendicular in the blue sky. Now and again, particularly after looking around and at the sun, He closes His eyes and leans on the rock sheltering Him, as if He were seized by dizziness.

I see Satan's ugly face appear. He does not show himself in the features we imagine him: horns, tail etc. He looks like a bedouin enveloped in his robe and in a large mantle that resembles a domino. He is wearing a turban on his head and its white flaps fall along his cheeks, down to his shoulders protecting them. Thus only a very small dark triangle of his face can be seen, with thin, sinuous lips, very black hollow eyes, full of magnetic flashes. Two eyes that penetrate and read into the bottom of your heart, but in which you can read nothing, or one word only: mystery. The very opposite of Jesus' eyes, also so magnetic and fascinating, which read in your heart, but in which you can also read that in His heart there is love and bounty for you. Jesus' eyes caress your soul. Satan's are like a double dagger that stabs and burns you.

He approaches Jesus: « Are you alone? »

Jesus looks at him, but does not reply.

« How did You happen to be here? Did You get lost? »

Jesus looks at him again, and is silent.

« If I had water in my flask, I would give You some. But I have none myself. My horse died, and I am now going on foot to the ford. I will get a drink there, and I will find someone who will give me some bread. I know the road. Come with me. I'll take You there. »

Jesus does not even look at him.

« You are not answering? Do You know that if You stay here, You will die? The wind is already beginning to blow. There will be a storm. Come. »

Jesus clenches His hands in silent prayer.

« Ah! It is You, then? I have been looking for You for such a long time! And I have been watching You for so long. Since You were baptised. Are You calling the Eternal? He is far away. You are now on the earth, in the midst of men. And I reign over men. And yet, I feel sorry for You, and I want to help You, because You are so good, and You have come to sacrifice Yourself for nothing. Men will hate You because of Your goodness. They understand nothing, but gold, food and pleasure. Sacrifice, sorrow, obedience are words more arid for them than the land around us here. They are more arid than this dust. Only snakes can hide here, waiting to bite, and jackals waiting to tear to pieces. Come with me. It is not worthwhile suffering for them. I know them better than You do. »

Satan has sat down in front of Jesus and he scrutinises Him with his dreadful eyes, and smiles at Him with his snakelike mouth. Jesus is always silent, and is praying mentally.

« You don't trust me. You are wrong. I am the wisdom of the earth. I can be Your teacher and show You how to triumph. See, the important thing is to triumph. Then, once we have imposed ourselves and we have enchanted the world, then we can take them wherever we want. But first, we must be as they wish us to be. Like them. We must allure them, making them believe that we admire them and follow their thoughts.

You are young and handsome. Start with a woman. One must always start from her. I made a mistake inducing her to be disobedient. I should have advised her differently. I would have turned her into a better instrument, and I would have beaten God. I was in a hurry. But You! I will teach You, because one day I looked at You with angelical joy, and a fraction of that love is still left in me, but You must listen to me, and make use of my experience. Find yourself a woman. Where you do not succeed, she will. You are the new Adam: You must have Your Eve.

In any case, how can You understand and heal the diseases of the senses, if You do not know what they are? Don't You know that that is where the seed is, from which the tree of greediness and arrogance sprouts? Why do men want to reign? Why do they want to be rich and powerful? To possess woman. She is like a lark. She will be attracted only by something sparkling. Gold and power are two sides of the mirror that draw woman, and are the causes of evil in the world. Look: in a thousand different crimes, there are at least nine hundred that take root in the lust of possessing a woman or in the passion of a woman, burning with a desire that man has not yet satisfied, or can no longer satisfy. Go to a woman if You want to know what life is. And only then, You will be able to cure and heal the diseases of mankind.

Women, You know, are beautiful! There is nothing nicer in the world. Man has brains and strength. But woman! Her thought is a perfume, her touch is the caress of flowers, her grace is like wine, pleasant to drink, her weakness is like a hank of silk, or the curl of a child in a man's hand, her caress is a strength which is poured over our own strength, and inflames it. Sorrow, fatigue, worries are forgotten when we lie near a woman, and she is in our arms like a bunch of flowers.

But what a fool I am! You are hungry and I am talking to You of women. Your energy is exhausted. That is why that fragrance of the earth, that flower of creation, the fruit that gives and excites love, seems without any value to You. But look at these stones. How round and smooth they look, gilded by the setting sun! Don't they look like loaves? Since You are the Son of God, all You have to say is: "I want" and they will become sweet-smelling bread, just like the loaves housewives are now taking out of their ovens for the supper of their families. And these arid acacias, if You only Wish so, will they not be filled with sweet fruit and dates as sweet as honey? Eat Your fill, Son of God. You are the Master of the earth. The earth is bowing down to put itself at Your feet and appease Your hunger.

Don't You see that You are turning pale and unsteady at the mention of bread. Poor Jesus! Are You so weak that You cannot even work a miracle? Shall I work it for You? I am not Your equal, but I can do something. I will do without any strength for a whole year, I will gather it all together, but I want to serve You, because You are good, and I always remember that You are my God, even if now I have forfeited calling You so. Help me with Your prayers, that I may… »

« Be quiet! "Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God". »

The devil starts with anger. He grinds his teeth, and clenches his fists. But he controls himself, and turns his grinding into a smile.

« I understand. You are above the necessities of the earth and You are disgusted at making use of me. I deserved it. But come, then, and see what there is in the House of God. You will see how even priests do not refuse to come to a compromise between the spirit and the flesh. After all, they are men, and not angels. Work a spiritual miracle. I will take You up to the pinnacle of the Temple and You will undergo a transfiguration and become most handsome. You will then call the cohorts of angels and will tell them to form a footrest for Your feet with their interlaced wings, and to let You down, thus, into the main yard. So that people may see You, and remember that God exists. One must show oneself now and again, because man's memory is so weak, particularly with regard to spiritual matters. You can imagine how happy the angels will be in forming a protection for Your feet and a ladder for You to descend! »

« It is said: "You must not put the Lord your God to the test". »

« You understand that Your apparition would not change anything and the Temple would continue to be a market full of corruption. Your divine wisdom is aware that the hearts of the ministers of the Temple are nests of vipers, that tear and are torn to pieces for the sake of prevailing. They are subdued only by human power.

Well, then, come. Adore me. I will give You the earth. Alexander, Cyrus, Caesar, all the great rulers, past or present, will be like the leaders of miserable caravans as compared with You, as You shall have the kingdoms of the world under Your sceptre. And with the kingdoms, all the wealth, all the beautiful things on earth, women, horses, armies and temples. You will be able to raise Your Sign everywhere when You are the King of kings and the Lord of the world. You will then be obeyed and respected both by the people and by the priesthood. All classes will honour and serve You, because You will be the Powerful One, the Only One, the Lord.

Adore me for one moment only! Appease this thirst of mine for being worshipped! It ruined me, but it is still left in me, and I am parched by it. The flames of hell are like a fresh morning breeze as compared to this fierce ardour burning inside me. It is my hell, this

thirst. One moment, one moment only, Christ. You are so good! One moment of joy for the eternally Tortured One! Let me feel what it is like to be god, and I will be a devoted, obedient servant for all Your life and all Your enterprises. One instant, one instant only, and I will no longer torture You! » And Satan falls on his knees, imploring.

Jesus, instead, stands up. He has lost weight because of the long days of fast, and He now looks taller. His face is terribly severe and potent. His eyes are two burning sapphires. His voice is like thunder: it reverberates in the cave of the huge stone, and spreads over the stony, desolate plain when He cries: « Be off, Satan. It is written: "You must worship the Lord your God, and serve Him alone ". »

Satan, with a cry of fearful torture and indescribable hatred, springs to his feet, a dreadful sight in his furious, smoky figure. And he disappears with a last cursing yell.

Jesus is tired, and sits down, leaning back with His head resting on the stone. He looks exhausted. He is perspiring. But angels come to blow gently with their wings in the closeness of the cave, thus purifying and refreshing the air. Jesus opens His eyes, and smiles. I do not see Him eat. I would say that He is nourished by the aroma of Paradise, and is reinvigorated by it.

The sun has set in the west. He takes His empty haversack and in the company of the angels who, flying above His head, emit a mild light while it is getting dark very rapidly, He starts walking eastwards, or rather north-eastwards. He has resumed His usual expression, His step is steady. The only remaining sign of His long fast is a more ascetic look on His pale, thin face and in His eyes, enraptured in a joy which does not belong to this world.

Jesus says:

« Yesterday you had no strength, which is My will, and you were, therefore, half-alive. I let your body rest and I made you fast the only way which is burdensome to you: depriving you of My word. Poor Mary! You kept Ash Wednesday. You tasted an ashen flavour in everything because you were without your Master. I did not let you perceive Me, but I was there.

This morning, as our anxiety is reciprocal, when you were half asleep, I whispered to you: "Agnus Dei qui tollis peccata mundi, dona nobis pacem" and I made you repeat it many times and I repeated it to you many times. You thought that I was going to speak about that. No. First there is the subject which I showed you and upon which I will comment for you. Then this evening I will illustrate this other one.

As you have seen, kindness is always Satan's disguise when he presents himself. He looks like an ordinary person. If souls are careful, and above all, if they are in spiritual contact with God, they perceive the warning that makes them cautious and prepares them to fight the devil's snares. But if souls are distracted, separated from God by an overwhelming sensuality, and are not assisted by prayer, which joins them to God and pours strength into the hearts of men, then they seldom perceive the snares hidden under the innocent appearance and they fall into the trap. It is then very difficult for them to free themselves.

The two most common means adopted by Satan to conquer souls are sensuality and gluttony. He always starts from material things. Once he has dismantled and subdued the material side, he attacks the spiritual part.

First the morals: thoughts with their pride and greed; then the spirit, obliterating not only its love - which no longer exists when man replaces divine love with other human loves - but also the fear of God. Then man surrenders his body and soul to Satan, only for the sake of enjoying what he wants, and enjoying it more and more.

You saw how I behaved. Silence and prayer. Silence. Because if Satan performs his work of a seducer and comes round us, we must put up with the situation without any foolish impatience or cowardly fears. We must react with resolution to his presence, and with prayer to his allurements.

It is useless to debate with Satan. He would win, because he is strong in his dialectics. Only God can beat him. And so you must have recourse to God, that He may speak for you, through you. You must show Satan that Name and that Sign, not so much written on paper or engraved on wood, but written and engraved in your hearts. My Name, My Sign. You should answer back to Satan, using the word of God, only when he insinuates that he is like God. He cannot bear that.

Then after the struggle, there comes victory and the angels serve and defend the winner from Satan's hatred. They restore him with celestial dews, with the Grace that they pour with full hands into the heart of the faithful son, with a blessing that caresses his soul.

One must be determined to defeat Satan, and have faith in God, and in His help. Faith in the power of prayer, and in the Lord's bounty. Then Satan can do no harm.

Go in peace. This evening I will gladden you with the remainder. »

47. Jesus Meets John and James.

25th February 1944.

I see Jesus walking along the green strip of vegetation that borders the Jordan. He has gone back to the same place where He was baptised. He is near the ford that apparently was well known and commonly used to cross to the other bank towards Perea. But the place, which was so crowded before, is now deserted. There are only a few travellers, going on foot, or riding donkeys or horses.

Jesus does not seem to be aware of them. He proceeds along His way, northwards, absorbed in His thoughts. When He reaches the ford, He meets a group of men of different ages, who are discussing animatedly, and then they part, some southwards, some northwards.

Amongst those going northwards, I see John and James. John is the first to see Jesus, and he points Him out to his brother and companions. They talk a little amongst themselves, and then John starts walking quickly to reach Jesus. James follows him, walking a little slower. The others do not show any interest. They walk slowly, while discussing.

When John is near Jesus, about two or three metres behind Him, he shouts: « Lamb of God Who takes away the sins of the world! »

Jesus turns round, and looks at him. There are now only a few steps between them. They look at each other: Jesus with His serious, scrutinising look, John with his pure eyes smiling in his beautiful, youthful face, that looks like the face of a girl. He is about twenty years old, and on his rosy cheeks there is only the sign of a blond down, like a golden veil.

« Whom are you looking for? » asks Jesus.

« For You, Master. »

« How do you know I am a Master? »

« The Baptist told me. »

« Well then, why do you call Me Lamb? »

« Because I heard him call You so one day, when You were passing by, just over a month ago. »

« What do you want from Me? »

« I want You to tell us words of eternal life and to comfort us. »

« But who are you? »

« I am John of Zebedee, and this is James, my brother. We are from Galilee, and we are fishermen. But we are also disciples of John. He spoke words of life to us and we listened to him, because we want to follow God, and deserve His forgiveness doing penance and thus prepare our hearts for the coming of the Messiah. You are the Messiah. John said so, because he saw the sign of the Dove descending on You. He said to us: "Here is the Lamb of God". I say to you: Lamb of God Who takes away the sins of the world, give us peace, because we no longer have anyone who may guide us, and our souls are upset. »

« Where is John? »

« Herod has taken him. He is in prison, at Machaerus. The most faithful amongst his disciples have tried to free him. But it is not possible. We are coming from there. Let us come with You, Master. Show us where You live. »

« Come. But do you know what you are asking for? Who follows Me will have to leave everything: his home, his relatives, his way of thinking, also his life. I will make you My disciples and My friends, if you wish so. But I have neither wealth nor protection. I am poor, and I shall be even poorer, to the extent of not having a place where I may rest My head and I will be persecuted by My enemies, even more than a lost sheep is pursued by wolves. My doctrine is even more rigid than John's, because it forbids also resentment. And My doctrine is concerned not so much with external matters, as it is with the soul. You must be re-born if you want to be My disciples. Are you willing to do that? »

« Yes, Master. Only You have words that can give us light. They descend upon us, and where there was darkness and desolation because we had no guide, they shed light and sunshine. »

« Come, then. Let us go. I will teach you on our way. »

Jesus says:

« The crowd that met Me was a large one. But only one recognised Me. He, whose soul, mind and flesh were pure and free from all lewdness.

I insist on the value of purity. Chastity is always the source of clear ideas. Virginity refines and then preserves intellectual and emotional sensitiveness, elevating it to such a perfection that only a virgin can experience.

There are many ways of being a virgin. By compulsion, and this applies particularly to women, when no one ever proposed to them. The same should apply to men. But it does not. And that is bad, because only heads of families, with unhealthy minds and often diseased bodies, can be born of youth soiled with lust before time.

There is wanted virginity, that is the virginity of those who consecrate themselves to the Lord with the ardour of their souls. A beautiful virginity! A sacrifice pleasing to God! But they do not all persist in their purity like lilies which stand upright on their stalks, looking towards Heaven, unaware of the mud on the ground, open to the kisses of God's sun and His dews.

Many are faithful only in a material way. But they are unfaithful in their thoughts, which regret and wish for what they sacrificed. They are virgins only by half. If their flesh is intact, their hearts are not. Their hearts ferment, boil, exhale fumes of sensuality, the more refined and reproved, the more it is the invention of a mind that caresses, nourishes and continually enlarges the images of satisfactions, illicit even for those who are free, more than illicit for those consecrated to God.

Then you have the hypocrisy of the vow. Its appearance is there, its essence is not. And I tell you that between those who come to Me with their lilies broken by the brutality of a tyrant, and those who come with their lilies materially intact, but covered with the slaver of a sensuality they have caressed and cultivated to fill their hours of solitude, I will call "virgins" the former, and "non virgins" the latter. I will give the former the crown of virgins and a double crown of martyrs, because of their flesh which has been wounded and of their hearts which have been ulcerated by a mutilation they did not want.

The value of purity is such that, as you have seen, the first thing Satan was anxious about, was to deceive Me about impurity. He knows very well that sensual sins dismantle the soul and make it an easy prey to other sins. Satan's efforts aimed at this capital point, in order to defeat Me.

Bread, hunger, are the material forms for the allegory of appetite, of the appetites that Satan takes advantage of for his own purpose. The food he offered Me to make Me fall intoxicated at his feet is quite a different thing! Greed would have followed, then avarice, power, idolatry, blasphemy and the abjuration of the divine Law. But that was the first step to catch Me. Exactly as he did to injure Adam.

The world sneers at pure people. Those who are guilty of lewdness strike them. John the Baptist is the victim of the lust of an obscene couple. But if there is still some light in the world, this is due to the pure of the world. They are the servants of God, they understand God and repeat God's words. I said: "Happy the pure in heart, they shall see God". Also in this world: since the fumes of sensuality do not perturb their hearts, they "see" God, they hear Him, they follow Him and they show Him to other people.

John of Zebedee is a pure soul. He is the Pure One amongst My disciples. A soul as beautiful as a flower in an angelical body! He calls Me with the words of his first master and asks Me to give him peace. But he already has peace in his heart because of his purity, and I loved him because of his purity, to which I entrusted My teachings, My secrets, and the most dear Creature I had.

He was My first disciple, who loved Me from the very first instant he saw Me. His soul had melted with Mine from the day he saw Me passing near the Jordan and he saw the Baptist pointing to Me. Even if he had not found Me later, when I came back from the desert, he would have looked for Me until he found Me, because who is pure, is humble and anxious to be taught in the science of God, and like the water that flows to the sea, he goes towards those he knows to be masters in the celestial doctrine. »

Jesus says also:

« I did not want you to speak about the sensual temptation of your Jesus. Even if your internal voice had made you understand Satan's motive in attracting Me towards sensuality, I preferred to speak of it Myself. Think no more about it. It was necessary to mention it. Go on now. Leave Satan's flower on its sands. Follow Jesus as John did. You will be walking among thorns, but as roses you will find the drops of blood of Him Who shed them for you, to defeat the flesh also in you.

I will forestall a remark as well. In his Gospel, John mentioning his meeting with Me says: "And the following day". It would therefore appear that the Baptist pointed Me out the day after My baptism and that John and James followed Me at once. But that conflicts with what the other Evangelists said about the forty days spent in the desert. But you should read as follows: "(John having already been arrested), one day, later, the two disciples of John the Baptist, the ones to whom he had pointed Me out saying: 'Here is the Lamb of God', on seeing Me again, called Me and followed Me". After I had come back from the desert.

And we went back together to the shores of the lake of Galilee, where I had taken shelter to begin evangelising from there, and the two - after being with Me during the whole journey and then for one day in the hospitable house of a friend of My relatives spoke of Me to the other fishermen. But it was the initiative of John, whose will to do penance had made his soul, already so limpid owing to his purity, a masterpiece of pellucidity in which the Truth was clearly reflected, bestowing on him also the holy daring of the pure and generous, who are never afraid of stepping forward, wherever they see that there is God, and truth and doctrine and the way of God. How much I loved him for that simple, heroical feature of his! »

48. John and James Speak to Peter about the Messiah.

12th October 1944.

A most clear dawn over the Lake of Galilee. The sky and the water sparkle with rosy flashes, not very different from the mild ones shining on the walls of the little orchards of the lake-village, where fruit-trees, with their unkempt, luxuriant foliage, seem to rise from the orchards and peep at the little lanes, bending over them.

The village is beginning to awaken: women start going to the fountain or to the washing place, while fishermen unload the baskets of fish, or haggle over prices, in very loud voices, with merchants who have come from other villages, while others carry the fish to their houses. I called it a village, but it is not a very small one. It is rather a modest place, at least what I see of it, but it is quite large and spreads generally along the lake.

John comes out of a little street and goes quickly towards the lake. James follows him, but much more calmly. John looks at the boats which are already on the shore, but cannot see the one he is looking for. He sees it while it is still about one hundred yards from the beach, manoeuvring to enter the harbour, and holding his hands at the sides of his mouth, he shouts at the top of his voice, a long « Oh-e! », which must be their usual call. When he sees that they have heard him, he gesticulates with both his arms, obviously meaning: « Come, come. »

The men in the boat, not knowing what is the matter, lay on the oars, and the boat moves faster than it did with the sail, which they have struck, probably to gain time. When they are about ten metres from the shore, John does not wait any longer. He takes off his mantle and his long tunic, and throws them on the shore, takes off his sandals, lifts his undertunic and holds it with one hand almost against his groin, then goes into the water to meet the boat arriving.

« Why did you two not come? » asks Andrew. Peter, sulkily, does not say one word.

« And why did you not come with me and James? » John replies to Andrew.

« I went fishing. I have no time to waste. You disappeared with that man… »

« I beckoned you to come. It is Him. You should hear His words!… We stayed with Him all day until late at night. We have now come to say to you: "Come". »

« Is it really Him? Are you sure? We only saw Him then, when the Baptist pointed Him out to us. »

« It is Him. He did not deny it. »

« Anyone can say what suits him to impose himself on dupes. It is not the first time… » mumbles Peter, dissatisfied.

« Oh, Simon! Don't say that! He is the Messiah! He knows everything! He hears you » John is grieved and dismayed at Simon Peter's words.

« Sure! The Messiah! And He showed Himself to you, James and Andrew! Three poor ignorant fishermen! The Messiah will need much more than that! And He hears me! Eh! My poor boy. The first sunshine of spring has damaged your brains! Come on, come and do some work. That's much better. And forget such fairy tales! »

« I'm telling you. He is the Messiah! John said holy things, but He speaks of God. Who is not Christ cannot speak such words. »

« Simon, I am not a boy. I am old enough and I am composed and thoughtful. You know that. I did not speak much, but I listened a lot during the hours we spent with the Lamb of God and I can tell you that really He can but be the Messiah! Why don't you believe? Why do you not want to believe? You may not believe, because you have not heard Him. But I believe Him. We are poor and ignorant? Well, He says that He has come to announce the Gospel of the Kingdom of God, of the Kingdom of peace, to the poor, humble and little ones before the great ones. He said: "The great ones already have their delights. They are not enviable delights when compared with the ones I have come to bring you. The great ones are already capable of understanding by means of their culture. But I have come to the 'little' ones of Israel and of the world, to those who weep and hope, to those who seek Light and are hungry for the real Manna, to whom learned men do not give light and food, but only burdens, darkness, chains, contempt. And I call the 'little ones'. I have come to turn the world upside down. Because I will lower what is now held high, and I will raise what is now held in contempt. Let those who want the truth and peace, who want eternal life, come to Me. Those who love Light, let them come to Me. I am the Light of the world". Did He not say that, John? » James has spoken in a calm, gentle voice.

« Yes, and He said: "The world will not love Me. The great world will not love Me, because it is corrupted by vices and idolatry. Nay, the world will not want Me, because as it is the offspring of Darkness, it does not love the Light. But the earth is not made only of the great world. There are on it also those who, mixed with the world, are not of the world. There are people who are of the world because they have been imprisoned in it, like fish in a net". He said exactly that, because we were speaking on the shore of the lake and He was pointing to some nets which were being dragged to the shore with fish in them. Nay, He said: "See. None of those fish wanted to be

caught in the net. Also men, intentionally, would not like to fall prey to Mammon. Not even the most wicked who, blinded by pride, do not believe they have no right to do what they do. Their real sin is pride. All the other sins grow from it. Those who are not completely wicked, would like even less to fall prey to Mammon. But they fall because of their frivolity and because of a weight that drags them to the bottom, and which is Adam's sin. I have come to remove that sin, and while awaiting the hour of Redemption, to give those who believe in Me a strength such that will enable them to free themselves from the snares that trap them and will make them free to follow Me, the Light of the world". »

« Well then, if He said that, we must go to Him at once. » Peter, with his impulsiveness, which is so genuine and I like so much, has decided at once, and is already acting accordingly, hastening to unload the boat which has already reached the shore: the

fishermen have almost beached it, unloading nets, ropes and sails. « And you, silly Andrew, why did you not go with them?!… »

« But… Simon! You reproached me because I did not persuade them to come with me… You have been grumbling all night, and now you rebuke me because I did not go?! »

« You are right… But I did not see Him… you did… and you must have seen that He is not like us… He must have something compelling!… »

« Oh! Yes. » John says. « His face! His eyes! What beautiful eyes, aren't they, James?! And His voice!… Oh! What a voice! When He speaks, you seem to be dreaming of Heaven. »

« Quick, quick. Let's go and see Him. And you, (addressing the other fishermen) take everything to Zebedee and tell him to do as he thinks best. We will be back this evening in time to go fishing. »

They all get dressed and set out. But Peter, after a few yards stops and gets hold of John's arm and asks him. « Did you say that He knows everything, and hears everything?… »

« Yes, I did. Just think that when we saw the moon high up in the sky, I said: "I wonder what Simon will be doing now", and He said: "He is casting his net and he cannot set his mind at rest because he has to do it all by himself, since you did not go out with the twin boat in such a good evening for fishing… he does not know that before long he will be fishing with different nets and catching different fish". »

« Holy Mercy! It's true! Well, He will also have heard… also that I called Him little less than a liar… I can't go to Him! »

« Oh! He is so good. He certainly knows what you thought. He already knew. Because when we left Him saying that we were coming to you, He said: "Go. But don't let the first words of contempt discourage you. Who wants to come with Me must be able to make headway against the sneering words of the world and the prohibitions of relatives. Because I am above blood and society, and I triumph over them. And who is with Me will also triumph for ever". And He also said: "Don't be afraid to speak. The man who hears will come, because he is a man of good will". »

« Is that what He said? Well, I'll come. Speak, speak of Him, while we are going. Where is He? »

« In a poor house; they must be His friends. »

« Is He poor? »

« A workman from Nazareth. So He said. »

« And how does He live now, if He does not work any longer? »

« We did not ask Him. Perhaps His relatives help Him. »

« It would have been better if we had brought some fish, some bread and fruit… something. We are going to consult a rabbi, because He is like… He is more than a rabbi, and we are going empty-handed! Our rabbis don't like that… »

« But He does. We had but twenty pennies between us, James and I, and we offered Him them, as is customary with rabbis. He did not want them. But since we insisted so much, He said: "May God reward you with the blessings of the poor. Come with Me" and He gave them to some poor people: He knew where they lived. And when we asked Him: "Master, are You not keeping anything for Yourself?" He replied: "The joy of doing the will of God and serving His glory". We also said: "You are calling us, Master. But we are all poor. What shall we bring You?", He replied with a smile which made us enjoy the delights of Paradise: "I want a great treasure from you", and we said: "But we have nothing". And He answered: "A treasure with seven names, which even the poorest may have, while the rich may not possess it. You have it, and I want it. Listen to the names: charity, faith, good will, right intention, continence, sincerity, spirit of sacrifice. That is what I want from My followers, only that, and You have it. It is dormant, like a seed under a winter clod, but the spring sunshine will make it sprout into a sevenfold spike". That is what He said. »

« Ah! Now I feel that He is the true Rabboni, the promised Messiah! He is not harsh with the poor, He does not ask for money… It is enough to call Him the Holy Man of God. We can go safely. »

And it all ends.

49. First Meeting of Peter and the Messiah.

13th October 1944.

With my soul dejected by too many things, I am praying to receive illumination. And I am led to chapter 12 of the Epistle to the Hebrews and the strength of my spirit is really reinvigorated and once again I have the energy « to listen ». In fact when I am oppressed by so many things, I feel like saying: « I do not want to do anything any more. An ordinary life, an ordinary life at all costs. » But I know who it is « Who speaks » and I see Him look at me with loving beseeching eyes. And I can no longer say: « I do not want. »

God is really a fire which devours also the inclinations of our human nature when the latter yields to Him. To Him Who speaks saying: « I will not leave you, I will not abandon you », I want to repeat once again with full confidence: « You are of much help to me, I do not fear man. O God, do not disappoint my hope.. »

At 2 p.m. I see the following:

Jesus is coming along a little road, a path between two fields. He is alone. John is moving towards Him along a different path in the fields and he meets Him at last, going through an opening in a hedge.

John, both in yesterday's vision and to-day's is very young. His face is rosy and beardless, the fair complexion of a youth, who can hardly be called a man. There are no signs of moustache or beard, but only the smoothness of his rosy cheeks, his red lips, and his bright smile and pure look, not so much because of its deep turquoise hue, as because of the limpidity of his virginal soul shining through his eyes. His blond-brown long soft hair undulates at each step while he walks almost as fast as if he were running.

When he is about to pass through the hedge, he shouts: « Master! »

Jesus stops and turns round, smiling.

« Master, I have longed so much for You! The people in the house where You live told me that You had come towards the country. But they did not say where. I was afraid I might not meet you. » While speaking, John has bent his head slightly, out of respect. And yet, he is full of truthful love, both in his attitude and in his eyes, which he raises towards Jesus, while his head is still gently inclined towards his shoulder.

« I saw you were looking for Me and I came towards you. »

« You saw me? Where were You, Master? »

« Over there » and Jesus points to a group of trees far away, which, by the colour of their foliage, I would say were olive-trees. « I was over there. I was praying, and thinking what to say this evening in the synagogue. But I came away as soon as I saw you. »

« But how could You see me, if I can hardly see the place, hidden as it is behind that hedge? »

« And yet, you see, here I am. I came to meet you because I saw you. What the eye does not do, love does. »

« Yes, love does. You love me, therefore, Master? »

« And do you love Me, John, son of Zebedee? »

« So much, Master. I think I have always loved You. Before meeting You, long before, my soul was looking for You, and when I saw You, my soul said to me: "Here is the One you are seeking". I think I met You, because my soul perceived You. »

« You said it, John, and what you say is right. I also came towards you because My soul perceived you. For how long will you love Me? »

« For ever, Master. I no longer want to love anybody, but You. »

« You have a father and a mother, brothers and sisters, you have your life, and with your life, you have a woman and love. How will you be able to leave all that for My sake? »

« Master… I do not know… but I think, if it is not pride to say so, that Your fondness will take the place of father and mother, of brothers and sisters, and also of a woman. I will be compensated for everything, if You love me. »

« And if My love should cause you sorrows and persecutions? »

« They will be nothing, if You love me. »

« And the day I should die… »

« No! You are young, Master… Why die? »

« Because the Messiah has come to preach the Law in its truthfulness and to accomplish Redemption. And the world loathes the Law and does not want redemption. Therefore they persecute God's messengers. »

« Oh! Let that never be! Do not mention that prediction of death to him who loves You!… But if You should die, I would still love You. Allow me to love You. » John's look is an imploring one. He has bowed his head lower than ever, and he walks beside Jesus, and seems to be begging love.

Jesus stops. He looks at him, scrutinises him with His deep, penetrating eyes, and then lays His hand on his bowed head. « I want you to love Me. »

« Oh! Master! » John is happy. Although his eyes shine with tears, his well shaped young mouth smiles. He takes the divine hand, kisses it on its back, and presses it to his heart.

They take to the road again.

« You said you were looking for Me… »

« Yes, to tell You that my friends want to meet You… and because, oh! how I was longing to be with You again! I left You only a few hours ago… but I could no longer be without You. »

« Have you therefore been a good announcer of the Word? »

« Also James, Master, spoke of You in such a way as… to convince them. »

« So that also he who had no confidence - and is not to be blamed because his reserve was due to prudence - is now convinced. Let us go and give him full assurance. »

« He was somewhat afraid… »

« No! Not afraid of Me! I have come for good people and even more for those who stand in error. I want to save people, not to condemn them. I will be full of mercy with honest people. »

« And with sinners? »

« Also. By dishonest people, I mean those who are spiritually dishonest and hypocritically they feign to be good, whereas they do ill deeds. And they do such things, and in such a way for their own profit and to secure an advantage over their neighbours. I will be severe with them. »

« Oh! Simon, then, need not worry. He is as loyal as no one else. »

« That is what I like, and I want you all to be so. »

« Simon wants to tell You many things. »

« I will listen to him after speaking in the synagogue. I asked them to inform the poor and sick people in addition to the rich and healthy ones. They are all in need of the Gospel. »

They are near the village. Some children are playing in the road and one of them runs into Jesus' legs and would have fallen if He

were not quick in getting hold of him. The child cries just the same, as if he had been hurt and Jesus, holding him in His arms, says: « An Israelite who is crying? What should the thousands of children have done, who became men, crossing the desert with Moses? And yet, the Most High Lord sent the sweet manna for them, rather than for the others, because He loves innocent children and looks after these little angels of the earth, these wingless little birds, just as He sees to the sparrows of woods and towns. Do you like honey? Yes? Well, if you are good, you will eat a honey which is sweeter than the honey of your bees. »

« Where? When? »

« When, after a life of loyalty to God, you will go to Him. »

« I know that I cannot go there unless the Messiah comes. My mother says that now, we in Israel, are like many Moses and we die seeing the Promised Land. She says that we are there, waiting to go in, and that only the Messiah will make us go in. »

« What a clever little Israelite! Well, I tell you that when you die, you will go to Paradise at once, because the Messiah will already have opened the gates of Heaven. But you must be good. »

« Mummy! Mummy! » The child slides down from Jesus' arms and runs towards a young woman, who is entering her house holding a copper amphora.« Mummy! The new Rabbi told me that I will go to Paradise at once when I die and I will eat so much honey… if I am good. I will be good! »

« God grant it! I am sorry, Master, if he troubled You. He is so lively! »

« Innocence does not trouble, woman. May God bless you, because you are a mother who is bringing her children up in the knowledge of the Law. »

The woman blushes at being praised and replies: « May the blessing of the Lord be with You, too. » And she disappears with her little one.

« Do You like children, Master? »

« Yes, I do, because they are pure… sincere… and affectionate. »

« Have you any nephews, Master? »

« I have but My Mother… In Her there is purity, sincerity, the love of the most holy children, together with wisdom, justice and the fortitude of adults. I have everything in My Mother, John. »

« And You left Her? »

« God is above also the holiest mother. »

« Will I meet Her? »

« Yes, you will. »

« And will She love me? »

« She will love you because She loves whoever loves Her Jesus. »

« Then You have no brothers? »

« I have some cousins on My Mother's husband's side. But every man is My brother, and I have come for everybody. We are now at the synagogue. I am going in, and you will join Me with your friends. »

John goes away, and Jesus goes into a square room with the usual display of triangular lamps and lecterns with rolls of parchment. There is already a crowd waiting and praying. Jesus also prays. The people whisper and make their comments behind Him, as He bows to the head of the synagogue, greeting him, and He asks for a roll at random.

Jesus begins His lesson.

He says: « The Spirit makes Me read the following things for you. At chapter seven of the book of Jeremiah, we read: "Yahweh Sabaoth, the God of Israel, says this: 'Amend your behaviour and your actions and I will stay with you here in this place. Put no trust in delusive words like these: This is the sanctuary of Yahweh, the sanctuary of Yahweh, the sanctuary of Yahweh! But if you do amend your behaviour and your actions, if you treat each other fairly, if you do not exploit the stranger, the orphan and the widow, if you do not shed innocent blood in this place, and if you do not follow alien gods, to your own ruin, then here in this place I will stay with you, in the land that long ago I gave to your fathers for ever' ".

Listen, Israel. Here I am to illuminate for you the words of light, which your dimmed souls can no longer see or understand. Listen. There is much weeping in the land of the People of God: old people cry remembering past glories, adults cry because they are bent under the yoke, children cry because they have no prospects of future glory. But the glory of the earth is nothing compared to a glory which no oppressor, except Mammon and ill will, can take away.

Why are you crying? Because the Most High, Who was always good to His people, has now turned His face elsewhere and no longer allows His children to see His Countenance? Is He no longer the God Who parted the sea and made Israel cross it and led the people through the desert and nourished them, and defended them from their enemies, and that they might not lose the way to Heaven, He gave a Law for their souls, as He had sent them a cloud for their bodies? Is He no longer the God That sweetened the waters and sent manna to His worn out children? Is He not the God Who wanted you to settle in His land and made an alliance with you as Father with his children? Well, then, why has the foreigner struck you?

Many amongst you mumble: "And yet the Temple is here!" It is not enough to have the Temple and to go and pray God in it. The first temple is in the heart of every man and that is where holy prayers should be said. But a prayer cannot be holy unless the heart first

amends its way of living and with his heart man also amends his habits, affections, the rules of justice towards the poor, servants, relatives and God.

Now look. I see rich hard-hearted men who make rich offerings to the Temple, but they never say to a poor man: "Brother, here is a piece of bread, and a penny. Take them. From man to man, and let not my help discourage you as my offering may not make me proud". I see people who, in their prayers, complain to God because He does not hear their prayers promptly; then when a poor wretch, very often a relative, says to them: "Listen to me", they reply heartlessly: "No". I see you crying because your money is squeezed out of your purses by your ruler. But then you squeeze blood out of those you hate and you are not filled with horror when you take the blood and life away from a body.

O Israel! The time of Redemption has come. Prepare its ways in your hearts with good will. Be honest, good, love one another. The rich must not despise the poor; merchants must not defraud; the poor must not envy the rich. You are all of one blood, and you belong to one God. You are all called to one destiny. Do not shut with your sins the Heavens that the Messiah will open for you. Have you erred so far? Err no longer. Abandon all errors.

The Law is simple, easy and good as it goes back to the original ten commandments, illuminated by the light of love. Come. I will show you which they are: love, love, love. God's love for you. Your love for God. Love for your neighbours. Always love, because God is love, and those are the Father's children who know how to live love.

I am here for everybody, and to give everybody the light of God. Here is the Word of the Father that becomes food for you. Come, taste, change the blood of your spirits with this food. Let every poison vanish, let every lust die. A new glory is offered to you: the eternal one, to which all those will come whose hearts will truly study the Law of God.

Start from love. There is nothing greater. When you know how to love, you will already know everything, and God will love you, and God's love means help against all temptations. May the blessing of God be on those who turn to God with their hearts full of good will. »

Jesus is silent. The people whisper. The meeting breaks up after some hymns, many of which are sung like psalms.

Jesus goes out onto the little square. On the doorstep there are John and James with Peter and Andrew.

« Peace to you » says Jesus and He adds: « Here is the man who in order to be just must not judge before knowing. But he is honest in admitting he is wrong. Simon, you wanted to see Me? Here I am. And you, Andrew, why did you not come before? »

The two brothers look at each other embarrassed. Andrew whispers: « I did not dare. »

Peter blushes, but does not speak. But when he hears Jesus say to his brother: « Were you doing any wrong in coming? One must not dare do only evil things » he intervenes frankly: « It was my fault. He wanted to bring me to You at once. But I… I said… Yes, I said "I don't believe it", and I did not want to come. Oh! I feel better now!… »

Jesus smiles, then He says: « And because of your sincerity I tell you that I love you. »

« But I… I am not good… I am not capable of doing what You said in the synagogue. I am quick-tempered and if anyone offends me eh! I am greedy and I like money… and in my fish business eh! not always… I have not always been honest. And I am ignorant. And I have little time to follow You to receive Your Light. What shall I do? I would like to become as You say… but… »

« It is not difficult, Simon. Are you acquainted a little with the Scriptures? Are you? Well, think of the prophet Micah. God wants from you what Micah said. He does not ask you to tear your heart apart, neither does He ask you to sacrifice your most holy affections. He does not ask you for the time being. One day, without being requested by God, you will give God your own self. But He will wait while the sun and the dew turn you, a thin blade of grass as you are now, into a sturdy, glorious palm tree. For the time being, He asks you only this: to be just, to love mercy, to take the greatest care in following your God. Strive to do that and Simon's past will be cancelled and you will become a new man, the friend of God and of His Christ. No longer Simon, but Cephas, (1) the safe rock on which I lean. »

« I like that! I understand that. The Law is so… is so… that is, I cannot comply with it any longer, as the rabbis have made it. But what You say, yes,… I think I will be able to do it. And You will help me. Are You staying in this house? I know the owner. »

« I am staying here. But I am going to Jerusalem and after I will preach throughout Palestine. I came for that. But I will often be here. »

« I will come to hear You again. I want to be Your disciple. A little of the light will enter my head. »

« Your heart, above all, Simon. Your heart. And you, Andrew, have you nothing to say? »

« I am listening, Master. »

« My brother is shy. »

« He will become a lion. It is getting dark. May God bless you, and grant you a good haul. Go now. »

(1) Cephas means Rock, see John 1,42

Peace be with You. » They go away.

As soon as they are out Peter says: « I wonder what He meant before, when He said that I will be fishing with other nets and catching different fish. »

« Why did you not ask Him? You wanted to say so many things, but you hardly spoke. »

« I… was bashful. He is so different from all the other rabbis! »

« Now He is going to Jerusalem… » says John, with so much longing and nostalgia. « I wanted to ask Him if He would let me go with Him… But I did not dare… »

« Go and ask Him now, my boy » says Peter. « We left Him so… without a word of affection. Let Him at least know that we admire Him. I will tell your father. »

« Shall I go, James? »

« Go. »

John runs away… and he runs back, overjoyed. « I said to Him: "Do You want me to come to Jerusalem with You?" He replied: "Come, My friend". Friend, He said! Tomorrow, I will be here at this time. Ah! To Jerusalem with Him!… »

… the vision ends.

With regard to the previous vision, this morning the 14th Of October Jesus says to me:

« I want you and everybody to consider John's behaviour: particularly one point that always escapes everybody's notice. You admire him because he was pure, loving, faithful. But you do not notice that he was great also in humility.

He, the first one responsible for Peter's coming to Me, was modestly silent about that detail. The apostle of Peter, and consequently the first of My apostles, was John. First in recognising Me, first in speaking to Me, in following Me, in preaching Me. And yet, see what he says? "Andrew, Simon's brother, was one of the two who had heard John's (2) words and had followed Jesus. The first person he met was his brother Simon, to whom he said: 'We have found the Messiah' and he took him to Jesus".

Besides being good, he is just, and since he knows that Andrew is distressed because of his shy and reserved disposition, and that he would like to do so much, but does not succeed in doing it, he wants the acknowledgement of Andrew's good will to be handed down to posterity. He wants Andrew to appear as Christ's first apostle with Peter, notwithstanding that Andrew's shyness and uneasiness with his brother have been the cause of the failure of his apostolate.

Amongst those who do something for Me, who can imitate

(2) That is: John the Baptist.

John, instead of proclaiming himself an unexcelled apostle, without considering that his success depends on a multitude of things, which are not only holiness, but also human daring, luck and the occasional chance of being with other people less daring and less lucky, but perhaps, holier?

When you succeed in doing some good, do not boast about it, as if the merit were entirely yours. Praise God, the Lord of the apostolic workers, and have a clear eye and a sincere heart to see and give each the praise they deserve. A clear eye to descry the apostles who sacrificed themselves and are the first real incentive for the work of the others. Only God sees them: they are timid and seem to be doing nothing, whereas they draw from Heaven the fire that urges daring workers. A sincere heart in saying: "I work. But this fellow loves more than I do, he prays better than I do, I am not able to sacrifice myself as he does and as Jesus said: '… in your private room with the door closed pray secretly.' Since I am aware of his humble holy virtue, I want to make it known and say: 'I am an active instrument; he is a power that inspires me, because, joined as he is to God, he is a channel of celestial energy for me' ".

And the Blessing of the Father, that descends to reward the humble man, who secretly sacrifices himself to give strength to the apostles, will descend also on the apostle who sincerely acknowledges both the supernatural and silent help of the humble one, and his merits which superficial men do not notice.

It is a lesson for everybody. Is he My favourite? Yes, he is. Does he not resemble Me also in this? Pure, loving, obedient, but also humble. I looked at Myself in him as in a mirror and I could see My virtues in him. I therefore loved him like another Self. I could see in him the glance of My Father, Who considered him a little Christ. And My Mother would say to Me: "I feel as if he were My second son. I seem to be seeing You, reproduced in a man".

Oh! How well the One Full of Wisdom knows you, My beloved! The two blues of your pure hearts mingled into one veil only to form a protection of love for Me, and they became one love only, even before I gave My Mother to John and John to My Mother. They loved each other because they realised they were alike: children and brothers of the Father and of the Son. »

50. Jesus at Bethsaida in Peter's House. He Meets Philip and Nathanael.

15th October 1944.

[…] Later on (at 9:30) I had to describe this.

John knocks at the door of the house where Jesus is a guest. A woman comes to the door and when she sees who it is, she calls Jesus.

They greet each other with a salutation of peace. Then Jesus says: « You have come early, John. »

« I have come to tell You that Peter asks You to pass by Bethsaida. He has spoken to many people about You… We did not go out fishing last night. We prayed as well as we could, and we gave up profit… because the Sabbath was not yet over. And this morning, we went through the streets speaking about You. There are many people who would like to hear You… Will You come, Master? »

« I will, although I must go to Nazareth before going to Jerusalem. »

« Peter will take You from Bethsaida to Tiberias in his boat. It will be even quicker for You. »

« Let us go, then. »

Jesus takes His mantle and haversack. But John relieves Him of the latter. And they set out, after saying goodbye to the landlady.

The vision shows them coming out of the village and starting their journey to Bethsaida. But I do not hear what they are saying, in fact the vision is interrupted and it is resumed only when they are entering Bethsaida. I realise that it is that town because I see Peter, Andrew and James, with their wives, awaiting Jesus at the entrance to the village.

« Peace be with you. Here I am. »

« We thank You, Master, also on behalf of those who are waiting for You. It is not the Sabbath today, but will You speak Your words to those waiting to hear You? »

« Yes, Peter, I will. In your house. »

Peter is overjoyed: « Come, then. This is my wife and this is John's mother and these are their friends. But there are other people waiting for You: relations and friends of ours. »

« Tell them that I will speak to them this evening, before I leave. »

I forgot to mention that they left Capernaum at sunset and arrived at Bethsaida the following morning.

« Master… please: stay one night at my house. The road to Jerusalem is a long one, even if I will shorten it for You, taking You to Tiberias by boat. My house is poor, but honest and friendly. Stay with us tonight. »

Jesus looks at Peter and at all the rest who are waiting. He looks at them inquisitively. He then smiles and says: « Yes, I will stay. »

It is a greater joy for Peter.

People look out from their doors and exchange knowing glances with one another. A man calls James by his name and speaks to him in a low voice, pointing to Jesus. James nods in assent and the man goes and speaks to other people standing at a crossroads.

They go into Peter's house. There is a large smoky kitchen. In a corner, there are nets, ropes, fishing baskets. In the middle there is

a long, low fireplace, but there is no fire. Through two opposite doors, one can see the street on one side, and the kitchen garden with a fig-tree and vines on the other side. Beyond the street the rippling on the sky-blue lake can be seen, and beyond the kitchen garden there is the dark, low wall of another house.

« I offer You what I have, Master, and as best as I know how to… »

« You could not offer any more or any better, because you are making your offering with love. »

They give Jesus some water to refresh Himself and then some bread and olives. Jesus takes a few mouthfuls only to please them, then He thanks them, and eats no more.

Some children look in inquisitively from the kitchen garden and the street. I do not know whether they are Peter's children. I only know that he frowns at the intruders to keep them out. Jesus smiles and says: « Leave them alone. »

« Master, do You want to rest? My room is here and Andrew's is over there. Take Your choice. We will not make any noise while You are resting. »

« Have you got a terrace? »

« Yes, and the vine, although it is still almost bare, gives a little shade. »

« Then take Me up there. I prefer to rest there. I will think and pray. »

« As You wish. Come. »

A little staircase rises from the kitchen garden up to the roof, which is a terrace surrounded by a low wall. Also there, there are nets and ropes. But how much bright light, and what a beautiful view of the blue lake!

Jesus sits on a stool, leaning His back against the little wall. Peter bustles with a sail, which he spreads over and on the side of the vine to make a shield against the sun. There is a breeze and silence. Jesus is visibly happy.

« I am going, Master. »

« Go. Go with John and tell people that I will be speaking here at sunset. »

Jesus remains alone and prays for a long time. With the exception of two pairs of doves that come and go from their nests, and the twittering of sparrows, there is no noise or living being near Jesus praying. The hours pass peacefully and quietly.

Then Jesus stands up, He walks round the terrace, looks at the lake, smiles at some children playing in the street and they smile back at Him, He looks along the street, towards the little square about one hundred yards away from Peter's house. He goes downstairs. He looks into the kitchen: « Woman, I am going for a walk on the shore. »

He goes out and walks to the beach, near the children. He asks them: « What are you doing? »

« We wanted to play at war. But he does not want to, and we are playing at fishing. »

The boy who does not want to play at war, is a frail little fellow with a most bright face. Perhaps he is aware that, as frail as he is, he would get a beating in making « war » and so he pleads for peace.

But Jesus takes the opportunity to speak to the children: « He is right. War is a punishment of God to chastise men, and it is a sign that man is no longer a true son of God. When the Most High created the world, He made all things: the sun, the sea, the stars, the rivers, the plants, the animals, but He did not make arms. He created man and gave him eyes that he might cast loving glances, and a mouth to utter loving words, and ears to listen to such words, and hands to give help and to caress, and feet to run fast to assist our neighbours in need, and a heart capable of loving. He gave man intelligence, speech, affections and taste. But He did not give man hatred. Why? Because man, a creature of God, was to be love as God is Love. If man had remained a creature of God, he would have persevered in love, and the human family would have not known either war or death. »

« But he does not want to make war, because he always loses. » (I had guessed right.)

Jesus smiles and says: « We must not reprove what is harmful to us simply because it is harmful to us. We must reprove a thing when it is harmful to everybody. If a person says: "I do not want that because I would lose", that person is selfish. Instead, the good child of God says: "Brothers, I know I would win, but I say to you: don't let us do that because you would suffer a loss". Oh! That fellow has understood the main precept! Who can tell Me which is the main precept? »

The eleven mouths say all together: « "You shall love your God with all your strength, and your neighbour as yourself" »

« Oh! You are clever children. Do you all go to school? »

« Yes, we do. »

« Who is the most clever? »

« Him. » It is the frail little fellow who does not want war.

« What is your name? »

« Joel. »

« A great name! He says: "… let the weakling say: 'I am strong'". But strong in what? In the Law of the true God, to be amongst those whom in the Valley of Decision He will judge to be His saints. But the judgement is already near. Not in the Valley of Decision, but on the mountain of Redemption. There, the sun and the moon will grow dark with horror, the stars will tremble and shed tears of mercy, and the children of Light will be judged and separated from the children of Darkness. And the whole of Israel will know that its God has come. Happy those who will have recognised Him. Honey, milk and fresh water will descend into their hearts and thorns will become eternal roses. Which of you wants to be amongst those who will be judged saints of God? »

« I! I! I! »

« Will you love the Messiah, then? »

« Yes! Yes! You! You! It's You we love. We know who You are! Simon and James have told us, and our mothers have told us. Take us with You! »

« Yes, I will take you if you are good. No more bad words, no more arrogance, quarrels, no answering back to your parents. Prayer, study, work, obedience. And I will love you and come with you. »

The children are all round Jesus. They look like a gaily-coloured corolla around a long, deep-blue pistil.

An elderly man goes near the group, inquisitively. Jesus turns round to caress a child who is pulling His mantle and sees him. He stares at him, intensely. The man blushes and greets Him, but does not say anything else.

« Come! Follow Me! »

« Yes, Master. »

Jesus blesses the children and walking beside Philip, (He calls him by his name) He goes back home. They sit in the little kitchen garden.

« Do you want to be My disciple? »

« Yes, I do… but I dare not hope for so much. »

« I have called you. »

« Then I am Your disciple. Here I am. »

« Did you know about Me? »

« Andrew spoke to me about You. He said to me: "The One you were pining after has come". Because Andrew knew that I yearned for the Messiah. »

« Your expectation has not been disappointed. He is in front of You. »

« My Master and my God! »

« You are a well-intentioned Israelite. That is why I am manifesting Myself to you. Another friend of yours is waiting, he is a sincere Israelite, too. Go and say to him: "We have found Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph of the House of David, Him of Whom Moses and the Prophets have spoken". Go. »

Jesus remains alone until Philip comes back with Nathanael-Bartholomew.

« Here is a true Israelite in whom there is no deceit. Peace be with you, Nathanael. »

« How do You know me? »

« Before Philip came to call you, I saw you under the fig-tree. »

« Master, You are the Son of God. You are the King of Israel! »

« Because I said I saw you, while you were meditating under the fig-tree, you believe? You will see greater things than that. I solemnly tell you that Heaven is open and because of your faith you will see angels descending and ascending above the Son of man: that is above Me, Who am speaking to you. »

« Master! I am not worthy of such a favour! »

« Believe in Me and you will be worthy of Heaven. Will you believe? »

« I will, Master. »

The vision is interrupted… it starts again on the terrace full of people; other people are in Peter's kitchen garden. Jesus starts speaking.

« Peace to men of good will. Peace and blessings to their homes, their women, their children. May the grace and the light of God reign in your homes and in the hearts dwelling in them.

You have wished to hear Me. The Word is speaking. It speaks with joy to the honest, with sorrow to the dishonest, with delight to the holy and the pure, with mercy to sinners. It does not deny Itself. It has come to spread out like a river that flows to irrigate lands needing water, refreshing them and fertilising them at the same time with humus.

You want to know what is required to become disciples of the Word of God, of the Messiah, Word of the Father, Who has come to gather Israel together, that it may hear once again the words of the holy and immutable Decalogue and may be sanctified by them and thus be purified for the hour of Redemption and of the Kingdom, as far as man can be purified by himself.

Now, I say to the deaf, the blind, the dumb, the lepers, the paralytic, the dead: "Rise, you are healed, rise, walk, may the rivers of light, of words, of sounds be opened for you, that you may see and hear Me and speak of Me". But rather than to your bodies, I am speaking to your souls. Men of good will, come to Me without any fear. If your souls are injured, I will cure them; if they are ill, I will heal them; if they are dead, I will raise them. All I want is your good will.

Is what I ask for difficult? No. It is not. I do not impose on you the hundreds of precepts of the rabbis. I say to you: follow the Decalogue. The Law is one and immutable. Many centuries have gone by since it was given, beautiful, pure, fresh, like a new-born

creature, like a rose just opened on its stem. Simple, neat, easy to follow. Throughout centuries faults and trends have complicated it with many minor laws, with burdens and restrictions, with too many painful clauses. I am bringing once again the Law to you as the Most High gave it. But, in your own interest, I ask you to accept it with sincere hearts, like the true Israelites of bygone times.

You grumble, more in your hearts than with your lips, that it is the fault of people in the upper classes, rather than of humble people. I know. Deuteronomy states what is to be done, nothing else was necessary. But do not judge those who acted for other people, not for themselves. Do what God commands. And above all, strive and be perfect in the two main precepts. If you love God with all your souls, you will not sin, because sin gives pain to God. Who loves, does not want to give pain. If you love your neighbours, as you love yourselves, you will be respectful children to your parents, faithful husbands to your wives, honest merchants in your trade, without any violence against your enemies, truthful in bearing witness, without envy of wealthy people, without any incentive of lewdness for another man's wife. And as you do not want to do to other people what you do not wish should be done to you, you will not steal, or kill, or slander, or enter someone else's nest like cuckoos.

Nay, I say to you: "Carry to perfection your obedience to the two precepts of love: love also your enemies".

How much the Most High will love you, since He loves man so much. Although man became His enemy because of the original sin, and because of his personal sins, He sent man the Redeemer, the Lamb Who is His Son, that is I, Who am speaking to you, the Messiah promised to redeem you from all your sins, if you will learn to love as He does.

Love. May your love become a ladder by which, like angels, you will ascend to Heaven, as Jacob saw them, when you hear the Father say to each and everybody: "I will be your protector wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this place; to Heaven, the Eternal Kingdom".

Peace be with you. »

The crowd utter words of emotional approval and slowly go away. Peter, Andrew, James, John, Philip and Bartholomew stay.

« Are You leaving tomorrow, Master? »

« Tomorrow, at dawn, if you do not mind. »

« I am sorry that You are going away. But I do not mind the hour. On the contrary, it suits me. »

« Are you going fishing? »

« Yes, tonight, when the moon rises. »

« You did well, Simon, not fishing last night. The Sabbath was not yet finished. Nehemiah in his reformation wants the Sabbath to be respected in Judah. Even nowadays too many people work on the Sabbath day at presses, carry wood, wine and fruit and buy and sell fish and lambs. You have six days for that. The Sabbath is of the Lord. Only one thing you may do on the Sabbath: you may do good to your neighbour. But all profit must be excluded from such help. Who infringes the Sabbath to make a profit will be

punished by God. He makes a profit? He will lose it during the other six days. He makes no profit? He has fatigued his body to no purpose, because he did not grant it the rest that Intelligence prescribed for it, and thus he irritated his soul having worked in vain, and goes to the extent of cursing. The day of the Lord, instead, is to be spent with your hearts united to God in sweet prayer of love. You must be faithful in everything. »

« But… scribes and doctors, who are so severe with us… do not work on Sabbath days, they do not even give a piece of bread to their neighbours, to avoid the fatigue of handing it over, but they practise usury also on a Sabbath. As it is not a material work, is it legal to practise usury on a Sabbath? »

« No. Never. Neither on a Sabbath nor any other day. Who practises usury is dishonest and cruel. »

« The scribes and the Pharisees, then… »

« Simon: don't judge. Do not do it. »

« But I have eyes to see… »

« Is there only evil to be seen, Simon? »

« No, Master. »

« Well, then, why look at evil deeds? »

« You are right, Master. »

« Well, tomorrow morning at dawn, I will leave with John. » « Master… »

« Yes, Simon, what is it? »

« Master… are You going to Jerusalem? »

« You know I am. »

« Also I am going at Passover… and also Andrew and James. »

« Well?… Do you mean that you would like to come with Me? And your fishing? And your profit? You told Me that you like to have money, and I will be away for many days. I am going to My Mother's first. And I will go there also on My way back. I will stop there to preach. How will you manage?… »

Peter is perplexed, undecided… then he makes up his mind: « think… I will come. I prefer You to money! »

« I am coming, too. »

« And so am I. »

« We are going too, aren't we, Philip? »

« Come, then, you will help Me. »

« Oh!… » Peter is more than excited at the idea of helping Jesus. « How shall we do that? »

« I will tell you. To do good, all you need do, is do what I tell you. Who obeys always does good. We will now pray and then each of us will go and perform his duties. »

« What will You do, Master? »

« I will continue to pray. I am the Light of the world, but I am also the Son of man. I must, therefore, draw from the Light, to

become the Man Who redeems man. Let us pray. » Jesus says a psalm. The one beginning: « Who rests in the help of the Most High, will live in the protection of the God of Heaven. He will say to the Lord: "You are my protector and my shelter. He is my God, I will hope in Him. He rescued me from the snares of fowlers and from harsh words" etc. » I find it in the fourth book. It is the second psalm in book four, I think it is number 90, (if I read the Roman number correctly).

The vision ends thus.

51. Judas Thaddeus at Bethsaida to Invite Jesus to the Wedding at Cana

17th October 1944.

I see the kitchen in Peter's house. In addition to Jesus, there are Peter and his wife, James and John. I think they have just finished eating their supper. They are talking, and Jesus takes an interest in fishing.

Andrew enters and says: « Master, there is the man here in whose house You are living, together with another man who says he is Your cousin. »

Jesus gets up and goes towards the door saying: « Let them come in. » And when He sees Judas Thaddeus in the light of the oil lamp and of the fireplace, He exclaims: « You, Judas?! »

« Yes, Jesus. » They kiss each other.

Judas Thaddeus is a handsome man, in the fullness of his virile manhood. He is tall, although not quite so tall as Jesus, well built and strong, of a dark brown-olive complexion, like saint Joseph when young, but not sallow: his eyes have something in common with those of Jesus, because they are blue, verging on periwinkle. His brown beard is squarely cut, his hair wavy, but not so curly as Jesus', and is the same hue as his beard.

« I have come from Capernaum, I went there by boat and I have come here in the same boat to gain time. Your Mother sends me; She says: "Susanna is getting married tomorrow; please come to the wedding". Mary will be there, and also my mother and brothers. All the relatives have been invited. You would be the only one absent, and they ask You to come and make the young couple happy. »

Jesus bows lightly stretching out His arms and says: « A wish of My Mother is a law for Me. But I will come also for Susanna's and our relatives' sake. Only… I am sorry for you… » and He looks at Peter and the others. « They are My friends » He explains to His cousin. And then He mentions their names, beginning with Peter's. He then adds: « And this is John » with a special expression that causes Judas Thaddeus to look at him more carefully while the beloved disciple blushes. He ends the introductions stating: « My friends, this is Judas, son of Alphaeus, My cousin according to the custom of the world, because he is the son of the brother of My Mother's spouse. A very good friend of Mine, and a companion both in life and in work. »

« My house is open to you as it is to the Master. Sit down » and then addressing Jesus, Peter says: « So? Are we no longer going to Jerusalem with You? »

« Of course you will come. I will go after the wedding feast. The only difference is that I will not stop at Nazareth any longer. »

« Quite right, Jesus, because Your Mother is my guest for a few days. That is what we intend to do. She also will come there after the wedding. » It is the man from Capernaum who speaks thus.

« This is what we will do. I will now go in Judas' boat to Tiberias and from there to Cana. With the same boat I will come back to Capernaum with My Mother, and with you. You will come the day after the next Sabbath, Simon, if you still wish to come, and we will go to Jerusalem for Passover. »

« Of course I want to come! Nay, I will come on the Sabbath to hear You in the synagogue. »

« Are You already teaching, Jesus? » asks Thaddeus.

« Yes, My cousin. »

« And you should hear His words! Ah! no one else speaks like Him! » exclaims Peter.

Judas sighs. With his head resting on his hand, his elbow on his knee, he looks at Jesus and sighs. He seems anxious to speak but does not dare.

Jesus encourages him: « What is the matter, Judas? Why do you look at Me and sigh? »

« Nothing. »

« No. It must be something. Am I no longer the Jesus of Whom you were fond? From Whom you had no secrets? »

« Of course You are! And how I miss You, You the Master of Your older cousin… »

« Well, then! Speak. »

« I wanted to tell You… Jesus… be careful… You have a Mother… She has but You… You want to be a "rabbi" different from the others and You know, better than I do, that… that the powerful classes do not allow anything which may differ from the customary laws they have laid down. I know Your way of thinking… it is a holy one… But the world is not holy… and it oppresses saints… Jesus… You know the fate of Your cousin the Baptist… He is in jail, and if he is not yet dead, it is because that evil Tetrarch is afraid of the crowds and of the wrath of God. As evil and superstitious as cruel and lustful… You… what are You going to do? To what fate are You going to expose Yourself? »

« Judas, you are so familiar with My way of thinking, and that is what you ask Me? Are you speaking on your own initiative? No, don't lie! You have been sent, certainly not by My Mother, to tell Me such things… »

Judas lowers his head and becomes silent.

« Speak, cousin. »

« My father… and Joseph and Simon with him… You know, for Your sake, because they are fond of You and Mary… do not look favourably on what You intend doing… and… and they would like You to think of Your Mother… »

« And what do you think? »

« I… I… »

« You are drawn in opposite directions by the voices coming from High Above and those coming from the world. I am not saying from below. I say from the world. The same applies to James, even more so. But I tell you that above the world there is Heaven, and above the interest of the world there is the cause of God. You must change your ways of thinking. When you learn to do that, you will be perfect. »

« But… and Your Mother? »

« Judas, She is the only one who, according to the way of thinking of the world, should be entitled to recall Me to My duty as a son: that is to My duty to work for Her, and provide for Her material needs, to My duty to assist and comfort Her with My presence. But She does not ask for any of these things. Since She had Me, She knew She would lose Me, to find Me once again in a much wider manner than the small family circle… And since then She has prepared Herself for that.

Her unreserved voluntary donation of Herself to God is nothing new. Her mother offered Her in the Temple before She even smiled at life. And - as She told Me the innumerable times She spoke to Me of Her holy childhood, holding Me close to Her heart in the long winter evenings or in the clear starry summer nights - She gave Herself to God since the dawn of Her life in this world. And She gave Herself even more when She had Me, that She might be where I am, fulfilling the Mission given to Me by God. Everybody will abandon Me at a certain moment, perhaps only for a few minutes, but everyone will be overcome by cowardice, and you will think that it would have been better, for your own safety, if you had never known Me. But She, Who understood and knows, She will always be with Me. And you will become Mine, once again, through Her. With the power of Her unshaken, loving faith, She will draw you to Herself and will thus bring you to Me, because I am in My Mother, and She is in Me, and We are in God.

I would like you all to understand that, both you who are My relatives according to the world, and you, friends and children in a

supernatural way. Neither you, nor anyone else know Who My Mother is. But if you knew, you would not criticise Her in your hearts stating She is not capable of keeping Me subject to Her, but you would venerate Her as the closest friend of God, the Mighty Woman Who can obtain all graces from the heart of the Eternal Father and from Her beloved Son. I will certainly come to Cana. I want to make Her happy. You will understand better after the wedding. » Jesus is majestic and persuasive.

Judas gazes at Him. He is thinking. He then says: « And I will certainly come with You, with these friends, if You want me… because I feel that what You say is right. Forgive my blindness and my brothers'. You are so much holier than we are!… »

« I bear no grudge against those who do not know Me. I am also without ill-feeling towards those who hate Me. But I feel sorry for them, because of the harm they do themselves. What have you got in that satchel? »

« The tunic Your Mother sent You. It is a big feast tomorrow. She thinks that Her Jesus will need it, so that He may not look out of place amongst all the guests. She worked from early morning till late night every day, to have it ready for You. But She did not finish the mantle. Its fringes are not yet ready and She is very sorry about it. »

« It does not matter. I will wear this one, and I will keep that one for Jerusalem. The Temple is much more important than a wedding feast. »

« She will be so happy. »

« If you want to be on the way to Cana at dawn, you ought to leave at once. The moon is rising and it will be a pleasant crossing » says Peter.

« Let us go, then. Come, John. I am taking you with Me. Goodbye, Simon Peter, James, Andrew. I will see you on the Sabbath evening at Capernaum. Goodbye, woman. Peace be with you and your house. »

Jesus goes out with Judas and John. Peter follows them as far as the lake and helps them cast off.

And the vision ends.

Jesus says:

« When it is time to arrange the work in order, insert the vision of the wedding at Cana here. Put in the date (16th January 1944). »

52. Jesus at the Wedding at Cana.

The evening of 16th January 1944. The wedding at Cana.

I see a house. A typical middle east house: a long, low, white house, with few windows and doors, with a terraced roof, surrounded

by a little wall, about one metre high, with a shady vine pergola, which reaches up to the sunny terrace and stretches its branches over more than half of its surface. An outside staircase climbs up along the front, reaching up to a door which is situated half way up the facade. At ground level there are a few low doors, not more than two on each side of the house, and they open into low dark rooms. The house is built in the middle of what looks like a kind of threshing-floor, but is actually more a grassy open space than a threshing-floor, with a well in its centre. There are some fig and apple-trees. The house faces the road, but-it is not set right on the roadside. It is a little way off the road and a path along the grass links it to the road, which looks like a main road.

It seems to be on the outskirts of Cana: a house owned by farmers who live in the middle of their holding. The country stretches calm and green far beyond the house. The sun is shining in a completely blue sky. At first I do not see anything else. There is no one near the house.

Then I see two women, with long dresses and mantles that also cover their heads like veils, walking along the road and then on the path. One is older than the other: about fifty years old, with a dark dress, the grey-brown hue of raw wool. The other woman is wearing lighter garments: a pale yellow dress and a blue mantle. She looks about thirty-five years old. She is really beautiful, slender, and Her carriage is most dignified, although She is most kind and humble. When She is nearer, I notice Her pale face, Her blue eyes and Her blond hair visible on Her forehead. I recognise Our Most Holy Lady. I do not know who the other older woman is. They are speaking to each other and Our Lady smiles. When they are near the house, someone, who is obviously watching the arrival of the

guests, informs the others in the house, and two men and two women, all in their best clothes, go to meet them. They give the two women and particularly Our Lady a most warm welcome.

It is early morning, I would say about nine o'clock, perhaps earlier, because the country has the fresh look of the early morning hours, when the dew makes the grass look greener and the air is still free from dust. It appears to be springtime because the grass in the meadows is not parched by the summer sun and the corn in the fields is still young and green and earless. The leaves of the figtree and apple-tree are green and tender and those of the vines are the same. But I see no flowers on the apple-tree and there is no fruit on the apple and fig-tree or on the vines: which means that the apple-tree blossomed only recently and the little fruits cannot be seen as yet.

Mary, Who is most warmly welcomed and is escorted by an elderly man who appears to be the landlord, climbs up the outside

staircase and enters a large hall which seems to fill the whole of the house upstairs, or most of it.

If I am correct, the rooms on the ground floor are the ones where they actually live, where they have their store-room, wine cellar, whereas the hall upstairs is used on special occasions, such as feast days, or for tasks which require a lot of space, such as drying and pressing foodstuffs. For special celebrations the hall is cleared of every object and then decorated, as it is today, with green branches, mats and tables prepared with rich dishes. In the centre there is a richly laid table with amphorae and plates full of fruit. Along the right-hand side wall, in respect to me, there is another table already prepared, but not so sumptuously. On the left-hand side, there is a kind of long dresser with plates of cheese and other foodstuffs, which look like cakes covered with honey and sweetmeats. On the floor, near the same wall, there are more amphorae and six large vases, shaped more or less like copper pitchers. I would call them jars.

Mary listens benignly to what they are telling Her, then She takes off Her mantle and kindly helps to finish laying the tables. I see Her going to and fro sorting out the bed-seats, straightening up the wreaths of flowers, improving the appearance of the fruit dishes, making sure that the lamps are filled with oil. She smiles, speaks very little and in a very low voice. Instead She listens a lot and with so much patience.

A loud sound of musical instruments (not very harmonious) is heard coming from the road. They all rush out, with the exception of Mary. I see the bride come in, smartly dressed and happy, surrounded by relatives and friends. The bridegroom, who was the first to rush out and meet her, is now beside her.

At this point there is a change in the vision. Instead of the house I see a village. I do not know whether it is Cana or a nearby village. And I see Jesus with John and another man, who I think is Judas Thaddeus, but I may be wrong. I am sure about John. Jesus is wearing a white tunic and a dark blue mantle. When he hears the sound of the instruments, Jesus' companion questions a man about something and then tells Jesus. Then Jesus, smiling, says: « Let us go and make My Mother happy. » And He starts walking across the fields towards the house, with His two companions.

I forgot to mention that it is my impression that Mary is either a relation or a close friend of the bridegroom's relatives, because She is on familiar terms with them.

When Jesus arrives, the same watchman as before, informs the others. The landlord, with his son, the bridegroom, and Mary goes down to meet Him, and greets Him respectfully. He then greets the other two and so does the bridegroom. But what I like is the loving and respectful way in which Jesus and Mary exchange their greetings. There are no effusions, but the words « Peace be with You » are pronounced with a look and a smile worth one hundred embraces and one hundred kisses. A kiss trembles on Mary's lips, but it is not given. She only lays Her little white hand on Jesus, shoulder and lightly touches a curl of His long hair. The caress of a chaste lover.

Jesus climbs the staircase beside His Mother, followed by His disciples, the landlord and the groom, and enters the banquet hall, where the women start bustling about, adding seats and plates for the three guests, who, apparently, were not expected. I would say that Jesus' coming was uncertain and the arrival of His companions was completely unforeseen.

I can distinctly hear the Master's full, virile, most sweet voice say on entering the hall: « May peace be in this house and the blessing of God on you all. » A greeting of majesty addressed to all the people present. Jesus dominates everybody with His bearing and His height. He is a guest, and a casual one, but He seems to be the king of the banquet, more than the groom, more than the landlord. No matter how humble and obliging, He is the one who dominates.

Jesus sits at the central table with the bride and the bridegroom, their relatives and the most influential friends. The two disciples are also invited to sit at the same table, out of respect for Jesus.

Jesus' back is turned to the wall where the large jars and the dresser are. He therefore cannot see them, neither can He see the steward bustling about the dishes of roast meat, which are brought in through a little door near the dresser.

I notice one thing. With the exception of the mothers of the young couple and of Mary, no woman is sitting at that table. All the women, who are making a din worthy of one hundred people, are sitting at the other table near the wall, and are served after the young couple and the guests of importance. Jesus is sitting near the landlord, in front of Mary, Whose place is near the bride.

The banquet starts. And I can assure you that they lack neither appetite nor thirst. The ones who eat and drink little are Jesus and His Mother, Who speaks also very little. Jesus talks a little more. But although very moderate, He is neither sullen nor disdainful in the little He says. He is kind, but not talkative. He answers when He is questioned, when they speak to Him, He takes an interest in the subject, he states His opinion, but then He concentrates on His thoughts, like one accustomed to meditation. He smiles, He never laughs. If He hears any inconsiderate joke, He pretends He has not heard. Mary is nourished by the contemplation of Her Jesus, and so is John, who is at the end of the table and hangs on His Master's lips.

Mary notices that the servants are talking in low voices to the steward, who looks very embarrassed and She understands what

the cause of the unpleasant situation is. « Son », She whispers in a low voice, thus drawing Jesus' attention. « Son, they have no more wine. »

« Woman, what is there still between Me and You? » Jesus, when saying these words, smiles even more gently, and Mary smiles too, like two people aware of some truth which is their joyful secret and is ignored by everyone else.

Jesus explains the meaning of the sentence to me.

« That "still", which is omitted by many translators, is the keyword of the sentence and explains its true meaning.

I was the Son, submissive to My Mother, up to the moment when the will of My Father told Me that the hour had come when I was to be the Master. From the moment My mission started, I was no longer the Son submissive to My Mother, but I was the Servant of God.

My moral ties with My Mother were broken. They had turned into higher bonds, all of a spiritual nature. I always called Mary, My Holy "Mother". Our love suffered no interruptions, neither did it even cool down, nay, it was never so perfect as when I was separated from Her as by a second birth and She gave Me to the world and for the world, as the Messiah and Evangeliser. Her third sublime mystical maternity took place when She bore Me to the cross in the torture of Golgotha, and made Me the Redeemer of the world.

"What is there still between Me and You?" Before I was Yours, only Yours. You gave Me orders, and I obeyed You. I was subject" to You. Now I belong to My mission.

Did I not say: "He, who lays his hand on the plough and looks back to bid farewell to those who are staying, is not fit for the Kingdom of God"? I had laid My hand on the plough not to cut the ground with the ploughshare, but to open the hearts of men and sow there the word of God. I was to take My hand away from the plough only when they would tear it away to nail it to the Cross and to open with My torturing nail My Father's heart, out of which forgiveness for mankind was to flow.

That "still", forgotten by most, meant this: "You were everything for Me, Mother, as long as I was only Jesus of Mary of Nazareth, and You are everything in My spirit; but since I became the expected Messiah, I belong to My Father. Wait for a little while and once My mission is over, I will be, once again, entirely Yours; You will hold Me once again in Your arms, as when I was a little child, and no one will ever again contend with You for Your Son, considered as the disgrace of mankind, who will throw His mortal remains at You, to bring on You the shame of being the mother of a criminal. And afterwards You will have Me once again, triumphant, and finally You will have Me for ever when You are triumphant in Heaven. But now I belong to all these men. And I belong to the Father, Who sent Me to them".

That is the sense of that short but so full of meaning "still". »

Mary says to the servants: « Do what He will tell you. » In the smiling eyes of Her Son, Mary has read His consent, veiled by the great teaching to all those « who are called ».

And Jesus says to the servants: « Fill the jars with water. »

I see the servants filling the jars with water brought from the well (I hear the pulley screeching as the dripping pail is pulled up and lowered down). I see the steward pour out some of the liquid with astonished eyes, then taste it with gestures of even greater astonishment, relish it and speak to the landlord and the groom (they were near each other).

Mary looks at Her Son once again, and smiles; then having received a smile from Him, She bows Her head, blushing slightly. She is happy.

A murmur spreads throughout the hall, they all turn their heads towards Jesus and Mary, some stand up to get a better view, some go near the jars. Then a moment's silence, which is immediately broken by an outburst of praises for Jesus.

He stands up and simply says: « Thank Mary » and withdraws from the banquet. His disciples follow Him. On the threshold He repeats: « May peace be in this house and God's blessing on you » and He adds: « Goodbye, Mother. »

The vision ends.

Jesus teaches me as follows:

« When I said to the disciples: "Let us go and make My Mother happy", I had given the sentence a deeper meaning than it seemed. I did not mean the happiness of seeing Me, but the joy of being the initiatress of My miraculous activity and the first benefactress of mankind.

Always remember that. My first miracle happened because of Mary. The very first one. It is a symbol that Mary is the key to miracles. I never refuse My Mother anything and because of Her prayer I bring forward also the time of grace. I know My Mother, the second in goodness after God. I know that to grant you a grace is to make Her happy, because She is All Love. That is why I said, knowing Her: "Let us go and make Her happy".

Besides, I wanted to make Her power known to the world, together with Mine. Since She was destined to be joined to Me in the flesh, it was fair She should be joined to Me in the power that is shown to the world. Because we were one flesh: I in Her, She around Me, like the petals of a lily round its scented lively pistil; and She was united to Me in sorrow: because we were both on the cross, I with My body, She with Her soul, as a lily is scented because of its corolla and because of the essence extracted from it.

I say to you what I said to the guests: "Thank Mary. It is through Her that you had with you the Master of the miracle and you have My graces, particularly those of forgiveness".

Rest in peace. We are with you. »

53. Jesus Drives the Merchants out of the Temple.

24th October 1944.

I see Jesus entering the enclosure of the Temple with Peter, Andrew, John, James, Philip and Bartholomew. There is a very large crowd both inside and outside the enclosure. Pilgrims are arriving in flocks from every part of the town.

From the top of the hill on which the Temple is built, one can see the narrow twisted streets of the town, swarming with people. One gets the impression that a self-moving, many-coloured ribbon has been laid between the white houses. The town looks like a rare toy indeed, a toy made of gaily-coloured ribbons between two white threads, all converging on the point where the domes of the House of the Lord are shining.

Inside it is… a real market. The concentration of a holy place has been destroyed. Some run, some call, some contract for lambs, shouting and cursing because of the extortionate prices, some drive the poor bleating animals into their enclosures (rough partitions made of ropes and pegs, at the entrance of which stand the merchants or owners, awaiting buyers). Blows with cudgels, bleatings, curses, shouts, insults to the boys who are not prompt in gathering together or selecting the animals, abuses to the purchasers who haggle over prices or who go away, graver insults to those who wisely brought their own lambs.

Near the benches of the money-changers, there is more bawling. It is obvious that either always, or at Passover time, the Temple functioned as a… stock exchange or black market. There was no fixed rate of exchange. There must have been a legal rate, but the money-changers imposed a different one, making whatever profit they fancied, for exchanging the money. And I can assure you they

were not joking in their usury transactions!… The poorer the people were and the farther they came from, the more they were fleeced: old people more than young people, those coming from beyond Palestine more than the old folk.

Some poor old men looked over and over again at the money they had saved in a whole year, I wonder with how much hard work, they took it out and put it back into their purses dozens and dozens of times, going from one money-changer to another and at times ending up by going back to the first one, who avenged himself for their original desertion by increasing the premium for the exchange. And the big coins passed from the hands of the sighing owners into the clutches of the usurers and were changed into smaller coins. Then a further tragedy would take place with vendors over the choice and payment of their lambs, and the poor old men, particularly if they were half blind, were fobbed off with the most wretched little lambs.

I see an old couple, man and wife, come back pushing a poor little lamb which must have been found faulty by the sacrificers. They cried and begged the vendor, who, far from being moved, replied with nasty words and rude manners.

« Considering what you want to spend, Galileans, the lamb I gave you is even too good. Go away! Or if you want a better one, you must pay five more coins. »

« In the name of God! We are poor and old! Are you going to prevent us from celebrating this Passover which may be our last one? Are you not satisfied with what you wanted for a poor little lamb? »

« Go away, you filthy lot. Joseph the Elder is now coming here. I enjoy his favour. God be with you, Joseph! Come and make your choice! »

The man whose name is Joseph the Elder, that is Joseph of Arimathea, enters the enclosure and picks a magnificent lamb. He passes by, stately and proud, magnificently dressed, without even looking at the poor old people weeping at the gate, that is the enclosure entrance. He almost bumps into them when he goes out with the fat, bleating lamb.

But Jesus also is now nearby. He also has made His purchase, and Peter, who probably bargained for Him, is pulling a fairly good lamb.

Peter would like to go at once where they offer the sacrifices. But Jesus turns to the right, towards the dismayed, weeping, undecided old couple, who are knocked about by the crowds and insulted by the vendor.

Jesus, Who is so tall that the heads of the poor old souls reach only up to His heart, lays one hand on the shoulder of the woman and asks her: « Why are you crying, woman? »

The little old woman turns round and she sees the young, tall, stately man, wearing a beautiful new white tunic and a snow-white mantle. She must think He is a doctor because of His garments and His aspect and is greatly surprised, because doctors and priests pay no attention to the poor, neither do they protect them from the stinginess of merchants. She explains to Jesus the reason for their tears.

Jesus addresses the lamb vendor: « Change this lamb for these believers. It is not worthy of the altar, neither is it fair that you should take advantage of two poor old people, only because they are weak and unprotected. »

« And who are You? »

« A just man. »

« By Your way of speaking and Your companions', I know You are a Galilean. Can there be a just man in Galilee? »

« Do what I told you, and be a just man yourself. »

« Listen! Listen to the Galilean Who is defending His equals! And He wants to teach us of the Temple! » The man laughs and jeers, imitating the Galilean accent, which is more musical and softer than the Judaean, at least I think so.

Many people go near them and other merchants and moneychangers take their companion's part against Jesus.

Amongst the people present there are two or three ironical rabbis. One of them asks: « Are You a doctor? », in such a way that even Job would lose his temper.

« Yes, I am. »

« What do You teach? »

« This I teach: to make the House of God a house of prayer and not a usury or a market place. That is what I teach. »

Jesus is formidable. He looks like the archangel posted on the threshold of Eden. He has no flashing sword in His hand but the beams from His eyes strike the impious mockers like lightning. Jesus has nothing in His hands. All He has is His wrath. And full of wrath, He walks fast and solemn between the benches, He scatters the coins which had been sorted out so meticulously according to their values, He turns over the benches and tables, and everything falls on the ground with great noise, in the bustle of rebounding metals and beaten wood, angry cries, shrieks of terror and shouts of approval. He then snatches from the hands of the stable-boys some ropes with which they were holding oxen, sheep and lambs, and He makes a very hard lash, in which the slip-knots are real scourges: He lifts it, swings it and strikes mercilessly with it. Yes, I can assure you: mercilessly.

The unforeseen storm hits heads and backs. The believers move to one side admiring the scene; the guilty ones, chased as far as the external wall, take to their heels, leaving their money on the ground and abandoning in a great confusion of legs, horns and wings, their animals, some of which run and fly away. The bellows, bleatings, and fluttering of turtle doves and pigeons, added to the burst of laughter and shouting of the believers at the escaping usurers, overcome even the plaintive chorus of lambs, slaughtered in another yard.

Priests, rabbis and Pharisees rush to the spot. Jesus is still in the middle of the yard, on His way back from the chase. The lash is still in His hands.

« Who are You? How dare You do that, upsetting the prescribed ceremonies? From which school are You? We do not know You, neither do we know where You come from. »

« I am He Who is Mighty. I can do anything. Destroy this true Temple and I will raise it to give praise to God. I am not upsetting the holiness of the House of God or of the ceremonies, but you are perturbing it, allowing His House to become the centre of usurers and merchants. My school is the school of God. The same school as the whole of Israel had when the Eternal God spoke to Moses. You do not know Me? You will know Me. You do not know where I come from? You will learn. »

And turning towards the people, without noticing the priests any longer, tall in His white tunic, with His mantle open and blowing behind His back, His arms stretched out like an orator at the most important part of his speech, He says: « Listen, Israel! In Deuteronomy it is said: "You are to appoint judges and scribes at all the gates… and they must administer an impartial judgement to the people. You must be impartial; you must take no bribes, for a bribe blinds wise men's eyes and jeopardises the cause of the just. Strict justice must be your ideal, so that you may live in rightful possession of the land that Yahweh your God is giving you".

Listen, Israel. In Deuteronomy it is said: "The priests and scribes and the whole of the tribe of Levi shall have no share or inheritance with Israel, because they must live on the foods offered to Yahweh and on His dues; they shall have no inheritance among their brothers, because Yahweh will be their inheritance".

Listen, Israel. In Deuteronomy it is said: "You must not lend on interest to your brother, whether the lack be of money or food or anything else. You may demand interest on a loan of a foreigner; you will lend without interest to your brother whatever he needs".

The Lord said that.

But now you see that in Israel judgements are administered without justice for the poor. They are not inclined to justice, but they are partial with the rich, and to be poor, to be of the common people means to be oppressed. How can the people say: "Our judges are just" when they see that only the mighty ones are respected and satisfied, whereas the poor have no one who will listen to them? How can the people respect the Lord, when they see that the Lord is not respected by those who should respect Him more than everyone else? Does he who infringes the Lord's commandment respect Him? Why then do the priests in Israel possess property and accept bribes from tax-collectors and sinners, who make them offerings to obtain their favours, while they accept gifts to fill their coffers?

God is the inheritance of His priests. He, the Father of Israel, is more than a Father to them and provides them with food, as it is

just. But not more than what is just. He did not promise money and possessions to His servants of the sanctuary. In eternal life, they will possess Heaven for their justice, as Moses, Elijah, Jacob and Abraham will, but in this world they must have but a linen garment and a diadem of incorruptible gold: purity and charity, and their bodies must be subject to their souls, which are to be subject to the true God, and their bodies are not to be masters over their souls and against God.

I have been asked on what authority I do this. And on what authority do they violate God's command and allow in the shade of the sacred walls usury on their brothers of Israel, who have come to obey the divine command? I have been asked from what school I come and I replied: "From God's school" Yes, Israel, I have come from and I will take you back to that holy and immutable school.

Who wants to know the Light, the Truth, the Way, who wants to hear once again the voice of God speaking to his people, let him come to Me. You followed Moses through the deserts, Israel. Follow Me, because I shall lead you through a far worse desert, to the true blessed Land. At God's command, I will draw you to it, across an open sea. I will cure you of all evils lifting up My Sign.

The time of Grace has come. The Prophets expected it and died waiting for it. The Prophets prophesied it and died in that hope. The just have dreamt of it and died comforted by that dream. It is now here.

Come. "The Lord is about to judge His people and have mercy on His servants", as He promised through Moses. »

The people crowding round Jesus stand open-mouthed listening to Him. Then they comment on the new Rabbi's words and ask His companions questions.

Jesus goes to another yard, separated from this one only by a porch. His friends follow Him, and the vision ends.

54. Jesus Meets Judas Iscariot and Thomas and Cures Simon the Zealot.

26th October 1944.

Jesus is together with His six disciples. Neither the other day nor today have I seen Judas Thaddeus, who said he wanted to come to Jerusalem with Jesus.

It must still be Passover time, because there is always a lot of people in town.

It is evening and many people are hurrying home. Jesus also goes towards the house where He is a guest. It is not the house of the last Supper, which is in town, although not far from its walls. This house, instead, is a real country house, amongst thick olive-trees.

From the rustic open space in front of the house, one can see the olive-trees down the terraces of the hill, right down to a little torrent, with very little water, which flows away along the valley formed by two hills: on the top of one there is the Temple, on the other hill there are only olive-trees. Jesus is at the first slopes of the latter hill, which rises smoothly, completely covered with peaceful trees.

« John, there are two men awaiting your friend » says an elderly man, who must be the farmer or the owner of the olive-grove. I would say that John knows him.

« Where are they? Who are they? »

« I don't know. One is certainly a Judaean. The other… I don't know. I didn't ask him. »

« Where are they? »

« In the kitchen, waiting, and… and… yes… there is another man who is all covered with sores. I made him stay over there, because I am afraid he may be a leper. He says he wants to see the Prophet Who spoke in the Temple. »

Jesus, Who up to this moment has been silent, says: « Let us go to him first. Tell the others to come if they so wish. I will speak to them there, in the olive-grove. » And He makes for the place indicated by the man.

« And what about us? What shall we do? » asks Peter.

« Come, if you want. »

A man, muffled up, is leaning against the rustic wall supporting a terrace, the nearest to the boundary of the property. He must have climbed up there along a path coasting the torrent.

When he sees Jesus approaching him, he shouts: « Go back. Back! Have mercy on me! » And he uncovers his trunk dropping his tunic to the ground. If his face is covered with scabs his trunk is one big sore. Some of the sores have already become deep wounds, some are like burns, some are whitish and glossy, as if there was a thin white pane of glass on them.

« Are you a leper? What do you want of Me? »

« Don't curse me! Don't stone me. I have been told that the other evening You revealed Yourself as the Voice of God and the Bearer of Grace. I was also told that You gave assurance that by raising Your Sign, You will cure all diseases. Please raise it on me. I have come from the sepulchres… over there… I crept like a snake amongst the bushes near the torrent to arrive here without being seen. I waited until evening before leaving because at dusk it is more difficult to see who I am. I dared… I found this man, the man of the house, he is good. He did not kill me. He only said: "Wait over there, near the little wall". Have mercy on me » and as Jesus is going near him, all by Himself, because the six disciples and the landlord, as well as the two strangers, are far away and are

evidently disgusted, he adds: « Don't come nearer. Don't! I am infected! » But Jesus proceeds. He looks at him so mercifully, that the man starts crying and kneels down almost touching the ground with his face, moaning: « Your Sign! Your Sign! »

« It will be raised when it is time. But now I say to you: Stand up. Be healed. I want it. And be the sign in this town that must recognise Me. Rise, I say. And do not sin, out of gratitude to God! »

The man rises slowly. He seems to emerge from the long flowery grass as from a shroud… and is healed. He looks at himself in the last dim light of the day. He is healed. He shouts: « I am clean! Oh! What shall I do for You now? »

« You must comply with the Law. Go to the priest. Be good in future. Go. »

The man is on the point of throwing himself at Jesus' feet, but he remembers he is still impure, according to the Law, and he restrains himself. But he kisses his own hand, and throws a kiss to Jesus and weeps. He weeps out of joy.

The others are dumbfounded. Jesus turns away from the healed man and rouses them smiling. « My friends, it was only a leprosy of the flesh. But you will see leprosy fall from hearts. Is it you that wanted Me? » He asks the two strangers. « Here I am. Who are you? »

« We heard You the other evening… in the Temple. We looked for You in town. A man, who said he is a relative of Yours, told us You stay here. »

« Why are you looking for Me? »

« To follow You, if You will allow us, because You have words of truth. »

« Follow Me? But do you know where I am going? »

« No, Master, but certainly to glory. »

« Yes. But not to a glory of this world . I am going to a glory which is in Heaven and is conquered by virtue and sacrifice. Why do you want to follow Me? » He asks them again.

« To take part in Your glory. »

« According to Heaven? »

« Yes, according to Heaven. »

« Not everybody is able to arrive there. Because Mammon lays more snares for those yearning for Heaven than for the others. And only he who has strong will power can resist. Why follow Me, if to follow Me implies a continuous struggle against the enemy, which is in us, against the hostile world, and against the Enemy who is Satan? »

« Because that is the desire of our souls, which have been conquered by You. You are holy and powerful. We want to be Your friends. »

« Friends!!! » Jesus is silent and sighs. Then He stares at the one who has spoken all the time and who has now removed the mantle-hood from his head, and is bareheaded. He is Judas of Kerioth. « Who are you? You speak better than a man of the people. »

« I am Judas, the son of Simon. I come from Kerioth. But I am of the Temple. I am waiting for and dreaming of the King of the Jews. I heard You speak like a king. I saw Your kingly gestures. Take me with You. »

« Take you? Now? At once? No. »

« Why not, Master? »

« Because it is better to examine ourselves carefully before venturing on very steep roads. »

« Do You not believe I am sincere? »

« You have said it. I believe in your impulsiveness. But I do not believe in your perseverance. Think about it, Judas. I am going away now and I will be back for Pentecost. If you are in the Temple, you will see Me. Examine yourself. And who are you? ».

« I am another one who saw You. I would like to be with You. But now I am frightened. »

« No. Presumption ruins people. Fear may be an impediment, but it is a help when it originates from humility. Do not be afraid. Think about it, too, and when I come back… »

« Master, You are so holy! I am afraid of not being worthy. Nothing else. Because I do not doubt my love… »

« What is your name? »

« Thomas, of Didymus. »

« I will remember your name. Go in peace. »

Jesus dismisses them and He goes into the hospitable house for supper.

The six disciples who are with Him want to know many things. « Why, Master, why did You treat them differently? Because there was a difference. Both of them had the same impulsiveness… » asks John.

« My friend, also the same impulsiveness may have a different taste and bring about a different effect. They both certainly had the same impulsiveness. But they were not the same in their purposes. And the one who appears less perfect is, in fact, more perfect, because he has no incentive to human glory. He loves Me because he loves Me. »

« And so do I. »

« And I, too. »

« And I. »

« And I. »

« And I. »

« And I. »

« I know. I know you for what you are. »

« Are we therefore perfect? »

« Oh! No! But, like Thomas, you will become perfect if you

persevere in your desire to love. Perfect?! Oh! My friends! And who is perfect but God? »

« You are! »

« I solemnly tell you that I am not perfect by Myself, if you think I am prophet. No man is perfect. But I am perfect because He Who is speaking to you is the Word of the Father: part of God. His thought that becomes Word. I have Perfection in Myself. And you must believe Me to be such if you believe that I am the Word of the Father. And yet, see, My friends, I want to be called the Son of man because I lower Myself taking upon Myself all the miseries of man, to bear them as My first scaffold, and cancel them, after bearing them, without suffering from them Myself. What a burden, My friends! But I bear it with joy. It is a joy for Me to bear it, because, since I am the Son of mankind, I will make mankind once again the child of God. As it was on the first day. »

Jesus is speaking very gently, sitting at the poor table, gesticulating calmly with His hands on the table, His head slightly inclined to one side, His face lit up from below by a small oil lamp on the table. He smiles gently, He Who formerly was so majestic a Master in His bearing, is now so friendly in His gestures. His disciples are listening to Him carefully.

« Master… why did Your cousin not come, although he knows where You live? »

« My Peter!… You will be one of My stones, the first one. But not all the stones can be easily used. Have you seen the marble blocks in the Praetorium building? With hard labour they have been torn away from the bosom of the mountain side, and are now part of the Praetorium. Look instead at those stones down there shining in the moonlight, in the water of the Kidron. They arrived in the riverbed by themselves, and if anyone wants to take them, they do not put up any resistance. My cousin is like the first stones I am speaking of… The bosom of the mountain side: his family, they contend for him with Me. »

« But I want to be exactly like the stones in the torrent. I am quite prepared to leave everything for You: home, wife, fishing, brothers. Everything, Rabboni, for You. »

« I know, Peter. That is why I love you. Also Judas will come. »

« Who? Judas of Kerioth? I don't care for him. He is a dandy young man, but… I prefer… I prefer myself… » They all laugh at Peter's witty remark. « There is nothing to laugh at. I mean that I prefer a sincere Galilean, a rough fisherman, but without any fraud to… to townsfolk who… I don't know… here: the Master knows what I mean. »

« Yes, I know. But do not judge. We need one another in this world, the good are mixed with the wicked, just like flowers in a field. Hemlock grows beside the salutary mallow. »

« I would like to ask one thing… »

« What, Andrew? »

« John told me about the miracle You worked at Cana… We were hoping so much that You would work one at Capernaum… and You said that You would not work any miracles before fulfilling the Law. Why Cana then? And why here and not in Your own fatherland? »

« To obey the Law is to be united to God and that increases our capabilities. A miracle is the proof of the union with God, as well as of God's benevolent and assenting presence. That is why I wanted to perform My duty as an Israelite, before starting the series of miracles. »

« But You were not bound to fulfill the Law. »

« Why? As the Son of God, I was not. But as a son of the Law, yes, I was. For the time being, Israel knows Me only as such… and, even later, almost everyone in Israel will know Me as such, nay, even less. But I do not want to scandalise Israel and therefore I obey the Law. »

« You are holy. »

« Holiness does not bar obedience. Nay it makes obedience perfect. Besides everything else, there is a good example to be given. What would you say of a father, of an elder brother, of a teacher, of a priest who did not give good examples? »

« And what about Cana? »

« Cana was to make My Mother happy. Cana is the advance due to My Mother. She anticipates Grace. Here I honour the Holy City, making her, in public, the starting point of My power as Messiah. But there, at Cana, I paid honour to the Holy Mother of God, Full of Grace. The world received Me through Her. It is only fair that My first miracle in the world should be for Her. »

There is a knocking at the door. It is Thomas once again. He goes in and throws himself at Jesus' feet. « Master… I cannot wait until You come back. Let me come with You. I am full of faults, but I have my love, my only real great treasure. It is Yours, it's for You. Let me come, Master… »

Jesus lays His hand on Thomas' head. « You may stay, Didymus. Follow Me. Blessed are those who are sincere and persistent in their will. You are all blessed. You are more than relatives to Me, because you are My children and My brothers, not according to the blood, that dies, but according to the will of God and to your spiritual wishes. Now I tell you that I have no closer relative than those who do the will of My Father, and you do it, because you want what is good. »

The vision ends thus. It is 4 o'clock p.m. and the shadows of torpor are already falling upon me: a torpidity which I perceive will be violent, a logical consequence of yesterday's painful hour…

But I was very ill also on October the 24th. So much so, that when the vision was over - I wrote it suffering from a headache quite as bad as meningitis - I did not have enough strength to add that at last I saw Jesus dressed as He appears to me when the vision is entirely for me: wearing a soft tunic of white wool just verging to ivory and a mantle of the same hue. The garments He was wearing the first time He revealed Himself as Messiah in Jerusalem.

55. Thomas Becomes a Disciple.

27th October 1944.

This morning, as I recovered my senses after a very heavy torpor which had lasted many hours, while I was praying awaiting daylight, I saw the resumption of the vision.

I say resumption because we are still in the same place: the low, wide kitchen, with its dark, smoky walls, dimly lit up by the small flame of an oil lamp on the rustic table. It is a long narrow table at which eight people are sitting: Jesus and His six disciples, and the landlord, four each side.

Jesus, sitting on a stool - the only seats here are three-legged stools, real country furniture - is still turned round speaking to Thomas. Jesus' hand has fallen from Thomas' head on to his shoulder. Jesus says: « Stand up, My friend. Have you had any supper yet? »

« No, Master. I walked a few yards with the other fellow who was with me, then I left him and I came back saying that I wanted to speak to the healed leper… I said that because I thought he would disdain approaching an impure man. I guessed right. But I wanted to see You, not the leper… I wanted to say to You: "Please take me"… I wandered up and down the olive-grove until a young man asked me what I was doing. He must have thought I was ill-disposed. He was near a pillar, at the boundary of the olive-grove. »

The landlord smiles. « It's my son » he explains and adds: « He is on guard at the oil-mill. In the caves under the mill, we still have almost all the crop of the year. It was a very good one and we made a lot of oil. And when there are large crowds about, robbers always get together to plunder unguarded places. Eight years ago, just at Parasceve, they robbed us of everything. Since then we keep a good watch one night each. His mother has gone to take him his supper. »

« Well, he asked me: "What do you want?", and he spoke in such a tone that to save my back from his stick, I answered at once: "I am looking for the Master Who lives here". He then replied: "If what you say is true, come to the house". And he brought me here. It was he who knocked at the door and he did not go away until he heard my first words. »

« Do you live far away? »

« I live on the other side of the town, near the Eastern Gate. »

« Are you alone? »

« I was with some relatives. But they have gone to stay with other relatives on the road to Bethlehem. I remained here to look for You day and-night, until I found You. »

Jesus smiles and says: « So no one is waiting for you? »

« No, Master. »

« It is a long way, it is a dark night, the Roman patrols are about the town. I say: stay with us, if you wish. »

« Oh! Master! » Thomas is happy.

« Make room for him. And each of us will give something to our brother. » Jesus gives him the portion of cheese He had in front of Him. He explains to Thomas: « We are poor and our supper is almost over. But there is so much heart in who offers. » And He says to John who is sitting beside Him: « Give your seat to our friend. »

John gets up at once and sits down at the end of the table near the landlord.

« Sit down, Thomas, and eat. » And then He says to them all: « You will always behave like that, My friends, according to the law of charity. A pilgrim is already protected by the law of God. But now, in My name, you must love him even more. When anyone asks you for some bread, a drop of water or a shelter in the name of God, you must give it in the same name. And you will receive your reward from God. You must behave so with everybody. Even with your enemies. And that is the new Law. Up till now you were told: "Love those who love you and hate your enemies". I say: "Love also those who hate you". Oh! if you only knew how much you will be loved by God, if you love as I am telling you! And when anyone says: "I want to be your companion in serving the true Lord God and following His Lamb", then he must be dearer to you than a brother by blood, because you will be joined by an eternal bond: the bond of Christ. »

« But if someone comes who is not sincere? It is easy to say: "I want to do this or that". But words do not always correspond to the truth » says Peter, rather irritated. I do not know why, but he is not in his usual jovial mood.

« Peter, listen. What you say is sensible and fair. But, see: it is better to exceed in bounty and trust rather than exceed in distrust and hardness. If you help an undeserving person, what harm will befall you? None. Nay, God's reward will always be active for you, whereas the person will be guilty of betraying your trust. »

« No harm? Eh! Very often a worthless person is not satisfied with ingratitude, but goes much further, even to the extreme of ruining one's reputation, wealth and one's very life. »

« True. But would that diminish your merit? No, it would not. Even if the whole world should believe slander, even if you became poorer than Job, even if the cruel person should take your life, what would change in the eyes of God? Nothing. Nay, something would change. But to your advantage. God, to the merits of your bounty, would add the merits of your intellectual, financial, physical martyrdom. »

« All right! Perhaps it is so. » Peter does not speak any more. He sulkily rests his head on his hand.

Jesus addresses Thomas: « My friend, before, in the olive-grove I said to you: "When I come back here, if you are still willing, you will be one of My disciples". Now I say to you: "Are you willing to do Jesus a favour?" »

« Most certainly. »

« And if this favour should cost you some sacrifice? »

« There is no sacrifice in serving You. What is it You want? »

« I wanted to say… but you may have some business, some affections… »

« None, none! I have You! Tell me. »

« Listen. Tomorrow at daybreak the leper will leave the sepulchres to find someone who will inform the priest. You will be the first to go to the sepulchres. It is charity. And you will shout: "Come out, you, the one who was cleansed yesterday. I have been sent by Jesus of Nazareth, the Messiah of Israel, He who cleansed you". Let the world of the "living dead" know My name, let them throb with hope, and let those come to Me, who will have faith in addition to hope, that I may heal them. It is the first form of purity that I am bringing, the first form of the resurrection, of which I am the lord. One day I will grant a greater purity… One day the sealed tombs will violently expel those who are really dead, and they will appear and laugh with their empty eye sockets, with their bare jaws, because of the rejoicing of the souls freed from Limbo, a remote rejoicing and yet perceived even by skeletons. They will appear to laugh because of this liberation and to throb knowing it is due to… Go! He will come to you. You will do what he asks you to do. You will assist him in everything, as if he were your brother. And you will also say to him: "When you are completely purified, we will go together along the road of the river, beyond Doco and Ephraim. Jesus, the Master, will be waiting for us to tell us in what we have to serve him". »

« I will do that. And what about the other one? »

« Who? The Iscariot? »

« Yes, Master. »

« The advice I gave him still stands. Let him decide by himself and let him take a long time. Nay, avoid seeing him. »

« I will be with the leper. Only lepers wander about in the valley of the sepulchres and those who pitifully are in touch with them. »

Peter mumbles something. Jesus hears him.

« What is the matter with you, Peter? You either grumble or are silent. You seem to be discontented. Why? »

« I am discontented. We were the first and You did not work a miracle for us. We were the first and You let a stranger sit beside You. We were the first and You entrust him, not us, with a task. We were the first and… yet, yes, we seem to be the last ones. Why are You going to wait for them on the road near the river? Certainly to entrust them with some mission. Why them, and not us? »

Jesus looks at him. He is not angry. On the contrary He smiles as one smiles at a child. He gets up, goes slowly over to Peter and, smiling, says to him: « Peter! Peter! You are a big, old baby! » And He says to Andrew, who is sitting beside his brother: « Go and take My seat » and He sits beside Peter, clasping his shoulders with His arm, and He speaks to him, holding him thus against His own shoulder: « Peter, you think I am being unfair, but I am not. On the contrary it is a proof that I know what you are worth. Look. Who needs proofs? He who is not yet certain. I knew you were so certain about Me, that I did not feel any need to give you evidence of My power. Proofs are required here in Jerusalem, where vices, irreligiousness, politics and many worldly things dim souls to such an extent that they can no longer see the Light passing by. But up there, on our beautiful lake, so clear under a clear sky, amongst honest and good willing people, no proof is required. You will have miracles. I will pour torrents of graces upon you. But consider how I valued you, I took you without exacting any proof and without finding it necessary to give you any, because I know who you are. You are dear to Me, so dear, and so faithful. »

Peter cheers up: « Forgive me, Jesus. »

« Yes, I forgive you because your sulkiness is a sign of love. But do not be envious any more, Simon of Jonas. Do you know what the heart of your Jesus is? Have you ever seen the sea, the real sea? You have? Well, My heart is bigger than the immense sea! And there is room for everybody. For the whole of mankind. And the smallest person has a place exactly as the greatest. And a sinner finds love just like an innocent. I am entrusting these with a mission. Certainly. Do you want to forbid Me? I chose you. You did not choose yourselves. I am therefore free to decide how I want to employ you. And if I leave them here with a mission - which might well be a test, as the lapse of time granted to the Iscariot may be due to mercy - can you reproach Me? How do you know that I am not keeping a greater mission for you? And is not the nicest mission to be told: "You will come with me"? »

« It is true. I am a blockhead! Forgive me… »

« Yes. I forgive everything. Oh! Peter!… But I beg you all never to

discuss merits and positions. I could have been born a king. I was born poor, in a stable. I could have been rich. I lived with My work and now I live out of charity. And yet, believe Me, My friends, there is no one greater than I in the eyes of God. Greater than I am, Who am here: the servant of man. »

« You a servant? Never! »

« Why not, Peter? »

« Because I will serve You. »

« Even if You served Me as a mother serves her child, I have come to serve man. I will be a Saviour for him. What service is there like that? »

« Oh! Master! You explain everything. And what seemed dark becomes clear at once! »

« Are you happy now, Peter? Now let Me finish talking to Thomas. Are you sure you will recognise the leper? He is the only one healed; but he may already have left by starlight, to find an early wayfarer. And someone, anxious to enter the town and see his relatives, might perhaps take his place. Listen to his description. I was near him and I saw him well in the twilight. He is tall and thin. Of a dark complexion, like a cross-breed, very deep and dark eyes with snow-white eyebrows, hair as white as linen and somewhat curly, and a long snubbed nose like the Lybians', two thick protruding lips particularly the lower one. He is so olive-coloured that his lips verge on violet. He has an old scar on his forehead and it will be the only stain, now that he has been cleaned from scabs and dirt. »

« He must be old, if he is all white. »

« No, Philip, he looks old, but he is not. Leprosy made him white. »

« What is he? A cross-breed? »

« Perhaps, Peter. He resembles African people. »

« Will he be an Israelite, then? »

« We will find out. But suppose he is not? »

« Eh! If he were not, he would go away. He is already lucky that he deserved to be healed. »

« No, Peter. Even if he is an idolater, I will not send him away. Jesus has come for everybody. And I solemnly tell you that people living in darkness will overcome the children of the people of Light… »

Jesus sighs. He then stands up. He thanks the Father with a hymn and blesses everyone.

The vision ends thus.

I point out incidentally that my internal adviser said to me, since yesterday evening when I saw the leper: « It is Simon, the apostle. You will see him and Thaddeus coming to the Master. » This morning, after Holy Communion (today is Friday) I opened

my missal and I saw that this is the eve of the feast of Saints Simon and Judas, and tomorrow's Gospel deals with charity, almost repeating the very words I heard before the vision. However, I have not seen Judas Thaddeus so far.

56. Judas of Alphaeus, Thomas and Simon Are Accepted as Disciples at the Jordan.

28th October 1944.

You are beautiful, o banks of the Jordan, as beautiful as you were in the times of Jesus! I admire you and am enraptured by your solemn green-blue peace, resounding with flowing waters and leafy branches, as sweet as a melody.

I am on a road which is quite wide and also well maintained. It must be a highway, or more likely a military road, built by the Romans to link the various regions with the capital. It runs near the river, but not precisely along it. It is in fact separated from it by woodland, the function of which I think is to consolidate the river banks and contain the water in times of flood. The woodland continues on the other side of the road, so that the road looks like a natural tunnel over which the trees interlace their leafy branches, a beneficial protection for wayfarers in the hot climate of this country.

At the point where I am, the river, and consequently also the road, form a wide bend, so that the leafy embankment appears to me like a huge green barrier built to enclose a basin of calm waters. It almost looks like a lake in a luxury park. But the water is not as still as the water of a lake. It flows, although slowly. This is evident from its rustling against the first reed thickets, the more daring ones that have grown down there, in the gravel bed, and also from the undulation of the long ribbon-like leaves of the canes, reaching down to the water by which they are sweetly lulled. Also a group of willows, with flexible falling branches' have entrusted the ends of their green foliage to the river, that combs the thin branches with a graceful caress, stretching them softly on the water surface.

There is peace and silence in the early morning. One can sense only the warbling of birds, the rustling of water and leaves, the glittering of dew drops on the tall green grass between the trees, a grass not yet hardened or parched by the summer sunshine, but tender and fresh, since- it came up after the springtime showers, which nourished the earth, in its very depth, with moisture and rich juices.

Three wayfarers are standing on the road, in the middle of the bend. They look up and down, to the south, where Jerusalem is and to the north, where Samaria lies. They look anxiously between the trees to see whether anyone is arriving as expected. They are Thomas, Judas Thaddeus and the healed leper. They are speaking.

« Can you see anything? »

« No, I can't. »

« Neither can I. »

« And yet this is the place. »

« Are you sure? »

« I'm sure, Simon. One of the six said to me, when the Master was going away amid the acclamations of the crowd, after the miraculous healing of a crippled beggar, who was healed at the Fish Gate: "We are now going out of Jerusalem. Wait for us five miles between Jericho and Doco, at the bend of the river, along the road in the woodland". This one. He also said: "We will be there in three days' time at dawn". This is the third day, and we have been here before dawn. »

« Will He come? Perhaps we should have followed Him from Jerusalem. »

« You were not yet allowed to mix with the crowds, Simon. »

« If my cousin told you to come here, He will certainly come here. He always keeps His promise. All we can do is wait. »

« Have you always been with Him? »

« Yes, always. Since He came back to Nazareth He was my good companion. We were always together. We are about the same age, I am a little older. And I was the favourite of His father, who was my father's brother. Also His Mother was very fond of me. I grew up more with Her than with my own mother. »

« She was fond… Is She no longer as fond of you, now? » « Oh! Yes, She is. But we have parted a little since He became a prophet. My relatives are not happy about it. »

« Which relatives? »

« My father and the two older brothers. The other one is undecided… My father is very old and I did not have the courage to hurt him. But now… Now, no longer so. Now I am going where my heart and my mind tell me. I am going to Jesus. I don't think I am offending the Law by doing so. In any case… if what I want to do was not right, Jesus would tell me. I will do what He says. Is it right for a father to prevent a son from doing good? If I feel that my salvation is there, why prevent me from reaching it? Why, at times, are our fathers our enemies? »

Simon sighs, as if he were overwhelmed by sad memories, he lowers his head, but does not speak.

Thomas instead replies: « I have already overcome the obstacle. My father listened to me and he understood me. He blessed me saying: "Go. May this Passover be for you the liberation from the slavery of waiting. You are fortunate because you can believe. I

will wait. But if it is really 'Him', and you will find out following Him, then come and say to your old father: 'Come, Israel has the Expected One' ". »

« You are luckier than I am. And we always lived beside Him! And we, in the family, do not believe!… We say, that is: they say: "He has gone mad"! »

« There, there is a group of people » shouts Simon. « It's Him, it's Him! I recognise His fair head! Oh! Come! Let us run! » They start walking fast southwards. When they reach the centre of the bend, the trees cover the remainder of the road, so that the two groups face each other unexpectedly. Jesus seems to be coming up from the river, because He is among the trees on the bank.

« Master! »

« Jesus! »

« My Lord! »

The three cries of the disciple, the cousin and the cured leper are full of joy and veneration.

« Peace to you! » There is the beautiful, unmistakable, full, resonant, calm, expressive, clear, virile, sweet, incisive voice! « You too, Judas, My cousin, are here? »

They embrace each other. Judas is weeping.

« Why are you weeping? »

« Oh! Jesus! I want to stay with You! »

« I have been waiting for you all the time. Why did you not come? »

Judas lowers his head and is silent.

« They did not let you! And now? »

« Jesus, I… I cannot obey them. I want to obey only You. »

« But I did not give you an order. »

« No, You did not. But it is Your mission that gives it! It is He, Who sent You, Who is speaking here, in my heart, and says to me: "Go to Him". It is She, Who bore You, my sweet teacher, Who with Her gentle look, as mild as a dove's, says to me without uttering a word: "Be of Jesus!". Can I ignore that heavenly voice that pierces my heart? Can I ignore the prayers of such a Holy Woman, Who implores me for my own good? Only because I am Your cousin on Joseph's side, am I not to acknowledge You for what You are, whereas the Baptist recognised You, although he had never seen You, here, on the banks of this river and he greeted You as the "Lamb of God"? And I, should I not be capable of anything, although I was brought up with You, and I was good because I followed You, and I became a son of the Law through Your Mother, from Whom I learned not the six hundred and thirteen precepts of the rabbis, besides the Scriptures and the prayers, but the essence of them all? »

« And your father? »

« My father? He does not lack bread and assistance, and then… you give me the example. You have thought of the welfare of the people, rather than the little advantage of Mary. And She is alone. Tell me, Master, is it not right for a son to say to his father, without lacking respect: "Father, I love you. But God is above you and I will follow Him"? »

« Judas, My cousin and My friend, I tell you: you have made good progress on the way to Light. Come. It is lawful to speak thus to a father, when it is God Who calls. There is nothing above God. Also the laws of relationship cease, that is they are raised to a dignity, because with our tears, we give our fathers and mothers a greater help and for something everlasting, not for a short time in this world. We draw them with us to Heaven, and by sacrificing our affections, to God. So, Judas, stay here. I have been waiting for you and I am happy to have you, the friend of My life at Nazareth. »

Judas is touched.

Jesus addresses Thomas: « You obeyed faithfully. That is the first virtue of a disciple. »

« I came because I want to be faithful to You. »

« And you will be. I tell you. And you, who are hiding shyly in the shade, come here. Do not be afraid. »

« My Lord! » The ex-leper is at Jesus' feet.

« Stand up. Your name? »

« Simon. »

« Your family? »

« My Lord… it was powerful… I was powerful too… But bitter sectarian hatred… and errors of youth damaged its power. My father… Oh! I must speak against him, who caused me to shed so many earthly tears! You see, You saw the gift he gave me. »

« Was he a leper? »

« He was not. Neither was I. But he suffered from another disease which we in Israel associate with various forms of leprosy. He… his caste was then triumphant, he lived and died as a powerful man, at home. I… if You had not saved me, I would have died in the valley of sepulchres. »

« Are you alone? »

« Yes, I am. I have a faithful servant who looks after what property is left. I sent word to him. »

« And your mother? »

« She… is dead. » The man seems embarrassed.

Jesus looks at him attentively. « Simon, you asked me: "What shall I do for You?" Now I say to you: "Follow Me". »

« I will, at once, my Lord… But… But I… let me tell You one thing. I am, I was called "Zealot" because of the caste, and "Cananean", because of my mother. See. I am of a dark complexion. In my veins there is the blood of a slave woman. My father had no children from his wife, and he had me from a slave. His wife was a good woman and she brought me up as her own son, she took care of me in my endless illnesses until she died… »

« There are no slaves or freemen in the eyes of God. There is only one slavery in His eyes: sin. And I have come to abolish it. I am calling everybody, because the Kingdom is of all men. Are you a learned man? »

« Yes, I am. I also had my position amongst the important people, as long as my disease was hidden under my clothes. But when it spread to my face… My enemies then could not believe they were at last able to confine me amongst the "dead", although a Roman doctor of Caesarea, when I consulted him, told me that mine was not real leprosy, but hereditary serpigo, which I would spread only by procreation. Is it possible for me not to curse my father? »

« You must not curse him. He has caused you all sorts of trouble… »

« Yes, he did! He was a squanderer, a vicious, cruel, heartless man without any love. He deprived me of my health, he denied me love and peace, he branded me with a shameful name and with a disease which is a mark of infamy… He wanted everything for himself, even his son's future. He deprived me of everything, also of the joy of being a father. »

« That is why I say to you: "Follow Me". As My follower you will find father and children. Look up, Simon. There, the True Father is smiling at you. Look at the wide world, at the continents, at the countries: there are children and children everywhere; children of' the souls for the childless. They are waiting for you, and many like you are also waiting. There are no foundlings under My Sign. There is no solitude, no difference in My Sign. It is a sign of love, and it gives love. Come, My childless Simon. Come, Judas, who are losing your father for My sake. I join you in the same destiny. »

They are both beside Him. He is holding His hands on their shoulders as if He were taking possession of them and imposing a common yoke on them. He then says: « And I unite you together. But now I will separate you. Simon, you will stay here with Thomas. You will prepare with him the way for My return: I will be back soon, and I want the people to be waiting for Me. Tell the sick people that He Who can cure their illnesses, is about to come here: you can certainly tell them that. Tell those who are waiting, that the Messiah is among His people. Tell the sinners that He Who forgives has come to give them strength to rise… »

« Will we be able to do that? »

« Yes, you will. All you have to say is: "He has come. He calls you. He is waiting for you. He has come to grant you graces. Come here to see Him", and to these words, add a report of what you know. And you, Judas, My cousin, come with Me and these. But you will stay at Nazareth. »

« Why, Jesus? »

« Because you must prepare My way in My fatherland. Do you think it is a small mission? I can tell you that there is not a harder one… » Jesus sighs.

« And will I succeed? »

« You will and you will not. But it will be sufficient to be justified. »

« Justified of what? And with whom? »

« With God. With your fatherland. With your family. They will not be able to reproach us, because we offered good things: and if the fatherland and the family will disdain our offer, we shall not be blamed for their loss. »

« And what about us? »

« You, Peter? You will go back to your fishing nets. »

« Why? »

« Because I will teach you slowly and I will take you with Me, when I find that you are ready. »

« But will we see You, then? »

« Certainly. I will often come to see you, or I will send for you when I am at Capernaum. Now, let us say goodbye, My friends and let us go. I bless you, who are staying here. May My peace be with You. »

And the vision ends.

57. Return to Nazareth after Passover with the Six Disciples.

31st October 1944.

Jesus is near Nazareth with His cousin and the six disciples. From the top of the hill where they are, the white village can be seen amongst the green of the trees, with its houses scattered up and down the sweetly undulating slopes, gently declining in some cases, more steep in others.

« Here we are, My friends. That is My house. My Mother is at home because there is smoke rising from the house. Perhaps She is baking. I will not ask you to stay with Me, because I imagine you will be anxious to go to your homes. But if you wish to share My bread with Me and meet My Mother, Whom John has already met, then I say to You: "Come". »

The six disciples, who were already sad because of the impending separation, are all happy again and they accept the invitation wholeheartedly.

« Let us go, then. »

They go down the hillock quickly and take to the main road. It is evening. It is still warm, but the shades of evening are falling over

the country, where the crops are beginning to ripen.

They go into the village. Women are coming and going from the fountain, men standing on the threshold of their little workshops or working in the kitchen gardens wave to Jesus and James.

The children press round Jesus.

« Have You come back? »

« Are You staying here, now? »

« The wheel of my little barrow is broken again. »

« Do You know, Jesus. I have a new baby sister, and they have called her Mary. »

« The schoolmaster told me that I have learned everything and that I am a true son of the Law. »

« Sarah is not -here, because her mother is very ill. She cries, because she is afraid. »

« My brother Isaac got married. We had a lovely feast. »

Jesus listens, caresses, praises, promises His help.

And they reach the house thus. Mary is already at the door, as a thoughtful boy informed Her.

« Son! »

« Mother! »

They are in each other's arms. Mary, Who is much smaller than Jesus, is leaning with Her head on Her Son's chest, clasped in His arms. He kisses Her blond hair. They enter the house.

The disciples, including Judas, remain outside, to leave Jesus and Mary free in their first effusions.

« Jesus! My Son! » Mary's voice trembles, as if it were choked with sobs.

« Why, Mother, why are You so upset? »

« Oh! Son. They told Me… In the Temple, that day, there were some Galileans and some Nazarenes… They came back… and they told Me… Oh! Son! »

« But You can see, Mother, that I am well. I suffered no harm. God was glorified in His House. »

« Yes, I know, Son of My heart. I know it was like the blare awaking the sleepers. And I am happy for the glory given to God… I am happy that this people of Mine wakes to God… I am not reproaching You… I will not be a hindrance to You… I understand You and… and I am happy, but I begot You, Son!… » Mary is still clasped by Jesus' arms and She has spoken holding Her little open hands pressed against Her Son's chest, Her head turned up towards Him, Her eyes shining with tears ready to run down Her cheeks. She is now silent, leaning Her head on His chest. She looks like a grey turtle-dove, in Her greyish dress, sheltered by two strong white wings, because Jesus still wears His white tunic and mantle.

« Mother! Poor Mother! Dear Mother!… » Jesus kisses Her again.

He then says: « Well, see? I am here, but I am not alone. I have My first disciples with Me, and the other ones are in Judaea. Also My cousin Judas is with Me and follows Me… »

« Judas? »

« Yes, Judas. I know why You are surprised. Among those who told You what happened, there certainly was Alphaeus with his sons, and I am not mistaken if I tell You that they criticised Me. But do not be afraid. Today is so, tomorrow will be different. A man is to be cultivated like the soil, and where there are thorns, there will be roses. Judas, of whom You are so fond, is already with Me. »

« Where is he now? »

« Outside with the others. Have You got enough bread for everybody? »

« Yes, Son. Mary of Alphaeus is taking it out of the oven just now. Mary is very good to Me, particularly now. »

« God will give her glory. » He goes to the door and calls: « Judas! Your mother is here! Come in, My friends! »

They go in and greet Jesus' Mother. Judas kisses Her and then runs looking for his mother.

Jesus introduces the five disciples mentioning their names: Peter, Andrew, James, Nathanael, Philip; because John, who has already met Mary, spoke to Her immediately after Judas, bowing down to Her and receiving Her blessing.

Mary greets them and asks them to sit down. She is the landlady and although adoring Her Jesus with Her glances - Her soul seems to be speaking to Her Son through Her eyes - She takes care of Her guests. She would like to bring some water to refresh them. But Peter objects: « No, Woman. I cannot allow that. Please sit near Your Son, Holy Mother. I will go, we will all go into the kitchen garden to refresh ourselves. »

Mary of Alphaeus rushes in, flushed and covered with flour, she greets Jesus Who blesses her, she then leads the six men into the kitchen garden, to the fountain, and comes back happy. « Oh! Mary! » she says to the Virgin. « Judas told me. How happy I am! For Judas and for You, my dear sister-in-law. I know that the others will scold me. But it does not matter. I will be happy the day I know that they are all for Jesus. We are mothers and we know… we feel what is good for our children. And I feel that You, Jesus, are the wealth of my children. »

Jesus caresses her head and smiles at her.

The disciples come back in and Mary of Alphaeus serves them sweet-smelling bread, olives and cheese. She then brings a small amphora of red wine, which Jesus pours out to his friends. It is always Jesus Who offers and then hands things out.

At first the disciples are somewhat embarrassed, then they become more sure of themselves and they speak about their houses, of the journey to Jerusalem, of the miracles worked by Jesus. They are full of zeal and affection and Peter endeavours to form an alliance with Mary to be taken by Jesus at once, without having to wait at Bethsaida.

« Do what He tells you » urges Mary, with a gentle smile. « The wait will be more useful to you than an immediate union. Whatever My Jesus does is always well done. »

Peter's hope vanishes. But he submits with good grace. He only asks: « Will it be a long wait? »

Jesus smiles at him, but does not say anything.

Mary interprets Jesus' smile as a favourable sign and She explains: « Simon of Jonas, He is smiling… I therefore say to you: as fast as a swallow's flight over the lake will be the time of your obedient waiting. »

« Thank You, Woman. »

« Have you nothing to say, Judas? And you, John? »

« I am looking at You, Mary. »

« And I. »

« I am also looking at you… and do you know? This reminds Me of bygone days. Also then I had three pairs of eyes staring at Me lovingly. Do you remember, Mary, My three pupils? »

« Oh! I do remember! You are quite right! And even now, three of almost the same age, are looking at You with all their love. And I think that John is like Jesus, as Jesus was then, so fair and rosy, the youngest of them all. »

The others are anxious to know more… and memories and stories of the past are awakened and related. It is growing dark.

« My friends, I have no bedrooms. But the workshop where I used to work is over there. If you wish to take shelter there… But there is nothing but benches in it. »

« A comfortable bed for fishermen, wont to sleep on narrow boards. Thank You, Master. It is an honour and a blessing to sleep under Your roof. »

They withdraw after bidding good night. Judas also goes home with his mother.

Jesus and Mary are left in the room, sitting on the chest, in the light of the little oil lamp, each with one arm round the other's shoulder, and Jesus tells Mary of His recent journey. And Mary listens blissful, anxious, happy.

The vision ends thus.

58. Cure of a Blind Man at Capernaum.

7th October 1944.

Jesus says, and I become calm at once and the joy of such bright peace makes my heart cheerful: « See. He is so fond of episodes of blind people. Let us give him another one. » And I see.

I see a beautiful summer sunset. The sun has inflamed the whole of the western sky and the Lake of Gennesaret looks like a huge disc aflame, under a sky ablaze.

The streets in Capernaum are just beginning to become crowded; women go to the fountain, fishermen prepare their nets and boats to go fishing at night, children run playing in the streets, little donkeys carrying hampers go towards the country, probably to get vegetables.

Jesus appears at a door which opens on to a little yard completely shaded by a vine and a fig-tree. Beyond it there is a stoney lane, that runs along the lake. It must be Peter's house, because he is on the shore with Andrew, arranging the fish baskets and nets in the boat, and sorting the seats and coils of rope. He is preparing everything to go fishing, and Andrew is helping him, coming and going from the house to the boat.

Jesus asks His apostle: « Will you have a good haul? »

« The weather is right. The water is calm, it will be clear moonlight. The fish will come to the surface from the bottom and my net will drag them. »

« Are we going by ourselves? »

« Oh! Master! How could we manage by ourselves with this type of net. »

« I have never gone fishing and I expect to be taught by you. » Jesus goes down very slowly towards the lake and He stops near the boat, on the coarse, pebbly sands.

« See, Master: this is what we do. I go out beside the boat of James of Zebedee, and we go thus to the right point, both boats together. Then we lower the net. We hold one end. You said You wanted to hold it. »

« Yes, if you tell Me what I have to do. »

« Oh! You only have to watch it going down. It must be lowered slowly without making any knots. Very slowly, because we will be in a fishing area, and any harsh movement may drive the fish away. Without knots, otherwise the net would close up, whereas it must open like a bag, or if You prefer so, like a veil blown by the wind. Then, when the net is fully lowered, we will row gently, or we may set sail, according to circumstances, forming a semicircle on the lake. And when we understand by the vibration of the safety peg that the haul is good, we head for the shore. When we are almost on the shore - not before to avoid running the risk of losing all the fish; not after, to avoid damaging both the fish and net on the stones - we will haul in the net. At this point we must be very careful, because the boats must be so close as to allow one boat to catch the end of the net from the other one, but they must not collide, to avoid crushing the netful of fish. Please, Master, be careful, it is our daily bread. Keep an eye on the net, that jolts may not turn it over. The fish fight for their freedom with strong strokes of their tails, and if there is a lot of them… You will understand… They are small things, but if ten, one hundred, a thousand get together, they become as strong as Leviathan. »

« The same happens with sins, Peter. After all, one fault is not irretrievable. But if one is not careful in controlling oneself, and one adds fault to fault, at the end a little fault, perhaps a single omission, or a simple weakness, becomes bigger and bigger, it becomes a habit, it becomes a capital vice. At times one starts with a lustful glance and ends up by committing adultery. At times, while simply lacking charity when speaking to a relative, one ends up by doing violence to one's neighbour. Never, never allow faults to increase in gravity and in numbers, if you wish to avoid trouble! They become dangerous and overbearing like the infernal Snake himself, and they will drag you down into Gehenna. »

« What You say is right, Master… But we are so weak! »

« Care and prayer are necessary to become strong and obtain help, together with a strong will not to sin. And you must have full trust in the loving justice of the Father. »

« Do You think He will not be too severe with poor Simon? »

« He might have been severe with the old Simon. But with My Peter, with the new man, the man of His Christ… no, Peter, He will not. He loves you and will love you. »

« And what about me? »

« You, too, Andrew; and John, James, Philip and Nathanael as well. You are the first chosen by Me. »

« Will there be any more? There is Your cousin, and in Judaea… »

« Oh! There will be many more. My Kingdom is open to all mankind and I solemnly tell you that My haul, in the nights of centuries, will be more plentiful than your richest one… Because every century is one night in which not the pure light of Orion or of the sailing moon will be the guide and light of mankind, but the word of Christ and the Grace He will bestow; a night that will become the dawn of a day with no sunset and of a light in which all the faithful will live and will be the dawn of a sunshine that will make all the chosen resplendent, beautiful, happy for ever even like gods. Minor gods, children of God the Father and like Me… It is not possible for you to understand now. But I solemnly tell you that your Christian life will cause you to resemble your Master, and you will shine in Heaven with His signs. So, notwithstanding the envious malice of Satan and the weak will of men, My haul will be more plentiful than yours. »

« But shall we be Your only apostles? »

« Are you jealous, Peter? No, don't be! Others will come and in My heart there will be love for everybody. Don't be avaricious, Peter. You do not yet know Who loves you. Have you ever counted the stars? Or the stones in the depth of the lake? No, you could not. And even less you would be able to count the loving throbs of which My heart is capable. Have you ever been able to count how many times this lake kisses the shore with its waves in the course of twelve moons? No, you would never be able to do so. And even less you would be able to count the loving waves that My heart pours out to kiss men. Be sure of My love, Peter. »

Peter takes Jesus' hand and kisses it. He is deeply moved.

Andrew looks, but does not dare take Jesus' hand. But Jesus caressing his hair with His hand says: « I love you very much, too. In the hour of your dawn, without having to lift your eyes, you will see your Jesus reflected in the vault of heaven, and He will be smiling at you to say to you: "I love you. Come", and your passing away at dawn will be sweeter than entering a nuptial room… »

« Simon! Simon! Andrew! Here I am… I am coming… » John is rushing towards them, panting. « Oh! Master! Have I kept You waiting? » John looks at Jesus with the eyes of a lover.

Peter answers: « To tell you the truth, I was beginning to think you were no longer coming. Get your boat ready quickly. And James? … »

« Well… we are late because of a blind man. He thought Jesus was in our house and he came there. We said to him: "He is not here. Perhaps He will cure you tomorrow. Just wait". But he did not want to wait. James said to him: "You have been waiting so long to see the light, what does it matter if you have to wait another night?" But he will not listen to reason… »

« John, if you were blind, would you be anxious to see your mother? »

« Eh!… most certainly! »

« Well then? Where is the blind man? »

« He is coming with James. He got hold of his mantle and will not let it go. But he is coming very slowly because the shore is covered with stones, and he stumbles against them… Master, will You forgive me for being hard? »

« Yes, I will, but to make amends, go and help the blind man and bring him to Me. »

John runs away.

Peter shakes his head, but does not say anything. He looks at the sky which is becoming blue after being a deep copper hue, he looks at the lake and the other boats which are already out fishing and he sighs.

« Simon? »

« Master? »

« Don't be afraid. You will have a good haul, even if you are the

last one to go out. »

« Also this time? »

« Every time you are charitable, God will grant you the grace of abundance. »

« Here is the blind man. »

The poor man is coming forward between James and John. He is holding a walking stick in his hand, but is not using it at present. He walks better, supported by the two men.

« Here, man, the Master is in front of you. »

The blind man kneels down: « My Lord! Have mercy on me. »

« Do you want to see? Stand up. How long have you been blind? »

The four apostles gather round the other two.

« Seven years, Lord. Before, I could see well, and I worked. I was a blacksmith at Caesarea on Sea. I was doing well. The harbour, the good trading, they always needed me for one job or another. But while striking a piece of iron to make an anchor, and You can imagine how red hot it was to be pliable, a splinter came off it, and burnt my eye. My eyes were already sore because of the heat of the forge. I lost the wounded eye, and also the other one became blind after three months. I have finished all my savings, and now I live on charity… »

« Are you alone? »

« I am married with three little children… ; I have not even seen the face of one of them… and I have an old mother. And yet she and my wife earn a little bread, and with what they earn and the alms I take home, we manage not to starve. If I were cured!… I would go back to work. All I ask for is to be able to work like a good Israelite and thus feed those I love. »

« And you came to Me? Who told you? »

« A leper who was cured by You at the foot of Mount Tabor, when You were coming back to the lake after that beautiful speech of Yours. »

« What did he tell you? »

« That You can do everything. That You are the health of bodies and of souls. That You are a light for souls and bodies, because You are the Light of God. He, although a leper, had dared to mingle with the crowd, at the risk of being stoned, all enveloped in his mantle, because he had seen You passing by on the way to the mountain, and Your face had kindled hope in his heart. He said to me: "I saw something in that face that whispered to me: 'There is health there. Go!' And I went". Then he repeated Your speech to me and he told me that You cured him, touching him with Your hand, without any disgust. He was coming back from the priest after his purification. I knew him. I had done some work for him when he had a store at Caesarea. I came, asking for You in every town and village. Now I have found You… Have mercy on me! »

« Come. The light is still too bright for one coming out of darkness! »

« Are you going to cure me, then? »

Jesus takes him to Peter's house, in the dim light of the kitchen garden, he places him in front of Himself, in such a position that his cured eyes may not see, as first sight, the lake still sparkling with light. The man looks like a very docile child, he obeys without asking questions.

« Father! Your Light to this son of Yours! » Jesus has stretched His hands over the head of the kneeling man. He remains in that attitude for a moment. He then moistens the tips of His fingers with saliva and with His right hand He touches lightly the open, but lifeless eyes.

A moment. Then the man blinks, rubs his eyelids as if he were awakening from sleep, and his eyes were dimmed.

« What do you see? »

« Oh!… oh!… oh!… Eternal God! I think… I think… oh! that I can see… I see Your mantle… it's red, isn't it? And a white hand… and a woollen belt… oh! Good Jesus… I can see better and better, the more I get used to seeing… There is the grass of the earth… and that is certainly a well… and there is a vine… »

« Stand up, My friend. »

The man who is crying and laughing, stands up, and after a moment's hesitation between respect and desire, he lifts his face and meets Jesus' eyes: Jesus smiling full of merciful love. It must be beautiful to recover your sight and see that face as the first thing! The man gives a scream and stretches his arms. It is an instinctive action. But he controls himself.

But Jesus opens His arms and draws to Himself the man who is much lower than He. « Go home, now', and be happy and just. Go with My peace. »

« Master, Master! Lord! Jesus! Holy! Blessed! The light… I see… I see everything… There is the blue lake, the clear sky, the setting sun, and then the horns of the waxing moon… But it is in Your eyes that I see the most beautiful and clear blue, and in You I see the beauty of the most real sun, and the chaste light of the blessed moon. You are the Star of those who suffer, the Light of the blind, the living active Mercy! »

« I am the Light of souls. Be a son of the Light. »

« Yes, Jesus, always. Every time I close my re-born eyes, I will renew my oath. May You and the Most High be blessed. »

« Blessed be the Most High Father! Go! »

And the man goes away, happy, sure of himself, while Jesus and the dumbfounded apostles get into two boats and begin their navigation manoeuvres.

And the vision ends.

59. The Demoniac of Capernaum Cured in the Synagogue.

2nd November 1944.

I see the synagogue of Capernaum. It is already crowded with people waiting. People near the door cast glances at the square, which is still sunny, though it is almost evening. At last there is a shout: « The Rabbi is coming. » They all turn towards the door, the smaller people stand on their toes or endeavour to push their way to the front. Some start discussing and shoving, notwithstanding the reproaches of those employed in the synagogue and of the elders of the town.

« May peace be with all those seeking the Truth. » Jesus is at the entrance and He greets them, blessing with His arms stretched forward. His tall figure stands out against the very bright light in the sunny square. He has taken off His white mantle and is wearing the usual deep blue one. He makes His way through the crowd, which opens out and then throngs around Him, like the waves round a ship.

« I am ill, cure me! » moans a young man who appears to be consumptive, and pulls Jesus by His mantle.

Jesus lays His hands on his head and says: « Have faith. God will listen to you. Let Me speak to the people now, then I will come to you. »

The young man lets Him go and calms down.

« What did He say to you? » asks a woman holding a child in her arms.

« He said that after He has spoken to the people, He will come to me. »

« Is He going to cure you then? »

« I don't know. He said to me: "Have faith". I can only hope. »

« What did He say? What did He say? »

The people want to know. Jesus' answer is repeated through the crowd.

« In that case, I am going to get my child. »

« And I am bringing my old father here. »

« Oh! If Aggaeus would only come! I'll try… but he will not come. »

Jesus has reached His place. He greets the head of the synagogue who reciprocates the greeting. He is a small, stout, rather elderly man. When speaking to him, Jesus bends down. It is like a palm bending over a shrub which is wider than it is taller.

« What shall I give You? » asks the little man.

« Whatever you wish, or anything at random. The Spirit will be our guide. »

« But… will You be prepared? »

« I am. Give me a roll at random. I tell you: the Spirit of the Lord will guide the choice for the sake of this people. »

The head of the synagogue stretches his hand out to the pile of rolls, he picks one and unrolls it, he stops at a certain point. « Here » he says.

Jesus takes the roll and starts reading at the shown point: « Joshua: "Rise and sanctify the people and say to them: 'Sanctify yourselves for tomorrow, because the Lord of Israel declares: the ban is now among you, Israel; you can never stand up to your enemies until you take from among you him who is contaminated by such crime' ". » He stops, He rolls the parchment and hands it back.

The crowd is most heedful. Only one whispers: « We shall hear some very nice words against our enemies! ». « It is the King of Israel, the Promised One, Who gathers His people together! »

Jesus, stretches out His arms in His usual oratorial attitude. Silence is now perfect.

« Who came to sanctify you, has risen. He has come out from the secrecy of His house, where He prepared Himself for this mission. He purified Himself to give you an example of purification. He established His position with the mighty ones in the Temple and with the people of God, and is now amongst you. It is I. Not as some of you think and hope, with clouded minds and unrest in their hearts. The Kingdom of which I am the future King and to which I call you, is more notable and greater.

I am calling you, Israel, before any other people, because in the fathers of your fathers you received the promise of this hour and of the alliance with the Most High Lord. But His Kingdom will not be established with armed multitudes or wild blood shedding and neither the violent, nor the overbearing, the proud, the wrathful, the envious, the lustful, the avaricious will enter it but only the good, the meek, the continent, the merciful, the humble, the patient and those who love God and their neighbours will be admitted.

Israel! You are not asked to fight against external enemies, but against internal ones. Against those who are in all your hearts. In the hearts of thousands and thousands of your children. Remove the barrier of sin from all your hearts, if you want God to gather you together tomorrow and say to you: "My people, yours is the Kingdom that will never be defeated, or invaded, or undermined by enemies" .

Tomorrow. Which tomorrow? In a year's or a month's time? Oh! Do not be inquisitive! Do not allow an unhealthy thirst to inquire into the future by means which taste of guilty witchcraft. Leave the Python spirit to the heathens. Leave to Eternal God the secrecy of time. As from tomorrow, the morrow that will rise after this evening, and the morrow that will come after tonight and will rise at cock-crow, come and be purified by sincere penance.

Repent of your sins to be forgiven and to be ready for the Kingdom. Remove from yourselves the barrier of sin. Each of you has his own. Each has the one against the ten commandments of eternal salvation. Examine your consciences with sincerity and you will find your errors. Repent with sincere humility. You must repent. Not just with your mouths. You cannot laugh at or deceive God. But repent with a firm will, that will make you change your ways of living and return to the Law of the Lord. The Kingdom of Heaven is waiting for you. Tomorrow.

Tomorrow? you may ask. Oh! the hour of God is always an early morrow, even when it comes at the end of a life as long as the Patriarchs'. Eternity does not use as a measure of time the slow flowing of a sand glass. And the measures of time which you call days, months, years, centuries are but heartbeats of the Eternal Spirit that keeps you alive. But your souls are eternal and you must adopt for your souls the same measure of time as your Creator does. You must, therefore, say: " 'Tomorrow will be the day of my death". No, not death for the faithful. But rest of expectation, waiting for the Messiah to open the gates of Heaven.

And I solemnly tell you that only twenty-seven of you here present will die and have to wait. The rest will be judged before their death, and their death will be a transition to God or Mammon without any delay because the Messiah has come, He is amongst you and calls you to give you the Gospel, to teach you the Truth and save you in Heaven.

Do penance! The "morrow" of the Kingdom of Heaven is impending. May it find you pure so that you may possess the eternal day.

Peace be with you. »

A bearded sumptuously dressed Israelite stands up to contradict Him. He says: « Master, what You have stated appears to be in contrast with what is said in the sacred book of Maccabees, glory of Israel. It is said there: "Indeed when evil-doers are not left for long to their own devices but incur swift retribution, it is a sign of great benevolence. In the case of the other nations, the Lord waits patiently for them to obtain the full measure of their sins, before He punishes them". According to what You said, instead, the Most High would appear to be very slow in punishing us, waiting, as for the other nations, the time of Judgement, when the measure of sins is full. Events, indeed, give You the lie. Israel is punished as stated by the historian of the Maccabees. But if what You say is correct, is there no conflict between Your doctrine and the sentence I have quoted? »

« I do not know who you are, but I will give you My answer, whoever you are. There is no conflict in the doctrine, but only in the interpretation of the words. You interpret them in a human sense, I, instead, in a spiritual one. You see everything as referred to the present time and transient things, and you represent the majority of people who think likewise. I represent God and I explain and

apply everything to eternal and supernatural matters. It is true, Yahweh did strike you at present because of your pride and because you considered yourselves a "nation" according to the world. But how much He loved you and how patient He is with you, more than with anyone else, granting you the Saviour, His Messiah, that you may listen to Him and be saved before the hour of the wrath of God! He does not want you to be sinners any longer. But if He struck you in the fleeting worldly things, seeing that the injury does not cure your souls, nay it makes them duller and duller, He does not inflict a further punishment, but He grants you salvation. He sends you Him Who cures and saves you! I, Who am speaking to you. »

« Do You not consider Yourself bold in avowing Yourself a representative of God? None of the Prophets dared so much and You… Who are You, Who are speaking? And by whose order do You speak? »

« The Prophets could not say of themselves what I state of Myself. Who am I? The Expected One, The Promised One, the Saviour. You have already heard His Precursor say: "Prepare the way for the Lord… Here the Lord God is coming… Like a shepherd He will feed His flock, although He is the Lamb of the true Passover". Many amongst you heard these words from the Precursor and they saw the heavens brighten with a light that descended in the shape of a dove and they heard a voice speak and say who I am. By whose order do I speak? By the order of Him Who is and Who sends Me. »

« You say that, but You may be a liar or a dreamer. Your words are holy, but Satan sometimes uses deceitful words painted with holiness, to deceive people. We do not know You. »

« I am Jesus of Joseph of the House of David, I was born at Bethlehem Ephrathah, as was promised, named Nazarene, because I live at Nazareth. And that according to the world. According to God I am His Messenger. My disciples know. »

« Oh! They! They can say what they like or what You tell them to say. »

« Another will speak, who does not love Me, and will say Who I am. Wait till I call one of the people present here. »

Jesus looks at the crowd, who are astonished and annoyed at the dispute, and divided between the two opposite doctrines. He looks for someone with His sapphire eyes, and then in a loud voice He calls: « Aggaeus! Come here. It is an order. »

There is great excitement in the crowd. They open out to let a man pass, who is violently shaking all over his body and is supported by a woman.

« Do you know this man? »

« Yes, he is Aggaeus, of Malachi, of Capernaum. He is possessed by an evil spirit which tortures him with sudden fury-fits. »

« Does everybody know him? »

The crowd shout: « Yes, we do. »

« Can any of you say that he has spoken to Me, even for a few minutes? »

The crowd shout: « No, no, he is half-witted, he never leaves his house, and nobody has seen You in it. »

« Woman, bring him here in front of Me. »

The woman pushes and drags him, while the poor man trembles more than ever.

The head of the synagogue warns Jesus: « Be careful! The devil is about to torture him… and then he rushes at people, scratches and bites them. »

The crowd moves away thronging against the walls.

Jesus and the man are now facing each other. There is a moment's struggle. The man, usually mute, seems to have difficulty in speaking, he moans, then his voice turns into words: « What is there between us and You, Jesus of Nazareth? Why have You come to torture us? Why do You want to destroy us, You, the Lord of Heaven and Earth? I know who You are: the Holy of God. No one, in human flesh, was ever greater than You, because in Your flesh of man is enclosed the Spirit of the Eternal Winner. You have already beaten me in… »

« Be quiet! I order you to come out of this man. »

The man has a fit of strange convulsions. He is tossed about by jerks and thrusts, as if someone pulled and pushed him, violently ill-treating him, he shouts in a wild voice, foams at his mouth, and is then thrown down onto the ground. He gets up, astonished and cured.

« Have you heard? What do you say now? » Jesus asks His opponent.

The bearded sumptuous man shrugs his shoulders and, obviously beaten, goes out without replying. The crowd scoff at him and applaud Jesus.

« Silence! This place is sacred! » says Jesus and He orders: « Bring Me the man to whom I promised help from God. »

The sick man comes forward. Jesus caresses him: « You believed Me! Be cured. Go in peace and be just. »

The young man lets out a yell. I wonder what he feels. He kneels down before Jesus, kisses His feet thanking Him: « Thanks from me and from my mother! »

Other sick people come: a little boy with paralysed legs. Jesus takes him in His arms, caresses him and puts him down… and leaves him. The child does not fall, but runs to his mother, who clasps him to her heart, weeping, and in a loud voice blesses « the

Holy One of Israel ». A little old blind man comes, led by his daughter. He also is cured with a caress on his diseased eyes.

There is a roar of blessing from the crowd.

Jesus makes His way through the crowd smiling, and although He is tall, He would not succeed in pushing through, if Peter, James, Andrew and John did not work generously with their elbows, to make their way and reach Jesus, and then escort Him to the exit onto the square, which is now dark.

The vision ends thus.

60. Cure of Simon Peter's Mother-in-law.

3rd November 1944.

Peter is speaking to Jesus. He says: « Master, I would like to ask You to come to my house. I did not dare to ask You last Sabbath. But… I would like You to come. »

« To Bethsaida? »

« No, here… to my wife's house. I mean her home. »

« Why do you want that, Peter? »

« Well, for many reasons… also because today I was told that my mother-in-law is ill. If You would cure her, perhaps she… »

« Tell Me, Simon. »

« What I wanted to say is… if You go to her, she would stop… yes, well, You know, it is not the same thing to hear people speak of someone and to see and listen to someone, and if the person in question cures… well… »

« You mean also the ill-feeling would come to an end? »

« No, not exactly ill-feeling. But, You know… there are many opinions in the village, and she… does not know whom she should listen to. Come, Jesus. »

« I will come. Let us go. You will tell those who are waiting for Me that I will speak to them from your house. »

They go as far as a low house, even lower than Peter's house at Bethsaida, and it is also closer to the lake. It is separated from the lake by the pebbly shore and I think that when there is a storm, the waves break against the walls of the house, which, while being low, are very wide, as if several people lived in it.

In the kitchen garden in front of the house, facing the lake, there is only an old gnarled vine, supported by a rustic pergola, and an old fig-tree which the winds, blowing from the lake, have bent towards the house. The ruffled foliage of the tree brushes the walls of the house and beats against the shutters of the little windows, which are now closed as a protection against the bright sunshine. There is nothing but the vine and the fig-tree and a greenish little wall of a low well.

« Come in, Master. »

There are some women in the kitchen, some are busy mending the nets, some are preparing the food. They greet Peter and they bow embarrassed to Jesus, peering up at Him curiously.

« Peace be to this house. How is the patient? »

« Tell Him, you who are the oldest daughter-in-law » three of the women say to another one, who is drying her hands on the edge of her dress.

« Her temperature is very high. The doctor has seen her and he said she is too old to get better and that when the disease goes from the bones to the heart, and gives a temperature, one dies, particularly at an old age. She will not eat any more… I try and prepare something good, even now, see, Simon, I was preparing the soup she used to like so much. I chose the best fish that I got from my brothers-in-law. But I do not think she will be able to eat it. And… she is so restless! She complains, and shouts, and cries, and curses… »

« Be patient, as if she were your mother and God will grant you merit for it. Take Me to her. »

« Rabbi… Rabbi… I don't know if she will be pleased to see You. She does not want to see anybody. I dare not say to her: "I am now bringing the Rabbi in to see you". »

Jesus smiles calmly. He addresses Peter: « It is your turn, Simon. You are a man and the oldest son-in-law, you told Me. Go. »

Peter makes a significant grimace and obeys. He walks across the kitchen, and goes into another room and through the door which he closes, I can hear him talking to a woman. He looks out and says: « Come, Master, quick. » And he whispers in a very low, just audible voice: « Before she changes her mind. »

Jesus walks across the kitchen and opens the door wide. Standing on the threshold, He pronounces His sweet, solemn greeting: « Peace be with you. » He goes in, although He gets no reply. He goes near a low bed on which there is lying a little old woman, grey-haired, thin, panting because of the high temperature which causes her wasted face to flush.

Jesus bends over the little bed, smiles at the old woman: « Are you in pain? »

« I am dying! »

« No. You will not die. Do you believe that I can cure you? »

« Why would You want to do that? You do not know me. »

« For Simon, who asked Me… and for you, to give your soul time to see and love the Light. »

« Simon? It would be better if he… How come Simon thought of me? »

« Because he is better than you think. I know him and I am sure. I know him, and I am happy to satisfy him. »

« Would You cure me, then? I will not die, then? »

« No, woman. You will not die as yet. Can you believe in Me? »

« I believe, I believe. It is enough for me not to die! »

Jesus smiles once again. He takes her hand. Her hand, wrinkled and with swollen veins, disappears in the younger hand of Jesus, Who stands straight up, and takes the attitude He normally assumes when working a miracle. He shouts: « Be cured! I want it! Get up! » and He lets her hand go. And her hand falls down without any complaint, whereas before, notwithstanding Jesus had taken it very gently, she groaned when it was moved.

There is silence for a few moments. Then the old woman cries out: « Oh! God of our fathers! But there is nothing wrong with me! I am cured! Come! Come! » Her daughters-in-law rush in. « Look! » says the old woman: « I can move and I feel no pain! And I am no longer feverish! Feel how cool I am. And my heart no longer feels like the blacksmith's hammer. Ah! I am not dying any longer! » Not one word for the Lord!

But Jesus does not mind. He says to the oldest daughter-in-law: « Dress her that she may get up. She is fit to be up. » And He makes for the door.

Simon, mortified, says to his mother-in-law: « The Master has cured you. Have you nothing to say to Him? »

« Certainly. I wasn't thinking of that. Thank You. What can I do to thank You? »

« Be good, very good. Because the Eternal Father has been good to you. And if it is not too much trouble for you, allow Me to rest in your home today. I have been to all the nearby villages the past week, and I arrived here at dawn this morning. I am tired. »

« Certainly! Certainly! You may stay if You wish. » But there is not much enthusiasm in her words.

Jesus, Peter, Andrew, James and John go and sit down in the kitchen garden.

« Master!… »

« Yes, Peter? »

« I feel humiliated. »

Jesus makes a gesture, which meant: « Never mind. » He then goes on: « She is not the first, and will not be the last who do not feel immediate gratitude. But I do not seek gratitude. All I want is to give souls the chance to save themselves. I do My duty. Let them do theirs. »

« Ah! There have been other cases like this one? Where? »

« Curious Simon! But I will please you, although I do not like useless curiosity. At Nazareth. Do you remember Sarah's mother? She was very ill when we arrived in Nazareth and we were told that the little girl cried. Since she is good and gentle, and I did not want her to become an orphan and a stepdaughter in future, I went to see the woman… I wanted to cure her… But I had not yet set foot

in the house, when her husband and a brother drove Me away, saving: "Away! Go away! We do not want to get into trouble with the synagogue". For them, for too many, I am already a rebel… I cured her just the same… for the sake of her children. And I said to Sarah in the kitchen garden, caressing her: "I will cure your mother. Go home. Do not cry any more". And the woman was cured the same moment and the little girl told her, and she told also her father and her uncle… and she was punished for speaking to Me. I know, because the child ran after Me when I was leaving the village… But it does not matter. »

« I would have made her become ill again. »

« Peter! » Jesus is severe. « Is that what I teach you and the others? What have you heard Me say from the very first time you heard Me? Of what have I always spoken as being the first condition to be My true disciples? »

« It is true, Master. I am a real beast. Forgive me. But… I cannot bear the fact that they do not love You! »

« Oh! Peter! You will see much greater indifference! You will have many surprises, Peter! People that the so called "holy" world scorns as being money-changers, who instead will set an example in the world, an example which will not be followed by those who despise them. Heathens who will be My most faithful ones. Prostitutes who will become pure by strong will power and penance. Sinners who amend their way of living… »

« Listen: that a sinner amends his way… it may well be. But a prostitute and a money-changer!… »

« You do not believe it? »

« I do not. »

« You are mistaken, Simon. But here is your mother-in-law coming towards us. »

« Master, I beg You to come and sit at my table. »

« Thank you, woman. May God reward you. »

They go into the kitchen and sit at the table. The old woman serves them with plenty fish, both as soup and roasted. « I have nothing else but this » she apologises. And, to keep up the habit, she says to Peter: « Your brothers-in-law are doing even too much, all alone as they are, since you went to Bethsaida! If it had only helped to make my daughter richer… But I hear that you are very often absent and you do not go fishing. »

« I follow the Master. I have been to Jerusalem with Him and I am with Him on Sabbaths. I do not spend my time in revelries. »

« But you don't earn any money. Since you want to be the Prophet's servant, you had better come back here again. At least that poor daughter of mine will be fed by her relatives while you are acting the saint. »

« But are you not ashamed of speaking like that in front of Him who cured you? »

« I am not criticising Him. He is doing His job. I am criticising you, you are a sluggard. In any case, you will never be a prophet or a priest. You are an ignorant sinner, a good for nothing. »

« You are lucky that He is here, otherwise… »

« Simon, your mother-in-law gave you very good advice. You can go fishing even here. I am told that you used to go fishing also at Capernaum. You can come back again. »

« And live here again? But Master, You do not… »

« Be good, Peter. If you are here, you will be either on the lake or with Me. So what difference is it for you if you are or you are not in this house? » Jesus has laid His hand on Peter's shoulder and His calmness seems to pass into the fiery apostle.

« You are right. You are always right. I will do that. But… what about these? » and he points to his partners John and James.

« Can they not come, too? »

« Oh! Our father and above all our mother will be happier if they know we are with You, rather than with them. They will not object. »

« Perhaps Zebedee will come, too » says Peter.

« Quite likely. And others with him. We will come, Master. We will certainly come. »

« Is Jesus of Nazareth here? » asks a little boy appearing at the door.

« He is here, come in. »

A boy comes in, whom I recognise as one of the boys I saw in the first visions of Capernaum, and exactly the one who tumbled down near Jesus' feet, and promised he would be good, so he would get the honey of Paradise.

« My little friend, come here » says Jesus.

The little fellow, somewhat embarrassed because so many are looking at him, takes heart and runs to Jesus, Who embraces him and sits him on His knees; and gives him a bit of His fish on a slice of bread.

« Here, Jesus. This is for You. Also today that person said: « It is the Sabbath. Take this to the Rabbi of Nazareth and tell your friend to pray for me. » He knows that You are my friend!… » The child smiles happily, and eats his bread and fish.

« Well done, little James! You will tell that person that My prayers rise to the Father for him. »

« Is it for the poor? » asks Peter.

« Yes, it is. »

« Is it always the same offering? Let us look. »

Jesus hands over the purse. Peter empties it and counts the coins. « Still the same large sum! But who is this person? Say, boy, who is it? »

« I have not to say, and I will not say! »

« You little rascal! Be good, and I will give you some fruit. »

« I will not speak, whether you insult me or caress me. »

« What a tongue he has! Just listen! »

« Little James is right, Peter. He is keeping his word: leave him alone. »

« Master, do You know who the person is? »

Jesus does not reply. He is busy with the child, to whom He gives another bit of roasted fish, after removing all the bones. But Peter insists, and Jesus is obliged to answer.

« I know everything, Simon. »

« And we are not to know? »

« And will you never be cured of your fault? » Jesus reproaches him, but smiles at the same time. And He adds: « You will soon know. Because if evil wants to be hidden, and cannot always be such, good, even if it wants to be hidden, to be meritorious, will be made known one day, for the glory of God, Whose nature shines in one of His sons. The nature of God: love. And this person understands all that, because he loves his neighbours. Go, James. Take My blessing to that person. »

The vision ends thus.

61. Jesus Preaches and Works Miracles in Peter's House.

4th November 1944.

Jesus has climbed on top of a pile of baskets and ropes at the entrance to the kitchen garden of the house of Peter's mother-in-law. The kitchen garden is crowded with people, and other people are on the lake shore, some sitting on the shore, some on the beached boats. It looks as if He has been speaking for some time, because the sermon has started.

I hear: «… Certainly many times you have thought so in your hearts. But it is not so. The Lord has not lacked in kindness of heart towards His people. Notwithstanding His people lacked in loyalty to Him thousands of times.

Listen to this parable. It will help you to understand.

A king had many wonderful horses in his stables. But he was particularly fond of one of them. He gazed fondly at it, even before he had it. Afterwards, when he got it, he put it in a delightful place and he often went to admire his favourite horse, both with his eyes and with his heart, dreaming it would become the wonder of his kingdom. And when the horse rebelled against commands, disobeyed and ran away under another master, the king, in his sorrow and his severity, promised he would forgive the rebel after it had been punished. And loyal as he was, although far away, he watched over his favourite and sent gifts and guardians to it, hoping they would keep his remembrance in the horse's heart.

But the horse, although suffering from the exile from the kingdom, was not steady, as the king was, in loving and wishing complete forgiveness. At times it was good, at times bad; neither was its goodness greater than its badness. Nay, it was the other way round. And yet the king was patient and with reproaches and caresses, he endeavoured to turn his horse into a dearer and more docile friend. As time went by, the horse became more and more loath. It invoked its king, it cried under the whip of other masters, but it did not really want to belong to the king. It simply did not want to. Oppressed, exhausted, moaning, it did not say: "I am such through my own fault". Instead, it accused its king for it. .

The king, after trying everything, decided to make one last effort. "So far" he said, "I have sent messengers and friends. Now I will send my own son. His heart is like my own and will speak the same love as I would, and will make use of the same caresses and gifts as I used, nay, he will be even kinder, because my son is like myself, but made more sublime by love". And he sent his son.

That is the parable. Now tell Me: do you think that king loved his favourite horse? »

The crowd together reply: « He loved it with infinite love. »

« Could the animal complain of its king about all the ill it had suffered after leaving him? »

« No, it could not » reply the people.

« Answer also this question: how do you think that horse will have received the king's son who went to rescue and cure it and take it back once again to the delightful land? »

« With great joy, of course, with gratitude and love. »

« Now, if the king's son said to the horse: "I have come for this reason, to do such and such a thing for you, but now you must be good, obedient, willing and loyal to me", what do you think the horse replied? »

« Oh! There is no need to ask! Now that it was aware of how much it cost to be expelled from the kingdom, it will have said that it wanted to be as the king's son suggested. »

« Well, then, what was the duty of that horse, according to you? »

« To be even better than it was requested, more affectionate, more docile, to be forgiven for past faults, and out of gratitude for all the good received. »

« And if it did not do that? »

« It would deserve death, because it was worse than a wild beast. »

« My friends, you have judged correctly. But do exactly Yourselves as you would have liked that horse to do. I beseech you, men, the favourite creatures of the King of Heaven, of God, My Father and yours, to be at least as you judge that horse to be.

Because after the Prophets, God sends you His own Son and I implore you, for your good, and because I love you as only God can love , the God Who is in Me to work the miracle of Redemption. Woe to those men who lower themselves to a lower degree than animals! But if it was possible to excuse those who committed sin up to the present time - because too long a time has elapsed since the Law was given and too much worldly dust has settled on the Law - now it is no longer so. I have come to bring once again the word of God. The Son of man is amongst men to lead them back to God. Follow Me. I am the Way, the Truth, the Life. »

The usual whispering of the crowd.

Jesus tells His disciples: « Let the poor come forward. There is a rich offer for them made by one who begs to obtain forgiveness from God. »

Three tattered old men come forward, two blind men and a cripple; they are followed by a widow with seven emaciated children.

Jesus stares at them, one by one, He smiles at the widow and particularly at the children. Nay, He says to John: « Put those over there in the kitchen garden. I want to speak to them. » But He becomes stern, with blazing eyes, when a little old man appears. But He says nothing, for the time being.

He calls Peter, whom He asks for the purse received shortly before and for another one containing smaller coins, which are offerings collected from good-hearted people. He empties the coins onto the bench near the well, He counts them, and divides them. He makes six parts. A very big one, all silver coins, and five smaller ones in size, with many bronze coins and a few big ones. He calls the poor, sick people and asks them: « Have you nothing to tell Me? »

The blind men are silent; the cripple says: « May He Who sent You, protect You. » Nothing else.

Jesus puts the offering into his good hand.

The man says: « May God reward You. But more than this offering, I would like to be cured by You. »

« You did not ask for that. »

« I am poor, a worm trodden on by the mighty ones, I dared not hope You would have mercy on a beggar. »

« I am Mercy that bends over all miseries calling Me. I refuse no one. All I ask for is faith and love, that I may say: I am listening to You. »

« Oh! My Lord! I believe You and I love You. Save me, then! Heal Your servant! »

Jesus lays His hand on the crook-back, He moves it gently, as if He were caressing the man and says: « I want you to be healed. »

The man straightens up, agile and wholesome, uttering endless blessings.

Jesus hands the offering to the blind men and waits an instant before dismissing them… then He lets them go. He calls the old people. He gives the alms to the first one, and helps him to put the coins into his belt pouch. He listens pitifully to the mishaps of the second one, who informs Jesus of the disease of one of his daughters.

« I have but her! And she is dying. What will happen to me? Oh! if only You came! She cannot come, she cannot stand up. She would love to… but cannot. Master, Lord, Jesus, have mercy on us! »

« Where do you live, father? »

« At Korazim. Ask for Isaac of Jonah, named the Adult. Will You really come? Will You not forget our misfortunes? And will You cure my daughter? »

« Do you believe I can cure her? »

« Oh! I do believe it. That is why I am speaking to You about it. »

« Go home, father. Your daughter will be greeting you on the doorstep. »

« But she is in bed and she has not been able to get up for the last three… Ah! I now understand! Oh! Thank You, Rabboni! Blessed are You and He Who sent You! Praise be to God and His Messiah! » The old man goes away, plodding along as fast as he can. But when he is almost outside the kitchen garden he says: « Master, will You come just the same to my poor house? Isaac will be waiting for You to kiss Your feet and wash them with His tears, and offer You the bread of love. Come, Jesus: I will speak to the townsfolk about You. »

« I will come. Go in peace and be happy. »

The third old man comes forward, He seems to be the most ragged. But Jesus has only the big pile of money left. He calls in a loud voice: « Woman, come here with your little ones. »

The young emaciated woman comes forward with her head lowered down. She seems a sad hen with her sad brood of chickens.

« How long have you been a widow, woman? »

« Three years at the moon of Tishry. »

« What age are you? »

« Twenty-seven. »

« Are they all your children? »

« Yes, Master… and I have nothing else. I finished everything… How can I work if no one wants me with all these little ones? »

« God does not abandon even the worm He created. He will not abandon you, woman. Where do you live? »

« On the lake. Three stadia outside Bethsaida. He told me to come here… My husband died on the lake; he was a fisherman. » She Points to Andrew, who blushes and would like to disappear.

« You did well, Andrew, telling the woman to come to Me. »

Andrew takes heart and whispers: « The man was a friend of mine, he was good, he died in a storm and lost also his boat. »

« Take this, woman. It will help you for a long time, then another sun will rise on your days. Be good, bring your children up in the Law and you will not be without God's help. I bless you: you arid your little ones. » And He pats them, one by one, with great pitiful love.

The woman goes away pressing her treasure to her heart.

« And what about me? » asks the old man who is left last.

Jesus looks at him, but is silent.

« Nothing for me? You are not fair! You gave her six times as much as the others, and nothing to me. Of course… she was a woman! »

Jesus looks at him, but is silent.

« Look everybody, and tell me if there is justice! I have come from far away, because I was told that money was given here, and now I see that some get too much and I get nothing. A poor, old, sick man! And He wants us to believe in Him!… »

« My old man, are you not ashamed of telling such lies? Death is behind your back and you lie and endeavour to rob also who is hungry. Why do you want to rob your brothers of the offering that I received to give it with justice? »

« But I… »

« Be quiet! You should have understood by My silence and My action that I had recognised you and you should have followed My example and been silent. Why do you want Me to shame you? »

« I am poor. »

« No, you are a miser and a thief. You live for money and usury. »

« I have never lent on usury. God is my witness. »

« And is this not the most fierce usury, to rob those who are in dire need? Go. Repent. That God may forgive you. »

« I swear… »

« Be quiet! I tell you! It is said: "You shall not swear falsehood". If I did not respect your old age, I would search you and in your breast I would find a purse full of gold: your real heart. Go away! »

The impudent old man, seeing that his secret has been discovered, goes away without any need for Jesus' thundering voice.

The crowd threaten and scorn him, and they insult him as a thief.

« Be quiet! If he did wrong, do not do the same. He lacks sincerity is dishonest. If you insult him, you lack charity. A brother who makes a mistake is not to be insulted. Everybody has his sins. No one is perfect but God. I was compelled to shame him, because nobody must ever be a thief, and much less steal from poor people. But only the Father knows how much I suffered having to do it. You must also be sorry, seeing that a man in Israel infringes the Law endeavouring to defraud the poor and a widow. Do not be

greedy. May your souls, not money, be your treasure. Do not be perjurers. Let your language be as sincere and honest as your actions. Life is not eternal and the hour of death will come. Live in such a way that at the hour of your death peace may be in your souls. The peace of those who lived an honest life. Go home… »

« Have mercy, Lord! This son of mine is deaf because a demon vexes him. »

« And this brother of mine is like an unclean animal, he wallows in the mud and eats excrement. A malignant spirit forces him to do that, and although against his will, he does foul things. »

Jesus goes towards the imploring group. He lifts His arms and orders: « Come out of them. Leave to God His creatures. »

Amidst shouts and uproars the two unhappy men are cured. The women leading them kneel down, blessing.

« Go home and be thankful to God. Peace to you all. Go. »

The crowd leave, commenting on the events. The four disciples gather round the Master.

« My friends, I solemnly tell you that all sins can be found in Israel and the demons have taken up their abode there. Neither are the possessed the only ones whose lips are mute, or are driven to live like animals and eat filth. But the most real and numerous

possessions are those that make hearts mute to honesty and love, and turn hearts into a sink of filthy vices. Oh! Father! » Jesus sits down depressed.

« Are You tired, Master? »

« Not tired, My dear John, but afflicted because of the state of hearts and the lack of will to grow better. I have come… but man… man… Oh,' Father!… »

« Master, I love You. We all love You… »

« I know. But you are so few… and My eagerness to save is so great! »

Jesus has embraced John, and is resting His head on His disciple's. He is sad. Peter, Andrew and James are near Him, and they look at Him with love and sadness.

And the vision ends thus.

62. Jesus Prays at Night.

5th November 1944.

I see Jesus coming out of Peter's house at Capernaum, making as little noise as possible. He obviously spent the night there to make Peter happy.

It is the dead of night. The sky is a starry canopy. The lake faintly reflects the glitter of the sky and, rather than see it, one guesses the peaceful lake is there sleeping under the stars, because of the gentle lapping of the water on the gravel shore.

Jesus sets the door ajar, looks at the sky, the lake and the road. He is thinking. Then He starts walking, not along the lake, but towards the village. He passes through part of it towards the country. He goes into the country, along a little path that leads to the first undulations of an olive-grove. He enters the green, silent peace and prostrates Himself in prayer.

A fervent prayer! He prays kneeling down, and then, as if He were fortified, He stands straight up, His face raised to Heaven, a face made more spiritual by the rising light of a clear, summer dawn. He prays smiling now, whereas before, He was sighing, probably because of some moral grief. His arms are fully outstretched. He seems a living, tall, angelical cross, so gentle is His attitude. He seems to be blessing the whole country, the rising day, the fading stars and the lake, now becoming visible.

« Master! We have been looking for You all over! We saw the door ajar, when we came back with the fish, and we thought You had gone out. But we could not find You. And at last, a peasant, who was loading his baskets to take them to town, told us. We were calling: "Jesus, Jesus!", and he said: "Are you looking for the Rabbi Who speaks to the crowds? He went up that path, up towards the mountain. He must be in Micah's olive-grove, because He often goes there. I have seen Him there before". He was right. Why did You come out so early, Master? Why did You not rest? Was the bed not comfortable?… »

« No, Peter. The bed was comfortable and the room was lovely. But I often do that. To raise My spirit and be united to the Father. Prayer is a strength for oneself and for others. We achieve everything by praying. If we do not receive a grace, which the Father does not always grant - and we must not think it is due to lack of love, instead we must believe that it is the will of an Order which governs the destiny of every man for a good purpose prayer certainly gives us peace and contentment, to enable us to bear so many vexing things, without going off the holy path. It is easy, you know, Peter, to have a clouded mind and an agitated heart because of what is around us! And how can a clouded mind or an agitated heart perceive God? »

« It's true. But we do not know how to pray! We are not capable of saying the lovely words You say. »

« Say the words you know, as best as you can. It is not the words, but the sentiments with which they are uttered that make your prayers pleasant to the Father. »

« We would like to pray as You do. »

« I will teach you also to pray. I will teach you the most holy prayer. But to prevent it from being only a void formula on your lips, I want your hearts to have at least a minimum of holiness, light and wisdom… That is why I instruct you. Later, I will teach

you the holy prayer. Why were you looking for Me, is there anything you want of Me? »

« No, Master. But there are many who want so much from You. There were already people coming from Capernaum, and they were poor, sick, depressed people, people of good will and anxious to be taught. When they inquired about You, we said: "The Master is tired and is sleeping. Go away and come back next Sabbath". »

« No, Simon. You must not say that. There is not one day only for mercy. I am Love, Light and Health every day of the week. »

« But… so far You have spoken only on Sabbaths. »

« Because I was still unknown. But as I become known, every day there will be effusions of Grace and graces. I tell you solemnly that the time will come when even the moment of time which is granted to a sparrow to rest on a branch and eat some little grains will not be granted to the Son of man for His rest and meals. »

« But You will be taken ill! We will not allow that. Your kindness must not make You unhappy. »

« And do you think that could make Me unhappy? Oh! If all the world came to Me to listen to Me, to bewail its sins and sorrow on My heart, to be healed in its bodies and souls, and I were worn out speaking, and forgiving and pouring forth My power, I would be so happy, Peter, that I would not even regret Heaven, where I was in the Father! Where were they from, those who were coming to Me? »

« From Korazim, Bethsaida, Capernaum, and there were some even from Tiberias and Gherghesa, as well as from the hundreds of villages around those towns. »

« Go and tell them that I will be at Korazim, Bethsaida and nearby villages. »

« Why not at Capernaum? »

« Because I came for everybody and everybody must have Me, and then… there is old Isaac waiting for Me. We must not disappoint his hopes. »

« Will You wait for us here, then? »

« No, I am going and you will stay at Capernaum to send the crowds to Me; I will come back later. »

« We will be here alone… » Peter is sad.

« Do not be sad. Obedience should make you happy as well as the conviction that you are a useful disciple. And the same applies to the others. »

Peter, Andrew, James and John cheer up. Jesus blesses them, and they part.

The vision ends thus.

63. The Leper Cured near Korazim.

6th November 1944.

Since before dawn, as in the detail of a perfect photograph, I see in my spirit a poor leper.

He is really a wreck of a man. He is so ravaged by his disease, that I could not tell his age. Reduced to a skeleton, half naked, his body is in the state of a corroded mummy, with contorted hands and feet, parts of which are missing, so that the miserable limbs no longer seem to belong to a human being. His hands, twisted and clawed, resemble the talons of a winged monster, his feet, are so fragmented and disfigured, that they are almost like the hooves of an ox.

And his head!… I think that the head of anyone left unburied which becomes mummified by sun and wind, must be like the head of this man. A few surviving forelocks, spread here and there, sticking to the yellowish, crusty skin, like dust dried on a skull, very deep set eyes, half open, lips and nose half eaten by the disease and showing cartilage and gums, two embryonic wrecks of outer ears, all his visible body covered by a wrinkled skin, as yellow as some types of kaolin, with bones showing here and there: his skin seems to have the task of keeping all the poor bones together, in its filthy sack, all covered with ugly scars and putrid sores. A real wreck!

I cannot help thinking of the personification of Death wandering on the earth, covered by a wrinkled skin on its skeleton, enveloped in a filthy mantle falling to bits and pieces, holding in its hand not a scythe, but a knotty stick torn from a tree.

He is at the entrance of a remote cave, a real cave, in such a state of ruin that I cannot say whether it was originally a sepulchre, or a hut for wood cutters or the remains of a demolished house. He is looking at the road, over one hundred metre s away from his cave, a main road, dusty and still sunny. There is nobody on the road. As far as the eye can see, on the road there are sunshine, dust and solitude. Much higher up, to the northwest, there must be a village or a town. I can see the first houses. It must be at least a kilometre away.

The leper looks and sighs. He takes a chipped bowl and fills it at a brook. He drinks. He goes into a tangle of bushes, behind his cave, bends down and pulls some wild roots out of the ground. He goes back to the brook, he washes them, removing the coarser dirt with the little water of the rivulet and he eats them slowly, taking them painfully to his mouth with his ruined hands. They must be as hard as sticks. He finds difficulty in chewing them and he has to spit many out as he is unable to swallow them, notwithstanding the water he drinks to help himself.

« Where are you, Abel? » shouts someone.

The leper rouses, he has something on his lips that might be a smile. But his lips are in such a bad state that even that outward sign of a smile is vague and shapeless. He replies with a strange, squeaky voice: it reminds me of the cry of certain birds, the exact name of which I do not know: « I am here! I did not believe you were coming any more. I thought something had happened to you. I was sad… If I lose you too, what will happen to poor Abel? » While speaking, he walks towards the road, as far as he can according to the Law, apparently, because at half the way, he stops.

A man comes forward on the road, he is moving so fast that he seems to be running.

« Is that really you, Samuel? Oh! If it is not you I am waiting for, whoever you may be, don't hurt me! »

« It’s me, Abel, it's me! And I am cured. Look how I can run. I am late, I know. And I was worried about you. But when you hear… oh! you will be happy. And I have with me not only the usual crusts of bread, but a whole loaf of good, fresh bread, and it is all for you, and I have some good fish, and some cheese, and it is all for you. I want you to rejoice, my poor friend, and thus get ready for a greater joy. »

« But how have you become so rich? I do not understand… »

« I will tell you. »

« And cured. You do not seem the same man! »

« Listen, then. I heard that there was at Capernaum that Rabbi who is a holy man, and I went… »

« Stop, stop! I am infected. »

« Oh! It does not matter! I am no longer afraid of anything. » The man, who is indeed the cripple cured and helped by Jesus, with his fast step has almost reached the leper and is only a few steps from him. He spoke while walking and smiling happily.

But the leper says once again: « In the name of God, stop. If anyone should see you… »

« I will stop. Look: I am putting the provisions here. Eat, while I speak to you. » He puts a bundle on a large stone, and opens it up. He then withdraws a few steps, while the leper moves forward and throws himself on the rare food.

« Oh! How long it is since I had food like this! How good it is! And I was just thinking that I was going to rest with an empty stomach. Not one merciful soul today… and not even you… I had chewed some roots… »

« Poor Abel! I was afraid of that. But I said: "Well, he may be sad now, but he will be happy after!" »

« Happy, yes, because of this good food. But after… »

« No! You will be happy for ever. »

The leper shakes his head.

« Listen, Abel. If you can have faith, you will be happy. »

« But faith in whom? »

« In the Rabbi. In the Rabbi Who cured me. »

« But I am a leper. And at the last stage! How can He cure me? »

« Oh! He can. He is holy. »

« Yes, also Elisha cured Naaman the leper… I know… But I… I cannot go to the Jordan. »

« You will be cured without the need of any water. Listen: this Rabbi is the Messiah, do you understand? The Messiah! He is the Son of God. And He cures everyone who has faith. He says: "I want" and the demons flee, limbs are straightened, and blind eyes see. »

« Oh! I would have faith, I would indeed! But how can I see the Messiah? »

« Exactly… I have come just for that. He is often over there, in that village. I know where He will be this evening. If you want… I said: "I will fell Abel, and if Abel feels he can have faith, I will take him to the Master". »

« Are you mad, Samuel? If I go near houses, I will be stoned. »

« Not near the houses. It will be soon getting dark. I will take you to that thicket, and then I will go and call the Master. I will bring Him to you… »

« Go, go at once! I will go by myself to that place. I will walk in the ditch, behind the hedge, but go, go… Oh! go, my good friend! If you only knew what it is to suffer from this disease. And what it means to hope to be cured!… » The leper no longer is interested in the food. He cries and gesticulates imploring his friend.

« I am going, and you will come. » The cured cripple runs away.

Abel with difficulty climbs down into the ditch coasting the road, as it is full of bushes which have grown on the dry earth. Only in the centre there is a fine stream of water. It is getting dark, and the poor man slides among the bushes, always on the look-out in case he should hear any steps. Twice he has to hide on the bottom: the first time when a man on horseback passes along the road, the second time when three men, laden with hay, pass by going to the village. And he goes on.

But Jesus and Samuel reach the thicket before him. « He will be here before long. He moves very slowly because of his wounds. Please be patient. »

« I am not in a hurry. »

« Will You cure him? »

« Has he faith? »

« Oh!… he was dying of starvation. He saw that food after years of abstinence, and yet, after a few mouthfuls, he left it all to come here. »

« How did you meet him? »

« You know… I lived on charity after my misfortune and I went

along the roads from one place to another. I used to pass here every seven days and I met the poor man… one day, when driven by hunger, he had come on the main road looking for something, under a most violent storm. He was searching amongst the garbage, like a dog. I had a chunk of dry bread in my knapsack, the gift of some good people, and I shared it with him. We have been friends ever since, and I bring him some food every week. With what I have… If I have a lot, I can give a lot; if I have little, I give little. I do what I can as if he were my brother. Since You cured me, may You be blessed, I have been thinking of him… and of You. »

« You are good, Samuel; that is why you have been visited by grace. He who loves deserves everything from God. But there is something moving among the branches… »

« Is that you, Abel? »

« Yes, it is me. »

« Come, the Master is waiting for you here, under the walnut tree. »

The leper rises from the ditch and climbs on to the bank, which he crosses and goes into the meadow. Jesus, leaning with His back against a very tall walnut tree, is waiting for him.

« Master, Messiah, Holy One, have mercy on me! » and he throws himself on to the grass at Jesus' feet. With his face still bent down on the ground he says: « My Lord! If You want, You can cleanse me! » He then dares to rise on to his knees, he stretches out his skeleton-like arms, with contorted hands, he lifts his emaciated ruined face… Tears run down from his diseased eye sockets to his corroded lips.

Jesus looks at him so pitifully. He looks at that shadow of a man, devoured by the terrible disease, who is so horrible and ill-smelling that only true charity can endure to be near him. And yet, Jesus stretches out His hand, His beautiful wholesome right hand to caress the poor fellow.

The leper, without getting up, throws himself back on his heels, and shouts: « Don't touch me! Have mercy on me! »

But Jesus takes a step forward. Stately, good, kind He lays His fingers on the head devoured by leprosy, and in a low voice, which is full of love and yet most authoritative, He says: « I want it! Be cleansed! » His hand remains on the poor head for a few minutes. « Get up. Go to the priest. Fulfill the prescriptions of the Law. And do not tell anyone what I did for you. But be good. Do not sin any more. I bless you. »

« Oh! Lord! Abel! You are completely cured! » Samuel, seeing the complete change of his friend, shouts out of joy.

« Yes, he is cured. He deserved it because of his faith. Goodbye. Peace be with you. »

« Master! Master! Master! I will not leave You. I cannot leave You. »

« Do what the Law prescribes. We will meet again. Once again I bless you. »

Jesus goes away, nodding to Samuel to stay. And the two friends shed tears of joy, while in the light of a quarter of the moon they go back to the cave for the last rest in that den of misfortune.

And the vision ends thus.

64. The Paralytic Cured in Peter's House.

[…] The same day, 9th November, immediately after.

I see the shore of the lake of Gennesaret. And I can see the boats beached by the fishermen; on the foreshore, leaning against the boats, are Peter and Andrew, intent on mending the nets, which their assistants bring them still dripping, having rinsed them in the lake to remove entangled rubbish. About ten yards away, John and James, bent over their boat, are busy at tidying it up, and they are helped by an assistant and by a man about fifty or fifty-five years old, who I think is Zebedee, because the assistant calls him « master » and also because he is very like James.

Peter and Andrew, with their backs to the boat, are working silently knotting the threads of the nets and fixing corks to them. Now and again they exchange a few words about their work, which, as far as I understand, has not been profitable.

Peter is sorry about it, not because of the loss of profit or the unprofitable work, but he says: « I am sorry, because- what shall we do to feed these poor people? We receive only occasional offerings and I am not going to touch the ten pieces of silver and the seven drachmas we collected during the last four days. Only the Master can tell me to whom and how that money is to be given. And He will not be back here until Sabbath! If we had had a good haul!… I would have cooked the small fish for the poor… and if anyone at home grumbled, I would not have cared. Healthy people can find food for themselves. But sick people!… »

« Above all that paralytic!… They have already travelled so much to bring him here… » says Andrew.

« Listen, brother. I think… we can't remain divided like this, and I don't know why the Master does not want us with Him all the time. At least… I would not see these poor people whom I can't help, and if I saw them I would say to them: "He is here". »

« I am here! » Jesus has come near them, walking quietly on the soft sand.

Peter and Andrew start. They exclaim: « Oh! Master! » and they shout: « James! John! The Master! Come here! »

The two brothers rush towards them. They all draw close to Jesus. Some kiss His tunic, some His hands, and John dares to encircle

His waist with his arm, and lean his head on Jesus' chest. Jesus kisses his hair.

« What were you talking about? »

« Master… we were saying that we would have liked to have You. »

« Why, My friends? »

« To see You and love You seeing You, and also because of some poor and sick people. They have been waiting for You for over two days… I did what I could. I put them over there, see that hut in that waste land? Over there the handicraftsmen repair the boats. I sheltered there a paralytic, who has a very high temperature, and a little boy who is dying in his mother's arms. I could not send them away to look for You. »

« You did the right thing. But how have you been able to help them and who brought them here? You said they are poor! »

« Yes, Master, they are. Rich people have horses and carts. Poor people have only their legs. They cannot come looking for You as fast as they would like. I did what I could. Look: here are the offerings I have received. I have not touched anything. You will do that. »

« Peter, you could have done that, too. Certainly… My dear Peter, I am sorry that you should be reproached and have extra work because of Me. »

« No, Lord. You must not be sorry about that. It is no trouble for me. I am only sorry I have not been able to be more charitable. But, believe me, I have done, we have all done what we could. »

« I know. I know you have worked and in vain. But if there is no food, your charity remains: alive, active and holy in the eyes of God. »

Some children have rushed round them shouting: « The Master! The Master is here! Here is Jesus, here is Jesus! » and they draw close to Him, Who caresses them while speaking to His disciples.

« Simon, I am going into your house. You will all go and tell the people that I am back and then bring Me the sick ones. »

The disciples go away quickly in different directions. But the whole of Capernaum knows that Jesus has come, thanks to the children who are like bees swarming from the beehive to the various flowers; in our case to the houses, the streets and the squares. They come and go rejoicing, informing their mothers, passers-by, old people sitting in the sun, and they run back to be caressed by Him Who loves them. One of them, a daring boy says: « Speak to us and for us, today, Jesus. You know we love You and we are better than men. »

Jesus smiles at the young psychologist and promises: « I will speak just for you. » And followed by the children, He goes into the house and enters pronouncing His usual greeting of peace: « Peace to this house. »

People crowd into the big room at the back of the house, which is used as a store for nets, ropes, baskets, oars, sails, and provisions. Peter must have put it at Jesus' disposal, because everything has been piled up in one comer to make room. The lake cannot be seen from here. Only its gently lapping waves can be heard. Instead one can see the low greenish wall of the kitchen garden, with the old vine and the leafy fig-tree. There are people even on the road, as they pass from the room into the kitchen garden and hence onto the road.

Jesus begins to speak. In the front row, there are five… high-ranking people, who have elbowed their way through the crowd taking advantage of the fear they strike into poor people. Their sumptuous garments and their pride denounce them as Pharisees and doctors. But Jesus wants His little friends around Him, a crown of innocent little faces, of bright eyes, of angelical smiles, all looking up at Him. Jesus speaks and while speaking, now and again He caresses the curly head of a child who is sitting at His feet, resting his head on his little arm bent on Jesus' lap. Jesus is speaking, sitting on a huge pile of baskets and ropes.

« "My Beloved went down to his garden, to the beds of spices, to pasture his flocks in the gardens, and gather lilies… He pastures his flock among the lilies", says Solomon, the son of David, from whom I descend, I, the Messiah of Israel.

My garden! Which garden is more beautiful and worthy of God than Heaven, where the flowers are the angels created by the Father? And yet, it is not so. The Only Begotten Son of the Father, the Son of man wanted another garden, because it is for the sake of man that I took flesh, without which I would not be able to redeem the faults of the flesh of man. A garden which might have been but little inferior to the heavenly one, if from the earthly Paradise, the children of Adam, the children of God, had spread about, like sweet bees from a beehive, to populate the earth with holiness destined entirely for Heaven. But the enemy sowed brambles and thorns in Adam's heart, and brambles and thorns have overflown from his heart on to the earth. It is no longer a garden, but a wild cruel forest in which fever stagnates and snakes nestle.

And yet the Beloved of the Father still has a garden in this world which is domineered by Mammon. The garden in which He feeds on His celestial food: love and purity; the bed where He picks the flowers dear to Him, flowers not stained with sensuality, greed, pride. These ones. (Jesus caresses as many of the children as He can, patting with His hand the little attentive heads, one big caress that touches them lightly and makes them smile happily). Here are My lilies.

Solomon in all his wealth, did not have a robe more beautiful than the lily that scents the valley, neither did he possess a diadem of a more splendid gracefulness than the one in the pearl chalice of a lily. And yet, for My heart, there is no lily worth one of these. There is no flower-bed, no garden of wealthy people, all cultivated with lilies, that I consider worth only one of these pure, innocent, sincere, simple, little children.

Men and women of Israel! You, great and humble people according to your wealth and position, listen! You are here because you want to know Me and love Me. You must therefore know the first condition to become Mine. I will not speak difficult words. Neither will I give you more difficult examples. I say to you: "Take example from these children".

Which of you has no children, nephews, or little brothers in their childhood, at home? Are they not a restful comfort, a bond for parents, relatives, friends? Their souls are as pure as a clear dawn, their faces scatter clouds and inspire hope, their caresses dry your tears and give you new strength! Why is there so much power in them, although they are weak, defenceless and still unlearned? Because they have God in themselves, they have strength and wisdom in God. The true wisdom: they know how to love and believe. They know how to believe and want. They know how to live in such love and such faith. Be like them: simple, pure, loving, sincere, faithful.

There is no wise man in Israel greater than the smallest of these children, whose souls belong to God and His Kingdom belongs to them. Blessed by the Father, loved by the Son of the Father, flowers of My garden, may My peace be with you and with whoever will imitate you for My sake. »

Jesus has finished.

« Master! » shouts Peter amidst the crowd, « the sick people are here. Two of them can wait until You come out, but this one is crushed amongst the crowd and… he cannot stay here any longer. It is impossible for us to come in. Shall I send him back? »

« No, lower him down through the roof. »

« You are right. We will do that at once. »

I can hear them shuffling on the low roof of the big room, the terrace of which is not built of cement, as the store-room is not really part of the house. The roof is formed with branches covered by chips of stone like slate. I do not know what stone it is. They make an opening through which, by means of ropes, they lower down the little stretcher on which the patient is lying. It is lowered in front of Jesus. The crowds throng closer to see.

« Both you and who brought you have great faith. »

« Oh! Lord! How could we have no faith in You? »

« Well, I say to you: son (he is a very young man) your sins are forgiven. »

The man looks at him, crying… perhaps he is somewhat disappointed because he was hoping to be cured in his body. The Pharisees and doctors whisper something to one another turning up their noses, foreheads and mouths in disdain.

« Why are you muttering, more in your hearts than with Your lips? According to you, it is easier to say to the paralytic: "Your sins are forgiven" or "Get up, take your little bed and walk away"? You think that only God can forgive sins. But you cannot answer which of these things is greater, because this man, whose whole body is lost to him, has spent a lot of money without being cured. And he can only be cured by God. Now, that you may learn that I can do everything, that you may learn that the Son of man has authority both over bodies and souls, on the earth and in Heaven, I say to him: "Get up. Pick up your bed and walk. Go home and be holy". »

The man jerks, he shouts, stands up, he throws himself at Jesus' feet, kisses and caresses them, he cries and laughs, and his relatives and the crowd do likewise. The crowd divides into two to let him pass, as if he were triumphant, and they follow him rejoicing. The five resentful men go away, conceited and as stiff as sticks.

And so the mother can go in with her child: a little emaciated babe, still unweaned. She holds him out in her hands saying simply: « Jesus, You love them. You said so. For Your love and for Your Mother!… » and she weeps.

Jesus takes the suckling, who is dying, He presses him against His heart, for a moment He holds the little wan face with its little violet lips and its eyelashes already closed, against His mouth. Only one moment thus: when He removes him from His blond beard, the little face is rosy, the tiny mouth smiles vaguely as infants do, his little eyes look around bright and inquisitive, his little hands, which before were lifeless, ruffle Jesus' hair and beard. And Jesus smiles.

« Oh! My son! » shouts the happy mother.

« Take him, woman. Be happy and good. »

And the woman takes her reborn son and presses him to her heart. And the little one claims his food at once, he searches, finds, opens and sucks, hungry and happy.

Jesus blesses and passes. He goes to the door where is the man with the high temperature.

« Master! Be good! »

« And you, too. Make use of your health in justice. » He caresses him and goes out.

He goes back to the beach, followed, preceded and blessed by many who implore Him: « We did not hear You. We could not get in. Speak also to us. »

Jesus nods assent and as the crowd press Him to the point of suffocating Him, He gets into Peter's boat. But it is not sufficient. The siege continues. « Set the boat afloat and move away a little. » The vision ends here.

65. The Miraculous Draught of Fishes.

10th November 1944.

The vision begins once again when Jesus starts speaking.

« When all the trees bloom in spring, the happy farmer says: "I will have a good crop" and that hope causes his heart to rejoice. But from springtime to autumn, from the month of flowers to the month of fruit, how many days, winds, rains, sunshine and storms must pass, and sometimes wars or the cruelty of the mighty ones and diseases of plants, and at times diseases of the men of the fields, so that the plants, no longer hoed up, no longer watered, pruned, supported or cleaned, although they promised copious fruit, wilt and die or bear no fruit!

You follow Me. You love Me. Like plants in springtime you adorn yourselves with purposes and love. Israel, indeed, at the dawn of My mission is like our sweet countryside in the bright month of Nisan. But listen. Like the excessive heat in dry weather, Satan, who is envious of Me, will come to scorch you with his wrath. The world will come with its icy winds to freeze your blooms. And passions will come like storms. And tedium will come like a persistent rain. All My enemies and yours will come to sterilise what should be the fruit of your inclination to bloom in God.

I am warning you, because I know. Will everything then be lost, when I, like a sick farmer, even more than sick: dead, will no longer be able to speak to you and work miracles for you? No. I will sow and cultivate as long as I have time. Then everything will grow and ripen for you, if you keep a good watch.

Look at the fig-tree near the house of Simon of Jonas. Who planted it did not find the right and most favourable spot. Planted as it was near the damp northern wall, it would have withered, if by itself it had not found protection to survive. And it sought sunshine and light. There it is: all bent, but strong and proud, drawing in the rays of the sun from early dawn and converting them into nutrition for

its hundreds and hundreds of sweet fruits. It defended itself by itself. It said: "The Creator wanted me, that I may give joy and food to man. And I want to join my will to His". A fig-tree! A speechless tree! A soulless tree! And will you, children of God, the children of man, will you be inferior to a wooden plant?

Keep a good watch to bear fruits of eternal life. I will cultivate You, and at the end I will give you such a potent juice, that you will

never find a more powerful one. Do not allow Satan to laugh at the destruction of My work, of My sacrifice and of your souls. Seek light. Seek sunshine. Seek strength. Seek life. I am the Life, Strength, Sunshine and Light of those who love Me. I have come to take you whence I came. I am speaking to you here, to call You all and point out to you the ten commandments that give eternal life. And with loving advice I say to you: "Love God and your neighbour". It is the first condition to fulfill everything else well. It is the most holy of the holy commandments. Love. Those who love God, in God and for the Lord God, will have peace both on the earth and in Heaven, for their abode and their crown. »

People go away with difficulty after Jesus' blessing. There are neither sick nor poor people.

Jesus says to Simon: « Call the other two. Let us go on to the lake and cast the net. »

« Master, my arms ache with fatigue: all night I cast and hauled the net, and all in vain. The fish are down at the bottom. I wonder where. »

« Do as I tell you, Peter. Always listen to those who love you. »

« I will do as You say, out of respect for Your word. » And he shouts to the assistants and also to James and John: « Let us go out fishing. The Master wants to go. » And while they are moving away, he says to Jesus: « However, Master, I assure You that it is not the right time. Goodness knows where the fish will be resting just now!… »

Jesus, sitting at the prow, smiles and is silent.

They form a semicircle on the lake and then cast the net. After a few minutes' waiting, the boat is shaken in a strange way, because the lake is as smooth as a glass pane under the midday sun.

« But that is fish, Master! » says Peter, with his eyes wide open.

Jesus smiles and is silent.

« Heave ho! Heave ho! » Peter' orders his assistants. But the boat lists to one side, where the net is: « Hey there! James! John! Quick! Come Quick! With the oars! Quick! »

They rush and the joint efforts of the two crews succeed in hauling in the net without damaging the catch.

The two boats draw closer. They are now united. One, two, five, ten baskets. They are all full of wonderful fish, and there are still so many wriggling in the net: live silver and bronze, struggling to escape death. There is only one thing to be done: to empty the net into the bottom of the boats. They do that and the bottoms become a turmoil of agonizing lives. And the crew are up to their ankles in such abundance that the boats sink below the water-line because of the excessive weight.

« To the shore! Steer! Quick! The sails! Watch the depth line! Have the poles ready to prevent a clash. We have too much weight! »

As long as the manoeuvre lasts, Peter thinks of nothing else. But when he gets ashore, he begins to realise. He understands. He is frightened. « Master! My Lord! Go away from me! I am a sinner! I am not worthy of being near You! » He is on his knees on the damp shore.

Jesus looks at him and smiles: « Get up! Follow Me! I will not leave you any more! From now on, you will be a fisher of men, and your companions with you. Be afraid of nothing. I am calling you. Come! »

« At once, Lord. You look after the boats. Take everything to Zebedee and to my brother-in-law. Let us go. We are all for You, Jesus! Blessed be the Eternal Father for this choice. »

And the vision ends.

66. The Iscariot Finds Jesus at Gethsemane and is Accepted as a Disciple.

28th December 1944.

In the afternoon I see Jesus… in the olive-grove… He is sitting on one of the little ground terraces, in His familiar posture, His elbows resting on His knees, His forearms forward and His hands joined. It is getting dark and the light becomes fainter and fainter in the thick olive-grove. Jesus is alone. He has taken off His mantle as if He were warm, and His white tunic stands out against the green of the surroundings which are made even darker by the twilight.

A man comes down through the olive-trees. He seems to be looking for something or someone. He is tall, and is wearing gay coloured garments: a yellow pink hue that makes his big mantle more showy, adorned as it is with swinging fringes. I cannot see his face very well because of the dim light and the distance, and also because the edge of the mantle is lowered over part of his face. When he sees Jesus, he makes a gesture as if to say: « There He is! » and he hastens his step. When he is a few metres away, he greets Him: « Hail, Master! »

Jesus turns round suddenly and looks up, because the man is standing on the next terrace, which is higher up. Jesus looks at him, He is serious, and I would say also sad. The man says once again: « I greet You, Master. I am Judas of Kerioth. Do You not recognise me? Do You not remember? »

« I remember and recognise you. You spoke to Me here with Thomas, last Passover. »

« And You said to me: "Think about it and make up your mind before I come back". I have made up my mind. I will come. »

« Why are you coming, Judas? » Jesus is really sad.

« Because… The last time I told You why. Because I dream of the

Kingdom of Israel and I see You as a king. »

« Is that why you are coming? »

« Yes, it is. I will put myself and everything I possess: capability, acquaintances, friends, fatigue at Your service and at the service of Your mission to rebuild Israel. »

The two are now close, in front of each other, standing, and they stare at each other. Jesus is grave and melancholy. Judas exalted by his dream, is smiling, handsome and young, sprightly and ambitious.

« I did not look for you, Judas. »

« I know. But I looked for You. For days and days I have been putting people at the gates to warn me of Your arrival. I thought You would be coming with some followers and that it would therefore be easy to notice You. Instead… I understood that You had been here, because a group of pilgrims was blessing You as You had cured a sick man. But no one could tell me where You were. Then I remembered this place. And I have come. If I had not found You here, I would have resigned myself to not finding You any more… »

« Do you think it is a good thing for you, that you found Me? »

« Yes, because I was looking for You. I was longing for You, I want You. »

« Why? Why did you look for Me? »

« But I have told You, Master! Did You not understand? »

« I did understand you. Yes, I did. But I want you also to understand Me before you follow Me. Come. We will talk while walking. » And they start walking, one beside the other, up and down the paths that cross one another in the olive-grove. « You want to follow Me for a human reason, Judas. But I must dissuade you. I have not come for that. »

« But are You not the designated King of the Jews? The one of whom the Prophets spoke? Others have come. But they lacked too many things and they fell like leaves no longer supported by the wind. But You have God with You, in fact You work miracles. Where there is God, the success of the mission is guaranteed. »

« You have spoken the truth. I have God with Me. I am His Word. I was prophesied by the Prophets, promised to the Patriarchs, expected by the people. But why, Israel, have you become so blind and deaf that you are no longer able to read and see, to hear and understand the reality of events? My Kingdom is not of this world, Judas. Allow yourself to be convinced of that. I have come to Israel to bring Light and Glory. But not the light and glory of the earth. I have come to call the just of Israel to the Kingdom. Because it is from Israel that the plant of eternal life is to come, and with Israel it is to be formed, the plant, the sap of which will be the Blood of the Lord, the plant that will spread all over the earth, until the end of time. My first followers will be from Israel. My first confessors will be from Israel. But also My persecutors will be from Israel. Also My executioners will be from Israel. And also My traitor will be from Israel… »

« No, Master. That will never happen. If everyone should betray You, I will remain with You and defend You. »

« You, Judas? And on what do you base your certainty? »

« On my honour as a man. »

« Which is more fragile than a cobweb, Judas. It is God we have to ask for the strength to be honest and faithful. Man!… Man accomplishes human deeds. To accomplish spiritual deeds - and to follow the Messiah with truthfulness and justice is to accomplish a spiritual deed - it is necessary to kill man and make him be born again. Are you capable of so much? »

« Yes, Master. And in any case… Not everybody in Israel will love You. But Israel will not give the Messiah executioners and traitors. Israel has been waiting for You for centuries! »

« I will be given them. Remember the Prophets… Their words… and their end. I am destined to disappoint many. And you are one of them. Judas, you have here in front of you a mild, peaceful poor man, who wishes to remain poor. I have not come to impose Myself and make war. I am not going to contend with the strong and mighty ones for any kingdom or any power. I contend only with Satan for souls and I have come to break the chains of Satan with the fire of My love. I have come to teach mercy, sacrifice, humility, continence. I say to you and to everybody: "Do not crave for human wealth, but work for eternal coins". You are deceiving yourself if you think I am to triumph over Rome and the ruling classes. Herods and Caesars can sleep tranquilly, while I speak to the crowds. I have not come to snatch anybody's sceptre… and My eternal sceptre is already ready, but no one, unless one was love as I am, would like to hold it. Go, Judas, and ponder… »

« Are You rejecting me, Master? »

« I reject nobody, because who rejects does not love. But, tell Me, Judas: how would you describe the gesture of a man, who, knowing he is infected by a contagious disease, says to another man who approaches him unaware of the situation, to drink out of his chalice: "Watch what you are doing"? Would you define it hatred or love? »

« I would say it was love, because he does not want the man, unaware of the danger, to ruin his health. »

« Well, define also My gesture likewise. »

« Can I ruin my health coming with You? No, never. »

« You can ruin more than your health, because, consider this carefully, Judas, little will be debited to him who is a murderer, but believes he is doing justice, and he believes it because he does not know the Truth; but a great deal will be debited to him, who knowing the Truth, not only does not follow it, but becomes its enemy. »

« I will not do that. Take me, Master. You cannot refuse me. If You are the Saviour and You see that I am a sinner, a sheep astray, a blind man off the right path, why do You refuse to save me? Take me. I will follow You, even to death… »

« To death! That is true. Then… »

« Then, Master? »

« The future is in God's bosom. Go. We will meet tomorrow at the Fish Gate. »

« Thank You, Master. The Lord be with You. »

« And may His mercy save you. »

And it all finishes.

67. Jesus Works the Miracle of the Broken Blades at the Fish Gate.

31st December 1944.

I see Jesus walking along a shady road all alone. It looks like a fresh little valley, rich in waters. I call it a little valley because it is embanked between two risings of the ground and a rivulet flows in its centre.

The place is deserted in the early morning hour. The sun has just risen, a beautiful, clear summer day, and with the exception of the warbling of the birds in the trees and the plaintive cooing of wild doves nesting in the crevices of the barren hill, no other sound is heard. The trees are mostly olive-trees, particularly on the hill on the left-hand side, whereas the other hill is more barren with low lentisk, thorny acacia and agave bushes, etc. Even the rivulet, with very little water lying in the centre of the riverbed, does not seem to make any noise, and flows gently reflecting in its depth the green of the surrounding hills, and thus looks dark emerald.

Jesus crosses a primeval little bridge: the trunk of a tree, half planed, thrown across the torrent, without parapet or any protection, and goes on His way on the other bank.

I can now see walls and gates and also some merchants with vegetables and foodstuffs crowding near the gates, still closed, waiting to go into town. Donkeys are busy braying and brawling; also their owners scuffle in robust style. Insults and blows with cudgels are aimed at and given not only to the donkeys' backs, but also to human heads.

Two men are quarrelling in earnest, because the donkey of one of them has helped itself from the beautiful basket of lettuce of the other donkey and has eaten quite a lot of it! Perhaps it is only a pretext to give vent to old ill-feelings. In fact from under their

short tunics, which reach down to their calves, they pull out two short large knives, as broad as a hand: they look like short pointed daggers, and they glint in the sun. Screams of women and shouts of men are heard everywhere. But no one tries to separate the men who are ready for a rustic duel.

Jesus, Who was walking, thoughtful, raises His head, He sees the fight and rushes between the two: « Stop, in the name of God! » He orders.

« No, I want to fix this cursed dog once and for all! »

« And so do I! You are fond of fringes? I'll make a fringe for you with yours bowels! »

The two move fast round Jesus, pushing Him, insulting Him to get rid of Him, endeavouring to strike each other, but without success, because Jesus, moving His mantle carefully, wards off the blows and interferes with their aiming. He gets His mantle torn.

People shout: « Come away, Nazarene. You'll be the loser ». But He does not move and endeavours to calm them, reminding them of God. In vain! The two rivals are mad with rage!

The power of miracle can be seen radiating from Jesus. For the last time He shouts: « I order you to stop it! »

« No! Get out of the way. Go your way, dog of a Nazarene! »

Jesus then stretches out His hands, with His powerful bright look. He does not say one word. But the blades fall in pieces to the ground, as if they were made of glass, and had clashed against a rock.

The two men look at the short, useless handles, left in their hands. Astonishment deadens wrath. Also the astonished crowd shout.

« And now? » asks Jesus, severely. « Where is your strength? »

Also the soldiers on duty at the gate, who rushed out at the latest shouts, stare surprised and one bends down to pick up the fragments of the blades and test them on his nails, not believing they were made of steel.

« And now? » repeats Jesus. « Where is your strength? On what did you base your right? On those bits of metal now lying in the dust? On those splinters of metal which had no other strength but to induce you to a sin of wrath against a brother, thus depriving you of all the blessings of God and consequently of all strength? Oh! how miserable are those who rely on human means to win, and who do not realise that holiness and not violence will make us winners both on the earth and beyond it! Because God is with the just.

Listen, people of Israel, and you, soldiers of Rome. The Word of God speaks to all the sons of man, and the Son of man will not reject the Gentiles.

The second commandment of the Lord is a commandment of love for our neighbours. God is good and wants good will in His

children. Who is not kindly disposed towards his neighbour, cannot consider himself a son of God neither can he have God in himself. Man is not an animal without reason, that rushes at and bites a prey. Man has reason and a soul. With his reason he must behave as a man. With his soul he must behave as a saint. Who behaves differently, lowers himself below animals; he stoops down to embrace demons because a soul becomes wicked with the sin of wrath.

Love. I say nothing else. Love your neighbour as the Lord God of Israel prescribes. Do not always be of Cain's blood. And why are you so? For the sake of a few coins, you who might have become murderers. For a few palms of land. For a better position. For a woman. What are such things? Are they eternal? No. They last less than a lifetime, which lasts an instant of eternity. And what do you lose if you follow them? The eternal peace promised to the just, and which the Messiah will bring you together with His Kingdom. Come on to the way of Truth. Follow the Voice of God. Love one another. Be honest. Be moderate. Be humble and fair. Go and meditate. »

« Who are You who speak such words and break swords with Your will power? Only One can do such things: the Messiah. Not even John the Baptist is greater than He is. Are You perhaps the Messiah? » three or four people ask Him.

« Yes, I am. »

« You? Are You the One who cures sick people and preaches God in Galilee? »

« I am. »

« I have an old mother who is dying. Cure her! »

« And I, see? I am losing all my strength because of my pains. My children are still young. Cure me! »

« Go home. Your mother this evening will prepare your supper; and you: be healed. I want it! »

The crowd roars with joy. They then ask: « Your Name! Your Name! »

« Jesus of Nazareth. »

« Jesus! Jesus! Hosanna! Hosanna! »

The crowd is jubilant. The donkeys now can do what they like, no one pays attention to them. Mothers rush out from the town, as the news has obviously spread and they lift up their little ones. Jesus blesses and smiles. And He endeavours to make His way through the acclaiming crowd to enter the town and go His way. But the crowd will not hear of it. « Stay with us! In Judaea! In Judaea! We are the sons of Abraham, too! » they shout.

« Master! » Judas runs towards Him. « Master, You arrived before me. But what is happening »

« The Rabbi has worked a miracle! Not in Galilee; here! We want Him here! »

« See, Master? The whole of Israel loves You. It is only fair You should stay here, too. Why do You not want to? »

« It is not that I do not want to, Judas. I came here by Myself, that the roughness of the Galilean disciples might not irritate the subtleness of the Judaeans. I want to gather all the sheep of Israel under the sceptre of God. »

« That is why I said to You: "Take me". I am a Judaean, and I know how do deal with my equals. Will You therefore remain in Jerusalem? »

« For a few days. To wait for a disciple, who is also a Judaean. Then I will go through Judaea… »

« Oh! I will come with You. I will accompany You. You will come to my village. I will take You to my house. Will You come, Master? »

« I will come… Have you any news of the Baptist, since you are a Judaean and you live with the mighty ones? »

« I know that he is still in jail, but they want to set him free, because the crowds are threatening a revolt, if they do not get their prophet. Do You know him? »

« Yes, I do. »

« Do You like, him? What do You think of him? »

« I think no one has been more like Elijah than he is. »

« Do You really consider him the Precursor? »

« Yes, he is. He is the morning star announcing the sun. Blessed are those who through his preaching have prepared themselves for the Sun. »

« John is very severe. »

« Not more with others than he is with himself. »

« That is true. But it is difficult to follow him in his penance. You are more kind, and it is easy to love You. »

« And yet… »

« Yet… what, Master? »

« Yet, as he is hated because of his austerity, I will be hated because of My goodness, because they both preach God, and God is disliked by the wicked. But it is to be thus. As he precedes Me in preaching, so he will precede Me in death. Woe to the killers of Penance- and Goodness. »

« Why, Master, have You always such sad forecasts? The crowds love You. You saw that… »

« Because I am sure. Humble people do love Me. But the crowd is not all humble and of humble people. But I am not sad. It is a Placid vision of the future and compliance with the will of the Father, Who sent Me for that. And I have come for that. Here we are at the Temple. I am going to the Bel Nidrasc (1) to teach the crowds. If you wish, you may stay. »

« I will stay with You. There in only one thing I wish: to serve You and let You triumph. »

They enter the Temple, and it all ends.

(1) The authoress does not explain the meaning of « Bel Nidrasc ». However, in view of the fact that she often confuses m and n in Jewish names, it may well be that the correct spelling should be Midrash (a rabbinical comment on the Scriptures). In which case Bel Midrash would be the part of the Temple where doctors used to teach people. In fact the text says: «… Here we are at the Temple. I am going to the Bel Nidrasc to teach the crowds. »

68. Jesus Preaches in the Temple. Judas Iscariot Is with Him.

1st January 1945.

I see Jesus entering the enclosure of the Temple with Judas beside Him. After going through the first terrace, He stops in a porch on the side of a wide yard, paved with multicoloured marble. The place is beautiful and crowded.

Jesus looks round and sees a spot He likes. But before turning His steps to it, He says to Judas: « Call the official of the place for Me. I must make Myself known, so that no one may say I break the custom and lack in respect. »

« Master, You are above the custom, and no one more than You is entitled to speak in the House of God, since You are His Messiah. »

« I know, you know, but they do not know. I have not come to scandalise or to teach people to break, not only the Law, but also the custom. On the contrary, I have come to teach respect, humility and obedience and to remove scandals. I therefore want to ask to be allowed to speak in God's name, making the official of the place acknowledge Me as being worthy. »

« You did not do that the last time. »

« The last time I was inflamed by the zeal for the House of God, desecrated by too many things. The last time I was the Son of the Father, the Heir Who in the name of the Father and for the love of My House, acted in His majesty, which is above officials and priests. Now I am the Master of Israel, and I teach Israel also that. After all, Judas, do you think that a disciple is greater than His Master? »

« No, Jesus. »

« And who are you? And who am I? »

« You are the Master, I the disciple. »

« Well then, if you admit that, why do you want to teach your Master? Go and obey. I obey My Father, you must obey your Master. The first condition of the Son of God: to obey without discussing orders, knowing that the Father can give but holy orders. The first condition of a disciple: to obey his Master, knowing that the Master knows, and can give but just orders. »

« It is true. Forgive me. I will obey. »

« I forgive you. Go. And, Judas, listen to one more thing: remember that. Always bear that in mind in future. »

« To obey? Yes, I will. »

« No: remember that I was respectful and humble to the Temple. To the Temple: that is, to the mighty castes; go. »

Judas looks at Him, wistfully and inquisitively… but he dare not ask further questions. And he goes away thoughtfully.

… He comes back with a sumptuously dressed personage. « Here, Master, the official. »

« Peace be with you. I ask to teach Israel, amongst the rabbis of Israel. »

« Are You a rabbi? »

« Yes, I am. »

« Who was Your teacher? »

« The Spirit of God Who speaks to Me in His wisdom and enlightens for Me every word of the Holy Scriptures. »

« Are You greater than Hillel, since You say You know all doctrines, without a teacher? How can one be formed if there is no one forming him? »

« As David was formed, an unknown little shepherd, who became a powerful and wise king by God's will. »

« Your Name? »

« Jesus of Joseph of Jacob, of the House of David, and of Mary of Joachim of the House of David, and of Anne of Aaron, Mary, the Virgin married in the Temple by the High Priest, according to the law of Israel, because She was an orphan. »

« Who can prove that? »

« There must still be some Levites here who will remember the event and who were the same age as Zacharias of the class of Abijah, My relative. Ask them, if you doubt My sincerity. »

« I believe You. But who will prove to me that You are capable of teaching? »

« Listen to Me and you will judge yourself. » « You are free to do it… But… are You not a Nazarene? »

« I was born at Bethlehem of Judah, at the time of the census decreed by Caesar. Banished by unfair orders, the children of David are now everywhere. But the family is of Judah. »

« You know… the Pharisees… all Judaea… throughout Galilee… »

« I know. But be reassured. I was born at Bethlehem, at Bethlehem Ephrathah, whence My family comes; if now I live in Galilee, it is only to fulfill the given sign… »

The official goes away a few yards, hastening to where they call him.

Judas asks: « Why did You not say that You are the Messiah? »

« My words will say so. »

« Which is the sign to be fulfilled? »

« The union of Israel under the teaching of the word of Christ. I am the Shepherd of Whom the Prophets speak and I have come to gather all the sheep of every region, I have come to cure the sick ones, and put the wandering ones on a good pasture. There is no Judaea or Galilee, no Decapolis or Idumaea for Me. There is only one thing: the Love that sees with one glance only and joins in one embrace only in order to save… » Jesus is inspired. Rays of light seem to be emanating from Him, so happily He smiles at his dream. Judas, amazed, stares at Him.

Some curious people draw near them, fascinated and struck by their different magnificence.

Jesus lowers His head and smiles at the little group with a smile, the sweetness of which no painter will ever be able to portray and no believer, who has never seen it, will ever be able to imagine. And He says: « Come if you are anxious to hear eternal words. »

He turns His steps towards the arch of the porch, and leaning against a column, He begins to speak. He refers to the event of the morning as a starting point.

« This morning, on entering Zion, I saw two children of Abraham who were ready to kill each other for a few coins. I could have cursed them in the name of God, because God says: "You shall not kill" and He also says that who does not maintain the Law is to be

cursed. But I felt pity for their ignorance of the spirit of the Law and I only prevented them from committing murder, that they may have the opportunity of repenting, knowing God, serving Him in obedience, loving not only those who love them, but also their enemies.

Yes, Israel. A new day is rising for you and the commandment of love is becoming brighter. Does the year begin with the foggy Ethanim, or with the sad Chislev, the days of which are shorter than a dream and its nights longer than a calamity? No, it begins with the flowery, sunny, happy Nisan, when everything smiles and the heart of man, even the most poor and sad one, opens to hope, because summer is coming, with its crops, sunshine and fruit, when it is sweet to sleep on a meadow full of flowers, under a starry sky, and it is easy for man to nourish himself, because every clod of earth bears herbs or fruit to satisfy his hunger.

Here, Israel. Winter, the time of expectation, is over. Here is now the joy of the promise which is being accomplished. The Bread and Wine are about to be ready for your hunger. The Sun is among you. Everything breathes more freely and sweetly under this Sun. Also the precept of our Law: the first and most holy of the holy precepts: "Love your God and love your neighbour".

In the dim light granted to you so far, you were told: "Love those who love you and hate your enemies": you could not have done any better, because the wrath of God still weighed upon you, owing to Adam's sin of estrangement. And your enemy was not only who crossed the borders of your fatherland, but also who did you wrong privately or you thought he had done. Hatred, therefore, was smouldering in every heart, because which man, intentionally or unintentionally, does not give offence to his brother? And which man reaches an old age without being offended?

I say to you: love also those who offend you. Do that, considering that Adam, and every man through him, is a sinner against God, and there is no one who can say: "I have not offended God". And yet, God forgives, not once only He forgives, but dozens of times, He forgives thousands of times, as it is proved by the fact that man still exists on the earth. Forgive therefore, as God forgives. And if you cannot do it out of love for the brother who injured you, do it for the love of God, Who gives you bread and life, Who protects you in your worldly needs, and has arranged all events to procure eternal peace for you in His bosom. This is the new law, the law of God's springtime, of the flowery time of Grace amongst men, of the time that will bear you a matchless Fruit that will open the gates of Heaven for you.

The voice that spoke in the desert is no longer heard. But it is not mute. It still speaks to God on behalf of Israel and still speaks to every Israelite with an honest heart and it says - after teaching you to do penance to prepare the ways to the Lord Who is coming, and to be charitable giving what is surplus to those who lack even what is necessary, and to be honest without extorting and vexing - it says: "The Lamb of God, He Who takes away the sins of the world, Who will baptise with the fire of the Holy Spirit is amongst you. He will clear His threshing-floor and gather His wheat".

Endeavour to recognise Him Whom the Precursor indicates to you. His suffering is imploring God to give you light. See. May your spiritual eyes be opened. You will recognise the Light that is coming. I pick up the voice of the Prophet announcing the Messiah, and with the power I receive from the Father, I amplify it and I add My authority to it and I call you to the truth of the Law. Prepare your hearts for the grace of the oncoming Redemption. The Redeemer is amongst you. Blessed are those who will be worthy of being redeemed, because they are men of good will.

Peace be with you. »

Someone asks: « Are You a disciple of the Baptist, since You speak of him with such veneration? »

« I was baptised by him, on the banks of the Jordan, before he was imprisoned. I venerate him because he is holy in the eyes of

God. I solemnly tell you that among the children of Abraham there is no one greater in grace than he is. From his birth to his death, the eyes of God will rest upon that blessed man without any feeling of disdain. »

« Did he give You any assurance about the Messiah? »

« His word, which does not lie, pointed out the living Messiah to those present. »

« Where? When? »

« When it was time to do so. »

But Judas feels bound to say to everybody: « The Messiah is He Who is speaking to you. I declare it, because I know Him, and I am His first disciple. »

« Him!… Oh!… » The people move away frightened. But Jesus is so sweet that they gather round Him again.

« Ask Him to work some miracles. He is powerful. He can cure. He can read your hearts. He can answer all your questions. »

« Tell Him, on my behalf, that I am not well. My right eye is blind. My left one is already failing… »

« Master. »

« Judas. » Jesus, Who is caressing a little girl, turns round.

« Master, this man is almost blind and he wants to see. I told him you can… »

« I can cure who has faith. Have you faith, man? »

« I believe in the God of Israel. I come here to enter the Bethzatha Pool. But there is always someone before me. »

« Can you believe in Me? »

« If I believe in the angel of the pool, should I not believe in You, Who Your disciple says are the Messiah? »

Jesus smiles. He wets His finger with saliva and lightly touches the diseased eye. « What can you see? »

« I see things without the fog I used to see. Are You not curing the other one? »

Jesus smiles once again. He repeats the operation on the blind eye. « What can you see? » He asks, removing His fingertip from the closed eyelid.

« Ah! Lord of Israel! I can see as well as when I was a little boy, running on the meadows! May You be blessed for ever and ever! » The man cries, kneeling at Jesus' feet.

« Go. Be good, now, out of gratitude to God. »

A Levite who arrived towards the end of the miracle, asks: « On what authority do You do such things? »

« Are you asking Me? I will tell you, if you answer a question. According to you, who is greater, a prophet who prophesies the Messiah or the Messiah Himself? »

« What a question! The Messiah is greater: He is the Redeemer promised by the Most High! »

« Well, then, why did the Prophets work miracles? On what authority? »

« On the authority given to them by God to prove to the crowds that God was with them. »

« Well, I work miracles on the same authority: God is with Me, I am with Him. And I thus prove to the people that what I say is true and that the Messiah, with a greater right and a greater power, can do what the Prophets were able to do. »

The Levite goes away pensive and the vision ends.

69. Jesus Teaches Judas Iscariot.

3rd January 1945.

I see Jesus and Judas once again: they are coming out of the Temple, after praying in the area closest to the Holy of Holies, allowed to Jewish males.

Judas would like to remain with Jesus. But the Master objects to his wish. « Judas, I want to be alone at night time. At night, My spirit gets its nourishment from the Father. Prayer, meditation and solitude are more necessary for Me than material food. Who wishes to live for the spirit, and lead others to live the same life, must disregard the flesh, nay, I would say: kill it, to devote all his attention to the spirit. Everybody must do that, you know" Judas. You, too, if you really want to belong to God, that is to the supernatural. »

« But we are still on the earth, Master. How can we neglect the flesh and take care only of the spirit? Is what You say not the antithesis of God's commandment: "You shall not kill"? Does the commandment not forbid also suicide? If life is a gift from God, must we love it, or not? »

« I will not reply to you as I would reply to a simple-minded man, whom it is sufficient to get to raise his soul or his mind to supernatural spheres, so that we can take him with us flying in spiritual kingdoms. You are not a simple-minded person. You were formed in an environment that refined you… and it also marred you with its quibbles and doctrines. Do you remember Solomon, Judas? He was wise, the wisest man of those times. Do you remember what he said, after acquiring all knowledge? "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity. To fear God and observe His commandments, that is all that matters to man". Now I tell you that it is necessary to know how to get nourishment, but no poison, from food. And if we know that a food is bad for us, because it causes detrimental reactions in us, as it is stronger than our salutary juices which could counteract its effects, we must take no more of that food, even if it is pleasant to our taste. Plain bread and water from the fountain are better than the sophisticated dishes of the

king's table, containing drugs which upset and poison.. »

« What must I leave, Master? »

« Everything you know that upsets you. Because God is peace and if you want to follow the path of God, you must clear your mind, your heart and your flesh of everything that is not peace producing and causes perturbation. I know it is difficult to amend one's way of living. But I am here to help you. I am here to help man to become the son of God once again, to re-create himself by means of a new creation, of an autogenesis wanted by man himself. But let Me reply to your question, so that you may not say that you were left in error through a fault of Mine. It is true that to kill oneself is the same as killing other people. Both our own and other people's lives are the gift of God and only God Who gives life, has the authority to take it. Who kills himself, confesses his own pride, and pride is hated by God. »

« He confesses his pride? I would say his despair. »

« And what is despair but pride? Just think, Judas. Why does one despair? Either because misfortunes persistently perturb him and he wants to overcome them by himself, but is unable to do so. Or because he is guilty and he thinks that he cannot be forgiven by God. In both cases, is not pride the basic reason? The man who wants to do all by himself, is no longer humble enough to stretch out his hand to the Father and say to Him: "I am not able, but You are. Help me, because I hope and wait for everything from You". The other man who says: "God cannot forgive me" says so, because measuring God by his own standards, he knows that another person could not forgive him, if that person had been offended, as he offended God. So here again it is pride. A humble man understands and forgives, even if he suffers for the offence received. A proud man does not forgive. He is proud also because he is not capable of lowering his head and saying: "Father, I have sinned, forgive Your poor guilty son". But do you not know, Judas, that the Father will forgive everything, if one asks to be forgiven with a sincere, contrite, humble, heart willing to rise again to new life? »

« But certain crimes are not to be forgiven. They cannot be forgiven. »

« That is what you say. And it will be true only because man wants it to be true. But, oh! I solemnly tell you that even after the crime of crimes, if the guilty man should rush to the Father's feet - He is called Father, Judas, just for that, and He is a Father of infinite perfection - and crying, implored Him to be forgiven, offering to expiate, without despairing, the Father would make it possible for him to expiate and thus deserve forgiveness and save his soul. »

« Well, then, You say that the men quoted by the Scriptures who killed themselves, did wrong. »

« It is not lawful to do violence to anybody, not even to oneself. They did wrong. In their limited knowledge of good, perhaps in certain cases, they had mercy from God. But after the Word has clarified the truth and has given strength to spirits with His Spirit, then who dies in despair will no longer be forgiven. Neither in the instant of the personal judgement, nor after centuries of Gehenna, on Doomsday, never! Is that hardness on God's side? No: it is justice. God will say: "You, a creature gifted with reason and supernatural knowledge, created free by Me, you decided to follow the path you chose and you said: 'God will not forgive me. I am separated from Him for ever. I think I must apply the law by myself to my own crime. I am parting from life to evade remorse' without considering that you would no longer have felt remorse if you had come on My faithful bosom. And let it be done to you, as you judged. I will not do violence to the freedom I gave you".

That is what the Eternal Father will say to the suicide. Meditate on it, Judas. Life is a gift, a gift to be loved. But what gift is it? A holy gift. So love it holily. Life lasts as long as the flesh holds out. Then the great Life, the eternal Life begins. A Life of blissful happiness for the just, of malediction for the unjust. Is life a purpose or a means? It is a means. It serves for a purpose which is eternity. Then let us give life what is required to make it last and serve the spirit in its conquest. Continence of the flesh in all its lusts, in all of them.

Continence of the mind in all its desires, in all of them. Continence of the heart in all human passions. Infinite instead is to be the ardour for heavenly passions: love of God and the neighbour, obedience to the divine word, heroism in good and virtue.

I have given you the answer, Judas. Are you convinced? Is the explanation sufficient? Be always sincere, and ask When you do not yet know enough: I am here to be your Master. »

« I have understood and it is sufficient. But… it is very difficult to do what I have understood. You can… because You are holy. But… I am a man, young and full of life… »

« I have come for men, Judas. Not for the angels. They do not need a teacher. They see God. They live in His Paradise. They are not unaware of the passions of men, because the Intelligence which is their Life makes them acquainted with everything, also those who are not guardians of men. But, spiritual as they are, they can have but one sin, as one of them had, and he drew to his side those who were weaker in charity: pride, the arrow that disfigured Lucifer, the most beautiful of the archangels, and turned him into the horripilant monster of the Abyss. I have not come for the angels, who, after Lucifer's fall, are horrified even at the shadow of a proud thought. But I have come for men. To make angels of men.

Man was the perfection of creation. He had the spirit of the angel and the full beauty of the animal, complete in all its animal and moral parts. There was no creature equal to him. He was the king of the earth, as God is the King of Heaven, and one day, when he would have fallen asleep for the last time on the earth, he would have become king with the Father in Heaven. Satan tore the wings off the angel-man and he replaced them with the claws of a beast and with intense yearning for filth, and lured him into becoming a being which is better described as a man-demon, rather than simply a man. I want to eradicate the disfigurement worked by Satan, as well as the corrupted craving of the contaminated flesh. I want to give back to man his wings, and make him once again king, coheir of the Father and of the Celestial Kingdom. I know that man, if he is willing, can do what I say, to become once again king and angel. I would not tell you things you could not do. I am not one of the rhetors who preach impossible doctrines. I have real flesh, so that through the experience of the flesh, I might learn which are the temptations of man. »

« And what about sins? »

« Everyone can be tempted. Sinners are only those who want to be such. »

« Have You ever sinned, Jesus? »

« No, I never wanted to sin. Not because I am the Son of the Father. But because I wanted and I want to prove to man that the Son of man did not sin because He did not want to sin, and that man can, if he wants, not sin. »

« Have You ever been tempted? »

« I am thirty years old, Judas. And I did not live in a cave upon a mountain. I lived amongst men. And if I had been in the loneliest place in the world, do you think temptations would not have come to Me? We have everything in us: good and evil (1). We carry everything with us. And the breath of God blows on the good and vivifies it like a thurible of sweet-smelling holy incense. And Satan blows on evil, thus kindling a furious blazing fire. But diligent good will and constant prayer are like damp sand on the hellish fire: they suffocate it and put it out. »

« But if You have never sinned, how can You judge sinners? »

« I am a man and the Son of God. What I might ignore as a man

(1) Chapters 5 and 6 of this book should be read once again. It will then be clear that the evil temptation did not come to Jesus from inside (see Hebrews 4, 15) but from outside (see Matthew 4, 1-11; Mark 1, 12-13; Luke 4, 1-13). In such light, therefore, is to be understood the expression: « I am thirty years old… » What follows: « We have everything in us: good and evil… put it out » cannot be referred also to Jesus, but only to Judas and all the members of mankind stained by the original sin. Jesus' short speech aims at convincing Judas that man, if he wants, and asks God for help, can overcome all trials and temptations.

and judge wrongly, I know and judge as the Son of God. After all!… Judas, answer this question of Mine. Will one who is hungry, suffer more by saying: "I will now sit down at the table" or by saying: "There is no food for me"? »

« He suffers more in the latter case, because the simple thought that he is without food, will bring back to him the pleasant smell of food and his bowels will be tortured by biting desire. »

« Right: temptation is as biting as that desire, Judas. Satan makes it more intense, more real, more alluring than any accomplished act. Further, the act satisfies, and at times nauseates; whereas temptations do not subside, but like pruned trees, they grow stronger and stronger. »

« And have You never yielded? »

« No, never. »

« How did You manage? »

« I said: "Father, lead Me not into temptation". »

« What? You, the Messiah, You work miracles and You ask Your Father for help? »

« Not only for help: I ask Him not to lead Me into temptation. Do you think that I, simply because am I, can do without the Father? Oh! no! I solemnly tell you that the Father grants everything to His Son, and that the Son receives everything from the Father. And I tell you that everything the Father will be asked for in My name will be granted. But here we are at Gethsemane, where I live. The first trees can be seen beyond the walls. You live beyond Tophet. It is getting dark already. You had better not come up as far as that. We will meet again tomorrow at the same place. Goodbye. Peace be with you. »

« Peace be with You, too, Master… But I would like to tell You another thing. I will come with You as far as the Kidron, then I will come back. Why do You live in such a humble place? You know, people notice so many things. Do You not know anyone in town with a beautiful house? If You wish, I can take You to some friends. They will give You hospitality because of my friendly attitude towards them; and the house would be more worthy of You. »

« Do you think so? I do not. All classes of people are worthy or unworthy. And without lacking in charity, but to avoid offending justice, I tell you that the unworthy, the mischievously unworthy, are often to be found amongst the great ones. It is not necessary and it is of no use being influential, to be good or to hide sins from the eyes of God. Everything will be turned over under My Sign. And not who is mighty will be great, but who is humble and holy. »

« But to be respected, to impose oneself… »

« Is Herod respected? Is Caesar respected? No, they are endured and cursed both by lips and by hearts. And believe Me, Judas, on

good people, or simply on people of good will, it will be easier for Me to impose Myself with modesty rather than with majesty. »

« But… will You always despise the mighty ones? You will make enemies of them! I was thinking of speaking of You to many people I know and who are influential… »

« I will not despise anybody. I will meet the poor as well as the rich, slaves as well as kings, pure people as well as sinners. But if I have to be grateful to those who supply Me with bread and a roof that I may carry on My work, whatever the roof and the bread may be, I will always give My preference to the humble. The great ones already have so many joys. The poor have but their honest conscience, a faithful love, children and the joy of being listened to by those who are above them. I will always be bent over the poor, the afflicted, and sinners. I thank you for your good intention. But leave Me to this place of peace and prayer. Go, and may God inspire you with what is good. »

Jesus leaves the disciple and goes into the olive-grove, and the vision ends.

70. Jesus Meets John of Zebedee at Gethsemane.

4th January 1945.

I see Jesus going towards the little low white house in the middle of the olive-grove. A young man greets Him. He seems to come from there, because he is holding in his hands pruning and hoeing tools.

« God be with You, Rabbi: » Your disciple John came, and he just left to come and meet You.

« How long ago? »

« Not long, he has just passed that path. We thought You were coming from Bethany… »

Jesus starts walking very fast, He goes round the cliff, He sees John almost running down towards the town and calls him.

The disciple turns round and with his face brightened with joy, he shouts: « Oh! My Master! » and he starts running back.

Jesus receives him with His arms wide open and they embrace each other affectionately.

« I was coming to look for You… We thought You had been to Bethany, as You told us. »

« Yes, I wanted to go. I must start evangelising also the surroundings of Jerusalem. But I remained in town… to teach a new disciple. »

« Everything You do is well done, Master. And is always successful. See? Even now we met very soon. »

They start walking, and Jesus places an arm on the shoulders of John, who, being shorter than Jesus, looks up at Him, obviously

very happy for so much intimacy. They thus start going back to the little house.

« Have you been here long? »

« No, Master. I left Doco at dawn, along with Simon, to whom I gave Your message. Then we stopped together in the country of Bethany, sharing the food we had, and speaking of You to the peasants we found in the fields. When it was cooler, we parted. Simon went to see a friend of his, to whom he wants to speak about You. He owns almost the whole of Bethany-. He has known him for a long time, when their fathers were alive. But Simon is coming here tomorrow. He asked me to tell You that he is happy to serve You. Simon is very clever. I would like to be like him. But I am an ignorant boy. »

« No, John, you are doing very well, too. »

« Are You really satisfied with Your poor John? »

« Yes, I am thoroughly satisfied, My dear John. Thoroughly satisfied. »

« Oh! My Master! » John bends down with eagerness to take Jesus, hand, which he kisses and passes lovingly over his face, as if caressing it.

They have arrived at the little house. They enter the low smoky kitchen. The landlord greets them: « Peace be with You. »

Jesus replies: « Peace to this house, to you and to those who live here with you. I have a disciple with Me. »

« There will be bread and oil for him, too. »

« I brought some dried fish that James and Peter gave me. And passing by Nazareth, Your Mother gave me some bread and honey for You. I walked all the time without stopping, but it will be dry now. »

« It does not matter, John. It will always have the flavour of My Mother's hands. »

John pulls out his treasures from the knapsack that he had put in a corner. And I see them prepare the dried fish in a strange way. They steep it for a few minutes in hot water, they then put some olive oil on it and they roast it on the fire.

Jesus blesses the food and sits at the table with His disciple. Also the landlord, whose name I hear is Jonah, and his son, sit at the same table. The landlady comes and goes bringing fish, some black olives, boiled vegetables dressed with oil. Jesus offers also some honey. And He offers it to the landlady, spreading it on some bread. « It comes from My beehive » He says. « My Mother looks after the bees. Eat it. It is good. You are so good to Me, Mary, and you deserve much more than this » He then adds, because the woman does not want to deprive Him of the sweet honey.

The supper ends in a short time, while they hold a brief conversation on common topics. As soon as they finish, and after thanking

for the food, Jesus says to John: « Come. Let us go out into the olive-grove for a little while. It is a clear, mild night. It will be pleasant to be out there for a short time. »

The landlord says: « Master, I say "good night" to You. I am tired and also my son is tired. We are going to bed. I will leave the door ajar and the lamp on the table. You know what to do. »

« Go, Jonah. And put out the lamp. There is such a bright moonlight, that we will be able to see without any light. »

« But where will Your disciple sleep? »

« With Me. On My mat there is room also for him. Is that right, John? »

John is enraptured at the idea of sleeping beside Jesus.

They go out into the olive-grove. But before going out, John takes something out of the knapsack in the comer. They walk for a little while and they reach a brow from which the whole of Jerusalem can be seen.

« Let us sit down here and talk a little » says Jesus.

But John prefers to sit at Jesus' feet on the short grass, and he rests his arm on Jesus' knees, with his head reclined on his arm, looking now and again at Jesus. He looks like a little boy near the person dearest to him. « It is beautiful also here, Master. Look how large the town seems at night. Larger than by day. »

« It is because the moonlight shades the outlines. See: the borders seem to widen out in a silver brightness. Look at the top of the Temple, up there. Does it not look as if it were suspended in midair. »

« It seems supported by angels on their silver wings. »

Jesus sighs.

« Why are You sighing, Master? »

« Because the angels have abandoned the Temple. Its feature of purity and holiness is now confined to its walls only. Those who should impress it into its soul - because every place has its soul, that is the spirit for which it was built, and the Temple has, or should have, a soul of prayer and holiness - those who should energise such spirit, are instead the first to suffocate it. You cannot give what you do not possess, John. And if there are many priests and Levites living there, not even one tenth of them are capable of giving life to the Holy Place. They give death instead. They transmit the death of their own souls, which are dead to what is holy. They have their formulae. But they do not have the essence of them. They are corpses which are warm only because putrefaction swells them. »

« Have they done You wrong, Master? » John is all upset.

« No. On the contrary they allowed Me to speak when I asked to. »

« Did You ask them? Why? »

« Because I do not want to be the one who starts war. There will be war in any case. Because I will be the cause of a silly human fear for some, and the cause of reproach for others. But this must be written in their book, not in Mine. »

They are quiet for a few moments, then John resumes speaking. « Master, I know Annas and Caiaphas. My family has been on business relations with them, and when I came to Judaea to see John, I used to come to the Temple, and they were good to the son of Zebedee. My father always sends them the best fish. That is the custom, You know? If you want them to be friendly and to continue so, you must do that… »

« I know. » Jesus is serious.

« Well, if You wish, I will speak to the High Priest about You. And… if You want, I know a man who is on business terms with my father. He is a rich fish merchant. He has a lovely big house near the Hippicus Tower, because they are very rich people, but they are also very good. You would be more comfortable and You would not get so tired. To come here, You have to come through the suburb of Ophel, which is so wild and always full of donkeys and quarrelsome boys. »

« No, John. Thank you. But I am all right here. See how much peace there is? I told also the other disciple who made the same suggestion. He said: "To enjoy a higher reputation". »

« I mentioned it that You might not get so tired. »

« I do not get tired. I will walk so much, and I will never tire. Do you know what tires Me? Indifference. Oh! What a burden it is! It is like carrying a weight on your heart. »

« I love You, Jesus. »

« Yes, and you comfort Me. I love you so much, John, and I always will, because you will never betray Me. »

« Betray You! Oh! »

« And yet there will be many who will betray Me… John, listen. I told you that I stayed here to teach a new disciple. He is a young Jew, educated and well known. »

« Well, then. You will have to work much less with him than You have to with us, Master. I am glad that You have someone who is more capable than we are. »

« Do you think I will work less? »

« Yes, if he is less ignorant than we are, he will understand You better, and serve You better, especially if he loves You. »

« What you say is right. But love is not proportionate to education or formation. A virgin loves with all the strength of her first love. That applies also to the virginity of mind. And the beloved penetrates and is more deeply impressed on a virgin heart and a virgin mind, rather than on hearts and minds imbued with other loves. But if God wants… Listen, John. I would ask you to be friendly with him. My heart shudders at the thought of putting you, an unshorn lamb, near the expert in life. But it subsides considering that you may well be a lamb, but you are also an eagle, and if the expert will endeavour to make you touch the ground, which is always muddy, the soil of good human sense, with a stroke of your wings, you will be able to free yourself and desire only the clear blue sky and the sun. That is why I ask you to remain as you are and be friendly to the new disciple, inspiring him with your love, because he will not be loved very much by Simon Peter and the others… »

« Oh! Master! Are You not sufficient? »

« I am the Master. Not everything will be said to Me. You are a companion, a little younger, to whom it will be easier for him to unbosom himself. I am not suggesting you should repeat to Me what he tells you. I detest spies and traitors. But I ask you to evangelise him with your faith, your charity, your purity, John. It is a land defiled by stagnant waters. It must be dried up by the sun of love, purified by the integrity of thoughts, desires and deeds, and cultivated with faith. You can do that. »

« If You say I can… Yes! If You say I can do that, I will do it. For Your sake… »

« Thank you, John. »

« Master, You mentioned Simon Peter. And that reminded me of something I should have told You immediately, but the joy of listening to You made me forget about it. When we went back to Capernaum after Pentecost, we found the usual amount of money from that unknown person. The boy had taken it to my mother. I gave it to Peter, and he handed it back to me, saying I should use some of it on my way back and in my stay at Doco and I should bring You the rest, for whatever need of Yours… because also Peter thought this place might not be comfortable… but You say it is… I took only two coins for two poor people I met near Ephraim. For the rest, I lived with what my mother had given me and what I was given by some good people to whom I preached Your Name. Here is the purse. »

« We will give the money to the poor tomorrow. So Judas also will be acquainted with our custom. »

« Has Your cousin come? How was he so quick? He was at Nazareth and he did not tell me he was leaving… »

« No. Judas is the new disciple. He comes from Kerioth. But you saw him at Passover, here, the evening I cured Simon. He was with Thomas. »

« Ah! It's him? » John is a little perplexed.

« Yes, it is he. And what is Thomas doing? »

« He carried out Your instructions, he left Simon the Cananean and by the sea road he went to meet Philip and Bartholomew. »

« Yes, I want you to love one another, without preferences, helping one another mutually and bearing with one another. No one is perfect, John. Neither the young nor the old. But if you have a good will, you will reach perfection and what is wanting in you, I will supply. You are like the children of a holy family. In it there are very different characters. One is strong, another is sweet, or brave, or shy, or impulsive or very cautious. If you were all alike, you would be really strong in one character, but very weak in all the others. Whereas you thus form a perfect union, completed by you all. Love unites you, it must unite you, for the sake of God's cause. »

« And for Your sake, Jesus. »

« First the cause of God and then the love for His Christ. »

« I… and what am I in our family? »

« You are the loving peace of the Christ of God. Are you tired, John? Do you want to go back? I will stay here and pray. »

« I will stay, too, and I will pray with You. Let me stay and pray with You. »

« You may stay. »

Jesus says some psalms and John prays with Him. But his voice dies down and he falls asleep with his head on Jesus' lap. Jesus smiles and stretches His mantle on the shoulders of the sleeping disciple and continues to pray mentally.

The vision ends thus.

Then Jesus says:

« Another comparison between My John and another disciple. A comparison that makes the figure of My beloved disciple clearer and clearer.

He is the one who divests himself also of his own way of thinking and judging, in order to be "the disciple". He is the one who gives himself without wishing to withhold even a particle of himself, as his self was before becoming a disciple. Judas is the one who does not want to divest himself of himself. His donation is therefore unreal. He carries with himself his ego diseased with pride, sensuality and greed. He retains his way of thinking. And he thus counteracts the effect of the donation and of Grace.

Judas: the first of all the apostles who failed. And they are so many! John: the first of those who become victims out of love for Me. And you are one of them.

My Mother and I are the sublime Victims. It is difficult to reach us, nay it is impossible, because our sacrifice was of total bitterness. But My John! He is the victim that all My lovers can imitate: virgins, martyrs, confessors, evangelisers, servants of God and of the Mother of God, devoted to activity or contemplation: he is an example for everyone. He is the one who loves.

Note their different ways of reasoning. Judas investigates, quibbles, is obstinate, even when he pretends to give in he still has mental reservations. John feels he is nothing, he accepts everything, he does not ask for reasons, he is satisfied with making Me happy. That is the example.

And did you not feel completely peaceful before his simple dear love? Oh! My John! And My little John, whom I want to be more and more like My beloved. Accept everything, always saying as the apostle: "Everything You do, is well done, Master", in order to deserve to always hear Me say to you: "You are My loving peace". I need comfort as well, Mary. Give Me it. My Heart for your rest. »

71. Jesus with Judas Iscariot Meets Simon Zealot and John.

6th January 1945.

I see Jesus with Judas Iscariot walking up and down near one of the gates of the Temple enclosure.

« Are You sure he will come? » asks Judas.

« I am certain. He was leaving Bethany at dawn and at Gethsemane he was to meet My first disciple… »

There is a pause, then Jesus stops and stares at Judas. He is standing in front of him. He studies him. He then places a hand on his shoulder and asks: « Why, Judas, do you not tell Me your thoughts? »

« Which thoughts? I have no special thought, Master, at the present moment. I ask You even too many questions. You certainly cannot complain of my muteness. »

« You ask Me many questions and You give Me many details on the town and its inhabitants. But you do not unburden yourself to Me. What do you think it matters to Me, what you tell Me about the wealth of people and the members of this or that family? I am not an idler who has come here to while away the time. You know why I have come. And you may well realise that I am concerned with being the Master of My disciples, as the most important thing. I therefore want sincerity and trust from them. Was your father fond of you, Judas? »

« He was very fond of me. He was proud of me. When I went back home from school, and even later, when I went back to Kerioth from Jerusalem, he wanted me to tell him everything. He took an interest in everything I did and he would rejoice if they were good things, he would comfort me if they were not so good, if sometimes, You know, we all make mistakes - if I had made a mistake and had been blamed for it, he would show me the fairness of the reproach I had received, or the injustice of my action. But he did it so gently… he seemed an older brother. He always ended by saying: "I am saying this because I want my Judas to be just. I want to be blessed through my son". My father… »

Jesus, Who has been carefully studying His disciple all the time, truly moved at the evocation of his father, says: « Now, Judas, be sure of what I am going to tell you. Nothing will make your father so happy, as your being a faithful disciple. Your father, who brought you up as you said, must have been a just man and his soul will rejoice, where he is awaiting the light, seeing that you are My disciple. But in order to be such, you must say to yourself: "I have found my lost father, the father who was like an older brother to me, I have found him in my Jesus, and I will tell Him everything, as I used to tell my beloved father, over whose death I am still mourning, that I may receive from Him guidance, blessings or a kind reproach". May God grant it, and above all may you behave so that Jesus will always say to you: "You are good. I bless you". »

« Oh! yes, Jesus! If You love me so much, I will strive to be good, as You want and my father wanted me to be. And my mother will no longer have an aching pain in her heart. She used to say: "You have no guide now, my son, and you still need one so much". When she knows that I have You! »

« I will love you as no other man could possibly love you, I will love you so much, I do love you. Do not disappoint Me. »

« No, Master, I will not. I was full of conflicts. Envy, jealousy, eagerness to excel, sensuality, everything clashed in me against the voice of my conscience. Even quite recently, see? You caused me to suffer. That is: no, not You. It was my wicked nature… I thought I was Your first disciple… and, now You have just told me that You already have one. »

« You saw him yourself. Do you not remember that at Passover I was in the Temple with many Galileans? »

« I thought they were friends… I thought I was the first one to be chosen for such destiny, and that I was therefore the dearest. »

« There are no distinctions in My heart between the first and the last. If the first one should err and the last one were a holy man, then there would be a distinction in the eyes of God. But I will love just the same: I will love the holy living man with a blissful love, and the sinner with a suffering love. But here is John coming with Simon. John, My first disciple, Simon, the one of whom I spoke to you two days ago. You have already seen Simon and John. One was ill… »

« Ah! The leper! I remember. Is he already Your disciple? »

« Since the following day. »

« And why did I have to wait so long? »

« Judas?! »

« You are right. Forgive me. »

John has seen the Master, and he points Him out to Simon. They make haste. John and the Master kiss each other. Simon, instead, throws himself at Jesus' feet and kisses them, exclaiming: « Glory to my Saviour! Bless Your servant that his actions may be holy in the eyes of God and that I may glorify Him and bless Him for giving You to me. »

Jesus places His hand on Simon's head: « Yes, I bless you to thank you for your work. Get up, Simon. This is John, and this is Simon: here is My last disciple. He also wants to follow the Truth. He is therefore a brother for you all. »

They greet each other: the two Judaeans inquisitively, John heartily.

« Are you tired, Simon? » asks Jesus.

« No, Master. With my health I have recovered a vitality I never felt before. »

« And I know you make good use of it. I have spoken to many people and they all told Me that you have already instructed them about the Messiah. »

Simon smiles happily. « Also last night I spoke of You to one who is an honest Israelite. I hope You will meet him one day. I would like to take You to him. »

« That is quite possible. »

Judas joins in the conversation: « Master, You promised to come with me, in Judaea. »

« And I will. Simon will continue to teach the people on My coming. The time is short, My dear friends, and the people are so many. I will now go with Simon. You two will come and meet Me this evening on the road to the Mount of Olives and we will give money to the poor. Go now. »

When Jesus is alone with Simon, He asks him: « Is that person in Bethany a true Israelite? »

« He is a true Israelite. His ideas are the prevailing ones, but he is really longing for the Messiah. And when I said to him: "He is now among us", he replied at once: "I am blessed because I am living this hour". »

« We shall go to him one day and take our blessing to his house. Have you seen the new disciple? »

« I have. He is young and seems intelligent. »

« Yes, he is. Since you are a Judaean, You will bear more with him than the others will, because of his ideas. »

« Is that a desire, or an order? »

« A kind order. You have suffered and You can be more indulgent. Sorrow teaches many things. »

« If You give me an order, I will be totally indulgent to him. »

« Yes. Be so. Perhaps Peter, and he may not be the only one, will be somewhat upset seeing how I take care and worry about this disciple. But one day, they will understand… The more one is deformed, the more assistance one needs. The others… oh! the others form properly, also by themselves, by simple contact. I do not want to do everything by Myself. I want the will of man and the help of other people to form a man. I ask you to help Me… and I am grateful for the help. »

« Master do You think he will be disappointing You? »

« No. But he is young and was brought up in Jerusalem. »

« Oh! near You he will amend all the vices of that town… I am sure. I was already old and hardened by bitter hatred, and yet I have changed completely after seeing You… »

Jesus whispers: « So be it! » Then in a loud voice: « Let us go to the Temple. I will evangelise the people. »

And the vision ends.

72. Jesus, John, Simon and Judas go to Bethlehem.

7th January 1945.

I see, early in the morning, Jesus, Who at the same Gate meets His disciples Simon and Judas. John is already with Jesus. And I hear Him say: « My friends, I ask you to come with Me through Judaea. If it is not too much for you, particularly for you, Simon. »

« Why, Master? »

« It is hard to walk on the Judaean mountains… and perhaps it will be even more painful for you to meet someone who harmed you. »

« As far as the road is concerned, I wish to assure You, once again, that after You cured me, I feel stronger than a young man and no work is heavy for me, also because it is done for You, and now, with You. With regard to meeting people who harmed me, there is no harsh resentment or feeling in Simon's heart, since he became Yours. Hatred has gone together with the scales of the disease. And believe me, I cannot tell You whether You worked a greater miracle in curing my corroded flesh or my soul consumed by hatred. I do not think I am wrong in saying the latter miracle was the greater. A wound of the soul heals less easily… and You cured me in one instant. That is a miracle. Because one does not recover all of a sudden, even if one wants to with all one's strength and a man does not get rid of a bad moral habit, if You do not destroy that habit with Your sanctifying will power. »

« Your judgement is correct. »

« Why do You not do that with everyone? » asks Judas, somewhat resentful.

« But He does, Judas. Why do you speak like that to the Master? Do you not feel you have changed since you have been in contact with Him? Previously, I was a disciple of John the Baptist. But I have found myself completely changed since He said to me: "Come". » John, who in general very seldom interferes, and never does in the presence of the Master, this time cannot keep quiet. Kind and loving, he lays one hand on Judas' arm as if to calm him down and he speaks to him anxiously and persuasively. He then realises he has spoken before Jesus, he blushes and says: « Forgive me, Master, I spoke in Your stead, but I wanted… I did not want Judas to grieve You. »

« Yes, John. But he did not grieve Me as My disciple. When he is My disciple, then, if he persists in his way of thinking, he will grieve Me. It grieves Me only to notice how much man has been corrupted by Satan who perverts his thoughts. All men, you know! The thoughts of all of you have been misled by him! But the day will come, when you will have the Strength and the Grace of God, you will have Wisdom with His Spirit… you will then have everything to enable you to judge rightly. »

« And will we all judge rightly. »

« No, Judas. »

« But are You referring to us, disciples, or to all men? »

« I refer firstly to you, and to all the others. When the time comes, the Master will nominate His workers and send them all over the world… »

« Are You not doing that already? »

« For the time being, I use you only to say: "The Messiah is here. Come to Him". Later I will make you capable of preaching in My name, of working miracles in My name… »

« Oh! Also miracles? »

« Yes, on bodies and on souls. »

« Oh! How they will admire us, then! » Judas is overjoyed at the thought.

« But, then, we shall not be with the Master… and I will always be afraid to do with my human capacity what comes only from God » says John, and he looks thoughtfully and somewhat sadly at Jesus.

« John, if the Master will allow me, I would like to tell you what I think » says Simon.

« Yes, tell John. I want you to advise one another. »

« Do You already know it is advice? »

Jesus smiles and is quiet.

« Well, I tell you, John, that you must not, we must not be afraid. Let us found upon His wisdom of a holy Master and upon His promise. If He says: "I will send you", it means that He knows that He can send us without any fear that we may do harm to Him or to

ourselves, that is to the cause of God, that is so dear to each of us, like a newly-wed bride. If He promises to clothe our intellectual and spiritual misery with the brightness of the power His Father gives Him for us, we must be certain that He will do so and that we

will be successful, not by ourselves, but through His mercy. All this will most certainly happen, providing our deeds are free from pride and human ambitions. I think that if we contaminate our mission, which is entirely a spiritual one, with earthly ingredients, then also Christ's promise will no longer stand. Not because of any inability on His part, but because we will strangle such ability with the rope of pride. I do not know whether I have made myself understood. »

« You have spoken very clearly. I am wrong. But you know… I think that after all, to wish to be admired as the Messiah's disciples, so close to Him as to deserve to do what He does, is the same as wishing to increase even more the powerful figure of Christ among people. Praise to the Master, Who has such disciples, that is what I mean » answers Judas.

« What you say is not entirely wrong. But… see, Judas. I come from a caste which is persecuted because… because it misunderstood what and how the Messiah should be. Yes. If we had waited for Him with the correct vision of His being, we would not have fallen into errors, which are blasphemy against the Truth and a rebellion against the Law of Rome, so that we have been punished both by God and by Rome. We fancied Christ as a conqueror who would free Israel, as a new Maccabaeus, greater than the great Judas… Only that. And why? Because rather than have regard to the interest of God we took care of our own interests: of the fatherland and of the people. Oh! The interests of the fatherland are most certainly sacred. But what are they when compared to the eternal Heavens? In the long hours of persecution, first, and then of isolation, when as a fugitive, I was compelled to hide in the dens of wild beasts, sharing food and bed with them, to escape Roman power and above all the impeachments of false friends; or when, waiting for death I was already foretasting the savour of the sepulchre, in the cave of a leper, how much did I meditate, and how much did I see: I saw the figure of the Messiah… Yours, my humble and good Master, Yours, Master and King of the Spirit, Yours, O Christ, Son of the Father, leading to the Father, and not to the royal palaces of dust, nor to the deities of mud. You… Oh! It is easy for me to follow You… Because, forgive my daring which avows itself to be correct, because I see You as I thought of You, I recognise You, I recognised You at once. No, it was not a question of meeting You, but of recognising One whom my soul had already met… »

« That is why I called you… and that is why I am taking you with Me, now, in this first journey of Mine in Judaea. I want you to complete your recognition… and I want also these, whom age makes less capable of reaching the Truth by means of deep meditation, I want them to know how their Master has come to this hour… You will understand later. There is David's Tower. The Eastern Gate is near. »

« Are we going out by it? »

« Yes, Judas. We are going to Bethlehem first. Where I was born… You ought to know… to tell the others. Also that is part of the knowledge of the Messiah and of the Scriptures. You will find prophecies written in things not as prophecies but as history. Let us go round Herod's houses… »

« The old, wicked, lustful fox. »

« Do not judge. There is God, Who judges. Let us go along the path through these vegetable gardens. We will stop under the shade of a tree, near some hospitable house, until it cools down. We will then go on our way. »

The vision ends.

73. Jesus at Bethlehem in the Peasant's House and in the Grotto.

8th January 1945.

A stony, dusty, flat road, dried up by the summer sun. It runs alongside huge olive-trees, all laden with small newly formed olives. The ground, where it has not been trodden, is strewn with a layer of minute little olive flowers, which have fallen off after pollination.

Jesus, with the three disciples, proceeds in single file along the edge of the road, where the grass is still green, protected by the shade of the olive-trees and consequently there is less dust.

The road turns at a right angle, after which it climbs easily towards a large valley shaped like a horseshoe, on which numerous houses are strewn forming a small town. At the right angle turn of the road, there is a square building surmounted by a little low dome. It is all closed up, as if it were abandoned.

« That is Rachel's sepulchre » says Simon.

« In that case, we have almost arrived. Are we going into town at once? »

« No, Judas, I want to show you a place first… Then we will go into town, and since there is still clear daylight and it will be an evening of moonlight, we will be able to speak to the people. If they will listen to us. »

« Do You think they will not listen to You? »

They have reached the sepulchre, an ancient but well preserved monument, well whitewashed.

Jesus stops to drink at a rustic well nearby. A woman who has come to draw water offers Him some. Jesus asks her: « Are you from Bethlehem? »

« I am. But now at harvest time, I live in the country here with my husband, to look after the vegetable gardens and the orchards. Are You a Galilean? »

« I was born in Bethlehem, but I live at Nazareth in Galilee. »

« Are You persecuted, too? »

« The family is. But why do you say: "You too"? Are there many people persecuted among the Bethlehemites? »

« Don't You know? What age are You? »

« Thirty. »

« Then You were born exactly when… oh! what a calamity! But why was He born here? »

« Who? »

« The One they said was the Saviour. Cursed be the fools who, drunk as they were, thought the clouds were angels and the bleating and braying were voices from Heaven, and in the haze of drunkenness they mistook three miserable people for the holiest people on the earth. Cursed be they! And cursed be those who believe them. »

« But, with all your cursing, you are not telling Me what happened. Why are you cursing? »

« Because… Listen: where are You going? »

« To Bethlehem with My friends. I have business there. I must visit some old friends and take them the greetings of My Mother. But I would like to know many things before, because we have been away, we of the family, for many years. We left the town when I was only a few months old. »

« Before the catastrophe, then. Listen, if You do not loathe the house of a peasant, come and share our bread and salt with us. You and Your companions. We will talk during supper and I will put you all up for the night. My house is small. But above the stable there is a lot of hay, all piled up. The night is clear and warm. If You want, You can sleep there. »

« May the Lord of Israel reward your hospitality. I will be happy to come to your house. »

« A pilgrim brings blessings with him. Let us go. But I shall have to pour six jars of water on the vegetables which have just come up. »

« And I will help you. »

« No, You are a gentleman, Your behaviour says so. »

« I am a worker, woman. This one is a fisherman. Those two Judaeans are well off and employed. I am not. » And He picks up a jar which was lying flat on its big belly near the very low wall of the well, He ties it to the rope, and lowers it into the well.

John helps Him. Also the others wish to be as helpful and they ask the woman: « Where are the vegetables? Tell us and we will take the jars there. »

« May God bless you! My back is broken with fatigue. Come… »

And while Jesus is pulling up His jar, the three disciples disappear along a little path… and come back with two empty ones, which they fill up and then go away. And they do not do that three, but ten times. And Judas laughing says: « She is shouting herself hoarse, blessing us. We have given so much water to her salad, that the soil will be damp for at least two days, and the woman will not have to break her back. » When he comes back for the last time, he says: « Master, I am afraid we have been unlucky. »

« Why, Judas? »

« Because she has it in for the Messiah. I said to her: "Don't curse. Don't you know that the Messiah is the greatest grace for the people of God? Yahweh promised Him to Jacob, and after him to all the Prophets and the just people in Israel. And you hate Him?" She replied: "Not Him. But the one whom some drunken shepherds and three cursed diviners from the East called 'Messiah' ". And since that is You… »

« It does not matter. I know I am placed as a trial and contradiction for many. Did you tell her who I am? »

« No, I am not a fool. I wanted to save Your back and ours. »

« You did well. Not because of our backs. But because I wish to show Myself when I think the time is right. Let us go. »

Judas leads Him as far as the vegetable garden.

The woman empties the last three jars and she then takes Him towards a rustic building in the middle of the orchard. « Go in » she says. « My husband is already in the house. »

They look into a low smoky kitchen. « Peace be to this house » greets Jesus.

« Whoever You are, may You and Your friends be blessed. Come in » replies the man. And he takes out to them a basin of water that they may refresh and clean themselves. Then they all go in and sit round a rough table.

« Thank you for helping my wife. She told me. I had never dealt with Galileans before and I was told that they are rough and quarrelsome. But you have been kind and good. Although already tired… you worked so hard. Are you coming from far? »

« From Jerusalem. These two are Judaeans. The other one and I are from Galilee. But, believe Me, man: you will find good and bad everywhere. »

« That's true. I, the first time I have met Galileans, I have found them to be good. Woman: bring the food. I have but bread, vegetables, olives and cheese. I am a peasant. »

« I am not a gentleman Myself. I am a carpenter. »

« What? You? With Your manners? »

The woman intervenes: « Our guest is from Bethlehem, I told you, and if His relations are persecuted, they were probably rich and learned, like Joshua of Ur, Matthew of Isaac, Levi of Abraham, poor people!… »

« You have not been questioned. Forgive her. Women are more talkative than sparrows in the evening. »

« Were they Bethlehemite families? »

« What? You do not know who they are, and You come from Bethlehem? »

« We ran away when I was a few months old… »

The woman who must be really loquacious, resumes speaking: « He went away before the massacre. »

« Eh! I see that. Otherwise He would not be in this world. Have You never been back? »

« No, never. »

« What a calamity! You will not find many of those Sarah said You want to meet and visit. Many were killed, many ran away, many… who knows!… missing, and it has never been known whether they died in the desert or were killed in jail as a punishment for

their rebellion. But was it a rebellion? And who would have remained inactive allowing so many innocents to be slaughtered? No, it is unfair that Levi and Elias should still be alive when so many innocents are dead! »

« Who are those two, and what did they do? »

« Well… at least You will have heard of the slaughter. The slaughter by Herod… Over a thousand babies slaughtered in town, almost another thousand in the country (1). And they were all, or almost all, males, because in their fury, in the darkness, in the scuffle, the killers tore away from their cradles, from their mother's beds, from the houses they assailed, also some baby girls, and they pierced them like sucking baby gazelles shot down by archers. Well: why all that? Because a group of shepherds, who had obviously drank a huge quantity of cider to stand the intense night cold, in a frenzy of excitement, stated they had seen angels, heard songs, received instructions… and they said to us of Bethlehem: "Come. Adore. The Messiah is born". Just imagine: the Messiah in a cave! In all sincerity, I must admit that we were all drunk, even I, then an adolescent, also my wife, then only a few years old… because we all believed them, and in a poor Galilean woman we saw the Virgin Mother mentioned by the Prophets. But She was with Her husband, a rough Galilean! If She was the wife, how could She be the "Virgin"? To cut a long story short: we believed. Gifts, worshipping… houses opened to give them hospitality!…

(1) The real number of babies killed is thirty-two, of which eighteen in the actual town of Bethlehem and four-teen in the nearby country. Also six baby girls were slaughtered as the hired cut-throats could not tell them from baby boys because they were dressed alike, and also because of the darkness and their hurry to kill. The peasant, as is often the case, exaggerates. The above detailed information is given by Maria Valtorta on a separate sheet added to the original manuscript.

Oh! They played their roles very well! Poor Anne! She lost her property and her life, and also the children of her oldest daughter, the only one left because she was married to a merchant in Jerusalem, lost all their property because their house was burned down and the whole holding was laid waste by Herod's order. Now it is an uncultivated field where herds feed. »

« And was it entirely the shepherds' fault? »

« No, it was the fault also of three wizards who came from Satan's kingdom. Perhaps they were accomplices of the three… And we foolishly felt proud of so much honour! And the poor archsynagogue! We killed him because he swore that the prophecies confirmed the truth of the shepherds' and wizards' words… »

« It was therefore the fault of the shepherds and of the wizards? »

« No, Galilean. It was also our fault. The fault of our credulity. The Messiah had been expected for such a long time! Centuries of expectation. And there had been many disappointments recently because of false Messiahs. One of them was a Galilean, like You, another one was named Theudas. Liars! They… Messiahs! They were nothing but greedy adventurers hunting for a stroke of luck! We should have learned the lesson. Instead… »

« Well, then, why do you curse all the shepherds and magicians? If you consider yourselves fools, too, then you ought to be cursed as well. But the precept of love forbids cursing. One curse attracts another curse. Are you sure you are eight? Could it not be true that the shepherds and the magicians spoke the truth, revealed to them by God? Why do you persist in believing they were liars? »

« Because the years of the prophecy were not complete. We thought about it afterwards… after our eyes had been opened by the blood that reddened basins and rivulets. »

« And could the Most High not have advanced the coming of the Saviour, out of an excess of love for His people? On what did the wizards found their statement? You told Me they came from the East… »

« On their calculations concerning a new star. »

« Is it not written: "A star from Jacob takes the leadership, a sceptre arises from Israel"? Is Jacob not the great Patriarch and did he not stop in the land of Bethlehem as dear to him as his eyes, because his beloved Rachel died there? And did the mouth of a Prophet not say: "A shoot springs from the stock of Jesse, a scion thrusts from his roots"? Jesse, David's father, was born here. Is the shoot on the stock, cut at its roots by tyrannical usurpations, is it not the "Virgin" Who will give birth to Her Son, conceived not by deed of man, otherwise She would not be a virgin, but by divine will, whereby He will be the "Immanuel" because: Son of God, He will be God and bring God among the people of God, as His name proclaims? And will He not be announced, as the prophecy says, to

the people walking in darkness, that is to the heathens, "by a great light"? And the star the magicians saw, could it not be the star of Jacob, the great light of the two prophecies of Balaam and Isaiah? And the very massacre ordered by Herod, does it not come within the prophecies? "A voice is heard in Ramah… It is Rachel weeping for her children". It was written that tears should ooze from Rachel's bones in her sepulchre at Ephrathah when, through the Saviour, the reward would come to the holy people. Tears which were to turn into celestial laughter, just as the rainbow is formed by the last drops of the storm, but it says: "Here, the sky is clear". »

« You are a learned man. Are You a rabbi? »

« Yes, I am. »

« And I perceived it. There is light and truth in Your words. But… Oh! too many wounds are still bleeding in this land of Bethlehem because of the true or false Messiah… I would never advise Him to come here. The land would reject Him as it rejects a stepson who caused the death of the true children. In any case… if it was Him… He died with the other slaughtered children. »

« Where do Levi and Elias live now? »

« Do You know them? » The man becomes suspicious.

« I do not know them. Their faces are unknown to Me. But they are unhappy, and I always have mercy on the unhappy. I want to go and see them. »

« Well, You will be the first one after about thirty years. They are still shepherds and they work for a rich Herodian from Jerusalem, who has taken possession of a lot of the property belonging to the people killed… There is always someone making a profit! You will find them with their herds on the high grounds towards Hebron. But this is my advice: don't let anyone from Bethlehem see You speaking to them. You would suffer from it. We bear them because… because of the Herodian. Otherwise… »

« Oh! Hatred! Why hate? »

« Because it is just. They have done us harm. »

« They thought they were doing good. »

« But they did harm. Let them be harmed. We should have killed them as they had so many people killed through their stupidity. But we had become stupid ourselves and later… there was the Herodian. »

« So, even if he had not been there, after the first desire for revenge, which was still excusable, would you have killed them? »

« We would kill them even now, if we were not afraid of their master. »

« Man, I tell you, do not hate. Do not wish evil things. Do not be anxious to do evil things. There is no fault here. But even if there was, forgive. Forgive in the name of God. Tell the other people of Bethlehem as well. When your hearts are free from hatred, the Messiah will come; you will know Him then, because He is alive. He already existed when the massacre took place. I am telling you. It was Satan's fault, not the fault of the shepherds and of the magicians that the massacre took place. The Messiah was born here for you, He came to bring the Light to the land of His fathers. The Son of a Virgin Mother of the line of David, in the ruins of the house of David, He granted a stream of Graces to the world, and a new life to mankind… »

« Go away! Get out of here! You are a follower of that false Messiah, Who could but be false, because He brought misfortune to us here in Bethlehem. You are defending Him, so… »

« Be silent, man. I am a Judaean and I have influential friends. I could make you feel sorry for your insult » bursts out Judas, getting hold of the peasant's garments, and shaking him in a fit of violent anger.

« No, No, out of here! I don't want trouble with the people of Bethlehem or with Rome or Herod. Go away, you cursed ones, if you don't want me to leave my mark on you… Out! »

« Let us go, Judas. Do not react. Let us leave him in his hatred. God will not enter where there is bitter hatred. Let us go. »

« Yes, we will go. But you will pay for it. »

« No, Judas, do not say that. They are blind… We shall meet so many on My way. »

They go out following Simon and John, who are already outside, speaking to the woman, round the comer of the stable.

« Forgive my husband, Lord. I did not think I was going to cause so much trouble… Here, take these. You will eat them tomorrow morning. They are newly laid. I have nothing else… Forgive us. Where will You sleep? » (She gives Him some eggs).

« Do not worry. I know where to go. Go and peace be with you for your kindness. Goodbye. »

They walk a short distance, without speaking, then Judas bursts out: « But You… Why not make him worship You? Why did You not crush that filthy swearer down in the mud? Down on the ground! Crushed because he showed no respect for You, the Messiah… Oh! That is what I would have done! Samaritans should be reduced to ashes by means of a miracle! It is the only thing that will shake them. »

« Oh! How many times will I hear that said! But if I should reduce to ashes for every sin against Me!… No, Judas. I have come to create, not to destroy. »

« Yes! And in the meantime they are destroying You. »

Jesus does not reply.

Simon asks: « Where are we going now, Master? »

« Come with Me, I know a place. »

« But if You have never been here after You left, how can You know? » asks Judas, still angry.

« I know. It is not a beautiful place. But I have been there before. It is not in Bethlehem… it is a little outside… Let us turn this way. »

Jesus is in front, followed by Simon, then Judas and John is last… In the silence, broken only by the rustling of their sandals on the small grains of gravel of the path, someone sobbing can be heard.

« Who is crying? » asks Jesus turning round.

And Judas: « It's John. He has been frightened. »

« No, I was not frightened. I had already laid my hand on the knife under my belt… Then I remembered the words You keep repeating: "Do not kill, forgive". »

« Why are you crying, then? » asks Judas.

« Because I suffer seeing that the world does not love Jesus. They do not know Him, and they do not want to know Him. Oh! It is such a pain! As if someone tore my heart with burning thorns. As if I had seen someone treading on my mother or spitting upon my father's face… Even worse… As if I had seen Roman horses eating in the Holy Ark and resting in the Holy of Holies. »

« Do not cry, My dear John. Say for this present time and for endless times in future: "He was the Light and He came to enlighten darkness - but darkness did not know Him. He came to the world that had been made for Him, but the world did not know Him. He came to His own town, to His domain, but His own people did not accept Him". Oh! Do not cry like that! »

« That does not happen in Galilee! » says John sighing.

« Well, not even in Judaea » says Judas. « Jerusalem is the capital and three days ago it sang hosannas to You, Messiah! You cannot judge from this place of coarse peasants, shepherds and market gardeners. Also the Galileans, mind you, are not all good. After all, where did Judas, the false Messiah, come from? They said… »

« That is enough, Judas. There is no use in getting angry. I am calm. Be calm, too. Judas, come here. I want to speak to you. » Judas goes near Him. « Take this purse. You will do the shopping for tomorrow. »

« And for the time being, where are we going to lodge? »

Jesus smiles, but does not reply. It is dark. Everything is white in the moonlight. The nightingales sing amongst the olives. A brook is a silvery resounding ribbon. One can smell the scent of hay of the mown fields: a warm, I would say, carnal smell. Bellows and bleats

can be heard. And stars, stars and stars… stars strewn on the heavenly curtain, a canopy of living gems, spread over the hills of Bethlehem.

« But here!… There is nothing but ruins here! Where are You taking us? The town is over there. »

« I know. Come. Follow the rivulet, behind Me. A few more steps and then… then I will offer you the abode of the King of Israel. »

Judas shrugs his shoulders and becomes quiet.

A few more steps, then a heap of ruined houses: the remains of houses… A cave between the clefts of a big wall.

Jesus asks: « Have You any tinder? Light it. »

Simon lights a small lamp which he has taken out of his knapsack and he gives it to Jesus.

« Come in » says the Master lifting the lamp. « Come in. This is the nativity room of the King of Israel. »

« You must be joking, Master! This is a filthy den. Ah! I am not going to stay here! I loathe it: it is damp, cold, stinking, full of scorpions and perhaps also snakes… »

« And yet… My friends, here the night of the twenty-fifth of Chislev, Feast of the Lights, Jesus Christ, was born of the Virgin, the Immanuel, the Word of God made flesh, for the love of man: I Who am speaking to you. Also then, as now, the world was deaf to the voices of Heaven speaking to the hearts of men… and it rejected the Mother… and here… No, Judas, do not avert your eyes in disgust from those fluttering noctules, from those green lizards, from those cobwebs, do not lift with-disgust your beautiful embroidered mantle, lest it may trail on the ground covered with animal excrement. Those noctules are the daughters' daughters of the ones that were the first toys to be tossed before the eyes of the Child, for Whom the angels sang the "Gloria" heard by the shepherds, intoxicated only by an ecstatic joy, a true joy. The emerald green of those lizards was the first colour to strike My eyes, the first, after My Mother's white face and dress. Those cobwebs were the canopy of My royal cradle. This ground… oh! you may tread on it without disdain… It is littered with excrement… but it is sanctified by Her foot, the foot of the Holy, the Most Holy, Pure, Immaculate Mother of God, Who gave birth, because She was to give birth, because God, not man, told Her and covered Her with His shadow. She, the Faultless One, trod on it. You can tread on it, too. And may the purity diffused by Her, by the will of God, rise from the soles of your feet to your heart… »

Simon is on his knees. John goes straight to the manger and cries, leaning his head against it. Judas is terrified… he is overcome by emotion, and no longer worried about his beautiful mantle, he kneels on the ground, takes the edge of Jesus' tunic and kisses it and beats his breast saying: « Oh! My good Master, have mercy on the blindness of Your servant! My pride vanishes… I see You as You are. Not the king I was thinking of. But the Eternal Prince, the Father of future centuries, the King of peace. Have mercy, my Lord and my God, have mercy on me! »

« Yes, you have all My mercy! Now we will sleep where the Infant and the Virgin slept, over there where John has taken the place of the adoring Mother, here where Simon looks like My putative father. Or, if you prefer so, I will speak to you of that night… »

« Oh! yes, Master, tell us of Your birth. »

« That it may be a bright pearl shining in our hearts. And we may tell the whole world. »

« And we may venerate Your Virgin Mother, not only as Your Mother, but also as… as the Virgin! »

Judas was the first to speak, then Simon and then John, whose face smiles and cries, near the manger.

« Come and sit on the hay. Listen… » and Jesus tells them of the night of His birth. «… as the Mother was near Her time to have Her Child, a decree was issued by the imperial delegate Publius Sulpicius Quirinus on instructions from Caesar Augustus, when Sentius Saturninus was governor of Palestine. The decree stated that a census had to be taken of all the people of the empire. Those who were not slaves were to go to their places of origin and register in the official rolls of the empire. Joseph, the spouse of the Mother, was of the line of David and the Mother was also of David's line. In compliance with the decree, they left Nazareth and came to Bethlehem, the cradle of the royal family. The weather was severe… » Jesus continues the story and it all ends thus.

74. Jesus Goes to the Hotel in Bethlehem and Preaches from the Ruins of Anne's House.

9th January 1945.

It is an early bright summer morning. The sky seems painted with strokes of a pink brush by little thin clouds looking like strips of frayed gauze, dropped on a smooth turquoise carpet. The air is full of the songs of birds, exhilarated by the bright light… Sparrows, blackbirds, redbreasts whistle, chirp, brawl over a stem, a worm, a twig which they want to take to their nests, or eat, or use as a roost. Swallows dart from the sky down to the little stream to wet their snow white breasts, the tops of which are rust coloured, and after receiving the freshness of the water and catching a little fly still asleep on a little stem, they dart straight up into the sky as fast as the flash of a burnished blade, chattering joyfully.

Two blue-headed wagtails, dressed in pale ash-grey silk, are walking gracefully, like two little dames, along the bank of the stream, holding well up their long tails adorned with little velvet black spots, they look at themselves in the water, and, satisfied with their beautiful looks, they resume walking, while a blackbird, a real little rogue of the wood, scoffs at them, whistling at them with his long yellow beak. In the thick foliage of a wild apple-tree growing all alone near the ruins, a nightingale is calling her mate insistently, and she becomes silent only when she sees him coming with a long caterpillar wriggling in the grip of his thin beak. Two city pigeons, which have probably escaped from a dove-cot and have chosen a free dwelling place in the crevices of a ruined tower, give vent to their love effusion by cooing in such a way that the male seems to be endeavouring to seduce the modest female.

Jesus, with arms crossed, looks at all the happy little creatures and smiles.

« Are You already ready, Master? » asks Simon, from behind Him.

« Yes, I am. Are the others still sleeping? »

« Yes, they are. »

« They are young… I washed Myself in that stream… The water is so cold that it clears the mind… »

« I'll go and wash now. »

While Simon, wearing only a short tunic, is washing himself and then puts on his clothes, Judas and John come out. « Hail, Master, are we late? »

« No. It is only daybreak. But now be quick and let us go. »

The two get washed and put on their tunics and mantles.

Jesus, before setting off, picks some little flowers which have grown between the crevices of two stones, and puts them into a small wooden box, in which there are already other items, which I cannot see very well. He explains: « I will take them to My Mother. She will love them… Let us go. »

« Where, Master? »

« To Bethlehem. »

« Again? I do not think the situation is a favourable one for us… »

« It does not matter. Let us go. I want to show you where the Magi came and where I was. »

« In that case, listen. Excuse me, will You, Master? But let me do the talking. Let us do one thing. In Bethlehem and at the hotel, let me speak and ask questions. You Galileans are not awfully liked in Judaea, and much less here than anywhere else. Nay, let us do this: your clothes show that You and John are Galileans. It's too easy. And then… your hair! Why do you persist in wearing it so long? Simon and I will change mantles with you. Simon, give yours to John, I'll give mine to the Master. That's it! See? You already look a little more like Judaeans. Now take this. » And he takes off the cloth covering his head: a yellow, brown, red, green striped length of material, like his mantle, held in position by a yellow cord, he places it on Jesus' head, adjusting it along His cheeks to hide His fair hair. John puts on the very dark green one of Simon. « Oh! That's better now. I have a practical sense. »

« Yes, Judas, you have a practical sense. That is true. Watch, however, that it does not exceed the other sense. »

« Which one, Master? »

« The spiritual sense. »

« No! No! But in certain cases it pays to be more a politician than an ambassador. And listen… be good a little longer… it is for Your own good… Do not contradict me if I should say something… something… which is not true. »

« What do you mean? Why tell lies? I am the Truth and I want no lies in Me or around Me. »

« Oh! I will only tell half lies. I will say that we are all coming back from remote places, from Egypt for instance, and that we are seeking news of dear friends. I will say that we are Judaeans coming back from exile. After all, there is some truth in everything, and I will be speaking, and… one lie more, one lie less… »

« But Judas! Why deceive? »

« Never mind, Master! The world lives on deceit. And at times deceit is a necessity. Well: to make You happy, I will only say that we are coming from far and that we are Judaeans. Which is true for three out of four of us. And you, John, please do not speak at all. You would give yourself away. »

« I will be quiet. »

« Then… if everything works out all right… we shall say the rest. But I do not believe it… I am shrewd, I grasp things at once. »

« I see that, Judas. But I would prefer you to be simple. »

« It does not help much. In Your group, I will be the one in charge of difficult missions. Let me carry on. »

Jesus is reluctant. But He gives in.

They set out. They walk round the ruins, then along a windowless massive wall on the other side of which one can hear braying, mooing, neighing, bleating and the queer cry of camels or dromedaries. The wall forms an angle. They go round it. They are now in the square of Bethlehem. The fountain is in the centre of the square, the shape of which is still slantwise, although there is a difference on the side opposite the hotel. Over there, where there was the little house, which I still remember being all silvery in the rays of the Star, there is now a large opening, strewn with ruins. Only the little staircase is still up, with its little landing. Jesus looks and sighs.

The square is full of people around vendors of foodstuffs, utensils, clothes etc. All the goods are on mats or in baskets on the ground, and most of the merchants are also crouched in the centre of their… shops, with the exception of those standing up, shouting and gesticulating with stingy buyers.

« It's market day » says Simon.

The main gate of the hotel is wide open and a line of donkeys laden with goods is coming out.

Judas is the first to enter. He looks round. Full of haughtiness, he seizes a dirty hostler in short sleeves, that is with a sleeveless short tunic, reaching down to his knees. « Hostler! » he shouts. « The landlord! Quick! Be quick. I am not used to be kept waiting for people. »

The boy runs away, dragging a broom behind him.

« But Judas! What manners! »

« Be quiet, Master. Leave me alone. It is important that they consider us rich people coming from town. »

The landlord rushes in, and he bends down repeatedly in front of Judas, who is impressive in Jesus' dark red mantle worn on top of his sumptuous yellow tunic full of fringes.

« We have come from far, man. We are Judaeans of the Asiatic communities. This gentleman, born in Bethlehem and persecuted, is now looking for some dear friends. We are with Him. We have come from Jerusalem, where we worshipped the Most High in His House. Can You give us some information? »

« My lord… your servant… will do everything for you. Give me your orders. »

« We want some information on many… and particularly on Anne, the woman whose house was opposite your hotel. »

« Oh! poor woman! You will find her only in Abraham's bosom. And her children with her. »

« Is she dead? How? »

« Don't you know of Herod's massacre? The whole world talked about it and even Caesar called him "a pig who feeds on blood". Oh! What have I said? Don't report me! Are you really a Judaean? »

« Here is the sign of my tribe. So? Speak up. »

« Anne was killed by Herod's soldiers, with all her children, except one daughter. »

« But why? She was so good? »

« Did you know her? »

« Yes, very well. » Judas lies brazen-facedly.

« She was killed because she gave hospitality to those who said they were the father and mother of the Messiah… Come here, into this room… Walls have ears and it is dangerous to talk about certain things. »

They go into a low dark room. They sit down on a low couch.

« Now… I had a wonderful nose. I am not a hotel keeper for nothing. I was born here, the son of sons of hotel keepers. Wiles are in my blood. And I did not take them. I could have found a hole for them. But… poor, unknown Galileans as they were… Oh! no! Hezekiah will not fall into the trap! And I felt… I felt they were different… that woman… Her eyes… something… no, no… She must have had a demon inside Her and She spoke to him. And She brought him… not to me… but to town. Anne was more innocent

than a little lamb, and she gave them hospitality a few days later, when She already had the Child. They said He was the Messiah… Oh! the money I made during those days! The census was nothing like it! Many people came here who had nothing to do with the census. They came even from the seaside, even from Egypt to see… and it lasted for months! What a profit I made! The last to come were three kings, three powerful people, three magicians… I would not know! What a train! An endless one! They took all the stables and they paid in gold for so much hay that could have lasted a month, and they went away the following day, leaving it all here. And what gifts they gave to the hostlers and the women! And to me! Oh! I can only speak well of the Messiah, whether He was a true or false one. He made me earn bags of money. And I had no disasters. None of My family died, because I had just got married. So… but the others! »

« We would like to see the places of the slaughter. »

« The places? But every house was a place of slaughter. There .were people killed for miles round Bethlehem. Come with me. »

They go up a staircase into a large terraced roof. From it, one can see a lot of countryside and the whole of Bethlehem spread on the hills like an open fan.

« Can you see the ruined spots? Over there also the houses were burnt down because the fathers defended their children with their weapons. Can you see over there that kind of a well covered with ivy? Those are the remains of the synagogue. It was burnt down with the archsynagogue who stated that it was the Messiah. It was burnt down by the survivors, who were wild because of the slaughter of their children. We had trouble for that after… And over there, and there, there… see those sepulchres? The victims are buried there.. They look like little sheep spread all over the green, as far as the eye can see. All the innocents and their fathers and mothers… See that vat? Its water was red after the killers washed weapons and hands in it. And the brook at the back here, did you see it? It was pink because of the blood which had flowed into it from the sewers. And there, over there, in front of us. That is what is left of Anne's house. »

Jesus is crying.

« Did You know her well? »

Judas replies: « She was like a sister for His Mother. Is that right, my friend? »

Jesus replies simply: « Yes. »

« I understand » remarks the hotel keeper who becomes pensive.

Jesus bends forward to speak to Judas in a low voice.

« My friend would like to go on those ruins » says Judas.

« Let Him go! They belong to everybody! »

They go downstairs, say goodbye and go out. The host is disappointed.

Perhaps he was hoping to earn something.

They cross the square. And they climb the little staircase still left.

« From here » says Jesus, « My Mother made Me wave My hand to the Three Wise Men and we left from here to go to Egypt. »

People look at the four men on the ruins. One asks: « Are they relatives of Anne? »

« They are friends. »

A woman shouts: « Don’t do any harm to the poor dead woman, don't you do it, as her other friends did when she was alive, and then they ran away. »

Jesus is standing on the landing against the little wall enclosing it. He is therefore about two metres higher up than the square, with nothing behind Him. The outline of His figure is clearly cut against the sun shining behind Him: it forms a halo around His golden hair, and makes His snow white linen tunic look even whiter as it is the only garment on Him, since His mantle has slipped off His shoulders and is now lying at His feet like a multicoloured pedestal. Further back, there is the green unkempt background of what was Anne's kitchen garden and field, now laid waste and strewn with debris.

Jesus stretches out His arms. When Judas sees that gesture he says: « Don't speak! It isn't wise! »

But Jesus' powerful voice fills the square: « Men of Judah! Men of Bethlehem, listen! Women of the land sacred to Rachel, listen! Listen to One Who descends from David, and has suffered because of persecutions and has become worthy of speaking, and is speaking to you to give you light and comfort. Listen. »

The people stop shouting, quarrelling and buying and they gather together.

« He is a rabbi! »

« He certainly comes from Jerusalem. »

« Who is He? »

« What a handsome man! »

« And what a voice! »

« And His manners! »

« Of course, He is of David's House! »

« He is one of ours, then! »

« Let's listen to Him! »

The whole crowd is now gathered near the little staircase which looks like a pulpit.

« In Genesis it is said: "I will make you enemies of each other: you and the woman: She will crush your head and you will strike at Her heel". It is also said: "I will multiply your pains in childbearing… and the soil shall yield you brambles and thistles". That was the sentence against man, woman and the serpent.

I have come from far to revere Rachel's tomb, and in the evening breeze, in the dew of the night, in the plaintive morning song of the nightingale, I heard ancient Rachel's sobs being repeated, and they were repeated by the mouths of many mothers of Bethlehem, within their tombs or within their hearts. And I heard Jacob's sorrow roar in the pain of the widowed husbands, deprived of their wives whom sorrow had killed… I cry with you… But listen, brethren of My land. Bethlehem, the blessed land, the least of the towns in Judah, but the greatest in the eyes of God and of mankind, roused Satan's hatred because it was the cradle of the Saviour, as Micah says, destined to be the tabernacle on which the Glory of God, the Fire of God, His Incarnate Love was to rest.

"I will make you enemies of each other: you and the woman; She will crush your head and you will strike at Her heel". Which enmity is there greater than the one that aims at a mother's children, the very heart of a woman? And which heel is there stronger than the Saviour's Mother's? The revenge of Satan defeated was therefore a natural one: he did not strike at the heel, but at the hearts of mothers, because of the Mother.

Oh! Pains were multiplied when the children were lost after giving birth to them! Oh! great was the trouble of being a childless father after sowing and toiling for the offspring! And yet, Bethlehem, rejoice! Your pure blood, the blood of the innocents has prepared a blazing purple way for the Messiah… »

The crowd, which has become more and more turbulent after Jesus mentioned the Saviour and His Mother, is now showing clear signs of agitation.

« Be quiet, Master » says Judas. « And let us go. »

But Jesus does not listen to him. He goes on: « … for the Messiah that the Grace of the God-Father saved from tyrants to preserve Him for His people and its salvation and… »

The shrill voice of a woman shouts: « Five, five I gave birth to, and not one is now in my house. Poor me! » And she yells hysterically.

It is the beginning of the uproar.

Another woman, rolls over in the dust, she tears her dress, and shows a breast maimed of its nipple, shouting: « Here, here on this mamma they slaughtered my first-born son! The sword cut off his face and my nipple at the same time. Oh! my Ellis! »

« And what about me! What about me? There is my royal palace. Three tombs in one, watched over by the father: my husband and children together. There, there! If there is a Saviour, let Him give me back my children, my husband, let Him save me from despair, from Beelzebub He must save me. »

They all shout: « Our children, our husbands, our fathers! Let Him give them back, if He exists! »

Jesus waves His arms imposing silence. « Brethren of My land: I would like to give you back your children, in their flesh. But I tell you: be good, be resigned, forgive, hope, rejoice in hope and exult in one certainty: you will soon have your children, angels in Heaven, because the Messiah is about to open the gates of Heaven, and if you are just, death will be a new Life and a new Love… »

« Ah! Are You the Messiah? In the name of God, tell us. »

Jesus lowers Him arms, in so sweet and kind a gesture as if He were embracing them all, and He says: « Yes, I am. »

« Go away! Go away! It's Your fault, then! »

A stone is thrown amid hisses and jeers.

Judas reacts at once in a most praiseworthy way… Oh! if he had always behaved thus! He jumps in front of Jesus, standing on the low wall of the landing, with his mantle wide open and undaunted he protects Jesus from the stones. His face bleeds and he shouts to John and Simon: « Take Jesus away. Behind those trees. I'll follow. Go, in the name of Heaven! » And he shouts to the crowd: « Mad dogs! I am of the Temple and I will report you to the Temple and to Rome. »

The crowd is scared for a moment. Then the shower of stones is resumed at once, but fortunately, they are not experts. And Judas, fearless, gets it, and replies with offensive language to the curses of the crowd. Nay: he catches a stone thrown at him, and he throws it back on the head of an old man who is shouting like a magpie plucked alive! And as they attempt to climb up his pedestal, he quickly picks up an old branch from the ground, (he has now come off the little wall) and he swings it round on backs, heads and hands mercilessly.

Some soldiers rush to the spot and with their lances they make their way through the crowd: « Who are You? Why this brawl? »

« I am a Judaean and I have been attacked by these plebeians. A rabbi, well known to the priests, was with me. He was speaking to these dogs. But they became wild and attacked us. »

« Who are You? »

« Judas of Kerioth, I was a man of the Temple, now I am a disciple of rabbi Jesus of Galilee. I am a friend of Simon the Pharisee, of Johanan the Sadducee, and of Joseph of Arimathaea, the Counsellor of the Sanhedrin, and finally, of Eleazar ben Anna, the Proconsul's great friend, and you can check. »

« I will. Where are you going? »

« I am going to Kerioth with my friend, then to Jerusalem. »

« Go. We will protect your back. »

Judas hands some coins to the soldier. It must be illegal… but quite usual, because the soldier takes them swiftly and cautiously, he salutes and smiles. Judas jumps down from his platform, he goes through the uncultivated field, skipping now and again, and

he reaches his companions.

« Are you seriously hurt? »

« No, it's nothing, Master! In any case, it's for You… But I gave them a licking as well. I must be covered with blood… »

« Yes, on your cheek. There is a rivulet here. »

John moistens a small piece of cloth and wipes Judas' cheek.

« I am sorry, Judas… But see… to tell them that we are Judaeans, according to your good practical sense… »

« They are beasts. I believe You are now convinced, Master. And I hope you will not insist… »

« Oh! no! Not because I am afraid. But because it is useless, just now. When they do not want us, we must not curse them, but withdraw praying for the poor, foolish people, who die of starvation and cannot see the Bread. Let us go along this out-of-the-way path, towards the shepherds, if we can find them. I think we will be able to get on to the Hebron road… »

« To have more stones thrown at us? »

« No. To say to them: "I am here". »

« What?… They will certainly beat us. They have been suffering for thirty years because of You. »

« We will see. »

They enter a cool, shady, thick little wood, and I lose sight of them.

75. Jesus and the Shepherds Elias, Levi and Joseph.

11th January 1945.

The hills are becoming much higher and woodier than those around Bethlehem and they rise continuously and eventually form a real chain of mountains.

Jesus is climbing ahead of them all and He looks around, as if He were anxious to find something. He does not speak. He listens more to the voices of the woods than to the apostles', who are a few yards behind Him and are speaking to one another.

A bell rings in the distance, but the wind carries its ding-dong. Jesus smiles. He turns round: « I hear the bells of sheep. »

« Where, Master? »

« I think near that hillock. But the wood prevents Me from seeing. »

John, without uttering one word takes off his tunic - they have all rolled up their mantles and are carrying them across their backs, because they feel warm - and having on only his short tunic, he throws his arms around a tall smooth trunk, which I think is an ash tree, and he climbs up… until he can see. « Yes, Master. There are many herds and three shepherds over there, behind that thicket. » He comes down, and they proceed, sure of

their way.

« Will it be them? »

« We shall ask, Simon, and if they are not, they will tell us something… They know one another. »

After approximately one hundred yards, there is a large, green pasture, surrounded on all sides by huge aged trees. Many sheep are grazing on the thick grass of the undulated meadow. Three men are watching over them. One is old: his hair is all white, of the other two, one is about thirty, the other about forty years old.

« Be careful, Master. They are herdsmen… » advises Judas, when he sees Jesus hastening His step.

But Jesus does not even answer. He goes on, tall and handsome in His white tunic, with the setting sun in front of Him. He seems an angel, so bright He is… « Peace be with you, My friends » He greets when He reaches the edge of the meadow.

The three men turn round, surprised. There is silence. Then the oldest one asks: « Who are You? »

« One Who loves you. »

« You would be the first in so many years. Where are You from? » « From Galilee. »

« From Galilee? Oh! » The man watches Him carefully. Also the other two have come near.

« From Galilee » repeats the shepherd, and he adds in a very low voice, as if speaking to himself: « He came from Galilee, too… From which town, my Lord? »

« From Nazareth. »

« Oh! Well, tell me. Has a Child ever come back to Nazareth, a Child with a woman whose name was Mary and a man called Joseph, a Child, Who was even more beautiful than His Mother, so beautiful that I have never seen a fairer flower on the slopes of Judah? A Child born in Bethlehem of Judah, at the time of the edict? A Child Who later fled, most fortunately for the world. A Child, oh! I would give my life just to hear whether He is alive… He must be a man by now. »

« Why do you say that His flight was a great fortune for the world? »

« Because He was the Saviour, the Messiah and Herod wanted Him dead. I was not there when He fled with His father and Mother. When I heard of the slaughter and I came back… because also I had children (he sobs), my Lord, and a wife… (he sobs), and I heard they had been killed (he sobs again), but I swear by the God of Abraham, I was more afraid for Him than for my own family - I heard He had fled and I could not even enquire; I could not even take away my own slaughtered creatures… They threw stones at me, as they do with lepers and unclean people, they treated me like a murderer… and I had to hide in the woods, and live like a wolf… until I found a master. Oh! it's no longer Anne… He is hard and cruel… If a sheep gets hurt, if a wolf preys on a lamb, he either beats me till I bleed or he takes my poor pay, and I have to work in the woods for other people, I must do something, to pay him back three times the value. But it does not matter. I have always said to the Most High: "Let me see Your Messiah, at least let me know that He is alive, and all the rest is nothing". My Lord, I have told You how the people in Bethlehem treated me, and how my master deals with me. I could have repaid them in their own coins, I could have wronged them, stealing, so that I would not suffer under my master. But I preferred to suffer, to forgive, to be honest, because the angels said: "Glory to God in the Highest Heaven and peace on earth to men of good will". »

« Is that what they said? »

« Yes, they did, my Lord, You must believe, at least You, Who are good. You must know and believe that the Messiah is born. No one would believe it any longer. But angels do not lie… and we were not drunk, as they said. This man here, was a boy then, and he was the first to see the angel. He drank but milk. Can milk make one drunk? The angels said: "Today, in the town of David the Saviour was born, He is Christ, the Lord. And here is a sign for you. You will find a Child wrapped in swaddling clothes lying in a manger". »

« Did they say exactly that? Did you not misunderstand them? Are you not mistaken, after such a long time? »

« Oh! no! Isn't it, Levi? In order not to forget, - we could not forget in any case, because they were heavenly words and were written in our hearts with a heavenly fire - every morning, every evening, when the sun rises, when the first star starts shining, we repeat them as a prayer, as a blessing, to have strength and comfort in His name and in His Mother's. »

« Ah! You said: "Christ"? »

« No, my Lord. We say: "Glory to God in the Highest Heaven and peace on earth to men of good will, through Jesus Christ Who was born of Mary in a stable in Bethlehem and Who, wrapped in swaddling clothes, was in a manger, He Who is the Saviour of the world". »

« But, in short, whom are you looking for? »

« Jesus Christ, the Son of Mary, the Nazarene, the Saviour. »

« It is I. » Jesus is radiant when saying so, revealing Himself to His persevering lovers: persevering, faithful, patient.

« You! Oh! Lord, Saviour, Our Jesus! » The three men prostrate themselves on the ground and kiss Jesus' feet, crying with joy.

« Stand up. Get up. Elias and you, Levi and you, whose name I do not know. »

« Joseph, the son of Joseph. »

« These are My disciples, John, a Galilean, Simon and Judas, Judaeans. »

The shepherds are no longer prostrated on the ground, they are kneeling, sitting back on their heels. They worship thus the Saviour, with loving eyes, trembling lips, while their faces blanch and blush with joy.

Jesus sits down on the grass.

« No, my Lord. You, King of Israel, must not sit on the grass. »

« Never mind, My dear friends. I am poor. A carpenter as far as the world is concerned. I am rich only in My love for the world, and in the love I get from good people. I have come to stay with you, to share the evening meal with you and sleep beside you on the hay, and to be comforted by you… »

« Oh! comfort! We are coarse and persecuted. »

« I am persecuted, too. But you give Me what I am seeking: love, faith and hope, a hope that will last for years and bear flowers. See? You waited for Me and you believed without the least doubt, that I was the Messiah. And I have come to you. »

« Oh! Yes! You have come. Now, even if I die, I will not be upset, by the fact that I hoped in vain. »

« No, Elias. You will live until Christ's triumph and after. You saw My dawn, you must see My glory. And what about the others? You were twelve: Elias, Levi, Samuel, Jonah, Isaac, Tobias, Jonathan, Daniel, Simeon, John, Joseph, Benjamin. My Mother always mentioned your names to Me. Because you were My first friends. »

« Oh! » The shepherds are more and more moved.

« Where are the others? »

« Old Samuel died of old age about twenty years ago. Joseph was killed because he fought at the gate of the enclosure to give time to his wife, who had just become a mother a few hours before, to escape with this man, whom I took with me for the sake of my friend… also to have children around me once again. I took Levi also with me… He was persecuted. Benjamin is a shepherd on Lebanon with Daniel. Simeon, John and Tobias, who now wants to be called Matthew in memory of his father, who was also killed, are disciples of John. Jonah works on the plain of Esdraelon for a Pharisee. Isaac suffers very much from his back which is bent in two, he lives in dire poverty, all by himself at Juttah. We help him as much as we can, but we have all been badly hit and our help is like dew drops on a fire. Jonathan is now the servant of one of Herod's big men. »

« How could you, and particularly Jonathan, Jonah, Daniel and Benjamin get such jobs? »

« I remembered Your relative Zacharias… Your Mother had sent me to him. When we were in the mountain gorges in Judaea, fugitives and cursed, I took them to him. He was good to us. He sheltered and fed us. And he found work for us. He did what he could. I had already taken all Anne's herd for the Herodian… and I remained with him… When the Baptist, grown into a man, began to preach, Simeon, John and Tobias went to him. »

« But now the Baptist is in jail. »

« Yes, and they are keeping watch near Machaerus, with a few sheep, to avoid arousing suspicion. They were given the sheep by a rich man, a disciple of Your relative John. »

« I would like to see them all. »

« Yes, My Lord. We will go and say to them: "Come, He is alive. He remembers us and loves us". »

« And He wants you to be His friends. »

« Yes, my Lord. »

« But we will go first to Isaac. And where are Samuel and Joseph buried? »

« Samuel in Hebron. He remained in Zacharias' service. Joseph… has no tomb. He was burned with the house. »

« He is no longer in the cruel fire, but in the flames of God's love and will soon be in His glory. I am telling you, and particularly you, Joseph, son of Joseph. Come here, that I may kiss you to thank your father. »

« And my children? »

« They are angels, Elias. Angels who will repeat the "Gloria" when the Saviour is crowned. »

« King? »

« No, Redeemer. Oh! What a procession of just people and saints! And in front there will be the white and purple phalanges of the martyrs! As soon as the gates of Limbo are opened, we shall ascend together to the eternal Kingdom. And then you will come and will find your fathers, mothers and children in the Lord! Believe Me. »

« Yes, my Lord. »

« Call Me: Master. It is getting dark, the first evening star is beginning to shine. Say your prayer before supper. »

« Not I. You say it, please. »

« Glory to God in the highest Heaven, and peace on earth to men of good will who have deserved to see the Light and serve it. The Saviour is among them. The Shepherd of the royal line is with His herd. The morning Star has risen. Rejoice, just people! Rejoice in the Lord. He Who made the vaults of heaven and has strewn them with stars, Who placed the seas at the boundaries of the land, Who created winds and dew, and fixed the course of seasons to give bread and wine to His children, He is now sending you a more Sublime food: the living Bread that descends from Heaven, the Wine of the eternal Vine. Come to Me, you who are the first of My worshippers. Come to meet the Eternal Father in truth, to follow Him in holiness and receive His eternal reward. » Jesus has said the prayer, standing up, with His arms stretched out, while the disciples and shepherds are on their knees.

They then offer bread and new milk, and since there are only three bowls, or emptied marrows, I do not know which, Jesus is the first to eat, with Simon and Judas. Then John, to whom Jesus hands His cup, with Levi and Joseph. Elias is last.

The sheep are no longer grazing. They gather in a compact group, perhaps waiting to be led to their enclosure. Instead I see the three shepherds taking them into the wood, under a rustic shed formed with branches and enclosed by ropes. They then busy themselves preparing hay beds for Jesus and His disciples. They light fires, probably to keep wild animals away.

Judas and John lie down, and tired as they are, they soon fall asleep. Simon would like to keep Jesus company. But shortly afterwards, he falls asleep too, sitting on the hay leaning against a pole. Jesus remains awake with the shepherds. And they talk of Joseph, of Mary, of the flight into Egypt, of their return… and after such questions about loving friendship, they ask more noble questions: what can they do to serve Jesus? How will they, poor, rough shepherds, be able to do anything?

And Jesus teaches them and explains: « Now I am going to go through Judaea. My disciples will keep in touch with you all the time. Later I will let you come. In the meantime, get together. Make sure that you are all in touch with one another, and that everyone knows that I am here, in this world, as Master and Saviour. Let everybody know, as best as you can. I will not promise that you will be believed. I have been mocked at and beaten. They will do the same to you. But as you have been strong and just in your long expectation, persist in being so, now that you are Mine. Tomorrow, we will go towards Juttah. Then to Hebron. Can you come? »

« Of course, we can. The roads belong to everybody and the pastures to God. Only Bethlehem is forbidden by an unfair hatred. The other villages know… but they jeer at us, calling us "topers". Thus we will not be able to do very much here. »

« I will employ you elsewhere. I will not abandon you. » « For all our lifetimes? »

« For all My lifetime. »

« No, Master, I will die first. I am old. »

« Do you think so? I do not. One of the first faces I saw, Elias, was yours. It will also be one of the last. I will take with Me, impressed in My eyes, the image of your face deranged by sorrow for My death. But after, you will treasure in your heart the memory of the joy of a triumphal morning, and will thus await death… Death: the everlasting meeting with Jesus, Whom you adored when He was a baby. Also then the angels will sing the Gloria: "for the man of good will". »

I hear nothing more, the sweet vision fades away and ends.

76. Jesus at Juttah with the Shepherd Isaac.

12th January 1945.

A fresh valley resounding with the water of a silvery little torrent flowing foamy southwards among the rocks. The gay freshness of the water spreads out on the little pastures on the banks, but its moisture seems to climb up the very green slopes of the hills. It is a beautiful, varied, emerald green, which from the soil through the bushes and shrubs of the brushwood reaches up to the top of the tall trees of the wood. Many of them are walnut trees. The wood is spotted with many green open spaces, covered with thick grass, which are good, healthy pastures for herds.

Jesus is going down towards the torrent with His disciples and the three shepherds. He stops patiently to wait for a sheep which has been left behind or when one of the shepherds has to run after a lamb which has gone astray. He is the Good Shepherd now. He has provided Himself with a long branch to push aside blackberry, hawthorn and clematis branches, which stick out in all directions, and catch garments. And the stick completes His pastoral figure.

« See? Juttah is up there. We will cross the torrent, there is a ford, which is very useful in summer, without having to use the bridge. It would have been quicker to come via Hebron. But You did not want that. »

« No. We will go to Hebron later. We must always go first to those who suffer. The dead do not suffer any longer when they have been just people. And Samuel was a just man. And if the dead need our prayers, it is not necessary to be near their bones to pray for them.

Bones? What are they? A proof of the power of God Who made man with dust. But nothing else. Also animals have bones. But the skeletons of all animals are not so perfect as a man's skeleton. Only man, the king of creation, has an upright position, as a king over his subjects, and his face looks forwards and upwards without having to twist his neck; man looks upwards, towards the Abode of the Father. But they are still bones. Dust which will return to dust. The eternal Bounty has decided to assemble them again on the eternal Day to give even a greater joy to the blessed souls. Just imagine: not the souls only will be reunited and will love one another as and even more than they did on the earth, but they will rejoice also seeing one another with the same features they had on the earth: dear curly-haired children, like yours, Elias, fathers and mothers with loving hearts and faces like yours Levi and Joseph. Nay, in your case Joseph, it will be the day when at last you will see the faces for which you feel nostalgia. There are no more orphans,

no widows among the just, up there…

Prayers for the dead can be said anywhere. It is the prayer of a soul for the soul of a relative to the Perfect Spirit, Who is God, Who is everywhere. Oh! holy freedom of what is spiritual! There are no distances, no exile, no prisons, no tombs… There is nothing that can divide or restrict in painful impotence what is outside and above the chains of the flesh. You will go with your better part, towards your beloved ones. And they will come to you with their better part. And the whole effusion of loving souls will rotate around the Eternal Fulcrum, around God: the Most Perfect Spirit, the Creator of everything that was, is and will be, Love that loves you and teaches you how to love…

But here we are at the ford. I can see a row of stones emerging from the shallow water. »

« Yes, Master, it is that one there. At the time of floods it is a roaring waterfall, now there are seven streamlets flowing placidly between the six large stones of the ford. »

In fact six large stones, cut quite squarely, are laid across the torrent, at about a foot from each other and the water, which before them is like a large sparkling ribbon, is divided into seven minor ones, rushing happily to join together again beyond the ford, forming one only fresh stream which flows, babbling among the stones.

The shepherds watch the sheep crossing, some walk on the stones, some prefer crossing in the stream, only a foot deep, and they drink the pure gurgling water.

Jesus crosses on the stones followed by His disciples. They resume walking on the other bank.

« You told me that You want to inform Isaac that You are here, but You do not want to go into the village? »

« Yes, that is what I want. »

« Well, we had better part. I will go to him, Levi and Joseph will stay with the herd and with You. I'll go up here. It will be quicker. » And Elias starts climbing up the mountain side, towards the white houses which are so bright up there in the sunshine.

I seem to be following him. He is now at the first houses. He goes along a tiny path between houses and kitchen gardens. He walks thus for about ten metres. He then turns into a wider road and then enters the square. I forgot to mention that this is happening in the early morning hours. I am saying so now because the market is still on in the square and housewives and vendors are shouting under the shady trees of the square.

Elias goes resolutely to the point where the square ends and quite an attractive street starts. Perhaps the nicest in the village. At the comer there is a little house, or rather, a room with the door wide open. Almost on the threshold there is a little bed, on which

an emaciated sick man is lying, asking all passers-by for alms, in a plaintive voice.

Elias dashes in. « Isaac… it's me. »

« You? I was not expecting you. You were here last month. »

« Isaac… Isaac… Do you know why I have come? »

« No, I don't… You are excited. What's happening? »

« I have seen Jesus of Nazareth, He is a man, now, a rabbi . He came looking for me… and He wants to see us. Oh! Isaac! Are you not well? »

Isaac, in fact, has fallen back as if he were dying. But he comes round: « No. The news… Where is He? What is He like? Oh! If I could see Him! »

« He is down in the valley. He sent me to say to you exactly this: "Come, Isaac, because I want to see you and bless you". I'll call someone now to help me and I'll take you down. »

« Is that what He said? »

« Yes, it is. But what are you doing? » « I'm going. »

Isaac throws away the blankets, he moves his paralysed legs, he throws them off the straw mattress, he puts his feet on the floor, he stands up, still somewhat hesitating, and shaky. It all happens in an instant, under Elias' wide open eyes… who at last understands and begins to shout… A little woman looks in curiously. She sees the sick man stand up and cover himself with one of the blankets, since he has nothing else, and run away, shouting like a mad man.

« Let us go… this way, it will be quicker and we will not meet the crowd… Quick, Elias. »

They run through a little door of a kitchen garden in the back, they push the gate, made of dry branches, and once outside, they run along a narrow dirty path, then down a little road along kitchen gardens and finally through meadows and thickets, right down to the torrent.

« There is Jesus, over there » says Elias, pointing at Him. « The tall, handsome one, with fair hair, with a white tunic and red mantle… »

Isaac runs, he cuts through the grazing sheep, and with a cry of triumph, joy and adoration he prostrates himself at Jesus' feet.

« Stand up, Isaac. I have come. To bring you peace and blessings. Stand up, that I may see your face. »

But Isaac cannot stand up. Too much excitement at the one time and he remains prostrated, with his face on the ground, crying happily.

« You came at once. You did not worry whether you could… »

« You told me to come… and I came. »

« He did not even close the door or pick up the alms, Master. »

« It does not matter. The angels will watch his house. Are you happy, Isaac? »

« Oh! My Lord! »

« Call Me Master. »

« Yes, my Lord, my Master. Even if you had not cured me, I would have been happy to see You. How could I find so much grace with You? »

« Because of your faith and patience, Isaac. I know how much you suffered… »

« Nothing! nothing! It does not matter! I have found You. You are alive. You are here. That's what matters. The rest, all the rest is over. But, my Lord and my Master, You are not going away any more, is that right? »

« Isaac, I have the whole of Israel to evangelise. I am going… But if I cannot stay, you can always serve and follow Me. Do you want to be My disciple, Isaac? »

« Oh! But I am not capable! »

« Can you avow Who I am? Avow it against jeers and threats? And tell people that I called you and you came? »

« Even if You did not want, I would avow all that. I would disobey You in that, Master. Forgive me for saying so. »

Jesus smiles. « You can see then that you are capable of becoming a disciple! »

« Oh! If that's all one has to do! I thought it was more difficult, that we had to go to school with the rabbis to learn how to serve You, the Rabbi of rabbis… and to go to school at my age… » The man in fact must be at least fifty years old.

« You have done your schooling already, Isaac. »

« Me? No. »

« Yes, you have. Have you not continued to believe and love, to respect and bless God and your neighbour, not to be envious, not to wish what belongs to other people, and even what was your own and you no longer possessed, to speak only the truth, even if it should be harmful to you, not to associate with Satan committing sins? Have you not done all these things, in the last thirty years of misfortunes? »

« Yes, Master. »

« So you see, you have done your schooling. Go on doing so and reveal, in addition, to the world, that I am in the world. There is nothing else to be done. »

« I have already preached You, Lord Jesus. I preached You to the children, who used to come, when I arrived lame in this village, begging for bread and doing some work, such as shearing and dairy work, and the children used to come round my bed, when I got worse and I was paralysed from my waist downwards. I spoke of You to the children of many years ago, and to the children of

present times, who are the sons of the previous ones… Children are good and they always believe… I told them of Your birth… of the angels… of the Star and the Wise Men… and of Your Mother… Oh! Tell me! Is She alive? »

« She is alive and She sends you Her regards. She always spoke of you all. »

« Oh! If I could see Her! »

« You will see Her. You will come to My house one day. Mary will greet you saying: "My friend". »

« Mary… yes, when you utter that name it is like filling your mouth with honey… There is a woman in Juttah, she is a woman now, she had her fourth child not long ago, but once she was a little girl, one of my little friends… and she called her children: Mary and Joseph the first two, and as she dared not call the third one Jesus, she called him Immanuel, as a good omen for herself, her home and Israel. And she is now thinking of the name to be given to her fourth child, born six days ago. Oh! When she hears that I am cured! And that You are here! Sarah is as good as home made bread, and her husband Joachim is also so good. And their relatives? I owe them my life. They have always helped and sheltered me. »

« Let us go and ask them for hospitality during the hottest hours of the day and to bless them for their charity. »

« This way, Master. It is easier for the sheep and we will avoid the people, who are most certainly excited. The old woman, who saw me getting up, will have certainly told them. »

They follow the torrent, then further south, they depart from it, and take to a steep path, following a prominence of the mountain shaped like the prow of a ship. Now the torrent flows in the opposite direction to that of those who are climbing. The water runs along a beautiful uneven valley formed by the intersection of two ranges of mountains. I recognise the place. It is unmistakable. It is the scene of the vision of Jesus and the children, which I saw last spring. The usual little dry-stone wall marks the boundaries of the estate, which declines towards the valley. I see the meadow with apple-trees, fig-trees, walnut-trees, then the white house surrounded by green lawns, with the protruding wing which protects the staircase and forms a porch and loggia. And there is the little dome on the highest part, the kitchen garden with the well, the pergola and the flower beds…

One can hear a lot of shouting from the house. Isaac walks in front of them all. He goes in. He calls at the top of his voice: « Mary, Joseph, Immanuel! Where are you? Come to Jesus. »

Three little ones run: a girl about five years old, and two little boys, about four and two years of age, the latter still somewhat uncertain when walking. They are dumbfounded when they see the… revived man. Then the little girl shouts: « Isaac! Mummy!

Isaac is here! Judith was right. »

A woman comes out of a room, where there is a lot of noisy shouting: the buxom, brown, tall, lovely mother of the past vision, most beautiful in her best dress: a snow-white linen dress, like a rich chemise falling in puckers down to her ankles, tied at her well-shaped waist by a multicoloured striped shawl, that covers her wonderful hips dropping in fringes down to her knees at the back, while at the front it is tied under the filigree buckle and its ends are hanging loose. A light veil patterned with rose branches on a beige background is pinned to her black plaits, like a tiny turban, and falls on to her neck in flowing folds and then onto her shoulders and breasts. It is held tight on her head by a small crown of medals tied together by a little chain. Heavy rings hang from her ears, and her tunic is held close to her neck by a silver necklace which passes through eyelets of her dress. She wears heavy silver bracelets on her arms.

« Isaac! What's this? Judith… I thought she had gone mad… But you are walking! What happened? »

« The Saviour! Oh! Sarah! He is here! He has come! »

« Who? Jesus of Nazareth? Where is He? »

« Over there! Behind the walnut-tree, and He wishes to know if you will receive Him! »

« Joachim! Mother! Come here, all of you! The Messiah is here! »

Women, men, boys, little ones run out shouting and yelling… but when they see Jesus, tall and stately, they lose heart and become petrified.

« Peace to this house and to you all. The peace and blessing of God. » Jesus walks slowly, smiling, towards the group. « My friends: will you give hospitality to the Wayfarer? » and He smiles even more.

His smile overcomes all fears. The husband takes heart: « Come in, Messiah. We have loved You before meeting You. We shall love You more after meeting You. The house is celebrating today for three reasons: for You, for Isaac and for the circumcision of my third son. Bless him, Master. Woman, bring the baby! Come in, my Lord. »

They go into a room decorated for the feast. There are tables with foodstuffs, carpets and branches everywhere.

Sarah comes back with a lovely new-born baby in her arms. She presents him to Jesus.

« May God be always with him. What is his name? »

« No name yet. This is Mary, this is Joseph, this is Immanuel… but this one has no name yet… »

Jesus looks at the parents, who are close to each other, He smiles: « Find a name, if he is to be circumcised today… » They look at each other, they look at Him, they open their mouths and close them again without saying anything. Everyone is paying attention.

Jesus insists: « The history of Israel has so many great, sweet, blessed names. The sweetest and most blessed ones have already been given. But perhaps there are still some left. »

The parents cry out together: « Yours, Lord! » and the mother adds: « But it is too holy… »

Jesus smiles and asks: « When will he be circumcised? »

« We are waiting for the circumciser. »

« I will be present at the ceremony. And in the meantime I wish to thank you for what you have done for My Isaac. He no longer needs the help of good people. But good people still need God. You called your third son: God be with us. But you had God with you ever since you were charitable to My servant. May you be blessed. Your charity will be remembered in Heaven and on the earth. »

« Is Isaac going away now? Is he leaving us? »

« Is that upsetting you? But he must serve his Master. But he will come, and so will I. In the meantime, you will speak of the Messiah… There is so much to be said to convince the world! But here is the person you are expecting. »

A pompous personage comes in with a servant. There are greetings and low bows. « Where is the child? » he asks with haughtiness.

« He is here. But greet the Messiah. He is here. »

« The Messiah! The one who cured Isaac? I heard about it. But.. We will talk about it after. I am in a great hurry. The child and his name. »

The people present are mortified by the man's manners. But Jesus smiles as if the impoliteness was not addressed to Him. He takes the baby, He touches his little forehead with His beautiful fingers, as if He wanted to consecrate him and says: « His name is Jesai » and He hands him back to his father, who goes into another room with the haughty man and other people. Jesus remains where He was until they come back with the child, who is screaming desperately.

« Woman, give Me the child. He will not cry any longer » He says to comfort the distressed mother. In fact, the child, once he is laid on Jesus' knees, is silent.

Jesus forms a group of His own, with the little ones around Him, and also the shepherds and disciples. The sheep that Elias has put in an enclosure are bleating outside. There is the noise of a party in the house. They bring sweets and drinks to Jesus. But Jesus hands them out to the little ones.

« Are You not drinking, Master? Will You not have anything. We are offering it warmly. »

« I know, Joachim, and I accept wholeheartedly. But let Me make the little ones happy first. They are My joy… »

« Pay no attention to that man, Master. »

« No, Isaac. I will pray that he may see the Light. John, take the two little boys to see the sheep. And you, Mary, come closer to Me and tell Me: Who am I? »

« You are Jesus, the Son of Mary of Nazareth, born in Bethlehem. Isaac saw You and he gave me the name of Your Mother, that I may be good. »

« To imitate Her, you must be as good as an angel of God, purer than a lily that blooms on top of a mountain, as pious as the holiest Levite. Will you be like that? »

« Yes, Jesus, I will. »

« Say: Master or Lord, little girl. »

« Let her call Me with My name, Judas. Only when it is uttered by innocent lips, it does not lose the sound that it has on My Mother's lips. Everybody, throughout future centuries, will mention that name, some because of an interest or other, some to curse it. Only innocent people, without any interest and any hatred, will pronounce it with the same love as this little girl and My Mother. Also sinners will invoke Me, because they need mercy. But My Mother and the little ones! Why do you call Me Jesus? » He asks, caressing the little girl.

« Because I love You… as I love my father, mother and my little brothers » she says, embracing Jesus' knees, and smiling with her head turned upwards.

And Jesus bends down and kisses her… and it all ends thus.

77. Jesus at Hebron. Zacharias' House. Aglae.

13th January 1945.

« At what time will we be arriving? » asks Jesus Who is walking in the centre of the group behind the sheep, grazing on the grass on the banks.

« At about the third hour. It's almost ten miles » replies Elias.

« Are we going to Kerioth afterwards? » asks Judas.

« Yes, we will go there. »

« Was it not quicker to go to Kerioth from Juttah? It cannot be a great distance. Is that correct, shepherd? »

« About two miles longer, more or less. »

« This way, we will be doing over twenty for nothing. »

« Judas, why are you so worried? »

« I am not worried, Master. But You promised You would come to my house. »

« And I will. I always keep My promises. »

« I sent word to my mother… and after all, You said so Yourself, one can be near the dead also with one's soul. »

« I did. But just think, Judas: you have not yet suffered because of Me. These people have been suffering for thirty years, and they have never betrayed, not even My memory they betrayed. They did not know whether I was dead or alive… and yet they remained faithful. They remembered Me as a newly-born baby, an infant with nothing but tears and the need of milk… and they have always worshipped Me as God. Because of Me they have been beaten, cursed and persecuted as if they were the disgrace of Judaea, and yet their faith has never faltered, neither did it wither under blows, on the contrary it took deeper roots and became stronger. »

« By the way. For some days I have been anxious to ask You a question. These people are Your friends and the friends of God, are they not? The angels blessed them with the peace of Heaven, did they not? They have been faithful against all temptations, have they not? Would You explain to me, then, why they are unhappy? And what about Anne? She was killed because she loved You… »

« Are you therefore deducing that to be loved by Me and to love Me brings bad luck? »

« No… but… »

« But you are. I am sorry to see you so closed to the Light and so open to human things. No, never mind John, and you too, Simon. I prefer him to speak. I never reproach. I only want you to open your souls to Me that I may enlighten them. Come here, Judas, listen. You are basing yourself on an opinion which is common to many people of our times and will be common to many in future. I said: an opinion. I should say: an error. But since you do not do so out of malice, but out of ignorance of the truth, it is not an error, it is only an incorrect opinion like a child's. And you are like children, My poor men. And I am here, as a Master, to make adults of you, capable of telling the truth from the false, good from bad and what is better from what is good. Listen to Me, therefore.

What is life? It is a period of pause, I would say the limbo of Limbo, that the God Father grants you as trial to ascertain whether you are good or bad children, after which He will allot, according to your deeds, a future life without pauses or trials. Now tell Me: would it be fair if a man, simply because he has been granted the rare gift of being in the position of serving God in a special way, had also an everlasting wealth throughout his life? Do you not think that he has already been granted a great deal and may therefore consider himself happy, even if human things are against him? Would it not be unfair if he, who already has the light of divine revelation in his heart and the smile of a clear conscience, should also have worldly honours and wealth? And would it not also be unwise? »

« Master, I would also say that he would be a desecrator. Why put human joys where You already are? When one has You - and they had You, they are the only rich people in Israel because they have had You for thirty years - one should have nothing else. We do not put human things on the Propitiatory… and the consecrated vase is used only for sacred uses. And these people are consecrated since the day they saw Your smile… and nothing but You is to enter their hearts, which possess You. I wish I was like them! » says Simon.

« But you wasted no time, immediately after you saw the Master and were cured, in getting back your property » Judas replies ironically.

« That is true. I said I would and I did. But do you know why? How can you judge if you do not know the whole situation? My representative was given precise instructions. Now that Simon Zealot has been cured - and his enemies can no longer harm him, neither can they persecute him because he belongs only to Jesus and to no sect: he has Jesus and nothing else - Simon can dispose of his wealth which an honest and faithful servant kept for him. And I, being the owner for a further short time, gave instructions that the estate should be reorganised, so that I would get more money when selling it and I would be able to say… no, I am not telling what. »

« The angels tell, Simon and they are writing it in the eternal book » says Jesus.

Simon looks at Jesus. Their eyes meet: Simon's express surprise, Jesus' blessing approval.

« As usual. I am wrong. »

« No, Judas. You have a practical sense, you said so yourself. »

« Oh! but with Jesus!… Also Simon Peter was full of practical sense, now instead!… You, too, Judas, will become like him. You have only been with the Master a short time, we have been longer with Him, and we are already better » says John who is always kind and conciliatory.

« He did not want me. Otherwise I would have been His since Passover. » Judas is really bad-tempered today.

Jesus puts an end to the argument by asking Levi: « Have you ever been to Galilee? »

« Yes, my Lord. »

« You will come with Me, to take Me to Jonah. Do you know him? »

« Yes, I do. We always met at Passover. I used to go and see him then. »

Joseph, mortified, lowers his head. Jesus notices and says: « You cannot both come. Elias would be left alone with the sheep. But you will come with Me as far as the Jericho pass, where we will part for some time. I will tell you after what you have to do. »

« What about us? Will we not do anything? »

« Yes, you will, Judas, you will. »

« There are some houses over there » says John, who is walking a few steps in front of the others.

« It's Hebron. Between two rivers with its crest. See, Master? That house there, amidst all the green, a little higher up than the others? That's Zacharias' house. »

« Let us quicken our paces. »

They cover the last stretch of the road very rapidly and go into the village. The sheep's little hooves sound like castanets on the uneven stones of the road, which is paved very roughly. They reach the house. People look at the group of men, who are so different by look, age and garments amongst the white sheep.

« Oh! It's different! There was a gate here! » says Elias. Now in place of the gate there is a metal door which prevents one from seeing, and also the enclosure wall is higher than a man and thus nothing can be seen inside.

« Perhaps it will be open at the back. » They go round a large quadrilateral wall, it is rather a long rectangular one, but the wall is the same height all round.

« The wall was built not long ago » remarks John, examining it. « There is not a scratch on it and there is still lime rubble on the ground. »

« I cannot even see the sepulchre… It was near the wood. Now the wood is outside the wall and… and it seems to belong to everybody. They are gathering firewood in it. » Elias is puzzled.

A man, an old woodcutter, small but strong, who is watching the group, stops sawing a trunk which he has cut down, and goes towards the group. « Whom are you looking for? »

« We wanted to go in, to pray on Zacharias' tomb ».

« There is no tomb any longer. Don't you know? Who are you? »

« I am a friend of Samuel, the shepherd. This… »

« It is not necessary, Elias » says Jesus and Elias keeps quiet.

« Ah! Samuel!… I see! But since John, Zacharias' son, was put into prison, the house is no longer his. And it is a misfortune, because he had all the profit of his property given to the poor people in Hebron. One morning a man came from Herod's court, he threw Jowehel out, he affixed seals, then he came back with bricklayers and they started raising the wall… The sepulchre was over there, in the corner. He did not want it… and one morning we found it all spoiled and half destroyed… the poor bones were all scattered… We put them together again, as well as we could… They are now in a sarcophagus… And in the house of the priest Zacharias, that filthy man keeps his lovers. Now there is a mime from Rome. That is why he raised the wall. He does not want people to see… The house of the priest a brothel! The house of the miracle and of the Precursor! For it is certainly him, if he is not the Messiah. And how much trouble we had because of the Baptist! But he is our great man! He is really great! Even when he was born there was a miracle. Elizabeth was as old as a withered thistle but she became as fruitful as an apple in Adar, and that was the first miracle. Then a cousin of hers came and She was a holy woman, and She served her and loosened the priest's tongue. Her name was Mary. I remember Her, although we saw Her very rarely. How it happened I don't know. They say that to make Elizabeth happy, She made Zacharias put his mute mouth against Her pregnant bosom or that She put Her fingers into his mouth. I don't know. It is a fact, that after nine months' silence, Zacharias spoke praising the Lord and saying that there was a Messiah. He did not explain more. But my wife was there that day and she assured me that Zacharias, praising the Lord, said that his son would precede Him. Now I say: it is not what people believe. John is the Messiah and he goes before the Lord, as Abraham went before God. That's what it is. Am I not right? »

« You are right with regard to the spirit of the Baptist, who always proceeds before God. But you are not right with regard to the Messiah ».

« Well, the woman who said that She was the Mother of the Son of God - Samuel said so - was it not true that She was? Is She still living? »

« Yes, She was. The Messiah was born, preceded by him who raised his voice in the desert, as the Prophet said. »

« You are the first to say so. John, the last time that Jowehel took him a sheepskin, which he did every year at the beginning of winter, although he was questioned about the Messiah, did not say: "The Messiah is here". When he will say so… »

« Man, I was a disciple of John and I heard him say: "Here is the Lamb of God" pointing to… » says John.

« No, no. He is the Lamb. A true Lamb who grew up by himself, almost without the need of a father and mother. As soon as he became a son of the Law, he lived isolated in the mountain caves overlooking the desert, and he grew up there conversing with God. Elizabeth and Zacharias died, and he did not come. God only was his father and mother. There is no holy man greater than he is. You can ask everyone in Hebron. Samuel used to say so, but the people in Bethlehem must have been right. John is the holy man of God. »

« If someone said to you: "I am the Messiah", what would you say? » asks Jesus.

« I would call him a "blasphemer" and I would drive him away, throwing stones at him. »

« And if he worked a miracle to prove that he was the Messiah? »

« I would say that he was "possessed". The Messiah will come when John reveals himself in his true nature. The very hatred of Herod is the proof. Cunning as he is, he knows that John is the Messiah. »

« He was not born in Bethlehem. »

« But when he is freed, after announcing by himself his impending oncoming, he will reveal himself in Bethlehem. Also Bethlehem is waiting for that. Whilst… Oh! Go, if you have plenty of guts, and talk to the Bethlehemites of another Messiah… and you will see… »

« Have you a synagogue? »

« Yes, about two hundred steps straight ahead. You cannot go wrong. Near it there is the sarcophagus with the violated remains. »

« Goodbye, may God enlighten you. »

They go away. They turn round on to the front of the house.

At the door there is a young woman impudently dressed. She is beautiful. « My Lord, do you wish to come into the house? Come in. »

Jesus stares at her as severe as a judge, but does not speak.

But Judas does, supported by all the others. « Go back in, shameless woman! Do not desecrate us with your breath, ravenous bitch. »

The woman blushes and lowers her head. She is about to disappear abashed and scoffed at by urchins and passersby.

« Who is so pure as to say: "I have never desired the apple offered by Eve?" » asks Jesus severely and He adds: « Show Me him and I will call him a holy man. Nobody? Well, then, if not out of disgust, but out of weakness, you feel unable to go near this woman, you may withdraw. I will not force weaklings into unequal struggles. Woman, I would like to come in. This house belonged to a relative of Mine and is dear to Me. »

« Come in, my Lord, if You do not loathe me. »

« Leave the door open, that the world may see and may not tattle… »

Jesus enters serious and solemn. The woman, subdued, bows down before Him and dares not move. But the quips of the people cut her to the quick. She runs away to the end of the garden, while Jesus goes as far as the foot of the staircase. He looks in through the half open doors but does not go in. He then goes to the place of the sepulchre, where there is now a kind of small pagan temple.

« The bones of the just, also when dry and scattered, ooze a purifying balm and spread seed of eternal life. Peace to the dead who lived doing good! Peace to the pure who are sleeping in the Lord! Peace to those who suffered, but knew no vice! Peace to the real great ones of the world and of Heaven! Peace! »

The woman has reached Jesus, walking along the hedge that protects her.

« My Lord! »

« Woman. »

« Your Name, my Lord. »

« Jesus. »

« I never heard it. I am Roman: a mime and dancer. I am an expert only in lust. What is the meaning of Your name? My name is Aglae and… and it means: vice. »

« Mine means: Saviour. »

« How do You save? And whom? »

« Those who are anxious to be saved. I save by teaching to be pure, to prefer sorrows to honours, to desire good at all costs, » Jesus speaks without bitterness, without even turning towards the woman.

« I am lost… »

« I am the One seeking who is lost. »

« I am dead. »

« I am the One who gives Life. »

« I am filth and falsehood. »

« I am Purity and Truth. »

« You are also Bounty, You do not look at me. You do not touch me, You do not tread on me. Have mercy on me… »

« First, you must have mercy on yourself. On your soul. »

« What is the soul? »

« It is what makes a god of man and not an animal. Vice and sin kill it, and once it is killed, man becomes a repulsive animal. »

« Will it be possible for me to see You again? »

« Who looks for Me, finds Me. »

« Where do You live? »

« Where hearts need doctors and medicines to become honest again. »

« In that case… I will not see You again… I live where no doctor, medicine or honesty is wanted. »

« Nothing prevents you from coming to where I am. My name will be shouted in the streets and will reach you. Goodbye. »

« Goodbye, my Lord. Allow me to call You "Jesus". Oh! Not out of familiarity!… But that a little of salvation may come to me. I am Aglae, remember me. »

« I will. Goodbye. »

The woman stays at the end of the garden, Jesus comes out of it severe. He looks at everybody. He sees perplexity in His disciples and hears jeers from the Hebronites. A servant closes the door.

Jesus goes straight along the road. He knocks at the synagogue.

A resentful old man looks out. He does not even give Jesus time to speak. « The synagogue is forbidden, in this holy place, to those who deal with prostitutes. Go away. »

Jesus turns away without replying and continues walking along the road. His disciples follow Him. They begin to speak when they are outside Hebron.

« You asked for trouble, Master » says Judas. « A prostitute, of all people! »

« Judas, I solemnly tell you that she will surpass you. And now, since you are reproaching Me, what do you say of the Judaeans? In the most holy places in Judaea we have been scoffed at and driven away… That is the truth. The day will come when Samaria and the Gentiles will worship the true God, and the people of the Lord will be soiled with blood and a crime… a crime in comparison with which the sins of prostitutes who sell their bodies and their souls, will be a very small thing. I was not able to pray on the tomb of My cousins and of the just Samuel. It does not matter. Rest, holy bones, rejoice, souls, that dwelt in them. The first resurrection is near. Then the day will come when you will be shown to the angels as the souls of the servants of the Lord. »

Jesus stops speaking and the vision ends.

78. Jesus at Kerioth. Death of Old Saul.

14th January 1945.

I am under the impression that the steepest part, that is the closest tangle of Judaean mountains, is between Hebron and Juttah. But I may be mistaken, and this valley may be wider, opening on to wider horizons, with isolated mountains emerging here and there, not forming any real chain. It may be a valley between two chains of mountains. I do not know. It is the first time I see it, and I am puzzled. The fields are not very large, but they are well cultivated with various cereals: mainly barley and rye. There are also some nice vineyards in the sunny parts. Higher up, I can see some lovely forests of pine-trees and fir-trees and other trees typical of woody places. A reasonably good road leads into a small village.

« This is the suburb of Kerioth. Please come to my country house. My mother is waiting for You there. We will go to Kerioth afterwards » says Judas who is beside himself with excitement.

I omitted to mention that only Judas, Simon and John are now with Jesus. The shepherds are not here. Perhaps they remained in the pastures of Hebron or they have gone back towards Bethlehem.

« As you wish, Judas, but we could have stopped even here to meet your mother. »

« Oh! No! It is only a farm house. My mother comes here at harvest time. But she lives in Kerioth. And do You not want my town people to see You? Do You not want to take Your light to them? »

« I certainly do, Judas. But you already are aware that I do not mind the humility of the place that gives Me hospitality. »

« But today You are my guest… and Judas knows how to be hospitable. »

They walk for a few more yards among houses spread about the country, while men and women look out, called by children. It is obvious that their curiosity has been awakened. Judas must have sent word warning them.

« Here is my poor house. Forgive its poverty. »

But, after all, the house is not a hovel: it consists of a large and well kept ground floor only, in the middle of a thick flowering orchard. A small private clean road leads from the main road to the house.

« May I go ahead of You, Master? »

« Yes, go. »

Judas goes.

« Master, Judas has done things in great style » says Simon, « I rather suspected he would. But now I am certain. Master, You keep saying, and quite rightly, spirit… But he… he does not see things that way. He will never understand You… or perhaps only very late » he adds not to grieve Jesus.

Jesus sighs and is silent.

Judas comes out with a woman who is about fifty years old. She is rather tall, but not so tall as her son, who has her same dark eyes and curly hair. But her eyes are kind and rather sad, whereas those of Judas are imperious and shrewd.

« I greet You, King of Israel » she says prostrating herself in a real salutation of a subject. « Allow Your servant to give You hospitality. »

« Peace to you, woman. And may God be with you and your creature. »

« Oh! yes! With my creature. » It sounds more like a sigh than a reply.

« Stand up, mother. I have a Mother, too, and I cannot allow you to kiss My feet. I kiss you, woman, in My Mother's name. She is a sister of yours… in love and in the painful destiny of the mother of those who are marked. »

« What do You mean, Messiah? » asks Judas somewhat worried.

But Jesus does not reply. He is embracing the woman, whom He has kindly raised up from the ground and is now kissing her cheeks. And, holding her hand, He walks toward the house.

They go into a cool room, which is shaded by light striped curtains. Cold drinks and fresh fruit are already laid out. But first of all Judas' mother calls a maidservant who brings in water and the landlady would like to take off Jesus' sandals and wash His dusty

feet. But Jesus objects. « No, mother. A mother is too holy a person, particularly when she is honest and good, as you are, to be allowed to take the attitude of a slave… »

The mother looks at Judas… an unusual look. She then goes away. Jesus has refreshed Himself. When He is about to put on His sandals, the woman comes back with a new pair. « Here, Messiah. I think I have done the right thing… as Judas wanted… He said to me: "A little longer than mine, but the same width". »

« But why, Judas? »

« Will You not let me offer You a gift? Are You not my King and my God? »

« Yes, Judas. But you must not give so much trouble to your mother. You know what I am like… »

« I know. You are holy. But You must appear as a holy King. That is how one imposes oneself. -In the world, where nine tenths of the folk are foolish people, we must impose ourselves with our appearance. Trust me. »

Jesus has fastened the red leather open-work straps of the new sandals, which reach up to His ankles. They are much nicer than His plain sandals of a workman, and they resemble Judas' sandals, which are like shoes with open-work showing parts of his feet.

« Also the tunic, my King. I prepared it for Judas… But he makes a present of it to You. It's a linen one: cool and new. Allow a mother to put it on You… as if You were her son. »

Jesus looks at Judas once again… but does not speak. He unties the lace of His tunic, round His neck, and lets His wide tunic fall on to the floor and thus is left with only His short under-tunic. The woman puts on Him the lovely new garment. She offers Him a belt, which is richly embroidered braid, from which a cord hangs down, decorated with very thick tassels. Jesus must feel comfortable in the cool clean clothes, but He does not seem very happy. In the meantime the others have cleaned themselves.

« Come, Master. They come from my poor orchard. And this is honeyed water, prepared by my mother. Perhaps, Simon, you would prefer this white wine. Have some. It is the wine of my vineyard. And what about you, John? Will you have the same as the Master? » Judas is overjoyed at pouring the drinks into beautiful silver cups, thus showing his wealth.

His mother is not very talkative. She looks… looks… at Judas, and even more at Jesus, and when Jesus, before eating, offers her the nicest fruit (possibly very big apricots, they are yellow red fruits, certainly not apples) and He says to her: « First of all to mother, always », her eyes well with tears.

« Mother, is the rest ready? » asks Judas.

« Yes, son. I think I have done everything well. But I was brought up here and I have always lived here and I do not know… I do not know the habits of kings. »

« Which habits, woman? Which kings? What have You done, Judas? »

« Are You not the promised King of Israel? It is time that the world should salute You as such, and that must happen for the first time here, in my town, in my house. I revere You as such. For my sake, and for the respect due to Your names of Messiah, Christ, King, which the Prophets gave You by Yahweh's command, do not give me the lie. »

« Woman, friends, please. I must speak to Judas. I have precise instructions to give him. »

The mother and the disciples withdraw.

« Judas: what have you done? Have you understood so little of Me so far? Why lower Me to the extent of making Me only a mighty man of the world, nay: a man intriguing to become mighty? And do you not understand that that is an offence, nay an obstacle to My mission? Yes. Do not deny it. It is an obstacle. Israel is subjected to Rome. You know what happened when they raised against Rome someone who seemed a mob-leader and aroused the suspicion of creating an insurrection. Only a few days ago you heard how pitiless they were against a Child because they were afraid He might be a king according to the world. And yet you!…

Oh! Judas! What do you expect from the sovereignty of the flesh? What do you expect? I gave you time to think and decide. I spoke to you very clearly from the very first time. I also sent you away because I knew… because I know, I read and see what is in you. Why do you want to follow Me, if you do not want to be as I want you? Go away, Judas. Do not harm yourself and do not harm Me… Go away. It is better for you. You are not a suitable worker for this task. It is by far too much above you. In you there is pride, there is greed and all its three branches, there is arrogance… even your mother must be afraid of you… you are inclined to falsehood… No, My follower must not be like that. Judas, I do not hate you, I do not curse you. I only say to you, and I am saying it with the grief of one who knows he cannot change the person he loves, I only say to you: go your way, make your way in the world, since that is what you want, but do not stay with Me.

My life!… My royal palace! How small and mean they are! Do you know where I will be a King? When I will be proclaimed King? When I will be raised up, upon an ill-famed piece of wood and My own blood will be My purple, and My crown will be a wreath of thorns and My insignia a mocking poster and the curses of all the people, of My people, will be the trumpets, the tambourines, the organs, the citherns saluting the proclamation of the King. And do you know by whose deed all this will happen? By the deed of one

who did not understand Me. One who will have understood nothing. One, whose heart was a hollow piece of bronze, which pride, sensuality and avarice had filled with their humours, which will generate coils of snakes that will be used to chain Me and… and to curse him. The others are not so well aware of My destiny. Please do not tell them. Let us keep this to ourselves. In any case it ,is a reproach… and you will keep quiet to avoid saying: "I was reproached"… Is that clear, Judas? »

Judas has blushed so much, that he looks purple. He is standing before Jesus, mortified, his head lowered… He kneels down and he cries with his head on Jesus' knees: « I love you, Master, Don't reject me. Yes, I am proud and foolish, but don't send me away. No. Master. I will never do it again. You are right. It was thoughtless of me. But there is some love in my mistake. I wanted to honour You… and I wanted the others to honour You as well… because I love You. You said so three days ago: "When you make a mistake without malice, out of ignorance, it is not an error, but an imperfect judgement: like the error of children, and I am here to make adults of you". Here I am, here against Your knees… You said You would be a father to me… and I am here against Your knees as if they were my father's, and I ask You to forgive me, and to make an "adult" of me, a holy adult… Don't send me away, Jesus, Jesus, Jesus… Not everything is wicked in me. You know: I left everything for you and I have come. You are much more than the honours and victories I got serving other people. You are indeed the love of poor unhappy Judas who would like to give You nothing but joy, and is instead the cause of pain for You… »

« That is all right, Judas. I forgive you once again… » Jesus looks tired… « I forgive you, hoping… hoping that in future you will understand Me. »

« Yes, Master. But, now, do not give me the lie, otherwise I will be laughed at. Everybody in Kerioth knows that I was coming with David's Descendant, the King of Israel… and the town has made preparations to welcome You… I thought I was doing a good thing… showing You what one must do to be respected and obeyed… and I also wanted to show John and Simon, and through them, all the others who love You but treat You as their equal… Also my mother would be mocked at, as the mother of a mad liar. For her sake, my Lord… And I swear that I… »

« Do not swear to Me. Swear to yourself, if you can, that You will not commit such a sin again. For the sake of your mother and your fellow citizens I will not shame you by going away without stopping here. Stand up. »

« What will You tell the others? »

« The truth… »

« No, don't. »

« The truth: that I gave you instructions for to-day. It is always possible to tell the truth in a charitable way. Let us go. Call Your mother and the others. »

Jesus is rather severe. He smiles again only when Judas comes back with his mother and the disciples. The woman gazes at Jesus, but she gains confidence when she sees His kind disposition. I get the impression she is in great distress.

« Shall we go to Kerioth? I have rested and I wish to thank you, mother, for all your kindness. May Heaven reward you and grant rest and peace to your late husband, for all your charity to Me. »

The woman tries to kiss His hand, but Jesus caresses her head and thus prevents her from doing so.

« The wagon is ready, Master. Come. »

Outside, in fact, an ox cart is just arriving. It is a comfortable cart, on which they have placed cushions as seats and a red tent as a cover.

« Get on, Master. »

« Your mother, first. »

The woman gets on and then Jesus and the others.

« Sit here, Master. » (Judas no longer calls Him king).

Jesus sits in front, and Judas sits beside Him. The woman and the disciples are behind. The man driving the cart goads the oxen walking beside them.

It is a short journey: about four hundred metres, probably a little more. The first houses of Kerioth are now visible and it looks like a decent little town. A little boy on the sunny road is watching and he immediately dashes away. When the cart reaches the first houses,

the notables and the people welcome Him; the houses are decorated with draperies and branches. The people shout with joy and bow down deeply. Jesus, from the height of His shaking throne, can but greet them and bless them.

The cart moves on and after crossing a square it turns into a street, where it stops before a house the door of which is already wide open. Two or three women are standing at the door. They stop and get off.

« My house is Yours, Master. »

« Peace to it, Judas. Peace and holiness. »

They go in. Beyond the hall there is a large room, with low divans and inlaid furniture. The notables of the place and other people go in with Jesus. There is a lot of bowing and curiosity: a showy joyfulness.

An impressive elderly man delivers a speech: « it is a great honour for the land of Kerioth to receive You, my Lord. A great fortune! A happy day! It is a great fortune to have You and to see that a son of Kerioth is Your friend and assistant. May he be blessed because he met You before everyone else! And may You be blessed ten times ten because you have revealed Yourself: You are the one Who has been expected for generations and generations. Speak, my Lord and King. Our hearts are anxious to hear Your word, just as the land parched by a fiery summer awaits the first soft showers in September. »

« Thank you, whoever you are. Thank you. And thanks to these citizens whose hearts have honoured the Word of the Father, and the Father Whose Word I am. Because You must understand that thanks and honour are due not to the Son of man, Who is speaking to you, but to the Most High Lord, for this time of peace during which He re-establishes the broken paternity with the sons of man. Let us praise the true Lord, the God of Abraham Who had mercy on and loved His people and granted them the promised Redeemer. Glory and praise not to Jesus, the servant of the Eternal Will, but to the loving Will. »

« Your words are the words of a holy man: I am the chief of the synagogue. To-day it is not a Sabbath. But come to my house, to explain the Law, since You are anointed with Wisdom, rather than with royal oil. »

« I will come. »

« Perhaps my Lord is tired… »

« No, Judas, I am never tired of speaking of God and I am never anxious to disappoint the hearts of men. »

« Come, then » the synagogue chief insists. « The whole of Kerioth is out there waiting for You. »

« Let us go. »

They go out. Jesus is between Judas and the archsynagogue, around them there are the notables and the crowds. Jesus passes through them blessing.

The synagogue is on the square. They go in. Jesus goes to the lectern. He begins to speak, bright in His beautiful robes, His face inspired, His arms stretched out in His usual attitude.

« People of Kerioth, the Word of God is speaking to you. Listen. He Who is speaking to you is but the Word of God. His sovereignty comes from the Father and will return to the Father after Israel has been evangelised. May your hearts and minds be opened to the truth, so that you may be freed from errors and confusion.

Isaiah said: "For all the footgear of battle, every cloak rolled in blood, is burnt and consumed by fire. For there is a Child born to us, a Son given to us, and dominion is laid on His shoulders; and this is the name they give Him: Wonder-Counsellor, Mighty-God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace". That is My Name. We leave to Caesar and the Tetrarchs their preys. I will commit a robbery. But not a robbery deserving to be punished by fire. On the contrary I will snatch from Satan's fire many of his preys and I will take them to the Kingdom of peace, of which I am the Prince, and to the future century: the eternal time of which I am the Father.

"God", says David, from whose stock I descend, as was prophesied by those who saw the future because of their holiness which was so pleasing to God, that He chose them as His messengers, "God elected one only… my son… but the work is great: this palace is not for man but for God". It is so. God, the King of kings, elected one person only: His Son, to build His house in the hearts of men. And He has already prepared the materials. Oh! How much gold of charity! and copper, silver, iron, rare wood and precious stones! They are all gathered in his Word Who makes use of them to build God's abode in you. But if man does not help the Lord, the Lord will build His dwelling place in vain. One must reply to gold with gold, to silver with silver, to copper with copper, to iron with iron. That is, love is to be given for love, continence to serve Purity, perseverance to be loyal, strength to be steadfast. And one must carry stones today, wood tomorrow: a sacrifice today, a deed tomorrow and thus build. You must always build the Temple of God in your hearts.

The Master, the Messiah, the King of everlasting Israel and of God's eternal people, calls you. But He wants you to be pure for the work. Relinquish pride: praise is due to God. Relinquish human thoughts: the Kingdom belongs to God. Be humble and say with Me: "All things are Yours, Father. Everything that is good is Yours. Teach us how to know You and serve You in truth". Say: "Who am I?" And acknowledge that you will be something only when you become purified dwellings into which God may descend and rest.

You are all pilgrims and strangers in this world, learn how to gather together and proceed towards the promised Kingdom. The road: the commandments fulfilled not because of fear of a punishment, but out of love for You, holy Father. The Ark: a perfect heart in which the nourishing manna of wisdom is treasured and the branch of a pure will is certain to bloom. And come to the Light of the world, that your houses may be bright with light. I bring you the Light. Nothing else. I have no riches and I do not promise worldly honours. But I possess all the supernatural wealth of My Father and I promise the eternal honour of Heaven to those who will follow God with love and charity.

Peace be with you. »

The people who have listened attentively, begin to murmur somewhat agitated. Jesus speaks to the head of the synagogue. Other people, perhaps the notables, join the group.

« Master, but are You not the King of Israel? We were told… »

« I am. »

« But You said… »

« That I neither possess nor promise worldly Wealth. I can speak but the truth. Yes, it is so. I know what you think. But the error is due to a misinterpretation and your great respect for the Most High. You were told: "The Messiah is coming" and you thought, like many in Israel, that Messiah and king were the same thing. Raise your minds higher up. Look at this beautiful summer sky. Do you

think it ends there, where the air seems a sapphire vault? No, the most pure, the most azure spheres are beyond it, up as far as Paradise, which no one can imagine, where the Messiah will lead all the just who die in the Lord. The same difference exists between the Messiah's royalty, as understood by men, and His true Royalty: which is entirely divine. »

« But will we, poor men, be able to raise our minds so far up? »

« Yes, if you only want to. And if you want to, I will help you. »

« How shall we call You, if You are not a king? »

« Call Me Master, or Jesus, as you wish. I am a Master and I am Jesus, the Saviour. »

An old man says: « Listen, my Lord. Some time ago, a long time ago, at the time of the edict, we heard here that the Saviour was born in Bethlehem… and I went there with other people… I saw a little Baby, exactly like all other new-born babies. But I adored Him with faith. Later I heard that there was a holy man, whose name is John. Which is the true Messiah? »

« The One you adored. The other is His Precursor: a great saint in the eyes of the Most High. But he is not the Messiah. »

« Was it You? »

« It was I. And what did you see around the new-born Child? »

« Poverty and cleanliness, honesty and purity… A kind grave carpenter, whose name was Joseph, a carpenter but of the House of David, a young mother, fair and kind, whose name was Mary, before whose grace the most beautiful roses of Engedi turn pale and the lilies of the royal flower beds seem misshapen, and a Child with large blue eyes and pale gold hair… I saw nothing else… And I can still hear the voice of the Mother say to me: "On behalf of My Creature I say to You: may the Lord be with you until the eternal meeting and may His Grace come towards you on your way". I am eighty-four years old… my way is near its end. I was no longer expecting to meet the Grace of God. Instead I have found You… and now I do not wish to see any other light than Yours… Yes. I see You as You are in this merciful attire, which is the flesh You have taken. I see You! Listen to the voice of a man who sees the Light of God while dying! »

The people press round the old inspired man, who is in Jesus' group. No longer leaning on his walking stick, he lifts his trembling arms and raises his white head, which, with its byparted beard, seems the head of a patriarch or a prophet.

« I see Him: The Chosen, Supreme, Perfect One, Who descended here out of love, I see Him rise again to the right hand side of the Father and become One with Him. But… Oh! He is not just a Voice' or an incorporeal Essence, as Moses saw the Most High, or as Genesis tells the First Parents heard Him and spoke to Him in the evening breeze. I see Him as real Flesh rising to the Eternal Father. Blazing Flesh! Glorious Flesh! Oh! Pomp of Divine Flesh! Oh! Beauty of the Man-God! He is the King! Yes. The King. Not of Israel: of the world. All the royalties of the earth bow to Him and all the sceptres and crowns fade away in the splendour of His sceptre and jewels. He has a crown on His head and a sceptre in His hand. He wears a rational on His chest: it is adorned with pearls and rubies, the brightness of which was never seen before. Flames issue from it as if it were a blazing furnace. There are two rubies on His wrists and buckles with rubies are on His holy feet. There is so much light from the rubies! Admire, peoples, the Eternal King! I see You! I see You! I am rising with You… Ah! Lord! Our Redeemer!… The light increases within my soul… The King is decorated with His own Blood! The crown is a wreath of bleeding thorns. The sceptre is a cross… Here is the Man! He is here! It is You!… Lord, for the sake of Your sacrifice have mercy on Your servant, Jesus, I commend my soul to Your mercy. »

The old man, who so far had stood up, rejuvenated by the fire of prophecy, suddenly collapses and would fall if Jesus were not quick in holding him up against His chest.

« Saul. »

« Saul is dying! »

« Help! »

« Be quick. »

« Peace to the just man who is dying » says Jesus, Who has slowly knelt down to support the old man, who has become heavier and heavier.

There is silence.

Then Jesus lays him down on the ground. And He stands up. « Peace to his soul. He died seeing the Light. In his expectation which will be a short one, he will already see the face of God and will be happy. There is no death, that is parting from life, for those who died in the Lord. »

The people, after a little while, go away commenting. The elders, Jesus, His disciples and the archsynagogue remain.

« Did he prophesy, Lord. »

« His eyes saw the Truth. Let us go. »

They go out.

« Master, Saul died enraptured by the Spirit of God. We touched him, are we clean or unclean? »

« Unclean. »

« And what about You? »

« I am just like the others. I do not change the Law. The Law is law and an Israelite fulfils it. We are unclean. Within the third and the seventh day we shall get purified. Till then, we are unclean. Judas, I am not going back to your mother's. I do not want to take uncleanliness to her home. Send her word by someone who can go there. Peace to this town. Let us go. »

I do not see anything else.

79. Jesus on His Way Back Stops with the Shepherds near Hebron.

15th January 1945.

Jesus is walking with His disciples on a road along the torrent. The road is not really running along the torrent. The torrent is below; high above, on the side of the mountain there is a twisting road, as is easily found in mountain places. John is almost purple, laden like a porter, with a big heavy satchel. Judas is carrying Jesus' bag and his own. Simon has only his bag and the mantles. Jesus is now wearing his own clothes and sandals. But Judas' mother must have had His tunic washed, because it is no longer creased.

« How much fruit! How beautiful are those vineyards on those hills! » says John, who is always in good humour, notwithstanding the heat and the fatigue. « Master, is this the river on the banks of which our fathers picked the miraculous grapes? »

« No, it is another one, farther south. But the whole region was blessed with rich fruit. »

« It is not so blessed now, although still beautiful. »

« Too many wars have devastated the country. Israel was made here… but it had to be fecundated by its own blood and by the blood of its enemies. »

« Where will we find the shepherds? »

« Five miles from Hebron, on the banks of the river you were enquiring about. »

« Beyond that hill, then. »

« Correct. »

« It's very warm. The summer… Where are we going after, Master? »

« To a place which is even warmer. But I ask you to come. We shall travel by night. The stars are so bright that there is no darkness. I want to show you a place… »

« A town? »

« No… A place… that will make you understand the Master… perhaps better than do His words. »

« We lost some days over that stupid incident. It spoiled everything… and my mother who had prepared so much, was disappointed.

I cannot understand why You wanted to segregate Yourself with the purification… »

« Judas, why do you call stupid a fact that was a grace for a true believer? Would you not like such a death for yourself? He had waited all his life for the Messiah, and although an elderly man, he had gone along uncomfortable roads, to adore Him, when he was told: "He is here". He had kept My Mother's word for thirty years in his heart. He was enraptured by the fire of love and faith in the last hour granted to him by God. His heart burst out of joy and was burnt, like a pleasing holocaust, by the fire of God. Which destiny could be better? He spoiled the feast you had prepared? You can see in that the answer of God. The things of man are not to be mixed with the things of God… Your mother will have Me again. The old man would not have had Me again. The whole of Kerioth can come to Christ, the old man had no more strength to do so. I am happy that I held the old dying father against My heart and I commended his soul. With regard to the rest… Why give scandal lacking respect for the Law? One must walk in front of the others if one wants to say: "Follow me". And to lead people on to a holy path, one must walk on the same path. How could I have said, or how could I say: "Be faithful", if I were faithless? »

« I think that error is the cause of our decay. The rabbis and Pharisees crush the people with their precepts and then… then they behave like the man who desecrated John's house, making it a place of sin » remarks Simon.

« He is one of Herod's… »

« Yes, Judas, but the same faults are to be found also in the classes which are said - by themselves of course - to be holy. What do you say about it, Master? » asks Simon.

« I say that only if there is a handful of true yeast and true incense in Israel, the bread will be made and the altar perfumed. »

« What do you mean? »

« I mean that if there is anyone coming to the Truth with a sincere heart, the Truth will spread like the yeast in the mass of flour and like incense all over Israel. »

« What did that woman say to You? » asks Judas.

Jesus does not reply. He instead addresses John: « Your load is heavy and you are tired. Give it to Me. »

« No, Jesus, I am used to carrying weights and in any case… the thought of Isaac's joy makes it light. »

They go round the hillock. Elias' sheep are in the shade of the wood, on the other side. And the shepherds, sitting in the shade are watching them. When they see Jesus they start running.

« Peace to you. You are here? »

« We were worried about You… because of the delay… and we didn't know whether to come and meet You or obey… then we

decided to come so far… and thus obey Your instructions and satisfy our love at the same time. You were to be here many days ago. »

« We had to stay… »

« Nothing… wrong? »

« No, My friends, nothing. A faithful believer died on My breast. Nothing else. »

« What do you think should have happened, shepherd? When things are well arranged… Certainly one must know how to prepare them and prepare also hearts to receive them. My town paid every honour to Christ. Did they not, Master? »

« Yes, they did. Isaac, on our way back we called at Sarah's. Also the town of Juttah, without any preparation other than its simple goodness and the truth of Isaac's words, understood the essence of My doctrine and learned how to love with a holy practical unselfish love. She sent you some clothes and food, Isaac, and everybody wanted to add something to the alms you left on your bed, because you are now back in the world and you lack everything. Take this. I never take money. But I accepted this because it is purified by charity. »

« No, Master, You keep it. I… I am used to doing without it. »

« You will now have to go to the various villages, to which I will send you. And you will need it. A workman is entitled to his pay, also If he deals with souls… because there is still a body to be nourished, as if it were a donkey helping its master. It is not much. But you will manage. John has some clothes and sandals in that bag. Joachim took some of his own. They may be too big… but there is so much love in the gift! »

Isaac takes the bag and goes behind a bush to dress. He was still barefooted and was wearing his strange gown made from a blanket.

« Master » says Elias. « That woman… the woman who is in John's house… three days after You left and we were pasturing the sheep on the meadows of Hebron - they belong to everybody, the meadows, and they could not send us away - she sent her maid to us with this bag and told us that she wanted to speak to us… I don't know whether I did the right thing… but the first time I gave the bag back to her and said: "I do not want to listen to her"… Then she sent this message: "Come in Jesus' name" and I went. She waited until her… well, the man who keeps her, had gone… How many things she wanted to know. But I… didn't tell her very much. Out of prudence. She is a prostitute. I was afraid it might be a trap for You. She asked me who You are, where You live, what You do, if You are a gentleman… I said: "He is Jesus of Nazareth, He goes everywhere, because He is a Master, and He goes round Palestine teaching"; I said You are a poor man, a simple workman, made wise by Wisdom… Nothing else. »

« You did well » says Jesus, and Judas at the same moment exclaims: « You did the wrong thing! Why did you not say that He is the Messiah, the King of the world? The proud Roman woman should be crushed under the blow of God's splendour. »

« She would not have understood me… In any case how could I be sure that she was sincere? When you saw her, you said what she is. Was I to throw holy things, and everything that is Jesus is holy, into her mouth? Was I to endanger Jesus, giving too much information? Anyone may hurt Him, but I will not. »

« John, let us go and tell her who the Master is, and explain the holy truth to her. »

« Not me. Unless Jesus tells me. »

« Are you afraid? What can she do to you? Do you loathe her? The Master did not. »

« I am not afraid neither do I loathe her. I feel sorry for her. But I think that if Jesus wanted, He could have stopped to teach her. He did not do it… it is not necessary for us to do it. »

« At the time there were no signs of a conversion… Now… Show me the bag, Elias. » And Judas, who is sitting on the grass, empties the bag on his mantle. Rings, armlets, bracelets and a necklace roll out: yellow gold on the dark gold of Judas' mantle. « They are jewels!… What can we do with them? »

« They can be sold » says Simon.

« They are troublesome things » remarks Judas, who, however, admires them.

« That's what I told her, when I took them; I also said: "Your master will beat you". She replied: "They do not belong to him. They are mine and I do what I want with them. I know it is the gold of sins… but it will become good if used for the poor and the holy. That they may remember me" » and she was crying.

« Go and see her, Master. »

« No. »

« Send Simon. »

« No. »

« Well, I'll go. »

« No. » Jesus' « No » is sharp and peremptory.

« Was I wrong, Master, in speaking to her and taking that gold? » asks Elias, when he sees Jesus so serious.

« You did nothing wrong. But there is nothing more to be done. »

« But perhaps that woman wants to redeem herself and she needs to be taught… » Judas objects once again.

« There are already in her so many sparks capable of starting a fire which will bum her vices and purify her soul and repentance will render her innocent once again. A few minutes ago I spoke to you of the yeast which is mixed with the flour and turns it into holy bread. Listen now to a short parable.

That woman is the flour. A flour in which the Evil One has mixed his hellish powders. I am the yeast. That is, My word is the yeast. But if there is too much chaff in the flour, or if sand, or little stones or ashes are mixed in it, is it possible to make bread with it, even if the yeast is good? It is not possible. It is necessary to patiently remove the chaff, the ashes, stones and sand from the flour.

Then Mercy passes by and offers the first sieve… The first one: made with short basic truths, which may be understood by one entangled in the net of total ignorance, vice and Gentilism. If the soul accepts it, the first purification begins. The second takes place by means of the sieve of the soul itself, which compares its own being with the Being that revealed Itself. And the soul is horrified. And it starts its work. By means of a more and more particular operation, after the stones, the sand and the ashes, it reaches the point of removing also that part of the flour consisting of grains too heavy and too coarse to make good bread. The soul is now ready. Mercy then passes by once again and penetrates into the flour now ready - that is a preparation too, Judas - and raises it and turns it into bread. But it is a long operation: an operation of the "will power" of the soul.

That woman already has in herself the minimum which was fair to give her and which may be used by her to accomplish her work. Let her do it, if she wishes to, but we must not disturb her. Everything upsets a soul which is working: curiosity, unadvised zeal, intolerance as well as excessive compassion. »

« We are not going to see her, then? »

« No. And that none of you may be tempted to, let us leave at once. There is shade in the wood. We will stop at the foot of the Terebinth Valley. And we will part there. Elias will go back to his pastures with Levi: Joseph will come with Me as far as the Jericho ford. Later… we will meet again. You, Isaac, continue what you did at Juttah, going from here, through Arimathaea and Lydda, to Doco. We will meet there. It is necessary to prepare Judaea, and you know how to do it. Exactly as you did at Juttah ».

« And what about us? »

« You? You will come, as I said, to see My preparation. Also I prepared for My mission. » « Did You go to a rabbi's? »

« No. »

« Did You go to John? »

« I was only baptised by him. »

« Well, then? »

« Bethlehem spoke with its stones and its hearts. Also where I am taking you, Judas, the stones and a heart, Mine, will speak to you and give you the answer. » ,

Elias, who has brought some milk and brown bread, says: « While waiting for You, I tried, and Isaac tried with me, to convince the people in Hebron… But they will not believe, they will not take an oath, they do not want anyone but John. He is their "holy man" and they do not want anyone else. »

« It is a sin quite common to many places and many present and future believers. They look at the workman, not at the master who sent the workman. They ask the workman questions and they do not even say to him: "Tell your master". They forget that there is a workman only because there is a master and that it is the master who instructs the workman and enables him to work. They forget that the workman can intercede, but only the master can concede. In this case God and His Word with Him. It does not matter. The Word is sorry but bears no grudge. Let us go. »

The vision ends.

80. Jesus Returns to the Mountain Where He Fasted and to the Rock of Temptation.

17th January 1945.

A most beautiful dawn in the wilderness, seen from the height of a mountain side. It is daybreak. A few stars are still visible and a very thin arc of a waning moon looks like a silver comma on the dark blue velvet of the sky.

The mountain is completely isolated, that is, it is not linked to any other chain of mountains. But it is a real mountain, not a hill. The top is much higher up, but even from the middle of its slope one commands a very wide horizon, because one is well above ground level. In the fresh morning air, as the faint white-greenish dawn light becomes clearer and clearer, profiles and details slowly become visible, whereas before they were hidden in the fog that precedes daybreak, a fog that is darker than night, because the light of the stars seems to diminish and fade away in the transition from night to day. I thus see that the mountain is rocky and barren, split by gorges forming grottoes, caves and inlets in its side. It is a real wilderness: only where there is some earth capable of receiving and retaining the moisture of the rain, are there a few green tufts, mainly stiff thorny plants, with very few leaves, and low hard bushes of grass similar to thin green sticks, the name of which I do not know.

Below there is an even more barren plain, a flat stony ground that becomes more arid as it stretches out towards a dark spot, much longer than wider, at least five times longer than wider, which I think must be a dense oasis, which has sprung up in so much bleakness, because of underground waters. But when the light becomes brighter, I see that it is nothing but water. Stagnant, dark, dead water. A lake of infinite sadness. In the still feeble light it reminds me of the vision of the dead world. It seems to be drawing to itself all the darkness of the sky and all the gloominess of the surrounding area, dissolving in its still water the deep green of the thorny shrubs and stiff grass that for miles and miles around it and above it, are the only decoration of the earth. And after filtering so much gloom it seems to spread it around once again. How different it is from the sunny, smiling lake of Gennesaret!

High above, looking at the clear blue sky, which is becoming clearer and clearer, looking at the light progressing from the east in deeper and deeper brightness, one's soul rejoices. But looking at the huge, dead lake, gives one a stab in the heart. Not one bird flies over the water. Not one animal is on its shore. Nothing.

While I am watching so much desolation, I am roused by the voice of my Jesus: « Here we are at the place I wanted. » I turn round. I see Him behind me, with John, Simon and Judas, near the rocky slope of the mountain, where there is a little path, or rather, where the long erosion of waters, in the rainy months, has formed throughout centuries, a very shallow channel, a drain for the water flowing from the mountain top and which is a path for wild goats rather than for men.

Jesus looks around and repeats: « Yes, this is the place to which I wanted to bring you. Here Christ prepared for His mission. »

« But there is nothing here! »

« You are quite right, there is nothing. »

« With whom were You? »

« With My soul and with the Father. »

« Ah! You stayed only for a few hours! »

« No, Judas. Not a few hours. Many days… »

« But who served You? Where did You sleep? »

« My servants were the wild asses that came to sleep in their caves, where I also had taken shelter. My maidservants were the eagles that said to Me with their harsh cries: "It's daylight" and they flew away to attack their prey. My friends were the little hares that came up almost to My feet, gnawing at the wild herbs. My food and My drink were the same food and drink of the wild flower: the night dew and the sunshine. Nothing else. »

« But why? »

« To prepare well, as you say, for My mission. Things well prepared for are successful. You said so yourself. And My thing was not a trifle, a useless thing which would glorify Me, the Servant of the Lord, but it was to make men understand what the Lord is, and by means of such understanding, make Him loved in the spirit of truth. The servant that is concerned with his own triumph, and not with the Lord's, is a miserable man! The servant who is anxious to make a profit, who dreams he will sit on a high throne built on the

interests of God, which have been lowered down to the earth, whereas they are celestial interests, is also a miserable servant. He is no longer a servant, except in outer appearance. He is a merchant, a trafficker, a deceitful person, who deceives himself and men and would like to deceive also God… a wretched man who believes he is a prince, whilst he is a slave. He belongs to the Evil One, his

king of falsehood. Here, in this cave, Christ for many days lived fasting and praying to get ready for His mission. And where would you have suggested I should have gone to prepare, Judas? »

Judas is puzzled and bewildered. Eventually he replies: « I would not know… I was thinking… to a rabbi… or with the Essenes… I do not know. »

« And was it possible for Me to find a rabbi who would tell Me more than the power and wisdom of God were telling Me? And could I - I the Eternal Word of the Father, Who was present when the Father created man and am aware of the immortal soul by which he is animated and of the power of free capable judgement with which he was endowed by the Creator - would I have gone to derive science and skill from those who deny the immortality of souls, final resurrection and also the freedom of man to act, attributing virtues and vices, holy and wicked deeds to a destiny, which they say is fated and uncontrollable? Certainly not!

You have a destiny. In the mind of God Who creates you, there is a destiny for you. It is the wish of the Father. And it is a destiny of love, of peace, of glory: "the holiness of being His children". That is the destiny that was present in the divine mind when Adam was fashioned with dust and will be present until the creation of the last soul of man.

But the Father does not denigrate you in your position of kings. If a king is a prisoner, he is no longer a king: he is an outcast. You are kings because you are free in your small individual kingdoms. In your "ego". You can do what you like and how you like. Before you and on the boundaries of your small kingdom you have a friendly King and two enemy powers. The Friend shows you the rules that He gives to make His followers happy. He shows them and says: "Here they are. With them, your eternal victory is certain". He, The Wise and Holy One, shows them to you so that you may put them into practice, if you want to, and thus receive eternal glory.

The two enemy powers are Satan and the flesh. By flesh I mean your flesh and the world: they are, the pomps and enticements of the world, that is, the riches, feasts, honours and powers which are obtained from the world and in the world, but are not always obtained honestly and they are used even less honestly when eventually a man reaches them. Satan, the master of the flesh and of the world, speaks also on behalf of the world and of the flesh. He, too, has his rules… Oh! He certainly has! And as your "ego" is enveloped in the flesh, and the flesh is attracted by the flesh, as metal chips are attracted by a magnet, and the singing of the Seducer is sweeter than the warble of a nightingale in love in the moonlight and among perfumed rose bushes, it is easier to follow those rules, and incline towards those powers and say to them: "I consider you my friends. Come in". Come in… Have you ever seen an ally who remains honest for ever, without asking a hundredfold return for the help he has given? That is what those powers do. They go in… And they become the masters. Masters? No: galley sergeants. They tie you, men, to the galley bench, they fasten you with chains, they do not allow you to raise your head from their yoke, and their lash leaves bleeding marks on your backs if you attempt to escape. You either must bear to be torn to pieces and become a heap of shattered flesh, so useless, as flesh, as to be rejected and kicked aside by their cruel feet, or you must die under their blows.

If you can bear that martyrdom, then Mercy will come, the Only One who can still have mercy on that revolting misery, which the world, one of the masters, now loathes and at which the other master, Satan, throws the arrows of his revenge. And Mercy, the Only One, passes by, bends down, picks it up, doctors it, cures it and says: "Come. Do not be afraid. Do not look at yourself. Your wounds are but scars, but they are so numerous that you would be horrified, as they disfigure you. But I do not look at them. I look at your good will. Because of your good will, you are marked. Therefore I say to you: I love you. Come with Me". And He takes it to His Country. You then understand that Mercy and the friendly King are the same person. You find the rules He had shown to you and you did not want to follow. Now you want them… and first you reach the peace of your conscience, then the peace of God.

Tell Me, now. Was that destiny imposed by the Only One on everybody, or did each choose it for himself? »

« It was chosen by each person. »

« You are right, Simon. Was it possible for Me to go to those who deny the blessed resurrection and the gift of God, to be taught? I came here. I took My soul of the Son of man and I gave it its finishing touches and I thus finished the work of thirty years of humility and preparation in order to be perfect when starting My mission. Now I ask you to stay with Me for a few days in this cave. Our stay will be less depressing because we shall be four friends joining in our efforts against sadness, fears, temptation and the desires of the flesh. I was by Myself. It will be less painful, because it is now summer and up here, the mountain winds lessen the heat. I came here at the end of the Tebeth moon and the wind blowing down from the snowy tops was harsh. It will be less trying because

it will be shorter and also because we have the necessary food to satisfy our hunger and in small leather flasks that I asked the shepherds to give you, there is enough water to last us for the days of our stay. I… I must snatch two souls from Satan. It can only be done by penance. I ask you to help Me. It will be a training for you. You will learn how to snatch victims from Mammon: not so much with words as with sacrifice… Words!… The satanic uproar prevents one from hearing them… Every soul which is a prey of the Enemy is enveloped in an eddy of infernal voices… Do you want to stay with Me? If you do not want to, you may go and we will meet at Tekoah, near the market. »

« No, Master, I will not leave You » says John, while Simon at the same time exclaims: « You extol us by wanting us to be with You in this redemption. » Judas… does not appear to be terribly enthusiastic. But he puts a good face on… destiny and says: « I will stay. »

« Well, take the flasks and the bags and put them inside, and before the sun gets hot, break some wood and gather it near the crevice. The nights are severe, even in summer, and not all the animals are gentle. Light a branch at once. Over there, a branch of that gummy acacia. It burns very well. We will search in the crevices and with the fire we will drive out asps and scorpions. Go. »…

… The same spot on the mountain. But it is night now. A starry night. I think that the beauty of such a nocturnal sky can be enjoyed only in such almost-tropical countries. The stars are wonderfully large and bright. The bigger constellations seem clusters of diamond chips, of clear topazes, of pale sapphires, of mild opals and soft rubies. They tremble, they light up, they go out like glances hidden for an instant by eyelashes, and light up again more beautiful than before. Now and again a star swoops across the sky and I wonder to where it disappears. A streak of light that seems a jubilant cry of a star capable of flying over wide landscapes.

Jesus is sitting at the entrance of the cave and is speaking to the three disciples who are sat in a circle round Him. They must have lit a fire, because in the middle of them, some brands are still as bright as embers and they cast their ruddy glow on the four faces.

« Yes. Our stay is over. The last time it lasted forty days… And I would repeat that it was still winter up here… and I had no food. A little more difficult than this time, was it not? I know that you have suffered even now. The little food we had and I gave you was nothing, particularly for hungry young people. It was barely sufficient to prevent you from collapsing. And the water even less so. The heat is intense during the day. And you will say that it was not so in winter. But then there was a dry wind blowing from that

mountain top and it parched My lungs, and it rose from the plain loaded with desert dust and it dried more than this summer heat which can be assuaged by sucking the juice of those acidulous fruits that are almost ripe. The mountain in winter gave only wind and

frost-bitten herbs near bare acacias. I did not give you everything because I kept the last bread and cheese and the last flask of water for our way back… I know what My return journey was like, exhausted as I was in the desert solitude… Let us pick up our things and go. Tonight is even clearer than the night we came here. There is no moon. But light is pouring from the sky. Let us go. Remember this place. Remember how Christ prepared and how the apostles prepare. Let the apostles prepare as I teach them. »

They get up. Simon stirs the embers with a stick, and before scattering them with his foot, he rekindles the fire throwing some dry herbs on it, and from the flame he lights a branch of acacia and holds it up at the entrance of the cave, while Judas and John pick up mantles, bags and small leather flasks of which only one is still full. He then puts the branch out, rubbing it against the rock, he takes his satchel, puts on his mantle like all the rest, and ties it at his waist so that it may not hinder him in walking.

Without speaking, one behind the other, they go down a very steep path, putting to flight small animals grazing on the scanty grass not yet parched by the sun. It is a long and uncomfortable journey. At last they reach the plain. It is not easy to walk even there, where stones and stone splinters undermine their feet, sliding under them and hurting them also, because the thick dust of the path conceals them and it is therefore impossible to avoid them. Further, naked thorny bushes scratch them and catch the lower part of their garments. But they can walk faster.

High above, the stars are lovelier and lovelier.

They walk and walk for hours. The plain is more and more barren and depressing. Little scales sparkle in small crevices and holes of the ground. They look like dirty scales of diamond chips. John bends down to look at them.

« It is the salt of the subsoil which is saturated with them. It comes to the surface with the spring waters and then dries up. That is why life is impossible here. The Eastern Sea spreads its death for many miles around, through deep veins in the ground. Only where fresh spring waters counteract its effects, is it possible to find plants and ease » explains Jesus.

They go on walking. Jesus stops at the hollow rock where I saw Him tempted by Satan. « Let us stop here. Sit down. It will soon be daybreak. We have walked for six hours and you must be hungry, thirsty and tired. Take this. Eat and drink, sitting here, near Me, while I tell you something that you will repeat to your friends and to the world. » Jesus has opened His satchel and has pulled out

bread and cheese, which He cuts and hands out, and from His flask He pours out some water into a small jug which He hands round, too.

« Are You not eating, Master? »

« No, I will speak to you. Listen. Once a man asked Me whether I had ever been tempted. He asked Me whether I had ever committed sin, and whether, when tempted, I had ever given in. And he was surprised because, in order to resist temptation, I, the Messiah, had asked the Father for help, saying: "Father, lead Me not into temptation". »

Jesus speaks slowly, calmly as if He were relating an event with which none of them was acquainted… Judas lowers his head as if he were embarrassed. But the others are so intent on looking at Jesus, that they do not notice him.

Jesus goes on: « Now, My friends, you will learn something of which that man had only a faint idea. After My Baptism I came here: I was clean, but one is never clean enough with regard to God, and the humility in saying: "I am a man and a sinner" is already a baptism which makes the heart clean. I had been called "the Lamb of God" by the holy prophet who saw the Truth and saw the Spirit descend upon the Word and anoint Him with its chrism of love, while the voice of the Father filled the Heavens saying: "This is My beloved Son in Whom I am well pleased". You, John, were present when the Baptist repeated those words… After being baptised, although I was clean both by My nature and by appearance, I wanted to "prepare". Yes, Judas. Look at Me. May My eyes tell you what My mouth does not yet speak. Look at Me, Judas. Look at your Master, Who although was the Messiah, did not consider Himself superior to man, on the contrary, knowing He was the Man, He wanted to be so in everything, except in yielding to evil. Exactly so. »

Judas has now raised his head and looks at Jesus in front of him. The light of the stars causes Jesus' eyes to sparkle as if they were two stars fixed in a pale face.

« If one wants to prepare to be a teacher one must have been a pupil. I, as God, knew everything. My intelligence enabled Me to understand also the struggles of man, both by intellectual power and in an intellectual way, that is without any practical experience. But then some poor friend of Mine, some poor son of Mine, could have said to Me: "You do not know what it is to be a man and have senses and passions". And it would have been a fair reproach. I came here, or rather on that mountain, to prepare… not only for My mission… but also for temptation. See? I was tempted where you are now sitting. By whom? By a mortal being? No. His power would have been too limited. I was tempted by Satan himself.

I was exhausted. I had not eaten for forty days… But while I was engrossed in prayer, everything had been forgotten in the joy of speaking to God, rather than forgotten, it had been made endurable. I felt it as a discomfort of a material nature, confined to matter only… I then came back to the world… I was back in the ways of the world… And I felt the needs of those who are in the world. I was hungry. I was thirsty. I felt the biting cold of the desert night. My body was worn out with lack of rest, of a bed and with a long journey made in such a state of weariness that I could go no farther…

Because I am made of flesh too, My dear friends. Real flesh. And my flesh is subject to the weakness common to all the flesh. And, with My flesh, I have a heart. Yes, I took the first and second of the three parts that form man. I took the physical part with all its needs and the morals with their passions. And whilst, with My will, I subdued all the bad passions at birth, I let the holy passions grow like mighty age-old cedars, that is filial love, love for the fatherland, friendship, work, everything that is best and holy. And here I felt nostalgia for My far away Mother, here I felt the need of Her care for My human frailty, here I felt once again the pain of parting from the Only One Who loved Me with perfect love, here I realised what sorrow is laid aside for Me and I was grieved at Her sorrows, poor Mother, Who will have to shed so many tears for Her Son and because of the wickedness of men, that She will be left tearless. And here I experienced the weariness of the hero and of the ascetic who in an hour of forewarning realise the uselessness of their efforts… I cried… Sadness… a lure for Satan. It is not a sin to be sad in painful circumstances. It is a sin to go beyond sadness and fall into inertness and despair. But Satan comes at once when he sees anyone in spiritual languor.

He came. Dressed as a kind traveller. He always takes a kind appearance… I was hungry… and thirty years old. He offered to help Me. First he said to Me: "Tell these stones to become bread". But before… yes… even before, he spoke to Me about woman. Oh! He knows how to speak of her. He knows her very well. He corrupted her first, to make her his ally in corruption. I am not only the Son of God. I am Jesus, the workman of Nazareth. I said to that man, who was speaking to Me then, the one who asked Me whether I had experienced temptations and almost accused Me for being unjustly blessed, because I had not sinned: "The act subsides when satisfied. A rejected temptation does not fade away, but becomes stronger also because Satan instigates it". I resisted the temptation

both of lust of woman and hunger for bread. And you must know that Satan proposed woman to Me as the best ally to succeed in the world, and he was quite right, from a human point of view.

Temptation did not give up because of My remark: "Man does not live on his senses only" and he spoke to Me of My mission. He wanted to seduce the Messiah after failing with the young Man. And he incited Me to crush the unworthy ministers of the Temple with a miracle… A miracle, the fire of Heaven, is not to be bent to form a wicker wreath to crown ourselves… And we must not put God to the test, asking for miracles for human purposes. That is what Satan wanted. The reason mentioned by him was an excuse; the truth was: "Boast of being the Messiah", as he wanted to lead Me to another lust: the lust for pride.

He was not daunted by My reply: "You must not put the Lord your God to the test" and he circumvented Me with the third power of his nature: gold. Oh! gold. Bread is a great thing, and woman an even greater one for those longing for food or pleasure. To be acclaimed by the crowds is a very great thing for man. How many crimes are committed for these three things! But gold… gold! It is a key that opens, a circle that joins, it is the beginning and end of ninety-nine of human actions. For bread and a woman man becomes a thief. For power he becomes also a murderer. But for gold he becomes an idolator. The king of gold, Satan, offered Me his gold if I adored him. I pierced him with the eternal words: "You shall worship the Lord your God, and serve Him only".

It happened here. »

Jesus is now standing. He seems taller than usual in the flat nature surrounding Him, in the slightly phosphorescent light of the stars. Also the disciples get up. Jesus goes on speaking, staring intently at Judas.

« Then the angels of the Lord came… The Man had won the treble battle. The Man knew what it meant to be a man and had won. He was exhausted. The struggle had been more exhausting than the long fast… But the spirit was triumphant… I think that Heaven was startled at My becoming a perfect creature endowed with knowledge. I think that from that moment I got the power of working miracles. I was God. I had become the Man. Now, by defeating the animal nature connected with man's nature, I was the Man-God. And I am. And as God I am omnipotent. And as Man I am omniscient. Do as I did, if you want to do what I do. And do it in memory of Me.

That man was amazed at My asking the Father's help, and at My praying not to be led into temptation. That is, not to be left at the mercy of temptation beyond My strength. I think that that man will no longer be amazed, now that he knows. I ask you to do the same in My memory and to win as I did. And never doubt My nature of true Man and true God, seeing how strong I was in all the temptations of life, and how I won the battles of the five senses, of sensuality and of sentiments. Remember all that.

I promised to take you where it would be possible for you to know the Master… from the dawn of His day, a dawn which is as pure as the one which is now rising, to the noontide of His life. The noon which I left to go and meet My human evening… I said to one of you: "I also prepared"; you now see it is true. I thank you for your company in the return to the place of My birth and the place of My penance. My first contacts with the world had sickened and depressed Me. It is too ugly. My soul has now been nourished with the lion's marrow: the union with the Father in prayer and solitude. And I can go back to the world and take My cross upon Me once again, the first cross of the Redeemer: the cross of the contact with the world. With the world, in which there are too few souls called Mary, called John…

Now listen, and you in particular, John. We are going back towards My Mother and our friends. I beg you not to mention to My Mother the harshness which has been opposed to the love of Her Son. She would suffer too much. She will suffer so much because of man's cruelty… but do not let us give Her the chalice now. It will be so bitter when it is given to Her! So bitter that it will creep like poison into Her holy viscera and veins and will gnash them and freeze Her heart. Oh! Do not tell My Mother that Bethlehem and Hebron rejected Me like a dog! Have mercy on Her! You, Simon, are old and good, and thoughtful as you are, you will not speak, I know. You, Judas, are a Judaean, and will not speak out of patriotic pride. But you, John, are a Galilean, and young, do not commit a sin of pride, criticism and cruelty. Be silent. Later… later you will tell the rest what I now ask you be silent about. There is already so much to be said about Christ. Why add to it what is Satan's work against Christ? My dear friends, do you promise Me that? »

« Oh! Master! We do promise. Be certain of it. »

« Thank you. Let us go to that small oasis. There is a spring, a well full of cold water and there is shade and greenery. The road towards the river passes near it. We will find food and refreshment till evening. By starlight, we will reach the river, the ford. And we will wait for Joseph or join him if he is already back. Let us go. »

And they set out while the first pinkish hue in the sky, in the east, announces the rising of a new day.

81. At the Jordan Ford. Meeting with the Shepherds John, Matthias and Simeon.

18th January 1945.

I see the Jordan ford once again: the green road coasting the river on both banks, beaten by many travellers on account of its `lade. Lines of little donkeys come and go, as well as many people. On the bank of the river, three men are pasturing a few sheep.

Joseph is on the road, waiting, and he looks up and down.

Jesus appears in the distance, with His three disciples, at the junction of the river path with the main road. Joseph calls the shepherds, who lead the sheep on to the road, driving them along the grassy bank. They walk fast towards Jesus.

« I haven't got the courage… What shall I say to greet Him? »

« Oh! He is so good! Say: "Peace be with You". He always says that. »

« Yes, He… but we… »

« And what about me? I am not even one of His first worshippers, and He is so fond of me… oh! so fond! »

« Which one is it? »

« The tallest One, with fair hair. »

« Matthias, will we tell Him of the Baptist? »

« Of course we will! »

« Will He not think that we preferred the Baptist to Him? »

« No, Simeon. If He is the Messiah, He can see into the hearts of men, and in ours He will see that in the Baptist we were still looking for Him. »

« Yes, you are right. »

The two groups are now a few yards apart. Jesus is already smiling His indescribable smile. Joseph hastens his step. Also the sheep begin to run urged by the herdsmen.

« Peace be with you » says Jesus raising His arms as if He were embracing them. And He specifies: « Peace to you, Simeon, John and Matthias, faithful to Me, and faithful to John the Prophet! Peace to you, Joseph » and He kisses him on his cheeks. The other three are now on their knees. « Come, My friends. Under these trees, on the exposed river-bed and let us talk. »

They go down and Jesus sits on a large protruding root, the others on the ground. Jesus smiles and looks at them intently, one by one: « Let Me become familiar with your faces. Your souls are already known to Me, souls that seek and love what is good contrary to all worldly yearnings. Isaac, Elias and Levi send you their regards, and there are other greetings, from My Mother. Have You any news of the Baptist? »

The men, so far gagged by embarrassment, take heart. They find words at last: « He is still in jail. Our hearts tremble for him, because he is in the hands of a cruel man who is dominated by an infernal creature and is surrounded by a corrupted court. We love him… You know that we love him and that he deserves our love. After you left Bethlehem, we were persecuted by men… but we were distressed and disheartened because we had lost You, rather than by their hatred, and we were like trees uprooted by the wind. Then, after years of suffering, like a man, whose eyelashes have been stitched, endeavours to see the sun, but cannot, also because he is closed in a prison, but feels the warmth of the sun on his body, we felt that the Baptist was the man of God, foreseen by the Prophets to prepare the way to His Christ and we went to him. We said: "If the Baptist precedes Him, if we go to the Baptist, we will find Him." Because, my Lord, it was You we were looking for. »

« I know, and you found Me. And now I am with you. »

« Joseph told us that You came to the Baptist. But we were not there that day. Perhaps he had sent us somewhere. We serve him, in spiritual matters, when he asked us, with so much love, and we listened to him with love, although he was so severe, because he was not You - the Word - but he always spoke words of God. »

« I know. And do you know this man? » and He points to John.

« We saw him with the other Galileans in the crowds which were most faithful to the Baptist. And, if we are not mistaken, you are the one whose name is John, and of whom he used to say to us, his closest disciples: "Here: I am the first, he is the last. And then: he will be the first and I the last". But we never understood what he meant. »

Jesus turns round to His left side where John is and He draws him against His heart and with a most kind smile He explains: « He meant that he was the first to say: "Here is the Lamb" and that John here will be the last of the friends of the Son of man, to speak of the Lamb to the crowds; but that in the heart of the Lamb, John is the first, because he is dearer than any other man to the Lamb. That is what he meant. But when you see the Baptist - You will see him again, and you will serve him again until the predetermined hour - tell him that he is not the last in Christ's heart. Not so much because of the blood, as on account of his holiness, he is loved as much as John. And remember that. If the saint in his humility proclaims himself "last", the Word of God proclaims him equal to the disciple who is dear to Me.. Tell him that I love this disciple because he has the same name and because I find in him the signs of the Baptist, who prepares the souls for Christ. »

« We will tell him… But will we see him again? »

« Yes, you will. »

« Yes, Herod dare not kill him for fear of the people and at his court, which is full of greed and corruption, it would be easy to free him if we had a lot of money. But, although there is quite a lot - because friends have given a lot - there is still a lot missing. And we are afraid we will not be in time… and he may be killed. »

« How much do you think you need for the ransom? »

« Not for his ransom, Lord. He is hated too much by Herodias and she has too much control of Herod, to think of the possibility of a ransom. But I think that all the greedy people of the kingdom have gathered at Machaerus. Everybody is anxious to have a good time and stand out, from the ministers down to the servants. And to do that, they need money… We have also found who would let the Baptist out for a large sum of money. Perhaps also Herod would prefer that… because he is afraid. Not for any other reason. He is afraid of the people and afraid of his wife. In that way, he could please the people, and his wife could not accuse him of disappointing her. »

« And how much does that person want? »

« Twenty silver talents. But we have only twelve and a half. »

« Judas, you said that those jewels are beautiful. »

« Yes, beautiful and valuable. »

« How much will they be worth? I think you are an expert. »

« Yes, I am a good judge. Why do You want to know how much they are worth, Master? Do You want to sell them? Why? »

« Perhaps… Tell Me: how much will they be worth? »

« At least six talents, if they are sold well. »

« Are you sure? »

« Yes, Master. The necklace by itself, so big and heavy, of the purest gold, is worth at least three talents. I have examined it carefully. And also the bracelets… I don't know how Aglae's thin wrists could hold them. »

« They were her shackles, Judas. »

« That's true, Master… But so many would like to have such beautiful shackles! »

« Do you think so? Who? »

« Well… many people! »

« Yes, many who are human beings only by name… And do you know a possible buyer? »

« So, do You want to sell them? And is it for the Baptist? But look, it's cursed gold! »

« Oh! Human inconsistency! You have just said with evident desire, that many people would love to have that gold, and then you say it is cursed?! Judas, Judas!… It is cursed, indeed. But she said: "It will be sanctified if it is used for poor and holy people" and that is why she gave it, that who benefits by it, may pray for her poor soul that like the embryo of a future butterfly swells in the seed of her heart. Who is holier and poorer than the Baptist? He is equal to Elijah in his mission but greater than Elijah in holiness. He is poorer than I am. I have a Mother and a home… And when one has such things, and pure and holy as I have, one is never forlorn. He no longer has a home, and he has not got even the tomb of his mother. Everything has been violated and desecrated by human iniquity. So who is the buyer? »

« There is one in Jericho and there are many in Jerusalem. But the one in Jericho!!! He is a shrewd Levantine gold-beater, a usurer, a middleman, a pander, he is certainly a thief, probably a killer, he is definitely persecuted by Rome. He has changed his

name to Isaac, to be considered a Hebrew… But his real name is Diomedes. I know him very well… »

« Yes, we see that! » intervenes Simon Zealot, who speaks little, but notices everything. And he asks: « How come you know him so well? »

« Well… you know… In order to please certain mighty friends. I went to see him… and did some business… You know… we of the Temple… »

« I know… you do all sorts of jobs » Simon ends with cold irony. Judas flares up, but keeps silent.

« Will he buy? » asks Jesus.

« I think so. He has plenty money. Of course, one must be skilful in selling because the Greek is shrewd and if he realizes he is dealing with an honest person, with a nestling dove, he plucks him mercilessly. But if he has to deal with a vulture like himself… »

« You ought to go, Judas. You are the right man. You are as sly as a fox and as raptorial as a vulture. Oh! Forgive me, Master. I spoke before You! » says Simon Zealot again.

« I am of the same opinion, and I will therefore tell Judas to go. John, you will go with him. We will meet again at sunset, and the meeting place will be the market square. Go. And do your best. »

Judas gets up at once. John's eyes are imploring like a chastened puppy's. But Jesus is speaking to the shepherds and does not notice John's imploring look. And John sets out behind Judas.

« I would like to see you happy » says Jesus.

« You will always make us happy, Master. May God bless You for it. Is that man a friend of Yours? »

« Yes, he is. Do you think he should not be? »

The shepherd John lowers his head, and keeps silent. Simon, the disciple, speaks: « Only who is good, can, see. I am not good, and therefore I do not see what Bounty sees. I see the exterior. Who is good penetrates also into the interior. You, John, see as I do. But the Master is good… and sees… »

« What do you see in Judas, Simon? I want you to tell Me. »

« Well, when I look at him, I think of certain mysterious places which look like dens of wild beasts and malarial ponds. Only a huge tangle can be seen and one is frightened, and keeps clear… Instead… behind it there are turtle-doves and nightingales and the soil is rich in healthy waters and beneficial herbs. I want to believe that Judas is like that… I think he must be, because You chose him. And You know… »

« Yes, I know… There are many flaws in the heart of that man… But he has some good points. You saw that yourself in Bethlehem and in Kerioth. And his good points which are humanly good are to be raised to a spiritual goodness. Judas will then be as you would like him to be. He is young… »

« Also John is young… »

« And in your heart, you conclude that he is better. But John is John! Love poor Judas, Simon, I beg you.. If you love him… he will appear to be better. »

« I endeavour to love him, for Your sake. But he breaks all my efforts as if they were water canes… But, Master, there is only one law for me: to do what You want. I will therefore love Judas, although something within me shouts against him and towards myself. »

« What, Simon? »

« I do not know exactly what it is: something that resembles the cry of the night watchman… and says to me: "Do not sleep! Watch!" I do not know. That something has no name. But it is here… in me, against him. »

« Forget about it, Simon. Do not trouble to give it a definition. It is better not to know certain truths… and you might be mistaken. Leave it to your Master. Give Me your love, and you can be sure that it makes Me happy… »

And it all ends.

82. Judas Iscariot Tells of how He Sold Aglae's Jewels to Diomedes.

19th January 1945.

The market place in Jericho. It is not morning, but evening: a very warm summer evening at sunset. Of the morning market, there are only traces: remains of vegetables, heaps of excrement, straw fallen from donkeys' baskets and rags… All is covered with flies, and ferments in the heat of the sun and stinks disgustingly. The large square is empty. There are few passersby, some quarrelsome urchins throwing stones at the birds perched on the trees. Some women go to the fountain. Nothing else.

Jesus arrives from a side street, and looks round. He does not see anybody yet. He waits patiently, leaning against the trunk of a tree, and finds the opportunity of speaking to the boys about charity, that starts with God and from the Creator descends to all creatures.

« Do not be cruel. Why do you want to annoy the birds of the air? They have their nests up there, and their little ones. They do not harm anyone. They give us their chirping and cleanliness, because they eat the rubbish left by men and the insects that are harmful to crops and fruit. Why wound them, or kill them, depriving the little ones of their fathers and mothers, or the latter of their little ones? Would you be glad if a wicked man came to your house and destroyed it, or killed your parents, or took you away from them? No, you would not be happy. Well, then, why do to these innocent creatures what you would not like done to yourselves? How will you, refrain one day from doing harm to men if, children as you are now, you harden your hearts, and hurt defenceless, kind little creatures such as these birds? Do you not know that the Law says: "Love your neighbour as yourself"? Who does not love his neighbour does not even love God. And who does not love God, how can he go to His House and pray to Him? God might say to him, and he does say it in Heaven: "Go away. I do not know you. You, My son? No, you are not. You do not love your brothers, you do not respect in them the Father Who created them, so you are not a brother and a son, but an illegitimate child: a stepson to God, a stepbrother to your brothers". See how the Eternal Lord loves? In the cold months, He makes His little birds find the barns full of hay, so that they may nest there. In the hot months, He protects them from the sun with the foliage of trees. In winter the corn in the fields is just covered with earth and it is easy for them to find the seed and nourish themselves. In summer they quench their thirst with the juice of fruits, and they build solid, warm nests with hay and the wool left on brambles by sheep. And He is the Lord. You, little men, created by Him like the little birds, and therefore their brothers in creation, why do you want to differ from Him and think that you can be cruel to these little animals? Be merciful with everybody, not depriving anyone of what is due to one: both amongst men and animals, your servants, your friends and God… »

« Master? » calls Simon « Judas is coming. »

«… and God will be merciful with you, and will give you everything you need, as He does with these innocent creatures. Go and take the peace of God with you. »

Jesus makes His way through the boys and some of the adults who had joined them, and goes towards Judas and John, who are coming from another street. Judas is jubilant. John smiles at Jesus… but does not seem very happy.

« Come, come, Master. I think I have done well. But come with me. It is not possible to speak here in the street. »

« Where, Judas? »

« To the hotel. I have already booked four rooms… oh! nothing special, don't worry. Only to rest in a bed after so much discomfort in all this heat, and to have a meal like men and not like birds Perched on branches, and also to talk in peace. I sold the jewels very well, didn't I, John? »

John nods in assent but not very enthusiastically. But Judas is so Pleased with his work that he does not notice either that Jesus is not very happy at the prospect of comfortable lodgings or that John is even less enthusiastic about his transactions. And he goes on: « As I had sold at a higher price than I had estimated, I said: "It is fair that I should take a small amount, one hundred coins, for our beds and meals. If we are exhausted, although we always had something to eat, Jesus must be completely worn out". I am obliged to ensure that my Master is not taken ill! An obligation Of love, because You love me, and I love You… There is room also for you and the sheep » he says to the shepherds. « I have seen to everything. »

Jesus does not say one word. He follows him with the others.

They arrive in a smaller square. Judas says: « See that house without any windows opening on the street and with such a narrow little door that it looks like a fissure? It's Diomedes, the goldbeater's house. It looks like a poor house, doesn't it? But there is enough gold in there to buy the whole of Jericho and… Ah! Ah! » Judas laughs maliciously… « amongst all that gold many jewels and plates can be found, as well as other things, belonging to the most influential people in Israel. Diomedes… oh! they all pretend they do not know him, whereas they are all acquainted with him: from the Herodians down to… to everybody. On that plain, smooth wall, one could write: "Mystery and Secret". If those walls could speak! Then you would not be scandalised at the way I negotiated this business, John! You… you would die, choked with amazement and scruples. By the way, listen, Master. Never send me again with John on certain business. He almost ruined everything. He cannot take a hint, he cannot deny things, whereas with shrewd men like Diomedes one must be quick and outspoken. »

John grumbles: « You were saying certain things. So unforeseen and so… so… Yes, Master. Do not send me again. I am only good at being kind and loving… I… »

« It is most unlikely that we shall ever need such transactions again » answers Jesus, very seriously.

« That is the hotel over there. Come, Master. I will do the talking, because I arranged everything. »

They go in, and Judas speaks to the landlord, who has the sheep taken to a stable, while he himself takes the guests into a little room where there are two mat-beds, some chairs and a table already laid. He then withdraws.

« I will tell you what happened at once, Master, while the shepherds are settling the sheep. »

« I am listening. »

« John can say whether I am telling the truth. »

« I do not doubt it. No oath or witness is required among honest men. Tell Me. »

« We arrived in Jericho at midday. We were wet with perspiration, like pack-animals. I did not want to give Diomedes the impression that I was in urgent need. So first of all, I came here, I refreshed myself, I put on clean clothes, and I got John to do the same. Oh! He would not hear of having his hair sorted and perfumed. But I had made out my plans, on my way here!… When it was almost evening, I said: "Let's go". By that time, we were well rested and fresh like two wealthy people on a pleasure trip. When we were about to arrive at Diomedes' abode, I said to John: "Always agree to what I say. Do not contradict me, and be quick in taking a hint". But I should have left him outside! He did not help at all. On the contrary… Fortunately, I am as quick as two people, and I managed.

The exciseman was coming out of his house. "Very well!" I said. "If he is coming out, we will find the money and what I want to make a comparison". Because the exciseman, being a usurer and a thief like all his kind, always has necklaces taken with threats and usury from the poor people whom he taxes more than is fair, in order to have plenty to spend in feasting and women. And he is very friendly with Diomedes, who buys and sells gold and flesh… We went in after I had made myself known. I said: we went in. Because there is a difference between going into the entrance hall, where he pretends to be doing an honest job, and going down into the underground room, where he does his real business. One must be well known to him to be introduced there. As soon as he saw me, he said: "Do you want to sell more gold? We are going through hard times, and I have little money". His usual old story. I replied: "I have not come to sell, but to buy. Have you any jewels for a lady? But they must be beautiful, valuable, heavy, in pure gold!"

Diomedes was amazed. And he asked me: "Do you want a woman?" "Never mind that" I replied to him. "They are not for me. They are for this friend of mine who is getting married and wishes to buy the jewels for his beloved bride".

At this point, John began to behave like a child. Diomedes, who was looking at him, saw him turn purple, and being a filthy old man, he said: "Ah! the boy has only heard his bride being mentioned, and he is in heat. Is your woman very beautiful?" he asked. I kicked John to rouse him, and to make him understand not to behave foolishly. But he replied "Yes" as if he had been strangled and Diomedes became suspicious. Then I spoke: "Whether she is beautiful or not is none of your business, old man. She will never be one of the women on account of whom you will go to hell. She is an honest virgin, and will soon be an honest wife. Show us your gold. I am his best man and it is my task to help the young man… I am a Judaean citizen". "He is a Galilean, is he not?" Your hair always gives you away. "Is he rich? " "Yes, very" .

We then went downstairs, and Diomedes opened his coffers and treasure-chests. But tell the truth, John. Did we not seem to be in Heaven with all the jewels and all the gold? Necklaces, wreaths,

bracelets, ear-rings, hairnets of gold and precious stones, hairpins, buckles, rings… Ah! what magnificence! With much haughtiness, I picked a necklace more or less like Aglae's, and rings, buckles, bracelets, everything like I had in my bag, and the same quantity. Diomedes was surprised and he kept asking: "What! Some more? But who is this man? And who is the bride? A princess?" When I had everything I wanted, I said: "The price?".

Oh! What a string of preparatory moaning on the times, taxes, risks, thieves! And another string of assurances on his honesty! And then his reply: "Just because it's you, I'll tell you the truth. Without any exaggeration. But not even one penny less. I want twelve silver talents". "Thief!" I said. And I went on: "Let's go, John. In Jerusalem we will find someone who is not such a thief as he is" and I pretended I was going out. He ran after me. "My great friend, my beloved friend, come, listen to your poor servant. I cannot accept less. It's impossible. Look. I'll make an effort at the cost of ruining myself. I'll do it because you have always honoured me with your friendship, and you made me do good business. Eleven talents, there you are. That is what I would pay if I had to buy that gold from someone starving. Not a penny less. It would be like bleeding my veins". Is that not what he said? He made me laugh and he disgusted me at the same time.

When I saw he was quite determined on the price, I pulled a fast one on him. "Dirty old rascal. Bear in mind that I do not want to buy, on the contrary, I want to sell. This is what I want to sell. Look. It is as beautiful as yours. Gold from Rome in the latest fashion. It will sell like hot cakes. You can have it for eleven talents. Exactly what you asked for yours. You fixed the price, and you pay". You should have heard him. "This is treachery! You betrayed the esteem I held you in! You want to ruin me! I cannot pay all that!" he shouted. "You appraised its value. So pay!" "I cannot". "Look, I'll take it to somebody else". "No, my friend, don't", and he stretched out his hooked hands towards Aglae's heap of gold. "Well, then, pay: I should ask for twelve talents. But I will be satisfied with the last price you asked". "I cannot". "Usurer! Look, I have a witness here and I can report you as a thief… " and I mentioned other virtues of his which I will not repeat on account of this boy…

At last, as I was anxious to sell and settle the matter quickly, I whispered something in his ear, something that I will not keep… What weight has a promise made to a thief? And I clenched the bargain at ten and a half. We came away while he was crying and offering his friendship and… women. And John was almost in tears. What does it matter if they think you are a depraved man! Nothing, providing you are not. Don't you know that the world is like that, and that you are a failure in the world? A young man who has not had any experience of women? Who do you think will believe you? Or if they believe you, well! I would not like them to think of me what they may think of you, if they believe you do not desire women.

Here, Master. Count them Yourself. I had a pile of coins. But I went to the exciseman and I said to him: "Take this rubbish and give me the talents Isaac gave you". That was the last bit of information I got after closing the matter. But the last thing I said to Isaac-Diomedes was: "Remember that the Judas of the Temple exists no more. Now I am the disciple of a holy man. Pretend therefore that you never met me, if your life is dear to you". And I was on the point of wringing his neck because he gave me a sharp answer. »

« What did he say to you? » asks Simon, coldly.

« He said: "You, the disciple of a holy man? I will never believe it, or I will soon see your holy man here, asking for a woman". He said: "Diomedes is an old disgrace of the world. But you are a new one. And I may still change, because I became what I am when I was old. But you will not change. You were born like that". Filthy old man! He denies Your power, see? »

« And being a good Greek, he speaks the truth. »

« What do you mean, Simon? Are you referring to me? »

« No. I am referring to everyone. He is a man who knows gold and men's hearts the same way. He is a thief, the most filthy of all the filthy trades. But one perceives in him the philosophy of the great Greeks. He knows man, the animal with seven sinful jaws, the octopus that suffocates goodness, honesty, love and many other things, both in itself and in others. »

« But he does not know God. »

« And would you like to teach him? »

« Yes, I would. Why? It's the sinners that need to know God. »

« True. But… the master must know Him to teach Him. »

« And do I not know Him? »

« Peace, My friends. The shepherds are coming. Do not let us upset their souls with our quarrels. Have you counted the money? That is enough. Fulfill all your actions as you fulfilled this one, and I repeat it once again, in future, if you can, do not tell lies, not even to accomplish a good deed. »

The shepherds come in.

« My friends. Here are ten and a half talents. The amount is short of one hundred coins which Judas has kept for the hotel expenses. Take them. »

« Are You giving them all? » asks Judas.

« Yes, every penny. I do not want a farthing of that money. We have the offerings of God and of those who honestly seek God… and we will never lack what is necessary. Believe Me. Take the money and be happy, as I am, for the Baptist. Tomorrow, you will go towards his prison. Two of you: that is John and Matthias. Simeon and Joseph will go to Elias to report to him and to be taught for the

future. Elias knows. Later, Joseph will come back with Levi. The meeting place, in ten days time, is at the Fish Gate in Jerusalem, at sunrise. And now, let us eat and rest. Tomorrow, at dawn, I will leave with My disciples. I have nothing else to tell you for the time being. Later, you will hear from Me. » And everything fades out while Jesus is breaking the bread.

83. Jesus Cries on account of Judas and Simon Zealot Comforts Him.

20th January 1945.

The country where Jesus is, is very fertile. There are magnificent orchards and vineyards, with huge bunches of grapes beginning to turn gold or ruby. Jesus is sitting in an orchard, and is eating some fruit offered to Him by a farmer.

Perhaps He has just finished speaking, because the man says to Him: « It's a pleasure for me, Master, to quench Your thirst. Your disciple had spoken to us of Your wisdom, nevertheless, we were astonished when we listened to You. Close as we are to the Holy City, we often go there to sell our fruit and vegetables, and we then go up to the Temple and listen to the rabbis. But they do not speak as You do. We used to come away saying: "If that is so, who will be saved?" With You, it is entirely different! Oh! We seem to be so light-hearted! Although adults, we feel like children in our hearts. I am a… rough man and I am not good at making myself understood. But I am sure You understand me! »

« Yes, I do. You mean that, although you have an adult's knowledge and maturity after listening to the Word of God, You feel simplicity, faith and purity revive in your heart, as if you were a child once again, without fault or malice, but with so much faith, as when you were taken to the Temple for the first time by your mother, or you prayed on her knees. That is what you mean. »

« Yes, that, just that. You are fortunate because you are always with Him » he then says to John, Simon and Judas who are sitting on a low wall, eating juicy figs. And he ends saying: « And I am honoured because You were my guest for one night. I am not afraid of any misfortune in my house, because You have blessed it. »

Jesus replies: « A blessing is efficacious and lasting if the souls of men are faithful to the Law of God and to My doctrine. Otherwise its grace-giving ceases. And it is only fair. Because if it is true that God grants sunshine and fresh air to the good and to the bad, that they may live, and that they may become better if they are good, and they may be converted if they are bad, it is also just that the

Father's protection should turn elsewhere as a punishment for the wicked, to remind them of God, by means of some pain. »

« Is pain not always evil? »

« No, My friend. It is evil from a human point of view, but from a supernatural one it is good. It increases the merits of just people, who accept it without despairing or rebelling and they offer it, as they offer themselves with resignation, as a sacrifice to expiate their own imperfections and the faults of the world, and it is a redemption for those who are not good. »

« It is so difficult to suffer! » says the farmer, who has been joined by his relatives, about ten people in all, adults and children.

« I know that man finds it difficult. And knowing that he would find it so difficult, the Father had not given His children any sorrow. It came with sin. But how long does sorrow last on the earth? in the life of a man? A short time. It is always short, even if it lasts a whole lifetime. Now I say: is it not better to suffer for a short time rather than for ever? Is it not better to suffer here than in Purgatory? Consider that time there is multiplied a thousand times to one. Oh! I solemnly tell you: you ought not to curse pain, but bless it, and you should call it "grace" and "mercy". »

« Oh! Your words, Master! They are as pleasant to us as honeyed water from a cool amphora is to a man parched with thirst in summer. Are You really going away tomorrow, Master? »

« Yes, I am going tomorrow. But I will come back again. To thank you for what you have done for Me and My friends, and to ask you for some more bread and a rest. »

« You will always find them here, Master. »

A man with a donkey laden with vegetables comes near.

« Here I am. If your friend wishes to go… My son is going to Jerusalem for the big Parasceve market. »

« Go, John. You know what you have to do. In four days' time we will meet again. My peace be with you. » Jesus embraces John and kisses him. Simon does the same.

« Master » says Judas. « If You will allow me, I would like to go with John. I am anxious to see a friend of mine. He goes to Jerusalem every Sabbath. I would go with John as far as Bethphage and then I will proceed on my own… He is a friend of our family… You know… my mother told me… »

« I have not asked you any question, My friend. »

« It breaks my heart having to leave You. But in four days' time I will be with You once again. And I will be so faithful that I will even bore You. »

« You may go. In four days' time, at dawn, be at the Fish Gate. Goodbye and may God watch over you. »

Judas kisses the Master and goes near to the little donkey that begins to trot along the dusty road.

It is evening and the country becomes silent. Simon watches the peasants irrigating their fields.

Jesus has not moved from the place where He was sitting. He then gets up, goes round to the back of the house, and walks along the orchard. He wants to be alone. He goes as far as a thicket of huge pomegranate trees and low bushes, which I think must be gooseberries. But I am not sure, because there are no berries on them and I am not familiar with the leaves of these plants. Jesus hides behind the thicket. He kneels down. He prays… and then He bends down with His face on the ground, on the grass and He weeps. I realise that He is crying because of His deep, interrupted sighs. A disheartened crying, without sobs, but so sad.

Some time passes thus. It is now twilight. But it is not yet so dark as to prevent seeing. And in the faint light Simon's disfigured but honest face suddenly appears above a bush. He looks round for something and sees the crouched figure of the Master, completely covered by His dark blue mantle which confuses Him with the dark ground. Only His fair hair and His hands joined in prayer catch the eye: His hands protrude above His head which rests on His wrists. Simon looks at Him with his large kind eyes. He understands that Jesus is sad because of His sighing and he utters: « Master », with his thick almost purple lips.

Jesus looks up.

« You are crying, Master? Why? May I come near You? » Simon's expression is one of astonishment and sorrow. He is definitely not a handsome man. In addition to his disfigured features and his dark olive complexion, he bears the deep bluish marks of the scars caused by his disease. But his glance is so gentle that his ugliness disappears.

« Come, Simon, My friend. »

Jesus is sitting on the grass. Simon sits beside Him.

« Why are You sad, Master? I am not John and I am not capable of giving You what John gives you. But I would like to give You every possible comfort, and I am only sorry that I am not able to do so. Tell me. Have I displeased You these last few days to the extent that it depresses You to stay with me? »

« No. My good friend. You have never displeased Me since the first moment I saw you. And I think you will never cause Me to shed tears. »

« Well, then, Master? I am not worthy of Your confidence. But, on account of my age, I could be Your father and You know how anxious I have always been to have children… Allow me to caress You as if You were my son and let me be a father and mother to You in this hour of pain. It is Your Mother that You are in need of to forget so many things… »

« Oh! Yes! It is My Mother! »

« Well, while waiting to have comfort in Her, grant Your servant the joy of consoling You. You are crying, Master, because someone has displeased You. For several days Your face has been like the sun darkened by clouds. I have been watching You. Your goodness hides the wound, that we may not hate him who wounds You. But the wound is a painful and abhorrent one. But tell me, my Lord: why do You not remove the source of Your pain? »

« Because it would be useless from a human point of view and it would not be charitable. »

« Ah! You are aware that I am speaking of Judas! It is because of him that You are suffering. How can You, the Truth, tolerate that liar? He lies shamelessly. He is more deceitful than a fox and more closed than a rock. He has now gone away. What for? How many friends has he got? I am sorry to leave You. But I would like to follow him and see… Oh! My Jesus! That man… send him away, my Lord. »

« It is useless. What is to be, shall be. »

« What do You mean? »

« Nothing special. »

« You allowed him to go with pleasure, because You were disgusted with his behaviour at Jericho. »

« It is true, Simon. I tell you once again: what is to be, shall be. And Judas is part of this future. He is to be there, too. »

« But John told me that Simon Peter is very frank and full of ardour… Will he suffer Judas? »

« He must stand him. Also Peter is destined for a part, and Judas is the canvas on which he must weave his part, or, if you prefer so, Judas is the school where Peter will learn more than with anyone else. Also idiots are capable of being good with John and understanding souls like John's. But it is difficult to be good with people like Judas, and to understand souls like Judas' and to be a doctor and priest for them. Judas is your living teaching. »

« Ours? »

« Yes. Yours. The Master will not be on the earth for ever. He will leave after eating the hardest bread and drinking the sourest wine. But you will stay to continue Me… and you must know. Because the world does not end with the Master. It will last longer, until the final return of Christ and the final judgement of man. And I solemnly tell you that for every John, Peter, Simon, James, Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Thomas, there are at least seven Judases. And many, many more!… »

Simon is thoughtful and silent. He then says: « The shepherds are good. Judas scorns them. But I love them. »

« I love them and praise them. »

« They are simple souls, such as You like. »

« Judas has lived in town. »

« His only excuse. But there are many people who have lived in towns, and yet… When will You come to my friend? »

« Tomorrow, Simon. And I will come with pleasure, because we are by ourselves, just you and I. I believe he is a learned and experienced man, like you. »

« And he suffers a lot… In his body and even more in his heart. Master… I would like to ask You a favour: if he does not speak to You of his grief, please do not ask him any question about his family. »

« I will not. I am on the side of those who suffer, but I do not force anybody's confidence. Tears deserve respect. »

« And I did not respect them… But I felt so sorry for You… »

« You are My friend and you have already given a name to My sorrow. I am an unknown Rabbi for your friend. When he knows Me… then… Let us go. It is dark. Do not let us keep our tired guests waiting. To-morrow at dawn we will go to Bethany. »

Jesus then says:

« My little John, how many times have I cried with My face on the ground because of men! And you would like to suffer less than I did?

Also amongst you, good people are in the proportion that existed between good people and Judas. And the better one is, the more one suffers. But also for you it is necessary to learn by studying Judas, and I say that particularly for those who are responsible for the spiritual care of souls. Each of you, priests, is a "Peter". And you have to forgive and retain. But how much power of observation you must have, how much union with God, what great pains you must take and how many comparisons with the method of the Master you must make, in order to be a priest as it is your duty to be!

Some people may think that what I am saying is useless, human, impossible. They are the usual people who deny the human phases of Jesus' life and they make of Me a being so remote from human life as to be only a divine being. What happens then to the most holy Humanity, to the sacrifice of the Second Person in becoming flesh? Oh! I was truly a Man amongst men. I was the Man. And that is why I suffered in seeing the traitor and ungrateful people. That is why I rejoiced on account of those who loved Me or were converted to Me. That is why I shuddered and cried before Judas' spiritual corpse. I shuddered and cried before My dead friend. But I knew that I would call him back to life and I rejoiced seeing his soul already in Limbo. Here… I had the Demon in front of Me. And I will say no more.

Follow Me, John. Let us give men also this gift. And then… Blessed are those who listen to the Word of God and strive to do

what it says. Blessed are those who want to know Me in order to love Me. In them and to them I shall be a blessing. »

84. Jesus Meets Lazarus at Bethany.

21st January 1945.

It is a very clear summer dawn. Rather than dawn, it is early morning, because the sun is already above the horizon and is rising higher and higher smiling at the charming earth. Every stem is sparkling with dew. All the night stars seem to have turned into gold and gem dust for all the stems and all the leaves; even for the stones strewn on the ground, the silicious chips of which, wet with dew, seem diamond powder or gold dust.

Jesus and Simon are walking along a little road which departs from the main one at a sharp angle like a V. They are going towards magnificent orchards and fields of flax as tall as a man, almost ready to be cut. Other fields, farther away, show only large bright red spots of poppies amongst the yellow stubble.

« We are already in the property of my friend. You can see, Master, that the distance was within the prescription of the Law. I would never take the liberty of deceiving You. Behind that apple orchard there is the garden wall and the house. I made You come along this short cut to be within the prescribed mile. »

« Your friend is very wealthy! »

« Yes, very. But he is not happy. He owns property also elsewhere. »

« Is he a Pharisee? »

« His father was not. He… is very observant. I told You: a true Israelite. »

They walk a little farther. There is a high wall, and beyond it, trees and trees, with the house just emerging through them. There is a rise in the ground here, which, however, does not allow one to see the garden, so beautiful that we would call it a park.

They go round the corner. The wall runs level and from its top entwined branches of roses and sweet smelling jasmins hang down, splendid in their dewy corollas. There is the heavy wrought iron gate. Simon knocks with the heavy bronze knocker.

« It is too early to go in, Simon » remarks Jesus.

« Oh! My friend gets up at sunrise, as he finds comfort only in his garden or in books. Night is a torture for him. Please do not delay further to give him Your joy. »

A servant opens the gate.

« Good morning, Aseus. Tell your master that Simon Zealot has come with his Friend. »

The servant runs away after letting them in, saying: « Your servant greets you. Come in, Lazarus' house is open to his friends. »

Simon, who is familiar with the place, does not go to the central avenue, but he turns along a path running in the direction of a jasmin bower between rose hedges.

Shortly afterwards Lazarus comes forward from the bower. He is thin and pale, as I have always seen him, and tall; his short hair is neither thick nor curly, while his little sparse beard is confined to the lower part of his chin. He is wearing a snow white linen garment, and walks with difficulty like one suffering from leg trouble.

When he sees Simon he waves His hand affectionately and then, as best as he can, he runs towards Jesus and throws himself on his knees, bending down to the ground to kiss the hem of Jesus' tunic, saying: « I am not worthy of so much honour. But since Your holiness stoops to my misery, come, my Lord, come in and be the Master in my poor house. »

« Rise, My friend. And receive My peace. »

Lazarus gets up and kisses Jesus' hands and looks at Him with veneration not devoid of curiosity. They walk towards the house.

« How anxiously have I waited for You, Master! Every morning, at dawn, I would say: "He will come today", and every evening I said: "I have not seen Him today, either". »

« Why were you expecting Me so anxiously? »

« Because… whom are we in Israel expecting, but You? »

« And do you believe that I am the Expected One? »

« Simon has never lied, neither is he a boy that gets excited over nothing. Age and sorrow have made him as mature as a wise man. In any case… even if he had not recognised Your true nature, Your deeds would have spoken and said that You are a "Saint". Who accomplishes the deeds of God, must be a man of God. And You accomplish them. And You do things in a way that says how truly You are the Man of God. My friend came to You because of the fame of Your miracles and he received a miracle. And I know that Your way is strewn with miracles. Why, then, not believe that You are the Expected One? Oh! It is so sweet to believe what is good! We have to feign to believe as good, many things which are not good, for peace sake, because it would be useless to change them; many dubious words that seem adulation, praise, kindness of heart, and instead are sarcasm and blame, poison concealed by honey, we must pretend we believe them, although we know they are poison, blame, sarcasm… we must do so because… it is not possible to do otherwise, and we are weak against a whole world which is strong, and we are alone against a whole world which is hostile to us… why, then, should we have difficulty in believing what is good? On the other hand the time is ripe and the signs of the time are here. What might still be missing to make belief certain and beyond all possible doubt, should be supplied by our anxiety to believe and to

appease our hearts in the certainty that the expectation is finished and that the Redeemer has come, the Messiah is here… He Who will give peace to Israel, and to the children of Israel, Who will let us die without anguish, knowing that we have been redeemed, and will enable us to live without that nostalgic feeling for our dead ones… Oh! the dead! Why mourn their death, if not because, as they have no longer any children, they have not yet the Father and God? »

« Has your father been dead long? »

« Three years, and my mother seven… but I no longer lament their deaths… I also would like to be where I hope they are awaiting Heaven. »

« In which case you would not have the Messiah as your guest. »

« That is true. Now I am in a better position than they are, because I have You… and my heart calms down because of this joy. Come in, Master. Grant me the honour of making my house Yours. Today is the Sabbath and I cannot invite friends to honour You… »

« Neither do I wish that. Today I am all for Simon's friend and Mine. »

They go into a beautiful hall, where some servants are ready to receive them. « Please follow them » says Lazarus. « You will be able to refresh yourselves before the morning meal. » And while Jesus and Simon go into another room, Lazarus gives instructions to the servants. I can see that the house belongs to wealthy people and it is also a very refined one…

… Jesus drinks some milk, which Lazarus insists on serving Him personally, before sitting at the table for the morning meal.

I hear Lazarus addressing Simon and saying to him: « I have found the man who is willing to purchase your property, and to pay the price which your agent fixed as a fair one. He will not deduct one drachma. »

« But is he willing to comply with my conditions? »

« Yes, he is. He accepts everything, providing he gets the property. And I am happy because at least I know who my neighbour is. However, as you do not want to be present at the transaction, so he also wishes to remain unknown to you. And I would ask you to yield to his request. »

« I see no reason why I should not. You, my friend, will take my place… Whatever you do, is well done. It is enough for me that my faithful servant is not put out… Master, I am selling, and as far as I am concerned, I am happy that I have nothing more that may tie me to anything which is not Your service. But I have an old faithful servant, the only one left after my misfortune and, as I have already told You, he has always helped me during my isolation, looking after my property, as if it were his own, nay, with the help of Lazarus, passing it off as his own, in order to save it and thus subsidise me. Now it would not be fair if I should leave him homeless, now that he is old. I have decided that a small house, near the boundary of the property, should be his and that part of the money should be given to him for his future maintenance. Old people, You know, are like ivy: having lived always in one place, they suffer too much being torn away from it. Lazarus wanted my servant with him, because he is good. But I preferred thus. The old man will not suffer so much… »

« You are good, too, Simon. If everybody were as just as you are, My mission would be easier… » remarks Jesus.

« Do You find the world averse, Master? » asks Lazarus.

« The world?… No. The strength of the world: Satan. If he were not the master of men's hearts and did not hold them in his possession, I would not find any resistance. But Evil is against Good, and I have to defeat evil in every man to put good into them… and they are not all willing… »

« It is true. They are not willing! Master: what words do You use to convert and convince those who are sinful? Words of severe reproach, like the ones that fill the history of Israel against guilty people, and the Precursor is the last to use them, or words of mercy? »

« I use love and mercy. Believe Me, Lazarus, a loving glance has more power on those who have fallen, than a curse. »

« And if love is mocked at? »

« One must insist again. Insist to the very utmost. Lazarus, do you know those lands where quicksands swallow unwary people? »

« Yes, I do. I have read about them, because in my situation I read a lot, both out of enthusiasm and to pass the long sleepless hours at night. I know there are some in Syria and in Egypt, as well as some near the Chaldeans. And I know that they are like suckers. They suck what they catch. A Roman says they are the mouths of Hell, where pagan monsters live. Is that true? »

« No, it is not true. They are only special formations of the earth. Olympus has nothing to do with them. People will stop believing in Olympus, and they will still exist, and the progress of mankind will only be able to give a more truthful explanation of the fact, but will not eliminate it. Now I say to you: since you read about them, you may also have read how a person who has fallen into them can be saved. »

« Yes, by means of a rope thrown to the person, or by means of a pole or even a branch. Sometimes a small thing is sufficient to give a sinking man the minimum support to hold on to, and in addition, the necessary calm, without struggling, to await rescue. »

« Well. A sinner, a man possessed, is one who has been swallowed by a deceitful soil, the surface of which is covered with flowers, whereas underneath it is quicksand. Do you think that if a man knew what it means to give Satan the possession of even an atom of himself, he would do it? But he does not know… and after… Either the astonishment and the poison of Evil paralyse him, or drive him mad and to avoid the remorse of being lost he struggles, he clings to other sands, he stirs up huge waves with his rash movements, and thus hastens his own end. Love is the rope, the wire, the branch mentioned by you. We must insist, insist… until it is caught. A word… forgiveness… a forgiveness greater than the fault… just to stop the sinking and await God's assistance. Lazarus, do you know the power of forgiveness? It brings God to assist the rescuer… Do you read much? »

« Yes, I do. But I do not know whether I do the right thing. My disease and… and other things have deprived me of many of the delights of men… and now, I have but the passion for flowers and books… For plants and also for horses… I know that I am criticised for it. But how can I go to my estate in this condition (and he uncovers two huge legs all bandaged up) on foot or riding a mule? I must use a cart, and a fast one. That is why I bought some horses, of which I am now very fond, I admit. But if You tell me that that is wrong… I will have them sold. »

« No, Lazarus. These are not corrupting things. What upsets the soul and drives away from God is cause of corruption. »

« Now, Master. What I would like to know is this. I read a lot. I have but this comfort. I like to learn… I think that after all it is better to know than to do wrong, it is better to read than to do other things. But I do not read only our pages. I like to learn about the world of other peoples and I am attracted by Rome and Athens. Now, I am aware of the great evil that befell Israel when she became corrupted by the Assyrians and the Egyptians and of the great harm done to us by Hellenistic governments. I do not know whether a man can do himself the same harm that Judas did himself and us, his children. What is Your opinion on the matter? I am anxious to be taught by You, as You are not a rabbi, but the wise and divine Word. »

Jesus stares at him for a few seconds, His glance is penetrating and distant at the same time. He seems to pierce Lazarus' opaque body and scrutinise his heart and penetrating even further, He appears to see… I wonder what… At last He speaks: « Are you upset by what you read? Does it detach you from God and His Law? »

« No, Master. On the contrary, it urges me to make comparisons between our true God and pagan falseness. I make comparisons and I meditate on the glories of Israel, her just people, the Patriarchs, the Prophets, and the questionable figures of other peoples' histories. I compare our philosophy, if we can call so the Wisdom that speaks in our sacred texts, with the poor Greek and Roman philosophies which contain sparks of fire, but not the blaze that burns and shines in the books of our Wise Men. And after, with greater veneration, I bow down with my soul to adore our God Who speaks in Israel through deeds, people and our books. »

« Well, then, continue to read… It will help you to understand the pagan world… Continue. You may continue. There is no ferment of evil or of spiritual gangrene in you. You, therefore, may read without any fear. The love you have for your God makes sterile the profane germ, that reading might spread in you. In all man's actions there is the possibility of good and of evil. It depends on how they are accomplished. Love is not a sin, if one loves in a holy way. Work is not a sin, if one works when it is the right time. To earn is not a sin, if one is satisfied with what is honest. To educate oneself is not a sin, providing the education does not kill the idea of God in us. Whereas it is a sin to serve also at the altar, if one does it for one's own benefit. Are you convinced, Lazarus? »

« Yes, Master. I asked other people the same question and they scorned me… But You give me light and peace. Oh! If everybody heard You! Come, Master. Amongst the jasmins there is a cool breeze and silence. It is sweet to rest under their cool shade awaiting the evening. »

They go out and it all finishes.

85. Jesus Goes Back to Jerusalem, and Listens to Judas Iscariot in the Temple and then Goes to Gethsemane.

22nd January 1945.

Jesus is with Simon in Jerusalem. They make their way through a crowd of vendors and little donkeys that look like a procession in the street, and while doing so Jesus says: « Let us go up to the Temple before going to Gethsemane. We will pray the Father in His House. »

« Only that, Master? »

« Only that. I cannot stay. Tomorrow at dawn there is the meeting at the Fish Gate, and if the crowd should insist, how could I be free to go there? I want to see the other shepherds. I will send them, as true shepherds, throughout Palestine, that they may gather the sheep together and the Owner of the sheep may be known, at least by name, so that when I pronounce that name, they may know that I am the Owner of the flock and they may come to Me to be caressed. »

« It is sweet to have a Master like You! The sheep will love You. »

« Yes, the sheep will… but not the billy-goats… After seeing Jonah, we shall go to Nazareth and then to Capernaum. Simon Peter and the others are suffering because of such a long absence… We will go to make them happy and to make ourselves happy. Also the summer season induces us to do that. Night is made to rest and those who prefer the knowledge of the Truth to a rest are too few. Man… Oh! Man! He forgets too easily that he has a soul and he thinks of and worries only about his body. The sun during the day is scorching. It prevents us from travelling and teaching in the squares and in the streets. It is so exhausting that it makes the souls as drowsy as the bodies. So… let us go and teach My disciples. Let us go to sweet Galilee, rich in green fields and cool waters. Have you ever been there? »

« I passed through once, in winter, during one of my painful peregrinations from one doctor to another. I liked it… »

« Oh! It is beautiful. Always. In winter and even more in the other seasons. Now, in summer, its nights are so angelical… Yes, they really seem made for the flights of angels, so pure they are. The lake… The lake surrounded by mountains, more or less close to it, seems to be made just to speak of God to souls seeking God. It is a piece of the sky which has fallen into the green vegetation, and the vault of Heaven does not forsake it, but is mirrored in it with its stars, which are thus multiplied… to be presented to the Creator strewn on a sapphire plate. The olive-trees reach down almost to its shores and are full of nightingales. And they also sing their praise to the Creator Who lets them live in such a sweet and placid place.

And My Nazareth! All spread out to be kissed by the sun, all white and green, charming, between the two giants of the Great and Small Hermon, and the pedestal of mountains supporting the Tabor: a pedestal with sweet green slopes, which raise their lord, often covered with snow, up towards the sun. The Tabor is so beautiful when the sun shines on its top, which then becomes pinkish alabaster, whereas on the other side, Mount Carmel is the hue of lapislazuli in certain hours of great heat, when all the veins of marbles or of waters, of forests and meadows, appear in their various hues; and it is like a gentle amethyst at daybreak. In the evening, instead, it is violet-sky beryl and is a solid block of sardonyx when the moon shows it all black in her milky-silver light. And farther down, to the south, is the fertile flowery plain of Esdraelon.

And then… then, oh! Simon! There is a Flower there! There is a Flower that lives solitary, fragrant with purity and love for Her God and Her Son! There is My Mother. You will meet Her, Simon, and then you will be able to tell Me whether there is a creature like Her, also in human grace, on the earth. She is beautiful, but everything is surpassed by what emanates internally from Her. If a brute should divest Her of all Her clothes, should disfigure Her and send Her roving, She would still appear as a Queen in a royal dress, because Her holiness would cover Her as a mantle and confer splendour on Her. The world can give Me all possible evil, but I will forgive the world everything, because to come into the world and redeem it, I had Her, the humble and great Queen of the world, Whom the world does not know, but through Whom it has received Good and will receive still more throughout centuries.

Here we are at the Temple. Let us keep the Judaic form of worship. But I solemnly tell you that the true House of God, the Holy Ark, is Her Heart, the veil of which is Her most pure flesh and its embroidery work are all Her virtues. »

They have gone in and are walking on the first floor. They go through a porch, towards a second floor.

« Master, look, there is Judas in that crowd of people. And there are also some Pharisees and members of the Sanhedrin. I am going to hear what he is saying. May I go? »

« Go. I will wait for you at the Great Porch. »

Simon walks away fast and he stands where he can hear without being seen.

Judas is speaking with firm belief: «… and there are people here whom you all know and respect, who can tell you who I was. Well, I tell you that He has changed me. I am the first redeemed. Many amongst you venerate the Baptist. He venerates him, too, and calls him "the saint equal to Elijah because of his mission, but even greater than Elijah". Now, if the Baptist is such, He Whom the Baptist calls "the Lamb of God" and by his own holiness swears that he saw Him crowned with the fire of the Spirit of God while a voice from Heaven proclaimed Him "Beloved Son of God to be listened to", can but be the Messiah. And He is. I swear to it. I am neither a coarse nor a silly man. I have seen His deeds and heard His words. And I tell you: it is He: the Messiah. Miracles serve Him as a slave serves his master. Diseases and misfortunes disappear like dead things and are replaced by joy and good health. And hearts change even more than bodies. You can tell by me. Have you sick people or pains to be relieved? If you have, come to the Fish Gate, tomorrow morning at dawn. He will be there and will make you happy. In the meantime, here, in His name I give this help to the poor. »

And Judas hands out some coins to two cripples and three blind men and then forces an old woman to accept the last ones. He then dismisses the crowd and remains with Joseph of Arimathaea, Nicodemus and three other people whom I do not know.

« Ah! Now I feel well! » exclaims Judas. « I have nothing left. I am as He wants me to be. »

« To tell you the truth, I don't recognise you any longer. I thought it was a joke. But I see that you are in earnest » exclaims Joseph.

« I am in earnest. Oh! I am the first not to recognise myself. I am still a filthy beast as compared to Him. But I have already changed a lot. »

« And will you no longer belong to the Temple? » asks one of the unknown men.

« Oh! no. I belong to Christ. Whoever approaches Him, can but love Him, unless one is really wicked. And one wishes nothing else but Him. »

« Will He not come here any more? »

« Of course He will. But not now. »

« I would like to hear Him. »

« He has already 'spoken here, Nicodemus. »

« I know. But I was with Gamaliel… I saw Him, but I did not stop. »

« What did Gamaliel say, Nicodemus? »

« He said: "Some new prophet". Nothing else. »

« And did You not say to him what I told you, Joseph? You are his friend… »

« I told him. But he replied: "We already have the Baptist and according to the doctrine of the Scribes there must be at least one hundred years between this one and that one, to prepare the people for the coming of the King. I say that it will take less", he added, "because the time is now complete". And he concluded: "But I cannot admit that the Messiah should reveal Himself thus… One day I thought that the Messianic manifestation was about to begin, because His first ray was really a heavenly flash. But after… there was a great silence and I think I was mistaken". »

« Try and speak to him again. If Gamaliel were with us and you with him… »

« I would not advise that » objects one of the three unknown men. « The Sanhedrin is powerful and Annas rules over it cunningly and greedily. If your Messiah wants to live, I advise Him to live in obscurity. Unless He imposes Himself with strength. But then there is Rome… »

« If the Sanhedrin heard Him, they would convert to Christ. »

« Ah! Ah! Ah! » laugh the three strangers and say: « Judas, we believed you had changed, but we thought that you were still intelligent. If what you say about Him is true, how can you believe that the Sanhedrin would follow Him? Come, come, Joseph. It is better for all of us. May God give you protection, Judas. You need it. » And they go away. Judas remains alone with Nicodemus.

Simon disappears and goes to the Master. « Master, I accuse myself of a sin of slander both in my words and with my heart. That man puzzles me. I thought he was almost an enemy of Yours, but I heard him speak of You in a way, that few amongst us do, particularly here where hatred might suppress first the disciple and then the Master. And I saw him give money to the poor, and try to persuade the members of the Sanhedrin… »

« See, Simon? I am glad that you saw him just then. You will tell the others when they accuse him. Let us bless the Lord for the joy you are giving Me, because of your honesty in saying: "I have sinned", and on account of the work of the disciple, whom you considered wicked, which he is not. »

They pray for a long time, then they go out.

« Did he not see you? »

« No, I am sure. »

« Do not say anything to him. He is a very weak soul. Praise would be like food given to a convalescent from a high temperature due to stomach trouble. It would make him worse, because he would boast of being noticed. And where pride enters… »

« I will be quiet. Where are we going? »

« To see John. At this hot hour of the day, he will be at the Olivegrove. »

They walk fast, moving when possible to shady spots in the streets which are burning in the scorching sun. They cross the dusty suburb and through the wall gate they go out into the dazzling country, they reach the olive-grove and finally the house.

In the kitchen, which is cool and dark because of the curtain at the door, there is John. He is dozing and Jesus calls him: « John! »

« You, Master? I was expecting You this evening. »

« I have come earlier. How did you manage, John? »

« Like a lamb which had lost its shepherd. I spoke of You to everybody, because to speak of You was like being with You, somehow. I spoke to relatives, acquaintances, to strangers. Also to Annas… And to a cripple, with whom I made friends, by giving him three coins. They were given to me and I gave them to him. I spoke also to a poor woman, who was crying on her doorstep, with a group of women. I asked her: "Why are you crying?" She replied: "The doctor said to me: 'Your daughter is ill with tuberculosis. Resign yourself. At the first storms in October she will die'. I have but her: she is beautiful and good, she is fifteen years old. She was to get married in spring, but instead of her wedding chest, I have to prepare her tomb!" I said to her: "I know a Doctor Who can cure her for you, if you have faith!" "No one can cure her now. She has been visited by three doctors. She is already spitting blood". "Mine" I said, "is not a doctor like yours. He does not cure with medicines. But with His own power. He is the Messiah!" A little old woman then said: "Oh! Believe, Eliza! I know a blind man who can now see because of Him!" And the mother then passed from distrust to hope and she is waiting for You… Did I do the right thing? That's all I have done. »

« You have done well. This evening we shall go to your friends. Have you seen Judas again? »

« No, Master. He sent me some food and money which I gave to the poor. And he sent word that I should use it, because it was his own money. »

« It is true. John, tomorrow we are going towards Galilee… »

« I am glad, Master. I am thinking of Simon Peter. Goodness knows how he is longing to see You! Shall we pass also by Nazareth? »

« Yes, and we shall stop there waiting for Peter, Andrew and your brother James. »

« Oh! Are we staying in Galilee? »

« We will stay for some time. »

John is happy and it all ends on his happiness.

86. Jesus Speaks to the Soldier Alexander at the Fish Gate.

24th January 1945.

It is dawn once again. And once again there are long lines of donkeys crowding at the Gate which is still closed. Jesus is with Simon and John. Some traders recognise Him and press round Him. Also a guard runs towards Him when the Gate is opened and sees Him. And he greets Him: « Hail, Galilean. Tell these restless people to be less rebellious. They complain of us. But they do nothing but curse us and disobey. And they say it is a form of cult for them. What religion have they got if it is based on disobedience? »

« Bear with them, My soldier. They are like those who have a guest in their house who is not wanted, but is stronger than they are. And they can only take vengeance with their tongues and by being spiteful. »

« Yes. But we must do our duty. And so we have to punish them. And thus we become more and more the unwanted guest. »

« You are right. You must do your duty. But do it always with humanity. You should always say: "If I were in their position, what would I do?" You will then see that you feel pity for the subjects. »

« I like to hear You speak. You are free from contempt and haughtiness. The other Palestinians spit at us, and loathe us… unless they can skin us properly for a woman or some purchase. Then the gold of Rome is no longer loathsome. »

« Men are men, soldier. »

« Yes and man is a bigger liar than a monkey. It is not pleasant, however, to be among those who are like snakes lying in wait… We also have homes, mothers, wives and children and our lives are dear to us. »

« There you are: if everybody remembered that, there would be no more hatred. You asked: "What religion have they?" I will

answer you: a holy religion which prescribes as first commandment love for God and for our neighbour. A religion that teaches obedience to the laws. Also of enemy countries.

Because listen, My brothers in Israel, nothing happens unless God permits it. Also dominations: a misfortune without equal for a people. But if that people should examine itself in all fairness, almost always they should say that they brought on such a misfortune by their way of living contrary to God. Remember the Prophets. How many times have they spoken about that! How often have they shown with past, present and future events that a ruler is a punishment, the lash of chastisement on the back of an ungrateful son. And how many times have they taught how to avoid it: by going back to the Lord. Neither rebellion nor war cure wounds or tears, neither do they undo chains. To live as just people does all that. Then God intervenes. And what can arms and armies do against the splendour of the angelical cohorts fighting for good people? Have we been struck? Let us deserve to be no longer so, by living as children of God. Do not double your chains by committing new sins. Do not allow the Gentiles to think that you are without any religion or more pagan than they are because of your way of living. You are the people who received the Law from God Himself. Respect it. Get the rulers to bow down before your chains saying: "They are subjects but they are greater than we are, of a greatness that is not based on numbers, money, arms, power, but on the fact that they come from God. Here shines the divine paternity of a perfect, holy, powerful God. Here is the sign of a real Divinity. It shines through its children". And may they meditate on that and come to the truth of the true God, abandoning their errors. Everyone, even the poorest, the most ignorant amongst the people of God can be a teacher to a Gentile by his way of living and can preach God to the heathens by the deeds of a holy life.

Go. Peace be with you. »

« Judas is late and also the shepherds » points out Simon.

« Are You expecting someone, Galilean? » asks the soldier who has listened carefully.

« Some friends. »

« Come into the cool of the passageway. The sun is hot from the very early hours. Are You going to town? »

« No, I am going back to Galilee. »

« On foot? »

« I am poor: on foot. »

« Are You married? »

« I have My Mother. »

« Also I. Come… if You do not loathe us as the others do. »

« Only sin disgusts Me. »

The soldier looks at Him, surprised and thoughtful. « We will never have to interfere with You. Our swords will never be lifted against You. You are good. But the others!… »

Jesus is in the half light of the passageway. John is towards the town. Simon is sitting on a mass of stone which serves as a bench.

« What is Your name? »

« Jesus. »

« Ah! You are the one who works miracles also on deceased people?! I thought You were only a magician… We have some, too. A good magician, however. Because there are some… But ours cannot cure sick people. How do You do it? »

Jesus smiles and is silent.

« Do You use magic words? Have You ointments of dead people's marrows, dried snakes reduced to powder, magic stones taken from the Python's caves? »

« None of that. I have only My power. »

« Then You really are a saint. We have the haruspices and the vestals… and some of them work wonders and they say that they are the most holy ones. But do You believe it? They are worse than the rest. »

« Well, then, why do you venerate them? »

« Because… because it is the religion of Rome. And if a citizen does not respect the religion of his country, how can he respect Caesar, his fatherland, and so on, many things? »

Jesus stares at the soldier. « Truly you are well advanced on the way of Justice. Proceed, o soldier, and you will get to know what your soul feels it has in itself, without being able to give a name to it. »

« Soul? What is it? »

« When you die, where will you go? »

« Who knows?… I don't know. If I die as a hero, on the funeral pyre of heroes… if I am a poor old man, a mere nothing, perhaps I will rot in my hole or on the side of a road. »

« That is as far as your body is concerned. But where will your soul go? »

« I don't know whether all men have a soul or only those destined by Jupiter to the Elysian Fields after a wonderful life, unless he takes them up to Olympus as it happened to Romulus. »

« Every man has a soul and it is the thing that distinguishes men from animals. Would you like to be a horse? Or a bird? A fish? Flesh, that-dying, is only rot? »

« Oh! no. I am a man and I prefer to be such. »

« Well, what makes you a man is your soul. Without it you would be nothing more than a speaking animal. »

« And where is it? What is it like? »

« It has no body. But it exists. It is in you. It comes from Him Who created the world and goes back to Him after the death of the

body. »

« From the God of Israel, according to You. »

« From the only, one, eternal, supreme God, Lord and Creator of the universe. »

« And also a poor soldier like me, has a soul and it goes back to God? »

« Yes. Also a poor soldier, and his soul will have God as a Friend, if it was always good, or God as a Punisher, if it was bad. »

« Master, there is Judas with the shepherds and some women. If I am right, there is the girl we spoke of yesterday » says John.

« I am going, soldier. Be good. »

« Will I not see You again? I would like to know… »

« I will stay in Galilee until September. Come, if you can. At Capernaum or Nazareth anyone will tell you where I am. At Capernaum ask for Simon Peter. At Nazareth for Mary of Joseph. She is My Mother. Come. I will speak to you of the true God. »

« Simon Peter… Mary of Joseph. I'll come, if I can. And if You come back, remember Alexander. I belong to the Jerusalem Century. »

Judas and the shepherds are already in the passageway.

« Peace to you all » says Jesus.

And He is about to say more, when a slender smiling girl makes her way through the group and throws herself at His feet: « Your blessing on me again, Master and Saviour and my kiss again to You! » And she kisses His hands.

« Go. Be happy and good. A good daughter, then a good wife, and then a good mother. Teach your future children My Name and My doctrine. Peace to you and to your mother. Peace and blessings to all those who are friends of God. Peace also to you, Alexander. »

Jesus goes away.

« We are late. But some women besieged us » explains Judas. « They were at Gethsemane and wanted to see You. We had gone there without knowing of them, to join You and come here together. But You had already gone away and the women instead were there. We wanted to leave them… But they were more insistent than flies. They wanted to know so many things… Have You cured the girl? »

« Yes. »

« And have You spoken to the Roman? »

« Yes. He has an honest heart. And he is seeking the Truth… »

Judas sighs.

« Why are you sighing, Judas? » asks Jesus.

« I am sighing because I wish our people would seek the Truth. Instead they evade it, or sneer at it, or remain indifferent. I feel discouraged. I feel as if I do not want to come back here again, but do nothing else but listen to You. In any case, as a disciple, I am

good for nothing. »

« And do you think that I am very successful? Do not be discouraged, Judas. It is the struggle of the apostolate. There are more defeats than victories. Defeats here. Up there they are always victories. The Father sees your good will and even if you are not successful He blesses you just the same. »

« Oh! You are good! » Judas kisses His hand. « Will I ever become good? »

« Yes, if you want to. »

« I think I have been good these past days… I suffered to be so… because I have many desires… but I always thought of You. »

« Persist, then. You give Me so much joy. And what news have you got for Me? » He asks the shepherds.

« Elias sends You his greetings, and also some food. And he asks You not to forget him. »

« Oh! I have My friends in My heart! Let us go as far as that little village, surrounded by green fields. Then we will proceed in the evening. I am happy to be with you, I am glad that I am going to My Mother and that I have spoken of the Truth to an honest man. Yes, I am happy. If you knew what it is for Me to do My mission and see souls coming to it, that is to the Father, oh! you would follow Me more and more with your souls!… »

I see nothing else.

87. Jesus and Isaac near Doco. Departure towards Esdraelon.

25th January 1945.

« And I tell You, Master, that humble people are better. The ones I addressed either laughed at me or ignored me. Oh! The little ones at Juttah! » It is Isaac speaking to Jesus. They are all in a group sitting on the grass on the river bank. Isaac seems to be giving a report on his work.

Judas intervenes and, an exceptional case, he calls the shepherd by his name: « Isaac, I am of your opinion. We waste our time and lose our faith dealing with them. I am giving it up. »

« I will not. But it makes me suffer. I will give up only if the Master tells me. For years I have been accustomed to suffering out of loyalty to the truth. I could not tell lies to get into the good graces of the mighty ones. And do you know how many times they came to make fun of me, in the room where I was ill, promising help - oh! they were certainly false promises - if I would say that I had lied, and that You, Jesus, were not the New-Born Saviour?! But I could not lie. If I had lied I would have denied my own joy, I would have killed my only hope, I would have rejected You, my Lord! Reject You! In my dark misery, in my dreary illness there

was always a sky strewn with stars above me: the face of my mother, the only joy of my orphan life, the face of a bride, who was never mine and whom I continued to love even after her death. These were the two minor stars. And the two major stars, like two most pure moons: Joseph and Mary smiling at the New-Born Baby and at us poor shepherds, and Your bright, innocent, kind, holy, holy, holy face, in the centre of the sky of my heart. I could not reject that sky of mine! I did not want to deprive myself of its light, as there is no other so pure. I would have rather rejected my own life, or I would have lived in torture, rather than reject You, My blessed remembrance, my New-Born Jesus! »

Jesus lays His hand on Isaac's shoulder and smiles.

Judas speaks again: « So you insist? »

« I do. Today, tomorrow, and the day after again. Someone will come. »

« How long will the work last? »

« I don't know. But believe me. It is enough not to look either ahead or back. And do things day by day. And in the evening, if we have worked with profit, we say: "Thank You, my God", if without any profit, just say: "I hope in Your help for tomorrow". »

« You are wise. »

« I don't even know what it means. But I do in my mission what I did during my sickness. Thirty years' infirmity is no trifling matter! »

« Ehi! I believe that. I was not yet born and you were already an invalid. »

« I was ill. But I never counted those years. I never said: "Now it is the month of Nisan again, but I am not blossoming again with the roses. Now it is Tishri and I still languish here". I went on, speaking of Him, both to myself and to good people. I realised that the years were passing, because the little ones of bygone days came to bring me their wedding confections or the cakes for the birth of their little ones. Now, if I look back, now that from old I have become young, what do I see of my past? Nothing. It is past. »

« Nothing here. But in Heaven it is "everything" for you, Isaac, and that "everything" is waiting for you » says Jesus. And then speaking to everyone: « You must do so. I do so Myself. We must go on. Without getting tired. Tiredness is one of the roots of human pride. And so is haste. Why is man annoyed by defeats, why is he upset by delays? Because pride says: "Why say ‘no’ to me? So

much delay for me? This is lack of respect for the apostle of God". No, My friends. Look at the whole universe and think of Him Who made it. Meditate on the progress of man, and consider his origin. Think of this hour which is now being completed and count how many centuries have preceded it. The universe is the work of a calm creation. The Father did not do things in a disorderly way.

But He made the universe in successive phases. Man is the work of patient progress, the present man, and he will more and more progress in knowledge and in power. And such knowledge and power will be holy or not holy, according to his will. But man did not become skilled all at once. The First Parents, expelled from the Garden, had to learn everything, slowly, progressively. They had to learn the most simple things: that a grain of corn is more tasty if ground into flour, then kneaded and then baked. And they had to learn how to grind it and bake it. They had to learn how to light a fire. How to make a garment by observing the fleece of animals. How to make a den by watching beasts. How to built a pallet, by watching nests. They learned how to cure themselves with herbs and water, by observing animals, that do so by instinct. They learned to travel across deserts and seas, studying the stars, breaking in horses, learning how to balance boats on water, by watching the shell of a nut floating on the water of a stream. And how many failures before success! But man succeeded. And he will go farther. But he will not be happier on account of his progress, because he will become more skilled in evil than in good. But he will make progress. Is Redemption not a patient work? It was decided centuries and centuries ago, it is happening now after being prepared for centuries. Everything is patience. Why be impatient, then? Could God not have made everything in a flash? Was it not possible for man, gifted with reason, created by the hands of God, to know everything in a flash? Could I not have come at the beginning of centuries? Everything was possible. But nothing must be violence. Nothing. Violence is always against order; and God, and what comes from God is order. Do not attempt to be superior to God. »

« But, then, when will You be known? »

« By whom, Judas? »

« By the world! »

« Never! »

« Never? But are You not the Saviour? »

« I am. But the world does not want to be saved. Only one in a thousand will be willing to know Me, and only one in ten thousand will really follow Me. And I will say even more. I will not be known even by My most intimate friends. »

« But if they are Your intimate friends, they will know You. »

« Yes, Judas. They will know Me as Jesus, as Jesus the Israelite. But they will not know Me as He Who I am. I solemnly tell you that I will not be known by all My intimates. To know means to love with loyalty and virtue… and there will be who does not know Me. » Jesus takes the attitude of resigned discouragement which is customary to Him when He announces His future betrayal: He opens His hands and holds them out, turned outwards, His sorrowful

face looking at neither man nor Heaven, but only at His future destiny of a betrayed person.

« Do not say that » implores John.

« We follow You, to know You more and more » says Simon, and the shepherds join their voices to his.

« We follow You, as we would follow a bride and You are dearer to us than she could be; we are more jealous of You than of a woman. Oh! no. We know You already so much that we cannot ignore You any longer. He (and Judas points at Isaac) says that to deny Your remembrance of a New-Born Baby would have been more distressing than losing his life. And You were but a new-born baby. We know You as Man and Master. We listen to You and see Your works. Your contact, Your breath, Your kiss: they are our continuous consecration and our continuous purification. Only a satan could deny You after being Your close companion. »

« It is true, Judas. But there will be one. »

« Woe to him! I will be his executioner. »

« No. Leave justice to the Father. Be his redeemer. The redeemer of this soul that is inclined towards Satan. But let us say goodbye to Isaac. It is evening. I bless you, My faithful servant. You now know that Lazarus of Bethany is our friend and is willing to help My friends. I am going. You are staying here. Prepare the parched land of Judaea for Me. I will come later. In case of need you know where to find Me. My peace be with you » and Jesus blesses and kisses His disciple.

88. Jesus with the Shepherd Jonah in the Plain of Esdraelon.

26th January 1945.

Jesus is walking along a little path which runs between parched fields, covered with stubble and full of crickets. Levi and John are walking beside Him. Behind in a group are Joseph, Judas and Simon.

It is night. But there is no relief from the heat. The soil seems to be still burning after the great heat of the day. Dew is of no avail in so much heat. I think it evaporates even before reaching the ground, such is the burst of heat rising from the furrows and the cracks in the soil.

They are silent, exhausted and hot. But I see Jesus smile. It is a clear night although the setting moon is hardly visible in the far east.

« Do You think he will be there? » Jesus asks Levi.

« He will certainly be there. This is the time when the crops are stored away, but they have not yet started picking the fruit. Farmers are therefore busy watching their vineyards and orchards

against robbers and they do not go away, particularly when their masters are as stingy as Jonah's. Samaria is not far and when those renegades get a chance… oh! they are happy to cause damage to us Israelites. Do they not know that the servants get beaten for it? Of course they do. But they hate us, that's all. »

« Do not cherish resentment, Levi » says Jesus.

« No. But You will see how Jonah was wounded five years ago because of them. Since then he lives watching at night. Because the scourge is a cruel punishment… »

« Is there still a long way to go? »

« No, Master. See where this dreariness ends and there is a dark area? The orchards of Doras, the cruel Pharisee, are there. If You will allow me, I will go on in front of You, to let Jonah hear me. »

« Yes, go. »

« Are all the Pharisees like that, my Lord? » asks John. « Oh! I would not like to be in their service! I prefer my boat. »

« Is your boat your dearest thing? » asks Jesus half serious.

« No, You are! It was the boat when I did not know that Love was on the earth » answers John promptly.

Jesus smiles at his impetuosity. « You did not know that love was on the earth? And how were you born then, if your father did not love your mother? » asks Jesus, jokingly.

« That love is beautiful, but it does not attract me. You are my love, You are the love on the earth for poor John. »

Jesus embraces him and says: « I was anxious to hear you say so. Love is greedy for love and man gives and will always give tiny drops to its thirst, like these which are falling from the sky and are so small that they vanish mid-air, in the great summer heat. Also man's drops of love will vanish mid-air, killed by the heat of too many things. Hearts will still squeeze them out… but interests, love, business, greed, so many human things will burn -them. And what will rise to Jesus? Oh! too little! The remains, the few surviving human pulsations, men's throbs interested in asking, asking, and asking, in urgent need. To love Me out of pure love will be the characteristic of few people… of people like John… Look at an ear of corn grown after the end of the season. It is perhaps a seed that fell at harvest time. But it was able to spring up, to resist sunshine and dry weather, to grow up, to form an ear… Feel it: it is already formed. In these stripped fields it is the only living thing. Before long the ripe grains will fall on the ground, breaking the smooth husk that holds them close to the stem, and they will become charity food for the little birds, or yielding one hundred per cent, they will grow again and before winter brings the plough back to the earth, they will be ripe once again and will satisfy the hunger of many birds already starving in the dreariest season… See, My John, what one brave seed can do? And the few people that will

love Me out of pure love, will be like that. One only will satisfy the hunger of many. One only will make beautiful the area which before was ugly. One only will give life where there was death and all the hungry ones will come to that one. They will eat a grain of its active love and then, selfish and absent-minded, they will fly away. But also without their knowing it, that grain will Put vital germs in their blood, in their souls… and they will come back. And today, tomorrow and the day after, as Isaac said, the knowledge of the Love will increase in their hearts. The stripped stem will no longer be a living thing: a parched straw. But how much good from its sacrifice! And how much reward for its sacrifice! »

Jesus, Who had stopped for a moment before a thin ear of corn, grown at the edge of the path, in a little ditch, which in rainy weather was perhaps a little stream, has moved on, while John listens to Him all the time in his usual attitude of an ardent admirer, who takes in not only the words but also the movements of the person loved.

The others, who are speaking among themselves, are not aware of the tender conversation. They have now reached the orchard and they stop, forming one group. The heat is such that they are all perspiring, although they are not wearing mantles. They wait silently.

From the dark thicket, which is faintly lit up by moonlight, Levi, visible in his light clothes, appears, followed by a person of darker dress. « Master, Jonah is here. »

« May My peace come to you! » greets Jesus, before Jonah reaches Him.

But Jonah does not reply. He runs and throws himself weeping at His feet and kisses them. When he is fit to speak he says: « How long have I waited for You! How long! How depressing it was to feel that my life was passing away, that death was approaching, and I had to say: "I have not seen Him!" And yet, no, not all hopes were destroyed. Not even when I was about to die. I would say: "She said so: 'You will serve Him again' and She could not have said something that was not true. She is the Mother of the Immanuel. No one, therefore, possesses God more than She does, and who has God knows what is of God". »

« Get up. She sends you Her greetings. You have been near Her and You are still near Her. She lives at Nazareth. »

« You! She! At Nazareth? Oh! I wish I had known. At night, in the cold winter months, when the fields rest and evil people cannot cause damage to farmers, I would have come, I would have run there, to kiss Your feet and I would have come back with my treasure of certainty of faith. Why did You not show Yourself, Lord? »

« Because is was not the time. The time has now come. We must learn to wait. You said: "In the winter months when the fields rest". And yet they have been sown, have they not? Well, I was like a grain that had been sown. And you saw Me when I was being sown. Then I disappeared. Buried in necessary silence. That I might grow and reach harvest time and shine in the eyes of the world and of those who had seen Me a New-Born Baby. That time has come. The New-Born is now ready to be the Bread of the world. And I am looking first for My faithful ones, and I say to them: "Come. I will satisfy your hunger". »

The man is listening to Him, smiling happily, and he keeps saying to himself: « Oh! You are really here! You are really here! »

« You were about to die? When? »

« When I was thrashed to death, because they had stripped two vineyards. Look how many wounds! » He lowers his tunic and shows his shoulders all marked by irregular scars. « He beat me with an iron rod. He counted the bunches of grapes that had been picked, he could see where the stalks had been torn off, and he gave me a blow for every bunch. And then he left me there, half dead. Mary helped me, she is the young wife of a friend of mine, and she has always been fond of me. Her father was the land-agent before me and when I came here I became very fond of the little girl, because her name was Mary. She took care of me and, I recovered after two months, for the sores had become infected because of the heat, and had given me a high temperature. I said to the God of Israel: "It does not matter. Let me see Your Messiah again, and this misfortune is of no importance to me. Accept it as a sacrifice. I can never offer You a sacrifice. I am the servant of a cruel man and You know. He does not even allow me to come to Your altar at Passover. Accept me as a victim. But give me Him!" »

« And the Most High has satisfied you. Jonah, do you wish to serve Me, as your friends are already doing? »

« Oh! How shall I do that? »

« As they do. Levi knows and he will tell you how simple it is to serve Me. I only want your good will. »

« I have given You that since the time You cried in the manger. It made me overcome everything. Both dejection and hatred. The fact is… we cannot speak very much here… The master once kicked me because I was insisting that You existed. But when he was away, and with those I could trust, oh! I did tell the wonder of that night! »

« And now tell the wonder of your meeting. I have found almost everyone, and everyone is faithful. Is that not a wonder? Only because you contemplated Me with faith and love you have become just in the eyes of God and men. »

« Oh! Now I will have courage! And how much courage! Now that I know that You are alive I can say: "He is there. Go to Him!… "

But where, my Lord? »

« All over Israel. Up to September I will be in Galilee. I will Often be at Nazareth or Capernaum, and I can be traced from there. After… I will be everywhere. I have come to gather the sheep of Israel. »

« Oh! My Lord! You will find many billy-goats. Beware of the great ones in Israel! »

« They will not do Me any harm, if it is not the time. Say to the dead, the sleepers, the living: "The Messiah is amongst us". »

« To the dead, Lord? »

« To those whose souls are dead. The others, the just who died in the Lord, are already rejoicing for their imminent liberation from Limbo. Say to the dead: "I am the Life". Say to the sleepers: "I am the Sun that rises awaking from sleep". Say to the living: "I am the Truth they are seeking". »

« And You cure also sick people? Levi told me about Isaac. Is the miracle only for him, because he is Your shepherd, or is it for everybody? »

« For good people, a miracle is a just reward. For those who are not so good, it urges them toward true goodness. It is also for bad people, to shake them and make them understand that I am and that God is with Me. A miracle is a gift. Gifts are for good people. But He Who is Mercy and sees the human burden, which can be lightened only by powerful events, has resort also to this means, that He may say: "I have done everything for you, but all in vain. Tell Me, therefore, what else I must do". »

« Lord, do You mind entering my house? If You give me assurance that no robber will come into the estate, I would like to give You hospitality, and invite also the few people who know You because I spoke to them of You. Our master has bent and broken us like ignoble stems. We have but the hope of an eternal reward. But if You will show Yourself to downcast hearts, they will feel new strength. »

« I will come. Do not be afraid for your trees and vineyards. Can you believe that the angels will watch them faithfully? »

« Oh! My Lord. I saw Your heavenly servants. I do believe. And I will come with You and feel safe. Blessed these trees and vineyards which have the breeze and songs of angelical wings and voices! Blessed is the soil which is sanctified by Your feet! Come, Lord Jesus! Listen, trees and vines. Listen, soil. Now I will say to Him the Name that I confided to you for my own peace. Jesus is here. Listen, and may the sap exult through branches and vineshoots. The Messiah is with us. »

It all ends with these joyful words.

89. Return to Nazareth after Leaving Jonah.

27th January 1945.

The light is so faint it seems to be blinking. At the door of a very poor hut - it would be an overstatement to call it a house - there is Jesus with His disciples, Jonah and other poor peasants like him. It is departure time.

« Will I not see You again, my Lord? » asks Jonah. « You have brought light to our hearts. Your kindness has turned these days into a feast that will last all our lives. But You have seen how we are treated. A mule is taken more care of than we are. And trees receive more human attention. They are money. We are only millstones that earn money. And we are used until we die of excessive toil. But Your words have been as many loving caresses. Our bread seemed more plentiful and it tasted better because You shared it with us, this bread which he does not even give to his dogs. Come back to share it with us, my Lord. Only because it is You, I dare say that. It would be an insult to offer anyone else shelter and food which even a beggar would disdain. But You… »

« But I find in them a heavenly perfume and flavour, because in them there is faith and love. I will come, Jonah. I will come back. You stay in your place, tied like an animal to the shafts. May your place be Jacob's ladder. And in fact angels go and come from Heaven down to you, carefully gathering all your merits and taking them up to God. But I will come to you. To relieve your spirit. Be faithful to Me, all of you. Oh! I would like to give you also human peace. But I cannot. I must say to you: go on suffering. And that is very sad for One Who loves… »

« Lord, if You love us, we no longer suffer. Before we had no one to love us… Oh! If I could, at least I, see Your Mother! »

« Do not worry. I will bring Her to you. When the weather is milder, I will come with Her. Do not risk incurring cruel punishments on account of your anxiety to see Her. You must wait for Her as you wait for the rising of a star, of the evening star. She will appear to you all of a sudden, exactly as the evening star, which is not there one moment, and a moment later it shines in the sky. And you must consider that even now She is lavishing Her gifts of love on you. Goodbye, everybody. May My peace protect you from the harshness of him who torments you. Goodbye, Jonah. Do not cry. You have waited for so many years with patient faith. I now promise you a very short wait. Do not weep. I will not leave you alone. Your kindness wiped My tears when I was a NewBorn Baby. Is Mine not sufficient to wipe yours? »

« Yes… but You are going away… and I have to remain here… »

« Jonah, My friend, do not make Me go away depressed because I cannot comfort you .. »

« I am -not crying, my Lord… But how will I be able to live

without seeing You, now that I know that You are alive? »

Jesus caresses the forlorn old man once again and then goes away. But standing on the edge of the miserable threshing-floor, Jesus stretches His arms out and blesses the country. He then departs.

« What have You done, Master? » asks Simon who has noticed the unusual gesture. .

« I put a seal on everything. That no demon may damage things and thus cause trouble to those wretched people. I could do no more… »

« Master, let us walk on a little faster. I would like to tell You something which I do not want the others to hear. » They move farther away from the group and Simon begins to speak: « I wanted to tell You that Lazarus has instructions to use my money to assist all those who apply to him in Jesus' name. Could we not free Jonah? That man is worn out and his only joy is to be with You. Let us give him that. What is his work worth here? If instead he were free, he would be Your disciple in this beautiful yet desolate plain, The richest people in Israel own fertile estates here and they exploit them with cruel usury, exacting a hundredfold profit from their workers. I have known that for years. You will not be able to stop here long, because the sect of the Pharisees rules over the country and I do not think it will ever be friendly to You. These oppressed and hopeless workers are the most unhappy people in Israel. Your heard it Yourself, not even at Passover have they peace, neither can they pray, whilst their severe masters, with solemn gestures and affected exhibitions, take up prominent positions in front of all the people. At least they will have the joy of knowing that You exist, and of listening to Your words, which will be repeated to them by one who will not alter one single letter. If You are agreeable, Master, please say so, and Lazarus will do the necessary. »

« Simon, I knew why you gave all your property away. The thoughts of men are known to Me. And I loved you also because of that. By making Jonah happy, you make Jesus happy. Oh! How it torments Me to see good people suffer! My situation of a poor man despised by the world afflicts Me only because of that. If Judas heard Me, he would say: "But are You not the Word of God? Give the order, and these stones will become gold and bread for the poor people". He would repeat Satan's snare. I am anxious to satisfy people's hunger. But not the way Judas would like. You are not yet sufficiently mature to grasp the depth of what I want to say. But I will tell you: if God saw to everything He would rob His friends. He would deprive them of the chance of being merciful and fulfilling the commandment of love. My friends must possess this mark of God, in common with Him: the holy mercy consisting

in deeds and words. And the unhappiness of other people gives My friends the opportunity to practise it. Have you understood what I mean? »

« Your thought is a deep one. I will ponder Your words. And I humble myself, as I see how dull-minded I am and how great God is Who wants us to be gifted with all His most sweet attributes, so that He may call us His children. God is revealed to me in His manifold perfections by every ray of light with which You illuminate my heart. Day by day, like one proceeding in an unknown place, the knowledge of the immense Thing which is the Perfection Which wants to call us His "children" is progressing in me and I seem to be climbing like an eagle or to be diving like a fish into two endless depths, such as sky and sea, and I climb higher and higher and dive deeper and deeper, but I never touch the end. But what is, therefore, God? »

« God is the unattainable Perfection, God is the perfect Beauty, God is the infinite Power, God is the incomprehensible Essence, God is the unsurpassable Bounty, God is the indestructible Mercy, God is the immeasurable Wisdom, God is the Love that became God. He is the Love! He is the Love! You say that the more you know God in His perfection, the higher you seem to climb and the deeper to dive into two endless depths of shadeless blue… But when you understand what is the Love that became God, you will no longer climb or dive into the blue, but into a blazing vortex and you will be drawn towards a beatitude which will be death and life for you. You will possess God, with a perfect possession, when, by your will, you succeed in understanding and deserving Him. You will then be fixed in His perfection. »

« O Lord… » Simon is overwhelmed.

There is silence. They reach the road. Jesus stops, waiting for the others. When they are all together again, Levi kneels down: « I should be leaving, Master. But Your servant asks You a favour. Take me to Your Mother. This man is an orphan like me. Do not deny me what You give him, that I may see the face of a mother… »

« Come. What is asked in My Mother's name, I grant in My Mother's name. »

… Jesus is by Himself. He is walking fast among the thick olive trees laden with small fruits which are already well shaped. The sun, although almost setting, is blazing down in the grey-green dome of the precious peaceful trees, but it does not penetrate the tangle of branches beyond providing for a few tiny bright eyelets of light. The main road, on the other hand, embedded in two banks, is a dusty blazing dazzling ribbon.

Jesus proceeds smiling. He reaches a cliff… and smiles even more happily. There is Nazareth… its panorama seems to be flickering, such is the heat of the blazing sun. Jesus goes down

even faster. He reaches the road now, without minding the sun. He is walking so fast that He seems to be flying: He has protected His head with His mantle, which blows at His sides and behind Him. The road is deserted and silent as far as the nearest houses. Now and again the voices of a child or a woman can be heard from the inside of a house or a kitchen garden, the trees of which extend their branches over the road. Jesus avails Himself of such shady spots to avoid the merciless sunshine. He turns into a half shaded road. There are some women gathered round a cool well. Almost every one of them salutes Him welcoming Him in their shrill voices.

« Peace to you all… But please be silent. I want to give My Mother a surprise. »

« Her sister-in-law has just gone away with a pitcher of cool water. But she is coming back. They are left without any water. The spring is either dry or the water is absorbed by the parched land before reaching Your garden. We don't know. That's what Mary of Alphaeus was saying. There she is… she is coming. »

The mother of Judas and James is coming carrying an amphora on her head and another one in her hand. She does not see Jesus at once; she is shouting: « I'll be quicker this way. Mary is very sad, because Her flowers are dying of thirst. They are the ones planted by Joseph and Jesus and it breaks Her heart to see them withering. »

« But now that She sees Me… » says Jesus appearing from behind the group of women.

« Oh! My Jesus! Blessed You are! I'll go and tell… »

« No. I will go. Give Me the amphoras. »

« The door is half shut. Mary is in the garden. Oh! How happy She will be! She was speaking of You also this morning. But why come in this heat! You are all perspiration! Are You alone? »

« No. With friends. But I came ahead of them. To see My Mother first. And Judas? »

« He is at Capernaum. He often goes there. » Mary does not say anything else. But she smiles while drying Jesus' wet face with her veil.

The pitchers are ready. Jesus takes two, He ties one at each end of His belt which He throws across His shoulder and takes the third one in His hand.

He walks away, turns round a comer, reaches the house, pushes the door, enters the little room which seems dark in comparison with the bright sunshine outside. He slowly lifts the curtain protecting the door of the garden and He watches.

Mary is standing near a rose-bush, with Her back to the house and is pitying the parched plant. Jesus lays the pitcher on the floor and the copper tinkles against a stone. « Are you here already,

Mary? » says His Mother without turning round. « Come, come, look at this rose! And these poor lilies. They will all die, if we do not assist them. Bring also some small canes to hold up this falling stalk. »

« I will bring You everything, Mother. »

Mary springs round. She remains for a moment with Her eyes wide open, then with a cry She runs with outstretched arms towards Her Son, Who has already opened His arms and is waiting for Her with the most loving smile.

« Oh! My Son! »

« Mother! Dear! »

Their embrace is a long and loving one and Mary is so happy that She does not feel how hot is Jesus. But then She notices it: « Why, Son, did You come at this time of the day? You are purple red and are perspiring like a sodden sponge. Come inside. That I may dry and refresh You. I will bring You a fresh tunic and clean sandals. My Son! My Son! Why go about in this heat! The plants are dying because of the heat and You, My Flower, are going about. »

« It was to come to You as soon as possible, Mother. »

« Oh! My dear! Are You thirsty? You must be. I will now prepare… »

« Yes, I am thirsty for Your kisses, Mother. And for Your caresses. Let Me stay like this, with My head on Your shoulder, as when I was a little boy… Oh! Mother! How I miss You! »

« Tell Me to come, Son, and I will. What did You lack because of My absence? The food You like? Clean clothes? A well made bed? Oh! My Joy, tell Me what You lacked. Your servant, My Lord, will endeavour to provide. »

« Nothing, but You… »

Jesus goes into the house hand in hand with His Mother. He sits on the chest near the wall, embraces Mary Who is in front of Him, resting His head on Her heart and kissing Her now and again. Now He stares at Her: « Let Me look at You, to My heart's content, holy Mother of Mine. »

« Your tunic first. It is not good for You to remain so damp. Come. »

Jesus obeys. When He comes back wearing a fresh looking tunic, they resume their sweet conversation.

« I have come with My disciples and friends. But I left them in Melcha's wood. They will come tomorrow at dawn. I… I could not wait any longer. My Mother!… » and He kisses Her hands. « Mary of Alphaeus has gone away to leave us alone. She also understood how anxious I was to be with You. Tomorrow… tomorrow You will attend to My friends and I to the Nazarenes. But this evening You are My Friend and I am Yours. I brought You… Oh! Mother: I found the shepherds of Bethlehem. And I brought You two of

them: they are orphans and You are the Mother. Of all men. And more so of orphans. And I brought You also one who needs You to control himself. And another one who is a just man and has suffered so much. And then John… And I brought You the recollections of Elias, Isaac, Tobias, now called Matthew, John and Simeon. Jonah is the most unhappy of them all. I will take You to him… I promised him. I will continue to look for the others. Samuel and Joseph are resting in the peace of God. »

« Were You at Bethlehem? »

« Yes, Mother. I took there the disciples who were with Me. And I brought You these little flowers, that were growing near the stones of the threshold. »

« Oh! » Mary takes the withered stems and kisses them. « And what about Anne? »

« She died in Herod's slaughter. »

« Oh! Poor woman! She was so fond of You! »

« The Bethlehemites suffered a lot. But they have not been fair to the shepherds. But they suffered a lot… »

« But they were good to You then! »

« Yes. And that is why they are to be pitied. Satan is jealous of their past kindness and urges them to evil things. I was also at Hebron. The shepherds, persecuted… »

« Oh! To that extent?! »

« Yes, they were helped by Zacharias, who got them jobs and food, even if their masters were hard people. But they are just souls and they turned their persecutions and wounds into merits of true holiness. I gathered them together. I cured Isaac… and I gave My name to a little boy… At Juttah, where Isaac was languishing and where he came back to life again, there is now an innocent group, called Mary, Joseph and Jesai… »

« Oh! Your Name! »

« And Yours and the name of the Just One. And at Kerioth, the fatherland of a disciple, a faithful Israelite died resting on My heart. Out of joy, having found Me… And then… Ah! how many things I have to tell You, My perfect Friend, sweet Mother! But first of all, I beg You, I ask You to have so much mercy on those who will be coming tomorrow. Listen: they love Me… but they are not perfect. You, Teacher of virtue… oh! Mother, help Me to make them good… I would like to save them all… » Jesus has slipped at Mary's feet. She now appears in Her Motherly majesty.

« My Son! What do You want Your poor Mother to do better than You do? »

« To sanctify them… Your virtue sanctifies. I brought them here deliberately, Mother… one day I will say to You: "Come", because it will then be urgent to sanctify souls, that I may find them willing to be redeemed. And I will not be able by Myself… Your silence

will be as eloquent as My words. Your purity will assist My power. Your presence will keep Satan away… and Your Son, Mother, will feel stronger knowing that You are near Him. You will come, will you not, My sweet Mother? »

« Jesus! Dear Son! I have a feeling that You are not happy… What is the matter, Creature of My heart? Was the world hostile to You? No? It is a relief to believe it… but… Oh! Yes. I will come. Wherever You wish, as and when You wish. Even now, in this blazing sunshine, or by night, in cold or wet weather. You want Me? Here I am. »

« No. Not now. But one day… How sweet is our home. And Your caresses! Let Me sleep thus, with My head on Your knees. I am so tired! I am still Your little Son… » And Jesus really falls asleep, tired and exhausted, sitting on the mat, His head on the lap of His Mother, Who happily caresses His hair.

90. The Next Day in the House in Nazareth.

28th January 1945.

I see Mary moving about the house, barefooted and active, at daybreak. In Her pale blue dress, She is like a butterfly lightly and noiselessly touching walls and other things. She goes to the front door and opens it carefully without making any sound, She leaves it half open, after having a look at the still deserted road. She tidies up, opens doors and windows, goes into the workshop, where She now keeps Her looms, since it was abandoned by the Carpenter, and bustles about also in there. She carefully covers one of the looms, where weaving has just begun and smiles at one of Her thoughts, while looking at it.

She goes out into the garden. The doves gather on Her shoulders. And with short flights, from one shoulder to the other, to have the best place, quarrelsome and jealous of Her love, they accompany Her to a closet where foodstuffs are stored. She takes some grain for them and says: « Here, stay here to-day. Don't make any noise. He is so tired! » She then takes some flour and goes into an anteroom near the stone oven and starts making the bread. She kneads it and smiles. Oh! How Mother smiles to-day. She is like the young Mother of the Nativity, so much joy has made Her young again. From the dough She takes a lump and puts it aside, covering it, and then resumes Her work, getting heated, while Her hair looks lighter in colour as it becomes slightly powdered with flour.

Mary of Alphaeus comes in quietly. « Are You working already? »

« Yes, I am baking bread, and look: the honey cakes He likes so much. »

« You make the cakes. The dough is quite bulky. I'll work it for You. »

Mary of Alphaeus, a more robust country woman, works at the bread with enthusiasm, while Mary mixes butter and honey to the cakes. She makes many round shaped ones and places them on a metal plate.

« I do not know how to inform Judas… James does not dare… and the others… » Mary of Alphaeus sighs.

« Simon Peter is coming to-day. He always comes with the fish on the second day after the Sabbath. We will send him to Judas. »

« If he is willing to go… »

« Oh! Simon never says no to Me. »

« May peace be on this day of yours » says Jesus appearing.

The two women start hearing His voice.

« Are You already up? Why? I wanted You to sleep… »

« I slept like a child in its cradle, Mother. I am afraid You have not slept… »

« I watched You sleeping… I always did so when You were a baby. You always smiled in Your sleep and that smile of Yours remained all day long in My heart like a pearl… But last night, Son, You were not smiling. You kept sighing as one who is afflicted… » Mary, sore at heart, looks at Him.

« I was tired, Mother. The world is not like this house, where everything is honesty and love. You… You know Who I am and can thus understand what it is for Me to be in touch with the world. It is like walking along a foul muddy road. Even if a man is careful, he will get splashed with mud and the stench will penetrate him, even if he endeavours not to breathe… and if he is a man who loves cleanliness and pure air, You can imagine how troublesome it is… »

« Yes, Son, I understand. But it grieves Me that You should suffer… »

« Now I am with You and I do not suffer. There is only the memory… But it serves to increase the joy of being with You. » And Jesus bends down to kiss His Mother.

He caresses also the other Mary, who has just come in all flushed, after lighting the oven fire.

« We will have to inform Judas. » It is the worry of Mary of Alphaeus.

« It is not necessary. Judas will be here, to-day. »

« How do You know? »

Jesus smiles and is silent.

« Son, every week, this day, Simon Peter comes. He comes to bring the fish caught early in the night. And he arrives here shortly after daybreak. He will be happy today. Simon is good. He always helps us, while he is here. Does he not, Mary? »

« Simon Peter is honest and good » says Jesus. « But also the other Simon whom You will see shortly, is a kind-hearted man. I am going to meet them. They must be about to arrive. »

And Jesus goes out whilst the women, after putting the bread into the oven, go into the house, where Mary puts on Her sandals and then comes back wearing a snow-white linen dress.

Some time goes by and while waiting, Mary of Alphaeus says: « You did not have time to finish that work. »

« It will soon be finished. And My Jesus will have the relief of shade without having His head burdened. »

The door is pushed from outside. « Mother: here are My friends. Come in. »

The disciples and shepherds go in all together. Jesus is holding by their shoulders the two shepherds and He leads them towards His Mother: « Here are two sons looking for a mother. Be their joy, Woman. »

« You are welcome… You?… Levi… You? I do not know, but according to your age, as He told Me, you must be Joseph. That name is sweet and sacred in this house. Come, come. It is with joy that I say to you: My house welcomes you and a Mother embraces you, in remembrance of the love you in your father had for My Child. »

The shepherds seem spellbound, they are so enraptured.

« Yes, I am Mary. You saw the happy Mother. I am still the same. Also now I am happy seeing My Son among faithful hearts. »

« And this is Simon, Mother. »

« You deserved the grace because you are good. I know. And may the grace of God be always with you. »

Simon, who is more experienced in the customs of the world, bows down to the ground, his arms crossed over his chest, and says: « I salute You, true Mother of Grace and now that I have met both the Light and You, Who are more gentle than the moon, I will not ask the Eternal Father for anything else. »

« And this is Judas of Kerioth. »

« I have a mother but my love for her fades away, compared to the veneration I feel for You. »

« No, not for Me. For Him. I am, only because He is. I want nothing for Myself. I only ask for Him. I know how you honoured My Son in your town. But I say to you: let your heart be the place where He receives the highest honour from you. Then I will bless you with a motherly heart. »

« My heart is under the heel of your Son. A happy oppression. Only death will undo my loyalty. »

« And this is our John, Mother. »

« I have not been worried ever since I knew you were with My Jesus. I know you and My mind is at peace when I know that you are with My Son. I bless you, My peace. » She kisses him.

Peter’s harsh voice is heard from outside: « Here is poor Simon bringing his greetings and… » He has come in and is dumbfounded.

He then throws on to the floor the round basket which was hanging

from his shoulder and he throws himself on his knees saying: « Ah! Eternal Lord! But… No, You should not have done that to me, Master! You were here… and did not let poor Simon know! May God bless You, Master! How happy I am! I could not bear to be without You any longer! » And he caresses Jesus' hand without listening to Him Who keeps repeating: « Get up, Simon. Will you get up? »

« Yes, I will get up. But… Hey, you, boy! (the boy is John) At least you could have come to tell me! Now run quick. Go to Capernaum and tell the others… and Judas' household first of all. Your son is about to arrive, woman. Be quick. Just imagine that you are a hare chased by dogs. »

John leaves laughing.

Peter has got up at last. He is still holding Jesus' thin hand in his short thickset ones, marked by swollen veins, and he kisses it without letting it go, although he appears to be anxious to hand over the fish, which is in the basket on the floor. « Eh! no. I don't want You to go away again without me. Never again, never again such a long time without seeing You! I will follow You as a shadow follows a body and the rope follows the anchor. Where have You been, Master? I kept wondering: "Oh! Where will He be? What will He be doing? And will that boy, John, be able to look after Him? Will he make sure that Jesus does not get too tired? That He is not left without food?" Eh! I know You… You have lost weight! Yes, You have. He did not take proper care of You! I will tell him that… But where have You been, Master? You are not telling me anything! »

« I am waiting for you to give Me a chance to say one word! »

« It's true. But… Ah! To see You is like having a new wine. It goes to your head just with its smell. Oh! My Jesus. » Peter is almost in tears out of Joy.

« I also missed you. I missed you all, although I was with dear friends. Here, Peter. These two men have loved Me since I was a New-Born Baby. Even more! They have suffered because of Me. Here is a son who lost his father and mother on account of Me. But now he has so many brothers in you all, has he not? »

« Of course, Master. If by chance, the Devil should love You, I would love him because he loves You. I see that you are poor, too. So we are equal. Come here that I may kiss you. I am a fisherman but my heart is more tender than a dove's. And it is sincere. Don't pay attention if I am rough. I am hard outside. Inside I am all butter and honey. But with good people… because with evil ones… »

« And this is the new disciple. »

« I think I have already met him… »

« Yes, he is Judas of Kerioth, and Your Jesus was made welcome in that town because of him. I ask you to love each other, even if

you are from different regions. You are all brothers in the Lord. » « And I will treat him as such, if he will be such. Eh! Yes… (Peter stares at Judas, a frank warning glance), yes, I may as well say so, so you will understand me at once and properly. I will tell you: I do not think much of Judaeans in general, and of the citizens of Jerusalem in particular. But I am honest. And upon my honesty I can assure you that I will put aside all the ideas I have of you, and that I want to see in you only a brother disciple. It is up to you now not to make me change my mind and my decision. »

« Have you such preconceived ideas, Simon, also with regard to me? » asks the Zealot smiling.

« Oh! I had not seen you. With regard to you? Oh! no. Honesty is painted on your face. Goodness comes from your heart, like sweet smelling oil from a porous vase. And you are an elderly man, which is not always a merit. Some times, the older one gets, the more false and worse one becomes. But you are one of those who behave like vintage wines. The older they get, the better and purer they become. »

« You have judged correctly, Peter » says Jesus. « Now come. While the women are working for us, let us stop under the cool bower. How lovely it is to be with friends! We will then go all together through Galilee and farther. Well, not all. Now that Levi is satisfied, he will go back to Elias to tell him that Mary sends him Her greetings. Is that all right, Mother? »

« That I bless him, as well as Isaac and the others. My Son has promised to take Me along with Him… and I will come to you, the first friends of My Child. »

« Master, I would like Levi to take to Lazarus the letter You know about. »

« Have it ready, Simon. Today is a full feast day. Levi will go away tomorrow evening. In time to be there before the Sabbath. Come, My friends… »

They go into the green kitchen garden and it all ends.

91. Jesus' Lesson to His Disciples in the Olive-Grove.

29th January 1945.

I see Jesus coming out of His house and going out of Nazareth with Peter, Andrew, John, James, Philip, Thomas, Bartholomew, Judas Thaddeus, Simon and Judas Iscariot and the shepherd Joseph. They stop in the neighbourhood, in a thicket of olive-trees.

He says: « Come round Me. During these months of presence and absence I have weighed you up and studied you. I have known you and I have known the world with the experience of a man. Now I have decided to send you into the world. But before I must teach You, to make you capable of facing the world with the kindness

and wisdom, the calm and perseverance, the conscience and science necessary for your mission. This period of excessive heat, which makes any long journey through Palestine impossible, will be used by Me for your education and formation as disciples. Like a musician, I have heard what is dissonant in you and I will now tune you to the celestial harmony you must convey to the world in My name. I am keeping this son (and He points at Joseph) because I will delegate to him the task of referring My words to his companions, so that also there an efficient group may be formed, that will announce Me not by simply stating that I exist, but by explaining the most essential features of My doctrine.

First of all I tell you that it is absolutely necessary for you to love one another and be united. Who are you? Men of every social condition, of different age, from everywhere. I preferred to choose those who are not indoctrinated, because I will more easily instil into them My doctrine, and also because - as you are destined to evangelise those who are in complete ignorance of the true God - I want them not to disregard their previous ignorance of God, when they remember it, and to teach them with charity, remembering with how much charity I taught them.

You may object: "We are not heathens, even if we are not intellectually cultured". No, you are not. However, not only you but also those among you who represent the learned and rich people, are involved in a religion, which has only the name of religion, as its nature has been perverted by too many factors. I tell you that there are many who boast of being children of the Law. But eight out of ten of them are but idolaters who have confused the true, holy, eternal Law of the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, in the haze of a thousand petty human religions. Therefore, looking at one another, both you humble fishermen without culture, and you merchants or sons of merchants, and you officials or sons of officials, and you wealthy people or sons of wealthy people, you must say: "We are all equal. We have all the same faults and we all need the same teaching. Since we are brothers in our personal or national faults, from now on we must become brothers in the knowledge of the Truth and in our efforts in practising it".

Exactly: brothers. I want you to call and to consider one another as such. You are like one family. When does a family thrive and when does the world admire it? When its members are united and of the same mind. If one son becomes the enemy of another, if one brother harms another, is it possible for the prosperity of that family to last long? No. In vain the father of the family strives to work, to smooth down difficulties, to impose himself on the world. His efforts are not successful, because the wealth of the family falls to pieces, their difficulties increase, the world laughs at their perpetual quarrels by which hearts and possessions - which

united were powerful against the world - are broken into a small knot of tiny opposite interests, and the enemies of the family take more and more advantage of them to hasten their ruin. You must never be like that. Be united. Love one another. You must love one another to help one another.

Look. Also what surrounds us teaches us this great strength. Look at this army of ants running all to the same place. Let us follow them. We will discover the reason of their sensible rushing to one spot… Here it is. This little sister of theirs, with her tiny organs which are invisible to us, has discovered a great treasure under this large wild chicory leaf. It is a bread crumb which perhaps was dropped from the hands of a peasant who had come here to attend to his olive-trees, or from the hands of a wayfarer who rested here in the shade eating his food, or of a child who was playing happily on the grass full of flowers. How could she trail to the hole by herself this treasure which is a thousand times her size? So she called a sister and said to her: "Look. Go quickly and tell our sisters that there is food here for the whole tribe and for many days. Go before a bird discovers this treasure and calls his mates and they devour it". And the little ant ran, panting because of the rough ground, up and down pebbles and stalks, until she reached the anthill and she said: "Come. One of us is calling you. She found enough for us all. But she can't bring it here by herself. Come". And all the ants ran, also the ones who already tired because of a hard day's work, were resting along the tunnels of the nest; also the ones who were laying in stores in the store cells. One, ten, a hundred, a thousand… Look… They grasp it with their jaws, they lift it supporting it with their bodies and they trail it pushing their tiny feet on the ground. This one has fallen… that one there is almost crippled because the edge of the crumb, turning over, is squeezing her against a stone; and this one, so small, obviously one of the youngest in the tribe, is stopping exhausted… but having caught her breath, she is starting again.

Oh! How united they are! Look: now the bread crumb has been completely embraced by them and it is moving, very slowly, but it is moving. Let us follow it… A little more, little sisters, still a little more, and your efforts will be rewarded… They are exhausted. But they do not give up. They rest and start again… Now they are reaching the ant nest. And now? Now they work to break the big crumb into little bits. Look how they work! Some cut bits off, some carry them away… It's all finished. Now it is all safely stored and they happily disappear into the crevices, down along the tunnels. They are ants. Nothing but ants. And yet they are strong because they are united.

Meditate on that. Have you anything to ask Me? »

« I would like to ask You: but are we not going back to Judaea

again? » asks Judas Iscariot.

« Who said so? »

« You did, Master. You said that You want to prepare Joseph so that he may teach the others in Judaea! Have You felt so hurt, that You do not want to go there again? »

« What have they done to You in Judaea? » asks Thomas anxiously and Peter, at the same time, vehemently: « Ah! I was right then in saying that You had come back much thinner. What did the perfect ones" in Israel do to You? »

« Nothing, My friends. Nothing more than what I will find even here. If I went round the whole world, I would find friends and enemies everywhere. But, Judas, I asked you to be quiet… »

« That's true, but… No, I cannot be quiet when I see that You prefer Galilee to my fatherland. You are unfair. You were honoured also there… »

« Judas! Judas… Oh! Judas. Your reproach is unfair. And you accuse yourself, giving vent to wrath and jealousy. I had done My best to make known only the good I had received in your Judaea and without lying I was able to mention such good with joy, so that you people of Judaea might be loved. I did so with joy. Because for the Word of God there is no distinction of regions, there are no antagonisms, enmities, differences. I love all men. All of them… How can you say that I prefer Galilee when I worked the first miracles and the first demonstrations on the holy ground of the Temple and of the Holy City, so dear to every Israelite? How can you say that I am partial, if of My eleven disciples, or rather ten, because My cousin is one of the family, not just a friend, four are Judaeans? And if I take into account also the shepherds, who are all from Judaea, you can see how many friends I have in Judaea. How can you say that I do not love you, if, knowing all things, I arranged My journey so as to give My name to a new-born in Israel and receive the soul of a dying just man of Israel? How can you say I do not love you Judaeans, if I wanted two Judaeans and only one Galilean to be present at the revelation of My birth and of My preparation to My mission? You accuse Me of injustice. But examine yourself, Judas, and consider whether you are not the unjust one. »

Jesus has spoken with majesty and kindness. But even if He had not said anything else, the three ways in which He pronounced « Judas » at the beginning of His speech, would have been sufficient to give him a good lesson. The first « Judas » was pronounced by the majestic God Who demands respect, the second by the Master Who teaches in a fatherly manner, the third was the prayer of a friend grieved at the behaviour of a friend. Judas lowers his head mortified, but still bad-tempered, and ugly looking because of low sentiments coming to light.

Peter cannot keep silent. « At least beg His forgiveness, boy. If I had been in Jesus' place, you would not have got off just with words! You are more than unfair! You are lacking in respect, my fine gentleman! Is that how they educate you in the Temple? Or is it you that is not educable? Because, if it is, then… »

« That is enough, Peter. I said what was to be said. This will be a starting point for tomorrow's teaching. And now I will repeat to everybody what I told these disciples in Judaea: do not tell My Mother that Her Son was ill-treated by the Judaeans. She is already quite sad because She has realised that I am suffering. Respect My Mother. She lives in seclusion and silence. She is active only in virtue and prayer for Me, for you, for everybody. Let the gloomy lights of the world and harsh quarrels be far away from Her retreat, which is protected by discretion and purity. Do not put even the shadow of hatred where everything is love. Please respect Her. She is braver than Judith, as you will see. But do not compel Her, before Her time, to taste the dregs, which are the sentiments of the wicked people of the world. That is, the sentiments of those who have not even a rough idea of God and God's Law. I spoke to you of them at the beginning: they are the idolaters who consider themselves the wise men of God and they thus add idolatry to pride. Let us go. »

And Jesus goes back to Nazareth.

92. Jesus' Lesson to His Disciples near His Home.

30th January 1945.

Jesus is once again teaching His disciples, whom he has taken under the shade of a huge walnut-tree, situated above Mary's garden, part of which is shaded by the protruding branches of the tree. It is a stormy day and a storm is impending, that is probably the reason why Jesus did not go too far from His house. Mary comes and goes from the garden to the house, and each time She looks up and smiles at Her Jesus, sitting on the grass near the treetrunk, surrounded by His disciples.

Jesus says: « I told you yesterday that today's lesson would be on what was caused yesterday by a careless word. And here is the lesson.

You must consider as certain, and it should be your rule when acting, that nothing of what is hidden will remain such for ever. It is either God Who takes care to make known the work of one of His children by means of His miracles, or by means of the words of just people who acknowledge the merits of a brother. Or it is Satan who, through the mouth of a careless person, I will not say more, reveals what good people preferred to say nothing about, so as not to Provoke uncharitable situations; or Satan distorts the truth in

order to create confusion in the minds of people. Therefore the moment always comes when hidden things are made known.

You must always bear that in your minds. And may it restrain you from doing evil, without, however, encouraging you to refrain from doing good. How often one acts out of goodness, true goodness, but human goodness! And as such acting is human, that is, its intention is not perfect, one wishes it to be known to men and one is worried and gets enraged seeing that it remains unknown, and strives to make it known. No, My friends. Do not do that. Do good and give it to the eternal Lord. He knows how to make it known also to men, if it is for your own good. If instead that should impede your just actions, owing to a burst of proud satisfaction, then the Father will keep it secret, and will give you glory in Heaven in the presence of all the celestial Cohort.

And never judge a deed by its appearance. Never accuse anyone, because the actions of men may at times seem bad and yet conceal other reasons. A father, for instance, may say to his lazy glutton son: "Go away" which may seem hard and contrary to his paternal duties. But it is not always so. His "Go away" is seasoned with bitter tears shed more by the father than by the son, and it is accompanied by words and by the wish that the words may be true: "You will come back when you are sorry for your indolence". And it is also an act of justice with regard to the other sons, because it prevents a glutton from squandering in vice what belongs also to the others. It is bad, instead, if that word is pronounced by a father, who is at fault himself, against God and his own children, because in his selfishness he considers himself above God and deems he has rights also on the soul of his son. No. The spirit belongs to God and not even God violates the freedom of the soul, which is thus free to give itself or not. All actions seem identical to the world. And yet how much one differs from another! One is justice, the other a faulty arbitrary act. Therefore never judge anybody.

Peter yesterday asked Judas: "Who was your teacher?" Let him never ask that again. Let no one accuse the other of what one sees in anybody. Teachers have the same words for all the pupils. How is it, then, that ten become just and ten wicked? It is because each adds of his own what he has in his heart, and that turns the scale towards good or towards bad. How can the teacher then be accused of teaching wrongly, if the good he inculcated is negatived by the excessive evil reigning in a heart? The first factor of success depends upon you. The teacher works at your ego. But if you are not susceptible to improvement, what can the teacher do? What am I? I solemnly tell you that there will be no teacher more patient, wise and perfect than I am. And yet, also of some of My disciples it will be said: "Who was his teacher?"

When judging do not allow yourselves to be overwhelmed by personal reasons. Yesterday Judas, who loves his region more than it is fair, thought I was unfair to it. Man is often subject to such imponderable elements as love for his fatherland, or attachment to an idea, and like a kingfisher that has lost its bearings, he deviates from his destination. God is the destination. It is necessary to see everything in God, to see properly, without putting oneself or anything else above God. And if one makes a mistake… Peter, and you all, do not be intolerant! Have you really never made the mistake that hurts you so much when made by someone else? Are you sure? And supposing you never made it, what are you to do? Thank God and nothing else. And watch carefully. And unceasingly, so that tomorrow you will not fall into what has been avoided so far. See? The sky today is dark because of an impending hailstorm. And looking at the sky we said: "Do not let us go too far from home". Well, if we can judge things, which however dangerous, are nothing as compared to the danger of losing God's friendship by sinning, why can we not discern where there may be a danger for our souls?

Look, there is My Mother over there. Can you conceive an inclination to evil in Her? Well, since love urges Her to follow Me, She will leave Her home when My love so wishes. But this morning, after asking Me once again - because She, My Teacher, used to say to Me: "Son, let Your Mother be among Your disciples. I want to learn Your doctrine"; She, Who possessed that doctrine in Her womb and even before in Her soul, as a gift of God to the future Mother of His Incarnate Word - She said: "But… decide whether I can come without losing My union with God, and without My heart being corrupted by what there is in the world and which You say penetrates with its stench, because My heart has always been, is and wants to be only of God. I search My heart, and as far as I know, I think I can do it, because… (and at this point unknowingly, She gave Herself the highest praise)… because I find no difference between the spotless peace I enjoyed as a flower in the Temple and the peace I have now within Me, now that I have been a housewife for over thirty years. But I am an unworthy servant who does not know the things of the spirit well and is even less capable of judging them. You are the Word, the Wisdom, the Light. And You may be the light of Your poor Mother Who is agreeable not to see You any longer, rather than not be grateful to the Lord". And I had to say to Her, while My heart trembled with admiration: "Mother, I tell You: It is not You that will be corrupted by the world. But it is the world that will be purified by You'.

My Mother, as you have just heard, has been able to see the dangers of living in the world, dangers also for Her. And You,

men, should you not see them? Oh! Satan is really lying in wait. And only those on the alert will win. And the others? You are asking about the others? For the others it will be as it was written. »

« What was written, Master? »

« "And Cain set on Abel and killed him. And the Lord said to Cain: 'Where is your brother? What have you done with him? The voice of his blood is crying to Me. Now you shall be accursed on the earth that has tasted human blood at the hands of a brother who has opened the veins of his brother and that horrid thirst of the earth for human blood will never cease. And the earth, poisoned by that blood, will be more sterile than a woman withered by age. And you shall be a fugitive seeking peace and bread. And you shall not find them. On account of your remorse, you shall see blood on every flower and blade of grass, on all waters and food. The sky will seem blood to you and the sea blood and from the sky, from the earth and the sea three voices will reach you: the voice of God, of the Innocent, of the Demon. And you will kill yourself not to hear them' ". »

« Genesis does not say that » remarks Peter.

« No. Genesis does not. But I do. And I am not mistaken. And I say so for the new Cains of the new Abels. For those who not watching over themselves and the Enemy, will become one thing with him. »

« But none of us will be such, is that right, Master? »

« John, when the Veil of the Temple will be torn, a great truth will be written brightly all over Zion. »

« Which, my Lord? »

« That the children of darkness have in vain been in touch with the Light. Remember that, John. »

« Will I be a son of darkness, Master? »

« No, not you. But remember that, to explain the Crime to the world. »

« Which crime, Lord? Cain's? »

« No: that is the first chord of Satan's hymn. I am referring to the perfect Crime. The inconceivable crime. The one, to understand which, it is necessary to look at it through the sun of divine Love and through Satan's mind. Because only the perfect Love and the perfect hatred, only the infinite Good and the infinite Evil can explain such Offer and such Sin. Do you hear that? Satan seems to be listening and shouting out of the desire to commit it. Let us go before the cloud bursts with lightning and hail stones. »

And they run down the cliff jumping into Mary's garden while the storm begins to rage.

93. The Lesson to the Disciples in the Presence of the Most Holy Virgin in the Garden in Nazareth.

31st January 1945.

Jesus goes into the kitchen garden, which looks as if it has been washed by the storm of the previous evening. And He sees His Mother bending over some little plants. He goes up to Her and greets Her. How sweet is their kiss! Jesus embraces Her shoulders with His left arm and draws Her to Himself kissing Her forehead, just under Her hair line and He then bows down to be kissed by His Mother on the cheek. But what completes the sweetness of the gesture is the glance that accompanies it. Jesus' look is full of love, although majestic and protective; Mary's is all veneration and love. When they kiss each other like that, Jesus seems to be the older of the two, and Mary is like a young daughter receiving the morning kiss from her father or from a much older brother.

« Were Your flowers damaged by yesterday evening's hailstones and by last night's wind? » asks Jesus.

« No harm, Master. Only the branches were badly ruffled » answers Peter in a somewhat hoarse voice, before Mary can speak.

Jesus looks up and sees Simon Peter, with only his short tunic on, busy straightening some fig-tree branches which were bent upwards. « Are you working already? »

« Eh! We fishermen sleep like the fish: at any time, anywhere, but only as long as they let us rest. And one gets used to it. This morning I heard the door squeak at dawn and I said: "Simon, She is already up. Be quick! Go and help Her with your strong hands". I thought She might be worrying about Her flowers in such a windy night. And I was not wrong. Eh! I know what women are like!… My wife also tosses about in her bed, like a fish in the net, when there is a storm and she worries about her plants… Dear woman! Sometimes I say to her: "I bet you do not toss so much when your Simon is thrown about like a straw on the lake!" But it is not fair, because she is a good wife. It seems impossible that her mother is… Well, be quiet, Peter. That's got nothing to do with it. It is not right to grumble and imprudently to tell people what out of kindness we should not mention. See, Master, Your word has entered also my stubborn head! »

Jesus replies laughing: « You are saying everything yourself. I can but approve and admire your wisdom as a farmer. »

« He has already tied all the shoots which had become loose, he has supported the pear-tree which is too heavily laden, and he placed those ropes under that pomegranate-tree, which is growing all on one side » says Mary.

« Yes! It looks like an old Pharisee. It leans to the side that suits it. And I straightened it up as if it were a sail and I said to it: "Don't you know that you must keep to a happy medium? Come

here, you blockhead, or you will crash down because of your excessive weight". Now I am working at this fig-tree. But out of selfishness. I am thinking of everybody's appetite: fresh figs and new bread! Ah! Not even Antipas has such a good meal! But I must be careful, because the branches of a fig-tree are as tender as a young girl's heart, when she says her first words of love, and I am heavy, and the best figs are at the top. They have already been dried by the early sun. They must be delicious. Eh! Boy. Don't stand there looking at me. Wake up! Give me that basket. »

John, who has just come out of the workshop, obeys and climbs up the big fig-tree. When the two fishermen come down, also Simon Zealot, Joseph and Judas Iscariot have come out from the workshop. I do not see the others.

Mary brings some new bread: small round brown loaves, which Peters cuts with his pocket knife and then places the split figs onto them, and offers them first to Jesus, then to Mary and the others. They eat with relish in the cooled kitchen garden, which is so beautiful in the bright morning sunshine, also because of the recent rain which has cleaned the air.

Peter says: « This is Friday… Master, tomorrow is the Sabbath… »

« We all know that » remarks the Iscariot.

« Of course. But the Master knows what I mean… »

« Yes, I know. This evening we will go to the lake, where you left your boat and we will sail to Capernaum. Tomorrow I will speak there. »

Peter is overjoyed.

Thomas, Andrew, James, Philip, Bartholomew and Judas Thaddeus, who must have slept elsewhere, come in all together. They greet one another.

Jesus says: « Let us stay here all together. There will be also a new disciple. Mother, come. »

They sit down, some on stones, some on stools, forming a circle round Jesus, Who has sat on the stone bench against the wall with His Mother beside Him and at His feet John, who preferred to sit on the ground in order to be near.

Jesus begins speaking slowly and solemnly as usual.

« To what shall I compare the apostolic formation? To the nature surrounding us. See. The earth in winter seems dead. But inside it the seeds are active and the lymphs feed on moisture which they store in the underground branches - I could call the roots thus so that they may have plenty for the upper branches when it is time to blossom. You also can be compared to the winter earth: barren, naked, ugly looking. But the Sower has passed on you and has spread the seed. The Tiller has come near you and has broken up the soil round your trunks, which are as hard and rough as the soil in which they are planted, so that the roots may receive

nourishment from the clouds and from the air and the trunks may be strengthened for the future fruit. And you have received the seed and the tillage because you are willing to bear fruit in the work of God.

I will also compare your apostolic formation to the storm which struck and bent and seemed a purposeless violence. But see how much good it has done. The air today is purer, fresher, without dust or sultriness. The sun is the same sun as yesterday's. But it is not so scorching as yesterday when it seemed like a high temperature, because its rays reach us through purified and fresh strata of air. The herbs and plants are relieved as well as men, because cleanliness and serenity cheer up all things. Also contrasts help to attain a more precise knowledge and clarification. Otherwise they would be nothing but wickedness. And what are contrasts if not the storms that stir up different types of clouds? And do such clouds not pile up slowly in the hearts of men in useless bad moods, petty jealousies and vain pride? Then the wind of Grace blows and gathers them together that they may discharge their ill humours and the sky may clear up again.

And your apostolic moulding is like the work that Peter was doing this morning for the delight of My Mother: which is to straighten, tie, support or undo, according to the varying situations and necessities, to make you "strong workers" at the service of God. It is necessary to correct wrong ideas, to tie and subdue the rebelling flesh, to support weaknesses, to cut off evil inclinations if necessary, and to free from slavery and timidity. You must be free and strong. Like eagles, that leave their native mountain tops and fly higher and higher. The service of God is the flight. Affections are the mountain tops.

One among you is sad today because his father's life is on the decline. And he is declining with his heart closed to the Truth and to his son who is following the Truth. More than closed: hostile. The father has not yet said the unfair: "Go away", of which I spoke to you yesterday, thus declaring himself to be above God. But his closed heart and sealed lips are not yet capable of saying at least: "Follow the voice that is calling you". Neither the son nor I Who am speaking to you, would expect to hear those lips say: "Come and let the Master come with you. And may God be blessed because He chose a servant in my family, creating thus with the Word of the Lord, -a kinship which is more sublime than blood". But at least I, for his own sake, and the son for more complicated reasons, would not like to hear hostile words from him.

But this son must not cry. He must know that I bear no grudge or ill-feeling towards his father. I feel only pity for him. I have come and stopped here, although I knew it would be useless, so that one day the son may not say to Me: "Oh! Why did You not come?" I

have come that he may be fully convinced that everything is quite useless, when a heart is hardened by hatred. I have also come to comfort a good woman who is suffering because of this family division, as if her heart were torn to pieces. But both the son and the good mother must be convinced that I do not return hatred for hatred. I respect the honesty of the old believer who is faithful to what has been so far his religion, although his faith has gone off the right path.

There are many like him in Israel… That is why I say to you: I will be more accepted by the heathens than by the children of Abraham. Mankind has depraved the idea of the Saviour and has lowered His supernatural royalty to the poor idea of a human sovereignty. I must break the hard bark of Hebraism, penetrate it, and cut it till I reach the bottom and then place the fruitful new Law exactly where the heart of Hebraism is. Oh! Israel, brought up around the vital stone of the Law of Sinai, has become like a monstrous fruit, the pulp of which is formed by layers of harder and harder fibres, protected outside by a shell firm against every penetration and also against the ejection of the germ, so much so that the Eternal Father deems the moment has come to create the new plant of the faith in the one and trine God. To allow the will of God to be fulfilled and Hebraism to become Christianity, I must notch, pierce, penetrate and make My way to the very stone, then warm it with My love, so that it will awake and swell, sprout and grow more and more and thus become the mighty plant of Christianity, the perfect, eternal, divine religion. And I solemnly tell you that it will be possible to penetrate Hebraism only in the proportion of one part to a hundred.

I therefore do not deem reprobate this Israelite who does not want Me and is not willing to give Me his son. That is why I say to the son: do not cry on account of the flesh and blood that suffer being rejected by the flesh and blood that generated them. That is why I say: do not even cry on account of the soul. Your suffering operates more than anything else in favour of your soul and his, in favour of your father who does not understand and does not see. And I also say to you: do not feel remorse for being more of God than of your father.

And I say to you all: God is more than father, mother, brothers. I have come to join people not according to the world, to flesh and blood; but according to the spirit and to Heaven. I therefore must separate flesh and blood to take with Me the souls which, even when on this world, are fit for Heaven, to take the servants of Heaven. So I have come to call the "strong ones", and make them even stronger, because My army of meek people is made of I strong" people. Meek towards their brothers, strong against their own ego and the selfishness of family blood.

Do not cry, My cousin. I can assure you that your pain is operating before God in favour of your father and brothers more than any word, not only yours, but also Mine. Believe Me, words cannot enter where preconceived ideas form a barrier. But Grace enters. And a sacrifice draws graces.

I solemnly tell you that when I call someone as a disciple, there is no obedience greater than this one. And we must obey without even stopping to reckon how and how much others will react to our going towards God. One must not even stop to bury one's father. And you will receive a reward for your heroism, a reward not only for yourselves, but also for those from whom you are torn away, broken hearted, and whose words often strike you more painfully than a slap in the face, because they accuse you of being ungrateful children and in their selfishness they curse you as rebels. No, not rebels. Saints.

The first enemies of those who are called, are their relatives. But we must learn to distinguish between love and love and to love in a supernatural way. That is to love more the Master of the supernatural than the servants of the Master. We must love our relatives in God. But not more than God. »

Jesus is silent, He gets up and goes near His cousin who, with lowered head, can hardly hold back his tears. Jesus caresses him. « Judas… I left My Mother to follow My mission. This should remove all doubts about the honesty of your behaviour. If it had not been a good deed, would I have done it to My Mother, Who, above all, has no one but Me? »

Judas presses Jesus' hand to his face and nods his head. But he cannot say anything.

« Let us go, the two of us by ourselves, as when we were boys and Alphaeus thought I was the most sensible boy in Nazareth. Let us go and take these beautiful bunches of golden grapes to the old man, so that he may not think that I am neglecting him or that I am hostile to him. Also your mother and James will be pleased. I will tell him that I will be in Capernaum tomorrow and that his son will be entirely devoted to him. You know, old people are like children: they are jealous. And they always suspect they are being neglected. We must pity them… »

Jesus has gone, leaving in the garden the disciples dumbfounded at the revelation of pain and incompatibility between a father and a son because of Jesus. Mary has gone with Jesus as far the door and now She comes back sighing in distress.

It all ends.

94. Cure of the Beauty of Korazim. Sermon in the Synagogue at Capernaum.

1st February 1945.

Jesus comes out of the house of Peter's mother-in-law together with His disciples, except Judas Thaddeus. A boy is the first to see Him and he informs also those who do not want to know. Jesus, Who is on the shore of the lake, sitting in Peter's boat, is immediately surrounded by people who welcome Him and ask Him endless questions, which Jesus answers with His unsurpassed patience, smiling gently as if all the chattering were a celestial harmony.

Also the archsynagogue comes. Jesus gets up to greet him. Their reciprocal salutation is full of oriental respect. « Master, may I expect You to come and teach the people? »

« Of course, if you and the people wish so. »

« We have been wishing it for so long. They can tell You. » The people in fact shout their confirmation.

« Well then, I will be with you this evening. Now you may go. I have to go to see a person who wants Me. »

The people go away reluctantly, while Jesus, Peter and Andrew go on to the lake in the boat. The other disciples remain on the shore.

The boat sails for a short distance and then the two fishermen steer it into a small bay, between two low hills, which look as if originally they were one hill only, the central part of which had collapsed either because of water erosion or because of an earthquake, thus forming a very small fiord. However, since it is not a Norwegian fiord, there are no fir-trees, but only ruffled olive-trees which, no one knows how, have grown on the steep slopes, among slipped rocks and huge protruding splinters. Blown by the winds of the lake, which obviously must be very strong here, the branches of the trees are all interwoven, and form a kind of roof, under which a freakish little torrent foams: it is very noisy because of its many cascades and full of foam because it falls every yard or so, but in actual fact it is only a little rivulet among the streams.

Andrew jumps into the water to beach the boat as far up as possible and tie it to a tree-trunk, while Peter takes in the sail and fastens a board as a bridge for Jesus. « But » he says, « I would advise You to take off Your sandals and Your tunic, as we do. That mad thing there (and he points at the little torrent) causes the water of the lake to rise and the board is not safe with all this rolling. »

Jesus obeys without question. On the shore they put on their sandals again and Jesus puts on also His tunic. The two disciples are wearing only their short dark undertunics.

« Where is she? » asks Jesus.

« She must be hiding in the wood, after hearing voices. You know… with all she's got to wear… »

« Call her. »

Peter shouts out loud: « I am the disciple of the Rabbi of Capernaum. The Rabbi is here. Come out. »

There is no sign of life.

« She does not feel safe » explains Andrew. « One day someone called her and said: "Come, there is some food for you" and then threw stones at her. We saw her then for the first time, because I did not remember her when she was the Beauty of Korazim. »

« And what did you do then? »

« We threw her a loaf of bread and some fish and a rag, a piece of an old sail cloth with which we used to dry ourselves, because she was nude. We then ran away not to be contaminated. »

« And what made you come back? »

« Master… You were away and we were thinking what should we do to get people to know You. We thought of all the sick people, the blind, the crippled, the mute… and also of her. We said: "Let us try". You know… many… oh! it was certainly our fault, said we were mad and would not listen to us. Others instead believed us. I spoke to her myself. I came here by boat, all by myself, for several moonlight nights. I used to call her and say to her: "On the stone, at the foot of the olive-tree, there is some bread and fish. Don't be afraid, come" and I would then go away. She must have waited until she saw me disappear before she came, because I never saw her. The sixth time I saw her standing on the shore, exactly where You are now. She was waiting for me… How horrible she was! I did not run away because I thought of You…

She said to me: "Who are you? Why have mercy on me?"

I replied: "Because I am the disciple of Mercy".

"Who is He?"

"He is Jesus of Galilee".

"And does He teach you to have mercy on us?"

"On everybody".

"But do you know who I am?"

"You are the Beauty of Korazim, now a leper".

"And is there mercy also for me?"

"He says that His mercy is for everybody, and we, to be like Him, must have mercy on everybody".

At this point, Master, the leper blasphemed without realising what she was saying. She said: "He must have been a big sinner Himself ".

I said to her: "No. He is the Messiah, the Holy Man of God" I wanted to say to her: "Be you accursed for your tongue", but I did not say anything else, because I thought: "In her distress she cannot think of divine mercy". She then started crying and said: "Oh!

If He is a Holy Man He cannot have mercy on the Beauty. He might pity the leper… but not the Beauty. And I was hoping… "

I asked her: "What were you hoping for, woman?"

"To be cured… to go back into the world… amongst men… to die begging, but amongst people… not like a beast in the den of wild beasts which are horrified at the sight of me".

I said to her: "Will you swear to me that if you go back to the world, you will be honest?"

She replied: "Yes. God has justly punished me for my sins. I now repent. My soul is expiating its sins, but it abhors sin for ever".

I thought I could then promise her salvation in Your name.

She said to me: "Come back, come back again… Speak to me of Him that my soul may know Him before my eyes see Him… And I came and spoke to her of You as best as I could… »

« And I have come to grant salvation to the first convert of My Andrew. » (It is Andrew who has been speaking all the time, while Peter has gone up the torrent, jumping from stone to stone, calling the leper).

She at last shows her horrid face among the branches of an olive-tree. She sees and shouts.

« Come down, then » exclaims Peter. « I am not going to stone you! Over there, can you see Him? There is the Rabbi Jesus. »

The woman tumbles down the slope, I say so, because she runs down so fast, and she reaches Jesus' feet before Peter is back near the Master. « Mercy, Lord! »

« Can you believe that I am able to grant you it? »

« Yes, because You are a saint and I repent. I am Sin, but You are Mercy. Your disciple was the first to have mercy on me, and he brought me bread and faith. Cleanse me, Lord, my soul before my body, because I am impure three times, and if You want to give me one purity, only one, I beg You to give me the purity of my sinful soul. Before hearing Your words, that he repeated to me, I used to say: "To be cured and to go back amongst people". Now that I know, I say: "To be forgiven, that I may have eternal life". »

« And I grant you forgiveness. But nothing else… »

« May You be blessed! I shall live in my den with the peace of God… free… oh! free from remorse and free from fear! No longer afraid of God, now that You have absolved me! »

« Go into the lake and wash yourself. Stay in until I call you. »

The woman, reduced to a miserable skeleton, all corroded, her white coarse hair all ruffled, gets up from the ground and goes into the lake clothed in her meagre rags, that cover so little of her.

« Why did You send her to wash herself? It is true that the foul smell is ineffective, but… I do not understand » says Peter.

« Woman, come out of the water and come here. Take that cloth on that branch » (it is the piece of cloth used by Jesus to dry

Himself after wading from the boat to the shore).

The woman comes out obediently, completely naked, as she left her rags in the water to take the dry piece of cloth. The first to shout is Peter, who is looking at her, whilst Andrew, more bashful, is turning his back on her. But he turns round when his brother shouts and he shouts, too. The woman, who is staring at Jesus so intently that she is aware of nothing else, when she hears the shouts and sees the hands pointed at her, looks at herself… And she sees that her leprosy has been left in the lake with her rags. She does not run as one might expect her to. She throws herself down, crouching on the shore, ashamed of her nakedness, excited to such an extent that she is only fit to weep with a long feeble lament, which is more heart-rending that any cry.

Jesus moves towards her… He reaches her… He throws the cloth on her, caresses her head very lightly, says to her: « Goodbye. Be good. You deserved the grace because of the sincerity of your repentance. Grow in the faith of Christ. And fulfill the purification law. »

The woman is weeping all the time… Only when she hears the noise of the board that Peter is drawing into the boat, she looks up, stretches out her hands and shouts: « Thanks, my Lord. Thanks, Blessed Lord. Oh! Blessed, blessed!… »

Jesus waves her goodbye before the boat disappears round the rocky promontory of the little fiord.

… Jesus with His disciples goes into the synagogue at Capernaum after crossing the square and the street leading to it. The news of the recent miracle has already spread, because many people whisper and make comments.

Just on the threshold of the synagogue door I see Matthew, the future apostle. He is standing there, half inside half outside and I do not know whether he is shy or is annoyed at all the meaningful glances cast at him and at some rather unpleasant raillery of which he is the object. Two richly dressed Pharisees gather their wide mantles affectedly, as if they were afraid of being infected by the plague, if they touched Matthew's tunic even slightly.

When Jesus is going in, He stares at him and stops for a moment. But Matthew lowers his head: that is all.

As soon as they are inside, Peter whispers to Jesus: « Do You know who that curly-headed man is, the one who is more scented than a woman? He is Matthew, our tax collector… What has he come here for? It's the first time. Perhaps he did not find his mates and above all his women, with whom he spends the Sabbaths, squandering in orgies the doubled and trebled taxes he squeezes out of us, to have plenty for the revenue and his vices. »

Jesus looks at Peter so severely, that Peter becomes as red as a poppy, lowers his head and stops, so that he ends up at the rear in

the apostolic group.

Jesus has reached His place. After some songs and prayers said with the people, He turns round to speak. The archsynagogue asks Him whether He wants a roll of the Bible, but Jesus answers: « It is not necessary. I already have a subject. »

And He begins: « The great king of Israel, David of Bethlehem, after committing his sin, cried with a penitent heart, shouting to God his repentance and asking God's forgiveness. David's soul had been darkened by the fog of sensuality which prevented him from seeing the Face of God and understanding His word.

His Face, I said. In the heart of man there is a spot which remembers the Face of God: the most noble spot, which is our "Sancta Sanctorum", from which holy inspirations and decisions originate, the point that is scented like an altar, shines like a fire, and sings like a chorus of Seraphim. But when sin rages in us, that area grows so dark, that light, perfume and singing fade out and only the stench of thick smoke and the taste of ashes are left. But when light comes back, because a servant of God brings it to the dimmed man, he then sees his own ugliness, his inferior condition and struck with horror he exclaims like king David: "Have mercy on me, Lord, in your goodness, in Your great tenderness wipe away my faults" and he does not say: "I cannot be forgiven, I will therefore go on sinning". But he says: "I am humiliated and contrite, but, I beg You, You know that I was born guilty, but wash me and purify me, that I may become as white as the snow on mountain tops". He also says: "My holocaust will not consist of rams and bulls, but of the true contrition of my heart. Because I know that this is what You want from us and You do not scorn it".

That is what David said after his sin, after the servant of God, Nathan, made him, repent. That is what sinners must say, even more so, now that the Lord has sent not a servant, but the Redeemer Himself, His Word, Who, as a just ruler not only of men, but also of celestial and infernal beings, has risen amongst His people, like the light at dawn, which at sunrise shines in a cloudless sky.

You have already read how a man, a prey to Mammon, is weaker than a person dying of tuberculosis, even if before he was the "strong" one. You know how Samson was worthless after yielding himself up to sensuality. I want you to understand the lesson of Samson, the son of Manoah, destined to beat the Philistines, the oppressors of Israel. The first condition to be such was that from his conception he was to be kept virgin from everything that stirs up base sensations, and contaminates the intestines with impure foodstuffs: that is wine, cider and fat meats, which kindle the loins with an impure fire. The second condition: to be the deliverer he was to be sacred to the Lord from his

childhood and was to remain such by uninterrupted nazirite. He is .sacred who remains holy not only externally but also internally. Then God is with him.

But the flesh is flesh and Satan is Temptation. And Temptation, to fight God in the hearts of men and in His holy decrees, uses as a weapon the flesh that excites men: woman. The strength of the "strong" man then quivers and he becomes a weakling that spoils the gift of God. Now listen: Samson was tied with seven fresh bowstrings, with seven new ropes, he was fixed to the ground with seven plaits of his hair. And he had always won. But one must not tempt God, not even in His goodness. It is not lawful. He forgives, He always forgives. But He exacts the firm will to abandon sin, that He may continue to forgive. Who says: "Lord, forgive" but does not shun what induces him to continual sin, is foolish! Samson, three times the winner, did not avoid Delilah, sensuality, sin, and bored to death, says the Book, and having lost heart, says the Book, he revealed his secret: "My strength is in my seven plaits".

Is there anyone amongst you, who, tired of the great tiredness of sin, is losing heart, because nothing is so depressing as a bad conscience, and is about to surrender to the Enemy? No, whoever you are, do not do it. Samson revealed to temptation the secret to defeat his seven virtues: the seven symbolical plaits, his virtues, that is his faithfulness to nazirite; tired as he was he fell asleep in the lap of the woman and was defeated. He was blind, a slave, powerless, because he had not been faithful to his vow. Neither did he become again the "strong man", the "deliverer", until he found his strength again in the grief of repentance. Repentance, patience, perseverance, heroism and then, o sinners, I promise you will be your own deliverers. I solemnly tell you that no baptism, no rite is of any avail, if there is no repentance and will to forgo sin. And I tell you that no one is so big a sinner that he cannot revive with his tears the virtues which sin had torn from his heart.

Today a woman, a guilty woman of Israel, punished by God for her sins, received mercy on account of her repentance. I said: mercy. Those who had no mercy on her and treated the punished woman pitilessly, shall receive less mercy. Had they no guilty leprosy in their hearts? Let everybody examine himself… and have mercy to receive mercy. I hold My hand out on behalf of this repentant woman, who is coming back to the living after a segregation of death. Simon of Jonas, not I, will collect the offerings for the repented woman, who from the threshold of life is coming back to true Life. And do not grumble, you older people. Do not grumble. I was not here when she was the Beauty. But you were. I will say no more. »

« Are You accusing us of being her lovers? » asks one of the two resentful old men.

« Let everyone have his heart and his actions before him. I do not accuse. I am speaking in the name of Justice. Let us go. » And Jesus goes out with His disciples.

Judas Iscariot is detained by two people who appear to know him. I hear them say: « Are you with Him, too? Is He really a holy man? »

Judas has one of his disconcerting outbursts: « I hope you will at least be able to understand His holiness. »

« But He cured on the Sabbath. »

« No, He forgave on a Sabbath. And which day is more suitable than the Sabbath for forgiveness? Are you not giving me anything for the redeemed woman? »

« We do not give our money to prostitutes. It is offered to the holy Temple. »

Judas laughs disrespectfully and leaves them in the lurch. He joins the Master, Who is entering the house of Peter who is saying to Him: « Here, just outside the synagogue, little James gave me two purses today, instead of one, on behalf of the unknown man. Who is he, Master? You know… Tell me. »

Jesus smiles: « I will tell you when you learn not to speak ill of anyone. »

And it all ends.

95. James of Alphaeus Is Received among the Disciples. Jesus Preaches near Matthew's Customs Bench.

2nd February 1945.

It is market morning at Capernaum. The square is full of traders selling all kinds of goods.

Jesus, coming from the lake, arrives in the square and sees His cousins Judas and James coming towards Him. He quickens His pace in their direction and after embracing them affectionately, He asks them solicitously: « How is your father? What has happened? »

« Nothing new, as far as his life is concerned » answers Judas.

« Why did you come then? I told you to stay. »

Judas lowers his head and is silent. But James bursts out: « It is -my fault if he did not obey You. Yes, it's my fault. But I could not put up with the situation any longer. They are all against me. Why? Is there any harm in loving You? Are we wrong in being fond of You? So far I was held back by the scruple of doing the wrong thing. But now that I know, now that You said that not even a father is above God, I could not bear the situation any longer. Oh! I have tried to show respect, to make him understand my reasons, to clarify the situation. I said: "Why are you against me? If He is the Prophet, the Messiah, why do you want the world to say: 'His own

family was against Him? The world followed Him, His family did not?' Because, if He is as insane as you say, should we of the family not be close to Him to prevent His insanity from harming Him and us?" O Jesus, that's what I said arguing in a human way, as they did. But You know that Judas and I do not believe that You are insane. You know that we consider You the Holy Man of God. You know that we have always looked at You as our Major Star. But they would not understand us. They would not listen to us any more. And I came away. Between Jesus and the family, I chose You. Here I am, if You want me. If You do not want me, I'll be the most unhappy of all men, because I will not have anything: neither Your friendship nor the love of the family. »

« Have we got to this stage? O James, My poor James, I wish I had not seen you suffer so, because I love you! But if Jesus-Man is crying with you, Jesus-Word is jubilant on account of you. Come. I am sure that the joy of bringing God to men will increase your happiness every hour of the day until it reaches its full rapture in the last hour of the earth and in the eternal hour of Heaven. »

Jesus turns round and calls His disciples, who had discreetly stopped a few yards away. « Come here, My friends. My cousin James is now one of My friends and thus a friend of yours. How I longed for this hour, for this day because he was a perfect friend in My childhood and a good brother in My youth! »

The disciples welcome the newcomer and Judas, whom they had not seen for several days.

« We looked for you at home… but you were on the lake. »

« Yes, I was on the lake for two days with Peter and the others. Peter had a good haul. Is that right? »

« Yes, but what annoys me is that now I will have to give many didrachmas to that thief over there… » and he points at Matthew, the exciseman, whose bench is besieged by people paying for the stall ground, I think, or for foodstuffs.

« It will all be proportioned, I suppose. The better the haul, the more you pay and the more you earn. »

« No, Master. The more I catch, the more I earn. But if the weight of my draught of fish is doubled, that man there does not make me pay twice as much. He charges me four times as much… The profiteer! »

« Peter! Well, let us go just there. I want to speak. There is always a lot of people near the customs bench. »

« No wonder! » grumbles Peter. « Lots of people and imprecations. »

« Well, I will go and grant blessings. Perhaps some honest feeling will enter the exciseman's heart. »

« You need not worry about that. Your words will never go through his crocodile skin. »

« We shall see. »

« What are You going to say to him? »

« Nothing directly. But I will speak in such a way that My words will be addressed also to him. »

« Say that a thief is both who assails people in the road and who fleeces poor people who work for their daily bread and not for women and orgies. »

« Peter, do you want to speak in My place? »

« No, Master: I would not be able to speak properly. »

« And with your acrimony you would harm yourself and him. »

They have reached the customs bench. Peter is about to pay. Jesus stops him and says: « Give Me the money. I will pay today. » Peter looks at Him amazed and then gives Him a leather purse containing some money.

Jesus waits for His turn and when He is before the exciseman He says: « I am paying for eight baskets of fish belonging to Simon of Jonas. The baskets are over there, where the servants are standing. You can check, if you wish. But honest people should be able to trust each other's word. And I think that you will believe that I am honest. How much do I pay? »

Matthew, who was sat at his bench, when Jesus says: « And I think that you will believe that I am honest », stands up. He is a small and rather elderly man, about Peter's age, but his face has the weary look of the pleasure-lover and he is obviously bewildered. At first he lowers his head, then he raises it and looks at Jesus. And Jesus stares at him gravely, dominating him from His imposing height.

« How much? » Jesus asks again, after a few seconds.

« There is no taxation for the disciple of the Master » replies Matthew. And in a lower voice he adds: « Pray for my soul. »

« I carry it within Me, because I am gathering sinners. But… why do you not look after it? » And Jesus turns His back on him at once and goes back to Peter, who is struck with wonder. Also the others are dumbfounded. They whisper and wink meaningfully…

Jesus leans against a tree, about ten yards from Matthew and begins speaking.

« The world may be compared to a large family, the members of which are in different trades, all of which are necessary. There are farmers, shepherds, vine-dressers, carpenters, fishermen, bricklayers, joiners and blacksmiths, and then clerks, soldiers, officers responsible for special missions, doctors, priests. There is everything. The world could not consist of only one class of people. They are all necessary, all holy, if they do what they should do with honesty and justice. How can they achieve that if Satan tempts them on all sides? By turning their thoughts to God, Who sees everything, also the most concealed deeds, and to His Law, that

says: "Love your neighbour as you love yourself, do not do to other people what you do not want done to yourself, do not steal in any way".

Tell Me, you who are listening to Me: when a man dies, does he take his purses of money with him? And even if he were so silly as to have them buried with him in his tomb, could he make use of them in the other world? No. Money becomes a piece of metal corroded on the rot of a decomposed corpse. But his soul would be naked elsewhere and even poorer than blessed Job, it would be deprived of the smallest coin, even if he had left heaps of talents here and in his tomb. Nay, listen, listen! I solemnly tell you that it is difficult to gain Heaven with riches, on the contrary Heaven is generally lost because of riches, also if they are obtained honestly or by inheritance, because only few rich people know how to make use of their wealth honestly.

What is necessary then to gain Paradise and rest on the Father's bosom? It is necessary not to be greedy for wealth. That is, not to be eager by wanting wealth at all costs, even by going against honesty and love. Not to be eager to such an extent as to love the wealth one possesses more than Heaven and one's neighbour, refusing to assist a needy neighbour. Not to be greedy for what wealth can offer, that is: women, pleasures, a bountiful table, magnificent garments, which are an insult to those who are cold and hungry. There is a currency that can change the unjust money of the world into a currency having legal tender in the Kingdom of Heaven. And that is the holy wisdom in turning into eternal riches, the human riches which are often unjust or the cause of injustice. That is, you must earn honestly, give back what you obtained unfairly, make use of your riches with parsimony and detachment, learning how to become detached from them, because sooner or later they will leave us, whereas good deeds will never leave us. You must consider that!

We would all like to be called "just" and to be considered as such and to be rewarded by God for being just. But how can God reward who is just only by name but in fact is not so? How can He say: "I forgive you", when repentance is expressed only by word of mouth and is not supported by a real change of the spirit? There is no real repentance as long as the lust for the thing for which we sinned will last. But when a man humbles himself, when he severs all links with evil passions, such as women or gold and says: "For Your sake, o Lord, I will have no more of this", he is really repentant. And God receives him saying: "Come, you are as dear to Me as an innocent child, and a hero". »

Jesus has finished. He goes away without even turning towards Matthew, who had come near the ring of listeners after the very first words.

When they are near Peter's house, his wife runs to meet her husband and says something to him. Peter beckons Jesus to go near him. « The mother of James and Judas is here. She wants to speak to You but does not want to be seen. What shall we do? »

« Thus. I will go into the house as if I wanted to rest and you will all go and give alms to the poor. Take also the money that was not wanted for the taxation. Go. » Jesus waves them all farewell, while Peter harangues them persuading them to go with him.

« Where is the mother, woman? » Jesus asks Peter's wife.

« On the terrace, Master. It is still in the shade and is cool. You may go up. And there is more privacy than in the house. »

Jesus climbs up the tiny staircase.

In a corner, under the thick vine pergola, there is Mary of Alphaeus, sitting on a little bench against the parapet, dressed completely in black, with her veil pulled over her face. She is weeping, silently.

Jesus calls her: « Mary! My dear aunt! »

She lifts her poor sorrowful face and stretches out her hands: « Jesus! How sad at heart I am! »

Jesus is near her. He makes her remain sat. He remains standing with His mantle on, one hand on His aunt's shoulder, while the other is clasped within hers. « What is the matter with you? Why are you crying so much? »

« Oh! Jesus! I came away from home saying: "I am going to Cana to get some eggs and wine for the invalid". Your Mother is with Alphaeus and is nursing him and You know how capable She is, and I am not worried. But actually I came here. I have been running for two nights to get here quicker. I am exhausted… But the exertion is nothing… It's the pain in my heart that hurts so much!… My Alphaeus… my Alphaeus… my children… Why is there so much difference between those who are of the same blood and why is such difference as hard as millstones to crush a mother's heart? Are Judas and James with You? Are they? Then You know… Oh! Jesus! Why does my Alphaeus not understand? Why is he dying? Why does he want to die like that? And Simon and Joseph? Why are they against You and not with You? »

« Do not cry, Mary. I bear them no grudge. I already told Judas. I understand and I am sorry for them. If that is the reason why you are crying, please cry no more. »

« Yes, that's why, because they offend You. That's one reason and then… then… I do not want my husband to die being hostile to You. God will not forgive him… and I, oh! I will not have him… not even in future life… » Mary is really distressed. She is crying her heart out and her tears fall on Jesus' left hand, which she is still holding in her own and now and again kisses it and lifts her poor face tortured by pain.

« No » says Jesus. « No. Do not say that. I forgive. And if I forgive… »

« Oh! Come, Jesus. Come and save his soul and his body. Come… People are saying also, to accuse You, they are already saying that You have taken away two sons from a dying man, that's what they are saying in Nazareth, see? They also say: "He works miracles everywhere, but He is not capable of working them in His own home" and they contend with me when to defend You I say: "What can He do if you have practically driven Him away with your reproaches and if you do not believe?" »

« You said the right words: if you do not believe. What can I do where there is no faith? »

« Oh! You can do everything. I believe for them all. Please come. Work a miracle… for Your poor aunt… »

« I cannot. » Jesus is most sad in saying so. Standing up and clasping the head of the crying woman to His chest, he seems to be confessing His inability to nature itself and to be calling nature as a witness to His pain at not being able because of an eternal decree.

The woman is crying more loudly.

« Listen, Mary. Be good. I swear that if I could, if it were the right thing to do, I would do it. Oh! I would snatch this grace from the Father, for you, for My Mother, for Judas and James, and also for Alphaeus, Joseph and Simon. But I cannot. You are now so broken-hearted that you cannot understand the justice of My inability. I will tell you, although you will not understand. When it was the hour of My father's death, I did not bring him back to life again, and you know how just he was and how much My Mother loved him. I did not bring him back to life again. It is not just that a family should be exempt from the inevitable misfortunes of life only because one of its members is a holy person. If that was the case, I should remain on the earth for ever, and yet I will soon die, and Mary, My holy Mother, will not be able to snatch Me from death. I cannot. This is what I can do and I will do. » Jesus has sat down and is holding His relative's head against His shoulder. « This is what I will do. I promise peace for your Alphaeus on account of your pain and I give you assurance that you will not be separated from him and I give you My word that our family will be united again in Heaven for ever-, and as long as I live and even afterwards, I will grant you so much peace and so much strength that you will become My apostle for so many poor women, whom it will be easier for you, a woman, to contact. You will be My beloved friend in this time of evangelization. Alphaeus' death - do not cry - will free you from your duties of a wife and will raise You to the more sublime status of a mystical female priesthood, so necessary near the altar of the Great Victim and amongst so many heathens, who will yield more willingly to the holy heroism of

female disciples than of male ones. Oh! your name, dear aunt, will be like a bright star in the Christian sky… Do not cry any more. Go in peace. Be strong, resigned and holy. My Mother… became a widow before you… and will console you as She can console. Come. I do not want you to go away in this heat. Peter will take you in his boat as far as the Jordan and then to Nazareth on a donkey. Be good. »

« Bless me, Jesus. Give me strength. »

« Yes, I bless you and kiss you, My good aunt. » And He kisses her tenderly, pressing her for a long while to His heart until He sees that she has calmed down.

96. Jesus Preaches to the Crowd at Bethsaida.

3rd February 1945.

Jesus is at Bethsaida. He is speaking standing on the boat which has taken Him there and is now almost beached, tied to a pole of a little rough pier. Many people, sitting in a semicircle on the sand, are listening to Him. Jesus has just started His speech.

« … and I see here also you people of Capernaum love Me, because you have followed Me, neglecting your business and comforts to hear the words that teach you the truth. I am aware that your behaviour causes you to be insulted and may also do you social harm, worse than any financial loss, which may be the consequence of your neglecting your business. I know that Simon, Eli, Uriah and Joachim are against Me. Now they are against Me, in future they will be My enemies. And as I do not wish to deceive anyone, neither do I wish to deceive you, My faithful friends, I tell you that the mighty ones in Capernaum will make use of all means to harm Me, to make Me suffer, to defeat Me by isolating Me… They will throw out innuendos as threats and insults as slander. The common enemy will make use of everything to snatch souls from Christ and take possession of them. I tell you: who perseveres will be saved; but I also tell you that he who loves his life and welfare more than eternal salvation, is free to go away, to leave Me and take care of his petty life and temporary welfare. I will not hold anybody back.

Man is free. I have come to make him more free. Free from sin, and that concerns the spirit. And free from the chains of a distorted oppressive religion, which with torrents of words, clauses and precepts suffocates the true word of God, a word which is clear, short, light, easy, holy and perfect. I have come to sieve consciences. I gather My corn on the threshing-floor, and I thresh it with the doctrine of sacrifice, and I sift it with the sieve of its own will. The light useless chaff, sorghum, vetch, darnel will be blown away and will fall heavy and harmful, and will be eaten by birds,

and only the pure, selected, solid good corn will enter My granary. The corn: the saints.

Satan has challenged the Eternal Father for centuries. Elated with his first victory over man, Satan said to God: "Your creatures will be mine for ever. Nothing, not even punishment, not even the Law You want to give them, will enable them to earn Heaven, and that Abode of Yours, from which You expelled me, me, the only intelligent being in Your creation, will remain empty, useless and sad, like all useless things". And the Eternal Father replied to the Cursed One: "You will be able to do that as long as your poison is the only thing to rule over man. But I will send My Word and His word will counteract your poison, it will restore hearts to health, curing them of the madness with which you made them wicked, and they will come back to Me. Like lost sheep that find the shepherd, they will come back to My Fold and Heaven will be filled with souls. I made it for them. And you will be grinding your horrible teeth, out of powerless fury, down there in your horrid kingdom, a cursed prisoner, and the stone of God will be turned over on you and sealed by the angels and darkness and hatred will be with you and with your followers, while Mine will enjoy light and love, songs and beatitude and infinite, eternal, sublime freedom". And Mammon with a burst of sneering laughter swore: "And upon my Gehenna I swear that I will come when it is time. I will always be present wherever Your evangelised people are and we shall see whether I or You is the winner".

Satan, of course, lays snares for you, to sift you. And I also circumvent you to sift you. The contestants are two: I and he. You are in the middle. The duel of Love and Hatred, of Wisdom and Ignorance, of Good and Evil is over you and around you. I am sufficient to ward off any wicked blow against you. I come between the satanic weapon and you and I am willing to be wounded in your stead, because I love you. But you must ward off your internal blows, with your will, running towards Me, following My way which is Truth and Life. Who is not desirous of Heaven will not possess Heaven. Who is not suitable to become a disciple of Christ, will be like light chaff, that will be blown away by the wind of the world. Who is Christ's enemy is pernicious seed that will grow in the satanic kingdom.

I know why you people of Capernaum have come here. My conscience is so clear of the sin I am accused of, on account of which non-existent sin people speak ill of Me behind My back, suggesting that to listen to me and to follow Me is to become associated with the sinner, that I am not afraid to make the reason known to the people of Bethsaida. Among you, citizens of Bethsaida, there are some elderly people, who for various reasons have not forgotten the Beauty of Korazim. There are men who sinned with her, there

are women who cried because of her. They cried - I had not yet come to say: "Love those who hurt you!" - they cried and they rejoiced when they heard that she was bitten by putrefaction which transuded outside from her impure intestines, on to her magnificent body, and which is the symbol of that more serious leprosy that had corroded her soul of an adulteress, a homicide and a prostitute. An adulteress seventy times seven, with anyone who was a "man" and had money. A homicide seven times seven of her illegitimate conceptions; a prostitute for pleasure not for need.

Oh! I understand you, wives, whose husbands were unfaithful! I understand your rejoicing when you were told: "The flesh of the Beauty is more fetid and putrid than a carrion lying in the ditch of a main road, a prey to crows and worms". But I say to you: you must forgive. God took your vengeance and then God forgave. You must forgive, too. I forgave her also on your behalf, because I know that you are good, o women of Bethsaida, who greet Me shouting: "Blessed the Lamb of God! Blessed Who is coming in the name of the Lord!" If I am the Lamb and you know Me as such, if I, Lamb, come amongst you, you must all become meek sheep, also those whom the pain of an unfaithful husband, a pain of a long time ago, provides with the instinct of a beast that defends its den. If you were tigers and hyenas, I, the Lamb, could not stay with you.

He Who has come in the most holy name of God to gather just people and sinners and lead them to Heaven, went also to the repentant woman and said to her: "Be cleansed. Go and expiate". I did that on a Sabbath. And that is what I am accused of. A formal accusation. The second accusation is that I approached a prostitute. A woman who had been a prostitute. But now was a soul bewailing her sins.

Well, I say: I did it and I will do it. Bring Me the Book, pry into it, study it, examine it thoroughly. Find, if you can, one passage that forbids a doctor to cure a sick person, or a Levite to take care of the altar, or a priest to listen to a believer, only because it is the Sabbath. And if you find it and show it to Me, I will beat My chest and say: "Lord, I have sinned before You and before men. I am not worthy of forgiveness. But if You have mercy on Your servant, I will bless You as long as I live". Because that soul was diseased. And sick people need a doctor. It was a desecrated altar and a Levite was required to clean it. It was a believer going to cry in the true Temple of the true God, and it needed a priest to introduce it. I solemnly tell you that I am the Doctor, the Levite, the Priest. I solemnly tell you that if I do not My duty, and I lose only one of the souls anxious to be saved, God the Father will ask Me to account for it and will punish Me for losing it.

That is My sin, according to the mighty ones in Capernaum. I

could have waited till the following day to do it. Yes. But why delay twenty four hours to grant a contrite heart the peace of God? in that heart there was true humility, pure sincerity, perfect repentance. I saw into her heart. Leprosy was still on her body. But her heart had already been cured by the balm of years of repentance, of tears and expiation. Only My reconsecration was needed to draw that heart near God, without contaminating the pure air around God with its nearness. And I did it. She came out of the lake cleansed also in her flesh. But even more cleansed in her heart.

How many of those who entered the water of the Jordan to obey the Precursor's exhortation have not come out as cleansed as she was! Because their baptism was not the voluntary, sincere, heartfelt action of a soul eager to be ready for My coming. It was only a formality to appear perfectly holy in the eyes of the world. It was therefore hypocrisy and pride. Two sins that increased the mass of faults already existing in their hearts. John's baptism is but a symbol. It means: "Get rid of your pride by humiliating yourselves and admitting that you are sinners; get rid of your lust by washing yourselves of its mud". Your souls are to be baptised by your will to be clean and ready for God's banquet. No sin is so grave that it cannot be removed first by repentance, then by Grace and finally by the Saviour. There is no sinner so bad that he may not lift his humbled face and smile at the hope of redemption. It is sufficient for him to forgo sin completely, to be heroic in resisting temptations, to be sincere in his desire to be born to a new life.

I will now tell you something which is true, and yet may seem blasphemy to My enemies. But you are My friends. I am speaking with particular regard to you, My disciples already chosen, and to you all who are listening to Me. The angels, pure and perfect spirits, living and rejoicing in the light of the Most Holy Trinity, although perfect, are inferior to you men, who are far from Heaven, and they admit their inferiority. Their inferiority consists in their impossibility to sacrifice themselves and suffer to cooperate in the redemption of man. What do you think of that? God does not take an angel and say to him: "Be the redeemer of mankind!" But He takes His own Son. And although the Son's sacrifice is of incalculable value and His power is infinite, the Father, knowing that there is still something missing from the amount of merits to be opposed to the amount of sins that mankind accumulates hourly, does not take other angels to fill the measure and does not say to them: "Suffer to imitate Christ", but He says that to you, men. Such is His fatherly goodness that He makes no difference between the Son of His love and the children of His power. He says to you: "Suffer, sacrifice yourselves, be like My Lamb. Be co-redeemers… !" Oh! I can see cohorts of angels who

stop rotating for an instant in their adoring ecstasy round the Trine Fulcrum, and kneel down, looking towards the earth and say: "Blessed are you who can suffer with Christ for your and our Eternal God!"

Many will not yet understand such greatness. It is too superior to men. But when the Victim will be sacrificed, when the eternal Corn will rise from the dead never to die again, after being reaped, threshed, husked and buried in the bowels of the earth, then the super-spiritual Enlighter will come and will enlighten the spirits, even the most backward ones, but still faithful to Christ Redeemer, and then you will understand that I have not blasphemed, but I have announced the highest dignity of man to you: to be co-redeemers, even if before you were sinners.

In the meantime get ready for such dignity with pure hearts and intentions. The purer you are the more you will understand. Because impurity, whichever it may be, is always smoke that dims and makes heavy both your sight and your intellect. Be pure. Begin with your bodies and then pass on to your souls. Start from your five senses and then go on to the seven passions.

Start from your eye, the king of senses, that makes way to the most painful and complicated appetites. The eye sees the body of a woman and it lusts after a woman. The eye sees the wealth of rich people, and it lusts after gold. The eye sees the power of rulers and it lusts after power. Let your eyes be peaceful, honest, sober, pure and your desires will be peaceful, honest, sober and pure. The purer your eye is, the purer your heart will be. Keep a watch on your eye, a greedy discoverer of tempting apples. Be chaste in your looks if you want to be chaste in your bodies. If you possess the chastity of the flesh, you will possess the chastity of riches and power. You will possess all chastities and be the friend of God.

Do not be afraid of being mocked at because of your chastity. Be afraid only of being God's enemies. One day I heard someone say: "You will be scoffed at as a liar or a eunuch if you show no lust for women". I solemnly tell you that God instituted marriage to make you His imitators in procreating and His assistants in filling Heaven with people. But there is a higher condition, before which the angels bow down, as they see its sublimity which, however, they cannot imitate. A condition, which is perfect when it lasts from birth to death, but from which are not precluded those who are no longer virgins, who forgo their fecundity, whether male or female, and give up their sensual virility, to become prolific and virile only in the spirit. It is the condition of a eunuch without any physical imperfection or voluntary or violent mutilation. The condition that does not prohibit a person from going near the altar, on the contrary, in future centuries, the altar will be served and surrounded by such persons. It is the highest eunuch condition: where

amputation is brought about by the will of belonging only to God, of preserving one's body and heart chaste for Him, that they may for ever be refulgent with the purity so dear to the Lamb.

I have spoken for the people and for those chosen among the people. Now, before entering Philip's house to share his bread and salt, I bless you all: the good people as a reward, the sinners to encourage them to come to Him Who came to forgive. May peace be with you all. »

Jesus comes off the boat and walks through the crowd pressing around Him. At a comer of a house there is Matthew who has listened to the Master, from that spot, not daring to go nearer. Jesus stops when He arrives there and as if He were blessing everybody, He blesses once again, looks at Matthew and then goes away, surrounded by His disciples and followed by the crowd and disappears into a house.

It all ends.

97. The Call of Matthew.

4th February 1945.

This morning I was thinking again of what you said yesterday when I read the vision to you. You were simply astonished. And I told Jesus Who was near me.

He replied to me: « That is why I give them. You cannot imagine how joyfully I brighten up for My true friends. I thus give Myself to My Romualdo, for his joy, love and help, and because I see him. I had no secrets for John. I have none for the Johns. Tell old John that I give him so much peace and a good catch of fish. No catch for you. I give you only the womanly work of interlacing nets with the thread that I give you. Work, go on working… And do not be upset if you have no time for anything else. Everything is in this work. And do not take it amiss if I do not come and say to you: "Peace to you". One greets when one arrives or departs. But when people are always together, they do not greet one another. To stay permanently is peace. My permanence is. And I am not your guest. You are actually in My arms and I never let you down for a moment. I have so much to tell you about My mortal days! However, well, I will make you happy today and I say to you: "May My peace be with You". »

Almost immediately afterwards I see the following.

We are once again in the market square in Capernaum. But it is warmer to-day. The market is already over and in the square there are only a few idlers chatting and some children playing.

Jesus, in the middle of His group, is coming from the lake towards the square, caressing the children who come to meet Him and taking an interest in their little snippets of news. A little girl

shows a large bleeding scratch on her forehead and accuses her little brother of doing it.

« Why did you hurt your sister? You should not do that. »

« I didn't do it on purpose. I wanted to pick those figs and I took a stick. But it was too heavy and it fell on her… I wanted to pick them also for her… »

« Is that true, Johanna? »

« Yes, it is. »

« Well, then, you can see that your brother did not want to hurt you. On the contrary he wanted to make you happy. So make peace at once and give each other a kiss. Good little brothers and sisters, and all good children, must never bear a grudge. Come on… »

The two weeping children kiss each other. They are both crying: one because of the suffering of the scratch, the other because he is sorry that he caused the pain.

Jesus smiles at the kisses sprinkled with big tears. « Well. Now that I see you are being good, I will pick the figs for you. And without a stick. » No wonder! Tall as He is and with such long arms, He can do it without any trouble. He picks and hands them out.

A woman rushes to the spot. « Take them, take them, Master. I'll bring You some bread at once. »

« No, not for Me. They are for Johanna and Toby. They wanted them. »

« And you have troubled the Master? Oh! How troublesome they are! Forgive them, my Lord. »

« Woman, there was peace to be made… and I got them to make it with the very object of their war: with figs. Children are never a nuisance. They like sweet figs and I… I like their sweet innocent souls. They take so much bitterness away from Me… »

« Master… it's the gentry who don't love You. But we, poor people, we do. And they are very few, whereas we are so many… »

« I know, woman. Thanks for your encouragement. Peace be with you. Goodbye, Johanna! Goodbye, Toby! Be good. Do not harm each other and bear no ill-will. All right? »

« Yes, Jesus » answer the children.

Jesus walks away and He says smiling: « Now that with the help of figs we have cleared the sky of all clouds, we are going to… Where do you think we are going? »

The apostles do not know. Some mention one place, some another. But Jesus shakes His head every time and laughs.

Peter says: « I am giving up. Unless You tell us… I am in a bad mood today. You did not see him. But when we were coming off the boat, there was Eli, the Pharisee. And he was green with envy… more than ever! And the way he looked at us! »

« Let him look. »

« Eh! That's all we can do. But I can assure You, Master, that two figs won't be enough to make peace with him! »

« What did I say to Toby's mother? "I made peace with the very object of their war". And I will try to make peace by paying My respects to the eminent people in Capernaum, since they feel that I offended them. So someone else will be happy. »

« Who? »

Jesus does not answer the question and He goes on: « Probably I will not be successful, because they are not willing to make peace. But listen: if in all contests the wiser of the two would give' in, and instead of persisting in wanting to be right, he came to an agreement, even sharing equally what, I would also admit, might belong to him by full right, the situation would be a better and a more holy one. People are not always harmful on purpose. Sometimes one does harm without wishing to. You must always consider that and forgive. Eli and the others are convinced that they are serving God with justice by acting as they do. With patience and perseverance, and with humility and good grace, I will endeavour to persuade them that new times have come and that God, now, wants to be served according to My teaching. Good grace is the shrewdness of an apostle, perseverance is his weapon, his example and prayers for those to be converted are his success. »

They arrive in the square. Jesus goes straight to the taxation counter where Matthew is making up his accounts and checking the coins, which he divides into various denominations and puts into bags of different colours, and then into a metal coffer, which two servants are waiting to take elsewhere.

As soon as the shadow of Jesus' tall figure appears on the bench, Matthew looks up to see who is the late taxpayer. In the meantime Peter, pulling Jesus by His sleeve, says: « There is no payment to be made, Master. What are You doing? »

But Jesus does not listen to him. He stares at Matthew who has risen to his feet immediately in a reverent attitude. A further piercing glance. But it is not the glance of a severe judge, as the last time. It is a glance of a call and love. It enraptures him and fills him with love. Matthew blushes. He does not know what to do or what to say…

« Matthew, son of Alphaeus, your hour is striking. Come. Follow Me! » orders Jesus majestically.

« I? Master, Lord! But do You know who I am? I am saying that for Your sake, not for mine… »

« Come, follow Me, Matthew, son of Alphaeus » He repeats more kindly.

« Oh! How can I have found grace before God? I… I… »

« Matthew, son of Alphaeus, I have seen into your heart. Come, follow Me. » This third invitation is a caress.

« Oh! At once, my Lord! » and Matthew, weeping, comes out from behind the counter, without bothering to pick up the coins spread over it or to close the coffer. Nothing. « Where are we going, my Lord? » he asks when he is near Jesus. « Where are You taking me? »

« To your house. Will you give hospitality to the Son of man? »

« Oh!… but… but what will those who hate You say? »

« I listen to what is said in Heaven and they are saying there: "Glory be to God for a sinner, who is being saved!" and the Father says: "Mercy will rise for ever in Heaven and will hover over the earth, and since I love you with an eternal perfect love, I will have mercy also on you". Come. And with My coming, as well as your heart, may also your house be sanctified. »

« I have already purified it, because of a certain hope I had in my heart… but I could not reasonably believe it might come true… Oh! I with Your holy friends… » and he looks at the disciples.

« Yes. With My friends. Come. I am joining you together. Be like brothers. »

The disciples are so amazed, that they have not yet been able to utter one word. In a group, they have walked behind Jesus and Matthew in the bright sunshine in the square, where there is not a soul left, and then for a short distance along a street which is burning in the blazing sun. There is not a soul in the streets. There is nothing but sunshine and dust.

They go into a house. A beautiful house with a large front door opening on to the road. There is a cool shady hall, beyond which I can see a large yard cultivated as a garden.

« Come in, my Master! Bring water and drinks. »

The servants immediately bring what was requested.

Matthew goes out to give instructions, while Jesus and His disciples refresh themselves. He then comes back. « Come now, Master. The dining room is cooler… My friends are coming… Oh! I want a big celebration! It's my regeneration… It's my… my true circumcision… You have circumcised my heart with Your love… Master, it will be the last feast… No more feasts now for Matthew, the exciseman. No more worldly feasts… Only an internal rejoicing because I have been redeemed and I am serving You… and I am loved by You… How much have I cried… How much, during the past months… I have been crying for almost three months… I did not know what to do… I wanted to come… But how could I, with my unclean soul, come to You, the Holy One?… »

« You were cleansing it with repentance and charity. Towards Me and your neighbour. Peter? Come here. »

Peter, who is so astonished that he has not yet said one word, comes forward. The two men, both elderly, thickset and stout, are now facing each other, and Jesus, handsome and smiling, is between them.

« Peter, you asked Me many times who was the unknown man of the purse which James used to bring us. Here he is, in front of you. »

« Who? That rob… Oh! forgive me, Matthew! Who could have imagined it was you? And that you were able to tear out a piece of your heart every week and make that rich offering, you who were our despair on account of your usury? »

« I know. I taxed you unfairly. But now, I kneel down before you all and I say to you: do not reject me! He has accepted me. Don't be more severe than He is. »

Peter, who sees Matthew at his feet, suddenly lifts him bodily, roughly but affectionately: « Stand up. You don't have to ask me or the others to forgive you. You must ask Him. We… well, never mind, we are more or less thieves like you… Oh! I have said it! Cursed be my tongue! But that's me: I say what I think, and what's in my heart is also on my lips. Come, let us make a pact of peace and love » and he kisses Matthew on his cheeks.

The others do the same, more or less affectionately. I say so, because Andrew is somewhat reserved, out of shyness, and Judas Iscariot is icy. He seems to be embracing a bundle of snakes, so aloof and brief is his embrace.

Matthew hears a noise and goes out.

« Master » says Judas Iscariot « I do not think that is wise. The Pharisees are already accusing You, and You… An exciseman as one of Your disciples! An exciseman… after a prostitute!… Do you want to ruin Yourself? If so, tell us, that… »

« That we may make ourselves scarce, is that it? » concludes Peter ironically.

« Who spoke to you? »

« I know that you are not speaking to me, I, instead, am speaking to your noble soul, to your most pure and wise soul. I know that you, a member of the Temple, smell the stench of sin in us poor people, who are not of the Temple. I am aware that you, a full Judaean, a blend of Pharisee, Sadducee and Herodian, half a scribe and a dash of an Essene - do you wish any more noble words? - I am aware you do not feel at home with us and you are like a magnificent alose caught in a net full of gudgeons. What can we do? He caught us and we… are staying. If you feel uncomfortable… you had better go away. We shall all have some respite. Also He, Who, see? is irritated with me and with you. With me because I lack patience and also… yes, also charity, but even more with you, because you understand nothing, notwithstanding all your alleged attributes, and you have neither charity, nor humility, nor respect. You have nothing, my boy. Except a lot of hot air… and God grant it is harmless. »

Jesus has allowed Peter to speak while He is standing with folded

arms, pressed lips, a stem look and piercing eyes. At the end He says: « Have you finished, Peter? Have you also cleansed you heart of the yeast that was inside it? You have done the right thing. Today is Passover for a son of Abraham. Christ's call is like the blood of the lamb on your souls, and where His call is, there will be no more faults. There will be no fault if he who receives it is faithful to it. My call is redemption and is to be celebrated without any yeast. »

Not a word is spoken to Judas. Peter is quiet and mortified.

« Our host is coming back » says Jesus. « And with some friends. Do not let us show them anything but virtue. Who is not capable of doing so, should go out. Do not be like Pharisees, who oppress people with precepts which they cannot keep themselves. »

Matthew comes back in with some other men and the banquet starts. Jesus is in the centre between Peter and Matthew. They speak of many things and Jesus patiently explains to this and that one what they want to know. There are also complaints about the Pharisees who despise them.

« Well, come to Him Who does not despise you. And behave in such a way that at least good people may not scorn you » answers Jesus.

« You are good. But You are the only one! »

« No. These are like Me and then… there is the Father God Who loves him who repents and wants to become his friend again. If man should lack everything, but the Father should still remain, would man's joy not be full? »

The banquet is at the end when a servant nods to the landlord and says something to him.

« Master: Eli, Simon and Joachim are asking to come in and speak to You. Do You wish to see them? »

« Certainly. »

« But… my friends here are excisemen. »

« And that is what they are coming to see. Let them see. It would be no use hiding it. It would not serve any good purpose, because evil tongues would make the situation worse stating that there were also prostitutes here. Let them come in. »

Three Pharisees come in, they look around with ironical smiles and are about to speak.

But Jesus, Who has stood up and goes to meet them with Matthew, precedes them. He lays one hand on Matthew's shoulder and says: « O true children of Israel, I salute you and I give you a great piece of news that will bring great joy to your hearts, the hearts of perfect Israelites, pining for the observance of the Law in every heart, to give glory to God. Here: Matthew, the son of Alphaeus, as from to-day is no longer the sinner, the scandal of Capernaum. A mangy sheep of Israel has been cured. Rejoice!

After him, other mangy sheep will be cured and your town, in the holiness of which you are so interested, will be pleasing to God for its holiness. He leaves everything to serve God. Give the kiss of peace to the Israelite led astray, who is returning to Abraham's bosom. »

« Is he returning with excisemen? In a joyful banquet? Oh! It is truly a gracious conversion! Look over there, Eli: that is Josiah, the procurer of women. »

« And that is Simon of Isaac, the adulterer. »

« And that one? That's Azariah, the gambling-house keeper, in whose gambling-house Romans and Judaeans play, quarrel and go with women. »

« Master, do You know who these are? Did You know? »

« I did. »

« Well, then, why did you people of Capernaum, you disciples, why did you allow all this? I am surprised at you, Simon of Jonas! »

« And you, Philip, you are known here, and you, Nathaniel, I am surprised! You, a true Israelite! Why did you allow your Master to eat with excisemen and sinners? »

« Is there no more restraint in Israel? » The three Pharisees are thoroughly scandalised.

Jesus says: « Leave My disciples in peace. I wanted it. Only I. »

« Obviously! When one acts as a saint and is not a saint, one soon falls into unpardonable errors! »

« And when disciples are taught not to have respect, they do not have respect even for the Law. I am still smarting under the disrespectful laughter at me, Eli, the Pharisee, from this man, a Judaean of the Temple. One teaches what one knows. »

« You are wrong, Eli. You are all wrong. One teaches what one knows. It is true. And I know the Law and I teach those who do not know it, that is, sinners. I know that you are already masters of your souls. Sinners are not. I am looking for their souls, which I give back to them, so that they may bring them to Me again, as they are: sick, wounded, soiled and I may cure and cleanse them. I have come for that. It is sinners that need the Saviour. And I have come to save them. Try and understand Me… and do not hate Me without cause. »

Jesus is gentle, convincing, humble… But the three Pharisees are hisped thistles all covered with aculei… and they go out showing disgust.

« They have gone… We will now be criticised everywhere » whispers Judas Iscariot.

« Let them do as they wish. Make sure that the Father does not criticise you. Do not be upset, Matthew, nor you, his friends. Our conscience says: "Do no harm". That is enough. »

Jesus sits down and it all ends.

98. Jesus on the Lake of Tiberias. Lesson to His Disciples near the Same Town.

5th February 1945.

Jesus is with His thirteen disciples on the lake of Galilee. There are two boats with seven people in each. Jesus is in Peter's, the first one, with Peter, Andrew, Simon, Joseph and His two cousins. In the other boat there are the two sons of Zebedee with Judas Iscariot, Philip, Thomas, Nathanael and Matthew.

The boats are sailing fast before a cool Boreas, which ripples the water very lightly and the ripple-marks are outlined by a thin veil of foam which resembles fine lace-work on the blue turquoise of the beautiful clear lake. The boats leave behind them two wakes, which meet almost immediately, thus forming a bright sparkling froth, most pleasant to be seen, as they sail in company, Peter's boat being only a few yards ahead of the other one.

From boat to boat, only a few yards apart, the disciples exchange remarks and comments. I thus understand that the Galileans are illustrating and explaining to the Judaeans the various spots of the lake, their trades, the important people who live in the area, the distance from their starting point to the place of arrival, that is from Capernaum to Tiberias. The boats are not being used for fishing, they are only carrying passengers.

Jesus is sitting on the prow and is evidently enjoying the beauties of nature around Him, the quietness, the blue sky and lake, the latter encircled by green shores, where many white villages stand out against the green of the countryside. Almost lying on a bundle of sails, in the very front of the prow, He pays no attention to the conversation of the disciples, and often lowers His head looking at the sapphire mirror of the lake, as if He were studying its depth and were interested in the creatures living in the pellucid water. I wonder what He is thinking about… Peter addresses Him twice to find out whether the sun is annoying Him as it has already risen from the east and is shining full on the boat, and is already warm, although not hot - ; and the second time he asks Him if He wants some bread and cheese like the others. But Jesus does not want a tent or any bread. And Peter leaves Him alone.

A few small leisure boats, almost the size of a shallop, but fitted with purple canopies and soft cushions, cut across the course of the fishermen's boats. Shouts, bursts of laughter and the smell of perfumes go by with them.

They are full of beautiful women, many merry Romans, some Palestinians and a few Greeks. This I gather so from the words of a thin slender young man, as brown as an almost ripe olive, smartly dressed in a short red tunic, bordered by a heavy Greek fret and held tight at his waist by a belt, which is the masterpiece of a

goldsmith. He says: « Hellas is beautiful! But not even my Olympic fatherland has this blue and these flowers. It is really not surprising that the goddesses left it to come here. Let us spread flowers, roses and our compliments to the goddesses, no longer Greek but Judaean… » And he spreads on the women in his boat the petals of magnificent roses and he throws some into a nearby boat.

A Roman replies to him: « Spread them, spread them, Greek! But Venus is with me. I do not spread roses, I pick them from this beautiful mouth. It is sweeter! » And he bends down to kiss the open smiling lips of Mary of Magdala, who is leaning on cushions with her blond head in the lap of the Roman.

By now the little boats are in front of the two big ones and both because of the inexperience of the rowers and because of a sudden gust of wind, the boats almost collide.

« Be careful, if your lives are dear to you » shouts Peter, who is wild when he veers, shifting the helm, to avert a collision. Insults from the men and shouts of fear from the women go from boat to boat.

The Romans insult the Galileans saying: « Get out of the way, you dirty Jewish dogs. »

Peter and the other Galileans do not let the insults pass and Peter in particular, flushing like a cockerel, standing on the edge of the boat, which is pitching heavily, with his hands on his hips, gives tit for tat and does not spare Romans or Greeks or Jews or Jewesses. Nay, he assails the women with such curteous titles that I prefer to omit. The squabble lasts until the tangle of keels and oars is loosed and they all go their own ways.

Jesus has not moved from His place. He has remained sitting, His mind far away, without a glance or a word to the boats or the passengers. Leaning on one elbow, He has continued to look at the far away shore, as if nothing was happening. Also a flower is thrown at Him, I do not know by whom, certainly by a woman, because I can hear a woman laugh when it is being thrown. But He… does not stir. The flower almost hits His face, then falls on to boards and ends up under the feet of the furious Peter.

When the little boats are about to move away, I see the Magdalene stand up and follow the indication of one of her partners in vice, that is, she turns her beautiful eyes towards the serene face of Jesus, Whose mind is so far away. How far from this world that face is! …

« Say, Simon! » asks Judas Iscariot. « Since you are a Judaean like me, tell me. That beautiful blonde in the Roman's lap, the one who stood up a few minutes ago, isn't she the sister of Lazarus of Bethany? »

« I don't know » is the sharp reply of Simon the Cananean. « I came back amongst the living only a short while ago, and she is a young

woman… »

« You are not going to tell me that you do not know Lazarus of Bethany, I hope! I know very well that you are his friend and that you have been there also with the Master. »

« And if it were so? »

« And since it is so, I say that you must know also the sinner who is Lazarus' sister. Even the dead know her! People have been talking about her for the last ten years. She began to be light-headed as soon as she reached the age of puberty. But for over four years! You must be aware of the scandal, even if you were in the "valley of the dead". The whole of Jerusalem talked about her. And Lazarus shut himself up at Bethany… He did the right thing, after all. No one would have set foot in his magnificent house in Zion, where she also came and went. I mean: no holy living person. In the country… well!… In any case she is always around, but never at home… She is certainly at Magdala now… With a new lover… Are you not answering me? Can you give me the lie? »

« I am not giving you the lie. I am silent. »

« So it is she! You have recognised her, too! »

« I saw her when she was a child and she was pure then. I have seen her again now… But I recognise her. Although lewd, she is the living image of her mother, a holy woman. »

« Well, then, why were you on the point of denying that she is your friend's sister? »

« We always endeavour to conceal our sores and those of the people we love. Particularly when one is honest. »

Judas gives a forced laugh.

« You are quite right, Simon. And you are honest » remarks Peter.

« And did you recognise her? You certainly go to Magdala to sell your fish, and I wonder how many times you have seen her!… »

« My boy, you must know that when your back is broken after an honest day's work, you are not interested in women. You only love the honest bed of your wife. »

« Eh! Everybody likes beautiful things! At least, if for no other reason than to look at them. »

« Why? To say: "It is no food for my table"? No, certainly not. I have learned many things from the lake and from my job, and this is one of them: a fish of fresh and calm water is not fit for salt water or a vorticose water course. »

« What do you mean? »

« I mean that everybody should keep his place, to avoid dying an evil death. »

« Did the Magdalene make you feel as if you were dying? »

« No, I am tough. But tell me: are you not feeling well, perhaps? »

« Me? Oh! I didn't even look at her!… »

« You liar! I am sure that you were consumed with envy because you were not on this boat, to be closer to her… you would have put up even with me, to be nearer… So much so, that you are honouring me with your conversation, because of her, after so many days of silence. »

« Me? She would not have even seen me! She was always looking at the Master! »

« Ah! Ah! Ah! And he says that he was not looking at her! How could you see where she was looking, if you did not look at her? »

They all laugh at Peter's remark, except Judas, Jesus and Simon Zealot.

Jesus puts an end to the discussion which He feigns He has not heard by asking Peter: « Is that Tiberias? »

« Yes, Master, it is. I will now haul. »

« Wait. Can you stop in that quiet small bay? I would like to speak to you only. »

« I will measure the depth and let You know. » And Peter lowers a long pole into the water and moves slowly towards the shore. « Yes, I can, Master. Shall I go closer to the shore? »

« As far as you can. There is shade and solitude. I like it. »

Peter steers towards the shore. The land is about fifteen yards away, at most. « I would now touch. »

« Stop. And you come as close as possible and listen. »

Jesus leaves His place and sits in the middle of the boat, on a plank placed athwartwise. The other boat is in front of Him, while the disciples in His boat are sitting round Him.

« Listen. You may think that I do not pay attention to your conversation and that consequently I am a lazy teacher who does not look after his pupils. You must know that My soul does not leave you one moment. Have you ever seen a doctor who studies a patient affected by a disease not yet identified and presenting contrasting symptoms? He keeps an eye on him, after visiting him, he watches him both when he sleeps and is awake, in the morning and in the evening, when he speaks and when he is silent, because every symptom may help to identify the hidden disease and suggest a cure. I do the same with you. I hold you by means of invisible but most sensitive threads, which are grafted into Me, and they transmit to Me even the lightest vibrations of your ego. I allow you to believe that you are free, that you may reveal yourselves for what you are, which happens when a schoolboy or a maniac thinks he is not being watched by his overseer.

You are a group of people, but you form a nucleus, that is, one thing only. You are therefore a unit, which is formed as a body and which is to be studied in its individual features, which are more or less good, in order to shape it, amalgamate it, round it off, increase it in its polyhedric sides, and make it a perfect unit. That is why I

study you. And I study you also when you are sleeping.

What are you? What are you to become? You are the salt of the earth. That is what you must become: the salt of the earth. With salt, meat is preserved from putrefaction and many other victuals as well. But if the salt were not salty, could it be used to salt? I want to salt the world with you, to have it seasoned with a celestial flavour. But how can you salt if you become tasteless?

What causes you to lose a celestial flavour? That which is human. Sea water, that is: the water of the real sea, is so salt that it is not good to drink, is it? And yet, if one takes a cup of sea water and pours it into an amphora of fresh water, then one can drink it, because the sea water is so diluted that it has lost its biting strength. Mankind is like fresh water mixed to your celestial saltness. Again, suppose we could take a little stream of water from the sea and get it to flow into this lake, would you be able to trace that tiny stream? No. It would have been lost in the fresh water. That is what happens to you when you immerse, or rather, you submerge your mission in so much humanity.

You are men. I know. And who am I? I am He Who has all possible strength. And what do I do? I communicate such strength to you after calling you. But what is the use of communicating it to you, if you dissipate it under avalanches of human influences and sentiments?

You are, you must be the light of the world. I chose you: I, the Light of God amongst men, that you may continue to illuminate the world, after I have gone back to the Father. But can you illuminate if you are smoky lamps which have gone out? No. Nay, with your smoke - an ambiguous smoke is worse than a completely extinguished wick - you would darken the dim light that the hearts of men may still have.

Oh! Miserable are those who will apply to the apostles seeking God, and instead of light will receive smoke! It will be scandal and death for them. But the unworthy apostle will be cursed and punished. Your destiny is a great one! And a great tremendous commitment as well! But remember that who has been given more, is obliged to give more. And you have been given the most, both in the way of education and of gifts. You are educated by Me, the Word of God, and you receive from God the gift of being "the disciples", that is, the continuators of the Son of God.

I would like you to meditate upon your election, to examine yourselves thoroughly, to weigh yourselves… and if anyone feels that he is suitable only to be a believer - I will not even say: if anyone-feels he is but an unrepentant sinner; I only say: if anyone feels that he is suitable only to be a believer - but does not feel the strength of an apostle, let him withdraw.

The world is large, beautiful, sufficient, varied enough for those

who love it! It offers all the flowers and all the fruit suitable for the stomach and the senses. I offer but one thing: holiness. And on the earth it is the meanest, the poorest, the roughest, the thorniest and the most persecuted thing that exists. In Heaven its meanness is changed into immensity, its poverty into riches, its thorniness into a flowery carpet, its hardness into a smooth pleasant path, its persecution into peace and beatitude. But here it is a hero's labour to be a saint. That is all I can offer.

Are you willing to remain with Me? Do you not feel like staying? Oh! Do not be amazed or sorry. You will hear Me ask you this question many times. And when you hear it, please think that My heart weeps asking it, because it is wounded by your insensibility to your vocation. So examine your own consciences, then judge with honesty and sincerity, and then make up your minds. Make up your minds, so that you may not become reprobates. Say "Master, friends, I realise that I am not made for this life. I kiss you goodbye and I say to you: pray for me".

Better so than to betray. Better so… What do you say? Betray whom? Whom? Me. My cause, which is the cause of God, because I am one thing with the Father. And yourselves, yes, you would betray yourselves, you would betray your souls, giving them away to Satan. Do you wish to remain Jews? I will not force you to change. But do not betray. Do not betray your souls, Christ and God. I swear that neither I, nor those faithful to Me will criticise you, neither will they have you despised by the faithful crowd. A short while ago one of your brothers said a great word: "We always endeavour to conceal our sores and those of the people we love". And he who would go away, would be a sore, a cancer, which after growing in our apostolic body, would come off, because of its total gangrene, leaving a painful mark which we would carefully keep hidden.

No, do not cry, you who are the better ones. Do not cry. I bear you no grudge, neither am I intolerant seeing you so slow. You have just been chosen and I cannot expect you to be perfect. I will not even demand it after some years, after repeating one hundred or two hundred times the same things in vain. Nay, listen: in a few years' time you will be less fervent than now, that you are neophytes. Such is life… such is mankind… You lose impetus after the first leap. But (Jesus springs to His feet) I swear to you that I will win. Purified by natural selection, fortified by a supernatural mixture, you, better ones, will become My heroes. The heroes of Christ. The heroes of Heaven. The power of the Caesars will be like dust as compared to the regality of your priesthood. You, poor fishermen of Galilee, you, unknown Judaeans, you, mere numbers in the mass of present men, will become more famous, more acclaimed, more venerated than Caesar, and than all the, Caesars the

world ever had or will have. You will be known and blessed in the near future and in the most remote centuries, until the end of the world.

I appoint you to such sublime destiny, because you are honestly willing. And I will outline the essential features of the apostolic character, so that you may be fit for your destiny.

Be always vigilant and ready. Your loins should be always girded up, and your lamps always lit, as if you were to leave any moment or to run to meet someone who is arriving. You are in fact, and will be until your death, the indefatigable pilgrims looking for wanderers; and until death puts them out, your lamps are to be held high up and lit to show the way to misguided souls coming towards the fold of Christ.

You are to be faithful to the Master Who appointed you to such service. That servant will be rewarded whom the master always finds vigilant and upon whom death comes in the state of grace. You cannot and must not say: "I am young, I have time for this and for that, and then I will think about my Master, my death, my soul! Young people die like old ones, and strong men like weak ones. And old and young, strong and weak are equally subjected to the assaults of temptation. Be careful, because the soul can die before the body and you may unknowingly carry around a putrid soul. The dying of a soul is so imperceptible! Like the death of a flower. Not a cry, not a convulsion… it inclines its flame like a tired corolla, and goes out. Later, sometimes after a long time, sometimes immediately after, the body realises it is carrying a verminous corpse within itself, it becomes mad with fear and commits suicide to avoid such union… Oh! it does not avoid it! It falls on to a swarm of snakes in Gehenna with its very verminous soul.

Do not be dishonest like brokers or pettifoggers who side with two opposite customers, do not be as false as politicians, who call this man and that man a "friend", whereas they are enemies to both of them. Do not act in two different ways. You cannot laugh at God or deceive Him. Behave with men as you do with God, because an insult to man is an insult to God. Let God see you as you wish to be seen by men.

Be humble. You cannot reproach your Master for not being so. I set the example. Do as I do. Be humble, gentle, patient. That is how the world is conquered. Not by violence or force. Be strong and violent against your vices. Extirpate them, at the cost of breaking your hearts. Some days ago I told you to watch over your eyes. But you do not know how to do it. I tell you: it would be better to become blind by pulling out covetous eyes, rather than become lustful.

Be sincere. I am the Truth: both in sublime and human things. I want you to be genuine, too. Why be deceitful with Me, or your

brothers, or your neighbour? Why cheat people? Proud as you are, why do you not say: "I do not want people to find out that I am a liar"? And be sincere with God. Do you think you can deceive Him with long manifest prayers? Oh! poor children! God sees into your hearts!

Be chaste in doing good. Also in giving alms. An exciseman knew how to be so before his conversion. And are you not capable? Yes, I am praising you, Matthew, for your chaste weekly offer, which only the Father and I knew was yours and I am quoting you as an example. Also that is a form of chastity, My friends. Do not disclose your goodness as you would not undress a young daughter before a crowd of people. Be virgins in doing good. A good act is virgin when it is free from any connection with thoughts of pride and praise, or from incentives of pride.

Be faithful to your vocation to God. You cannot serve two masters. A nuptial bed cannot hold two brides at the same time. God and Satan cannot share your embraces. Man cannot, neither can God nor Satan, share a treble embrace contrasting with the three embracing one another. Be averse to the lust for gold as well as to the lust for the flesh, to the lust for the flesh as to the lust for power. That is what Satan offers you. Oh! his deceitful riches! Honour, success, power, wealth: obscene markets where your souls are the legal tender. Be satisfied with little. God gives you what is necessary. It is enough. He guarantees that for you as He does for the birds of the air, and you are worth much more than birds. But He wants reliance and moderation from you. If you rely on Him, He will not disappoint you. If you are moderate, His daily gift will be sufficient for you.

Do not be heathens, by being of God only by name. Those are heathens who love gold and power, to appear as demigods, more than they love God. Be holy and you will be like God in eternity.

Do not be intolerant. Since you are all sinners, behave to others as you would like others to behave to you: that is, with mercy and forgiveness.

Do not judge. Oh! do not judge! You have only been with Me for a short time, and yet you have seen how many times I, although innocent, have been wrongly judged and accused of non-existent sins. A bad judgement is an insult. And only true saints do not pay back in the offender's coin. Refrain therefore from offending so that you may not be offended. Thus you will not fail in your duties either to charity, or to holy, dear, kind humility, which is Satan's enemy, together with chastity. Forgive, always forgive. Say: "I forgive, Father, that I may be forgiven by You of my numberless sins".

Improve hourly, with patience, perseverance, heroism. Who told You that it is not painful to become good? Nay, I tell you: it is the

greatest labour. But the reward is Heaven and it is therefore worthwhile getting exhausted in such labour.

And love. Oh! What words shall I use to persuade you to love? None is suitable to convert you to love, poor men, instigated by Satan! So I say: "Father, hasten the hour of purification. This land and this flock of Yours are dry and diseased. But there is a dew that can cleanse and soothe them. Open its fountain. Open Me, Father. Here I am burning with the desire to fulfill Your will, which is also Mine and of the Eternal Love. Father, Father, Father! Look at Your Lamb and be Its Sacrificer". »

Jesus is really inspired. Standing, His arms stretched out in the shape of a cross, His face raised towards the sky. In His linen tunic and with the blue lake behind Him, He seems a praying archangel.

The vision ends on this gesture of His.

99. Jesus Looks for Jonathan in the House of Chuza at Tiberias.

6th February 1945.

I see the beautiful new town of Tiberias. Its whole lay-out makes me understand that it is a new and a wealthy town: the town plan is neater than that of any other town in Palestine and shows a civilized and harmonious ensemble not to be found even in Jerusalem. There are beautiful avenues and straight roads, already provided with a sewer system whereby water and rubbish are cleared away. There are also wide squares with large fountains, the bases of which are built with the most beautiful marbles.

Many buildings copy the Roman style, with spacious arcades. Through some front doors, already open at this early hour, one can see large halls, marble peristyles decorated with valuable curtains, chairs and tables; in almost every building there is a central yard, paved with marble, with a jet-fountain and marble vases full of blossoming flowers. It is definitely an imitation of the Rome architecture, which has been copied very well and very richly. The loveliest houses are in the streets nearest to the lake. The first three streets, parallel to the lake, are really luxurious. The first one follows the gentle curve of the lake and is absolutely magnificent. The last part is a series of "villas" with the main facades on the back street, and on the lake side they have luxuriant gardens, which stretch so far down as to be lapped by the waves of the lake. Almost every one has a little harbour, in which there are leisure boats with precious canopies and purple seats.

Jesus does not seem to have disembarked from Peter's boat in the harbour of Tiberias, but somewhere else, probably in the suburbs and is now walking along the avenue alongside the lake.

« Have You ever been to Tiberias, Master? » asks Peter.

« No. Never. »

« Eh! Antipas has done things well and in great style to flatter Tiberius! He is corrupted indeed!… »

« It seems more a holiday resort than a business town. »

« The trading centre is on the other side. It has a lot of trade and is wealthy. »

« And these houses? Do they belong to Palestinians? »

« Some do, some don't. Many belong to Romans, and many… although full of statues and similar trash, belong to Jews. » Peter sighs and mumbles: «… I wish they had taken away only our independence… but they have taken away also our faith… We are becoming more heathen-minded than they are!… »

« Not through their fault, Peter. They have their habits and they do not force us to adopt them. We want to become corrupted ourselves. Because of material interest, of the fashion, servilism… »

« You are right. And the Tetrarch is the first one… »

« Master, here we are » says the shepherd Joseph. « This is the house of Herod's steward. »

They stop at the end of the avenue, where there is a fork and the avenue becomes the second street, so that the "villas" are situated between it and the lake. The house indicated by Joseph is the first one and is really beautiful, with a flower garden all round it. Branches of jasmin and roses and their sweet smell spread out as far as the lake.

« Is this where Jonathan lives? »

« I was told that he lives here. He is the steward's steward. He has been fortunate. Chuza is not a bad man and is just in acknowledging the merits of his steward. He is one of the few honest men at the court. Shall I go and call him? »

« Go. »

Joseph goes to the tall front door and knocks. The door-keeper comes to the door. They exchange a few words. I see that Joseph shows disappointment and the porter puts out his grey head and looks at Jesus; he then asks something and Joseph nods assent. They go on speaking.

Joseph then comes towards Jesus Who has been waiting patiently under the shade of a tree. « Jonathan is not here. He is up on High Lebanon. He has taken Johanna up there, in the fresh and pure air, because she is very ill. The servant said that Jonathan went because Chuza is at court and he cannot come away after the scandal of the escape of the Baptist. She was getting worse and the doctor said that she would die here. But the servant says that You should go in and rest. Jonathan has spoken of the baby Messiah and also here You are known by name and You are expected. »

« Let us go. » The group begins to move.

The porter, after casting a sidelong glance, calls other servants and opens wide the door, so far only half open, and runs towards Jesus, with the utmost respect: « Bless us, Lord, and this sad house. Come in. Oh! Jonathan will be very sorry that he is not here! He was hoping so much to see You. Please come in with Your friends. »

In the hall there are servants and maids of all ages. They all bow down respectfully, greeting Jesus, and they are curious at the same time. A little old woman is weeping in a comer.

Jesus goes in and blesses with His usual gesture and His greeting of peace. They offer Him refreshments. Jesus sits on a chair and they all gather round Him. « I can see that I am not unknown to you » remarks Jesus.

« Oh! Jonathan brought us up, telling us about You. Jonathan is good. He says that he is good because the kiss he gave You made him good. But it is also because he is good. »

« I have given and received kisses… but, as you say, it is only in good people that they increase their goodness. Is he absent just now? I came to see him. »

« As I said: he is up in Lebanon. He has friends there… It is the last hope for our young mistress, if it does not help… »

The little woman in the comer cries louder. Jesus looks at her inquisitively.

« She is Esther, the mistress's wet-nurse. She is crying because she cannot resign herself to lose her. »

« Come, mother. Do not cry like that » Jesus encourages her. « Come here near Me. A disease does not necessarily mean death! »

« Oh! it is death! it is death! After she had her only unfortunate childbirth, she is dying! Adulteresses have deliveries secretly and yet they live, and she, so good, so honest, dear, so dear, she must die! »

« What is the matter with her now? »

« She has a fever that consumes her… She is like a lamp that burns in a very windy place… it gets stronger every day and she gets weaker. Oh! I wanted to go with her. But Jonathan wanted young maids, because she has no strength left and she has to be lifted bodily and I am no longer capable… Not capable of that… but I am capable of loving her. I received her from her mother's womb… I was a servant and I was married, and I had a child one month old and I suckled her, because her mother was very weak and could not… I acted as her mother when she became an orphan and she could hardly say mummy. I have grown old and wrinkled watching at her bedside when she was ill… I dressed her as a bride and led her to her nuptial bed… I smiled at her hopes of becoming a mother… I wept with her over her dead baby… I have gathered all the smiles and all the tears of her life… I have given her all the

smiles and all the consolation of my love… and now she is dying and I am not beside her… » One can but feel sorry for the old woman.

Jesus caresses her, but to no avail. « Listen, mother. Have you faith? »

« In You? Yes, I have. »

« In God, woman. Do you believe that God can do everything? »

« I do, and I believe that You, His Messiah, can do it, too. Oh! They already speak in town of Your power! That man there (and she points to Philip) some time ago was speaking of Your miracles near the synagogue. And Jonathan asked him: "Where is the Messiah?" and he replied: "I do not know". Jonathan then said to me: "If He were here, I swear it, she would be cured". But You were not here… and he has gone away with her… and now she will die… »

« No. Have faith. Tell me exactly what you feel in your heart: can you believe that she will not die because of your faith? »

« Because of my faith? Oh! If that is what You want, here it is. Take also my life, my old life… just let me see her cured. »

« I am the Life. I give life and not death. You gave life to her, one day, with the milk of your breast, and it was a poor life that could finish. Now with your faith, you are giving her an endless life. Smile, mother! »

« But she is not here… » The old woman is uncertain between hope and fear. « She is away, and You are here… »

« Have faith. Listen. I am now going to Nazareth for a few days. Also there are some friends of Mine who are ill… I will then go to Lebanon. If Jonathan comes back within six days, send him to Nazareth, to Jesus of Joseph. If he does not come, then I will go. »

« How will you find him? »

« Tobias' archangel will guide Me. Fortify your faith. That is all I ask of you. Do not cry any longer, mother. »

The old woman, instead, cries louder. She is at Jesus' feet, resting her head on His divine knees, kissing and crying on His blessed hand.

Jesus caresses her with His other hand and as the other servants gently reproach her because she is getting exhausted weeping, He says: « Leave her alone. It is a relief for her to shed tears now. It will do her good. Are you all glad that your mistress may be restored to health? »

« Oh! She is so good! When one is like her, one is not a master, but a friend and is loved as such. We love her, believe us. »

« I can see into your hearts. Be always good, too. I am going. I cannot wait. I have a boat. I bless you. »

« Come back, Master. Come back again! »

« I will come back. I will often come back. Goodbye. Peace to this

house and to you all. »

Jesus goes out with His disciples, in the company of the servants cheering Him.

« You are better known here than in Nazareth » remarks His cousin James sadly.

« This house has been prepared by a man who had true faith in the Messiah. As far as Nazareth is concerned, I am only a carpenter… Nothing else. »

« And… we have not the strength to preach You for what You are… »

« Have you not? »

« No, my cousin. We are not heroes like Your shepherds… »

« Do you think so, James? » Jesus smiles looking at His cousin who is so much like His putative father, with his brown eyes and hair, and swarthy face, whereas Judas looks paler, as his face is framed by a very dark beard and curly hair, and his eyes are almost a violet blue hue, and are vaguely like Jesus'. « Well I tell you that you do not know yourself. You and Judas are two strong characters. »

His cousins shake their heads.

« You will realize that I am not mistaken. »

« Are we really going to Nazareth? »

« Yes. I want to speak to My Mother and… and do something else. Who wants to come, can come. »

They all want to go. The cousins are the happiest of the lot. « It is because of our father and mother, see? »

« Yes, I understand. We will go to Cana and then to Nazareth. »

« To Cana? Oh! Well, we will go to Susanna's. She will give us eggs and fruit for our father, James. »

« And she will certainly give us some of her good honey. He likes it so much! »

« And it is very nourishing. »

« Poor father! He suffers so much! Like an uprooted tree, he feels his life is fading away… and he would like not to die… » James looks at Jesus. With a silent prayer… Jesus pretends not to see him. « Joseph also died like that, with severe pains, did he not? »

« Yes, he did » replies Jesus. « But he suffered less because he was resigned. »

« And he had You. »

« Also Alphaeus could have Me… »

The cousins sigh sadly and it all ends.

100. Jesus in the House of His Uncle Alphaeus and then at His Own Home.

7th February 1945. St. Romuald.

Jesus is on the beautiful hills of Galilee with His disciples. To escape the sun which is still high in the sky, although beginning to set, they walk under trees, mainly olive.

« Beyond that edge there is Nazareth » says Jesus. We shall soon be there. I now tell you that at the entrance to the town, we will part. Judas and James will go at once to see their father, as their hearts desire. Peter and John will give alms to the poor people, who will certainly be near the fountain. The others and I will go home for supper and then we will think about resting.

« We will go back to good Alphaeus. We promised him last time. But I will come only to say hello to him. I give my bed to Matthew who is not yet accustomed to hardships and privations » says Philip.

« No, not you, you are old. I will not allow that. I have had very comfortable beds so far, but I suffered the pains of hell in them! Believe me: I am enjoying so much peace now, that even if I lie down on stones, I seem to be resting on feathers. Oh! It's your conscience that makes you sleep or not! » replies Matthew.

A charity competition starts among the disciples Thomas, Philip, Bartholomew and Matthew who are obviously the ones who the last time stayed in the house of this Alphaeus (who is certainly not James' father, because James speaking to Andrew says: « There will always be room for you, as the last time, even if his father's health has got worse. »

Thomas wins: « I am the youngest in the group. I am giving my bed. Never mind, Matthew. Little by little you will get used to it. Do you think that I will be put to a lot of trouble? No. I am like a young man in love who says: "I may be lying on a hard bed, but I am near my love". » Thomas, about thirty eight years old, laughs happily and Matthew yields to him.

The first houses of Nazareth are now only a few yards away.

« Jesus… we are going » says Judas.

« Yes, go. »

The two brothers almost run away.

« Eh! A father is a father » whispers Peter. « Even if he is sulky with us, he is always our same blood, and blood is thicker than water. In any case… I like Your cousins. They are very good. »

« Yes, they are very good. And they are humble, so humble that they do not even try to ascertain how humble they are. They always think that they are at fault, because they see good in everybody except themselves. They will go a long way… »

They are now in Nazareth. Some women see Jesus and greet Him, also men and children do likewise. But there is not the excitement

for the Messiah as in other places: here it is friends greeting a friend who has come back. And they greet Him more or less effusively. In many I see an ironic curiosity while they watch the heterogenous group of Jesus' disciples, which is certainly not a train of regal dignitaries or stately priests. Hot, dusty, modestly dressed as they are, with the exception of Judas Iscariot, Matthew, Simon and Bartholomew - I have mentioned them in a descending order of smartness - they look more like a crowd of country folk going to a market, than followers of a king. Which king has of His own only His imposing stature and above all His stately countenance.

They walk for a few yards, then Peter and John leave and go to the right, whereas Jesus and the others proceed as far as a little square crowded with children shouting round a tank full of water, from which their mothers are drawing supplies.

A man sees Jesus and he makes a gesture of pleasant surprise. He rushes towards Him and greets Him: « You are welcome! I was not expecting You so soon! Here: kiss my last grandson. He is little Joseph. He was born during Your absence » and he hands Him the little baby he is holding in his arms.

« Have you named him Joseph? »

« Yes. I cannot forget him who was almost a relative of mine, and even more than a relative, my great friend. Now I have given all the dearest names also to my grandchildren: Anne, my friend when I was a little boy, and Joachim. Then Mary… oh! what a celebration when she was born! I remember when they gave me her to kiss and they said to me: "See? That beautiful rainbow was the bridge on which she came down from Heaven. The angels use that road there" and she really looked like a little angel, she was so beautiful… Now here is Joseph. If I had known that You were coming back so soon, I would have awaited You for his circumcision. »

« I thank you for your love for My grandparents, My father and My Mother. He is a beautiful child. May he be for ever as just as the just Joseph. » Jesus tosses the baby who smiles at Him babyishly.

« If You wait for me, I'll come with You. I am waiting for the amphoras to be filled. I don't want my daughter Mary to get tired. Nay, look, this is what I will do. I'll give the amphoras to Your disciples, if they will take them, and I'll speak to you for a little while, all by ourselves. »

« Of course we will take them! We are not Assyrian kings » exclaims Thomas, who is the first to take hold of an amphora.

« Well then, look. Mary of Joseph is not at home. She is at Her brother-in-law's, you know. But the key is in my house. Ask them to give it to you, so that you may enter the house, the workshop, I mean. »

« Yes, go. You may also go into the house, I will come later. »

The apostles go away and Jesus is left with Alphaeus.

« I wanted to tell You… I am a true friend of Yours… And when one is a true friend, and is older, and is from the same place, one may speak. I think that one ought to speak… I… I do not want to give You any advice. You know better than I do. I only want to warn You that… Oh! I do not want to play the spy, neither do I wish to place Your relatives in an unfavourable light. But I believe in You, the Messiah, and… and it hurts me to hear them say that you are not Him, that is the Messiah, that You are unsound, that you are the ruin of the family, and of Your relatives. The town… you know, Alphaeus is held in high esteem and so people listen also to them, and he is now ill and I feel sorry for him… Also sufferings at times cause people to do wrong things. See, I was there that evening when Judas and James defended You and their liberty to follow You… Oh! what a row! I don't know how Your Mother can stand it! And that poor woman Mary of Alphaeus? Women are always the victims in certain family situations. »

« My cousins are now at their father's… »

« At their father's? Oh! I feel sorry for them! The old man is beside himself, it must be his age and his illness, but he is behaving like a madman. If he were not mad, I would feel even more sorry for him because… he would ruin his soul. »

« Do you think that he will treat his sons badly? »

« I am sure he will. I am sorry for them and for the women… Where are You going? »

« To Alphaeus' house. »

« Don't, Jesus. Don't let them be disrespectful to You! »

« My cousins love Me more than themselves and it is fair that I should reward them with equal love… There are two women there, who are dear to Me. I am going. Do not keep Me back. » And Jesus hurries towards Alphaeus' house, whereas the other man remains pensive in the street.

Jesus is walking fast. There He is, at the entrance to Alphaeus' kitchen garden. He hears the crying of a woman and the unbecoming shouting of a man. Jesus walks faster the few yards that separate the street from the house, across the very green kitchen garden. He is almost on the threshold of the house when His Mother looks out of the door and sees her Son.

« Mother! »

« Jesus! »

Two cries of love.

Jesus is going to enter, but Mary says: « No, Son. » And She stands on the threshold with Her arms stretched out, clasping the door iambs with Her hands: a barrier of body and love, and She repeats: « No, Son. Do not go in. »

« Let Me in, Mother. Nothing will happen. » Jesus is very calm,

although Mary's growing pallor is certainly upsetting Him. He takes Her slender wrist, moves Her hand away from the door jamb and goes in.

There are strewn on the kitchen floor, reduced to a slimy pulp, the eggs, the grapes and the jar of honey brought from Cana. From another room a querulous voice is heard, that of an old man who is cursing, accusing, complaining in one of those senile fits of temper, so unfair, impotent and painful to be seen, and so sorrowful to endure. «… there you are, my house is ruined, we have become the laughing-stock of the whole of Nazareth, and I am here, alone, helpless, struck in my heart, in the respect due to me, in my needs! … That is what is left for you, Alphaeus, for behaving as a true believer! Why? Why? Because of a madman. A madman who has made my foolish sons insane. Ah! Ah! What a pain! »

And Mary of Alphaeus' tearful voice implores: « Be good, Alphaeus, be good! Don't you see that you are hurting yourself? Come, let me help you to lie down… You are always good, always just… Why are you behaving thus to yourself? To me? To the poor children? … »

« No! No! Don't touch me! I don't want you! The children are good? Ah! They certainly are! Two ungrateful sons! They brought me honey after filling me with bitterness. They brought me eggs and grapes, after feeding on my heart! Go away, I tell you. Away! I don't want you. I want Mary. She knows how to do things. Where is that weak woman now, who can't get Her Son to obey Her? »

Mary of Alphaeus, chased out, enters the kitchen while Jesus is about to go into Alphaeus' room. She sees Him and collapses on Him, sobbing desperately, while Mary, the Virgin, goes humbly and patiently near the old angry man.

« Do not cry, aunt. I will go in now. »

« No, no! Don't let him insult You! He seems to be mad. He has a stick. No, Jesus, no. He struck also his sons. »

« He will not do anything to Me » and Jesus, resolutely, though kindly, moves His aunt to one side and goes in.

« Peace to you, Alphaeus. »

The old man, who is on the point of lying down with endless complaints and reproaches to Mary, because She is not capable of doing anything (before he had said that only She knew how to do things) suddenly turns round. « You are here? Here to scoff at me? Also that? »

« No. To bring you peace. Why are you so cross? You are making your condition worse. Mother, leave him. I will lift him. I will not hurt you and you will not have to make any effort. Mother, lift the blankets. » And Jesus carefully gets hold of the heavy-breathing, weak, wicked, weeping, miserable little heap of bones and lays him with great care, as if he were a new-born baby, on his bed.

« There you are. As I used to do to My father. Let us lift this pillow. It will raise you up and you will breathe better. Mother, put that little one there, under his back. He will be more comfortable. And now the light like that, that it may not hurt his eyes, while letting in the fresh air. That is it. Now… I saw a decoction on the fire. Bring it to Me, Mother. And make it very sweet. You are all perspiration and you are getting cold. It will do you good. »

Mary goes out obediently.

« But I… but I… Why are You good to me? »

« Because I love you, you know that. »

« Before I loved You, too… but now… »

« Now you no longer love Me. I know. But I love you, and that is enough for Me. After… you will love Me… »

« Well then… Ah, Ah… how painful! then if it is true that You love me, why do You give offense to my grey hair? »

« I do not offend you, Alphaeus, in any way. I honour You. »

« Honour me? I am the laughing-stock of Nazareth. »

« Why do you say so, Alphaeus? In what way have I made you a laughing-stock? »

« With regard to my sons. Why are they rebels? Because of You. Why am I mocked at? Because of You. »

« Tell Me: if Nazareth should praise you because of the destiny of your sons, would you feel the same pain? »

« In that case, I would not! But Nazareth does not praise me. They would praise me if You were a conqueror. But that they should leave me on account of one who is little less than an insane man who roams about the world, drawing upon himself hatred and derision, a poor man amongst the poor! Ah! Who would not laugh? My poor home! What an end for you, poor house of David! And I was to live so long to see this misfortune? To see You, the last shoot of the glorious family, become corrupt with insanity because of excessive servility! Ah! Misfortune has befallen us since the day my faint-hearted brother agreed to be united to that insipid yet overbearing woman who had full control over him. I then said: "Joseph is not cut out for marriage. He will be unhappy!" And he was. He knew what it was like, and he never wanted to have anything to do with marriage. Cursed be the Law of orphan heiresses! Cursed be fate. Cursed be that wedding. »

The « Virgin heiress » has come back with the decoction in time to hear Her brother-in-law's jeremiad. She is even more pale. But Her patient gracefulness is not upset. She goes near Alphaeus and with a gentle smile helps him to drink.

« You are unfair, Alphaeus. But you are so ill, that you are forgiven everything » says Jesus, Who is holding up is head.

« Oh! Yes! Very ill! You say that You are the Messiah! You work miracles. So they say. If at least You cured me, to compensate me

for the sons You have taken. Cure me… and I will forgive You. » « Forgive your sons. Endeavour to understand their souls, and I will give you relief. If you have still a grudge against them, I car, do nothing. »

« Forgive them? » The old man has an outburst of rage, which, of course, sharpens his agonies of pain and that makes him enraged again.

« Forgive them? Never! Go away! Away, if that is what You have to tell me! Go away! I want to die without being troubled any further. »

Jesus makes a gesture of resignation. « Goodbye, Alphaeus, I am going away… Must I really go? Uncle… must I really go? »

« If You are not going to satisfy me, yes, go away. And tell those two serpents that their old father is dying with a grudge against them. »

« No. Do not do that. Do not lose your soul. Do not love Me, if you wish so. Do not believe that I am the Messiah. But do not hate. Do not hate, Alphaeus. Scoff at Me. Call Me insane. But do not hate. »

« But why do You love me, if I insult You? »

« Because I am He Whom you do not want to acknowledge. I am the Love. Mother, I am going home. »

« Yes, My Son. I will not be long. »

« I leave My peace with you, Alphaeus. If you want Me, send for Me, at any time, and I will come. »

Jesus goes out, as calm as if nothing had happened. He only looks paler.

« Oh! Jesus, Jesus, forgive him » moans Mary of Alphaeus.

« Of course, Mary. There is not even any need to forgive him. Who suffers, is forgiven everything. Now he is already more calm. Grace works also unknown to one's heart. And then there are your tears, and certainly Judas' and James' sufferings, and their loyalty to their vocations. May peace be in your anguished heart, aunt. » He kisses her and goes out into the kitchen garden to go home.

When He is about to set foot on the road, Peter comes in, and behind him John, panting as if they had been running. « Oh! Master! What's the matter? James said to me: "Run to my house. I wonder how Jesus is being treated!" No, I'm wrong. Alphaeus came in, the man of the fountain, and he said to Judas: "Jesus is in your house" and then James said so. Your cousins are distressed. I don't understand what it is all about. But I see You… and I take heart. »

« It is nothing, Peter. A poor invalid, made intolerant by pain. It is all over now. »

« Oh! I am glad! And why are you here? » Peter asks the Iscariot, who has rushed there too, and his tone is not very kind.

« You are here too, are you not? »

« I was asked to come and I came. »

« I came too. If the Messiah was in danger, and in His own

fatherland, I, having already defended Him in Judaea, can defend Him also in Galilee. »

« We are quite capable of that. But there is no need in Galilee. »

« Ha! Ha! Ha! Indeed! His fatherland is ejecting Him like heavy food. Well. I'm glad for you, who were scandalised by a little incident, which took place in Judaea, where He is unknown. Here, instead!… » and Judas ends whistling a tune which is a masterpiece of a satire.

« Listen, boy. I am not in the right mood to put up with you. Stop it, therefore… if… something is dear to you. Master, did they hurt You? »

« No, My dear Peter. I can assure you. Let us walk faster to comfort My cousins. »

They go and enter the large workshop. Judas and James are near the big carpenter's bench. James is standing, Judas is sitting on a stool, his elbow on the bench, his head resting on his hand. Jesus goes towards them, smiling, to reassure them at once that His heart loves them: « Alphaeus is calmer, now. His pains are subsiding and everything is peaceful again. You must be calm, too. »

« Did You see him? And mother? »

« I saw everybody. »

Judas asks: « Also our brothers? »

« No, they were not in. »

« They were there. They did not want to be seen by You. But with us! Oh! If we had committed a crime, we would not have been treated like that. And we flew from Cana for the joy of seeing him again and bringing him what he is fond of! We love him… but he no longer understands us… he no longer believes us. » Judas bends his arm and cries, his head resting on the bench. James is stronger. But his internal torture can be read on his face.

« Do not cry, Judas. And you… do not suffer. »

« Oh! Jesus! We are his children… and he cursed us. But even if that tears our hearts, no, we are not turning back! We belong to You and we will remain Yours, even if they threaten us with death to detach us from You! » exclaims James.

« And you said that you were not capable of heroism? I knew. But you have said it yourself. Really, you will be faithful also against death. And you, too » Jesus caresses them. But they are suffering. The stony vault resounds with Judas' crying.

And it is thus possible for me to become better acquainted with the disciples' souls.

Peter, whose honest face is sorrowful, exclaims: « Yes! It is painful… A sad situation. But, my dear boys (and he shakes them affectionately) not everybody deserves such words… I… I realise that I have been fortunate in my vocation. That good woman, my wife, always says to me: "It is as if I were repudiated, because you are

no longer mine. But I say: 'Oh! happy repudiation!' ". You should say that, too. You lose your father but you gain God. »

The shepherd Joseph, an orphan, devoid of experience of family life is amazed that a father can be the cause of so many tears, and says: « I thought I was the most unhappy of all, because I am fatherless. But I see that it is better to moan over his death than to bewail him as an enemy. »

John kisses and caresses his friends.

Andrew sighs and is quiet. He is pining to speak but his shyness gags him.

Thomas, Philip, Matthew and Nathanael are speaking in low voices in a comer, with the respect due to real sorrow.

James of Zebedee is praying, just intelligibly, that God may grant peace.

Simon Zealot, oh! how much I like his gesture! He leaves his corner and comes near the two distressed men, he lays one hand on Judas's head and with his other arm he embraces James' waist and says: « Don't cry, son. Jesus did say to us, to you and to me: "I am uniting you: you who are losing your father because of Me, and you who have a father's heart, without having any children". And we did not understand how much of a prophesy there was in His words. But He knew. Now: I beg you. I am old and I always dreamt of being called "father". Accept me as such, and I, as a father, will bless you every morning and evening. Please accept me as such. » The two brothers nod in assent sobbing more loudly.

Mary comes in and hastens towards the two sad men. She caresses Judas' dark head and James' cheeks. She is as pale as a lily. Judas takes Her hand, kisses it and asks: « What is he doing? »

« He is sleeping, son. Your mother sends you her kisses » and She kisses them both.

Peter's harsh voice bursts out: « Listen, come here a moment, I want to tell you something » and I see Peter get hold of an arm of the Iscariot with his strong hand and take him out in the street. And then he comes back in alone.

« Where did you send him? » asks Jesus.

« Where? To get some fresh air, or I would have ended up by giving him some myself, but in a different way… and I did not do it only because of You. Oh! I feel better now. Who laughs in the presence of sorrow is an asp, and I crush snakes. You are here… and I only sent him out in the moonlight. It may well be… but I will become even a scribe, a change that only God can work in me, as I hardly know that I am in this world, but he… he will not become good, not even with the help of God. Simon of Jonas can assure You, and I am not mistaken. No! Don't worry! He could not believe that he was getting away from a sad situation. He is more arid than a flint-stone in the sun in August. Come on, boys! There

is a Mother here that not even Heaven has a sweeter one. There is a Master here Who is more loving than Paradise, and there are so many hearts that sincerely love you. Storms do a lot of good: they clear away the dust. To-morrow you will be fresher than flowers, swifter than birds, to follow our Jesus. »

And it all ends on these simple good words of Peter.

Then Jesus says:

« After this vision you will put the one I gave you in spring 1944, the one in which I asked My Mother Her impression on the apostles. By now their moral characters are sufficiently clear to allow that vision to be put here without scandalising anybody. I did not need anybody's advice. But when we were alone, and the disciples were scattered among friendly families or in nearby villages, when I stopped in Nazareth, how pleasant it was to speak to and ask advice of My kind Friend: My Mother, and have confirmation from Her graceful wise lips of what I had already seen. I have never been anything but "Her Son" with Her. And among those born of woman there was never a mother more "mother" than She, in all the perfections of human and moral motherly virtues, neither was there a son more "son" than I with regard to respect, confidence and love.

And now that you also have had at least a little knowledge of the Twelve, of their virtues, faults, characters, struggles, is there still anyone who believes that it was an easy task for Me to keep them together, elevate and perfect them? And is there still anyone who considers the life of an apostle to be easy, and that to be an apostle or, as very often is the case, to consider oneself such, one is entitled to a smooth life, free from sorrows, contrasts, defeats? Is there still anybody who, only because he serves Me, expects Me to be his servant and to work miracles uninterruptedly in his favour, making his life as beautiful as a flowery carpet, easy and glorious from a human point of view? My way, My work, My service is the cross, sorrow, abnegation, sacrifice. I did that. Let those who say that they are "My" friends do the same. The above is not for the Johns, but for discontented and difficult doctors.

And also for doctors of captious objections I say that I made use of the words: uncle and aunt, which are unusual in Palestinian languages, to clarify and settle a disrespectful question concerning My condition of only-begotten Son of Mary and the Virginity of My Mother prae - and postpartum; She in fact had Me through spiritual divine union, and let Me repeat it once again, She knew no other union, neither did She give birth to any other child: Inviolate Flesh, which even I did not rend, closed on the mystery of a tabernacle-womb, the throne of the Trinity and of the Incarnate Word. »

101. Jesus Questions His Mother about His Disciples.

The evening of 13th February 1944.

About two hours after the above vision, I now see the house of Nazareth. I recognise the room of the farewell, open on to the little kitchen garden, where the plants are all covered with leaves.

Jesus is with Mary. They are sitting beside each other on the stone bench set against the wall. It looks as if they have already had their supper and that Mother and Son are taking delight in a sweet conversation, while the others have already withdrawn, if there are other people, as I do not see anybody. My internal voice informs me that it is one of the first times that Jesus goes back to Nazareth after His Baptism, His fasting in the desert and above all, after the formation of the apostolic college. He tells His Mother of His first days of evangelization, and the first hearts He conquered.

Mary is hanging on the words of Her Jesus. Mary is thinner and paler, as if She had suffered during this period of time. Two dark shadows have formed under Her eyes, as if She had been crying and worrying a great deal. But now She is happy and smiling. She smiles caressing Her Jesus' hand. She is happy to have Him there, talking heart to heart with Him in the silence of the oncoming evening.

It must be summer time, because the fig tree already has its first ripe fruits, which stretch out as far as the house and Jesus, standing up, picks some and gives the best ones to His Mother, peeling them carefully and offering them in the crown of skins pulled down inside out, as if they were white buds streaked in red, amidst a corolla of petals white inside and violet outside. He offers them in the palm of His hand and smiles seeing that His Mother relishes them.

Then He asks Her point blank: « Mother, have You seen the disciples? What do You think of them? »

Mary, Who is about to put a third fig to Her mouth, starts, withholds Her hand, lifts Her head and looks at Jesus.

« What do You think of them now that I have shown them all to You? » urges Jesus.

« I think that they love You and that You will get much out of them. John… Love John, as You know how to love. He is an angel. I do not worry when I think that he is with You. Peter, too… is good. Somewhat harder, because he is older, but sincere and convinced. And his brother, too. They love You as best as they can, just now. Later, they will love You more. Also our cousins, now that they are convinced, will be faithful to You. But the man from Kerioth… I do not like him, Son. His eye is not crystal-clear and his heart even less so. He frightens Me. »

« He is full of respect for You. »

« Too much respect. He is full of respect also for You. But not for you, the Master; for You the future King, from Whom he hopes to receive wealth and glory. He was a nobody, just a little more than the others at Kerioth. He hopes to play an important role at Your side and… Oh! Jesus! I do not want to be uncharitable, but I think, even if I do not want to believe it, that in case You should disappoint him, he will not hesitate to take Your place, or endeavour to do so. He is ambitious, greedy and vicious. He is more suitable to be the courtier of a worldly king, than Your apostle, My Son. He frightens Me! » And the Mother looks at Jesus with two eyes full of dismay in Her pale face.

Jesus sighs. He ponders. He looks at His Mother. He smiles to encourage Her. « Also that is needed, Mother. If it were not he, it would be someone else. My College must represent the world, and in the world they are not all angels, neither are they all of the same character as Peter and Andrew. If I chose everything perfect, how could the poor diseased souls dare hope to become My disciples? I have come to save what is lost, Mother. John is saved as he is. But how many are not! »

« I am not afraid of Levi. He redeemed himself because he wanted to. He forsook his sin and his customs desk and acquired a new soul to come with You. But Judas of Kerioth did not. On the contrary, pride is becoming more and more the master of his ugly old soul. But You already know that, Son. Why do You ask Me? I can but pray and cry for You. You are the Master. Also of Your poor Mother. »

The vision ends here.

102. Cure of Johanna of Chuza near Cana.

8th February 1945.

The disciples are having their supper in Joseph's large workshop. The big bench serves as a table, on which there is everything that is needed. But I see that the workshop is used also as a dormitory. The other two carpenter's benches have been changed into beds by placing mats on them, and little low beds (mats on hurdles) have been placed along the walls. The apostles are speaking to one another and to the Master.

« So You are really going up to Lebanon? » asks the Iscariot.

« I never promise what I am not going to keep. In this case I promised twice: the shepherds and Johanna of Chuza's nurse. I have waited for five days as I told her, and I have added today for prudence' sake. But now I am going. We shall start as soon as the moon rises. It will be a long way even if we go by boat as far as Bethsaida. But I want My heart to rejoice, greeting also Benjamin and Daniel. You have seen what souls the shepherds have. Oh! It is

well worthwhile going to honour them, because not even God lowers Himself by honouring one of His servants, on the contrary He increases His justice. »

« In this heat? Watch what You are doing. I am telling You for Your own sake. »

« Nights are already less sultry. The sun will be in Leo only for a short time now, and the storms are mitigating the heat. And I tell you once again. I am not compelling anyone to come. Everything must be spontaneous in Me and around Me. If you have business to attend to, or if you feel tired, stay here. We will meet later. »

« Well, You said so. I have to attend to some family matters. Vintage time is near and my mother asked me to see certain friends… You know, I am the head of the family, after all. I mean: I am the man in the family. »

Peter grumbles: « It is a good thing that he remembers that a mother always comes first after a father. »

Judas, whether he does not hear or he does not want to hear, shows no sign that he has heard the grumbling, which in any case Jesus checks by casting a glance, while James of Zebedee, who is sitting near Peter, gives a tug at his tunic to make him keep quiet.

« You may go, Judas. Nay, you must go. We must never be wanting in obedience to our mothers. »

« Well, I will go at once, if You allow me. I will be at Nain in time to find accommodation. Goodbye, Master. Goodbye, friends. »

« Be the friend of peace and deserve always to have God with you. Goodbye » says Jesus, whereas the others say goodbye all together.

There is not much grief at seeing him depart, on the contrary… Peter, perhaps because he is afraid that he may change his mind, helps him to tie the straps of his bag and to sling it across his back, he takes him to the door of the workshop, which is already open like the other door opening on to the kitchen garden, obviously to ventilate the sultry room after a very hot day. He remains at the door looking at Judas going away, and when he sees that he is really departing, he makes a gesture of joy and of ironical farewell and comes back in rubbing his hands. He says nothing… but has already said everything. Some of the disciples who have been watching, laugh up their sleeves.

But Jesus does not notice them, because He is scanning the face of His cousin James, who has blushed and looks grave, and has stopped eating his olives. He asks him: « What is the matter? »

« You said: "We must not lack obedience to our mother… " What about us, then? »

« Have no scruples. As a general rule that is how one must behave. When one is but a man and a child of the same flesh. But not when one has taken another nature and a different paternity.

Such higher paternity is to be followed in its orders and desires. Judas came before you and Matthew… but he is still so far behind. He must form, and he will do so very slowly. You must all be charitable to him, you, too, Peter, be charitable! I understand… but I say to you: be charitable. To tolerate bothersome people is not an easy virtue. Make use of it. »

« Yes, Master… But when I see him so… so… Well, be quiet, Peter, because in any case He understands… I seem to be a sail too taut because of the wind… I creak under the stress, and something always breaks within me… But You know, or rather, You do not know because You are worth nothing as a boatman, so I tell You, if all the sheets of a sail snap because of excessive tension, I can assure You that the sail gives the stupid boatman such a slap, that it stuns him… Now I feel that… I risk having all the sheets broken… and then… It is better, yes, if now and again he goes away. So the sail droops because of lack of wind and I have time to reinforce the sheets. »

Jesus smiles and shakes His head, pitying the just and fiery Peter.

A loud noise of ironshod hooves and the shouting of children is heard in the street. « He is here! He is here! Stop, man. » And before Jesus and the disciples become aware of what is happening, the dark body of a horse steaming with sweat appears before the door, a horseman dismounts, dashes in and prostrates himself at Jesus' feet, kissing them with veneration.

They all look at him quite amazed. « Who are you? What do you want? »

« I am Jonathan. »

Joseph responds with a cry: as, sitting behind the high bench, and, because of the flashing arrival, it had been impossible for him to recognise his friend. The shepherd rushes toward the prostrated man: « You, it is you!… »

« Yes. I am worshipping my beloved Lord! Thirty years of hope, oh! What a long wait! Here: those years have now blossomed like the flower of a solitary agave, all of a sudden, in a blissful ecstasy, even more blissful than the one of long ago! Oh! My Saviour! »

Women, children and some men, amongst whom also good Alphaeus of Sarah, still holding a piece of bread and cheese in his hand, gather at the door and even inside the large room.

« Stand up, Jonathan. I was about to come and look for you, Benjamin and Daniel… »

« I know… »

« Stand up, that I may give you the kiss that I gave your friends. » Jesus forces him to stand up and kisses him.

« I know » repeats the robust old man, who is well preserved and well dressed. « I know. She was right. It was not the delirium of a

dying person! Oh! Lord God! How a soul hears and perceives You, when You call it! » Jonathan is moved.

But he recovers. He does not waste time. Full of adoration and yet active, he comes to the point. « Jesus, our Saviour and Messiah, I have come to beg You to come with me. I have spoken to Esther and she told me… But earlier, Johanna had spoken to You and she told me… oh! do not laugh at a happy man, you who hear me, for I am happy and yet distressed, until I hear You say "I will come". You know that I was travelling with my dying mistress. What a journey! It was quite good from Tiberias to Bethsaida. But after we left the boat and took a wagon, although I had fitted it out as well as I could, it was a torture. We travelled slowly, by night, but she suffered. At Caesarea Philippi she was on the point of death, vomiting blood. We stopped… The third morning, seven days ago, she sent for me. She was so pale and exhausted, that she looked as if she were already dead. But when I called her, she opened her mild eyes, like those of a dying gazelle and smiled at me. With her little ice-cold hand she beckoned me to bend down, her voice being so weak, and she said to me: "Jonathan, take me home. But at once". Her effort in giving the order was so great that, although she is always more gentle than a good little child, her cheeks turned scarlet and for a moment her eyes brightened up. She continued: "I dreamed of my house at Tiberias. There was in it One Whose face was like a star, He was tall, fair-haired, His eyes were as blue as the sky and His voice sweeter than the sound of a harp. He was saying to me: 'I am the Life. Come. Come back. I am waiting for you to give you it'. I want to go". I said: "My mistress! You cannot! You are not well! When you are better, we will see". I thought it was the delirium of a dying person. But she was weeping and then… - oh! it is the first time she said so during the six years that she had been my mistress, and she even sat up in her anger, whereas before she could not move - and then she said to me: "Servant, I want to go. I am your mistress. Obey!" and she then fell back vomiting blood. I thought she was dying… and I said: "Let us make her happy. She will die one way or the other!… I will feel no remorse for displeasing her at the end, after pleasing her all the time". What a journey! She would not rest except in the morning between the third and the sixth hour. I wore the horses out to come quickly. We arrived at Tiberias today at the ninth hour… And Esther told me… I then understood that it was You Who had called her. Because that was the hour and the day You promised Esther a miracle and You appeared to the soul of my mistress. She wanted to start again immediately after the ninth hour and she sent me on first… Oh! come, my Saviour! »

« I will come at once. Faith deserves a reward. Who wants Me, will have Me. Let us go. »

« Wait. I threw a purse of money to a young man, saying: "Three, five, as many donkeys as you like, if you have no horses, and at once, at Jesus' house". They are about to come. We will be quicker. I hope to meet her near Cana. If at least… »

« What, Jonathan? »

« If at least she is alive… »

« She is alive. But even if she were dead, I am the Life. Here is My Mother. »

The Virgin, Who has obviously been informed by someone, is hastening towards them followed by Mary of Alphaeus. « Son, are You going away? »

« Yes, Mother. I am going with Jonathan. He has come. I knew I would be able to let You see him. That is why I waited an extra day. »

Jonathan at first has bowed down deeply, with his arms crossed over his chest, he now kneels down and lightly lifts the hem of Mary's dress and kisses it saying: « I salute the Mother of my Lord! »

Alphaeus of Sarah says to the curious onlookers: « Oh! What do you say? Should we not be ashamed of being the only faithless ones? »

The noise of many hooves is heard in the street. It is from the little donkeys. I think that all the donkeys in Nazareth are there, and they are so many that they would be sufficient for a squadron. While Jonathan picks the best and negotiates, paying without haggling over the price, and takes two Nazarenes with some more donkeys, lest some might lose a shoe, and that the two men might bring back all the braying herd of donkeys, Mary and the other Mary help to close the haversacks and sacks.

Mary of Alphaeus says to her sons: « I will leave your beds here. And I will caress them… And I will feel as if I were caressing you. Be good, worthy of Jesus, sons… and I… I will be happy… » and in the meantime she is shedding large tears.

Mary instead helps Jesus and caresses Him lovingly, giving Him much advice and many messages for the other two Lebanese shepherds, because Jesus states that He will not be back until He finds them.

They depart. It is evening and the first quarter of the moon is rising now. Jesus is in front with Jonathan, all the others are behind. While they are in town they go at a walking pace, because of the people gathering near them. But as soon as they are out, they break into a gallop, while the caravan resounds with hooves and harness bells.

« She is in the wagon with Esther » explains Jonathan. « Oh! My mistress! What a joy to make you happy! To bring Jesus to you! Oh! my Lord! To have You here, beside me! To have You! Your face is really like the star that she saw and Your hair is fair and Your

eyes like the sky and Your voice is really the sound of a harp… oh! But Your Mother! Will You bring Her to my mistress, one day? »

« Your mistress will come to Her. They will be friends. »

« Will they? Oh!… Yes, she can. Johanna is married and had a child. But her soul is as pure as a virgin's. She can be near the blessed Mary. »

Jesus turns round because of a hearty laugh from John, which all the others imitate.

« It's me, Master, that makes them laugh. On the boat I am more steady than a cat… but here! I am like a barrel left loose on the deck of a boat caught in a southwest wind » says Peter.

Jesus smiles and encourages him, promising that the trot will soon be over.

« Oh! It's all right. It's all right if the boys laugh. Let us go and make this good woman happy. »

Jesus turns round again at another outburst of laughter. Peter exclaims: « No, I will not tell You that one, Master. But why not? Yes, I will tell You. I was saying "Our prime minister will bite his fingers when he finds out that he was absent when there was the possibility of strutting about with a lady of rank". And they laugh. But it is so. I am sure that if he had imagined that, he would not have had paternal vineyards to look after. »

Jesus does not reply.

The road is quickly covered by the well-fed little donkeys. Cana is soon left behind them in the clear moonlight.

« If You allow me, I will go ahead. I will stop the wagon. Its jolting makes her suffer so much. »

« Yes, go. »

Jonathan puts his horse to the gallop.

They go a long way in the moonlight. Then they meet the dark shape of a large covered wagon, stopped at the roadside. Jesus spurs His donkey which breaks into a canter. He is now near the wagon and dismounts.

« The Messiah! » announces Jonathan.

The old nurse rushes out of the wagon on to the road, and then throws herself down on to the dust. « Oh! save her! She is dying. »

« Here I am. » And Jesus climbs into the wagon, where there is a pile of cushions and a slender body on them. There is a little lamp in a comer, and cups and amphoras. A young maid servant is weeping, while wiping the cold perspiration from the dying woman. Jonathan hastens in with one of the wagon lamps.

Jesus bends over the unconscious woman, who is really dying. There is no difference between the whiteness of her linen dress and the palor, which is even faintly bluish, of her emaciated hands and face. Only her thick eyebrows and her very dark long eyelashes give some colour to the snow white face. Her cheeks do not even

have the ominous bright scarlet of consumptives. Her lips are only a shade of violet pink, half open while breathing is difficult.

Jesus kneels down beside her and watches her. The nurse takes her hand and calls her. But her soul, already on the threshold of death, does not give any response.

The disciples have arrived with the two young men from Nazareth and they gather round the wagon.

Jesus lays His hand on the forehead of the dying woman, who for one instant opens her dimmed hazy eyes and then closes them again.

« She no longer hears » moans the nurse. And she cries louder.

Jesus makes a gesture: « Mother, she will hear. Have faith. » He then calls her: « Johanna! Johanna! It is I! I am calling you. I am the Life. Look at Me, Johanna. »

The dying woman opens her large dark eyes with a brighter glance and looks at the face bending over her. She shows joy and smiles. She slowly moves her lips forming a word which, however, has no sound.

« Yes. It is I. You have come and I have come. To save you. Can you have faith in Me? »

The dying woman nods her head. All her vitality and all the words which she is unable to express otherwise are concentrated in her glance.

« Well (Jesus, while still kneeling down and holding His left hand on her forehead, straightens Himself up, exerting His Heavenly power) Well: I want it. Be cured. Rise. » He removes His hand and stands up.

A fraction of a second, then Johanna of Chuza, without any help whatsoever, sits up, gives a cry and throws herself at Jesus' feet, calling in a loud happy voice: « Oh! To love You, my Life. For ever! Yours! For ever Yours! Nurse! Jonathan! I am cured! Oh! Quick! Run and tell Chuza. That he may come to adore the Lord! Oh! bless me again, and again, and again! Oh! My Saviour. » She weeps and smiles, kissing Jesus' tunic and hands.

« Yes, I bless you. What else shall I do for you? »

« Nothing, Lord. Beside loving me and allowing me to love You. »

« And would you not like to have a child? »

« Oh! a child!… Do as You please, Lord. I leave everything to You: my past, my present and my future. I owe You everything and I give You everything. Give to Your servant, what You know is better. »

« Eternal life then. Be happy. God loves you. I am going. I bless You, and I bless you all. »

« No, my Lord. Stop in my house, which now is, oh! is really a flowery rose-garden. Allow me to go back in there with You… Oh! How happy I am! »

« I will come. But I have My disciples. »

« My brothers, Lord. Johanna will have for them, as for You, food and drinks and every refreshment. Make me happy! »

« Let us go. Send the donkeys back and follow us on foot. The road is a short one now. We shall go slowly, that you may follow us. Goodbye, Ishmael and Aser. Give My greetings to My Mother, on My behalf, and to My friends. »

The two Nazarenes, dumbfounded, depart with their braying donkeys, whereas the wagon starts its return journey, this time with its load of joy. The disciples follow in group making their comments.

And it all ends.

103. Jesus on Lebanon with the Shepherds Benjamin and Daniel.

10th February 1945.

Jesus is walking beside Jonathan along a green shady embankment. The apostles are behind talking among themselves. But Peter parts from them and comes forward and, as frank as usual, he asks Jonathan: « But was the road to Caesarea Philippi not quicker? We have taken this one… but when will we arrive? You went that way with your mistress, didn't you? »

« With an invalid I dared everything. But you must realise that I am a courtier of Antipas, and Philip after that filthy incest, does not approve of Herod's courtiers… You know, I am not afraid for myself. But I do not want to cause trouble to you, and particularly to the Master, and make enemies for you. In Philip's Tetrarchy, the Word is required, as in Antipas'… and if they hate you, how will you manage? On your way back you can come this way, if you prefer to do so. »

« I praise your prudence, Jonathan. But coming back I intend passing through the Phoenician region » says Jesus.

« They are enveloped in the darkness of errors. »

« I will call at the border areas to remind them that there is a Light. »

« Do you think that Philip would revenge himself on a servant for the wrong he received from his brother? »

« Yes, Peter. They are both alike. They are dominated by the lowest instincts and they make no distinction. They seem animals, not men, believe me. »

« And yet he should be fond of us, that is, of Him, a relative of John's. John after all spoke in his name and on his behalf, when he spoke in the name of God. »

« He would not even ask you where you came from or who you are. If you were seen with me, if he recognised me or if I was

pointed out to him by an enemy of Antipas' household as the servant of his Procurator, you would be imprisoned at once. If you knew how much mud there is behind purple dresses! Revenge, abuse of power, betrayals, lust, thefts are the nourishment of their souls. Souls?… Well! Let us say so. I think they have no souls any longer. You can see. It ended well. But why was John freed? Because of a feud between two court officials. One, to get rid of the other, who was so favoured by Antipas that John was placed in his custody, for a sum of money opened the jail at night… I think he must have dulled his rival's senses with a drugged wine, and the following morning… the poor fellow was beheaded in place of the Baptist who had escaped. Disgusting, I tell you. »

« And your master stays there? He seems to be a good man. »

« He is. But he cannot do otherwise. His father and his grandfather were at the court of Herod the Great, and the son was compelled to be there. He does not approve. But he can only keep his wife away from that vicious court. »

« Could he not say: "You are disgusting" and go away? »

« He could. But, although he is so good, he is not yet capable of such a deed. It would almost certainly mean death. And who is anxious to die because of his soul's honesty, elevated to the highest degree? A saint like the Baptist. But we, poor people! »

Jesus, Who has allowed them to speak among themselves, comes in: « Before long in all known areas of the world the saints happy to die for such fidelity to Grace and for the love of God will be as thick as flowers on a meadow in April. »

« Really? Oh! I would like to greet those saints and say to them: "Pray for poor Simon of Jonas!" » says Peter.

Jesus looks steadfastly at him smiling.

« Why are You looking at me like that? »

« Because you will see them as their assistant and you will see them when they assist you. »

« For what, Lord? »

« To become the Stone consecrated by the Sacrifice, on which My Testimony will be celebrated and built. »

« I do not understand You. »

« You will understand. »

The other disciples, who have come near and have listened, talk among themselves.

Jesus turns round: « I solemnly tell you that you will all be tested by one torture or another. For the time being it is the renunciation of comfort, of affections, of material profit. Afterwards it will be a greater and greater thing, up to the sublime thing that will crown you with an immortal diadem. Be faithful. And you will all be faithful. And that is what you will have. »

« Will the Jews, the Sanhedrin, perhaps kill us because of our

love for You? »

« Jerusalem washes the thresholds of its Temple in the blood of its Prophets and its Saints. But also the world is waiting to be washed… There are many temples of dreadful gods. They will in future be temples of the true God, and the leprosy of paganism will be cleansed by the lustral water made with the blood of martyrs. »

« Oh! Most High God! Lord! Master! I am not worthy of so much! I am so weak! Afraid of evil! Oh! Lord!… Either send away Your useless servant or give me strength. I would not like to make You cut a poor figure with my cowardice. » Peter has thrown himself at the feet of the Master and He really implores Him with heartfelt words.

« Stand up, My dear Peter. Do not be afraid. You still have a long way to go… and the time will come when you will wish only to endure your final trial. And then you will have everything, both from Heaven and from yourself. I will be looking at you full of admiration. »

« You say so… and I believe it. But I am such a poor man! »

They resume walking…

… and after a long interruption I begin to see again when they have already-left the plain to climb up a very high wooded mountain. Probably it is not even the same day, because whilst then it was a very torrid morning, now a beautiful dawn causes tiny liquid diamonds to sparkle on all the stems. Endless coniferous forests have been left behind and they dominate from their height and like green cathedrals they receive the untiring pilgrims amongst their columns.

Lebanon is really a wonderful mountain chain. I do not know whether the whole chain is Lebanon or only this mountain. I know that I can see well-wooded mountain ranges rise in a high tangle of ridges and cliffs, of valleys and plateaux, along which torrents like light green-blue silver ribbons flow and then fall into the valleys. All kinds of birds fill the forests of conifers with their warblings and their flights, and the morning air is perfumed with the fragrance of resins. On turning towards the valley, or rather, to the west, one can see the wide, quiet, solemn sea, so pleasant to the view, and the coast, which stretches northwards and southwards, with its towns, its harbours, and the few water-courses, that flow into the sea, and look like shiny commas on the arid land, so scarce is their water which the summer sun dries up, and seem yellowish finger marks on the blue sea.

« These are lovely places » remarks Peter.

« And it is not even very warm » says Simon.

« The sun is no trouble because of the trees » adds Matthew.

« Did they get the Temple cedars here? » asks John.

« Yes, they did. These forests yield the most beautiful wood. Daniel and Benjamin's master owns many of them as well as large herds. They saw the trunks on the spot and then carry them down to the valley along those gullies or by strength of arms. It is hard work when the trunks are to be used totally undressed, as was so in the case of the Temple. But he pays well and many work for him. And then he is quite good. He is not like cruel Doras. Poor Jonah! » replies Jonathan.

« Why are his servants almost slaves? When I said to Jonah: "Leave him in the lurch and come with us. Simon of Jonas will always have some bread for you"; he replied: "I cannot, unless I redeem myself". What is the situation? »

« Doras, and he is not the only one in Israel, is used to doing this: when he sees a good servant, he makes him a slave by subtle cunning. He debits him with false amounts of money, which the poor man cannot pay, and when the sum is sufficient he says: "You are my slave by debt". »

« Oh! What a shame! And he is a Pharisee! »

« Yes, as long as Jonah had some savings, he was able to pay… then… one year it was a hailstorm, the next year the drought. Corn and vineyards yielded little and Doras multiplied the damage by ten, and by ten again… Then Jonah was taken ill through excessive fatigue. And Doras lent him the money for the cure, but he exacted repayment twelve to one, and as Jonah could not pay, he added it to the rest. In short: after a few years there was a debt that made him a slave. And he will not let him go… He will always find other excuses and other debts… » Jonathan is sad thinking of his friend.

« And could your master not… »

« What? Have him treated as a human being? And who would go against the Pharisees? Doras is one of the most powerful ones; I think that he is also a relative of the High Priest… At least so they say. Once, when he was thrashed almost to death, and I was told, I wept so much that Chuza said to me: "I will redeem him to make you happy". But Doras laughed in his face and would not accept anything. Eh! That rascal… He owns the best fields in Israel… but I can assure You: they are fertilised by the blood and tears of his servants. »

Jesus looks at the Zealot and the Zealot looks at Him. They are both grieved.

« And is Daniel's master good? »

« At least he is human. He exacts, but he does not oppress. And, as the shepherds are honest, he treats them with affection. They are responsible for the pastures. He knows and respects me because I am a servant of Chuza… and I may be useful to him… But why, my Lord, is man so selfish? »

« Because love was strangled in the earthly Paradise. But I have

come to loosen the noose and to give life back to love. »

« Here we are in Elisha's estate. The pastures are still far away. But at this time the sheep are almost always in the folds because of the heat. I'll go and see if they are there. » And Jonathan runs away.

He comes back after some time with two robust grey-haired herdsmen, who really dash down the slope to meet Jesus.

« Peace to you. »

« Oh! Oh! Our Baby of Bethlehem! » says one, and the other: « May the peace of God, which has come to us, be blessed. » The two men are prone on the grass. The reverence paid to an altar is not so deep as the present reverence for the Master.

« Stand up. I reciprocate your blessing, and I am happy to do so because it descends joyfully on whoever is worthy of it. »

« Oh! We worthy! »

« Yes, you are, because you have always been faithful. »

« And who would not have been faithful? Who can forget that hour? Who can say: "It is not true what we saw?" Who can forget that You smiled at us for months, when we used to call You in the evening, when we came back with our sheep and you clapped your hands to the sound, of our pipes?… Do you remember, Daniel? Almost always dressed in white in Your Mother's arms, You appeared to us in the sun-rays in Anne's meadow or at the window, and You looked like a flower on Your Mother's snow-white dress. »

« And once You came, taking Your first steps, to caress a little lamb, not quite so curly as You! How happy You were! And we did not know what to do with our rustic persons. We would have liked to be angels to be less coarse… »

« Oh! My friends. I saw your hearts, and I still see them now. »

« And You smile at us as You did then! »

« And You came here to see us poor shepherds! »

« To My friends. I am happy now. I have found you all and I will not lose you any more. Can you give hospitality to the Son of man and His friends? »

« Oh! Lord! Do You have to ask us? We are not short of bread and milk. But if we had only one morsel, we would give it to You, to have You here with us. Is that right, Benjamin? »

« We would give You our hearts as food, our longed for Lord! »

« Let us go then. We shall speak of God… »

« And of Your relatives, Lord. Joseph, so good! Mary… Oh! She: the Mother! See, look at this dewy narcissus. It is beautiful and pure and its top is like a diamond star. But She… Oh! this flower is insignificant when compared to the Mother! A smile of Hers was purification, to meet Her was a feast, to listen to Her was to be sanctified. Do you remember Her words, too, Benjamin? »

« Yes, and I can repeat them for you. Because what She told us,

during the months we could listen to Her, is written here (and he strikes his chest). It is the page of our wisdom. And we also understand it, because it is a word of love. And love… oh! love is understood by everybody! Come, Lord, come in and bless our happy abode. »

They enter a room near the large fold and it all ends.

104. Jesus in the Sea-Town Receives Letters Concerning Jonah.

11th February 1945.

Jesus is in the beautiful sea-town, which on the map has a natural wide and well-protected gulf, with a capacity for taking many ships, made even safer by a massive harbour wall. It must be used also a great deal for military purposes, because I see Roman triremes with soldiers on board. They are disembarking, though I do not know whether because they are relieving troops or because they are reinforcing the garrison. The harbour, that is the port, vaguely reminds me of Naples, dominated by the Vesuvian mountains.

Jesus is sitting in a humble house near the harbour. It is certainly the house of fishermen, probably friends of Peter and John, because I see that they feel at their ease in the house and with its residents. I do not see the shepherd Joseph. And, of course, I do not see the Iscariot, still absent. Jesus is speaking informally to the members of the family and to other people who have come to listen to Him. But it is not a real sermon. His words are full of advice and comfort, such as only He can give.

Andrew comes in, he seems to have gone out on some errand, because he also has some loaves in his hands. He blushes when drawing near, because it must be a real torture for him to attract people's attention to himself, and rather than speak he whispers: « Master, could You come with me? There… there is some good to be done. But only You can do it. »

Jesus gets up without even asking what is the good.

But Peter asks: « Where are you taking Him? He is so tired. It is supper time. They can wait for Him till tomorrow. »

« No… it must be done at once. It is… »

« Why don't you speak, you frightened gazelle? How can a great big strapping man be like that!… You look like a little fish caught in the net! »

Andrew blushes even more. Jesus defends him by drawing him to Himself. « I like him thus. Leave him alone. Your brother is like wholesome water. It works noiselessly in the depths, it comes out from the earth like a very fine stream, but it cures those who go near it. Let us go, Andrew. »

« I'm coming, too! I want to see where he takes You » insists Peter.

Andrew implores: « No, Master. Only You and I, alone. If there is a crowd it is impossible. It's a matter of love… »

« What's that? Are you playing the paranymph now? »

Andrew does not reply to his brother. He says to Jesus: « A man wants to repudiate his wife and… and I have spoken. But I am not capable. But if You speak… oh! You will succeed, because the man is not a bad person. He is… he is… he will tell You. »

Jesus goes out with Andrew without saying anything further.

Peter is somewhat undecided, he then says: « I will go. At least I want to see where they go. » And he goes out, although the others tell him not to do so.

Andrew is about to come out from a narrow thronged street. And Peter follows him. He goes round a little square full of old Women. And Peter follows him. He threads his way through a large door that opens on to a wide yard surrounded by poor little low houses. I call it a large door because there is an arch. But there is no door. And Peter follows him. Jesus enters one of the little houses with Andrew. Peter lies in wait outside. A woman sees him and asks: « Are you a relative of Aava? And those two? Have you come to take her away? »

« Be quiet, you cackle of a hen! I am not to be seen. »

To keep a woman quiet! It is a difficult task. And since Peter casts withering glances at her, she goes to chat with the other old women. Poor Peter is immediately surrounded by a circle of women, boys and also men, who simply by commanding one another to be silent, make a noise that gives away their presence. Peter is consumed with anger… but to no avail.

Jesus' full, calm, beautiful voice comes from inside the house, together with the broken voice of a woman and the hoarse voice of a man. « If she has always been a good wife, why repudiate her? Have you ever wronged him? »

« No, Master, I swear it! I have loved him like the pupil of my eye » moans the woman.

And the man, sharp and hard: « No. She never wronged me except in being sterile. And I want children. I don't want God's malediction on my name. »

« It is not your wife's fault, if she is such. »

« He lays the blame on me. On me and my relatives, as if we betrayed… »

« Woman, be sincere. Did you know that you were sterile? »

« No. I was and I am like all women. Also the doctor said so. But I am not successful in having children. »

« You can see that she has not betrayed you. She suffers for that, too. Will you answer sincerely, too: if she were a mother, would you repudiate her? »

« No. I swear it. There is no reason. But the rabbi said so, and also the scribe: "A barren woman is the curse of God on a house and it is your right and duty to give her a divorce libel and not to vex your virility by depriving yourself of children". I am doing what the Law states. »

« No. Listen. The Law says: "Do not commit adultery" and you are about to commit it. That is the original commandment and nothing else. And if on account of the hardness of your hearts Moses granted divorce, it was to prevent intrigues and concubinages hateful to God. Then your vice expanded more and more Moses' clause, creating the wicked chains and murderous stones which are the present lot of women, always victims of your arrogance, of your whims, of your deafness and your blindness to affections. I tell you: it is not legal to do what you want to do. Your action is an offence to God. Did Abraham perhaps repudiate Sarah? And Jacob, Rachel? And Elkanah, Anna? And Manoah, his wife? Do you know the Baptizer? You do? Well: was his mother not sterile up to her old age and then gave birth to the holy man of God, as Manoah's wife gave birth to Samson, and Anna of Elkanah to Samuel, and Rachel to Joseph, and Sarah to Isaac? To the husband's continence, to his compassion for his sterile wife, to his fidelity to marriage, God grants a prize, and a prize celebrated through centuries, as He grants consolation to the weeping sterile women, no longer sterile nor depressed, but glorious in the exultation of being mothers. You are not allowed to offend her love. Be just and honest. God will reward you beyond your merit. »

« Master, You are the only one to speak so… I did not know. I asked the doctors and they said to me: "Do it". But not one word to tell me that God rewards a good deed with gifts. We are in their hands… and they close our eyes and our hearts with an iron hand. I am not a bad man, Master. Don't be angry with me. »

« I am not angry. I feel sorry for you more than I do for this weeping woman. Because her pain will end with her life. Yours will begin then, to last for ever. Think about it. »

« No, it will not begin. I don't want it to begin. Will You swear to me by the God of Abraham that what You say is the truth? »

« I am the Truth and Wisdom. Who believes in Me will have justice, wisdom, love and peace. »

« I want to believe You. Yes, I want to believe You. I feel there is something in You which is not in the others. Well. I will now go to the priest and I will say to him: "I am not going to repudiate her any longer. I will keep her and I will only ask God to help me to feel less the pain of being childless". Aava: do not cry. We will ask the Master to come again to keep me good, and you… continue to love me. »

The woman cries louder, because of the contrast between her

previous sorrow and her present joy.

Jesus instead smiles. « Do not cry. Look at Me. Look at woman. »

She looks up. She looks at His bright face through her tears

« Come here, man. Kneel down beside your wife. I will now bless" you and sanctify your union. Listen: "Lord God of our fathers, Who made Adam with the dust of the soil and gave him Eve as a helpmate, that they might populate the earth with men, bringing them up in Your holy fear, descend with Your blessing and Your mercy, open and fecundate the womb that the Enemy had closed to lead them to a double sin of adultery and despair. Have mercy on these two children, Holy Father, Supreme Creator. Make them happy and holy. May she be as prolific as a vineyard, and he her protector, as the elm-tree supports the vine. Descend, o Life, to give life. Descend, o Fire, to inflame. Descend, o Power, to activate. Descend! Grant them that for the praise feast for the fruitful crops next year they may offer You their living sheaf, their first born, a son, sacred to You, Eternal Father, Who bless those who hope in You". » Jesus has prayed in a thundering voice, His hands stretched out over their bowed heads.

The people no longer refrain themselves and they gather together, Peter in front of them all.

« Stand up. Have faith and be holy. »

« Oh! Stay, Master! » beg the reconciled couple.

« I cannot. I will come back. I will be here very often. »

« Stay, stay. Speak also to us! » shout the crowd. Jesus blesses but does not stop. He promises only to come back soon. And He goes to His hospitable house, followed by a small crowd.

« Inquisitive man: what should I do to you? » He asks Peter on the way.

« Whatever You wish. However, I was there… »

They enter the house, they dismiss the crowd that make comments on the words they heard, and they sit down to supper.

Peter is still inquisitive. « Master, will there really be a son? »

« Have you ever seen Me promise things which do not come true? Do you think that I would take the liberty of using the confidence in the Father to lie and deceive? »

« No… but… Could You do that to all married couples? »

« I could. But I do it only where I see that a son can be an incentive to holiness. I do not do it where it would be a hindrance. »

Peter ruffles his grizzled hair and becomes quiet.

The shepherd Joseph comes in. He is covered in dust like one who has walked a long way.

« You? Why are you here? » asks Jesus after a greeting kiss.

« I have some letters for You. Your Mother gave me them and one is from Her. Here they are. » And Joseph hands Him three small

,rolls of a kind of thin parchment, tied with a little ribbon. The largest one is also sealed. The second one has only a knot, the third one shows a broken seal. « This one is from Your Mother » says Joseph, pointing at the one with the knot.

Jesus unfolds it and reads it. First in a low voice and then loud. « "To My beloved Son, peace and blessings. A messenger from Bethany arrived here at the first hour on the calends of the month of Elul. It was the shepherd Isaac, to whom I gave the kiss of peace and refreshments in Your name and out of gratitude on my part. He brought Me these two letters which I am sending on to You, and he told Me that Your friend Lazarus of Bethany presses You to consent to his request. My beloved Jesus, blessed Son and Lord, I also have two things to ask You. One is to remind You that You promised Me to call Your poor Mother to instruct Her in the Word. The other is that You should not come to Nazareth without speaking to Me first" »

Jesus stops all of a sudden, He stands up, and goes towards James and Judas. He embraces them tightly and ends repeating by heart the words: « "Alphaeus has returned to the bosom of Abraham at the last full moon, and great was the mourning of the town… » The two sons weep on Jesus' chest, Who goes on: « "At the last hour he wanted You. But You were far away. But it is a consolation for Mary, who considers it a sign of God's forgiveness, and it must give peace also to My nephews". Have you heard? She says so. And She knows what She is saying. »

« Give me the letter » implores James.

« No, it would hurt you. »

« Why? What can it say more painful than the death of a father?… »

« That he cursed us » sighs Judas.

« No. Not so » says Jesus.

« You say so… not to pierce us. But it is so. »

« Read, then. »

And Judas reads: « "Jesus: I beg You, and also Mary begs You; do not come to Nazareth until the mourning is over. Their love for Alphaeus makes the Nazarenes unfair towards You and Your Mother cries because of that. Our good friend Alphaeus comforts Me and calms the town. The report by Aser and Ishmael on Chuza's wife caused a great stir. But Nazareth is now a sea agitated by different winds. I bless You, My Son, and I ask Your peace and blessing for My soul. Peace to My nephews. Mother". »

The apostles make their comments and comfort the weeping brothers.

But Peter says: « Are You not reading those? »

Jesus nods assent and opens Lazarus' letter. He calls Simon Zealot. They read together, in a comer. They then open the other

roll and read it as well, they discuss between themselves; and I see that the Zealot endeavours to persuade Jesus about something, but he is not successful.

Jesus, with the rolls in His hand, comes to the centre of the room and says: « Listen, friends. We are one family and there are no secrets among us. And if it is compassion to conceal evil, it is justice to make good known. Listen to what Lazarus of Bethany writes: "To Lord Jesus peace and blessing, and peace and health to my friend Simon. I received Your letter and, servant as I am, I placed my heart, my speech and all my means at Your service to make You happy and to have the honour of not being a useless servant. I went to Doras, to his castle in Judaea, to ask him to sell me his servant Jonah, as You wish. I confess that if I had not been requested by Simon, a faithful friend, on Your behalf, I would not have faced that mocking, cruel, impious jackal. But for You, my Master and Friend, I feel I can face also Mammon. Because I think that who works for You, is near You and consequently is protected. And I have certainly been helped, because, contrary to expectations, I won. The discussion was a hard one and his first refusals humiliating. Three times I had to bow down to that powerful slave-driver. He then forced me to wait some days. At last here is the letter. It befits the asp he is. And I almost dare not say to You: - Give in to gain Your ends -, because he is not worthy to have You. But there is no other way. I accepted on Your behalf and I signed. If I did the wrong thing, rebuke me. But believe me: I tried to serve You as well as I could. Yesterday a Judaean disciple of Yours came, stating that he came in Your name to find out whether there was any news to be taken to You. He said he was Judas of Kerioth. But I preferred to wait for Isaac to send the letter. And I was surprised that You had sent someone else, since You know that Isaac comes here every Sabbath to rest. I have nothing else to tell You. Only, kissing Your holy feet, I beg You to bring them to Your servant and friend Lazarus, as promised by You. Health to Simon. To You, Master and Friend, a kiss of peace and a prayer for blessing. Lazarus".

And now the other one: "Health to Lazarus. I decided. You will have Jonah for twice the amount. But I make the following terms and I will not change them for any reason. I want Jonah to finish the harvests of the year, that is he will be handed over at the moon of Tishri, at the end of the moon. I want Jesus of Nazareth to come personally to take him, and I will ask Him to enter my house, that I may meet Him. I want payment immediately after signing the contract. Goodbye. Doras". »

« What a pest! » shouts Peter. « But who is paying? I wonder how much he wants and we… we are always without a farthing! »

« Simon is paying. To make Me and poor Jonah happy. He is buying

only the wreck of a man, who will not serve him at all. But he gains great merit in Heaven. »

« You? Oh! » They are all surprised. Even Alphaeus' sons forget their sorrow because of their amazement.

« It is he. It is just that it should be known. »

« It would also be just if it were known why Judas Iscariot went to Lazarus. Who sent him? Did You? »

But Jesus does not reply to Peter. He is very grave and pensive. He comes out of His meditation only to say: « Give some refreshment to Joseph and then let us go and rest. I will prepare a reply for Lazarus… Is Isaac still at Nazareth? »

« He is waiting for me. »

« We shall all go. »

« No. Your Mother says… » They are all in utter confusion.

« Be quiet. That is what I want. My Mother speaks with Her loving heart. I judge with My reason. I prefer to do it while Judas is away. And I want to hold out a friendly hand to My cousins Simon and Joseph, and mourn with them before the mourning is over. We will then go back to Capernaum, to Gennesaret, that is to the lake, awaiting the end of the month of Tishri. And we will take the Maries with us. Your mother needs affection. We will give it to her. And Mine needs peace. I am Her peace. »

« Do You think that at Nazareth?… » asks Peter.

« I do not think anything. »

« Oh! Well! Because, if they should hurt Her, or cause Her sorrow!… They will have to deal with me! » says Peter completely upset.

Jesus caresses him, but He is lost in thought. He is sad, I would say. He then goes between Judas and James and sits down embracing them to comfort I them.

The others speak in low voices not to disturb their sorrow.

105. Jesus Makes Peace with His Cousin Simon in the House of Mary of Alphaeus.

12th February 1945.

The sun is sinking in a bright red sunset, that like a fire about to go out, is becoming deeper and deeper until it becomes ruby-violet: a beautiful rare hue, that fading slowly, colours all the western sky, until it shades into the dark cobalt-blue sky, where the east is steadily advancing with its stars and its crescent moon, now beginning her second phase. Farmers are hastening back to their homes, where spirals of smoke from the low little houses in Nazareth reveal that fires have already been lit.

Jesus is about to go back to town, and contrary to the opinion of the others, He does not want anyone to go and inform His Mother.

« Nothing will happen. Why upset Her beforehand? » He says.

He is now in the streets. Some people salute Him, some whisper behind His back, some rudely turn their backs and slam their doors when the group of the apostles passes by.

Peter's miming is really wonderful. But also the others are somewhat worried. Alphaeus' sons look like two convicts. They are walking beside Jesus, their heads lowered, but they watch everything and now and again they look at each other dismayed and concerned for Jesus. The Master, as if nothing were the matter, reciprocates the greetings with His usual kindness, bends down to caress the children, who in their simplicity do not side with anybody, and are always the friends of their Jesus, Who is always so affectionate towards them.

One of them, a fine chubby child, four years old at most, leaves his mother's skirt, runs towards Him and stretches out his little arms saying: « Take me! » And as Jesus satisfies him and picks him up, the child kisses Him with his lips soiled by the fig he is eating, and then he carries his love to the point of offering a little morsel of the fig to Jesus saying: « Take it! It's good! » Jesus accepts the offering and smiles at being fed by the budding little man.

Isaac, laden with pitchers, is coming from the fountain. He sees Jesus, lays down the pitchers and shouts: « Oh! My Lord! » running towards Him. « Your Mother has just gone back home. She was at Her sister-in-law's. But… Have You received the letter? » he asks.

« That is why I am here. Do not say anything to Mother for the time being. I am going to Alphaeus' house first. »

Isaac, wise as he is, replies only: « I will obey You », he takes his pitchers and goes towards the house.

« We are going now. You, My friends, will wait for us here. I will not be long. »

« Most certainly not! We shall not enter the mourning house, but we will stay outside over there. Is that right? » says Peter.

« Peter is right. We will remain in the street. But near You. »

Jesus bows to their wish. But He smiles and says: « They will do Me no harm. Believe Me. They are not bad. They are only humanly passionate. Let us go. »

I see them in the street of the house and then at the entrance to the kitchen garden. Jesus goes in first, followed by Judas and James. Jesus is now on the kitchen threshold. Inside, near the fireplace, there is Mary of Alphaeus, who is cooking and weeping. In a comer, there are Simon and Joseph, with other men, sitting in a small group. Amongst the men there is Alphaeus of Sarah. They are sitting there, as silent as statues. It is probably their custom. I do not know.

« Peace to this house and peace to the soul which departed from it. »

The widow utters a cry and makes an instinctive gesture of pushing Jesus back and placing herself between Him and the others. Simon and Joseph stand up, gloomy and disconcerted. But Jesus pretends that He has not noticed their hostile attitude. He goes close to the two men (Simon looks as if he is already fifty years old or more) and stretches out His hands in a gesture of friendly invitation. The two brothers are more disconcerted than ever. But they dare not make any rude gesture. Alphaeus of Sarah is in a state of extreme agitation and is clearly suffering. The other men are expressionless awaiting the outcome.

« Simon, since you are now the head of the family, why do you not receive Me? I have dome to mourn with you. How much I would have liked to be with you in the hour of sorrow! But I was far away, through no fault of Mine. You are a just man, Simon. And you must admit it. »

The man is still aloof.

« And you, Joseph, whose name is so dear to Me, why do you not accept My kiss? Will you not allow Me to mourn with you? Death unites true affections. And we love one another. Why should there now be disunity? »

« Because of You our father died a vexed man » says Joseph harshly. And Simon: « You should have stayed here. You knew that he was dying. Why did You not stay? He wanted You… »

« I could not have done more than what I had already done. And you know that… »

Simon, who is more fair, says: « It is true. I know that You came and he sent You away. But he was ill and depressed. »

« I know and I said to your mother and your brothers: "I bear him no grudge, because I understand his heart". But God is above everybody. And God wanted this sorrow for everybody. For Me, because, believe Me, I suffered as if a piece of My flesh had been torn from Me; for your father, who in his suffering understood a great truth, which had been obscure to him throughout his life; for you, as this pain gives you the opportunity of making a sacrifice which is more salutary than a sacrificed steer; and for James and Judas, who are now as mature as you, dear Simon, because this pain is their greatest burden and it oppresses them like a millstone, it has made them adults and of a perfect age in the eyes of God. »

« What truth did my father see? Only one: that his own blood, at the last hour, was hostile to him » replies Joseph harshly.

« No. He understood that the spirit is above blood. He understood the pain of Abraham and because of that he had Abraham to assist him » replies Jesus.

« I wish it were so! But who can assure us? »

« I can, Simon. And more than I, your father's death can. Did he

not ask for Me? You said so. »

« I did. It is true. He wanted Jesus. And he used to say: "At least my soul would not die! He can do it! I sent Him away and He will not come any more. Oh! To die without Jesus! What a horrid man you are! Why did I reject Him?" Yes, that is what he said. He would also say: "And He asked me many times: 'Must I go?' and I sent Him away… Now He will not come any more". He wanted You. Your Mother sent for You, but they could not find You at Capernaum and he cried so much. And with his last ounce of strength he took Your Mother's hand and wanted Her beside him. He could hardly speak. But he said: "The Mother is somewhat the Son. I am keeping Her to have some of Him, because I am afraid of death". Poor father! »

There is an eastern scene with cries and gestures of sorrow, in which they all take part, also James and Judas who have dared to go in. Jesus is the most quiet, He weeps only.

« Are You shedding tears? You loved him, then? » asks Simon.

« Oh! Simon! Why do you ask Me? If I could have avoided it, do you think that I would have let him suffer? I am with the Father, but not above the Father. »

« You cure dying people, but You did not cure him » remarks Joseph bitterly.

« He did not believe in Me. »

« That is true, Joseph » points out his brother Simon.

« He did not believe and did not renounce his ill-feeling. There is nothing I can do when there is lack of faith and hatred. I therefore say to you: do not hate your brothers. Here they are. Their torture is not to be aggravated by your ill-feeling. Your mother is torn to shreds more by this living hatred, than by death that ends in itself, and in the case of your father, it ended in peace, because his desire to have Me gained him God's forgiveness. I am not speaking of Myself, neither am I asking anything for Myself. I am in the world, but I am not of the world. What is alive in Me, compensates Me for what the world denies Me. I suffer with My humanity, but I raise My spirit above the earth and I rejoice in celestial matters. But they!… Do not violate the law of love and blood. Love one another. In James and Judas there is no offence against their blood. But even if there were, you must forgive. Look at things in the right way and you will see that they are the most offended ones, as you do not understand the necessities of their souls enraptured by God. And yet they have no grudge, but only a desire for love. Is that right, My cousins? »

Judas and James, who are clasped in their mother's arms, nod while weeping.

« Simon, you are the oldest. Set the example… »

« I… as far as I am concerned… But the world… but You… »

« Oh! the world! It forgets and changes at each daybreak… And I! Come: give Me your brotherly kiss. I love you. You know I do. Divest yourself of those scales that make you hard and are not yours, but have been imposed by strangers not as just as you are. Always judge with your upright heart. »

Simon, still somewhat reluctant, stretches out his arms. Jesus kisses him and then leads him towards his brothers. They kiss one another weeping and moaning.

« It is your turn now, Joseph. »

« No. Do not insist. I remember my father's suffering. »

« In actual fact you are perpetuating it by your grudging attitude. »

« It does not matter. I am faithful. »

Jesus does not insist. He addresses Simon: « It is late in the evening. But if you do not mind… Our hearts are burning with the desire to revere his remains. Where is Alphaeus? Where did you bury him? »

« Behind the house. Where the olive grove ends against the crag. A respectable sepulchre. »

« Please, take Me there. Mary, take heart. Your husband is jubilant because he sees your children in your bosom. Stay here. I am going with Simon. Be in peace! Joseph: I am saying to you what I said to your father: "I bear you no grudge. I love you. When you want Me, call Me. I will come and mourn with you". Goodbye. » And Jesus goes out with Simon…

The apostles look at them inquisitively. But they see that they are in perfect harmony and they are happy.

« Will you come, too » says Jesus. « They are My disciples, Simon. They wish to revere your father, too. Let us go. »

They walk through the olive-grove and it all ends.

Jesus says:

« Insert here the third and fourth visions given on 13th February 1944.

As you see, Simon, less obstinate, yielded to justice, if not completely, at least partially, with holy promptness. And after the meeting for Alphaeus' death, he did not become My disciple, never mind an apostle, as in your ignorance you called him about a year ago, but at least he was a non-hostile spectator. He was also the guardian of his mother and of Mine, when they were to be escorted and defended from people's lampooning. But he was not so strong as to impose himself on those who called Me "insane"; and was still so much a man as to be a little ashamed of Me and to worry about dangers to the whole family, because of My apostolate against sects. But he is already on the right way. On which way, after the Sacrifice, he proceeded more and more steady until he

professed his faith in Me with his blood. Grace at times operates instantaneously, at times slowly. But it always operates where there is a will to be just.

Go in peace. Be in peace in your sorrows. The time preparatory to Easter is beginning and you are to carry the Cross for Me. I bless you, Mary of Jesus' Cross. »

106. Jesus Is Driven Out of Nazareth and He Comforts His Mother. Reflections on Four Contemplations.

The evening of 13th February 1944.

I see a large square room. I call it a large room, although I realise it is the synagogue in Nazareth (as my internal informant tells me) because there is nothing but the bare walls painted pale yellow and a sort of desk on one side. There is also a tall lectern with some rolls on it. Lectern or bookcase, call it as you wish. It is, in short, a kind of an inclined table, supported by one leg, and on which there are some rolls lined up.. There are some people praying, but not as we pray, they are all facing on one direction, with their hands not joined, but approximately as a priest stands at the altar. Above the desk and the lectern there are some lamps.

I do not understand the reason for this vision, which does not change but remains fixed for some time. But Jesus tells me to write it and I do so.

I am once again in the synagogue in Nazareth. The rabbi is now reading. I hear his singsong nasal voice, but I do not understand the words, which are pronounced in a language unknown to me.

Amongst the people there is also Jesus with His apostle-cousins and with others who are obviously relatives, but I do not know them.

After the reading the rabbi looks at the crowd in a mute invitation.

Jesus comes forward and asks to preside at the meeting today. I hear His beautiful voice reading the passage of Isaiah quoted by the Gospel: « The spirit of the Lord has been given to me… » And I hear the comment He makes, calling Himself « the bearer of the Gospel, of the law of love that replaces the previous rigour with mercy, so that health will be granted to all those who on account of the sin of Adam were diseased in their souls and indirectly also in their bodies, because sin always gives rise to vice and vice to bodily illness. Therefore all those who are prisoners of the Evil Spirit will be freed. I have come to break their chains, to reopen the way to Heaven, to give light to blind souls and hearing to deaf ones. The time of the Grace of the Lord has come. The Grace is amongst you and is speaking to you. The Patriarchs desired to see this day,

the existence of which was proclaimed by the Most High and its time was foretold by the Prophets. And informed by a supernatural inspiration, they already know that the dawn of this day has risen and their entry to Paradise is now close at hand and they exult in their souls, saints who require only My blessing to be citizens of Heaven. You see it. Come to the light which has risen. Divest Yourselves of your passions to be agile in following Christ. Have a good will to believe, to improve yourselves, to desire health and you will be given health. It is in My hands. But I only give it to those who have a good will to receive it. Because it would be an offence to Grace to give it to those who want to continue to serve Mammon. »

A murmur runs through the synagogue. Jesus looks round. He reads on faces and into hearts and goes on: « I understand your thoughts. Because I am from Nazareth, you would like a privileged favour. But you want it not out of power of faith, but out of selfishness. So I solemnly tell you that no prophet is made welcome in his own country. Other countries have accepted Me and will accept Me with greater faith, also those, whose names are a scandal for you. There I will gather My followers, whereas I will not be able to do anything in this country, because it is closed and hostile to Me. But I wish to remind you of Elijah and Elisha. The former found faith in a Phoenician woman, the latter in a Syrian. And they were able to work a miracle for her and for him. The people dying of starvation in Israel and the lepers in Israel did not receive bread and cleanliness, because their hearts had not the good will, the fine pearl, that the Prophets could see. The same will happen also to you, who are hostile to and incredulous of the Word of God. »

The crowds become enraged, they curse and endeavour to lay hands on Jesus. But the apostle-cousins, Judas, James and Simon, defend Him and the enraged Nazarenes then hustle Jesus out of the town. They follow Him as far as the brow of the hill, threatening Him, not only with words. But Jesus turns round, immobilises them with His magnetic glance and walks through them uninjured and disappears along a mountain path.

I see a small, very small village. A handful of houses. A hamlet, as we would call it nowadays. It is higher up than Nazareth which can be seen below and it is only a few miles from it. A very poor hamlet.

Jesus is speaking to Mary sitting on a low wall near a little house. It is perhaps the house of friends or perhaps a hospitable one, according to the eastern laws of hospitality. And Jesus has taken shelter there after He was driven out of Nazareth, waiting for His apostles, who have certainly scattered through the countryside,

while Jesus was with His Mother.

His three apostle-cousins are not with Him just now. They are inside, in the kitchen, and they are talking to an elderly woman whom Thaddeus calls « mother ». I thus understand that she is Mary of Clopas. She is a rather elderly woman and I recognise her as the woman who was with the Most Holy Virgin at the wedding at Cana. Mary of Clopas and her sons have certainly withdrawn there to leave Jesus and Mary free to speak.

Mary is distressed. She has heard what happened at the synagogue and She is sorrowful. Jesus comforts Her. Mary entreats Her Son to keep away from Nazareth, where everybody is ill-disposed towards Him, even their other relatives, who consider Him a madman anxious to give rise to ill-feeling and discussions. But Jesus makes a gesture smiling. He seems to be saying: « It takes more than that! Never mind! » But Mary insists.

He then answers: « Mother, if the Son of man should go only where He is loved, He should turn His step from this world and go back to Heaven. I have enemies everywhere. Because the Truth is hated, and I am the Truth. But I did not come to find easy love. I came to do the will of the Father and to redeem man. You are love, Mother, My love, that compensates Me for everything. You, and this little herd, which grows in numbers every day with some little sheep that I snatch from the wolves of passions and I lead to the fold of God. All the rest is duty. I have come to fulfill this duty and I must accomplish it even to the extent of crashing against the stony hearts unyielding to good. Nay, only after I have fallen, wetting their hearts with blood, I will soften them, stamping on them My Sign that will cancel the Enemy's sign. Mother, I descended from Heaven for that. I can only wish to accomplish that. »

« Oh! Son! My Son! » Mary's voice is heart-rending. Jesus caresses Her. I notice that Mary is wearing on Her head, besides a veil, also Her mantle. She is more than ever veiled, like a priestess.

« I shall be away for some time, to make You happy. When I am nearby, I will send someone to inform You. »

« Send John. I seem to be seeing you, somehow, when I see John. Also his mother is full of care for Me and for You. It is true that she hopes to have privileged positions for her sons. She is a woman and a mother, Jesus. We must bear with her. She will speak also to You about it. But she is sincerely affectionate. And when she is freed from the humanity which ferments in her as in her sons, as in the others, as in everybody, My Son, she will be great in her faith. It is painful that everybody should hope to receive worldly welfare from You, a welfare, that even if it is not human, is selfish. But sin is in them with its lust. The blessed hour, so much dreaded, although the love of God and of man makes Me desire it, when You will cancel Sin, has not yet come. Oh! that hour! How

your Mother's heart trembles because of that hour! What will they do to You, Son? Son Redeemer, of Whom the Prophets predict such a martyrdom? »

« Do not think about it, Mother. God will help You at that hour. God will help Me and You. And after there will be peace. I tell You once again. Now go, because it is growing dark and You have a long way to go. I bless You. »

Jesus says:

« Little John: much work today. But we are one day late and it is not possible to go slow. That is why I have given you strength today. I granted you the four contemplations to be able to speak to you of Mary's sorrows and Mine, in preparation for My passion. I should have spoken to you about them yesterday, Saturday, the day dedicated to My Mother. But I had pity on you. Today we must make up for the time lost. After the sorrows which I have made known to you, Mary had also these. And I with Her.

My eyes had seen into the heart of Judas Iscariot. No one must think that the Wisdom of God has not been able to understand that heart. But, as I told My Mother, he was necessary. Woe to him for being the traitor! But a traitor was necessary. Deceitful, shrewd, greedy, lustful, dishonest, more intelligent and cultured than the masses, he had been able to impose himself on everybody. Daring as he was, he smoothed the way for Me, also when the way was a difficult one. He was above all fond of standing out and showing his position of trust near Me. He was not obliging out of instinctive charity, but only because he was one of those whom you would call a "hustler". That enabled him also to look after the purse and approach women. Two things which he loved without restraint, together with a third one: position amongst men.

The Pure, Humble Virgin, Detached from earthly wealth, could but feel disgust for that serpent. I felt disgust, too. And only I and the Father and the Spirit know what I had to overcome to be able to endure him at My side. But I will tell you later.

Likewise I was aware of the hostility of priests, Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees. They were shrewd foxes who endeavoured to drive Me into their dens to tear Me to pieces. They were thirsty for My blood. And they tried to set traps for Me everywhere to catch Me, to bring accusations against Me and get rid of Me. Their intrigue lasted three long years and it was appeased only when they learned that I was dead. They slept happily that night. The voice of the accuser had been silenced for ever. That is what they thought. No. It was not yet dead. It will never be and it thunders and thunders and curses those who nowadays are like them. How much pain My Mother suffered through their fault! And I cannot forget that pain.

That the crowd was inconstant, was nothing new. It is the beast that licks the hand of the tamer if it is armed with a whip or offers a piece of meat to satisfy its hunger. But if the tamer falls and can no longer make use of the lash, or if he has no more food for its hunger, then it rushes at him and tears him to pieces. It is sufficient to tell the truth and to be good, to be hated by the crowd, after the first moment of enthusiasm. The truth is a reproach and a warning. Goodness deprives one of the lash and causes those who are not good to be no longer afraid. Thus: "crucify Him", after shouting: "hosanna". My life as a Master is overwhelmed by these two voices. And the last one was "crucify Him". The hosanna is like the deep breath taken by a singer before high notes. Mary, on Good Friday evening, heard once again within Herself all the false hosannas, which had turned into shouts for the death of Her Creature, and She was pierced by them. I will not forget that either.

The humanity of the apostles! How much of it! I was carrying in My arms, to lift them up to Heaven, stones which weighed down towards the earth. Even those who did not contemplate the possibility of becoming ministers of an earthly king, as Judas Iscariot did, those who did not think of coming to the throne in My place, if need be, as he did, were still eager for glory. The day came when also My John and his brother craved for that glory, that dazzles you like a mirage also in celestial matters. It is not the holy longing for Paradise, that I want you to have. But it is a human desire that your holiness may be known. Not only, but it is like the greediness of a money-changer, of a usurer, whereby, in exchange for a little love given to Him to Whom I told you that you must give yourselves entirely, you claim a place at His right hand side in Heaven.

No, My children. No. Before you must be able to drink all the chalice that I drank. All of it: with its charity given in return for hatred, its chastity against the allurements of sensuality, with its heroism in trials, with its holocaust for the love of God and one's brothers. Then, when you have fulfilled your duty completely, you must still say: "We are useless servants", and wait for My Father and yours to grant you, out of His goodness, a place in His Kingdom. You must strip yourselves, as you saw Me stripped in the Praetorium, of everything that is human, keeping only the indispensable, which is respect towards the gift of God, that is life, and towards your brothers to whom we may be more useful from Heaven than on the earth, and leaving to God to clothe you with the immortal stole, made immaculate in the blood of the Lamb.

I have shown you the sorrows preparatory to My Passion. I shall show you more. Although they are sorrows, your soul rested contemplating them. That is enough now. Be in peace. »

107. Jesus in the House of Johanna of Chuza with His Mother.

13th February 1945.

I see Jesus going towards the house of Johanna of Chuza. When the doorkeeper servant sees Who is arriving, he utters such a cry of joy that the entire household is astir. Jesus enters smiling and giving His blessing.

Johanna rushes from the garden full of flowers to throw herself at Jesus' feet and kiss them. Also Chuza comes, and he first bows down deeply and then kisses the hem of Jesus' tunic.

Chuza is a handsome man about forty years old. He is not very tall but well built, his hair is dark with only a tinge of silver-grey at his temples. His eyes are lively and dark, his complexion pale and his dark square-cut beard is well cared for.

Johanna is taller than her husband. The only trace of her recent illness is her remarkable slenderness, which, however, is less gaunt than before. She looks like a thin supple palm-tree crowned with her beautiful head with deep black most sweet eyes. She has a thick shock of raven black hair charmingly arranged. Her smooth large forehead looks even whiter under such genuine blackness and her well shaped little mouth stands out with its healthy red lips between soft pale cheeks, which are like petals of scarlet camellias. She is a beautiful woman… the one who gives the purse to Longinus on Calvary. Then she was weeping, distressed and completely covered by her veil. Now she is smiling and bareheaded. But it is she.

« To what do I owe the joy of having You as my guest? » asks Chuza.

« To My need of stopping to await My Mother. I am coming from Nazareth… and I have to make My Mother come with Me for some time. I will go to Capernaum with Her. »

« Why not here with me? I am not worthy, but… » says Johanna.

« You are well worthy. But My Mother is with Her sister-in-law, whose husband died a few days ago. »

« The house is large enough to receive more than one guest. And You have given me such joy that no part of it is precluded from You. Give Your orders, Lord, since You turned away death from this abode and You have given it back its gracefully blooming rose » says Chuza, supporting his wife, of whom he must be very fond. I understand that from the way he looks at her.

« I do not give orders. I accept. My Mother is tired and has suffered much recently. She is worried about Me, and I wish to show Her that there are people who love Me. »

« Well! Bring Her here, then! I will love Her as a daughter and a maid » exclaims Johanna.

Jesus consents.

Chuza goes out to give the necessary orders at once and while the vision splits into two, leaving Jesus in the wonderful garden, intent on speaking to Chuza and his wife, I follow and see the arrival of the comfortable speedy wagon in which Jonathan has gone to Nazareth to bring Mary.

The town, of course, is in some confusion over the matter. And when Mary and Her sister-in-law, revered as two queens by Jonathan, climb into the wagon, after giving the key of the house to Alphaeus of Sarah, the fuss increases. The wagon leaves, while Alphaeus takes his revenge over the rough handling of Jesus in the synagogue, by saying: « Samaritans are better than we are! You have seen how a man of Herod's reveres His Mother!… Whilst we… ! I am ashamed of being a Nazarene. »

There is uproar between the two parties. Some desert from the opposition party and come towards Alphaeus and are profuse in their excuses.

« Of course » answers Alphaeus. « Guests in the house of the Procurator. You have heard what his steward said: "My master begs You to honour his house". He is honoured, see? And he is the rich and powerful Chuza, and his wife is a royal princess. And he is honoured! And we, that is you, have thrown stones at Him. Shame! »

The Nazarenes do not reply and Alphaeus presses with greater vigour: « Of course, to have Him is to have everything! And no support of man is required. But do you think it is useless to have Chuza as a friend? Is it of good omen to be despised by him? Do you realise that he is the Procurator of the Tetrarch? That is nothing, is it? Play the Samaritans with Christ! You will draw upon yourselves the hatred of the mighty ones. And then… I will be glad to see you! Without help from Heaven or from the earth! Fools! Wicked misbelievers! » The storm of insults and rebukes goes on, while the Nazarenes go away dejected like beaten dogs. Alphaeus is alone at the door of Mary's house like an avenging archangel…

It is late evening when on the road alongside the lake Jonathan's wagon arrives to the trot of strong horses. Chuza's servants, who were already on sentry-duty at the door, give the signal and they rush with lamps, thus adding to the moonlight.

Johanna and Chuza rush there. Also Jesus appears, smiling, with the group of the apostles behind Him. When Mary comes off, Johanna prostrates herself on the ground and salutes: « Praise to the flower of the royal family. Praise and blessing to the Mother of the Word Saviour » and Chuza bows down so low, that he could not bow any lower not even before Herod, and he says: « Blessed be this hour that brings You to me. Blessed are You, Mother of Jesus. »

Mary replies kindly and humbly: « Blessed be Our Saviour and

blessed be the good people who love My Son. »

They all enter the house, received with deep effusion of respect. Johanna is holding Mary's hand and smiles at Her saying: « You will allow me to serve You, will you not? »

« Not Me, but Him. Always serve and love Him. And you will have given Me everything. The world does not love Him… It is My grief. »

« I know. Why this dislike from one part of the world, whereas others would give their lives for Him? »

« Because He is the sign of contradiction for many. Because He is the fire that purifies metal. Gold is purified. The scum falls to the bottom and is thrown away. I was told since He was a little child… And day by day the prophecy is fulfilled… »

« Do not cry, Mary. We will love and defend Him » comforts Johanna.

But Mary continues Her silent weeping, which only Johanna can see in the semidark comer where they are sitting.

It all ends.

108. Jesus at the Vintage in the House of Anna. Miracle of a Paralytic Child.

14th February 1945.

The whole country of Galilee is busy in the joyful vintage work. Men, climbing up high ladders, pick the grapes from pergolas and vines; women, their heads laden with baskets, take the golden and ruby grapes to where the crushers are waiting. Songs, burst of laughter, jokes are exchanged from hillock to hillock and from garden to garden. The smell of must is everywhere. Bees are humming and seem intoxicated, so fast do they fly about and dance from the remaining vine shoots, still laden with grapes, to the baskets and vats where the grapes sought by them get lost in the thick juice of the must. Children, their faces painted with juice like fauns, scream like swallows, running on the grass, in the yards and in the streets.

Jesus is going to a town not far from the lake. It is a town on the plain; it looks like a wide riverbed between two remote mountain ranges stretching northwards. The plain is well irrigated because a river (I think it is the Jordan) flows across it. Jesus is going along the main road and is cheered by many shouting: « Rabbi! Rabbi! » Jesus passes by and blesses.

Before the town there is a rich estate, at the entrance to which there is an elderly couple waiting for the Master. « Come in. When they finish working, they will all gather here to hear You. How much joy You bring us! It spreads from You as the lymph spreads through the shoots and becomes a joyful wine for our hearts. Is

that Your Mother? » asks the landlord.

« Yes, She is. I brought Her here to you, because She also is now in the group of My disciples. The last to be received, the first in faithfulness. She is the Apostle. She preached Me even before I was born… Mother, come. One day, it was in the first times when I was evangelising, this mother did not make Me miss You, so kind she was to Your tired Son. »

« May the Lord grant you His grace, merciful woman. »

« I have grace, because I have the Messiah and You. Come. The house is cool and the light is not so bright. You will be able to rest. You must be tired. »

« My only tiredness is the hatred of the world. But to follow Him and listen to Him! It has been My desire since My earliest childhood. »

« Did You know that You were to be the future Mother of the Messiah? »

« Oh! no. But I hoped to live long enough to hear Him and serve Him, the last of His evangelised followers, but faithful! oh! faithful! »

« You now hear Him and serve Him. And You are the first. I am a mother, too, and I have wise children. When I hear them speak, my heart leaps with pride. And what do You feel hearing Him? »

« A gentle ecstasy. I sink into My nothingness, and Goodness, which is He Himself, lifts Me up with Him. I then see in a simple glance the eternal Truth, and it becomes the blood and flesh of My spirit. »

« Blessed be Your heart! It is pure and that is why it can understand the Word. We are harder because we are full of faults… »

« I would like to give My heart to everybody for that, that love might enlighten you to understand. Because, believe Me, it is love, and I am the Mother and therefore love is natural in Me, it is love that makes all undertakings easy. »

The two women go on speaking, the old one near the ever so young Mother of my Lord, while Jesus talks to the landlord near the vats, into which the teams of vintagers pour the grapes. The apostles, sitting in the shade of a jasmin bower, enjoy bread and grapes with good appetite.

The sun is about to set and the work slowly comes to an end. The husbandmen are by now all in the large rustic yard, where there is a strong smell of crushed grapes. Other farmers have come from nearby houses.

Jesus climbs a little staircase that leads up to a gallery wing of the house, under which sacks of victuals and agricultural implements are stored. How Jesus smiles climbing those few steps! I see Him smiling while His soft hair is gently blowing in the evening breeze. I wonder why He is smiling so brightly. The joy of His

smile, like the wine of which the landlord was speaking, enters my heart, very sad today, and comforts it.

(It is not the first thing that relieves me today. Even this morning, and you (1) saw me weeping because of a sharp spiritual sorrow, He, at Holy Communion, appeared to me as usual when you say: « Here is the Lamb of God ». But He did not just look at you lovingly, Father, and smile at me. He departed from your side, on the left hand side of the bed and passed to the right one, with His long, slightly rolling gait, caressing me with His long hands and saying: « Do not weep! »… But now His smile fills me with peace.)

He turns round. He sits down on the last step at the top of the stair-case, which becomes a gallery for the more fortunate listeners, that is the owners of the house, the apostles and Mary, Who, always humble, had not even tried to climb up to that place of honour, but is led there by the landlady. She is sat one step below Jesus, so that Her fair-haired head is at the height of Jesus' knees, and as She is sitting sideways, She can look at His face with Her look of a dove in love. Mary's delicate profile stands out neatly, as in marble, against the dark wall of the rustic gallery.

Farther down, there are the apostles and the owners. All the husbandmen are in the yard, some standing, some sitting on the ground, some have climbed on to the vats or up the fig trees which are at the four corners of the yard.

Jesus speaks slowly, sinking His hand into a large sack of corn placed behind Mary's back: He seems to be playing with the grain, or to be caressing it with pleasure, while gesticulating calmly with His right hand.

« I was asked: "Come, Jesus, to bless the work of man". And I have come. I bless it in the name of God. Because, every work, if honest, deserves to be blessed by the eternal Lord. But I said it: the first condition to receive blessings from God is to be honest in all one's actions.

Now let us consider together when and how actions are honest. They are honest when they are done having eternal God present in one's soul. Can one ever sin if one says: "God is looking at me. God's eyes are on me and He does not miss the least detail of my actions"? No. One cannot. Because the thought of God is a salutary thought and diverts man from sin more than any human threat.

But must one only fear eternal God? No. Listen. You were told: "Fear the Lord your God". And the Patriarchs and the Prophets trembled when the Face of God, or an angel of the Lord, appeared to their just souls. Truly, in time of divine wrath, the apparition of the Supernatural must make hearts tremble. Who, even if as pure

(1) It is to be remembered that Maria Valtorta often addresses her spiritual Father in the « Poem ».

as a child, does not tremble before the Powerful One, before Whose eternal brightness are the adoring angels, prostrated in the heavenly hallelujah? God mitigates with a veil of pity the unbearable refulgence of an angel to allow the human eye to look at it without having eyes and mind burned out. What must it therefore be to see God?

But it is so, as long as the wrath lasts. But when it is replaced by peace and the God of Israel says: "I have sworn it. And I will keep My pact. Here is He Whom I am sending, and it is I, although not being I, but My Word, Who becomes flesh to be Redemption", then love must take the place of fear, and nothing but love is to be given to eternal God, joyfully, because the time of peace has come for the earth and between God and man. When the first spring winds spread the pollen of the vine flowers, the farmer must still be watchful, because many injuries may be caused to the fruit by inclement weather and insects. But when the happy day of vintage comes, then all fears cease and hearts rejoice in the certainty of the harvest.

The Shoot of the stock of Jesse has sprung, preannounced by the Prophets. He is now amongst you: a rich bunch which brings you the juice of eternal Wisdom and only asks to be picked and squeezed to be Wine for men. A wine of endless delight for those who will feed on Him. But woe to those who having had this Wine within reach will reject it, and three times woe to those who after feeding on it will reject it or mix it within themselves with the food of Mammon.

And now I am going back to the first idea. The first condition to have God's blessing, both in spiritual and human deeds, is honesty of intentions.

He is honest who says: "I abide by the Law not to be praised by men, but out of loyalty to God". He is honest who says: "I follow Christ not because of the miracles He works, but for the advice of eternal life He gives me". He is honest who says: "I work not for a greedy gain, but because also work has been set by God as a means of sanctification on account of its formative, mortifying, preservative and elevating values. I work to be able to help my neighbour, I work to be able to make the wonders of God known, Who of a tiny grain makes a tuft of ears, of a grape-stone makes a huge vineyard, of a fruit-stone makes a tree, and of me, a man, a poor nothing, who was made out of nothing by His will, He makes His assistant in the unremitting work of perpetuating cereals, vines and orchards, as well as populating the earth with men".

There are people who work as hard as pack animals, but their only religion is to increase their wealth. If their more unfortunate companion dies of privations and fatigue beside them; if the children of that poor man die of starvation, what does it matter to

the greedy hoarder of riches? There are others, who even harderhearted, do not work but make other people work and they accumulate wealth by their sweat. And others squander what they meanly extort from other people's work. Their work is certainly not honest. And do not say: "And yet God protects them". No. He does not protect them. Now they enjoy an hour of triumph. But they will soon be struck by divine rigour, which both in time and in eternity will remind them of the commandment: "I am the Lord your God. Love Me above all things and love your neighbour as yourself ". Oh! If those words resound eternally, they will be more dreadful than the lightning of Sinai!

You are told many words, too many. I will tell you only these: "Love God. Love your neighbour". They are like the work in the vineyard in spring, that makes the vine shoots fruitful. The love of God and of your neighbour is like the harrow that clears the soil of the harmful herbs of selfishness and of evil passions; it is like the hoe that digs a circle round the shoot to isolate it from infectious parasite herbs and to nourish it with cool irrigation water; it is like the shears that remove what is superfluous and confine the strength, directing it to where it will bear fruit; it is a tie that fastens and supports with a robust pole, finally it is the sun that ripens the fruits of good will and makes them fruits of eternal life.

You are now jubilant because it has been a good year, the crops are plentiful and the vintage rich. But I solemnly tell you that this joy of yours is less than a tiny grain of sand as compared to the immeasurable jubilation that will be yours when the eternal Father will say to you: "Come, My fruitful shoots grafted into the true Vine. You have helped in all kinds of work, also in painful ones, to bear abundant fruit, and you are now coming to Me, rich with sweet juices of love for Me and your neighbour. Blossom in My gardens for ever and ever".

Aim at that eternal happiness. Pursue that good with loyalty, with gratitude bless the Eternal Father Who assists you in reaching it. Bless Him for the grace of His Word, bless Him for the grace of a good harvest. Love the Lord with gratitude and do not fear. God gives one hundred to one to those who love Him. »

Jesus would have finished. But they all shout: « Bless us, bless us! Your blessing upon us! »

Jesus stands up, He stretches- out His arms and in a thundering voice He says: « May the Lord bless you and keep you, may His Face shine on you and be gracious to you. May the Lord uncover His Face to you and bring you peace. The Name of the Lord be in your hearts, in your homes and in your fields. »

The little crowd which had gathered utter cries of joy and applause for the Messiah. They then become quiet and open out to let pass through a mother, who is carrying in her arms a paralytic

child, about ten years old. At the foot of the staircase, she holds him out, as if she were offering him to Jesus.

« She is one of my servants. Her boy last year fell from the terrace and broke his back. He will lie on his back all his life » explains the landlord.

« She has been hoping in You all these months… » adds the landlady.

« Tell her to come to Me. »

But the poor woman is so excited, that she seems to be paralyzed. She trembles all over and trips on her long dress while climbing up the high steps with her son in her arms.

Mary, compassionate, stands up and goes down to meet her. « Come. Do not be afraid. My Son loves you. Give Me your child. It will be easier for you to climb up. Come, My daughter. I am a Mother, too » and She takes the child, smiling kindly at him, and then goes up with Her piteous load weighing 'on Her arms. The boy's mother follows Her crying.

Mary is now before Jesus. She kneels down and says: « Son! For the sake of this mother! » Nothing else.

Jesus does not even ask the usual question: « What do you want Me to do for you? Do you believe that I can do it? » No. Today He smiles and says: « Woman, come here. »

The woman goes beside Mary. Jesus lays His hand on her head and says only: « Be happy » and He has not yet finished saying the words, when the boy, who so far had been lying heavily on Mary's arms, with his legs hanging loose, sits up all of a sudden and with a cry of joy: « Mummy! », he runs to take refuge in his mother's lap.

The shouts of hosanna seem to be penetrating the sky now all red at sunset.

The woman, clasping her son to heart, does not know what to say and she asks: « What must I do to tell You that I am happy? »

And Jesus, caressing her once again: « You must be good and love God and your neighbour and bring your son up in this love. »

But the woman is not yet content. She would like to… she would like to… and at last she asks: « A kiss of Yours and of Your Mother's to my child. »

Jesus bends down and kisses him and Mary does likewise. And while the woman is going away happy, surrounded by cheering friends, Jesus explains to the landlord: « Nothing else was needed. He was in My Mother's arms. Even without any word I would have cured him, because She is happy when She can relieve distress and I want to make Her happy.- »

And Jesus and Mary exchange one of those glances that only one who has seen them can understand, so deeply meaningful are they.

109. Jesus at Doras' House. Death of Jonah.

15th February 1945.

I see once again the plain of Esdraelon, by day. A cloudy late November day. It must have rained during the night, one of the first rains of the dreary winter months, because the earth is damp but not muddy. And it is windy. A damp wind that blows away the yellow leaves and pierces one's bones with its breath saturated with moisture.

In the fields there are a few yokes of oxen ploughing. They laboriously turn the rich heavy soil of this fertile plain, preparing it for seed-time. And what upsets me is to see that in some places it is the men themselves that work as oxen, pushing the ploughshare with all the strength of their arms and even with their chests, pressing their feet in the soil already turned, toiling like slaves in this work which is very hard also for robust bulls.

Also Jesus looks and notices. And His face turns so sad as to weep.

The disciples, only eleven, because Judas is still absent and the shepherds are no longer here, speak among themselves and Peter says: « Also a boat is small, poor and laborious… But it is one hundred times better than this pack-animal job! » He then asks: « Are they perhaps Doras' servants? »

Simon Zealot replies: « I don't think so: his fields are beyond that orchard, I think. And we can't see them yet. »

But Peter, always curious, leaves the road and walks along a hedge between two fields. Four thin peasants, wet with perspiration have sat down for a moment on its borders. They are panting with fatigue. Peter asks them: « Are you Doras' men? »

« No, but we belong to his relative, to Johanan. And who are you? »

« I am Simon of Jonas, a fisherman of Galilee until the moon of Civ. Now I am Peter of Jesus of Nazareth, the Messiah of the Gospel. » Peter says so with the respect and glory with which one would say: « I belong to the high divine Caesar of Rome » and much more, too. His honest face is shining with joy in professing himself of Jesus.

« Oh! the Messiah! Where, where is He? » ask the four unhappy men.

« That one over there. The tall fair-headed one, clad in dark red. The one who is now looking here, and is smiling waiting for me. »

« Oh!… If we went there… would He send us away? »

« Send you away? Why? He is the friend of the unhappy, the poor, the oppressed, and I think that you… yes, you are just them… »

« Oh! we are indeed! But not like Doras' men. At least we have as much bread as we want and we are not lashed unless we stop working, but… »

« So that, if the fine master Johanan should find you here talking, he… ».

« He would lash us more than he would lash his dogs… »

Peter whistles significantly. He then says: « Well it is better if we do this… » and cupping his hands to his mouth he calls out loud: « Master. Come here. There are some hearts that are suffering and they want You. »

« But what are you saying? Him to come here?! But we are ignoble servants! » The four men are terrified at such boldness.

« But lashes are not pleasant. And if that fine Pharisee should turn up, I would not like to have a share myself… » Peter says laughing and with his big hand he shakes the most terrified of the four men.

Jesus with His long stride is about to arrive. The four men do not know what to do. They would like to run and meet Him, but they are paralyzed with respect. Poor beings completely frightened by human wickedness. They fall flat on their faces, adoring the Messiah Who is coming towards them.

« Peace to all those who desire Me. Who desires Me, desires good, and I love him as a friend. Get up. Who are you? »

But the four just lift their faces off the ground, and remain kneeling and quiet.

Peter explains: « They are four servants of the Pharisee Johanan, a relative of Doras. They would like to speak to You, but if he comes, there will be a volley of blows, that is why I said to You: "Come". Get up, boys. He will not eat you! Have faith. Just think that He is a friend of yours. »

« We… we know about You… Jonah told us… »

« I have come for him. I know that he announced Me. What do you know of Me? »

« That You are the Messiah. That he saw You a baby. That the angels sang peace to good people with Your coming, that You were persecuted… that You were saved and that now You have been looking for Your shepherds and… You love them. These last things he told us now. And we thought: if He is so good as to look for some shepherds and love them, He would certainly be also a little fond of us… We need so much someone who may love us… »

« I love you. Do you suffer much? »

« Oh!… But Doras' men even more. If Johanan found us talking here!… But today he is at Gerghesa. He has not yet come back from the Feast of the Tabernacles. But his steward this evening will give us food after measuring the work that we have done. But it does not matter. We will not rest for our meal at the sixth hour and we will make up for this time. »

« Tell me, man. Would I be able to work that implement? Is it a difficult task? » asks Peter.

« No, it's not difficult. But it is hard work. It takes a lot of strength. »

« I have that. Show me. If I succeed, you can talk and I will play the ox. You, John, Andrew and James, come to the lesson. We will abandon fish for the worms of the soil. Come on! » Peter lays his hands on the cross-bar of the beam. There are two men at each plough, one on each side of the long beam. He looks and imitates all the gestures of the peasant. Strong as he is and rested, he works well and the man praises him.

« I am a master in ploughing happily » exclaims good Peter. « Come on, John! Come here. An ox and a bull-calf at each plough. James and that mute calf of my brother at the other one. Right! Heave away! » and the two ploughs proceed side by side turning the soil and cutting furrows in the long field at the end of which they turn round and cut a fresh furrow. They seem to have worked as farmers all their lives.

« How good Your friends are! » says the boldest of Johanan's servants. « Did You make them such? »

« I have guided their goodness. As you do with the pruner's shears. Goodness was already in them. It now blossoms well because there is Who takes care of it. »

« They are also humble. They are Your friends and yet they are serving us, poor servants, like that! »

« Only those who love humility, meekness, continence, honesty and love, love above all, can stay with Me. Because who loves God and his neighbour, possesses in consequence all virtues and gains Heaven. »

« Shall we be able to gain it, too, we, who have no time to pray, to go to the Temple, not even to raise our heads off the furrows? »

« Tell Me: do you hate him who deals with you so hard? Is there in you rebellion and reproach to God for putting you amongst the lowest of the earth? »

« Oh! no, Master! It is our fate. But when tired we throw ourselves on our pallets, we say: "Well, the God of Abraham knows that we are so exhausted that we are not able to say more than: 'Blessed be the Lord!' ", and we also say: "Also today we have lived without sinning"… You know… we could also cheat a little and eat a fruit with our bread, or pour some oil on to the boiled vegetables. But the master said: "Bread and vegetables are sufficient for servants, and at harvest time a little vinegar in the water to quench their thirst and give them strength". And we do that. After all… we could be worse off. »

« And I solemnly tell you that the God of Abraham smiles at your hearts, whilst He turns a severe face towards those who insult Him in the Temple with false prayers, while they do not love their fellows. »

« Oh! but they love people like themselves! At least… it looks as if they do, because they respect one another with gifts and bows. It is for us that they have no love. But we are different from them, and it is fair. »

« No. It is not fair in My Father's Kingdom. But different will be the way of judging. Not the rich and the mighty ones, as such, will receive honours. But only those who have always loved God, loving Him above themselves and above everything else, such as money, power, women, a bountiful table; and loving their fellow men, that is all men, both rich and poor, well-known and unknown, learned and without culture, good and bad. Yes, you must love also bad people. Not because of their wickedness, but out of pity for their souls which they wound to death. It is necessary to love them imploring the Celestial Father to cure them and redeem them. In the Kingdom of Heaven those will be blessed who have honoured the Lord with truth and justice, who have loved their parents and relatives out of respect; those who have not stolen anything in any way, that is who have given and exacted what is just, also in the work of servants; those who have not killed any reputation or creature and have not desired to kill, even when the behaviour of other people is so cruel as to excite hearts to disdain and rebellion; those who have not sworn falsehood damaging one's neighbour and the truth; those who have not committed adultery or any carnal sin; those, who being mild and resigned, have always accepted their lot without envying others. Of those is the Kingdom of Heaven, and also a beggar can be a happy king up there, whereas a Tetrarch, with all his power, will be less than nothing, nay, more than nothing: he will be a prey to Mammon, if he has sinned against the eternal law of the Decalogue. »

The men listen to Him gaping. Near Jesus there are Bartholomew, Matthew, Simon, Philip, Thomas, James and Judas of Alphaeus. The other four continue working, red in their faces and hot, but cheerful. Peter is quite enough to keep them all merry.

« Oh! How right Jonah was in calling You: "Holy!" Everything is holy in You: Your words, Your look, Your smile. We have never felt our souls thus… ! »

« Have you not seen Jonah for a long time? »

« Since he has been ill. »

« Ill? »

« Yes, Master. He cannot stand it any more. He was already dragging himself along before. But after the summer work and the vintage he is unable to stand up. And yet that… makes him work… Oh! You say that we must love everybody. But it is very difficult to love hyenas! And Doras is worse than a hyena! »

« Jonah loves him… »

« Yes, Master. And I say that he is a saint like those who have

been martyred because of their loyalty to the Lord Our God. »

« You have spoken the truth. What is your name? »

« Micah, and this is Saul, and this is Jowehel, and this is Isaiah. »

« I will mention your names to the Father. And you were saying that Jonah is very ill? »

« Yes, as soon as he finishes his work he throws himself on the straw and we don't see him. The other servants of Doras tell us. »

« Will he be working now? »

« Yes, if he can stand up. He should be beyond that apple orchard. »

« Was Doras' harvest a good one? »

« Yes, it was famous all over the area. The plants had to be propped up owing to the miraculous size of the fruit, and Doras had to have new vats made because there were so many grapes that the usual ones could not contain them. »

« Doras must have rewarded his servant! »

« Rewarded! Oh! Lord, how little You know of him! »

« But Jonah told Me that years ago Doras thrashed him to death for the loss of a few bunches and that he became a slave through debt, because his master blamed him for the loss of a few crops. Since this year he had a miraculous abundance, he should have given him a prize. »

« No. He lashed him savagely, accusing him of not having the same abundance in past years, because he had not taken due care of the land. »

« But that man is a beast! » exclaims Matthew.

« No. He is soulless » says Jesus. « I leave you, My sons, with a blessing. Have you bread and food for today? »

« We have this bread » and they show Him a dark loaf which they take out of a sack lying on the ground.

« Take My food. I have but this. But I am staying at Doras' today and… »

« You at Doras' house? »

« Yes. To ransom Jonah. Did you not know? »

« No one knows anything here. But… distrust him, Master. You are like a lamb in the wolf's den. »

« He will not be able to do Me any harm. Take My food. James, give them what we have. Also your wine. You must rejoice a little, too, My poor friends. Both your souls and your bodies. Peter! Let us go. »

« I am coming, Master. There is only this furrow to cut. » And he runs to Jesus, his face drawn with fatigue. He dries himself with the mantle he had taken off, he puts it on again and he laughs happily.

The four men cannot thank them enough.

« Will you pass by here again, Master? »

« Yes. Wait for Me. You will say goodbye to Jonah. Can You do that? »

« Oh! yes. The field is to be ploughed by evening. More than two thirds has been done. How well and quickly. Your friends are strong! May God bless You. Today for us is a greater feast than Passover. Oh! May God bless you all! »

Jesus goes straight to the apple-orchard. They cross it and reach Doras' fields. Other peasants are at the ploughs or are bent down removing all the loose herbs from the furrows. But Jonah is not there. The men recognise Jesus and salute Him without leaving their work.

« Where is Jonah? »

« After two hours he fell on the furrow and has been taken home. Poor Jonah. He will not have to suffer long now. He is nearing his end. We shall never have a better friend. »

« You have Me on the earth and him in Abraham's bosom. The dead love the living with a double love: their own and the love they obtain by being with God, therefore a perfect love. »

« Oh! Go to him at once. That he may see You in his suffering! »

Jesus blesses and goes away.

« What are You going to do now? What will You say to Doras? » ask the disciples.

« I will go as if I knew nothing. If he sees that he is being met fairly and squarely, he may be pitiless towards Jonah and the servants. »

« Your friend is right: he is a jackal » says Peter to Simon.

« Lazarus speaks nothing but the truth and he is not a backbiter. You will meet him and you will like him » replies Simon.

The house of the Pharisee can be seen. Large, low, but well built, in the middle of an orchard now fruitless. A country house, but rich and comfortable. Peter and Simon go ahead to warn.

Doras comes out. An old man with the hard profile of a rapacious person. Ironic eyes, a serpent's mouth wriggling a false smile in a beard more white that black. « Hail, Jesus » he greets informally and with obvious condescension.

Jesus does not say: « Peace »; He replies: « May your salutation return to you. »

« Come in. My house receives You. You have been as punctual as a king. »

« As an honest person » replies Jesus.

Doras laughs as if it was a joke.

Jesus turns round and says to His disciples, who had not been invited: « Come in. They are My friends. »

« Let them come in… but isn't that one the exciseman, the son of Alphaeus? »

« This is Matthew, the disciple of Christ » says Jesus in a tone…

that the other understands and he gives a laugh more forced than before.

Doras would like to crush the « poor » Galilean Master under the wealth of his house which is sumptuous inside. Sumptuous and icy. The servants seem slaves. They walk with bent shoulders, stealing away swiftly,' always afraid of punishment. One feels that the house is dominated by coldheartedness and hatred.

But Jesus cannot be crushed by a display of wealth or by reminding Him of one's wealth and relatives and Doras, who understands the indifference of the Master, takes Him to his orchard-garden, showing Him rare plants and offering Him their fruits, which servants bring on golden trays and cups. Jesus enjoys and praises the delicious fruit, partly preserved as a julep, and they are beautiful peaches, partly in their natural state, and they are pears of a rare size.

« I am the only one to have them in Palestine and I don't think that there are any in the whole peninsula. I sent for them to Persia and even farther away. The caravan cost me as much as a talent. But not even the Tetrarchs have such fruits. Perhaps not even Caesar has them. I count all the fruits and I want their stones. And the pears are eaten only at my table because I do not want even one seed to be taken away. I send some to Annas, but only cooked ones so that they are sterile. »

« But they are plants of God. And all men are equal. »

« Equal? No! I equal to… to Your Galileans? »

« Souls come from God and He creates them equal. »

« But I am Doras, the faithful Pharisee!… » He looks as proud as a peacock in saying so.

Jesus darts a glance at him with His sapphire eyes which are becoming brighter and brighter, a sign that denotes oncoming pity or severity. Jesus is so much taller than Doras and towers over him, stately in His purple tunic near the small, slightly bent Pharisee, wrinkled in a garment strikingly wide and rich in fringes.

Doras, after some time of self-admiration, exclaims: « Jesus, why did You send Lazarus, the brother of a prostitute, to the house of Doras, the pure Pharisee? Is Lazarus Your friend? You must not do that. Don't You know that he is anathematized because his sister Mary is a prostitute? »

« I know but Lazarus and his deeds which are honest. »

« But the world remembers the sin of that house and sees that its stains spread to its friends… Don't go there. Why are You not a Pharisee? If You wish… I am influential… I will have You accepted, although You are a Galilean. I can do anything in the Sanhedrin. Annas is in my hands, like the edge of my mantle. People would be more afraid of You. »

« I want only to be loved. »

« I will love You. You can see that I already love You because I am yielding to Your wish and I am giving You Jonah. »

« I paid for him. »

« True, and I am surprised that You can afford to pay so much. »

« Not I. A friend paid for Me. »

« Well, well. I am not inquisitive. I say: You see that I love You and I want to make You happy. You will have Jonah after our meal. It is only for You that I make this sacrifice… » and he laughs his cruel laughter.

Jesus darts a more and more severe glance at him, His arms folded on His chest. They are still in the orchard garden awaiting mealtime.

« But You must make me happy. A joy for a joy. I am giving You my best servant. I am therefore depriving myself of something useful for the future. This year Your blessing, I know that You were here at the beginning of summer, has given me crops which have made my farm famous. Now bless my herds and my fields. Next year I will not regret the loss of Jonah… and in the meantime I will find someone like him. Come and bless. Give me the joy of being celebrated throughout Palestine and having folds and granaries full of all sorts of good things. Come » and he grasps Jesus and tries to drag Him, overwhelmed by gold-fever.

But Jesus resists. « Where is Jonah? » he asks severely.

« Where they are ploughing. He wanted to do also that for his good master. But before the meal is over he will come. In the meantime, come and bless the herds, the fields, the orchards, the vineyards, the oil-mills. Bless everything. Oh! How fruitful they will be next year! Come then. »

« Where is Jonah? » asks Jesus in a louder thundering voice.

« I told You! Where they are ploughing. He is the first servant and does not work: he is at the head of the men. »

« Liar! »

« Me? I swear to it by Jehovah! »

« Perjurer! »

« Me? I a perjurer? I am the most faithful believer! Watch how You speak! »

« Killer! » Jesus has been raising His voice louder all the time and this last word is like thunder.

His disciples go near Him, servants look out of doors frightened. Jesus' face is unendurable in its severity. Phosphorescent rays seem to be emanating from His eyes.

Doras is frightened for a moment. He shrinks, a bundle of fine cloth near the tall person of Jesus, clad in a dark red woollen tunic. Then his pride prevails and he shouts with his squeaky voice like a fox's: « Only I give orders in my house. Get out, vile Galilean. »

« I will go out after cursing you, your fields, herds and vineyards, for this year and the years to come. »

« No, don't! Yes. It is true. Jonah is ill. But he is being taken care of. He is well looked after. Withdraw Your curse. »

« Where is Jonah? Let a servant lead Me to him, at once. I paid for him; and since he is a piece of merchandise, a machine, for you, I consider him as such; and since I purchased him, I want him. »

Doras pulls out a gold whistle from his chest and blows it three times. A group of servants, both of the house and of the fields, come out from everywhere, they run near the dreaded master, bowing down so deeply, that they seem to be crawling, « Bring Jonah to Him and hand him over. Where are You going? »

Jesus does not even answer. He follows the servants who have rushed beyond the garden towards the peasants' dwellings, the filthy holes of the poor peasants. They enter Jonah's hovel.

He is only skin and bones now and is panting half-naked because of a high temperature, on a cane-mat, where the mattress is a patched up garment and the blanket an even more worn out mantle. The same woman as last time is looking after him as best she can.

« Jonah! My friend! I have come to take you away! »

« You? My Lord! I am dying… but I am happy to have You here! »

« My faithful friend, you are now free, and you will not die here. I am taking you to My house. »

« Free? Why? To Your house? Oh! Yes. You did promise me that I would see Your Mother. »

Jesus is most loving, bending over the miserable bed-of the unhappy man. And Jonah seems to be recovering on account of his joy.

« Peter, you are strong. Lift up Jonah, and you, give your mantles. This bed is too hard for one in his state. »

The disciples take off their mantles at once, they fold them several times and lay them on the mat, using some as a pillow. Peter lays down his load of bones and Jesus covers him with His own mantle.

« Peter, have you got any money? »

« Yes, Master, I have forty coins. »

« Good. Let us go. Cheer up, Jonah. A little more trouble and then there will be so much peace in My house, near Mary… »

« Mary… yes… oh! Your house! » In his extreme weakness poor Jonah weeps. He can but weep.

« Goodbye, woman. The Lord will bless you for your mercy. »

« Goodbye, Lord. Goodbye, Jonah. Pray for me. » The young woman is weeping.

When they are at the door, Doras appears. Jonah makes a gesture of fear and covers his face. But Jesus lays a hand on his head and

goes out beside him, more stem than a judge. The unhappy procession goes out into the rustic yard and takes the orchard path.

« That bed is mine! I sold You the servant, not the bed. »

Jesus throws the purse at his feet without saying a word.

Doras picks up the purse and empties it. « Forty coins and five didrachmas. It's too little! »

Jesus looks the greedy revolting torturer up and down, but does not reply. It is impossible to say what His gesture means.

« At least tell me that You are withdrawing the anathema! »

Jesus crushes him once again with a glare and a few words: « I entrust you to the God of Sinai » and goes past upright, beside the rustic litter, which Peter and Andrew are carrying most cautiously.

When Doras sees that it is all to no good, that the punishment is certain, he shouts: « We will meet again, Jesus! I will have You in my clutches again! I will fight You to death. You can take that worn out man. I no longer need him. I will save his burial money. Go, go away, cursed Satan! I will set the whole Sanhedrin on You. Satan! Satan! »

Jesus feigns that He does not hear. The disciples are dismayed.

Jesus attends only to Jonah. He looks for the smoothest and most sheltered paths until they reach a crossroad near Johanan's fields. The four peasants run to say goodbye to their friend who is leaving and to Jesus Who is blessing.

But the road from Esdraelon to Nazareth is a long one, and they cannot proceed speedily, because of their pitiful load. There is no wagon or cart along the main road. There is nothing. They proceed in silence. Jonah seems to be sleeping, but he holds on to Jesus' hand.

Towards evening, a military Roman wagon catches up with them.

« In the name of God, stop » says Jesus lifting His arm.

The two soldiers stop; from under the cover pulled over the wagon, as it has started raining, peeps out a pompous noncommissioned officer. « What do You want? » he asks Jesus.

« I have a dying friend. I ask you to take him into the wagon. »

« We are not allowed… but… get on. We are not dogs either. » The litter is lifted into the wagon.

« Your friend? Who are You? »

« Rabbi Jesus of Nazareth. »

« You? Oh!… » The non-commissioned officer looks at Him curiously. « If it is You, then… get on as many as you can. But don't let anyone see you… It is an order… but above orders there is also humanity, isn't there? You are good, I know. Eh! We soldiers know everything… How do I know? Even stones speak well or evil, and we have ears to listen to them in order to serve Caesar. You are not a false Christ like the others before You, who were agitators and

rebels. You are good. Rome knows. This man… is very ill. »

« That is why I am taking him to My Mother. »

« Hum! She won't cure him for long! Give him some wine. It's in that canteen. Aquila, whip the horses, Quintus, give me the ration of honey and butter. It's mine, it will do him good. He has a cough and honey will help. »

« You are good. »

« No. Not quite so bad as many. And I am happy to have You here with me. Remember Publius Quintilianus of the Italica legion. I stay at Caesarea. But I am now going to Ptolomais. Inspection order. »

« You are not My enemy. »

« I? I am an enemy of bad people. Never of good people. And I would like to be good, too. Tell me: What doctrine do You preach for us, military people? »

« The doctrine is one only, for everybody. Justice, honesty, continence, compassion. One must do one's duty without any abuses. Also in the hard necessities of the army, one must be human. And one must endeavour to know the Truth, that is God, one and eternal, without which knowledge every action is deprived of grace and consequently of eternal reward. »

« But when I am dead, what will I do with the good I have done? »

« Who comes to the true God will find that good in the next life. »

« Am I going to be born again? Will I become a tribune or even an emperor? »

« No. You will become like God, being united to His eternal beatitude in Heaven. »

« What? Me in Olympus? Amongst the gods? »

« There are no gods. There is the true God. The One I preach. The One Who hears you and notes your goodness and your desire to know the Good. »

« I like that! I did not know that God could be concerned with a poor heathen soldier. »

« He created you, Publius. He therefore loves you and would like to have you with Himself. »

« Eh!… why not? But… no one ever speaks to us of God. »

« I will come to Caesarea and you will hear Me. »

« Oh! Yes. I will come to hear You. There is Nazareth. I would like to serve You further. But if they see me… »

« I will get off, and I bless you for your kindness. »

« Hail, Master. »

« May the Lord show Himself to you, soldiers. Goodbye. »

They get off and resume walking.

« In a short while you will be able to rest, Jonah » says Jesus encouragingly.

Jonah smiles. He becomes calmer and calmer as night falls and

now that he is sure that he is far from Doras.

John and his brother run ahead to inform Mary. And when the little procession arrives in Nazareth, almost deserted in the late evening, Mary is already at the door awaiting Her Son.

« Mother, here is Jonah. He is taking shelter under Your kindness to begin enjoying his Paradise. Are you happy, Jonah? »

« Happy! Happy! » whispers the exhausted man as if he were in ecstasy.

He is taken into the little room where Joseph died.

« You are in My father's bed. And here is My Mother, and I am here. See? Nazareth becomes Bethlehem, and you are now the little Jesus between two people who love you, and these are the ones who venerate you as the faithful servant. You cannot see the angels, but they are waving their bright wings above you and are singing the-words of the Christmas psalm… »

Jesus pours all His kindness on poor Jonah who is getting worse from one second to the next. He seems to have resisted so far to die here… but he is happy. He smiles and tries to kiss Jesus' hand and Mary's, and to say… but his anguish interrupts his words. Mary comforts him like a mother. And he repeats: « Yes… yes » with a blissful smile on his emaciated face.

The disciples, standing at the kitchen garden entrance, are silent and watch deeply moved.

« God has listened to your long desire. The Star of your long night is now becoming the Star of your eternal Morning. You know its name » says Jesus.

« Jesus, Yours! Oh! Jesus! The angels… Who will sing the angelical hymn for me? My soul can hear it… but also my ears wish to hear it… Who?… to make me sleep happy… I am so sleepy! So much work I have done! So many tears… So many insults… Doras… I forgive him… but I do not want to hear his voice and I hear it. It is like the voice of Satan near me, who am dying. Who will cover that voice for me with the words that came from Heaven? »

It is Mary Who on the same tune as Her lulluby sings softly: « Glory to God in the Highest Heaven and peace to men down here. » And She repeats it two or three times because She sees that Jonah calms down on hearing it.

« Doras does not speak any more » he says after some time. « Only the angels… It was a Child… in a manger… between an ox and a donkey… and it was the Messiah… And I adored Him… and with Him there was Joseph and Mary… » His voice fades away in a short gurgle and then there is silence.

« Peace in Heaven to the man of good will! He is dead. We shall bury him in our poor sepulchre. He deserves to await the resurrection of the dead near My just father » says Jesus.

And it all ends, while Mary of Alphaeus, informed I do not know by whom, is coming in.

110. Jesus in the House of Jacob near Lake Merom.

17th February 1945.

I would say that Palestine, besides the lake of Galilee and the Dead Sea, had another small lake or pond, in short a sheet of water,, the name of which I do not know. I am not at all good at reckoning dimensions, but with my naked eye I would say that this small basin is about two miles by one and a half. Very small, as one can see. But its green shores are pretty and also its surface which is so blue and calm that it seems a huge chip of sky-blue enamel veined in its centre by a lighter and slightly more wavy stroke of the brush, perhaps because of the current of the river which flows into it in the north and flows out in the south, and which, because of the lightness of the water, which above all I do not think is deep, does not stop flowing, but like a live stream in the middle of still waters, it shows its vitality and presence by means of a different hue and light ripples of the water.

There are no sailing-boats on the little lake, but only a few rowing-boats, in which a solitary fisherman casts or hauls his fishing baskets, or ferries a traveller who wants to take a short cut. And there are endless herds of sheep, which have certainly come down from the mountain pastures in view of the oncoming autumn, and are grazing on the green and rich pastures of the shores.

At the southern end of the lake, which is oval shaped, there is a main road running from east to west, or rather from north east to south west. It is quite well kept and is very busy with wayfarers going to the villages scattered in the area. Jesus is proceeding on this road with His disciples.

It is a rather dull day and Peter remarks: « It would have been better if we had not gone to that woman. The days are getting shorter and shorter and the weather worse and worse… and Jerusalem is still so far away. »

« We will arrive in time. And believe Me, Peter, we obey God more by doing a good deed than by an external ceremony. That woman is now blessing God with all her creatures, around the head of the family, who has recovered so well that he will be able to be in Jerusalem for the Feast of the Tabernacles, whereas by that time he would have been sleeping under bandages and ointments in a sepulchre. Never corrupt faith with the outward appearance of acts. Never criticise. How can you be surprised at Pharisees if you, too, fall into an error of lack of compassion and you close your heart to your neighbour and say: "I serve God and

that is enough"? »

« You are right, Master. I am more ignorant than a little ass. »

« And I am keeping you with Me to make you wise. Do not be afraid. Chuza has offered Me the wagon almost as far as Jabbok. It is a short way from there to the ford. He insisted so much and with such valid reasons, that I had to accept it, although I deem that the King of the poor should make use of the means of the poor. But Jonah's death caused a delay and I have to modify My plans according to such unexpected events. »

The disciples talk of Jonah, pitying his poor life and envying his happy death. Simon Zealot whispers: « I was not able to make him happy and give the Master a true disciple who had matured in long martyrdom and unshakable faith… and I am sorry. The world is in such need of faithful creatures, believing in Jesus, to balance the many people who deny and will deny! »

« It does not matter, Simon » answers Jesus. « He is happier, now. And more active. And you have done more than anyone would have done for him and for Me. I thank you also on his behalf. He now knows who freed him. And he blesses you. »

« Well, then, he curses Doras, too » exclaims Peter.

Jesus looks at him and says: « Do you think so? You are mistaken. Jonah was a just man. Now he is a saint. He did not hate or curse when he was alive. He does not hate or curse now. From his place of expectation, he is looking at Paradise, and as he already knows that Limbo will soon let the expectants out, he is jubilant. He does nothing else. »

« And Doras… will he be struck by Your anathema? »

« In what way, Peter? »

« Well… by making him think and change… or by punishing him. »

« I have entrusted him to the justice of God. I, the Love, have abandoned him. »

« Good gracious! I would not like to be him. »

« Neither would I! »

« Nor I! »

« No one would, because what will the justice of the Perfect Being ever be like? » say the disciples.

« It will be ecstasy for the good, it will be a thunderbolt for the satans, My friends. I solemnly tell you: to be for a whole life a slave, a leper, a beggar is regal happiness, as compared to one hour, one single hour, of divine punishment. »

« It's raining, Master. What shall we do? Where shall we go? » In fact the first large drops of rain are falling and bouncing on the lake, which has become dark reflecting the sky, now overcast, and it looks as if it is going to rain more heavily.

« To some house. We will ask for shelter in the name of God. »

« And let us hope that we will find someone as good as the Roman. I did not think they were like that… I had always avoided them as being impure and I see that… if I take everything into account, they are better than many of us » says Peter.

« Do you like the Romans? » asks Jesus.

« Eh!… I find that they are not worse than we are. But they are Samaritans… »

Jesus smiles but does not say anything.

They meet a woman who is driving eight sheep in front of her.

« Woman, can you tell us where we can find shelter?… » asks Peter.

« I am the servant of a poor lonely man. But if you want to come… I think my master will receive you kindly. »

« Let us go. »

They proceed under the heavy shower, walking fast in the middle of the sheep trotting with their fat bodies to escape the downpour. They leave the main road to take a little one leading to a low house. I recognise the house of the peasant Jacob, the peasant of Matthias and Mary, the two little orphans of the August vision, I think.

« It's over there! Run ahead while I take the sheep to the fold. Beyond the wall there is a yard through which you go to the house. He will be in the kitchen. Never mind if he is not very talkative… He has a great deal of trouble. »

The woman goes toward a small hut on the right hand side. Jesus turns to the left with His disciples.

There is the threshing-floor with the well and the stone oven at the farther end and the apple-tree on one side and there is the wide open door of the kitchen where a wood fire is lit and a man is repairing a broken rural implement.

« Peace to this house. I ask you to give shelter for tonight to Me and My companions » says Jesus on the threshold of the door.

The man looks up. « Come in » he says, « and may God give back to You the peace You are offering. But… peace here! For some time peace has been Jacob's enemy. Come in. Come in!… Come in all. A fire is the only thing I can give you in plenty… because… Oh! but… But You, now that You have taken off Your hood (Jesus had covered His head with the edge of His mantle, holding it tight under His chin with His hand) and I can see You properly… You are, yes, You are the Galilean Rabbi, the one who is called Messiah and works miracles… Is it You? In the name of God tell me. »

« I am Jesus of Nazareth, the Messiah. Do you know Me? »

« I heard You speak last month in the house of Judas and Anna… I was with the vintagers because… I am poor… A chain of misfortunes: hail, grubs, diseased plants and herds… What I had was sufficient for me, as I am alone, with only one maid servant. But now

I have run into debt because I am persecuted by bad luck… To avoid selling all my sheep, I worked in the houses of other people… After all… my fields!… They looked as if a battle had been fought on them, they were so burnt, and the vines and the olive-trees so fruitless. Since my wife died, and that was six years ago, Mammon seems to be amusing himself here. See? I am working at this plough. But the wood is all broken. What shall I do? I am not a carpenter and I go on tying it up. But it is no use. And I must watch also farthings now… I will sell another sheep to have the tools repaired. The roof leaks… but the field matters to me more than the house. What a pity! The sheep are all pregnant… and I was hoping to replenish my herd… Who knows! »

« I see that I have come to bother you, when you already have so many worries. »

« You a bother? No. I heard You speak and… I still have in my heart what You said. It is true that I have worked honestly, and yet… But I think that I was not yet good enough. I think that perhaps it was my wife who was good, as she felt pity for everybody, my poor Leah, who died too early, too early for her husband… I think that the wealth of those days came from Heaven because of her. And I want to become better, because of what You say and to imitate my wife. And I am not asking for much… only to remain in this house, where she died, where I was born… and to have a piece of bread for myself and the woman who works as my maid and as a shepherdess and helps as well as she can. I have no male servants. I had two and they were enough, as I also worked in the fields and in the olive-grove… But I have bread only for myself, and not much either… »

« Do not deprive yourself of it, to give it to us… »

« No, Master. If I had only one morsel, I would give it to You. It is an honour for me to have You… I would never have hoped for so much. But I am telling You my troubles because You are good and You understand. »

« Yes, I understand. Give Me that hammer. You do not do it that way. You will break the wood. Give Me also that spike, but make it red-hot first. It will be easier to make a hole in the wood and we will put the peg in without any trouble. Let Me do it. I was a carpenter… »

« You want to work for me? No! »

« Let Me do it. You are giving Me hospitality and I want to help you. Men must love one another, each giving what one can. »

« You give peace, wisdom and You work miracles. You are already giving a great deal, a great deal indeed! »

« I give also My work. Come, do as I tell you… » And Jesus, Who is wearing only His tunic, works quickly and skilfully at the split beam, He drills holes, fastens and bolts it and tests it until He feels

that it is firm. « It will still work for a long time. Till next year. And then you will get a new one. »

« I think so, too. That ploughshare has been in Your hands and it will bless my land. »

« Not because of that, Jacob, it will bless it. »

« Why then, my Lord? »

« Because you are merciful. You do not foster ill-feelings of selfishness and envy, but you accept My doctrine and you practise it. Blessed be the merciful. They will receive mercy. »

« In what way am I being merciful to You, my Lord? I have practically no place or food for Your needs. All I have is my good will and never before have I regretted being poor, as I do now, because I cannot honour You and Your friends. »

« Your good will is enough for Me. I solemnly tell you that also a cup of water given in My name is a great thing in the eyes of God. I was a tired wayfarer caught in a storm, and you have given Me hospitality. Mealtime comes and you say to Me: "I offer You what I have". Night falls, and you offer Me a friendly roof. What more do you want to do? Be confident, Jacob. The Son of man does not look at the pomp of reception or of food, but He looks at the feelings of one's heart. The Son of God says to the Father: "Father, bless My benefactors and all those who in My name are merciful to their brothers". That is what I am saying for you. »

The servant, who has spoken to her master while Jesus was working at the plough comes back with some bread, some fresh milk, a few withered apples and a tray of olives.

« That is all I have » apologises the man.

« Oh! In your food I see a food that you cannot see! And I feed on it because it has a celestial flavour. »

« Do You, the Son of God, perhaps feed on some food which angels bring to You? Perhaps You live on the bread of the spirit. »

« Yes, the spirit has a greater value than the body, and not only in Me. I do not feed on angelical bread, but on the love of the Father and of men. That is what I find also at your table and I bless the Father Who led Me to you with love, and I bless you because you receive Me with love and give Me love. That is My food as well as doing the will of the Father. »

« Then bless and offer the food to God in my stead. Today You are the head of my family and You will always be my Master and Friend. »

Jesus takes the bread and offers it holding it up on the palms of His hands, saying a psalm, I think. He then sits down, breaks it and hands it out…

It all ends thus.

111. Return to the Jordan Ford near Jericho.

18th February 1945.

« I am surprised that the Baptist is not here » says John to the Master. They are all on the eastern bank of the Jordan, near the famous ford where the Baptist once used to baptise.

« And he is not even on the other bank » points out James.

« They may have caught him again, hoping to get another purse » remarks Peter. « Those crooks of Herod certainly deserve the cross! »

« We shall cross to the other side and ask » says Jesus.

They do cross over and they ask a ferryman of the other bank: « Does the Baptist no longer baptise here? »

« No, he doesn't. He is at the border with Samaria. That is the state we are in! A holy man has to take shelter near the Samaritans to protect himself from the citizens of Israel. Why are we surprised if God abandons us? I am surprised at one thing only: that He does not make a Sodom and Gomorrah of the whole of Palestine!… »

« He does not because of the just people who are there, because of those, who although not yet completely just, are thirsty for justice and follow the doctrine of those who preach holiness » replies Jesus.

« Two, then: the Baptist and the Messiah. I know the former, because I served him also here at the Jordan, ferrying some believers to him, without asking for any payment, because he says that one is to be content with what is just. I thought that it was just that I should be satisfied with what I earned doing other jobs and that it was unfair to ask to be paid for taking souls to be purified. My friends said that I was mad. But after all… Since I was happy with the little I had, who could complain? On the other hand I see that so far I have not died of starvation, and I hope that Abraham will smile at me when I die. »

« You are in the right, man. Who are you? »

« Oh! My name is a great one and it makes me laugh because my only wisdom is concerned with oars. My name is Solomon. »

« You possess the wisdom for judging that who cooperates to a purification must not corrupt it with money. I tell you, that not only Abraham, but the God of Abraham will smile at you as at a faithful son, when you die. »

« Oh! God! Is that true? Who are You? »

« I am a just man. »

« Listen: I told You that there are two in Israel: one is the Baptist, the other the Messiah. Are You the Messiah? »

« Yes, I am. »

« Oh! Eternal mercy! But… one day I heard some Pharisees say… Never mind… I do not want to foul my mouth. You are not what they said. Their tongues are more forked than vipers'!… »

« Yes, I am, and I say to you: you are not very far from the Light. Goodbye, Solomon. Peace be with you. »

« Where are You going, Lord? » The man is dumbfounded at the revelation and is speaking in a completely different tone. Before it was a good natural person who spoke. Now it is an adoring believer.

« I am going to Jerusalem via Jericho. I am going to the Tabernacles. »

« To Jerusalem?… You too? »

« I am a son of the Law, too. I do not repeal the Law. I give it light and strength so that it may be fulfilled in a perfect way. »

« But Jerusalem already hates You! I mean, the great ones, the Pharisees in Jerusalem. I told You that I heard… »

« Leave them alone. They do their duty, what they think is their duty. I do Mine. I solemnly tell you, that until the hour comes, they will not be able to do anything. »

« Which hour, Lord? » ask the disciples and the ferryman.

« The hour of the triumph of Darkness. »

« Will You live until the end of the world? »

« No. There will be a more dreadful darkness than the darkness of the extinguished stars and of our planet, dead with all its inhabitants. And it will take place when men extinguish the Light, which is I. The crime has already been committed by many. Goodbye, Solomon. »

« I will follow You, Master. »

« No. Come to the Bel Nidrasc in three days' time. Peace be with You. »

Jesus sets out amongst His pensive disciples.

« What are you thinking of? Do not be afraid for Me or yourselves. We have passed through the Decapolis and Perea, and everywhere we have seen farmers working in the fields. In some places the land was still covered with stubble and couch-grass, an arid hard land, encumbered with parasite plants, the seeds of which had been carried there from the desert waste by the summer winds. They were the fields of lazy and fast living people. In other places the soil had already been turned by the ploughshare, and stones, bramble and couch-grass had been cleared away by fire and man's toil. And what before was harmful, that is the useless plants, was turned by the purifying fire and man's toil into good manure and useful fertilizing salts. The soil may have suffered because of the pain caused by the share that cut into it and rummaged through it, and because of the biting fire that scorched its wounds. But it will rejoice in spring, more beautiful, saying: "Man tortured me to give me these rich crops which make me beautiful". And they were the fields of the willing people. And in other places the soil was already soft, also the ashes had been cleared away, it

was a real nuptial bed for its fertile union to the seed, that gives so many glorious ears of wheat. And they were the fields of people who were so generous as to reach perfection in activity.

Well, the same applies to hearts. I am the Share and My word is the Fire, to prepare men for the eternal triumph.

There are those who, lazy or fast living, do not yet ask for Me, do not want Me, are satisfied with their vices and wicked passions, which look like green floral garments, and are instead bramble and thorns, which tear souls to pieces, and tie them into faggots for the fire in Gehenna. For the time being the Decapolis and Perea are like that… and are not the only ones. They do not ask for miracles, because they do not want My sharp word nor the ardour of My fire. But their hour will come. In other places there are those who accept My sharp word and My ardour, and they think: "It is painful. But it purifies me and will make me productive of good deeds". They are the ones, who, although they have not the heroism of acting, allow Me to act. It is the first step on My way. And finally there are those who help My work with their own continuous diligent work and they do not walk, but they fly on the way to God. They are the faithful disciples: you and the others scattered throughout Israel. »

« But we are few… against so many. We are humble… against the mighty ones. How can we defend You, should they wish to hurt You? »

« My friends, remember the dream of Jacob. He saw an incalculable multitude of angels ascending and descending a ladder that from Heaven reached down to the Patriarch. A multitude, and yet it was but a part of the angelical cohorts… Well, if even all the cohorts that sing hallelujah to God in Heaven should come down to defend Me, when the hour comes, they will be of no avail. Justice is to be fulfilled… »

« You mean injustice! Because You are holy and if they hurt You and hate You, they are unjust. »

« That is why I say that the crime has already been committed by some. Who broods over thoughts of murder, is already a murderer, who broods over thoughts of theft, is already a thief, who over thoughts of adultery, is already an adulterer, who of betrayal, is already a betrayer. The Father knows and I know. But He allows Me to go. And I go. Because that is what I came for. But the crops will ripen and will be sown once and once again before the Bread and the Wine are given as food to men. »

« There will be a banquet of joy and peace, then! »

« Of peace? Yes. Of joy? Also. But… oh, Peter! oh, My friends! How many tears will be shed between the first and the second chalice! And only after the last drop of the third chalice has been drunk, great will be the joy amongst the just, and certain the peace

to men of good will. » (1)

« And You will be there. Won't You? »

« I?… Is the Head of the family ever absent from the rite? Am I not the Head of the large family of Christ? »

Simon Zealot, who has never spoken, says, as if he were speaking to himself: « "Who is coming in garments stained in crimson? He is richly clothed, marching so full of strength". "It is I, who speak of integrity and am powerful to save". "Why are your garments red, your clothes as if you had trodden the winepress? » « "I have trodden the winepress alone. My year of redemption has come". »

« You have understood, Simon » remarks Jesus.

« I have understood, my Lord. »

The two look at each other; the others look at them astonished and they ask one another: « Is he talking of the red clothes that Jesus is wearing even now, or of the royal purple which He will put on when the hour comes? »

Jesus does not pay attention and does not seem to hear anything else.

Peter takes Simon to one side and asks: « Since you are learned and humble, explain your words to me, who am ignorant. »

« Yes, brother. His name is Redeemer. The chalices of the banquet of peace and joy between man and God, and the earth and Heaven, He will fill them Himself with His Wine, pressing Himself in sufferings because of His love for us all. He will therefore be present, notwithstanding the powers of Darkness will have then apparently extinguished the Light, Which is He. Oh! We must love our Christ very much, because many will refuse to love Him. Let us make sure that in the hour of dereliction, the lament of David may not be applied to us reproachingly: "A pack of dogs (with us amongst them) surrounds Me". »

« Do you think so?… But we will defend Him, at the cost of dying with Him. »

« We will defend Him… But we are men, Peter. And our hearts will melt even before His bones are disjointed… Yes, we will be like the ice-cold water in the sky that lightning melts into rain and then the wind freezes once again on the ground. We are like that! Our present courage of being His disciples, because His love and His presence condense us into a virile boldness, will melt under the

(1) Reference is made here to the Jewish ritual for the celebration of the Passover Supper, described by Mishna, a fundamental text of the Talmud, codified in the II-III century after Christ. At least four chalices were to be consumed at the Passover Supper. According to the Poem of the Man-God, there was great sadness between the first and the second chalice (probably because of the prediction by Christ of Judas' betrayal). But after the third chalice (that is, the one consecrated into the Blood of Christ) there was great joy and peace (probably an allusion to the wonderful speech of Jesus to the Apostles after the departure of Judas).

striking lightning of Satan and of the satans… And what will be left of us? Then, after the vile necessary test, faith and love will unite us firmly again and we will be like crystal proof against cuts. But we will be aware of that and we will succeed if we love Him very much while we have Him. Then, I do believe, because of His word, that we shall not be enemies and betrayers. »

« You are a learned man, Simon. I am… illiterate. And I am also ashamed of asking Him so many questions. And I suffer when I hear that there are so many reasons for tears… Look at His face: it seems to be washed by secret tears. Look at His eyes: they look neither at the sky nor at the ground. They are open on a world unknown to us. And how tired and bent His carriage is! He seems to have grown old because of His worries. Oh! I don't like Him like that! Master! Master! Smile. I don't like to see You so sad. You are as dear to me as a son, and I would give You my chest as a pillow, to make You sleep and dream of other worlds… Oh! forgive me if I said to You "son". It's because I love You, Jesus. »

« I am the Son… That name is My Name. But I am no longer sad. See? I am smiling because you are friendly to Me. Over there, there is Jericho, completely red in the sunset. Two of you should go and look for lodgings. The others and I will go and wait for you beside the synagogue. Go. »

And it all ends while John and Judas Thaddeus set out looking for a hospitable house.

112. Jesus in the House of Lazarus. Martha Speaks of the Magdalene.

19th February 1945.

I see the market square in Jericho, its trees and shouting vendors. In a comer there is Zacchaeus, the tax-collector, intent on his legal and illegal extortions. He must deal also in jewellery because I see him weighing and appraising jewels and valuables, I do not know whether they are given to him as payment of taxes, instead of money, or whether they are sold for other necessities.

It is now the turn of a slender woman, who is completely clad in a huge rust-grey mantle. Also her face is covered with yellowish closely woven byssus which prevents her face from being seen. One can see only the slimness of her figure which is visible notwithstanding the huge greyish cloak that envelops her. She must be young, at least according to the little that can be seen, that is, one hand which for a moment she takes out of her mantle to hand over a gold bracelet, and her feet, shod in rather sophisticated sandals, fitted with uppers and interlacing leather straps, so that only her smooth juvenile toes and part of her slim white ankles are visible. She gives her bracelet without saying one word, takes the

money without any objection and turns round to go away.

I now notice that behind her there is the Iscariot, who watches her carefully and when she is about to go away, he says a word to her, which I do not catch. But she does not reply, as if she were dumb, and she hastens away in her mass of clothes.

Judas asks Zacchaeus: « Who is she? »

« I do not ask my customers their names, especially when they are as kind as she is. »

« Young, isn't she? »

« Apparently. »

« Is she Judaean? »

« Who knows?! Gold is yellow in all countries. »

« Show me that bracelet. »

« Do you want to buy it? »

« No. »

« Well, nothing doing. What do you think? That it will start talking in her place? »

« I wanted to see if I could find out who she is… »

« Are you so interested? Are you a necromancer who divines, or a bloodhound that scents? Go away, forget her. If she is like that, she is either honest and unhappy or she is a leper. Therefore… nothing doing. »

« I am not craving for a woman » replies Judas contemptuously.

« May be… but by the looks of your face I can hardly believe it. Well, if you do not want anything else, please step aside. I have other people to attend to. »

Judas goes away angrily and asks a bread vendor and a fruit seller whether they know the woman who had just bought some bread and apples from them, and whether they know where she lives.

They do not know. They reply: « She has been coming here for some time, every two or three days. But we do not know where she lives. »

« But how does she speak? » insists Judas.

The two laugh and reply: « With her tongue. »

Judas abuses them and goes away… and runs into the group of Jesus and His disciples, who are coming to buy some bread and food for their daily meal. The surprise is reciprocal and… not very enthusiastic.

Jesus says only: « You are here? » and while Judas mumbles something, Peter breaks into a loud laugh and says: « Here, I am blind and a misbeliever. I cannot see the vineyards. And I don't believe in the miracle… »

« What are you saying? » ask two or three disciples.

« I am speaking the truth. There are no vineyards here. And I cannot believe that Judas, in all this dust, can gather grapes simply

because he is a disciple of the Rabbi. »

« Vintage finished a long time ago » replies Judas harshly.

« And Kerioth is many miles away » concludes Peter.

« You are attacking me at once. You are hostile to me. »

« No. I am not such a fool as you think. »

« That is enough » commands Jesus. He is severe. He addresses Judas: « I was not expecting to see you here. I thought you would be in Jerusalem for the Tabernacles. »

« I am going there tomorrow. I have been waiting here for a friend of our family, who… »

« Please, that is enough. »

« Do You not believe me, Master? I swear… »

« I did not ask you anything, and please do not say anything. You are here. That is enough. Are you thinking of coming with us or have you still got business to attend to? Answer frankly. »

« No… I have finished. In any case that fellow is not coming and I am going to Jerusalem for the Feast. And where are You going? »

« To Jerusalem. »

« Today? »

« I will be at Bethany this evening. »

« At Lazarus' house? »

« Yes, at Lazarus'. »

« Well, I will come too. »

« Yes, come as far as Bethany. Then Andrew with James of Zebedee and Thomas will go to Gethsemane to make preparations and wait for us all, and you will go with them. » Jesus stresses the last words in such a way that Judas does not react.

« And what about us? » asks Peter.

« You will go with My cousins and Matthew where I will send you and will come back in the evening. John, Simon, Bartholomew and Philip will stay with Me, that is, they will go and announce in Bethany that the Rabbi has come and will speak to the people at the ninth hour. »

They walk quickly across the barren countryside. There is an impending storm, not in the clear sky, but in their hearts, they are all conscious of it, and they proceed silently.

When they reach Bethany, and coming from Jericho Lazarus' house is one of the first to be met, Jesus dismisses the group that is to go to Jerusalem and then the other one which He sends towards Bethlehem saying: « Go and do not worry. Half way you will find Isaac, Elias, and the others. Tell them that I will be in Jerusalem for many days and I expect them to bless them. »

In the meantime Simon has knocked at the door and had it opened. The servants inform Lazarus who comes at once.

Judas Iscariot, who had gone a few yards ahead, comes back with the excuse of saying to Jesus: « I have displeased You, Master.

I realise it. Forgive me » and at the same time through the open gate he casts sidelong glances at the garden and at the house.

« Yes. It is all right. Go. Do not keep your companions waiting. »

And Judas must go.

Peter whispers: « He was hoping there might be a change in the instructions. »

« Never, Peter. I know what I am doing. But bear with that man… »

« I will try. But I cannot promise… Goodbye, Master. Come, Matthew and you two. Quick. »

« My peace be always with you. »

Jesus enters with the remaining four and after kissing Lazarus He introduces John, Philip and Bartholomew, and then dismisses them and remains alone with Lazarus.

They go towards the house. This time, under the beautiful porch there is a woman. She is Martha. She is swarthy and tall, although not quite so tall as her sister, who is fair-haired and rosy; but she is a beautiful young woman with a balanced and well shaped plump body, a little dark head, a smooth brown forehead. Her eyes are kind, mild, dark long-shaped and as soft as velvet, between her dark eyelashes. Her nose is slightly turned down and her small lips are very red against her dark cheeks. She smiles showing strong snow-white teeth.

She is wearing a dark blue woollen dress with red and dark green galloons round the neck and at the end of her wide short sleeves, from which two other sleeves unfold, of very fine white linen, tied and pleated at the wrists by a little cord. Her very fine white blouse shows also at the top of her breast, round the lower part of her neck where it is held tight by a cord. As a belt she is wearing a scarf of blue, red and green, of a fine cloth which is tied round the upper part of her hips and hangs down her left side in a tuft of fringes. A rich and chaste dress.

« I have a sister, Master. Here she is, Martha, she is good and pious. She is the consolation and the honour of the family and the joy of poor Lazarus. Before she was my first and only joy. Now she is the second, because You are the first. »

Martha prostrates herself on the floor and kisses the hem of Jesus' tunic.

« Peace to the good sister and to the chaste woman. Stand up. »

Martha rises to her feet and goes into the house with Jesus and Lazarus. She then asks to leave to attend to the house.

« She is my peace… » whispers Lazarus, and he looks at Jesus. An inquisitive look. But Jesus pretends He does not see it.

Lazarus asks: « And Jonah? »

« He is dead. »

« Dead? Then… »

« I got him when he was dying. But he died a free man and happy in My house, at Nazareth, between Me and My Mother. »

« Doras practically killed him for You before handing him over! »

« Yes, with fatigue and also with blows. »

« He is a devil and hates You. That hyena hates the whole world… Did he not tell You that he hates You? »

« Yes, he did. »

« Distrust him, Jesus. He is capable of anything, Lord… what did Doras tell You? Did he not tell You to shun me? Did he not place poor Lazarus in a disgraceful light? »

« I think that you know Me well enough to understand that I judge for Myself and according to justice, and that when I love, I love without considering whether such love may procure Me good or evil according to the views of the world. »

« But that man is cruel and he injures and hurts severely… He tormented me also some days ago. He came here and he told me… Oh! I am so vexed already! Why does he want to take You also away from me? »

« I am the solace of those who are tormented and the companion of those who are forlorn. I have come to you also for that.. »

« Ah! Then You know?… Oh! shame on me! »

« No. Why on you? I know. So what? Shall I anathematise you, who are suffering? I am Mercy, Peace, Forgiveness, Love for everybody; and what shall I be for those who are innocent? The sin for which you suffer is not yours. Shall I be pitiless towards you if I feel pity also for her?… »

« Have You seen her? »

« I have. Do not cry. »

But Lazarus, his head resting on his folded arms on a table, is weeping, sobbing painfully.

Martha appears at the door and looks in. Jesus nods to her to be silent. And Martha goes away with big tears running silently down her cheeks.

Lazarus calms down little by little and apologises for his weakness. Jesus comforts him and since His friend wishes to withdraw for a moment, He goes out into the garden and walks among the flower-beds, where some purple roses are still in bloom.

Martha joins Him shortly afterwards. « Master, has Lazarus spoken to You? »

« Yes, Martha, he has. »

« Lazarus cannot set his mind at rest since he is aware that You know and that You have seen her… »

« How does he know? »

« First, that man who was with You and says he is Your disciple: the young one, tall, swarthy, clean-shaven… then Doras. The latter lashed You with his contempt, the former only said that You had

seen her on the lake… with her lovers… »

« Do not cry for that! Do you think that I am unacquainted with your wound? I was aware of it since I was with the Father… Do not lose heart, Martha. Raise your heart and your head. »

« Pray for her, Master. I pray… but I cannot forgive completely and perhaps the Eternal Father rejects my prayer. »

« You are right: you must forgive to be forgiven and heard. I already pray for her. But give Me your forgiveness and Lazarus'. You, a good sister, can speak and achieve even more than I can. His wound is too fresh and sore for My hand to touch it even lightly, You can do it. Give Me your full holy forgiveness, and I will… »

« Forgive… We will not be able. Our mother died of grief through her ill deeds and… they were still slight compared with the present ones. I see my mother's torture… it is always present to me. And I see what Lazarus is suffering. »

« She is ill, Martha, and insane. Forgive her. » « She is possessed, Master. »

« And what is diabolic possession but a disease of the spirit infected by Satan to the extent of degenerating into a spiritual diabolic being? How can certain perversions in human beings be explained otherwise? Perversions that make man much worse than beasts in ferocity, more lewd than monkeys in lust, and so on, and make a hybrid, in which man, animal and demon are mingled. That is the explanation of what amazes us as an inexplicable monstrosity in so many creatures. Do not weep. Forgive. I see. Because My sight is sharper than the sight of the eye or of the heart. I see God. I see. I tell you: forgive, because she is ill. »

« Cure her, then! »

« I will cure her. Have faith. I will make you happy. But forgive and tell Lazarus to forgive. Forgive her. Love her. Be on familiar terms with her. Speak to her as if she were like you. Speak to her of Me… »

« How do You expect her to understand You, the Holy One? »

« She may not seem to understand. But My Name, even by Itself, is salvation. Get her to think of Me and to mention My Name. Oh! Satan runs away when a heart thinks of My Name. Smile, Martha, at this hope. Look at this rose. The rain of the past days had spoiled it, but look, the sun today has opened it, and it is even more beautiful because the drops of rain on the petals adorn it with diamonds. Your house will be like that… Tears and sorrow, now, and later… joy and glory. Go! Tell Lazarus, while I, in the peace of Your garden, will pray the Father for Mary and for you… »

It all ends thus.

113. In Lazarus' House Again after the Tabernacles. Invitation of Joseph of Arimathea.

20th February 1945.

I do not know how I will be able to write so much, because I hear that Jesus wants to appear with the Gospel as He lived it, and I suffered all through the night to remember the following vision, of which I scribbled the words I heard, as best I could, in order not to forget them [… I

And now, at 11 o'clock, I see this.

Jesus is once again in Lazarus' house. From what I hear, I gather that the Tabernacles have already been celebrated and that Jesus has come back to Bethany through the insistence of His friend, who would never like to be separated from Jesus. I also realise that Jesus is at Lazarus' only with Simon and John, while the others are scattered in the area. Finally I understand that there has been a kind of meeting of friends, still loyal to Lazarus, who has invited them so that they may meet Jesus.

I understand all that, because Lazarus expounds even more clearly the moral characters of each. Speaking of Joseph of Arimathea, he defines him 'a true and just Israelite'. He says: « He dare not say so, because he is afraid of the Sanhedrin, of which he is a member, and which already hates You. But he hopes to see in You the One Predicted by the Prophets. He spontaneously asked me if he could come to meet You and form his own opinion of You, as he did not think that what Your enemies said about You was right… Pharisees have come from as far as Galilee to accuse You of sin. But Joseph's evaluation was: "Who works miracles has God with him. Who has God cannot be in sin. Nay he can but be one loved by God". And he would like to have You at Arimathea, as his guest. He asked me to tell You. And I beg You: please grant his request and mine. »

« I have come for the poor and for those who suffer in their souls and bodies, rather than for the mighty ones who consider Me only an interesting object. But I will go to Joseph's. I am not against the mighty ones on purpose. One of My disciples - the one who out of curiosity and self-proclaimed importance came to your house, without any order from Me… but he is young and we must bear with him - can testify to My respect for the mighty castes who proclaim themselves the "guardians of the Law" and… they mean "the sustainers of the Most High". Oh! The Eternal Father sustains Himself by Himself. None of the doctors ever had the same respect as I had for the officials of the Temple. »

« I know. A great many know… But only the best call such attitude by the right name. The others… call it "hypocrisy". »

« One gives what one has in oneself, Lazarus. »

« True. But go to Joseph. He would like to have You next Sabbath. »

« I will go. You can let him know. »

« Also Nicodemus is good. Yes… he said to me… Can I tell You a piece of criticism on one of Your disciples? »

« Yes, do. If he is a just man he will say what is just; if unjust, he will criticise a conversion, because the Spirit gives light to the spirit of man, if he is an upright man; and the spirit of man guided by the Spirit of God possesses a superhuman wisdom and can read the truth in hearts. »

« He said to me: "I do not criticise the presence of unlearned people or of excisemen among the disciples of Christ. But I do not consider worthy of being one of His disciples, the man who I do not know whether he is for Him or against Him, but is like a chameleon, which takes the colour and the appearance of what is around it". »

« That is the Iscariot. I know. But believe Me: youth is a wine that ferments and then becomes purified. When fermenting it swells and foams and overflows in all directions through excess of vigour. A springtime wind blows in all directions and seems a mad ruffler of foliage. But it is the wind we have to thank for fecundating flowers. Judas is wine and wind. But he is not evil. His behaviour upsets and perturbs, it even hurts and causes one to suffer. But he is not completely wicked… he is a fiery colt. »

« You say so… I am not competent to judge him. I still feel bitter at the fact that he told me that You had seen her… »

« But your bitterness is now sweetened by honey, because of My promise… »

« Yes, but I remember that moment. Sorrow is not forgotten even when it ends. »

« Lazarus, Lazarus! You worry about too many things… and so trifling. Let days go by like air bubbles that vanish and never come back in their bright or sad hues. And look at Heaven. It does not vanish: it is for the just. »

« Yes, Master and Friend. I will not criticise the fact that Judas is with You, or the fact that You keep him. I will pray that he may not be harmful to You. »

Jesus smiles and it all ends.

114. Jesus Meets Gamaliel at the Banquet of Joseph of Arimathea.

21st February 1945.

Arimathea is a mountainous town, too. I do not know why, but I imagined it on a plain. Instead it is on the mountains, which, however, are already sloping down to the plain, and from certain turns of the road the flat country appears to be fertile towards the

west and it fades away on the horizon, in this November morning, in a low mist that looks like an endless sheet of water.

Jesus is with Simon and Thomas. There are no other apostles with Him. I am under the impression that He wisely appraises the feelings of the people He has to approach, and according to the circumstances, He takes those who can be accepted without annoying the landlord too much. These Jews must be more touchy… than romantic little women…

I can hear them speaking of Joseph of Arimathea, and Thomas, who probably knows him very well, describes his beautiful large estate which stretches along the mountain, particularly towards Jerusalem along the road that runs from the capital to Arimathea and links this town to Joppa. I hear them say so, and Thomas praises also the fields that Joseph possesses along the roads on the plain.

« At least men are not treated like animals here! Oh! That Doras! » says Simon.

In fact the workers here are well fed and clothed and have the appearance of satisfied people who are well. They greet respectfully because they obviously know who the tall handsome Man is, Who is going to the house of their master along the countryside of Arimathea. And they watch Him, speaking among themselves in low voices.

When Joseph's house comes into sight, a servant, after bowing low, asks: « Are You the Rabbi we are expecting? »

« I am » replies Jesus.

He salutes bowing again and runs to inform the landlord.

In fact before Jesus reaches the boundary of the house - completely surrounded by a high hedge of evergreens, which replace here the high wall around Lazarus' house and isolates it from the road, being at the same time the continuation of the garden around the house, richly planted with trees and at present very bare of foliage - Joseph of Arimathea, in his wide fringed robe, comes to meet Him and bows very low with his arms folded on his chest. It is not the humble salutation of a person who acknowledges in Jesus the God become Flesh and who humbles himself by kneeling to the ground to kiss His feet or the hem of His tunic, but it is a salutation of deep respect. Jesus also bows and then gives His greeting of peace.

« Come in, Master. You have made me happy by accepting my invitation. I was not expecting so much compliance from You. »

« Why not? I go also to Lazarus' house and… »

« Lazarus is a friend of Yours… I am a stranger. »

« You are a soul seeking the truth. The Truth, therefore, does not reject you. »

« Are You the Truth? »

« I am the Way, the Life and the Truth. Who loves and follows Me will have the certain Way, the blessed Life and will know God; because God, besides being Love and Justice, is Truth. »

« You are a great Doctor. Wisdom emanates from every word of Yours. » He then turns to Simon: « I am happy that you have come back to my house, too, after such a long absence. »

« I was not absent of my own accord. You are aware of my fate and of how many tears were shed during the life of the little Simon of whom your father was so fond. »

« I know. And I think that you know that I never spoke one word against you. »

« I know everything. My faithful servant told me that I am indebted also to you, if my property was respected. May God reward you for it. »

« I was influential in the Sanhedrin and I made use of my position to help, with justice, a friend of my house. »

« Many were the friends of mine and many were influential in the Sanhedrin. But they were not as just as you are… »

« And who is this? I seem to have met him… But I do not know where… »

« I am Thomas, called Dydimus… »

« Ah! Yes! Is your old father still alive? »

« Yes, still alive. In his business, with my brothers. I left him for the Master. But he is happy that I did. »

« He is a true Israelite, and, since he has got to the point of believing that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah, he can but be happy that his son is amongst His favourites. »

They are now in the garden, near the house.

« I have kept Lazarus. He is in the library, reading a summary of the last meetings of the Sanhedrin. He did not want to stay because… I know that You are already aware… That is why he did not want to stay. But I said: "No. It is not fair that you should be so ashamed. No one will insult you in my house. Please stay. Who ignores his surroundings is alone against the whole world. And since in the world there is more wickedness than goodness, who is alone is knocked down and trodden on". Was I not right? »

« You were and You did the right thing » replies Jesus.

« Master… today there will be Nicodemus and… Gamaliel. Do You mind? »

« Why should I? I acknowledge his wisdom. »

« Yes. He was anxious to see You… and he wanted to insist on his point of view. You know… ideas. He says that he has already seen the Messiah, and that he is waiting for the sign that He promised him, at His revelation. He also says that You are "a man of God". He does not say: "the Man". He says: "a man of God". A rabbinical subtlety, isn't it? You are not offended, are You? »

« Subtlety. You are right. We must bear with them. The best ones will prune by themselves all the superfluous branches that make, them bear foliage and no fruit, and will come to Me. »

« I wanted to inform You of his words, because he will certainly repeat them to You. He is frank » points out Joseph.

« A rare virtue which I appreciate very much » replies Jesus.

« Yes. I also said to him: "But Lazarus of Bethany is with the Master". I told him… because… well, because of his sister. But Gamaliel replied: "Is she present? No? Well then? The mud falls off the garment which is no longer in the mud. Lazarus has shaken it off himself. And he does not contaminate my garment with it. And then I am of the opinion that if a man of God goes to his house, I, a doctor of the Law, can go there too". »

« Gamaliel's judgement is correct. He is a Pharisee and a doctor to the backbone, but still honest and just. »

« I am happy to hear You say so. Master, here is Lazarus. »

Lazarus bends down to kiss Jesus' tunic. He is happy to be with Him, but he is obviously agitated while waiting for the guests. I am sure that poor Lazarus, to his well known torment, known to men because handed down by history, has to add these moral sufferings, unknown to and ignored by most people, that is, the dreadful sting of the thought: « What will this man say to me? What does he think of me? How does he consider me? Will he offend me by means of words or scornful glances? » A sting that tortures all those who have a blot in their families.

They have now entered the very rich hall where the tables have been laid and they are waiting only for Gamaliel and Nicodemus, because four other guests have already arrived. I hear them being introduced with their respective names: Felix, John, Simon and Cornelius.

There is a great stir and rushing of servants when Nicodemus and Gamaliel arrive. Gamaliel is always stately in his snow-white robe which he wears with regal majesty. Joseph rushes to meet him and their reciprocal salutations are pompous exchanges of respect. Also Jesus is bowed and He bows to the great rabbi who greets Him with the salutation: « The Lord be with You » to which Jesus replies: « And may His peace always be your companion. » Also Lazarus bows down and all the others do likewise.

Gamaliel sits at the centre of the table, between Jesus and Joseph. Lazarus is beside Jesus, Nicodemus beside Joseph. The meal starts after the ritual prayers, which Gamaliel says after an oriental exchange of courteousness among the three main personages, that is, Jesus, Gamaliel and Joseph.

Gamaliel is very dignified but not proud. He listens more than he speaks. But anyone can understand that he ponders on every word of Jesus and often looks at Him with his deep dark severe

eyes. When Jesus becomes silent because a subject has been exhausted, Gamaliel revives the conversation by means of a suitable question.

Lazarus at first is somewhat confused. But later he takes heart and he speaks, too.

No direct allusion is made to Jesus' personality until the meal is almost over. Then a discussion starts between the guest named Felix and Lazarus, who is later joined and supported by Nicodemus and finally by the guest named John, on miracles as proof in favour or against a person.

Jesus is silent. He sometimes smiles in a mysterious way, but is silent. Also Gamaliel is quiet. His elbow is leaning on the bed and he is staring at Jesus. He seems to be wishing to decipher some supernatural word engraved on the pale smooth skin of Jesus' thin face. He seems to be analysing every fibre of it.

Felix maintains that John's holiness is incontestable and from such undisputed and indisputable holiness he draws a conclusion unfavourable to Jesus Nazarene, the author of many famous miracles. He says: « Miracles are not a proof of holiness because the life of the prophet John is devoid of them, and yet no one in Israel leads a life like his. There are no banquets, no friendships, no comforts for him. He suffers and is imprisoned for the sake of the Law. He lives in solitude, because although he has disciples, he does not live with them and he finds faults also in the most honest and thunders out against everybody. Whereas… eh! this Master here of Nazareth, has worked miracles, it is true, but I see that He, too, loves what life offers and does not disdain friendships and, forgive me if one of the Elders of the Sanhedrin says this to You, he is too easy in giving, in God's name, forgiveness and love to well known sinners marked by anathema. You should not do that, Jesus. »

Jesus smiles, but does not speak. Lazarus replies in His stead: « Our powerful Lord is free to direct His servants as and where He wishes. He granted the power of working miracles to Moses. He did not grant it to Aaron, His first High Priest. So? What is your conclusion? Is one) ore holy than the other? »

Certainly answers Felix.

« Then Jesus is more holy, because He works miracles. »

Felix is disconcerted. But he raises a captious objection: « Aaron had already been given the pontificate. It was enough. »

« No, my friend » replies Nicodemus. « His pontificate was a mission. A holy mission, but nothing more than a mission. Not always and not all the high priests of Israel were holy men. And yet they were high priests, even if they were not holy. »

« You are not saying that the High Priest is a man devoid of grace!… » exclaims Felix.

« Felix… don't let us play with fire. You, Gamaliel, Joseph,

Nicodemus and I, we all know many things… » says the guest named John.

« What? What? Gamaliel, say something!… » Felix is scandalised.

« If he is fair, he will speak the truth which you do not want to hear » say the three men who are bitter against Felix.

Joseph endeavours to bring about peace. Jesus is silent as well as Thomas, the Zealot and the other Simon, the friend of Joseph. Gamaliel seems to be playing with the fringes of his robe, but he looks at Jesus inquisitively.

« Speak then, Gamaliel » shouts Felix.

« Yes, do speak » say the three opponents.

« I say: the frailties of the family are to be concealed » says Gamaliel.

« That's not an answer! » shouts Felix. « It looks as if you are admitting that there are faults in the house of the High Priest. »

« He is the soul of truth » reply the three men.

Gamaliel draws himself up and turns towards Jesus. « Here is the Master Who overshadows the most learned men. Let Him speak about it. »

« You wish so and I obey. I say: a man is a man. A mission is beyond man. But man, invested with a mission, becomes capable of accomplishing it as a superman, when through a holy life, he has God as his friend. It is He Who said: "You are a priest according to the order given by Me". What is written on the Pectoral? "Doctrine and Truth". That is what the High Priest ought to possess. Doctrine is acquired by constant meditation, aiming at the knowledge of the Most Wise One. Truth is achieved by means of absolute loyalty to good. Who intrigues with evil, finds Falsehood and loses Truth. »

« Very well! You have replied as a great rabbi. I, Gamaliel, am telling You. You surpass me. »

« Let Him explain then, why Aaron did not work miracles and Moses did » raves Felix.

Jesus replies readily: « Because Moses had to impose himself on the dull, heavy and even hostile mass of the Israelites and had to succeed in having ascendancy over them, in order to bend them to the will of God. Man is the eternal savage and the eternal child. He is struck by what exceeds the common order of things. And a miracle is such. It is a light waved before dimmed eyes, it is a sound produced near plugged ears. It wakes people up. It draws their attention. It makes them say: "God is here". »

« You are saying that to Your own benefit » retorts Felix.

« To My benefit? What do I gain by working a miracle? Do I look taller if I stand on a blade of grass? Such is a miracle with regard to holiness. There are saints who never worked miracles. There are magicians and necromancers, who work them by means of dark

powers, that is, they do superhuman things, which, however, are not holy, and they are demons. I shall be I, even if I work no more miracles. »

« Excellent! You are great, Jesus! » approves Gamaliel.

« And according to you, who is this great man? » urges Felix addressing Gamaliel.

« The greatest prophet I know, both with regard to His deeds and to His words » replies Gamaliel.

« He is the Messiah, I am telling you, Gamaliel. Believe me, you are wise and just » says Joseph.

« What? You too, the guide of the Judaeans, the Elder, our glory, are falling into this idolatry of a man? Who can prove to you that He is the Christ? I will not believe Him even if I see Him work miracles. Why does He not work one in front of us? You that praise Him, should tell Him, and you, too, that defend Him » says Felix to Gamaliel and Joseph.

« I did not invite Him to amuse my friends and I beg you to remember that He is my guest » replies Joseph gravely.

Felix gets up and goes away, a cross and rude man.

There is silence. Jesus turns to Gamaliel: « Are you not asking for miracles to believe? »

« It will not be the miracles of a man of God to remove the thorn I have in my heart, that is, three questions that are always without an answer. »

« Which questions? »

« Is the Messiah alive? Was it that one? Is it this one? »

« It is He, I tell you, Gamaliel! » exclaims Joseph. « Don't you think that He is holy? Different? Powerful? You do? Well, then? What are you waiting to believe? »

Gamaliel does not reply to Joseph. He turns to Jesus: « Once… do not be upset, Jesus, if I am tenacious of my ideas… Once, when the great wise Hillel was still alive, we both believed that the Messiah was in Israel. There was a great brightness of a divine sunshine on that cold day in a bitter winter! It was Passover… Men were worried about the frozen crops… I said, after I heard those words: "Israel has been saved! As from today there will be abundance in the fields and blessings in our hearts! The Expected One has revealed Himself in His first refulgence". And I was not wrong. You may all remember the harvest of that embolismic year, a year of thirteen months, as it happens also this year. »

« Which words did you hear? Who spoke them? »

« One… a little more than a child… but God was shining on His innocent gentle face… I have been thinking of it and remembering it for the last nineteen years… and I try to hear that voice again… that spoke words of wisdom… In which part of the world does He now live? I ponder… He was God. In the appearance of a little boy

in order not to frighten men. And like lightning that dashing across the sky appears flashing northwards, southwards, eastwards and westwards, He, the Divine Being, in His appearance of merciful beauty, with the face and voice of a child and a divine mind, wanders on the earth to say to men: "I am". So I think… When will He come back to Israel?… When? And I think: when Israel will become the altar for His feet; and my heart moans seeing the abjection of Israel: never. Oh! What a harsh reply! But true! Can the Holiness descend into Its Messiah as long as there is abomination amongst us? »

« It can and does descend, because it is Mercy » replies Jesus.

Gamaliel looks at Him pensively and then asks: « What is Your true Name? »

And Jesus stands up, stately, and says: « I am Who I am. The Thought and the Word of the Father. I am the Messiah of the Lord. »

« You?… I cannot believe it. Great is Your Holiness. But that Child, in Whom I do believe, said then: "I will give a sign… These stones will vibrate when My hour comes". I am awaiting that hour to believe. Can you give it to me, to convince me that You are the Expected One? »

They are now both standing, tall, stately, one in his wide white linen robe, the other in his plain dark red woollen tunic, one elderly, the other young, both with deep dominating eyes, staring at each other.

Jesus then lowers His right arm, which He had folded on His chest, and as if He were swearing, He exclaims: « You want that sign? And you will have it! I repeat the far off words: "The stones of the Temple of the Lord will vibrate hearing My last words". Wait for that sign, doctor of Israel, a just man, and then believe, if you wish to be forgiven and saved. Blessed before time, if you could believe before! But you cannot. Centuries of wrong beliefs, on a just promise, and heaps of pride, are your bulwark against Truth and Faith. »

« You are right. I will wait for that sign. Goodbye. The Lord be with You. »

« Goodbye, Gamaliel. May the Eternal Spirit enlighten you and guide you. »

They all greet Gamaliel who goes away with Nicodemus, John and Simon (the Sanhedrin member). Jesus, Joseph, Lazarus, Thomas, Simon Zealot and Cornelius stay.

« He will not bend!… I would like him to be one of Your disciples. He would be of conclusive weight in Your favour… But I am unable » says Joseph.

« Do not worry. No weight can save Me from the storm which is already approaching. But Gamaliel, if he does not bend in My favour, will not bend against Christ either. He is one who is

waiting… »

It all ends.

115. Cure of the Little Dying Boy. The Soldier Alexander. Intimation to Jesus.

22nd February 1945.

The interior of the Temple. Jesus is with His disciples very close to the real and true Temple, that is, to the Holy Place which only the priests could enter. It is a beautiful large courtyard which one enters through a hall and from which through an even richer court one reaches the high terrace on which is the cube of the Holy.

My effort is quite useless! If I should see the Temple a thousand times and describe it two thousand, I would always be defective in describing this stately labyrinth, both because of the complexity of the place, and of my ignorance of names and my incapacity to draw a chart…

They seem to be praying. Also many other Israelites, all men, are there praying each on his own account. The evening of a dull November day falls early.

I hear people shouting and I perceive the cross stentorean voice of a man cursing also in Latin, mingled to shrill piercing Jewish voices. It is like the bustle of a struggle and the shrill voice of a woman shouts: « Oh! Let him go! He says that He will save him. »

The concentration of the stately courtyard is broken. Many heads turn round towards the spot whence the voices are coming. Also Judas Iscariot, who is with the disciples, turns round. Tall as he is, he sees and says: « A Roman soldier is struggling to come in! He is violating, he has already violated the Holy Place! How horrible! » Many echo his words.

« Let me pass, you Jewish dogs! Jesus is here. I know! I want Him! I don't care about your stupid stones. The boy is dying and He will save him. Get away! Hypocritical hyenas… »

As soon as Jesus realises that He is wanted, He goes towards the hall where the struggle is taking place, He reaches it and shouts: « Peace and respect to the place and to the hour of the offering. »

« Oh! Jesus! Hail! I am Alexander. Make room, you dogs! »

And Jesus says calmly: « Yes, make room. I will take the heathen elsewhere, as he does not know what this place is for us. »

They move aside and Jesus reaches the soldier, whose cuirass is stained with blood. « Are you wounded? Come. We cannot stay here » and He takes him through the other court and beyond it.

« I am not wounded. A little boy… My horse, near the Antonia, got out of hand and knocked him down. Its hooves split his head. Proculus said: "Nothing doing!" It's… it's no fault of mine… but it happened through me and his mother is desperate. I saw You passing

by… and coming here… I said: "Proculus cannot, but He can". I said: "Woman, come. Jesus will cure him". Those mad people kept me back… and perhaps the child is dead. »

« Where is he? » asks Jesus.

« Under the arcade, in his mother's lap » answers the soldier already seen at the Fish Gate.

« Let us go » and Jesus walks away even faster, followed by His disciples and a train of people.

On the steps limiting the arcade, leaning against a column, there is a tormented woman, weeping over her dying child. The little boy is wan, his half open purple lips are breathing heavily as is typical of people whose brains have been injured. A bandage is tied round his head, stained with blood at the back of his neck and at his forehead.

« His head is split at the front and at the back. His brains can be seen. A head is tender at that age and the horse was a huge one and had been shod recently » explains Alexander.

Jesus is close to the woman, who does not even speak any more, agonizing as she is over her dying son. He lays His hand on her head. « Do not cry, woman » He says with all the kindness of which He is capable, that is with infinite kindness. « Have faith. Give Me your child. »

The woman looks at Him stupified. The crowd curse the Romans and pity the dying boy and his mother. Alexander is filled with anger, for the unfair charges, and with compassion and hope.

Jesus sits beside the woman because He sees that she is unable to make any gesture. He bends down. He takes the little wounded head in His long hands, He bends lower, over the waxen little face, breathes over the wheezing little mouth… a few moments. Then He smiles, a smile hardly perceptible through His locks of hair which have fallen forward. He straightens Himself. The child opens his little eyes and makes the gesture of sitting up. His mother fears that it is his last movement and screams pressing him to her heart.

« Let him go, woman. Child, come to Me » says Jesus, still sitting beside the woman and stretching out His hands with a smile. And the boy throws himself confidently into those arms and weeps, not out of sorrow, but because of the fear which is coming back to him with his returning memory.

« There is no horse here, the horse is not here » Jesus assures him. « It is all over. Is it still painful here? »

« No, but I am afraid, I am afraid! »

« See, woman. It is nothing but fear. It will soon be over. Bring Me some water. The blood and bandages are affecting him. John, give Me one of the apples you have… Take, little one. Eat it. It is good… »

They bring water. It is the soldier Alexander who brings it in his helmet.

Jesus makes the gesture of undoing the bandage.

Alexander and the mother say: « No! He is coming round… but his head is split!… » Jesus smiles and unties the bandage. One, two, three, eight turns. He removes the blood-stained cloth. From the middle of his forehead to the back of his neck, on his right-hand side, it is all one clot of blood, still soft, among the child's hair. Jesus wets a bandage and washes…

« But underneath there is the wound… if You remove the clot it will start bleeding again » insists Alexander.

The mother closes her eyes not to see.

Jesus continues to wash. The clot melts… now the child's hair is clean. It is wet, but there is no wound underneath. Also his forehead is healed. There is only a tiny red mark where was the scar.

The crowd shout out of amazement. The woman dares to look and when she sees, she no longer controls herself. She throws herself on Jesus, embracing Him with her child and weeps. Jesus puts up with the effusion and the shower of tears.

« Thank You, Jesus » says Alexander. « I was sorry I had killed this innocent boy. »

« You have been good and trustful. Goodbye, Alexander. Go back to your work. »

Alexander is about to go away, when some officials of the Temple and some priests arrive like so many hurricanes. « The High Priest orders You, through us, to leave the Temple, You and the heathen desecrator. At once. You have upset the offering of the incense. That man has entered a place reserved exclusively to Judaeans. It is not the first time that the Temple has been disturbed because of You. The High Priest together with the Elders on duty, orders You never to put foot in here again. Go away, and stay with Your heathens. »

« We are not dogs either. He said: "There is only one God, creator of the Judaeans and of the Romans". If this is His House and I was created by Him, I ought to be allowed to come in as well » replies Alexander, stung by the scornful tone in which the priests pronounce « heathens ».

« Be quiet, Alexander. I will speak » cuts in Jesus, Who has handed the boy back to his mother after kissing him, and is now standing up. He says to the group who are turning Him out: « No one can forbid a believer, a true Israelite, whom no one can prove guilty of sin, to pray near the Holy. »

« But to explain the Law in the Temple, yes, he can be forbidden. You assumed the right, without having it, and without asking for it. Who are You? Who knows You? How dare You usurp a name

and a position which do not belong to You? »

Jesus looks at them with knowing eyes, He then says: « Judas of Kerioth, come here. »

Judas does not appear to be very enthusiastic about the invitation. He had tried to disappear as soon as the priests and the officials of the Temple arrived (however, they are not wearing military uniforms: it must be a civil office). But he is obliged to obey because Peter and Judas of Alphaeus push him forward.

« Judas, please answer. And you, look at him. You know him. He is of the Temple. Do you know him? »

They are obliged to reply: « Yes, we do. »

« Judas, what did I ask you to do when I spoke here for the first time? And why were you amazed? And what did I say to you in reply to your amazement? Speak and be frank. »

« He said to me: "Call the official on duty that I may ask him for permission to teach". And he gave His name, He explained who He was and mentioned His tribe… and I was astonished as I considered it a useless formality, since He says that He is the Messiah. And He said to me: "It is necessary and when the hour comes, remember that I never lacked in respect to the Temple and its officials". Yes. That is what He said. I must say so to honour the truth. » At the beginning Judas spoke somewhat uncertain, as if he were annoyed. Then, with one of his typical sudden changes, he became certain, almost arrogant.

« I am astonished that you should defend Him. You have betrayed our trust in you » says a priest to Judas reproachfully.

« I have not betrayed anyone. How many of you are of the Baptist! So, are they traitors? I am of Christ. That's all. »

« Well, He must not speak here. He may come as a believer. It is even too much for one who is friendly with heathens, prostitutes and excisemen… »

« Reply to Me, now » says Jesus, severe but calm. « Who are the Elders on duty? »

« Doras and Felix, Judaeans. Joachim of Capernaum and Joseph, Ituraean. »

« I understand. Let us go. Refer to the three accusers, because the Ituraean cannot have accused, that the Temple is not all Israel and Israel is not the whole world, and that the slobber of reptiles, however plentiful and most poisonous, will not drown the Voice of God, neither will its poison paralyse My going amongst men until the hour comes. And after… oh! tell them that after, men will do justice to the executioners and will raise the Victim making It their only love. Go. And let us go. » And Jesus covers Himself with His wide heavy dark mantle and goes out in the middle of His disciples.

Behind them is Alexander who stayed for the discussion. Outside

the enclosure, near the Antonia Tower, he says: « I say goodbye to You, Master. And I ask You to forgive me for being the cause of a reproach for You. »

« Oh! Do not worry! They were looking for a pretext. If it was not you, it would have been someone else… In Rome you have games in the Circus with beasts and snakes, have you not? Well, I tell you that no beast is more wild and deceitful than a man who wants to kill another man. »

« And I tell You that I have travelled through all the regions of Rome, at Caesar's service. But nowhere amongst the thousands of people I have met, did I find anyone more divine than You. No, not even our gods are as divine as You are! They are vindictive, cruel, quarrelsome, liars. You are good. You are really a Man, not man. Hail, Master. »

« Goodbye, Alexander. Proceed in the Light. »

It all ends.

116. Jesus Speaks to Nicodemus, at Night, at Gethsemane.

24th February 1945.

Jesus is in the kitchen of the little house in the olive-grove, having supper with His disciples. They are talking of the events of the day, which, however, is not the special happening just described, because I hear them talking of other events, amongst which is the cure of a leper near the sepulchres, along the Bethphage road.

« There was also a Roman centurion watching » says Bartholomew. And he continues: « He asked me, while on horseback: "Does the man you follow often do such things?" and when I answered in the affirmative, he exclaimed: "Then He is greater than Aesculapius and will become richer than Croesus". I replied: "He will always be poor, according to the world, because He never receives, but gives and only wants souls to take to the true God". The centurion looked at me amazed, then spurred his horse and galloped away. »

« There was also a Roman lady in a litter. It must have been a woman. The curtains were not drawn but she was peeping through them. I saw her » says Thomas.

« Yes, it was near the top bend of the road. She had told them to stop when the leper cried: "Son of David, have mercy on me!" One of the curtains was then drawn and I saw her look at You through a valuable lens, then she laughed ironically. But when she saw that You cured him only by giving a command, she called me and asked me: "Is He the one they call the true Messiah?" I replied "Yes" and she said to me: "Are you with Him?" and then she asked: "Is He really good?" » says John.

« Then you saw her! What was she like? » ask Peter and Judas.

« Well!… A woman… »

« What a great discovery! » says Peter laughing. And the Iscariot insists: « But was she beautiful, young, rich? »

« Yes. I think that she was young and also beautiful. But I was watching Jesus more than I was looking at her. I wanted to see if the Master was setting out again… »

« Fool! » mumbles Judas between his teeth.

« Why? » asks James of Zebedee defending his brother. « My brother was not a dandy in search of affairs. He replied out of courtesy. But he did not lack in his first quality. »

« Which? » asks the Iscariot.

« That of a disciple, whose only love is the Master. »

Judas, very cross, lowers his head.

« In any case… it is not the right thing to be seen talking to the Romans » says Philip. « They are already accusing us of being Galileans, and thus less "pure" than Judaeans. And that because of our birth. Then they accuse us of staying often at Tiberias, a meeting place of Gentiles, Romans, Phoenicians , Syrians… and then… oh! of how many things they accuse us!… »

« You are good, Philip, and you are drawing a veil over the harshness of the truth you are telling. But the truth, without any veil, is this: of how many things they accuse Me » says Jesus Who has been quiet so far.

« After all, they are not completely wrong. Too many contacts with the heathens » says the Iscariot.

« Do you think that only those are heathens who have not Moses' law? » asks Jesus.

« Well, who else? »

« Judas!… Can you swear on our God that you have no heathenism in your heart? And can you swear that the most prominent Israelites have none? »

« Master… I do not know about the others… but I can swear with regard to myself. »

« According to you, what is heathenism? » asks Jesus again.

« It is to follow a false religion, to worship gods » replies Judas violently.

« Which are? »

« The gods of Greece and Rome, the Egyptian ones… that is the gods with thousands of names, and of non-existent people, who according to the pagans, fill their Olympus. »

« No other god exists? Only the Olympic ones? »

« Which other ones? Are they not already too many? »

« Too many, yes. But there are many more and incense is burnt at their altars by every man, also by priests, Scribes, Pharisees, Sadducees, Herodians, all people of Israel, am I right? Not only, but it is burnt also by My disciples. »

« Ah! Certainly not! » they all say.

« No? My friends… Which of you does not have a secret cult, or several secret cults? One has beauty and smartness. Another the pride of his knowledge. Another burns incense to his hope of becoming a great man, from a human point of view. Another worships women. Another money… Another kneels down before his knowledge… and so on. I solemnly tell you that there is no man who is not stained with idolatry. Why then disdain those who are pagans by misfortune, when you remain pagans by your own free will, although you belong to the true God? »

« But we are men, Master » exclaim many of them.

« That is true. Then… be charitable to everybody because I have come for everybody and you are not worth more than I am. »

« However, we are being accused and Your mission is being obstructed. »

« It will be carried on just the same. »

« With regard to women » says Peter, who probably because he is sitting next to Jesus, is in such a transport of delight, that he is very good. « For some days, and precisely since You spoke at Bethany the first time after we came back to Judaea, a woman, all covered with a veil, has been following us all the time. I do not know how she finds out our intentions. I know that she is almost always either in the last rows of people listening to You when You speak, or behind the crowds that follow You when You walk about, or even behind us when we go announcing You in the country. At Bethany, the first time, she whispered to me from behind her veil: "That man you said is going to speak, is He really Jesus of Nazareth?" I replied to her that He was and in the evening she was behind the trunk of a tree listening to You. Then I lost sight of her. But now, here in Jerusalem, I have seen her two or three times. Today I asked her: "Do you need Him? Are you not well? Do you want alms?" She always shook her head, because she never speaks to anyone. »

« One day she said to me: "Where does Jesus live?" and I said to her: "At Gethsemane" » says John.

« You clever fool! You shouldn't. You should have said: "Uncover your face. Make yourself known and I will tell you" » says the Iscariot, bad tempered.

« But when have we ever asked for such things?! » exclaims John, simple-minded and innocent.

« You can see other people. She is always veiled. She is either a spy or a leper. She must not follow us and learn about us. If she is spying, it is to harm us. Perhaps she is paid by the Sanhedrin for that… »

« Ah! Does the Sanhedrin use such methods? » asks Peter. « Are you sure? »

« Most certain. I was of the Temple and I know. »

« Lovely! That fits like a glove what the Master just said » remarks Peter.

« What? » Judas is already flushed with anger.

« That also amongst priests there are heathens. »

« What's that to do with paying a spy? »

« Quite a lot! Too much, indeed! Why do they pay? To overthrow the Master and triumph over Him. So they are placing themselves on the altar with their foul souls under their clean clothes » replies Peter with good common sense.

« Well, the fact is » cuts short Judas « that woman is dangerous to the crowd and to us. To the crowd if she is a leper, to us if she is a spy. »

« That is, to Him, eventually » replies Peter.

« But if He falls, we fall, too… »

« Ah! Ah! » laughs Peter and concludes: « And the idol will break into pieces, if it falls, and we lose our time, our reputation and perhaps our lives, then, Ah! Ah! it is better to try and not let it fall or… move away in time, is that right? I instead… look, I embrace Him closer. If He falls, overthrown by the traitors of God, I want to fall with Him » and Peter clasps Jesus in his short arms.

« I did not realise that I had done so much harm, Master » says John very sadly: he is facing Jesus. « Hit me, ill-treat me, but save Yourself. It would be dreadful if I were the cause of Your death!… I could never forgive myself. I feel that tears would leave burning marks on my cheeks and scald my eyes. What have I done! Judas is right: I am a fool. »

« No, John, you are not, and you did the right thing. Let her come. Always. And respect her veil. It may be worn as a protection in the struggle between sin and the desire for redemption. Do you know what wounds are caused on a being when such struggle takes place? Do you know how much one weeps and blushes? You, John, a dear son with the heart of a good child, you said that your face would be marked by tears if you were to cause harm to Me. But you must know that when a revived conscience begins to gnaw at the flesh, that was sinful, in order to destroy it and triumph with its soul, it must consume everything that was an attraction for the flesh, and the creature ages and withers under the blaze of the devouring fire. Only later, when redemption is complete, a second, holy and more perfect beauty is formed again, because it is the beauty of the soul that emerges from the eyes, from the smile, from the voice and from the honest pride on the forehead on which God's forgiveness has descended and shines like a diadem. »

« So I did not do the wrong thing?… »

« No, you did not. Neither did Peter. Leave her alone. Now you may all go and rest. I will stay with John and Simon, to whom I

wish to speak. Go. »

The disciples withdraw. Perhaps they sleep in the oil-mill. I do not know. They go away, and they certainly do not go back to Jerusalem, where the gates have been closed for hours.

« You said, Simon, that Lazarus sent Isaac and Maximinus to you today, when I was at David's Tower. What did he want? » « He wanted to tell You that Nicodemus is at his house and would like to speak to You secretly. I took the liberty of saying: "Let him come. The Master will wait for him at night". You can be alone only by night. That is why I said to You: "Dismiss them all, except John and me". We need John to go to the Kidron bridge and wait for Nicodemus who is in one of Lazarus' houses, outside the wall. I had to stay to explain the situation. Have I done the wrong thing? »

« No, you have done the right thing. Go, John, to your place. »

Jesus and Simon are by themselves. Jesus is pensive. Simon respects His silence. But Jesus interrupts it suddenly and, as if He were concluding an internal thought in a loud voice, He says: « Yes. That is the best thing to do. Isaac, Elias and the others are sufficient to keep alive the idea which is becoming known amongst good and humble people. For the mighty ones… There are other means. There is Lazarus, Chuza, Joseph, and others… But the mighty ones… do not want Me. They tremble and are afraid for their power. I will go away from these Judaean hearts, who are becoming more and more hostile to the Christ. »

« Are we going back to Galilee? »

« No, but we are going far from Jerusalem. Judaea is to be evangelised. It is part of Israel, too. But here, you see what happens… Everything serves to accuse Me. I am withdrawing. And for the second time… »

« Master, here is Nicodemus » says John going in first.

They greet one another, then Simon takes John and goes out of the kitchen, leaving the two alone.

« Master, forgive me if I wanted to speak to You in secret. I do not trust many people with regard to You and myself. I am not acting entirely out of cowardice. It is also prudence and the desire to be of greater assistance to You, than if I belonged to You openly. You have many enemies. I am one of the few here who admire You. I sought Lazarus' advice. Lazarus is powerful by birth, he is feared because he stands high in the favour of the Romans, he is just in the eyes of God, he is wise by matured talent and learning, he is a true friend of Yours and mine. Those are the reasons why I wanted to speak to him. And I am happy that he came to the same conclusion as I did. I informed him of the last… discussions at the Sanhedrin about You. »

« The last accusations. Tell the plain truth. »

« The last accusations. Yes, Master. I was about to say: "Well, I

am one of His followers, too" so that at least one would be in Your favour in that assembly. But Joseph, who was beside me, whispered: "Be quiet. Do not let us disclose our thoughts. I will explain later". And when we came out he said: "It is better that way. If they know that we are His disciples, they will keep us in the dark about their thoughts and decisions, and will be able to harm Him and us. If, instead, they think that we are only inquiring into His life, they will not resort to subterfuges". I realised that he was right. They are so… wicked! I also have my interests and my duties… and Joseph has his… You understand, Master… »

« I do not reproach you in any way. I was saying that to Simon, before you came here. And I have decided to go away from Jerusalem. »

« You hate us because we do not love You! »

« No. I do not hate even My enemies. »

« You say so. It is true. You are right. How sorrowful for me and Joseph! And Lazarus? What will Lazarus say, who today had decided to let You leave this place and go to one of the houses he owns in Zion. Lazarus is a very wealthy man. A large part of the town belongs to him as well as much land in Palestine. His father, to his own wealth and to Eucheria's, who belonged to Your tribe and family, added the reward of the Romans to their faithful servant, and he bequeathed a very large heritage to his children. And what matters more, a veiled but potent friendship with Rome. Without it, no one would have saved the household from abuse, after Mary's disgraceful behaviour, her divorce, which was granted to her only because of her position, her licentious life in that town which is his domain, and in Tiberias, the elegant brothel which Rome and Athens have turned into a prostitution bed for many of the chosen people. Truly, if the Syrian Theophilus had been a more convinced proselyte, he would not have given his children the Hellenistic upbringing which kills so much virtue and disseminates so much voluptuousness, and which, imbibed and expelled without any consequence by Lazarus and especially by Martha, infected and proliferated in the dissolute Mary and made her the disgrace of her family and of Palestine! No, without the powerful shelter of the favour of Rome, they would have been anathematised more than lepers. But since the situation is such, take advantage of it. »

« No. I am going to withdraw. Who wants Me will come to Me. »

« I should not have spoken! » Nicodemus is depressed.

« No. Wait and be convinced » and Jesus opens a door and calls: « Simon! John! Come here. »

The two disciples rush in.

« Simon, tell Nicodemus what I was saying to you when he arrived. »

« That the shepherds are sufficient for the humble people, Lazarus, Nicodemus and Joseph with Chuza for the mighty ones and that You are going away from Jerusalem without leaving Judaea. That is what You were saying. Why do You ask me to repeat it? What has happened? »

« Nothing. Nicodemus is afraid I might be going away because of what he told Me. »

« I told the Master that the Sanhedrin is more and more hostile, and that He ought to put Himself under Lazarus' protection. He protected your property because Rome is on his side. He would protect also Jesus. »

« It is true. It is good advice. Although my caste is disliked also by Rome, a word of Theophilus saved my property during my proscription and my leprosy. And Lazarus is very friendly to You, Master. »

« I know. But I have decided. And I do what I said. »

« We are going to lose You, then! »

« No, Nicodemus. Men of all sects go to the Baptist. Men of all sects and positions will be able to come to Me. »

« We came to You because we knew that You were greater than John. »

« You may still come. I will be a solitary rabbi like John, and I will speak to the crowds willing to hear the voice of God and capable of believing that I am that Voice. And the others will forget Me. If they are at least capable of that. »

« Master, You are sad and disappointed. And You are right. Everybody listens to You. And they believe in You so much that they obtain miracles. Even one of Herod's men, whose natural goodness must be corrupted by that incestuous court, even Roman soldiers believe in You. Only we in Zion are so hard… But not everybody. You know… Master, we know that You have come from God, that You are His doctor, and there is none greater than You. Also Gamaliel says so. No one can work the miracles that You work unless God is with him. Also learned people like Gamaliel believe that. Why then can we not have the same faith as the humble people of Israel? Oh! Tell me. I will not betray You, even if You should say to me: "I lied to corroborate My se words with a seal that nobody can deride". Are You the Mess Ah of the Lord? The Expected One? The Word of the Father, incarnate to teach and redeem Israel according to the Covenant? »

« Are you asking that by yourself, or have others sent you to ask it?. »

« By myself, Lord. I have a storm and a torment within me. Contrasting winds and voices. Why do I, a mature man, not have the Peaceful certainty that this fellow has, although he is almost illiterate and a boy, the certainty that gives such a smile to his face,

such light to his eyes, such sunshine to his heart? How do you believe, John, to be so certain? Teach me, son, your secret, by means of which you were able to see and understand that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah! »

John becomes as red as a strawberry, he then bends his head, as if he were apologising for saying such a great thing, and replies simply: « By loving. »

« By loving! And what about you, Simon, an upright man, on the threshold of old age, you, a learned man, so tried as to be induced to fear deceit everywhere? »

« By meditating. »

« Loving! Meditating! I also love and meditate and I am not yet certain! »

Jesus cuts in saying: « I will tell you the true secret. They knew how to be born again, with a new spirit, free from all ties, virgin of all ideas. And they therefore understood God. If one is not born again, one cannot see the Kingdom of God nor believe in its King. »

« How can a grown man be born again? Ejected from his mother's womb, man cannot go back into it. Are You referring perhaps to reincarnation, in which many pagans believe? No, it is not possible of You. In any case it would not be going back into a womb, but a reincarnation beyond time. That is, not now. How? »

« There is but one life of the body in the world and only one eternal life of the soul beyond the world. Now I am not speaking of the flesh and blood, but of the immortal spirit, which is born to true life by means of two things: through water and the Spirit. But the greater is the Spirit, without Whom water is but a symbol. He who has been cleansed through water, must then purify himself through the Spirit and through the Spirit he must become inflamed and shine, if he wishes to live in the bosom of God here and in the eternal Kingdom. Because what is born of the flesh, is and will remain flesh, and dies with the flesh after serving it in its carnal lusts and sins. But what is born of the Spirit is spirit and it lives going back to the Spirit of which it was born, after bringing up its own spirit to the perfect age. The Kingdom of Heaven will be inhabited only by those beings which have reached a perfect spiritual age. Do not be surprised, therefore, if I say: "It is necessary for you to be born again". These two knew how to be born again. The younger subdued the flesh and caused his spirit to revive by putting his ego on the stake of love. All matter was burnt. From the ashes there arose his fresh spiritual flower, a wonderful helianthus that turns towards the eternal Sun. The older one laid the axe of honest meditation to the root of his old way of thinking, he uprooted the old plant leaving only the shoot of good will, of which he caused his new thoughts to be born. He now loves God with a new spirit and sees Him. Everybody has his own method of reaching the harbour.

Every wind is good providing one knows how to unfurl the sails - You feel the wind blowing, and according to its direction you can adjust the brails. But you cannot tell where the wind comes from, neither can you call the one you need. Also the Spirit calls and It comes calling and passes by. But only who is alert can follow it. A son knows the voice of his father, the spirit knows the voice of the Spirit of which it was born. »

« How can that happen? »

« You, a teacher in Israel, are asking Me? Do you not know these things? We speak about and witness to what we know and have seen. Now, then, I speak about and witness to what I know. How will you ever be able to believe what you have not seen, if you do not believe the witness I am bearing to you? How can you believe in the Spirit, if you do not believe in the Incarnate Word? I have descended to ascend again and take with Me those who are down here. Only One descended from Heaven: the Son of Man. And only One will ascend to Heaven with the power to open Heaven: I, the Son of Man. Remember Moses. He raised a serpent in the desert to heal the diseases of Israel. When I am raised, those who are now blind, deaf, dumb, mad, lepers, ill because of the fever of sin, will be cured and whoever believes in Me will have eternal life. Also those who believe in Me, will have that blissful life. Do not bend your forehead, Nicodemus. I have come to save, not to lose. God did not send His Only-Begotten Son into the world so that those in the world might be condemned, but that the world might be saved through Him. In the world I have found all the sins, all the heresies, all the idolatries. But can the swallow flying swiftly over dust soil its feathers with it? No. It only takes along the sad roads of the earth a particle of blue sky, and the scent of the sky, it utters a call to rouse men and make them raise their eyes from the mud and follow its flight which returns to the sky. I do likewise. I have come to take you with Me. Come!… Who believes in the Only Begotten Son will not be judged. He is already saved, because the Son speaks in his favour to the Father and says: 'He loved Me.' But it is useless to perform holy deeds, if one does not believe. He has already been judged because he did not believe in the name of the Only-Begotten Son of God. Which is My Name, Nicodemus? »

« Jesus. »

« No. Saviour. I am Salvation. Who does not believe in Me, rejects his salvation and is judged by the eternal Justice. And this is the judgement: "Light was sent to you and to the world, in order to save you, but you and men preferred darkness to light, because you preferred evil actions, which were customary to you, to the good actions that He pointed out to you, that you might follow them and be saints". You hated the Light because evil-doers love darkness for their crimes, and you avoided the Light that It might

not illuminate your hidden wounds. I am not referring to you, Nicodemus. But that is the truth. And the punishment will be proportioned to the judgement, both for individuals and for communities. With regard to those who love Me, and practise the truth I teach, and are therefore born in their spirits a second time, by a more genuine birth, I say that they are not afraid of the light, on the contrary they go towards it, because their own light increases the light by which they were enlightened, a reciprocal glory that makes God happy in His children and the children in the Father. No, the children of the Light are not afraid of being enlightened. Nay, in their hearts and by means of their deeds they say: "Not I, He, the Father, He, the Son, He, the Spirit, have worked the good in me. Glory be to them, for ever". And from Heaven replies the eternal song of the Three Who love one another in their perfect Unity: "Eternal blessing to you, true son of Our will". John, remember those words when the time comes to write them. Nicodemus, are you convinced? »

« Yes, Master, I am. When will I be able to speak to You again? »

« Lazarus will know where to take you. I am going to him before going away from here. »

« I am going, Master. Bless Your servant. »

« My peace be with you. »

Nicodemus goes out with John.

Jesus addresses Simon: « Do you see the work of the power of Darkness? Like a spider, it lays its snares and entangles and imprisons who does not know how to die in order to be born again like a butterfly, so strong as to tear the dark cobweb and go beyond it, carrying on its golden wings pieces of shining network as a souvenir of its victory, like oriflammes and banners taken from the enemy. To die to live. To die to give you strength to die. Come, Simon, and rest. And God be with you. »

It all ends.

117. Jesus at Lazarus' House Before Going to the « Clear Water ».

25th February 1945.

Jesus is climbing the steep path that takes one to the plateau on which Bethany is built. This time He is not going along the main road, He has taken another road which is steeper and faster and runs from northwest to east and is much less beaten, probably because it is so steep. Only wayfarers in a hurry make use of it; those who have herds and prefer to avoid the bustle of the main road; those, who, like Jesus today, do not wish to attract the attention of many people. He is climbing ahead of His disciples, talking animatedly to the Zealot. Behind, in a group, are His cousins

with John and Andrew, then in another group James of Zebedee, Matthew, Thomas and Philip; Bartholomew, Peter and the Iscariot are last.

When they reach the plateau, on which Bethany looks very pleasant in the sunshine of a clear November day, and from which, looking eastwards, the Jordan valley and the Jericho road can be seen, Jesus tells John to go and inform Lazarus of His arrival. While John walks away fast, Jesus proceeds slowly with His disciples, and is greeted everywhere by local people.

The first person to come from Lazarus' house is a woman, who prostrates herself to the ground saying: « Happy is this day for the house of my landlady. Come, Master. Here is Maximinus, and there is Lazarus, at the gate. »

Also Maximinus comes towards them. I do not know exactly who he is. I am under the impression that he is either a relative, not quite so rich, entertained as a guest by Theophilus' children, or a steward of their large estates, treated as a friend because of his merits and his long service in the house. Perhaps he is the son of one of the stewards of the father, and has been given the same position by Theophilus' children. He is a little older than Lazarus, that is, he is about thirty-five years old, perhaps a little more. « We were not expecting to have You so soon » he says.

« I ask hospitality for one night. »

« If it was for ever, You would make us very happy. »

They are at the entrance and Lazarus kisses and embraces Jesus and greets the disciples. Then holding his arm round Jesus' waist, he enters the garden with Him and departs from the others asking at once: « To what do I owe the joy of having You? »

« To the hatred of the members of the Sanhedrin. »

« Have they done You ill? Again? »

« No. But they want to. The time has not yet come. Until I have ploughed the whole of Palestine and sown the seed, I must not be overthrown. »

« You must also reap the harvest, my good Master. It is only fair that it should be so. »

« My friends will reap My harvest. They will use the sickle where I sowed. Lazarus, I have decided to go away from Jerusalem. I know it is of no use. I know beforehand. But it will enable Me to evangelise, if nothing else. In Sion I am denied also that. »

« I sent Nicodemus to tell You to go to one of my houses. No one dares to violate it. You would fulfill Your mission without any trouble. And, oh! my house. It would be the most blessed of all my houses because it would be sanctified by Your teaching, by Your very breathing in it! Give me the joy of being useful to You, my Master. »

« You see that I am already giving you it. But I cannot stay in

Jerusalem. I would not be molested, but those who came to Me would. I am going towards Ephraim, between this place and the Jordan. I will evangelise it and I will baptise as the Baptist did. »

« In that part of the country I have a little house. It is used to store the tools of workers. Sometimes they sleep there when making hay or at vintage time. It is a very poor house. Just a roof on four walls. But it is in my land. And it is known… And such knowledge will frighten jackals. Accept it, Master. I will send servants to prepare it… »

« It is not necessary. If your peasants sleep there, it will be quite sufficient also for us. »

« I will not make it magnificent, but I will add more beds, oh! plain ones, as You wish, and I will make them take blankets, seats, amphoras and cups. You must eat and cover yourselves, particularly during the winter months. Let me see to it. I do not even have to do it myself. Here is Martha coming. She has a practical and diligent talent for all household matters. She was born for the house and to be the comfort of the bodies and souls in the house. Come, my gentle and chaste hotel-keeper! See? I, too, have taken shelter under her motherly care, in her part of the heritage. Thus I do not miss my mother so badly. Martha, Jesus is retiring to the plain of the "Clear Water". There is nothing beautiful there, except the soil which is fertile; the house is a sheepfold. But He wants a poor house. We must furnish it with the bare essentials. Give the orders, please, you are so clever! » and Lazarus kisses the beautiful hand of his sister who then lifts it to caress him with true motherly love.

Then Martha says: « I will go at once. I will take Maximinus and Marcella with me. The men of the wagon will help to sort things out. Bless me, Master, so that I may take with me something of Yours. »

« Yes, My kind hotel-keeper. I will call you as Lazarus did. I give you My heart to take with you, in your own heart. »

« Do You know, Master, that Isaac, Elias and the others are in this part of the country today? They asked me for pastures down in the plain, to be together for a little while, and I agreed. They are moving today. I expect them here for their meal. »

« I am glad. I will give them instructions… »

« Yes, so that we may keep in touch with one another. However, You will come now and again… »

« Yes, I will. I have already spoken to Simon about it. And as it is not fair that I should invade your house with My disciples, I will go to Simon's house… »

« No, Master. Why give me that pain? »

« Do not investigate, Lazarus. I know it is the right thing. »

« But, then… »

« But, then, I will always be in your domains. What even Simon does not know, I do know. He who wanted to purchase, without showing himself and without discussion, to be near Lazarus of Bethany, was the same son of Theophilus, the faithful friend of Simon the Zealot and the great friend of Jesus of Nazareth. It is one whose name is Lazarus, who doubled the amount of money for Jonah and did not deduct it from Simon's substance to give him the joy of being able to do a lot for the poor Master and for the poor of the Master. It is Lazarus of Bethany, who discreetly and diligently organises, guides and helps all the good efforts to assist, comfort and protect Me. I know. »

« Oh! don't say that! I thought I had arranged things so well and secretly! »

« There is secrecy for men. Not for Me. I read into hearts. Shall I tell you why your natural goodness is tinged with supernatural perfection? Because you are asking for a supernatural gift, the salvation of a soul, your own holiness and Martha's. And you feel that it is not enough to be good according to the world, but it is necessary to be good according to the laws of the spirit, to receive grace from God. You did not hear My words. But I said: "When you do a good deed, do it secretly, and the Father will give you a great reward". You did it out of a natural inclination to humility. And I solemnly tell you that the Father is preparing for you a reward that you cannot even imagine. »

« Mary's redemption?!… »

« That, and much, much more. »

« What then, Master, more than that is impossible? »

Jesus looks at him and smiles. He then says in the tone of a psalm:

« The Lord reigns and His saints with Him.

With His beams He interlaces wreaths and lays them on the heads of His saints.

That they may shine for ever in the eyes of God and of the universe.

Of what material is it made? Of which stones is it adorned? Gold, most pure gold is the ring, made with the double fire of the divine love and the love of man, chiselled by the will that hammers, files, cuts and refines.

Pearls in great abundance and emeralds more green than grass in April, turquoises as blue as the sky and opals as translucent as the moon, amethysts like chaste violets, and jaspers and sapphires and hyacinths and topazes. They are set for a whole lifetime. And a ring of rubies as the final touch, a great crown on the glorious forehead.

Because the blessed man will have had faith and hope, he will have had meekness and chastity, moderation and strength, justice

and prudence, infinite mercy and at the end he will have written with his blood My Name and his faith in Me, his love for Me, and his name in Heaven.

Rejoice, just people of the Lord. Man does not know and God sees.

In eternal books He writes My promises and your deeds, and your names with them, princes of the future century, eternally triumphant with the Christ of the Lord. »

Lazarus looks at Him amazed. He then whispers: « Oh!… I… will not be able… »

« Do you think so? » And Jesus picks a flexible willow branch hanging loose over the path and says: « Look: as My hand easily bends this branch, so love will mould your soul and make an eternal crown of it. Love is the individual redeemer. Who loves begins his own redemption. The Son of man will accomplish its fulfilment. »

It all ends.

118. Jesus at the « Clear Water ». Preliminaries for Life in Common with the Disciples.

26th February 1945.

If this little low rustic house is compared to the Bethany house, it is certainly a sheepfold, as Lazarus says. But if it is compared to the houses of Doras' peasants, it is quite a good dwelling.

It is very low and very wide, of solid structure, it has a kitchen, that is, a huge fireplace in a room completely blackened with smoke, in which there is a table, some chairs, amphoras and a rustic rack with plates and cups. A large coarse wooden door gives light to it as well as access. On the same wall as this door, there are three more doors, giving access to three long narrow rooms, with whitewashed walls and a beaten earthen floor, as in the kitchen. In two of the rooms there are some light beds. The rooms look like little dormitories. The large number of hooks fixed in the walls testify that tools and probably agricultural products were hung there. They now serve as clothes-hooks for mantles and haversacks. The third large room (it is a corridor, rather than a room, because its length is out of proportion to its width) is empty. It must have been used also to shelter animals because there is a manger and rings on the wall, and on the floor are the typical holes dug by shod hooves. There is nothing in it at present.

Outside, close to this last room, there is a large rustic porch, consisting of a roof supported by coarse barked tree trunks covered with brushwood and slates. It is not really a porch, but a shed, because it is open on three sides: two are at least ten yards long, the third side, the narrow one, is about five yards long, not more.

In summer a vine stretches its branches from one trunk to another on the southern side. The vine is now bare and shows its skeleton branches; also a huge fig-tree is now bare, but in summer it must shade the large basin in the centre of the threshing floor, which was certainly used to water animals. Beside it there is a rough well, that is, a hole on ground level; it is encompassed by only one row of flat, white stones.

That is the house where Jesus will stay with His disciples in the place called « Clear Water ». It is surrounded by fields, or rather by meadows and vineyards, and about three hundred yards away (please do not take as articles of faith the measurements I give) I can see another house in the middle of fields. It looks nicer because there is a terraced roof, which this house has not got. Olive groves and woods beyond the other house prevent one from seeing any farther.

Peter, his brother and John are working eagerly, sweeping the threshing floor and the rooms, sorting the beds and drawing water. Peter is bustling around the well to sort and reinforce the ropes and make it more practical and easy to draw water. Jesus' cousins instead are working with hammer and files at the locks and shutters, and James of Zebedee helps them sawing and using a hatchet like a shipyard worker.

Thomas is busying himself in the kitchen and seems an experienced cook by the way he controls fire and flames and because of his skill in cleaning the vegetables which handsome Judas condescended to bring from the nearby village. I understand that there is a village, a large or small one, because Judas says that they bake bread twice weekly and consequently there was no bread on that day.

Peter hears him and says: « We will make some cakes. There is flour over there. Quick, take your tunic off and knead it, and then I will cook them. I know how to do it. » I cannot help laughing when I see that the Iscariot stoops to mixing the flour, in his under-tunic, getting thoroughly covered with it.

Jesus is not present. Also Simon, Bartholomew, Matthew and Philip are absent.

« Today is the worse day » replies Peter to the mumbling of Judas of Kerioth. « It will be easier tomorrow. And in spring everything will be just right… »

« In spring? Are we staying here for ever? » asks Judas frightened.

« Why? Is this not a house? It does not rain in it. There is drinking water. And a fireplace. What else do you want? It suits me very well. Also because I do not smell the stench of Pharisees and company… »

« Peter, let us go and haul in the nets » says Andrew and drags his brother away before he and the Iscariot start quarrelling.

« That man does not like me » exclaims Judas.

« No, you can't say that. He is so frank with everybody. But he is good. It's you that is always discontented » replies Thomas, who, on the contrary, is always in high spirits.

« The reason is that I thought it was something different… »

« My Cousin does not prevent you from going to different things » says James of Alphaeus calmly. « I think that we all believed that it was a different thing to follow Him, because we were stupid. It is because we are stubborn and very proud. He never concealed the danger and fatigue in following Him. »

Judas grumbles between his teeth. The other Judas, Thaddeus, who is working at a kitchen shelf, which he wants to convert into a cupboard, replies to him: « You are wrong. Also according to our habit, you are wrong. Every Israelite must work. And we are working. Is work such a burden to you? I don't feel it, because since I have been with Him, all work is light. »

« I do not regret anything either. And I am happy to be just at home now » says James of Zebedee.

« We will do a lot, here!… » remarks Judas of Kerioth ironically.

« In short, what do you want? What do you expect? A satrap's court? I cannot bear you to criticise what my Cousin does. Is that clear? » bursts out Thaddeus.

« Be quiet, brother. Jesus does not approve of these disputes. Let us speak as little as possible and do as much as possible. It will be better for all concerned. On the other hand… if He is not successful in changing our hearts… can you possibly hope to do it by your words? » says James of Alphaeus.

« The heart that does not change is mine, isn't it? » asserts the Iscariot aggressively.

But James does not reply to him. He holds a nail between his lips and at the same time he nails some boards vigorously, making such a loud noise, that Judas' grumbling cannot be heard.

Some time goes by, then Isaac and Andrew come in together, the former carrying eggs and a basket of fresh sweet-smelling loaves, the latter with some fish in a fishing basket.

« Here » says Isaac. « The steward sends these and he wants to know if there is anything we need. That is the instruction that he got. »

« Do you see that we are not starving to death? » says Thomas to the Iscariot. He then says: « Andrew, give me the fish. How lovely it is! But how do you cook it?… I don't know how to do it. »

« I'll see to that » says Andrew. « I'm a fisherman » and in a comer he starts gutting his fish, still alive.

« The Master is coming. He has made a tour of the village and of the country. You will see that people will be coming soon. He already cured a man whose eyes were diseased. I had already been

all over the country and they were informed… »

« Of course! I… I! The shepherds do everything… We have given up a safe quiet life, at least I have, and we have done many things, but apparently we have done nothing… »

Isaac, astonished, looks at the Iscariot but… very wisely does not reply. The others do likewise… but they are boiling with rage.

« Peace to you all. » Jesus is at the entrance, smiling lovingly. The sunshine seems to increase in brightness at His arrival. « How clever of you! You are all at work! Can I help you, cousin? »

« No, have a rest. I have finished. »

« We are laden with foodstuffs. Everybody wanted to give us something. If all men had the kind hearts of the humble people! » says Jesus somewhat sad.

« Oh! My Master. May God bless You! » It is Peter who is coming in carrying a bundle of sticks on his shoulders and who from under his load thus greets Jesus.

« And may the Lord bless you too, Peter. You have been working hard! »

« And we will work even harder in our free time. We have a villa in the country! And we will make an Eden of it. In the meantime I have sorted the well, so that by night we can see where it is, and make sure that we don't lose our pitchers when drawing water. Then… see how clever Your cousins are? They have prepared all the things which are necessary for those who have to live in a place for a long time, and about which I, a fisherman, would not have known anything at all. Really clever. Also Thomas. He could work in Herod's kitchen. Also Judas is clever. He made lovely cakes… »

« But quite useless. There is bread now » replies Judas in a bad temper.

Peter looks at him and I am expecting a sharp reply, but Peter shakes his head, sorts the ashes and lays his cakes on them.

« Everything will soon be ready » says Thomas. And he laughs.

« Are You speaking today? » asks James of Zebedee.

« Yes, between the sixth and the ninth hour. Your companions said so. So let us eat at once. »

After some time John puts the bread on the table, arranges the seats, lays the cups and amphoras, while Thomas brings the boiled vegetables and the roasted fish.

Jesus is in the centre, He offers and blesses, hands the food out and they all eat with relish.

They are still eating when some people appear on the threshing floor. Peter gets up and goes to the door: « What do you want? »

« The Rabbi. He is not speaking here? »

« Yes, He is. But He is eating now because He is a man, too. Sit over there and wait. »

The little group go under the rustic shed.

« But it is getting cold and it will often rain. I think we ought to use that empty stable. I cleaned it thoroughly. The manger will be His seat… »

« Don't talk nonsense! The Rabbi is a rabbi » says Judas.

« What nonsense! If He was born in a stable, He can speak from a manger! »

« Peter is right. But, please, be friendly to one another » Jesus seems tired of repeating these words.

They finish eating and Jesus goes out at once to meet the little crowd.

« Wait, Master » Peter shouts after Him. « Your cousin has made a seat for You because the soil is damp under there. »

« It is not necessary. You know that I speak standing up. The people want to see Me and I want to see them. You should rather make some seats and light beds. Some sick people may come… and they will be needed. »

« You are always thinking of other people, my good Master! » says John, kissing His hand.

Jesus goes towards the little crowd smiling somewhat sadly. All the disciples go with Him.

Peter, who is beside Jesus, makes Him bend down and whispers to Him: « The veiled woman is behind the wall. I have seen her. She has been there since this morning. She has followed us from Bethany. Shall I send her away or leave her? »

« Leave her. I said so. »

« But, if she is a spy, as the Iscariot says? »

« She is not. Rely on what I tell you. Leave her alone and say nothing to the others. And respect her secret. »

« I did not say anything, because I thought it was better… »

« Peace to you, who are looking for the Word » begins Jesus. And He goes to the end of the shed with His back to the house. He speaks slowly to about twenty people sitting on the ground or leaning against the trunks, in the warmth of a faint November sunshine.

« Man falls into error when considering life and death and applying these two nouns. He calls "life" the period of time in which, born of his mother, he begins to breathe, to nourish himself, to move, to think, to act; and he calls "death" the moment when he ceases breathing, eating, moving, thinking, acting and he becomes cold insensitive remains, ready to go back into a bosom: a sepulchre. But it is not so. I want to make you understand "life", and point out to you the actions suitable to life.

Life is not existence. Existence is not life. Also this vine which is interwined around these columns, exists. But it does not possess the life of which I am speaking. Also that bleating sheep, tied to that far off tree, exists. But it does not have the life of which I am

speaking. The life of which I am speaking does not begin with the existence of the body and does not cease with the ending of the flesh. The life to which I refer does not start in a mother's womb. It begins when a soul is created by the Thought of God to dwell in a body, it ends when sin kills it.

Man, at first, is but a seed that grows, a seed of flesh, instead of gluten or of marrow, like the seeds of cereals and of fruit. At first he is but an animal taking shape, the embryo of an animal like the one now swelling in the womb of that sheep. But the moment that this incorporeal part, which is also the most powerful in its subliming incorporeity, is infused into the human conception, then the animal embryo does not only exist as a beating heart, but it lives according to the Creating Thought, and becomes man, created in the image and likeness of God, the son of God, the future citizen of Heaven.

But that happens if life lasts. Man can exist having only the image of man, but no longer being man. That is, he is a sepulchre in which life putrifies. That is why I say: "Life does not begin with existence and does not cease with the ending of the flesh". Life begins before birth. Life, then, never ends, because the soul does not die, that is, it does not fall into nothingness. It dies to its destiny, which is the celestial destiny, but it survives its punishment. It dies to that blissful destiny, by dying to Grace. This life, hit by a canker which is the death of its destiny, lasts throughout centuries in damnation and torture. This life, if preserved as such, reaches the perfection of living, by becoming eternal, perfect, blissful like its Creator.

Have we any obligations to life? Yes, we have. It is a gift of God. Every gift of God is to be used and preserved carefully, because it is as holy as the Donor. Would you ill-use the gift of a king? No. It is handed down to the heirs, and to the heirs of the heirs, as a glory to the family. Why then ill-treat a gift of God? How is this divine gift to be used and preserved? How is this heavenly flower of the soul to be kept alive to preserve it for Heaven? How can you achieve "to live" above and beyond existence?

Israel has clear laws on the matter and has only to comply with them. Israel has prophets and just people who set examples and explain how to observe the laws. Israel has now also its saints. Israel cannot, should not err. I see stained hearts and dead souls swarming everywhere. So, I say to you: do penance; open your souls to the Word; practise the immutable Law; give fresh blood to the worn out "life" which is languishing within you; if it is already dead, come to the true Life: to God. Bewail your sins. Shout: "Mercy!" But rise from the dead. Do not be dead people alive, so that in future you may not suffer eternally. I will speak to you only of the way to reach and preserve life. Another man said

to you: "Do penance. Cleanse yourselves of the impure fire of lust, of the mud of sin". I say to you: My poor friends, let us study the Law together. Let us hear in it, once again, the fatherly voice of the true God. And then let us pray together the Eternal Father saying: "May Your mercy descend into our hearts".

It is now gloomy winter. But spring will come before long. A dead soul is more sad than a forest made bare by frost. But if humility, good will, penance and faith penetrate you, life will come back to you, like a forest in spring, and you will blossom to God, to bear the everlasting fruits of true life in future, in the future of centuries without end.

Come to Life! Cease existing only and begin "to live". Death, then, will not be the "end", but the beginning. The beginning of a never ending day, of a peaceful immeasurable joy. Death will be the triumph of what lived before the flesh, and the triumph of the flesh called to eternal resurrection, to take part in this Life that, in the name of the true God, I promise to all those who "want" that "life " for their souls, crushing under their feet sensuality and passions, to enjoy the freedom of the children of God.

Go. Every day, at this time, I will speak to you of the eternal truth. The Lord be with you. »

The crowd disperse slowly making comments. Jesus goes to the solitary house and it all ends.

119. Jesus at the « Clear Water »: « I Am the Lord Your God. »

27th February 1945.

There are at least twice as many people as yesterday. There are also well-to-do people. Some have come on donkey-back and are taking their meal under the porch, after tying the little donkeys to the poles of the porch, waiting for the Master.

It is a cold but clear day. The people are talking among themselves in low voices, and the most learned explain who the Master is and why He speaks in that place.

One asks: « Is He greater than John? »

« No. It's a different thing. John, of whom I was a disciple, is the Precursor, and is the voice of justice. This one is the Messiah, and is the voice of wisdom and mercy. »

« How do you know? » ask many.

« Three disciples of the Baptist told me. If you only knew what happened! They saw Him when He was born. Just imagine, He was born of light! There was such a bright light that they, who were shepherds, rushed out of the sheepfold, among the animals that had gone mad with terror, and they saw that the whole of Bethlehem was on fire, and then the angels came down from

Heaven and they put the fire out with their wings, and He, the Child, was on the earth, born of light. All the fire became a star… »

« No! It's not so. »

« Yes, it is. One, who was a stableman at Bethlehem when I was a boy, told me. Now that the Messiah is a man, he boasts about it. »

« It is not so. The star came afterwards, it came with the wise men of the east, one of whom was a relative of Solomon, and therefore of the Messiah, because He is of the house of David, and David is Solomon's father, and Solomon loved the queen of Sheba because she was beautiful and because of the gifts that she brought him, and he had a child of her, and he belongs to Judah although he is from beyond the Nile. »

« What are you talking about? Are you crazy? »

« No. Do you mean that it is not true that His relative brought him the perfumes as is the custom among kings and members of that family? »

« I know the true story » says another one. « This is what happened. I know because Isaac is one of the shepherds and is a friend of mine. So, the Child was born in a stable, of the house of David. There was a prophecy… »

« But does He not come from Nazareth? »

« Let me tell you. He was born in Bethlehem because He belongs to David, and it was at the time of the edict. The shepherds saw a light, so beautiful that there has never been a more beautiful one, and the youngest, because he was innocent, was the first to see the angel of the Lord, who spoke as sweetly as the music of a harp saying: "The Saviour is born. Go and worship Him", and then the angels sang: "Glory to God and peace to good men". And the shepherds went and they saw the little baby in a manger between an ox and a donkey, and His Mother and father. And they worshipped Him and then they took Him to the house of a good woman. And the Child grew like all children, beautiful, good and lull of love. Then the wise men came from beyond the Euphrates and the Nile, because they had seen a star and recognised it as the star of Balaam. But the Child was already walking. And king Herod ordered the slaughter because he was afraid for his kingdom. But the angel of the Lord had warned them of the danger and the babies of Bethlehem died, but He did not, because He had escaped beyond Matharaea. Then He came back to Nazareth and worked as a carpenter, and when His time came, after that His cousin, the Baptist announced Him, He started His mission and first looked for His shepherds. He cured Isaac, who had been paralysed for thirty years. And Isaac never tires in preaching Him. That is the truth. »

« But the three disciples of the Baptist did tell me those words! » says the first man, somewhat mortified.

« And they are true. It's the description of the stableman that is not true. He boasts about it? He ought to go and tell the Bethlehemites to be good. The Messiah cannot preach in Bethlehem or in Jerusalem. »

« Of course! Just imagine if the Scribes and Pharisees want to hear His words! They are vipers and hyenas, as the Baptist calls them. »

« I would like to be cured. See? My leg is affected with gangrene. I thought I was going to die coming here on a donkey. I looked for Him in Zion, but He was no longer there… » says one.

« They threatened Him with death… » replies another man.

« The dogs! »

« Yes. Where are you from? »

« From Lydda. »

« A long way! »

« I… I would like to tell Him of a sin of mine… I told the Baptist, but I ran away, he reproached me so violently. I don't think I can be forgiven… » says another man.

« What have you done? »

« A lot of evil. I will tell Him. What do you say? Will He curse me? »

« No. I heard Him speak at Bethsaida. I happened to be there. What words He spoke!!! He was talking of a woman who had committed sin. Ah! I would almost have liked to be her to deserve them!… » says an old stately man.

« Here He comes » many shout.

« Mercy! I am ashamed! » says the guilty man who is about to run away.

« Where are you running, My son? Is there so much darkness in your heart that you hate the Light to the extent of having to flee before it? Have you sinned so much as to be afraid of Me, Who am Forgiveness? What sin can you have committed? Even if you had killed God you should not be afraid, if you were truly repentant. Do not weep! Or come: we will weep together. » Jesus, Who by lifting one hand had ordered the fleeing man to stop, now holds him tight to Himself, and then turns to those who are waiting and says: « Just one moment. That I may comfort this heart. Then I will come to You. »

And He walks beyond the house and going round the comer He knocks against the veiled woman, who was standing there listening. Jesus stares at her for a moment, He walks ten more steps and stops. « What have you done, son? »

The man falls on his knees. He is about fifty years old. His face is ravaged by many passions and a secret torture. He stretches his arms and shouts: « I killed my mother and brother… to have all my father's heritage and enjoy it with women… I have had no more

peace… My food… , blood! My sleep… nightmares… My pleasures… Ah! in the lap of women, in their lustful cries, I felt the cold body of my dead mother and I heard the death-rattle of my poisoned brother. Cursed be pleasure women, they are asps, medusae, unappeasable morays… my ruin! »

« Do not curse. I do not curse you… »

« Are You not cursing me? »

« No. I weep and I take your sin upon Me!… How heavy it is! It breaks My limbs. But I clasp it to consume it for you… and I give you forgiveness. Yes. I forgive you your big sin. » He lays His hands on the head of the sobbing man and prays: « Father, My Blood will be shed also for him. For the time being, here are My tears and My prayer. Father, forgive, because he is repentant. Your Son, to Whose judgement everything is left, wants it!… » He remains thus for a few minutes, He then bends, raises the man and says to him. « Your sin is forgiven. It is for you to expiate what is left of your crime, through a life of penance. »

« God has forgiven me. And my mother? My brother? »

« What Gods forgives, everybody forgives. Go and sin no more. »

The man cries louder and kisses His hand. Jesus leaves him to let him weep. He goes back to the house. The veiled woman makes a gesture as if she wanted to go and meet Him, but she bends her head and does not move. Jesus passes in front of her without looking at her.

He is now in His place. He speaks: « A soul has gone back to the Lord. Blessed be His omnipotence that snatches from the demon's snares the souls He created and takes them back on to the way to Heaven. Why was that soul lost? Because it had lost sight of the Law.

It is said in the Book that the Lord showed Himself on Sinai in all His fearful might, to say by means of it: "I am God. This is My will. And this is the lightning I hold ready for those who will rebel against the will of God". And before speaking He ordered that none of the people should go up to contemplate Him Who is, and that also the priests should be purified before approaching the limit of God, that they might not be struck. Because it was the time of justice and of trials. Heaven was closed, as if by a stone, on the mystery of Heaven and on the wrath of God, and only the swords of justice flashed from Heaven on the guilty children. But not now. Now the Just One has come to consume all justice and the time has come, when without lightning and without limitations, the Word of God speaks to man to give him Grace and Life.

The first word of the Father and Lord is this: "I am the Lord Your God".

There is not one instant of the day in which this word is not uttered by the voice of God and is not written by His finger. Where?

Everywhere. It is repeated continuously by everything. By grass and stars, by water and fire, by wool and food, by light and darkness, by health and illness, by wealth and poverty. Everything says: "I am the Lord. You received that from Me. One thought of Mine gives it to you, another thought takes it away from you, there is no power of armies or of defence that can shield you from My will". It shouts in the voice of the wind, it sings in the murmur of water, it gives off scent in the sweet smell of flowers, it is engraved on mountain tops, and it whispers, speaks, calls, shouts in consciences: "I am the Lord your God".

Never forget that! Do not close your eyes, your ears, do not suffocate your consciences, so that you may not hear that word. In any case it stands and the moment will come when it will be written by the fiery finger of God on the walls of banqueting halls or on the waves of rough seas, on the smiling lips of a child, or on the pallor of a dying old man, on a sweet-smelling rose or on a fetid sepulchre. The moment will come when in the exhilaration of wine and pleasure, in the bustle of business, in the rest at night, during a lonely walk, it will raise its voice and say: "I am the Lord your God" and not the flesh that you kiss so avidly, and not the food that you gobble so greedily, and not the gold that you hoard so stingily, and not the bed in which you idle, and neither taciturnity, nor loneliness, nor sleep can silence it. "I am the Lord your God", the Companion Who will not abandon you, the Guest you cannot drive out. Are you good? Then the guest and companion is a good Friend. Are you wicked and guilty? Then the guest and companion becomes the angry King and gives no peace. But He does not leave you. Separation from God is granted only to damned souls. But the separation is their unappeasable and eternal torture.

"I am the Lord your God" and it adds "Who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery". Oh! He really says that just now! And from what Egypt He is bringing you out, towards the promised land, which is not this place, but Heaven! The eternal Kingdom of the Lord, where there is no hunger or thirst, cold or death, but everything will exude joy and peace and every soul will be replete with peace and joy.

He is now releasing you from real slavery. Here is the Redeemer. It is I. I have come to break your chains. Every human ruler may die, and through his death slaves may be set free. But Satan does not die. He is eternal. He is the ruler who has fettered you in order to drag you wherever he wishes. You are sinners and sin is the chain by means of which Satan holds you. I have come to break the chain. I am coming in the name of the Father and because I wanted to come. The promise which has not been understood is therefore now being fulfilled: "I brought you out of Egypt and of slavery".

This is now being fulfilled spiritually. The Lord your God is

bringing you Out Of the land of the idol who seduced the First parents, He frees you from the slavery of sin, He clothes you once again with Grace and admits you to His Kingdom. I solemnly tell you that those who come to Me will be able to hear the Most High say to the blessed hearts, in a soft fatherly voice: "I am the Lord your God and I am drawing you to Me, free and happy".

Come. Turn your hearts and faces, your prayers and will to the Lord. The hour of Grace has come. »

Jesus has finished. He passes by blessing and He caresses an old woman and a swarthy smiling little girl.

« Cure me, Master. I am suffering so much! » says the man affected with gangrene.

« Your soul first. Do penance… »

« Baptise me as John did. I cannot go to him. I am not well. »

« Come. » Jesus goes down towards the river, which is on the other side of two very large meadows and is hidden by a wood. He takes His sandals off and so does the man who has dragged himself there on crutches. They go down to the river bank and Jesus, cupping His hands, pours the water on the head of the man, who is in the river up to half his shin.

« Take your bandages off, now » Jesus tells him while going back up to the path.

The man obeys. His leg is healed. The crowd shout their astonishment.

« Also I! »

« Also I! »

« Baptise me, too! » shout many.

Jesus, Who is already half way along the path, turns round: « Tomorrow. Go now and be good. Peace be with you. »

It all ends and Jesus goes back to the house, to the dark kitchen although it is early afternoon.

The disciples gather round Him. Peter asks: « What was the matter with the man You took behind the house? »

« He needed to be purified. »

« But he did not come back and he was not there asking to be baptised. »

« He went to where I sent him. »

« Where? »

« To expiate, Peter. »

« In jail? »

« No. To do penance for the rest of his life. »

« Does one not get purified by water? »

« Also tears are water. »

« That is true. Now that You have worked a miracle, I wonder how many people will come!… They were already twice as many today… »

« Yes. If I had to do everything, I would not be able to. You will baptise. At first, one at a time, then two, three, then many. And I will preach and cure the sick people and the guilty ones. »

« Are we to baptise? Oh! I am not worthy! Dispense me, Lord, from that mission! I need to be baptised! » Peter is on his knees imploring.

But Jesus bends down and says: « You will be the very first one to baptise, as from tomorrow. »

« No, Lord! How can I do that if I am blacker than that chimney? »

Jesus smiles at the sincere humility of His apostle on his knees against His own knees, on which he has joined his coarse big fisherman's hands. He then kisses Peter on his forehead, just below his rough grey curly hair: « There you are. I baptise you with a kiss. Are you happy? »

« I would commit another sin to have another kiss! »

« No. You must not mock at God by taking advantage of His gifts. »

« Will You not give a kiss also to me? I have sins, too » says the Iscariot.

Jesus stares at him. His look, which changes so easily, turns from the brightness of joy that made it so clear while speaking to Peter, to a severe, and I would say, tired gloom, and He says: « Yes… also to you. Come. I am not unfair to anybody. Be good, Judas. If you only wanted!… You are young. You have a whole lifetime to climb higher and higher, up to the perfection of holiness… » and He kisses him.

« Now, it is your turn, Simon, My friend. And yours, Matthew, My victory. And Yours, wise Bartholomew. And yours, faithful Philip. And yours, cheerful Thomas. Come, Andrew, silently active. And you, James, of our first meeting. And you now, joy of your Master. And you, Judas, companion of my childhood and youth. And you, James, whose look and heart remind Me of the Just One. You have all had My kiss. But remember that great is My love, but also your good will is required. Tomorrow you will be taking one step forward in your lives as My disciples. And remember that every step forward is an honour and an obligation. »

« Master… one day You said to me, John, James and Andrew, that You would teach us how to pray. I think that if we prayed as You do, we would become worthy of doing the work that You want us to do » says Peter.

« Also then I replied to you: "When you are sufficiently formed, I will teach you the sublime prayer. To leave you 'My' prayer. But even that prayer will be nothing if you say it only with your lips. For the time being, ascend to God with your souls and your will. Prayer is a gift that God grants to man and that man presents to God". »

« What? Are we not yet worthy of praying? The whole of Israel pray… » says the Iscariot.

« Yes, Judas. But from her deeds, you can see how Israel prays. I do not want to make traitors of you. Who prays with an external attitude, and internally is against good, is a traitor. »

« And when are You going to make us work miracles? » Judas asks again.

« We… miracles? Eternal mercy! And yet, we drink nothing but water! Miracles… us? Boy, are you crazy? » Peter is scandalised, frightened and is beside himself.

« He told us, in Judaea. Did You not? »

« Yes, it is true. I did. And you will work them. But as long as there is too much flesh in you, you will not work miracles. »

« We will fast » says the Iscariot.

« It is of no use. By flesh I mean the corrupted passions, the triple craving and the train of vices that follow the treacherous triple craving… Like the children of a filthy bigamous union, the pride of the mind gives birth, through the greed for flesh and power, to all the evil that is in man and in the world. »

« For You we have left everything » replies Judas.

« But not yourselves. »

« Must we die then? We would do it to be with You. At least I would… »

« No. I am not asking for your material death. I want animality and Satanism to die in you, and they do not die as long as the flesh is satisfied and falsehood, pride, anger, arrogance, gluttony, avarice, sloth are in you. »

« We are such faulty men near You, Who are so holy! » whispers Bartholomew.

« And He has always been so holy. We know » states His cousin James.

« He knows what we are… Therefore we must not lose heart. We must just say: give us day by day strength to serve You. If we said: "We are without sin" we would be deceived and we would be deceivers. Of whom? Of ourselves who know what we are, even if we do not want to tell? Of God, Who cannot be deceived? But if we say: "We are weak and sinners. Help us with Your strength and forgiveness" God will not disappoint us and in His goodness and justice He will forgive us and cleanse us of the iniquity of our poor hearts. »

« May you be blessed, John. Because the Truth speaks through your lips which are scented with innocence and only kiss the adorable Love » says Jesus standing up, and He draws to His heart His best-loved disciple, who had spoken from his dark corner.

120. Jesus at the « Clear Water »: « You Shall Have No Gods in My Presence. »

28th February 1945.

« It is said: "You shall have no gods in My presence. You shall not make yourself a carved image or any likeness of anything in heaven or on the earth beneath or in the waters under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or serve them. For I, the Lord your God, am a strong and jealous God and I punish the father's faults in the sons, the grandsons, and the great-grandsons of those who hate Me, but I show kindness down to the thousandth generation of those who love Me and keep My commandments". » Jesus' voice resounds in the large room crowded with people; it is in fact raining and they have all taken shelter in it. In the first row there are four invalids, that is, a blind man led by a woman, a child covered with sores, a woman yellow with jaundice or malaria, and a man who has been carried there on a stretcher.

Jesus is speaking leaning against the empty manger. John and the two cousins, Matthew and Philip are near Him, while Judas, Peter, Bartholomew, James and Andrew are at the entrance door letting in those who arrive late. Thomas and Simon are moving amongst the people telling children to be quiet, collecting alms and listening to requests.

« "You shall have no gods in My presence".

You have heard how God is omnipresent with His eyes and His voice. Truly, we are always in His presence. Whether we are locked in a room or are amongst the crowds in the Temple, we are in His presence. If we are concealed benefactors hiding our faces also from the people we help, or murderers who attack and kill wayfarers in a lonely gorge, we are always in His presence. A king in the middle of his court, a soldier on the battlefield, a Levite inside the Temple, a wise man bent over his books, a peasant in the furrows, a merchant at his desk, a mother watching over a cradle, a bride in her nuptial room, a virgin in the secrecy of her father's dwelling, a child studying at school, an old man lying down to die, they are all in His presence. They are all in His presence and also the actions of men are in His presence.

All the actions of men! A dreadful word! And a comforting one! Dreadful if the actions are sinful, comforting if they are holy. To know that God sees us, prevents us from doing evil and encourages us to do good. God sees that I am doing the right thing. I know that He does not forget what He sees. I believe that He rewards good deeds. I am therefore certain that I shall be rewarded and I rest on that certainty. It will give me a happy life and a placid death, because both in life and in death my soul will be comforted by the

bright light of God's friendship. That is the reasoning of a person who does good. But why do evil-doers not consider that idolatry is one of the forbidden things? Why do they not say: "God sees that whilst I simulate a holy cult, I worship a false god or false gods, to whom I have erected an altar unknown to men but known to God"?

Which gods, you may object, if even in the Temple there is no image of God? Which are the faces of these gods, if it was impossible for us to give a face to the true God? Yes, it is impossible to elaborate a face, because the Perfect and Most Pure One cannot be worthily represented by man. Only the spirit can catch a glimpse of the incorporeal and sublime beauty and can hear His voice and appreciate the caresses which He bestows upon a holy person worthy of such divine contact. But the sight, the hearing, the hand of man cannot see or hear, and therefore they cannot repeat with sound on a lyre, with a mallet and a chisel on marble, what the Lord is. Oh! endless happiness when you, souls of just people, will see God! The first glance will be the dawn of the blessedness which will be your companion for centuries without end. And yet what we cannot do for the true God, man does for false gods. And one erects an altar to woman; another to gold; another to power; another to science; another to military triumphs; one worships a mighty man, equal to himself by nature, but greater in arrogance or luck; another worships himself and says: "There is no one like me". Such are the gods of those who are the people of God.

Do not be astonished at the heathens who worship animals, reptiles and stars. How many reptiles, how many animals, how many dead stars you worship in your hearts! Lips utter lies to flatter, to possess, to corrupt. Are those not the prayers of secret idolaters? Hearts brood over thoughts of vengeance, of illicit trades, of prostitution. Are those not the cults devoted to the impure gods of lust, greed, wickedness?

It is said: "You shall adore nothing but your true, one, eternal God". It is said: "I am a strong jealous God".

Strong: no other strength is greater than His. Man is free to act, Satan is free to tempt. But when God says: "Enough" man can no longer do wrong, Satan can no longer tempt. The latter is driven back to his hell, the former is checked in his misuse of evil doing, to which there is a limit, beyond which God does not allow anyone to go.

Jealous. Of what? Of which jealousy? Of the petty jealousy of petty men? No. The holy jealousy of God for His children. The just, loving jealousy. He created you. He loves you. He wants you. He knows what is harmful to you. He is aware of what is capable of separating you from Him. And He is jealous of what interposes between the Father and His children and diverts them from the only

love which is health and peace: God. Understand that jealousy which is not mean, is not cruel, is not restrictive of freedom. It is infinite love, infinite goodness, unlimited freedom, which gives Itself to the limited creature, to draw it to Itself and in Itself for ever, and associate it to Its infinity. A good father does not want to enjoy his wealth by himself. But he wants his children to enjoy it with him. After all he accumulated his riches more for his children than for himself. God acts likewise but He conveys to His love and desire the perfection which is in all His actions.

Do not disappoint the Lord. He promises the guilty fathers and the children of the guilty children punishment. And God always keeps His promises. But do not be disheartened, o children of man and of God. Listen to the other promise and rejoice: "I show kindness down to the thousandth generation of those who love Me and keep My commandments". Down to the thousandth generation of good people. And to the thousandth fault of the poor children of man, who fall not out of wickedness but because of their thoughtlessness and Satan's snares. And His kindness is even greater. I tell you that He stretches His arms out towards you, if with penitent hearts and faces washed by tears you say: "Father, I have sinned. I know. I humble myself and I confess my sin to You. Forgive me. Your forgiveness will be my strength to start 'living again' the true life".

Do not be afraid. Before you committed sins out of weakness, He knew that you would sin. His Heart is closed only if you persist in your sin and want to sin, thus making of a certain sin or of many sins your gods of horror. Demolish every idol, make room for the True God. He will descend in His glory to consecrate your hearts, when He sees that He is the only one in you.

Give God's dwelling back to Him. His abode is not in the temples built with stones, but in the hearts of men. Wash its threshold, clear its interior from all useless or sinful decorations. Only God. He only. He is everything! In no way is inferior to Paradise the heart of a man in which God dwells, the heart of a man who sings his love to the divine Guest.

Of every heart make a Heaven. Start your cohabitation with the Most High. In your eternal future it will improve in power and joy. But even here it will exceed the trembling amazement of Abraham, Jacob and Moses. Because it will no longer be the dazzling, frightening meeting with the Mighty One, but the permanent life with Father and Friend Who descends to say: "It is a joy for Me to be amongst men. You make Me happy. Thank you, son". »

The crowd, over a hundred people, break the spell after some time. Some become aware that they are weeping, some that they are smiling at the same hope of joy. At last the crowd seem to awake, they seem to whisper, to sigh vigorously, and finally utter

a cry as of liberation: « May You be blessed! You are opening for us the way of peace! »

Jesus smiling replies: « Peace is with you, if from now on you follow good. »

He then goes towards the invalids. He touches with His hand the child, the blind man, the woman who is completely yellow, He bends over the paralytic and says: « I want it. »

The man looks at Him and then shouts: « There is warmth in my dead limbs! » and he stands up, as he is, until they pull a blanket from his little bed over him, and the mother lifts her child, who is no longer covered with sores, and the blind man winks at the first contact with light, and women shout: « Dina is no longer as yellow as buttercups. »

The place is in utter confusion. Some people shout, some bless, some push to see, some try to go out and tell the village. Jesus is assailed from all directions.

Peter sees that they are almost crushing Him and he shouts: « Boys! They are suffocating the Master! Come and let us make room » and with great efforts the twelve disciples elbow their way through the crowd, kicking also a few shins, and they free the Master and take Him out. « I will see to this tomorrow » he says. « You will stay at the door and the others at the other end of the room. Have they hurt You? »

« No. »

« They seemed to have gone mad. What manners! »

« Leave them. They were happy… and so was I. Go to those who want to be baptised. I am going to the house. Judas, you and Simon will give alms to the poor. Give them everything. We have much more than is fair for the apostles of the Lord. Peter, go. Do not be afraid of doing too much. I will justify you with the Father, because I am ordering you to do it. Goodbye, friends. »

And Jesus, tired and wet with perspiration, goes into the house, while each of the disciples does his duty among the pilgrims.

121. Jesus at the « Clear Water »: « You Shall Not Take My Name in Vain. »

1st March 1945.

All the disciples are in utter confusion. They are so restless that they look like a beehive which has been upset. They speak and cast sidelong glances outside in all directions… Jesus is not there. At last they make up their minds about what is worrying them and Peter says to John: « Go and look for the Master. He is in the wood near the river. Tell Him to come at once or to let us know what we are to do. » John runs away.

The Iscariot says: « I don't understand the reason for so much excitement

and unkindness. I would have gone and welcomed him with full honours… His visit is an honour for us. So… »

« I don't know. He may be different from his foster brother.. But… who lives with hyenas catches their smell and instinct. In any case, you would like to send that woman away… But mind what you do! The Master does not want, and I have to protect her. If you touch her… I am not the Master… Just for your information. »

« Oh! Who is she after all?! Perhaps the beautiful Herodias? »

« Don't be facetious. »

« Don't blame me. You have kept a royal watch over her, like a queen… »

« The Master said to me: "Make sure she is not disturbed and respect her". And that is what I am doing. »

« But who is she? Do you know? » asks Thomas.

« I don't. »

« Come on, tell us… You know… » insist many of them.

« I swear that I know nothing. The Master certainly knows. But I don't. »

« We must get John to ask Him. He tells him everything. »

« Why? What is special about John? Is your brother a god? »

« No, Judas. He is the best of us all. »

« You can save yourselves the trouble » says James of Alphaeus. « My brother saw her yesterday, when he was coming back from the river with the fish Andrew had given him, and he asked Jesus. And He replied: "She has no face. She is a soul seeking God. She is nothing else for Me and I want her to be so for every body ". And He said "I want" in such a way, that I would advise you not to insist. »

« I will go to her » says Judas Iscariot.

« Just try, if you camp » says Peter, flushing like a cockerel.

« Are you going to play the spy and inform Jesus? »

« I leave that profession to those of the Temple. We, people of the lake, earn our bread working, not informing. Never be afraid of an accusation from Simon of Jonas. But don't provoke me and don't take the liberty of disobeying the Master, because I am here… »

« And who are you? A poor man like me. »

« Yes. Nay I am poorer, rougher, and more ignorant than you are. I know, but it does not worry me. I would worry if I were like you as far as my heart is concerned. But the Master gave me that task and I am fulfilling it. »

« Like me with regard to your heart? What is there in my heart that is so disgusting? Speak, accuse me, offend me… »

« For heaven's sake, stop it » burst out the Zealot and Bartholomew. « Stop it, Judas. Respect Peter's grey hair. »

« I respect everybody, but I want to know what there is in me… »

« I will serve you at once… Let me speak… There is pride, enough

to fill this kitchen, there is falsehood and lust. »

« Me false? »

They all cut in and Judas is compelled to be quiet.

Simon says quietly to Peter: « Excuse me, my friend, if I say something to you. He has his faults, but you have some, too. And one is that you do not bear with young people. Why don't you take into account their age, their birth… many things? See, you are acting for Jesus' sake. But don't you realise that such arguments are tiring Him? I am not asking him (and he points at Judas) but I am begging you, a mature and honest man. He has so much trouble because of His enemies. Why should we increase His afflictions? There is so much hostility around Him. Why should we give rise to it also in His own nest? »

« It is true. Jesus is very sad and He has also lost weight » says Judas Thaddeus. « At night I can hear Him tossing and turning in His bed, and sighing. Some nights ago I got up and I saw Him crying while praying. I asked Him: "What is the matter?" And He embraced me and said: "Be friendly to Me. How toilsome it is to be the 'Redeemer'!" »

« I also met Him in the wood near the river after He had evidently wept » says Philip. « And at my inquisitive glance He replied: "Do you know what makes Heaven different from the earth, apart from the difference of the lack of God's visible presence? It is the lack of love amongst men. It chokes Me like a halter. I have come here to scatter seeds for the little birds and be loved by creatures that love one another". »

Judas Iscariot (he must be somewhat deranged) throws himself on the ground and cries like a boy.

At that moment Jesus comes in with John: « What is the matter? Why cry?… »

« It's my fault, Master. I made a mistake. I reproached Judas too harshly » says Peter frankly.

« No I… I am to be blamed. I am causing You trouble I am not good I disturb, I make people cross, I disobey, I am Peter is right. But help me to be good! Because I have something here, in my heart, that makes me do things that I would not like to do. It is stronger than I am… and I cause trouble to You, Master, to Whom I would like to give only joy… Believe me! It is true… »

« Of course, Judas. I have no doubt. You have come to Me with a sincere heart, with true enthusiasm. But you are young… Nobody knows you, you do not know yourself as well as I do. Get up and come here. Later we will speak all by ourselves. In the meantime let us speak of the matter for which you all sent for Me. What harm is there if also Manaen has come? Can a relative of Herod not thirst for the true God? Are you afraid for Me? No, do not be afraid. Have faith in My word. That man has come for an honest purpose. »

« Why did he not make himself known then? » ask the disciples.

« Exactly because he comes as a 'soul' and not as Herod's fosterbrother. He has kept silence because he thinks that the relationship with a king is nothing before the word of God… We shall respect his silence. »

« But if, instead, he has been sent by him?… »

« By whom? By Herod? No. Do not be afraid. »

« Who sends him then? How does he know about You? »

« Through my cousin John. Do you think that when in jail he did not speak of Me? Through Chuza… through the voice of the crowds… through the very hatred of the Pharisees… Also the leaves of trees and the air speak of Me, now. A stone has been thrown into the still water and a stick has struck the bronze. The waves are spreading out wider and wider conveying the revelation to far away waters and the sound entrusts it to space… The earth has learned to say: "Jesus" and will never stop mentioning it. Go and be kind to him as you are to anybody else. Go. I am staying here with Judas. »

The disciples go out.

Jesus looks at Judas who is still weeping and asks him: « Well? Have you nothing to tell Me? I know everything about you. But I want to hear it from you. Why are you weeping? And above all, why this derangement whereby you are always so dissatisfied? »

« Yes, Master! You have said it. I am jealous by nature. You certainly know. And I suffer seeing… seeing so many things. It makes me restless and… unfair. And I become bad whereas I would not like to… »

« Do not start weeping again! Of what are you jealous? Get accustomed to speaking with your true soul. You speak a lot, even too much. But how? With your instinct and your mind. You follow a difficult and twisted route to say what you want to say: I am talking of you, of your ego, because with regard to what you have to say of other people or to other people, you show no restraint or limitation. Neither do you show restraint or limitation to your flesh. It is your mad horse. You are like a charioteer to whom the race manager has given two mad horses. One is your sensuality, the other… shall I tell you what the other one is? Shall I? It is the error that you do not want to tame. You are a capable but reckless charioteer, you rely on your capability and you think it is enough. You want to be first… you do not want to waste time in changing at least one horse. On the contrary you spur them and flog them. You want to be "the winner". You are anxious to be applauded… Do you not realise that victory is certain when it is conquered by constant, patient and prudent work? Speak to your soul. I want your confession to originate from there. Or have I to tell you what there is within you? »

« I find that You are not fair or constant either, and I suffer because of that. »

« Why do you accuse Me? In what have I failed in your eyes? »

« When I wanted to take You to my friends, You refused saying: "I prefer to be with humble people". Then Simon and Lazarus told You that it was better to seek the protection of some mighty person and You agreed. You are partial to Peter, Simon, John… You… »

« What else? »

« Nothing else, Jesus. »

« Nonsense!… Bubbles on the foam of the waves. I feel sorry for you, because you are a poor wretch torturing yourself, whilst you could be rejoicing. Can you say that this place is luxurious? Can you deny that there was an urgent reason that compelled Me to accept it? If Zion were not such a harsh stepmother to its prophets, would I be here, hiding like one who is afraid of human justice and takes shelter in a sanctuary? »

« No. »

« Well, then? Can you say that I did not entrust you with missions as I did with the others? Can you say that I have been severe with you when you were wrong? You have not been sincere… The vineyards!… Oh! Your vineyards! What were the names of those vineyards? You were not sympathetic to those who were suffering or were redeeming themselves. You were not even respectful to Me. And the others noticed it… And yet only one voice always defended you: Mine. The others would be entitled to be jealous, because if there was one who was protected, that one was you. »

Judas weeps downhearted and moved.

« I am going. This is the hour when I belong to everybody. You stay here and meditate. » I

« Forgive me, Master. I will have no peace until You have forgiven me. Don't be sad because of me. I am a bad boy… I love and I torture… With my mother… and with You. And I would do the same with my wife if I should get married… It would be better if I died!… »

« It would be better if you mended your ways. But you are forgiven. Goodbye. » Jesus goes out and closes the door.

Peter is outside: « Come, Master. It is already late. And there is a -lot of people. It will soon be dark. And you have not had any food… That boy is the cause of everything. »

« That "boy" needs you all so that he will no longer be the cause of all these things. Try and remember that, Peter. If he were your son, would you pity him?… »

« H'm! I might and I might not. I would pity him… but… although he is a grown up man, I would teach him something, as if he were a naughty boy. If he were my son, he would not be like that… »

« That is enough. »

« Yes, it's enough, my Lord. There is Manaen. The one whose mantle is so dark red that it seems black. He gave me this for the poor and he asked me if he can stay and sleep here. »

« What did you tell him?. »

« The truth: "We have only beds for ourselves. Go to the village". »

Jesus does not say anything. But he leaves Peter in the lurch and goes towards John, to whom He says something.

He then goes to His place and starts speaking.

« Peace be to you all and may light and holiness come to you with peace. It is said: "You shall not take My Name in vain".

When does one take it in vain? Only when one curses it? No. Also when one utters it without making oneself worthy of God. Can a son say: "I love and honour my father" if he does the very opposite to what his father wants from him? One does not love his father by saying: "father, father". One does not love God, by saying: "God, God".

In Israel where, as I explained to you the day before yesterday, there are so many idols in the secrecy of hearts, there is also a hypocritical praise to God, to which the deeds of the praisers do not correspond. There is also a trend in Israel: they find so many sins in exterior things and do not want to find them where they really are, in interior things. In Israel there is also a silly pride, an anti-human and anti-spiritual habit: the Name of our God uttered by pagan lips is considered swearing and the Gentiles are forbidden to go near the true God, because that is considered a sacrilege.

That was the situation so far. But it is no longer so…

The God of Israel is the same God Who created all men. Why prevent creatures from feeling the attraction of their Creator? Do you think that heathens do not feel something in the bottom of their hearts, something unsatisfied, that shouts, stirs, seeks? Whom? What? The unknown God. And do you think that if a pagan moves towards the altar of the unknown God, to the incorporeal altar which is the soul in which there is always the remembrance of its Creator, the soul which expects to be possessed by the glory of God, like the Tabernacle erected by Moses according to the order given to him, the soul that weeps until such possession does not take place, do you think that God will reject the pagan's offer as one rejects a profanation? And do you consider a sin the action caused by the honest desire of a soul that aroused by celestial summons says: "I am coming" to God Who says to it: "Come", whilst you consider holiness the corrupted cult of an Israelite who offers to the Temple what is left over from his pleasures, and goes into the presence of God and mentions the name of the Most Pure One, with body and soul polluted by countless foul sins?

No. I solemnly tell you that the perfect sacrilege is committed by the Israelite who with his impure soul takes the Name of the Lord in vain. His Name is taken in vain, when you are aware, and you are not fools, that you pronounce it in vain because of the state of your souls. Oh! I see the indignant face of God which disgusted turns elsewhere when a hypocrite calls Him or an unrepentant soul mentions Him! And I am terrified although I do not deserve the divine wrath.

I read in many of your hearts this thought: "Well, with the exception of children, no one can mention God's name, because in all men there is impurity and sin". No. Do not say that. That Name is to be invoked by sinners. It is to be invoked by those who feel they are choked by Satan and want to free themselves from sin and from the Seducer.

It is said in Genesis that the Serpent tempted Eve when the Lord was not walking in Eden. If God had been in Eden, Satan could not have been there. If Eve had invoked God, Satan would have fled. Always have that thought in your hearts. And call the Lord with sincerity. That Name is salvation. Many of you wish to descend into the river to be purified. Purify your hearts, unceasingly, writing upon them, by means of love, the word: God. No false prayers. No habitual practices. But say that Name: God, with your hearts, your thoughts, your deeds, with your whole selves. Repeat it that you may not be alone. Repeat it to be supported. Repeat it to be forgiven.

Understand the meaning of the word of the God of Sinai: the name of God is taken "in vain" when saying "God" does not imply a change for the better. Then it is a sin. It is not taken "in vain", when, like the beating of your hearts, every minute of your day, every honest deed, need, temptation, sorrow bring to your lips the filial word of love: "Come, my God!" Then, truly, you do not sin mentioning the holy Name of God.

Go. Peace be with you. »

There are no sick people. Jesus remains under the shed, where the shades of evening are falling, leaning against the wall, with folded arms. He is watching those who are going away riding their little donkeys, or are hurrying towards the river to be purified or are going to their villages across the fields.

The man wearing the very dark red mantle seems uncertain as to what to do. Jesus is watching him. The man eventually moves and goes towards his horse; he has, in fact, a beautiful white horse adorned with a red caparison dangling under the studded saddle.

« Man, wait for Me » says Jesus and He goes towards him. « It is getting dark. Have you a place where to sleep? Have you come from far? Are you alone? »

The man replies: « From very far… and I will go… I don't know…

To the village, if I find… if not… to Jericho. I left my escort there, as I did not trust them. »

« No. I offer you My bed. It is already made. Have you any food?, »

« No, I have none. I was expecting to find a more hospitable place… »

« It lacks nothing. »

« Nothing. Not even hatred for Herod. Do You know who I am? »

« There is only one name for those who look for Me: brothers in the Name of God. Come. We will share our bread. You can put Your horse in that large room. I will sleep there and I will watch it for You… »

« No. I will never allow that. I will sleep there. I accept Your bread but nothing more. I will not put my unclean body where You rest Your holy one. »

« Do you think that I am holy? »

« I know You are holy. John, Chuza… Your deeds… Your words… The royal palace is resounding with them like a shell murmuring the noise of the sea. I used to go to John… then I lost him. But he had said to me: "One Who is greater than I am will take you and raise you". It could be but You. I came when I found out where You were. »

They are by themselves under the shed. The disciples are speaking in low voices near the kitchen and are casting sidelong glances at them.

The Zealot, who was the baptizer today, comes back from the river with the people who have been baptised last. Jesus blesses them and then says to Simon: « This man is the pilgrim who is seeking shelter in the name of God. And in the name of God we greet him as a friend. »

Simon bows and the man does likewise. They go into the large room and Manaen ties his horse to the manger. John, beckoned by Jesus, rushes in with some grass and a pail of water. Also Peter comes in with a small oil lamp, because it is already dark.

« This will do very nicely. May God reward you » says the gentleman and then between Jesus and Simon he enters the kitchen where a bundle of brushwood, which has just been lit, gives light.

It all ends.

122. Jesus at the « Clear Water »: « Honour Your Father and Your Mother. »

3rd March 1945.

Jesus is walking slowly up and down the bank of the river. It is very early in the morning, because the fog of a dreary winter day is still lying amongst the reeds along the river banks. There is

nobody, as far as the eye can see, on either bank of the Jordan. There is only the low mist, the babbling of water against the reeds, the murmuring of the river, the water of which is rather muddy because of the rain of the previous days, the short, sad calls of a few birds, as they are wont when the love-season is over and birds pine away because of the season and of scarsity of food.

Jesus listens to them and He seems to be very interested in the call of a little bird, which with clock precision turns its little head northwards and chirps plaintively, then it turns its head southwards and repeats its inquiring chirp without any reply. At last the little bird seems to have received a reply from the other bank and it flies away, across the river, with a little cry of joy. Jesus makes a gesture as if to say: « Good! » and resumes walking.

« Am I disturbing You, Master? » asks John, who has come from the meadows.

« No. What do you want? »

« I wanted to tell You… I think it is a bit of information which may give You relief and I have come at once, also to seek Your advice. I was sweeping our large rooms when Judas Iscariot came in. He said to me: "I will help you". I was amazed because he is never anxious to do such humble things even when he is told… but all I said was: "Oh! Thank you! I will be quicker and we will do a better job". He began to sweep and we finished very quickly. He then said: "Let us go into the wood. It is always the older ones who bring in the wood. It is not fair. Let us go. I am not very good at it. But if you teach me… " And we went. And while I was there tying the faggots, he said to me: "John, I want to tell you something". "Yes, do" I said. And I thought it might be a bit of criticism. Instead he said: "You and I are the youngest. We ought to be more united. You are almost afraid of me, and you are quite right, because I am not good. But believe me… I do not do it deliberately. Sometimes I feel the need of being bad. Perhaps, as I was the only son, I have been spoiled. And I would like to become good. The older ones, I know, are not very fond of me. Jesus' cousins are annoyed because… well, I have not behaved well with them and also with their cousin. But you are good and patient. Be good to me. Imagine that I am your brother, a bad brother, whom you must love, even if he is bad. Also the Master says that we must behave like that. When you see that I am not doing exactly the right thing, tell me. And then don't leave me always alone. When I go to the village, come with me. You will help me not to do wrong. Yesterday I suffered very much. Jesus spoke to me and I looked at Him. In my silly grudge I did not look at myself or at others. Yesterday I looked and I saw… They are quite right in saying that Jesus is suffering… and I feel that it is also my fault. I no longer want to be the cause of His pain. Come with me. Will you come? Will you help me

to become better?" That is what he said, and, I confess it, my heart was beating like the little heart of a sparrow caught by a boy. It was throbbing out of joy because I will be happy if he becomes good, and I am happy also for Your sake, and my heart was beating also out of fear, because… I would not like to become like Judas. Then I remembered what You told me the day You accepted Judas, and I replied: "Yes, I will help you. But I must obey if I receive different orders… " I thought, I will now tell the Master, and if He agrees, I will go with him, if He does not agree, I will ask Him to order me not to leave the house. »

« Listen, John. I will let you go. But you must promise Me that if you feel that anything is upsetting you, you will come and tell Me. You have given Me a great joy, John. Here is Peter with his fish. Go, John. »

Jesus addresses Peter: « A good catch? »

« H'm. Not really. Very small fish… But everything helps. James is grumbling because an animal gnawed at the rope and he lost his net. I said to him: "Was it not entitled to eat, too? You should feel pity for the poor animal". But James does not see it that way… » says Peter laughing.

« Exactly what I say of one who is a brother of yours. And what you are not capable of doing. »

« Are You talking of Judas? »

« Yes, I am. And he suffers for it. His intentions are good but his tendencies are perverse. But tell Me something, My experienced fisherman. If I wanted to go on a boat on the Jordan and reach the lake of Gennesaret, what should I do? Would I succeed? »

« Eh! It would be hard work! But you would succeed with small flat boats… A laborious task, You know. And a long one! It would be necessary to measure the depth continuously, to watch the banks, the shoals, the little floating woods, the current. A sail is of no use in such cases, on the contrary… But do You want to go back to the lake following the river? Don't forget that it is hard work to go against the stream. You need many people, otherwise… »

« You are quite right. When a man is vicious, he must go against the stream to go back to the straight and narrow path and he cannot succeed by himself. Judas is exactly one of them. And you are not helping him. The poor fellow is going along all by himself, he knocks against the bottom, he runs into shoals, he gets entangled in the little floating woods, and is caught in the maelstroms. On the other hand, if he is measuring the depth, he cannot hold the rudder at the same time or use the oars. Why then should he be reproached if he does not proceed? You feel sorry for strangers, but not for him, although he is your companion. That is not fair. See over there, he and John are going to the village to get bread and vegetables. He asked, as a favour, not to go alone. And he asked

John, because he is not a fool, and he knows what you older ones think of him. »

« And You have sent him? Supposing also John should get spoiled? »

« Who? My brother? Why should he get spoiled? » asks James who has just arrived with his net, which he has recovered in a bed of reeds.

« Because Judas is going with him. »

« Since when? »

« As from today, and I have allowed him to go. »

« Well, if You allow him… »

« And I advise you all to do the same. He is left by himself too much. Do not be only judges for him. He is not any worse than many. But he has been more spoiled, since his childhood. »

« Yes, it must be so. If his father had been Zebedee and his mother Salome, he would not be like that. My parents are good. But they do not forget that they have rights and duties over their children. »

« What you said is true. I will speak of that today. Let us go now. I see that the crowds are already moving across the meadows. »

« I don't know what we will have to do to live. There is no longer time to eat, to pray, to rest… and the crowd is getting larger and larger » says Peter, half amazed and half annoyed.

« Do you mind? It is a sign that there are still people seeking God. »

« Yes, Master. But You suffer because of it. Yesterday You were also left without any food and last night You had only Your mantle to cover Yourself. If Your Mother knew! »

« She would bless God Who brings so many believers to Me. »

« And She would reproach me whom She begged to look after You » concludes Peter.

Philip and Bartholomew are coming down towards them gesticulating. They see Jesus, they quicken their pace and say: « Oh! Master! What shall we do? There is a real pilgrimage: invalids, people weeping and poor people without any means, who have come from far away. »

« We shall buy some bread. The rich people give alms. All we have to do is to make use of them. »

« The days are short. The shed is crowded with people camping there. The nights are damp and cold. »

« You are right, Philip. We shall squeeze into one of the big rooms. It can be done, and we will arrange the other two rooms for those who cannot reach their homes before night. »

« I see! Before long we will have to ask our guests permission to change our clothes. They will be so intrusive that they will compel us to run away » grumbles Peter.

« You will see quite different flights, My dear Peter! What is the matter with that woman? » They are now on the threshing floor and Jesus sees a woman who is weeping.

« Who knows! She was here also yesterday and also yesterday she was weeping. When You were speaking to Manaen she moved to come and meet You, then she went away. She must live in the village or nearby, because she has come back. She does not look ill… »

« Peace be with you, woman » says Jesus passing near her.

And she replies in a low voice: « And with You. » Nothing else.

There must be at least three hundred people. Under the shed there are lame, blind, dumb people, a man shuddering from head to foot, a young man obviously hydrocephalous, whose hand is held by a man. He does nothing but howl, slaver and shake his huge idiotic looking head.

« Is he perhaps that woman's son? » asks Jesus.

« I don't know. Simon looks after the pilgrims and he will know. »

They call the Zealot and ask him. But the man is not with the woman. She is by herself. « She does nothing but weep and pray. A short while ago she asked me: "Does the Master cure also the hearts of people?" » explains the Zealot.

« Perhaps her husband is unfaithful to her » remarks Peter.

While Jesus goes towards the sick people, Bartholomew and Matthew go to the river with many pilgrims for the purification rite.

The woman weeps in her corner and does not stir.

Jesus does not deny a miracle to anybody. Beautiful is the cure of the dull-witted boy into whom Jesus breathes intelligence, holding his huge head between His long hands. They all gather round Him. Also the veiled woman, perhaps because there is a large crowd, dares to draw close and she stands near the weeping woman. Jesus says to the idiot: « I want the light of intelligence to be in you to make way to the light of God. Listen: say with Me: "Jesus". Say it. I want it. »

The dull-witted young man, who before could only howl like an animal, mumbles with difficulty: « Jesus », or rather: « Jejus. »

« Once again » orders Jesus still holding the deformed head between His hands and dominating him with His eyes.

« Jes-us. »

« Again. »

« Jesus! » says at last the poor idiot, whose eyes are no longer expressionless and whose lips now smile in a different way.

« Man » says Jesus to his father. « You had faith! Your son is cured. Question him. The Name of Jesus is miraculous against diseases and passions. »

The man asks his son: « Who am I? »

And the boy: «My father. »

The man presses his son to his heart and states: « He was born like that. My wife died in childbirth and he had an obstruction in his brain and his speech. Now you see. Yes, I had faith. I come from Joppa. What must I do for You, Master? »

« Be good. And Your son, too. Nothing else. »

« And love You. Oh! Let us go and tell your grandmother. She convinced me to come. May she be blessed! »

The two go away happy. The only sign of the past misfortune is the huge head of the boy. His expression and speech are normal.

« But, was he cured by Your will or by the power of Your Name? » ask many.

« By the will of the Father, Who is always benign to His Son. But also My Name is salvation. You know: Jesus means Saviour. There is a salvation of the soul and a salvation of the body. Who pronounces the Name of Jesus with true faith is freed from disease and sin, because in every spiritual or physical disease there is the claw of Satan who creates physical diseases to drive people to rebellion and desperation through the pains of the flesh, and he creates moral or spiritual diseases to lead souls to damnation. »

« So, according to You, Beelzebub is not alien to all the afflictions of mankind. »

« No, he is not. Through him disease and death entered the world. And crime and corruption also entered the world through him. When you see anyone tortured by misfortune, you can be sure that he suffers on account of Satan. When you see one who is the cause of misfortune, you may conclude that he is an instrument of Satan. »

« But illness comes from God. »

« Illness is a disorder in the order. Because God created man wholesome and perfect. The disorder caused by Satan in the order given by God, has brought with it the illness of the flesh and its consequences, that is, death or sorrowful heredity. Man inherited from Adam and Eve the original sin. But not only that. And the stain has expanded wider and wider embracing the three branches of man: the flesh more and more vicious and consequently weak and diseased, the morals prouder and prouder and thus corrupted, the spirit more and more sceptical and thus more and more idolatrous. That is why it is necessary, as I did with the poor halfwit, to teach the Name that puts Satan to flight, engraving It on minds and hearts, placing It on one's ego as a seal of ownership. »

« But do You possess us? Who are You, that You think so much of Yourself? »

« I wish it were so! But it is not. If I possessed you, you would be already saved. And it would be My right. Because I am the Saviour and I should have people who have been saved. But I will save

those who have faith in Me. »

« John… I come from John, he said to me: "Go to Him Who is preaching and baptising near Ephraim and Jericho. He has the power to forgive and to retain whilst I can only say to You: do penance to make your soul agile in following salvation" » says one who had been cured miraculously and before was going on crutches whereas now he moves about quickly.

« Does the Baptist not suffer through losing followers? » asks one.

And the one who had spoken before replies: « Suffer? He says to everybody: "Go! Go! I am the star that is setting. He is the Star that is rising and is fixed eternally in its brightness. If you do not want to be left in darkness, go to Him before my wick goes out". »

« The Pharisees don't say that! They are full of bitter hatred because You draw the crowds to You. Did You know? »

« I know » replies Jesus briefly.

They start a dispute on the rights and wrongs of the behaviour of the Pharisees. But Jesus cuts it short saying: « Do not criticise » so sharply that no reply is possible.

Bartholomew and Matthew come with those who have been baptised.

Jesus starts speaking.

« Peace be to you all.

Since you come here in the morning and it is more comfortable for you to leave half way through the day, I have decided to speak to you of God in the morning. I have also thought of giving hospitality to the pilgrims who cannot go back to their homes before night. I am a pilgrim Myself and I possess the bare necessaries given to Me by a compassionate friend. John has even less than I have. But wholesome people, or not seriously ill, go to John, such as cripples, blind or dumb people. But not dying people or affected by high temperature as they come to Me. They go to him for a baptism of penance. You come to Me also to be cured in your bodies. The Law says: "Love your neighbour as you love yourself". I think and say: how would I be showing love to My brothers, if I closed My heart to their needs, also to their physical needs? And I conclude: I will give them what I was given. Holding out My hand to rich people, I will ask for bread for the poor, depriving Myself of My bed I will receive in it who is tired and suffering.

We are all brothers. And you do not give proof of your love by means of words but by deeds. Who closes his heart to his fellowman, has a heart like Cain. Who has no love, is a rebel against the command of God. We are all brothers. And yet I see, and you also see, that there is hatred and disagreement within a family, where the same blood and flesh corroborate the brotherhood which comes to us from Adam. Brothers are against brothers, children against

their parents, and parents are hostile to each other.

But in order not to be always wicked brothers, and in future adulterous husband and wife, it is necessary to learn from an early age to respect the family, which is the smallest and the greatest organization in the world. The smallest as compared to the organization of a town, of a region, of a country, of a continent. But the greatest because it is the oldest; because it was established by God, when the concept of fatherland, of country did not yet exist, but the family nucleus was already alive and active, a source to race and races, a small kingdom in which man is king, woman queen and the children subjects. Can a kingdom last if it is divided and there is enmity among its inhabitants? It cannot. And truly a family will not last if it lacks obedience, respect, economy, good will, activity, love.

"Honour your father and mother" says the Decalogue. How are they to be honoured? Why are they to be honoured?

They are honoured by true obedience, by correct love, by loving respect, by a reverential fear that does not bar confidence, but at the same time does not make us treat our elders as if we were servants and underlings. They are to be honoured because after God, a father and mother are the donors of life and of all the material necessities of life, they are the first teachers and the first friends of the young being born on the earth.

We say: "May God bless you" or "Thank you" when someone picks up for us something we have dropped or gives us a piece of bread. Shall we not say, with love: "May God bless you" or "Thank you" to those who break their backs working in order to feed us, weaving our clothes and keeping them clean, who rise from their beds to watch our sleep, who deprive themselves of their rest to cure us, and make a bed for us of their laps, when we are most tired and sorrowful?

They are our teachers. A teacher is feared and respected. But a teacher takes us when we already know what is indispensable to support and feed ourselves and say the essential things, and he leaves us when we are still to be taught the most difficult lesson in life, that is, "to live". It is our father and mother who prepare us for school first, and then for life.

They are our friends. But which friend can be more friendly than a father? And which more friendly than a mother? Can you be terrified of them? Can you say: "I have been betrayed by him or by her"? And yet there is the foolish boy or the even more foolish girl, who make friends with strangers and close their hearts to their father and mother and they spoil their minds and hearts with unwise if not guilty friendships, which are the cause of paternal and maternal tears, that like drops of molten lead bum their parents' hearts. Those tears, however, I tell you, do not fall on the dust or

into oblivion. God picks them up and counts them. The anguish of a downtrodden parent will receive a prize from the Lord. But the behaviour of a son who tortures his parents will not be forgotten either, even if the father and mother, in their sorrowful love, implore from God mercy on their guilty son.

It is said: "Honour your father and mother, if you want to have a long life on the earth". And I add: "And for ever in Heaven". A short life here would be too light a punishment for those who wrong their parents! Life to come is not an idle story, and in life to come there will be a prize or a punishment according to how we lived. Who wrongs a parent, offends God, because He orders us to love our parents, and who does not love them, commits a sin. Thus, rather than his material life, he loses the true life of which I spoke to you, and goes to his death, nay he is already dead, because his soul is deprived of the grace of God, he is already a criminal because he offends the most holy love after the love for God, he has in himself the germ of future adulteries, because from a bad son he will become an unfaithful husband, he already possesses the incentive of social depravation, because from a bad son originates the future thief, the fierce violent killer, the cold blooded usurer, the cynical hedonist, the disgusting betrayer of his fatherland, of his friends, of his children, of his wife, of everybody.. Can you hold in high esteem and trust a man who has been capable of betraying the love of a mother and mocking at the grey hair of a father?

But listen a little further: to the duty of children corresponds a similar duty of parents. Cursed be the guilty son! But cursed be also the guilty parent. Do not cause your children to criticise you and imitate you in doing wrong. Get them to love you on account of the love you give them with justice and mercy. God is Mercy. Let parents, who are second only to God, be mercy. Be an example and consolation to your children. Be their peace and guide. Be the first love of your children. A mother is always the first image of the bride we would like to have. A father is for his young daughters the image of the husband they dream of. Behave in such a way that your sons and daughters may wisely choose their wives and husbands, thinking of their father and mother and seeking in their partners the sincere virtues of their parents.

If I were to speak until I treated the whole subject fully, a whole day and night would not suffice. So, for your sake, I will curtail My speech. May the Eternal Spirit tell you the rest. I spread the seed and move on. But in good people the seed will take root and bear fruit. Go. Peace be with you. »

Those who have to leave, go away quickly. Those who are staying, go into the third big room and eat their bread or the bread given to them by the disciples in the name of God. Boards and straw have been placed on rustic trestles so that the pilgrims can

sleep there.

The veiled woman walks away with quick steps, the other one who was crying before and cried all the time that Jesus spoke, roams about, undecided as to what to do, then makes up her mind and goes away.

Jesus goes into the kitchen to take His food. But He has just started eating when they knock at the door.

Andrew, who is the nearest to it, gets up and goes out into the yard. He speaks and then comes back in: « Master, a woman, the one who was weeping, wants You. She says that she has to go away and must speak to You. »

« If we go on like this, when and how is the Master going to get some food? » exclaims Peter.

« You should have told her to come later » says Philip.

« Be quiet. I will eat after. Go on eating. »

Jesus goes out. The woman is out there.

« Master… one word… You said… Oh! Come behind the house! It's painful to tell my sorrow! »

Jesus pleases her without saying anything. Only when He is behind the house He asks: « What do you want from Me? »

« Master… I heard You before, when You were speaking amongst us… and then I heard You when You were preaching. You seem to have spoken just for me. You said that in every physical or moral disease there is Satan… I have a son whose heart is ill. I wish he heard You when You were speaking of parents! He is my torture. Bad companions have lead him astray and he is exactly as You said… a thief… at home for the time being, but… He is quarrelsome, overbearing… Young as he is, he is ruining himself through lust and orgies. My husband wants to throw him out. I… I am his mother and I am dying broken-hearted. See how my breast is panting. It's my heart that is broken because of the pain. I have been wishing to speak to You as from yesterday because… I hope in You, my God. But I did not dare to speak. It is so painful for a mother having to say: "I have a cruel son"! » The woman is weeping, bent and grieved, in front of Jesus.

« Do not weep any more. He will be cured of his illness. »

« Yes, he would, if he could hear You. But he does not want to hear You. Oh! he will never be cured! »

« Have you faith in Me for him? Do you want in his place? »

« Why ask me? I have come from High Perea to beg You on his behalf… »

« Then go. When you reach your home, your son will come to meet you and will be repentant. »

« But how? »

« How? Do you think that God cannot do what I ask for? Your son is there. I am here. But God is everywhere. I say to God: "Father,

have mercy on this mother". And the call of God will resound like thunder in your son's heart. Go, woman. One day I will pass through the villages of your country and you, a proud mother of your son, will come with him to meet Me. And when he will cry on your knees, asking you to forgive him and will tell you of the mysterious struggle from which he emerged with a new soul and will ask you how it happened, say to him: "It is through Jesus that you have returned to an honest life". Speak to him of Me. If you came to Me, it means that you know. Let him know and make him think of Me that he may have the strength of salvation. Goodbye. Peace to the mother who had faith, to the returning son, to the happy father, to the united family. Go! »

The woman goes toward the village and it all ends.

123. Jesus at the « Clear Water »: « You Shall Not Fornicate. »

4th March 1945.

Jesus says to me:

« Be patient, My dear soul, with regard to the double work. This is a period of endurance. You know how tired I was in My last days?! You see it. When walking I lean on John, on Peter, on Simon, also on Judas… Yes. And although miracles emanated from Me, even by simple contact with My clothes, I was not able to change that heart! Let Me lean on you, little John, to repeat the words which I spoke in the last days to those stubborn dullminded people who heard the announcement of My torture without being affected by it. And let the Master preach for hours in the sad plain of the Clear Water. And I shall bless you twice: for your fatigue and for your pity. I count your efforts, I gather your tears. For your efforts on behalf of your brothers you will be rewarded as those who wear themselves out to make God known to men. The tears shed for My suffering during the last week will be rewarded with Jesus' kiss. Write and may you be blessed. »

Jesus is standing on a kind of platform made with boards in one of the large rooms, the last one, and is speaking in a very loud voice, near the door, so that He may be heard by those in the room and also by those in the shed or on the threshing floor, which is flooded by the rain. The people standing there in their large dark coarse mantles, which are proof against water, look like so many lay brothers. The weakest people are in the room, the women under the shed, the strongest, mainly men, are in the yard, in the rain.

Peter, barefooted and wearing only his short tunic and with a piece of cloth on his head, comes and goes, and is always in a good humour even if he has to paddle in water and take unexpected showers. John, Andrew and James are with him. They are

cautiously transferring from the other room sick people and are guiding or supporting blind or lame people.

Jesus is patiently waiting for them all to be settled. He is only sorry that the four disciples are wet like sponges dipped into a pail of water.

« It is nothing! We are like pitched wood. Don't worry. We are getting baptised again and the baptiser is God Himself » replies Peter to Jesus' commiserations.

At last they are all settled and Peter thinks he can go and put on a dry tunic. And he goes away with the other three. But when he comes back again to the Master, he sees the large grey mantle of the veiled woman appear round the corner of the shed and he goes towards her without considering that to do so he must cross the yard diagonally in a heavy shower of rain which is getting heavier and heavier, while the water of the pools splashes up to his knees. He takes her by the elbow, without displacing her mantle, and pulls her towards the wall of the large room, out of the rain. He then places himself beside her, as stem and still as a sentry.

Jesus sees him and He smiles bending His head to conceal the brightness of His smile. He starts speaking.

« Those amongst you, who have been coming to Me regularly, must not say that I do not speak orderly, and that I skip some of the ten commandments. You hear. I see. You listen. I apply My speech to the pains and the sores that I see in you. I am the Doctor. A doctor calls first on those who are more seriously ill, on those who are closer to death. He then visits those who are not so dangerously ill. I do the same.

Today I say to you: "Do not fornicate".

Do not look round endeavouring to read the word "lustful" on somebody's face. Love one another. Would you love anyone who read that word on your face? No, you would not. Well, then, do not try to read it in the worried eyes of your neighbour or on his forehead that blushes and bows to the ground. And then… Oh! tell Me, especially you men. Which of you has not tasted this bread made with ashes and excrement, which is sexual satisfaction? And is lust only what carries you for one hour between the arms of a prostitute? Is lust not also the desecrated union with your wife, desecrated because it is ratified vice as it is reciprocal,/'sensual satisfaction, which, however, evades its consequences?

Marriage means procreation and its act means and must be fecundation. Otherwise it is immoral. You must not make a brothel of your nuptial beds. And that is what they become if they are soiled by lust and are not consecrated by maternity. The earth does not reject the seed. It receives it and makes a plant of it. The seed does not escape from the furrow after being laid there. But it takes root at once and it strives to grow and bear fruit, that is the vegetable

creature born of the union between soil and seed. Man is the seed, woman is the soil, the fruit is the son. It is sinful to refuse to bear fruit and scatter strength in vice. It is prostitution performed on the nuptial bed, and in no way differs from the other prostitution, on the contrary it is aggravated by disobedience to the commandment that says: "Be one flesh and multiply by bearing children".

Therefore, women deliberately barren, legal and honest wives in the eyes of the world, but not in the eyes of God, you can see that you may be considered prostitutes and you fornicate just the same even if only with your husbands, because you do not seek maternity but too often you are only after pleasure. And do you not consider that pleasure is a poison that contaminates every mouth that tastes it? It burns with a fire that seems to satisfy, instead it falls out of the fireplace and devours, more and more insatiable, leaving a sour taste of ash on the tongue as well as disgust, nausea and contempt both of oneself and of the partner in pleasure, because when a conscience revives, and it does revive between two heats, one can but feel such contempt of oneself, being lowered below the level of beasts.

"You shall not fornicate" it is said.

A great deal of the carnal actions of men are fornications. And I do not take into consideration the inconceivable obsessive union which Leviticus condemns with the following words: "Man: you must not lie with a man as with a woman" and "You must not lie with any animal, you would thereby become unclean. And woman will do likewise and will not offer herself to an animal, because it would be a foul thing". But after mentioning the duty of husband and wife in marriage, which is no longer holy when it becomes barren through malice, I am going to speak of the true and proper fornication between man and woman performed out of reciprocal vice or for compensation in money or in gifts.

The human body is a magnificent temple that contains an altar. God should be on the altar. But God is not where there is corruption. Therefore an impure body has a desecrated altar without God. Like a drunken person who wallows in mire and in the regurgitations of his own drunkenness, man lowers himself in the brutality of fornication and becomes worse than the most impure worm and beast.

Tell Me, if among you there is anyone who has perverted himself to the extent of dealing with his body as one deals in fodder or animals at the market, which benefit did he gain? Take your hearts in your hands, examine them, question them, listen to them, note their wounds, their pangs and then tell Me: was the fruit so sweet as to deserve such pain to a heart that was born pure and that you have compelled to live in an impure body, and to beat

to give life and heat to lust, and to be worn out by vice?

Tell Me: are you so perverted that you do not sob secretly, hearing the voice of a child calling: "mummy", or thinking of your mothers, you women of pleasure who have run away from home or have been driven out of them, so that the rotten fruit may not contaminate with its oozing rottenness the other good ones? Thinking of your mothers who probably died broken-hearted, having to say: "I gave birth to disgrace"?

Do you not feel your hearts shudder with shame, when you meet an old solemn-looking man because of his white hair and you consider that you have soiled your fathers' heads with handfuls of mud and have exposed them to the scorn of their native country?

Do you not feel your 'entrails writhe with regret when you see a happy wife or an innocent virgin and you have to say: "I have given up all that and I will never be like that again!"?

Do you not feel your faces blush with shame when you meet the eyes of men looking at you lustfully or scornfully?

Do you not realise how miserable you are when you are thirsty for the kiss of a child and you dare not say: "Give me it" because you have killed lives at their birth, you have rejected them as boring burdens and as a useless hindrance, detached from the tree that had borne them, and thrown out to make dung, and now those little lives shout at you: "murderers!"?

But, above all, are you not terrified of the Judge Who created you and is waiting for you to ask you: "What have you done of yourself? Did I, perhaps, give you life for that? How dare you come to My presence, you nest swarming with worms and putrefaction? You have had everything of what was your god: pleasure. Go to the place of eternal malediction".

Who is weeping? Nobody? Are you saying: nobody? And yet My soul is going to meet another soul that is weeping. Why is it going to meet her? To anathematize her because she is a prostitute? No. Because I feel sorry for her soul. I feel repulsion for all her filthy body, sweaty with wanton exertion. But her soul!

Oh! Father! Father! Also for this soul I have taken flesh and I left Heaven to be her Redeemer and the Redeemer of many souls like hers! Why should I not pick up this stray sheep and take her to the fold, clean her, unite her to the flock, give her pastures and a love as perfect as only Mine can be, so different from the love that so far she called love, but instead was hatred, such a pitiful, complete, sweet love that she may no longer regret the past or may regret it only to say: "Too many days have I lost away from You, eternal Beauty. Who will give me back the time I lost? How can I enjoy in the short time which is left to me, what I would have enjoyed if I had always been pure?"

And yet, o soul oppressed by all the lust of the world, do not

weep. Listen: you are a filthy rag. But you can become a flower once again. You are a dunghill. But you can become a flower-bed. You, are an impure animal. But you can become an angel. Once you were an angel. And you used to dance on the flowery meadows, a rose amongst the roses, as fresh as they were, sweet-smelling with virginity. And you happily sang your childish songs, and then you would run to your mother, to your father and say to them: "You are my love". And the invisible guardian who is at the side of each creature would smile at your blue-white soul… And then? Why? Why did you tear off your wings, those of a little innocent being? Why did you tread on the hearts of your father and mother to run after other unreliable hearts? Why did you compel your pure voice to utter false sensual words? Why did you break the stem of the rose and desecrate yourself?

Repent, daughter of God. Repentance invigorates, purifies and elevates. Can man not forgive you? Not even your father could forgive you? But God can. Because the bounty of God is not to be compared to human goodness and His mercy is infinitely greater than human misery. Honour yourself by making your soul honourable through an honest life. Justify yourself with God committing no more sins against your soul. Obtain from God a new name. That is what matters. You are vicious. Become honest. Become the sacrifice and the martyr of your repentance. You knew how to make a martyr of your heart to give pleasure to your flesh. Now make a martyr of your flesh to give eternal peace to your heart.

Go. You may all go away. Each 'with his burden and his thoughts, and meditate. God awaits everybody and rejects none of those who repent. May God grant you His light that you may know your souls. Go. »

Many go away towards the village. Some go into the large room. Jesus goes towards the sick people and cures them.

A group of men are talking in low voices in a comer: they are gesticulating and getting excited in discussing their various opinions. Some accuse Christ, some defend Him, some exhort both parties to a riper judgement. At the end, the most bitter ones, probably because they are fewer than the other two groups, take a middle course. They go to Peter, who is carrying away with Simon three stretchers of people cured miraculously, as they are now useless, and they assail him overbearingly in the large room which has become the guest-room for pilgrims. They say to him: « Man of Galilee, listen to us. »

Peter turns round and looks at them as if they were rare animals. He does not speak, but the expression of his face is wonderful. Simon casts a glance at the five furious men and then goes out, leaving them all in the lurch.

One of the five resumes speaking: « I am Samuel, the scribe; this is Sadoc, another scribe; and this is Eleazar, a well known and mighty Judaean; and this is Callascebona, the famous elder; and, finally, this is Nahum. Do you understand? Nahum! » the tone of his voice is really bombastic.

Peter bows lightly at each name, but at the last one his head stops half way and with the greatest indifference he says: « I don't know. Never heard of it. And… I don't understand anything. »

« You rough fisherman! Bear in mind that he is Annas' trustee! »

« I don't know Annas; or rather I know many women whose name is Anna. There is a swarm of them also in Capernaum. But I don't know of which one he is the trustee. »

« He? Am I being addressed as "he"? »

« What do you want me to say to you? Ass or bird? When I went to school the teacher taught me to say "he" when speaking of a man, and, if I am not mistaken, you are a man. »

The man becomes infuriated, as if he were tortured by the words. The other man, who spoke first, explains: « Annas is Caiaphas' father-in-law… »

« Ah!… I see!!! Well? »

« I am telling you that we are indignant! »

« At what? At the weather? I am indignant too. I have changed my clothes three times and I have no more dry ones. »

« Don't be silly! »

« Silly? It's the truth. If you are not indignant at the weather, at what then? With the Romans? »

« With your Master! With the false prophet! »

« Hey! Dear Samuel! Be careful because if I wake up I am like the lake: From dead calm I become stormy in a moment. So watch how you speak… »

Also the sons of Zebedee and of Alphaeus have come in together with the Iscariot and Simon and they gather round Peter who shouts louder and louder.

« You shall not touch with your plebeian hands the great men of Zion! »

« Oh! The handsome young gentlemen! And you shall not touch my Master otherwise you will be flying into the well at once and then you will really get purified, both internally and externally. »

« I wish to draw the attention of the doctors of the Temple to the fact that this house is a private one » says Simon calmly. And the Iscariot corroborates the situation saying: « And I can guarantee that the Master has always had the greatest respect for other people's houses, and above all for the House of the Lord. Have the same respect for His. »

« Be quiet, you sly worm. »

« Sly in what? You are disgusting and I came where there is no

disgust. And God grant I have not been completely corrupted by being with you! »

« Summing up: what do you want? » -asks James of Alphaeus sharply.

« And who are you? »

« I am James of Alphaeus, and Alphaeus of James, and James of Matan, and Matan of Eleazar, and if you wish so, I will mention all my ancestors up to king David from whom I descend. And I am a cousin of the Messiah. So I ask you to speak to me, since I am of the royal family and a Judaean, if your arrogance feels disgust in speaking to an honest Israelite who knows God better than Gamaliel and Caiaphas. So, speak up. »

« Your Master and relative gets prostitutes to follow Him. That veiled woman is one of them. I saw her while she was selling some gold. And I recognised her. She is Shammai's lover and has run away from him. Which is a disgrace to him. »

« To whom? To Shammai the rabbi? In that case she must be an old crock. And thus out of danger… » remarks the Iscariot teasingly.

« Be quiet, you fool! To Shammai of Elchi, Herod's favourite. »

« Well now! It means that she is no longer particularly fond of the favourite. She has to go to bed with him. Not you. Why worry then? » Judas Iscariot is superlatively ironical.

« Man, do you not think that you are dishonouring yourself by playing the spy? » asks Judas of Alphaeus. « And do you not consider that he dishonours himself who lowers himself to commit a sin, not he who endeavours to save a sinner? Why is my Master and brother dishonoured, if, when speaking, His voice reaches also the ears profaned by the slaver of lustful people in Zion? »

« His voice? Ah! Ah! Your Master and cousin is thirty years old and He is a greater hypocrite than the others. And you all sleep soundly at night… »

« You vile reptile. Get out of here or I will strangle you » shouts, Peter, and James and John echo his words, whilst Simon simply says: « Shame on you! Your hypocrisy is so great that it regurgitates and overflows and you slaver like a snail on a pure flower. Go out and become a man, because now you are but slaver. I recognise you, Samuel. Your heart is always the same. May God forgive you. Go away from my presence. »

While the Iscariot and James of Alphaeus are holding Peter, who is seething with anger, Judas Thaddeus, who more than ever is now like his Cousin, having the same blue flashing look and stately expression, says in a thundering voice: « He dishonours himself who dishonours an innocent person. God gave us sight and speech to accomplish holy deeds. A slanderer misuses and degrades them, employing them for evil deeds. I will not soil myself by a rude

deed offensive to your white hair. But I will remind you that wicked people hate an upright man and a fool vents his spleen without considering that he betrays himself. Who lives in darkness mistakes a branch in bloom for a reptile. But who lives in light sees things as they are, and if they are denigrated, he defends them for justice' sake. We live in light. We are the chaste, beautiful generation of the children of light, and our Leader is the Holy One Who knows neither woman nor sin. We follow Him and defend Him from His enemies, whom He has taught us not to hate but to pray for. Old as you are, you may learn from a young man, who has become ripe because Wisdom is his teacher, not to be so quick in speaking and not good at all in doing good. Go. And inform those who sent you that God rests on His glory in this poor dwelling, not in the desecrated house which is on mount Moriah. Goodbye. »

The five men dare not reply and they go away.

The disciples discuss whether they should tell Jesus Who is still with the people He has cured. They decide it is better to inform Him. They go to meet Him, they call Him and they tell Him.

Jesus smiles peacefully and replies: « Thank you for defending Me… but what can you do? One gives what one has. »

« However, they are not entirely wrong. We have eyes to see and many people do see. She is always out there, like a dog. It does You no good » say many of the disciples.

« Leave her alone. She will not be the stone that will strike My head. And if she is saved… it is well worth being criticised for such a joy! »

It all ends on that sweet reply.

124. The « Veiled Woman » at the « Clear Water ».

5th March 1945.

It is such an awful day that there is not even one pilgrim. It is raining in torrents and the threshing floor is a pool on which dry leaves are floating. I wonder where all the leaves have come from, some have been blown by the wind, which howls and shakes doors and windows. The kitchen, which is gloomier than ever, because to keep the rain out it is necessary to close the door, is full of smoke, which the wind blows back down the chimney and causes the disciples to cough and their eyes to water.

« Solomon was right » states Peter. « Three things drive a man out of his house: a quarrelsome wife… and I left mine at Capernaum to quarrel with her brothers-in-law, a smoky fireplace and a leaky roof. We have the last two things. But I will see to this chimney tomorrow. I will go up on the roof and you, James, John and Andrew, will come with me. We will raise the chimney and cover

its top with slates. »

« And where are you going to find the slates? » asks Thomas.

« We will take them off the shed. If it rains there, it will not be a disaster. But in here… Are you sorry that your dishes will no longer be decorated with sooty drops? »

« Most certainly not! I wish you could do that! See what a sight I am. It rains on my head when I am here near the fire. »

« You look like an Egyptian monster » says John laughing.

Thomas, in fact, has queer black smutty commas on his chubby good-natured face. Always merry as he is, he is the first to laugh and also Jesus laughs, because, just when he is speaking, another sooty drop falls on his nose, blackening its point.

« Since you are a weather expert, what do you think of it? Will it last long like this? » the Iscariot, who has changed completely during the last few days, asks Peter.

« I will tell you in a minute. I am going to play the star-gazer » replies Peter, who goes to the door, opens it a little and puts his head and hand out. He then states: « A low southern wind. Heat and thick fog… H'm! There is little… » Peter becomes quiet, he comes back in slowly, sets the door ajar, and casts sidelong glances.

« What is the matter? » ask three or four of the disciples.

But Peter beckons them to be quiet. He looks round. He then whispers: « That woman is here. She drank some water of the well and took one of the faggots left in the yard. It is wet and will not burn… She is going away. I will go after her. I want to see… » He goes out cautiously.

« But where does she live, if she is always here? » asks Thomas.

« And she is here in this weather! » says Matthew.

« She certainly goes to the village, because the day before yesterday she was also buying bread there » says Bartholomew.

« She is really determined in wearing her veil! » remarks James of Alphaeus.

« Or she has a very good reason for it » concludes Thomas.

« But will she really be the one referred to by that Jew yesterday? » asks John. « They are always such liars! »

Jesus has kept quiet all the time, as if He were deaf. They all look at Him, fully aware that He knows. But He is working with a sharp knife at a piece of soft wood which He slowly turns into a very useful large fork to take vegetables out of boiling water. And when He finishes it, He offers His work to Thomas who has devoted himself entirely to cooking.

« You are really clever, Master. But… will You tell us who she is? »

« A soul. To Me you are all "souls". Nothing else. Men, women, old people, children: souls, and nothing but souls. Children are

white souls, young boys blue souls, young people pink souls, just people gold souls, sinners are pitched souls. But only souls. And I smile at the white souls because I seem to be smiling at angels; and I rest among the blue and pink flowers of good young people; and I rejoice at the precious souls of the just; and I toil and suffer, to make the souls of sinners precious and splendid. Faces?… Bodies?… They are nothing. I know you and recognise you because of your souls. »

« And what kind of a soul is she? » asks Thomas.

« A soul less curious than the souls of My friends, because she is not inquisitive, does not ask questions, comes and goes without a word or a look. »

« I thought she was a whore or a leper. But I changed my mind because… Master, if I tell You something, will You not reproach me? » asks the Iscariot who goes and sits on the ground near Jesus' knees; he has changed completely, he is humble, kind and even more handsome in his modest mien than when he behaves as the pompous and haughty Judas.

« I will not reproach you. Tell Me. »

« I know where she lives. I followed her one evening… pretending I was going out to get some water, because I noticed that she always comes to the well when it is dark… One morning I found a silver hair-pin on the ground… just near the rim of the well… and I realised that she had lost it. Well, she lives in a little wooden hut in the forest. Perhaps it is used by peasants. But it is half rotten. And she put some faggots on it as a roof. Perhaps that is why she wanted that faggot. It is a den. I don't know how she can live in it. It would hardly suffice for a big dog or a small donkey. It was moonlight and I could see it clearly. It is almost buried in blackberry bushes, it is empty inside and there is no door. That's why I changed my mind and I realised that she is not a prostitute. »

« You should not have done that. But, tell Me the truth: did you do anything else? »

« No, Master. I would have liked to see her, because I have noticed her since Jericho and I seem to recognise her light step with which she walks rapidly wherever she wishes. Also her figure must be supple and… beautiful. Of course, one can easily see that, notwithstanding all her clothes… But I did not dare spy upon her while she was going to lie down on the ground. Perhaps she took her veil off. But I respected her… »

Jesus stares at him, then He says: « And you suffered for that. But you have told the truth. And I am telling you that I am pleased with you. The next time it will not cost you so much to be good. It is the first step that matters. Well done Judas! » and Jesus caresses him.

Peter comes back in. « Master! That woman is crazy! Do You

know where she is? Almost on the river bank, in a little wooden hut under a thicket. Perhaps once it was used by fishermen or woodcutters… Who knows? I would never have thought that a poor woman could live in such a damp place, buried in a ditch under a heap of bushes. I said to her: "Speak and tell me the truth. Are you a leper?" She replied in a whisper: "No". "Swear it " I said. And she said: "I swear it". "Be careful, if you are and you do not say so and you come near our house and I find out that you are not clean, I will have you stoned. But if you are persecuted, if you are a thief or a murderer, and you are staying here because you are afraid of us, do not be afraid of any harm. But come out of there. Don't you see that you are lying in water? Are you hungry? Are you cold? You are shivering. I am an old man, you can see that. I am not courting you. I am old and honest. So listen to me". That's what I said. But she would not come. We will find her dead because she is lying in the water. »

Jesus is pensive. He looks at the twelve faces which are staring at Him. He then asks: « What do you think we should do? »

« Master, what You decide! »

« No. I want you to decide. It is a matter in which also your reputation is involved. And I must not do violence to your right to defend it. »

« In the name of mercy I say that we cannot leave her there » says Simon.

And Bartholomew: « I would say that we should put her in the big room for today. Don't the pilgrims go there? So she can go there, too. »

« She is a creature like anybody else, after all » remarks Andrew.

« In any case, there is no one coming today, so… » points out Matthew.

« I suggest that we should give her hospitality for today, and tomorrow we will tell the steward. He is a good man » says Judas Thaddeus.

« You are right! Good! And he has many empty stables, too. A stable is still a royal palace as compared to that small sunken dingy! » exclaims Peter.

« Go and tell her then » says Thomas encouragingly.

« The younger ones have not yet spoken » points out Jesus.

« As far as I am concerned, I am happy with what You do » says His cousin James. And the other James and his brother say together: « We, too. »

« I am only worried if by sheer bad luck a Pharisee should happen to come here » says Philip.

« Oh! Even if we lived up in the clouds, do you think they would not accuse us? They do not accuse God because He is far away. But if they could have Him near themselves, as Abraham, Jacob and

Moses had, they would reproach Him… According to them, who is faultless? » says Judas Iscariot.

« Well, then, go and tell her to take shelter in the big room. Peter, go with Simon and Bartholomew. You are elderly and she will not feel too uneasy with you. And tell her that we will give her some warm food and a dry dress. That is the one that Isaac left. See, everything can be useful. Also a woman's dress given to a man… »

The younger ones laugh because there must have been some funny story with regard to the dress in question.

The three elder ones go out… and they come back shortly afterwards.

« It took some doing… but at the end she came. We swore to her that we will never disturb her. I will now take her some straw and the dress. Give me the vegetables and some bread. She has not even got anything to eat today. In fact… who would go about in this deluge? » And good Peter goes out with his gifts.

« And now there is an order for everybody: under no circumstance one may go into the room. Tomorrow we will do the necessary. You must become accustomed to doing good for the sake of good, without any curiosity or desire to get entertainment out of it, or anything else. See? You were complaining today that we would not have done anything useful. We have loved our neighbour. Could we have done anything greater? If she is an unhappy woman, and she certainly is, can our help not give her much greater relief, warmth and protection than the little food, the poor dress, the sound roof we have given her? If she is a guilty woman, a sinner, a creature seeking God, will our love not be the most beautiful lesson, the most powerful word, the clearest indication to lead her on to the path of God? »

Peter comes in very quietly and listens to his Master.

« See, My friends. Israel has many teachers, and they speak all the time… But souls remain as they were. Why? Because the souls hear the words of their teachers but they see also their deeds. And their deeds destroy their words. And the souls remain where they were, if they do not even go backwards. But when a teacher does what he says and in all his actions he behaves like a saint, also when he only performs a material action, such as giving bread, a dress, a lodging to a suffering neighbour, he gets souls to proceed and reach God, because his very actions say to his brothers: "God exists and God is here". Oh! Love! I solemnly tell you that he who loves saves himself and others. »

« What You say is true, Master. That woman said to me: "Blessed be the Saviour and He Who sent Him, and you all with Him" and though I am a poor man she wanted to kiss my feet and she was weeping behind her thick veil… Who knows!… Let us hope that no night-bird will arrive from Jerusalem… Otherwise, who will save

us? »

« Our conscience will save us from the judgement of our Father. That is enough » says Jesus. And He sits at the table after blessing and offering the food.

It all ends.

125. Jesus at the « Clear Water »: « Observe Holy Days. »

6th March 1945.

The weather is not so dreadful although it is still raining, and people can come to the Master.

Jesus is listening, on one side, to two or three people, who have great things to tell Him and then reach their places looking much calmer.

He blesses also a little boy whose little legs are badly fractured and whom no doctor would cure. They all, in fact, said: « It is useless, they are fractured high up, near the spine. » His mother is talking, weeping as she explains: « He was running with his little sister in the village street. A Herodian came at full speed on his wagon and ran him over. I thought he was dead. But it is worse. See. I am keeping him on this board… because there is nothing else to be done. And he suffers, because the bone pierces his flesh. And later, when it will no longer pierce him, he will suffer because he will be compelled to lie on his back. »

« Is it very painful? » Jesus pitifully asks the weeping child.

« Yes, it is. »

« Where? »

« Here… and here » and with his little hesitant hand he touches his kidneys and his back. « The board is hard and I want to move, I… » and he cries desperately.

« Shall I take you in My arms? Will you come? I will take you up there, and you will see all the people when I am speaking. »

« Yes… » (his "Yes" is full of keen desire). The poor little thing stretches out his arms imploringly.

« Come then. »

« But he cannot, Master, it is impossible! It hurts him too much… I cannot even move him to wash him. »

« I will not hurt him. »

« The doctor… »

« The doctor is the doctor, I am I. Why have you come? »

« Because You are the Messiah » replies the woman, who goes pale, then blushes, moved by hope and despair at the same time.

« Well, then? Come, My dear little one. » And Jesus passes one arm under the motionless legs, and the other one under his shoulders and takes the child in His arms and asks him: « Am I hurting you? No? Well, say goodbye to your mummy and let us go. »

And He goes with His load through the crowd that opens out to let Him pass. He goes to the end of the room, He climbs on to the kind of platform which they built for Him, so that He may be seen by everybody, also by those in the yard, He asks for a stool and He sits down, He adjusts the child on His knees and asks him: « Do you like this? Now, be good and listen » and He starts speaking, gesticulating with one hand only, His right one, because He is holding the child with His left one. The little fellow looks at the people and is very happy to see something, he smiles at his mother whose heart is palpitating with hope at the other end of the room, and he plays with the cord of Jesus' tunic and with His soft fair beard and with a lock of His long hair.

« It is said: "Do an honest work and devote the seventh day to the Lord and to your soul". That is the commandment of the Sabbatical rest.

Man is not greater than God. And yet God created the universe in six days and He rested on the seventh. Why then does man take the liberty of not imitating the Father and breaking His commandment? Is it a foolish commandment? No. It is truly a beneficial commandment to the body, to morals and to the spirit.

A tired body needs rest, like every other being in creation. An ox, which has worked in the field, rests, and we let it rest, so that we may not lose it. Likewise, the donkey that carries us and the sheep that gives birth to a little lamb and gives us milk, need a rest. Also the soil of the field rests, and we let it rest, so that during the months that it is deprived of seed, it may be nourished and become saturated with the salts that are contained in rain or emerge from the earth. Also animals and plants, which obey the eternal laws of wise reproduction, rest well, also without our con sent. Why then does man not want to imitate the Creator, Who rested on the seventh day, whereas inferior beings, both vegetable and animal, which only received an instinctive order, know how to comply with it and obey it?

It is a moral commandment, besides being a physical one. Man for six days belongs to everybody and everything. Like a thread in a loom he moves up and down, without being ever able to say: "Now I am going to attend to myself and to my dear ones. I am a father and today I belong to my children, I am a husband and today I will devote myself to my wife, I am a brother and I will rejoice with my brothers, I am a son and I will look after my old parents".

It its a spiritual commandment. Work is holy. Love is holier. God is Most Holy. So we must remember to devote at least one day out of seven to our good and holy Father, Who gave us life and keeps us alive. Why should we have less respect for Him than for our fathers, our children, brothers, wives and our bodies? Let the day

of the Lord be His. Oh! It is pleasant to take shelter in a loving home in the evening, after a day's work! It is pleasant to come back to it after a journey! Why then not take shelter in the house of the Father after six days' work? Why should we not be like the son who comes back after a six day journey and says: "Here I am, I want to spend my day of rest with you"?

But now, listen. I said: "Do an honest job".

You know that our Law orders us to love our neighbour. Honest work forms part of our love for our neighbour. An honest working person does not steal in business, does not defraud a workman of his pay, does not exploit him guiltily, he remembers that a servant and a workman are made of body and soul like himself, and he does not treat them like lifeless pieces of stone which it is lawful to break or strike with one's foot or an iron rod. Who does not do that, does not love his neighbour and therefore commits a sin in the eyes of God. His earnings are cursed, even if he offers part of them as alms to the Temple.

Oh! What a false offer! And how can anyone dare place it at the foot of the altar when it drips the tears and blood of an exploited subordinate or its name is "theft", that is, betrayal of one's neighbour, because a thief is the betrayer of his neighbour? Believe Me, one does not keep a holy day unless one makes use of it to examine and improve oneself and make amends for the sins committed during the previous six days.

That is the observance of holy days, not the merely exterior observance, which does not change one jot of your way of thinking. God wants living deeds, not sham deeds. A false respect for His Law is a mere sham. And a mere sham is the false observance of the Sabbath, that is a rest taken to show obedience to the commandment in the eyes of men, when the hours of idleness are spent in vice, in lust, in orgy, in planning how to exploit and damage one's neighbour in the oncoming week. The observance of the Sabbath is a sham, when the material rest is not coupled with an inner, spiritual, sanctifying examination of oneself, with the humble avowal of one's misery, with the firm determination to improve oneself during the oncoming week.

You may say: "And if one falls into sin again?" What would you say of a child, who, having fallen once, should not wish to take another step, that he may not fall again? That he is foolish. That he must not be ashamed if his steps are uncertain, because we were all like that when we were little ones, and our fathers did not stop loving us because of that. Who does not remember the profusion of maternal kisses and paternal caresses we received every time we fell?

The most sweet Father, Who is in Heaven, does the same. He bends over His little one who is weeping on the ground and says to

him: "Do not weep. I will raise you. Next time you will be more careful. Come into My arms now. Here all your troubles will cease and you will go away strengthened, cured and happy". That is what our Father, Who is in Heaven, says. And that is what I say to you. If you could have faith in the Father, you would succeed in everything. A faith, mind you, like the faith of a child. A child believes that everything is possible. He does not ask whether and how something may happen. He does not measure the depth of things. He believes in those who inspire confidence to him and does what they tell him. Be like children with the Most High. How He loves those stray angels which are the beauty of the earth! In the same way He loves the souls that become as simple, good and pure as a child.

Do you wish to see the faith of a child to learn to have faith? Look. You all feel sorry for the little one whom I am clasping to My chest and who, contrary to what doctors and his mother said, has not cried while sitting in My lap. See? For a long time he has done nothing but cry day and night without getting any rest, instead here he has not cried and has fallen asleep placidly against My heart. I asked him: "Do you want to come in My arms?" and he replied: "Yes", without considering his miserable state, the probable pain he might feel, as a result of being moved. He saw love on My face, he said: "Yes" and he came. And he felt no pain. He was happy to be up here, and see things, after being confined to that flat board, he enjoyed lying on the soft warmth of a body and not on the hard wood, he smiled, he played and he fell asleep still holding a lock of My hair in his tiny hand. I will now wake him with a kiss… » and Jesus kisses the brown hair of the child who wakes up smiling.

« What is your name? »

« John. »

« Listen, John. Do you want to walk? Do you wish to go to your mummy and say to her: "The Messiah blesses you on account of your faith"? »

« Yes » replies the little one clapping his hands. He then asks: « Will You make me go? On the meadows? No more the ugly hard board? No more the doctors who hurt me? »

« No more, never again. »

« Ah! How I love You! » and he throws his arms round Jesus' neck and kisses Him, and to kiss Him better, with a jump he kneels on Jesus' knees and a hail of kisses descends on the forehead, the eyes, the cheeks of Jesus.

The child, who had been paralysed up to this point, in his joy, has not even realised that he has been able to move. But the shouting of his mother and of the crowd, rouses him and he turns round surprised. The large innocent eyes of his thin face look

around inquiringly. Still on his knees, with his right arm round Jesus' neck, he asks Him confidentially - pointing at the crowd in tumult and at his mother, who from the other end is calling him, joining his name to Jesus' at the same time: « John! Jesus! » « Why are the people and my mother shouting? What is the matter with them? Are You Jesus? »

« Yes, I am. The people are shouting because they are happy that you can walk. Goodbye, little John (Jesus kisses and blesses him). Go to your mummy and be good. »

The child, sure of himself, comes off Jesus' knees, runs to his mother, flings his arms round her neck and says: « Jesus blesses You. Why are you crying, then? »

When the crowd has calmed down a little, Jesus says in a thundering voice: « Behave like little John, you who commit sin and hurt yourselves. Have faith in the love of God. Peace be with you. »

And while the shouts of the acclaiming crowd are mingled with the happy tears of the mother, Jesus leaves the room, escorted by his disciples, and it all ends.

126. Jesus at the « Clear Water »: « You Shall Not Kill ». Deathof Doras.

10th March 1945.

« It is said: "You shall not kill". To which of the two groups of commandments does this one belong? Are you saying: "To the second"? Are you sure? I will ask you another question: is it a sin which offends God or the man who has been struck? You say: "The man who has been struck"? Are you sure also of that? And another question: is it only a sin of homicide? By killing a person does one commit but this one sin? You say: "Only this one"? Does no one doubt it? Give Me your answers in a loud voice. Let one speak on behalf of everybody. I will wait. » And Jesus bends to caress a little girl who has come near Him and looks at Him enraptured, forgetting to nibble at the apple that her mother gave her to keep her quiet.

A stately old man stands up and says: « Listen, Master. I am an old synagogue leader and I have been asked to speak on behalf of everybody. And I am going to speak. I think, we all think, that we have replied according to justice and according to what we have been taught. My certainty is based on the Law concerning homicide and blows. But You know why we have come: to be taught, as we know that You are Wisdom and Truth. If, therefore, I am wrong, enlighten my darkness, that the old servant may go to his King clad in light. And similarly, enlighten also these people who belong to my flock and have come with their shepherd to

drink at the source of Life » and before sitting down, he bows with the greatest respect.

« Who are you, father? »

« Cleopas, of Emmaus, Your servant. »

« Not Mine: of Him Who sent Me, because the Father is to be given all priority and all love in Heaven, on the earth and in hearts. And the first to give Him this honour is His Word, Who, on the faultless table takes and offers the hearts of good people, as the priest does with the bread of the proposition. But listen, Cleopas, that you may go to God enlightened as is your holy desire.

When judging a fault, it is necessary to take into consideration the circumstances that precede, prepare, justify and explain the fault. A man who has committed murder, before presenting himself to God to ask forgiveness, must ask himself: "Whom did I strike? What did I strike? Where, with what means, why, how, when did I strike?"

"Whom did I strike?"

A man. I say: a man. I do not consider whether he is rich or poor, free or a slave. As far as I am concerned, there are neither slaves nor mighty ones. There are only men, created by One God, therefore, they are all equal. In fact, also the most powerful king on the earth is dust before the majesty of God. And in His eyes, as well as in Mine, there is only one slavery: sin, and therefore a slavery under Satan. The old Law discriminates between free men and slaves, and subtilises between killing with one blow and killing when the person struck survives for a day or two and likewise, whether a pregnant woman is killed by blows or only the fruit of her womb dies. But that was said when the light of perfection was still far away. Now it is amongst you and says: "Who kills his fellow-creature commits a sin". And he sins not only against man, but also against God.

What is man? Man is the sovereign creature whom God created to be the king of creation and He created him in His image and likeness, giving him His likeness according to the spirit, and His image by drawing his perfect image from His perfect thought. Look at the air, at the earth, at the seas. Can you see an animal or a plant, however beautiful it may be, which is equal to man? Animals run, eat, drink, sleep, procreate, work, sing, fly, creep, climb. But they do not speak. Man can also run and jump, and is so agile in jumping as to emulate birds; he can swim, and is so fast that he seems a fish; he can creep and looks like a reptile; he climbs like a monkey; he can sing like a bird. He can procreate and reproduce. And, besides, he can speak.

Do not say: "Every animal has its language". True, one moos, another bleats, another brays, another chirps, another warbles, but the last bull will bellow exactly the same as the first one, and

so sheep will bleat until the end of the world, and donkeys will always bray like the first one, and sparrows will always chirp, whilst the lark and the nightingale will sing their songs: the former to the sun, the latter to a starry night, also on the last day of the world, exactly as they greeted the first sun and the first night. Man, instead, having not only a voice and a tongue, but also a nervous system, the centre of which is the brain, the seat of intelligence, is capable of perceiving new sensations, meditating on them and giving them names.

Adam called dog his friend and gave the name of lion to the animal that seems most like it because of its mane round its shortbearded face. He called sheep the lamb that greeted him mildly and gave the name of bird to the beautiful flower of feathers that flies like a butterfly but sings a sweet song that a butterfly cannot sing. And later, throughout centuries, the children of Adam created new names, as and when they "became acquainted" with the works of God in His creatures, or, through the divine spark which is in man, they not only procreated children, but they also created things which were useful or harmful to their children, according to whether they were with God or against God. Those who create and do good things are with God. Those who create wicked things, harmful to their neighbours, are against God. God avenges His children tortured by man's wickedness.

Man is thus the favoured creature of God. Even if he is now guilty, he is still the dearest creature to Him. That is witnessed by the fact the He sent His own Word, not an angel, not an archangel, not a cherub, not a seraph, but His own Word, clad with human flesh, to save man. He did not deem that flesh unworthy to make Him liable to suffer and expiate, Who being a Most Pure Spirit Himself, could not have suffered and expiated the sin of man.

The Father said to Me: "You shall become man: the Man. I made one. He was as perfect as everything I make. He was destined to a peaceful life, a most peaceful final sleep, a happy awakening and a most happy eternal life in My celestial Paradise. But You know that nothing contaminated may enter our Paradise, because there I-We, one and trine God, have Our throne. Only holiness is allowed to stand before it. I am He Who I am. My divine nature, Our mysterious being can be known only to those who are without sin. Now man, in Adam and through Adam, is foul. Go. Cleanse him. I want it. From now on You shall be the Man. The First-Born. Because You will be the first to enter here with mortal flesh deprived of sin, with a soul deprived of the original sin. Those who have preceded You on the earth and those who will come after You, will receive life through Your death of a Redeemer". Only one who was born can die. I was born and I will die.

Man is the favoured creature of God. Now tell Me: if a father has

many children, but one is his darling, the apple of his eye, and that one is killed, will that father not suffer more than he would have suffered if another son had been killed? That should not happen because a father should be just to all his children. But it happens because man is not perfect. God can do so with justice because man is, the only creature, amongst all created things, who has a spiritual soul in common with his Creator Father, an undeniable sign of his divine paternity.

If one kills the son of a father, does one offend only the son? No. One offends also the father-One offends the son in his flesh and the father in his heart. Both are wounded. By killing a man, does one offend only the man? No. Also God. Man in his flesh, God in His right. Because life and death are to be given and taken by Him only. To kill is to do violence to God and to man. To kill is to enter God's domain. To kill is to go against the commandment of love. Who kills does not love God, because he dissipates one of His works: a man. Who kills does not love his neighbour, because he takes away from his neighbour what a murderer wants for himself: life.

I have thus replied to the first two questions.

“Where did I strike?"

One can strike in the street, in the house of the person assaulted, or by alluring the victim to one's own home. One can strike either one or another organ causing a more severe pain, or committing two homicides in one, by striking a woman whose womb is bearing its fruit.

One may strike in the street unintentionally. An animal that gets out of our hands may kill a passer-by. In which case there is no premeditation. But if a man, armed with a dagger and wearing refined dissembling clothes, goes to the house of his enemy - and often an enemy is a person whose only fault is to be better - invites him to his own house under the pretext of honouring him, and then cuts his throat and throws him into a well, then there is premeditation and his guilt is complete in malice, ferocity and violence.

If I kill a mother and her child, then God will ask me to account for two deaths. Because the womb that gives birth to a man according to the commandment of God is sacred and sacred is the young life that grows within it, to whom God has given a soul.

“By which means did I strike?"

In vain one says: "I did not intend to strike" if he went armed with an accurate arm. In a fit of anger, also one's hand may become • weapon, or a stone picked off the ground, or a branch taken from • tree. But who inspects his dagger or an axe, with cold determination, and sharpens it if he thinks that it is not sharp enough, then conceals it safely on his body so that, although it is not seen, it may

be easily grasped, and being thus ready goes to his enemy, cannot certainly say: "I did not intend to strike". Who prepares a poison picking poisonous herbs and fruits, makes a powder or drink with them which he then offers to the victim as spices or as cyder, cannot certainly say: "I did not want to kill".

And now listen, you women, tacit unpunished murderesses of so many lives. It is also murder to detach a fruit that is growing in a womb, because it is of a guilty seed, or because it is an embryo which is not wanted, being a useless burden to your bodies and your wealth. There is only one way not to have that burden: by being chaste. Do not join homicide to lust, violence to disobedience, and do not think that God does not see, simply because man does not see. God sees everything and remembers everything. You ought to remember that, too.

“Why did I strike?"

Oh! for how many reasons! The sudden mental turmoil which causes in you a violent emotion, such as finding your nuptial bed polluted, or a thief at home, or a dirty fellow intent on doing violence to your young daughter, the cold premeditated planning to get rid of a dangerous witness, of someone who encumbers your way, or of someone at whose position or purse you aim; those are some of the many reasons. And if God can still forgive who in a painful derangement becomes a murderer, He will not forgive who becomes such through lust for power or for men's esteem.

Always behave properly and you will fear nobody's eye or word. Be happy with what you possess, and you will not aspire to other people's property, to the extent of becoming murderers in order to have what belongs to your neighbour.

“How did I strike?"

Being pitiless also after the first impulsive outburst? Sometimes man cannot control himself. Because Satan throws him into evil as a slinger hurls a stone. But what would you say of a stone, which, after reaching its target, should fly back by itself to the sling, to be hurled again and strike once more? You would say: "It is possessed of a magic hellish power". And such is man, when after the first blow he strikes a second, a third, a tenth time, with unbridled ferocity. Because wrath abates and reason takes over after the first outburst, if it is an outburst caused by a justifiable reason. Whereas ferocity increases the more the victim is struck by a genuine murderer, that is, by a satan, who does not feel and cannot feel pity for a brother because, being satan, he is hatred personified.

“When did I strike?"

During the first outburst? After it had subsided? Pretending I had forgiven whereas my grudge grew more and more? Did I perhaps - wait for years before striking, to cause double pain by

killing the father through his children?

You can see that by killing one offends the first and second group of commandments. Because you unduly claim the right of God and you oppress your neighbour. It is therefore a sin against God and against your neighbour. You do not only commit a sin of homicide. But you commit a sin of wrath, of violence, of pride, of disobedience, of sacrilege, and sometimes, if you kill to steal a position or a purse, of greed. I will only mention this now, and I will explain it to you in greater detail some other day, one does not commit homicide only by means of a weapon or poison. But also by slander. Meditate on that.

I also say to you: the master, who striking a slave, does it cunningly, so that he may not die in his hands, is twice guilty. A slave is not money of his master: he is a soul of his God. And cursed be for ever who treats him worse than a bull. »

Jesus' eyes sparkle with majesty and His voice thunders. They all look at Him amazed, because before He was speaking quietly.

« May he be cursed. The New Law repeals that hardness which was still justice when in the people of Israel there were no hypocrites who pretend to be saints and sharpen their wits only to take advantage of the Law of God or elude it. But now that Israel is overflowing with such vipers, for whom all caprices are lawful when it suits them, the miserable mighty ones whom God looks at with hatred and disgust, I say: it is no longer so.

Slaves fall in the fields or at the millstones. They fall with fractured bones and with nerves laid bare by scourges. They accuse them of false crimes, so that they may strike them and thus justify their diabolical sadism. They even make use of God's miracles, as an accusation, to have the right to strike them. Neither God's power nor a slave's holiness convert their wicked souls. They cannot be converted. Good will not enter a soul glutted with evil. But God sees and says: "It is enough".

There are too many Cains who kill the Abels. And what do you think, you foul sepulchres, whose outsides are whitewashed and covered with the words of the Law, and in whose insides Satan dominates as a king and the most cunning satanism flourishes, what do you think? That only Abel was Adam's son and that God looks benignantly only at those who are not slaves of man, and that He refuses the only offer that a slave can make: His honesty seasoned with tears? No, I solemnly tell you that every just man is an Abel, even if he is laden with fetters, even if he is dying on the furrows, or bleeding because of your scourging, and that all the unjust people are Cains, who out of pride, not out of true veneration, give to God what is contaminated with their sins and stained with blood.

Desecrators of miracles! Desecrators of men, murderers, impious

people! Out! Away from My sight! Enough! I say: enough. And I can say that, because I am the divine Word Who translates the Divine Thought. Away! »

Jesus, standing on the rough platform, is so imposing as to be frightening. With His right arm stretched out towards the door, His eyes like two blue flames, He seems to be striking by lightning the sinners present. The little girl at His feet starts crying and runs to her mother. The disciples look at one another amazed and they look to see to whom the diatribe is addressed. Also the crowd turn round and look inquisitively.

At last the mystery is clarified. At the other end of the room, outside the door, half hidden behind a group of tall country men, Doras appears. He looks thinner, yellower, more wrinkled, with his big nose and protruding chin. A servant helps him to move because he seems to be semi-paralysed. No one had seen him there, in the middle of the yard. He dares to speak in his clucking voice: « Are You speaking to me? Is it for me? »

« Yes, for you. Go out of My house. »

« I am going out. But I will soon have a reckoning with You, don't worry. »

« Soon? At once. The God of Sinai, as I told you, is waiting for You. »

« And You too, baleful fellow, because You are the cause of my infirmity and of the noxious animals in my land. I will see You again. And it will be a joy for me. »

« Yes. And you will not be wishing to see Me. Because I will be your judge. »

« Ah! Ah! curs… » He gropes, he mumbles and falls.

« He is dead! » shouts his servant. « The master is dead! May You be blessed, Messiah, our avenger! »

« Not I, but God, the eternal Lord. Let no one be contaminated. Only the servant is to see to his master. And be kind to his body. And you all, his servants, be good. Do not rejoice, out of bitter hatred, because he has been struck, so that you may not deserve to be condemned. May God and just Jonah be always your friends, and I with them. Goodbye. »

« But did he die by Your request? » asks Peter.

« No. But the Father came into Me… It is a mystery that you cannot understand. It is enough for you to know that it is not right to strike God. He avenges Himself by Himself. »

« Then, could You not tell the Father to let all those who hate You die? »

« Be quiet! You do not understand what your mentality is! I am Mercy and not Revenge. »

The old man, the head of the synagogue, comes near and says: « Master, You have answered all my questions and light is in me.

May You be blessed. Come to my synagogue. Do not refuse an old man Your word. »

« I win come. Go in peace. The Lord is with you. »

While the crowds go away very slowly, it all ends.

127. Jesus at the « Clear Water »: « Do Not Put the Lord Your God to the Test ». The Three Disciples of the Baptist.

11th March 1945.

It is a very clear winter day: sunshine, wind and a clear sky, all blue, without the least trace of a cloud. It is early morning. A light veil of frost, or rather of almost frozen dew, is like diamond dust on the ground and on the grass.

Three men are coming towards the house. They are walking with the certainty of people who know where they are going. They see John who is crossing the yard, laden with pails of water drawn from the well. They call him.

John turns round, lays the buckets on the ground and says: « You are here? Welcome! The Master will be happy to see you. Come, before the crowds arrive. So many people come now!… »

They are the three shepherd disciples of John the Baptist. Simeon, John and Matthias follow the apostle happily.

« Master, there are three friends here. Look » says John going into the kitchen where a big fire of brushwood is burning merrily, spreading a pleasant smell of wood and burnt laurel.

« Oh! Peace to you, My friends. What made you come to Me? A misfortune of the Baptist? »

« No, Master. We came here with his permission. He sends You his greetings and asks You to recommend to God the lion chased by the archers. He does not delude himself about his destiny. But he is free for the time being. And he is happy because he knows that You have many followers. Also many who before were with him. Master… we would like to come with You, too, but… we do not want to leave him now that he is persecuted. You will understand us… » says Simeon.

« On the contrary, I bless you for that. The Baptist deserves respect and love. »

« Yes. You are right. The Baptist is a great man, and he is standing out like a giant more and more. He is like the agave, which, when it is about to die, forms the great candelabrum with the septiform flower and blazes and perfumes. That is what he is like. And he always says: "I would only like to see Him once again… " He wishes to see You. We have picked up that cry of his soul, and without telling him, we have brought it to You. He is the "Penitent" and the "Abstinent" Prophet. And he is pining away with the holy longing to see You and hear You. I am Tobias, or

Matthias. But I think that the archangel given to Tobit did not differ from him. He is full of wisdom. »

« It is not said that I shall not see him… But is that the only reason why you have come? It is troublesome to travel in this weather. Today is a clear day. But up to three days ago, there was so much rain on the roads! »

« No, we have not come only for that. Some days ago, Doras, the Pharisee, came to us to be purified. But the Baptist refused him the rite saying: "Water will not penetrate where there is such a thick crust of sin. Only One can forgive you, the Messiah". He then replied: "I will go to Him. I want to be cured and I think that this disease in due to His spell". The Baptist then chased him away as he would have chased Satan. When going away, he met John, whom he knew since the time John used to go to Jonah, to whom he was somehow related, and he said to him: "I am going. They all go. Also Manaen has been there and even… I say prostitutes, (but he used a dirtier word) go to Him. The Clear Water is full of deceived people. Now if He cures me and withdraws His anathema from my land, which armies of moles, worms and cricket-moles are digging up like war machines, eating the seed and gnawing away at the roots of fruit trees and vines, and nothing can destroy them, I will become His friend. Otherwise… woe to Him!" We replied to him: "Are you going there in that frame of mind?" He replied: "Who believes in that devil? In any case, He can form an alliance with me as He does with prostitutes". We decided to come and tell You, so that You know how to deal with Doras. »

« It is already all done. »

« Already done? Of course. He has wagons and horses, we have only our legs. When did he come? »

« Yesterday. »

« And what happened? »

« This: if you prefer to busy yourselves with Doras, You may go to his house in Jerusalem and mourn him. They are preparing him for his sepulchre. »

« Dead?! »

« Dead. Here. But do not let us speak of him. »

« Yes, Master… But… tell us one thing. Is it true what he said of Manaen? »

« Yes. Are you sorry? »

« Oh! It is our joy! We have spoken so much to him of You at Machaerus! And what does an apostle want but that his Master be loved? That is what John wants, and we with him. »

« You are right, Matthias. Wisdom is with you. »

« And… I don't believe it. But we have just met her… She came also to us looking for You, before the Feast of the Tabernacles. And we said to her: "What you are looking for is not here. But He

will soon be in Jerusalem for the Tabernacles… " We told her that because the Baptist had said to us: "See that sinner, she is a crust of filth, but inside she has a flame which is to be stoked. It will become so strong that it will break out through the crust and will bum everything. The filth will fall off and only the blaze will be left". That is what he said. But, is it true that she sleeps here, as two mighty Scribes came to tell us? »

« No. She is in one of the steward's stables, more than a mile from here. »

« Hellish tongues! Have you heard that? And they!… »

« Let them say. Good people do not believe their words, they believe in My deeds. »

« Also John says So. Some days ago, some of his disciples said to him in our presence: "Rabbi, He, Who was with you on the other side of the Jordan and to Whom you bore witness, now baptises. And they all go to Him. You will be left without followers". And John replied: "Blessed my ears that hear this news! You do not realise what joy you are giving me. You must know that man cannot take anything unless it is given to him by Heaven. You can witness that I said: 'I am not the Christ, but I have been sent before Him to prepare His way'. A just man does not take a name which does not belong to him, and even if people wish to praise him by saying: 'You are the one', that is, the Saint, he will say: 'Truly not, I am his servant'. And he is very happy just the same, because he thinks: 'I must be a little like Him, if people mistake me for Him'. And what does one who loves want, but to be like the person he loves? Only the bride gets pleasure from the bridegroom. A best man could not get it, because it would be immoral and a theft. But the friend of the groom, who is near him and listens to his words full of nuptial joy, feels such a great joy that it is almost like the delight that makes happy the virgin who married his friend and who foretastes the honey of the nuptial words. That is my joy and it is complete. What else does the friend of the groom do, after serving his friend for months and after leading the bride to his house? He withdraws and disappears. So will I! One only remains: the groom with the bride: Man with mankind. Oh! what deep words! He must grow greater, I must grow smaller. He Who comes from Heaven is above all the others. Patriarchs and Prophets disappear at His coming, because He is like the sun that illuminates everything with such a bright light, that stars and planets, deprived of light, are brightened by it, and those, the light of which is not extinguished, are outshone by its extreme brightness. It happens thus, because He comes from Heaven, whereas the Patriarchs and Prophets will go to Heaven, but they do not come from Heaven. Who comes from Heaven is above all the others. And He announces what He has seen and heard. But none of those who do not aim at

Heaven and therefore deny God can accept His witness. Who accepts the witness of Him Who descended from Heaven, seals, by his belief, that God is true, and not an idle story without any truth, and he perceives the Truth, because his soul craves for It. Because He, Whom God sent, speaks words of God, because God gives Him the Spirit without reserve, and the Spirit says: 'Here I am. Take Me, because I want to be with You, Who are the delight of our love'. Because the Father loves the Son immeasurably and has placed all things in His hands. Therefore who believes in the Son, has eternal life. But who refuses to believe in the Son will not see Life. And the wrath of God will stay in him and on him". That is what he said. I engraved his words on my memory that I might repeat them to You » says Matthias.

« And I praise you and thank you for them. The last Prophet in Israel is not He Who descends from Heaven, but, as he was blessed with divine gifts since he was in the womb of his mother - you do not know, but I am telling you - it is he who is nearest to Heaven. »

« What? Oh! Tell us. When speaking of himself, he says: "I am the sinner". » Both the shepherds and the disciples are anxious to know.

« When My Mother was carrying Me, when She was pregnant of Me-God, as She is the Humble and Loving One, She went to serve John's mother, who was Her cousin on Her mother's side, and was pregnant in her old age. The Baptist already had a soul, as he was in his seventh month. And the germ of man, closed in his mother's womb, leapt with joy on hearing the voice of the Spouse of God. A precursor also in that, he preceded all the redeemed souls, because Grace was communicated from womb to womb and penetrating, it cancelled the Original Sin from the soul of the child. I therefore say that on the earth there are three who possess Wisdom, as there are in Heaven Three Who are Wisdom: the Word, His Mother, the Precursor on the earth; the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit in Heaven. »

« Our souls are thoroughly amazed, almost like when we were told: "The Messiah is born… " Because You were the Abyss of Mercy and our John is the abyss of humility. »

« And My Mother is the abyss of purity, of grace, of charity, of obedience, of humility, and of every other virtue which comes from God and which God grants to His saints. »

« Master » says James of Zebedee. « There is a lot of people. »

« Let us go. You may come, too. »

The crowd is a very large one.

« Peace be with you » says Jesus. He is smiling and very rarely is His smile so bright. People whisper and nod to Him. There is a great deal of curiosity.

It is said: « "Do not put the Lord your God to the test".

This commandment is forgotten too often. We put God to the test when we want to impose our will on Him. We put God to the test when we rashly act against the rules of the Law, which is holy and perfect and in its spiritual side, the principal one, it deals with and takes care also of the flesh that God created. We put God to the test, when, after being forgiven by Him, we revert to our sins. We put God to the test when, after receiving help from Him, we turn to our own ways and damage the help which had been granted for our own good and to remind us of God. God is neither to be mocked at nor derided. But that happens too often.

Yesterday you saw what punishment awaits those who deride God. The Eternal God, Who is full of compassion for those who are repentant, is most severe with unrepentant souls, who under no circumstances will amend themselves. You come to Me to hear the word of God. You come to receive miracles. You come to be forgiven. And the Father gives you His word, His miracles and His forgiveness. And I do not regret that I descended from Heaven, because I can give you miracles and forgiveness and I can make you understand God.

That man was struck down, like Nadab and Abihu, by the fire of divine wrath. But you must refrain from judging him. What happened, a new miracle, should only make you meditate on how one must behave to have God as a friend. He wanted the penitential water but without a supernatural spirit. He wanted it for a human spirit. As a magic means to cure his illness and free him from his calamity. All he was aiming at was his body and his harvest. Not his poor soul, which was of no value to him. His only values were life and money.

I say: a heart is where its treasure is, and a treasure is where the heart is. The treasure is therefore in the heart. In his heart he had a thirst for life and for a lot of money. How was he to get it? By any means. Also by crime. And so, was his request for baptism not deriding God and putting Him to the test? Sincere repentance for his long sinful life would have sufficed to obtain for him a holy death and what was fair to have on the earth. But he was unrepentant. As he never loved anyone but himself, he went so far as not to love even himself. Because hatred kills also the animal selfish love of man for himself. Tears of sincere repentance should have been his lustral water. And may that be true for all of you who are listening to Me. Because there is no one without sin, and you all therefore need that water. Springing from your hearts, it descends upon you and washes you, it cleanses what is polluted, it raises what is prostrated, it instils new life into those who have been bled by sin.

That man was anxious only about the trifles of the earth. But there is only one misery that should make man pensive. And that

is the eternal misery of losing God. He did not fail to make the ritual offers. But he did not offer God the sacrifice of his spirit, that is, he did not stop sinning, he did not do penance and ask forgiveness by means of good deeds. Hypocritical offers made by means of riches unlawfully acquired are similar to requests made to God to become an accomplice of the evil actions of man. Can that ever happen? Is that not mocking at God? God rejects him who says: "I offer sacrifices" but is anxious to continue to sin. Can a corporeal fast be of any avail when the soul does not abstain from sin?

May the death of the man who died here make you meditate on the conditions which are necessary to be loved by God. Now in his sumptuous abode his relatives and the hired female mourners are mourning over his corpse which will shortly be taken to its sepulchre. Oh! A true mourning and a true corpse! Nothing more than a corpse! Nothing but disheartened mourning. Because the soul which was already dead will be for ever separated from those whom he loved out of blood relationship or similarity in mentality. Even if the same dwelling place will unite them for ever, they will be divided by the hatred that reigns there. Then death is "true" separation. It would be better if a man, when he has killed his soul, mourned over himself, rather than be mourned by other people, and thus, through the tears of a contrite and humble heart, he gave life back to his soul, through God's forgiveness.

Go. Without hatred or comment. With nothing but humility. As I have spoken of him out of justice, without hatred. Life and death teach us how to live well and die a happy death, and conquer life without death. Peace be with You. »

There are no sick people, no miracles, and Peter says to the three disciples of the Baptist: « I am sorry for you. »

« Oh! It is not necessary. We believe without seeing. We had the miracle of His birth and it made us believe. And now we have His word to corroborate our faith. We only ask to serve it until we are in Heaven, like our brother Jonah. »

It all ends.

128. Jesus at the « Clear Water »: « You Shall Not Covet Your Neighbour's Wife ».

12th March 1945.

Jesus passes through the middle of a very large crowd and they call Him from all directions. Some show their wounds, some mention their misfortunes, some simply say: « Have mercy on me », some show Him their little children and ask Him to bless them. The clear calm day has brought a great many people.

When Jesus is almost in His place, a plaintive cry is heard from

the little path that leads to the river: « Son of David, have mercy on an unhappy man! »

Jesus looks in that direction and so do the crowd and His disciples. But a box-thicket conceals the pleading man.

« Who are you? Come out. »

« I cannot. I am not clean. I must go to the priest to be expelled from the world. I have sinned and leprosy has infected my body. I hope in You. »

« A leper! A leper! Anathema! Let us stone him! » shout the crowd in a turmoil.

Jesus with a gesture commands silence and calm. « He is not more unclean than anyone in sin. In the eyes of God an unrepentant sinner is more unclean than a repentant leper. If you are capable of believing, come with Me. »

The disciples and some curious people follow Jesus. The others crane their necks and remain where they are.

Jesus goes beyond the house and the little path, towards the box-thicket. He then stops and commands: « Show yourself. »

A young man, a little older than a teenager, appears. His face, which is still handsome and fresh looking, is lightly veiled by a very thin moustache and beard. His eyes are red with weeping.

He is hailed by a group of women all covered in veils, who were previously weeping in the yard of the house when Jesus passed by and are now crying even louder owing to the threats of the crowd. « Oh son! » shouts a woman collapsing on to the arms of another woman, probably a relative or a friend, I am not sure.

Jesus proceeds alone towards the unhappy fellow. « You are very young. How did you become a leper? »

The young man lowers his eyes, blushes, mumbles but ventures no more. Jesus repeats His question. The young man says something more clearly, but only a few words are caught: «… my father… I went… we sinned… not only I… »

« Your mother is over there, hoping and weeping. God in Heavens knows. I am here and I know. But I need your humiliation, so that I may have mercy on you. Speak up. »

« Speak, son. Have mercy on the womb that carried you » wails the mother who has dragged herself to where Jesus is standing and now, on her knees, is subconsciously holding the hem of Jesus' tunic in one hand, while she is stretching the other one towards her son, shedding scalding tears.

Jesus lays His hand on her head. « Speak up » He says once again.

« I am her first born and I help my father in his trade. He sent me to Jericho many times to see his customers and… and one… had a beautiful young wife… I liked her. I went farther than I should have done… She liked me… We pined for each other… and we sinned during the absence of her husband… I do not know what happened,

because she was healthy. Yes. Not only I was healthy and wanted her… she was healthy, too, and she wanted me. I don't know whether… she wanted other men, beside me, and got infected… She soon withered and now she is already amongst the tombs, buried alive… And I… and I… Mother! You have seen it. It is a little spot, but they say that it is leprosy and I will die of it. When?… No life… no home no mother! Oh! mother! I can see you but I cannot kiss you! Today they are coming to rip my clothes and expel me from home… from the village… I am worse than dead. And I will not even have my mother to mourn over my corpse… »

The young man is weeping. His mother looks like a tree violently shaken by the wind, she is sobbing so convulsively. People comment with contrasting feelings.

Jesus is sad. He says: « And when you were committing sin, did you not think of your mother? Were you so insane as not to remember that you had a mother on the earth and a God in Heaven? And if no leprosy had appeared on you, would you ever have realised that you had offended God and your neighbour? What have you done with your soul? And with your youth? »

« I was tempted… »

« Are you a little baby that you do not know that that fruit was cursed? You deserve to die without mercy. »

« Oh! Mercy! Only You can… »

« Not I. God. And if you swear now that you will not sin again. »

« I swear it. Save me, Lord. Within a few hours I will be condemned. Mother!… Help me with your tears… Oh! Mother! »

The woman has no voice left. She grasps Jesus' legs and looks up with eyes dilated with pain. Her face has the tragic expression of a person who is drowning and knows that he is holding on to the last support that may save him.

Jesus looks at her. He smiles pitifully: « Get up, mother. Your son is cured. But for your sake, not for his. »

The woman cannot yet believe it. She feels that he cannot have been cured, being so far away, and shakes her head in denial, sobbing continuously.

« Man: remove your tunic from your chest. That is where you had the spot. So that your mother may be comforted. »

The young man lowers his tunic and appears nude in the eyes of everybody. His skin is the smooth clean skin of a strong young man.

« Look, mother » says Jesus, and He bends to raise the woman. His gesture serves also to hold her back, whilst her motherly love and the sight of the miracle would urge her towards her son, without waiting until he is purified. As she realises that it is impossible for her to go where her motherly loves urges her, she

relaxes on Jesus' chest and kisses Him in a true joyful rapture. She weeps, smiles, kisses, blesses… and Jesus caresses her compassionately. He then says to the young man: « Go to the priest. And remember that God cured you for your mother's sake and that you may be just in future. Go. »

The young man goes away after blessing the Saviour and, at a distance he is followed by his mother and the other women who were with her. The crowds sing hosannas.

Jesus goes back to His -place.

« Also that young man had forgotten that there is a God Who commands honest morals. He had forgotten that it is forbidden to make for oneself gods which are not God. He had forgotten to keep the Sabbath as I taught you. He had forgotten a loving respect for his mother. He had forgotten that it is forbidden to fornicate, to steal, to be false, to covet his neighbour's wife, to kill himself and his soul, to commit adultery. He had forgotten everything. You have seen how he was stricken.

"You shall not covet your neighbour's wife" is linked to "You shall not commit adultery". Lust always precedes deeds. Man is too weak to be able to crave for something without consuming his desire. And, what is exceedingly sad, man is not capable of behaving in the same way with regard to his honest desires. In evil man wishes and then fulfils his wish. In good he wishes and then stops, if he does not retreat.

Since sinful desires are widely spread like couch grass which spreads by itself, I will repeat to you all, what I said to him: are you little babies who do know that that temptation is poisonous and is to be avoided? "I was tempted". The old excuse! But since it is also an old example, man ought to remember its consequences and thus say: "No". Our history does not lack examples of chaste people who persevered as such notwithstanding all the allurements of sex and the threats of violent people.

Is temptation evil? It is not. It is the work of the Evil One. But who overcomes it, turns it into glory.

A husband who makes love with other women, is a murderer of his wife, of his children and! of himself. Who enters his neighbour's abode to commit adultery is a thief, and one of the most cowardly. Like a cuckoo, he enjoys somebody else's nest, without any expense. Who deceives the good faith of a friend, is a forger, because he simulates a friendship which in fact he does not have. Who behaves thus, dishonours himself and his parents. Thus, can God be with him?

I worked the miracle for that poor mother. But I feel such disgust for lewdness, that it upsets Me. You shouted out of fear and horror for leprosy. My soul shouted out of disgust for lewdness. I am surrounded by all possible miseries and I am the

Saviour of them all. But I prefer to touch a corpse, a just man whose putrified flesh has been honest and who is in peace with his soul, rather than go near anyone who smells of lust. I am the Saviour, but I am the Innocent One. That should be remembered by all those who come here or speak of Me, imputing to My person their own passions.

I realise that you would like something else from Me. But I cannot. The ruin of a youth, hardly formed and already demolished by lewdness, has upset Me more than if I had touched Death. Let us go to the sick people. Since I cannot be the Word, owing to the nausea that chokes Me, I shall be the Health of those who hope in Me.

Peace be with you. »

Jesus, in fact, is very pale, as if He were suffering. He smiles again only when He bends over sick children or the invalids lying in their stretchers. Then He is Himself once again. Particularly when He puts His finger into the mouth of a little dumb boy, about ten years old, and makes him say: « Jesus » and then « Mummy ».

People walk away very slowly.

Jesus stays and walks in the sunshine, which floods the yard, until the Iscariot goes up to Him and says: « Master, my mind is not at rest… »

« Why, Judas? »

« Because of those people in Jerusalem… I know them. Let me go there for a few days. I am not asking You to send me there by myself. On the contrary, please do not allow that. Send Simon and John with me. They were so good to me in our first journey in Judaea. One dampens my zeal, the other purifies my very thoughts. You cannot believe what John means to me! He is dew on my ardour and oil on my agitated water… Believe me. »

« I know. You must not be surprised, therefore, if I am so fond of him. He is My peace. But you, too, if you are always good, will be My consolation. If you make use of the gifts of God, of which you have many, in doing good, as you have been doing for some days, you will become a true apostle. »

« And will You love me as You love John? »

« I love you just the same, Judas. Only I will love you without any anxiety or sorrow. »

« Oh! Master, how good You are! »

« You may go to Jerusalem. But it will be to no avail. But I do not want to disappoint your desire to help Me. I will tell Simon and John at once. Let us go. You see how your Jesus suffers for certain sins? I am like one who has lifted a weight which was too heavy. Never give Me such pain. Never again… »

« No, Master, I love You. You know… But I am weak… »

« Love fortifies. »

They go into the house and it all ends.

And it is better so, because I feel ill: morally. And you know the reason. Physically - either because it is Passion time, or because I have written too much, I do not know exactly why - in this terrible period I often have a temperature and I suffer from pains in my lungs, spine and abdomen. I think that Compito(l) is still affecting me. I am suffering the consequences of all the dampness and lack of sunshine in that dear village.

(1) Compito is the village to which the author was evacuated during the war.

129. Jesus at the « Clear Water ». He Cures the Mad Roman and Speaks to the Romans.

13th March 1945.

Today Jesus is with the nine remaining disciples, as the other three have left for Jerusalem. Thomas, who is always cheerful, is therefore engaged both with his vegetables and with other more spiritual tasks, while Peter, Philip, Bartholomew and Matthew look after the pilgrims, and the others go to the river to baptise. A real baptism of penance, owing to the bitterly cold wind!

Jesus is still in His comer in the kitchen, while Thomas bustles about, but is very quiet so as to leave the Master in peace, when Andrew comes in and says: « Master, there is a very sick man, who I think should be cured at once because… They say that he is insane, because they are not Israelites. We would say that he is possessed. He howls, bawls and writhes. Come and see him Yourself. »

« I am coming at once. Where is he? »

« He is still in the field. Can You hear that howling? It's him. It sounds like a beast, but it's him. He must be rich because he is accompanied by a well dressed man and he was taken out of a magnificent wagon by many servants. He must be a heathen because he curses the gods of Olympus. »

« Let us go. »

« I am coming to see him, too » says Thomas, who is more curious to see than worried about his vegetables.

They go out and instead of going towards the river, they turn their steps towards the fields, which separate this farmstead (as we would call it) from the steward's house.

Some sheep browsing in a meadow become frightened and scatter in all directions. The shepherds and a dog - it is the second dog which has appeared in my visions - endeavour in vain to gather them together. In the middle of the meadow there is a man who is bound fast, but nevertheless he jumps like a madman and utters frightful cries, which increase more and more as Jesus draws near.

Peter, Philip, Matthew and Nathanael are standing nearby, perplexed. There are also some other people there, all men,

because the women are afraid.

« You have come, Master? See what a fury he is! » says Peter.

« It will soon be over. »

« But… he is a heathen, You know? »

« And what does that matter? »

« Eh!… because of his soul!… »

Jesus smiles slightly and proceeds. He reaches the group around the madman, who is becoming more and more agitated.

A man, clearly a Roman by his dress and his clean-shaven face, comes away from the group and greets: « Hail, Master. Your fame reached me. You are greater than Hippocrates in curing and greater than Aesculapius' simulacrum in working miracles for sick people. I know. That is why I have come. My brother, see him? Insane because of some mysterious disease. No doctor understands it. I went with him to Aesculapius' temple. But he came out worse than before. At Ptolomais I have a relative, who sent me a message by a galley. It said that there is One here Who cures everybody. And I came. What a dreadful journey! »

« It deserves a reward. »

« But, mind. We are not even proselytes. We are Romans, faithful to our gods. You call us heathens. We come from Sybaris, but we are now at Cyprus. »

« It is true. You are heathens. »

« So… there is nothing for us? Your Olympus rejects ours or is rejected. »

« My God, One and Trine reigns, one and alone. »

« I have come in vain » says the disappointed Roman.

« Why? »

« Because I belong to another god. » « Souls are created by One God Only. » « Soul?… »

« A soul. The divine thing that is created by God for every man. A companion in lifetime, it survives after lifetime. »

« And where is it? »

« In the depth of one's ego. But, although as a divine thing it is inside the most sacred sanctuary we can say of her - and I say her and not it, because she is not a thing, but a true being worthy of full respect - we can say that she is not contained but contains. »

« By Jove! Are You a philosopher? »

« I am Reason united to God. »

« What You said made me think that You were… »

« And what is philosophy, when it is true and honest, but an elevation of human reason towards the infinite Wisdom and Power, that is towards God? »

« God! God!… I have that poor wreck there who upsets me. But I am almost forgetting his state to listen to You, Divine One. »

« I am not divine as you understand the term. You call divine who is superior to man. I say that that word is to be given only to him who is from God. »

« Who is God? Who has ever seen Him? »

« It has been written: "Hail, You who formed us! When I describe human perfection, the harmony of our body, I celebrate your glory". It was said: "Your bounty shines in the distribution of your gifts to all those who live, so that every man might have what is necessary. And your wisdom is revealed by your gifts, and your power by the fulfilment of your will". Do you recognise these words? »

« If Minerva assists me… they are of Galen. But how do You know them? I am dumbfounded!… »

Jesus smiles and replies: « Come to the true God and His divine spirit will indoctrinate you in the "true wisdom and piety, which is to know yourself and worship the Truth". »

« But that is Galen again! Now I am certain. Besides being a doctor and a magician, You are also a philosopher. Why don't You come to Rome? »

« I am neither a doctor, nor a magician, nor a philosopher, as you say. But I am the Witness of God on the earth. Bring Me the invalid. »

They drag him there, while he howls and writhes.

« See? You say that he is insane and that no doctor can cure him. It is true. No doctor: because he is not insane. But one of the infernal gods, I say so for you, a heathen, has entered him. »

« But he does not have the python spirit. On the contrary, he only tells false things. »

« We call him "demon", not python. There is a speaking one and a dumb one. One that deceives by means of seemingly true reasons, and one that is only mental derangement. The former is more complete and dangerous. Your brother is possessed by the latter. But now he will get rid of it. »

« How? »

« He will tell you himself. » Jesus orders: « Leave the man! Go back to your abyss. »

« I am going. My power is too weak against You. You expel me and gag me. Why do You always beat us?… » The spirit has spoken through the lips of the man, who then collapses exhausted.

« He is cured. Release him without any fear. »

« Cured? Are You sure? But… I adore You! » The Roman is about to prostrate himself.

But Jesus does not allow him. « Raise your spirit. God is in Heaven. Worship Him and go towards Him. Goodbye. »

« No. Not so. At least accept something. Allow me to treat You like Aesculapius' priests. Allow me to hear You speak… Allow me

to speak of You in my fatherland… »

« Do so. And come with your brother. »

His brother is looking around himself, amazed, and he asks: « Where am I? This is not Cintium! Where is the sea? »

« You were… » Jesus commands silence with a gesture and says: « You were suffering from a high temperature and they brought you to a different climate. You are now better. Come. »

They all go; but they are not all equally moved, because in the large room some admire, others criticise the recovery of the heathen. Jesus goes to His place, with the Romans in the very front of the crowd.

« I hope you do not mind if I quote a passage of the Kings. It is said that when the king of Syria was about to declare war on Israel, there was a great honourable man at his court, a leper, whose name was Naaman. A young girl of Israel, who had been captured by the Syrians and had become his slave, said to him: "If my lord went to the prophet who is in Samaria, he would certainly cure him of his leprosy". Upon hearing that, Naaman asked the king's leave and followed the girl's advice. But the king of Israel was greatly irritated and said: "Am I perhaps God that the king of Syria should send invalids to me? This is a trap to make war against us". But when the prophet Elisha was informed of the incident, he said: "Let the leper come to me and I will cure him and he will know that there is a prophet is Israel". So Naaman went to Elisha. But Elisha did not receive him. He only sent word to him: "Wash yourself seven times in the Jordan and you will be cleansed". Naaman got angry, because he thought he had gone such a long way for nothing and indignant as he was he was about to leave. But his servants said to him: "He only asked you to wash yourself seven times, and even if he had ordered you to do much more, you should have done it, because he is the prophet". Naaman then surrendered. He went, washed himself and was cured. Overjoyed he went back to the servant of God and said to him: "Now I know the truth: there is no other God on the whole earth. There is only the God of Israel". And since Elisha would not accept any gift, Naaman asked him to be allowed to take as much soil as would enable him to make sacrifices to the true God on soil of Israel.

I know that you do not all approve of what I have done. I also know that I am not obliged to justify Myself with you. But since I love you with true love, I want you to understand My gesture and learn by it, so that all feelings of criticism and scandal may vanish from your souls.

We have here two subjects of a pagan country. One of them was ill and they were told by a relative, certainly through the words of an Israelite: "If you went to the Messiah of Israel, he would cure

the sick man". And they have come to Me from very far. Their confidence was greater than Naaman's, because they knew nothing of Israel and the Messiah, whereas the Syrian, being of a nearby country and in continuous touch with the slaves of Israel, already knew that God is in Israel. The true God. Is it not right therefore that a pagan may now go back to his fatherland and say: "There is truly a man of God in Israel and they worship the true God in Israel"?

I did not say: "Wash yourself seven times". But I spoke of God and their souls, two things with which they were unacquainted and which bring the seven gifts, like inexhaustable sources. Because the plants of faith, hope, charity, justice, temperance, strength, prudence grow where there is the concept of God and of the spirit, and a desire to reach them. Such virtues are unknown to those who from their gods can only copy common human passions, increased in licentiousness, as pertaining to alleged supreme beings. They are now going back to their country. But rather than the joy of having been granted their request, there is the joy of being able to say: "We know that we are not brutes, and that beyond this life there is a future. We know that the true God is Bounty and He therefore loves us, too, and He helps us to persuade us to go to Him".

And do you think that they are the only ones to ignore the truth?

A short while ago one of My disciples thought that I could not cure the sick man because he had a pagan soul. What is a soul? From Whom does it come? A soul is the spiritual essence of man. It is the being, created of a perfect age, which invests, accompanies, vivifies the whole life of the flesh and continues to live when the flesh no longer exists, because it is immortal like Him Who created it: God. As there is only One God, there is no such thing as souls of pagans or of non pagans created by different gods. There is only one Power that creates souls: and that is the Power of the Creator, of our one, only, powerful, holy, good God, with no other passion but love, perfect charity, a completely spiritual charity, which I call also a completely moral charity, in order to be understood by these Romans. Because the concept of spirit is not understood by these little children who know nothing of the holy words.

Do you think that I have come only for Israel?

I am the One Who will gather all races under one pastoral staff, the Heavenly one. And I solemnly tell you that the time will soon come when many heathens will say: "Let us have that much that will enable us to consummate sacrifices to the true God, to the one and trine God in our pagan land". I am the Word of that true God. They are now going. They are more convinced than if I had crushed them with disdain. They have perceived God in the miracle and in

My words and they will tell when they go back.

Further, I ask you: was it not fair to reward so much faith? Although disconcerted by the opinion of doctors, and disappointed by useless visits to temples, they still had faith to come to the Unknown One, to the great Unknown One in the world, the One Derided and Mocked at and Calumniated by Israel and say to Him: "I believe You can". The first chrism to the new mentality is granted to them because they believed. I did not cure them so much of a disease as I did of their wrong faith, because I placed a chalice near their lips and the more they drink of it the thirstier they will become: the thirst for the knowledge of the true God.

I have finished. I say to you people of Israel: have the same faith as they had. »

The Roman draws near with his cured brother: « Well… I no longer dare say: by Jove. But on my honour as a Roman citizen I swear to You that I shall thirst after what You said! But now I must go. Who will give me more to drink? »

« Your spirit, the soul that you now know you have, until the day when a messenger of Mine will come to you. »

« Not You? »

« No… Not I. But I shall not be absent, although I am not present. And just in a little more than two years' time I will present you with a gift which is greater than the recovery of your brother so dear to you. Goodbye, both of you. Persevere in sentiments of faith. »

« Hail, Master. May the true God save You. » The two Romans go away and they can be heard calling the servants with the wagon.

« And they did not even know that they had a soul! » exclaims an old man.

« Yes, father. And they accepted My word better than many is Israel. Now, since they have given such rich alms, let us help the poor people of God with a double and treble measure. And let the poor pray for those benefactors, who are poorer than they are, that they may achieve the true and only wealth, which is to know God. »

The veiled woman is weeping under her veil, which prevents one from seeing her tears, but not from hearing her sobs.

« That woman is weeping » says Peter. « Perhaps she has no money left. Shall we give her some? »

« She is not crying for that. But go and say to her: "Fatherlands pass away. Heaven remains. It belongs to those who have faith. God is Bounty and He therefore loves also sinners. And he helps you to persuade you to go to Him". Go. Tell her that and then let her weep. It is poison coming out of her. »

Peter goes towards the woman who has already started walking towards the fields. He speaks to her and then comes back. « She started crying louder » he says. « I thought I was going to comfort

her… » and he looks at Jesus.

« She is, in fact, relieved. Also joy makes people weep. »

« H'm… Who knows! Well, I will be happy when I see her face. Will I see it? »

« On Doomsday. »

« Divine Mercy! But I will be dead then! And what shall I care to know that? I shall be looking at the Eternal Father then! »

« Start doing that now. It is the only useful thing. »

« Yes… but… Master, who is she? »

They all laugh.

« If you ask that question again, we will go away at once, so you will forget her. »

« No, Master. However, it is enough if You stay… »

Jesus smiles. « That woman » He says, « is the remains of a meal and an early fruit. »

« What do You mean? I do not understand. »

But Jesus leaves him and goes towards the village.

« He is going to Zacharias'. His wife is dying » explains Andrew. « He sent me to tell the Master. »

« You make me angry! You know everything, you do everything and you never tell me anything. You are worse than a fish. » Peter vents his disappointment on his brother.

« Brother, don't get angry. You speak also in my place. Let us go and haul our nets. Come. »

Some go to the right, some to the left and it all ends.

130. Jesus at the « Clear Water »: « You Shall Not Bear False Witness ».

14th March 1945.

« How many people! » exclaims Matthew.

And Peter replies: « Look! There are also some Galileans… Ah! Ah! Let us go and tell the Master. They are three honourable bandits! »

« They are after me, perhaps. They pester me even here… »

« No, Matthew. A shark will not eat a little fish. It wants a man, a noble prey. And if it cannot really find one, it will gorge a big fish. But you, I and the others, are tiny little fish… trifles. »

« Are you referring to the Master? » asks Matthew.

« Of course! Can't you see how they are looking in every direction? They are like wild beasts scenting the trail of a gazelle. »

« I am going to tell Him… »

« Wait! Let us tell Alphaeus' sons. He is too good. A wasted goodness if swallowed by those mouths. »

« You are right. »

The two go to the river and call James and Judas. « Come here.

There are some queer types… Good for the gallows. They have certainly come to annoy the Master. »

« Let us go. Where is He? »

« He is still in the kitchen. Let us be quick, because if He finds out He will object. »

« Yes. And He is wrong. »

« I say that, too. »

They go back to the threshing floor. The group, described as "Galilean", are speaking condescendingly to other people. Judas of Alphaeus goes near them, as if by chance. And he hears:

« … words are to be supported by facts. »

« And they are! Also yesterday He cured a Roman who was possessed! »

« Horrible! He cured a pagan! What a scandal! Have you heard that, Eli? »

« All faults are in Him: He is friendly with excisemen and prostitutes, and is in touch with heathens and… »

« And He endures scandalmongers, which is also a fault, and the gravest, in my eyes. But since He does not know and does not want to defend Himself, speak to me about it. I am His brother and I am older than He is, and this is another brother, the oldest(,). Speak up. »

« Why are you getting angry? Do you think that we are speaking ill of the Messiah? Oh! We have come from very far because of His fame. We were also telling these people… »

« Liar! You are so disgusting that I am turning my back on you. » And Judas of Alphaeus, probably because he feels that his love for his enemies is in danger, goes away.

« Isn't what we said true? Everybody here can tell… »

But not one of the « everybody », that is of those to whom the Galileans were speaking, utters a word. They do not wish to lie and they dare not give them the lie. So they remain silent.

« We do not even know what He is like… » says the Galilean Eli.

« You did not insult Him in my house, did you? » asks Matthew ironically. « Or has a disease made you lose your memory? »

The "Galilean" covers himself with his mantle and goes away with the others without replying.

« Coward » shouts Peter after him.

« They were telling us dreadful things about Him… » explains a man. « But we have seen His deeds. On the other hand we know what they, the Pharisees, are like. Whom should we believe then? The Good One, Who is really good, or the wicked ones, who say they are good, whereas they are a calamity? I know that since I

(1) It is to be remembered that the Hebrew word "brother" was used not only for a male kinsman having the same parents, but also for other relatives, and in particular for cousins.

have been coming here, I have changed so much, that I do not recognise myself any more. I was violent and hard on my wife and children, I had no respect for my neighbours, instead now… Everybody at the village says: "Azariah is no longer himself ". So? Has anyone ever heard that a demon makes people good? For whom does he work then? For our holiness? Oh! he is a strange demon indeed if he works for the Lord! »

« You are right, man. And may God protect you because you understand, see and work properly. Carry on like that and you will be a true disciple of the blessed Messiah. You will be a joy for Him Who wants your good and bears everything to lead you to it. Be scandalised only at true evil. But when you see that He works in the name of God do not be scandalised, and do not believe those who would like to persuade you of scandals, even if you see Him doing new things. These are new times. They have come like a flower, which has come up after its roots have been working for centuries. Had He not been preceded by centuries of expectation, we could not have understood His Word. But centuries of obedience to the Law of Sinai have given us the minimum preparation which enables us to inhale all the incense and the new times, a divine flower that the Bounty has granted us to see, and thus purify and fortify ourselves and spray ourselves with the scent of holiness like altars. New times have new systems, which are not contrary to the Law, but are infused with mercy and charity because He is the Mercy and the Love which descended from Heaven. » James of Alphaeus waves his hand to the people and goes towards the house.

« You do speak well! » says Peter amazed. « I never know what to say. I can only say: "Be good. Love Him, listen to Him and believe Him". I don't really know how He can be satisfied with me! »

« And yet He is very satisfied » replies James of Alphaeus.

« Do you really mean that or are you saying so out of kindness? »

« It is true. Also yesterday He was telling me. »

« Was He? In that case I am happier today than I was on the day they brought me my bride. But… where did you learn to speak so well? »

« On His Mother's knees and beside Him. What lessons! What words! Only He can speak better than She. But what She lacks in power, She gains in kindness… and penetrates your heart. Oh! Her lessons! Have you ever seen a piece of cloth the corner of which touches a scented oil? It slowly absorbs the scent but not the oil and even if the oil is removed, the scent is still there to say: "I was there". She is like that. With Her wisdom and grace She imbued us, coarse pieces of cloth which later life washed, and Her perfume is within us. »

« Why does He not make Her come? He said He was going to! We

would become good, we would not be such blockheads… at least I would not. And also these people… In Her presence they would be good, also those wicked persons who come now and again… »

« Do you think so? I don't. We would improve and also the humble people. But the mighty and the wicked ones!… Oh! Simon of Jonas! Don't ascribe your honest feelings to other people! You would be disappointed… Here He is coming. Don't let us say anything… »

Jesus comes out of the kitchen holding the hand of a little boy, who toddles along with Him, eating a piece of bread seasoned with olive oil. Jesus adapts His stride to the little legs of His friend. « I made a conquest! » He says happily. « This four year old man, whose name is Asriel, told Me that he wants to be a disciple and wants to learn everything: to preach, to cure sick children, to make the vine shoots bear bunches of grapes also in December and then he wants to climb up a mountain and shout to the whole world: "Come, the Messiah is here!" Is that right Asriel? »

The smiling child replies: « Yes » and continues eating his piece of bread.

« You are hardly capable of eating! » Thomas teases him.

« You are not even capable of saying who the Messiah is. »

« He is Jesus of Nazareth. »

« And what does "Messiah" mean? »

« It means… it means: the Man Who was sent to be good and to make us all good. »

« And what does He do to make us good? And since you are a little rascal, what will you do? »

« I will love Him. And I will do everything. And He will do everything, because I love Him. If you do that, you will become good, too. »

« And you have had your lesson, Thomas. You have the commandment: "Love Me and you will do everything, because I will love you if you love Me; and love will work everything in you". The Holy Spirit has spoken. Come, Asriel. Let us go and preach. » Jesus is so happy when He is with a child, that I would like to take all the children to Him and make Him known to all the children. Instead there are so many who do not even know Him by name!

He passes in front of the veiled woman and before reaching her He says to the child: « Say to that woman: "Peace be with you". »

« Why? »

« Because she is like you when you fall and hurt yourself. And she is weeping. But if you tell her that, it will pass. »

« Peace be with you, woman. Don't cry. The Messiah told me. If you love Him, He will love you and cure you » shouts the child while Jesus drags him away without stopping. Asriel has the stuff missionaries are made of. Even if for the time being his sermons

are somewhat… untimely and he says more than he was asked to say.

« Peace to you all.

It is said: "You shall not bear false witness".

What is there more nauseating than a liar? Can we not say that he joins cruelty to impurity? Of course, we can. A liar, I am talking of a liar in grave matters, is cruel. He kills a reputation with his tongue. So he does not differ from a murderer. Nay: he is more than a murderer. A murderer kills only the body. A liar kills also a good name, the memory of a man. He is, therefore, twice a murderer. He is an unpunished murderer because he does not shed blood, but he injures the reputation both of the person calumniated and of the whole family. And I will not take into consideration the case of the person who brings about the death of his neighbour by swearing false witness. The coal of Gehenna is already piled upon such person. I am only talking of those who make false insinuations by telling lies and stir up other people against an innocent person. Why do they do that? Either out of hatred, without any reason, or out of greed to get what another man possesses, or out of fear.

Hatred. Only a friend of Satan hates. A good person does not hate. Never. For no reason whatsoever. Even if he is scorned and damaged, he forgives. He never hates. Hatred is the witness that a lost soul bears of itself and is the best witness in favour of an innocent man. Because hatred is the revolt of evil against good. Who is good does not need to be forgiven.

Greed. "He has what I have not got. I want what he has. But only by disparaging him I can obtain his position. And I am going to do it. Will I be lying? What does it matter? Will I be stealing? What does it matter? Will I ruin a whole family? What does it matter?" Of the many questions that the shrewd liar asks himself, he forgets, he wants to forget one question. This one: "And if I should be found out?" He does not ask himself such question, because a prey to pride and greed, he is like one whose eyes are closed. He does not see the danger. He is also like a drunk man. He is intoxicated with a satanic wine and does not consider that God is stronger than Satan and takes vengeance of the calumniated man. The liar has given himself to Falsehood and foolishly relies on its protection.

Fear. Many a time man slanders to excuse himself. It is the most common form of falsehood. Evil has been done. We are afraid it might be found out as our deed. Then, using and abusing the esteem in which we are still held by other people, we upset the situation, and we saddle someone else, of whose honesty only we are afraid, with the evil deed we accomplished. We also do it, because at times our neighbour has been the unintentional witness

of our evil action, and we want to be secure from his eventual witness. So we accuse him to make him unpopular and thus, if he should speak, no one may believe him.

Behave properly! And you will never need such falsehood. Do you not consider, when you lie, what a heavy burden you take upon yourselves? It is made of subjection to the evil spirit, of perpetual fear of being found out, and of the necessity of remembering the lie, also after years, in all the circumstances and details in which it was told, without contradicting oneself. The labour of a galley-slave! If it only helped to gain Heaven! Instead it serves only to prepare a place in hell!

Be frank. How lovely are the lips of a man who does not know falsehood! He may be poor, coarse, unknown? He is, is he? But he is still a king. Because he is sincere. And sincerity is more regal than gold and diadems, and elevates one above the crowds more than a throne, and procures a greater court of good people than a monarch has. Intimacy with a sincere man gives safety and comfort. Whereas friendship with an insincere person, or even to be near such a person, causes a feeling of uneasiness. Since the truth soon comes to light in a thousand ways, why does he who lies not consider that afterwards he will always be suspected? How can one believe what he says? Even if he speaks the truth, and who hears him wants to believe him, there is always a doubt: "Is he lying also now?" You may ask: "Where is the false witness?" Every lie is a false witness. Not only legal ones.

Be simple, like God and a child. Be truthful every moment of your lives. Do you want to be considered good? Be truly so. Even if a scandalmonger should wish to speak evil of you, one hundred good people will say: "No. It is not true. He is good. His deeds speak of him".

In one of the sapiential books it is said: "A scoundrel, a vicious man, he goes with a leer on his lips… Deceit in his heart, always scheming evil, he sows dissension… There are six things that the Lord hates, seven that His soul abhors: a haughty look, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that weaves wicked plots, feet that hurry to do evil, a false witness who lies with every breath, a man who sows dissension among brothers… His own lips are to blame when the wicked man is entrapped. A false witness is nothing but deceit. Lips that tell the truth abide firm for ever, the tongue that lies lasts only for a moment. The words of a backbiter sound simple, but they pierce man's heart. The enemy brooding over treason is known by his speech. Do not trust him when he whispers, because he carries seven evils in his heart. He deceitfully conceals his hatred, but his wickedness will be disclosed… The man who digs a pit falls into it, the stone comes back on him that rolls it".

The sin of falsehood is as old as the world and the thought of the wise man concerning it is unchanged, unchanged is also the judgement of God on those who lie. I say: have only one language. May your "yes" be always "yes" and your "no" be always "no", also before mighty ones and tyrants. And you will receive great reward in Heaven for it. I say to you: be spontaneous like a child who by instinct goes towards him whom he perceives to be good without seeking anything but goodness. And he says what his own goodness makes him think, without considering whether he says too much and whether he may be reproached for it.

Go in peace. And may the Truth become your friend. »

Little Asriel, who has been sitting all the time at Jesus' feet, looking up at Him like a little bird that listens to the song of its father, makes a loving gesture: he rubs his little face against Jesus' knees and says to Him: « You and I are friends because You are good and I love You. Now I will say that too » and forcing his voice to make himself heard from one end to the other of the large room, gesticulating as he saw Jesus doing, he says: « Listen, everybody. I know where the people go who do not tell lies and love Jesus of Nazareth. They climb up Jacob's ladder. Up, up, up… together with the angels and they stop when they find the Lord » and he smiles happily, displaying his little teeth.

Jesus caresses him and goes among the crowd. He takes the little one back to his mother and says: « Thank you, woman, for giving Me your child. »

« He has bothered You… »

« No. He has given Me love. He is a little one of the Lord and may the Lord be always with him and with you. Goodbye. » It all ends.

131. Jesus at the « Clear Water »: « You Shall Not Covet What Belongs to Your Neighbour. »

15th March 1945.

« God gives everybody what is necessary. That is the truth. What is necessary to man? Pomp? A large number of servants? Countless fields? Banquets lasting from sunset to dawn? No. All that is necessary to man is a roof, a loaf, a garment. The indispensable to live.

Look around yourselves. Who are the happiest and the healthiest? Who enjoys a healthy tranquil old age? Fast living people? No. Those who live and work honestly and wish honest things. They are not poisoned by lust and thus they are strong. They are not intoxicated by orgies and are thus agile. They are not consumed by the poison of jealousy and are thus cheerful. Who instead craves to possess more and more, kills his own peace and has no joy,

grows old precociously, consumed by envy and abuses.

I could link the commandment: "You shall not steal" to the other one: "You shall not covet what belongs to your neighbour". In fact an immoderate longing urges one to steal. The step between the two is a very short one. Is every desire an unlawful one? I do not mean that. The father of a family who works in the fields or in a workshop and wishes to gain what is necessary to secure food for his family, most certainly does not commit a sin. On the contrary he fulfils his duty of a father. Who instead craves only to enjoy more and takes possession of what belongs to other people to have a better time, commits a sin.

Envy! What is to covet other people's property but avarice and envy? My dear children, envy separates man from God and unites him to Satan. Do you not remember that Lucifer was the first one to covet what did not belong to him? He was the most beautiful of the archangels and enjoyed the vision of God. He should have been happy with that. He envied God, wanted to be God and became a demon. The first demon. Another instance: Adam and Eve had been given everything, they enjoyed the earthly paradise and God's friendship, blessed with the gifts of grace which God had granted them. They should have been satisfied with that. They envied God's knowledge of good and evil and were driven out of Eden and became disliked by God. The first sinners. A third instance: Cain envied Abel's friendship with the Lord. And he became the first killer. Mary, the sister of Aaron and Moses, envied her brother and became the first leper in the history of Israel. I could lead you step by step through the whole history of the people of God, and you would see that immoderate longing made men sinners and brought the country calamity. Because the sins of the individuals accumulate and bring disasters to the country, exactly as grains of sand, piling up throughout centuries, cause landslides which overwhelm villages and their inhabitants.

I have often cited little children as an instance, because they are simple and trustful. Today I say to you: imitate birds in their freedom from desires. Look. It is now winter. There is little food in the orchards. Do they worry about hoarding it in summer? No, they do not. They trust in the Lord. They know that they will always be able to catch for their little crops a small worm, a little grain, a crumb, a small spider, a little fly floating on water. They know that there will always be a warm chimney-top or a flock of wool to shelter them in winter, and they know as well that when the time comes when they will need hay for their nests and more food for their little ones, there will be sweet-smelling hay in the fields and juicy food in the orchards and in the furrows, and the air and the soil will be rich in insects. And they slowly sing: "Thank You, Creator, for what You give us and will give us", and they are

ready to sing hosannas at the top of their voices when they will enjoy the company of their mates during the mating season and they see their offspring multiply.

Is there a happier creature than a bird? And what is its intelligence as compared to the intelligence of man? A chip of silica compared with a mountain. But it teaches you a lesson. I solemnly tell you that who lives without any impure desires possesses the joy of a bird. He trusts in God, feels that God is his Father. He smiles at the rising day and at the falling night, because he knows that the sun is his friend and night his nourishment. He looks at men without malice and is not afraid of their vengeance, because he does not harm them in any way. He is not afraid for his health or his sleep, because he knows that an honest life prevents diseases and grants a peaceful rest. And finally he is not afraid of death, because he knows that, since he always acted well, God can but smile at him. Also a king dies. And a rich man dies. A sceptre will not avert death, neither can money buy immortality. As before the King of kings and the Lord of lords crowns and money are ridiculous things, a life lived according to the Law is the only thing of value!

What are those men at the end of the room saying? Do not be afraid of speaking. »

« We were saying: of what sin is Antipas guilty? Of theft or adultery? »

« I would like you to look at your own hearts, and not at other people. But I will reply to you that he is guilty of idolatry, because he worships the flesh more than God, and he is guilty of adultery, theft, unlawful desires, and he will soon be guilty of homicide. »

« Will he be saved by You, the Saviour? »

« I will save those who are repentant and return to God. The unrepentant shall have no redemption. »

« You said that he is a thief. What did he steal? »

« His brother's wife. A theft is not only of money. It is also theft to take a man's reputation, to seduce a virgin, to take a wife away from her husband, as it is theft to steal a neighbour's ox or his plants. A theft, aggravated by lust or false witness, is aggravated by adultery, fornication or falsehood. »

« And what sin does a woman, who prostitutes herself, commit? »

« If she is married, a sin of adultery and theft with regard to her husband. If she is not married, a sin of impurity and of theft with regard to herself. »

« To herself? But she gives what belongs to her!! »

« No. Our body was created by God to be the temple of the soul, which is the temple of God. It must, therefore, be kept honest, otherwise the soul will be robbed of God's friendship and of eternal life. »

,« A prostitute then can only be of Satan? »

« Every sin is prostitution with Satan. A sinner, like a hired woman, gives himself to Satan for unlawful love, hoping to make a foul profit. Prostitution is a grave, a very grave sin which makes man like unclean animals. But do you think that any other capital sin is not so grave? What shall I say of idolatry? Of homicide? And yet God forgave the Israelites after the golden calf. He forgave David after his sin, which was a twofold one. God forgives who is repentant. Let repentance be proportioned to the number and gravity of sins, and I tell you that who is more repentant, will be more forgiven. Because repentance is a kind of love. Of active love. Who repents, says to God by his repentance: "I cannot bear Your wrath, because I love You and I want to be loved". And God loves who loves Him. I therefore say: the more one loves, the more one is loved. Who loves completely, is completely forgiven.

And that is the truth.

Go. But before I must let you know that at the gate of the village there is a widow, with many children, who are starving to death. She has been driven out of her house because of debts. And she may still "thank" the landlord, because he only drove her out. I have used your alms to buy bread for them. But they need a shelter. Mercy is the most acceptable sacrifice to the Lord. Be good and in His name I give you assurance of a reward. »

The people whisper, consult with one another, discuss.

Jesus in the meantime cures a man who is almost blind and listens to a little old woman who has come from Doco to beg Him to go to her daughter-in-law who is ill. A long woeful story, which I, exhausted as I am today, will not write.

And, fortunately, it all comes to an end, because I am definitely not fit to go on, as I have been suffering from a heart attack these last three hours and it has dazzled also my sight.

132. Jesus at the « Clear Water ». Closure.

17th March 1945.

« My children in the Lord, the Feast of Purification is now at hand, and I, the Light of the world, am sending you prepared with the minimum necessities to celebrate it properly. It is the first light of the feast from which you will light all the others. Because he who should pretend to light many lamps without having the means to light the first one, would be quite foolish. And even more foolish would be he who pretended to start his own sanctification from the most arduous things, neglecting what is the basis of the immutable building of perfection: the Decalogue.

We read in the Book of Maccabees that Judas with his men, after reconquering the Temple and the City with the protection of the

Lord, destroyed the altars and the temples of the foreign gods and purified the Temple. He then erected another altar, and with flints he lit a fire, offered sacrifices, burnt the incense, placed the lights and laid the loaves of the proposition and then, they all prostrated themselves and begged the Lord not to let them sin any more and if, owing to their weakness, they should fall into sin again, to be treated with divine mercy. And that happened on the twenty-fifth of the month of Chislev.

Let us consider and apply the narrative to ourselves, because every word in the history of Israel, the chosen people, has a spiritual meaning. Life is always a lesson. The life of Israel is a teaching not only for our earthly days, but also for the conquest of the eternal days.

"They destroyed the altars and the pagan temples".

That is the first operation. The one I told you to carry out when I mentioned the individual gods that take the place of the true God: the idolatries of sensuality, of gold, of pride, the capital vices that lead to the desecration and death of the soul and of the body and to the punishment of God. I did not crush you under the numberless formulae which now oppress the believers and are a bulwark against the true Law, which is oppressed and concealed by heaps of exterior prohibitions, which by their very oppression cause the believers to lose sight of the unswerving clear holy voice of the Lord Who says: "Do not curse. Do not idolise. Do not desecrate the festivals. Do not dishonour your parents. Do not kill. Do not fornicate. Do not steal. Do not lie. Do not covet other people's belongings. Do not covet your neighbour's wife". Ten prohibitions. Not one more. And they are the ten columns of the temple of the soul. Above them shines the gold of the holiest precept: "Love your God. Love your neighbour". It is the coronation of the temple. It is the protection of its foundations. It is the glory of its builder.

Without love one could not keep the ten rules and the columns would fall, all of them or some, and the temple would crash, all of it or part. But it would always be a ruin and no longer suitable to receive the Most Holy. Do what I told you, knock down the three lusts. Be sincere in giving a name to your vices, as God is sincere in saying to you: "Do not do this or that". It is useless subtilising forms. Who loves something more than he loves God, whatever that love may be, is an idolater. Who invokes God professing himself His servant and then does not obey Him, is a rebel. Who out of greed works on the Sabbath is a distrustful presumptious desecrator. Who refuses help to his parents, advancing pretexts, even if he says that they are works given to God, is one who is hated by God, Who put fathers and mothers as His image on the earth. Who kills is always a murderer. Who fornicates is always lustful. Who steals is always a thief. Who lies is always vile. Who

covets what is not his, is always a greedy loathsome glutton. Who desecrates a nuptial bed is always filthy.

It is so. And I remind you that after the erection of the golden calf, there came the wrath of the Lord; after Solomon's idolatry there was the schism that divided and weakened Israel; and our present misfortunes of spirit, fate and nationality came after Hellenism was accepted, nay, introduced and welcomed by unworthy Judaeans under Antiochus Epiphanes. I remind you that Nadab and Abihu, false servants of God, were struck by Jehovah. Remember that the manna was not holy on Sabbaths. Remember Cam and Absalom. And I recall the sin of David against Uriah and the sin of Absalom against Amnon. I recall the end of Absalom and Amnon, the fate of Heliodorus, a thief, and of Simon and Menelaus. I remind you of the ignoble end of the two false elders who had borne false witness against Susanna. And I could continue with instances without finding an end to them. But let us go back to the Maccabees.

"And they purified the Temple".

It is not enough to say: "I destroy". It is necessary to say: "I purify". I told you how a man is purified: by humble and sincere repentance. There is no sin that God will not forgive if the sinner is really repentant. Have faith in the Divine Bounty. If you were able to understand what that Bounty is, even if all the sins of the world were upon you, you would not flee from God, on the contrary you would run to His feet, because only the Most Good One can forgive what man does not forgive.

"And they erected another altar".

Oh! Do not try to deceive the Lord. Do not be false in your behaviour. Do not mix God and Mammon. You would have an empty altar: God's. Because it is useless to erect a new altar if there are still remains of the other one. Either God or the idol. Make your choice.

"And they lit the fire with flint and tinder".

The flint is the firm will to belong to God. The tinder is the desire to cancel in God's heart even the memory of your sin during the rest of your lives. Then the fire is lit: love. Because the son who by means of an honourable life endeavours to console the parent he had offended, does love his father, as he wants him to be happy on account of his son, who before was the cause of his tears and is now his joy.

Now, at this point, you may offer sacrifices, bum incense, lay the lights and the loaves. The sacrifices will be acceptable to God, and the prayers agreeable, the altar will really be lit up, rich in the food of your daily offers. You may pray saying: "Be our Protector", because He will be your friend. But His mercy did not wait for you to ask for it. It anticipated your desire. And He sent

Mercy to say to you: "Do have hope. I am telling you: God forgives you. Come to the Lord".

There is an altar already amongst you: the new altar. Streams of light and forgiveness flow from it. Like oil they spread, cure, reinvigorate. Believe the Word that comes from it. Weep with Me over your sins. Like a Levite who conducts a chorus, I will direct your voices to God, and your wailing, if united to My voice, will not be rejected. I lower Myself with you, the Brother of men according to the flesh, the Son of the Father according to the spirit, and I say for you and with you: "From this deep abyss, where I-Mankind have fallen, I cry to You, Lord. Listen to the voice of him who looks at himself and sighs, and do not close Your ears to my words. O God, I am horrified at seeing myself. I am horrible in my own eyes! And what shall I be in Your eyes? Do not look at my faults, o Lord, otherwise I will not be able to withstand Your presence, but have mercy on me. Because You said: 'I am Mercy'. And I believe in Your word. My soul, wounded and depressed, confides in You, in Your promises, and from dawn till dusk, from my youth till my old age I will hope in You".

Although guilty of homicide and adultery and reproved by God, David was forgiven after he cried to the Lord: "Have mercy on me, not out of respect for me, but for the glory of Your mercy which is infinite. And in Your mercy wipe away my sin. There is no water that can wash my heart unless it is taken from the deep water of Your holy goodness. Wash me of my injustice with it and purify me of my foulness. I do not deny that I sinned. Nay, I confess my crime, my sin is constantly in my mind like an accusing witness. I offended man in my neighbour and in myself, but I am particularly sorry that I sinned against You. And may this tell You that I acknowledge that You are just in Your words and I am afraid of Your judgement which triumphs over all human power. But consider, o Eternal God, that I was born guilty and that she who conceived me was a sinner, and that You have loved me so much as to reveal and give me Your wisdom as my teacher that I might understand the mysteries of Your sublime truth. And if You have done so much, shall I fear You? No. I do not fear You. Sprinkle me with the bitterness of sorrow and I shall be purified. Wash me with tears and I shall become like mountain snow. Let me hear Your voice, and Your humiliated servant will rejoice, because Your voice is joy and happiness, even when it reproaches. Turn Your face to my sins, and Your eyes will cancel my iniquity. The heart You gave me was desecrated by Satan and by my human weakness. Create a clean heart in me, and destroy what is corrupted in the viscera of Your servant, so that an upright spirit only may reign in him. Do not banish me from Your presence and do not deprive me of Your friendship, because only Your salvation is the

joy of my soul and Your sovereign spirit is the consolation of a humiliated heart. May I be Your messenger among men and say to them: 'See how good the Lord is. Walk in His ways and you will be blessed, as I am, I the abortion of man who am becoming a son of God through His grace which is restored in me'. And the sinner will return to You. Blood and flesh are boiling and howling in me. Save me from them, o Lord, salvation of my soul, and I will sing Your praise. I did not know. But now I have understood. You do not want a sacrifice of rams, but the holocaust of a broken heart. A crushed and broken heart is more pleasing to You than rams, because You created us for Yourself and You want us to remember that and to give back to You what is Yours. Be benign to me in Your great goodness and rebuild my Jerusalem and Yours: a purified and forgiven soul on which sacrifice, oblation and holocaust my be offered for sins, thanksgiving and praise. And may every new day of mine be an offering of holiness consumed upon Your altar to ascend to You with the scent of my love".

Come! Let us go to the Lord. I in front, you behind. Let us go to the wholesome water, to the holy pastures, to the land of God. Forget the past. Smile at the future. Do not worry about the mire, look at the stars. Do not say: "I am darkness"; say: "God is Light". I have come to announce peace to you, to give the Good News to the meek, to cure those whose hearts are crushed by too many things, to preach freedom to all the slaves, and first of all to the slaves of Mammon, to free prisoners from lust.

I tell you: the year of grace has come. Do not weep, if you are sad because you know that you are sinners, do not weep, exiles of the Kingdom of God. I will replace your ashes with gold, and your tears with oil. I will put the best clothes on you to introduce you to the Lord and say to Him: "Here are the sheep You set Me to look for. I visited and gathered them, I counted them, I looked for the ones which had gone astray and I have brought them to You, protecting them from rain and fog. I have taken them amongst all the peoples, I have gathered them from every region to lead them to the Land which is not on the earth, which You prepared for them, Holy Father, to take them up to the heavenly tops of your fertile mountains, where everything is light and beauty, along the streams of celestial bliss where the spirits You love are sated with You. I also looked for the wounded ones, I cured the ones which were injured, I restored the weak ones, I did not neglect even one. And I carried on My shoulders, like a loving joke, the one which had almost been torn to pieces and devoured by the wolves of sensuality and I lay her at Your feet, benign holy Father, because she can no longer walk, neither does she know Your words, she is a poor soul chased by remorse and men, she is a mourning trembling soul, she is like a heavy wave that breaks on the coast. She comes

forward with her desire, but the knowledge of herself drives her back… Open Your bosom to her, Loving Father, so that this lost creature may find peace in it. Say to her: 'Come!' Say to her: 'You are Mine'. She belonged to the whole world, but she loathes it and is afraid of it. She says: 'Every master is a filthy bravo'. Let her say: 'This King of mine has given me the joy of being caught!' She does not know what love is. But if You receive her, she will learn that this celestial love is the nuptial love of God and the human spirit, and like a bird freed from the cage of cruel people, she will climb higher and higher, up to You, to Heaven, to joy and glory, singing: 'I have found Whom I sought. My heart has no further desire. I rest and rejoice in You, eternal Lord, blessed for ever!' ".

Go. Celebrate the Feast of Purification with a new spirit. And may the light of God shine within You. »

The conclusion of Jesus' speech has been overwhelming. His eyes were shining in His bright face and His smile and voice were of a gentleness never known before.

The people are almost fascinated and they do not move until He repeats: « Go. Peace be with you. » The pilgrims then start to leave speaking among themselves.

The veiled woman walks away quickly, as usual, with her lightly swaying agile step. She seems to have wings as the wind swells her mantle round her shoulders.

« I will now see whether she is from Israeli » says Peter.

« Why? »

« Because if she remains here, it means… »

« … that she is a poor woman without a house of her own. Nothing more, remember that, Peter. » Jesus walks towards the village.

« Yes, Master, I will remember. And what shall we do now that they will all be staying at home for the Feast? »

« Our women will be lighting the lamps in our place. »

« I am sorry… It is the first year that I do not see them being lit in my house, or that I do not light them myself. »

« You are a big baby. We will light the lamps, too. So you will not be in a sulk any longer. And you will be the very one to light them. »

« Me? Not I, Lord. You are the Head of our family. It's for You to light them. »

« I am a lamp which is always lit… and I would like you all to be such, as well. I am the eternal Purification, Peter. Do you know that I was born on the twenty-fifth of Chislev? »

« I wonder how many lamps? » asks Peter full of admiration.

« It was impossible to count them… All the stars in the sky… »

« No! Did they not celebrate Your birthday at Nazareth? »

« I was not born in Nazareth, but in a stable in Bethlehem. I see

that John knows how to be quiet. John is very obedient »

« And he is not curious, whereas I am very much so! Will You tell Your poor Simon all about it? Otherwise how can I speak about You? Many times people ask me questions, and I never know what to say… The others are clever, I mean Your brothers and Simon, Bartholomew and Judas of Simon. Yes, also Thomas is good at speaking… he sounds like a crier at the market… selling goods. But he can speak… Matthew… well, it's no problem for him! He makes use of his old skill at the customs bench to fleece people and compel them to say: "You are right". But I!… poor Simon of Jonas! What did the fish teach you? And the lake? Two things… but they are of no use: the fish to be silent and persevering. They persevered in escaping from the net and I persevered in keeping them in it. The lake taught me to be brave and vigilant. And what about the boat? It taught me to slog away without sparing any of my muscles and to stand up even when the lake was rough and one might fall. To watch the pole-star, to hold the rudder with a firm hand, to be strong, brave, constant, careful, that is what my poor life taught me… »

Jesus lays a hand on his shoulder and shakes him looking at him with loving admiration, a true admiration of such sincerity and says to him: « Do you not think that is a lot, Simon Peter? You have what is necessary to be My "stone". Nothing to be added, nothing to be taken away. You will be the eternal navigator, Simon. And you will say to who comes after you: "Watch the pole-star, that is, Jesus. A firm hand on the rudder, strength, courage, firmness, carefulness, hard work without sparing oneself, an eye on everything, capability of standing up also on rough seas… " With regard to being silent… well… the fish did not teach you that! »

« With regard to what I should be able to say, I am more mute than fish. The other words?… Also magpies can chatter as well as I do… But tell me, my Master? Will You give a son also to me? We are old… But You said that the Baptist's mother was old… Now you said: "And you will say to him who comes after you… " Who comes after a man but his son? » Peter's face expresses prayer and hope.

« No, Peter. And do not be upset about it. You look just like your lake when the sun is hidden by a cloud. From bright it becomes dull. No, My dear Peter. You will not have one, but a thousand, ten thousand sons, and in every country… Do you not remember what I said to you: "You will be a fisher of men"? »

« Oh!… Yes… but… A child who called me "father" would be so kind! »

« You will have so many that you will not be able to count them. And you will give them eternal life. And you will find them in Heaven and will bring them to Me saying: "Here are the children

of Your Peter and I want them to be where I am", and I will say to you: "Yes, Peter. It will be done as you wish. Because you have done everything for Me and I will do everything for you". » Jesus is most kind in making such promises.

Peter swallows saliva while weeping over the dying hope of an earthly paternity and at the same time shedding joyful tears at the rapture announced to him. « Oh! Lord! » he says. « But to give eternal life it is necessary to persuade souls to be good. And we are back to the same point: I am not good at speaking. »

« When the time comes, you will be able to speak better than Gamaliel. »

« I want to believe You… But, You work the miracle, because if I have to do it by myself… »

Jesus smiles at him gently and says: « Today I am entirely yours. Let us go through the village. We will go and see the widow. I have a secret offer. A ring to be sold. Do you know how I got it? A stone fell near My feet, while I was praying under this willow tree. A little parcel was tied to the stone with a tiny strip of parchment. Inside the little parcel there was the ring and on the parchment one word: "Charity". »

« Let me see? Oh? beautiful! A woman's ring. What a tiny finger! But how heavy it is!… »

« Now you will sell it. I am not capable. The hotel-keeper buys gold. I will wait for you near the baker's. Go, Peter. »

« But… I don't know what to do. I… gold… I know nothing about gold! »

« Just think that it is bread for people who are hungry, and do your best. Goodbye. »

And Peter turns to the right, while Jesus, more slowly, goes to the left, towards the village, which appears in the distance from behind a thicket on the other side of the steward's house.

133. Jesus Leaves the « Clear Water » and Goes towards Bethany.

18th March 1945.

There are no pilgrims at the Clear Water. It is a strange sensation to see the place without any people stopping there for the night or taking their meals on the threshing-floor or under the shed. Everything is clean and tidy today, without any of the traces that crowds usually leave.

The disciples spend their time in manual work, some make wickerwork fish traps, some dig out the ground to make drains for the rain water and thus prevent it from stagnating on the threshing-floor. Jesus is standing in the middle of a meadow crumbling bread for some sparrows. There is not a soul as far as

the eye can see, notwithstanding the clear day.

Andrew, who is coming back from an errand, goes towards Jesus and says: « Peace to You, Master. »

« And to you, Andrew. Come here with Me for a moment. You can stay here near these little birds. You are like them. See? When they know that who goes near them loves them, they are no longer afraid. See how confident, safe and happy they are. Before they were almost near My feet. Now that you are here they are on the look-out… But look… There is a bolder sparrow which is coming forwards. It has realised that there is no danger. And the others are following it. See how they eat to their fill? Is it not the same with us, the children of the Father? He sates us with His love. And when we are sure that we are loved and are asked to be His friends, why should we be afraid of Him or of ourselves? His friendship must make us bold also with men. Believe Me, only a criminal must be afraid of his fellow-creature. Not a just man like you. »

Andrew blushes but does not say anything.

Jesus draws him to Himself and smiling says to him: « You and Simon should be put into one crucible to be melted and formed again. You would then be both perfect. And yet… If -I told you that although you are so different now, you will be perfectly identical to Peter at the end of your mission, would you believe Me? »

« If You say so, it must be certain. I will not even ask how that may happen. Because everything You say is true. And I will be happy to be like my brother Simon, because he is just and makes You happy. Simon is clever! And I am so happy that he is clever. He is also brave and strong. But also the others!… »

« And are you not? »

« Oh! I… You are the only one who can be satisfied with me… »

« And I am the only one to realise that you work noiselessly but more deeply than the others. Because amongst the twelve disciples, there are some who make as much noise as the work they do. There are some who make much more noise than the work they do, and there are some who do nothing but work. A humble, active, ignored work… The others may think that they do nothing. But He Who sees, knows. There are such differences because you are not yet perfect. And there will always be such differences amongst future disciples, also amongst those who will come after you, until the angel will thunder: "Time no longer exists". There will always be ministers of Christ who are equally able to work and to draw upon themselves the eyes of the world: they are the masters. And unfortunately there will be also those who are nothing but noise and exterior gestures, false shepherds with a histrionic attitude… Priests? No, they are mimers. Nothing else. Gestures do not make the priest, neither does the cassock. Neither

worldly knowledge nor mighty worldly relations make the priest. It is his soul. So great a soul as to crush the flesh. My priest is completely spiritual… That is how I dream him. That is what My holy priests will be like. The spirit has neither the voice nor the attitude of the stage player. It is insubstantial because it is spiritual and therefore it cannot wear pepla or masks. It is what it is: spirit, fire, light, love. It speaks to the spirits. It speaks with the chastity of eyes, of gestures, of words, of deeds. Man looks. And he sees a fellow-creature. But what does he see above and beyond the flesh? Something that makes him slow down his hurried steps, that makes him meditate and conclude: "This man, who is like me, has only the appearance of man. He has the soul of an angel". If he is a misbeliever, he concludes: "Because of him I believe that there is a God and a Heaven". And if he is lustful, he says: "This fellow-creature of mine has heavenly eyes. I will restrain my sensuality so that I may not desecrate them". And if he is a miser, he decides: "Because of the instance of this man who is not attached to riches, I will stop being a miser". And if he is a man quick to anger or a cruel fellow, in front of a gentle person, he will become more quiet and calm. That is what a holy priest will be able to do. And, believe Me, amongst the holy priests there will always be some ready to die for the love of God and of their neighbour, and they will do it so quietly, after practising perfection throughout their lives also very quietly, that the world will not even notice them. But if the whole world does not become utter lewdness and idolatry, it will be through those heroes of silence and loyal activity. And their smiles will be like yours: pure and timid. Because there will always be some Andrews. They will exist through the grace of God and for the fortune of the world! »

« I did not think I deserved such words… I had done nothing to provoke them… »

« You helped Me to attract a heart to God. And it is the second one that you have led towards the Light. »

« Oh! Why did she speak! She had promised… »

« No one has spoken. But I know. When your tired companions rest, there are three sleepless people at the Clear Water. The apostle of the silent active love for his brother sinners. The creature urged by her soul towards salvation. And the Saviour Who prays and keeps watch, Who waits and hopes… My hope: that a soul may find salvation… Thank you, Andrew. Continue like that and be blessed for it. »

« Oh! Master!… Do not say anything to the others. When I am alone with a person, speaking to a leprous woman on a deserted beach, or speaking here to a woman whose face I do not see, I am still capable of doing very little. But if the others, and above all Simon, know about it and they want to come… then I am not able

to do anything at all. You must not come either… I am shy of speaking before You. »

« I will not come. Jesus will not come. But the Spirit of God has always been with you. Let us go home. They are calling us for our meal. »

And it all ends between Jesus and His gentle disciple.

They are still eating and they have already lit the lamp, because night falls very rapidly and because of the bitterly cold wind it is advisable to keep the door closed, when someone knocks at the door and John's gay voice is heard.

« Welcome! »

« You were quick! »

« What is the news? »

« You are heavily laden! »

They are all speaking at the same time, helping the three to take off the very heavy bags which they are carrying on their backs.

« Slowly! »

« Let us say hello to the Master! »

« Just a moment! »

There is a bright homely excitement due to the joy of being all together.

« I greet you, My friends. God gave you good weather. »

« Yes, Master. But not good news. I foresaw that » says the Iscariot.

« What's the matter? What happened?… » Their curiosity is aroused.

« Let them have some refreshment first » says Jesus.

« No, Master. We will give You and the others what we have first. And the first thing… John, give the letter. »

« Simon has it. I was afraid of spoiling it in my bag. »

The Zealot, who has been struggling so far with Thomas who wanted to serve him with water for his tired feet, comes forward saying: « I have it here, in my belt purse. » And he opens a pocket inside his wide red leather belt and pulls out a roll which has now been flattened out.

« It's from Your Mother. When we were near Bethany, we met Jonathan who was going to Lazarus' house with the letter and many other things. Jonathan is going to Jerusalem because Chuza is putting his house in order… Herod is perhaps going to Tiberias… and Chuza does not want his wife to stay with Herodias » explains the Iscariot while Jesus undoes the knots of the roll and unrolls it.

The apostles whisper while Jesus reads the words of His Mother smiling blissfully.

« Listen » He then says. « There is also something for the Galileans. My Mother writes:

"To Jesus, My gentle Son and Lord, peace and blessing.

Jonathan, a servant of the Lord, has brought Me kind presents from Johanna, who asks her Saviour to bless her, her husband and the whole household. Jonathan tells Me that he has been instructed by Chuza to go to Jerusalem to open his house in Zion. I bless the Lord for that, because I can thus let You have My words and blessings. Also Mary of Alphaeus and Salome send their love and blessings to their sons. And since Jonathan has been extremely kind, there are also the regards of Peter's wife to her far away husband and also the relatives of Philip and Nathanael send their kind regards. All your women, o dear far away men, have worked with needles, looms, or in the kitchen gardens and are sending you clothes for the winter months, and sweet honey, reminding you to take it with hot water in the damp evenings. Take care of yourselves. That is what your mothers and wives have told Me and I am telling you. Also My Son. We have not sacrificed ourselves for nothing, believe us. Enjoy the humble gifts that we, the disciples of Christ's disciples, are offering to the servants of the Lord, and give us only the joy of hearing that you are all well.

Now, My beloved Son, I think that for almost a year You have not been entirely Mine. And I seem to have gone back to the time when I knew that You were already here, because I felt Your little heart beat within My womb, but I could also say that You were not yet here, because You were separated from Me by a barrier which prevented Me from caressing Your beloved body and I could only adore Your spirit, o My dear Son and adorable God. Also now I know that You are here and that Your heart beats with Mine, never separated from Me even if we are not together, but I cannot caress, hear, serve and venerate You, the Messiah of the Lord and His poor maid.

Johanna wanted Me to go and stay with her, so that I would not be alone during the Feast of Lights. But I preferred to remain here with Mary, and light the lamps, for You and for Me. But if I were the greatest queen on the earth and I could light a thousand or ten thousand lamps, I would still be in darkness because You are not here. Whereas I was in a bright light in that dark grotto, when I pressed You to My heart, My Light and Light of the world. This will be the first time that I will say to Myself: 'My Child is a year older to-day' and I have not My Child with Me. And it will be sadder than Your first birthday at Matarea. But You are fulfilling Your mission and I Mine. And we are both doing the will of the Father and we are acting for the glory of God. That wipes all tears.

Dear Son, I know what You are doing from what I am told. As the waves carry the voice of the open sea as far as a solitary enclosed gulf, so the echo of Your holy work for the glory of God reaches our quiet little house and Your Mother rejoices and trembles, because if they all speak of You, not everyone expresses the same

hearty feelings. Friends and people You have helped, come to Me and say: 'Blessed be the Son of Your womb', and also Your enemies come to pierce My heart saying: 'Anathema on Him'. But I pray for the latter ones because they are poor unhappy people, even more than the pagans who come and ask: 'Where is the magician, the divine one?' and they do not realise that, while erring, they state a great truth, because You really are a priest and great, according to the ancient meaning of the word and You are Divine, My Jesus. And I send them on to You saying: 'He is in Bethany'. Because I know that I have to say so, until You give Me different instructions. And I pray for those who come seeking health for what is to die, that they may find salvation for their eternal souls.

Please do not worry about My sorrows. They are compensated by the great joy of the words of those whose bodies and souls have been cured. But Mary has had a greater sorrow than Mine; I am not the only one to be spoken to. Joseph of Alphaeus wants You to know that in one of his recent business trips to Jerusalem he was stopped and threatened because of You. They were men of the Great Council. I think he must have been pointed out by one of the great men here. Otherwise who would have known that Joseph is the head of the family and Your brother? I am telling You this, because as a woman I have to obey, But for what concerns Me I say to You: I would like to be near You, to comfort You. But I leave it to You to decide, since You are the Wisdom of the Father, without taking into account My tears. Your brother Simon was on the point of coming to see You after that incident. And he wanted Me to go with him. But he was held back by the bad weather and even more by the fear he might not find You, because we were told, as a threat, that You cannot stay where You are.

Son! My adored and holy Son! I am keeping My arms raised, as Moses did on the hilltop, praying for You in Your battle against the enemies of God and Yours, My Jesus, Whom the world does not love.

Leah of Isaac died here. And I was very sorry because she was always a good friend of Mine. But My greatest sorrow is that You are far away and not loved by people. I bless You, My Son, and as I give You peace and blessing, I ask You to give Yours to Mother". »

« Those impudent fellows reach even that house! » shouts Peter.

And Judas Thaddeus exclaims: « Joseph… might have kept the news to himself. But… I am sure he was dying to let people know! »

« The howl of hyenas does not frighten living people » states Philip.

« The trouble is that they are not hyenas, they are tigers. They are after a living prey » says the Iscariot, who then says to the Zealot: « Tell them what we have learned. »

« Yes, Master. Judas was right in being afraid. We went to see

Joseph of Arimathea and Lazarus, and we went there as well known friends of Yours. Then Judas and I, as if we were very old friends, went to see some of his friends in Zion… And… Joseph and Lazarus tell You to go away from here at once during these feast days. Don't insist, Master. It is for Your own good. Judas' friends then said: "Be careful, they have already decided to come and catch Him so that they may accuse Him, during these feast days when there is no people. Let Him retire for some time and thus disappoint those vipers. Doras' death has roused their poison and their fear. Because they are afraid besides being full of hatred. And fear causes them to see what does not exist and hatred makes them lie". »

« They know everything about us! It's a hideous situation! And they distort and exaggerate everything! And when they think that there is not enough to curse us, then they start inventing. They make me feel sick and discouraged. I feel like going into exile, like going… I don't know… far away. Away from Israel which is nothing but sin… » The Iscariot is depressed.

« Judas, Judas! A woman to bear a child to the world carries it for nine lunations. Do you want to be quicker in giving the world the knowledge of God? Not nine, but thousands of lunations will be required. And as at each lunation the moon waxes and then wanes appearing to us as a new moon, then as a full moon, then as a waning moon, so in the world there will always be growing, full and decreasing phases of religion. But even when religion will seem to be dead, it will be alive, exactly as the moon is still there also when she seems to have disappeared. And those who have worked at this religion will have full merits even if only a tiny minority of faithful souls will be left on the earth. Cheer up! Do not be easily roused in triumph, or easily depressed in defeat. »

« But… let us go away. We are not yet strong enough. And we feel that in front of the Sanhedrin we would be afraid. At least I would. I don't know about the others… But I don't think it would be wise to try. Our hearts are not like the hearts of the three young men at Nebuchadnezzar's court. »

« Yes, Master. It is better. »

« It's wise. »

« Judas is right. »

« You see that also Your Mother and relatives… »

« And Lazarus and Joseph. »

« We should not let them come at all. »

Jesus stretches out His arms and says: « Let it be done as you wish. But later we will come back here. You have seen how many people come. I will not force your souls or put them to the test. In fact, I feel that they are not yet ready… But let us see the work of the women. »

But while everybody with bright eyes and a joyful voice pulls out from the haversacks the parcels containing clothes, sandals, and the foodstuffs sent by the mothers and wives, and they all endeavour to get Jesus interested in admiring so many good things, He remains sad and self-absorbed. He reads His Mother's letter over and over again. Taking with Him a small lamp, He has withdrawn to the farthest comer from the table on which the clothes, apples, small jars of honey, small cheeses are, and shading His eyes with a hand, He seems to be meditating. But He is suffering.

« Look, Master, what a lovely tunic and mantle with hood my wife, poor woman, has made for me. I wonder how much she has worked on them, because she is not so skilled as Your Mother » says Peter, who is overjoyed while holding his treasures in his arms.

« Lovely, yes, they are lovely. She is a clever wife » says Jesus kindly. But His thoughts are far from the articles shown to Him.

« Our mother has made two tunics for us with thick woven cloth. Poor mother! Do You like them, Jesus? They are a lovely shade, aren't they? » says James of Zebedee.

« Really beautiful, James. It will suit you. »

« Look. I bet these belts were made by Your Mother. Only She can embroider like that. And I say that this double veil to protect us from sunshine was also made by Mary. It is like Yours. The tunic is not. Mother certainly wove it. Poor mother! After all the tears she shed last summer, she cannot see very well and often breaks the thread. What a dear! » And Judas of Alphaeus kisses the dark red heavy tunic.

« You are not very cheerful, Master » remarks Bartholomew at last. « You are not even looking at the things which were sent to You. »

« He cannot be » points out Simon Zealot.

« I am thinking… Well… Make the parcels up again. Sort everything out. It is not the time to be caught and we shall not be caught. At dead of night, in the moonlight, we will go towards Doco and then to Bethany. »

« Why to Doco? »

« Because there is a dying woman there, who is waiting to be cured by Me. »

« Are we not calling at the steward's? »

« No, Andrew. We are not calling anywhere. So no one will have to tell lies saying that they do not know where we are. If you are anxious not to be persecuted, I am anxious not to cause trouble to Lazarus. »

« But Lazarus is waiting for You. »

« And we are going to him. Or rather… Simon, will you give Me hospitality in the house of your old servant? »

« With pleasure, Master. You know everything, now. I can therefore say to you, on behalf of Lazarus, of myself and of him who lives in the house: it is Yours. »

« Let us go. Hurry up, so that we may be at Bethany before the Sabbath. »

And while they all scatter with lamps to do what is necessary for the sudden departure, Jesus is left alone.

Andrew comes back in, he goes near Jesus and asks: « What about that woman? I am sorry to leave her now that she was about to come… It is wise… You saw that… »

« Go and tell her that we will be coming back after some time and that in the meantime she should remember your words… »

« Your words, Lord. I only repeated Yours. »

« Go. Hurry up. And do not let anybody see you. Truly in this world of bad people, those who are innocent must look like wicked people… »

Everything ends on this great truth.

134. Cure of Jerusa, the Woman of Doco Afflicted with Cancer.

19th March 1945.

I see Jesus enter the little town of Doco, at daybreak, on a dull winter morning, and ask an early passer-by: « Where does Marian live, the old mother whose daughter-in-law is dying? »

« Marian? Levi's widow? The mother-in-law of Jerusa, Josiah's wife? »

« Yes. »

« Look, man. At the end of this street there is a square, on one side there is a fountain and three streets branch off from there. Take the street with a palm-tree in its centre and go along it for about one hundred steps. You will find a ditch. Follow it as far as the wooden bridge. Cross it and You will see a small archway. Go through it and you will find that it opens on to a square; you are there. Marian's house is yellowish because of its age. And with the expenses they have to meet, they cannot afford to clean it. You cannot go wrong. Goodbye. Are You coming from far? »

« Not very. »

« But You are a Galilean? »

« Yes. »

« And these? Have You come for the Feast? »

« They are friends. Goodbye, man. Peace be with you. » Jesus leaves the chatterbox, who is no longer in a hurry. And He goes His way followed by the apostles.

They reach the… little square: a small area of very muddy soil, in the centre of which there is a tall young oak, which has grown

without any hindrance and is probably very useful in summer. For the time being it only causes melancholy, because hanging over the poor houses, thick and dark as it is, it obstructs light and sunshine.

Marian's house is the poorest. It is large and low, but thoroughly neglected! The front door is full of patches which cover up the splintered parts of the very old wood. A small window has no covering and it shows a black hole like an empty eye socket.

Jesus knocks at the door. It is opened by a little girl about ten years old, pale looking, with untidy hair and red eyes. « Are you Marian's granddaughter? Tell the old mother that Jesus is here. »

The little girl shouts and runs away calling at the top of her voice. The old woman rushes forth followed by six children, along with the previous girl. The tallest seems to be her twin brother; the last ones, two little barefooted haggard-faced children, are hanging on to the old woman's dress, and they can barely walk.

« Oh! You have come! Children, venerate the Messiah! You are welcome to my poor house. My daughter is dying… Don't cry, children, don't let her hear you. Poor creatures! the girls are exhausted through watching at her bedside, because I do everything, but I am no longer fit to watch at night, because I am overcome by sleep and I fall on to the floor. I have not slept in my bed for months. I now sleep on a chair, so that I am near her and the girls. But they are very young and they suffer from exhaustion. The boys gather wood to keep the fire burning and they sell some to buy bread. They are worn out, poor grandsons! But it is not work that kills us, but it's seeing her dying… Don't cry. We have Jesus now. »

« Yes, do not cry. Your mother will recover, your father will come back, you will not have so many expenses and you will not be so hungry. Are these two the last ones? »

« Yes, Lord. Although a weak creature she had twins three times… and her breast became diseased. »

« Some have got too many and some none » grumbles Peter through his beard and he takes a little one in his arms and gives him an apple to keep him quiet. And while the other little one also asks for one and Peter pleases him, Jesus goes with the old woman from the entrance into the yard, then climbs the steps and enters a room where a young emaciated woman is groaning.

« Jerusa, the Messiah is here. You will not suffer any more now. Can't you see that He has really come? Isaac never tells lies. And he told me. Do you believe that since He has come here, He can cure you? »

« Of course, my good mother. Yes, my Lord. But if You cannot cure me, at least let me die. I have horrible pains in my breast. The mouths of my children, to whom I gave sweet milk, have given me back fire and bitterness. I suffer so much, my Lord! And I cost so much! My husband works far away to earn bread for us. My old

mother is wearing herself out. I am dying… What will happen to my children when I am dead of my disease and she of exhaustion and privations? »

« There is God for the little birds and also for the children of man. You will not die. Does it hurt you so much here? » Jesus makes the gesture of laying His hand on her breast covered by bandages.

« Don't touch me! Don't increase my pain! » shouts the sick woman.

But Jesus gently lays His thin hand on the inflamed mamma. « You really have a fire in it, poor Jerusa. Motherly love has become fire in your breast. But you do not bear grudge to your husband and to the children, do you? »

« Oh! Why should I? He is good and has always loved me. We loved each other with wise love, and our love bloomed in children… And they… ! I am grieved at leaving them, but… Lord! But my fire is relaxing! Mother! Mother! It is as if an angel were blowing air from Heaven on my torture! Oh! How peaceful! Don't, don't take Your hand away, my Lord. On the contrary, press it harder. Oh! How strong! What a joy! My children! My children here, I want them here! Dinah! Ozias! Anna! Sheba! Melchi! David! Judas! Here! Here! Your mummy is not dying any more! Oh!… » The young woman turns over on the pillows weeping with joy while the children rush in and the old woman, on her knees, not finding anything else in her joy, intones the song of Azariah in the furnace and sings it all in the trembling voice of a deeply moved old woman.

« Ah! My Lord! What can I do for You! I have nothing to honour You! » she says at last.

Jesus raises her up and says: « Just allow Me to stay here, for I am tired. And do not tell anybody. The world does not love Me. I must go away for some time. I ask you to be faithful to God and to be silent. You, the young mother, the children. »

« Oh! Don't be afraid! No one calls on poor people! You can stay here without being afraid of being seen. The Pharisees, eh? But… what about eating? I have only a little bread… »

Jesus calls the Iscariot and says to him: « Take some money and go and buy what is necessary. We will eat and rest with these good people until evening. Go and be quiet. » He then addresses the cured woman: « Take your bandages off, get up and help your mother and rejoice. God granted you the grace out of mercy on your virtues as a wife. We will break our bread together because the Most High Lord is in your house today and we must celebrate with great joy. » And Jesus goes out and joins Judas who is about to leave. « Buy plenty, that they may have enough for a few days. While we are at Lazarus', we shall lack nothing. »

« Yes, Master. And, if You will allow me… I have some money of my own. I made a vow to offer it for Your salvation from Your

enemies. I will buy bread with it. It is better to give it to these brothers in God than to the greedy people in the Temple. Will You allow me? Gold has always been a serpent to me. I do not want to suffer from its charm any more. Because I feel so well now that I am good. I feel free. And I am happy. »

« Do as you wish, Judas. And may the Lord give you peace. »

Jesus goes to meet His disciples, while Judas goes out and it all ends.

135. At Bethany in the House of Simon Zealot.

21st March 1945.

When Jesus, having climbed the last hill, reaches the tableland, He sees Bethany bright in the December sunshine which makes the barren country less depressing. The sunshine also makes less gloomy the green spots of cypress-trees, young oaks and carobtrees, which grow here and there, and look like courtiers intent on bowing to some very tall regal palms which stand upright and solitary in most beautiful gardens.

In Bethany, in fact, there is not only Lazarus' beautiful house. There are also other dwellings of rich people, perhaps citizens of Jerusalem, who prefer to live here, near their property, and their large beautiful villas with well tended gardens stand out amongst the small houses of the peasants. And it is strange to see in this hilly place some palm trees evoke memories of the East, with their slender trunks and stiff tassel-like heads, behind the jade green leaves of which one instinctively endeavours to see a yellowish boundless desert. Here instead are backgrounds of silver-green olive trees or ploughed fields, completely devoid for the time being of any trace of corn. There are also skeleton-like fruit trees, with dark trunks and tangled branches as if they belonged to souls that writhe in an infernal torture.

Jesus also sees at once one of Lazarus' servants who is on sentryduty. He bows deeply and asks leave to take the news of His arrival to his master, and as soon as he is granted permission he departs.

In the meantime peasants and townsfolk rush to greet the Rabbi, and a young woman, who is certainly not an Israelite, peeps out over a laurel hedge, which encloses a beautiful house with its green scented foliage. Her peplum or, if I remember the name correctly, her stole, makes me think that she is either Greek or Roman. It is so long as to form a light train, but it is wide, of soft snow-white wool brightened by a border embroidered with a brilliant Greek fret, in which golden threads shine. It is held tight at her waist by a belt identical to the border. Also her hair-style, which consists of a gold hair-net holding in place a complicated

hair-dressing that is curly in the front, then smooth, ending in a large tuft on the nape of her neck, gives me the same impression. She looks around herself inquisitively attracted by the trilling shouts of the women and the hosannas of the men. She then smiles scornfully, when she sees that they are going towards a poor man who has not even a little donkey to ride and is walking amongst fellows like himself, who are even less charming than he is. She shrugs her shoulders and with a bored gesture goes away, followed, as if by dogs, by a group of multicoloured stilt-birds, amongst which there are two white ibises and many-coloured flamingoes, as well as two herons, as red as fire, with small trembling silverlike crowns on their heads, the only white part of their splendid golden flamed plumage.

Jesus looks at her for a moment, then He listens again to a big old man… who would like his legs not to be as weak as they are. Jesus caresses him and encourages him to be… patient, because it will soon be springtime and with the beautiful April sunshine he will feel stronger.

Maximinus arrives, a few yards ahead of Lazarus. « Master… Simon told me… that You are going to his house… Sorrow for Lazarus… but it is understood… »

« We shall talk about it later. Oh! My friend! » Jesus hastens towards Lazarus, who seems embarrassed, and kisses him on his cheek. They have in the meantime reached a lane that leads to a little house situated between the orchard of Lazarus and those of other people.

« So, You really want to go to Simon's house? »

« Yes, My friend. I have all my disciples with Me and I prefer so… »

Lazarus accepts the decision but does not reply. He only turns round to the little crowd following them and says: « Go. The Master needs a rest. »

I now see how powerful Lazarus is. They all bow to his words and withdraw while Jesus greets them kindly: « Peace to you. I will let you know when I am going to preach. »

« Master » says Lazarus now that they are alone, ahead of the disciples who are talking to Maximinus a few yards behind. « Master, Martha is weeping bitter tears. That is why she did not come. But she will come later. I weep only in my heart. But we say: it is just. If we had known that she was coming… But she never comes for the feast days… True… when does she ever come?… I say: the devil has driven her here just today. »

« The devil? And why not her angel by God's order? But you must believe Me, even if she were not here, I would have gone to Simon's house. »

« Why, my Lord? Had You no peace in my house? »

« So much peace that after Nazareth it is the dearest place to Me. But tell Me: why did you say to Me: "Come away from the Clear Water"? Because of the approaching ambush. Is it not so? Well, then, I am placing Myself in the land of Lazarus, but I am not putting Lazarus in the situation of being insulted in his own house. Do you think that they would respect you? To trample on Me, they would tread on the Holy Ark… Let Me do as I wish. At least for the time being. Then I will come. In any case nothing forbids Me to have My meals with you and nothing prevents you from coming to Me. But make them say: "He is in the house of one of His disciples". »

« And am I not one? »

« You are My friend, which is more than a disciple for anybody's heart. It is a different thing for wicked people. Let Me do as I wish. Lazarus, this house is yours… but it is not your house. The beautiful rich house of Theophilus' son. And that is very important for pedantic people. »

« You say so… but it is because it's because of her. I had almost convinced myself to forgive her but if she causes You to go away, upon my word, I will hate her »

« And you will lose Me completely. Renounce that idea at once, or you will lose Me at once… Here is Martha. Peace to you, My gentle hotel-keeper. »

« Oh! Lord! » Martha is on her knees weeping. She has let down the veil which was laid on her hair dressed in the shape of a diadem, so that strangers may not see her tears. But she does not think to conceal them from Jesus.

« Why these tears? Truly, you are wasting them! There are so many reasons to weep, and to make something valuable with tears. But to weep for that reason! Oh! Martha! You do not seem to know any longer Who I am! You know that I have only the exterior appearance of a man. My heart is divine and it beats as a divine thing. Come on. Get up and come into the house… and with regard to her… leave her alone. Even if she came to laugh at Me, I tell you to leave her alone. She is not herself. It is he who keeps hold of her that makes her an instrument of perturbation. But here is One Who is stronger than her master. The struggle is now directly between Me and him. You must pray, forgive, have patience and believe. Nothing else. »

They go into the little house, which is a square one surrounded by a porch which makes it look longer. There are four rooms inside, divided by a cross-shaped corridor. The usual external staircase leads to the top of the porch which therefore becomes a terrace and gives access to a very large room, as wide as the house. Once it was certainly used as a store room but now it is clean and completely empty.

Simon, who is beside his old servant, whose name I hear is Joseph, receives the guests and says: « You could speak to the people here, or take Your meals… as You wish. »

« We will think about that. In the meantime go and tell the others that the people can come after their meal. I will not disappoint the good people here. »

« Where shall I tell them to go? »

« Here. The day is a mild one. The place is sheltered from the winds. The bare orchard will not be damaged if people come into it. I will speak to them here, from the terrace. You may go. »

Lazarus is left alone with Jesus. Martha, who has to provide for so many people, has become the « good hotel-keeper » again and is working downstairs with the servants and the apostles preparing tables and beds.

Jesus lays one arm round Lazarus' shoulders and leads him out of the large room. They walk on the terrace that encircles the house in the lovely sunshine that makes the day mild and from above Jesus watches the work of the servants and disciples and smiles at Martha who comes and goes and looks up at Him. Although she looks grave she is not quite so upset as erstwhile. He looks also at the beautiful view around the place and with Lazarus mentions various places and people and at last He suddenly asks: « So Doras' death was like a stick stirred in the serpents' nest? »

« Oh! Master! Nicodemus told me that never before was a meeting of the Sanhedrin so violent! »

« What have I done to the Sanhedrin to upset it so much?. Doras died a natural death killed by his wrath, in the presence of a considerable crowd. I did not allow anyone to be lacking in respect to his dead body. So… »

« You are right. But they… are out of their minds with fear. And… do You know that they said they must find You committing a sin so that they may kill You? »

« Well, in that case do not worry! They will have to wait until the hour of God! »

« But Jesus! Do You know of whom we are talking? Do You know of what Pharisees and Scribes are capable? Do You know what Annas' soul is like? Do You know who his deputy is? Do You know… What am I saying? Of course You know! So it is quite useless for me to tell You that they will invent a sin in order to be able to accuse You. »

« They have already found it. I have already done more than what is necessary. I have spoken to Romans, to prostitutes… Yes. To prostitutes, Lazarus. One of them, do not look at Me so frightened,… one of them always comes to listen to Me and she was given hospitality in a stable of your steward, upon My request, because, to be near Me, she was living in a pigsty… »

Lazarus is petrified with astonishment. He does not stir. He looks at Jesus as if he saw someone shockingly strange and amazing.

Jesus rouses him smiling: « Have you seen Mammon? » He asks him.

« No… I have seen Mercy. But… I understand, those of the Council do not. And they say it is a sin. So it is true! I thought… Oh! What have You done? »

« My duty, My right and My desire: I endeavoured to redeem a soul that had fallen. You can therefore see that your sister will not be the first mud I will approach and over which I will bend. Neither will she be the last. I wish to sow flowers and make them grow in mud: the flowers of bounty. »

« Oh! God! My God!… But… Master, You are right. It is Your right, Your duty and Your desire. But hyenas do not understand that. They are such foul carrion that they do not smell, they cannot smell the scent of lilies. And also where they grow, the mighty carrion smell sin and they do not realise that it comes from their own stench… I beg You. Do not stop in any place for a long time. Go, wander about, without giving them time to reach You. Be like a night fire, dancing on the stems of flowers, swift, elusive, disconcerting in its movements. Do that. Not out of cowardice, but out of love for the world that requires You to live to be sanctified. Corruption is increasing. Oppose sanctification to it… Corruption!… Have You seen the new woman citizen in Bethany? She is a Roman married to a Judaean. He is also observant. But she is an idolater and as she could not live comfortably in Jerusalem, because her neighbours complained of the animals she kept, she came here. Her house is full of animals which we consider unclean and… she is the most unclean of them all, because she lives laughing at us and with looseness which… I am not in a position to criticise because… But I say that whilst no one sets foot in my house because of Mary, who weighs heavily on the family with her sin, they go to the house of that woman. But she is in Pontius Pilate's good books and lives without her husband. He is in Jerusalem, she is here. And so they pretend, he and they, that they do not become profaned by coming here and that they do not realise that they are profaned. Hypocrisy! They live up to their necks in hypocrisy! And before long they will be drowned in it. Sabbath is the banquet day… And they are members of the Council! One of Annas' sons is the most devoted visitor. »

« I have seen her. Yes. Leave her alone. And leave them alone. When a doctor prepares a medicine, he mixes the ingredients and the water seems to become tainted, because he beats them and the water becomes cloudy. Then the dead parts are deposited and the water becomes clear again, although it is saturated with the juices

of the healthy ingredients. That is what is happening now. Everything in mixed and I work with everybody. Then the dead parts will be deposited and thrown away and the living ones will remain active in the great sea of the people of Jesus Christ. Let us go downstairs. They are calling us. »…

… and the vision resumes when Jesus goes back up on the terrace to speak to the people of Bethany and nearby villages, who have gathered to hear Him.

« Peace to you.

Even if I were silent, the wind would carry to you the words of My love and of the hatred of other people. I know that you are excited because you are aware of the reason why I am here amongst you. But let it be only an excitement of joy and bless with Me the Lord Who makes use of evil to give joy to His children, by leading, under the spur of wickedness, His Lamb amongst the lambs, to save Him from the wolves.

See how good the Lord is. As water flows into the sea, so a river and a stream flowed into the place where I was. A river of loving kindness, a stream of burning bitterness. The former was the love of you all, from Lazarus and Martha to the last inhabitant in the village, the latter was the unfair hatred of those who not being able to reach the Good which calls them, accuse the Good of being Evil. And the river said: "Come, come back to us. May our waves surround, isolate and defend You. May they give You what the world denies You". The wicked stream hissed threats and wanted to kill with its poison. But what is a stream when it is compared with a river, and what when compared with the sea? Nothing. And the poison of the stream was reduced to nothing, because the river of your love overwhelmed it, and only the kindness of your love flowed into the sea of My love. Nay, it did a good turn, it brought Me back to you. Let us bless the Most High Lord for it. »

Jesus' powerful voice rings out through the calm silent air. Jesus, bright in the sunshine, waves and smiles from the terrace. On the ground, the people listen to him blissfully: a flourish of faces raised towards Him and smiling at the harmony of His voice. Lazarus is near Jesus, with Simon and John. The others are scattered amongst the crowd. Also Martha goes upstairs and sits down on the floor at Jesus' feet, looking towards her house, visible beyond the orchard.

« The world belongs to bad people. Paradise to good people. That is the truth and the promise. May your certain strength rest upon such promise. The world passes, Paradise does not. If by being good you gain it, you will enjoy it for ever. So? So why get upset at what bad people do? Do you remember Job's lamentations? They are the eternal lamentations of those who are good and oppressed; because the flesh moans, but it should not moan, and the more it is

trampled on, the more it should raise the wings of its soul in the jubilation of the Lord.

Do you think that those are happy who appear to be happy, because by legal means and even more by illegal ones they have opulent granaries, vats full to the brim and jars overflowing with oil? No. They taste the blood and tears of other people in all their meals, and their beds seem to be bristling with thorns, so much they feel remorse. They rob the poor and despoil orphans, they rob their neighbours to hoard goods, they oppress whoever is inferior to them in power and in wickedness. It does not matter. Never mind. Their kingdom is of this world. But what will be left at their death? Nothing. Unless you wish to call a treasure the pile of sins that they will take with themselves and with which they present themselves to God. Never mind. They are the children of darkness, rebels to the Light and they are unable to follow the bright paths of the Light. When God makes the morning Star shine, they call it the shadow of death and as such they think it is contaminated and they prefer to walk in the glitter of their filthy gold and hatred, which blazes only because the things of hell shine with the phosphorous of the lakes of eternal perdition… »

« My sister, Jesus… Oh! » Lazarus sees Mary stealing behind a hedge of his orchard to come as close as possible. She stoops as she walks but her fair hair shines like gold against the dark box.

Martha is about to get up. But Jesus presses His hand on her head and she is compelled to stay where she is. Jesus speaks louder.

« What shall we say of those unhappy people? God gave them time to do penance but they misuse it in order to sin. But God does not lose sight of them, even if He seems to. And the moment comes when, either because the love of God pierces their hard hearts, as a thunderbolt penetrates a rock or because the total mass of crimes carries the wave of their filth right into their throats and nostrils - and they are disgusted, at last they are disgusted with that taste and that stench which are nauseating also to other people and fill their own hearts - the moment comes when they loathe it and a feeling desiring good roots in their hearts. Each soul then cries: "Who will allow me to go back to former times, when I was a friend of God? When His light shone in my heart and I walked in its rays? When the amazed world was silent before my justice and who saw me said I was blessed? The world craved for my smiles and my words were received like the words of an angel and the hearts of my relatives leapt with pride in their chests. And what am I now? I am an object of derision to young people, of horror to elderly people, I am the subject of their songs and they spit scornfully in my face."

Truly, that is how in certain moments the souls of sinners speak,

the souls of the true Jobs, because there is no greater misery for man than to lose God's friendship and His Kingdom for ever. And they must arouse pity. Only pity. They are poor souls, who out of idleness or rashness, have lost the eternal Spouse. "On my bed, at night, I sought him whom my heart loves. I sought but did not find him". In fact in the darkness one cannot distinguish the spouse, and the soul, spurred by love, being thoughtless because enveloped by a spiritual night, seeks and wants to find relief from its torture. And the soul thinks it can be found with any love. No. Only one is the love of the soul: God. Those souls, spurred on by the love of God, wander seeking love. It would be sufficient for them to wish to have light and they would have Love as their consort. They wander like sick people, groping for love and they find all the loves, all the foul things that man has so called, but they do not find the Love, because the Love is not gold, pleasure, power, but God.

Poor souls! Had they been less lazy and had they risen at the first invitation of the eternal Spouse, of God Who says: "Follow Me", of God Who says: "Open to Me", they would not have opened the door, in the outburst of their awakened love, when the disappointed Bridegroom was already far and had disappeared… And they would not have desecrated the holy impulse of the need of love in a mire which disgusts even unclean animals, as it is so useless and strewn with trite troubles, which were not flowers but thorns which torture but do not crown. Neither would they have known the sneering words of the patrol guards, of the whole world, which, like God, but for opposite reasons, does not lose sight of the sinner, but waylays him to mock at him and criticise him.

Poor souls beaten, despoiled and wounded by the whole world! Only God does not join in such pitiless scornful stone throwing. But He lets His tears drop to cure the wounds and put an adamantine dress on His creature. Always His creature… Only God… and the children of God with the Father. Let us bless the Lord. He wanted Me to come back here for the sake of sinners to say to you: "Forgive. Always forgive. Make every bad thing become a good one and every offence a grace". I do not only say to you "make". I say: imitate My attitude. I love and bless My enemies because through them I have been able to come back to you, My friends.

Peace be with you all. »

The women in the crowd wave veils, the men branches: then all slowly depart after greeting Jesus.

« Will they have seen my shameless sister? »

« No, Lazarus. She was well concealed behind the hedge. We were able to see her because we were up here, the others could not see her. »

« She had promised us… »

« Why was she not to come? Is she not a daughter of Abraham? I want you, My brothers, and you, My disciples, to swear that you will not let her understand anything. Leave her alone. Will she laugh at Me? Never mind. Will she weep? Leave her alone. Will she be staying? Leave her alone. Will she be wanting to run away? Leave her alone. The secret of the Redeemer and of redeemers is to be patient, good, persevering and to pray. Nothing else. Every gesture is too much in the case of certain diseases… Goodbye, My friends. I am staying here to pray. Each of you may go to his own task and may God be with you. »

And it all ends.

136. The Feast of Dedication in Lazarus' House with the Shepherds.

22nd March 1945.

Lazarus' splendid house is most brilliant this evening. It seems to be catching fire owing to the number of lights which are lit within. And the light spreads outside, in this early night, overflowing from the halls into the entrance and then into the porch, stretching out to gild the gravel on the paths, the grasses and bushes of the flower beds, struggling with the yellow sensual brilliance of the moonlight, and outshining it in the first few yards, whereas farther out everything becomes angelical due to the pure silver mantle which the moon casts over everything. In addition the silence that envelops the magnificent garden, where only the arpeggio of the water jet of the fishpond can be heard, seems to intensify the tranquil heavenly peace of the lunar night, whilst near the house, many merry voices and the lively tumult made by furniture moving and the carrying of dishes to the tables, remind man that he is still a man and not a spirit.

Martha moves about swiftly in her wide modest beautiful violet-red dress, and she seems a flower, a bell-flower or a butterfly fluttering against the purple walls of the entrance hall or against the dining hall walls, which are decorated with small designs and look like a carpet.

Jesus, on the other hand, is walking alone and thoughtful near the fishpool and He seems to be absorbed by alternatively the dark shadow thrown from a tall laurel, a real gigantic tree, and by the phosphoric moonlight which is becoming clearer and clearer. It is indeed so bright that the fountain jet looks like a silver plumule which breaks into diamond chips, which fall and get lost in the silvery water of the fountain. Jesus watches and listens to the words whispered by the water in the night. Their sound is so sweet that they awake a nightingale in the thick laurel and the bird

replies to the slow arpeggio of the water drops with the high note of a flute, and then it stops, as if it were waiting, to be given the note and thus tune in with the water, and at last, as the king of song, it starts its perfect melodious soft hymn of joy.

Jesus stops walking lest the rustling noise of His steps should upset the calm joy of the nightingale, and I think, also His own, because He smiles with His head bent, a smile of pure joy. When the nightingale stops singing after a very clear note which is held and modulated by ascending tones, and I do not understand how such a small throat can do so, Jesus exclaims: « May You be blessed, holy Father, for such perfection and for the joy You have given Me! » and He resumes His slow walk, full of, I wonder what, deep meditation.

Simon goes towards Him and says: « Master, Lazarus asks You to come. Everything is ready. »

« Let us go. And thus may their last doubt, that I love them less because of Mary, be removed. »

« How many tears, Master! Only Your secret miracle has relieved their pain. Don't You know that Lazarus was about to run away, when, upon their return, she went out of the house, saying that she was leaving their sepulchre to go and live in joy… and other rude remarks? Martha and I implored him not to do it, also because… one never knows the reaction of a heart. If he had found her, I think he would have punished her once for all. They would have liked her to be at least silent about You… »

« And they would have liked Me to work a miracle immediately for her. And I could have done it. But I do not want a forced resurrection in hearts. I will force death and it will give Me back its victims. Because I am the Master of death and of life. But I will not force a resurrection on spirits, because they are not made of matter, which is lifeless without a soul, whereas spirits are immortal beings capable of rising of their own will. I give the first call and the first help, like one who opens a sepulchre in which a man still alive has been closed and where he would die if he were to remain for a long time in that stifling darkness, and I let in air and light… then I wait. If the spirit is anxious to come out, it comes out. But if it does not want to come out, it grows darker and it goes to the bottom. But if it comes out!… Oh! If it comes out, I solemnly tell you that no one will be greater than a risen spirit. Only absolute innocence is greater than a dead person that becomes alive by force of love and for the joy of God… My greatest triumphs!

Look at the sky, Simon. You see there, stars, little stars and planets of various sizes. They all live and shine for God Who made them and for the sun that illuminates them. But they are not all equally bright and of the same size. It will be the same in My Heaven. All the redeemed will have life through Me and will

receive brightness from My light. But they will not be all equally bright and great. Some will be plain star-dust, like the dust that makes Galathea milky, and will be those countless ones, who received from Christ, or rather, have taken from Him the minimum indispensable not to be damned, and only through the infinite mercy of God, after a long Purgatory, will come to Heaven. Others will be brighter and better formed, the just who have united their own will, please note that I am saying will, not good will, to the will of Christ and have obeyed My words not to be damned. Then there will be the planets, those of good will, and they will be brightest! Their light will be like a pure diamond or a bright gem of different hues: the red of a ruby, the violet of an amethyst, the gold of a topaz, the white of a pearl: the lovers faithful unto death for love, the repentants for love, the people active for love, the people immaculate for love.

And there will be some of those planets, and they will be the glory of the Redeemer, that will glare like amethysts, rubies, topazes and pearls, because they will be everything for the sake of love. They will be heroic to the extent of forgiving themselves for not having loved before, repentant to become saturated with expiations as Esther was saturated with perfumes before presenting herself to Ahasuerus, untiring in doing in a short time, the short time left to them, what they did not do in the years they spent in sin, pure to the extent of heroism in forgetting, also in their bodies, besides in their souls and thoughts, that they had senses. They will be the ones who through their multiform brightness will attract the eyes of the believers, of the pure, of the repentant, of the martyrs, of the heroes, of the ascetics, of the sinners and for each of those categories their brightness will be a word, a reply, an invitation, an assurance…

But let us go. We are talking and they are waiting for us. »

« The point is that when You speak, we forget that we are alive. Can I tell Lazarus all that? I think it contains a promise… »

« You must tell him. The word of a friend may soothe their wound and they will not blush for blushing before Me… We have kept you waiting, Martha. But I was talking to Simon about the stars and we forgot about these lights. Your house, this evening, is really a vault of heaven… »

« We have lit the lights not only for ourselves and our servants, but also for You and for Your friends, who are our guests. Thanks for coming this final evening. Now it is really the feast of the Purification… » Martha would like to say more, but feels she is about to burst into tears and keeps quiet.

« Peace to you all » says Jesus entering the hall aglitter with dozens of silver lamps, all lit and placed all around.

Lazarus comes forward smiling: « Peace and blessing to You,

Master, and many years of holy happiness. » They kiss each other. « Some friends of ours have told me that You were born when Bethlehem was ablaze for the Purification Feast years ago. Both they and we are happy to have You here this evening. Do You not want to know who they are? »

« I have no friends but My disciples, the dear ones in Bethany and the shepherds. So it is the shepherds. Did they come? What for? »

« To adore You, our Messiah. We were informed by Jonathan and we came. With our herds which are now in Lazarus' stables, and with our hearts we are now and always at Your holy feet. » Isaac has spoken on behalf of Elias, Levi, Joseph and Jonathan, who are all prostrated at His feet; Jonathan in the soft tunic of the steward loved by his master; Isaac in his garment of a tireless pilgrim, a tunic made of coarse dark brown wool proof to water; Levi, Joseph and Elias are wearing fresh clean clothes given to them by Lazarus, so that they may sit at the table without their poor torn clothes smelling of sheep.

« Is that why you sent Me into the garden? May God bless you all! Only My Mother is missing to make Me completely happy. Stand up. This is My first birthday away from My Mother. But your presence relieves Me from the nostalgia of Her kisses. » They all go into the dining room. Most of the lamps in it are in gold and the metal is brightened up by the light of the flames which seem more lively from the reflection of so much gold. The table has been laid in the shape of a U to make room for so many people and to facilitate service from servants and carvers. Besides Lazarus, there are the apostles, the shepherds, Maximinus and Simon's old servant.

Martha attends to the assignment of places at the table and she would like to remain standing. But Jesus objects: « Today you are not the hotel-keeper; you are the sister and you will sit down as if you were of the same blood as Myself. We are one family. Let us put rules aside to make room for love. I want you here, beside Me, and John near you. And Lazarus with Me. But, give Me a lamp. A light is to keep watch between Martha and Me… a flame: for the women who are absent and yet are present, for the women loved, waited for, dear to us and far away. For them all. The flame utters words of light. Love utters words of warmth and those words travel far, on the incorporeal wave of the spirits which are always to be found beyond mountains and seas, and they take kisses and blessings… They take everything. Is it not so? »

Martha puts the lamp where Jesus wants it, at an empty place… and, as Martha understands, she bends and kisses the hand of Jesus, Who then lays it on her dark hair blessing and comforting.

The meal starts. The three shepherds are at first somewhat embarrassed, whereas Isaac is more confident and Jonathan shows no

uneasiness. The three shepherds take heart as the meal goes on and after being quiet for some time they begin to speak. And what should they speak of, if not of their recollections?

« We had not been long back in the pen » says Levi « and I felt so cold that I sought comfort among the sheep, weeping because I wanted my mother… »

« I, instead, was thinking of the young Mother I had met not long before and I was saying to myself: "Will She have found a place?" I wish I had known that She was in a stable! I would have taken Her to the pen!… But She was so kind, a lily of our valleys, that I thought it would be an insult to say to Her: "Come and stay with us". But I was thinking of Her… and I felt even colder, thinking how much She must be suffering. Do you remember the light that night? And your fear? »

« Yes… but then… the angel… Oh!… » Levi, somewhat lost in reverie, smiles at his recollection.

« Oh! listen a moment, friends. We know very little and we are badly informed. We have heard about angels, mangers, herds, Bethlehem… And we know that He is a Galilean and a carpenter… It is not fair that we should not be informed! I asked the Master at the Clear Water… but then we spoke about something else. This young man who knows has not told me anything… Yes, I am speaking to you, John of Zebedee. Is that how you respect an elder? You keep everything to yourself and you allow me to remain a stupid disciple. Am I not already a dunce on my own? » They all laugh at Peter's benign indignation. But he addresses his Master: « They are laughing. But I am right » and he then says to Bartholomew, Philip, Matthew, Thomas, James and Andrew: « Come on, you tell them, too, protest with me! Why do we know nothing? »

« Really… Where were you when Jonah was dying? and when we were on Lebanon? »

« You are right. But in the case of Jonah, I thought it was the delirium of a dying man, at least I did, and on Lebanon… I was tired and sleepy. Forgive me, Master, but it is the truth. »

« And it will be the truth for many! The world of those who have been evangelised will often reply to the eternal Judge, to justify their ignorance despite the teaching of My apostles, what you have said: "I thought it was delirium… I was tired and sleepy". And they will often not acknowledge the truth because they will mistake it for delirium, and they will not remember the truth because they are tired and sleepy as a result of indulging in too many useless, fleeting and even sinful things. One thing only is necessary: to know God. »

« Well, now that You have told us what we deserve, tell us what happened… Tell Your Peter. Then I will tell the people. If not, I

have already told You, what can I tell them? I know nothing of the past, I am no good at explaining the prophecies and the Book, the future… oh! poor me! So what shall I evangelise? »

« Yes, Master. Let us know, too… We know that You are the Messiah and we believe it. But, at least as far as I am concerned, I found it difficult to admit that anything good could come from Nazareth… Why did You not make me acquainted at once with Your past? » says Bartholomew.

« To test your faith and the brightness of your spirit. But now I will speak to you, or rather, we will speak to you of My past. I will tell you what even the shepherds do not know, and they will tell you what they saw. And you will be acquainted with the dawn of Christ. Listen:

When the time of Grace had come, God prepared His Virgin. You will readily understand that God could not dwell where Satan had put an undelible mark. The Power therefore took action to prepare Its future spotless tabernacle. And She, on Whom there is no stain, was conceived of two just people, in their old age, against the common rules of procreation. Who brought that soul into the embryonal flesh that rekindled the old womb of My grandmother, Anna of Aaron? Levi, you saw the Archangel of all the announcements. You can say: it is he. Because the Strength of God(,) has always been the victorious archangel who brought joyful tidings to saints and prophets, he has been the unconquerable warrior who smashed even Satan's great power as if it were the stem of withered moss, he is the intelligent spirit who with clever and bright intelligence warded off the snares of the other intelligent but wicked spirit, and thus had God's command promptly accomplished.

The Announcer, who was already familiar with the ways of the earth, as he had descended to speak to the Prophets, with a cry of joy took from the divine Fire the spark which was the soul of the eternal Maid and clasping it in the circle of the angelical flames of his spiritual love, brought it down on to the earth, into a house, into a womb. And the world, from that moment, had the Adoring Maid; and God, from that moment, could look at a spot on the earth, without feeling disgusted. And a little creature was born: the Child Beloved by God and the angels, the Child Consecrated to God, the Daughter piously loved by Her parents. "And Abel gave the first-born of his flock to God". Oh! Truly the grandparents of the eternal Abel gave God the early fruit of their property, they gave Him all their goods, and they died because they had given everything back to Him, Who had given it to them!

My Mother was the Maid of the Temple from Her third to Her fifteenth

(1) Such is, basically, the etymological meaning of the name « Gabriel ».

year of age and She hastened the coming of Christ with the power of Her love. A virgin before being conceived, a virgin in the obscurity of a womb, a virgin in Her whimpers, a virgin in Her first steps, the Virgin was of God and of God only, and She proclaimed Her right, which was above the decree of the Law of Israel, and obtained from the husband given to Her by God, to remain inviolate after the wedding.

Joseph of Nazareth was a just man. The Lily of God could be given only to him, and he was the only one to have it. And, being an angel both in his body and his soul, he loved as the angels of God love. The depth of that strong love, which enjoyed all the fondness of married life, without going beyond the barrier of celestial fire beyond which was the Ark of the Lord, will be understood only by few people on the earth. It is the evidence of what a just man can do, if he only wants to, because also the soul, even if it is injured by the original sin, has a powerful strength of elevation, to remember and to go back to its dignity of a Child of God, and it works in a divine way for the sake of the Father.

Mary was still in Her house, waiting to be married to Her spouse, when Gabriel, the angel of divine announcements came back to the earth and asked the Virgin to become a Mother. He had already promised the Precursor to Zacharias, who had not believed him. But the Virgin believed that it could happen by the will of God, and sublime as She was in Her ignorance, She only asked: "How can that happen?" And the Angel replied to Her: "You are Full of Grace, Mary. Do not be afraid, for You have won God's favour also with regard to Your virginity. You will conceive and bear a Son and You will name Him Jesus, because He is the Saviour promised to Jacob and to all the Patriarchs and Prophets of Israel. He will be great and the true Son of the Most High because He will be conceived by deed of the Holy Spirit. His Father will give Him the throne of David, as it is predicted, and He will rule over the house of Jacob for ever and His true Reign will have no end. Now the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are awaiting Your obedience to fulfill the promise. The Precursor of Christ is already in the womb of Elizabeth, Your cousin, and if You agree, the Holy Spirit will descend upon You, and so the Child born of You will be holy and will bear His true name of Son of God".

Mary then replied: "I am the Handmaid of the Lord. Let it be done to Me according to His word". And the Spirit of God descended upon His Bride and in the first embrace He bestowed upon Her His light, which super-perfected Her virtues of silence, humility, prudence and charity, of which She was full, and She was one thing with the Wisdom and could no longer be separated from Charity, and the Obedient and Chaste One was lost in the ocean of Obedience, which I am, and She knew the joy of being a Mother,

without the perturbation of being touched. She was the snow that became a flower and offered Herself to God… »

« And Her husband? » asks Peter dumbfounded.

« The seal of God closed Mary's lips. And Joseph became aware of the prodigy only when Mary came back from the house of Her relative Zacharias and appeared a mother to the eyes of Her spouse. »

« And what did he do? »

« He suffered… and Mary suffered. »

« If it had been I… »

« Joseph was a saint, Simon of Jonas. God knows where to lay His gifts… He suffered bitterly and he decided to desert Her, taking upon himself the reputation of an unfair man. But the Angel descended and said to him: "Do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, because what is forming in Her is the Son of God and She is a Mother by the deed of God. And when the Son is born, you will name Him Jesus, because He is the Saviour". »

« Was Joseph a learned man? » asks Bartholomew.

« Like a descendant of David. »

« Then he will have received light at once remembering the Prophet: "Here, a virgin will conceive… »

« Yes, he did receive it. And joy followed the trial… »

« Had it been I » resumes Peter « it would not have happened, because before I would have… Oh! Lord, what a good job it was not I! I would have broken Her like the stem of a flower without giving Her time to speak. And after, if I had not been a murderer, I would have been afraid of Her… The fear for the Tabernacle, which the whole of Israel has had for centuries… »

« Also Moses was afraid of God, and yet he was helped and stayed with Him on the mountain… So Joseph went to the holy house of his Spouse and saw to the needs of the Virgin and of the Unborn Child. And when the time of the edict came for all the people, he went with Mary to the land of his fathers, and Bethlehem rejected them because the hearts of men are closed to charity. Now you go on. »

« Towards evening I met a young smiling woman riding a little donkey. There was a man with Her. He asked for some milk and information. I told him what I knew… Then night fell… and a great light… and we went out… and Levi saw an angel near the pen. And the Angel said: "The Saviour is born". It was the dead of night. And the sky was full of stars. But their light faded in the light of the Angel and of thousands and thousands of angels… (Elias still weeps remembering). And the Angel said to us: "Go and worship Him. He is in a little stable, in a manger, between two animals… You will find a little Baby wrapped in poor swaddling clothes… " Oh! How bright the Angel was when saying these

words!… Do you remember, Levi, how his wings emitted flames when, after bowing to mention the Saviour, he said: "… Who is Christ the Lord"? »

« Oh! If I remember! And the voices of the thousands of angels? Oh!… "Glory to God in the Highest Heaven and peace on earth to men of good will!" That music is still here, in me, and it carries me to Heaven every time I hear it » and Levi raises an ecstatic face shining with tears.

« And we went » says Isaac. « Laden like pack-animals, as happy as if we were going to a wedding, and then… we were not capable of doing anything when we heard Your thin voice and Your Mother's, and we pushed Levi, the boy, forward, that he might look. We felt like lepers near so much purity… And Levi listened and he smiled weeping and he repeated to us what he heard, with a voice so like that of a lamb, that Isaac's sheep bleated. And Joseph came to the entrance and let us in… Oh! How tiny and beautiful You were! A flesh-coloured rosebud on coarse hay… and You were crying… Then You smiled because of the warmth of the sheepskin we offered You and of the milk we milked for You… Your first meal… Oh!… and then… and then we kissed You… You smelt of almonds and jasmine… and we could not bring ourselves to leave You… »

« In fact, you have never left Me. »

« It is true » says Jonathan. « Your face, Your voice and Your smiles remained within us… And You were growing… more and more beautiful… the world of good people came to delight in You… and the world of the wicked did not see You… Anna… Your first steps… the three Wise Men… the star. »

« Oh! What a light, that night! The world seemed to be ablaze with thousands of lights. Instead, the night of Your birth, the light was pearly and steady. Now they were dancing stars, then they were adoring stars. And from the top of a hill we saw the caravan passing and we followed it to see whether it was going to stop… And the following day the whole of Bethlehem saw the adoration of the Wise Men. And then… Oh! Don't let us mention the horror! Don't let us talk about it!… » Elias turns pale remembering.

« Yes, do not tell. Silence on hatred… »

« Our greatest pain was that we no longer had You and we knew nothing about You. Not even Zacharias knew. Our last hope… And nothing more. »

« Why, Lord, did You not comfort Your servants? »

« Are you asking why, Philip? Because it was wise to do so. You can see that also Zacharias, whose spiritual formation was completed after that hour, did not want to lift the veil. Zacharias… »

« But You told us that he took care of the shepherds. So, why did he not tell them first, and then You, that you were looking for one

another? »

« Zacharias was a just man, completely man. He became less man and more just during the nine months of dumbness, he improved himself in the months following the birth of John, but he became a just spirit when the refutation of God fell on his human pride. He had said: "I, a priest of God, say that the Saviour must live in Bethlehem" and God had shown to him that human judgement, even that of a priest, is a poor one, if it is not enlightened by God. Horrified by the thought: "I could have had Jesus killed because of my word" Zacharias became the just man, who is now resting awaiting Paradise. And justice taught him prudence and charity. Charity with regard to the shepherds, prudence with regard to the world, to which Christ was to be unknown. When, on our way back to our fatherland, we directed our steps towards Nazareth, with the same prudence that now guided Zacharias, we avoided Hebron and Bethlehem, and coasting the sea we went back to Galilee. Not even on the day that I became of age, was it possible to see Zacharias, who had left the day before with his son for the same ceremony.

God watched, God tested, God provided, God perfected. To have God implies restraints, not only joy. And My father by love and My Mother by My soul and flesh suffered from restraints. They were forbidden also what is lawful, so that mystery might envelop the Child Messiah with a shadow. And that should clarify to many people, who do not understand it, the twofold reason for the worry when I was lost for three days. The love of a Mother, the love of a father for the lost Child; fear of the guardians for the Messiah Who might be revealed before the time; terror of having badly protected the Health of the world and the great gift of God. That is the reason for the unusual cry: "Son, why have You done this to us? See how Your father and I have been worried looking for You!" Your father, Your Mother… A veil was cast on the splendour of the Divine Incarnate. And the reassuring reply: "Why were you looking for Me? Did you not know that I must be busy with My Father's affairs?" A reply which the Full of Grace accepted and understood for what it means. That is: "Do not be afraid. I am small, a child. But if I grow, according to My human nature, in height, wisdom and grace in the eyes of men, I am the Perfect One because I am the Son of the Father and thus I know how to behave perfectly, serving the Father by making His light shine, serving God by preserving the Saviour". And that is what I have done up to a year ago.

The time has now come. The veils are being lifted. And the Son of Joseph is showing Himself in His true nature: the Messiah of the Good News, the Saviour, the Redeemer, and the King of the future century. »

« And have You never seen John again? »

« Only at the Jordan, My dear John, when I wanted to be baptised. »

« So You did not know that Zacharias had helped the shepherds? »

« I told you: after the shedding of the innocent blood, the just became saints, and men became just. Only the demons remained what they were. Zacharias learned to sanctify himself through humility, charity, prudence, silence. »

« I want to remember all this. But will I be able? » says Peter.

« Don't worry, Peter. Tomorrow I will ask the shepherds to repeat it to me all over again, calmly, in the orchard. Once, twice, three times, if necessary. My memory is good, I exercised it at my excise-desk and I will remember for everybody. When you wish, I will be able to repeat everything to you. I did not even keep notes at Capernaum, and yet… »

« Oh! You never made the mistake of a didrachma!… I remember… Good! I will forgive you your past, wholeheartedly, if you remember this story… and if you repeat it to me very often. I want it to enter my heart, as they have it, as Jonah had it… Oh! to die saying His Name!… »

Jesus looks at Peter and smiles. He then gets up and kisses his greying hair.

« Why that kiss, Master? »

« Because you made a prophesy. You will die mentioning My Name. I kissed the Spirit that spoke in you. »

Then Jesus intones a hymn in a loud voice and everybody, standing up, joins in: « "Stand up and bless the Lord your God, from everlasting to everlasting. Blessed be His sublime glorious Name with every praise and benediction. You are the only Lord. You made the Heavens, and the Heaven of Heavens with all their array, the earth and all it bears etc. (it is the hymn sung by the Levites at the Feast of the Consecration of the people, II Book of Ezra, Ch. IX)" » and it all ends with that long hymn. I do not know whether it is part of the ancient rite or whether Jesus says it on His own.

137. Return to the « Clear Water ».

15th April 1945.

Jesus is going across the flat fields at the Clear Water with His apostles. It is a rainy day and the place is deserted. It must be about midday, because the weak sun that appears now and again from behind the grey curtain of clouds, shines down directly.

Jesus is speaking to the Iscariot whom He entrusts with the task of going to the village to buy what is most urgently required.

When He is alone, Andrew goes near Him and, always shy, he

says to Him in a low voice. « Will You listen to me, Master? »

« Yes. Come with Me, let us go ahead » and He quickens His step, followed by the apostle, until they are a few yards away.

« The woman is no longer there, Master! » says Andrew sadly. And he explains. « They have beaten her and she ran away. She was wounded and bleeding. The steward saw her. I went ahead, saying that I wanted to see whether there were any snares, but in actual fact I wanted to go and see her at once. I was hoping so much to bring her to the Light! I have prayed so much these past days for that! … Now she has run away! She will get lost. If I knew where she is, I would reach her… I would not say that to the others,-but I am telling You, because You understand me. You know that there is no sensuality in this research, but only a desire to save a sister of mine, a desire so strong as to be a torture… »

« I know, Andrew, and I say to you: also now, after what happened, your desire will be fulfilled. A prayer said for that purpose is never lost. God makes use of it and she will be saved. »

« You say so? My pain is somewhat soothed! »

« Would you not like to know what happened to her? Do you not even care if you are not the one who will bring her to Me? Are you not asking how he will succeed? » Jesus smiles kindly while His blue eyes shine brightly when He looks at the apostle who is walking beside Him. One of those smiles and looks which are a secret of Jesus for conquering hearts.

Andrew looks at Him with his kind brown eyes and says: « It is enough for me to know that she will come to You. What does it matter whether it is I or someone else? How will he succeed? You know and I need not know. Your assurance is everything and I am happy. »

Jesus lays His arm on Andrew's shoulders and draws him to Himself in an affectionate embrace, which throws good Andrew into ecstasies. And holding him thus He says: « That is the gift of the true apostle. See, My dear friend, your life and the lives of future apostles will always be like that. Sometimes you will know that you have been the "saviours". But in most cases you will save without knowing that you have saved the very people you are most anxious to save. Only in Heaven you will see the people you have saved come to meet you or enter the eternal Kingdom. And the joy of your blessed souls will increase for each person saved. Sometimes you will know while on the earth. It is the joy I grant you to infuse you with greater vigour for new conquests. But blessed be that priest who does not need such spurs to do his duty! Blessed be who does not lose heart because he sees no triumph and does not say: "I am not going to work any more because I get no satisfaction out of it". Apostolic satisfaction, considered as the only stimulus to work, shows lack of apostolic formation, degrades

apostolate, a spiritual mission, to the level of common human work. You must never fall into the idolatry of your ministry. You are not the ones to be worshipped, but it is the Lord your God. The glory of saved souls is only His. The work of salvation is your task, and the glory of being the "saviours" is to be postponed till you are in Heaven. But you were telling Me that the steward saw her. Tell Me. »

« Three days after we left, some Pharisees came looking for You. Of course, they did not find us. They went round the village and the houses in the country saying they were anxious to see You. But no one believed them. They put up at the hotel, turning out arrogantly all the people who were in it, because, they said, they did not want to have any contact with unknown strangers, who might even profane them. And they went to the house every day. After some days they found the poor woman, who always went there, probably because she was hoping to find You and her peace. And they made her run away, chasing her as far as her refuge in the steward's stable. They did not assail her at once, because he came out with his sons, all armed with cudgels. But in the evening, when she went out, they came back together with other people, and when she was at the fountain, they pelted her with stones, calling her a "prostitute" and pointing her out to the scorn of the village. And as she was running away, they reached her and maltreated her, they tore off her veil and mantle so that everybody could see her, they thrashed her once again, and with their authority they imposed themselves on the head of the synagogue, requesting that he should anathematize her, in order to have her stoned, and he should also anathematize You for bringing her to the village. But he refused to do it and is now awaiting the anathema of the Sanhedrin. The steward tore her from the hands of those rascals and assisted her. But during the night she went away leaving a bracelet with words written on a bit of parchment. She wrote: "Thanks. Pray for me". The steward says that she is young and beautiful, although she is very pale and thin. He looked for her in the country, because she was badly wounded. But he did not find her. And he does not know how she has been able to go far. Perhaps she is dead, somewhere… and she did not save herself… »

« No. »

« No? She is not dead? Or she is not lost? »

« Her will to redeem herself is already an absolution. Even if she were dead, she would be forgiven, because she sought the Truth, stamping Error down. But she is not dead. She is climbing the first slopes of the mountain of redemption. I see her… She is bent under the tears of repentance; but her tears make her stronger and stronger, whilst her burden becomes lighter and lighter. I see her. She is proceeding towards the Sun. When she has climbed all the

mountain, she will be in the glory of the Sun-God. She is climbing… Help her with your prayers. »

« Oh! my Lord! » Andrew is almost amazed at the thought of being able to help a soul in its sanctification.

Jesus smiles even more gently. He says: « We must open our arms and our hearts to the persecuted head of the synagogue and we must also go and bless the good steward. Let us go to your companions and tell them. »

But while walking back to reach the ten disciples who stopped at a distance when they realised that Andrew was having a private conversation with the Master, the Iscariot arrives in great haste. He looks like a huge butterfly running on the meadow, as he moves so fast while his mantle flutters behind him and he makes wide gestures with his arms.

« What's the matter with him? » asks Peter. « Has he gone mad? »

Before anybody can reply to him, the Iscariot, who is now nearby, is able to shout in a choked voice: « Stop, Master. Listen to me before going to the house… There is a trap. Oh! the cowards!… » and he continues to run. He has now arrived. « Oh! Master. It is no longer possible to go there! The Pharisees are in the village and they go to the house every day. They are awaiting You to hurt You. They are sending away those who come looking for You. They are frightening them with horrible anathemas. What do You want to do? You would be persecuted here and Your work would be frustrated… One of them saw me and attacked me. An ugly bignosed old man who knows me because he is one of the Scribes of the Temple. Because also some Scribes are there. He assailed me, laying hold of me with his claws and insulting me in a hawk-like voice. As long as he insulted and scratched me, look… (and he shows a wrist and a cheek adorned with clear nail marks) I did not mind. But when he spat on You, I caught him by the neck… »

« But Judas! » shouts Jesus.

« No, Master. I did not strangle him. I only prevented him from cursing You and then I let him go. He is now dying with fear for the risk he ran… But, please, let us go away. In any case, no one could come to You any more… »

« Master! »

« But it's terrible! »

« Judas is right. »

« They are like hyenas laying an ambush! »

« Fire of heaven that fell on Sodom, why don't you come back again? »

« Do you know, boy, that you have been brave? What a pity I was not there, too; I could have given you a hand. »

« Oh! Peter! If you had been there, that little hawk would have lost feathers and voice for ever. »

« But how did you manage… not to finish the job? »

« Who knows!… A flash in my mind: a thought from I wonder which part of my heart: "The Master condemns violence" and I stopped. And it struck me harder than the impact on the wall against which the Scribe threw me when he attacked me. I felt as if my nerves had been shattered… so much so that afterwards I would not have had enough strength to be pitiless against him. What an effort it is to control oneself!… »

« You have been really brave! Hasn't he, Master? Are you not telling us Your point of view? » Peter is so pleased with Judas' behaviour, that he does not notice that Jesus' face, which before was bright, has become severe and dark looking, while He tightens His lips so that His mouth looks smaller.

He opens His lips to say: « I tell you that I feel more disgusted with your way of thinking than with the behaviour of the Judaeans. They are miserable people in darkness. You, who are with the Light, are hard, vindicative, grumblers, violent, and you approve of a brutal action as they do. I tell you that you are giving Me evidence that you are exactly the same as you were when you saw Me for the first time. And it grieves Me. With regard to the Pharisees, you must know that Jesus Christ does not run away. You may withdraw. I will face them. I am not a coward. When I have spoken to them and have failed in convincing them, I will withdraw. No one must say that I have not endeavoured by all means to attract them to Me. They are children of Abraham, too. I do My duty, till the end. Their condemnation is to be caused only by their ill will and not by any negligence of Mine towards them. » And Jesus goes towards the house, the low roof of which is visible beyond a row of bare trees.

The apostles follow Him with drooping heads, speaking under their breath.

They are at the house and they enter the kitchen in silence. And they busy themselves around the fireplace. Jesus is engrossed in His thoughts.

They are about to eat their food, when a group of people appear at the door. « Here they are » whispers the Iscariot.

Jesus gets up at once and goes towards them. He is so stately that the little group move back for a moment. But Jesus' greeting reassures them: « May peace be with you. What do you want? »

The cowards then think that they can dare everything and presumptuously they enjoin: « In the name of the Holy Law we order You to leave this place, for You are a disturber of consciences, a transgressor of the Law, a corrupter of the peaceful towns in Judaea. Are You not afraid of the punishment of Heaven, You ape of the Just One who baptises at the Jordan, You protector of prostitutes? Away from the holy land of Judaea! That Your

breath may not arrive inside the walls of the holy City. »

« I am not doing anything wrong. I teach as a rabbi, I cure as a thaumaturge, I cast out demons as an exorciser. Such categories exist also in Judaea. And God, Who wants them, has them respected and venerated by you. I am not asking for veneration. I only ask to be allowed to do good to those who suffer from diseases in their bodies, their minds or their souls. Why do you forbid Me? »

« You are possessed. Go away. »

« An insult is not a reply. I asked you why you forbid Me, whilst you allow others. »

« Because You are possessed and You cast out demons and work miracles with the help of demons. »

« And what about your exorcisers? With whose help do they do it? »

« Through their holy lives. You are a sinner. And to increase Your power, you make use of prostitutes, because the possession of the diabolic strength increases in the union. Our holiness has purified the area of Your accomplice. But we will not allow You to stay here, so that You may not attract other women. »

« But is this house yours? » asks Peter who has gone near the Master with a rather menacing look.

« It is not our house. But the whole of Judaea and the whole of Israel are in the holy hands of the pure ones in Israel. »

« And that's you, presumably! » concludes the Iscariot, who has also come to the door, and then sneers at them. He also asks: « And where is your other friend? Is he still trembling? You disgraceful lot, go away! At once. Otherwise I will make you feel sorry for… »

« Be silent, Judas. And you, Peter, go back to your place. Listen, Pharisees and Scribes. For your own good, for the sake of your souls, I beg you not to fight the Word of God. Come to Me. I do not hate you. I understand your mentality and I feel sorry for it. But I want to lead you to a new, holy mentality, capable of sanctifying you and of giving Heaven to you. Do you think that I have come to fight you? Oh! no! I have come to save you. That is why I came. I take you upon My heart. I ask you to love and understand. Since you are the wisest men in Israel, you must understand the truth better than anybody else. Be souls, not only bodies. Shall I kneel down and beg you on My knees? The stake, your souls, is such that I would put Myself under your feet to conquer them for Heaven, because I am sure that the Father would not consider My humiliation a mistake. Say one word to Me who am waiting! »

« Be cursed, that is what we say. »

« All right. It has been said. You may go. I will go, too. » And Jesus turns His back on them and goes back to His seat. He lays His head on the table and weeps.

Bartholomew closes the door so that none of the cruel people

who insulted Him, and who are now going away threatening and cursing Christ, may see His tears.

There is a long silence then James of Alphaeus caresses Jesus' head and says: « Do not weep. We love You, also on their behalf. »

Jesus looks up and says: « I am not weeping over Myself. I am weeping over them, as they are killing themselves, deaf as they are to every invitation. »

« What shall we do now? » asks the other James.

« We will go to Galilee. We will leave tomorrow morning. »

« Not today, Lord? »

« No. I must say goodbye to the good people here. And you will come with Me. »

138. A New Disciple. Departure for Galilee.

16th April 1945.

« My Lord, I have done nothing but my duty towards God, towards my master and towards honesty of conscience. I watched that woman while she was my guest and I always found her to be honest. She may have been a sinner. But she is not now. Why should I investigate on a past which she has repented and for which she has atoned? My sons are handsome young men. But she has never shown her face, which is really beautiful, neither did she let them hear her voice. I can say that I heard the tone of her silver voice when she shouted because she had been wounded. Otherwise, the little she asked for behind her veil, and she always asked me or my wife, was whispered in such a low voice that we could hardly understand her. You can see how prudent she was, too. When she was afraid that her presence might be harmful to anyone, she went away… I had promised to defend her and to help her. But she did not avail herself of the opportunity. No. A fallen woman does not behave like that! I will pray for her, as she asked me, also without this souvenir. Keep it, Master. Give it in alms, for her good. If it is given by You, it will obtain peace for her. »

The steward speaks respectfully to Jesus. He is a stout handsome man with an honest countenance. Behind him there are six hefty young men, all like their father, six truly intelligent faces, and there is also his wife, a little gentle slender woman, who is listening to her husband as if he were a god, continuously nodding assent.

Jesus takes the gold bracelet and hands it to Peter saying: « It is for the poor. » He then addresses the steward: « Not everybody in Israel is as upright as you are. You are wise because you can tell good from evil and you follow uprighteousness without counting the cost, whether it is profitable to do so from a human point of view. In the name of the Eternal Father I bless you, your children,

your wife and your house. Persevere in such spiritual proclivity and the Lord will always be with you and you will have eternal life. I am going away now, but that does not mean that we shall not meet again. I will come back and you can always come to Me. God grant you peace for what you have done for Me and for that poor creature. »

The steward, his children and wife kneel down and kiss the feet of Jesus, Who after a last blessing gesture goes away with His disciples towards the village.

« And what if those ugly people are still there? » asks Philip.

« It is not possible to forbid people speaking in the streets » replies Judas of Alphaeus.

« No. But we are "anathema" to them. »

« Oh! Never mind! Does it worry you? »

« It only worries me because the Master does not want any violence. And as they know, they take advantage of it » grumbles Peter through his beard. And he certainly thinks that Jesus, Who is speaking to Simon and the Iscariot, does not hear him.

But Jesus does hear and He turns round, partly grave, partly smiling and says: « Do you think that I would be victorious if I used violence? That is a poor human system and serves, only temporarily, for human victories. How long does oppression last? Until by itself it causes reactions in the people held down, which reactions accumulating form greater violence that suppresses the previous oppression. I do not want a temporary kingdom. I want an eternal one: the Kingdom of Heaven. How many times have I told you? How many times will I have to tell you? Will you ever understand? Yes, the moment will come when you will understand. »

« When, my Lord? I am in haste to understand, that I may be less ignorant » says Peter.

« When? When you are ground like corn between the stones of sorrow and repentance. You could, nay, you should understand before. But to do so you should overcome your human nature and let your souls free. But you are not able to make such an effort against yourselves. But you will understand… you will understand. And then you will also understand that I could not make use of violence, a human means, to establish the Kingdom of Heaven: the Kingdom of the spirit. In the meantime do not be afraid. Those men who are worrying you, will not do anything. It is enough for them to have driven Me away. »

« But was it not easier to tell the head of the synagogue to come to the steward's house or to wait for us on the main road? »

« Oh! what a wise man My Thomas is today! Of course it was not easy. Or rather: it was easier but not fair. He showed heroism for Me and was abused in his house because of Me. It is just that I should go to his house to comfort him. »

Thomas shrugs his shoulders and speaks no more.

Here is the village. A large very rural one, with houses in the orchards which are all bare at present and there are many sheepfolds. It must be a suitable place for sheep-rearing, because there are sheep bleating everywhere, coming from or going to the pastures on the plain. There is the usual crossroad, with the square and the fountain in the centre. The house of the head of the synagogue is there.

The door is opened by an elderly woman, whose face is clearly marked by tears. And yet, when she sees the Lord, she has a reaction of joy and she prostrates herself blessing.

« Stand up, mother. I have come to say goodbye to you. Where is your son? »

« He is in there… » and she points to a room at the end of the house. « Have You come to console him? I have not been able… »

« So, is he depressed? Is he sorry he defended Me? »

« No, Lord. But he has a scruple. But he will tell You. I will call him. »

« No. I will go. You wait here. Let us go, woman. »

Jesus walks across the hall, only a few yards long, He pushes the door and goes into the room, He goes slowly towards a man who is sitting, bent towards the floor, engrossed in anguished meditation.

« Peace to you, Timotheus. »

« What! You! Lord! »

« Yes, it is I. Why are you so sad? »

« Lord… I… They told me that I have sinned. They told me that I am anathema. I examine myself but I do not appear to be so. But they are the holy ones in Israel and I am a poor head of the synagogue. They are certainly right. And now I dare not look up at the angry face of God. And I have such need in this hour! I was serving Him with true love and I was endeavouring to make Him known. I will now be deprived of that opportunity, because the Sanhedrin will certainly curse me. »

« But what is your trouble? That you are no longer the head of the synagogue, or that it is no longer possible for you to speak of God? »

« It is the latter that afflicts me, Master! I think that You mean whether I am sorry for not being the head of the synagogue because of the benefit and honour one gets from it. I do not care for that. I have only my mother, who was born at Aera where she has a little house. She has a roof there and what to live on. I… am young. I will work. But I will never dare speak of God again, for I have sinned. »

« Why have you sinned? »

« They say that I am an accomplice of… Lord! Don't make me speak!… »

« No. I will speak. No, I will not mention it either. But you and I know their charges and we know that they are not true. Therefore you have not sinned. I am telling you. »

« Then, I can still look up at the Almighty? Can I… »

« What, son? » Jesus is extremely kind when he bends over the man, who has suddenly stopped speaking as if he were frightened. « What? My Father is anxious that you should look at Him, He wants you to look at Him. And I want your heart and your thoughts. Yes, the Sanhedrin will strike you. I am stretching out My arms to you and I say: "Come". Do you want to be My disciple? I see in you what is necessary to be a worker for the eternal Master. Come to My vineyard… »

« Do You really mean that, Master? Mother… did you hear? I am happy, mother! I… bless that suffering because it gives me this joy. Oh! Let us make merry, mother. I will go with the Master, and you will go back to your house. I will come at once, my Lord, Who have banished all my fears, my sorrow and my fear of God. »

« No. You will wait the word of the Sanhedrin, with a peaceful heart, without hatred. Stay in your position as long as you are left in your place. You will then reach Me at Nazareth or Capernaum. Goodbye. Peace be with you and with your mother. »

« Are You not staying in my house? »

« No. I will come to your mother's house. »

« It is not a very loyal village. »

« I will teach them to be faithful. Goodbye, mother. Are you happy now? » Jesus caresses her, as He normally does with elderly women whom, I notice, he calls mother.

« I am happy, Lord. I brought up a son for the Lord. The Lord now takes him from me to be the servant of his Messiah. Blessed be the Lord. And blessed be You, Who are His Messiah. Blessed be the hour You came here. Blessed be my offspring who has been called to Your service. »

« Blessed be the mother who is as holy as Anna of Elkanah. Peace be with you. »

Jesus goes out followed by mother and son. He joins His disciples, says goodbye once again and starts His return journey towards Galilee.

139. On the Mountains near Emmaus.

17th April 1945.

Jesus is with His disciples in a very mountainous place. It is a bad and rough road and the elderly apostles find progress arduous. The younger ones, on the other hand, are very cheerful around Jesus and they climb nimbly, talking to one another.

The two cousins, the sons of Zebedee and Andrew are elated at

the idea of going back to Galilee, and their joy is such that it enthrals also the Iscariot, who for some time has been in an excellent frame of mind. He simply says: « Master, at Passover, when we come to the Temple, will You come back to Kerioth? My mother is always hoping to see You. She sent me word. And also the people of the village… »

« Certainly. Now, even if we wanted to go, the season is too inhospitable to go along those impassable roads. See how troublesome it is even here. And without that compulsion, I would not have set out on this journey… But we could not stay any longer… » Jesus becomes silent and pensive.

« And later, I mean for Passover, will we be able to come? I would like to show Your grotto to James and Andrew » says John.

« Are you forgetting how much Bethlehem loves us? » asks the Iscariot. « Nay, how much they love the Master. »

« No. But I could go with James and Andrew. Jesus could stay at Juttah or in your house… »

« Yes, I like that. Will You come, Master? They will go to Bethlehem, and You will stay with me at Kerioth, You have never been all alone with me… and I am so anxious to have You all to myself… »

« Are you jealous? Do you not know that I love you all exactly the same? Do you not think that I am with all of you, also when I seem to be far away? »

« I know that You love us. If You did not love us, You would have to be much more severe, at least with me. I believe that Your spirit is always watching over us. But we are not only spirit. There is man, with the love of man, his desires, his regrets. Jesus, I know that I am not the one who makes You most happy. But I believe that You know how eager I am to please You and how I regret all the hours that I lose You through my misery… »

« No, Judas. I do not lose you. I am closer to you than to the others just because I know who you are. »

« What am I, my Lord? Tell me. Help me to understand what I am. I do not understand myself. I seem to be a woman who is troubled by whims caused by her pregnancy. I desire both holy things and depraved things. Why? What am I? »

Jesus looks at him with an inscrutable expression. He is sad, but His sadness is mingled with pity, with so much pity. He looks like a doctor who observes the state of a patient and knows that he cannot recover his health… But He does not speak.

« Tell me, Master. Your opinion will be the least harsh for poor Judas. In any case… we are all brothers. It does not matter if they know of what I am made. On the contrary, if they hear Your opinion on me, they will amend their own and will help me. Won't you? »

The others are embarrassed and do not know what to say. They look at their companion, they look at Jesus.

Jesus draws the Iscariot near Himself, to the place where His cousin James was before, and says: « You are only confused. You have all the best elements, but they are not well settled, and the slightest breeze upsets them. A short while ago we passed through that gorge and we were shown the damage caused by the water, the land and the trees to the poor houses of the little village there. Water, land and trees are useful and blessed things, are they not? And yet they became a curse there. Why? Because the water of the torrent did not have a fixed course, but, also because of the indolence of man, it had dug various beds, according to its whims. That was all right as long as there were no storms. The clear water that irrigated the mountain in so many tiny streams looked like a jeweller's work, like necklaces of diamonds or emeralds, according to whether they reflected the light or the shade of the forests. And man enjoyed them, because the murmuring streams were useful to his fields. Also the plants were beautiful; they had been planted by playful winds, with bizarre foliage and branches and had left wide glades open to sunshine. Also the soft soil was beautiful, it had been deposited by, who knows which remote floods between the undulations of the mountain and was so fertile for cultivations. But when the storms came a month ago, the freakish streams joined together and overflowed in an irregular way along a different course, sweeping away the plants and dragging the soil down to the valley. If the water had been maintained in an orderly way, if the trees had been grouped together in woods, if the soil had been supported methodically by a suitable protection, the three good elements, wood, water and soil would not have become the ruin and death of that little village. You have intelligence, boldness, education, readiness, fine appearance and so many other attributes. But they are disorganised within you and you leave them as they are. See: you must work patiently and constantly to put your qualities in order, as order is also strength, so that when the storm of temptation comes, the good that is within you may not become an evil for yourself and others. »

« You are right, Master. Now and again I get upset by a storm and everything becomes ruffled. And You say that I could… »

« Your will is everything, Judas. »

« But there are such strong temptations… We hide ourselves up because we are afraid that the world might read them on our faces. »

« And that is the mistake! That is exactly the moment when you should not shut yourself up. But you ought to look for the world, for the world of good people, to be helped by them. A fever is abated also by contact with the peace of good people. And you

ought to look also for the world of those who criticise you, because, owing to the pride which urges us to hide ourselves so that our tempted souls may not be "read", that would serve as a reaction to our moral weakness. And you would not fall. »

« You went into the desert… »

« Because I could do it. But woe to those who are alone, unless in their solitude they are a multitude against a multitude. »

« How? I don't understand. »

« A multitude of virtues against a multitude of temptations. When virtue is feeble, one must do as this ivy: get hold of the branches of strong trees, to climb up. »

« Thank You, Master. I will cling to You and to my companions. But you must all help me. You are all better than I am. »

« It was the frugal honest surrounding where we were brought up, that was better, my friend. But now you are with us and we love you. You will see… I don't want to criticise Judaea, but believe me, in Galilee, at least in our villages, there is less wealth and less corruption. Tiberias, Magdala and other places of pleasure, are not far from corruption. But we live with "our" simple souls, which may be also coarse, if you wish so, but are active and holily happy with what has been granted to us by God » says James of Alphaeus.

« But, don't you know, James, that Judas' mother is a holy woman? Her goodness in written all over her face » objects John.

Judas of Kerioth smiles happily at the praise, and he smiles even more when Jesus confirms: « You are right, John. She is a holy creature. »

« Eh! It was my father's dream to make me a great man of the world and he took me away too early and too deeply from my mother… »

« What have you got to say that you are always speaking? » asks Peter from far away. « Stop! Wait for us! It is not fair that you should go on like that without considering that my legs are so short. »

They stop until the other group join them.

« Ah! My little boat, how I love you! I have to work here like a slave… What were you talking about? »

« We were saying what is necessary to be good » replies Jesus.

« And are You not telling me, Master? »

« Of course: order, patience, perseverance, humility, charity… I told you many times! »

« Not order. What has it to do with it? »

« Disorder is never a good quality. I have just explained that to your companions. They will tell you. And I mentioned it first, whereas I mentioned charity last, because they are the two extremities of the straight line of perfection. Now you know that a

straight line on a plane has neither beginning nor end. Each extremity can be either the beginning or the end, whereas in the case of a spiral, or any other design which is not enclosed in itself, there is always a beginning and an end. Holiness is linear, simple, perfect and has but two extremities, like a straight line. »

« It is easy to draw a straight line… »

« Do you think so? You are wrong. In a drawing, even if it is a complicated one, some imperfections may not be noticed. But an error is noticed at once in a straight line: either in inclination or uncertainty. Joseph, when he taught me the trade, insisted a great deal that the boards should be straight and quite rightly he used to say: "See, son? A small imperfection may not be seen in a decoration or in a turned work, because the eye, unless it is very experienced, if it watches one point, does not see another. But if a board is not as straight as it should be, even the most simple work will not be satisfactory, such as a poor table for a peasant. It will be on a slant or it will wobble. It is only good for the fire". We can say the same applies to souls. If we do not want to be good but for the eternal fire, that is, if we want to conquer Heaven, we must be perfect like a board which is planed and squared properly. Who starts his spiritual work in an unplanned manner, starting from useless things, jumping from one thing to another, like a restless bird, will end up by not being able to join the various parts of his work. They will not fit in. Therefore, order and charity. Then, holding those two extremities firm in two vices, so that they may not move, you can work at all the rest, decorations or carving, whatever it may be. Have you understood? »

« Yes, I have. » Peter endures his lesson in silence and suddenly concludes: « So my brother is more clever than I am. He is really tidy. One step after the other, calm and quiet. He does not seem to be moving, instead… I would like to do a lot of things quickly. And I do nothing. Who will help me? »

« Your good will. Do not be afraid, Peter. You do things, too. You are making yourself. »

« What about me? »

« You, too, Philip. »

« And what about me? I do not seem to be good for anything. »

« No, Thomas. You work, too. You all work. You are wild trees, but the grafts will slowly and certainly change you and you are My joy. »

« There You are. We are sad and You console us. We are weak, and You fortify us. We are afraid and You encourage us. You are always ready with advice and comfort for everybody and for every case. How can You be always ready and so good, Master? »

« My friends, that is why I came, knowing what I was going to find and what I had to do. If one has no illusions, one has no disappointments

and thus one does not lose enthusiasm' And one proceeds. Remember that when you, too, will have to work at the animal man to make the spiritual man. »

140. In the House of Cleopas, the Head of the Synagogue.

18th April 1945.

John and his brother knock at a door in a village. I recognise the house which the two disciples of Emmaus entered With Christ after His resurrection. When the door is opened, they go in and speak to someone I do not see. They come out and walk along a street and join Jesus, Who is standing with the others in a lonely place.

« He is at home, Master. And he is really happy that You have come. He said to us: "Go and tell Him that my house is at His disposal. I am coming, too". »

« Let us go, then. »

They walk for a little while and then meet the old head of the synagogue Cleopas, whom we saw at the Clear Water. They bow to one another, then the old man, who looks like a patriarch, kneels down in veneration. Some citizens, who see him, draw near curiously.

The old man stands up and says: « Here is the promised Messiah. Remember this day, o citizens of Emmaus. »

Some people watch with a completely human curiosity, some instead look with religious respect. Two men elbow their way through the crowd and say: « Peace to You, Rabbi. We were there, too, on that day. »

« Peace to you all. I have come as your head of the synagogue asked Me. »

« Will You work miracles also here? »

« If there are children of God who believe and need a miracle, I will certainly work it. »

The head of the synagogue says: « Those who wish to hear the Master, should come to the synagogue. Also those who have sick people. Can I say that, Master? »

« Yes, you can. After the sixth hour I shall be entirely at your disposal. Now I am entirely of good Cleopas. » And followed by a train of people He walks beside the old man to his house.

« Here is my son, Master. And this is my wife. And this is the wife of my son and her little children. I am sorry that my other son is in Jerusalem, with the father-in-law of my son Cleopas, and with another poor man from here… But I will tell You. Come in, my Lord, with Your disciples. »

They go in and are refreshed in the usual Jewish custom. They then sit near the fire burning in a large fireplace, because it is a

cold damp day.

« We will soon be sitting at the table. I have invited the notables of the place. It is a great feast, today. They do not all believe in You. But they are not enemies either. They are only inquirers… They would like to believe. But we have been disappointed too often, lately, about the Messiah. People are distrustful. A word from the Temple would suffice to dispel all doubts. But the Temple… I think that if people see You and hear You, in a simple way, a lot can be done in that direction. I would like to give You some real friends. »

« You are one. »

« I am a poor old man. If I were younger, I would follow You. But old age is a burden. »

« You already serve Me by believing. You preach Me with your faith. Be good, Cleopas. I will not forget you in the hour of Redemption. »

« Here is Simon with Hermas. They are arriving » informs the son of the head of the synagogue.

They all stand up while two middle-aged gentlemanlike men come in.

« This is Simon and this is Hermas. They are true Israelites. But their souls are genuine. »

« God will reveal Himself to their souls. May in the meantime peace descend upon them. Without peace one cannot hear God. »

« It is also stated in the book of the Kings speaking of Elijah. »

« Are these Your disciples? » asks the one named Simon.

« Yes, they are. »

« They are of every age and from every place. And are You Galilean? »

« From Nazareth. But I was born in Bethlehem at the time of the census. »

« You are a Bethlehemite, then. It confirms Your figure. »

« It is a benign confirmation, for human weakness. But the confirmation is in the supernatural. »

« You mean, in Your works » says Hermas.

« In them and in the words that the Spirit puts on My lips. »

« They have been repeated to me by those who heard them. Your wisdom is really great. And are You going to found Your Kingdom on it? »

« A king must have subjects who know the laws of his kingdom. »

« But all Your laws are spiritual! »

« You are right, Hermas. They are all spiritual. I will have a spiritual kingdom. I have therefore a spiritual code. »

« What about the reconstruction of Israel then? »

« Do not fall into the common error of understanding the name Israel for what its human meaning is. Israel means "People of

God". I will rebuild the true freedom and power of this people of God and I will rebuild it by giving back to Heaven the souls which have been redeemed and made wise of the eternal truth. »

« Please, let us sit at the table » says Cleopas who sits with Jesus at the centre of the table. Hermas is on Jesus' right and Simon is next to Cleopas, then the son of the head of the synagogue and the disciples.

Jesus, at the request of the landlord, makes the offering and blesses and the meal starts.

« Have You come to this area? » asks Hermas.

« No, I am going to Galilee. I will pass here later. »

« What? Are You leaving the Clear Water? »

« Yes, Cleopas. »

« Crowds of people used to come there, notwithstanding it was winter. Why disappoint them? »

« Not I. That is what the pure ones of Israel want. »

« What? Why? What harm were You doing? Palestine has many rabbis who speak where they wish. Why are You not allowed to do so? »

« Do not investigate, Cleopas. You are old and wise. Do not put the poison of bitter knowledge into your heart. »

« Perhaps You were preaching a new doctrine, which through an error of evaluation, was considered dangerous by the Scribes and Pharisees? What we know of You does not seem… is that right Simon? Perhaps we do not know everything. According to You, in what does the Doctrine consist? » asks Hermas.

« In the exact knowledge of the Decalogue. In love and mercy. Love and mercy, this breath and this blood of God, are the rule of My behaviour and of My Doctrine. And I practise it in all my daily difficult situations. »

« But that is not a fault! It is goodness. »

« It is considered a sin by the Scribes and Pharisees. But I cannot misrepresent My mission, neither can I disobey God Who sent Me as "Mercy" on to the earth. The time of full Mercy has come after centuries of Justice. Justice is the sister of Mercy. They were born of the same womb; but whereas before Justice was stronger and the other only mitigated its rigours - because God cannot be forbidden to love - now Mercy is the queen and Justice rejoices, because it was so grieved at having to punish! If you consider the situation properly, you will easily see that they always existed since Man compelled God to be severe. The fact that mankind still exists is the proof of what I say. Adam's very punishment is blended with mercy. God could have burnt them to ashes in their sin. He granted them expiation. And he made a Woman, the cause of good, shine in the eyes of the woman, the cause of all evil, depressed for being the cause of evil. And He granted both of them

children and the knowledge of existence. To Cain, the killer, together with justice He granted the mark, which was mercy, so that he might not be killed. And He granted Noah to mankind corrupted, that he might save man in the ark and He then promised the eternal covenant of peace. No more fierce deluges. Justice was subdued by Mercy. Do you wish to go back through Sacred History with Me as far as My moment? You will see greater and greater waves of love follow one upon the other. Now the sea of God is full and it lifts you, o mankind, upon its clear tranquil water, it lifts you cleansed and beautiful up to Heaven, and says to you: "I hand you back to my Father". »

The three men are absorbed in the astonishment of so much loving light. Then Cleopas sighs: « It is so. But You are the only one like that! But what will happen to Joseph? Should they have already listened to him? Will they have listened to him? »

Nobody replies.

Cleopas addresses Jesus: « Master, a man of Emmaus has fallen into a grave sin. His father, a long time ago, repudiated his wife, who went to Antioch and settled there with her brother, who owned an emporium. He had never met that woman, who, for reasons which I am not investigating, was repudiated a few months after she had been married. He had been told nothing about her, because her name had of course been banished from that house. When he grew into a man and he inherited his father's wealth and business, he decided to get married and having met a woman at Joppa, who owned a rich emporium he married her. Now I do not know how, but it became common knowledge that that woman was the daughter of his father's first wife. It was therefore a grave sin, although, from my point a view, the paternity of the woman is most uncertain. Joseph, who was condemned, all at once lost his peace both as a believer and as a husband. And although he most regretfully repudiated his wife, perhaps his sister, who was so grieved that she became feverish and died, he has not been forgiven. In all conscience I say that, if he had had no enemies eager for his wealth, he would not have been hit so hard. What would You do? »

« It is a very grave case, Cleopas. Why did you not speak to Me about it, when you came to see Me? »

« I did not want to keep You away from here… »

« Oh! But I am not driven away by such things! Now listen. From a material point of view, there is an incest. And consequently a punishment. But a fault is a moral sin, only when there is a will to commit a sin. Did the man consciously commit incest? You say no. Well, where is the sin? I mean, his guilt in wanting to commit a sin? There is still to consider the fault of a common life with the daughter of his father. But you say that it is uncertain whether she

was such. And even if she were, the fault ended when their common life ended. And it certainly ended both because of the repudiation and of her subsequent death. I therefore say that the man should be forgiven his seeming sin. And I say that since there is no conviction for the royal incest, which persists and is known to the whole world, people should feel pity for this sad case, the origin of which goes back to the right of repudiation granted by Moses to avoid more evils, if not graver ones. I do not approve of that right, because man and wife, whether they are married happily or unhappily, should live together, without any repudiation, which encourages adultery and situations like the present one. And further, I would repeat, if you are going to be severe, you must be equally so with everybody. First of all with yourselves and then with the mighty ones. But as far as I know, with the exception of the Baptist, no one has raised his voice against the royal sin. Are those who condemn, immune from similar or worse sins, or does their name or their power cast a veil over them, as their pompous mantles protect their bodies, which are often unhealthy because of their vices? »

« You are right, Master. It is so. But, in short, who are You?… » ask together the two friends of the head of the synagogue.

Jesus has no time to reply because the door opens and Simon, the father-in-law of Cleopas junior comes in.

« You are welcome. What is the news? »

They are all so curious that no one thinks of the Master any more…

« Well… he has been condemned. They would not even accept the offer of the sacrifice. Joseph has been cut off from Israel. »

« Where is he? »

« Out there. He is weeping. I have tried to speak to the most powerful ones. But they rejected me as if I were a leper. Now… But… That man is ruined. Both his wealth and his soul. What can he do? »

Jesus stands up and goes towards the door, without saying one word.

Old Cleopas thinks that He has taken offence for being neglected and says: « Oh! forgive me, Master! But I am so grieved that my mind is upset. Please, stay here! »

« I will stay, Cleopas. I am only going to see that poor man. Come, if you wish, with Me. » Jesus goes out into the hall.

There is a strip of ground in front of the house, with some small flower-beds, and beyond it there is the road. There is a man lying on the threshold. Jesus goes near him with His arms stretched out. Behind Him are all the others who are anxious to see.

« Joseph, has no one forgiven you? » Jesus speaks most kindly. The man starts on hearing a new voice which sounds so kind

after the many voices that condemned him. He looks up full of amazement.

« Joseph, has no one forgiven you? » asks Jesus once again and He bends to take the hands of the man, trying to lift him up.

« Who are You? » asks the unhappy fellow.

« I am Mercy and Peace. »

« There is no more mercy or peace for me. »

« There is always some in the bosom of God. That bosom is full of them, particularly for unhappy children. »

« But my sin is such that I am separated from God. You are certainly good, but leave me, that You may not get contaminated. »

« I will not leave you. I want to give you peace. »

« But I am… Who are You? »

« I told you: Mercy and Peace. I am the Saviour, I am Jesus. Stand up. I can do what I want. In the name of God I absolve you from your unintentional contamination. The other evil does not exist. I am the Lamb of God Who takes away the sins of the world. All judgement has been given to Me by the Eternal Father. Who believes in My word will have eternal life. Come, poor child of Israel. Refresh your tired body and fortify your depressed spirit. I will forgive much graver sins. No. The desperation of hearts will not come from Me! I am the spotless Lamb, but I do not run away from wounded sheep, lest I should get contaminated. On the contrary I look for them and take them with Me. Too many people have been completely ruined through an excessive and also unfair sternness of judgement. Woe to those who lead a spirit to desperation because of their intolerant strictures! They do not act in the interests of God, but for Satan's. Now I have seen a prostitute, who was anxious to redeem herself, driven away from the Redeemer, I have seen the head of a synagogue persecuted because he was a just man. I now see a man struck for an unintentional fault. I see too many things being accomplished where vice and falsehood are thriving. And like a wall that is raised by placing one brick on top of another and thus forms a barrier, so the things I have seen, and I have already seen too many in one year, are building up a wall of hardness between Me and them. Woe to them when it will be completely built with the materials supplied by them! Take this, eat and drink. You are exhausted. Then, tomorrow you will come to Me. Do not be afraid. When You are back in a peaceful frame of mind, you will be free to decide on your future. You are not able now and it would be dangerous to let you do it. »

Jesus has taken the man back into the dining room and has forced him to sit in His place. He then serves him and addressing Hermas and Simon He says: « That is My Doctrine. That and nothing else. And I do not only preach it. I practise it. Let those who thirst for Truth and Love come to Me. »

Jesus says:

« And My first year of evangelisation ends here. Take note of that. What shall I tell you? I gave it because it was my wish to make it known. But what happens with the Pharisees, happens also with this work. My desire to be loved - to know is to love - is rejected by too many things. And that deeply grieves Me, the Eternal Master imprisoned by you… »

INDEX *

*Volumes 1 and 2 contained Summary-Indexes giving summaries of the numbered paragraphs into which each chapter of the volume had been divided.

Starting from volume 3, this Summary-Index has been suspended and has also been suppressed in reprints of volumes 1 and 2, as the summaries of the paragraphs will be issued more suitably with the various indexes to be compiled at a later date.

Consequently, each volume now contains only the Index of the titles of the chapters.

THE SECOND YEAR OF THE PUBLIC LIFE

141. Instruction to the Disciples while Going towards Arimathea.

19th April 1945.

« My Lord, what shall we do with this man? » Peter asks Jesus pointing at a man, whose name is Joseph, and who has been following them since they left Emmaus. Joseph is now listening to the two sons of Alphaeus and to Simon, who are paying particular attention to him.

« I have told you. He is coming with us as far as Galilee. »

« And then? »

« And then he will be staying with us. You will see that that is what is going to happen. »

« Is he going to be a disciple, too? With that foul story about him? »

« Are you a Pharisee, too? »

« Not me! But… I think that the Pharisees are too keen on keeping an eye on us… »

« And they will cause us trouble if they see him with us. That is what you mean. So, we should allow a son of Abraham to be plunged into grief, because we are afraid of being annoyed. No, Simon Peter. It is a soul that can be lost or saved according to how its deep wound is healed. »

« But, are we not Your disciples?… »

Jesus looks at Peter and smiles sweetly. He then says: « One day, many months ago, I said to you: "Many more will come". The field is vast, very vast. Because of its vastness, the workers will never be sufficient… also because many, like Jonah, will die working hard. But you will always be My favoured ones » concludes Jesus, drawing gloomy Peter close to Himself and His promise cheers the apostle.

« So, he is coming with us. »

« Yes, until his heart is refreshed. He is deeply disillusioned by all the bitter hatred he has had to endure. He is indeed poisoned. »

Also James, John and Andrew have joined the Master and are listening to Him.

« You cannot appraise the enormous harm that a man can do another man by means of his hostile intolerance. I ask you to remember that your Master was always very benign towards those who were suffering from a spiritual disease. You think that My greatest miracles and My main virtue consist in the curing of bodies. No, My friends… Yes, you too, who are ahead of us and you, who are behind Me, come here. The road is wide and we can walk in a group. »

They all gather round Jesus Who continues: « My main deeds, the ones that bear the clearest witness to My nature and My mission, the ones upon which the Father looks with joy, are the healing of

hearts, whether they are freed from one or more capital vices, or relieved from grief. Hearts are discouraged by grief when they are convinced that they have been struck and abandoned by God. What is a soul that has lost the certainty of the help of God? It is a thin bearbine crawling in the dust, as it is no longer able to clutch at the idea that was its strength and its joy. It is horrible to live without hope. Life is beautiful, in its hardship, only because it receives such warmth from the Divine Sun. The aim of life is that Sun. The days of man may be dismal, wet with tears and smeared with blood. But the Sun will rise again. Then there will be no more grief, no separations, no harshness, no hatred, no misery or solitude in an enveloping fog. Instead there will be brightness and singing, serenity and peace, there will be God. God: the eternal Sun! See how gloomy the earth is when there is an eclipse. If man were compelled to say: "The sun is defunct" would he not feel as if he were to live for ever in a dark hypogeum, buried and dead before dying? But man knows that behind the planet that hides the sun and makes the world look dismal there is still God's bright sun. And the thought of being united to God during life is like that. If men hurt, steal, calumniate, God cures, grants, justifies. And He does so in full measure. Men may say: "God has rejected you". But a confident soul thinks, must think: "God is just and good. He knows all reasons and is benign. He is more benign than the most benign of men. He is infinitely so. Therefore He will not reject me if I lean my tear-stained face on His bosom and I say to Him: 'Father, I have but You. Your son is in anguish and depressed. Give me Your peace… I have been sent by God to gather those whom man has upset and Satan has overwhelmed and I save them. That is really My work. A miracle on a body is a manifestation of divine power. The redemption of souls is the work of Jesus Christ, the Saviour and Redeemer. I think, and I am not mistaken, that those who have been rehabilitated by Me in the eyes of God and in their own, will be My faithful disciples, the ones who with greater strength will be able to lead crowds of people to God saying: "Are you sinners? So am I. Are you depressed? So am I. Are you desperate? So was I. And yet you can see that the Messiah had mercy on my spiritual distress and He wanted me to be His priest. Because He is mercy and He wants the world to be convinced of that, and no man is more suitable to convince than he who has experienced such mercy in himself". Now I will put them on a par with My friends, and with those who have worshipped Me since I was born, that is, I will associate them with you and with the shepherds. Nay, I will set them alongside the shepherds, with those who have been cured, with those who without any special election, like you twelve, have followed My way and will follow it as long as they live. Isaac is near Arimathea, as requested by our

friend Joseph. I will take Isaac with Me, so that he may join Timoneus when the latter arrives. You may join them, Joseph, if you think that there is peace in Me and a purpose for a whole life. They will be good brothers to you. »

« O My Comfort! It is exactly as You say. My deep wounds, both as a man and as a believer, are being cured very quickly. I have been with You three days. And I feel that what was my torture only three days ago, is a dream that is fading away. I had that dream, but the more time elapses, the more its harsh details vanish before reality. During the past nights I have pondered over things. I have a good relative at Joppa. He was… the involuntary cause of my trouble, because it was through him that I met that woman. And that will tell You whether we were in a position to know whose daughter she was… True, she may have been the daughter of my father's first wife. But he was not the father. Her name was different and she came from far away. She became acquainted with my relative through business transactions. And that is how I met her. My relative was very fond of my business. I am going to make him an offer. The business would come to an end without a master. I am sure he will buy it, also because thereby he will not feel remorse for the trouble he caused me. I will then be self-sufficient and I will be able to follow You without any worry. I only ask You to grant me that man Isaac You mentioned. I am afraid of being all alone with my thoughts. They are still too sad… »

« I will let you have Isaac. He is a kind soul. Sorrow has perfected him. He has carried his cross for thirty years. He knows what it means to suffer… In the meantime we will go ahead. And you will join us at Nazareth. »

« Are we not stopping at Joseph's? »

« Joseph is probably in Jerusalem… The Sanhedrin is very busy… We will find out from Isaac. If he is there, we will take him our peace. If he is not there we will stop only one night, to rest. I am anxious to reach Galilee. There is a Mother Who is suffering. You must remember that there are people who are keen on distressing Her. I want to reassure Her. »

142. Instruction to the Apostles Going towards Samaria.

21st April 1945.

Jesus is with the twelve apostles. The region is still mountainous, but since the road is quite wide, they are all in a group and are speaking among themselves.

« But, now that we are all by ourselves, we can talk about it: why so much jealousy between the two groups? » asks Philip.

Jealousy It is nothing but pride! replies Judas of Alphaeus.

« No. I say that it is only a pretext to justify, somehow, their unjust

behaviour towards the Master. Under the cover of zeal for the Baptist, they succeed in driving Him away, without alienating the crowds too much » says Simon.

« I would unmask them. »

« Peter, we would do many things that He does not do. »

« Why does He not? »

« Because He knows it is better not to do so. All we have to do is to imitate Him. It is not for us to guide Him. And we must be happy about it. It is a great relief to have only to obey… »

« You are quite right, Simon » says Jesus, Who was walking ahead of them apparently pensive. « You are quite right. It is easier to obey than to command. It does not seem so, but it is. It is certainly easy when the spirit is good. And likewise it is difficult to command when the spirit is upright. Because a spirit that is not righteous, gives irrational orders and worse than irrational. Then it is easy to command. But… how more difficult it is to obey! When a man is responsible for a place or a group of people, he must always be charitable and fair, wise and humble, moderate and patient, firm but not obstinate. Oh! It is difficult!… For the time being you have but to obey. You must obey God and your Master. You, and you are not the only one, wonder why I do or do not do certain things, you wonder why God allows or does not allow such things. See, Peter, and all of you, My friends. One of the secrets of the perfect believer is not to set oneself as the interrogator of God. "Why do You do that?" a soul that is not completely formed asks God. And that soul seems to be taking the attitude of a wise adult before a little schoolboy and says: "That is not to be done. It is silly. It is wrong". Who is above God?

You now see that under the pretence of zeal for John I am being driven away. And you are scandalised. And you would like Me to put matters right by polemizing with those who maintain such principles. No, never. You have heard what the Baptist said through the mouths of his disciples: "He must grow greater, I must grow smaller". There is no regret in him, no clinging to his position. A saint is not attached to such things. He does not work to increase the number of his "own" followers. He has no followers of his own. He works to increase the believers in God. God alone is entitled to have followers. Therefore, as I do not regret that some people, in good or in bad faith, remain disciples of the Baptist, so he is not distressed, as you have heard, if some of his disciples come to Me. He disregards such numerical pettiness. He looks at Heaven. And I look at Heaven. Do not argue, therefore, among yourselves, whether it is fair or unfair that the Jews should accuse Me of snatching disciples from the Baptist, whether it is just or unjust to allow people to say that. Those are altercations of talkative women round the village fountain. Saints help one another, they

give and exchange spirits with unreserved ease, smiling at the idea of working for the Lord.

I have baptized, nay, I made you baptize, because the spirit is so dull, nowadays, that it is necessary to present piety, miracles and doctrine in a material form to it. Because of such spiritual dullness I will have to avail Myself of the help of material substances when I want to make you work miracles. But believe Me, the evidence of holiness is neither in the oil, nor in the water, nor in any other ceremony. The time is about to come when an impalpable, invisible thing, which materialists cannot conceive, will be the queen, the "returning queen", powerful and holy with every holy thing and in every holy thing. Through it man will become again the "son of God" and will work what God works, because he will have God with him: Grace. That is the returning queen. Then baptism will be a sacrament. Then man will speak and understand the language of God and will give life and Life, he will give power of science and of strength, then… oh! then! But you are not yet mature to learn what Grace will grant you. Please help its coming by continuously training yourselves and forget useless and mean things.

There is the boundary of Samaria. Do you think I ought to speak there? »

« Oh! » They are all more or less scandalised.

« I solemnly tell you that there are Samaritans everywhere, and if I should not speak where there is a Samaritan, I should not speak anywhere. Come therefore. I will not make any effort to speak. But I will not disdain to speak of God if I am asked. One year is over. The second is beginning. It is between the beginning and the end. At the beginning the Master was still predominant. Now the Saviour is being revealed. The end will see the face of the Redeemer. Let us go. The more a river approaches its estuary, the more it grows. I also am increasing the work of mercy because the end is approaching. »

« Are we going towards some big river after Galilee? Perhaps to the Nile? Or the Euphrates? » whisper some of the disciples.

« Perhaps we are going amongst the Gentiles… » reply others.

« Do not speak among yourselves. We are going towards "My" end. That is, towards the fulfilment of My mission. Listen carefully to what I say to you, because afterwards I will leave you and you will have to continue in My name. »

143. Photinai, the Samaritan Woman.

22nd April 1945.

« I will stop here. You go into town and buy what is necessary for our meal. We shall eat here. »

« Shall we all go? »

« Yes, John. You had better be all together. »

« And what about You? You will be left alone… They are Samaritans… »

« They will not be the worst enemies of Christ. Go. I will pray, while waiting for you. I will pray for you and for them »

The disciples reluctantly go away, and they turn round three or four times to look at Jesus, Who has sat down on a little wall, exposed to the sun, near the low broad edge of a well. It is a big well, so wide that it seems a cistern. In summer it is shaded by tall trees, which are now bare. It is not possible to see the water, but the little puddles and ring marks of wet pitchers on the ground near the well, are clear signs that water has been drawn. Jesus sits down and meditates, in His usual attitude, His elbows resting on His knees, His hands stretched out and joined, His body slightly bent forward and His head lowered. When He feels the mild warmth of the sun, He lets His mantle drop from His head and shoulders and holds it round His waist. He raises His head and smiles at a flight of wrangling sparrows quarrelling over a large crumb of bread, which someone has dropped near the well.

But the sparrows fly away when a woman arrives near the well. With her left hand she is holding an empty amphora by one of its handles, whilst her right hand with a gesture of surprise pushes aside her veil to see who the man is who is sitting there. Jesus smiles at the thirty-five/forty year old woman. She is tall, with a beautiful strongly marked figure. A Spanish type, we would say: a pale olive complexion, rather thick bright-red lips, dark eyes which are even exceedingly large, very dark eyebrows and hair, visible through her transparent veil. Also her rather plump features are typically oriental and slightly soft, as is customary with Arab women. Her dress is a multicoloured striped robe, which is held very tight round her waist and her plump sides and breast, and then falls to the ground in a kind of wavy fringe. She is wearing several rings on her rather plump dark fingers and bracelets on her wrists, which appear under her linen sleeves. Round her neck she wears a heavy necklace from which some medals are hanging; I should call them amulets because they are of all shapes. Heavy ear-rings hang down as far as her neck and shine under her veil.

« Peace be with you, woman. Will you give Me some water to drink? I have walked a long way and I am thirsty. »

« Are You not a Judaean? And You ask me, a Samaritan woman, to give You a drink? What has happened? Have we been rehabilitated, or have you been routed? A great event must have taken place, if a Judaean speaks kindly to a Samaritan woman. But I should say to You: "I will not give You anything, to punish in You all the insults the Jews have been heaping on us for centuries". »

« You are right. A great event has taken place. And because of it many things have changed and many more will change. God has granted a great gift to the world and through it many things have changed. If you knew the gift of God and Who is saying to you:

"Give Me a drink", perhaps you would have asked Him to give you a drink and He would have given you living water. »

« Living water is in the veins of the earth. It is in this well. But it is ours. » The woman's tone is derisory and arrogant.

« Water comes from God. As bounty comes from God. As life comes from God. Everything belongs to the One Only God, woman. And all men come from God: Samaritans and Judaeans. Is this not Jacob's well? And is not Jacob the head of our race? If later on an error divided us, that does not change our origin. »

« Of course, it was our error, was it not? » the woman asks aggressively.

« Neither ours nor yours. It was the error of one who had lost sight of Charity and Justice. I do not wish to offend you or your race. Why do you wish to strike an offensive attitude? »

« You are the first Judaean whom I hear speak thus. The others… But reverting to the well, yes, it is Jacob's and its water is so plentiful and clear that we in Sychar prefer it to other fountains. But it is very deep. You have neither amphora nor bucket. How could You, therefore, draw living water for me? Are You greater than our holy Patriarch Jacob, who found this abundant vein for himself, his sons and his cattle and left it to us as his souvenir and gift? »

« You are right. But whoever drinks this water, will be thirsty again. I instead have a water and whoever drinks it will not be thirsty again. But it is only Mine. And I will give it to whoever asks Me for it. And I solemnly tell you that whoever has the water I give him, will always be satisfied and will never be thirsty again, because My water will be an unfailing eternal spring. »

« What? I do not understand. Are You a magician? How can a man become a well? A camel drinks and lays a supply of water in his big stomach. But he then consumes it and it does not last all his life. And You say that Your water lasts a whole lifetime? »

« Even longer: it will last until eternal life. In those who drink it, it will gush until eternal life and will give germs of eternal life, because it is a spring of health. »

« Give me some of that water, if You really have it. I get tired coming here. If I have it, I will not be thirsty any more and I will never be ill or become old. »

« Is that the only thing of which you get tired? Of nothing else? And you feel only the need of drawing water to drink and satisfy Your poor body? Think about it. There is something more important than your body. Your soul. Jacob did not procure only the

water of the earth for himself and his sons. He was anxious to be holy and to bestow holiness, the water of God. »

« You call us heathens… If what You say is true, we cannot be holy… » The woman's tone is no longer insolent and ironical and she is submissive and somewhat confused.

« Also a heathen can be virtuous. And God, Who is just, will reward him for the good he has done. It will not be a complete reward, but I can tell you that between a guilty believer and an innocent heathen, God looks at the latter with less severity. And if you know you are such, why do you not come to the True God? What is your name? »

« Photinai. »

« Well, tell me, Photinai, are you sorry that you cannot aspire to holiness because you are a heathen, as you say, or because you are in the haze of an old error, as I say? »

« Yes, I am sorry. »

« Well, then, why do you not live at least as a virtuous heathen? »

« Lord!… »

« Yes, can you deny it? Go and call your husband and come back here with him. »

« I have no husband. » The embarrassment of the woman increases.

« You have spoken the truth. You have no husband. But you have had five men and you have one with you now who is not your husband. Was that necessary? Also your religion condemns lewdness. You have the Decalogue, too. Why, then, Photinai, do you live thus? Are you not tired of the exertion of being flesh for everybody, instead of being the honest wife of one man only? Are you not afraid of the evening of your life, when you will be all alone with your memories and regrets? And with your fears? Yes, all those. Fear of God and of ghosts. Where are your children? »

The woman lowers her head completely and does not reply.

« You have none in this world. But their little souls, whom you prevented from seeing the day of their birth, are reproaching you. And they always will. Jewels… beautiful dresses… a splendid house… a bountiful table… But emptiness, and tears, and interior misery. You are forlorn, Photinai. And only through sincere repentance, through God's forgiveness and consequently through your children's forgiveness, you can become rich again. »

« Lord, I see that You are a prophet. And I am ashamed… »

« And when you were doing evil things, were you not ashamed of yourself before the Father Who is in Heaven? Do not weep out of dejection before the Man… Come here, Photinai. Come near Me. I will speak to you of God. Perhaps you did not know Him well. And that is why you have been so faulty. If you had known the True God well, you would not have degraded yourself so much. He

would have spoken to you and supported you… »

« Lord, our ancestors have worshipped on this mountain. You say that one must worship only in Jerusalem. But You said that there is only One God. Help me to see what I must do and where… »

« Woman, believe Me. Before long the Father will be worshipped neither on the mountain in Samaria nor in Jerusalem. You worship Him Whom you do not know. We worship Him Whom we know, because salvation comes from the Judaeans. I remind you of the Prophets. But the time will come, nay, it has already arrived, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, no longer according to the ancient rite, but to the new one, where there will be no sacrifice of animals consumed by fire. There will be the eternal sacrifice of the Immaculate Victim consumed by the Fire of Charity. It will be a spiritual cult in a spiritual Kingdom. And it will be understood by those who are able to worship in spirit and truth. God is Spirit. Those who worship Him must do so spiritually. »

« You speak holy words. I know, because we also know something, that the Messiah is about to come: the Messiah, He Who is called also "Christ". When He comes, He will teach us everything. Not far from here there is also one who is said to be His Precursor. And many go and listen to him. But he is so severe!… You are kind… and the souls of poor people are not afraid of You. I think that Christ will be good. They say that He is the King of Peace. Will it be long before He comes? »

« I have told you that His hour has already come. »

« How do You know? Are You perhaps one of His disciples? The Precursor has many disciples. Also Christ will have them. »

« I, Who am speaking to you, am Jesus Christ. »

« You!… Oh!… » The woman, who had sat down near Jesus, stands up and is about to run away.

« Woman, why are you running away? »

« Because I am struck with terror at being near You. You are holy. »

« I am the Saviour. I came here, although it was not necessary, because I knew that your soul was tired of wandering. You are disgusted with your food… I have come to give you a new food, which will remove your nausea and tiredness… Here are My disciples coming back with My food. But I have already been fed by giving you the first crumbs of your redemption. »

The disciples glance at the woman out of the corners of their eyes, more or less prudently, but no one speaks. She goes away forgetting about her amphora and the water.

« Here, Master » says Peter. « The people have treated us very well. Here is some cheese, fresh bread, olives and apples. Take what You want. It's a good job that woman left her amphora. We

shall draw water with it quicker than with our small flasks. We shall have a drink and then we shall fill them. And we shall not have to ask the Samaritans for anything else. Neither shall we have to go near their fountains. Are You not eating? I wanted to get some fish for You, but there was none. Perhaps You would have preferred it. You look tired and pale. »

« I have a food which is unknown to you. I will have some of it and it will restore Me considerably. »

The disciples look at one another inquisitively.

Jesus replies to their silent questions: « My food is to do the will of Him Who sent Me and to accomplish the work which He wants Me to complete. When a sower sows the seed, can he say that he has done everything and thus state that he can reap the harvest? Most certainly not. How much more there is still to be done before he may say: "My work is accomplished". And he cannot rest until that moment. Look at these little fields in the bright midday sunshine. Only a month ago, even less than a month ago, the soil was bare and dark because it was wet with rain. Look now. It looks as if it were covered by a light whitish veil, because of the many very pale-green corn stems, which have just come up and look even lighter because of the bright sunshine. That is the future crop and seeing it you say: "It will be harvest time in four months. The sowers will employ reapers, because if one man is quite sufficient to sow his field, many men are required to reap the harvest. And they are all happy. Both the man who sowed a small sack of corn and now must prepare his granaries to store the crop, and those who in a few days earn enough to live on for a few months". Also in the spiritual field those who reap what I have sown will rejoice with Me and like Me, because I will give them the wages and crops due to them. I will give them what to live on in My eternal Kingdom. You have but to reap. I have done the hardest work. And yet I say to you: "Come. Reap the harvest in My field. I am glad that you burden yourselves with the sheaves of My corn. When you have harvested all the corn that I, without ever tiring, have sown everywhere, then the will of God will be fulfilled and I will sit at the banquet in the Celestial Jerusalem". Here the Samaritans are coming with Photinai. Be kind to them. They are souls coming to God. »

144. With the People of Sychar.

23rd April 1945.

A group of Samaritan dignitaries are coming towards Jesus, led by Photinai. « God be with You, Rabbi. This woman has told us that You are a prophet and that You do not disdain speaking to us. We beg You to stay with us and not to refuse to speak to us,

because if it is true that we are cut off from Judah, that does not mean that only Judah is holy and that all the error is in Samaria. Also amongst us there are some just people. »

« I told her exactly the same. I will not impose Myself, neither will I reject those who seek Me. »

« You are just. The woman told us that You are Christ. Is that true? Reply to us in the name of God. »

« I am. The Messianic epoch has come. Israel is united by her King. And not only Israel. »

« But You will be the Messiah for those who… are not in error, as we are » remarks an imposing elderly man.

« Man, I see that you are their leader and I also see that you are honestly seeking the Truth. Now, listen to Me since you are learned in the holy scriptures. I was told what the Spirit said to Ezekiel, entrusting him with the prophetic mission: "Son of man, I send you to the people of Israel, to a nation of rebels, who have rebelled against Me… They are impudent and stubborn children… They may listen to you and then not keep your words, which are My words, because they are a rebellious house, but at least they will know that there is a prophet among them. Therefore, be not afraid of them, nor be afraid of their words, because they are unbelieving and rebellious… And you shall speak My words to them, whether they hear or refuse to hear you. Do what I tell you, hear what I say to you, be not rebellious like them. Eat, therefore, whatever food I give you". And I came. I do not flatter Myself and I do not expect to be received as a triumphant victor. But since the will of God is My honey, here I am to fulfil it, and if you wish I will tell you the words which the Spirit said to Me. »

« How can the Eternal Father have thought of us? »

« Because He is love, My children. »

« Not all the Rabbis in Judah say so. »

« But that is what the Messiah of the Lord tells you. »

« It is written that the Messiah is to be born of a virgin in Judah. Of whom and where were You born? »

« In Bethlehem Ephrata, of Mary of the House of David, by means of a spiritual conception. I ask you to believe Me. » Jesus' beautiful voice is a declaration of triumphant joy in proclaiming His Mother's virginity.

« Your face is shining with a bright light. No, it is not possible for You to lie. The faces of the children of darkness are gloomy and their eyes are grim. You are bright; Your eyes are as bright as the morning star and Your words are true. Please come to Sychar and teach the children of this people. Then You will go away… and we will remember the Star that appeared in our sky… »

« Why would you not follow it? »

« How can we? » They are talking while walking towards the

town. « We are cut off. At least that is what they say. But we were born in this faith and we do not know whether it is right to abandon it. Further… well, I feel I can tell You. After all we have eyes to see and minds to think. When we pass through your country, on journeys or on business, not everything we see is so holy as to persuade us that God is with you Judaeans or with you Galileans. »

« I solemnly tell you that the remainder of Israel will be charged with not persuading and leading you back to God by means of good examples and charity, instead of offending and anathematising you. »

« How much wisdom there is in You. Have you all heard Him? »

They all nod assent whispering their admiration.

They have in the meantime reached the town and many people draw near while they walk towards a house.

« Listen, Rabbi. Since You are wise and good, please resolve a doubt of ours. A great deal of our future depends on it. As You are the Messiah and thus the Restorer of David's Kingdom, You must be happy to rejoin this severed limb to the body of the state. Are You not? »

« I am taking care not so much to reunite the severed parts of what is perishable and transient, as to lead back to God all the souls, and I am happy when I restore the Truth to a heart. But express your doubt. »

« Our fathers sinned. Since then the souls of Samaritans have been disliked by God. What benefit will we receive if we follow Good? We will always be like lepers in the eyes of God. »

« Your regret is the eternal dissatisfaction of all schismatics. Once again I will reply to you with Ezekiel: "All souls are Mine" says the Lord. "The soul of the father as well as the soul of the son. Only the soul that sins shall die. If a man is righteous, if he is not an idolator, if he does not fornicate, or steal or lend at an interest, if he has mercy both on the body and on the soul of his neighbour, he is righteous in My eyes and shall live a true life". And further on. "If a just man has a rebellious son, shall that son live because his father was a just man? He shall not live". And also: "If the son of a sinner is a righteous man, will he die like his father, because he is his son? No, he shall live eternal life because he was just". It would not be fair if one had to suffer for the iniquity of another. The soul that has sinned shall die. The soul that has not sinned shall not die. And if he who has sinned is repentant and comes to the Justice, behold, he shall have true life, too. The Lord God, the One and Only Lord, says: "I do not want the death of the sinner, but I want him to repent and live". That is why He sent Me, o wandering children: that you may have true life. I am the Life. Who believes in Me and in Him Who sent Me will have eternal life, even if up to the present moment he was a sinner. »

« Here we are at my house, Master. Do You not detest entering it? »

« I detest only sin. »

« Come in, then, and stay. We shall break our bread together and then, if it is not a burden to You, You will explain the word of God to us. That word has a different flavour when it is explained by You… and we are tortured by a doubt: we do not feel sure that we are right… »

« Everything would be appeased if you dared to come openly to the Truth. May God speak to your hearts. It is getting dark. Tomorrow, at the third hour I will speak to you at some length, if you wish so. Go now with the Mercy which is close to you. »

145. Evangelization at Sychar.

24th April 1945.

Jesus is speaking to a large crowd in the centre of a square. He has climbed on a stone bench near the fountain. The crowds are around Him. Also the Twelve are around Him… their faces are dismayed, or annoyed, or they clearly show disgust at certain contacts. Bartholomew and the Iscariot in particular clearly show their embarrassment and to be as far as possible from the Samaritans, the Iscariot is sitting astride the branch of a tree as if he wanted to dominate the scene, while Bartholomew is leaning against a door in a corner of the square. The prejudice is evident and clearly visible in all of them.

Jesus, on the contrary, has not changed His usual attitude in the least. Nay, I would say that He is endeavouring to prevent His majesty from frightening the people and at the same time He tries to let it shine to remove all doubts. He caresses two or three little ones and asks them their names, He takes an interest in an old man to whom He gives alms Himself, He replies to two or three questions, which are put to Him on private matters, not on general problems.

The first one is the request of a father whose daughter had eloped and is now begging to be forgiven.

« Forgive her at once. »

« But I suffered because of her, Master. And I still suffer. In less than a year I have grown ten years older. »

« Forgiveness will relieve you. »

« It is not possible. The wound is still there. »

« That is true. But in the wound there are two parts that hurt. One is the undeniable affront you received from your daughter. The other is the effort to cease loving her. Remove at least the latter. Forgiveness, which is the highest form of love, will remove it. You must consider, poor father, that your daughter was born of

you and is always entitled to your love. If you knew that she was suffering from a physical disease and that she would die, unless you cured her yourself, would you let her die? Most certainly not. Consider then that you, with your forgiveness can put an end to her trouble and bring her back to her wholesome instinct. Because you must realise that she was overwhelmed by the basest material instinct. »

« So You would advise me to forgive her? »

« You must. »

« How will I be able to see her move about the house, and not curse her for what she has done? »

« In that case you would not forgive her. Your forgiveness must not consist in opening once again the door of your house to her, but in reopening your heart. Be good, man. What? Shall we not have for our own child the patience we have for a restless steer? »

A woman, instead, asks Jesus whether she ought to marry her brother-in-law to give a father to her little orphans.

« Do you think he will be a real father to them? »

« Yes, Master, I do. They are three boys. It takes a man to guide them. »

« Marry him, then, and be a faithful wife to him, as you were to your first husband. »

The third man asks Him whether he will be doing the right thing or not by accepting an invitation to go to Antioch.

« Man, why do you want to go there? »

« Because I have not enough means here for myself and my large family. I met a Gentile who would employ me because he saw how skilful I am in my work and he would take on also my sons. But I would not like… the scruple of a Samaritan may seem strange to You, but there it is. I would not like to lose our faith. That man, You know, is a heathen! »

« So? Nothing contaminates unless one wants to be contaminated. Go to Antioch and be of the True God. He will guide you and you will be the benefactor of your master, who will acquire the knowledge of God through your honesty. »

He then begins speaking to the crowd.

« I have heard many of you and I have -perceived that each of your hearts is rent by a secret sorrow, a grief, of which you are not even aware. Your sorrow has been accumulating for centuries and neither the reasons expressed by you nor the insults hurled at you can dissolve it. On the contrary it becomes deeper and deeper and weighs like snow that becomes ice.

I am not one of you, neither am I one of those who accuse you. I am Justice and Wisdom. And once again I will quote Ezekiel to solve your case. He speaks of Samaria and Jerusalem in a prophetical style, and he says that they are daughters of one mother

and calls them Oholah and Oholibah. The first to fall into idolatry was the former, whose name is Oholah, because she was already deprived of the spiritual help from union with the Father of Heaven. Union with God is always salvation. She changed true wealth, true power, true wisdom with the poor wealth, power and wisdom of one who was inferior to God, who was even lower than she was, and she was seduced to such an extent as to become the slave of the way of living of her seducer. She wanted to be strong, and instead became weak. She wanted to be superior, and became inferior. She became insane because she was imprudent. It is not easy for one to get rid of an infection, when one has imprudently become infected by it. You may say: "Inferior? No. We were great". Yes, you were great, but how? At what cost? You know. How many people, also amongst women, become rich at the dreadful cost of their honour! They achieve something that may come to an end. They lose something that never ends: their reputation.

When Oholibah saw that Oholah's folly had brought her wealth, she wanted to imitate her and became more deranged than her sister, and was twice as guilty, because she had the True God with her and she should never have trodden on the strength that she received from that union. And a terrible severe punishment was inflicted on the twice crazy fornicatrix Oholibah, and a more severe punishment will be imposed. God will turn His back on her. He is already doing so, in order to go to those who do not belong to Judah. Neither can God be accused of being unfair, because He does not impose Himself. He opens His arms to everybody, He invites everybody, but if one says to Him: "Go away", He goes away. He goes to seek love elsewhere, to invite other people, until He finds someone who says to Him: "I will come". I therefore say to you that you can find relief from your torture, you must find it, by meditating on what I told you. Oholah, recover your consciousness. God is calling you.

The wisdom of man consists in acknowledging his faults, the wisdom of the spirit lies in loving the True God and His Truth. Do not look at Oholibah, or Phoenicia, or Egypt, or Greece. Look at God. That is the Fatherland of every righteous soul: Heaven. There are not many laws, but one only: God's. Through the law one achieves Life. Do not say: "We sinned", but say: "We do not want to sin any more". You have the proof that God still loves you and that He has sent His Word to say to you: "Come". I say to you: "Come". Have you been offended and proscribed? By whom? By Your own fellow creatures. But God is above them and He says to You: "Come". The day will come when you will rejoice because You were not in the Temple... Your hearts will rejoice at that. But souls will rejoice even more because God's forgiveness will already have descended upon the righteous hearts scattered

throughout Samaria. Prepare His coming. Come to the universal Saviour, o children of God, who have lost your way. »

« Some of us at least would come. But those on the other side do not want us. »

« And once again with the priest and prophet I say to you: "I am about to take the stick of Joseph, which is in the hand of Ephraim and the tribes of Israel associated with him and I will join it to the stick of Judah and make them one stick… " Do not go to the Temple. Come to Me. I do not reject anyone. I am called the King dominating over everybody. I am the King of kings. I will purify all peoples if they wish to be purified. I will gather you together, o herds without shepherds or with idol-shepherds, because I am the Good Shepherd. I will give you one tabernacle only and I will place it in the midst of My believers. That tabernacle will be the source of life, the bread of life, it will be light, salvation, protection, wisdom. It will be everything, because it will be the Living One given as food to the dead to make them live, it will be God Whose holiness will overflow to sanctify. That is what I am and will be. The days of hatred, of incomprehension, of fear have come to an end. Come! People of Israel! People separated! People afflicted! People remote! You are a dear people, infinitely dear, because you are ill and weak, because you have been wounded by an arrow that has opened the veins of your souls and has let the vital union with your God escape. Come! Come to the bosom where you were born, come to the breast from which you received life. Kindness and warmth are still here for you. Come! Come to Life and to Salvation. »

146. Goodbye to the People of Sychar.

25th April 1945.

Jesus says to the Samaritans of Sychar: « Before leaving you, as I have other children to evangelize, I want to show you the shining paths of hope, and set you on them saying to you: you may go safely as the goal is certain. Today I will not quote the great Ezekiel; I will quote Jeremiah's favourite disciple, a most great Prophet.

Baruch speaks for you. Oh! He really takes your souls and speaks on behalf of them all to the Sublime God Who is in Heaven. Your souls. I do not mean only the souls of the Samaritans, but all your souls, o families of the chosen people who have fallen into manifold sins; and He takes also your souls, o Gentile peoples, who feel there is an unknown God among the many gods you worship, a God Whom your souls perceive to be the Only True God and Whom your dullness prevents you from seeking and knowing, as your souls would wish. At least a moral law was given to you, o Gentiles and idolaters, because you are men, and man has in

himself an essence that comes from God, and its name is spirit, which always speaks of and suggests nobility and urges to holy things in life. And you have compelled it to become the slave of your vicious flesh, infringing the human moral law that you had, thus becoming sinners, also from a human point of view and you lowered the concept of your faith and yourselves to a level of brutality that makes you inferior to animals. And yet listen. You all listen. The deeper your knowledge of the moral supernatural Law given to you by the True God, the more you will understand and, consequently, act accordingly.

He prays - and this is the prayer that is to be said by your hearts humiliated by a noble humility, which is not degradation or pusillanimity, but an exact knowledge of one's miserable conditions, as well as a holy desire to find means of improving them spiritually - Baruch thus prays: "Look down, Lord, from Your holy dwelling place, take heed of us and listen. Look at us, Lord and consider; the dead down in Sheol, whose breath has been taken from their bodies, are not the ones to give glory and due observance to the Lord; the person overcome with affliction, who goes his way bowed down and frail, with failing eyes and hungering soul, he is the one to give You glory, Lord, and due observance". And Baruch weeps humbly and every just soul should weep with him, seeing and calling by their true names the misfortunes that have turned a strong people into a sad, divided and subdued one: "We did not listen to Your voice and so You carried out what You had promised through Your servants the prophets… and behold the bones of our kings and of our ancestors have been dragged from their resting places and have been tossed out to the heat of the day and the frost of the night and people died in dreadful agony, from famine, sword and plague. And so because of the wickedness of the House of Israel and the House of Judah, You have reduced this Temple, where Your Name was invoked, to what it is today".

Oh! Children of the Father, do not say: "Both our Temple and yours have been rebuilt and are beautiful". No. A tree split by a thunderbolt from its top down to the roots will not survive. It may just vegetate in a miserable manner through an effort to live by means of the shoots coming from the roots, which are reluctant to die, but it will be barren brushwood, it will no longer be a healthy tree, laden with wholesome sweet fruit. The ruin that started with the separation, grows worse and worse, although the material structure does not appear to be damaged, on the contrary it looks beautiful and new. It crushes down the consciences that live in it. And then the hour will come when every supernatural flame will be extinguished and the Temple will be deprived of its very life, the Temple, an altar of precious metal, which can subsist

only if it is continuously smelted by the warmth of its ministers' faith and charity; and icy, dull, soiled, full of dead bodies, it will become putrefaction upon which foreign crows and the avalanche of divine punishment will rush to ruin it completely.

Pray, children of Israel, weeping with Me, your Saviour. May My voice support yours and reach up to the throne of God, as it is able to. Who prays with Christ, the Son of the Father, is heard by God, the Father of the Son. Let us say the old just prayer of Baruch: "And now, Almighty Lord, God of Israel, every soul in anguish, every troubled heart cries to You. Listen and have pity, o Lord. You are a Merciful God, have mercy on us for we have sinned in Your sight. You sit enthroned for ever, and shall we perish continually? Almighty Lord, God of Israel, hear the prayer of the dead of Israel and of their sons, who have sinned against You. They did not listen to the voice of the Lord their God, hence the disasters that have befallen us. Do not call to mind the misdeeds of our ancestors, but remember instead Your power and Your Name… Because we invoke Your Name and we turn from the wickedness of our ancestors, have mercy on us".

Pray thus and be truly converted, by returning to true wisdom, which is the wisdom of God. It can be found in the Book of God's commandments and in the Law that lasts for ever, and that I, the Messiah of God, have now come to bring to the poor of the world in its simple unchangeable form, announcing them the Gospel of the time of Redemption, of Forgiveness, of Love, of Peace. Who believes in that Word will reach eternal life.

I leave you, citizens of Sychar, who have been good to the Messiah of God. I leave you with My peace. »

« Stay a little longer. »

« Come back again. »

« No one will ever speak to us as You did. »

« May You be blessed, good Master. »

« Bless my little one. »

« Pray for me, since You are a Saint. »

« Allow me to keep one of Your fringes, as a blessing. »

« Remember Abel. »

« And me, Timothy. »

« And me, Jorai. »

« I will remember you all. Peace be with you. »

They go with Him for a few hundred yards out of town, and then they slowly go back…

147. Instruction to the Apostles and the Miracle of the Woman of Sychar.

26th April 1945.

Jesus is walking ahead of the apostles, alone, close to a hedge of prickly cactus, the leaves of which are shining in the sun and seem to be deriding all the other bare plants. One can see on them a few surviving fruits which age has coloured brick-red and an odd early flower pleasantly bright in its yellow-cinnebar hue.

Behind Him, the apostles are whispering to one another, and I get the impression that they are not really speaking in praise of the Master. All of a sudden Jesus turns round and says: « Keep watching the wind and you will never sow, stare at the clouds and you will never reap. It is an old proverb and I follow it. And you can see that where you were afraid of ill winds and did not want to stop, I found a fertile soil and the possibility of sowing. And notwithstanding "your" clouds, which, may I tell you, you ought not to display where Mercy wants to show His sunshine, I am sure I have already harvested. »

« However, no one asked You for a miracle. Their faith in You is very odd! »

« And do you think, Thomas, that faith is evidenced only by requesting miracles? You are wrong. It is the very opposite. If a man wants a miracle to be able to believe, it means that without the tangible proof of the miracle, he would not believe. Who instead says: "I believe" in somebody else's word, shows the greatest faith. »

« So the Samaritans are better than we are! »

« I am not saying that. But in their state of spiritual disability they have shown a much greater capacity for understanding God than the believers in Palestine. You will find that very often in your lifetime, and I would ask you to remember this instance, so that you will know how to behave with the souls who turn to the faith in Christ. »

« But, Jesus, forgive me for telling You, I think that with all the hatred against You, it does You no good to give rise to new accusations. If the members of the Sanhedrin knew that You have… »

« You may very well say: "loved", because that is what I have done and I do, James. And since you are My cousin, you can understand that I can but love. I have shown to you that I always love also those who were against Me amongst My kinsfolk and countrymen. And should I not love those people who respected Me, although they did not know Me? The members of the Sanhedrin can do all the harm they like. But it will not be the thought of such future evil that will stop the effusion of My omnipresent and omnieffective love. In any case… even if I did… I would not prevent the Sanhedrin from finding accusations in their hatred. »

« But, Master, You are wasting Your time in an idolatrous country, whilst so many places in Israel are expecting You. You say that every hour is to be consecrated to the Lord. Are the hours spent here not lost? »

« The day spent in gathering the lost sheep is not lost. It is not lost, Philip. It is said: "A man multiplies offerings by keeping the Law… but by having mercy he offers a sacrifice". It is said: "Give the Most High as He has given to you, generously as your means can afford". I do that, My friend. And the time devoted to sacrifice is not wasted. I show mercy and I make use of the means I received by offering My work to God. Therefore be calm. In any case… Who wanted a request for a miracle to be convinced that the people in Sychar believe in Me, is now satisfied. That man is certainly following us for some reason. Let us stop. »

A man in fact is coming towards them. He seems to be bent under a large bundle that he is carrying on his shoulders. When he sees the group stop, he stops, too.

« He wants to harm us. He stopped because he saw that we noticed him. Oh! They are Samaritans! »

« Are you sure, Peter? »

« Of course I am! »

« Well, then. You all stay here. I will go and meet him. »

« Never, my Lord. If You go, I will come, too. »

« Come, then. »

Jesus walks towards the man. Peter jogs along beside Him, curious and hostile at the same time. When they are a few yards from the man, Jesus says: « What do you want, man? Whom are you looking for? »

« For You. »

« Why did you not look for Me when I was in town? »

« I did not dare… If You had rejected me in the presence of everybody, I would have suffered too much and would have been ashamed. »

« You could have called Me as soon as I was alone with My disciples. »

« I was hoping to reach You when You were alone, as Photinai did. I also have a grave reason for being alone with You… »

« What do you want? What are you carrying on your shoulders so heavily? »

« My wife. A spirit has taken possession of her and has turned her into a dead body and a dull intelligence. I have to feed her, dress her and carry her like a baby. It happened all of a sudden, without any disease… They call her the "possessed woman". It causes me much pain. And work. And expenses. Look. » The man lays on the ground his bundle containing an inert body enveloped in a mantle, as if it were a sack, and he uncovers the face of a woman, who is

still young. If she did not breathe, one would say that she was dead. Her eyes are closed, her mouth is half open… her face looks as if she had breathed her last.

Jesus bends over the poor woman lying on the ground, looks at her, looks at the man: « Do you think that I can? Why do you believe it? »

« Because You are Christ. »

« But you have not seen anything that proves it. »

« I heard Your word. That is enough. »

« Peter, do you hear him? What do you think I should do now, in the presence of such good faith? »

« Well Master You I As You wish, after all… » Peter is very embarrassed.

« Yes, I will do as I wish. Man, look. » Jesus takes the woman by the hand and says: « Go out of her. I want it. »

The woman, so far motionless, is shaken by a dreadful convulsion: at first she is silent, then she shouts and groans and finally bursts into a loud cry, during which she opens her eyes wide as if she were awaking from a nightmare. She then calms down and somewhat bewildered she looks around, staring first at Jesus, the Unknown Man smiling at her she then looks at the dust on the road where she is lying, she gazes at a tuft of grass that has grown on the edge of the road and on which the tiny white-red heads of daisies seem pearls about to open out in a halo of rays. She looks at the cactus hedge, at the deep blue sky, and looking round she sees her husband who full of anxiety is watching every movement of hers. She smiles and now, fully free, she jumps to her feet and seeks refuge on the chest of her husband, who caresses and embraces her, weeping.

« What is it? How am I here? Why? Who is that man? »

« He is Jesus, the Messiah. You were ill and He has cured you. Tell Him that you love Him. »

« Oh! Yes. Thank You… But what was the matter with me? My children… Simon… I do not remember the past, but I remember I have some children… »

Jesus says: « You need not remember the past. Always remember the present day. And be good. Goodbye. Be good and God will be with you. » And Jesus withdraws quickly, followed by the blessings of both of them.

When He reaches the others who remained behind, close to the hedge, He does not speak to them. But He addresses Peter: « So? You were sure that that man wanted to hurt Me, what are you going to say now? Simon, Simon! How much you still lack to be perfect! How much you all lack! With the exception of their well known idolatry, you have all the sins of those people and arrogance in judging over and above. Let us have our meal now. We

cannot reach before night the place I wanted to. We shall sleep in some barn, if we do not find anything better. »

The Twelve, with a sense of reproach in their hearts, sit down without speaking and take their food. It is a peaceful day and the sun shines on the country which slopes towards a plain in mild undulations.

After their meal they stop for a little while, until Jesus stands up and says: « Simon and Andrew, come with Me. I am going to see whether that house is a friendly one or not. » And He goes away while the others stay and are silent, until James of Alphaeus says to Judas Iscariot: « Is that woman coming here not the woman of Sychar? »

« Yes, she is. I know her by her dress. I wonder what she wants. »

« She will be wanting to go her way » replies Peter sulkily.

« No, she is looking in our direction, shielding her eyes with her hand. »

They watch her until she is near them and asks in a low voice: « Where is your Master? »

« He has gone away. Why do you want Him? »

« I need Him. »

« He does not waste His time with women » replies Peter curtly.

« I know. He doesn't with women. But I am the soul of a woman who needs Him. »

« Leave her alone » suggests Judas of Alphaeus. And he replies to Photinai: « Wait. He will soon be back. »

The woman withdraws to a little comer where the road bends and she remains still and silent, while no one pays attention to her. Jesus is soon back and Peter says: « Here is the Master. Tell Him what you want and be quick. »

The woman does not even reply to him, but goes towards Jesus and kneels down at His feet. She is silent.

« Photinai, what do you want from Me? »

« Your help, my Lord. I am so weak. And I do not want to sin any more. I have already told the man. But now that I am no longer a sinner, I know nothing. I do not know what good is. What shall I do? Please tell me. I am mud. But Your feet tread on the road to go towards souls. Trample on my mud, but come to my soul with Your advice. » She is weeping.

« You cannot follow Me, a lonely woman as you are. But if you really do not want to sin any more and you want to learn how not to sin, then go back to your house with a repentant mind and wait. The day will come, when amongst many more women who have also been redeemed, you will be able to be near your Redeemer and learn the science of Goodness. Go. Be not afraid. Persevere in your present will not to sin. Goodbye. »

The woman kisses the ground, stands up, retreats for a few yards, then goes away, towards Sychar…

148. Jesus Visits the Baptist near Ennon.

27th April 1945.

It is a clear moonlight night, so clear that the ground appears in all its details and the fields, covered with corn which has just come up, look like green-silver plush carpets, on which the country paths seem dark stripes, watched over by the tree trunks that are white on the moonlit side and completely dark on the other.

Jesus is walking steadfast and alone. He proceeds very fast along His way until He reaches a stream that is flowing down gurgling towards the plain in a north-east direction. He goes upstream as far as a lonely spot near a woody slope. He moves to one side, climbs up a steep path and arrives at a natural cave on the side of the hill.

He goes in and bends over a body that is lying on the ground and can be seen only indistinctly in the moonlight, which shines on the path outside, but does not illuminate the cave. He calls him: « John. »

The man awakes and sits up, still drowsy. But he soon realises Who is calling him and jumps to his feet, then prostrates himself saying: « How is it that my Lord came to me? »

« To make your heart and Mine happy. You wanted Me, John. Here I am. Get up. Let us go out into the moonlight and sit and talk on the rock near the grotto. »

John obeys, gets up and goes out. But when Jesus sits down, he kneels down in front of Christ. He is wearing a sheepskin, which hardly covers his very lean body, and he pushes back his long dishevelled hair, which had fallen over his eyes, to see the Son of God better.

The contrast between them is very strong. Jesus is pale and fairhaired, His hair is soft and tidy and His beard is trimmed round the lower part of His face. John is like a bush of very dark hairs, in which two deep set eyes can be seen: two feverish eyes, I would say, as they shine so much in their jet black setting.

« I have come to thank you. You have fulfilled and are fulfilling, with the perfection of Grace within you, your mission as My Precursor. When the hour comes, you will enter Heaven beside Me, because you will have deserved everything from God. And in the expectation, you will already be in the peace of the Lord, My beloved friend. »

« I will enter peace very soon, my Master and God, bless Your servant to strengthen him for his last trial. I am aware it is now near and that there is still one witness I have to bear: the witness of my blood. And You are aware more than I am, that my hour is about to arrive. The merciful bounty of Your Divine heart has brought You here, to fortify the last martyr of Israel and the first of the new era. Tell me only one thing: will I have to wait long for Your coming? »

« No, John. Not much longer than the time that elapsed between your birth and Mine. »

« May the Most High be blessed for that. Jesus… may I call You so? »

« You can, because of our blood and your holiness. The Name, which also sinners pronounce, can be pronounced by the holy one in Israel. It is salvation for them, let it be kindness to you. What do you want from Jesus, your Master and cousin? »

« I am about to die. As a father is anxious for his children, so I am anxious for my disciples. My disciples… You are a Master and You know how fondly we love them. My only fear in dying is that they may get lost like sheep without a shepherd. Will You please gather them. I give You back the three who are Yours and who have been perfect disciples while waiting for You. They, and Matthew in particular, really possess wisdom. I have some more and they will come to You. Allow me to entrust those three to You personally. They are the dearest. »

« And they are dear to Me. Do not worry, John. They shall not perish. Neither those three, nor the other true disciples of yours. I will collect your inheritance and look after it as the dearest treasure received from the perfect friend and servant of the Lord. »

John prostrates himself to the ground, and what seems impossible in such an austere personage, he bursts into tears sobbing out of spiritual joy.

Jesus lays a hand on his head: « Your joyful and humble tears are in unison with a song of long ago at the sound of which your little heart leapt out of joy. The song and your tears are the same hymn of praise to the Eternal Father, Who "has done great things, He that is Mighty, to humble souls". Also My Mother is about to intone once again the song that She sang then. But later, the greatest glory will come also to Her as to you after your martyrdom. I convey also Her greetings to you. You deserve all respect and comfort. Here it is only the hand of the Son of man, which is laid on your head, but Light and Love are descending from the open Heavens to bless you, John. »

« I do not deserve so much. I am Your servant. »

« You are My John. That day at the Jordan, I was the Messiah Who was being revealed; here, now, it is your cousin and God Who wishes to give you the viaticum of His love as God and as a relative. Get up, John. Let us kiss each other goodbye. »

« I do not deserve so much. I have longed so much for it, all my life. But I dare not do that to You. You are my God. »

« I am your Jesus. Goodbye. My soul will be near yours until peace comes. Live and die in peace for the sake of your disciples. That is all I can give you for the time being. But in Heaven I will

give you one hundredfold, because you have found grace in the eyes of God. »

Jesus has lifted him and embraced him, kissing him on his cheeks and being kissed by him. Then John kneels once again and Jesus lays both hands on his head and prays with His eyes turned to Heaven. He seems to be consecrating him. He is impressive. They are silent for some time. Then Jesus takes His leave with His kind salutation: « May peace be always with you » and He resumes the same road as before.

149. Jesus Teaches the Apostles.

28th April 1945.

« My Lord, why do You not rest during the night? Last night I got up and did not find You. Your place was empty. »

« Why were you looking for Me, Simon? »

« I wanted to give You my mantle. I was afraid You might feel cold in the limpid but very cold night. »

« And were you not cold? »

« In many years of misery I got accustomed to being badly dressed, badly fed and badly lodged… That valley of the dead!… How horrible! Just now it was not the case. But the next time we go to Jerusalem, because we will certainly go there, come, my Lord, to that place of death. There are so many unhappy people there… and their physical misery is not the worst… What most tortures and consumes them is their desperation… Do You not think, my Lord, that lepers are too harshly treated? »

The Iscariot replies to the Zealot, who is pleading the cause of his old companions, before Jesus does: « So you would leave them amongst the people? So much the worst for them if they are lepers! »

« That's all we need to make the Jews martyrs! How lovely it would be to have lepers walking in the streets with the soldiers and other things!… » exclaims Peter.

« I think it is a fair and wise step to keep them confined » remarks James of Alphaeus.

« Yes. But it should be done in a charitable manner. You do not realise what it is to be a leper. You cannot speak about them. If it is fair to take due care of our bodies, why are we not equally fair to the souls of lepers? Who speaks to them of God? And God only knows how much they need to think of God and of peace in their utter desolation! »

« Simon, you are right. I will go to them. Because it is just and to teach you all such mercy. So far I have cured the lepers that I met by chance. So far, that is, until I was driven out of Judaea. I addressed the great people in Judaea, as they are the most remote

and in the greatest need of redemption, in order to be of help to the Redeemer. As I am now convinced that such an attempt is quite useless, I am abandoning it. I will no longer address the mighty ones, but the lower and miserable people in Israel. And the lepers in the valley of the dead will be amongst them. I will not disappoint the faith that those, who have been evangelized by the grateful leper, have in Me. »

« How do You know, my Lord, that I did that? »

« As I know what friends and enemies, whose hearts I search, think of Me. »

« Goodness gracious! You really know everything about us, Master! » shouts Peter.

« Yes, I do. Also that you, and not only you, wanted to send Photinai away. Do you not know that you are not allowed to send soul away from good? Do you not know that to get to the heart of • town you must be most kind and merciful also towards those whom human society, which is not holy because it is not identified with God, calls and judges unworthy of mercy? But do not be upset because I know all that. Be sorry only that the sentiments of your hearts are not approved of by God and endeavour not to have them in future. I told you, the first year is over. In the new year I will proceed along My way with new forms. In the second year you must make progress, too. Otherwise it would be useless for Me to get tired evangelizing, and super-evangelizing you, My future priests. »

« Did You go and pray, Master? You promised to teach us Your prayers. Will You do that this year? »

« I will. But I want to teach you to be good. Goodness is already a prayer. But I will do it, John. »

« And will You teach us also to work miracles this year? » asks the Iscariot.

« Miracles are not taught. They are not the game of a juggler. A miracle comes from God. Who has grace in the eyes of God obtains it. If you learn to be good, you will have grace and obtain miracles. »

« But You are not answering our question. Simon asked You and John asked You, but You have not told us where You went last night. It could be dangerous to go out alone in a heathen country. »

« I went to make a righteous soul happy and since he is doomed to death, I went to collect his inheritance. »

« Did You? Was it a large one? »

« Yes, Peter, very large and of great value. The fruit of the work of a true just man. »

« But I have not seen anything in Your bag. Are they jewels which You are carrying on You? »

« Yes, jewels that are most dear to My heart. »

« Let us see them, Lord. »

« I will have them when the man doomed to death dies. For the time being he needs them, and I need them, leaving them where they are. »

« Has he invested them at an interest? »

« Do you think that money is the only valuable thing? It is the most useless and filthy thing on earth. It is only useful for material things, for crimes and for hell. Only rarely man makes use of it for a good purpose. »

« Well, if it is not money, what is it? »

« Three disciples formed by a saint. »

« You have been to the Baptist. Oh! Why? »

« Why!… You always have Me with you. And you all together are not worth a single finger nail of the Prophet. Was it not right that I should go to take God's blessing to the holy one in Israel to fortify him for his martyrdom? »

« But if he is holy he does not need to be fortified. He can manage by himself! »

« The day will come when "My" saints will be brought before judges and condemned to death. They will be saints, in the grace of God, comforted by faith, hope and charity. And yet I can already hear their cries, the cries of their souls: "Lord, help us in this hour!". Only with My help My saints will be strong in persecutions. »

« We are not the ones You are referring to, are we? Because I am utterly incapable of suffering. »

« That is true. You are not capable of suffering. But, Bartholomew, you have not been baptized yet. »

« Yes, I have. »

« With water. You still need another baptism. Then you will be able to suffer. »

« I am already old. »

« And when very old, you will be stronger than a young man. »

« But You will help us just the same, will You not? »

« I shall always be with you. »

« I will endeavour to get accustomed to suffering » says Bartholomew.

« I will always pray, from now on, to obtain this grace from You » says James of Alphaeus.

« I am old and all I ask for is to precede You and enter peace with You » says Simon Zealot.

« I… I do not know what I would like. Whether to precede You or to be near You and die together » says Judas of Alphaeus.

« I will be unhappy if I survive You. But I will be comforted by Preaching You to the people » states the Iscariot.

« I am of the same opinion as Your cousin » says Thomas.

« I, instead, am with Simon the Zealot » says James of Zebedee.

« And what about you, Philip? »

« Well… I say that I do not know what to think about it. The Eternal Father will give me what is best. »

« Oh! Keep quiet. You would think that the Master is to die soon! I do not want to think of His death! » exclaims Andrew.

« You are quite right, my dear brother. You are young and 'healthy, Jesus. You will have to bury us all, I mean the ones who are older than You. »

« What if they killed Me? »

« Let that never happen to You, but I will avenge you. »

« How? By a blood vengeance? »

« Well… also by that means, if You will allow me. Otherwise, by my profession of faith amongst peoples, I will confute the accusations moved against You. The world will love You because I will be indefatigable in preaching You. »

« That is true and that is what will happen. And what about you, John, and you, Matthew? »

« I must suffer and wait until I have washed my soul by suffering a great deal » says Matthew.

« And I… I do not know. I would like to die at once so that I would not see You suffer. I would like to be near You to comfort You in Your agony. I would like to live for a long time to serve You. I would like to die with You to enter Heaven with You. I would like everything, because I love You. And I think that I, the least of my brothers, will be able to do all that, if I know how to love You properly. Jesus, increase Your love! » says John.

« You mean: "Increase my love" » remarks the Iscariot.

« No. I say: "Increase Your Love". Because the more He will inflame us with His love, the more we shall love. »

Jesus draws the pure passionate John to Himself and kisses his forehead saying: « You have revealed a mystery of God about the sanctification of hearts. God effuses Himself to just souls, and the more they surrender to His love, the more He increases it and their holiness grows greater. That is the mysterious and ineffable work of God and of souls. It is accomplished in mystical silence, and its power, which cannot be described by human words, creates indescribable masterpieces of holiness. It is not a mistake, but a wise prayer, to ask God to increase His love in one's heart. »

150. Jesus at Nazareth. « Son, I Will Come with You. »

30th April 1945.

Jesus is alone. He is walking fast along the main road near Nazareth. He enters the village and directs His steps towards His house. When He is near it He sees His Mother. She is also going towards the house and Her nephew Simon is with Her, carrying a

bundle of firewood. Jesus calls Her: « Mother! »

Mary turns round exclaiming: « Oh! My Blessed Son! » and they both run to meet each other, while Simon drops the bundle to the ground and like Mary runs towards Jesus and greets Him wholeheartedly.

« Mother, I have come. Are You happy now? »

« So happy, Son. But… If You came only because I begged You, I tell You that it is not right for Me or for You to listen to the call of blood, rather than to Your mission. »

« No, Mother. I have come for other reasons as well. »

« Is it really true, Son? I thought, I wanted to believe that they were false rumours and that You were not hated so much… » There are tears in Mary's voice and in Her eyes.

« Do not weep, Mother. It grieves Me so much. I need Your smiles. »

« Yes, Son. That is true. You see so many harsh faces of enemies, that You need so much smiling love. But here, see? Here is She Who loves You on behalf of everybody… » Mary is leaning lightly on Her Son, Who embraces Her shoulders, and while walking slowly towards the house, She endeavours to smile, to expel all grief from Jesus' heart.

Simon has picked up his bundle and is walking beside Jesus.

« You are pale, Mother. Have they grieved You so much? Have You not been well? Have You tired Yourself excessively? »

« No, Son, no one has grieved Me. My only sorrow is that You are far from Me and they do not love You. Here everybody is good to Me. I will not even mention Mary and Alphaeus; You know what they are like. Also Simon, see how good he is. He is always like that. He has helped Me all these past months. He is now supplying Me with wood. He is so good. Also Joseph is. They are so thoughtful of their Mary. »

« May God bless you, Simon, and may He bless also Joseph. I forgive you for not loving Me yet as the Messiah. Oh! You will eventually love Me as Christ! But how could I forgive you for not loving Her? »

« It is fair and peaceful to love Mary, Jesus. You are loved, too… only, see, we are too much afraid for You. »

« Yes, you love Me with a human love. You will come to the other love. »

« You, too, Son, are pale looking and thin. »

« Yes, You look older. I can see that, too » remarks Simon.

They go into the house, and Simon, after laying the firewood in its place, withdraws discreetly.

« Son, now that we are alone, tell Me the truth. The whole truth. Why did they drive You away? » Mary speaks holding Her hands on Jesus' shoulders and staring at His thin face.

Jesus smiles kindly but sadly: « Because I tried to bring man back to honesty, justice and to the true religion. »

« But who accuses You? The people? »

« No, Mother, the Pharisees and the scribes, with the exception of a few just ones amongst them. »

« But what have You done to incur their accusations? »

« I told them the truth. Do You know that it is the biggest mistake with men? »

« What could they say to justify their accusations »

« They told lies. The ones You know and many more. »

« Tell Your Mother. Place Your sorrow, all Your sorrow on My bosom. A mother's bosom is accustomed to sorrow and is happy to consume it, to remove it from the heart of her son. Give Me Your sorrow, Jesus. Come here, as You were wont to do when a child, and leave all Your bitterness. »

Jesus sits on a little stool at His Mother's feet and tells Her all about the months spent in Judaea, without any grudge and without concealing anything.

Mary caresses His hair with a heroic smile on Her lips to fight back the tears shining in Her blue eyes.

Jesus mentions also the necessity of approaching women to redeem them and His grief at not being able to do so owing to the wickedness of men.

Mary nods assent and then She decides: « Son, You must not deny Me what I want. From now on I will come with You when You go away. I will come at any time, in any season, to any place. I will defend You from false accusations. My simple presence will cause the mud to fall off. And Mary will come with Me. She is so anxious to. That is what is needed near the Holy One, against the demon and against the world: a mother's heart. »

151. In Susanna's House in Cana. The Royal Officer.

1st May 1945.

Jesus is possibly going towards the lake. He certainly arrives at Cana and directs His steps towards Susanna's house. His cousins are with Him. While they are in the house and they rest and take some food, Jesus, to Whom His relatives and friends are listening as they should always do, teaches those good people in a very simple way. He also comforts the husband of Susanna, who appears to be ill. She is in fact absent and while I hear them talk continuously of how much she suffers, a well dressed man enters and prostrates himself at Jesus' feet.

« Who are you? What do you want? »

While the man is still sighing and weeping, the landlord pulls Jesus by the hem of His tunic and whispers: « He is an officer of the

Tetrarch. Don't trust him too much. »

« Speak up. What do you want from Me? »

« Master, I heard that You are back. I have been waiting for You as one waits for God. Come to Capernaum at once. My son is so ill that his hours are numbered. I saw John, Your disciple. He told me that You were coming here. Come, please come at once, before it is too late. »

« What? Can You, a servant of the persecutor of the Holy One in Israel, believe in Me? You do not believe in the Precursor of the Messiah. So, how can you believe in the Messiah? »

« That is true. We are guilty of incredulity and of cruelty. But have mercy on a father! I know Chuza. I have seen Johanna. I have seen her before and after the miracle. And I believed in You. »

« Quite! You are such an incredulous and wicked generation that you will not believe without signs and miracles. You lack the essential quality that is necessary to obtain a miracle. »

« It is true. It is all very true. But You can see… I believe in You now and I beg You: come to Capernaum at once! I will have a boat ready for You at Tiberias, so that You may come quicker. But please come before my child dies! » and he weeps desolately.

« I am not coming just now. But go to Capernaum. Your son is cured as from this moment and he will live. »

« May God bless You, my Lord. I believe You. But as I want all my household to welcome You when You come to Capernaum, come to my house. »

« I will come. Goodbye. Peace be with you. »

The man rushes out and soon after the trot of a horse can be heard.

« But is the boy really cured? » asks Susanna's husband.

« Is it possible for you to think that I tell lies? »

« No, my Lord. But You are here and the boy is there. »

« There is no barrier, no distance for My spirit. »

« Well, then, my Lord. You changed water into wine at my wedding, please change my tears into happy smiles. Cure my Susanna. »

« What will you give Me in exchange for that? »

« The amount of money You want. »

« I will not stain what is holy with Mammon's blood. I am asking your spirit what it will give Me. »

« Myself, if You wish so. »

« And if I asked, without any words, a great sacrifice? »

« My Lord, I ask You to grant physical health to my wife and the sanctification of us all. I don't think I can say that anything is too much to have that… »

« You are suffering agonies because of your wife. But if I restored her to health and I got her to become My disciple for ever, what

would you say? »

« That… You are entitled to do it and that… I will imitate Abraham in his readiness to the sacrifice. »

« You are right. Listen, everybody: the time of My Sacrifice is approaching. Like a course of water it is running fast and incessantly to the sea. I must accomplish what I have to do. And human hardness precludes so much of the field of My mission. My Mother and Mary of Alphaeus will come with Me when I go away amongst people that do not love Me yet or will never love Me. My wisdom knows that women will be able to help the Master in those precluded fields. I have come to redeem also women and in the future century, in My time, women will be seen serving the Lord and the servants of the Lord as priestesses. I have chosen My disciples. But to elect women who are not free, I must ask fathers and husbands to do it. Do you agree? »

« Lord, I love Susanna. And so far I have loved her more as a body than as a soul. But after Your teaching, something is already changed in me and I look at my wife as a soul besides as a body. A soul belongs to God and You are the Messiah, the Son of God. I cannot deny Your right on what belongs to God. If Susanna wants to follow You, I will not oppose her. I only beg You to work the miracle that will cure her body and my feelings… »

« Susanna is cured. In a few hours' time she will come here to tell you how happy she is. Let her soul follow its impulse without any mention of what I have just said. You will see that her soul will come to Me spontaneously as a flame tends upwards. But because of that, her love of a wife will not be stifled. On the contrary it will rise to the highest degree, which is to love each other with the better part: with your souls. »

« Susanna belongs to You, Lord. She was to die a very painful slow death. And once she was dead, I would have lost her for ever in this world. But as You say, I will still have her beside me, to lead me on to Your way. God gave me her, and God is taking her away from me. Blessed be the Most High in giving and in taking. »

152. In Zebedee's House. Salome Is Accepted as a Disciple.

2nd May 1945.

Jesus is in a house, which, from what the people living in it say, I understand to be the house of John and James. With Jesus, beside the two apostles, there are Peter and Andrew, Simon Zealot, the Iscariot and Matthew. I do not see the others.

James and John are most happy. They come and go from their mother to Jesus and viceversa, like butterflies which do not know which of two equally loved flowers they should prefer. Mary Salome, who is also most happy, caresses each time her big boys,

while Jesus smiles.

They must already have had their meal, because the table is still laid. But the two disciples at all costs want Jesus to eat some bunches of white grapes, which their mother has preserved and which must be as sweet as honey. What would they not give Jesus?

But Salome wants to give and receive something better than grapes and caresses. And after being lost in thought for a little while, looking at Jesus, then at Zebedee, she makes up her mind. She goes near Jesus Who is sitting with His back to the table, and kneels down before Him.

« What do you want, woman? »

« Master, You have decided that Your Mother, and the mother of James and Judas should come with You, and also Susanna is coming, and the great Johanna of Chuza will certainly come as well. If only one woman comes, all the others who venerate You, will come. I would like to be one of them. Take me, Jesus. I will serve You with all my love. »

« You have Zebedee to look after. Do you not love him any more? »

« Oh! Of course I love him. But I love You more. Oh! I do not mean that I love You as a man. I am sixty years old, I have been married for almost forty, and I have never seen any other man but my husband. I am not going to be crazy now that I am old. Neither is my love for my Zebedee going to end because of my old age. But You… I am not good at speaking. I am a poor woman. I will tell You as best I can. Thus: I love Zebedee with my constant inborn femininity. I love You with the spirit You have aroused in me with Your words and what James and John have told me. It is something completely different… but so beautiful. »

« It will never be so beautiful as the love of a very good husband. »

« Oh! No. It is much more beautiful. Oh! Don't take it amiss, Zebedee! I still love you with all my heart. But I love Him with something, which is still Mary, but it is no longer Mary, your poor wife, it is something more… Oh! I do not know how to tell you! »

Jesus smiles at the woman who does not wish to offend her husband, but cannot conceal her new great love. Also Zebedee smiles gravely, and goes near his wife, who, still on her knees, turns round to look at her husband and at Jesus alternately.

« Do you realise, Mary, that you will have to leave your home? And you are so proud of it! Your doves, your flowers… this vine that bears such sweet grapes of which you are so proud… your beehives, which are the most famous ones in the village… and you will no longer have your loom on which you have woven so much linen and so much woollen cloth for your dear ones… And what about your little nephews? What will you do without your little nephews? »

« Oh! My Lord! What do all these things matter: walls, doves, flowers, vines, beehives, looms, they are all good and dear things, but so insignificant as compared to You and to loving You?! My little nephews… well! Yes! I will feel sorry that I cannot put them to sleep on my lap or hear them call me… But You are worth more! Oh! You are worth more than all the things You mentioned! And if those things were taken all together and because of my weakness they were as dear or dearer than serving and following You, I would cast them aside, with the tears of a woman, to follow You with the smile of my soul. Take me, Master. John, James, will you tell Him… and you too, my husband. Be good. Help me. »

« All right. You will come with the others. I wanted you to meditate carefully on the past and the present, on what you leave and what you get. But come, Salome. You are mature to enter My family. »

« Oh! Mature! I am less than a child. But You will forgive my errors and hold me by the hand. You… because, coarse as I am, I will be much ashamed before Your Mother and before Johanna. I will be ashamed before everybody. Except You. Because You are the Good One and You understand, pity and forgive everything. »

153. Jesus Speaks to His Disciples of Women's Apostolate.

3rd May 1945.

« What is the matter with you, Peter? You look discontented » asks Jesus, Who is walking along a country path under almondtrees in blossom, which announce to men that the worst season is over.

« I am thinking, Master. »

« You are thinking. I know. But you do not seem to be thinking of happy things! »

« As You know everything about us, You already know my thoughts. »

« Yes, I do. Also God the Father knows the needs of men, but He wants in man the intimacy that discloses his needs and asks for help. I can tell you that you are wrong in being vexed. »

« So my wife is not less dear to You? »

« Of course not, Peter. Why should she? There are many dwelling places of My Father in Heaven. And many are the tasks of men on the earth. And they are all blessed, provided they are fulfilled in a holy manner. Could I possibly say that all the women who do not imitate the Maries and Susanna are disliked by God? »

« Certainly not! Also my wife believes in the Master, but she does not follow the example of the other women » says Bartholomew.

« Neither does my wife nor my daughters. They are staying at home, but they are always ready to give us hospitality, as they did

yesterday » says Philip.

« I think my mother will do the same. She cannot leave everything… she is all by herself » says the Iscariot.

« It is true! I was sad because I thought mine was so… so little… oh! I cannot explain! »

« Do not criticise her, Peter! She is an honest woman » says Jesus.

« She is very shy. Her mother had them all under her thumb, both her daughter and her daughters-in-law » says Andrew.

« But she should have changed in all the years she has been with me! »

« Oh! Brother! You are not all that sweet-tempered yourself, you know. If a person is shy you are like a spoke in his wheel. My sister-in-law is very good and the best proof is that she has always tolerated with patience her mother and her bad temper, and you and your overbearance. »

They all laugh at Andrew's outspoken conclusion and at Peter's astonished face when he hears of his overbearance.

In addition Jesus laughs heartily. He then says: « The faithful women who do not feel like leaving their homes to follow Me are equally useful to Me by staying at home. If they all wanted to come with Me, I would have to ask some of them to remain. Now that some women are going to join us, I will also have to see to them. It would be neither decent nor wise for the women to be without a dwelling place while they move about. We can rest anywhere. A woman has different necessities from men, and needs a shelter. We can all sleep in one place. But they could not stay with us, both because of the respect due to them and because of their more delicate constitution. We must never tempt Providence and nature beyond their limits. Now, of every friendly house, where there is one of your women, I will make a shelter for their sisters. I will do that with your house, Peter, with yours, Philip, with yours, Bartholomew, and with yours, Judas. We cannot expect our women to travel around incessantly, as we do. Instead we shall have them waiting for us, at the meeting place, from which we shall move in the morning and go back in the evening. We shall give them instructions for the hours of rest and the world will no longer be able to grumble, if other unhappy women come to Me, neither shall I be prevented from listening to them. The mothers and wives that follow us will defend their sisters and Me against the slander of the world. You can see that I am making a quick trip to greet My friends or where I know that I will have friends. I am not doing that for Myself. I am doing that for the weaker disciples who by means of their weakness will support our strength and make it helpful to many more creatures. »

« You said that we are going to Caesarea now. Who is there? »

« Creatures seeking the True God are to be found everywhere.

Springtime is already announced by the pinkish-white almond blossoms. The cold days are over. In a few days' time I will decide upon the places where we shall stop and shelter the women disciples, and we shall start moving around again, to spread the word of God, without worrying about our sisters, without any fear of slander and both their patience and their kindness will be a lesson to you. The hour of rehabilitation of women is almost here. There will be a great flowering of holy virgins, wives and mothers in My Church. »

154. Jesus at Caesarea on Sea Speaks to the Galley-Slaves.

4th May 1945.

Jesus is in the centre of a beautiful wide square, from which a very wide road leads off, one which is almost an extension of the square as far as the seaside. A galley must have left the harbour only recently and it is taking to the open sea driven by the wind and by the oarsmen. Another one is manoeuvring to enter the harbour, because its sails are being furled and the oars are worked on one side only to veer round into a suitable position. The harbour cannot be seen from the square, but it must be nearby. On the sides of the square there are rows of large houses, the typical walls of which have almost no openings. There are no shops.

« Where are we going now? You wanted to come here, instead of going to the eastern side and this is the heathen district. Who do You think will listen to You here? » says Peter reproachfully.

« Let us go over there, to that comer towards the seaside. I will speak there. »

« You will be speaking to the waves. »

« Also the waves were created by God. »

They go. They are now just at the corner and they can see the harbour into which the galley they saw before is now slowly entering and is moored at its place. Some sailors are idling along the quays. Some fruit-sellers chance going towards the Roman boat to sell their goods. Nothing else.

Jesus, leaning with His back against the wall, really seems to be speaking to the waves of the sea. The apostles, not very happy with the situation, are all around Him, some standing, some sitting on stones scattered here and there, to be used as benches.

« Foolish is the man who, seeing that he is powerful, healthy and happy, says: "What do I need? Whom do I need? Nobody. I need nothing, I am self-sufficient; therefore God's decrees and moral laws mean nothing to me. My only law is to do what I can, without considering whether it is good or bad for other people". »

A vendor turns round on hearing the sonorous voice and comes near Jesus Who continues: « That is how a man and a woman

without wisdom and faith speak. But if that proves a more or less great power, it also evidences a relationship with Evil. »

Some men come off the galley and other boats and come towards Jesus.

« A man, not by words of mouth, but by deeds proves that he is related to God and to Virtue, when he considers that life is more changeable than the waves of the sea, which one moment are calm and soon after stormy. Likewise the power and wealth of today may turn into misery and incapacity tomorrow. Then what will a man do if he is bereft of union with God? How many on the galley were one day happy and mighty and are now slaves and considered criminals! Criminals: therefore twice slaves, of the human law, which is derided in vain because it exists and punishes its transgressors, and of Satan who for ever takes possession of criminals, who do not repent and hate their crimes. »

« Hail, Master! You are here!? Do You know me? »

« May God come to you, Publius Quintilianus. See? I have come. »

« And You are here, in the Roman district. I was not hoping to see You again. But I am very happy to hear You. »

« And I am happy, too. Are there many men chained to the oars on that galley? »

« Yes, quite a large number. Mostly war prisoners. Are You interested in them? »

« I would like to approach that boat. »

« Come. Get away from here » he orders the few people who had come near and who draw back at once, mumbling rude remarks.

« You may leave them. I am accustomed to being pressed by crowds. »

« I can take You so far, not any farther. It's a military galley »

« It is enough. May God reward you. »

Jesus resumes speaking while the Roman, in his splendid uniform, seems to be mounting guard beside Him.

« Slaves by misfortune, that is, slaves only once. Slaves for a lifetime. But every tear that falls on their chains, every blow that strikes them writing pain on their flesh, files their handcuffs, adorns what does not die, opens to them the peace of God, Who is the friend of His poor unhappy children, and Who will give them as much joy as the pain they suffered here. »

Some men of the crew look out from the bulwarks of the galley and listen. None of the galley slaves are there, of course. But Jesus' Powerful voice certainly reaches them through the rowlock sockets and it spreads through the quiet air at low tide. Publius Quintilianus is called by a soldier and goes away.

« I want to tell these unhappy men who are loved by God, to be resigned to their misfortune, and to turn their pains into flames that will soon unfasten the chains of the galley and of their lives,

ending in a desire for God. Having endured the poor day, which is our life, a dark, stormy, fearful, painful day, they thus enter the day of God, a bright, serene, fearless and joyful day. You will enter the great peace, the infinite freedom of Paradise, o martyrs of a painful destiny, provided you are good in your suffering and you aspire to God. »

Publius Quintilianus comes back with other soldiers and he is followed by a litter carried by slaves, and the soldiers make room for it.

« Who is God? I am speaking to Gentiles who do not know who God is. I am speaking to the children of the peoples subdued who do not know who God is. In your forests, o Gauls, Iberians, Thracians, Germans, Celts, you have a sham god. A soul is naturally inclined to worship, because it remembers Heaven. But you cannot find the True God, Who put a soul into your bodies, a soul equal to the soul we people of Israel have, equal to the soul of the mighty Romans who have subdued you, a soul that has the same duties and the same rights to Good and to which the Good One, that is the true God will be faithful. Be equally faithful to Good. The god or gods that you have worshipped so far, learning his or their names on your mothers' knees; the god of whom you no longer think because you do not feel any comfort coming from him to relieve your suffering, the god that perhaps you hate and curse in your daily despair, is not the True God. The True God is Love and Piety. Were perhaps your gods like that? No, they were not. They were also hard, cruel, false, hypocrites, vicious, thieves. And now they have abandoned you, without the least comfort, which is the hope of being loved and the assurance of a rest after so much suffering. It is so because your gods do not exist. But God, the True God, Who is Love and Piety, and Who I can assure you exists, is He Who made the sky, the seas, the mountains, the forests, the plants, the flowers, the animals and man. He is the One Who inspires conquerors to treat the poor people of the world with mercy and love, as He is Mercy and Love.

O mighty masters, consider that you all come from the same origin. Do not act cruelly against those who by misfortune have come under your power, and be human also to those whom a crime has tied to the bench of a galley. Man sins many times. No man is without sins which are more or less secret. If you considered that, you would be really good to your brothers, who, not so lucky as you are, have been punished for crimes which you also have committed, without, however, being punished for them.

Human justice is such a doubtful thing in judging, that it would be dreadful if divine justice were like it. There are guilty people who do not appear to be so, whereas innocent people are considered guilty. Let us not ask why. It would be too grave an accusation

against unjust men who hate their fellow men! There are people who are really guilty, but have been led to perpetrate a crime by overbearing circumstances that somewhat extenuate their crime. Be therefore human, you who are in charge of galleys. Above human justice there is a much higher divine justice. The justice of the True God, Who created kings and slaves, rocks and grains of sand. He watches you; both you on the oars and you who are in charge of the crew; woe betide you if you are cruel without any reason. I, Jesus Christ, the Messiah of the True God can assure you: at your death He will tie you to an eternal galley, and will entrust the demons with a blood-stained lash and you will be tortured and struck exactly as you did. Because, if according to human law a criminal is to be punished, you must not overstep all limits. Remember that. A man who is powerful today may be miserable tomorrow. God only is eternal.

I would like to change your hearts, and above all I would like to untie your fetters, give you back your freedom and send you back to your fatherlands. But, My dear galley-slaves, you are My brothers, you cannot see My face, but your sorely wounded hearts are well known to Me; instead of the freedom and fatherlands, which I cannot give you now, while you are the poor slaves of mighty men, I will give you a greater freedom and Fatherland. For your sake I have become a prisoner Myself, far from My fatherland, I will redeem you by offering Myself in ransom, because you are not the disgrace of the world, as men call you, but the shame of man, who forgets the limits of the rigours of war and justice. I will make a new law for you on the earth and a pleasant abode for you in Heaven. Remember My Name, o children of God, who are weeping. It is the name of a Friend. Repeat A in your suffering. Be sure that, if you love Me, you will have Me, even if we never see one another on the earth. I am Jesus Christ, the Saviour, your Friend. I comfort you in the name of the True God. May peace come to you soon. »

A crowd of people, mainly Romans, have gathered round Jesus, Whose new ideas have astonished everybody.

« By Jove! You have made me ponder on new things, of which I had never thought before. I feel they are true… » Publius Quintilianus looks at Jesus, pensive and moved at the same time.

« It is so, My friend. If man used his brains, he would never go so far as to commit a crime. »

« By Jove, by Jove! Wonderful words! I must remember them! You said: "If man used his brains… »

«… he would never go so far as to commit a crime. »

« It is true. You are really a great man, You know? »

« Every man who wanted, could be as great as I am, if he were all one with God. »

The Roman continues his sequence of « by Joves » in increasing admiration.

Then Jesus says to him: « Can I give some solace to those galleyslaves? I have some money… some fruit, some comfort, that they may know that I love them. »

« Give me it. I can do that. On the other hand there is a lady over there who can do much. I will ask her. » Publius goes to the litter and speaks through the curtains that have been slightly drawn. He comes back. « I am authorised to do it. I will see to the distribution, so that the jailors may not take advantage of it. And it will be the only time a soldier of the Empire deals mercifully with war slaves. »

« The first, but not the only time. The day will come when there will be no slaves, and even before that My disciples will go among galley-men and slaves and call them brothers. »

A further sequence of « by Joves » can be heard in the calm air while Publius is waiting to have enough wine and fruit for the galley-slaves. Before going on board the galley he whispers near Jesus' ear: « Claudia Procula is in there. She would like to hear You again. In the meantime she wants to ask You something. Go and see her. »

Jesus goes towards the litter.

« Hail, Master. » The curtain is drawn a little, showing a beautiful woman about thirty years old.

« May the desire for wisdom come upon you. »

« You said that a soul remembers Heaven. Therefore, that thing which You say we have within us, is it eternal? »

« Yes, it is eternal. That is why it remembers God. It remembers the God Who created it. »

« What is the soul? »

« The soul is the true nobility of man. You are famous because you belong to the Claudi family. A man is even more so because he belongs to God. In your veins there is the blood of the Claudi, the mighty family, which, however, had a beginning and will come to an end. In man, because of his soul, there is the blood of God. Because a soul is the spiritual blood - as God is a Most Pure Spirit - of the Creator of man: of the Eternal, Almighty, Holy God. Because of the soul, which is in him and which is alive as long as it is united to God, man is eternal, powerful and holy. »

« I am a pagan. So I have no soul… »

« You do have it. But it has fallen into a state of lethargy. Wake it up to the Truth and to Life… »

« Goodbye, Master. »

« May Justice conquer you. Goodbye. »

« As you have seen, here also I had people listening to Me » says Jesus to the disciples.

« Yes, but with the exception of the Romans, who will have understood You? They are barbarians! »

« Who? All of them. Peace is with them and they will remember Me more than many others in Israel. Let us go to the house where they are offering us hospitality for our meal. »

« Master, that woman is the same one who spoke to me on the day that You cured the sick man. I saw her and I recognised her » says John.

« You can see, therefore, that even here there was someone waiting for us. But you do not seem to be very happy about it. I will have accomplished a great deal when I succeed in persuading you that I have come not only for the Jews, but for all the peoples, and I have prepared you for them all. And I tell you: remember everything of your Master. There is no event, however trifling it may seem, that may not be a lesson for you one day during your apostolate. »

No one replies and a sad smile of pity appears on Jesus' lips.

This morning He had such a smile also for me…

I was in a state of such deep depression that I began to weep over so many things, the tiredness of writing and writing with the firm belief that so much bounty of God and work of little John are utterly useless, not being the least. And weeping I invoked my Master, and when out of kindness He came exclusively for me, I told Him what worried me.

He shrugged His shoulders as if He wished to say: « Forget about the world and its nonsense » and then He caressed me saying: « So what? Would you not like to help Me any more? Does the world not want to know My words? Well, let us repeat them to each other, for My joy in mentioning them to a faithful heart, for yours in hearing them. The weariness of the apostolate!… More depressing than any other work! It deprives the serenest day of its light and the sweetest food of its sweetness. Everything becomes ashes and dirt, nausea and bitterness. But, My dear soul, these are the hours in which we take upon ourselves the weariness, the doubts, the misery of the worldly people who die because they do not possess what we have. And they are the hours in which we do more. I told You also last year. "To what advantage?" wonders the soul submerged by what submerges the world, that is, by the waves sent by Satan. And the world drowns. But the soul nailed to the cross with its God does not drown. It is in darkness for a moment and sinks under the nauseating wave of spiritual tiredness, then it emerges fresher and more beautiful. Your expression: "I am no longer good for anything" is the consequence of such tiredness. You would never be good for anything. But I am always I, and thus you will always be good for your task of mouthpiece. Of course, if I saw that My gift were hidden avariciously like a heavy most

valuable gem, or it were used imprudently, or out of indolence it were not protected by means of the safety precautions commanded by human wickedness in such cases, to guard the gift and the person through whom the gift is granted, I would say: "Enough of that". And this time without any possible recurrence. Enough for everybody, with the exception of My little soul, which today looks just a little flower in a downpour. And with such caresses can you doubt My love for you! Cheer up! You helped Me in wartime. Help Me again, now… There is so much to be done. »

And I calmed down under the caress of the long hand and of the very kind smile of My Jesus, so candid as when He is all for me.

155. Cure of the Little Roman Girl at Caesarea.

5th May 1945.

Jesus says:

« Little John, come with Me, as I have to make you write a lesson for the consecrated people of the present time. Watch and write. »

Jesus is still at Caesarea on Sea. He is no longer in the same square as yesterday, but further inland, from where the harbour and ships can still be seen. There are many warehouses and shops and as on the ground, in this open space, there are mats with various kinds of goods, I realise that it is near the market place, which was perhaps located near the harbour and warehouses, for the convenience of seamen and of the people buying goods brought by sea. There is a lot of shouting and bustling among the people. Jesus with Simon and His cousins, is waiting for the others who are buying the food that is needed. Some children look curiously at Jesus, Who caresses them lovingly while speaking to His apostles. Jesus says: « I am sorry to see dissatisfaction because I approach the Gentiles. But I can but do what I must do and be good to everybody. At least you three and John must endeavour to be good; the others will follow you and imitate you. »

« How can one be good to everybody? After all they despise and oppress us, they do not understand us, they are full of vices… » says James of Alphaeus apologetically.

« How can one do that? Are you happy that you were born of Alphaeus and Mary? »

« Of course I am. Why do You ask me? »

« And if God had asked you before you were conceived, would you have chosen to be born of them? »

« Certainly. But I do not understand. »

« If instead, you were born of a Gentile, and you heard someone accuse you of wanting to be born of a heathen father, what would you have said? »

« I would have said… I would have said: "It is no fault of mine. I

was born of him, but I might have been born of someone else". I would have said: "You are unfair in accusing me. If I do no harm, why do you hate me?". »

« Exactly, also these people, whom you despise because they are pagans, can say the same. It is no merit of yours, if you were born of Alphaeus, a true Israelite. You can only thank the Eternal Father, Who granted you a great gift, and out of gratitude and humility you can endeavour to take to the True God those who did not receive such a gift. One must be good. »

« It is difficult to love those whom we do not know. »

« No. It is not. Look. You, little fellow, come here. »

A little boy, about eight years old, who is playing in a corner with two other little lads, comes near Jesus. He is a strong boy, with very dark hair and a fair complexion.

« Who are you? »

« I am Lucius, Caius Lucius, of Caius Marius, a Roman, the son of the Decurion of the guards, who remained here after he was wounded. »

« And who are those? »

« They are Isaac and Toby. But we must not say, because they are not allowed to play with us. The Jews would hit them. »

« Why? »

« Because they are Jews and I am a Roman. They are forbidden to associate with us. »

« But you are playing with them. Why? »

« Because we are fond of one another. We always play together dice or jumping. But we have to hide. »

« And would you love Me? I am a Jew, too, and I am not a boy. Just imagine: I am a Master, something like a priest. »

« What do I care? If You love me, I will love You. And I love You because You love me. »

« How do you know? »

« Because You are good. Who is good, loves. »

« There you are, My friends. That is the secret to love: to be good. Then you love without considering to which faith other people belong. »

Arid Jesus, holding little Caius Lucius by the hand, goes and caresses the little Jewish children, who are frightened and hide in a passage way and He says to them: « Good children are angels. Angels have one fatherland only: Paradise. They have only one religion: the religion of the One God. They have only one Temple: the Heart of God. Like little angels, always love one another. »

« But if they see us they will hit us… »

Jesus shakes His head sadly but does not reply…

A tall shapely woman calls Lucius, who leaves Jesus saying: « My mother! » and shouts to the woman: « I have a big friend. He is a

Master!… »

The woman does not go away with her son, on the contrary, she comes near Jesus and asks Him: « Hail. Are You the Galilean who spoke at the harbour yesterday? »

« Yes, I am. »

« Wait for me, then. I'll be back in a moment » and she goes away with her little son.

In the meantime the other apostles have also arrived, with the exception of Matthew and John, and they ask: « Who was she? »

« A Roman, I think » reply Peter and the others.

« What did she want? »

« She told us to wait here. We shall soon find out. »

Some people have come near them in the meantime and are waiting curiously.

The woman comes back with other Romans. « So You are the Master? » asks one who looks like a servant of a rich family. After receiving an answer in the affirmative, he asks: « Would it upset You if You had to cure the little daughter of one of Claudia's friends? The child is choking to death and the doctor does not know the cause of it. She was all right last night. This morning she is in agony. »

« Let us go. »

They take a few steps along a street towards the place where they were yesterday and they arrive at a wide open main entrance of a house where Romans appear to be living.

« Just a moment. » The man rushes in and almost immediately looks out again and says: « Come in. »

But before Jesus can go in, a young ladylike woman comes out. Her extremely pitiful state is very obvious. She is holding in her arms a little child, only a few months old, completely inert, livid with suffocation. I would say that she is suffering from a lethal diphtheritis and is about to breathe her last. The woman clings to Jesus' chest like a shipwrecked person to a rock. Her tears prevent her from speaking.

Jesus takes the baby, whose very pale tiny hands with nails already blue are shaken by fits, and lifts her up. Her little head hangs down motionless. The mother, no longer a proud Roman in front of a Jew, has fallen at Jesus' feet, in the dust, sobbing, her face raised, her hair dishevelled, pulling at Jesus' tunic and mantle with her outstretched arms. Behind and round her there are Romans of the household and Jewish women of the town, looking at her.

Jesus wets His right hand forefinger with saliva, puts it into the little panting mouth, pressing it down the throat.

The child writhes and becomes darker in the face. The mother cries: « Don't! Don't! » and she writhes as if she were pierced by a

blade. The people are holding their breath.

Jesus pulls His finger out with a mass of putrid membranes. The child writhes no longer, cries for a few seconds, then calms down and smiles innocently, shaking her hands and moving her lips like a little bird, that chirps flapping its little wings while waiting to be fed.

« Take her, woman. Feed her. She is cured. »

The mother is so bewildered that she takes the child and still kneeling in the dust she kisses and caresses her and breast-feeds her. She seems to be out of her wits, as if she had forgotten everything except her child.

A Roman asks Jesus: « How did You do that? I am the Proconsul's doctor and I am clever. I tried to remove the obstruction, but it was too far down!… But You… so… »

« You are clever. But the True God is not with you. May He be blessed. Goodbye. » And Jesus is about to go away.

But a small group of Israelites feel they should interfere. « Why did You take the liberty of approaching foreigners? They are corrupted and unclean, and whoever approaches them, becomes such. »

They are three and Jesus stares at them severely and then says: « Are you not Haggai, the man from Azotus, who came here last Tishri to negotiate business with the merchant at the foundation of the old fountain? And are you not Joseph of Ramah, who came here to consult the Roman doctor, and you know, as well as I do, why? So? Do you not feel unclean? »

« A doctor is never a stranger. He cures bodies and all bodies are alike. »

« And souls are even more so. After all, what did I cure? The innocent body of a child and by doing so I hope to cure the souls of strangers, which are not innocent. Therefore both as a doctor and as the Messiah I can approach anybody. »

« No, You cannot. »

« No, Haggai? And why do you deal with the Roman merchant? »

« I only approach him through goods and money. »

« And as you do not touch his body, but only what was touched by his hands, you do not think that you are contaminated. Oh! How blind and cruel you all are!

Listen, everybody. In the very book of the Prophet, whose name this man bears, it is written: "Ask the priests this question on the Law: 'If a man carries consecrated meat in the fold of his gown and with this fold touches bread, broth, wine or food of any kind, does such food become holy?'. The priests answered: 'No, it does not'. Haggai then said: 'If a man made unclean by contact with a corpse touches any of this, does it become unclean?'. The priests answered: 'Yes, it does'."

By means of such shifty, false, inconsistent behaviour, you bar

and condemn Good and accept only what is profitable to you. Then there is no more indignation, no disgust, no horror. Provided no personal detriment is caused to you, you decide whether a thing is clean or unclean, whether it makes one clean or not. And how can you, liars as you are, state that what has been sanctified by contact with holy flesh or some holy thing, does not make holy what it touches; and what has touched an unclean thing can make unclean what it touches?

Do you not realise that you are belying yourselves, false ministers of a Law of Truth, exploiters of that very same Law, which you twist as if it were a hempen rope, when you are anxious to profit by it, you hypocritical Pharisees? Under religious pretexts you give vent to your human envious malice, entirely human, you desecrators of what belongs to God, revilers and enemies of the Messenger of God. I solemnly tell you that every action, every conclusion, every movement of yours is motivated by a complex shrewd mechanism, where the wheels, springs, weights and rods are your selfishness, your passions, your insincerity, your hatred, your anxiety to overwhelm people, your envy.

Shame! Greedy, trembling, spiteful, you live in the supercilious fear of being overcome by someone who may not belong to your own caste. You thus deserve to be like the one who frightens and irritates you! As Haggai says, of a heap of twenty measures you make one of ten, and of fifty barrels you make twenty, and you pocket all the difference, whereas to set an example to men and for the love to be given to God, you should add something of your own to the heap of the measures and to the number of the barrels, for the benefit of those who are hungry, instead of taking it away. You thus deserve to be made barren by a burning wind and by rust and hail stones, in all the deeds of your hands.

Who are those amongst you who come to Me? Those whom you consider dung and filth, who are so ignorant that they do not even know that there is a true God, they come to the One Who brings them that God, Who is present in His deeds and in His words. You, instead, have built a niche for yourselves and you stay in there, as arid and cold as idols awaiting incense and worship. And since you consider yourselves gods, you deem it useless to think of the True God, as one should think of Him, and you consider dangerous that other people, who are not like you, should dare what you do not dare. In fact you cannot dare, because you are idols and servants of the Idol. But he who dares, can do it, because not he, but God works in Him.

Go! Tell those who sent you to spy on Me, that I disdain merchants who do not feel contaminated if they sell goods or their fatherland or the Temple to those from whom they receive money. Tell them that I feel disgusted at the brutes, who worship only

their own flesh and blood, for the recovery of which they do not consider the contact with a foreign doctor to be contaminating. Tell them that the measure is the same for everybody and that there are not two measures. Tell them that I, the Messiah, the Just Admirable Counsellor, upon Whom the Spirit of the Lord shall rest with His seven gifts, Who will not judge by what appears to the eyes, but by the secrets of hearts, Who will not condemn according to what His ears hear, but by the spiritual voices He will hear in every man, Who will side with the humble and judge the poor with righteousness, the One Who I am, because that is Who I am, is already judging and smiting those who on the earth are nothing but earth. And the breath of My lip will slay the wicked and destroy their dens, but will be Life and Light, Freedom and Peace for those who desirous of justice and faith will come to My Holy Mountain to be sated with the Science of the Lord. That is Isaiah, is it not?

My people. Everything comes from Adam and Adam comes from My Father. Everything is therefore the work of the Father and it is My duty to gather all men together for the Father. And I bring them to You, o Holy, Eternal, Almighty Father. I shall lead the stray children back to You, after gathering them together by means of loving words, under My pastoral rod, which is like the one Moses raised against the deadly snakes. That You may have Your Kingdom and Your people. And I make no difference because in the depths of all men I see something that shines brighter than fire: a soul, a spark of Your Eternal Brightness. O My eternal desire! O My untiring will!

This is what I want and what I crave for. That the whole earth may sing Your Name. That mankind may call You Father. A Redemption that will save everybody. A fortified will that will make every man obedient to Your will. An eternal triumph that will fill Paradise with an everlasting hosanna… Oh! Multitude of Heavens! Behold, I see the smile of God… and that is the reward compensating all human harshness. »

The three men have fled in the hail of reproaches. All the others, both Romans and Jews, are gaping. The Roman woman, with her child, who has sucked her fill and is sleeping peacefully in her lap, is still where she was, almost at Jesus' feet, weeping, overwhelmed by maternal joy and spiritual emotion. Many are moved to tears by the last words of Jesus Who seems to be flashing with glory in His ecstasy.

And Jesus, lowering His eyes and returning with His spirit from Heaven back to the earth, sees the crowd and the mother… and passing by, after waving goodbye to everybody, He caresses her lightly, blessing her for her faith. And He walks away with His disciples, while the crowds, still amazed, remain where they

were…

(The young Roman woman, unless it is a casual resemblance, is one of the Roman women who were with Johanna of Chuza on the way to Calvary. As no one here called her by her name, I am not sure.)

156. Annaleah Devotes Herself to God as a Virgin.

6th May 1945.

Jesus with Peter, Andrew and John, knocks at the door of His house in Nazareth. The door is opened at once by His Mother, Whose face brightens with a beautiful smile on seeing Jesus.

« Welcome home, My Son! Since yesterday I have had with Me a pure dove waiting for You. She came from far away. The person who brought her here could not stay longer. As she asked for My advice, I told her what I could. But only You, My Son, are the Wisdom. You are welcome, too » She says to the disciples. « Come in and refresh yourselves. »

« Yes, stay here. I am going at once to see the girl who is waiting for Me. »

The three disciples are very curious, but show their curiosity in different ways. Peter stares intently in all directions, almost hoping to see through the walls. John looks as if he wanted to read on Mary's face the name of the unknown girl. Andrew, who on the other hand has blushed, stares intently at Jesus and both his eyes and his lips seem to be trembling with a silent entreaty.

Jesus pays no attention to any of them. While the three make up their minds and go into the kitchen, where Mary offers them some food in the warmth of the fireplace, Jesus draws the curtain that conceals the door opening on to the kitchen garden and goes out into it.

The mild sunshine makes more airy and dream-like all the blooming branches of the tall almond-tree. The only tree in blossom, the tallest in the kitchen garden, looks splendid in its silk white-pink dress, compared with the poverty of all the others: the pear-tree, the apple-tree, the fig-tree, the pomegranate, the vines which are still all barren, stately in its soft bright veil, which contrasts with the drab humility of the olive trees: it seems to have caught with its long branches a wispy cloud, lost in the blue field of the sky, and to have adorned itself with it to say to everybody: « The wedding of springtime is coming. Rejoice, plants and animals. It is the time for kisses with the winds, the bees, the flowers. It is the time for kisses under the tiles, or in the thick of woods, o little birds of God and snow-white sheep. Kisses today, offspring tomorrow, to perpetuate the work of our Creator God. »

Jesus with His arms folded on His chest, standing in the sun,

smiles at the serene gracefulness of His Mother's kitchen garden, with its bed of lilies recognizable from their first leaves, its still bare rose-bushes and silvery olive leaves, and many other families of flowers spread among the humble beds of legumes and vegetables, which are just becoming green. Clean, tidy and unassuming, it also seems to exhale the purity of perfect virginity.

« Son, come to My room. I will bring her to You, because she ran there when she heard so many voices. »

Jesus enters His Mother's room, the chaste, the most chaste little room, which heard the words of the angelical conversation and which exhales, even more than the kitchen garden, the virginal, angelical, holy essence of Her Who has lived in it for years and of the Archangel who venerated his Queen in it. Have thirty years gone by or did the meeting take place only yesterday? Also today a distaff holds its soft and almost silvery tuft of wool and the thread is on the spindle, folded embroidery is on the shelf near the door, between a parchment roll and a copper amphora in which there is a thick almond branch in bloom; also today the striped curtain, lowered on the mystery of the virginal dwelling, is moved by a gentle breeze, and the bed, neat in its corner, still has the genteel look of the bed of a girl who has just reached the threshold of youth. What will one dream or has dreamt of on the low pillow?…

The curtain is softly raised by Mary's hand; Jesus, Who was contemplating that abode of purity, standing with His back to the door, turns round.

« Here, My Son. I have brought her to You. She is a little lamb. You are her Shepherd » and Mary, Who has come in holding by the hand a slender brunette young girl, who blushes vehemently when she appears in Jesus' presence, quietly withdraws letting the curtain down.

« Peace to you, child. »

« Peace… Lord… » The girl, deeply moved, is speechless, but she kneels down and bows her head.

« Stand up. What do you want from Me? Do not be afraid… »

« I am not afraid… but… now that I am in front of You… after longing so much… what seemed easy and necessary to tell You… I cannot remember… it does not seem what it was… I am silly… forgive me, my Lord… »

« Do you want a grace for this world? Do you need a miracle? Have you souls to convert? No? What, then? Speak up! You had so much courage and now are losing heart? Do you not know that I am the One Who increases strength? Yes? You do? Well, then, speak as if I were a father for you. You are young. How old are you? »

« Sixteen years, my Lord. »

« Where have you come from? »

« From Jerusalem. »

« What is your name? »

« Annaleah… »

« The dear name of My grandmother and of many more holy women of Israel, and joined to it, to make one only, the name of the good, faithful, loving, meek wife of Jacob. It will be a good omen to you. You will be a model wife and mother. No? You are shaking your head? You are weeping? Have you been rejected? No? Your fiance perhaps died? Has no one proposed to you yet? »

The girl always shakes her head. Jesus takes a step forward, caresses her and forces her to raise her head and look at Him… Jesus' smile overcomes the girl's excitement. She takes heart: « My Lord, I could be a wife and a happy one, thanks to You. Do You not recognise me, my Lord? I am the girl who suffered from tuberculosis, the dying fiancee, whom You cured at Your John's request… After Your grace I… I have had another body: this healthy one in the place of the dying one I had before; and I have had another soul… I do not know. I did not feel the same… The joy of being cured, and consequently the certainty I could get married my regret in dying was that I could not get married - they only lasted for a few hours. And then… » The girl becomes franker and franker, she finds the words and the ideas that she had lost in the excitement of being alone with the Master… « … And then I felt that I should not be only selfish, and say only: "Now I will be happy", but that I should think of something else, something that came to You and to God, Your Father and mine. Something that, although small, should express my gratitude. I gave the matter a lot of thought and when the following Sabbath I saw my fiance I said to him: "Listen, Samuel. Without the miracle I would have died in a few months' time and you would have lost me for ever. Now I would like to offer a sacrifice to God, with you, to say to God that I praise Him and thank Him". And Samuel, because he loves me, said at once: "Let us go to the Temple together and offer a sacrifice". But that was not what I wanted. I am a poor and common girl, my Lord. I know very little and I can do much less. But through Your hand, which You laid on my diseased breast, something had come not only into my corroded lungs, but also into my heart. It was health to my lungs, and wisdom to my heart. And I realised that the sacrifice of a lamb was not the sacrifice wanted by my soul that… that loved You. » The girl becomes silent, blushing after her profession of love.

« Go on without any fear. What did your soul want? »

« To sacrifice something worthy of You, the Son of God! And so… so I thought it should be something spiritual like what comes from God, that is, the sacrifice of postponing my wedding, for Your sake, my Saviour. A wedding, You know, is a great joy. When one

is in love it is a great thing! One longs to… is anxious to celebrate it!… But I was no longer the same person as a few days previously. I no longer wanted my wedding as the dearest thing… I told Samuel… and he understood me. He also wanted to be a nazirite for one year, starting on the day which was to be the day of our wedding, that is the day after the calends of Adar. In the meantime he has been looking for You, because he wanted to love and know Him Who had given him back his fiancee: You. And he found You, after many months, at the Clear Water. I came too… and Your word completed the change of my heart. Now my previous vow is no longer sufficient for me… Like that almond-tree out there, which in the warmer and warmer sunshine has revived after being dead for months and has blossomed and will leaf and then bear fruit, so I have continuously grown in the knowledge of what is better. The last time, when I was already sure of myself and of what I wanted - I have pondered on the matter all these past months - the last time I went to the Clear Water, You were no longer there… They had driven You away. I wept and prayed so much that the Most High heard me and persuaded my mother to send me here with a relative who was going to Tiberias to speak to the courtiers of the Tetrarch. The steward told me that I would find You here. I found Your Mother… and Her words, only listening to Her and being beside Her these two days, have completely matured the fruit of Your grace. » The girl has knelt down as if she were in front of an altar, her arms folded on her breast.

« All right. But what do you want exactly? What can I do for you? »

« Lord, I would like… I would like a great thing. And only You, the Donor of life and health, can give it to me, because I think that what You can give, You can also take away… I would like You to take the life You gave me, during the year of my vow, before it ends… »

« Why? Are you not grateful to God for the life you received? »

« So grateful! Infinitely! But for one thing only: because by living by His grace and by Your miracle I have understood what is best. »

« Which is? »

« Which is to live like angels. As Your Mother, my Lord… as You live… as Your John lives… The three lilies, the three white flames, the three beatitudes of the earth, my Lord. Yes. Because I think that it is a beatitude to possess God and God is possessed by the pure. I believe that who is pure is a Heaven with God in its centre and the angels around… Oh! My Lord! That is what I would like… Little have I heard of what You, Your Mother, the disciple and Isaac have said. Neither have I approached anyone else who could tell me Your words. But I feel as if my soul heard You all the time and You were its Master… I have told You everything, my Lord… »

« Annaleah, you are asking for very much and are giving very much… Daughter: you have understood God and the perfection to which a creature may rise to be like the Most Pure and to please the Most Pure. »

Jesus has laid His hands on the sides of the head of the darkhaired girl, who is kneeling in front of Him and speaks bending over her: « He Who was born of a Virgin - because He could but build His nest on a pile of lilies - is nauseated, My dear daughter, by the triple lechery of the world and He would be crushed by so much nausea if His Father, Who knows on what His Son lives, did not intervene with loving help to support My soul in anguish. The pure are My joy. You are giving Me what the world takes from Me through its unexhausted baseness. May the Father and you, dear girl, be blessed for that. Go happily. Something will intervene to make your vow an eternal one. Be one of the lilies scattered on the blood-stained ways of Christ. »

« Oh! my Lord… there is still one thing I would like… »

« Which? »

« Not to be present at Your death… I could not see Him die, Who is my Life. »

Jesus smiles kindly and with His hand He wipes the tears streaming down her little dark face. « Do not weep. Lilies are never in mourning. You shall smile with all the pearls of your angelical crown when you see the crowned King enter His Kingdom. Go. May the Spirit of the Lord teach you while I am away. I bless you with the fire of Eternal Love. »

Jesus looks out on to the kitchen garden and calls: « Mother! Here is a little daughter, she is all Yours. She is now happy. But immerse her in Your purity every time we go to the Holy City, that she may become snow of celestial petals spread on the throne of the Lamb. » And Jesus goes back to His disciples, while Mary caresses the girl and stays with her.

Peter, Andrew and John look at Him inquisitively. And Jesus' bright face tells them that He is happy. Peter cannot help asking: « To whom did You speak so long, my Master? And what have You heard to be so beaming with joy? »

« To a woman at the dawn of life, to her who will be the dawn of many more that will come. »

« Who? »

« The virgins. »

Andrew mumbles, in a low voice, to himself: « It is not her… »

« No. It is not she. But do not tire of praying, be good and patient. Every word of your prayer is like a call, a light in the dark and it supports and guides her. »

« But who is my brother waiting for? »

« For a soul, Peter. A great poverty that he wants to change into

a great wealth. »

« And where did Andrew find it, since he never goes about, he never speaks, and he is a helpless sort of chap? »

« On My way. Come with Me, Andrew. Let us go and see Alphaeus and bless Him amongst his many grandchildren. You wait for Me at James and Judas'. My Mother wants to be left alone all day. »

And while they go away, some here, some there, secrecy envelops the joy of the first girl consecrated to virginity for Christ's sake.

157. Instruction to the Women Disciples at Nazareth.

7th May 1945.

Jesus is still at Nazareth, at home. Rather, He is in the old carpenter's shop. The twelve apostles are with Him as well as Mary, Mary mother of James and Judas, Salome, Susanna, and, something new, Martha. A really sorrowful Martha, with clear signs of tears below her eyes. A Martha who is lost and frightened at being alone in the presence of other people and above all of the Lord's Mother. Mary endeavours to familiarise her with the other women and to relieve her of the feeling of uneasiness from which She sees she is suffering. But poor Martha's heart seems to be swelling more and more with Her caresses. She flushes and weeps alternately under her veil, which she has pulled very low over her sorrow and discomfort.

John comes in with James of Alphaeus. « She is not in, my Lord. She and her husband are the guests of a friend of hers. So the servants said » says John.

« She will certainly be very sorry. But she will always be able to see You and receive Your instructions » concludes James of Alphaeus.

« All right. The group of women disciples is not here as I expected it. But, you can see, Martha, Theophilus' daughter and Lazarus' sister, is present in the place of the absent Johanna. The disciples know who Martha is. So does My Mother. You, too, Mary, and perhaps also you, Salome, have already heard from your sons who Martha is, not so much as a woman according to the world, but as a creature in the eyes of God. And you, Martha, on the other hand, know who these women are, who consider you as their sister and will love you so much. You are their sister and daughter. And you are in great need of their love, My dear Martha, that you may enjoy the comfort of their kind fondness, which God does not condemn, but has given to man to support him in the weariness of life. And God has brought you here just when I had chosen to lay the foundation, I could say, to give you the canvas on which you will

embroider your perfection of disciples.

Disciple means to follow the discipline of the Master, of His doctrine. Therefore, in a wide meaning, all those who now and in future centuries will follow My doctrine, will be called disciples. And to avoid mentioning many names, saying: disciples of Jesus according to the teaching of Peter and Andrew, of James or John, of Simon or Philip, of Judas or Bartholomew, or of Thomas and Matthew, they will be called Christians by one word only, which will unite them all under one sign. But in the great mass of the followers of My discipline I have already selected the first and the second ones and the same will be done throughout centuries in My memory. As in the Temple, and even before, in Moses' days, there was a Pontiff, the priests, the Levites, those responsible for various services, offices and duties, the singers and so on, so in My new Temple, as large as the earth, which will last as long as the earth, there will be superiors and inferiors, all of them useful and loved by Me, and besides, there will be women, the new category, whom Israel has always despised, confining them to the virginal songs in the Temple or to the teaching of the virgins in the Temple. But nothing more.

Do not discuss whether that was fair or not. In the closed religion of Israel and in the days of Wrath it was fair. All the shame fell upon women, the origin of sin. In the universal religion of Christ and in the days of Forgiveness all that is changed. All the Grace was assembled in one Woman and She delivered it to the world, that it might be redeemed. Woman is therefore no longer the anger of God, but the help of God. And through the Woman, beloved by the Lord, all women can become disciples of the Lord, not only as the mass of followers, but as minor priestesses, assistants to the priests, to whom they can give so much help beside them and among the believers and non-believers, among those who will be brought to God not so much by the call of holy words as by the holy smile of one of My women disciples.

You have asked to follow Me, as men do. But, as far as you are concerned, it is too little for Me, if you only come, only listen and only practise. It would be your sanctification. A great thing. But not yet enough for Me. I am the Son of the Absolute One and I want the absolute for My beloved ones. I want everything, because I have given everything.

Further, not only I exist, there is also the world. This terrible thing, the world. It should be tremendous in holiness: a boundless holiness, in number and power, of the multitude of the children of God. Instead it is tremendous in wickedness. Its full iniquity is really unlimited owing to the number of its manifestations and the power of its vices. All sins are in the world, which is no longer a multitude of the children of God, but a multitude of the children of

Satan, and above all, the sin bearing the clearest sign of its paternity is most alive: hatred. The world hates. Who hates sees evil even in the most holy things, and wants other people to see evil, even if they do not see it. If you asked the world why I came, it would not say to you: "To do good and redeem". But it would say: "To corrupt and usurp". If you asked the world what it thinks of you who follow Me, it would not say: "You follow Him to become holy and give comfort to the Master, through holiness and purity". But it would say: "You follow Him because you have been seduced by the man".

Such is the world. And I am telling you also that, so that you may consider everything before showing yourselves to the world as the chosen women disciples, the founders of a family of future women disciples, the cooperators of the servants of the Lord. Take your hearts in your hands, and say to them, to those sensitive hearts of women, that you, and your hearts with you, will be scorned at, calumniated, spit at, trampled on by the world, by contempt, by falsehood, by the cruelty of the world. Ask your hearts whether they are capable of receiving all the wounds without shouting out of indignation, cursing those who wound it. Ask them whether they feel they can face the moral martyrdom of slander without going to the extent of hating the slanderers and the Cause for which they are calumniated. Ask them whether, sated and covered with the envy of the world, they will always be able to exhale love, whether poisoned with absinth they will be able to squeeze out honey, whether when suffering all tortures of incomprehension, of scorn, of malicious gossip, they will still be able to smile, pointing to Heaven, their goal, to which you wish to lead other people, out of womanly charity, which is motherly charity also in young girls, still motherly even if bestowed upon old people who could be your ancestors, but are spiritual babies just born and incapable of understanding and conducting themselves in the way, the life, the truth, the wisdom that I have come to bring, by giving Myself: Way, Life, Truth, divine Wisdom. I will love you just the same if you say to Me: "I have not the strength, my Lord, to challenge the whole world for You".

Yesterday a girl asked Me to immolate her, before the hour of her wedding strikes, because she feels that she loves Me, as God is to be loved; that is with her whole self, with the absolute perfection of giving herself. And I will do it. I have concealed the hour from her, that her soul may not tremble with fear, or her body more than her soul. Her death will be like the end of a flower, that closes its corolla in the evening, thinking it will reopen it the following day, but never opens it again, because the kiss of the night has sucked its life. And I will do it, according to her desire, by bringing forward her repose of death to a few days before Mine.

So that this first virgin of Mine may not be kept waiting in limbo, and I may find her immediately after My death…

Do not weep! I am the Redeemer… This holy girl did not ask to follow Me, but she did not limit herself to hosannas immediately after the miracle, but she worked the miracle as if it were money invested at an interest, and from human gratitude she passed to a supernatural one, from an earthly desire to a heavenly one, showing a maturity of spirit, which is superior to almost everybody else's I say "almost" because amongst you who are listening to Me, there are perfections that are equal and even greater. She did not ask to follow Me, nay she showed the desire to accomplish her evolution from a girl to an angel in the secrecy of her abode. And I love her so much that in the hours of disgust at what the world is, I will recall this kind creature, blessing the Father, Who wipes away My tears and perspiration of a Master in a world that does not want Me, by means of such flowers of love and purity.

But if you want, if you have the courage to remain the chosen women disciples, behold, I will point out to you the work you have to do to justify your presence and your election near Me and near the saints of the Lord. You can do so much amongst your fellow creatures and for the ministers of the Lord.

I have already mentioned it to Mary of Alphaeus many months ago. How great is the necessity of a woman near the altar of Christ! The infinite miseries of the world can be cured much more and much better by a woman than by a man, and then taken to man to be completely cured. Many hearts, particularly of females, will open to you, o women disciples. You must receive them as if they were dear children led astray, who are coming back to their father's house and dare not face their parent. You are the ones who will recomfort the culprit and placate the judge. Many will come to you seeking God. You will welcome them as if they were tired pilgrims, saying: "This is the house of the Lord, He will be here at once", and in the meantime you will envelop them with your love. A priest of Mine will come, if I do not.

A woman knows how to love. She was made to love. She degraded love into sensual lust, but true love, the gem of her soul, is still imprisoned in the depth of her heart: love devoid of foul sensual mud, made of angelical wings and perfumes, of pure flame and remembrances of God, of its origin from God and its creation by God. Woman: the masterpiece of goodness near the masterpiece of creation, which is man: "And now I will make Adam a helpmate that he may not feel alone", must not abandon the Adams. Take therefore that faculty of loving and make use of it in the love of Christ and for Christ amongst your neighbours. Be most charitable to repentant culprits. Tell them not to be afraid of God. Is it possible for you, mothers and sisters, not to be able to do that?

How often your little ones, your young brothers were ill and needed a doctor! And they were afraid. But with caresses and loving words you relieved them of their fear and they, no longer terrified as before, with their little hands held by yours, let the doctor cure them. Culprits are your sick brothers and children, who are afraid of the doctor's hand, and of his sentence… No, it must not be so. Since you know how good God is, tell them that God is good and no one must be afraid of Him. Even if He is frank and resolute in saying: "You shall not do it again", He will not reject who has already done it and has fallen ill. But He will cure him to restore him to health.

Be mothers and sisters to holy living people. They, too, need love. They will become tired and worn out in evangelizing. They will not be able to do all that is to be done. Help them, discreetly and diligently. Women know how to work at home, near tables and beds, at looms and everything that is needed for everyday life. The future of the Church will be a continuous flow of pilgrims to the places of God. Be their kind hotel-keepers, taking upon yourselves all the most humble work, so that the ministers of God may be free to continue the work of the Master.

Then difficult, sanguinary, cruel times will come. Christians, also the holy ones, will undergo hours of terror and weakness. Man is never very strong in suffering. Women, instead, as compared to men, enjoy the true kingliness of being able to suffer. Teach men, supporting them in the hours of fear, discouragement, tears, tiredness and bloodshed. In our History we have examples of wonderful women, who performed deeds of liberating daring. We have Judith, Jael. But believe Me, no one is greater, so far, than the mother who was eight times a martyr, seven times with each of her sons, and once herself, in the times of the Maccabees. Then there will be another one… And after Her, there will be countless numbers of heroines of sorrow and in sorrow, women who will be the solace of martyrs and martyrs themselves, who will be angels for those who are persecuted, silent priestesses who will preach God by their way of living, and who, with no other consecration but the one they received from the God-Love, will be consecrated and worthy of it.

Those are the outlines of your main duties. I will not be able to devote much time to you in particular. But you will be formed by listening to Me. And you will be formed even more under the perfect guidance of My Mother.

Yesterday this maternal hand (and Jesus takes Mary's hand in His own) brought Me the girl of whom I have spoken to you and who told Me that to listen to Her and be beside Her for a few hours had matured the fruit of the grace she had received and had carried it to perfection. It is not the first time that My Mother has worked

for Christ, Her Son. You and you, who are My disciples as well as cousins, know what Mary is for the formation of souls to God and you will be able to tell both those men and women who may be afraid that I have not prepared them for their mission or that they are still insufficiently prepared when I shall no longer be with you. My Mother will be with you now, when I am not amongst you, and later when I shall no longer be with you. She will remain with you, and with Her will remain the wisdom of all Her virtues. As from now you may follow all Her advice.

Yesterday evening, when we were alone, and I was sitting near Her, as I used to when I was a child, My head resting on Her shoulder, which is so soft and so strong, My Mother said to Me we had been talking of the girl who had left early in the afternoon, with enclosed in her virginal heart a sun, brighter than the one in the sky: her holy secret - She said to Me: "How lovely it is to be the Redeemer's Mother!" Yes, how lovely it is when the creature coming to the Redeemer is already a creature of God, a creature in whom there is only the stain of origin, that can only be washed away by Me. All the other small stains of human imperfection have been washed away by love.

But, My sweet Mother, Most Pure Guide of souls to Your Son, Holy Star of orientation, Kind Teacher of saints, Pious Foster Mother of the most little ones, Healthy Cure of sick people, not always such creatures who are not repugnant to holiness will be coming to You… But lepers, horrors, stench, a tangle of snakes and foul things, will creep to Your feet, o Queen of mankind, and will shout: "Have mercy! Succour us! Take us to Your Son!". And You will have to put this pure hand of Yours on their wounds, and bend with Your eyes of a heavenly dove on hellish deformities, inhale the stench of sin and not run away. Nay, You will have to press to Your heart those who have been mutilated by Satan, those abortions, that filth, and wash them with Your tears and bring them to Me… And then You will say: "How difficult it is to be the Redeemer's Mother!". But You will do it because You are the Mother… I kiss and bless these hands of Yours from which so many creatures will come to Me, and each of them will be a glory of Mine. But before Mine, it will be a glory of Yours, Holy Mother.

My dear women disciples, follow the example of My Teacher, of the Teacher of James and Judas, of everyone who wishes to be formed in Grace and Wisdom. Follow Her word. It is the same as Mine, but made sweeter. Nothing is to be added to it because it is the word of the Mother of Wisdom.

And you, My friends, endeavour to acquire the humbleness and firmness of women, and demolishing manly pride, do not despise the women disciples, but mitigate your strength, and I could say also your hardness and your intolerance, in contact with the kindness

of women. And above all, learn from them how to love, to believe and to suffer for the Lord, because I solemnly tell you that they, the weak ones, will become the strongest in faith, in love, in daring, in sacrificing themselves for their Master, Whom they love with their whole selves, without asking for anything, without pretending anything, satisfied only with loving to give Me solace and joy.

Go now to your homes, or to the houses where you are guests. I will stay with My Mother. God be with you. »

They all go away except Martha.

« Martha, you stay here. I have already spoken to your servant. Today it is not Bethany that is giving hospitality, but it is Jesus' little house. Come. You will eat beside Mary and sleep in the little room near Hers. The spirit of Joseph, our comfort, will comfort you while you are resting, and tomorrow you will go back to Bethany stronger and more sure of yourself, to prepare women disciples also there, while waiting for the one dearest to Me and to you. Do not doubt, Martha. I never promise in vain. But it takes time to turn a desert full of vipers into a heavenly thicket. The first work is not noticed. Nothing seems to have taken place. Instead the seed has already been sown. The seeds. All of them. And then tears will come, to act as rain that opens the seeds… And the good trees will come… Come! Weep no more! »

158. Jesus Speaks to Johanna of Chuza on the Lake.

8th May 1945.

Jesus is on the lake, in Peter's boat, behind two other boats; one is a common fishing boat, like that of Peter, the other is a slender expensive pleasure boat. It belongs to Johanna of Chuza. But the owner is not in her boat. She is at Jesus' feet, in Peter's humbler craft.

I would say that they met by chance somewhere on the flowery shore of Gennesaret, most beautiful in this first appearance of Palestinian springtime, which strews its clouds of blossoming almond-trees and lays the pearls of future flowers on pear and apple-trees, on pomegranates, quince-trees, on all the trees which are most fruitful and bear the most beautiful blossoms and fruit. When the boat keeps close to the shore exposed to the sun, one can already see millions of buds swelling on the branches, awaiting to blossom, while the petals of the early almond-trees flutter in the quiet air until they alight in the clear water. The shores, covered with the new grass, which looks like bright green silk, are studded with the golden eyes of buttercups, or radiate-star daisies, near which the beautiful, thin bluish forget-me-nots, stiff on their sterns like little crowned queens, smile gently, as placid as

children's eyes, and they seem to be saying « yes, of course » to the sun, to the lake, to the other herbs, which are happy to bloom, under the sky-blue eyes of their Lord.

At the beginning of spring the lake has not yet the opulence that will turn it into a triumph the following months, it has not the luxurious pomp, which I would call sensual, of the many thousand rigid or supple roseries, in the form of tufts in gardens or veils against walls, of the many thousand corymbs of cytisi and acacias, of the thousands and thousands of groups of tuberoses, of the thousands and thousands of waxed stars of citrus trees, of all the blending of hues, of strong, soft, inebriating perfumes, which form the environment and spur of human great desire for enjoyment that desecrates this corner of the earth, which is so pure, and is the lake of Tiberias, the place chosen centuries ago to be the theatre of the greatest number of miracles worked by our Lord Jesus.

Johanna looks at Jesus absorbed in the beauty of His Galilean lake and her face smiles reflecting, like a faithful mirror, His smile. They are speaking in the other boat. There is silence here. The only noise is the thud of the bare feet of Peter and Andrew, who are manoeuvring the boat, and the sigh of the water opened by the prow and whispering its pain to the sides of the boat, and then changing into laughter at the stern, when the wound heals and becomes a silvery wake that the sun causes to sparkle as if it were diamond dust.

At last Jesus ends His contemplation and turns His eyes towards Johanna. He smiles at her and asks her: « We are almost there, are we not? And you will be saying that your Master is not a very pleasant companion. I have not spoken one word to you. »

« But I have read them on Your face, Master, and I heard everything You said to these things which are around us. »

« Well, then, what was I saying? »

« Love, be pure, be good. Because you come from God, and nothing bad or impure has come out of His hands. »

« You have read right. »

« But, my Lord, the herbs will do that… Also the animals will do it. Man… Why will he not, although he is the most perfect? »

« Because Satan's tooth has pierced man only. He pretended to demolish the Creator through His greatest prodigy, most like Him. »

Johanna lowers her head in thought. She seems to be hesitating and weighing two opposite desires. Jesus is watching her. She then raises her head and says: « Would You mind approaching some friends of mine, who are pagans? You know… Chuza is a courtier… And the Tetrarch - and even more so the true mistress of the Court: Herodias, to whose will every desire of Herod yields, as it

is… fashionable, to show that they are more refined than any other Palestinian, to be protected by Rome by worshipping Rome and everything that is Roman - flirts with the Romans of the proconsular household… and almost imposes them on to us. Really I must say that the women are not worse than we are. Also amongst us, on these very shores, there are some women who have fallen very low. And what can we speak of, unless we speak of Herodias?… When I lost my child and I was ill, they were very good to me, although I did not seek them. And after, we have remained friends. But if You tell me that it is wrong, I will put an end to it. No? Thank You, my Lord. The day before yesterday I was with one of these friends. It was a friendly visit, as far as I was concerned, a duty call with regard to Chuza. It was an order of the Tetrarch who… would like to come back here but does not feel too safe and so… he enters into more interested relations with Rome, in order to be protected. Nay… please… You are a relative of the Baptist, are You not? Well, tell him not to be too trustful. He should never leave Samaria. On the contrary, if he does not mind, he should hide there for some time. The snake is going near the lamb and the lamb has a lot to be afraid of. Of everything. Let him be watchful, Master. But it must not be known that I said it. It would be the end of Chuza. »

« Do not worry, Johanna. I will inform the Baptist in such a way that no harm will be done. »

« Thank You, my Lord. I want to serve You… but by doing so, I would not like to harm my husband. Nay… I… will not always be able to come with You. Sometimes, I will have to stay, because he wants me to, and it is just… »

« You will stay, Johanna. I understand everything. Say no more, because it is not necessary. »

« But will You want me to be near You in the most dangerous hours for You? »

« Certainly, Johanna. »

« Oh! What a burden it was for me having to say that and actually giving voice to the words! But now I am relieved… »

« If you have faith in Me, you will always be relieved. But you were talking about a Roman lady friend… »

« Yes. She is a close friend of Claudia and I think she must be a relative of hers, too. And she would like to speak to You, or at least, listen to You. And she is not the only one. Now that You have cured Valeria's child, and the news travelled as quick as lightning, they are more anxious than ever. At the banquet the other evening, there was a lot of talking, in your favour and against You. Because some Herodians were present, as well as some Sadducees… although, if you asked them they would deny it… and there were also some women… rich… but… but not honest.

There was… I regret telling You because I know that You are a friend of her brother… but there was Mary of Magdala with her new friend and another woman, a Greek, I think, as dissolute as she. You know… among heathens, women are at table with men and that is very… very… What a nuisance! My friend was so kind as to choose my husband as my companion and that was a great relief. But the others… oh!… Well… They were talking about You, because Faustina's miracle caused a stir and if the Romans admired You as a great doctor or magician - forgive me, my Lord the Herodians and the Sadducees vomited venom on Your Name. And Mary! Oh Mary! How horrible!… She began sneering and then. No, I will not tell You. I wept all night over it… »

« Never mind. She will recover. »

« But she is all right, You know? »

« Her body is. All the rest is poisoned. She will recover. »

« You say so… The Roman women, You know what they are like… said: "We are not afraid of witchcraft, neither do we believe in lies. We want to judge by ourselves"; and after they said to me: "Could we not hear Him?" »

« Tell them that at the end of the month of Shebat I will be in your house. »

« I will tell them, my Lord. Do You think they will come to You? »

« There is a world to be rebuilt in them. First it is necessary to destroy, then to build. But it is not impossible. Johanna, there is your house and your garden. Work in it for your Master, as I told you. Goodbye, Johanna. The Lord be with you. I bless you in His name. »

The boat draws near to the shore. Johanna begs: « Are You really not coming? »

« Not now. I must revive the flames. In the absence of a few months, they have almost gone out. And time flies. »

The boat stops in the little bay which penetrates into Chuza's garden. Some servants rush to assist their mistress in getting off. Her boat arrives at the wharf after Peter's, and John, Matthew, the Iscariot and Philip come off it and get on board Peter's boat, which slowly departs and resumes its voyage to the opposite shore.

159. Jesus at Gherghesa. John's Disciples.

9th May 1945.

Jesus is speaking in a town which I have never seen before. At least, that is what I think, because all the towns are alike in style and it is difficult to tell one from the other at first sight. Also here a road coasts the lake and all the boats are on the shore. Large and small houses are set in a row on the other side of the road, but the

hills are much more distant and so the little town is on a charming plain which stretches along the eastern shores of the lake, protected from the winds by the range of hills, and warmed by the sun which here, more than in the other parts of the country, increases the blossoming of the trees.

I think that Jesus' sermon has already begun because He says: «… It is true. You say: "We will never abandon You because to abandon You is to abandon God". But, o people of Gherghesa, remember that nothing is more changeable than the human mind. I am convinced that at present that is what you really think. My word and the miracle that took place have encouraged you in that direction and at the present moment you are sincere in what you say. But I wish to remind you of one event, I could quote a thousand both remote and recent. I will mention only this one.

Joshua, the servant of the Lord, on the eve of death, gathered around him all the tribes with their elders, leaders, judges and scribes and he spoke to them in the presence of the Lord, reminding them of all the benefits gained from and prodigies worked by the Lord through His servant. And after enumerating all these things, he asked them to repudiate any god which was not the Lord or at least to be frank in their faith, choosing with sincerity either the True God or the gods of Mesopotamia and of the Amorites, so that there should be a clear separation between the sons of Abraham and the paganizing people.

An openly declared error is always better than a hypocritical profession and mixture of faiths, which is an insult to God and death to souls. And nothing is easier to maintain and more commonly met than such mixture. The appearance is good; the substance underneath it is not good. That state applies also nowadays. Those believers who mix the observance of the Law with what is forbidden by the Law, those miserable fellows who stagger like drunken people between loyalty to the Law and the profit of business and compromise with outlaws from whom they hope to receive some advantage, those priests or Scribes or Pharisees who no longer make the service of God the aim of their lives, but indulge in shrewd politics to triumph over other people and thus be able to do anything against more honest persons, because they are not the servants of God, but they serve a power which they know is strong and useful for their purposes, all those people are nothing but hypocrites who mix our God with false gods.

The people replied to Joshua: "Never let it be that we shall abandon the True God to serve false gods". Joshua told them what I have just told you about the holy jealousy of the Father, about His will to be loved exclusively, with our whole selves, about His justice in punishing those who are untruthful. Punishment! God

can punish just as He can reward us. It is not necessary to be dead to receive our reward or punishment. Consider, o people of Israel, whether God, after giving you so much, freeing you from the Pharaohs, leading you safely through the desert and the snares of enemies, allowing you to become a great and respected nation, full of glory, has not punished you once, twice, ten times, for your sins! Consider what you have become now! And I, Who see you throwing yourselves headlong into the most sacrilegious idolatry, I see also into which abyss you are about to fall because you always persevere in the same faults. And because of that I rebuke you, o people who are twice Mine, because I am your Redeemer and because I was born of you. My reproach is not hatred, it is not grudge, nor intolerance, it is love, even if it is severe.

Joshua then said: "You are witnesses: you have chosen the Lord" and they all replied: "Yes, we are". And Joshua, who was wise besides being brave, knowing how fleeting the will of man is, wrote in the book all the words of the Law and of the covenant and he put them in the temple, and also in the sanctuary of the Lord in Shechem, which contained the Tabernacle for the occasion, he set a great stone as witness and said: "This stone which has heard all your words to the Lord shall remain here as a witness so that you may not lie and deny the Lord your God".

A stone, no matter how great and hard it may be, can always be reduced to powder by man, by thunderbolt or by the erosion of water and time. But I am the Eternal Corner-Stone. And I cannot be destroyed. Do not lie to this Living Stone. Do not love it only because it works miracles. Love it because through it you will touch Heaven. I would like you to be more spiritual, more faithful to the Lord. I am not saying to Me. I am, only because I am the Voice of the Father. By trampling on Me, you wound Him Who sent Me. I am the mediator. He is everything. Take what I offer you and keep within yourselves what is holy so that you may reach God. Do not love the Man, love the Messiah of the Lord not because of the miracles He works, but because He wants to work in you the intimate and sublime miracle of your sanctification. »

Jesus blesses and directs His steps towards a house. He is almost at the door when He is stopped by a group of elderly men who greet Him respectfully saying: « May we ask You a question, Lord? We are disciples of John and as he always speaks of You and also because the fame of Your miracles reached us, we wish to make Your acquaintance. We have just listened to You and we have a question to ask You. »

« Ask it. If you are disciples of John, you are already on the path of justice. »

« You said, speaking of the idolatries which are common amongst believers, that there are people amongst us who come to compromise

between the Law and those who are out of the Law. But You also are a friend of theirs. We know that You do not disdain the Romans. So? »

« I do not deny it. But can you say that I do it to make a profit? Can you say that I caress them even to receive only their protection? »

« No, Master. And we are more than certain. But the world is not made only of us, who want to believe only in the evil that we see and not in the evil we are told about. Now tell us the convincing reason for approaching Gentiles, for our own guidance and to defend You in the event of someone slandering You in our presence. »

« It is evil to have contact when one does it for human purposes. It is not evil when one approaches them to take them to the Lord our God. That is what I do. If you were Gentiles, I could spend some time explaining to you how every man comes from One God only. But you are Jews and disciples of John. You are therefore the cream of Jews, and I need not explain that to you. You can therefore understand and believe that it is My duty, as the Word of God, to take His word to all men, the sons of the Universal Father. »

« But they are not His sons, they are pagans… »

« With regard to Grace they are not. Because of their erroneous faith, they are not. That is true. But until I redeem you, man, also a Jew, will have lost Grace, he will be deprived of it, because the Stain of Origin prevents the ineffable ray of Grace from descending into men's hearts. But with regard to creation, man is always a son. From Adam, the founder of the human family, descend both the Jews and the Romans and Adam is the son of the Father Who gave him His spiritual likeness. »

« That is true. Another question, Master. Why do John's disciples fast very sternly and Yours do not? We do not mean that You should not eat. Also the Prophet Daniel was holy in the eyes of God although he was a great man at the court in Babylon, and You are greater than he. But they… »

« What very often is not achieved by rigorism, is achieved by cordiality. There are people who would never come to the Master, and the Master must go to them. There are others who would go to the Master, but are ashamed of going amongst the crowd. The Master must go also to them. And since they say to Me: "Be my guest that I may know You" I go, bearing in mind, not the pleasure of a rich table, and of a conversation that sometimes is very painful for Me, but only and always the interest of God. That is as far as I am concerned. And as often at least one of the souls which I approach is converted to God, and every conversion is a wedding feast for My soul, a great feast in which all the angels in Heaven take part and which is blessed by the Eternal God, My disciples the friends of

Me-the Spouse, rejoice with the Spouse and Friend. Would you like to see My friends in pain while I rejoice? While I am with them? But the time will come when they will no longer have Me. And then they will fast. New methods for new times. Up to yesterday, in the days of the Baptist, there was the ash of Penance. Today, in My days, there is the sweet manna of Redemption, of Mercy, of Love. The old methods could not be engrafted into Mine, as My method could not have been used then, not even yesterday. Because Mercy was not yet on the earth. It is now. No longer the Prophet, but the Messiah, to Whom everything has been entrusted by God, is on the earth. Each day has what is useful to it. Nobody sews a new cloth on to an old garment, lest the new piece of cloth, particularly when being washed, should shrink and thus tear the old cloth and the hole would become bigger. Likewise no one puts new wine into old wineskins, otherwise the new wine would burst the wineskins, which cannot stand the effervescence of the new wine, and it would run out of the burst wineskins. But the old wine, which has already been decanted several times, is put into old wineskins, and the new wine into new ones. So that one force may be compensated by another equal one. The same happens now. The force of the new doctrine suggests new methods to divulge it. And I, Who am aware of it, make use of them. »

« Thank You, Lord. We are now happy. Pray for us. We are old wineskins. Will we be able to restrain Your force? »

« Yes, because the Baptist shaped you and because his prayers and Mine will make you capable of so much. Go with My peace and tell John that I bless him. »

« But… according to You, is it better for us to stay with the Baptist or with You? »

« As long as there is old wine, drink it, if its flavour is agreeable. Later… as the putrid water which is everywhere will disgust you, you will love the new wine. »

« Do You think that the Baptist will be recaptured? »

« Yes, most certainly. I have already sent him a warning. Go now. Enjoy your John as long as you can and make him happy. Afterwards you will love Me. And you will find it hard… also because no one who has become used to old wine will all of a sudden wish to have new wine. One says: "The old one was better". And in fact I will have a different flavour, which will seem sour to you. But you will relish its vital flavour day by day. Goodbye, friends. May God be with you. »

160. From Naphtali to Giscala. Meeting with Rabbi Gamaliel.

10th May 1945.

« Master! Master! Do You know who is ahead of us? There is rabbi Gamaliel! He is sitting with his servants, in a caravan, in the shade in a wood, sheltered from the winds! They are roasting a lamb. What are we going to do now? »

« What we were going to do, My friends. We will proceed along our way… »

« But Gamaliel is of the Temple. »

« Gamaliel is not wicked. Do not be afraid. I will go ahead. »

« Oh! I am coming too » say His cousins at the same time, as well as all the Galileans and Simon. Only the Iscariot, and to a lesser degree, Thomas, do not seem very anxious to proceed. But they follow the others.

They walk for a few yards along a mountainous road deep set between the wooded slopes of the mountain. The road then bends and opens on to a kind of tableland and crosses it, widening out, and soon after that it becomes once again narrow and winding under a roof of interwoven branches. In a sunny bare patch, which is however shaded by the first leaves of the wood, there are many people under a rich tent, while other people are busy in a comer turning the lamb on the fire.

There is no doubt about it! Gamaliel took very good care of himself. For one person travelling he set a crowd of servants in motion with I do not know how much luggage. He is now sitting in the centre of his tent: a cloth supported by four gilt poles, a kind of canopy under which there are low seats covered with cushions and a table the top of which rests on carved wooden legs. A very fine table-cloth is spread on the table and the servants are laying valuable dishes on it. Gamaliel looks like an idol. With his hands open on his knees, stiff and hieratic, he looks like a statue to me. The servants move round him like large butterflies. But he pays no attention to them. He is pondering, his eyelashes rather lowered on his severe eyes, and when he raises them, his deep very dark pensive eyes are displayed in all their severe beauty at the sides of a long thin nose and under the high rather bald forehead of an elderly man. His forehead is marked by three parallel wrinkles and by a large bluish vein which forms a V shaped angle in the centre of his right temple.

The noise of the oncoming people causes the servants to turn round. Gamaliel also looks round. He sees Jesus approaching ahead of everyone and he makes a gesture of surprise. He stands up and moves to the edge of the tent, but no farther. From there he bows low with his arms crossed on his chest. Jesus replies to him in the same way.

« You are here, Rabbi? » asks Gamaliel.

« I am here, rabbi » replies Jesus.

« May I ask You where You are going? »

« It is a pleasure for Me to tell you. I am coming from Naphtali and I am going to Giscala. »

« On foot? But it is a hard and long road along these mountains. You are tiring Yourself too much. »

« Believe Me. If I am welcomed and listened to, all tiredness disappears. »

« Well, then… allow me to be for once the one who will remove Your fatigue. The lamb is ready. We would have left the leavings to the birds because I never take them with me. You can see that it is no trouble for me to offer food to You and to Your followers. I am friendly to You, Jesus. I do not consider You inferior to me, but greater than I am. »

« I believe you. And I accept your hospitality. »

Gamaliel speaks to a servant who appears to be the highest in authority and who passes on the order. The tent is extended and more seats and dishes for Jesus' disciples are taken off the many mules.

They bring bowls to purify their fingers. Jesus performs the rite with the greatest courtliness, whereas the apostles, on whom Gamaliel is casting sharp sidelong glances, do so as well as they can, with the exception of Simon, Judas of Kerioth, Bartholomew and Matthew, who are more accustomed to Jewish refinements.

Jesus is beside Gamaliel who is alone on one side of the table. The Zealot is in front of Jesus. After the prayer of thanksgiving, which Gamaliel says with calm solemnity, the servants carve the lamb and divide it among the guests and they fill the cups with wine or water sweetened with honey, for those who prefer it.

« We have met by chance, Rabbi. I was never expecting to see You and on the way to Giscala. »

« I am going towards the whole world. »

« Yes, You are the indefatigable Prophet. John is the stationary one, You are the roaming One. »

« It is easier, therefore, for souls to find Me. »

« I would not say so. Your continuous moving about, disorientates them. »

« I disorientate My enemies. But those who want Me, because they love the Word of God, find Me. Not everybody can come to the Master. And the Master, Who wants everybody, goes to everybody, helping thus the good and warding off the conspiracies of those who hate Me. »

« Are You referring to me? I do not hate You. »

« Not to you. But since you are just and frank, you can say that I am speaking the truth. »

« Yes, it is so. But… see… The fact is that we old people do not understand You well. »

« Yes, old Israel does not understand Me well. That is her misfortune… and because of her will. »

« No, no. »

« Yes, rabbi. They are not willing to understand the Master. And who confines himself to that, does evil, but a comparative evil. Many instead deliberately misunderstand and distort My word to harm God. »

« God? He is above human snares. »

« Yes. But every soul that goes astray or is led astray, - and it is misleading to distort My word or My work, both with regard to oneself and to other people, - harms God in the soul which is lost. Every soul that is lost is a wound to God. »

Gamaliel lowers his head, and closing his eyes, he meditates. He then presses his forehead between his long thin fingers, in an involuntary gesture of pain. Jesus watches him. Gamaliel raises his head, opens his eyes, looks at Jesus and says: « But You know that I am not one of those. »

« I know. But you are one of the former. »

« Oh! It is true. But it is not true that I am not willing to understand You. The truth is that Your word stops on my mind and does not penetrate farther. My mind admires it as the word of a learned man and the spirit… »

« And the spirit cannot receive it, Gamaliel, because it is encumbered with too many things. And ruined things. A short while ago, coming here from Naphtali, I passed near a mountain, which juts out from the mountain chain. I was pleased to pass there to see the two beautiful lakes of Gennesaret and Merom, from high above, as eagles and the angels of the Lord see them, to say once again: "Thank You, Creator, for the beauty You grant us". Well, whilst the whole mountain is covered with flowers, green meadows, orchards, fields, woods, and the laurels smell sweet near the olive-trees, preparing the white host of thousands and thousands of flowers and also the strong oak-tree seems to become gentler as it dresses itself with wreaths of clematis and woodbine: over there, there is no flowering, no fertility, neither of man nor of nature. All the efforts of the winds, all the toil of men are frustrated because the Cyclopean ruins of ancient Hatzor encumber everything and between one large stone and another only nettles and bushes can grow and snakes can hide. Gamaliel… »

« I understand. We are ruins, too… I understand the parable, Jesus. But… I cannot… I cannot… do otherwise. The stones are too heavy. »

« One in Whom you believed said to you: "The stones shall vibrate hearing My last words". But why wait for the last words of

the Messiah? Will you not regret that you did not follow Me before? The last!… Sad words, like those of a friend who is dying, and to whom we have to listen, but too late. But My words are more important than the words of a friend. »

« You are right… But I cannot. I am waiting for that sign, that I may believe. »

« When a piece of ground is barren, a thunderbolt is not sufficient to till it. The soil will not receive it. But the stones that cover the soil will receive it. Endeavour at least to remove them, Gamaliel. Otherwise, if they are left where they are, in the depth of your heart, the sign will not lead you to believe. »

Gamaliel is silent, engrossed in thought. The meal is over.

Jesus stands up and says: « I thank You, My God, both for the meal and for the opportunity of speaking to a wise man. And thank you, Gamaliel. »

« Master, do not go away like that. I am afraid You are angry with me. »

« Oh! no! You must believe Me. »

« Then, do not go away. I am going to Hillel's tomb. Would You disdain coming with me? It will not take us long, because I have mules and donkeys for everybody. All we have to do is to take off their pack-saddles, which the servants will carry. And the hardest part of the road will be shortened for You. »

« I do not mind coming with you or going to Hillel's tomb. It is an honour. Let us go. »

Gamaliel gives the necessary instructions, and while they are all busy taking down the temporary dining-room, Jesus and Gamaliel mount two mules and they go ahead, one beside the other, along a quiet steep road, on which the ironshod hooves resound loudly.

Gamaliel is silent. Only twice he asks Jesus whether His saddle is comfortable. Jesus replies and then becomes quiet, engrossed in thought. So much so that He does not notice that Gamaliel, holding his mule back a little, lets Him go forward by a full neck, so that he may study every gesture of His. The eyes of the old rabbi are so keen in penetration that they look like the eyes of a hawk gazing at its prey. But Jesus is not aware of it. He proceeds calmly, following the undulant pace of His mount, He is pensive and yet He observes all the features of what is around Him. He stretches out a hand to pick a hanging bunch of golden cytisus, He smiles at two little birds which are building their nest in a thick juniper, He stops the mule to listen to a blackcap and, as a blessing, He nods assent to the anxious cry by which a wild dove urges her mate to work.

« You love herbs and animals very much, do You not? »

« Yes, very much. They are My living book. Man always has the foundations of faith in front of him. Genesis lives in nature. Now,

one who knows how to see, knows also how to believe. This flower, so sweet in its scent and in the substance of its pendulous corollas, and in such a contrast with this thorny juniper and with that furze, how could it have made itself by itself? And look: that robin redbreast, could it have made itself with that dried bloodstain on its soft throat? And those two doves, where and how have they been able to paint those onyx collars on the veil of their grey feathers? And over there, those two butterflies: a black one with large gold and ruby rings, while the other, with blue stripes, where have they found the gems and ribbons for their wings? And this stream? It is water. Agreed. But where did it come from? Which is the first source of the water-element? Oh! To look means to believe, if one knows how to look. »

« To look means to believe. We look too little at the living Genesis that is in front of us. »

« Too much science, Gamaliel. And too little love, and too little humility. »

Gamaliel sighs and shakes his head.

« Here. We have arrived, Jesus. Hillel is buried over there. Let us dismount and leave our mules here. A servant will take them. »

They dismount tying the two mules to a tree trunk and they turn their steps towards a burial ground which protrudes from the mountain near a large house completely closed up.

« I come here to meditate and prepare myself for the feasts of Israel » says Gamaliel pointing at the house.

« May Wisdom grant you all its light. »

« And here (and Gamaliel points at the sepulchre) to prepare myself to meet death. He was a just man. »

« He was a just man. I will be pleased to pray near his ashes. But, Gamaliel, Hillel must not teach you only to die. He must teach you to live. »

« How, Master? »

« "A man is great when he humbles himself" was his favourite saying… »

« How do You know if You have not met him? »

« I did meet him… in any case, even if I had never met Hillel, the rabbi, personally, I know his thought, because there is nothing I ignore of human thoughts. »

Gamaliel lowers his head and whispers:

« God only can say that. » « God and His Word. Because the Word knows the Thought and the Thought knows the Word, and loves Him, communicating with Him and granting Him all His treasures, to make Him participate in Himself. Love fastens the bonds and makes one Perfection of them. It is the Trinity that loves Itself, is divinely formed, generates, proceeds and is completed. Every holy thought was born in the Perfect Mind, and is reflected in the mind of the just

man. Can the Word therefore ignore the thoughts of the just, since they are the thoughts of the Thought? »

They pray near the closed sepulchre. They pray for a long time. The disciples and then the servants reach them, the former on horseback, the latter carrying the luggage. But they stop at the edge of the meadow, beyond which is the sepulchre. The prayer is over.

« Goodbye, Gamaliel. Ascend as Hillel did. »

« What do You mean? »

« Ascend. He is ahead of you because he knew how to believe more humbly than you. Peace be with you. »

161. The Grandson of Eli, a Pharisee of Capernaum, is Cured.

11th May 1945.

Jesus is about to arrive in Capernaum by boat. The sun is almost setting and the lake is sparkling with red and yellow hues.

While the two boats are manoeuvring to draw near the coast, John says: « I will go to the fountain and bring You some water for Your thirst. »

« The water is good here » exclaims Andrew.

« Yes, it is good. And your love makes it even better for Me. »

« I will take the fish home. The women will prepare them for supper. After, will You speak to us and to them? »

« Yes, Peter, I will. »

« It is more pleasant now to come back home. Heretofore we looked like so many nomads. But now, with the women, there is more order, more love. And then! When I see Your Mother, I no longer feel tired. I don't know… »

Jesus smiles and is quiet.

The boat grounds on the shingly shore. John and Andrew, who are wearing short undertunics, jump into the water and with the help of some young men they beach the boat and place a board as a wharf. Jesus is the first to come off, and He waits until the second boat is beached, in order to be together with all His disciples. Then, walking with slow steps they go towards the fountain. A natural fountain of spring water, that wells up just outside the village, and plentiful, cold and silvery runs into a stone basin. The water is so limpid that it induces people to drink it. John, who has run ahead with an amphora, is already back and he hands the dripping pitcher to Jesus, Who has a long drink.

« How thirsty You were, my Master! And I, foolishly, did not get any water. »

« It does not matter, John. It is all over » and He caresses him.

They are about to come back when they see Simon Peter arrive,

running as fast as he can. He had gone home to take his fish. « Master! Master! » he shouts panting. « The village is in turmoil, because the only grandchild of Eli, the Pharisee, is about to die from a snakebite. He had gone with the old man, and against his mother's wishes, to their olive-grove. Eli was overseeing some works, while the child was playing near the roots of an old olivetree. He put his hand into a hole, hoping to find a lizard, and he found a snake. The old man seems to have become distraught. The child's mother, who incidentally hates her father-in-law, quite rightly as it happens, is accusing him of being a murderer. The boy is getting colder and colder every moment. Although relatives, they did not love one another! And they could not have been more closely related! »

« Family grudge is never a good thing! »

« Well, Master, I say that the snakes did not love the snake: Eli. And they have killed the little snake. I am sorry that he saw me and he shouted after me: "Is the Master there?". And I am sorry for the little one. He was a nice boy and it is not his fault that he was the grandson of a Pharisee. »

« Of course, it is not his fault. »

They walk towards the village and they see a crowd of people, shouting and weeping, coming towards them, with the elderly Eli in front of them.

« He has found us! Let us go back! »

« Why? That old man is suffering. »

« That old man hates You, remember that. He is one of Your first and fiercest accusers at the Temple. »

« I remember that I am Mercy. »

Old Eli, unkempt and upset, with untidy garments, runs towards Jesus, his arms outstretched, and drops at His feet shouting: « Mercy! Mercy! Forgive me. Do not avenge Yourself on an innocent boy for my harshness. You are the only one who can save him! God, Your Father, has brought You here. I believe in You! I venerate You! I love You! Forgive me! I have been unfair! A liar! But I have been punished. These hours alone serve as a punishment. Help me! It's the boy! The only son of my dead son. And she is accusing me of killing him » and he weeps striking his head on the ground rhythmically.

« Come on! Do not cry like that. Do you want to die without having to look after your grandson any more? »

« He is dying! He is dying! Perhaps he is already dead. Let me die, too. Don't let me live in that empty house! Oh! My sad last days! »

« Eli, get up and let us go… »

« You… are You really coming? But do You know who I am? »

« An unhappy man. Let us go. »

The old man gets up and says: « I will go ahead, but run, run, be

quick! » And I he goes away, very quickly, because of the desperation piercing his heart.

« But, Lord, do You think that You will change him? Oh! what a wasted miracle! Let that little snake die! Also the old man will die broken-hearted… and there will be one less on Your way… God has seen to it… »

« Simon! To tell you the truth, you are now the snake. » Jesus severely repels Peter, who lowers his head, and He goes on.

Near the largest square in Capernaum there is a beautiful house before which the crowds are making a dreadful noise… Jesus turns His steps towards it and is about to arrive when the old man comes out from the wide open door, followed by a ruffled woman, who is holding in her arms a little agonizing child. The poison has already paralyzed his organs and death is near. The little wounded hand is hanging down with the mark of the bite at the root of his thumb. Eli does nothing but shout: « Jesus! Jesus! »

And Jesus, squeezed and overwhelmed by the crowds who hamper His movements, takes the little hand to His mouth, sucks the wound, then breathes on the waxen face and the glassy half closed eyes. He then straightens Himself up: « Here » He says, « the child will now wake up. Do not frighten him with your expressions which are so upset. He will already be afraid when he remembers the snake. »

In fact the boy, whose face colours up, opens his mouth in a big yawn, rubs his eyes, opens them and is surprised at being among so many people. He then remembers, and is about to run away, with such a sudden leap, that he would have fallen had Jesus not been ready to receive him in His arms.

« Good, good! What are you afraid of? Look how beautiful the sun is! Over there is the lake, your house, and your mother and grandfather are here. »

« And the snake? »

« It is no longer here. But I am. »

« You. Yes… » The child thinks… and then, in the innocent voice of truth, he says: « My grandfather used to tell me to say "cursed" to You. But I will not say it. I love You, I do. »

« I? I said that? The little one is raving. Do not believe him, Master. I have always respected You. » As fear passes away, the old nature comes to surface again.

« Words are and are not of value. I take them for what they are. Goodbye, little one, goodbye, woman, goodbye, Eli. Love one another and love Me, if you can. » Jesus turns round and goes toward the house where He lives.

« Why, Master, did You not work a striking miracle? You should have ordered the poison to go out of the little one. You should have shown Yourself as being God. Instead You sucked the poison like

any poor man. » Judas of Kerioth is not very happy. He wanted something sensational.

Also others are of the same opinion. « You should have crushed that enemy of Yours, with Your power. You heard him, eh! He became poisonous again at once… »

« His poison is of no importance. But you must consider that if I had done what you wanted Me to do, he would have said that I was helped by Beelzebub. His ruined soul can still acknowledge My power as a doctor. But no more. A miracle leads to faith only those who are already on that way. But in those without humility faith always proves that there is humility in a soul - it leads to blasphemy. It is better therefore to avoid that danger by having recourse to forms of human appearance. The incurable misery is the misery of the incredulous. No means will eliminate it because no miracle induces them to believe or to be good. It does not matter. I fulfil My task. They follow their ill fate. »

« Why did You do it, then? »

« Because I am Goodness and because no one may say that I was vindictive with My enemies and provocative with provokers. I am heaping coal on their heads. And they are handing it to Me that I may heap it. Be good, Judas of Simon. Endeavour not to behave as they do! And that is all. Let us go to My Mother. She will be happy to hear that I cured a child. »

162. Jesus in the House in Capernaum after the Miracle on Elisha.

13th May 1945.

From a vegetable garden, which is beginning to flourish in all its furrows, Jesus enters a very large kitchen where the two elder Maries (Mary of Clopas and Mary Salome) are cooking the supper.

« Peace to you! »

« Oh! Jesus! Master! » The two women turn round and greet Him, one holding in her hands a lovely fish, which she is gutting, the other still holding a pot full of vegetables, which are boiling, and which she has just removed from the fire to see whether they were cooked. Their kind withered faces, flushed by the fire and work, smile out of joy and seem to become younger and lovelier in their happiness.

« It will be ready in a moment, Jesus. Are You tired? You must be hungry » says aunt Mary, who has the familiarity of a relative and loves Jesus, I think, more than her own children.

« Not more than usual. But I will certainly eat with relish the good food that you and Mary have prepared for Me. And the others will do the same. Here they are coming. »

« Your Mother is upstairs. You know! Simon came… Oh! I am as

happy as a lark this evening! No. Not really because… You know when I would be as happy as a king. »

« Yes, I know. » Jesus draws His aunt close to Himself and kisses her forehead and then says: « I know your desire and your sinless envy of Salome. But the day will come when you will be able to say like her: "All my sons belong to Jesus". I am going to My Mother. »

He goes out, climbs the little outside staircase and goes on to the terrace, which covers a full half of the house, whereas the other half is taken up by a very large room, from which come out the strong voices of men, and at intervals, Mary's gentle voice, the limpid virginal voice of a girl, which years have not affected, the same voice that said: « I am the handmaid of the Lord » and which sang lullabies to Her Baby.

Jesus goes near noiselessly, smiling because He hears His Mother say: « My home is My Son. I do not suffer being away from Nazareth, except when He is away. But if He is near Me… oh! I need nothing else. And I am not afraid for My house… You are there… »

« Oh! Look, there is Jesus! » shouts Alphaeus of Sarah, who facing the door, is the first to see Jesus.

« Yes, here I am. Peace to you all. Mother! » He kisses His Mother on Her forehead and is kissed by Her. He then turns to the unexpected guests, who are His cousin Simon, Alphaeus of Sarah, Isaac the shepherd and one Joseph who was received by Jesus at Emmaus after the verdict of the Sanhedrin.

« We went to Nazareth and Alphaeus told us that we had to come here. We came. And Alphaeus wanted to come with us, and also Simon » explains Isaac.

« I could not believe I was coming » says Alphaeus.

« I also wanted to see You, stay a little time with You and with Mary » concludes Simon.

« And I am very happy to be with you. I did the right thing in not staying any longer as the people of Kedesh desired, where I arrived coming from Gherghesa to Merom and going round the other side of the lake. »

« Is that where You came from? »

« Yes, I visited the places where I had already been and even farther away. I went as far as Giscala. »

« What a long road! »

« But what a great harvest! Do you know, Isaac. We were the guests of rabbi Gamaliel. He was very kind to us. And then I met the synagogue leader of the Clear Water. He is coming, too. I entrust him to you. And then… and then I gained three disciples… » Jesus smiles frankly, blissfully.

« Who are they? »

« A little old man at Korazim. I helped him some time ago, and the poor man, who is a true Israelite without prejudice, to show Me his love, has worked his area, as a perfect ploughman works the soil. The other is a boy, five years old, perhaps a little more. Intelligent and brave. I spoke also to him the first time I was at Bethsaida and he remembered better than adults. The third is an old leper. I cured him near Korazim one evening a long time ago and then I left him. I have now found him again, announcing Me on the mountains in Naphtali. And to confirm his words he shows what is left of his hands, cured but partly impaired, and his feet, which have also been cured but are deformed, and yet he walks a long way. People realise how ill he was when they see what is left of him and they believe his words which are dressed with tears of gratitude. It was easy for Me to speak there, because there was one who had already made Me known and had led other people to believe in Me. And I was able to work many miracles. So much can be done by one who really believes… »

Alphaeus nods assent without speaking, continuously absentminded, while Simon lowers his head under the implicit reproach, and Isaac rejoices wholeheartedly because of the joy of his Master, Who is about to tell of the miracle worked shortly before on Eli's little grandchild.

But supper is ready, and the women, with Mary, prepare the table in the large room and take the dishes there and then withdraw downstairs. Only the men remain and Jesus offers, blesses and hands out the portions.

But only a few mouthfuls of food had been taken, when Susanna goes upstairs saying: « Eli has come with servants and many gifts. But he would like to speak to You. »

« I will come at once, or better still, tell him to come up. »

Susanna goes out and comes back shortly afterwards with old Eli and two servants who are carrying a large basket. Behind them the women, with the exception of the Most Holy Mary, are casting curious glances.

« God be with You, my benefactor » greets the Pharisee.

« And with you, Eli. Come in. What do you want? Is your grandson not well again? »

« Oh! He is very well. He is jumping in the kitchen garden like a little kid. Before I was so dumbfounded and bewildered that I failed to fulfil my duty. I wish to show You my gratitude and I beg You not to refuse the little I am offering You. A little food for You and Your friends. It is the produce of my fields. And… I would like… I would like to have You at my table tomorrow. To thank You once again and honour You, with my friends. Do not refuse, Master. I would understand that You do not love me and that if You cured Elisha, it was only for his sake, not mine. »

« Thank you. But no gifts were needed. »

« Every great and learned man accepts them. It's the custom. »

« And I do. But I accept very willingly one gift only, nay, I look for it. »

« Which is? If I can, I will give it to You. »

« Your hearts. Your thoughts. Give Me them. For your own good. »

« But I consecrate mine to You, blessed Jesus' Can You doubt it? Yes, I… I did You wrong. But now I have understood. I have also heard of the death of Doras, who offended You… Why are You smiling, Master? »

« I was remembering something. »

« I thought You did not believe what I was saying. »

« Oh! no. I know that you were moved by Doras' death. Even more than by this evening's miracle. But do not be afraid of God, if you have really understood, and if from now on you wish to be My friend. »

« I can see that You really are a prophet. It is true, I was more afraid… I was coming to You more out of fear of punishment like Doras', than because of the accident. And this evening I said: "There you are. The punishment has come. And it is even more severe because it did not strike the old oak in its own life, but in its love, in its joy for life, by striking the little oak, in which I rejoiced". I understood that it would have been just as it was for Doras… »

« You understood that it would have been just. But you did not believe yet in Him Who is good. »

« You are right. But it is no longer so. Now I have understood. So, are You coming to my house tomorrow? »

« Eli, I had decided to leave at dawn. But I will postpone My departure by one day, that you may not think that I despise you. I will be with you tomorrow. »

« Oh! You really are good. I will always remember it. »

« Goodbye, Eli. Thank you for everything. This fruit is beautiful, and the cheese must be as tasty as butter, and the wine certainly very good. But you could have given everything to the poor in My name. »

« There is something for them, if You wish so, at the bottom, under the rest. It was an offering for You. »

« Well, we will distribute it tomorrow together, before or after the meal, as you prefer. May the night be a peaceful one for you, Eli. »

« And for You. Goodbye » and he goes away with his servants.

Peter, who with all the mimicry of which he is capable, has pulled out the contents of the basket, to hand it back to the servants, puts the purse on the table in front of Jesus and says, as if he were concluding an internal speech: « And it will be the first time that the

old owl gives alms. »

« It is true » confirms Matthew. « I was greedy, but he surpassed me. He doubled his capital by usury. »

« Well… if he mends his ways… It's a good thing, is it not? » says Isaac.

« It certainly is a good thing. And it appears to be so » state Philip and Bartholomew.

« Old Eli a convert! Ah! Ah! » Peter laughs heartily.

Simon, the cousin, who has been pensive all the time, says: « Jesus, I would like… I would like to follow You. Not like these. But at least as the women do. Let me join my mother and Yours. They are all coming… I, I, a relative… I do not expect to have a place amongst the disciples. But at least… at least as a good friend… »

« May God bless you, my son! How long have I been waiting to hear you say that! » shouts Mary of Alphaeus.

« Come. I reject no one, neither do I force anyone. I do not even exact everything from everybody. I take what you can give Me. It is a good thing that the women are not always alone, when we go to places unknown to them. Thank you, brother. »

« I am going to tell Mary » says Simon's mother and she adds: « She is down in Her little room, praying. She will be happy. »

… It is rapidly growing dark. They light a lamp to go down the staircase which is already dark in twilight, and some go to the right, some to the left, to rest.

Jesus goes out, and walks to the shore of the lake. The village is quiet, the streets are deserted, there is no one on the shore or on the lake in the moonless night. There are only stars to be seen in the sky and the murmur of the surf to be heard on the shingly shore. Jesus goes on board the beached boat, sits down, lays one arm on the edge and rests His head on it. I do not know whether He is thinking or praying.

Matthew approaches Him very quietly: « Master, are You sleeping? » he asks in a low voice.

« No, I am thinking. Come here beside Me, since you are not sleeping. »

« I thought You were upset and I followed You. Are You not satisfied with Your day's work? You touched Eli's heart, You acquired Simon of Alphaeus as a disciple… »

« Matthew, you are not a simple man like Peter and John. You are astute and learned. Be also frank. Would you be happy because of those conquests? »

« But… Master… They are always better than I am and You told me, on that day, that You were very happy because of my conversion… »

« Yes. But you were really converted. And you were genuine in

your evolution towards Good. You came to Me without any elaboration of thought, you came through the will of your spirit. But Eli is not like that… neither is Simon. Only the surface of the former has been touched: the man-Eli is shocked. Not the spirit Eli. That is always the same. When the excitement caused by the miracles on Doras and his little grandchild is over, he will be the same Eli as yesterday and as always. Simon!… he, too, is nothing but a man. If he had seen Me insulted instead of honoured, he would have pitied Me, and as always, he would have left Me. This evening he heard that a little old man, a child, a leper can do what he, although a relative, cannot do; he saw the pride of a Pharisee bend before Me and he decided: "Also I". But those conversions brought about by the spur of human evaluations, are not the ones that make Me happy. On the contrary, they dishearten Me. Stay with Me, Matthew. It is not a moonlight night, but at least the stars are twinkling. In My heart this evening there is nothing but tears. Let your company be the star of your distressed Master… »

« Master, if I can… You can imagine! The trouble is that I am always a poor miserable man, a good for-nothing. I have sinned too much to be able to please You. I am not good at speaking. I do not yet know how to say the new, pure, holy words, now that I have left my old language of fraud and lust. And I am afraid I will never be able to speak to You and about You. »

« No, Matthew. You are a man, with all the painful experience of a man. You are the one, who, having tasted mud and tasting now the celestial honey, can tell the two flavours, and give their true analysis, and understand and make your fellow creatures understand now and later. And they will believe you, because you are the man, the poor man, who by his own will, becomes the just man dreamt of by God. Let Me, the Man-God, lean on you, the mankind I have loved to the extent of leaving Heaven for you, and dying for you. »

« No, not to die. Don't tell me that You are dying for me! »

« Not for you, Matthew, but for all the Matthews of the world and centuries. Embrace Me, Matthew, kiss your Christ, for yourself and for everybody. Relieve My tiredness of an unappreciated Redeemer. I relieved you of your tiredness of a sinner. Wipe away My tears, because My bitterness, Matthew, is that I have been so little understood. »

« Oh! Lord, Lord! Yes. Of course!… » and Matthew, sitting near the Master and clasping Him with one arm, comforts Him with his love…

163. Dinner in the House of Eli, the Pharisee of Capernaum.

14th May 1945.

Eli's house is very busy today. Servants and maidservants go and come and amongst them there is little Elisha, a lively little child. Then there are two stately personages and two more. I know the former two, as they are the ones who went with Eli to Matthew's house. I do not know the latter two, but I hear them being called Samuel and Joachim. Jesus comes last with the Iscariot.

After solemn reciprocal salutations, there is the question: « Only with this one? And the others? »

« The others are around the country. They will come in the evening. »

« Oh! I am sorry. I thought it was… True, last night I invited only You, meaning all the rest with You. Now I was afraid they might be offended, or… they might disdain to come to my house, owing to past light disagreements… eh! eh! » The old man laughs…

« Oh! no! My disciples do not nourish proud touchiness or incurable grudge. »

« Of course! of course! Very well. Let us go in then. »

The usual purification ceremony and then they go into the dining room, which opens on to a large yard, where the first roses bring a happy note.

Jesus caresses little Elisha, who is playing in the yard and who has only four little red marks on his hand from the past trouble. He does not even remember his past fear, but he remembers Jesus and he wants to kiss Him and be kissed by Him, with the spontaneity of children. With his little arms round Jesus' neck, he speaks to Him through His hair, confiding that when he is big he will go to Him and asks: « Do You want me? »

« I want everybody. Be good and you will come with Me. »

The little boy goes away bounding about.

They sit at the table and Eli wishes to be so perfect that he puts Jesus beside him and on the other side Judas, who is thus between Eli and Simon, as Jesus is between Eli and Uriah.

The meal begins. Their conversation at first is inconsequential. It then becomes interesting. And since wounds are sore and chains are heavy, the talk turns to the eternal topic of the enslavement of Palestine by Rome. I do not know whether it was done deliberately or without any evil purpose. I know that the five Pharisees complain of the new Roman abuses, as of a sacrilege, and they want to get Jesus interested in the discussion.

« You know! They want to pry into our income, down to the last coin. And as they have realised that we meet in the synagogue to speak about that and about them, now they are threatening to come in, without any respect. I am afraid they will enter also the

houses of priests, one of these days! » shouts Joachim.

« What do You say about that? Do You not feel disgusted? » asks Eli.

Jesus replies to the direct question: « As an Israelite yes, as a man no. »

« Why that distinction? I do not understand. Are You two in one? »

« No. But there is in Me flesh and blood: that is, the animal. And there is the spirit. The spirit of an Israelite, compliant with the Law, suffers because of such violations. The flesh and blood do not suffer, because I lack the goad that hurts you. »

« Which one? »

« Interest. You said that you meet in the synagogues to speak also of business without fear of intrusive ears. And you are afraid you will no longer be able to do so and consequently you are afraid you may not be able to conceal even a small coin from the tax-collectors and that you may be taxed exactly according to your assets. I possess nothing. I live on the charity of My neighbours and on My love for them. I have neither gold, nor fields, nor vineyards, nor houses, except My Mother's house in Nazareth, which is so small and poor as to be ignored by the tax-assessors. Consequently I am not afraid that they may find out that My statement of income is untrue and that I may be fined and punished. All I possess is the Word that God gave Me and that I give. But it is such a sublime thing that man has no means whatsoever to affect it. »

« But if You were in our position what would You do? »

« Well, do not take it amiss if I tell you quite frankly My opinion, which is in contrast to yours. I solemnly tell you that I would behave differently. »

« How? »

« Not offending against the holy truth. It is always a sublime virtue, even when it is applied to such human things as taxes. »

« But… then… ! How they would fleece us! But You are not considering that we own a lot and we would have to pay a lot! »

« You have said it. God has granted you a lot. In proportion you must give a lot. Why behave so badly, as unfortunately many do, so that poor people are taxed out of proportion? We are aware of the situation. How many taxes there are in Israel, our taxes, which are unjust! The great, who already have so much, benefit by them. Whereas they are the despair of poor people who have to pay them and have to starve to find the money. Love for our neighbour does not recommend that. We Israelites should be so thoughtful as to take upon us the burden of the poor. »

« You are saying that because You are poor, too. »

« No, Uriah. I am saying that because it is justice. Why has Rome been able to oppress us thus? Because we sinned and we are divided by hatred. The rich hate the poor, the poor hate the rich. Because

there is no justice and the enemy takes advantage of the situation and has subdued us. »

« You have mentioned various reasons… Are there any more? »

« I would not like to go against the truth by twisting the nature of a place consecrated to religion and making it a sure shelter for human things. »

« Are You reproaching us? »

« No. I am replying to you. Listen to your own consciences. You are masters and therefore… »

« I would say that it is time to rise, to rebel, to punish the invader and restore our kingdom. »

« True, true! You are right, Simon. But the Messiah is here. He must do it » replies Eli.

« But the Messiah, for the time being, forgive me, Jesus, is only Goodness. He advises everything, except to rebel. We will… »

« Listen, Simon. Remember the book of Kings. Saul was at Gilgal, the Philistines were at Michmash, the people were afraid and dispersed, the prophet Samuel was not coming. Saul decided to precede the servant of God and offer the sacrifice himself. Remember the answer that Samuel, on his arrival, gave to the imprudent Saul: "You have acted like a fool and you have not carried out the order that the Lord had commanded you. If you had not done that, now the Lord would have confirmed your sovereignty over Israel for ever. But now your sovereignty will not last". An untimely and proud action served neither the king nor the people. God knows the hour. Man does not. God knows the means, man does not. Leave things to God and deserve His help by means of holy behaviour. My Kingdom is not a kingdom of rebellion and ferocity. But it will be established. It is not a preserve for a few people. It will be universal. Blessed are those who will come to it, who are not led into error by My poor appearance, according to the spirit of the world, and who will see the Saviour in Me. Be not afraid. I shall be King. The King who came from Israel. The King who will extend His Kingdom all over Mankind. But you, masters of Israel, must not misunderstand My words and those of the Prophets who announce Me. No human kingdom, no matter how powerful it may be, is universal and eternal. The Prophets say that Mine will be such. That should enlighten you on the truth and spirituality of My Kingdom. I leave you. But I have a request to make to Eli. This is your purse. In a shelter of Simon of Jonas there are some poor people who have come from everywhere. Come with Me to give them the alms of love. Peace be with you all. »

« Stay a little longer » beg the Pharisees.

« I cannot. There are people, whose bodies and hearts are diseased, and they are waiting to be comforted. Tomorrow I will be going away. I want everyone to see Me leave without being disappointed. »

« Master, I… am old and tired. Please go in my name. You have Judas of Simon with You, and we know him well. Do it Yourself. God be with You. »

Jesus goes out with Judas who, as soon as they are in the square, says: « The old viper! What did he mean? »

« Forget about it! Or better still: just think that he wanted to praise you. »

Impossible, Master! Those mouths never praise who does good. I mean, never sincerely. And with regard to his coming!… It is because he loathes the poor and is afraid of their curses. He has tortured the poor people here so often. I can swear it without any fear. And therefore…

« Be good, Judas. Be good. Let God judge. »

164. Towards the Retreat on the Mountain before the Election of the Apostles.

15th May 1945.

The boats of Peter and John are sailing on the placid lake, followed by, I think, all the boats that exist on the shores of Tiberias, because they are so numerous, large and small, coming and going, endeavouring to reach and overtake the boat in which Jesus is and then forming a long line behind it. Prayers, entreaties, requests and outcries can be heard over the blue waves.

Jesus promises, replies and blesses. In His boat there is also Mary and the mother of James and Judas, whereas in the other boat there is Mary Salome with her son John and Susanna. « Yes, I will come back. I promise you. Be good. Remember My words, so that you may connect them with the ones I will tell you later. I will not be away long. Do not be selfish. I have come also for other people. Be good! You will hurt yourselves. Yes, I will pray for you. You will always have Me with you. The Lord be with you. Of course, I will remember your tears and you will be comforted. You must hope and have faith. »

And thus, blessing and promising while the boat is moving, they reach the shore. It is not Tiberias, but a tiny little village, a handful of poor, almost forlorn houses. Jesus and the disciples disembark and the boats handled by the servants and Zebedee go back. Also the other boats imitate them, but many of the people in them disembark and want to follow Jesus at all costs. Among them I can see Isaac with his two proteges: Joseph and Timoneus. I do not recognise anybody else amongst the many people of all ages, from youngsters to old people.

Jesus leaves the village, the few poorly dressed inhabitants of which remain quite indifferent. Jesus has given alms to them and then reaches the main road. He stops. « And now, let us part » He

says. « Mother, You with Mary and Salome will go to Nazareth. Susanna can go to Cana. I will soon come back. You know what is to be done. God be with you! »

But for His Mother He has a special greeting, a salutation all smiles and also when Mary kneels down, setting an example to the others, in order to be blessed, Jesus smiles most kindly. The women, with Alphaeus of Sarah and Simon, go towards their town.

Jesus addresses those who have stayed: « I leave you, but I am not sending you away. I leave you for a short time, as I am retiring with My disciples to those mountain gorges, which you can see over there. Who wishes to wait for Me, should do so here on this plain. Those who do not wish to wait, can go home. I am retiring to pray because I am on the eve of great events. Those who love the cause of the Father should pray, joining Me in spirit. Peace be with you, My children. Isaac, you know what you have to do. I bless you, My little shepherd. » Jesus smiles at emaciated Isaac, who is now the shepherd of men gathering round him.

Jesus is now walking away from the lake, turning His steps decidedly towards a gorge between the hills, which stretch in parallel lines, I would say, from the lake westward. A little but very noisy foamy stream runs down between one rocky rugged hill and the next one, which is so steep that it resembles a fjord. Above the stream there is the wild mountain with ugly looking plants, which have grown in all directions, wherever they could, in the crevices between stones. A very narrow steep path climbs up the more rugged hill. And Jesus takes it.

The disciples follow Him with difficulty, in single file, in dead silence. Only when Jesus stops to let them recover their breath, where the path, which looks like a scratch on the impervious mountain side, widens out, they look at one another without uttering a word. Their glances say: « But where is He taking us? », but they do not speak. They only look at one another more and more desolately as they see Jesus resume walking up the wild gorge, with its many caves, crevices and rocks, where it is very difficult to walk, also because of the bramble and thorny bushes, which catch their clothes on all sides, and scratch them and cause them to stumble and hurt their faces. Also the younger ones, laden with heavy sacks, have lost their good humour.

At last Jesus stops and says: « We shall stop here for a week in prayer, to prepare you for a great event. That is why I wanted to be isolated in this desert place, away from all roads and villages. The grottoes here have already been useful to men in the past. They will be useful also to you. The water here is cool and plentiful, whereas the earth is dry. We have enough bread and food for the time we shall be staying. Those who last year were with Me in the

desert, know how I lived there. This is a royal palace compared with that place, and the season, which is now mild, is not affected by the icy bitterness of frost or the burning heat of the sun. You may, therefore, stay here cheerfully. Perhaps we shall never again be all together like this and all alone. This retreat must unite you, making not twelve men of you, but one only institution.

Are you not saying anything? Are you not asking any questions? Lay on that rock the loads that you are carrying and throw down the valley the other load that you have in your hearts: your humanity.

I have brought you here to speak to your spirits, to nourish your spirits, to make you spiritual. I shall not speak many words. I have told you so many in approximately one year that I have been with you! Enough of that. If I should have to change you by means of words, I would have to keep you ten years… one hundred years, and you would still be imperfect. It is now time that I make use of you. And to make use of you, I must form you. I will have recourse to the great medicine, to the great weapon: to prayer. I have always prayed for you. But now I want you to pray by yourselves. I will not yet teach you My prayer. But I will tell you how to pray and what prayer is. It is the conversation of sons with the Father, of spirits with the Spirit, an open, warm, trustful, quiet and frank conversation. Prayer is everything: it is confession, knowledge of ourselves, repentance, a promise to ourselves and to God, a request to God, all done at the feet of the Father. And it cannot be done in a turmoil, among distractions, unless one is a giant in prayer. And even giants suffer from the clash with the noise of the world in their time of prayer. You are not giants, but pygmies. You are but infants in your spirits. You are deficient in your spirits. You will reach here the age of spiritual reason. The rest will come later.

In the morning, at midday and in the evening, we shall gather together to pray with the old words of Israel and to break our bread, then each of you will go back to his grotto, in front of God and of his soul, in front of what I told you in regard to your mission and to your capabilities. Weigh yourselves, listen to yourselves, make up your minds. I am telling you for the last time. And after you will have to be perfect, as much as you can, without tiredness and without your humanity. Then you will no longer be Simon of Jonah and Judas of Simon. No longer Andrew or John, Matthew or Thomas. But you will be My ministers.

Go. Each by himself. I shall be in that cave. I shall always be present. But do not come without a good reason. You must learn to do things by yourselves and be all by yourselves. Because I solemnly tell you that a year ago we were about to become acquainted with one another, and in two years' time we shall be parting. Woe betide you and Me if you have not learned to act by yourselves.

God be with you.

Judas, John, take the foodstuffs into My cave, that one. They must last and I will hand them out. »

« They are not enough!… » objects someone.

« They are sufficient not to die. A too full stomach makes the spirit dull. I want to elevate you and not make you dead weights. »

165. The Election of the Twelve Apostles.

16th May 1945.

It is dawning and the soft light whitens the mountains and seems to soften the wild mountain side. Only the gurgling sound of the foamy stream at the bottom of the valley can be heard, a sound which becomes a strange noise, when echoed by the mountain and its many caves. Where the disciples have rested, there is some gentle rustling among the leaves and the herbs: the first birds to awake, or the last night-birds returning to their hiding places. A group of hares or wild rabbits, gnawing at a low bush of blackberries, run away frightened by a falling stone. Then they go back cautiously, moving their ears in all directions to pick up every sound and when they see that everything is peaceful, they return to the bush. All the leaves and stones are wet with dew and in the wood there is a strong smell of moss, mint and marjoram.

A redbreast flies down to the edge of a cave, the roof of which is formed by a huge protruding stone and standing up straight on its very thin legs, ready to fly away, it moves its little head round, looks into the cave and at the ground, chirping inquisitively and… gluttonously, because of some bread crumbs on the ground. But it does not make up its mind to fly down until it sees that it has been preceded by a big blackbird, which proceeds hopping sideways and is extremely comical in its urchin-like attitude with its profile of an old notary, who wants only a pair of spectacles, to be the complete dignitary. The robin then flies down, hopping behind its daring fellow creature, which now and again thrusts its yellow beak into the moist ground, in archaeological research… for food and then proceeds further, after whistling, just like a real little rascal. The redbreast stuffs itself with the little bread crumbs and is amazed when it sees the blackbird, which had confidently gone into the silent cave, come out of it with a cheese-rind, which it knocks repeatedly against a stone to break it up and make a sumptuous meal of it. It goes back in again, has a look round, and not finding anything else, it whistles scoffingly and flies away to complete its song on the top of an oak-tree, in the blue morning sky. Also the robin flies away, because of a noise from the interior of the cave… and it perches on a thin bough that dangles loosely.

Jesus goes to the entrance of His cave and crumbles some bread,

calling the little birds very gently, by means of a modulated whistle, which is a very good imitation of the twittering of many birds. He then moves away, climbing higher up and resting against a rock in order not to frighten His little friends, which soon fly down: the robin being the first and then many more of various kinds. Jesus' stillness and also His look are such that after a short time many birds are hopping only a few inches from Him. I like to believe, also because of my own experience, that also the most distrustful animals go near people when their instinct tells them that they are not enemies but friends. The redbreast, which is now satisfied, flies to the top of the rock against which Jesus is leaning, it rests on a very thin branch of clematis, swings above Jesus' head and seems to be anxious to descend upon His fair hair or His shoulder. The meal is now over. The rising sun gilds the mountain tops and then the highest branches of the trees, whereas down below, the valley is still in the dim dawn light. The little birds, satisfied and full, fly towards the sun and sing at the top of their voices.

« And now let us go and wake up these other children of Mine » says Jesus, and He walks down, as His cave is the highest one, and He enters the various caves calling the sleeping apostles by their names.

Simon, Bartholomew, Philip, James and Andrew reply at once. Matthew, Peter and Thomas take a little longer to reply. And while Judas Thaddeus goes to meet Jesus as soon as he sees Him appear at the entrance of his grotto, as he is already ready and wide awake, the other cousin, the Iscariot and John are fast asleep, so much so that Jesus has to shake them on their beds, made with tree branches and leaves, in order to wake them up.

John, the last one to be called, is so sound asleep, that he does not realise Who is calling him, and in the haze of his interrupted sleep, he whispers: « Yes, mother, I am coming at once… » But he turns round on his other side.

Jesus smiles, sits on the rustic mattress made of foliage picked in the wood, He bends and kisses the cheek of John, who opens his eyes and is dumbfounded at seeing Jesus. He sits up and says: « Do you need me? Here I am. »

« No. I woke you up as I did the others. But you thought it was your mother. So I kissed you, as mothers do. »

John, half naked in his undertunic, because he used his tunic and mantle as bed covers, clasps Jesus' neck and lays his head between Jesus' shoulder and cheek saying: « Oh! You are much more than a mother! I left her for You, but I would not leave You for her! She bore me to the earth. You are bearing me to Heaven. Oh! I know! »

« What do you know more than the others? »

« What the Lord told me in this cave. See, I never came to You and

I think my companions said it was due to indifference and pride. But I am not concerned with what they think. I know that You know the truth. I was not coming to Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Son of God, but to what You are in the bosom of the Fire that is the eternal Love of the Most Holy Trinity, its Nature, its Essence, its Real Essence - oh! I cannot tell, however, what I have understood in this dark gloomy cavern that has become so full of light for me, in this cold grotto where I have been burnt by a featureless fire that has descended into the depth of my being and has inflamed me with a sweet martyrdom, in this silent cave, which has, however, sung celestial truths to me - but to what You are, the Second Person of the ineffable Mystery, which is God and which I penetrated because God has drawn me to Himself and I have always had Him with me. And I have poured all my desires, all my tears, all my requests on Your divine bosom, Word of God. Amongst the many words I have heard from You, there never was one so comprehensive as the one You told me here, You, God the Son, You, God like the Father, You, God like the Holy Spirit, You, centre of the Trinity… oh! perhaps I am blaspheming, but that is what I think, because if You were not the love of the Father and the love for the Father, then the Love, the Divine Love would be missing, and the Divinity would no longer be Trine and it would lack the most becoming attribute of God: His love! Oh! I have so much in here, but it is like water gurgling against a dam and cannot flow out… and I seem to be dying of it, so violent and sublime is the turmoil in my heart, since I have understood You… but I would not like to be freed of it for the whole world… Let me die of that love, my sweet God! » John smiles and weeps, panting, inflamed by his love, relaxing on Jesus' chest, as if he were exhausted by his ardour. And Jesus caresses him, burning with love Himself.

John composes himself and with deep humility he begs: « Do not tell the others what I told You. I am sure that they too have lived with God as I did during these past days. But leave the stone of silence on my secret. »

« Do not worry, John. No one will be aware of your wedding with the Love. Get dressed, come. We must leave. »

Jesus goes out on to the path where the others are already gathered. Their faces look more venerable and serene. The old ones look like patriarchs, the younger ones have a maturity and dignity, which were previously concealed by their youth. The Iscariot looks at Jesus with a shy smile on his face marked by tears. Jesus caresses him passing by. Peter… is silent. And his silence is so strange that it is more striking than any other change. He looks at Jesus attentively, but with a new dignity that makes his bald forehead look more spacious and his eyes more severe, whereas before they were full of gentle intelligence only. Jesus calls him

near Himself and keeps him there while waiting for John, who at last comes out. I could not say whether his face looks more pale or more flushed, it is certainly burning with a flame that does not change its colour, and yet is most obvious. They all look at him.

« Come here, John, near Me. And you, too, Andrew, and you, James of Zebedee. Then you, Simon, and you, Bartholomew, Philip, and you, My cousins, and Matthew. Judas of Simon here, in front of Me. Thomas, come here. Sit down. I must speak to you. »

They all sit down quietly, like good children, all engrossed in their internal world and yet paying attention to Jesus, as they never did before.

« Do you know what I have done to you? You all know. Your souls told your minds. But your souls, which were the queens these past days, have taught your minds two great virtues: humility and silence, the son of humility and prudence, which are the daughters of charity. Only eight days ago you would have come to proclaim your cleverness and your new knowledge, like clever children who are eager to astound people and overcome their rivals. Now you are silent. You have grown from children into adolescents and you are already aware that such a proclamation might humiliate a companion who was perhaps less helped by God, and therefore you do not speak.

You are also like pubescent girls. The holy reserve, concerning the change that revealed the nuptial mystery of souls with God, was born in you. These caves seemed cold, hostile and repulsive on the first day… now you are looking at them as if they were bright scented nuptial rooms. You have met God in them. Before you were aware of Him. But you did not know Him in the intimacy that blends two into one. Amongst you there are some who have been married for years, some who have had but a disappointing relationship with women, some who are chaste owing to various reasons. But the chaste ones now know what perfect love is, as the married ones know. Nay, I can say that nobody knows what perfect love is, as he who is unaware of carnal lusts. Because God reveals Himself in His fullness to the pure, both because He takes delight in giving Himself to those who are pure, as He, the Most Pure One, finds part of Himself in the creature free from lust, and because He wishes to compensate the creature for what it denies itself for His love.

I solemnly tell you that because of the love I have for you and of the wisdom I possess, if I did not have to accomplish the work of the Father, I would keep you here and be with you, isolated, as I am sure that I would soon make great saints of you, and you would no longer be subject to confusion, defections, failures, slackening, recurrences. But I cannot. I must go. And you must go. The world is waiting for us. The desecrated and desecrating world, which needs

teachers and redeemers, is waiting for us. I wanted you to know God, so that you may love Him more than you love the world, which with all its affections is not worth one single smile of God. I wanted to make it possible for you to meditate on what the world is and what God is, so that you may yearn for what is better. At present you are yearning only for God. Oh! I wish I could secure you in your yearning of the present moment! But the world is waiting for us. And we shall go to the world, which is waiting for us, for the sake of the holy Charity that by My order is sending you to the world as it sent Me. But I implore you! Lock in your hearts, like a pearl in a coffer, the treasure of the past days in which you have examined, cured, elevated, renovated and united yourselves to God. And keep and preserve these precious memories in your hearts, like the witness stones erected by the Patriarchs in remembrance of the alliance with God.

As from today you are no longer My favourite disciples, but the apostles, the chiefs of My Church. All the hierarchies of the Church, throughout centuries, shall descend from you, and will call you masters, having as their Master your God in His treble power, wisdom and charity. I have not chosen you because you are the most worthy, but for a number of reasons that you need not know now. I have chosen you in place of the shepherds who have been My disciples since I was born. Why did I do it? Because it was right to do so. Amongst you there are Galileans and Judaeans, learned and unlearned, rich and poor people. And that is because of the world, that it may not say that I have chosen one category only. But you will not be sufficient for everything there is to be done. Neither now, nor later.

Not all of you will remember a passage of the Book. I will remind you. Book 2 of Chronicles, Chapter 29, tells how Hezekiah, King of Judah, had the Temple purified, and after it was purified, he had sacrifices offered in atonement, for his kingdom, for the Temple and for the whole of Judah, and then the offerings of the single individuals began. But as the priests were not sufficient for the sacrifices, the levites, who are consecrated with a shorter rite than the priests, were summoned.

That is what I will do. You are the priests, who have been prepared by Me, the Eternal Pontiff, diligently and for a long time. But you will not suffice for the work, which is much more extensive than the sacrifice of the offerings of individuals to the Lord their God. I will therefore associate with you the disciples who will remain such, those who are waiting for us at the foot of the mountain, those who are already higher up, those who are spread all over Israel and that later will be spread all over the world. They will be entrusted with equal tasks, because the mission is only one, but their position will be different in the eyes of

the world. But not in the eyes of God, where there is justice, so that the obscure disciple, ignored by the apostles and by his brethren, who lives a holy life taking souls to God, will be greater than a known apostle, who has only the name of apostle and lowers his apostolic dignity for human purposes.

The task of the apostles and disciples will still be the same as the task of the priests and levites of Hezekiah: to perform the rites of the cult, to demolish idolatries, to purify hearts and places, to preach God and His Word. There is not a more holy task on the earth. Neither is there a dignity higher than yours. That is why I said to you: "Listen to yourselves and examine yourselves".

Woe betide the apostle who falls! He drags many disciples with him, and they drag a greater number of believers and the ruin grows larger and larger like a falling avalanche or a ring that expands on the lake when several stones are thrown in the same spot.

Will you all be perfect? No. Will the spirit of the present moment last? No. The world will throw its tentacles to choke your souls. That will be the victory of the world: to extinguish the light in the hearts of saints; the world, a son of Satan for five tenths, a servant of Satan, for three more tenths, indifferent to God for the remaining two tenths. Defend yourselves from yourselves, against yourselves, against the world, flesh and the demon. Above all, defend yourselves from yourselves. Stand on your guard, My children, against pride, sensuality, duplicity, tepidity, spiritual drowsiness and against avarice! When your inferior ego speaks and moans over alleged cruelty to it, hush it up by saying: "For a moment of hardship, which I give you now, I will procure for you, and for ever, the banquet of ecstasy that you enjoyed in the mountain cave at the end of the month of Shebat".

Let us go. Let us go and meet the others who in large numbers are awaiting My coming. And then I will go for a few hours to Tiberias and you, preaching Me, will go to wait for Me at the foot of the mountain that is on the road leading from Tiberias to the sea. I will come up there to preach. Take your bags and mantles. The retreat is over and the election has been made. »

17th May 1945.

Jesus says:

« You are not feeling well and I will leave you in peace. I only wish to point out to you how a sentence omitted or a word wrongly copied can alter everything. And you, My writer, are alive and can make the correction at once. So consider and try to understand how twenty centuries have deprived the Gospel, the apostolic Gospel, of parts that did no harm to the doctrine, but prevented it from being easily understood. This - if we go back to the origin we find that it is still the work of Disorder - explains many things

and lends itself to the children of Disorder for so many more things. And you can see how easy it is to make errors in copying… Little John, be good today. You are a broken flower. I will come later and mend your stalk. I need the tears of your wound today. God is with you. »

166. The First Sermon of Simon Zealot and John.

18th May 1945.

Jesus, half way down the mountain, finds many disciples and many more people, who by degrees have joined the disciples. They have come here urged by the need of a miracle, by the desire to hear Jesus' word, and have been guided here either by information of people or by the instinct of their souls. I think that the guardian angels of men have led them to the Son of God, as they were desirous of God. And I do not think I am telling an idle story. If we consider with what prompt and shrewd perseverance Satan led enemies to God and to His Word, every time his diabolical spirit could exhibit to men the semblance of a fault in Christ, it is admissable to think, rather than admissable it is indeed just to think also that the angels were no way inferior to demons and they led non-demoniacal spirits to Christ.

And Jesus does His utmost for all those who have been waiting for Him patiently and fearlessly and grants them miracles and the comfort of His word. How many miracles! As many as the flowers decorating the mountain crags. Some of the miracles are great, like the one for a boy who was rescued from a blazing straw-barn and was dreadfully burnt. The child was brought here on a stretcher, crying mournfully, a heap of scorched flesh under a linen cloth, with which he had been covered, so dreadful is the appearance of his burnt body. He is about to breathe his last. Jesus breathes over him and heals his burns that disappear completely, so much so that the boy gets up, absolutely naked, and runs happily towards his mother, who, weeping for joy, caresses his body now entirely cured, without any trace of burns. She kisses his eyes, which were expected to be burnt, and instead are bright and shining with joy. His hair is short, but not destroyed, as if the flames had acted as a razor and not as an instrument of destruction. Other miracles are minor, like the one in favour of a little elderly man, suffering from asthmatic spasms, who says: « Not for my own sake, but because I have to act as a father to my little orphan grandchildren and I cannot work the land with this disease here, in my throat, choking me… »

There is also an invisible but real miracle, brought about by Jesus' words: « Amongst you, there is one whose soul is weeping, but dare not say the words: "Have mercy on me!" My reply is: "Let

it be done as you wish. You have all My pity, that you may know that I am Mercy". In my turn, however, I say to you: "Be generous". Be generous with God. Break all ties with the past. You perceive God, so come to Him Whom you perceive, with a free heart and complete love. » I do not know to whom, among the crowd, these words are addressed.

Jesus says also: « These are My apostles. They are as many Christs, because I have elected them as such. Apply to them trustingly. They have learned from Me what is needed for your souls… » The apostles, thoroughly afraid, look at Jesus. But He smiles and goes on: «… and they will give your souls the light of stars and the refreshment of dew, to prevent you from languishing in darkness. And then I will come and give you perfect light and consolation and all wisdom to make you strong and happy by means of a supernatural strength and joy. Peace be with you, My children. I am expected by other people who are more unhappy and poorer than you are. But I will not leave you alone. I am leaving My apostles with you, which is the same as if I left the children of My love entrusted to the most amiable and reliable foster-mothers. »

Jesus waves His hand, blesses them and departs, pushing through the crowd, who do not want to let Him go, and just then He works the last miracle. An elderly partly-paralysed woman, brought here by her grandson, joyfully shakes her right arm, which before she could not move, and shouts: « He touched me lightly with His mantle, when passing by, and I am cured! I did not even ask for it, because I am old… But He felt pity also for my secret desire. And with His mantle, the hem of which hardly touched my useless arm, He cured me! Oh! What a great Son our holy David has! Glory be to his Messiah! But look! Look! Also my leg is moving like my arm… Oh! I feel as if I were only twenty years old! »

While many people rush towards the old woman, who is shouting her happiness at the top of her voice, Jesus can sneak away without being detained further. And the apostles follow Him.

When they are in a lonely place, almost down on the plain, they stop for a moment in an area of heathland, which stretches towards the lake. Jesus says: « I bless you! Go back to your work and continue it until I come back, as I told you. »

Peter, who has been quiet so far, bursts out: « But, my Lord, what have You done? Why did You say that we have everything that souls need? It is true that You have told us many things. But we are blockheads, at least I am, and… and of all You gave me, little is left, very little indeed. I am like one, who after a meal, still has in his stomach the heavy part of the food. The rest is no longer there. »

Jesus smiles frankly: « Where is the rest of the food, then? »

« Well… I don't know. I know that when I eat delicate food, after an hour I feel my stomach empty. But if I eat horse-radish, or lentils dressed with oil, eh! it takes a long time to get rid of them! »

« It does. But you can be sure that horse-radish and lentils, which seem to fill you more, are the less nourishing: it is meal that goes through with little benefit. Whereas the delicate dishes that you feel no longer, within an hour, are no longer in your stomach, but in your blood. When food has been digested it is no longer in one's stomach, but its juice is in the blood and is more useful. Now you and your companions think that nothing, or only a little, is left in you of what I told you. Perhaps you remember whatever is more pertinent to one's own nature: the violent the violent parts, the contemplative the contemplative parts, the affectionate the loving parts… But believe Me: everything is within you. Even if it seems to have gone. You have absorbed it. Your thoughts will wind off like a multicoloured thread showing you light or strong hues according to what you require. Be not afraid. Consider that I know and I would never send you if I knew that you were unable to do it. Goodbye, Peter. Cheer up! Smile! Have faith! A good act of faith in the Omnipresent Wisdom. Goodbye, everybody. The Lord is with you. » And He leaves them quickly, while they are still amazed and worried about what they have heard they must do.

« And yet we must obey » says Thomas.

« Yes… of course… Oh! poor me! I feel like running after Him… » grumbles Peter.

« No. Don't. To obey is to love Him » says James of Alphaeus.

« It is only reasonable and also according to holy prudence that we should start while He is still near us and can advise us if we make mistakes. We must help him » suggests the Zealot.

« That's true. Jesus is rather tired. We must relieve Him a little, as best we can. It is not enough to carry the bags, make the beds and prepare the food. Anyone can do that. But we must help Him in His mission, as He wants us to » confirms Bartholomew.

« It's all right for you, because you are a learned man. But I… I am almost completely ignorant… » moans James of Zebedee.

« O Lord! There are those who were up there. They are coming here! What shall we do? » exclaims Andrew.

And Matthew says: « Excuse me, if I, the most miserable one, give you my advice. Would it not be better to pray the Lord, instead of standing here complaining about things complaints cannot mend? Come on, Judas, you know the Scriptures so well, say for us all the prayer of Solomon to obtain Wisdom. Quick! Before they arrive here. »

And Thaddeus in his beautiful baritone voice begins: « God of my ancestors, Lord of mercy, Who by Your word have made all things… etc.… etc. » down to: «… all those were saved by Wisdom,

who pleased You, o Lord, from the beginning. » He finishes in time, just before the people arrive, and gather round them asking thousands of questions as to where the Master has gone, when He will come back, and a more difficult one to be answered, requesting: « How can they follow the Master, not with their legs, but with their souls, along the Way pointed out by Him? »

The apostles are embarrassed by the question. They look at one another and the Iscariot replies: « By following perfection » as if his reply explained everything!…

James of Alphaeus, who is more humble and quiet, becomes pensive, then says: « The perfection to which my companion refers is achieved by obeying the Law. Because the Law is justice and justice is perfection. »

But the crowd are not yet satisfied and one, who appears to be a leader, asks: « But we are like little children with regard to doing good. Children do not know yet the meaning of Good and Evil, they cannot tell one from the other. And on this way, which He points out to us, we are so inexperienced that neither are we able to distinguish between them. There was a way known to us, the old one, which we were taught at school. It is so difficult, long and frightening! Now, listening to His words, we feel that it is like that aqueduct we can see from here. Below, there is the road for animals and men, above, on the light arches, high up in the sun and in the blue sky, near the tallest branches rustling in the wind and resounding with the singing of birds, there is another road, as smooth, clean and clear, as the inferior one is rough, dirty and dark, there is a way for the gurgling limpid water, which is a blessing, because of the water that comes from God and is caressed by what is of God: rays of the sun and of the stars, new leaves, flowers and wings of swallows. We would like to climb up to that higher way, which is His way, but we do not know how to do so, because we are bound down here, under the weight of the old construction. What shall we do? »

The person who has spoken is a young man about twenty-five years old, dark, strong, with an intelligent mien. He does not seem to be a man of the people like the majority of the crowd present. He is leaning on an older man.

The Iscariot, tall as he is, sees him and whispers to his companions: « Quick, explain things properly. There is Hermas with Stephen, who is loved by Gamaliel! » And that is enough to embarrass the apostles completely.

At last the Zealot replies: « There would be no arch, if there was no foundation in the dark road. The latter is the matrix of the former, which rises from it and climbs towards the blue sky, of which you are desirous. The stones fixed in the ground and holding the weight without enjoying rays or flights are aware that they

are set there, because now and again a swallow, squeaking, flies down as far as the mud, and caresses the base of the arch, and a ray of the sun or of a star filters through to say how beautiful is the vault of heaven. Thus, in past centuries, a divine word of promise, a celestial ray of wisdom, descended now and again to caress the stones oppressed by divine wrath. Because the stones were necessary. They are not, were not and never will be useless. Time and the perfection of human knowledge have risen slowly on them and have reached the freedom of present days and the wisdom of supernatural knowledge.

I already see your objection, it is written on your face. It is the one we have all had, before we were able to understand that this is the New Doctrine, the Gospel preached to those who, because of a retarding process, have not become adults through the elevation of the stones of knowledge, but have grown darker and darker like a wall that sinks into a dark abyss.

In order to get out of this affliction of a supernatural darkness, we must bravely free the foundation stone from all the others laid on top of it. Do not be afraid to knock down the high wall that does not carry the pure lymph of the eternal spring. Go back to the foundation, which is not to be changed. It comes from God. It is immovable. But before rejecting the stones, because they are not all bad and useless, examine them one by one, at the sound of the word of God. If you hear that they are sound, keep them and use them again to rebuild. But if you hear in them the dissonant sound of human voice or the rending sound of a satanic voice - and you cannot be mistaken because if it is God's voice it is a sound of love, if it is a human voice it is a sensual sound, if it is a satanic voice it is a sound of hatred - then break the wicked stones into shivers. I say: break them into shivers, because it is charity not to leave behind germs or evil things, which may seduce the wayfarer and induce him to use them to his own disadvantage. Crush literally to smithereens all your deeds, writings, teachings and acts that were not good. It is better to be left with little, to rise by hardly one cubit with good stones, rather than by yards with wicked stones. -Sunbeams and swallows descend also to low walls, which hardly rise above the ground and the humble little flowers at the edge of the road easily reach the low stones to caress them. On the contrary, the proud useless rough stones that want to rise higher receive nothing but thorny caresses and poisonous embraces. Demolish in order to rebuild and to ascend, testing the goodness of Your old stones to the sound of the voice of God. »

« You are a good speaker, man. We must ascend! But how? We have told you that we are less than babies. Who will enable us to climb the steep column? We will test the stones to the sound of the voice of God. We will break up the ones that are not good. But

how can we ascend? We feel giddy only at the thought of it! » says Stephen.

John, who has been listening with his head lowered, smiling to himself, raises his head. His face is bright and he begins to speak:

« Brothers! The thought of ascending makes you feel giddy. It is true. But who told you that it is necessary to attack the ascent direct? Not only babies, but even adults cannot do it. Only angels can glide in the blue skies, because they are free from all material weight. And only heroes in holiness can do it amongst men.

We have a living being, who in this dejected world, is still a holy hero, like the ancient people who adorned Israel, when the Patriarchs were friends of God and the word of the eternal Code was the only one and was obeyed by every righteous creature. John, the Precursor teaches us how to attack the ascent direct. John is a man. But the Grace, which the Fire of God communicated to him, purifying him in his mother's womb, as the lips of the Prophet were cleansed by the Seraph, so that he might precede the Messiah without leaving the stench of original sin along the royal way of Christ, that Grace has given John the wings of an angel and Penance has made them grow, suppressing at the same time the human weight which his nature of a man born of a woman had retained. John, therefore, from the cavern where he preached penance, with his spirit married to Grace burning in his body, can ascend to the top of the arch beyond which is God, the Most High Lord our God, and dominating the past centuries, the present day and the future, with the voice of a prophet and the eye of an eagle that can stare at the eternal sun and recognise it, he can announce: "There is the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world". And he can die after this sublime song, which will be sung not only in our limited time, but also in the endless Time in the eternal blessed Jerusalem, to applaud the Second Person, to invoke Him on human miseries, to sing hosannas in the eternal brightness.

But the Lamb of God, the Most Sweet Lamb Who left His bright abode in Heaven, where He is the Fire of God in an embrace of fire - oh! the eternal generation, of the Father Who conceives His Word through His unlimited and most holy thought, and absorbs Him producing an effusion of love, from which the Spirit of Love proceeds, the centre of Power and Wisdom - but the Lamb of God, Who left His most pure incorporeal form, to enclose His infinite purity, holiness and divine nature in mortal flesh, knows that we have not been cleansed by Grace, not yet, and knows that we could not ascend to the high summit, where God, One and Trine is, like the eagle, which is John. We are little sparrows living on roofs and on roads, we are swallows that fly in the sky but feed on insects, we are woodlarks who want to sing imitating the angels, but our

singing, when compared to theirs, is a dissonant high-pitched drone of cicadas in summer. The Sweet Lamb of God, Who came to take away the sin of the world, knows that. Because if He is no longer the Infinite Spirit of Heaven, having taken human flesh, His infinity is not diminished thereby and He knows everything because His wisdom is always infinite.

And so He teaches us His way. The way of love. He is the Love, which out of mercy for us, became flesh. And that Merciful Love created for us a way, which also little ones can ascend. And He is the first to ascend it, not because of His own need, but to teach us. Neither would He need to spread His wings to return to the Father. His spirit, I swear it to you, is closed down here, on the miserable earth, but it is always with the Father, because God can do everything, and He is God. But He goes ahead, leaving behind Him the perfume of His holiness, the gold and fire of His love. Look at His way. Oh! It does reach the summit of the arch! But how peaceful and safe it is! It is not straight: it is spiral. It is longer and the sacrifice of His merciful love is revealed by such length where He delays for the sake of us, the weak ones. It is longer, but better suited to our misery. The ascent to love, to God, is as simple as Love. But it is vast, because God is an abyss, which I would say is immeasurable if He did not bend across to be reached, to be kissed by the souls in love with Him (John speaks and weeps, smiling with his lips, in the ecstasy of revealing God). The simple way of love is long, because the Abyss, which is God, is limitless, and one could climb as much as one would like. But the Admirable Abyss calls our miserable abyss. It calls it by means of its light and says: "Come to Me!" Oh! The invitation of God! The invitation of the Father!

Listen! Listen! The kindest words are coming towards us from the Heavens left open, because Christ opened the gates wide and left the angels of Mercy and Forgiveness to keep them open, so that while men are waiting for the Grace, at least light, scents, songs and peace should flow down to attract the hearts of men in a holy manner. It is the voice of God Who is speaking. And the Voice says: "Your childhood? But it is your most valuable money! I would like you to become really little, so that you would have the humility, the sincerity and the love of children, the confident love of children for their fathers. Your inability? But that is My glory! Oh! Come. I do not even ask you to test the sound of the good and bad stones by yourselves. Give them to Me! I will pick them and You will do the rebuilding. The ascent to perfection? Oh! no, My little children. Join hands with My Son, your Brother now, and thus ascend beside Him…

To ascend! To come to You, Eternal Love! To achieve Your likeness, that is Love! To love! That is the secret!… To love! To give

oneself… To love! To suppress oneself… To love! To melt… The flesh? It is nothing. Sorrow? It is nothing. Time? It is nothing. Sin itself becomes nothing if I dissolve it in Your fire, o God! Only Love exists. Love' The Love that gave us the Incarnate God, will give us all forgiveness. And no one knows how to love better than children. And no one is loved more than a child.

O you, whom I do not know, who want to know what Good is, to distinguish it from Evil, to possess the blue sky, the celestial Sun, and everything that is supernatural joy, love and you will achieve it. Love Christ. You will die to the life of this world, but you will rise again in your spirit. With your new spirit, without any further need of stones, you will be for ever an inextinguishable fire. A flame rises. It needs neither steps nor wings to rise. Free your ego from every construction, put love into yourself. You will blaze up. Let that happen without any restriction. Nay, kindle the fire, throwing into it your past passions and knowledge. What is not good will be destroyed by the flames, what is already a noble metal will become pure. Cast yourself, brother, into the active joyful love of the Trinity. You will understand what now seems incomprehensible to you, because you will understand God, Who can be understood only by those who give themselves, without any limitation, to His sacrificing fire. You will be fixed, in the end, in God in a loving embrace, praying for me, the child of Christ, who dared to speak to you of Love. »

They are all dumbfounded: the apostles, the disciples, the believers… The man to whom the words were addressed is pale, while John's face is flushed, not so much because of the effort as because of his love.

Stephen at last shouts: « May you be blessed! But tell me, who are you? »

And John - his attitude reminds me so much of the Virgin at the Annunciation - replies in a low voice, bending as if he were adoring Him Whom he mentions: « I am John. You see in me the least of the servants of the Lord. »

« But who was your master before? »

« No one but God. Because I received my spiritual milk from John, the presanctified of God, now I eat the bread of Christ, the Word of God, and I drink God's fire that comes to me from Heaven. Glory be to the Lord! »

« Ah! I am not going to leave you! Neither you nor him, I will part from none of you. Take me with you! »

« When… Oh! But Peter is here, he is our chief » and John takes Peter, who is dumbfounded, and proclaims him « the first ».

And Peter collects himself and says: « Son, a considered reflection is required for a great mission. This man is our angel and he inflames us. But it is necessary to know whether the flame will

last in us. Measure yourself and then come to the Lord. We will open our hearts to you as to a most dear brother. In the meantime, if you wish to become better acquainted with our life, you may stay. The flocks of Christ may grow exceedingly so that the true lambs may be separated from the false rams, choosing among the perfect and imperfect ones. »

And the first apostolic revelation ends thus.

167. In the House of Johanna of Chuza. Jesus and the Roman Ladies.

19th May 1945.

Jesus comes off a boat at the wharf at Chuza's garden, helped by a boatman who had taken Him there. A gardener who has seen Him runs to open the gate which closes the entrance to the property on the lake side. It is a strong tall gate, which, however, is concealed by a very thick high hedge of laurel and box on the outer side, towards the lake, and by roses of all colours on the inner side, towards the house. The magnificent rose-bushes decorate the bronze laurel and box leaves, they creep through the branches and peep out on the other side, or they pass over the green barrier and let their flowery heads fall on the other side. Only the central part of the gate, across the avenue, is barren and is opened there to let through people going to or coming from the lake.

« Peace to this house and to you, Joanna. Where is your mistress »

« Over there, with her friends. I will call her at once. They have been waiting for You three days, because they were afraid of being late. »

Jesus smiles. The servant runs away to call Johanna. In the meantime Jesus walks slowly towards the place mentioned by the servant, admiring the wonderful garden, one could say the wonderful rosery, which Chuza had built for his wife. Magnificent early roses of all types, sizes and shapes are a blaze of colours in this sheltered inlet of the lake. There are other flower plants. But they are not yet in bloom and their number is minimal as compared to the quantity of rose-bushes.

Johanna arrives. She has not even laid down the basket half full of roses, nor the scissors she was using to cut them, and she runs thus, her arms stretched out, agile and beautiful in her wide dress of very thin woollen material, of a very light pink hue, the folds of which are held in place by silver filigree studs and buckles, decorated with sparkling pale garnets. On her dark wavy hair a mitre-shaped diadem, also in silver and garnets, hold a very light pink byssus veil, which hangs over her back, leaving uncovered her ears, adorned with earrings matching the diadem, her smiling

face and thin neck, round which she wears a shining necklace which is made like the rest of her precious ornaments.

She drops her basket at Jesus' feet and kneels down to kiss His tunic, among the roses spread on the ground.

« Peace to you, Johanna. I have come. »

« And I am happy. They have come, too. Oh! Now I seem to have done the wrong thing by organising this meeting! How will you manage to understand one another? They are heathens! » Johanna is somewhat worried.

Jesus smiles, and laying His hand on her head He says: « Be not afraid. We will understand one another very well. You have done the right thing "by organising this meeting". Our meeting will be full of blessings as your garden is full of roses. Now, pick up those poor roses which you dropped and let us go to your friends. »

« Oh! There is any amount of roses. I was picking them to pass the time and then my friends are so… so voluptuous. They love flowers as if they were… I do not know… »

« I love them, too! See, we have already found a subject on which we can understand one another. Come on! Let us pick up these wonderful roses… » and Jesus bends to set the example.

« Not You! Not You, my Lord! If You really want to… well… it's done. »

They walk as far as a bower made by multicoloured interlaced rose-bushes. Three Roman ladies are casting glances at them from the threshold: Plautina, Valeria and Lydia. The first and last ones are hesitant, but Valeria runs out and makes a curtsy saying: « Hail, Saviour of my little Fausta! »

« Peace and light to you and to your friends. »

The friends curtsy without speaking.

We already know Plautina. Tall, stately, with beautiful dark, rather authoritative eyes, under a smooth very white forehead, a perfect straight nose, a well shaped rather tumid mouth, a roundish well defined chin, she reminds me of some beautiful statues of Roman empresses. Heavy rings shine on her beautiful hands and large golden bracelets round her statuesque arms, on her wrists and above her elbows which appear pinkish white, smooth and perfect under her short draped sleeves.

Lydia, on the other hand, is fair-haired, thinner and younger. Her beauty is not the stately beauty of Plautina, but she possesses all the grace of feminine youth which is still a little unripe. And since we are on a pagan subject, I could say that if Plautina looks like the statue of an empress, Lydia could well be Diana or a gentle modest looking nymph.

Valeria, who is not in the desperate situation in which we saw her at Caesarea, appears in the beauty of a young mother, rather plumply shaped but still very young, with the quiet look of a

mother who is happy to breastfeed her own child and see it grow healthy. Rosy and brown, her smile is a quiet but very kind one.

I am under the impression that the two ladies are of a lower rank than Plautina, whom they respect as a queen, as is obvious also from their attitude.

« Were you attending to flowers? Go on, go on. We can talk also while you pick this beautiful work of the Creator, which flowers are, and while you arrange them in these precious vases with the ability of which Rome is mistress, to lengthen their lives, which unfortunately are too short… If we admire this bud, which is just opening its yellow pink petal in a lovely smile, how can we not be sorry to see it dying? Oh! How amazed the Jews would be if they heard Me speak thus! But also in a flower we feel there is something which is alive. And we regret to see its end. But plants are wiser than we are. They know that on every wound caused by cutting a stem a new shoot will grow and it will become a new rose. And so we must learn the lesson and make of our somewhat sensual love for flowers a spur to a higher thought. »

« Which one, Master? » asks Plautina, who is listening diligently and is intrigued by the refined thought of the Jewish Master.

« This one. That as a plant does not die as long as its roots are nourished by the soil, it does not die because its stems die, so mankind does not die because one being ends his earthly life. But new flowers are always born. And - a thought which is even higher and will make us bless the Creator - while a flower, once it is dead, will not come to life again, which is sad, man, when he is asleep in his last sleep, is not dead, but he lives a brighter life, drawing, through his better part, eternal life and splendour from the Creator Who formed him. Therefore, Valeria, if your little girl had died, you would not have lost her caresses. The kisses of your creature would have always come to your soul, because, although separated from you, she would not have forgotten your love. See how pleasant it is to have faith in eternal life? Where is your little one now? »

« In that covered cradle. I never parted from her before, because the love for my husband and for my daughter were the only interests of my life. But now that I know what it is to see her dying, I do not leave her even for a moment. »

Jesus goes towards a seat on which there is a kind of wooden cradle, covered by an expensive cover. He uncovers it and looks at the sleeping child, whom the fresher air awakes tenderly. Her little eyes seem surprised when they open and her lips part in an angel's smile, while her tiny hands, which heretofore were closed, are now open and anxious to get hold of Jesus' wavy hair. The twittering of a sparrow marks the progress of speech in her little mind. At last the great universal word trills: « Mummy! »

« Pick her up, pick her up » says Jesus Who moves to one side to let Valeria bend over the cradle.

« She will give You trouble! I will call a slave and have her taken into the garden. »

« Trouble? Oh! No! Children are never any trouble. They are always My friends. »

« Have You any children or grandchildren, Master? » asks Plautina, who watches how Jesus, smiling, teases the baby to make her laugh.

« No, I have neither children nor grandchildren. But I love children as I love flowers. Because they are pure and without malice. Nay, give Me your little one, woman. It is such a great joy for Me to press a little angel to My heart. » And He sits down holding the little baby, who watches Him and ruffles His beard and then finds something more interesting to do playing with the fringes of His mantle and with the cord of His tunic, to which she devotes a long mysterious speech.

Plautina says: « Our good and wise friend, one of the few who does not disdain us and does not become corrupt associating with us, will have told You that we were anxious to see You and hear You, to judge You for what You are, because Rome does not believe in idle stories.. Why are You smiling, Master? »

« I will tell you later. Go on. »

« Because Rome does not believe in idle stories and wants to judge with true knowledge and conscience before condemning and extolling. Your people exalt You and calumniate You to the same degree. Your deeds would convince one to exalt You. The words of many Jews would induce people to consider You little less than a criminal. Your words are solemn and wise like a philosopher's. Rome is very fond of philosophic doctrines and… I must admit it, our present philosophers do not have a satisfactory doctrine, also because their ways of living do not correspond to their doctrines. »

« They cannot have a way of living corresponding to their doctrine. »

« Because they are pagans, is that right? »

« No, because they are atheists. »

« Atheists? But they have their gods. »

« They do not even have those any more, woman. I remind you of the ancient philosophers, the greatest ones. They were heathens, too. However, consider how high was the moral tone of their lives! It was mingled with errors, because man is inclined to err. But when they were confronted with the greatest mysteries: life and death, when they had to face the dilemma of Honesty or Dishonesty, of Virtue or Vice, of Heroism or Cowardice and they considered that if they turned to evil, a great misfortune would befall their fatherland and their fellow citizens, then with a super effort of

will they rejected the tentacles of evil polyps and, holy and free, they chose Good, at all costs. That Good which is no one else but God. »

« You are God, so they say. Is that true? »

« I am the Son of the True God, I became flesh, but I still remain God. »

« But what is God? The greatest Master, if we look at You. »

« God is much more than a Master. Do not minimise the sublime idea of Divinity to a limitation of wisdom. »

« Wisdom is a deity. We have Minerva. She is the goddess of knowledge. »

« You have also Venus, the goddess of pleasure. Can you admit that a god, that is, a being superior to men, possesses, raised to the highest degree, all the horrible vices of mortals? Can you conceive that an eternal being has for all eternity the petty, mean, humiliating delights of those who have only one hour's time? And that the superior being makes them the scope of his life? Do you not consider what a desecrated heaven is the one you call Olympus, where the most acrid juices of mankind ferment? If you look at your heaven, what can you see? Lust, crime, hatred, war, thefts, crapulence, snares, revenge. If you wish to celebrate the feast of your gods, what do you do? You indulge in orgies. What cult do you give them? Where is the true chastity of the virgins consecrated to Vesta? On what divine code of law do your pontifices base their judgement? What words can your augurs read in the flight of birds or in the peal of thunder? And what answers can the bleeding entrails of sacrificed animals give to your haruspices? You said: "Rome does not believe in idle stories". Why does she believe, then, that twelve poor men, by sending a pig, a sheep and a bull round the fields and sacrificing them, can gain Ceres' favour, when you have an endless number of deities, one hating the other, and you believe in their revenges? No. God is something quite different. He is Eternal, One and Spiritual. »

« But You say that You are God and yet You are flesh. »

« There is an altar with no god in the fatherland of gods. Man's wisdom has devoted it to the unknown God. Because wise men, the true philosophers, have realised that there is something beyond the illustrated scenario created for the eternal children, that is for men whose souls are enveloped in the swaddling clothes of error. If those wise men - who realised that there is something beyond the false scenario, something really sublime and divine, which created everything that exists and from which comes all the good there is in the world - if those men wanted an altar to the unknown God, Whom they perceived to be the True God, how can you call god what is not god and how can you say that you know what you do not know? Learn, therefore, what God is, that you may know and

honour Him. God is the Being Who by His thought made everything from nothing. Can the tale of stones changing into men convince you and satisfy you? I solemnly tell you that there are men more hard and wicked than stones, and stones more useful than men. But is it not more pleasant for you, Valeria, to say, looking at your little baby: "She is the living will of God, created and formed by Him, gifted by Him with a second life which does not end, so that I will have my little Fausta for ever and ever, if I believe in the True God", rather than say: "This rosy flesh, this hair thinner than a spider's web, these clear eyes originate from a stone"? Or to say: "I am entirely like a she-wolf or a mare, and like an animal I mate, like an animal I procreate, like an animal I rear, and my daughter is the fruit of my beastly instinct and she is an animal like me, and tomorrow, when she is dead and I am dead, we shall be two carrions which will dissolve with a foul odour and will never see each other again"? Tell Me! Which of the two choices would your maternal heart prefer? »

« Certainly not the latter, my Lord! If I had known that Fausta was not a thing that could be dissolved for ever, my grief, when she was in agony, would not have been so violent. Because I would have said: "I have lost a pearl. But it still exists. And I will find it". »

« You are right. When I was coming towards you, your friend told me that she was amazed at your passion for flowers. And she was afraid that it might upset Me. But I reassured her saying to her: "I love flowers, too, so we will understand each other quite well". But I wish to bring you to love flowers, as I have brought Valeria to love her baby, of whom she will now take greater care, as she knows that Fausta has a soul, which is a particle of God enclosed in the body which her mother made for her; a particle which will not die and which her mother will find again in Heaven, if she believes in the True God.

The same applies to you. Look at this beautiful rose. The purple which adorns the imperial robe is not so magnificent as this petal, which is not only a pleasure to the eye because of its hue, but is also a joy to touch because of its smoothness and to smell because of its scent. And look at this one, and this one, and this one. The first one is like blood gushing from a heart, the second is like fresh fallen snow, the third one is pale gold, the last one is like the sweet face of this child smiling in My lap. And further: the first one is stiff on an almost thornless stem, the leaves of which are reddish as if they had been sprayed with blood, the second has only a few thorns, and its leaves are pale and dull on the stem, the third one is as flexible as a reed and its small leaves are as shiny as green wax, the stem of the last one is so thick with thorns, that it seems anxious to prevent all possible access to its rosy corolla. It looks like a

file with very sharp teeth.

Now consider this. Who made all that? How? When? Where? What was this place in the mists of time? It was nothing. It was an amorphous stirring of elements. One: God, said: "I want" and the elements separated and gathered in family groups. And another "I want" thundered and the elements arranged themselves, one with the other: the water between the lands; or one on the other: air and light on the formed planet. One more "I want" and plants were made. And then the stars, then animals and at last man. And God, to make man, His favourite creature, happy, granted him, as magnificent toys, flowers, stars and finally the joy of procreating not what dies, but what survives death, by the gift of God, and which is the soul. These roses are as many "wills" of the Father. His infinite power makes it clear in an infinite number of beautiful things.

My explanation is rather a difficult one because it clashes with the brazen resistance of your beliefs. But I hope, as it is our first meeting, that we have understood one another a little. Let your souls ponder on what I have told you. Have you any questions to ask? Ask them. I am here to clarify things. Ignorance is not a disgrace. It is disgraceful to persist in ignorance where there is someone willing to clarify doubts. »

And Jesus, as if He were the most experienced father, goes out holding the little child, who is taking her first steps and wants to go towards a jet of water swaying in the sunshine.

The ladies remain where they were, speaking to one another. And Johanna, hesitating between two desires, is standing on the threshold of the bower.

At last Lydia makes up her mind and followed by the others goes towards Jesus, Who is laughing because the little one is trying to catch the solar spectrum with her hand and grasps nothing but light, and she insists over and over again, babbling with her rosy lips.

« Master… I have not understood why You said that our masters cannot lead a good life because they are atheists. They believe in Olympus. But they believe… »

« They have but the outward appearance of belief. As long as they really believed, as the truly wise men believed in the Unknown God I mentioned to you, in that God Who satisfied their souls, even if He was nameless, even if inadvertently they did not want to, as long as they turned their thoughts to that Being, by far superior to the poor gods full of the faults of mankind, of the low faults of mankind, the gods that paganism created for itself, they somehow reflected God, by necessity. A soul is a mirror that reflects and an echo that repeats… »

« What, Master? »

« God. »

« It's a great word! »

« It is a great truth. »

Valeria, who is fascinated by the thought of immortality, asks: « Master, tell me where the soul of my child is. I will kiss that spot like a shrine and I will worship it, because it is part of God. »

« The soul! it is like this light that little Fausta wishes to grasp and cannot, because it is incorporeal. But it is there. You, I, your friends can see it. Likewise a soul can be seen in everything that differentiates man from animals. When your little one will tell you her first thoughts, you can say that such understanding is her soul which is revealing itself. When she will love you not by instinct, but with her reason, consider that that love is her soul. When she will grow beautiful beside you, not so much in her body as in virtue, consider that that beauty is her soul. And do not worship her soul, but God Who created it, God Who wishes every soul to be a throne for Him. »

« But where is this incorporeal and sublime thing: in one's heart? In one's brains? »

« It is in the whole of man. It contains you and is contained within you. When it leaves you, you become a corpse. When it is killed by a crime that man commits against himself, you are damned, separated from God for ever. »

« You therefore agree that the philosopher who said that we are "immortal" was right, although he was a heathen? » asks Plautina.

« I do not agree. I will go further. I say that it is an article of faith. The immortality of the soul, that is the immortality of the superior part of man is the most certain and most comforting mystery to believe. It is the one that assures us of where we come from, where we go, who we are, and it removes all the bitterness of every separation. »

Plautina is deeply absorbed in thought. Jesus watches her and is silent. At last she asks: « And have You a soul? »

Jesus replies: « Certainly. »

« But are You or are You not God? »

« I am God. I told you. But now I have taken the nature of Man. And do you know why? Because only by this sacrifice of Mine I was able to resolve the points which were insuperable for your reason, and after demolishing errors and freeing minds, I was able also to free souls from a slavery which I cannot explain to you just now. I therefore enclosed Wisdom and Holiness in a body. I spread Wisdom like seed on the ground and pollen to the winds. Holiness will flow, as from a precious broken amphora, on to the world in the hour of Grace and will sanctify men. Then the Unknown God will become known. »

« But You are already known. Who doubts Your power and Your

wisdom, is either wicked or a liar. »

« I am known. But this is only daybreak. Midday will be full of the knowledge of Me. »

« What will Your midday be like? A triumph? Shall I see it? »

« Truly, it will be a triumph. And you will be present. Because you loathe what you know and you crave for what you ignore. Your soul hungers. »

« That is true. I hunger for truth. »

« I am the Truth. »

« Then, give Yourself to me who am hungry. »

« All you have to do is to come to My table. My word is the bread of truth. »

« But what will our gods say if we abandon them? Will they not avenge themselves on us? » asks fearful Lydia.

« Woman: have you ever seen a foggy morning? The meadows are lost in the vapour that conceals them. Then the sun shines and the vapour is dissolved and the glistening meadows are more beautiful. The same applies to your gods, the fog of a poor human thought, which, ignoring God and needing to believe, because faith is a permanent necessity for man, created Olympus, a real non-existent idle story. And thus your gods, when the sun, that is, the True God, rises, will dissolve in your hearts without being able to do any harm. Because they do not exist. »

« We shall have to listen to You again… quite a lot… We are most definitely before the unknown. Everything You say is new to us. »

« But does it disgust you? Can you accept it? »

Plautina replies sure of herself: « No. It does not. I feel more proud of the little I know now, and which Caesar does not know, than I do of my name. »

« Well, then, persevere. I leave you with My peace. »

« What? Are You not staying, my Lord? » Johanna is desolate.

« No, I am not staying. I have a lot to do… »

« Oh! I wanted to speak to You about my trouble! »

Jesus, Who had begun to walk, after saying goodbye to the Roman ladies, turns round and says: « Come as far as the boat and You will tell Me what your pain is. »

And Johanna goes. And she says: « Chuza wants to send me to Jerusalem for some time and I am not happy about it. He is doing it because he does not want me to be confined any longer now that I am healthy… »

« You, too, are creating useless fogs for yourself! » says Jesus Who is stepping on to the boat. « If you considered that you can thus give Me hospitality or follow Me more easily, you would be happy and would say: "Bounty has seen to it". »

« Oh!… that is true, my Lord. I had not thought about that. »

« So, you can see! Be a good wife and obey. Obedience will give

you the reward of having Me as your guest at next Passover and the honour of helping Me to evangelize your friends. My peace be always with you. »

The boat sets out and it all ends.

168. Aglae in Mary's House at Nazareth.

20th May 1945. Pentecost.

Mary is working quietly at a piece of cloth. It is evening, all the doors are closed, a three flame lamp lights up the little room in Nazareth, particularly the table at which the Virgin is sat. The cloth, perhaps a bed sheet, hangs from the chest and from Her knees on to the floor, so that Mary, Who is wearing a dark blue dress, seems to emerge from a pile of snow. She is alone. She is sowing fast, Her head bent on Her work, and the light of the lamp causes the top part of Her hair to shine with pale gold tints. The rest of Her face is in half-light.

There is dead silence in the tidy room. No noise can be heard either from the road, deserted at night, or from the kitchen garden. The heavy door of the room where Mary works, where She takes Her meals and receives Her friends, and which opens on to the kitchen garden, is closed, so that not even the noise of the fountain water running into the basin can be heard. It is really the stillness of the night. I wonder what Mary is thinking of while Her hands are working swiftly…

There is a light tapping at the main door. Mary looks up and listens… The tapping has been so light that Mary must be thinking that it was caused by some night animal or by the wind and She bends Her head once again to Her work. But the knocking is repeated and more loudly. Mary stands up and goes to the door. Before opening She asks: « Who is knocking? »

A thin voice replies: « A woman. In the name of Jesus, have mercy on me. »

Mary opens the door at once holding the lamp up to see the pilgrim. She sees a heap of clothes, through which no one appears. A poor heap of clothes, stooping very low and saying: « Hail! My Lady! » and then once again: « In the name of Jesus, have mercy on me. »

« Come in and tell Me what you want. I do not know you. »

« Nobody and many know me. Vice knows me. And Holiness knows me. But now I need Piety to open Her arms to me. And You are Piety… » and she weeps.

« Come in, then… And tell me… You have said enough to make Me understand that you are unhappy… But I do not yet know who you are. Your name, sister… »

« Oh! no! Not sister! I cannot be Your sister… You are the Mother

of Good… I… I am Evil… » and she cries louder and louder under her mantle, which covers her completely.

Mary lays the lamp on a chair; she takes the hand of the unknown woman kneeling on the threshold and compels her to stand up.

Mary does not know her… but I do. She is the Veiled woman of the Clear Water.

She stands up, dejected, trembling, shaken by her sobs, and is still reluctant to go in. She says: « I am a heathen, my Lady. I am filth, for you Jews, even if I were holy. I am twice filth because I am a prostitute. »

« If you come to Me, if you look for My Son through Me, you can only be a repentant heart. This house welcomes those whose name is Sorrow » and She leads her in, closing the door, lays the lamp on the table, and asks her to sit down and says: « Speak. »

But the Veiled woman does not want to sit down; still stooping, she continues to weep. Mary is in front of her, kind and queenly. She waits, praying, for her to calm down. Her whole attitude tells me that She is praying, although nothing about Her takes the form of prayer: neither Her hands which are holding all the time the little hand of the Veiled woman, nor Her lips which are closed.

At last her weeping calms down. The Veiled woman dries her face with her veil and then says: « And yet I have not come from so far as to be unknown. It is the hour of my redemption and I must reveal myself… to show with how many wounds my heart is covered. And You are a mother… and His Mother… You will, therefore, have mercy on me. »

« Yes, My daughter. »

« Oh! yes! Call me daughter! I had a mother and I left her… I was later told that she died of a broken heart I had a father… he cursed me and he says to those in town: "I no longer have a daughter' » (she resumes crying more bitterly. Mary turns pale with anguish, but lays Her hand on her head to comfort her). The Veiled woman goes on: « No one will call me daughter any more!… Yes, caress me thus, as my mother used to do when I was pure and good… Let me kiss Your hand and wipe my tears with it. My tears alone will not cleanse me. How much have I wept when I realised! -Also before I used to weep, because it is horrible to be nothing but flesh, abused and insulted by man. But they were the tears of an ill-treated animal that hates and rebels against him who tortures and fouls it more and more… because I changed master, but I did not change bestiality… I have been weeping for eight months… because I have understood… I understood my misery and my depravity, I am covered and saturated with it and I feel disgusted… But my tears, although more and more conscious, do not yet cleanse me. They mix with my depravity and do not wash

it away. Oh! Mother! Wipe my tears and I shall be so cleansed as to be able to go near my Saviour! »

« Yes, My daughter, yes, I will. Sit down. Here, near Me. And speak calmly. Leave your burden here, on My knees of a Mother » and Mary sits down.

But the Veiled woman sinks to the ground at Her feet, as she wishes to speak to Her thus. She begins slowly: « I come from Syracuse… I am twentysix years old… I was the daughter of a steward, as you would call him, we say a procurator, of a wealthy Roman gentleman. I was an only daughter. My life was a happy one. We lived near the seaside, in a beautiful villa, where my father was the steward. Now and again the owner of the villa, or his wife or children would come. They treated us very well and were very good to me. The girls used to play with me… My mother was happy and… proud of me. I was beautiful… intelligent and I succeeded in everything… But I loved frivolous things more than good things. There is a great theatre at Syracuse. A great theatre… Beautiful… huge… It is used for games and plays… Mimers are widely employed in the comedies and tragedies which are performed there. They emphasize the meaning of the chorus by their silent dances. You do not know… but also by means of our hands or through the movements of our bodies we can express the feelings of a man agitated by a passion. Young boys and girls are trained as mimers in a special school. They must be as beautiful as gods and as agile as butterflies… I loved to go to a kind of high spot overlooking that place and see the mimers dance. I then imitated them on the flowery meadows, on the golden sands of my land, in the garden of the villa. I seemed an artistic statue, or a light blowing breeze, so clever I was in assuming statuesque postures or flying about almost without touching the ground. My wealthy friends admired me… my mother was proud of me… »

The Veiled woman speaks, remembers, sees and dreams of her past and weeps. Her sobs are like commas in her speech.

« One day… it was May… The whole of Syracuse was blooming with flowers. The celebrations were just over and I had gone into raptures over a dance performed in the theatre… The owners had taken me there with their daughters. I was fourteen years old… In that dance the mimers, who were to represent the springtime nymphs running to worship Ceres, danced crowned with roses and clad with roses… Only with roses because their dresses were very light veils, a cobweb spread with roses… While dancing they looked like winged Hebes, so light they glided about, while their magnificent bodies appeared through the ruffled strips of their flowery veils, flowing like wings behind them. I studied the dance… and one day… one day »…

The Veiled woman cries louder… She then composes herself.

« I was beautiful. I still am. Look. » She stands up throwing her veil behind her and letting her large mantle drop. And I am dumbfounded, because I see Aglae emerge from the discarded clothes. She is beautiful, also in her modest dress, in her simple plaited hair-style, without any jewels, without pompous garments. Her body is like a real flower, slender and perfect, with a beautiful light brown face and velvet eyes full of ardour.

She kneels down again in front of Mary. « I was beautiful, unfortunately. And I was crazy. On that day I put on veils, the daughters of our landlord helped me as they loved to see me dance… I got dressed on a strip of the golden beach, facing the blue sea. On the deserted beach there were white and yellow wild flowers, with the sharp scent of almonds, of vanilla, of clean human bodies. Waves of strong perfumes came also from the citrus gardens and the rose gardens in Syracuse gave off a scent, as well as the sea and the sand on the beach; the sun drew a smell from all things… something panicky that went to my head. I felt as if I were a nymph, too, and I was worshipping… whom? The fertile Earth? The fecundating Sun? I do not know. A heathen amongst heathens, I think I was worshipping Sense, my despotic king, whom I did not know I had, but who was more powerful than a god… I put on a wreath of roses picked in the garden… and I danced. I was enraptured by the light, the scents, by the pleasure of being young, agile and beautiful. I danced… and I was noticed. I saw I was being looked at. But I was not ashamed of appearing nude in the presence of two greedy eyes of a man. On the contrary, I took pleasure in dancing more lively. The satisfaction of being admired lent wings to my feet. And it was my ruin. Three days later I was left all by myself because the landlords left to go back to their patrician dwelling in Rome. But I did not stay at home… The two admiring eyes had revealed something else to me, beyond dancing… They had revealed sensuality and sex. »

Mary makes an involuntary gesture of disgust, which is noted by Aglae. « Oh! but You are pure! Perhaps I disgust You… »

« Speak, My daughter. It is better if you speak to Mary than to Him. Mary is a sea that washes… »

« Yes, it is better if I tell You. I thought that myself when I heard that He had a mother… Because before, seeing Him so different from every other man, the only thoroughly spiritual man - now I know there is the spirit and what it is - before I could not have said of what Your Son was made, as He was without sensuality although a man, and within myself I thought He had no mother, but He had descended upon the earth to save the horrible wretches of whom I am the worst.

Every day I went back to that place hoping to see the young handsome swarthy man… And after some time I saw him again…

He spoke to me. He said to me: "Come to Rome with me. I will take you to the imperial court, you will be the pearl of Rome". I replied: "Yes. I will be your faithful wife. Come and see my father". He laughed mockingly and kissed me. He said: "Not my wife. But you shall be the goddess and I your priest and I will reveal the secrets of life and pleasure to you". I was thoroughly infatuated, I was a young girl. But although a young girl, I knew what life is… I was shrewd, I was infatuated, but not yet depraved… and I was disgusted by his proposal. I tore myself away from his embrace and I ran home… But I did not speak to my mother about it… and I did not resist the desire to see him again… His kisses had made me more enthralled than ever… And I went back… I had hardly reached the deserted beach when he embraced me kissing me frenziedly, with a storm of kisses, with loving words, with questions: "Is there not everything in this love? Is this not sweeter than a bond? What else do you want? Can you live without this?"

Oh! Mother… I eloped the same evening with the filthy patrician… and I became a rag trampled on by his beastliness… I was not a goddess: but mud. Not a pearl: but trash. Life was not revealed to me, but the filth of life, the infamy, the disgust, the pain, the shame, the infinite misery of not even belonging to myself… And then… utter ruin. After six months of orgies, he became tired of me and passed on to fresh love affairs and I lived on the streets. I made the most of my dancing talent… I already knew that my mother had died of a broken heart and that I no longer had a home or a father… A dancing master accepted me in his academy. He perfected me… he enjoyed me… and he launched me into the corrupt Roman patriciate as a flower fully skilled in every sensual art. The already dirty flower fell into a cloaca. For ten years I fell lower and lower into the abyss. I was then brought here to delight Herod's leisure time and I was engaged here by a new master. Oh! No chained dog is more chained than one of us! And there is no dog trainer more brutal than the man who possesses a woman! Mother… You are trembling! I am filling You with horror! »

Mary has taken Her hand to Her heart, as if it had been wounded. But She replies: « No, not you. The Evil, which is such a powerful master on the earth, is horrifying Me. Go on, My poor creature. »

« He took me to Hebron… Was I free? Was I rich? Yes, I was, because I was not in jail and I was covered with jewels. No, I was not, because I could see only those whom he wanted and I had no right to myself.

One day a man, the "Man", Your Son, came to Hebron. The house was dear to Him. I realised it and I invited Him to enter. Shammai was not there… and from the window I had already heard words and seen a sight which had upset my heart. But I

swear to You, Mother, that it was not the flesh that drove me towards Your Jesus. It was something that He revealed to me that drove me to the door, defying the quips of the populace, to say to Him: "Come in". It was the soul that I then learned I had. He said to me: "My Name means: Saviour. I save those who are anxious to be saved. I save by teaching to be pure, to desire and accept sorrows with honour, to desire Good at all costs. I am the One Who seeks those who are lost and gives Life. I am Purity and Truth!". He told me that I also had a soul and that I had killed it by my way of living. But He did not curse me, neither did He mock me. And He never looked at me! The first man who did not strip me with his greedy eyes, because I lie under the terrible curse of attracting men… He told me that who looks for Him will find Him because He is where a doctor and a medicine are needed. And He went away. But His words were in here. And they have never come out. I used to say to myself: "His Name means Saviour", as if I were beginning to wish to be cured. I was left with His words and with His friends, the shepherds. And I took the first step by giving them alms and asking for their prayers… And then… I ran away…

Oh! It was a holy flight! I ran away from sin seeking the Saviour. I went about looking for Him. I was sure I would find Him because He had promised me. They sent me to a man whose name is John, thinking it was He. But it was not. A Jew sent me to the Clear Water. I lived selling the large quantity of gold I had. During the months when I wandered about I had to keep my face covered to avoid being captured and also because, really, Aglae was buried under that veil. The old Aglae was dead. Under the veil there was her wounded bloodless soul seeking its doctor. Many a time I was compelled to flee the sensuality of men who persecuted me, although I was so disguised in my attire. Also one of the friends of Your Son…

At the Clear Water I lived like an animal: poor but happy. And the dew and the river did not clean me as much as His words. Oh! Not one was lost! Once He forgave a murderer. I heard… and I was about to say: "Forgive me, too". Another time He spoke of lost innocence… Oh! How many tears of regret! Another time He cured a leper… and I was about to shout: "Cleanse me too, of my sin… -Another time He cured a madman, a Roman… and I wept… and He got someone to tell me that fatherlands pass away, but Heaven remains. One stormy night He sheltered me in His house… and later He asked the steward to give me hospitality and He told a child to say to me: "Do not weep"… Oh! His kindness! My misery! Both so great that I did not dare to take my misery to His feet… notwithstanding that one of His disciples during the night instructed me in the infinite mercy of Your Son. And then, when those who considered sinful the desire of a soul to be reborn, laid snares for

Him, my Saviour went away… and I waited for Him… But He was awaited also by the vengeance of those who are by far less worthy of looking at Him than I am. Because I, as a heathen, sinned against myself, whereas they, who already know God, sin against the Son of God… and they hit me and they have hurt me more with their accusations than with stones and they have wounded my soul more than my body, as they led me to despair.

Oh! What a dreadful struggle against myself! Worn out, bleeding, wounded, feverish, without my Doctor, homeless, without food, I looked behind me and in front of me… My past would say to me: "Come back", my present said: "Kill yourself", my future used to say: "Hope". I did hope… I did not commit suicide. I would, if He rejected me, because I do not want to be what I was!… I dragged myself to a village asking for shelter… But they recognised me. Like an animal I had to run away, here, there, always chased, always scorned at, always cursed, because I wanted to be honest and because I had disappointed those who, through me, wanted to strike Your Son. Following the river I came up to Galilee and I came here… You were not here… I went to Capernaum. You had just left. But an old man saw me. One of His enemies, who wanted me to bear witness against Your Son, and as I was weeping without reacting, he said to me: "Everything could change in your favour if you would become my lover and my accomplice in accusing the Rabbi of Nazareth. It is enough for you to say in the presence of my friends, that He was your lover… " I ran away like a person who sees a snake creep out of a flowery bush.

I thus understood that I can no longer go to Him… and I came to You. Here I am: tread on me, for I am mud. Here I am: reject me, for I am a sinner. Here I am: call me by my name: prostitute. I will accept anything from You. But, Mother, have mercy on me. Take my poor soiled soul and take it to Him. It is a crime to put my lust into Your hands. But only there it will be protected from the world that wants it and it will become penance. Tell me how I must behave. Tell me what I have to do. Tell me which means I must use to be no longer Aglae. What must I mutilate in myself? What must I tear away from myself that I may no longer be sin, or an allurement, that I may no longer have to be afraid of myself and of men? Shall I put out my eyes? Or burn my lips? Or cut my tongue? My eyes, lips and tongue have served me in evil deeds. I no longer want evil and I am willing to punish myself and them by sacrificing them. Or shall I tear off these greedy loins which have driven me to perverted love? Or these unappeasable viscera which I am afraid may be aroused afresh? Tell me, please tell me how can a woman forget she is a female and how can she make other people forget! »

Mary is upset. She weeps and suffers, but the only sign of Her

grief are the tears that fall on the repentant woman.

« I want to die only after I have been forgiven. I want to die remembering nothing but my Saviour. I want to die knowing that His wisdom is friendly to me… and I cannot go near Him because the world looks at Him and at me suspiciously to accuse us… » Aglae cries, prostrate with grief.

Mary stands up whispering: « How difficult it is to be redeemers! » She is almost breathless.

Aglae, who hears the whisper and understands Her gesture, moans: « See? You can see that You are disgusted, too. I will now go away. I am done for! »

« No, My daughter. You are not done for. No, you are beginning now. Listen, poor soul. I am not moaning because of you, but because of the cruel world. I will not let you go, but I will pick you up, a poor swallow tossed by the storm against the walls of My house. I will take you to Jesus and He will show you your way to redemption… »

« I no longer hope… The world is right. I cannot be forgiven. »

« You cannot by the world. You can by God. Let me speak to you in the name of the Supreme Love, Who gave Me a Son that I may give Him to the world. He took Me out of the blessed simplicity of my consecrated virginity so that the world might receive Forgiveness. He drew My blood not from My childbirth but from My heart by revealing to Me that My Creature is the Great Victim. Look at Me, daughter. There is a large wound in this heart. It has been groaning for over thirty years and it is becoming deeper and deeper and it consumes Me. Do you know its name? »

« Sorrow. »

« No. Love. It is love that bleeds Me so that My Son may not be the only one to save. It is love that sets Me on fire that I may purify those who dare not go to My Son. It is love that causes Me to weep that I may wash sinners. You wanted My caresses. I am giving you My tears that will already cleanse you and enable you to look at My Lord. Do not weep thus! You are not the only sinner who has come to the Lord and has left redeemed. Other women came, many more will come.

You are not sure that He can forgive you? But can you not see in everything that happened to you the mysterious will of Divine Goodness? Who brought you to Judaea? Who took you to John's house? Who placed you at the window that morning? Who lit a light to illuminate His words for you? Who made you understand that charity, when joined to the prayers of those who have been helped, obtains help from God? Who gave you the strength to run away from Shammai's house and to persevere during the first days until His arrival? Who led you on to His way? Who enabled you to live as a repentant sinner to cleanse your soul more and

more? Who gave you a martyr's soul, a believer's soul, a persevering and pure soul?

Do not shake your head. Do you think that only he is pure who has never known sensuality? Do you think that a soul can never again become virgin and beautiful? Oh! My daughter! Between the purity which is entirely a grace of the Lord and your heroic ascent to climb back to the summit of your lost purity, you must believe that yours is the greater. You are building it against sensuality, against need and habit. For Me it is a natural endowment, like breathing. You have to break off your thoughts, your feelings, your flesh, in order not to remember, not to desire, not to yield… I… Oh! Can a little child, a few hours old, have carnal desires? And does he have any merit thereby? The same applies to Me. I do not know what that tragic hunger is that made mankind a victim. I know but the most holy hunger for God. But you did not know it and you learned it by yourself. But you subdued the other hunger, the tragic and horrible one, for the sake of God, your only love at present. Smile, daughter of divine mercy! My Son is working in you what He told you at Hebron. He has already done that. You are already saved, because of your good will to be saved, because you have come to know of purity, of sorrow, of Good. Your soul has revived. Yes, you need His word saying to you in the name of God: "You are forgiven". I cannot say that. But I give you My kiss as a promise, as a beginning of forgiveness…

O Eternal Spirit, a little of You is always in Your Mary! Allow Her to pour forth Your Sanctifying Spirit on this creature who is weeping and hoping. For the sake of Our Son, o God of Love, save this woman who is expecting salvation from God. May the Grace, with which the Angel said that God has filled Me, may that Grace by a miracle rest upon her and support her until Jesus, the Blessed Saviour, the Supreme Priest, absolves her in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Spirit…

It is late, My daughter. You are tired and worn out. Come, Rest. You will go away tomorrow… I will send you to an honest family, because too many people come here now. And I will give you a dress like Mine and you will look like a Jewess. And as I will see My Son only in Judaea, because Passover is near and at the new moon of April we shall be in Bethany, I will speak to Him of you. Come to the house of Simon the Zealot. You will find Me there and I will take you to Him. »

Aglae is weeping again. But now she is at peace.

She is sitting on the floor. Also Mary has sat down again. And Aglae rests her head on Her knees and kisses Her hand… She then moans: « They will recognise me… »

« Oh! They will not. Do not be afraid. Your dress was too well known. But I will prepare you for your journey towards

Forgiveness and you will be like a virgin going to her wedding: you will be different and unknown to the people unaware of the rite. Come. There is a little room near Mine. Saints and pilgrims wishing to go to God have rested in it. It will shelter you, too. »

Aglae is about to pick up her large mantle and her veil.

« Leave them. They are the clothes of poor lost Aglae. But she no longer exists… and not even her dress is to remain. It experienced too much hatred… and hatred hurts as much as sin. »

They go out into the dark kitchen garden and then into Joseph's little room. Mary lights the little lamp on the shelf, caresses the repentant woman once again, closes the door and with her treble light she looks to see where She can take Aglae's torn mantle so that nobody may see it the following day.

169. The Sermon of the Mount: « You Are the Salt of the Earth. »

22nd May 1945.

Jesus is walking fast along a main road. He is alone. He is going towards a mountain, which rises near a main road running eastwards from the lake, and it begins to rise with a low mild elevation, which extends for a good distance, forming a tableland from which one can see all the lake and the town of Tiberias towards the south, as well as other towns, not quite so beautiful, stretching towards the north. There is then a crag and the mountain rises rather steeply up to a peak, and then slopes down and rises once again up to another peak, similar to the previous one, thus forming a kind of strange saddle.

Jesus begins climbing towards the tableland along a mule-track, which is still quite comfortable, and reaches a small village, the inhabitants of which work the tableland, where the corn is beginning to come to ear. He goes through the village and proceeds through the fields and meadows all strewn with flowers and rustling with crops.

The clear day displays all the beauty of the surrounding nature. Besides the lonely little mountain, towards which Jesus is going, to the north lies the imposing peak of Mount Hermon, the top of which looks like a huge pearl laid on a base of emeralds, so white is the peak covered with snow, whereas the woody slope is green. Beyond the lake, which is between the lake and Mount Hermon, the plain is green. Lake Merom is there, but cannot be seen from here. There are more mountains towards the lake of Tiberias on the north-west side and beyond the lake there is a lovely flat country and other mountains, the contours of which are softened by the distance. To the south, on the other side of the main road, I can see the hills, which I think conceal Nazareth. The more one climbs, the

wider the view. I cannot see what lies to the west, because the mountain acts as a wall.

Jesus meets first the apostle Philip, who seems to have been posted there as sentinel. « What, Master? You are here? We were expecting to meet You on the main road. I am waiting here for my companions who have gone to get some milk from the shepherds who pasture their flocks on these mountains. Down, on the road, there is Simon with Judas of Simon and Isaac, and… Oh! here… Come! Come! The Master is here! »

The apostles, who are coming down with flasks and containers, begin to run and the younger ones, of course, arrive first. The welcome they give the Master is really touching. At last they are all together and while Jesus smiles, they all want to speak and tell Him…

« But we were waiting for You on the road! »

« We were just thinking that You were not coming even today. »

« You know, there are many people. »

« Oh! We were embarrassed, there are some scribes and even some of Gamaliel's disciples… »

« That's right, my Lord! You left us just at the right moment! I have never been so afraid as I was just then. Don't play such a trick on me again! »

Peter complains and Jesus smiles and asks: « Did anything wrong happen to you? »

« Oh! no! On the contrary… Oh! Master! Don't You know that John gave a sermon?… It sounded as if You were speaking through him. I… we were all dumbfounded… That boy who only a year ago was able only to cast a net… oh! » Peter is still amazed and he shakes John who smiles but is silent. « Do you believe that it is possible that this boy spoke those words with these smiling lips? He sounded like Solomon. »

« Also Simon spoke very well, my Lord. He was really "the chief " » says John.

« No wonder! He took me and pushed me there! Who knows!… They say that I gave a good sermon. Perhaps I did. I don't know… because what with the surprise at John's words, what with the fear of speaking to so many people and causing You to cut a poor figure, I was bewildered… »

« Causing Me to cut a poor figure? But you were speaking and you would have cut a poor figure, Simon » teases Jesus.

« Oh! As far as I am concerned… I was not worried about myself. I did not want them to sneer at You and consider You a fool for choosing a blockhead as your apostle. »

Jesus sparkles with joy because of Peter's humility and love. But He only asks: « And what about the others? »

« Also the Zealot spoke very well. But he… we all know. But this

boy was the great surprise! Of course, since we retired to pray, the boy's soul seems to be in Heaven all the time. »

« That is true, very true. » They all confirm Peter's words. And they continue telling Jesus…

« You know? Among the disciples now there are two, who according to Judas of Simon, are very important. Judas is very active. Of course! He knows many of those… high up and knows how to deal with them. And he likes to speak… He speaks very well. But the people prefer to hear Simon, Your cousins and above all this boy. Yesterday a man said to me: "That young man speaks very well - he was referring to Judas - but I prefer you". Oh! poor fellow! He prefers me and I can hardly put a few words together!… But why did You come here? The meeting place was the road, and we have been there. »

« Because I knew I was going to find you here. Now listen. Go down and tell the others to come up, also the known disciples. The people are not to come today. I want to speak to you only. »

« In that case it is better to wait until evening. When the sun is about to set, the people spread among the nearby villages and they come back the following morning waiting for You. Otherwise… who will hold them back? »

« All right. Do that. I will wait for you up there, at the top. The nights are mild now and we can sleep in the open. »

« Wherever You wish, Master. Providing You are with us. »

The disciples go away and Jesus resumes climbing up to the top, which is the same one as I already saw last year in the vision for the end of the sermon of the Mount and the first meeting with Mary Magdalene. The view is now wider and is becoming brighter in the sunset.

Jesus sits on a rock and is recollected in meditation. And He remains thus until the shuffling of feet on the path warns Him that the apostles are back. It is getting dark, but the sun still shines on the mountain top, drawing scents from every herb and flower… There is a strong smell of wild lilies of the valley while the tall stems of narcissi shake their stars and buds as if they were asking for dew.

Jesus gets up and greets them: « Peace be with you. »

There are many disciples who come up with the apostles. Isaac leads them smiling. His smiling face is the thin face of an ascetic. They all gather round Jesus Who is greeting Judas Iscariot and Simon Zealot particularly.

« I wanted you all here with Me, to be for a few hours with you alone and speak only to you. I have something to tell you to prepare you for your mission. Let us take our food and then we shall speak, and while you are sleeping your souls will continue to relish the doctrine. »

They have their frugal meal and then form a circle round Jesus Who is sitting on a large stone. They are about one hundred, perhaps more, between disciples and apostles: a circle of attentive faces, which the flames of two fires light up oddly. Jesus speaks slowly, gesticulating quietly. His face looks paler, as it emerges from His dark blue tunic and also because it is lit up by the rays of the new moon, which illuminates the spot where He is, a small comma of a moon in the sky, a ray of light that caresses the Master of Heaven and earth.

« I wanted you here, aside, because you are My friends. I called you together after the first test of the Twelve, to widen the circle of My active disciples, and to hear from you your first reactions to being guided by those whom I am giving to you to continue My work. I know that everything went well. I supported with My prayer the souls of the apostles, who had come out of a praying retreat with a new strength in their minds and in their hearts. A strength that does not come from human effort, but from a complete reliance in God.

Those who have been most unmindful of themselves, have given most. It is difficult to be unmindful of oneself.

Man is made of recollections and the ones that raise their voice most are the memories of one's ego. You must distinguish between ego and ego. There is the spiritual ego of the soul that remembers God and its origin from God, and there is the inferior ego of the flesh that remembers its passions and the numberless exigencies concerning its whole being. They are so many voices as to form a choir, and unless the spirit is quite strong, they overcome the solitary voice of the spirit that remembers its nobility as child of God. It is therefore necessary - with the exception of this holy memory that should always be stimulated and kept green and bright - it is necessary to learn how to forget yourselves, in all the memories, the needs, the timid reflections of the human ego, in order to be perfect disciples.

In this first test of My Twelve, those who have given most are the ones who forgot themselves most. They forgot not only their past, but also their limited personality. They are the ones who no longer remembered what they were, and were so united to God as to be afraid of nothing. Why were some standoffish? Because they remembered their habitual scruples, their usual considerations and prejudice. Why were others laconic? Because they remembered their doctrinal inability and they were afraid of cutting a bad figure or causing Me to cut one. Why the showy ostentation of others? Because they remembered their usual pride, their desire to show off, to be applauded, to rise above the others, to be "someone". Finally, why the sudden revelation of a triumphal, rabbinic, persuasive, firm eloquence in others? Because they, and

they alone did remember God. Like those who so far have been humble and have endeavoured to pass unnoticed and at the right moment were able, all of a sudden, to assume the pre-eminent dignity conferred on them, and which they never wanted to exert before, lest they should presume too much. The first three groups remembered their inferior ego. The other group, the fourth, remembered their superior ego and were not afraid. They felt God with themselves and in themselves and were not afraid. Oh! holy boldness which comes from being with God!

Therefore now listen, both you apostles and you disciples. You apostles have already heard these concepts. But now you will understand them in greater depth. You disciples have never heard of them or you have only heard fragments of them. And you must engrave them on your hearts. Because I will make a wider and wider use of you, as Christ's flock is becoming more and more numerous. Because the world will attack you more and more violently, and its wolves will increase in number against Me, the Shepherd and against the flock and I want to put in your hands the weapons to defend both the Doctrine and My flock. What is sufficient for the herd is not sufficient for you, little shepherds. If the sheep are allowed to make mistakes, browsing in herbs which make the blood bitter or desires crazy, you are not allowed to make the same mistakes, leading a large herd to ruin. Because you must realise that where there is an idolatrous shepherd the sheep either die of poison or are devoured by wolves.

You are the salt of the earth and the light of the world. But should you fail in your mission you would become a tasteless and useless salt. Nothing could give you flavour again, since God could not give you it, considering that it was given to you as a gift, and you have desalted it, by washing it in the insipid dirty water of mankind, by sweetening it by means of the corrupt sweetness of sensuality, thus mixing with the pure salt of God the corruption of pride, avarice, gluttony, lust, wrath, sloth, so that there is a grain of salt to seven times seven grains of each vice. Your salt, therefore, is but a mixture of stones in which the poor grain of lost salt cannot be found, a mixture of stones screeching under your teeth and leaving in your mouths the flavour of earth, that makes food disagreeable and disgusting. It is not even useful for inferior use, as the flavour of the seven vices would harm also every human employment. The salt then can only be spread and trodden on by the careless feet of the people. How many people will thus be able to tread heavily on the men of God! Because those chosen men will allow the careless people to trample on them, as they no longer are a substance employed to give the flavour of noble heavenly things, as they are nothing but corruption.

You are the light of the world. You are like this mountain top

which was the last to be kissed by the sun and the first to be silvered by the moon. Who is in a high place shines and can be seen because even the most dreamy eye looks now and again at high spots. I would say that the physical eye, which is said to be the mirror of the soul, reflects the yearning of the soul, a yearning often unnoticed but always alive as long as a man is not a demon, a yearning after heights where reason by instinct places the Most High. And searching for Heaven, at least some times in life the eye looks at heights.

I beg you to remember what we all have done, since our childhood, entering Jerusalem. Where do our eyes turn? To Mount Moriah, triumphantly crowned with the marbles and gold of the Temple. And where do we turn our eyes when we are in the enclosure of the Temple? We look at the precious domes shining in the sun. How much beauty there is in the sacred enclosure, spread in its halls, porches and yards! But what is up there strikes our eyes. I also beg you to remember what happens when we are on the way to some place. Where do we turn our eyes, almost to forget the length of the journey, the tedium, the tiredness, the heat, the dust of the road? They turn to the mountain tops, even if they are not very high, even if they are far away. And what a relief it is to see them appear if we are walking in a flat unvarying plain! Is there mud on the road? There is neatness up there. Is it sultry on the plain? It is cool up there. Is the view limited down here? It is wide up there. And only by looking at the mountain tops, we feel less the heat of the day, the mud is not so slippery, and walking is not so painful. If there is a town shining on the mountain top, no eye will refrain from admiring it. We could say that even a modest place becomes beautiful if placed, almost like an airy place, on a mountain top. That is why in the true and false religions, the temples were placed, when possible, on high spots, and if there was no hill or mountain, they built a stone pedestal, thus building with human labour the elevation on which to lay the temple. Why is that done? Because men want the temple to be seen so that its sight will remind mankind of God.

Likewise I said that you are lights. When in the evening you light a lamp in the house, where do you put it? In a hole under the oven? In the cave used as a cellar? Or do you close it in a chest? Or do you hide it under a bushel? No, you do not. Otherwise it would be useless lighting it. The light instead is placed on top of a shelf, or it is put on a lamp-stand, so that being high up, it may brighten up the whole room and illuminate the people living in it. And precisely because what is placed on a high place is to remind men of God and illuminate, it must be able to fulfil its task.

You must remember the True God. Thus you must ensure that you do not have within yourselves the sevenfold paganism. Otherwise

you would become profane high places with thickets sacred to this or to that god, and you would drag into your paganism those who look at you as the temples of God. You must bear the light of God. A dirty wick, a wick not nourished with oil, smokes and gives no light, it has a bad smell and does not illuminate. A lamp hidden behind a dirty quartz-crystal does not create the splendid gracefulness or the dazzling effects of light on the bright mineral. But it fades behind the veil of black smoke that makes the crystal cover dull.

The light of God shines where wills are zealous in removing daily the scum produced by work itself, with its contacts, reactions and disappointments. The light of God shines where the wick is immersed into plenty liquid of prayer and charity. The light of God multiplies into infinite splendid reflections, as many as the perfections of God, each of which excites in the saint a virtue practised heroically, if the servant of God keeps the unattackable quartz of his soul clear from the smoke of every soiling passion. The unattackable quartz. Unattackable! (Jesus thunders out in this conclusion and His voice resounds in the natural amphitheatre).

Only God has the right and the power to scratch that crystal, to write His Most Holy Name on it with the diamond of His will. That Name then becomes the ornament that emphasizes the brighter facets of supernatural beauty on the most pure quartz. But if the foolish servant of the Lord, losing control of himself and the sight of his mission, a completely and solely supernatural one, allows false ornaments and scratches, instead of engravings to be cut on his quartz, that is, mysterious and satanic figures made by the hot claw of Satan, then the wonderful lamp no longer retains its intact beauty, but it cracks and breaks and the fragments of the splintered crystal suffocate the flame, and even if it does not break, a tangle of marks of unmistakable nature forms on its surface and soot penetrates into them spoiling it.

Woe, three times woe, to the shepherds who lose charity, who refuse to climb day by day to take upwards their flocks that expect their ascent in order to ascend themselves. I will strike them down and remove them from their positions and I will put out their smoke altogether.

Woe, three times woe, to the masters, who reject Wisdom to become saturated with a science, which is often opposed and always proud, sometimes satanic, because it makes them men, whereas - listen and remember - if every man is destined to become like God, through the sanctification that makes man a son of God, a master, a priest should already have in this world the aspect of a son of God, and only such aspect. He should have the aspect of a creature entirely devoted to souls and to perfection. He should have such aspect to lead his disciples to God. Anathema to

the masters of a supernatural doctrine, who become idols of human knowledge.

Woe, seven times woe, to those among My priests who are dead to the spirit, who with their lack of savour and ill-living flesh live as miserable sluggish human beings. Their sleep is full of hallucinated apparitions of everything, except God One and Trine, and is full as well of all sorts of calculations, except the superhuman desire to increase the wealth of hearts and of God; they live a material, miserable dull life, dragging into their dead water those who follow them, believing that they are "Life". The curse of God on those who corrupt My little beloved flock. I shall not ask an account and I will not punish those who perish through your laziness, o negligent servants of the Lord, but I will ask you to account for every hour and all the time lost and all evil consequences and I will punish you.

Remember those words. And now go. I am climbing to the top. You may sleep. Tomorrow the Shepherd will open the pastures of Truth to His flock. »

170. The Sermon of the Mount. The Beatitudes (Part One).

24th May 1945.

Jesus speaks to the apostles allotting a place to each one, so that they may direct and watch over the crowd who are climbing up the mountain since the early hours in the morning, with sick people whom they carry in their arms or in stretchers or who have dragged themselves along on crutches. Among the people there are Stephen and Hermas.

The air is clear and rather chilly, but the sun soon softens the fresh mountain air, which on its turn, moderates the heat of the sun, drawing benefit from it, as it becomes pure and cool but not sharp.

The people sit on the stones scattered in the little valley between the two crests, but some wait for the sun to dry the grass, wet with dew, so that they may sit down on the earth. There is a huge crowd from all the districts in Palestine and the people are of all conditions. The apostles disappear in the multitude, but like bees that come and go from the meadows to the beehives, now and again they go back to the Master to inform Him, to ask for advice, and for the pleasure of being seen near Him.

Jesus climbs a little higher up than the meadow, which is at the bottom of the little valley, He leans against the rock and begins speaking.

« Many have asked Me, during a year of preaching: "You say that You are the Son of God, tell us what is Heaven, what is the Kingdom, what is God. Because our notions are hazy. We know

that there is Heaven with God and the angels. But no one has ever come to tell us what it is like, because it is closed to righteous people". They have also asked Me what the Kingdom is and what God is. And I have endeavoured to explain to you what the Kingdom is and what God is. I have striven not because it was difficult for Me to give an explanation, but because it is difficult for many reasons to get you to accept the truth that clashes, as far as the Kingdom is concerned, with a multitude of ideas, which have risen over the centuries and, as far as God is concerned, with the sublimity of His Nature.

Others have also asked Me: "All right. That is the Kingdom and that is God. But how do we achieve them?" Here again I have tried to explain to you patiently the true spirit of the Law of Sinai. Who abides by that spirit conquers Heaven. But to explain the Law of Sinai to you it is necessary to make you hear the loud thunder of the Lawgiver and of His Prophet, who, while promising blessings to obedient believers, threaten terrible punishments and maledictions to those who disobey. The Epiphany of Sinai was frightful and its dreadfulness is reflected in the entire Law, and has been reflected throughout centuries and in all souls.

But God is not only a Legislator… God is a Father. And a Father of immense goodness.

Probably, nay, certainly, your souls are not in a position to rise and contemplate the infinite perfections of God, and His goodness least of all, because goodness and love are the rarest virtues amongst men. The reason is that your souls are weakened by original sin, by passions, by your own sins, by your own selfishness and the selfishness of other people: the former closes your souls, the latter irritates them. Goodness! How sweet it is to be good, with no hatred, no envy, no pride! How sweet it is to have eyes that look only for love and hands that stretch out only in gestures of love, and lips that utter only words of love and a heart, above all a heart, that full only of love, urges eyes, hands and lips to acts of love!

The most learned amongst you know with which gifts God had enriched Adam, both for himself and for his descendants. Also the most ignorant amongst the children of Israel know that there is a soul in us. Only the poor heathens are unaware of this royal guest, of this vital breath and celestial light that sanctifies and gives life to our body. But the most learned know which gifts were given to man and to the soul of man.

God was not less munificent to the soul than to the flesh and blood of the creature made by Him with a little mud and His breath. As He gave the natural gifts of beauty and integrity, of intelligence and will power, and the capability of loving oneself and other people, He also gave moral gifts and the subjection of senses

to reason. Therefore the wicked captivity of senses and passions did not permeate the freedom and control of Adam and of his will, with which God had gifted him, thus he was free to love, free to wish, free to enjoy in justice, without what makes you slaves, causing you to feel the bite of the poison that Satan spread and which now overflows, carrying you out of the limpid river-bed on to the slimy fields and putrescent ponds, where the fever of carnal and moral senses fermentates. Because you must realise that also the concupiscence of thought is sensual. And they received supernatural gifts, that is, sanctifying Grace, a heavenly destiny, the vision of God.

Sanctifying Grace: the life of the soul. The most spiritual thing deposited in our spiritual soul. The Grace that makes us children of God, because it preserves us from the death of sin, and who is not dead "lives" in the house of the Father: Paradise; in My Kingdom: Heaven. What is this Grace that sanctifies and gives Life and Kingdom? Oh! Not many words are required! Grace is love. Grace is therefore God. It is God Who admiring Himself in the creature whom He created perfect, loves Himself, contemplates Himself, desires Himself, gives Himself what is His own to multiply it, to delight in the multiplication, to love Himself in the many others who are others Himself.

Oh! My children! Do not defraud God of this right of His! Do not deprive God of what belongs to Him! Do not disappoint God in His desire! Consider that He acts out of love. Even if you did not exist, He would still be Infinite, and His power would not diminish. But He, although He is complete in His infinite immeasurable measure, does not want anything for Himself and in Himself which He could not, because He is already Infinite - but for Creation, His creature. He wants to increase His love for all rational creatures contained in Creation, and therefore gives you His Grace: Love, that you may carry it in yourselves to the perfection of saints, and you may pour this treasure, taken from the treasure that God has given you with His Grace and increased by all the holy deeds in all your heroic lives of saints, into the infinite Ocean where God is: into Heaven.

You are divine reservoirs of Love! That is what you are, and no death is given to your being, because you are eternal, as God is, being like God. You shall be, and there will be no end to your being, because you are immortal like the holy spirits that supernourished you, returning to you enriched by their own merits. You live and nourish, you live and enrich, you live and form the most holy thing which is the Communion of the spirits, from God, the Most Perfect Spirit, down to the last born baby, who sucks his mother's breast for the first time.

Do not criticise Me in your hearts, o learned men! Do not say:

"He is crazy, He is a liar! Because He speaks foolishly saying that there is Grace in us, when Sin has deprived us of it. He lies stating that we are already one thing with God". Yes, there is sin and there is separation. But before the power of the Redeemer, Sin, the cruel separation between the Father and the children, will collapse like a wall shaken by a new Samson. I have already got hold of it and I am shaking it and it is about to fall and Satan is trembling with wrath and impotence, as he can avail nothing against My power and he realises that so much prey is being snatched from him and that it is becoming more difficult to drag man to sin. Because when I will have taken you to My Father, through Me, and you have been cleansed and strengthened by My Blood and sorrow, Grace will come back to you, lively and powerful and you will be triumphant, if you so wish. God does no violence to your thoughts or your sanctification. You are free. But He gives you back your strength. He gives you back your freedom from Satan's empire. It is up to you to take upon yourselves the infernal yoke or to put angelical wings on your souls. It depends on you, with Me as your brother to guide you and nourish you with an immortal food.

You may ask: "How can one conquer God and His Kingdom through a milder road than the harsh Sinai one?" There is no other road but that one. But let us look at it not from the point of view of a threat, but from the point of view of love. Let us not say: "Woe to me, if I do not do that!" trembling with fear of sinning, of not being able not to sin. But let us say: "How glad I will be if I do that!" and with the impulse of a supernatural joy, full of happiness, let us rush towards these beatitudes, brought about by compliance with the Law, as roses sprout from a thorny bush.

"How happy I will be if I am poor in spirit, because mine shall be the Kingdom of Heaven!

How happy I will be if I am gentle because I shall have the earth for my heritage!

How happy I will be if I mourn without rebelling, because I will be comforted!

How happy I will be if I hunger and thirst for justice more than I do for bread and wine to satisfy the flesh, because Justice will satisfy me!

How happy I will be if I am merciful, because I will have divine mercy shown me!

How happy I will be if I am pure in heart, because God will bend over my pure heart and I will see Him!

How happy I will be if I am peaceful in spirit, because God will call me His son, because love is in peace and God is Love Who loves whoever is like Him!

How happy I will be if I am persecuted in the cause of right, because God, my Father, to reward me for my earthly persecutions,

will give me the Kingdom of Heaven!

How happy I will be if I am abused and accused falsely for being Your son, o God! It must not cause me desolation but joy, as it will make me equal to Your best servants, to the Prophets, who were persecuted for the same reason and with whom I firmly believe I shall share the same great eternal reward in Heaven, which is mine!".

Let us look thus at the way of salvation: through the joy of saints.

"How happy I will be if I am poor in spirit".

Oh! Satanic thirst for wealth, to what frenzy you lead both rich and poor! The rich who live for their gold: the ill-famed idol of their ruined spirits. The poor who live hating the rich because of their gold, and even if they do not murder them physically, they curse the rich wishing them all sorts of evil. It is not enough not to do evil, one must not even wish to do it. He who curses wishing calamities and death is very like him who kills physically, because he wishes the death of the person he hates. I solemnly tell you that such a wish is like an action held back, it is like a foetus conceived in a womb and formed, but not yet ejected. A wicked desire corrupts and ruins man, because it lasts longer than a violent action and is deeper than the action itself.

If a rich man is poor in spirit he does not sin for the sake of his gold but he turns his gold into sanctification, because he turns it into love. Loved and blessed, he is like spring water that saves travellers in a desert, as he gives generously, without avarice, happy to be able to relieve desperate situations. If he is poor, he is happy in his poverty and eats his bread which is sweetened by the joy of being free from the thirst of gold, he sleeps free from nightmares and gets up well rested for his tranquil work, which is always light when done without greed or envy.

What makes man materially rich is gold, what makes him morally rich are his affections. Gold comprises not only money but also houses, fields, jewels, furniture, herds, everything, in other words, that which makes life wealthy materially. Affections include: blood or marriage ties, friendship, intellectual soundness, public offices. As you can see, if for the first group a poor man can say: "Oh! as far as I am concerned, providing I do not envy those who are rich, I am all right because I am poor, and thus I am settled by force of circumstances", with regard to the second group also a poor man must be careful, because also the poorest man can become sinfully rich in spirit. Who is immoderately attached to a thing, commits a sin.

You may say: "Are we then to hate the wealth that God granted us? Why then does He command us to love our fathers, mothers, wives, children and say: 'You shall love your neighbour as

yourself?' ". You must distinguish. We must love our fathers, mothers, wives and our neighbour, but in the degree indicated by God: "As ourselves". Whereas God is to be loved above everything and with our whole selves. We must not love God as we love the dearest people among our neighbours: because a woman suckled us or because she sleeps on our chest and procreates children for us, but we must love Him with our whole selves, that is, with all the ability to love that is in man: the love of a son, of a husband, of a friend and - do not be scandalised - the love of a father. Yes, we must have for the interests of God the same care that a father has for his children, for whom he lovingly protects his wealth and increases it, and he takes care of and is anxious for their physical growth and intellectual education and for their success in the world.

Love is not an evil and must not become an evil. The graces, which God grants us, are not evil and must not become so. They are love, granted out of love. We must make a loving use of such wealth granted to us by God in personal affections and in worldly goods. And only he who does not make an idol of such wealth but uses it to serve God in holiness, shows that he has no sinful attachment to it. One then practises that holy poverty in spirit that deprives itself of everything in order to be more free to conquer God, the Holy Supreme Wealth. To conquer God: that is to have the Kingdom of Heaven.

"How happy I will be if I am gentle".

This may seem to be in contrast with the facts of daily life. Those who are not lowly seem to be prominent and successful in their families, towns and countries. But is theirs a real triumph? No, it is not. It is fear that keeps apparently subdued those who are overwhelmed by the despot, but in actual fact it is nothing but a veil drawn over the rebellion seething against the tyrant. Irascible and overbearing people do not win the love of their relatives, of their own citizens or of their subjects. Neither are intellects or souls convinced to follow the doctrines of masters who impose themselves by stating: "I said so, thus it is". Such masters only create selftaught men seeking the key that can open the closed doors of a wisdom or of a science which they feel to be, and actually is the opposite of what is imposed on them.

Those priests who do not endeavour to conquer souls by means of a patient, humble and loving kindness, do not win any souls to God, but they look like armed warriors who start a fierce attack, such is their intolerant rashness in dealing with souls… Oh! poor souls! If they were holy they would not need you, o priests, to reach the Light. They would already have it within themselves. If they were just, they would not need you, o judges, to be put under the restraint of justice, as they would already have justice within

themselves. If they were healthy, they would not need a doctor. Be therefore gentle. Do not put souls to flight. Attract them through love. Because lowliness is love, as poverty in spirit is love.

If you are such you will have the Earth for your heritage and you will take this place to God, whereas before it belonged to Satan, because your lowliness, which besides love is also humility, will have overcome Hatred and Pride, expelling from souls the vile king of hatred and pride, and the world will belong to you, that is, to God, because you will be the just souls that will acknowledge God as the Absolute Master of creation, to Whom praise and blessing are due and everything else which belongs to Him.

"How happy I will be if I mourn without rebelling".

Sorrow is on the earth and sorrow wrings tears from men. Sorrow did not exist but man brought it on to the earth and because of his corrupt intellect he continuously strives to increase it in every possible way. Besides diseases and calamities ensuing from thunderbolts, storms, avalanches, earthquakes, man, in order to suffer and above all to make other people suffer - because we would like only other people to suffer, and not ourselves, the effects of means studied to make people suffer - man invents deadly weapons, which are more and more dreadful and moral hardships, which are more and more cunning. How many tears man wrings from his fellow man through the instigation of his secret king: Satan! And I solemnly tell you that those tears are not an impairment but a perfection of man.

Man is an absent-minded child, a thoughtless superficial child, a backward born child, until tears make him an adult, thoughtful, intelligent person. Only those who weep or have wept, know how to love and can understand. They know how to love their weeping brothers, how to understand them in their grief, how to help them with their goodness, which is fully aware how bitter it is to weep alone. And they know how to love God, because they have realised that everything is grief except God, because they have understood that sorrow can be soothed if tears are shed on God's heart and they have also realised that resigned tears, which do not cause faith to be lost or prayer to become barren and which loathe rebellion, such resigned tears change nature and instead of sorrow they become comfort.

Yes. Those who weep loving the Lord will be comforted.

"How happy I will be if I hunger and thirst for justice".

From the moment he is born to the moment he dies, man craves eagerly for food. He opens his mouth at his birth to get hold of his mother's nipple, he opens his lips to swallow some refreshment in the throes of death. He works to feed himself. He makes a huge nipple of the world from which he sucks insatiably for that which is perishable. But what is man? An animal? No, he is a son of God.

He is in exile for a few or many years. But his life does not come to an end when he changes his dwelling.

There is a life in life as there is a kernel in a nut. The shell is not the nut, but it is the kernel inside the shell that is the nut. If you sow a shell nothing will come up, but if you sow the shell with the kernel inside it, a big tree will grow. The same applies to man. It is not his flesh that becomes immortal, but his soul. And it is to be nourished to take it to immortality, to which the soul, out of love, will take the body in the blessed resurrection. Wisdom and Justice are the nourishment of the soul. They are taken as food and as drink and they strengthen and the more one takes of them, the more grows the holy eagerness to possess Wisdom and know Justice. But the day will come when the holy insatiable hunger of the soul will be satisfied. It will come. God will give Himself to His child, and will suckle him and the child destined for Paradise will be satisfied with the admirable Mother Who is God Himself, and man will never be hungry again but will rest happily on God's divine bosom. No human science is equal to this divine science. The curiosity of the mind can be gratified, but the necessities of the spirit cannot. Nay, the spirit is disgusted by the difference in taste and makes a wry mouth at the bitter nipple, preferring to suffer the pangs of hunger, rather than be filled with a food that does not come from God.

Be not afraid, o men thirsting or starving for God! Be faithful and you will be satisfied by Him Who loves you.

"How happy I will be if I am merciful".

Who amongst men can say: "I do not need mercy"? No one. Now, if in the Old Law it is written: "Eye for eye, tooth for tooth", why should we not say in the New Law: "Who has been merciful shall find mercy"? Everybody needs forgiveness.

Well, then: forgiveness is not achieved by formulae or by the form of a rite, which are external symbols granted to man's dull mentality, it is instead obtained through the internal rite of love, which is still mercy. If the sacrifice of a goat or a lamb and the offer of a few coins were prescribed, the reason is that every evil is founded on two roots: greed and pride. Greed is punished through the expense for the purchase of the offering, pride by the open confession of the rite: "I am making this sacrifice because I have sinned". It is also done to anticipate the times and the signs of the times, and in the blood which is shed is symbolised the Blood which will be shed to cancel the sins of men.

Blessed therefore are those who are merciful to those who are hungry, nude, homeless, to those who suffer from the greatest misery, which is to have a bad disposition, as it causes grief both to those who have it and to those who live with them. Be merciful. Forgive, bear with people, help them, teach them, support them.

Do not conceal yourselves in a crystal tower saying: "I am pure and I will not descend amongst sinners". Do not say- "I am rich and happy and I will not hear of other people's miseries". Remember that your richness, your health, your family wealth may vanish quicker than smoke blown away by a strong wind. And remember that crystal acts as a lense and consequently what may be unnoticed if you were mixed among the crowds, cannot be concealed if you place yourselves in a crystal tower where you are alone, isolated and illumined on all sides.

Mercy is necessary to offer a continuous, secret, holy sacrifice of expiation and to obtain mercy.

"How happy I will be if I am pure in heart".

God is purity. Paradise is the Kingdom of Purity. Nothing impure can enter Paradise where God is. Therefore, if you are impure, you will not be able to enter the Kingdom of God. Oh! But what a joy the Father grants to His children in advance! Who is pure has in this world an advance of Heaven because God bends over a pure soul and man from the earth can see his God. He is not familiar with the taste of human love, but relishes the flavour of divine love, to the point of being enraptured, and can say: "I am with You and You are in me, I therefore possess You and I recognise You as the most loving spouse of my soul". And believe Me, who has God enjoys substantial changes, of which he himself is unaware, and thus becomes holy, wise, strong; words embellish his lips and his actions acquire a strength that is not of the creature, but comes from God Who lives in it.

What is the life of those who see God? A beatitude. And do you wish to deprive yourselves of such a gift for the sake of fetid impurities?

"How happy I will be if I am peaceful in spirit".

Peace is one of God's characteristics. God is to be found only in peace. Because peace is love, whereas war is hatred. Satan is hatred. God is peace. No man can say that he is the son of God, neither can God call son a man who has an irascible soul always ready to stir up a storm. Not only. Neither can he be called the son of God who, although not a trouble-maker himself, by means of his own great peace does not help to calm the storms stirred up by other people. Who is peaceful propagates peace also without uttering any words. Master of himself and, I dare say, master of God, he divulges Him as a lamp spreads its light, as a thurible exhales its perfume, as a wineskin holds wine, and this sweet oil, which is the spirit of peace issuing from the children of God, gives light in the foggy gloominess of ill-feelings, and purifies the air from the miasmas of malice and calms the raging waves of quarrels.

Let God and men say that you are so.

"How happy I will be if I am persecuted in the cause of right".

Man has become so devilish that he hates good wherever it is, and he hates who is good, as if who is good, even when silent, accuses and reproaches him. In fact the goodness of one person makes the wickedness of a wicked person appear even more wicked… In fact the faith of a true believer makes the hypocrisy of a false believer appear more clearly. In fact, he who by his way of living continuously bears witness to justice can but be hated by the unjust. And then the unjust are pitiless towards the lovers of justice.

The same applies here as in wars. Man makes more progress in the satanic art of persecution than in the holy art of love. But he can persecute only what has a short life. What is eternal in man eludes the snare, nay, it achieves a more energetic vitality than persecution itself. Life escapes through the bleeding wounds or because of the privations that consume those who are persecuted. But the blood makes the purple of the future king and the privations are as many steps to ascend the thrones that the Father has prepared for His martyrs, for whom are reserved the royal seats in the Kingdom of Heaven.

How happy I will be if I am accused and abused falsely".

Strive to have your names written in the celestial books, where names are not written according to human falsehood, which is accustomed to praise those who less deserve praise, where, instead, with justice and love are written the deeds of good people in order to give them the reward promised to the blessed ones by God.

In the past, the Prophets were calumniated and abused. But when the gates of Heaven are opened, they will enter the City of God, like imposing kings, and the angels will bow singing out of joy. You, too, who have been abused and accused falsely for being the children of God, will have a heavenly triumph and when the time comes to an end and Paradise is full, then every tear will be dear to you, because through it you will have conquered the eternal glory, which I promise you in the name of the Father.

Go. I will speak to you again tomorrow. Only the sick people should remain that I may relieve them from their pains. Peace be with you and may the meditation on salvation lead you, through love, on to the road the end of which is Heaven. »

171. The Sermon of the Mount. The Beatitudes (Part Two).

25th May 1945. The Sermon of the Mount continues.

It is the same place and the same time. The crowd is larger. In a corner, near a path, there is a Roman, who seems anxious to hear but does not want to upset the crowd. I recognise him from his short tunic and the different style of his mantle. Stephen and Hermas are still there.

Jesus walks slowly to His place and resumes speaking.

« What I told you yesterday must not cause you to think that I have come to abolish the Law. No. But since I am the Man, and I understand the weakness of man, I wanted to encourage you to comply with it, turning your spiritual eyes not to the dark abyss, but to the bright Sublimity. Because if the fear of punishment can hold you back three times out of ten, the certainty of a reward will urge you seven times out of ten. Trust is therefore more efficacious than fear. And I want you to be fully and firmly confident, so that you accomplish not seven parts of good out of ten, but ten out of ten and thus gain the most holy prize of Heaven.

I will not change one iota of the Law. And Who gave it amongst the peals of thunder on Sinai? The Most High. Who is the Most High? God One and Trine. Where did He take it from? From His Thought. How did He give it? By His Word. Why did He give it? Out of His Love. You can thus see that the Trinity was present. And the Word, obedient as ever to the Thought and Love, spoke on behalf of the Thought and Love. Could I give Myself the lie? No, I could not.

But since I can do everything, I can complete the Law, make it divinely complete, not what men did throughout centuries, as they did not make it complete, but incomprehensible and impossible to be fulfilled. In fact they superimposed precepts and laws taken from their own thoughts, according to their own gain, and they thus lapidated and suffocated, sterilised and buried the most holy Law given by God. Can a tree survive if it is continuously struck by avalanches, rubble and floods? No, it will die. The Law dies in many hearts, suffocated by the avalanches of too many superstructures. I have come to remove them all, and after unearthing and reviving the Law, I will make it no longer a law, but a queen.

Queens promulgate laws. The laws are the work of queens, but they are not above queens. I instead make the Law a queen: I complete it, I crown it, putting on its top the wreath of the evangelic counsels. Before it was order. Now it is more than order. Before it was the necessary thing. Now it is more than the necessary thing: now it is perfection. Who weds it, as I present you with it, becomes immediately a king, because he has reached "perfection", because he has been not only obedient, but also heroic, that is, holy, as holiness is the sum of virtues carried to the greatest height attainable by a creature, heroically loved and practised through a complete detachment from every human desire and consideration.

I could say that he is a saint, whom love and desire prevent from seeing everything but God. As his attention is not distracted by inferior sights, his eyes and heart are fixed on the Most Holy Brightness, which is God and in which, since everything is in God, he can see his distressed brothers stretching out their hands suppliantly.

And without taking his eyes away from God, the saint devotes himself to his suppliant brothers. Against the flesh, against wealth, against comforts, he pursues his ideal: to serve. Is a saint poor or disabled? No, he is not. He has succeeded in achieving true wisdom and wealth. He therefore possesses everything. And he never tires because while it is true that he is always active, it is also true that he is continuously nourished. And while he understands the sorrows of the world, he feeds on the delights of Heaven. He is nourished by God and delights in God. He is a creature who has understood the meaning of life.

As you can see I neither change nor mutilate the Law, neither do I corrupt it by superimposing human fomenting theories. I complete it. The Law is what it is and shall be such until the last day: not one word will be changed, not one precept will be abolished. It is crowned with perfection. To reach salvation it is sufficient to accept it as it was given. To obtain immediate union with God it is necessary to live it according to My advice. But since heroes are an exception, I will speak to common souls, to the mass of souls, so that no one may say that I have made what is necessary unknown, in order to reach perfection. But of everything I tell you, remember this: he who takes the liberty of infringing one of the least of these commandments, will be considered one of the least in the Kingdom of Heaven. And he who will induce others to infringe them, will be considered one of the least both with regard to himself and to those whom he led to the infringement. He, instead, who through his life and deeds, rather than by words, has convinced others to abide by the Law, will be great in the Kingdom of Heaven and his greatness will be increased by each of those whom he has led to obey and thus sanctify themselves.

I know that what I am about to say will taste bitter to many tongues. But I cannot tell lies, even if the truth I am about to speak will procure Me many enemies.

I solemnly tell you that unless you create anew your justice, detaching it completely from the poor and unfairly defined justice which the Pharisees and Scribes have taught you; unless you are really more just than the Pharisees and Scribes, who think they are just because they increase the number of formulae without any substantial change of their spirits, you shall not enter the Kingdom of Heaven.

Beware of false prophets and erring doctors. They come to you clad as lambs, and they are rapacious wolves; they come clad with holiness and they deride God; they say they love the truth and they feed on falsehood. Study them before following them.

Man has a tongue and speaks with it, he has eyes and sees with them, he has hands and makes signs with them. But he has something else which is a more truthful witness of his real being:

his deeds! And what are two hands joined in prayer, if a man is a thief and fornicator? And what are two eyes, which pretending to be inspired, roll in all directions, if after the farce, they greedily stare at a woman or an enemy, out of lust or for murder? And what is a tongue expert in whistling a false song of praise and in seducing by means of honeyed words, if behind your back it calumniates you and is capable of swearing falsely if only it could pass you off as a mean fellow? What is a tongue that says long hypocritical prayers and is then quick in killing the reputation of a neighbour or seducing his good faith? It is disgusting! And disgusting are untruthful hands and eyes. But the deeds of men, the true deeds, that is, his behaviour at home, in business, towards his neighbour and servants, are the things that testify: "This man is a servant of the Lord". Because holy deeds are the fruit of true religion.

A good tree does not bear bad fruit and a bad tree does not bear good fruit. Will these thorny bushes ever be able to give you tasty grapes? And those even more stinging thistles, will they ever be able to mature sweet figs for you? No, they will not. In actual fact you will be able to pick only a few sour blackberries from the former and uneatable fruits will come from the latter, which although flowers, are still thorny.

The man who is not just will be able to command respect by his appearance, and only by it. Also the downy thistle looks like a tuft of thin silvery threads adorned with diamonds by the dew. But if inadvertently you touch it, you find out that it is not a tuft, but a bundle of thorns, painful to man, harmful to sheep, so that shepherds uproot them from their pastures and bum them on the fire they light at night so that not even the seed may be spread. A just and provident step. I do not say to you: "Kill the false prophets and hypocritical believers". Nay, I say to you: "Leave the task to God". But I say to you: "Be careful, keep away from them that you may not be poisoned by their juices".

I told you yesterday how God is to be loved. I will insist on how our neighbour is to be loved.

Once it was said: "You shall love your friend and hate your enemy". No, not so. That was all right for the times when man did not have the comfort of God's smile. But now new times have come, when God has loved man so much as to send His Word to redeem him. Now the Word is speaking. And it is already an effusion of Grace. Later the Word will consummate the sacrifice of peace and redemption and there will be not only an effusion of Grace, but Grace will be given to every soul believing in Christ. It is therefore necessary to elevate the love for our neighbour to a perfection that unifies friend and enemy.

Have you been slandered? Love and forgive. Have you been struck? Love and offer the other cheek to him who smacked you,

considering that it is better that he gives vent to his wrath on you who can put up with it, rather than on somebody else who would take vengeance for the insult. Have you been robbed? Do not think: "This neighbour of mine is greedy", but charitably say: "This poor brother of mine is needy" and give him also your tunic if he has stolen your mantle. You will make it impossible for him to steal twice, because he will have no need to rob another person of his tunic. You may say: "It may be a vice and not a need". Well, give just the same. God will reward you for it and the wicked man will pay for it. But many times, and this should remind you of what I told you yesterday on lowliness, when he sees how he has been dealt with, his vice will drop from his heart and the sinner will redeem himself making amends for the theft by handing back what he had stolen.

Be generous towards those, who, being more honest, ask you for what they need, instead of robbing you. If the rich were really poor in spirit, as I explained yesterday, there would be no painful social inequalities, the cause of so many human and superhuman calamities. Always consider: "If I were in need, how would I feel if I were denied help?" and act according to the reply of your ego. Do to others what you would like done to yourself and do not do to others what you would not like done to yourself.

The old saying: "Eye for eye, tooth for tooth", which is not one of the ten commandments, but was added because man, devoid of Grace, is such a beast that he only understands vengeance, the old saying has been cancelled. It has indeed been cancelled by the new word: "Love him who hates you, pray for him who persecutes you, justify him who slanders you, bless him who curses you, help the one who harms you, be pacific with quarrelsome people, be compliant with bothersome persons, willingly help those who have recourse to you without practising usury, do not criticise, do not judge". You do not know the particular reason for men's actions. Be generous and merciful in all kinds of assistance. The more you give the more you will be given and a full pressed down measure will be poured by God on to the lap of him who has been generous. God will not give you only according to what you have given, but He will give you much more. Endeavour to love and be loved. Quarrels are more costly than friendly settlements and a good grace is like honey, the flavour of which lasts for a long time on one's tongue.

Love, love. Love friends and enemies, to be like your Father, Who allows the rain to fall on the good and the wicked and lets the sun shine on the just and unjust and will grant eternal sunshine and dew, and hellish fire and hail, when the good will be chosen, like selected ears of corn, amongst the sheaves of the harvest. It is not enough to love those who love you and from whom you expect

reciprocation. That is no merit: it is a joy and also naturally honest men can do it. Also the publicans and the gentiles do it. But you must love according to God and out of respect for God, Who is the Creator also of those who are your enemies or are not very fond of you. I want the perfection of love in you and I therefore say: "Be perfect as your Father, Who is in Heaven, is perfect".

So great is the precept of love for your neighbour, the perfecting of the precept of love for your neighbour, that I no longer say, as it was said: "Do not kill" because he who kills will be condemned by men. But I say to you: "Do not get angry" because a higher judgement is above you and takes into account immaterial actions. Who insults his brother will be condemned by the Sanhedrin. But who treats him as a madman, and consequently has harmed him, will be condemned by God. It is useless to make offers at the altar, unless you, for the sake of God, first sacrifice your ill-feelings in your hearts and you fulfil the most holy rite of forgiveness. Therefore, when you are about to make an offering to God and you remember that you have wronged your brother and you bear him a grudge because of a fault of his, leave your offer before the altar, make first the sacrifice of your self-esteem, by becoming reconciled to your brother, then come to the altar and only then your sacrifice will be holy. Full agreement is always the best business. The judgement of man is precarious and who stubbornly challenges it, may lose the cause and have to pay the opponent down to the last coin or languish in jail.

In everything turn your eyes to God. Ask yourselves: "Am I entitled to do what God does not do to me?". Because God is not so stubborn and implacable as you are. Woe to you if He were! No one would be saved. Let that consideration induce you to mild, humble, pitiful feeling. And then you will certainly receive a reward from God, both here and in the next world.

Here, in front of Me, there is also one who hates Me and dare not say to Me: "Cure me" because he knows that I am aware of his thoughts. But I say: "Let is be done as you wish. And as the scales fall from your eyes, so may ill-feelings and darkness fall from your heart".

You may all go with My peace. I will speak to you again tomorrow. »

The crowds disperse slowly, waiting perhaps for the cry of a miracle, which, however, is not heard.

Also the apostles and the first disciples, who remain on the mountain, ask: « Who was it? Has he not been cured? » and they insist with the Master, Who is standing, with folded arms, watching the crowd descending the mountain.

Jesus at first does not reply; He then says: « His eyes are cured, but his soul is not. It cannot be cured because it is full of hatred. »

« But who is it? That Roman, perhaps? »

« No. A poor wretch. »

« Why did You cure him, then? » asks Peter.

« Should I strike by lightning all the people like him? »

« Lord… I know that You do not want me to say: "yes", and so I will not say it… but that is what I think… and it is the same… »

« It is the same, Simon of Jonah. You should know then… Oh! How many hearts covered with scales of hatred there are around Me! Come. Let us go up there, to the top, to look from the height at our beautiful sea of Galilee. Only you and I. »

172. The Sermon of the Mount. The Beatitudes (Part Three).

26th May 1945. The Sermon of the Mount continues.

The same place and the same time. The people, with the exception of the Roman, are the same. Perhaps the crowd is larger because many people are standing at the beginning of the paths leading to the little valley.

Jesus is speaking:

« One of the errors easily made by man is to have lack of honesty towards himself. And since man is rarely sincere and honest, he has made some provision for himself in order to be compelled to go along the way he wants. This curb, which, after all, as he is a fiery horse, he soon slackens or gives a pull, as he wishes, and thus changes his gait; or he removes it completely and does as he likes, without considering what reproach he may receive from God, from men and from his own conscience. That bit is the oath. But no oath is necessary amongst honest people and God never taught you it. On the contrary He commanded you: "You shall not bear false witness", without any further addition. Because man ought to be frank without the need of anything except the loyalty of his word.

When in Deuteronomy mention is made of vows, also of the vows that are something which originated from a heart considered to be united to God, either through a feeling of need or a sentiment of gratitude, it is written: "Whatever passes your lips, you must keep to, and the vow that you have freely made with your own mouth to the Lord your God must be fulfilled". Mention is always made of the word given, without anything else but the word. Who feels the need of taking an oath is neither sure of himself nor of the opinion his neighbour has of him. And who makes other people take an oath testifies thereby that he distrusts the frankness and honesty of the swearer. As you can see, the habit of taking an oath is one of the consequences of man's moral dishonesty. And it is a shame for man. It is a double shame because man is not even faithful to the shameful thing which an oath is and by deriding God as easily as

he derides his neighbour, he swears falsely with the greatest ease and calmness.

Can there be a more contemptible man than a perjurer? A perjurer in fact convinces his neighbour to believe him, often by using a sacred formula, thus calling God to be his accomplice and to stand surety for him, or by invoking his dearest affections: his father, mother, wife, children, his dead relatives, his very life and most essential organs, to support his false statements. He thus deceives his neighbour. He is an impious person, a thief, a traitor, a murderer. Of whom? Of God, of course, because he contaminates the Truth with his disgraceful lies and jeers at Him, daring Him: "Strike me, give me the lie, if You can. You are there, I am here and I laugh at it". Of course, you may laugh, liars and gibers! But the moment will come when you will not laugh and that will happen when He, to Whom all power is entrusted, will appear to you, dreadful in His majesty, and simply by His aspect will make you stand to attention and will strike you with the lightning of His eyes, before His voice hurls you to your eternal destiny branding you with His curse. He is a thief because he takes possession of a reputation which he does not deserve. His neighbour, impressed by his oath, grants it to him, and the serpent adorns himself with it, pretending to be what he is not. He is a traitor because by his oath he promises something which he does not want to keep. He is a murderer: he kills either the honour of his fellow man depriving him of his reputation through false witness or he kills his own soul because a perjurer is a vile sinner in the eyes of God, Who sees the truth, also when no one else sees it.

God cannot be deceived, neither by means of false words, nor by means of hypocritical deeds. He sees. He does not lose sight of each man for a moment. And there is no fortified stronghold or deep cellar which His eyes cannot penetrate. Also within you, God penetrates the stronghold which every man has round his heart. And He judges you not according to what you swear, but to what you do.

I will therefore substitute another order for the one given to you, when the oath enjoyed great favour to put a restraint on lies and on the easiness of failure to keep a promise. I do not say as the ancients said: "Do not swear falsely, but keep your oath", but I say to you: "Never swear". Neither by Heaven which is the throne of God, nor by the earth which is the stool of His feet, nor for Jerusalem and her Temple which are the City of the Great King and the House of the Lord our God.

Do not swear either by the graves of the deceased or by their souls. Graves are full of the dross of the inferior part of man, which is common also to animals, and with regard to their souls, leave them in their dwellings. Do not cause them to suffer or to be

struck with horror, if they are the souls of just people already in the foreknowledge of God. And although they are in such foreknowledge, which is partial knowledge, because they will not possess God in the fulness of His brightness until the moment of Redemption, they can but suffer seeing you sinners. And if they are not just, do not increase their torture by reminding them of their sin through yours. Leave the holy deceased in their peace, and the unholy ones in their pains. Do not deprive the former of anything, do not add anything to the latter. Why appeal to the dead? They cannot speak. The saints because charity prevents them from speaking: they would have to give you the lie too many times. The damned because hell does not open its gates and the damned only open their mouths to curse, and their voices are suffocated by the hatred of Satan and of the demons, because the damned are like demons.

Do not swear by the head of your father or of your mother, or by the head of your wife or of your innocent children. You have no right to do so. Are they perhaps money or merchandise? Are they a signature on a document? They are more and they are less than such things. They are blood and flesh of your own blood, man, but they are also free creatures and you cannot use them as slaves to guarantee your false statements. And they are less than your own signature, because you are intelligent, free and grown up, you are not interdicted, neither are you a child who does not know what he is doing and must be represented by his parents. You are a man gifted with reason and consequently responsible for your actions and you must act by yourself, employing, as a guarantee for your own deeds and words, your own honesty and your own frankness, the reputation that you enjoy with your neighbour, not the honesty, the frankness of your relatives and the reputation they enjoy. Are fathers responsible for their children? Yes, they are, but only as long as they are under age. After, everybody is responsible for himself. Not always just children are born of just parents, nor is it so that a holy woman is married to a holy man. Why then use the justice of a relative as a guarantee? Likewise, holy children may be born of a sinner, and as long as they are innocent, they are holy. Why then appeal to a pure soul for an impure act of yours, such as an oath which you wish to swear falsely?

Do not swear by your own head, your eyes, your tongue, your hands. You have no right to. Everything you have belongs to God. You are only the temporary guardians, the bankers of the moral or material treasures which God granted you. Why then make use of what does not belong to you? Can you add one hair to your head or change its colour? And if you cannot do that, why do you use your sight, your word, the freedom of your limbs to corroborate your oath? Do not challenge God. He could take you at your word and

dry up your eyes as He can dry up your orchards, or take your children away from you, or crush your houses to remind you that He is the Lord and you His subjects, and that who idolizes himself and thinks he is above God, challenging Him with his falsehood, is cursed.

Let your speech be simply: yes, it is; no, it is not. Nothing else. Any addition is suggested by the Evil one, who later will laugh at you, because you cannot remember everything and you will contradict yourself and you will be jeered at and recognised as a liar.

Be sincere, My children, both in your words and in your prayers. Do not behave like the hypocrites, who, when praying, love to stand in synagogues or in the corners of squares where they may be seen by people and praised as just and pious men, whereas, within their families, they are guilty towards God and towards their neighbour. Do you not consider that that is like a form of perjury? Why do you want to maintain as true what is not true in order to win a reputation which you do not deserve? An hypocritical prayer aims at saying: "I am truly a saint. I swear it in the presence of those who see me and cannot deny they saw me praying". Like a veil laid on existing wickedness, a prayer said for such purposes becomes blasphemy.

Let God proclaim you saints and live in such a way that your whole life may shout on your behalf: "Here is a servant of God". But you must be silent for your own sake. Do not allow your tongue to be urged by pride and thus become an object of scandal in the angels' eyes. It would be better for you to become mute at once if you do not have the power to control pride and tongue, and you proclaim yourselves just and pleasing to God. Leave that poor glory to proud and false people. Leave that fleeting reward to haughty and deceitful people! A poor reward! But that is what they want and they will not have any other, because you cannot have more than one. Either the true reward, the Heavenly one, which is eternal and just, or the sham one, the earthly one, which lasts as long as the life of man, and even less, and which is paid for, after this life, with a truly mortifying punishment, because it is an unjust reward.

Listen how you must pray with your lips and with your work and with your whole selves, urged by your hearts which do love God and feel He is your Father, but they always remember who the Creator is and what the creature is, and in the presence of God they are always full of reverential love, whether you are praying or are busy, whether you are walking or resting, earning or helping.

I said urged by your hearts. It is the first and essential feature. Because everything comes from your hearts and your minds: your words, your eyes, your deeds are like your hearts. A just man

draws good from his just heart and the more he draws the more he finds, because the good done creates more good, like blood that is renewed circulating in the veins and flows back to the heart enriched with new elements taken from the oxygen, which it had absorbed or from the food juices, which it had assimilated. Whereas a wicked man can draw but fraud and poison from his gloomy heart full of fraud and poison, which grow more and more because they are corroborated by accumulating sins, while the blessings of God accumulate in a good man. You may be sure that it is the exhuberance of the heart that overflows from lips and reveals itself in deeds.

Make your hearts humble, pure, loving, trustful and sincere and love God with the chaste love of a virgin for her bridegroom. I solemnly tell you that each soul is a virgin married to the Eternal Lover, to God Our Lord; this world is the time of engagement during which the guardian angel of every man is the spiritual paranymph, and all the hours and contingencies of life are as many maids preparing the nuptial trousseau. The hour of death is the hour for the accomplished wedding when the introduction, embrace and union take place and the soul can raise the veil of the bridal dress and throw itself into the arms of God and the Spouse will not cause scandal by loving so.

But for the time being, o souls still victimised in the bonds of the engagement to God, when you wish to speak to the Spouse, withdraw to the peace of your abode, above all to the peace of your inner abodes and, angels of flesh helped by your guardian angels, speak to the King of angels. Speak to your Father in the secrecy of your hearts and of your inner rooms. Leave outside everything that belongs to the world: eagerness to be noted and to edify, and the scruples of long prayers full of words, of monotonous, tepid words lacking love.

For God's sake, get rid of standards in your prayers. There are really some people who waste many hours reciting a monologue only with their lips and which is a real soliloquy because not even the guardian angels listen to it; it is such a vain noise that they become absorbed in fervent prayer for the silly men guarded by them, in an effort to find a remedy. There are in fact some men who would not spend those hours in a different way, not even if God appeared to them saying: "The salvation of the world depends on your leaving such soulless manner of speech and going, shall we say, just to draw water from a well and pour it on to the ground for My sake and the sake of your fellow men". There are indeed many who believe that their monologue is more important than the kindness in receiving a visitor or the charity in helping a person in need. They are souls which have fallen into the idolatry of prayer.

Prayer is an act of love. And one can love praying or baking

bread, meditating or assisting a sick person, making a pilgrimage to the Temple or looking after the family, sacrificing a lamb or sacrificing one's desires, even the honest desire to concentrate on the Lord. It is sufficient for you to have your whole selves and all your actions impregnated with love. Be not afraid! The Father sees, understands, listens, grants. How many graces are granted for one single, true perfect sigh of love! How much wealth for an intimate sacrifice made with love. Do not be like the Gentiles. God does not need to be told what He has to do for your needs. The pagans may tell their idols, which cannot understand. But you cannot tell God, the True Spiritual God, Who is not only God and King, but also your Father and knows what you need, even before you ask Him.

Ask and it will be given to you, look and you will find, knock and it will be opened to you. Because whoever asks, will receive, whoever looks, will find and it will be opened to whomsoever knocks. When your child stretches his little hand towards you saying: "Father, I am hungry" do you perhaps give him a stone? Will you give him a snake if he asks for a fish? No, you will give him bread and fish, and caresses and blessings over and above, because it is pleasant for a father to nourish his son and see his happy smiles. If therefore you, whose hearts are imperfect, are capable of giving gifts to your children, out of a natural love that is common also to animals for their offspring, how much more will your Father, Who is in Heaven, grant to those who ask Him for the good and necessary things for their welfare. Do not be afraid to ask and do not be afraid not to receive!

However, I wish to warn you against an easy error: do not behave like those who are weak in their faith and in their love. Also amongst believers there are pagans whose poor religion is a mixture of superstition and faith, a building tampered with, into which all kinds of parasitic herbs have penetrated, so much so that it falls to pieces, and they, weak and pagans as they are, feel their faith is dying if they are not heard.

You ask. And you think it is fair to ask. And for that particular moment a certain grace may be right. But life does not end at that moment. And what is good today, may not be good tomorrow. You do not know that, because you know only the present, and that is a grace of God, too. But God knows also the future. And God to save you a greater pain does not hear your prayer.

During My year of public life more than once I heard hearts moaning: "How much I suffered then, when God did not hear me. But now I say: 'It was better thus, because that grace would have prevented me from reaching this hour of God"'. I heard others say to Me: "Why, Lord, do You not hear me? You grant it to everybody but not to me?" And yet, although I was sorry to see them suffer, I

had to say: "I cannot", because to hear them would have meant hindering their flight to a perfect life.

Also the Father some times says: "I cannot". Not because He cannot satisfy the request immediately, but because He does not want to satisfy it in view of future consequences. Listen. A child is suffering from intestinal trouble. His mother calls a doctor and the doctor says: "He must fast to be cured". The child cries, yells, implores, seems to be languishing. The mother, always pitiful, joins her moaning to her son's. She thinks that the doctor's order is severe and hard. She feels that such fasting and crying may be detrimental to her son. But the doctor is inflexible. At last he says: "Woman, I know, you don't. Do you want to lose your son or do you want me to save him?". The mother shouts: "I want him to live". "In that case" says the doctor "I cannot let him have any food. It would kill him". Also the Father some times says so. You, pitiful mothers of your own ego, do not want to hear it weep because some grace has been denied. But God says: "I cannot. It would do you harm". The day will come, or eternity will come, when you will say: "Thank You, my God, for not listening to my foolishness!"

What I said with regard to prayers, I say with regard to fasting. When you fast, do not look sad, as hypocrites do, who on purpose disfigure their faces that the world may know and believe that they are fasting, even if it is not true. They also have received their reward with the praise of the world, and will not receive another one. Instead, when you fast, look happy, wash your faces thoroughly so that they may look fresh and smooth, put oil on your heads and scents on your hair and smile like one who has been well fed. Oh! Truly there is no food that nourishes as much as love does! And who fasts with a loving spirit, feeds on love! I solemnly tell you that even if the world calls you "vain" and "publicans", the Father will see your heroic secret and will give you a double reward. One for your fasting and the other for the sacrifice of not being praised for it.

And now go and feed your bodies, since your souls have been nourished. Those two poor people may stay here with us. They will be blessed guests who will give flavour to our bread. Peace be with you. »

And the two poor people stay. One is a very lean woman, the other a very old man. They are not together. Chance had joined them, as they were standing dejected in a comer, stretching out in vain their hands towards those who passed in front of them.

Jesus goes straight towards them since they dare not come forward and takes them by the hand leading them to the middle of the group of the apostles, under a kind of tent that Peter has put up in a corner and under which they perhaps take shelter at night

and they gather during the hot hours of the day. It is a shed formed by branches and… mantles. But it serves its purpose, although it is so low that Jesus and the Iscariot, the tallest of the lot, have to bend to enter.

« Here a father and a sister. Bring what we have. While taking our food we will hear their story. » And Jesus personally serves the two shy old souls and listens to their sorrowful stories. The old man is alone, after his daughter went far away with her husband and forgot her father. The woman is also alone, after a fever killed her husband and, in addition, she is ill.

« The world despises us because we are poor » says the old man. « I wander about begging for alms to scrape together some money to celebrate Passover. I am eighty years old. I have always kept Passover and this may be the last time. But I do not want to go to Abraham's bosom with any regret. As I forgive my daughter, so I hope to be forgiven. And I want to keep my Passover. »

« It is a long way, father. »

« The way to Heaven is even longer, if one is not present at the rite. »

« Are you going by yourself? And if you feel ill on the way? »

« The angel of God will close my eyes. »

Jesus caresses his white trembling head and asks the woman: « And what about you? »

« I am looking for work. If I were better fed I would get rid of my fever. And if I were cured I could work at the corn. »

« Do you think that food alone could cure you? »

« No, You could, too. But I am a poor thing, too poor to ask You for mercy. »

« And if I cured you, what would you like afterwards? »

« Nothing else. I would already have had more than I could hope for. »

Jesus smiles and hands her a piece of bread dipped into some water and vinegar, which I think is their drink. The woman eats it without speaking and Jesus continues smiling.

The meal is over. It was so frugal! The apostles and disciples look for a shady place along the slopes and among the thickets. Jesus remains under the tent. The old man is lying on the grass and tired as he was, has fallen asleep.

After a short time the woman, who had gone away looking for some shade where to rest, comes towards Jesus Who smiles at her to cheer her up. She comes forward looking shy, but happy, almost as far as the tent. She is then overcome by joy, she walks with a vigorous stride and falling flat on her face with a choked cry exclaims: « You have cured me! May You be blessed! At this time I used to shiver with fever, but I am not now… Oh! » and she kisses Jesus' feet.

« Are you sure that you have been cured? I did not tell you. It might be by chance… »

« Oh! no! Now I understand Your smile when You handed me the bread. Your virtue entered me with that morsel. I have nothing to give You in exchange, except my heart. Order Your maid, Lord, and she will obey You until she dies. »

« Yes. See that old man? He is all alone and he is just. You had a husband and death took him away. He had a daughter and selfishness took her away. And that is worse. And yet he does not curse. But it is not fair that he should go about alone in his last hours. Be a daughter to him. »

« Yes, my Lord. »

« Mind you, it means working for two. »

« I am strong now, and I will do it. »

« Go up there, then, to that cliff and tell the man who is resting there, the one wearing a grey tunic, to come to Me. »

The woman goes away quickly and comes back with Simon Zealot.

« Come, Simon, I want to speak to you. Woman, wait here. »

Jesus walks away for a few yards.

« Do you think that Lazarus would find it difficult to take on another worker? »

« Lazarus? I do not think that he even knows how many servants he has! One more, one less!… But who is it? »

« That woman. I cured her and… »

« That is enough, Master. If You cured her it means that You love her. What You love is sacred to Lazarus. I commit myself for him. » « That is true. What I love is sacred to Lazarus. You are right. And that is why Lazarus will become a saint, because by loving what I love he will love perfection. I want to join that old man to that woman and let that patriarch keep his last Passover in great joy. I am very fond of old holy people and I am happy if I can give them a serene sunset. »

« You love also children… »

« Yes, and sick people… »

« And those who weep… »

« And those who are alone… »

« Oh! My Master! Don't You realise that you are fond of everybody? Also of Your enemies? »

« I do not realise it, Simon. To love is My nature. There… the patriarch is waking up. Let us go and tell him that he will be keeping Passover with a daughter beside him, and without any more need for bread. »

They go back to the tent where the woman is waiting for them and the three of them go towards the old man who has sat up and is tying his sandals.

« What are you going to do, father? »

« I am going down to the valley. I hope to find some shelter for the night and tomorrow I will beg on the road and then down, down, in a month's time, if I am not dead, I will be in the Temple. »

« No. »

« Must I not?… Why! »

« Because God does not want it. You will not go alone. This woman will come with you. She will take you where I tell her and you will be made welcome for My sake. You will keep your Passover, but without any trouble. You have already carried your cross, father. Put it down now. All you have to do is to concentrate in prayer thanking the good Lord. »

« But why… why… I… I do not deserve so much… You… a daughter… It is more than if You gave me twenty years… And where, where are You sending me?… » The old man is weeping into his long beard.

« I am sending you to Lazarus of Theophilus. I do not know whether you know him. »

« Oh!… I come from the border of Syria and I remember Theophilus. But… Oh! Blessed Son of God, allow me to bless You! »

And Jesus, sitting on the grass, in front of the old man, does bend His head to let him impose solemnly his hands on it, thundering out in a very deep voice the old blessing: « May the Lord bless You and keep You. May the Lord let His face shine on You and be gracious to You. May the Lord uncover His face to You and bring You to peace. »

Jesus, Simon and the woman reply together: « Amen. »

173. The Sermon of the Mount. The Beatitudes (Part Four).

27th May 1945. The Sermon of the Mount continues.

The crowd is growing larger and larger as the days go by. There are men, women, old people, children, rich and poor alike. The couple, Stephen and Hermas, is always present, although not yet associated with the old disciples led by Isaac. And there is also the new couple formed yesterday: the old man and the woman. They are in the very front, near their Comforter and they look much more cheerful than yesterday. The old man, to make up for the many months or years during which he was neglected by his daughter, has laid his wrinkled hand on the knees of the woman and she is caressing it out of the inborn instinct of a morally sound woman to be maternal.

Jesus passes near them to climb up to His rustic pulpit, and while passing He caresses the head of the old man who looks at Him as if he already saw Him as God.

Peter says something to Jesus Who makes a gesture as if He wanted to say: « It does not matter. » But I do not understand what the apostle says. Peter remains near Jesus, and Judas Thaddeus and Matthew join him. The other apostles are scattered among the crowd.

« Peace be with you all!

Yesterday I spoke of prayer, of swearing, of fasting. Today I want to instruct you in other perfections. They are also prayer, trust, sincerity, love, religion.

The first thing I will speak to you of is the right use of riches, changed into as many treasures in Heaven by the good will of the faithful servant. The treasures of the earth do not last. But the treasures of Heaven are eternal. Are you fond of what is yours? Are you sorry to die because you will no longer be able to look after your property and you will have to leave it? In that case transfer them to Heaven. You may say: "What is of the earth will not enter Heaven and You have taught us that money is the filthiest thing on earth. How can we transpose them to Heaven?" No. You cannot take money, material as it is, into the Kingdom where everything is spiritual. But you can take the fruit of money.

When you give a banker your money, why do you do it? That he may make it bear interest. You do not deprive yourselves of it, not even temporarily, that he may give you back the same amount. But out of ten talents you want him to give you back ten plus one or even more. Then you are happy and you praise the banker. Otherwise you say: "He is honest, but he is a fool". And, if instead of ten plus one, he should give you nine, saying: "I lost the rest", you would denounce him and send him to prison. What is the fruit of money? Does the banker sow your money and water it to make it grow? No. The fruit is given by a skilful handling of business, so that by means of mortgage deeds and loans at interest, the money is increased by the premium rightly requested for the loan of the gold. Is it not so?

Now listen. God gives you earthly riches. To some people he grants a great deal, to some only as much as they need to live, and He says to you: "Now it is up to you. I have given them to you. Gain by these means an end as My love wishes for your own good. I have entrusted you with them, but not that you may turn them into evil. Make your wealth bear interest, for this real Fatherland, both because of the reputation I hold you in, and out of gratitude for My gifts".

And here is the method to gain this end.

Do not accumulate your treasures on the earth, living for them, being cruel for them, cursed by your neighbour and by God on account of them. It is not worth it. They are never safe in this world. Thieves can always rob you. Fire can always destroy your houses.

Diseases of plants and animals can exterminate herds and orchards. How many things undermine your property! Whether it is real estate and unassailable, such as houses and gold; whether its nature is liable to be damaged, such as all living things, vegetables and animals, or precious cloths, they can be ruined. Thunderbolts, fire and floods can destroy houses; thieves, blight, dry weather, rodents and insects can damage fields; catching diseases, fever, crippling, murrain can destroy cattle; moths and mice can ruin valuable pieces of cloth and precious pieces of furniture; oxidization can corrode vases, chandeliers and artistic gates; everything is subject to destruction.

But if you turn earthly welfare into supernatural good, then it becomes free from all damage by time, men and calamities. Store up your treasure in Heaven, where thieves cannot break in, and where no calamities occur. Work with merciful love for all the miseries of the earth. You may caress your money and kiss it if you wish so, you may rejoice at the plentiful crops, at the vineyards laden with grapes, at the countless number of olives which bend the branches of the olive-trees, and at your prolific sheep with turgid udders. You may rejoice at all that, but not in a sterile or human way. Rejoice with love and admiration, with supernatural delight and foresight.

"Thank You, my God, for this money, for these crops, plants, sheep and for this business! Thank you, sheep, plants, meadows, business, which serve me so well. May you all be blessed, because through Your goodness, o Eternal Father, and through yours, o things of mine, I can do so much good to those who are hungry, or are naked, homeless, sick, alone… Last year I did it for ten. This year - as I have more money, although I gave away much as alms, and the crops are more plentiful and the flocks larger - I will give twice, three times as much as last year. So that everybody, also those who have no wealth of their own, may partake of my joy and bless with me the Eternal Lord". That is the prayer of a just man. A prayer which joined to your deeds, transfers your wealth to Heaven, and not only keeps it eternally for you, but you will find it increased by the holy fruit of love.

Store your treasure in Heaven so that your heart may also be there, above and beyond the risk that not only your gold, your houses, fields and herds may suffer damage, but that your very heart may be attacked and robbed, corroded, burnt and killed by the spirit of the world. If you do that, you will have your treasure in your heart because you will have God within you until the blessed day when you will be in Him.

But in order not to diminish the fruit of charity, take care to be charitable in a supernatural spirit. What I said in regard to prayer and to fasting applies also to charity and to any other good action

you may do.

Keep the good you may do free from the violating sensation of the world, keep it immune from human praise. Do not profane the scented rose of your charity and of your good deeds, as it is a true censer of perfumes agreeable to the Lord. Good is profaned by a proud spirit, by the desire to be noted when doing good and by the quest for praise. The rose of charity is then dribbled and eaten away by the big slimy snails of satisfied pride and the censer is filled with the fetid straw of the litter on which the proud man basks like a well fed animal.

Oh! Those deeds of charity accomplished to be pointed out by people! It would be better, much better, if they had not been performed at all! Who does not do them, commits a sin of harshness. Who does them letting people know both the amount given and the name of the person to whom it was given, and begging for praise, commits a sin of pride by making the offer known, as he says: "See how much I can afford?", sins against charity because he humbles the beneficiary by making his name known, and commits a sin of spiritual avarice as he wants to store up human praises… It is straw, nothing but straw. Let God and His angels praise you.

When you give alms, do not have it trumpeted before you, to draw the attention of passersby and win their praise, as the hypocrites do, who want to be praised by men and thus give alms only where they can be seen by many people. They, too, have received their reward and will not have another one from God. Do not commit the same sin and do not be so presumptuous. But when you give alms, your left hand must not know what your right is doing, so secret and modest is your almsgiving and then forget about it. Do not linger admiring your deed, swelling with it like the toad that contemplates itself with its veiled eyes in the pond and sees also the clouds, trees and a chart near the bank reflected in the still water and when it sees that it is so small as compared to them, which are so large, it swells up with air until it bursts. Also your charity is nothing as compared to the Infinite, which is the Charity of God, and if you wanted to become like Him and make your small charity so big as to be equal to His, you would fill yourselves with the wind of pride and would end up by perishing.

Forget about it. Forget about the action itself. A light, a sweet voice will always be present with you and will make your day bright, sweet and happy. Because that light will be the smile of God, the honey will be the spiritual peace, which still comes from God, and the voice will be the voice of God, the Father Who will say to you: "Thank you". He sees the hidden evil and the concealed good and will give you a reward for them. I can… »

« Master, You give the lie to Your own words! » The sudden resentful remark comes from the centre of the crowd.

They all turn round in the direction of the voice. There is some confusion. Peter says: « I told You! Eh! When there is one of those over there… everything goes wrong! » Many people in the crowd hiss and grumble against the reviler.

Jesus is the only one who remains calm. He has folded His arms and is standing, tall as He is, on His rock, with the sun in front of Him, in His dark blue tunic.

The reviler, heedless of the reaction of the crowd, goes on: « You are a bad Master because You teach what You do not do and… »

« Be quiet! Go away! Shame! » shout the crowd. And again: « Go back to your Scribes! The Master is quite enough for us! Let the hypocrites go with the hypocrites! You false masters! Usurers!… » and they continue but Jesus thunders out: « Silence! Let him speak » and the crowds no longer shout but they whisper their insults glaring at him at the same time.

« Yes. You teach what You do not do. You told us that we should give alms without being seen, and yesterday in the presence of a whole crowd You said to two poor people: "Stay and I will appease your hunger". »

« I said: "Let the two poor people stay here. They will be the blessed guests who will give flavour to our bread". Nothing else. I did not say I wanted to satisfy their hunger. Which poor man has not at least some bread? It was My joy to extend to them our good friendship. »

« Of course! You are cunning and You can play the lamb!… »

The old man stands up, turns round and raising his walking stick he shouts: « Infernal tongue who are accusing the Holy One, do you think that you know everything and that you can accuse Him of what you know? As you do not know who God is and who He is Whom you are insulting, so you do not know His deeds. Only the angels and my overjoyed heart know. Listen, men, listen everybody and see whether Jesus is the liar and the proud man that this traitor to the Temple is saying. He… »

« Be quiet, Ishmael! Be quiet for My sake! If I made you happy, please make Me happy by being silent » Jesus begs him.

« I obey You, Holy Son. But let me say only this: the blessing of an old faithful Israelite is on Him Who assisted me in the name of God and God put that blessing on my lips for me and for Sarah, my new daughter. But there will be no blessing on your head. I will not curse you. I will not foul, with a curse, my mouth which must say to God: "Receive me". I did not do it to her who disowned me, and I have already received a divine reward for it. But there is One who will take the place of the Innocent you are accusing and of Ishmael, the friend of God, Who assists Him. »

A chorus of shouts closes the speech of the old man who sits down again, while a man sneaks away, followed by insults. The

crowds then shout to Jesus: « Go on, go on, Holy Master! We will listen only to You. Listen to us, not to those cursed birds of evil omen! They are jealous, because we love You more than we love them! But You are holy, they are wicked. Go on, speak to us. You can see that we have no other wish but to hear You. Our homes, our business? They are nothing, we left them to hear You. »

« Yes, I will speak to you. But do not be upset by what happened. Pray for those poor people. Forgive them as I do. Because if you forgive men their faults, also your Father Who is in Heaven will forgive you your sins. But if you bear men a grudge and do not forgive them, neither will your Father forgive you your shortcomings. And everybody needs to be forgiven.

I was saying to you that God will give you a reward, even if you do not ask to be rewarded for the good you have done. But do not do good to be rewarded, to have a security for tomorrow. Do not do good restricted within narrow limits by fear: "And after, will I have enough for myself? And should I have nothing, who will help me? Will I find anyone who will do what I did? And when I will no longer be able to give, will I still be loved?".

Look: I have mighty friends among rich people and I have friends amongst the poor people of the earth. And I solemnly tell you that the mighty ones are not the most loved. I go to them not for My own sake or profit. But because they can give Me much for those who have nothing. I am poor. I have nothing. I would like to have all the treasures in the world and change them into bread for those who are hungry, into homes for the homeless, into clothes for the naked and into medicines for the sick. You may say: "You can cure people". Yes, I can do that and other things. But I do not always find faith in men, and I cannot do what I would do and would like to do, if the hearts of men had faith in Me. I would like to help also those who have no faith. And as they do not ask the Son of man for miracles, I would like, as a man to man, to help them. But I have nothing. That is why I stretch out My hand to those who are rich and I ask them: "Give Me some alms, in the name of God". That is why I have high-placed friendships. Tomorrow, when I am no longer on the earth, there will still be poor people, but I shall not be there to work miracles for those who have faith, nor to give alms to lead to faith. But then My rich friends, who are in touch with Me, will have learned how to help, and My apostles, after their experience with Me, will have learned how to give alms out of love for their brothers. And the poor will always receive assistance.

Yesterday, I received from one who has nothing, more than all those who are rich have given Me. He is a friend, and as poor as I am. But he gave Me something which no money can buy, and which made Me happy, bringing back to Me so many serene hours

of My childhood and youth, when every evening the hands of a Just One were laid on My head and I went to rest with his blessing as the guardian of My sleep. Yesterday this poor friend of Mine made Me king with his blessing. You thus see that none of My rich friends has given Me what he gave Me. Therefore, be not afraid. Even if you no longer have the power of money, providing you have love and holiness, you can still assist who is poor, tired and distressed.

And I therefore say to you: do not worry too much because you are afraid of having too little. You will always have what is necessary. Do not worry too much about your future. Nobody knows how much future there is ahead of him. Do not worry about what you will eat to support yourselves in life or what clothes you will put on to keep your bodies warm. The life of your souls is by far more precious than your stomachs and your limbs, it is much more valuable than your food and your clothes, exactly as material life is more valuable than food and the body more precious than its clothes. And your Father knows. You ought to know, too. Look at the birds in the sky. They do not sow or reap or gather into barns, and yet they do not starve to death because the heavenly Father feeds them. And you men, the favourite creatures of the Father, are worth much more than they are.

Which of you, with all his talent, can add one single cubit to his height? If you cannot raise your height even by a span, how can you possibly change your future conditions, increasing your wealth, to ensure that you will live to a long and happy old age? Can you say to death: "You shall come for me when I want"? You cannot. Why, then, worry about your future? And why go to so much trouble lest you should be left without clothes? Think of the lilies growing in the fields: they do not work or spin, they do not buy any cloth from vendors, yet I assure you that not even Solomon in all his regalia was robed like one of them. Now if that is how God clothes the grass in the field, which is there today and will be thrown into the furnace tomorrow or used to feed the cattle and will thus end up in ash or dung, how much more He will see to you, His children?

Do not be of little faith. Do not worry about an uncertain future saying: "What shall I eat when I am old? What shall I drink? How will I clothe myself?". Leave such worries to the Gentiles, who do not have the lofty certainty of the divine paternity. You have it and you know that the Father is aware of your needs and loves you. Therefore trust Him. Seek first what is really necessary: faith, goodness, charity, humility, mercy, purity, justice, meekness, the three and four main virtues, and all the others as well, in order to be the friends of God, and have a right to His Kingdom. And I can assure you that all the rest will be given to

you as well, without having to ask for it. There is no rich man richer than a saint or any man safer than he is. God is with the saint and the saint is with God. He does not ask anything for his body, and God supplies what is necessary. But he works for his soul, and God gives Himself to him in this world, and Paradise in the next one.

So do not go to any trouble for what is not worth your trouble. Let your imperfections grieve you, not your scanty earthly means. Do not worry about tomorrow. Tomorrow will take care of itself, and you will take care of it when you live it. Why worry today? Is life not already quite full of yesterday's sad memories and of today's troubles, that we should feel the need to add the nightmares of tomorrow's uncertainties? Leave to each day its own trouble! There will always be in life more pains than we would wish, without adding the present pains to future ones! Always say the great word of God: "Today". You are His children, created to His likeness. So say with Him: "Today".

And today I give you My blessing. May it accompany you until the beginning of a new today: of tomorrow, that is when I will give you once again My peace in the name of God. »

174. The Sermon of the Mount. The Beatitudes (Part Five). Encounter with the Magdalene.

29th May 1945.

It is a glorious morning and the air is clearer than usual. Distances seem to be shortened and remote things seem to be seen through a magnifying lens so clear and neat are the least details. The crowds are getting ready to listen to the Master. Day by day the country is becoming more beautiful in its luxurious dress at the height of the springtime season, which in Palestine I think is at end of March and beginning of April, because later it has the look typical of summertime, with ripe crops and thick fully developed foliage.

The whole country is now in bloom. From the height of the mountain, which is adorned with its own flowers even in spots which would appear least suitable for blossom growth, one can see the flexuous corn undulating down in the plain, blown by the breeze making it look like sea-green waves, with a pale golden hue at the top of the ears now seeding in their bristly awns. The fruit trees, completely covered with petals stand straight above the crops undulating in the light breeze, and look like as many huge Powder-puffs or balls of white, pale pink, dark pink, bright red gauze. The olive-trees by contrast, in their dress of penitent ascetics seem to be praying and their prayers are already changing into a tentative snowfall of tiny white flowers.

The top of Mount Hermon is like pink alabaster and is kissed by the sun. Two diamond threads - they look like threads from here - run down from the alabaster top twinkling in an unbelievable fashion in the sun, and disappear into the green woods; they appear once again down in the valley where they form water-courses which flow towards Lake Merom, which cannot be seen from here. They then flow out with the beautiful waters of the Jordan and later drop into the light sapphire sea of Galilee, which twinkles like chips of precious stones set in and lit up by the sun. The sails moving on the lake, calm and splendid in its frame of gardens and wonderful countryside, seem driven by small light clouds sailing in the sea of the sky.

Nature really seems to be smiling in this early hour of a spring day.

And the crowds throng incessantly. They come up from all directions: old, healthy, sick, children and young couples who wish to start their married life with the blessing of God's word. There are beggars and wealthy people who call the apostles and give them offerings for those who are poor and they are so anxious to find a concealed place in which to do it that they seem to be going to confession. Thomas has taken one of the travelling bags and calmly pours all the money into it as if it were chicken-feed, and then takes it to the rock where Jesus is speaking, and he laughs happily saying: « Rejoice, Master! You have enough for everybody today! »

Jesus smiles and says: « And we shall start at once, so that those who are sad may be happy immediately. You and your companions will select the poor and sick people and bring them here. »

That takes a comparatively short time, although they have to listen to the cases of many people and it would have taken much longer without the practical help of Thomas, who, standing on a stone to be seen by everybody, shouts in his powerful voice: « All those suffering from physical trouble go to my right hand side, over there, in the shade. » The Iscariot follows his example as he, too, is gifted with an exceptionally powerful and beautiful voice, and he shouts: « And all those who think they are entitled to alms should come here near me. And make sure you are not telling lies because the eyes of the Master can read your hearts. »

The crowds start moving about to form three groups: those who are sick, those who are poor, and those who are anxious only to hear Jesus teaching.

But two people, and then three of the last group seem to be in need of something which is neither health nor money, but is more necessary than both: a woman and two men. They look at the apostles but dare not speak. The severe looking Simon Zealot passes by; also Peter passes by; he is busy speaking to a dozen little children to whom he promises some olives if they keep quiet

until the end of the sermon, and a thrashing if they disturb while the Master is speaking; the elderly grave Bartholomew passes by; Matthew and Philip pass carrying a cripple who would have to struggle too much to open his way through the crowd; also the cousins of the Lord pass by helping an almost blind beggar and a very old poor woman - I wonder how old she is - who weeps telling James all her troubles; James of Zebedee passes by holding in his arms a poor girl, who is certainly ill, and whom he has taken from her mother to ensure that she does not get hurt by the crowds, while the panting mother follows him; the last to pass by are Andrew and John, whom I would call the indivisible ones, because while John, in his serene simplicity of a holy child, is willing to go with his companions, Andrew, on account of his reservedness, prefers going with his old fishing companion and fellow disciple of the Baptist. They had stayed at the junction of the two main paths, to show people to their places, but there being no more pilgrims on the stony path of the mountain, the two have come together to go to the Master with the last offerings received.

Jesus is already bending over sick people and the hosannas of the crowds punctuate each miracle.

The woman, who appears to be completely distressed, dares to pull John's tunic, while he is speaking to Andrew and she smiles.

He bends and asks her: « What do you want, woman? »

« I would like to speak to the Master… »

« Are you not well? You are not poor… »

« I am well and I am not poor. But I need Him… because there are evils without any fever and there is misery without poverty and mine… mine… » and she weeps.

« Listen, Andrew. This woman is sick in heart and would like to speak to the Master. What shall we do? »

Andrew looks at the woman and says: « It is certainly something which is painful to tell… » The woman nods assent. Andrew goes on: « Do not weep… John, try and take her behind our shed. I will take the Master there. »

And John, smiling, begs people to let him pass, while Andrew goes in the opposite direction towards Jesus.

But they are noticed by two distressed men, and one of them stops John, and the other Andrew, and shortly afterwards they are both with John and the woman behind the shed of branches which is part of the tent.

Andrew reaches Jesus when the Latter is curing the cripple who raises his crutches like two trophies, as brisk as a skilled dancer, shouting his blessing. Andrew whispers: « Master, behind our shed there are three people weeping. But it is their hearts that ache and their grief cannot be made known… »

« All right. I still have this girl and this woman. Then I will come.

Go and tell them to have faith. »

Andrew goes away while Jesus is bending over the little girl who is being held once again by her mother. « What is your name? » Jesus asks her.

« Mary. »

« And what is My name? »

« Jesus » replies the child.

« And Who am I? »

« The Messiah of the Lord Who has come to bring good to bodies and souls. »

« Who told you? »

« My mother and father who hope in you for my life. »

« Live and be good. »

The child, whose spine I think was affected by a disease, because although she is about seven years old, and perhaps older, she only moved her hands and was all enveloped in thick stiff bandages from her armpits down to her hips - they can be seen because her mother has lifted her dress to show them - remains as she was for a few minutes, then begins to slide down from her mother's lap on to the ground and runs towards Jesus Who is curing the woman, whose case I do not understand.

All the sick people have been satisfied and they are the ones who shout most in the crowd applauding « the Son of David, glory of God and ours. »

Jesus goes towards the shed.

Judas of Kerioth shouts: « Master! What about these? »

Jesus turns round and says: « Let them wait where they are. They will be comforted, too » and He walks fast to the back of the shed where the three people in anguish are with Andrew and John.

« The woman first. Come with Me into these hedges. Speak without any fear. »

« My Lord, my husband wants to leave me for a prostitute. I have five children and the last one is two years old… Great is my grief… and I am worried about my children… I do not know whether he will take them or leave them to me. He will certainly want the boys, at least the oldest one… And I who bore him will no longer have the joy of seeing him? And what will they think of their father and of me? They must think evil of one of us. And I would not like them to judge their father… »

« Do not weep. I am the Master of Life and of Death. Your husband will not marry that woman. Go in peace and continue to be good. »

« But… You will not kill him? Oh! Lord, I love him. »

Jesus smiles: « I will not kill anyone. But there is someone who will do his work. You must know that the demon is not greater than God. When you go back to your town you will find out that

someone killed that evil creature and in such a way that your husband will realise what he was doing and will love you again with revived love. »

The woman kisses the hand that Jesus had laid on her head and goes away.

One of the men comes: « I have a daughter, Lord. Unfortunately she went to Tiberias with some girl friends and it was as if she had taken some poison. When she came back to me she was like a mad woman. She wants to go away with a Greek man… and then… Why was she born? Her mother is heartbroken and perhaps will die of grief… I… only Your words, which I heard last winter, keep me from killing her. But, I tell You, my heart has already cursed her. »

« No. God, Who is a Father, only curses an accomplished and obstinate sin. What do you want from Me? »

« That You get her to mend her ways. »

« I do not know her and she will certainly not come to Me. »

« But You can change her heart also from far away! Do You know who sent me to You? Johanna of Chuza. She was leaving for Jerusalem when I went to her mansion to ask her whether she knew that wretched Greek. I was afraid she might not know him, because she is good, although she lives at Tiberias, but since Chuza has contacts with the Gentiles… She does not know him. But she said to me: "Go to Jesus. He called my soul back from very far away and He cured me, by that call, of my phthisis. He will cure also your daughter's heart. I will pray and you must have faith". I have faith. You can see it. Have mercy on me, Master. »

« Your daughter this evening will weep on her mother's knees asking to be forgiven. You must be as good as her mother and forgive her. The past is dead. »

« Yes, Master. As You wish and may You be blessed. »

He turns round to go away… but retraces his steps: « Forgive me, Master… But I am so afraid. Lust is such a demon! Give me a thread of Your tunic. I will put it in my daughter's pillow. The demon will not tempt her while she is asleep. »

Jesus smiles and shakes His head… but satisfies the man saying: « That your mind may be quieter. But you must believe that when God says: "I want it" the demon goes away without any further need. So keep this as a souvenir of Mine », and He gives him a small tuft from His fringe.

The third man comes: « Master, my father died. We thought he had some money. But we did not find any. That would not matter as my brothers and I are not short of bread. But I lived with my father as I am the eldest. The other two brothers are now accusing me of stealing the money and they want to sue me for theft. You can see my heart. I did not see one single coin. My father kept his Money in a coffer in a metal case. When he died we opened the coffer

but the case was no longer there. They say: "Last night, while we were sleeping, you took it". It is not true. Help me to restore peace and esteem among us. »

Jesus stares at him and smiles.

« Why are you smiling, Master? »

« Because your father is the guilty one, the guilt of a child who hides his toy lest someone should take it. »

« But he was not a miser. Believe me. He was charitable. »

« I know. But he was very old… It is the disease of old people… He wanted to preserve things for you, and out of too much love, he caused you to fall out with one another. But the case is buried at the foot of the cellar steps. I am telling you so that you may be aware that I know. While I am speaking to you, by pure chance, your younger brother, by striking the ground angrily, caused it to vibrate and so they discovered it and they are now embarrassed and sorry for blaming you. Go back home with a quiet mind and be good to them. Do not reproach them for their lack of esteem. »

« No, my Lord. I will not. But I am not going home, I am staying here to hear You. I will go tomorrow. »

« And if they take that money? »

« You say that we must not be greedy. I do not want to be so. It is enough for me if there is peace amongst us. On the other hand… I did not know how much money there was in the case and thus I will not suffer for any information contrary to the truth. And I consider that that money might have been lost… I will live now, as I lived before, should they deny me it. It is enough if they do not call me a thief. »

« You are well advanced on the way of God. Proceed and peace be with you. »

And also that man goes away happily.

Jesus goes back to the crowds, towards the poor people and gives them alms according to His own judgement. Everybody is now happy and Jesus can speak.

« Peace be with you.

I explain the ways of the Lord to you, that you may follow them. Could you follow the path that goes down on the right hand side, and at the same time follow the one on the left hand side? You could not. Because if you take one you must leave the other. Even if the two paths were close together you could not walk any length with one foot in one and one in the other. You would end up by being tired and making a mistake, even if there was a wager. But between the path of God and Satan's there is a great distance, which becomes greater and greater, just like the two paths that come out up here, but as they run down the valley they become farther and farther from each other, as one goes towards Capernaum and the other towards Ptolomais.

Such is life, it bestrides past and future, good and evil. Man is in the centre with his will power and free will; at the ends, on one side there is God and His Heaven, on the other side Satan and his Hell. Man can choose. Nobody forces him. Do not say to Me: "Satan tempts us" as an excuse for descending towards the low path. Also God tempts with His love, which is very strong, with His words, which are most holy, with His promises, which are most alluring! Why then should you allow yourselves to be tempted by one only of the two, by the most undeserving one to be listened to? Are God's words, promises, love not sufficient to counteract Satan's poison?

Consider that that is not to your favour. When a man is physically very healthy, he is not immune from contagion, but overcomes it quite easily. Whereas if a man is already ill and consequently weak, he will almost certainly die in the event of catching a new infection, and if he survives, he is more seriously ill than previously because his blood lacks the strength to kill the contagious germs completely. The same applies to the superior part. If a man is morally and spiritually healthy and strong, you may be sure that he is not free from temptations, but evil does not strike roots in him. When I hear anyone say to Me: "I approached this man and that one, I read this book and that one, I endeavoured to persuade this person and that one to do good, but in actual fact the evil which was in their minds and in their hearts, the evil which was in the book, entered my heart", I conclude: "Which proves that you had already created within yourself a suitable ground for penetration. Which proves that you are a weakling lacking in moral and spiritual strength. Because we must derive some good also from our enemies. By watching their errors we must learn not to fall into the same. An intelligent man does not become the laughing stock of the first doctrine he hears. A man saturated with a doctrine cannot make room in his mind for any other. This explains the difficulties met when one endeavours to convince those, who are persuaded of other doctrines, to follow the true Doctrine. But if you admit that you change your mind like a weathercock, I can see that you are thoroughly empty, that your spiritual stronghold is full of breaches, that the dam of your mind is leaking in hundreds of places, through which good water runs out and foul water runs in and you are so stupid and listless that you are not even aware of it and you do not see it. You are a wretch".

Of the two paths, therefore, choose the good one and proceed on it resisting to the allurements of senses, of the world, of science, of the demon. Leave half faiths, compromises, pacts with two people, one opposed to the other, to the men of the world. They, too, should avoid them, if they are honest. At least you, men of God, must shun them. You cannot have them either with God or with

Mammon. You must not have them with yourselves either, because they would be of no value. If your actions are a mixture of good and evil, they are of no value whatsoever. The entirely good ones would be cancelled by the bad ones. The evil ones would lead you straight into the Enemy's arms. Therefore do not indulge in them. Be loyal in your service. No one can serve two masters with two different minds. He will either love one and hate the other or viceversa. You cannot be both of God and of Mammon. The spirit of God cannot be conciliated with the spirit of the world. The former ascends, the latter descends. The former sanctifies, the latter corrupts. And if you are corrupt, how can you act with purity? Senses light up in corrupt people and other lusts follow senses.

You already know how Eve was corrupted and how Adam became corrupt through her. Satan kissed the woman's eyes and bewitched them, so that every aspect, so far pure, became impure for her and roused strange curiosities. Then Satan kissed her ears and opened them to the words of a new science: his own. Also Eve's mind wanted to know what was not necessary. Then Satan showed her eyes and mind, now awake to Evil, what previously they had not seen or understood, and everything in Eve became sharp and corrupt. And the Woman went to the Man, revealed her secret and persuaded Adam to taste of the new fruit, so beautiful to the eye and so strictly forbidden so far. And she kissed him and looked at him with mouth and eyes already fouled by Satan's gloomy disorder. And corruption penetrated Adam who saw, and through his eyes he craved for what was forbidden and he bit it with his helpmate and fell from such height into mud.

A corrupt person will draw another person to corruption, unless the latter is a saint in the true sense of the word.

Watch your eyes, men. Both the eyes of your bodies and the eyes of your minds. If they are corrupt, they can but corrupt all the rest. The eye is the light of the body. Your thought is the light of your heart. But if your eye is not pure - because since the organs are subject to thought, a corrupt thought will corrupt also senses everything in you will become obscure, and a seducing haze will create impure phantasms in you. Everything is pure in him who has a pure thought which causes a pure look, and the light of God descends as a master where there is no obstruction of senses. But if out of ill will you have accustomed your eyes to disorderly visions, everything will become darkness in you. In vain you will look at the most holy things. In the darkness they will be nothing but blackness and blackness will be the deeds accomplished by you.

Therefore, o children of God, defend yourselves against yourselves. Look after yourselves diligently against all temptations. There is no evil in being tempted. An athlete prepares himself for victory fighting. But it is evil to be overcome because

you are not prepared and you are negligent. I know that everything serves as a temptation. I know that defence is exhausting. I know that it is tiring to have to struggle. But think of what you will gain through these things. And for one hour of pleasure, whatever kind it may be, would you like to lose an eternity of peace? What does the pleasure of the flesh, of gold, of thoughts leave you? Nothing. What do you gain by rejecting them? Everything. I am speaking to sinners, because man is a sinner. Well, tell me the truth: after satisfying your senses, your pride, your greed, have you felt fresher, happier, safer? In the hour following your satisfaction, which is always the time of meditation, have you sincerely felt that you were happy? I have never tasted the bread of sensuality. But I will reply in your stead: "No. Languor, unhappiness, uncertainty, nausea, fear, restlessness: that was the juice squeezed out of the hour spent in pleasure".

But I beg you: while I say to you: "Never do that", I also say to you: "Do not be inflexible with those who make mistakes". Remember that you are all brothers, made of one flesh and one soul. Consider that there are many reasons why one is led to sin. Be merciful towards sinners and kindly help them and take them back to God, showing them that the path they have followed is full of dangers for the flesh, the mind and the spirit. Do that and you will receive a great reward… Because the Father Who is in Heaven is merciful to good people and He knows how to give you one hundredfold to one. Now I say to you… »

And here Jesus tells me that you must copy the vision dated 12th August 1944, from line 35 to the end, that is to the departure of Mary Magdalene.

12th August 1944.

Jesus says: « Look and write. It is the Gospel of Mercy that I give to everybody and in particular to those women who will recognise themselves in the sinner and whom I invite to follow her in her redemption. »

Jesus is standing on a rock and is speaking to a large crowd. It is a mountainous place. A lonely hill, between two valleys. The top of the hill is shaped like a yoke, or rather, like a camel's hump, so that a few yards from the top there is a natural amphitheatre where voices resound clearly as in a well-built concert hall.

The hill is all in flower. It must be summer. The crops down in the plain are beginning to ripen and are getting ready to be cut. The glacier of a high mountain in the north is shining in the sun. Directly below, to the east, the Sea of Galilee looks like a mirror broken into numberless fragments, each of which is a sapphire lit

up by the sun. Its blue-gold twinkling is dazzling and it reflects a few fluffy clouds in a very clear sky and the shadow of some swift sails. Beyond the lake of Gennesaret there is a vast extent of plain ground, which because of a light mist near the earth, caused perhaps by evaporation of dew - in fact it must be early morning as the grass on the mountain still has a few dewy diamonds glittering on its stems - looks like a continuation of the lake with an opal-like hue veined with green. Further back there is a chain of mountains, the side of which is so bizarre as to give the impression of clouds sketched on the clear sky.

Some of the people are sitting on the grass, some on large stones, some are standing. The apostolic college is not complete. I can see Peter and Andrew, John and James, and I can hear the other two being called Nathanael and Philip. Then there is one who is and is not one of the group. Perhaps he is the last one who arrived: they call him Simon. The others are not there, unless they are among the crowds and I cannot see them.

The sermon has already started. I understand that it is the Sermon of the Mount. But the Beatitudes have already been proclaimed. I would say that the sermon is drawing towards the close because Jesus says: « Do that and you will receive a great reward. Because the Father Who is in Heaven is merciful to good people and He knows how to give you one hundredfold to one. So I say to you… »

There is much excitement amongst the people who crowd round the path leading to the tableau. The people closest to Jesus turn their heads round. Everybody's attention is distracted. Jesus stops speaking and turns His eyes in the same direction as the others. He is serious and handsome in His dark blue tunic, His arms folded on His chest while the first rays of the sun rising above the eastern peak of the hill shine on His head.

« Make room, you plebeians » shouts the angry voice of a man. « Make room for the beauty who is passing… » and four dandies, smartly dressed, come forward, one of whom is certainly Roman, because he is wearing a Roman toga; they are carrying Mary of Magdala, still a great sinner, triumphantly on their hands, crossed to form a seat.

And she smiles with her beautiful mouth, throwing back her head and her golden hair, which is all plaits and curls held by precious hair-pins and a pale gold leaf strewn with pearls, which encircles the upper part of her forehead like a diadem, from which small light curls hang down to veil her splendid eyes, made larger and more seductive by a refined make-up. The diadem disappears behind her ears, under the mass of plaits at the back of her snowwhite completely bare neck. And her nakedness extends much farther than her neck. Her shoulders are bare down to her shoulderblades and her breast is even more so. Her dress is held on her

shoulders by two little gold chains. It is completely sleeveless. Her body is covered, so to say, by a veil the only purpose of which is to protect her skin from sunburn. The dress is of a very light fabric and when she throws herself back, out of affection, against one or the other of her lovers, she seems to be doing so completely nude. I am under the impression that the Roman is the one she prefers because she glances and smiles at him more frequently and rests her head on his shoulder.

« The desire of the goddess has been satisfied » says the Roman. « Rome has acted as a mount for the new Venus. Over there, there is the Apollo you wanted to see. Seduce Him, therefore… But leave some crumbs of your charm also to us. »

Mary laughs and with an agile provoking movement she jumps to the ground, showing her small feet shod in white sandals with golden buckles, as well as a good length of her leg. Then her dress covers her whole body. It is in fact a very wide one of snow-white wool as thin as a veil, held tight at the waist, very low, near her sides, by a large belt made of supple gold bosses. And she stands on the green tableland, where there is a vast amount of lilies of the valley and wild narcissi, like a flower of flesh, an impure flower, which has opened there by witchcraft.

She is more beautiful than ever. Her tiny purple lips seem a carnation opening on the whiteness of her perfect set of teeth. Her face and body would satisfy the most exacting painter or sculptor both because of her complexion and her figure. With her broad breast, her perfectly sized sides, her naturally supple slender waist, as compared with her sides and breast, she does look like a goddess, as the Roman said, a goddess sculptured in a light pinkish marble on the sides of which a fabric is draped and then hangs in the front in a mass of folds. Everything has been devised to please.

Jesus stares at her. And she defiantly resists His look while she smiles and twists lightly as the Roman tickles her, running on her bare shoulders and breast a lily picked among the grass. Mary with affected indignation, lifts her veil saying: « Have respect for my innocence » which causes the four to burst into a guffaw.

Jesus continues staring at her. As soon as the noise of the laughter fades away, Jesus resumes speaking, as if the apparition of the woman had kindled the flame of the sermon, which was losing intensity in its conclusion, and no longer looks at her. He looks instead at His audience who seem embarrassed and scandalised at the event.

Jesus says: « I told you to be faithful to the Law, to be humble and merciful, to love not only your brothers by the flesh but also those who are brothers because they were born, like you, of man. I told you that forgiveness is better than hostility, that compassion is better than stubbornness. But now I tell you that you must not

condemn unless you are free from the fault you wish to condemn. Do not behave like the Scribes and Pharisees who are severe with everybody except themselves, who call impure what is exterior and can only contaminate what is exterior and then they receive impurity in the very depths of their hearts.

God does not stay with the impure. Because impurity corrupts what is the property of God: souls, and in particular the souls of children who are angels spread over the earth. Woe to those who tear off their wings with the cruelty of devilish beasts and throw those flowers of Heaven into the mire, by letting them taste the flavour of material things! Woe… It would be better if they died struck by thunderbolts rather than commit such sin!

Woe to you, rich and fast living people! Because it is amongst you that the greatest impurity thrives and idleness and money are its bed and pillow! You are now sated. The food of concupiscence reaches your throats and chokes you. But you will be hungry. And your hunger will be terrible, insatiable and unappeasable for ever and ever. You are now rich. How much good you could do with your wealth! Instead you do so much harm both to yourselves and to other people. But you will experience a dreadful poverty on a day that will have no end. You now laugh. You think you are triumphing. But your tears will fill the ponds of Gehenna. And they will never cease.

Where does adultery nestle? Where does the corruption of young girls hide? Who has two or three licentious beds, in addition to his own matrimonial one, on which he squanders his money and wastes the strength of a healthy body given to him by God that he may work for his family and not to wear himself out through filthy unions which place him below unclean beasts? You heard that it was said: "You shall not commit adultery". But I tell you that he who looks at a woman lustfully, that she who wished to go with a man, has already committed adultery in his or her heart, simply by that. There is no reason which can justify fornication. None. Neither the abandonment nor the repudiation of a husband. Nor pity for the repudiated woman. You have one soul only. When it is joined to another soul by a pact of faithfulness, it must not lie. Otherwise the beautiful body for which you sin will go with you, o impure souls, into the inexhausted fire. Mutilate your body, rather than kill it for ever by damning it. Come to your moral senses, o rich men, verminous sinks of vice, so that you may not disgust Heaven… »

Mary, who at the beginning listened with a face which was a dream of allurement and irony, sneering now and again, at the end of the sermon becomes livid with rage. She realises that although Jesus does not look at her, He is speaking to her. She becomes more and more livid and rebellious and at last can resist no longer.

She spitefully envelops herself in her veil and followed by the glances of the crowds jeering at her and by Jesus' voice which pursues her, she runs down the slope of the mountain, leaving strips of her dress on the thistles and dogrose bushes growing on the edges of the path, laughing out of anger and mockery.

I see nothing else. But Jesus says: « You will see more. »

29th May 1945.

Jesus resumes: « You are indignant at what happened. For two days our shelter, which is well above the mud, has been upset by Satan's hiss. It is therefore no longer a shelter and we will leave it. But I wish to conclude this code of the "most perfect" in this wide and bright horizon. God really appears here in the majesty of the Creator and watching His marvels we can firmly believe that He and not Satan is the Master. The Evil One could not create even a blade of grass. But God can do everything. This should comfort us. But you are all already in the sun. And that is harmful. Spread out on the slopes where there is shade and it is cool. Have your meals, if you wish so. I will speak to you again on the same subject. Many things have delayed us. But do not be sorry about it. You are with God here. »

The crowds shout: « Yes, we are. With You » and they move under the thickets spread on the eastern side so that the slope of the hill and the tree branches shelter them from the sun, which is already too warm.

In the meantime Jesus tells Peter to take the tent down.

« Are we really going away? »

« Yes, we are. »

« Because she came?… »

« Yes, but do not tell anybody, especially the Zealot. He would be upset because of Lazarus. I cannot allow the word of God to be mocked at by heathens… »

« I see, I see… »

« Well, there is another thing you must understand. »

« Which, Master? »

« That it is necessary to be silent in certain cases. Please do not forget. You are so dear, but you are also so impulsive as to burst out into biting criticism. »

« I understand… You do not want for Lazarus and Simon… »

« And for others as well. »

« Do You think there will be any today? »

« Today, tomorrow, the day after tomorrow, always. It will always be necessary to watch the rashness of My Simon of Jonah. Go now and do what I told you. »

Peter goes away calling his companions to help him.

The Iscariot is pensive in a comer. Jesus calls him three times,

but he does not hear. At last he turns round: « Do You want me, Master? » he asks.

« Yes, go and take your food and help your companions. »

« I am not hungry. Neither are You. »

« Neither am I, but for different reasons. Are you upset, Judas? »

« No, Master. I'm tired… »

« We are now going to the lake and then to Judaea, Judas. To your mother's, as I promised you… »

Judas cheers up. « Are You really coming only with me? »

« Of course. Love Me, Judas. I would like My love to be such in you as to preserve you from all evil. »

« Master… I am a man. I am not an angel. At times I feel tired. Is it a sin to feel the need of sleep? »

« No, providing you sleep on My chest. Look over there how happy the people are and how beautiful the scenery is from here. Also Judaea must be lovely in springtime. »

« Most beautiful, Master. But spring, there, on the mountains, which are higher than here, is later. But there are beautiful flowers. The apple-orchards are magnificent. Mine, which is looked after by my mother, is one of the most beautiful ones. And when she moves about in it, with the doves following her to get some corn, believe me, it is a sight that soothes your heart. »

« I believe you. If My Mother is not too tired, I would like to take Her to see yours. They would love each other, because they are both good. »

Judas, drawn by this idea, cheers up and forgetting that « he was not hungry and he was tired » runs happily to his companions and tall as he is, he undoes the topmost knots without any trouble and eats his bread and olives, as happy as a child.

Jesus looks at him pitifully and then goes towards the apostles.

« Here is some bread, Master. And an egg. I got that rich man over there, the one wearing the red tunic, to give me it. I said to him: "You listen and you are hungry. He speaks and is exhausted. Give me one of your eggs. It will do Him much more good than it would do you". »

« Peter! »

« No, Lord. You are as pale as a baby sucking from an empty breast, and You are becoming as thin as a fish after the mating season. Let me see to it. I do not want to have to reproach myself. I will put it under these warm ashes of the faggots I burnt, and You will eat it. Don't You know it is… how many? most certainly weeks that we have been feeding on bread and olives and a little milk. H'm!… One could say that we are purging ourselves. And You eat less than everybody and speak for everybody. Here is the egg. Take it while it's warm, it will do You good. »

Jesus obeys and seeing that Peter is eating bread only, He asks:

« And what about you? Where are your olives? »

« Sss! I need them for after. I promised them. »

« To whom? »

« To some children. But if they are not quiet until the end, I will eat the olives and give them the stones, that is blows. »

« Very good indeed! »

« Ehi! I will never do that. But if we don't say so… I got so many blows myself, and if they had given me all the ones I deserved for all my pranks, I should have had ten times as many! But they do you good. I am like this because I got them. »

They all laugh at the apostle's sincerity.

« Master, I would like to remind You that today is Friday and that these people… I do not know whether they will be able to get food in time for tomorrow or reach their homes » says Bartholomew.

« That's true. It is Friday! » several of them say.

« It does not matter. God will provide. But we will tell them. »

Jesus stands up and goes to His new place, in the middle of the crowds spread in the thickets. « First of all I wish to remind you that this is Friday. I say that those who are afraid they cannot reach their homes in time and are not in a position to believe that God will provide food for His children tomorrow, should go away at once, so that they will not be still on the road at sunset. »

Of all the crowd there, about fifty people get up. All the others stay where they are.

Jesus smiles and begins to speak.

« You heard that in the old days it was said: "You shall not commit adultery". Those who among you have heard Me in other places know that I have spoken about that sin several times. Because, look, as far as I am concerned, it is a sin not for one person only, but for two or for three. I will make Myself clear. An adulterer sins with regard to himself, he sins with regard to his accomplice, and sins causing the betrayed wife or husband to sin, they may in fact be led to despair or to commit a crime. That with regard to the accomplished sin. But I will say more. I say: "Not only the accomplished sin, but the desire to accomplish it is already a sin". What is adultery? It is to crave for him, who is not ours, or for her, who is not ours. One begins to sin by wishing, continues by seduction, completes it by persuasion, crowns it by the deed.

How does one begin? Generally with an impure glance. And that is connected with what I said before. An impure eye sees what is concealed from a pure eye and through the eye thirst enters the throat, hunger enters the body and fever the blood. A carnal thirst, hunger, fever. Delirium begins. If the person looked at is honest, the delirious looker-on is left alone on tenterhooks, or will denigrate in revenge. If also the person looked at is dishonest, he 'will reply to the look and the descent into sin begins.

I therefore say to you: "If a man looks at a woman lustfully, he has already committed adultery with her because his thought has accomplished the deed of his desire". If your right eye should cause you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. It is better for you to be without one eye than to be thrown into the infernal darkness for ever. And if your right hand should cause you to sin, cut it off and throw it away, for it will do you less harm to lose one part of you than to have your whole body go to hell. It is true that it is written that deformed people cannot serve God in the Temple. But after this life, the deformed by birth who are holy and those who are deformed out of virtue, will become more beautiful than angels and will serve God, loving Him in the happiness of Heaven. It has also been said to you: "Anyone who divorces his wife, must give her a writ of dismissal". But that is to be condemned, for it does not come from God. God said to Adam: "This is the helpmate I made for you. Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth and conquer it". And Adam, full of superior intelligence, because sin had not yet dimmed his reason made perfect by God, exclaimed: "This at last is bone from my bones, and flesh from my flesh. This is to be called woman, that is: another I, because this was taken from man. This is why a man leaves his father and mother and joins himself to his wife and the two become one body". And in an increased splendour of light the Eternal Light approved smiling Adam's word, which became the first indelible law. Now, if owing to the ever increasing hardness of man, the human lawgiver had to give a new law; if owing to the ever increasing inconstancy of man, the lawgiver had to put a restraint and say: "If you have dismissed her you cannot take her back", that does not cancel the first genuine law, passed in the Earthly Paradise and approved by God.

I say to you: "Whoever divorces his wife, except for the case of fornication, exposes her to adultery". Because what will the divorced woman do in ninety per cent of the cases? She will get married again. With what consequences? Oh! How much there is to be said about that! Do you not know that you can cause involuntary incests by such system? How many tears are shed because of lust. Yes: lust. There is no other name for it. Be frank. Everything can be overcome when the spirit is righteous. But everything is an excuse to satisfy sensuality when the spirit is lustful. Woman's frigidity, dullness, ineptitude for housework, shrewish tongue, love for luxury, everything can be overcome, also diseases and irascibility, if one loves holily. But as after some time one does not love as on the first day, what is more than possible is considered impossible and a poor woman is thrown on to the road and to perdition.

He who rejects her commits adultery. He who marries her after the divorce, commits adultery. Death only dissolves a marriage.

Remember that. And if your choice is an unhappy one bear the consequences as a cross, being both of you unhappy but holy, without making also the children unhappy, as they are innocent and suffer more because of such unfortunate situations. The love for your children should cause you to ponder one hundred times, also in the case of death of your partner. Oh! I wish you could be satisfied with what you already have had and to which God said: "Enough!" I wish you, widows and widowers, realised that death is not an attenuation but an elevation to the perfections of parents! To be a mother in the place of a dead mother. To be a father in the place of a deceased father. To be two souls in one and receive the love for the children from the cold lips of the dying partner and say: "Go in peace, without worrying for those who were born of you. I will continue to love them, on my own and on your behalf, I will love them twice and will be their father and mother and they will not suffer the unhappiness of orphans, neither will they feel the inborn jealousy that the children of a remarried consort experience with regard to him or her who takes the sacred place of mother or father called by God to a new abode".

My children, My sermon is drawing to its end, as the day is nearing its end while the sun is setting in the west. I want you to remember the words of this meeting on the mountain. Engrave them in your hearts. Read them over and over again and very often. Let them be your everlasting guidance. And above all be good to those who are weak. Do not judge that you may not be judged. Remember that the moment might come when God could remind you: "That is how you judged. So you knew that that was bad. You therefore committed a sin, knowing what you were doing. You must now pay for it".

Charity is an absolution. Be charitable to everybody and in everything. If God gives you much assistance to keep you good, do not be proud of it. But endeavour to climb the full length of the ladder of perfection and give a hand to those who are tired or unaware and to those who are easily disappointed. Why do you observe so diligently the splinter in your brother's eye if first you do not go to the trouble of taking the plank out of your own eye? How dare you say to your brother: "Let me take the splinter out of your eye" while the plank in your eye is blinding you? Son, do not be a hypocrite. Take the plank out of your own eye first and then you will be able to take the splinter out of your brother's eye, without ruining him.

As you avoid being uncharitable, avoid also being imprudent. I said to you: "Give a hand to those who are tired or unaware and to those who are easily disappointed". But if it is charity to teach the ignorant, to encourage the tired, to give new wings to those whose old ones are broken, it is imprudence to reveal the eternal truths to

those affected by satanism, who take possession of them to pretend they are prophets, to insinuate themselves among simple people, to corrupt, lead astray and sacrilegiously foul the things of God. Absolute respect, to be able to speak, to be silent, to ponder, to act, are the virtues of the true disciple in order to make proselytes and serve God. You are gifted with the faculty of reason and, if you are just, God will grant you all the light to make a better use of your reason. You must consider that the eternal truths are like pearls, and no one has ever seen pearls thrown in front of pigs, which prefer acorns and rank broth to precious pearls, which they could crush under their feet and then, furious at being mocked at, they would turn against you to tear you to pieces.Do not give dogs what is holy. That is for the present and the future.

I have told you much, My children. Listen to My words; he who listens to them and puts them into practice, can be compared to a thoughtful man, who wishing to build a house, chose a rocky place. He certainly worked hard to lay the foundations. He had to work with pick and stone chisel, he got callous hands and broke his back. But he was able to put lime in the fissures of the rock and lay bricks one close to the other, like the wall of a fortress, and the house was as solid as a mountain. The house was exposed to the inclemency of the weather and to downpours, the rain caused the rivers to overflow their banks, the winds whistled, the waves beat it, but the house resisted everything. Such is he who has a sound faith. Instead who listens superficially and does not strive to engrave My words in his heart, because he is aware that to do so he would have to work hard, suffer and extirpate too many things, is like a man who out of indolence and foolishness builds his house on sand. As soon as the inclement weather comes, the house quickly built, quickly collapses and the forlorn fool contemplates the rubble of the house and the ruin of his capital. And in that case the ruin can be repaired with expenses and work. But if the edifice of the spirit crashes, because it was badly built, there is no way to rebuild it. One cannot build in future life. Woe to those who present themselves there with rubble!

I have finished. I am now going down towards the lake and I bless you in the name of the One and Trine God. May peace be with you. »

But the crowds shout: « We are coming with You. Let us come. No one has words like Yours! » And they begin to follow Jesus Who goes down on the opposite side from which He came up and which is in the direction of Capernaum.

The descent is steeper but faster and they soon reach the foot of the mountain on a green flowery plain.

(Jesus says: « Enough for today. Tomorrow… »)

175. The Leper Cured at the Foot of the Mountain.

30th May 1945.

Amongst the many flowers which perfume the earth and delight our eyes, I see the horrible spectre of a revolting, corroded leper, completely covered with sores.

The crowds shout with fear and rush back to the lower slopes of the mountain. Some of them gather stones to throw at the rash man.

But Jesus turns round with His arms fully stretched out and shouts: « Peace! Stay where you are: be not afraid. Put the stones down. Have mercy on a poor brother. He is a son of God, too. »

The crowds obey, overwhelmed by the power of the Master, Who moves forward through the tall grass in bloom to a few steps from the leper, who, on his part, has understood that Jesus is protecting him, and has come nearer.

When he reaches Jesus, he prostrates himself, and the blooming grass envelops him like cool scented water. The flowers undulate and gather together, forming a veil over the miserable man concealed amongst them. Only the mournful voice that can be heard reminds people of the wretched creature lying there. It says: « Lord, if You want, You can cure me. Have mercy also on me! »

Jesus replies: « Raise your head and look at Me. A man who believes in Heaven must be able to look at it. And you do believe, because you are asking for a grace. »

The grass is shaken and opens out once again. Like the head of a shipwrecked person emerging from the sea, the head of the leper appears, stripped of hair and beard. His head is a skull not yet entirely deprived of all flesh.

And yet Jesus does not disdain touching that forehead with the tips of His fingers, where there are no sores on the skin. But the skin on that spot is ashen-grey, scaly, and lies between two putrid erosions, one of which has destroyed his scalp, and the other has opened a hole where his right eye was, so that I could not say whether the ball of his eye is still in the huge socket, which, between his temple and his nose, lays bare his cheek-bone and his nasal cartilage, full of corruption. And Jesus, holding the fingertips of His lovely hand there, says: « I want it. Be cleansed. »

And as if the man were not eaten away and covered with sores, but only covered with dirt on which cleansing waters were poured, the leprosy disappears at once. First the wounds heal; then his skin becomes clear, his right eye appears between fresh eyelids, his lips close round his yellowish teeth. Only his hair and beard are missing, that is, there are only scanty tufts of hair where previously there was only a tiny piece of wholesome skin.

The crowds shout in amazement. And their joyful shouts tell the man that he is cured. He lifts his hands, so far concealed by the

grass, he touches his eye, where the huge hole was; he touches his head, where the large sore showed the skull and feels his fresh skin. He stands up, looks at his chest, his hips… He is all wholesome and clean… He collapses once again on the flowery meadow weeping out of joy.

« Do not weep. Stand up and listen to Me. Go back to life according to the rite and do not tell anybody until you have accomplished it. Show yourself to the priest as soon as possible, make the offering prescribed by Moses as evidence of your miraculous cure. »

« It's for You that I should witness, my Lord! »

« You will witness for Me by loving My doctrine! Go. »

The crowd has come close once again and they congratulate the man miraculously healed, although from due distance. There are some people who feel they ought to give him some provisions for his journey and throw some coins to him. Others throw bread and foodstuffs, and a man, seeing that the leper's clothes are nothing but torn rags, through which his entire body is visible, takes his mantle off, ties it in a knot, as if it were a large handkerchief, and throws it to the leper who can thus cover himself decently. Another man, as charity is contagious when it is in common, cannot resist his desire to supply him with sandals, takes off his own and throws them to the leper.

« And what about you? » asks Jesus Who saw the gesture.

« Oh! I live nearby. I can walk barefooted. He has to go a long way. »

« May God bless you and all those who have helped our brother. Man: you will pray for them. »

« Yes, I will, I will pray for them and for You: that the world may have faith in You. »

« Goodbye. Go in peace. »

The man walks away a few yards, then turns round and shouts: « Can I tell the priest that You have cured me? »

« It is not necessary. Just say: "The Lord had mercy on me". It is the whole truth and nothing else is required. »

The people throng round the Master, forming a circle which does not want to open at any cost. But the sun has set and the Sabbath rest begins. The villages are far away. But the people do not pine for their villages, their food or anything else. But the apostles are worried about it and they tell Jesus. Also the elder disciples are worried. There are women and children, and while the night is mild and the grass of the meadow is soft, the stars are not bread, neither do stones become food.

Jesus is the only one who does not trouble. The people in the meantime eat the remnants of their food without any worry and Jesus points it out to His apostles: « I solemnly tell you that these people are worth more than you are! Look how thoughtlessly they

are finishing everything. I said to them: "Who cannot believe that God will provide food for His children tomorrow, may go away", and they stayed. God will not belie His Messiah and will not disappoint those who hope in Him. »

The apostles shrug their shoulders and do not show concern for anything else.

It is nightfall after a placid, beautiful red sunset and the silence of the country spreads over everything, after the last choir of birds. There is a light whispering of the wind and then the first mute flight of a night bird, the first star appears and a frog croaks.

The children are already asleep. The adults are talking among themselves and now and again someone goes to the Master asking for clarification of some point or other. So no one is surprised when a person, imposing by look, garments and age, is seen coming along a path between two corn fields. Some men are following him. Everybody turns round to look at him and they point him out to one another whispering. The whispering spreads from one group to another, it revives and fades away. The groups that are farther away come near drawn by curiosity.

The noble looking man reaches Jesus, Who is sat at the foot of a tree listening to some men, and bows down before Him. Jesus stands up at once and responds with equal respect to the salutation. The people present are watching attentively.

« I was up on the mountain and perhaps You thought that I did not have faith as I went away for fear of having to fast. But I went away for another reason. I wanted to be a brother among brothers, the eldest brother. I would like to speak to You aside. Can You listen to me? Although a scribe, I am not Your enemy. »

« Let us move away a little… » and they go into the corn field.

« I wanted to provide some food for the pilgrims and I came down to tell the baker to bake bread for a large crowd. You can see that I am at a legal distance, because these fields belong to me, and it is lawful to walk from here to the top on a Sabbath. It was my intention to come up tomorrow with my servants. But I found out that You are here with the crowd. I beg You to allow me to provide for the Sabbath. Otherwise I would be very sorry that I had to forego Your words for nothing. »

« For nothing, no, never, because the Father would have compensated you with His light. But I thank you and will not disappoint you. I only wish to point out that the crowd is very large. »

« I asked them to heat all the ovens, also the ones used to dry foodstuffs and I will succeed in having bread for everybody. »

« I did not mean that. I was referring to the quantity of bread… »

« That does not trouble me. Last year I had a good crop of corn. You have seen what the ears of corn are like this year. Let me do it. It will be the greatest protection for my fields. After all, Master…

You gave me such bread today… You really are the Bread of the spirit!… »

« Let it be done as you wish. Let us go and tell the pilgrims. »

« No. You said so. »

« Are you a scribe? »

« Yes, I am. »

« May the Lord take you where your heart deserves. »

« I understand what You mean but do not say. You mean: to the Truth. Because great are our errors… and our ill-will. »

« Who are you? »

« A son of God. Pray the Father for me. Goodbye. »

« Peace be with you. »

Jesus goes slowly back to His apostles while the man goes away with his servants.

« Who was he? What did he want? Did he say something unpleasant to You? Has he sick people? » Jesus is assailed with questions.

« I do not know who he is. Or rather, I know that he is goodhearted and that… »

« He is John, the scribe » says one of the crowd.

« Well, I know now, because you said so. He only wanted to be the servant of God with His children. Pray for him because tomorrow we shall all have food, thanks to his goodness. »

« He is really a just man » says one.

« Yes, indeed. I do not know how he can be the friend of others » remarks another one.

« He is swathed in scruples and rules like a baby, but he is not a bad man » concludes a third one.

« Do these fields belong to him? » ask many who are not from this part of the country.

« Yes, they do. I think that the leper was one of his servants or peasants. But he allowed him to stay around here and I think that he also fed him. »

The comments continue but Jesus does not pay attention to them. He calls the Twelve near Him and asks them: « And what should I say now in regard to your incredulity? Did the Father not put bread for all of us into the hands of one who, by caste, is an enemy of Mine? Oh! men of little faith!… Go into the soft hay and sleep. I am going to pray the Father that He may open your hearts and to thank Him for His kindness. Peace be with you. »

And He goes to the lower slopes of the mountain. He sits down and collects His thoughts in prayer. When He raises His eyes He sees the myriad of stars crowding the sky, when He lowers them, He sees the crowd of people sleeping on the meadows. Nothing else. But such is the joy in His heart that His face seems to become transfigured by a bright light…

176. The Sabbath after the Sermon. At the Foot of the Mountain.

1st June 1945.

Jesus has delayed somewhat up on the mountain during the night, so that at dawn He can be seen standing on the edge of an escarpment.

Peter, who sees Him, points Him out to his companions and they go up towards Him. « Master, why did You not come with us? » many of them ask.

« I needed to pray. »

« But You also need to rest very badly. »

« My friends, during the night a voice came from Heaven asking for prayers for the good and the wicked and also for Myself. »

« Why? Do You need it? »

« As much as anybody. My strength is nourished with prayer and My joy with doing what My Father wants. My Father told Me the names of two people and a sorrow for Myself. The three things He mentioned need prayer so much. » Jesus is very sad and He looks at His apostles with eyes which seem to be begging or asking for something. His eyes rest on one, then on another and at last on Judas Iscariot and Jesus stares at him.

The apostle notices it and asks: « Why do You look at me like that? »

« I was not looking at you. My eyes were contemplating something else… »

« That is? »

« The nature of a disciple. All the good and all the evil that a disciple can do and give to his Master. I was thinking of the disciples of the Prophets and of John. And I was thinking of My own. And I was praying for John, for the disciples and for Myself… »

« You are sad and tired this morning, Master. Tell those who love You what Your trouble is » begs James of Zebedee.

« Yes, tell us, and if there is anything we can do to relieve Your grief, We will do it » says His cousin Judas.

Peter speaks to Bartholomew and Philip, but I do not understand what they say.

Jesus replies: « Be good, endeavour to be good and faithful. That is the only relief. There is no other one, Peter. Have you understood? Forget your suspicion. Love Me and love one another, do not allow those who hate Me to seduce you, above all love the will of God. »

« Eh! If everything is within its control, also our errors are within it! » exclaims Thomas in a philosophical tone.

« Do you think so? But it is not so. But many people have woken up and are looking here. Let us go down and sanctify this holy day

with the word of God. »

They go down while the people who wake up are more and more numerous. The children, as merry as little sparrows, are already prattling, running and jumping in the meadows, getting wet with dew, so that a few blows begin to fly with consequent tears. Then the children run towards Jesus Who caresses them and begins to smile once again as if He reflected their innocent cheerfulness. A little girl wants to put a little bunch of flowers on His belt, flowers she picked in the meadow « because His tunic is more beautiful like that » she says and Jesus lets her do it, although the apostles grumble. But Jesus says: « You ought to be happy that they love Me! The dew removes the dust from flowers. The love of children removes all sadness from My heart. »

Jesus coming from the mountain arrives in the midst of the pilgrims at the same time as John, the scribe, who is coming from his house with many servants carrying baskets of bread, olives, cheese and a little lamb or little kid, whatever it may be, roasted for the Master. Everything is laid at His feet and He sees to the distribution giving everybody some bread, a slice of cheese and a handful of olives. But He gives a piece of the roasted lamb with bread to a mother who is still holding at her breast a plump baby who laughs showing his milk teeth, and He does likewise with two or three more people whom He thinks need special attention.

« But it's for You, Master » says the scribe.

« I will have some, do not worry. But see… if I know that many partake of your goodness, it will taste better to Me. »

The distribution is over and the people nibble at their bread, leaving some for later. Jesus also drinks some milk which the scribe wishes to pour for Him into a precious cup from a little flask held by a servant and which looks like a little pitcher.

« But You must satisfy me and give me the joy of hearing You » says John, the scribe, who is greeted by Hermas with equal respect and with greater respect by Stephen.

« I will not deny you that satisfaction. Come over here » and Jesus leans against the mountain and begins to speak.

« God's will has held us in this place because had we gone any further, after the distance we had walked, we would have infringed the precepts and caused scandal. And may that never happen until the New Pact is written. It is right to sanctify feast days and praise the Lord in places of prayer. But the whole creation can be a place of prayer if man can make it thus through his elevation to the Father. Noah's Ark adrift on the water was a place of prayer and likewise the belly of Jonah's whale. Places of prayer were the house of the Pharaoh when Joseph lived in it, and the tent of Holofernes for the chaste Judith. And was not the corrupt place where the prophet Daniel lived as a slave, so sacred to the Lord,

because of the holiness of His servant who so sanctified the place as to deserve the high prophecies of Christ and of the Antichrist, which are a key to present and future times? All the more reason this place is holy as with its hues and scents, with its pure air and rich crops, with its dewy pearls it speaks to us of God, the Father and Creator and says: "I believe. And you ought to believe because we bear witness to God". Let it therefore be our synagogue for this Sabbath and let us read the eternal pages on corollas and ears, with the sun as our lamp.

I mentioned Daniel. I said to you: "Let this place be our synagogue". That reminds us of the joyful "bless the Lord" of the three holy young men in the flames of the furnace: Heavens and waters, dew and frost, ice and snow, fire and colours, light and darkness, lightning and clouds, mountains and hills, all germinated things, birds, fish and animals, praise and bless the Lord with humble holy-hearted men. We can pray and deserve Heaven everywhere. We deserve it when we do the Father's will.

At daybreak they pointed out to Me that if everything is controlled by the will of God, also the errors of men are wanted by that will. That is an error and a widespread one. Can a father ever wish his son to be blameworthy? No, he cannot. And yet we see that in some families some sons become blameworthy, although they have a just father who points out to them the good to be done and the evil to be avoided. And no righteous person will accuse a father of urging his sons to do evil things.

God is the Father, men are the sons. God points out the good and says: "Behold, I put you in this situation for your own good". Also when the Evil One and the men who serve him bring misfortunes to men, God says: "Behold, this is how you must behave in this painful hour; by doing so, this misfortune will serve for an eternal good". He advises you, but does not force you. So if a man, knowing what the will of God is, prefers to do the very opposite, can we say that this very opposite is the will of God? We cannot.

Love God's will. Love it more than your own and follow it against the enticements and power of the world, of the flesh, of the demon. Also those things have a will. But I solemnly tell you that he who submits to such wills is most unhappy.

You call Me Messiah and Lord. You say you love Me and you praise Me. You follow Me and that seems love. But I solemnly tell you that not everyone amongst you will enter the Kingdom of Heaven with Me. Also amongst My earliest and latest disciples there are some who will not enter the Kingdom, because many will do their own will or the will of the flesh, of the world, of the demon, but not My Father's. Not those who say to Me: "Lord! Lord!" will enter the Kingdom of Heaven, but those who do the will of My Father. They will be the only ones to enter the Kingdom

of God.

The day will come when I, Who am now speaking to you, after being the Shepherd, will be the Judge. Do not let the present appearance deceive you. Now My shepherd's staff gathers together all the scattered souls and kindly invites you to come to the pastures of Truth. Later the staff will be replaced by the sceptre of the Judge King and My power will be quite different. It will not be with kindness but with implacable justice that I will separate the sheep fed with Truth from those which mixed Truth and Error or fed only on error. I will do that a first time and then once again. And woe betide those who between the first and the second appearance before the Judge will not have purged themselves because they will not be able to purge themselves of their poisons. The third category will not purge itself. No pain could purge it. They wanted nothing but Error, so let them be in Error.

And yet among them there will be someone moaning: "What, Lord! Did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name did we not cast out demons and work many miracles?". And then I will say very clearly to them: "Yes, you dared to clothe yourselves with My name that you might appear what you are not. You wanted your satanism to be considered as living with Jesus. But you are accused by the fruit of your deeds. Where are the souls you saved? When were your prophecies fulfilled? What was the result of your exorcisms? Who was the accomplice of your deviations? Oh! My Enemy is really powerful! But not more than I am. He helped you only to plunder more souls, and thanks to you, the circle of those swept away by heresy, has widened. Yes, you have worked wonders, which apparently looked even greater than those of the true servants of God, who are not histrionics who astonish crowds, but are so humble and obedient as to amaze angels. My true servants, through their sacrifices do not create phantasms, but wipe them out of hearts; they do not impose themselves on men, but show God to souls of men. They do nothing but the will of the Father and lead others to do it, like a wave that pushes the wave preceding it and draws the one following it, without putting themselves on a throne and saying: 'Look'. My true servants do what I tell them, without thinking of anything else, and their deeds bear the sign of My unmistakable peace, kindness and order. I can therefore say to you: they are My servants, but I do not know you. Go away from me all of you, workers of iniquity".

That is what I will say. And it will be a dreadful word. Take care you do not deserve it and proceed along the safe, although painful way of obedience, towards the glory of the Kingdom of Heaven.

Enjoy your Sabbath rest praising God with your whole selves. Peace be with you. »

And Jesus blesses the crowds before they scatter seeking shade, one group speaking to another, commenting on the words they have just heard.

Jesus is left with His apostles and John, the scribe, who does not speak but is absorbed in deep meditation, watching every gesture of Jesus.

And the cycle of the Mount is over.

177. The Servant of the Centurion Is Cured.

2nd June 1945.

Jesus enters Capernaum coming from the country. Only the Twelve are with Him, nay, only eleven apostles, as John is not there. The usual greetings of the crowd form a vast range of expressions, from the entirely simple ones of children, to the rather shy ones of women, to the enraptured ones of people cured miraculously, and those which are either curious or ironical. There are enough to satisfy all tastes. And Jesus replies to everybody according to how He is greeted: caressing the little ones, blessing the women, smiling at those cured miraculously, and with deep respect for the others.

But this time the series is completed by the greeting of a centurion of the town, I think. He greets Him: « Hail, Master! » to which Jesus replies: « May God come to you. »

While the crowd draws close to see the outcome of the meeting, the centurion continues: « I have been waiting for You for several days. You do not recognise me as one of those who were listening to You on the Mount. I was wearing civilian clothes. Are You not asking me why I went there? »

« No, I am not, but what do you want from Me? »

« I have instructions to follow those who hold meetings, because too often Rome has had to regret having granted permission for apparently honest meetings. But seeing and listening to You, I thought of You as a… as a… I have a servant who is ill, Lord. He is lying in my house, in his bed, paralyzed by a disease of the bones and he suffers dreadfully. Our doctors cannot cure him. Your doctors refuse to come. I invited them to come because it is a disease caused by the corrupt air of this area and you know how to cure it with the herbs of the feversome soil of the shore where the water stagnates before being absorbed by the sand of the sea. I am very sorry because he is a faithful servant. »

« I will come and cure him. »

« No, my Lord. I am not asking You to go to all that trouble. I am a heathen, filth, as far as you are concerned. If the Jewish doctors are afraid of becoming contaminated by coming to my house, all the more reason it would contaminate You, Who are divine. I am

not worthy that You should enter under my roof, but if You say only one word here, my servant will be cured because You rule over everything. Now if I, who am subject to my authorities, the first being Caesar, for whom I must act, think and behave as I am told, can in turn order soldiers under me, and if I say to one: "Go", to another: "Come" and to a servant: "Do that", the first one will go where I send him, the other will come because I call him, and the third will do what I tell him, You, as You are Who You are, will be immediately obeyed by the disease, which will vanish. »

« But the disease is not a man… » objects Jesus.

« Neither are You a man, You are the Man. You can therefore give orders to elements and fevers, because everything is subject to Your power. »

Some elders of Capernaum take Jesus aside and say to Him: « He is a Roman, but listen to him because he is an honest man who respects and helps us. It was he who built our synagogue and he has given strict instructions to his soldiers not to gibe at us on Sabbaths. Grant him, therefore, the grace, for the sake of Your town, so that he may not be disappointed and irritated, and his fondness for us may not turn into hatred. »

And Jesus, after listening to them, turns round smiling at the centurion and says: « Go ahead and I will come after you. »

But the centurion says once again: « No, my Lord, I have told You: it would be a great honour if You entered under my roof, but I do not deserve so much; say only one word and my servant will be cured. »

« Let it be so. Go and have faith. This very moment the fever is leaving him and life is flowing back into his limbs. Endeavour to get Life to come also to your soul. Go. »

The centurion salutes, then bows and goes away.

Jesus watches him go away, then turns to the people present and says: « I solemnly tell you that I did not find so much faith in Israel. Oh! It is quite true! "The people that walked in darkness saw a great light; on those who live in a land of deep shadow a light has shone", and also "The Messiah will hoist His flag over the nations and gather them together". Oh! My Kingdom! They will really flow to you in immense numbers! More numerous than all the camels and dromedaries of Madian and Ephah, than those who bring the gold and incense of Sheba, more numerous than all the flocks of Kedar and the rams of Nebaioth, will be those who come to you and My heart will exult with joy seeing all the peoples of the sea and the wealth of the nations coming to Me. The islands are waiting for Me to adore Me, and the children of foreigners will build the walls of My Church, the gates of which will lie open continually to receive the kings and the wealth of the nations and sanctify them in Me. What Isaiah saw, will be accomplished! I tell

you that many will come from the east and the west and will sit with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the Kingdom of Heaven, whereas the children of the Kingdom will be thrown out into the dark, where there will be weeping and grinding of teeth. »

« You therefore foretell that the gentiles will be equal to the children of Abraham? »

« Not equal, but greater. You can only regret that it is due to your fault. Not I, but the Prophets say so, and the signs already confirm it. Now some of you should go to the house of the centurion and ascertain that his servant is cured as the faith of the Roman deserved. Come. Perhaps in the house there are some sick people waiting for Me. »

Jesus with the apostles and a few more people turns His steps towards the usual house where He stays when in Capernaum, while most of the people, driven by curiosity, rush towards the centurion's house making a great noise.

178. Jesus Meets Three Men Who Want to Follow Him.

3rd June 1945.

I see Jesus turning His steps towards the lake with eleven apostles, as John is still absent. Many people press round Him: among them there are many who were on the Mount, mainly men, who have reached Him at Capernaum to hear His word once again. They would like to detain Him. But He says: « I belong to everybody. And there are many who are entitled to have Me. I will come back. You will join Me. But let Me go now. » He has difficulty in walking through the crowd who throng the little narrow street. The apostles push with their shoulders to make room for Him. But it is like pushing a spongy substance which immediately springs back again. They get angry, too, but to no avail.

They are already in sight of the lake, after a fierce struggle, when a middle-aged refined looking man goes near the Master and touches His shoulder to attract His attention.

Jesus turns round and stops, asking: « What do you want? »

« I am a scribe. But our precepts can in no way be compared to Your word and I am fascinated by it. Master, I do not want to leave You. I will follow You wherever You go. Which way are You going? »

« The way to Heaven. »

« I do not mean that. I am asking You where are You going now. In which houses will You stop after the present one, so that I may always find You? »

« Foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head. The world is My home, wherever there are spirits to be taught, distress to be relieved, sinners

to be redeemed. »

« Everywhere, then. »

« You are right. Can you, a doctor in Israel, do what these simple men do for My sake? What are required here are: sacrifice, obedience, charity for everybody, a mind adaptive for everything and with everybody. Because compliance is alluring. Because he who wishes to cure must bend over all sores. Afterwards there will be the purity of Heaven. But here we are in mud and we have to pull out of the mud, on which we walk, the victims already submerged in it. We cannot lift our clothes and move to one side because the mud is deeper there. Purity must be within us. We must be sated with it so that nothing else can enter. Can you do all that? »

« At least let me try. »

« Try. I will pray that you may succeed. »

Jesus begins to walk again and His attention is drawn by two eyes staring at Him, the eyes of a tall strong young man who has stopped to let the train of followers pass, as he seems to be going in a different direction. Jesus says to him: « Follow Me. »

The young man starts, changes colour, blinks as if he were dazzled by light, then opens his mouth to speak but cannot find an immediate reply. At last he says: « I will follow You. But my father died at Korazim and I must bury him. Let me do that and then I will come. »

« Follow Me. Leave the dead to bury their dead. You have already been attracted by Life. On the other hand, you aspired to that. Do not weep over the gap which Life opened around you to make you a disciple. The maiming of affection is the root of the wings which are born of a man who has become a servant of the Truth. Leave corruption to its own fate. Rise towards the Kingdom of the incorrupt. You will find there also the incorruptible pearl of your father. God calls and passes by. Tomorrow you would no longer find your heart of today or God's invitation. Come. Go and announce the Kingdom of God. »

The man is leaning against a low wall and with his arms hanging by his sides: he is holding two bags, full of perfumes and bandages; his head is lowered in thought, wavering between two loves: for God and for his father.

Jesus waits and looks at him, he then gets hold of a little child, clasps him to His heart saying: « Say with Me: "I bless You, o Father, and I invoke Your light for those who weep in the haze of life. I bless You, o Father, and I invoke Your strength for those who are like a child in need of support. I bless You, o Father, and I invoke Your love that it may cause men to forget everything which is not Yourself, as they can find all good in You, both here and in Heaven, although they cannot believe it". » And the child, an innocent boy about four years old, repeats in his thin voice the

holy words with his hands held in prayer by the right hand of Jesus, Who holds them by their plump wrists as if they were two flower stems.

The man makes up his mind. He hands the two bundles to a companion and comes towards Jesus, Who puts down the child after blessing him, and embraces the young man, proceeding thus with him, to comfort him and support him in his effort.

Another man questions Him: « I would like to come with You, too. But before following You I would like to take leave of my relatives. Will You allow me? »

Jesus stares at him and replies: « There are too many roots in your human being. Uproot them and if you cannot, cut them off. One must come to God's service with spiritual freedom. He who gives himself, must have no ties. »

« Flesh and blood are always flesh and blood. I will slowly reach the freedom You refer to… »

« No, you would never reach it. God is as exacting as He is infinitely generous in rewarding. If you wish to be a disciple you must embrace your cross and follow Me. Otherwise one remains a simple believer. The way of the servant of God is not strewn with petals of roses. And it is absolute in its demands. No one who has put his hand to the plough to furrow the fields of hearts and spread there the seed of God's doctrine, can look back to see what he left, what he lost and what he could have had if he had followed another common way. Who does that is not fit for the Kingdom of God. Work upon yourself. Make a man of yourself and then come. Not now. »

They reach the shore. Jesus goes on board Peter's boat and whispers a few words to him. I see Jesus smile while Peter makes a gesture expressing amazement. But He does not say anything. Also the man who did not go to bury his father in order to follow Jesus, gets into the boat.

179. The Parable of the Sower.

4th June 1945.

Jesus says to me showing me the course of the Jordan, or rather, the mouth of the Jordan where it flows into Lake Tiberias, that is where the town of Bethsaida lies on the right bank of the river, with respect to those facing north: « The town nowadays no longer appears to be on the shore of the lake, but a little inland. And that puzzles scholars. The explanation is to be found in the earth which filled this part of the lake, as it was deposited there throughout twenty centuries by the river, by alluvia and landslides from the hills of Bethsaida. The town was then just at the mouth of the river, and in fact the smaller boats, particularly in seasons rich in

water, used to sail upstream, almost as far as Korazim; the river, however, was always used as a harbour and shelter for the boats of Bethsaida when the lake was very rough. I am not saying this for you, to whom it is of no interest, but for difficult doctors. And now go on. »

The boats of the apostles, after crossing the short stretch of the lake between Capernaum and Bethsaida, land in the latter town. Other boats have followed them and many people come off them to join the people of Bethsaida who have come to greet the Master. Jesus enters Peter's house where his wife is staying once again. I suppose she has preferred to be alone rather than live with her mother who continuously grumbles about her husband.

Outside the crowds claim Jesus at the top of their voices, which disturbs Peter very much, so much so that he goes up to the roof terrace and harangues the citizens telling them that they ought to have respect and manners. He would like to enjoy the company of his Master for a little while, in peace, now that he has Him in his house, whereas he has neither the time nor the pleasure to offer Him some water and honey among the many things he asked his wife to offer. And he grumbles…

Jesus looks at him smiling and shakes His head saying: « You would think that you never see Me and that we have just met by chance! »

« But it is so! When we are in the world are You and I ever together? Never in your life! Between You and me there is the world with its sick people, its distressed people, its listeners, its curious people, its slanderers, its enemies, and You and I are never together. Here instead You are with me, in my house, and they ought to understand that! » He is really upset.

« But I do not see the difference, Simon. My love is the same and My word is the same. Whether I tell you privately, or I tell everybody, what difference does it make? »

Peter then confesses his great grief: « The trouble is that I am a blockhead and my mind wanders easily. When You speak in a square, on a mountain, amongst a large crowd, I understand everything, but I do not know why, I remember nothing. I told also my companions and they say that I am right. Other people, I mean the people who listen to You, understand You and remember what You say. How often have we heard someone say: "I have no longer done that because You told us", or: "I came because once I heard You say so and so and I was impressed by it". We instead… hum! it's like a water course which passes by and does not stop. The river bank no longer has the water which has passed by. It is true that other water comes, a great deal of it, but it passes by, it passes by… And I am terrified at the thought that, if what You say will

come true, the moment will come when You will no longer be there to play the part of the river and… and I… What will I give to those who are thirsty if I cannot save even one drop of the great lot You give me? »

Also the others support Peter's moaning, complaining that they are left with nothing of what they hear, whilst they would like to remember everything to reply to those who ask them questions.

Jesus smiles and replies: « I do not think so. People are very satisfied also with you… »

« Certainly… of course! For all we do! Make room for You, by elbowing our way through the crowds, carry sick people, collect alms and say: "Yes, that is the Master!". Wonderful, isn't it? »

« Do not defame yourself too much, Simon. »

« I am not defaming myself. I know myself. »

« That is the most difficult wisdom. But I wish to relieve you of your great fear. When I speak and you cannot understand and remember everything, ask Me without any fear of boring or discouraging Me. We always have some hours of privacy, when you can open your hearts to Me. I give so much to so many. And what would I not give you whom I love so much that God could not love you more? You spoke of waves that pass by and nothing is left on the bank. The day will come when you will realise that every wave has deposited a seed and that a plant has grown from every seed. You will find in front of you flowers and plants for all occasions and you will be amazed at yourself saying: "What has the Lord done to me?" because you will then be redeemed from the slavery of sin and your present virtues will have reached a great height of perfection. »

« You say so, my Lord, and I rest upon Your word. »

« Now let us go to those who are waiting for us. Come. Peace to you, woman. I will be your guest this evening. »

They go out and Jesus directs His steps towards the lake to avoid being oppressed by the crowds. Peter is quick in moving the boat a few yards from the shore, so that Jesus' voice may be heard by everybody, but with a space between Him and those listening.

« Corning here from Capernaum I was thinking what I should tell you and I found an indication in the events of this morning.

You saw three men come to Me. One came spontaneously, the second because I urged him, the third came because of a sudden enthusiasm. And you also saw that I took only two of them. Why? Did I perhaps see a traitor in the third, one? No, in truth. But I saw that he was unprepared. To all appearance, this one here beside Me, the one who was going to bury his father, seemed more unprepared. Instead the most unprepared was the third one. This one was so prepared, without being aware of it, that he was able to make a really heroic sacrifice. Heroism in following God is always

evidence of strong spiritual Preparation. And that is the explanation of certain surprising events that take place around Me. Those who are most prepared to receive Christ, whichever their caste and education might be, come to Me with absolute promptitude and faith. Those who are less prepared examine Me as an exceptional man or they study Me with suspicion or curiosity, or they attack and defame Me accusing Me in various ways. The different ways of behaviour are proportional to the unpreparedness of spirits.

Among the chosen people it should be possible to find everywhere spirits ready to receive the Messiah in Whose expectation Patriarchs and Prophets were consumed by anxiety, the Messiah Who at last has come, preceded and accompanied by all the prophesied signs, the Messiah, Whose spiritual personality becomes clearer and clearer through the visible miracles worked on bodies and elements, and through the invisible ones worked on consciences which are converted and on Gentiles who turn to the True God. But it is not so. The promptitude in following the Messiah is strongly hindered by the children of that people and, what is sad to be said, it is more hindered the more one climbs to its higher classes. I am not saying this to scandalise you, but to induce you to pray and meditate. Why does that happen? Why do Gentiles and sinners proceed farther on My way? Why do they accept what I say and the others do not? Because the children of Israel are anchored, nay, they are stuck like pearl-oysters to the bank where they were born. Because they are sated, overwhelmed and obese with their wisdom and they cannot make room for Mine by throwing away what is superfluous to make room for what is necessary. The others do not suffer from such slavery. They are poor heathens or poor sinners, unimpeded like a boat which is adrift, they are poor people, who have no treasures of their own, but only heaps of errors or sins, of which they gladly strip themselves as soon as they understand what the Gospel is and they taste its fortifying honey, which is quite different from the nauseating mixture of their sins.

Listen, and perhaps you will understand better how the same action can bear different fruits.

A sower went out to sow. He owned many fields of various kinds. He had inherited some from his father, on which his carelessness had allowed thorny plants to proliferate. Other fields had been purchased by him: he had bought them from a neglectful man and he had left them as they were. In other fields there were many intersecting roads, as the man loved comfort and did not like to travel a long way when going from one place to another. Finally, there were some fields, the closest to his house, which he had looked after to have a pleasant sight in front of his house. They were free from stones, thorns, couch-grass and so on.

So the man took his sack of seed-corn of the best quality, and began to sow. The seed fell on the good soft soil, which had been ploughed, weeded, fertilized, in the fields near the house. It was spread in the fields with many roads and paths, which divided them into small portions, and caused also the fertile soil to be covered by ugly arid dust. Some of the seed fell on the fields where the foolishness of the man had allowed the thorny plants to proliferate. The plough had turned them upside down, it looked as if they were not there, but they were, because only fire, the radical destructor of weeds, prevents them from growing again. The last seed fell on the fields which he had recently bought and had left as they were, without ploughing them and without removing all the stones, which had sunk into the ground forming a hard pavement on which no plant could take root. After scattering all the seed, he went back home and said: "Very well! All I have to do is to wait for the harvest". And he was delighted because, as months went by, he saw the corn come up thick in the fields near the house and grow… oh! what a beautiful sea! and it turned gold and it sang hosannas to the sun, as one ear rubbed against another. The man said to himself: "All the fields are like these ones! Let us prepare sickles and granaries. How much bread! How much gold!" And he was delighted…

He cut the corn in the nearest fields and after that he went to the ones which he had inherited from his father and which he had left in a wild state. And he was taken aback. The corn had come up, because the fields were good and the soil cultivated by the father was rich and fertile. But its fertility had affected also the thorny plants which had been overturned but not destroyed. They had grown again and had formed a really thick ceiling of bramble, through which the corn had not been able to emerge, with the exception of a few ears, and it was completely suffocated.

The man said: "I neglected this place. But there was no bramble in the other fields, so it should be all right". And he went to the fields which he had purchased shortly before. His surprise and grief were greater. The thin withered corn leaves were strewn all over like dry hay. Nothing but dry hay. "How come?" moaned the man. "And yet there are no thorns here! And it was the same seed! And it had come up thick and beautiful. It can be seen by the well formed and numerous leaves. Why then did it all wither before coming into ear?" And with real regret he began to dig the ground to see whether there were any mole burrows or other pests. There were no insects or rodents. But how many stones! A stone-pit! The fields were literally paved with chips of stone and the scanty earth covering them was deceiving. Oh! if he had ploughed deep at the right time! Oh! if he had dug the ground before accepting the fields and buying them as good ones! Oh! if, after the mistake he had

made in buying what he had been offered without making sure of its goodness, if at least he had improved them by working hard! It was now too late and all regret was useless.

The man stood up, and, downhearted as he was, he went to the fields where he had built many roads for his comfort… and mad with grief he tore off his clothes. There was absolutely nothing there… The dark soil of the field was covered with a thin layer of white dust… The man collapsed to the ground moaning: "But why here? There are no stones, no bramble here, because these are our fields. My grandfather, my father and I have always owned them and in many many years we made them fertile. I built the roads, I have taken some of the earth away, but that could not make them so sterile… " He was still weeping when he received the answer to his grief from a swarm of birds which flew eagerly from the paths to the field and back to the paths in search of seeds… The field, which had been turned into a network of paths, on the edges of which the corn had fallen, had attracted many birds, which first had eaten the corn on the paths and then the seeds in the field, down to the last grain.

So the same seed, sown in all the fields, had yielded one hundred to one in some, sixty, thirty, nothing in others. Listen, anyone who has ears. The seed is the Word: the same for everybody. The places where the seed fell: your hearts. Meditate the parable and understand it. Peace be with you. »

He then turns towards Peter and says: « Go up the river as far as you can and stop on the other side. » And while the two boats sail a short distance up the river and then stop near the bank, Jesus sits down and asks the new disciple: « Who is left now at home? »

« My mother and the eldest brother, who has been married for five years. My sisters are in various parts of the region. My father was very good and my mother mourns his death broken-heartedly. » The young man stops all of a sudden, stifling heartfelt sobs.

Jesus grabs his hand and says: « I experienced that sorrow Myself and I saw My Mother weep. So I can understand… »

The rubbing of the boat on the pebbly river-bed causes the conversation to be interrupted to allow them to go ashore. The low hills of Bethsaida which almost reach down to the lake, have come to an end here, instead a plain rich in crops extends from this shore, on the other side of Bethsaida, northwards.

« Are we going to Merom? » asks Peter.

« No, let us take this path among the fields. »

The lovely and well kept fields show ears of corn still tender but well formed, all of the same height; and while lightly undulating in the cool northern breeze they look like another small lake, the sails of which are the trees growing here and there full of whistling birds.

« These fields are not like the ones of the parable » remarks Jesus' cousin James.

« Not really! The birds have not devastated them, there are no stones, no bramble. The corn is beautiful! In a month's time it will be golden… and in two it will be ready for the sickle and the granary » says Judas of Kerioth.

« Master… I remind You of what You said in my house. You spoke so well. But I am beginning to have ideas in my head which are as confused as those ruffled clouds up there… » says Peter.

« This evening I will explain it to you. Now we are in sight of Korazim. » And Jesus stares at the new disciple saying: « Much is given to those who give. And possessions do not deprive the gift of its merits. Take Me to the sepulchre of your family and to your mother's house. »

The young man kneels down, kissing Jesus' hand and weeping.

« Get up. Let us go. My spirit has perceived your weeping. I want to fortify you in your heroism through My love. »

« Isaac the Elder had told me how good You were. Isaac, You know? You cured his daughter. He was my apostle. But I see that Your kindness is much greater than I was told. »

« We shall call also on the Elder to thank him for giving Me a disciple. »

They reach Korazim and Isaac's house is the first one they find. The old man, who is on his way back home, when he sees Jesus with His apostles and the young man from Korazim among them, raises his arms, holding his walking stick in his hand, and is speechless and dumbfounded. Jesus smiles and His smile gives speech back to the old man.

« May God bless You, Master! Why so much honour to me? »

« To say to you: "Thanks". »

« But what for, my God? I have to say that word to You. Come in. Oh! I am sorry that my daughter is absent, assisting her mother-inlaw. Because she got married, You know? I have received nothing but blessings after I met You! After she was cured that rich relative of ours came from far away, a widower, with the little ones needing a mother… Oh! But I have already told You all that! My head is old! Forgive me! »

« Your head is wise and forgets to be proud of the good it does for its Master. To forget the good done is wisdom. It shows humility and trust in God. »

« But I… I would not know… »

« And this disciple… have I not had him through you? »

« Oh!… But I have done nothing, You know? I only told him the truth… and I am happy that Elias is with You. » He turns towards Elias and says: « Your mother, after the first moment of astonishment, was relieved when she heard that you were with the Master.

The last honours rendered to your father were really solemn. He has not been long buried. »

« And what about my brother? »

« He is quiet… you know… he was rather upset by your absence… because of the village people… He still has that mentality… »

The young man turns to Jesus: « You said so. But I would not like him to be dead… Let him become alive as I am, and at Your service. »

The others do not understand and they look at one another inquisitively, but Jesus replies: « Do not despair, but persevere. » He blesses Isaac and goes away, notwithstanding they entreat Him to stay.

They stop first near the sepulchre and pray. After, through a still semibare vineyard, they go to Elias' house.

The meeting of the two brothers is rather a cold one. The elder feels offended and wants people to notice it. The younger feels guilty from a human point of view and does not react. But the arrival of their mother, who without saying anything prostrates herself and kisses the hem of Jesus' tunic brightens the atmosphere and their spirits. And they want to honour the Master. But Jesus does not accept anything, He only says: « Let your hearts be just, one towards the other, as just was he whom you are mourning. Do not give a human sense to what is super-human: death and the election to a mission. The soul of your just father was not upset seeing that this son was not present at the burial of his body, but it rested quietly on the certainty of Elias' future. Do not let worldly thoughts disturb the grace of the election. If the world was surprised at not seeing him near his father's coffin, the angels exulted seeing him beside the Messiah. Be just. And may that comfort you, mother. You brought him up wisely and he has been called by Wisdom. I bless you all. Peace be with you now and always. »

They go on the road which takes them back to the river, and from there to Bethsaida. Elias did not delay even for one moment on the threshold of his father's house. After kissing his mother goodbye, he followed the Master with the simplicity of a child who follows his real father.

180. Lesson to the Apostles in Peter's Kitchen and Announcement of the Baptist's Capture.

7th June 1945.

We are in Peter's kitchen once again. The meal must have been a hearty one because dishes with leavings of meat, fish, cheese, dried fruit and honey cakes are being piled up on a kind of cupboard, which reminds me of our Tuscan kneading troughs. Pitchers and chalices are still on the table.

Peter's wife must have worked miracles to satisfy her husband, and she must have worked all day. Now, tired but happy, she is in her little corner listening to what her husband and the others are saying. She watches her Simon, who, as far as she is concerned, must be a great man, even if he is somewhat exacting, and when she hears him speak new words, where before he could only talk of boats, nets, fish and money, she begins to blink as if she were dazzled by a bright light. Peter, both because of his joy in having Jesus at his table and because of the hearty meal he has had, is in the best of spirits this evening, and the future Peter, preaching to the crowds, is disclosed.

I do not know which remark of a companion originated the clearcut reply of Peter who says: « It will happen to them what happened to the founders of the Tower of Babel. Their own pride will provoke the collapse of their theories and they will be crushed. »

Andrew objects to his brother: « But God is Mercy. He will prevent the collapse to give them time to mend their ways. »

« Do not believe that. They will crown their pride with false accusations and persecutions. Oh! I can already see it. They will persecute us to disperse us as unpleasant witnesses. And since they attack the Truth by laying snares for it, God will take revenge and they will perish. »

« Will we have the strength to resist? » asks Thomas.

« Well… as for me, I would not have it. But I put my trust in Him » and Peter nods to the Master Who is listening and is silent, His head slightly inclined, as if He wished to hide His understanding countenance.

« I think that God will not put us to tests beyond our strength » says Matthew.

« Or He will at least increase our strength in proportion to the tests » concludes James of Alphaeus.

« He is already doing that. I was rich and powerful. If God had not decided to preserve me for a purpose of His, I would have surrendered myself to despair and perished when I was persecuted and an outcast. I would have acted harshly against myself… Instead a new wealth, which I had never possessed before, descended upon my desolation: the wealth of a conviction: "God exists". First… God… Yes, I believed, I was a faithful Israelite. But mine was a faith of formalism. And I thought that the reward of my faith was always inferior to my virtue. I took the liberty of debating with God because I felt that I was still something on the earth. Simon Peter is right. I, too, was building a tower of Babel by praising myself and satisfying my ego. When everything collapsed around me and I was like a worm crushed by the weight of all this human futility, then I no longer debated with God, but with myself, with my stupid self and I ended up by demolishing it.

And as I did so, making room for what I think is the God immanent in our earthly beings, I gained a new strength and wealth: the certainty that I was not alone and that God was watching over man defeated by men and by evil. »

« According to you, what is God, "the God immanent in our earthly beings" as you said? What do you mean? I do not understand you and I think it is a heresy. God is the One we know through the Law and the Prophets. There is no other God » says rather sternly Judas of Kerioth.

« If John was here he would tell you better than I can. But I will tell you as best I can. God is the One we know through the Law and the Prophets. That is true. But in what do we know Him? And how? »

Judas of Alphaeus exclaims: « Little and badly. The Prophets, who described Him for us, knew Him. The idea we have is a muddled one, as we can just see through a mound of explanations piled up by sects… »

« Sects? What do you mean? We have no sects. We are the children of the Law. We all are » the angry aggressive Iscariot says.

« The children of the laws. Not of the Law. There is a slight difference. Plural, not singular. In actual fact, we are the children of what we created, no longer of what God gave us » retorts Thaddeus.

« The laws derive from the Law » says the Iscariot.

« Also diseases originate in our bodies, but that does not mean that they are good » replies Thaddeus.

« But let me hear what this immanent God of Simon Zealot is. » The Iscariot, who cannot argue against the remark of Judas of Alphaeus, endeavours to take the discussion back to where it started.

Simon Zealot says: « Our senses need a term to catch an idea. Each of us, I am referring to us believers, believes, by the virtue of faith, in the Most High Lord and Creator, Eternal God, Who is in Heaven. But every being needs more than such bare, pure, incorporeal faith, which is fit and sufficient for the angels who see and love God spiritually, as they share with Him a spiritual nature and can see God. We have to create a "picture" of God for ourselves, which picture is made with the essential features that we ascribe to God, to give a name to His infinite absolute perfection. The more a soul concentrates, the more it succeeds in achieving an exact knowledge of God. That is what I say: the immanent God. I am not a philosopher. Perhaps I have applied the word wrongly. In short, I think that the immanent God is to feel, to perceive God in our spirits, to feel and perceive Him no longer as an abstract idea, but as a real presence, bestowing strength and a new peace upon us. »

« All right. But, to sum up, how did you feel Him? What is the difference

between feeling by faith and feeling by immanence? » asks the Iscariot somewhat ironically.

« God is safety, boy. When you perceive Him, as Simon says, by means of that word, which I do not understand literally, but I understand its spirit - and believe me, the trouble is that we understand only literally and we do not understand the spirit of God's words - it means that you are able to grasp the idea of the terrible majesty, but also of the most sweet paternity of God. It means that, should all the world judge and condemn you unjustly, you would feel that One only, He, the Eternal One, Who is your Father, does not judge you, but absolves and comforts you. It means that if all the world should hate you, you would feel over you a love greater than any this world can offer. It means that if you were isolated in jail or in a desert you would always hear One speak to you and say: "Be holy, that you may be like your Father". It means that for the true love for this Father and God, Whom at last you perceive as such, you accept, work, take and leave without any human consideration, as you are concerned only to return love for love and to copy God as much as possible in your actions » says Peter.

« You are proud! To copy God! You are not entitled to » declares the Iscariot.

« It is not pride. Love leads to obedience. To copy God seems to me a form of obedience because God said that He made us in His own image and likeness » replies Peter.

« He made us. We must not go higher up. »

« You are a poor wretch, my boy, if that is what you think! You are forgetting that we fell and that God wants to take us back to what we were. »

Jesus begins to speak: « Even more, Peter, Judas and you all. Even more than that. Adam's perfection was still susceptible of improvement through love, which would have made him a more precise image of his Creator. Adam without the stain of sin would have been a most shining mirror of God. That is why I say: "Be perfect as your Father Who is in Heaven is perfect". Like your Father. Therefore like God. Peter is quite right. And so is Simon. I ask you to remember their words and apply them to your souls. »

Peter's wife almost faints from joy on hearing her husband being praised thus. She weeps behind her veil: she is quiet but happy.

Peter blushes so much that he seems to be having a stroke of apoplexy. He remains dumb for a few moments, then says: « Well, then, give me my reward. The parable of this morning… »

Also the others join Peter saying: « Yes, You promised. Parables serve very well to make people understand the comparison. But we know that they have a higher meaning than the comparison.

Why do You speak to them in parables? »

« Because they are not to understand more than I explain. You are granted much more, because as My disciples, you must be acquainted with the mystery; and you are therefore given to understand the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven. That is why I say to you: "Ask Me if you do not understand the spirit of the parable". You give everything and everything is given to you, so that you, in your turn, may give everything. You are giving everything to God: love, time, interests, freedom, lives. And God gives you everything to reward you and to enable you to give everything in the name of God to those who come after you. Thus, to him who has given will be given abundantly. But he who gave only partly or did not give at all, will be deprived also of what he has.

I speak to them in parables, so that, while seeing, they may see only what is illuminated by their will to adhere to God, and while listening, always through the same will of adherence, they may hear and understand. See! Many hear My word, few adhere to God. Their spirits lack good will. Isaiah's prophecy is fulfilled in them: "You will hear with your ears and will not understand, you will look with your eyes and will not see". Because this people is hardhearted; their ears are hard and their eyes are closed, so that they may not see and hear, that they may not understand with their hearts and convert, that I may cure them. But you are blessed because your eyes see and your ears hear, and because of your good will! I solemnly tell you that many Prophets and many just people were anxious to see what you see and they did not see it, and to hear what you hear and they did not hear it. They pined away with the desire to understand the mystery of the words, but as soon as the light of the prophecy went out, the words remained like burnt out coals, also for the holy man who had received them.

Only God reveals Himself. When His light fades out, as soon as the purpose of illuminating the mystery comes to its end, the inability to understand envelops the regal truth of the word received, like the bandages of a mummy. That is why I said to you this morning: "The day will come when you will find everything I have given you". Now you cannot remember. But later light will come upon you, not just for a moment, but for an inseparable union of the Eternal Spirit with yours, whereby your teaching concerning what pertains to the Kingdom of God will be infallible. And what applies to you, will apply also to your successors, if they live of God as of one bread only.

Now listen to the spirit of the parable.

We have four kinds of fields: the fertile ones, the thorny ones, the stony ones and the ones full of paths. We also have four types of spirits.

There are the honest spirits, the spirits of good will, prepared by their own will and by the work of an apostle, of a "true" apostle; because there are apostles who have the name but not the spirit of an apostle and they are more lethal for the will in formation, than birds, thorns and stones. They upset in such a way, through their intolerance, their haste, their reproaches and their threats, as to drive people away from God for ever. There are others who, on the contrary, through an excess of benignity, utterly out of place, cause the seed to rot in too soft a soil. Because of their lack of vigour, they kill the vigour of the souls they cure. But let us consider the true apostles, that is, the shining mirrors of God. They are paternal, merciful, patient, and at the same time they are strong, as their Lord is strong. Now: the souls prepared by them and by their own will can be compared to the fertile fields, free from stones and brambles, from couch-grass and darnel, in which the word of God thrives and every word, that is every seed, bears a bundle of ears, yielding in some places one hundred, in others sixty, thirty per cent. Are there any like that among those who follow Me? There certainly are. And they will be holy. They come from all castes and countries. And there are Gentiles among them and they will yield one hundred per cent because of their good will, only because of that, or because of their good will and that of an apostle or disciple who prepares them for Me.

The thorny fields are those in which thorny tangles of personal interests, which suffocate the good seed, have been allowed to grow by carelessness. You must watch yourselves all the time. Never say: "Oh! I am well formed, I have been sown, I can rest assured that I will bear seeds of eternal life". Watch yourselves; the struggle between Good and Evil is still on. Have you ever watched a colony of ants that install themselves in a house? There they are, near the fireplace. The housewife takes all foodstuff away from there and puts it on the table. They sniff the air and attack the table. The housewife puts the food in a cupboard and they get into the cupboard through the keyhole. The woman hangs her food supply from the ceiling, and they go a long way along walls and beams, down the rope and reach the food. The woman burns them, scalds them, poisons them. And thinking that she has destroyed them she is happy. But if she does not watch, what a surprise she gets! The new hatched ones come out and she has to start all over again. And that is what happens while you live; you must be careful and uproot the evil weeds as soon as they come up. Otherwise they will form a ceiling of brambles which suffocate the corn. Worldly cares, deceiving wealth form the tangle, suffocate the seed of God and prevent it from coming into ears.

And here are the fields full of stones. How many there are in Israel! They are the ones that belong to the "children of the laws"

as My cousin Judas quite rightly said. In them there is not the one Stone of Witness, nor the Stone of the Law. There is the quarry of poor petty human laws made by men. They are so many that with their weight they have broken also the Stone of the Law into chips. A disaster which does not allow the seed to take root. The root is no longer nourished because there is neither soil nor sap. The water stagnating on the stone pavement causes the seed to rot, the sun makes the stones hot and parches the little plants. Such are the spirits of those who put complicated human doctrines in place of the simple doctrine of God. They even receive My word with joy. At first it shakes and allures them. But later… They would need to be heroes and work hard to clean the field, their souls and minds of all rhetorical stones. The seed would then take root and bear long spikes. As it is… it bears nothing. The fear of human retaliation is enough. It is enough to say: "And after? What will the mighty ones do to me?" and the poor seed languishes without nourishment. It is enough for the whole quarry to stir with the vain sound of the hundreds of precepts, which have been put in place of the Precept, that man perishes with the seed received… Israel is full of them. That explains why the coming to God is in inverse ratio to human power.

The last are the dusty barren fields full of roads. Those of worldly selfish people. Their comfort is their law, enjoyment their aim. Their ambitions: to do no work, to slumber, to enjoy themselves, to feast… The spirit of the world is their king. The dust of worldliness covers the soil which becomes mouldy. Birds, that is dissipation, rush on to the thousand paths which have been built to make life easier. The spirit of the world, that is, of the Evil one, picks up and destroys all the seed that falls on this soil open to all sensuality and laxity…

Have you understood? Have you any questions to ask? No? In that case we can go and rest and tomorrow we will leave for Capernaum. There is one place to which I must go before starting on My journey to Jerusalem for Passover. »

« Shall we go through Arimathea again? » asks the Iscariot.

« I am not sure. It depends on… »

There is a loud knocking at the door.

« Who can it be at this time? » asks Peter getting up to open the door.

John comes in. He is most upset, covered in dust, and he has obviously been weeping.

« You are here! » they all shout. « What's the matter? »

Jesus, Who has stood up, says only: « Where is My Mother? »

And John, coming forward and kneeling at the feet of the Master, holding his arms as if he were asking for help, says: « Your Mother is well, but She is weeping as I am, as many others are, and

She begs You not to come following the Jordan on our side. That is why She sent me back, because Your cousin John has been captured… » And John weeps while everybody is bewildered.

Jesus turns very pale but does not become excited. He says only:

« Stand up and tell us. »

« I was going down with Your Mother and the other women. Isaac and Timoneus were also with us. We were three women and three men. I was carrying out Your instruction to take Mary to John… Ah! You knew it was their last farewell!… It was to be their last farewell… Because of the storm of a few days ago, we had to stop for a little while. But it was enough to make it impossible for John to see Mary… We arrived at noon and he was captured at daybreak… »

« Where? How? By whom? In his cave? » they all ask, they all want to know.

« He was betrayed!… They used Your name to betray him! »

« How horrible! Who did that? » they all shout.

And John shuddering, whispering in a low voice what not even the air should hear, states: « It was one of his disciples… »

The confusion is at its highest pitch. Some curse, some weep, some are petrified with astonishment.

John throws his arms round Jesus' neck and shouts: « I am afraid for You!… for You! The saints have their traitors who sell themselves for gold and for fear of the mighty ones, yearning for reward, obeying Satan. For thousands of things! Oh! Jesus! Jesus! How dreadful! My first master! My John who gave me to You! »

« It is all right! Do not worry! Nothing will happen to Me for the time being. »

« But later? What will happen later? I look at myself, at these… I am afraid of everybody, also of myself. Will one of us be Your traitor?… »

« Are you mad? And do you think that we would not tear him to pieces? » shouts Peter.

And the Iscariot: « Oh! You really are mad! It will never be I! But if I should feel so weak as to eventually become so, I would kill myself. Better than be the murderer of God. »

Jesus frees Himself from John's grip, shakes Judas violently saying: « Do not swear! Nothing can make you weak, unless you want! And if that should happen, make sure you weep for it, and do not commit another crime in addition to deicide. He becomes weak, who cuts off his vital link with God. » He then returns to John, who is weeping with his head on the table and he says: « Speak calmly. It grieves Me, too. He was of My blood and was My Precursor. »

« I only saw some of the disciples, who were dismayed and furious with the traitor. The others accompanied John towards his

prison to be near him at his death. »

« But he is not dead yet… the last time he managed to escape. » says the Zealot endeavouring to comfort John of whom he is very fond.

« He is not dead yet. But he will die » replies John.

« Yes, he will die. He knows as well as I do. Nothing and no one will save him this time. When? I do not know. I know that he will not come out of Herod's hand alive. »

« Yes, Herod. Listen. John went to the mountain gorge, between Mount Ebal and Gerizim, where we also passed coming back to Galilee, because the traitor said to him: "The Messiah is dying after being attacked by His enemies. He wants to see you to entrust a secret to you". And he went with the traitor and some other people. Herod's armed men were in the shade of the valley and they captured him. The others ran away and gave the news to the disciples who had remained near Hennon. They had just come when I arrived with Your Mother. And the dreadful thing is that he was one from our towns… and that the Pharisees of Capernaum are the leaders of the plot to catch him. They went to John saying that You had been their guest and that You were leaving from there to go to Judaea… he would not have left his refuge but for You… »

Dead silence follows John's report. Jesus looks bloodless, His deep blue eyes are dimmed. He is standing with his head bowed, His hand still on John's shoulder, and His hand is trembling lightly. No one dare speak. Jesus breaks the silence: « We shall go to Judaea following a different route. But I must go to Capernaum tomorrow. As early as possible. Rest now. I am going up to the olivegrove. I need to be alone. » And He goes out without saying anything else.

« He is certainly going to weep » whispers James of Alphaeus.

« Let us follow Him, brother » says Judas Thaddeus.

« No. Let Him weep. But let us go out quietly and keep watch. I fear tricks everywhere » replies the Zealot.

« Yes, let us go. We fishermen to the shore. If anybody comes from the lake we will see him. You go to the olive-grove. He is certainly in the usual place, near the walnut-tree. At dawn we will have the boats ready to go away early. Those snakes! Ehi! I did tell you! Tell me, boy? But… is His Mother really safe? »

« Oh! Yes! Also the shepherd disciples of John have gone with Her. Andrew… we will never see our John again! »

« Be quiet! It sounds like the song of the cuckoo… One precedes the other and… and… »

« By the Holy Ark! Be quiet! If you go on talking about misfortunes to the Master, I will start from you, letting your backs feel the weight of my oar! » shouts an enraged Peter. « You… » he then

says to those who are to go to the olive-grove: « Get some clubs, some big branches, you will find some in the wood-shed… and spread out, armed with them. The first one to come near Jesus to harm Him, kill him. »

« The disciples! We must be careful with the new ones! » exclaims Philip.

The new disciple feels hurt and asks: « Are you in doubt about me? He chose me and wanted me. »

« Not about you. I mean the scribes and Pharisees and their worshippers. That is where the trouble will come from, believe me. »

They go out, some towards the boats, some towards the olivetrees on the hills, and it all ends.

181. Parable of the Darnel.

8th June 1945.

A clear dawn causes the lake to sparkle like pearls and envelops the hills in a mist as light as a muslin veil, through which olive and walnut-trees, houses and the background of villages look prettier than usual. Boats are sailing smoothly and quietly towards Capernaum. All of a sudden Peter turns the tiller of the rudder, so abruptly that the boat heels to one side.

« What are you doing? » asks Andrew.

« There is the boat of an owl (1). It is leaving Capernaum now. My eyes are good and since yesterday evening I have the scent of a hound. I do not want them to see us. I am going back to the river. We will go on foot. »

Also the other boat has followed the manouevre, but James, who is holding the rudder, asks Peter: « Why are you doing that? »

« I will tell you later. Follow me. »

Jesus, Who is sitting astern, rouses when they are almost off the Jordan. « What are you doing, Simon? » He asks.

« We are getting off here. There is a jackal about. It is not possible to go to Capernaum today. I want to go and find out what is happening first. I will go with Simon and Nathanael. Three worthy people against three unworthy ones… if the unworthy ones are not more. »

« You must not see traps everywhere, now! Is that not the boat of Simon the Pharisee? »

« It is just that one. »

« He was not present at John's arrest. »

« I don't know. »

« He has always shown respect to Me. »

« I don't know. »

(1) The owl is considered the bird of evil-omen.

« You make Me appear a coward. »

« I don't know. »

Although Jesus does not feel like laughing, He cannot help smiling at Peter's holy obstinacy. « But, after all, we must go to Capernaum. If not today, later… »

« I told You that I am going first, to see… and if necessary… I will also go… it will be a bitter pill to swallow… but I will do it for Your sake… I will go… to the centurion and ask his protection… »

« No! It is not necessary! »

The boat grounds on the little desert shore opposite Bethsaida. They all go ashore.

« You two come with me. You too, Philip. You younger ones, stay here. We will not be long. »

Elias, the new disciple, begs Jesus: « Come to my house, Master. I will be so happy to give You hospitality… »

« Yes, I will come. Simon: you will meet Me at Elias' house. Goodbye, Simon. Go. But be good, wise and merciful. Come here that I may kiss you and bless you. »

Peter does not guarantee that he will be good, patient and merciful. He is silent and kisses Jesus while being kissed by Him. Also the Zealot, Bartholomew and Philip kiss Jesus goodbye and the two parties go in opposite directions.

They enter Korazim when it is broad daylight. All the stems twinkle with dewy gems. Birds are singing everywhere. The air is pure and cool, it seems to savour of milk, of a vegetable milk rather than animal milk. The scent of the corn coming into ears, of the almond-groves laden with fruit… is the scent I could smell in cool mornings in the rich fields in the Po Valley.

They soon reach Elias' house. Many people in Korazim already know that the Master has arrived, and while Jesus is about to enter the house, a mother rushes towards Him shouting: « Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on my daughter! » She is carrying in her arms a little girl, about ten years old, who is very thin and waxen, or yellowish rather than waxen.

« What is the matter with your daughter? »

« She is feverish. She caught a disease at the pastures along the Jordan. Because we are the shepherds of a rich man. Her father sent for me when she was taken ill. He has gone back to the mountains. But You know that with this kind of disease one cannot stay up in high places. But how can I stay here? Our master has allowed me so far. But I look after the wool and the litters. This is the busy season for shepherds. If I stay here we will be dismissed or separated. And if I go back to the Hermon I will see my daughter die. »

« Do you believe that I can cure her? »

« I have spoken to Daniel, Elisha' shepherd. He said to me: "Our

Child cures all diseases. Go to the Messiah". I have come from beyond Merom carrying her in my arms and looking for You. I was going to walk until I found You… »

« You need walk no farther, but go home, to your peaceful work. Your daughter is cured because that is what I want. Go in peace. »

The woman looks at her daughter and at Jesus. She is perhaps hoping to see her daughter become fat and rosy all at once. Also the girl stares at Jesus with her tired eyes wide open and smiles.

« Do not be afraid, woman. I am not deceiving you. Her fever has gone for ever. Day by day she will become a healthy girl. Let her go. She will no longer stagger neither will she feel tired. »

The mother puts the child down and she stands upright. She becomes more and more cheerful and at last she trills in her silvery voice: « Bless the Lord, mother! I am cured! I can feel it » and with the naivety of a little shepherd girl, she throws her arms round Jesus' neck and kisses Him. Her mother, reserved as her age demands, prostrates herself and kisses His tunic blessing the Lord.

« Go. Remember the gift of God and be good. Peace be with you. »

The crowds gather in Elias' little kitchen garden requesting Jesus to speak to them. And although He is not inclined to do so, sad as He is because of the Baptist's capture and the way it happened, He yields and begins to speak in the shade of the trees.

« As we are still in the lovely season when the corn bursts into ears, I wish to tell you a parable taken from the corn. Listen.

The Kingdom of Heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field. But while the man and his servants were asleep, his enemy came and sowed darnel seeds among the wheat and went away. At first no one noticed anything. Winter came with rain and frost, the end of the month of Tebeth came and the corn sprouted. The tiny little green leaves which had just come up, looked all alike in their innocent early days. The months of Shebat and Adar came and the plants grew and the spikes seeded. They then saw that it was not all wheat, and that there was also darnel, twisted with its thin strong bearbines round the corn stalks.

The servants of the master went to his house and said: "Lord, what seed did you sow? Was it not selected seed, free from every other seed?".

"It was certainly so. I picked all the grains and they were all of the same quality. I would have noticed any other seed".

"If so, why has so much darnel grown among your corn?".

The landlord became pensive and said: "Some enemy has done that to harm me".

The servants then asked: "Do you want us to go into the field and free the corn from the darnel, weeding it out patiently? Tell us and we will do it".

But the master said: "No. Because you might weed out also the

corn and almost certainly you would damage the ears which are still tender. Let them both grow till the harvest. Then I will say to the reapers: 'Cut everything together, but before tying the sheaves, since the bearbines of the darnel are withered and friable, whereas the closed ears are stronger and harder, pick the darnel from the wheat and tie it into separate bundles. You will burn them and they will fertilize the soil. Take instead the good corn into the granaries and it will be used to bake good bread, to the great shame of my enemy who will have gained only to become despicable to God because of his envious malice' ".

Consider now how often and how plentifully the Enemy sows in your hearts. And you must understand that it is necessary to watch patiently and constantly to ensure that little darnel is mixed with the chosen wheat. The fate of the darnel is to be burnt. Do you wish to be burnt or to become citizens of the Kingdom? You say that you want to become citizens of the Kingdom. Well, endeavour to be so. The good God gives you the Word. The enemy is vigilant to make it harmful, because the flour of wheat if mixed with the flour of darnel makes a bitter bread, which is harmful to the stomach. If there is darnel in your souls, pick it with good will and throw it away, so that you may not be unworthy of God.

Go, My children. Peace be with you. »

The crowds slowly disperse. The eight apostles, Elias, his brother and mother, old Isaac, whose soul rejoices seeing his Saviour, stay in the kitchen garden.

« Gather round Me and listen. I will explain the full meaning of the parable to you, as it has two more meanings, besides what I told the crowd.

In the universal sense the purport of the parable is as follows: the field is the world. The good seed is the children of the Kingdom of God sown by God in the world, while they wait to reach their end and be cut by the Mower and be taken to the Master of the world Who will store them in His granaries. The subjects of the Evil one are the darnel, which has also been spread in the field of God for the purpose of causing grief to the Master of the world and damage to the corn of God. The enemy of God has sown them deliberately, through witchcraft, because the demon really perverts the nature of man making him a creature of his own and then sows it to lead astray other people whom he has not been able to enslave otherwise. The harvest, that is the tying of the sheaves and carrying them to the granaries, is the end of the world and that is accomplished by the angels. They are given instructions to gather together the creatures which have been cut, to separate the corn from the darnel, and as in the parable the darnel is burnt, so the damned will be burnt in the eternal fire, at the Last Judgement.

The Son of man will have all scandalmongers and performers of iniquity removed from His Kingdom. Because the Kingdom then will be on the earth and in Heaven and many sons of the Enemy will be mixed among the citizens of the Kingdom. And, as prophesied also by Prophets, they will reach the perfection of scandal and abomination in every ministry on the earth and will be of great annoyance to the children of the spirit. The corrupt will have already been driven out of the Kingdom of God in Heaven, because no corruption will enter Heaven. And now the angels of the Lord, brandishing their sickles among the group of the last harvest, will mow down and separate the corn from the darnel and will throw the latter into the burning furnace, where there will be weeping and grinding of teeth. The just, instead, the chosen seed, will be taken to the eternal Jerusalem, where they will shine like the sun in the Kingdom of My Father and yours.

That is the universal sense. But there is another sense, which is the answer to the question which you have been asking yourselves many times and particularly since yesterday evening. Your question is: "Can there be traitors in the mass of disciples?" and your hearts tremble with horror and fear. Yes, there may be some. There are certainly some.

The Sower sows the good seed. In this case, instead of sowing, we could say that He "picks". Because the master, whether it is I or the Baptist, chose his disciples. How were they, therefore, led astray? No, I did not use the right word saying that the disciples are the "seed". You may misunderstand. I will call them "field". As many disciples as fields, chosen by the master to form the area of the Kingdom of God, the wealth of God. The master tires himself cultivating them so that they may yield one hundred per cent. He takes care of everything with patience, love, wisdom, working hard and perseveringly. He also sees their wicked inclinations, their barrenness and avidity, their stubbornness and weakness. But he hopes all the time, corroborating his hope through prayer and penance, because he wishes to lead them to perfection.

But the fields are open. They are not gardens enclosed in walls of protection, of which the only owner is the master, who is the only one who can go in. They are open. Placed as they are in the centre of the world, among the world, anyone can go near them and into them. Everybody and everything. Oh! darnel is not the only bad seed sown! Darnel could be the symbol of the bitter frivolity of the worldly spirit. But all the other seeds, scattered by the Enemy, come up in them. There are nettles, couch-grass, dodder, bearbines, and finally hemlock and poisonous herbs. Why? What are they?

Nettles: stinging untameable spirits which hurt through their excess of poison and cause so much trouble. Couch-grass: parasites

who wear out the master as they can only creep and suck, taking advantage of his work and injuring the willing ones, who would make much more profit if the master were not upset and distracted by the cares required by the couch-grass. The sluggish bearbines rise from the ground only by making use of the efforts of other people. Dodders: they are a torture on the already painful road of the master and a torment to the faithful disciples who follow him. They twist, pierce, tear to pieces, scratch, cause mistrust and pain. The poisonous ones: the criminal disciples, who go as far as betraying and killing as hemlock and other poisonous plants do. Have you noticed how beautiful they are with their little flowers which later become white, red, blue-violet berries? Who would say that the white or pinkish star-shaped corolla, with its little golden heart, or the many-coloured corals, so much like other little fruits which are the delight of birds and children, can cause death, once they are ripe? No one. And the innocent ones fall into the trap. They believe that everybody is as good as they are… they pick and die.

They believe that everybody is as good as they are! Oh! The truth that makes the master sublime and condemns his traitor! How? Does goodness not disarm wickedness? Does it not make ill-will harmless? No. It does not, because the man who has fallen a prey to the Enemy is indifferent to what is superior. And what is superior changes aspect, as far as he is concerned. Kindness becomes weakness on which is lawful to tread and it stimulates his ill-will as the scent of blood stimulates a beast to slaughter.

Also the master is always innocent… and he lets his traitor poison him, because he cannot possibly believe that a human being can murder an innocent person.

The enemies come into the fields of the Master, that is to His disciples. They are many and Satan is the first one. The others are his servants, that is, men, passions, the world and the flesh. The disciple who is more easily struck by them is the one who is not entirely close to the Master, but is between the Master and the world. He is not capable and does not want to part completely with the world, the flesh, passions and demons, to belong entirely to Him Who wants to take him to God. And the world, flesh, passions and the demon scatter their seed in him: gold, power, women, pride, the fear of an unfavourable opinion of the world, the spirit of utilitarianism. "The great ones are the strongest. I will serve them so that they will be friendly to me". And they become criminals and damned for such miserable things!…

Why does the Master, Who sees the imperfection of a disciple, not cast him away at once, even if He is not prepared to submit to the thought: "He will be My murderer"? That is what you are asking yourselves. Because it is useless to do so. If He did so he would not

avoid having him as an enemy, a double and more dangerous enemy, because of his anger and his sorrow at being found out or at being driven away. Yes, because of his sorrow. Because sometimes a bad disciple does not realise that he is such. The demon's action is so subtle that he is not aware of it. He becomes wicked without even suspecting that he is subject to such action. And because of his anger. He is enraged at being known for what he is, when he is aware of Satan's work and of his followers: the men who tempt weak people in their weak points, to remove from the world a saint who offends them, wicked as they are, when compared with his goodness. The saint then prays and trusts in God. "Let what You allow, be done" he says. He adds only the clause: "providing it serves Your purpose". The saint knows that the time will come when the wicked darnel will be rejected from the harvest. By whom? By God Himself Who does not allow more than what is useful to the triumph of His loving will. »

« If You maintain that Satan and his followers are always to be blamed… it seems to me that the responsibility of the disciple diminishes » says Matthew.

« Do not believe that. If there is Good there is also Evil and man is gifted with discernment and freedom. »

« You say that God does not allow more than what is useful to the triumph of His loving will. Therefore also such error is useful, if He allows it, and it serves the triumph of the divine will » says the Iscariot.

« And you infer, as Matthew does, that that justifies the disciple's crime. God created the lion without ferocity and the snake without poison, now one is ferocious and the other poisonous. That is why God separated them from man. Ponder over that and draw conclusions. Let us go to the house. The sun is already too warm. It looks as if there is going to be a storm. And you are tired because of the sleepless night. »

« The rooms in the house are high, large and cool. You will be able to rest » says Elias.

They go up the outside staircase. But only the apostles lie down on the mats to rest. Jesus goes out on to the terrace, a comer of which is shaded by a very tall oak-tree, and becomes engrossed in thought.

182. On His Way to Magdala Jesus Speaks to Some Shepherds.

9th June 1945.

Peter comes back only the following morning. And he is more calm than when he left, because he was made welcome at Capernaum and the town had been cleared of Eli and Joachim.

« They must have taken part in the plot. Because I asked some friends when they had left, and I understood that they had not come back after going to the Baptist as penitents. And I do not think that they will come back so soon, now that I mentioned that they were present at the arrest… There is much turmoil because of the Baptist's capture… I will ensure that the whole world knows about it… It is the best weapon we have. I met also Simon, the Pharisee… But if he really is what he appeared to me, I think he is favourably disposed towards us. He said to Me: "Tell the Master not to follow the Jordan along the western valley. The other side is safer" he said stressing the words. And he ended: "I have not seen you. I have not spoken to you. Don't forget. And mind what you do in mine, yours and everybody's interest. Tell the Master that I am a friend" and he kept looking up, as if he were speaking to the wind. They are always false, also when doing good things and… and I will say "strange", so that You will not reproach me. But… ehi!… but I went and I had a little chat with the centurion. Just… to ask: "Is your servant well?", and when I was told that he was, I said: "That is good! Make sure you keep him healthy because they are laying snares for the Master. The Baptist has already been captured… " and the Roman grasped the idea immediately. A cunning fellow he is! He replied: "Where there is a vexillum, there will be a guard for Him, and there will be someone reminding the Jews that no plot is allowed under the sign of Rome, death or the galley being the punishment". They are heathens, but I could have kissed him. I like people who understand and take action! So we can go. »

« Let us go. But all that was not necessary » says Jesus.

« It was… it was necessary indeed! »

Jesus says goodbye to the hospitable family and also to the new disciple, to whom He must have given some instructions.

They are alone once again: the Master with His apostles and they walk along the cool country, along a road which Jesus has taken much to Peter's surprise, as he wanted to take a different one. « We are going away from the lake… »

« We will still arrive in time for what I have to do. »

The apostles become silent and go towards a little village, a handful of houses, spread out in the country. A loud ding-dong of sheep-bells can be heard as the flocks are driven towards the pastures on the mountains.

When Jesus stops to let a large herd pass, the shepherds point Him out and gather together. They consult with one another but dare no more. Jesus puts an end to their doubts by walking through the herd, which has stopped to graze the thick grass. He goes straight to caress a little shepherd, who is standing towards the centre of the woolly bleating mass of sheep. He asks the boy:

« Are they yours? » Jesus knows very well that they are not the boy's, but He wants him to speak.

« No, Lord. I am with those men. And the herds belong to many owners. We are all together for fear of the bandits. »

« What is your name? »

« Zacharias, the son of Isaac. But my father died and I work as a servant because we are poor and my mother has three more sons younger than I am. »

« Has your father been long dead? »

« Three years, Lord… and since then I have never smiled because my mother always weeps and I have no one who caresses me any more… I am the first born and my father's death has made a man of me, while I was still a child… But I must not weep but earn some money… But it is so difficult! » Tears stream down his face which is too serious for his age.

The shepherds have drawn near and so have the apostles. A group of men in the midst of moving sheep.

« You are not fatherless, Zacharias. You have a holy Father in Heaven, Who always loves you, if you are good, and your father has not ceased loving you because he is in Abraham's bosom. You must believe that. And because of such faith you must endeavour to become better and better. » Jesus speaks kindly and caresses the boy.

A shepherd dares to ask: « You are the Messiah, are You not? »

« Yes, I am. How do you know? »

« I know that You are about in Palestine and I know that You speak holy words. That is why I recognised You. »

« Are you going far? »

« Up to the high mountains. The hot weather is coming… Will You not speak to us? Up there, where we are, only the winds speak, and sometimes the wolf speaks and it slaughters… as it happened to Zacharias' father. During the whole winter we were hoping to see You, but we never found You. »

« Let us go under the shade of that thicket and I will speak to you. » And Jesus goes ahead of them, holding the little shepherd by the hand and caressing with the other hand the little lambs which raise their heads, bleating.

The shepherds gather the flock under a coppice and while the sheep lie down ruminating or graze or rub themselves against tree trunks, Jesus speaks.

« You said: "Up there, where we are, only the winds speak, and sometimes the wolf speaks and slaughters". What happens up there, happens in men's hearts through the work of God, of men and of Satan. You may, therefore, have up there what you would have in any other place.

Do you know the Law well enough and its ten commandments?

And you, too, boy? In that case you know enough. If you faithfully practise what God commanded, you will be holy. Do not complain of being far from the world. That will preserve you from much corruption. And God is not far from you, but closer in that solitude, where you can hear His voice in the winds, which He created, in the herbs and in the water, whereas you would not hear it among men. Your flock teaches you a great virtue, nay many great virtues. It is meek and obedient. It is satisfied with little and is grateful for what it has. It loves and knows those who take care of it and love it. Do likewise saying: "God is our Shepherd and we are His sheep. He watches us. He protects us and grants us not what is the source of vice, but what is necessary to live". And keep wolves away from your hearts. Wicked men are wolves: they seduce you and incite you to evil actions by Satan's order and it is Satan himself who induces you to sin so that he may tear you to pieces.

Be watchful. You shepherds know the habits of wolves. They are as shrewd, as sheep are simple and innocent. They steal close to you, after watching from above the habits of the herd, they sneak closer through bushes and lie as still as stones to avoid drawing your attention. Do they not look like huge stones which have rolled down on to the meadows? Then, when they are sure that no one is watching, they spring and bite. That is how Satan behaves. He watches you to find out your weak points, he roams about you, he seems harmless and absent, concerned with something else, whereas he is watching you, and then he suddenly leaps to induce you to sin, and sometimes he is successful.

But close to you there are a doctor and a compassionate spirit. God and your angel. If you are wounded, if you have been taken ill, do not go away from them, as a dog which has become rabid does. On the contrary, while weeping shout to them: "Help!". God forgives those who repent and your angel is ready to implore God with you and for you.

Love one another and love this boy. Each of you must feel as if he were somehow the father of the orphan. The presence of a child amongst you should influence every action of yours through the holy restraint of respect for a child. And let your company make up for what death deprived him of. We must love our neighbour. This boy is the neighbour entrusted to you by God in a special manner. Teach him to be good, a faithful believer, honest and free from vices. He is worth much more than one of these sheep. Now, if you take care of the sheep because they belong to their owner, who would punish you if you should let them perish, how much more care you must take of this soul which God entrusts to you for Himself and for his dead father. His situation as an orphan is a sad one indeed. Do not make it more painful by taking advantage of him and vexing him because he is only a youngster. Remember

that God sees the deeds and tears of 'every man and takes everything into account, in order to reward or punish.

And you, My boy, remember that you are never alone. God sees you and so does the spirit of your father. When something upsets you and induces you to do wrong, say: "No, I do not want to be an orphan for ever and ever". You would be, if you damned your soul by sinning.

Be good. I bless you so that all goodness may be with you. If we were going the same way, I would continue to speak to you for a long time. But the sun is rising and you must go, and so do I. Your task is to protect the sheep from the heat, Mine to relieve men of another ardour, a more dreadful one, the passions of their hearts. Pray that they may consider Me as their Shepherd. Goodbye, Zacharias. Be good. Peace be with you. »

Jesus kisses the little shepherd and blesses him and while the flock moves slowly away, His eyes follow him. He then resumes His way.

« You said that we are going to relieve hearts of another ardour… Where are we going? » asks the Iscariot.

« For the time being as far as that shady spot, where the stream is. We will have something to eat there and then you will be told where we are going. »

Jesus says: « Insert here the vision of the second moment of Mary Magdalene's conversion, which you had last year, on the 12th of August 1944. »

183. Jesus at Magdala. He Meets with Mary Magdalene the Second Time.

12th August 1944.

The entire apostolic college is round Jesus. Sitting on the grass, in the cool shade of a thicket, near a stream, they are all eating bread and cheese and drinking the cool clear water of the stream. Their dusty sandals give to understand that they have walked a long way and perhaps the disciples wish but to rest on the long fresh grass.

But the Tireless Walker is not of the same mind. As soon as he deems that the hottest hour is over, He gets up, goes on to the road and looks… He then turns round and says: « Let us go. » Nothing else.

When they reach a crossroads, where four dusty roads meet, Jesus resolutely takes the one in a north-east direction.

« Are we going back to Capernaum? » asks Peter.

Jesus replies: « No. » Just: no.

« We are going to Tiberias, then » insists Peter, who is anxious to

know.

« Not there either. »

« But this road takes one to the Sea of Galilee… and Tiberias and Capernaum are there… »

« And there is also Magdala » says Jesus with a half-serious expression to satisfy Peter's curiosity.

« Magdala? Oh!… » Peter is somewhat scandalised, which makes me think that the town is ill-famed.

« Yes, to Magdala. Do you consider yourself too honest to enter that town? Peter, Peter!… For My sake you will have to enter not towns of pleasure but real brothels… Christ did not come to save those who are already saved, but those who are lost… and you shall be "Peter", or Rock, not Simon, for that purpose. Are you afraid of becoming contaminated? No! Not even this one, see (and He points at the very young John) will suffer any harm. Because he does not want, as you do not want, as your brother and John's brother do not want, as none of you, for the time being, wants. As long as one does not want, no harm is done. But one must not want resolutely and perseveringly. You will obtain will-power and perseverance from the Father, by praying with sincere intentions. Not all of you will be able to pray thus, in future… What are you saying, Judas? Do not be too self-confident. I, Who am the Christ, constantly pray to have strength against Satan. Are you better than I am? Pride is the opening through which Satan penetrates. Be vigilant and humble, Judas. Matthew, since you are familiar with this place, tell Me: is it better to go to the town this way, or is there another road? »

« It depends, Master. If You want to go to the area of Magdala where fishermen and poor people live, this is the road. But - I do not think this is the case but I am telling You to give You a complete answer - if You want to go where the rich people are, then in about one hundred yards, You have to leave this road and take another one, because their houses are approximately in this direction and it is necessary to go back… »

« We will go back because I want to go to the residential area of the wealthy people. What did you say, Judas? »

« Nothing, Master. It is the second time that You ask me in a very short time. But I have never spoken. »

« Not with your lips, no. But you have spoken, grumbling in your heart. You have grumbled with your guest: your heart. It is not necessary to have an interlocutor, in order to speak. We say many words to ourselves… But we must not moan or calumniate, not even with our own ego. »

The group proceeds in silence. The main road becomes a town street, paved with one handbreath wide square stones. The houses are more and more splendid and magnificent, surrounded by luxuriant

flourishing gardens and orchards. I am under the impression that the elegant Magdala was for the Palestinians a kind of place of pleasure like some towns around our lakes in Lombardy: Stresa, Gardone, Pallanza, Bellagio and so on. Among the rich Palestinians there are many Romans, who must have come from other places, such as Tiberias or Caesarea, possibly officials of the Governor or merchants who export to Rome the most beautiful products of the Palestinian colony.

Jesus proceeds, sure of Himself, as if He knew where to go. He follows the contour of the lake, which reflects the houses and gardens built on its limits.

A loud noise of crying people can be heard from a sumptuous house. It is the voices of women and children. The shrill voice of a woman shouts: « My son! My son! »

Jesus turns round and looks at His apostles. Judas steps forward. « No, not you » orders Jesus. « You, Matthew. Go and find out. »

Matthew goes and comes back: « A brawl, Master. A man is dying. A Jew. The man who wounded him, a Roman, has run away. His wife, mother and children have rushed to help him… But he is dying. »

« Let us go. »

« Master… Master… It happened in the house of a woman… who is not his wife. »

« Let us go. »

Through the wide open door they enter a large hall which opens on to a lovely garden. The house seems to be divided by this kind of covered peristyle, which is full of pots with green plants, statues and inlaid articles. It is a mixture of a hall and greenhouse. In a room, the door of which opens on to the hall, there are some women weeping. Jesus goes in confidently. But He does not pronounce His usual greeting.

Among the men present there is a merchant who obviously knows Jesus, because as soon as he sees Him, he says: « The Rabbi of Nazareth! » and greets Him respectfully.

« Joseph, what is the matter? »

« Master, a stab wound in his heart… He is dying. »

« Why? »

A grey-haired unkempt woman stands up - she was kneeling near the dying man holding his limp hand - and with distracted face and voice she shouts: « Because of her, because of her… She has turned him into a devil… Mother, wife, children no longer existed for him! Hell will have you, satan! »

Jesus looks up and His eyes follow the trembling accusing hand and in a corner, against the dark red wall, He sees Mary of Magdala, more immodest than ever, wearing, I would say, nothing

on half of her body, because she is half naked from the waist upwards, draped in a kind of hexagonal net decorated with little round objects which look like tiny pearls. But as she is in a halflight, I cannot see her well.

Jesus lowers His eyes once again. Mary, lashed by His indifference, stands up, whereas before she seemed somewhat depressed, and strikes a defiant pose.

« Woman » says Jesus to the mother. « Do not curse. Tell Me. Why was your son in this house? »

« I told You. Because she infatuated him. She did. »

« Silence. So, he was in sin, too, because he is an adulterer and an unworthy father of these innocent children. He therefore deserves his punishment. In this life and in the next one there is no mercy for those who do not repent. But I feel sorry for your grief and for these innocent children. Is your house far? »

« About one hundred yards. »

« Lift the man and take him there. »

« It is not possible, Master » says Joseph, the merchant. « He is breathing his last. »

« Do as I tell you. »

They place a board under the body of the dying man and the procession slowly moves out. They cross the street and go into a shady garden. The women go on crying loudly.

As soon as they enter the garden, Jesus addresses the mother. « Can you forgive? If you forgive, God will forgive. We must be kind-hearted, to obtain grace. He has sinned and will sin again. It would be better for him to die, because, if he lives, he will fall into sin again and he will have to answer also for his ingratitude to God Who has saved him. But you and these innocent ones (and He points at the wife and children) would give yourselves up to despair. I have come to save, not to lose. Man, I tell you: stand up and be cured. »

The man begins to recover. He opens his eyes, sees his mother, wife and children and lowers his head shamefully.

« Son, son » says the mother. « You were dead, if He had not saved you. Come to your senses. Don't be infatuated for a… »

Jesus interrupts the old woman. « Be quiet, woman. Have mercy, as mercy was granted to you. Your house has been sanctified by a miracle, which is always the evidence of God's presence. That is why I could not work it where there was sin. You, at least, must endeavour to keep it such, even if he will not. Take care of him now. It is fair that he should suffer a little. Be good, woman. And you. And you little ones. Goodbye. » Jesus has laid His hand on the heads of the two women and of the children.

He then goes out passing in front of the Magdalene who followed the procession as far as the entrance of the house where she remained

leaning against a tree. Jesus slackens His pace as if He were waiting for His disciples, but I think He does so to give Mary a chance of making a gesture. But she does not.

The disciples reach Jesus and Peter cannot help muttering between his teeth an epithet appropriate to Mary, who, wishing to strike an attitude, bursts into a laugh of a weak triumph. But Jesus heard Peter's word and addresses him severely: « Peter. I do not insult. Do not insult. Pray for sinners. Nothing else. »

Mary stops her trilling laughter, lowers her head and runs away, like a gazelle, towards her house.

184. At Magdala in the House of Benjamin's Mother.

10th June 1945.

The miracle must have taken place only a short while ago, because the apostles are talking about it, and also some citizens are making comments, pointing at the Master, Who with a grave countenance goes straight to the outskirts of the town, where the poor people live.

He stops at a little house, from which a little boy comes bounding out followed by his mother. « Woman, will you let Me go into your kitchen garden and rest there until it cools down a little? »

« Go in, my Lord. Also into the kitchen, if You so wish. I will bring You some refreshments. »

« Do not trouble. It is quite enough for Me to stay in this peaceful garden. »

But the woman offers Him some water mixed with I do not know what and then she wanders round the kitchen garden, as if she were anxious to but dare not speak. She busies herself with her vegetables, but it is only a pretence. In actual fact she is paying attention to the Master, but the little boy annoys her because every time he catches a butterfly or an insect, he shouts and thus prevents her from hearing what Jesus says. She gets angry and gives him a little slap and… he shouts louder.

Jesus - Who was replying to the Zealot who had asked Him: « Do You think Mary is upset because of it? » saying: « Much more than you would think… » - turns round and calls the child, who runs towards Him and stops crying on His knees.

The woman shouts: « Benjamin Come here. Do not disturb the Master. »

But Jesus says: « No, leave him. He will be good and will leave you in peace. » He then says to the boy: « Do not cry. Your mummy did not hurt you. She only made you obey, or, she wanted to make you obey. Why did you shout when she wanted you to be quiet? Perhaps she is not feeling well, and your shouting was annoying her. »

The boy, with the incontrovertable frankness of children, which is the desperation of adults, immediately exclaims: « No, she is feeling all right. She wanted to hear what You were saying… She told me. But I wanted to come to You, so I was deliberately making a lot of noise, so that You would look at me. »

Everybody laughs and the woman blushes.

« Do not blush, woman. Come here. You wanted to hear Me speak? Why? »

« Because You are the Messiah. No one but You can be the Messiah, considering the miracle You have worked… And I was anxious to hear You. I never go out of Magdala because I have… a difficult husband and five children. The youngest is four months old… and You never come here. »

« I have come, and to your house, as you can see. »

« That is why I wanted to hear You. »

« Where is your husband? »

« At sea, my Lord. If he catches no fish, there is no food for us. I have but this little kitchen garden. Can it suffice for seven people? And yet that is what Zacchaeus would like… »

« Be patient, woman. Everybody has a cross. »

« Oh! No! Shameless women have but pleasure. You have seen the deeds of the shameless ones! They enjoy themselves and make other people suffer. They do not suffer the labour of childbirth neither do they break their backs working. Their hands do not blister digging, neither do they get spoiled washing clothes. They are beautiful and fresh looking. Eve's punishment does not affect them. Nay, they are our punishment, because… men… You know what I mean. »

« I understand. But, believe Me, they have a terrible cross, too. The most dreadful one, which is not visible: their conscience which reproaches them, the world that sneers at them, their blood that disowns them, God that curses them. They are not happy, believe Me. They do not suffer the labour of childbirth, they do not break their backs working, they do not ulcerate their hands toiling. But they feel broken just the same, and ashamed. Their hearts are one big sore. Do not envy their fresh look, their apparent serenity. It is a veil laid over a ruin that bites and gives no peace. Do not envy their sleep, you, a mother who dreams of her innocent children… Their pillows are covered with nightmares. And in future, in their old age, in their agony, they will have nothing but remorse and terror. »

« It is true… Forgive me… May I stay here? »

« Yes, stay. I will tell Benjamin a nice parable and those who are no longer children will apply it to themselves and to Mary of Magdala. Listen.

You doubt Mary's conversion to Good. There is no sign in her in

that direction. Brazen and impudent, conscious of her rank and power, she dared to defy the people and come to the very threshold of the house where they are weeping because of her. She laughed at Peter's reproach. She replied to My inviting look, by striking a proud attitude. Perhaps some of you, either for Lazarus' sake or for Mine, would have liked Me to speak to her directly, at some length, subduing her with My power, showing My strength as Messiah and Saviour. No. All that is not needed. I already said so many months ago in regard to another sinner. Souls must react by themselves. I pass and sow the seed. The seed works in secret. A soul is to be respected in this work. If the first seed does not take root, another must be sown, and a third one… and one must give up only when there is definite proof that it is useless to sow. And one prays. Prayer is like dew on the clods of earth: it keeps them soft and nourishes them, so that the seed can sprout. Is that not what you do, woman, with your vegetables?

Now listen to the parable of how God works in the hearts of men to establish His Kingdom there. Because every heart is a small kingdom of God on the earth. Later, after death, all these small kingdoms will agglomerate into one, immeasurable, holy eternal Kingdom of Heaven.

The Kingdom of God is created in men's hearts by the Divine Sower. He comes to his field - man belongs to God, because every man is initially His - and sows His seed. He then goes to other fields, to other hearts. Days follow the nights and nights the days. The days bring sunshine and rain, in our case rays of divine love and effusion of divine Wisdom speaking to the spirit. The nights bring stars and restful silence: in our case enlightening calls of God and silence for the soul so that it may collect its thoughts and meditate.

The seed, in this course of imperceptible but powerful influence, swells, splits, takes root, sprouts, grows. And all that happens without any help from man. The soil spontaneously produces grass from seeds, the herb becomes strong and supports the rising ear, the ear grows, swells, hardens, becomes golden and perfect when seeding. When it is ripe, the sower comes back and cuts it because the time of perfection has arrived for that seed. It cannot develop any further and so it is harvested.

My word does the same work in hearts. I am referring to the hearts which receive the seed. But it is a slow process. One must not spoil everything by being hasty. How troublesome it is for the little seed to split and take root! Such work is painful also for a hard wild heart. It must open itself, allow people to search it, accept new things and nourish them laboriously, appear different being covered with humble useful things, instead of the fascinating, pompous, useless, exuberant flourishing that covered

it previously. It must be satisfied with working humbly for the benefit of the divine Thought, without drawing other people's admiring attention. It must exert all its talent to grow and burst into ear. It must bum with love to become corn. And after overcoming all fears of human opinion, which are so grievous, after toiling, suffering and becoming attached to its new dress, it must be deprived of it by a cruel cut. It must give everything to receive everything. It must be divested to be clad again in Heaven with the stole of sainthood. The life of a sinner who becomes a saint is the longest, most heroic and glorious fight. I tell you.

You will realise from what I told you that it is fair that I should deal with Mary as I am doing. Did I behave differently with you, Matthew? »

« No, my Lord, You did not. »

« And tell Me the truth: what convinced you more, My patience or the bitter reproaches of the Pharisees? »

« Your patience, so much so that I am here. The Pharisees, by despising and anathematizing me, made me scornful, and out of contempt I did more harm than I had done so far. That is what happens. Sinners become more obstinate when they realise that they are treated as sinners. But when we are caressed instead of being insulted, we are dumbfounded and we weep… and when one weeps, the whole framework of sin collapses… One is left nude before Goodness and one implores it wholeheartedly to be reclothed by It. »

« You are right. Benjamin, did you like My story? Yes? Good. Where is your mother? »

James of Alphaeus replies: « She went out at the end of the parable and ran along that road. »

« She may have gone to the seaside to see whether her husband is coming » says Thomas.

« No. She has gone to her old mother's, to get the children. Mummy takes them there so that she can work » says the little boy, who is leaning familiarly on Jesus' knees.

« And she keeps you here, my little man? You must be a handsome evil-doer if she keeps you here all by yourself! » remarks Bartholomew.

« I am the eldest, and I help her… »

« You help her to gain Paradise, poor woman! How old are you? » asks Peter.

« In three years' time I will be a son of the Law » replies the urchin proudly.

« Can you read? » asks Thaddeus.

« Yes… but very slowly… because the teacher throws me out almost every day… »

« What did I say! » exclaims Bartholomew.

« But I behave like that because the teacher is old and ugly and says the same things all the time and makes you fall asleep! If he were like Him (and he points to Jesus) I would pay attention. Do You hit those who sleep or play? »

« I do not hit anybody. But I say to My pupils: "Pay attention for your own good and for My sake" » replies Jesus.

« Yes, that's all right! Out of love, not out of fear. »

« But if you are good, the teacher will love you. »

« Do You love only those who are good? You just said that You were patient with this man here, who was not good… » The child's logic is cogent.

« I am good with everybody. But when one becomes good, I love that one very much and I am very good, too. »

The boy is pensive… he then looks up and asks Matthew: « And what did you do to become good? »

« I loved Him. »

The boy becomes pensive again and then looking at the Twelve asks Jesus: « Are these ones all good? »

« Of course they are. »

« Are you sure? I sometimes behave as a good boy, but that is when… I am thinking of some big mischief. »

They all burst into laughter. Also the little fellow, who is in a confessing humour, laughs. Also Jesus laughs pressing him to His heart and kissing him.

The boy, who is now friendly with everybody, wants to play and says: « I will now tell You who is good » and he begins his selection. He looks at them all and goes straight to John and Andrew who are nearby and says: « You and you. Come here. » He then chooses the two Jameses and places them with the other two. He then takes Thaddeus. He is quite pensive in front of the Zealot and Bartholomew and says: « You are old, but good » and he joins them to the others. He examines Peter, who undergoes the examination, jokingly frowning at him, and finds him to be good. Also Matthew and Philip pass the examination. He says to Thomas: « You laugh too much. I am in earnest. Don't you know that my teacher says that he who always laughs, fails in the test? » After all, also Thomas passes his examination, but with low marks. The boy then goes back to Jesus.

« Hey, you urchin! I am here, too! I am not a tree. I am young and handsome. Why don't you examine me? » says the Iscariot.

« Because I don't like you. My mother says that when you don't like something, you must not touch it. You just leave it on the table, so that other people, who may like it, can take it. And she also says that if you are offered something which you do not like, You must not say: "I do not like it". But you say: "Thank you, but I am not hungry". And I do not hunger for you. »

« Why not? Look, if you say that I am good, I will give you this coin. »

« What am I going to do with it? What can I buy with a lie? Mummy says that the money which is the fruit of deceit, becomes straw. Once at my grandmother's, I got them to give me a didrachma by telling a lie because I wanted to buy some honey-cakes, and during the night it turned into straw. I put it in that hole over there, under the door, to take it the following morning, but I found a handful of straw in its place. »

« But how can you see that I am not good? What is wrong with me? Am I lame? Am I ugly looking? »

« No. But you frighten me. »

« Why? » asks the Iscariot going near him.

« I don't know. Leave me alone. Don't touch me or I will scratch you. »

« What a hedgehog! You are silly. » Judas gives a forced laugh.

« I am not silly. You are bad » and the boy takes shelter in the lap of Jesus, Who caresses him without speaking.

The apostles make fun of the situation which is not very pleasant to the Iscariot.

In the meantime the woman comes back with half a dozen people, and behind them, many more. They must be about fifty. All poor people.

« Would You speak to them? At least a few words. This is my husband's mother, these are my children. And that man over there is my husband. A word, Lord » implores the woman.

« Yes, I will speak. To thank you for your hospitality. »

The woman goes back into the house, where her suckling claims her and she sits on the threshold breastfeeding her baby.

« Listen. Here on My knees I have a little boy who has spoken very wisely. He said: "Everything that is obtained by deceit, becomes straw". His mother taught him that truth.

It is not a tale. It is an eternal truth. What is done dishonestly, is never successful. Because falsehood in words, deeds, and in religion is always a sign of alliance with Satan, the master of falsehood. Do not believe that the deeds worthy of achieving the Kingdom of Heaven are very noisy or showy. They are common, continuous deeds, but performed with a supernatural purpose of love. Love is the seed of the plant that sprouts in you and grows up as far as Heaven, and in its shade all the other virtues sprout. I will compare it to the tiny mustard seed. How small it is! It is one of the smallest seeds that man sows. But look how big and leafy it becomes when it has grown up and how much fruit it bears. Not one hundred per cent, but one hundred to one. The smallest. But the most diligent in working. How much profit it gives you.

Love is the same. If you enclose in your hearts a tiny seed of love

for your Most Holy God and for your neighbour, and if you accomplish your deeds guided by love, you will not fail in any of the precepts of the Decalogue. You will not lie to God by means of a false religion of practices but not of the spirit. You will not lie to your neighbour, behaving as ungrateful children, as adulterers, as too exacting husbands and wives, as thieves in business, as liars in life, as violent avengers towards your enemies. Look how many birds have taken shelter, in this warm hour of the day, among the branches of the trees in the garden. Before long, that mustard plant, which now is still very small, will be a real perch for birds. All the birds will come to the safe shade of those thick and comfortable trees and their little ones will learn to fly safely among those branches which are like steps and a net, which they can climb without falling. Such is love, the foundation of the Kingdom of God.

Love and you will be loved. Love and you will bear with one another. Love and you will not be cruel by wanting more than what is lawful from those who are under you. Love and sincerity to obtain the peace and glory of Heaven. Otherwise, as Benjamin said, every action of yours accomplished lying to love and to truth will turn into straw for your beds in hell. I will not say anything else to you. I will only say: always bear in mind the great precept of love and be faithful to God the Truth, to the truth in every word, deed and sentiment, because the truth is the daughter of God. Let the work of bringing yourselves to perfection be continuous, as the seed continuously grows until it is perfect. A silent, humble, patient work. You may rest assured that God sees your struggles and He will grant you a greater reward for overcoming your selfishness, for holding back a rude word, for satisfying a necessity without being ordered to do so, than if, fighting in a battle, you killed the enemy. The Kingdom of Heaven, which you will possess if You live as just people, is built with the little things of every day. With goodness, moderation, patience, with being satisfied with what one has, bearing with one another, and with love, love, love.

Be good. Live in peace, one with the other. Do not grumble. Do not judge. God will then be with you. I give you My peace as a blessing and thanksgiving for the faith you have in Me. »

Then Jesus turns to the woman saying: « May God bless you especially, because you are a holy wife and a holy mother. Persevere in virtue. Goodbye, Benjamin. Love the truth and obey Your mother. My blessing to you, to your little brothers and to you, mother. »

A man comes forward. He is embarrassed and stammers: « But, but… I am moved by what You say of my wife… I did not know… »

« Have you no eyes or intelligence? »

« Yes, I have. »

« Why do you not make use of them? Shall I clear them? »

« You have already done that, my Lord. But I love her, You know… The trouble is… that, that… one gets used… and… and… »

« And one thinks that it is quite all right to exact too much, because the other one is more gentle than we are… Do not do that any more. You are always in danger with your work. Be not afraid of storms if God is with you. But if there is Injustice in you, be much afraid. Have you understood? »

« More than You have said. I will do my best to obey You… I did not know… » and he looks at his wife as if he saw her for the first time.

Jesus blesses and goes out on to the little road. He resumes walking towards the country.

185. The Calming of the Storm.

30th January 1944.

[…] Now that everybody is asleep I am telling you my joy. I « saw » today's Gospel. Mind you, this morning when I read it, I said to myself: « This is an episode of the Gospel which I will never see, because it is not very suitable for a vision. » Instead, when I was not thinking about it, it came to fill me with joy. This is what I saw.

A sailing boat, not excessively large, nor very small, a fishing boat, on which five or six people can move comfortably, is ploughing the water of the beautiful deep blue lake of Gennesaret.

Jesus is sleeping in the stern. He is dressed in white as usual. He is resting His head on His left arm and under His arm and head He has placed His blue-grey mantle, which has been folded many times. He is sitting, not lying, on the bottom of the boat and His head is resting on the board that is at the very end of the stern. I do not know how sailors call it. He is sleeping peacefully. He is tired and calm.

Peter is at the rudder. Andrew is busy with the sails, John and two more people - I do not know who they are - are sorting out the ropes and nets in the bottom of the boat, as if they were preparing to catch during the night. I would say that the day is drawing to its end because the sun is already setting in the west. All the disciples have pulled their tunics up, gathering them round their waists by means of belts, in order to be free in their movements, passing from one part of the boat to another, stepping over oars, seats, baskets and nets, without being hindered by their clothes. None of them is wearing a mantle.

I see that the sky is clouding over and the sun is hiding behind huge storm clouds, which have suddenly appeared from behind the

top of a hill. The wind blows them fast towards the lake. The wind, for the time being, is high up, and the lake is still quiet, it is only becoming darker and its surface is no longer perfectly smooth. There are no waves as yet, but the water is beginning to ruffle.

Peter and Andrew watch the sky and the lake and are preparing to draw close to the shore. But the wind suddenly rages over the lake that in a few minutes surges foaming. The swelling waves clash one against the other, they strike the little boat, lifting it up, lowering it down, tossing it in all directions, thus preventing all manoeuvres of the rudder as the wind prevents manoeuvring the sail, which has to be lowered.

Jesus is sleeping. Neither the steps and excited voices of the disciples, nor the howling wind, nor the waves pounding on the sides of the boat and its prow, awake Him. His hair is blowing in the wind and drops of water reach Him. But He is sleeping. John runs from stem to stern and covers Him with his mantle, which he has taken from under a board. He covers Him with delicate love.

The storm rages more and more furiously. The lake is as black as if ink had been poured into it and is streaked by the foam of the waves. The boat lets in water and is driven farther and farther to the open sea by the wind. The disciples are perspiring in their efforts to manoeuvre the boat and baling out the water which the waves pour in. But to no avail. They are paddling in the water that reaches up to their knees and the boat is becoming heavier and heavier.

Peter loses his calm and patience. He hands the rudder over to his brother, staggers towards Jesus and shakes Him vigorously.

Jesus wakes up and raises His head.

« Save us, Master, we are going down! » Peter shouts to Him (he must shout to make himself heard).

Jesus stares at His disciple, looks at the others and then at the lake. « Do you believe that I can save you? »

« Quick, Master » shouts Peter, while a real mountain of water moves fast from the centre of the lake towards the poor little boat. It is so high and dreadful that it looks like a water spout. The disciples who see it coming kneel down and hang on to whatever they can, certain that it is the end.

Jesus gets up. He stands on the stem board: a white figure against the livid storm. He stretches His arms out towards the billow and says to the wind: « Stop and be quiet » and to the water: « Calm down. I want it. » And the billow dissolves into foam, which falls harmlessly with a last roar, which fades into a whisper, while the wind dies down changing into a whistle and then a sigh. And the sky becomes clear once again over the appeased lake, while hope and faith fill the hearts of the disciples.

I cannot describe Jesus' majesty. One must see it to understand

it. And I enjoy it inwardly because it is still present in my mind and I think of how placid was Jesus' sleep and how imperious was His command to the winds and the waves.

Jesus then says:

« I will not expound the Gospel in the same sense as everybody else does. I will elucidate the circumstances preceding the Gospel passage.

Why was I sleeping? Did I perhaps not know that there was going to be a storm? Yes, I knew. Only I knew. Why was I sleeping, then?

The apostles were men, Mary. They were full of good will, but still very much "men". Man thinks he is always capable of everything. When he is really capable of doing something he is full of haughtiness and attachment to his "ability". Peter, Andrew, James and John were good fishermen and consequently they thought they were unexcelled in handling a boat. As far as they were concerned I was a great "Rabbi", but a mere nothing as a sailor. Thus they thought I was unable to help them, and when on the boat to cross the Sea of Galilee, they begged Me to sit down because I was not capable of doing anything else. Also their love for Me was behind their attitude, as they did not want Me to do any material work. But their attachment to their own ability was greater than their love.

I do not impose Myself, Mary, except in exceptional cases. I generally leave you free and wait. On that day, tired as I was and being requested to rest, that is to let them act, clever as they were, I went to sleep. In My sleep there was mingled also the ascertainment of how man is "man" and wants to do things by himself without feeling that God asks but to help him. I saw in those "spiritual deaf men", in those "spiritual blind men", all the spiritual deaf and blind people, who throughout centuries would ruin themselves, because "they wanted to do by themselves", although I was bent over their needs awaiting to be asked to help them.

When Peter shouted: "Save us!", My bitterness dropped like a stone. I am not "man", I am the God-Man. I do not behave as you do. When someone rejects your advice or your help, and you see him in trouble, even if you are not so bad as to rejoice at it, you are uncharitable enough to look at him disdainfully and indifferently, without being moved by his shouts for help. Your attitude means: "When I wanted to help you, you did not want me? Well, help yourself now". But I am Jesus. I am the Saviour. And I save, Mary. I always save as soon as I am asked to.

The poor men might object: "In that case, why do You allow single or collective storms to break out?". If by My power I should

destroy Evil, you would consider yourselves the authors of Good, which in actual fact is a gift of Mine, and you would not remember Me any longer. You would never remember Me. My poor children, you are in need of sorrow to remember that you have a Father. As the prodigal son remembered he had a father when he was hungry.

Misfortunes persuade you of your nothingness, of your ignorance, which is the cause of so many errors, of your wickedness, the cause of so much mourning and grief, of your faults, the cause of the punishments which you inflict upon yourselves, as well as of My existence, of My power and of My goodness.

That is what today's Gospel teaches you. "Your" Gospel of the present time, my poor children. Call Me. Jesus does not sleep except when He is in anguish because He sees that He is not loved by you. Call Me and I will come. »

186. The Demoniacs of Gadara.

11th June 1945.

The vision « The calming of the storm » which you saw on 30th January 1944, is to be put here. Then the following vision.

Jesus, after crossing the lake from northwest to southeast, asks Peter to land near Hippos. Peter obeys without discussing and takes the boat down to the mouth of a little river, which is in flood because of the springtime rains and of the recent storm and flows into the lake through one of the wild rocky gorges common to this coastal area. The assistants - there is one in each boat - fasten the boats and are ordered to wait until evening to go back to Capernaum.

« And be as dumb as an ox » suggests Peter. « If they ask you where the Master is, reply without hesitation: "I don't know". And if anyone wants to know where He is going to, give the same reply. In any case it is the truth, for you don't know. »

They part and Jesus begins to ascend a steep path which climbs the almost upright cliff. The apostles follow Him along a very hard path up to the summit of the cliff which levels over to a tableland strewn with oak-trees under which there are many pigs pasturing.

« Stinking animals! » exclaims Bartholomew. « They prevent us from passing… »

« No, they do not. There is room for everybody » replies Jesus calmly.

In any case the swineherds, when they see the Israelites, endeavour to gather the pigs under the oak-trees, leaving the path free. And the apostles pass by, making endless grimaces, among the filth left by the grouting animals, which fat as they are, seem anxious to become even fatter.

Jesus passes without any fuss, saying to the swineherds: « May

God reward you for your kindness. »

The swineherds, poor people not much cleaner than their pigs but infinitely thinner, look at Him amazed and then whisper to one another. One of them says: « Is He perhaps not an Israelite? » And the others reply to him: « Don't you see that His tunic is fringed? »

The group of the apostles gather together, now that they can proceed in one group along a fairly wide path.

The view is beautiful. Only a few score of feet above the lake, it commands a view over the whole lake with the towns spread along its shores. Tiberias is splendid with its beautiful buildings on the opposite shore facing the apostles. Below this spot, at the foot of the basaltic cliff, the short beach looks like a green pillow, whereas on the opposite shore, from Tiberias to the mouth of the Jordan, there is a rather widespread marshy plain due to the river having difficulty in resuming its course after delaying in the placid lake. But the plain looks like a garden, because it is so thick with marsh flora, and is densely populated with colourful variegated water fowl, which seem bedecked with jewels. The birds rise from the thick grass and from the reed-thickets, they fly over the lake, they dive into it to steal a fish from its water, and they rise even more brilliant, because the water has brightened up their plumage, and then they fly back to the plain where the wind plays swaying its many-coloured flowers.

Up here, instead, there are woods of very tall oak-trees, under which the grass is soft and emerald-green, and beyond this strip of woods, on the other side of a large valley, the mountain climbs again, forming a very steep rocky summit, on which houses rise, built on terraces. I think that the mountain side and the walls of the houses are all one, for its caves are used as dwellings, in a mixture of a troglodyte and ordinary village. It is a village characteristic of structures on large rising terraces, so that the roof of the house on the terrace below is at the height of the ground entrance of the terrace above it. On the sides where the mountain is very steep, so steep that no house can be built there, there are caves, deep crevices and descents dropping down to the valley. In the season of downpours the descents must become as many whimsical little torrents. All kinds of blocks, which the floods have rolled down to the valley, form a chaotic pedestal for the little mountain which is so wild and steep, hunchbacked and overbearing that it looks like a squire who wants to be respected at all costs.

« Is that not Gamala? » asks the Zealot.

« Yes, it is Gamala. Do you know the town? » says Jesus.

« I was a fugitive there, one night, a long time ago. Then I was affected by leprosy and I did not come out of the sepulchres any more. »

« Did they pursue you so far? »

« I was coming from Syria, where I had gone seeking protection. But they discovered me and only my flight to this place saved me from being captured. Afterwards slowly and continuously threatened I went down as far as the desert of Tekoa and from there, suffering already from leprosy, to the Valley of the Dead. Leprosy saved me from my enemies… »

« These people are heathens, are they not? » asks the Iscariot.

« Almost everybody. Only a few Jews are here on business, and then there is a mixture of beliefs, or no beliefs at all. But they did not treat the fugitive badly. »

« These are places for bandits. What gorges! » exclaim many.

« Yes, but believe me, there are more bandits on the other side » says John who is still impressed by the capture of the Baptist.

« On the other side there are bandits also among those who enjoy the reputation of being just » concludes his brother.

Jesus begins to speak: « And yet we go near them without feeling disgusted. Whereas here you were making grimaces because you had to pass near some animals. »

« They are unclean… »

« A sinner is much more so. These animals are made like that, and it is not their fault if they are like that. Man instead is responsible for being unclean because of his sins. »

« Why, then, are they classified as unclean for us? » asks Philip.

« I have mentioned that once. In this commandment there is a supernatural reason and a natural one. The former reason is to teach the chosen people to live bearing in mind its election and the dignity of man, also in a common action like eating. A savage feeds on everything. It is enough for him to fill his stomach. A pagan, even if he is not a savage, also eats everything, without considering that overeating foments vices and inclinations which degrade man. Nay, pagans endeavour to arrive at this frenzy for pleasure, which is almost a religion for them. The more learned amongst you are aware of obscene celebrations in honour of their gods, which degenerate into lecherous orgies. A son of the people of God must be able to control himself, perfecting himself through obedience and prudence, bearing in mind his origin and his end: God and Heaven. The natural reason is not to stimulate the blood by means of food that causes a heat unbecoming of man, who is not forbidden also carnal love, but must always moderate it with the freshness of his soul tending to Heaven. Man must therefore make sure that the sentiment that joins him to his wife, in whom he must see a fellow creature like himself, not a female, is love, not sensuality. But the poor animals are neither guilty of being pigs nor of the effects that the flesh of pigs may cause in man's blood in the long run. And the swineherds are much less guilty. If they are

honest, what difference will there be, in the next life, between them and the scribe who is bent over his books but does not learn to be good? I solemnly tell you that we shall see swineherds among the just and scribes among the unjust. But what is ruining? »

They all move away from the side of the mountain because stones and earth are rolling down and bouncing on the slope and they all look around amazed.

« There, there! Over there! Two men completely naked… are coming towards us gesticulating. Mad… »

« Or demoniacs » replies Jesus to the Iscariot, who was the first to see the two demoniacs come towards Jesus.

They must have come out of some cave on the mountain side. They are howling. And one, who is running faster, rushes towards Jesus. He is running so fast and moving his arms up and down so much as if they were wings, that he looks like a strange ugly big bird stripped of its feathers. He collapses at Jesus' feet shouting: « You are here, Master of the world? What have I got to do with You, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? Has the hour of our punishment already come? Why have You come to torture us before the time? » The other demoniac, both because his tongue is tied and because he is possessed by a demon who causes him to be dullwitted, does nothing but throw himself on the ground, face down, and weep. He then sits up, remains inert, playing with little stones and his bare feet. The demon continues to speak through the lips of the other man who writhes on the ground in a paroxysm of terror. I would say that he wants to react, whereas he can but worship, attracted and rejected at the same time by Jesus' power. He howls: « I entreat You in the name of God, stop tormenting me. Let me go. »

« Yes. But out of this man. Unclean spirit, go out of them and tell Me your name. »

« Legion is my name because we are many. We have possessed these men for years and through them we break bonds and chains, and there is no strength of man capable of holding them. They are a terror, because of us, and we make use of them to have You cursed. We revenge ourselves on them for Your anathema. We degrade man below a beast to mock at You and there is no wolf, jackal, hyaena, vulture or vampire like these which we possess. But don't cast us out. Hell is too horrid!… »

« Go out! In the name of Jesus, go out! » Jesus' voice thunders and His eyes fire splendour.

« At least let us go into the herd of pigs You met. »

« Go. »

With a beastly howl the demons part from the two wretched men and in a sudden whirlwind, which causes the oak-trees to sway like reeds, they run into the large herd of pigs that with real demoniac cries begin to run, as possessed beings, through the oak-trees,

pushing, wounding, biting one another and hurl themselves into the lake, when, after reaching the edge of the cliff, they have but the water below as a shelter. The swineherds are overwhelmed and dumbfounded and while they shout seized by fear, hundreds of animals fall headlong into the calm water in a succession of splashes, causing the water to surge and foam; they sink, refloat, showing in turn their round bellies or their pointed snouts with terrified eyes, and in the end get drowned. The swineherds run towards the town howling.

The apostles go towards the place of the disaster and come back saying: « Not one of them is saved! He has done them a bad turn. »

Jesus replies calmly: « It is better if two thousand pigs perish than one man. Give them some clothes. They cannot stay like that. »

The Zealot opens his bag and gives one of his tunics. Thomas gives another one. The two men are still somewhat stunned as if they were just awaking from a sound sleep full of nightmares.

« Give them some food. Let them go back to the normal life of men. »

Jesus watches them, while they eat the bread and olives given to them and they drink out of Peter's flask.

At last they speak: « Who are You? » asks one.

« Jesus of Nazareth. »

« We don't know You » says the other.

« Your souls know Me. Get up now and go home. »

« We have suffered very much, I think, but I cannot remember very well. Who is this man? » asks the one who spoke on behalf of the demon, and he points at his companion. « I do not know. He was with you. »

« Who are you? Why are you here? » he asks his companion.

The one who was dumb, and is still more inert, says: « I am Demetrius. Is this Sidon? »

« Sidon is on the sea, man. Here you are beyond the lake of Galilee. »

« Why am I here? »

Nobody can reply. Some people are arriving followed by the swineherds. They look frightened and curious. When they see the two men dressed and tidy, their astonishment increases.

« That is Mark of Josiah!… And that is the son of the heathen merchant!… »

« And He is the one who cured them and caused our pigs to perish, because they became mad when the demons entered them » say the swineherds.

« Lord, You are powerful, we admit it. But You have already caused us too much harm! A damage of many talents. Go away, please, lest Your power should bring the mountain down and hurl

it into the lake. Go away… »

« I will go. I do not impose Myself on anybody » and Jesus, without further discussion goes back the way He came.

The demoniac who spoke follows Him, behind the apostles. Farther back, at some distance, there are many citizens watching whether He is really leaving.

They go down the steep path back to the mouth of the little torrent, near the boats. The citizens remain on the terrace watching. The demoniac who has been cured goes down behind Jesus.

In the boats the assistants are terrified. They saw the pigs raining into the lake and are still contemplating their bodies which surface more and more numerous, more and more swollen, with their round bellies in the air and their stiff short legs like four pegs stuck into a huge fat bladder. « What happened? » they ask.

« We will tell you later. Loosen the boats and let us go… Where, my Lord? »

« To the gulf of Tarichea. »

The man who has followed them, now that he sees them getting into the boats, implores: « Take me with You, Lord. »

« No. Go home: your relatives are entitled to have you. Speak to them of the great things the Lord has done to you and tell them how He had mercy on you. This area is in need of faith. Light the flames of faith out of gratitude to the Lord. Go. Goodbye. »

« Comfort me at least with Your blessing, that the demon may not possess me again. »

« Be not afraid. If you do not want, he will not come. But I bless you. Go in peace. »

The boats depart from the shore westwards. Only then, when the boats are ploughing through the waters strewn with the swine victims, the inhabitants of the town, which did not want the Lord, withdraw from the terrace and go away.

187. Towards Jerusalem for the Second Passover. From Tarichea to Mount Tabor.

12th June 1945.

Jesus dismisses the boats saying: « I am not coming back » and followed by His apostles, and across the area, which appeared to be very fertile also from the opposite shore, He turns His steps towards a mountain, which appears towards the south-west.

The apostles are walking in silence, communicating with one another only by casting glances. In fact they are not enthusiastic for the journey across this beautiful but wild area, which is full of bog grass that gets entangled with their feet; of reeds that cause a drizzle of dew to fall on their heads from the edges of the leaves; of hazels that strike their faces with the hard canes of their dry

fruit; Of willow trees the fragile branches of which hang down everywhere tickling them; of treacherous patches of grass that seems to be growing on solid ground, whereas it conceals puddles of water into which their feet sink, they are in fact patches of foxtails and tares, growing in tiny pools and so thick as to conceal the element in which they have come up.

Jesus, instead, seems to be extremely happy in the midst of all that green and the thousand hues of all the flowers, which creep on the ground, or stand upright, or cling to other plants to climb up, forming thin festoons strewn with light convolvuli of a very delicate mallow pink, or forming delicate blue carpets for the thousand corollas of water myosotises, which open the perfect cups of white, pink, blue corollas among the large flat leaves of the water lilies. Jesus admires the tufts of the water reeds, as soft as silk and pearled with dew, and He bends joyfully to watch the delicate features of foxtails, which lay an emerald veil on the water. He stops ecstatically in front of the nests which the birds are building, flying happily to and fro, trilling, darting from branch to branch, working happily, with their beaks full of wisps of hay, of down of reeds, of flocks of wool picked on hedges, which had torn it from migrating sheep… He seems the happiest person in the world. Where is the world with its wickedness, falsehood, sorrows, snares? The world is beyond this green flowery oasis, where everything scents, shines, smiles, sings. This is the earth created by the Father and not desecrated by man and man can be forgotten here.

He wants to share His happiness with the others. But He does not find a favourable ground. The hearts of the apostles are tired and embittered by so much ill-will and they react against things and also against the Master by means of a stubborn silence, which is like the stillness of the air before a storm. Only His cousin James, the Zealot and John take an interest in what interests Jesus. All the others are… absent, if not hostile. Perhaps they are keeping quiet, not to grumble. But inwardly they must be speaking, and speaking too much.

It is a more lively exclamation of admiration before the living jewel of a kingfisher which flies down, taking a little silver fish to its mate, that makes them open their mouths.

Jesus says: « Can there be anything more gentle? »

Peter replies: « Perhaps not more gentle… but I can assure You that a boat is more comfortable. Here it is damp just the same, but we are not comfortable… »

« I would prefer the track for caravans to this… garden, if You wish to call it so, and I am in full agreement with Simon » says the Iscariot.

« It was you who did not want the caravan route » replies Jesus.

« Ehi! certainly… But I would not have given in to the Gherghesenes. I would have gone away from there, but I would have continued beyond the river to Gadara, Pella and down to the south » grumbles Bartholomew.

And his great friend Philip concludes: « The roads belong to everybody, after all, and we could have passed through them as well. »

« My friends! I am so anguished and disgusted… Do not increase My grief with your pettiness! Let Me seek some comfort in things which do not know how to hate… »

The reproach, kind in its sadness, moves the apostles.

« You are right, Master. We are not worthy of You. Forgive our foolishness. You can see the beautiful, because You are holy and You look with the eyes of Your heart. We are coarse flesh and can only perceive coarse flesh… But never mind. Believe me, even if we were in paradise, we would be sad without You. But with You… oh! it is always beautiful for our hearts. It is only our limbs that refuse » many of them whisper.

« We will soon be going out of here and will find a more comfortable ground, even if not so cool » promises Jesus.

« Where are we going exactly? » asks Peter.

« To give Passover to those who suffer. I have been wanting to do it for a long time. But I could not. I would have done it going back to Galilee. Now that they compel us to go along roads that we have not chosen, I am going to bless Jonah's poor friends. »

« We will be wasting a lot of time! Passover is near! There are always delays for various reasons. » Another chorus of complaints rises to the sky. I do not know how Jesus can be so patient…

Without reproaching anyone, He says: « Please, do not hinder Me! Endeavour to understand My need to love and to be loved. I have but this solace on the earth: to love and do the will of God. »

« And are we going from here? Was it not better to go from Nazareth? »

« If I had suggested that, you would have rebelled. No one will suspect that I am here… and I am doing it for you… because you are afraid. »

« Afraid? Ah! No! We are ready to fight for You. »

« Pray the Lord not to put you to the test. I know that you are quarrelsome, resentful, anxious to offend those who offend Me and to humble your neighbour. I know all that. But I do not know you to be brave. As far as I am concerned, I would have gone also by Myself and along the main road and nothing would have happened because it is not yet the time. But I feel sorry for you. But I have to obey My Mother, yes, also that and I do not want to upset Simon the Pharisee. I will not disgust them. But they will disgust Me. »

« And where do we go from here? I am not familiar with this area » says Thomas.

« We will reach Tabor, we will coast part of it and will go to Nain via Endor; from there to the plain of Esdraelon. Be not afraid!… Doras, the son of Doras, and Johanan are already in Jerusalem. »

« Oh! It will be beautiful! They say that from the summit, from a certain spot, one can see the Great Sea, the Sea of Rome. I like it so much! Will You take us to see it? » John begs with his kind childish face raised towards Jesus.

« Why do you like to see it so much? » asks Jesus caressing him.

« I do not know… Because it is huge and you cannot see its end… It makes me think of God… When we were up on Lebanon I saw the sea for the first time, because I had never been anywhere else, except along the Jordan or on our little sea… and I was moved so much that I wept. So much blue! So much water! And it never overflows!… What a wonderful thing! And the stars make paths of light on the sea… Oh! do not laugh at me! I looked at the golden way of the sun until I was dazzled, at the silvery way of the moon, until I could see nothing but whiteness and I saw them getting lost far far away. Those ways spoke to me. They said: "God is in that infinite distance and these are the ways of fire and purity, which a soul must follow to go to God. Come. Dive into the infinite, travelling on these two ways, and you will find the Infinite One". »

« You are a poet, John » says Thaddeus admiringly.

« I do not know whether this is poetry. I know that it inflames my heart. »

« But you have seen the sea also at Caesarea and at Ptolomais, and quite close, too. We were on the beach! I do not see the need to go all that way to see some more sea water. After all… we were born on the water… » remarks James of Zebedee.

« And we are in it also now, unfortunately! » exclaims Peter, who diverting his mind for a moment to listen to John, has not noticed a treacherous puddle and has got soaked… They all laugh, and he laughs too.

But John replies: « That is true. But from high above it is more beautiful. You see more and farther. You think that it is deeper and vaster… You wish… you dream… » and John is already dreaming… He looks in front of himself and smiles at his dream… He looks like a flesh-coloured rose spread with minute dew drops, so downy becomes his smooth clear skin of a young fair-haired man and as it gets sprinkled with a light perspiration it looks more like the petal of a rose.

« What do you wish? What are you dreaming? » Jesus asks His favourite disciple in a low voice and He looks like a father who questions a dear son speaking in his sleep. Jesus speaks to John's soul, questioning him so gently as not to spoil the dream of His loving

disciple.

« I wish to go on to the infinite sea… towards other lands beyond it. I wish to go and speak of You. I am dreaming… of going towards Rome, towards Greece, towards dark places to take the Light there… so that those living in darkness may get in touch with You and may live in communion with You, Light of the world… I am dreaming of a better world… to be bettered through the knowledge of You, that is, through the knowledge of the Love that makes people good, pure, heroic, of the Love that makes the world love and raise Your Name, Your Faith, Your Doctrine above hatred, sin, flesh, above the vices of the mind, above gold, above everything… and I dream of going with my brothers on the sea of God, on the road of light to take You… as Your Mother once brought You down to us from Heaven… I dream that I am a child, who knowing nothing but love, is happy also when facing trouble… and sings to comfort the adults who ponder too much, and moves forward… facing death smiling… towards glory with the humility of one who does not know what he is doing, but knows only that he is coming to You, Love… »

The apostles have not breathed during John's ecstatic confession… They remained still where they were, looking at the youngest one speaking with his eyes covered by his eyelids, like a veil thrown over the ardour rising from his heart, and looking at Jesus Who is enraptured finding Himself so completely in His disciple…

When John stops speaking, slightly bent forward - he reminds me of the gracefulness of the Virgin Mary at the Annunciation in Nazareth - Jesus kisses his forehead saying: « We shall go and contemplate the sea, to let you dream once again My future Kingdom in the world. »

« Lord… You said that afterwards we shall be going to Endor. Make me happy too… that I may get over the bitterness of that boy's judgement… » says the Iscariot.

« Oh! are you still thinking about that? » asks Jesus.

« Yes, always. I feel degraded in Your eyes and in the eyes of my companions. I think of what Your thoughts… »

« Why do you fret over trifles? I was not thinking of that trifle any longer, neither were the others. You are reminding us… You are a child accustomed only to being caressed and the word of a little boy seems the sentence of a judge to you. But you must not be afraid of that word, but of your actions and of God's judgement. But to convince you that you are as dear to Me as previously, as always, I tell you that I will satisfy you. What do you wish to see at Endor? It is a poor village among the rocks… »

« Take me there… and I will tell You. »

« All right. But mind it does not cause you to suffer afterwards… »

« If it cannot be painful for him to contemplate the sea, it cannot be harmful to me to see Endor. »

« To see?… But it is the desire of what one seeks to see in looking that can be harmful. But we shall go… »

And they resume the road towards Mount Tabor, the huge mass of which appears to be nearer and nearer, while the marshy aspect of the ground changes, as the soil becomes solid and dry and the vegetation thinner, making room for taller plants and bushes of clematis and blackberries, the new leaves and early flowers of which are a pleasant sight.

188. From Tabor to Endor in the Cave of the Necromancer. Encounter with Felix Who Becomes John.

13th June 1945.

Jesus and the apostles have passed Mount Tabor and left it behind them. They are now walking on a plain lying between that mountain and another one facing it, talking of the climb made by them all, although at the beginning the elder ones had not been too keen. But now they are happy they had gone up to the top. The journey is now easy because they are on a main road which is quite comfortable for walking. It is early in the morning because I am under the impression that they have spent the night on the slopes of the Tabor.

« That is Endor » says Jesus pointing to a poor village built on the first heights of the other mountain. « Do you really want to go there? »

« If You wish to make me happy… » responds the Iscariot.

« Let us go, then. »

« But is it a long way? » asks Bartholomew, who, because of his age, is not very keen on walking tours.

« Oh! no! But if you wish to stay… » says Jesus.

« Yes! You may stay. I will go with the Master » says Judas of Kerioth immediately.

« Listen, before making up my mind, I would like to know what there is to be seen… From the top of Mount Tabor we saw the sea and after the boy's speech I must admit that I saw it properly for the first time and I saw it as You see: with my heart. Here… I would like to know whether there is anything to learn, because in that case I will come even if it is tiresome… » says Peter.

« Do you hear that? You have not yet said what you intend doing. Be kind to your companions and tell us now » says Jesus invitingly.

« Did Saul not go to Endor to consult the necromancer? »

« Yes, he did. So? »

« Well, Master, I would like to go there and hear You speak of

Saul. »

« In that case I will come, too! » exclaims Peter full of enthusiasm.

« Let us go then. »

They walk fast along the last stretch of the main road, which they leave to follow a secondary road, which takes straight to Endor.

It is a poor village, as Jesus said. The houses cling to the slopes which, beyond the village become steeper. Poor people live in them. Most of them must be shepherds who pasture their flocks on the sides of the mountain and in the woods of old oak-trees. There are a few small fields of barley, or similar fodder grains, in favourable sites and some apple and fig-trees. There are only a few vines around the houses, decorating the walls, which are dark because the place is obviously a damp one.

« We will now ask where the place of the necromancer was » says Jesus. And He stops a woman who is coming back from the fountain with pitchers.

She looks at Him curiously, then replies impolitely: « I don't know. I have much more important things to worry about than such nonsense! » and she goes away.

Jesus turns to an old man who is carving a bit of wood.

« The necromancer?… Saul?… Who bothers about them now? But, wait… There is one here who has studied and perhaps he knows… Come with me. »

And the old man climbs laboriously up a stony lane to a very poor and shabby looking house. « He lives here. I will go in and call him. »

Peter, pointing at some poultry scratching about in a dirty yard, says: « This fellow is not an Israelite. » But he says no more because the old man comes back followed by a man blind in one eye who is as dirty and untidy as everything round his house.

The old man says: « See? This man says that it is over there beyond that dilapidated house. There is a path, a stream, a wood and some caves, the one at the top, where there are still traces of ruined walls on one side, is the one you are looking for. Is that right? »

« No. You have muddled everything. I will go with these strangers. » The man's voice is harsh and guttural, which increases everybody's feeling of uneasiness.

He starts walking. Peter, Philip and Thomas make repeated signs to Jesus to advise Him not to go. But Jesus does not pay attention. He walks with Judas behind the man, and the others follow Him… unwillingly.

« Are You an Israelite? » asks the man.

« Yes, I am. »

« I, too, or almost, although I do not look like one. But I lived a

long time abroad and I got into many habits, of which these fools here disapprove. I am better than the others. But they say that I am a demon, because I read a great deal, I breed poultry which I sell to the Romans and I can cure people by means of herbs. When young, because of a woman, I quarrelled with a Roman - I was at Cintium then - and I stabbed him. He died, I lost one eye and all my wealth and I was sentenced to life imprisonment. But I knew how to cure people, and I cured the daughter of one of the guards. I thus won his friendship and some freedom… I used it to escape. I acted badly, because the man certainly paid for my flight with his life. But freedom seems so beautiful when one is a prisoner… »

« Is it not really beautiful afterwards? »

« No. Jail, where one is alone, is better than being in contact with men who do not allow you to be alone and come around us to hate us… »

« Did you study philosophy? »

« I was a teacher at Cintium… I was a proselyte… »

« And now? »

« Now I am nothing. I live according to the reality of facts. And I hate, as I was and am still hated. »

« Who hates you? »

« Everybody. And God is the first. She was my wife… and God allowed her to be unfaithful to me and ruin me. I was free and respected, and God allowed me to become a convict serving a life sentence. God abandoned me, men were unfair. Both He and they destroyed me. There is nothing left here… » and he strikes his forehead and his chest. « Rather, here, in my head, there are my thoughts, my knowledge. It is in here that there is nothing » and he spits contemptuously.

« You are wrong. You have still two things there. »

« Which? »

« Remembrance and hatred. Remove them. Become really empty… and I will give you something new to put in there. »

« What? »

« Love. »

« Ah! Ah! You make me laugh. I have not laughed for thirty-five years, man. Since I had the proof that the woman was unfaithful to me with the Roman wine merchant. Love! Love to me! It is like me throwing jewels to my chickens! They would die of indigestion, unless they passed them out with their excrement. The same would happen to me. Your love would be a burden to me, if I could not digest it… »

« No, man! Do not say that! » Jesus lays His hand on the man's shoulder, He is deeply and openly distressed.

The man looks at Him with his only eye and what he sees on that most sweet and beautiful face causes him to be struck dumb and to

change his expression. From being sarcastic he becomes very serious and then really sad. He lowers his head and with a changed voice he asks: « Who are You? »

« Jesus of Nazareth. The Messiah. »

« You!!! »

« I. Did you not know about Me, since you read so much? »

« I knew… But I did not know that You were alive and… above all, I did not know this. I did not know that You are good to everybody… thus… also to murderers… Forgive me for what I said… about God and love… Now I understand why You want to give me love… Because without love the world is hell, and You, the Messiah want to make a paradise of it. »

« A paradise in every heart. Give Me the remembrance and the hatred that make you ill and let Me put love into your heart! »

« Oh! I wish I had known You before!… then… But when I killed, You were certainly not born yet… But later… when I was free, as free as a snake in a forest, I lived to poison people with my hatred. »

« But you did also some good. Did you not say that you cured people by means of herbs? »

« Yes. To be tolerated. But how many times I had to struggle against my desire to poison people by means of potions!… See? I took refuge here because… it is a place where the world is ignored and which the world ignores. A cursed place. In other places I hated and was hated and I was afraid of being recognised… But I am wicked. »

« You regret having harmed the prison- guard. Do you not see that there is still some goodness in you? You are not wicked… Your only trouble is that you have a large open wound, which nobody is curing… Your goodness runs out of it as blood from a wound. But if someone would cure your wound and heal it, My dear brother, goodness would increase in you, because it would no longer vanish as it forms… »

The man weeps with bent head trying to conceal his tears. Only Jesus Who is walking beside him notices them. He notices but does not say anything further.

They arrive at a cavern made of rubble and mountain caves. The man endeavours to steady his voice and says: « Here it is. You may go in. »

« Thank you, My friend. Be good. »

The man does not say anything and remains where he was, while Jesus with His apostles, passing over large stones which must have been part of very strong walls, upsetting green lizards and other ugly looking insects, enters a large smoky grotto, on the walls of which there are still graffiti signs of the zodiac and similar things. In a corner blackened by smoke there is a niche and under

it a hole which looks like a gully-hole for water. Bats hanging in disgusting bunches decorate the ceiling and an owl, upset by the light of a branch which James has lit to ensure they do not tread on scorpions or asps, complains flapping its wadded wings and closing its ugly eyes which cannot bear the light. It is perched in the niche, and the foul smell of dead mice, of weasels and birds in decomposition at its feet is mixed with the stench of dung and of the damp soil.

« It is really a lovely place! » says Peter. « Your Tabor and your sea were much better, my boy! » And then addressing Jesus: « Master, satisfy Judas at once because this is not… Antipa's royal hall! »

« Certainly. What is it that you want to know? » He asks Judas of Kerioth.

« Well… I would like to know whether and why Saul sinned coming here… I would like to know whether it is possible for a woman to evoke the dead. I would like to know whether… Oh! It is better if You speak. I will ask You questions. »

« It's a long story. At least let us go out there, in the sunshine, on the stones… We will get away from the dampness and the stench » begs Peter.

And Jesus agrees. They sit as best they can on the ruins of the walls.

« Saul's sin was only one of his sins. It was preceded and followed by many more. All of them grave. Double ingratitude towards Samuel who had anointed him king and who subsequently disappeared so as not to share with the king the admiration of the people. He was several times ungrateful to David who saved him from Goliath and spared him in the caves at Engedi and Hachilah. He was guilty of many acts of disobedience and of scandalising his people. He was guilty of grieving his benefactor Samuel by lacking in charity. He was guilty of jealousy, of making attempt on David's life, David being another benefactor of his, and finally, of the crime he committed here. »

« Against whom? He did not kill anyone here. »

« He killed his soul in here, he finished killing it. Why are you lowering your head? »

« I am thinking, Master. »

« You are thinking. I can see that. What are you thinking of? Why did you want to come? You must admit it was not out of mere curiosity of a scholar. »

« We always hear someone talk of magicians, necromancers, evoked spirits… I wanted to see whether I could discover anything… I would like to know how it is done… I think that since we are destined to amaze people in order to attract them, we should be, somehow, necromancers, too. You are You and You do things by means of Your power. But we must ask for power, for

help in order to perform exceptional deeds, which are necessary… »

« Are you mad? What are you saying? » shout many.

« Be quiet. Let him speak. He is not mad. »

« Yes, I thought that by coming here a little of the magic of gone by days would assume possession of me and make me greater. In Your interest, believe me. »

« I know that your present desire is a sincere one. But I will reply to you with eternal words, because they are words of the Bible and the Bible will exist as long as man exists. Believed or mocked at, employed to defend the truth or scorned at, it will always exist. It is written: "And Eve, seeing that the fruit of the tree was good to eat and pleasing to the eye, took it and ate it and gave some to her husband… Then their eyes were opened and they realised that they were naked and they made themselves loin-cloths… And God said: 'How did you realise that you were naked? Only because you ate of the forbidden fruit'. And He expelled them from the garden of delights". And in the book of Saul, it is written: "Samuel appearing said: 'Why have you disturbed me, conjuring me up? Why do you consult me when the Lord has abandoned you? The Lord will deal with you as I told you… because you did not obey the voice of the Lord' ". Son, do not stretch your hand towards the forbidden fruit. It is imprudent even to go near it. Do not be curious to know ultramundane things, lest its satanic poison should conquer you. Avoid the occult and what cannot be explained. One thing only is to be accepted with holy faith: God. But avoid what is not God and what cannot be explained by man's reason or cannot be done by man's power, so that the sources of wickedness may not be opened for you and you may realise that you are "naked". Naked: repellent in your humanity mixed with satanism. Why do you wish to amaze people by means of obscure prodigies? Amaze them through your holiness, which should be as bright as things coming from God. Do not be anxious to rend the veils which separate the living from the dead. Do not disturb the deceased. Listen to them, if they are wise, while they are on the earth, venerate them by obeying them also after their death. But do not upset their second life. Who does not obey the voice of the Lord, loses the Lord. And the Lord has forbidden occultism, necromancy, satanism in all its forms. What more do you wish to know than the Word already tells you? What more do you wish to perform than your goodness and My power enable you to perform? Do not crave for sin, but for holiness, son. Do not feel mortified. I am glad that you disclose your humanity. Many people, too many, like what you like. But the purpose of your desire: "to be powerful to attract people to Me" removes a heavy weight from that humanity and puts wings on it. But they are the wings of a night bird. No, My dear Judas. Put wings as bright as the sun, wings of

an angel on your spirit. By the simple breeze caused by flapping them you will attract hearts and will lead them in your wake to God. Can we go? »

« Yes, Master! I was wrong… »

« No. You have been an inquirer… The world will always be full of them. Come. Let us get away from the stench of this place. Let us go towards the sun! In a few days it will be Passover, and afterwards we will go to your mother's. I conjure her up for you: your honest home, your holy mother. How peaceful it is! »

As usual, the recollection of his mother and the Master's praise for her, cheer Judas.

They come out of the ruins and they begin to descend the path they had walked up previously. The man blind in one eye is still there.

« Are you still here? » asks Jesus pretending that He does not notice that his face is flushed because of the many tears he has shed.

« Yes, I am still here. I will follow You if You allow me. I have something to tell you… »

« Come with Me, then. What do you want to tell Me? »

« Jesus… I find that to have the strength to speak and to work the holy magic of changing myself, of conjuring up my dead soul as the necromancer evoked Samuel for Saul, I must pronounce Your Name, which is as sweet as Your eyes, and as holy as Your voice. You have given me a new life, but it lacks form and energy, like the life of a new-born baby after a difficult birth. It still struggles in the grip of wicked old habits. Help me to come out of my death. »

« Yes, My friend. »

« I… I have realised that there is still a little humanity in my heart. I am not entirely a beast, and I can still love and be loved, forgive and be forgiven. Your love, which is forgiveness, has taught me. Is it not so? »

« Yes, My friend. »

« Then… take me with You. I was Felix! What an irony! But give me a new name. That my past may be really dead. I will follow You like a stray dog, which finally finds a master. I will be Your slave, if You wish so. But do not leave me alone… »

« Yes, My friend. »

« What name will You give me? »

« A name dear to Me: John. Because you are grace granted by God. »

« Will You take me with You? »

« Yes, for the time being. Later you will follow Me with My disciples. But what about your house? »

« I have no house any longer. I will leave what I have to the poor.

Just give me love and bread. »

« Come. » Jesus turns round and calls His apostles. « I thank you, My friends, and you in particular, Judas. Through you, Judas, through you all, a soul is coming to God. Here is a new disciple. He is coming with us until we can entrust him to our brother disciples. Be happy because you have found a heart and bless God with Me. »

But the Twelve do not really look very happy. But out of obedience and kindness they welcome him.

« If You do not mind I will go ahead. You will find me at the door of my house. »

« Yes, go. »

The man runs away. He seems another man.

« And now that we are by ourselves I order you, and this is an order, to be kind to him and not to mention his past to anybody. I will immediately reject anyone who should speak or be uncharitable to our redeemed brother. Is that clear? And see how good the Lord is! We came here for a human purpose and He allows us to go away after achieving a supernatural deed. Oh! I rejoice because of the joy now in Heaven for the new convert. »

They reach the house. The man is there, on the threshold, wearing a clean dark tunic and a mantle to match it, a pair of new sandals and carrying a large haversack over his shoulder. He closes the door and then, what is strange in a man who might be considered hard-hearted, he takes a white hen, perhaps his pet, which squats tamely in his hands, he kisses it weeping and lays it down.

« Let us go… and forgive me. But my chicken always loved me… I used to speak to them and… they understood me… »

« I understand you, too… and I love you. So much. I will give you all the love that the world denied you in thirty-five years… »

« Oh! I know! I can feel it! That is why I am coming. But be indulgent to a man who… loves an animal which has been more faithful to him than men… »

« Yes… Forget your past. You will have so much to do! And, experienced as you are, you will do it very well. Simon, come here and you, too, Matthew. See? This man was more than a prisoner, he was a leper. And this one… a sinner. And they are very dear to Me, because they know how to understand poor hearts… Is that right? »

« Thanks to Your goodness, my Lord. But you may rest assured, my friend, that everything is cancelled by serving Him. Only peace remains » says the Zealot.

« Yes. Peace and a new youth take over from old vices and hatred. I was a tax collector. Now I am an apostle. The world is in front of us. And we know all about it. We are not absent-minded children who pass near the harmful fruit and the bending plant and do not see facts. We know. We can avoid evil and teach other people how to avoid it. And we can straighten up those who bend.

Because we know what a relief it is to be supported. And we know Who supports: Him » says Matthew.

« That's true! Quite true! You will help me. Thank you. I feel as if I were passing from a dark foul smelling place to the open in a flowery meadow… I felt something similar when I came out, at long last free, after twenty years of imprisonment and brutal work in the mines in Anatolia and I found myself - I escaped one stormy evening - on the top of a wild mountain, but in the open, in a place full of sunshine at dawn, and covered with scented woods… Freedom! But now it is better! Everything is more sublime! I had not been in chains for fifteen years. But hatred, fear and solitude were still like chains to me… But now they have been shaken off!… Here we are at the house of the old man who brought You to me. Ehi! Man! »

The old man rushes towards them and is dumbfounded seeing the fellow blind in one eye clean, wearing new clothes and smiling.

« Here, take this. It's the key of my house. I am going away, for good. I am grateful to you because you are my benefactor. You have given me a family. Do what you like with my property… and look after my chicken. Treat them well. A Roman comes every Sabbath and buys eggs… You will make a profit… Take care of my little hens… and may God reward you for it. »

The old man is astonished… He takes the key and stands openmouthed.

Jesus says: « Yes, do as he told you and I will be grateful to you, too. I bless you in the name of Jesus. »

« The Nazarene! You! Mercy! I have spoken to the Lord! Women! Men! The Messiah is here! »

He screams like an eagle and people rush from everywhere.

« Bless us! Bless us! » they shout. Some shout: « Stay here! » and others: « Where are You going? At least tell us where You are going. »

« To Nain. I cannot stay. »

« We will follow You. Do You mind? »

« Come. Peace and blessing to those who remain here. »

They go towards the main road and take it.

The man, who is walking near Jesus and can hardly carry his haversack, draws Peter's curiosity. « What have you got in there that is so heavy? » he asks.

« My clothes… and some books… My friends after and at the same time as the chicken. I could not part with them. But they are heavy. »

« Eh! Science is heavy! Of course! And who likes it, eh? »

« They prevented me from becoming mad. »

« Eh! You must be fond of them! What books are they? »

« Philosophy, history, Greek and Roman poetry… »

« Lovely, certainly lovely. But… do you think you will be able to carry them with you »

« Perhaps I will be able to part with them. But you cannot do everything at once, can you, Messiah? »

« Call Me Master. No, you cannot. But I will let you have a place where you will be able to keep your friends, your books. They may help you to discuss of God with the heathens. »

« Oh! How free Your thought is from all restrictions! »

Jesus smiles and Peter exclaims: « No wonder! He is Wisdom! »

« And Goodness, believe me. And are you learned? »

« Me? Oh! Most learned. I can tell an allice from a carp and my erudition ends there. I am a fisherman, my friend! » and Peter smiles humbly and frankly.

« You are an honest man. It is a science you learn by yourself. And a very difficult one to learn. I like you. »

« And I like you, too. Because you are sincere. Also when you accuse yourself. I forgive everything, I help everybody. But I am a ruthless enemy of false people. They make me sick. »

« You are right. A false man is a delinquent. »

« A delinquent. You are right. Say, would you mind giving me your sack for a little while? In any case, you may be sure that I will not run away with books… I think you are finding it difficult… »

« Twenty years in a mine breaks your back… But why do you want to toil? »

« Because the Master has taught us to love one another like brothers. Give them to me. And take my rags. My bag is not heavy… There is no history, no poetry in it. My history, my poetry and the other thing you mentioned, is He, my Jesus, our Jesus. »

189. The Son of the Widow of Nain.

14th June 1945.

Nain must have been a town of some importance in the days of Jesus. It is not a large town, but is well built, surrounded by its walls, lying on a low pleasant hill, an offshoot of the Little Hermon, commanding a very fertile plain which stretches towards the north-east.

One arrives here coming from Endor, after crossing a little river, which flows into the Jordan. But neither the Jordan nor its valley can be seen any longer, because they are concealed by hills which form an arch shaped like a question mark in the east.

Jesus follows a main road which links the lake region to the Hermon and its villages. Many inhabitants of Endor walk behind Him talking to one another animatedly.

Only a short distance separates the group of the apostles from the walls: about two hundred yards, at most. And as the main road

runs straight to one of the town gates, which is wide open because it is broad daylight, it is possible to see what is happening in the inner side of the walls. Thus Jesus, Who is speaking to the apostles and the new convert, sees a funeral coming towards them, with a great noise of weepers and similar eastern displays.

« Shall we go and see, Master? » ask many. And many of the inhabitants of Endor are already rushing to see.

« Yes, let us go » says Jesus condescendingly.

« Oh! It must be a boy. See how many flowers and ribbons there are on the bier » says Judas of Kerioth to John.

« Or it is probably a virgin. » replies John.

« No, it is certainly a young man, because of the shades they have used. And there is no myrtle either… » says Bartholomew.

The funeral comes out to the other side of the walls. It is not possible to see what there is on the bier, which is carried shoulder high by the bearers. One understands that there is a corpse, enveloped in bandages and covered by a sheet, only because of its outline and that it is the body of a fully grown person, because it is as long as the bier.

A veiled woman is walking beside it, weeping, supported by relatives or friends. The only sincere tears in all that farce of mourners. And when a bearer trips on a stone or rise in the ground or stumbles and causes the bier to shake, the mother moans: « Oh! no! Be careful! My boy has suffered so much! » and she raises her trembling hand to caress the edge of the bier. And as she is unable to do anything else, she kisses the veils and the ribbons, which blown by a gentle breeze lightly touch the immobile corpse.

Peter, sympathetic, his good keen eyes welling up with tears whispers: « She is the mother. » But he is not the only one whose eyes are shining with tears at the sight. Also the Zealot, Andrew, John, and even the ever merry Thomas have tears in their eyes. They are all deeply moved. Judas Iscariot whispers: « If it were I! Oh! Poor mother of mine… »

Jesus, the kindness of Whose eyes is so deep as to be unbearable, directs His steps towards the bier.

The mother, who is now sobbing louder because the funeral is about to turn towards the open sepulchre, pushes Him aside resolutely, when she sees that Jesus wants to touch the bier. I wonder what she is afraid of in her grief. She shouts: « He is mine! » and looks at Jesus with staring eyes.

« I know, mother. He is yours. »

« He is my only son! Why should he die, he was so good and dear, he was my joy, and I am a widow. Why? » The crowd of the hired mourners mourn more loudly, forming a chorus with the mother who continues: « Why he, and not I? It is not just that she who has borne a child, should see her offspring perish. The offspring must

live, otherwise why was my womb torn to give birth to a man? » and she strikes her abdomen wildly and desperately.

« Do not do that! Do not weep, mother. » Jesus takes her hands clenching them firmly in His left hand, while with His right one He touches the bier saying to the bearers: « Stop and put the bier down. »

The bearers obey and lower the little bed which rests on its four legs.

Jesus takes the sheet covering the dead boy and pulls it back uncovering the corpse.

The mother shouts her grief and the name of her son, I think: « Daniel! »

Jesus, still clenching the mother's hands in His, stands up, His eyes imposingly bright, the power of miracle shining majestically on His face, lowering His right hand, orders in the full strength of His voice: « Young man! I tell you: get up! »

The dead boy, enveloped in bandages as he is, sits up on the little bed and calls: « Mother! » He calls her with the stammering frightened voice of a terrified child.

« He is yours, woman. I give him to you in the name of God. Help him to get rid of the sudarium. And be happy. »

And Jesus makes the gesture of withdrawing. Impossible! The crowds rivet Him to the bier, on which the mother has thrown herself groping for the bandages, endeavouring to be quick, while the imploring childish moaning repeats: « Mother! Mother! »

The sudarium and bandages are undone and mother and son can embrace each other, and they do so without bothering about the sticky balms, which the mother removes from his dear face and hands, making use of the same bandages. As she has not clothes to put on him, she takes off her mantle and envelops him in it, caressing him all the time…

Jesus looks at her… he looks at the loving group, close together on the edge of the little bed, no longer a bier, and He weeps.

Judas Iscariot sees His tears and asks: « Why are You weeping, my Lord? »

Jesus turns His face towards him and says: « I am thinking of My Mother… »

The brief conversation draws the woman's attention to her Benefactor. She takes her son by the hand, she supports him because his limbs are still somewhat numb, and kneeling down she says: « You, too, my son. Bless this Holy man Who has restored you to life and to your mother » and she bends to kiss Jesus' tunic while the crowd sing hosannas to God and to His Messiah, Who by now is well known for what He is, because the apostles and the people of Endor have taken upon themselves to tell Who He is Who worked the miracle.

And the crowds exclaim: « Blessed be the God of Israel. Blessed be the Messiah, His Messenger! Blessed be Jesus, Son of David! A great Prophet is risen among us! God has really visited His people! Hallelujah! Hallelujah! »

At last Jesus can steal away and enter the town. The crowd follow and pursue Him, exulting in their love.

A man rushes towards Jesus and bows deeply to Him. « Please come and stay under my roof. »

« I cannot. Passover prevents Me from making any stop except those programmed. »

« In a few hours it will be sunset and this is Friday… »

« Exactly, that is why I must reach My halting place before sunset. I thank you just the same. But do not keep Me back. »

« I am the head of the synagogue. »

« So you mean that you are entitled to have Me. Man, if I had arrived here only one hour later, that woman would not have had her son restored to her. I am going where other unhappy people are waiting for Me. Do not be so selfish as to delay their joy. I will certainly come again and I will be with you in Nain for several days. Now let Me go. »

The man does not insist any more. He only says: « As You said. I will wait for You. »

« Yes. Peace to you and to the citizens of Nain. Also to you, people of Endor, peace and blessings. Go back to your homes. God has spoken to you through the miracle. Endeavour, through the power of love, to have all your hearts restored to Goodness. »

A last chorus of hosannas. Then the crowds let Jesus go and He crosses the town diagonally and goes out into the country, towards Esdraelon.

190. From Nain to Esdraelon. Jesus Stays at Micah's.

15th June 1945.

The sun is setting in a red sky when Jesus comes in view of Johanan's fields.

« Let us quicken our pace, My friends, before the sun sets. And you, Peter, go with your brother to inform our friends, Doras' men. »

« I will go indeed, also to see whether the son has really gone away. » Peter stresses the word « son ». And he goes away.

In the meantime Jesus proceeds at a slower pace, looking around to see whether any of Johanan's men are about. But He can only see the fertile fields, in which the ears of grain are already well formed.

At last, a face, wet with perspiration, appears among the vineleaves and an exclamation is heard: « Oh! Blessed Lord! » and the

peasant runs out of the vineyard and prostrates himself at Jesus' feet.

« Peace to you, Isaiah! »

« Oh! You remember also my name? »

« It is written in My heart. Stand up. Where are your companions? »

« Over there. In the apple-orchards. But I will tell them at once. You will be our guest, will You not? The master is not here and we can welcome You. In any case… what with the fear, what with the joy… it is better. Just imagine, he gave us a lamb this year and will allow us to go to the Temple! He has given us only six days… but we will run all the way… We will be in Jerusalem, too… Imagine! … And thanks to You. » The man is in his seventh heaven of delight because he has been treated as a man and as an Israelite.

« I have done nothing, as far as I know… » says Jesus smiling.

« Eh! no! You have done a great deal. Doras, and the fields of Doras, and these ones here, which are instead so beautiful this year… Johanan was informed of your visit, and he is not a fool. He is afraid and… and he is afraid. »

« Of what? »

« He is afraid that what happened to Doras may happen to him. Both with regard to his life and to his property. Have You seen Doras' fields? »

« I have come from Nain… »

« In that case You have not seen them. They are a complete ruin. (The man whispers that in a low but clear voice, like someone imparting a secret concerning something dreadful.) They are all ruined! There is no hay, no fodder, no fruit. Vines and orchards withered… Dead… everything is dead… like Sodom and Gomorrah… Come, I will show You. »

« It is not necessary. I am going to see those peasants… »

« But they are no longer here! Did You not know? Doras, the son of Doras, has scattered them or dismissed them, and the ones he sent to the other country places which belong to him, must not speak of You, or they will be lashed… Not to speak of You! That will be difficult! Also Johanan said so to us. »

« What did he say? »

« He said: "I am not so foolish as Doras and I will not say to you: 'I do not want you to speak of the Nazarene'. It would be useless, because you would do it just the same and I do not want to lose you by lashing you to death like untameable animals. On the contrary I say to you: 'Be good as the Nazarene certainly teaches you and tell Him that I treat you well'. I do not want to be cursed, too". Of course, he can see what these fields are like after You blessed them, and what the ones You cursed are like. Oh! Here are the ones who ploughed the field for me… » and the man runs to meet Peter and Andrew.

But Peter greets him briefly and proceeds on his way and begins to shout: « Oh! Master! There is no one left! They are all new faces. And everything is laid waste! He could very well do without any peasants here. It is worse than the Salt Sea!… »

« I know. Isaiah told Me. »

« But come and see! What a sight… »

Jesus pleases him after saying to Isaiah: « I will stay with you. Tell your companions. But do not go to any trouble. I have enough food. All we need is a barn to sleep in and your love. I will come back soon. »

The sight of Doras' fields is really distressing. Fields and meadows are dry and barren, vineyards are withered, the foliage and fruit of trees are completely destroyed by millions of insects of all kinds. Also the garden-orchard near the house looks like a desolate dying wood. The peasants wander to and fro uprooting weeds, crushing caterpillars, snails, earth-worms and the like, shaking branches under which they place basins full of water to drown little butterflies, aphides and other parasites which cover the leaves and eat away the plant until it dies. They endeavour to find a sign of life in the vine-shoots, which break like dry wood as soon as they are touched and some times fall off the main branch, as if the roots had been cut by a saw. The contrast with Johanan's fields, vineyards and orchards is most striking and the ruin of the cursed fields seems more impressive when compared to the fruitfulness of the others.

« The hand of the God of Sinai is a heavy one » whispers Simon the Zealot.

Jesus makes a gesture as if to say: « How right you are! » but He does not say anything. He only asks: « How did it happen? »

A peasant replies between his teeth: « Moles, locusts, worms… but go away! The steward is faithful to Doras… Don't cause us trouble… »

Jesus sighs and goes away.

Another peasant, who is bent under an apple-tree earthing it up, in the hope he may save it, says: « We will reach You tomorrow… when the steward goes to Jezreel for the prayer… we will come to Micah's house. »

Jesus makes the gesture of blessing and goes away.

When He goes back to the cross-road, all the peasants of Johanan are there and joyful and happy they surround their Messiah and take Him to their poor dwellings.

« Did You see, over there? »

« Yes, I did. Doras' peasants are coming tomorrow. »

« Of course, when the hyenas go to pray… We do that every Sabbath… and we speak of You, we tell what we heard from Jonah, from Isaac, who often comes to see us, and what we learned from

You in Tishri. We speak as best we can. Because it is impossible not to speak of You. And the more we suffer, the more we are forbidden, the more we speak of You. Those poor people… they drink the essence of life every Sabbath… But how many there are in this plain who are in need of knowing, of knowing You at least, and yet they cannot come here… »

« I will see to them as well. And may you be blessed for what you do. »

The sun is setting while Jesus enters a kitchen blackened by smoke. The Sabbath rest begins.

191. The Sabbath at Esdraelon. Little Jabez. The Parable of Rich Dives.

16th June 1945.

« Give Micah enough money so that tomorrow he may pay for what he borrowed today from the peasants of this area » says Jesus to the Iscariot, who usually handles the… common possessions. Then Jesus calls Andrew and John and sends them to two spots from which it is possible to see the road or the roads coming from Jezreel. He calls also Peter and Simon and sends them to meet the men of Doras with instructions to stop them at the boundary between the two estates. He then says to James and Judas: « Take the foodstuffs and come with Me. »

The peasants of Johanan, women, men and children follow them. The men are carrying two small amphoras, which, however, are not very small, and which must be full of wine. They are jars rather than amphoras and contain about ten litres each. (Please do not take my estimate as an article of faith). They go towards a thick vineyard, which is already all covered with new leaves, at the end of Johanan's property. Beyond it there is a large ditch which is kept full of water with, I wonder, how much work.

« See? Johanan quarrelled with Doras over this ditch. Johanan said: "It is your father's fault if everything is ruined. If he did not want to adore Him, he should have been afraid of Him instead of provoking Him". And Doras shouted like a demon: "It was this ditch that saved you. The insects did not cross it… And Johanan replied: "Why is all your property ruined, then, when previously your fields were the nicest ones in Esdraelon? It's God's punishment, believe me. You went beyond the limit. This water?… It has been here all the time and that is not what saved me". And Doras shouted again: "Which proves that Jesus is a demon". "He is a just man" Johanan shouted back. And they continued for some time, while they had breath. Later Johanan spent a lot of money to divert the torrent, to find other underground water sources, and to dig more ditches on the boundary line between him and his

relative, and he made them deeper and told us what we told You yesterday… After all, he is happy that it happened. He was so envious of Doras… He now hopes that he will be able to buy everything, because Doras will end up by selling everything at a very low price. »

Jesus benignly listens to all the confidential information, while waiting for Doras' poor peasants, who arrive without any delay and prostrate themselves on the ground as soon as they see Jesus in the shade of a tree.

« Peace to you, My friends. Come here. The synagogue is here today and I am your head of it. But first I wish to be the father of your family. Sit around Me, that I may give you some food. The Groom is with you today, and we will have a wedding banquet. »

And Jesus uncovers a basket, from which He takes some loaves of bread handing them to the amazed peasants of Doras. From another basket He takes the foodstuffs He has been able to find: cheese, cooked vegetables, and a little kid or lamb, cooked whole, which He divides among the unhappy men. He then pours out some wine and hands round a coarse chalice so that everybody may drink.

« Why all this? And what about them? » ask Doras' men pointing to Johanan's men.

« They have already had their share. »

« All this expense! How could You do that? »

« There are still some good people in Israe » replies Jesus smiling.

« But this is Sabbath… »

« Thank this man » says Jesus pointing at the man from Endor. « He got the lamb. It was easy to get the rest. »

The poor men devoured - it is the right word - the food, the like of which they had not tasted for a long time.

One of them, a rather elderly man, is pressing to his side a boy about ten years old; he eats and weeps.

« What is the matter, father?… » asks Jesus.

« It's because Your goodness is too great… »

The man from Endor says in his guttural voice: « That is true… and it makes you weep. But the tears are not bitter ones… »

« They are not bitter. That's true. And then… There is something I would like. My tears express also a desire. »

« What do you want, father? »

« See this child. He is my grandson. He was left to me after the landslide of last winter. Doras does not even know that he has come to me, because I have to let him live like a wild animal in the wood and I see him only on the Sabbath. If he finds out he will either drive him away or compel him to work… and this tender offspring of mine will be treated worse than a pack-animal. At Passover I am sending him to Jerusalem with Micah, to become a

son of the Law… and after?… He is my daughter's son… »

« Would you give him to Me, instead? Do not weep. I have many friends who are honest, holy and without any children. They will bring him up in a holy manner, in My Way… »

« Oh! Lord! That is what I have been wishing for since I heard of You. And I prayed that holy man Jonah to save my grandchild from this death, because he knows what it means to belong to this master… »

« Child, would you come with Me? »

« Yes, my Lord. And I will cause You no grief. »

« That is settled. »

« But… to whom do You wish to give him? » asks Peter pulling Jesus by the sleeve. « Also this one to Lazarus? »

« No, Simon. But there are so many without any children… »

« And I am one of them… » Peter's desire seems to make his face grow thinner.

« Simon. I have already told you. You are to be the "father" of all the children I will bequeath to you. But you are not to be bound by any child of your own. Do not be upset. You are too indispensable to your Master, Who cannot detach you from Himself because of an affection. I am exacting, Simon. I am more exacting than a very jealous husband. I love you most partially and I want you to be entirely Mine. »

« All right, my Lord… all right… Let it be done as You wish. » Poor Peter is really heroic in adhering to Jesus' will.

« He will be the son of My dawning Church. All right? He will belong to everybody and to nobody. He will be "our" child. He will follow us when distances will allow him to, or he will come to us and the shepherds will be his guardians, as in every child they love "their" Child Jesus. Come here, My child, what is your name? »

« Jabez of John and I am from Judah » says the boy without hesitating.

« Yes. We are Judaeans » confirms the old man. « I used to work in Doras' lands in Judaea, and my daughter got married to a man from that area. He worked in the woods near Arimathea and last winter… »

« I saw the disaster. »

« The boy was spared because that night he was far away with a relative… In actual fact the boy was appropriately named Jabez. I said to my daughter at once: "Why? Do you not remember the ancient tradition?". But her husband insisted in giving him that name, so he is Jabez (1). »

« "The child will call on the Lord and the Lord will bless him and

(1) Jabez was not considered a lucky name. See Chronicles I, 4, 9-10.

will extend his lands, and the hand of the Lord will be with him and will keep harm away from him". That is what the Lord will grant him to comfort you, father, and the souls of the dead, and to console the orphan.

And now that we have separated the needs of the body from those of the soul, by an act of love for the boy, listen to the parable that I have thought out for you.

There was once a very rich man. He wore the most beautiful garments, and in his purple and byssus clothes he used to strut about in squares and at home, respected by his citizens as the most powerful man in the country, and by his friends, who gratified his pride to gain benefits thereby. They feasted every day in his halls, where the multitude of his guests, all rich and none therefore needy, crowded flattering Dives. His banquets were famous for the copiousness of food and of choice wines.

In the same town there lived a beggar, a great beggar. He was great in his misery as the other was great in his wealth. But under the crust of the human misery of Lazarus, the beggar, there was hidden a treasure, which was even greater than Lazarus' misery and Dives' wealth. And it was Lazarus' true holiness. He had never infringed the Law, not even when urged by need, and above all he had complied with the precept of love for God and for his neighbour. He, as is wont with poor people, used to go near the doors of rich people to ask for alms, so that he would not starve to death. And every evening he would go to Dives' house, hoping to receive at least the crumbs of the pompous banquets which took place in the magnificent halls. He would lie in the street, near the door, and wait patiently.

But if Dives noticed him, he would have him driven away because that underfed body, covered with sores and ragged clothes, was too sad a sight for his guests. That is what Dives used to say. In actual fact, it was because the sight of so much misery and goodness was a continuous reproach to him. His well fed dogs, adorned with precious collars, were more pitiful than he was and they used to go near poor Lazarus and lick his sores, showing their great joy at being caressed by him. They even took the remnants of the bountiful tables to him, so that Lazarus survived malnutrition thanks to animals. If he had relied on man he would have died, because man did not even allow him to enter the halls, after the banquet, to pick up the crumbs which had fallen from the tables.

One day Lazarus died. No one on earth noticed it, no one mourned him. Nay, Dives rejoiced not seeing on that day or afterwards that misery which he called a "disgrace" near his door. But the angels noticed it in Heaven. And when he was about to breathe his last in his cold barren cave, the celestial cohorts were present and in a bright dazzling light they picked up his soul and singing hosannas

they took it to the bosom of Abraham.

Some time went by and Dives died. Oh! What a grand funeral! The whole town, already aware of his agony, crowded in the square, where his abode was, some to be noticed as friends of the great man, some out of curiosity, some to gain favour with the heirs, and they all joined in the mourning, and their cries rose to the sky and with their cries also the false praises of the "great, just benefactor" who had died.

Can the word of man change God's judgement? Can human apology cancel what is written in the book of Life? No, it cannot. What has been judged is judged and what has been written is written. And notwithstanding the grand funeral, the soul of Dives was buried in hell.

Then, in that horrible jail, eating and drinking fire and darkness, finding hatred and torture everywhere and in every moment of eternity, he raised his eyes to heaven. He raised his eyes to heaven which he saw in the brightness of lightning, in the fraction of a second, and the indescribable beauty of heaven remained present in his mind and tormented him in the midst of atrocious tortures. And he saw Abraham up there. Far, but bright, happy… and in his lap, bright and happy there was also Lazarus, poor Lazarus, once miserable, despised, revolting… and now? He was handsome in the light of God and of his holiness, full of God's love, admired not by men but by the angels of God.

Dives weeping cried: "Father Abraham, have mercy on me! Send Lazarus, as I cannot possibly hope that you will do it yourself, send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and touch my tongue with it, to cool it, for I am in agony in these flames which pierce me continuously and bum me!".

Abraham replied: "Remember, son, that you had all good things during your life, whereas Lazarus had all bad things. But he turned evil into good, whereas you did nothing but evil of all the good things. It is therefore just that now he should be comforted here and that you should suffer. In any case it is not possible to do it. Holy people are spread over the earth so that men may take advantage of them. But if notwithstanding all the opportunities, a man remains what he was - in your case: a demon - it is useless to make recourse to saints. We are now separated. Herbs are mixed when they are in the field. But when they are cut, the good ones are separated from the evil ones. That is what happens to you and to us. We were together on the earth and you rejected and tortured us in every possible way, you forgot us, acting against the law of charity. We are now divided. There is an abyss between you and us, and those who wish to cross it and come to you, cannot do it, neither can you, where you are, cross the dreadful abyss and come to us".

Dives, crying more loudly shouted: "Holy father, at least please send Lazarus to my father's house. I have five brothers. I have never understood what love is, not even among relatives. But now I understand what a terrible thing it is not to be loved. And since where I am there is hatred, in the fraction of a second, when my soul saw God, I understood what Love is. I do not want my brothers to suffer the pains which I am suffering. I am terrified because they are leading the same life as I did. Oh! send Lazarus to tell them where I am, and why I am here, and let them know that hell does exist, and it is dreadful, and that those who do not love God and their neighbour come to hell. Send him! So that they may provide in good time, and may not come here, to this place of eternal torture".

But Abraham replied: "Your brothers have Moses and the Prophets. They should listen to them".

And with a deep groan of a tormented soul Dives replied: "Oh! Father Abraham! They will be more impressed by a dead person… Listen to me! Have mercy!".

But Abraham said: "If they have not listened to Moses and the Prophets, they will not believe either one who has risen from the dead for one hour to speak words of Truth to them. In any case it is not fair that a blessed soul should leave my bosom to go and be insulted by the sons of the Enemy. The time of insults is over for such souls. They are now in peace by the order of God Who sees that it is useless to endeavour to convert those who do not even believe in the word of God and do not practice it".

That is the parable and its meaning is so clear that no clarification is required.

My Jonah lived here and really achieved the holiness of Lazarus, whose glorious position near God is made clear by the protection He grants to those who hope in Him. Jonah can come to you, as a friend and protector, and he will come if you are always good.

I would like, and I tell you now what I told him last spring, I would like to be able to help you all, also materially, but I cannot, and I am sorry for that. I can but point Heaven to you. I can only teach you the great wisdom of resignation and promise the future Kingdom to you. Do not hate, never, for any reason whatsoever. Hatred is strong in the world. But it always has a limit. Love has no limit of power or time. Love therefore, to possess love, as a defense and comfort on the earth, and as a reward in Heaven. It is better to be Lazarus than Dives, believe Me. Believe it and you will be blessed.

In the desolation of these fields you cannot hear one word of hatred, even if facts could have justified it. Do not misunderstand the miracle. I am Love and I would not have struck. But seeing

that Love could not bend cruel Dives, I abandoned him to Justice which avenged the martyr Jonah and his brothers. This is what the miracle teaches you. That Justice is always vigilant, also when It seems to be absent and that since God is the Master of creation, in pursuance of Justice, He can make use also of the least beings, such as caterpillars and ants, to punish the hearts of cruel and greedy people letting them die choked by a regurgitation of their own poison.

I bless you, now. And I will pray for you at every dawn. And you, father, do not worry about the little lamb you are entrusting to Me. I will bring him back now and again, that you may rejoice seeing him grow in wisdom and goodness in the way of the Lord. He will be your lamb of this poor Passover of yours, the most pleasing of all the lambs offered at the altar of Jehovah. Jabez, say goodbye to the old father and then come to your Saviour, to your Good Shepherd. Peace be with you! »

« Oh! Master! Good Master! How painful it is to leave you! »

« Yes, it is painful. But it is better if the steward does not find you here. I came here deliberately, to avoid punishments for you. Please obey for the sake of the Love Who advises you. »

The unhappy men rise with tears in their eyes, and go back to their cross. Jesus blesses them once again and then, holding the boy by the hand and with the man from Endor on the other side, He goes back to Micah's house along the same way He came.

Andrew and John join Him and the disciples after their watch.

192. From Esdraelon to Engannim Stopping at Megiddo.

17th June 1945.

« Is that the top of Mount Carmel, my Lord? » asks His cousin James.

« Yes, it is, brother. That is the chain of the Carmel and the highest peak is the one that gives the name to the chain. »

« The world must be beautiful also from there. Have You ever been up there? »

« Yes, once, by Myself, at the beginning of My mission. And at the foot of it I cured the first leper. But we will go there together, to commemorate Elijah… »

« Thank You, Jesus. You have understood me as usual. »

« And as usual I perfect you, James. »

« Why? »

« The reason is written in Heaven. »

« Would You not tell me, brother, since You can read what is written in Heaven? »

Jesus and James are walking one beside the other and only little Jabez, who is held by the hand by Jesus, can hear the confidential

conversation of the two cousins who smile looking at each other's eyes.

Jesus embraces James' shoulders with His arm to draw him closer to Himself and asks: « Do you really want to know? Well, I will tell you by means of a riddle, and when you find the answer you will be wise. Listen: "After assembling the false prophets on Mount Carmel, Elijah stepped out in front of all the people: 'How long' he said 'do you mean to hobble first on one leg then on the other? If the Lord is God, follow Him; if Baal, follow him'. The people did not reply. Elijah then said to the people: 'I, I alone, am left as a prophet of the Lord' and the only strength of the lonely prophet was his cry: 'Answer me, Lord, answer me, so that this people may know that You are the Lord God, and are winning back their hearts'. Then the fire of the Lord fell and consumed the holocaust". Guess, My brother. »

James is pensive with his head lowered and Jesus looks at him smiling. They walk for a few yards thus, then James asks: « Is it in connection with Elijah or with my future? »

« With your future, of course… »

James becomes thoughtful again and then whispers: « Am I perhaps destined to invite Israel to follow a way with sincerity? Am I destined to be the only one left in Israel? If so, do You mean that all the others will be persecuted and scattered and that… I will pray You for the conversion of this people… as if I were a priest… as if I were… a victim… But if it is so, Jesus, inflame me as from now… »

« You already are inflamed. But you will be carried away by Fire, like Elijah. That is why you and I will go, all alone on Mount Carmel to speak… »

« When? After Passover? »

« Yes, after a Passover. And then I will tell you many things… »

A lovely little river which flows towards the sea and is in flood because of the springtime rains and the thawing snow, prevents them from proceeding.

Peter runs towards them and says: « The bridge is further up, where the road from Ptolomais to Engannim passes. »

Jesus goes back submissively and crosses the little river by a strong stone bridge. Immediately afterwards they meet some little mountains and hills, but they are of little importance.

« Will we be at Engannim by evening? » asks Philip.

« Certainly… But… we have the boy now. Are you tired, Jabez? » Jesus asks fondly. « Be as frank as an angel. »

« A little, Lord. But I will do my best to walk. »

« This boy is very weak » says the man from Endor in his guttural voice.

« No wonder! » exclaims Peter. Considering the life he has been

leading for months! « Come here, I will carry you in my arms. »

« Oh! No, sir. Don't tire yourself. I am still able to walk. »

« Come, come here. You are certainly not heavy. You look like an underfed little bird » and Peter puts him astride his square shoulders, holding him by the legs.

They walk fast because the sun is now strong and urges them to reach the shady hills.

They stop in a village, the name of which I hear is Mageddo, to take some food and rest near a very cool fountain, which is also noisy because of the abundance of water that gushes out into a dark stone basin. But no one in the village takes an interest in the travellers, anonymous among many other more or less rich pilgrims, who on foot or riding donkeys or mules are going towards Jerusalem for Passover. There is already a holiday atmosphere and there are many boys among the travellers, exhilarated at the idea of the ceremony for their coming of age.

Two boys, of well-to-do families, who have come to play near the fountain while Jabez is there with Peter - who takes the boy with him everywhere attracting him with a thousand little things - ask the boy: « Are you going, also, to become a son of the Law? »

Jabez replies shyly: « Yes » almost hiding himself behind Peter.

« Is this man your father? Are you poor? »

« Yes, I am poor. »

The two boys, probably the sons of Pharisees, look him over ironically and curiously and then say: « One can see it. »

It can be seen, indeed… His tunic is really shabby! Perhaps the boy has grown, and although the hem of the tunic has been let down, the garment, a brown faded by inclement weather, hardly reaches half way down his thin legs. His little feet are badly shod in two shapeless sandals held together by strings which must torture his feet.

The boys, with the ruthless selfishness typical of many children and with the cruelty of ill-mannered urchins, say: « Oh! In that case you will not have a new suit of clothes for your feast! We instead!… Is that right Joachim? Mine is all red with mantle to match. His, instead, is sky blue and we will have sandals with silver buckles, a precious belt and a talet held by a pale gold leaf and… »

«… and a heart of stone, I would say! » bursts out Peter, who has finished cooling his feet and drawing water to fill all the flasks. « You are bad boys. The ceremony and your clothes are not worth a fig if your hearts are not good. I prefer my boy. Go away, you proud urchins! Go amongst the rich but respect the poor and the honest. Come, Jabez! This water is good for your tired feet. Come here that I may wash them. You will walk better afterwards. Look how these strings have hurt you! You must not walk any more. I will carry you in my arms until we reach Engannim. I will find a

shoemaker there and I will buy you a new pair of sandals. » And Peter washes and dries the little feet which had not received so many caresses for a long time.

The boy looks at him, hesitates, then bends over the man who is tying his sandals and embraces him with his emaciated arms saying: « How good you are! » and kisses his grey hair.

Peter is moved. He sits on the damp ground, as he is, takes the boy in his lap and says to him: « Call me "father" then. »

They form a tender group. Jesus and the others approach them.

But before the two parties meet, the two proud little fellows already mentioned who had remained there inquisitively, ask: « But is he not your father? »

« He is father and mother to me » replies Jabez without hesitation.

« Yes, dear! You are right: father and mother. And, my dear little gentlemen, I can assure that he will be properly dressed for the ceremony. He, too, will have a dress fit for a king, as red as fire and a belt as green as grass, and his talet will be as white as snow. »

And although the match is not a very harmonising one, it shocks the two conceited boys and drives them away.

« What are you doing, Simon, sitting on the wet ground? » asks Jesus smiling.

« Wet? Ah! yes. I am just noticing it. What am I doing? I am becoming a lamb again having innocence on my heart. Ah! Master. Well, let us go. But you must leave this boy in my hands. Afterwards I will surrender him. But he is mine until he becomes a true Israelite. »

« All right! And you will be his guardian, like an old father. Is that all right? Let us go, so that we shall be at Engannim before evening, without making the boy run too much. »

« I will carry him. My fishing net is heavier. He cannot walk with these broken soles. Come here. » And with his godson astride his shoulders Peter takes happily to the road again. The road is now more shady, through woods of various kinds of trees, gently ascending hills, from which one's eyes rove over the fertile plain of Esdraelon.

They are already near Engannim - which must be a beautiful little town supplied with water brought from the hills by means of an elevated aqueduct, probably a Roman work - when the noise of an oncoming military squad makes them take refuge on the edge of the road. The hooves of the horses resound on the road, which here, near the town, shows signs of a paving that appears through the dust gathered on it with rubble. The road has obviously never been swept with a besom.

« Hail, Master! How do You happen to be here? » shouts Publius Quintilianus dismounting from his horse, and going towards Jesus

with a broad smile, holding the horse by the reins. His soldiers slow down to keep pace with their superior.

« I am going to Jerusalem for Passover. »

« I am going, too. We are reinforcing the guard for the festivity, also because Pontius Pilate is coming to town, too, and Claudia is there. We are her runners. The roads are so insecure! The eagles drive jackals away » says the soldier laughing and looks at Jesus. He then continues in a low voice: « Double watch this year, to protect the back of filthy Antipas. There is a lot of ill-feeling because of the capture of the Prophet. Ill-feeling in Israel… and consequently dissatisfaction among us. But… we have already ensured that the High Priest and his stooges have been… benignly lectured… » and he ends in a low voice: « Go without any fear. All the claws have been retracted into the paws. Oh! They are afraid of us. If we only clear our throats, they take it for a roar. Will you speak at Jerusalem? Come near the Praetorium. Claudia speaks of You as of a great philosopher. That is a good thing because Claudia is the proconsul. » He looks around and sees Peter flushed, perspiring with his load. « And that boy? »

« An orphan I brought with Me. »

« But that man of Yours is working too hard! Boy, are you afraid to come on the horse with me for a few yards? I will keep you under my chlamys and I will go slow. I will hand you back to him when we are at the gate. »

The boy does not object, he is as mild as a lamb, and Publius lifts him up on to the saddle.

And while he is ordering his soldiers to go slow he sees also the man from Endor. He stares at him and says: « What! You here? »

« I am here. I have stopped selling eggs to the Romans. But the chicken are still there. I am now with the Master… »

« Good for you! You will have greater comfort. Goodbye. Hail, Master. I will wait for You at that group of trees. » And he spurs his horse.

« Do you know him? And does he know you? » many ask John of Endor.

« Yes, as his supplier of chicken. He did not know me before, but once I was summoned to the headquarters at Nain to fix the prices, and he was there. Since then he always spoke to me when I went to Caesarea to buy books or tools. He calls me Cyclops or Diogenes. He is not a bad fellow, and although I cannot bear Romans I have never offended him because he might be useful to me. »

« Did you hear that, Master? My speech to the centurion at Capernaum was a good thing. I feel more relaxed now » says Peter.

They reach the thicket in the shade of which the patrol has dismounted.

« I am handing the boy back to You. Have You orders, Master? »

« No, Publius. May God show Himself to you. »

« Hail », he mounts his horse and spurs it, followed by his men with a loud rattle of hooves and body-armour.

They enter the town and Peter with his little friend goes to buy sandals.

« That man is dying for a son » says the Zealot, and he concludes: « He is right. »

« I will give you thousands. Now let us go and look for a place to rest, so that tomorrow we can start at dawn. »

193. From Engannim to Shechem in Two Days.

18th June 1945.

Jesus goes on His way towards Jerusalem along roads which are more and more crowded with pilgrims. A heavy shower during the night has made the road somewhat muddy, but, on the other hand, it has removed dust and made the air clearer. The fields look like gardens diligently tended by skilled men.

They all walk fast because they are well rested after a night's sleep, and because the boy, with his new sandals, no longer suffers when walking: on the contrary, as he becomes more and more familiar, he chatters with this one and that one, and confidentially informs John that his father's name was also John and his mother's Mary, and that he therefore is very fond of John also. « But » he concludes, « I love you all, and in the Temple I will pray so much for you and for the Lord Jesus. »

It is moving to see how this group of men, most of whom have no children, are so paternal and full of attention for the youngest of Jesus' disciples. Even the countenance of the man from Endor softens when he forces the little one to swallow a beaten egg, or when he climbs up among the woods, which make the hills as well as the higher mountains green, to pick acidulous branches of shrubs or scented stems of wild fennel, which he takes to the boy to quench his thirst, without overburdening his stomach with water. He also draws his attention to the different aspects and sights of the country, which is split here by large valleys, at the bottom of which run main roads, to take his mind off the length of the journey.

The old teacher of Cintium, ruined by human wickedness, revives because of this boy, a wretch like himself, and the wrinkles of misfortune and bitterness smooth into a gentle smile. Jabez is already less shabby looking, because of his new sandals, and his face is not so sad, because I do not know which hand of an apostle has erased every trace of the wild life the boy led for so many months, sorting his hair so far ruffled and dusty and now made soft and tidy by a good wash. The man from Endor also is

quite different. He is still somewhat puzzled when he hears anyone call him John, but then he shakes his head and smiles pitying his bad memory. Day by day his countenance loses its habitual hardness and gains a gravity, which is quite serene. Of course these two wretched people who are reviving through Jesus' kindness, gravitate towards the Master in their love. Their companions are dear, but Jesus… When He looks at them or speaks just to them, the expression on their faces is a most happy one.

After crossing the large valley and then a beautiful green hill, one can still dimly see the plain of Esdraelon. This causes the child to sigh: « What will my old father be doing? » and with a very sad sigh and tears in his brown eyes he exclaims: « Oh! he is not so happy as I am… and he is so good! » and the lament of the child casts a sad veil over everybody. They begin to descend a very fertile valley, completely covered with cultivated fields and olive-groves. A light breeze causes the tiny flowers of vines and of the earlier olive-trees to fall like snow. The plain of Esdraelon is out of sight for good.

They stop for a meal and then resume the journey towards Jerusalem. But it must have rained heavily or the area is rich in underground water, because the meadows look like a marsh owing to the water that glitters among the thick grass and rises lapping on the banked road, which, however, is still very muddy. The adults pull their tunics up to prevent them from becoming soiled with mud, and Judas Thaddeus puts the boy on his shoulders to let him rest and to cross more quickly the flooded and perhaps unhealthy area.

Daylight is beginning to fade when, after walking along the edge of other hills and crossing a dry rocky valley, they enter a village situated on a raised rocky embankment. They push their way through the crowd of pilgrims and look for accommodation in a very rural type hotel: a large shed under which is spread much straw and nothing else. Small lamps lit here and there shed a glow on the supper of the pilgrim families, poor families, like the apostolic one, because most of the rich people have put up tents outside the village, disdaining contact with either the local people or the poor pilgrims.

Night and silence fall… The first to fall asleep is the boy, who, tired as he is, reclines his head on the lap of Peter, who lays him on the straw and covers him carefully.

Jesus gathers the adults in prayer and then each throws himself on the straw to rest after the long journey.

The day after: the apostolic group that left in the morning is about to enter Shechem in the evening, having passed through Samaria, a beautiful town, surrounded by walls, adorned with

splendid imposing buildings, around which are grouped some lovely tidy houses. I am under the impression that the town, like Tiberias, has been recently rebuilt with systems borrowed from Rome. Outside the walls, around the town, the land is very fruitful and well cultivated. The road from Samaria to Shechem winds down from terrace to terrace, in a series of walls supporting the earth, which reminds me of the Fiesoli hills. There is a splendid view of green mountains to the south and of a most beautiful plain westwards.

The road tends to descend to the valley, but it climbs now and again to cross other hills from the top of which one commands the land of Samaria with its lovely olive-groves, corn fields, vineyards, watched over from the hill crests by woods of oak and other forest trees, which must be protective against the winds that blowing through the gorges are inclined to create whirlwinds damaging to cultivations. This area reminds me very much of certain spots in our Apennines, around Mount Amiata, where one can contemplate at the same time the flat cultivations of cereals in the Maremma and the bright hills and majestic mountains that rise higher inland. I do not know what Samaria is like now. It was very beautiful in those days.

Now, between two high mountains, the highest in the area, one can see straight through a valley, in the middle of which there is the very fertile well-watered land of Shechem. It is here that Jesus and His disciples are caught up with by the joyful caravan of the Consul's court, on its way to Jerusalem for the festivity. There are slaves on foot and slaves on the wagons guarding the luggage… My God, how many items they carried with them in those days!!! And with the slaves there are wagons that are packed with all sorts of goods, even complete litters and travelling coaches: the four wheel wagons are very wide, well sprung, with tilt, under which the ladies are sheltered. And then many other carts and slaves…

A curtain is drawn, by the bejewelled hand of a lady and the severe profile of Plautina appears: she nods smiling but does not say anything. Valeria, whose little girl on her knees trills and smiles, greets people in the same fashion. The other wagon, which is even more stately, passes by but no curtain is drawn. But when it has gone by, the pinkish face of Lydia looks out from the rear, through the closed curtains and she nods, too. The caravan goes away…

« They travel in comfort! » says Peter who is tired and wet with perspiration. « But, if God helps us, the day after tomorrow evening we will be in Jerusalem. »

« No, Simon. I must make a detour and go towards the Jordan. »

« But why, my Lord? »

« Because of the boy. He is very sad, and it would be too sad for

him to see the mountain of the disaster. »

« But we will not see it! Or rather, we will see the other side… and I take it upon myself to divert his attention. John and I… His attention is easily distracted, poor little dove without a nest. To go towards the Jordan! Well! It is better this way. A straight road. Shorter. Safer. No. No. This one, this one. See? Also the Roman ladies are taking it. Along the sea and the river there is the risk of fever during the first summer rains. It is healthy here. In any case… When are we going to arrive if we lengthen the way? Consider how agitated Your Mother must be after that unpleasant business of the Baptist!… » Peter wins and Jesus agrees.

« In that case we will stop early and have a good rest and tomorrow we will leave at dawn to be at Gethsemane in the evening of the day after tomorrow. The day after Friday we will go to Bethany to see My Mother and we will leave John's books there, as they have been quite a burden for you, and we will find Isaac there and will entrust him with this poor brother of ours… »

« And the boy? Are You handing him over at once? »

Jesus smiles. « No. I am giving him to My Mother, Who will prepare him for "his" feast. And then we will keep him with us for Passover. But after we will have to leave him… Do not become too attached to him! Or rather: love him as if he were your own son, but with a supernatural spirit. As you can see he is weak and gets tired. I, too, would have liked to teach him Myself and bring him up nourished in Wisdom by Me. But I am the Untiring One and Jabez is too young and too weak to do the work we do. We will go through Judaea and will come back to Jerusalem for Pentecost, and then we will go… evangelizing… We shall find him again in our fatherland in summer. Here we are at the gate of Shechem. Go ahead with your brother and with Judas of Simon and look for accommodation. I will go to the market square and wait for you there. »

They part and Peter goes away looking for a shelter, while the others walk with difficulty in the streets crowded with people shouting and gesticulating, with donkeys, wagons, all going to Jerusalem for the oncoming Passover. The shouting, calling and cursing of people, added to the braying of donkeys cause a noise that resounds very loudly under the vaults, which link one house to another, a noise that resembles the rumble of certain shells when placed near one's ear. The echo travels from vault to vault where the shades become darker and the crowds, like an impetuous torrent, rush into the streets, insinuating themselves everywhere, looking for a roof, a square, a meadow wherein to pass the night…

Jesus, holding the child by the hand, leaning against a tree, is waiting for Peter in the square, which, for the occasion, is always

full of vendors.

« Let us hope that no one sees us and recognises us! » says the Iscariot.

« How can you recognise a grain of sand among the sands? » replies Thomas. « Don't you see the crowds? »

Peter comes back: « Outside the town there is a shed with some hay. I could not find anything else. »

« Neither shall we look for anything else. It is even too much for the Son of man. »

194. From Shechem to Beeroth.

19th June 1945.

As a river grows larger when new tributary streams flow into it, so the road from Shechem to Jerusalem is becoming gradually more and more crowded, as believers heading for the Holy City pour on to it along secondary roads from villages. A situation which is of great help to Peter in distracting the attention of the boy who is now passing near the hills where he was born and where his parents are buried under a landslide. The child is not aware of it.

After a long march interrupted - after Shiloh, on its steep hill, had been left behind to the left - by a pause to rest and take some food in a green valley resounding with pure crystal-clear waters, the pilgrims set forth again and cross a little calcareous mountain, which is rather barren, and on which the sun is blazing down mercilessly. They then begin to descend through a range of most beautiful vineyards, which with their festoons adorn the crags of the calcareous mountains. The area is most sunny.

Peter smiles significantly and makes a sign to Jesus, Who in turn smiles. The boy does not notice anything, engrossed as he is in listening to John of Endor who is speaking to him of other lands he has visited where the most sweet grapes grow that, however, are not so much used to make wine, as to make cakes, which are more delicious than honey cakes.

They are now climbing a very steep hill, because they have left the dusty crowded main road and have taken this short cut through woods. And when they reach the summit, they can distinctly see in the distance a huge bright light shining above an agglomeration, perhaps whitewashed houses.

« Jabez » calls Jesus « come here. Can you see that golden spot? It is the House of the Lord. There you will swear to obey the Law. But do you know it well? »

« My mother used to speak to me about it and my father taught me the precepts. I can read… and… and I think I know what "they" told me before they died… » The boy, who had come smiling

when Jesus called him, is now weeping with his head lowered and his trembling hand in Jesus' hand.

« Do not weep. Listen. Do you know where we are? This is Bethel. Holy Jacob dreamt of the angels here. Do you know? Do you remember? »

« Yes, Lord. He saw a ladder that from the earth reached up to Heaven and the angels went up and down, and my mother used to say that when one dies, if one has always been good, one sees the same thing and goes up that ladder to the House of God. My mother used to tell me many things… But now she does not tell me any more… I have them all in here and that is all I have of hers… » Tears stream down his little sad face.

« Do not weep like that! Listen, Jabez. I also have a Mother and Her name is Mary and She is holy and good and can tell many things. She is wiser than a teacher and more gentle and beautiful than an angel. We are going to see Her now. She will love you so much. And She will tell you many things. And then John's mother is with her and she is very good, too, and her name is Mary. And there is the mother of my brother Judas, and she is as sweet as a honey cake and her name is Mary, too. They will love you so much. Because you are a clever boy and for My sake, because I love you so much. And you will grow up with them and when you are big, you will be a holy man of God, like a doctor you will preach Jesus Who has given you a new mother here and Who will open the gates of Heaven to your dead mother and to your father, and will open them also to you when your hour comes. You will not even need to climb the long ladder of Heaven when you die. You will have climbed it during your lifetime, being a good disciple, and you will find yourself up there, at the gate of Paradise, and I will be there and I will say to you: "Come, My friend and son of Mary" and we shall be together. » Jesus' bright smile, while walking slightly bent to be closer to the raised face of the child who is walking beside Him with his hand held by Jesus, and the wonderful story wipe his tears and make him smile.

The boy, who is far from being dim of wit but is only stunned by grief and the hardships he has suffered, is interested in the story and asks: « You said that You will open the gates of Heaven. Are they not closed because of the great Sin? My mother used to say that no one could enter until forgiveness had come and the just were waiting for it in Limbo. »

« It is so. But preaching the word of God I will go to the Father and… having obtained forgiveness for you, I will say to Him: "Father, I have fulfilled Your will. Now I want My reward for My sacrifice. Let the just, who are waiting, come to Your Kingdom". And the Father will say to Me: "Let it be done as You wish". I will then come down and I will call all the just, and at the sound of My

voice Limbo will open its gates and the holy Patriarchs, the bright Prophets, the blessed women of Israel will come out rejoicing. And do you know how many children? There will be children of all ages, as many as the flowers in a flowery meadow! And they will follow Me singing and will ascend to the beautiful Paradise. »

« And will my mother be there? »

« Most certainly. »

« You did not say to me that she will be with You at the gate of Heaven when I am dead, too… »

« There is no need for her and for your father to be at that gate. Like bright angels they will fly continuously from Heaven down to the earth, from Jesus to their little Jabez, and when you are about to die, they will do what those two little birds over there, in that hedge, are doing. Can you see them? » And Jesus takes the boy in His arms to let him see better. « See how they are sitting on their little eggs. They are waiting for them to hatch, then they will spread their wings over the brood to protect them from all evils, and then, when they are grown and ready to fly, they will support them with their strong wings and will take them up, up, up… towards the sun. Your parents will do the same with you. »

« Will it be just like that? »

« Exactly like that. »

« But will You tell them to remember to come? »

« That is not necessary, because they love you, but I will tell them. »

« Oh! How I love You! » The child, who is still in Jesus' arms, presses against His neck and kisses Him with such joyful effusion that is really moving.

Jesus kisses him, too, and puts him down.

« Well! Let us go on. Towards the Holy City. We must arrive there tomorrow, towards evening. Why such a hurry? Can you tell me? Is it not the same if we arrive the day after tomorrow »

« No. It would not be the same. Because tomorrow is Parasceve and after sunset one can walk only for six stadia. You are not allowed to go farther because the Sabbath and its rest have begun. »

« So one idles about on the Sabbath. »

« No. You pray the Most High Lord. »

« What is His name? »

« Adonai. But saints can pronounce His name. »

« Also good children. Tell Me if you know. »

« Jaave » (the boy pronounces it thus: a very soft G, which is almost a J, and a very long 'a').

« And why does one pray the Most High Lord on the Sabbath? »

« Because He told Moses, when He gave him the tables of the Law. »

« Oh! Did He? And what did He say? »

« He said that we must keep it holy. "For six days you shall labour, but on the seventh day you shall rest and make others rest, because that is what I did, too, after the creation". »

« What? Did the Lord rest? Did He become tired creating? And was it He Who created. How do you know? I know that God never tires. »

« He was not tired, because God does not walk and does not move His arms. But He did it, to teach Adam and us, and to have a day on which we think of Him. And He created everything, most certainly. The Book of the Lord tells us. »

« But was the Book written by Him? »

« No. But it is the Truth. And one must believe it unless one wants to go to Lucifer. »

« You said that God does not walk and does not move His arms. How did He create then? What is He like? A statue? »

« He is not an idol: He is God. And God is… God is… let me think and remember what my mother said, and even better than she did, that man that in Your name goes to visit the poor people at Esdraelon… My mother used to say, to make me understand God: "God is like my love for you. It has no body, but it exists". And that little man, but with such a gentle smile, would say: "God is an Eternal Spirit, One and Trine, and the Second Person became flesh for the sake of us, poor people, and His name is… " Oh! My Lord! Now that I think of it… it's You! » The child, dumbfounded, prostrates himself on the ground adoring.

They all run thinking that he has fallen, but Jesus with His finger on His lips beckons them to be silent and then says: « Stand up, Jabez. Children must not be afraid of Me! »

The boy looks up reverently and looks at Jesus with a changed expression, almost of fear.

But Jesus smiles and stretches out His hand saying: « You are a wise little Israelite. Let us continue the examination. Now that you have recognised Me, do you know whether the Book mentions Me? »

« Oh! Yes, Lord. From the beginning to now. Everything speaks of You. You are the promised Saviour. Now I understand why You will open the gates of Limbo. Oh! Lord! Lord! And do You love me so much? »

« Yes, Jabez. »

« No, no longer Jabez. Give me a new name that means that You loved me and saved me… »

« I will choose a name together with My Mother. All right? »

« But a name that means just that. And I will have it as from the day I become a son of the Law. »

« You will have it as from that day. »

They pass Bethel and rest in a little cool valley, rich in water, to take some food. Jabez is half stunned by the revelation and eats in silence, accepting with veneration every mouthful that Jesus hands to him. But he slowly takes heart again, and after playing happily on the green grass with John while the others are resting, he goes back to Jesus together with his smiling friend John, and the three chat together.

« You did not tell Me who speaks of Me in the Book. »

« The Prophets, Lord. And even before, the Book speaks of You when Adam was expelled, and… then to Jacob, Abraham and Moses… Oh!… My father told me that he went to John - not this one, the other John, the one of the Jordan - and he, the great Prophet, called You the Lamb… Oh! Now I understand the lamb of Moses… You are Passover! »

John teases him: « But which Prophet spoke best of Him? »

« Isaiah and Daniel. But I… I like Daniel more, now that I love You as my father. Can I say that? That I love You as I loved my father? Yes? Well, now I prefer Daniel. »

« Why? Who speaks most of the Christ is Isaiah. »

« Yes, but he speaks of the sorrows of the Christ. Daniel instead speaks of the beautiful angel and of Your coming. It is true… he also says that Christ will be sacrificed. But I think that the Lamb will be sacrificed with one single blow. Not as Isaiah and David say. I always wept when my mother read them and she did not read them any more. » He is almost weeping even now while caressing Jesus' hand.

« Forget about it for the time being. Listen. Do you know the precepts? »

« Yes, my Lord. I think I know them. I used to repeat them when I was in the wood, so that I would not forget them, also because I wanted to hear the words of my mother and my father. But now I will not weep any more (tears, however, are shining in his eyes) because I have You. »

John smiles and embraces Jesus saying: « The same words as mine! All those who are children in their hearts speak the same language. »

« Yes. Because their words come from one wisdom only. But now we ought to go, so that we can be in Beeroth very early. The number of the people is increasing and the weather looks threatening. There will be a rush for shelters. And I do not want you to be taken ill. »

John calls his companions and they set forth again towards Beeroth, across a plain which is not very well cultivated, but is not so barren as the little mountain they climbed after Shiloh.

195. From Beeroth to Jerusalem.

20th June 1945.

It is raining and Peter seems to me the opposite of Aeneas, because instead of carrying his father, he has little Jabez on his shoulders, completely covered by Peter's large mantle. The boy's little head emerges above the grey-haired head of Peter, who, with the boy's arms round his neck, dabbles in the puddles, laughing wholeheartedly.

« We might have been spared all this » grumbles the Iscariot, who is irritable because of the water pouring from the sky and splashing his clothes with mud.

« Eh! Many things could be spared! » replies John of Endor, staring at handsome Judas with his one good eye, which I think can see as well as two.

« What do you mean? »

« I mean that it is useless to expect the elements to have consideration for us, when we have none for our neighbour, and concerning matters that are by far more important than a few drops of water or a splash of mud. »

« That is true. But I like to be tidy and clean when I go to town. I have many friends there, and high up. »

« Then watch that you do not fall. »

« Are you teasing me? »

« Nooooh! But I am an old teacher and… an old pupil. I have been learning since I was born. First I learned to vegetate, then I observed life, then I became acquainted with the bitterness of life, I practised a useless justice, the justice of "man alone" against God and society. God punished me with remorse, society with fetters, so, after all, I was the victim of justice. At last, now, I have learned, I am learning how "to live". Now, since I am a teacher and a pupil, you will realise that it is natural for me to repeat the lessons. »

« But I am an apostle… »

« And I am a poor wretch, I know, and I should never take the liberty of teaching you. But, see, you never know what one may become. I thought I was going to die an honest and respected teacher in Cyprus and I became a murderer and a convict serving a life sentence. But when I raised a knife to take vengeance, and when I was dragging the fetters hating the universe, if anyone told me that I was to become a disciple of the Holy One, I would have doubted whether his mind was sound. And yet… Here I am! So, I may be able to give a good lesson also to you, an apostle. Because of my experience. Not because of my holiness, I would not dream of it. »

« That Roman was right in calling you Diogenes. »

« Of course. But Diogenes was looking for a man and could not

find one. I, luckier than he, found a snake where I thought there was a woman, and an adulterer where I thought I saw a friendly man, but after wandering about for many years, as I became insane through such experience, I have found the Man, the Holy One. »

« I know no other wisdom but Israel's. »

« If that is so, you already have the means for salvation. But now you have also the science, nay the wisdom of God. »

« It is the same thing. »

« Oh! no! It is like a foggy day compared to a sunny day. »

« Well! Are you anxious to teach me? I don't feel like it. »

« Let me speak! Once, I used to speak to children: they were absent-minded. Then I spoke to shadows, they cursed me. Then to chicken: they were better, far better than the first two groups. Now I speak to myself as I am not yet able to speak to God. Why do you want to stop me? I have but one eye, the mines ruined my life, I have suffered from heart trouble for years. At least let my mind be fruitful. »

« Jesus is God. »

« I know, and I believe it. More than you do. Because I have revived through His work, you have not. No matter how good He is, He is still God, and I, a poor wretch dare not treat Him with familiarity as you do. My soul speaks to Him… my lips dare not. My soul does, and I think that He perceives it weeping out of gratitude and repentant love. »

« That is true, John. I do perceive your soul. » Jesus comes into the conversation of the two. Judas blushes with shame, the man of Endor with joy. « I perceive your soul, that is true. And I perceive also the work of your mind. What you said is correct. When you have been formed in Me, your experience as a teacher and a diligent pupil will be of great help to you. Speak, do speak, also to yourself. »

« Once, Master, not long ago, you told me that it is wrong to speak to one's ego » remarks Judas insolently.

« That is true, I did. But that was because you were grumbling with your ego. This man is not grumbling, he is meditating, and for a good purpose. He is not doing anything wrong. »

« In brief, I am wrong! » Judas is aggressive.

« No, your heart is impatient. But the weather cannot be always good. Farmers want rain. It is charity to pray that it may rain. And also this is charity. But look, there is a beautiful rainbow forming an arch from Ataroth to Ramah. We are already beyond Ataroth, we have passed the large sad valley, and here the country is cultivated and pleasant under the sun, which is breaking through the clouds. When we are in Ramah we shall be thirty-six stadia from Jerusalem. We shall see the Holy City again after that hill,

which is the place of the horrid lewd crime committed by the men of Gibeah. What a terrible thing is the concupiscence of the flesh, Judas… »

Judas does not reply, instead he delays splashing angrily in the puddles.

« What's the matter with him, today? » asks Bartholomew.

« Be quiet, lest Simon of Jonah should hear you. Let us avoid all arguments… and do not let us upset Simon. He is so happy with his boy! »

« Yes, Master. But it is not right. I will tell him. »

« He is young, Nathanael. You were young, too… »

« Yes… but… He should not be lacking in respect towards You! » He raises his voice without wishing to do so.

Peter rushes towards them: « What's the matter? Who is lacking in respect? The new disciple? » and he looks at John of Endor, who has discreetly withdrawn when he understood that Jesus was correcting the apostle and is now speaking to James of Alphaeus and Simon Zealot.

« Not in the least. He is as respectful as a young girl. »

« Oh! Good! Otherwise… his only eye was in danger. Well… it must be Judas!… »

« Listen, Simon, could you not busy yourself with your little friend? You took him away from Me, and now you want to become engaged in a friendly conversation I am having with Nathanael. Do you not think that you want to do too many things? »

Jesus smiles so gently that Peter becomes uncertain about his own thoughts. He looks at Bartholomew… who, however, has raised his aquiline face and is scanning the sky… Peter's suspicion fades away.

Peter's attention is completely diverted by the apparition of the Holy City, which is now near, and is visible in all the beauty of its hills, olive-groves, houses, and above all of the Temple, a sight which must always have been a source of emotion and pride for Israelites. The warm April sun of Judaea has soon dried up the slabstones of the consular road. Puddles of water have disappeared completely. The apostles are tidying themselves on the side of the road, they let down the tunics which they had pulled up, they wash their muddy feet in a clear stream, they tidy their hair and drape their mantles. Also Jesus does that. I see them all doing it.

The entrance into Jerusalem must have been an important matter. To present oneself at the walls on these feast-days was like presenting oneself to a sovereign. The Holy City was the « real » queen of Israelites. I realise that this year, because I can notice the crowds and their behaviour on the consular road. The processions of the various families form here, the women in one group, the

men in another, the children in either, but all very serious and serene at the same time. Some fold up their old mantles and Pull out a new one from their travelling bags, or change sandals. Their gait then becomes solemn, it is already hieratic. In each group there is a soloist who gives the tone, and the hymns, the glorious old hymns of David, are intoned. And people look at one another more lovingly, as if they had been pacified by the sight of the House of the Lord and they look at the Holy House, a huge cube of marble surmounted by golden domes, placed like a pearl in the centre of the imposing enclosure of the Temple.

The apostolic procession is formed as follows: Jesus and Peter in front, with the boy between them; behind them Simon, the Iscariot and John; then Andrew, who has forced John of Endor to stay between him and James of Zebedee; in the fourth row the two cousins of the Lord and Matthew; last Thomas, Philip and Bartholomew. It is Jesus Who intones in His beautiful powerful voice of a light baritone, a mellow voice with refined tenor vibrations, and Judas Iscariot, a pure tenor, answers together with John, with his limpid voice typical of young people, the two baritone voices of Jesus' cousins and the almost bass voice of Thomas, whose baritone voice is so deep that it can hardly be classified as such. The others, who are not gifted with such beautiful voices, follow the chorus of the virtuosi singing in low voices. (The psalms are the known ones, called gradual psalms). Little Jabez, the voice of an angel among the strong voices of men, sings very well, probably because he knows Psalm CXXI better than the others: « How I rejoiced when they said to me: "We shall go to the house of the Lord". » His little face, which only a few days ago was so sad, is now bright with joy.

The walls are now close at hand. Here is the Gate of the Fish. And the overcrowded streets.

They go straight to the Temple to say the first prayer. And then peace in the peace of Gethsemane, then supper and rest.

The journey towards Jerusalem is over.

196. The Sabbath at Gethsemane.

21st June 1945.

The group has spent most of the Sabbath morning resting their tired bodies and cleaning their clothes which had become dusty and creased during the journey. There is so much inviting water in the spacious cisterns of Gethsemane, full of rain water, and in the foamy Kidron, now in flood, because of the recent downpours, where the water resounds against the stones like a symphony. And the apostles, one after the other, defying the low temperature of the water, plunge into it and then, clad from head to foot in fresh

clothes, their hair rather sleeked by the spray of the torrent, they draw water from the cisterns pouring it into large vats in which they have sorted out their clothes according to the colours.

« Well! Once they are soaked in there, it will be less troublesome for Mary to wash them. » (I suppose that Mary is the woman who stays at Gethsemane). « Only you, my dear little friend, cannot change. But tomorrow… » In fact the boy is wearing a clean robe, which has been taken from his little sack: so small that it would be quite sufficient for the garments of a doll! But the boy's little tunic is even more discoloured and torn than the other one and Peter looks at it with apprehension, whispering: « How can I possibly take him to town? I think I will cut one of my mantles in two, because a mantle… would cover him completely. »

Jesus, Who has heard this paternal soliloquy says: « It is better to let him rest now. This evening we are going to Bethany… »

« But I want to buy him a robe. I promised it. »

« You certainly will. But it is better to seek My Mother's advice. You know… women… have more experience in such purchases… and She will be happy to take care of the child… You will go together. »

Peter is enraptured to the seventh heaven of delight at the idea of going shopping with Mary. I do not know whether Jesus has expressed all His thoughts or whether He has held back some, those implying that His Mother's taste is more refined than Peter's and would thus avoid the clashing of atrocious hues. The fact is that He achieves His aim without mortifying Peter.

They scatter in the olive-grove, which is so beautiful on this serene April day. The rain of the past days seems to have silvered the olive-trees and sown flowers, so bright are the leaves in the sun and so numerous the little flowers at the foot of each tree. Birds are singing and flying everywhere. The town is lying over there, west of an onlooker.

It is not possible to see the crowds thronging inside, but one can see the caravans going towards the Gate of the Fish and to others, with names unknown to me, on this eastern side, and the travellers are swallowed by the town as it if were a hungry mouth.

Jesus is walking up and down watching Jabez who is playing with John and the younger ones. Also the Iscariot, who has got out of yesterday's huff is cheerful and plays. The elder ones watch and smile.

« What will Your Mother say of this child? » asks Bartholomew.

« I think She will say: "He is very thin" » says Thomas.

« Oh! no! She will say: "Poor child!" » replies Peter.

« Instead She will say to You: "I am glad that You love him" » objects Philip.

« His Mother would never have doubted it. But I don't think She

will say anything. She will press him to Her heart » says the Zealot.

« And You, Master, what do You think She will say? »

« She will do what you said. She will think many things, nay, all of them, and will say them in Her heart, and when kissing him She will only say: "May you be blessed" and She will take care of him as if he were a little bird fallen from its nest. One day, listen, She told Me of when She was a little girl. She was not yet three years old because She was not yet in the Temple, and Her heart was full of love, emanating, like flowers and olives pressed and crushed in a mill, all Her oils and perfumes. And in a rapture of love She said to Her mother that She wanted to be a virgin to please the Saviour more, but that She would have liked to be a sinner in order to be saved, and She almost wept, because Her mother could not understand Her and could not tell Her how it is possible to be "pure" and a "sinner" at the same time. Her father satisfied Her by bringing her a little sparrow, which he had saved when it was about to be drowned on the edge of a fountain. He explained the parable of the little bird, saying that God had saved her in advance and therefore She was to bless Him twice. And the little Virgin of God, the Most Great Virgin Mary, practised Her first spiritual maternity on behalf of the little bird, which She let free when it was strong enough. But the bird never left the kitchen garden in Nazareth, where flying and twittering, it comforted the sad house and the broken hearts of Anne and Joachim, when Mary was in the Temple. It died shortly before Anne breathed her last… It had fulfilled its duty… My Mother had dedicated Herself to virginity for love. But, since She was a perfect creature, maternity was in Her blood and spirit. Because woman is created to be a mother and it is an aberration, if she is deaf to such sentiment, which is love of second power… »

Also the others have come near slowly.

« What do You mean, Master, by love of second power? » asks Judas Thaddeus.

« My brother, there are many loves and various powers. There is the love of first power: the one given to God. Then there is the love of second power: the love of a mother or of a father, because if the previous one is entirely spiritual, this one is spiritual by two parts and carnal by one. It is true that human affection is mixed in it, but the superior sentiment prevails, because a father and mother, who are such in a wholesome and holy way, do not only feed and caress the body of their child, but they give also nourishment and love to the mind and the spirit of their creature. And what I am saying is so true, that those who devote themselves to children, even if only to educate them, end up by loving their pupils, as if they were of their own flesh. »

« In fact I was very fond of my pupils » says John of Endor.

« I understood that you must have been a good teacher by the way you deal with Jabez. »

The man of Endor bows and kisses Jesus' hand without speaking.

« Please go on with Your classification of loves » begs the Zealot.

« There is the love for one's wife: love of third power because it is made - I am always talking of wholesome and holy loves - half of spirit and half of flesh. A man, besides being the husband of his wife, is a teacher and a father to her; and a woman is an angel and a mother to her husband, besides being his wife. These are the three highest loves. »

« And the love for our neighbour? Are You not wrong? Or have You forgotten it? » asks the Iscariot. The others look at him dumbfounded and… furious because of his remarks.

But Jesus replies placidly: « No, Judas. Watch. God is to be loved because He is God, so no explanation is required to convince one to have such love. He is He Who is, that is Everything; and man: Nothing, who participates of Everything, because of the soul infused in him by Eternal God - without which soul man would be one of the many animals that live on the earth, or in water or in the air - he must adore Him from a sense of duty and to deserve to survive in Everything, that is to deserve to be part of the holy People of God in Heaven, a citizen of the Jerusalem which will know neither profanation nor destruction for ever.

The love of man, and particularly of woman, for their offspring, is indicated as an order in the words of God to Adam and Eve, after He had blessed them, seeing that He had made a "good thing", on a remote sixth day, the first sixth day of creation. God said to them: "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth… " I can see your tacit objection, and this is My reply to you: Since before sin everything in creation was regulated by and based on love, that multiplication of children would have been a holy, pure, powerful, perfect love. And God gave it as His first commandment to man: "Be fruitful and multiply". Therefore, love your children after Me. Love, as it is now, the present procreator of children, did not exist then. There was no malice nor the detestable thirst for sensuality. Man loved woman and woman loved man, naturally, not naturally according to nature as we understand it, or rather, as you men understand it, but according to the nature of children of God: supernaturally. Sweet were the days of love of the Two who were brothers, because born of one Father, and yet were husband and wife, who loved and looked at each other with the innocent eyes of twins in a cradle; and man felt the love of a father for his wife "bone from his bones and flesh from his flesh", what a son is for his father; and the woman experienced the joy of being a daughter, protected by a very high love, because she felt that she had in

herself something of the wonderful man who loved her, with innocence and angelical ardour, in the beautiful meadows in Eden!

Later, in the sequence of commands that God, smiling, gave to His beloved children, there comes what Adam himself, gifted by Grace with an intelligence inferior only to God's, decreed speaking of his wife and of every woman through Eve, a decree of the thought of God, which was clearly reflected by the spotless mirror of Adam's spirit, a flower in thought and in word: "Man will leave his father and his mother and will join himself to his wife and they will become one body".

If there had not been the three pillars of the three above mentioned loves, could there have been love for one's neighbour? No. It could not have existed. The love of God makes God a friend and teaches love. Who does not love God, Who is good, cannot certainly love his neighbour who in most cases is faulty. If there had been no conjugal love and paternity in the world, there could have been no neighbours, because a neighbour is the son of man. Are you convinced? »

« Yes, Master. I had not thought of that. »

« It is difficult indeed to go back to the sources. Man has been stuck in mud for thousands of years, and those sources are so high up on the summits! The first one, above all, is a source that comes from an immense height: God… But I will take you by the hand and lead you to the sources. I know where they are… »

« And the other loves? » ask together Simon Zealot and the man from Endor.

« The first one of the second series is the love for our neighbour. In actual fact it is the fourth in power. Then comes the love for science. Finally the love for work. »

« Is that all? »

« That is all. »

« But there are many more loves! » exclaims Judas of Kerioth.

« There are other hungers. But they are not loves. They are the negation of love. They deny God, they deny man. They cannot be love because they are negations and Negation is Hatred. »

« If I deny consent to evil, is that Hatred? » asks Judas Iscariot once again.

« Poor me! You are more captious than a scribe! Can you tell me what is the matter with you? Is the rarified air of Judaea affecting your nerves like a cramp? » exclaims Peter.

« No. I like to learn and to have many clear ideas. It is quite possible we may have to speak to scribes and I do not want to be short of arguments… »

« And do you think that in the moment of need you will be able to pull out the colour required from the sack where you stock all the rags? » asks Peter.

« Rags the words of the Master? You are swearing? »

« Don't pretend you are scandalized. They a-re not rags in His mouth; but once they have been mishandled by us they become rags. Try and give a piece of precious byssus to a boy… It will soon become a dirty torn rag. And that is what happens to us. Now if you expect to fish at the right moment the little rag you need, what with the rag, and what with its dirt… uhm! I do not know what you will be up to. »

« Don't worry. That is my business. »

« Oh! You may be sure that I will not worry! I have enough problems of my own. And then… ! I am happy providing you cause no harm to the Master. Because, in that case, I would mind also your business… »

« You can do that when I do anything wrong. But that will never happen, because I know how to behave… I am not ignorant… »

« Instead I am, I know. And because I am I do not stock any ballast, to flaunt it later, at the right moment. But I implore God and God will help me for the sake of His Messiah, of Whom I am the least and most faithful servant. »

« We are all faithful » replies Judas haughtily.

« Oh! You are bad! Why do you offend my father? He is old and he is good. You must not do that. You are bad and you frighten me » says Jabez with stern countenance, after being silent and listening carefully.

« And that makes two! » whispers James of Zebedee in a low voice, touching Andrew with his elbow.

Although he has spoken in a low voice, the Iscariot hears him.

« You can see, Master, whether the words of the silly boy of Magdala have left a trace » says Judas raging with anger.

« Would it not be more pleasant to continue listening to the lesson of the Master, instead of behaving like angry kids? » asks peaceful Thomas.

« Of course, Master. Tell us more about Your Mother. Her childhood is so bright! The very reflection of that brilliance makes our souls pure, and I, a poor sinner, need that light so badly! » exclaims Matthew.

« What shall I tell you? There are so many episodes, one more touching than the other… »

« Did She tell You about them? »

« Yes, some. But Joseph told Me many more, as the most beautiful stories he could tell a child, and also Alphaeus of Sarah, who was a few years older than My Mother, and was Her friend during the short period She was at Nazareth… »

« Oh! Please, tell us… » begs John,

They are all sitting in a circle in the shade of the olive-trees, with Jabez in the centre staring at Jesus as if he were listening to a

heavenly tale.

« I will tell you about the lesson on chastity that My Mother gave Her little friend and many more people a few days before entering the Temple. A girl in Nazareth, a relative of Sarah's, got married on that day and also Joachim and Anne had been invited to the wedding. Little Mary went with them, and with other children She was to spread loose flower petals on the bride's way. They say that She was most beautiful, as a child, and everybody contented for Her after the joyful arrival of the bride, It was not easy to see Mary every day, as She lived mostly at home, where She loved a little grotto more than any other place, and even nowadays She calls it "the grotto of Her nuptials". So when She appeared outside, fair-haired, rosy and kind, She was overwhelmed by caresses. They used to call Her "the Flower of Nazareth" or "the Pearl of Galilee" or also "the Peace of God" in remembrance of a huge rainbow, which suddenly appeared as soon as She was born. She was in fact all that, and much more. She is the Flower of Heaven and of creation, the Pearl of Paradise and the Peace of God… Yes, the Peace of God. I am the Peaceful One because I am the Son of the Father and the Son of Mary: the Infinite Peace and the Sweet Peace. On that day everybody wanted to kiss Her and take Her on their laps. And as She was averse to being kissed and touched, She said with kind gravity: "Please, do not rumple Me". They thought She was talking of Her linen dress, held tight to Her waist, to Her wrists and neck by a blue band, or of Her little wreath of blue flowers, with which Anne had adorned Her head to keep Her light curls in place, and they assured Her that they would not crease Her dress or the wreath. But, sure of Herself, a little three year old woman standing in the middle of a circle of adults, She said seriously: "I am not thinking of what can be mended. I am speaking of My soul. It belongs to God. And it does not wish to be touched but by God". They objected: "But we are kissing You, not Your soul". She replied: "My body is the temple of My soul and the Spirit is its priest. People are not allowed to enter the enclosure of priests. Please, do not enter the enclosure of God". Alphaeus, who was then about eight years old and was very fond of Her, was greatly impressed by that reply and the following day, seeing Her near Her little grotto, he asked Her: "Mary, when You are grown up, would You marry me?". He was still under the excitement of the nuptial feast at which he had been present. And She answered: "I am very fond of you. But I do not see you as a man. I will tell you a secret. I see only the soul of a living being. And I love it so much, with all My heart. But I see only God as the True Living Being' to Whom I will be able to give Myself". That is one of the episodes. »

« "The True Living Being"!!! That is a very deep word! » exclaims

Bartholomew.

And Jesus, humbly and smiling replies: « She was the Mother of Wisdom. »

« Was She?… But was She not three years old? »

« She was. I already lived in Her, as God was in Her, in His most perfect Unity and Trinity, since She was conceived. »

« Excuse me if I, a sinner, dare speak, but did Joachim and Anne know that She was the chosen Virgin? » asks Judas Iscariot.

« No, they did not know. »

« In that case, how could Joachim say that God had saved Her in advance? Does that not refer to Her privilege over sin? »

« Yes, it does. But Joachim spoke inspired by God, like all the prophets. He himself did not understand the sublime supernatural truth that the Spirit spoke through his lips. Because Joachim was just. So just as to deserve that paternity. And he was humble. There is no justice where there is pride. He was just and humble. He comforted his Daughter out of fatherly love. He taught Her through his wisdom of a priest, as he was such as a guardian of the Ark of God. As a Pontiff he consecrated Her with the sweetest title: "The Immaculate One". And the day will come when another grey haired Pontiff will say to the world: "She is the Immaculate Conception" and will give this truth to the world of believers, as a dogma which cannot be refuted, so that the Most Beautiful Virgin of God, crowned with stars, clad with the rays of the moon, which are not so pure as She is, brighter than all stars, the Queen of Creation and of God, may shine, fully revealed, in the world which in those days will be sinking deeper and deeper in the grey fog of heresies and vices. Because God-King has as His Queen, in His Kingdom, Mary. »

« So Joachim was a prophet? »

« He was a just man. His soul repeated like an echo what God said to his soul which was loved by God. »

« When are we going to this Mother, my Lord? » asks Jabez with eager eyes.

« This evening. What will you say to Her when you see Her? »

« "I greet You, Mother of the Saviour". Is that all right? »

« Very good » confirms Jesus caressing him.

« But are we going to the Temple today? » asks Philip.

« We shall go there before leaving for Bethany. And you will stay here and be a good boy. Will you not? »

« Yes, my Lord. »

The wife of Jonah, the caretaker of the olive-grove, who has come near very quietly says: « Why don't you take him. The boy is anxious to come… »

Jesus stares at her without saying anything.

The woman understands and says: « I see! I should still have a little

mantle of Mark. I will look for it » and she runs away.

Jabez pulls John's sleeve: « Will the teachers be severe? »

« Oh! no. Don't be afraid. In any case it is not today. In a few days' time, with His Mother, you will be more learned than a doctor » John comforts him.

The others hear and smile at Jabez' concern.

« But who will present him as if he were his father? » asks Matthew.

« Of course I will! Unless… the Master wishes to present him » says Peter.

« No, Simon. I will not present him. I leave that honour to you. »

« Thank You, Master. But… You will be there, too? »

« Certainly. We shall all be there. He is "our" boy… »

Mary of Jonah comes back with a dark violet mantle, which is still good. But what a shade! She says so herself: « Mark never wanted to wear it because he did not like the shade. »

No wonder! It is vile! And poor Jabez with his olive complexion looks ghastly in the violent violet shade. But he cannot see himself… and he is therefore happy to have the mantle in which he can drape himself like an adult.

« The meal is ready, Master. The woman has taken the lamb off the spit just now. »

« Let us go, then. »

And going down from the place where they were, they go into the large kitchen for their meal.

197. In the Temple at the Hour of the Offering.

22nd June 1945.

Peter is really stately while entering the enclosure of the Temple, acting as the father of Jabez, whom he is holding by the hand. He is walking so erect, that he looks even taller than he really is.

All the others are behind him, in a group. Jesus is last and is engaged in close conversation with John of Endor, who seems to be ashamed to enter the Temple.

Peter asks his protege: « Have you ever been here before? » and the boy replies: « When I was born, father. But I do not remember » which makes Peter laugh heartily. Also the others, when they are told by Peter, laugh and say gently and wittily: « Perhaps you were sleeping and so… » or « We are all like you. We do not remember when we came here when we were born. »

Also Jesus asks John of Endor the same question and gets a similar reply. In fact John says to Him: « We were proselytes and my mother carried me here in her arms, just at Passover, because I was born early in Adar and my mother, who came from Judaea, set out as soon as she was able to, to offer her son to the Lord in good

time. Perhaps too early, because she was taken ill and never recovered. I was under two years of age when I lost my mother. The first misfortune in my life. I was her first-born, I became her only child because of her disease, and she was very proud to die having complied with the Law. My father used to say to me: "She died a happy death because she had offered you to the Temple"… Poor mother! What did you offer? A future murderer… »

« John, do not say that. You were Felix then, now you are John. Bear in mind the great grace that God granted you, always remember that. Forget your past debasement… Did you not come back to the Temple again? »

« Oh! Yes. When I was twelve years old and always after that, as long as… I was able to… Later, when I could have come, I did not, because I told You that I worshipped only one thing: Hatred… And that is why I dare not proceed further here. I feel a stranger in the House of the Father… I have abandoned it for too long… »

« You are coming back to it led by the hand by Me Who am the Son of the Father. If I am taking you up to the altar, it means that I know that everything has been forgiven. »

John of Endor sobs deeply and says: « Thank You, my God. »

« Yes, thank the Most High. Can you not see that your mother, a true Israelite, had a prophetic spirit? You are the son sacred to the Lord and never ransomed. You are Mine, you belong to God, you are a disciple and thus a future priest of your Lord in the new era and in the new religion, which will be called after Me. I absolve you of everything, John. Proceed confidently towards the Holy. I solemnly tell you that among those who live in this enclosure there are many more guilty and less worthy than you to go near the altar… »

Peter in the meantime is busy showing the boy the most noteworthy things in the Temple, but he asks the more learned ones, particularly Bartholomew and Simon, to help him, because in the fulfilment of his duty as a father he feels more at ease with the elder ones.

They are near the treasury to make their offering when Joseph of Arimathea calls them. « You are here? When did you arrive? » he asks after greeting them.

« Yesterday evening. »

« And the Master? »

« He is over there, with a new disciple. He is coming. »

Joseph looks at the boy and asks Peter: « One of your grandsons? »

« No… yes… well: nothing by blood, a great deal by faith, everything by love. »

« I do not understand… »

« He is a little orphan… so nothing by blood. A disciple, therefore

a great deal by faith. A son… so everything by love. The Master took him… and I caress him. He is becoming of age in the next few days… »

« Already twelve years old? And so small? »

« Eh!… The Master will tell you… Joseph, you are good… one of the few good people in here… Tell me… would you help me in this matter? You know… I am presenting him as if he were my son. But I am a Galilean and I am a nasty leper… »

« A leper?! » exclaims Joseph inquisitively moving away in fright.

« Don't be afraid! I am a leper because I belong to Jesus! The most loathsome form of leprosy for those of the Temple, with a few exceptions. »

« No! Don't say that! »

« It's the truth and we must admit it… So I am afraid they will be cruel to the boy because of me and because of Jesus. In any case I do not know how much he knows of the Law, of the Halascia, the Haggadha and of the Midrasciots. Jesus says that he knows quite a lot… »

« Well, if Jesus says so! Don't be afraid! »

« Only to cause me trouble they would… »

« You are very fond of this little fellow! Do you keep him with you all the time? »

« I cannot!… I am always about… The boy is too young and delicate… »

« But I would willingly come with you… » says Jabez who has been reassured by Joseph's caresses.

Peter is bright with joy… But he says: « The Master says that we must not do that and we will not do it… But we shall meet now and again just the same… Joseph… will you help me? »

« Of course, I will! I will come with you. They will not do him an injustice in front of me. When? Oh! Master! Give me Your blessing! »

« Peace to you, Joseph. I am happy to see you and I am glad that you are in good health. »

« I am happy, too, Master, and also Your friends will be pleased to see You. Are You staying at Gethsemane? »

« I was there, but after the prayer I am going to Bethany. »

« To Lazarus'? »

« No, to Simon's. My Mother, the mother of My brothers and the mother of John and James are also there. Will you come and see Me? »

« Are You asking me? I will come with great joy and it is a great honour, for which I thank You. I will come with some friends… »

« Be careful, Joseph, with friends!… » suggests Simon Zealot.

« Oh! You already know them. Prudence teaches: "Do not let the air know". But when you see them you will understand that they are friends. »

« Well… »

« Master, Simon of Jonah was telling me about the ceremony for the little one. You arrived when I was asking when you intend having it. I want to be there, too. »

« On the Wednesday before Passover. I want him to keep Passover as a son of the Law. »

« Very good. That is settled. I will come and join you at Bethany. But I will come with my friends on Monday. »

« Agreed. »

« Master, I must leave You. Peace be with You. It is the hour of incense. »

« Goodbye, Joseph. Peace be with you. Come, Jabez. This is the most solemn hour of the day. There is another one in the morning. It is right that man should bless the Lord to be blessed during the day, in all his deeds. But in the evening it is more solemn. Light fades, work ends, night falls. The fading light reminds us of the fall into sin and in fact sinful deeds are generally accomplished during the night. Why? Because man, no longer engrossed in his work, can be more easily entrapped by the Evil One who avails himself of his allurements and nightmares. It is therefore right, after thanking God for protecting us during the day, that we should implore Him to deliver us from night phantasms and temptations. Night, sleep… the symbols of death. Blessed be those who after living with the blessing of the Lord go to sleep in a bright dawn and not in darkness. The priest who offers incense, does so on behalf of us all. He prays for all the people, in communion with God, and God entrusts him with the blessing for the whole people of His children. See how great the ministry of a priest is? »

« I would like… I would feel as if I were closer to my mummy… »

« If you are always a good disciple and a good son to Peter, you will become one. Come now. The trumpets are announcing that the time has come. Let us go and praise Yahweh with veneration. »

198. Jesus Meets His Mother at Bethany.

23rd June 1945.

Jesus is walking fast with His disciples towards Lazarus' town, along a shady road which links the Mount of Olives to Bethany. One could say that the green ramifications of the mountain stretch as far as the countryside of Bethany. Jesus is recognised even before entering the town and voluntary messengers run in all directions to inform people of His arrival. Thus Lazarus and Maximinus arrive running from one side, Isaac with Timoneus and Joseph from another, and the third group to arrive is Martha with Marcella, who lifts her veil to bend down and kiss Jesus' tunic. Immediately after Mary of Alphaeus and Mary Salome reach the

spot, they greet the Master and then embrace their sons. Little Jabez, still held by the hand by Jesus, is tossed about by so much rushing and watches everything dumbfounded. John of Endor, feeling like a stranger, withdraws to the end of the group and stands aside. Suddenly, in the lane leading to Simon's house, Jesus' Mother comes forward.

Jesus drops Jabez' hand and gently pushes His friends to one side, to hasten towards Her. The well known words resound in the air, like a solo of love above the whispering of the crowd: « Son! »; « Mother! » They kiss each other and in Mary's kiss there is the anguish of a mother who has been afraid for a long time and now that the terror, which had seized her, is dissolving, she feels the tiredness of the effort she made, and evaluates the risks He has run…

Jesus, Who understands, caresses Her saying: « Beside My angel I had Yours, Mother, watching over Me. No harm could have befallen Me. »

« May the Lord be praised for that. But I suffered so much! »

« I wanted to come sooner, but in order to obey You, I had to come a different way. But it was a good thing, because Your order, Mother, bore good fruit, as usual. »

« It was Your obedience, Son! »

« It was Your wise order, Mother… » They smile at each other like two lovers.

Is it possible that this Woman is the Mother of this Man? Where are the sixteen years of difference in age? The freshness and grace of Mary's face and of Her virginal body make Her a sister of Her Son Who is in the fullness of a handsome manliness.

« Are You not asking Me why it bore good fruit? » asks Jesus smiling all the time.

« I know that My Jesus conceals nothing from Me. »

« My dear Mother! » He kisses Her again…

People have kept away a few yards pretending not to be watching the scene. But I wager that there is not one of all the eyes that seem to be looking elsewhere that does not cast sidelong glances at the loving scene.

The one who is most keen in watching is Jabez, whom Jesus left when He ran to embrace His Mother, and who has been left all alone, because owing to the quick succession of questions and answers, everybody's attention was diverted from the poor boy… He looks, then bends his head, endeavours to restrain his tears… but he cannot and bursts out weeping, moaning: « Mummy! Mummy! »

Everybody turns round, Jesus and Mary are the first, and everybody endeavours to help or find out who the boy is. Mary of Alphaeus rushes towards him with Peter - they were together -

and they both ask: « Why are you crying »

But before Jabez can catch his breath and speak while shedding so many tears, Mary has run towards him and taken him in Her arms saying: « Yes, my little child, your Mother! Do not cry any more… and excuse Me if I did not see you before. My friends, here is My little son… » It is obvious that Jesus, in the few seconds while approaching the boy, must have said to Her: « He is a little orphan I brought with Me. » Mary realised the rest.

The boy is still weeping, but not so disconsolately, and as Mary is holding him in Her arms and kissing him, he ends up by smiling while his face is still wet with tears.

« Let me dry those tears of yours. You must not cry any more! Give Me a kiss… »

Jabez was expecting nothing but that and after being caressed by bearded men, he is overjoyed in kissing Mary's smooth cheek.

Jesus has been looking for John of Endor and when He sees him, He goes to get him in his remote comer. And while all the apostles are greeting Mary, Jesus comes towards Her, holding John of Endor by the hand and He says: « This is the other disciple, Mother. Your command gained these two sons for You. »

« It was Your obedience, Son » repeats Mary and She greets the man saying: « Peace to you. »

The man, the coarse restless man of Endor, who has changed so much since that morning when Judas' whim took Jesus to Endor, completely divests himself of his past while bowing to Mary. I think it is so, because his face, after bowing, looks really serene and truly « at peace ».

They all set out towards Simon's house: Mary with Jabez in Her arms, Jesus holding John of Endor by the hand, and then, around them and behind them, Lazarus and Martha, the apostles with Maximinus, Isaac, Joseph, and Timoneus.

They enter the house on the threshold of which Simon's old servant greets Jesus and his master with deep respect.

« Peace to you, Joseph, and to this house » says Jesus, lifting His hand to bless after laying it on the old servant's white head.

Lazarus and Martha, after their first expression of joy, are somewhat sad and Jesus asks them: « Why, My friends? »

« Because You are not staying with us and because everybody comes to You except the soul that we would like to be Yours. »

« Fortify your patience, your hope and your prayers. After all, I am with you. This house!… This house is but the nest from which the Son of man will fly every day to His dear friends, so close in space, but if we consider the situation in a supernatural way, infinitely closer in love. You are in My heart and I am in yours. Can we be closer than that? But we will be together this evening. Please sit at My table. »

« Oh! Poor me! And I am idling about! Come, Salome, there is a lot to be done! » The exclamation of Mary of Alphaeus makes everybody laugh while Jesus' good relative gets up immediately to her work.

Martha joins her: « Don't worry about the food, Mary. I will go and give the necessary instructions. Just lay the table. I will send you enough chairs and what is necessary. Come, Marcella. I will be back at once, Master. »

« I saw Joseph of Arimathea, Lazarus. He is coming here on Monday with some friends. »

« Oh! Well, You are my guest on that day! »

« Yes. He is coming to spend the day with us, but also to arrange a ceremony concerning Jabez. John: take the boy up to the terrace. He will enjoy himself there. »

John of Zebedee, who is always obedient, gets up at once and shortly afterwards the boy can be heard chattering and running about on the terrace that surrounds the house.

« The child » Jesus explains to His Mother, His friends, the women among whom there is also Martha, who has rushed back so that she would not miss one moment of joy near the Master, « is the grandson of one of Doras' peasants. I passed through Esdraelon… »

« Is it true that the fields are a complete ruin and that he wants to sell them? »

« They are a ruin. Whether he wants to sell them, I do not know. One of Johanan's men mentioned it to me. But I do not know whether it is certain. »

« If he should sell them… I would willingly buy them to have a refuge for You also in the middle of that nest of snakes. »

« I do not think that you will be successful. Johanan is ready to buy them. »

« We shall see… But go on. Who are the peasants? He scattered all the former servants. »

« Yes, he did. The present ones come from his land in Judaea, at least the old man, the boy's relative, does. The boy was kept in a wood, like a wild animal, so that Doras could not see him… and he had been there since last winter… »

« Oh! poor boy! But why? » The women are all moved.

« Because his father and mother were buried under the landslide near Emmaus. The whole family: father, mother and his little brothers. He survived because he was not at home. They took him to the old father. But what could a peasant of Doras do? Isaac, also in this case, you spoke of Me as a saviour. »

« Was that wrong? » asks Isaac humbly.

« You did the right thing. God wanted it. The old man gave me the boy, who is to become of age in the next few days. »

« Oh! poor little thing! So tiny at twelve years of age?! My Judas

was twice his size at that age… And Jesus? What a beautiful flower! » says Mary of Alphaeus.

And Salome: « Also my children were much stronger! »

Martha whispers: « He is really tiny! I thought he was not ten yet. »

« Eh! Hunger is a nasty thing. And he must have suffered from starvation since he was born. And now… What could the old man give him, if they are all dying of starvation there? » says Peter.

« Yes, he suffered a great deal. But he is good and intelligent. I took him to comfort both the old man and the boy. »

« Are you going to adopt him? » asks Lazarus.

« No. I cannot. »

« Well, I will take him. »

Peter sees his hopes vanish and he utters a really deep groan: « Lord! Everything to him? »

Jesus smiles: « Lazarus, you have already done so much and I am grateful to you. But I cannot entrust this child to you. He is "our" boy. He belongs to all of us. He is the joy of the apostles and of the Master. Besides, he would be brought up in luxury here. I want to make him a present of My royal mantle: "honest poverty". The poverty that the Son of man wanted for Himself, to be able to go near the greatest miseries without mortifying anybody. You have had a gift from Me also recently… »

« Ah! Yes! The old patriarch and his daughter. The woman is very active, the old man very good. »

« Where are they now? I mean: in which place? »

« They are here, in Bethany. Do You think I was going to send away the blessing You had sent me? The woman weaves linen. Light skilful hands are required for that job. Since the old man insists in working, I put him at the beehives. Yesterday he had a long golden beard, didn't he, sister? The bees swarmed and clung to his long beard and he was speaking to them as if they were his daughters. He is happy. »

« I am sure he is! May you be blessed! » says Jesus.

« Thank You, Master. But that boy will cost You a lot. You will allow me at least to… »

« I will see to his clothes for the ceremony » shouts Peter. They all laugh at his impulsive reaction.

« All right. But he will need other clothes. Simon, be good. I have no children either. Allow Martha and me to find some solace seeing to some little garments to be made for him. »

Peter, who has been thus besought, is moved at once and he says: « His clothes… yes… But his dress for Wednesday… I am going to get it. The Master promised me and He told me that I would be going with His Mother to buy it tomorrow. » Peter explains everything in detail lest there should be some unexpected change

to his disadvantage.

Jesus smiles and says: « Yes, Mother. Please go with Simon tomorrow. Otherwise he will die of heart-failure. You will give him some advice as to what he should choose. »

« I said: a red dress and a green sash. He will look lovely. Much better than the shade he has on now. »

« Red will be all right. Also Jesus was dressed in red. But I would say that a red sash would be better on a red dress, or at least it should be embroidered in red » says Mary gently.

« I was saying green because I see that Judas, who is swarthy, looks very smart with those green stripes on his red tunic. »

« But these are not green, my friend! » laughs Judas.

« No? What shade are they then? »

« This hue is called "agate vein". »

« How do you expect me to know that?! They look green to me. I saw that hue also on leaves… »

The Most Holy Virgin interrupts benignly: « Simon is right. It is the exact shade of leaves at the first rain in the month of Tisri… »

« That's it! And since leaves are green I was saying that it was green » concludes Peter happily. The Sweet Mother has settled also this small matter peacefully.

« Will you call the boy, please? » begs Mary. And the child arrives at once with John.

« What is your name? » asks Mary caressing him.

« It is… it was Jabez. But I am expecting a new one… »

« Are you? »

« Yes, Jabez wants a name meaning that I have saved him. You will find one for him, Mother. A name of love and of salvation. »

Mary is pensive… She then says: « Marjiam (Maarhgziam). You -ire the little star in the sea of those saved by Jesus. Do you like it? Thus it will remind you also of Me besides of Salvation. »

« It is beautiful » says the boy joyfully.

« But isn't it a woman's name? » asks Bartholomew.

« With "l" at the end instead of "m", when this tiny drop of Mankind is grown up, you can change his name into the name of a man. For the time being he has the name which his Mother has given him. Is that right? »

The boy says « yes » and Mary caresses him.

Her sister-in-law says to Her: « This wool is good » and she feels Jabez' mantle. « But its shade! What do You think? I would dye it very dark red. It will come out lovely. »

« We will do it tomorrow evening. Because he will have his new mantle. We cannot take it off him now. »

Martha says: « Would you come with me, my little boy? I will take you to a place near here, to see many things, then we will come back here… »

Jabez does not object. He never refuses… but he seems somewhat afraid to go with the woman who is almost unknown to him. He says shyly and gently: « Could John come with me? »

« Of course… »

They go away. And during their absence the various groups continue their conversations. They narrate, comment and sigh on human harshness. Isaac tells what he has been able to find out about the Baptist. Some say he is at Machaerus, some at Tiberias. His disciples have not yet come back…

« But did they not follow him? »

« Yes. But near Doco those who had captured him crossed the river with their prisoner and no one knows whether they went up to the lake or down to Machaerus. John, Matthias and Simeon are moving around to find out and they will certainly not abandon him. »

« And you, Isaac, will certainly not abandon this new disciple. He will stay with Me for the time being. I want him to celebrate Passover with Me. »

« I will celebrate it in Jerusalem, in Johanna's house. She saw me and offered a room for me and my companions. They are all coming this year. And we shall be there with Jonathan. »

« Also those from Lebanon? »

« Yes. Perhaps John's disciples will not be able to come. »

« Johanan's men are coming, did you know? »

« Are they? I will be at the door, near the priests offering sacrifices. I will see them and take them with me. »

« They will be arriving at the last moment. Their time is very limited. But they have a lamb. »

« I have one, too. A marvellous one. Lazarus gave me it. We will sacrifice this one and they can keep theirs for their journey back home. »

Martha comes back with John and the boy who is wearing a little white linen dress and a red overall. On his arm he is carrying a mantle which is also red.

« Do you remember them, Lazarus? See, things are always useful. »

They smile at each other.

Jesus says: « Thank you, Martha. »

« Oh! My Lord! I have a mania for keeping things. I inherited it from my mother. I still have many of my brother's robes. They are dear to me because they were handled by my mother. Now and again I take one to give it to a child. I will now give them to Marjiam. They are a little long for him, but they can be shortened. When Lazarus became of age, he did not want them any more… The typical passing fancy of a child… and he got his own way because my mother adored her Lazarus. »

She caresses her brother fondly and Lazarus takes her beautiful hand, kisses it and says: « And do you not? » They smile at each other.

« That is a gift of Providence » remark many.

« Yes, my whim has done a good turn. Perhaps I shall be forgiven because of that. »

Dinner is ready and everyone sits at his place…

… It is late in the night when Jesus can speak to His Mother in peace. They have gone up to the terrace, and sitting one beside the other, hand in hand, they speak and listen to each other. Jesus is the first to give an account of the things that happened. Then Mary says: « Son, after Your departure, immediately after, a woman came to Me… She was looking for You. A great misery. And a great redemption. But the poor creature needs to be forgiven by You so that she may persevere in her decision. I entrusted her to Susanna saying that she had been cured by You. That is true. I could have kept her with Me if our house were not like a sea-port, where all the boats come in… and many with evil intentions. And the woman is disgusted with the world by now. Do You want to know who she is? »

« She is a soul. But tell Me her name that I may receive her without any mistake. »

« She is Aglae. The Roman mime and sinner whom You began to save at Hebron, who looked for You and found You at the Clear Water and she has already suffered because of her revived honesty. How much she has suffered!… She told Me everything… How horrible!… »

« Her sin? »

« That… and I would say how much more: how horrible the world is. Oh! My Son! Do not trust the Pharisees in Capernaum! They wanted to use the unhappy creature to harm You. They would have used even her… »

« I know, Mother… Where is Aglae? »

« She will be coming with Susanna before Passover. »

« Very well. I will speak to her. I will be here every evening and with the exception of Passover evening, which I am reserving for the family, I will wait for her. All You need do is tell her to wait, if she comes. It is a great redemption, as You said. And such a spontaneous one! I solemnly tell You that in few hearts My seed took root with the same strength as it did in this unhappy soil. And later Andrew helped it to grow until it was fully formed. »

« She told Me. »

« Mother, what did You feel when that ruin approached You? »

« Disgust and joy. I seemed to be on the brink of a hellish abyss, and at the same time I felt as if I were being carried into the blue sky. You are God indeed, My Son, when You work such miracles! »

They remain silent, under the very bright stars and the pale light of the first quarter of the moon, which is tending to become full. Silent, loving each other and resting in each other's love.

199. Jesus Goes to the Lepers of Siloam and Ben Hinnom. The Power of Mary's Word.

24th June 1945.

The beautiful morning invites people to leave their homes and beds and go for a walk and the people living in the Zealot's house get up very early and like bees at sunrise, they go out to breathe the pure air in Lazarus' orchard round the hospitable house. They are soon joined by Lazarus' guests, that is, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, Andrew and James of Zebedee. The sun shines in joyfully through all the windows and wide open doors and illuminates the simple tidy rooms with a golden hue, which brightens the shades of clothes and enlivens the hues of hair and eyes.

Mary of Alphaeus and Salome are busy serving the men who enjoy a hearty appetite. Mary instead is watching one of Lazarus' servants who is sorting Marjiam's hair, cutting it with greater skill than his first barber ever did. « That will do for the time being » says the servant. « Later, when you have offered God the curls of your childhood, I will cut it shorter. The warm season is coming and you will feel better without any hair on your neck. And your hair will grow stronger. It is dry, weak and has been neglected. See, Mary? It needs some attention. I will now put some oil on it to keep it in place. Can you smell the lovely scent, my boy? It is oil which Martha uses. It is very good. Almond, palm and medulla of the finest quality with a rare essence. My mistress told me to keep this little jar for the boy. Oh! Here you are! You now look like the son of a king » and the servant, who is probably the barber of Lazarus' house, pats Marjiam on the cheek, greets Mary and goes away looking quite satisfied.

« Come and let Me dress you » says Mary to the boy who has on only a short tunic with short sleeves; I think it is a shirt or what was used in those days as a shirt. By its fine linen I gather that it must have belonged to Lazarus when a boy. Mary takes off the towel in which Marjiam was enveloped and puts on him a linen vest puckered round the neck and cuffs, and a red woollen robe with wide neck and sleeves. The shining snow-white linen protrudes from the neck-opening and the sleeves of the red dull cloth. Mary's skilful hands must have adjusted the length of the robe and of the sleeves during the night, and it now fits the boy, particularly when Mary girds his waist with a soft sash adorned with a woollen white and red tassel. The child no longer looks like the poor little creature of a few days earlier.

« Now go and play, but do not get dirty, while I get ready » says Mary, caressing him. And the boy bounds out happily, looking for his big friends.

Thomas is the first one to see him: « How lovely you are! Fit for a wedding! You make me cut a poor figure » says plump Thomas who is always merry and genial. And he takes him by the hand saying: « Let us go and see the women. They were looking for you to feed you. »

They go into the kitchen and Thomas causes the two Maries, who are bent over the kitchen-stove, to start, when he shouts in his loud voice: « There is a young man here looking for you » and laughing he introduces the boy who was hiding behind his robust back.

« Oh! dear! Come here that I may give you a kiss! Look, Salome, how lovely he is! » exclaims Mary of Alphaeus.

« He is, indeed! All he needs now is to become more robust. But I'll see to that. Come here, that I may kiss you, too » replies Salome.

« But Jesus is going to entrust him to the shepherds… » objects Thomas.

« Not on your life! My Jesus is mistaken here. What can you men do or pretend you can do? You are only good at quarrelling because, incidentally, you are rather quarrelsome… like little goats which are fond of one another and gore one another with their horns - at eating, speaking and you have a thousand needs and you claim the Master to pay all His attention to you… otherwise you become sulky… Children need mothers. Is that right? What is your name? »

« Marjiam. »

« Of course! But blessed be my Mary! She could have given you an easier name! »

« It's almost like Hers! » exclaims Salome.

« Yes, but Hers is more simple. There aren't those letters in the centre of it… They are too many… »

The Iscariot, who has just come in, says: « She gave a name which is precise in its meaning, according to the genuine old language. »

« All right. But it is difficult, and I will take one letter away and say Marziam. It is easier and the world will not collapse because of that. Is that right, Simon? »

Peter, who is passing by the window speaking to John of Endor, looks in and asks: « What do you want? »

« I was saying that I shall call the boy Marziam. It is easier. »

« You are right, woman. If the Mother allows me, I will call him thus, too. But how wonderful you look! So do I, eh? Look! »

In fact he is perfectly tidy, his cheeks have been shaved, his hair cut, his beard trimmed and scented with oil, his clothes show no creases and his sandals are so clean that they look like new ones. I do not know what he has polished them with. The women admire

him and he laughs happily.

The boy has finished eating and goes out to meet his great friend, whom he always calls: « Father ».

And there is Jesus coming from Lazarus' house together with the latter. The boy runs towards Him and Jesus says: « Peace be with us, Marjiam. Let us exchange the kiss of peace. »

Lazarus, greeted by the boy, caresses him and gives him a sweet.

They all gather round Jesus. Also Mary, wearing a turquoise woollen dress on top of which a darker mantle is draped, comes towards Her Son smiling.

« We can go, then » says Jesus. « You, Simon, with My Mother and the boy, if you still wish to buy his robe, now that Lazarus has seen to it. »

« Of course I do! And then… I will be able to say that once I walked beside Your Mother. A great honour. »

« Go, then. Simon, you will take Me to your leper friends… »

« Really, Master? Then, if You do not mind, I will run ahead, to gather them… You will reach me. You know where they are… »

« All right, go. The others can do what they like. You are all free until Wednesday morning. At the third hour everybody is to be at the Golden Gate. »

« I am coming with You, Master » says John.

« Also I » says his brother James.

« And we, too » say the two cousins.

« I will come, too » says Matthew, and Andrew after him.

« And I? I would like to come, too… but if I go to do the shopping, I cannot come… » says Peter, pressed by two desires.

« It can be done. We shall go to the lepers first, while My Mother with the boy goes to the house of a friend in Ophel. We will reach Her later and you will go with Her, while the others and I go to Johanna's. We will meet at Gethsemane for our meal and towards sunset we will come back here. »

« If You allow me, I will go to see some friends… » says Judas Iscariot.

« I have already told you. Do what you like. »

« In that case, I will go to my relatives. Perhaps my father has already come. If he is there, I will bring him to see You » says Thomas.

« What about us two? What do you say, Philip? We could go and see Samuel. »

« Very good » Philip replies to Bartholomew.

« And what about you, John? » Jesus asks the man of Endor. « Do you prefer to remain here and sort out your books, or do you wish to come with Me? »

« Really, I would prefer to come with You… My books… I am already less fond of them. I prefer to read You, the Living Book. »

« Come, then. Goodbye, Lazarus… »

« I will come, too. My legs are a little better, and after we have seen the lepers, I will leave You and go to Gethsemane and wait for You there. »

« Let us go. Peace to you, women. »

They remain all together until they are near Jerusalem. Then they part, the Iscariot goes on his own and enters the town probably through the Gate near the Antonia Tower; Thomas, Philip and Nathanael walk for about ten more yards with Jesus and their companions and then enter the town through the suburb of Ophel, together with Mary and the boy.

« And now, let us go and see those unhappy people! » says Jesus, and turning His back to the town He goes towards a desolate place on the slope of a rocky hill which lies between the two roads from Jericho to Jerusalem. A strange place, similar to a flight of steps after the first slope, up which climbs a path, so that there is a drop of at least three yards from the first terrace to the path, and the same from the second one. It is an arid, dead… extremely sad place.

« Master » shouts Simon the Zealot « I am here. Stop where You are, that I may show You the way… » and the Zealot, who was leaning against a rock to be in the shade, comes forward and leads Jesus up the steps of a path leading towards Gethsemane, but separated from it by the road that from the Mount of Olives goes to Bethany.

« Here we are. I lived among the tombs of Siloam and my friends are here. Some of them. The others are at Ben Hinnom, but cannot come… They would have to cross the road and would be seen. »

« We shall go also to them. »

« Thank You! On their part and mine. »

« Are they many? »

« Winter has killed most of them. But here there are still five of those to whom I had spoken. They are waiting for You. There they are, on the edge of their prison… »

There are probably ten monsters. I say « probably », because if five, who are standing up, are clearly visible, the others, because of the greyish hue of their skin, the deformity of their faces and the fact that they hardly protrude from the stone barrier, cannot be counted accurately and they may be more than five or less. Among those standing up there is only one woman. One can tell only by her white dishevelled hair hanging coarse and dirty over her shoulders down to her waist. There is no other sign by which one could tell her sex, because the disease, which is in an advanced stage, has reduced her to a skeleton, destroying all feminine forms. Likewise among the men, only one still has traces of moustaches and beard. All the others have been depilated by the destructive disease.

They shout: « Jesus, our Saviour, have mercy on us! » and they stretch out their deformed or ulcerated hands. « Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on us! »

« What do you want Me to do for you? » asks Jesus looking towards their misery.

« We want You to save us from sin and from this disease. »

« Your will and repentance will save you from sin… »

« But if You wish, You can cancel our sins. At least those, if You do not want to cure our bodies. »

« If I say to You: "Choose either one or the other", which one would you prefer? »

« God's forgiveness, Lord. To be less desolate. »

Jesus has a gesture of approval. He smiles brightly, raises His arms and shouts: « Let it be granted. I want it. »

Granted! The grace might be granted for their sins, or for their disease, or for both, and the five unhappy people remain uncertain. But the apostles have no uncertainty and they can but shout their hosannas when they see the leprosy disappear as fast as a flake of snow that falls on a fire. The five then understand that the full grace has been granted to them. Their shouting resounds like a cry of victory. They embrace one another and throw kisses at Jesus, as they cannot prostrate themselves at His feet. They then turn to their companions saying: « And you still refuse to believe? What miserable wretches are you? »

« Good! Be good! Your poor brothers need time to think. Say nothing to them. Faith is not imposed, it is preached with peace, kindness, patience and perseverance. That is what you will do after your purification, exactly as Simon did with you. After all, the miracle preaches by itself. You who have been cured, will go to the priest as soon as possible. You, who are still ill, wait for us this evening. We will bring you some food. Peace be with you. »

Jesus descends again on to the road followed by the blessings of everybody.

« And now let us go to Ben Hinnom » says Jesus.

« Master… I would like to come. But I realise that I cannot. I will go to Gethsemane » says Lazarus.

« Go, Lazarus. Peace be with you. »

While Lazarus is slowly walking away, the apostle John says: « Master, I will go with him. He walks with difficulty and the road is not very good. I will join You later at Ben Hinnom. »

« Yes, you may go. Let us go. »

They cross the Kidron, walk along the southern side of Mount Tophet and enter the little valley completely strewn with tombs and filth. There is not one tree or any shade from the sun, which blazes down on this southern side heating the stones of these new hellish terraces where the stinking smell of burning rubbish increases

the heat. And inside the sepulchres, similar to crematoria, there are poor bodies, which are wasting away… Siloam may be unpleasant in winter, damp as it is and facing north, but this place must be dreadful in summer…

Simon Zealot lets out a shout calling them, and first three lepers, then two, then one, and another one come, as best they can, to the prescribed limit. There are two women here, and one of them is holding by the hand a horrible looking boy whose face is particularly affected by leprosy. He is already blind… And there is a noble looking man, notwithstanding his miserable state. He speaks on behalf of everybody: « Blessed be the Messiah of the Lord, Who has come down to our Gehenna, to free from it those who hope in Him. Save us, o Lord, because we are perishing! Save us, Saviour! King of the House of David, King of Israel, have mercy on Your subjects. Oh! Shoot of the stock of Jesse, of Whom it is said that in Your time there will be no evil, stretch out Your hand and pick up the remains of Your people. Cast away this death from us, wipe our tears, because that is what is said of You. Call us, Lord, to Your delicious pastures, to Your fresh waters, for we are thirsty. Lead us to the eternal hills where there is no sin or sorrow. Have mercy, Lord… »

« Who are you? »

« John, one of the Temple. I was probably infected by a leper. As You can see, I caught the disease only recently. But these!… Some of them have been awaiting death for years, and this little girl came here even before she could walk. She does not know what is the creation of God. What she knows or what she remembers of the wonders of God are these tombs, this merciless sun and the stars at night. Have mercy on the guilty and the innocent ones, o Lord, our Saviour. » They have all knelt down stretching out their hands.

Jesus weeps at so much misery. He then opens His arms shouting: « Father, I want it: health, life, sight and salvation for them. » He remains with His arms stretched out praying intensely with all His spirit. He seems to become thinner and to rise in prayer, a flame of love, white and powerful in the powerful gold of the sun.

« Mummy, I can see! » is the first cry, which is answered by the shout of the mother who clasps her cured little girl to her heart; then the shouts of the others and of the apostles… The miracle has been worked.

« John, as you are a priest, you will lead your companions in the rite. Peace be with you. Towards evening we shall bring some food also to you. » He blesses and is about to go away.

But John, the leper, shouts: « I want to follow Your steps. Tell me what I must do, where I must go to preach You! »

« In this desolate barren land, which must turn to the Lord. Let

the town of Jerusalem be your field. Goodbye. »

« And now let us go to My Mother » He says to the apostles.

« But where is She? » ask many of them.

« In a house known to John. In the house of the girl who was cured last year. »

They enter the town, covering a good deal of the thickly populated suburb of Ophel until they reach a little white house.

With His usual kind salutation He enters the house, the door of which is half open and one can hear the sweet voice of Mary, the silvery voice of Annaleah and the thick voice of her mother. The girl prostrates herself adoring and her mother kneels down. Mary stands up.

They would like to keep the Master with His Mother. But Jesus promises to go back some other day, He blesses them and says goodbye. Peter goes away with Mary and is very happy. They are both holding the boy by his hands and they look like a happy family. Many people turn round to look at them. Jesus watches them go away smiling.

« Simon is happy! » exclaims the Zealot.

« Why are You smiling, Master? » asks James of Zebedee.

« Because I see a great promise in that group. »

« Which promise, Brother? What do You see? » asks Thaddeus.

« This is what I see: that I shall be able to go away with a peaceful mind, when the time comes. I need not be afraid for My Church. Then it will be small and slender like Marjiam. But My Mother will be there to hold it by the hand and to be its Mother; and there will be Peter as its father. In his honest rough hands I can place the hand of My dawning Church without any worry. He will give it the strength of his protection. My Mother the strength of Her love. And the Church will grow… like Marjiam… He is really the symbol-child! May God bless My Mother, My Peter and their child and ours! Now let us go to Johanna's. »

… And once again, in the evening, we are in the little house in Bethany. Many have already withdrawn, because they were tired. Peter is walking up and down the path, often looking up to the terrace where Jesus and Mary are sitting talking. John of Endor, instead, is speaking to the Zealot sitting under a pomegranate-tree in full blossom.

Mary has already spoken a great deal because I can hear Jesus say: « Everything You told Me is just and I will bear in mind its justice. And I say that also Your advice concerning Annaleah is right. It is a good sign that the man has accepted it so readily. It is true that the people high up in Jerusalem are dull-minded and envious, I could also say that they are filthy. But in the humble people there are pearls of unknown value. I am glad that Annaleah is happy. She belongs more to Heaven than to the earth, and perhaps

the man, who has now understood the concept of the spirit, realises that and he respects her almost religiously. His intention to go elsewhere, so that no human sentiment may upset the pure vow of his girl, proves it. »

« Yes, My Son. Man perceives the perfume of virgins… I remember Joseph. I did not know which words to use. He was not aware of My secret… And yet he helped Me to disclose it with the intuition of a saint. He had perceived the scent of My soul… Also John, see? … How peaceful he is! And everybody seeks him. Even Judas of Kerioth, although… No, Son. Judas has not changed. I know and You know. We do not speak because we do not want to start war. But even if we do not speak, we know… and even if we do not speak, the others realise… Oh! My Jesus! The younger apostles told Me today, at Gethsemane, the episode at Magdala and the other one of Sabbath morning… Innocent children speak… because they see through the eyes of their angels. But also old people have an idea… They are not wrong. He is an elusive being… Everything is elusive in him… and I am afraid of him and I have on My lips the same words of Benjamin at Magdala and of Marjiam at Gethsemane, because I feel the same disgust for Judas as children do. »

« Not everybody can be John!… »

« I do not pretend that! In that case, it would be paradise on the earth. But, see, You told Me about the other John… A man who killed… but I feel only sorry for him. Judas frightens Me. »

« Love him, Mother! Love him, for My sake! »

« Yes, Son, I will. But not even My love will serve. It will only make Me suffer and make him guilty. Oh! Why did he come to You? He upsets everybody, he offends Peter who deserves all respect. »

« Yes. Peter is very good. I would do anything for him, because he deserves it. »

« If he heard You, he would say with his good frank smile: "Ah! My Lord, that is not true!" And he would be right. »

« Why, Mother? » But Jesus smiles, because He has already understood.

« Because You are not satisfying him by giving him a son. He told Me all his hopes, his desires… and Your refusals. »

« And did he not tell You the reasons justifying them? »

« Yes, he did and he added: "It is true… but I am a man, a poor man. Jesus persists in seeing a great man in me. But I know that I am a poor fellow, and so… he could give me a child. I got married to have them… and I will die without any". And he said - pointing at the boy who, delighted because of the lovely dress bought by Peter, had kissed him, saying: "Beloved father" - he said: "See, when this little creature, whom only ten days ago I did not know, says that to me, I feel that I become softer than butter and sweeter

than honey and I weep, because… every day that goes by, takes this child away from me". »

Mary becomes silent, watching Jesus, studying His face, waiting for a word… But Jesus has placed His elbow on His knee, resting His head in His hand and is silent, looking at the green expanse of the orchard.

Mary takes His hand and caressing it She says: « Simon has this great desire… When I went with him, he did nothing but speak to Me about it, and his reasons are so good that… I could say nothing to keep him quiet. They are the same reasons that all women and mothers think of. The boy is not strong. If he were as strong as You were… oh! he could have faced the life of a disciple without any fear. But he is so thin!… He is very intelligent, very good… but nothing more. When a little dove is so delicate, you cannot throw it in the air to let it fly very early, as you do with strong ones. The shepherds are good… but they are still men. Children need women. Why do You not leave him with Simon? While You refuse him a son of his own, born of him, I understand the reason. A son is like an anchor. And Simon, who is destined to such a great task, cannot be hindered by anchors. But You must agree that he is to be the "father" of all the sons You will be leaving him. How can he be a father if he has had no training with a child? A father must be sweet. Simon is good, but not sweet. He is impulsive and intolerant. Only a little creature can teach him the fine art of being indulgent to whoever is weak… Consider Simon's destiny… He is Your successor after all! Oh! I must say that cruel word! But for all the sorrow it causes Me saying it, listen to Me. I would never advise You anything unless it were good. Marjiam… You want to make a perfect disciple of him… But he is only a boy. You… You will be going before he is a man. To whom then can You give him, to complete his formation, better than Simon? Finally, poor Simon, You know how much trouble he has had, with his mother in-law, also because of You. And yet he has not picked up a tiny part of his past, of his freedom of a year ago, to be left in peace by his mother-in-law, whom not even You have been able to change. And his poor wife? She is longing so much to love and be loved. Her mother… oh! Her husband? A dear domineering man… No affection is ever given to her without exacting too much… Poor woman!… Leave her the boy. Listen, Son. For the time being we will take him with us. I will come to Judaea, too. You will take Me to one of My companions of the Temple, who is almost a relative, because she is of the House of David. She lives at Bethzur. I will be pleased to see her, if she is still alive. Then, when we go back to Galilee, we will give him to Porphirea. When we are near Bethsaida, Peter will take him. When we come here, so far, the boy will stay with her. Ah! You are smiling now! So You are going to

please Your Mother. Thank You, My Jesus. »

« Yes, let it be done, as You wish. » Jesus stands up and calls out loud: « Simon of Jonas: come here. »

Peter starts and rushes down the steps. « What do You want, Master? »

« Come here, you usurper and corrupter! »

« Me? Why? What have I done, Lord? »

« You have corrupted My Mother. That is why you wanted to be alone. What shall I do with you? »

But Jesus smiles and Peter recovers confidence. « Oh! » he says. « You really frightened me! But now You are laughing… What do You want from me, Master? My life? I have but that, because You have taken everything… But if You want, I will give it to You. »

« I do not want to take anything from you. I want to give you something. But do not take advantage of your victory and do not disclose the secret to the others, you most artful fellow who defeats the Master by means of the weapon of His Mother's word. You will have the boy, but… »

Jesus can say no more, because Peter, who had knelt down, bounces to his feet and kisses the Master with such delight that he makes the words die on His lips.

« Thank Her, not Me. But remember that this must be of assistance to you, and not an impediment… »

« My Lord, You will not have to repent of the gift… Oh! Mary! May You be always blessed, You holy and good… » And Peter, who has fallen on his knees again, weeps, kissing Mary's hand…

200. Aglae Meets the Master.

25th June 1945.

Jesus goes back to the Zealot's house alone. It is getting dark and the evening is quiet and serene after so much sunshine. Jesus looks in at the kitchen door, says hallo and then goes upstairs, to meditate in the upper room, which has already been prepared for supper. He does not look very happy. He often sighs and walks to and fro in the large room, looking now and again at the surrounding country, which can be seen through the many doors of this large room, shaped like a cube above the ground floor. He goes out also and walks on the terrace making a tour of the house and He stops at the rear side looking at John of Endor who is kindly drawing water from a well and handing it to busy Salome. He looks, shakes His head and sighs.

The power of His glance draws the attention of John, who looks up and asks: « Master, do You want me? »

« No, I was only looking at you. »

« John is good. He helps me » says Salome.

« And God will reward him also for that help. »

After these words Jesus goes back into the room and sits down. He is so engrossed in thought that He does not notice the noisy chattering of many voices and the shuffling of many feet in the entrance corridor and then two light footsteps climbing the outside staircase and approaching the large room. Only when Mary calls Him He looks up.

« Son, Susanna has arrived in Jerusalem with her family and she brought Aglae here at once. Do You wish to listen to her while we are alone? »

« Yes, Mother. At once. And do not let anyone come up until it is all over. I hope to deal with her before the others come back. But please watch that there is no indiscreet curiosity… in no one… and particularly with regard to Judas of Simon. »

« I will watch carefully… »

Mary goes out and shortly afterwards comes back holding by the hand Aglae, who is no longer enveloped in her large grey mantle with her veil pulled over her face and is not wearing high heeled sandals with complicated buckles and strips, which she wore before. She is now dressed like a Jewess, with low flat very plain sandals, like Mary's, a dark blue dress on which her mantle is draped, and a white veil which she is wearing in the style of common Jewish women, that is, simply covering her head with one edge falling on her shoulders so that her face is only partially veiled. Her plain dress, identical with the one worn by most women and the fact that she was with other Galileans prevented her from being recognised.

She enters with her head lowered, blushing at every step, and I think that she would have knelt down on the threshold, if Mary had not kindly pulled her towards Jesus.

« Here, Son, Is the woman who has been looking for You for such a long time. Listen to her » says Mary when She is near Jesus and then withdraws, pulling the curtains over the wide open doors and closing the one which is near the staircase.

Aglae puts down the little bag she was carrying on her shoulder, then she kneels down at Jesus' feet and bursts into tears. She prostrates herself on the floor, her head resting on her arms crossed on the floor.

« Do not weep thus. This is not the time for tears. You should have wept when you were hateful to God. Not now that you love Him and are loved by Him. »

But Aglae continues to weep…

« Do you not believe that it is so? »

She manages to speak through her sobs: « I love Him, it is true, as best I can… But although I know and believe that God is Bounty I cannot possibly hope to be loved by Him. I have sinned too much…

Perhaps one day I will be loved… But I still have to weep so much… For the time being I am alone in my love. All alone… It is not the desperate solitude of past years. It is a solitude full of longing for God, so it is no longer hopeless… but it is so sad… »

« Aglae, how little you still know the Lord! This longing for Him is the proof that God is replying to your love, that He is your friend, Who calls you, invites you and wants you. God is incapable of remaining insensible to the desire of a creature, because He, the Lord and Creator of all creatures, excited that desire in that heart. He excited it because He loved with privileged love the soul that is now longing for Him. The desire of God always precedes the desire of the creature, because He is Most Perfect and therefore His love is by far more eager and ardent than the love of the creature. »

« But how can God love my filth? »

« Do not endeavour to understand with your intelligence. He is an abyss of mercy, which human intelligence cannot understand. But what the intelligence of man cannot understand, the intelligence of love, the love of the spirit does. It understands and confidently penetrates the mystery, which is God, and the mystery of the relationship of the soul with God. Enter, I tell you. Enter, because God wants it. »

« Oh! My Saviour! So I am really forgiven? I am really loved? Must I believe it? »

« Did I ever lie to you? »

« Oh! no, Lord! Everything You told me at Hebron came true. You saved me because Your Name is salvation. You looked for me, a poor lost soul. You gave me the life of this soul, which I was carrying dead within me. You told me that if I had looked for You I would find You. And it was true. You told me that You are wherever man needs a doctor and medicine. And it is true. Everything, everything You told poor Aglae, from the words on that morning in June, to the other words at the Clear Water… »

« So you must believe also these. »

« Yes, I believe, I do believe! But say to me: "I forgive you"! »

« I forgive you in the name of God and of Jesus. »

« Thank You… But now… What must I do? Tell me, My Saviour, what I must do to have Eternal Life. Man becomes corrupt only by looking at me… I cannot live in perpetual fear of being discovered and entrapped… During this journey I trembled every time a man looked at me… I do not want to sin any more neither do I want to cause others to sin. Tell me the road I must follow. I will follow it whatever it may be. You can see that I am strong also in privations… And even if I should die because of too many privations, I am not afraid. I will call death "my friend", because death will rid me of the dangers of the earth, and for ever. Speak, my Saviour. »

« Go to a desert place. »

« Where, my Lord? »

« Wherever you wish. Where your spirit will lead you. »

« Will my spirit, which is just formed, be capable of so much? »

« Yes, because God is leading you. »

« And who will speak to me of God again? »

« Your risen soul, for the time being… »

« Will I see You again? »

« Never again in this world. But before long I will have redeemed you completely and then I will come to your spirit to prepare you to ascend to God. »

« How will my complete redemption take place if I do not see You again? How will You give it to me? »

« By dying for all sinners. »

« Oh! no! You must not die! »

« To give men the Life I must give Myself to death. That is why I came as a human being. Do not weep… You will soon join Me where I shall be after My sacrifice and yours. »

« My Lord! Will I die for You, too? »

« Yes, but in a different way. Your flesh will die hour by hour and because your will wants that. It has been dying for almost one year. When it is completely dead, I will call you. »

« Will I have the strength to destroy my guilty flesh? »

« In your solitude where Satan will attack you with livid violence the more you become worthy of Heaven, you will find an apostle of Mine, once a sinner and later redeemed. »

« Not the blessed apostle who spoke to me of You? He could not have been a sinner because he is too honest. »

« Not that one. Another one. He will reach you at the right moment. He will tell you what you cannot know just now. Go in peace. The blessing of God be with you. »

Aglae, who has been kneeling all the time, bends to kiss the feet of the Lord. She dares no more. She then picks up her sack and turns it upside down. Some plain dresses, a little tinkling purse and an amphora of fine pink alabaster fall out of it.

Aglae puts the dresses into the sack, picks up the purse and says: « This is for the poor. It is what is left of my jewels. I kept only some coins for my journey… because, even if You had not told me, I intended going to a remote place. And this is for You. It is not so sweet as the perfume of Your holiness. But it is the best the earth can give. And I used it for the worst… Here. May God grant me to smell at least like this, in Your presence, in Heaven » and she removes the precious cap of the amphora and pours its contents on to the floor.

Waves of a strong scent of roses rise from the floor bricks, which become impregnated with the precious essence. Aglae puts away the empty amphora saying: « In remembrance of this hour » and she

bends again to kiss Jesus' feet. She then stands up, withdraws backwards, goes out, closes the door…

I hear her steps receding towards the staircase, her voice exchanging a few words with Mary, then the noise of her sandals going down the steps and then nothing else. There is nothing left of Aglae except the little purse at Jesus' feet and the very strong scent in all the room.

Jesus gets up… he picks up the purse, puts it in His bosom, goes towards an opening looking on to the road and smiles seeing the woman going away, all alone, in her Jewish mantle, towards Bethlehem. He makes a gesture of blessing and goes towards the terrace and calls: « Mother. »

Mary goes upstairs quickly: « You made her happy, My Son. She has gone, with strength and peace. »

« Yes, Mother. When Andrew comes in, send him to Me before anybody else. »

Some time goes by, then I hear the voices of the apostles, who have come back… Andrew goes upstairs: « Master, do You want me? »

« Yes, come here. No one will know, but it is only fair that I should tell you. Andrew, thank you in the name of God and of a soul. »

« Thanks? For what? »

« Can you not smell this perfume? It is a souvenir of the Veiled woman. She came. She is saved. »

Andrew turns as red as a cherry, he falls on his knees, and cannot find words… At last he says: « Now I am happy. Blessed be the Lord! »

« Yes, get up. Do not tell the others that she came. »

« I will be quiet, my Lord. »

« You may go. Listen: has Judas of Simon come yet? »

« Yes, he wanted to come with us, telling us… a lot of lies. Why does he do that, Lord? »

« Because he is a spoiled boy. Tell Me the truth: have you quarrelled? »`

« No. My brother is too happy with his boy to be anxious to quarrel, and the others, You know… are more prudent. It is true, we are all disgusted, in our hearts. But after supper he is going away… Other friends… he says. Oh! and he despises prostitutes!… »

« Be good, Andrew. You must be happy, too, this evening… »

« Yes, Master. I also have a sweet, although invisible, paternity. I am going. »

After some time the apostles come upstairs in a group with the boy and John of Endor. The women follow them with dishes and lamps. The last to come are Lazarus and Simon. As soon as they enter the room, they exclaim: « Ah! it was coming from here!!! » and

they smell the air saturated with the scent of roses, although the doors are wide open.

« But who scented this room thus? Perhaps Martha? » many of them ask.

« My sister has not left the house, today, after our meal » replies Lazarus.

« Who then? An Assyrian Satrap? » asks Peter facetiously.

« The love of a redeemed woman » Jesus says gravely.

« She might have spared this useless exhibition of redemption and given the poor what she spent. There are so many of them, and they know that we always give. I have not even a small coin left » says the Iscariot angrily. « And we have to buy a lamb, rent a room for the Supper and… »

« But I offered you everything… » says Lazarus.

« That is not fair. The rite loses its beauty. The Law says: "You shall take a lamb for you and your household". It does not say: "You shall accept a lamb". »

Bartholomew turns round all of a sudden, he opens his mouth, but closes it at once. Peter turns crimson in the effort to keep quiet. But the Zealot, who is in his own house, feels he can speak and says: « Those are rabbinical quibbles… May I ask you to forget about them and have, instead, respect for my friend Lazarus. »

« Well done, Simon. » Peter will burst if he does not speak. « Very good! I think also that we are forgetting too much that only the Master is entitled to teach… » Peter has to make an heroic effort to say: « we are forgetting » instead of saying: « Judas is forgetting. »

« It is true… but… I am nervous… I am sorry, Master. »

« Yes. And I also will reply to you. Gratitude is a great virtue. I am grateful to Lazarus. As that redeemed woman was grateful to Me. I pour on Lazarus the perfume of My blessing, also on behalf of those, among My apostles, who are not capable of doing so, I, the head of you all. The woman poured at My feet the perfume of her joy for being saved. She acknowledged the King, she came to the King, before many others upon whom the King bestowed much more love than upon her. Let her do as she wishes without criticising her. She will not be able to be present at My acclamation, or at My unction. Her cross is already upon her shoulders. Peter, you asked whether an Assyrian Satrap had come here. I solemnly tell you that not even the incense of the Magi, so pure and precious, was sweeter or more precious than this. Its essence was mixed with tears and that is why it is so intense: humility supports love and makes it perfect. Let us sit down to our meal, My friends… »

And with the offering of the food, the vision ends.

201. Marjiam's Examination.

26th June 1945.

It must be Wednesday morning because the group of apostles and women, preceded by Jesus and Mary with the boy between them, is approaching the Gate of the Fish. Joseph of Arimathea, who went to meet them as he had promised, is also there. Jesus looks for Alexander, the soldier, but does not see him.

« He is not here today either… I wonder why… »

The crowd is so large that it is quite impossible to inquire of the soldiers, and in any case it might not be wise to do so, as the Jews are more intolerant than ever before festivities; they are also upset because of the capture of the Baptist and they accuse Pilate and his satellites of being accomplices. I realise that the situation is such because of the epithets which are exchanged during squabbles between soldiers and citizens at the Gate, where picturesque… rude insults crack every moment like fireworks.

The women from Galilee are scandalised and they envelop themselves closer in their mantles and veils. Mary blushes, but proceeds without hesitation, as straight as a palm tree, looking at Her Son, Who does not even attempt to make the overexcited Jews see reason or induce the soldiers to be merciful towards the Israelites. And as some rather unpleasant epithet is addressed to the Galilean group, Joseph of Arimathea moves forward towards Jesus and is recognised by the crowd who become silent out of respect for him.

At last the Gate of the Fish is behind them, and the great crowd of people, pouring into the town in waves, rushes along the streets, along with donkeys and herds…

« Master, we are here! » shouts Thomas, who is on the other side of the Gate with Philip and Bartholomew.

« Is Judas not here? », « Why are you here? » ask many.

« No. We came here at daybreak, because we were afraid that You might come earlier. But we have not seen him. I met him yesterday, he was with Sadoc, the scribe, you know, Joseph? The old, very lean man, with a wart under his eye. And there were other people with him… young people. I shouted to him: "Hallo, Judas". But he did not reply, pretending he did not know me. I said: "But what's the matter with him?" and I followed him for a few yards. He left Sadoc, in whose company he looked like a Levite, and went with the other men of his own age… who were certainly not Levites… And now he is not here… And he knew that we had decided to come here! »

Philip does not say anything. Bartholomew tightens his lips so much that they can no longer be seen, in an effort to stifle his opinion, which is rising from his heart.

« Very well! Let us go just the same! I will certainly not weep

because of his absence » says Peter.

« Let us wait for a little while. He may have been held up » says Jesus gravely.

They lean against the wall, on its shady side, the women in one group, the men in another.

They are all wearing their best clothes. Peter, especially, is really magnificent. He is showing off brand new snow-white headgear, adorned with a galloon embroidered in red and gold. He is wearing his best tunic, a very dark garnet-red, adorned with a new belt identical in style with the decoration of his headgear. A knife, like a dagger, with an engraved hilt and an open-work brass sheath, through which the blade shines, hangs from his belt. The others are also armed more or less in the same fashion. Only Jesus is without a weapon. He is wearing a pure white linen tunic and a fleur-de-lis blue mantle, which Mary has certainly woven for Him during the winter months. Marjiam's dress is pale red with a festoon in a darker hue round the neck, cuffs and hem. A similar galloon is embroidered round the waist and the hem of the mantle, which the boy is carrying on his arm and caresses happily. Now and again he raises his head and his little face looks half smiling and half worried… Also Peter has a little parcel in his hand and he holds it very carefully.

Some time goes by… but there is no sign of Judas.

« He did not deign… » grumbles Peter, and perhaps he would say something else, but John, the apostle, says: « Perhaps he is waiting for us at the Golden Gate… »

They go to the Temple. But Judas is not there.

Joseph of Arimathea loses patience. He says: « Let us go. »

Marjiam turns rather pale and kisses Mary saying: « Pray… pray for me! »

« Yes, My dear. Do not be afraid. You are so clever… »

Marjiam then clings to Peter. He presses Peter's hand nervously and as he still does not feel safe, he would like to take Jesus' hand.

« I am not coming, Marjiam. I am going to pray for you. I will see you later. »

« You are not coming? Why, Master? » asks Peter who is greatly surprised.

« Because it is better thus… » Jesus is very serious, I would say that He looks sad. And He concludes: « Joseph, who is a just man, can but approve of My decision »

In fact Joseph does not utter one word and his silence, with an eloquent sigh, confirms his agreement.

« Well, then… let us go… » Peter is somewhat distressed.

Marjiam then clings to John. And they set out, preceded by Joseph to whom people bow deeply showing their respect. Also Simon and Thomas go with them. The others remain with Jesus.

They enter the hall which Jesus also entered once. A young man, who is writing in a corner, springs to his feet on seeing Joseph and he bows so profoundly as almost to touch the floor.

« God be with you, Zacharias. Please call Asrael and Jacob at once. »

The young man goes out and comes back almost at once with two men who are rabbis, or members of the synagogue, or scribes, I do not know. Two sullen personages whose haughtiness subsides only in Joseph's presence. Eight other less imposing men follow them. They sit down leaving the postulants, Joseph of Arimathea included, standing.

« What do you want, Joseph? » asks the senior examiner.

« I wish to present to your wisdom this son of Abraham who has reached the age prescribed to come under the Law and comply with it by himself. »

« Is he a relative of yours? » and they look at one another amazed.

« We are all relatives in God. But the boy is an orphan, and this man, whose honesty I guarantee, has adopted him as he does not wish to be without descendants. »

« Who is the man? Let him reply himself. »

« Simon of Jonas, from Bethsaida in Galilee, married with no children, a fisherman for the world, a son of the Law for the Most High. »

« And you, a Galilean, are taking this paternity upon yourself? Why? »

« It is written in the Law that we must take care of orphans and widows. That is what I am doing. »

« Can he possibly know the Law so well as to deserve to… But, boy, tell me. Who are you? »

« Jabez Marjiam of John, from the country near Emmaus, I was born twelve years ago. »

« So you are a Judaean. Is it lawful for a Galilean to take care of him? Let us look up the laws. »

« But what am I? A leper or am I cursed? » Peter begins to boil with anger.

« Be quiet, Simon, I will speak for him. I told you that I am standing surety for this man. I know him as if he were of my own household. Joseph the Elder would never propose anything against the Law or the laws. Please examine this child with justice and dispatch. The yard is full of children waiting to be examined. Please make haste, for everybody's sake. »

« But who can prove that the child is twelve years old and was redeemed from the Temple? »

« You can prove it looking up the documents. It is a piece of boring research, but can be done. Boy, did you tell me that you were the first-born? »

« Yes, sir. You will be able to see that, because I was consecrated to the Lord and redeemed with the prescribed offerings. »

« Let us look for these details then… » says Joseph.

« It is not necessary » reply coldly the two captious examiners. « Come here child. Say the Decalogue » and the boy replies without any hesitation. « Give me that roll, Jacob. Read, if you can. »

« Where, rabbi? »

« Wherever you wish. What comes first under your eyes » says Asrael.

« No. Here. Give it to me » says Jacob. He then unfolds the roll and says: « Here. »

« "He then said to them secretly: 'Bless the Lord of Heaven, utter His praise before all the living, because He has been merciful with you. It is right to keep the secret of a king, but it is also right to reveal… »

« That is enough, quite enough! What are these? » asks Jacob, showing the fringes of his mantle.

« The sacred fringes, sir: we wear them to remember the precepts of the Most High Lord. »

« Is it lawful for an Israelite to eat any meat?… » asks Asrael.

« No, sir. Only the ones which are declared clean. »

« Tell me the precepts… »

And the docile child begins the string of: « You shall not… »

« That is enough! As a Galilean, he knows even too much. Man, it is for you now to swear that the boy is of age. »

Peter, with the best grace of which he is still capable after so much rudeness: delivers his paternal speech: « As you have ascertained, my son, at the prescribed age, knows how to conduct himself, as he knows the Law, the precepts, habits, traditions, ceremonies, blessings, prayers. Therefore, as you have verified, both he and I can ask you to declare him of age. In actual fact, I should have stated that before; but the custom has been infringed here, and not by us Galileans, and the child was questioned before the father. But I say this to you: since you have judged him competent, from this moment I am no longer responsible for his actions, neither in the eyes of God nor of men. »

« Pass into the synagogue. »

The little procession passes into the synagogue, followed by the sullen looks of the rabbis, whom Peter has put in their place. While Marjiam is standing in front of the lecterns and lamps, they cut his hair, shortening it so that it covers his ears, whereas before it reached down to his shoulders. Peter then opens his little parcel and takes out of it a beautiful red woollen belt embroidered in gold-yellow and ties it round the boy's waist, and while the priests are tying little leather strips on his forehead and arm, Peter is busy fixing the sacred fringes on to the mantle which Marjiam has

handed over to him. And Peter is deeply moved when he intones the hymn praising the Lord!…

The ceremony is over. They slip out quickly and Peter says: « Thank goodness! I could not stand it any longer! What do you think, Joseph? They did not even fulfil the rite. It does not matter. You, my son, have Who will consecrate you… Let us go and get the lamb for the sacrifice of praise to the Lord. A little lamb, as dear as you are. And I thank you, Joseph! Say "thanks" to this great friend. If you had not been there, they would have thoroughly abused us. »

« Simon, I am glad I have been useful to a just man like you, and I beg you to come to my house in Bezetha for dinner. Of course, you will bring all the others. »

« Let us go and tell the Master. For me… it is too great an honour! » says Peter humbly, but he is beaming with joy.

They go through the yards and the halls once again to the yard of the women, where Marjiam's friends congratulate him. The men then go into the hall of the Israelites where Jesus is present with His disciples. They all join together in a dignified happy union, and while Peter goes to sacrifice the lamb, they all proceed through porches and yards to the first enclosure.

How happy is Peter with his boy, who is now a perfect Israelite! He is so happy that he does not notice the wrinkle that furrows Jesus' forehead. So happy that he does not notice the rather oppressive silence of his companions. It is only in the hall of Joseph's house - when the boy, who is asked the ritual question as to what lie wants to do in future, replies: « I will be a fisherman like my father » - that Peter, weeping, remembers and understands…

« But… Judas has spoiled our feast with a drop of poison… And You are upset, Master… and that is why the others are sad. Forgive me if I did not notice it before… Ah! Judas!… »

I think that everybody's heart is sighing like Peter's. But Jesus, to remove the poison, strives to smile and says: « Do not worry, Simon. We miss only your wife… I was thinking also of her; she is so good and is always sacrificed. But she will soon have her joy, unexpected but so welcome. Let us think of the good that is in the world. Come. So Marjiam answered all the questions correctly? I knew he would… »

Joseph comes back into the hall after giving instructions to his servants. « I thank you all » he says « for making me feel young again with this ceremony and for the honour of having in my house the Master, His Mother, His relatives and you all, my dear fellow disciples. Come into the garden. It is cool and the flowers… » and it all ends.

202. At the Temple on the Eve of Passover.

27th June 1945.

It is the eve of Passover. Jesus is alone with His apostles, because the women have not joined the group, and He is waiting for Peter, who has taken the lamb of Passover to be sacrificed. While they are waiting and Jesus is speaking to Marjiam of Solomon, Judas crosses the large yard. He is with a group of young men speaking gesticulating ostentatiously and assuming an inspired attitude. He shakes his mantle continuously, then drapes it round himself posing skilfully. I do not think that Cicero looked so stately when delivering his orations…

« Look, Judas is over there! » says Thaddeus.

« He is with a group of saforim » remarks Philip.

And Thomas says: « I am going to hear what he is saying » and he runs away before Jesus may express a foreseeable « don't ».

Oh! Jesus' countenance! A countenance of suffering and of severe judgement. Marjiam who was looking at Him while He was speaking kindly and somewhat sadly of the great king of Israel, notices the sudden change, is almost frightened by it and shakes Jesus' hand to call Him back to His senses exclaiming: « Don't look! Don't look! Look at me, for I love You. »…

Thomas is successful in reaching Judas without being seen by him and follows him for a few steps. I do not know what he hears, but I know that he bursts into a sudden thundering exclamation which causes many people to turn round, and in particular Judas, who becomes livid with rage: « How many rabbis there are in Israel! I congratulate you, new light of wisdom! »

« I am not a flint-stone. I am a sponge. And I absorb. And when the desire of those starving for wisdom demands it, I squeeze out all my juices of life to give them… » Judas is pompous and contemptuous.

« You sound like a perfect echo. But an echo can only exist, if it is near the Voice. Otherwise it fades away, my friend. You seem to be going away from it. He is over there. Are you not coming? »

Judas changes colour, with the rancorous disgusting countenance of his worst moments. But he controls himself. He says: « Goodbye, my friends. Here I am with you, Thomas, my dear friend. Let us go to the Master at once. I did not know that He was here in the Temple. If I had known, I would have looked for Him » and he clasps Thomas' shoulders with his arm, as if he were very fond of him.

But Thomas, who is placid but not foolish, is not deceived by such protestations… and asks rather astutely: « What? Don't you know that it is Passover? And do you think that the Master is not faithful to the Law? »

« Oh! Never on your life! But last year He went about, and

spoke… I remember this very day. He attracted me by means of His royal authoritativeness… Now… He looks to me like one who has lost vigour. Don't you think so? »

« No, I don't. I think He looks like one who has lost esteem. »

« Yes, in His mission, you are quite right. »

« No. You have misunderstood. He has lost men's esteem. And you are one of those responsible for that. Shame on you! » Thomas no longer smiles. He is grave and his words lash Judas like a whip.

« Watch how you speak! » threatens the Iscariot.

« Watch how you behave. We are two Jews here, with no witnesses. And that is why I am speaking to you. And I say once again: "Shame on you!". And now be quiet. Don't feign tragedy and don't start lamenting, otherwise I will speak in front of everybody. There is the Master and your companions. Control yourself. »

« Peace to You, Master… »

« Peace to you, Judas of Simon. »

« It is a great pleasure for me to find You here… I would like to speak to You »

« Do so. »

« You know I wanted to tell You… Can You not listen to me aside? »

« You are among your companions. »

« But I wanted You only. »

« At Bethany I am alone with those who want Me and look for Me, but you do not look for Me. You avoid Me… »

« No, Master. You cannot say that. »

« Why did you offend Simon and Me yesterday, and Joseph of Arimathea, your companions and My Mother and the other women as well? »

« I did? But I did not see you! »

« You did not want to see us. Why did you not come, as we had arranged, to bless the Lord because of an innocent child who was being accepted by the Law? Tell Me! You did not even feel the need to inform us that you were not coming. »

« There is my father! » shouts Marjiam who sees Peter coming back with his lamb, which has been slaughtered, eviscerated and enveloped once again in its skin. « Oh! Micah and the others are with him! I am going, can I go and meet them and hear of my old father? »

« Yes, son, go » says Jesus caressing him. And touching John of Endor on his shoulder, he says to him: « Please, go with him and… keep them there for a little while. » And He addresses Judas once again: « Tell Me! I am waiting for your reply. »

« Master a sudden obligation… an unbreakable one… I was very sorry But… »

« But was there not one person in Jerusalem who could bring your justification, supposing you had one? And even that would have been a fault. I remind you that recently a man did not bury his father to follow Me, and that these brothers of Mine left their father's house, amongst imprecations, to follow Me, and that Simon and Thomas, and Andrew, James, John, Philip and Nathanael with them, left their families and Simon Cananean left his wealth to give it to Me and Matthew his sins to follow Me. And I could go on mentioning one hundred more names. There are people who leave their lives, their very lives, to follow Me to the Kingdom of Heaven. But since you are so selfish, at least be polite. You have no charity, at least be courtly. Since you like them, imitate the false Pharisees who betray Me, who betray us behaving like well-bred people. It was your duty to be free to be with us yesterday, so as not to offend Peter, for whom I demand respect from everybody. But if you had at least sent notice… »

« I made a mistake. But now I was coming to You on purpose, to tell You that for the same reason I cannot come tomorrow. You know… I have friends of my father and… »

« That is enough. Go with them. Goodbye. »

« Master… are You angry with me? You told me that You would act as my father… I am a reckless son, but a father forgives… »

« I forgive you. But go away. Do not keep your father's friends waiting, as I do not keep waiting the friends of holy Jonah. »

« When are You leaving Bethany? »

« At the end of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Goodbye. »

Jesus turns round and goes towards the peasants who are in an ecstasy over Marjiam who is so changed. He takes a few steps and then stops because of Thomas' remark: « By Jehovah! He wanted to see in You the authoritativeness of a King! He got what he wanted! … »

« I beg you all to forget the incident, as I am striving to forget it. I order you to make no mention of it to Simon of Jonah, John of Endor and the little one. For reasons which you can easily understand, it is better not to grieve or scandalise those three. And no word about it at Bethany, with the women. My Mother is there, do not forget it. »

« Do not be concerned, Master. »

« We will do all we can to make amends. »

« And to comfort You » they all say.

« Thank you… Oh! Peace to you all. Isaac found you. I am glad. Enjoy your Passover in peace. My shepherds will be as many good brothers to you. Isaac, before they go away, bring them to see Me. I want to bless them once again. Have you seen the boy? »

« Oh! Master! How well he is! He is already much healthier! We will tell the old man. He will be so happy. This just man has told us

that Jabez is now his son… It is a gift of Providence! We will tell him everything. »

« Also that I am a son of the Law. And that I am happy. And I always remember him. And he must not weep for me or for my mother. She is near me and she is near him like an angel and he will always have her, also in the hour of death, and if Jesus has already opened the gates of Heaven, well, then mummy will come to meet the old father and she will be more beautiful than an angel and will take him to Jesus. Jesus told me. Will you tell him? Will you be able to tell him properly? »

« Certainly, Jabez. »

« No. Now I am Marjiam. The Lord's Mother gave me that name. It is as if you said Her name. She loves me so much. She puts me to bed in the evening and She makes me say the prayers which She made Her Child say. And she wakes me up with a kiss, She dresses me and teaches me many things. Also Jesus does. But they teach me so gently that I learn without any difficulty. My Master!!! » The child presses against Jesus with an attitude of adoration and love that is really moving.

« Yes, tell him everything, also not to give up hope. This angel prays for him and I bless him. I bless you, too. Go. Peace be with you. »

The two groups part, each going its own way.

203. The « Our Father ».

28th June 1945.

Jesus comes out with His apostles from a house near the walls and I think that they are still in the Bezetha district, because to go outside the walls, one must pass again by Joseph's house, near the Gate, which I hear people call Herod's Gate. The town is semideserted in the placid moonlit evening. I understand that they have celebrated Passover in one of Lazarus' houses, which, however, is not the one of the Last Supper. They are, in fact, poles apart. One in the north, the other in the south of Jerusalem.

On the doorstep Jesus takes leave, with His usual kindness, of John of Endor, who is to take care of the women and whom He thanks for accepting that task. He kisses Marjiam, who has also come to the door and then sets out for Herod's Gate.

« Where are we going, Lord? »

« Come with Me. I am taking you to crown Passover with a rare longed for pearl. That is why I wanted to be alone with you. My apostles! Thank you, My friends, for your great love for Me. If you could see how it comforts Me, you would be amazed. See: I proceed among continuous frictions and disappointments. Disappointments for you. You must convince yourselves that I am never

disappointed, because I have not been granted the gift of ignoring… That is another reason why I advise you to agree to be guided by Me. If I allow this or that thing, do not hinder it. If I do not interfere to put an end to something, do not endeavour to do it yourselves. Each thing is to be done at the right moment. Trust Me, in everything. »

They are at the north-east comer of the circuit of the walls; they turn round it and proceed along the hill of Moriah to a point where they can cross the Kidron by a little bridge.

« Are we going to Gethsemane? » asks James of Alphaeus.

« No. Farther up. To the Mount of Olives. »

« Oh! It will be lovely! » says John.

« Also the boy would have liked it » whispers Peter.

« Oh! There will be many more opportunities for him to come here! He was tired. He is only a boy. I want to give you a great thing because the right moment has now come for you to have it. »

They climb up among the olive-trees, leaving Gethsemane on the right, until they reach the top of the mountain, where the leaves of the olive-trees are rustling in the wind.

Jesus stops and says: « Let us stop… My dear disciples who are to continue My work in future, come near Me. Many a time you have said to Me: "Teach us to pray as You pray. Teach us, as John taught his disciples, so that we may pray with the same words as our Master". And I always replied to you: "I will do that when I see in you the minimum sufficient preparation so that the prayer may not be a vain formula of human words, but a real conversation with the Father". That moment has now come. You now possess what is necessary to know the words worth being said to God. And I want to teach you them this evening, in peace and in our mutual love, in the peace and love of God and with God, because as true Israelites we have fulfilled the Passover precept and we have complied with God's commandment concerning love for God and our neighbour. One of you has suffered very much during the past days. He suffered undeservedly, also because of his effort to repress his indignation roused by the undeserved deed. Yes, Simon of Jonah, come here. Not one throb of your honest heart has been concealed from Me, neither has there been any grief that I have not shared with you. Both I and your companions… »

« But You, my Lord, have been offended more than I was! And that was for me a greater pain,… no… a more sensitive… no, not that… a more… more. Well: that Judas should have loathed to be present at my feast, has hurt me as a man. But to see You grieved and offended has hurt me in a different way and I suffered twice as much… I… I do not want to boast and show off by using Your words… But I must say, and if it is due to pride in me, tell me, I must say that I suffered with my soul… and it hurts more. »

« It is not pride, Simon. You suffered spiritually, because Simon of Jonah, a fisherman in Galilee, is changing into Peter of Jesus, the Master of the spirit, so that also His disciples are becoming active and wise in the spirit. It is for this progress of Yours in the life of the spirit, it is because of such progress of you all, that I want to teach you the prayer this evening. How much you have changed after the solitary retreat! »

« Everybody, Lord? » asks Bartholomew who sounds rather incredulous.

« I understand what you mean… But I am speaking to you eleven. Not to anyone else… »

« But what is the matter with Judas of Simon, Master? We do not understand him any more… He seemed so changed, but now, since we left the lake… » says Andrew desolately.

« Be quiet, brother. I have the key to the mystery! A little bit of Beelzebub has stuck to him. He went to look for it in the cave at Endor to astonish us… and he was served as he deserved! The Master said it on that day… At Gamala the demons rushed into the pigs. At Endor the demons came out of that poor wretch of John and went into him… We know that… we know… Let me tell them, Master! I have it here, in my throat, and if I do not say it, it will not come out and it will poison me… »

« Be good, Simon! »

« Yes, Master… and I would assure You that I will not be rude to him. But I say and think that since Judas is a vicious fellow - and we all know that - he is somewhat similar to a pig… and obviously demons willingly choose pigs when… changing their dwelling places. There it is: I have said it. »

« Do you think it is thus? » asks James of Zebedee.

« What else can it be! There is no other reason why he should be so intractable. He is worse now than he was at the Clear Water! And there one might have thought that the place and the season made him so nervous. But now… »

« There is another reason, Simon… »

« Tell us, Master. I will be happy to change my mind about my companion. »

« Judas is jealous. He is agitated because he is jealous. »

« Jealous? Of whom? He is not married, and even if he were, and went with women, I think that none of us would be rude to a fellow disciple… »

« He is jealous of Me. Just think: Judas changed after Endor and after Esdraelon. That is, when he saw that I was taking care of John and of Jabez. But now that John, above all, John, will be going away, as he will be leaving Me and staying with Isaac, you will see that Judas will become merry and good once again… »

« Well!… But You are not going to tell me that he is not possessed

by a little demon. And above all… No, I will say it! And above all You will not tell me that he has improved during these last months. I was jealous as well, last year… I would not have liked anybody except the six of us, the first six, do You remember? Now, now… Let me invoke God just this once as witness to what I am going to say. Now I say that the more the disciples increase in numbers around You, the happier I am. Oh! I would like to bring all men to You and I would also like to have all the necessary means to help those who are in need, so that misery may not hinder anyone from coming to You. God sees whether I am telling the truth. But why am I thus now? Because I let You change me. He… has not changed. On the contrary… Yes, Master… A little demon has possessed him… »

« Do not say that. Do not think that. Pray that he may be cured. Jealousy is a disease… »

« Of which one can be cured, beside You, if one wants to. Ah! I will put up with him, for Your sake… But, how difficult it is!… »

« I gave you a prize for that: the boy. And now I will teach you how to pray… »

« Oh! yes, Brother. Let us speak of that… and let us remember my namesake only as one who is in need of prayer. I think he has already had his punishment. He is not with us just now! » says Judas Thaddeus.

« Listen. When you pray, pray thus: "Our Father, Who are in Heaven, may Your name be held holy, Your Kingdom come on earth as it is in Heaven, and may Your will be done on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us today our daily bread, forgive us our debts as we forgive those who are in debt to us, and do not put us to the test, but save us from the Evil One". »

Jesus has stood up to say the prayer and everybody has imitated Him, attentively and moved.

« Nothing else is required, My friends. Everything man needs for his spirit and his flesh and blood is contained in these words as in a golden ring. With this prayer you ask for what is useful to the former and the latter two. And if you do what you ask for, you will gain eternal life. It is so perfect a prayer that neither the storms of heresies nor the course of ages will undermine it. Christianity will be split by Satan's bite and many parts of My mystic body will be torn off and separated, forming independent cells in the vain desire to form a body as perfect as the mystical Body of Christ will be, which is the one formed by all the faithful believers united in the apostolic Church, the only true Church, as long as the earth exists. But those separated little cells, devoid of the gifts, which I will leave to the Mother Church to nourish My children, will always be denominated Christian, because of their worship of the Christ, and in their error they will always remember that they derive from the

Christ. Well, they will pray with this universal prayer as well. Remember it carefully. Meditate on it continuously. Practise it in your actions. You need nothing else to sanctify yourselves. If one were alone, in a heathen place, without churches, without books, one would already have all the knowledge to meditate on in this prayer and a church in his heart for this prayer. One would have a safe rule of sanctification.

"Our Father".

I call Him: "Father". Father of the Word, Father of the Incarnate. That is how I want you to call Him because you are all one with Me, if you remain in Me. Once man had to prostrate himself with his face on the ground to whisper, trembling with fear: "God!" He who does not believe in Me and in My word is still in such paralyzing fear… Watch the interior of the Temple. Not God, but the very remembrance of God is concealed from the eyes of the faithful by a treble veil. He who prays is separated by remoteness and veils, everything has been devised to say to him: "You are mud. He is Light. You are contemptible. He is Holy. You are a slave. He is King".

But now!… Stand up! Come near Me! I am the Eternal Priest. I can take you by the hand and say: "Come". I can grasp the veils and draw them, and thus throw open the inaccessible place closed so far. Closed? Why? Closed by Sin, yes. But even more closed by the dispirited thought of man. Why closed if God is Love, if God is father? I can, I must, I want to take you not into the dust, but into the azure; not far, but near; not as slaves, but as children on to the heart of God.

Say: "Father! Father!". And never tire repeating this word. Do you not know that every time you say it, Heaven shines because of God's joy? If you said with true love no other word but that one, you would be saying a prayer pleasing to the Lord. "Father! Father!" the little ones say to their fathers. It is the first word they say: "Mother, father". You are the little children of God. I begot you from the old man you were and whom I destroyed by means of My love to give birth to the new man, the Christian. Call, therefore, the Most Holy Father Who is in Heaven, with the first word that little children learn.

"May Your Name be held holy".

Oh! Name, which is holier and sweeter than any other name and which the fear of the guilty taught you to conceal under a different one. No, no longer Adonai. He is God. He is the God Who in an excess of love created Mankind. And Mankind, from now onwards, with lips cleansed by the purification that I am preparing, should call Him by His Name, awaiting to fully comprehend the true meaning of the Incomprehensible One, when the best children of Mankind, united to Him, will rise to the Kingdom that I have

come to establish.

“Your Kingdom come on earth as it is in Heaven".

Desire its coming with all your strength. If it came, it would be the joy of the earth. The Kingdom of God in hearts, in families, among citizens and nations. Suffer, work, sacrifice yourselves for this Kingdom. Let the earth be a mirror reflecting the life of Heaven in each individual. It will happen. All this will happen one day. Centuries of tears and blood, of errors, persecutions, of darkness relieved by flashes of light radiating from the mystical Light of My Church will precede the moment in which the earth will possess the Kingdom of God. Oh! My Church: although a boat, it will never be sunk, as it is also a cliff unshakeable by breakers and will hold high the Light, My Light, the Light of God. And it will then be like the intense blazing of a star which, having reached the perfection of its existence, disintegrates, an immeasurable flower of the ethereal gardens, to breathe its existence and love at the feet of its Creator, in a rutilant throb. But it will most certainly come. And then there will be the perfect, blessed eternal Kingdom of Heaven.

“And may Your will be done on earth as it is in Heaven".

The submission of one's will to the will of another person can be accomplished only when one reaches perfect love for that creature. The submission of one's will to God's can be achieved only when one achieves possession of the theological virtues in a heroic degree. In Heaven, where everything is faultless, God's will is done. You, children of Heaven, must learn to do what is done in Heaven.

“Give us today our daily bread".

When you are in Heaven, God alone will be your nourishment. Beatitude will be your food. But here, you still need bread and since you are the children of God, it is only fair to say: "Father, give us some bread". Are you afraid He will not hear you? Oh! no! Just think: If one of you has a friend and, if he finds out that he has no bread to offer another friend or relative, who has arrived in the middle of the night, goes to his friend saying: "Lend me three loaves, because a guest has arrived and I have nothing to give him to eat", can he possibly hear his friend answer him from inside the house: "Do not bother me, I have already bolted the door and my children are already sleeping beside me. I cannot get up and give you what you want"? No. If he has applied to a true friend and if he insists, he will receive what he asks for. He would receive it also if he applied to someone who was not a very good friend. He would be satisfied because of his insistence, as his friend, of whom he asked the favour, will hasten to give him what he wants, so that he may no longer be bothered.

But when you pray the Father, you do not turn to a friend of the

earth, but you apply to the Perfect Friend Who is the Father of Heaven. That is why I say to you: "Ask, and it will be given to you, search, and you will find, knock and the door will be opened to You". For the one who asks will receive, the one who searches always finds, the one who knocks will have the door opened to him. What father among you would hand his son a stone when he asked for bread? Or hand him a snake instead of a roasted fish? A father who did that to his own children would be a criminal. I have already told you and I will repeat it to convince you to be good and trustful. As a sound-minded person would not give a scorpion instead of an egg, with what greater bounty will God give you what you ask for! Because He is good, whereas you are more or less wicked. Ask, therefore, the Father for your bread with humble filial love.

"Forgive us our debts as we forgive those who are in debt to us"

There are material debts and spiritual ones. There are also moral debts. The money or the goods that one has received as a loan and must give back, are a material debt. Esteem extorted and not Oven back and love wanted and not returned are a moral debt. To obey God, from Whom one would exact much giving Him very little, and to love Him are a spiritual debt. He loves us and is to be loved, as a mother, a wife, a son, from whom so much is exacted, are to be loved. A selfish man wants to receive, but does not give. But an egoist is poles apart from Heaven. We are in debt to everybody. From God to a relative, from a relative to a friend, from a friend to our neighbour, to a servant, to a slave, because they are all beings like ourselves. Woe to him who does not forgive! He will not be forgiven. God, out of justice, cannot remit the debt of a man who is in debt to Him, the Most Holy One, if man does not forgive his fellow man.

"Do not put us to the test, but save us from the Evil One".

The man who did not feel the need to share the Passover supper with us, asked Me, less than a year ago: "What? You asked not to be tempted and to be helped against temptation?". There were only the two of us… and I replied. Later we were four, in a lonely area, and I replied once again. But still to no avail, because when dealing with an unyielding spirit it is necessary to open a breach by demolising the evil fortress of his stubbornness. And I will, therefore, repeat it once, ten times, one hundred times until everything is accomplished.

But since you are not hardened by strange doctrines or by even stranger passions, I beg you to pray thus. Pray with humility that God may avert temptations from you. Oh! humility! To know oneself for what one is! Without losing heart, but to know oneself! Say: "I may give in, even if I do not think I could do it, because I

am but an imperfect judge of myself. Therefore, Father, if possible, deliver me from temptations by keeping me so close to You as not to allow the Evil One to harm me". Because, remember, it is not God Who tempts you to evil things, but it is the Evil One who tempts you. Pray the Father that He may support your weakness so that it may not be led into temptation by the Evil One.

I have told you everything, My beloved ones. This is My second Passover among You. Last year we shared only our bread and the lamb. This year I give you My prayer. I will have other gifts for My future Passovers amongst you, so that, when I shall have gone where the Father wants Me, you may have a remembrance of Me, the Lamb, at every feast of the Mosaic lamb.

Get up and let us go. We shall go back to town at dawn. Nay: tomorrow, you, Simon, and you, My brother (and He points at Judas), will go to fetch the women and the boy. You, Simon of Jonah, and you all, will stay with Me until they come back. Then we shall all go to Bethany together. »

And they go down to Gethsemane, where they enter the house to rest.

204. Jesus to the Gentiles: Faith Is Built as Your Temples.

29th June 1945.

In the peace of the Sabbath Jesus rests near a flax field in bloom belonging to Lazarus. Rather than « near » I should say that He is immersed in the tall flax, and sitting on the edge of a furrow He is engrossed in thought. Only an odd silent butterfly flutters near Him or a lizard rustles nearby, looking at Him with its jet-black eyes, raising its little triangular head with its light throbbing throat. There is nothing else. In the late afternoon also the least sigh of wind has become silent among the tall stalks.

From far away, perhaps from Lazarus' garden, the song of a woman can be heard and the joyful shouting of the boy who is playing with someone. Then one, two, three voices call: « Master! Jesus! »

Jesus rouses Himself and stands up. Although the fully grown flax is very tall, Jesus emerges a good height above the blue-green sea.

« There He is, John! » shouts the Zealot.

And John in turn calls: « Mother! The Master is here, in the flax field. »

And while Jesus approaches the path leading to the houses, Mary arrives.

« What do You want, Mother? »

« My Son, some Gentiles have come with some ladies. They say that they heard from Johanna that You were here. They also said

that they have been waiting for You all these past days near the Antonia… »

« Ah! I know! I will come at once. Where are they? »

« At Lazarus' house, in his garden. He is loved by the Romans and does not feel the repugnance towards them that we do. He let them go into the large garden with their carts, so that no one would be scandalised… »

« All right, Mother. They are Roman soldiers and ladies. I know. »

« And what do they want from You? »

« What many in Israel do not want: light. »

« But how and what do they believe You are? God perhaps? »

« Yes, in their way of thinking. It is easier for them to accept the idea of the incarnation of a god in mortal flesh, than it is for us. »

« So they believe in Your faith… »

« Not yet, Mother. I must destroy theirs, first. For the time being they consider Me a wise man, a philosopher, as they say. But both their desire to become acquainted with philosophical doctrines and their inclination to believe the incarnation of a god as possible, are of great help to Me in leading them to the true Faith. Believe Me, they are more ingenuous in their way of thinking, than many Israelites. »

« But are they sincere? It is rumoured that the Baptist… »

« No. Had it been for them, John would be free and safe. Nonrebellious people are left in peace. On the contrary I can assure You that for them to be a prophet - they say a philosopher because the loftiness of supernatural wisdom is still philosophy to them - is a guarantee of respect. Do not worry, Mother. No harm will come to Me from that end… »

« But the Pharisees… if they find out, what will they say about Lazarus also? You are You… and You are to bring the Word to the world. But Lazarus!… They already offend him so much… »

« But they cannot touch him. They know that he is protected by Rome. »

« I leave You, Son. Here is Maximinus, he will take You to the Gentiles » and Mary, Who had walked beside Jesus all the time, withdraws quickly, and goes towards the Zealot's house. Jesus on the other hand goes through a little iron door in the garden wall, into a distant part of the garden, where it actually becomes an orchard and precisely near the place where Lazarus will be buried later.

Lazarus also is there, but no one else. « Master, I took the liberty of giving them hospitality… »

« You did the right thing. Where are they? »

« Over there, in the shade of the boxes and laurels. As You can see they are at least five hundred steps from the house. »

« That is all right… May Light come to you all. »

« Hail, Master! » greets Quintilian, who is wearing civilian clothes.

The ladies stand up to greet Jesus. They are Plautina, Valeria and Lydia; there is also another elderly woman, but I do not know who she is or whether she is of the same rank as the others. They are all wearing very plain clothes without any sign of distinction.

« We were anxious to hear You, but You never came. I was on duty when You arrived. But I never saw You. »

« Neither have I seen at the Gate of the Fish a soldier, who was a friend of Mine. His name was Alexander… »

« Alexander? I am not sure whether he is the one I am thinking of. I know that some time ago, in order to calm the Jews, we had to remove a soldier who was guilty of… speaking to You. He is now at Antioch. But perhaps he will come here again. How boring they are… they want to rule even now that they are subject! One has to be clever to avoid greater trouble… They make life difficult for us, believe me… But You are good and wise. Will You speak to us? I may be leaving Palestine soon, and I would like to have something to remind me of You. »

« Yes, I will speak to you. I never disappoint anyone. What do you wish to know? »

Quintilian looks at the ladies inquisitively.

« Whatever You wish, Master » says Valeria.

Plautina stands up again and says: « I have been thinking a lot… there is so much I would like to know… everything, to be able to judge. But if I may ask, I would like to know how can a faith, Yours, for instance, be built on a ground which You said is devoid of true faith. You said that our beliefs are vain. So we have nothing. How can we achieve something? »

« I will take as an example something that you have. Your temples. Your really beautiful sacred buildings, the only imperfection of which is that they are dedicated to Nothing, can teach you how one can achieve faith and where to place it. Watch. Where are they built? Which place, if at all possible, is chosen for them? How are they built? The place is generally spacious, open and elevated. And when it is not spacious and open, it is made so by demolishing what encumbers and obstructs it. If it is not elevated, they increase its height by means of a stereobate more elevated than the normal three steps employed for temples placed on a natural elevation. They are generally surrounded by a sacred enclosure, formed by colonnades and porches inside which are enclosed the trees sacred to the gods, fountains and altars, statues and stelae and are usually preceded by a propylaeum beyond which is the altar where prayers to the deity are said. In front of it there is the place for the sacrifice, because the sacrifice precedes the prayer. Very often, and particularly in the more magnificent ones, a peristyle encircles them with a garland of precious

marbles. Inside there is the front vestibule, outside or inside the peristyle, the cell of the deity and the rear vestibule. Marbles, statues, pediments, acroteria and gables, all polished, precious and decorated, make the temple a most noble building also for the coarsest sight. Is it not so? »

« Yes, it is, Master. You have seen and studied them very well » confirms Plautina praising Jesus.

« But we know that He never left Palestine!? » exclaims Quintilian.

« I never left Palestine to go to Rome or Athens. But I am acquainted with Greek and Roman architecture and I was present when the genius of man decorated the Parthenon because I am wherever there is life or a manifestation of life. Wherever a wise man meditates, a sculptor sculptures, a poet writes, a mother sings over a cradle, a man toils in fields, a doctor fights diseases, a living being breathes, an animal lives, a tree vegetates, I am there together with Him from Whom I come. In the rumble of the earthquake or in the peal of thunder, in the light of stars or in flood-tide and ebb-tide, in the flight of eagles or in the buzzing of mosquitoes, I am there with the Most High Creator. »

« So… You… You know everything. Both thoughts and deeds of men? » asks Quintilian again.

« Yes, I do. »

The Romans look at one another amazed. There is a long silence then Valeria timidly begs: « Expand on Your idea, Master, so that we may know what to do. »

« Yes. Faith is built as they build the temples of which you are so proud. They make space for the temple, they free it from obstructions, they elevate it. »

« But where is the temple in which one should put faith, the true deity? » asks Plautina.

« Faith, Plautina, is not a deity. It is a virtue. There are no deities in true faith. There is only One and True God. »

« So… He is up there, in His Olympus, all by Himself? And what does He do if He is alone? »

« He is Self-sufficient and takes care of everything in creation. I have just told you that God is present also in the buzzing of a mosquito. He does not get bored, do not worry. He is not a poor man, the master of an immense empire in which he feels he is hated and lives trembling with fear. He is Love and lives loving. His Life is continuous Love. He is Self-sufficient because He is infinite and most powerful, He is Perfection. So numerous are the things created that live because of His continuous will, that He has no time to grow weary. Tedium is the fruit of idleness and vice. In the Heaven of the True God there is neither idleness nor vice. Soon, in addition to angels which now serve Him, He will have a great crowd of just people rejoicing in Him and the crowd will grow

greater and greater with the future believers in the True God. » « Are the angels genii? » asks Lydia.

« No, they are spiritual beings like God Who created them. »

« What are genii, then? »

« As you imagine them, they are falsehood. They do not exist, as you imagine them. But owing to the instinctive need of men to search for the truth, you also have realised that man is not only flesh and that there is something immortal in his perishable body. And that is the consequence of the incentive of the soul, which is alive and present also in heathens, and suffers in them, as it is disappointed in its desires, because it is famished longing for the True God Whom it remembers, in the body in which it dwells and which is guided by a pagan mind. And the same applies to towns and nations. And thus you believe, you feel the need to believe in "genii". And thus you give yourselves an individual genius, a family, a town, a national genius. You have the "genius of Rome", the "genius of the emperor". And you worship them as lesser deities. Come to the true faith. You will become acquainted and friendly with your angel, whom you will venerate, but not worship. Only God is worshipped. »

« You said: "Incentive of the soul which is alive and present also in heathens, and suffers in them because it is disappointed". But from whom does the soul come? » asks Publius Quintilian.

« From God. He is the Creator. »

« But are we not born of woman through union with man? Also our gods are born thus. »

« Your gods do not exist. They are phantoms of your mind which needs to believe. Because such need is more peremptory than the need to breathe. Also he, who says he does not believe, does believe. He believes in something. The simple statement: "I do not believe in God" presupposes another faith. In oneself, perhaps, or in one's proud mind. But one always believes. It is like thinking. If you say: "I do not want to think", or: "I do not believe in God", by those two simple sentences you prove that you are thinking that you do not want to believe in Him Whom you know to exist and that you do not want to think. With regard to man, to express the concept correctly you must say: "Man, like all animals, is born through the union of male and female. But the soul, that is the thing which distinguishes the animal-man from the animal-brute, comes from God. He creates it as and when a man is procreated, or rather: when he is conceived in a womb and He infuses it in the body which otherwise would be only animal". »

« And have we got it? We pagans? According to Your fellow-countrymen it would not appear to be so… » says Quintilian ironically.

« Every man born of woman has it. »

« But You said that sin kills it. If so, how can it be alive in us sinners? » asks Plautina.

« You do not sin against faith, because you believe that you are in the Truth. When you become acquainted with the Truth and you persist in your error, then you will commit sin. Likewise, many things which are sinful for Israelites, are not so for you. Because no divine law forbids you. One sins when one consciously rebels against the order given by God and says: "I know that what I am doing is wrong. But I want to do it just the same". God is just. He cannot punish one who does the wrong thing thinking that he is doing the right one. He punishes those, who being able to tell Good from Evil, choose the latter and persist in it. »

« So we have a soul and it is alive and present in us? »

« Yes, it is so. »

« And it suffers? Do You really think that it remembers God? We do not remember the womb that bore us. We could not tell what its inside was like. If I have understood You correctly, the soul is spiritually born of God. Can it possibly remember Him if our body does not remember the long time it was in a womb? »

« The soul is not material, Plautina. An embryo is. In fact the soul is infused when the foetus is already formed (1). The soul is, like Clod, eternal and spiritual. It is eternal from the moment it is created, whereas God is the Most Perfect Eternal Being and thus has no beginning in time and will have no end. The soul, the lucid, intelligent, spiritual work of God, does remember. And it suffers, because it longs for God, the True God, from Whom it comes, and it hungers for God. That is why it spurs the torpid body to endeavour to approach God. »

« So we have a soul as those whom you call "the just people" of your nation have? Exactly the same? »

« No, Plautina. It depends on what you mean. If you mean according to its origin and nature, it is exactly the same as the souls of our saints. But if you refer to its formation, then I say that it is different. And if you mean according to the perfection reached before death, then it may be completely different. But that does not apply only to you heathens. Also a son of our people can be completely different from a saint, in future life. A soul is subjected to three phases. The first is creation. The second a new creation. The third is perfection. The first is common to all men. The second is peculiar to just people who through their will elevate their souls to a more

(1) Jesus' intent in speaking to the Roman ladies is not to specify the moment of the infusion of the soul into a body, but to prove the existence of the soul, its spiritual nature and divine origin, as opposed to the material nature and human origin of the body, and to clarify that He states that the soul is infused into the embryo when the latter is sufficiently formed to receive the soul, that lucid an intelligent as it is, has flashes of remembrance of its origin from God before being infused into a body.

complete revival, joining their good deeds to the perfection of God's work, whereby their souls are spiritually more perfect and form a connection link between the first and third ones. The third is peculiar to the blessed souls, or saints, if you prefer so, who have exceeded by a thousand degrees the initial stage of their souls, a stage suitable to man, and have transformed them into something suitable to rest in God. »

« How can we make room, clearance and elevation for our souls? »

« By demolishing the useless things you have in your "ego". Clear it of all wrong knowledge, and with the debris make the elevation for the sovereign temple. A soul is to be carried higher and higher, on the three steps. Oh! you Romans love symbols. Look at the three steps in a symbolic light. They can tell you their names: penance, patience, perseverance. Or: humility, purity, justice. Or: wisdom, generosity, mercy. Or, finally, the splendid trinomial: faith, hope, charity. Look also at the symbol of the ornate strong enclosure which encircles the area of the temple. You must surround your soul, the queen of the body, the temple of the Eternal Spirit, with a barrier which may protect it without obstructing light or oppressing it with ugly sights. An enclosure which must be safe and free from the love and desire of what is inferior: flesh and blood, and must aim at what is superior: the spirit. The chisel of freedom is your will power, which will smooth comers, and remove clefts, stains and flaws in the marble of your ego, so that it may be perfect round your souls. And at the same time, the enclosure protecting the temple is to be used by you as a merciful shelter for the more unhappy people who do not know what Charity is. The porches: they are the effusion of love, of piety, of your desire that more people may come to God, and are like the loving arms stretched like a veil over the cradle of an orphan. And beyond the enclosure: the most beautiful and most scented trees are a homage to the Creator. The trees, planted on a soil previously barren and subsequently cultivated symbolise all kinds of virtues and form the second living flowery enclosure around the sanctuary; and among the trees, that is among the virtues, there are the fountains, a further effusion of love and another purification before approaching the propylaeum near which one must sacrifice one's carnality and repudiate all forms of lust before ascending the altar. And then you may proceed further, to the altar and lay your offer on it and finally, crossing the vestibule, you may approach the cell, where God is. And what will the cell be like? Abundance of spiritual wealth, because you can never adorn God too much. Have you understood? You asked Me how Faith is built. I said to You: "Following the method employed to build temples". You can see that it is true. Is there anything else you wish to ask Me? »

« No, Master. I think that Flavia has written what You said. Claudia wants to know. Have you written everything? »

« I have written everything most accurately » replies the woman handing over the waxed tablets.

« The wax will last and it will be possible to read them. »

« It is wax. It is easily cancelled. Write everything in your hearts. It will never cancel. »

« Master, they are encumbered with vain temples. We are throwing Your words against them to demolish them. But it is a long task » says Plautina sighing. And she concludes: « Remember us in Your Heaven… »

« You may rest assured that I will. I leave you. I want you to know that your visit has been very dear to Me. Goodbye, Publius Quintilian. Remember Jesus of Nazareth. »

The ladies say goodbye and are the first to go away. Then Quintilian, who is somewhat pensive, leaves. Jesus watches them go away with Maximinus who leads them back to their wagons.

« What are You thinking of, Master? » asks Lazarus.

« That there are many unhappy people in the world. »

« And I am one of them. »

« Why, My dear friend? »

« Because everybody comes to You, except Mary. Is she the greatest ruin? »

Jesus looks at him and smiles.

« You are smiling? Are You not sorry that Mary cannot be converted? Are You not sorry that I am suffering? Martha has done nothing but weep since Monday evening. Who was that woman? Don't You know that for the whole day we hoped it was she? »

« I am smiling because you are an impatient child… And I am smiling because I think that you are wasting energy and tears. Had it been she, I would have rushed to tell you. »

« So it was not she? »

« Oh! Lazarus!… »

« You are right. Patience! Still patience!… Master, here are the jewels that You gave me to sell. They have become money for the poor. They were beautiful. Ladies' jewels. »

« They belonged to "that" woman. »

« I thought so. Ah! Had they been Mary's… But she!… I am losing hope, my Lord!… »

Jesus embraces him without speaking for a little while. He then says: « Please do not mention those jewels to anybody. She must disappear, without being admired or desired any longer, like a cloud driven elsewhere by the wind, without leaving any trace in the blue sky. »

« You may be sure, Master… and, in exchange, bring me Mary, our unhappy Mary… »

« Peace be with you, Lazarus. I will keep My promise. »

205. The Parable of the Prodigal Son.

30th June 1945.

« John of Endor, come here with Me. I must speak to you » says Jesus looking out of the door.

The man hastens towards Jesus leaving the boy to whom he was explaining something. « What do You want to tell me, Master? » he asks.

« Come upstairs with Me. »

They go up to the terrace and they sit down in the most sheltered part, because the sun is already strong, although it is still morning. Jesus runs His eyes over the cultivated country, where day by day the corn is becoming golden and fruit is ripening on trees. He seems to be wishing to derive some thought from that vegetable metamorphosis.

« Listen, John. I think that Isaac is coming today to bring Me Johanan's peasants before they leave. I told Lazarus to lend Isaac a wagon to quicken their return and thus avoid a delay which would cause them to be punished. And Lazarus has agreed, because he does everything I tell him. But I want something else from you. I have here a sum of money given to Me by a person for the poor of the Lord. Usually one of My apostles is responsible for keeping the money and giving alms. Generally it is Judas of Kerioth; sometimes one of the others. But Judas is not here. And I do not want the others to know what I want to do. I would not have told Judas either. You will do it, in My name… »

« I, my Lord?… I?… Oh! I am not worthy!… »

« You must accustom yourself to working in My name. Is that not why you came? »

« Yes, but I thought I had to work to rebuild my poor soul. »

« And I will give you the means. Against what did you sin? Against Mercy and Love. You demolished your soul by means of hatred. You will rebuild it through love and mercy. I will give you the material. I will make use of you especially for deeds of mercy and love. You are capable also of curing, and of speaking. So you are qualified to take care of physical and moral miseries and you are capable of doing it. You will start with this action. Here is the purse. You will give it to Micah and his friends. Divide it into equal parts. But divide it as I will tell you. Make ten parts and give four to Micah, one for himself and one each to Saul, Joel and Isaiah. Give the other six to Micah with instructions to give them to Jabez' old father, for himself and his companions. They will thus be able to have some comfort. »

« All right. But what shall I tell them to justify it? »

« Say: "This is to remind you to pray for a soul that is redeeming itself ". »

« But they may think that it is I! It is not fair! »

« Why? Do you not want to redeem yourself? »

« It is not fair that they should think that I am the donor. »

« Never mind, do as I tell you. »

« I will obey… but at least let me give something as well. In any case… now I do not need anything any more. I do not buy books and I have no poultry to feed. I am satisfied with very little. Take this, Master. I am keeping a minimum for my sandal expenses… » and from a purse attached to his belt he takes out some coins which he adds to Jesus' money.

« May God bless you for your mercy… John, before long we shall be parting, because you will be going with Isaac. »

« I am sorry about that, Master. But I will obey. »

« I am sorry as well to send you away. But I need itinerant disciples so badly. I am no longer sufficient. I will soon be sending the apostles and then the disciples. And you will do a lot of good. I will keep you for special missions. In the meantime you will become formed with Isaac. He is so good and the Spirit of God has really instructed him during his long disease. And he is the man who has always forgiven everything… On the other hand, the fact that we have to part does not mean that we shall never meet again. We shall often meet, and every time we are together, I will speak just for you, remember that… »

John bends very low, he hides his face in his hands, bursts into bitter tears and moans: « Oh! Then tell me at once something to persuade me that I have been forgiven… that I can serve God… If You knew how I see my soul, now that the smoke of hatred has vanished… and how I think of God… »

« I know, do not weep. Be humble, but do not be disheartened. Disheartenment is still pride. Be humble, that is all. Cheer up, do not weep… »

John of Endor slowly calms down…

When Jesus sees that he has become calm, He says: « Come, let us go under that thicket of apple-trees and gather our companions and the women. I will speak to everybody, but I will tell you how God loves you. »

They go down, assembling the others as they proceed, and they all sit down in a circle in the shade of the apple orchard. Also Lazarus, who was speaking to the Zealot, joins the company. They are about twenty people in all.

« Listen. It is a beautiful parable that will guide you with its light in many cases.

A man had two sons. The elder was a serious, affectionate, obedient worker. The younger was more intelligent than his brother who was actually somewhat dull and preferred to be guided rather than tire himself taking decisions by himself, but he was also rebellious, absent-minded, fond of luxury, pleasure loving, a

squanderer and idle. Intelligence is a great gift of God. But it is a gift to be used wisely. Otherwise it is like certain medicines that, when taken in the wrong way, kill instead of curing. His father, as it was his right and duty, used to recall him to a more sensible life. But it was all in vain, the only result was that he answered back and became more obstinate in his wicked ideas.

Finally one day, after a fiercer quarrel, the younger son said: "Give me my part of the estate. So I will no longer hear your reproaches and my brother's complaints. Let each have his own and no more about it". "Be careful" replied the father, "because you will soon be ruined. What will you do then? Consider that I will not be unfair to favour you and I will not take a farthing off your brother to give it to you". "I will not ask you for anything. You may be sure. Give me my part".

The father had the estate and valuables assessed, and since money and jewels were worth as much as the real estate, he gave the elder brother the fields and vineyards, the herds and olivetrees, and the younger one the money and jewels, which the young man changed immediately into money. And after doing that in a few days, he went to a distant country where he lived like a lord, squandering all his money on a life of debauchery, making people believe that he was the son of a king, because he was ashamed to admit that he was a countryman and thus he disowned his father. Banquets, friends, women, robes, wines, games… he led a loose life. He soon saw that his money was coming to an end and that poverty was in sight. And to make matters worse, the country experienced a severe famine, which compelled him to spend his last penny. He would have liked to go back to his father. But he was proud and decided not to. So he went to a wealthy man of the country, a friend of his in his happy days, and he begged him saying: "Take me among your servants, remembering the days when you enjoyed my wealth". See how foolish man is! He prefers the lash of a master rather than say to his father: "Forgive me. I made a mistake!". The young man had learned many useless things with his bright intelligence, but he did not want to learn the saying of Ecclesiasticus: "How ill-famed is he who deserts his father and how accursed of the Lord is whoever angers his mother". He was intelligent, but not wise.

The man to whom he had applied, in exchange for the grand time he had enjoyed with the foolish young man, sent him to look after his pigs, because it was a pagan country and there were many pigs. So he was sent to pasture the herds of pigs in the farm. Filthy, in rags, stinking and starving - food in fact was scarce for all the servants and particularly for the lowest ones and he, a foreign ridiculed herdsman of pigs was considered such - he saw the pigs glut themselves with acorns and sighed: "I wish I could fill my stomach

with this fruit! But they are too bitter! Not even starvation can make them palatable". And he wept remembering the sumptuous banquets when he acted the "grand seigneur" only a short while before, laughing, singing, dancing… and then he would think of the honest substantial meals at his far away home, of the portions his father used to make impartially for everybody, keeping for himself the smallest one, happy to see the healthy appetite of his sons… and he remembered the helpings his just father gave the servants and he sighed: "My father's servants, even the lowest, have plenty bread… and I am dying here of starvation… A long meditation, a long struggle to subdue his pride…

At last the day came, when his humility and wisdom revived and he got up and said: "I will go back to my father! This pride of mine is silly, as it deprives me of my freedom. And why? Why should I suffer in my body and even more in my heart when I can be forgiven and receive comfort? I will go back to my father. That is settled. And what shall I say to him? What has matured in my heart here, in this abjection, in this filth, suffering the pangs of hunger! I will say to him: 'Father, I have sinned against Heaven and against you, I am no longer worthy of being called your son; treat me therefore as the least of your servants, but bear me to stay under your roof. That I may see you moving about… ' I cannot say to him: '… because I love you'. He would not believe me. But my behaviour will tell him and he will understand and before dying he will bless me once again… Oh! I hope so. Because my father loves me". And when he went back to town in the evening he gave up his job and begging along the way he went back home. And he saw his father's fields… and the house… and his father superintending the work… he was old, emaciated by grief but always kind and good… The guilty son seeing that ruin caused by him stopped frightened… but the father, looking round, saw him and ran to meet him, because he was still far away. And when he reached him, he threw his arms round his neck and kissed him. Only the father had recognised his son in the dejected beggar and he was the only one to be moved with love.

The son, clasped in his father's arms, with his head resting on his father's shoulder, whispered sobbing: "Father, let me throw myself at your feet". "No, son! Not at my feet. Rest on my heart, which has suffered so much because of your absence, and now needs to revive feeling your warmth on my chest". And the son, crying louder, said: "Oh! father! I have sinned against Heaven and against you, I am no longer worthy to be called son by you. But allow me to live among your servants, under your roof, seeing you, eating your bread, serving you, and you will be the breath of my life. Every time I take a morsel of bread, every time you breathe, my heart, which is so corrupt, will change and I will become

honest… "

But the father, embracing him all the time, led him towards the servants, who had gathered together watching in the distance and he said to them: "Quick, bring here the best robe, and basins of scented water, and wash him, spray him with scents, clothe him, put new sandals on his feet and a ring on his finger. Bring a fattened calf and kill it. And prepare a banquet. Because this son of mine was dead and has come back to life, he was lost and has been found. Now I want him to find once again the innocent love of a child, and my love and the celebration of the household for his return must give it to him. He must realise that he is always my dear last-born child, as he was in his childhood a long time ago, when he used to toddle beside me making me happy with his smile and his prattling". And the servants did so.

The elder son was out in the country and he did not know anything until his return. Coming towards the house in the evening, he saw that it was brightly lighted and he heard the sound of instruments and dancing coming from it. He called a servant who was bustling about and asked him: "What is happening?". And the servant replied: "Your brother has come back! Your father had the fattened calf killed because his son has come back to him safe and cured of his wickedness and he ordered a celebration. They are only waiting for you to start". But the first-born was angry because he thought that such a feast for his younger brother was unfair, as he was not only younger, but had been also wicked. And he did not want to go in, on the contrary he was about to walk away from the house.

But the father, informed of the situation, ran out and reached him and endeavoured to convince him, begging him not to spoil his joy. The elder brother replied to his father: "And you expect me not to be upset? You are unfair to your first-born and you hold him in contempt. I have served you since I was able to work, and I have done that for many years. I have never disobeyed an order of yours, not even a simple desire. I have always been near you, and I have loved you for two, to make you recover from the wound inflicted on you by my brother. And you have not given me even a lamb to have a feast with my friends. You are now honouring my brother and you have killed the best calf for him, who offended and abandoned you, and has been a lazy spendthrift, and has now come back because he was driven by starvation. It is really worth while being a hard honest worker! You should not have done that to me".

The father then, clasping him to his heart, said: "Son! Can you believe that I do not love you, because I do not celebrate your behaviour? Your deeds are holy by themselves, and the world praises you because of them. Your brother, instead, needs to be

rehabilitated both in the eyes of the world and in his own. And do you think that I do not love you because I give you no visible prize? But day and night, in every moment of my life, you are present to my heart, and I bless you every moment. You have the continuous reward of being always with me, and what is mine is yours. But it was fair to have a feast, a celebration for your brother who was dead and has come back to good life, was lost and has come back to our love". And the first-born yielded to his father's desire.

And that, My friends, is what happens in the House of the Father. And whoever feels that he is like the younger son of the parable, must believe that if he imitates him in going to the Father, the Father will say to him: "Not at My feet. But rest on My heart, which has suffered because of your absence and is now happy because you have come back". Who is in the situation of the first-born and without any fault against the Father, must not be jealous of the Father's joy, but must take part in it and love the redeemed brother.

That is all. You, John of Endor and you, Lazarus, please remain here. The others can go and set the tables. We shall not be long. » They all withdraw. When Jesus, Lazarus and John are alone, Jesus says to them: « That is what will happen to the dear soul you are awaiting, Lazarus, and that is what is happening to yours, John. God's bounty has no limit… »

… The apostles, together with Mary and the women, go towards the house, preceded by Marjiam who runs ahead frisking. But he soon comes back and takes Mary by the hand saying to Her: « Come with me. I have something to tell you, when we are alone. » And Mary follows him. They turn towards a well, situated in a corner of the little yard, and completely covered by a thick bower that from the ground climbs up towards the terrace forming an arch. Behind it, there is the Iscariot.

« Judas, what do you want? Go, Marjiam… Speak. What do you want? »

« I am guilty… I dare not go to the Master or face my companions… Help me… »

« I will help you. But do you not consider how much grief you cause? My Son wept because of you. And your companions suffered. But come. No one will say anything to you. And, if you can, do not commit the same sins again. It is shameful for a man and a sacrilege against the Word of God. »

« And will You forgive me, Mother? »

« I? I count for nothing as far as you are concerned, since you think you are so great. I am the least of the servants of the Lord. How can you worry about Me, if you feel no pity for My Son? »

« Because I have a mother as well, and if You forgive me, I will feel as if she did, too. »

« She does not know about this fault of yours. »

« But she made me swear I would be good to the Master. I am a perjurer. I can feel the soul of my mother reproaching me. »

« You feel that, do you? But do you not feel the lament and the reproach of the Father and of His Word? You are disgraceful, Judas! You cause grief to yourself and to those who love you. »

Mary is very grave and sad. She speaks without bitterness but with much gravity. Judas weeps.

« Do not weep. Improve yourself. Come » and She takes him by the hand and enters the kitchen.

Everybody is filled with astonishment. But Mary wards off any possible uncharitable remark. She says: « Judas has come back. Behave as the first-born did after his father's speech. John, go and tell Jesus. »

John of Zebedee runs away. Silence hangs heavy on the kitchen… Then Judas says: « Forgive me, all of you, and you, Simon, first of all. Your heart is so paternal. And I am an orphan, too. »

« Yes, I forgive you. Please, say no more about it. We are brothers… and I do not like these ups and downs of forgiveness and relapses. They humiliate both the offender and the forgiver. Here is Jesus. Go to Him. That's all. »

Judas goes away and Peter, not being able to do anything else, starts chopping wood with keen impetuosity…

206. The Parable of the Ten Virgins and the Parable of the Royal Wedding.

1st July 1945.

Jesus is speaking in the presence of Johanan's peasants, of Isaac and many disciples, of the women amongst whom there is the Blessed Virgin Mary and Martha, and of many people from Bethany. All the apostles are present. The boy, sitting in front of Jesus, does not miss one word. I think Jesus has just begun to speak because people are still arriving…

Jesus says: «… it is because of this sensation of fear that I realise is so sharp in you, that today I wish to tell you a sweet parable. Sweet for the men of good will, bitter for the others. But the latter can remove the bitterness. Let them become men of good will, and the reproach, provoked in their consciences by the parable, will no longer exist.

The Kingdom of Heaven is the house of the nuptials of God with souls. The moment a soul enters it, is the day of the nuptials.

Now listen. It is a custom with us that virgins escort the bridegroom when he arrives, to take him with lights and songs to the nuptial house together with his sweet bride. When the procession

leaves the house of the bride, who wearing a veil and deeply moved turns her steps to the place where she will be queen, that is, to a house which is not hers, but will become hers the moment she becomes one body with her husband, the procession of the virgins, who are generally friends of the bride, runs to meet the happy couple, forming a circle of lights around them.

Now it happened that in a town there was a wedding. While the bride and bridegroom were making merry with relatives and friends in the house of the bride, ten virgins went to their place, that is, to the hall in the groom's house, to be ready to go out and meet him when the sound of cymbals and songs warned them that the young couple had left the bride's house to come to the groom's. But the feast in the house of the nuptials was protracted and night fell. As you know, the virgins always keep their lamps lit, so that they do not waste time at the right moment. Now, of these ten virgins, five were wise and five were foolish, and all their lamps were lit and shining. The wise ones, full of wisdom, had provided themselves with small flasks full of oil, to fill up their lamps in the event they should have to wait longer than expected, whereas the foolish ones had only filled their little lamps.

One hour went by after the other. Cheerful conversation, tales and jokes made their waiting pleasant. But later they did not know what to say or what to do, and weary and tired, the ten girls sat down more comfortably and slowly fell asleep with their lamps lit and close to them. At midnight a cry was heard: "The bridegroom is coming, go and meet him!". The ten girls got up on hearing the order, took their veils and garlands, adorned themselves and ran to the shelf where the lamps were. The light of five of them was already fading… The wicks, no longer sustained with oil, which was finished, were smoky, their light was becoming fainter and fainter and they would go out at the least whiff of air, whereas the flames of the other five lamps, which had been refilled by the wise virgins before they fell asleep, were still bright and became even brighter when more oil was added to the lamps.

"Oh!" begged the foolish girls "give us some of your oil, otherwise our lamps will go out as soon as we move them. Yours are already so beautiful!… But the wise virgins replied: "The wind is blowing in the night outside and heavy drops of dew are falling. There is never enough oil to give a flame strong enough to withstand the wind and dampness. If we give you some, also our lights will begin to fade away. And the procession of the virgins would be really a sad one without the flickering flames of lamps! Go, run to the nearest vendor, beg, knock, make him get up to give you some oil". And the foolish girls, panting, creasing their veils, staining their dresses, losing their garlands while pushing one

another and running, followed the advice of their companions.

But while they were on their way to buy some oil, the bride and the bridegroom appeared at the end of the street. The five virgins with their lamps lit, ran to meet them and the young couple entered the house in the midst of them for the final ceremony, when the virgins at the end would escort the bride to the nuptial room. The door was closed behind them and those who were outside were left out. And that was the case of the five foolish bridesmaids, who at last arrived with the oil, but found the door closed and in vain they knocked, hurting their hands and moaning: "Lord, lord, open the door for us! We were in the wedding procession. We are the propitiatory virgins, chosen to bring honour and good luck to your wedding". But the bridegroom, leaving for a moment the closest guests whose leave he was taking while the bride was entering the nuptial room, from the upper part of the house said to them: "I tell you that I do not know you. I do not know who you are. I did not see you rejoicing around my beloved bride. You are usurpers. You are therefore left out of the nuptial house". And the five foolish girls, weeping, went away along the dark streets, with their useless lamps, their creased dresses and torn veils, while their garlands were practically destroyed or lost.

And now listen to the meaning of the parable. I told you at the beginning that the Kingdom of Heaven is the house of the nuptials of God with souls. All the faithful are called to the celestial wedding because God loves all His children. Sooner or later everybody arrives at the moment of the nuptials and it is a great fortune to arrive.

But listen further. You know how girls consider an honour and fortune to be invited as bridesmaids of the bride. Let us see whom the various people represent and you will understand better. The Bridegroom is God. The bride is the soul of a just person who, after the period of engagement in the house of the Father, that is under the protection of and in obedience to God's doctrine, living according to justice, is taken to the house of the Bridegroom for the wedding. The virgin-maids are the souls of the faithful, who following the example set by the bride - the fact that she was chosen by the Bridegroom because of her virtues means that she was a living example of holiness - endeavour to achieve the same honour by sanctifying themselves. They are in a white, clean, fresh dress, with white veils, crowned with flowers. They are holding lighted lamps in their hands. The lamps are very clean, and the wicks are nourished with the purest oil so that they may not be malodorous.

In a white dress. Justice steadily practised gives a white dress and the day will soon come when it will be most white, without even the most remote remembrance of stain, it will be of supernatural, angelical whiteness.

In a clean dress. One must keep the dress always clean through humility. It is so easy to dim the purity of the heart. And those whose hearts are not pure cannot see God. Humility is like water that washes. A humble man soon notices that he has darkened his robe, because his eyes are not dimmed by the fumes of pride and thus he runs to his Lord and says: "I have stained the purity of my heart. I weep at Your feet to be cleansed. Oh! my Sun, purify my heart through Your benign forgiveness and Your paternal love!"

In a fresh dress. Oh! the freshness of a heart! Children have it by gift of God. The just have it by gift of God and through their own will. Saints have it by gift of God and through their will elevated to heroism. But will a sinner, whose soul is torn, burnt, poisoned and disgraced, never be able to have a fresh robe? Oh! of course he will. He begins to have it the moment he looks at himself with disgust. He increases its freshness when he decides to change life. He brings it to perfection when through penance he washes, detoxicates, cures and recomposes his poor soul. And with the help of God, Who does not refuse assistance to anyone who asks Him for a holy help, and through his own will elevated to super-heroism because it is not necessary for him to protect what he has, but to rebuild what he destroyed and thus he must work twice, three times, seven times as much - and with untiring penance, relentless against his sinful ego, he will take his soul back to the freshness of a child's soul. A new freshness, made precious by experience which makes him the master of other people who were once like him, that is, sinners.

With white veils. Humility! I said: "When you pray or do penance, do not let the world see you". In the Wisdom Books it is written: "It is right to keep the secret of the King". Humility is the candid veil worn to defend the good we do and the good God grants us. We must not be proud of the privileged love granted to us by God, nor seek foolish human glory. The gift would be taken away at once. But from the depth of our hearts we must sing to our God: "My soul proclaims Your greatness, o Lord… because You have looked upon Your lowly handmaid". »

Jesus makes a short pause and casts a glance at His Mother, Who blushes under Her veil and bends forward as if She wanted to tidy the hair of the boy sitting at Her feet, but in actual fact to conceal her deep-felt remembrance…

« Crowned with flowers. A soul must weave its daily garland of virtuous deeds, because nothing withered or slovenly looking is to appear in the presence of the Most High. I said daily. Because a soul does not know when God-Bridegroom may appear and say: "Come". Therefore you must never tire renewing the garland. Be not afraid. Flowers wither. But the flowers of virtuous wreaths do not wither. God's angel, whom every man has at his side, picks up

these daily wreaths and takes them to Heaven. And they will be there the throne for the new blessed soul when it enters the nuptial house as the bride.

They have lighted lamps. They have them to honour the Bridegroom and to see the way. How refulgent faith is, and what a kind friend it is! It gives a flame as bright as a star, a flame that smiles because it is sure in its certainty, a flame that brightens also the instrument supporting it. Also the flesh of man nourished with faith seems to become brighter and more spiritual, even in this world, free from premature withering. Because he who believes holds on to God's words and commandments in order to possess God, his ultimate aim, and therefore he shuns corruption, is not perturbed or afraid, feels no remorse, is not compelled to make an effort to remember lies or to conceal evil deeds and remains young and handsome by means of the beautiful incorruptibility of saints: flesh and blood, mind and heart free from lust to contain the oil of faith, to give light without smoke. A constant will to feed that light for ever. Everyday life, with its disappointments, ascertainments, contacts, temptations, disagreements, tends to diminish faith. No! It must not happen. Go every day to the source of the sweet, sapiential oil of God. A lamp with little oil can be put out by the least puff of wind or by the heavy dew of the night. The night… The hour of darkness, of sin, of temptation comes for everybody. It is night for the soul. But if the soul is filled to the brim with faith, its flame cannot be put out by the wind of the world or by the fog of sensuality.

And finally vigilance, vigilance, vigilance. He who is unwarily trustful and says: "Oh! God will come on time, while my light is still on", and makes up his mind to go to sleep instead of keeping awake, and goes to sleep without providing what is necessary to get up and be ready at the first call, and he who waits until the last moment to procure the oil of faith or the strong wick of good will, runs the risk of being left out when the Bridegroom arrives. Be vigilant, therefore with prudence, perseverance, purity, confidence, so that you may be always ready for God's call, because you really do not know when He will come.

My dear disciples, I do not want you to be afraid of God, on the contrary I want you to have faith in His goodness. Both you who will remain here, and you who will be going away, must consider that, if you do what the wise virgins did, you will be invited not only to escort the Bridegroom, but like the virgin Esther, who became queen in the place of Vashti, you will be chosen and elected to be brides, as the Bridegroom "found more approval and favour with you than with anybody else". I bless you, who are about to go away. Take My words with you for yourselves and for your companions. May the peace of the Lord be always with you. »

Jesus goes near the peasants to say goodbye to them once more, but John of Endor whispers to him: « Master, Judas is here now… »

« It does not matter. Take them to the wagon and do as I told you. »

The people at the meeting slowly go away. Many talk to Lazarus… And Lazarus turns towards Jesus, Who after leaving the peasants was going towards him, and says: « Master, before leaving us, speak to us again… It is the desire of the hearts of the people of Bethany. »

« Night is falling. But it is placid and serene. If you wish to gather on the mown hay, I will be speaking to you before leaving this friendly town. Or we can meet tomorrow, at dawn. Because the hour of farewell has come. »

« Later! This evening! » they all shout.

« As you wish. Go now. I will speak to you half way through the first watch »…

… and in fact, untiring, Jesus sets out towards the middle of a recently mown meadow, on which the withering hay forms a sweet smelling soft rug, while the sun sets and also its glow disappears and crickets begin their early uncertain solitary chirping. He is followed by the apostles, the Maries, Martha and Lazarus and their household, Isaac and his disciples, and I would say by all the people of Bethany. Among the servants there is the old man and the woman, the two who on the Mount of Beatitudes found comfort for the rest of their days.

Jesus stops to bless the patriarch, who kisses His hand weeping, and caresses the boy walking beside Jesus and says to him: « You are happy that you can follow Him all the time! Be good, be careful, son. You are very lucky! Very lucky, indeed! A crown is suspended over your head… You are blessed! »

When they are all settled, Jesus begins to speak.

« After the departure of our dear friends, who needed to be confirmed in the hope, nay, in the certainty that little knowledge is required to be admitted to the Kingdom, that only a minimum truth on which one's good will may work is sufficient, I will now speak to you, who are much happier than they are, because you enjoy much more material comfort and you have greater help from the Word. Only by thought I can extend My love to them. Here, My love reaches you also through My word. Therefore, you are to be treated both here on the earth and in Heaven with greater strength, because more will be asked of those to whom more was given. They, the poor friends who are going back to their prison, have the least welfare, and, on the contrary, the greatest sorrow. Therefore, there are only promises of benignity for them, because anything else would be superfluous. I solemnly tell you that their lives are penance and holiness, and nothing else is to be imposed

upon them. And I also solemnly tell you, that like wise virgins, they will not let their lamps go out until the hour they are called. Let them go out? No. The light of their lamps is the only good they possess. They cannot let it go out.

I solemnly tell you that as I am in the Father, so the poor are in God. That is why I, the Word of the Father, wanted to be born poor and to remain poor. Because amongst the poor I feel closer to the Father Who loves the least people and is loved by them with all their strength. The rich have many things. The poor have but God. The rich have friends. The poor are alone. The rich have many comforts. The poor have none. The rich have many distractions. The poor have but their work. Money makes everything easy for the rich. The poor have also the cross of having to be afraid of diseases and famine, because they mean starvation and death to them. But the poor have God. Their Friend. Their Comforter. He Who distracts them from their painful present by means of heavenly hope. He, to Whom man can say - and they know how to say it, because they are poor, humble, alone -: "Father, support us in Your mercy".

What I say on this land of Lazarus, a friend of Mine and a friend of God although he is so rich, may seem strange. But Lazarus is an exception amongst the rich. Lazarus has been successful in achieving that most difficult virtue to be found on the earth, and even more difficult to be practised when it is recommended by other people. The virtue of freedom from wealth. Lazarus is just. He does not feel offended. He cannot be offended because he knows that he is the rich-poor man, and thus My concealed reproach does not affect him. Lazarus is just. And he knows that the world of great people is as I say. I therefore speak and say: I solemnly tell you that it is much easier for a poor man to be in God than it is for a rich one; and in the Heaven of My Father and yours, many seats will be occupied by those who on the earth were despised because they were the least amongst men, like trodden dust.

The poor keep in their hearts the pearls of the words of God. They are their only treasure. Who has only one precious thing, watches over it. Who has many, is bored and absent-minded, proud and sensual. That is why he does not admire with humble loving eyes the treasure given by God, and confuses it with other treasures, only apparently precious, treasures which are the riches of the earth and he thinks: "It is only out of kindness that I accept the words of one who is like me fleshwise! " and by means of strong flavours of sensuality he blunts his capability of savouring what is supernatural. Strong flavours!… Yes, very spicy to disguise their stench and their putrid flavour…

But listen and you will understand better how worldly cares, riches and orgies prevent one from entering the Kingdom of

Heaven.

Once a king celebrated the wedding of his son. You can imagine the feast at the palace. He was the only son, and having reached the perfect age, he was getting married to his beloved bride. The father and king wanted the joy of his son to be surrounded with joy, as he was at last getting married to his dear fiancee. Among the many celebrations he gave a sumptuous dinner. And he prepared it in good time, watching every detail, to ensure it was magnificent and worthy the wedding of the king's son.

He sent out his servants early to tell friends and allies, as well as the mighty ones of his kingdom, that the wedding was to take place on a certain evening and that they were invited, and that they should come to form a worthy retinue to the king's son. But friends, allies and mighty ones of the kingdom did not accept the invitation.

The king then, doubting that the first servants had not spoken clearly, sent out some more, who should insist saying: "Please, do come! Everything is now ready. The tables are laid in the hall, rare wines have been brought from everywhere, oxen and fattened cattle are already in the kitchen to be cooked, women slaves are kneading flour to make cakes and crushing almonds in mortars to make the finest delicacies flavoured with rare spices. The most clever dancers and musicians have been engaged for the feast, Come, therefore, or all the preparations will be useless!"

But friends, allies and great ones of the kingdom either refused or said: "We have other things to do", or pretended to accept the invitation, but then they attended to their own matters, some to their fields, some to their business, some to even less noble affairs. And finally there were some who, bored with so much insistence, took the servant of the king and killed him to keep him quiet, as he insisted saying: "Do not refuse the king's invitation or you may find yourself in trouble". The servants went back to the king and reported the situations and the king flared up in a temper and sent his soldiers to punish the murderers of his servants and chastise those who had scorned his invitation, whilst he intended to reward those who had promised to come.

But at the fixed hour on the evening of the feast, no one came. The king was very angry, he called his servants and said to them: "On no account my son will be left without people who will give him a hearty welcome on the evening of his wedding. The banquet is ready, but the guests we invited are not worthy of it. And yet the nuptial banquet of my son is to take place. Go therefore to the squares, along the streets, stand at the crossroads, stop the passersby, gather together those who are standing there, and bring them all here. Let the hall be filled with joyful people".

The servants went. They went out along the streets, they spread

out on the squares, they stood at crossroads, they gathered as many people as they could find, both good and bad, rich and poor, and took them to the royal palace, and they gave each of them the means to be worthy to enter the hall of the nuptial banquet. Finally they led them into the hall, which was full of jubilant people, as the king desired.

But when the king went into the hall to see whether the feast could begin, he saw one man who, notwithstanding the assistance given to him by the servants, was not wearing a wedding garment. He asked him: "How did you get in here, without a wedding garment?". And the man did not know what to say, because he had no excuse. The king then called his servants and said to them: "take this man, bind him hand and foot and throw him out of my palace, into the dark and icy mud. He shall stay there weeping and grinding his teeth as he deserved through his ingratitude and because he offended me and my son more than me, by entering the banquet hall with a poor dirty garment, whereas nothing must enter it but what is worthy of it and of my son".

As you can see, worldly cares, avarice, sensuality, cruelty bring down the king's wrath on people and cause the children of such cares never to enter again the palace of the king. And you can also see how among those who were invited, for the sake of his son, some were punished.

How many there are nowadays in this land, to whom God has sent His Word! God has really invited the allies, the friends, the great ones of His people, through His servants, and He will invite them again, and more urgently, as the hour of My Wedding approaches.

But they will not accept the invitation, because they are false allies, false friends and they are great only by name, because they are base. (Jesus' voice is rising louder and louder and His eyes are flashing like two gems, in the light of the fire lit between Him and His audience, to give light in the moonless night; the moon is in fact waning and will rise later). Yes, they are base. And because of their baseness, they do not understand that it is their duty and an honour for them to accept the King's invitation. Pride, harshness, lust act like a wall in their hearts. And - wicked as they are! they hate Me and so they do not want to come to My wedding. They refuse to come. They prefer to be connected with filthy policy, with even filthier money and with the most filthy sensuality, rather than come to My wedding. They prefer shrewd calculations, conspiracies, underhand conspiracies, snares, crimes.

I condemn all that in the name of God. Consequently the voice which speaks and the feasts to which they are invited, are hated by them. Those who kill the servants of God are to be looked for among this people: the Prophets who have been the servants till

now; My disciples who are the servants from now onwards. The swindlers of God who say: "Yes, we will come", whereas inwardly they think: "Never on your life!" are to be selected among this people. All that is in Israel.

And the King of Heaven will send to gather at the crossroads those who are not friends, not great ones, not allies, but only people passing by, so that His Son may have a worthy wedding celebration. And through Me, through Me the Son and the servant of God, the gathering has already begun. They will come, whoever they are… And they have already come. And I help them to be clean and properly dressed for the wedding feast. But there will be someone, who for his own misfortune, will misuse also the munificence of God, Who gives him scents and regal garments to make him appear what he is not, that is, a rich and worthy person, and he will take abominable advantage of such bounty to seduce and make a profit… An individual with a wicked soul, embraced by the revolting octopus of all vices… and he will embezzle scents and garments to make an unlawful profit, as he will not use them for the wedding of the Son, but for his own wedding with Satan.

All that will happen. Because many are called but few are those, who knowing how to persevere in their vocation, are chosen. But it will also happen that those hyenas, who prefer putrid food to living nourishment, will be punished by being thrown out of the Banquet hall into the dark and mud of an eternal pond, in which Satan grins horribly at each triumph over a soul and where there is an eternal sound of desperate weeping of the mad people who followed Crime instead of following Bounty Who had called them.

Get up and let us go and rest. I bless you, citizens of Bethany. I bless you all and I give you My peace. And I particularly bless you, Lazarus, My friend, and you, Martha. I bless My old and new disciples, whom I will be sending into the world to invite people to the wedding of the King. Kneel down, that I may bless you all. Peter, say the prayer that I taught you, and say it here, standing beside Me, because that is how it is to be said by those who are destined by God for that task. »

They all kneel down on the hay, only Jesus and Peter remain standing. Jesus, tall as he is, is most handsome in His linen robe, and Peter, in his dark brown tunic, deeply moved, says the prayer, almost trembling, in a voice which although not beautiful is manly, going very slow for fear he might make a mistake: « Our Father… » The sobs of men and women can be heard…

Marjiam, kneeling just in front of Mary Who is holding his hands joined, is looking at Jesus with an angelical smile and says in a low voice: « Look, Mother, how lovely He is! And how lovely also my father is! I seem to be in Heaven… Will my mother be here, watching? »

And Mary, in a whisper ending in a kiss, replies: « Yes, My dear. She is here. And she is learning the prayer. »

« And what about me? Will I learn it? »

« She will whisper it to your soul while you sleep, and I will repeat it to you during the day. »

The boy bends back his little dark-haired head, resting it on Mary's breast, and remains thus while Jesus blesses with the solemn Mosaic blessing.

Then they all get up and go to their homes: only Lazarus follows Jesus, entering Simon's house with Him, to remain a little longer together. All the others come in as well. The Iscariot places himself in a semidark comer and looks mortified. He dare not go near Jesus with the others…

Lazarus congratulates Jesus. He says: « Oh! I am sorry to see You go away. But I am happier than I would have been, had I seen You go away the day before yesterday! »

« Why, Lazarus? »

« Because You looked so tired and sad… You did not speak, and You hardly ever smiled… Yesterday and today You have become once again my kind holy Master, and that makes me so happy… »

« I was so even if I was quiet… »

« You were. But You are serenity and word. That is what we want from You. We drink our strength at those sources. And now those sources seemed to be dried up. Our thirst was painful… You see that also the Gentiles are amazed, and they have come looking for them… »

"The Iscariot, whom John of Zebedee had approached, dares to speak: « Of course, they inquired also of me… Because I was very often at the Antonia, hoping to see You. »

« You knew where I was » replies Jesus briefly.

« I did. But I was hoping You would not disappoint those who were expecting You. Also the Romans were disappointed. I do not know why You behaved like that… »

« And you are asking Me? Are you not aware of the humours of the Sanhedrin, of the Pharisees, and of others as well, with regard to Me? »

« What? Were You afraid? »

« I was disgusted. Last year, when I was alone - all by Myself against the whole world, which did not even know whether I was a prophet - I bore evidence that I was not afraid. And you were a conquest of that audacity of Mine. I spoke openly against a whole world of howlers; I caused the voice of God to be heard by a people who had forgotten it; I cleansed the House of God of the material filth in it, without any hope of purifying it of the more serious moral filth nesting in it, because I am not unaware of the future of men. But I had to do My duty, because of My zeal for the House of

the Eternal Lord, which had been converted into a place where swindlers, usurers and thieves bawled, and I did it to rouse from their torpor those whom centuries of priests' carelessness had caused to fall into spiritual lethargy. It was a cry to gather My people and take it to God… This year I have come back… And I saw that the Temple is still the same… it is even worse. It is no longer a den of thieves, but a place of conspiracy, it will later become the centre of Crime, then a brothel and finally it will be destroyed by a power greater than Samson's, crushing a caste unworthy of being called holy. It is useless to speak in that place, where, I would remind you, I was forbidden to speak. Faithless people, whose poisoned leaders dare to forbid the Word of God to speak in His House! I was forbidden. I was silent for the sake of the least ones. It is not yet time to kill Me. Too many people are in need of Me, and My apostles are not yet strong enough to take on their arms My offspring: the World. Do not weep, Mother, forgive, good Mother, Your Son's need to tell those, who wish to or may deceive themselves, the truth that I know… I will be silent… But woe to those who cause God to be silent!… Mother, Marjiam, do not weep!… Please. Let no one weep. »

But in actual fact they are all weeping more or less bitterly.

Judas, as white as death in his striped red and yellow robe, dares still to speak, in a moaning ridiculous voice: « Believe me, Master, that I am amazed and grieved… I do not know what You mean… I know nothing… It is true that I have not seen anyone of the Temple. I have broken off contacts with everybody… But if You say so it must be true… »

« Judas!… You have not seen Sadoc either? »

Judas bends his head grumbling: « He is a friend. I met him as such, not as one of the Temple… »

Jesus does not reply to him. He turns to Isaac and John of Endor, whom He gives more advice concerning their work.

Meanwhile the women comfort Mary Who is weeping and the boy who is weeping seeing Mary weep.

Also Lazarus and the apostles are sad. But Jesus comes towards them. He is smiling kindly once again, and while embracing His Mother and caressing the child, He says: « And now I will say goodbye to you who are staying. Because we are leaving tomorrow at dawn. Goodbye, Lazarus. Goodbye, Maximinus. Joseph, I thank you for your kindness to My Mother and the women disciples, while waiting for Me. Thank you for everything. Lazarus, bless once again Martha in My name. I will come back soon. Come, Mother, to rest. And you, too, Mary and Salome, if you wish to come. »

« Of course we are coming! » say the two Maries.

« Well… to bed. Peace to everybody. God be with you. » He makes

a gesture of blessing and goes out holding the boy by the hand and embracing His Mother…

The stay in Bethany is over.

207. From Bethany to the Grotto of Bethlehem.

3rd July 1945.

Dawn has just begun to smile when Jesus leaves Bethany and turns His steps towards Bethlehem with His Mother, Mary of Alphaeus, Mary Salome, followed by the apostles and preceded by the boy, who finds reason to rejoice in everything he sees: the butterflies which awake, little birds that sing or peck on the path, flowers sparkling with dewy diamonds, a flock that comes into sight and in which there are many little bleating lambs. After crossing the torrent, which foams merrily amongst stones, south of Bethany, the group turns towards Bethlehem, along a road running between two ranges of hills, completely covered with green olive-trees and vineyards, and a few small fields in which the golden corn in almost ready for reaping. The valley is cool and the road quite comfortable.

Simon of Jonah comes forward, he reaches Jesus' group and asks: « Is this the road to Bethlehem? John says that the last time You took another road. »

« That is true » replies Jesus. « But that was because we were coming from Jerusalem. This one is shorter. At Rachel's sepulchre, which the women wish to see, we will part, as you decided some time ago. We will meet later at Bethzur, where My Mother wishes to stop. »

« Yes, we said so… But it would be so lovely if we were all there… particularly Your Mother… because, after all, She is the Queen of Bethlehem and of the Grotto, and She knows everything so well… If we heard the story from Her… it would be quite different, that's what I mean… »

Jesus smiles looking at Simon, who has kindly expressed his desire.

« Which grotto, father? » asks Marjiam.

« The Grotto where Jesus was born. »

« Oh! Lovely! I will come, too!… »

« It would be lovely indeed! » say Mary of Alphaeus and Salome.

« It would be beautiful!… It would mean going back to the time… when the world did not know You, that is true, but did not hate You yet… It would mean finding once again the love of simple people who could but love and believe, with humility and faith… And I would be able to lay aside this burden of bitterness which has been lying heavily on My heart since I learned that You are so hated, and I would lay it in Your manger… The kindness of Your

eyes, of Your breath, of Your childish smile must still be there… and they would caress My heart… It is so grieved!… » Mary is speaking slowly, in a low voice expressing desire and sadness.

« Then, we shall go there, Mother. You will lead us. You are the Teacher to-day and I am the Little Boy Who is learning. »

« Oh! Son! No! You are always the Master… »

« No, Mother. Simon of Jonah is quite right. In the land of Bethlehem You are the Queen. It is Your first castle. Mary, of the house of David, lead this little group to Your abode. »

The Iscariot is on the point of speaking, but he remains silent. Jesus, Who has noticed and understands, says: « If anyone does not wish to come, because he is tired or for any other reason, he is free to proceed to Bethzur. » But no one replies.

They proceed westwards, along the cool valley. The road then bends lightly to the north along a protruding hill and they thus reach the road which takes from Jerusalem to Bethlehem, near a cube-shaped building surmounted with a small dome, which is Rachel's tomb. They all go near it and pray reverently.

« Joseph and I stopped here… Everything is exactly the same as then. Only the season is different. It was a cold day in the month of Chislev. It had rained and the roads were muddy, then an ice-cold wind began to blow and perhaps during the night there was a frost. The roads had hardened, but furrowed by cart-wheels and crowded with people, they were like a sea crowded with boats and My little donkey had difficulty in proceeding… »

« And did You not, Mother? »

« Oh! I had You!… » and She looks at Him with a tender blissful face. She then resumes speaking: « It was getting dark and Joseph was very worried… a biting cold wind was blowing stronger and stronger… People were rushing towards Bethlehem, pushing one another and many took to abusing My little donkey because it was going so slowly in an effort to find suitable places for its hooves… It seemed to be aware that You were there… and that You were sleeping for the last time in the cradle of My bosom. It was cold… But I was warm. I could feel You coming… Coming? You could say: "Mother, I had been there nine months". Yes. But now it was as if You were coming from Heaven. Heaven was bending down over Me and I could see its brightness… I could see God inflamed with joy for Your oncoming birth and those flames pierced Me, burned Me, abstracted Me from everything… Cold… wind… crowds… it was all… nothing! I saw God… Now and again, with an effort, I would succeed in bringing My spirit back to the earth and I would smile at Joseph, who was afraid I might be cold and tired, and he led the little donkey lest it should stumble and he enveloped Me in a blanket lest I should get cold… But nothing could have happened to Me. I felt no jolts. I seemed to be moving along a starry path,

among snow-white clouds, supported by angels… And I smiled… First at You… I looked at You, through the barrier of the flesh, while You were sleeping, with Your little fists closed, in Your cradle of living roses, My lily-bud… Then I smiled at My spouse, who was so distressed, to encourage him… And then at the people who were not aware that they were already breathing the air of the Saviour…

We stopped near Rachel's tomb to let the donkey rest for a moment and to eat a little bread and some olives, the provisions of poor people. But I was not hungry. I could not be hungry… I was nourished with My joy… We took to the road again… Come. I will show you where we met the shepherd… Do not worry, I cannot go wrong. I am living that hour again and I can find every place because I see everything through a bright angelical light. Perhaps the angelical group is here once again, invisible to our bodies, but visible to our souls with its brightness, and everything is revealed and clear. They cannot be mistaken, and they are leading Me… for My joy and yours. Here: Elias came from that field into this one with his sheep, and Joseph asked him for some milk for Me. And we stopped over there, in that field, while he was drawing the warm nourishing milk and giving some advice to Joseph.

Come, come… Here is the path of the last little valley before Bethlehem. We took it because the main road was a confusion of people and horses, close to the town… There is Bethlehem! Oh! Dear land of My fathers, you gave Me the first kiss of My Son! You opened your-door, as good and fragrant as the bread of which you bear the name (1), to give the True Bread to the world dying of starvation! Like a mother, in whom there is still Rachel's maternal love, you embraced Me, o holy land of David's Bethlehem, first temple of the Saviour, of the morning Star born of Jacob to show Mankind the route to Heaven! Look how beautiful she is now in springtime! But she was beautiful also then, although fields and vineyards were bare! A thin veil of frost was sparkling on the bare branches, which looked as if they were covered with diamond dust, enveloped in a heavenly impalpable veil. The chimney of every house was smoking while supper was being prepared and the smoke, rising from terrace to terrace up to this brow, made the town look veiled as well… Everything was chaste, intimate, waiting… For You, Son! The earth perceived Your coming… And also the people of Bethlehem would have perceived You, because they are not bad, even if you do not believe so. They could not give us hospitality… The good honest homes in Bethlehem were crowded with insensitive proud people, who are always arrogant, and are so also nowadays, and they could not perceive You… How many

(1) Bethlehem according to common interpretation means: « house of bread ».

Pharisees, Sadducees, Herodians, scribes, Essenes there were! Oh! Their being dull at present is a consequence of their being hardhearted then. They closed their hearts to love for their poor sister that night… and they remained and still are in darkness. They rejected God then, by rejecting love for their neighbour.

Come. Let us go to the Grotto. It is useless to enter the town. The best friends of My Child are no longer there. Friendly Nature is quite sufficient to make a fire, with its stones, its stream, its wood. Nature perceived the coming of its Lord… There… come without hesitating… We go round here… There, over there are the ruins of David's Tower. Oh! it is dearer to Me than a royal palace! Blessed ruins! Blessed stream! Blessed tree because, as if by miracle, you allowed the wind to pull down so many of your branches so that we might find firewood and light a fire! »

Mary descends quickly towards the Grotto, She crosses the little stream on a board acting as a bridge, She runs in the open space before the ruins and falls on Her knees at the entrance of the Grotto, She bends and kisses the ground. All the others follow Her. They are touched… The boy, who has not left Her one moment, seems to be listening to a wonderful story and his little dark eyes drink in Mary's words and gestures without missing a single one.

Mary stands up and goes in saying: « Everything is exactly as then!… But then it was night… Joseph lit a lamp when I entered. Only then, dismounting from the little donkey I became aware of how tired and cold I was… An ox greeted us, I went near it, to feel its warmth and lean against the hay… Joseph laid the hay out here, where I am, to make a bed for Me, and he dried the hay for Me and for You, Son, at the fire he had lit in that comer… because he was as good as a father in his love of an angelical spouse… And holding each other's hand, like brother and sister lost in the darkness of night, we ate our bread and cheese, then he went over there to kindle the fire and he took off his mantle to close the entrance… In actual fact he put a veil before the glory of God descending from Heaven. You, My Jesus… and I lay on the hay, in the warmth of the two animals, enveloped in My mantle and covered with a woollen blanket… My dear spouse!… In that hour of anxiety when I was all alone before the mystery of My first maternity, an hour full of uncertainty for every woman, and in My case, in My only maternity, it was also full of the mystery of what it would be to see the Son of God emerge from mortal flesh, he, Joseph, was like a mother, an angel to Me… he was My comfort then and always afterwards… Then silence and sleep enveloped the Just man… so that he might not see what for Me was God's daily kiss…

And with regard to Me, after the interval of human necessities, there came immeasurable waves of ecstasy from a heavenly sea

and they raised Me higher and higher on their bright crests carrying Me up with them into an ocean of light, of joy, of peace, of love, until I was lost in the sea of God, of God's bosom… A voice from the earth whispered: "Are You sleeping, Mary?". Oh! it was so far away!… An echo, a remembrance of the earth!… And so faint it was that My soul did not stir, and I do not know how I replied, while I rose, I rose even higher into the depth of fire, of infinite beatitude, of foreknowledge of God… up to Him… Oh! were You born of Me that night, or was I born of the Trine brightness? Did I give You or did You absorb Me to generate Me? I do not know… And then the descent, from choir to choir, from star to star, from cloud to cloud, a sweet, slow, blissful, placid descent, like a flower carried high in the sky by an eagle and then dropped, descending slowly, on the wings of the air, made more beautiful by a drop of rain, by a tiny piece of rainbow stolen in the sky… alights on its native soil… My diadem: You! You on My heart…

Sitting here, after adoring You on My knees, I loved You. At last I could love You without the barrier of the flesh, and I moved from here to take You to the love of him, who, like Me, was worthy of being one of the first to love You. And here, between these two rustic columns, I offered You to the Father. And here You rested for the first time on Joseph's heart… Then I swaddled You and together we laid You here… And I lulled You while Joseph was drying hay at the fire and when it was warm he placed it on Your chest and then we both adored You, bending over You, as I am doing now, to inhale Your breath, contemplating the humiliation to which love can lead and shedding tears which are certainly shed also in Heaven for the unexhausted joy of seeing God. »

Mary, Who has been pacing to and fro while recalling the past, pointing out the places, panting with love, with bright tears shining in Her blue eyes and a smile of joy on Her lips, bends over Her Jesus, Who has sat on a huge stone listening to Her recollection, and kisses His head, weeping, adoring as She did then…

« And then the shepherds… they were in here, adoring with their good souls and with the deep sigh of the earth which entered with them, with their scent of humanity, of herds and hay; and outside there were the angels, everywhere, who adored with their love, with their songs which no human creature can repeat, and with the love of Heaven, with the air of Heaven which came in with them, which they brought in, in all their brightness… Your birth, Blessed Son!… »

Mary has knelt down beside Her Son and weeps emotionally with Her head resting on His knees. No one dare speak for some time. More or less moved they all look around as if they expected to see the scene painted among the cobwebs and rough stones…

Mary collects Herself and says: « Now, I told you of the infinitely

simple and infinitely great birth of My Son. With My woman's heart, not with the wisdom of a master. There is nothing else, because it was the greatest thing on the earth, concealed under very ordinary appearances. »

« But the day after? And then later? » many ask, amongst them the two Maries.

« The following day? Oh! very simple! I was the mother who nurses her baby, washes him and swaddles him, as every mother does. I used to warm the water of the stream on a fire lit out there, so that the smoke would not hurt His little blue eyes, and then in the most sheltered corner in an old tub I washed My Child and put fresh swaddling clothes on Him. I washed His napkins in the stream and hung them out in the sun… and then - and it was My greatest joy - I suckled Him and He sucked and became rosier and happier… On the first day, at the warmest hour of the day, I sat out there to see Him properly. The light glimmers in here, it does not come in direct and the lamp and the flame of the fire made things look strange. I went out there, in the sun… and I looked at the Incarnate Word. The Mother then became acquainted with Her Son and the handmaid of God with Her Lord. And I was a woman and a worshipper… Then Anna's house… the days near Your cradle, Your first steps, Your first word… But that happened later, in due course… And nothing, nothing was equal to the hour of Your birth… Only when I return to God I will find that fullness once again… »

« But… why set out at the last moment! How unwary of You! Why not wait? The decree provided for an extension for special cases such as birth or disease. Alphaeus said so… » says Mary of Alphaeus.

« Wait? Oh! no! That evening, when Joseph brought the news, You and I, Son, leapt for joy. It was the call… because You were to be born here, and nowhere else, as the Prophets had foretold, and that sudden decree was as if merciful Heaven wanted Joseph to erase even the memory of his suspicion. It was what I was waiting for, for You, for him, for the Judaic world and for the future world, for ever and ever. We decided. And we acted accordingly. Wait! Can the bride delay her nuptial dream? Why wait? »

« Well… anything might have happened… » says Mary of Alphaeus once again.

« I was not afraid of anything. I rested in God. »

« But did You know that everything would happen thus? »

« Nobody told Me. And I never thought of it, so much so that to encourage Joseph, I let him and you doubt that there was still time for the birth. But I knew, I really knew that the Light of the World was to be born during the feast of the Dedication. »

« And you, mother, why did you not go with Mary? And why did

father not think of it? After all you were both going to come here! Did we not all come? » asks Judas Thaddeus sternly.

« Your father had decided to come after the Dedication and he told his brother. But Joseph would not wait. »

« But at least you… » insists Thaddeus.

« Do not reproach her, Judas. By mutual consent we decided it was just to lay a veil on the mystery of this birth. »

« Did Joseph know that it was to take place with those signs? If You did not know, how could he have known? »

« We knew nothing, except that He was to be born. »

« So? »

« So divine Wisdom guided us, as it was right that it should. Jesus' birth and His presence in the world were to appear devoid of uncommon features, which might rouse Satan… And you are aware that the present bitter hatred of Bethlehem people towards the Messiah is a consequence of Christ's first epiphany. Demoniacal hatred made use of the revelation to cause bloodshed, and thereby intensify hatred. Are you satisfied, Simon of Jonah, who are speechless and almost breathless? »

« Yes, so much… so much that I seem to be out of this world, in a holier place than if I were beyond the Velarium of the Temple… So much… that now that I have seen You in this place and in the light of that night, I am afraid that I did behave with respect towards You, as if You were a great woman, but just a woman. Now… now I will not dare to call You: "Mary", as I did before. Heretofore You were the Mother of My Master. Now I have seen You on the crests of those heavenly waves, I have seen You as a Queen, and I, a poor wretch, prostrate myself, because I am a slave » and he throws himself on the ground kissing Mary's feet.

Jesus speaks now: « Simon, stand up. Come here, close to Me. » Peter goes to the left hand side of Jesus because Mary in on His right. « What are we now? » asks Jesus.

« We? Well, we are Jesus, Mary and Simon. »

« Very well. But how many are we? »

« Three, Master. »

« So we are a trinity. One day, in Heaven, the Divine Trinity had a thought: "It is now time that the Word should go to the world". And in a throb of love the Word came upon the earth. He parted therefore from the Father and the Holy Spirit. He came to work on the earth. The Two Who had remained in Heaven contemplated the deeds of the Word, remaining more united than ever to blend Thought and Love to assist the Word working on the earth. The day will come when an order will be issued from Heaven: "It is time for You to come back because everything has been accomplished", and then the Word will go back to Heaven, thus… (Jesus takes a step backwards leaving Mary and Peter where they

were) and from the heights of Heaven He will contemplate the deeds of the two who remained on the earth, who, by holy inspiration, will join together more than ever, to blend power and love to obtain the means of fulfilling the desire of the Word: "The redemption of the world through the perennial teaching of His Church". And the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit will form a chain with Their beams to tie more and more closely the two left on the earth: My Mother, love; you, power. You will certainly have to treat Mary as a queen, but not as if you were a slave. Do you not think so? »

« I think everything You wish. I am overwhelmed! I… the power? Oh! If I am to be the power I must definitely lean on Her! Oh! Mother of my Lord, never abandon me, never, never… »

« Do not be afraid. I will always hold you by the hand, as I used to do with My Child until He could walk by Himself. »

« And after that? »

« And after I will support you with My prayers. Cheer up, Simon. Never doubt God's power. I did not doubt it, neither did Joseph. You must not doubt it either. God gives us His help hour by hour, if we remain humble and faithful… Come out here, now, near the stream, in the shade of the good tree, which, if it were later in summer, would give you its apples in addition to its shade; come. We shall eat before going… Where, Son?" »

« To Jala. It is near. And tomorrow we shall go to Bethzur. »

They sit in the shade of the apple-tree and Mary leans against its robust trunk.

Bartholomew watches Her, so young and still heavenly moved by the recollection She made, while She accepts from Her Son the food which He has blessed and She smiles at Him with loving eyes, and he whispers: « "In His shade I am seated and His food is sweet to My taste". »

Judas Thaddeus replies to him: « It is true. She is sick with love. But we cannot say that She was awakened under an apple-tree. »

« Why not, brother? What do we know about the secrets of the King? » replies James of Alphaeus.

And Jesus smiling says: « The new Eve was conceived of the Thought at the foot of the paradisiacal apple-tree in order to put to flight the serpent and detoxicate the poisoned fruit by means of Her smile and Her tears. She became the tree of the redeeming fruit. Come, friends, and eat of it. Because to be nourished by its sweetness is to be nourished by the honey of God. »

« Master, please satisfy an old desire of mine for some clarification. Does the Song which we are reciting foresee Her? » asks Bartholomew in a low voice while Mary is looking after the boy and speaking to the women.

« The Book speaks of Her from its beginning and future books

will speak of Her until the word of man changes into the everlasting hosanna of God's eternal City » and Jesus turns towards the women.

« You can hear that He descends from David! What wisdom, what poetry! » says the Zealot speaking to his companions.

« Listen » joins in the conversation the Iscariot who is still in the mood of the previous day and speaks very little, although he endeavours to emulate the freedom he had before, « listen, I would like to understand why the Incarnation had to take place. Only God can speak in such a way as to defeat Satan. Only God can have the power of redeeming. And I do not doubt it. But I think that the Word might have lowered Himself less than He did by being born like every other man, submitting Himself to the miseries of childhood and so on. Could He not have appeared in human form, already adult, in the appearance of an adult? And if He really wanted a mother, could He not have chosen one, an adoptive one, as He did for a father? I think I asked Him once, but He did not reply at length, or I do not remember. »

« Ask Him! Since we are on the subject… » says Thomas.

« I won't. I upset Him and I feel as if I have not been forgiven yet. Ask Him on my behalf. »

« I beg your pardon! We accept everything without so many clarifications and you expect us to ask questions? It is not fair! » retorts James of Zebedee.

« What is not fair? » asks Jesus.

There is silence, then the Zealot speaks on behalf of everybody repeating Judas Iscariot's questions and the replies of the others.

« I do not bear a grudge. That is the first thing. I make the comments that I must make, I suffer and I forgive. That applies to him who is afraid, which is still the consequence of his perturbation. With regard to My real Incarnation I say: "It is just that it took place". In future many people will make mistakes concerning My Incarnation, ascribing to Me the erroneous forms that Judas would like Me to have taken. A man seemingly solid in body, but in reality fluent like a lighting effect, so that I would and would not be flesh. And Mary's maternity would and would not be a real maternity. I am really flesh and Mary is really the Mother of the Word Incarnate. If the hour of My birth was but an ecstasy, that is because She is the new Eve without the burden of sin and without the heritage of punishment. But I did not lower Myself by resting in Her. Was the manna enclosed in the Tabernacle perhaps humiliated? No, on the contrary it was honoured by being in that abode. Others will say that I, since I was not real flesh, did not suffer and did not die during My stay on the earth. Of course, since they cannot deny that I was here, they will deny My real Incarnation or My true Divinity. No, I am really One with the Father for

ever, and I am united to God as Flesh, because as a matter of fact it is possible that Love reached what is unreachable because of His Perfection, by becoming Flesh to save flesh. A reply to all these errors is given by My whole life, which shed blood from birth to death and was submitted to everything that is common to man, except sin. Yes, I was born of Her. For your welfare. You do not know how much Justice has been mitigated since the Woman has become its collaborator. Have I satisfied you, Judas? »

« Yes, Master. »

« Do likewise with Me. »

The Iscariot bends his head, is abashed and perhaps he is really touched by so much kindness.

The rest is protracted in the cool shade of the apple-tree. Some fall asleep, some doze. But Mary gets up and goes back into the Grotto and Jesus follows Her…

208. Going to Eliza's at Bethzur.

4th July 1945.

« We shall almost certainly find them if we go back on to the Hebron road for a little while. Please go in pairs looking for them on the mountain paths. From here to Solomon's Pools and thence to Bethzur. We will follow you. This is their pasture area » says the Lord to the Twelve and I understand that He is speaking of the shepherds.

The apostles are getting ready to go, each with his favourite companion and only the inseparable couple of John and Andrew do not get together because they both go to the Iscariot saying: « I will come with you » and Judas replies: « Yes, come, Andrew. It is better thus, John. You and I already know the shepherds. So it is better if you go with someone else. »

« Come with me, then, boy » says Peter leaving James of Zebedee, who without protesting goes with Thomas, while the Zealot joins Judas Thaddeus, James of Alphaeus goes with Matthew and the two inseparable Philip and Bartholomew remain together. The boy remains with Jesus and the Maries.

The road is cool and comfortable and runs among completely green mountains covered with forests and meadows. They meet herds going towards pastures in the faint light of dawn.

At the sound of every cattle-bell Jesus stops speaking and looks round, He then asks the shepherds whether Elias, the Bethlehemite shepherd, is in that area. I understand that by now Elias is called « the Bethlehemite ». Even if other shepherds are from Bethlehem, he is by right or by mockery « the Bethlehemite ». But no one knows where he is. They answer stopping their herds and ceasing to play their rustic flutes.

Almost every young man has one of those primeval cane flutes, which cause Marjiam to be thrown into ecstasies, until a good old man gives him his nephew's saying: « He will make himself another one », and Marjiam goes away happily with the instrument across his back, even if he does not know how to play it, at least for the time being.

« I would like so much to meet them! » exclaims Mary.

« We will certainly find them. In this season they are always near Hebron. »

The boy is interested in those shepherds who saw the Child Jesus and he asks Mary many questions and She explains everything patiently and kindly.

« But why did they punish them? They had done nothing but good! » asks the boy after hearing the story of their misfortunes.

« Because very often man makes mistakes, accusing innocent people of evil deeds that in actual fact were done by someone else. But as they have been good and have forgiven, Jesus loves them so much. We must always be able to forgive. »

« But all the children who were slaughtered, how could they have forgiven Herod? »

« They are little Martyrs, Marjiam, and martyrs are saints. They not only forgive their executioners, but they love them, because they open Heaven to them. »

« But are they in Heaven? »

« No, not just now. But they are in Limbo where they are the joy of Patriarchs and of the just. »

« Why? »

« Because when they arrived with their souls purple with blood, they said: "Here we are, we are the heralds of Christ the Saviour. Rejoice, you who are waiting, because He is already on the earth". And everybody loves them because they are the bearers of these good tidings. »

« My father told me that also Jesus' Word is good tidings. So when my father goes to Limbo after repeating it on the earth, and I also go there, will we be loved as well? »

« You will not go to Limbo, My dear little one. »

« Why? »

« Because Jesus will have already gone back to Heaven and will have opened it and all good people will go straight to Heaven when they die. »

« I will be good, I promise. And Simon of Jonah? He too, eh? Because I do not want to become an orphan a second time. »

« He will be there as well, you may be sure, but there are no orphans in Heaven. We have God. And God is everything. We are not orphans here either. Because the Father is always with us. »

« But Jesus in that lovely prayer, which You teach me by day and

my mother at night, says: "Our Father Who are in Heaven". We are not in Heaven yet. Therefore, how can we be with Him? »

« Because God is everywhere, son. He watches over the baby that is born and over the old man who is dying. The child who is born this moment, in the most remote part of the world, has God's love and eye with him and will have them until he dies. »

« Even if he is as bad as Doras? »

« Yes. »

« But can God, Who is so good, love Doras who is so bad and makes my old father weep? »

« He looks at him with disdain and sorrow. But if he should repent, He would say to him what the father of the parable said to his repentant son. You should pray that he may repent and… »

« Oh! no, Mother! I will pray that he may die!!! » says the child impetuously. Although his remark is not very… angelical, his impetuosity is so sincere that no one can help laughing.

Mary then resumes the sweet gravity of a Teacher: « No, My dear. You must not do that to a sinner. God would not listen to you and would look sternly at you as well. We must wish our neighbour the greatest welfare, even if our neighbour is very bad. Life is a good thing because it gives man the possibility of gaining merits in the eyes of God. »

« But if one is bad, one gains sins. »

« We pray that he may become good. »

The boy is pensive… but he does not like this sublime lesson and he concludes: « Doras will not become good even if I pray for him. He is too bad. Even if all the baby martyrs of Bethlehem should pray with me, he would not become good. You do not know… You do not know that one day he struck my old father with an iron rod, because he found him sitting during working hours? He was not able to stand because he was not feeling well… and he beat him and left him half dead, and then kicked him on his face… I saw him because I was hiding behind a hedge… I had gone there because no one had brought me any bread for two days and I was hungry… I had to run away so that he might not hear me, because I was crying seeing my father like that, with blood on his beard, lying on the ground, as if he were dead… I was weeping when I went to beg some bread… but that bread is still lying here… and it tastes of the blood and tears of my father and mine, and of all those who are tortured and who cannot love those who torture them. I would like to strike Doras that he may feel what a blow is, and I would like to leave him without any bread, that he may learn what it is to be hungry, and I would make him work in the sun, in mud, under the threats of the overseer, without food, that he may know what he gives the poor… I cannot love him because… because he kills my holy father, and I… if I had not found you, to whom would I have

belonged? »

The child, in a fit of pain, shouts and cries, trembling, deranged, striking with his closed fists the air, as he cannot strike the slavedriver. The women are amazed and touched and they endeavour to calm him. But he is really in a fit of grief and does not hear anything. He shouts: « I cannot, I cannot love and forgive him. I hate him, I hate him on behalf of everybody, I hate him, I hate him! … » He is in a pitiful and frightful state. It is the reaction of a creature who has suffered too much.

And Jesus says so: « That is Doras' gravest felony: to drive an innocent child to hate… »

He then takes the child in His arms and speaks to him: « Listen, Marjiam. Do you want to go one day with your mummy, your daddy, your little brother and the old father? »

« Yes… »

« Then you must not hate anybody. He who hates does not go to Heaven. You cannot pray for Doras just now? Well, do not pray, but do not hate. Do you know what you must do? You must never look back to think of the past… »

« But my father who suffers is not past… »

« That is true. But look, Marjiam, try and pray like this: "Our Father Who are in Heaven, please see to what is my wish… You will see that the Father will listen to you in the best possible way. Even if you killed Doras, what would you do? You would lose the love of God, Heaven, the company of your father and mother and you would not relieve of his troubles the old man whom you love. You are too little to be able to do it. But God can. Tell Him. Say to Him: "You know how much I love my old father and how I love all those who are unhappy. Will You please see to this matter, because You can do everything". What? Do you not want to preach the Gospel? But the Gospel teaches love and forgiveness! How can you say to one: "Do not hate. Forgive" if you cannot love and forgive' Leave things to good God and you will see how well He can arrange matters. Will you do that? »

« Yes, I will, because I love You. »

Jesus kisses the boy and lets him down.

The incident is over as well as their journey. There are three large basins excavated in the rocky mountain, a really grand work, and the surface of the most limpid water sparkles as well as the waterfall that from the first basin falls into the second larger one and then into the third one, which is really a little lake. Pipelines convey the water to distant towns. The whole mountain, from the spring to the basins and from the basins to the ground is most beautiful and fertile, thanks to the humidity of the soil in this area, and flowers more composite than wild ones, together with rare scented herbs, make the green sides of the mountain a

most pleasant and brilliant sight. One would think that man has planted garden flowers here together with scented herbs, which, in the heat of the sun, diffuse in the air their aromas of cinnamon, camphor, clove, lavander and other pleasantly pungent, fragrant, strong, sweet smells, in a wonderful blend of the finest earthly perfumes. I would say that it is a harmonious conglomeration of smells because it is really a poem of herbs and flowers in hues and fragrance.

All the apostles are sat in the shade of a tree covered with large white flowers, the name of which I do not know. They are huge pendulous bell-shaped flowers, of white enamel hue, which dangle at the least breath of wind, diffusing their fragrance at each undulation. I do not know the name of this tree. Its flowers remind me of a shrub that grows in Calabria, which the locals call « bottaro », but the trunk is quite different, as this is a tall tree, with a robust trunk, and not a shrub. Jesus calls them and they hasten towards Him.

« We found Joseph almost at once, he was coming back from a market. They will all be at Bethzur this evening. We gathered together, by shouting to one another, and we remained here in the cool shade » explains Peter.

« What a lovely place! It looks like a garden! We were discussing whether it is natural or not, and some insist it is, some that it isn't » says Thomas.

« The land of Judaea has such marvels » states the Iscariot, who is inevitably inclined to grow proud by everything, also by flowers and herbs.

« Yes, but… I think that if Johanna's garden at Tiberias were abandoned and it became wild, also Galilee would have the marvel of wonderful roses among ruins » retorts James of Zebedee.

« You are not wrong. This is the area where Solomon's gardens were, and they were famous, like his palaces, throughout the world of those days. Perhaps it was here that he dreamt of the Song of Songs, and he ascribed to the Holy City all the beautiful flowers that he had grown here » says Jesus.

« So I was right! » exclaims Thaddeus.

« Yes, you were. Do You know, Master? He was quoting Ecclesiastes, joining the idea of the gardens to the idea of the basins and he concluded by saying: "But he realised that everything is vanity and nothing lasts under the sun, except the Word of My Jesus" » says James, the other brother.

« I thank you. But let us thank also Solomon, whether the original flowers are his or not. The basins that nourish herbs and men are certainly his. May he be blessed for them. Now let us go over to that big ruffled rose-bush, which has formed a flowery tunnel from tree to tree. We will stop there. We are almost half way… »

… And they take to the road again about the ninth hour, when every tree casts a long shadow in this area, which is very well cultivated in every part. One gets the impression of walking through a botanic garden because all kinds of trees are represented: forest trees, fruit and ornamental ones. There are people working the land everywhere but they show no interest in the group passing by. On the other hand, it is not the only one, Other groups of Israelites are on their way back from the Passover celebration. The road is quite good although it is cut along the mountains, and the continuously varying landscape relieves travellers of the monotony of the journey. Streams and torrents form liquid silver commas and write words which they then sing in their many intersecting meanderings, which flow through forests or hide under caves from which they come out more beautiful. They seem to be playing with plants and stones like happy children.

Also Marjiam, who is cheerful once again, plays and tries to make music with his instrument to imitate birds. But the sounds he produces are not songs, but dissonant laments, which appear to be most unwelcome to the more difficult members of the group, that is to Bartholomew, because of his age, and to Judas of Kerioth, for many reasons. But no one complains openly and the boy whistles frisking about. Only twice he points at a village nestling in the forests and asks: « Is it mine? » and turns pale. But Simon, who keeps him close to himself, replies: « Your village is very far from here. Come, let us see if we can pick that beautiful flower and take it to Mary » and thus takes his mind off his worries.

The sun is beginning to set when Bethzur appears on its hill and almost at the same time on the secondary road they have taken to go there, they see the flocks of the shepherds and the shepherds who run to meet them. When Elias sees that Mary also is there, he lifts his arms in a gesture of surprise and remains thus, not believing his own eyes.

« Peace to you, Elias. It is I. We promised you, but it was not possible to meet in Jerusalem… Never mind. We are meeting now » says Mary kindly.

« Oh! Mother, Mother!… » Elias does not know what to say. At last he finds words: « Well, I am celebrating Passover now. It is just the same, or better still. »

« Of course, Elias. We sold well. We can kill a little lamb. Oh! Please be the guests of our poor table » beg Levi and Joseph.

« We are tired this evening. Tomorrow. Listen. Do you know a certain Eliza, the wife of Abraham of Samuel? »

« Yes. She lives in her house at Bethzur. But Abraham is dead and his sons died last year. The first one died of a disease in a few

hours, and no one knows of what he died. The other died of a slow death and nothing stopped his decline. We gave her the milk of a young goat, because the doctors said it was good for him. He drank a lot of it, as all the shepherds took it to her, because the poor mother had sent people to look for whoever had a young goat giving milk for the first time in the herd. But it was of no avail. When we came back to the plane the young man would not take any food. When we came back to Adar, he had been dead two months. »

« My poor friend! She was so fond of Me in the Temple… and she was somehow related to Me through our ancestors… She was good… She left to marry Abraham, to whom she had been promised since her childhood, two years before Me and I remember when she came to offer her first-born to the Lord. She sent for Me, not only for Me, but later she wanted Me to be alone with her for some time… And now she is alone… Oh! I must make haste to comfort her! You stay here. I will go with Elias and I will enter by Myself. Sorrow demands respect… »

« Not even I, Mother? »

« Of course, always. But the others… Not even you, My little one. It would be painful for you. Come, Jesus! »

« Wait for us on the village square. Look for a shelter for the night. Goodbye » orders Jesus.

And with only Elias for company, Jesus and Mary go as far as a large house, which is completely closed and silent. The shepherd knocks at the door with his stick. A maidservant looks out of a little window asking who it is. Mary moves forward saying: « Mary of Joachim and Her Son, from Nazareth. Tell your mistress. »

« It is useless. She does not want to see anybody. She is weeping her heart out. »

« Try. »

« No. I know how she drives me away if I try to take her mind off her worries. She does not want anyone, she will not see anyone or speak to anyone. She speaks only to the memory of her sons. »

« Go, woman. I order you to go. Say to her: "Little Mary of Nazareth is here, the one who was your daughter in the Temple… You will see that she will be wanting Me. »

The woman goes away shaking her head. Mary explains to Her Son and to the shepherd: « Eliza was much older than I was. She was waiting in the Temple for her fiance to come back from Egypt where he had gone on inheritance matters and so she remained there up to unusual age. She is almost ten years older than I am. The teachers used to entrust the little girls to the guidance of adult pupils… and she was My companion-teacher. She was good and… Here is the woman. »

In fact the servant thoroughly amazed rushes to open the door wide: « Come in, come in! » she says. And then in a low voice: « May

You be blessed for getting her out of that room. »

Elias takes his leave and Mary enters with Her Son.

« But this man, really… For pity's sake! He is the same age as Levi… »

« Let Him come in. He is My Son and will comfort her better than can. »

The woman shrugs her shoulders and precedes them through the long hall of a beautiful but sad house. Everything is clean, but everything seems dead…

A tall woman, walking bowed in dark clothes, comes forward in the dim light of the hall.

« Eliza! Dear! I am Mary! » says Mary running towards her and embracing her.

« Mary? You… I thought You were dead, too. I was told… when? I don't know… My head is empty… I was told that You died with many other mothers after the coming of the Magi. But who told me that You were the Mother of the Saviour? »

« The shepherds perhaps… »

« Oh! the shepherds! » The woman bursts into bitter tears. « Don't mention that name. It reminds me of the last hope for Levi's life… And yet… yes… a shepherd spoke to me of the Saviour and I killed my son taking him to the place where they said the Messiah was, near the Jordan. But there was nobody there… and my son arrived back in time to die… Fatigue, cold… I killed him… But I had no intention of being a murderer. I was told that He, the Messiah, cured diseases… and that is why I did it… Now my son accuses me of killing him… »

« No, Eliza. It is you that think so. Listen. I instead think that your son has taken Me by the hand saying: "Come to my dear mother. Take the Saviour to her. I am happier here than I would be on the earth. But she listens only to her weeping, and she cannot hear the words that I whisper to her with my kisses, poor mother, she is like a woman possessed by a demon who wants her to surrender to despair, because he wants us to be divided. If instead she resigns herself and believes that God does everything for a good purpose, we would be united for good, with our father and brother. Jesus can do it". And I came… with Him… Do you not wish to see Him?… » Mary has spoken holding the poor wretch in Her arms all the time, kissing her grey hair with unparalleled kindness.

« Oh! if it were true! But, why then did Daniel not come to You, to tell You to come sooner?… But who told me some time ago that You were dead? I don't remember… I don't remember… That is another reason why perhaps I waited too long to go to the Messiah. But they said that He, You, everybody had died at Bethlehem… »

« Never mind who said so. Come here, look, My Son is here. Come

to Him. Make your children and your Mary happy. Do you know that we suffer seeing you thus? » And She leads her towards Jesus Who is standing in a dark corner and only now comes forward, under a lamp that the maidservant has placed on top of a tall coffer.

The poor mother raises her head… and I now see that she is the Eliza who was also on Calvary with the pious women. Jesus stretches out His hands in a gesture of loving invitation. The poor wretch hesitates a moment, then she entrusts her own hands to His and finally, all of a sudden, she throws herself on to Jesus' chest, moaning: « Tell me, tell me that I am not guilty of Levi's death! Tell me that they are not lost for ever! Tell me that I will soon be with them!… »

« Yes, I will. Listen. They are now exulting because you are in My arms. I will soon be going to them, and what shall I tell them? That you are not resigning yourself to the Lord? Shall I tell them that? The women of Israel, the women of David, so strong, so wise, are to be given the lie by you? No. You are suffering, because you suffered all alone. Your grief and you. You and your grief. One cannot endure it thus. Are you no longer bearing in mind the words of hope for those whom death has taken away from us? "I mean to raise you from your graves and lead you back to the soil of Israel. And you will know that I am the Lord when I open your graves and raise you from your graves. When I put My spirit in you, you will live". The soil of Israel, for the just sleeping in the Lord, is the Kingdom of God. I will open it and give it to those who are waiting. »

« Also to my Daniel? And to my Levi?… He was so horrified at death!… He could not stand the idea of being far from his mother. That is why I wanted to die and be buried beside him… »

« But they were not there with their living parts. Only dead things were there and they could not hear you. They are in the place of expectation… »

« But does it really exist? Oh! Do not be scandalised at me. My memory has turned into tears! My head is full of the noise of the weeping and death-rattle of my sons. That death-rattle! That death-rattle. It has dissolved my brains. I have but that deathrattle in here… »

« And I will put the words of life there for you. I will sow the Life, because I am Life, where there is the din of death. Remember the great Judas Maccabee who wanted a sacrifice offered for the dead, rightly thinking that they are destined to rise again and that it is necessary to hasten their peace by means of suitable sacrifices. If Judas Maccabee had not been certain of their resurrection, would he have prayed and made people pray for the dead? As it is written, he thought that a great reward is set aside for those who

die piously, as your sons certainly did… See, you are saying yes? So do not despair. But pray devoutly for your dead ones, that their sins may be expiated before I go to them. Then, without waiting for a moment, they will come to Heaven with Me. Because I am the Way, the Truth and the Life and I lead, and I speak the Truth and I give Life to those who believe in My Truth and follow Me. Tell Me. Did your sons believe in the coming of the Messiah? »

« Of course, my Lord. I taught them to believe that. »

« And did Levi believe that if I wanted I could cure him? »

« Yes, My Lord. We hoped in You… but it was of no avail… and he died disheartened after hoping so much… » The woman resumes weeping again more calmly but more desolately in her calm than when she was agitated.

« Do not say that it was of no avail. He who believes in Me, even if he is dead, will live for ever… Night is falling, woman. I will join My apostles. I leave My Mother with you… »

« Oh! Will you please stay as well!… I am afraid that if You go away, my torture will begin again… The storm is just beginning to calm at the sound of Your words… »

« Do not be afraid! You have Mary with you. I will come again tomorrow. I have something to tell the shepherds. Can I tell them to approach your house?… »

« Oh! Yes. They used to come also last year for my son… Behind the house there is an orchard and a rustic yard. They can go there as they used to do then, to keep the flock together… »

« All right. I will come. Be good. Remember that Mary in the Temple was entrusted to You. I entrust Her to you as well tonight. »

« Yes, do not worry. I will look after Her… I will have to see to Her supper, to Her rest… For how long I have never thought of these things! Mary, will You sleep in my room, as Levi did when he was ill? I in my son's bed, You in mine. And I will feel as if I heard his light breathing again… He always held me by the hand… »

« Yes, Eliza. But before we shall speak of many things. »

« No. You are tired. You must sleep. »

« You, too… »

« Oh! I! I have not slept for months… I weep… and weep… I can do nothing else… »

« This evening, instead, we shall pray, and then we shall go to bed and you will sleep… We shall sleep holding each other's hand. You may go, Son, and pray for us… »

« I bless you. Peace to you and to this house! »

And Jesus goes away with the maidservant who is dumbfounded and keeps repeating: « What a miracle, my Lord! What a miracle! After so many months she has spoken, she has reasoned… Oh! what a wonderful thing!… They were saying that she would die insane…

And I was sorry, because she is good. »

« Yes, she is good and that is why God will help her. Goodbye, woman. Peace also to you. »

Jesus goes out on to the almost dark street and it all ends.

209. Jesus in Eliza's House Speaks of Sorrow that Bears Fruit.

5th July 1945.

The news that Eliza has convinced herself that she should get rid of her tragic melancholy must have spread through the village, so much so that when Jesus, followed by His apostles and disciples goes towards the house, crossing the village, many people watch Him carefully. They also ask the various shepherds questions about Him, why He came, about those who are with Him, about the boy, the women, the medicine He gave Eliza to relieve her of the darkness of insanity so quickly as soon as He arrived, about what He is going to do or say… And who wishes to ask more questions, may do so…

The last question is: « Could we not come as well? » to which the shepherds reply: « That we do not know. You ought to ask the Master. Go and ask Him. »

« And if He should ill-treat us? »

« He does not ill-treat even sinners. Go. He will be pleased. »

A group of people, mainly elderly men and women, of the same age as Eliza, consult one another and then move forward approaching Jesus Who is speaking to Peter and Bartholomew, and rather hesitantly they call Him: « Master… »

« What do you want? » asks Bartholomew.

« To speak to the Master, to ask… »

« May peace come to you. What questions do you wish to ask Me? »

They take heart seeing Jesus smile and say: « We are all friends of Eliza, and of her house. We heard that she has been cured. We would like to see her and hear You. Can we come? »

« You can come certainly to hear Me. To see her, no, My dear friends. Mortify your friendship and also your curiosity. Because it is also curiosity. Have respect for a deep grief which is not to be disturbed. »

« But has she not recovered? »

« She is turning towards the Light. But when night comes to an end, is it suddenly midday? And when you light a fire, is the flame bright at once? The same applies to Eliza. And if a sudden gust of wind blows on the little starting flame, does it not put it out? Use discretion therefore. The woman is one big sore. Also friendship might irritate her because she needs rest, silence, and solitude, not tragic as yesterday's, but a resigned solitude to find herself once

again… »

« So, when shall we see her? »

« Sooner than you think, Because she is now on the path to health. But if you knew what it means to come out of that darkness! It is worse than death. And who comes out of it, after all, is ashamed of having been there and that the world should know. »

« Are you a doctor? »

« I am the Master. »

They have reached the house. Jesus speaks to the shepherds:« Go into the yard. Who wishes to come with you, may do so. But no one must make any noise or go beyond the yard. Will you watch as well » He says to the apostles, « that everybody complies. And you (He speaks to Salome and Mary of Alphaeus) watch that the boy does not make any noise. Goodbye. » And He knocks at the door while the others turn the corner along a narrow street and go where they were told.

The maidservant opens the door. Jesus goes in while the servant repeatedly bows to Him.

« Where is your mistress? »

« With Your Mother… and, just imagine! she has come down into the garden! How wonderful! How wonderful! And yesterday evening she came into the dining room… She was weeping, but she came. I would have liked her to take some food, instead of the usual drop of milk, but I was not successful! »

« She will take it. Do not insist. Be patient also in your love for your mistress. »

« Yes, my Saviour. I will do everything You tell me. »

I think, in fact, that if Jesus told the woman to do the strangest things, she would do them without discussing, because she is so convinced that Jesus is Jesus and that everything He does is right. In the meantime she takes Him into a large kitchen garden, full of fruit-trees and of flowers. But if the fruit-trees have begun by themselves to come into leaf and blossom, to set the fruit and make them grow, the poor flower plants, neglected for over a whole year, have become a miniature forest, which is so entangled that the weaker and lower plants are suffocated beneath the weight of the stronger ones. Flower-beds and paths no longer exist as they have become one chaotic tangle. There is some order only at the end of the garden where the maidservant has sown salads and legumes for her own use.

Mary is, with Eliza under a very ruffled pergola, the shoots and tendrils of which reach down to the ground. Jesus stops and looks at His young Mother, Who with most refined art awakes and directs Eliza's mind to things completely different from what up to yesterday were the thoughts of the afflicted woman.

The servant approaches her mistress and says: « The Saviour has

come. »

The women turn round and come towards Him, one with Her sweet smile, the other looking tired and bewildered.

« Peace be with you. This garden is beautiful… »

« It was beautiful… » says Eliza.

« And the soil is fertile. Look how much beautiful fruit is about to ripen! And how many flowers on the rose bushes! And over there? Are they lilies? »

« Yes, they are, round a fountain where my children used to play so much. But then it was tidy… Now everything is ruined here. And it no longer seems the garden of my sons. »

« In a few days it will be as it was before. I will help you. Is that right, Jesus? You will leave Me here for a few days with Eliza. We have so much to do… » says Mary.

« What You want, I want. »

Eliza looks at Him and whispers: « Thank You. »

Jesus caresses her white hair and then takes His leave to go to the shepherds.

The women remain in the garden, but shortly afterwards, when Jesus's voice greeting the people present is heard in the calm air, Eliza, as if she were attracted by an irresistible force, goes slowly up to a very tall hedge beyond which is the yard.

Jesus speaks first to the three shepherds. He is close to the hedge, and in front of Him there are the apostles and the citizens of Bethzur who followed Him. The Maries with the boy are sitting in a corner. Jesus says: « But are you bound by contract or can you free yourselves from your commitment any time? »

« Well, we are really free servants. But we do not think that it is right to leave him at once, now that the flocks demand so much attention and it is difficult to find shepherds. »

« No, it is not fair. But it is not necessary to do it at once. I am telling you in good time, so that you may provide in all fairness. I want you to be free. To join the disciples and help Me… »

« Oh! Master!… » The three men are thrown into ecstasies for joy. « But will we be able? » they ask.

« I have no doubt about it. So that is settled. As soon as you can do it, you will join Isaac. »

« Yes, Master. »

« You may go among the rest. I will speak a few words to the people. »

And leaving the shepherds He addresses the crowd.

« Peace be with you. Yesterday I heard two unfortunate persons speak. One at the dawn of life; the other at its decline: two souls bewailing their distress. And I wept in My heart with them, seeing how much sorrow there is on the earth, and how only God can relieve it. God! The exact knowledge of God, of His great infinite

bounty, of His constant presence, of His promises. I saw how one man can be tortured by another one and how death can drive him to desolation, on which Satan works to increase his grief and cause ruin. I then said to Myself: "The children of God must not suffer such tortures. Let us grant the knowledge of God to those who ignore it, let us give it once again to those who have forgotten it in the storm of sorrow". But I also saw that I am no longer sufficient by Myself for the infinite needs of My brothers. And I have decided to call many, in greater and greater numbers, so that all those who need the comfort of the knowledge of God may have it.

These twelve apostles are the first. As My representatives they can lead to Me, and therefore to comfort, all those who are bent under too heavy a burden of sorrow. I solemnly tell you: Come to Me, all of you who are afflicted, disgusted, broken-hearted, tired, and I will share your grief with you and give you peace. Come, through My apostles, disciples and women disciples, who are increasing every day with new people full of good will. You will find comfort in your grief, company in your solitude, the love of your brothers to make you forget the hatred of the world, you will find, above all, the supreme comforter, the perfect companion, the love of God. You will no longer doubt anything. You will no longer say: "Everything has come to an end for me!". But you will say: "Everything begins for me in a supernatural world, which abolishes distances and cancels separations", so that orphans will be reunited to their parents who have risen to Abraham's bosom, and fathers and mothers, wives and widows will find their lost children and husbands.

In this land of Judaea, still near Bethlehem of Naomi, I remind you that love relieves pain and gives joy. Consider, you who are weeping, Naomi's desolation when her house was left without men. Listen to the words of her down-hearted dismissal of Orpah and Ruth: "Go back, each of you, to her mother's house. May the Lord be kind to you as you have been to those who have died and to me… Listen to her weary insistence. She who once had been the beautiful Naomi and now was the tragic Naomi, crushed by grief, did not hope for anything else in life. She only wished to go and die in the place where she had been happy in the days of her youth with the love of her husband and the kisses of her children. She said: "Go, go. It is useless to come with me… I am as good as dead… My life is no longer here, but there, in the next world, where they are. Do not sacrifice your lives any longer beside a dying thing. Because I really am 'a thing'. I am indifferent to everything. God has taken everything away from me… I am bitter grief. And I would grieve you… and that would weigh sorely on my heart. And the Lord would ask me to account for that, He Who

has already struck me so hard, because it would be selfishness to keep you, alive, near me, dead. Go to your mothers… But Ruth stayed to support the sorrowful old woman.

Ruth had understood that there are sorrows which are always greater than one's own and that her grief of a young widow was lighter than the woman's who had lost her husband and two sons; as the grief of an orphan boy, who is compelled to live begging, without caresses, without good advice, is by far greater than the deep sorrow of a mother bereft of her children; likewise the keen regret of him who, for a number of reasons, goes as far as to hate mankind and see in every man an enemy whom he must fear and against whom he must defend himself, is even greater than other sorrows, because it involves not only flesh, blood and mentality, but the soul with its supernatural duties and rights and drives it to perdition. How many childless mothers there are in the world for motherless children! How many childless widows there are who could be compassionate towards solitary old aged people! How many there are, who, having been deprived of every love so that they may devote themselves entirely to the unhappy, could fight hatred with their need to love and thus give love to unhappy Mankind, which suffers more and more because it hates more and more!

Sorrow is a cross, but it is also a wing. Mourning divests to reclothe. Rise, you who are weeping! Open your eyes, get rid of nightmares, of darkness, of selfishness! Look… The world is the barren land where one weeps and dies. And the world shouts: "help" through the mouths of orphans, of sick, lonely, doubtful people, through the mouths of those who are made prisoners of hatred by treason or cruelty. Go among those who are shouting. Forget yourselves among those who are forgotten! Recover your health among those who are sick! Be hopeful among those who are despairing! The world is open to those willing to serve God in their neighbour and to gain Heaven: to be united to God and to those whom we mourn. The gymnasium is here. The triumph there. Come. Imitate Ruth in all your sorrows. Say with her: "I will be with you until I die". And even if those misfortunes, which consider themselves incurable, should reply to you: "Do not call me Naomi, call me Mara, for God has marred me bitterly" you must persist. And I solemnly tell you that those misfortunes one day, because of your persisting, will exclaim: "Blessed be the Lord Who relieved me of my bitterness, desolation and solitude, by means of a creature who knew how to make his sorrow bear good fruit. May God bless him because he is my saviour".

Remember that Ruth's kindness to Naomi gave the Messiah to the world, because the Messiah descends from David, as David descended from Jesse, Jesse from Obed, Obed from Boaz, Boaz

from Salmon, Salmon from Nahshon, Nahshon from Amminadab, Amminadab from Ram, Ram from Hezron, Hezron from Perez, and they populated the fields of Bethlehem preparing the ancestors of the Lord. Every good deed is the origin of great things, which you do not even imagine. And the effort man makes against his own selfishness can cause such a wave of love, capable of rising higher and higher, supporting in its limpidity him who caused it, until it lifts him to the feet of the altar, to the heart of God.

May God grant you peace. »

And Jesus, without going back into the garden through the little door built in the hedge, watches that no one goes near the hedge, from the other side of which comes a long weeping… Only when all the people of Bethzur have gone away, He departs with His apostles without disturbing those beneficial tears…

210. Towards Hebron. The World's Reasons and God's.

6th July 1945.

« I do not suppose you wish to make a pilgrimage to all the known places in Israel » says the Iscariot ironically. He is discussing in a group where there are Mary of Alphaeus and Salome together with Andrew and Thomas.

« Why not? Who forbids us? » asks Mary of Clopas.

« I do. My mother has been waiting for me for such a long time… »

« Well go to your mother. We will reach you later » says Salome and she seems to be adding mentally: « No one will miss you. »

« Certainly not! I am going with the Master. Contrary to what had been arranged, Mary is not coming. And that should not have been done to me, because I was promised She would come. »

« She stopped at Bethzur for a good reason. That woman was really unhappy. »

« Jesus could have cured her at once, without making her recover by degrees. I do not know why He is no longer fond of working outstanding miracles. »

« He must have holy reasons for doing what He did » states Andrew calmly.

« Of course! And He thus loses proselytes. Our stay at Jerusalem, what a disappointment it was! The more there is need for highflown things, the more He crouches in the dark. I intended so much to see, to fight… »

« Excuse my question… But what did you want to see and with whom did you intend to fight? » asks Thomas.

« What? Who? But I wanted to see His miracles and then make head against those who say that He is a false prophet or possessed. Because that is what they say, see? They say that if Beelzebub does not support Him, He is a poor wretch. And since Beelzebub's

whimsical disposition is well known and we know that he delights in taking and leaving, as a leopard does with its prey, and that this mentality is justified by facts, I become impatient when I think that He does nothing. We are cutting a lovely figure! The apostles of a Master… Who does nothing but teach… that is undeniable, but nothing else. » Judas' abrupt pause after the word « Master » makes the others think he was about to say something nasty.

The women are horrified and Mary of Alphaeus, being a relative of Jesus', says frankly: « I am not surprised at that, but I am astonished that He puts up with you, boy! »

But Andrew, the ever meek Andrew, loses his temper and blushing, very much like his brother just this once, says furiously: « Go away! And you won't cut any more bad figures because of the Master! And who asked you to come? He called us. Not you. You had to insist several times to be accepted. You imposed yourself. I do not know who keeps me from reporting everything to the others… »

« One can never talk to you. They are right when they say you are quarrelsome and ignorant people… »

« Well, to tell you the truth, neither do I understand how you can say that the Master made a mistake. Neither did I know of the whimsical disposition of the Demon. Poor thing! He must certainly be odd. Had he been intelligent he would not have rebelled against God. But I will take note of that » teases Thomas to avert the approaching storm.

« Don't jest, because I am serious. Can you perhaps say that He attracted attention in Jerusalem? Also Lazarus said so… »

Thomas breaks into a hearty laugh. Then, still laughing, and his laughter has already disconcerted Judas, he says: « He has not done anything? Go and ask the lepers at Siloam and Hinnom. That is: you will not find anyone at Hinnom, because they were all cured. If you were not there, because you were in a hurry to go to… your friends, and consequently you do not know, that does not prevent the valleys of Jerusalem and many more places from resounding with the hosannas of the lepers cured » concludes seriously Thomas. And he continues sternly: « You suffer from bile trouble, my friend. And thus you taste bitter and see green everywhere. It must be a recurring disease with you. And believe me, it is not very pleasant to lie with one like you. You must change. I will not tell anybody anything, and if these good women will listen to me, they will be quiet as well, and so will Andrew. But you must change. You must not think that you have been disappointed because there is no disappointment. Neither are you necessary because the Master knows what to do by Himself. Don't you try to be the Master's master. And if for that poor woman of Eliza He acted thus, it means that that was the right thing to do. Let snakes

hiss and spit as they like. Don't go to the trouble of acting as broker between them and Him and above all do not think that you lower yourself by being with Him. Even if He did not cure even a cold in future, He is always powerful. His word is a continuous miracle. And set your mind at rest. We have no archers behind us! Don't worry, we will succeed in convincing the world that Jesus is Jesus. And be quiet, if Mary promised to come to your mother's, She will come. In the meantime we will go round this beautiful part of the country, it is our work! And why not? Let us make the women disciples happy by going to visit Abraham's tomb, his tree and Jesse's sepulchre and… what else did you say? »

« They say that this is the place where Adam lived and where Abel was killed… »

« The usual senseless tales! » grumbles Judas.

« In one hundred years' time they will say that also the Grotto of Bethlehem and many other things were a tale! But excuse me! You wanted to go to that stinking cave at Endor, which you must agree did not belong to a holy cycle; don't you think so? And they have come here where they say there is the blood and the ashes of saints. Endor brought us John and who knows… »

« What a handsome acquisition John is! » scoffs the Iscariot.

« His face isn't, no. But in his soul he may be better than we are. »

« What? With his past! »

« Be quiet. The Master said that we are not to remember it. »

« Lovely! If I did any such things, I wonder whether you would not remember them! »

« Goodbye, Judas. You had better be by yourself. You are too cross. I wish I knew what is the matter with you! »

« What is the matter with me, Thomas? The trouble is that I see that we are being neglected to the advantage of strange newcomers. And I see that everybody is preferred to me. And I also notice how He waits until I am away to teach you how to pray. And do you expect me to be happy with such a situation? »

« No, I don't. But may I point out that if you had come with us for the Passover Supper you would have been on the Mount of Olives as well with us, when the Master taught us the prayer. I do not see how we are neglected because of any strange newcomer. Are you referring to the poor innocent boy? Or because unhappy John is with us? »

« Because of both of them. Jesus hardly ever speaks to us now. Look at Him even now… He is loitering over there, talking and talking to the boy. He will have to wait a long time before He can put him among the disciples! And the other one will never be a disciple. He is too proud, too learned, too hardened, with bad tendencies. And yet: "John here, John there" »

« Father Abraham, help me to bear this in patience!!! And in what

do you think the Master prefers others to you? »

« Do you not see that even now? When it was time to leave Bethzur, after stopping to teach three shepherds who could have very well been taught by Isaac, whom does He leave with His mother? Me? you? No. He leaves Simon. An old man who can hardly speak!… »

« But the little he says is always said right » retorts Thomas, who is now alone because the women and Andrew have gone away and are walking fast in front of them as if they wished to get past a stretch of the road where the sun is very warm.

The two apostles have become so excited that they do not hear Jesus coming, because the noise of His footsteps is completely muffled by the dust of the road. But if He makes no noise, the two are shouting as loud as ten people and Jesus can hear. Behind Him there are Peter, Matthew, the two cousins of the Lord, Philip and Bartholomew and the two sons of Zebedee with Marjiam between them.

Jesus says: « You are right, Thomas. Simon speaks little, but the little he says is always right. His mind is placid and his heart honest. And above all he has a great good-will. That is why I left him with My Mother. He is a true reliable man and at the same time he knows how to live, he has suffered and is old. Therefore I am saying this because I suppose there is someone who thinks My choice was unfair - therefore he was the most suitable to remain. Judas, I could not allow My Mother to be left alone near a poor woman who is still ill. And it was just that I should leave Her. My Mother will complete the work that I started. But I could not leave Her with My brothers, or with Andrew, James or John, or with you. If you do not understand the reason, I do not know what to say… »

« Because She is Your Mother, She is young, beautiful, and people… »

« No! People will always have filth in their thoughts, on their lips and hands and particularly in their hearts, dishonest people who see their sentiments in everybody else; but I am not concerned with their mud. It falls off by itself, when it is dry. But I preferred Simon because he is old and he would not remind the desolate woman too much of her dead sons. You young men would have recalled them with your youth… Simon knows how to watch without being noticed, he never demands anything, he understands and can control himself. I could have taken Peter. Who would be better than he near My Mother? But he is still too impulsive. You know that I tell him openly, and he takes no offence. Peter is sincere, and he loves sincerity even to his own detriment. I could have taken Nathanael. But he has never been to Judaea before. Simon instead knows the country well and he will

be invaluable in bringing My Mother to Kerioth. He knows where your country house and the town one are and he will not… »

« But… Master!… But is Your Mother really coming to mine? »

« We said so. And when you say something, you do it. We shall proceed slowly, stopping to evangelize these villages. Do you not want Me to evangelize Your Judaea? »

« Of course, Master!… But I believed… I thought… »

« Above all you were causing yourself a lot of trouble through your own imagination. By the second phase of the moon of Sivan we shall all be at your mother's. We, that is also My Mother and Simon. For the time being She is evangelizing Bethzur, a Judaean town, as Johanna is evangelizing Jerusalem with the assistance of a girl and a priest who was previously a leper, as Lazarus with Martha and old Ishmael are evangelizing Bethany, as Juttah is evangelized by Sarah and I am sure that your mother speaks of the Messiah at Kerioth, You cannot certainly say that I have left Judaea without voices. On the contrary, although it is more narrow-minded and stubborn than any other region, I have given it the sweetest voices, the voices of women, beside those of Isaac, a holy man, and of Lazarus, a friend of Mine. A woman knows how to use words with the subtle art of a woman, a mistress in leading souls to where she wants. Are you not speaking any more? Why are you almost weeping, you big moody boy? What is the use of poisoning yourself with shadows? Have you still any reason to be upset? Tell Me! Speak up… »

« I am bad… and You are so good. Your goodness always strikes me, because it is always so fresh and so new… I… I can never tell when I am going to find it on my way. »

« You are right. It is not possible for you to know. Because it is neither fresh nor new. It is eternal, Judas. It is omnipresent, Judas… Oh! We are near Hebron and Mary, Salome and Andrew are waving their hands to us. Let us go. They are speaking to some men. They must be asking where the historical places are. Your mother is becoming young again by this recollection, my dear brother! »

Judas Thaddeus smiles at his Cousin and Jesus smiles back.

« We are all becoming young! » says Peter. « I seem to be at school once again. But this is a lovely school! Much better than Elisha's, the grumbler. Do you remember him, Philip? What did we not do to him! Remember the story of the tribes? "Say the towns of the tribes!"; "You did not say them in chorus… Repeat them… "; "Simon, you look like a sleeping frog. You are left behind. Start all over again". O dear! My head was full of names of towns and villages of bygone days, and I knew nothing else. Instead here, one really learns! Do you know, Marjiam? One of these days your father will be going to sit his exams, now that he has

learned… »

They all laugh while going towards Andrew and the women.

211. Welcome Reception at Hebron.

7th July 1945.

They are all sitting in a circle in a thicket near Hebron and they are eating while speaking to one another. Judas, who is now sure that Mary will go to his mother's, is in the best of spirits and endeavours to erase the memory of his bad humour with his companions and the women, by showering his attention on them. He must have gone to the village to do the shopping and he says that he has found a great difference in it since last year. « The news of Jesus' preaching and miracles has reached this place. And the people have begun to ponder many things. Do You know, Master, that Doras has some property in this part of the country? Also Chuza's wife has some land on these mountains and a castle of her own, as marriage settlement. Obviously the ground has been prepared both by her and by Doras' peasants, because some of his men from Esdraelon must be here. He… Doras told them to be quiet. But they!… I don't think they would be silent even if he tortured them. The death of the old Pharisee greatly surprised everybody, You know? And the very good health of Johanna, who came here before Passover. Ah! Also Aglae's lover has served You. You know that she ran away shortly after we came here. And he played havoc among many innocent people to avenge himself. So that the people concluded by thinking of You as an avenger of the oppressed and they are now expecting You. I mean the better ones… »

« Avenger of the oppressed! I really am. But in a supernatural way. None of those who see Me with sceptre and axe in My hands as king and executioner according to the spirit of the earth, is right. I certainly came to free people from oppression. From the oppression of sin, which is the gravest, of illness, of desolation; from ignorance and selfishness. Many will learn that it is not fair to oppress people, simply because one has been placed by fate in a high position, and that, on the contrary, a high position should be used to raise up those who are down at the bottom. »

« Lazarus does that, also Johanna. But they are only two against hundreds… » says Philip disconsolately.

« Rivers are not as wide at their sources as they are at their estuaries. A few drops, a trickle of water, but later… There are rivers that look like seas at their mouths. »

« The Nile, eh? Your Mother told me of the time You went to Egypt. She always said to me: "A sea, believe Me, a green-blue sea. To see it in flood is a dream!" and She told me of the plants that seem to spring from the water and of all the greenery that seemed

to be left by the receding water… » says Mary of Alphaeus.

« Well, I tell you that, as the Nile at its source is a trickle of water and then becomes the giant it is, so the tiny trickle of great people who for the time being bend with love and out of love over the least of their brothers, will become a multitude later. For the time being Johanna, Lazarus, Martha, but how many later! » Jesus seems to be seeing those who will be merciful to their brothers and He smiles, enraptured in His vision.

Judas confides that the head of the synagogue wanted to come with him, but he did not dare to take a decision by himself: « Do you remember, John, how he drove us away last year? »

« I remember… But let us ask the Master. »

And when Jesus is questioned He says that they will go into Hebron. If the people want them, they will call them and they will stop; otherwise they will pass without pausing.

« So we will see also the Baptist's house. To whom does it belong now? »

« To whoever wants it, I think. Shammai went away and never came back. He took away servants and furniture. The citizens to avenge themselves of his abuse of power, knocked the enclosure wall down, and the house now belongs to anybody. At least the garden does. They gather there to venerate their Baptist. They say that Shammai was murdered. I do not know why… apparently because of women… »

« Certainly some filthy plot at court!… » whispers Nathanael through his beard.

They get up and go towards Hebron, towards the Baptist's house. When they are almost there, they see a serried group of citizens coming forward rather hesitatingly. They seem curious and embarrassed. But Jesus greets them smiling. They take heart, they open out and that severe person, the head of the synagogue, whom they had met in the previous year, emerges from the group.

« Peace to you! » greets Jesus instantly. « Will you allow us to stop in your town? I am here with all My favourite disciples and with some of their mothers. »

« Master, but do You not bear us, or me, a grudge? »

« Grudge? I do not know what it is, neither do I know why I should bear it. »

« Last year I offended You… »

« You offended an Unknown man, thinking it was your right to do so. Later you understood and you were sorry you had done it. But that is past. And as repentance cancels sin, so the present deletes the past. Now I am no longer Unknown to you. So what are your sentiments towards Me? »

« Of respect. Lord. Of… desire… »

« Desire? What do you want from Me? »

« To know You better than I do at present. »

« How? In what way? »

« Through Your word and Your deeds. We have received news about You, Your doctrine, Your power, and we were told that You were involved in the liberation of the Baptist. So You did not hate him, You did not try to oust our John!… He himself admitted that it was through You that he saw once again the valley of the holy Jordan. We went to him and spoke to him of You and he said to us: "You do not know what you have rejected. I should curse you, but I forgive you because He taught me to forgive and to be meek. But if you do not wish to be anathematised by the Lord and by me, love the Messiah. And have no doubts. This is his evidence: spirit of peace, perfect love, greatest wisdom, heavenly doctrine, absolute meekness, power over everything, total humility, angelical chastity. You cannot be wrong. When you breathe peace near a man Who says He is the Messiah, when you drink the love emanating from Him, when you pass from your darkness into Light, when you see sinners being redeemed and flesh being cured, then say: 'This is truly the Lamb of God!' ". We know that Your deeds are those mentioned by John. Therefore forgive us, love us, give us what the world expects from You. »

« That is why I am here. I have come from far away to give to the town of John also what I give every place that accepts Me. Tell Me what you wish from Me. »

« We also have sick people, and we are ignorant. We are ignorant particularly with regard to what is love and goodness. John, in his total love for God, has an iron hand and a fiery word and he wants to bend everybody as a giant bends a blade of grass. Many give way to dejection, because man is more sinful than holy. It is difficult to be saints!… You… they say that You raise, You do not bend, You do not cauterise, You use balms, You do not crush, You caress. We know that You are paternal with sinners and You are powerful against diseases, whichever they may be, also and above all the diseases of hearts. Our rabbis can no longer do that. »

« Bring Me your sick people and then gather in this garden, which has been abandoned and was desecrated by sin after it had been made a temple for the Grace that lived in it. »

The people of Hebron spread out in all directions as fast as swallows. Only the head of the synagogue remains and together with Jesus and the disciples he goes in beyond the enclosure of the garden, to the shade of a bower where entangled roses and vines have grown wild. The population is soon back. With them there is a paralytic in a litter, a blind young woman, a dumb boy and two sick people, whose trouble I do not know. The last two are walking supported by other people.

Jesus greets each sick person saying: « Peace to you. » Then He

asks the kind question: « What do you want Me to do for you? » followed by the chorus of lamentations, as each one wishes to tell his own story.

Jesus, Who was sitting, stands up and goes to the dumb boy, whose lips He wets with His saliva and utters the great word: « Open. » And He repeats it wetting the sealed eyelids of the woman with His finger moistened with saliva. He then stretches out His hand to the paralytic and says to him: « Rise! » and finally He imposes His hands on the two sick people saying: « Be cured, in the name of the Lord! ». And the boy who previously mumbled, says distinctly: « Mummy! », while the young woman winks at the light with her unsealed eyelids, and with her fingers screens her eyes from the unknown sun, weeping and laughing, and looks again, with half open eyes, not being accustomed to the light, at the leaves, the earth, the people and particularly at Jesus. The paralytic comes boldly off the stretcher and his compassionate bearers lift it, empty as it is, to make the people afar understand that the grace has been granted, while the two sick people cry for joy and kneel down to venerate their Saviour.

The crowds are frantically shouting hosanna, Thomas, who is near Judas, looks at him so intensely and with such a clear expression, that Judas declares to him: « I was foolish, forgive me. »

When the shouting subsides, Jesus begins to speak.

« The Lord spoke to Joshua saying: "Speak to the children of Israel and say to them: Choose the cities of refuge of which I spoke to you through Moses, where a man who has killed accidentally, unwittingly, may find sanctuary and may thus avoid the wrath of the next of kin, the avenger of blood". And Hebron was one of those towns. It is also written: "And the elders of the town will not hand the innocent man over to him who wants to kill him, but they will receive him and assign him a place where to live and he will remain there until he appears for judgement and until the death of the high priest then in office; only then he may go back to his town and to his house".

That law already contemplates and prescribes merciful love towards our neighbour. God enacted that law because it is not legal to condemn without interrogating the accused, neither is it legal to kill in a fit of wrath. The same can be said with regard to moral crimes and accusations. It is not legal to accuse unless one knows, neither can one pass judgement without interrogating the accused. But nowadays a new series of sentences and accusations has been added to those already existing in respect of the usual sins or alleged offences: the ones moved against those who come in the name of God. In the past they were moved against the Prophets, now they are repeated against the Precursor of Christ and against Christ.

You are aware of it. Drawn by deception out of the land of Shechem, the Baptist is now awaiting death in Herod's prison, because he will never submit to falsehood or compromise, and his life may be crushed and his head cut off, but they will not be able to suppress his honesty or cut his soul off the Truth, which he has served faithfully in all its divine, supernatural and moral forms. And likewise Christ is persecuted with double and decuple fury, because He does not confine Himself to saying: "It is not lawful" to Herod, but He thunders the same "It is not lawful" wherever He finds sin or knows it is a sin, without excluding any class, in the name of God and for God's honour.

How can that happen? Are there no more servants of God in Israel? Yes, there are. But they are "idols".

In Jeremiah's letter to the exiles, the following is written among many other things. And I am drawing your attention to it because every word of the Book is a lesson that, as the Spirit had it written for a current event, refers to an event that will take place in the future. So it is written: "… When you enter Babylon you will see gods made of gold, silver, stone, wood… Be on your guard, do not imitate the foreigners, do not have any fear of their gods… Say in your hearts: 'Lord, it is You only that we must worship' ". And the letter describes the details of those idols whose tongues are made by a craftsman and they do not make use of them to reproach their false priests, who strip them of their gold to clothe prostitutes with it and later they remove the same gold, desecrated by the perspiration of prostitution, to reclothe the idol; idols that rust and woodworm can corrode and are clean and tidy only if man washes their faces and clothes them, whereas they can do nothing by themselves, although they have sceptre and axe in their hands. And the Prophet concludes: "Therefore be not afraid of them". And he continues: "Those gods are as useless as broken pots. Their eyes are full of the dust raised by the feet of those who enter the temple, and they close them tight, as in a sepulchre or like a man who has offended the king, because anyone can steal their precious robes. They cannot see the light of the lamps, so they are like temple beams, and the lamps serve only to blacken them with smoke, while owls, swallows and other birds fly over their heads and soil them with excrement, and cats nestle among their clothes and tear them. So you must not be afraid of them, they are dead things. Neither is their gold of any use to them, it is only a display, and if it is not polished, the idols do not shine, as they did not feel anything when they were made. Fire did not awake them. They were bought at fabulous prices. They are carried wherever man wants to take them because they are shamefully powerless… So why are they called gods? Because they are worshipped with offerings and a show of false ceremonies, which are not felt by those

who perform them, nor believed by those who see them. Whether they are treated badly or well, they are incapable of paying back either treatment, as they are incapable of electing or overthrowing a king, they can give neither wealth nor evil, they cannot save a man from death or deliver a weak man from an overbearing one. They feel no pity for widows and orphans. They are like the stones of the mountains"… The letter says more or less that.

Now, we also have idols, no more saints, in the ranks of the Lord. That is why Evil can rise against Good. The evil that soils with excrement the intellects and hearts of those who are no longer saints, and nestles among the false robes of goodness.

They can no longer speak the words of God. Of course! Their tongue is made by man and they speak the words of man, when they do not speak Satan's. And they can only foolishly reproach the innocent and the poor, but they are silent where they see the corruption of powerful people. Because they are all corrupt and they cannot accuse one another of the same crimes. They are greedy, not for the Lord, but for Mammon, and they work accepting the gold of lust and crime, bartering it, stealing it, seized with immoderate desire exceeding every limit and imagination. They are covered with dust, which rots on them and if they show clean faces, God sees their filthy hearts. They are corroded by the rust of hatred and the worm of sin and they cannot react to save themselves. They brandish maledictions as if they were sceptres and axes, but they do not know that they are cursed. Isolated in their thoughts and their hatred, like corpses in a sepulchre or prisoners in jail, they remain there, clinging to the bars lest somebody might take them away from there, because those dead people are still something: mummies, nothing else but mummies looking like human beings, while their bodies have turned into dry wood, and outside they would be old-fashioned articles in a world seeking Life, in need of Life as a child needs a mother's breast, a world that wants who can give it Life and not the stench of death.

They do live in the Temple and the smoke of the lamps, that is of honours, blackens them, but no light descends upon them; and all passions nestle in them like birds and cats, while the fire of their mission does not give them the mystical torture of being burnt by the fire of God. They are refractory to Love. The fire of Charity does not inflame them, as Charity does not clothe them with its golden brightness. The Charity of double form and double source: charity of God and of neighbour, the form; charity from God and from man, the source. Because God withdraws from a man who does not love, and thus the former source ceases; and man withdraws from a wicked man, and also the latter source ceases. Charity deprives a loveless man of everything. They allow

themselves to be bought at a cursed price, and to be led where it suits profit and power.

No. It is not right! No money can buy a conscience, particularly the conscience of a priest or a teacher. It is not right to acquiesce in the mighty things of the earth when they induce acts contrary to God's commandments. That is spiritual inability and it is written: "A eunuch is not to be admitted to the assembly of the Lord". Thus, if a man, impotent by nature, cannot belong to the people of God, can a spiritually impotent man be His minister? Because I solemnly tell you that many priests and masters are suffering from guilty spiritual barrenness, as they lack spiritual virility. Many. Too many!

Meditate. Observe. Compare. You will see that we have many idols, but few ministers of the Good which is God. That is why the sanctuary towns are no longer a sanctuary. Nothing is now respected in Israel and saints die because those who are not saints hate them.

But I invite you: "Come!". I call you in the name of your John who is languishing because he is a saint, who was struck because he precedes Me and because he endeavoured to remove the filth from the paths of the Lamb. Come to serve God. The time is near. Do not be unprepared for Redemption. Let the rain fall on the sown ground. Otherwise it will fall in vain. You people of Hebron must be the leaders! You lived here with Zacharias and Eliza: the holy people who deserved John from Heaven; and here John spread the scent of Grace by means of his true childish innocence and from the desert he sent you the anti-corrupting incense of his Grace, which has become a wonder of penance. Do not disappoint your John. He raised the love for our neighbour to an almost divine level, whereby he loves the last dweller on the desert, as he loves you, his fellow-citizens, and he certainly implores Salvation for you. And Salvation means to follow the Voice of the Lord and believe in His Word. And from this sacerdotal town come in a body to the service of God. I am passing and I call you. Do not be inferior to prostitutes, for whom one word of mercy is sufficient to persuade them to abandon their previous life and come on to the way of Good.

I was asked upon My arrival: "But do You not bear us a grudge?" Grudge? No, I have love for you! And I hope to see you in the multitude of My people, whom I lead to God, in the new exodus towards the true Promised Land: the Kingdom of God, beyond the Red Sea of sensuality and the deserts of sin, free from all kinds of slavery, to the eternal Land, which abounds in delight and is saturated with peace… Come! This is Love passing by. Whoever wishes can follow Him, because only good-will is required to be accepted by Him. »

Jesus has finished and there is wonder-struck silence. It seems that many are weighing, testing, enjoying and comparing the words they have heard.

While that is happening and Jesus, Who is tired and hot, sits down and speaks to John and Judas, a loud noise is heard coming from the other side of the garden enclosure. The shouts, at first confused, become clearer: « Is the Messiah there? Is He there? » and when they receive an affirmative reply, they bring forward a cripple who is so deformed that he looks like an S.

« Oh! it is Mashal! »

« But he is too crippled! What does he expect? »

« There is his mother, poor woman! »

« Master, her husband left her because of that freak of nature, her son, and she lives here of charity. But she is old and will not live very long… »

The freak of nature, he really is, is now before Jesus. It is not possible to see his face as he is so bent and twisted. He looks like the caricature of a man-chimpanzee, or of a humanised camel. His mother, a poor old wretch, does not even speak, she only moans: « Lord, Lord… I believe… »

Jesus lays His hands on the crooked shoulders of the man, who hardly reaches up to His waist, looks up to Heaven and thunders: « Rise and walk in the ways of the Lord » and the man gives a start and then springs up as straight as the most perfect man. His movement is so rapid that one would think that the springs holding him in that abnormal position, had suddenly broken. He now reaches up to Jesus' shoulders, he looks at Him, then falls on his knees, with his mother, kissing the feet of his Saviour.

What happens in the crowd is indescribable… And against His will, Jesus is compelled to stay in Hebron, because the people are ready to make barriers at the gates to prevent Him from going out.

He thus enters the house of the elderly head of the synagogue, who is so changed from last year…

212. At Juttah, Jesus Speaks in Isaac's House.

8th July 1945.

The whole population of Juttah has run to meet Jesus with the wild flowers picked on the mountain sides and the early fruits they cultivate, besides the smiles of the children and the blessings of the citizens. And before Jesus can set foot in the village, He is surrounded by the good people who, warned by Judas of Kerioth and by John, sent ahead as messengers, have rushed with what they found best to honour the Saviour, and above all with their love.

Jesus blesses with gestures and words both adults and young

people who press against Him kissing His tunic and hands, and lay sucklings on His arms so that He may bless them with a kiss. The first to do so is Sarah, who places against His heart the beautiful ten month old baby, whose name is Jesai.

Their love is so impetuous that it prevents progress. And yet it is like a rising wave. I think that Jesus proceeds carried more by that wave than by His own feet, and His heart is certainly carried very high, into the clear sky, by the joy of such love. His face shines with the brightness of the moments of greatest joy of Man-God. It is not the powerful magnetic looking face of the moments when He works miracles, nor the majestic face as when He discloses His continuous union with the Father, nor the severe one as when He condemns sin. They all sparkle with different lights, but the present one is the light of the hours of relaxation of His whole ego, assailed from so many sides, compelled to be always vigilant of every slightest gesture or word, both of His own or of others, surrounded by all the traps of the world that, like a malefic cobweb, throw their satanic threads around the Divine Butterfly of the Man-God, hoping to paralise His flight and imprison His spirit, so that He may not save the world; to gag His word, so that He may not instruct the supreme guilty ignorance of the earth; to tie His hands, the hands of the Eternal Priest, so that they may not sanctify men, depraved by demon and flesh; to dim His eyes, so that the perfection of His look may not attract hearts to Himself, His look in fact is a magnet, forgiveness, love, charm overwhelming every resistance that is not the resistance of a perfect satan.

Oh! Is the work of the enemies of the Christ still not always the same against the Christ? Science and Heresy, Hatred and Envy, the enemies of Mankind, who sprang from Mankind itself like poisoned branches from a good tree, do they not do all that, so that Mankind may die, as they hate it more than they hate the Christ, because they hate it in an active way, unchristianising it in order to deprive it of its joy, whereas they can bereave Jesus of nothing, as He is God, whilst they are dust? Yes, they do that.

But the Christ takes shelter in faithful hearts, whence He looks, speaks and blesses Mankind and then… and then He gives Himself to those hearts and they… and they touch Heaven with its blessedness, still remaining here, but burning their senses and organs, in their feelings and thoughts and in their souls, to the extent of being delightfully tortured in their whole being… Tears and smiles, groans and songs, exhaustion and dire urgency for life are our companions, more than companions they are our very being, because as bones are in the flesh and veins and nerves are under our skin and they all make one man, thus, likewise, all these burning things originating from the fact that Jesus gave Himself to us, are within us, in our poor humanity. And what are we in

those moments which could not last for ever, because if they lasted a few moments longer, we would die burnt and broken? We are no longer men. We are no longer the animals gifted with reason living on the earth. We are, we are, oh! Lord! Let me say it once, not out of pride, but to sing Your glories because Your glance burns me and makes me rave… We are then seraphim. And I am surprised that we do not emit flames and fierce heat perceptible by people and matter, as it happens in the apparitions of damned souls. Because if it is true that the fire of Hell is such that even the reflection emitted by a damned soul can set a piece of wood on fire and melt metals, what is Your fire like, o God, in Whom everything is infinite and perfect?

One does not die of fever, one does not burn because of it, one is not consumed by the fever of bodily diseases. You are our fever, Love! And by it we are burnt, we die, we are consumed and the fibres of our hearts, which cannot resist so much, are torn apart by it and for it. But I expressed myself badly, because love is delirium, love is a waterfall that shatters dams and descends knocking down everything that is not love, love is the thronging in the mind of sensations, which are all true and present, but no hand can write them down, as the mind is so fast in translating the feelings of the heart into thoughts. It is not true that one dies. One lives. Life is decupled. One lives a duplicated life: as a man and as a blessed soul: the life of the earth, and that of Heaven. Oh! I am sure of it: one achieves and exceeds the life without faults, without restrictions and limitations, that You, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, You, God Creator, One and Trine, had given to Adam a prelude to the Life, after ascending to You, to be enjoyed in Heaven, following a placid transition from the Earthly Paradise to the Heavenly one, a transfer made in the loving arms of angels, like the sweet sleep and assumption of Mary into Heaven, to come to You!

One lives the true Life. Then one finds oneself here, and as I am doing now, one is amazed and ashamed of going so far and one says: « Lord, I am not worthy of so much. Forgive me, Lord » and one beats one's breast, because we are terrified at having been proud and a thicker veil is lowered over the splendour, because if it does not continue to blaze with overwhelming ardour, out of pity for our limitation, it gathers in the centre of our hearts, ready to blaze once again in a mighty way for another moment of blessedness wanted by God. The veil is lowered on the sanctuary where the fire, the light and love of God are burning… and exhausted and yet regenerated we resume going like… people inebriated with a strong sweet wine that does not dim reason but prevents us from having eyes and thoughts for what is not the Lord, You, my Jesus, ring linking our misery to divinity, means of redemption for our

sin, creator of blessedness for our souls, You, Son, Who with Your wounded hands put our hands in the spiritual ones of the Father and of the Spirit, that we may be in You, now and for ever. Amen.

But where have I been while Jesus inflames me, inflaming the people of Juttah with His loving glance? You may have noticed that I no longer speak of myself or I do so only seldom. How many things I could say. But the tiredness and physical weakness, which oppress me immediately after dictations, and spiritual modesty, which grows stronger and stronger the more I proceed, convince me and compel me to be silent. But today… I went too high and, we know, the air of the stratosphere makes one lose one's control… I went much higher than the stratosphere… and I could not control myself any more… And I think that if we always kept quiet - we who are caught in these vortices of love - we would end up by deflagrating like projectiles, or rather, like overheated or closed boilers. Forgive me, Father. And now let us go on.

Jesus enters Juttah and is led to the market square and then to the poor little house where Isaac languished for thirty years. They say to Him: « We come here to speak of You and to pray, as in a synagogue, the most true one. Because it is here that we became acquainted with You and here the prayers of a saint have asked You to come to us. Come in and see how we have arranged the place… »

The little house, which the previous year consisted only of three tiny rooms - the first one where Isaac, a sick man, begged, the second, a lumber room and the third, a kitchenette which opened on to the yard - is now one room only with benches in it for those who meet there. The few household implements of Isaac have been placed, like so many relics, in a little hut in the yard and the respectful people of Juttah have made the yard less dreary looking, as they have planted there some climbing plants, which now cover the rustic stockade with their flowers and form an incipient pergola, growing on a network of rope stretched out over the yard, at the height of the low roof.

Jesus praises them and says: « We can stop here. I only beg you to give hospitality to the women and the boy. »

« Oh! Master! That will never be needed! We will come here with You and You will speak to us, but You and Your friends are our guests. Grant us the blessing of giving You and the servants of God hospitality. We only regret that they are not as many as the houses… »

Jesus agrees and leaves the little house going towards that of Sarah who will not cede to anybody her right to entertain Jesus and His friends at a meal…

… Jesus is speaking in Isaac's house. The people crowd the room and the yard and throng also the square, and Jesus, in order to be heard by everybody, stands in the middle of the room, so that His

voice will carry both in the yard and in the square.

He must be dealing with a subject brought on by a question or an event. He says: «… But have no doubt. As Jeremiah says, they will find out at the test how sorrowful and bitter it is to abandon the Lord. Neither potash nor lye can remove the stains of certain crimes, My friends. Not even the fire of Hell can corrode that stain. It is indelible.

Also here we must acknowledge the justice of Jeremiah's words. Our great ones in Israel really look like the wild she-asses mentioned by the Prophet. They are accustomed to the desert of their hearts, because, believe Me, as long as one is with God, even if one is as poor as Job, even if one is alone, even if one is nude, one is never alone, poor or nude, one is never a desert, but they have rejected God in their hearts and thus they are an arid desert. Like wild she-asses they sniff in the air the smell of males, which in our case, because of their lust, are named power, money, as well as true and proper lechery, and they follow that smell, as far as crime. Yes. They follow it and will follow it even more so in future. They do not know that their hearts, not their feet, are exposed to the darts of God Who will avenge their crime. How confused kings, princes, priests and scribes will be, because they really said and still say to what is nothing, or worse, is sin: "You are my father. You have begotten me"!

I solemnly tell you that Moses in a fit of anger broke the Tables of the Law when he saw the people in idolatry. Later he climbed the mountain, prayed, adored and obtained grace. That happened centuries ago. But idolatry has not yet died in the hearts of men, and will never rest, on the contrary it will rise, like yeast in flour. Almost every man now has his own golden calf. The earth is a forest of idols, because every heart is an altar, but hardly ever there is God upon it. Who is not a slave of one evil passion, is slave of another and who has not one wicked desire, has another with a different name. Who has no greed for gold, has a greed for positions, who has no lust for the flesh, is an utter egoist. How many egos are worshipped in hearts like golden calves! The day, therefore, will come when they are struck and they will call the Lord and will hear Him reply: "Go to your gods. I do not know you". I do not know you! A dreadful word when uttered by God to man. God created the race of Men and He knows each individual. If He therefore says: "I do not know you" it means that by the power of His will He has erased that man from His memory. I do not know you! Is God too severe because of that verdict? No. Man cried to Heaven: "I do not know you", as faithfully as an echo…

Consider: man is obliged to acknowledge God out of gratitude and out of respect for his own intelligence.

Out of gratitude. God created man and granted him the ineffable

gift of life and provided him with the super-ineffable gift of Grace. When man lost Grace through his own fault, he heard a great promise being made to him: "I will give Grace back to you". It is God, the offended party, Who says so to the offender, as if He, God, were guilty and obliged to make amends. And God keeps His promise. Behold, I am here to give Grace to man. God has not confined Himself to giving only what is supernatural, but He has lowered His Spiritual Essence to provide for the coarse necessities of man's flesh and blood, and He gives the heat of the sun, the relief of water, corn, vines, all kinds of trees and all races of animals. Thus man received from God all the means of life. He is the Benefactor. Man must be grateful and show his gratitude by endeavouring to know Him.

Out of respect for one's own reason. A madman and an idiot are not grateful to those who cure them, because they do not understand the true value of the cure. And they hate those who wash them and feed them, who accompany them and put them to bed, who watch that they do not get hurt, because beastly as they are on account of their illness, they mistake cures for tortures. The man who fails in his duties towards God disgraces himself, a being gifted with reason. Only a fool or an idiot cannot tell his father from a stranger, a benefactor from an enemy. But an intelligent man knows his father and his benefactor and takes pleasure in knowing him better and better, also with regard to things of which he is unaware, as they happened before he was born or before he was helped by his father or benefactor. That is what you must do with the Lord to show that you are intelligent and not brutes.

But too many people in Israel are like those fools who do not know their father or their benefactor. Jeremiah asks: "Can a girl forget her ornaments and a bride her sash?" Oh! yes. Israel is made of such foolish girls, of such wanton brides who forget honest ornaments and sashes to put on tinsels of prostitutes; and this is found to happen more and more frequently, the more one climbs the classes that should be the teachers of the people. And God's reproach, with His wrath and regret, is addressed to them: "Why do you endeavour to prove that your behaviour is good to obtain love, whereas you teach the wickedness of your ways of living, and the blood of poor and innocent people was found on the hems of your garments?".

My friends, distance is good and evil. To be very far from the places where I am likely to speak is an evil, because it prevents you from hearing the words of Life. And you regret it. That is true. But it is good inasmuch that it keeps you away from the places where sin ferments, corruption boils and snares hiss to act against Me, hampering Me in My work, and against the hearts of people, by insinuating doubts and falsehood with regard to Me. But I

prefer you to be far away rather than corrupted. I will see to your formation. You know that God had provided before we were acquainted with one another, so that we might love one another. I was known before we met. Isaac was your announcer. I will send many Isaacs to speak My words to you. However, you must know that God can speak everywhere and privately to the spirit of man and instruct him in His doctrine.

Do not be afraid that by being alone you may be led into error. No. If you do not want, you will not be unfaithful to the Lord and to His Christ. On the other hand, he who just cannot stay away from the Messiah should know that the Messiah opens His heart and stretches out His arms to him and says: "Come". Come, whoever wishes to come. Stay here, whoever wishes to stay. But both the former and the latter should preach Christ by means of an honest life. Preach Him against the dishonesty which nestles in too many hearts. Preach Him against the levity of the numberless people who do not know how to persevere faithfully and forget their ornaments and sashes of souls called to the wedding with Christ. You said to Me in your happiness: "Since You came here, we have had neither sick nor dead people. Your blessing has protected us". Yes, health is a great thing. But make sure that My present coming makes you all wholesome spiritually, always and in everything. To that effect I bless you and I give My peace to you, to your children, to your fields, crops, homes, herds and orchards. Make a holy use of them, do not live for them, but by them, giving what is superfluous to those in need, and you will thus obtain an overflowing measure of the Father's blessings and a place in Heaven. You may go. I will stay here to pray… »

9th July.

I am reading again what I wrote yesterday, rewriting some incomprehensible words, out of pity for your eyes, Father. It is distressing to read it… it is so inferior to what I felt while describing my mood! And yet, to be helped to say what the Lord made me feel, lest I should describe it badly and also for my own relief because it is also painful, you know? - I invoked my St. John. I said to him: « You know these things very well. You experienced them. Help me. » And I was comforted by his presence, by his smile of an eternal good simple-minded man and by his caress. But now I feel that my poor word is so inferior to the feelings I experienced… All human things are straw, only the supernatural is gold. And a human being cannot even describe it.

213. At Kerioth, Jesus Speaks in the Synagogue.

9th July 1945.

The inside of the synagogue of Kerioth, the very spot where they laid on the ground Saul, who died after seeing the future glory of Christ. In this place, in a crowd of people from which Jesus and Judas emerge - they are the tallest and both their faces are shining, one out of love, the other for the joy of seeing that his town is always faithful to the Lord and is distinguishing itself by bestowing solemn honours upon the Master - there are the notables of Kerioth and a little farther away from Jesus the citizens, packed like seeds in a sack. The synagogue is so full that it is difficult to breathe, although the doors are open. And in order to pay homage to the Master and hear Him, they end up by making such confusion and so much noise that it is impossible to hear anything.

Jesus puts up with the situation and is silent. But the others become impatient, they gesticulate and shout: « Silence! » But their voices are lost in the hubbub, like a cry on a stormy beach.

Judas wastes no time. He climbs on to a tall bench and strikes the lamps, which are hanging in a cluster, one against the other. The hollow metal resounds and the chains rattle against one another, like musical instruments. The people become silent and at last it is possible to hear Jesus speak.

He says to the head of the synagogue: « Give Me the tenth roll from that shelf. » And once He has it, He opens it and hands it back to the head of the synagogue saying: « Read the fourth chapter of the story, the second Book of Maccabees. »

The head of the synagogue obeys and begins to read. And Onias' vicissitudes, Jason's errors and Menelaus' betrayals and thefts are presented for the consideration of those present. The chapter is over. The head of the synagogue looks at Jesus Who has been listening carefully.

Jesus nods that it is enough and then turns to the people: « In the town of My dearest disciple I will not speak the usual words to teach you. We shall be staying here for a few days and I want him to say them to you, because it is from here that I want to begin the direct contact, the continuous contact between apostles and people. That was decided in upper Galilee where it had a first bright success. But the humility of My disciples caused them to withdraw into the background, because they are afraid that they are not capable and that they would be usurping My place. No. They must do it, they will do well and help their Master. The true apostolic preaching is therefore to begin here, joining in one love only the Galilean Phoenician borders to the lands of Judah, the southern ones, bordering on the countries of the sun and sands. Because the Master is no longer sufficient for the needs of the crowds. And also

because it is right that the eaglets should leave their nests and make their first flights while the Sun is still with them and His strong wing can support them.

Therefore, during these days, I will be your friend and your comfort. They will be the word and will spread the seed that I gave them. Therefore I will not teach the public, but I will give you a privileged thing: a prophecy. I ask you to remember it for the future when the most dreadful event of Mankind will darken the sun and in the darkness your hearts may be led to judge erroneously. I do not want you to be led into error, because from the first moment you have been good to Me. I do not want the world to be in a position to say: "Kerioth was the enemy of Christ". I am just. I cannot allow criticism, whether spiteful against Me or fond of Me, to be able to accuse you of faults against Me, spurred by its feelings. As it is not possible to expect equal holiness in the children of a large family, so it is not possible to expect it in a large town. But it would be strongly against charity to say: "The whole family or the whole town is anathema" because of one wicked son or one bad citizen.

Listen therefore, then remember, be always faithful, and as I love you so much as to wish to defend you from an unfair accusation, so you must love those who are innocent. Always. Whoever they may be. Whatever their kindred may be with the guilty ones.

Now listen. The time will come when in Israel there will be informers of the treasury and of the country, who in the hope of making friends with foreigners, will speak ill of the true High Priest, accusing him of alliance with the enemies of Israel and of wicked deeds against the sons of God. And to reach their aim they are capable of committing crimes, laying the responsibility on the Innocent One. And the time will come, still in Israel, even more than at the times of Onias, when an infamous man, intriguing to become the Pontiff, will go to the mighty ones in Israel and will corrupt them with the gold of false words, which is even more infamous, and will twist the truth of facts, and he will not speak against crimes, on the contrary, pursuing his shameful object, he will do his best to corrupt customs to have a firmer grip on the souls deprived of God's friendship: everything to reach his aim. And he will succeed. Of course! Because if in the very abode on Mount Moriah there are no gymnasia of the impious Jason, in actual fact they are in the hearts of the inhabitants of the mountain, who for the sake of exemptions are willing to sell what is worth much more than a piece of ground, that is, their very conscience. The fruits of the old error can still be seen, and he who has eyes to see, can see what is happening over there, where there should be charity, purity, justice, goodness and deep holy religion. But if those fruits are already the cause of tremor, the fruits of their

seeds will cause not only tremor, but God's malediction.

And here is the true prophecy. I solemnly tell you that he who slyly achieved position and reliance, by means of long underhand tricks, will give into the hands of His enemies, in exchange for money the High Priest, the True High Priest. Deceived by protestations of love and pointed out to His executioners with an act of love, He, the True High Priest, will be killed without any regard to justice. What charges will be made against Christ, because I am speaking of Myself, to justify the right to kill Him? Which fate will be reserved for those who do that? A fate of immediate dreadful justice. Not an individual fate, but a collective one for the accomplices of the traitor. A more remote and even more dreadful fate than the destiny of the man whom remorse will drive to crown his demoniac soul by committing a final crime against himself. Because that one will end in a moment. This last punishment will be a long and frightful one. You will find it in the sentence: "… and His indignation was roused and he ordered Andronicus to be stripped of the purple and to be killed on the very spot where he had laid impious hands on Onias". Yes, the sacerdotal race will be struck in its sons as well as in the executioners. And you can read the destiny of the evil associated mass of people in the following words: "The voice of this blood cries to Me from the earth. Therefore you shall be accursed… " And they will be said by God to the whole people who did not guard the gift of Heaven. Because if it is true that I have come to redeem, woe to those who will be murderers, and will not be redeemed, amongst this people whose first redemption is My Word.

I have told you. Remember that. And when you hear them say that I am an evil-doer, say: "No. He warned us. And this is the sign, which is being fulfilled and He is the Victim killed for the sins of the world". »

The people leave the synagogue and gesticulating they all speak of the prophecy and of the esteem in which Jesus holds Judas. The people of Kerioth are elated at the honour conferred on them by the Messiah by choosing the town of an apostle, and precisely of the apostle of Kerioth to begin the apostolic teaching as well as at the gift of the prophecy. Although it is a sad one, it is a great honour to have received it with the loving words preceding it…

Jesus and the group of the apostles are the only ones to be left in the synagogue; they then go into the little garden between the synagogue and the house of the head of the synagogue. Judas has sat down and is weeping.

« Why are you weeping? I do not see any reason… » says the other Judas.

« Well. I almost feel like doing the same myself. Did you hear Him? We are to speak now… » says Peter.

« We have already done a little of that up on the mountain. And we will improve all the time. You and John did it successfully at once » says James of Zebedee to encourage them.

« I am the worst… but God will help me. Is that right, Master? » asks Andrew.

Jesus, Who was looking through some parchment rolls He had brought with Him, turns round and says: « What were you saying? »

« That God will help me when I have to speak. I will try and repeat Your words as best I can. My brother is afraid and Judas is weeping. »

« Are you weeping? Why? » asks Jesus.

« Because I have really sinned. Andrew and Thomas can tell You. I have been running You down and You benefit me calling me "dearest disciple" and asking me to teach here… How much love!… »

« But did you not know that I loved you? »

« Yes. But… Thank You, Master. I will never grumble again; I am really darkness and You are the Light. »

The head of the synagogue comes back and invites them to his house, and while going there he says: « I am thinking of Your words. If I have understood You properly, as in Kerioth You found a favourite disciple, our Judas of Simon, so You prophesy You will find an unworthy one. I am sorry for that. Fortunately our Judas will make up for the other… »

« With my whole being » says Judas, who has collected himself.

Jesus does not speak, but He looks at His interlocutors and makes a gesture opening out His arms as if He wanted to say: « It is so. »

214. In Judas' House at Kerioth.

10th July 1945.

Jesus is about to sit down at the table with all His friends in Judas' beautiful house. And He says to Judas' mother, who has come from her country house to give proper hospitality to the Master: « No, mother, you must stay with us as well. We are like a family here. This is not the cold formal banquet for casual guests. I took your son, and I want you to take Me as a son, as I take you as a mother, because you are really worth it. Is that right, My friends, that thus we shall be happier and feel at home? »

The apostles and the two Maries nod wholeheartedly. And Judas' mother, her eyes bright with tears, sits between her son and the Master, in front of Whom there are the two Maries with Marjiam between them. The maidservant brings the food, which Jesus offers, blesses and then hands out, because Judas' mother is inflexible on that point. And He always hands out beginning from her, which moves the woman more and more and makes Judas proud

and pensive at the same time.

They talk about various subjects in which Jesus endeavours to get Judas' mother interested and He strives as well to make her become familiar with the two women disciples. Marjiam is helpful in this respect as he states that he is very fond also of Judas' mother: « Because her name is Mary like all good women. »

« And will you not love the one who is waiting for us on the lake, you little rascal? » asks Peter half-seriously.

« Oh! very much, if she is good. »

« You can be sure of that. Everybody says so, and I must say so as well, because if she has always been kind to her mother and to me, she must be really good. But her name is not Mary, son. She has a queer name, because her father called her after the thing that had brought him wealth and he called her Porphirea. Purple is beautiful and precious. My wife is not beautiful, but she is precious on account of her goodness. And I have been very fond of her because she is so peaceful, chaste and quiet. Three virtues… eh! not easily found! I eyed her carefully since she was a girl. When I came to Capernaum with fish I used to see her mending the nets, or at the fountain, or working silently in the kitchen garden and she wasn't an absent-minded butterfly fluttering here and there, neither was she a thoughtless little hen looking round at every crow of a cock. She never raised her head when she heard the voice of a man, and when I, in love with her goodness and her wonderful plaits, her only beauties, and… well, also moved to pity because she was treated like a slave at home… when I began to say hello to her - she was then sixteen years old - she hardly replied to me, she pulled her veil over her face and remained more indoors. Eh! It took a very long time to find out whether she considered me an ogre or not and before I could send my best man to her!… But I do not regret it. I could have travelled all over the world, but I would not have found another one like her. Am I right, Master, that she is good? »

« Yes, she is very good. And I am sure that Marjiam will love her even if her name is not Mary. Will you not, Marjiam? »

« Yes. Her name is "mummy" and mummies are good and are loved. »

Judas then tells what he did during the day. I understand that he went to inform his mother of their visit, and then he began to speak in the country near Kerioth together with Andrew. He then says: « But tomorrow I would like everybody to come. I do not want to be the only one to be noticed. As far as possible, we should go in twos, a Judaean with a Galilean. For instance, John and I, Simon and Thomas. I wish the other Simon came! But you two (he points at Alphaeus' sons) can go together. I told everybody, also those who did not want to know, that you are the Master's cousins. And you two (he points at Philip and Bartholomew) can also go

together. I told them that Nathanael is a rabbi who came to follow the Master. That impresses people very favourably. And… you three will stay here. But as soon as the Zealot comes, we can form another couple. And then we will change round, because I want the people to meet everybody… » Judas is sprightly. « I spoke about the decalogue, Master, endeavouring especially to clarify those parts in which this area is more lacking… »

« Do not let your hand be too heavy, Judas, please. Always bear in mind that one achieves more by means of kindness than by intolerance and that you are a man as well. So examine yourself and consider how easy it is also for you to fall and how you become upset when you are reproached too frankly » says Jesus while Judas' mother bends her head blushing.

« Do not worry, Master. I am striving to imitate You in everything. But in the village, which we can see also through that door (the doors are open while they are eating and a beautiful view can be seen from this room which is upstairs) there is a sick man who would like to be cured. But he cannot be carried here. Could You come with me? »

« Tomorrow, Judas, tomorrow morning, definitely. And if there are more sick people tell Me or bring them here. »

« You really want to benefit my fatherland, Master? »

« Yes. So that no one may say that I have been unfair to those who did no harm to Me. I help also wicked people! So why not the good ones of Kerioth? I wish to leave an indelible remembrance of Me… »

« What? Are we not coming back here? »

« We will come back again, but… »

« Here is the Mother, the Mother with Simon! » trills the boy who sees Mary and Simon climbing the staircase leading up to the terrace where is the room.

They all stand up and go towards the two who have just arrived. There is the noise of exclamations, of greetings, of seats moved about. But nothing diverts Mary from greeting first Jesus and then Judas' mother, who has bowed down deeply, and whom Mary raises again embracing her as if she were a dear friend met after a long absence.

They go back into the room and Mary of Judas tells the maidservant to bring in fresh food for the new guests.

« Here, Son, Eliza's greetings » says Mary, handing a small parchment roll to Jesus Who unfolds it and reads it, then says: « I knew. I was sure. Thank You, Mother. On My behalf and on Eliza's. You really are the health of the sick! »

« I? You, Son. Not I. »

« You; and You are My greatest help. » He then turns to the apostles and women disciples and says: « Eliza writes: "Come back, my Peace. I want not only to love You, but to serve You". So

we have relieved a creature of her anguish and melancholy, and we have gained a disciple. Yes, we will go back. »

« She wishes to meet also the women disciples. She is recovering slowly, but without relapsing. Poor Eliza! She still undergoes moments of frightful bewilderment. Does she not, Simon? One day she wanted to try to come out with Me, but she saw a friend of Daniel's… and we had great difficulty in calming her weeping. But Simon is so clever! And since Eliza expressed the desire to return to the world, but the world of Bethzur is too full of memories for her, Simon suggested we should call Johanna. And he went to call her. After the feast she went back to Bether, to her magnificent rose-garden in Judaea. Simon says that he seemed to be dreaming, while crossing the hills covered with rose-bushes, that he was already in Paradise. She came at once. She is in a position to understand and pity a mother mourning her sons! Eliza has become very fond of her and I came away. Johanna wants to persuade her to leave Bethzur and go to her castle. And she will succeed because she is as sweet as a dove but as firm as a rock in her decisions. »

« We shall go to Bethzur on our way back and then we shall part. You women disciples will stay with Eliza and Johanna for some time. We will go through Judaea and we shall meet in Jerusalem for Pentecost »…

The Most Holy Virgin Mary and Mary, Judas' mother, are together. They are not in the town house, but in the country one. They are alone. The apostles are outside with Jesus, the women disciples and the boy are in the magnificent apple-orchard and their voices can be heard together with the noise of clothes beaten on washboards. They are perhaps doing the washing while the boy is playing.

Judas' mother, sitting in a dim-lit room beside Mary, is speaking to Her: « These peaceful days will be like a dream to me. Too short! Yes, too short! I know that we must not be selfish and that it is fair that You should go to that poor woman and to so many other unhappy people. But I wish I could!… I wish I could spare the time, or come with You!… But I cannot. I have no relatives apart from my son and I must look after the property of the family… »

« I understand… It is painful to part from one's son. We mothers would always like to be with our children. But we are giving them for a great cause, and we will not lose them. Not even death can take our sons away from us, if they and we are in grace in the eyes of God. But ours are still on the earth, even if by the will of God they are torn from our bosoms to be given to the world for its good. We can always join them and even the echo of their deeds is like a caress to our hearts, because their deeds are the scent of their souls. »

« What is Your Son to You, Woman? » asks Mary of Judas in a low voice.

And the Most Holy Mary replies promptly: « He is My joy. »

« Your joy!!!… » and then Judas' mother bursts into tears and lowers her head to hide them. She bows so low as to almost touch her knees with her forehead.

« Why are you weeping, my poor friend? Why? Tell Me. I am happy in My maternity, but I can understand also those mothers who are not happy… »

« Yes. Not happy! And I am one of them. Your Son is Your joy… Mine is my grief. At least he has been so. Now, since he has been with Your Son, I am not so worried. Oh! of all those who pray for Your holy Son, for His welfare and triumph, there is no one, after You, Blessed Woman, who prays so much as this unhappy mother who is speaking to You… Tell me the truth: what do You think of my son? We are two mothers, one facing the other, between us there is God. And we are speaking of our sons. It can be but easy for You to speak of Yours. I… I have to strive against myself to speak of mine. And yet, how much good, or how much grief, can come to me from this conversation! And even if it is grief, it will always be a relief to speak about it… That woman of Bethzur became almost insane when her sons died, did she not? But I swear it to You, sometimes I have thought and still think, looking at my Judas who is handsome, healthy, intelligent, but he is not good not virtuous, not righteous in his soul, not sound in his feelings, I often think that I would prefer to mourn him dead rather than know that he is disliked by God. But tell me, what do You think of my son? Be frank. This question has been tormenting my heart for over a year. But whom could I ask? The citizens? They did not yet know that the Messiah existed and that Judas wanted to go with Him. I knew. He told me when he came here after Passover, elated, violent, as usual, when he has a sudden fancy, and as usual, scornful of his mother's advice. His friends in Jerusalem? A holy prudence and a pious hope prevented me. I did not want to say: "Judas is following the Messiah" to those whom I cannot love because they are everything but saints. And I hoped that his fancy notion would vanish, like many others, like all of them, even at the cost of tears and desolation, as it happened in the case of more than one girl whom he fascinated here and elsewhere, but never married. Do you know that there are places where he will no longer go because he may receive a fair punishment? Also his being of the Temple was a whim. He does not know what he wants. Never. His father, may God forgive him, spoiled him. I never had any authority with the two men in my house. I could but weep and make amends with all kinds of humiliation… When Johanna died - and although no one told me, I know that she died of a broken

heart when Judas told her that he did not want to get married, after she had been waiting for all her youth, whereas everybody knew that in Jerusalem he had sent friends to a very rich woman who owned stores as far as Cyprus to enquire about her daughter - I had to shed many bitter tears, because of the reproaches of the dead girl's mother, as if I were an accomplice of my son. No. I am not. I have no authority over him. Last year, when the Master came here, I realised that He had understood… and I was about to speak. But it is painful, very painful for a mother to have to say:

"Be careful of my son. He is greedy, hard-hearted, vicious, proud and inconstant". And that is what he is. I am praying that Your Son, Who works so many miracles, may work one for my Judas… But tell me, please tell me, what do You think of him? »

Mary, Who has been silent all the time, with an expression of pitiful sorrow while listening to that maternal lament of which Her righteous soul cannot disapprove, says in a low voice: « Poor mother!… What do I think? Yes, your son is not the limpid soul of John, nor the meek Andrew, not the firm Matthew who wanted to change and did change… He is… inconstant, yes, he is. But we shall pray so hard for him, both you and I. Do not weep. Perhaps your motherly love, which would like to be proud of your son, makes you see him more perverted than he is… »

« No! No! I see right and I am so afraid. » The room is full of the weeping of Judas' mother and in the half-light Mary's white face has become even paler because of the maternal confession that sharpens all the suspicions of the Lord's Mother. But She controls Herself. She draws the unhappy mother to herself and caresses her while she, abandoning all reservedness, painfully and confusedly informs Mary of all the harshness, pretensions and violence of Judas and concludes: « I blush for him when I see I am the object of the loving attention of Your Son! I have not asked Him. But I am sure that besides doing it out of kindness, He wants to say to Judas by means of His loving attention: "Remember that this is how a mother is to be treated". Now, for the time being he appears to be good… Oh! If it were only true! Help me, help me with Your prayers, You Who are holy, so that my son may not be unworthy of the grace that God granted him! If he does not want to love me, if he cannot be grateful to me, who gave birth to him and brought him up, it does not matter. But let him really love Jesus; let him serve Him loyally and gratefully. But if that cannot be then… then may God take his life. I would rather have him in a sepulchre… at last I would have him because since he reached the age of reason he was hardly ever mine. Better dead than a bad apostle. Can I pray for that? What do You say? »

« Pray the Lord that He may do what is best. Do not weep any more. I have seen prostitutes and Gentiles at the feet of My Son,

and publicans and sinners with them. They all became lambs through His Grace. Hope, Mary, hope. The grief of mothers saves their sons, do you not know that?… »

And everything ends on that pitiful question.

215. The Lunatic Girl of Bethginna.

11th July 1945.

I do not see the return to Bethzur nor the rose-gardens of Bether, which I was so anxious to see. Jesus is alone with the apostles. Marjiam is not there either, as he has obviously been left with Our Lady and the woman-disciples. It is a very mountainous area, but also very rich in vegetation, with forests of conifers, or rather of pine-tree s, and the balsamic invigorating scent of resin spreads everywhere. And Jesus is walking across those green mountains, with His disciples, facing westwards.

I hear them talking about Eliza who seems to have changed considerably and has been convinced to follow Johanna to her estate in Bether, and they are speaking also of Johanna's kindness. They are also discussing the tour they are about to make, towards the fertile plains before the sea. And the names of past glories come to light again, giving rise to stories, questions, explanations and friendly discussions.

« When we reach the top of this mountain, I will show you all the areas in which you are interested. They may suggest you thoughts for your sermons to the crowds. »

« But how can we do that, my Lord? I am not capable » moans Andrew, and Peter and James join him. « We are the most unlucky ones. »

« Oh! In that case I am no better. If it was gold or silver, I could talk about it, but about these things… » says Thomas.

« And what about me? What was I? » asks Matthew.

« But you are not afraid of the public, you are capable of debating » replies Andrew.

« Yes, but on different matters… » retorts Matthew.

« Of course!… But… Well, you already know what I would like to say, so just imagine that I have already told you. The fact is that you are worth more than we are » says Peter.

« Listen, My dear. There is no need to be sublime. Simply say what you think, with your firm belief. Believe Me, when one is convinced, one can always persuade others » says Jesus.

But Judas of Kerioth implores: « Give us some hints. An idea put forth properly may be useful in many ways. I think these places have been left without one word about You. Because no one seems to know You. »

« The reason is that there is still a strong wind blowing from the

Moriah… It makes sterile… » replies Peter.

« It is because it has not been sown. But we will sow » retorts the Iscariot, who is sure of himself and happy after his first success.

They reach the top of the mountain. A wide panorama stretches out from there and it is beautiful to look at it standing in the shade of the thick trees which crown the top, so varied and sunny: overlapping chains stretching in every direction like petrified billows of an ocean lashed by opposite gales and then, as if in a calm gulf, everything subsides into an endless brightness showing a vast plain in which a little mountain rises, as solitary as a lighthouse at the entrance of a harbour.

« Look. That village spread along the crest, as if it wanted to enjoy all the sunshine, and where we will be stopping, is like the centre of a crown of historical places. Come here. There is (to the north) Jarmuth. Do you remember Joshua? The defeat of the kings who wanted to attack the camp of Israel, which was strengthened by the alliance with the Gibeonites. And near it there is Bethshemesh, the sacerdotal town in Judah where the Ark was returned by the Philistines with the gold votive offerings prescribed by the diviners and priests to the people to be freed from the calamities that had struck the guilty Philistines. And over there is Zorah, lying completely in the sun, Samson's fatherland, and a little to the east Timnath where he got married and where he performed many brave deeds and did so many foolish things. And there are Azekah and Shochoh, formerly Philistine camps. Farther down is Zanoah, one of the towns in Judah. Now turn round, here is the Valley of the Terebinth, where David fought Goliath. And over there is Makkedah, where Joshua defeated the Amorites. Turn round again. Can you see that solitary mountain in the middle of the plain, which once belonged to the Philistines? Gath is there, Goliath's fatherland and the place where David took refuge with Achish to escape from the mad rage of Saul, and where the wise king pretended he was mad because the world defends fools from wise people. Where the horizon opens out, there are the plains of the very fertile land of the Philistines. We will go through there, as far as Ramle. And now let us enter Bethginna. You, precisely you, Philip, who are looking at Me so imploringly, will go round the village, with Andrew. While you are walking about, we shall stop near the fountain or in the village square. »

« Oh! Lord! Don't send us alone. Please, come with us! » they beg.

« Go, I said. Obedience will be of more help to you than My mute presence. »

… And so Philip and Andrew go, at random, through the village, until they find a small hotel, an inn, rather than a hotel, and inside there are some brokers bargaining for lambs with some shepherds. They go in and stop disconcertedly in the middle of the

yard, which is surrounded by very rustic porches.

The hotel-keeper rushes towards them: « What do you want? Lodgings? »

They consult looking at each other, and they appear to be utterly dismayed. Probably they cannot remember even one word of what they had decided to say. Andrew is the first to regain control of himself and he replies: « Yes, lodgings for us and for the Rabbi of Israel. »

« Which rabbi? There are many of them! But they are wealthy gentlemen. They do not come to the villages of poor people to bring their wisdom to the poor. The poor have to go to them and we are lucky if they allow us to go near them! »

« There is only one Rabbi of Israel. And He has come to bring the Gospel to the poor, and the poorer and more sinful they are, the more He looks for them and approaches them » replies Andrew kindly.

« In that case He will not make much money! »

« He does not seek wealth. He is poor and good. When He can save a soul it is a full day for Him » replies once again Andrew.

« Oh! It is the first time that I hear that a rabbi is good and poor. The Baptist is poor but severe. All the others are severe and rich, as greedy as leeches. You over there, have you heard? Come here, you who travel round the world. These men say that there is a poor but good Master Who comes looking for poor people and sinners. »

« Ah! It must be the one who wears a white robe like an Essene. I saw him some time ago at Jericho » says one of the brokers.

« No. That one is by himself. It must be the one of whom Thomas told us, because he happened to speak about him with some shepherds on the Lebanon » replies a tall brawny shepherd.

« Indeed! And he would come as far as here, if he was on the Lebanon! For the sake of your eyes of a cat! » exclaims another one.

While the innkeeper is speaking and listening to his customers, the two apostles have remained standing in the middle of the yard like two poles.

At last one of the men says to them: « Ehi! You! Come here! Who is He? Where does that man you spoke of, come from? »

« He is Jesus of Joseph, from Nazareth » says Philip gravely and he looks as if he were expecting to be laughed at.

But Andrew adds: « He is the Messiah foretold. I implore you, for your own good, listen to Him. You have mentioned the Baptist. Well, I was with him, and he pointed to us Jesus Who was passing and said: "There is the Lamb of God, Who takes away the sins of the world". When Jesus descended into the Jordan to be baptised, the Heavens opened and a Voice cried out: "This is My beloved Son, My favour rests on Him" and the Love of God descended like a dove, shining over His head. »

« See? It is the Nazarene! But tell me, since you say you are His friends… »

« No, not His friends: we are His apostles, His disciples and we have been sent to announce that He is coming, so that those who are in need of salvation may go to Him » clarifies Andrew.

« All right. But tell me. Is He really as some say, that is, a holy man, holier than the Baptist, or is He a demon as others describe Him? You are always with Him, because if you are His disciples, you must be with Him, tell us frankly. Is it true that He is lewd and a guzzler? That He loves prostitutes and publicans. That He is a necromancer and He evokes spirits at night to find out the secrets of hearts? »

« Why do you ask these men such questions? Ask them instead whether it is true that He is good. They will take it amiss and they will go and tell the Master our evil reasoning and we will be cursed. One never knows!… Whether He is God or a demon, it is better to treat Him well. »

It is Philip who speaks now: « We can reply to you quite frankly because there is nothing wicked to be concealed. He, our Master, is the Saint of all saints. He spends His days teaching. He goes tirelessly from place to place seeking the hearts of men. He spends the night praying for us. He does not disdain the pleasures of the table and friendship, but not for His own advantage, but only to approach those who otherwise would be unapproachable. He does not repel publicans and prostitutes but only because He wants to redeem them. His way is traced out with miracles of redemption and miracles over diseases. Winds and seas obey Him. But He does not need anybody to work His prodigies, neither does He have to evoke spirits to know hearts. »

« How can He?… You said that winds and seas obey Him… But they are not endowed with reason. How can He give them orders? » asks the innkeeper.

« Tell me, man: according to you is it more difficult to give an order to the wind or the sea or to death? »

« By Jehovah! You cannot give orders to death! You can throw oil on the sea, you can hoist sails over it, or, more wisely, you can avoid going to sea. You can lock doors against the wind. But you cannot give an order to death. There is no oil capable of calming it. There is no sail which, hoisted on our little boat, can make it sail so fast as to leave death behind. And there are no locks for it. It comes in when it wants to, even if the doors have been locked. Oh! No one gives orders to that queen! »

« And yet our Master commands it. Not only when it is near. But also after it has come. A young man of Nain was about to be put into the dreadful mouth of his sepulchre, and He said to him: "I tell you: rise!" and the young man came back to life. Nain is not in the

country of the hyperboreans. You can go and see. »

« Just like that? In the presence of everybody? »

« On the road. In the presence of the-whole of Nain. »

The innkeeper and his customers look at one another in silence. Then the innkeeper says: « But He will do that only for His friends. »

« No, man. For all those who believe in Him and not for them only. He is Mercy on the earth, believe me. No one applies to Him in vain. Listen. Is there anyone amongst you who suffers from or weeps because of diseases in the family, doubts, remorse, temptations, ignorance? Go to Jesus, the Messiah of the Gospel. He is here today. He will be elsewhere tomorrow. The Grace of the Lord Who is passing should not be let pass in vain » says Philip who has become more and more sure of himself.

The innkeeper ruffles his hair, opens and closes his mouth, tortures the fringes of his belt… at last he exclaims: « I will try! I have a daughter. Up to last summer she was all right. Then she became a lunatic. She remains like a mute animal in a corner, she never moves from it and only with difficulty her mother can dress her and feed her. The doctors say that her brains have been burnt out by too much sunshine, others say that it is due to an ill-starred love. The people say she is possessed. How can that be, as she has never been away from here?! Where would she have got that demon? What does your Master say? That a demon can take also an innocent person? »

Philip replies without hesitation: « Yes, to torture the relatives and drive them to despair. »

« And… Can He cure lunatics? Should I hope? »

« You must believe » says Andrews promptly. And he tells them of the miracle of the Gerasenes and concludes: « If those who were a legion in the hearts of sinners fled thus, why should the one who forced his way into the heart of a young person not flee? I tell you, man: for those who hope in Him also what is impossible becomes as easy as breathing. I have seen the works of my Lord and I am a witness of His power. »

« Oh! in that case which of you is going to call Him? »

« I will go myself, man. I will soon be back. » And Andrew runs away while Philip remains speaking to them.

When Andrew sees Jesus standing in a lobby out of the merciless sun shining in every part of the square, he runs towards Him saying: « Come, Master. The daughter of the innkeeper is lunatic. Her father implores You to cure her. »

« Did he know Me? »

« No, Master. We have tried to make You known to him… »

« And you have succeeded. When one reaches the point of believing that I can cure an incurable disease, one is already well advanced in faith. And you were afraid that you did not know how to do it.

What -did you tell him? »

« I don't think I could tell You. We told him what we thought of You and of Your deeds. Above all we told him that You are Love and Mercy. The world has such wrong knowledge of You!!! »

« But you know Me well. And that is enough. »

They arrive at the small inn. All the customers are standing at the door, full of curiosity, and in the middle there is Philip with the innkeeper who keeps talking to himself.

When he sees Jesus, he runs to meet Him: « Master, Lord, Jesus… I… I believe so firmly that You are You, that You know everything, You see everything, You can do everything, I believe it so firmly that I say to You: Have mercy on my daughter although I have so many sins in my heart. Do not punish my daughter because I have been dishonest in my trade. I will no longer be grasping, I swear it. You can see my heart with its past and with its present thought. Forgive and have mercy on us, Master, and I will speak of You to everybody who comes here, to my house… » The man is on his knees.

Jesus says to him: « Stand up and persevere in your present sentiments. Take Me to your daughter. »

« She is in a stable, my Lord. The sultry weather makes her feel worse. And she will not come out. »

« It does not matter. I will go to her. It is not the sultry weather. It is the demon who perceives My coming. »

They go into the yard and then into a dark stable, followed by all the rest.

The girl, unkempt and lean, becomes agitated in the darkest corner and as soon as she sees Jesus, she shouts: « Back, go back! Do not disturb me. You are the Christ of the Lord, I am one struck by You. Leave me alone. Why do You always follow me? »

« Go out of this girl. Go. I want it. Give your prey back to God and be quiet! »

There is a heart-rending shout, a jerk, her body becomes flabby and collapses on to the straw… then she calmly, sadly asks questions expressing her amazement: « Where am I? Why am I here? Who are they? » and she invokes: « Mummy ». The young girl becomes shy when she realises that she is without veil and with a torn dress in the presence of many strangers.

« Oh! Eternal Lord! But she is cured… » and strange to be seen the innkeeper weeps like a child and tears stream down his ruddy cheeks… He is happy and he weeps and does not know what to do, except kiss Jesus' hands, while the mother of the girl also weeps, surrounded by her amazed little ones, and kisses her first-born now free from the demon.

All the people present shout in amazement and many more rush to see the miracle. The yard is full.

« Remain with us. Lord. It is getting dark. Rest under my roof. »

« Man, we are thirteen. »

« Even if you were three hundred it would not matter. I know what You mean. But the greedy dishonest Samuel is dead, Lord. Also my demon has fled. Now there is a new Samuel. And he will still be the innkeeper. But a holy one. Come, come with me, that I may pay you homage as a king, a god. Such as You are. Oh! blessed be the sun that brought You here today… »

216. In the Plain towards Ashkelon.

12th July 1945.

The sun is blazing down on the countryside and is scorching the ripe corn drawing a scent from it, which reminds one of the smell of bread. There is a vague smell in the air, the smell of sunshine, of laundry, of crops, of summer.

Because every season, I could say every month, and even every hour of the day has its smell, as each place has its own, if one has sharp senses and a keen spirit of observation. The smell of a winter day with a biting cold wind is quite different from the mellow smell of a foggy winter day, or of a snowy one. And how different is the smell of springtime that comes and announces itself by means of a scent, which is not a scent, and is very different from the smell of winter. One gets up in the morning and the air has a different smell: the first breath of springtime. And so forth for the smell of orchards in blossom, of gardens, of corn, down to the warm smell of vintage and then, as an intermezzo, the smell of earth after a storm…

And what about the hours? It would be foolish to say that the smell of dawn is like that of noon, or that the latter is like that of the evening or night. The first is fresh and virginal, the second is pleasant and jolly, the third is tired and saturated with all the smells exhaled by everything during the day; the last one, the night one, is calm and cosy, as if the Earth were a huge cradle taking in its little ones to rest.

And what about places? Oh! the smell of a seashore is so different at dawn and in the evening, at noon and at night, when the sea is stormy or calm, if the beach is pebbly or sandy! And the smell of seaweed, which appears after tides, and the sea seems to have opened its bowels to let us breathe the stench of its depths. That smell is so different from that of inland plains, which differs from that of hilly places, which is different from the smell of high mountains.

Such is the infinity of the Creator Who impressed a sign of light, or colour, or scent, or sound, or shape, or height on each of the infinite things that He created. O infinite beauty of the Universe, I

now only see you through the visions and the remembrance of what I saw, loving God and praying Him through His works and the joy I felt watching them, how vast, mighty, inexhaustible and ever fresh you are. You are never tired and never tire anyone. Nay, man is renewed watching you, o Universe of my Lord, he becomes better and purer, he is elevated and he forgets… Oh! I wish I could always contemplate you and forget the inferior part of men, loving them in and for their souls and leading them to God! And so, following Jesus, Who is going with His apostles across this plain full of crops, I digress once again allowing myself to be carried away by the joy of speaking of my God through His magnificent works. That is love, too, because one praises what one loves in a person or simply praises the person one loves. The same applies to creature and Creator. Who loves Him, praises Him, and the more one loves Him the more one praises Him for Himself and for His works. But I will now order my heart to be silent and I will follow Jesus, not as a worshipper, but as a faithful chronicler.

Jesus is walking through the fields. It is a hot day. The place is desert. There is not a soul in the fields. There are only ripe ears of corn and a few trees here and there. Sunshine, corn, birds, lizards, green tufts of grass, which is still in the calm of the air, are the only things to be seen around Jesus. On one side of the main road along which Jesus is walking - a dusty dazzling ribbon between the fields undulating with corn - there is a little village, on the other side a farm. Nothing else.

Everybody is hot and proceeds in silence. They have taken off their mantles but as they are wearing woollen tunics, however light they may be, they suffer the heat just the same. Only Jesus, His two cousins and the Iscariot are wearing linen or hempen clothes. Jesus' and the Iscariot's garments are of white linen, whereas those of Alphaeus' sons look thicker and heavier than linen and they are also dyed in a darker ivory shade, exactly the shade of unbleached hemp. The others are wearing their usual robes and are drying their perspiration with the linen cloth which covers their heads.

They reach a thicket of trees at a crossroads. They stop in the healthy shade and drink avidly out of their flasks.

« It is as warm as if it had been on the fire » grumbles Peter.

« I wish there was a little stream here! But there is absolutely nothing! » sighs Bartholomew. « I will have none left before long. »

« I think I would say that it is better to walk on the mountains » moans James of Zebedee, who is flushed with heat.

« A boat is the best of all. It is cool, restful, clean, ah! » Peter's heart flies back to his lake and his boat.

« You are right. But there are sinners on the mountains as well as on the plains. If they had not driven us away from the Clear Water

and had not persecuted us so closely, I would have come here between Tebeth and Shebat. But we shall soon be on the seaside. The air is cooled there by the open sea wind » says Jesus comforting them.

« Eh! We need it! We are like dying pikes here. But how can the corn be so beautiful when there is no water? » asks Peter.

« There is underground moisture which keeps the soil damp » explains Jesus.

« It would be better if it was above ground instead of under. What am I going to do with it, if it is down there? I have no roots! » says Peter impulsively and they all laugh.

Judas Thaddeus becomes serious and says: « The soil is as selfish as some souls, and it is equally arid. If they had allowed us to stop in that village and spend the Sabbath there, we would have enjoyed shade, water and rest. But they drove us away… »

« And we would have had food as well. Now we have not even that. And I am hungry. I wish there was some fruit! The fruit trees are all close to the houses. And who is going to pick it? If the people here are in the same mood as those over there… » says Thomas, pointing at the village they left behind, to the east.

« Take my portion of food. I am not very hungry » says the Zealot.

« You may take also Mine » says Jesus. « Those who feel more hungry, should eat. »

But when the food portions of Jesus, of the Zealot and of Nathanael are put together, they look very scanty, as one can tell from the dismayed looks of Thomas and the younger ones. But they nibble silently at their tiny portions.

The patient Zealot goes towards a spot where a row of green plants on the parched soil suggests the presence of moisture. There is in fact a trickle of water in the bottom of a ditch, just a trickle, which is bound to disappear before long. He shouts to his distant companions to come and refresh themselves, and they all rush there, and following the intermittent shade of a row of plants on the bank of the half dry brook, they are able to refresh their dusty feet, and wash their perspired faces. But first of all they fill their empty flasks and leave them in the water, in the shade, to keep them cool. They sit down at the foot of a tree and being tired they doze off.

Jesus looks at them lovingly and sympathetically and shakes His head. The Zealot, who has gone to drink once again, notices His gesture and asks Him: « What is the matter, Master? »

Jesus stands up, He goes towards the Zealot and clasping him with one arm He takes him towards another tree saying: « What is the matter? I grieve at your fatigue. If I were not sure of what I am doing to you, I could never set My mind at peace while causing you so much trouble. »

« Trouble? No, Master! It is a joy to us. Everything vanishes following You. We are all happy, believe me. There is no regret, there is no… »

« Be quiet, Simon. Humanity remonstrates also in good people. And from a human point of view, you are not wrong in remonstrating. I have taken you away from your homes, from your families, from your business and you came thinking that it was going to be quite different to follow Me… But your present remonstration, your internal protest will calm down one day, and you will then realise that it was good to go through fog and mud, through dust and dog-days, persecuted, thirsty, without food, following a persecuted, hated, slandered Master… and worse still. Everything will seem beautiful to you then. Because your minds will be different, and you will see everything in a different light. And you will bless Me for leading you along My difficult way… »

« You are sad, Master. And the world justifies Your sadness, but we are no part of it. We are all happy… »

« All? Are you sure? »

« Are You of a different opinion? »

« Yes, Simon, I am. You are always happy. You have understood. Many others have not. See those who are sleeping? Do you know how many thoughts they are turning over in their minds also while sleeping? And all those among the disciples? Do you think they will be faithful until everything is accomplished? Look: let us play this old game that you certainly played when a boy (and Jesus picks a round fully ripe dandelion growing among the stones. He raises it gently to His mouth, blows and the dandelion dissolves into tiny umbrellas, which wander in the air with their little tufts on top of the tiny handles). See? Look… How many have fallen on My lap as if they were in love with Me? Count them… They are twentythree. They were at least three times as many. And the others? Look. Some are still wandering, some have fallen because of their weight, some, which are proud of their silvery plume, are haughtily rising higher, some are falling into the mud that we made with our flasks. Only… Look, look… Of the twenty-three that were on My lap, seven more have gone. That hornet flying by was enough to blow them away!… What were they afraid of? Or by what were they allured? Were they afraid of its sting? Or were they allured by its beautiful black and gold hues, or by its graceful appearance, its iridescent wings?… They have gone… Following a deceitful beauty. Simon, the same will happen to My disciples. Some will go because of their restlessness, some because of their inconstancy, their pride, their dullness, their frivolity, their lust for filth, some for fear, some because of their foolishness. Do you think that in the crucial hour of My mission I shall have beside Me all those who now say to Me: "I will come with You"? The tiny tufts of the

dandelion, which My Father created, were more than seventy… and now there are only seven left on My lap, because some more have been blown away by this puff of wind that has caused the thinner stems to flutter away… It will be like that. And I am thinking of how much you have to struggle to be loyal to Me… Come, Simon. Let us go and look at those dragonflies dancing over the water. Unless you prefer to have a rest. »

« No, Master. Your words have grieved me. But I hope that the cured leper, the persecuted man whom You have rehabilitated, the solitary whom You have gifted with company, the nostalgic man longing for love to whom You have opened Heaven and the world, may find and give love, I hope that that man will not abandon You… Master… what do You think of Judas? Last year You wept with me because of him. Then… I do not know… Master, never mind those two dragonflies, look at me, listen to me. I would not say this to anybody. I would not tell my companions, my friends. But I will tell You. I am not successful in loving Judas. I must admit it. He rejects my desire to love him. He does not hold me in contempt, on the contrary he is even too courtly with the old Zealot who he realises is more skilful than the others in knowing men. But it is the way he behaves. Do you think he is sincere? Tell me. »

Jesus is silent for a few moments as if He were enchanted by the two dragonflies that resting on the surface of the water form a tiny rainbow with their iridescent elytra, a precious rainbow as it attracts a curious midge, which is swallowed by one of the voracious insects, which, in turn, is immediately snatched and devoured together with the midge, by a toad or frog, lying in wait. Jesus stands up, as He had almost lain down to see the little tragedies of nature and says: « It is just like that. A dragonfly has strong jaws to feed on herbs and strong wings to catch gnats, and a frog has a large mouth to swallow dragonflies. Each has his own and makes use of it. Let us go, Simon. The others are waking up. »

« But You have not replied to me, Master. You did not want to. »

« I did! My old wise man, meditate and you will find… » And Jesus goes from the ditch towards His disciples who are waking up and looking for Him.

217. Jesus Is Master also of the Sabbath.

13th July 1945.

We are still in the same place, but the setting sun is more bearable.

« We must go and reach that house » says Jesus.

They set out and reach it. They ask for bread and refreshment. But the farmer drives them away rudely.

« Race of Philistines!-Vipers! They are always the same! They

were born of that stock and bear poisonous fruit » grumble the tired and hungry disciples. « May you be given tit for tat. »

« Why do you lack charity? The time of the law of retaliation is over. Come forward. It is not yet night and you are not dying of hunger. Offer this little sacrifice so that these souls may become hungry for Me » says Jesus exhorting them.

But the disciples go into a field and begin to pick the ears of corn, they rub them on the palms of their hands and eat them. I think they do it more out of spite than to satisfy their hunger.

« They are good, Master » shouts Peter. « Are You not having any? And they have a double flavour… I would like to eat up the whole field. »

« You are right! So they would repent for not giving us any bread » say the others while walking through the corn and eating with relish.

Jesus is walking alone on the dusty road. The Zealot and Bartholomew are five or six yards behind Him, speaking to each other.

There is another crossroads, where a secondary road crosses the main one, and a group of sulky Pharisees is standing there. They must be coming back from the Sabbath celebration in the village that can be seen at the end of the secondary road, a large flat town, which looks like a huge animal lying in its den.

Jesus sees the Pharisees, looks at them and smiling kindly greets them: « Peace be with you. »

Instead of replying to His greetings, one of the them asks arrogantly: « Who are You? »

« Jesus of Nazareth. »

« See, I told you it was Him » says another.

In the meantime Nathanael and Simon have come close to the Master, whereas the other apostles are coming towards the road, walking along the furrows. They are still chewing and have some corn in their hands.

The Pharisee who had spoken first, probably because he is the most important one, resumes speaking to Jesus, Who has stopped waiting to hear what they have to say: « Ah! So You are the famous Jesus of Nazareth? Why have You come so far? »

« Because also here there are souls to be saved. »

« We are quite sufficient for that. We know how to save our souls and those of our subjects. »

« If it is so, you are doing the right thing. But I have been sent to evangelize and save. »

« Sent! Sent! Who can prove it to us? Not Your deeds certainly! »

« Why do you say that? Are you not interested in your Life? »

« Of course! You are the one who administers death to those who do not adore You. So You want to kill the whole sacerdotal and

Pharisaic classes, and the class of scribes and many more, because they do not worship You and they never will. Never, do You understand? We, the chosen ones in Israel, will never worship You. Neither shall we love You. »

« I do not compel you to love Me and I say to you: "Worship God" because… »

« That is, You, because You are God, are You not? But we are not the horrible people of Galilee nor the foolish people of Judah who follow You forgetting our rabbis… »

« Do not be upset, man. I am not asking for anything. I am fulfilling My mission, I teach people to love God and I repeat the Decalogue to them, because it has been forgotten, and what is worse, it is badly applied. I want to give Life. Eternal Life. I do not wish anybody a bodily death and much less a spiritual one. The Life in which I asked you whether you were interested, is the life of your soul, because I love your soul, even if your soul does not love Me. And it grieves Me to see that you are killing it by off ending the Lord and despising His Messiah. »

The Pharisee becomes so excited that he seems to have fallen into a fit of convulsions: he disarranges his clothes, he tears his fringes, he takes off his headgear, he ruffles his hair and shouts: « Listen! Listen! Hear what He says to me, to Jonathan of Uziel, a direct descendant of Simon the Just. That I offend the Lord! I don't know who keeps me from cursing You, but… »

« It is fear that keeps you. But you may do it. You will not be burnt to ashes just the same. But you will be in due course, and then you will invoke Me. But between you and Me, there will then be a red stream: My Blood. »

« All right. But in the meantime, since You say that You are a saint, why do You allow certain things? Since You say that You are a Master, why do You not teach Your apostles before anybody else? Look at them, behind You!… They still have in their hands the instrument of their sin! Can You see them? They have picked corn and this is the Sabbath. They have picked ears of corn, which do not belong to them. They have infringed the Sabbath and they have stolen. »

« They were hungry. In the village where we arrived yesterday evening, we asked for bread and lodgings. They drove us away. Only an old woman gave us some of her bread and a handful of olives. May God give her one hundredfold, because she gave us everything she had, and she only asked for a blessing. We walked for a mile and then we stopped, complying with the law, and we drank the water of a stream. Then, at sunset, we went to that house… They rejected us. You can see that we were willing to obey the Law. »

« But you did not. It is not legal to do manual work on Sabbaths

and it is never legal to take what belongs to other people. My friends and I are scandalised. »

« But I am not. Have you not read how David at Nob took the consecrated bread of the Proposition for himself and his companions? The sacred loaves belonged to God, in His house, and by a perpetual order were to be kept for the priests. It is written: "They will belong to Aaron and his sons, who shall eat them in a holy place, because they are a most holy thing". And yet David took them for himself and his companions, because he was hungry. If, therefore, the holy king entered the house of God and ate the bread of the Proposition on a Sabbath, although it was not legal for him to eat it, and yet it was not imputed to him as a sin, because also after that event God continued to love him, how can you say that we have sinned it we pick on the soil of God the ears of corn that have grown and ripened through His will, the ears that belong also to birds, and you deny that men, the sons of the Father, may eat »,

« They asked for those loaves, they did not take them without asking. And that makes the difference. In any case it is not true that God did not impute that sin to David. God struck him very hard! »

« Not because of that. It was because of his lewdness, of the census, not because… »

« Oh! That's enough. It is not legal, and that is all. You have no right to do it and you shall not do it. Go away. We do not want you in our land. We do not need you. We do not know what to do with you. »

« We shall go. »

« And for ever, remember that. Let Jonathan of Uziel never find you again in his presence. Go! »

« Yes, we will go. But we will meet again. And then it will be Jonathan who wants to see Me to repeat his judgement, and to rid the world of Me for ever. But then it will be Heaven that will say to you: "It is not legal for you to do it", and that "it is not legal" will resound in your heart like the sound of a bugle-horn throughout your life and beyond. As on Sabbaths the priests in the Temple infringe the Sabbath rest but do not commit sin, so we, servants of the Lord, can attain love and help from the Most Holy Father, without thus committing sin, since man denies us his love. There is One here Who is by far greater than the Temple and can take anything He wants of what exists in creation, because God has made everything a footstool for the Word. And I take and give. And that applies both to the ears of corn of the Father, laid on the immense table of the Earth, and to the Word. I take and give. Both to the good and to the wicked. Because I am Mercy. But you do not know what is Mercy. If you knew what My being Mercy means,

you would also know that I want nothing but mercy. If you knew what Mercy is, you would not have condemned innocent people. But you do not know. You do not even know that I do not condemn you, you do not know that I will forgive you, nay, I will ask the Father to forgive you. Because I want mercy and not punishment. But you do not know. You do not want to know. And that is a greater sin than the one you impute to Me, it is greater than the one you say these innocent men have committed. You must know that the Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath and that the Son of man is master also of the Sabbath. Goodbye… »

He turns to His disciples: « Come. Let us go and look for a place where to lie down among the sands that are now near. The stars will keep us company and dew will refresh us. God, Who sent manna to Israel, will provide nourishment also for us, His poor faithful servants. » And Jesus leaves the rancorous group and goes away with His disciples, while night is falling with its first violet shadows…

They find at last a hedge of Indian figs, on the top leaves of which, bristling with thorns, are some fruit, which are beginning to ripen. Anything is good when one is hungry. And stinging themselves, they pick the ripest ones and proceed thus, until the fields become sandy dunes. The noise of the sea can be heard in the distance.

« Let us rest here. The sand is soft and warm. Tomorrow we will go to Ashkelon » says Jesus and tired as they are, they all lie down at the foot of a high dune.

218. Arrival at Ashkelon.

14th July 1945.

The fresh dawn breath wakes the sleeping apostles. They rise from their sand beds, where they slept close to a dune strewn with small tufts of dry grass, and they climb to the top. A large sandy coast appears before them, whereas a little farther away and a little closer to them there are beautiful well cultivated fields. The white stones of a dry torrent are conspicuous against the golden sand and their whiteness - the whiteness of dry bones - stretches as far as the sea, the surface of which glitters in the distance, rippled by the morning tide and a light mistral. They walk on the edge of the dune as far as the dry torrent, which they cross, and they resume walking across the dunes, which crumble under their feet and are so undulated that they seem a solid continuation of the sea.

They reach the shore-line, where they can walk faster, and while John is hypnotised by the boundless ocean beginning to shine in the rising sun, and he seems to be drinking in its beauty as his eyes

become bluer and bluer, Peter who is more practical, takes his sandals off, pulls up his tunic and paddles in the shallow water looking for little crabs or shells to suck. A beautiful sea town is about two miles away, stretched along the coast above a semilunar rocky barrier beyond which sands have been carried by storms and blown by winds. And the rocks of the barrier, now that the water recedes at low tide, appear here as well, compelling thus the apostles to walk on the dry sand in order not to cut their bare feet on the sharp rocks.

« Where is the entrance to the town, my Lord? I can only see a very solid wall from here. It is not possible to enter by sea. The town is in the inner-most spot of the gulf » says Philip.

« Come. I know where the entrance is. »

« Have You already been here? »

« Once when I was a child, but I would not remember. But I know where to go. »

« How strange! I have noticed that many a time… You never take the wrong road. Sometimes we make You go wrong. One would think that You have already been to the places we go to » remarks James of Zebedee.

Jesus smiles but does not reply. He walks confidently as far as a little rural suburb where market gardeners grow vegetables for the town. The fields and market gardens are tidy and well looked after and men and women are working in them, pouring water in the furrows, after drawing it laboriously from wells by hand, or in the old squeaky method by means of buckets pulled up by a poor blindfolded donkey walking round the well. But they do not say anything. Jesus greets them. « Peace be with you. » But if they are not hostile, they are certainly indifferent.

« My Lord, we are running the risk of dying of hunger here. They do not understand Your greetings. I will try now » says Thomas. And he opens conversation with the first market gardener he sees: « Are your vegetables expensive? »

« Not more than other market gardeners'. Dear or not dear, according to how thick a purse is. »

« Well said. But, as you can see, I am not dying of starvation. I am fat and rosy also without your vegetables. Which means that my purse is well stocked. Listen: we are thirteen and we have money to spend. What can you sell us? »

« Eggs, vegetables, early almonds, apples flabby by age, olives… Whatever you want. »

« Give me some eggs, apples and bread for everybody. »

« I have no bread. You will find it in town. »

« I am hungry now, not in an hour's time. I don't believe that you have no bread. »

« I have not got any. The women are making it. See that old man

over there? He always has plenty, because as he is closer to the road, pilgrims often ask him for it. Go to Ananiah and ask him. I will bring you the eggs now. But, mind you, they cost a coin a pair. »

« What a thief you are! Do your hens perhaps lay golden eggs? »

« No. But it is not pleasant to be in the middle of the stench of poultry, and one does not do it for nothing. In any case, you are Jews, are you not? So pay! »

« You can keep your eggs. And that's you paid! » and Thomas turns his back to him.

« Ehi! man! Come here. I will give you them for less. Three to a coin. »

« Not even four. You can eat them yourself and may they choke you. »

« Come here. Listen. How much are you prepared to give me? » The market gardener chases Thomas.

« Nothing. I don't want them any more. I wanted to have a snack before going to town. But it is better so. I will not lose my voice or my appetite before singing the king's stories and I will have a good meal at the hotel. »

« I will give you them for a didrachma a pair. »

« Ugh! You are worse than a horse-fly. Give me your eggs. And make sure they are new laid ones. Otherwise I will bring them back and I will make your snout yellower than it already is. » And Thomas comes away with at least two dozen eggs in the fold of his mantle. « See? From now on I will do the shopping in this land of thieves. I know how to deal with them. They are lousy with money when they come to purchase our goods for their women and our bracelets are never heavy enough and they haggle over prices for days. I will avenge myself. Now let us go and see that other nasty piece of work. Come, Peter. Here, John, take the eggs. »

They go to the old man whose market garden is near the main road, which from the north leads to the town running near the houses of the suburb. It is a fine well paved road, certainly Roman work. The eastern town gate is now quite near and beyond it one can see that the road proceeds straight and becomes really artistic, with a shady porch on each side, supported by marble columns, in the cool shade of which people walk leaving the middle of the road to donkeys, camels, dogs and horses.

« Hail! Will you sell us some bread? » asks Thomas.

The old man either does not hear or does not want to hear. In actual fact the squeaking of the water-wheel is such that it can cause confusion.

Peter loses his temper and shouts: « Stop your Samson! At least it will be able to catch its breath and not die under my eyes. And listen to us! »

The man stops the donkey and casts a side glance at his interlocuter, but Peter disarms him saying: « Eh! Is it not right to give the name of Samson to a donkey? If you are a Philistine, you should like it because it is an insult to Samson. If instead you come from Israel, you should like it because it reminds you of a defeat of the Philistines. So you can see… »

« I am a Philistine and am proud of it. »

« You are right. And I will be proud of you if you give us some bread. »

« But are you not a Judaean? »

« I am a Christian. »

« What place is that? »

« It is not a place. It is a person. I belong to that person. »

« Are you His slave? »

« I am more free than any other man because who belongs to that person does not depend on anybody, except God. »

« Are you speaking the truth? Not even on Caesar? »

« Phew! What is Caesar as compared to Him Whom I follow, and to Whom I belong, and in Whose name I ask you to give me some bread? »

« But where is that powerful man? »

« That man over there, the One looking here and smiling. He is the Christ, the Messiah. Have you never heard of Him? »

« Yes, the king of Israel. Will He defeat Rome? »

« Rome? The whole world, also Hell. »

« And you are His generals? Dressed like that? Perhaps to evade the persecutions of the wicked Jews. »

« Well… it is, and it isn't. But give me some bread and while eating I will explain the situation to you. »

« Bread? But I will give you also water, and wine, and seats in the shade, for you and for your companion and for your Messiah. Call Him. »

And Peter rushes towards Jesus. « Come, come. He will give us what we want… that old Philistine. But I think he will assail You with questions… I told him Who You are… I more or less told him… But he is favourably disposed. »

They all go to the market garden where the man has already arranged benches round a coarse table under a thick vine pergola.

« Peace to you, Ananiah. May your ground be fertile because of your charity and may it bear you rich fruit. »

« Thank You. Peace to You. Sit down. Anibe! Nubi! Bring bread, wine and water at once » the old man orders two women who are certainly African, because one is absolutely black with thick lips and frizzly hair and the other is very dark but more of a European type. And the old man explains: « They are the daughters of my wife's slaves. She is dead and the slaves who came with her are

also dead. But the daughters are here. They come from the High and Low Nile. My wife came from there. It's forbidden, eh? But I don't care. I am not an Israelite and the women of inferior race are meek. »

« Are you not from Israel? »

« I am by force, because Israel oppresses us like a yoke. But… You are an Israelite and You will feel insulted at what I say?… »

« No. I am not offended. I would only like you to listen to the voice of God. »

« It does not speak to us. »

« That is what you say. I am speaking to you, and that is His voice. »

« But You are the King of Israel. »

The women who are arriving with bread, water and wine when they hear « king » being mentioned, stop dumbfounded looking at the smiling dignified young man, whom their master calls « king », and they are about to withdraw, almost creeping out of respect.

« Thank you, women. Peace to you, too. » Then, addressing the old man: « They are young… You may go on with your work. »

« No. The soil is wet and can wait. Speak to us a little. Anibe, unharness the donkey and take it to the stable. And you, Nubi, pour the last buckets of water and then… Are you stopping here, Lord? »

« Do not go to any further trouble. I only want to take some food and then I will go to Ashkelon. »

« It is no trouble. Go to town, but come back here in the evening. We will share our bread and salt. You two, hurry up. You see to the bread, you call Jetheo, tell him to kill a kid and prepare it for this evening. Go. » And the two women go away without speaking.

« So You are a king. But Your army? Herod is cruel in every possible way. He rebuilt Ashkelon. But for his own glory. And now!… But You know the disgraceful things of Israel better than I do. What will You do? »

« I have but the weapon that comes from God. »

« David's sword? »

« The sword of My word. »

« Oh! You have some hopes! It will become blunt against bronze hearts. »

« Do you think so? I am not aiming at a kingdom in this world. I am aiming at the Kingdom of Heaven on behalf of all of you. »

« Us all? Me, as well, a Philistine? And my slaves? »

« For everybody. You and them. And for the most uncivilised man in the centre of African forests. »

« Do You want to establish such a wide kingdom? Why do You call it of Heaven? You could call it: Kingdom of the Earth. »

« No, do not misunderstand me. My Kingdom is the Kingdom of

the True God. God is in Heaven. So it is the Kingdom of Heaven. Every man is a soul clad with a body and a soul can live but in Heaven. I want to cure your souls, remove their errors and hatred and lead them to God through goodness and love. »

« I like that very much. I do not go to Jerusalem, but I know that no one in Israel has spoken like that for ages. So You do not hate us? »

« I do not hate anyone. »

The old man is pensive… then he asks: « And have the two slaves got a soul the same as you people of Israel? »

« of course they have. They are not captured wild beasts. They are unhappy creatures. They deserve love. Do you love them? »

« I do not ill-treat them. I want them to obey, but I never use a lash and I feed them well. They say that an ill-fed animal will not work. But also an ill-fed man is bad business. And they were born in the house. I saw them when they were babies. They are the only ones who will be left, because I am very old, You know? Almost eighty. They and Jetheo are what is left of my old household. I am fond of them as I am of my property. They will close my eyes… »

« And then? »

« And then… Who knows! I don't know. They will go and work as maidservants and the house will fall to pieces. I am sorry. I made it wealthy by my work. This ground will be covered with sand again and become sterile… This vineyard… My wife and I planted it. And that rosery… It's Egyptian, Lord. I smell the perfume of my wife in it… It seems my son… the only son who is buried under it and is now dust… Sorrows… It is better to die young and not see all that and death which is approaching… »

« Your son is not dead, neither is your wife, their souls survive. Their flesh is dead. Death must not frighten you. Death is life for those who hope in the Lord and live righteously. Think about it… I am going to town. I will come back this evening and I will ask you to allow Me to sleep under that porch with My disciples. »

« No, my Lord. I have many empty rooms. I offer them to You. »

Judas puts some coins on the table.

« No. I don't want them. They are of this country that is hateful to you. But perhaps they are better than those who rule over us. Goodbye, my Lord. »

« Peace to you, Ananiah. »

The two slaves together with Jetheo, a brawny elderly peasant, have come to see Him leave. « Peace to you as well. Be good. Goodbye » and Jesus touches lightly Nubi's frizzy hair and the shiny straight hair of Anibe, He smiles at the man and departs.

Shortly afterwards they enter Ashkelon along the road of the double porch, which goes straight to the centre of the town. The town is an imitation of Rome, with fountains and basins, squares

in the style of the Forum, towers along the wall and Herod's name everywhere, which he obviously had placed to praise himself since the population of Ashkelon do not applaud him. The town is busy and becomes more so as the time passes and one approaches its centre, which is spacious and airy, with the sea as a bright background like a turquoise enclosed in the pink coral tongues of the houses spread in the deep arc of the coast. Rather than a gulf it is indeed a true arc, a section of a circle made very pale pink by the sunshine.

« Let us divide into four groups. I will go, nay I will let you go. Then I will make My choice. Go. After the ninth hour we will meet at the gate where we came in. Be wise and patient. » And Jesus looks at them going away and remains alone with Judas Iscariot who has stated that he will give nothing to the people here because they are worse than heathens. But when Judas hears that Jesus wishes to wander about in silence, he changes his mind and says: « Do You mind being alone? I would go with Matthew, James and Andrew as they are the least capable ones… »

« You may go. Goodbye. »

And Jesus all alone, wanders far and wide in the town, a seeming nonentity amongst busy people who pay no attention to Him. Only two or three children look at Him curiously and a woman provokingly dressed comes resolutely towards Him smiling alluringly. But Jesus looks at her so severely that she becomes purple, lowers her eyes and goes away. At the corner she turns round again, and as a man who watched the scene jeers at her bitingly, laughing at her defeat, she envelops herself in her mantle and runs away.

The children, instead, walk round Jesus, looking at Him and smiling in response to His smiles. One more daring than the others asks: « Who are You? »

« Jesus » He replies caressing him.

« What are You doing? »

« I am waiting for some friends. »

« From Ashkelon? »

« No, from My country and from Judaea. »

« Are You rich? I am. My father has a beautiful house and he makes carpets in it. Come and see. It is not far. »

And Jesus goes with the boy and they enter a long archway, which is a kind of covered road. At the other end they catch a glimpse of the sea, which is very bright in the sunshine and looks even more lively in the dim light of the archway.

They meet a haggard little girl who is weeping. « That is Dinah. She is poor, You know? My mother gives her food. Her mother cannot work any more. Her father died, at sea. In a storm while going from Gaza to the harbour of the Great River to take goods there

and to collect some. And as the goods belonged to my father and Dinah's father was one of our sailors, my mother now sees to them. But there are so many of them who have been left fatherless thus… What do You say? It must be dreadful to be orphans and poor. Here is my house. Don't tell my mother that I was in the street. I should have been at school. But I was expelled because I was making my companions laugh with this… » and he pulls out from his clothes a puppet carved in wood, set in a thin piece of wood, which is really very comical, with its slipper chin and its very queer nose.

Jesus' lips tremble as if He were on the point of smiling, but He controls Himself and says: « That is not your school teacher, is it? Or a relative? It is not right. »

« No. It's the head of the synagogue of the Jews. He is old and ugly and we always make fun of him. »

« That is not right either. He is certainly much older than you are and… »

« Oh! He is very old, he is almost humpbacked and blind, but he is so ugly looking!… It's no fault of mine, if he is so ugly! »

« No. But you are wrong in making fun of an old man. You will be ugly too, when you are old, because you will be bent with age; you will be bald, almost blind, you will need a stick to walk, your face will be like that one. So? Will you be happy if an ill-mannered boy makes fun of you? And why should you worry your master and disturb your companions? It is not right. If your father knew, he would punish you and your mother would be upset. I will not tell them anything. But you will give Me two things immediately: your promise that you will no longer commit such offences and that puppet. Who made it? »

« I did, Lord… » says the humiliated boy, who is now conscious of the gravity of his… misdeeds… And he goes on: « I like to carve wood very much! Sometimes I carve the flowers or the animals which are on the carpets. You know?… dragons, Sphynxes and other animals… »

« You may do that. There are so many beautiful things on the earth! So are you going to promise and will you give me that puppet? Otherwise we are no longer friends. I will keep it as a souvenir and I will pray for you. What is your name? »

« Alexander. And what will You give me? »

Jesus is embarrassed. He always has so little! But He remembers that He has a beautiful buckle on the collar of one of his tunics. He looks for it in His bag, finds it, takes it off and gives it to the boy. « And now let us go. But, mind you, even if I go away, I will know everything just the same. And if I know that you are a bad boy, I will come back here and tell your mother everything. » The agreement is made.

They enter the house. Beyond the hall there is a large yard on

three sides of which there are large rooms with the looms.

The maidservant who opened the door is amazed seeing the boy with a stranger and informs the landlady, a tall kind looking woman who comes immediately asking: « But has my son not been well? »

« No, woman. He brought Me here to see your looms. I am a stranger. »

« Do You wish to make some purchases? »

« No. I have no money. But I have friends who love beautiful things and have money. »

The woman looks curiously at the man who so candidly admits that he is poor and she says: « I thought You were a rich man. Your manners and aspect are those of a lord. »

« Instead I am only a Galilean rabbi: Jesus, the Nazarene. »

« We are in business and we are unprejudiced. Come and see. »

And she takes Him to see her looms where young women are working under her guidance. The rugs are really valuable both with regard to design and shade: they are deep, soft and look like flower beds in bloom or kaleidoscopes of gems. On others there are allegorical figures, such as hyppogryphs, mermaids, dragons or heraldic gryphons like ours, intermingled with flowers.

Jesus admires them. « You are very clever. I am glad I have seen all this. And I am glad that you are a good woman. »

« How do you know? »

« It is written on your face and the boy told Me about Dinah. May God reward you for it. Even if you do not believe it, you are very close to the Truth, because there is charity in you. »

« Which truth? »

« The Most High Lord. He who loves his neighbour and practises charity both towards his family and his subjects, and extends it to unhappy people, has already Religion in himself. That is Dinah, is it not? »

« Yes. Her mother is dying. Later, I will take her, but not for the looms. She is too young and too delicate. Dinah, come to this gentleman. »

The little girl, with the sad look of unhappy children, approaches Jesus shyly.

Jesus caresses her and says: « Will you take Me to your mother? You would like her to be cured, would you not? Well, then, take Me to her. Goodbye, woman. And goodbye, Alexander. And be good. »

He goes out holding the girl's hand. « Are you alone? » He asks her.

« I have three little brothers. The last one never knew his father. »

« Do not weep. Can you believe that God can cure your mother? You know, do you not, that there is only one God Who loves the men that He created and especially good children? And that He can

do everything? »

« Yes, I know, Lord. My brother Tolme used to go to school and at school he was mixed with Jewish boys. That is why we know many things. I know that God exists and His name is Jehovah and that He punished us because the Philistines were bad to Him. The Jewish children always reproach us for that. But I was not there then, neither was my mother or my father. So why… » tears choke her words.

« Do not weep. God loves you, too, and He brought Me here, for you and for your mother. Do you know that the Israelites are expecting the Messiah Who is to come to establish the Kingdom of Heaven? The Kingdom of Jesus, the Redeemer and Saviour of the world? »

« I know, my Lord. And they threaten us saying: "Then there will be trouble for you". »

« And do you know what the Messiah will do? »

« He will make Israel a great country and will treat us very badly. »

« No. He will redeem the world, He will remove sin, He will teach people not to sin, He will love the poor, the sick, the afflicted, He will go to them, and He will teach the rich, the healthy, the happy to love them and He will tell everybody to be good to reach the blissful eternal life in Heaven. That is what He will do. And He will not oppress anybody. »

« And how will people know Him? »

« Because He will love everybody and will cure the sick people that believe in Him, He will redeem sinners and teach love. »

« Oh! I wish He came before my mother dies! How I would believe in Him! How I would pray Him! I would go and look for Him until I found Him and I would say to Him: "I am a poor girl without father and my mother is dying, I hope in You" and I am sure that, although I am a Philistine, He would hear me. » Her voice throbs with simple deep faith.

Jesus smiles looking at the poor girl walking beside Him. She cannot see His bright smile as she is looking ahead, towards the house which is now close at hand…

They arrive at a poor little house, at the end of a blind alley. « It's here, my Lord. Come in… » A small miserable room, a straw mattress with a worn out body on top of it, three little ones between three and ten years of age, sitting near the mattress. Misery and starvation are portrayed everywhere.

« Peace to you, woman. Do not get excited. Do not trouble yourself. I found your daughter and I know that you are not well. I have come. Would you like to be cured? »

In a small voice the woman replies: « Oh! My Lord!… It's the end for me!… » and she weeps.

« Your daughter believes that the Messiah could cure you. And

what about you? »

« Oh! I believe that, too. But where is the Messiah? »

« It is I, Who am speaking to you. » And Jesus, Who was bending over the mattress whispering His word to the poor woman, stands up and shouts: « I want it. Be cured. »

The children are almost afraid of His majesty, and the three amazed faces remain around their mother's pallet. Dinah presses her hands against her little breast. A light of hope, of beatitude shines on her face. She is so touched, that she is almost panting. Her mouth is open to utter a word which her heart is already whispering and when she sees that her mother, so far wan and exhausted, sits up, as if she were supported by a strength infused into her, and then stands up, with her eyes staring all the time at the Saviour, Dinah utters a cry of joy: « Mummy! ». The word filling her heart has been spoken!… And then another one: « Jesus! » And embracing her mother she compels her to kneel down saying: « Adore Him, adore Him! It is He, the prophesied Saviour of Whom Tolme's teacher spoke. »

« Worship the True God, be good, remember Me. Goodbye. » And He goes out quickly while the two happy women are still prostrated on the floor…

219. Teaching at Ashkelon.

15th July 1945.

The apostles arrive at the town gate in successive little groups, according to the directions of Jesus. The Master is not yet there. But He arrives soon, emerging from a little street running along the walls.

« The Master must have had good fortune » says Matthew. « Look how He is smiling. »

They meet and then all together go out of the gate and take to the main road again, a road lined with suburb market gardens.

Jesus asks them: « Well? How did it go with you? How did you do? »

« Very badly » the Iscariot and Bartholomew reply together.

« Why? What happened? »

« They almost stoned us. We had to run away. Let us go away from this place of barbarians. Let us go back to where people love us. I will not speak again here. Actually I had no intention of speaking. Then I allowed myself to be convinced and You did not stop me. And yet You know how things are… » The Iscariot is angry.

« But what happened to you? »

« Eh! I had joined Matthew, James and Andrew. We went to Judgement Square, because it is the meeting place of refined people

who have plenty time to listen to those who speak. We decided that Matthew should speak, being the most suitable one to talk to publicans and their clients. And he began by speaking to two men who were quarrelling over the ownership of a field involved in an intricate inheritance: "Do not hate each other for what is perishable and for what you cannot take with you in the next life. But love each other so that you may enjoy the eternal good which you can achieve by controlling your evil passions, without any other struggle, and thus win and possess Good". That is what you were saying, is that right? And when two or three people approached us, he continued: "Listen to the Truth that is teaching the world, so that the world may have peace. You can see that the world suffers because it entertains an excessive attachment for things that perish. The earth is not everything. There is also Heaven, and in Heaven there is God, as on the earth there is now His Messiah, Who sent us to inform you that the time of Mercy has come and that no sinner can say: 'I shall not be heard', because he who is really repentant is forgiven, heard, loved and invited to the Kingdom of God". Many people had already gathered together and some were listening respectfully, while some were asking questions, thus disturbing Matthew. I never reply to anybody, to avoid interrupting the speech. I speak and then I reply to any question at the end. Let them bear in mind what we want to tell them and be silent. But Matthew wanted to reply at once!… And they were asking us questions as well. But there were also some who sneered saying: "There is another madman! He certainly comes from that den of Israel. They are like weeds those Jews, they spread everywhere! They talk everlasting nonsense! They have God as their companion. Listen to them! God is on their sword edge and on their sharp tongues. Listen, listen. Now they are calling in question His Messiah. Some other raving lunatic who will torture us as always happened in the past. Let the plague catch Him and His race!". Then I lost my temper. I pulled Matthew back, as he was going on speaking, smiling as if they were paying homage to him, and I began to speak, taking Jeremiah as my starting point: "See how the waters rise from the North and become an overflowing torrent… Upon hearing the noise of the water, you will lose your strength; your pride, your hearts, your arms, your feelings, everything will collapse. Because the punishment of God for you, mischievous race, will have the roar of a waterfall, whereas it will be earthly armies and heavenly warriors to punish your stubbornness, attacking you by order of the Heads of the People of God. And you, the remains of the island of sin and door of Hell, will be exterminated! You have become arrogant because Herod has rebuilt your homes? But you will be shaved until you become hopelessly bald and you will be struck by all sorts of

punishments in your towns and villages, in your valleys and plains. The prophecy is not yet dead… " and I wanted to continue, but they rushed upon us and only because a heaven-sent caravan was passing along one of the streets, we managed to take shelter, as stones were already flying. They hit the camels and their drivers; there was an uproar and we made off. Afterwards we remained quietly in a little suburb yard. Ah! I will never come back here again… » « I beg your pardon, but you offended them! It's your fault! Now we understand why they were so hostile when they came to drive us away! » exclaims Nathanael. And he continues: « Listen, Master. We, that is Simon of Jonah, Philip and I had gone towards the tower overlooking the sea. There were some sailors and ship owners there, loading goods for Cyprus, Greece and other more distant places. And they were cursing the sun, the dust and their hard work, their Philistine destiny that implied that they were slaves of overbearing people, whereas they could have been kings. And they cursed the Prophets, the Temple and all of us. I wanted to go away, but Simon objected saying: "No, on the contrary, we must approach these sinners. The Master would do that, and we must do it as well". "Then, you can speak to them" said Philip and I. "And if I do not know what to say?" said Simon. "Then we will help you" we replied. Simon then, smiling, went towards two men who had sat down perspiring on a huge bale they could not lift on to the boat, and he said: "It's heavy, isn't it?". "It's not so much its weight, as the fact that we are tired. And we have to complete the loading, because that's what the owner wants. He wants to sail when the sea is calm, because this evening the sea will be rough and he must be beyond the rocks to be out of danger". "Rocks in the sea?". "Yes, over there, where the water foams, a nasty spot". "Currents, eh? Of course! The south wind blows round the promontory and collides with the current there… Are you a sailor?". "A fisherman, a fresh water fisherman. But water is always water and wind always wind. I have finished up in the water more than once myself and my catch went back into the lake. Our trade is a good one but can be also unpleasant. There is no place entirely bad and no race entirely cruel. With a little good will it is always possible to come to some agreement and one finds out that there are good people everywhere. Come on! I want to give you a hand" and Simon called Philip saying: "Come on, you will catch the load there, I will catch it here and these good people will lead us over there, to the boat, and down to the holds". The Philistines were rather unwilling, but then they allowed them to help. After putting the bale in its place, and others, which were on the bridge as well, Simon began to praise the boat, as he only knows how, and he praised the sea, the town that was so beautiful as seen from off shore and he took an interest in navigation and in foreign towns.

And they were all round him, thanking him and praising him… Until one asked him: "But where are you from? From the Nile area?". "No, from the sea of Galilee. But as you can see I am not a tiger". "That is true. Are you looking for a job?". "Yes". "I will take you on, if you wish. I can see that you are a clever sailor" said the owner. "I instead will take you". "Me? But did you not tell me that you want a job?". "That is true. My work is to take men to the Messiah of God. You are a man. So you are work for me". "But I am a Philistine!". "And what does that mean?". "It means that you hate us, that you have persecuted us from time immemorial. Your chiefs have always said so… The Prophets, eh? But now the Prophets are voices which no longer shout. Now there is only the great holy Jesus, He does not shout, but calls people with a friendly voice. He does not curse, He blesses. He does not cause misfortunes, but removes them. He does not hate and does not want anyone to hate. On the contrary He loves everybody and He wants us to love also our enemies. In His Kingdom there will no longer be winners and losers, free men and slaves, friends and enemies. There will no longer be such distinctions which hurt, which are the consequence of human wickedness; but there will be only His followers, that is people who live in love, in freedom, in the victory over everything which is burdensome or sorrowful. I beg you. Please believe my words and desire Him. The prophecies were written. But He is greater than the Prophets and prophecies are obliterated for those who love Him. See this beautiful town of yours? You would find it much more beautiful in Heaven, if You went so far as to love our Lord Jesus, the Christ of God". That is what Simon was saying and he was simple and inspired at the same time and everybody listened to him diligently and respectfully. Yes, respectfully. Then some citizens came out of a street shouting, and they were armed with clubs and stones and they saw us and they knew from our clothes that we were foreigners, and now I understand, they realised that we were of your race, Judas, and they thought that we were all of your kind. If those of the boat had not protected us we would have been in trouble! They lowered a lifeboat and took us away by sea and they let us ashore near the garden where we were at midday and from there we came here together with the people who cultivate flowers for the rich of the country. But, Judas, you have ruined everything! Is that the way to abuse people? »

« It is the truth. »

« But it is to be used discreetly. Peter did not tell lies, but he knew what to say » retorts Nathanael.

« Oh! me! I tried to put myself in the place of the Master, and I thought: "He would be so kind. And I as well… " » says Peter simply.

« I like strong attitudes. They are more regal. »

« Your usual idea! You are wrong, Judas. The Master has been endeavouring to correct that idea of yours for a year. But you will not yield to corrections. You are as obstinate in your error as those Philistines upon whom you rushed » says Simon the Zealot reproachfully.

« When did He ever correct me for that? In any case everybody has his own ways and makes use of them. »

The Zealot starts at those words and looks at Jesus, Who is silent and Who responds with a light smile of understanding to Simon's remindful glance.

« That is not a good reason » says James of Alphaeus calmly and continues: « We are here to correct ourselves before correcting others. The Master has been first our Master. And He would not have been our Master if He had not wanted us to change our habits and minds. »

« He was Master in wisdom… »

« He was? He is » says Thaddeus seriously.

« How much cavilling! All right, He is. »

« And He is our Master in everything else, not only in wisdom. His teaching applies to everything there is in us. He is perfect, we are imperfect. Let us endeavour therefore to become perfect » advises James of Alphaeus kindly.

« I don't think I committed a fault. The fault lies with that cursed race. They are all wicked. »

« No. You cannot say that » bursts out Thomas. « John went among the lowest class: the fishermen who were taking their catch to the market. And look at this damp sack. It is full of choice fish. They gave up their profit to give it to us. They were afraid that the morning catch might not be fresh by evening, so they went back to sea and they wanted us to go with them. We seemed to be on the take of Galilee and I can assure you that if the place reminded us of it, if also the boats full of keen faces reminded us, John reminded us much more. He seemed another Jesus. Words flowed from his smiling lips as sweet as honey and his face shone like another sun. How he resembled You, Master! I was moved. We were at sea for three hours, waiting for the nets, stretched out between floats, to become full of fish and they were three hours of utter happiness. Then they wanted to see You. But John said: "We will meet at Capernaum" as if he was saying: "We will meet in the square of your village". And yet they promised to come and they took due note. And we had to argue not to be laden with too much fish. They gave us the best ones. Let us go and cook them. We shall have a feast this evening, to make up for yesterday's fasting. »

« But what did you say to them » asks the Iscariot who is disconcerted.

« Nothing special. I spoke of Jesus » replies John.

« But the way you can speak of Him! Also John quoted the Prophets. But he turned them upside down » explains Thomas.

« Upside down? » asks the Iscariot nonplussed.

« Yes. You extracted harshness from the Prophets, he extracted sweetness. Because, after all, their severity is love, exclusive violent love, if you wish so, but it is still love for souls that they would like to be faithful to the Lord. I do not know whether you have ever considered that, as you were educated among the scribes. I have, although I am a goldsmith. Also gold is hammered and melted in a crucible, to make it more beautiful. Not out of hatred: but for love. That is how the Prophets dealt with souls. I understand it, probably because I am a goldsmith. He quoted Zechariah's prophecy concerning Hadrach and Damascus and when he came to the sentence: "Seeing this Ashkelon will be terrified, and Gaza will be seized with trembling, so will Ekron, at the ruin of her prospects. The king will vanish from Gaza", he began to explain how all that happened because man had abandoned God, and speaking of the coming of the Messiah, Who is loving forgiveness, he promised that from a poor royalty, such as the sons of the earth wish for their countries, the men who follow the Doctrine of the Messiah will succeed in attaining an eternal infinite royalty in Heaven. To say that, is nothing, but to hear it! I thought I was listening to music and that I was being carried away by angels. And thus the Prophets, who gave you a cudgelling, gave us delicious fish. »

Judas is disconcerted and remains silent.

« And what about you? » the Master asks His cousins and the Zealot.

« We went towards the shipyards, where the caulkers work. We also preferred to go amongst the poor people. But there were also some wealthy Philistines watching their boats being built. We did not know which of us should speak so we drew lots, as children do. Judas held up seven fingers, Simon two and I four. So it was for Judas to speak. And he did » explains James of Alphaeus.

« What did you say » they all ask.

« I openly made myself known for what I am, saying that I was asking them in their hospitality to be kind enough to listen to the word of a pilgrim who considered them as brothers, having the same origin and same end, and the hope, which although not common was full of love, to take them to the house of the Father and call them "brothers" for ever, in the great joy of Heaven. Then I said: "Zephaniah, our Prophet said: 'The region of the sea will be a place for shepherds… they will lead flocks there to pasture; among the house of Ashkelon they will rest at evening' " and I clarified my idea saying: "The Supreme Shepherd has come amongst you.

He is not armed with arrows, but with love. He stretches out His arms towards you and points out His holy pastures. He remembers the past only to pity men for the great harm they do and have done to themselves through hatred, like foolish children, while they could have relieved so much sorrow by loving one another, since they are brothers. This land" I said "will be the place of holy shepherds, the servants of the Supreme Shepherd who are already aware that they will have their richest pastures here and their best flocks; and their hearts, in their declining years, will be able to rest thinking of your hearts and the hearts of your children, more intimate than friendly homes, because Jesus Our Lord, will be their Master". They understood me. They asked me questions, nay, they asked us all questions. And Simon told them of his cure, my brother spoke to them of Your goodness towards the poor. And here is the proof. This fat purse for the poor we shall find on our way. The Prophets did not harm us either… »

Judas does not utter a single word.

« Well » says Jesus comfortingly, « Judas will do better next time. He thought he was doing the right thing by doing what he did. And as he acted for an honest purpose, he committed no sin. And I am equally satisfied with him. It is not easy to be an apostle. But one learns. I regret one thing only. That I did not have this money before and that I did not meet you. I needed it for a miserable family. »

« We can go back. It is still early… But, excuse me. Master. How did You come across it. What did You do? Just nothing? Did You not evangelize? »

« I? I walked. By means of My silence I said to a prostitute: "Abandon your sinful life". I met a boy, somewhat of a little rogue, and I evangelized him and we exchanged gifts. I gave him the buckle which Mary Salome had put on my tunic at Bethany, and he gave Me this work of his » and Jesus takes out from His tunic the caricatural puppet. They all look at it and laugh. « Then I went to see some beautiful carpets which a man makes in Ashkelon to sell them in Egypt and elsewhere… and I comforted a little fatherless girl and I cured her mother. And that is all. »

« And You think that is little? »

« Yes. Because there was also the need of some money, but I had none. »

« But let us go back… we did not upset anyone » says Thomas.

« And what about your fish? » says James of Zebedee jokingly.

« The fish? Well. You who are… anathematised, go to the old man who is giving us hospitality and start preparing. We will go to town. »

« Yes » says Jesus. « But I will show you the house from a distance. There will be many people. I will not come, because they would

keep Me. I do not wish to offend our host who is waiting for us, by declining his invitation. Rudeness is always against charity. »

The Iscariot lowers his head even more and becomes purple, such is the change of his colour, remembering how often he has committed that fault.

Jesus resumes: « You will go into the house and look for the little girl, she is the only girl there, so you cannot be mistaken. You will give her this purse and say to her: "God sends you this because you believed. It is for you, your mummy and your little brothers". Nothing else. And come back at once. Let us go. »

And the group breaks up as Jesus goes to town with John, Thomas and His cousins, whereas the others go towards the house of the Philistine market gardener.

220. Jesus at Magdalgad Incinerates a Pagan Idol.

16th July 1945.

Ashkelon and its market gardens are already but a memory. In the cool hours of a wonderful morning, Jesus and His disciples, turning their backs to the sea, direct their steps towards the low but beautiful green hills rising from the fertile plain. His apostles, who are both well rested and satisfied, are all in good fettle and speak of Ananiah, of his slaves, of Ashkelon, of the tumult in town when they went back to take the money to Dinah.

« It was my fate that I should be in straits because of the Philistines. After all, hatred and love have the same manifestations. And I, who had never suffered at the hands of Philistine hatred, was almost wounded by their love. They were on the point of capturing us to compel us to tell them the whereabouts of the Master, so elated were they because of the miracle. And how they shouted! Didn't they, John? The town was boiling like a pot. Those who were upset would not listen to reason and they were looking for the Jews to thrash them, those who had been benefited, or their friends, were endeavouring to persuade the former that a god had passed by. What a turmoil! They can talk it over for months. The trouble is that they talk with clubs rather than with their tongues. Well… it is up to them. They can do as they like » says Thomas.

« But… they are not bad… » remarks John.

« No. They are only blinded by so many things » replies the Zealot.

Jesus does not speak along a good stretch of the road. He then says: « Here, I will now go up to that village on the mountain, while you go on to Ashdod. Be careful. Be gentle, kind and patient. Even if they laugh at you, bear it in peace, as Matthew did yesterday, and God will help you. At sunset leave the town and go to the pond near Ashdod. We shall meet there. »

« But, my Lord, I will not let You go all alone! » exclaims the Iscariot. « These people are violent… It is not wise. »

« Do not be afraid for Me. Go, Judas, and be prudent yourself. Goodbye. Peace be with you. »

The Twelve go away but they are not very enthusiastic. Jesus looks at them depart and He takes the cool shady path up the hill. The hill is covered with olive, walnut and fig-trees and with well cultivated vineyards that are already promising good crops. On the plains there are little fields of cereals, while white-haired goats are grazing on the green grassy slopes.

Jesus arrives at the first houses of the village. He is about to enter when He meets a strange procession. There are women shouting, men howling an alternate lament and they are performing a kind of dance round a blindfolded billygoat, which they beat while proceeding. The knees of the animal are already bleeding after stumbling and falling on the stones of the path. Another group of people, who are also shouting and howling, are moving round a carved simulacrum, which is really very ugly and they hold up pans full of embers, which they keep alive by spraying resins and salt over them, at least I think that is what is happening, as the former smell of turpentine and the latter crackles like salt. Another group is gathered round a wizard, before whom they continuously bow, shouting:

« By your strength! » (men)

« You only can! » (women)

« Implore the god! » (men)

« Remove the witchcraft! » (women)

« Order the matrix! »

« Save the woman! »

And then all together, with a hellish howl, shout:

« Death to the sorceress! »

And they start all over again, with a variant:

« By your strength! »

« You only can! »

« Command the god! »

« To let us see! »

« Order the billygoat! »

« To show us the sorceress! »

And with another hellish cry:

« Who hates the house of Phara! »

Jesus stops a man of the last group, and kindly asks him: « What is happening? I am a foreigner… »

The procession has stopped for a moment to beat the billygoat, spray resins on the embers and take breath, and the man explains: « The wife of Phara, the great man of Magdalgad is dying in childbirth. Someone who hates her, has cast a spell on her. Her

womb has become strangulated and the child cannot come into the world. We are looking for the sorceress to kill her. Only that way Phara's wife can be saved, and if we do not find the sorceress we will sacrifice the billygoat to implore supreme mercy from goddess Matrix (I now realise that the monstruous puppet is a goddess)… »

« Stop. I can cure the woman and save her son. Tell the priest » says Jesus to the man and to two more who have approached Him.

« Are You a doctor? »

« More than a doctor. »

The three men elbow their way through the crowd and go to the idolatrous priest. They speak to him. The rumour spreads. The procession, which had set out again, stops.

The priest, imposing in his many coloured rags, nods to Jesus and orders: « Young man, come here! » And when Jesus is near him: « Is what You say true? Mind you, if what You say does not happen, we will infer that the spirit of the sorceress is embodied in You and we will kill You in her place. »

« What I said is true. Take Me to the woman at once and in the meantime give Me the billygoat. I need it. Remove the bandage from its head and bring it here. »

They do so. The poor stunned staggering bleeding animal is brought to Jesus Who caresses its thick black coat.

« Now you must obey Me in everything. Will you do that? »

« Yes! » shout the crowd.

« Let us go. Do not shout any more and stop burning resins. It is an order. »

They enter the village and along the main street they go to a house situated in the centre of an orchard. Shouting and crying can be heard through the wide open doors, and above all, the lugubrious dreadful laments of the woman who cannot give birth to her child.

They run to tell Phara, who looking wan and with ruffled hair comes forward together with two weeping women and some useless wizards who are burning incense and leaves on copper pans.

« Save my wife! »

« Save my daughter! »

« Save her, save her! » shout in turn the husband, an old woman and the crowd.

« I will save her and her boy as well, because it is a boy, a very healthy one, with two sweet eyes the hue of a ripe olive and dark hair on his head like this fleece. »

« How do You know? What? Can You see also inside a womb? »

« I see and penetrate everywhere. I know everything and I can do everything. I am God. »

If He had thrown a thunderbolt, the effect would not have been the same. They all throw themselves on the ground, as if they were dead.

« Stand up. Listen. I am the powerful God and I cannot bear other gods before Me. Light a fire and throw that statue on to it. »

The crowds rebel. They begin to doubt the mysterious « god » who orders the goddess to be burned. The priests are most indignant.

But Phara and his mother-in-law, who are interested in the woman's life, oppose the hostile crowd and since Phara is the great man in the village, the crowd checks its anger. But the man asks Him: « How can I believe that You are a god? Give me a sign and I will order them to do what You want. »

« Look. See the wounds of this billygoat? They are open, are they not? They are bleeding, are they not? And the animal is almost dead. Well, I do not want that… Now, look. »

The man bends, looks… and shouts: « There are no wounds! » and he throws himself on the ground begging: « My wife, my wife! »

But the priest of the procession threatens: « Watch, Phara! We do not know who He is! Dread the revenge of the gods! »

The man is seized with double fear: the gods, his wife… He asks: « Who are You? »

« I am He Who I am, in Heaven, on the earth. All power is subject to Me, every thought is known to Me. The dwellers of Heaven adore Me, those in Hell fear Me. And those who believe in Me will see all wonders being performed. »

« I believe! I believe… Your Name! »

« Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Lord. Burn that idol! I cannot bear gods in My presence. Put out those thuribles. Only My Fire is powerful and willing. Obey, or I will incinerate that vain idol, and I will go away without saving anyone. »

Jesus is awesome in His linen robe, from the shoulders of which hangs His blue mantle behind Him, His arm raised in a gesture of command, His face gleaming… They are afraid of Him, no one speaks… In the silence, the heart-rending exhausting cries of the suffering woman are distinctly heard. But they are still reluctant to obey. Jesus' face is becoming more and more awesome to human eyes. It is really a fire burning both matter and souls. And the copper pans are the first to suffer. The men holding them are compelled to throw them away as they can no longer stand their heat. And yet the coal seems to be out… Then the idol-bearers are forced to lay on the ground the 'litter which they were carrying shoulderhigh as the shafts are becoming carbonised, as if a mysterious flame burned them, and as soon as the litter is on the ground, the idol catches fire.

The crowds are terrorised and run away…

Jesus turns to Phara: « Can you really believe in My power? »

« I do believe. You are God. The God Jesus. »

« No. I am the Word of the Father, of Jehovah of Israel, and I have come in Flesh, Blood, Soul and Divinity to redeem the world and give men faith in the True God, the One, Trine God Who is in the Most High Heavens. I have come to give help and mercy to men, so that they may abandon Error and come to the Truth, which is the Only God of Moses and of the Prophets. Can you still believe? »

« Yes, I do. »

« I have come to bring the Way, Truth and Life to men, to demolish idols, to teach wisdom. Through Me the world will be redeemed, because I will die for love of the world and for the eternal salvation of men. Can you still believe? »

« Yes, I believe. »

« I have come to tell men, that if they believe in the True God, they will have eternal life in Heaven, near the Most High, Who is the Creator of every man, animal, plant and planet. Can you still believe? »

« Yes, I do believe. »

Jesus does not even enter the house. He only stretches out His arms towards the poor woman's room, with His hands open as in the resurrection of Lazarus, and He shouts: « Come out to the light to know the Divine Light and by order of the Light which is God! » A thundering order, echoed after a moment, by a cry of triumph having in its sound both wail and joy, and then the feeble weeping of a new-born baby, feeble but clear and growing more and more in strength.

« Your son is crying to greet the earth. Go to him and tell him, both now and later, that not the earth, but Heaven is his fatherland. Bring him up for Heaven, and that applies also to you. That is the Truth speaking to you. Those things (and He points at the copper pans, crumpled up on the ground like dry leaves, and now completely useless, and at the ashes marking the place of the idol's litter) are Falsehood that neither helps nor saves. Goodbye. » And He is about to go away.

But a woman rushes forth with a lively baby enveloped in linen swaddling clothes and she shouts: « It's a boy, Phara. He is beautiful and strong, His eyes are as dark as a ripe olive and his hair is darker and thinner than the hair of a little sacred goat. And your wife is resting blissfully. She no longer suffers, as if nothing had happened. It was all so sudden, when she was already dying… and after those words… »

Jesus smiles and as the man presents the baby to Him, He touches its head with the tips of His fingers. The people - with the exception of the priests who go away indignantly when they see Phara's defection - gather round them to see the baby and look at Jesus.

Phara would like to give Him gifts and money for the miracle. But Jesus kindly but resolutely says: « Nothing. A miracle can only be paid for by loyalty to God Who granted it. I will retain this billygoat as a remembrance of your town. » And He goes away with the billygoat, which trots along beside Him, as if Jesus were his owner, and now that it is cured, it looks happy and bleats for joy of being with one who does not strike it…

They go down the slopes of the hill and take the main road which leads to Ashdod…

When in the evening, near the shady pond, Jesus sees the apostles coming, their amazement is reciprocal, as they see Jesus with the ram and He sees them with the disappointed faces of those who have not done any business.

« A disaster, Master! They did not hit us, but they drove us out of town. We have been wandering about the country and we got some food but we had to pay highly for it. And yet we were kind… » they say desolately.

« It does not matter. We were driven away also at Hebron last year, but this time they honoured us. You must not lose heart. »

« And what about You, Master? And that goat? »

« I went to Magdalgad. I incinerated an idol and its thuribles, I made a baby boy come into the world, I preached the True God by means of miracles and I took this goat, destined to an idolatrous rite, as My reward. Poor thing, it was covered with wounds. »

« But now it is all right! It's a wonderful animal. »

« It is a sacred animal, destined to the idol… Yes, it is now sound. The first miracle I worked to convince them that I am the Powerful One, and not their piece of wood. »

« And what are You going to do with it? »

« I am taking it to Marjiam. A puppet yesterday, a goat today. It will make him happy. »

« Are You going to take it with You all the way to Bether? »

« Of course. I see nothing horrible about it. If I am the Shepherd, I can certainly have a ram. We will give it to the women. And they will go to Galilee with it. We will find a little she-goat. Simon, you will become the shepherd of little goats. It would be better if they were sheep… But there are more goats than lambs in the world… It is a symbol, My dear Peter. Remember that… By means of your sacrifice you will make many lambs of rams. Come. Let us go to that village among the orchards. We shall find lodgings either in the houses or on the sheaves which are already tied up in the fields. And tomorrow we will go to Jabneel. »

The apostles are surprised, grieved, disheartened. They are surprised at the miracles, grieved because they were not there, disheartened because of their inability, whereas Jesus can do everything.

He, instead, is So happy!… And He is successful in convincing them: « Nothing is useless. Not even defeat, because it serves to make you humble, whereas speech serves to make a name, Mine, resound and leave a remembrance in hearts. » And He is so persuasive and bright with joy that they also cheer up.

221. Lesson to the Apostles Going to Jabneel.

17th July 1945.

« Shall we go to Ekron from Jabneel? » ask some of the apostles while walking across a very fertile country, in which the corn is taking its final sleep in the bright sunshine that has ripened it. The mown fields resemble immense sad death beds, now that they are bereft of corn ears with loads of corn awaiting to be carried elsewhere.

But if the fields are barren, the orchards are a most pleasant sight, with the fruit about to ripen, changing colour from the green of the little hard ones to the soft yellowish, pinkish, waxy shiny shades of those that are more ripe. The figs open their very sweet caskets of flower-fruits, bursting their elastic skins to reveal, through whitish-green or violet cracks, a transparent jelly replete with tiny seeds, which are darker in colour than the pulp itself,

With each tiny wafting breeze the olive-trees shake, likewise, the oval-shaped fruits suspended on delicate stems amid the silver-green foliage. The dignified walnut trees sustain their firmstalked fruits, which swell within the plush of the husks, while the almond-trees are ripening their fruits as is evidenced by the velvety texture and changing colour of the individual nuts. Grapes in general are swelling while a few bunches, favourably placed, try to show the topaz or ruby of maturity. Day by day the cacti on the plain or lower hill sides are becoming a brighter sight with magnificent coloration on the seed clusters contained within and held skywards and ripened within the protection of the strong thorny leaves.

Isolated palm-trees and thick carob-trees remind one of nearby Africa and while the former click the castanets of their hard fanshaped leaves, the latter have dressed themselves in dark enamel and are standing haughtily stiff on their lovely foliage.

Tall agile goats, both white and black, all with long curved horns and soft keen eyes, feed on cacti and attack fleshy agaves, those huge brushes with hard thick leaves which, like open artichokes, shoot up from the centre of their hearts their gigantic seven branched stalk, resembling a cathedral candelabrum, with its sweet-smelling yellow-red flower blazing on top.

Africa and Europe have come together to cover the ground with most beautiful vegetation, and as soon as the apostolic group

leaves the plain to take a path that climbs up the hill literally covered with vineyards on this side facing the sea - a rocky calcareous slope where the grapes must be of immense value when their juice changes into julep - there appears the sea, my sea, the sea of John, the sea of God. It appears draped in its immense blue silk crepe and it speaks of distances, of infinity, of power, while it sings with the sky and the sun the trio of the creating glories. And the plain stretches out in its full undulated beauty with simulations of hills, only a few feet high, adjoining flat areas, with golden dunes stretching as far as towns and villages on the sea, white spots on the blue sea.

« How beautiful! How beautiful! » whispers John ecstatically.

« My Lord! The sea is the life of that boy. You must destine him for the sea. He seems to be seeing his bride when he sees the sea! » says Peter who does not discriminate much between sea and lake. And he smiles kindheartedly.

« He is already destined, Simon. You are all destined. »

« Oh! Good! And where are You sending me? »

« Oh! You!… »

« Tell me, be good! »

« To a place which is greater than your town and Mine and Magdala and Tiberias all put together. »

« I will get lost. »

« Do not be afraid. You will look like an ant on a large skeleton. But going to and fro untiringly you will bring the skeleton back to life. »

« I don't understand that at all… Tell me more clearly. »

« You will understand, you certainly will… » and Jesus smiles.

« And what about me? »

« And me? » They all want to know.

« This is what I will do. » And Jesus bends - they are on the gravelly bank of a torrent in the central part of which the water is still quite deep - and He picks up a handful of very fine gravel. He throws it into the air and it falls spreading in all directions. « There you are. Only this tiny stone is left in My hair. You will be scattered like that. »

« And You, brother, represent Palestine, don't You? » asks James of Alphaeus gravely.

« Yes, I do. »

« I would like to know who will be left in Palestine » asks James once again.

« Take this little stone. As a souvenir » and Jesus gives the little piece of gravel, which had remained entangled in His hair, to His cousin James and smiles.

« Could You not leave me in Palestine. I am the most suitable, because I am the coarsest, but I can still manage at home. Whereas

abroad!… » says Peter.

« On the contrary, you are the least suitable to remain here.

You are all prejudiced against the rest of the world and you think it is easier to evangelize in a country of believers rather than in a country of idolaters or Gentiles. It is instead the very opposite. If you considered what true Palestine offers us in its higher classes and also, although to a lesser degree, in its people, and if you bore in mind that here, in a place where the name of Palestine is hated and the name of God, in its true meaning, is unknown, we have certainly not been received any worse than in Judaea, in Galilee and in the Decapolis, your prejudices would vanish and you would realise that I am right when I say that it is easier to convince ignorant people of the True God, than those of the People of God, who are subtle guilty idolaters, and proudly believe they are perfect and wish to remain as they are.

How many gems, how many pearls I see where you can see land and sea only! The land of the multitudes which are not Palestine. The sea of Mankind which is not Palestine and which, as sea, desires only to receive searchers to give them those pearls, and as land, to be searched to allow those gems to be taken. There are treasures everywhere. But they are to be looked for. Every clod of earth may conceal a treasure and nourish a seed, every depth may hide a pearl. What? Would you perhaps expect the sea to make havoc in its depths by means of furious storms to detach pearloysters from their beds and open them by the striking power of billows and thus offer them on the shore to lazy people who do not want to work, to cowards who do not want to run risks? Would you expect the earth to make trees out of grains of sand and give you fruit without any seed? No, My dear. Fatigue, work, courage are required. And above all, no prejudices.

You, I know, disapprove, some more some less, of this journey among the Philistines. Not even the glories, which this land reminds us of, the glories of Israel that speak from these fields, fecundated by Hebrew blood, shed to make Israel great, and from those towns torn one by one from the hands of those who possessed them, to crown Judah and make it a powerful nation, are capable of making you love this pilgrimage. And I will not say to you: not even the idea of preparing the ground to receive the Gospel and the hope of saving souls can convince you. I will not say that to you, among the many reasons which I present to your minds so that you may consider the justice of this trip. That thought is still too high for you. You will arrive at it one day. And then you will say: "We thought it was a whim, a pretext, we thought that the Master lacked love towards us by making us go so far, on a long painful journey, risking unpleasant situations. Instead it was love, it was foreseeing, it was to smooth our way, now that we no longer have Him

with us, and we feel more lost than ever. Because then we were like vine shoots which grow in all directions, but they know that the vine will nourish them and that nearby there is a strong pole to support them, now instead we are shoots which must form a pergola by themselves, being still nourished by the stump of the vine, but with no trunk on which to lean". That is what you will say and you will thank Me.

And after all!… Is it not lovely to go like this, dropping sparks of light, notes of heavenly music, celestial corollas, perfumes of truth, serving and praising God, on lands enveloped in darkness, in dumb hearts, on souls as sterile as deserts, to overcome the stench of Falsehood, and do that all together, thus, You and I, the Master and His apostles, with one only heart, one only desire, one only will? So that God may be known and loved. So that God may gather all peoples under His tent and everybody may be where He is. That is the hope, the desire, the hunger of God! And that is the hope, the desire, the hunger of souls, who are not of different races, but belong to one race only: the one created by God. And since they all are the sons of the One God, they have the same desires, the same hopes, the same hungers for Heaven, for Truth, for real Love…

Centuries of errors seem to have changed the instinct of souls. But it is not so. Errors envelop minds. Because minds are mingled with flesh and feel the effects of the poison with which Satan inoculated the animal man. And thus errors can envelop hearts because they are engrafted into the flesh as well, and feel the effect of the poison. The treble concupiscence bites senses, sentiments and thoughts. But the spirit is not engrafted into the flesh. It may be stunned by the blows which Satan and concupiscence deliver it. It may be almost blinded by the allurements of the flesh and by the sprays of boiling blood of the animal man, into whom it is infused. But it has not changed its longing for Heaven, for God. It cannot change. See the clear water of this torrent? It descended from the sky and it will go back to the sky through the evaporation of water caused by winds and sun. It descends and rises again. Elements are not consumed, they go back to their origin.

The spirit goes back to its origin. If this water here, among these stones, could speak, it would tell you that it longs to go back to the sky, to be blown by the winds along the fields of the firmament, a soft white cloud, or a pinkish one at dawn, or bright copper at sunset, or like a violet flower at twilight when stars begin to peep. It would tell you that it would like to act as a sieve for the stars peeping through the gaps of cirri to remind men of Heaven, or as a veil for the moon, so that she might not see the nocturnal ugly deeds on the earth, rather than be here, confined between banks, under the menace of becoming mud, compelled to see copulations

of water snakes and toads, while it is so fond of the solitary freedom of the atmosphere. Also spirits, if they dared to speak, would say the same thing: "Give us God! Give us the Truth!". But they do not say that, because they know that man is not aware of, does not understand or mocks the entreaties of the "great beggars", of the spirits who seek God to satisfy their terrible hunger: their hunger for the Truth.

The idolaters, the Romans, the atheists, the unhappy we meet on our way, and you will always meet, those who are despised in their desire for God, either through politics or family selfishness, or through heresies born of filthy hearts and spread throughout nations: they are all hungry! They are hungry! And I have mercy on them. And should I not have mercy on them, being He Who I am? If out of pity I provide food for men and sparrows, why should I not have mercy on the spirits, who have been prevented from being of the True God, and who stretch out the arms of their spirits shouting: "We are hungry!"? Do you think that they are wicked, or savages, or unable to go as far as love God's Religion and God Himself? You are wrong. They are spirits awaiting love and light.

This morning we were woken by the threatening bleating of the billygoat that wanted to drive away the big dog which had come to sniff Me. And you laughed seeing how the ram pointed its horns threateningly, after tearing the little rope by which it was tied to the tree, under which we slept, and with one bound it placed itself between Me and the dog, without considering that it might have been attacked and slaughtered by the Molossian hound in the uneven struggle to defend Me. Likewise, the peoples who seem wild rams to you, will go as far as to courageously defend the Faith of Christ, once they have learned that Christ is Love inviting them to follow Him. He invites them. He does. And you must help them to come.

Listen to a parable.

A man got married and his wife bore him many sons. But one of them was born deformed in his body and seemed to be of a different race. The man considered him a dishonour and did not love him, although the child was innocent. The boy was brought up amongst the lowest servants and was thoroughly neglected and thus he was considered an inferior being also by his brothers. His mother had died in giving birth to him and consequently she could not mitigate his father's harshness, or stop the mockery of his brothers, or correct the wrong ideas conceived in the primitive mind of the child, a little wild beast unwillingly tolerated in the house of the beloved sons.

And thus the boy became a man. His reason developed late but finally reached maturity and he understood that it was unfair for a son to be brought up in a stable, to be fed with a piece of bread and

clothed with rags, without ever receiving a kiss, or being spoken to or being invited to his father's house. And he suffered bitterly and would lament in his den: "Father! Father!". He ate his bread, but there was still a great hunger in his heart. He covered himself with his clothes, but he felt bitter cold in his heart. Some animals and some pitiful people of the village were friendly to him. But his heart was full of solitude. "Father! Father!"… The servants, his brothers, his fellow citizens heard him moan thus all the time, as if he were mad. And he was called the "madman".

At last one of the servants dared to go to him, when he had become almost an animal, and said to him: "Why do you not throw yourself at the feet of your father?". "I would, but I dare not… "Why do you not come into the house?". "I am afraid". "But would you like to?". "Of course I would! Because that is what I hunger for, why I feel cold, and I feel as if I were in a desert. But I do not know how to live in my father's house". The good servant then began to teach him, to make him look more decent, to relieve him of his terror of being unpleasant to his father, saying: "Your father would like to have you, but he does not know whether you love him. You always avoid him… Relieve your father of the remorse of dealing too severely with you and of the grief of knowing that you are forlorn. Come. Your brothers also will no longer laugh at you because I told them of your grief".

And the poor son one evening was guided by the good servant to his father's house and he cried: "Father, I love you, let me come in! … And his father, who was now old and was sadly pondering on his past and his eternal future, started at that voice and said: "My sorrow is subsiding at last because in the voice of my deformed son I heard my own, and his love is the proof that he is blood of my blood and flesh of my flesh. Let him therefore come and take his place amongst his brothers and blessed be the good servant who made my family complete by bringing the rejected son among all the sons of his father".

That is the parable. But in applying it, you must bear in mind that the Father of the spiritually deformed sons, that is, God because schismatics, heretics, those who are separated, are spiritually deformed - was compelled to be severe by the voluntary deformities wanted by His sons. But His love never yielded. He is waiting for them. Take them to Him. It is your duty.

I taught you to say: "Our Father, give us this day our bread". But do you realise what "our" means? It does not mean yours, of you twelve. Not yours as disciples of the Christ. But yours as men. For all men. For the present and the future ones. For those who know God and for those who do not know Him. For those who love God and His Christ and for those who do not love Him or love Him badly.

I put on your lips a prayer for everybody. It is your ministry. You, who know God and His Christ and love Them, must pray for everybody. I told you that My prayer is a universal one, and will last as long as the world. And you must pray universally, joining your voices and your hearts of apostles and disciples of Jesus' Church to those of people belonging to other Churches, which may be Christian but not apostolic. And you must insist, because you are brothers, you in the house of the Father, they outside the house of the common Father, with their hunger, their homesickness, until they also, like you, are given the true "bread" which is the Christ of the Lord, which is administered on apostolic tables, not on any other where it is mixed with impure aliments. You are to insist until the Father says to those deformed brothers: "My grief is subsiding, because I heard the voice and the words of My OnlyBegotten First-Born in your voices. Blessed be those servants who have led you to the House of your Father in order to complete My Family". Servants of an Infinite God, you must put infinity in every intention of yours. Have you understood?

There is Jabneel. Once the Ark passed by here on its way to Ekron, which was not able to keep it and sent it back to BethShemesh. The Ark is going to Ekron once again. John, come with Me. All the others will remain in Jabneel. Meditate and be careful how you speak. Peace be with you. »

And Jesus goes away with John and the ram which, bleating, follows Him like a dog.

222. Towards Modin.

18th July 1945.

The hills after Jabneel, running from west to east with regard to the pole-star, rise in height and behind them many more can be seen rising higher and higher. The green and violet summits of the Judaean mountains stand out in the distance, in the twilight. The day has rapidly come to its end, as is wont in southern regions. From the bright red sunset, in less than one hour it has passed to the first twinkling of stars and it seems impossible that the blazing sun has gone out so suddenly, deleting the blood-red sky with a thicker and thicker veil of red amethyst, which later becomes mallow and gradually changes colour becoming more and more transparent, showing an unreal sky, no longer blue, but pale green, which darkens into the greyish-blue hue of fresh oats, foreboding the indigo which will reign during the night, studded with diamonds like a royal mantle. And the first stars are already smiling in the east together with a little sickle of the moon at its first quarter. The earth is imparadised more and more in the light of the stars and in the silence of men. Now what does not sin is

singing: nightingales, gurgling waters, rustling leaves, chirping crickets, and toads which with the accompaniment of oboes sing to the dew. Perhaps also the stars are singing up there… as they are closer to the angels than we are. The heat is abating in the air of the night, damp with dew so pleasing to herbs, men and animals!

Jesus Who had waited at the foot of a hill for the apostles coming from Jabneel where John has gone to fetch them, is now speaking to the Iscariot, to whom He hands some purses of money with instructions on how to distribute it. Behind Him there is John, holding the billygoat. He is silent, between the Zealot and Bartholomew, who are talking of Jabneel where Andrew and Philip behaved so well. Farther back, there are all the others in a group, speaking loud and summarising their adventures in the Philistine region and openly expressing their joy for their return to Judaea for Pentecost in the very near future.

« Are we really going there soon? » asks Philip, who is very tired walking on the hot sand.

« That's what the Master said. You heard Him » replies James of Alphaeus.

« My brother certainly knows. But He seems lost in reverie. What they have done during these five days is a mystery » says James of Zebedee.

« Sure. I am dying to know. At least that as compensation for that… purgative at Jabneel. Five days during which we had to watch every word, every step and where we looked, to avoid getting into trouble » says Peter.

« However, we were successful. We are beginning to learn » says Matthew happily.

« To tell you the truth… I trembled with fear two or three times. That blessed boy of Judas of Simon!… Will he never learn to control himself? » says Philip.

« He will, when he is old. And yet, we may say that he does it for a good purpose. You heard Him? Also the Master said so. He does it out of zeal… » remarks Andrew to excuse him.

« Come off it! The Master said so because He is Goodness and Prudence. But I do not think He approves of Him » replies Peter.

« He does not tell lies » retorts Thaddeus.

« It is not a question of telling lies. But He knows how to reply most prudently, and we do not know how to do that, and He speaks the truth without breaking anybody's heart, without rousing anybody's indignation and without reproaching. Of course, He is He! » says Peter with a sigh.

They become silent while walking in the clearer and clearer moonlight. Then Peter says to James of Zebedee: « Try and call John. I do not know why he is avoiding us. »

« I can tell you at once: because he knows that we would torment

him in order to find out » replies Thomas.

« Of course! And he is staying with the two most prudent and wise ones » confirms Philip.

« Well, try just the same, James, be good » insists Peter.

And James, condescendingly, calls John three times: the latter does not hear, or pretends not to hear. Bartholomew instead turns round and James says to him: « Tell my brother to come here » and then to Peter: « But I don't think he will tell us. »

John goes obediently at once and asks: « What do you want? »

« We want to know whether we are going straight to Judaea from here » replies his brother.

« That is what the Master said. He was almost on the point of not coming back from Ekron and was going to send me to fetch you. Then He preferred to come as far as these last slopes… Because one can go to Judaea also from here. »

« By Modin? »

« By Modin. »

« It is not a safe road. Bandits wait for caravans along it and make sudden attacks on them » objects Thomas.

« Oh!… with Him!… Nothing can resist Him!… » replies John looking up to the sky enraptured in who knows what memories and smiling.

They all watch him and Peter says: « Tell me: are you perhaps reading a blissful story in the starry sky, with that look on your face? »

« Me? No… »

« Come off it! Also stones can see that you are miles away from the world. Tell me: what happened to you at Ekron? »

« Nothing, Simon. I can assure you. I would not be happy if anything unpleasant had happened. »

« Not unpleasant. On the contrary!… Come on! Speak up! »

« But I can tell you nothing more than what He has already told you. They were kind like people amazed at miracles. That's all. Exactly as He said. »

« No » and Peter shakes his head. « No. You are not good at telling lies. You are as clear as spring water. No. You change colour. I have known you since you were a boy. You will never be able to tell lies. You are unable because of your heart, of your thoughts, of your tongue, of your very skin that changes colour. That is why I am so fond of you and I have always loved you. Listen, come here, to your old Simon of Jonah, your old friend. You remember when you were a boy and I was already a man? How I used to fondle you. You wanted storie's and cork-boats "which never shipwreck", you used to say and which you needed to go far away… Also now you are going far away and you are leaving poor Simon ashore. And your little boat will never be wrecked. It is sailing full of flowers

like the ones you used to launch, when a child, at Bethsaida, on the river, so that the river would carry them to the lake and they would sail and sail… Do you remember? I love you, John. We all love you. You are our sail. You are our boat which does not wreck. We sail in your wake. Why don't you tell us of the miracle at Ekron? »

Peter has spoken clasping with one arm the waist of John, who endeavours to elude the question, saying: « Since you are our chief, why do you not speak to the crowds with the same persuasive strength as you are using with me? They need to be convinced, not I. »

« Because I feel more at ease with you. I love you, but I do not know them » says Peter excusing himself.

« And you do not love them. That's your mistake. Love them, even if you do not know them. Say to yourself: "They belong to our Father". You will then seem to know them and you will love them. You will see in them so many Johns… »

« That is easily said! As if asps and hedgehogs could be exchanged for you, my eternal boy. »

« Oh! no! I am like everybody else. »

« No, brother. Not like everybody. We, with the exception perhaps of Bartholomew, Andrew and the Zealot, would have told everybody what happened to us and made us happy. You are silent. But you must tell me, your elder brother. I am like a father to you » says James of Zebedee.

« God is my Father, Jesus my Brother, and Mary my Mother… »

« So blood counts for nothing with you? » shouts James anxiously.

« Do not be upset. I bless the blood and the womb that formed me: my father and mother; and I bless you, my brother of the same blood: the former because they begot me and brought me up enabling me to follow the Master, and you because you are following Him. Since my mother became a disciple, I love her in two ways: with my flesh and blood as a son; with my soul as her fellowdisciple. Oh! what a joy to be united in His love!… »

Jesus has come back after hearing James' excited voice and the last words clarify the situation to Him. « Leave John alone. It is quite useless to torment him. He is very much like My Mother. And he will not speak. »

« Well, You tell us, then » they all implore.

« Well, here it is. I took John with Me because he is the most suitable for what I wanted to do. I have been helped and he has been perfected. That is all. »

Peter, John's brother James, Thomas, the Iscariot look at one another, making wry mouths, disappointed as they are. And Judas Iscariot, not satisfied with being disappointed, says so: « Why perfect him, who is already the best? »

Jesus replies to him: « You said: "Everybody has his way and makes use of it". I have Mine. John has his, which is very like Mine. Mine cannot be perfected. His can. And I want that to be, because it is right that it should be so. And that is why I took him. Because I needed one who had that way and that soul. So let there be no bad mood and no curiosity. Let us go to Modin. The night is serene, cool and clear. We shall walk as long as it is moonlight, then we shall sleep until dawn. I will take the two Judas to venerate the tombs of the Maccabees, whose glorious name they bear. »

« Only the two of us with You! » exclaims the Iscariot happily.

« No. With everybody. But the visit to the tomb of the Maccabees is for you. That you may imitate them in a supernatural way, fighting and winning in a completely spiritual field. »

223. Jesus Speaks to Highwaymen.

19th July 1945.

« I will speak in the place where we are going » says the Lord while the group goes more and more into valleys that assail the mountain with hard narrow stony roads, and go up and downhill, losing horizons and reconquering them. Finally, going down a very steep slope, where only the billygoat is at ease, as Peter remarks, they reach a deep valley, where they can rest and take some food near a spring, which is very rich in water.

There are other people spread in the meadows and thickets having their meal, like Jesus and His apostles. It must be a well known resting place preferred by travellers, since it is sheltered from winds and there are soft meadows and plenty water. They are pilgrims who are going towards Jerusalem, travellers going perhaps to the Jordan, merchants of lambs destined to the Temple, shepherds with their flocks. Some are travelling on horseback, most of them on foot.

There is also a nuptial caravan in festive array, which has just arrived. Gold jewels shine through the veil covering the bride, a little older than a girl, in the company of two matron-like women sparkling with bracelets and necklaces, and of a man, perhaps the matchmaker, besides two servants. They arrived on donkeys adorned with ribbons and harness bells and they withdraw to eat in a comer, as if afraid that the glances of the people present might violate the young bride. The matchmaker or relative, whatever he may be, mounts guard in a threatening attitude while the women eat. The curiosity of the other people is greatly roused and in fact, with the excuse of asking for some salt, or a knife, or a drop of vinegar, there is always someone going here or there, to find out whether anyone knows who the bride is, where she is going, and

many other nice things of the kind…

There is in fact one who knows where she comes from, where she is going and is more than happy to tell everything he knows, also because he is prompted by another man who makes him more talkative by pouring out some very good wine for him. In a few moments also the most secret details of two families are disclosed, with information on the trousseau, which the bride is taking in the cases which are there, and on the wealth that is awaiting her in her husband's house and so on. They thus learn that the bride is the daughter of a rich merchant in Joppa, and is getting married to the son of a rich merchant in Jerusalem, and that the bridegroom has preceded her to adorn the nuptial house for her impending arrival and that the man who is accompanying her is a friend of the groom and also the son of a merchant, of Abraham, who deals in diamonds and gems, whereas the bridegroom is a gold-beater, and the bride's father is a merchant dealing in woollen and cotton cloths, carpets, curtains…

As the chatterbox is close to the apostolic group, Thomas hears him and asks: « Is the bridegroom perhaps Nathanael of Levi? »

« Yes, he is. Do you know him? »

« I know the father well, because I did business with him, I am a little less familiar with Nathanael. A wealthy marriage! »

« And a happy bride! She is covered with gold. Abraham, a relative of the bride's mother and father of the groom's friend, distinguished himself and so did the groom and his father. They say that the contents of those cases are worth many gold talents. »

« Good Lord! » exclaims Peter and he whistles a tune. He then says: « I am going to have a close look to see whether the main goods correspond to the rest » and he stands up, together with Thomas, and they both go for a short walk round the nuptial group. They watch the three women carefully, three heaps of cloth and veils, from which jewelled hands and wrists emerge and through which they can see ears and necks sparkling with jewels. They also watch the boastful matchmaker, who swaggers so much, as if he had to repel corsairs attacking the little virgin. He looks daggers also at the two apostles. But Thomas begs him to greet Nathanael of Levi on behalf of Thomas, called Didymus. And thus peace is made, so much so that while he is speaking, the bride manages to be admired, as she gets up in such a way that her mantle and veil fall off and she appears in all the gracefulness of her body and clothes showing her wealth worthy of an idol.

She must be fifteen years old, at most, and her eyes are very alert! She moves about mincingly notwithstanding the two matrons' disapproval of her affected ways: she unpins her plaits and then fastens them again by means of precious hairpins: she tightens her belt which is studded with gems: she unlaces, takes

off and puts on again her shoe-styled sandals, fastening them with gold buckles, and at the same time she displays her beautiful dark hair, her lovely hands and soft arms, a slender waist, well shaped breast and hips, her perfect feet and all her jewels which tinkle and glitter in the twilight or in the light of the flames of the first bonfires.

Peter and Thomas go back. Thomas says: « She is a beautiful girl. »

« She is a perfect coquette. It may be… but your friend Nathanael will soon find out that there is someone who keeps his bed warm for him, while he warms gold to beat it. And his friend is a perfect fool. He puts his bride in the right hands! » concludes Peter sitting down near his companions.

« I did not like that man who was encouraging that other fool over there to speak. When he had heard all he wanted to know, he went away up the mountain… This is a bad spot. And the weather is just right for highwaymen. Moonlight nights. Exhausting heat. Trees all covered with leaves. H'm! I don't like this place » grumbles Bartholomew. « It would have been better to go on. »

« And that imbecile who mentioned all the riches! And that other one who plays the hero and the watchman of shadows and cannot see real bodies!… Well, I will keep watch near the fire. Who is coming with me? » asks Peter.

« I am, Simon » replies the Zealot. « I can go without sleeping. »

Many of the people, particularly single travellers, have got up and gone away a few at a time. There are left the shepherds with their flocks, the nuptial group, the apostolic one and three lamb merchants, who are already sleeping. Also the bride is asleep with the matrons under a tent which the servants have put up. The apostles look for a place where to rest, while Jesus withdraws to pray. The shepherds light a bonfire in the centre of the clearing where are their flocks. Peter and Simon light another one near the path of the cliff where the man disappeared, the one who had roused Bartholomew's suspicion.

Time passes and those who are not snoring, are nodding. Jesus is praying. There is dead silence. Also the spring shining in the moonlight seems to be silent. The moon is now high in the sky and the clearing is brightly lit up, whereas the edges are shadowed by thick foliage.

A big sheep dog snarls. A herdsman raises his head. The dog stands up raising the hair on its back and pointing in an alert position. It even trembles in its deep excitement while its hollow snarling becomes louder and louder. Also Simon raises his head and shakes Peter who is dozing. A slight rustle can be heard in the wood.

« Let us go to the Master. We will bring Him with us » say the two

apostles. In the meantime the herdsman wakes up his companions. They are all listening noiselessly. Also Jesus has got up, before being called and is going towards the two apostles. They gather near their companions, that is, near the shepherds, whose dog is becoming more and more excited.

« Call those who are sleeping. Everybody. Tell them to come here, without making any noise, particularly the women and the servants with the coffers. Tell them that perhaps there are highwaymen about. But do not tell the women, only the men. » The apostles spread out obeying the Master Who says to the shepherds: « Put a lot of wood on the fire so that it will give a good light. » The shepherds obey, and as they look excited, Jesus says to them: « Do not be afraid. Not one flock of wool will be taken off you. »

The merchants arrive and whisper: « Oh! Our profits! » and they add a string of abuse against the Roman and Jewish governors who do not clear the world of robbers.

« Do not be afraid. You will not lose one single little coin » says Jesus comforting them.

The weeping women arrive and they are frightened, because the brave matchmaker, trembling with fear, is terrorising them moaning: « It will be our death! The robbers will kill us! »

« Do not be afraid. No one will touch you. They will not even look at you » says Jesus to comfort them and He takes the women to the centre of the little group of men and frightened animals.

The donkeys are braying, the dog is barking, the sheep are bleating, the women are sobbing and the men are cursing or swooning more than the women, a real cacophony caused by fear.

Jesus is calm, as if nothing had happened. The rustling in the wood can no longer be heard because of the uproar. But the presence of approaching robbers in the wood is evidenced by the noise of breaking branches and rolling stones. « Silence! » orders Jesus. And He orders it in such a way that everything becomes quiet.

Jesus leaves His place and goes towards the wood, at the edge of the clearing. He turns His back to the wood and begins to speak.

« The wicked craving for gold drives men to base feelings. Man makes himself known because of his hunger for gold more than anything else. Consider how much evil is caused by this metal through its alluring but useless brightness. I think that the air in Hell is of the same hue, so hellish is its nature since man became a sinner. The Creator had left it in the bowels of that huge lapislazuli which is the earth, created by His will, that it might be useful to man with its salts and an ornament to temples. But Satan, kissing Eve's eyes, and biting man's ego, gave the savour of witchcraft to the innocent metal. And since then man kills and sins for the sake of gold. Woman for its sake becomes a coquette and inclined

to carnal sin. Man for its sake becomes thief, usurper, homicide, harsh against his neighbour and his own soul, which he deprives of its true inheritance, to follow transient things, and he deprives it also of the eternal treasure for the sake of a few shining scales, which he will have to leave at his death.

You, who for the sake of gold, sin more or less lightly, or more or less gravely, and the more you sin, the more you laugh at what your mothers and teachers taught you, namely, that there is a reward or a punishment for actions done during life, will you not consider that because of that sin you will lose God's protection, eternal life and joy, and you will have in your hearts remorse and malediction, while fear will be your companion, fear of human punishment, which is nothing when compared to the fear, which you should have but you have not, of divine punishment? Will you not consider that you may have a dreadful end because of your misdeeds, if you have gone as far as being criminals; and an even more dreadful end, because it will be an everlasting one, if for the sake of gold, your misdeeds have not gone as far as shedding blood, but have despised the law of love and of respect for your neighbour, by denying assistance to those who are starving through your avarice, or stealing positions or money or defrauding by means of false weights, through your greed? No. You do not consider all that. You say: "It's all an idle story! And I have crushed such idle stories under the weight of my gold. And they no longer exist".

It is not an idle story. It is the truth. Do not say: "Well, when I am dead, that is the end of everything". No. That is the beginning. Next life is not an abyss without thought and without remembrance of the past you have lived or without longing for God, as you think the period of expectation of liberation by the Redeemer is. Next life is a happy expectation for the just, a patient expectation for the expiating, a dreadful expectation for the damned. For the first in Limbo, for the second in Purgatory, for the third in Hell. And while the expectation will end for the first when they enter Heaven after the Redeemer, it will be comforted for the second by a greater hope after that hour, whilst the dreadful certainty of eternal malediction will be confirmed for the third.

Think about it, you sinners. It is never too late to repent. Change the verdict which is being written in Heaven against you, by means of true repentance. Do not let Sheol be hell for you, but an expiating expectation, at least that, through your own will. Do not let it be darkness, but twilight, not torture, but nostalgia, not despair, but hope. Go. Do not endeavour to fight against God. He is the Strong and Good One. Do not insult the names of your relatives. Listen to the wail of that fountain, it is like the wail that breaks the hearts of your mothers knowing that you are

murderers. Listen to the howling of the wind in that gorge. It seems to be threatening and cursing. As your fathers curse you for the life you lead. Listen to remorse crying in your hearts. Why do you want to suffer whilst you could be peacefully satisfied with little on the earth and everything in Heaven? Grant peace to your spirits! Give peace to men who are afraid, who must be afraid of you as if you were as many wild beasts! Grant peace to yourselves, poor wretches! Raise your eyes to Heaven, detach your mouths from the poisonous food, purify your hands dripping with the blood of your brothers, purify your hearts.

I have faith in you. That is why I am speaking to you. Because if the whole world hates and fears you, I do not hate you or fear you. But I stretch out My hand to say to you: "Rise. Come. Become meek amongst men, men amongst men". I am so little afraid of you that now I say to everybody here: "Go back and rest. Bear your poor brothers no ill-will, but pray for them. I will remain here looking at them with loving eyes, and I swear that nothing will happen. Because love disarms the violent and satisfies the greedy. Blessed be Love, the true strength of the world, the unknown but powerful strength, the strength that is God". »

And addressing everybody Jesus says: « You may go now. Be not afraid. There are no longer evil-doers over there, but only dismayed men who are weeping. He who weeps does no harm. I wish to God they remained as they are now. It would be their redemption. »

224. Arrival at Bether.

20th July 1945.

The train of animals following the apostolic college has undergone a change. The billygoat is no longer there and in its place there is a sheep and two lambs. A fat sheep with turgid udder, two little lambs as cheerful as urchins. A tiny flock that looks less magic than the very dark billygoat, and makes everybody happy.

« I told you that we would have a little goat to make Marjiam a little happy shepherd. Instead of the little goat, since you will not hear of goats, we got sheep. And white ones, exactly as Peter wanted them. »

« Of course! I thought I was pulling Beelzebub behind me » says Peter.

« In fact, since it was with us, how many unpleasant things have happened. It was a spell following us » confirms the Iscariot angrily.

« A good spell, then. Because what harm has really befallen us? » says John calmly.

They all shout at him reproaching him for his blindness. « Didn't you see how they were mocked at Modin? » « And do you think my brother's fall was just nothing? He might have been ruined. If he had broken his legs or his back, how could we have carried him away from there? » « And do you think that last night's incident was a pleasant one? »

« I saw everything, I considered everything and I blessed the Lord because nothing wrong happened to us. Evil came towards us, but then it ran away, as usual, and the incidents have certainly served to leave seeds of goodness both at Modin and with the vinedressers, who came with the certainty that they would find at least one person wounded and with the remorse of having been without charity, and in fact they wanted to make amends; and the same happened last night with the robbers. They did no harm and we, that is Peter, got the sheep in exchange for the goat and as a present for their safety, and there is now a good deal of money for the poor because the merchants and the women gave us purses of money and offerings. And what is more important, they all received the word of Jesus. »

« John is right » say the Zealot and Judas Thaddeus. And the latter concludes: « Everything seems to be taking place through a clear foreknowledge of the future. It is odd that we should be there, and we were late, because of my fall, at the same time as the jewelled women, and the shepherds with large flocks, as well as the merchants lousy with money: all of whom were a wonderful prey for the robbers! Brother, tell me the truth. Did You know that all that was going to happen? » Thaddeus asks Jesus.

« I told you many a time that I can read the hearts of men, and when the Father does not dispose otherwise, I do not ignore what must happen. »

« Well, why do You at times make mistakes, such as going towards hostile Pharisees, or to towns that are completely hostile? » asks Judas Iscariot.

Jesus stares at him and then says calmly and slowly: « They are not mistakes. They are necessities of My mission. The sick need a doctor and the ignorant a master. Both the former and the latter at times reject doctor or master. But if they are good doctors and good masters, they continue to go to those who refuse them because it is their duty to go. And I go. You would like all resistance to collapse wherever I go. I could do that. But I do not use violence against anyone. I convince people. Coercion is to be used only in very exceptional cases and only when a spirit enlightened by God understands that it may serve to persuade that God exists, and is the strongest, or when many people are to be saved. »

« Like yesterday evening, eh? » asks Peter.

« Yesterday evening those robbers were afraid because they saw that we were wide awake and waiting for them » says the Iscariot with evident scorn.

« No. They were convinced by words » says Thomas.

« No. They would not dream of it! They are indeed tender souls that can be convinced by a couple of words, even if spoken by Jesus! I know what they are like when I was attacked with my family and many people of Bethsaida in the gorge of Adummim » replies Philip.

« Master, tell me. It's since yesterday that I wanted to ask You. Was it Your words or Your will to prevent anything from happening? » asks James of Zebedee.

Jesus smiles and is silent.

Matthew replies: « I think that it was His will to overcome the hardness of those hearts, which He almost paralysed in order to be able to speak and save them. »

« I say that, too. That is why He remained there by Himself, looking at the wood. He subdued them with His look, by means of His defenceless calm and by trusting them. He did not even have a stick in His hands!… » says Andrew.

« All right. That's what we say. That's what we think. But I want to hear it from the Master » says Peter.

There is a lively discussion, in which Jesus does not interfere. Some say that since Jesus has declared that He does not force anyone, He has not used coercion in the case of those robbers either. That is what Bartholomew states. The Iscariot instead, who is mildly supported by Thomas, declares that he cannot believe that the look of a man can do so much. Matthew retorts: « It can do that and much more. I was converted by His look even before He spoke to me. » The opposite opinions cause a lively discussion, as each stubbornly insists in his own. John, like Jesus, is silent and he smiles lowering his head to conceal his smile. Peter revives the discussion as none of the arguments of his companions convinces him. He thinks and says that the look of Jesus is different from the look of an ordinary man, and he wants to know whether it is because He is Jesus, the Messiah, or because He is always God.

Jesus speaks: « I solemnly tell you that not only I, but anyone who is united to God by means of faultless holiness, purity and faith will be able to do that and much more. The look of a child, if his spirit is united to God, can cause vain temples to collapse, without shaking them as Samson did, it can command wild beasts and men-beasts to be meek, it can repel death and defeat diseases of the spirit, and the word of a child, united to God and an instrument of God can also cure diseases, make the poison of snakes harmless, work all kinds of miracles. Because it is God Who works in Him. »

« Ah! I understand! » says Peter. And He stares at John. And after a long internal conversation with himself, he concludes in a loud voice: « Yes! You, Master, can do that, because You are God, and because You are Man united to God. And the same happens to those who go so far, or have gone so far as to be united to God. I understand! I really understand! »

« But are you not inquiring about the key to that union, or about the secret of that power? Not all men are successful in going so far, although they all have the same means to succeed. »

« Quite right! Where is the key to that strength which unites man to God and dominates matter? A prayer or secret words… »

« A short while ago Judas of Simon was blaming the billygoat for all the unpleasant incidents that happened to us. There are no spells connected with animals. Reject superstitions, which are also a form of idolatry and can cause misfortunes. And as there are no formulas to work witchcraft, so there are no secret words to work miracles. There is only love. As I said yesterday evening, love calms the violent and satisfies the greedy. Love: God. With God within you, fully possessed through perfect love, your eye will become a fire capable of burning every idol and knocking down their simulacra, and your word will become power. And your eye will become an arm that disarms. You cannot resist God, you cannot resist Love. Only the demon can resist it, because he is perfect Hatred, and his children can resist with him. The others, the weak people seized with passions, but who have not sold themselves voluntarily to the demon, cannot resist. Whatever their religion may be, or their indifference to any faith, whatever the level of their spiritual baseness, they are struck by Love, the great Winner. Endeavour to arrive there soon, and you will do what the children of God and the bearers of God do. »

Peter does not take his eyes off John; also the sons of Alphaeus, James and Andrew are lively and watchful.

« Well, then, my Lord » says James of Zebedee, « what has happened to my brother? You are speaking of him. He is the boy who works miracles! Is that it? Is it so? »

« What has he done? He turned a page of the book of Life, and he read and learned new mysteries. Nothing else. He preceded you, because he does not stop to consider every obstacle, to weigh every difficulty, to work out every profit. He no longer sees the earth. He sees the Light, and goes to it. Without stopping. But leave him alone. The souls burning with greater flames are not to be disturbed in their ardour which gladdens and burns. You must let them burn. It is utmost joy and utmost toil. God grants them moments of darkness because He knows that fierce heat kills delicate souls, when they are exposed to continuous sunshine. God grants silence and mystic dew to such delicate souls, as He grants it to wild

flowers. Let the athlete of love rest, when God allows him to rest. Imitate gymnasiarchs who grant their pupils due rest… When you arrive where he has already arrived, and beyond, because both you and he will go beyond that point, you will realise the need for respect, silence and dim light that souls feel when they become the prey of Love and its instrument. Do not think: "I will be glad to be known, and John is a fool, because the souls of our neighbours, like the souls of children, want to be attracted by wonders". No, when you are there, you will have the same desire for silence and dim light as John has now. And when I shall no longer be amongst you, remember that when you have to pronounce sentence on a conversion or on possible holiness, you must always use humility as your measure. If a man is still proud, do not believe that he is converted. And if pride reigns in a man, who may even be said to be a "saint", you may be sure that he is not a saint. He may quackishly and hypocritically play the saint and pretend he works wonders. But he is no saint. His appearance is hypocrisy, his wonders are satanism. Have you understood? »

« Yes, Master. »… They are all quiet and pensive. But if their lips are closed, it is possible to guess their thoughts by their countenance. A deep desire to know quivers like ether around them, emanating from them…

The Zealot endeavours to divert their attention and thus gain time to speak to them separately and advise them to be quiet. I think that the Zealot has taken that task upon himself in the apostolic group. He is the moderator, the adviser, the peacemaker of his companions, besides being one who understands the Master so well. He says: « We are already in Johanna's estate. That village in that little valley is Bether. The large building on that top is the castle where she was born. Can you smell this perfume in the air? It comes from the roseries which begin to give off scent in the morning sun. In the evening it is a powerful fragrance. But it is so beautiful to see them in the cool morning, covered with dew drops, like millions of diamonds thrown on to millions of opening corollas. When the sun sets they pick all the roses that are completely open. Come. I want to show you from a knoll the view of the roseries that overflow from the top, like a waterfall, down the crags on the other side. A cascade of flowers, which climbs back up again, like a wave, on two other hills. It is an amphitheatre, a lake of flowers. It is really wonderful. The road is steeper. But it is worth while climbing up, because from that spot one overlooks all this paradise. And we shall soon be at the castle. Johanna lives there in perfect freedom, amongst her peasants, who are the only guards of so much wealth. But they are so fond of their mistress, who has turned these valleys into a paradise of beauty and of peace, that they are worth much more than all Herod's guards.

Here, look, Master. Look, my friends » and he points at a semicircle of hills invaded with roses.

Wherever one's eyes rest, one can see roseries, under very tall trees, to shield them from winds, from excessive heat of the sun and hailstorms. There is sunshine and air also under this light roof, which is like a veil but is not oppressive, and is duly controlled by the gardeners, and the most beautiful roseries in the world grow there. There are thousands and thousands of all kinds of rose-bushes. There are miniature, low, tall, very tall plants. They grow in tufts, like cushions studded with flowers, at the foot of trees, on very green meadows, as hedges along paths, on the banks of streams, in circles around irrigation vats, spread over the whole park which comprises hills, or twined round tree trunks, or from tree to tree forming flowery festoons and garlands. It is really a dream. All sizes and shades are present blending beautifully, with the ivory hue of tea-roses close to the blood red of other corollas. The true roses, which like the cheek of a child, shade on the contours into white tinged with pink, reign as queens, also because of their number.

They are all struck by so much beauty.

« But what does she do with all this? » asks Philip.

« She enjoys it » replies Thomas.

« No. She extracts the essence and thus employs hundreds of servants and gardeners who work at the presses. The Romans make great use of it. Jonathan was telling me when he showed me the figures of the last crop. But there is Mary of Alphaeus with the boy. They have seen us and they are calling the others… »

In fact there are Johanna and the two Maries, who are preceded by Marjiam, who runs down towards Jesus and Peter, with his arms stretched out ready for an embrace. The women arrive as well and they prostrate themselves before Jesus.

« Peace to you all. Where is My Mother? »

« Among the roseries, Master, with Eliza. Oh! She is definitely cured! She can now face the world and follow You. Thanks for making use of me for that purpose. »

« Thanks to you, Johanna. You can see that it was useful to come to Judaea. Marjiam.: here are your presents. This lovely puppet and these beautiful sheep. Do you like them? »

The boy is breathless with joy. He leans towards Jesus Who has bent to give him the puppet and has remained thus to look at him in the face, and he clasps His neck, kissing Him with utmost ardour.

« And thus you will become as meek as the little sheep and then you will become a good shepherd for those who believe in Jesus. Is that right? »

Marjiam replies « Yes » in a choked voice, while his eyes shine

with joy.

« Now go and see Peter, because I am going to My Mother. I can see a strip of Her veil moving along a hedge of roses. »

And He runs to Mary embracing Her to His heart at a corner of a path. After a first kiss, Mary, still panting, explains: « Eliza is coming behind Me… I ran to kiss You, because it was not possible for Me not to kiss You… but I did not want to kiss You in front of her… She has changed a great deal… But her heart still aches in the presence of other people's joy, now denied to her for ever. Here she is coming. »

Eliza walks the last few yards with a rapid step and kneels down to kiss Jesus' tunic. She is no longer the tragic woman of Bethzur. She is an old austere lady, marked by sorrow that has left a deep trace on her countenance.

« May You be blessed, my Master, now and ever, for giving back to me what I had lost. »

« May a greater peace be with you, Eliza. I am happy to see you here. Stand up. »

« I am happy, too. I have so many things to tell You and to ask You, Lord. »

« We will have plenty time because I am staying here for a few days. Come, that I may introduce My disciples to you. »

« Oh!!! You have already understood what I wanted to tell You?! That I want to start a new life: Yours; and have a new family: Yours; and sons: Yours; as You told me speaking of Naomi, in my house, at Bethzur. I am the new Naomi through Your grace, my Lord. May You be blessed for it. I am no longer depressed and barren. I will still be a mother. And if Mary allows me, I will also be a mother to You, besides being a mother to the sons of Your doctrine. »

« Yes. You will be. Mary will not be jealous and I will love you so much that you will not regret coming with us. Let us go now to those who wish to tell you that they love you as brothers. » And Jesus takes her by the hand and leads her towards her new family.

The journey made while waiting for Pentecost is over.

225. The Paralytic at the Pool of Bethzatha.

21st July 1945.

Jesus is in Jerusalem, in fact quite near the Antonia. All the apostles are with Him, with the exception of the Iscariot. Many people are hurrying towards the Temple. They are all wearing their best clothes, both the apostles and the pilgrims, and I think therefore that it is Pentecost time. Among the people are many beggars, pitifully lamenting over their miseries and directing their steps towards the best places for seeking alms, near the gates

of the Temple, or at the crossroads from which people come towards the Temple. Jesus, while passing, gives alms to the poor wretches, who give meticulously every detail of their misery.

I am under the impression that Jesus has already been to the Temple, for I can hear the apostles talking of Gamaliel, who pretended not to see them, although Stephen, one of his pupils, had pointed out Jesus to him.

I can also hear Bartholomew asking his companions: « What did that scribe mean by saying: "A herd of rams for the slaughterhouse"? »

« He might have been talking of some business of his own » replies Thomas.

« No. He was pointing at us. I saw him clearly. In any case his next sentence confirmed the earlier remark. He said sarcastically: "Before long also the Lamb will be ready to be shorn and slaughtered". »

« Yes, I heard him, too » confirms Andrew.

« Of course! I am yearning to go back and ask the scribe's companion what he knows about Judas of Simon » says Peter.

« He knows nothing! This time Judas is not here because he is really ill. We know that for certain. Perhaps he really suffered too much during the trip we made. We are hardier. He always lived here, in comfort, and he tires easily » replies James of Alphaeus.

« Yes, we know. But that scribe said: "The chameleon is missing from the group". Does the chameleon not change colour any time it wants to? » asks Peter.

« Yes, Simon. But they were certainly referring to his clothes, which are always new. He is proud of them. He is young and we must bear with him… » remarks the Zealot to reconcile them.

« That is true, too. But!… What a queer expression! » concludes Peter.

« They are eternally threatening » says James of Zebedee.

« The trouble is that we know we are threatened and yet possibly imagine threats also where there are none… » points out Judas Thaddeus.

« And we see faults where they do not exist » ends Thomas.

« Of course! Suspicion is unpleasant… I wonder how Judas is today? In the meantime he is enjoying that paradise and those angels… I would not mind being ill myself, to enjoy those delights! » says Peter, to which Bartholomew adds: « Let us hope that he recovers soon. We must finish our trip, for the warm weather is at our heels. »

« Oh! He is well looked after, in any case… the Master will see to it, if necessary » assures Andrew.

« He had a very high temperature when we left him. I don't know how he got it, so… » says James of Zebedee. Matthew replies to

him: « Sure everybody gets it! Troubles just come. But it is nothing serious. The Master is not worried about it. If He had envisaged anything grave, He would not have left Johanna's castle. »

Jesus in fact is not at all anxious. He is speaking to Marjiam and John, walking ahead of the others and giving alms. He is obviously showing and explaining many things to the boy because I see Him pointing here and there. He is going towards the end of the Temple walls, towards the north-east comer. There are many people making for a place where there is a number of porches in the vicinity of a gate, which I hear being called « the Sheep Gate ».

« This is the Probatica, the Bethzatha pond. Now look at the water carefully. See how still it is? In a short while you will see that it stirs, swells, reaching up to that damp mark. Can you see it? It is the angel of the Lord who descends, the water perceives him and venerates him as best it can. He brings to the water the order to cure the man who is ready to jump into it. See the crowd? But the minds of many wander easily and thus they do not see the first motion of the water; or the stronger ones uncharitably push aside the weaker ones. One must never divert one's attention in the presence of the signs of God. We must ensure that our souls are always vigilant, because we never know when God may show Himself or send His Angel. And we must never be selfish, not even for health reasons. Very often these unhappy people lose the benefit of the Angel's visit, because they waste time quarrelling over whose turn it is or who is in greater need » Jesus patiently explains to Marjiam, who looks at Him with attentive gaze, keeping an eye at the same time on the water.

« Can one see the Angel? I would like to. »

« Levi, a shepherd, when he was about your age, saw him. You should look carefully as well, and be ready to praise him. »

The boy's mind is no longer diverted. He looks alternatively at the water and above it, he hears nothing else, and sees nothing else. Jesus in the meantime looks at the small group of invalids, blind people, cripples, paralytics, who are waiting. The apostles are also watching carefully. The sunshine causes play of light on the water and invades like a king the five porches encircling the pond.

« There, there! » trills Marjiam. « The water is rising, it is moving, it shines! How bright! The Angel! » and the boy kneels down.

In fact the water, in its motion in the pond, seems to be raised by a sudden huge wave swelling up to the edge of the pond, and it shines like a mirror in the sun. A dazzling flash for a moment.

A lame man is ready to dive into the water and he comes out, shortly afterwards, with his leg, previously contracted and marred by a large scar, completely cured. The others complain and quarrel with him, stating that after all he was not unable to work whereas

they are. And they continue arguing.

Jesus turns round and sees a paralytic lying in his little bed and weeping. He approaches him, bends over and caresses him asking: « Why are you weeping? »

« Master, nobody ever thinks of me. I stay here all the time, everybody is cured, except me. I have been lying on my back for thirty-eight years, I spent all I had, my relatives are dead, I am now a burden to a distant relation who carries me here in the morning and takes me back in the evening… But what a burden I am to him! Oh! I wish to die! »

« Do not grieve. You have had so much patience and faith. God will hear you. »

« I hope so… but one has fits of depression. You are good. But the others… Those who are cured, in order to thank God, could remain here to assist their poor brothers… »

« They should do that, in fact… Have no ill-feeling. They do not think of it. They are not malevolent. It is the joy of being cured that makes them selfish. Forgive them… »

« You are kind. You would not do that. When the water moves, I try to drag myself over there with my hands. But there is always someone who precedes me, and I cannot stay near the edge, because they would trample on me. And even if I stayed there, who would lower me into the water? If I had seen You before, I would have asked You… »

« Do you really want to be cured? Then, stand up! Take your bed and walk! » Jesus has stood up to give the order, and while rising He seems to have raised also the paralytic, who stands up on his feet, takes one, two, three steps, almost incredulously, behind Jesus Who is going away, and when he realises that he is really walking, he utters a cry that makes everybody turn round.

« But who are You? In the name of God, tell me! Are You perhaps the Angel of the Lord? »

« I am more than an angel. My name is Piety. Go in peace. »

People gather round them. They want to see, to speak, to be cured. But the guards of the Temple, who I think were also watching the pond, arrive, and they disperse the noisy gathering, threatening punishment.

The paralytic picks up his litter: two bars fitted with two pairs of small wheels and a piece of torn cloth nailed on them, and he happily goes away shouting to Jesus: « I will find You. I will not forget Your name or Your face. »

Jesus, mingling with the crowd, goes away in the opposite direction, towards the walls. But He has not yet gone through the last porch when He is caught up by an excited group of Jews, of the worst castes, who seem to be blown by a furious wind, and are all urged by the same desire to insult Jesus. They look, they search.

they scan people's faces. But they are not successful in finding out who it really is, and Jesus goes away, while they, disappointed as they are, following the information of the guards, rush at the poor but happy man who has just been cured and they reproach him saying: « Why are you taking this bed away? It is the Sabbath. You are not allowed. »

The man looks at them and says: « I know nothing. I know that He Who cured me said to me: "Take your bed and walk". That's all I know. »

« He must certainly be a demon because he ordered you to violate the Sabbath. What was he like? Who was he? A Judaean? A Galilean? A Proselyte? »

« I don't know. He was here. He saw me weeping and He approached me. He spoke to me and He cured me. He went away holding a boy by the hand. I think it was His son, because He is old enough to have a son of that age. »

« A boy? Well it is not He!… What did He say His name is? Did you not ask Him? Don't tell lies! »

« He told me that His name is Piety. »

« You are a fool! That's not a name! »

The man shrugs his shoulders and goes away.

The others say: « It was certainly He. Hania and Zaccheus, the scribes, saw Him. »

« But He has no children! »

« And yet it is He. He was with His disciples. »

« Judas was not there. He is the one we know well. The others… might be anybody. »

« No. It was them. »

And they continue arguing while the porches become crowded once again with sick people…

Jesus enters the Temple again on another side, the western side, which faces the town. The apostles follow Him. Jesus looks around and at last sees him whom He is looking for: Jonathan, who, in turn, was looking for Jesus.

« He is better, Master. His temperature is going down. Your Mother says that She hopes to come by next Sabbath. »

« Thank you, Jonathan. You were punctual. »

« Not very, as Maximinus of Lazarus kept me. He is looking for You. He has gone to Solomon's porch. »

« I will go and meet him. Peace be with you, and take My peace to My Mother and the women disciples, and also to Judas. »

And Jesus walks fast towards Solomon's porch, where in fact He finds Maximinus.

« Lazarus heard that You are here. He wishes to see You to tell You something important. Will You come? »

« Of course, I will. And soon. You can tell him to wait for Me during

the week. »

Maximinus also goes away after a few more words.

« Let us go and pray again, since we came back so far » says Jesus and He directs His steps towards the hall of the Hebrews.

But when He is near it, He meets the cured paralytic, who has gone to thank the Lord. The happy man sees Jesus among the crowd, greets Him joyfully and tells Him what happened at the pond after He left. And he concludes: « Then a man, who was surprised to see me here and completely cured, told me who You are. You are the Messiah. Are You not? »

« I am. But also if you had been cured by the water or by any other power, you would still have the same duty towards God. That is, to make use of your health for good work. You are cured. Go, therefore, and resume your activity in life with good intentions. And do not sin any more, so that God may not have to punish you more severely. Goodbye. Go in peace. »

« I am old… I know nothing… But I would like to follow You and serve You. Do You want me? »

« I reject no one. Think about it before coming. And if you make up your mind, come. »

« Where? I do not know where You are going… »

« I move about the world. You will find My disciples everywhere and they will send you to Me. May the Lord enlighten you for the best… »

Jesus now goes to His place and prays…

I do not know whether the cured man has gone spontaneously to the Judaeans or the latter, being on the look out, have stopped him to find out whether the man, who was speaking to him, was the one who had cured him. I know that the man speaks to the Judaeans and then goes away, while they come towards the steps that Jesus must come down, to go through the other yards and go out of the Temple. When Jesus arrives they say to Him abruptly, without greeting Him: « So You continue to violate the Sabbath, notwithstanding You have been reprimanded so many times? And You expect to be respected as a messenger of God? »

« Messenger Much more: as Son. Because God is My Father. If you do not wish to respect Me, you may refrain from doing so. But I will not cease accomplishing My mission because of that. God does not cease operating for one moment. Even now My Father is operating, and I operate as well, because a good son does what his father does, and because I have come into the world to operate. »

People have approached them to listen to the debate. Among them, there are some who know Jesus, some who have been helped by Him, some who see Him for the first time. Some love Him, some hate Him, many are uncertain. The apostles form a group with the Master. Marjiam is almost frightened and looks as if he is

going to weep.

The Judaeans, a mixture of scribes, Pharisees and Sadducees, shout at the top of their voices that they are scandalised: « How dare You! Oh! He says He is the Son of God! What sacrilege! God is He Who is, and has no children! Call Gamaliel! Send for Sadoc! Gather the rabbis that they may hear and confute Him. »

« Do not become excited. Call them, and they will tell you, if it is true they know, that God is One and Trine: Father, Son and Holy Spirit and that the Word, that is the Son of Thought, has come, as prophesied, to save Israel and the world from Sin. I am the Word. I am the foretold Messiah. There is no sacrilege, therefore, if I say that the Father is My Father. You are upset because I work miracles and through them I attract crowds and convince them. You accuse Me of being a demon, because I work prodigies. But Beelzebub has been in the world for many centuries, and he truly does not lack devout worshippers… Why, then, does he not do what I do? »

The people whisper: « It is true! Very true! Nobody does what He does. »

Jesus continues: « I will tell you: it is because I know what he does not know and I can do what he cannot. If I accomplish deeds of God, it is because I am His Son. One can do by oneself only what one has seen being done by others. I, the Son, can only do what I have seen done by the Father, as I have been One with Him for ever, and I am like Him in nature and power. Everything the Father does, I do as well, as I am His Son. Neither Beelzebub nor anybody else can do what I do, because Beelzebub and the others do not know what I know. The Father loves Me, His Son, and He loves Me immensely as I love Him. He has therefore shown Me and still shows Me everything He does, so that I may do what He does, I on the earth, in this time of Grace, He in Heaven, even before Time existed on the earth. And He will show Me greater and greater deeds so that I may accomplish them and you may be amazed. His Thought is inexhaustible in depth. I imitate Him as I am inexhaustible in accomplishing what the Father thinks and, by thinking, wants. You do not yet know what Love creates inexhaustibly. We are Love. And there is not limit for Us, and there is nothing that cannot be applied to the three grades of man: the inferior, the superior, the spiritual grades. In fact as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, I, the Son, can likewise give life to whomsoever I wish, nay, because of the infinite love the Father has for His Son, I can not only give life to the inferior part but also to the superior one, by freeing the minds and hearts of men from mental errors and evil passions, and I can give life to the spiritual part by giving back to the spirit its freedom from sin, because the Father does not judge anybody, having left all judgement

to the Son, as the Son is He Who, through His own sacrifice, acquired Mankind to redeem it: and the Father does that according to justice, because it is just that He, Who has purchased with His own money, should be given what He purchased, so that everybody may honour the Son as they already honour the Father. You must know that if you separate the Father from the Son, or the Son from the Father, and you do not remember the Love, you do not love God as He is to be loved, that is, in truth and wisdom, and you commit a sin of heresy, because you worship One only, whilst They are three in an admirable Trinity. Thus, he who does not honour the Son, does not honour the Father either, because the Father, God, does not want only One of the Three Divine Persons to be worshipped, but He wants Them all, as a Whole, to be worshipped. He who does not honour the Son, does not honour the Father either, Who sent Him out of a perfect thought of love. He therefore denies that God can accomplish just deeds. I solemnly tell you that he who listens to My word and believes in Him Who sent Me, will have eternal life and will not be condemned, but will pass from death to life, because to believe in God and to accept My word means to infuse into oneself the Life that does not die. The hour is about to come, nay it has already come for many, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and whoever hears its vivifying sound in the depth of his heart, shall live. Scribe, what are you saying? »

« I am saying that the dead can no longer hear anything, and that You are mad. »

« Heaven will persuade you that it is not so, and that your knowledge is nothing as compared to God's. You have humanised supernatural things to such an extent, that you give words only an immediate and earthly meaning. You have taught the Haggadah according to fixed formulae, your formulae, without any effort to understand the allegories in their true meaning, and now, since your souls are tired of being urged by a human mentality, which crushes your spirits, you do not even believe what you teach. And that is the reason why you can no longer fight against occult powers. The death of which I am speaking is not the death of the flesh, but of the soul. People will come who will listen to My word with their ears, will accept it in their hearts, and will practise it. Even if their spirits are dead, they will receive life again, because My Word is Life that will be infused into them. And I can give it to whomsoever I wish, because in Me there is perfect Life. As the Father has in Himself perfect Life, so also the Son had from the Father, in Himself, perfect, complete, eternal, inexhaustible, transfusable Life. And with Life, the Father gave Me power to judge, because the Son of the Father is the Son of Man, and He can and must judge man. And do not be amazed at this first resurrection,

the spiritual one, which I work by My Word. You will see stronger ones, which will appear stronger to your dull senses, because I solemnly tell you that there is nothing greater than the invisible but real resurrection of a spirit. The hour will soon come when the voice of the Son of God will penetrate tombs and those who are in them will hear it. And those who did good actions will come out of them to go to the resurrection of eternal Life, and those who did evil deeds will to go the resurrection of eternal damnation. I do not say that I will do that by Myself, by My own will, but by the will of the Father joined to Mine. I speak and judge according to what I hear and My judgement is correct, because I do not seek My own will, but the will of Him Who sent Me.

I am not separated from the Father. I am in Him and He is in Me and I know His Thought and I express it in word and action.

What I testify on My own behalf cannot be accepted by your incredulous spirits, which refuse to see in Me anything but a man like yourselves. But there is another one who testifies on My behalf, whom you say you venerate as a great prophet. I know that his testimony is true. But although you say that you venerate him, you will not accept his testimony, because it differs from your thought, which is hostile to Me. You do not accept the testimony of the just man, of the last Prophet in Israel, because, with regard to what you do not like, you say that he is only a man and can be mistaken. You sent messengers to interrogate John, hoping he would say of Me what you wanted, what you think of Me, what you want to think of Me. But John gave his testimony to the truth and you could not accept it. Because the Prophet says that Jesus of Nazareth is the Son of God, you are saying in the secret of your hearts, as you are afraid of the crowds, that the Prophet is insane, as Christ is. I, however, do not depend on the testimony of man, not even of the most holy one in Israel. I tell you: John was a lamp alight and shining, but only for a short time you wanted to enjoy the light that he gave. When his light was cast on Me, to make the Christ known for what He is, you allowed the lamp to be hidden under a bushel, and before that, you had built up a wall between the lamp and yourselves, in order not to see the Christ of the Lord in its light. I am grateful to John for his testimony, and the Father is grateful as well. And John will receive a great reward for his testimony, shining in Heaven also because of it, the first to shine like a sun, of all men up there, and he will shine like all those, who have been faithful to the Truth and hungry for God, will shine. But I have a greater testimony than John's. The testimony of My works. Because the works the Father has given Me to carry out, those works I accomplish and they testify that the Father has sent Me giving Me all power. And thus, the Father Who sent Me, bears witness to Me Himself.

You have never heard His Voice or seen His Face. But I have seen it and I see it, I have heard it and I hear it. His Word finds no home in you, because you do not believe in the One He sent. You study the Scriptures, believing that in their knowledge you have eternal Life. And do you not realise that the very Scriptures testify to Me? Why then do you continue to refuse to come to Me for life? I will tell you: it is because you refuse what is opposed to your inveterate ideas. You lack humility. You are uncapable of saying: "I made a mistake. He, or this book is right, and I am wrong". That is what you have done with John, with the Scriptures, and that is what you are doing with the Word Who is speaking to you. You cannot see or understand, because you are enveloped with pride and deafened by your own voices.

Do you think that I am speaking to you because I want to be glorified by you? No, you must bear in mind that I neither seek nor accept glory from men. What I seek and want is your eternal salvation. That is the glory I seek. My glory as Saviour cannot exist unless I have souls that have been saved, and the greater their number, the greater My glory, which is to be given to Me by the souls saved and by the Father, the Most Pure Spirit. But you will not be saved. I know you for what you are. You have no love for God. You are without love. And that is the reason why you do not come to the Love speaking to you, and thus you will not enter the Kingdom of Love. You are not known there. The Father does not know you, because you do not know Me, Who am in the Father. You do not want to know Me. I have come in the name of My Father and you refuse to accept Me, whereas you are willing to accept anyone who comes in his own name, providing he says what is agreeable to you. You say that you are faithful souls. No, you are not. How can you believe, when you beg glory of one another, and you do not seek the glory of Heaven, which proceeds only from God? The glory of Heaven is Truth and not a matter of worldly interests which end here on the earth and attract only the vicious humanity of Adam's degraded children. I will not accuse you before the Father. You can be sure of that. There is already one who will accuse you: Moses in whom you hope. He will reproach you for not believing in him because you do not believe in Me, as he wrote about Me, but you do not acknowledge Me by what he wrote. You do not believe in the words of Moses, the great Prophet in whose name you swear. Thus, how can you believe in My words, in the words of the Son of Man, in whom you have no faith? From a human point of view that is logical. But here we are in a spiritual sphere and your souls are at stake. God scrutinises them in the light of My works and He compares your actions with what I have come to teach you. And God judges you.

I am going away. You will not see Me for a long time. But do not

consider that as a triumph of yours. On the contrary it is a punishment. Let us go. »

Jesus pushes His way through the crowd. Some of the people remain silent, some express their approval, but only in a whisper for fear of the Pharisees, and they go away.

226. Mary Has Sent for Martha at Magdala.

22nd July 1945.

Jesus in the company of the Zealot arrives at Lazarus' garden on a beautiful summer morning. It is still dawn and thus everything is cool and smiling.

The gardener, who has come to receive the Master, points out to Him the hem of a white tunic disappearing behind a hedge and says: « Lazarus is going to the jasmin pergolas and has taken some rolls to read. I will call him. »

« No, I will go, by Myself. »

Jesus walks fast along a path bordered with hedges in bloom. The grass close to the hedges deadens the noise of His steps and Jesus endeavours to walk on it, to reach Lazarus unexpectedly.

He in fact comes upon him, while standing, after laying the rolls on a marble table, he is praying in a loud voice: « Do not disappoint me, my Lord. Corroborate the ray of hope which has begun to shine in my heart. Grant me what I have asked You for thousands of times with my tears, what I have asked for by my actions, by forgiving, by my whole self. Give me it in exchange for my life. Grant me it in the name of Your Jesus, Who has promised me that peace. Can He possibly tell lies? Must I think that His promise was nothing but vain words? That His power is inferior to the sinful abyss which my sister is? Tell me, my Lord, that I may resign myself for Your sake… »

« Yes, I tell you! » says Jesus.

Lazarus springs round and cries: « Oh! my Lord. When did You arrive? » and he bends to kiss Jesus' tunic.

« Only a few minutes ago. »

« All alone? »

« With Simon Zealot. But I came here alone. I know that You have a great thing to tell Me. So tell Me. »

« No. Answer first the questions which I ask God. According to Your answer, I will tell You. »

« Tell Me, do tell Me, your great thing. You can tell Me… » and Jesus smiles stretching out His arms invitingly.

« Most High God! It is true? So You know that it is true?! » and Lazarus goes towards Jesus' arms to confide his great thing.

« Mary asked Martha to go to Magdala. And Martha left full of anxiety as she feared some misfortune… And I was left here, with

the same fear. But by the servant who accompanied her there, Martha has sent me a letter, which has filled me with hope. Look, I have it here, on my heart. I keep it here, because it is more valuable to me than a treasure. It is very short, only a few words, but I read them now and again, to make sure that they have really been written. Look… » and Lazarus takes from under his tunic a small roll tied with a violet ribbon and unfolds it. « See? Read it, read it. In a loud voice. If You read it, it will sound more certain to me. »

« "Lazarus, my brother. Peace and blessing to you. I arrived in a short time safe and sound. And my heart has no longer throbbed with fear of fresh misfortunes, because I saw that Mary, our Mary, is all right and… shall I tell you? She looks less disturbed than previously. She wept on my heart. She wept bitterly… And then, during the night, in the room where she had taken me, she asked me many things about the Master. That is all for the time being. But since I see Mary's face and I hear her words, I can say that hope has been raised in my heart. Pray, my dear brother, and hope. Oh! If it were true! I am remaining here a little longer because I feel that she wants me to be close to her, as if she wished to be defended from temptations. And that she wants to learn… What? What we already know. Jesus' infinite bounty. I told her about that woman who came to Bethany… I see that she is pensive, very pensive indeed… Jesus ought to be here. Pray and hope. The Lord be with you". » Jesus folds the roll and hands it back.

« Master… »

« I will go. Is it possible for you to tell Martha to come and meet Me at Capernaum in a fortnight's time, at most? »

« Yes, I can do that. And what about me? »

« You will stay here. I will send Martha here as well. »

« Why? »

« Because redemptions are deeply modest. And nothing causes more shame than the eye of a parent or of a brother. I also say to you: "Pray, pray, pray". »

Lazarus weeps on Jesus' chest… Then, when he recovers, he tells of his anxiety, of his depression… « For almost a year I have been hoping… and despairing… How long is the time taken by resurrection!… » he exclaims.

Jesus lets him speak… until Lazarus realises he is failing in his duty of a host and he stands up to take Jesus into the house. To do so they pass near a thick jasmin hedge in full bloom, on the starshaped corollas of which, golden bees are humming.

« Ah! I was forgetting to tell You… The old patriarch You sent me, has gone back to Abraham's bosom. Maximinus found him here, with his head leaning against this hedge, as if he had fallen asleep near the beehives which he tended as if they were houses

full of golden children. That is what he used to call the bees. He seemed to understand them and to be understood by them. And on the patriarch sleeping in the peace of a clear conscience, when Maximinus found him, there was a precious veil of little golden bodies. The bees were lying on their friend. He was so good that he probably tasted of honey… And he was so honest that he was probably like an uncontaminated corolla for the bees… It grieved me. I would have liked to have him longer in my house. He was a just man… »

« Do not mourn his death. He is in peace, and from his peace he prays for you, who made his last days happy. Where is he buried? »

« At the end of the orchard. Still close to his beehives. Come and I will show You… »

And they go through a laurel grove towards the actively buzzing beehives.

23rd July, at 8 o'clock.

It is a very pale Judas who comes off the wagon with Our Lady and the women disciples, that is, the Maries, Johanna and Eliza.

… and thanks to the confusion I had in the house this morning I was not able to write while I was seeing, therefore, as it is now 6 o'clock p.m., I can only say that I understood and heard that Judas, now convalescent, is going back to Jesus, Who is at Gethsemane with Mary, Who cured him and with Johanna, who insists that the women and the convalescent should go back to Galilee in the wagon. And Jesus agrees and makes the boy get on it with them. Johanna instead is remaining for a few days in Jerusalem with Eliza, then Eliza will go to Bethzur and Johanna to Bether. I remember that Eliza said: « I have now the courage to go back there, because my life is no longer aimless. I will get my friends to love You. » And I remember that Johanna added: « And I will do that in my estate, while Chuza leaves me here. It will be serving You, although I would prefer to follow You. » I also remember that Judas said he never felt the desire for his mother, not even in the worst hours of his disease, because « Your Mother was a real mother to me, She was kind and loving and I will never forget it » he said. The rest of the words is confused, so I will not repeat them, because they would be my words and not those spoken by the people of the vision.

227. Marjiam Is Entrusted to Porphirea.

24th July 1945.

Jesus is on the lake of Galilee with His disciples. All the disciples are with Him, including Judas, who has quite recovered and whose countenance has become more gentle after his illness

and the attention he has received. There is also Marjiam, who is rather frightened as it is his first time out on the lake. He does not want to let it be seen, but every time the boat pitches more vigorously, he clings with one arm to the neck of the sheep, which shares his fear bleating pitifully, and with the other arm he grasps whatever he can, the mast, a bench, an oar, Peter's leg, or Andrew's, or the legs of the servants who move backwards and forwards manoeuvring the boat, and he closes his eyes, fearing perhaps that his last hour has come.

Pinching the boy's cheek, Peter now and again says to him: « You are not afraid, eh? A disciple must never be afraid… » The boy shakes his head in denial, but as both the wind and the lake are rising while they approach the mouth of the river, where the Jordan flows into the lake, he closes his eyes tighter and more frequently and at last - when the boat heels over, when struck on one side by a wave - he gives a scream of terror.

Some of the apostles laugh and some tease Peter remarking that he has become the father of a bad sailor, and some make fun of Marjiam who always says that he wants to go by sea and by land preaching Jesus, and then is afraid of sailing a few cables' lengths on the lake. But Marjiam defends himself saying: « Every man is afraid of what he does not know. I of water, Judas of death… »

I thus realise that Judas must have been afraid of dying and I am surprised that he does not react to the boy's remark. On the contrary he says: « You are right. Everyone is afraid of what one does not know. But we are about to arrive at Bethsaida, which is only a short distance away. And you are sure that you will find love there. I also would like to be at a short distance from the House of the Father and be sure of finding love there! » He says so with a tired sad expression.

« Are you not trusting God? » asks Andrew who is obviously amazed.

« No, I mistrust myself. During the days of my illness, when I was surrounded by so many pure good women, I felt so backward spiritually! How much I meditated! I would say to myself: "If they still work to improve themselves and earn Heaven, what must I do?" Because they feel that they are still sinners, whereas I thought that they were already saints. And what about me?… Will I ever succeed, Master? »

« With good will, one can do everything. »

« But my will is very unreliable. »

« The help of God will make up for what is missing. Your present humility is a result of your illness. You can thus see that God, through a painful incident, has provided for you something that you did not have. »

« That is true, Master. But those women! What perfect disciples

they are! I am not speaking of Your Mother. We all know about Her. I mean the others. Oh! They have really surpassed us! I was one of their first tests for their future ministry. But, believe me, Master, You may rely entirely on them. Eliza and I were looked after by them, and she has gone back to Bethzur with a completely changed soul and mentality and I… I hope to change, too, now that they have worked on me… » Judas, who is still physically not too strong, begins to weep. Jesus, Who is sitting beside him, lays His hand on his head, nodding to the others to be silent. Peter and Andrew are busy in the last landing manoeuvres and are silent: the Zealot, Matthew, Philip and Marjiam are certainly not anxious to speak, either because they are anxiously waiting to land, or because they are wise enough not to make any remark.

The boat sails up the Jordan and shortly afterwards grounds on the gravel bed. While the servants land to fasten the boat, anchoring it to a large stone by means of a rope, and to place a board as a landing-wharf and Peter and Andrew put on their long garments, the other boat makes the same manoeuvre and the other apostles land. Also Jesus and Judas step ashore while Peter puts a little tunic on the boy and tidies him up in order to present him in a decent state to his wife. They have all now disembarked, including the sheep.

« And now let us go » says Peter. He is really excited. He takes the boy by the hand. Also Marjiam is deeply moved, and in fact he forgets the sheep and John takes care of them. In a sudden fit of fear Marjiam asks: « But will she be wanting me? And will she really love me? »

Peter reassures him, but perhaps he is affected by the same fear and he says to Jesus: « Master, will You tell Porphirea? I don't think I could explain the situation to her properly. »

Jesus smiles and promises that He will see to it.

They soon arrive at the house following the river bank. Through the open door they can hear Porphirea doing her housework.

« Peace be with you! » says Jesus looking in at the kitchen door where the woman is tidying up her kitchenware.

« Master! Simon! » The woman runs and prostrates herself at the feet of Jesus and then at those of Peter. She then stands up, and while her face, which, if not beautiful, is certainly most amiable, blushes, she says: « I have been longing so much to see you! Are you all well? Come in! You must be tired… »

« No. We are coming from Nazareth, where we stayed for a few days and we stopped also at Cana. The boats were at Tiberias. You can see that we are not tired. We had a boy with us and Judas of Simon was rather weak after being ill. »

« A boy? Such a young disciple? »

« An orphan we picked up on our way. »

« Oh! dear! Come here my darling, let me kiss you! »

The boy, who was timidly half hidden behind Jesus, allows the woman, who has knelt down to be his height, to embrace and kiss him, and he shows no reluctance.

« Are You going to take him with You all the time, while he is so young? He will become tired… » The woman is so pitiful. She clasps the boy in her arms and holds her cheek against his.

« Actually I was thinking of something else. I was planning to entrust him to one of the women disciples, when we go away from Galilee, from the lake area… »

« And not to me, my Lord? I never had any children of my own. But I have had many nephews and I know how to deal with children. I am the disciple who is not good at speaking, who is not so healthy as to be able to follow You, as the other women disciples do… oh! You know! I may also be cowardly, if You think so. But You know how I am tied up. Did I say "tied up"? I am tied with two ropes each pulling me in opposite directions and I have not the courage to cut off either one or the other… Let me be of some little service to You, by being the mother disciple of this boy. I will teach him what the others teach many other people… To love You… »

Jesus lays His hand on her head and smiling says: « The boy was brought here because I knew he would find a mother and a father here. Here! Let us make up the family. » And Jesus puts Marjiam's hands into those of Peter, whose eyes are shining with tears, and those of Porphirea. « And bring this innocent boy up in a holy manner. »

Peter, of course, already knew, and he only wipes off a tear with the back of his hand. But his wife, who was not expecting so much, is left in mute amazement for a few moments. She then kneels down again saying: « Oh! My Lord. You took away my husband and left me almost a widow. Now You are giving me a son. You are giving back all the roses to my life, not only the ones You took, but also the ones I never had. May You be blessed! This boy will be dearer to me than if he had been the fruit of my own womb. Because he comes to me from You. » And she kisses Jesus' tunic and the boy and takes him on her lap… She is happy…

« Let us leave her to her love effusions says Jesus. You may remain as well, Simon. We are going to town to preach. We shall come back late this evening and ask you for food and a place to rest. »

And Jesus goes out with His disciples leaving the three in peace…

John says: « My Lord, Simon is happy today! »

« Do you want a child as well? »

« No. I would like a pair of wings to fly up to the gates of Heaven

and learn the language of the Light, to repeat it to men » and he smiles.

They settle the sheep at the end of the orchard, near the large room where the nets are stored, they give them some leaves, grass and water of the well, and then go towards the town centre.

228. Jesus Speaks at Bethsaida.

25th July 1945.

Jesus is speaking in Philip's house. Many people have gathered before it and Jesus is standing on the threshold, which is built on two high steps.

The news of Peter's adopted son, who has come with the miniature fortune of three little sheep, seeking the great wealth of a family, has spread like a drop of oil on a piece of cloth. They all speak about it, whispering comments, which correspond to their different ways of thinking.

Those who are sincere friends of Simon and Porphirea, are glad to see them happy. Those who are malevolent say: « To make her accept him, he had to give the boy a dowry. » Good people say: « We shall all love this little boy, whom Jesus loves. » Ill-disposed people state: « Simon's generosity? Never on your life! He must have made a profit, otherwise!… »

Other greedy people comment: « I would have done that, too, if I had been given a boy with some sheep. Three sheep, do you realise that? A little flock. And they are beautiful! Supplies of milk and wool are guaranteed, and then they will have lambs to sell or to keep! It's a wealth! And the boy can serve and work… »

Others contradict them all: « Oh! What a shame! Expect payment for a good deed? Simon certainly never thought of that. As a fisherman with a modest income, we have always known him to be generous to the poor and particularly to children. It is only fair, now that he no longer earns anything by fishing and that his family is growing, that he should make a little profit in some other way. »

While they are all making their comments, putting into words the good or the evil hidden in their hearts, Jesus is listening and speaking to a man of Capernaum, who has come to see Him and tell Him to go as soon as possible, because the daughter of the head of the synagogue is dying and also because a lady has been going there for some days, in the company of a handmaid, looking for Him. Jesus promises to go the following morning. His decision grieves the people of Bethsaida, who would like to have Him in their town for a few more days.

« There are other people who need Me more than you do. So let Me go. In any case, I shall be in Galilee during the summer months

and I will be in Capernaum very often. So it will be easy for us to meet. A father and mother are in anguish and it is charity to help them. You approve of Simon's kindness towards the orphan. At least the good ones among you do. But only the opinions of good people are of value. You should not listen to the opinions of those who are not good, because they are always tinged with poison and falsehood. So, since you are good, you must approve of My goodness in going to comfort a father and a mother. And do not allow your approval to be fruitless, but let it urge you to active imitation.

The pages of the Scriptures tell us how much good can come from a good action. Let us remember Tobit. He deserved that an angel should protect his son Tobias and should teach him how to give sight back to his father. But how many charitable deeds just Tobit had performed without any thought of personal profit, notwithstanding the reproaches of his wife and the dangers to his life! And remember the words of the archangel: "Prayer and fasting were good things and almsgiving is worth more than mountains of gold treasures, because almsgiving saves from death, purges every kind of sin, makes people find mercy and eternal life… When you were praying and shedding tears and burying the dead… I offered your prayers to the Lord". I solemnly tell you that My Simon will exceed by far the virtues of old Tobit. He will remain as the guardian of your souls in My Life, after I have gone. He is now beginning his paternity of a soul, so that tomorrow he will be the holy father of all the souls faithful to Me.

Therefore do not complain. But if one day you should find on your way an orphan, like a bird fallen out of its nest, pick him up. It is not the mouthful of food shared with an orphan that impoverishes the table of the true sons. On the contrary it brings the blessing of God to that house. Do that because God is the father of orphans and He presents them to you Himself, so that you may help them by rebuilding for them the nest destroyed by death. And do that because it is prescribed by the Law given by God to Moses, who is our Legislator, just because while he was a defenceless baby, in a hostile land of idols, he found a merciful heart that knelt down to save him from death, rescuing him from the river, freeing him from persecutions, because God had destined that Israel should one day have her liberator. An act of piety thus obtained for Israel her leader. The repercussions of a good deed are like sound-waves, which spread very far from the spot of emission, or, if you prefer so, they are like gusts of wind, which carry far away the seed blown from fertile soil.

You may go now. Peace be with you. »

Jesus then says:

« You will put here the vision of the resurrection of Jairus' daughter, which you had on the 11th of March 1944. »

229. The Woman with a Haemorrhage and Jairus' Daughter.

11th March 1944.

This vision appears when I am praying, and I am tired and vexed, and thus in the worst condition to think about my things. But physical and mental tiredness and vexation vanished as soon as my Jesus appeared and I write.

Jesus is walking on a sunny dusty road that runs along the lake shore. He is making His way towards the village and is surrounded by a large crowd, which was certainly waiting for Him. The people throng round Him notwithstanding the fact that the apostles push with their arms and shoulders to make way for Him and raise their voices to persuade the crowd to make room.

But Jesus is not upset by so much confusion. As He is taller by a head than those around Him, He looks and smiles kindly at the crowds pressing round Him, He replies to their greetings, He caresses a few boys who succeed in creeping through the hedge of adults and thus get close to Him, He lays His hand on the heads of babies raised by their mothers above those who are nearer Jesus, so that He may touch them. And He continues to walk, slowly, patiently, in the midst of the shouting and continual pressure that would annoy any other person.

A man shouts: « Make way, make way. » It is a panting voice and it must be known to many as it is obviously the voice of an influential person, because the crowd opens out, albeit with some difficulty, such is the crush, to let a man about fifty years old pass. He is wearing a long loose garment and round his head he has a kind of white handkerchief, two flaps of which hang down along his cheeks and neck.

When he arrives before Jesus, he prostrates himself at His feet and says: « Oh! Master, why have You been away so long? My little girl is so ill. No one can cure her. You alone are her mother's hope and mine. Come, Master. I have been waiting for You with immense anxiety. Please come at once. My only daughter is dying… » and he weeps.

Jesus lays His hand on the head of the weeping man, who is bent and shaking with sobs, and replies to him: « Do not weep. Have faith. Your daughter will live. Let us go to her. Stand up. Let us go! » His final words sound like a command. Before He was the Comforter, now it is the Dominator who is speaking.

They set out. Jesus is walking beside the weeping father and is holding him by the hand. And when the poor man is convulsed

with deeper sobs, I see Jesus look at him and press his hand harder. He does not do anything else, but how much strength must flow into a soul that is dealt with thus by Jesus!

Previously James was where the father is now. But Jesus made him move to make room for the father. Peter is on the other side. John is beside Peter and they are both endeavouring to stem the crowds, as James and the Iscariot are doing on the other side, beside the weeping father. Some of the other apostles are in front, some behind Jesus. But it is an impossible task! Particularly the three who are behind, among whom I see Matthew, cannot hold back the living wall. But when they grumble too much or they almost insult the pushing crowds, Jesus looks back and says kindly: « Leave My little ones alone!… »

However, at a certain moment He turns round with an abrupt movement letting go the father's hand and He stops. Not only His head has turned round, but His whole body. He looks taller, because He has taken a kingly attitude. With a severe inquisitive countenance He scans the crowd. His eyes are flashing, not harshly, but majestically: « Who touched Me? » He asks.

Nobody replies.

« Who touched Me, I repeat » insists Jesus.

« Master » reply the disciples « Do You not see how the crowds are pressing round You on all sides? They are all touching You, notwithstanding our efforts. »

Jesus, while speaking, looks three or four times at a little woman, about forty years old, very poorly dressed and emaciated, who endeavours to disappear in the crowds and vanish completely. His eyes must be burning her. She realises that she cannot escape, comes back and throws herself at His feet, almost touching the dust of the road with her face, while her arms are stretched out not daring to touch Jesus.

« Forgive me! It was I. I was ill. I have been ill for twelve years! I was shunned by everybody. My husband deserted me. I spent everything I had so that I might not be considered a disgrace, and I might be able to live like everybody else. But no one was able to cure me. See, Master? I am old before my time. My strength has flown out of me with my incurable haemorrhage and my peace went with it. They told me that You are good. I was told by one whom You cured of leprosy and who, having been shunned himself for many years, did not loathe me. I did not dare to tell You before. Forgive me! I thought that if I only touched You, I would be cured. But I did not make You unclean. I hardly touched the hem of Your tunic, the hem that trails on the ground, on the dirt of the road… I am dirt myself… But now I am cured, may You be blessed! The moment I touched Your tunic, my complaint came to an end. I am like all other women. I will no longer be avoided by everybody.

My husband, my children and relatives will be able to stay with me and I will be able to caress them. I shall be useful in my house. Thank You, Jesus, my good Master. May You be blessed for ever! »

Jesus looks at her with infinite kindness. He smiles and says: « Go in peace, My daughter. Your faith has restored you to health. Be free from your complaint for ever. Be good and happy. Go. »

While He is still speaking a man arrives. I think he is a servant, and he addresses the father who has been waiting all the time, respectfully but anxiously, as if he were on tenterhooks. « Your daughter is dead. It is quite useless to bother the Master. Her soul departed and the women are already mourning her. Her mother has sent me to tell you and she asks you to come at once. »

The poor father utters a deep groan. He hides his face in his hands, pressing his forehead and eyes and bending his head as if he had been struck.

As Jesus is intent on listening and answering the woman, one would think that He has seen and heard nothing, instead He turns round and laying His hand on the bent shoulders of the poor father, He says: « Man, I told you: "Have faith". I repeat: "Have faith". Do not be afraid. Your girl will live. Let us go to her. » And He sets out, holding the dejected man close to Himself.

The crowds, seeing so much grief and being deeply affected by the recent miracle, are frightened and stop, they then part, allowing Jesus and His disciples to walk fast, and they follow in the wake of the passing Grace. They walk thus for about one hundred yards, perhaps more - I am not good at estimating - proceeding towards the centre of the town.

People are crammed in front of a respectable house, commenting in loud shrill voices on the event and replying to louder screams coming from the house through the wide open door. They are trilled piercing screams, apparently uttered monotonously by the shriller voice of a soloist, to whom a group of thin voices replies first and then is followed by another group of full voices. There is enough uproar to cause even healthy people to die.

Jesus orders His disciples to stop at the door, and He tells Peter, John and James to follow Him. He enters the house with them, holding the weeping father by the arm all the time. By holding him thus, He seems to be wishing to instil into him the certainty that He is there to make him happy. The women mourners (I would call them howlers), when they see the landlord and the Master, double their screams. They clap their hands, beat tambourines, strike triangles to accompany their lamentations.

« Be quiet » says Jesus. « There is no need to weep. The girl is not dead. She is sleeping. »

The women shout louder, some roll on the floor, some scratch themselves, and tear their hair (or they pretend to do so), to prove

that she is really dead. The musicians and friends of the family shake their heads at Jesus' illusion. They think that He is deceived. But He repeats: « Be silent! » so energetically that the turmoil, while not ceasing completely, becomes a whisper. And He passes by.

He goes into a little room. A dead girl is lying on a bed. She is thin, very pale, has already been dressed and her dark hair has already been set in order. Her mother is weeping on the right hand side of the bed and kisses the waxen little hand of the dead girl. Jesus… how handsome He is now! I have seldom seen Him thus! He approaches the bed solicitously. He seems to be sliding or flying across the floor, so fast He approaches the little bed. The three apostles stand with their backs to the door, which they have closed in the faces of curious onlookers. The father is standing at the foot of the bed.

Jesus goes to the left hand side and with His left hand He takes the lifeless left hand of the girl. Yes, I saw Him well. It is the left hand, both of Jesus and of the girl. He raises His right arm with open palm, to the height of His shoulder and then lowers it in the attitude of one who swears or gives an order. He says: « Little girl, I tell you: Get up! »

There is a moment when everybody is in suspense, except Jesus and the girl. The apostles stretch their necks to see better. The father and mother look at their child with eyes full of deep sorrow. After a moment a sigh raises the breast of the girl. A light hue tinges her waxen face and its deathly pallor fades away. The hint of a smile appears on her lips before her eyes open, as if she were having a beautiful dream. Jesus is still holding her hand. She gently opens her eyes and looks around as if she were awaking. She sees first the face of Jesus, Who is looking at her with His most beautiful eyes and smiling kindly to encourage her, and she smiles at Him.

« Get up » repeats Jesus. And He pushes aside with His hand the funeral ornaments spread on the bed and around it (flowers, veils etc. etc.) and helps her to get up and take her first steps, holding her by the hand.

« Give her something to eat, now » He commands. « She is cured. God has given her back to you. Thank Him for that. And do not tell anybody what happened. You know what happened to her. You believed and your faith deserved a miracle. The others did not have faith. It is quite useless to endeavour to convince them. God does not show Himself to those who deny a miracle. And you, My little girl, be good. Goodbye! Peace to this house. » And He goes out closing the door behind Him.

The vision ends.

I will tell you that the two points of it which made me joyful are

those in which Jesus looks among the crowd for the person that touched Him and above all when standing near the little dead girl He takes her by the hand and tells her to get up. Peace and assurance have come into me. It is impossible for One as Merciful and Powerful as He is, not to have mercy on us and not defeat the Evil that kills us.

Jesus for the time being makes no comment, neither does He say anything about the other things. He sees that I am almost dead but does not consider that it is the case that I should feel better this evening. Let it be done as He wishes. I am already happy enough to have His vision.

230. Jesus and Martha at Capernaum.

27th July 1945.

Jesus, hot and covered with dust, goes back to the house in Capernaum with Peter and John.

He has just entered the kitchen garden and is going towards the kitchen, when the landlord calls Him familiarly saying: « Jesus, that lady of whom I spoke to You at Bethsaida, has come again looking for You. I told her to wait and I took her to the room upstairs. »

« Thank you, Thomas. I will go to her at once. If the others come tell them to wait here. » And Jesus goes upstairs immediately, without even taking off His mantle.

On the terrace at the top of the staircase there is Marcella, Martha's maid. She is standing there alone. « Oh! Master. My mistress is inside. She has been waiting for You for so many days » says the woman kneeling down to worship Jesus.

« I rather thought that. I will go to her at once. May God bless you, Marcella. »

Jesus lifts the curtain protecting the room from the excessively bright sunshine, for although the sun is now setting, it is still very warm and the white houses in Capernaum seem to be ablaze in the red glare of a huge brazier. In the room, sitting near the window is Martha, enveloped in a mantle and covered with a veil. She is perhaps contemplating the part of the lake where a woody hill protrudes into the water forming a promontory. Perhaps she is only contemplating her own thoughts. She is certainly absorbed in thought and in fact she does not hear the light shuffling of the feet of Jesus who is walking towards her. And she starts when He calls her.

« Oh! Master! » she exclaims. And she falls on her knees, with outstretched arms, as if she were imploring help and then she bends so low as to touch the floor with her forehead, and she bursts into tears.

« What is the matter? Stand up. Why are you weeping so bitterly? Have you some misfortune to tell Me? You have? What is it? Do you know that I was at Bethany? You do? And I was told that there was good news. But now you are weeping… What happened? » and He compels her to stand up and makes her sit on a bench against the wall, while He sits in front of her. « Now, take off your veil and mantle, as I am doing. You must be suffocating under them. And I want to see the face of My dear Martha, who is so upset, so that I may disperse all the clouds perturbing it. »

Martha obeys, still weeping, and her flushed face and swollen eyes can now be seen.

« Well? I will help you. Mary sent for you. She wept very much, she wanted to know many things about Me, and you thought that that was a good sign, so much so that you wanted Me to come to complete the miracle. And I have come. And now?… »

« Now, nothing, Master! I was mistaken. Too keen a desire makes one see what does not exist… I made You come for nothing… Mary is worse than before… No! What am I saying? I am calumniating her, I am telling lies. She is not worse, because she does not want any more men around her. She is different, but still so bad. She seems to be mad… I no longer understand her… At least before I understood her. But now! Who can understand her? » and Martha weeps desolately.

« Now, calm down and tell Me what she does. Why is she bad? So, she does not want any more men around her. So I suppose that she leads a retired life at home. Is that so? It is? Good. That is very good. The fact that she wanted you to stay with her, as if she wanted to be defended against temptations - that is what you wrote - and the fact that she wanted to avoid temptations by shunning guilty acquaintances or what might lead to such relationship, are signs of good will. »

« Do You think so, Master? Do You really think that? »

« Of course I do. So why do you think that she is bad? Tell Me what she does… »

« Well. » Martha, who is somewhat encouraged by Jesus' certainty, speaks more calmly. « Well. Since I came here, Mary has never left the house or the garden, not even to go out on the lake in her boat. And her nurse told me that even before I came, she hardly ever went out. Apparently this change began at Passover. But before my arrival, some people used to come and see her and she did not always refuse to see them. Sometimes she gave instructions not to let anybody pass. And it appeared to be a standing order. But then she would go as far as striking the servants, motivated by unjust anger, if upon hearing the voices of visitors, she went to the hall and found out that they had already been sent away. However, she has not done that again, since I came. The first

night she said to me, and that is why I was so hopeful: » « Hold me back, if necessary tie me. But don't let me go out, don't let me see anybody but you and my nurse. Because I am not well and I want to recover. But those who come to me or want me to go to them, are like feverish marshes. And they make me grow worse. But their appearance is so handsome, so flowery and joyful, their fruit is so pleasant looking, that I cannot resist them, because I am a poor wretch. Your sister is weak, Martha. And some people take advantage of her weakness to make her do foul things, to which a part of me does not agree. The only part which is still left to me of my poor mother… " and she wept. And I did that. I did it kindly when she was reasonable; but I acted firmly when she looked like a wild beast in a cage. She never rebelled against me. On the contrary, when the worst moments of temptation are over, she comes and weeps at my feet, resting her head on my lap and she says: "Forgive me, forgive me!" and if I ask her: "For what, sister? You have not grieved me", she replies: "Because a little while ago, or yesterday evening, when you said to me: 'You are not going out from here', I hated and cursed you in my heart and I wished you would die". Is she not to be pitied, my Lord? Is she perhaps mad? Has her vices made her mad? I think that one of her lovers has given her a philtre to make her a slave of his lust and that its poison has gone to her brains… »

« No. It is not a question of philtres or madness. It is something quite different. But go on. »

« So she is respectful and obedient to me. And she has not illtreated the servants any more. But after the first evening, she has not asked anything else about You. And if I mention You, she changes the subject. But she sits for hours and hours on a rock where the belvedere is, looking at the lake, until she becomes dazzled, and every time a boat sails by she asks me: "Do you think it is the boat of the Galilean fishermen?" She never mentions Your Name or the names of the apostles. But I know that she thinks of You and of them in Peter's boat. And I realise that she thinks of You because sometimes in the evening, when we are walking in the garden or before going to bed, and I am doing needlework, while she does nothing, she says to me: "Is that how one must live according to the doctrine you follow?" And sometimes she weeps, sometimes she laughs sarcastically, like a mad person or a demon. On other occasions she lets down her hair, which is always arranged so artistically, and she makes two plaits, she puts on one of my dresses and then she comes to me, with her plaits behind her back or in front of her, modest and young looking in my high-necked dress, and also because of her plaits and countenance and she says to me: "Is that what Mary should be like?" and even then sometimes she weeps kissing her wonderful plaits, which are as

thick as her arms and reach down to her knees, the living gold which was my mother's pride, at times, instead, she laughs in her ghastly way or she says to me: "Look, I had rather do this and be done with it" and she ties her plaits round her neck and pulls them tight until her face becomes purple, as if she wanted to strangle herself. At times she pities or ill-treats herself, and that obviously happens when she feels the temptations of her flesh more fiercely. I have caught her striking her breast and scratching her face savagely or banging her head against a wall and when I asked her: "Why are you doing that?" she would look at me with a wild deranged expression saying: "To tear myself, my bowels, my head to pieces. Cursed harmful things must be destroyed. And I am destroying myself ". And if I speak to her of God's mercy, of You because I still speak to her of You, as if she were the most faithful of Your women disciples, and I swear to You that at times I am horrified at mentioning Your name in her presence - she replies: "There can be no mercy for me. I have gone beyond the limit". She is then seized by a fit of despair and shouts, beating herself till she draws blood: "Why have I this monster that tears me to pieces? And it gives me no peace. And it leads me to evil deeds by means of sweet singing voices, to which it then adds the cursing voices of my father and mother, of you and Lazarus, because you and Lazarus curse me, too, and Israel curses me and it makes me hear them to drive me mad… " When she says that, I reply to her: "Why are you worried about Israel, which is only a people, and you do not think of God? But since you trampled on everything without considering what you were doing, endeavour now to overcome everything and do not worry about worldly things, but care only for God, your father and mother. If you change your life, they will not curse you, but will stretch their arms out to you… " And she listens to me, pensive, astonished as if I were telling her an unreal story, and then she weeps… But does not reply. At times, instead she orders the servants to bring her wines and drugs and she eats and drinks those artificial nourishments and explains: "I do that to forget". Now, since she found out that You are here in the lake area, every time she sees me come to You, she says: "I will come sometime, too" and laughing in that manner which is an insult to herself, she concludes: "Thus the eye of God will fall also upon manure". But I do not want her to come. And now, when I want to come, I wait until she falls asleep, when she is exhausted with being angry, with drinking and weeping… with everything. Also today I ran away like that, so that I can go back at night before she awakes. That is my life… I no longer hope… » and she resumes weeping more bitterly than previously, as her tears are no longer restrained by the effort of speaking calmly.

« Do you remember, Martha, what I told you once? "Mary is ill".

You did not want to believe it. Now you can see it. You say that she is mad. She says herself that she is ill and suffers from a sinful fever. I say: she is ill because she is possessed by a demon. It is still a disease. And her incoherent behaviour, her fury, her tears, her affliction, her longing for Me are stages of her illness, which has come to a moment of crisis and has its most violent fluctuations. You are doing the right thing in being good to her and patient with her. You are right in speaking to her of Me. Do not be disgusted at mentioning My Name in her presence. Poor soul of My Mary! Her soul also was created by the Father and it is in no way different from all other souls, from yours, from Lazarus', from the souls of the apostles and disciples. Her soul also was included and foreseen to be amongst the souls for whom I became flesh in order to be their Redeemer. In actual fact I have come more for her than for you, Lazarus, the apostles and disciples. Poor soul of My Mary, who is suffering so much! Of My poor Mary who has been poisoned with seven poisons besides the first universal poison! Of My imprisoned Mary! But let her come to Me! Let her breathe the air I breathe, let her hear My voice and meet My glance!… She calls herself: "Manure"… Oh! My poor dear soul in whom the demon of pride is the weakest of the seven possessing her! Only because of that she will be saved! »

« And if she should find someone who may lead her astray once again, when she comes out? She is afraid of that herself… »

« And she will always be afraid of that, now that she has gone so far as to loathe vice. But be not afraid. When a soul already has the desire of coming to Good, and is held back only by the diabolic Enemy, who is aware that he is going to lose his prey, and by the personal enemy of one's ego, which reasons in a human way and judges itself in a human way, ascribing to God its own judgement to prevent the soul from controlling the human ego, then that soul is already strong enough against the attacks of vice and of vicious people. It has found the Polar Star and will no longer deviate. And do not say to her again: "You have not thought of God and You are instead thinking of Israel?" It is an implicit reproach. Do not do that. She has just come out of a fire. She is one big sore. Touch her lightly only with balms of kindness, of forgiveness and hope… Leave her free to come. You must tell her when you are thinking of coming, but do not say to her: "Come with me". On the contrary, if you understand that she wants to come, do not come yourself. Go back and wait for her at home. She will come back to you broken by Mercy. Because I must remove the wicked power that is holding her and for a few hours she will look like a woman whose veins have been cut or whose bones have been removed by a doctor. But later she will feel better. She will be dumbfounded. She will be in great need of caresses and silence. Assist her as if you

were her second guardian angel: without letting her perceive your presence. And if you see her weeping, let her weep. And if you hear her asking herself questions, leave her alone. And if you see her smile, and then become serious, and then smile once more in a different way, with a different look, with a different countenance, do not ask her questions, do not make her feel uneasy. She is suffering more now, ascending, than she did, descending. And she must ascend by herself, as she descended by herself. She could not bear you to look at her when she was descending, because your eyes were full of reproach. And she cannot bear you to look at her now that her sense of shame has been aroused at last. Then she was strong, because Satan, her master, was with her and a wicked strength supported her and she could challenge the world, and yet she could not bear to be seen by you in her sin. Now Satan is no longer her master. He is still a guest in her, but Mary's will is holding him by the throat. And she has not Me yet. That is why she is too weak. She cannot even bear your caressing sisterly eyes watching her confession to her Saviour. All her energy is employed and consumed in holding the septuple demon by the throat. For all the rest she is defenceless and unclothed. But I will reclothe her and fortify her. Go in peace, Martha. And tomorrow tell her tactfully that I shall be speaking near the torrent of the Fountain, here in Capernaum, after vesper. Go in peace. I bless you. »

Martha is still perplexed.

« Do not become incredulous, Martha » says Jesus Who is watching her.

« No, my Lord. But I was thinking… Oh! Give me something that I may give Mary, to give her a little strength… She is suffering so much… and I am so afraid that she may not be able to triumph over the demon! »

« You are a little girl! Mary has Me and you. Can she possibly not succeed? However, take this. Give Me your hand, which has never sinned, and has always been kind, merciful, active and pious. It has always made gestures of love and prayer. It has never been lazy or idle or corrupt. Now, I will hold it between My hands to make it even holier. Raise it against the demon and he will not endure it. And take this belt of Mine. Never part with it. And every time you see her, say to yourself: "The power of Jesus is stronger than this belt of Jesus and by it everything can be overcome: demons and monsters as well. I must not be afraid". Are you happy now? My peace be with you. Go in peace. »

Martha worships Him and goes out.

Jesus smiles when he sees her climb on to the wagon, which Marcella has called to the gate, and depart towards Magdala.

231. Two Blind Men and a Dumb Demoniac Cured.

28th July 1945.

Jesus then goes down into the kitchen, and when He sees that John is about to go to the fountain, instead of remaining in the warm smoky kitchen, He prefers to go with John. He thus leaves Peter to deal with the fish that Zebedee's servants have just brought in for the supper of the Master and His disciples.

They do not go to the spring well at the end of the village, but to the fountain in the square, the water of which still comes from the clear plentiful spring on the mountain side near the lake. In the square there are many people as is customary in Palestinian villages in the evening. Women with amphoras, boys playing, men discussing business or… local gossip. Also some Pharisees pass by, surrounded by servants or clients, on their way to their rich homes. Everybody moves aside to let them pass, paying their respect, but as soon as they have gone, many curse them wholeheartedly mentioning their most recent abuses and usury dealings.

Matthew is haranguing his old friends in a comer of the square and that causes the Pharisee Uriah to remark scornfully in a loud voice: « The famous conversions! But attachment to sin is still there as can be seen from lasting friendships. Ah! Ah! »

Matthew turns round and replies angrily: « They last in order to convert them. »

« There is no need for that! Your Master is quite sufficient. You had better stay away, lest you might be taken ill again, presuming that you have really been cured. »

Matthew becomes purple in the effort to control himself and not give him a piece of his mind, and he simply replies: « Do not be afraid, and have no hope. »

« What? »

« Don't be afraid that I may become once again Levi the publican, and have no hope that I may imitate you in order to lose these souls. I leave to you and to your friends to keep contemptuously aloof from other people. I imitate my Master and I approach sinners to lead them to Grace. »

Uriah would like to retort, but another Pharisee, old Eli, arrives and says to him: « Do not contaminate your purity and your tongue, my friend. Come with me » and walking arm-in-arm with him he takes him towards his house.

In the meantime the crowd, particularly children, have gathered round Jesus. Among the children there are Toby and Johanna, the little brother and sister, who one day, a long time ago, were quarrelling over some figs. They now say to Jesus, hanging on to His tall body to draw His attention: « Listen, listen. Also today we have been good, You know? We have never cried and we

have not teased each other, for Your sake. Will You give us a kiss? »

« So you have been good for My sake! What joy you give Me. Here is My kiss. And be even better tomorrow. »

And there is James, the little fellow who used to bring Matthew's purse to Jesus every Sabbath. He now says to Jesus: « Matthew does not give me anything now for the poor of the Lord, but I have put aside all the money they give me when I am good and I will give it to You now. Will you give it to the poor on account of my grandfather? »

« Of course I will. What is the matter with your grand-dad? »

« He cannot walk any more. He is so old and his legs will not support him. »

« Are you sorry for that? »

« Yes, I am, because he was my master when we went into the country. He told me many things. And he made me love the Lord. Also now he tells me of Job and he shows me the stars in the sky, but he does that from his chair… It was much nicer before. »

« I will come to your grand-dad tomorrow. Are you happy now? »

And James is replaced by Benjamin, not the boy from Magdala, but the one from Capernaum, the boy I saw in a vision a long time ago. When he arrives in the square with his mother and sees Jesus, he leaves his mother's hand and rushes through the crowd, shrieking like a swallow and when he arrives in front of Jesus, he embraces His knees saying: « I want a caress, too! »

Simon, the Pharisee, passes by at that moment and bows pompously to Jesus, Who responds to his salutation. The Pharisee stops and while the crowd draw aside as if frightened, Simon says: « And would You not caress me as well? » and he smiles lightly.

« I will caress anyone who asks Me. I congratulate you, Simon, on your very good health. I was told in Jerusalem that you were rather ill. »

« Yes, I was very ill. I wanted You, to be cured. »

« Did you believe that I could cure you? »

« I never doubted it. But I had to recover by myself, because You have been away for a long time. Where have You been? »

« In the border area of Israel. That is how I spent the days between Passover and Pentecost. »

« A very successful journey? I heard of the lepers at Hinnom and Siloam. Really wonderful. Only that? Certainly not. But we hear of You, through John, the priest. He who is not biassed believes in You and is happy. »

« And what about him who does not believe because he is biassed? What about him, my wise Simon? »

The Pharisee is somewhat upset… he cannot make up his mind, as while he does not wish to condemn his too many friends, who are prejudiced against Jesus, he does wish to deserve being praised

by Jesus. He decides on the latter alternative and says: « He who does not want to believe in You, notwithstanding all the proofs You give, is condemned. »

« And I wish nobody were… »

« Yes, You do. But we do not return to You the same measure of goodness that You have for us. Too many do not deserve You… Jesus, I would like You to be my guest tomorrow… »

« I cannot tomorrow. Let us make it in two days' time. Do you agree? »

« I always agree with You. I will have… some friends… and You will have to put up with them if… »

« I know. I will come with John. »

« John only? »

« The others have other tasks to attend to. Here they are, they are just coming back from the country. Peace to you, Simon. »

« God be with You, Jesus. »

The Pharisee goes away and Jesus joins His disciples.

They go back home for supper.

But while they are eating roast fish, some blind men arrive, who had already implored Jesus on the road. They now repeat their prayer: « Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on us! »

« Go away! I told you to come tomorrow and let it be tomorrow. Let Him eat » says Peter reproachingly.

« No, Simon. Do not send them away. So much perseverance deserves a reward. You two, come forward » He then says to the blind men, who go in sounding the floor and walls with their sticks. « Do you believe that I can give your eyesight back to you? »

« Oh! Yes! Lord! We came because we are certain. »

Jesus gets up from the table, approaches them, lays His fingertips on the blind eyes, raises His head and prays: « Let it be done to you according to your faith. » He removes His hands, and the eyelids, so far motionless, begin to wink, because light strikes the revived pupils of one of the men, and the eyelids of the other become unsealed, whereas before they were sealed probably by neglected ulcers, and the palpebral edges are reshaped anew without the least fault, so that he can wink freely.

The two men fall on their knees.

« You may stand up and go. And mind you, do not let anybody know what I have done to you. Take the news of the grace to your relatives and friends in your villages. It is not necessary to do so here and it would not do your souls any good. Make sure that the faith of your souls does not suffer from any injury and now that you know what it is like to be able to see, ensure that your eyes do not get injured, so that you may not become blind again. »

The supper is over. They go up on the terrace where it is cool. The lake is shining in the moonlight.

Jesus sits on the edge of the low wall and lets His mind wander watching the silvery surface of the lake. The others are talking to one another in low voices, so as not to disturb Him. But they look at Him as if they were fascinated. In fact how handsome He is! The moon forms a halo around His head and illuminates His face, which is severe and serene at the same time, emphasising its tiniest details. He is sitting with His head lightly tilted backwards, leaning against the coarse vine branch, which climbs up there and then spreads out on the terrace. His deep blue eyes look like onyx in the night and seem to be pouring peaceful waves over everything. At times He looks up at the clear sky, strewn with stars, at times He looks down at the hills, and farther down, at the lake or He stares at a distant hazy point and His eyes seem to be smiling at something they only can see. His wavy hair is gently blown by a light breeze. He is sitting slightly sideways, touching the floor with one foot, while the other is a few inches off it, with His hands relaxing on His lap. His white robe emphasises His splendour, which becomes silvery in the moonlight, and His long white hands look more like old ivory emphasising the virile beauty of His tapering fingers. Also His face, with its high forehead, straight nose, lightly oval-shaped cheeks and its pale-copper beard, looks like old ivory without the pinkish nuance visible during the day on the upper part of His cheeks.

« Are You tired, Master? » asks Peter.

« No, I am not. »

« You look pale and pensive… »

« I was thinking. But I do not think I am paler than usual… The moonlight makes you all look pale as well. You will go to Korazim tomorrow and you may find some disciples there. Speak to them. And remember to be back here at vesper. I will be preaching near the torrent. »

« How lovely! We shall tell the people of Korazim. On our way back we met Martha and Marcella. Did they come here? » asks Andrew.

« Yes, they did. »

« There was a lot of talk at Magdala about Mary, who does not go out any more and has no more parties. We had a rest in the house of the same woman as last time. Benjamin told me that when he feels inclined to be naughty, he thinks of You and… »

«… and of me, You may as well say so, James » says the Iscariot.

« He did not say so. »

« But he meant it when he said: "I do not want to be handsome, but I want to be naughty" and he cast me a side glance. He cannot stand me… »

« A dislike of no importance, Judas. Forget about it » says Jesus.

« Yes, Master. But it is annoying that… »

« Is the Master there? » someone shouts from the street.

« Yes, He is. But what do you want now? Is the day not long enough for you? Is this a decent hour to disturb poor pilgrims' Come back tomorrow » orders Peter.

« The trouble is that we have a dumb demoniac with us. And he escaped three times on the way. Had it not been for that, we would have arrived earlier. Be good! Before long, when the moon is high in the sky, he will begin to howl louder and will frighten the village. Look how he is struggling already?! »

Jesus goes to the other side of the terrace and leans out over the low wall. The apostles do likewise. A row of faces bending over a crowd of people looking up at them. In the middle, moving about and howling like a chained bear or a wolf, there is a man with his wrists tied together so that he may not escape. He howls while moving about restlessly, as if he were looking for something on the ground. When he looks up and meets Jesus' eyes, he utters a beastly cry, an inarticulate howl, and tries to run away.

The crowds, almost all the adults of Capernaum are there, move aside frightened.

« Come, for goodness' sake! He is starting all over again… »

« I am coming at once. » And Jesus runs downstairs and goes in front of the poor wretch who is more agitated than ever.

« Go out of him. I want it. »

The howling fades into one word: « Peace! »

« Yes, peace. Peace to you now that you are freed. »

The crowd shout for wonder seeing the sudden change from fury to calm, from being possessed to freedom, from dumbness to speech.

« How did you know that I was here? »

« At Nazareth they said to us: "He is at Capernaum". This was confirmed at Capernaum by two men who said their eyes had been cured by You in this house. »

« That is true! It is very true! They told us as well… » many shout. And they remark: « Such things have never been seen in Israel before! »

« If He were not helped by Beelzebub He would not do them » sneer the Pharisees of Capernaum. Simon, however, is not amongst them.

« Help or not help. I have been cured and so were the blind men. You would not be able to do it, notwithstanding your great prayers » retorts the cured dumb demoniac and he kisses Jesus' robe. The Master does not reply to the Pharisees, He simply dismisses the crowd saying: « Peace be with you » and He asks the cured man and those who accompanied him to stay, and offers them hospitality in the room upstairs so that they may rest until the following morning.

Jesus says: « You will put here the Parable of the lost sheep, which you had on the 12th of August 1944. »

232. Parable of the Lost Sheep.

12th August 1944.

Jesus is speaking to the crowds. Standing on the wooded embankment of a little torrent, He is addressing a large crowd spread in a field where the corn has already been cut and the burnt stubbles are a distressing sight. It is evening. Night is falling, but the moon is already rising. Flocks of sheep are going back to the folds and the sound of cattle-bells mingles with the loud chirping of crickets and the high-pitched drone of cicadas. Jesus takes the passing flocks as a starting point.

He says: « Your Heavenly Father is like a solicitous shepherd. What does a good shepherd do? He looks for good pastures for his sheep, where there is no hemlock or other poisonous herbs, but there is plenty sweet clover, aromatic mint and bitter but wholesome chicory. He looks for places where beside good grass there is the cool shade of trees and the clear water of a stream and he ensures that there are no asps among the green grass. He does not prefer the richest pastures, because he knows that snakes and harmful herbs are quite common there and thus dangerous for his sheep. He prefers instead mountain pastures, where the dew keeps the grass clean and fresh and the strong sunshine keeps snakes away and the breezy air is light and healthy, not like the unhealthy air in the plains. The good shepherd watches his sheep one by one. He cures them when they are sick and if they get hurt he dresses their wounds. He reproaches the sheep that might be sick because they are too greedy for food and he calls to a different place the ones that might be harmed by staying too long in a damp spot or in the sunshine. And if one is unwilling to eat he looks for acidulous aromatic herbs suitable to whet its appetite and he feeds it with his own hands, speaking to it as if it were a friend. That is what the good Father Who is in Heaven does with His children wandering on the earth. His love is the staff that gathers them together, His voice is their guide, His Law is His pasture, Heaven His fold.

But one of his sheep left him. How fond of it he was! It was young, pure, white, like a cloud in an April sky. The shepherd used to look at it with so much love, thinking of how much good he could do for it and how much love he could receive from it. And it strayed. A tempter passed on the road that runs along the pasture. He does not wear a plain jacket, but has on a many-coloured robe. He does not have a leather belt with hatchet and knife hanging

from it, but he wears a golden belt, from which little bells hang, as sweet-sounding as the singing of a nightingale, and phials of inebriating scents… He does not carry a shepherd's staff as the good shepherd does, to gather the sheep together and defend them and should his staff not be sufficient, he is ready to defend them with his hatchet and knife and even with his life. But the tempter who is passing by, is holding in his hands a thurible sparkling with gems and from it smoke rises, which is stench and scent at the same time, and it bewilders as the sparkling of the fake jewels dazzles. He passes by singing and drops handfuls of salt, which shines on the dark road… Ninety-nine sheep look and remain where they are. The one hundredth, the youngest and dearest one, makes a leap and disappears behind the tempter. The shepherd calls it. But it does not come back. It runs faster than the wind to join the tempter who has just gone by, and to sustain itself while running it tastes some of the salt, which as soon as it is swallowed, causes a strange burning frenzy so that the poor sheep craves for cool water in the deep green shades of forests. And following the tempter it goes into the forests, and it climbs and descends and falls… once, twice, three times. And each time it feels round its neck the slimy embrace of reptiles, and being thirsty it drinks foul water and when it is hungry it eats herbs shining with revolting slobber.

And in the meantime what does the good shepherd do? He leaves the ninety-nine faithful ones in a safe place and he sets out and does not stop until he finds traces of the lost sheep. Since it does not come back to him, although he calls it in a loud voice begging the wind to carry his call to it, he goes to the sheep. And he sees it from afar, intoxicated in the coils of reptiles, so intoxicated that it does not feel nostalgia for the man who loves it, on the contrary it mocks him. And he is aware that it is guilty of entering, like a thief, the abode of other people, so guilty that it dare not look at him… And yet the good shepherd does not become tired… and he goes on looking for it all the time, following its traces and weeping when he loses them: strips of fleece; traces of its soul; traces of blood; various crimes; filth; proofs of its lust; but he goes on and reaches it. Ah! I found you, my beloved one. I reached you at last! How far have I walked for you, to take you back to the fold. Do not bend your dejected head. Your sin is buried in my heart. Nobody will know about it, except me, and I love you. I will defend you from the criticism of other people, I will shield you with my body to protect you against the stones of accusers. Come. Are you wounded? Oh! let me see your wounds. I know them. But I want you to show them to me with the confidence you had when you were pure, and you looked at me, your shepherd and your God, with innocent eyes. There they are. They have all the same name.

How deep they are! Who inflicted these very deep ones in the depth of your heart? It was the Tempter, I know. It is he who has neither staff nor hatchet, but he strikes more deeply with his poisonous bite, and after him, the false jewels of his thurible strike: the ones that seduced you by sparkling… and they were hellish sulphur brought to daylight to burn your heart. Look how many wounds! How much torn fleece, how much blood, how much bramble.

O my poor little disappointed soul! But tell me: if I forgive you, will you still love me? Tell me: if I stretch out my arms to you, will you come to them? Tell me: do you thirst for good love? Well: come and be born again. Come back to the holy pastures. Weep. Your tears and mine will wash the traces of your sin and in order to nourish you, because you are worn out by the evil which has burnt you, I open my chest and my veins and I say to you: "Feed on them, and live!" Come here that I may take you in my arms. We will walk faster to the safe holy pastures. You will forget everything of this miserable hour. And your ninety-nine good sisters will rejoice at your return, because I tell you, my little lost sheep, which I have looked for coming from far away, and I reached and saved, I tell you, there is more rejoicing among the good, for one who was lost and has been found, than for ninety-nine just who never left the fold. »

Jesus has never turned round to look at the road behind Him and on which Mary of Magdala has arrived in the dim light of the evening. She is most elegant, but at least she is dressed, and she is wearing a dark veil, which conceals her features and figure. But when Jesus continues His speech from the words: « I found you, my beloved one », Mary hides her hands under her veil and weeps, softly and continuously.

People cannot see her, because she is on this side of the embankment, which runs along the road. Only the moon, now high in the sky, and Jesus' spirit can see her…

And He says to me: « The comment is in the vision itself. But I shall speak to you again about it. Rest now, because it is time. I bless you, My faithful Mary. »

233. Comment on Three Episodes Connected with the Conversion of Mary of Magdala.

13th August 1944.

Jesus says:

« As from January, when I let you see the supper in the house of Simon, the leper, you and he who guides you, have wished to know more about Mary of Magdala and the words I spoke to her. Now, after seven months, I reveal those pages of the past to you, to make you happy and to give a rule to those who must learn to bend over

those women, who are lepers in their souls, and also to invite those poor wretches, who are suffocating in their sepulchres of vice, to come out of them.

God is good. He is good to everybody. He does not measure by means of human measures. He does not discriminate between mortal sins. Sin, whatever it may be, grieves Him. Repentance pleases Him and makes Him willing to forgive. Resistance to Grace makes Him inflexibly severe because Justice cannot forgive the unrepentant who will die as such, notwithstanding all the help given to them so that they might be converted. But the main cause of forty per cent, if not fifty per cent, of non-conversions is the negligence of those responsible for conversions, that is, a mistaken false zeal protecting real selfishness and pride, whereby one is happy in one's refuge, without having to descend into dirt to save a heart from it. "I am pure, I deserve respect. I will not go where there is filth and where they may fail to respect me".

But has he who speaks thus not read the Gospel where it is written that the Son of God came to call tax collectors and prostitutes beside the honest people, the only honest ones according to the old Law? Does he not think that pride is impurity of the mind, and lack of charity is impurity of the heart? Will you be despised? I was despised before you and more than you, and I was the Son of God. Will you have to wear your clean robe where there is filth? And did I not touch that filth with My hands to make it stand up and say to it: "Walk on this new way"? Do you not remember what I said to your first predecessors? "Whatever town or village you go into, ask for someone trustworthy and stay with him". So that the world may not grumble. Because the world is inclined to see evil in everything. But I added: "When you enter houses -'houses' I said, not 'house' - salute them saying: 'Peace to this house'. And if the house deserves it, peace will descend upon it, if it does not, your peace will come back to you". I said that to teach you that until there is a definite proof of unrepentance, you must have the same heart for everybody. And I completed My lesson by saying: "And if anyone does not welcome you and does not listen to your words, as you walk out of those houses or towns shake the dust from your feet". Sin is but dust, and God makes good souls, who have constantly loved Him, like smooth crystal cubes: it is enough to blow or shake the dust and it disappears without doing any harm.

Be really good. Be thoroughly united, with eternal Bounty in the middle of you, and no corruption will be able to foul you above the soles of your sandals which touch the ground. Souls are so high up! I mean the souls of those who are good and thoroughly united to God. Such souls are in Heaven. And no dust or filth can reach up there, not even when thrown angrily at the spirit of an apostle. They may strike your flesh, that is, they may wound you physically

or morally, persecuting you or offending you, because Evil hates Good. And so what? Was I not offended and wounded? Did they perhaps carve those blows and foul words into My Spirit? Did they upset Me? No, they did not. Like spittle on a mirror or a stone thrown against the juicy pulp of a fruit, they skidded without penetrating, or they penetrated only superficially, without damaging the kernel enclosed in the stone: on the contrary it fosters its germination because it is easier to sprout from a cracked core than from a whole one. Through death corn germinates and an apostle becomes active. Sometimes through physical death, or dying daily metaphorically, by crushing one's human ego. But that is not death: it is Life. The spirit triumphs over the death of humanity.

She (1) came to Me to satisfy the passing fancy of an idle woman who did not know how to while away the time, and although her ears were almost deafened by the false homage of those who lulled her singing to her sensuality in order to make her their slave, she heard the clear severe voice of Truth. Of the Truth that is not afraid of being despised or not understood and speaks looking at God. And like festive bells ringing together, all the voices mingled in the Word: voices wont to sing in the open blue sky, spreading over valleys and hills, plains and lakes, to commemorate the glory of the Lord and His festivity.

Do you not remember the solemn festivity that in peace time made the day of the Lord so joyful? The big bell, with its resonant clapper, gave the first peal in the name of divine Law and seemed to be saying: "I am speaking in the name of God, Judge and King". The smaller bells then harmonised: "Who is good, merciful and patient", and the smallest bell, in a silvery angelical voice added: "Whose Love urges men to forgive and be indulgent, to teach men that forgiveness is more useful than wrath and compassion is greater than inflexibility".

Likewise, after recalling the Law, trampled on by the sinner, I made her hear the song of forgiveness. I shook the hope of forgiveness in the darkness of sin, like a green-blue silk scarf among dark shades, so that hope might put in its comforting words. Forgiveness! It is like dew on the parching thirst of sinners. Dew is not like hail, which strikes like a dart, bounces and without penetrating the soil kills flowers. Dew descends so lightly that even the most delicate flower does not perceive it resting on its silk petals. But it drinks its refreshing moisture. Dew settles near roots, on parched clods of earth and penetrates the soil… It is a moisture of tears, the tears of stars, the loving tears of mothers on their thirsty children, whom it nourishes together with their sweet

(1) « She » is Mary Magdalene. In order to understand the full meaning of the present Chapter and events referred to therein, please see Chapter 183.

bountiful milk. Oh! the mysteries of elements operating also when man rests or sins! Forgiveness is like such dew. It brings not only cleanliness, but also vital juices, taken not from elements, but from divine hearths.

And after the promise of forgiveness Wisdom speaks saying what is legal and what is not legal, and it reproaches and shakes, not out of harshness, but out of maternal anxiety to save. How often your hardness becomes more impenetrable and unyielding to Charity bending over you!… How often you run away while Charity speaks to you!… How often you scorn It! How often you hate It!… If Charity dealt with you as you deal with It, woe to your souls! Instead, see, It is the Untiring Walker who comes looking for you. And It reaches you even if you hide in the darkest of dens.

Why did I decide to go to that house? Why did I not work a miracle in it? To teach the apostles how to behave, defying prejudices and criticism in order to fulfil their duty, which is so high as to be free from the trifling things of the world.

Why did I say those words to Judas? The apostles were still very much men. All Christians are very much men, also the saints on the earth, although to a lesser degree. Some humanism survives also in perfect souls. But the apostles were not yet perfect. Their minds were pervaded with human reasoning. I lifted them up. But the weight of their humanity pulled them down again. To let them descend as little as possible I had to put something on their ascending way, which could stop their descent, something on which they could stop to meditate and rest and thus be able to ascend again to a higher level than previously. I had to bring forth something capable of convincing them that I was God, that is: introspection of their souls, victory over elements, miracles, transfiguration, resurrection, ubiquity. I was on the road to Emmaus when I was in the Last Supper room, and the time of My ubiquity, when discussed by the apostles and disciples, was one of the reasons which affected them most strongly, freeing them from their ties and urging them on to the way of Christ. Rather than to Judas, who was already brooding over death, I was speaking to the other eleven. I was compelled to make it very clear to them that I was God, not out of pride, but of necessity for their formation. I was God and Master. Those words define Me as such. I reveal Myself by means of an extra-human faculty and I teach a virtue: we must not talk evil things not even in our hearts. Because God sees, and God must see a pure heart to descend into it and dwell there.

Why did I not work the miracle in that house? To make everybody understand that the presence of God calls for a pure environment, out of respect for His sublime majesty. I did not work the miracle there, because I wanted to speak to her, not uttering words with My lips, but with a deeper word addressed to her sinful

soul and say: "See, poor wretch? You are so filthy that everything near you becomes foul. So foul, that God cannot act. You are filthier than he is. Because you are repeating Eve's sin and are offering your fruit to many Adams, by tempting them and taking them away from their Duty. You are a minister of Satan". But why do I not want her to be called "satan" by his dejected mother? Because no reason can justify insult and hatred. The first essential condition to have God with us is to bear no ill-will and to forgive. The second condition is to admit that we, or those who belong to us, are sinners as well. We must not see only other people's faults. The third condition is to remain grateful and faithful, after receiving grace, out of justice to the Eternal Father. Woe to those who after receiving grace are worse than dogs and do not remember their Benefactor, whereas animals do!

I did not say one word to Mary Magdalene. I looked at her for a moment, as if she were a statue, then I left her. I went back to the "living ones" whom I wanted to save. I treated her with seeming carelessness, as if she were dead, like or more than a lifeless sculptured piece of marble. But I did not utter a word or make a gesture that did not aim mainly at her poor soul, which I wanted to redeem. And the last words: "I do not insult. Do not insult. Pray for sinners. Nothing else", like a garland of flowers the ends of which are joined together, are to be joined to the first words spoken upon the mountain: "Forgiveness is more useful than wrath and compassion than inflexibility". And these have enclosed the poor wretch in a cool velvet circle, scented with goodness, making her feel how the loving service of God is different from the cruel slavery of Satan, how sweet is the heavenly perfume as compared to the stench of sin, and how relaxing it is to be loved holily as compared to being possessed satanically.

See how moderate is the will of the Lord. He does not exact immediate conversions. He does not claim the absolute from a heart. He can wait and be satisfied. And while He waits for the lost woman to find her way, for the mad woman to find reason, He is satisfied with what the dejected mother can give her. I ask her only: "Can you forgive?" How many more questions I should have asked her to make her worthy of the miracle, if I had behaved according to human standards! But I measure your strength in a divine way. It was already a great success if the poor deranged mother could really forgive. And that is all I ask her, at that moment. After giving her son back to her, I say to her: "Be holy and make your house holy". But while the pangs of grief derange her mind, I ask her but to forgive the culprit. You must not exact everything from those who shortly before were in Darkness. That mother was to come later to full light, with her daughter-in-law and the children. For the time being, it was necessary to let the

first dawning of Light reach her eyes blinded by tears: that is, forgiveness, the dawn of God's day.

Of the people present only one - I am not referring to Judas, I am speaking of the people gathered there, not of My disciples only one was not to come to the Light. There is always someone for whom the apostle toils in vain. But you must not lose heart because of such defeats. An apostle must not pretend to achieve everything. Struggling against him there are adverse powers, with many different names, and like tentacles of an octopus they grasp again the prey that he had snatched from them. But the apostle is still meritorious. Woe to the apostle who says: "I am not going there because I know that I shall not be able to convert anyone". He is an apostle of very little value. It is necessary to go even if only one in a thousand will be saved. His apostolic day will be as fruitful because of that one as it would be for a thousand, because he will have done everything in his power and that is what God rewards. You must also consider that where the apostle is not able to convert, because the person to be converted is too firmly gripped by Satan and the power of the apostle is inadequate to the effort, God may intervene. And then? Who is greater than God?

Another thing that the apostle must absolutely practise is love. Clear love. Not only the secret love for the hearts of brethren. That is enough for good brethren. But the apostle is a worker of God and he must not limit himself to prayer: he must act. Let him act with love, with great love. Rigour paralyses the apostle's work and hinders the motion of souls towards the Light. So: not rigour, but love. Love is the incombustible fabric that protects you against the blaze of wicked passions. Love is the saturation of preserving essences which prevent human-satanic putrifaction from entering you. To conquer a soul you must learn how to love. To conquer a soul you must induce it to love: to love Good and disown its petty sinful loves.

I wanted Mary's soul. And as in your case, My little John, I did not confine Myself to speaking from the Teacher's desk. I stooped looking for her in the paths of sin. I pursued her and persecuted her by means of My love. A kind persecution! I-Purity followed her where she was Impurity. I was not afraid of any scandal, neither with regard to Myself nor to others. I could not be scandalised, because I was Mercy; and Mercy weeps over sins but is not scandalised by them. Woe to the shepherd who is scandalised and entrenches himself behind the screen of scandal to abandon a soul! Do you not know that souls are more inclined than bodies to rise again and that the pitiful loving word saying: "Rise, sister, for your own good" often works a miracle? I was not afraid of other people's scandal. My behaviour was justified in the eyes of God, and was understood by good people. An evil-minded man fermenting

with wickedness, which evaporates from a corrupt heart, is of no importance. Such man finds faults also in God, and considers only himself perfect. I therefore paid no attention to such people.

The three phases of the salvation of a soul are:

To be thoroughly and strictly honest in order to be able to speak without any fear of being silenced. To be able to speak to a whole crowd so that our apostolic word, addressed to the crowds gathering round our mystical boat, may travel farther and farther, like circles of waves, until it reaches the miry shore, where those who are not interested in knowing the Truth are lying in the mud. That is the first task in order to break the hard crust of the soil and prepare it to receive the seed. It is the hardest task both for him who performs it and for him who receives it, because words, like a sharp ploughshare, must wound the listener in order to open his heart. And I solemnly tell you that the heart of a good apostle is hurt and bleeds because of the grief in having to wound in order to open. But that grief also is prolific. Through the blood and the tears of an apostle waste land becomes fertile.

The second quality: It is necessary to act also where one, less conscious of one's mission, would flee. The apostle must break his back in the effort to extirpate darnel, couch-grass and thorns in order to clear the soil and plough it and then let the power of God and His bounty shine on it like the sun. And at the same time, like a judge and a doctor, he must be severe and merciful, and remain firm in the period of waiting to give the souls time to surmount their crises, to meditate and make up their minds.

Third phase: As soon as a soul that has repented in silence, dares to come shyly towards an apostle, weeping and thinking of its faults, fearing to be driven away, the apostle's heart must be greater than the sea, more gentle than a mother's heart, more loving than a bride's, and he must open it completely to allow waves of tenderness to flow from it. If you have God, Who is Charity, within you, you will easily find charitable words to be spoken to souls. God will speak in you and on your behalf and like honey dripping from a honeycomb, like balm flowing from a phial, love will reach parched sickened lips; it will reach wounded souls and will be relief and medicine.

You doctors of souls, make sinners love you. Let them taste the flavour of Heavenly Charity and let them become so eager for it, as to seek no other food. Let them feel in your kindness such a relief, as to seek it for all their wounds. Your charity must free them from all fear, because, as the epistle which you have read today says: "To fear is to expect punishment, and anyone who is afraid is still imperfect in love". Neither is he perfect who causes people to be afraid. Do not say: "What have you done?" Do not say: "Go away". Do not say: "You cannot have relish for good love".

Say, instead, in My name: "Love and I will forgive you". Say: "Come, Jesus' arms are open". Say: "Enjoy this angelical Bread and this Word and forget the pitch of hell and Satan's sneers". Bear the weakness of other people. An apostle must bear his own and other people's weaknesses, with his own crosses and other people's. And while coming to Me, laden with wounded sheep, encourage the poor stray souls saying: "Everything is forgotten by now"; say: "Be not afraid of the Saviour. He came from Heaven for you, just for you. I am but a bridge to carry you to Him Who is waiting for you, on the other side of the river of penitential absolution, to lead you to His holy pastures, which begin here, on the earth, and continue in Heaven, in everlasting nutricious delightful Beauty".

Here is the comment. It is of little concern to you, sheep faithful to the Good Shepherd. But if in you, little bride, it increases confidence, in the Father (1) it will be greater light in His light as judge, and for many it will be no incentive to come to Good. But it will be the penetrating and nourishing dew of which I have spoken and which makes withered flowers stand upright again.

Raise your heads. Heaven is high above. Go in peace, Mary. The Lord is with you. »

(1) That is, the Spiritual Father of Maria Valtorta.

234. Martha Has Her Victory within Her Grasp.

29th July 1945.

Jesus is about to embark in the boat, at the dawn of a clear summer day which is spreading roses on the wrinkled silky surface of the lake, when Martha arrives with her maidservant. « Oh! Master! Listen to me, for God's sake » she says.

Jesus goes back on to the shore and says to the apostles: « Go and wait for Me at the torrent. In the meantime prepare everything for our trip towards Magedan. The Decapolis also is waiting for the word. Go. »

And while the boat moves away and takes to the open lake, Jesus walks beside Martha. Marcella respectfully follows them.

They thus move away from the village walking on the shore, which from a sandy stretch, strewn at lake level with sparse tufts of wild herbs, becomes completely covered with vegetation as it climbs up the hill sides, which are reflected in the lake.

When they reach a lonely spot, Jesus asks smiling: « What do you want to tell Me? »

« Oh! Master… Mary came home last night shortly after midnight. Oh! I was forgetting to tell You that while we were having lunch at midday, she said to me: "Would you mind lending me one

of your dresses and a mantle? They may be a little short. But I will leave the dress loose and hold the mantle down… " I replied to her: "You may take whatever you wish, my dear sister". My heart was throbbing because, shortly before, speaking to Marcella in the garden I had said to her: "At vesper we must be at Capernaum, because the Master is speaking to the crowds this evening" and I saw Mary start and change colour. She became restless, moving about all alone, like a person in pain or in a flutter, on the point of making a decision… but does not know which way to decide. After lunch she went into my room and took the most dark and modest dress I had, she tried it on and asked the nurse to let the hem down, as it was too short. She tried to do it herself, but weeping she confessed: "I am no longer good at sewing. I have forgotten everything useful and good… " and she threw her arms round my neck saying: "Pray for me". She went out about sunset… How much I prayed, that she might not meet anyone who would keep her from coming here, so that she might understand Your word and succeed in definitely strangling the monster enslaving her… Look: I put on Your belt, which I tied under my own, and when I felt my waist being oppressed by the hard stiff leather, to which it is not used, I would say: "He is stronger than anything". Then Marcella and I came by wagon, as it is quicker. I do not know whether You saw us in the crowd… But what an aching pain in my heart at not seeing Mary! I would say to myself: "She must have changed her mind. She has gone back home. Or… she has run away as she could no longer stand my control, although she had asked for it". I was listening to You and weeping under my veil. Your words seemed to be spoken just for her… and she did not hear them! That is what I was thinking as I did not see her. I went back home down-hearted. It is the truth. I disobeyed You because You had said to me: "If she comes, you stay at home and wait for her". But think of my heart, Master! It was my sister coming to You! How could I not be there to see her near You? And then… You said to me: "She will be broken" and I wanted to be near her to support her at once…

I was kneeling in my room weeping and praying and it was after midnight when she came in. She came in so softly that I heard her only when she threw herself upon me embracing me and saying: "Everything you say, my blessed sister, is true. Nay, it is much more so than you told me. His mercy is much greater. Oh! Martha! There is no further need for you to watch me! You will see that I am no longer cynical and miserable! You will no longer hear me say: 'I do not want to think!' Now I want to think. I know what to think of. Of Bounty Which became flesh. You were certainly praying for me, sister. And victory is already within your grasp: Your Mary, who no longer wants to sin and who is born to a new life.

Here she is. Look at her straight in the face. Because she is a new Mary, whose face has been washed by tears of hope and repentance. You can kiss me, my pure sister. There is no trace of shameful love affairs on my face. He said that He loves my soul. Because He was speaking to my soul and about my soul. I was the lost sheep. He said, listen if I am right. You know how the Saviour speaks… " and she repeated Your parable perfectly. Mary is so intelligent! Much more intelligent than I am. And she remembers. So I heard You twice; and if those words were holy and adorable on Your lips, on hers they were holy, adorable and loving because they were spoken by my sister, who had been found and had come back to the family fold. We were sitting on a mat on the floor, embracing each other, as we were wont to do when we were little girls in my mother's room or near the loom where she wove or embroidered her wonderful cloths. And we remained thus, no longer divided by sin, and my mother also seemed to be present in her spirit. We wept without any grief, on the contrary, with so much peace! We kissed each other happily… And then Mary, who was tired after her long walk, and was exhausted with emotion and so many feelings, fell asleep in my arms and with the help of the nurse I laid her on my bed… and I left her there to come here… » and Martha, thoroughly happy, kisses Jesus' hands.

« I also will tell you what Mary said to you: "Victory is already in your grasp". Go and be happy. Go in peace. Let your behaviour be kind and prudent with your reborn sister. Goodbye, Martha. Let Lazarus know, as he is worried. »

« Yes, Master. But when will Mary come with us women disciples? »

Jesus smiles and says: « The Creator created the universe in six days and rested on the seventh. »

« I understand. I must be patient… »

« Yes, patient. Do not sigh. That is a virtue as well. Peace to you, women. We shall meet soon » and Jesus leaves them and goes towards the place where the boat is waiting near the shore.

Jesus says: « Put here the vision of the supper in the house of Simon, the Pharisee, which you saw on January 21st, 1944. »

235. Mary Magdalene in the House of Simon, the Pharisee.

21st January 1944.

To comfort me in my complex suffering and make me forget the wickedness of men, my Jesus grants me this sweet contemplation.

I see a sumptuous hall. A many-branched candlestick is hanging in the centre and is completely lit. The hall is hung with beautiful tapestry; there are magnificent pieces of furniture and chairs inlaid

and decorated with ivory and precious metal leaves.

There is a large square table in the centre, consisting of four tables assembled together. The table has been laid for many guests (all men) and is covered with beautiful table-cloths and very expensive tableware. There are valuable amphorae and cups and many servants are moving round the table carrying dishes and pouring out wines. There is no one in the centre of the square. I can see the magnificent floor which reflects the lights of the oil chandelier. Around the table there are many couches, all occupied by the guests.

I appear to be in the half-dark corner at the end of the hall, near a door, which is wide open, although screened by a heavy piece of tapestry hanging from its architrave.

The landlord and the most important guests are on the opposite side, that is, the farthest side from the door. The landlord is elderly, wearing a wide white tunic tied round his waist by an embroidered belt. Round the collar, the cuffs and the hem of the tunic there are strips of embroidered work, which have been attached as if they were embroidered ribbons or strips. But I do not like his expression. It is malicious, cold, proud and greedy.

On the opposite side, facing him, there is my Jesus. I see Him sideways, almost from behind His back. He is wearing His usual white tunic, sandals, and His long hair is parted on His forehead.

I see that both He and all the guests are not sitting up to the table, as I thought one would on those couches, instead they are reclined parallelly. In the vision of the wedding at Cana I did not pay much attention to this detail. I saw that they were eating leaning on their left elbows, but they did not appear to be so reclined, probably because the couches were shorter and not so sumptuous. Those I see now are real beds, and look like modern Turkish divans.

John is near Jesus and since Jesus is leaning on His left elbow, like everybody else, John is between the table and Jesus' body, with his elbow at the height of the Master's groin, so that he does not hinder Him while eating, but if he wishes, he can lie confidentially on His chest.

There is no woman at the table. They are all talking and the landlord now and again addresses Jesus with evident affected condescension. It is obvious that he wants to show to Him and to all those present as well, that he has greatly honoured Him, a poor and rather hot-headed prophet, as many people consider Him, by inviting Him to his wealthy house… I see Jesus reply kindly and quietly. He smiles faintly at those who ask Him questions, but His smile becomes bright when John speaks to Him or even looks at Him.

I see the magnificent curtain covering the door-space being raised

and a young woman come in. She is beautiful, sumptuously dressed and her hair is splendidly arranged. The artistically interlaced locks of her very thick blond hair form a beautiful ornament on her head. Her hair is so bright and abundant that she seems to be wearing a golden helmet wrought in relief. If I should have to compare the dress she has on with the ones I have always seen the Blessed Virgin Mary wear, I would say that it is very peculiar and complicated. There are buckles on the shoulders, jewels to hold together the pleats at the top of the breast, little gold chains to outline the breast, and the belt is adorned with studs and gems. It is a provoking dress, which emphasises the features of her beautiful body. The veil on her head is so light that… it veils nothing: it is an additional charm and nothing else. Her sandals are very expensive ones, of red leather with gold buckles and strips interlaced round her ankles.

Everybody, except Jesus, turns round to look at her. John watches her for a moment, then looks at Jesus. The others stare at her with evident malicious avidity. But the woman does not look at them, neither does she pay attention to the whispering that has arisen at her entrance, or to the winking of the people present, with the exception of Jesus and His disciple. Jesus pretends He has seen nothing. He continues His conversation with the landlord.

The woman goes towards Jesus and kneels down at the feet of the Master. She lays on the floor a little vase, shaped like a potbellied amphora, takes off her veil after removing a long valuable pin, which fastened it to her hair, she removes rings from her fingers and lays everything on the couch near Jesus' feet. She then takes His feet in her hands, first the right one and then the left one, unlaces His sandals and lays them on the floor. She then kisses His feet bursting into tears, she rests her forehead on them, caresses them, while tears stream down her face like drops of rain, shining in the light of the chandelier and wetting those adorable feet.

Jesus turns His head round very slightly and slowly, and His deep eyes rest for a moment on the woman's reclined head. An absolving glance. He then looks again at the centre of the hall, leaving her free in her outburst.

But the others do not: they scoff, wink and sneer. The Pharisee sits up for a moment to have a better view and his eyes express desire, vexation and irony. He desires the woman, and that feeling is evident. He is vexed because she has come in so freely, which may cause the others to think that she is a habitual guest in the house. And he is ironical with regard to Jesus…

But the woman is not aware of anything. She continues to shed torrents of tears noiselessly. She weeps and now and again she sobs. She then lets her hair down, after removing the gold hairpins, which held up her complicated hairdress and she puts also the hairpins

near the rings and the long veil-pin. Her golden locks roll down her back. She takes them with both hands, brings them in front of her and rubs them on Jesus' wet feet, until she sees that they are dry. She dips her fingers into the little vase and takes out a yellowish highly scented ointment. A sweet-smelling perfume, a mixture of lily and tuberose, spreads throughout the hall. The woman uses it profusely, she spreads it, kissing and caressing His feet at the same time.

Jesus looks at her now and again with so much loving pity. John, who looked round in amazement when she burst into tears, cannot detach his eyes from Jesus and the woman and looks at them alternately.

The face of the Pharisee has become more and more sullen. I now hear the well known words of the Gospel and I hear them uttered in a tone and with a look, which cause the old resentful man to lower his head.

I hear the words absolving the woman, who goes away leaving her jewels at Jesus' feet. She has tied her veil round her head, thus gathering together her dishevelled hair as best she can. Jesus, while saying to her: « Go in peace », lays His hand on her reclined head for a moment. A very gentle gesture.

Jesus now says to me:

« What made the Pharisee and his companions lower their heads and is not mentioned in the Gospel, are the words that My spirit, in one glance darted at him and drove into his arid avid soul. I answered him much more than has been reported, because none of the thoughts of those men was concealed from Me. And he understood My mute language, which was more meaningful and reproachful than My words were.

I said to him: "No. Do not make wicked insinuations to justify yourself to yourself. I am not affected by lewdness as you are. She does not come to Me attracted by sensuality. I am not you or like those who are like you. She comes to Me because My countenance and My word, which she heard by chance, have enlightened her soul, which lust had left in utter darkness. And she comes because she wants to overcome her sensuality and she realises, poor creature, that she will never succeed by herself. She loves My spirit, nothing but My spirit, which she perceives is supernaturally good. After so much evil that she received from you all, who have taken advantage of her weakness for your own vices, rewarding her with your lashing scorn, she comes to Me, because she realises that she has found Goodness, Joy and Peace, which she sought in vain in the pomps and vanities of this wicked world. Cure the leprosy of your soul, o hypocritical Pharisee, that you may have the right view of things. Forsake pride of mind and lust

of flesh. Their leprosy is much more fetid than the leprosy of your bodies. My touch can cure you of the latter, because you beg Me to cure you, but I cannot cure you of the leprosy of your souls, because you do not wish to be cured, as you like it. But she wants to recover. And thus I cleanse her, and I free her from the chains of her slavery. The sinner is dead. She is still over there, in those ornaments that she is ashamed to offer Me that I may sanctify them, using them for the needs of My disciples and Mine and for the poor, whom I help by means of the surplus of other people, because I, the Master of the universe, possess nothing now that I am the Saviour of man. She is still here, in the perfume spread on My feet, the perfume that has been humiliated like her hair, on that part of My body that you disdained to refresh with the water of your well, notwithstanding I have walked so far to bring light to you also. The sinner is dead. And Mary is reborn, as beautiful as a modest girl, through her deep sorrow and her righteous love. She washed herself in her tears. And I solemnly tell you, o Pharisee, that between this young man who loves Me in the purity of his youth, and that woman who loves Me in the sincerity of repentance of a heart reborn to Grace, I make no difference. And to the Pure young man and the Repentant woman I entrust the task of understanding My thought as no one else can, as well as the task of rendering the last honours to My Body, and the first greetings (I am not taking into account My Mother's special greetings) when I will rise from the dead". That is what I wanted to tell the Pharisee by means of My countenance.

But I will draw your attention to something else: for your joy and the joy of many. Also at Bethany Mary repeated the gesture that marked the dawn of her redemption. There are personal gestures, which are repeated and are peculiar to a person like the person's style. They are unmistakable gestures. But, as it was fair, at Bethany the gesture was not humiliated so much and it was more confidential in its reverent adoration.

Mary has gone a long way since that dawn of her redemption. A very long way. Love, like a high wind, has blown her high up and far ahead. Love has burnt her like a fire, destroying her impure flesh and making a purified spirit her new master. And Mary, now different in her revived womanly dignity, as she is different in her clothing, which is now as simple as My Mother's, in her hair-style, her looks, her behaviour, her words, this new Mary has a new way to honour Me by means of the same gesture. She takes the last of her vases of perfume, which she kept for Me, and pours it on My feet and My head, without shedding any tears, with a happy countenance due to love and the certainty that she had been forgiven and saved. Mary can now touch My head and anoint Me. Repentance and love have cleansed her by means of the fire of

seraphim and she is a seraph.

Repeat that to yourself, Mary, My little "voice" and repeat it to souls. Go, tell the souls that dare not come to Me because they feel guilty. He who loves much is pardoned much. That is, He who loves Me. You, poor souls, do not know how much the Saviour loves you! Be not afraid of Me. Come. Confidently. Courageously. I open My Heart and My arms to you.

Always remember: "I make no difference between him who loves Me with his spotless purity and him who loves Me in the sincere contrition of a heart reborn to Grace". I am the Saviour. Always remember that.

Go in peace. I bless you. »

22nd January 1944.

I have been thinking all day of Jesus' dictation of yesterday evening and of what I saw and understood, even if it was not said.

In the meantime, by the way, I tell you that the conversation of the commensals, as far as I could understand, that is, the part addressed to Jesus, was about daily events: the Romans, the Law opposed by them, and then the mission of Jesus as Master of a new school. But under the seeming benevolence it was clear that they asked vicious and captious questions to embarrass Him. A difficult task, because Jesus in a few words gave the right and conclusive answer to each subject.

For instance, when they asked Him of which particular school or sect He had become the new master, He replied simply: « Of God's school. It is He Whom I follow in His holy Law and to Whose interests I devote Myself, ensuring that it may be renewed for these little ones (and He lovingly looked at John and in John at all honesthearted people) in all its essence, as it was on the day that the Lord God promulgated it on Sinai. I take men back to the Light of God. »

To the other question, as to what He thought of the abuse of power by Caesar, who had become the ruler of Palestine, He replied: « Caesar is what he is because that is what God wants. Remember the prophet Isaiah. Through divine inspiration, does he not call Asshur "the rod" of His anger? The rod that punishes the people of God, because it has become too detached from God and its outer appearance and spirit are hypocrisy? And does He not say that after using him as a punishment, He will destroy him because he will have abused his task, by becoming too proud and cruel? »

Those are the two replies that impressed me most.

Then this evening my Jesus says to me smiling:

« I should call you as I called Daniel. You are the woman of wishes and you are dear to Me because you want your God so much. And I could continue saying to you what was said to Daniel by My angel: "Be not afraid, because from the first day when you

applied your heart to understand and grieve in the presence of God, your prayers have been heard and they are the reason why I have come". But here it is not the angel who is speaking. I am speaking to you: Jesus.

Mary, I always come when "a heart is anxious to understand". I am not a hard severe God. I am Living Mercy. And I come faster than thought to those who apply to Me. And I went immediately to poor Mary of Magdala, so immersed in sin, with My spirit, as soon as I perceived that the desire to understand was rising in her. The desire to understand the light of God and her own state of darkness. And I became her Light.

I was speaking to many that day, but in actual fact I was speaking only for her. I saw but her who had approached us driven by the vehemence of her soul, which rebelled against the flesh enslaving it. I saw but her with her poor face in turmoil, her forced smile, which endeavoured to hide so much weeping of her heart, under the appearance of false confidence and joy, which were a challenge to the world and herself. I saw but her, more entangled in the bramble than the lost sheep of the parable and she was drowning in the disgust of her own life, a disgust brought to the surface like those deep waves that bring up the water of the bottom.

I did not say great words, neither did I touch any specific subject concerning her, a well known sinner, as I did not wish to mortify her, compelling her to run away, to be ashamed or to come to Me. I left her in peace… I let My word and My look descend into her, fermenting there to turn the impulse of a moment into her glorious holy future. I spoke by means of one of the most gentle parables: a beam of light and kindness flashing just for her. And that evening, while I was setting foot in the house of the proud rich Pharisee, where My word could not fermentate into future glory because it was killed by Pharisaic pride, I already knew that she would come after weeping bitterly in her room of vice and that she had already decided on her future in the light of her tears.

Both the flesh and the thoughts of the men were inflamed with lust when they saw her enter. Everybody looked at her lustfully, except the two "pure ones" present at the banquet: John and I. They all thought that she came because of one of her usual caprices, a true diabolic possession, which drove her to extemporaneous affairs. But Satan was already defeated. And when they all noticed that she did not look at them, they enviously thought that she had come for Me. Man always fouls also the purest things, when he is but flesh and blood. Only the pure have the right view because there is no sin in them upsetting their thoughts.

But there is no reason to be frightened because man does not understand, Mary. God understands. And that is enough for

Heaven. The glory that comes from men does not add an ounce to the glory that is the destiny of the blessed souls in Paradise. Always remember that. Poor Mary of Magdala was always wrongly judged in her good deeds. But she was not wrongly judged in her bad deeds because they were lustful mouthfuls offered to the insatiable hunger of lewd men. She was criticised and wrongly judged at Nain, in the house of the Pharisee and she was criticised and reproached at Bethany, in her own home.

But John, who says a great word, has the key to the last bit of criticism: "Judas… because he was a thief". I say: "The Pharisee and his friends because they were lewd". See? Lust for sensuality, greed for money raise their voices to criticise good deeds. Good people do not criticise. Never. They understand.

But, I would repeat it, the criticism of the world is of no importance. What matters is the judgement of God. »

236. The Harvest Is Rich but the Labourers Are Few. The Parable of the Treasure Hidden in the Field.

29th July 1945.

Jesus is on the road that comes from lake Merom towards the lake of Galilee. He is with the Zealot and Bartholomew near a modest little brook, which nevertheless nourishes many plants, and the trio seem to be waiting for the others who are about to arrive from two different directions.

It is a very warm day, and yet many people have followed the three groups that have been preaching in the country addressing those who are in good health and taking the sick to the Master. Many people who have been cured miraculously form a happy group sitting among the trees, and their joy is such that they do not even feel tired notwithstanding the heat, the dust, the dazzling light, which are a great trial for everybody else.

When the group led by Judas Thaddeus first arrives near Jesus, all those forming it or following it appear to be very tired. The last group to arrive is the one led by Peter and it comprises many people from Korazim and Bethsaida.

« We have finished, Master. But there ought to be many groups… You can see Yourself. It is not possible to walk far, because of the heat. So what can we do? The more we have to do, the more the world seems to be widening out, scattering villages and increasing distances. I never realised that Galilee was so large. We are in a corner of Galilee, just a corner, and yet we cannot evangelize it, so wide it is and so large the number of those who need You and want You » sighs Peter.

« It is not the world that is growing wider. It is the knowledge of our Master that is spreading » replies Thaddeus.

« Yes, it is true. Look how many people. Many have been following us since this morning. During the warmest hours we took shelter in a copse. But even now, when it is almost evening, it is painful to walk. And these poor people are much farther from their homes than we are. If our work keeps growing like this, I do not know what we shall do… » says James of Zebedee.

« The shepherds will be coming too, in Tishri » says Andrew to encourage them.

« Yes! Shepherds, disciples, how lovely! They are only good at saying: "Jesus is the Saviour. He is over there". Nothing else » replies Peter.

« At least people will know where to find Him. Instead now… ! if we come here, they rush here, and while they are coming here, we go there, and they have to run after us. Which is not very pleasant when there are children and sick people. »

Jesus speaks: « You are right, Peter. I feel sorry as well for these souls and this people. The fact that many of them may not find Me at a certain moment, may be the cause of irreparable misfortunes. Look how tired and bewildered are those who are not yet certain of My Truth and look how hungry are those who have already tasted My word and can no longer go without it, and no other word can satisfy them. They look like sheep without a shepherd, wandering about without finding anyone who may lead them and pasture them. I will see to them, but you must help Me, with all your spiritual, moral and physical strength. You will no longer have to go around in large groups, but in couples. And we will send also the best disciples two by two. Because the harvest is really rich. Oh! I will prepare you in summer for this great mission. By the month of Tammuz Isaac will join us with his best disciples. And I will prepare you. But even so you will not be enough. Because the harvest is really rich but the labourers are few. So pray the Lord of the harvest to send many labourers to His harvest. »

« Yes, my Lord. But that will not make much difference to the situation of those who seek You » says James of Alphaeus.

« Why, brother? »

« Because they are looking not only for doctrine and words of Life, but they want to be cured and to be assisted and helped in all their ailments and in the impairments that either Satan or life have brought to their inferior or superior parts. And only You can do that, because Yours is the Power. »

« Those who are one with Me will be able to do what I do and the poor will be helped in all their miseries. But you do not have as yet what is required to do that. Endeavour to overcome yourselves, to trample on your humanity and thus let your spirit triumph. Absorb not only My word, but the spirit of it, that is, sanctify yourselves through it and then you will be able to do everything.

And now let us go and speak to them, as they do not wish to go away unless I speak the word of God to them. Then we shall go back to Capernaum. There will be someone waiting for us there as well… »

« Lord, is it true that Mary of Magdala asked You to forgive her, in the Pharisee's house? »

« It is true, Thomas. »

« And did You forgive her? » asks Philip.

« I did. »

« You did the wrong thing! » exclaims Bartholomew.

« Why? She was sincerely repentant and deserved to be forgiven. »

« But You should not have forgiven her in that house, publicly… » says the Iscariot reproachingly.

« But I do not understand where I was wrong. »

« This is the point: You know who the Pharisees are, how full their heads are of cavils, how they watch You, slander and hate You. One of them in Capernaum was Your friend and that was Simon. And You called a prostitute into his house to desecrate it and cause scandal to Your friend Simon. »

« I did not call her. She came. She was not a prostitute. She repented. That throws a different light on the matter. If they were not overcome with nausea beforehand, when they approached her and desired her, also in My presence, now that she is no longer just flesh, but a soul, they should not feel disgust seeing her enter the house to kneel at My feet and accuse herself weeping, humiliating herself in humble public confession represented by her tears. Simon the Pharisee had his house sanctified by a great miracle: "the resurrection of a soul". Five days ago in the square in Capernaum he asked Me: "Is that the only miracle You worked?" and he replied himself: "Certainly not" showing his desire to see one. And I gave it to him. I chose him to be the witness, the middleman of this engagement of a soul with Grace. He ought to be proud of it. »

« Instead he is scandalised. Perhaps You have lost a friend. »

« I found a soul. It is worth losing a man with his friendship, the poor friendship of a man, to give a soul the friendship of God. »

« It is useless. We cannot get You to consider matters from a human point of view. We are on the earth, Master! Remember that. And the laws and the ideas of the world are in force. You act according to the method of Heaven, You live in the Heaven You have in Your heart, You see everything in the light of Heaven. Poor Master of Mine! How divinely unsuited You are to live among us wicked people! » exclaims Judas embracing Him. The apostle, who is amazed and desolate at the same time, concludes: « And I am sorry because, through too much perfection, You make enemies of too many people. »

« Do not be sorry, Judas. It is written that it must be thus. But how do you know that Simon is offended? »

« He did not say that he is offended. But he made Thomas and me understand that it should not have happened. You should not have invited her to his house, which only honest people enter. »

« Well! With regard to the honesty of the people going to Simon's house, let us drop the subject » says Peter.

And Matthew adds: « I could say that the perspiration of prostitutes poured several times on the floors, on the table and beyond them in the house of Simon, the Pharisee. »

« But not publicly » retorts Judas.

« No. Hypocrisy concealed it. »

« So you can see that there is a difference. »

« There is also a difference between a prostitute who goes in to say: "I am giving up my disgraceful sinful life" and one who goes in to say: "Here I am to commit sin with you' »

« Matthew is right » they all say.

« Of course, he is right. But they do not reason the way we do. We must come to a compromise with them, and adjust ourselves to their ways to have them friendly. »

« No, never, Judas. In truth, honesty, in moral behaviour there are neither adjustments nor compromises » thunders Jesus. And He concludes: « In any case I know that I acted rightly and for a good purpose. And that is enough. Let us go and dismiss those tired people. »

And He goes towards those who are spread under the trees, looking in His direction, anxiously waiting to hear Him.

« Peace to you all who have walked for miles and in dog days to come and hear the Gospel. I solemnly tell you that you are beginning to really understand what the Kingdom of God is, how precious its possession is and how blissful to belong to it. And labour is no longer burdensome for you, as it is for others, because you are ruled by your soul, which says to the flesh: "Rejoice because I am oppressing you. I am doing it for your own happiness. When you are joined to me again, after resurrection, you will love me for crushing you and you will see me as your second saviour". Do your souls not say that? Of course they do! You now base your actions on the teaching of the parables I spoke to you some time ago. But I will now give you further light to make you love more and more the Kingdom which awaits you and the value of which cannot be measured.

Listen: A man went by chance into a field to get some mould for his little kitchen garden and while he was digging with some difficulty the very hard soil, he came across a vein of precious metal. What did the man do then? He covered up with earth what he had discovered. He did not mind working a little more, because the

discovery justified the work. He then went home, he gathered together all his wealth consisting of money and valuables and he sold the latter to make more money. He then went to the owner of the field and said to him: "I like your field. How much do you want for it?" "I am not selling it" replied the owner. But the man offered larger and larger sums of money disproportionate to the value of the field, and at last he succeeded in convincing the owner who thought: "This man must be mad! And supposing he is, I am going to take advantage of the situation. I will accept the money he offers me. It is not a matter of money-grubbing, because he insists in offering me it. With that money I will be able to buy at least three more fields, and better ones as well". And he sold the field and was sure he had done very good business. But it was the other man who had done a wonderful deal because he gave away what could be stolen by thieves, or lost or used up, and he gained a treasure, which being real and natural, was inexhaustible. It was worth while sacrificing what he had, to make that purchase, although for some time he possessed nothing but the field, because in actual fact he possessed, and for ever, the treasure hidden in it.

You have understood all that and you behave like the man of the parable. Give up transient riches in order to possess the Kingdom of Heaven. Sell them or give them to the fools in the world and let them laugh at you because the world thinks it is foolish to do that. Do that, always behave like that, and your Father Who is in Heaven will rejoice giving you one day your seat in the Kingdom.

Go back to your homes before the Sabbath comes, and on the day of the Lord meditate on the parable of the treasure, which is the heavenly Kingdom. Peace be with you. »

The crowds slowly spread along the road and the country paths, while Jesus goes towards Capernaum as night is falling.

He arrives there at night. They noiselessly cross the silent town in the moonlight, which is the only light in the dark unevenly paved narrow streets. They silently enter the little kitchen garden near the house, as they think that everybody is in bed. Instead a lamp is lit in the kitchen and three shadows, made mobile by the flickering flame, are thrown on the white wall of the stone-oven.

« There is somebody waiting for You, Master. But it is not possible to go on like this! I will go and tell them that You are too tired. Go up on to the terrace in the meantime. »

« No, Simon. I am going into the kitchen. If Thomas kept these people here, there must be a good reason for it. »

In the meantime those inside the house have heard the whispering and Thomas, the landlord, comes to the door.

« Master, the usual lady is here. She has been waiting for you since yesterday evening, at sunset. She is with a servant » and he adds in a low voice: « She is very nervous. She weeps all the time… »

« All right. Tell her to come upstairs. Where did she sleep? »

« She did not want to sleep. Then she withdrew to my room for a few hours, at dawn. I let the servant sleep in one of your beds. »

« Very well. He can sleep there also tonight. And you will sleep in Mine. »

« No, Master. I shall sleep on some mats on the terrace. I shall sleep very well just the same. »

Jesus goes up to the terrace. Martha follows Him.

« Peace to you, Martha. »

A sob is her reply.

« Are you still weeping? Are you not happy? »

Martha shakes her head.

« But why? »…

There is a long pause full of sobs. At last she moans: « Mary has not come back for many nights. And we cannot find her. Neither I nor Marcella nor the nurse can find her… She went out after ordering the wagon to be ready for her. She was magnificently dressed… Oh! she would not put on my dress again!… She was not half -nude - she has some such dresses as well - but it was still a very provoking one… And she took jewels and perfumes… and has not come back. She dismissed the servant when they reached the first houses in Capernaum saying: "I will come back in the company of other people". But she has not come back. She deceived us! Or she felt lonely, perhaps she was tempted… or something has happened to her… She has not come back… » And Martha falls on her knees, weeping, with her head reclined on her forearm, which is resting on a pile of empty sacks.

Jesus looks at her and like an overlord He says slowly and confidently: « Do not weep. Mary came to Me three evenings ago. She anointed My feet and left at My feet all her jewels. She thus consecrated herself, and for ever, and has become one of My disciples. Do not disparage her in your heart. She has excelled you. »

« But where is my sister then? » exclaims Martha looking up with a troubled face. « Why has she not come back home? Has she been assailed? Has she taken a boat and drowned herself? Or has a rejected lover carried her off? Oh! Mary! My Mary! I had found her and I have lost her at once! » Martha is really beside herself. She does not consider that those downstairs can hear her. Neither does she consider that Jesus can tell her where her sister is. She is in despair and does not ponder on anything.

Jesus takes her by the wrists and compels her to be still and to listen to Him, towering above her with His height and dominating her with His magnetic look. « That is enough! I want you to have faith in My words. I want you to be generous. Have you understood? » He does not let her go until Martha calms down a little. « Your sister has gone to savour her joy, and she has enveloped

herself in holy solitude because she is full of the supersensitive modesty of redeemed souls. I told you in advance. She cannot bear the kind but inquisitive look of relatives on her new dress of a bride of Grace. And what I say is always true. You must believe Me. »

« Yes, my Lord, I do. But my Mary has been too long a prey to the demon, He has recaptured her at once, he… »

« He is avenging himself on you for the prey he has lost for ever. Am I therefore to see that you, the strong woman, are becoming his prey through a foolish dismay for no reason whatsoever? Am I to see that because of her, who now believes in Me, you are going to lose the beautiful faith that I always saw in you? Martha! Look at Me carefully. Listen to Me. Do not listen to Satan. Do you not know that when he is compelled to give up a prey, because God has defeated him, he busies himself at once to find other victims, because he is an untiring torturer of human beings and an indefatigable thief of God's rights? Do you not know that the recovery of a soul is consolidated by the torture of another good faithful soul that resists the demon's attacks? Do you not know that nothing of what exists and happens in creation is uncontrolled, but everything follows an eternal law of subordination and consequence, whereby the deed of one person has very wide natural and supernatural repercussions? You are weeping here, you are tormented here by a horrible doubt, but you remain faithful to your Christ also in this hour of darkness. Not far from you, but in a place unknown to you, Mary feels that her last doubt on the infinity of forgiveness received is being dissipated and her weeping changes into smiles and her shadow into light. It is your torture that guided her where there is peace, where souls are regenerated near the immaculate Mother, Who is such Life that She was granted the privilege of giving birth to the Christ, Who is the Life. Your sister is with My Mother. Oh! she is not the first to furl sail in that peaceful harbour after the gentle ray of the living Star of Mary called her to Her loving bosom, out of silent but active love for Her Son! Your sister is at Nazareth. »

« But how did she go there if she does not know Your Mother, or Your house?… By herself… At night… Thus… Without means… Wearing that dress… Such a long way… How? »

« How? As a tired swallow flies back to its native nest, crossing seas and mountains, through storms, fog and hostile winds. As swallows fly to hibernating places. Instinct guides them, warmth invites them, the sun calls them. She also went to the ray inviting her… to the universal Mother. And we will see her come back happily at dawn… coming out for ever from darkness, with a Mother beside her, Mine, never to be an orphan again. Can you believe that? »

« Yes, my Lord. »

Martha looks as if she were charmed. Jesus in fact has been the dominator. Tall, upright, and yet lightly bent over Martha who was kneeling, He has spoken slowly, but incisively, as if He wished to transfuse Himself into the perturbed disciple. I have seldom seen Him so powerful, to persuade by means of His word a person listening to Him. But at the end, what light, what smile is on His face! Martha's face mirrors it with a smile and a milder light.

« And now go and rest. With My peace. »

Martha kisses His hands and goes downstairs in better spirits…

237. The Magdalene Is Accompanied by Mary among the Disciples.

30th July 1945.

« I think we are going to have a storm today, Master. Can You see those leaden clouds advancing from behind the Hermon? And look how the lake is ruffling ! And You can feel the gusts of the north wind alternating with wide warm Sirocco blasts. Whirlwinds: a sure sign of a storm. »

« In how long, Simon? »

« Before the first hour is over. See how the fishermen are hurrying back. They can hear the lake grumble and growl. It will soon be leaden as well, then it will become pitch-black and finally it will burst forth in all its fury. »

« But it looks so calm! » remarks Thomas incredulously.

« You are familiar with gold, and I with water. It will be as I say. It is not even a sudden storm. It is brewing with clear signs. The surface of the water is calm, only tiny ripples, as if it were nothing. But if you were out in a boat! You would hear thousands of knuckles striking the keel and shaking the boat in a strange way. The water is already bubbling underneath. Just wait for the sign from the sky and then you will see!… Let the north wind become knotted with Sirocco! And then!… Ehi! women! Take in what you have been hanging out and shelter your domestic animals. In a short while it will be raining in buckets. »

In fact the sky is becoming more and more greenish, with slateveins caused by the continuous flowing of clouds that seem to be erupted by great Hermon. They drive dawn back to where it came from, as if the hours were falling back towards night instead of proceeding towards midday. Only a sunbeam persists in shining through the barrier of dark clouds tinging the top of a hill southwest of Capernaum with an unreal yellow-green hue. The lake has changed from sky-blue to purple-blue and the foam of the first small broken waves looks oddly white against the dark water. There are no boats on the lake now. Fishermen hasten to beach their boats, to put away nets, baskets, sails and oars, while

peasants make haste to get their harvest in, they ensure that awnings are properly fastened to poles and they close the cattle in their stables; women rush to the well before the rain starts, or they gather together the children, who got up early, and push them into the houses, like brooding-hens aware of an oncoming hail-storm.

« Simon, come with Me. Call also Martha's servant and My brother James. Get a large piece of canvas. A strong large piece. There are two women on the road and we must go and meet them. »

Peter looks at Him curiously, but he obeys without wasting any time. On the way, while they are running southwards through the village, Simon asks: « But who are they? »

« My Mother and Mary of Magdala. »

The shock is such that Peter stops for a moment as if he were nailed to the ground and he exclaims: « Your Mother and Mary of Magdala?!!! Together?!!! » He then resumes running, as neither Jesus nor James nor the servant have stopped. But he repeats: « Your Mother and Mary of Magdala! Together!… Since when? »

« Since she is Mary of Jesus. Be quick, Simon, it is beginning to rain… »

Peter strives to keep up with his companions, who are taller and faster then he is. Clouds of dust now rise from the parched road, blown by a wind, which is becoming stronger and stronger every moment, ruffling the lake and raising breakers, which pound roaring on the shore. When it is possible to see the lake it looks like a huge cauldron boiling furiously. Waves three or four feet high rise in all directions, clashing, merging, swelling, then parting in opposite directions, seeking other waves to plunge into: a foaming duel of wave crests, of swelling masses of water, of roaring billows reaching the shore and lashing the houses closest to it. When houses conceal the view of the lake, the latter discloses its presence with a roar exceding the howl of the wind that bends trees tearing off foliage and fruit: a deafening roar exceeding the rumble of prolonged threatening thunders, preceded by flashes of lightning, which are becoming more and more frequent and powerful.

« I wonder how frightened those women must be » mumbles Peter panting.

« Not My Mother. I do not know about the other. But if we do not hurry they will certainly get drenched. »

They have left Capernaum about one hundred yards behind, proceeding through clouds of dust and very heavy rain, a real downpour, which furrows obliquely the gloomy air so violently that the rain is pulverised and thus blinds them and takes away their breath, when they see two women running and seeking shelter under a large tree.

« There they are. Let us run! »

Although Peter's love for Mary lends wings to his feet, short- legged

as he is and not a very good runner, he arrives when Jesus and James have already covered the two women with a large piece of a sail.

« We cannot stop here. There is the danger of thunderbolts and in a short while the road will be a torrent. Let us go, Master. At least as far as the nearest house » says Peter out of breath.

They set out with the women in the middle of them, holding the canvas over their heads and backs. The first word that Jesus addresses to Mary, who is still wearing the dress she had on the evening of the banquet in Simon's house, with a mantle of the Blessed Virgin on her shoulders, is: « Are you afraid, Mary? »

Mary Magdalene, whose head is lowered under her veil and whose hair has become thoroughly dishevelled running in the rain, lowers her head even further, blushes and whispers: « No, my Lord. »

Also Our Lady has lost some hairpins and She looks like a little girl with her plaits hanging down her back. She smiles at Her Son Who is beside Her and speaks to Him through that smile.

« You are soaking, Mary » says James of Alphaeus touching Our Lady's veil and mantle.

« It does not matter. We are not getting wet now. Is that right, Mary? He has rescued us also from the rain » says Mary kindly to the Magdalene, of whose painful embarrassment She is fully aware. Mary nods assent.

« Your sister will be happy to see you. She is at Capernaum. She was looking for you » says Jesus.

Mary looks up for a moment and stares at Jesus with her beautiful eyes, while Jesus speaks to her with the simplicity He uses with the other women disciples. But she does not say anything. She is stifled by too many emotions.

Jesus concludes: « I am glad I kept her. I will let you go after I have blessed you. »

His last words are lost in the sharp crash of a nearby thunderbolt. The Magdalene is fear-struck for a moment. She covers her face with her hands, bends her head bursting into tears.

« Don't be afraid! » says Peter encouraging her. « It is over now. You must never be afraid when you are with Jesus. »

Also James, who is beside the Magdalene, says to her: « Do not weep. The houses are not far now. »

« I am not crying for fear… I am weeping because He said to me that He will bless me… I… I… » but she can say no more.

The Blessed Virgin intervenes in order to calm her saying: « Mary, you have already overcome your storm. Think no more about it. Now everything is serene and peaceful. Is that right, My Son? »

« Yes, Mother. It is all very true. Before long the sun will be shinning,

and everything will look more beautiful, cleaner and fresher than yesterday. It will be the same with you, Mary. »

And His Blessed Mother, pressing the Magdalene's hand continues: « I shall repeat your words to Martha. I am glad that I can see her at once and tell her how her Mary is full of good will. »

Peter, paddling in the watery mud and bearing patiently with the deluge, comes out from under the canvas and runs towards a house to ask for shelter.

« No, Simon » says Jesus. « We all prefer to go home. Is that right? »

Everybody agrees and Peter goes back under the piece of sail.

Capernaum is like a desert. Wind, rain, thunder and lightning prevail there, together with hailstones, which are now striking houses and terraces sounding and bouncing. The lake is dreadfully impressive. The waves lash the houses near it, because the little beach has disappeared and the boats fastened near the houses seem to have sunk so full they are of water, which breakers keep pouring into them, while the water already in them overflows.

They run into the kitchen garden, which has become a huge puddle with rubbish floating on the muddy water, and then enter the kitchen where they are all gathered.

Martha gives a scream when she sees her sister held by the hand by Mary. She clasps her neck, but does not realise how wet she is, she kisses her and calls her: « Miri, Miri, my darling! » Perhaps that is the pet-name by which they called the Magdalene when she was a little girl.

Mary is weeping, with her head resting on her sister's shoulder, and covers Martha's dark dress with her thick golden hair, the only shining thing in the dark kitchen where a little fire of brushwood gives some light, while a little lamp hardly sheds any.

The apostles are dumbfounded and so are the landlord and his wife, who look into the kitchen upon hearing Martha's scream, and after a moment of understandable curiosity they withdraw discreetly.

When her effusions of loves have somewhat calmed down, Martha notices Jesus and Mary and realises that it is strange that they should be all together. She thus asks her sister, Our Lady and Jesus - I could not say whom she asks more insistently -: « But… how is it that you are all together? »

« The storm, Martha, was approaching. I went with Simon, James and your servant to meet the two pilgrims. »

Martha is so shocked that she does not consider the fact that Jesus was so certain in going to meet them and does not ask: « But… did You know? ». The question, however, is asked by Thomas, who gets no reply because Martha says to her sister: « But why were you with Mary? »

The Magdalene lowers her head.

Our Lady comes to her rescue taking her by the hand and saying: « She came to Me as a pilgrim goes to a place where she can be told which road to take to reach her destination. And she said to Me: "Teach me what I must do to belong to Jesus". And since she is animated by thorough good will, she understood that wisdom at once! And I found that she was ready to be taken by the hand and led to You, My Son, and to you, good Martha, and to you, brotherdisciples, and say to you: "Here is Your disciple and your sister, who will give but supernatural joys to her Lord and to her brothers". I ask you to believe Me and to love her as Jesus and I love her. »

The apostles then gather round her greeting their new sister. There is, of course, a certain amount of curiosity… But how could that be avoided?! After all… they are still men…

It is Peter's common sense that says: « That's all very well. You have assured her assistance and holy friendship. But we ought to consider that our Mother and sister are drenched to the skin… We are soaking, as well, to tell you the truth… But they are in a worse situation. Their hair is dripping water like willow trees after a storm and their clothes are wet and muddy. Let us light a fire, and get dresses for them and prepare some warm food… »

Everybody becomes busy: Martha takes the two drenched travellers into the room, the fire is kindled and the wet garments, veils and mantles are hung in front of it. I do not know what arrangements they are making in the room… I see that Martha, who has found once again her energy of a very good housekeeper, comes and goes solicitously, carrying basins and hot water, cups of hot milk, garments lent by the landlady, to assist the two Maries…

238. The Parable of the Fishermen.

31st July 1945.

They are all gathered in the large room upstairs. The violent storm has turned into unceasing rain, which at times becomes a drizzle and almost stops and then suddenly changes to a downpour. The lake is certainly not blue today, it is yellowish with streaks of foam when the wind blows or it rains heavily. The hills are all very wet, and tree branches are still bent, thoroughly soaked. A few branches, broken by the wind, are hanging loose and many leaves torn off by hail stones are carried away by little streams everywhere: yellowish water which pours leaves, stones, and earth from the hillsides into the lake. The light is dim, greenish.

In the room there are the Blessed Virgin Mary, Martha and the Magdalene, sitting near a window overlooking the hills, and there are also two women, whom I do not know. But I am under the impression

that they are already known to Jesus, Mary and the apostles, as they are apparently at ease. They certainly are more relaxed than the Magdalene is: she is sitting still, with her head lowered, between the Virgin Mary and Martha. They are now wearing their clothes, which have been dried by the fireplace and have been brushed to remove mud stains. No, I am wrong. The Blessed Virgin has put on Her dark blue woollen dress. But the Magdalene has borrowed a dress, which, tall and buxom as she is, is too short and tight for her and she endeavours to make up for the deficiency by enveloping herself in her sister's mantle. She has gathered her hair into two thick plaits, which she has somehow managed to tie in a knot on the nape of her neck, because it takes more than a few hairpins picked up there and then, to support the weight of her hair. In fact I have always noticed that the Magdalene, in addition to hairpins, uses a thin straw-coloured ribbon, which looks like a fine diadema and blends with her golden hair.

Jesus, the apostles and the landlord are on the other side of the room, some are sitting on stools, some on the window-sills. Martha's servant is not there. Peter and the other fishermen are watching the weather and making forecasts for the following day. Jesus listens or replies to this one and that one.

« If I had known about this, I would have told my mother to come. It is only fair that the woman should feel at home with her companions » says James of Zebedee casting sidelong glances at the women.

« Eh! If we had known!… But why didn't mother come with Mary? » Thaddeus asks his brother James.

« I don't know. I would like to know myself. »

« Is she perhaps not feeling well? »

« Mary would have told us. »

« I will ask Her » and Thaddeus goes towards the women.

I can hear Mary's clear voice reply: « She is well. But I did not want her to overwork herself in this heat. We ran away like two little girls, did we not, Mary? Mary came late in the evening, when it was dark and we left at dawn. I only said to Alphaeus: » « Here is the key. I shall be back soon. Tell Mary". And I came away. »

« We shall go back together, Mother. As soon as the weather is settled and Mary has a dress, we shall all go together through Galilee and we shall accompany our sisters to the safest road. So Porphirea, Susanna, and your wives and daughters, Philip and Bartholomew, will meet them. » His expression: « Will meet them », instead of saying: « will meet Mary » is really exquisite. And it is also a strong one. It demolishes every prejudice and mental reservation of the apostles concerning the Magdalene. His words impose her, overcoming their reluctance, her shame, everything.

Martha's face shines with joy, Mary Magdalene blushes and her countenance is imploring, grateful, upset; what can I say?… The Most Holy Mother smiles kindly.

« Where shall we go first, Master? »

« To Bethsaida. Afterwards we shall go to Nazareth via Magdala, Tiberias and Cana. From Nazareth we shall proceed to Bethlehem in Galilee via Japhia and Shimron and then to Sicaminon and Caesarea… » Jesus is interrupted by an outburst of weeping of the Magdalene. He raises His head, looks at her and then continues as nothing had happened: « At Caesarea you will find your wagon. That is the instruction I gave the servant and you will go to Bethany. We shall meet later, at the Feast of the Tabernacles. »

Mary Magdalene collects herself at once, she does not reply to her sister's questions, but she goes out of the room and probably withdraws to the kitchen for a little while.

« Jesus, Mary suffers on hearing that she has to come to certain towns. We must understand her… I am saying this more for the disciples than for You » remarks Martha humbly and worriedly.

« That is true, Martha. But it must be so. If she does not face the world at once and does not overcome public opinion, which is a dreadful torturer, her heroic conversion will be paralysed. She must do that at once and in our company. »

« While she is with us no one will say anything to her. I can assure you, Martha, also on behalf of all my companions » promises Peter.

« Of course! We shall treat her as a sister. That is what Mary said she is and that is what she will be for us » confirms Thaddeus.

« After all!… We are all sinners and the world did not spare us either. So we can understand her struggle » says the Zealot.

« I understand her more than anyone else. It is very meritorious to live where we sinned. People know who we are!… It is a torture. But it is justice and glory to resist there. Precisely because the power of God is manifest in us, we spur others to turn, without even uttering words » says Matthew.

« You can see, Martha, that your sister is understood and loved by everybody. And she will be loved and understood more and more. She will be a reference mark for so many guilty and fearful souls. She is a great strength also for good people. Because after shaking off the last fetters of her humanity Mary will be a fire burning with love. She has only given a different course to the exuberance of her feelings. She has raised her powerful faculty to love to a supernatural level. And she will work wonders there. I can assure you. She is still upset now. But you will see her become calmer and stronger in her new life as days go by. In Simon's house I said: "She is pardoned much because she loves much". I now solemnly tell you that she will be forgiven everything, because she will love her God with all her strength, her soul, her thought, her

blood, her flesh, to the extent of holocaust. »

« She is lucky to deserve such words! I wish I deserved them, too » sighs Andrew.

« You? But you deserve them already! Come here, my fisherman. I want to tell you a parable that seems to have been thought up just for you. »

« Just a moment, Master. I am going to call Mary. She is so anxious to become acquainted with Your doctrine!… »

While Martha goes out the others arrange their seats so as to form a semicircle round Jesus. The two sisters come back and sit once again near the Blessed Virgin.

Jesus begins to speak: « Some fishermen took to the open sea and cast their net and after due time they hauled it on board. They were doing their work with considerable difficulty according to the instructions of a master, who had entrusted them with the task of supplying his town with choice fish, and had said to them: "Do not bother to bring ashore unwholesome or inferior quality fish. Throw them back into the sea. Other fishermen will catch them and as they work for another master, they will take them to his town, because they consume there what is harmful and thus makes the town of my enemy more and more horrible. Nothing unhealthy is to enter my beautiful, bright, holy town".

Thus, after hauling the net on board the fishermen began their selection work. It was a good catch and the fish differed in appearance, size and colour. Some looked beautiful but their flesh was full of bones and tasted unpleasant; their bellies were full of mud, worms and rotten seaweed, which accentuated the bad taste of the fish. Others instead were ugly looking, like the sinister faces of criminals or resembled nightmare monsters, but the fishermen knew that their flesh was exquisite. Others were so insignificant that no one paid any attention to them. The fishermen continued their work until the baskets were all full of choice fish and only cheap fish were left in the net. "That is enough. The baskets are full. Let us throw the rest into the sea" said many of the fishermen.

But one of them, who had spoken very little, whilst the others had either exalted or derided every fish they happened to handle, went on searching in the net and among the cheap fish he found two or three that he placed on top of the baskets. "What are you doing?" the others asked him. "The baskets are full of beautiful fish. You are now spoiling them by placing that poor fish on top of them. You seem to consider them as the most beautiful of the lot". "Leave me alone. I know this kind of fish and I know how delicious it is".

That is the parable, which ends with the blessing of the master for the patient, skilful, silent fisherman who was able to select the

best fish in the great mass of them. Listen now to its application.

The master of the beautiful, bright holy town is the Lord. The city is the Kingdom of Heaven. The fishermen: My disciples. The fish of the sea: mankind, where every kind of people are present. The good fish: the saints.

The master of the dreadful town is Satan. The horrible town: Hell. His fishermen: the world, flesh, wicked passions embodied in Satan's servants, both spiritual, that is demons, and human, that is men, who corrupt their fellow men. The bad fish: mankind unworthy of the Kingdom of Heaven: damned souls.

Among the fishermen of souls for the City of God there will always be those who emulate the skill of the patient fisherman, who perseveres in his search just in those strata of mankind where his less patient companions pick only what appears to be good at first sight. And unfortunately there will be also some fishermen, who, being too absent-minded and talkative - attention and silence are required for the selection work in order to hear the voices of souls and supernatural indications - will not see the good fish and will lose them. And there will be some who through excessive intolerance will reject souls because their exterior aspect is not perfect, whilst they are excellent with regard to the rest.

What does it matter, if one of the fish you catch for Me shows signs of past struggles and mutilations due to many causes, if they do not injure his spirit? What does it matter to you, if one of them was wounded in freeing himself from the Enemy and presents himself with such wounds, if his interior clearly shows his will to belong to God? Tried souls are reliable souls. More reliable than those souls that are like children protected by swaddling clothes, cradles and mothers, and sleep peacefully after being fed, or smile happily, but who later on in life, when they become of age and can reason and have to face the vicissitudes of life, may be the cause of unpleasant surprises because of their moral deviations.

I wish to remind you of the parable of the prodigal son. And you will hear many more because I will always endeavour to teach you right judgement in examining consciences and in selecting the best method to guide consciences, which are individual and therefore each has its own special way of feeling and reacting to temptations and to your teaching. Do not think that it is easy to select souls. Far from it! It takes a spiritual eye shining with divine light and it takes an intellect infused with divine Wisdom, and possession of virtues in heroic degree, first of all charity. It is necessary to be able to concentrate on meditation because each soul is an obscure text to be read and meditated. And continuous union with God is required, forgetting all selfish interests. One must live for souls and for God, and be able to overcome prejudices, resentments, aversion. It is necessary to be as kind as a father and as hard as a

warrior. Kind to give advice and to encourage. Hard to be able to say: "That is not allowed and you shall not do it". Or: "It is right to do that and you shall do it". Because - and you must consider this carefully - many souls will be thrown into the ponds of hell. But not only the souls of sinners. There will be also the souls of evangelical fishermen: of those who will have failed in their ministry, contributing thus to the loss of many souls.

The day will come, the last day of the earth, the first of the completed and eternal Jerusalem, when the angels, like the fishermen of the parable, will separate the just from the wicked and at the inexorable command of the Judge, the good will pass into Heaven and the wicked into the eternal fire. And then the truth will be made known concerning the fishermen and the fish, hypocrisy will collapse and the people of God will appear as they are, with their leaders and those saved by the leaders. We shall then see that many, who were outwardly insignificant and ill-treated, are the brightest ones in Heaven, and that the quiet patient fishermen are the ones who have done most and now shine with as many gems as the souls they saved.

I have told you the parable and explained it. »

« And my brother?!… Oh! but… » Peter looks at him… and then at the Magdalene…

« No, Simon. I have no merit there. It was all the Master's work » says Andrew frankly.

« So, are the other fishermen, Satan's I mean, going to get the remnants? » asks Philip.

« They endeavour to take the best, the souls capable of the greatest prodigy of Grace, and they make use of the same men to do so, beside their own temptations. There are so many in the world who for a mess of pottage sell their birthright! »

« Master, the other day You said that there are many who allow themselves to be seduced by the allurements of the world. Are they those who fish for Satan? » asks James of Alphaeus.

« Yes, My brother. In that parable man allowed himself to be seduced by much money, which could give him much pleasure, losing thus every right to the Treasury of the Kingdom. But I solemnly tell you that out of one hundred men only one third can resist the temptation of gold or other enticements, and of that third only half can do it heroically. The world is dying suffocated because it voluntarily overburdens itself with the ties of sin. It is better to be devoid of everything rather than possess mean and illusive riches. Endeavour to imitate wise jewellers, who, when they are informed that a very rare pearl has been found, do not bother to keep so many small jewels in their safes, but they get rid of everything to buy the wonderful pearl. »

« Why then do You say that there is a difference in the missions

with which You entrust those who follow You, and You say that we have to consider those missions as a gift of God? Should we not forgo them as well, because they are but crumbs compared to the Kingdom of Heaven » says Bartholomew.

« Not crumbs: they are means. They would be crumbs, or better still, they would be dirty straw, if they became man's aim in life. Those who busy themselves to obtain a position with a human profit, turn that position, even if it is a holy one, into dirty straw. You must instead accept it obediently, as a joyful duty and a complete holocaust, and you will turn it into a very rare pearl. A mission is a holocaust if fulfilled unreservedly, it is martyrdom and a glory. It drips tears, perspiration, blood, but forms a crown of eternal royalty. »

« You can really answer all questions! »

« Have you understood? Do you understand what I say by means of comparisons taken from every day life, but enlightened by a supernatural light that explains their eternal meaning? »

« Yes, Master, we do. »

« Remember then the method to teach crowds. Because that is one of the secrets of scribes and rabbis: to remember. I solemnly tell you that each of you, imbued with the wisdom that ensures the possession of the Kingdom of Heaven, is like the father of a family who takes from his treasury what is necessary for his family, making use of old and new things, for one only purpose, which is the welfare of his children. It is no longer raining. Let us leave the women in peace and go to old Tobit who is about to open his spiritual eyes on the dawn of next life. Peace to you, women. »

239. Marjiam Teaches Mary Magdalene the « Our Father ».

1st August 1945.

The sky is once again clear over the Sea of Galilee. Now that the rain has washed away the dust, everything seems more beautiful than before the storm. The air is perfectly clear and looking at the sky you get the impression that it is higher up and lighter… a transparent veil stretched between the earth and the splendour of Paradise. The lake reflects the deep blue of the sky and its turquoise water is a quiet charming sight.

It is dawning. Jesus with His Mother, Martha and Mary Magdalene embarks in Peter's boat. In addition to Peter and Andrew, also the Zealot, Philip and Bartholomew are with Him. Matthew, Thomas, Jesus' cousins, the Iscariot are instead in the other boat with James and John. They are sailing towards Bethsaida, a short voyage favoured by a fair wind. The crossing lasts only a few minutes.

When they are about to arrive, Jesus says to Bartholomew and to

his inseparable companion Philip: « You will go and inform your womenfolk. I am coming to your houses today. » And He stares at them meaningfully.

« We will, Master. Are You not granting me or Philip the pleasure of having You as our guest? »

« We are staying only until sunset and I do not wish to deprive Simon Peter of the joy of Marjiam's company. »

The boat rubs against the shore and stops. They disembark and Philip and Bartholomew part from their companions to go to the village.

« Where are those two going? » Peter asks the Master Who was the first to disembark and is now beside him.

« To inform their women. »

« Then, I will go and tell Porphirea, too. »

« It is not necessary. Porphirea is so kind that it is not necessary to prepare her in any way. Her heart can give but kindness. »

Peter's face shines with joy on hearing the praise of his wife and does not say anything else.

In the meantime also the women have disembarked, on a plank placed for them as a wharf, and they go towards Simon's house.

Marjiam, who is taking his sheep out to browse on the fresh grass on the lower hillsides of Bethsaida, is the first to see them and he announces them with a cry of joy running to embrace Jesus, Who has bent to kiss him. He then goes to Peter. Also Porphirea, whose hands are covered with flour, arrives and bows, greeting them.

« Peace to you, Porphirea. You were not expecting us so soon, were you? But I was anxious to bring My Mother to you, together with two women disciples, as well as My blessing. My Mother was anxious to see the boy again. There he is in Her arms. And the women disciples wanted to meet you… this is Simon's wife: the good and silent disciple, more active in her obedience than many others. And these are Martha and Mary from Bethany. Two sisters. Love one another. »

« Those You bring to me are dearer to me than my own blood, Master. Come. My house is more beautiful every time You set foot in it. »

Mary approaches Porphirea smiling and embraces her saying: « I see that you are really a loving mother. The boy is already much better and is happy. Thank you. »

« Oh! Woman blessed above every other woman! I know that it was because of You that I had the joy of being called mother. And You must know that I will never grieve You by not living up to that privilege. Come in, with the sisters… »

Marjiam looks at the Magdalene curiously. Many thoughts must be crossing his mind. At last he says: « But… you were not at

Bethany… »

« No, I was not. But I shall always be there from now on » says the Magdalene blushing and smiling faintly. She caresses the boy saying: « Even if we have just met, do you love me? »

« Yes, because you are good. You have wept, have you not? That is why you are good. And your name is Mary, isn't it? Also my mother's name was Mary and she was good. Every woman, whose name is Mary, is good. But » he concludes, not to offend Porphirea and Martha, « but also many of those with other names are good. What was your mother's name? »

« Eucheria… and she was so good » and two large tears stream down the face of Mary of Magdala.

« Are you weeping because she is dead? » asks the boy, and he caresses her beautiful hands, which she has crossed on her dark dress, which is obviously one of Martha's adapted for her, because its hem has been let down. And he adds: « You must not weep. You know, we are not alone. Our mothers are always near us. Jesus says so. And they are like guardian angels. Jesus says that also. And if we are good, they will come and meet us when we die and we go up to God in our mother's arms. It is true, you know? He said so! »

Mary Magdala clasps her little consoler in her arms and kisses him saying: « Then pray that I may become good. »

« But are you not already? Only those who are good go with Jesus… And if one is not completely good, one becomes good, in order to become a disciple of Jesus. Because you cannot teach what you do not know. We cannot say: "Forgive" if we do not forgive first. Neither can we say: "You must love your neighbour" if we do not love him first. Do you know Jesus' prayer? »

« No, I don't. »

« Of course, you have been with Him only a short time. It is so beautiful, you know? It mentions all these things. Listen how beautiful it is. » And Marjiam slowly says the « Our Father » with deep sentiment and faith.

« How well you know it! » says Mary of Magdala admiringly.

« My mother taught me it by night and Jesus' Mother by day. If you wish so, I will teach you it. Do you wish to come with me? The sheep are bleating. They are hungry. I am going to take them to the pasture. Come with me. I will teach you how to pray and you will become thoroughly good » and he takes her by the hand.

« But I do not know whether the Master wants… »

« Go, by all means, Mary. You have an innocent child as a friend and some little lambs… You may go, tranquilly… »

Mary of Magdala goes out with the boy and she can be seen going away preceded by the three sheep. Jesus is looking on… and the others, too.

« My poor sister! » exclaims Martha.

« Do not pity her. She is a flower straightening its stem after a storm. Can you hear her?… She is laughing… Innocence is always a consolation. »

240. Jesus Is the Powerful Lover. The Parable of the Lost Drachma.

2nd August 1945.

The boat is sailing along the coast from Capernaum to Magdala.

Mary of Magdala is for the first time in her wonted posture of a convert: she is sat on the bottom boards at the feet of Jesus, Who, instead, is sitting sternly on a little bench. The Magdalene's face is today quite different from what it looked like yesterday; it is not yet the radiant countenance of the Magdalene running to meet her Jesus every time He goes to Bethany, but it is already free from fear and terror and her eyes, which were as downcast as they had previously been impudent, are now serious but confident, and in her dignified gravity there is now and again a sparkle of delight when she listens to Jesus speaking to the apostles or to His Mother and Martha.

They are talking of the kindness of Porphirea, who is so simple and loving, of the hearty reception of Salome and of Bartholomew's and Philip's women. Philip says: « If my daughters were not still so young, and their mother were not so adverse to letting them wander about, they would follow You, too, Master. »

« Let their souls follow Me. That is also holy love. Philip, listen. Your elder daughter is about to be betrothed, is she not? »

« Yes, Master. A worthy wedding and a very good groom. Is that right, Bartholomew? »

« Yes, that is true. I can guarantee that because I know the family. I could not accept to be the man proposing the deal, but I would have done it willingly, knowing for certain that a holy family was being formed, had I not been obliged to be near the Master. »

« But the girl asked Me to tell you to forget about it. »

« Does she not like the groom? She is wrong. Young people are mad. I hope she will change her mind. There is no reason to refuse a very good match. Unless… No, it's not possible! » says Philip.

« Unless what? Go on, Philip » urges Jesus.

« Unless she loves another man. But it is not possible! She is never out of the house and at home she leads a sequestered way of life. It is not possible! »

« Philip, there are lovers who enter also the most private of houses; who know how to speak to those they love notwithstanding all the barriers and close watching; those who overcome every objection of widowhood, or youth, although well protected,

or… other kinds of obstacles, and take the girls or women they want. And there are also lovers who cannot be refused. Because they are overbearing in their desire, and alluring in overcoming every resistance, even the demon's. Your daughter loves one of those. And the most powerful one. »

« But who? One of Herod's court? »

« That is not powerful! »

« One… one of the Proconsul's household, a Roman patrician? I will never allow that. The pure blood of Israel will have no contact with impure blood. Even if I should kill my daughter. Don't smile, Master. I am in agony! »

« Because you are like a restive horse. You see shadows where there is nothing but light. Do not be upset. Also the Proconsul is but a servant and his patrician friends are servants and Caesar is a servant. »

« You must be joking, Master! You wanted to frighten me. There is no one greater than Caesar and there is no greater master than he is. »

« I am, Philip. »

« You? You want to marry my daughter?! »

« No. Her soul. I am the lover who enters the most secluded houses and hearts locked with seven keys. It is I Who know how to speak notwithstanding barriers and close watching. It is I Who demolish obstacles and take what I want to take: pure people and sinners, virgins and widowers, people free from vices and slaves of vices. And I give everyone a new, unique, regenerated, beatified, eternally young soul. My wedding. And no one can refuse to give Me My kind preys: no father, no mother, no children, not even Satan. Whether I speak to the soul of a young girl, like your daughter, or to the soul of a sinner immersed in sin and held by Satan with seven chains, that soul will come to Me. And no one or nothing can snatch it from Me. No wealth, power or joy of the world can give the perfect delight that those enjoy who get married to My Poverty, to My Mortification. They are bare of all poor wealth, and clad with all celestial Good. They are cheerful with the serenity of belonging to God, to God alone… They are the masters of the earth and of Heaven. They dominate the former and conquer the latter. »

« But that never happened in our Law! » exclaims Bartholomew.

« Divest yourself of the old man, Nathanael. When I saw you for the first time I greeted you saying that you were a perfect Israelite without guile. But be now of Christ, not of Israel. And be so without deception and without ties. Clothe yourself with this new mentality. Otherwise you will not be able to understand the many beautiful aspects of the redemption that I came to bring to all mankind. »

Philip intervenes saying: « And You say that my daughter has been called by You. And what will she do now? I will certainly not oppose her. But I wish to know, also to help her, in what her call consists… »

« In bringing the lilies of a virginal love into the garden of Christ. There will be so many such virgins in future centuries!… So many! … Scented flowerbeds to counterbalance the sinks of vice. Praying souls counterbalancing blasphemers and atheists. They assist mankind in all its misfortunes and are the joy of God. »

Mary of Magdala moves her lips to ask a question, and in doing so she still blushes, but she looks freer and easier than in past days: « And we… the ruins that You are building up, what shall we become? »

« What your virgin sisters are… »

« Oh! It cannot be! We have trampled on too much mud and… and… it is not possible. »

« Mary, Mary! Jesus never forgives by halves. He told you that He had forgiven you. And so it is. You, and all those who sinned like you and whom My love forgives and weds, will smell sweet, will pray, love, and comfort. As you are aware of evil and capable of curing it wherever it is, your souls are martyrs in the eyes of God. You are therefore as dear as virgins. »

« Martyrs? In what, Master? »

« Against yourselves and recollections of your past and through thirst for love and expiation. »

« Must I believe that?… » The Magdalene looks at everybody in the boat, asking them to confirm her rising hope.

« Ask Simon. I spoke of you and of sinners in general, in a starry night, in your garden. And all your brothers can tell you whether My voice has sung the wonders of Mercy and of conversion for all those who have been redeemed. »

« Also the boy has spoken to me about it, in his angelical voice. I came back from his lesson with a refreshed soul. He made me understand You better than my sister did, so much so that I felt more confident in having to face Magdala. Now, after what You told me, I feel my strength growing. I scandalised the world. But I swear to You, my Lord, that the world looking at me now will understand what Your power is like. »

Jesus lays His hand on her head for a moment, while the Most Holy Virgin smiles at her as only She can smile: heavenly.

There is Magdala, lying on the coast of the lake, with the rising sun in front of it, and mount Arbela behind it, protecting it from winds, and the narrow wild steep rocky valley through which a little torrent flows into the lake. The steep coast extends westwards: a beautiful charming austere sight.

« Master » shouts John from the other boat, « there is the valley of

our retreat… » and his face shines as if the sun were burning within him.

« Yes, our valley. You have recognised it. »

« It is impossible to forget the places where we became acquainted with God » replies John.

« In that case I will always remember this lake. Because it was here that I met You. Do you know, Martha, that one morning I saw the Master here?… »

« Yes, and we nearly all went to the bottom, both you and we. Woman, I can assure you that your oarsmen were not worth a farthing » says Peter, who is manoeuvring to get ashore.

« Neither the oarsmen nor those with them were worth anything… But it was the first time we met, and that is of great worth. Then I saw You upon the mountain, then at Magdala and later at Capernaum… And every time we met, so many chains were broken… But Capernaum was the best place. You freed me there… »

They land where the others have already come off the other boat. They enter the town.

The simple or… malicious curiosity of the Magdala people must be a torture for the Magdalene. But she bears it heroically following the Master Who is walking ahead, among His disciples, while the women are behind them. There is much whispering and irony. All those who formerly feigned to respect Mary, for fear of reprisals, while she was the overbearing mistress of Magdala, now that they see her humble and chaste and realise she has parted for good from her powerful friends, they take the liberty of insulting and reviling her.

Martha, who is suffering as much as she is, asks her: « Do you wish to go home? »

« No, I am not leaving the Master. And I am not inviting Him to my house, until it is purified and every trace of the past has been removed. »

« But you are suffering, sister! »

« I deserved it. » And she must be really suffering. Her flushed face is beaded with sweat not due to the warm weather.

They cross the whole of Magdala going towards the poor quarters, as far as the house where they stopped the last time. The woman is dumbfounded when looking up from her washboard to see who is greeting her, she finds Jesus facing her along with the well known lady of Magdala, who is no longer pompously dressed and adorned with jewels. On the contrary she is wearing a light linen veil, a periwinkle violet dress, which is high-necked and certainly does not belong to her, because it is too tight and has been adapted for her. She is enveloped in a heavy mantle, which must be a torture in that warm weather.

« Will you allow Me to remain in your house and speak to those who are following Me? » That is, to the whole of Magdala, because the whole population has followed the apostolic group.

« Why ask me, my Lord? My house is Yours. » And she busies herself bringing seats and benches for the women and the apostles. When passing near the Magdalene she bows like a slave.

« Peace to you, sister » replies the Magdalene. And the poor woman is so shocked that she drops the bench she was carrying. But she does not say one word. The scene makes me think that Mary of Magdala probably treated her subjects rather haughtily. The poor woman is utterly astonished when she is asked how the children are, where they are, and whether her husband has had good hauls.

« They are well… They are at school or with my mother. The little one is sleeping in his cradle. My husband has had good catches of fish and will bring you the tithes due to you… »

« That is no longer necessary. Use them for the children. Can I see the baby? »

« Come… »

People have crowded the street.

Jesus begins to speak:

« A woman had ten drachmas in her purse. But she made a movement and the purse fell from her breast; it opened and the coins rolled on the floor. She picked them up with the help of her next door neighbours who were with her, and she counted them. They were only nine. The tenth could not be found. As it was almost evening and it was getting dark, the woman lit a lamp, placed it on the floor and she began to sweep the floor with a broom to see whether it had rolled far from the spot where it had fallen. But the drachma could not be found. Her friends left her, as they were tired searching for it. The woman then shifted a heavy chest, a cabinet, and she removed amphoras and pitchers from a niche in the wall. But the drachma could not be found. She then began to crawl on all fours and searched in the sweepings, piled up against the door, in case the drachma had rolled out of the house and become mixed with vegetable refuse. And at last she found the drachma, which was soiled and almost buried under the sweepings. The jubilant woman picked it up, washed it and dried it. It was now more beautiful than beforehand. And she showed it to her neighbours whom she called again at the top of her voice, those who had gone away after helping her in the early search, and she said to them: "Here you are! See? You advised me not to bother any more. But I insisted and I found the lost drachma. Rejoice therefore with me because I have not suffered the loss of one of my treasures".

Also your Master, and His apostles as well, behave like the

woman of the parable. He knows that a movement may cause a treasure to fall. Every soul is a treasure and Satan, who hates God, provokes false movements to make poor souls fall. There are Some who in falling stop near the purse, that is they do not go too far from the Law of God, Who gathers them and protects them by means of His commandments. Some go farther away, that is, they go farther away from God and His Law. Some, finally, roll as far as the sweepings, dirt and mud. And they would end up by burning in the eternal fire, as rubbish is burnt in suitable places. The Master knows and He looks untiringly for lost coins. He looks for them everywhere, with love. They are His treasures. And He never tires and He loathes nothing. He rummages, searches, shifts, sweeps until He finds what He is looking for. And once He has found it, He washes the recovered souls with His forgiveness and calls all His friends: the whole Paradise and all the good people of the earth and says to them: "Rejoice with Me because I have found what was lost and it is now more beautiful than beforehand because My forgiveness has made it new."

I solemnly tell you, there is much rejoicing among the angels of God and the good people of the earth over a repentant sinner. And I solemnly tell you that there is nothing more beautiful than tears of repentance. I solemnly tell you that only demons cannot rejoice over such a conversion, which is a triumph of God. And I tell you that the way a man welcomes the conversion of a sinner is the measure of his own goodness and his union with God.

Peace be with you. »

The crowds understand the lesson and look at the Magdalene, who has come to sit on the threshold holding the baby in her arms, perhaps to strike a posture. The crowds disperse slowly and only the landlady is left with her mother who has just arrived with the children. Benjamin is not there, he is still at school.

241. Knowledge Is not Corruption if it Is Religion.

3rd August 1945.

When the boat moors in the little harbour of Tiberias, many idlers walking near the little pier come to see who has arrived. There are people of all ranks and nationalities. Thus the long many-coloured Jewish tunics, the dark heads and imposing beards of Israelities mix with the short, sleeveless, white woollen garments and the clean shaven short-haired heads of sturdy Romans and with the even scantier garments covering the agile effeminate bodies of Greeks. The latter seem to have absorbed the skilful art of their remote fatherland even in posing, and look like statues of gods descended upon the earth in mortal bodies, enveloped as they are in white tunics, with classic faces adorned

with curly scented hair and arms laden with bracelets, which their affected movements cause to shine.

Many women of pleasure are mingled with the Romans and Greeks, who do not hesitate to show their love affairs in squares and streets, whereas Palestinians refrain from this, although many gaily indulge in free love with ladies of leisure at home. This clearly appears to be the case because courtesans call several Jews familiarly by their names, among them being a Pharisee adorned with ribbons, notwithstanding the fact that the Jews give the women ugly looks.

Jesus moves towards that part of the town where the more elegant people gather together. These people are mainly Romans and Greeks with a few coutiers of Herod's and some rich merchants from the Phoenician coast, presumably from Sidon and Tyre, as they are talking of those towns and emporia and ships. The external porches of the Thermal baths are full of such elegant idle people who kill time discussing petty topics, such as the favourite discobolus or the most agile and smartest athlete in Graeco-Roman wrestling. Or they chatter of fashion and banquets and make appointments for pleasure trips inviting to them the most beautiful courtesans or the perfumed curly-haired ladies who come out from the Thermal baths or other buildings, pouring into this hall-like artistic marmoreal centre of Tiberias.

The passing group is bound to rouse intense curiosity that becomes really morbid when someone recognises Jesus, having seen Him at Caesarea and there is also someone who recognises the Magdalene although she is completely enveloped in her mantle, with her veil lowered over her forehead and cheeks, so that little of her face can be seen, as she is walking with her head bent.

« It's the Nazarene Who cured Valeria's daughter » says a Roman.

« I would love to see a miracle » another Roman replies to him.

« I would like to hear Him speak. They say He is a great philosopher. Shall we ask Him to speak? » asks a Greek.

« Don't interfere, Theodate. His head is in the clouds and He talks accordingly. A tragedian would like Him for a satire » replies another Greek.

« Don't become impatient, Aristobolus. He is apparently descending from the clouds and is discussing sound arguments. See how many lovely young women He has got with Him » exclaims a Roman jokingly.

« But that is Mary of Magdala! » shouts a Greek, who then calls: « Lucius! Cornelius! Titus! Look: Mary is over there! »

« It's not her! Mary like that? Are you drunk? »

« It is Mary, I am telling you. She cannot deceive me, even if she is so disguised. »

Romans and Greeks crowd round the apostolic group, which is

crossing the square adorned with arcades and fountains. Some women join the curious men and it is a woman who goes almost under Mary's face to see her properly and is dumbfounded when she sees that it is Mary.

She asks her: « What are you doing in this guise? » and laughs mockingly.

Mary stops, straightens herself, raises one hand and uncovers her face throwing her veil back. It is Mary of Magdala, the powerful lady against whatever is despicable and mistress of her own feelings, who appears. « It is I, yes » she says in her beautiful voice while her beautiful eyes are flashing. « It is I. And I am revealing myself, so that you may not think that I am ashamed of being with these holy people. »

« Oh! Mary with holy people! Come away. Do not degrade yourself! » exclaims the woman.

« I have been degraded up till now. But not now. »

« Are you mad? Or is it a whim.? » she replies.

A Roman winking and joking says: « Come with me. I am more handsome and merrier than that moustached hired mourner who mortifies life and makes a funeral of it. Life is beautiful! A triumph. A joyful orgy! Come. I will excell everybody in making you happy » and the swarthy young man whose foxlike face is rather handsome, endeavours to touch her.

« Go away! Don't touch me. You spoke the truth: the life you lead is an orgy. And a most shameful one. I loathe it. »

« Oh! But up till recently it was your kind of life » replies the Greek.

« She is playing the virgin now! » sneers a Herodian.

« You will ruin those holy people! The Nazarene will lose His halo with you. Come with us » insists a Roman.

« You had better come with me and follow Him. Stop being animals and become at least men. »

A chorus of laughter and mockery is their reply.

Only an elderly Roman says: « Respect the woman. She is free to do what she likes. I will defend her. »

« Listen to the demagogue! Did last night's wine upset you? » asks a young man.

« No. He is hypochondriac because his back is aching » replies another.

« Go to the Nazarene and ask Him to scratch it for you. »

« I will go and ask Him to scratch off the filth I picked up being with you » replies the elder.

« Oh! Crispus has become corrupt at the age of sixty » say many laughing, while they form a circle round him.

But the man named Crispus is not worried at being scorned and he begins to walk behind the Magdalene and they reach Jesus Who

has stopped in the shade of a beautiful building which occupies two sides of the square with porticoes and benches.

And Jesus has already come to grips with a scribe who reproaches Him for being in Tiberias with such company.

« And why are you here? So far with regard to Tiberias. And I tell you also that there are souls to be saved in Tiberias as well, nay, more here than anywhere else » replies Jesus.

« They cannot be saved: they are Gentiles, heathens, sinners. »

« I came for sinners. To make the True God known to everybody. To everybody. I came also for you. »

« I do not need masters or redeemers. I am pure and learned. »

« I wish you were learned enough to understand your own condition! »

« And You to know how prejudicial is to You the company of a prostitute. »

« I forgive you also on her behalf. In her humility she has cancelled her sin. You have doubled yours in your pride. »

« I have no sins. »

« You have the capital one. You are loveless. »

The scribe says: « Raca! » and goes away.

« It is my fault, Master! » says the Magdalene. And seeing the pale face on the Blessed Virgin she moans: « Forgive me. I am causing Your Son to be insulted. I will withdraw… »

« No. You shall stay where you are. I want it » says Jesus in an incisive voice. His eyes flash with majesty and there is such authority emanating from His whole person that it is almost impossible to look at Him! He then adds more kindly: « Stay where you are. If anyone cannot bear being near you, let him go away, by himself. »

And Jesus resumes walking towards the western part of the town.

« Master! » calls the stout elderly Roman who defended the Magdalene.

Jesus turns round.

« They call You Master, and I call You thus as well. I was anxious to hear You speak. I am part philosopher and part worldly sinner. But perhaps You could make an honest person of me. »

Jesus stares at him saying: « I am leaving the town where base human animality reigns and mockery is sovereign. » And He resumes walking.

The man follows Him with difficulty and perspiring, because Jesus is striding and he is bulky and rather old and weighed down by vices. Peter looks back and tells Jesus.

« Let him walk. Do not bother about him. »

Shortly afterwards the Iscariot says: « But that man is following us. It is not right! »

« Why? Out of pity or is there another reason? »

« Pity him? No. Because farther back there is the scribe and other Jews following us. »

« Leave them alone. It would have been better if you had pitied him instead of pitying yourself. »

« You, Master. »

« No: yourself, Judas. Be frank in acknowledging your feelings and confessing them. »

« I really pity the elder as well. It is difficult, You know, to keep up with You! » says Peter perspiring.

« It is always difficult to follow Perfection, Simon. »

The man follows them without tiring, endeavouring to stay near the women, to whom, however, he does not speak.

The Magdalene is weeping silently under her veil.

« Do not weep, Mary » says Our Lady comforting her and taking her by the hand. « Later the world will respect you. The first days are the most painful ones. »

« Oh! It is not for my own sake! It is because of Him! I would never forgive myself if I were the cause of trouble for Him. Did You hear what the scribe said? I am prejudicial to Him. »

« Poor daughter! Do you not know that such words have been hissing around Him like so many snakes long before you thought of coming to Him? Simon told Me that they accused Him of that even last year, because He cured a woman leper, once a sinner, whom He saw only when He worked the miracle and never again, and was older than I am, and I am His Mother. Do you not know that He had to come away from the Clear Water because a poor sister of yours had gone there to be redeemed? How can they accuse Him if He is without sin? By telling lies. And where do they find them? In His mission among men. His good deed is used as evidence of His sin. Whatever My Son should do, they would always consider it a sin. If He retired to a hermitage, He would be guilty of neglecting the people of God. If He comes among the people, He is guilty of doing that. He is always guilty, as far as they are concerned. »

« Then, they are hatefully wicked! »

« No. They are stubbornly blind to the Light. My Jesus is the Eternal Misunderstood One. And He will be more and more so. »

« And does that not grieve You? You seem so serene to me. »

« Be quiet. I feel as if My heart were wrapped in burning thorns. And every time I breathe I am pierced by them. But He must not know! I strive to appear serene, in order to support Him by My serenity. If His Mother does not console Him, where is My Jesus going to find comfort? On which breast can He recline His head without being wounded or calumniated by doing so? It is only fair that I, forgetting the thorns that rend My heart and the tears that I drink in My hours of solitude, should lay a soft loving mantle, a

smile, at any cost, to leave Him quieter… quieter, until… until the wave of hatred will be such that nothing will be of any avail. Not even the love of His Mother… » Two tears stream down Mary's pale face.

The two sisters, deeply moved, look at Her. « But we are here and we love Him. Then the apostles… » says Martha to comfort Her.

« Yes, you are here. And He has the apostles… They are still much inferior to their task… And My grief is deeper because I know that He is aware of everything… »

« So He knows that I am willing to obey, even to the extent of immolating myself, if necessary? » asks the Magdalene.

« He does. You are a great joy for Him on His hard way. »

« Oh! Mother! » and the Magdalene takes Mary's hand and kisses it effusively.

Tiberias ends at the vegetable gardens of the suburbs. Beyond them there is the dusty road that leads to Cana; on one side there are orchards, on the other meadows and fields parched by the summer sun.

Jesus proceeds into an orchard to rest in the shade of thick trees. The women reach Him first and then the panting Roman arrives; he is utterly exhausted. He remains a little aside, does not speak, but watches.

« Let us take some food while we are resting » says Jesus. « There is a well over there and a peasant near it. Go and ask him to let us have some water. »

John and Thaddeus go. They come back with a pitcher dripping water, followed by the peasant who offers some wonderful figs.

« May God reward you with good health and a rich harvest. »

« May God protect You. You are the Master, are You not? »

« I am. »

« Will You be speaking here? »

« There is no one here who wants Me to speak. »

« I do, Master. I wish it more that I wish water which is so good when one is thirsty » shouts the Roman.

« Are you thirsty? »

« Yes, very. I have followed You from town. »

« Fountains of cool water are not lacking in Tiberias. »

« Do not misunderstand me, Master, or feign to misinterpret me. I followed You to hear You speak. »

« Why? »

« I do not know why or how. It happened seeing her (and he points at the Magdalene). I do not know. Something said to me: "He will tell you what you do not yet know". And I came. »

« Give the man some water and figs. That he may refreshen his body. »

« And what about my mind? »

« Minds are refreshened by the Truth. »

« That is why I followed You. I looked for the truth in human knowledge. I found corruption. Even in the best doctrines there is something which is not good. I have become so disheartened that I am disgusted and a disgusting man without any other future but the hour I live. »

Jesus stares at him while eating the bread and figs that the apostles have brought Him.

The meal is soon over.

Jesus, still sitting, begins to speak as if He were just giving a simple lesson to His apostles. Also the peasant remains nearby.

« Many are those who look for the Truth throughout their lives, without reaching it. They look like fools who are anxious to see and yet hold bronze blinkers before their eyes and they grope searching convulsively so that they go farther and farther away from the Truth, or they hide it by throwing on it various things that their foolish search shifts and causes to fall. Nothing but that can happen to them, because they look for the Truth where the Truth cannot be. To find the Truth you must join intellect to love and look at things not only with wise eyes, but with good eyes. Because bounty is worth more than wisdom. He who loves will always find a path leading to the Truth.

To love does not mean to take delight in the flesh or for the flesh. That is not love. It is sensuality. Love is affection from soul to soul, from superior part to superior part, so that man does not see in his companion a slave, but the mother of his children, and nothing else, that is, the half that forms with man a whole, capable of procreating life or more lives; that is, the companion who is the mother and sister and daughter of man, who is weaker than a newborn baby or stronger than a lion, according to circumstances, and who as mother, sister and daughter is to be loved with confident protective respect. Whatever is not what I say, is not love. It is vice. It does not lead upwards, but downwards: not to the Light, but to Darkness; not to the stars, but to filth. You must love your woman to be able to love your neighbour. And you must love your neighbour to know how to love God. And the way to the Truth is found.

That is where the Truth is, o men who are looking for it. The Truth is God. That is where the key to understand knowledge is to be found. The faultless doctrine is God's doctrine. How can man answer all his questions if God is not with him to give him the answers? Who can disclose the mysteries of creation, only and simply those mysteries, but our Supreme Maker, Who made creation? Who can understand the living marvel, which is man, the being in whom the animal perfection is united to the immortal perfection, which is the soul, whereby we are gods, if our souls are alive,

that is free from those actions which would abase a brute, and which, however, man commits and of which he is proud?

O men, searching for the Truth, I will repeat Job's words to you: "If you would learn more, ask the cattle, seek information from the birds of the air. The creeping things of the earth will give you lessons, and the fishes of the sea will tell you all". Yes, the earth, this verdant flowery earth, the fruit swelling on trees, the proliferating birds, the winds blowing clouds, the sun that for centuries and millennia has risen unerringly, everything speaks of God, everything explains God, everything reveals and discovers God.

If Science is not based on God, it becomes error and does not elevate but abases. Knowledge is not corruption if it is religion. He whose knowledge is based on God will not fall, because he is conscious of his dignity and believes in his eternal future. But you must look for the real God, not for phantoms that are not gods, but mere frenzies of men still enveloped in spiritual ignorance so that there is not even the shadow of wisdom in their religions or the shadow of truth in their faith.

Every age is capable of becoming wise. Nay, once again in Job it is written: "At dusk a noonday light will rise for you and when you think your end has come, you will rise like the morning star. You will be full of confidence because of the hope waiting for you'.

Good will is sufficient to find the Truth, which sooner or later will be found. But once it has been found, woe to those who do not follow it, but imitate the obstinate people of Israel, who, although already in possession of the thread to find God, that is, everything written in the Book about Me, will not surrender to the Truth, nay they hate it, amassing in their minds and hearts the barrenness of hatred and formulae. And they do not know that because of excessive weight the earth will open under their steps, which they think are the steps of triumphers, whereas they are the steps of slaves of formalism, of hatred, of selfishness. And they will be swallowed up and will be thrown headlong into the abyss where those go who are consciously guilty of a paganism that is more guilty than the heathenism that people have adopted by themselves in order to have a religion on which to base their behaviour.

As I do not reject those who repent amongst the children of Israel, so I do not reject those idolaters who believe in what they were given to believe and who inwardly implore: "Give us the Truth".

I have spoken to you. Let us rest now under these green trees, if this man will allow us. We shall go to Cana in the evening. »

« Lord, I am leaving You. But as I do not wish to desecrate the

wisdom that You have given me, I will leave Tiberias this evening, I am going away from this country. I will retire to the coast of Lucania with my servant. I have a house there. You have given me much. I realise that You cannot give more to the old Epicurean. But what You have given me is enough to enable me to build up my mind. And… pray Your God for old Crispus. He was Your only listener in Tiberias. Pray that I may hear You again, before Libitina (1) clasps me, so that, through the capability which I think I will be able to create within me, I may understand You and the Truth better. Hail, Master. » And he salutes in the Roman way.

When he passes near the women who are sitting a little aside, he bows to Mary of Magdala and says: « Thank you, Mary. It was a good thing that I knew you. You have given the searched for treasure to your old feast companion. If I arrive where you already are, I will owe you that. Goodbye. » And He goes away.

The Magdalene presses her hands against her heart and her face shows wonder and radiance. Then, she drags herself on her knees before Jesus. « Oh! Lord! So it is true that I may lead people to Good? Oh! My Lord. That is too kind of You! » And bending until her face touches the grass, she kisses Jesus' feet and wets them once again with tears: the tears of gratitude of the great lover of Madgala.

(1) Ancient Roman goddess of sepultures, whose name was used by Latin poets as synonymous with death.

242. In the House at Cana.

4th August 1945.

In the house at Cana the rejoicing for Jesus' arrival is little less than it was at the miraculous wedding. There are no players, no guests, the house is not adorned with flowers and evergreens, there are no tables laid for many guests, nor any steward near the sideboards and the stone jars, full of wine. But love excels everything and it is given in the right form and measure, that is, not to the guest, Who is probably also a distant relation, but still a man, but to the Master Guest Whose true Nature is known and acknowledged and Whose Word is venerated as something divine. The hearts in Cana, therefore, love with their whole selves the Great Friend, Who appeared in His linen tunic at the garden entrance, in the green of the garden and the red of the sunset, beautifying everything with His presence, communicating His peace not only to the hearts to whom He addresses His greeting, but also to things.

And it really seems that a veil of solemn joyful peace is laid out wherever He turns His blue eyes. Purity and peace flow from His

eyes, wisdom from His lips and love from His heart. What I am about to say may seem impossible to the reader of these pages. And yet, the same place, which before Jesus' coming was an ordinary place, or a busy place excluding the possibility of peace, which supposedly should be free from work bustling, is ennobled as soon as He appears there, and the bustling becomes orderly and does not bar the possibility of supernatural thoughts mingled with manual labour. I do not know whether I have made myself clear.

Jesus is never sullen, not even when He is more disgusted with something that has happened, but is always majestically dignified and communicates such supernatural dignity to the place in which He moves. Jesus is never a jolly fellow or a complainer laughing coarsely or looking hypochondriac, not even in the moments of greatest delight or deepest depression. His smile is inimitable. No painter will ever be able to reproduce it. It is like a light emanating from His heart, a bright light in the hours of greatest joy because a soul has been redeemed or approaches Perfection: I would say a rosy smile, when He approves of the spontaneous deeds of His friends or disciples and enjoys their company; a blue angelical smile, to remain in the field of hues, when He bends over children to listen to them, teach them and then bless them; a smile mitigated by piety when He looks at the miseries of the flesh or the spirit; finally a divine smile, when He speaks of His Father or Mother, or looks at or listens to His Most Pure Mother.

I have never seen Him hypochondriac, not even in the hours of bitter torment. During the torture of being betrayed, during the anguish when He sweated blood, and the spasm of His passion, if melancholy overwhelmed the sweet refulgence of His smile, it was not sufficient to cancel the peace, which is like a diadem shining with heavenly gems on His smooth forehead and enlightening His divine person. Neither have I ever seen Him indulge in immoderate merriment. He is not averse to a hearty laugh, when the case demands it, but He immediately resumes His noble serenity. But when He laughs, He prodigiously looks younger, to the extent of looking like a twenty year old man and the world seems to blossom through His lovely, hearty, loud, melodious laughter. Neither can I say that I have seen Him do things hurriedly. Whether He moves or speaks, He does so calmly, without, however, being sluggish or listless. It is probably because, tall as He is, He can stride, without running, to go a long way and He can likewise reach at distant things without having to stand up to do so. Even the way He moves is certainly gentlemanly and majestic.

And what about His voice? Well: I have heard Him speak for almost two years, and yet at times I lose the thread of His speech as I become so engrossed in studying His voice. And Jesus, very kindly and patiently, repeats what He said and He looks at me

with His smile of the good Master to ensure that nothing is missing in His dictation because of my delight in enjoying and listening to His voice and studying its tone and charm. But after two years I am not in a position to say precisely what the tone is. I definitely exclude the bass tone and also the light tenor tone. But I am always doubtful whether it is a powerful tenor voice or a perfect baritone voice with a very wide vocal range. I would say that it is the latter because His voice at times takes bronze-like notes, mellow and so deep, particularly when He speaks to a sinner, to lead him back to Grace or He points out human deviations to crowds. But when He analyses or condemns forbidden things or He shows the hypocrisy of men, the bronze notes of His voices become clearer; and they are as sharp as the peal of thunder when He imposes the Truth or His will and they vibrate like a sheet of gold struck with a crystal hammer when He sings the praises of Mercy or exalts the work of God; but the timbre of His voice is a most loving one when He speaks to or about His Mother. Jesus' voice is then really imbued with love: the reverent love of a son, and the love of God Who praises His most perfect work. And He uses the same tone, although not so strongly, when speaking to His favourites, to converts and to children. And His voice never tires, not even in very long speeches, because it colours and completes His thoughts and words, emphasising their power or kindness, according to the case.

And at times I remain still, with the pen in my hand, listening, and I then realise that He has gone too far ahead, and that it is impossible to catch up with Him… and I remain still, and Jesus kindly repeats the words. He does the same when I am interrupted, to teach me to patiently endure bothersome things or people, and I make Him understand how « bothersome » they are when they deprive me of the beatitude of listening to Jesus…

Now, at Cana, He is thanking Susanna for the hospitality granted to Aglae. They are by themselves under a pergola laden with grapes which are already ripening. All the others are in the kitchen, refreshing themselves.

« The woman was very good, Master. She certainly was not a burden to us. She helped me every time I did the washing, when we cleaned the house at Passover, as if she were a servant, and I can assure You that she worked like a slave to help me finish our clothes for Passover. She was prudent and withdrew every time someone came to the house; and she endeavoured not to be alone even with my husband. She hardly spoke in the presence of the family and took little food. She got up every morning to tidy herself before the men woke and I always found the fire lit and the house cleaned. But when we were alone she would ask me about You and begged me to teach her the psalms of our religion. She used

to say: "That I may pray as the Master prays". Has she finished to suffer now? Because she did suffer very much. She was afraid of everything and sighed and wept a great deal. Is she happy now? »

« Yes, supernaturally happy and free from fear. She is in peace. And I thank you for the good you did to her. »

« Oh! My Lord. What good? I treated her with love in Your name, because that is all I can do. She was a poor sister. I realised that. And I loved her, out of gratitude to the Most High Who has kept me in His grace. »

« And you have done more than if you had preached in the Bel Nidrasc. Now you have another one here. Did you recognise her? »

« Who does not know her here? »

« Nobody, that is true. But you and the district here do not know the second Mary, the one who will always be faithful to her vocation. Always. I ask you to believe it. »

« You say so. You know. I believe. »

« Say also: "I love". I know that it is more difficult to pity and forgive one of our own people, who has sinned, than one who has the excuse of being a pagan. But if our regret in seeing family apostasies was keen, let our pity and forgiveness be keener. I have forgiven Israel everything » concludes Jesus, stressing the last words.

« And I will forgive, as far as I am concerned. Because I think a disciple should do what the Master does. »

« You are in the truth and God rejoices because of that. Let us go with the others. It is getting dark. It will be pleasant to rest in the peace of the night. »

« Will You not speak to us, Master? »

« I do not know yet. »

They go into the kitchen where food and drinks have been prepared for supper.

Susanna moves forward and blushing slightly she says: « Will my sisters come upstairs with me? We must lay the tables because afterwards we must prepare beds for the men. I could do it by myself. But it would take me longer. »

« I am coming, too, Susanna » says the Blessed Virgin.

« No, we are enough and it will help us to become acquainted with one another, work does help to fraternise. »

They go out together while Jesus, after drinking some water flavoured with some syrup - I do not know what it is - goes and sits with His Mother, the apostles and the men of the house, in the cool shade of the pergola, leaving the servants and the elderly landlady free to finish preparing the food.

The voices of the three women disciples laying the tables can be heard from the room upstairs. Susanna tells of the miracle which was worked at her wedding and Mary of Magdala replies: « To

change water into wine is a great thing, but to change a sinner into a woman disciple is even greater. God grant I become like that wine: that I may be of the best. »

« Have no doubt about it. He changes everything in a perfect way. There was one here, and a heathen in addition, whose sentiments and faith He changed. Can you doubt that the same will not happen to you, who are already an Israelite? »

« One? Young? »

« Young. Beautiful. »

« And where is she now? » asks Martha.

« Only the Master knows. »

« Ah! Well, she is the one of whom I spoke to you. Jesus was with Lazarus that evening and he heard the words which were spoken concerning her. What a sweet scent there was in that room! Lazarus' garments were imbued with it for several days. And yet Jesus said that the heart of the convert excelled it with the perfume of her repentance. I wonder where she has gone. I think to some solitary place… »

« She is lonely, and she was a stranger. I am here, and I am known. She expiates in solitude, I… living in the world, amongst those who know me. I do not envy her destiny, as I am with the Master. But I hope I will be able to imitate her one day, by being without anything that may distract me from Him. »

« Would you leave Him? »

« No. But He says that He will go away. My soul will then follow Him. I can defy the world with Him. Without Him I would be afraid of the world. I shall put a desert between me and the world. »

« And what about Lazarus and me? What shall we do? »

« What you did in your grief. You will love each other and will love me. And without blushing… Because you will then be alone, but you will know that I am with the Lord. And I will love you in the Lord. »

« Mary is strong and well determined in her decisions » comments Peter who has heard.

And the Zealot replies: « She is a straight blade like her father. She has her mother's features, but her father's unyielding spirit. »

And the lady with the unyielding spirit is running down the stairs to tell her companions that supper is ready.

The country fades away in the serene moonless night. Only the faint light of stars shows the dark masses of trees and the white ones of houses. Nothing else. Some night birds are fluttering silently round Susanna's house, in search of flies, skimming past the people sitting on the terrace round a lamp, which throws a faint yellowish light on the faces of those who are gathered round Jesus. Martha, who must be terrified of bats, gives a scream every time a

big noctule skims past her. Jesus instead is busy with the moths attracted by the lamp and with His long arm He endeavours to keep them away from the flame.

« They are both very stupid animals » says Thomas. « The former mistake us for bluebottles, the latter mistake the flame for the sun and get burnt. They have not even got a shadow of brains. »

« They are animals. Do you expect them to reason? » asks the Iscariot.

« No. But I would like them to have instinct at least. »

« It is not possible for them to have it. I am talking of moths. Because they die after their first trial. Instinct awakes and develops through painful surprising experience » comments James of Alphaeus.

« And what about bats? They should have it because they live for years. They are stupid, that's all » retorts Thomas.

« No, Thomas. Not more than men. Many times men also look like stupid bats. They fly, or rather they flutter, like drunk men, round things that can only cause grief. Here you are: My brother has struck one down with his mantle. Give Me it » says Jesus.

James of Zebedee, at whose feet the stunned bat has fallen and is now tossing clumsily on the floor, picks it up with two fingers by one of its membranous wings and holding it out, like a dirty rag, lays it on Jesus' lap.

« Here is the unwary animal. Let us leave it alone and you will see that it will recover, but it will not change its habits. »

« An unusual rescue, Master. I would have killed it » says the Iscariot.

« No. Why? It has a life, too, and is keen on it » replies Jesus.

« I don't think so. It either does not know it has a life or is not keen on it. It endangers it! »

« Oh! Judas! Judas! How severe you would be with sinners, with men. Also men know that they have one life and another one and they do not hesitate to endanger both one and the other. »

« Have we got two lives? »

« The life of the body and the life of the soul, you know that. »

« Ah! I thought You were referring to reincarnation. Some people believe in it. »

« There is no reincarnation. But there are two lives. And yet man endangers both of them. If you were God how would you judge men, who are gifted with reason besides instinct? » «

Severely. Unless it were a person of unsound mind. »

« Would you not take into account the circumstances that make people morally insane? »

« No, I would not. »

« So you would have no mercy on anyone who knows God and is acquainted with the Law, and yet sins. »

« I would have no mercy. Because man must be able to control himself. »

« He should be able. »

« He must, Master. It is an unpardonable disgrace that an adult should commit certain sins, particularly when nothing forces him. »

« Which sins according to you? »

« The sins of sensuality first. One degrades oneself irreparably… » Mary of Magdala lowers her head… Judas goes on: «… and one corrupts others as well, because a kind of ferment exhales from the bodies of impure people and it upsets even the pure and urges them to imitate the impure… »

While the Magdalene lowers her head further, Peter says: « Hey, there! Don't be so severe! The first to be guilty of such unpardonable disgrace was Eve, and you are not going to tell me that she was corrupted by the impure ferment exhaling from a lascivious person. In any case I would like you to know that, as far as I am concerned, I am in no way upset even if I sit near a lustful person. It's his business… »

« One is always infected by being near. If the body is not, the soul is, and that is worse. »

« You seem a Pharisee! Excuse me, in that case one should lock oneself up in a crystal tower and stay there, sealed up. »

« But do not believe, Simon, that it would help you. Temptations are more dreadful in loneliness » says the Zealot.

« Oh! Well! They would be like dreams. No harm » replies Peter.

« No harm? Don't you know that temptations lead to cogitations, cogitations to compromise to satisfy somehow one's aroused instinct, and then compromise opens the way to refinement of sin in which sensuality is joined to thought? » asks the Iscariot.

« I know nothing about all that, my dear Judas. Perhaps because I have never cogitated, as you say, on certain things. But I think that we have gone very far from bats and that it is a good job that you are not God. Otherwise you would be all alone in Paradise, with your severity. What do You say, Master? »

« I say that it is wise not to be too absolute because the angels of the Lord listen to the words of men and record them in the eternal books and it might not be pleasant one day to be told: "Let it be done to you according to your own judgement". I say that if God sent Me it means that He wants to forgive all the sins of which man repents, as He knows how weak man is, because of Satan. Judas, tell Me: do you agree that Satan may take possession of a soul so as to force coercion on it, which may diminish the gravity of sin in the eyes of God? »

« I do not. Satan can impair but the inferior part. »

« You are blaspheming, Judas of Simon » exclaim almost together

the Zealot and Bartholomew.

« Why? In what way? »

« You are giving the lie to God and the Book. We read in it that Lucifer impaired also the superior part, and God, through His Word, has told us many times » Bartholomew replies.

« It is also said that man has free will. Which means that Satan cannot do violence to man's mind and feelings. Even God does not do it. »

« No, God does not, because He is Order and Loyalty. But Satan does, because he is Disorder and Hatred » insists the Zealot.

« Hatred is not the sentiment opposed to loyalty. You are wrong. »

« I am right, because if God is Loyalty and therefore does not fail to keep His word to leave man free in his actions, the demon cannot belie such word, as he never promised free will to man. But it is true that he is Hatred and therefore attacks God and man, assailing the intellectual freedom of man, in addition to his body, reducing such freedom of thought to slavery in possessed people, whereby man does things, which he would not do, if he were free from Satan » maintains the Zealot.

« I do not agree. »

« What about possessed people, then? You are denying the evidence of facts » shouts Judas Thaddeus.

« Possessed people are deaf, or dumb or insane. They are not lustful. »

« Is that the only vice you have in mind? » asks Thomas ironically.

« It is the most common one and the lowest. »

« Ah! I thought it was the one you are better acquainted with » says Thomas laughing.

Judas jumps to his feet as if he wanted to react. But he controls himself and goes downstairs and then walks away through the fields.

There is silence… Then Andrew says: « His idea is not completely mistaken. In fact one would say that Satan takes possession only of senses: sight, hearing, speech and brains. But then, Master, how can certain wicked actions be explained? Are they not possessions? Doras, for example?… »

« Doras, as you say, in order not to be uncharitable towards anybody, and may God reward you for that, or Mary, as we all know, and she is the first to know, after the clear uncharitable hints by Judas, are those who are more completely possessed by Satan, who extends his power over the three great powers of man. They are the most oppressive and subtle possessions, from which only those can free themselves who are so little degraded in their souls as to be still able to understand the invitation of the Light. Doras was not lustful. But even so he would not come to the

Redeemer. And that is where the difference lies. That is, whilst in the case of lunatic, dumb, deaf, blind people possessed by the demon, their relatives endeavour and do the necessary to bring them to Me, in the case of those whose spirits are possessed, only their spirits can seek freedom. That is why they are forgiven as well as freed. Because it was their will to begin opposition to the demon's possession. And now let us go and rest. Mary, since you know what it is to be caught, pray for those who lend themselves intermittently to the Enemy's action, committing sin and causing grief. »

« Yes, my Master. I will. And without any ill-feeling. »

« Peace to everybody. Let us drop here the cause of so much discussing. There is darkness with darkness, outside, in the night. But we are going inside to sleep under the protection of the angels. »

And He lays on a bench the bat, which makes its first attempts to fly away, and He withdraws with the apostles to the room upstairs, while the women with the landlord and landlady go downstairs.

243. John Repeats the Speech Made by Jesus on Mount Tabor.

5th August 1945.

They are all climbing the cool short cuts leading to Nazareth. The Galilean hillsides seem to have been created that very morning, because the recent storm has washed them so thoroughly and the dew keeps them shiny and fresh, so that they are all bright in the early sunshine. The air is so clear that all the details of the more or less distant mountains are visible and there is a deep sensation of freshness and liveliness.

When they reach the top of a hill they delight in admiring the sight of a lake, which is most beautiful in the pure morning light. They all admire it, as does Jesus. But Mary Magdalene soon turns her eyes in a different direction looking for something. Her eyes rest on the mountain tops lying northwest, but she does not seem to find what she is looking for.

Susanna, who is beside her, asks: « What are you looking for? »

« I would like to recognise the mountain where I met the Master. »

« Ask Him. »

« Oh! It is not worth disturbing Him. He is speaking to Judas of Kerioth. »

« What a man Judas is! » whispers Susanna. She does not say anything else, but… the rest is clearly understood.

« That mountain is certainly not along this road. But I will take you there some time, Martha. It was dawn, just like now, and there

were so many flowers… And so many people… Oh! Martha! And I had the audacity to appear in front of everybody in that shameful dress and with those friends… No, you cannot be offended at Judas' words. I deserved them. I deserved every one of them. And the present suffering is my expiation. Everybody remembers and everybody is right in telling me the truth. And I must be silent. Oh! If one only pondered before sinning! Who offends me now is my best friend, because he helps me to expiate. »

« But that does not mean the he has not done wrong. Mother, is Your Son really pleased with that man? »

« We must pray very much for him. So He says. »

John leaves the apostles to come and help the women at a difficult passage, where their sandals slip as the path is strewn with smooth stones, like reddish slates, and with glossy hard grass, which is very dangerous as the foot has no grip on it. The Zealot imitates John and the women pass over the difficult spot leaning on them.

« This is rather a difficult road. But there is no dust and no travellers on it. And it is shorter » says the Zealot.

« I know it, Simon » says Mary. « I came to that little village half way up the hill, with My nephews when Jesus was driven out of Nazareth » says the Blessed Virgin with a sigh.

« But the world is beautiful from here. There is the Tabor over there, and the Hermon, and to the north the mountains of Arbela, and over there, in the back, the great Hermon. It is a pity that the sea is not visible as it is from Tabor » says John.

« Have you been there? »

« Yes, with the Master. »

« John, through his love for the infinite, obtained a great joy for us, because on the top of the mountain Jesus spoke of God so ecstatically that we had never heard the like before. And after receiving so much, we obtained a great conversion. You will meet the man too, Mary. And your spirit will be fortified more than it already is. We found a man hardened with hatred, brutalised by remorse and Jesus turned him into a man who, I am sure, will become a great disciple. Like you, Mary. Because, you can be sure that what I tell you is the truth, we sinners are more yielding to Good, which envelops us, because we feel the need to be forgiven even by ourselves » says the Zealot.

« That is true. But it is very kind of you to say "we sinners". You were a poor wretch, not a sinner. »

« We are all sinners, some more some less, and he who thinks he is less a sinner, is the most likely to become one, if he is not already so. We are all sinners. But the big sinners who repent are the ones who know how to be as absolute in Good as they were in evil. »

« Your comforting words are a great relief to me. You have

always been a father to the children of Theophilus. »

« And like a father I rejoice because the three of you are Jesus' friends. »

« Where did you find that disciple who was a big sinner? »

« At Endor, Mary. Simon wishes to ascribe the merit of so many beautiful things to my desire to contemplate the sea. But if John the elder came to Jesus it is no merit of the silly young John. It is the merit of Judas of Simon » says Zebedee's son smiling.

« Did he convert him? » asks Martha doubtfully.

« No. But he wanted to go to Endor and… »

« Yes, to see the cave of the sorceress… Judas of Simon is a very strange type… One must take him as he is… Of course!… And John of Endor led us to the cave and then remained with us. But, my dear son, the merit is still yours, because without your desire for the infinite we would not have gone that way and Judas would not have desired to go on that strange research. »

« I would like to know what Jesus said on Mount Tabor… as I would like to recognise the mountain where I saw Him » sighs Mary Magdalene.

« The mountain is the one where the sun seems to be rising, because of the sparkling of a pond there, which collects the spring water and herds make use of it. We were farther up where the top seems to be split like a huge two-pronged-fork attempting to pierce the clouds and take them somewhere else. With regard to Jesus' speech, I think John can repeat it for you. »

« Oh! Simon! Is it possible for a boy to repeat the words of God? »

« No, it isn't for a boy. It is for you. Try. To please your sisters and me, as I love you. »

John blushes very much when he begins to repeat the speech of Jesus.

« He said: "Here is the infinite page on which currents write the word: I 'believe'. Think of the chaos of the Universe before the Creator decided to order the elements and arrange them into a wonderful association, which has given man the earth and what it contains and has adorned the firmament with stars and planets. Nothing existed: neither as amorphous chaos, nor as ordered system.

God made it. First He made the elements. Because they are necessary, although at times they seem to be harmful. But always remember this: there is no small drop of dew, no matter how small it be, which does not have a good reason for existing, there is no insect, however small and insignificant it may be, which does not have its good reason for being. And likewise there is no monstruous mountain vomiting from its bowels fire and incandescent lapilli, which does not have its good reason for existing. And there is no cyclone without a reason. And passing from things to

people, there is no event, no tear, no joy, no birth, death, no sterility and prolific maternity, no long marriage life or early widowhood, no misfortune of calamities and diseases, or prosperity of wealth and health, which does not have its good reason for being, even if it does not appear as such to the short-sightedness and pride of men, who see and judge through the cataracts and fogs typical of imperfect things. But the Eye of God, the infinite Thought of God, sees and knows. The secret of living free from sterile doubts, which irritate, exhaust and poison the days on the earth, is to believe that God does everything for a good intelligent reason, that God does what He does for love, not for the stolid intention of tormenting for the sake of tormenting.

God had created the angels. And some of them, who did not want to believe that the level of glory at which they had been placed was good, rebelled and with their minds parched by lack of faith in their Lord, they attempted to assail the unreachable throne of God. They opposed their discordant unjust pessimistic thoughts to the harmonious reasons of the faithful angels, and pessimism, which is lack of faith, changed them from spirits of light into spirits of darkness.

Blessed are those for ever who both in Heaven and on the earth base all their thoughts on a presupposition of fully enlightened optimism! They will not be wrong, at least as far as their spirits are concerned, as they will continue to believe, hope and above all love God and their neighbour, and will thus remain in God until the end of centuries!

Paradise had already been freed from those proud pessimists who saw gloomy sides also in the brightest words of God, as the pessimists on the earth look on dark sides also of the clearest deeds of men and by wishing to be separated in an ivory tower, as they consider themselves the only perfect ones, they condemn themselves to a dark dungeon, which ends in the darkness of the kingdom of hell, the kingdom of Negation. Because pessimism is Negation as well.

So God created the Universe. And as to understand the glorious mystery of Our being One and Trine one must believe and understand that the Word existed from the beginning and was with God, joined by the most perfect Love, Which can be effused only by two Who are Gods, being, however, only One; so, to see creation as it is, it is necessary to look at it with eyes of faith because in its being, as a son bears the indelible reflection of his father, so creation has within itself the indelible reflection of its Creator. We shall then see that in the beginning there was the sky and the earth and then light, which can be compared to love. Because light is delight, as love is. And light is the atmosphere of Paradise. And the incorporeal Being, Who is God, is Light and is the Father of every intellectual,

affective, material, spiritual light, both in Heaven and on the earth.

In the beginning there was the sky and the earth and for them light was given and through light everything else was made. And as in the most high Heaven the spirits of light were separated from those of darkness, so in creation light was separated from darkness and Day and Night were made and that was the first day of creation, with its morning and its evening, its midday and midnight. And when the smile of God, that is light, came once again after night, then the hand of God, His powerful will, stretched out over the shapeless empty earth, and over the sky where the waters wandered, one of the free elements in chaos, and wanted the firmament to separate the disorderly wandering of the waters between the sky and the earth, so that it would be a velarium for paradisiac splendour, a limit to superior waters, and thus floods would not descend upon boiling metals and atoms, washing away and disjointing what God was uniting.

Order was restored in the sky. And there was order on the earth through the command given by God to the waters spread over the earth. And the sea began to exist. There it is. On it, as on the firmament it is written: 'God is'. Whatever the intellectuality of man is, or his faith or disbelief, in front of this page, in which a particle of infinity, which is God, shines, and in which there is the evidence of His power, man is obliged to believe, because no human power and no natural settlement of elements can possibly repeat such a wonder, not even in a very small way. Man is obliged to believe not only in the Lord's power, but also in His goodness, as through that sea He gives food and ways of communication to man, He gives wholesome salts, He mitigates the heat of the sun and gives space to winds, and seed to lands remote from one another, and causes it to roar like storms to call the ant - man - to the Infinite One, his Father, and He gives man the possibility of elevating himself to higher spheres, contemplating higher visions.

Three things speak most of God in creation, which is entirely a witness of His power: the light, the firmament and the sea. The astral and meteorological order, which is a reflection of the divine Order; the light, which only a God could create; the sea, the power which only God could confine within firm limits, after creating it, and He gave it motion and voice, without, however, damaging, as a turbulent disorderly element, the earth, which bears the sea on its surface.

Ponder on the mystery of light, which is inexhaustible. Raise your eyes towards the firmament where stars and planets are resplendent. Look at the sea and consider it for what it is. It is not a separation but a bridge between peoples who live on other shores and although they cannot be seen and are unknown, one must

believe that they exist, simply because the sea exists. God does not make anything useless. He, therefore, would not have created the seemingly infinite sea, unless it were limited by other lands beyond the horizon, which prevents us from seeing, lands which are populated with other men, who have all come from one only God, and by God's will have been carried there by storms and currents, to people continents and regions. And the sea sends remote appeals through its waves, through the voice of its waves and its tides. It is a link, not a separation.

The anxiety which causes John a sweet anguish is the appeal of remote brothers. The more the spirit dominates the flesh, the more capable it is of hearing the voices of spirits that are united even if they are divided, like branches that spring up from the same root are united even if one cannot see the other if an obstacle is interposed between them. Look at the sea with eyes full of light. You will see lands strewn round its shores, at its limits, and other lands inside it and a cry will reach you from every one of them: 'Come. Bring us the Light that you possess. Bring us the Life given to you. Speak to our hearts the word with which we are not acquainted, but we know is the foundation of the universe: love. Teach us to read the word that we see written on the infinite pages of the firmament and of the sea: God. Enlighten us because we feel that there is a light, which is more real than the one which reddens the sky and makes the sea glitter like gems. Bring to our darkness the Light that God gave you after generating It through His love, and He gave It to you on behalf of all peoples, as He gave light to the stars so that they might give it to the earth. You are the stars, we are the dust. But form us as the Creator formed the earth with dust, so that man might people it adoring Him now and for ever, until the hour comes when there is no earth, but the Kingdom comes. The Kingdom of light, of love, of peace, as the living God told you it will be, because we are children of this God as well, and we ask to became acquainted with our Father'.

And learn to go along the ways of infinity. Without fear and without disdain, towards those who call you and weep. Towards those who will also grieve you because they feel God but do not know how to adore God, but they will also procure you glory, because, the more you possess love and bestow it, leading to the Truth the people who are waiting to reach it, the greater you will be".

Jesus said so, but much better than I did. But that was at least His idea. »

« John, you have repeated exactly what the Master said. You have only omitted what He said about your capability to understand God through your generosity in giving yourself. You are good, John. The best amongst us! We have come to the end of our

way without noticing it. There is Nazareth on its hill. The Master is looking at us and smiling. Let us reach Him at once to enter the village together. »

« Thank you, John » says Our Lady. « You have given a great present to your Mother. »

« I thank you, too. You have opened infinite horizons to poor Mary… »

« What were you talking so much about? » Jesus asks those who have just joined Him.

« John has repeated the speech You made on Mount Tabor. Perfectly. And we were delighted. »

« I am glad that My Mother has heard it, because the sea is related to Her name and Her charity is as vast as the sea. »

« Son, You possess such charity as the Man, and yet it is nothing as compared to Your infinite charity of the divine Word. My sweet Jesus! »

« Mother, come near Me. As You held Me by the hand when we came back from Cana or from Jerusalem, when I was a little boy. »

And they look at each other with eyes full of love.

244. Jesus at Nazareth.

6th August 1945.

The first place where Jesus stops in Nazareth is the house of Alphaeus. He is about to enter the kitchen garden when He meets Mary of Alphaeus who is going to the fountain carrying two copper amphoras.

« Peace be with you, Mary! » says Jesus, embracing His relative, who, effusive as usual, kisses Him shouting for joy.

« This will certainly be a peaceful joyful day, my Jesus, because You have come! Oh! My dearest sons! How happy is your mother to see you! » and she kisses her big boys who were behind Jesus. « You are staying with me today, are you not? I have just lit the oven for the bread. And I was going to the fountain, because I do not want to interrupt its baking. »

« Mother, we will go » say her sons taking the amphoras.

« How kind they are, aren't they, Jesus? »

« Yes, they are so kind » confirms Jesus.

« Also to You, are they not? Because if they should love You less than they love me, they would be less dear to me. »

« Be not afraid, Mary. They are nothing but joy to Me. »

« Are You alone? Mary went away so suddenly… I would have come too. She was with a woman… A disciple? »

« Yes. Martha's sister. »

« Oh! Blessed be God! I have prayed so much for that. Where is she? »

« There she is, she is arriving with My Mother, Martha and Susanna. »

The women in fact have just turned the corner, followed by the apostles. Mary of Alphaeus runs to meet them and she exclaims: « How happy I am to have you as my sister! I should say "daughter" because you are young and I am old. But I will call you by the name which is so dear to me since I call my Mary by it. Come, my dear, you must be tired… But you are certainly happy » and she kisses the Magdalene holding her by the hand as if she wanted her to feel more deeply that she loves her. The fresh beauty of Mary Magdalene seems more striking when she is close to the rather run down figure of good Mary of Alphaeus.

« You are all staying with me today. I will not let you go away » and with a deep unvoluntary sigh of her soul, confession escapes her: « I am always so lonely! When my sister-in-law is not here, my days are sad and lonely. »

« Are your sons not here? » asks Martha.

Mary of Alphaeus blushes and sighs: « With their souls, yes. They are still here. To be a disciple joins and divides… But as you came, Mary, they will come too » and she wipes a tear. She looks at Jesus Who is watching her pitifully and she strives to smile and asks: « It takes a long time, doesn't it? »

« Yes, Mary. But you will see it happen. »

« I was hoping… After that Simon… But he heard of other… things and he became hesitant again. Love him just the same, Jesus! »

« Can you doubt it? »

While Mary is speaking she prepares some refreshments for the pilgrims, turning a deaf ear to the words of everybody assuring her that they need nothing.

« Let us leave the women disciples in peace » says Jesus and He concludes: « And let us have a walk through the village. »

« Are You going away? The other sons may come. »

« I am staying all day tomorrow. So we will be together. I am now going to see My friends. Peace to you, women. Goodbye, Mother. »

Nazareth is already in a state of excitement because of Jesus' arrival and in the company of the Magdalene. Some rush to the house of Mary of Alphaeus, some to Jesus' and since the latter is closed they all go back towards Jesus Who is crossing Nazareth going towards the centre of the village. The town is always ill-disposed to the Master. Some people are ironical, some incredulous, some are openly wicked as is obvious from certain biting remarks: they all follow the great Son of Nazareth out of curiosity, without love, and they do not understand Him. Even in the questions they ask Him there is no love, but disbelief and derision. But He feigns not

to notice and replies kindly and mildly to those who speak to Him.

« You give to everybody, but You seem a son without any tie to Your fatherland, because You give it nothing. »

« I am here to give what you ask for. »

« But You prefer not to be here. Are we perhaps bigger sinners than the others? »

« There is no sinner, no matter how big he may be, whom I do not wish to convert. And you are not worse than the others. »

« However, You do not say that we are better than the others. A good son always says that his mother is better than any other mother, even if she is not so. Is perhaps Nazareth a stepmother to You? »

« I am not saying anything. When it is not possible to say that one is good, and when one does not wish to lie, to be silent is the charitable rule towards others and oneself. But you would be readily praised if you only came to My doctrine. »

« So You wish to be admired? »

« No, only listened to and believed, for the good of your souls. »

« Speak, then! We will listen to You. »

« Tell Me about what you wish Me to speak. »

A middle-aged man says: « Listen. I would like You to come with me and explain something to me. »

« I will come at once, Levi. »

And they go to the synagogue while people gather behind the Master and the head of the synagogue. The synagogue is soon crowded.

The head of the synagogue takes a roll and reads: « Solomon brought Pharaoh's daughter from the Citadel of David up to the house he had built for her, because he said: "My wife must not live in the palace of David king of Israel, because it was sanctified when the ark of the Lord entered it" Now I would like to have Your opinion on the matter, whether You think that measure was right or not, and why. »

« It was undoubtedly right, because respect for David's house, which had been sanctified when the ark of the Lord was brought into it, demanded it. »

« But since the Pharaoh's daughter was Solomon's wife, was she thereby not worthy to live in the house of David. Does the wife not become, according to Adam's word, "bone of the bone" of her husband and "flesh of his flesh"? If it is so, how could she desecrate what the husband did not desecrate »

« In the first Book of Ezra it is written: "You have committed sin by marrying foreign women; you have added to the sin of Israel". And one of the causes of Solomon's idolatry was his marriages with foreign women. God had said: "Foreign women will lead your hearts astray to the extent of making you follow foreign

gods". We are aware of the consequences. »

« But he was not led astray because he had married the Pharaoh's daughter, in fact he wisely judged that she was not to live in the holy house. »

« God's goodness cannot be measured by our standards. Man, after one fault, does not forgive, although he himself is always guilty. God is not inexorable after a first fault, but He does not allow man to persist with impunity in the same sin. He therefore does not punish man the first time he falls; He then speaks to his heart. But He punishes when His goodness does not serve to convert, but is mistaken for weakness by man. He then inflicts punishment, because God is not to be derided. Although bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh, the Pharaoh's daughter had laid the first germs of corruption in the heart of the Wise King, and you know that a disease breaks out not when there is only one germ in the blood, but when the blood is corrupt with many germs that have multiplied from the first one. Man's fall into sin always begins with an apparently innocuous laxity. Then compliance with evil increases. Then one becomes accustomed to conscience compromises and to neglecting one's duties and obedience to God and thus by degrees man falls into grave sins, even of idolatry in the case of Solomon, who thus provoked a schism, the consequences of which are still lasting. »

« So You say that it is necessary to be extremely careful and to have the greatest respect for holy things? »

« Most certainly. »

« Now explain also this to me. You say that You are the Word of God. Is it true? »

« I am. He sent Me to bring the Gospel to all men on the earth and to redeem them from all their sins. »

« So, if You really are what You say, You are greater than the Ark. Because God is not in the glory dominating the Ark, but He is within You. »

« You are right. That is the truth. »

« Why, then, do You desecrate Yourself? »

« And did you bring Me here to tell Me that? I feel sorry for you, for you and for those who urged you to speak. I ought not to justify Myself, because every justification is deliberately misunderstood by your hatred. But I will give a justification to you who accuse Me of not loving you and of desecrating My person. Listen. I know what you are hinting at. But I reply to you: "You are wrong". As I open My arms to those who are dying in order to bring them back to life and I call the dead and give their lives back to them, likewise I open My arms to those who are more truly about to die and to those who are more truly dead: sinners, to bring them to eternal Life and raise them, if they are already putrid, so that they

may not die again. But I will tell you a parable. A man became a leper because of his many vices. Human society banished him from its company and the man, in dire solitude, began to ponder on his situation and his sins, which had brought him to that state. Many years passed thus and when he had given up hope he suddenly recovered his health. The Lord had mercy on him because of his many prayers and tears. What did the man then do? Could he go back home because the Lord had had mercy on him? No. He had to show himself to the priest, who after examining him for some time, had him purified and sacrificed two sparrows. And after washing his clothes not only once, but twice, the man went back to the priest with the prescribed spotless lambs, the ewe-lamb, flour and oil. The priest then led him to the door of the Tabernacle. And the man was finally religiously readmitted amongst the people of Israel. But tell Me: when he went to the priest the first time, why did he go? »

« To be purified the first time and thus be able to go through the great purification, which would readmit him amongst the holy people! »

« You are right. So he was not entirely purified? »

« Ehi! No. There is still a lot missing before he is; with regard both to his body and his soul. »

« How did he dare then to go near the priest the first time when he was utterly unclean, and a second time to go near the Tabernacle? »

« Because the priest is the necessary means to be readmitted amongst the living. »

« And the Tabernacle? »

« Because only God can forgive sins and it is of our faith to hold that God rests in His glory beyond the Holy Veil, dispensing His pardon from that source. »

« So the cured leper is not yet clear of sin when he approaches the priest and the Tabernacle? »

« No. Certainly not! »

« Men with twisted thoughts and insincere hearts, why do you accuse Me, if I, Priest and Tabernacle, allow spiritual lepers to approach Me? Why do you have two measures to judge? Yes, the woman who was lost is now here with Me, as well as Levi the publican, who is here with his new soul and his new office and many others as well, who came before them. They may stay because they have been readmitted amongst the people of the Lord. They were brought to Me by the will of God Who has given Me the power to judge and absolve, to cure and raise people from the dead. There would be desecration if they persisted in their idolatry as Pharaoh's daughter did, but there is no desecration because they have embraced the doctrine that I brought to the

earth and through it they have risen to the Grace of the Lord. Men of Nazareth, who lay snares for Me as you do not think that it is possible that the true Wisdom and Justice of the Word of the Father are in Me, I say to you: "Imitate sinners". They truly surpass you in coming to the Truth. And I also say to you: "Do not have recourse to mean snares to oppose Me". Do not do that. Ask, and I will give you the vital Word, as I give it to everyone who comes to Me. Receive Me as a son of this land of ours. I bear you no grudge. My hands are full of caresses and My heart of the desire to teach you and make you happy. I am so anxious to please you, that if you wish so, I will spend the Sabbath with you, teaching you the New Law. »

There is a conflict of opinions amongst the crowd. But curiosity or love prevails and many shout: « Yes, we will be here tomorrow and will listen to You. »

« I will pray that every obstacle oppressing your hearts may be removed during the night. So that every prejudice may vanish and with free minds you may understand the Voice of God that has come to bring the Gospel to the whole world, but it is My desire that the first place capable of receiving it may be the town where I grew up. Peace to you all. »

245. In the Synagogue at Nazareth on the Sabbath.

7th August 1945.

We are once again in the synagogue at Nazareth, but on a Sabbath.

Jesus has read the apologue against Abimelech and ends with the words: « "May, fire come from the thorn bush and devour the cedars of Lebanon" ». He then hands the roll to the head of the synagogue.

« Are You not reading the rest? You ought to read it, so that they may understand the apologue » says the head.

« It is not necessary. The days of Abimelech are very remote. I will apply the old apologue to the present time.

Listen, people of Nazareth. You already know the moral of the apologue against Abimelech, as you have been instructed by the head of your synagogue, who in his days was instructed by a rabbi, who had learned from another rabbi and so on for ages, always with the same method and the same conclusions. You will hear a different moral from Me. And I ask you to make use of your intelligence and not to be like the ropes of a well pulley, which, until they are worn out, run from the pulley down to the water, and then from the water back up to the pulley, without ever changing. Man is not a rope or a mechanical device. Man has been gifted with intelligence and must make use of it on his own behalf, according to

needs and circumstances. Because if the letter of the word is eternal, circumstances change. Those are poor masters who do not want the trouble or the satisfaction of extracting each time new teachings, that is the spirit that the ancient wise words always contain. They will be like echoes, which can but repeat, even dozens of times, the same word, without ever adding one word of their own.

Mankind - the forest in fact, where all kinds of trees, shrubs and herbs are gathered, represents mankind - feels the need to be led by someone who would take upon himself all the glory and the even greater burden of authority and responsibility for the happiness or unhappiness of his subjects: someone who would be responsible to the subjects, to neighbouring countries, and what is more dreadful, to God. Because it is true that crowns and social pre-eminence, whichever they may be, are granted by men, but they are allowed by God, without Whose condescension no human power can be imposed. Which explains the sudden unimaginable changes of dynasties, which were considered everlasting and of powers which seemed untouchable, and which, when they overstepped the limit in punishing or trying people, were overthrown by the same people, with God's permission, and became nothing but dust or, at times, sewer filth.

I said: people feel the need to elect someone who will take upon himself all responsibilities towards his subjects, towards neighbouring nations and towards God, which is the most dreadful of all. Because if the judgement of history is dreadful and the interests of people endeavour in vain to change it, because future events and people will restore it to its original terrible truth, God's justice is even more relentless, because it is not affected by any pressure whatsoever, neither is it subject to changes of humour or opinion, as men too often are, and above all it is not subject to wrong judgement. Those, therefore, who are elected leaders of peoples and makers of history ought to act with the heroic justice of saints, in order not to become ill-famed in future centuries and be punished by God for ever.

But let us go back to Abimelech's apologue. So the trees wanted to have a king and went to the olive-tree. But the latter, being a sacred tree and consecrated to supernatural use because of its oil that burns in front of the Lord and is a predominant element in tithes and sacrifices, and forms the holy balm to anoint altars, priests and kings, and for its properties I would say it is almost thaumaturgic and as such is used both on healthy and sick bodies, the olive-tree replies: "How could I fail my holy supernatural vocation to degrade myself in worldly matters?"

Oh! How gentle was the reply of the olive tree! Why is it not learned and repeated by all those whom God elects to a holy mission, at least by those? Because in actual fact it should be pronounced

by every man as a reply to the suggestions of the demon, because every man is king and a son of God, gifted with a soul, which makes him a regal divine son, called to a supernatural destiny. His soul is an altar and a house. The altar of God, the house where the Heavenly Father descends to receive the love and reverence of His son and subject. Every man has a soul, and as each soul is an altar, every man is thereby a priest, a guardian of the altar and in Leviticus it is written: "The Priest shall not profane himself." Man, therefore, ought to reply to the temptations of the Demon, of the world and of the flesh: "Can I stop being spiritual and busy myself with material sinful matters?"

The trees went then to the fig-tree, inviting it to reign over them. But the fig-tree replied: "How can I forego my sweetness and my excellent fruit to become your king?"

Many apply to a meek and kind man to have him as their king. Not so much because they admire his kindness, but because they hope that by being very kind he will end up by being a king they can make fun of, from whom they can obtain anything they wish and whom they can abuse as they like. But kindness is not weakness. It is goodness. It is just, intelligent, firm. Never mistake kindness for weakness. The former is virtue, the latter a fault. And because it is a virtue it gives those who possess it a righteous conscience, which enables them to resist human solicitations and allurements, aiming at bending them towards worldly interests, which are not the interests of God, remaining faithful to their destiny, at all costs. A kind-minded man will never repel reproaches with bitterness, neither will he ever harshly reject those who ask his help. On the contrary, smiling sympathetically he will always say: "Leave me to my peaceful destiny. I am here to comfort you and help you, but I cannot become king, according to your expectations, because I am interested in one regality only, for the welfare of your soul and mine: spiritual regality".

The trees went to the vine and asked it to be their king. But the vine replied: "How can I forego being mirth and strength to come and reign over you?"

To be king always leads to spiritual gloom, both because of responsibilities and of remorse, because a king who does not commit sin and does not cause himself to feel remorse is more rare than a black diamond. Power allures while it shines from afar like a lighthouse, but when one reaches it, one realises that it is not a star but only the faint light of a firefly. Furthermore, power is but a strength tied with the multitude of ropes of thousands of interests stirred up around a king: the interests of courtiers, of allies, of relatives and personal ones. How many kings swear to themselves while being anointed with oil: "I will be impartial" and later are

unable to be so? Like a strong tree, which does not rebel against the first embrace of flexible or thin ivy saying: "It is so slender that it can do me no harm", on the contrary it is pleased to be decked with it and to be its protector supporting its climbing, so a king, very often, I could say always, yields to the first embrace of the interest of a courtier, of an ally, or a personal one or of a relative, who applies to him and he is pleased to be their munificent protector. "It is such a trifle!" he says, even if his conscience warns him: "Be careful!" And he thinks that it can harm neither his power nor his good name. Also the tree believes that. But the day comes when the ivy, growing in strength and in length, more and more voracious in sucking the lap of the soil and more and more anxious to climb up and conquer the sun and light, embraces, branch after branch, the whole big tree, overwhelms it, chokes it and kills it. And it was so slender! And the tree was so strong!

The same applies to kings. A first compromise with their mission, a first shrugging of shoulders at the voices of their conscience, because praise is pleasant and it is delightful to be a soughtafter protector, and the moment comes when the king no longer reigns, but the interests of other people have taken over and imprison the king, they gag him and suffocate him, and if they have become stronger than he is, they kill him when they see that he is slow in dying. Also a common man, who is still a king in his spirit, is lost if he accepts a lower regality out of pride or greed. And he loses his spiritual serenity that comes to him from his union with God. Because the Demon, the world and the flesh can give an illusory power and joy, but at the cost of the spiritual cheerfulness that comes from the union with God.

O cheerfulness and strength of the poor in spirit, you really deserve that man may say: "How can I accept to become king in the inferior part, if by forming an alliance with you, I lose my internal strength and joy, Heaven and its true royalty?" And those blessed poor in spirit, who aim at possessing only the Kingdom of Heaven and despise all other riches not pertaining to that Kingdom, can also say: "How can we fail in our mission, which is to yield ripe fortifying juices and joyful juices for brotherly mankind that lives in the arid desert of animality and whose thirst is to be quenched so that it will not die and has need to be nourished with vital juices like a child without a nurse? We are the nurses of mankind that has lost the breast of God, and wanders barren and sick and would die of despair or tortured by the darkest scepticism, if it did not find us who, with the good-humoured activity of those who are free from every earthly tie, could convince them that there is a Life, a Joy, a Freedom, a Peace. We cannot forego such Charity for the sake of an interest that is miserable".

The trees then went to the thorn bush, which did not reject them.

But it imposed severe terms. "If you want me as your king, you must come under me. But if after electing me, you will not comply, I will make every thorn of mine a burning torture and I will devour you all, including the cedars of Lebanon".

Such is the regality that the world accepts as true! Arrogance and ferocity are mistaken by corrupt mankind for true royalty, whereas meekness and goodness are considered foolish weak sentiments. Man will not submit to God, but he submits to Evil. He is seduced by it and consequently he is burnt by it.

That is Abimelech's apologue. But now I will propose another one to you. It does not refer to far away and past events. But to present things and near at hand.

The animals decided to elect a king for themselves. And since they were shrewd they thought of electing one who would not frighten them being strong or wild. So they discarded the lion and all felids. They said they did not want rostrate eagles or any other kind of bird of prey. They did not trust the horse, which with its speed could reach them and see what they were doing; and they trusted even less the donkey, which they knew to be very patient, but also subject to sudden rage and equipped with powerful hooves. They were horrified at the idea of having a monkey as their king, because monkeys are too intelligent and revengeful. Under the pretext that the snake had favoured Satan in seducing man, they said that they did not want it as their king, notwithstanding its graceful colours and its smart movements. In actual fact they did not want it because they were aware of its silent gait, its powerful muscles and the dreadful effect of its poison. Could they possibly choose as their king a bull or any other animal gifted with pointed horns? Never! "Also the devil has them" they said. But they were thinking: "Should we one day rebel, it will wipe us out with its horns".

After so much discarding, they saw a little fat white lamb hopping merrily on a green meadow, butting his mother's round udder. He had no horns and his eyes were as meek as the April sky. He was docile and simple. And he was satisfied with everything: with the water of the little stream where he used to drink dipping his rosy little muzzle into the water; with the many-flavoured little flowers that gratified both his eyes and palate; with the thick grass where it was pleasant to lie when he was full; with the clouds, which seemed as many little lambs roving about the blue meadows up there, and inviting him to play running in the field as they did in the sky; and, above all, he was pleased with the caresses of his mother, as she still allowed him to suckle now and again while she licked his white fleece with her pinkish tongue; with the safe fold, which was well sheltered from winds, and with its soft fragrant litter, where it was lovely to sleep beside his

mother. "He is pleased. He has neither weapons nor poison. He is naive. Let us make him our king". And they did. And they were proud of him because he was beautiful and kind, admired by nearby people and loved by his subjects because of his patient meekness.

The days passed and the lamb became a ram and said: "The time has now come when I must really reign. Now I am fully aware of my mission. The will of God, Who permitted me to be elected king, has formed me for my mission and has given me the capability to reign. It is therefore just that I should exert it in a perfect manner, also because I do not want to neglect the gifts of God". And when' he saw that his subjects were doing things contrary to morality, or to charity, kindness, loyalty, moderation, obedience, respect, prudence, and so on, he raised his voice to warn them. His subjects laughed at his wise and kind bleating, which did not frighten them like the roar of felines, or the screech of vultures when they dive onto a prey, or the hiss of a snake, or the barking of a frightful dog.

The lamb, which was now a ram, did not limit himself to bleating. He went to the culprits to bring them back to their duties. But the serpent slipped away through his legs. The eagle flew away and thus deserted him. The felines pushed him aside with their paws threatening: "For the time being our soft paws are only pushing you aside. But see what is in them? Claws". Horses and similar racers began to gallop round him, making fun of him. Strong elephants and other pachyderms pushed him about with their trunks, while monkeys threw objects at him from tree-tops.

The lamb, which had become a ram, at last was angry and said: "I did not want to use my horns or my strength. Because my neck is powerful indeed, and in fact it will be taken as a model to knock down war obstacles. I did not want to make use of it, because I prefer to use love and persuasion. But since you will not yield to such weapons, I will use force, because if you fail in your duties towards me and towards God, I do not want to fail in my duty towards God and towards you. I was elected to this position by you and by God, to guide you to Justice and Good. And I want Justice and Good, that is Order, to reign here". And he punished with his horns, but only slightly, because he was kind, an obstinate cur, which continued to molest its neighbours and later with his most powerful neck he broke down the door of the den where a greedy selfish pig had stored up victuals to the detriment of other animals, and knocked down also the liana thicket, which two lustful monkeys had chosen for their illicit love affairs.

"This king has become too strong. He really wants to reign. And he wants us to live as wise animals. That is not to our liking. We must dethrone him" they decided. But a shrewd monkey suggested: "We must do it only under the pretext of a just reason. Otherwise we shall cut a bad figure with nearby peoples and we

shall be disliked by God. Therefore let us spy on every action of the lamb, which has become a ram, so that our accusation may appear a just one".

"I will see to that" said the snake. "And I, too" said the monkey. So they never lost sight of the lamb, as one crawled on the grass and the other remained on tree-tops, and every evening, when he retired to rest after the fatigue of his mission and to ponder on the measures to be taken and the words to be used to put down the rebellion and overcome the sinful habits of his subjects, all the animals gathered, with the rare exception of a few honest faithful ones, to listen to the report of the two spies and traitors. Because that is what they were.

The snake would say to its king: "I follow you because I love you, and should I see you being attacked, I want to be able to defend you". The monkey used to say: "How much I admire you! I want to help you. Look: from here I can see that someone is committing a sin beyond that meadow. Run there", and then it would say to its companions: "Today also he took part in the banquet of some sinners. He pretended to go there to convert them, but in actual fact he was an accomplice of their orgy". And the snake reported: "He even went outside the limits of his people, as he approached butterflies, blue-bottles and slimy snails. He is not faithful. He deals with impure foreigners".

That is what they were saying behind the back of the innocent lamb, and they thought that he did not know. But the spirit of the Lord, Who had formed him for his mission, enlightened him also on the plots of his subjects. The lamb could have fled indignantly, cursing them. But he was kind and humble-hearted. And he was full of love. His mistake was to love. And an even greater mistake was to persevere in his mission, loving and forgiving, at the cost of death, to accomplish God's will. Oh! What mistakes these are with men. Unforgivable! So much so that it was condemned because of them. "Let him be killed; so that we may be free from his oppression". And the snake took upon itself to kill the lamb because the snake is always the traitor…

That is the other apologue. It is for you to understand it, people of Nazareth! Because I love you, I wish you to remain at least at the level of a hostile people, without going beyond that. The love for the land where I came when a child, and in which I grew up loving you and being loved, compels Me to say to you all: "Do not be more than hostile. Do not let history say: 'His traitor and His unjust judges came from Nazareth' ".

Goodbye. Be righteous in judging and firm in willing. The former virtue applies to you all, my fellow-citizens. The latter to those among you who are not upset by dishonest thoughts. I am going… Peace be with you. »

And Jesus, sorrowfully, with His head lowered, leaves the synagogue of Nazareth, in a painful silence, broken by two or three voices only, expressing approval.

He is followed by the apostles. Alphaeus' sons are the last ones. And their eyes do not certainly look like the meek eyes of a lamb… They glare upon the hostile crowd and Judas Thaddeus does not hesitate to plant himself in front of his brother Simon and say to him: « I thought my brother was more honest and of a stronger character. »

Simon lowers his head and is silent. But the other brother, supported by other people of Nazareth, exclaims: « You ought to be ashamed of offending your eldest brother! »

« No. I am ashamed of you. Of all of you. Nazareth is not a stepmother, but a perverted stepmother to the Messiah. But listen to my prophecy. You will shed enough tears to feed a fountain, but they will not serve to wash out the true name of this town and your own from history books. Do you know what that name is? "Stupidity". Goodbye. »

James' salutation is gentler: he wishes them the light of wisdom. And they go out with Alphaeus of Sarah and two young men, who, if I am not wrong, are the two ass-drivers who escorted the donkeys that were used to go to Johanna of Chusa, when she was about to die.

The crowds, who have remained dumbfounded, whisper: « But where did He get so much wisdom? »

« And how can He work miracles? Because He really works miracles. The whole of Palestine talks about it. »

« Is He not the son of Joseph, the carpenter? We have all seen Him, at the bench of the carpenter of Nazareth, making tables and beds, adjusting wheels and locks. He did not even go to school and His Mother was His only teacher. »

« A scandal which also our father criticised » says Joseph of Alphaeus.

« But your brothers also finished school with Mary of Joseph. »

« Eh! My father was weak with his wife… » replies Joseph again.

« In that case, also your father's brother? »

« Yes. »

« But is He really the carpenter's son? »

« Can't you see Him? »

« Oh! So many are like one another! I think He is one who says He is, but He is not. »

« Where is Jesus of Joseph, then? »

« Do you think that His Mother would not recognise Him? »

« His brothers and sisters are here and they all say that He is their relative. Is that right, you two? »

The two sons of Alphaeus nod assent.

« Well, then, He is either mad or possessed, because what He says cannot come from a workman. »

« We should not listen to Him. His alleged doctrine is either delirium or possession. »

Jesus is standing in the square waiting for Alphaeus of Sarah who is speaking to a man. And while He is waiting, one of the assdrivers, who had stopped at the door of the synagogue informs Him of the slander uttered in the synagogue.

« Do not let it grieve you. A prophet generally is not honoured in his fatherland or at home. Man is so foolish that he believes that one must be almost out of this world to be a prophet. And fellowcitizens and relatives all know and remember more than anybody else the human nature of their fellow-citizen or relative. But the truth is always triumphant. And now I say goodbye to you. Peace be with you. »

« Thank you, Master, for curing my mother. »

« You deserved it because you believed. My people here are inert, because there is no faith here. Let us go, My friends. We shall be leaving tomorrow at dawn. »

246. Our Lady Teaches the Magdalene.

8th August 1945.

« Where shall we stop, my Lord? » asks James of Zebedee, while they are walking through a gorge between two hills, the sides of which are cultivated and green from foot to top.

« At Bethlehem in Galilee. But during the warm hours we shall stop on the mountain overlooking Meraba. So your brother will be delighted once again seeing the sea » and Jesus smiles. He then concludes: « We men could have gone farther, but we have the women disciples following us, and although they never complain, we must not tire them excessively. »

« They never complain. That is true. We are more inclined to complain » agrees Bartholomew.

« And yet they are less accustomed to this life… » says Peter.

« Perhaps that is why they live it willingly » says Thomas.

« No, Thomas. They do it willingly out of love. You may be sure that neither My Mother nor the other housewives, such as Mary of Alphaeus, Salome and Susanna leave their homes willingly to come along the roads of the world and among people. And Martha and Johanna, when also the latter will come, not being accustomed to such fatigue, would not do it willingly if they were not urged by love. With regard to Mary of Magdala only a mighty love can give her the strength to undergo this torture » says Jesus.

« Why did You order her to come, then, if You know it is a torture? » asks the Iscariot. « It does no good to her or to us. »

« Nothing but the clear unquestionable demonstration of her change could persuade the world. And Mary wants to persuade the world of that. Her separation from the past has been complete. It is complete. »

« That is still to be seen. It is early to say so. When one gets used to a certain kind of life, it is difficult to part with it. Friendships and nostalgia take us back to it » says the Iscariot.

« Are you feeling nostalgia, then, for your previous life? » asks Matthew.

« I… no. I was just saying. I am I… a man, I love the Master and… in short, I have within me the elements that help me to be steadfast in my purpose. But she is a woman, and what a woman! And even if she were very firm, it is never very pleasant to have her with us. Should we meet some rabbis, priests or important Pharisees, you may rest assured that their comments might not be pleasing. When I think of it, I blush in advance. »

« Do not contradict yourself, Judas. If you have really broken off with your past, as you say, why do you regret so much that a poor soul should follow us to complete her conversion to Good? »

« Out of love, Master. I do everything out of love, too: for You. »

« Improve your love, then. Love, to be really such, must not be exclusive. When one can love only one object, and cannot love anything else, even if one is loved by what one loves, it is clear that that is not true love. Perfect love loves, with due gradation, all mankind and also animals and vegetables, stars and water, because it sees everything in God. One loves God, as is proper, and one loves everything in God. Be careful: exclusive love is often selfishness. Endeavour therefore to love everybody else out of love. »

« Yes, Master. »

The subject of the discussion is in the meantime proceeding beside Mary with the other women, and she is unaware of being the cause of so much talk.

They reach and go through the village of Japhia, but none of its citizens shows any desire to follow the Master or detain Him. So they proceed and as the apostles appear to be worried about the apathy of the place, Jesus endeavours to calm them.

The valley runs in a westward direction and another village can be seen lying at the foot of another mountain. This village, which I hear being called Meraba, is also unconcerned. Only some children approach the apostles while they are drawing water from a clear fountain leaning against a house. Jesus caresses them and asks their names, and the children ask His, who He is and where He is going. Also an old, bent, almost blind man approaches them and stretches out his hand to receive alms, which is in fact given to him.

They take to the road again, climbing a hill, the one lying across

the valley, into which flow its little rivers, now reduced to a trickle of water or to stones parched by the sun. But the road is good and runs through olive-groves first and then through other trees, which intertwine their branches and form a green gallery over the road. They reach the top, which is crowned with a forest of rustling ash-trees, if I am not mistaken. And they sit down there to have a rest and some food. And while eating and resting, they enjoy a delightful sight, because the view is beautiful, with the Mount Carmel chain on their left, to the west. It is a very green mountainous chain, in which all the most beautiful shades of green are present. And where the mountain ends, there is the sea, a shining, open, endless sea, stretching with its surface lightly rippled by little waves towards the north, washing the shores, which from the promontory formed by the last ramifications of Mount Carmel extend towards Ptolemais and other towns and then fade away in the mist near the Syro-Phoenician coast. It is not possible to see the sea south of the Carmel promontory, because it is hidden by the chain of mountains, which is higher than the hill where the apostolic group is gathered.

Hours go by in the shade of the airy rustling wood. Some sleep, some speak in a low voice, some watch. John leaves his companions and climbs up as high as possible to have a better view. Jesus retires to a thicket to meditate and pray. The women have withdrawn behind a hedge of honeysuckle in bloom and have refreshed themselves at a tiny spring, which is reduced to a trickle and forms a pool on the ground, as the water is so scarce that it cannot flow away. The elder women, being tired, have fallen asleep, while the Blessed Virgin, Martha and Susanna talk of their far away homes and Mary says that She would like to have the beautiful shrub in bloom to adorn Her little grotto.

The Magdalene, who had let her hair down, as she could not stand its weight, puts it up again and says: « I am going to John, now that he is with Simon, to look at the sea with them. »

« I am coming, too » replies the Blessed Virgin.

Martha and Susanna remain with their sleeping companions.

To reach the two apostles they have to pass near the thicket where Jesus has retired to pray.

« Prayer is My Son's rest » whispers Mary.

The Magdalene replies to Her: « I think that it is also essential for Him to be alone in order to keep His wonderful control, which the world puts to hard tests. Do You know, Mother? I have done what You told me. Every night I seclude myself for a more or less long time to restore within me the calm, which many things upset. And I feel much stronger afterwards. »

« At present you feel strong, later you will feel happy. Believe Me, Mary, both in peace and in struggle, in joy and in sorrow, our

spirit needs to dive into the ocean of meditation to rebuild what the world and events demolish and to achieve fresh strength to climb higher and higher. In Israel we use and misuse vocal prayer. I do not mean that it is useless or displeasing to God. But I say that meditation, mental elevation to God is always much more useful to the soul, because by contemplating His divine perfection and our misery, or the misery of so many poor souls, not to criticise them but to be indulgent to them and understand them, and to be grateful to God Who has supported us keeping us away from sin, or has forgiven us, so that we would not be left in sin, by meditating thus, we are really successful in praying, that is in loving. Because prayer, to be really such, must be love. Otherwise it is mumbling of lips from which the soul is absent. »

« But is it lawful to speak to God when one's lips are still dirty with so many profane words? In my hours of meditation, which I do as You, my most sweet apostle, taught me, I do violence to my heart, which would like to say to God: "I love You"… »

« No! Why? »

« Because I feel I would be making a sacrilegious offer by offering my heart… »

« Do not do that, My dear daughter. First of all, your heart has been reconsecrated by the Son's forgiveness, and the Father sees only that forgiveness. But even if Jesus had not yet forgiven you, and in an ignored solitude, which could be both material and moral, you should shout to God: "I love You. Father, forgive me my miseries. I am sorry for them because they grieve You", believe Me, Mary, God the Father would absolve you Himself and your cry of love would be dear to Him. Give yourself up to love. Do not do violence to it. Nay, let it become as violent as a blaze. A fire consumes everything that is material, but it does not destroy one molecule of air. Because air is incorporeal. On the contrary it purifies it from the tiny debris blown by winds and makes it lighter. Love does the same to souls. It may consume man's matter quicker, if God allows that, but it will not destroy his spirit. It will, instead, increase its vitality and will make it pure and agile to be able to ascend to God. See John over there? He is only a boy. And yet he is an eagle. He is the strongest of all the apostles. Because he has understood the secret of strength, of spiritual formation: loving meditation. »

« But he is pure. I… He is a boy. I… »

« Look at the Zealot, then. He is not a boy. He has lived, struggled, hated. He admits it frankly. But he has learned to meditate. And he, too, believe Me, is well high up. See? They look for each other, those two. Because they feel they are alike. They have reached the same perfect age of the spirit and by the same means: mental prayer. Through it the boy has become virile in his spirit and the

man, already old and tired, has recovered a strong virility. And do you know another one, who without being an apostle will make much progress, nay, has already made much progress, because of his natural inclination to meditation, which has become a spiritual necessity for him, since he is a friend of Jesus'? Your brother. »

« My Lazarus?… Oh! Mother! Since You know so many things because God shows them to You, tell me, how will Lazarus treat me, the first time we meet? Before he was disdainfully silent. But he did it because I would not bear being criticised. I have been very cruel to my brother and sister… I now realise it. Now that he knows that he can speak, what will he say to me? I am afraid of his frank reproach. Oh! he will certainly remind me of all the grief of which I was the cause. I would like to fly to Lazarus. But I am afraid of him. I used to go there, and not even the memories of my dead mother, her tears, which were still warm on the things she had used, tears she had shed for me, through my fault, would upset me. My heart was cynical, shameless, deaf to every voice, except to "evil". But now I no longer have the wicked strength of Evil and I tremble… What will Lazarus do to me? »

« He will open his arms to you and will call you, more with his heart than with his lips "my darling sister". He is so formed in God that he can but behave thus. Be not afraid. He will not say one word about your past. It is just as if I could see him, he is there at Bethany and his days of waiting are very long for him. He is waiting for you, to clasp you to his heart, to sate his brotherly love. All you have to do is love him as he loves you to enjoy the happiness of being born of the same womb. »

« I would love him even if he reproached me. I deserve it. »

« But he will love you only. Nothing else. »

They have joined John and Simon who are talking of their future trips and stand up reverently when the Mother of the Lord arrives.

« We have come too, to praise the Lord for the beautiful works of His creation. »

« Have you ever seen the sea, Mother? »

« Oh! I have. And although it was then stormy, it was less agitated than My heart, and less bitter than My tears, when I was fleeing along the coast from Gaza towards the Red Sea, with My Child in My arms, and the fear of Herod behind My back. And I saw it on our way back. And then it was springtime both on the earth and in My heart. The spring season of our return home. And Jesus clapped His little hands, happy as He was seeing new things… And Joseph and I were also happy, notwithstanding that the kindness of the Lord had made our exile at Matarea less hard, in a thousand ways. »

And their conversation goes on whilst I can no longer see or hear.

247. At Bethlehem in Galilee.

9th August 1945.

It is evening when they reach Bethlehem in Galilee. It is obvious that it is the destiny of towns with this name to lie on undulating hills, covered with green, woods, meadows where flocks graze, descending to the folds at night. The sky is still red after a glorious sunset, which is just over, and the air is full of pastoral music of bells and trembling bleatings, which are joined by the merry shouting of children and by the voices of mothers calling them.

« Judas of Simon, go with Simon and find lodgings for us and for the women. There is an inn in the centre of the village and we shall meet you there. »

While Judas and Simon obey, Jesus turns to His Mother and says: « This time it will not be like the other Bethlehem. You will find where to rest, Mother. Few people move about at this time of the year and there is no edict. »

« In this season it would be pleasant to sleep also on meadows or amongst these shepherds and the little lambs » and Mary smiles at Her Son and at some little shepherds who are staring at Her curiously.

She smiles in such a way that one of them touches another with his elbow and whispers to him: « It must be Her » and he comes forward, sure of himself, saying: « Hail, Mary, full of grace. Is the Lord with You? »

Mary replies with an even sweeter smile: « There is the Lord » and She points to Jesus, Who has turned round to speak to His cousins, asking them to give alms to the poor who are approaching them with plaintive requests. And She touches Her Son lightly saying to Him: « Son, these little shepherds are looking for You and they have recognised Me. I do not know how… »

« Isaac must have been here and left the perfume of revelation. Young man, come here. »

The little shepherd, a little swarthy fellow, about twelvefourteen years old, strong though lean, with very dark bright eyes, and an ebony shock of hair, clad in sheep skin - and he seems to me a young copy of the Precursor - approaches Jesus smiling happily, as if he were enchanted.

« Peace to you, boy. How did you recognise Mary? »

« Because only the Mother of the Saviour could have such a smile and countenance. I was told: "The countenance of an angel, eyes like stars and a smile sweeter than the kiss of a mother, as sweet as Her name, which is Mary, so holy as to be able to bend over the new-born God". That is what I saw in Her and I greeted Her because I was looking for You. We were looking for You, Lord, and… I did not dare greet You first. »

« Who spoke to you of Us? »

« Isaac, from the other Bethlehem, and he promised to take us to You in autumn. »

« Was Isaac here? »

« He is still in this area with many disciples. And he spoke to us shepherds. And we believed in his word, Lord: allow us to adore You as our companions did on that blessed night » and while he kneels down on the dust of the road, he utters a cry to the other shepherds who have stopped their flocks at the gate of the town (gate so to say, because it is not a walled town), where also Jesus had stopped, waiting for the women to enter the town together.

The little shepherd shouts: « Father, brothers and friends, we have found the Lord. Come and worship Him. »

And the shepherds come crowding with their flocks round Jesus and they beg Him not to go elsewhere but to accept their poor house, which is not far, as a dwelling place for Himself and His friends. « It is a wide fold » they explain « because God protects us and there are rooms and porches full of fragrant hay. The rooms are for Mother and Her sisters, because they are women. But there is one also for You. The others can sleep with us in the porches, on the hay. »

« I shall stay with you, too. And I shall rest more pleasantly than if I slept in a king's room. But let us go and tell Judas and Simon first. »

« I will go, Masters » says Peter and he goes away with James of Zebedee.

They stop on the side of the road awaiting the return of the four apostles.

The shepherds look at Jesus as if He were already God in His glory. The younger ones are really delighted and they seem to be wishing to impress in their minds every detail of Jesus and Mary, who has bent to caress some lambs, which are rubbing their heads against Her knees and bleating.

« There was one, in the house of My relative Elizabeth, which used to lick My plaits every time it saw Me. I called it "friend", because it was My friend, just like a child, and it came to Me every time it could. This one reminds Me of it with its eyes of two different shades. Do not kill it! Also the other was allowed to live because of its love for Me. »

« It's a ewe-lamb Woman, and we were going to sell it, because of the different shades of its eyes and I think it can see very little with one of them. But we will keep it if You wish so. »

« Oh! yes! I would not like any little lamb to be killed… They are so innocent and with their child-like voices they seem to be calling their mothers. I would think I was killing a baby if I had to kill one of these. »

« But, Woman, if all the lambs were to live, there would be no room for us on the earth » says the oldest shepherd.

« I know. But I am thinking of their pain, and of the pain of their mothers. They weep so much when their little ones are taken away from them. They look like real mothers, like us. I cannot bear to see anybody suffer, but it tears My heart to see a mother tortured. It is a different grief from any other, because the shock for the loss of a son tears not only our hearts and brains, but our very wombs. We mothers are always united to our sons. And it rends us completely, when they are taken away from us. » Mary no longer smiles, but tears shine in Her blue eyes and She looks at Jesus, Who is listening to Her and looks at Her, while She lays a hand on His arm, as if She were afraid He might be torn away from Her side.

A small escort of armed men arrives from a dusty road: six men together with some people who are shouting. The shepherds look and whisper something to one another. They then look at Mary and Jesus.

The oldest one says: « So it was a good job that You did not go into Bethlehem this evening. »

« Why? »

« Because those people, who passed by going to town, have gone to tear a son from his mother. »

« Oh! But why? »

« To kill him. »

« Oh! no! What has he done? »

Jesus also asks the same question and the apostles have gathered to hear.

« Rich Joel was found dead on the mountain road: he had been killed. He was coming back from Sicaminon with a lot of money. But he was not killed by highwaymen, because the money was still there'. The servant, who was accompanying him, said that his master had told him to run ahead and inform relatives of their return, and on the way he saw the young man, whom they are now going to kill, going toward the place where the man was murdered. And two men of the town now swear that they saw the young man attack Joel. Joel's relatives now demand his death. And if he is a murderer… »

« Do you not think he is? »

« I don't think it is possible. The young man is a little older than a boy, he is good, and is always with his mother, as he is her only son and she is a widow and a holy living person. He is well off. He does not bother with women. He is neither quarrelsome nor foolish. So why did he kill? »

« Perhaps he has some enemies. »

« Who? Joel, the dead man, or Abel, the one who is accused »

« The latter. »

« Ah! I would not know… But… No, I would not know. »

« Be frank, man. »

« Lord, it is something I am thinking of, and Isaac told us that we must not think ill of our neighbour. »

« But one must have courage to speak to save an innocent person. »

« If I speak, whether I am right or wrong, I shall have to flee from here, because Aser and Jacob are powerful. »

« Speak without fear. You will not have to flee. »

« Lord, Abel's mother is young, beautiful and wise. Aser is not wise, neither is Jacob. The former likes the widow and the latter… everybody in town knows that the latter sleeps in Joel's bed. I think that… »

« I see. Let us go, My friends. You women stay here with the shepherds. I shall be back soon. »

« No, Son. I am coming with You. »

Jesus is already walking fast towards the centre of the town. The shepherds are uncertain as to what to do, but they leave the flocks to the younger ones, who stay with all the women, with the exception of the Blessed Virgin and Mary of Alphaeus, who follow Jesus and they go to meet the apostolic group.

At the third road crossing the main street in Bethlehem they meet the Iscariot, Simon, Peter and James, who are coming towards them gesticulating and shouting.

« What a terrible thing, Master! And how painful! » exclaims Peter who is deeply upset.

« A son torn off his mother to be killed, and she is defending him like a hyena. But she is a woman against armed men » adds Simon Zealot.

« Many parts of her body are already bleeding » says the Iscariot.

« They broke her door down because she had barricaded it » concludes James of Zebedee.

« I am going to her. »

« Oh! yes! You are the only one who can console her. »

They turn right, then left, towards the town centre. It is now possible to see the excited tumultuous crowd pressing near Abel's house, and the heart-rending, inhuman, wild and at the same time pitiful shouting of a woman can be heard.

Jesus quickens His pace and arrives at a very small square, a widened curve of the street rather than a square, where the uproar is at its greatest.

The woman is still contending for her son with the guards, holding on with one hand, which is like an iron claw, to the ruin of the knocked down door, and to her son's belt with the other one and she savagely bites anyone who tries to loosen her grip, notwithstanding they deal her many blows and pull her hair so cruelly

as to throw her head back. When she does not bite she shouts: « Leave him! Murderers! He's innocent! The night Joel was killed he was in bed beside me! Murderers! Slanderers! Foul Perjurers! »

And the young man, whom the armed men are holding by the shoulders and dragging by the arms, turns round terror-stricken and shouts: « Mother, mother! Why must I die if I have not done anything? »

He is a handsome tall slender young man, with dark mild eyes, and dark wavy hair. His torn garment shows the young agile body of an adolescent.

Jesus with the help of those who accompany Him, pushes His way through the crowd, as compact as a rock, and reaches the pitiful group just at the moment when the exhausted woman is torn away from the door and dragged along the stony road, like a sack, tied to the body of her son. But that lasts for only a few yards. A more violent jerk tears the mother's hand off the young man's belt and the woman falls prone on the ground beating the road with her face, which bleeds profusely. But she gets up on her knees, stretching out her arms, while her son, who is being dragged away swiftly, as far as the crowds allow, as they open out with difficulty, frees his left arm and waves it, twisting round and shouting: « Mother! Goodbye! Remember, at least you, that I am innocent! ». The woman looks at him with staring eyes, she then faints and drops to the ground.

Jesus stops before the group of captors. « Stop for one moment. I order you! » His countenance allows no objection.

« Who are You? » aggressively asks a citizen in the group. « We do not know You. Move aside and let us go so that he may be killed before night. »

« I am a Rabbi. The greatest. In the name of Jehovah stop, or He will strike you by lightning ». In the meantime He seems to be striking by lightning. « Who are the witnesses against this man? »

« I, him and him » replies the man who had spoken before.

« Your testimony is not valid because it is false. »

« How can You say that? We are ready to swear it. »

« Your oath is a sin. »

« We are sinning? Are we? »

« You are. As you nurse your lust and your hatred, as you are greedy for wealth, as you are murderers, so you are also perjurers. You have sold yourselves to Filth. You are capable of any filthy deed. »

« Watch how You speak! I am Aser… »

« And I am Jesus. »

« You do not belong to here, You are neither a priest nor a judge. You are nothing. You are a foreigner. »

« Yes, I am the Foreigner because the earth is not My Kingdom.

But I am Judge and Priest. Not only of this small portion of Israel, but of the whole of Israel and of the whole world. »

« Let's go, let's go! We are dealing with a mad man » says the other witness and he gives Jesus a vigorous push to draw Him aside.

« You shall not take another step » thunders Jesus, Whose majestic countenance subdues and paralyses, as it can give life and joy when He wishes. « You shall not take another step. You do not believe what I am saying? Well, look. There is no dust of the Temple here, or water from it, neither are there words written with ink to make the water bitter, which is judgement on jealousy and adultery (1). But I am here. And I will give judgement. » Jesus' voice is so piercing that it sounds like a blare.

People throng to see. Only the Blessed Virgin and Mary of Alphaeus have stayed to help the mother who has fainted.

« And this is My judgement. Give me a pinch of dust from the road and a drop of water in a jug. And while they are being brought to Me, you who are accusing, and you who are accused, reply to Me. Are you innocent, son? Say so frankly to Him Who is your Saviour. »

« I am, Lord. »

« Aser, can you swear that you have spoken but the truth? »

« I swear it. I have no reason to lie. I swear it by the altar. May fire descend from Heaven and burn me if I am not telling the truth. »

« Jacob, can you swear that you are sincere in accusing and that there is no secret motive urging you to lie? »

« I swear by Jehovah. Only the love for my slain friend induces me to speak. I have no personal grudge against him. »

« And you, servant, can you swear that you have told the truth? »

« I will swear it a thousand times, if necessary! My master, my poor master! » and he covers his head with his mantle.

« Good. Here is the water and here is the dust. And this is the word. "Holy Father and Most High God, pass judgement on truth through Me, so that life and honour may be given to the innocent man and to the anguished mother, and suitable punishment to those who are not innocent. But because of the grace, which I enjoy in Your eyes, let neither fire nor death, but a long expiation come to them who have committed sin". »

He says these words stretching His hand over the pitcher, as priests do at the altar, during Mass at offertory. He then dips His right hand into the pitcher and with His wet hand He sprays the four men under judgement and makes each drink a drop of water: first the young fellow and then the others. He then folds His arms across His chest and looks at them.

Also the crowds look, but after a few moments they utter a cry

(1) For details of old Jewish rite, see Numbers 5, 11-31.

and throw themselves down, with their faces on the ground. The four men then, who are lined up, look at one another and shout in their turn: the young man out of amazement, the others out of horror because they see their faces covered with sudden leprosy, whereas the young fellow is immune from it.

The servant throws himself at the feet of Jesus, Who steps aside, like everybody else, including the soldiers, and taking young Abel by the hand draws him away as well, so that he may not become contaminated near the three lepers. And the servant shouts: « No! No! Forgive me! I am a leper! They paid me to delay my master until evening, so that they could kill him on the desert road. They made me unshoe his mule on purpose. They instructed me how to lie saying that I had come ahead. Instead I was with them killing him. And I will also tell You why they did it. Because Joel had found out that Jacob was in love with his young wife and because Aser wanted the mother of this young man and she refused him. So they made an agreement to get rid of Joel and Abel at the same time and then have a nice time with the women. I have told You everything. Cleanse me of my leprosy! Abel, you are good, pray for me! »

« Abel, go to your mother, so that when she comes round, she may see your face and thus come back to life happily. And you… I should say to you: "Let it be done to you what you have done". And it would be human justice. But I am entrusting you to a superhuman expiation. The leprosy, which you abhor, saves you from being seized and killed as you deserve. People of Bethlehem, step aside, open out, as the water of the sea did, and let these men go to their long imprisonment. A dreadful imprisonment! More dreadful than sudden death. Divine pity has granted them the possibility to make amends, if they wish so. Go! »

The crowds throng against the walls of houses leaving the centre of the road free, and the three men, covered with leprosy as if they had been affected by the disease for years, go towards the mountain, walking one behind the other. In the silence of approaching twilight, when all birds and animals become quiet, only their moaning can be heard.

« Purify the street with plenty water, after lighting fires on it. And you, soldiers, go and report that justice has been done according to the most perfect Mosaic Law. » And Jesus is about to go where His Mother and Mary of Clopas are still assisting the woman who is coming to herself slowly, while her son is caressing and kissing her cold hands.

But the people of Bethlehem with almost terrified respect beg Him: « Speak to us, Lord. You are really powerful. You are certainly the One mentioned by the man who came here announcing the Messiah. »

« I will speak to you tonight, near the fold of the shepherds. I am now going to comfort Abel's mother. »

And He goes to the woman, who is sitting on the lap of Mary of Alphaeus and is recovering her senses. She looks at the loving face of Our Lady Who smiles at her, but she is not fully aware of the situation until her eyes rest on the dark haired head of her son bent over her trembling hands, and she asks: « Am I dead, too? Is this Limbo? »

« No, woman. This is the Earth. This is your son saved from death. And this is Jesus, My Son, the Saviour. »

The first reaction of the woman is simply human. She collects all her strength and leans forward to take the bent head of her son in her hands, she sees that he is safe and sound, she kisses him frantically, weeping, laughing, repeating all possible pet names to express her joy.

« Yes, mother, yes. But now look, not at me, at Him, at Him Who saved me. Bless the Lord. »

The woman, still too weak to stand up or get up on her knees, stretches out her trembling bleeding hands and takes Jesus' hand kissing and wetting it with tears.

Jesus lays His left hand on her head saying to her: « Be happy. In peace. And be always good. And you, too, Abel. »

« No, my Lord. My son's life and mine are Yours, because You have saved them. Let him go with Your disciples, as he has been wishing to, since they were here. I offer him to You with so much joy and I beg You to allow me to follow him, to serve him and the servants of God. »

« And what about your house? »

« Oh! Lord! Can one risen from death have the same affections one had before dying? Myrtha has come back from death and out of hell through You. In this town I may go as far as hating those who tortured me through my child. And You preach love. I know. So let poor Myrtha love the Only One Who deserves love, and let her love His mission and His servants. Just now I am still exhausted and I would not be able to follow You. But allow me, my Lord, to do so as soon as I am fit. I will follow You and be with my Abel… »

« You will follow your son and Me. Be happy and in peace now. With My peace. Goodbye. »

And while the woman goes into her house supported by her son and other kind people, Jesus leaves the town with the shepherds, the apostles, His Mother and Mary of Alphaeus, and goes towards the fold, which is situated at the end of a road, in the fields.

… A bonfire lights up the meeting. Many people sitting in semicircles are waiting for Jesus to come and speak to them. In the meantime they are talking of the events of the day. Abel is there as well and many congratulate him stating that everybody believed

in his innocence.

The young man cannot help replying: « But you were still prepared to kill me! Even you, who had greeted me at the doorstep of my house, just at the time Joel was killed ». And he adds: « But I forgive you in Jesus' name. »

Jesus is now coming from the fold towards them: tall, clad in white, surrounded by the apostles, followed by the shepherds and women.

« Peace to you all.

If My coming here has served to establish the Kingdom of God among you, blessed be the Lord. If My coming here has served to make innocence shine, blessed be the Lord. If My coming here in time to prevent a crime serves also the purpose of giving three culprits the possibility of redeeming themselves, blessed be the Lord. Of all the many things on which this day induces us to meditate, and on which we shall be meditating while night falls to envelop in its darkness the joy of two hearts and the remorse of three others - and in its darkness it hides, as in a chaste veil, the joyful tears of the former and the bitter ones of the latter, which, however God sees - there is one thing which points out that there is nothing useless in what God gave as His Law.

The Law given by God, nominally, is strictly observed in Israel. But in actual fact it is not. The Law is analysed, dissected, hashed, to the extent of causing it to die through the torture of petty quibbles. It is there. But as a mummified body has no life, no breathing and no blood circulation, notwithstanding it looks like a body that is motionless because fast asleep, so the Law has no life, no breathing, no blood in far too many hearts. One can sit on a mummy as on a stool. One can lay things on a mummy, such as clothes, even filth, if one wishes, and the mummy will not rebel, because it has no life. Likewise too many people make a stool of the Law, a place where to lay things or discharge their filth, sure that it will not rebel in their consciences, which are dead.

I could compare a large portion of Israel to the petrified forests that one can see strewn in the Nile valley and in the Egyptian desert. They were woods, woods of living trees, nourished with sap, rustling in the sunshine, with beautiful leaves, flowers and fruit. They made of the spot where they came up a small earthly paradise, dear to men and to animals, who forgot the desolate aridity of the desert, the parching thirst which sand causes to man, penetrating his throat with its burning dust. They forgot the merciless sun that calcifies corpses in a short time, removing their flesh and turning it into dust, leaving clean skeletons stretched on the sand, so clean that they look as if they had been diligently polished by a workman. They forgot everything in the green rustling shade, rich in water and fruit, which refreshened and comforted

them and gave them energy for new journeys.

Then, for some unknown reason, like cursed things, they withered like trees that, after dying, still serve to light fires for man, or bonfires to illuminate the night, to keep away wild animals, or disperse the dampness of the night for pilgrims far from their houses. But those did not serve as firewood. They became like stones. The silica of the soil seemed to have climbed from the roots up to the trunk, the branches and leaves, through witchcraft. The winds then broke the thinner branches, which had become like alabaster, which is hard and soft at the same time. But the stronger branches are still there, on the powerful trunks, to deceive tired caravans. In fact in the dazzling reflection of the sun or the spectral moonlight, caravans can see the shadows of the straight trunks stand out on tablelands or at the bottom of valleys, which receive water only at the time of the fertile floods, and they rush towards the phantom forests, both because they are anxious to find shelter, refreshment, water and fresh fruit, and because their tired eyes are dazzled by the sun shining on the shadeless sand. True phantoms! Illusive likeness of living bodies. Real presence of dead things.

I saw them. Although I was little older than a baby, I remember them as one of the saddest things on the Earth. That is how they appeared to Me, until I touched, experienced, and weighed the entirely sad things of the Earth, because they are completely dead things. Immaterial things, that is dead virtues and dead souls. The former are dead in souls, the latter are dead because they killed themselves.

There is the Law in Israel. But it is there like the petrified trees in the desert that have become silica, death, deceit. They are things destined to wear away without being of any use. Nay, they are harmful, because they cause mirages that allure people diverting them from true oases and thus cause them to die of thirst, hunger and desolation. They are death, attracting others to death, as we read in certain tales of pagan myths.

You have had an instance today of what a Law is when it is reduced to stone in a soul that has also become stone. It is all kinds of sins and the cause of misfortune. May this serve you to learn how to live and to let the Law live within you, in its integrity, which I enlighten with the light of mercy.

It is the dead of night. The stars are looking down at us and God is looking down at us as well. Look up to the starry sky and elevate your souls to God. And without criticising the unhappy men already punished by God, and without any pride of being free from such sins, promise to God and to yourselves that you will not fall into the aridity of the cursed trees in the Egyptian deserts and valleys.

Peace be with you. »

He blesses them and then withdraws into the large fold enclosure, surrounded by rustic porches under which the shepherds have spread much hay as beds for the servants of the Lord.

248. Going towards Sicaminon.

10th August 1945.

The calm sunny morning helps the apostolic group to climb up some hills stretching westwards, that is towards the sea.

« We did the right thing by arriving at the mountains early in the morning. We could not have stayed in the plain in this heat. It is shady and cool here. I feel sorry for those who are following the Roman road. It is all right in winter, of course » says Matthew.

« After these hills we shall meet the wind from the sea. It always mitigates the air » says Jesus.

« We shall eat up on the top. The other day it was so beautiful. And from here it must be even more so because we are closer to Mount Carmel and to the sea » adds James of Alphaeus.

« Our fatherland is beautiful indeed! » exclaims Andrew.

« Yes. There is really everything. Mountains covered with snow, pleasant hills, lakes and rivers, all kinds of trees, and there is also the sea. It is really the delicious country celebrated by our psalmists, prophets, our great warriors and poets » says Thaddeus.

« Repeat some of the passages, since you know so many things » asks James of Zebedee.

« "With the beauty of Paradise He formed the earth of Judas.

With the smiles of His angels He adorned the land of Naphtali and with rivers of heavenly honey He flavoured the fruit of his land…

The whole creation is mirrored in you, gem of God, granted by God to His holy people.

O blissful land, your beauty is for the hearts of your children sweeter than the rich grapes maturing on your hillsides, more delicious than the milk filling the udders of your ewe-lambs, more inebriating than the honey with the flavour of flowers adorning you.

The sky descended to become a river uniting two gems, forming a pendant and a girdle on your green dress.

The Jordan sings, one of your seas smiles, while the other reminds men that God is full of awe and in the evening the hills seem to be dancing like merry girls on a meadow, and at angelical dawns your mountains pray or sing halleluja in the ardour of the sun, or adore Your power with the stars, Most High Lord.

You did not enclose us in narrow borders, but You gave us the

open sea to tell us that the world is ours". »

« Lovely! Really beautiful! I have only been on the lake and to Jerusalem; for years and years I have seen nothing else. So far I know only Palestine. But I am sure there is nothing more beautiful in the world » says Peter full of national pride.

« Mary was telling me that also the Nile valley is beautiful » says John.

« And the man of Endor speaks of Cyprus as if it were paradise » adds Simon.

« Eh! But our land!… »

And all the apostles with the exception of the Iscariot and Thomas, who are with Jesus a little ahead of the others, go on praising the beauty of Palestine.

The women are last to come, as they cannot restrain themselves from picking seeds of flowers to be sown in their gardens, also because the flowers are beautiful and will be a remembrance of their journey.

Some eagles, I think they are sea-eagles or vultures, are flying in wide circles over the hill tops, swooping down now and again in search of prey. And two vultures begin to fight, attacking each other in swift evolutions in the air, both losing feathers at each assault: an elegant but fierce duel that ends with the flight of the defeated one, which perhaps withdraws to die on a remote mountain-top. At least that is what everybody thinks, judging by its laborious flying, as if it were about to die.

« Greed did it no good » comments Thomas.

« Greed and stubbornness always cause trouble. Also those three yesterday!… Eternal mercy! What a dreadful destiny! » says Matthew.

« Will they never recover? » asks Andrew.

« Ask the Master ».

When Jesus is asked, He replies: « It would be better to ask whether they will convert. Because I solemnly tell you that it is better to die a holy leper than a healthy sinner. Leprosy will remain on the Earth, in the grave. Sins last for ever. »

« I liked Your speech of yesterday evening very much » says the Zealot.

« I, instead, didn't. It was too severe for too many people in Israel » says the Iscariot.

« Are you one of them? »

« No, Master. »

« Well, then. Why are you concerned? »

« Because it could be detrimental to You. »

« Should I then come to terms with sinners and be their accomplice, in order to avoid possible detriment? »

« I don't say that. You could not do that. But be quiet. Do not

alienate the mighty ones… »

« Silence gives consent. I do not consent to sin. Neither of common people, nor of mighty ones. »

« See what happened to the Baptist? »

« His glory. »

« His glory? I think it was his ruin. »

« Persecution and death suffered to be faithful to our duty are a glory for man. A martyr is always glorious. »

« But by his death he prevents himself from being a master, and grieves disciples and relatives. He frees himself from every pain, but leaves others in greater suffering. The Baptist has no relatives, that is true. But he still has duties towards his disciples. »

« Even if he had relatives, it would still be the same. Vocation is more than blood. »

« And what about the fourth commandment. »

« It comes after those concerning God. »

« You saw yesterday how a mother can suffer for her son… »

« Mother! Come here. »

Mary hastens towards Jesus and asks: « What do You want, Son? »

« Mother, Judas of Kerioth is pleading Your cause, he loves You and loves Me. »

« My cause? In regard to what? »

« He wants to persuade Me to be more prudent, so that I may not have to suffer like our relative, the Baptist. And he is telling Me that sons must have mercy on their mothers, by sparing themselves on their behalf, because that is what the fourth commandment prescribes. What do You say? You may speak, Mother, so that You may kindly instruct our Judas. »

« I say that I would no longer love My Son as God, that I would begin to doubt whether I have always been mistaken and whether I have always been deceived concerning His Nature, if I saw Him fail in His perfection, by lowering His thought to human consideration, losing sight of superhuman considerations that is, the redemption, the effort to redeem men, for their own sake and for the glory of God, at the cost of procuring for Himself affliction and hatred. I would still love Him as a Son led astray by a wicked power, I would love Him out of pity, because He is My Son, because He would be a poor wretch, but I could not love Him with the fullness of love with which I love Him now that I see Him faithful to the Lord. »

« You mean to Himself. »

« To the Lord. Now He is the Messiah of the Lord and must be loyal to the Lord like anybody else, more than anybody else, because His mission is greater than any other that was, is or ever will be on the Earth, and He certainly has from God suitable assistance for such a great mission. »

« But if anything wrong happened to Him, would You not weep? »

« I would shed all My tears. But I would weep tears of blood if I saw Him faithless to God. »

« That will greatly diminish the guiltiness of those who will persecute Him. »

« Why? »

« Because both You and He almost justify them. »

« Do not believe it. Their sins will always be the same in the eyes of God, whether we judge that it is inevitable, or we deem that no man in Israel ought to be guilty towards the Messiah. »

« Man in Israel? And if they were Gentiles would it not be the same? »

« No, it would not. The Gentiles would be in the wrong only towards a fellow-man. Israel knows who Jesus is. »

« Many in Israel do not know. »

« They do not want to know. They are deliberately incredulous. They thus add incredulity to anti-charity and they deny hope. It is not a small sin, Judas, to tread on the three main virtues. It is a grave sin, more grave spiritually than any material action against My Son. »

Judas, who is short of arguments, bends to lace a sandal and is left behind.

They reach the top of the mountain, or rather a ledge almost at the top, a ledge protruding forth as if it wished to run towards the beautiful blue sea. A thick wood of holm-oaks filters a clear emerald light, pierced by soft sunbeams as thin as needles. The charming airy mountain crest opens on to the nearby sea coast, opposite the majestic Mount Carmel chain. Below, at the foot of the mountain with the ledge protruding as if it were anxious to fly up, after some little fields situated in the central part of the mountain side, there is a narrow valley with a deep torrent, which must certainly be imposingly impetuous in time of floods, but is now reduced to a tiny silvery foaming stream in the middle of its bed. The torrent flows towards the sea along the foot of Mount Carmel. A road runs along the torrent, above its right hand bank and links a town situated in the middle of the bay to other inland towns, perhaps in Samaria, if I am taking my bearings correctly.

« That town is Sicaminon » says Jesus. « We shall be there late in the evening. Let us have a rest now, because the descent is difficult, though cool and short. »

And sitting in a circle, they talk to one another and to the women, while roasting on a rustic spit a lamb, certainly a gift of the shepherds…

249. Jesus Meets the Disciples at Sicaminon.

11th August 1945.

It is on the bank of the deep torrent that Jesus finds Isaac with many known and unknown disciples. Among the known ones there are: the head of the synagogue of the Clear Water, Timoneus; Joseph of Emmaus, the one accused of incest; the young man who did not bury his father to follow Jesus; Stephen; Abel, the leper cured near Korazim with his friend Samuel; Solomon, the ferryman of Jerico, and many more, whom I recognise, but I do not remember in the least where I saw them or their names. Many faces indeed are known to me, but only as faces of disciples. And there are other people who have been converted by Isaac or by the above mentioned disciples and are following the main group hoping to find Jesus.

Their meeting is tender, joyful and respectful. Isaac's eyes are beaming with joy, when he looks at the Master and shows Him his new flock and as a reward he asks Jesus to say a few words to his people.

« Do you know any quiet place where we can gather together? »

« At the end of the bay there is a desert beach, with some hovels of fishermen, which are empty at this time of the year because they are unhealthy and because the fishing season of fish to be salted is over and the fishermen have gone to Syro-Phoenicia to fish for murices. Many of them already believe in You because they heard You speak in sea towns or because they found disciples, and they have given us the little houses to rest in. We go there after a mission. Because there is a lot to be done in this area. It is deeply corrupted by many things. I would like to go as far as SyroPhoenicia, and I could do it by sea, because the coast is parched by the sun and it is impossible to go there on foot. But I am a shepherd, not a sailor, and among my people there is not even one who can sail. »

Jesus, Who listens carefully, smiling lightly, lowering His head a little, as He is so tall compared with the little shepherd who, like a soldier, is reporting everything to his general, replies: « God helps you because of your humility. If I am known here it is due to you, My disciple, and to no one else. We will now ask the men of the lake whether they feel they can sail the sea, and if possible, we will go to Syro-Phoenicia. » And He turns round looking for Peter, Andrew, James and John, who are talking animatedly to some disciples, while Judas is warmly congratulating Stephen, and the Zealot, Bartholomew and Philip are near the women. The other four are with Jesus.

The four fishermen come at once. « Do you feel up to sailing the sea? » asks Jesus.

The four look at one another perplexedly. Peter ruffles his hair

while pondering on the matter. He then asks: « But where? Off shore? We are fresh water fish… »

« No, along the coast, as far as Sidon. »

« H'm! I think it can be done. What do you say? »

« I think so, too. Sea or lake, it is still the same thing: water » says James.

« Nay: it will be even more beautiful and easier » exclaims John.

« I don't know how you can say that » replies his brother.

« It's his fondness for the sea. He who loves something, sees every perfection in it. If you loved a woman like that, you would be a perfect husband » says Peter jokingly shaking him affectionately.

« No, I am saying so because at Ashkelon I saw that manoeuvres are the same and navigation very smooth » replies John.

« Well, let us go, then! » exclaims Peter.

« However, it would be better to have someone from here. We have no experience with this sea and its depth contour » remarks James.

« Oh! I would not even think of that. We have Jesus with us! Before I was not yet certain, but after He calmed the lake! Let us go with the Master to Sidon. Perhaps there is some good to be done there » says Andrew.

« Well, we shall go. You will get the boats tomorrow. Ask Judas of Simon to give you the purse. »

And all mixed together, apostles and disciples - and it is needless to say how happy many are, particularly the ones already well known to Jesus - they retrace their steps going back towards the town, and walk round the outskirts, until they reach the end of the bay, which protrudes into the sea like a bent arm. A few little houses there, spread on the narrow pebbly shore, represent the most poverty-stricken and depopulated quarter of the town, which is inhabited only at intervals.

The walls of the little cubic shaped houses are worn away by saltness and age and they are all closed. When the disciples open them, they show their smoky misery and bare essential furnishings.

« Here they are. They are not beautiful, but are clean and comfortable » says Isaac, who is doing the honours of the house.

« The poor things are certainly not beautiful. The Clear Water was a royal palace in comparison. And there were some who complained!… » grumbles Peter.

« But they are a real fortune to us. »

« Of course! The all important thing is to have a roof over your head and to be fond of one another. Oh! look, there is our John! How are you? Where were you? »

But John of Endor, although smiling at Peter, runs to greet Jesus Who replies to him with very kind words.

« I did not let him come because he has not been well… I prefer him to stay here. He is so clever with citizens and with those who ask information on the Messiah… » says Isaac.

The man from Endor is indeed much thinner than previously. But his countenance is serene. His emaciation ennobles his features, so that one thinks of him as a man already affected by the double martyrdom of flesh and soul.

Jesus watches him and asks: « Are you not well, John? »

« I am not any worse than I was before seeing You. And that as far as my body is concerned. With regard to my soul, I think I am recovering from my peculiar wounds. »

Jesus looks at his peaceful eyes and hollow temples but does not say anything. He lays a hand on his shoulder while entering a little house with him, into which they have brought basins of salt water to refreshen their tired feet and pitchers of cool water to quench their thirst, while outside they are laying the table on a rustic board shaded by a very poor pergola of creepers.

While twilight is falling and the sea is whispering its evening prayers with the surf rustling on the pebbly shore, it is beautiful to see Jesus having supper with the women and the apostles, sitting at the coarse board, while the others, sitting on the ground, or on seats or baskets turned upside down, form a circle round the main table.

The meal is soon over and the table is cleared even sooner, because there were only very few plates, only for the more important guests. The sea has become indigo-black in the starless night. And all its majesty appears in this sad but solemn hour, typical of sea shores.

Jesus, Whose tall white figure is outstanding in the darker and darker shadows, rises from the table and comes towards the middle of the apostolic group, while the women withdraw. Isaac and another man light little fires on the beach to illuminate and keep away the clouds of mosquitoes, which probably come from nearby marshes.

« Peace to you all.

The mercy of God has joined us before the appointed time, giving reciprocal joy to our hearts. I have searched all your hearts, which are morally good, as is evidenced by your being here, waiting for Me, formed in Me, but still spiritually imperfect as is proved by some of your reactions that show how the old man of Israel still persists in you with all his ideas and prejudices, and the new man, the man of Christ with Christ's wide, bright merciful mentality and even wider charity has not yet come out of him, like a butterfly from its larva. Do not feel mortified if I have scanned you and pried into all your secrets. A teacher must know his pupils in order to correct their faults, and believe Me, if he is a good

teacher, he is not disgusted with the more faulty ones, on the contrary he pays greater attention to them, to improve them. You know that I am a good Master. And now let us consider those reactions and prejudices, let us consider together the reason why we are here, and because of the joy we experience by being together, let us bless the Lord, Who always achieves a collective welfare from an individual one.

I have heard from your own lips how much you admire John of Endor, and your admiration is even more remarkable because he professes to be a repentant sinner and on his past and present condition he bases the argument of his preaching to those whom he wants to bring to Me. It is true: he was a sinner. Now he is a disciple. Many of you have now come to the Messiah through his merit. You can thus see that God creates the new people of God just by those means that the old man of Israel would despise.

I now ask you to refrain from misjudging the presence of a sister, whom old Israel cannot understand to be a disciple. I told the women to go and rest. I was not so anxious to let them rest as I was to be able to give you a holy careful consideration on her conversion and thus prevent you from committing a sin against love and justice, and that is why I gave that command, which has certainly disappointed them.

Mary of Magdala, the great sinner, who had no excuse for her sin, has come back to the Lord. And from whom will she expect faith and mercy but from God and the servants of God? The whole of Israel, and with Israel the foreigners who are amongst us, who know her very well and judge her very severely, criticise and deride her resurrection, now that she is no longer their accomplice in vice.

Resurrection. That is the exact word. To raise the flesh from death is not the greatest miracle. It is only a relative miracle because it is destined to be cancelled one day by death. I do not give immortality to those whose flesh I raise from death, but I give eternity to those who resuscitate in their souls. And while a man, whose body is dead, does not join his will to Mine in order to come back to life and therefore he has not merit, there is a firm will in the man who revives spiritually, nay his will is there first. And he thus has merit.

I am not saying this to justify Myself. I have to give account of My action to God only. But you are My disciples. And each of you must be another Jesus. And none of you must be ignorant or guilty of any of those deep-rooted faults, whereby so many are united to God only by name.

Everything can become a good action. Also what seems less suitable to become so. When matter is presented to the will of God, even if it were the most inert, cold and filthy, it can become living,

blazing pure beauty.

I will give you an instance taken from the book of the Maccabees. When Nehemiah was sent back to Jerusalem by the king of Persia, they decided to offer sacrifices on the purified altar in the rebuilt Temple. Nehemiah remembered that at the time they were captured by the Persians, the priests assigned to the cult of God used to take the fire of the altar and hide it in a secret place, at the bottom of a valley, in a deep dry well, and did it so carefully and secretly that they were the only ones who knew where the sacred fire was. As Nehemiah remembered all that, he asked the grandchildren of those priests to go to the place which the priests, before dying, had disclosed to their sons, who in turn had informed their children, handing on the secret from father to son, and to take the sacred fire to light the fire for the sacrifice. But when the grandchildren went down into the secret well, they did not find the fire, and they found instead thick water, a putrid, stinking, heavy slime, which had filtered down there from all the obstructed sewers of the devastated city of Jerusalem. And they told Nehemiah, who told them to take some of that water and bring it up to him. After laying firewood on the altar and the victims on top of it, he sprayed everything copiously with the slimy water. The people was amazed and the priests scandalised, but they watched and did everything respectfully, only because it was Nehemiah who told them. But how sad their hearts were! And how discouraged they felt! As the overcast sky made the day a sad one, so uncertainty made men melancholy. But the sun broke through the clouds and its rays descended upon the altar and the firewood sprayed with the slimy water caught fire, which soon consumed the sacrifice, while the priests were saying the prayers that Nehemiah had written, singing the most beautiful hymns of Israel, until the whole sacrifice was consumed. And in order to convince the crowds that God can work miracles also with the most unsuitable means, when they are used for a righteous purpose, Nehemiah ordered the remaining water to be sprayed on to some large stones. And as soon as the stones were sprayed, they caught fire and were burnt out in the great light coming from the altar.

Every soul is a sacred fire laid by God on the altar of man's heart that it may burn the sacrifice of life through love for the Creator of life. Every life is a holocaust, if spent properly, and every day is a sacrifice to be offered holily. But marauders come, the oppressors of man and of man's soul. The fire falls into the deep well, not through any holy need, but through fateful stupidity. And submerged by all the drainage of the dens of vice, it becomes heavy putrid mud, until a priest descends to that bottom and brings that mud up to daylight, laying it on the holocaust of his own sacrifice. Because - and remember this - the heroism of

the man to be converted is not sufficient: also the heroism of him who converts is required. Nay, the latter must precede the former, because souls are saved through our sacrifice. Because thus we are successful in getting mud to change into fire and God to judge perfect and pleasing to His holiness the sacrifice that is being consumed.

Then, as it is still not enough to convince the world that repentant mud burns more than common fire, even if it is consecrated fire, which common fire serves only to burn wood and victims, that is, combustible material, then the repentant mud becomes so powerful as to set on fire and burn even stones, which are incombustible material. Are you not wondering whence such property comes to that mud? Do you not know? I will tell you: because in the ardour of repentance they merge with God, flame with flame; rising flame, descending flame; flame which offers itself loving, flame which gives itself loving; the embrace of two who love and find each other, who join together forming one thing only. And since the flame of God is a greater one, it overflows, excels, penetrates, absorbs and the flame of the repentant mud is no longer a relative flame of a created thing, but it is the infinite flame of the Uncreated Thing: of the Most High, Most Powerful, Infinite God.

That is what truly and wholly converted big sinners are, who have generously devoted themselves to their conversion without keeping anything of their past, burning themselves as the first thing, in their heavier part, by means of the flame rising from their mud, which has run towards Grace and has been touched by Grace. I solemnly tell you that many stones in Israel will be attacked by the fire of God because of these burning furnaces, which will blaze more and more, until the human creature is utterly consumed. And from their thrones in Heaven they will continue to burn the stones, the tepidity, uncertainty, timidity of the Earth, and as true supernatural burning glasses they will collect the One and Trine lights to converge them on to mankind and set it afire in God.

I would repeat that I did not have to justify My actions, but I wanted you to understand My conception and make it your own. A wrong conception, a Pharisaical suspicion of contaminating God by taking a repentant sinner to Him must never stop you from such a deed that is the perfect coronation of the mission for which I destine you. Always bear in mind that I have not come to save saints, but sinners. And do likewise, because a disciple is not worth more than his Master, and if I do not loathe taking by the hand the dregs of the Earth who feel the need of Heaven, who at long last feel it, and exulting I take them to God, because that is My mission, and every conquered soul justifies My incarnation,

which humiliated My Infinity, neither you must loathe doing so, as you are imperfect men, and you have all become more or less acquainted with imperfection, as you are of the same nature as your brother sinners, and I have elected you to the rank of saviours so that My work on the Earth may be continued for ever, as if I continued to live on it in an endless life.

And such it will be, because the union of My priests will be like the vital part of the great body of My Church, of which I will be the animating Spirit, and the numberless particles of believers will assemble round this vital part to form one only body, which will be called after My Name. But if the sacerdotal part should lack vitality would the numberless particles be able to live? In actual fact, as I am in the body, I could extend My Life as far as the most remote particles, neglecting the obstructed and useless channels and cisterns, reluctant to fulfill their mission. Because rain falls wherever it wishes and the good particles, being capable by themselves of desiring life, would still live My Life. But what would Christianity then be? A close assembly of souls, one near the other. One near the other and yet separated by channels and cisterns that no longer link them, distributing to each particle the Vital blood coming from one only centre. But there would be dividing walls and precipices across which the particles would look at one another, and they would be humanly hostile, supernaturally anguished, saying in their spirits: "And yet we were brothers and we still feel as such, notwithstanding they have divided us!" It would be a closeness of souls, not a fusion or an organism. And My love would shine sorrowfully upon such ruin…

Further, do not think that that applies only to religious schisms. No. It applies also to all the souls that remain all alone because priests refuse to support them, to take care of them, to love them, violating their mission, which is to say and do what I say and do, that is: "Come to Me, all of you, and I will lead you to God".

Go in peace, now, and God be with you. »

The crowd disperse slowly, going to their little houses. Also John of Endor stands up. He took notes while Jesus was speaking and in order to see what he was writing, he became red-hot near the fire.

But Jesus stops him saying: « Stay for a little while with your Master ». And He keeps him close to Himself until they have all gone away. « Let us go as far as that rock near the water. The moon is high in the sky and we can see our way. »

John agrees without demur. They move away from the houses about two hundred metres and they sit on a huge boulder, which I do not know whether it is the ruin of a pier, or the extreme ramification of a cliff fallen into the sea, or the wreck of one of the little houses swallowed by the water that through centuries advanced

on the shore. I know that whilst from the little beach it is possible to climb on to the rock, making use of the cavities and juts, which form a sort of steps, on the sea side the face is a sheer cliff ending in the blue sea. Because of the tide, half of the rock is surrounded by water, which grumbles and lightly smacks the obstacle and then withdraws with the sound of a huge sigh, becomes silent for a moment, starting all over again, with regular motions and sounds of slaps, aspirations and pauses, like syncopated music. They sit on the very top of the boulder struck by the sea. The moon forms a silvery road on the water and the sea looks deep blue in the moonlight, whereas before the moon rose, it was like a large blackish expanse in the dark night.

« John, are you not telling your Master the reason why your body suffers? »

« You know, my Lord. But do not say: "it suffers". Say: "it is being consumed". That is more exact, and You know, and You also know that it is being consumed with delight. Thank You, Lord. I recognised myself, too, in the mud that becomes flame. But I shall not have time to set the stones afire. I shall soon die. I have suffered too much through the hatred of the world and I exult too much because of the love of God. But I do not regret life. I might sin again here, or fail in the mission to which You destine us. I have already failed twice in my life. In my mission of a master, because I should have been able to find what was necessary to perfect myself and I did not train myself: in my mission of a husband, because I was not able to mould my wife… which was logical. As I was not able to perfect myself, I could not perfect her either. I might fail in my mission as a disciple. And I do not want to fail with You. Blessed therefore be death if it comes to take me where one can no longer sin! But if I am not destined to be a teaching disciple, I shall be a victim disciple, which fate is more like Yours. You said that this evening: "Burning ourselves as first thing. »

« John, is it a fate, which you suffer or is it an offer you are making? »

« An offer, which I am making, if God does not disdain mud that has become fire. »

« John, you are doing much penance. »

« Saints do, You are the first. It is fair that he should do it, who has so much to pay. But do You think that mine is not pleasant to God? Are You prohibiting me from doing it? »

« I never interfere with the good yearnings of a loving soul. I have come to preach by actual facts that suffering is expiation and sorrow redemption. I cannot contradict Myself. »

« Thank You, Lord. It will be my mission. » « What were you writing, John? »

« Oh! Master! Sometimes old Felix emerges again with his habits

of a teacher. I am thinking of Marjiam. He has a whole life to preach You, but because of his age, he is not here to hear Your sermons. I thought I should write certain instructions You have given us and which he has not heard, because he is intent on playing, or he is far away with one of us. There is so much wisdom in Your words, also in the least ones! Your familiar conversations are a lesson on matters of every day and every man, on the least things in life, which after all are the most important, because by piling up they form a heavy burden, which requires patience, perseverance, resignation to be borne holily. It is easier to accomplish one only great heroic deed than a thousand little ones for which a constant presence of virtue is required. And yet one will not attain a great deed, both in good and in evil, I know by experience with regard to evil, unless one stores up many little deeds, which seem insignificant. I began to kill when, tired of the frivolity of my wife, I looked at her scornfully for the first time. I have written Your short lessons for Marjiam. And this evening I wanted to take a note of Your great lesson. I will leave my work to the boy, so that he may remember me, the old master, and he may have what otherwise he would never have had. Your words: a wonderful treasure for him. Will you allow me? »

« Yes, John. But be in complete peace, like this sea. See? It would be too warm for you to go about in the heat of the sun, and apostolic life is really hard. You have fought so much in life. Now God calls you to Himself in this placid moonlight that makes everything calm and pure. Proceed in the kindness of God. I can tell you: God is pleased with you. »

John of Endor takes Jesus' hand, kisses it and whispers: « And yet it would have been lovely to say to the world: "Come to Jesus!" »

« You will say that from Paradise, where You will be a burning glass, too. Let us go, John. I would like to read what you have written. »

« Here it is, Lord. And tomorrow I will give You the other roll on which I wrote the other words. »

They descend from the boulder, and in a most clear moonlight, which has changed the pebbly shore into silver, they go back to the houses. They say goodbye to each other, John kneeling down, Jesus blessing him with His hand laid on his head and giving him His peace.

250. At Tyre, Jesus Speaks of Perseverance.

12th August 1945.

It is early morning when Jesus arrives in front of a sea-town. Four boats are following His. The town juts out strangely towards

the sea, as if it were built on an isthmus. Or rather: as if a slender isthmus linked the part protruding on the sea to the part stretching along the shore. It looks like a huge mushroom, as seen from the sea, with its crown lying on the waves, its roots under the shore, the isthmus being the stem. There are two harbours, one on each side: one, to the north, is wider and full of small boats; in the other, to the south, which is more sheltered, there are large ships arriving or departing.

« We must go over there » says Isaac, pointing to the harbour of the smaller boats. « That is where the fishermen are. »

They walk round the island and I can see that the isthmus is an artificial one, a kind of Cyclopean dam linking the little island to the mainland. They built lavishly in those days! I gather from this work and from the number of boats in the harbours that the town was wealthy and commercially very active. Behind the town, beyond a flat area, there are some pretty looking little hills, and the Great Hermon and the Lebanon chain of mountains can be seen very far behind. I also understand that this is one of the towns I could see from Lebanon.

Jesus' boat is now entering the northern harbour, the roadstead, because it does not dock, but the men row slowly backwards and forwards until Isaac sees those he is looking for and calls them at the top of his voice. Two beautiful fishing boats come towards them and the crew bend over the smaller boats of the disciples.

« The Master is with us, my friends. Come, if you wish to hear His word. This evening He is going back to Sicaminon » says Isaac.

« We are coming at once. Where shall we go? »

« To a quiet place. The Master is not disembarking at Tyre nor at the town on the mainland. He will speak from the boat. So choose a shaded and sheltered place. »

« Follow us towards the rock. There are some quiet shady inlets. You can also land. »

And they go to an inlet in the cliff, farther north. The very steep cliff protects from the sun. It is a lonely spot: only sea-gulls and woodpigeons live there: they fly out for their raids at sea and then fly back to their nests in the rocks, squeaking loud. Some more small boats have joined the leading one and have thus formed a little fleet. At the end of the tiny bay there is a very small beach. It is really a sham beach: a small square strewn with stones. It can hold about one hundred people.

They land making use of a large flat rock emerging from the deep water like a small natural wharf and they gather on the little stony beach, sparkling with salt. They are thin swarthy men, parched by the sun and the sea. Their short undergarments leave their thin agile limbs uncovered. They are clearly a different race from the Jews of the present time, but the difference is not so

striking with regard to Galileans. I would say that those SyroPhoenicians are more like the old Philistines than their neighbouring peoples. At least those I can see.

Jesus draws close to the beach and begins to speak.

« We read in the Book of Kings that the Lord ordered Elijah to go to Zarephath of Sidonians during the drought and famine which afflicted the Earth for over three years. The Lord did not lack means to appease the prophet's hunger in any place, neither did He send him to Zarephath because that town was rich in food. On the contrary, they were already dying of starvation there. Why then did God send Elijah the Tishbite?

There was in Zarephath a woman with a righteous heart. She was a widow, a holy living woman, the mother of a boy; she was poor and lonely, yet she never rebelled against the dreadful punishment, neither was she selfish in her hunger, or disobedient. God wanted to benefit her by granting her three miracles. One for the water she took to the thirsty man, one for the little loaf of bread she baked under ashes, when she had only a handful of flour left, one for the hospitality she offered the prophet. He gave her bread and oil, the life of her son and the knowledge of the word of God.

You can see that a charitable action not only satisfies the hunger of bodies or removes the grief for a death, but it teaches the soul the wisdom of the Lord. You have given lodgings to the servants of the Lord and He gives you the word of Wisdom. A good deed has brought the word of the Lord to this land, where that word does not come. I can compare you to the only woman in Zarephath who welcomed the prophet. Because if I had gone to town, the rich and mighty people would not have welcomed Me, the busy merchants and sailors would have neglected Me and My coming here would have been valueless.

I will now leave and you will say: "But what are we? A handful of men. What do we possess? A drop of wisdom". And yet I say to you: "I entrust you with the task of announcing the hour of the Redeemer". I leave you repeating the words of Elijah, the prophet: "The jar of flour will not run out. The oil will not diminish until one comes who will give it more copiously".

You have already done that. Because there are Phoenicians here among you who have come from beyond Mount Carmel. Which means that you have spoken as you were spoken to. You can thus see that the handful of flour and the drop of oil have not run out, but have instead increased in quantity. Continue to make it grow. And if you think that it is strange that God has chosen you for this work, as you do not feel capable of carrying it out, repeat the word of great trust: "I will do what you tell me, trusting your word". »

« Master, how are we to deal with the heathens here? We know

these people because they are fishermen, like ourselves. We fraternise because we do the same work. But what about the others? » asks a fisherman of Israel.

« You say that you fraternise because of the same work. Well, then, should the same origin not cause you to fraternise as well? God created both Israelites and Phoenicians. The people of the plain of Saron or of High Judaea are not different from the people of this shore. Paradise was made for all the sons of man. And the Son of man has come to take all men to Paradise. The purpose is to attain Heaven and give joy to the Father. Meet therefore on the same road and love one another spiritually as you love one another for reasons of your trade. »

« Isaac has told us many things. But we would like to know more. Is it possible for us to have a disciple, although we are so far out of the way? »

« Send them John of Endor, Master. He is so clever and he is accustomed to living with pagans » suggests Judas of Kerioth.

« No. John is staying with us » replies Jesus resolutely. He then turns to the shepherds: « When will the murex fishing be over? »

« At the first storms in autumn. The sea is too rough here, afterwards. »

« Will you be going back to Sicaminon then? »

« We will be going there and to Caesarea. We supply many Romans. »

« You will then be able to meet the disciples. For the time being… persevere. »

« On board my boat there is one whom I did not want and he came here almost in Your Name. »

« Who is he? »

« A young fisherman from Ashkelon. »

« Tell him to disembark and come here. »

The man goes on board and comes back with a young fellow who seems rather embarrassed at being the centre of so much attention.

The apostle John recognises him. « He is one of those who gave us the fish, Master » and he gets up to greet him. « You have come, Ermasteus? Are you alone here? »

« Yes, I am alone. At Capernaum I was ashamed… I stayed on the beach, hoping… »

« What? »

« To see your Master. »

« And not yours yet? My dear friend, why are you still hesitating? Come to the Light waiting for you. See how He is watching and smiling at you. »

« How will they bear with me? »

« Master, please come here for a moment. »

Jesus gets up and goes to John.

« He does not dare to come because he is a foreigner. »

« There are no foreigners, as far as I am concerned. And your companions? Were you not many?… Do not be upset. You are the only one who persevered. But I am happy also because of you alone. Come with Me. »

Jesus goes back to His place with His new conquest. « We shall certainly give this young man to John of Endor » He says to the Iscariot. He then speaks to everybody.

« A group of diggers went down into a mine where they knew there were some treasures well hidden in the bowels of the earth… And they began to dig. But the ground was hard and the work laborious. Many became tired, threw away their picks and went away. Some made fun of the foreman and treated him almost as a fool. Some cursed their fate, the work, the ground, the metal and in a fit of anger they struck the bowels of the earth tearing the vein into useless tiny bits and when they saw that they had only caused damage without making any profit, they also went away.

Only one remained: the most persevering one. He dealt kindly with the hard layers of the soil to pierce it without damaging anything, he made various tests, he dug and went down deeper. A wonderful valuable vein was at last discovered. The perseverance of the miner was thus rewarded and with the most pure metal he had found he was able to get many work contracts, a great glory and many customers, because everybody wanted that metal, which perseverance only was able to find, whereas lazy or angry people had achieved nothing.

But once the gold has been found, it must in its turn persevere and be available to be worked on, in order to become beautiful and ready to be used by the goldsmith. If the gold, after being excavated, should refuse to undergo further treatment, however painful it might be, it would remain a coarse metal, unsuitable to be worked on. You can thus see that the first enthusiasm is not enough to be successful, either as apostles, or disciples or believers. It is necessary to persevere.

Ermasteus had many companions, and in their first enthusiasm they all promised to come. He only has come. I have many disciples and their number will increase. But only a few of them will persevere until the end. Perseverance! It is the great word. For all good things.

When you cast the drag-net to catch murex shells, do you do that only once? No. Many times, for hours, for days, for months, and you are willing to go back to the same spot the following year, because your work brings bread and comfort to you and to your families. And would you behave differently for more important things, such as the interests of God and of your souls, if You are believers; your interests and your brothers', if you are disciples? I

solemnly tell you that it is necessary to persevere until the end, to extract purple for eternal garments.

And now let us stay here as good friends until it is time for us to go back. We shall thus become better acquainted and it will be easy to recognise one another… »

And they spread out in the little rocky bay, cooking mussels and crabs caught on the rocks, and little fish caught with small nets. Some sleep on dried seaweeds in caves opened in the rock by earthquakes or by the sea, while sky and sea are a dazzling blue kissing each other at the horizon. Seagulls fly backwards and forwards, from the sea to their nests in the rocks, squeaking and flapping their wings, the only noises which can be heard, together with the washing of the sea, in these sultry summer hours.

251. Return to Sicaminon. Jesus Speaks of Faith.

13th August 1945.

The people of Sicaminon, impelled by curiosity, besieged the place where the apostles were, all day long, awaiting the return of the Master. The women disciples, in the meantime, have not wasted any time, but have washed the clothes covered with dust and wet with perspiration, and on the little beach there is a bright display of garments drying in the wind and sunshine. As it is evening and getting dark, the dampness of sea fog is felt, so they hasten to take in the clothes, although they are still dampish. Before folding them they stretch them out in all directions and press them, so that they may look tidy to the respective owners.

« Let us take Mary's clothes to her at once » says Mary of Alphaeus. And she concludes: « She has been really suffering yesterday and today in that little stifling room!… »

I thus realise that Jesus has been absent for more than one day, during which time Mary of Magdala, who had only one dress, had to remain indoors, until her dress was dry.

Susanna replies: « Fortunately she never complains! I did not think she was so good. »

« And so humble, you should say, and reserved. Poor woman! It was the devil who tormented her! Since she was freed by my Jesus, she has become herself once again, exactly as she was when a girl. »

And talking to each other, they arrive back home carrying the laundry.

In the meanwhile Martha is busy preparing food and the Blessed Virgin is cleaning vegetables in a copper basin and then boils them for supper.

« Here you are. Everything is dry, clean and folded. And they badly needed it. Go to Mary and give her her clothes » says Susanna handing the clothes to Martha.

The two sisters come back shortly afterwards. « I thank both of you. The sacrifice of wearing the same dress for days was the most painful one to me » says Mary of Magdala smiling. « I now feel fresh and cool. »

« Go and sit outside, there is a lovely breeze. You certainly need it after being closed in » remarks Martha, who, being smaller than her sister and not so buxom, was able to put on a dress of Susanna's or of Mary of Alphaeus', while her clothes were being washed.

« This time we had to make the best of it. But in future we will bring little bags, like the others, and we will not have all this trouble » says the Magdalene.

« What? Are you going to follow Him as we do? »

« Of course. Unless He tells me otherwise. I am now going to the beach to see whether they are coming back. Are they coming back this evening? »

« I hope so » replies the Most Holy Virgin. « I am worried because He has gone to Phoenicia. But I know that He is with the apostles and after all the Phoenicians may be better than many other people. When I went to the fountain, a mother stopped Me saying: "Are You with the Galilean Master, the One they call Messiah? If so, come and see my son. Fever has been tormenting him for over a year". I went into the little house. Poor thing! He looks like a little flower about to die. I will tell Jesus. »

« There are others as well who want to be cured. They are more anxious to be cured than to be taught » says Martha.

« It is difficult for a man to be entirely spiritual. The voice and needs of the flesh are more strongly felt » replies the Virgin.

« However, many revive spiritually after a miracle. »

« Yes, Martha. And that is one of the reasons why My Son works so many miracles. Out of love for man, but also to draw him by such means on to His Way, which, otherwise, many would not follow. »

John of Endor, who had not gone with Jesus, comes back home with many disciples who are going to the little houses where they live. Almost at the same time the Magdalene comes back saying: « They are arriving. They are the five boats that left yesterday at dawn. I recognised them very well. »

« They must be tired and thirsty. I will go and get some more water. The water of the fountain is very cool » and Mary of Alphaeus goes out carrying some pitchers.

« Let us go and meet Jesus. Come » says the Blessed Virgin. And She goes out with the Magdalene and John of Endor, because Martha and Susanna, both flushed and very busy preparing supper, remain near the kitchen range.

Walking along a wall they arrive at a little pier, where other

fishing boats have already come in and are moored. From the end of the pier it is possible to have a very good view of the whole bay and of the town after which it is called, and one can also see the five boats sailing fast, slightly heeled to one side, as a light northern breeze fills the sails, and is thus favourable and at the same time brings relief to the men who are tired and warm.

« See how well Simon and the others are manoeuvering. They are following the pilot's boat excellently. They have now passed the breaker; they are now taking to the open sea to avoid the current which is strong over there. Good… Now everything is all right. They will soon be here » says John of Endor. The boats in fact are coming nearer and nearer and it is possible to distinguish the people in them.

Jesus is on the first one with Isaac. He has stood up and His tall figure appears in all its magnificence until the furling sail conceals Him for a few minutes. In fact the boat veers round to approach the little pier and passes before the women standing on the point. Jesus smiles waving to them, while they begin to walk fast to reach the landing place at the same time as the boat.

« May God bless You, My Son! » says Mary greeting Jesus Who is disembarking on the quay.

« May God bless You, Mother. Have You been worrying? The man whom we were looking for, was not in Sidon. We went as far as Tyre. And we found him there. Come, Ermasteus… Here, John. This man wants to be taught. I entrust him to you. »

« I shall not disappoint You in teaching him Your word. Thank You, Master! There are many people waiting for You » replies John of Endor.

« There is also a poor sick boy, Son, and his mother wants You to go there. »

« I will go to her at once. »

« I know who she is, Master. I will take You there. Ermasteus, come with us. You will begin to know the infinite goodness of our Lord » says the man from Endor.

Peter lands from the second boat, James from the third, Andrew from the fourth, John from the fifth; the four pilots followed by the other apostles or disciples who were with them all gather round Jesus and Mary.

« Go home. I shall soon be there as well. In the meantime prepare the supper and tell those who are waiting that I will speak to them at the end of vesper. »

« And what if there are some sick people? »

« I will cure them first. Even before supper, so that they may go back home happily. »

They part. Jesus with John of Endor and Ermasteus goes towards the town, the others walk back along the pebbly beach,

telling what they have seen or heard, as happy as children returning to their mothers.

Also Judas of Kerioth seems happy. He shows all the offerings given to him by the murex fishermen, and above all he shows a little bundle containing the precious substance. « This is for the Master. If He does not wear it, who can possibly do so? They called me to one side saying: "We have some precious madrepores in our boat, and we have also a pearl. Imagine! A treasure. I do not know how we were so lucky. But we will give them willingly to you for the Master. Come and see them". I went with them to please them, while the Master had withdrawn into a cave to pray. They were beautiful corals and a pearl, not a big one, but beautiful. I said to them: "Don't deprive yourselves of these things. The Master does not wear jewels. Give me instead some of that purple to make an ornament for His tunic". They had this little packet. They insisted in giving it all to me, at all costs. Take it, Mother, make something nice with it for our Lord, as You know how to do it. But make sure You do so. If He becomes aware of it, He will have it sold for the poor. And we like to see Him dressed as He deserves. Is that right? »

« Oh! It is true! I suffer when I see Him dressed so plainly amongst other people, while He is a king, and they are less than slaves and yet they wear gorgeous decorations and garments. And they look at Him as if He were unworthy of being near them! » says Peter.

« Ehi! Did you see how those gentlemen in Tyre were laughing when we took leave of the fishermen?! » replies his brother.

« I said to them: "You ought to be ashamed, you dogs! A single thread of His white tunic is worth all your finery". » says James of Zebedee.

« Since Judas has been able to get it, I would like You to have it ready for the Tabernacles » says Judas Thaddeus.

« I have never spun purple. But I will try… » says the Blessed Virgin touching the light bright-coloured wool, as soft as silk.

« My nurse is an expert at that. We shall find her at Caesarea. She will let you see how to do it. You will learn at once, because You do everything so well. I would put a band round the neck, the sleeves and at the hem of His tunic: purple on snow-white linen or wool, with palm or rosette decorations as we see on the marble of the Holy, and David's knot in the centre. It would look lovely » says the Magdalene who is an expert in such beautiful things.

Martha says: « Our mother made that design, because it was so beautiful, on the tunic that Lazarus wore on his journey to Syria when he took possession of our land there. I kept it because it was the last work of our mother. I will send it to You. »

« I will do it praying for your mother. »

They have reached the houses. The apostles spread out to gather those who want the Master, particularly sick people…

And Jesus comes back with John of Endor and Ermasteus. And He passes by greeting those who have crowded in front of the little houses. His smile is a blessing.

They bring Him the inevitable man with eye trouble, who is almost blind with ulcerous ophthalmia, and He cures him. Then it is the turn of a man sick with malaria, as emaciated and yellow as a Chinese, and He cures him. Then a woman asks for a particular miracle: milk for her breast, which has none, and she shows her baby, only a few days old, underfed and all red probably because of some inflammation. She moans: « See? We are told to obey man and to procreate. But what does it serve if we see our children languish? This is my third one, and I have buried two in the grave, because of my unfruitful breast. And this one is about to die, too, because he was born in this hot season, the others lived: one ten months, the other six, to make me weep even more when they died of intestine trouble. If I could give them my milk, that would not happen… »

Jesus looks at her and says: « Your child will live. Have faith. Go home and as soon as you are there offer your breast to the baby. Have faith. »

The woman goes away obediently with the poor baby, who moans like a kitten, close to his mother's heart.

« Will she have milk? »

« Of course she will. »

« I say that the baby will live, but she will never have any milk, and it is already a miracle if he lives. He is almost dead with privations. »

« Instead I say that she will have milk. » « Of course. »

« No, she will not. »

The people present are of different opinions.

Meanwhile Jesus withdraws to eat. When He comes out to preach, the crowd is even larger because the news of the miracle of the boy sick with fever, which Jesus worked as soon as He landed, has spread throughout the town.

« I give you My peace that it may prepare you to understand. It is not possible to hear the Voice of the Lord in a storm. Every perturbation is detrimental to Wisdom, which is peaceful, as it comes from God. Perturbations instead do not come from God, because worries, anxieties, doubts are the work of the Evil One to upset the children of man and separate them from God.

I will tell you a parable that you may understand My teaching more clearly.

A farmer had many trees in his fields and many vines which

yielded much fruit, among which there was a special quality, of which he was very proud. One year that vine produced many leaves but few grapes. A friend said to the farmer: "That is because you did not prune it enough". The following year the man pruned it much more. The vine had few shoots and fewer grapes. Another friend said to him: "That is because you pruned it too much". The third year the farmer left it alone. The vine did not produce any grapes at all, only a few crumpled leaves, covered with blight. A third friend stated: "It is dying because the soil is not good. Bum it". "Why? It is the same soil that the others have and I tend it exactly as I do with the others. Before it was doing so well!". His friend shrugged his shoulders and went away.

An unknown wayfarer passed by and stopped to look at the farmer sadly leaning on the poor vine. "What is the matter?" he asked. "Someone dead in the family?". "No. But this vine, of which I was so fond, is dying. It has no more sap and yields no fruit. One year little, the next one less, this year nothing. I have done everything they told me, but to no avail".

The unknown wayfarer entered the field and approached the vine. He felt the leaves, took a lump of earth in his hand, smelt it, crumpled it with his fingers, looked at the trunk of the tree supporting the vine. "You must remove that trunk. The vine is made barren by it".

"It has been its support for years!"

"Tell me, man: when you planted this vine, what was it like, and what was that trunk like?"

"Oh! It was a lovely three year old vine-shoot. I got it from another vine of mine, and to bring it here, I dug a deep hole, so that its roots would not suffer when they were taken away from the native soil. I dug a similar hole here as well, nay a larger one, so that it should be at ease at once, and I hoed the soil around it, to make it soft, so that the roots could spread out at once, without any difficulty. I settled it carefully, laying underneath it some good manure. As you know, roots grow strong immediately if they find suitable nourishment. I did not pay so much attention to the elm-tree. It was only a little tree planted there to support the vineshoot. In fact I planted it superficially near the vine-shoot, I earthed it up and went away. They both took roots, because the soil is good. The vine grew every year, it was looked after, hoed and pruned. The elm-tree instead hardly grew. But for what it was worth!… Then it grew strong. See how lovely it is now? When I come here, from afar I can see its top standing out like a tower and it looks like the ensign of my little kingdom. Once the vine covered it up and one could not see its beautiful foliage. But look how lovely it is up there, in the sunshine! And what a trunk! Straight and strong. It could have supported this vine for many

years, even if it became like the ones that the explorers of Israel took near the Torrent of Grapes. Instead…

"It has killed it. It has overwhelmed it. Everything was right for its life: the soil, its place, light, sunshine, the care you took of it. But the elm-tree killed it. It became too strong. It entangled its roots suffocating them, it took all the sap of the soil, it prevented it from breathing and receiving the necessary light. Cut down this useless powerful tree at once, and your vine will revive. And it will revive even better if you patiently dig up the ground to expose the roots of the elm-tree and then cut them, to ensure that they do not sprout. Their last ramifications will rot in the ground, and once dead they will become life, because they will become manure, a worthy punishment for their selfishness. Burn the trunk, make thus good use of it. A useless harmful tree is good only as firewood, and it is to be removed so that all the nourishment of the soil may go to the good and useful plant. Have faith in what I am telling you and you will be happy".

"But, who are you? Tell me that I may have faith".

"I am the Wise One. He who believes in Me will be safe" and he went away.

The man was rather doubtful. Then he made up his mind and he got a saw. And he called his friends to help him.

"Are you mad?" "You will lose both elm-tree and vine". "I would cut off only its top, in order to give air to the vine. But no more". "It must have a support. You are going to do a useless job". "I wonder who He was! Perhaps one who hates you, without you knowing it". "Or a madman" and so on.

"I am going to do what he told me. I have faith in Him" and he cut the elm-tree down at its root, and not happy, he laid bare the roots of both plants in a wide circle around them, and he patiently cut the roots of the elm-tree, taking great care not to damage those of the vine, he then filled in the hole, and as the vine had no support, he placed a strong iron pole near it with the word "Faith" written on a wooden board tied to the top of the pole.

The others went away shaking their heads. Autumn and winter passed and spring came. The vine-shoots twined round the support became adorned with buds, first closed like silvery velvet cases, then half open against the emerald of the fresh leaves, then fully open, and finally producing new strong shoots from the trunk, all covered with tiny flowers that turned into grapes. There were more bunches of grapes than leaves, and the latter were large, green, strong, the size of two, three or more clusters. And each bunch was thick with pulpy, juicy, wonderful grapes.

"And now what do you say? Was the tree the cause of the withering of my vine or was it not? Was the Wise One right or not? Was I right or not in writing on that board the word: 'Faith'?" said the

farmer to his incredulous friends.

"You were right. You are happy because you had faith and you were able to destroy the past and neglect the wrong information given to you".

That is the parable. With regard to the woman with the unfruitful breast, there is the answer. Look towards the town. » They all turn round and see the woman of a little while ago running towards them, and although she is running she does not detach the baby from her breast now full of milk, which the child sucks with such voracity as to almost choke himself. The woman stops only when she is at Jesus' feet, in front of Whom she detaches the baby from her nipple for a moment, shouting: « Bless him that he may live for You! »

After that moment Jesus resumes: « And you have had a reply to your various conjectures on the miracle. But the parable has a wider meaning than the little episode of faith rewarded. And here it is.

God had planted His vine, His people, in a suitable place, and supplied it with everything necessary to grow and bear more and more fruit, supporting it with masters so that the people might understand the Law more easily, and make it its strength. But the masters wanted to excel the Lawgiver, and they grew more and more until they imposed themselves more than the eternal word did. And Israel became sterile. The Lord then sent the Wise One so that those in Israel who with righteous souls are sorry for such barrenness and try this and that remedy, according to the dictates and advice of the masters, who are humanly learned but supernaturally unlearned, and thus far from knowing what is to be done to give life back to the spirit of Israel, may have true healthy advice.

But what happens? Why does Israel not recover its strength and become energetic as in the golden days of its loyalty to the Lord? Because the advice is: remove all parasites that have grown to the detriment of what is Holy: the Law of the Decalogue, as it was given, without any compromise, hesitation, hypocrisy, remove them to give air, space, nourishment to the Vine, to the People of God, and a strong, straight, inflexible, unique support, with a name as bright as the sun: Faith. But that advice is not accepted. I therefore tell you that Israel will perish, whilst it could revive and possess the Kingdom of God, if it believed and made amends and changed itself substantially.

Go in peace and the Lord be with you. »

252. Departure from Sicaminon. The Blessed Virgin Mary and Spiritualised Maternity.

14th August 1945.

It is still night, a beautiful night with waning moon, when

Jesus, the apostles and the women, John of Endor and Ermasteus, silently take leave of Isaac, the only one to be awake, and set out along the shore. The noise of their steps is only a slight creaking of gravel pressed by their sandals, and no one speaks until they have gone a few metres beyond the last house. The people sleeping in it, or in the ones before it, were certainly not aware of the silent departure of the Lord and His friends. There is dead silence. Only the sea speaks to the moon about to set in the west and it tells the sand the stories of its depths with the long wave at high tide, which begins leaving a narrower and narrower dry margin on the beach.

This time the women are in front, together with John, the Zealot, Judas Thaddeus and James of Alphaeus, who help them to get over small rocks spread here and there, which are damp and also slippery with the humidity of the night. The Zealot is with the Magdalene, John with Martha, while James of Alphaeus takes care of his mother and of Susanna, and Thaddeus does not surrender to anybody the honour of taking in his long strong hand - which is like Jesus' - the little hand of Mary to help Her in difficult spots. Each speaks in a low voice to his companion. They all seem to be wishing to respect the sleep of the Earth.

The Zealot is conversing intensely with Mary of Magdala and I can see that Simon stretches out his arms more than once, meaning: « it is so and there is nothing we can do about it » but I cannot hear what they are saying as they are ahead of everybody.

John speaks to his companion only now and again, pointing at the sea and Mount Carmel, the western side of which looks white in the moonlight. Perhaps he is talking of the road they took the last time, skirting Mount Carmel on the other side.

Also James, who is between Mary of Alphaeus and Susanna, is speaking of Mount Carmel. He says to his mother: « Jesus has promised me to climb up there with me alone and to tell me alone something. »

« What does He want to tell you, son? Will you tell me, afterwards? »

« Mother, if it is a secret, I cannot tell you » replies James smiling with his smile which is so tender; his likeness to Joseph, the spouse of the Blessed Virgin, is remarkable both with regard to his features and even more to his serene kindness.

« There are no secrets for a mother. »

« In fact I have none. But if Jesus wants me up there, all alone to speak to me, it means that He does not want anyone to know what He is going to tell me. And you, mother, are my dear mother, whom I love so much, but Jesus is above you, as His will is. But, when the time comes, I will ask Him whether I may repeat His words to you. Are you happy? »

« You will forget to ask Him… »

« No, mother. I never forget you, not even when you are far from me. Every time I see or hear something beautiful, I always say: "I wish my mother were here!" »

« My dear! Give me a kiss, son. » Mary of Alphaeus is moved. But emotion does not kill curiosity. After being quiet for a few moments, she makes a fresh assault: « You said: His will. So you know that He wants to tell what His Will is. Come on, you can tell me at least that. He told you that in the presence of everybody. »

« In actual fact I was alone with Him, ahead of the others » says James smiling.

« But the others could hear you. »

« He did not tell me very much, mother. He reminded me of the words and the prayer of Elijah on Mount Carmel: "Of all the prophets of the Lord, I alone am left". "Hear me, that this people may acknowledge that You are the Lord God". »

« And what did He mean? »

« How many things you want to know, mother! Go to Jesus, then, and He will tell you » replies James, to parry her embarrassing questions.

« He probably meant that, since the Baptist has been captured, He is the only prophet left in Israel and that God must preserve Him for a long time, so that the people may be taught » says Susanna.

« H'm! I don't believe that Jesus asks to be preserved for a long time. He asks nothing for Himself… Come on, dear James! Tell your mother. »

« Curiosity is a fault, mother; it is useless, dangerous, at times it is sorrowful. Make a nice act of mortification… »

« Alas! Did He mean that your brother will be put in prison, and killed perhaps?! » asks Mary of Alphaeus, who is thoroughly upset.

« Judas is not "all the prophets", mother, even if, as far as your love is concerned, each son of yours is the whole world… »

« I am thinking also of the others… because you will certainly be among the future prophets. So… so if you are the only one to be left… If you are the only one left, it means that the others, that my Judas… oh!… » Mary of Alphaeus leaves James and Susanna, and she runs back fast, as if she were a young girl, paying no attention to the question Thaddeus asks her.

She arrives in Jesus' group like one who has been chased. « My Jesus… I was speaking to my son… about what You told him… of Mount Carmel… of Elijah… of the prophets… You said… that James will be the only one left… And what will happen to Judas? He is my son, You know? » she says panting because of her anguish and her racing.

« I know, Mary. And I also know that you are happy that he is My

disciple. You see that you have all the rights of a mother, and I have them as Master and Lord. »

« That is true… it is true… but Judas is my boy!… » and Mary, foreseeing the future, burst into tears.

« Oh! how badly shed your tears are! But the heart of a mother is forgiven everything. Come here, Mary. Do not weep. I comforted you once before. Also on that occasion I promised you that your grief would obtain great graces from God, for you, for your Alphaeus, for your sons… » Jesus has laid His arm on the shoulder of His aunt drawing her close to Himself… He tells those who were with Him: « Move forward… » When He is alone with Mary Clopas, He resumes speaking: « And I did not tell a lie. Alphaeus died invoking Me. Thus every debt he had with God was cancelled. It was your grief, Mary, that obtained that conversion to his misunderstood relative, to the Messiah Whom he did not recognise before. Your present grief will get your hesitant Simon and your stubborn Joseph to imitate your Alphaeus. »

« Yes, but… What will You do to Judas, to my Judas? »

« I will love him even more than I love him now. »

« No, no. There is a threat in those words. Oh! Jesus! Oh! Jesus!… »

The Blessed Virgin Mary comes back to comfort Her sister-inlaw, although She does not know yet the nature of her grief, and when She knows, because when Mary sees Her beside her, she weeps more and informs Her, Our Lady becomes paler than the moon.

Mary of Alphaeus moans: « Will You tell Him, no, no, not death for my Judas… »

Our Lady, Who is deadly pale, says to her: « And can I ask that on your behalf, when I do not ask salvation from death for My own Son? Mary, say with Me: "Your will be done, Father, in Heaven, on the Earth and in the hearts of mothers". To do the will of God through the destiny of our sons is the redeeming martyrdom of us mothers… In any case… No one said that Judas is to be killed, or killed before you die. How burdensome your present prayer, that he may live to the most longeval age, would be for you, when in the Kingdom of Truth and Love, you will see everything in the light of God and in your spiritualised maternity. I am sure that you then, both as a blessed soul and a mother, would like your Judas to be like My Jesus in His destiny of Redeemer, and you would long to have him soon with you again, for ever. Because it is a mother's torture to be separated from her children. So great a torture, that I think it will last, as anxious love, also in Heaven, where we shall be received. »

Mary's crying, so loud in the silence of early dawn, has caused everybody to come back, to learn what has happened, and they thus hear the words of the Blessed Virgin and everybody is moved.

Mary of Magdala whispers weeping: « And I gave my mother that torture even here on the Earth. »

Martha weeps saying: « To be separated is sorrowful for both mothers and children. »

Peter's eyes are shining with tears and the Zealot says to Bartholomew: « Wonderful words of wisdom to explain what the maternity of a blessed soul will be! »

« And how things will be considered by a blessed mother: in the light of God and her spiritualised maternity… It takes your breath away as if you were facing a bright mystery » replies Nathanael.

The Iscariot says to Andrew: « Maternity is divested of all sensible weight and takes wings… when described thus. We seem to be seeing our mothers already transformed into inconceivable beauty. »

« That is true. Our mother, James, will love us thus. Can you imagine how perfect her love will be? » says John to his brother and he is the only one to smile brightly, so deeply moved he is at the thought that his mother will be able to love perfectly.

« I am sorry I caused so much sorrow » apologises James of Alphaeus. « But she apprehended more than I said… Believe me, Jesus. »

« I know, I know. But Mary is working on herself by herself, and that was a particularly hard stroke of the chisel. But it will relieve her of so much dead weight » says Jesus.

« Come on, mother, stop weeping. I am sorry that you should suffer like a poor little woman who is unaware of the certainties of the Kingdom of God. You are in no way like the mother of the Maccabean brothers » says Thaddeus reproaching her severely, but he embraces her at the same time and kisses her grey-haired head. « You are like a little girl who is afraid of shadows and of the tales they tell her to frighten her. And yet you know where to find me: in Jesus. What a mother! You ought to weep if you had been told that, in future, I was to become a traitor to Jesus, or one who would abandon Him, or would be a damned soul. In that case I agree. You ought to weep tears of blood. But, with the help of God, I will never give you such deep sorrow, mother. I want to be with you for ever and ever… »

The reproach first, and the subsequent caresses stop the tears of Mary of Alphaeus, who is now rather ashamed of her weakness.

Light, in the transition from night to day, has faded, because the moon has set, but it is not yet daylight. It is twilight. But immediately afterwards light begins to assert itself: at first it is leaden, then greyish, then greenish, afterwards whitish with bluish traces, and finally clear, like an incorporeal silver, and it makes it easy to walk on the damp shingly shore, from which the sea has receded, while it is delightful to contemplate the sea

becoming pale blue and on the point of brightening up with facets of gems. And then the air blends its silver with a darker and darker pink, until the golden pink of dawn becomes a reddish pink shower on the sea, on faces, on the country, with brighter and brighter contrasting hues, which reach the perfect climax, which I consider the most beautiful of the day, when the sun bouncing out from the eastern horizon, darts its first rays on mountains and hills, forests, meadows and the large expanses of sea and sky, emphasising each shade, whether it is the whiteness of snow, or remote mountains of indigo changing into jasper green, or cobalt sky attenuating to mix with pink, or sapphire veined with jade and lined with sea pearls. And today the sea is a real prodigy of beauty. It is not dead in dull calm, it is not ruffled by the fury of winds, but it is majestically alive in smiling little thin waves, just marked with ripplings crowned with a tiny crest of foam.

« We shall arrive at Dora before the heat of the day. And we shall depart at sunset. Sisters, your toilsome journey will end tomorrow at Caesarea. And we shall have a rest, too. Your wagon will be certainly waiting for you. We will part… Why are you weeping, Mary? Am I supposed to see all the Maries weep today? » says Jesus to the Magdalene.

« She is sorry to leave You » says her sister excusing her.

« That does not mean that we shall not be meeting again and soon. »

Mary shakes her head. That is not the reason why she is weeping.

The Zealot explains: « She is afraid she will not be able to be good without being near You. She is afraid of… of being tempted too strongly, when You are not near her to keep the demon away. She was telling me a little while ago. »

« Do not be afraid for that. I never withdraw the grace I have granted. Do you want to sin? No? Then do not worry. Be watchful, of course, but be not afraid. »

« Lord… I am weeping because at Caesarea… Caesarea is full of my sins. I can see them all now… My human nature will have much to suffer… »

« I am glad of that. The more you suffer, the better. Because afterwards you will no longer suffer such useless pains. Mary of Theophilus, I remind you that you are the daughter of a strong man, that you are a strong soul and I want to make you most strong. I can bear with the weakness of the other women disciples, because they have always been meek and shy, including your sister. But I will not put up with it in your case. I will work you with fire and on the anvil. Because your character is to be dealt with thus, in order not to spoil the miracle of your will and Mine. Let that be known to you and to all those who among the people present or absent may think that, as I have loved you so much, I

may become weak with you. I allow you to weep for repentance and for love. But nothing else. Is that clear? » Jesus is imposing and severe.

Mary of Magdala endeavours to swallow tears and sobs and she goes down on her knees, kisses Jesus' feet and endeavouring to steady her voice she says: « Yes, my Lord. I will do what You want. »

« Get up then and be calm. »

253. Syntyche, the Greek Slave.

15th August 1945.

I do not see the town of Dora. The sun is setting and the pilgrims have directed their steps towards Caesarea. But I did not see the stop at Dora. Perhaps it was a simple stop, without anything remarkable to be noted. The sea seems on fire, as in its calm it reflects the red of the sky so much, so deep a red that it looks unreal. Blood seems to have been shed on the vault of heaven. It is still warm notwithstanding the sea air makes the heat bearable. They are walking along the sea all the time, to avoid the fierce heat of the dry earth, and many of them have taken off their sandals and pulled up their garments to paddle in the water.

Peter states: « If the women disciples were not here, I would strip myself and go in up to my neck. »

But he has to come out even from where he is, because the Magdalene, who was ahead with the other women, comes back and says: « Master, I am familiar with this area. Can You see that yellow strip in the blue sea over there? A river flows into the sea there, also in summer, as it is a perennial one. And one must be careful in crossing it… »

« We have crossed so many. It is surely not the Nile! We will cross this one as well » says Peter.

« It is not the Nile. But in the water and on its banks there are dangerous water animals. You cannot cross it carelessly or barefooted, if you do not want to be wounded. »

« Oh! What are they? Leviathans? »

« You are right, Simon. They are in fact crocodiles. Small ones, that is true, but capable of maiming you for a while. »

« How did they come to be here? »

« I think they were brought there for religious rites of the Phoenician era. And they have remained there, they have become smaller, but not less aggressive, and from the temples have passed into the sludge of the river. They are now large lizards, with vicious teeth! The Romans come here hunting and to amuse themselves in various ways. I have come with them, too. Everything helps to… occupy the time. Their skin is lovely and is

used for many articles. Allow me therefore to be your guide, in view of my experience. »

« All right. I would like to see them… » says Peter.

« We may see some, although they have almost all been destroyed, they are hunted so much. »

They depart from the shore and turn inland, until they find a main road, half way between the hills and the sea and they soon reach an ogival bridge, thrown across a little river, the bed of which is rather wide, but the scanty water flows only in its centre. Where there is no water there are reeds and bog-grass, now almost parched by the summer heat, but in other seasons they perhaps form tiny islands in the water. The banks instead are covered with thick bushes and trees.

Although they look very carefully, they can see no animal, and many of them are disappointed. But when they are near the end of the bridge, the only arch of which is very high, so that it may not be submerged by water in the period of floods - it is a very strong construction probably built by the Romans - Martha gives a very shrill scream and runs back terrified. A very big lizard, that is all it is, but with the typical head of a crocodile, is lying across the road, feigning sleep.

« Don't be afraid! » shouts the Magdalene. « When they are like that, they are not dangerous. The trouble is when they are hidden and you put your foot on them without seeing them. »

But Martha remains prudently behind. Susanna also is frightened… Mary of Alphaeus is prudent but more brave and walking close to her sons she advances and looks. The apostles are not afraid and they look making comments on the ugly animal, which deigns to turn round its head slowly, so that its face can be seen. It then moves and seems to be wanting to come towards those who have disturbed it. Another scream from Martha who runs farther back, imitated also by Susanna and Mary Clopas. But Mary of Magdala picks up a stone, throws it at the lizard which, hit on one side, runs down the gravel bed and sinks into the mud.

« Come forward, you fearful woman. It's no longer here » she says to her sister. The women come together.

« It is really ugly » comments Peter.

« Is it true, Master, that once they fed them with human victims? » asks the Iscariot.

« It was considered a sacred animal, it represented a god, and as we offer sacrifices to our God, so the poor idolaters did it in the forms and with the errors becoming their condition. »

« But not now? » asks Susanna.

« I think that it is still possible that it might be done in idolatrous countries » says John of Endor.

« My God! But they will give them dead, eh? »

« No. If they give them, they give them alive. Generally girls or boys. The choice of the population. At least that is what I read » replies John once again to the women who look around frightened.

« I would die of fear if I had to go near one » says Martha.

« Really? But these ones are nothing compared with real crocodiles. They are at least three times as long and large. »

« And they are famished, too. This one was certainly replete with water snakes or wild rabbits. »

« Mercy! Water snakes, too! My Lord, where have You brought us? » moans Martha, who is so frightened that she makes everybody laugh.

Ermasteus, who has always been quiet, says: « Do not be afraid, It is enough to make a lot of noise to make them flee. I know because I have been to low Egypt many times. »

They set out clapping their hands or beating tree trunks. And the dangerous spot is left behind.

Martha has gone near Jesus and she often asks Him: « Will there be any more? »

Jesus looks at her, shakes His head, but reassures her: « The Saron plain is nothing but beauty, and we are now there. But the women disciples have really surprised me to-day. I do not really know why you are so fearful. »

« I do not know myself. But anything that creeps terrorises me. I seem to feel on me the cold of their bodies, which are certainly cold and slimy. And I wonder why they exist. Are they necessary? »

« You should ask Him Who made them. But you may be sure that if He made them, it means that they are useful. At least to make Martha's heroism shine » says Jesus, eyes shining wittily.

« Oh! Lord. You are joking and You are right. But I am afraid and I will never be able to control myself. »

« We shall see about that… But what is moving in those bushes over there? » says Jesus raising His head and looking straight in front of Him, at a tangled mass of bramble and other plants with long branches climbing towards an embankment of Indian figs, growing farther back with their leaves, which are as rigid as the climbing branches are flexible.

« Another crocodile, Lord?!… » moans Martha, who is terrorised once again.

The rustling of the branches increases and the head of a woman appears. She looks. When she sees so many men, she is uncertain whether to flee to the country or withdraw back into the wild tunnel. The former alternative prevails and she runs away screaming.

« A leper? » « A mad woman? » « A woman possessed? » they ask perplexedly.

The woman comes back because a Roman wagon is arriving from Caesarea and is already near. The woman looks like a mouse in a

trap. She does not know where to go, because Jesus and His group of people are near the thicket where she was sheltered, and thus she cannot go back to it, and she does not want to go towards the Roman wagon… In the evening dusk, as night falls fast after a powerful sunset, it is possible to see that she is young and pretty although her garments are torn and she is unkempt.

« Woman! Come here! » commands Jesus peremptorily.

The woman stretches out her arms imploring: « Do not hurt me! »

« Come here. Who are you? I will do you no harm » and He says so, so kindly that He persuades her.

The woman moves forward with her head lowered and she throws herself on the ground saying: « Whoever You are, have mercy on me. Kill me but do not hand me back to my master. I am a fugitive slave… »

« Who was your master? And where are you from? You are certainly not Hebrew. It is obvious from your way of speaking and from your garments. »

« I am Greek. The Greek slave of… Oh! mercy! Hide me! The wagon is about to arrive… »

They all form a group round the poor wretch curled up on the ground. Her dress torn by thorns shows her shoulders streaked with lashes and covered with scratches. The wagon passes by without any of its passengers paying attention to the group standing near the hedge.

« They have gone by, speak now. We will help you if we can » says Jesus laying the tips of His fingers on her ruffled hair.

« I am Syntyche, the Greek slave of a noble Roman of the Proconsul's suite. »

« So you are the slave of Valerian! » exclaims Mary of Magdala.

« Ah! Have mercy! Don't denounce me to him » implores the unhappy woman.

« Do not be afraid. I will never speak to Valerian again » replies the Magdalene. And she informs Jesus: « He is one of the richest and filthiest Romans we have here. And he is as cruel as he is filthy. »

« Why did you run away? » asks Jesus.

« Because I have a soul. I am not merchandise… (the woman takes heart when she realises she has come across compassionate people). I am not merchandise. He bought me. That is true. But he may have bought my person to embellish his house, that I may brighten up his time by reading for him, that I may serve him. But nothing else. My soul is mine! It cannot be bought. But he wanted also that. »

« How do you know there is a soul? »

« I am not illiterate, Lord. I was a prey of war since my youth. But I was not plebeian. This was my third master and a dirty faun. But I remember the words of our philosophers. And I know that

we are not made only of flesh. There is something immortal enclosed within us. Something which has no precise name for us. But I recently learned its name. One day a man came from Caesarea, he worked miracles and spoke better than Socrates and Plato. They discussed him very much, in thermal baths, in triclinia, or in gilt peristyles, contaminating his august Name by mentioning it in the halls of foul orgies. And I, just I who already felt I had something immortal that belongs only to God and cannot be purchased as merchandise at slave markets, was ordered by my master to read the works of philosophers to compare them and find out whether this unknown thing, that the Man from Caesarea had called "soul", was described in them. He made me read that! Me whom he wanted to enslave to his sensuality! I thus found out that this immortal thing is the soul. And while Valerian and his like were listening to my voice, and belching and yawning he endeavoured to understand, compare and discuss, I linked their conversation, referring the words of the Unknown Man, with the words of the philosophers and I kept them here, in my heart, and my dignity became stronger and stronger to reject his lustfulness… Some evenings ago he beat me to death because I rejected him, biting him with my teeth… and I ran away the following day… I have lived in that thicket for five days, picking blackberries and Indian figs at night. But I will end up by being caught. He is certainly looking for me. I cost much money and his sensuality craves too much for me to leave me alone… Have mercy on me! You are an Israelite and you certainly know where he is, I ask you to take me to the Unknown Man who speaks to slaves and speaks of souls. They told me that he is poor. I will starve, but I want to be near him that he may teach me and elevate me. It is brutalising to live with brutes, even if one resists them. I want to possess my moral dignity once again. »

« That man, The Unknown One, Whom you are looking for, is in front of you. »

« You? O unknown God of the Acropolis, Hail! » and she bows her forehead to the ground.

« You cannot remain here. But I am going to Caesarea… »

« Do not leave me, Lord! »

« I will not leave you… I think… »

« Master, our wagon is certainly at the appointed place, waiting for us. Send for it. She will be as safe in the wagon as she would be in our house » suggests Mary of Magdala.

« Oh! yes, Lord! Send her to us, in the place of old Ishmael. We will teach her Your doctrine. She will be torn from paganism » begs Martha.

« Do you want to come with us? » asks Jesus.

« With any of Your friends, providing I am no longer with that

man. But… but a woman here said that she knows him. Will she betray me? Will any Romans go to her house? No… »

« Be not afraid. Romans do not come to Bethany, above all Romans of the kind » replies the Magdalene reassuring her.

« Simon and Simon Peter, go and look for the wagon. We shall wait for you here. We shall go to town afterwards » orders Jesus.

… When the noise of the hooves and of the wheels and the lamp hanging from its roof announce the arrival of the heavy closed wagon, those waiting for it come up from the river bank, where they certainly had their evening meal, and come on to the road. The wagon comes jolting to a stop on the edge of the rough road and Peter and Simon come off it. They are immediately followed by an elderly woman who runs to embrace the Magdalene saying: « I did not want to delay one moment to tell you that I am so happy, to tell you that your mother is rejoicing with me, to tell you that you are once again the fair rose of our house, as when you used to sleep in the cradle after I had suckled you » and she kisses her many times.

Mary weeps in her arms.

« Woman, I entrust this young woman to you and I ask you to make the sacrifice of waiting here all night. Tomorrow you will be able to go to the first village on the consular road and wait there. We shall come by the third hour » Jesus says to the nurse.

« Everything as You wish, may You be blessed! Just let me give Mary the clothes I brought her. » And she climbs on to the wagon with the Most Holy Virgin, Martha and Mary. When they come out the Magdalene is dressed as we shall always see her in future: a plain dress, a wide thin linen cloth as a veil and a mantle without any ornament.

« You may go peacefully, Syntyche. We shall be coming tomorrow as well. Goodbye » says Jesus greeting her. And He takes to the road again towards Caesarea…

The sea-front is crowded with people walking in the light of torches or lanterns carried by slaves, breathing the air coming from the sea, which is a relief to their lungs tired of the summer sultriness. The ones walking are mainly rich Romans. The Jews are closed in their houses and enjoy the fresh air on their terraces. The sea-front looks like a very long parlour during visits. To pass there means to be examined closely in every detail. And Jesus passes just there… for the whole length of the promenade, ignoring those who watch Him, make comments or deride Him.

« Master, You are here? At this time? » asks Lydia, who is sitting on a kind of armchair, or little bed, which slaves have brought for her to the edge of the road. And she stands up.

« I am coming from Dora and I am late. I am looking for lodgings. »

« I would say to You: here is my house » and she points at a beautiful building behind her. « But I do not know whether… »

« No. Thank you. I cannot accept. I have many people with Me and two have already gone ahead of us to inform some people I know. I think they will give us hospitality. »

Lydia's eyes rest also on the women and the disciples at whom Jesus pointed, and she immediately recognises the Magdalene.

« Mary? It's you? So it's true? »

Mary's eyes are like those of a surrounded gazelle: she is tortured. And she is justified because Lydia is not the only one she has to face, as many more look at her… But she looks also at Jesus and plucks up courage again.

« It is true. »

« So we have lost you! »

« No. You have found me. At least I hope to find you again one day, and in a better friendship, on the road that at long last I have found. Please tell all those who know me. Goodbye, Lydia. Forget all the evil you saw me do, I ask you to forgive me… »

« Mary! Why are you lowering yourself? We have led the same life, the life of rich idle people, and there is no… »

« No. No, my life was worse. But I have come out of it. And for ever. »

« Goodbye, Lydia » the Lord cuts short and He directs His steps towards His cousin Judas who is coming towards Him with Thomas.

Lydia keeps the Magdalene back for another moment. « Tell me the truth, now that we are alone: are you really convinced? »

« Not convinced: happy to be a disciple. I regret one thing only: that I did not meet the Light before and that I have been feeding on filth instead of being nourished by It. Goodbye, Lydia. »

Her reply sounds clear in the silence enveloping the two women. None of the many people present speak any more… Mary turns round and makes haste to reach the Master.

A young man stands on her way: « Is that your last foolish action? » he says, and tries to embrace her. But half drunk as he is, he is not successful, and Mary evades him shouting: « No, it is my only wise one. » She reaches her companions who are completely covered with their veils, such is their disgust to be seen by those vicious people.

« Mary » says Martha anxiously « did you suffer much? »

« No, and He is right, I will never suffer again because of that. He is right… »

They all turn into a narrow dark street and enter a large house, certainly a hotel, for the night.

254. Goodbye to Mary of Magdala, to Martha and to Syntyche.

17th August 1945.

And they are once again on their way, going eastwards, towards the country.

The apostles and the two disciples are now with Mary Clopas and Susanna, a few yards behind Jesus, Who is with His Mother and the two sisters of Lazarus. Jesus is engrossed in talking. The apostles instead are silent. They look tired or disheartened. Their attention is not even attracted by the beauty of the country, which is really wonderful, with gentle undulations across the plain like many green pillows under the feet of a giant king and its tiny hills spread here and there, preluding the mountain chains of Mount Carmel and Samaria. Both the plain, which is the dominating part of the country, and the small decorated hills and undulated ground, are completely covered with blooming flowers and full of ripening fruit. It must be a well-watered place, notwithstanding its position and the season, because it is too flourishing to be lacking in water. I now understand why the plain of Saron is so often mentioned enthusiastically in the Holy Scriptures. But that enthusiasm is not shared by the apostles, who look somewhat sulky, the only ones to look so, in this splendid day and in this charming country.

The consular road, which is well kept, cuts across the most fertile land like a white ribbon and in the early morning one frequently meets farmers laden with victuals and travellers going to Caesarea. One of the farmers, leading a line of donkeys laden with sacks, who catches up with the apostles and compels them to step aside to make room for the asinine caravan, asks arrogantly: « Is the Kishon here? »

« Farther back » replies Thomas dryly, and mutters between his teeth: « You lout! »

« He is a Samaritan and that's enough! » replies Philip.

They become silent again. After a few yards, as if he were concluding an internal speech, Peter says: « For what it was worth! Was it worth going all that road? »

« Of course! Why did we go to Caesarea if He did not say even one word? I thought He intended working some wonderful miracle to convince the Romans. Instead… » says James of Zebedee.

« He exposed us to ridicule, that's all » comments Thomas.

The Iscariot aggravates the situation saying: « And He made us suffer. But He likes to be insulted and He thinks we like that as well. »

« In actual fact it was Mary of Theophilus who suffered in this case » remarks the Zealot calmly.

« Mary! Mary! Has Mary become the centre of the universe? She is

the only one who suffers, the only heroine, the only one to be perfected. If I had known, I would have become a robber and a killer in order to be the object of so much care » bursts out the Iscariot.

« Actually the last time we came to Caesarea and He worked a miracle and evangelized, we vexed Him by expressing our discontent because He had done so » remarks the cousin of the Lord.

« The trouble is that we do not know what we want… If He does one thing, we grumble, if He does the opposite thing, we still grumble. We are full of faults » says John seriously.

« Oh! There is the other wise man speaking! One thing is certain: no good has been done for some time. »

« No good, Judas? What about the Greek woman, and Ermasteus, and Abel, and Mary, but… »

« It is not with such nonentities that He will establish the Kingdom » retorts the Iscariot, who is haunted by the idea of an earthly triumph.

« Judas, please do not judge the actions of my Brother. It is a ridiculous pretence. A boy who wants to judge his master, or I should say: a nonentity wishing to be placed in high quarters » says Thaddeus, who has the same name and an invincible aversion for his namesake.

« Thank you for just calling me a boy. Actually, after living so long in the Temple I thought I could be considered at least of age » replies the Iscariot sarcastically.

« How dull these discussions are! » says Andrew with a sigh.

« True! Instead of being united, the more we live together, we are being divided. And yet at Sicaminon He told us that we must be united to the flock… How shall we ever be so, if we are not united as shepherds? » remarks Matthew.

« So we must not speak? We must never express our ideas? I don't think that we are slaves. »

« No, Judas, we are not slaves. But we are not worthy of following Him, because we do not understand Him » says the Zealot peacefully.

« I understand Him very well. »

« No. You do not understand Him, and like you, those who criticise Him, do not understand Him either… To understand means to obey without discussing, because one is convinced of the holiness of the guide » says the Zealot.

« Ah! You are talking of understanding His holiness! I was referring to His words. His holiness is undisputed and indisputable » the Iscariot hastens to say.

« Can you separate one from the others? A saint will always possess Wisdom, and his words will be wise. »

« That is true. But He does harmful things. Because of His excessive

holiness. I agree. But the world is not holy, and He causes trouble for Himself. Now, for instance, do you think that this Philistine and that Greek woman will do us any good? »

« If I am going to be harmful, I will withdraw » says Ermasteus, who feels mortified. « I came with the idea of honouring Him and doing the right thing. »

« You would grieve Him by going away for this reason » James of Alphaeus replies to him.

« I will pretend that I have changed my mind. I will say goodbye to Him… and I will go. »

« Surely not! You will not go away. It is not fair that the Master should lose a good disciple because of the short temper of other people » replies Peter promptly.

« If he wants to go away for so little, it means that he is not sure of his own will. So let him go » insists the Iscariot.

Peter loses his temper: « I promised Him, when He gave me Marjiam, that I would become paternal to everybody, and I am sorry to break my promise. But you force me to. Ermasteus is here and is staying here. Do you know what I must tell you? That you are the one who upsets the will of other people and makes them feel uncertain. You are one who causes separations and disorder. That is what you are. Shame on you. »

« What are you? The protector of… »

« Yes. You are quite right. I know what you mean. I am the protector of the Veiled woman, of John of Endor, of Ermasteus, of the slave, of anyone else who has been found by Jesus and is not one of those splendid ostentatious examples of the Temple, who are formed with the sacred mortar and cobwebs of the Temple, the wicks scented with the dregs of the lamps of the Temple, those like you, in other words, to make the parable clearer, because if the Temple is much, unless I have become a fool, the Master is much more than the Temple and you are lacking… » he shouts so loud that the Master stops and turns round and is about to walk back, leaving the women.

« He has heard! He will be sorrowful! » says the apostle John.

« No, Master. Don't come. We were discussing… to kill the boredom of the journey » says Thomas promptly.

But Jesus remains still so that they can reach Him.

« What were you discussing? Must I tell you once again that the women disciples surpass you? » His kind reproach touches their hearts. They become silent and lower their heads. « My friends. Do not be the cause of scandal to those who are being born to the Light just now! Do you not know that an imperfection of yours is more harmful to the redemption of a heathen or a sinner, than all the errors of paganism? »

No one replies because they do not know what to say to justify

themselves or to avoid accusing the others.

The wagon of Lazarus' sisters is near a bridge over a dry torrent. The two horses are grazing the thick grass on the banks of the torrent, which has perhaps run dry only recently and thus the banks are thick with grass. Martha's servant and another man, perhaps the driver, are also on the river-bed, whilst the women are in the closed wagon, which is completely enveloped with a heavy cover with tanned hides, which hang like heavy curtains down to the floor of the wagon. The women disciples move towards it, and the servant who is the first to see them, informs the nurse, while the other man takes the horses to the shaft.

In the meantime the servant rushes towards his mistresses bowing to the ground. The elderly nurse, a fine woman with an olive complexion, but pleasant, comes down from the wagon quickly and goes towards her mistresses. But Mary of Magdala says something to her and she directs her steps towards the Blessed Virgin saying: « Forgive me… But my joy in seeing her is so great that I see nobody else. Come, blessed Mother. The sun is scorching. It is cool in the wagon. »

All the women get on to it waiting for the men who are far behind. And while they are waiting and Syntyche, who is wearing the dress which the Magdalene had on yesterday, kisses the feet of her mistresses, as she insists in calling them, although they tell her that she is neither their slave nor their servant, but their guest in the name of Jesus, the Virgin Mary shows the precious little parcel of purple asking how the very short threads can be spun as they refuse to be moistened or twisted.

« That is not how to do it, Donna. They are to be reduced to powder and used as any other dye. It's the filament of the shell, not a hair. See how crumbly it is, now that it is dry? Reduce it to thin powder, sift it, to remove all long bits, which would stain the yarn or the cloth. It is better to dye the yarn in skeins. When You are sure that it is all fine powder, You dissolve it like cochineal, or saffron, or indigo powder or the powder of any other bark, root or fruit and You use it. Fasten the dye with strong vinegar the last time You rinse it. »

« Thank you, Naomi. I will do as you told Me. I have embroidered with purple threads, but they were given to Me ready to be used… Here is Jesus. It is time to say goodbye, My daughters. I bless you all in the name of the Lord. Go in peace and take peace and joy to Lazarus. Goodbye, Mary. Remember that you wept on My breast your first happy tears. I am therefore your Mother because a baby weeps its first tears on its mother's breast. I am your Mother and will always be such. What may be burdensome for you to tell also the most kind sister, the most loving nurse, come and tell Me. I will always understand you. What you would not dare say to My

Jesus, because it is still stained with humanity, which He does not want in you, come and tell Me. I will always be indulgent to you. And if you should like to inform Me also of your triumphs - but I would prefer you told Him, like sweet-smelling flowers, because He is your Saviour, not I - I will rejoice with you. Goodbye, Martha. You are now going away happily, and your supernatural happiness will last. So you need nothing else but to make progress in justice, in the peace which now nothing perturbs in you. Do it for the sake of Jesus, Who has loved you so much as to love your sister whom you love with complete love. Goodbye, Naomi. Go with the treasure you have found. As you used to satisfy her hunger with your milk, satisfy now your own, with the words that she and Martha will tell you, so that you may see in My Son much more than the exorciser who frees hearts from Evil. Goodbye, Syntyche, flower of Greece, you perceived by yourself that there is something more than flesh. Bloom now in God and be the first of the new Grecian flowers in Christ. I am very happy to leave you united thus. I bless you with My love. »

The shuffling of feet is now close at hand. They lift the heavy curtain and see Jesus Who is a few feet from the wagon. They come off in the parching sun, which is blazing down on the road.

Mary of Magdala kneels at Jesus' feet saying: « I thank You, for everything. And I thank You also very much for making me do this pilgrimage. You only possess Wisdom. I am now leaving divested of the remains of the Mary of time ago. Bless me, My Lord, to fortify me more and more. »

« Yes. I bless you. Enjoy the company of your brother and sister and with them form yourself more and more in Me. Goodbye, Mary. Goodbye, Martha. Tell Lazarus that I bless him. I entrust this woman to you. I am not giving her to you. She is My disciple. But I want you to give her the opportunity, however small, of understanding My doctrine. I will come later. Naomi, I bless you, and you two, as well. »

Martha and Mary have tears in their eyes. The Zealot greets them in particular handing them a letter for his servant. The others greet them all together. The wagon then sets out.

« And now let us go and look for some shady spot. May God guide them… Are you so sorry, Mary, that they have gone? » He asks Mary of Alphaeus, who is weeping silently.

« Yes. They were very good… »

« We shall be meeting them again soon. And they will have grown in numbers. You will have many sisters… or daughters, if you prefer so. It is all love, whether it is maternal or brotherly » says Jesus comforting her.

« Providing that does not cause trouble… » grumbles the Iscariot.

« Trouble to love one another? »

« No. Trouble having people of different races or origin. »

« You mean Syntyche? »

« Yes, Master. After all she was the property of the Roman and it was wrong to take possession of her. He will be angry with us and we will draw upon ourselves the rigour of Pontius Pilate. »

« What do you think Pontius Pilate cares if one of his subordinates loses a slave? He will know what a slave is worth. And if he is generally honest, as they say he is, at least at home, he will say that the woman did the right thing to run away. If he is dishonest, he will say: "Serves him right. I may find her". Dishonest people are not sensitive to other people's sufferings. In any case, poor Pontius! With all the trouble we make for him, he has enough to worry about instead of wasting his time with the complaint of a man who let his slave run away! » says Peter. And many say that he is right and laugh at the anger of the lewd Roman.

But Jesus discusses the matter at a higher level. « Judas, are you familiar with Deuteronomy? »

« Certainly, Master. And, I do not hesitate to say, as very few people are. »

« And what do you consider it is? »

« The spokesman of God. »

« Spokesman. So it repeats the word of God. »

« Exactly. »

« You judge it correctly. But, then, why do you not think that it is right to do what it commands? »

« I never said that. On the contrary! I find that we neglect it too much by following the new Law. »

« The New Law is the fruit of the old one, that is, it is the perfection achieved by the tree of Faith. But none of us neglect it, as far as I know, because I am the first to respect it and to prevent others from neglecting it. » Jesus is very incisive in saying these words. He resumes: « The Deuteronomy is untouchable. Also when My Kingdom will triumph, and with My Kingdom the New Law and its new codes and clauses, the Deuteronomy will always be applied to the new dictates, as the squared stones of ancient buildings are used for new ones, because they are perfect and make very strong walls. But My Kingdom does not yet exist, and I, a faithful Israelite, do not offend or neglect the Mosaic Book. It is the base of My behaviour and My teaching. Upon the base of the Man and of the Master, the Son of the Father places the heavenly construction of His Nature and Wisdom. In Deuteronomy it is written: "You shall not hand over to his master the slave who has come to you. He shall live with you, wherever he pleases, he shall stay peacefully in one of your towns and you shall not molest him". This decree applies in any case where a slave has been compelled to run away from a cruel master. In My case, in the case of Syntyche, the flight

is not towards a limited freedom, but towards the unlimited freedom of the Son of God. And now that this skylark has escaped from the hunters' trap, do you expect Me to put her into a net once again and hand her over to her prison to deprive her also of hope, after taking away her freedom? No, never! I bless the Lord because, as our trip to Endor brought this son back to the Father, so our visit to Caesarea has brought this woman to Me, that I may lead her to the Father. At Sicaminon I spoke to you of the power of faith. Today I will speak to you of the light of Hope. But now let us eat and rest in this orchard. Because the sun is scorching as if hell were open. »

255. Jesus Speaks of Hope.

18th August 1945.

Some vine-dressers, who are passing through the orchard, laden with baskets of golden grapes, which seem to be made of amber, see the apostles and ask them: « Are you pilgrims or strangers? »

« We are Galilean pilgrims going towards Mount Carmel » replies on behalf of everybody James of Zebedee, who with his fishermen companions is stretching his legs to overcome a residual somnolence. The Iscariot and Matthew are just waking up on the grass on which they had lain down, while the elder ones, being very tired, are still sleeping. Jesus is speaking to John of Endor and Ermasteus, while the Blessed Virgin and Mary Clopas are nearby, but they do not speak.

The vine-dressers ask: « Have you come from afar? »

« Caesarea was our last stop. Before that we were at Sicaminon and farther away. We come from Capernaum. »

« Oh! It's a long way in this season! But why did you not come to our house? It's over there, see? We could have given you cool water to refreshen yourselves, and some food, rustic food, but good. Come now. »

« We are about to depart. May God reward you just the same. »

« Mount Carmel will not flee on a chariot of fire as its prophet did » says a peasant half-seriously.

« No more chariots come from Heaven to take prophets away. There are no more prophets in Israel. They say that John is already dead » says another peasant.

« Dead? Since when? »

« That's what we were told by some people who came from beyond the Jordan. Did you venerate him? »

« We were his disciples. »

« Why did you leave him? »

« To follow the Lamb of God, the Messiah Whom he announced. Men, He is still in Israel. And much more than a chariot of fire

would be required to transfer Him worthily to Heaven. Do you not believe in the Messiah? »

« Of course we do! We decided to go and look for Him when the harvest is over. They say that He is very zealous in obeying the Law and that He goes to the Temple on prescribed festivities. We shall soon be going for the Tabernacles and will stay in the Temple every day to see Him. And if we do not find Him, we will go looking for Him until we find Him. Since you know Him, tell us: is it true that He is at Capernaum almost all the time? Is it true that He is tall, young, pale, fair-haired and that His voice is different from every other man's, as it touches the hearts of men and even animals and trees listen to it? »

« It touches every heart, except the hearts of Pharisees, Gamala. They have become harsher. »

« They are not even animals. They are demons, including the one whose name I bear. But tell us: is it true that He is so kind as to speak to everybody, to comfort everybody, to cure diseases and convert sinners? »

« Do you believe that? »

« Yes, we do. But we would like to be told by you who follow Him. Oh! I wish you would take us to Him! »

« But you have your vineyards to look after. »

« But we have also a soul to take care of, and it is worth more than our vineyards. Is He at Capernaum? By forced marches we could go and come back in ten days… »

« The One you are looking for is over there. He has rested in your orchard and is now speaking to that old man and the young one, and His Mother and the sister of His Mother are beside Him. »

« That One… Oh!… What shall we do? »

They become stiff with amazement. They are all eyes looking at Him. All their vitality is concentrated in their eyes.

« Well? You were so anxious to see Him, and now you are not moving? Have you become of salt? » says Peter prodding them.

« No… it's… But is the Messiah so simple? »

« What did you expect Him to be? Sitting on a flashing throne wearing a royal mantle? Did you think that He was a new Ahasuerus? »

« No. But… so simple, and He is so holy! »

« Man, He is simple just because He is holy. Well, let us do this… Master! Be patient, come here and work a miracle. There are some men here who are looking for You, but they have become petrified seeing You. Come and give them back motion and speech. »

Jesus, Who turned round when He was called, gets up smiling and comes towards the vine-dressers, whose countenance is so stupefied that they seem to be frightened.

« Peace be with you. Did you want Me? Here I am » and He makes

the usual gesture with His arms, which He stretches out as if He offered Himself.

The vine-dressers fall on their knees and remain silent.

« Be not afraid. Tell Me what you want. »

They offer their baskets full of grapes, without speaking.

Jesus admires the beautiful grapes, and saying: « Thanks » He stretches a hand and takes a bunch and begins to eat them.

« O Most High God! He eats like us! » says with a sigh the one whose name is Gamala.

It is not possible not to laugh at such a remark. Jesus also smiles more noticeably and almost to excuse Himself, He says: « I am the Son of man! »

His gesture has overcome their ecstatic torpor, and Gamala says: « Would You not enter our house, at least until vesper? We are many, because we are seven brothers with wives and children, and then there are the old ones who are waiting for death in peace. »

« Let us go. Call your companions and join us. Mother, come with Mary. »

And Jesus sets out behind the peasants who have got up and are walking a little sideways in order to see Him walk. The path is a narrow one and runs between trees tied to one another by vines.

They soon reach the house, or rather the houses, because there are several houses forming a square with a large common yard in the centre, where there is a well. The entrance is through a long corridor, which serves as a lobby and is closed at night with a heavy door.

« Peace to this house and to those who live in it » says Jesus entering and raising His hand to bless, and then lowers it to caress a little half -naked baby, who looks at Him ecstatically: he is lovely in his little sleeveless shirt, which has fallen off his plump shoulder; he is bare-footed, with one finger in his mouth and a crust of bread, dressed with oil, in the other hand.

« That's David, the son of my youngest brother » explains Gamala, while one of the other vine-dressers enters the house next door to inform the people in it, he then comes out and enters another one and so on, so that faces of every age look out and withdraw, and finally come out after a short toilet.

There is an old man sitting in the shade of a shed, shielded by a huge fig-tree, and he is holding a stick in his hands. He does not even raise his head, as if nothing were of interest to him.

« He is our father » explains Gamala. « He is one of the old people of the household, because Jacob's wife also brought her father here, when he was left all alone, then there is the old mother of Leah, who is the youngest wife. Our father is blind. His eyes are covered by a veil. So much sunshine in the fields! So much heat from the soil! Poor father! He is very sad. But he is very good. He

is now waiting for his grandchildren, who are his only joy. »

Jesus goes towards the old man. « May God bless you, father. »

« May God give Your blessing back to You, whoever You are » replies the old man raising his head towards the voice.

« Your fate is unpleasant, is it not? » asks Jesus kindly, beckoning to the others not to say who is speaking.

« It comes from God, after so much good He has given me during my long life. As I accepted good from God I must accept also the misfortune of my sight. After all, it is not eternal. It will end on the bosom of Abraham. »

« You are right. It would be worse if your soul were blind. »

« I have always endeavoured to keep its sight perfect. »

« How did you do that? »

« You who are speaking, are young, Your voice tells me. Are You perhaps like the present-day young people who are all blind, because they are without religion, eh? Be careful, it is a great misfortune not to believe and not to do what God told us. An old man tells You, my boy. If You abandon the Law, You will be blind both on the earth and in next life. You will never see God. Because the day will come when the Redemptor Messiah will open the gates of God for us. I am too old to see that day here on the earth. But I will see it from the bosom of Abraham. That is why I do not complain of anything. Because I hope that through my darkness I will expiate anything I may have done disagreeable to God, and that I may deserve Him in eternal life. But You are young. Be faithful, son, so that You may see the Messiah. Because the time is near. The Baptist said so. You will see Him. But if Your soul is blind You will be one of those of whom Isaiah speaks. You will have eyes, but You will not see. »

« Would you like to see Him, father? » asks Jesus laying one hand on his white head.

« I would like to see Him. Of course. But I prefer to go without seeing Him, rather than I should see Him and my sons should not recognise Him. I still have the ancient faith and it is enough for me. They… Oh! the world nowadays… »

« Father, see therefore the Messiah, and may the evening of your life be crowned with delight » and Jesus' hand slides from the white head down across his forehead as far as the bearded chin of the old man, as if He were caressing him, and in the meantime He bends to be at the height of his senile face.

« Oh! Most High Lord! But I can see! I see… Who are You, with this unknown face, which, however, is familiar to me, as if I had already seen You?… But… Oh! How foolish I am! You Who have given me back my eyesight are the blessed Messiah! Oh! » The old man weeps over Jesus' hands, which he has grasped, covering them with tears and kisses.

All the relatives are in a turmoil.

Jesus frees His hand and He caresses the old man again saying: « Yes, it is I. Come, so that you may become acquainted with My words as well as with My face. » And He goes towards a little staircase, which leads up to a shady terrace entirely shielded by a thick pergola. Everybody follows Him.

« I had promised My disciples to speak to them about hope and I was going to tell them a parable to explain it. This is the parable: this old Israelite. The Father of Heaven gives Me the subject to teach you all the great virtue that supports Faith and Charity, like the arms of a yoke.

A sweet yoke. The scaffold of mankind like the arm of the cross, the throne of salvation like the support of the wholesome snake raised in the desert. Scaffold of mankind. Bridge of the soul to fly up to the Light. And it is placed in the middle, between essential Faith and most perfect Charity, because without Hope there can be no Faith and without Hope, Charity dies. Faith presupposes unfailing hope. How can one believe that one will reach God if one does not hope in His Bounty? What can support you during your lifetime if you do not hope in eternal life? How can we persist in justice if we do not entertain the hope that every good deed of ours is seen by God Who will reward us for it? Likewise how can Charity be alive in us if we have no hope? Hope precedes Charity and prepares it. Because a man needs to hope in order to love. Those who have lost all hope, cannot love. This is the staircase, made of steps and banisters: Faith the steps, Hope the banisters; at the top there is Charity to which one climbs by means of the other two. Man hopes in order to believe, and believes in order to love.

This man knew how to hope. He was born. A baby of Israel like everybody else. He grew up with the same teaching as everybody else. He became a son of the Law like all the others. He became a man, a husband, a father, old, always hoping in the promises made to the patriarchs and repeated by the prophets. In his old age shadows came over his eyes, but not over his heart. Hope has always been lit in it. Hope to see God. To see God in next life. And, in the hope of that eternal vision, there was a more intimate and dearer hope: "to see the Messiah". And he said to Me, not knowing who was the young man speaking to him: "If you abandon the Law you will be blind both on the earth and in Heaven. You will not see God and you will not know the Messiah". He spoke as a wise man.

There are too many people in Israel now who are blind. They have no hope because it was killed by their rebellion to the Law, which is always a rebellion, even when veiled by sacred vestments, if it is not complete acceptance of the word of God, I say of God, not of the superstructures put there by man, which being too many and completely human, are neglected by the very

ones who put them there, and are fulfilled mechanically, compulsorily, wearily, unfruitfully by others. They have no more hope. But they deride the eternal truth. Therefore they no longer have Faith or Charity. The divine yoke given by God to man that he might make it his obedience and merit, the heavenly cross that God gave to man to conjure the serpents of Evil, that he might make it his health, has lost its cross arm, the one supporting the white flame and the red one: Faith and Charity, and darkness descended into the hearts of men.

The old man said to Me: "It is a great misfortune not to believe and not to do what God told us". It is true. I confirm it. It is worse than bodily blindness, which can be cured to give a just man the joy to see again the sun, meadows, the fruit of the earth, the faces of his sons and grandchildren, and above all, what was the hope of his hope: "To see the Messiah of the Lord". I wish such virtue were alive in the soul of every man in Israel and above all in the souls of those who are more learned in the law. It is not sufficient to have been to the Temple or to be of the Temple, it is not sufficient to know the words of the Book by heart. It is necessary to make them the life of our lives by means of the three divine virtues. You have an example: everything is easy to deal with where they are alive, even misfortune. Because the yoke of God is always a light one, which weighs only on the body but does not deject the spirit.

Go in peace, you who live in this house of good Israelites. Go in peace, old father. You have the certainty that God loves you. End your just day by laying your wisdom in the hearts of the children of your own blood. I cannot stay, but My blessing remains here, among these walls rich in grace like the grapes of this vineyard. »

And Jesus would like to go away. But He has to stay at least long enough to meet this tribe of all ages, and receive what they wish to give Him, until their travelling sacks are like bulging goat-skins… He can then take to the road again, along a short cut through the vineyard, shown to Him by the vine-dressers, who leave Him only when they reach the main road, in sight of a little village where Jesus and His friends can stay for the night.

256. Jesus Goes up Mount Carmel with His Cousin James.

19th August 1945.

« Evangelize in the plain of Esdraelon until I come back » Jesus orders His apostles on a clear morning, while they are taking a little food, some bread and fruit, on the banks of the Kishon.

The apostles do not appear to be very enthusiastic, but Jesus comforts them, telling them how to behave, and He concludes: « In any case you have My Mother with you. She will give you good advice. Go to Johanan's peasants, and on the Sabbath endeavour to

speak to Doras' peasants. Give them some assistance and console the old relative of Marjiam, giving him news of the boy and tell him that we will take him his grandson for the feast of the Tabernacles. Give those poor people very much, everything you have. Tell them everything you know, give them all the love you can, all the money we have. Be not afraid. As it goes, so it comes. We shall never die of starvation, even if we have to live on bread and fruit only. And if you see people needing clothes, give them some, also Mine. Nay, Mine first. We shall never be left nude. And above all if you come across poor wretches looking for Me, do not disdain them. You have no right to do that. Goodbye, Mother. May God bless you all through My lips. Go without any fear. Come, James. »

« Are You not taking Your bag? » asks Thomas seeing that the Lord is going away without picking it up.

« I do not need it. I shall walk more freely. »

James also leaves his, notwithstanding his mother had taken care to fill it with bread, cheese and fruit.

They set out following for a little while the bank of the Kishon, then they start climbing the first slopes leading up to Mount Carmel and can no longer be seen by those left behind.

« Mother, we are now in Your hands. Guide us because… we are not capable of doing anything » confesses Peter humbly.

Mary smiles reassuringly and says: « It is very simple. All you need do is obey His orders and you will do everything very well. Let us go. »

Jesus is climbing with His cousin and does not speak. Neither does James. Jesus is engrossed in thought; James, who feels he is on the threshold of a revelation, is full of reverential love, of spiritual tremor and looks now and again at Jesus, Whose pensive solemn face brightens up now and again with a smile. James looks at Him as he would look at God not yet incarnate and shining in His immense majesty. The apostle's face, which resembles the countenance of Saint Joseph, a brownish visage, with, however, some red on the top points of cheeks, becomes pale with emotion. But he respects the silence of Jesus.

They climb up steep short cuts, paying no attention to the shepherds pasturing their flocks on the green meadows under holm-oaks, oaks, ash-trees and other forestry, and as they climb up, they brush with their mantles glaucous juniper bushes, or golden broom ones, or emerald tufts strewn with myrtle pearls, or trembling curtains of honeysuckle and flowery climatis.

They ascend leaving behind woodsmen and shepherds until they reach, after an exhausting climb, the crest of the mountain, or rather a small tableland close to the crest crowned with gigantic oaks, and surrounded by a veritable balustrade of forestry, whose base is formed by the tops of the other trees on the mountain side,

so that the little meadow seems to be resting on a rustling support, isolated from the rest of the mountain, and is rather concealed by the branches beneath. Behind it there is the peak, with its trees rising towards the sky, with the firmament above and in front the unbroken horizon reddening in the sunset and stretching endlessly beyond the bright sea. A fissure on the earth, which does not collapse only because the roots of gigantic oaks hold it firmly in position, opens in the cliff and is barely wide enough for one man of normal build. The path is further narrowed and lengthened by some fringe undergrowth.

Jesus says: « James, My dear brother, we shall stop here tonight, and although our bodies are so tired, I ask you to pass the night in prayer. Tonight and all day tomorrow until this time. A whole day is not too much to receive what I want to give you. »

« Jesus, My Lord and Master, I will always do what You want » replies James, who became even paler when Jesus began to speak.

« I know. Let us go now and pick some blackberries and bilberries to eat and refresh ourselves at a spring that I heard below here. You may leave your mantle in the cave. No one will take it. »

And together with His cousin He goes round the cliff and picks wild fruit off the bushes in the undergrowth, and then, a few yards further down, on the opposite side to the one they came up, they fill their flasks, the only things they brought with them, at a babbling spring, which runs out from a mass of intertwined roots, and they refresh themselves because it is still very warm notwithstanding the height. They then climb back to the tableland, and while the sun setting in the west reddens the mountain top, they eat what they have picked and drink some water, smiling at each other like two happy children or two angels. They speak only a few words: a remembrance of those left down in the plain, an exclamation admiring the infinite beauty of the day, the names of two mothers… Nothing else.

Then Jesus draws His cousin towards Himself and James takes John's habitual posture: his head resting on the upper part of Jesus' chest, one arm hanging loose, the other hand in that of his Cousin. They remain thus, while in the dusk, birds twitter loudly in the thicket, the tinkle of cattle-bells recedes and fades in the distance, and a light breeze rustles caressingly in the tree tops, cool and reviving after the heat of the day, and promising dew in the night.

They remain thus for a long time, and I think that only their lips are silent, whilst their souls, more active than ever, are engaged in supernatural conversation.

257. Jesus Reveals to James of Alphaeus His Future Apostolic Mission.

20th August 1945.

It is the same time on the following day.

James is still in the fissure of the mountain and is sitting all curled up, with his head almost resting on his knees, which are drawn up and embraced by his arms. He is either engrossed in meditation or sleeping. I do not know which. He is certainly unaware of what is happening around him, that is, of the fight of two large birds, which for some private reason are duelling fiercely on the little meadow. I would say that they are mountain-cocks, or woodgrouse or pheasants, because they are the size of a cockerel, with variegated feathers but they have no combs, but only a helmet of flesh, as red as coral, on the top of their heads and on their cheeks, and I can assure you (1) that if their heads are small, their beaks must be like steel spikes. Feathers fly in the air and blood falls on to the ground in a dreadful noise, which has caused all whistling, trilling and warbling to come to an end among branches. Perhaps the little birds are watching the wild fight. James does not hear anything.

Jesus does hear and comes down from the hill top to which He had climbed and clapping His hands He separates the two opponents, which fly away bleeding, one towards the mountain side, the other to an oak-tree on the top, where it tidies its shaggy ruffled feathers.

James does not raise his head even at the noise made by Jesus, Who takes a few more steps smiling and stops in the middle of the little meadow. His white tunic seems to become tinged with red on the right hand side, so deep is the crimson of sunset. The sky seems to be catching fire. And yet James cannot be asleep, because as soon as Jesus whispers, He just whispers: « James, come here », he lifts his head from his knees, frees his legs from the embrace of his arms, stands up and comes towards Jesus. He stops a couple of paces before him and looks at Him.

Jesus returns the glance, gravely but encouraging him at the same time, by means of a smile, which is not formed by His lips or His eyes, and yet is visible. He stares at James, as if He wanted to read the slightest reaction and emotion of His cousin and apostle, who, feeling as on the previous day, that he is about to receive a revelation, turns pale and becomes even paler until he is as white as his linen tunic when Jesus raises His arms and lays His hands on his shoulders, and remains thus with arms stretched forth. James then looks just like a sacred host. Only his mild dark brown eyes and his brown beard give some colour to his expectant face.

(1) Maria Valtorta is addressing her confessor.

« James, My brother, do you know why I wanted you here, all by ourselves, to speak to you after hours of prayer and meditation? »

James seems to find it difficult to reply, as he is so deeply moved. But at last he replies in a low voice: « To give me a special lesson; or with regard to the future or because I am the least capable of all. I thank You from this moment, even if it is for a reproach. But, believe me, My Master and Lord, if I am slow and incapable, it is due to inborn deficiency, not to poor will. »

« It is not a reproach but a lesson for the time when I shall no longer be with you. During the last months you have pondered in your heart over what I told you one day, at the foot of this mountain, when I promised to come here with you, not only to speak of the prophet Elijah and to watch the infinite sea shining over there, but to speak to you of another sea, greater, more changeable and untrustworthy than this one, which today looks like the most placid of all seas, and yet in a few hours it may swallow boats and men in its voracious hunger. And you have always linked what I told you then to the idea that your coming here had some connection with your future destiny… In fact you are now becoming paler and paler, as you realise that it is a grave destiny, a heritage full of such responsibility as to cause even a hero to tremble. A responsibility and a mission to be fulfilled with all the holiness that is possible in man in order not to disappoint the will of God.

Be not afraid, James. I do not want your ruin. Therefore if I destine you to it, it means that I know that you will not receive any harm from it, but only supernatural joy. Listen, James. Set your heart at rest, through a fine act of abandonment to Me, so that you may be able to hear and remember My words. Never again shall we be all alone as we are now and with our souls so prepared to understand each other.

I will go one day, like every man who has a limited period of time to stay on the earth. My stay will come to an end in a way that is different from that of men, but it will still come to an end, and you will no longer have Me with you, except through My Spirit which, I can assure you, will never desert you. I will go after giving you what is necessary to enable My Doctrine to make progress in the world, after completing the Sacrifice and obtaining Grace for you. By means of that Grace and of the sapiential septiform Fire you will be able to do what you would now consider madness and presumption even to imagine. I will go and you will remain. And the world that did not understand Christ will not understand the apostles of Christ. You will therefore be persecuted and dispersed as the greatest danger to the welfare of Israel. But since you are My disciples you must be happy to suffer the same afflictions as your Master suffered.

One day in the month of Nisan I said to you: "You will be the one

who is left of the prophets of the Lord". Your mother, by spiritual ministry, almost understood the meaning of those words. But before they come true for My apostles, they will be realised with regard to you. James, everybody will be dispersed, except you, and that until you are called by God to His Heaven. You will remain in the place to which God will have elected you through the word of your brothers, you, the descendant of the royal race, in the royal city, to raise My sceptre and speak of the true King. Of the King of Israel and of the world, according to a sublime regality that no one understands except those to whom it is revealed.

They will be days when you will need strength, perseverance, patience and unlimited sagacity. You will have to be just with charity and with the pure simple faith of a child, but at the same time erudite as becoming a true master in order to support faith attacked in many hearts by so many enemies, and to confute the errors of false Christians and the doctrinaire quibbles of old Israel, which is blind now and will become even more blind after killing the Light and will twist the words of the prophets and even the instructions of the Father from Whom I come, to convince the world and itself, in order to give itself peace, that I was not the One of Whom patriarchs and prophets spoke. They will instead state that I was a poor man, a madman, a dreamer, according to the better ones, a possessed heretic according to the worse ones of old Israel.

I beg you then to be another Myself. No, it is not impossible! It is possible. You will have to bear in mind your Jesus, His actions, His words, His deeds. You will have to become molten in Me, as if you lay in the clay mould used by those who melt metals to shape them. I will always be present, so present and alive with you, My faithful ones, that you will be able to unite yourselves to Me and form another Me, if you only wish so. But you, who have been with Me since our earliest youth and have received the food of Wisdom from the hands of Mary, even before you received it from Mine, you who are the nephew of the most just man that Israel had, you must be a perfect Christ… »

« I cannot, I cannot, Lord! Give that task to my brother. Give it to John, to Peter Simon, to the other Simon. But not to me, my Lord! Why to me? What have I done to deserve it? Can't You see that I am a poor man capable of one thing only: that is, to love You and firmly believe what You say? »

« Judas' character is too strong. He will do well where paganism is to be demolished. Not here, where those who are to be convinced of the Christian faith believe that they are absolutely right, as they already are the people of God. Not here, where those are to be persuaded, who although they believe in Me, will be disappointed at the course of events. They are to be convinced that My Kingdom is not of this world, but it is the entirely spiritual Kingdom of

Heaven, the prelude to which is a Christian life, that is, a life in which spiritual values are the prevailing ones.

Persuasion is achieved by means of firm kindness. Woe to those who catch people by their throats to persuade them. They will say: "yes"! at the moment, to be freed from the grip. But they will run away without looking back and they will refuse any further discussion, if they are not wicked, but only misguided. But if they are wicked or simply fanatics, they will run away to get armed and kill the overbearing assertor of doctrines different from theirs. And you will be surrounded by fanatics. There will be fanatics among Christians and among Israelites. The former will expect you to take strong action or will claim authority from you to take strong action themselves. Because old Israel, with its intolerance and restrictions, will still be wriggling its poisonous tail amongst them. The latter will march against you and the others, as if they were fighting a holy war to defend the old Faith, its symbols and ceremonies. And you will be in the middle of the stormy sea.

Such is the fate of leaders. And you will be the leader of all those belonging to the Jerusalem converted to Christianity by your Jesus. You will have to know how to love perfectly in order to lead them holily. You will have to oppose your heart to the weapons and anathemas of the Jews, and not offer resistance with other weapons and anathemas. Never take the liberty of imitating the Pharisees in judging the Gentiles as filth. I have come for them as well, because the humiliation of God in taking flesh liable to death would have been out of proportion if done for Israel alone. Because while it is true that My Love would have made Me become incarnate with joy for the salvation of one only soul, Justice, which is also a divine perfection, demands that Infinite be humiliated for an infinity: for Mankind. You will have to be kind to them as well, in order not to repel them, confining yourself to being firm with regard to My doctrine, but indulging as far as other forms of life different from ours, and material matters are concerned, without any detriment to souls. But you will have to fight hard with your brothers over that, because Israel is enveloped in practices that are external only and useless, as they do not change souls. You instead must be concerned only with the spirit, and you must teach others to do the same. Do not expect Gentiles to change their habits all of a sudden. You will not change yours with one blow either. Do not remain anchored at your rock. Because to pick up wreckage at sea and take it to the dockyard and reshape it for a new life, it is necessary to sail and not remain still. And you must go and look for wreckage. There is some in paganism and also in Israel. Beyond the boundless sea there is God, Who opens His arms to all His creatures, whether they are rich because of their holy origin, like Israelites, or poor, because

pagans. I said: "You shall love your neighbour". Your neighbour is not only your relative or countryman. Also the Hyperborean, whose face is unknown to you, is your neighbour, as well as the man who is now admiring dawn in regions of which you are unaware, or the man who travels on the fabulous mountain chains covered with snow in Asia, or drinks at a river flowing in the unknown forests in central Africa. And if a worshipper of the sun should come to you, or one whose god is the voracious crocodile, or one who believes that he is Wisdom reincarnate, who understood the Truth, but did not grasp its Perfection, neither did he give it as Health to his faithful ones, or should a nauseated citizen of Rome or Athens come to you asking: "Give me knowledge of God", you cannot and must not say to them: "I reject you because it would be a profanation to take you to God". Bear in mind that they do not know, whereas Israel does. And yet many people in Israel are and will be really more idolatrous and cruel than the most barbarian idolater in the world, and they will not sacrifice human victims to this or to that idol, but to themselves, to their pride, avid for blood after they have become parched with an unquenchable thirst, which will last until the end of centuries. That terrible thirst may be quenched only by drinking once again and with faith what caused it. But it will then be the end of the world, because Israel will be the last to say: "We believe that You are God and the Messiah", notwithstanding all the proofs that I have given and will give of My Divinity.

You will watch and ensure that the faith of Christians is not vain. It would be vain if it consisted only of words or hypocritical practices. It is the spirit that vivifies. There is no spirit in mechanical or Pharisaic practices, which are but sham faith and not true faith. What would it avail man to sing praises to God in the congregation of believers, if every action of his is an imprecation to God, Who does not become the laughing-stock of such believer, but in His paternity, always maintains His prerogatives of God and King?

Watch and ensure that nobody takes a place not belonging to him. The Light will be given by God according to your situation, God will never let you be without Light, unless Grace is extinguished in you by sin. Many will love to be called: "master". One only is your Master: He Who is speaking to you; and one only is your Mistress: the Church, which perpetuates Him. In the Church those will be masters who have been consecrated with the special appointment to teach. But among the believers there will be some who by the will of God and their own holiness, that is because of their good will, will be overwhelmed by the vortex of Wisdom and will speak. There will be others, who are not wise themselves but are docile instruments in the hands of artisans, and they will

speak in the name of the Artisan, repeating, like good children, what the Father tells them to say, although they do not understand the full meaning of the words they speak. And finally there will be those who speak as if they were masters, and their magniloquence will deceive simple people, but they will be proud, hard-hearted, jealous, irascible, liars and lustful. While I tell you to receive the words of the wise in the Lord and of the sublime children of the Holy Spirit, helping them to understand the depth of divine words, because if they are the bearers of the Divine Voice, you, My apostles, will always be the teachers of My Church, and you must assist those who are supernaturally tired of the enrapturing and grave richness that God has granted them that they may take it to their brothers, so I say to you: reject the false words of false prophets, whose lives are not in accordance with My doctrine. A holy life, mildness, purity, charity and humility will never be lacking in the wise and little voices of God. They will always be lacking in the others.

Watch and ensure that there are no jealousy and slander, or resentment or desire for revenge in the congregation of believers. Watch and ensure that the flesh does not overwhelm the spirit. He, whose spirit does not control his body, could not withstand persecutions.

James, I know that you will do it, but promise your Brother that you will not disappoint Me. »

« But, my Lord! I am afraid of one thing only: that I am not capable of doing it. My Lord, I beg You, give that task to someone else. »

« No. I cannot… »

« Simon of Jonah loves You, and You love him… »

« Simon of Jonah is not James of David. »

« John! John, the learned angel, make him Your servant here. »

« No. I cannot. Neither Simon nor John possess that nothingness, which is, however, so important with men: kinship. You are a relative of Mine. After refusing to acknowledge Me, the better part of Israel will endeavour to be forgiven by God and by themselves and will make an effort to know the Lord Whom they cursed in the hour of Satan, and they will feel they have been forgiven, and will thus feel strong to come on to My Way, if one of My blood is in My place. James, great things have been accomplished upon this mountain. Here the fire of God consumed not only the holocaust, the wood and stones, but even the dust and the very water that was in the ditch. James, do you believe that God can do again such a thing, burning and consuming all the materiality of the man-James to make a James-fire of God? We have been speaking while the setting sun has inflamed our tunics. Do you think that the brightness of the chariot that took Elijah away, was like this or

more or less refulgent? »

« Much more refulgent because it was made of heavenly fire. »

« Consider therefore what a heart will be, when it has been turned into fire to have in itself God, because God wants it to perpetuate His Word preaching the Gospel of Salvation. »

« But You, Word of God, eternal Word, why do You not remain? »

« Because I am Word and Flesh. By the Word I must teach, and by the Flesh, redeem. »

« Oh! My Jesus, how will You redeem? What have You to face? »

« James, remember the prophets. »

« But are their words not allegoric? Can You, the Word of God, be manhandled by men? Do they perhaps not mean that Your divinity, Your perfection will be tormented but nothing more than that? My mother is worried about Judas and me, but I am worried about You and Mary, and also about ourselves, because we are so weak. Jesus, if men should overwhelm You, do You not think that many of us would believe You to be guilty, and being disappointed, would abandon You? »

« I am sure of it. There will be confusion among all My disciples. But then peace will reign, and there will be a cohesion of all the better parts, upon which the fortifying wise Spirit: the Divine Spirit will come, after My sacrifice and My triumph. »

« Jesus, in order that I may not deviate and may not be scandalised in the dreadful hour, tell me: what will they do to You? »

« You are asking Me a great thing. »

« Tell me, my Lord. »

« It will be a torture for you to know it exactly. »

« It does not matter. For the love that has united us… »

« It is not to be known. »

« Tell me and then cancel it from my memory until the hour it is to be accomplished. Then bring it back to my memory, together with the remembrance of this hour. I will thus not be scandalised and I will not become Your enemy in the depth of my heart. »

« It will be of no avail, because you, too, will yield to the storm. »

« Tell me, my Lord! »

« I shall be accused, betrayed, captured, tortured, crucified. »

« No! » shouts James writhing as if he had been struck to death. « No! » he repeats. « If they do that to You, what will they do to us? How shall we be able to continue Your work? I cannot accept the position You have destined to me… I cannot… When You die, I will die too, having no more strength. Jesus, listen to me! Don't leave me without You. Promise me at least that! »

« I promise that I will come and guide you with My Spirit, after My glorious Resurrection has freed Me from the restrictions of matter. You and I will be again one thing only, as we are now that you are between My arms » James in fact has begun to weep on

Jesus' chest. « Do not weep any more. Let us come out of this bright and painful hour of ecstasy, as one comes out from the shadow of death, remembering everything except the act of dying, a fright that freezes one's blood and lasts but one minute, and as an accomplished fact it lasts for ever. Come I will kiss you thus, to help you forget the burden of My fate as Man. You will remember all this at the right moment, as you asked. Here, I kiss your lips that will have to repeat My words to the people of Israel, and your heart that will have to love as I told you, and there, on your temple, where life will cease together with the last word of loving faith in Me. My beloved brother, I will come to you and be with you in the meetings of believers, in the hour of meditation, in those of danger and in the hour of your death! No one, not even your angel, will receive your spirit, because I will, with a kiss, thus… »

They remain embraced for a long time and James seems to doze off in the joy of God's kisses that make him forget his suffering. When he lifts his head, he has become once again James of Alphaeus, peaceful and kind, so much like Joseph, the spouse of Mary. He smiles at Jesus, his smile is more mature, somewhat sad, but always so sweet.

« Let us take our food, James, and then we shall sleep under the stars. At daybreak we shall go down to the valley… back to men… » and Jesus sighs… But He ends with a smile: « … and to Mary. »

« And what shall I tell my mother, Jesus? And my companions? They will ask me many questions… »

« You can tell them everything I told you, making you consider Elijah in his answers to Ahab, to the people on the mountain, and meditating on the power of a man loved by God to achieve what is wanted of people and all the elements, his zeal, which devours him, for the Lord, and how I made you consider that with peace and in peace one understands and serves God. You will say to them as I said to you: "Come", and as Elijah put his mantle on Elisha, so you by the mantle of charity will be able to gain for the Lord new servants of God. And to those who are always worried, say that I drew to your attention the joyful freedom from past things, which Elisha shows, when he got rid of the oxen and plough. Tell them how I reminded you that evil and no good befalls those who want miracles through Beelzebub, as it happened to Ahaziah, according to the word of Elijah. And finally tell them, how I promised you that for those who are faithful until death, the purifying fire of Love will come to bum their imperfections and take them straight to Heaven. The rest is for you only. »

258. Jesus and His Cousin James on Their Way Back from Mount Carmel.

21st August 1945.

Jesus leaves the tableland on Mount Carmel and descends along dewy paths through woods that become livelier with trills and voices in the early sunshine gilding the eastern side of the mountain. When the sun dissolves the heat haze, the beauty of the whole plain of Esdraelon is displayed with its orchards and vineyards all gathered around houses. It looks like a carpet, mostly green, with a few yellowish oases strewn with red areas, which are the fields where the corn has been cut and poppies now sparkle, a carpet enclosed by the triangular bezel of Mount Carmel, Mount Tabor and Mount Hermon (Little Hermon) and by more remote mountains, the names of which I do not know, which conceal the Jordan and are linked to the south-east to the mountains of Samaria. Jesus stops and looks pensively at all that area of Palestine.

James looks at Him and says: « Are You looking at the beauty of this region? »

« Yes, also at that. But more than anything else I was thinking of future pilgrimages and of the necessity of sending disciples without any delay to do real missionary work, and not just limited work as we have done now. There are many areas where I am not yet known and I do not want to leave any place without the knowledge of Me. It is a worry constantly present in My mind: to go and do everything, while I can… »

« Now and again something happens that delays You. »

« Rather than delay Me they cause changes to My itinerary; because the trips we make are never useless. But there is still so much to be done… Also because after being absent from one place I find that many hearts have gone back to where they started from, and I have to start all over again. »

« Yes, the apathy of souls, their inconstancy and affection for evil are depressing and disgusting. »

« Depressing, yes, but do not say disgusting. The work of God is never disgusting. We must feel pity not disgust for poor souls. We must always have the heart of a father, of a good father. A good father is never disgusted at the diseases of his children. We must never have a dislike for anyone. »

« Jesus, may I ask You a few questions? I did not sleep last night. But I pondered very much while watching You sleep. You look so young when You are asleep. My brother! You were smiling, with Your head resting on Your folded arm, just like the posture of a little boy. I could see You very well in the clear moonlight of last night. And I pondered. And many questions came up from my heart… »

« Tell Me. »

« I was saying: I must ask Jesus how we shall be able to set up that organised body, which You called Church, and in which there will be hierarchies, if I understood properly, considering how incapable we are. Will You tell us what we must do, or shall we have to do it by ourselves? »

« When the time comes, I will tell you who is its head. Nothing else. While I am with you, I will inform you of its various classes with the differences between apostles, disciples and women disciples. Because they cannot be avoided. But as I want the disciples to respect and obey the apostles, so the apostles must love and be patient with the disciples. »

« And what shall we have to do? Preach You all the time and nothing else? »

« That is essential. Then you will have to absolve in My name and bless, readmit to Grace, administer the Sacraments that I will institute… »

« What are they? »

« They are supernatural and spiritual means, applied also through material means, which are used to convince men that the priest is really doing something. You know that man does not believe unless he sees. He always needs something to tell him that there is something. That is why, when I work miracles, I impose My hands, or I wet with saliva, or I give a morsel of soaked bread. I could work a miracle by means of a simple thought. But do you think that in that case people would say: "God has worked the miracle?" They would say: "The invalid is cured because it was time for him to be cured". And they would ascribe the merit to the doctor, or to medicines or to the physical strength of the invalid. The same will apply to sacraments: religious formalities to administer Grace, or give it again, or fortify it in believers. John, for instance, used to immerge sinners into water to symbolise cleanness from sin. In actual fact the mortification of confessing oneself unclean because of sins committed, was more useful than the water that washed only the body. I will have a baptism as well, My baptism, which will not be only a symbol, but will really cleanse a soul of the original sin and give back to it the spiritual state that Adam and Eve possessed before they sinned, a state, which is now improved, because it will be granted through the merits of the Man-God. »

« But… water does not descend upon the soul! A soul is spiritual. Who can touch it in a new-born baby, in an adult or in an old person? Nobody. »

« See, you admit that water is a material means, with no effect on a spiritual thing? So it will not be the water, but the word of the priest, a member of the Church of Christ, consecrated in his service, or the word of another true believer, who may replace him in

exceptional cases, that will work the miracle of redeeming the baptised person from original sin. »

« All right. But man commits sins of his own… Who will remove the other sins? »

« It will always be the priest, James. If an adult is baptised, also the other sins will be removed with the original one. If a man has been baptised and he commits sins, the priest will absolve him in the name of God One and Trine and through the merits of the Incarnate Word, as I do with sinners. »

« But You are holy! We… »

« You must be holy because you touch holy things and you administer what belongs to God. »

« So shall we baptise the same man several times, as John does, in fact he grants immersion into water as many times as one goes to him? »

« John's baptism purifies only through the humility of the person who is immersed into water. I already told you. You shall not baptise again those who have already been baptised, unless a person has been baptised with a schismatic formula and not with the apostolic one, in which case a second baptism is to be administered, subject to a precise request of the person to be christened, if adult, and subject to a clear statement that the person in question wishes to become a member of the true Church. In all other cases, to give a soul its friendship and peace with God, you will use the words of forgiveness joined to the merits of Christ, and the soul that has come to you with true repentance and a humble confession, will be absolved. »

« And if a man cannot come because he is so ill that he cannot be moved? Will he die in sin? Will the fear for the judgement of God be added to the misery of his agony? »

« No. The priest will go to the dying person and give absolution. In actual fact he will give the person a more ample form of absolution, not a comprehensive one, but an absolution for each and every sense-organ, by means of which man generally sins. We have in Israel the Sacred Oil, compound according to the prescriptions given by the Most High, with which the altar, the Pontiff, priests and kings are consecrated. Man is really an altar. And he becomes king through his election to a throne in Heaven; he can therefore be consecrated with the oil of Unction. The Holy Oil will be taken with other rites of the Israelite cult and included in My Church, but with different uses. Because not everything in Israel is evil and to be rejected. Nay, many recollections of the old stock will be in My Church. And one will be the Oil of Unction, which will be used also in the Church to consecrate altars, Pontiffs, all ecclesiastic hierarchies, kings and believers, when they become princes and heirs of the Kingdom, or when they need the greatest

help to appear before God with their bodies and senses cleansed of all sins. The grace of God will assist both the soul and the body, if God so wishes for the benefit of the sick person. A body does not always react against diseases also because its peace is upset by remorse and because of the work of Satan, who through the death of the sick person hopes to gain a soul to his kingdom and cause despair to those who are left behind. The sick person passes from the satanic grip and internal emotion to a peaceful state, through the certainty of God's forgiveness, which also brings about Satan's departure. And since the gift of Grace was coupled in our first progenitors with the gift of immunity from diseases and from all forms of sorrow, the sick person who has been restored to Grace as great as the Grace of a new-born baby christened with My baptism, may get over the illness. The sick man is assisted also by the prayers of his brethren, who are obliged to have not only physical but above all spiritual pity on invalids, in order to obtain both physical and spiritual salvation for their brother. Prayer is in fact a form of miracle, James. The prayer of a just man, as you have seen in Elijah, can be very powerful. »

« I understand only a little of what You say, but what I do understand fills me with deep respect for the sacerdotal character of Your priests. If I have understood You correctly, we shall have many points in common with You: preaching, absolution, miracles. Three sacraments, therefore. »

« No, James. Preaching and miracles are not sacraments. The Sacraments will be more: seven, like the sacred candelabrum of the Temple and the gifts of the Spirit of Love. And in fact the Sacraments are gifts and flames and are granted to man so that he may bum for ever before the Lord. There will be a Sacrament also for the marriage of man. And it is already symbolised in the holy marriage of Sarah, the daughter of Raguel, after she was freed from the demon. The Sacrament will give the married couple all the assistance needed to live together according to the law and the wishes of God. Husband and wife also become the ministers of a rite: the rite of procreation. Husband and wife become also the priests of a small church: their family. They must therefore be consecrated in order to procreate with the blessing of God and to bring up a progeny that will bless the Most Holy Name of God. »

« And by whom will priests be consecrated? »

« By Me, before I leave you. You will, afterwards, consecrate your successors and those whom you will aggregate to yourselves to propagate the Christian faith. »

« You will teach us, will You not? »

« I and He Whom I will send to you. Also His coming will be a Sacrament. It will be granted voluntarily by the Most Holy God in His first Epiphany, and it will then be given by those who have

received the fullness of Priesthood. It will be strength and intelligence, confirmation in Faith, it will be holy piety and fear, it will be assistance in advice and supernatural wisdom, and it will be possession of a justice that by its nature and power will turn the child who receives it, into an adult. But you cannot for the time being understand that. But He will make you understand: the Divine Paraclete, the Eternal Love, when the moment comes for you to receive Him. And likewise, you cannot for the time being understand another Sacrament. It is so sublime that it is almost incomprehensible to angels. And yet you, simple men, will understand it by virtue of faith and love. I solemnly tell you that those who will love it and nourish their souls by it, will be able to trample on the demon with impunity. Because I will then be with them. Try to remember these things, brother. You will have to repeat them many times to your companions and to believers. You will all already know through your divine ministry, but you will be able to say: "He told me one day, coming down from Mount Carmel. He told me everything because since then I was destined to be the head of the Church of Israel". »

« Here is another question I wanted to ask You. I was thinking about it last night. Shall I have to say to my companions: "I will be the head here?" I don't like it. I will do it if You tell me. But I do not like it. »

« Be not afraid. The Paraclete Spirit will descend upon you all and will instil holy thoughts into you. You will all have the same thoughts for the glory of God in His Church. »

« And will there be no more of those… so unpleasant discussions that we have now? Even Judas of Simon will no longer be the cause of disagreement? »

« He will no longer be, do not worry. But there will still be differences of opinion. That is why I said to you: be careful and watch, without ever tiring, doing your duty to the end. »

« Another question, my Lord. How am I to behave during persecutions? By what You say, it looks as if I am the only one of the Twelve to be left. So the others will go away to avoid persecutions. And what about me? »

« You will stay in your place. Because if it is necessary that you are not all exterminated until the Church is well consolidated, which justifies the dispersion of many disciples and of almost all the apostles, nothing would justify your desertion and your abandoning the Church of Jerusalem. Nay, the greater its danger is, the more you will have to watch over it, as if it were your dearest child about to die. Your example will strengthen the souls of believers. And they will need it to pass the test. The weaker you see them, the more you will have to support them with pity and wisdom. If you are strong, do not be pitiless with weak people. Support them

saying: "I have received everything from God to become so strong. I must admit it humbly and act charitably on behalf of those who have not been blessed with so many gifts of God", and you must share your strength through your word, your assistance, your calm and example. »

« And if among the believers there should be some wicked ones, who are the cause of danger and of scandal to the others, what shall I do? »

« Be wise when you accept them, because it is better to be few and good, than many and not good. You know the old apologue of the good apples and the bad ones. Make sure it does not happen also in your church. But should you find people who betray you as well, endeavour in every way to get them to repent, using severe measures as a last resource. But if it is a matter of small individual faults, do not be so severe as to dismay people. Forgive, always… A heart is more easily redeemed by forgiveness joined to tears and loving words than by anathema. If the fault is a grave one, but is the result of a sudden attack by Satan, and is so grave that the culprit feels the need to run away from your presence, go and look for the offender. Because he is a lamb led astray, and you are the shepherd. Do not be afraid of degrading yourself by going along muddy paths, searching pools and precipices. Your forehead will then be crowned with the crown of the martyr of love, and it will be the first of the three crowns… And if you are betrayed yourself, as the Baptist was, and like many others, because every holy man has his traitor, forgive. Forgive the traitor more than you would forgive anybody else. Forgive as God forgave men and as He will forgive. Call him "son" again, who will grieve you, because that is how the Father calls you through My lips, and, truly, there is no man who has not caused deep sorrow to the Father in Heaven… »

There is a long period of silence while they cross pastures strewn with grazing sheep.

At last Jesus asks: « Have you no more questions to ask Me? »

« No, Jesus. And this morning I understood my tremendous mission more clearly… »

« Because you are less upset than you were yesterday. When your time comes, you will be even more calm and you will understand even better. »

« I will remember all these things… everything… except… »

« What, James? »

« Less what did not let me look at You last night without weeping. What I do not really know whether You told me, and whether I should believe it if really told by You; or whether it was a fright by the demon. How can You be so calm if… if that should really happen to You? »

« And would you be calm if I said to you: "That shepherd is dragging

himself along with great difficulty because of his maimed leg. Try to cure him in the name of God"? »

« No, my Lord. I would be beside myself thinking that I was tempted to usurp Your place. »

« And if I ordered you? »

« I would do it out of obedience and I would no longer be upset because I would know that You want it, and I would not be afraid of not knowing how to do it. Because, if You sent me, You would certainly give me the strength to do what You want… »

« You say so, and you are right. You can thus see that I, by obeying the Father, am always in peace. »

James lowers his head weeping.

« Do you really want to forget? »

« As You wish, my Lord… »

« You have two options: to forget or to remember. By forgetting you will be relieved from sorrow and from the necessity of being absolutely silent with your companions, but you will be left unprepared. By remembering you will become prepared for your mission, because in order never to complain and to be strengthened spiritually seeing the whole of Christ in the brightest light, one thing only is necessary: to remember what the Son of man suffers in His earthly life. Make your choice. »

« To believe, to remember, to love. That is what I would like. And to die, as soon as possible, Lord… » And James continues to weep silently. If it was not for the tears shining on his brown beard, one would not realise that he is weeping.

Jesus lets him weep… Then James asks: « And if in future You should allude again to… to Your martyrdom, shall I say that I know? »

« No. Be quiet. Joseph was able to be silent on his sorrow of a bridegroom when he thought his bride was unfaithful to him and on the mysteries of Her virginal conception and of My Nature. Imitate him. That was a tremendous secret as well. And it was to be kept, because if it had been disclosed, out of pride or carelessness, the whole Redemption would have been endangered. Satan is constant in watching and acting. Remember that. If you spoke now, you would damage too many people and too many things. Be silent. »

« I will… and it will be a double burden… »

Jesus does not reply. He lets James weep freely, sheltered by his linen hood.

They meet a man carrying an unhappy child tied to his back.

« Is he your son? » asks Jesus.

« Yes. He was born thus, and was the cause of his mother's death. Now, my mother is also dead, and when I go to my work, I take him with me to watch him. I am a woodcutter. I lay him on the

grass, on my mantle, and while I cut trees down, he plays with flowers, the poor wretch! »

« It is a great misfortune. »

« Yes, it is. But we must accept peacefully what God wants. »

« Goodbye, man. Peace be with you. »

« Goodbye. Peace to You. »

The man climbs the mountain, Jesus and James continue to descend.

« How many misfortunes! I was hoping that You would cure him » says James with a sigh.

Jesus does not appear to hear.

« Master, if that man had known that You are the Messiah, perhaps he would have asked You to work a miracle… »

Jesus does not reply.

« Jesus, will You let me go back and tell him? I feel sorry for that boy. My heart is already so grieved. Give me at least the joy of seeing the little fellow cured. »

« You may go. I will wait for you here. »

James runs back. He comes up with the man and calls him.« Man, stop, listen! The man who was with me is the Messiah. Give me your boy that I may take him to Him. You may come as well, if you wish so, to see whether the Master will cure him. »

« Go, man. I have all this wood to cut. I am already late because of the child. And if I do not work, I get no food. I am poor, and he costs me so much. I do believe in the Messiah, but it is better if you speak to Him on my behalf. »

James bends to pick up the boy lying on the grass.

« Be careful » warns the woodcutter. « He is painful all over. »

In fact, as soon as James attempts to lift him, the boy weeps moanfully.

« Oh! How painful! » exclaims James with a sigh.

« A dreadful pain » says the woodcutter working with a saw on a hard trunk, and he adds: « Could you not cure him? »

« I am not the Messiah. I am only a disciple… »

« Well? Doctors learn from other doctors. Disciples learn from their Master. Come on, be good. Don't make him suffer. Try. If the Master wanted to come, He would have come. He sent you either because He does not want to cure him or because He wants you to cure him. »

James is undecided. He then makes up his mind. He stands up and he prays as he has seen Jesus pray. Finally he enjoins: « In the name of Jesus Christ, the Messiah of Israel and Son of God, be cured » and immediately afterwards he kneels down saying: « Oh! My Lord, forgive me! I acted without Your permission! But I did it out of pity for this child of Israel. Have mercy, my God! On him and on me, a sinner! » and he sheds bitter tears bent over the boy

outstretched on the grass. His tears fall on to the twisted inert legs.

Jesus suddenly appears on the path. But no one sees Him, because the woodcutter is working, James is weeping and the boy is looking at him curiously, and then caressing him, he asks: « Why are you weeping? » and he stretches out his little hand to caress him again, and without realising it, he sits up by himself, he stands up and embraces James to comfort him. It is James' cry that makes the woodcutter turn round and he then sees his boy standing straight on his legs, which are no longer inert or twisted. And turning round he sees Jesus.

« There He is! » he shouts pointing to the back of James who turns round and sees Jesus looking at him beaming with joy.

« Master! I do not know how it happened… pity… that man… this child… Forgive me! »

« Stand up. Disciples are not above their Master but they can do what the Master does, when they do it for a holy reason. Stand up and come with Me. May you two be blessed and remember that also the servants of God accomplish the deeds of the Son of God » and He goes away, dragging James who continues to say: « How could I do that? I do not understand yet. How did I work a miracle in Your name? »

« By being pitiful, James. Through your desire to make Me loved by that innocent child and by that man who believed and doubted at the same time. John worked a miracle near Jabneel out of love, curing a dying man whom he anointed while praying. You cured here by means of your tears and your pity. And with your faith in My Name. See how peaceful it is to serve the Lord when a disciple has good intentions? Now let us walk fast, because that man is following us. It is not right that your companions should be aware of this, for the time being. I will soon be sending you in My name… (a deep sigh of Jesus), as Judas of Simon is anxious to work (another heavy sigh). And you will work… But it will not do everybody good. Quick, James! Your brother, Simon Peter and the others would suffer if they knew about this, as if it were favouritism. But it is not. It is to prepare someone among you twelve who may be capable of guiding the others. Let us go onto the gravel bed of the torrent that is covered with leaves. All trace of us will be lost… Are you sorry for the boy? Oh! we shall meet him again… »

259. Peter Speaks to Doras' Peasants about the Love Which Is Salvation.

22nd August 1945.

« My dear friends, what are you doing near this fire? » asks Jesus when He finds His disciples round a well fed fire, which blazes in

the early evening shadows at a crossroads in the plain at Esdraelon.

The apostles start, as they did not see Him come, and they forget the fire to greet the Master. They look as if they had not seen Him for ages. They then explain: « Listen! We settled an issue between two brothers from Jezreel and they were so pleased that they gave us a lamb each. We decided to cook them and give them to Doras' men. Micah of Johanan slaughtered and prepared them and we are now going to roast them. Your Mother has gone with Mary and Susanna to tell Doras' men to come here after vesper, when the steward goes home to tipple. Women do not attract attention so much… We endeavoured to see them pretending we were wayfarers passing by their fields, but we did not do much. We decided to gather here this evening and say… a little more, for their souls, and satisfy also their bodies, as You have done in the past. And now that You are here it will be even more pleasant. »

« Who was going to speak? »

« Well… A little each… informally. We are not capable of doing any more, also because John, the Zealot and Your brother do not want to speak. Judas of Simon and Bartholomew are not anxious to speak either… We even quarrelled over that… » says Peter.

« Why do those five not want to speak? »

« John and Simon because they say that it is not right that they should be the ones who always speak. Your brother because he wants me to speak and says that if I never start… Bartholomew because… because he is afraid that he may speak too masterly and that he may not succeed in convincing people. You can see that they are excuses… »

« And you, Judas of Simon, why do you not want to speak? »

« For the same reasons as the others! For all those reasons; because they are all fair… »

« Many reasons. But not one is specified. I will now decide, and My verdict will be inappellable. You, Simon of Jonah, shall speak, as Thaddeus wisely says. And you, Judas of Simon, shall also speak. Thus, one of the many reasons, the one known to God and to you, will no longer exist. »

« Master, believe me, there is nothing else… » Judas endeavours to retort.

But Peter cuts him short saying: « Oh! My Lord! How can I speak in Your presence? I shall never be able! I am afraid You may laugh at me… »

« You do not want to be alone; you do not want to be with Me… What do you want? »

« You are right. But… what shall I say »

« There is your brother coming with the lambs. Help him, and while you are cooking them, think it over. Everything helps to find a subject. »

« Also a lamb on the spit? » asks Peter incredulously.

« Yes. So obey. »

Peter heaves a deep sigh, a really pitiful one, but does not reply. He goes towards Andrew and helps him to fix the lambs on to a sharpened stick which is used as a spit, and he watches them cooking with such a grave countenance, that he looks like a judge on the point of passing sentence.

« Judas of Simon, let us go and meet the women » orders Jesus. And He goes away through the barren fields of Doras. « Judas, a good disciple does not despise what his Master does not despise » He says after a little while without wasting words.

« Master, I do not despise. But like Bartholomew, I feel that I would not be understood, and I prefer not to speak. »

« Nathanael is afraid that he may not fulfil My desire, which is to enlighten and relieve hearts. He is at fault, too, because he lacks confidence in the Lord. But you are much more at fault, because you are not afraid of not being understood, but you disdain being understood by poor peasants, who are ignorant of everything, except virtue. They surpass many of you, in fact, as far as virtue is concerned. You have not yet understood anything, Judas. The Gospel is really the Good News brought to the poor, the sick, the afflicted and the slaves. Later it will be given also to others. But it is given just to assist and relieve those who suffer from all kinds of misfortunes. »

Judas lowers his head but does not reply.

The Blessed Virgin, Mary of Clopas and Susanna appear coming out from a thicket.

« I greet You, Mother! Peace to you, women! »

« Son! I went to those… poor wretches. But I was given news that did not make Me suffer too much. Doras has got rid of this land and Johanan has taken it. It is not paradise… But it is no longer hell. The steward told the peasants today. He has already gone taking away on his carts all the corn to the last grain, and thus leaving everybody without anything to eat. And as Johanan's steward today has food only for his own men, Doras' peasants were to be left with nothing to eat. Those lambs are really providential! »

« It is also providential that the men no longer belong to Doras. We saw their houses… Pigsties » says Susanna who is obviously scandalised.

« The poor people are so happy' » concludes Mary of Clopas.

« I am happy, too. They will be better off than previously » replies Jesus going towards the apostles.

John of Endor joins Him carrying some pitchers of water, which he is taking along with Ermasteus. « Johanan's men gave them to us » he explains, after greeting Jesus respectfully.

They all go towards the spot where they are roasting the two lambs in a thick cloud of greasy smoke. Peter keeps turning his spit and in the meantime he broods over his thoughts. Judas Thaddeus, instead, is walking backwards and forwards, engrossed in conversation holding one arm round his brother's waist. Of the other apostles some bring firewood, some… lay the table, carrying large stones to be used as seats or as a table. I do not know.

Doras' peasants arrive. They are thinner and more ragged than ever. But they are so happy! They are about twenty in number and there is not even a child or a woman with them. Poor men all alone…

« Peace to you all and let us bless the Lord for giving you a better master. Let us bless Him by praying for the conversion of the man who has caused you to suffer so much. Is that right? Are you happy, old father? I am glad, too. I shall be able to come more frequently with the boy. Have they told you? You are weeping for joy, are you not? Come here, be not afraid… » He says speaking to Marjiam's grandfather, who stoops kissing His hand and weeping whispers: « I beg nothing else of the Most High. He has granted me more than I asked. I would now like to die lest I should live so long that suffering may overwhelm me again. »

The peasants, who were somewhat embarrassed being with the Master, soon take heart again, and when the two lambs are laid on large leaves arranged on the stones brought previously, and the portions are made, each of which is placed on a large bread-cake that serves also as a dish, they relax in their simplicity and they eat with relish, satisfying their hunger, after starving so long: they talk of the recent events.

One of them says: « I have always cursed locusts, moles and ants. But from now on they will look like messengers of the Lord to me, because it is through them that we are leaving hell. » And although the comparison of ants and locusts with angelical cohorts is somewhat queer, nobody laughs because they all perceive the tragic circumstances concealed in those words.

The fire lights up the assembly, but their faces do not look at the flame, neither do they pay much attention to what is in front of them. All eyes are turned towards Jesus' face, and are diverted only for a few moments when Mary of Alphaeus, who is busy making portions, lays more meat on the flat bread-cakes of the hungry peasants, and she finishes her work by wrapping two roasted legs in some large leaves and says to Marjiam's grandfather: « Take this. You will have a morsel each also tomorrow. And Johanan's steward in the meantime will provide something. »

« But what about you… »

« We will have less to carry. Take it, man. »

Of the two lambs there is nothing left but the picked bones and

the persistent smell of dripped fat still burning on the fire, which is dying out and its light is being replaced by moonlight.

Johanan's men also join the others. It is the moment to speak to them.

Jesus' blue eyes look up in search of Judas who is sitting near a tree, half hidden in the shade. And when Jesus sees that Judas pretends he does not understand, He calls in a loud voice: « Judas! » Judas is thus compelled to stand up and come forward. « Do not seclude yourself. Please evangelize in My place. I am very tired. In any case, if I had not come this evening, one of you would have had to speak! »

« Master… I do not know what to say… At least ask me some questions. »

« It is not for Me to ask you them. Men, what do you wish to hear or to have explained to you? » He then asks the peasants.

The men look at one another… they are uncertain… At last a peasant asks: « We have become aware of the power of the Lord and of His bounty. But we know little about His doctrine. Perhaps we will now be able to learn a little more, being with Johanan. But we are really anxious to know which are the essential things we must do in order to gain the Kingdom that the Messiah promises. As we can practically do nothing, will we be able to gain it? »

Judas replies: « You are certainly in a very painful situation. Everything in you and around you conspires to drive you away from the Kingdom. The lack of freedom to come to the Master whenever you wish, your condition of servants of a master, who, if not a hyena like Doras, is, as far as we know, a Molossian hound who keeps his servants prisoners, your sufferings and dejection, are unfavourable conditions to your election to the Kingdom. Because it is difficult for you not to cherish resentment and feelings of grudge, criticism and revenge for the man who treats you so hard. And the bare essential is to love God and one's neighbour. Otherwise there is no salvation. You must be watchful to maintain your hearts passively submitted to God's will, which is revealed to you in your destiny, and bear your master patiently without ever taking the liberty of expressing a judgement that certainly could not be kind to your master, or express gratitude for your… your… In short, you must not ponder on your situation, to avoid feelings of rebellion that would kill love. And he who does not love will not reach salvation, because he infringes the first precept. But I am almost certain that you will be saved because I see that you have good will joined to kind souls, which give rise to hope that you will be able to refrain from hatred and desire for revenge. In any case God's mercy is so great that He will remit what is still lacking for your perfection. »

There is silence. Jesus has lowered His head so much that His

countenance cannot be seen; but the faces of the rest can be seen and their expression is certainly not happy. The peasants look more dejected than previously, the apostles and the women seem surprised and almost frightened.

« We shall endeavour to repress every thought against patience and forgiveness » the old man replies humbly.

Another peasant says with a sigh: « It will certainly be difficult for us to reach the perfection of love, because it is already a great thing that we have not become the murderers of those who tortured us! A soul suffers a great deal, and even when it does not hate, it finds it difficult to love, like emaciated children who grow with difficulty… »

« No, man. I, instead, think that just because you have suffered so much without becoming murderers and revengeful, your souls love more strongly than ours. You love without even realising it » says Peter to comfort them.

And he becomes aware that he has spoken and he stops to say: « Oh! Master!… But… You told me that I had to speak… and to find the subject even in the lambs that I was roasting. And I continued to watch them to find some good words for our brothers here, and-for their situation. But, as I am stupid, I did not find anything suitable, and I do not know how, I found that I was wandering away in thoughts, which I do not know whether they are strange, in which case they are certainly mine, or holy, and if so, they have certainly come from Heaven. I will express them, exactly as they came to me, and You, Master, will explain them to me or reproach me, and you, my friends, will bear with me. I was looking first at the fire, and I thought: "Now: what is a fire made of? Of wood. But wood does not bum by itself. And if it is not dry, it will not bum at all, because water makes it heavy and prevents the tinder from lighting it. And when wood is dead, it rots and woodworms pulverise it, but it will not catch fire by itself. And yet if one arranges it in a suitable manner and holding tinder and flint close to it produces a spark and helps it to light by blowing on thin branches to increase the flame, because one always starts from the smallest things, then the flame rises and becomes beautiful and useful and sets everything on fire, also thick pieces of wood". And I said to myself: "We are like wood. We do not light up by ourselves. But we must take care not to be too impregnated with the heavy moisture of flesh and blood, to allow the tinder to be lit up by a spark. And we must desire to be burnt because if we remain inactive we may be destroyed by inclement weather and by woodworms, that is, by mankind and by the demon. Whereas if we give ourselves to the fire of love, it will begin to burn the thinner branches and will destroy them, and I considered the little branches to be imperfections, then it will grow and set on fire the

bigger pieces of wood, that is the stronger passions. And we, being like wood, something material, hard, dull, even ugly, will become the beautiful, incorporeal, agile, bright thing that a flame is. And that because we have given ourselves to love, which is the flint and tinder that turn us poor sinners into future angels and citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven". And that was one thought. »

Jesus has raised His head a little and is listening with His eyes closed and the shadow of a smile on His lips. The others are looking, they are still surprised but no longer frightened.

Peter continues to speak peacefully. « Another thought came to my mind looking at the lambs that were roasting. Do not say that my thoughts are childish. The Master told me to look for them in what I was watching… And I obeyed. So I was looking at the lambs and I said: "There you are. They are two innocent meek animals. Our Holy Scriptures are full of gentle allusions to lambs, both to remember Him Who is the promised Messiah and Saviour as was symbolised in the Mosaic lamb, and to remind us that God will have mercy on us. The prophets say so. He comes to gather His flock together, to assist wounded sheep and carry those whose limbs are fractured. How much goodness!" I was saying to myself. "We must not be afraid of a God Who promises us, poor wretches, so much mercy! But", I still said to myself, "we must be meek, at least meek, since we are no longer innocent. We must be meek and anxious to be consumed by love. Because what would the most beautiful and pure little lamb also become, after it has been slaughtered, if it is not cooked on a fire? A putrid carrion. Fire instead turns it into wholesome blessed food". And I concluded: "In short, all good things are achieved through love. Love relieves us of the burden of humanity, it makes us bright and useful, it enables us to be good to our brothers and grateful to God. It elevates our good natural qualities raising them to a height that bears the name of supernatural virtues. And he who is virtuous is holy, and who is holy possesses Heaven. So it is not science or fear that open the way to perfection for us, it is love. It detaches us from evil, much more than the fear of punishment, as through it we do not wish to grieve the Lord. It makes us pity our brothers and love them because they come from God. Therefore love is the salvation and the sanctification of man". That is what I was thinking while watching my roast and obeying my Jesus. Forgive me if that is all. But those thoughts did me good. I offer them to you hoping they may do you good as well. »

Jesus opens His eyes, which are radiant with joy. He stretches out one arm and lays His hand on Peter's shoulder: « I solemnly tell you that you have found the words that you had to find. Obedience and love made you find them and humility and the desire to give solace to your brothers will make of them as many stars in

their dark sky. May God bless you, Simon of Jonah. »

« May God bless You, Master! And are You not speaking? »

« They will be commencing their new service tomorrow. I will bless their commencement with My word. Go now in peace and may God be with you. »

260. Jesus to Johanan's Peasants: « Love Is Obedience ».

23rd August 1945.

It is not yet daybreak. Jesus is standing in the middle of Doras' ruined orchard: rows of withered or withering trees, many of which have already been felled or uprooted. Around Him there are Doras' and Johanan's peasants and the apostles, some standing, some sitting on the felled trunks.

Jesus begins to speak: « Another day and another departure. And I am not the only one who is leaving. You are departing as well, if not materially, morally, as you are going to another master. You will thus be joined to other good and pious peasants, and you will form one family, in which you will be able to speak of God and of His Word, without having to resort to subterfuges to do so. Sustain one another in your faith, help one another bear one another's faults and edify one another.

That is love. And you heard from My apostles last night, although in different ways, that love is salvation. Simon Peter with his simple kind word made you ponder how love changes your heavy nature into a supernatural nature, how a man without love may become corrupt and corrupting, like a slaughtered animal that is not cooked, or he may become useless like wood rotten with water that will not burn in a fire, and how love makes a man live in the atmosphere of God and thus he comes out of corruption and becomes useful to his neighbour. Because, believe Me, My dear children, love is the great strength of the Universe. I will never tire telling you. All the misfortunes on the earth come from lack of love, beginning from the death and diseases caused by the lack of love of Adam and Eve for the Most High Lord.

Because love is obedience. He who does not obey is a rebel. He who is a rebel does not love him against whom he rebels. Where do other general or particular misfortunes come from, such as wars or the downfall of contending families? From selfishness, which is estrangement. And the ruin of welfare through God's punishment follows the downfall of families. Because God sooner or later will strike him who lives without loving.

I know that it is rumoured here - and because of such rumour I am hated by some, looked at with fearful hearts by others, or invoked as a fresh punishment or tolerated for fear of a punishment - I know that it is rumoured here that it was My look that made

these fields cursed. It was not My look: but the punished selfishness of an unjust and cruel man. If My eyes were to scorch the land of all those who hate Me, very little green would be left in Palestine! I never avenge Myself for ill will manifested towards Me, but I hand over to the Father those who stubbornly persist in their sin of selfishness towards their neighbour and sacrilegiously deride the precept of love, and the more one endeavours to persuade them to love, by means of words and suitable deeds, the more cruel they become. I am always willing to raise My hand and say to a repentant soul: "I absolve you. Go in peace". But I will not offend Love by agreeing to inconvertible harshness. Always bear that in mind, to see things in the right light and disprove tales, which are always different from the truth, whether they are told out of veneration or angry fear.

You are changing master, but you will not be leaving this land, to take care of which in its present state seems madness. And yet I say to you: do your duty on it. You have done it so far for fear of cruel punishment. Do it also now, although you are aware that you will not be dealt with as in the past. Nay, I say to you: the more humanely you are treated, the more diligently and cheerfully you are to work, to return humanity through your work to those who grant you humanity. Because while it is true that masters are obliged to be humane to their subordinates - remembering that we are all of one race and that every man is born nude in the same manner and dies putrefying in the same manner, whether he is rich or poor, and that wealth is not the work of those who possess it, but of those who either honestly or dishonestly have amassed it for them, and that one is not to be proud of it or make use of it to oppress other people, instead one should use it with love, discretion and justice in order not to be looked at with severity by the true Master, Who is God, Who cannot be bought or seduced by jewels or gold talents, but can be made our friend only through our good deeds - because while all that is true, it is also true that servants are obliged to be good to their masters.

Do the will of God, Who wants you in your humble condition, with simplicity and good will. You know the parable of Dives. You know that not gold, but virtue is rewarded in Heaven. Virtue and submission to the will of God, make God the friend of man. I know that it is very difficult to be able to always see God through the deeds of men. It is easy in good people. It is difficult in bad people, because your souls may be induced to think that God is not good. But you must overcome the evil done to you by men tempted by Satan, and beyond that barrier that costs so many tears, you must see the truth of sorrow and its beauty. Sorrow comes from Evil. But as God cannot abolish it, as the power of Evil exists and it is the assay of the spiritual gold of the children of God, He compels

it to extract from its poison the juice of a medicine which gives eternal life. Because the pungency of sorrow inoculates good people with such reactions that spiritualise them more and more making them holy.

Be therefore good, respectful, submissive. Do not judge your masters. There is One Who judges them. I would like the man who commands you to become just, to make your life easier, and gain eternal life himself. But remember that the more burdensome the task to be accomplished is, the greater is the merit in the eyes of God. Do not try to defraud your master. Money or victuals obtained by fraud do not enrich or satisfy anybody's hunger. Let your hands, lips and hearts be pure. You will then keep the Sabbaths and holy days of obligation with grace in the eyes of God, even if you are compelled to work in the fields. I solemnly tell you that your labour will be worth more than the hypocritical prayer of those who go to fulfil their duty to be praised by the world, because in actual fact they infringe the precept by disobeying the Law that prescribes that each man and all the members of his family are to keep the Sabbath and festivals of Israel for their own sake. Because prayer does not consist in actions, but in sentiments. And if your hearts love God in a holy manner they will celebrate the rites of the Sabbath and festivals, which other people prevent you from keeping, better than they do and under every circumstance.

I bless you and I will now leave you because the sun is rising and I want to be on the hills before the heat of the day. We shall meet again soon because autumn is not far. Peace be with you all, both the new and the old servants of Johanan and may your hearts be serene. »

And Jesus sets out passing through the peasants and blessing them one by one.

Behind a large withered apple-tree there is a man half-hidden. But when Jesus is about to pass by pretending He has not seen him, the man jumps out and says: « I am Johanan's steward. He said to me: "If the Rabbi of Israel should come, let Him stop in my fields and let Him speak to my servants. They will do more work for us, because He teaches only good things". And yesterday he wrote to me informing me that as from today they (and he points to Doras' men) are with me, and these fields belong to Johanan and he says: "If the Rabbi should come listen to what He says and act accordingly. Let no calamity befall us. Load Him with honours but see if you can get Him to revoke the curse on the land". Because You must know that Johanan bought it out of spite. But I think he already regrets it. It will be a great achievement if we can turn into grazing ground… »

« Did you hear Me speak? »

« Yes, Master. »

« You know, then, how to behave, both you and your master, to

have God's blessing. Tell your master. And as far as you are concerned, moderate his orders, because you know how burdensome in actual fact is the work of a man in the fields and you are well liked by your master. But it is better for you to lose his favour and your position, rather than lose your soul. Goodbye. »

« But I have to honour You. »

« I am not an idol. I do not need interested honours to grant graces. Honour Me with your soul, by practising what you have heard and you will serve God and your master at the same time. »

And Jesus, followed by the apostles and the women, and then by all the peasants, goes across the fields and directs His steps towards the hills, greeting everybody once again.

261. In the House of Dora and Philip.

24th August 1945.

Jesus is going back towards Nazareth along a road which winds through hills, benefitting from the shade of olive-groves and orchards spread in this fertile and well cultivated region.

But when He arrives at a cross-road, intersecting the road to Ptolemais, He stops and says: « Let us stop at that house, where I have rested before, we shall have our meal, and while the sun follows its course, let us stay together before we part again. We shall go towards Tiberias, My Mother and Mary will go to Nazareth, John and Ermasteus to Sicaminon. »

Through an olive-grove they turn their steps towards a low large house of peasants, adorned with the usual fig-tree, and decked with the festoons of a vine which climbs up an outside staircase and expands its branches over the terrace.

« Peace be with you. I am here once again. »

« Come, Master. You are always welcome. May God grant peace to You and to Your friends » replies an elderly man who was crossing the yard carrying an armful of faggots. He then shouts: « Sarah! Sarah! The Master is here with His disciples. Add more flour to your bread! »

A woman covered with flour comes out of one of the rooms: she has obviously been sieving, because she is still holding in her hands a sieve with some bran in it; she kneels in front of Jesus smiling.

« Peace to you, woman. I brought you My Mother, as I promised you. Here She is. And this is Her sister-in-law, the mother of James and Judas. Where are Dinah and Philip? »

The woman, after greeting the two Maries, replies: « Dinah had her third baby-girl yesterday. We are a little sad, because we have not yet been given a nephew. But we are happy, too, is that right, Mattathias? »

« Yes, because she is a beautiful baby and she is always our blood. We will show her to You. Philip has gone to bring back Anna and Naomi from his old parents, but he will soon be back. »

The woman goes back to her baking while the man, after putting the faggots into the oven, takes care of the guests, offering them seats and new milk, if they want it, or fruit and olives, if they prefer them.

The room on the ground floor is cool and shady, large as it is and with two doors, one in the front, the other at the back, the former being shaded by the large fig-tree, the latter by a tall hedge of starshaped flowers, which resemble sunflowers in shape, but with smaller corollas. Thus an emerald green light enters the large room, and it is of great relief to eyes tired by the strong sunshine. There are benches and tables in the room, which is perhaps the one where the women spin and weave and the men repair their agricultural tools or store their supplies of flour and fruit, as would appear by some small beams with many hooks and boards placed on consoles, besides long chests along the walls. Fluffy hurds of linen or hemp look like loose plaits hanging on the whitewashed wall, and a piece of bright red cloth stretched on an uncovered loom seems to cheer up the whole room with its pompous joyful colour.

The landlady, who has finished her baking, comes back and asks the guests whether they wish to see the new-born baby.

Jesus replies: « I will certainly bless her. »

Mary instead stands up saying: « I will come and greet the mother. »

All the women go out.

« It is very comfortable here » says Bartholomew who is clearly very tired.

« Yes. It is quiet and shady. We shall end up by falling asleep » confirms Peter, who is already drowsy.

« In three days' time we shall be at home for a long time. You will be able to rest because you will be going evangelizing in the neighbourhood » says Jesus.

« And what about You? »

« I will stay at Capernaum most of the time, going to Bethsaida now and again. And I will evangelize those who join Me there. Then at the moon of Tishri we shall begin to go about again. In the meantime, I will instruct you in the evening… »

Jesus becomes silent because He sees that sleep makes His words useless. He shakes His head smiling, while watching the group overwhelmed by fatigue and sleeping in more or less comfortable postures. There is dead silence in the house and in the sunny country. It looks like an enchanted place. Jesus goes to the door near the hedge of flowers and through the branches He contemplates

the gentle Galilean hills, covered with grey still olive-trees.

A light shuffling is heard above His head together with the uncertain crying of a new-born baby. Jesus looks up and smiles at His Mother Who is coming down holding in Her arms a white little bundle from which three tiny red things emerge: a little head and two lively little fists.

« Look, Jesus, what a beautiful baby! She is somewhat like You when You were one day old. Your hair was so fair, that You did not seem to have any, if it had not been even then raised in light curls like a woolly cloud, and You were as red as a rose as well. And, look, look, now that she has opened her little eyes here in the shade and she is looking for her mother's breast, her eyes are dark blue, like Yours… Oh! darling! But I have no milk, My dear little one, My little rose, My little dove! » and Our Lady lulls the baby who stops crying and falls asleep, gurgling like a little dove.

« Mother, did You do that to Me also? » asks Jesus watching His Mother lull the baby, with Her cheek pressed against the little fairhaired head.

« Yes, Son. But I called You "My little lamb". She is beautiful, is she not? »

« Really beautiful and strong. Her mother can be proud of her » confirms Jesus, Who is also stooped watching the sleep of the innocent child.

« Instead she is not… Her husband is angry because all the children are girls. It is true that men are better for the fields we have. But it is no fault of our daughter… » says with a sigh the landlady who has just arrived.

« They are young. Let them love each other and they will have boys also » says the Lord confidently.

« Here is Philip… He will become gloomy now… » moans the upset woman. And in a louder voice she says: « Philip, the Rabbi of Nazareth is here. »

« I am glad to see Him. Peace to You, Master. »

« And to you, Philip. I saw your lovely baby. I am still looking at her, because she is really praiseworthy. God blesses you with beautiful, healthy and good children. You must be very grateful to Him… Are you not replying to Me? You seem to be annoyed… »

« I was hoping it was a boy! »

« You are not going to tell Me that you are unfair by accusing the innocent child of being a female or that you are going to be hard on your wife? » asks Jesus severely.

« I wanted a boy! For the Lord and for myself! » exclaims Philip resentfully.

« And do you think you are going to get one through injustice and rebellion? Have you perhaps read God's thought? Are you above Him that you may say to Him: "Do that because that is just?" This

woman disciple of Mine has no children, for instance. And yet she said to Me: "I bless my sterility which gives me wings to follow You". And this disciple, the mother of four sons, is anxious that all four of them may no longer belong to her. Is it true, Mary and Susanna? Do you hear them? And you, although you have been married only a few years to a fertile woman, and have been blessed with three rose-buds who seek your love, you are angry? With whom? Why? You do not want to tell Me? Well, I will tell you: because you are selfish. Pocket your ill-feeling. Open your arms to this child born of your seed and love her. Come on! Take her! » and Jesus takes the little bundle of linens and lays it in the arms of the young father. He then resumes speaking: « Go to your wife, who is weeping, and tell her that you love her. Or God really will never give you a son. I am telling you. Go!… »

The man goes up to his wife's room.

« Thank You, Master! » whispers his mother-in-law. « He has been very rude since yesterday… »

The man comes down after a few minutes and says: « I did it, my Lord. She thanks You. And she told me to ask You to name the baby because… in my unjust hatred I had decided on a name that was too ugly… »

« Call her Mary. She has sucked bitter tears with the first drop of milk, which was also bitter because of your harshness, so she may be called Mary and Mary will love her. Is that right, Mother? »

« Of course, poor little darling. And she is so pretty. And she will certainly be good and become a little star of Heaven. »

They go back into the large room where the apostles are fast asleep, with the exception of Judas, who seems to be on tenterhooks.

« Did you want Me, Judas? » asks Jesus.

« No, Master, but I cannot get to sleep and I would like to go out for a little while. »

« Who stops you? I am going out as well. I am going up to that hillock. It is all in the shade… I will rest praying. Do you want to come with Me? »

« No, Master. I would disturb You because I am not in condition to pray. Perhaps… perhaps I am not feeling very well and that is upsetting me… »

« Stay here, then. I do not force anybody. Goodbye. Goodbye, women. Mother, when John of Endor wakes, send him to Me, by himself. »

« Yes, Son. Peace be with You. »

Jesus goes out, Mary and Susanna bend to watch the cloth on the loom. Mary sits down with Her hands in Her lap, slightly bent. Perhaps She is praying, too. Mary of Alphaeus soon tires of watching the work. She sits in the darkest comer and soon falls asleep.

Susanna thinks it is a good idea and imitates her.

Only Mary and Judas are awake: the former deeply absorbed in Her thoughts, the latter looking at Her with wide open gaze, which never leaves Her. In the end he gets up and approaches Her slowly and noiselessly. Although he is most definitely a handsome man, he gives me the impression of a feline or snake approaching its prey, I do not know why. Probably because I dislike him, I feel that his very steps are deceitful and dangerous… He calls Her in a low voice: « Mary! »

« What do you want from Me, Judas? » Mary asks kindly looking at him with Her most loving eyes.

« I would like to speak to You… »

« Do so. I am listening. »

« Not here… I do not want anybody to hear me… Would You mind going out there for a moment? It is shady out there as well… »

« Let us go… But see. They are all sleeping… you could have spoken here as well » says the Blessed Virgin. But she gets up and goes out before him leaning against the tall flowery hedge.

« What do you want from Me, Judas? » She asks again, staring at the apostle who appears to be somewhat upset and to find difficulty in speaking. « Are you not feeling well? Or have you done something wrong and you do not know how to tell? Or do you feel that you are on the point of doing something wrong and it is a burden for you to admit that you are tempted? Speak, son. As I cured your body, I will cure your soul. Tell Me what is upsetting you, and if I can I will help you. If I cannot do so by Myself, I will tell Jesus. Even if you had committed a grave sin, He will forgive you if I ask Him. Really, Jesus would forgive you at once, as well… But perhaps you are ashamed of Him, the Master. I am a mother… I do not make anyone feel ashamed… »

« No, You do not, because You are a mother and You are so good. You are peace to all of us. I feel… very upset. I have a very bad character, Mary. I do not know what I have in my blood and in my heart… Now and again I am no longer able to control them… and then I would do the strangest… and worst things. »

« Even with Jesus near you, can you not resist temptation? »

« Yes. And I suffer because of that, believe me. It is so. I am a poor wretch. »

« I will pray for you, Judas. »

« It is not enough. »

« I will get just people to pray for you without telling them for whom it is. »

« It is not enough. »

« I will make children pray. So many of them come to Me, to My kitchen garden, like little birds looking for corn. And My caresses and the words I speak to them are corn to them. I speak to them of

God… And they, little innocent souls, prefer that to games and tales. The prayer of children is pleasing to the Lord. »

« Never as much as Yours. But it is still not enough. »

« I will tell Jesus to pray the Father for you. »

« It is still not sufficient. »

« More than that is impossible! Jesus' prayer defeats also demons… »

« Yes, but Jesus would not always pray. And I would go back to being myself… Jesus always says so, He will go away one day. I must think of the time when I shall be without Him. Jesus now wants to send us evangelizing. I am afraid to go with this enemy of mine, which is myself, to spread the word of God. I would like to be already perfected. »

« But, son, if not even Jesus is successful, who can ever be so? »

« You, Mother! Let me stay a little while with You. Pagans and prostitutes have stayed with You. So I can stay as well. If You do not want me to be where You live, at night I will go and sleep at Alphaeus and Mary of Clopas', but I will spend the day with You and the children. In the past I tried to do things by myself, and I made the situation worse. If I go to Jerusalem, I have too many wicked friends and in the situation I am in now, when I feel like this, I become their laughing-stock… It is the same if I go to any other town. The temptation of the road burns me with this one which I already have. If I go to Kerioth, to my mother's, I become the slave of pride. If I withdraw to a solitary place, silence rends me with Satan's voices. But if I am staying with You, oh! I feel that it will be different!… Let me come! Tell Jesus to grant me this! Do You want me to be lost? Are You afraid of me? You are looking at me with the countenance of a wounded gazelle which has no strength left to escape its assailants. But I will not offend You. I have a mother, too… and I love You more than her. Have mercy on a sinner, Mary! Look: I am weeping at Your feet… If You reject me, it may be my spiritual death… » and Judas is really weeping at Mary's feet; She looks at him and Her eyes are full of pity and anguish mixed with fear. She is very pale.

But She takes a step forward, because She had almost sunk into the hedge to keep away from Judas who was going too close to Her, and She lays a hand on Judas' dark hair. « Be quiet, lest they should hear you! I will speak to Jesus. And if He agrees… you will come to My house. I disregard the opinion of the world. It does not injure My soul. I would be horror-struck only at being guilty towards God. Calumny leaves Me cold. No one will speak ill of Me because Nazareth knows that its daughter does not cause scandal to Her town. In any case, let come what may, I am anxious that you may save your soul. I am now going to Jesus. Peace to you. » And She covers Herself with Her veil, which is white like Her dress and

She walks fast along the path which leads up to a hillock covered with olive-trees.

She looks for Her Jesus and finds Him engrossed in meditation.

« Son, it is I… Listen to Me! »

« Oh! Mother! Have You come to pray with Me? What joy and relief You bring to Me! »

« What is it, Son? Is Your soul anguished? Are You sad? Tell Your Mother! »

« You have said it, anguished and tired. Not so much because of work or of the miseries I see in hearts, as for the immutability of My friends. But I do not wish to be unfair to them. One only worries Me: Judas of Simon… »

« Son, I have come to speak to You o f him… »

« Has he wronged You? Has he grieved You? »

« No. But I feel sorry for him just as I would feel sorry if I saw a very infected person… Poor son! How ill his soul is! »

« And You feel sorry for him? Are You no longer afraid of Him? You were once… »

« Son, My pity is even greater than My fear. And I would like to help You and him to save his soul. You can do everything, and You do not need Me. But You say that everybody must cooperate with Christ in redeeming… and that son needs to be redeemed so badly! »

« What else can I do for him in addition to what I already do? »

« You cannot do any more. But You could let Me do. He asked Me to let him stay in our house because he thinks that he will be able to get rid of his monster there… You are shaking Your head? You do not want? I will tell him… »

« No, Mother. It is not that I do not want. I am shaking My head because I know that it is useless. Judas is like one who is drowning and although he realises that he is drowning, he rejects out of pride the rope that has been thrown to him to draw him to the shore. He has no will to come to the shore. Now and again, he is in terror of drowning and he seeks and invokes help, he clings to the rope… and then, seized once again by pride, he refuses help, rejects it, he wants to be independent… and he becomes heavier and heavier because of the muddy water that swallows him down. But as I wish to leave no stone unturned, let that be done as well, poor Mother… Yes, poor Mother, as You are subjecting Yourself, for the love of a soul, to the pain of having near You… one who frightens You. »

« No, Jesus. Do not say that. I am a poor woman because I am still subject to antipathies. Reproach Me. I deserve it. I should not be disgusted at anybody, for Your sake. That is why I am a poor woman. Oh! I wish I could give You back Judas spiritually cured! To give You a soul is to give You a treasure. And the person who gives a treasure is not poor. Son!… Shall I go and tell Judas that it

is all right, that You agree? You said once: "The day will come when You will say: 'How difficult it is to be the Mother of the Redemptor' " I have already said it once… for Aglae… But what is once only? Mankind is so numerous! And You are the Redeemer of all men. Son!… Son!… As I held the little baby in My arms to bring her to You to be blessed, let Me hold Judas in My arms, that I may bring him to Your blessing… »

« Mother… Mother… He does not deserve You… »

« Jesus, when You hesitated to give Marjiam to Peter, I told You that it would be beneficial to him. You cannot deny that Peter has become a new man since that moment… Let Me try with Judas. »

« Let it be done as You wish! And may You be blessed for Your loving intention towards Me and Judas! Now let us pray together, Mother. It is so pleasant to pray with You!… »

… The sun is just beginning to set when I see them depart from the house that gave them hospitality.

John of Endor and Ermasteus take leave of Jesus as soon as they reach the road. Mary with the women instead proceeds with Her Son along a road through the olive-groves on the hills. They are talking of the events of the day.

Peter says: « Philip must be really crazy! He was almost going to disown his wife and daughter, if You had not been there to make him listen to reason. »

« Let us hope that he will persevere in his repentance and he does not have another fit of bad temper against females. After all… it is due to women that the world goes on » says Thomas and many laugh at his witty remark.

« It is certainly true. But they are more unclean than we are and… » replies Bartholomew.

« Never! With regard to uncleanliness… we are not angels either! Now, I would like to know whether after Redemption it will always be the same for women. They teach us to honour mothers, and hold in great respect sisters, daughters, aunts, daughters- and sisters-in-law and then… Anathema here, anathema there! The Temple is out of question. Many times we are not allowed to approach them Eve sinned? Agreed. But also Adam sinned. God punished Eve and very severely. Is that not enough? »

« Thomas! Moses also considers women unclean. »

« And Moses, without women, would have been drowned… But, mind you, Bartholomew, although I am not so learned as you are, as I am only a gold-beater, I would remind you that Moses mentions the-bodily uncleanliness of women so that we may respect them, not to anathematise them. »

The debate is becoming livelier. Jesus, Who was ahead of them with the women and John and Judas Iscariot, stops and turning round He comes in to the discussion: « God had in front of Him a

people which was morally and spiritually amorphous and contaminated by connections with idolaters. He wanted to make the people physically and spiritually strong. Thus the precepts He gave were instructions beneficial to both physical strength and moral honesty. He could not do otherwise to check the lust of men and thus prevent repetition of the sins which caused the earth to be submerged and Sodom and Gomorrah to be burned down. But in future the redeemed woman will not be oppressed as she is now. Prohibitions concerning physical prudence will remain, but obstacles to her coming to the Lord will be removed. I am already removing them to prepare the first priestesses of the future era. »

« Oh! Will there be priestesses?! » asks Philip who is almost dumbfounded.

« Do not misunderstand Me. They will not be priestesses like men, they will not consecrate and will not administer the gifts of God, which you are not yet capable of understanding. But they will belong to the sacerdotal class, cooperating in many ways with priests to the benefit of souls. »

« Will they preach? » asks Bartholomew incredulously.

« As My Mother already preaches. »

« Will they make apostolic pilgrimages? » asks Matthew.

« Yes, they will. They will take faith very far, and I must admit it, with greater heroism than men. »

« Will they work miracles? » asks the Iscariot laughing.

« Some will work also miracles. But do not consider miracles the essential thing. They, being holy women, will work many miracles of conversions through their prayers. »

« Bah! Will women pray to the extent of working miracles! » grumbles Nathanael.

« Do not be narrow minded like a scribe, Bartholomew. What is prayer, according to you? »

« To address God by means of the formulae known to us. »

« That and much more. Prayer is the conversation of the heart with God and it ought to be the habitual state of man. Women, because of their more retired lives than ours and because of their affective faculties that are stronger than ours, are inclined to such conversation with God more than we are. They find comfort to their sorrows in it, relief in their work, which is not only the work in the house and in procreating, but also in tolerating us men, they find what wipes their tears and brings peace and joy to their hearts. Because they know how to speak to God and they will know even better in future. Men will be giants in doctrine, women will be those who support men and the world with their prayers, because many misfortunes will be avoided through their prayers and many punishments will be withheld. They will thus work miracles, invisible in most cases and known to God only, but not

less real. »

« You also worked an invisile but real miracle today. Is that right, Master? » asks Thaddeus.

« Yes, brother. »

« It would have been better to work a visible one » remarks Philip.

« Did you want Me to change the little girl into a boy? A miracle really is the alteration of what has been destined, a beneficial disorder, thus, which God grants to hear the prayer of man and thus prove to him that He loves him, or that He is He Who is. But child was born a female, and a female she will stay. »

I was so distressed this morning! » says the Blessed Virgin with a sigh.

« Why? The loveless baby was not Yours » says Susanna. And she adds: « When I see an unfortunate child I say: "Luckily for me I have none!" »

« Do not say so, Susanna! It is not charitable. I also could say so because My only Maternity is beyond natural laws. But I do not say that, because I always think: "If God had not wanted Me to be a virgin, that seed might have fallen on Me, and I would be the mother of the unhappy child", and thus I pity them all… Because I say: "He might have been My son" and as a mother I would like all children to be good, healthy, loved and loving, because every mother wishes that for her own children » replies Mary kindly. And Jesus seems to envelop Her in light, so radiantly He looks at Her.

« That is why You pity me… » says the Iscariot in a low voice.

« I pity everybody. Even if one were the murderer of My Son. Because I think that he would be the most in need of help… and love. Because the whole world would certainly hate him. »

« Donna, You would have to work hard defending him to give him time to repent… I would get rid of him immediately… » says Peter.

« This is where we part, Mother, God be with You. And with you, Mary. And with you, too, Judas. » They kiss one another and Jesus adds: « Remember that I have granted you a great thing, Judas. Make it beneficial and not detrimental to you. Goodbye. »

And Jesus with the eleven apostles left and Susanna goes eastwards at a quick pace, while Mary, Her sister-in-law and the Iscariot go straight ahead.

262. The Man with the Withered Hand.

26th August 1945.

Jesus enters the synagogue in Capernaum, which slowly becomes crowded with believers, because it is Sabbath. Everybody is greatly

surprised seeing Him. They all point to Him whispering and some pull the tunic of this or that apostle asking when they came back to town, because nobody knew that they were back.

« We landed at the "fig well" coming from Bethsaida, to avoid taking one step more than is prescribed, my friend » replies Peter to Uriah, the Pharisee, who, feeling offended at being called « friend » by a fisherman, goes away disdainfully and joins his peers in the first row.

« Don't tease them, Simon! » warns Andrew.

« Tease them? He asked me a question and I replied saying also that we avoided walking to respect the Sabbath. »

« They will say that we worked in the boat… »

« They will end up by saying that we worked by breathing! Fool! It's the boat, the wind and the waves that work, not us who sail in the boat. »

Andrew accepts the reprimand and becomes silent.

After the preliminary prayers it is time to read a passage and explain it. The head of the synagogue asks Jesus to do so, but Jesus points to the Pharisees saying: « Let them do it. » But as they do not wish to comply, He is compelled to speak.

Jesus reads a passage from the first Book of the Kings, which tells how David was betrayed by the men of Ziph, who informed Saul that he was at Gibeah. Jesus hands the roll back and begins to speak.

« It is always evil to infringe the precepts of charity, hospitality and honesty. But man does not hesitate to do so with utmost indifference. We have here a double episode of such infringement and the consequent punishment of God. The behaviour of the men of Ziph was deceitful. Saul's was equally so. The former were mean in their intention of getting into the graces of the stronger of the two. The latter was vile in the intention of getting rid of the Lord's anointed. They were thus united by their selfishness. And the false sinful king of Israel dares to give a reply to the base proposal mentioning the Lord: "May you be blessed by the Lord".

Derision of God's Justice! Habitual derision! Too often the Name of the Lord and His blessing are invoked as a reward or guarantee for man's wickedness. It is written: "You shall not utter the Name of God in vain". And can there be anything more vain, or rather, more wicked than uttering it to commit a crime against one's neighbour? And yet it is a sin that is more frequent than any other, committed with indifference also by those who are always the first in the meetings of the Lord, in ceremonies and teaching. Remember that it is a sin to investigate, take notice and prepare everything to damage one's neighbour. It is also a sin to make other people investigate, take notice and prepare everything so that other people may injure one's neighbour. It implies inducing

others to sin by tempting them with rewards or threatening them with retaliation.

I warn you that it is a sin. I warn you that such behaviour is selfishness and hatred. And you are aware that hatred and selfishness are enemies of love. I am warning you because I am anxious about your souls. Because I love you. Because I do not want you to be in sin. Because I do not want you to be punished by God as happened to Saul, whose country was destroyed by the Philistines, while he was chasing David to capture him and kill him. I solemnly tell you that that will always happen to those who harm their neighbours. Their victory will last as long as the grass of a meadow. It will come up quickly, but it will soon be dry and trodden on by the foot of indifferent passersby. Whereas good behaviour and honest life seem to find it hard to grow and assert themselves. But once they are perfected as habits of life they become strong leafy trees, which no hurricane can uproot or dogdays parch. Really, he who is faithful to the Law, truly faithful, becomes a strong tree, which is not bent by passions nor burnt by Satan's fire.

I have finished. If there is anyone who wishes to say something, let him do so. »

« We ask You whether You have spoken referring to us Pharisees. »

« Is the synagogue perhaps full of Pharisees? You are four, and there are hundreds of people. My word was for everybody. »

« But the allusion was clear. »

« Really, it has never been known that a man accuses himself only because suspicion is thrown on him by a parallel! But that is what you are doing. Why do you accuse yourselves if I do not accuse you? Are you aware of behaving as I said? I am not. But if you are, mend your ways. Because man is weak and may sin. And God forgives him if he sincerely repents and wants to sin no more. But to persist in evil is double sin for which there is no forgiveness. »

« We have not committed such sin. »

« Well, do not grieve over My words. »

The argument is over. And the singing of hymns fills the synagogue. The meeting seems to be on the point of winding up without any further incident, when Joachim, the Pharisee, sees a man in the crowd and beckons to him to go to the first row. The man is about fifty years old and has an atrophic arm and as atrophy has destroyed his muscles, also his hand is affected and is smaller than the other one.

Jesus sees him. And He notices the bustle to draw His attention to him. There is a flashing but very clear sign of disgust and pity on His face. But He does not ward off the blow. On the contrary He faces the situation resolutely.

« Come here, in the middle » He orders the man. And when the man is before Him, Jesus turns to the Pharisees and says: « Why do you tempt Me? Have I not just finished speaking of snares and hatred? And have you not just now said: "We have not such sin"? Are you not replying to Me? Answer at least this: Is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath? Is it lawful to save life or to kill? Are you not replying? I will reply in your place and in the presence of all the people, who will be able to judge better than you do, because they are simple and free from hatred and pride. It is not lawful to do any work on the Sabbath. But as it is lawful to pray, so it is lawful to do good, because good is even a greater prayer than the hymns and psalms which we have sung. But neither on the Sabbath nor on any other days is it lawful to do evil. And you have done just that by intriguing to have here this man who is not even from Capernaum and was brought here two days ago, as you knew that I was at Bethsaida and you guessed that I would be coming to My town. And you have done that to see if you can find something to use against Me. And thus you commit also the sin of killing your souls instead of saving them. But, as far as I am concerned, I forgive you and I will not disappoint the faith of this man, whom you told to come saying that I would cure him, whereas you wanted to lay a snare for Me. He is innocent because He came here with no other intention but to be cured. And be it so. Man: stretch out your hand and go in peace. »

The man obeys and his hand is cured and is like the other one. He makes use of it at once by taking the hem of Jesus' mantle to kiss it saying: « You know that I was not aware of their true intentions. Had I known, I would not have come, as I would have preferred to keep my withered hand, rather than serve against You. So have no grudge against me. »

« Go in peace, man. I know the truth and with regard to you I assure you of My good will. »

The crowd go out making comments, and Jesus comes out last with His eleven apostles.

263. A Day of Judas Iscariot at Nazareth.

27th August 1945.

The house in Nazareth would be the most suitable for spiritual elevation. There is peace, silence, order. Holiness seems to exude from its stones, from the trees of the kitchen garden, or to pour from the serene thathich forms a heavenly dome over it. In actual fact it exhales from Her Who lives in it, and moves about quickly and silently, with Her unchanged youthful gait and light step, as when She entered the house as a bride, and with the same smile which soothes and caresses.

The sun, in this early morning hour, is shining on the right hand side of the house, the one close to the first undulation of the hill, and only the tops of trees benefit from it, first of all the olive-trees planted near the terrace to retain the earth by means of their roots: they are the surviving olive-trees of Joachim's olive-grove, huge contorted trees with their thicker branches rising towards the sky as if they were invoking its blessing or were praying also from that peaceful place. Once the grove consisted of many trees, which like praying pilgrims formed a long procession extending as far as the fields where olive-grove and fields became grazing ground, whereas there are only a few trees left now within Joachim's mutilated property. The next to benefit from the sunshine are the tall strong almond and apple-trees, forming sunshades over the garden with their branches, then there is a pomegranate enjoying the rays of sunlight, and last the fig-tree near the house, when the sun already caresses the well cultivated flowers and vegetables in rectangular flower-beds and along the hedges planted under pergolas laden with grapes.

Buzzing bees, like flying golden drops alight on everything that may give them sweet scented juices. A small honeysuckle shoot is attacked by them as well as a hedge of bell-shaped flower bunches, the name of which I do not know, but must be night flowers, as they are about to close, and their scent is very strong. The bees hasten to suck them before they fold their petals to sleep in the corolla.

Mary goes quickly from the nest of the doves to the little fountain, and from there to the house, doing Her work, and yet, while doing so, She manages to admire Her flowers or the doves cooing along the paths or flying around the house and the kitchen garden.

Judas Iscariot comes back laden with plants and scions. « Hail, Mother. They gave me everything I wanted. I ran back so that they may not get injured. But I hope that they will take root as the honeysuckle did. Next year Your garden will be like a flowery basket. And You will thus remember poor Judas and his stay here » he says, carefully taking out from a bag some plants, the roots of which are enveloped in earth and damp leaves, and some scions from another bag.

« Thank you, Judas. Thank you very much, indeed. You have no idea how happy I am to have that honeysuckle near the little grotto. When I was a little girl, over there, at the end of those fields, which belonged to us in those days, there was a lovelier grotto, and ivy and honeysuckles adorned it with their branches and flowers, forming a kind of curtain and shelter for tiny lilies growing inside the grotto, which the delicate embroidery of maidenhair made completely green. Because there was a spring there… In the Temple I often thought of that grotto and I tell you that when I prayed

before the Veil of the Holy, as a virgin of the Temple, I did not perceive God more strongly. Nay, I must say that I dreamed there of the sweet conversations of My soul with My Lord… My Joseph prepared this one for Me, with this fine stream of water, not so much because of its utility, as to give Me the joy of a grotto like the other one… Joseph was good, and considerate of the least details… And he planted a honeysuckle and ivy, the latter is still alive, the former died during the years of our exile… He replanted it later. But it died three years ago. You have planted it once again. It has taken root, see? You are a very clever gardener. »

« Yes. When a child I loved plants so much and my mother taught me how to take care of them… Being with You, Mother, I feel as if I were a boy again and I discover my old skill. I do it to please You. You are so good to me!… » replies Judas, working skilfully in setting the plants in the most suitable places. Near the hedge of the night flowers he places a tangle of roots, which I do not know whether they are lilies of the valley or some other flower. « They will do well here » he says pressing with a little hoe the earth on to the buried roots. « Too much sunshine is not good for them. Eleazar's servant did not want to give me them. But I insisted so much that he gave them to me. »

« They did not want to give Joseph those Indian jasmines. But he did some work for them without asking for payment in order to get them for Me. They have flourished more and more. »

« There You are, Mother. I will now water them and they will be all right. » He waters them and then washes his hands in the fountain.

Mary looks at him: he is so different from Her Jesus, and so different as well from the Judas of certain stormy hours; She scans him, approaches him and laying a hand on his arm She kindly asks him: « Are you feeling better, Judas? In your soul, I mean. »

« Oh! Mother! So much better! I am in peace. And You can see it. I find pleasure and salvation in humble things and in being with You. I should never leave this peace, this quietude. Here… How far is the world from this house!… » And Judas looks at the garden, the plants, the little house… He concludes: « But if I stayed here I would never be an apostle. And I want to be one… »

« However, believe Me, it would be better for you to be a just soul rather than an injust apostle. If you feel that contact with the world upsets you, if you realise that the praises and honours of an apostle hurt you, give it up, Judas. It is better for you to be a simple believer in My Jesus, but a holy believer, rather than be a sinful apostle. »

Judas lowers his head pensively. Mary leaves him to his meditation and goes into the house, to Her housework.

Judas remains still for some time, he then walks up and down

under the pergola. His arms are folded, his head is lowered. He is engrossed in thought, then he begins to speak and gesticulate to himself. His monologue is incomprehensible. His gestures are typical of a person anguished with clashing ideas. He seems to be invoking and rejecting, or pitying, or cursing something, his inquisitive countenance becomes frightened, anguished, until his face has the expression of his worse moments… and he stops abruptly in the middle of the path, remaining still for some time, with a real diabolic countenance… He covers his face with his hands and runs up the hillock of the olive-trees, away from Mary's sight, and he weeps hiding his face in his hands, until he calms down and remains sat, leaning with his back against on olive-tree, as if he were bewildered…

… It is no longer morning, but the end of a glorious sunset. Nazareth opens the doors of its houses, which have been closed all day against the fierce summer heat of an eastern day. Women, men, children come out into the kitchen gardens or on to the roads still warm but no longer sunny, seeking cool air at the fountain, or playing or talking… waiting for supper. Men, women, children greet one another in loud voices, they chatter, laugh, shout…

Judas also goes out and turns his steps to the fountain carrying copper pitchers. He is noticed and indicated by the people of Nazareth with the nickname « the disciple of the Temple », which sounds to him like sweet music. He passes by greeting people kindly, but also with a little reserve, which if it is not yet proud haughtiness, it is very close to it.

« You are very good to Mary » a citizen with a long beard says to him.

« She deserves that and more. She really is a great woman of Israel. You are lucky to have such a citizen. »

The praise of the woman of Nazareth delights the people who repeat to one another what Judas said.

The apostle has in the meantime reached the fountain where he waits for his turn and he is so kind as to carry the pitchers of an elderly woman, who cannot bless him enough, and he fills the jars of two women, who are hampered by the suckling each carries in her arms. Sorting their veils they whisper: « May God reward you. »

« Love for our neighbour is the first duty of a friend of Jesus » replies the Iscariot bowing. He then fills his own pitchers and goes back home.

The head of the synagogue of Nazareth and other people stop him on his way home, and invite him to speak on the following Sabbath. « You have been here with us over two weeks and you have not taught us any lesson apart from your kindness to us all » complains the head, who is with other elders of the village.

« But if the speeches of your greatest son are not pleasant to you,

how can you be satisfied with the sermon of one of His disciples, who is a Judaean over and above? » replies Judas.

« Your suspicion is an unfair one and it grieves us. Our invitation is sincere. You are a disciple and a Judaean. That is true. But you are of the Temple. So you may speak. Because there is doctrine in the Temple. Joseph's son is only a carpenter… »

« But He is the Messiah! »

« He says so… But is it true? Or is it delirium? »

« But, people of Nazareth, what about His holiness! » His holiness Judas is scandalised at the incredulity of the Nazarenes.

« It is great. That is true. But between that and being the Messiah!… And then… Why does He speak so harshly? »

« Harsh? No. He does not seem harsh to me. Well, He is too sincere and too intolerant, that is true. He leaves no fault untouched, He does not hesitate to denounce abuses… and people do not like that. He always brings up a sore point. And that hurts. But He does it because of His holiness. Surely! That is the only reason. I have said to Him several times: "Jesus, You are damaging Your reputation". But He will not listen to me!… »

« You are very fond of Him, and learned as you are you could guide Him. »

« Oh! not learned… But practical, yes. I am of the Temple, you know!? I am familiar with customs. I have friends. Annas' son is like a brother to me. If you want something from the Sanhedrin, just tell me… But let me take the water to Mary now, as She is waiting for me for supper. »

« Come back later. It is cool on my terrace. You will be among friends and we shall be able to talk… »

« Yes, goodbye » and Judas goes home where he apologises to Mary for being late as he was held up by the head of the synagogue and by the elders of the village. And he concludes: « They would like me to speak on Sabbath… The Master did not tell me to speak. What do You say, Mother. Guide me. »

« Speak to the head of the synagogue… or to the synagogue? »

« To both. I would not like to speak to any of them because they are against Jesus and also because it seems a sacrilege to me to speak where He is by right the only Master there. But they insisted so much! They want me after supper… I have almost promised them to go. And if You think that by speaking I may be able to mitigate their spirit of resistance to the Master, which is so unpleasant, I will go and speak to them although it is so burdensome to me. I will speak as best I can, very simply, endeavouring to be very patient in view of their stubbornness. Because I have realised that it is worse to be hard. Eh! I will not make again the mistake I made at Esdraelon! The Master was so upset about it! He did not say anything to me, but I understood. I will not do it again. But I

would like to leave Nazareth after persuading the people that Jesus is the Messiah and is to be believed and loved. »- Judas is speaking while sitting at the table, at Jesus' place and eating what Mary has prepared for him. And it hurts me to see Judas sitting in that place, in front of Mary Who serves him like a mother.

She now replies: « It would be a good thing if Nazareth understood the truth and accepted it. I will not hold you back, you may go. No one can say better than you whether Jesus deserves love. Consider how much He loves you and He shows it by always excusing you and satisfying you whenever possible… Let that consideration inspire you with holy words and deeds. »

The supper is soon over. Judas goes to water the flowers in the garden before it gets too dark and he then goes out, leaving Mary on the terrace intent on folding the clothes She had hung out to dry. And Judas, after greeting Alphaeus of Sarah and Mary of Clopas who are talking standing at the door of the latter, goes straight to the house of the head of the synagogue.

Also the Lord's two cousins are present with other six elders. After pompous greetings they all sit gravely on seats adorned with cushions and they refresh themselves drinking anise or mint water, which must be very cool because the metal pitcher is moist outside owing to the difference in temperature between the ice cold water and the still warm air, notwithstanding the breeze blowing from the hills to the north of Nazareth stirs the tree-tops.

« I am glad you agreed to come. You are young. A little relaxation is good for you » says the head of the synagogue who is full of attention towards Judas.

« I was afraid of bothering you if I had come earlier. I know that you are rather disdainful towards Jesus and His followers… »

« Disdainful No. Sceptical… and we are hurt by His… let us admit it… by His too crude truth. We were under the impression that you disdained us and that is why we did not invite you. »

« I disdain you? On the contrary! I understand you very well… Of course! But I am sure that at the end peace will be made between you and Him. It suits both you and Him. It suits Him because He is in need of everybody, and it suits you because it does not pay to be considered enemies of the Messiah. »

« And do you think that He really is the Messiah? » asks Joseph of Alphaeus. « There is no trace in Him of the royal figure predicted by the prophets. Perhaps it is because we remember Him as a carpenter… But… Where is the liberating king in Him? »

« David also appeared to be only a little shepherd. But you know that there has been no greater king than David. Not even Solomon in all his glory was so great. Because, after all, Solomon only continued David's work, but was never inspired like him. Whereas David! Just consider the figure of David! It is gigantic! His regality

almost reaches up to Heaven. Do not doubt the royalty of the Christ, basing your judgement on His genealogy. David was king and shepherd. More truly: shepherd and then king. Jesus is king and carpenter. Or better still: carpenter and later king. »

« You speak as a rabbi. One can see that you have been brought up in the Temple » says the head of the synagogue. « And could you let the Sanhedrin know, that I, the head, am in need of the help of the Temple for a private reason? »

« Of course! Certainly! With Eleazar! Just imagine! And then Joseph the Elder, you know? The wealthy man from Arimathea. And then Sadoc, the scribe… and then… All you have to do is to tell me! »

« Well, be my guest tomorrow. We will talk about it. »

« Your guest? No. I cannot leave Mary, that holy and sorrowful woman. I came here specially to keep Her company… »

« What is the matter with our relative? We know that She is healthy and, although poor, She is happy » says Simon of Alphaeus.

« Yes. And we never leave Her. My mother is always with Her. And my wife and I, too. Although… Although I cannot forgive Her for being so weak with Her Son. And also for grieving my father, who because of Jesus died with only two of his sons at his bedside. And then… But family troubles are not to be proclaimed publicly » says Joseph of Alphaeus with a sigh.

« You are right. They should be whispered in a low voice and confided to a friendly heart. The same applies to many troubles. I have mine as well, as a disciple… But it's better not to speak of them! »

« On the contrary, let us speak of them. What is the matter? Trouble for Jesus? We do not approve of His behaviour. But we are His relatives. And we are read to side with Him against His enemies. Speak up! » says Joseph again.

« Trouble? No! I was just saying… The sorrows of a disciple are manifold! Not only because of the behaviour of his Master with friends and enemies, harming Himself, but also because it is grievous to see that He is not loved. I wish you all loved Him… »

« But what can we do? You said that yourself! His behaviour is such… He was not like that before leaving His Mother » says the head of the synagogue apologetically. « Is that true, what do you all say? »

They all agree solemnly, speaking highly of the silent, meek, retired Jesus of the past.

« Who could have imagined that He was to become what He is now? He was completely devoted to house and relatives. Now instead? » remarks an elderly Nazarene.

Judas exclaims with a sigh: « Poor woman! »

« Well, what do you know? Tell us, speak up! » shouts Joseph.

« Nothing more than you know. Do you think that it is pleasant for Her to be left alone? »

« If Joseph had lived as your father did, that would not have happened » states another elderly Nazarene sententiously.

« Don't believe that, man. It would have been the same. When one takes an idea into one's head!… » says Judas.

A servant brings some lamps and lays them on the table, because it is a moonless night although the sky is sparkling with stars. More drinks are brought at the same time and the head of the synagogue offers them to Judas at once.

« Thank you. I cannot stay any longer. I must go back to Mary » he says getting up.

Also Alphaeus' two sons stand up saying: « We will come with you. We are going the same way… » and they part greeting one another ceremoniously while the six elders remain with the head of the synagogue.

The streets are now deserted and silent. People can be heard talking in low grave voices on the terraced roofs. Children are already sleeping in their little beds and thus their shrill voices resembling the twittering of joyful birds are not heard. From the terraces of the wealthier houses the faint glow of oil lamps descends with the low voices of people.

Alphaeus' sons and Judas walk for a little while without speaking, then Joseph stops and taking Judas' arm he says: « Listen. I realise that you know something that you did not wish to mention in the presence of strangers. But now you must tell me. I am the oldest in the family and it is my right and my duty to know everything. »

« And I came here for the purpose of telling you and thus protect the Master, Mary, your brothers and your reputation. It is something painful to tell and to hear. Very painful to be done. Because it looks like playing the spy. But please understand me properly. It is not so. It is only love and prudence. I know many things, which you know as well. My friends of the Temple told me. And I know that they are dangerous for Jesus and for the good name of the family. I have tried to make the Master understand. But I was not successful. On the contrary, the more I advise Him, the worse He behaves, thus causing people to criticise and hate Him more and more. The reason is that He is so holy that He cannot understand what the world is like. In short, it is sad to see a holy thing perish through the heedlessness of its founder »

« But what is it? Tell us everything. And we will take action. Is that right, Simon? »

« Of course. But it seems impossible to me that He is imprudent and acts against His mission… »

« But if this kind young man, who loves Jesus, says so!? See what

you are like. You are always like that: uncertain, hesitating. You always leave me alone at the crucial moment. The whole family is against me. You have no pity for our reputation and for our poor brother who is ruining Himself! »

« No! He is not ruining Himself! But He is injuring Himself, that's what He is doing. »

« Speak up! » insists Joseph while Simon is perplexedly silent.

« I would speak… But I would like to be certain that you will not make any mention to Jesus… Swear it. »

« We swear it on the holy Veil. Speak up. »

« And you must not relate to your mother, and least of all to your brothers what I am going to tell you. »

« You can be certain of our silence. »

« And will you say nothing to Mary? In order not to grieve Her. It's your duty to see to the peace of that poor Mother, in silence, as I do. »

« We will not say anything to anybody. We swear it. »

« Well listen… Jesus no longer confines Himself to approaching Gentiles, publicans and prostitutes, to offending Pharisees and other important people. But He does things that are absolutely absurd… Just imagine that when in Philistia, He made us go about taking with us a black billy-goat. Now He has a Philistine among His disciples. And before that, the boy He picked up? You have no idea what comments were made. And a few days ago He took a Greek girl, a slave, who had run away from her Roman master. And His speeches are contradictory to our well known wisdom. In short He seems to be mad. And He damages Himself. In Philistia He intruded also into a ceremony of wizards, competing face to face with them. He defeated them, but… scribes and Pharisees hate Him. But what will happen if they happen to hear about such things? You must intervene and stop… »

« That's serious, very serious. But how could we know? We are here… And even now, how will we be able to find out? »

« And yet it is your duty to intervene and stop Him. His Mother is a mother, and She is too good. You must not abandon Him thus. For His own sake and for the sake of the world. Also His continuous driving away demons… It is rumoured that He is assisted by Beelzebub. You can imagine whether that can do Him any good. In any case, what kind of a king will He ever become if the crowds laugh at Him just now or are scandalised? »

« But… does He really do such things? » asks Simon incredulously.

« Ask Him yourself. He will tell You that He does. Because He even boasts about it. »

« You should let us know… »

« I certainly will! When I see something new I will send you word.

But… please, never say a word to anybody! »

« We swore it. When are you leaving? »

« After the Sabbath. There is no reason why I should stay here any longer. I have done my duty. »

« And we thank you for it. Eh! I said that He had changed. And you, brother… you would not believe me… Can you now see whether I was right? » says Joseph of Alphaeus.

« I can hardly believe, it. Judas and James, after all, are not fools. Why have they not told us? If such things are really happening, why have they not taken action? » says Simon of Alphaeus.

« Man, you will not disgrace me by refusing to believe my words! » answers back Judas resentfully.

« No!… but… That's enough. Forgive me if I say: I will believe when I see things myself. »

« All right. You will soon see and then you will have to say to me: "You were right". Well. There is your house. I leave you. God be with you. »

« God be with you, Judas. And… listen. Don't speak to anyone about that. For our reputation… »

« I will be as silent as the grave. Goodbye. »

And he goes away at a good pace. He enters the house serenely and goes up to the terrace where Mary, with Her hands in her lap, is contemplating the sky crowded with stars. In the light of the little lamp that Judas has lit to climb the steps, tears can be seen shining on Mary's cheeks.

« Why are You weeping, Mother? » asks Judas anxiously.

« Because I think that there are more snares in the world than stars in the sky. Snares for My Jesus… » Judas looks at Her attentively and he seems upset. But She concludes kindly: « But I am comforted by the love of His disciples… Love My Jesus… love Him… Do you wish to stay here, Judas? I am going down to My room. Mary of Clopas has already gone to bed after preparing the leaven for tomorrow. »

« Yes. I will remain up here. It is lovely here. »

« Peace be with you, Judas. »

« Peace be with You, Mary. »

264. Instructions to the Apostles at the Beginning of Their Apostolate.

28th August 1945.

Jesus is sitting at the table in the house in Capernaum with all His disciples, which means that Judas has joined his companions after fulfilling his task. It is evening. The light of the fading day enters from the door and the wide open windows through which it is possible to see the purple of sunset change into unreal violet-red,

the borders of which fray crumpling up into a violet-slate that pales into grey. It puts me in mind of a sheet of paper thrown on to a fire: it lights up and as soon as it stops burning, its edges crumple up and become a leaden bluish shade, which fades into an almost white pearly grey.

« It's warm » states Peter, pointing at a huge cloud which tinges the west with those shades. « Warm. But no rain. That's not a cloud, it's fog. Tonight I am going to sleep in the boat, where it is cooler. »

« No. Tonight we are going to the olive-groves. I must speak to you. Judas is now back. It is time for Me to speak to you. I know an airy spot, where we shall be comfortable. Get up and let us go. »

« Is it far? » they ask picking up their mantles.

« No. It is very near. Within a stone's throw by sling from the last house. You may leave your mantles. But take tinder and flint so that we can see our way when coming back. »

They come out of the upstairs room and go downstairs bidding good night to the landlord and his wife who are enjoying the cool air on the terrace. Jesus walks resolutely in the opposite direction from the lake and, after crossing the village, He proceeds for about two or three hundred yards into an olive-grove on the first hillock behind the village. He stops on a projection of earth that because of its position free from obstacles enjoys all the air possible in that sultry night.

« Let us sit down, and pay attention to Me. The hour of evangelization has come. I am about half way through My public life preparing hearts for My Kingdom. It is now time that My apostles also take part in the preparation of this Kingdom. That is what kings do when they decide to conquer a kingdom. First they make investigations and approach people to find out their reaction and win them to the plan they are pursuing. Later they enlarge their preparatory work by means of reliable messengers sent to the country to be conquered. And they send more and more of them until all the geographical and moral details of the whole country are known. After that the king completes his work by proclaiming himself king of that country and being crowned as such. And much blood is shed to achieve that. Because victories always cost blood… »

« We are ready to fight for You and shed our blood » promise the apostles by one consent.

« I will shed no blood but that of the Holy One and of saints. »

« Do You wish to begin Your conquest starting from the Temple, storming it at the hour of the sacrifice?… »

« Let us not stray, My friends. You will be informed of the future in due course. But do not shudder with horror. I assure you that I will not upset the ceremonies by means of a violent irruption. And yet they will be upset and there will be one evening when terror

will prevent the ritual prayer. The terror of sinners. But I shall be in peace that evening. In peace with both My spirit and My body. A total blissful peace… »

Jesus looks at His twelve apostles one by one and it is the same as if He looked at the same page twelve times and read for twelve times the one word written on it: incomprehension. He smiles and continues.

« So I have decided to send you so that you may penetrate further ahead and more widely than I can do by Myself. But for prudential reasons I will ensure that there is a difference between your way of evangelizing and Mine, because I do not want to put you in too difficult situations, which could be too seriously dangerous for your souls and bodies, and also because I do not wish to jeopardise My own work. You are not as yet perfected to the point of being able to approach anyone without being damaged or without damaging, and least of all are you heroic to the extent of defying the world on behalf of the Idea, facing the revenge of the world. So, when you go about preaching Me, do not go among Gentiles and do not enter the towns of Samaritans, but go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. There is so much to be done amongst them, because I solemnly tell you that the crowds that you think are so numerous around Me, are the hundredth part of those who are still waiting for the Messiah in Israel and they do not know Him, neither do they know that He is living amongst them. Take them faith in Me and the knowledge of Me. On your way preach saying, "The Kingdom of Heaven is near". Let that be your basic announcement supporting all your preaching… You have heard Me speak so much of the Kingdom! All you need do is repeat what I told you. But man, to be attracted by and convinced of spiritual truth, needs material kindness, as if he were an eternal boy who will not study a lesson or learn a trade unless he is attracted by a sweet from his mother, or a reward from his school master, or his trade tutor. In order to let you have the means to be believed and sought after, I will grant you the gift of working miracles… »

The apostles jump to their feet, with the exception of James of Alphaeus and John, shouting, protesting, becoming excited, each reacting according to his temperament. Really, the only one strutting about at the idea of working miracles is the Iscariot, who with the foolhardiness of false and selfishly motivated interest exclaims: « It was time that we should do that to have the least authority over the crowds! »

Jesus looks at him but does not say anything. Peter and the Zealot who were saying: « No, Lord! We are not worthy of so much! That is due to saints », contradict Judas, as the Zealot says: « Why do you take the liberty of reproaching the Master, you silly proud man? » and Peter adds: « The least authority? And what do you

want to do more than work miracles? Do you want to become God as well? Have you got the same itch Lucifer had? »

« Silence! » orders Jesus. And He continues: « There is one thing that is even greater than miracles and equally convinces the crowds, but more deeply and durably: a holy life. But you are far from that, and you, Judas, are farther than the rest. But let Me speak because My instruction is a long one.

Go therefore, curing sick people, cleansing lepers, raising bodies and spirits from the dead, because bodies and spirits can be sick, leprous, dead as well. And you are already aware how a miracle is worked: through a life of penance, fervent prayer, sincere desire to glorify the power of God, deep humility, living charity, burning faith, and through hope that no kind of difficulty can upset. I solemnly tell you that everything is possible to those who have such virtues. Demons also will flee before the Name of the Lord pronounced by you, if you have within you what I said. That power is given to you by Me and by our Father. No money can buy it. Only our Will grants it, only a just life keeps it. As it is given to you gratuitously, so gratuitously give it to others, to the needy. Woe betide you if you depreciate the gift of God by using it to fatten your purse. It is not your power, it is the power of God. Make use of it, but do not take possession of it, saying: "It is mine". As it is given to you, so it can be taken away from you. Simon of Jonah a little while ago said to Judas of Simon: "Have you got the same itch as Lucifer had?" He gave a correct definition. To say: "I do what God does because I am like God" is to imitate Lucifer. And his punishment is well known. Equally known is what happened to the two progenitors who in the earthly paradise ate the forbidden fruit, through instigation of the Envious One, who wanted to imprison more unhappy souls in his Hell, besides the rebellious angels already there, but also through their own itch of perfect pride. The only fruit you are allowed to take from what you do, are the souls whom you will conquer for the Lord by means of the miracle and who are to be given to the Lord. That is your money. Nothing else. You will enjoy your treasure in the next life.

Go without riches. Do not take with you gold, or silver, or money in your purses, or travelling-bag with two or more tunics or spare shoes, or pilgrim's staff, or weapons. Because for the time being your apostolic visits will be short ones and every Sabbath eve we shall meet and you will be able to change your sweated garments without having to take spare ones with you. No staff is required because it is more pleasant to walk without, and what is useful on hills and plains is different from what is useful in deserts and on high mountains. No weapon is needed. Weapons are useful to men who do not know what is holy poverty or divine forgiveness. You have no treasures to protect and defend from robbers.

The only robber you must fear is Satan. And he is defeated by perseverance and prayer, not by swords and daggers. Forgive those who offend you. If anyone should rob you of your mantle, give him also your tunic. If you should remain completely nude because of your mildness and detachment from riches, you will not scandalise the angels of the Lord or the infinite chastity of God, because your charity would clothe your nude body with gold and your mildness would adorn you like a sash, while your forgiveness towards the robber would give you a royal mantle and crown. You would therefore be better dressed than a king: not with corruptible clothes, but with imperishable material.

Do not worry about your food. You will always have what is appropriate for your condition and your ministry, because a worker is always worthy of the food that is offered to him. And if men should not provide for the worker, God will. I have already proved to you that to live and preach it is not necessary to have your stomachs full of food. That is useful to unclean animals whose purpose in life is to grow fat and then be slaughtered to fatten men. But you must fatten your own souls and the souls of other people with the food of wisdom. And Wisdom is revealed to minds not made dull by guzzling and to hearts nourished with supernatural food. You have never been so eloquent as after the retreat on the mountain. And then you ate only what was necessary to survive. And yet at the end of the retreat you were as strong and cheerful as you have never been before. Is that not true?

Whatever town or place you enter, find out who is deserving of receiving you. Not because you are Simon, or Judas, or Bartholomew, or James, or John, and so on. But because you are the messengers of the Lord. Even if you had been the dregs of society, or murderers, thieves, publicans, but now you were repentant and at My service, you would deserve respect because you are My messengers. I will say even more. I say: Woe betide you if outwardly you look like My messengers, whilst inwardly you are abject servants of Satan. Woe betide you! Hell would be too little compared to what your deceit deserves. But even if you were messengers of the Lord publicly, and at the same time the dregs of society, or publicans, thieves, murderers occultly and people in their hearts suspected or were almost certain of that, you would still be entitled to honour and respect, because you are My messengers. The eye of man must see beyond the means, and see the messenger and the final purpose, that is God and His work beyond the too often faulty means. Only in the case of grave sin, injuring the faith in hearts, I for the time being, My successors in future, will see that the bad limb is cut off. Because it is not lawful that the souls of believers should be lost through a demon priest. It will never be lawful, in order to hide the wounds affecting the apostolic body, to allow gangrenous

limbs to survive in it, as their repugnant aspect drives people away and their demoniac stench is poisonous.

So you will find out which is the most righteously living family, where women know how to live in seclusion and morals are chaste. And you will enter that house and live there until you leave the place. Do not imitate drones, which after sucking a flower pass on to a more nourishing one. Whether you arrive among people with a splendid house and rich table, or you happen to go to a humble family, rich only in virtue, stay where you are. Never seek what is "better" for the perishable body. On the contrary, always give it what is worse, keeping all the rights for the spirit. And whenever possible, give your preference to the hospitality of the poor: I tell you because it is better to do so. Do so in order not to mortify them and in memory of Me, as I am and will remain poor and I boast of being poor, and also because very often the poor are better than the rich. You will always find poor people who are just, but only rarely you will find a rich man without any fault. You have no excuse in saying: "I found goodness only amongst the rich" in order to justify your keen desire for welfare.

When entering a house greet its inhabitants with My salutation, which is the kindest there is. Say: "Peace be with you. Let peace be in this house, or Let peace come to this house". In fact, as messengers of Jesus and of the Gospel, you take peace with you and your going to one place is to make peace come to it. If the house is worthy of it, peace will come and remain in it; if it is not worthy of it, your peace will come back to you. So mind to be peaceful yourselves, in order to have God as your Father. A father always helps. And with the help of God you will do everything and everything well.

It may be, nay it will certainly happen, that a town or house will not receive you or will not listen to your words, but will drive you away or ridicule you or will chase you throwing stones at you as boring prophets. In such cases you must be more than ever peaceful, humble and mild, having acquired such virtues as a habit of life. Otherwise you will be overwhelmed by anger and you will commit sin, scandalising and increasing the incredulity of those you wish to convert. If instead you peacefully accept the insult of being driven away, derided, chased, you will convert people by means of the most beautiful sermon: the silent sermon of true virtue. One day you will find on your way the enemies of today and they will say to you: "We have been looking for you because your behaviour has convinced us of the Truth that you announce. Please forgive us and accept us as your disciples. Because we did not know who you were, but now we know that you are saints. And if you are saints, you must be the messengers of a saint, and we now believe in Him". But when leaving the town or the house

where you were not received, shake the dust off your sandals, so that the pride and harshness of that place may not stick even to your soles. I solemnly tell you: "On Doomsday Sodom and Gomorrah will be dealt with less severely".

Now: I am sending you like sheep among wolves. Be, therefore, as cunning as serpents and yet as harmless as doves. Because you are aware how the world, in which really there are more wolves than sheep, treats Me also, and I am the Christ. I can defend Myself by My power and I will do so until the hour of the temporary triumph of the world comes. But you do not possess that power and you need greater prudence and simplicity. Thus greater sagacity as well, to avoid being scourged and imprisoned for the time being.

In actual fact, notwithstanding your statement that you are willing to shed your blood on My behalf, you are not capable at present of putting up with an ironic or angry glance. But the time will come when you will be as strong as heroes against persecutions, even stronger than heroes and your heroism, which the world cannot conceive or explain, will be called: "madness". No, it will not be madness! It will be the identification, through love, of man with the Man-God, and you will be able to do what I have already done. To understand this heroism it will be necessary to see it, study it and judge it from a heavenly level. Because it is something supernatural that is beyond all the limitations of human nature. Kings, the kings of the spirit will be My heroes, for ever kings and heroes…

In those days they will arrest you laying hands on you, they will drag you before lawcourts, garrison commanders and kings, to judge and condemn you for the great sin, in the eyes of the world, of being the servants of God, the ministers and guardians of Good, the masters of virtue. And for that same reason you will be scourged and punished in many ways and even killed. And you will give testimony of Me to kings, garrison commanders, nations, confessing with your blood that you love Christ, the True Son of the True God.

When you are in their hands do not worry about what you have to reply and what you have to say. Do not grieve then for anybody, but for the judge and accusers led astray by Satan to the extent of becoming blind to the Truth. You will be given the words to be spoken at the time. Your Father will put them on your lips because it is not you who will be speaking to convert people to your Faith and profess the Truth, but it will be the Spirit of the Father Who will speak in you.

Brother will then betray brother to death, and the father his child, and children will rise against their parents and have them put to death. Do not be shocked or scandalised! Tell Me: according

to you is it a greater crime to kill a father, a son, a brother, or God Himself? »

« God cannot be killed » replies sharply Judas Iscariot.

« That is true. He is an invincible Spirit » confirms Bartholomew. And the others, although they do not speak, are all of the same opinion.

« I am God and I am Flesh » says Jesus calmly.

« No one is thinking of killing You » retorts the Iscariot.

« Please, reply to My question. »

« Of course, it is a graver crime to kill God! »

« Well: God will be killed by man, in the Flesh of the Man-God and in the soul of the murderers of the Man-God. So, as they will go so far as committing that crime, without the murderers being horrified at it, so the crimes of fathers, brothers and children, against children, brothers and fathers will be committed.

You will be hated by all men on account of My Name. But he who stands firm until the end will be saved. And when they persecute you in one town, take refuge in the next one. Not out of cowardice, but to give time to the new-born Church of Christ to reach the age, not of a weak incapable unweaned child, but an older age in which it will be able to face life and death without being afraid of Death. Let those flee who are advised by the Spirit to flee. As I fled when a child. Truly, all the vicissitudes of My earthly life will be repeated in My Church. All of them. From the mystery of its formation to the humbleness of the early times, to the perturbation and snares brought about by cruel people, to the necessity of fleeing to continue to live, from poverty and unremitting work, to many more events that I am living now, that I will suffer later, before reaching My eternal triumph. On the other hand let those remain who are advised by the Spirit to remain. Because even if they are killed they will live and be useful to the Church. Because what the Spirit of God advises, is always good.

I solemnly tell you that you and your successors will not have covered all the roads and all the towns in Israel before the Son of Man comes. Because on account of its dreadful sin Israel will be scattered like chaff by a whirlwind, and will be spread all over the earth and centuries and millennia will go by before it is gathered again on the threshing-floor of Araunah the Jebusite. Every time Israel will try to gather together, before the predetermined hour, it will be caught once again in the whirlwind and scattered, because Israel will have to weep for its sin for as many centuries as the drops of blood that will flow from the veins of the Lamb of God sacrificed for the sins of the world. And My Church, which will be struck by Israel in Me and in My apostles and disciples, will have to open its motherly arms and endeavour to gather Israel under its mantle, as a brooding hen does with its stray chickens.

When the whole of Israel will be under the mantle of the Church of Christ, then I will come. But that applies to the future. Let us talk of the present.

Remember that the disciple is not superior to his Teacher, nor the slave to his Master. It is enough for the disciple to be like his Teacher, which is already an undeserved honour; and for a slave to be like his Master, and it is supernatural bounty to grant you that. If they have called the Landlord Beelzebub, what will they not say of the household? And will the slaves be able to rebel, if the Landlord does not rebel, does not hate or curse, but calm in his justice he continues to work, postponing judgement to another moment, when he sees them obstinate in Evil, after he has tried everything to persuade them? No. The slaves will not be able to do what the Master does not do, but they can imitate Him, considering that they are sinners, whereas He is without sin. So, be not afraid of those who will call you "demons". The truth will be known one day and then it will be clear who was the "demon", whether it was you or they.

There is nothing hidden that is not to be revealed, and nothing secret that is not to be known. What I now say to you in the dark and secretly, because the world is not worthy of knowing all the words of the Word, it is not yet worthy of that and it is not yet time to tell also those who are unworthy, when the time comes when everything is to be known, tell in daylight, proclaim from housetops what I now whisper more to your souls than to your ears. Because the world then will have been baptised in Blood and there will be such a banner against Satan that the world, if it wishes so, will be able to understand the secrets of God, while Satan will not be able to injure anyone but those who wish to be bitten by him and prefer his bite to My kiss. But most of the world will not wish to understand. Only a minority will be willing to know everything in order to follow all My Doctrine. It does not matter. As it is not possible to separate that minority from the unjust mass, preach My Doctrine as well from housetops, preach it from mountain tops, on the boundless seas, in the bowels of the earth. Even if men will not listen to it, birds and winds, fish and waves will pick up the divine words and the bowels of the earth will keep their echo to repeat it to underground springs, minerals and metals, and they will all rejoice over them, because they have been created by God as well to be a stool for My feet and joy to My heart.

Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul, fear him rather who can lose your soul and unite it on Doomsday to your body raised from death, to throw both into the fire of Hell. Be not afraid. Are two sparrows not sold for a penny? And yet, if your Father does not allow it, not one of them will fall to the

ground notwithstanding all the snares of man. So be not afraid. The Father knows you. Every hair on your heads is known to Him. And you are worth more than many sparrows! And I tell you that if anyone acknowledges Me in the presence of men, I will acknowledge him in the presence of My Father Who is in Heaven. But the one who disowns Me in the presence of men, I will disown in the presence of My Father. To acknowledge means to follow and practice; to disown means to abandon My way out of cowardice, or treble concupiscence, or petty calculation, or attachment to a relative who opposes Me. Because that will happen.

Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth and for the earth. My Peace is above the selfish peace treaties for every day's wangle. It is not peace I have come to bring, but a sword. A sharp sword to cut the lianas detaining people in mud and open the way to supernatural flights. I have come to set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. Because I am He Who reigns and has every right on His subjects. Because no one is greater than I am with regard to rights on affections. Because all love is centralised in Me and becomes thus sublime: I am Father, Mother, Husband, Brother, Friend, and I love you as such and as such I am to be loved. And when I say: "I want", no tie can resist and that soul is Mine. I created it with the Father, I save it by Myself, so I am entitled to have it.

The real enemies of man are men, besides demons; and the enemies of the new man, of the Christian, will be his relatives at home, with their complaints, their threats or their entreaties. But from now on he who prefers his father and mother to Me, is not worthy of Me; he who prefers his son or daughter to Me, is not worthy of Me. He who does not take his cross daily, complex as it is, made of resignation, renunciation, obedience, heroism, sorrow, illness, mourning, made of anything that reveals the will of God or a test for man, and does not follow with it in My footsteps, is not worthy of Me. Anyone who appraises earthly life more than the spiritual one, will lose true Life. Anyone who loses his earthly life for My sake, will find an eternal blissful one.

Anyone who receives you, receives Me. He who receives Me receives Him Who sent Me. Anyone who receives a prophet as a prophet, will receive a reward proportionate to the charity offered to the prophet, he who receives a just man because he is just, will receive a prize proportionate to the just man. The reason is that he who acknowledges a prophet as such, must be a prophet himself, that is, very holy because he is held in the arms of the Spirit of God; and who will acknowledge a just man as such proves that he is just as well, because like souls know one another. Thus, each will be given a reward according to justice.

And he who has given a glass of pure water to one of My servants, even if he were the least one - and are servants of Jesus all those who preach Him through their holy lives, and may be kings or beggars, wise men or people who know nothing, old people and babies, because all ages and all classes can be My disciples - he who has given a disciple of Mine even a glass of water in My name and because he is My disciple, I solemnly tell you that he will not go without a reward.

I have finished. Now let us pray and go home. You will leave at dawn as follows: Simon of Jonah with John, Simon Zealot with Judas Iscariot, Andrew with Matthew, James of Alphaeus with Thomas, Philip with James of Zebedee, My brother Judas with Bartholomew. That is for this week. I will let you have new instructions later. Let us pray. »

And they pray in loud voices…

265. John the Baptist Sends His Disciples to Ask Jesus whether He Is the Messiah.

29th August 1945.

Jesus is alone with Matthew, who, having hurt his foot, has not been able to go and preach with the others. Invalids and people anxious to hear the doctrine of the Gospel have crowded the terrace and the free area of the kitchen garden, to hear Jesus and receive assistance.

Jesus ends speaking saying: « We have meditated together on Solomon's great sentence: "The greatest strength lies in the abundance of justice" and I now exhort you to have such abundance, because it is money to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Be with My peace and may God be with you. » He then turns to the poor and the sick - in many cases the same person is both - and He kindly listens to what they tell Him, He assists with money, advises with words, cures them by imposing His hands and by His words. Matthew, who is beside Him, sees to the alms in money.

Jesus is attentively listening to a poor widow who weeping informs Him of the sudden death of her husband, a carpenter, at his work bench, only a few days previously: « I ran here looking for You, and all the relatives of my dead husband accused me of being unbecoming and hard-hearted and they now curse me. But I came because I know that You can raise people from death and I also know that if I had found You, my husband would have risen again. But You were not here… He has now been buried two weeks… and I am here with five children… Our relatives hate me and do not help me. I have some olive-tree and vines. They are only a few, but they would give me bread for the winter months, if I could only keep them until harvest time. But I have no money, because my

husband was ill for some time and worked very little and he ate and drank even too much to support himself. He used to say that wine did him good… but it brought about double trouble as it killed him and used up all our savings, which were already scanty because of his work. He was just finishing a cart and a chest and he had orders for two beds, some tables and shelves. But now… They are not finished and my boy is not yet eight years old. I shall lose the money… I shall have to sell the tools and the wood. I cannot sell the cart and the chest as such, although they are almost finished, and I shall have to give them as firewood. And the money will not be enough, because I, my old mother, who is also ill, and five children are seven all together… I will sell the vineyard and the olive-trees… But You know what the world is like… They fleece you when they know that you are in need. Tell me, what shall I do? I wanted to keep the bench and tools for my son, who is already capable of doing some work with wood… and I wanted to keep the land to live on and as a dowry for my daughters… »

Jesus is listening to all that when the confusion of the crowd warns Him that something is happening. He turns round and sees three men who are elbowing their way through the crowd. He turns round to the widow again to ask her: « Where do you live? »

« At Korazim, near the road to the Warm fountain. A low house between two fig trees. »

« Very well. I will come and finish the cart and the chest and you will sell them to those who ordered them. Wait for Me tomorrow at dawn. »

« What? You are going to work for me! » the woman is choking with amazement.

« I will resume My work and bring you peace. And in the meantime I will give a lesson on charity to the heartless people of Korazim. »

« Yes! They have no hearts! If only old Isaac were there! He would not have let me die of starvation. But he has gone back to Abraham… »

« Do not weep. Do not worry. Here is what you need for today, I will come tomorrow. Go in peace. »

The woman stoops to kiss His tunic and she is somewhat relieved when she goes away.

« Three times holy Master, may I greet You? » asks one of the three men who have just arrived and have stopped respectfully behind Jesus, waiting for Him to dismiss the woman, and have thus heard Jesus' promise. The man who has greeted Jesus is Manaen.

Jesus turns around and smiling says: « Peace to you, Manaen! So you have remembered Me? »

« Always, Master. And I had planned to come to see You in

Lazarus' house or at the Garden of Gethsemane and stay with You. But the Baptist was captured before Passover. He was recaptured by treachery and I was afraid that Herodias might order the holy man to be killed during the absence of Herod, who had come to Jerusalem for Passover. She refused to go to Zion for the Festivity saying that she was not well. It is true, she was ill… of hatred and lust… I was at Machaerus to control the situation and check the wicked woman who is capable of killing with her own hand… And she does not do so because she is afraid of losing Herod's favour who… either because he is afraid or he is convinced, defends John, confining his action to keeping him in prison. Herodias has now escaped from the oppressing heat at Machaerus and she has gone to a castle of her own property. So I came with these friends of mine and disciples of John. He sent them that they may ask You some questions. And I joined them. »

When the crowd hear the man speak of Herod and they understand who is speaking, they press curiously round the little group of Jesus and the three men.

« What did you want to ask Me? » asks Jesus after exchanging greetings with the two austere personages.

« You had better speak, Manaen, since you know everything and you are more friendly » says one of the two.

« Well, Master. You must be indulgent if out of excess of love these disciples look suspiciously at Him Whom they believe to be the antagonist or the supplanter of their master. Your disciples do so as well as John's. It is an understandable jealousy that proves all the love of the disciples for their masters… I am… impartial, and these who are with me can confirm it, because I know You and John and I love you both with justice, so much so that, although I love You for what You are, I preferred to sacrifice myself and stay with John, because I respect him as well for what he is, and at the present moment, because he is in greater danger than You are. Now, because of their love, which the Pharisees are instigating with their hatred, they have come to doubt that You are the Messiah. And they told John thinking that they would fill him with joy by saying: "As far as we are concerned you are the Messiah. There cannot be anyone holier than you are". But John reproached them calling them first of all blasphemers, and then, after rebuking them, he more kindly explained the various facts that prove that You are the true Messiah. Finally, when he realised that they were still not convinced, he took two of them, these ones here, and said: "Go to Him and say to Him in my name: 'Are You the One Who is to come, or shall we wait for another one?' ". He did not send the shepherd disciples, because they believe and it would have been of no avail to send them. But he chose amongst those who are doubtful to let them approach You,

so that their word may dispel the doubts of their companions. I brought them here so that I could see You as well. That is all. I beg You to dispel their doubt. »

« But do not think that we are hostile to You, Master! Manaen's words might make You think so. We… We have known the Baptist for years and we have always seen him to be holy, penitent, inspired. You… we know You only through the words of other people. And You know what the words of man are worth… They build up and destroy fame and praises in the contrast between those who exalt and those who demolish, as a cloud is formed and dissolved by contrasting winds. »

« I know. I read in your souls and your eyes can read the truth in what surrounds you, just as your ears heard My conversation with the widow. That should be enough to convince you. But I say to you: look at those who are around Me. There are no rich, or jolly or scandalous people here; but only poor, sick, honest Israelites who are anxious to know the Word of God. Nothing else. This man, that one, this woman, and that little girl, that old man, were ill when they came here, and now they are sound and healthy. Ask them and they will tell you what was wrong with them, how I cured them and how they are feeling now. Do so. And in the meantime I will speak to Manaen » and Jesus is about to withdraw.

« No, Master. We do not doubt Your words. Just give us a reply to take back to John, that he may know that we came here, and on the strength of it he may convince our companions. »

« Go and report this to John: "The deaf hear; this girl was deaf and dumb. The dumb speak; and that man was dumb since his birth. The blind see". Man, come here. Tell these men what was wrong with you » says Jesus taking a miraculously cured man by the arm.

The man says: « I am a mason and a pail full of quicklime fell on my face. It burnt my eyes. I was four years in the dark. The Messiah wetted my dry eyes with His saliva and they have become fresher than when I was twenty years old. May He be blessed for it. »

Jesus resumes: « And with the blind, the deaf, the dumb who have been cured, the lame walk straight, the cripple run. Over there is that old man, a short while ago he was contracted, now he is as straight as a palm tree in the desert, and as agile as a gazelle. The most serious diseases are cured. Woman, what was the matter with you? »

« I had trouble with my breast for giving too much milk to voracious mouths. And my illness ate not only into my breast but also into my life. Look now » and opening her dress she shows her wholesome breasts and adds: « They were one big sore, as you can see from my tunic which is still soaked with pus. I am now going

home to put on a clean dress and I feel strong and am happy. Whilst only yesterday I was dying and I was brought here by compassionate friends, and I was so unhappy… because of my children who were about to be left motherless. Eternal praise to the Saviour! »

« Do you hear? And you can ask the head of the synagogue of this town with regard to the resurrection of his daughter, and on your way back to Jericho, go to Naim, and ask for the young man who rose again in the presence of the whole town when they were going to put him into his grave. You will thus be able to report that dead people rise again from the dead. You will be able to find out in many places in Israel that a large number of lepers have been cured, but if you wish to go to Sicaminon you will find many among the disciples, if you look for them. Tell John, therefore, that lepers are cleansed. And tell him, as you can see, that the Gospel is announced to the poor. And blessed are those who will not be scandalised in Me. Tell John that. And tell him that I bless him with all My love. »

« Thank You, Master. Bless us as well, before our departure. »

« You cannot leave in this warm hour. Stay here, therefore, as My guests, until evening. You will live for one day the life of this Master Who is not John, but loves John because He knows who he is. Come into the house. It is cool and it will restore you. Goodbye, My listeners. Peace be with you » and after dismissing the crowd He enters the house with the three guests…

… What they have said to one another during those sweltering hours I do not know. What I now see is the preparation for the departure to Jericho of the two disciples. Manaen is apparently staying, because they have not brought his horse with the two strong donkeys to the opening in the wall of the yard. The two messengers of John, after bowing several times to the Master and Manaen, mount their donkeys and look back saluting until they disappear round a comer.

Many people of Capernaum have gathered together to see the departure because the news of the visit of John's disciples and of Jesus' reply to them had spread through the village and I think it reached nearby towns as well. I see people from Bethsaida and Korazim, who introduced themselves to John's messengers, asking after him and to be remembered to him - they are perhaps ex-disciples of the Baptist - who are now chatting together with the people of Capernaum, making their comments. Jesus is about to enter the house while speaking to Manaen who is beside Him. But people press round Him, anxious to see Herod's foster-brother and his respectful manners to Jesus, and to speak to Jesus at the same time.

There is also Jairus, the head of the synagogue. But, thanks be to God, there are no Pharisees. And it is Jairus who remarks: « John

will be glad! You have sent him not only an exhaustive answer, but, by keeping them here, You have also been able to teach them and show them a miracle. »

« And it was not a little one, either! » exclaims a man.

« I deliberately brought my little daughter here today, that they might see her. She has never been so well and it is a great joy for her to come to the Master. And did you hear her reply? "I do not remember what death is. But I remember that an angel called me and he took me through a brighter and brighter light at the end of which there was Jesus. And I do not see him now as I saw Him then with my soul that was coming back to me. You and I now see the Man. But my soul saw the God Who is closed in the Man". And how good she has become since then! She was good. But now she is a real angel. Ah! they can say what they like, but as far as I am concerned, no one is holy but You! »

« But John is holy, too » says a man of Bethsaida.

« Yes. But he is too severe. »

« Not more with others than he is with himself. »

« But he does not work miracles and they say that he fasts to be like a magician. »

« And yet he is a saint » and the petty quarrel spreads among the crowd.

Jesus raises His hand stretching it out in His usual gesture asking for silence and attention when He wants to speak. The crowd become silent at once.

Jesus says: « John is holy and great. Do not consider his way of behaving or the lack of miracles. I solemnly tell you: "He is a great one in the Kingdom of God". He will appear there in all his grandeur.

Many complain that he was and still is so severe as to appear rude. I tell you solemnly that he has worked like a giant to prepare the ways of the Lord. And he who works like that has no time for softness. Did he not repeat, when he was along the Jordan, the words of Isaiah, by which he and the Messiah are prophesied: "Let every valley be filled in, every mountain and hill be laid low, let every cliff become a plain, and the ridges a valley" in order to prepare the ways to the Lord and King? He really did more than the whole of Israel to prepare My way! And he who has to lay mountains low and fill in valleys and straighten roads and make ridges become plains can but work rudely, because he was the Precursor and he preceded Me by only a few months and everything was to be done before the Sun was high on the day of Redemption. And this is the time, the Sun is rising to shine on Zion and thence on the whole world. John has prepared the way as he had to do.

What did you go to see in the wilderness? A reed swaying in

every direction in the breeze? But what did go to see? A man clad in fine soft clothes? But those live in the palaces of kings, wearing fine clothes and respected by many servants and courtiers, and they are courtiers themselves of a poor man. There is one here. Ask him whether he is not disgusted with the life at Court and whether he admires the solitary rugged rock that is struck in vain by thunderbolts and scourged by hailstones, and against which silly winds struggle endeavouring to demolish it, while it stands firm, thrusting its whole being towards the sky, with its top proclaiming the joy of altitude, straight as it is and sharp like a rising flame. That is John. That is how Manaen sees him, because he has understood the truth of life and death and he can see grandeur where it really is, even if it be hidden under a wild appearance.

And what did you see in John when you went to see him? A prophet? A saint? I will tell you: He is more than a prophet. He is more than many saints, because he is the one of whom it is written: "Look, I- am going to send my angel to prepare Your way before You". Angel. Consider this. You know that the angels are pure spirits created by God to His spiritual likeness and placed as a link between man, the perfection of the visible and material creation, and God, the Perfection of Heaven and Earth, Creator of the spiritual Kingdom and of the animal kingdom. Even in the holiest man there is always flesh and blood forming an abyss between him and God. And the abyss subsides under the weight of sin that weighs down also what is spiritual in man. So God created the angels, creatures reaching the summit of the creation scale, just as minerals lie at its base, minerals being the dust forming the earth and inorganic materials in general. They are clear mirrors of the Thought of God, willing flames operating out of love, ready to understand, quick in acting, free in willing as we are, but their entirely holy will ignores the rebellion and incentive of sin. That is what the angels adoring God are, His messengers to men, our protectors, who grant us the Light that shines on them and the Fire that they gather worshipping.

John is called "angel" by the prophetic word. And I say to you: "Of all the children born of women, a greater one than John the Baptist has never been seen". Yet the least in the Kingdom of Heaven will be greater than John-man. Because one of the Kingdom of Heaven is a son of God and not of woman. Endeavour therefore to become citizens of the Kingdom.

What are you asking one another? »

« We were saying: "But will John be in the Kingdom? And how will he be there?" »

« He is already in the Kingdom in his spirit and he will be there after his death as one of the most splendid suns of the eternal Jerusalem. And that because of the Grace that is in him without

any flaw and through his own will. Because he was and is violent also against himself for a holy purpose. From the Baptist onwards the Kingdom of Heaven belongs to those who are capable of conquering it through strength opposed to Evil, and the violent will conquer it. Because now it is known what is to be done and everything has been given for such conquest. It is no longer the time when the Law and the Prophets only spoke. They spoke down to the time of John. Now the Word of God speaks and He does not hide an iota of what is to be known for this conquest. Thus, if you believe in Me you must see him as the Elijah who is to come. If anyone has ears to hear, let him listen. What description can I find for this generation? It is like children shouting to their companions as they sit in the market place: "We have played the pipes for you and you would not dance, we sang dirges and you would not weep". For John came and he neither ate nor drank and this generation says: "He can do that because the demon assists him". The Son of man came, eating and drinking and they say: "Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of publicans and sinners". Thus her children do justice to Wisdom! I tell you solemnly that only children are capable of discerning the truth, because there is no malice in them. »

« You are right, Master » says the head of the synagogue. « That is why my daughter, who is still without malice, can see You as we are not able to see You. And yet this town and the neighbouring ones are overflowing with Your power, wisdom and kindness, and, I must admit it, they are making progress only in wickedness towards You. They will not mend their ways. And the good You do them ferments into hatred against You. »

« What are you saying, Jairus? You are calumniating us. We are here because we are faithful to the Christi » says one from Bethsaida.

« Yes. We are. But how many are we? Less than one hundred out of three towns that ought to be at Jesus' feet. Of those who are absent, I am talking of the men, half are hostile, a quarter are indifferent, I will grant that the rest cannot come. Is that not a sin in the eyes of God? And will such hatred and obstinacy in evil not be punished? Speak, Master, because You know, and if You are silent it is out of kindness, not because You do not know. You are patient, and that is mistaken for ignorance and weakness. Speak, therefore and may Your words stir at least those who are indifferent, as the wicked will not repent, but they become more and more wicked. »

« Yes, it is a sin. And it will be punished. Because the gift of God must never be despised or used to do wrong. Woe betide you, Korazim, woe betide you, Bethsaida, who misuse the gifts of God. If the miracles worked in you had taken place in Tyre and Sidon,

their inhabitants would have done penance and come to Me a long time ago wearing sackcloths and sprinkled with ashes. I therefore say that Tyre and Sidon will be dealt with more mercifully than you will on Doomsday. And you, Capernaum, do you think that You will be exalted to Heaven only because you gave Me hospitality? You will descend to hell. Because if the miracles I gave you had been worked in Sodom, it would still be flourishing, as it would have believed in Me and turned. Therefore greater mercifulness will be shown to Sodom on the Day of Judgement, because they did not know the Saviour and His word, and thus their sin is not so grave, than will be shown to you as you knew the Messiah and heard His word but you did not mend your ways. But, since God is just, those of Capernaum, Bethsaida and Korazim who believed and are becoming holy obeying My word, will be treated with great mercifulness. Because it is not fair for the just to be involved in the ruin of sinners. With regard to your daughter, Jairus, and yours, Simon, and your boy Zacharias, and your grandchildren, Benjamin, I tell you that they already see God, because they are without malice. And you can see how their faith is pure and active, joined to celestial wisdom and charitable yearning, which adults do not possess. »

And Jesus, looking at the sky, which is becoming dark at dusk, exclaims: « I thank You, Father of Heaven and Earth, because You have concealed these things from wise and learned people and You have disclosed them to the humble. Because that is what pleases You. Everything has been trusted to Me by My Father, and nobody knows Him but the Son and those to whom the Son has revealed it. And I have revealed it to the little ones, to the humble, the pure, because God gives Himself to them, and the truth descends like seed on free soil and the Father pours His light on it that it may take root and grow. Truly, the Father prepares these souls of children by age or children by will, that they may know the truth and I may rejoice in their faith. »

266. Jesus Works as a Carpenter at Korazim.

31st August 1945.

Jesus is working diligently in a carpenter's workshop. He is finishing a wheel. A delicate sad child helps Him handing this or that tool to Him. Manaen, although an idle witness, admires Him sitting on a bench near a wall.

Jesus has taken off His beautiful linen tunic and has put on a dark one, which is obviously not His own as it reaches only half way down His shins. It is an overall, clean although patched, which probably belonged to the deceased carpenter.

Jesus encourages the boy with smiles and kind words, teaching

him what he must do to prepare the glue properly and polish the sides of the chest.

« It did not take You long to finish it, Master » says Manaen standing up and running a finger on the mouldings of the finished chest that the boy is polishing with a fluid.

« It was almost finished!… »

« I wish I had this work of Yours. But the buyer has already come and he seems to have acquired some rights… You have disappointed him. He was hoping to be able to take everything to make up for the little money he had lent. Now he has to take his articles and nothing else. If he were one who believed in You… they would be of infinite value to him. But did You hear?… »

« Leave him. On the other hand there is some wood here, and the woman will be happy to make use of it and have some profit. Give an order for a chest and I will make it for you… »

« Really, Master? Do you intend to go on working? »

« Until there is no more wood left. I am a conscientious worker » He says smiling more frankly.

« A chest made by You! Oh! What a relic! But what shall I put in it? »

« Anything you like, Manaen. It will only be a chest. »

« But made by You! »

« So? The Father also made man, He made all men. And what did man put in himself, what do men put in themselves? » Jesus speaks while working, moving about looking for the necessary tools, tightening vices, drilling, planing, turning, according to what is needed.

« We have put sins in ourselves. That's true. »

« See! And you may rest assured that man created by God is worth much more than a chest made by Me. Never mix up objects and actions. Of My chest just make a relic for your soul. »

« That is? »

« Give your spirit the teaching you get from what I do. »

« Your charity, humility, activity, then… These virtues, is that right? »

« Yes. And do likewise yourself in future. »

« Yes, Master. But will You make me a chest? »

« Yes, I will. But since you still consider it a relic, I will make you pay for it as such. Thus they will be able to say that at least once I have been greedy for money… But you know for whom the money is… For these little orphans… »

« Ask me whatever You want. I will give it to You. At least it will justify my idling while You, the Son of God, are working. »

« Agreed: "With sweat on your brow, you shall eat your bread". »

« But that was said for the guilty man. Not for You! »

« Oh! One day I shall be the Guilty One and I shall have on Me all

the sins of the world. I will take them away with Me, on My first departure. »

« And do You think that the world will not sin any more? »

« It should not. But it will always sin. That is why the burden I shall have on Me will be such as to break My heart. Because I will have to bear the sins committed from the time of Adam down to that hour, and those from that hour until the end of the world. I will expiate everything on behalf of man. »

« And yet man will not understand You and will not love You… Do You think that Korazim will turn to You because of this holy silent lesson You are giving by this work You are doing to help a family? »

« No, they will not. They will say: "He preferred to work to kill the time and keep the money for Himself ". I had no more money. I had given it all. I always give everything I have, to the last little coin, and I have worked to give the money away. »

« And what about food for Yourself and Matthew? »

« God would have provided it. »

« But You gave us to eat. »

« Of course. »

« How did You do that? »

« Ask the landlord. »

« I will, as soon as we go back to Capernaum. »

Jesus smiles mildly into His fair beard.

In the silence that follows one can hear only the squeaking of the vice tightened on two pieces of a wheel.

Then Manaen asks: « What are You thinking of doing before the Sabbath? »

« I will go to Capernaum and wait for the apostles. We decided to meet every Sabbath eve and spend the Sabbath all together. Then I will give them instructions, and if Matthew is well there will be six couples going out to evangelize. If not… Do you wish to go with them? »

« I would rather stay with You, Master… But may I give You a piece of advice? »

« Tell Me. I will accept it if it is just. »

« Never be all by Yourself. You have many enemies, Master. »

« I know. But do you think that the apostles would be of much help, in case of danger? »

« They love You, I think. »

« Of course. But that would not help. If My enemies are thinking of capturing Me, they would come with greater forces than the apostles'. »

« It does not matter. Do not be alone. »

« In two weeks' time many disciples will join Me. I am going to prepare them to send them to evangelize as well. I will no longer

be alone. Do not worry. »

While they are talking thus, many curious people of Korazim come to eye them and then go away without speaking.

« They are astonished seeing You work. »

« Yes. But they are not so humble as to say: "That is how He teaches us". The best ones I had here are with the disciples, with the exception of an old man who died. It does not matter. A lesson is always a lesson. »

« What will the apostles say when they know you have been working? »

« They are eleven, because Matthew has already said what he thinks. There will be eleven different opinions. And most of them will oppose Me. But it will help Me to teach them. »

« Will You let me attend the lesson? »

« If you wish to stay… »

« But I am a disciple, they are apostles. »

« What is good for apostles will be good also for a disciple. »

« They may resent being reminded what justice is, in my presence. »

« It will do their humility good. Stay, Manaen. I keep you willingly with Me. »

« And I remain willing with You. »

The woman shows herself and says: « Your meal is ready, Master. But You are working too much… »

« I am earning My bread, woman. And… Here is another customer. He wants a chest as well. And he will pay a good price for it. The place where you keep the wood will be empty » says Jesus taking off the worn out apron He had on, and going out of the room to wash Himself in a basin the woman brought Him into the kitchen garden.

And with one of the uncertain smiles that reappear after a long period of deep sorrow, she says: « The place for the wood empty, the house full of Your presence and my heart in peace. I am no longer afraid of tomorrow, Master. And You… be not afraid that we may ever forget You. »

They enter the kitchen and it all ends.

267. Jesus Speaks of Love.

1st September 1945.

Jesus with Manaen beside Him comes out of the widow's house saying: « Peace to you and to your family. We will meet again after the Sabbath. Goodbye, little Joseph. You can play and rest tomorrow, and then you will help Me again. Why are you weeping? »

« I am afraid that You will not come back again… »

« I always speak the truth. But are you so sorry that I am going

away? »

The boy nods assent.

Jesus caresses him saying: « A day will soon pass. You will be with your mother and brothers tomorrow. And I will be with My apostles and I will be speaking to them. During the past days I spoke to you to teach you how to work, I am now going to them to teach them how to preach and to be good. You would not enjoy yourself with Me, the only boy among so many men. »

« Oh! I would enjoy myself because I would be with You. »

« I see, woman! Your son is like many, and they are the best. He does not want to leave Me. Can you trust him with Me until the day after tomorrow? »

« Oh! Lord! I would give You them all! They are as safe with You as they would be in Heaven… And this boy, who used to stay with his father more than the rest of them, has suffered too much. He was with his father at the moment… See?… He does nothing but weep and pine. Don't weep, son. Ask the Lord if what I say is true. Master, to comfort him I always say to him that his father is not lost, but has only gone far away from us temporarily. »

« Which is the truth. It is exactly as your mother says, little Joseph. »

« But I'll not be able to find him again until I die. And I am only a boy. If I am to become as old as Isaac, how long will I have to wait? »

« Poor boy! But time flies. »

« No, Lord. My father has been dead three weeks, and it seems such a long time to me… I cannot go on without him… » and he weeps silently but most pitifully.

« See? He is always like that. Particularly when he is not busy with something that interests him. The Sabbath is a torture. I am afraid he will die… »

« No. I have another boy who is orphan of father and mother. He was emaciated and sad. Now, staying with a good woman at Bethsaida and being sure that he is not separated from his parents, he has flourished again both in his body and soul. The same will happen to your son, both because of what I will tell him, and because time is a great healer, and also because he will calm down, too, when he sees that you are no longer worried about your daily bread. Goodbye, woman. The sun is setting and I must go. Come, Joseph. Say goodbye to your mother, your little brothers and then run to pick up with Me. »

And Jesus goes away.

« And what will You tell the apostles now? »

« That I have an old disciple and a new one. »

They walk through Korazim that is becoming animated with people.

A group of men stops Jesus: « Are You going away? Are You not staying for the Sabbath? »

« No. I am going to Capernaum. »

« You have not spoken one word during the whole week. Are we not worthy of Your word? »

« Have I not given you for six days the best word? »

« When? To whom? »

« To everybody. From the carpenter's bench. For days I have been preaching that our neighbour is to be loved and helped in every possible way, particularly when our neighbour is weak, as in the case of widows and orphans. Goodbye, people of Korazim. Ponder on this lesson of Mine on the Sabbath. » And Jesus sets out again, leaving the citizens perplexed.

But the boy, who has reached Jesus running, rouses the curiosity of the people who stop the Master again asking: « Are You taking away the widow's son? Why? »

« To teach him to believe that God is a Father and that in God he will find his lost father. And also that there might be one here who believes, in the place of old Isaac. »

« There are three men from Korazim with Your disciples. »

« With My disciples. Not here. This one will be here. Goodbye. » And with the child between Him and Manaen He walks fast through the country towards Capernaum, talking to Manaen.

They reach Capernaum after the apostles had arrived. They are sitting on the terrace in the shade of the pergola, round Matthew, whose wound is not yet healed, informing him of their feats. They turn round at the light shuffling of sandals on the little staircase and they see Jesus' fair head emerge more and more from the little wall of the terrace. They rush towards Him, Who is smiling… and they are dumbfounded seeing a poor boy behind Jesus. Manaen climbs the steps in his pompous pure white linen tunic, which is made even more beautiful by a precious belt, by the bright-red dyed linen tunic, which is so shiny as to seem silk, hanging from his shoulders like a train, and by his byssus head-dress fastened by a thin gold diadem, an engraved thin plate, which divides his wide forehead in two halves and gives him almost the air of an Egyptian king. His presence prevents an avalanche of questions which, however, are clearly expressed by the apostles' eyes. After greeting one another, while sitting near Jesus, the apostles ask: « And who is this one? » pointing at the boy. « This is My last conquest. Little Joseph, a carpenter like the great Joseph, who was My father. And thus most dear to Me, as I am to him. Is that right, little boy? Come here that I may introduce you to these friends of Mine of whom you have heard Me speak so much. This is Simon Peter: the kindest man to Children there is. And this is John: a big boy who will speak to you of God also when playing. And this is

James his brother, serious and good like an elder brother. And this is Andrew, Simon's brother: you will get along well at once with him, because he is as meek as a lamb. And this is Simon the Zealot: he loves fatherless children so much that I think he would go round the whole world looking for them, if he were not with Me. Then here is Judas of Simon and with him there is Philip of Bethsaida and Nathanael. See how they look at you? They have children as well and they love children. And there are My brothers James and Judas. They love everything I love and so they will love you. Now let us go to Matthew, who is suffering agonies with his foot, and yet he is not angry with the boy who playing recklessly hit him with a sharp flint-stone. Is that right, Matthew? »

« Oh! no, Master. Is he the widow's son? »

« Yes, he is. He is very clever, but he has become very sad. »

« Oh! poor boy! I will get you to call little James and you will play with him » and Matthew caresses him drawing him close to himself with one hand.

Jesus ends the introductions with Thomas, who, practical as he is, completes it by offering the boy a bunch of grapes he has picked off the pergola.

« Now you are friends » concludes Jesus, sitting down again while the child eats his grapes replying to Matthew who keeps him close to himself.

« But where have You been all alone for a whole week? »

« At Korazim, Simon of Jonah. »

« I know. But what did You do? Did You go to Isaac? »

« Isaac the Elder is dead. »

« So? »

« Did Matthew not tell you? »

« No. He only said that You were at Korazim since the day after our departure. »

« Matthew is more clever than you are. He can keep quiet, but you cannot check your curiosity. »

« Not only mine. Everybody's. »

« Well: I went to Korazim to preach factual charity. »

« Factual charity? What do You mean? » ask many.

« There is a widow at Korazim with five children and an old sick woman. Her husband died suddenly at his work bench, leaving behind him misery and unfinished jobs. Korazim did not find a tiny bit of pity for this unhappy family. I went to finish the work and… »

There is pandemonium. Some ask questions, some protest, some reproach Matthew for allowing it, some admire and some criticise. Unfortunately the majority protest or criticise.

Jesus lets the storm calm down just as it started and as a reply He says: « I am going back the day after tomorrow. And I will do so

until I finish. And I hope that you at least will understand. Korazim is a closed fruit-stone without its germ. You at least ought to be stones with germs.

Boy, give Me the walnut that Simon gave you and listen to Me as well.

See this nut? I am taking this one because I have no other fruitshells available, but to understand the parable, think, for instance, of the seeds of pines or palms, the hardest ones, or the stones of olives… They are very hard containers, completely closed, without cracks, of solid wood. They look like magic coffers, which can be opened only by means of violence. And yet if one of them is thrown on to the ground by chance and a passer-by buries it in the earth treading on it, what happens? The coffer opens and takes root and comes into leaf. How does that happen by itself? We have to strike it hard with a hammer to open it, instead without any blow it opens by itself. Is the seed a magic one? No. It contains a pulp. Oh! a feeble thing compared to the hard shell. And yet it nourishes an even smaller thing: the germ. And that is the lever that forces, opens it and produces a plant with roots and leaves. As an experiment, bury some fruit-stones and wait. You will see that some strike root, others do not. Pull out the ones that did not sprout. Open them with a hammer and you will see that they are empty seeds. So it is not the dampness of the ground or its heat that makes the stone open. But it is its pulp, or rather, the soul of the pulp: the germ, which swelling, acts as a lever and opens it.

That is the parable. Now let us apply it to ourselves.

What did I do that should not have been done? Have we understood one another so little that we have not understood that hypocrisy is a sin and that words are just like wind if they are not corroborated by action? What have I always told you? "Love one another. Love is the precept and the secret of glory". And I, Who preach, should I be without charity? Should I thus set the example of an untruthful master? No, never!

My dear friends! Our body is like a hard stone, in which pulp is enclosed: our soul, and in it there is the germ that I laid. It is made of many elements, the main one being charity. It acts as a lever to open the stone and free the spirit from the constrictions of matter and reunite it to God, Who is Charity.

Charity does not consist only in giving alms or comforting by means of words. Charity is accomplished through charity alone. Do not think that this is a pun. I had no money and words were not sufficient for this case. There were seven people on the threshold of starvation and anguish. Despair was already putting forth its black claws to grasp and strangle. The world was withdrawing harshly and selfishly before this misfortune. The world was proving that it had not understood the words of the Master. The Master

evangelized through deeds. I was capable and free to do it. And it was My duty, on behalf of the whole world, to love those poor wretches whom the world did not love. That is what I did.

Can you still criticise Me? Or should I criticise you, in the presence of a disciple who did not hesitate to come among sawdust and shavings in order not to leave the Master and who, I am sure, became more convinced of Me seeing Me bent over a piece of wood, than he would have been persuaded if he had seen Me on a throne, and in the presence of a boy, who perceived Me to be what I am, notwithstanding his ignorance, the misfortune that blunts his mind and the fact that he was in no way acquainted with the Messiah as He really is. Are you not saying anything? Do not feel humiliated only while I raise My voice to correct wrong ideas. I do it out of love. But strive to have within you the germ that sanctifies and opens the stone. Or you will always be useless beings. You must be prepared to do what I have done.

No work must be burdensome to you for the sake of your neighbour, or to take a soul to God. Work, whatever it may be, is never humiliating. Whereas base action, falseness, untrue denunciations, harshness, abuse of power, usury, slander, lust are humiliating. They do humiliate Man. And yet they are done unashamedly by those also who say they are perfect and who were certainly scandalised seeing Me work with saw and hammer. Oh! A hammer! The worthless hammer, if used to drive nails into wood to make a piece of furniture that will earn food for orphans, how noble it becomes! The hammer, although ignoble, if it is in My hands for a holy purpose will not longer appear as such and how it will be craved for by all those who gladly shout that they are scandalised because of it!

Oh! man: you ought to be light and truth, how dark and false you are! But you, at least, endeavour to understand what Goodness is! What Charity is. What Obedience is. I solemnly tell you that great is the number of Pharisees. And they are even present among those who surround Me. »

« No, Master. Don't say that! We… it is because we love You that we do not want certain things!… »

« It is because you have not yet understood anything. I have spoken to you of Faith and Hope and I did not think that any new word was required to speak to you of Charity, because so much emanates from Me that you should be saturated with it. But I see that you know it only by name, without being aware of its nature and form. Just as you know the moon.

Do you remember when I told you that Hope is like the cross-bar of the kind yoke supporting Faith and Charity, and it is the scaffold of mankind and the throne of salvation? You do? But you have not understood My words in their true meaning. And why did

you not ask for a clarification? I will give it to you. It is a yoke because it compels man to lower his silly pride under the weight of eternal truths. And it is the scaffold of such pride. The man who hopes in God his Lord unavoidably mortifies his pride that would like him to be proclaimed his "god" and acknowledges that he is nothing and God is everything, that he can do nothing and God can do everything, that he-man is transient dust and God is eternity elevating to a higher degree and rewarding man with eternity. Man nails himself to his holy cross to reach Life. The flames of Faith and Charity nail him to his cross, but Hope, which is between the former and the latter, elevate towards Heaven. But, remember the lesson: if charity is lacking, the throne is without light and the body, unnailed on one side, hangs towards mud and no longer sees Heaven. It thus cancels the wholesome effects of Hope and ends up by making sterile also Faith, because when one is detached from two of the three theological virtues, one falls into languor and deadly chill.

Do not reject God even in the least things. And to refuse to assist one's neighbour through heathen pride is to reject God.

My Doctrine is a yoke that bends guilty mankind; it is a mallet that breaks the hard bark to free its spirit. It is a yoke and a hammer indeed. And yet he who accepts it does not feel the tiredness that all other doctrines and all other human things give. And he who allows himself to be struck by it does not feel the pain of being crushed in his human ego, but feels a sensation of liberation.

Why do you endeavour to get rid of it to replace it with what is lead and pain? You all have your sorrows and your difficulties. All mankind has sorrows and difficulties, which at times are beyond human strength. From children like this one, who is already carrying on his little shoulders a heavy weight, which bends him and prevents his lips from smiling childishly and removes all thoughtlessness from his mind, which, from a human point of view, has never been childish, to the old man who is declining towards his sepulchre with all the disappointments, troubles, burdens and wounds of his long life. But in My Doctrine and in My Faith there is the relief from all such overwhelming burdens. That is why it is called the "Gospel". And he who accepts it and obeys will be blessed on the earth also because he will have God to comfort him and Virtues to make his way easy and bright, as if they were good sisters who, holding him by the hand with lit lamps, illuminate his way and his life and sing the eternal promises of God to him, until, yielding in peace his tired body to the earth, he awakes in Paradise.

Why, men, do you wish to be fatigued, desolate, tired, disgusted, desperate, when you can be relieved and consoled? Why do you

wish, too, My apostles, to feel the fatigue, the difficulty, the severity of your mission, whereas with the reliance of a child you could have cheerful zeal, bright aptitude to accomplish it and realise and perceive that it is severe only for the unrepentant who do not know God, whilst for its believers it is like a mother who supports her child on his way, pointing out to his uncertain steps stones and thorns, nests of snakes and ditches, that he may identify them and thus avoid danger?

You are now desolate. Your desolation had a really miserable beginning! You are desolate first of all because of My humility, as if it were a crime against Myself. And you are now distressed because you have understood that you have grieved Me and that you are still so far from perfection. But only in a few this latter desolation is devoid of pride: of the pride hurt by the ascertainment that you are still nothing, whilst out of pride you would like to be perfect. Be only humbly willing to accept a reproach and to confess that you are wrong, promising in your hearts that you want perfection for a superhuman purpose. And then come to Me. I correct you, but I understand and I am indulgent.

Come to Me, you apostles, and come to Me, you all men, who suffer through material, moral, spiritual sorrows. These last one are caused by the fact that you cannot sanctify yourselves as you would like for the love of God, with promptitude and without returning to Evil. The way of sanctification is long and mysterious, and sometimes it is covered unknown to the walker, who proceeds through darkness, with the taste of poison in his mouth and thinks that he is not proceeding and is not drinking a celestial liquid, and does not realise that such spiritual blindness is an element of perfection.

Blessed, three times blessed are those who continue to proceed without enjoyment of light and kindness and that do not surrender because they see or hear nothing, and they do not stop saying: "I will not proceed until God grants me some delight". I tell you: the darkest road will suddenly become the best-lighted one, opening on to celestial landscapes. And the poison after removing all relish for human things will change into heavenly sweetness for those brave believers, who quite astonished will exclaim: "Why all this? Why so much kindness and joy to me?". Because they have persevered and God will let them enjoy on the earth what Heaven is.

But, in the meantime, come to Me you all who are fatigued and tired, you, apostles, and with you all the men who seek God, who weep because of the sorrows of the world, who have become exhausted in their loneliness, and I will restore you. Take My yoke upon you. It is not heavy. It is a support. Embrace My Doctrine as you would embrace a beloved bride. Imitate your Master Who does

not confine Himself to bless it, but does what it teaches. Learn from Me Who am meek and humble-hearted… You will find rest for your souls, because meekness and humility grant the kingdom both on the earth and in Heaven. I have already told you that the true triumphers among men are those who conquer them by love, and love is always meek and humble. I would never ask you to do things that are beyond your strength, because I love you and I want you with Me in My Kingdom. Take therefore My insignia and My uniform and strive to be like Me and as My Doctrine teaches. Do not be afraid because My yoke is sweet and its weight is light, whereas the glory that you will enjoy if you are faithful to Me is infinitely powerful. Infinite and eternal…

I will leave you for some time. I am going to the lake with the boy. He will find some friends… Later we shall eat our bread together. Come, Joseph. I will introduce you to the little ones who love Me. »

268. The Dispute with the Pharisees and the Arrival of Jesus' Mother and Brothers.

2nd September 1945.

The scene is the same as in the last vision. Jesus is taking leave of the widow, holding little Joseph by the hand and He says to the woman: « Nobody will come before I come back, unless they are Gentiles. But keep here until the day after tomorrow whoever should come, saying that I shall definitely be here. »

« I will, Master. And if there are any sick people, I will give them hospitality as You taught me. »

« Goodbye, then, and peace be with you. Come, Manaen. »

From this brief conversation I understand that sick and unhappy people in general have come to the Master at Korazim and that Jesus has been evangelizing not only working but also through miracles. And if Korazim is still indifferent, it really means that it is a wild untillable soil. And yet Jesus walks through it, exchanging greetings with those who greet Him, as if nothing were the matter, and then resuming His conversation with Manaen, who is uncertain whether he should leave again for Machaerus or remain another week…

… In the meantime in the house at Capernaum they are preparing for the Sabbath. Matthew still limping a little welcomes his companions, offers them water and fresh fruit, inquiring about their mission.

Peter turns up his nose seeing that some Pharisees are already sauntering near the house: « They want to poison our Sabbath. I almost feel like going to meet the Master to tell Him to go to Bethsaida and thus frustrate their plans. »

« And do you think that the Master would do it? » asks his brother.

« Then, there is that poor wretch waiting for Him in the room on the ground floor » remarks Matthew.

« We could take him to Bethsaida by boat, and I, or someone else, could go and meet the Master » says Peter.

« It's not a bad idea… » says Philip, who would willingly go to Bethsaida where is his family.

« All the more that, take note, their guardianship has been reinforced with scribes. Let us go immediately. You will take the sick man, go through the kitchen garden and away through the back of the house. I will take the boat to the "fig well" and James will do likewise. Simon Zealot and Jesus' brothers will go to meet the Master. »

« I am not going away with the possessed man » proclaims the Iscariot.

« Why not? Are you afraid the demon might cling to you? »

« Don't bother me, Simon of Jonah. I said that I am not going and I will not go. »

« Go with the cousins to meet Jesus. »

« No. »

« Ugh! Come by boat. »

« No. »

« Well, what is it you want? You are always a hindrance… »

« I want to stay here, where I am. I am not afraid of anybody and I am not running away. In any case the Master would not be happy with the trick. And there would be another sermon reproaching us, and I have no intention of getting it through your fault. You may go. I will stay here to report… »

« Definitely no! Either everybody or nobody » shouts Peter.

« Then nobody, because the Master is here. Here He is coming » says the Zealot seriously, looking down the road.

Peter, who is obviously dissatisfied, grumbles into his beard. But he goes to meet Jesus with the others. After greeting Him, they inform Him of a blind and dumb man possessed, who has been waiting for several hours with his relatives for Him.

Matthew explains: « He is like an inert body. He threw himself on some empty sacks and has not moved since. His relatives hope in You. Come and refresh Yourself and You will assist him later. »

« No. I am going to him at once. Where is he? »

« In the room on the ground floor, near the oven. I put him in there with his relatives, because there are many Pharisees and scribes, who seem to be lying in wait… »

« Yes, and it would be better not to make them happy » grumbles Peter.

« Is Judas of Simon not here? » asks Jesus.

« He stayed in the house. He must do the opposite of what others do » grumbles Peter again.

Jesus looks at him but does not reproach him. He goes quickly towards the house, entrusting the boy just to Peter, who caresses him taking out at once from his wide sash a whistle saying: « One for you and one for my son. I will take you to see him tomorrow evening. I got a shepherd to make them for me after I had spoken to him of Jesus. »

Jesus enters the house, He greets Judas who seems to be busy sorting out the kitchenware, and He then goes straight to a kind of low dark store-room beside the oven.

« Get the sick man to come out » orders Jesus.

A Pharisee, who is not from Capernaum, but whose standoffishness is even worse than that of the local Pharisees, says: « He is not sick, he is possessed. »

« That is still a disease of the spirit… »

« But his eyes and tongue are bound… »

« It is always a disease of the spirit that expands to limbs and organs. If you had allowed Me to finish you would have realised that that is what I wanted to say. Fever is in the blood when one is ill, but after the blood it attacks this or that part of the body. »

The Pharisee does not know what to retort and becomes silent.

The possessed man has been led before Jesus. He is motionless. Matthew was quite right. He is greatly impeded by the demon.

People are gathering in the meantime. It is incredible how, particularly during the hours that I would call of relaxation, people were so quick in gathering where there was something to be seen. The notables of Capernaum are now there, and among them there are four Pharisees, Jairus is also there, and, in a comer, with the excuse of supervising order, there is the Roman Centurion, and citizens from other towns are with him.

« In the name of God, depart from the eyes and the tongue of this man! I want it! Set him free! You are no longer permitted to have him. Go away! » shouts Jesus stretching out His hands while giving the order.

The miracle begins with a howl of rage from the demon and ends with a cry of joy of the cured man who shouts: « Son of David! Son of David! Holy and King! »

« How can this man know that it was He Who cured him? » asks a scribe.

« It's all a farce! These people are paid to do that! » says a Pharisee shrugging his shoulders.

« By whom? If you do not mind me asking you » asks Jairus.

« By you, too. »

« And for what purpose? »

« To make Capernaum famous. »

« Do not mortify your intelligence by talking nonsense and your tongue by making it foul with lies. You know that it is not true, and you ought to realise that you are talking nonsense. What has happened here has happened in many parts of Israel. So there must be someone paying everywhere? I did not really know that the common people in Israel were very rich! Because you, and with you all the mighty ones, do not certainly pay for that. So it is the common people who pay, being the only ones who love the Master. »

« You are the head of the synagogue and you love Him. There is Manaen. At Bethany there is Lazarus of Theophilus. They are not common people. »

« But they are honest, and I am honest, too. And we do not cheat anybody, in no way. Much less in matters of faith. We do not take the liberty of doing that, because we fear God and we have understood what is pleasant to God: honesty. »

The Pharisees turn their back to Jairus and they attack the relatives of the cured man: « Who told you to come here? »

« Who? Many people, who had already been cured, or their relatives. »

« But what did they give you? »

« Give? The assurance that He would cure him. »

« Was he really ill? »

« Oh! Sly minds! Do you think that all this is feigned? If you do not believe it, go to Gadara and inquire about the misfortune of the family of Anna of Ismael. »

The irritated people of Capernaum are in tumult, while some Galileans, who have come from near Nazareth say: « And yet He is the son of Joseph, the carpenter! »

The citizens of Capernaum, being faithful to Jesus, shout: « No. He is what He said and what the cured man has just said: "Son of God and Son of David". »

« Do not increase the excitement of the population with your statements! » says a scribe contemptuously.

« And what is He, then, according to you? »

« A Beelzebub! »

« Ugh! Tongues of vipers. Blasphemers! You are possessed! Heartless men! You are our ruin. Do you want to deprive us also of the joy of the Messiah? Usurers! Arid stones! » A real uproar!

Jesus, Who had gone into the kitchen to drink some water, appears on the threshold in time to hear once again the stale stupid accusation of the Pharisees: « He is a Beelzebub because demons obey Him. The great Beelzebub, who is His father, helps Him and He drives out demons only through the assistance of Beelzebub, the prince of demons. »

Jesus descends the two little steps of the threshold and comes forward. He stops erect, severe and calm in front of the group of

scribes and Pharisees and staring at them with keen eyes He says to them:

« Also on the earth we see that a kingdom divided into opposed parties becomes weak internally and can be easily attacked and laid waste by nearby countries that make it their slave. Also on the earth we see that a town divided into conflicting parts does not flourish and the same applies to a family, the members of which are divided by mutual hatred. It falls to pieces and becomes a useless nibble, which is of no use to anybody, and the laughing stock of fellow citizens. Harmony is shrewdness besides being necessary. Because it keeps people independent, strong and loving. Patriots, citizens, relatives ought to ponder on that when for the caprice of an individual advantage they are tempted to have separations or commit abuses, which are always dangerous because they are alternative in parties and they destroy love. And such shrewdness is practised by those who are the masters of the world. Consider Rome in its undeniable power, so painful to us. Rome rules the world. But they are united by one mind and one will: "to rule". Even amongst them there must be differences, aversions, rebellions. But they lie at the bottom. On the surface they are one block, without cracks or perturbations. They all want the same thing and they are successful because of that. And they will be successful as long as they want the same thing.

Consider that example of human cohesive shrewdness and say: if the children of this world are like that, what will Satan be like? The Romans are demons, as far as we are concerned. But their heathen satanism is nothing compared to the perfect satanism of Satan and his demons. In their eternal kingdom, without time, without end, with no limits to cunning and wickedness, where they rejoice in being detrimental to God and men, and to be harmful is their very life and their only cruel painful enjoyment, they have attained with cursed perfection the fusion of their spirits in one will: "to be harmful". Now if, as you state, to insinuate doubt about My power, Satan is the one who helps Me because I am a minor Beelzebub, does it not follow that Satan is divided against himself and his demons, if he drives them out of the people possessed by him? And if he is at variance with his followers, can his kingdom last? No, it is not so. Satan is very shrewd and does not damage himself in the hearts of men. The aim of his life is "to steal - to damage - to lie - to offend - to upset". To steal the souls of God and the peace of men. To damage the children of the Father grieving Him. To lie in order to mislead. To offend in order to rejoice. To upset because he is disorder and cannot change. He is eternal in his being and in his methods.

But answer this question: if I drive out demons in the name of Beelzebub, in whose name do your sons drive them out? Are you

willing to admit that they are Beelzebub as well? If you say that, they will consider you slanderers. And if their holiness is such that they will not react to your accusation, you will condemn yourselves confessing that you think that you have many demons in Israel, and God will judge you in the name of the children of Israel accused by you of being demons. Therefore whoever may pass judgement, in actual fact they will be your judges, where judgement is not suborned by human pressure.

If, instead, as it is true, I expel demons through the Spirit of God, that would be evidence that the Kingdom of God and the King of that Kingdom have come to you. Which King has such power that no adverse force can resist Him. Thus I bind and compel the usurpers of the children of My Kingdom to depart from the place they have occupied and give Me back the prey so that I may take possession of it. Is that not what is done by one who wants to enter a house inhabited by a powerful man, to take his property, rightly or wrongly acquired? It is. He enters and ties him, and then he can plunder the house. I tie the dark angel who has taken what is Mine, and I take away from him the good property he has stolen of Me. And I am the only one who can do it, because I alone am the Strong One, the Father of the future century, the Prince of Peace. »

« Clarify for us what You mean by saying: "Father of the future century". Do You think that You will live until the new century and, still more foolishly, do You think that You, a poor man, will create time? Time belongs to God » asks a scribe.

« And are you, a scribe, asking Me? Do you not know that there will be a century that will have a beginning but no end, and that it will be Mine? I shall triumph in it gathering round Me its children and they will live for ever like the century that I shall have created and I am already creating it, giving the spirit its true value above the flesh, the world, and above the infernal angels whom I expel because I can do everything. That is why I say that those who are not with Me are against Me, and those who do not gather with Me, scatter. Because I am He Who I am. And he who does not believe that, which was already prophesied, sins against the Holy Spirit, Whose word was announced by the prophets, and it is neither false nor wrong, and must be believed without resistance.

And I tell you: men will be forgiven everything, all their sins and their blasphemy. Because God knows that man is not only spirit, but also flesh and his flesh, when tempted, is subject to sudden weakness. But blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. He who has spoken against the Son of man will still be forgiven, because the weight of the flesh enveloping My Person and the man who speaks against Me, can still mislead. But he who has spoken against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this or in future life, because the Truth is what it is: clear, holy,

undeniable and manifested to the spirit in such a way that it cannot mislead. Only those err who deliberately want to err. To deny the Truth spoken by the Holy Spirit is to deny the Word of God and the Love given by that word for the sake of men. And the sin against Love is not forgiven.

Every tree bears its fruit. You bear yours, but your fruit is not good. If you give a good tree to have it planted in the orchard, it will give good fruit; but if you give a bad tree, the fruit it will yield will be bad and everybody will say: "This is not a good tree". Because a tree is known by its fruit. And how can you think that you are able to speak well, since you are bad? Because a mouth speaks of what fills its heart. Because it is out of the superabundance of what is within us, that we act and speak. A good man takes good things out of his good treasure; a wicked man takes wicked things out of his evil one and he speaks and behaves according to what is within him.

I tell you solemnly that idleness is sinful. But it is better to be idle than accomplish wicked deeds. And I also tell you that it is better to be silent than speak idly and wickedly. Even if to be silent is to be idle, do that rather than sin with your tongues. I assure you that on Doomsday justification will be requested for every word spoken idly to men, and that men will be justified by the words they have spoken, and by their words they will be condemned. Be careful, therefore, because you speak many words that are more than idle, as they are not only idle but also harmful, and are spoken to drive hearts away from the Truth speaking to you. »

The Pharisees and scribes consult one another and afterwards, pretending to be kind, they ask: « Master, it is easier to believe what one sees. Give us, therefore, a sign so that we may believe that You are what You say You are. »

« You can see that there is in you the sin against the Holy Spirit, Who several times has pointed Me out to you as the Word Incarnate. Word and Saviour, Who has come in the predicted time, preceded and followed by the signs prophesied, and operating what the Spirit says. »

They reply: « We believe in the Spirit, but how can we believe in You unless we see a sign with our own eyes? »

« How can you believe in the Spirit Whose actions are spiritual, if you do not believe in Mine that are perceptible by your eyes? My life is full of them. Are they not enough? No, they are not. I say so Myself. They are not enough. One sign only will be given to this adulterous wicked generation that seeks a sign: that of the prophet Jonah. In fact as Jonah was in the belly of the whale for three days, so the Son of man will be for three days in the bowels of the earth. I tell you solemnly that the Ninevites will rise on the Day of

Judgement like all men, and they will rebel against this generation and condemn it. Because they did penance upon Jonah's preaching, but you do not. And there is One here who is greater than Jonah. And so the Queen of the South will rise and stand up against you and will condemn you, because she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon. And there is One greater than Solomon here. »

« Why do you say that this generation is adulterous and wicked? It is not any worse than the others. There are the same saints in it as in the others. The structure of Israel has not changed. You offend us. »

« You offend yourselves by injuring your souls, because you remove them from the Truth, and therefore from Salvation. But I will reply to you just the same. This generation is holy only in garments and outward appearance. It is not holy inwardly. There are in Israel the same names meaning the same things. But there is no reality of things. There are the same habits, garments and rites. But their spirit is missing. You are adulterers because you rejected the supernatural marriage with the Divine Law and you have married, in a second adulterous union, the law of Satan. You are circumcised only in a frail member. Your hearts are no longer circumcised. And you are wicked because you have sold yourselves to the Evil one. I have spoken. »

« You offend us too grievously. But, if it is so, why do You not free Israel from its demon so that it may become holy? »

« Is Israel willing to do that? No. Those poor people who come here to be freed from the demon are willing, because they feel it like a burden and a shame. But you do not feel that. And you would be freed quite uselessly, because as you are not anxious to be relieved, you would be caught again at once and in a stronger way. Because when an unclean spirit goes out of a man it wanders through arid country looking for a place to rest and cannot find one. The country is not materially arid, mind you. It is arid because it is hostile to him as it will not receive him, just as arid soil is hostile to seed. He then says: "I will go back to the house from which I was expelled by force and against his will. And I am sure that he will welcome me and let me rest". In fact he goes back to the one he possessed, and many times finds him willing to welcome him, because I solemnly tell you that man feels nostalgia more for Satan than for God and if Satan does not oppress his body, he does not complain of being possessed. He thus goes back and finds the house empty, swept, tidied, smelling of purity. He then goes off and collects seven other spirits, because he does not want to lose it again, and with these seven spirits more evil than himself he enters the house and they all settle in there. And the present state of a man who was converted once and is perverted a

second time is worse than it was before. Because the demon now knows exactly how much that man loves Satan and is ungrateful to God, and also because God will not go back where they tread on His graces, and where people, after the first experience of possession, open their arms to a greater one. A relapse into satanism is worse than a relapse into lethal phthisis already cured once. It cannot improve or recover. The same will apply to this generation, which although converted by the Baptist wanted to return to sin because it loves the Evil one and does not love Me. »

A whispering, which is neither of approval nor of protest, runs through the crowd which has become so large that not only the kitchen garden and terrace are full, but also the street. People are sitting astride the low wall, many have climbed up the fig-tree and the trees of the neighbouring orchards, because everybody wants to listen to the dispute between Jesus and His enemies. The whispering, like a wave that from the open sea arrives at the shore, from mouth to mouth reaches the apostles who are closer to Jesus, that is Peter, John, the Zealot and Alphaeus' sons. Some of the other apostles are on the terrace, some in the kitchen, except Judas who is in the street, among the crowds.

Peter, John, the Zealot, Alphaeus' sons pick up the whispering and say to Jesus: « Master, Your Mother is here with Your brothers. They are out there, in the street, and they are looking for You because they want to speak to You. Tell the crowds to move away, so that they may come to You, because a grave reason has certainly brought them here looking for You. »

Jesus raises His head and at the end of the crowd He sees the anguished face of His Mother, Who strives not to weep, while Joseph of Alphaeus is speaking to Her excitedly, and He sees Her repeated emphatic gestures of denial notwithstanding Joseph's insistency. He sees also the embarrassed face of Simon, who is openly grieved and disgusted… But He does not smile, neither does He give any order. He leaves the Sorrowful One in Her grief and His cousins where they are.

He lowers His head and looks at the crowd, and replying to the apostles near Him, He replies also to those who are far away and are endeavouring to make blood have more weight than one's duty. « Who is My Mother? Who are My brothers? » He looks round with severe countenance, as His face becomes pale as a result of the violent effort He has to make against Himself to set duty above family ties and blood, and to disavow His tie to His Mother in order to serve His Father, and pointing with a large gesture to the crowd pressing round Him in the red light of torches and in the silvery light of the almost full moon, He says: « This is My Mother and these are My brothers. Those who do the will of God are My brothers and sisters, they are My Mother. I have nobody else. And

My relatives will be such if they are the first to do the will of God with greater perfection than anybody else to the extent of completely sacrificing every other will or the call of blood or of affection. »

The crowds whisper in louder voices, like a sea made rough by sudden gusts of wind.

The scribes begin to withdraw saying: « He is a demon! He repudiates His own blood! »

His relatives come forward saying: « He is crazy! He tortures His very Mother! »

The apostles say: « His word is really full of heroism! »

The crowds comment: « How much He loves us! »

Mary, Joseph and Simon elbow their way through the crowd with difficulty. While Mary is thoroughly kind, Joseph is very angry and Simon is utterly embarrassed. They arrive near Jesus.

Joseph attacks Him at once: « You are crazy! You are offending everybody. You do not respect even Your Mother. But I am here now and I will stop You. Is it true that You are wandering about as a workman? If it is true, why do You not work in Your own shop, and thus provide for Your Mother? Why do You lie saying that Your task is to preach, You idle and ungrateful man, when You work for money with other people? I think that You are really possessed by a demon misleading You. Reply to me! »

Jesus turns round and takes little Joseph by the hand, He draws him close to Himself and holding him up by his armpits He says: « I worked to provide food for this innocent child and his relatives and persuade them that God is good. It was a sermon on humility and charity for Korazim. And not only for Korazim. But also for you, Joseph, My unfair brother. But I forgive you because I know that you have been bitten by snakes. And I forgive you, too, Simon, who are so changeable. I have nothing to forgive My Mother or be forgiven by Her, because Her judgement is just. Let the world do what it wants. I do what God wants. And with the blessing of My Father and Mother I am happier than I would be if the whole world hailed Me king according to the world. Come, Mother. Do not weep. They do not know what they are doing. Forgive them. »

« Oh! Son! I know. You know. There is nothing else to be said… »

« There is nothing else to be said except say to the people: "Go in peace". »

And Jesus blesses the crowd, and holding Mary with His right hand and Joseph with His left one, He goes towards the staircase and is the first to climb it.

269. The News of the Murder of John the Baptist.

4th September 1945.

Jesus is curing some sick people; Manaen only is present. They are in the house in Capernaum, in the shady kitchen garden, early in the morning. Manaen is no longer wearing his precious belt or the thin plate on his forehead. His tunic is held tight by a woollen cord and his headgear by a thin strip of cloth. Jesus is bareheaded, as He always is, when at home.

After curing and comforting the sick people, Jesus goes upstairs with Manaen and they both sit on the window-sill of the window facing the mountain, because the sun is shining on the other side of the house and it is very warm, although it is no longer the height of summer.

« Vintage will be starting soon » says Manaen.

« Yes. Then it will be the feast of the Tabernacles… and it will soon be winter. When are you thinking of going away? »

« H'm… I would never leave… But I am thinking of the Baptist. Herod is weak. If one knows how to influence him to do good, if he does not become good, he remains at least… not blood-thirsty. But only few people advise him wisely. And that woman!… That woman!… But I would like to stay here until Your apostles come back. Not that I rely much on myself… but I still have some weight… although the favour I enjoyed previously has diminished much since they have realised that I now follow the way of Good. But it does not matter. I would like to have enough courage to be able to abandon everything and follow You completely, like the disciples whom You are expecting. But shall I ever succeed? We who are not of the common people find it more difficult to follow You. Why? »

« Because the tentacles of your poor wealth hold you back. »

« However, I know some people who are not exactly rich, but are teamed or about to be so, and they do not come either. »

« They also have the tentacles of poor riches holding them back. One is not rich only in money. There is the wealth of knowledge. Few can confess with Solomon: "Vanity of vanities. All is vanity", which confession is resumed and enlarged not so much materially but deeply in Qoheleth. Do you remember it? Human science is vanity because to increase human knowledge only "is anguish and affliction of the spirit and he who multiplies science multiplies such anguish". I solemnly tell you that it is so. And I also tell you that it would not be so if human science were supported and bridled by supernatural wisdom and the holy love of God. Pleasure is vanity, because it does not last, but quickly fades away after burning, leaving ashes and emptiness. Wealth stored up by means of various industries is vanity for the man who dies, as he leaves it to other people and cannot repel death by means of it. Woman is vanity,

when she is considered a female and desired as such. So we conclude that the only thing which is not vanity is the holy fear of God and obedience to His commandments, that is the wisdom of man, who is not only flesh, but has a second nature: the spiritual one. Who can reason thus and is willing, is able to break off from every tentacle of poor wealth and move freely towards the Sun. »

« I want to remember those words. How much You have given me during the past days! I can now go back to that ugly Court, which seems bright only to fools, and seems powerful and free, whereas it is misery, prison and darkness, and I will be able to go back with a treasure that will enable me to live better waiting for the best. But will I ever reach that best, which is to be entirely Yours? »

« Yes, you will. »

« When? Next year? Later? Or when old age will make me wise? »

« You will reach it in a few hours by becoming spiritually mature and perfect in willing. »

Manaen looks at Him thoughtfully, inquisitively… But he does not ask any other question.

There is silence. Then Jesus says: « Have you ever approached Lazarus of Bethany? »

« No, Master. I can say no. If we met on few occasions, I cannot say it was out of friendship. You know… I was with Herod and Herod was against him… So… »

« Lazarus would now see you in God, beyond such things. You must endeavour to approach him, as a fellow-disciple. »

« I will do it, if You wish so… »

Excited voices are heard in the garden. They are anxiously asking: « The Master! The Master! Is He here? »

The harmonious voice of the landlady replies: « He is upstairs. Who are you? Sick people? »

« No. Disciples of John and we want Jesus of Nazareth. »

Jesus looks out of the window saying: « Peace be with you… Oh! It is you. Come in! »

They are the three shepherds John, Matthias and Simon. « Oh! Master! » they say looking up and showing their sorrowful faces. Not even the sight of Jesus cheers them up.

Jesus leaves the room and goes out to meet them on the terrace. Manaen follows Him. They meet where the staircase leads on to the sunny terrace.

The three men kneel down kissing the floor. Then John says on behalf of them all: « Receive us now, Lord, because we are Your inheritance » and tears stream down the faces of the disciple and his companions.

Jesus and Manaen utter one only cry: « John!? »

« He has been killed… »

The word drops like a loud dull noise, which drowns every other

noise in the world. And yet it was uttered in a low voice. But it petrifies both him who speaks and those who listen. And the earth, upon hearing it and being horrified, seems to interrupt every noise, such is the period of deep silence and complete immobility in animals, in leafy branches, in the air. Doves stop cooing, blackbirds interrupt their musical songs, the choir of sparrows is struck dumb, and a chirping cicada suddenly becomes silent, as if its contrivance had broken down unexpectedly, while the wind, which was caressing the leaves of vines and trees, making them rustle like silk and causing poles to squeak, drops completely.

Jesus becomes as pale as ivory while His eyes dilate glazing over. He opens His arms saying, and His voice is deep in the effort to make it steady: « Peace to the martyr of justice and to My Precursor. » He folds His arms, collects His thoughts in prayer, communicating with the Spirit of God and of the Baptist.

Manaen does not dare to make a gesture. Contrary to Jesus, he blushes vehemently and has an impulsion of anger. Then he becomes stiff and his excitement is revealed by the mechanical movement of his right hand rumpling the cord of his tunic, and of the left one which unintentionally searches for his dagger… and Manaen shakes his head pitying his weak mind that does not remember that he had renounced weapons in order to be « the disciple of the Meek Master, near the Meek Messiah. »

Jesus opens His mouth and eyes again. His countenance, His eyes, His voice have resumed the divine majesty habitual to Him. Only a deep melancholy tempered with peace hovers about Him. « come and tell Me. As from today you will be Mine. » And He takes them into the room, closing the door and half-drawing the curtains, to have a subdued light and an atmosphere of concentration around the sorrow and the beauty of the Baptist's death, and to form a partition between such perfection of life and the corrupt world. « Speak » He tells them.

Manaen is still petrified. He is near the group but does not utter one word.

« It was the evening of the feast… The event was unforeseeable… Only two hours before Herod had consulted with John and had dismissed him very kindly… And shortly before the… murder, the martyrdom, the crime, the glorification, Herod had sent a servant with icy fruit and rare wines for the prisoner. John had distributed everything to us… he never changed his austerity… We were the only ones to be there, thanks to Manaen, we were in the palace as kitchen servants and stable-grooms. And that was a grace because we could always see our John… John and I were in the kitchen, while Simon supervised in the stables ensuring that the grooms looked after the mounts of guests properly… The palace was full of important people, military commanders and gentlemen from

Galilee. Herodias had locked herself in her rooms after a violent quarrel in the morning with Herod… »

Manaen interferes: « But when did the hyena come? »

« Two days previously. Unexpectedly… saying to the monarch that she could not live away from him and be absent on the day of his feast. Viper and sorceress as she had always been, she had made a laughing-stock of him… But that morning, although he was already full of wine and lust, Herod refused to give the woman what she asked for with loud cries… But nobody thought it was John's life!… She remained disdainfully in her rooms. She sent back the royal dishes that Herod sent to her on precious trays. She kept only a precious one full of fruit, exchanging the gift with an amphora of drugged wine for Herod… Drugged… Ah! Her vicious intoxicated nature was sufficient to drug him for the crime! From the servants waiting at the table we learned that after the dance of the mimers, nay half way through it, Salome had rushed dancing into the banquet hall. And the mimers, in the presence of the royal girl, had withdrawn against the walls. We were told that her dance was perfect. Lewd and perfect. Worthy of the guests… Herod… Oh! perhaps a new desire of incest was fermenting in his heart!… Herod, at the end of the dance, said enthusiastically to Salome: "You have danced very well! I swear that you deserve a prize. I swear that I will give it to you. I swear that I will give anything you may ask me for. I swear it in the presence of everybody. And the word of a king is loyal also without swearing. Ask what you want". And Salome, simulating perplexity, innocence and modesty, enveloping herself in her veils with bashful gesture after so much impudicity, said: "Allow me, great king, to ponder for a moment. I will withdraw and I will come back later, because your grace has moved me"… and she left going to her mother. Selma told me that she went in laughing, saying: "Mother, you have won! Give me the tray". And Herodias with a cry of triumph ordered the slave to give the girl the tray that she had kept previously, saying: "Go, and come back with the hated head and I will clothe you with pearls and gold". And Selma was struck with horror and obeyed… Salome re-entered the hall dancing and went to prostrate herself at the king's feet saying: "Here. On this tray that you sent to my mother as a token that you love her and you love me, I want the head of John. And I will dance again, if it pleases you so much. I will dance the dance of victory. Because I have won! I have beaten you, king! I have defeated life, and I am happy!" That is what she said, and her words were repeated to us by a friendly cup-bearer. And Herod was embarrassed, being caught by two desires: to abide by his promise, to be just. But he could not be just, because he is unjust. He nodded to the headsman who was standing behind the royal seat, and he took from

Salome's raised hands the tray and from the banquet hall went down to the lower rooms. John and I saw him cross the yard… and shortly afterwards we heard Simeon's cry: "Murderers!" and then we saw the headsman pass again with the head on the tray… John, Your Precursor, was dead… »

« Simeon, can you tell Me how he died? » asks Jesus after some time.

« Yes, he was praying… He had previously said to me: "The two messengers will be back before long, and those who do not believe, will believe. But remember, should I be no longer alive when they come back, I, on the point of dying, say to you: 'Jesus of Nazareth is the true Messiah' so that you may repeat it to the others". He was always thinking of You… The headsman entered. I uttered a cry. John looked up and saw him. He stood up and said: "You can take only my life. But the lasting truth is that it is not legal to do wrong". And he was about to say something to me when the headsman swung his heavy sword, while John was standing and the head fell from the bust in a stream of blood that reddened the goatskin while his thin face blanched, but his open eyes were still alive and accusing. The head rolled at my feet… I fell at the same time as his body, as I fainted with grief… After… After Herodias had disfigured it, the head was thrown to the dogs. But we picked it up at once and we tied it in a precious veil together with the trunk, and during the night we recomposed the body and carried it out of Machaerus. We embalmed it at daybreak in a nearby acacia-thicket with the help of other disciples… But it was taken from us again to be slashed… Because she cannot destroy it and cannot forgive him… And her slaves, fearing death, were more ferocious than jackals in taking the head from us. If you had been there, Manaen!… »

« Had I been there… But that head is her malediction… Nothing is taken from the glory of the Precursor, even if the body is mutilated. Is that right, Master? »

« That is true. Even if the dogs had destroyed it, his glory would not change. »

« Neither has his word changed, Master. His eyes, although disfigured, under a large wound, still say: "You are not allowed". But we have lost him! » says Matthias.

« And we are now Your disciples, because that is what he said, and he told us that You already know. »

« Yes, you have been Mine for months. How did you come? »

« On foot; by stages. It was a long painful journey, in the heat of sands and of the sun, made even more painful by grief. We have been walking for almost twenty days… »

« You will rest now. »

Manaen asks: « Was Herod not surprised at my absence? »

« Yes, at first he was annoyed, then he became furious. But when his rage calmed down, he said: "One judge less". That is what our friend, the cup-bearer, told us. »

Jesus says: « One judge less! He has God as a judge and that is enough. Let us go to where we sleep. You are tired and covered with dust. You will find the garments and sandals of your companions. Take them, refresh yourselves. What belongs to one, belongs to everybody. Matthias, since you are tall, you can take one of My tunics. We will provide later. My apostles will be coming before night, because this is the Sabbath eve. Isaac will be coming next week with the disciples, and later Benjamin and Daniel will come; Elias, Joseph and Levi will be here after the Tabernacles. It is time for others to join the Twelve. Go and rest now. »

Manaen takes them in and then comes back. Jesus remains with Manaen. He sits down pensively, and is clearly sad, with His head reclined on a hand, His elbow resting on His knee as a support. Manaen is sitting near the table and does not move. He is sullen. His face is a storm.

After a long time, Jesus raises His head, looks at him and asks: « And what are you going to do now? »

« I do not know yet… There is no purpose in staying any longer at Machaerus. But I would like to remain at the court to find out… to protect You according to what I learn. »

« You had better follow Me without any delay. But I will not force you. You will come, when the old Manaen has been destroyed bit by bit. »

« I would also like to take that head away from that woman. She is not worthy to have it… »

Jesus has a pale hint of a smile and says frankly: « And you are not yet dead to human wealth. But you are dear to Me just the same. I know that I shall not lose you even if I have to wait. I know how to wait… »

« Master, I would like to give You my generosity to comfort You… Because You are suffering. I can see it. »

« It is true. I am suffering. Very much! »

« Only because of John? I do not think so. You know that he is in peace. »

« I know that he is in peace and I perceive him close to Me. »

« Well, then? »

« Then!… Manaen, what does dawn precede? »

« The day, Master. Why do You ask me? »

« Because the death of John precedes the day when I will be the Redeemer. And the human part in Me trembles at the idea… Manaen, I am going up the mountain. You stay here to receive whoever should come and to assist those who have already come. Stay until I come back. Then… you will do whatever you wish,

Goodbye. »

And Jesus leaves the room. He goes slowly down the steps, crosses the kitchen garden and at the back of it He takes a little path along ruffled gardens, olive-groves, orchards of apple and figtrees and vineyards and He climbs the slope of a little hill where He disappears from my sight.

270. Departure in the Direction of Tarichea.

5th September 1945.

Jesus goes back to the house at dead of night. He enters the kitchen garden silently. He looks for a moment into the dark kitchen. He looks into the two rooms where are the mats and beds. They are empty also. Only the changed clothes, piled on the floor, tell that the apostles have come back. The house is so silent that it seems unhabited.

Jesus, making less noise than a shadow, goes up the little steps, immaculate white in the whiteness of the full moon, and arrives on the terrace. He walks along it. He seems a ghost moving about silently, a bright ghost. In the white incandescence of the moon, He looks thinner and taller. He lifts with one hand the curtain at the door of the upper room. It had been left down since John's disciples had entered with Jesus. Inside there are the apostles, sitting here and there, in groups or alone, with John's disciples and Manaen; there is also Marjiam sleeping with his head on Peter's knees. The moon illuminates the room entering with its phosphorescent rays through the wide open windows. No one is speaking. And no one is sleeping, with the exception of the boy, who is sitting on a mat on the floor.

Jesus enters quietly and Thomas is the first to see Him. « Oh! Master! » he exclaims starting.

All the others rouse themselves. Peter in his excitement, is on the point of jumping to his feet, but he remembers the child and he stands up gently, laying Marjiam's dark-haired head on his seat, and thus is the last to arrive at Jesus, while the Master, with the tired voice of one who has suffered very much, is replying to John, James and Andrew, who are expressing their sorrow to Him: « I understand. But only he who does not believe can feel desolate because of death. Not we, who know and believe. John is no longer separated from us. He was before. Nay, he separated us. Either with Me, or with him. No longer so. Where he is, I am. He is near Me. »

Peter pushes his grey-haired head among the younger ones and Jesus sees him: « You have been weeping, too, Simon of Jonah? » And Peter with a voice hoarser than usual: « Yes, Lord. Because I was a disciple of John, as well. And then… Last Sabbath eve I was

complaining that the presence of Pharisees was going to embitter our Sabbath! This is really a bitter Sabbath! I brought the boy, to have a more enjoyable Sabbath… Instead… »

« Do not lose heart, Simon of Jonah. John is not lost. I am repeating that to you, too. And in exchange we have three perfected disciples. Where is the boy? »

« Over there, Master. He is sleeping… »

« Let him sleep » says Jesus stopping over the dark little head which is sleeping peacefully. And He asks again: « Have you had your supper? »

« No, Master. We were waiting for You and we were worried, because of Your delay, as we did not know where to look for You… and we seemed to have lost You as well. »

« We have still plenty time to be together. Well, prepare the supper, because afterwards we shall go to another place. I need to be alone among friends, and if we are here tomorrow, we shall always be surrounded by people. »

« And I swear to You that I would not put up with them, particularly with those snakes of Pharisaic souls. And it would be most unfortunate if a smile escaped them concerning us in the synagogue! »

« Be good, Simon!… I have thought of that as well. That is why I came back to take you with Me. »

The excitement on their faces can be better seen in the light of the little lamps that have been lit at the two ends of the table. Only Jesus is majestically solemn and Marjiam smiles in his sleep.

« The boy has already had his meal » explains Peter.

« It is better to let him sleep, then » says Jesus.

And in the middle of His disciples He offers and hands out the frugal food, which is taken without appetite. And the supper is soon over.

« Tell Me now what you have done… » says Jesus encouragingly.

« I went with Philip into the country at Bethsaida and we evangelized and cured a sick boy » says Peter.

« In actual fact it was Simon who cured him » says Philip, who does not wish to ascribe to himself a glory not belonging to him.

« Oh! Lord! I do not know how I did it. I prayed hard, with all my heart, because I felt sorry for the little sick boy. I then anointed him with oil, I rubbed him with my coarse hands… and he was cured. When I saw him colour up and open his eyes, that is, when I saw him revive, I was almost afraid. »

Jesus lays a hand on his head without speaking.

« John amazed people by expelling a demon. But I had to speak » says Thomas.

« Your brother Judas also did it » states Matthew.

« Andrew, too » says James of Alphaeus.

« Simon the Zealot, instead, cured a leper. Oh! he was not afraid of touching him! And he said to me: "Be not afraid. By the will of God, no physical disease will affect us" » says Bartholomew.

« You are right, Simon. And what about you two? » Jesus asks James of Zebedee and the Iscariot, who are a little farther away, the former talking to the three disciples of John, the latter being all alone and sulky.

« Oh! I did nothing » says James. « But Judas worked three wonderful miracles: a blind man, a paralytic, a possessed man. He looked like a lunatic to me. But that is what people said… »

« And you are pulling a long face, when God has assisted you so much? » exclaims Peter.

« I can be humble as well » replies the Iscariot.

« And we were the guests of a Pharisee. I was rather embarrassed. But Judas knows how to deal with them and he really appeased the Pharisee. On the first day he was stand-offish, but later… Is that right, Judas? »

Judas nods without speaking.

« Very well. And you will do better and better. We shall be all together next week. In the meantime… Simon, go and prepare the boats. You, too, James. »

« For everybody, Master? They will not contain us. »

« Can you not get another one? »

« Yes, if I ask my brother-in-law. I will go. »

« Go. And come back as soon as you are ready. And do not tell them too much. »

The four fishermen leave. The others go downstairs to get their sacks and mantles. Manaen stays with Jesus. The boy continues to sleep.

« Master, are You going far? »

« I do not know yet… They are tired and depressed. I am, too. I am thinking of going to Tarichea, into the country, to be alone in peace… »

« I have my horse, Master. But, if You will allow me, I will come following the lake. Will You be there for long? »

« Perhaps the whole week, but not longer. »

« In that case, I will come. Master, bless me in this first departure. And relieve my heart of a burden. »

« Which, Manaen? »

« I feel remorse for leaving John. Perhaps if I had been there… »

« No. It was his hour. And he was certainly pleased to see you come to Me. Do not let that upset you. Nay, endeavour to get rid quickly and properly of the only burden you have: the gusto of being man. Become spiritual, Manaen. You can. You are capable of being so. Goodbye, Manaen. My peace be with you. We shall soon meet in Judaea. »

Manaen kneels down and Jesus blesses him. He then raises him and kisses him.

The others come back in and exchange greetings, both the apostles and John's disciples. The fishermen are the last to come. « We are ready, Master. We can go. »

« Good. Say goodbye to Manaen Who is staying here until tomorrow evening. Assemble the foodstuffs, take some water and let us go. Make as little noise as possible. »

Peter stoops to awake Marjiam.

« No, leave him. He might cry. I will pick him up » says Jesus and He gently lifts the boy who whimpers a little, but instinctively makes himself comfortable in Jesus' arms.

They put the lamps out. They go out closing the door. They go downstairs and on the threshold they say goodbye once again to Manaen, and then, in single file, along the moonlit street they go to the lake: a huge silvery mirror under the moon at its zenith. The three little lamps on the prows, which are already in the water, look like three red drops on the quiet mirror. They go on board, settling themselves in the boats, the fishermen being the last to embark. Peter and a servant are in the boat where Jesus is, John and Andrew in the second, James and a servant in the third one.

« Where are we going, Master? » asks Peter.

« To Tarichea. Where we landed after the miracle of the Gadarenes. It will not be boggy now. And it will be quiet. »

Peter sets sail and the other two boats sail in his wake. Nobody speaks. Only when they are in the open lake and Capernaum disappears in the moonlight and things present a uniform appearance in its silvery dust, Peter says, as if he were speaking to the tiller: « And I am glad. They will be looking for us, my dear, and thanks to you they will not find us. »

« To whom are you speaking, Simon? » asks Bartholomew.

« To my boat. Don't you know that she is like a bride for a fisherman? How much I have talked to her! More than to Porphirea. Master!… Is the boy well covered? It's damp on the lake at night… »

« Yes, he is. Listen. Simon. Come here. I want to speak to you. »

Peter entrusts the tiller to the ship-boy and comes to Jesus.

« I said Tarichea. But it will be quite all right to be there after the Sabbath to say goodbye once again to Manaen. Could you not find a place nearby where we may stay in peace? »

« Oh! Master! In peace for us or also for the boats? For the boats we must go to Tarichea or to some harbour on the other shore. But if You are referring to us, it is enough to go into the woods beyond the Jordan, where only wild animals will find You… and perhaps an odd fisherman who is watching nets. We can leave the boats at Tarichea. We shall be there at dawn and we will go away quickly beyond the ford. It is easy to wade it at this time of the year. »

« Very well. We will do that… »

« The world is disgusting You as well, eh? You prefer fish and mosquitoes, eh? You are right. »

« It does not disgust Me. One must not be disgusted. But I do not want you to stir up a scandal and I wish to find comfort in you on the Sabbath. »

« My Master!… » Peter kisses Jesus' forehead and goes away wiping a large tear that insisted in dropping out and streaming down to his beard. He goes back to his rudder heading south resolutely, while the moonlight fades as the planet sets behind a hill, concealing its huge face from the sight of men, but still making the sky white with its light and the lake silvery on the eastern coast. The rest is dark-indigo hardly distinguishable in the light of the prow lamp.

271. Speaking to a Scribe on the Banks of the Jordan.

6th September 1945.

When Jesus sets foot on the right bank of the Jordan, a good mile, probably more, from the little peninsula of Tarichea, where there is nothing but beautiful green country, because the ground, which is now dry, but moist in its depths, keeps also the weakest plants alive, He finds a large crowd waiting for Him.

His cousins come to meet Him with Simon Zealot: « Master, the boats have given us away… Perhaps Manaen also was a hint… »

« Master » says Manaen apologetically « I left at night so that no one could see me and I have not spoken to anyone. Believe me. Many of them asked me where You were. And my reply to everybody was: "He left". But I think the trouble was brought about by a fisherman who said that he had given You his boat… »

« That fool of my brother-in-law! » thunders Peter. « And I told him to keep his mouth shut! And I also said to him that we were going to Bethsaida! And I told him that if he said one word I would tear his beard off! And I will do it! I will, indeed. And what are we going to do now? That's the end of our peace, solitude and rest! »

« Be good, Simon, be good. We have already had our peaceful days. In any case I have attained part of what I intended: teach you, comfort and calm you to prevent offences and contrasts between you and the Pharisees of Capernaum. Now let us go to these people who are waiting for us, and reward their faith and love. Is their love not a relief, too? Hatred grieves us. But there is love here, so it is joy. »

Peter calms down like a wind that drops suddenly. And Jesus goes towards the crowd of sick people, who are waiting for Him so anxiously, that their desire seems engraved on their faces, and He heals them, one after the other, kindly, patiently. He goes also to a

scribe who shows his little sick son to Him.

And it is the scribe who says to Him: « See? You are running away. But it is useless. Hatred and love are shrewd in finding. In this case, love has found You, as it is written in the Song of Songs. You are like the Beloved of the Songs. And they come to You as the maid of Shulam goes to her bridegroom, facing patrol guards and Amminadib's quadrigae. »

« Why do you say that? »

« Because it is true. It is dangerous to come because You are hated. Do You not know that Rome is watching for You and the Temple hates You? »

« Why are you tempting Me, man? Your words are insidious, to take My answers back to Rome and to the Temple. I did not cure your son by deceit… »

The scribe, who has been reproached so gently, lowers his head confusedly and confesses: « I see that You can really read the hearts of men. Forgive me. I now see that You are truly holy. Forgive me, Yes, it is true, I came and the yeast that others put into my heart was fermenting within me… »

« And it had found in you the necessary heat to ferment. »

« Yes, it is true… But now I am going away without any such yeast. That is, with a new leaven. »

« I know. I bear no grudge. Many are at fault through their own will, many through the will of other people. God, Who is just will judge them with different measures. Scribe, be just and do not corrupt in future as you were corrupted. When the pressure of the world will be urging you, look at the living grace, which is your son, who was rescued from death, and be grateful to God. »

« To You. »

« To God. All glory and praise to Him. I am His Messiah and I am the first to praise and glorify Him. And the first to obey Him. Because man does not degrade himself by honouring and serving God in truth, but he lowers himself by serving sin. »

« You are right. Do You always speak thus? To everybody? »

« Yes, to everybody. If I spoke to Annas, or to Gamaliel, or to a begging leper on a country path, the words would be the same because one is the Truth. »

« Speak, then, because everybody here is begging for a word or a grace of Yours. »

« I will. So that nobody may say that I am biased against those who are honest in their convictions. »

« Those I had are now dead. But it is true. I was honest in mine. I believed that I was serving God by fighting You. »

« You are sincere. And that is why you deserve to understand God, Who is never falsehood. But your convictions are not yet dead. I am telling you. They are like burned couch-grass. They

seem to be dead superficially and have in fact received a hard blow that has exhausted them. But the roots are alive and the soil nourishes them. And the dew invites them to strike new rhizomes, which will emit fresh shoots. You must watch that that does not happen, otherwise you will be invaded once again by couch-grass. Israel is a die-hard! »

« So Israel must die? Is it a wicked plant? »

« It must die to rise again. »

« A spiritual reincarnation? »

« A spiritual evolution. There is no reincarnation of any kind. »

« Some believe in it. »

« They are wrong. »

« Hellenism has spread such beliefs also among us. And learned people feed on them and are proud of them as if they were a most noble nourishment. »

« An absurd contradiction in those who cry anathema when one of the minor sixhundred and thirteen precepts is neglected. »

« It is true. But that is how things are. People like to imitate even what they hate. »

« Well, imitate Me, seeing that you hate Me. And it would be better for you. »

The scribe cannot help laughing at Jesus' witty remark. The people are listening open-mouthed and those who are farther away ask those who are near Jesus and the scribe to repeat their words.

« But, in confidence, what do You think of reincarnation? »

« That it is an error. I told you. »

« There are some who maintain that the living originate from the dead and the dead from the living, because what exists cannot be destroyed. »

« In fact, what is eternal cannot be destroyed. But tell Me. According to you, has the Creator limitations to Himself? »

« No, Master. To think that would be an abatement. »

« You are right. Can, then, one think that He allows a spirit to reincarnate because no more than so many spirits can exist? »

« One should not think so. Yet there are some who believe it. »

« And what is worse, Israel believes it. The thought of the immortality of the spirit, which is already a great one, even if it is joined to the error of a wrong evaluation by a pagan as to how such immortality takes place, ought to be perfect in an Israelite. Instead it becomes a small, low, guilty thought in those who believe in it in the terms of the heathen thesis. It is not the glory of a thought, which proves itself worthy of admiration by coming close to the Truth by itself and which therefore testifies to the composite nature of man, as it is in heathens, because of their intuition of an eternal life of the mysterious thing that is called soul and distinguishes us from brutes. But it is a, degradation of the

thought, which being acquainted with Divine Wisdom and the True God, becomes materialistic even in so highly a spiritual thing. A spirit transmigrates only from the Creator to the being and from the being to the Creator, to Whom it presents itself after this life to receive a sentence of life or of death. That is the truth. And it remains for ever where it is sent. »

« Do You not admit Purgatory? »

« Yes, I do. Why do you ask Me? »

« Because You say: "It remains where it is sent". Purgatory is temporary. »

« That is why in My thought I assimilate it to eternal Life. Purgatory is already "life". Stunned, tied, but always vital. After the temporary stay in Purgatory, the spirit reaches perfect Life, without any limitation or ties. Two things will remain: Heaven the Abyss. Paradise - Hell. Two categories: the blessed - the damned. But from those three kingdoms that now exist, no spirit will ever come to clothe itself with flesh. And that until the final resurrection, which will end for ever the incarnation of spirits in flesh, of the immortal in the mortal. »

« Not of the eternal? »

« God is Eternal. Eternity is to have no beginning and no end. And that is God. Immortality is to continue to live since when life began. And that is the spirit of man. That is the difference. »

« You say: "Eternal Life". »

« Yes. From the moment man is created to live, because of his spirit, through Grace and his own will, he can reach eternal Life. Not eternity. Life implies a beginning. We do not say "the Life of God", because God had no beginning. »

« And what about Yourself? »

« I will live because I am also flesh and to My divine spirit I joined the soul of the Christ in the flesh of man. »

« God is called the "Living God". »

« In fact He does not know death. He is Life. The endless Life. Not Life of God. Just Life. Only that. They are nuances, o scribe. But Wisdom and Truth clothe themselves in nuances. »

« Do You speak thus to Gentiles? »

« No. They would not understand. I show them the Sun. But as I would show it to a boy, so far blind and silly, who had miraculously recovered sight and intelligence. Thus: like a star. Without going into the details of its composition. But you people of Israel are neither blind nor fools. For ages the finger of God has opened your eyes and cleared your minds… »

« That is true, Master. And yet we are blind and foolish. »

« You have made yourselves such. And you do not want the miracle of Him Who loves you. »

« Master… »

« It is the truth, scribe. »

The man lowers his head and is silent. Jesus leaves him and passes by and while doing so He caresses Marjiam and the scribe's little boy, who are playing with many-coloured pebbles. Rather than preach He talks to this or that group. But He is continuously preaching as He resolves doubts, clarifies ideas, He sums up or expands on things already said or concepts only partly remembered by someone. And the hours go by thus…

272. First Miracle of the Loaves.

7th September 1945.

The place is still the same. But the sun no longer shines from the east filtering through the undergrowth along the Jordan in this wild place where the water of the lake flows into the river bed. It shines, equally obliquely, from the west, while setting in a glorious red sky, streaked by its last rays. Under the thick foliage the light is quite moderate, tending to the peaceful evening hues. The birds, exhilarated by the sunshine they enjoyed all day and by the plentiful food they picked in the neighbouring country, are making an uproar of trills and songs on tree-tops. Evening is approaching with the final pomp of the day.

The apostles point it out to Jesus, Who always teaches according to the subjects presented to Him. « Master, evening is approaching. This is a desert place, far from houses and villages, it is shady and damp. In a short while it will not be possible to see or walk here. The moon rises late. Dismiss the people so that they may go to Tarichea or other villages along the Jordan to buy food and find lodgings. »

« They need not go. Give them something to eat. They can sleep here as they did when waiting for Me. »

« Master, You know that there are only five loaves left and two fish. »

« Bring them to Me. »

« Andrew, go and look for the boy. He is looking after the bag. A little while ago he was with the scribe's son and two more boys, intent on making garlands of flowers and playing at kings. »

Andrew goes away at once. John and Philip also look for Marjiam among the crowds, who continuously change place. They find him almost simultaneously, with the bag of victuals across his back, a large shoot of clematis around his head and a belt of clematis, from which an offshoot hangs, as a sword, the top being the hilt, the long stem its blade. There are seven boys with him, all wearing the same decorations, paying court to the scribe's son, a very thin child, with the grave countenance of one who has suffered very much, who is adorned with flowers more than the

others and plays the king.

« Come, Marjiam. The Master wants you! »

Marjiam leaves his friends and runs away without taking off his… floral insignia. But the other boys follow him and Jesus is soon surrounded by a circle of children wreathed with flowers. He caresses them while Philip takes a parcel out of the bag containing some loaves, which are wrapped together with two big fish: two kilograms of fish, or little more. They would not suffice for the seventeen people, nay eighteen, including Manaen, of Jesus' group. They take the food to the Master.

« Very well. Now bring Me some baskets. Seventeen, as many as you are. Marjiam will hand the food to the children… » Jesus stares at the scribe who has always been near Him and asks: « Will you give food to the hungry people, too? »

« I would like to. But I have none myself. »

« Give Mine. I will let you have it. »

« But… are You going to satisfy five thousand men, besides women and children, with those two fish and the five loaves? »
« Undoubtedly. Do not be incredulous. Those who believe will see the miracle being accomplished. »

« Oh! In that case I want to hand out the food, too! »

« Then, get someone to give you a basket as well. »

The apostles come back with baskets and hand-baskets, some of which are low and wide, others are deep and narrow. The scribe comes back with a rather small one. Obviously his faith or his incredulity made him pick that one as the largest required.

« Good. Leave everything here. Now get the crowds to sit in an orderly way, in rows, as far as possible. »

And while they do that Jesus raises the loaves with the fish on top of them, offers them, prays and blesses them. The scribe does not take his eyes off Him for a moment. Jesus breaks the five loaves into eighteen parts; He makes also eighteen parts of the two fish, and puts a bit of fish: a tiny bit indeed, into each basket. He then breaks each of the eighteen bits of bread into morsels: each bit into many morsels. Relatively many; about twenty, not more. He then puts each bit which He has broken into morsels, into a basket, with the bit of fish.

« Now take them and hand the food out to satiety. Go. Marjiam, hand the food out to your companions. »

« Ah! How heavy it is! » says Marjiam lifting his basket. He goes at once towards his little friends, walking like one who carries a heavy weight.

The apostles, disciples, Manaen, the scribe watch him go incredulously… They then pick up their baskets and shaking their heads they say to one another: « The boy is joking! They are the same weight as before. » And the scribe looks inside his basket,

puts his hand into it searching for the bottom, because it is getting dark in the thicket where Jesus is, whereas farther away, in the glade, it is clear. However, notwithstanding their remarks, they go towards the people and begin to hand the food out. And they distribute… Now and again they look back at Jesus thoroughly astonished, as they move farther and farther away, and the Master leaning against a tree with folded arms, smiles subtly at their astonishment.

The distribution takes a long time and is plentiful… the only one who show no surprise is Marjiam, who smiles and is happy to be able to fill the laps of so many poor children with bread and fish. He is also the first to go back to Jesus saying: « I have dealt out so much, so much!… because I know what it is to be hungry… » and he raises his little face, which is no longer emaciated, but, remembering, it blanches with wide open eyes… But Jesus caresses him and a bright smile appears on his face, while he leans trustfully against Jesus, His Master and Protector.

The apostles and disciples come back slowly, dumbfounded with amazement. Last is the scribe who says nothing. But he makes a gesture that is more than a sermon. He kneels down and kisses the hem of Jesus' tunic.

« Take your share and give Me some. Let us eat the food of God. »

They eat, in fact, bread and fish, each according to his need…

In the meantime the people, who are now sated, exchange their impressions. Also those around Jesus make their comments watching Marjiam who finishes his food and plays with other children.

« Master » asks the scribe, « why did the boy feel the weight at once, and we did not? I searched also inside. There were still the few morsels of bread and the only bit of fish. I began to feel the weight when I moved towards the crowd. But if it had weighed for what I gave out, it would have taken a pair of mules to carry it, not a basket, but a wagon packed with food. At the beginning I was dealing it out sparingly… but later I gave and gave… and as I did not want to be unfair, I went back to the first ones and gave them more, because I had given them little at first. And yet it was enough. »

« I also felt the basket was getting heavy when I set out, and I gave plenty at once because I realised that You had worked a miracle » says John.

« I, instead, stopped, I sat down and poured everything on my lap to see… And I saw loaves and loaves. I then went on » says Manaen.

« I even counted them, because I did not want to cut a bad figure. There were fifty small loaves. So I said: I will give them to fifty people and then I will go back ». And I counted. But when I got to fifty, the weight was still the same. I looked inside. They were so

many. I went on and I handed out hundreds of them. They never diminished says Bartholomew.

« I, I must admit it, I did not believe, and I took the morsels of bread and the bit of fish in my hand and I looked at them saying: "What's the use of them? Jesus must have been joking!… " and I looked at them over and over again, hiding behind a tree, hoping and despairing to see them grow. But they were always the same. I was about to come back, when Matthew passed by saying: "Have you noticed how beautiful they are?". "What?" I asked him. "The loaves and fish!… "Are you mad? I can only see morsels of bread". "Go and hand them out with faith, and you will see". I threw back into the basket the few morsels and I went reluctantly… And then… Forgive me, Jesus, because I am a sinner! » says Thomas.

« No. You are a worldly spirit. You reason according to the world. »

« I as well, Lord. So much so that I was thinking of giving a coin with the bread and I said to myself: "They will eat somewhere else" » says the Iscariot. « I was hoping to help You cut a finer figure. So what am I? Like Thomas or more? »

« You are much more "worldly" than Thomas. »

« And yet I was thinking of giving alms to be "heavenly"! It was my own personal money… »

« Alms to yourself, to your pride. And alms to God. But the Latter does not need them and it is a sin to give alms to your pride, not a merit. »

Judas lowers his head and becomes silent.

« I, instead, thought that I had to crumble the morsel of fish and the morsel of bread, so that they would suffice. I did not doubt they would be sufficient, both with regard to numbers and nourishment. A drop of water given by You can be more nourishing than a banquet » says Simon Zealot.

« And what did you think? » Peter asks Jesus' cousins.

« We remembered Cana… and did not doubt » replies Judas gravely.

« And you, James, My dear brother, were you only thinking of that? »

« No, I thought it was a sacrament, as You told me… Is it so or am I wrong? »

Jesus smiles: « It is and it is not. Your thought of a remote figure is to be added to the truth concerning the power of nourishment in a drop of water, mentioned by Simon. But it is not yet a sacrament. »

The scribe is holding a crumb in his hand.

« What are you going to do with it? »

« A… souvenir. »

« I will keep one too. I will put it round Marjiam's neck in a little bag » says Peter.

« And I will take it to our mother » says John.

« And what about us? We have eaten it all… » say the others sorrowfully.

« Stand up. Go round again with the baskets and collect the scraps remaining, select the poorest people and bring them here with the baskets. And then, you, My disciples, will go to the boats and set sail going to the plain of Gennesaret. I will dismiss the crowds after assisting the poorer people and I will join you later. »

The apostles obey… and they come back with twelve baskets full of remnants of food and followed by about thirty beggars or very poor people.

« Very well. You may go now. »

The apostles and John's disciples say goodbye to Manaen and go away leaving Jesus rather reluctantly. But they obey. Manaen stays with Jesus until the crowd, in the last light of the day, set out towards villages or look for a place where to sleep among the tall dry bog grass. He then takes leave of the Master. The scribe has gone before him, in fact he was one of the first, as he left with his son following the apostles.

When they have all gone or fallen asleep, Jesus stands up, blesses the sleepers, and walking with slow steps He goes towards the lake, to the little peninsula of Tarichea, a few yards above the lake, like an indented hill protruding on it. And when He reaches the foot of it, without entering the town, but going round it, He climbs the hill, and stops on a crest, praying in front of the blue lake and in the peace of the serene moonlit night.

Jesus says: « You will put here the vision dated March 4th 1944: Jesus walks on the water. »

273. Jesus Walks on the Water.

4th March 1944.

It is late in the evening, almost night, because I can hardly see on the path that climbs up a hillock studded with trees, which I think are olives. But the light is so faint that I am not sure. The trees are not tall, but they are leafy and twisted, characteristically olive.

Jesus is alone. He is wearing a white tunic and a dark blue mantle. He climbs and enters the grove. He is striding resolutely. He is not walking fast, but as He strides, He goes a long way without rushing. He walks until He reaches a kind of natural balcony overlooking the lake, which is peaceful and quiet in the light of the stars already crowding the sky like bright eyes. Silence surrounds

Jesus with its restful embrace. It detaches Him from the crowds and from the earth, making Him forget them and uniting Him to the sky, which seems to descend to worship the Word of God and caress Him with the light of its stars.

He is praying in His habitual posture: standing with His arms stretched out crosswise. There is an olive-tree behind Him and He seems to be already crucified to its dark trunk. Tall as He is, the leafy branches are only a little above Him and they replace the inscription on the Cross with a word consonant to the Christ. There: « King of the Jews ». Here: « Prince of Peace ». The peaceful olivetree speaks the truth to those who can understand it. He prays for a long time. He then sits at the foot of the tree, on a thick protruding root, and assumes His habitual attitude with His hands interlocked and His elbows resting on His knees. He meditates. I wonder into which conversation He falls with His Father and the Spirit, now that He is alone and can be entirely of God. God with God!

I think that many hours go by thus because I see that stars have changed their position and many have already set in the west.

Just when the appearance of light, or rather of luminosity, because it cannot be called light as yet, becomes visible on the remote eastern horizon, a puff of wind shakes the olive-tree. It calms down. It resumes blowing and is stronger and becomes more and more violent at short intervals. The light of dawn, which has just begun, finds it difficult to make its way because of a mass of dark clouds, which have invaded the sky, driven by stronger and stronger gusts of wind. The lake is no longer calm either. I think it is preparing a storm like that I already saw in the vision of the tempest. The noise of the leafy branches and the roar of the water now fill the air, which a little while ago was so calm.

Jesus is roused from His meditation. He stands up and looks at the lake. He scans it in the light of the remaining stars and of the poor sickly dawn and sees the boat of Peter, which is striving hard to reach the opposite shore, but cannot make it. Jesus pulls His mantle tight around Himself, lifting over His head, as if it were a hood, the hanging hem, which would hinder His descent, and runs down, not the road He came up, but a very steep path, which takes one straight to the lake. He runs so fast that He seems to be flying.

When He reaches the shore lashed by the waves, which leave on the shingle an edge of fluffy rustling foam, He continues to walk fast, as if He were treading not on a restlessly tossing liquid element, but on the smoothest most solid pavement on the earth. He now becomes light. All the faint light that still comes from the few dying stars and the stormy dawn seems to converge on Him, gathering like phosphorescence round His slender body. He flies over the waves, the foamy crests and the dark folds between the

waves, with His arms stretched forward, while His mantle swells around His cheeks and flaps as much as possible, tight as it is around His body, like a wing.

The apostles see Him and utter a cry of fear, which the wind carries towards Jesus.

« Be not afraid. It is I. » Jesus' voice, although the wind is against Him, carries clearly over the lake.

« Is it really You, Master? » asks Peter. « If it is You, tell me to come and meet You, walking on the water like You. »

Jesus smiles: « Come » He says simply, as if to indicate that to walk on the water were the most natural thing in the world.

And Peter, half naked as he is, that is wearing only a short sleeveless tunic, jumps overboard and walks towards Jesus.

But when he is about fifty yards from the boat and as many from Jesus, he is seized with fear. So far his love impetus supported him. Now his human nature overwhelms him and… he fears for his own skin. Like one who is on a slippery ground, or better still, on quicksands, he begins to stagger, to grope, to sink. And the more he gropes and fears, the more he sinks.

Jesus has stopped and looks at him. He is serious and waits. But He does not stretch even one hand; His arms are folded and He does not take one step or utter one word.

Peter is sinking. His malleoli, shins, knees disappear. The water reaches up to his inguen, rises above it, up to his waist. Terror is on his face. Terror paralyses also his thoughts. He is nothing but flesh afraid of sinking. He does not even think of swimming. Nothing. He is hebetated by fear.

At last he decides to look at Jesus. And as soon as he looks at Him, his mind begins to reason and see where salvation is. « Master, my Lord, save me. »

Jesus opens His arms and as if He were carried by the wind or by the waves, He rushes towards the apostle and holds out His hand saying: « Oh! what a man of little faith. Why did you doubt Me? Why did you want to do it by yourself? »

Peter who had clutched convulsively at Jesus' hand, does not reply. He looks at Him only to ascertain whether He is angry, with a mixture of remaining fear and rising repentance.

But Jesus smiles at him and holds him firmly by the wrist, until they reach the boat and step overboard into it. Then Jesus orders: « Go to the shore. He is soaked through. » And He smiles looking at the mortified disciple.

The waves smooth down making it easy to land and the town seen in the past from the height of a hill now looms beyond the shore.

The vision ends here.

Jesus says:

« Many times I do not even wait to be called, when I see My children in danger. And many times I rush to help a son who is ungrateful to Me.

You are asleep or you are seized by the worries and anxieties of life. I watch and pray for you. I am the Angel of all men and I look after you and nothing grieves Me more than the impossibility of interference because you refuse My intervention, because you prefer to act on your own, or, worse still, you ask the Evil one to help you. Like a father who hears his son say to him: "I do not love you. I do not want you. Go out of my house", I am mortified and I suffer more than I did because of My wounds. But if you do not say to Me: "Go away", and you are absent-minded only because of the worries of life, then I am the Eternal Watchman ready to come even before he is called. And if I wait for you to say a word, as I sometimes do, it is only to hear you call Me.

How pleasant, how sweet it is to hear men call Me. To hear that they remember that I am the "Saviour". I will not mention the infinite joy that pervades and exalts Me when there is someone who loves Me and calls Me without being in need. He calls Me because he loves Me more than he loves anybody else in the world and is filled with joy, as I am, only by calling: "Jesus, Jesus", as children call: "Mummy, mummy" and they taste the sweetness of honey on their lips, because the simple word "mummy" has in itself the taste of motherly kisses.

The apostles were rowing obeying My order to go and wait for Me at Capernaum. And I, after the miracle of the loaves, went away from the crowds, all alone, not because I disdained them or because I was tired. I never disdained men, not even when they were bad to Me. I became indignant only when I saw the Law trampled or the house of God desecrated. But then the interests of the Father were involved, not I. And I was on the earth as the first of the servants of God, to serve the Father of Heaven. I was never tired in devoting Myself to the crowds, even when I saw them so dull, sluggish and human as to dishearten even those who had most confidence in their mission. Nay, just because they were so deficient I multiplied My lesson infinitely, I treated them exactly as backward pupils and I guided their spirits in the most elementary discoveries and initiations, just as a patient master guides the inexpert hands of pupils to form the first letters and thus enable them to understand and write. How much love have I given to crowds! I took them by the flesh to lead them to the spirit. I began from the flesh as well. But while Satan through it leads to Hell, I led to Heaven.

I wanted to be all alone to thank the Father for the miracle of the loaves. Thousands of people had been fed. And I exhorted them to

say: "Thanks" to the Lord. But once a man has been helped, he forgets to say "thanks". I said it on their behalf. And afterwards… And afterwards I had merged with My Father, for Whose love I was infinitely sick. I was on the earth, but like a lifeless hide. My soul was thrust towards My Father, Whom I felt leaning on His Word, and I said to Him: "I love You, Holy Father!". It was a joy to Me to say to Him: "I love You". To say so as a Man besides as God. I humiliated My feelings as Man, as I offered Him My palpitation as God. I seemed to be the magnet that attracted all the love of men, of men capable of loving God a little and that I gathered all such love and offered it from the bottom of My Heart. I seemed to be the only one to exist: I, the Man, that is the human race, conversing once again with God, in the cool of the evening, as on the innocent days.

But although My blessedness was complete, because it was a blessedness of love, it did not abstract Me from the needs of men. And I became aware of the danger of My children on the lake. And I left Love for the sake of love. Charity must be speedy.

They took Me for a ghost. Oh! how often, My poor children, you take Me for a ghost, for a frightening object! If you always thought of Me, you would know Me at once. But you have other ghosts in your hearts, and that makes you dizzy. But I make Myself known. Oh! if you only listened to Me!

Why was Peter sinking after walking so far? You said it: because his human nature overwhelmed his spirit.

Peter was very much a "man". Had it been John, he would not have dared immoderately, neither would he have changed his mind. Purity grants prudence and strength. But Peter was "man" in the full meaning of the word. He was anxious to excel, to show that "nobody" loves the Master as he does, he wanted to impose himself, and only because he was one of Mine, he thought he was above the weakness of the flesh. Instead, poor Simon, his results, when he was tested, were far from being sublime. But it was necessary, that he might be later the one who was to perpetuate the mercy of the Master in the dawning Church.

Peter is not only overwhelmed by fear for his endangered life, but, as you said, he becomes nothing but "trembling flesh". He no longer thinks, he no longer looks at Me. You all do the same. The more impending is the danger, the more you want to do things by yourselves. As if you were able to do things! You never go away from Me, or close your hearts to Me or even curse Me, as in the hours when you ought to hope in Me and call Me. Peter does not curse Me. But he forgets Me and I have to impose My will to call his spirit to Me, so that he may look at his Master and Saviour.

I absolve him beforehand of his sin of doubt, because I love him, as this impulsive man, once he is confirmed in grace, will be able to

proceed without any further perturbation or tiredness as far as martyrdom, and will be indefatigable in casting his mystical net to take souls to his Master. And when he invokes Me, I do not walk, I fly to help him and I hold him tight to lead him to salvation. My reproach is a mild one because I understand the extenuating circumstances of Peter. I am the best advocate and judge there is and there has ever been. On behalf of everybody.

I understand you, My poor children! And even when I say a word of reproach, My smile mitigates it. I love you. That is all. I want you to have faith. And if you do have it, I will come and take you out of danger. Oh! if the Earth could say: "Master, Lord, save me!". One cry, of the whole Earth, would be enough, and Satan and his sectarians would be immediately defeated. But you do not know how to have faith. I am multiplying the means to lead you to faith. But they fall into your slime as a stone falls into the slime of a marsh and are buried there.

You do not want to purify the water of your souls, you prefer to be putrid filth. It does not matter. I do My duty as the Eternal Saviour. And even if I cannot save the world because the world does not want to be saved, I will save from the world those who in order to love Me, as I am to be loved, are no longer of the world. »

274. The Deeds of Corporal and Spiritual Mercy.

8th September 1945.

Jesus is in the Korazim plain, along the upper Jordan valley, between the lakes of Gennesaret and Merom. The country is covered with vineyards and it is already vintage time.

He must have been there for some days, because the disciples who were at Sicaminon have joined Him this morning, and among them there is Stephen with Hermas. Isaac apologises for not coming earlier, because, he says, the new disciples and his uncertainty whether he should bring them or not caused the delay. « But » he says « I thought that the way to Heaven is open to all those of good will and these two, although they are pupils of Gamaliel, seem to be so. »

« You are right and you have done the right thing. Bring them here. »

Isaac goes away and comes back with the two disciples.

« Peace to you. Has the apostolic word seemed so true to you that you have decided to join it? »

« Yes, and Yours above all. Do not send us away, Master. »

« Why should I? »

« Because we are disciples of Gamaliel. »

« So what? I honour the great Gamaliel and I would like him to be with Me, because he is worthy of it. That is all he lacks to make his

wisdom perfect. What did he say to you when you left him? Because you certainly said goodbye to him. »

« Yes, he said to us: "You are lucky that you can believe. Pray that I may forget in order to remember. »

The apostles who have gathered round Jesus inquisitively, look at one another and ask whispering: « What does he mean? What does he want? To forget in order to remember? »

Jesus hears their whispering and explains: « He wants to forget his wisdom to take on Mine. He wants to forget that he is rabbi Gamaliel to remember that he is a son of Israel awaiting the Christ. He wants to forget himself, to remember the Truth. »

« Gamaliel is not untruthful, Master » replies Hermas apologetically.

« No, he is not. But it is the medley of poor human words which is untruthful. Words taking the place of the Word. You must forget them, divesting yourselves of them and come to the Truth as pure as virgins in order to be reclothed and fecundated. Humility is required for that. The difficulty… »

« Then, we must forget as well? »

« Undoubtedly. You must forget everything pertaining to man. And remember what pertains to God. Come. You can do it. »

« We want to do it » confirms Hermas.

« Have you already lived as disciples? »

« Yes, we have. Since the day we heard the Baptist had been killed. The news spread very rapidly in Jerusalem, where it was brought by Herod's courtiers and commanders. His death roused us from our torpidity » replies Stephen.

« The blood of martyrs is always a new life for torpid people, Stephen. Remember that. »

« Yes, Master. Will You speak today? I hunger for Your word. »

« I have already spoken. But I will speak again, and very much, to you disciples. Your companions, the apostles, have already begun their mission, after due preparation. But they are not sufficient for the needs of the world. And everything is to be done in good time. I am like one who has an expiry date and must do everything within that date. I ask you all to help Me, and in the name of God I promise you help and a glorious future. »

Jesus' keen eyes discovers a man completely enveloped in a linen mantle: « Are you not John, the priest? »

« Yes, Master. The hearts of the Jews are more arid than the cursed large valley. I ran away looking for You. »

« And your priesthood? »

« Leprosy expelled me from it the first time. Men, the second time, because I love You. Your Grace draws me to itself: to You. It expels me as well, from a desecrated place to a pure one. You have purified me, Master, both in my body and in my soul. And what is

pure cannot and must not approach what is impure. It would be an offence to Him, Who purified. »

« Your judgement is severe, but not unfair. »

« Master, unpleasant family matters are known to those who live in the family and should be mentioned only to righteous-minded people. You are so, and in any case You know. I would not tell anybody else. Here we are: You, the apostles, I and two who know as well as You and I do. So… »

« All right. But… Oh! You are here, too? Peace be with you. Have you come to hand out more food? »

« No, I came to have some of Your food. »

« Have your crops been spoiled? »

« Oh! no. They have never been so plentiful. But, my Master, I am looking for another bread and a different crop: Yours. And I brought with me the leper whom You cured in my fields. He came back to his master. But both he and I have a master to follow and serve: You. »

« Come: one, two, three, four… A good harvest! But have you taken into consideration your position at the Temple? You know, and I know… and I will say no more. »

« I am a free man and I go with whomever I wish » says John, the priest.

« So am I » says the last arrival: John, the scribe, who dealt out the food at the foot of the Mount of Beatitudes on the Sabbath.

« And we are free, too » state Hermas and Stephen.

And Stephen adds: « Speak to us, Lord. We do not know what our mission exactly consists in. Give us the least necessary to enable us to serve You at once. The rest will come as we follow You. »

« Yes. On the mountain You spoke of the beatitudes. And that was a lesson for us. But what are we to do with regard to other people, in our second love, the love for our neighbour? » asks John, the scribe.

« Where is John of Endor? » is Jesus' only answer.

« He is over there, Master, with the people who have been cured. »

« Let him come here. »

John of Endor goes at once. Jesus lays His hand on John's shoulder as a special greeting and says: « Here you are. I will now speak. But I want you, who bear a holy name, to be in front of Me. You, My apostle; you, a priest; you, a scribe; You, John of the Baptist; and finally, you, to complete the sequence of graces granted by God. And if you are the last one to be mentioned by Me, you know that you are not the last one in My heart. One day I promised you this speech. You will now have it. »

And Jesus, as He is wont, climbs a little mound, so that everybody may see Him, and the five Johns are in the first row, in front of Him. Behind them there is a group of disciples mingled

with the crowds who have come from every part of Palestine seeking health or doctrine.

« May peace be with you all and wisdom upon you.

Listen. One day, a long time ago, a man asked Me whether and to what extent is God merciful towards sinners. It was a sinner who asked that question, and although he had been forgiven he could not believe that God had forgiven him completely. And I soothed his anxiety by means of parables, I assured and promised him that for his sake I would always speak of mercy, so that his repentant heart, which wept within him like a lost child, should feel sure of being already in the possessions of his Father in Heaven.

God is Mercy because God is Love. A servant of God must be merciful to imitate God.

God makes use of mercy to attract to Himself His children led astray. A servant of God must make use of mercy as a means of taking misguided men back to God.

The precept of love is compulsory for everybody. But it must be three times so in the servants of God. No one will conquer Heaven if one does not love. That is all that is necessary to say to believers. But to the servants of God I say: "You cannot make believers conquer Heaven if you do not love them with perfect love". And who are you, who are crowding here around Me? Most of you are children of God aiming at perfect life, at the blessed, hard, bright life of the servant of God and minister of the Christ. And which are your duties in such lives of servants and ministers? Complete love for God and complete love for your neighbour. Your aim is to serve. How? Taking back to God those whom the world, flesh, the demon have stolen from God. By which means? By love. Love, which can be active in a thousand ways, and has but one purpose: to make people love.

Let us consider our beautiful Jordan. How imposing it is at Jericho! But was it like that at its sources? No. It was just a trickle of water and would have remained such if it had always been alone. Instead from the mountains and hills on both sides of its valley, thousands of tributaries, either alone or made up by many rivulets, flow into its bed, and it grows more and more from the little silvery blue stream so pleasant and joyful in its infancy until it becomes the large solemn placid river, flowing like a sky-blue ribbon between its fertile emerald banks.

Such is love. It is initially a tiny stream among the infants on the Way of Life, who can just avoid grave sins for fear of punishment, but subsequently, as they proceed on the way to perfection, many brooks of this main virtue, by will of love, appear from the rugged, arid, proud, harsh mountains of mankind and everything helps to make it rise and gush out: sorrows and joy, just as upon the mountains the frozen snow and the sun melting it, form rivers.

Everything helps to open the way for them: humility as well as repentance. Everything serves to convey them to the initial river. Because a soul, thrust onto that Way, loves to have its ego destroyed, and aspires to rise again drawn by the Sun-God, after becoming a beautiful, mighty, beneficial river.

The brooks that nourish the embryonic stream of awsome love, are, besides virtues, the deeds that virtues teach men to accomplish: deeds, which being streams of love, are deeds of mercy. Let us consider them together. Some were already known to Israel, some will be made known to you by Me, because My law is the perfection of love.

To feed the hungry.

It is a duty of gratitude and love. And a duty of imitation. Children are grateful to their father for the bread he procures for them. And when they are grown into men, they imitate him by procuring with their work bread for their own sons and for their father, by now unable to work, because of his age, an affectionate fair return of the good received. The fourth commandment states: "Honour your father and mother". One honours their old age by ensuring they do not have to beg for bread of others. But the first commandment comes before the fourth: "Love God with your whole being" and the second: "Love your neighbours as you love yourself". To love God in Himself and to love Him in one's neighbour is to be perfect. One loves Him by giving bread to those who are hungry, remembering how many times He appeased man's hunger through miracles.

But without taking into account the gifts of manna and quails, let us consider the continuous miracle of corn, which germinates through the bounty of God Who gave men lands suitable to be cultivated and He adjusts and control winds, rain, heat, seasons, so that the seed may become an ear of wheat and the wheat bread. And was it not a miracle of His mercy the fact that by supernatural light He taught His guilty child that the tall slender grass, ending in golden ears of seed smelling of the warm sun, enclosed in a hard cover of thorny scales, was food, which man had to pick, hull, pulverise, knead and bake? God taught man all that. And He taught him how to pick it, husk it, pound it, knead and bake it. He placed stones near the ears and water near the stone and by means of the reflection of water and sun He lit the first fire on the earth and the wind blew onto the fire some grains of wheat which were roasted smelling pleasantly, so that man might understand that wheat is better when toasted by fire, than as it is in the ear, as birds eat it, or soaked in water, after being pulverised, as a sticky mash. Now that you eat the good bread baked in the family oven, do you not consider how much mercy is shown by the achievement of so much perfection in baking, and how much progress human

knowledge has made from the first ear chewed as horses do, to the bread of today? And by whom? By the Giver of bread. And the same applies to all kinds of food, which man, through beneficent enlightenment, has been able to single out among the plants and animals, which the Creator spread over the earth, a place of fatherly punishment for His guilty child.

Thus, to give something to eat to the hungry is a prayer of gratitude to the Lord and Father, Who satisfies our hunger, and it is imitating the Father, Whose likeness was gratuitously granted to us, and which we must continuously increase by imitating His action.

To give drink to the thirsty.

Have you ever thought what would happen if the Father did not let rain fall on the earth? And if He said: "Because of your harsh unkindness towards the thirsty I will stop clouds from descending upon the earth" could we protest and curse? Water, more than wheat, belongs to God. Because wheat is cultivated by man, but only God cultivates the fields of clouds, which descend as rain or dew, fog or snow, nourishing fields and cisterns, filling rivers and lakes, giving shelter to fish, which appease man's hunger with other animals. If someone asks you: "Give me a drink" can you say to him: "No. This water is mine and I will not let you have it"? Liars! Which of you made a snowflake or one single drop of rain? Which of you evaporated a dew-diamond with his astral heat? No one. It is God Who does that. And if water descends from the sky and re-ascends there, it is only because God controls that part of creation as He controls the rest.

Give, therefore, the good cool water of the springs of the earth, or the pure water of your well, or the water that filled your cisterns, to those who are thirsty. It is the water of God. And it is for everybody. Give it to the thirsty. For such a small deed, which costs you no money and involves no work except the handing of a cup or a jug, I tell you that you will receive a reward in Heaven. Because, not the water, but the charitable action is great in the eyes and judgement of God.

To clothe the poor.

Nude, shameful, pitiful miseries pass along the roads of the earth: forlorn old people, people disabled by disease or misfortune, lepers coming back to life through the Lord's bounty, widows laden with children, people deprived of every comfort by mishaps, innocent little orphans. If My eyes scan the vast earth, I can see everywhere people who are naked or covered with rags, which hardly protect their decency but do not shelter them from the cold. And all those poor people look with downcast eyes at the wealthy people who pass by wearing soft garments and comfortable shoes. Downcast eyes and kindness in good people, downcast

eyes and hatred in those who are not so good. Why do you not assist their dejection, making the good ones better, by means of your love, and destroying hatred in those who are less good?

Do not say: "I have only enough for myself". As in the case of bread, there is always something more than what is necessary on the tables and in the wardrobes of people who are not entirely forsaken. Among those who are now listening to Me, there is more than one who from a cast-off garment made clothes for an orphan or a poor boy and out of an old bed-sheet made swaddling-bands for an innocent baby who had none and there is one, a beggar, who for years shared the bread begged for with so much difficulty, with a leper who could not go and beg for it at the doorstep of rich people. And I solemnly tell you that such merciful people are not found among the wealthy, but among the poor humble classes who know by their own experience how painful is poverty.

Here again, as for water and bread, consider that wool and linen with which you dress yourselves, come from animals and plants, which the Father created not only for the rich, but for all men. Because God gave man only one wealth: His Grace, health and intelligence. Not the filthy wealth, which is gold, elevated by you to a useless nobility, whilst as a metal it is not more beautiful than any other and it is much more useless than iron, with which you make spades and ploughs, harrows and sickles, chisels, hammers, saws and planes, the holy tools for holy work. And you elevated it to false nobility through the instigation of Satan, who has made you, the children of God, as wild as beasts. God had given you the riches of what is holy to make you more and more holy! Not this murderous wealth, which sheds so much blood and so many tears.

And give as it was given to you. Give in the name of the Lord, without being afraid of remaining naked. It would be better to die of cold, after stripping yourselves in favour of a beggar, than chill your hearts, even if clad in soft garments, through lack of charity. The warmth of a good action accomplished is more pleasant than the comfort of a mantle of pure wool and the clad bodies of poor people speak to God saying: "Bless those who have clothed us".

If to satisfy people's hunger and quench their thirst and clothe the poor joins holy temperance and blessed justice to most holy charity, so that the destiny of our unhappy brothers is modified through our holiness, when we give what we abound in, with God's leave, on behalf of those who are deprived of it through the wickedness of man or through diseases, to give hospitality to pilgrims joins charity to confidence and to the esteem of our neighbour. And that is a virtue, too, you know. A virtue that denotes honesty, besides charity, in those who possess it. Because he who is honest acts righteously, and as we generally think that

other people act as we do, so the confidence and simplicity believing that the words of other people are true, show that he who listens to them is one who speaks the truth in important and small matters and does not distrust what other people tell him.

Why should one think of the pilgrim who is asking for shelter: "And what about if he is a thief or a murderer?". Are you so attached to your wealth, as to be afraid, because of it, of every stranger who arrives at your house? Are you so attached to your lives as to shudder with horror at the thought of being deprived of them? What? Do you think that God cannot defend you from robbers? What? Are you afraid that a passer-by may be a robber, and you are not afraid of the evil guest who robs you of what cannot be replaced? How many give hospitality to the demon in their hearts! I could say: everybody shelters capital sin, yet nobody fears that. Are wealth and life the only valuable things? Is perhaps eternity not more valuable since you allow sin to rob you of it and kill it? O poor souls, robbed of their treasure and handed over to killers, as if they were trifles, whilst houses are locked and bolted, protecting with dogs and safes things that we cannot take with us when we die!

Why should we see a robber in every pilgrim? We are all brothers. Houses should be open to brothers passing by. Is a pilgrim not of our same blood? Of course he is! He is of the blood of Adam and Eve. Is he not our brother? Why not? The Father is one only: God, Who has given each of us an identical soul, as the father only gives the children of the same marriage the same blood. Is he poor? Ensure that your spirit, deprived of the Lord's friendship, may not be poorer than he is. Are his clothes torn? Ensure that your soul may not be more torn by sin. Are his feet covered with mud or dust? Ensure that your ego may not be more worn by vices, than his dirty sandal has been worn by so much walking. Is his appearance unpleasant? Make sure that yours is not more unpleasant in the eyes of God. Does he speak a foreign language? Make sure that the language of your hearts is not incomprehensible in the city of God.

You must see a brother in each pilgrim. We are all pilgrims going towards Heaven and we all knock at the doors along the way to Heaven. And the doors are the patriarchs, the just, the angels and archangels, whom we implore to help and protect us, so that we may reach our goal, without becoming exhausted and dropping into the darkness of night, into the rigours of ice-cold weather, the preys of insidious wolves and jackals, of wicked passions and demons. As we want angels and saints to show us their love by giving us shelter and strength to proceed on our way, so let us do likewise to the pilgrims of the earth. And each time we open our homes and our arms, greeting a stranger with the sweet word of

brother, and thinking of God, Who knows him, I tell you that we will have gone many miles along the way leading to Heaven.

To visit the sick.

Truly, as men are pilgrims, so they are sick. And the sickness of the soul is the gravest, it is invisible and lethal. And yet people are not disgusted by it. A moral sore is not disgusting. The stench of vice is not nauseating. Demoniac frenzy is not frightening. The gangrene of a spiritual leper does not make anyone sick. The sepulchre full of rottenness of a man whose soul is dead and putrified does not make anybody run away. He who approaches such impurities is not anathematised. How poor and narrow is the thought of man! But tell Me: which is worth more, the spirit, or blood and flesh? Can matter corrupt what is immaterial simply by being close to it? No, I tell you it cannot. The value of the spirit is infinite as compared to flesh and blood, that is true; but the flesh is not more powerful than the spirit. And the spirit can be corrupted by spiritual things, not by material ones. If a man takes care of a leper, his spirit does not become leprous; on the contrary, because of his charity practised heroically, to the extent of segregating himself in the valley of death out of pity for his brother, every stain of sin will be removed from him. Because charity is absolution from sin and the first purification.

Always bear in mind the following principle: "What would I like done to me, if I were like him?". And act as you would like other people to act on your behalf. Israel still has its ancient laws. But the day will come, and its dawn is no longer very far, when men will worship, as the symbol of absolute beauty, the image of One, Who will be the material repetition of the Man of sorrows of Isaiah and the Tortured Victim of David's psalm, Who will become the Redeemer of mankind, because He made Himself similar to a leper, and all those who are parched with thirst, ill, exhausted, weeping on the earth will hasten towards His wounds as deer rush to springs of water, and He will quench their thirst, will cure them, restore them, will comfort their souls and bodies, and the best believers will yearn to be like Him, covered with wounds, shedding their blood, beaten, crowned with thorns, crucified, for the sake of men to be redeemed, continuing thus the work of the King of kings and Redeemer of the world.

You, who are still Israel, but are already putting on wings to fly to the Kingdom of Heaven, begin to consider, as from this moment, this new conception and evaluation of sickness, and while blessing God for keeping you in good health, bend over those who are suffering and dying. One of My apostles said one day to one of his brothers: "Do not be afraid to touch lepers. No disease will attack us by God's will". He was right. God protects His servants. But even if you were infected when curing sick people, you would

be placed, in the next life, among the martyrs of love.

To visit prisoners.

Do you think that there are only criminals on galleys? One eye of human justice is blind and the other suffers from sight trouble, so that it mistakes camels for clouds and a snake for a flowery branch. It judges erroneously. Even more so because those who preside over it often deliberately stir up clouds of smoke, so that it may see more erroneously. But even if prisoners were all robbers or killers, it would be wrong for us to become robbers and murderers by depriving them of the hope of forgiveness through our scorn.

Poor prisoners! They dare not raise their eyes to God, laden as they are with their crimes. Their fetters really hurt their souls more than their feet. Woe to them if they despair of God! To the crime against their neighbour they would add the sin of despairing of forgiveness. The galley is expiation, just as dying on the scaffold. But it is not sufficient to pay what is due to human society for the crime committed. It is necessary to pay also and above all what is due to God, in order to expiate and have eternal life. But he who rebels and despairs, expiates only with regard to society. Let the convict or prisoner have the love of his brothers. It will be light in the dark. It will be a voice. A hand pointing upwards while the voice says: "May my love tell you that God also loves you, as He put in my heart this love for you, my unfortunate brother" and light enables men to see God, their merciful Father.

Let your charity go with greater reason to comfort the martyrs of human injustice: both those who are utterly innocent and those who have been led to kill by a cruel force. Do not judge what has already been judged. You do not know why man was driven to kill. You do not realise that many times the man who kills is nothing but a dead person, and automaton devoid of reason, because a bloodless murder has deprived him of reason with cruel cowardly betrayal. God knows. That is enough. In the next life many galley-slaves, murderers and robbers will be seen in Heaven, whereas many, who seemed to have been robbed and killed, will be seen in Hell, because in actual fact the pseudovictims were the true robbers of the peace, honesty and trust of other people and the true murderers of hearts. They were victims only because they were the last to be struck, after they had been striking covertly for years. Murder and theft are sins. But between one who kills and robs because he is led to such crimes by others and later repents, and one who induces others to sin and does not repent, the latter will be punished more severely, because he persuades others to commit sin and does not feel remorse.

Thus, by not passing judgement on them, be compassionate to prisoners. Always bear in mind that if all the murders and thefts

of men were to be punished, few men and women would not die in galleys and on the scaffold. What shall we call those mothers who conceive but do not wish to give birth to the fruit of their wombs? Oh! Do not let us pun! Let us call them frankly by their name: "Murderers". What shall we say about those men who steal other people's reputation and positions? Simply what they are: "Thieves". What is the name for those men and women, who are adulterous or torture their relatives to the extent of driving them to homicide or suicide, and for the mighty ones of the earth who drive their subjects to desperation and through desperation to violence? Here it is: "Murderers". Well? Is no one running away? So you can see that we live without any worry among criminals, who have evaded justice, who crowd houses and towns, rub against us in streets, sleep in the same hotels as we do, and share food with us. And yet, who is without sin? If God's finger should write on the wall of the room wherein the thoughts of man germinate, that is on man's forehead, words describing one as one was, is, or will be, very few would bear the word: "Innocent" written in bright letters. The other foreheads would bear the words: "Adulterers" "Murderers" "Thieves" "Killers" in letters as green as envy, or as black as treason, or as red as crime.

So, without being proud, be merciful to your brothers, who from a human point of view have been less fortunate than you are, and are now on galleys expiating what you do not expiate, although guilty of the same crime. Your humility will improve by doing so.

To bury the dead.

The contemplation of death is a lesson for life. I would like to take you all before death and say to you: "Endeavour to live as saints in order to have but this death: a temporary separation of the body from the soul, to rise thereafter triumphantly for ever, all gathered together in utter happiness".

We were all born nude. We all die and our mortal remains are destined to putrefaction. Whether kings or beggars, as we were born so we die. And if the pomp of kings allows their corpses to be preserved for a longer period of time, decomposition is still the fate of dead flesh. What are mummies? Flesh? No. They are matter fossilized by resins, lignified matter. It is not a prey to worms, as it has been altered and burned by essences, but it is a prey to woodworms, just like old wood.

But dust becomes dust once again, because God said so. And yet only because that dust enveloped the spirit and was vivified by it, like something that touched the glory of God - such is the soul of man - we must conclude that it is sanctified dust, not unlike the objects that have been in contact with the Tabernacle. There was at least one moment when a soul was perfect: while God was creating it. And if Sin disfigured it, depriving it of its perfection,

because of its Origin it still confers beauty to matter and because of the beauty that comes from God, a body is embellished and deserves respect. We are temples and as such we deserve to be honoured, as the places where the Tabernacle stopped were always honoured.

Grant, therefore, the dead the charity of an honourable rest while awaiting resurrection, and in the wonderful harmony of the human body contemplate the divine mind and hand that conceived and modelled it so perfectly and venerate the work of the Lord also in its remains.

But man is not only flesh and blood. He is also soul and mind. The latter suffer as well, and are to be assisted mercifully.

There are ignorant people who do wrong only because they do not know good. How many do not know or know wrongly the things of God and even moral laws! They languish like famishing people because no one satisfies their hunger and fall into marasmus through lack of nourishing truth. Go and teach them because that is why I have gathered you and I am sending you. Give the bread of the spirit to the hunger of spirits. To teach the ignorant corresponds, in the spiritual field, to appeasing the hunger of those who are starving. And if a reward is granted for a piece of bread offered to a languishing body, so that it may not die, what reward will be given to him who satisfies a spirit with eternal truth and gives it eternal life? Do not be avaricious of what you know. It was given to you without any expense or limit. Give it without avarice, because it belongs to God, like the water of the sky and it is to be given as it was given to us.

Be not avaricious or proud of what you know. But give with humble generosity. And give the limpid charitable relief of prayer to the living and to the dead who thirst for graces. Water is not to be refused to parched throats. What is therefore to be given to the hearts of anguished living people, and what to the expiating souls of the dead? Prayers, prayers that are prolific because they are full of love and spirit of mortification.

Prayer must be true, not mechanical like the noise of a wheel on the road. Is it the noise or the wheel that makes a cart proceed? It is the wheel that wears itself out to move the cart forward. The same applies to vocal mechanical prayer and to active prayer. The former is sound and nothing else. The latter is work, in which strength wears out and suffering increases, but it attains its goal. Pray more by means of mortification than with your lips and you will give relief to the living and the dead, fulfilling the second work of spiritual mercy. The world will be saved more by the prayers of those who know how to pray, than by useless rumbling deadly battles.

Many people in the world believe. But they do not believe firmly.

They waver as if they were drawn in opposite directions, and without proceeding by one step only, they wear their strength out unsuccessfully. They are the doubtful ones. Those who hesitate saying: "but", "if", "and then". Those who ask: "Will it really be thus?", "And if it were not so?", "Shall I be able?", "And if I am not successful?" and so on. They are like bearbines, which do not climb up unless they find something to cling to, and even when they do find it, they dangle to and fro, and it is not only necessary to find a support for them, but one must guide them onto it at each turn every day.

Oh! They really try one's patience and charity more than a backward child! But in the name of the Lord, do not abandon them! Give bright faith, ardent strength to those prisoners of themselves and of their hazy disease. Guide them towards the sun and the sky. Be masters and fathers to those dubious minds without tiring or losing your patience. They discourage you? Very well. How often you discourage Me and even more the Father Who is in Heaven and Who must often think that the Word seems to have become Flesh in vain, since men still hesitate even now that they hear the Word of God speak.

You will not presume that you are of greater worth than God is or I am! So open the prisons of these prisoners of "but" and "if". Relieve them from their chains of: "Shall I be able?", "If I am not successful?". Convince them that it is enough to do one's best and God is satisfied. And if you see them fall off their support, do not pass by ignoring them, but lift them up once again. Like mothers, who do not pass by if their child falls, but they stop, pick him up, clean him, comfort him and hold him until he is no longer afraid of falling again. And they do so for months and years if the boy's legs are weak.

Clothe those who are naked spiritually by forgiving those who offend you:

Offences are against charity. Lack of charity divests one of God. So he who offends becomes naked and only the forgiveness of the offended person can put clothes back on such nudity. Because he brings God back to it. God waits for the offended person to forgive before He forgives both the person offended by man, and the offender of man and of God. Because - let us admit it - there is no one who has not given offence to his Lord. But God forgives us if we forgive our neighbour, and forgives our neighbour if the person offended forgives. It will be done to you as you do to others. Forgive, therefore, if you wish to be forgiven and you will rejoice in Heaven for your charitable behaviour, as if a mantle studded with stars were placed on your holy shoulders.

Be merciful to those who are weeping. They have been wounded by life and their hearts are grieved in their affections.

Do not lock yourselves up in your serenity as in a stronghold. Weep with those who are weeping, comfort who is distressed, console the loneliness of those who have been deprived of a relative by death. Be fathers to orphans, sons to parents, brothers to one another.

Love. Why love only those who are happy? They already have their share of sunshine. Love the weeping. They are the least amiable for the world. But the world is not aware of the value of tears. You are. Love, therefore, those who are weeping. Love them if they are resigned in their grief. Love them even more if they rebel against their sorrow. Do not reproach them but kindly convince them of the truth of grief and the utility of sorrow. Through the veil of tears they may see the face of God deformed, and His countenance full of revengeful arrogance. No. Do not be scandalised! It is only a hallucination brought about by the fever of grief. Assist them so that their temperature may abate.

Let your fresh faith be like ice applied to a delirious patient. And when the raging fever drops and is followed by the seediness and torpid hebetude typical of those who come out of a trauma, then speak to them once again of God, as of something new, kindly and patiently, as you would deal with children who have become backward through disease… Oh! a lovely tale, told to amuse man, the eternal child! And then be quiet. Do not impose… A soul works by itself. Assist it with caresses and prayer. And when it asks: "So it was not God?", reply: "No. He did not want to hurt you, because He loves you, also on behalf of those who no longer love you because of death or other reasons". And when the soul says: "But I accused him", say: "He has forgotten it, because it was your fever". And when it says: "I would like to have Him", say: "Here He is! At the door of your heart, waiting for you to open it to Him".

Bear bothersome persons. They come in to upset the little house of our ego, just as pilgrims come in to upset the house in which we live. But as I told you to welcome pilgrims, so I tell you to welcome these persons.

Are they bothersome? But if you do not love them, because of the trouble they cause you, they love you, more or less righteously. Welcome them for such love. And even if they came inquiring, hating, insulting you, be patient and charitable. You can improve them through your patience. But you may scandalise them through your lack of charity. Be sorry because they sin; but be more sorry to make them sin and to sin yourselves. Receive them in My name, if you cannot receive them with your own love. And God will reward you, by coming Himself, later, to return the visit and cancel the unpleasant memory by His supernatural caresses.

Finally endeavour to bury sinners in order to prepare the return to the Life of Grace. Do you know when you do that? When

you admonish them with paternal, patient, loving insistence. It is as if you were burying little by little the ugly part of the body before delivering it to its sepulchre awaiting the command of God:

"Rise and come to Me".

Do the Jews not purify the dead out of respect for the body, which is to rise again? To admonish sinners is like purifying their limbs, the first operation for burial. The Grace of the Lord will do the rest. Purify them through charity, tears and sacrifices. Be heroes to snatch a soul from corruption. Be heroes.

You will not be left without reward. Because if a reward is given for a cup of water given to a thirsty body, what will be given to him who relieves a soul from infernal thirst?

I have finished. Those are the deeds of corporal and spiritual mercy that increase love. Go and practise them. And may the peace of God and Mine be with you now and ever. »

SUMMARY INDEX*

*Summary index by Emilio Pisani, who divided each chapter into sections marked by numbers. Chapters 141 to 196 of the summary index have been translated from Italian by Nicandro Picozzi and Chapters 197 to 274 by David Murray.

THE SECOND YEAR OF THE PUBLIC LIFE

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THE SECOND YEAR OF THE PUBLIC LIFE

(Conclusion)

3-1270

275. Avarice and the Foolish Rich Man.

10th and 14th September 1945.

Jesus is on one of the hills on the western coast of the lake. The towns and villages spread on both shores are displayed under His eyes. Directly under the hill are Magdala and Tiberias, the former with its luxurious district strewn with gardens, clearly separated from the poor houses of fishermen, peasants and common people by a little torrent now completely dry; the latter magnificent in every quarter, a town unaware of misery and decay, looking beautiful and fresh in the sunshine before the lake. Between the two towns there are a few but well kept vegetable-gardens on the short plain, while olive-trees climb the hill conquering it. From this hill-top one can see behind Jesus the saddles of the Mount of Beatitudes, at the foot of which there is the main road which goes from the Mediterranean Sea to Tiberias. Perhaps Jesus has chosen this place because it is so close to a very busy road, and thus people can come here from many towns both on the lake and in the inland of Galilee, and then go back home in the evening or find hospitality in many of the towns. The climate is also mild because of the height and also because the tall trees on the upper slopes have replaced the olive-trees.

There are in fact many people besides the apostles and disciples. People who need Jesus for health reasons, or for advice, people who have come out of curiosity, or led by friends or in a spirit of imitation. In brief, there is a large crowd. The season, which is no longer hot but tends to the languid pleasantness of autumn, encourages pilgrims to come in search of the Master.

Jesus has cured sick people and has spoken to the crowd on the subject of wealth unjustly attained and detachment therefrom, as is necessary in everyone who wishes to gain Heaven and is essential in those who want to be His disciples. He is now replying to the questions of this or that rich disciple, who is somewhat upset by such requirement.

John, the scribe, says: « Must I destroy what I have, thus depriving my family of what is due to them? »

« No. God gave you some property. Let it be useful to Justice and make just use of it. That is, assist your family by means of it, which is your duty; treat your servants humanely, and that is charity; help the poor, and the poor disciples in need. Your wealth thus will not be a hindrance, but an aid. »

Then addressing the crowds He says: « I solemnly tell you that also the poorest disciple can be in the same danger of losing Heaven through attachment to riches, if he acts against justice by coming to terms with rich people, after he has become a priest of Mine. A rich or wicked man will often endeavour to seduce you with gifts to make you agreeable to his way of living and to his sin.

And among My ministers there will be some who will yield to the temptation of presents. That must not happen. Follow the Baptist's example. Although he was not a judge or a magistrate, he possessed the perfection of judge and magistrate as pointed out in Deuteronomy: "You must be impartial, you must take no bribes, for a bribe blinds wise men's eyes and jeopardises the cause of the just". Too often man allows the edge of the sword of justice to be blunted by the gold which a sinner rubs on it. No, that must not happen. Learn how to be poor, how to die, but never come to terms with sin. Not even with the excuse of using that gold for the poor. It is cursed gold and would bear no good. It is the gold of a disgraceful compromise. You have been appointed masters that you may be masters, doctors and redeemers. What would you be, if your own interest led you to agree to wickedness? Masters of evil science, doctors who kill their patients, not redeemers but parties to the ruin of hearts. »

One of the crowd comes forward and says: « I am not a disciple. But I do admire You. Answer this question of mine: "Is it lawful to keep the money of another person?" »

« No, man. It is larceny, like robbing the purse of a passer-by. »

« Even if it is family money? »

« Of course. It is not right that one should take possession of the money belonging to all the others. »

« Then come to Abelmaim, Master, on the road to Damascus, and order my brother to share with me the inheritance of our father who died without leaving a written will. He took everything for himself. And remember that we are twins, born at the first and only birth. So I have the same rights as he has. »

Jesus looks at him and says: « It is a painful situation and your brother is certainly not behaving righteously. But all I can do is to pray for you and for him, that he may change, and I can come to your village and evangelize and thus touch his heart. The road is no burden to Me if I can bring about peace between you. »

The man becomes furious and bursts out: « What's the use of Your words? It takes much more than that in this case! »

« Did you not tell Me to order your brother to... »

« To order is not to evangelize. An order is always joined to a threat. Threaten to strike his person, if he does not give me what is due to me. You can do that. As You give health You can give a disease. »

« Man, I came to convert, not to strike. But if you have faith in My words, you will have peace. »

« Which words? »

« I told you that I will pray for you and for your brother, that you may be comforted and he may be converted. »

« Nonsense! I am not such a fool as to believe that. Come and

order. »

Jesus, Who has been meek and patient, becomes impressive and severe. He straightens up - before He was bending over the little stout angry man - and He says: « Man, who appointed Me judge or arbitrator between you? Nobody. But to avoid a rupture between two brothers I was willing to come and practise My mission of conciliator and redeemer, and if you had believed My words, on going back to Abelmaim you would have found your brother already changed. But you will not believe. And you will have no miracle. If you had been able to get hold of the treasure before your brother, you would have kept it, depriving your brother of it, because as it is true that you were born twins, it is also true that you have twin passions and both you and your brother have but one love: gold, and one faith: gold. Be therefore with your faith. Goodbye. »

The man goes away cursing Jesus while all the people present are scandalised and would like to punish him.

But Jesus objects saying: « Let him go. Why dirty your hands striking a brute? I forgive him because he is possessed and led astray by the demon of gold. Forgive him as well. Let us rather pray for the unhappy man so that he may become humane again with a beautiful free soul. »

« That is true. Even his countenance was dreadful because of his greed. Did you notice it? » the disciples and those who were close to the miser ask one another.

« It is true, indeed! He did not look the same person as before. »

« Yes. And when he rejected the Master, he almost struck Him while cursing Him, and his countenance was demoniac. »

« A tempting demon. He wanted to lead the Master to wickedness... »

« Listen » says Jesus. « It is true that the alterations of the spirit are reflected on one's face. It is as if the demon appeared on the surface of his possession. Only few people who are demons, either in deeds or appearance, do not disclose what they are. And those few are perfect in evil and perfectly possessed. The countenance of a just man, instead, is always beautiful, even if his face is materially disfigured, because of a supernatural beauty, which from the interior exudes exteriorly. And it is not just a saying, but a real fact, that we notice a bodily freshness as well in those who are free from vices. The soul within us envelops our whole being. The stench of a corrupt soul affects also the body, whereas the scent of a pure soul preserves it. A corrupt soul drives the flesh to obscene sins, which age and disfigure the body. A pure soul incites the body to a pure life, which grants a fresh complexion and imparts majesty.

Endeavour to keep your youth spiritually pure, or to revive it, if you have already lost it, and beware of greed, both for sensual

pleasures and for power. The life of man does not depend on the abundance of his wealth, neither in present life and much less in the next one, eternal life. It depends instead on his way of living, as well as his happiness, both on the earth and in Heaven. Because a vicious man is never really happy. On the contrary, a virtuous man is always happy with a celestial joy, even if he is poor and alone. Not even death upsets him. Because he has no sins or remorse making him fear to meet God, neither does he regret what he leaves on the earth. He knows that his treasure is in Heaven and like a man who goes to take the inheritance due to him, a holy inheritance, he goes happily and solicitously towards death, which opens to him the gate of the Kingdom where is his treasure.

Store up your treasure at once. Begin in your youth, you young people; work incessantly, you older people, who are closer to death because of your age. But since the date of death is unknown, and a child often dies before a venerable old man, do not postpone the work of storing up your treasure of virtues and good deeds for the next life, lest death should reach you before you have placed a treasure of merits in Heaven. Many people say: "Oh! I am young and strong! I will enjoy myself for the time being on the earth, and I will turn later". A big mistake!

Listen to this parable. A rich man's estate had yielded a good harvest. A really miraculous harvest. He looks happily at so much abundance piling up in his fields and threshing-floors and which is to be stored in provisional sheds and even in the rooms of his house, since his barns cannot hold it all, and says: "I have worked like a slave but I have not been disappointed by my fields. I have worked as much as for ten harvests, and I am going to rest just as long. What shall I do to put away all this crop? I do not want to sell it otherwise I would be compelled to work to have a new crop next year. This is what I will do: I will knock down my granaries and build larger ones, capable of holding all my crops and my goods. And then I will say to my soul: 'Oh, my soul! You have aside goods for many years. Rest, therefore, eat, drink and have a good time' ". The man, like many more people, mistook his soul for his body and mixed the sacred and the profane, because in actual fact a soul does not rejoice in revelries and idleness, but languishes. And the man, like many, after the first good harvest in the fields of virtue, stopped, as he thought he had done everything.

But do you not know that once you have laid your hand on the plough you must persevere for one, ten, one hundred years, as long as your life lasts, because to stop is a crime against oneself, as one denies oneself a greater glory, and it is a regression, because generally he who stops not only does not proceed further, but turns back? The treasure of Heaven must increase year by year to be good. Because if Mercy is benign to those also who had few years

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to store it up, it will not be an accomplice of lazy people who in a long life do little. It is a treasure increasing continuously. Otherwise it is no longer a fruit-bearing treasure, but an unfruitful one, which is detrimental to the readily available peace of Heaven.

God said to the foolish man: "Fool! You mistake body and wealth of the earth for what is spirit and you turn the grace of God into evil. This very night the demand will be made for your soul, and it will be taken away and your body will lie lifeless. And this hoard of yours, whose will it be then? Will you take it with you? No. You will come to My presence despoiled of earthly crops and spiritual works and you will be poor in the next life. It would have been better if you had used your crops for works of mercy on behalf of your neighbour and yourself. Because if you had been merciful towards others, you would have been merciful to your own soul. And instead of fostering idle thoughts, you could have plied a trade which would have given an honest profit for your body and great merit for your soul until I called you". And the man died that night and was severely judged. I tell you solemnly that that happens to those who store up treasure for themselves but do not grow rich in the eyes of God.

Go now and avail yourselves of the doctrine explained to you. Peace be with you. »

And Jesus blesses and withdraws into a thicket with His apostles and disciples to take some food and rest. And while eating He continues to speak on the same lesson, repeating a subject already explained several times to the apostles and which I think will never be clarified enough, because man is too easily seized with foolish fears.

« You must believe » He says, « that man should worry only about making himself rich in virtue. But mind you: you must not worry anxiously or painfully. Good is the enemy of anxiety, of fears, of haste, which still show too many traces of avarice, jealousy and human mistrust. Let your work be constant, confident, peaceful, without rough starts and stops, as onagers do. But no one makes use of them, unless one is mad, to go on a safe journey. Be peaceful in victory and peaceful in defeat. Also tears shed for an error you made and which grieves you because by it you have displeased God, must be peaceful, comforted by humility and trust. Prostration, anger against oneself are always a symptom of pride and lack of confidence. He who is humble knows that he is a poor man subject to the miseries of the flesh, which at times triumphs. He who is humble puts his trust not so much in himself as in God, and is serene also when defeated and says: "Forgive me, Father. I know that You are aware of my weakness which overwhelms me at times. I will believe that You pity me. I am fully confident that You will help me in future even more than heretofore, notwithstanding

I please You so little". Do not be indifferent or avaricious with regard to the gifts of God. Give generously what you possess of wisdom and virtue.

Be active in spiritual matters as men are with regard to their bodies. And as far as your bodies are concerned do not imitate the people of the world who always tremble for their future, fearing they may lack what is superfluous, that they may be taken ill, or die, that enemies may be harmful, and so on. God knows what you are in need of. Therefore be not afraid for your future. Be free from tears, which are heavier than the chains of galley-slaves. Do not be anxious about the necessities of life: what you will eat, or drink and how you will clothe yourself. The life of the spirit is worth more than the life of the body and the body is worth more than clothes, because you live with your bodies and not with your clothes and through the mortification of your bodies you help your souls to attain eternal life. God knows how long He will leave your souls in your bodies, and He will give you what is necessary until that hour. He gives it to crows, impure birds which feed on corpses and the reason for their being is just to remove putrefying corpses. And will He not give you what is necessary? Crows have neither larders nor granaries and God feeds them just the same. You are men, not crows. At present you are the cream of men because you are the disciples of the Master, the evangelizers of the world, the servants of God. And can you possibly think that God may neglect you, even for what concerns your clothes, since He takes care of the lilies of the valleys and makes them grow and clothes them with such beautiful robes that Solomon never possessed the like, and yet they do no work but scent worshipping God? It is true that by yourselves you cannot add one tooth to a toothless mouth, or lengthen by one inch a contracted leg, or make dimmed eyes bright. And if you cannot do such things, can you think you may be able to repel misery and diseases and turn dust into food? You cannot. But do not be of little faith. You will always have what you need. Do not worry like the people of the world who strive to satisfy their pleasures. You have your Father Who knows what you need. All you must seek, and it must be your first care, is the Kingdom of God and His justice, and all the rest will be given to you as well.

Be not afraid, My little flock. My Father was pleased to call you to the Kingdom, that you may have His Kingdom. You may, therefore, aspire to it and assist the Father through your good will and holy activity. Sell your property and give the money to charity, if you are alone. Give your relatives means of subsistence as compensation for your abandoning the house to follow Me, because it is unfair to deprive children and wife of their daily bread. And if you cannot sacrifice money, sacrifice the wealth of

your affections. They are money which God evaluates for what they are: gold which is purer than any other gold; pearls which are more precious than those taken from the sea, and rubies which are rarer than those found in the bowels of the earth. Because to renounce one's family for My sake is love which is more perfect than the purest gold, it is a pearl made of tears, a ruby made of blood wailing from the wound of one's heart, torn to pieces by the separation from father and mother, wife and children. But such purses never wear out, such treasures never fail. Thieves cannot break into Heaven. Wood-worms cannot eat what is deposited there. And have Heaven in your hearts and your hearts in Heaven near your treasures. Because a heart, whether good or wicked, is with what you consider your dear treasure. So as a heart is there where its treasure is (in Heaven), so the treasure is there where the heart is (within you), nay, the treasure is within the heart and with the treasure of saints, in the heart there is the Heaven of saints.

Be always ready like those who are about to depart or are waiting for their master. You are the servants of the Master-God. He can call you where He is any moment, or come where you are. Be, therefore, always ready to go, or to pay Him homage, with work or travelling belt round your waists and lamps lit in your hands. Coming out of a wedding party with one who has preceded you in Heaven and in being consecrated to God on the earth, God may remember that you are waiting and may say: "Let us go to Stephen or to John, or to James and to Peter". And God is fast in coming or saying: "Come". So be ready to open the door to Him when He arrives or to leave, should He call you.

Blessed are those servants whom the Master finds vigilant on His arrival. I tell you solemnly that to reward them for their faithful waiting, He will gird His waist, make them sit at the table and serve them. He may come at the first, or second or third watch. You do not know, so be always vigilant. And you will be happy if you are so and the Master finds you thus! Do not flatter yourselves by saying: "There is time. He will not come tonight". Evil would befall you. You do not know. If one knew when a thief is going to come, one would not leave the house unguarded so that a robber may force the door and coffers. Be prepared as well, because when you least expect Him, the Son of man will come saying: "It is time". »

Peter, who has even forgotten to finish his food, to listen to the Lord, when he sees that Jesus is silent, asks: « What You said, is it for us or for everybody? »

« It is for you and for everybody. But it is primarily for you, because you are like stewards put by the Master at the head of the servants and it is your duty to be twice as vigilant, both as stewards and as simple believers. What must a steward be like,

once he has been put by his master at the head of the servants, so that he may give each his fair portion at the right moment? He must be shrewd and loyal, in order to fulfil his own duty and make his subordinates fulfil theirs. Otherwise the interests of the master would suffer a loss, whereas he pays so that the steward may act on his behalf and safeguard his interests while he is away.

Happy is the servant whom the master finds acting loyally, diligently and honestly, on his returning home. I tell you solemnly that he will appoint his steward over other estates, over all his estates, and will relax and rejoice in his heart because of the reliability of his servant. But if the servant says: "Well! My master is very far away and has written to me that he will be delayed in coming back home. So I can do what I like and I will do the necessary when I think he is about to come". And he begins to eat and drink until he gets drunk and gives crazy orders and, as the good servants under him refuse to carry them out not to cause damage to their master, he beats servants and maids until they are taken ill and decline. And thinking that he is happy he says: "At last I relish being the master and feared by everybody". But what will happen to him? It will happen that the master will arrive when he least expects him, catching him perhaps in the very act of pocketing money or bribing some of the most unreliable servants. Then, I tell you, the master will throw him out, depriving him of his position as steward, and refusing to keep him among his servants, because it is not right to keep unfaithful traitors among honest people. And the more the master previously loved and instructed him, the more he will be punished.

Because the more one is aware of the will and mind of the master, the more one is obliged to fulfil it accurately. If one does not act as the master explained in so great detail that nobody else was told so clearly, one will be severely beaten, whereas an inferior servant, who knows little and does wrong while he thinks he is doing right, will receive a less severe punishment. Much will be requested of him who was given much, and he who has much in his care, will have to return much, because My stewards will be asked to give an account also of the soul of a baby one hour old.

My election is not a cool relaxation in a flowery little wood. I came to bring fire on the earth; and what can I wish for but that it may light up? That is why I tire Myself and I want you to tire yourselves until you die and until the whole earth is a celestial bonfire. I am to be baptised with a baptism. And how distressed I will be until it is accomplished! Are you not asking why? Because through it I will be able to make you Fire-bearers, agitators who will act in every and against every social stratum, to make it one thing only: the flock of Christ.

Do you think that I have come to bring peace to the earth? And

according to the way of thinking of the earth? No. On the contrary, I came to bring discord and separation. Because from now on, and until the-whole world becomes one only flock, of five people in one house two will be against three, and the father will be against his son, and the son against the father, the mother against her daughters and the daughters against the mother and mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law will have a further reason not to understand each other, because a new language will be spoken by some lips, and it will be like Babel, because a deep disturbance will agitate the reign of human and superhuman affections. Then the time will come when everything will be unified in a new language, spoken by all those who have been saved by the Nazarene, and feelings will be filtered like water, as the dross will sink to the bottom, while the limpid waves of celestial lakes will shine on the surface.

Truly, it is not restful to serve Me, according to the meaning man attaches to that word. Heroism and indefatigability are required. But I tell you that at the end it will be Jesus, still and always Jesus, Who will gird His waist to serve you, and will sit with you at an eternal banquet and all labour and sorrow will be forgotten.

Now, since no one has been looking for us, let us go to the lake. We shall rest at Magdala. In the gardens of Mary of Lazarus there is room for everybody and she has put her house at the disposal of the Pilgrim and His friends. There is no need for Me to tell you that Mary of Magdala died with her sin and she has risen again from her repentance as Mary of Lazarus, the woman disciple of Jesus of Nazareth. You are already aware of that because the news spread like the fury of the wind in a forest. But I will tell you something you do not know: all the personal wealth of Mary is for the servants of God and the poor people of Christ. Let us go... »

276. In the Garden of Mary of Magdala: Love for One's Neighbour.

16th September 1945.

Jesus is no longer where He was during the last vision. He is in a large garden which extends as far as the lake, and in the middle of it there is a house surrounded by the garden, which at the rear of the house is at least three times as large as on the front and sides. There are flowers, but above all trees, thickets and green nooks, some around fountain-basins of precious marbles, some like bowers around tables and stone seats. And there must have been statues here and there, both along the paths and in the centre of the basins. Only the pedestals of the statues are now left as a remembrance, near laurel and box shrubs or reflected in the basins full of limpid water.

The presence of Jesus with His disciples and of people from

Magdala, among whom there is little Benjamin who dared to tell the Iscariot that he was a bad man, makes me think that they are the gardens of the Magdalene's house... which have been conveniently altered for a new function by removing what might have disgusted or scandalised or reminded one of the past.

The lake is a grey-blue crepe reflecting the sky, where clouds are sailing swiftly, laden with the first autumn rain. But it is beautiful even so, in the still placid light of a day which is not clear but not entirely rainy. Its shores are no longer covered with flowers, they are however painted by the great painter which is autumn and they show ochre and purple hues and the exhausted pallor of the withering leaves of trees and vineyards, which change colour before yielding to the earth their living clothing. In the garden of a villa overlooking the lake like this one, there is a spot which has turned red, as if it poured blood into the water, due to the presence of a hedge of flexible branches, which autumn has coloured with a blazing copper hue, while the willow-trees spread along the shore, not far from the garden, seem to be trembling, as their slender silver-green leaves quiver and look paler than usual before dying.

Jesus is not looking at what I am watching. He is looking at some poor sick people whom He cures. He is looking at some old beggars to whom He gives some money. He is looking at some children offered to Him by their mothers that He may bless them. And He is looking pitifully at a group of sisters, who are informing Him of the behaviour of their only brother, who has caused their mother to die of a broken heart and has brought about their ruin, and the poor women beg Him to give them some advice and to pray for them.

« I will certainly pray for you. I will ask God to give you peace and I will pray for him, that he may turn and remember that you are his sisters, giving you what is fair and above all that he may love you once again. Because if he does that, he will do everything else. But do you love him, or have you a grudge against him? Do you forgive him wholeheartedly or is there anger in your tears? Because he is unhappy, too. More than you are. And notwithstanding his riches, he is poorer than you are, and you must pity him. He no longer loves and is without the love of God. See how unhappy he is? The sad life he made you lead will end in happiness for you and first of all for your mother. But not for him. On the contrary, from the false present enjoyment he would pass to an eternal dreadful torture. Come with Me. By speaking to you I will speak to everybody. »

And Jesus goes towards the centre of a meadow, where once there must have been a statue and the site is now strewn with groups of flowers. Only the pedestal is now left and it is surrounded

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by a low hedge of myrtle and miniature roses. Jesus goes towards that hedge and begins to speak. The people become silent and crowd round Him.

« Peace be with you. Listen.

It is written: "Love your neighbour as you love yourself". But who is our neighbour? The whole of mankind, in a general meaning. In a narrower sense all our countrymen; in an even narrower sense, all our fellow citizens; then in a more and more narrow meaning, all our relatives; finally, the last circle of this crown of love closed like the petals of a rose round the heart of the flower, the love for our full-brothers: our first neighbour. God is the centre of the heart of the flower of love, so love for Him is the first to be had. Around His centre there is the love for our parents, the second to be had, because father and mother are really the little "God" on the earth, as they procreated us and cooperated with God to our creation, besides taking care of us with untiring love. The various love rings press round that ovary which shines with pistils and exhales the perfume of the most choice love. The first is the love for our brothers born of the same womb and same blood as ourselves.

How is our brother to be loved? Only because his flesh and blood are the same as ours? Even the little birds which are together in one nest can do that. In fact, this is all they have in common: they were born in the same brood and have on their tongues the flavour of their father's and mother's saliva. We men are worth more than birds. We have more than flesh and blood. We have the Father besides having a father and mother. We have a soul and we have God, the Father of all men. So we must love our brother as a brother, because of our father and mother who gave birth to us, and as a brother because of God Who is the universal Father.

We must love him, therefore, spiritually not only corporeally. We must love him not only because of his body and blood, but because of the spirit which we have in common. And we must love, as it is to be loved, the spirit of our brother more than his body. Because the spirit is more important than the body. Because the Father God is more important than the man father. Because the spirit is worth more than the flesh. Because our brother would be much more unhappy if he lost the Father God than he would be if he lost his man father. It is heart-rending to be deprived of the man father, but it is only half an orphanhood. It is detrimental only to what is earthly, that is to our need for help and caresses. But the spirit, if it can believe, is not damaged by the death of the father. On the contrary,-in order to join the just father where he is, the spirit of the son rises as if it were attracted by a loving force. And I tell you solemnly that that is love, love for God and for the father, who has ascended with his soul to the place of wisdom. He ascends to the place where he is closer to God and acts with greater rectitude,

because he does not lack true help, that is the prayers of the father whom he now loves perfectly, neither does he lack restraint due both to the certainty that the father does now see the deeds of his son, better than he did in his lifetime, and to the desire to be able to join him through a holy life.

That is why one must take greater care of the spirit than of the body of the brother. It would certainly be a very poor love if it took care of what is perishable, neglecting what is not perishable and which, if neglected, may lose eternal joy. Too many people tire themselves with useless things and worry themselves about what is of comparative merit, losing sight of what is really necessary. Good sisters and brothers must not worry only about keeping clothes tidy and having meals ready, or helping their brothers with their work. But they must bend over their spirits and listen to their voices, perceive their faults, and with loving patience busy themselves to give them a wholesome holy spirit, if in those voices and faults they see a danger for their eternal lives. And if their brother has sinned against them, they must forgive him and get God to forgive him, through his return to love, without which God will not forgive.

It is written in Leviticus: "You must not bear hatred for your brother in your heart, you must openly tell him of his offence, this way you will not take a sin upon yourself because of him". But there is an abyss between not hating and loving. You may think that aversion, detachment, indifference are not sins, because they are not hatred. No. I have come to bring new light to love, and consequently, to hatred, because what makes the former shine in every detail, makes every detail of the latter shine as well. The very elevation to high spheres of the former, brings out, as a consequence, a greater detachment from the latter, because the higher love ascends, the lower hatred seems to sink.

My doctrine is perfection. It is refinement of feelings and judgement. It is truth without metaphors and paraphrases. And I tell you that aversion, detachment and indifference are already hatred. Simply because they are not love. Hatred is the opposite of love. Can you find another name for aversion? For being detached from a being? For indifference? He who loves has a liking for the person loved. So if he dislikes him, he no longer loves him. He who loves, even if he is separated materially from the person he loves, continues to be near him with his spirit. So if one is detached with one's spirit from the other, one no longer loves the other. He who loves is never indifferent towards the person he loves, on the contrary he is interested in everything concerning that person. So if one is indifferent towards another, it means that one does not love the other. You can thus see that those three attitudes are branches of one plant: hatred, Now what happens when we are offended by

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one whom we love? In ninety per cent of cases, if hatred does not arise, aversion, detachment or indifference will result. No. Do not do that. Do not freeze your hearts by means of those three forms of hatred. Love.

But you are asking yourselves: "How can we?". I reply to you: "As God can, as He loves those who offend Him. A sorrowful but still good love". You say: "How do we do that?". I am giving a new law on the relationship with a guilty brother, and I say: "If your brother offends you, do not humiliate him by reproaching him in public, but urge your love to cover up your brother's fault in the eyes of the world". Because great will be your merit in the eyes of God, by barring, out of love, every satisfaction to your pride.

Oh! How man loves to let people know that he was offended and grieved thereby! Like a foolish beggar he does not go to a king asking for alms in gold, but he goes to other foolish beggars like himself asking for handfuls of ash and manure and mouthfuls of burning poison. That is what the world gives to the offended person who goes complaining and begging for comfort. God, the King, gives pure gold to him, who, being offended, goes without any grudge to weep only at His feet and ask Him, Love and Wisdom, for comfort of love and how to behave in the sorrowful circumstance. Therefore, if you want comfort, go to God and act with love.

I say to you, correcting the old law: "If your brother has sinned against you, go and correct him by yourself. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother once again. And at the same time you have gained many blessings from God. If your brother does not listen to you, but he rejects you persisting in his fault, take with you two or three grave, clever, reliable witnesses, so that no one may say that you are agreeable to his fault or indifferent to the welfare of his soul, and go back to your brother with them, and kindly repeat your remarks in their presence, so that the witnesses may be able to repeat that you have done everything in your power to correct your brother in a holy way. Because that is the duty of a good brother, since the sin committed by him against you is detrimental to his soul, and you must take care of his soul. If that is of no avail, inform the synagogue, so that he may be called to order in the name of God. If even so he does not make amends and he rejects the synagogue or the Temple as he rejected you, consider him as a publican and a Gentile".

Do that both with your full brothers and with the people you love. Because also with your remote neighbour you must behave with holiness, generosity, flexibility and love. And when it is a law-suit and it is necessary to go to court and you go with your adversary, I tell you, o man, who often find yourself in greater evils through your own fault, to do everything in your power,

while you are on the way, to make your peace with him, whether you are right or wrong. Because human justice is always imperfect and a shrewd man generally defeats justice and the offender might be considered innocent, whilst you, who are innocent, might be found guilty. And then not only your right would not be acknowledged, but you would lose the case and from being innocent you would be found guilty of slander and so the judge would hand you over to the law-executor who would not let you free until you had paid down to the last penny.

Be conciliating. Does your pride suffer by it? Very well. Is money squeezed out of you? Better still. Providing your holiness increases. Do not feel nostalgia for gold. Do not crave for praises. Let God praise you. Ensure that you have your purse in Heaven. And pray for those who offend you. That they may make amends. If that happens, they themselves will give you back honour and goods. If they do not, God will.

Go, now, because it is time for your meal. Let only the beggars stay and sit at the apostolic table. Peace be with you. »

277. Jesus Sends the Seventy-Two Disciples.

17th September 1945.

After the meal Jesus dismisses the poor guests and remains with His apostles and disciples in the garden of Mary of Magdala. They sit at the very end of it, near the calm water of the lake, on which some sailing boats are fishing.

« They will have a good catch » comments Peter who is watching them.

« You will have a good catch, too, Simon of Jonah. »

« Me, my Lord? When? Do You want me to go out and fish for our food for tomorrow? I will go at once and... »

« We do not need any food in this house. You will have a good' catch in future, in the spiritual field. And most of these will be very good fishermen like you. »

« Not everyone, Master? » asks Matthew.

« Not everyone. But those who will persevere and become My priests will have good catches. »

« Conversions? » asks James of Zebedee.

« They will convert, forgive, lead back to God. Oh! so many things. »

« Listen, Master. You said before that if a man does not even listen to his brother in the presence of witnesses, the synagogue is to admonish him. Now, if I have understood correctly what You have been telling us since we met, I think that the synagogue will be replaced by the Church, the thing that You want to found. If so, where will we go to have our pig-headed brothers admonished? »

« You will do that yourselves, because you will be My Church. So believers will come to you, for advice for themselves or for advice for other people. I will tell you more. You will not be able only to give advice. You will be able to absolve in My Name. You will be able to release people from the chains of sin and you will be able to join two people who love each other so that they become one body. And what you do will be valid in the eyes of God, as if God Himself had done it. I tell you solemnly that whatever you bind on the earth will be bound in Heaven and whatever you absolve on the earth will be absolved in Heaven. And I say to you also, to make you understand the power of My Name, of brotherly love and prayer, that if two disciples of Mine, and I mean as such all those who will believe in the Christ, will gather together to ask for any just thing in My Name, that thing will be granted to them by My Father. Because prayer is a great power, brother union is a great power, My Name is a very great infinite power and so is My presence among you. And where two or three people are gathered in My Name, I shall be in the midst of them, and I will pray with them and the Father will not refuse anything to those who pray with Me. Many do not get what they ask for, because they pray by themselves, or they ask for what is illicit, or they pray with pride or sin in their hearts. Make your hearts pure, so that I can be with you, then pray and you will be heard. »

Peter is thoughtful. Jesus notices it and asks him why. And Peter replies: « I am thinking of the great duty to which we are destined. And I am afraid of it. I am afraid I cannot accomplish it properly. »

« In fact Simon of Jonah or James of Alphaeus or Philip, and so on, would not do it properly. But Peter the priest, James the priest, Philip the priest or Thomas will do very well because they will be acting together with Divine Wisdom. »

« And... how many times will we have to forgive our brethren? How many times if they sin against the priests; and how many if they sin against God? Because, if things will happen then, as they do now, they will certainly sin against us, since they sin against You so many times. Tell me whether I have to forgive always or a number of times. For instance, seven times, or more? »

« I will not say to you seven times, but seventy times seven. An endless number. Because also the Father of Heaven will forgive you many times, a great number of times, and you ought to be perfect. So do as He does with you, because you will represent God on the earth. Nay, listen. I will tell you a parable which will help everybody. »

And Jesus, Who was surrounded by the apostles only, in a box thicket, goes towards the disciples who are respectfully gathered in a open space adorned with a fountain-basin full of clear water.

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Jesus' smile is a like a sign that He is going to speak. And while He walks with long slow steps, so that in a few moments He covers a good distance without rushing, they are all delighted and press round Him as children gather round those who make them happy. It is a circle of keen faces, until Jesus leans against a tall tree and begins to speak.

« What I said before to the people is to be completed for you who have been chosen from the people. The apostle Simon of Jonah asked Me: "How many times must I forgive? Whom? Why?". I replied to him privately and I will now repeat My reply as it is fair that you should know now as well.

Listen how many times, how and why you have to forgive. You must forgive as God forgives, Who forgives a thousand times, if one sins a thousand times and repents. Providing He sees that in man there is no will to sin, no pursuit of what makes one sin and that sin is only the result of man's weakness. In the case of voluntary persistence in sin there can be no forgiveness for sins against the Law. But with regard to the grief such sins cause you individually, you are to forgive them. Always forgive those who harm you. Forgive, so that you may be forgiven, because you have sinned also against God and your brothers. Forgiveness opens the Kingdom of Heaven both to him who is forgiven and to him who forgives. It is like what happened to a king and his servants.

A king wanted to draw up the accounts with his servants. He called them one by one, beginning with those who were in the highest positions. There was one who owed the king ten thousand talents. But the servant could not pay back the advance the king had given him to build his house and purchase all kinds of goods, because in actual fact, for many more or less justified reasons, he had not made a very diligent use of the money lent to him for that purpose. The king and master was angry at his sloth and breakage of his word, and ordered him, his wife, children and all his possessions to be sold until he settled his debt. But the servant threw himself at the king's feet and weeping implored him: "Let me go. Have a little more patience and I will give you back everything I owe you to the last penny". The king was moved by so much distress - he was a good king - and not only agreed to his request, but when he heard that diseases had been the cause of his lack of diligence and failure to pay, he also remitted his debt.

The servant went away happily. But on his way out he ran into another servant, a poor fellow to whom he had lent one hundred denarii taken from the ten thousand talents received from the king. As he felt sure of the king's protection he thought everything was permissible to him and he seized the unhappy fellow by the throat saying: "Give me what you owe me". In vain the man stooped weeping to kiss his feet imploring: "Have mercy on me as I

have had much bad luck. Have a little patience and I will pay everything back to you to the last penny". The cruel servant sent for militiamen and had the poor wreck taken to prison so that he would make up his mind and pay him, or lose his freedom or his very life.

The friends of the unhappy man came to know about it, and being very upset, they went and told the king and master, who, upon hearing the news, ordered the pitiless servant to be brought before him and looking at him severely said: "You wicked servant, I helped you the first time, that you might become merciful, that you might become a rich man, then I helped you by remitting your debt when you implored me to have patience. You did not have pity on your fellow servant, whilst I, a king, had so much pity on you. Why did you not treat your fellow servant as I treated you?". And in his anger he handed him over to the jailors to be kept by them until he paid everything back, saying: "As he did not have pity on one who owed him very little, while he had so much pity from me who am a king, so I will no longer have pity on him".

And that is how My Father will deal with you if you are pitiless towards your brothers, if you are more guilty than a believer, after receiving so much from God. Remember that it is your duty to be more faultless than anybody else. Remember that God gives you a great treasure in advance, but He wants you to render an account of it. Remember that no one must be able to grant love and forgiveness like you.

Do not be servants exacting much for yourselves and giving nothing to those who ask you for help. As you do to others, it will be done to you. And you will be asked to give an account of how other people behave, if they have been led to good or to evil by your examples. Oh! If you have sanctified people, your glory in Heaven will be really great! But, likewise, if you have been corrupters or only sluggish in sanctifying, you will be severely punished.

I say to you once again: if any of you does not feel like being the victim of his own mission, let him go away. But let him not fail in it. I mean: let him not fail in what is pernicious to his own and other people's perfection. And let him have God as his friend, always forgiving your weak brothers from your hearts. Then each of you, who will thus forgive, will be forgiven by God the Father.

Our stay has come to an end. The time of Tabernacles is close at hand. Those to whom I spoke separately this morning, as from tomorrow will go ahead of Me announcing Me to the people. Those who are staying must not lose heart. I have kept some of them for prudential reasons, not because I disdain them. They will be staying with Me and I will soon send them as I am now sending the first seventy-two disciples.

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The harvest is rich, but the labourers are too few compared to what is needed. So there will be work for everyone. But that is not sufficient. So, without being jealous, ask the Lord of the harvest to send new labourers to His harvest. In the meantime, you may go. During the past days, the apostles and I have completed your instructions on the work you have to do, and I have repeated to you what I told the Twelve before sending them.

One of you asked Me: "How will I cure in Your Name?". Always cure the spirit first. Promise the sick people the Kingdom of God if they can believe in Me, and once you have ascertained their faith, order the disease to depart and it will go away. And do likewise with those whose souls are ill. Stimulate their faith first of all. By means of sound words inspire them with Hope. I will then come to grant them Divine Charity, as I put it into your hearts after you believed in Me and hoped for Mercy. And be not afraid of men or of demons. They will not hurt you. The only things you are to fear are: sensuality, pride, avarice. Through them you would hand yourselves over to Satan and devilish men, who also exist.

Go therefore, preceding Me along the roads of the Jordan. And when you arrive in Jerusalem go and join the shepherds in the valley of Bethlehem, and come with them to Me, in the place you know, and we will celebrate together the holy feast, and we will then go back to our ministry more invigorated than ever.

Go in peace. I bless you in the holy Name of the Lord. »

278. Jesus Meets Lazarus at the Field of the Galileans.

18th September 1945.

The famous Field of the Galileans - I think that is the meaning of the word used by Jesus to point out the meeting place with the seventy-two disciples sent ahead of Him - is part of the Mount of Olives, towards the road to Bethany, which actually passes there. And it is precisely in this place that in a vision of long ago, I saw Joachim and Anne camp with Alphaeus, then a little boy, near other tents made with branches, at the Feast of the Tabernacles, which preceded the conception of the Blessed Virgin.

The summit of the Mount of Olives is smooth: everything is smooth and pleasant on that mountain: the slopes, the view, the summit. It really inspires peace, clad as it is with olive-trees and silence. But not now. Because it is swarming with people intent on making their tents. But generally it is a place of tranquillity and meditation. On the left hand side, with respect to those facing north, there is a light depression, and then another summit which is even smoother than the previous one.

And it is on this tableland that the Galileans camp. I do not know whether it is an age-old religious custom or whether they do

so by order of the Romans to avoid conflicts with Judaeans and peoples of other regions, who are never very kind to Galileans. I do not know. I know that I can see many Galileans, amongst them Alphaeus of Sarah from Nazareth; Judas, the old land owner from Merom; Jairus, the head of the synagogue and other people from Bethsaida, Capernaum and other towns in Galilee, but whose names I do not know.

Jesus points out the place where they should put up their tents, on the eastern edge of the Field of the Galileans. And the apostles, together with some disciples, among whom there is John the priest and John the scribe, Timoneus, the head of the synagogue, Stephen, Ermasteus, Joseph of Emmaus, Abel of Bethlehem in Galilee, begin to make their tents with branches.

While they do so, Jesus speaks to some children from Capernaum, who have pressed round Him asking Him dozens of questions and confiding to Him as many pieces of information, when Lazarus arrives from the Bethany road with Maximinus, his inseparable companion. Jesus is facing the opposite direction and cannot see him. But the Iscariot does and he informs the Master, Who leaves the children and goes towards His friend smiling. Maximinus stops a few steps behind, to leave the two completely free in their first approach. And Lazarus covers the last few yards, as fast as he can, walking more painfully than ever, with a smile which trembles with pain on his lips and shines with tears in his eyes. Jesus opens His arms and Lazarus falls on to His heart, bursting into tears.

« What, My dear friend? Are you still weeping?... » asks Jesus, kissing his temple. He is so much taller than Lazarus, from His shoulders upwards, and looks even taller, as Lazarus is bent in his embrace of love and respect.

At last Lazarus looks up and says: « Yes, I am weeping. Last year I gave You the pearls of my sad tears, it is therefore fair that I give You the pearls of my tears of joy. Oh! Master, my Master! I think that there is nothing more humble and holy than good tears... And I give them to You, to say: "Thank You" for my Mary who is now a kind, happy, serene, pure good girl... Oh, much better than when she was a little girl. And I, I who felt that I was much above her, in my pride of an Israelite faithful to the Law, now I feel I am so tiny, so... nothing, as compared to her, who is no longer a woman, but a flame. A sanctifying flame. I... I cannot understand where she finds the wisdom, the words, the actions, which edify the whole household. I look at her as one looks at a mystery. But how could so much fire, such a jewel be hidden under so much rottenness and be there comfortably? Neither I nor Martha can ascend where she ascends. But how can she, if her wings were broken by vice? I do not understand... »

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« And there is no need for you to understand. It is enough that I understand. But I tell you that Mary has turned the powerful energy of her being towards Good. She has bent her character towards Perfection. And since her character is of powerful absolutism, she thrusts herself unreservedly on that way. She makes use of her experience in evil to be as powerful in good as she was in evil and using the same method of giving herself entirely, as she did in evil, she has given herself entirely to God. She has understood the law of "love God with your whole being, with your body, your soul and with all your strength". If Israel were made of Maries, if the world were made of Maries, we would have the Kingdom on God on the earth, as it will be in the most high Heaven. »

« Oh! Master! And it is Mary of Magdala who deserves such words!... »

« It is Mary of Lazarus. The great friend, the sister of My great friend. How did you know that I was here, if My Mother has not yet come to Bethany? »

« The steward of the Clear Water has come to me, by forced marches, and told me that You were coming. Every day I sent a servant here. A little while ago he came saying: "He has arrived and is at the Field of the Galileans". I left immediately... »

« But you are suffering... »

« So much, Master! My legs... »

« And you came. I would have come, soon... »

« My anxiety to tell You my joy was tormenting me. I have had it in my heart for months. A letter! How can a letter say such things? I could not wait any longer... Will You come to Bethany? »

« Of course. Immediately after the Feast. »

« You are anxiously awaited... That Greek girl... What a mind! I speak very much with her, anxious as she is to learn about God. But she is very well educated... and I succumb, because I do not know certain things very well. It takes You. »

« And I will come. Now let us go to Maximinus, and then I beg You to be My guest. My Mother will be happy to see you and you will be able to rest. She will soon be here with the boy. »

And they go to Maximinus who kneels down greeting Him...

279. The Seventy-Two Disciples Report to Jesus What They Have Done.

19th September 1945.

The seventy-two disciples come back at the long twilight of a clear October day with Elias, Joseph and Levi. They are tired and covered with dust, but so happy! The three shepherds are happy that they are now free to serve the Master. They are happy also

because, after so many years of separation, they are with their companions of long ago. The seventy-two are happy because they have accomplished their first mission satisfactorily. Their faces shine more than the little lamps which light up the little tents built for the large group of pilgrims.

Jesus' tent is in the centre and under it there is the Blessed Virgin with Marjiam who helps Her to prepare supper. Around it there are the tents of the apostles. Mary of Alphaeus is in the tent of James and Judas; Mary Salome and her husband are in John and James'; in the one near it there is Susanna with her husband, who is not an apostle or disciple... officially,... but he must have made a claim to stay there, since he granted his wife permission to be entirely of Jesus. Then, around them, there are the tents of the disciples, some of whom are with their families, some without. And those who are alone, as most of them are, have joined one or more companions. John of Endor has taken in the solitary Ermasteus, but he has endeavoured to be as close as possible to Jesus' tent, so that Marjiam often goes to him, taking one thing or another and cheering him up with the words of an intelligent child who is happy to be with Jesus, Mary and Peter, and at a feast as well.

After supper Jesus goes towards the slopes of the olive grove and the disciples follow Him all together.

When they are far from the babel and the crowd, after praying together, they report to Jesus in greater detail than they were able to do before, among those going and coming. And they are amazed and happy when they say: « Do You know, Master, that not only diseases but also demons obeyed us because of the power of Your Name? What a wonderful thing, Master! We poor men were able to release a man from the dreadful power of a demon, only because You had sent us!... » and they tell of many cases which happened here or there. Only of one possessed they say: « His relatives, or rather his mother and neighbours brought him to us by force. But the demon scoffed at us saying: "I have come back here by his will after the Nazarene had driven me out and I will not leave him again because he loves me more than he loves your Master and he looked for me" and with indomitable strength he suddenly tore the man away from those who were holding him and hurled him down a precipice. We ran to see whether he had been dashed to pieces. He had not! He was running like a young gazelle repeating curses and quips not really of this world... We felt sorry for his mother... But he!... Oh! can the demon do all that? »

« All that and much more » says Jesus sadly.

« Perhaps if You had been there... »

« No. I admonished him: "Go and do not relapse into your sin" But he did. He knew he wanted evil and he agreed. He is lost.

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There is a difference between a man who is possessed the first time through his ignorance and a man who wants to be possessed knowing that by doing so he sells himself again to the demon. But do not speak of him. He is a member cut off without hope. He is a volunteer of Evil. Let us rather praise the Lord for the victories He granted you. I know the name of the culprit and the names of those who have been saved. I could see Satan fall from heaven like a thunderbolt through your merits joined to My Name. Because I saw also your sacrifices, your prayers, the love with which you went towards unhappy people to do what I had told you to do. You have acted with love and God blessed you. Others will do what you do, but they will do it without love. And they will not get conversions... But do not rejoice because you have subdued spirits, but rejoice because your names are written in Heaven. Never remove them from there... »

« Master, when will those come who will not get conversions? Perhaps when You are no longer with us? » asks one of the disciples whose name I do not know.

« No, Agapo. Any time. »

« What? Also when You teach and love us? »

« Yes. I will always love you, also when you are far from Me. My love will always come to you and you will perceive it. »

« Oh! that is true. I perceived it one evening when I was vexed because I did not know how to reply to one who was asking me questions. I was on the point of running away shamefully. But I remembered Your words: "Be not afraid. You will be given at the right moment the words to be spoken" and I invoked You in my spirit. I said: "Jesus certainly loves me. I am calling His love to assist me" and Your love came to me. Like a fire, a light... a strength... The man before me was watching me sneering ironically and winking at his friends. He was sure to win the argument. I opened my mouth and it was like a river of words which flowed out joyfully from my silly mouth. Master, did You really come, or was it an illusion? I do not know. I know that at the end the man he was a young scribe - threw his, arms round my neck saying: "You are blessed and blessed is He who has led you to such wisdom" and he seemed anxious to find You. Will he come? »

« Man's thoughts are as labile as words written on water, and his will is as restless as the wing of a swallow flying about for its last meal of the day. But pray for him... Yes. I did come to you. And Matthias and Timoneus, and John of Endor and Simon and Samuel and Jonah: they all had Me. Some were conscious of My presence, some were not. But I was with you. And I shall be with those who serve Me with love and truth for ever and ever. »

« Master, You have not yet told us whether among those who are present there will be someone without love... »

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« It is not necessary to know that. It would be lack of love on My part to instigate indignation towards a companion who is not capable of loving. »

« But are there any? You can tell us that... »

« Yes, there are. Love is the simplest, sweetest and rarest thing there is, and even when it is sown, it does not always take root. »

« But if we do not love You, who can? » There is almost anger among the apostles and disciples who are upset by suspicion and sorrow.

Jesus closes His eyes. He conceals them that they may give no hint. But He makes a resigned, kind, sad gesture with His hands, which He stretches out with open palms, His gesture of resigned confession and admission and He says: « That is how it should be. But it is not so. Many do not know themselves yet. But I know them. And I pity them. »

« Oh! Master! Is it I perhaps? » asks Peter going close to Jesus, squeezing poor Marjiam between himself and the Master and throwing his short muscular arms towards the shoulders of Jesus Whom he grasps and shakes, looking mad with the terror of being one who does not love Jesus.

Jesus opens His bright but sad eyes and looking at Peter's inquisitive and frightened face, He says to him: « No, Simon of Jonah. Not you. You know how to love and you will love more and more. You are My Stone, Simon of Jonah. A good stone. I will lay on it the things dearest to Me and I am sure that you will support them without any disturbance. »

« And I? », « I? », « I? ». The question is being repeated like an echo from mouth to mouth.

« Peace! Peace! Be calm and endeavour, all of you, to possess love. »

« But which of us knows how to love most? »

Jesus looks round at everyone: a smiling caress... He then lowers His eyes and looks at Marjiam still squeezed between Himself and Peter and pushing Peter aside a little, He turns the boy round with his face towards the little crowd and says: « Here is he who knows how to love most among you. The boy. But you, whose cheeks are covered with beards and whose hair is grey, must not tremble with fear. Whoever is born again in Me becomes "a child". Oh! go in peace! Praise God Who called you, because you really see with your eyes the wonders of the Lord. Blessed are those who will also see what you see. Because I assure you that many prophets and kings desired to see what you see, but they did not see it, and many patriarchs would have liked to know what you know, but they did not know, and many just people would have liked to hear what You hear but they were not able to hear it. But from now on those who love Me, will know everything. »

3-1294

« And after? When You have gone, as You say? »

« Afterwards you will speak on My behalf. And later... Oh! large groups, not by number but by grace, of those who will see, know and hear what you now see, know and hear! Oh! large beloved multitudes of My "little-big" ones! Eternal eyes, eternal minds, eternal ears! How can I explain to you, who are around Me, what this eternal living will be, rather than eternal, endless living of those who will love Me and whom I will love to the extent of abolishing time, and they will be "the citizens of Israel" even if they live when Israel will be simply the remembrance of a nation, and they will be the contemporaries of Jesus living in Israel. And they will be with Me and in Me, until they learn what time has cancelled and pride has confused. What name shall I give them? You apostles, you disciples, the believers will be called "Christians ". And those? What name will they have? A name known only in Heaven. What reward will they receive from the earth? My kiss, My voice, the-warmth of My body. All Myself. I, they. They, I. Utter communion... Go. I will stay to delight My spirit in the contemplation of those who in future will know and love Me in an absolute manner. Peace be with you. »

280. At the Temple for the Tabernacles.

20th September 1945.

Jesus is going to the Temple. The male disciples precede Him in groups, the women disciples follow Him, also in groups, that is, His Mother, Mary of Clopas, Mary Salome, Susanna, Johanna of Chuza, Eliza of Bethzur, Annaleah of Jerusalem, Martha and Marcella. The Magdalene is not there. The twelve apostles and Marjiam are around Jesus.

Jerusalem is in the pomp of its solemn festivities. There are people in every street and from every country. Singing, talking, whispering of prayers, the cursing of ass-drivers, the weeping of children can be heard everywhere. And above all the confusion there is the clear sky visible between houses and a pleasant sunshine which brightens up the colours of garments and enlivens the dying shades of pergolas and trees, glimpses of which can be caught here and there, beyond the walls of closed gardens and terraces.

Jesus at times meets acquaintances and their greetings are more or less respectful according to the mood of the person He meets. Gamaliel in fact bows deeply but superciliously and stares at Stephen, who smiles at him from the group of disciples and whom Gamaliel calls aside, after bowing to Jesus, and says a few words to him. Stephen then goes back to his group. The salutation of Cleopas of Emmaus, the old head of the synagogue, is revering; he

is on his way to the Temple with his fellow citizens. As harsh as a curse is the reply of the Pharisees of Capernaum to Jesus' greeting. Johanah's peasants, led by their steward, greet Jesus by throwing themselves on the ground and kissing His feet in the dust of the road.

The crowds are amazed and stop to watch the group of men who at a cross-roads prostrate themselves with a cry at the feet of a young man, who is neither a Pharisee nor a famous scribe, who is neither a satrap nor a powerful courtier, and some ask who he is and a whisper spreads: « He is the Rabbi of Nazareth, the one who is said to be the Messiah. » Proselytes and Gentiles then crowd inquisitively, pressing the group against the wall, causing obstruction in the little square, until a group of ass-drivers scatters them shouting imprecations. But the crowd soon gathers again, separating women from men, in a harsh demanding manner which is also a manifestation of faith. Everybody wishes to touch Jesus' garments, say a word to Him, ask Him questions. Their efforts are quite futile, because in their haste, in their anxiety and restlessness to move forward, they push one another so that no one is successful and even questions and answers become muddled in the babel.

The only one who disregards the scene is Marjiam's grandfather, who replied with a shout to his grandson's shout, and immediately after revering the Master has clasped the boy to his heart and remaining thus, sitting back on his heels, his knees on the ground, is holding him on his lap, admiring and caressing him with tears and joyful kisses, asking him questions and listening to him. The old man is already in Paradise, so happy as he is.

The Roman troops rush to the spot thinking there is a brawl and they push through the crowd. But when they see Jesus they smile and withdraw tranquilly and merely advise the people present to clear out of the important cross-roads. Jesus obeys at once, taking advantage of the space made by the Romans, who are walking a few steps ahead of Him, as if they were making way for Him, whereas in actual fact they are going back to their outpost; the Roman guard has in fact been reinforced, as if Pilate were aware of the ill-feeling of the crowds and were afraid of an insurrection when Jerusalem is full of Jews from all over. And it is beautiful to see Him go, preceded by the Roman squad, like a king, to whom they make way, while he goes to his possessions.

When passing by, He says to the boy and the old man: « Remain together and follow Me » and to the steward: « Please leave your men with Me. They will be My guests until this evening. »

The steward replies respectfully: « Everything will be done as You wish » and he goes away after bowing deeply.

The Temple is now close at hand and the swarming of the

crowds, just like ants near the ant-nest, is even denser, when one of Johanah's peasants shouts: « There is our master! » and falls on his knees to greet him, imitated by all the others.

Jesus remains standing in the middle of a group of people prostrated, because the peasants had gathered round Him. He turns round looking towards the place pointed out by the peasant, and meets the glance of a Pharisee pompously dressed, whom I have already seen, but I do not know where.

Johanah, the Pharisee, is with other people of his caste: a heap of precious clothes of fringes, buckles, sashes, phylacteries, all larger than common ones. Johanah looks at Jesus attentively: a glance of mere curiosity, but not disrespectful. Nay, his salutation is a stiff one: just a slight inclination of the head. But it is a greeting to which Jesus replies respectfully. Two or three more Pharisees greet Him, whilst others look scornfully or pretend to be looking elsewhere, only one hurls an insult and the people near Jesus start, and even Johanah turns round immediately, fulminating with his eyes the offender, a man younger than he is, with hard conspicuous features.

Once they have gone by and the peasants dare to speak, one of them says: « That is Doras, Master, the one who cursed You. »

« Never mind. I have you who bless Me » replies Jesus calmly.

Leaning against an archivolt there is Manaen with other people, and as soon as he sees Jesus, he raises his arms with a cry of joy: « This is surely a joyous day, as I found You! » and he moves towards Jesus, followed by those who are with him. He reveres Jesus under the shady archivolt, where voices resound like under a dome.

While Manaen is greeting Jesus, His cousins Simon and Joseph pass near the apostolic group with other Nazarenes... but they do not even say hullo... Jesus looks at them sadly but does not say anything. Judas and James speak to each other excitedly, Judas quivers with rage and runs away, resisting restraint by his brother. But Jesus calls him with such a commanding voice: « Judas, come here! » that Alphaeus' vexed son comes back... « Leave them alone. They are like seed which has not yet felt springtime. Leave them in the dark of the insensitive sod. I will penetrate it just the same, even if the sod should become jasper closed round the seed. I will do it in due time. »

But the weeping of Mary of Alphaeus, who is desolate, resounds louder than the answer of Judas of Alphaeus. The long weeping of a distressed person... But Jesus does not turn round to comfort her although her groaning is very clearly heard under the archivolt resounding with echoes.

He continues to speak to Manaen who says to Him: « These are disciples of John's and have come with me. Like me, they want to

be Yours. »

« Peace be with good disciples. Over there are Matthias, John and Simeon, who are now with Me for good. I welcome you as I welcomed them, because everything that comes from the holy Precursor is dear to Me. »

They have now reached the enclosure of the Temple. Jesus gives instructions to the Iscariot and Simon Zealot for the ritual purchases and offerings. He then calls John, the priest, and says to him: « Since you come from this place, make arrangements to invite some Levites whom you know to be worthy of becoming acquainted with the Truth. Because this year I can really celebrate a joyful feast. Never again will the day be so pleasant... »

« Why, my Lord? » asks John, the scribe.

« Because I have you around Me, all of you, either with your visible presence or with your souls. »

« But we shall always be! And many more with us » states the apostle John emphatically. And everybody echoes him.

Jesus smiles, but remains silent, while John, the priest, goes away, to the Temple, together with Stephen, to carry out the order. Jesus shouts after him: « Join us at the Porch of the Pagans. »

They enter and almost immediately they meet Nicodemus, who bows deeply, but does not approach Jesus. But he exchanges with Jesus a meaningful smile full of peace.

While the women stop where they are allowed, Jesus goes with the men to the place of Jews, to pray, and after accomplishing the rite, He comes back to join those who are waiting for Him at the Porch of the Pagans.

The very large and high porches are crowded with people listening to the lessons of the rabbis. Jesus directs His steps to the spot where the two apostles and the two disciples sent ahead are standing waiting for Him. He is soon surrounded by people, as many people, spread in the crowded marble court, join the apostles and disciples. Curiosity is such that some disciples of rabbis also approach the circle round Jesus, but I do not know whether they do so spontaneously or because their masters have sent them.

Jesus asks point blank: « Why are you pressing round Me? Tell Me. You have well known rabbis, who are well liked by everybody. I am the Unknown and Disliked One. So why do you come to Me? »

« Because we love You » reply some, some say: « Because Your words are different from the words of the others », some: « To see Your miracles » or: « Because we have heard people talk about You » or: « Because You alone have words of eternal life and deeds corresponding to Your words », and finally some say: « Because we want to join Your disciples. »

Jesus looks at the people while they speak, as if He wanted to

pierce them with His eyes and read their most hidden thoughts and some of them, who cannot resist His glance, go away or hide behind a column or behind people taller than they are.

Jesus resumes: « But do you know what it means and what it is to follow Me? I am replying to those words only, because curiosity does not deserve a reply and because those who hunger for My words obviously love Me and wish to join Me. So, those who have spoken form two groups: curious people whom I disregard, and volunteers, whom I wish to acquaint with the severity of that vocation.

To follow Me as a disciple means renouncing all affections for one only love: Mine. The selfish love for oneself, the guilty love for riches, sensuality or power, the honest love for one's wife, the holy love for one's father and mother, the deep love for and of children and brothers, must all yield to My love, if one wishes to be Mine. I tell you solemnly that My disciples must be more free than birds flying in the sky, more free than winds blowing across the firmament without anyone or anything holding them back. They must be free, with no heavy chains, with no ties of material love, without even the thin cobwebs of the slightest barrier. The spirit is a delicate butterfly enclosed in the heavy cocoon of the flesh and even the iridescent impalpable web of a spider can slow down its flight or stop it all together: the spider of sensuality, of the lack of generosity in sacrifice. I want everything, unreservedly. The spirit needs such freedom and generosity in giving, to be sure that it is not entangled in the cobwebs of affections, habits, considerations, fears, stretched out like as many threads by the monstruous spider which is Satan, the robber of souls.

If one wants to come to Me and does not hate in a holy manner father, mother, wife, children, brothers and sisters, and one's very life, one cannot be My disciple. I said: "hate in a holy manner". Within your hearts you are saying: "Hatred, as He taught us, is never holy. So He is contradicting Himself". No. I am not contradicting Myself. I say that you must hate the heaviness of love, the sensual passionateness of love for your father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, and for your very life, on the contrary I order you to love relatives and life with the light freedom of spirits. Love them in God and for God, never postponing God to them, endeavouring and taking care to lead them where the disciple has already arrived, that is to God, the Truth. You will thus love God and relatives in a holy manner, safeguarding each love, so that family ties will not be a burden but wings, not a fault, but justice. You must be prepared to hate even your lives in order to follow Me. He hates his life who without fear of losing it or making it sad from a human point of view, uses it to serve Me. But it is only an appearance of hatred. A feeling erroneously called "hatred"

by man who cannot elevate himself, as he is entirely earthly, by little superior to brutes.

In actual fact such apparent hatred, which consists in denying sensual satisfaction to one's life in order to give a more and more intense life to the spirit, is love. It is love, of the highest degree and the most blessed. To deny oneself base satisfactions, to reject sensual affections, to risk unfair reproaches, criticism and punishment, being rejected, cursed and perhaps persecuted, all that is a sequence of grief. But it is necessary to embrace such grief and take it upon yourselves, like a cross, a scaffold on which all past faults are expiated to be justified by God, from Whom you can obtain every true, mighty, holy grace for those whom we love. He who does not carry his cross and does not follow Me, he who cannot do that cannot be My disciple.

Therefore, you who say: "We have come because we want to join Your disciples" must ponder on that very carefully. It is not a shame, but it is wisdom to weigh and judge oneself and admit both to oneself and others: "I am not the stuff of which disciples are made". What? The heathens have as a basis of one of their doctrines the necessity of "knowing oneself", and could you Israelites not do that to gain Heaven?

Because, remember this, blessed are those who will come to Me. But rather than come to betray Me and Him Who sent Me, it is better not to come at all, and remain children of the Law, as you have been so far. Woe betide those who, after saying: "I will come", cause damage to the Christ by being the betrayers of the Christian idea, the scandalisers of little ones and of good people! Woe betide them! And yet there will always be some of them!

You ought therefore to imitate him who wants to build a tower. First he carefully works out the necessary expenses and counts his money to ensure that he has enough to complete the work, lest, after laying the foundation, he may have to stop building through lack of money. In which case he would lose what he had previously and would be left without tower and without talents and over and above he would be scoffed at by people saying: "He began to build but was not able to finish the job. He can now stuff his stomach with the ruins of his unfinished building".

Imitate the kings of the earth also, by letting the poor events of the world be useful for supernatural teaching. When they want to go to war with another king, they calmly and carefully examine everything, the pros and cons, they consider whether the benefit of the conquest is worth the lives of the subjects, they study whether it is possible to conquer the place, whether their forces, which are half those of their enemy, but more pugnacious, can win; and as they rightly think that it is unlikely that ten thousand can beat twenty thousand soldiers, before clashing with the enemy, they

send ambassadors with rich gifts for the other king, and thus soothe him, as his suspicions had already been aroused by the military movements of the other, they disarm him with some proof of friendship, they dispel his doubts and fears and make a treaty of peace with him, which is always more advantageous than a war, both from the human and spiritual point of view.

That is what you must do before beginning a new life and fighting the world. Because to be My disciples implies going against the stormy and violent trend of the world, of flesh and of Satan. And if you feel that you do not have the courage to renounce everything for My sake, do not come to Me, because you cannot be My disciples. »

« All right. What You say is true » agrees a scribe who has mingled with the crowd. « But if we divest ourselves of everything, with what shall we serve You? The Law contains commandments which are like money which God has given man so that by making use of it he may buy eternal life. You say: "Renounce everything" and You mention father, mother, riches, honours. God has given us those things also, and through Moses He has told us to use them in a holy way in order to appear just in the eyes of God. If You take everything away from us, what will You give us? »

« True love, as I said, rabbi. I give you My doctrine which does not take one iota away from the old Law, but perfects it. »

« So we are all disciples alike, because we all have the same things, »

« We all have them according to the Mosaic Law. But not everybody has them according to the Law perfected by Me according to Love. Not everyone achieves in it the same amount of merits. Even among My disciples not everybody will have the same amount of merits and some not only will not have an amount, but will lose also the only coin they have: their souls. »

« What? Who was given more will be left with more. Your disciples, or rather Your apostles, are following You in Your mission and are aware of Your ways of behaving, and have had very much, Your real disciples have received much, those who are disciples only by name have received less, and those who like me listen to You only by accident receive nothing. It is obvious that Your apostles will have very much in Heaven, Your real disciples much, Your disciples by name less, those like me nothing. »

« It is obvious from a human point of view, but even from a human point of view it is wrong. Because not everybody is capable of making the goods received yield a profit. Listen to this parable and forgive Me if My lesson is too long. But I am a swallow of passage, and I stop in the House of the Father only for a little while, as I came for the whole world, and also because this little world, which is the Temple of Jerusalem, will not allow Me to interrupt

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My flight and remain where the glory of the Lord calls Me. »

« Why do You say that? »

« Because it is the truth. »

The scribe looks round and lowers his head. He can see that it is the truth as it is written on the faces of many members of the Sanhedrin, of rabbis and Pharisees who have been enlarging the crowd around Jesus. Faces green with bile, or purple with wrath, looks equivalent to words of curse and spittle of poison, ill-feeling fomenting everywhere, desire to ill-treat the Christ, which remains a mere desire only because of fear of the many people surrounding the Master with affection and who are ready for anything in order to defend Him, and perhaps because of fear of punishment by Rome, benign towards the meek Galilean Master.

Jesus calmly resumes clarifying His thought by means of a parable: « A man, who was about to set out on a long journey, and thus be away for a long time, called all his servants and committed all his wealth to them. He gave some of them five silver talents, some two silver talents, some only one gold talent: each according to his position and capability. And then he left. Now the servant who had received five silver talents, negotiated them diligently and after some time they brought him five more. The servant who had received two silver talents, did the same and doubled the amount received. But the servant to whom the master had given most, one talent of pure gold, was seized with fear that he might not be successful, with the fear of thieves and of many fanciful conceptions and above all with laziness, and he dug a deep hole in the ground and hid his master's money in it.

Many months went by and the master came back. He immediately called his servants to give back the money committed to them. The one who had received five silver talents came and said: "Here, my Lord. You gave me five. As I thought it was wrong not to make what you had given me yield some profit, I did my best and I gained five more talents. I was not able to do more... ... Well, very well, my good faithful servant. You have been faithful, willing and honest in little. I will give you authority over much. Come and join in your master's happiness". Next came the man of two talents and said: "I have taken the liberty of making use of your money to your own profit. Here is the account of how I used your money. See? There were two talents, now there are four. Are you glad, my lord?". And the master gave the good servant the same reply given to the first one.

Last came the one who enjoyed the greatest confidence of the master and had received a gold talent from him. He took it out of the casket and said: "You gave me the greatest value because you know that I am wise and loyal, as I know that you are uncompromising and exacting and will not tolerate loss of your money,

but if misfortune befalls you, you make it up with those who are close to you. In actual fact you reap where you have not sown and you harvest where you have not scattered seed and you do not remit a penny to your banker or to your steward for any reason whatever. Your money must be as much as you say. Now, as I was afraid of reducing the value of this treasure, I took it and hid it. I trusted nobody, not even myself. I have now dug it up and I give it back to you. Here is your talent".

"O unjust lazy servant! Really, you have not loved me, because you have not known me and you have not loved my welfare, because you left it inactive. You have betrayed the confidence I had in you and you belie, accuse and condemn yourself by yourself. You knew that I reap where I have not sown and I harvest where I have scattered no seed. Why, then, did you not ensure that I could reap and harvest? Is that how you come up to my confidence? Is that how you know me? Why did you not take the money to a banker, so that I might draw it on my return with its interest? I diligently instructed you how to do that and you, silly lazy servant, took no heed of what I told you. Your talent and everything else will be taken off you and given to the man of the ten talents".

"But he already has ten, while this man is deprived of it... " they objected.

"And that is right. He who has and works with what he has, will be given more and even in excess. But he who has nothing, because he did not want anything, will be deprived also of what was given to him. With regard to the useless servant who betrayed my confidence and left inactive the gifts I had given him, throw him out of my property and let him go and weep and eat his heart out".

That is the parable. As you see, rabbi, he who had most was left with less, because he did not deserve to keep the gift of God. And it is not necessarily true that one of those whom you call a disciple only by name, having thus little to negotiate, or even one of those who listen to me only by accident, as you say, and have only their souls as money, cannot be successful in getting the gold talent and the interest of it, which will be taken from one who had been given most. The surprises of the Lord are endless because the reactions of man are endless. You will see Gentiles reaching eternal life and Samaritans possessing Heaven, and you will see pure Israelites and followers of Mine losing Heaven and eternal Life. »

Jesus becomes silent as if He wished to put an end to the debate and He turns towards the enclosure of the Temple.

But a doctor of the Law, who had sat down listening gravely under the porch, gets up and standing in His way, asks Him: « Master, what must I do to gain eternal life? You have replied to others, please reply to me as well. »

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« Why do you want to tempt Me? Why do you want to lie? Are you hoping that I may say something different from the Law because I add brighter and more perfect ideas to it? What is written in the Law? Tell Me! What is the first commandment of the Law? » « "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, with all your intelligence. You shall love your neighbour as yourself ". »

« Your reply is correct. Do that and you will have eternal life. »

« And who is my neighbour? The world is full of good and of wicked people, known and unknown, friendly and hostile to Israel. Which is my neighbour? »

« A man going from Jerusalem down to Jericho through the mountain gorges, ran into highwaymen, who after wounding him severely, despoiled him of all his belongings and his very clothes and left him more dead than alive on the edge of the road.

A priest, who had finished his turn at the Temple, travelled down the same road. Oh! He was still smelling of the incense of the Holy! And his soul should have been scented with supernatural kindness and love, after being in the House of God, almost in touch with the Most High. The priest was in a hurry to get back home. So he looked at the wounded man but did not stop. He passed by hurriedly leaving the poor man on the edge of the road.

A Levite passed by. Should he become contaminated who must serve in the Temple? Never! He gathered his tunic so that it might not get stained with blood, he cast a glance over the man moaning in his blood and quickened his pace towards Jerusalem, towards the Temple.

Third came a Samaritan, who was travelling from Samaria towards the ford. He noticed the blood, he stopped, saw the wounded man in the deepening twilight, he dismounted and approached the wounded man, whom he gave a sip of strong and generous wine, he then tore his mantle to make bandages, and gently dressed the man's wounds after bathing them with vinegar and applying oil to them. He mounted the man on his horse and carefully led the animal, supporting the man at the same time, comforting him with kind words, without worrying about all the trouble or being annoyed because the man was of Jewish nationality. When he arrived in town, he took him to an inn, watched over him during the night and at dawn, seeing that he was better, he entrusted him to the innkeeper, paying him in advance with some denarii and saying: "Look after him as you would look after me. On my way back I will make good any extra expense you have, with a good measure, if you do everything well". And he went away.

Tell Me now, doctor of the Law. Which of these three was a neighbour" for the man who had run into highwaymen? The

priest perhaps? Or the Levite perhaps? Or was it not the Samaritan who did not ask who the wounded man was, why he was wounded, whether he was doing the wrong thing by assisting him, wasting time and money and running the risk of being taken for his wounder? »

The doctor of the Law replies: « The last one, who took pity on him, was his "neighbour". »

« Do the same yourself and you will love your neighbour and God in your neighbour and you will deserve eternal life. »

Nobody dare speak and Jesus takes advantage of the situation to join the women waiting for Him near the enclosure and return to town with them. A couple of priests have now joined the disciples, or rather: a priest and a Levite, a venerable old man the former, a very young one the latter.

Jesus is now speaking to His Mother, having Marjiam in the middle, between Himself and Her. And He asks Her: « Did You hear Me, Mother? »

« Yes, Son, and My sadness has been added to Mary of Clopas'. She wept a little before entering the Temple... »

« I know, Mother. And I know why. But she must not weep, but pray. »

« Oh! She prays so much! In the past nights, in her tent, while her sons were sleeping, she prayed and wept. I could hear her through the thin partition of the branches. To see Joseph and Simon only a few steps away, so close, and yet so divided... ! And she is not the only one to weep. Johanna, who seems so tranquil, has been weeping with Me... »

« Why, Mother? »

« Because Chuza... is behaving... very oddly. At times he seconds her in everything. At times he opposes her in everything. If they are alone where no one can see them, he is the usual exemplary husband. But if there are other people, of the Court naturally, with him, then he becomes dictatorial and disdainful of his meek wife. She does not understand why... »

« I can tell You. Chuza is Herod's servant. Understand Me, Mother. "Servant". I will not tell Johanna, not to hurt her. But that is what he is. When he is not afraid of being blamed or jeered at by his sovereign, he is good Chuza. But when he fears that, he is no longer so. »

« It is because Herod is very angry because of Manaen and... »

« It is because Herod is mad with tardy remorse for yielding to Herodias. But Johanna already has so much happiness in life. Under her coronet, she must wear her cilice. »

« Annaleah also weeps... »

« Why? »

« Because her fiance is going astray... against You. »

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« Tell her not to weep. It is a solution. A grace of God. Her sacrifice will bring Samuel back to Good. For the time being she will be left free from any pressure for marriage. I promised her to take her with Me. She will precede Me in death... »

« Son!... » Mary presses Jesus' hand, while Her face becomes deadly pale.

« Dear Mother! It is for the sake of men. You know. It is for the love of men. Let us drink our chalice with good will. Is that right? »

Mary stifles Her tears and replies: « Yes ». A tortured heartrending « yes ».

Marjiam looks up and says to Jesus: « Why do You say these dreadful things which grieve Mother? I will not let You die. I will defend You as I defended the lambs. »

Jesus caresses him and to raise the spirits of the two distressed ones, He asks the boy: « What will your little sheep be doing now? Do you not miss them? »

« Oh! I am with You! But I always think of them and I wonder: "Will Porphirea have led them to pasture? and will she watch that Foam does not go to the lake?". Foam is so lively, you know? Her mother calls her repeatedly... without avail! She does what she likes. And Snow, she is so greedy that she eats until she is sick. Do You know, Master? I know what it is to be a priest in Your Name. I understand better than the others. They (and he points at the apostles who are coming behind) they say so many big words, they make so many plans... for the future. I say: "I will be a shepherd for men, as I am for sheep. And that will be enough". My Mummy and Yours told me yesterday such a lovely passage of the prophets... and She said to me: "Our Jesus is just like that". And in my heart I said: "I will be like that, too". Then I said to our Mother: "For the time being I am a lamb, later I will be a shepherd. Jesus instead is at present the Shepherd and He is also the Lamb. But You are always a ewe-Lamb, our dear, white, beautiful ewe-Lamb, Whose words are sweeter than milk. That is why Jesus is such a lamb: because He was born of You, the Little Lamb of the Lord". »

Jesus stoops and kisses him fondly. He then asks him: « So you really want to be a priest? »

« Of course, my Lord! That is why I try to become good and learn so much. I always go to John of Endor. He treats me as a man and so kindly. I want to be the shepherd of the sheep both misled and not misled, and the doctor-shepherd of those which are wounded or suffer from fractures, as the Prophet says. Oh! How lovely! » and the boy takes a jump clapping his hands.

« What has this blackcap got that he is so happy? » asks Peter coming forward.

« He sees his way. Very clearly. Until the end. And I consecrate

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his vision with My approval. »

They stop before a high building, which, if I am not mistaken, is near the Ophel district, but in a more refined spot.

« Are we stopping here? »

« This is the house which Lazarus offered Me for our joyful banquet. Mary is already here. »

« Why did she not come with us? For fear of being jeered at? »

« Oh! No! I told her. »

« Why, Lord? »

« Because the Temple is more sensitive than a pregnant wife. As long as I can, and not out of cowardice, I do not want to collide with it. »

« It will be of no use to You, Master. If I were You, I would not only collide with it, but I would hurl it down from Moriah with all those who are in it. »

« You are a sinner, Simon. One must pray for one's fellow creatures, not kill them. »

« I am a sinner. But You are not... and... You ought to do it. »

« There is who will do it. After the measure of sin has been filled. »

« Which measure? »

« A measure that will fill the whole temple, overflowing in Jerusalem. You cannot understand... Oh! Martha! Open your house to the Pilgrim! »

Martha makes herself known and opens the door. They all go into a long hall ending in a paved yard with a single tree in each of the four corners. There is a large hall above the ground floor and from its open windows it is possible to see the whole town with its hills and slopes. I thus realise that the house is in the south or south-east side of the town.

The table has been laid for many guests. Many tables are set in parallel rows. About one hundred people can comfortably have a meal. Mary Magdalene, who was busy in the store room, arrives and prostrates herself before Jesus. Then Lazarus comes in with a happy smile on his drawn face. The guests enter little by little, some seem rather embarrassed, some are more sure of themselves. But the kindness of the women soon makes them all feel at home.

John, the priest, introduces to Jesus the two he has brought from the Temple. « Master, my good friend Jonathan and my young friend Zacharias. They are true Israelites without malice or ill will. »

« Peace be with you. I am happy to have you. The rite must be kept also in these pleasant customs. And it is lovely that the ancient Faith gives a friendly hand to the new Faith which has come from the same origin. Sit beside Me while we wait for dinner time. »

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The patriarchal Jonathan speaks, while the young Levite looks around curiously, and seems amazed and somewhat shy. I think he wants to give himself easy manners, but in actual fact he is like a fish out of water. Fortunately Stephen comes to his aid and brings him, one after the other, the apostles and the main disciples.

The old priest says caressing his white beard: « When John came to me, his master, to show me that he had been cured, I wanted to meet You. But, Master, I hardly ever leave my enclosure. I am old... But I was hoping to see You before dying. And Jehovah has heard me. May He be praised! Today I heard You in the Temple. You excel the old wise Hillel. I do not want to doubt, nay, I cannot doubt that You are what my heart is expecting. But do You know what it is to have imbibed for almost eighty years the faith of Israel as it has become through centuries of... human handling? It has become our blood. And I am so old! To hear You is like hearing the water that gushes out of a cool spring. Oh! yes! A virgin water! But I... I am full of the tired water which comes from so far away... and has been made heavy by so many things. How can I get rid of that saturation and enjoy You? »

« By believing and loving Me. Nothing else is required for just Jonathan. »

« But I will die soon! Shall I have time to believe everything You say? I shall not even be able to follow all Your words or learn them from other people. Then? »

« You will learn them in Heaven. Only a damned soul dies to Wisdom. But he who dies in the grace of God draws life and lives in Wisdom. Whom do you think I am? »

« You can but be the Expected One, Whom the son of my friend Zacharias foreran. Did You meet him? »

« He was a relative of Mine. »

« Oh! So You are a relative of the Baptist? »

« Yes, priest. »

« He is dead... and I cannot say: "Poor man!". Because he died faithful to justice, after accomplishing his mission and because... Oh! The dreadful times we live in! Is it not better to go back to Abraham? »

« Yes. But more dreadful times will come, priest. »

« Do You think so? Rome, eh? »

« Not only Rome. Guilty Israel will be the first cause. »

« It is true. God is striking us. We deserve it. But also Rome Have You heard of the Galileans killed by Pilate while they were offering a sacrifice? Their blood mingled with the victim's. Close to the very altar! »

« Yes, I heard about it. »

All the Galileans begin to riot because of that act of tyranny. They shout: « It is true that he was a false Messiah. But why kill his

followers after striking him? And why at that moment? Were they bigger sinners perhaps? »

Jesus brings about peace and then says: « You are asking whether they were bigger sinners than many other Galileans and whether that is why they were killed? No, they were not. I tell you solemnly that they paid and many more will pay if you do not turn to the Lord. If you do not do penance, you will all perish alike, both in Galilee and elsewhere. God is indignant with His people. I tell you. You must not think that those who have been struck are the worst. Each of you should examine and judge himself, and no one else. Also the eighteen people on whom the tower of Siloam fell and killed them, were not the most guilty in Jerusalem. I tell you. Do penance if you do not want to be crushed as they were, also in your souls. Come, priest of Israel. The meal is ready. It is your duty to offer and bless the food, because a priest is always to be honoured for the Idea which he represents and calls to our minds, and it is your duty because you are a patriarch among us, and we are all younger than you are. »

« No, Master! No! I cannot do that in Your presence! You are the Son of God! »

« You do offer incense before the altar! And do you perhaps not believe that God is there? »

« Yes, I do believe that! With all my strength! »

« Well, then? If you are not afraid of offering in the presence of the Most Holy Glory of the Most High, why should you be afraid in the presence of the Merciful One, Who took upon Himself human flesh to bring to you also the blessing of God before night comes to you? Oh! You people of Israel do not know that I covered with the veil of flesh My unendurable Divinity, so that man might approach God and not die thereof. Come, believe and be happy. I revere in you all the holy priests, from Aaron down to him who will be the last priest of Israel with Justice, you, perhaps, because priestly holiness really is languishing among us, like a forsaken plant. »

281. At the Temple They Are Aware of Ermasteus, of John of Endor and of Syntyche.

21st September 1945.

Jesus is on His way to Bethany with the apostles and disciples and is speaking to the disciples, whom He orders to part, so that the Judaeans will go through Judaea and the Galileans up Trans-Jordan announcing the Messiah.

The instruction raises some objections. I get the impression that Trans-Jordan did not enjoy a very good reputation among Israelites. They talk of it as if it were a pagan region. And that offends the disciples from that area, among whom the most influential

is the head of the synagogue of the Clear Water and then a young man, whose name I do not know, and both vigorously defend their towns and fellow citizens.

Timoneus says: « Come, my Lord, to Aera, and You will see how they respect You there. You will not find as much faith in Judaea, as there is there. Nay, I do not want to go there. Let me stay with You and send a Judaean and a Galilean to my town. They will see how they believed in You on my word only. »

And the young man says: « I believed without even seeing You. And I looked for You after my mother had forgiven me. But I am happy to go back there, although that means being mocked by wicked citizens as I was once, and being reproached by good people for my behaviour in the past. But it does not matter. I will preach You through my example. »

« You are right. You will do as you said. And then I will come. And you, Timoneus, are right, too. So Hermas will go with Abel of Bethlehem in Galilee to announce Me at Aera, while you, Timoneus, will stay with Me. But I do not want such disputes. You no longer are Judaeans or Galileans: you are disciples. That is enough. That name and your mission make you all equal with regard to birthplace, rank, everything. In one thing only you may differ: in holiness. That will be individual and in the measure which each of you will be able to attain. But I would like you all to have the same measure: the perfect one. See the apostles? They were divided like you by race and other things. Now, after a little over a year of instruction, they are simply the apostles. Do the same, and as among you, priests are together with old sinners and rich people with former beggars, and young men with old venerable people, cancel likewise divisions brought about by belonging to this or that region. By now you have one Fatherland only: Heaven. Because you have set off on the way to Heaven each of his own free will. Never give My enemies the impression that you are hostile to one another. Sin is your enemy, nothing else. »

They proceed in silence for some time. Then Stephen approaches the Master and says: « I have something to tell You. I was hoping that You would ask me, but You did not. Yesterday Gamaliel spoke to me... »

« I saw him. »

« Are You not asking me what he told me? »

« I am waiting for you to tell Me, because a good disciple has no secrets from his Master. »

« Gamaliel... Master, come a little ahead with me... »

« Well... let us go. But you could have spoken in the presence of everybody... »

They move away a few yards. Stephen blushing says: « I must give You a piece of advice, Master. Forgive me... »

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« If it is good, I will accept it. Tell Me. »

« In the Sanhedrin, they know everything sooner or later. It is an institution with a thousand eyes and one hundred ramifications. They penetrate everywhere, see everything and hear everything. It has more informers than there are bricks in the walls of the Temple. Many live thus... »

« Spying. You may say so. It is the truth and I know. So? What has been said, more or less true, at the Sanhedrin? »

« Everything... has been said. I do not know how they can find out certain things. Neither do I know whether they are true... But I will tell You literally what Gamaliel told me: "Tell the Master to have Ermasteus circumcised or to send him away for good. It is not necessary to say anything else". »

« In fact it is not necessary to say anything else. First of all because I am going to Bethany just for that and I will remain there until Ermasteus is fit to travel again. Secondly because no justification could demolish the prejudice and... standoffishness of Gamaliel, who is scandalised because I have with Me a man who is not circumcised in a member of his body. Oh! if he looked around and within himself! How many uncircumcised people in Israel! »

« But Gamaliel... »

« He is the perfect representative of old Israel. He is not wicked, but... Look at this pebble. I could split it, but I could not make it malleable. He is like that. He will have to be crushed in order to be recomposed. And I will do that! »

« Do You want to oppose Gamaliel? Be careful! He is powerful! »

« Oppose? As if he were an enemy? No. Instead of fighting against him, I will love him, satisfying one of his desires for his mummified brains and spreading on him a balm which will dissolve him to recompose him. »

« I will pray also that that may happen, because I am fond of him. Am I wrong? »

« No. You must love him by praying for him. And you will do that. I am sure you will. Nay, you will help Me to prepare the balm... However, you will tell Gamaliel, to calm him, that I had already provided for Ermasteus and that I am grateful to him for his advice. Here we are at Bethany. Let us stop so that I may bless you all, because this is where we part. » And after joining the large group of apostles mingled with disciples, He blesses and dismisses them all, with the exception of Ermasteus, John of Endor and Timoneus. Then with the disciples left Jesus walks at a good pace the short distance to Lazarus' gate, which is already wide open to receive Him, He enters the garden raising His hand to bless the hospitable house, in the large park of which are the owners of the house and the pious women, who are laughing at Marjiam running along the paths adorned with the last roses. And with the owners

and the women, also Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus come out of a path, when they hear the women shout; they also are guests of Lazarus, to be in peace with the Master. And they all make haste towards the Master; Mary with Her kind smile, and Mary of Magdala with her cry of love: « Rabboni! », and Lazarus limping, the two grave members of the Sanhedrin, and last, the pious women of Jerusalem and of Galilee: wrinkle-furrowed faces and smooth faces of young women and, as gentle as the face of an angel, the virginal face of Annaleah, who blushes in greeting the Master.

« Is Syntyche not here? » asks Jesus after the first greeting.

« She is with Sarah, Marcella and Naomi laying the tables. But here they are coming. »

And they come, in fact, with old Esther of Johanna, two faces marked by age and by sorrow, between two serene faces and the grave yet bright peaceful face of the Greek girl, different by race and by something which distinguishes her.

And I could not say that she is a real and true beauty. And yet her dark eyes softened by a nuance of very deep indigo, under a high and very noble forehead, are more impressive than her body, which is definitely more beautiful than her face. A slender but not meagre body, which is well proportioned and has a graceful gait and carriage. But it is her expression that strikes one. An intelligent, frank, deep look, which seems to inhale the whole world, selecting it, keeping what is useful, holy, good, and rejecting what is evil; a look which allows its very depths to be searched and from which her soul looks out to scan those approaching her. If it is true that it is possible to know an individual through his eyes, I say that Syntyche is a woman with unerring judgement and firm honest thoughts. She kneels also with the other women and waits to stand up until the Master tells her.

Jesus proceeds along the green garden as far as the porch before the house and then enters a hall where the servants are ready to serve refreshments and assist guests in the ablutions before meals. While all the women withdraw Jesus remains with the apostles in the hall, and John of Endor and Ermasteus go to the house of Simon Zealot to leave the bags they are carrying.

« Is the young fellow who has gone with John, the one-eyed man, the Philistine whom You have accepted? » asks Joseph.

« Yes, Joseph, he is. How do you know? »

« Master... Nicodemus and I have been wondering for some days how we know and how, unfortunately, the others of the Temple know about it. The fact is that we do know, Before the Tabernacles, in the meeting which is always held before such festivities, some Pharisees said that they knew for certain that among Your disciples, beside... - forgive me, Lazarus - known and unknown

prostitutes and publicans - forgive me, Matthew of Alphaeus and former galley-slaves, there were an uncircumcised Philistine and a heathen girl. With regard to the heathen girl, who is certainly Syntyche, one can understand how it became known, or at least guess so. The Roman made a great fuss about her and he became the laughing stock of his people and of the Jews, also because he searched for his runaway everywhere, complaining and threatening, and he even troubled Herod saying that she was hiding in Johanna's house and that the Tetrarch should order his steward to hand her back to her master. But it is strange, very strange that it should be known that among the many men who follow You, there is an uncircumcised Philistine, and a former galley-slave!... Do You not think so? »

« It is and it is not strange. I will provide for Syntyche and the former galley-slave. »

« Yes, do. Above all You ought to send John away. Your group of apostles is not a place for him. »

« Joseph, have you perhaps become a Pharisee? » asks Jesus severely.

« No... but... »

« And should I humiliate a soul which has been regenerated, because of the silly scruple of the worst Pharisaism? No, I will not! I will provide for his tranquillity. His, not Mine, I will watch over his perfecting as I watch over innocent Marjiam's. Really there is no difference in their spiritual ignorance! One speaks for the first time words of wisdom, because God has forgiven him, because he is re-born in God, because God has embraced the sinner. The other speaks the same words, passing from a forlorn childhood to a boyhood, watched over by the love of man beside the love of God, and opens his soul to the sun like a corolla and the Sun enlightens him with Himself. His Sun: God. And one is about to speak his last words... Can your eyes not see that he is wearing himself out with penance and love? Oh! I would really like to have many Johns of Endor in Israel and among My servants. I would like you, too, Joseph and you, Nicodemus, to have hearts like his and above all I wish his informer had it, the vile snake that hides under the appearance of a friend and is acting as a spy before becoming an assassin. The snake that envies the bird its wings, and lays snares for it to tear them off and enthrall it. No! The bird is about to change into an angel. And even if it could tear them off, which it will never be able to do, once they were put on to its slimy body, they would change into wings of a devil. Every spy is already a devil. »

« But where can such a rogue be? Tell me so that I may go at once and tear his tongue out » exclaims Peter.

« You had better pull his poisonous teeth out » says Judas of

Alphaeus.

« No! It's better to strangle him! So he will not be able to hurt in any way. Such people can always be harmful » remarks the Iscariot firmly.

Jesus stares at him and concludes: « ... and can always lie. But no one must do anything against him. It is not worth while letting the bird perish, to deal with the snake. With regard to Ermasteus, I am staying here, in Lazarus' house, just for the circumcision of Ermasteus himself, who is embracing the holy religion of our people for My sake and to avoid the persecution of narrow-minded Jews. It is the passage from dark to Light. But it is not necessary to make Light come to a heart. But I have agreed to calm down the susceptibility of Israel and to show the true will of the Philistine to come to God. But I tell you, in the times of Christ, that is not necessary to belong to God. Will, love, and a righteous conscience are sufficient. And how can we circumcise the Greek woman? In which part of her spirit, if she was able to perceive God better than many people in Israel? It is true- that among the people present many are in dankness as compared to those who are despised by you for being in darkness. In any case, both the informer and you, members of the Sanhedrin, can tell the people concerned that the scandal has been removed as from today. »

« With regard to whom? To all three? »

« No, Judas of Simon. With regard to Ermasteus. I will see to the other two. Have you anything else to ask Me? »

« No, Master. »

« Neither have I anything else to tell you. But I ask you to tell Me, if you know, what has happened to Syntyche's master. »

« Pilate shipped him back to Italy by the first boat available, to avoid having trouble with Herod and the Jews in general. Pilate is in a tight corner at present... and has enough worries » says Nicodemus.

« Is the news certain? »

« I can check on it, if You wish so, Master » says Lazarus.

« Yes. Do so. And then let Me know the true situation. »

« But in my house Syntyche is safe just the same. »

« I know. Israel also protects a slave who has run away from a foreign cruel master. But I want to know. »

« And I would like to know who is the spy, the informer, the pretty spy of the Pharisees... and I want to know, and this can be found out, who are the denouncing Pharisees. Let us have the names of the Pharisees and of their towns. I mean of the Pharisees who have done the lovely work of informing, following the betrayal of one of us, because we, old and new disciples, are the only ones to know things; a fine piece of work indeed it was to inform the Sanhedrin of the deeds of the Master, which are thoroughly honest, and who

says or thinks the contrary is a devil and »

« And that is enough, Simon of Jonah. It is an order. »

« And I obey, even if the veins of my heart should burst because of the effort. In the meantime the beauty of the day has gone »

« No. Why? Has anything changed among us? So? O My Simon! Come here beside Me and let us talk of what is good »

« They have come to tell us that dinner is ready, Master » says Lazarus.

« Let us go, then »

282. Syntyche Speaks in Lazarus' House.

22nd September 1945.

Jesus is sitting in the porched courtyard, which is inside the house in Bethany, the courtyard which I saw crowded with disciples on the morning of Christ's Resurrection. Sitting on a marble seat covered with cushions, leaning with His back against the wall of the house, surrounded by the owners of the house, by the apostles and the disciples John and Timoneus, together with Joseph and Nicodemus, and by the pious women, He is listening to Syntyche, who standing in front of Him, seems to be replying to a question of His. All the people present are more or less interested and are listening in various postures, some sitting on benches, some on the floor, some standing or leaning against the columns or the wall.

« ... it was necessary. In order not to feel all the burden of my situation. It was necessary not to be convinced, to refuse to be convinced that I was all alone, a slave banished from my fatherland. It was necessary to think that my father, mother, brothers and the so fond and kind Ismene were not lost for ever. And that, even if the whole world persisted in separating us, just as Rome had divided and sold us like baggage animals, although we were free citizens, a place would gather us all together again in the next life.

I had to think that our life is not only matter to be chained. On the contrary it has a free power that no chain can bind, except the voluntary one to live in moral disorder and in material revel. You call that "sin". Those who were my light in my night as a slave, give it a different definition. But they also agree that a soul nailed to a body by wicked corporal passions will not reach what you call the Kingdom of God, and we call living together with the gods in Hades. It is therefore necessary to abstain from falling into materialism and strive to achieve freedom from the body, procuring for oneself a heritage of virtue in order to possess a happy immortality and be reunited to those whom one loves.

And I could but think that the souls of the dead are not prevented from helping the souls of the living, so that a daughter could feel her mother's soul close to her and see her face and hear

her voice speaking to the daughter, who could reply: "Yes, mother. So that I may come to you. Yes, not to upset you. Yes, not to make you weep. Yes, in order not to darken Hades where you are in peace. For all that I will keep my soul free. It is the only thing which I possess and which nobody can take away from me. And I want to preserve it pure so that I may reason according to virtue". It was freedom and joy to think thus. And that is what I wanted to think. And act accordingly. Because it is only a half and sham philosophy to think one way and then act in a different one.

To think thus was to rebuild a fatherland also in exile. An intimate fatherland, with its altars, faith, teaching, affections in one's ego... A great mysterious fatherland, yet not even so, because of the mystery of the soul which is consciously aware of the next world, even if at present it knows it only as a sailor at sea can see the details of the sea-coast in a misty morning: vaguely, in a rough draft, with only a few spots clearly outlined and which are enough for the tired seaman tortured by storms to say: "There is the harbour, peace is over there". The fatherland of souls, the place of our origin... the place of Life.

Because life is generated by death... Oh! I could understand only half of that until I heard one of Your words. Later it was as if a sunbeam struck the diamond of my thought. Everything became enlightened and I understood to what extent the Greek masters were right and how later they became confused, as they lacked one datum, only one, to solve the theorem of Life and Death. The datum was: The True God, the Lord and Creator of everything existing!

May I mention Him with my heathen lips? Of course I may. Because I come from Him, like everybody else. Because He gifted the minds of all men with intelligence, and the wiser ones with a superior intelligence, whereby they seem demigods with a superhuman power. Because He made them write the truths which are already religion, if not a divine religion like Yours, a moral one, capable of keeping souls "alive", not only for the period of time we remain here, on the earth, but for ever.

Later I understood the meaning of: "Life is generated by death". He who said that was like one not completely drunk, whose intelligence had already become dullish. He spoke a sublime word, but did not understand it fully. I, forgive me my pride, Lord, I understood more than he did and I have been happy since that moment. »

« What did you understand? »

« That our present life is but the embryonal beginning of life and that true Life begins when death gives birth to us... to Hades, as a heathen, to eternal Life, as a believer in You. Am I wrong? »

« You are right, woman » approves Jesus.

Nicodemus interrupts: « But how did you hear of the Master's

words? »

« He who is hungry, seeks food, sir. I was looking for my food. I was a reader, and as I was learned with a good voice and pronunciation, I was in a position to read much in the libraries of my masters. But I was not yet satisfied. I could feel that there was something else beyond the walls decorated with human science, and as a prisoner looking for gold, I hammered with my knuckles, I forced doors open to get out, to find... When I came to Palestine with my last master I was afraid I was going to fall into darkness... I was going instead towards the Light. The words of the servant at Caesarea were like as many blows with a pick which demolished the walls making wider and wider breaches through which Your Word came in. And I picked up those words and the news. And like a child stringing beads, I lined them up and adorned myself with them, drawing strength to become more and more purified in order to receive the Truth. I felt that by purifying myself I would find it. Even on this earth. At the cost of my life I wanted to be pure to meet the Truth, Wisdom, Divinity. My Lord, I am speaking foolish words. They are looking at me as if they were thoroughly confounded. But You asked me... »

« Speak. Go on speaking. It is necessary. »

« I resisted external pressure with strength and moderation. I could have been free and happy, according to the world, if I had wanted. But I would not barter knowledge for pleasure. Because it is of no avail to have other virtues without wisdom. He, the philosopher, said: "Justice, moderation and strength separated from knowledge are like painted scenery, virtues befitting slaves, without anything firm and real". I wanted to have real things. The master, an imbecile, used to speak of You in my presence. Then the walls seemed to become a veil. It was enough to want to tear the veil and join the Truth. I did it. »

« You did not know what you were going to find » says the Iscariot.

« I knew how to believe that the god rewards virtue. I did not want gold, or honours, or physical freedom, no, not even that. But I wanted the truth. I asked God for that or to die. I wanted to be spared the humiliation of becoming an "object", and even more, of agreeing to become one. Renouncing everything which is corporal in looking for You, o Lord, because a research through senses is never perfect - as You noticed when seeing You I ran away, deceived as I was by my eyes - I abandoned myself to God Who is above us and within us and informs souls of Himself. And I found You because my soul led me to You. »

« Yours is a heathen soul » remarks once again the Iscariot.

« But a soul always has something divine within itself, particularly when it has striven to be preserved from error... It therefore tends to things of its own nature. »

3-1317

« Are you comparing yourself to God? »

« No. »

« Why do you say that, then? »

« What? Are you, a disciple of the Master, asking me? Me, a Greek woman and only recently freed? Do you not listen to Him when He speaks? Or is the ferment in your body such that it blunts your mind? Does He not always say that we are the children of God? So we are gods if we are the children of the Father, of His and our Father, of Whom He always speaks to us. You may reproach me for not being humble, but not for not believing or not paying attention. »

« So you think that you are worth more than I am? Do you think that you have learned everything from your Greek books? »

« No, neither one nor the other. But the books of wise men, wherever they come from, have given me the minimum necessary to support myself. I do not doubt that an Israelite is worth more than I am. But I am happy with the destiny which comes to me from God. What else could I wish for? In finding the Master I found everything. And I think that was my destiny, because I really see a Power watch over me and it has fixed a great destiny for me and I have done nothing but comply with it, as I feel it is a good one. »

« Good? You have been a slave, and of cruel masters... If the last one, for instance, had recaptured you, how could you have complied with your destiny, you very wise woman? »

« Your name is Judas, is it not? »

« Yes, and so? »

« And so... nothing. I want to remember your name besides your irony. Bear in mind that irony is not advisable even in virtuous people... How would I have complied with my destiny? Perhaps I would have killed myself. Because in certain cases it is better to die than to live, although the philosopher says that that is not right and it is impious to procure welfare by oneself because only the gods have the right to call us to stay with them. And this waiting for a sign of the gods to do it, has always kept me from doing it, even in the chains of my sad fate. But now, in being recaptured by my filthy master, I would have seen the supreme sign. And I would have preferred to die rather than live. I, too, have my dignity, man. »

« And if he recaptured you now? You would still be in the same situation... »

« Now I would not kill myself. Now I know that violence against the flesh does not injure the spirit that does not consent. I would now resist until I were bent by force and killed by violence. Because I would take that as a sign from God that through such violence He would call me to Himself. And I would now die tranquilly, knowing that I would be only losing what is perishable. »

3-1318

« You have replied very well, woman » says Lazarus and Nicodemus gives his approval as well.

« Suicide is never allowed » says the Iscariot.

« Many are the things which are forbidden, but the prohibition is not complied with. But, Syntyche, you must consider that as God has always guided you, so He would have prevented you from doing violence to yourself. Go now. I will be grateful to you if you look for the boy and bring him here » says Jesus kindly.

The woman bows to the ground and goes away. They all follow her with their eyes.

Lazarus whispers: « She is always like that! I fail to understand how what in her has been "life" is instead "death" for us Israelites. If You still have the chance of examining her again, You will see that whilst Hellenism corrupted us, though we already possessed Wisdom, it saved her. Why? »

« Because the ways of the Lord are wonderful. And He opens them to whoever deserves it. And now, My friends, I will dismiss you because night is falling. I am happy that you all have heard the Greek woman speak. As you have ascertained that God reveals Himself to the best people, you must conclude that it is hideous and dangerous to exclude all those who are not Israelites from the people of God. Bear that in mind for the future... Do not grumble, Judas of Simon. And you, Joseph, do not have unjustified scruples. None of you are contaminated for approaching a Greek woman. Make absolutely sure that you do not approach or give hospitality to the devil. Goodbye, Joseph; goodbye, Nicodemus. Will I be able to meet you again, while I am here? Here is Marjiam... Come, boy, say goodbye to the heads of the Sanhedrin. What do you say to them? »

« Peace be with you... and I say also: pray for me at the hour of incense. »

« You have no need for that, child. But why just at that hour? »

« Because the first time I entered the Temple with Jesus, He spoke to me of the evening prayer... Oh! It is so beautiful!... »

« And will you pray for us? When? »

« I will pray... in the morning and in the evening. That God may preserve you from sin during the day and the night. »

« And what will you say, my child? »

« I will say: "Most High Lord, let Joseph and Nicodemus be true friends of Jesus". And that will be enough, because he who is a true friend, does not grieve his friend. And he who does not grieve Jesus is sure to possess Heaven. »

« May God preserve you thus, child! » say the two members of the Sanhedrin caressing him. They then greet the Master, the Blessed Virgin and Lazarus individually and all the others in a body and go away.

3-1319

283. The Mission of Four Apostles in Judaea.

23rd September 1945.

Jesus is on His way back from an apostolic trip in the neighbourhood of Bethany. It must have been a short trip, because they are not carrying any food bags.

They are speaking to one another saying: « The idea of Solomon, the boatman, was a good one, Master, wasn't it? »

« Yes, it was. »

The Iscariot, of course, disagrees with the others: « I do not see much good in it. He gave us what is no longer of any use to him as a disciple. There is no reason why he should be praised... »

« A house is always useful » says the Zealot gravely.

« Yes, if it were like yours. But what is his house? An unhealthy shanty. »

« It is all Solomon has » retorts the Zealot.

« And as he grew old in it without aches and pains, we shall be able to stay there now and again. What do you expect? All the houses to be like Lazarus'? » adds Peter.

« I do not expect anything. I cannot see the necessity of that gift. Once you are there you can be in Jericho just as well. There are only a few stadia between the two places. And what are a few stadia for the like of us, who are compelled to wander about all the time, like persecuted people? »

Jesus intervenes before the others lose all patience as clear signs indicate is about to happen: « Solomon, in proportion to his riches, has given more than anybody else. Because he has given everything. He gave it out of love. He gave it to let us have a shelter in case we are caught in the rain, or in a flood, in that not very hospitable area and above all in case the Judaean ill-will should become so strong as to advise us to stay on the other side of the river. And that is with regard to the gift. That a humble, coarse but so faithful and willing disciple has been able to be so generous, which is clear evidence of his firm will to be a disciple of Mine for good, fills Me with great joy. I can truly see that many disciples, with the few lessons which they have received from Me, have excelled you who have received so many. You cannot sacrifice, particularly you, Judas, even what costs nothing: your personal opinions. You maintain yours stubbornly, unyieldingly. »

« You said that the struggle against oneself is the hardest... »

« And thus you want to tell Me that I am wrong when I say that it costs nothing. Is that right? But you have understood perfectly well what I mean! According to men, and you really are a true and proper man, only what is marketable is valuable. One's ego cannot be sold for money. Except... when a man sells himself to someone hoping to make a profit. An illicit trade like the one stipulated by a soul with Satan, even worse. Because it involves not only the

soul but also man's thoughts, or judgement or freedom, you may call it as you like. There are some wretched people like that... But for the time being, let us forget about them. I praised Solomon because I see how good his deed is. And that is enough. »

There is silence, then Jesus resumes speaking: « In a few days' time Ermasteus will be able to walk without any trouble. And I will go back to Galilee. But you will not all come with Me. Some will remain in Judaea and will come up later with the Judaean disciples, so that we shall all be reunited for the feast of the Dedication. »

« Such a long time? Oh dear! Whose turn will it be? » the apostles ask one another.

Jesus hears their whispering and replies: « It will be the turn of Judas of Simon, of Thomas, Bartholomew and Philip. But I did not say that you will have to be in Judaea until the feast of the Dedication. On the contrary I want you to gather the disciples and inform them to be there for the feast of the Dedication. So you will now go and look for them, gather them together and tell them; in the meantime you will watch over them and assist them and later you will come up after Me, bringing with you those you have found, and leaving instructions for the others to come. We have now friends in the main places in Judaea and they will do us the favour of informing the disciples. And on your way up to Galilee through Trans-Jordan, remember that I will be going through Gerasa, Bozrah, Arbela, as far as Aera, and collect also those who did not dare to come to Me asking for a miracle or doctrine, and later have regretted not doing so. Bring them to Me. I will stay in Aera until you arrive. »

« In that case we had better go at once » says the Iscariot.

« No, you will leave the evening before My departure and will stay with Jonah at Gethsemane until the following day, and then you will set out for Judaea. You will thus be able to see your mother and help her just now that she is selling her farm produce. »

« She learned to do that by herself years ago. »

« Don't you remember that last year she could not do without you at vintage time? » asks Peter rather slyly.

Judas becomes as red as a poppy and looks ugly in his anger and shame. But Jesus provides against any possible reply by saying: « A son is always of help and comfort to his mother. She will not see you again until Passover and after Passover. So go and do as I tell you. »

Judas does not reply to Peter, but he gives vent to his anger against Jesus: « Master, do You know what I must tell You? That I am under the impression that You want to get rid of me, or at least keep me away from You, because You suspect me and You wrongly think that I am guilty of something, because You lack charity

towards me, because... »

« Judas! That is enough! I could tell you many words. But I say only: " Obey! " » Jesus is majestic in saying so. Tall as He is, with shining eyes and severe countenance, He strikes everybody with fear...

And Judas trembles. He goes behind all the apostles, while Jesus, all alone, walks ahead of them. The speechless apostolic group is thus between them.

284. Jesus Leaves Bethany for Trans-Jordan.

24th September 1945.

« Lazarus, My dear friend, I ask you to come with Me » says Jesus appearing at the door of the hall where Lazarus is reading a roll, half reclining on a little bed.

« I will come at once, Master. Where are we going? » asks Lazarus getting up immediately.

« Into the country. I need to be all alone with you. »

Lazarus looks at Him with a worried expression and asks: « Have You sad news to give me secretly? Or... No, I do not even want to think of that... »

« No, I only wish to seek advice from you and not even the air must be aware of what we shall say. Order a wagon, because I do not want you to get tired. When we are out in the open country I will speak to you. »

« In that case I will drive it myself. So no servant will know what we say. »

« Yes, do that. »

« I am going at once, Master. I'll soon be ready » and he goes out.

Jesus also goes out after standing somewhat pensive in the middle of the magnificent hall. While engrossed in thought, He mechanically moves two or three objects and picks up a roll which had fallen on to the floor, and when putting it in its place in a cabinet, because of His inborn instinct for order, which is so deeply rooted in Jesus, He remains with His arm raised, looking at the strange art of some objects lined up in the cabinet, which are different from the current art in Palestine. By the embossed work and design imitating the ornaments of the temples of ancient Greece and of funeral urns, they appear to be very old amphoras and cups. What He sees beyond the articles themselves, I do not know... He leaves the hall and goes into the inner yard, where the apostles are.

« Where are we going, Master? » they ask when they see Jesus tidy His mantle.

« Nowhere. I am going with Lazarus. You will stay here and wait for Me. I shall soon be back. »

The Twelve look at one another. They are not very happy...

Peter says: « Are You going alone? Be careful... »

« Do not be afraid. While waiting, do not be idle. Teach Ermasteus, that he may have a better knowledge of the Law and be good company to one another, without arguments or rudeness. Bear with and love one another. »

He sets out towards the garden and they all follow Him. A closed cart soon arrives with Lazarus in it.

« Are You going in that cart? »

« Yes, so that Lazarus may not tire his legs. Goodbye, Marjiam. Be good. Peace to you all. »

He climbs into the cart, which grinding the pebbles of the avenue leaves the garden and turns into the main road.

« Are You going to the Clear Water, Master? » Thomas shouts after Him.

« No, I am not. Once again I tell you to be good. »

The horse starts at a steady trot. The road going from Bethany to Jericho runs through the country, which is becoming bare. The more they descend towards the plain, the more the fading of the greenery in the fields becomes noticeable.

Jesus is pensive. Lazarus is silent and intent only on driving the cart. When they are down in the plain, a fertile plain, which is ready to nourish the seed of future corn, and where all the vineyards seem to be asleep, like a woman who has recently given birth to her fruit and is resting after her pleasant labour, Jesus beckons Lazarus to stop. Lazarus stops at once and leads the horse into a side road, which takes to houses far away... and he explains: « We shall be safer here than on the main road. These trees will conceal us from the eyes of many people. » In fact a thicket of low trees acts as a screen against the curiosity of passers-by. Lazarus is standing before Jesus, waiting.

« Lazarus, I must send away John of Endor and Syntyche. You can see that both prudence and charity advise Me to do so. It would be a dangerous test and useless grief for both of them to be aware of the persecutions set in motion against them... and which, for at least one of them, could bring about most grievous surprises. »

« In my house... »

« No. Not even in your house. Perhaps they would not be troubled materially. But they would be humiliated morally. The world is cruel. It crushes its victims. I do not want those two beautiful and powerful souls to get lost like that. So, as one day I joined Ishmael to Sarah, I will now join My poor John to Syntyche. I want him to die in peace, I do not want him to be left alone, and he must go away feeling that he is being sent elsewhere, not because he was formerly a galley-man, but because he is the proselyte disciple who can be sent away to announce the Master. And Syntyche will help him... She is a beautiful soul and will be a great strength in

the future Church and for the future Church. Can you advise Me where to send them? I do not want them to stay in Judaea or in Galilee and not even in the Decapolis, where I go with My apostles and disciples. Nor in the heathen world. So, where? Where, so that they may be safe and useful? »

« Master... I... how can I give You advice! »

« No, tell Me. You love Me, you do not betray Me, you love those whom I love, you are not narrow-minded like the others. »

« I... well... I would advise You to send them where I have some friends. To Cyprus or to Syria. Make Your choice. I have trustworthy people in Cyprus. And even more in Syria!... I have also a little house, watched over by a manager, who is as faithful as a pet lamb. Our old Philip! He will do for my sake anything I tell him. And, if You do not mind, those who are persecuted by Israel and are dear to You, will be my guests as from now on, and will be safe in the house... Oh! It is not a palace! It is a house where Philip lives alone with a nephew, who looks after the gardens at Antigonium. The beloved gardens of my mother. We have kept them as a remembrance of her. She had taken there the plants of her Judaean gardens... plants of rare essences... Mother!... How much good she did to the poor with them... It was her secret domain... My mother... Master, I will soon be going to say to her: "Rejoice, my good mother. The Saviour is on the earth". She was expecting You... » Tears stream down Lazarus' drawn face. Jesus looks at him and smiles. Lazarus recovers his strength: « But let us speak of You. Do You think it is a good place? »

« I think it is. And I thank you once again, also on their behalf. You have relieved Me of a heavy burden... »

« When will they leave? I am asking so that I may prepare a letter for Philip. I will say that they are two friends of mine, from here, in need of peace. And that will suffice. »

« Yes, that is enough. But, I beg you, not even the air is to be aware of this. You can see that yourself. They are spying upon Me... »

« I know. I will not mention it even to my sisters. But how will You take them there? You have the apostles with You... »

« I will now go up as far as Aera without Judas of Simon, Thomas, Philip and Bartholomew. In the meantime I will teach Syntyche and John thoroughly, so that they may go with large provisions of Truth. I will then go down to lake Merom and later to Capernaum. And when I am there, I will send the four apostles away once again, on some other mission, and in the meantime I will send the two off to Antioch. That is what they are compelling Me to do... »

« To be afraid of Your own people. You are right... Master, it grieves me to see You worried... »

3-1324

« But your kind friendship is of great comfort to Me... Lazarus, I thank you... I am leaving the day after tomorrow and I will be taking your sisters away. I need many women disciples to conceal Syntyche amongst them. Johanna of Chuza also is coming. From Merom she will go to Tiberias, where she will be spending the winter months. Her husband has decided so to have her close to him, because Herod is going back to Tiberias for some time. »

« It will be done as You wish. My sisters are Yours, as I am, as my houses, servants and belongings are. Everything is Yours, Master. Make use of it to do good. I will prepare Your letter for Philip. It is better if I give it to You personally. »

« Thank you, Lazarus. »

« That is all I can do... If I were well... Cure me, Master, and I will come. »

« No, My dear friend... I need you as you are. »

« Even if I do not do anything? »

« Yes, even so. Oh! My Lazarus! » and Jesus embraces and kisses him.

They get on the cart and go back.

Lazarus is now silent and engrossed in thought, and Jesus asks him why.

« I was thinking that I am going to lose Syntyche. I was attracted by her science and goodness... »

« Jesus will gain her... »

« That is very true. When shall I see You again, Master? »

« In spring. »

« Shall I not see You again until spring? Last year You were here with me for the feast of the Dedication. »

« This year I will satisfy the apostles. But next year I will be with you quite a lot. It is a promise. »

Bethany appears in the October sunshine. They are about to arrive when Lazarus stops the horse to say: « Master, You are right in sending away the man from Kerioth. I am afraid of him. He does not love You. I do not like him. I never liked him. He is sensual and greedy. And thus he may commit any sin. Master, it was he who denounced You. »

« Have you any proof? »

« No, I have not. »

« Well, in that case, do not judge. You are not very clever at judging. Remember that you considered your Mary as inexorably lost... Do not say that it was My merit. She sought Me first. »

« That is true, too. However, beware of Judas. »

Shortly afterwards they enter the garden, where the apostles are curiously awaiting them.

3-1325

The absence of four apostles, and above all of Judas, makes the remaining group more intimate and happy. The group which leaves Bethany on a clear October morning on its way to Jericho, to cross to the other side of the Jordan, is just like a family, the heads of which are Jesus and Mary. The women are gathered round Mary, only Annaleah is absent from the group of the women disciples, which comprises the three Maries, Johanna, Susanna, Eliza, Marcella, Sarah and Syntyche. Peter, Andrew, James and Judas of Alphaeus, Matthew, John and James of Zebedee, Simon Zealot, John of Endor, Ermasteus and Timoneus, are grouped round Jesus, while Marjiam jumping about like a little kid, goes to and fro from one group to the other, which are only a short distance apart. Although laden with heavy bags, they proceed joyfully in the mild sunshine, through the country so solemn in its rest.

John of Endor proceeds with some difficulty under the weight hanging from his shoulders.

Peter notices it and says: « Give your useless load to me since you have decided to carry it round. Were you missing it? »

« The Master told me to bring it. »

« Did He? How lovely! Why? »

« I don't know. Yesterday evening He said to me: "Pack your books again and follow Me with them". »

« Lovely indeed!... But if He told you, it must be for a good reason. Perhaps it is for that woman. How accomplished she is! Are you as learned? »

« Almost as much as she is. She is very clever. »

« But you are not going to follow us with this load all the time, eh? »

« Oh! I don't think so. I don't know. But I can carry it myself. »

« No, my dear friend. I don't want you to be taken ill. You are looking very poorly, you know? »

« I know. I feel as if I were dying. »

« Don't be silly! At least wait until we arrive in Capernaum. It is so lovely now that we are by ourselves without that... Curse my tongue! I have failed once again in my promise to the Master!... Master? Master? »

« What do you want, Simon? »

« I have spoken ill of Judas, and I had promised You that I would not do it any more. Forgive me. »

« Yes, I do. But try not to do it again. »

« I still have 489 times to be forgiven by You... »

« What are you talking about, brother? » asks Andrew who is obviously utterly amazed.

And Peter, whose placid countenance is humorously bright, twisting his neck under the weight of John of Endor's bag, exclaims:

« Don't you remember that He said that we have to forgive seventy times seven. So I am still to be forgiven 489 times and I must keep an accurate account of them... »

They all laugh; Jesus cannot help smiling either. But He replies: « You had better keep count of all the times you are capable of being good, you big boy. »

Peter approaches Him and embracing with his right arm Jesus' waist he says: « My dear Master! How happy I am to be with You without... Come on, admit it! You are happy, too... And You know what I mean. We are all friendly here. Your Mother is here. There is also the boy. We are going towards Capernaum. The season is beautiful... Five good reasons to be happy. Oh! And it is beautiful to travel with You! Where are we staying tonight? »

« At Jericho. »

« Last year we met the Veiled woman there. I wonder what has happened to her... I am rather curious to know... And we found also the man of the vineyards... » Peter's laughter is so loud that it is contagious. They all laugh remembering the scene of the meeting with Judas of Kerioth.

« You are really incorrigible, Simon! » remarks Jesus reproachingly.

« I did not say anything, Master. But I had to laugh remembering his countenance when he found us there... in his vineyards... » Peter laughs so wholeheartedly that he is compelled to stop, while the others proceed laughing against their will.

Peter is joined by the women. Mary asks him kindly: « What is the matter with you, Simon? »

« Ah! I cannot tell You or I will be lacking in charity once more. But, Mother, tell me, since You are so wise. If I throw out innuendos against someone, or worse still, if I utter slander about someone, I obviously commit a sin. But if I laugh at something, at an event, which is known to everybody, something which makes people laugh, for instance, if we remember the surprise, the embarrassment and excuses of a liar when he was found out and we laugh again as we did in the past, is that still wrong? »

« It is an imperfection against charity. It is not a sin like backbiting, or slander or innuendo, but it is still lack of charity. It is like a thread pulled out of a piece of cloth. It does not tear or wear the cloth out, but it affects the firmness and beauty of the fabric and makes it subject to tears and holes. Do you not think so? »

Peter rubs his forehead and feeling rather humiliated he replies: « I do. I had never thought of that. »

« Think about it now and do not do it any more. Laughter may be more offensive to charity than slaps in the face. Has someone made a mistake? We have found someone guilty of lying or of other

faults? So? Why remember it? Why remind other people? Let us cover with a veil the faults of our brother, saying: "If I were the culprit, would I like another person to remember my fault or remind other people of it?". There are people who blush in their inmost heart, Simon, and suffer so much because of it. Do not shake your head. I know what you want to say. But, believe Me, also guilty people may blush thus. You must always think: "Would I like that done to me?". You will then see that you will no longer sin against charity. And you will always have so much peace in your heart. Look how happily Marjiam is jumping and singing, because his heart is not worried. He does not have to think about itineraries, expenses or what to say. He knows that someone else takes care of all that on his behalf. Do the same yourself. Abandon everything to God. Also judgement on other people. As long as you can be like a child led by God, why take upon yourself the burden of deciding and judging? The day will come when you must be judge and arbitrator and then you will say: "Oh! How easier and less dangerous it was formerly" and you will say that you were foolish in burdening yourself before the time with so much responsibility. How difficult it is to judge other people! Did you hear what Syntyche said some days ago? "A research through senses is never perfect". She is quite right. We very often judge according to the reactions of our senses. That is, with the utmost imperfection. Give up judging... »

« Yes, Mary. I sincerely promise You. But I do not know all the beautiful things which Syntyche knows! »

« And are you worried about that, man? Do you not know that I want to get rid of all that, in order to have only what you know? »

« Do you? Why? »

« Because science may support you on the earth, but through wisdom you gain Heaven. Mine is science, yours is wisdom. »

« But by means of your science, you were able to come to Jesus! So it is a good thing. »

« It is mixed with so many errors, that I would like to divest myself of it and clothe myself with wisdom only. I do not want ornate vain dresses. Let the severe inconspicuous dress of Wisdom be mine, as it clothes like an everlasting garment not what is corruptible, but what is immortal. The flame of Science flickers and quivers. The flame of Wisdom shines unvaryingly and steadily and is like the Divinity from which it originates. »

Jesus has slackened His pace in order to hear. He turns round and says to the Greek woman: « You must not yearn to divest Yourself of everything you know. But you must select from your knowledge what is a particle of eternal Intelligence conquered by minds of undeniable value. »

« Have, therefore, those minds repeated within themselves the

myth of the fire stolen from the gods? »

« Yes, woman. But it was not stolen in this case. They were able to pick it when the Divinity grazed them with its fire, caressing them as specimens, spread among decayed mankind, of what man is, gifted with reason. »

« Master, You should tell me what I must keep and what I must leave. I would not be a good judge. And then You ought to fill with the light of Your Wisdom, the spaces left empty. »

« That is what I intend doing. I shall point out to you to what extent is wise what you know and I will develop it from that point to the end of the true idea. So that you may know for certain. And that will be useful also to those who are destined to have many contacts with the Gentiles in future. »

« We shall not understand anything, my Lord » moans James of Zebedee.

« You will understand little, for the time being, but one day you will understand both the present lessons and their necessity. And you, Syntyche, will expound to Me those points which are most obscure to you. And I will clarify them when we stop to rest. »

« Yes, my Lord. It is the desire of my soul which merges in Your desire. I am the disciple of the Truth, You the Master. It is the dream of all my life: to possess the Truth. »

285. Arrival at Ramoth with the Merchant from the Other Side of the Euphrates.

25th September 1945.

After walking a long way across a fertile plain on the other side of the Jordan - and it is pleasant to walk in the serene mild season as it is now at the end of October - and after resting in a little village lying at the foot of the lower slopes of a rather bulky chain of mountains, some summits of which can really be called mountains, Jesus sets out once again, following a long caravan of many quadrupeds and well armed men, to whom He had previously spoken while they were watering their animals at the fountains in the square. They are mostly tall swarthy men, with typical Asian features. The head of the caravan is riding a very strong mule and is armed to the teeth and weapons are hanging from his saddle. And yet he had great respect for Jesus.

The apostles ask Jesus: « Who is he? »

« A rich merchant from the other side of the Euphrates. I asked him where he was going and he replied politely. He will be passing through the towns where I intend to go. Which is providential in these mountains, when we have the women with us. »

« Are You afraid of something? »

« I am not afraid of being robbed, as we possess nothing. But it

would be enough to frighten the women. A handful of robbers will never attack so strong a caravan, which will be most useful to us because we shall also find out the best passes and shall be able to cross over the difficult ones. He asked Me: "Are You the Messiah?" and when he heard that I was, he said: "I was in the Courtyard of the Heathens some days ago and I heard You more than I could see You, because I am a small man. Well, I will protect You and You will protect me. I have a very valuable load". »

« Is he a proselyte? »

« I do not think so. But perhaps he is of our extraction. »

The caravan proceeds slowly, as if they did not want to exhaust the strength of the quadrupeds by going too far. It is therefore easy to follow them and sometimes it is necessary to stop as the drivers let the laden animals pass one by one holding them by their halters in the most difficult spots.

Although a true and proper mountainous area, it is fertile and well cultivated. Perhaps the high mountains to the north act as a protection against the cold northern winds or the harmful eastern ones and that helps cultivation. The caravan marches along a stream which flows into the Jordan and is rich in water which comes down from I wonder which top. The view is beautiful and becomes more and more beautiful as one climbs up, stretching westwards across the plain of the Jordan and reaching, beyond it, the graceful hills and mountains of northern Judaea, while to the east and north the view changes continuously, stretching far out and wide, or showing overlapping rounded hills and green or rocky mountain tops, which seem to obstruct the road like the sudden wall of a labyrinth.

The sun is about to set behind the mountains of Judaea, colouring sky and slopes with a deep red, when the rich merchant, who has stopped to let the caravan pass, says to Jesus: « We must reach the village before night. But many of Your people look tired. This is a long hard leg. Let them mount the spare mules. They are quiet animals. In any case they will be resting all night and the weight of a woman is no burden to them. »

Jesus agrees and the man orders the caravan to stop to let the women mount the mules. Jesus makes John of Endor get on horseback as well. And those on foot, including Jesus, hold the reins to make the women feel safer. Marjiam wants to be... a man, and although he is exhausted, he refuses to go on horseback with anyone and he takes one of the reins of the Blessed Virgin's mule, Who is thus between Jesus and the boy, and he walks bravely.

The merchant has remained near Jesus and he says to Mary: « See that village, Donna? That is Ramoth. We will stop there. I am well known at the hotel because I come this way twice a year, and I go along the coast, also twice a year to purchase and sell. My life is a

hard one. But I have twelve children and they are all young. I got married late. The last one was nine days old when I left him. And he will have cut his first teeth when I see him. »

« A lovely family... » comments Mary, and She adds: « May Heaven preserve it for you. »

« As a matter of fact I cannot complain of its help although I do not really deserve it. »

Jesus asks him: « Are you at least a proselyte? »

« I should be... My ancestors were true Israelites. Then... we became acclimatised there... »

« A soul becomes acclimatised in one atmosphere only: in Heaven's. »

« You are right. But You know... My great grandfather married a woman who was not an Israelite. His children became less faithful... The sons of his children once again married women who were not from Israel and their children were respectful only of their Jewish names; because we are of Jewish extraction. Now I, a grandson of grandsons... I am nothing. Being in touch with everybody I have taken after everyone, with the result that I belong to no one. »

« That is not a good reason and I can prove it to you. If going along this road, which you know to be a good one, you should meet five or six people who said to you: "No, don't go this way!", "Go back", "Stop", "Go eastwards", "Turn westwards", what would you do? »

« I would say: "I know that this is the right road and the shortest, and I am not going to leave it ". »

« Likewise: if you are negotiating some business and you know the best way to do it, would you listen to those who either through boasts or interested cunning advised you to act differently? »

« No. I would follow the method which my experience tells me is the best. »

« Very well. Millennia of faith are behind you, a descendant of Israel. You are neither stupid nor uneducated. So why are you influenced by contacts with everybody in matters of faith, whereas you reject them when money or road safety is concerned? Do you not think it is dishonourable also from a human point of view? To place God after money and the road... »

« I do not postpone God. But I have lost sight of Him... »

« Because business, money, your life are your gods. But it is still God Who allows you to have such things... Then, why did you go to the Temple? »

« Out of curiosity. Coming out of a house where I had negotiated some goods, I saw a group of men pay their respects to You and I remembered the words I had heard at Ashkelon from a woman who made carpets. I asked who You were, as I suspected You

might be the One of Whom the woman had spoken to me. And when I found out that it was You, I followed You. I had done my business for that day... Then I lost sight of You. I saw You once again at Jericho. But only for a moment. Now I have found You again... That's it... »

« So God has joined and interlaced our ways. I have no gifts to offer you to thank you for your kindness. But before leaving you I hope to be able to give you a present, unless you leave Me beforehand... »

« No, I will not. Alexander Misace does not take back what he offers! Here we are. The village begins after that turn. I will go ahead. We will meet at the hotel » and he spurs his mule leaving almost at a gallop on the edge of the road.

« He is an honest unhappy man, Son » says Mary.

« And You would like him to be happy according to Wisdom, would You not? »

And they smile kindly at each other in the first shadows -of the evening.

... The pilgrims are all gathered in a large hall of the hotel, waiting to go to bed, in the long October evening. The merchant is in a corner, all by himself, intent on his accounts. Jesus, with His group, is in the opposite corner. There are no other guests. Braying, neighing and bleating can be heard coming from the stables, which makes, one assume that there are other people in the hotel. Perhaps they are already in bed.

Marjiam has fallen asleep in Our Lady's arms, forgetting all of a sudden that he was « a man ». Peter is dozing and is not the only one. Also the whispering elderly women are half asleep and are silent. Jesus, Mary, Lazarus' sisters, Syntyche, Simon Zealot, John and Judas are well awake.

Syntyche is searching John of Endor's bag looking for something. But she prefers to come close to the others and listen to Judas of Alphaeus who is speaking of the consequences of the exile in Babylon and concludes: « ... and perhaps that man is still a consequence of that. Every exile is a ruin... ». Syntyche nods unintentionally but does not say anything and Judas of Alphaeus concludes: « However, it is strange that one can so easily divest oneself of what has been a treasure for centuries to become entirely new, particularly in matters of religion, and a religion like ours... »

Jesus replies: « You must not be surprised if you see Samaria in the lap of Israel. »

There is silence... Syntyche's dark eyes are staring at Jesus' serene profile. She looks at Him intensely, but does not speak. Jesus perceives her glance and turns round to look at her.

« Have you not found anything to your liking? »

« No, my Lord. I have got to the point that I am no longer able to

reconcile the past with the present, former ideas with present ones. And I feel as if it were a defection because my former ideas have helped me to have the present ones. Your apostle spoke the truth... But my ruin is a happy one. »

« What is your ruin? »

« All my faith in heathen Olympus, my Lord. But I am somewhat upset because on reading Your Scriptures - John gave me them and I read them because there is no possession without knowledge - I found out that also in your history... of the beginning, shall I say, there are events which do not differ much from ours. Now, I would like to know... »

« I have already told you: ask Me and I will answer your questions. »

« Is everything wrong in the religion of the gods? »

« Yes, woman. There is but one God, Who does not originate from anybody else and is not subject to human passions and needs: one Only, Eternal, Perfect God, the Creator of everything. »

« I believe that. But I want to be able to reply to the questions which other heathens may ask me not in a way which does not admit any discussion, but by discussing in order to be convinced. I, by myself and by virtue of beneficent paternal God, have given myself informal answers, but sufficient to give peace to my spirit. But I was willing to reach the Truth. Others may be less anxious than I am in that respect. But everybody ought to be keen in such research. I do not want to be inactive with souls. I would like to give what I have received. But I must know in order to be able to give. Grant me knowledge and I will serve You in the name of love. Today, on the way, while I was watching the mountains and certain views reminded me of the chains of Hellas and of the history of my Country, by association of ideas the myths of Prometheus and Deucalion crossed my mind... You have something similar in the fulmination of Lucifer, in the infusion of life into clay, in the Flood of Noah. Light concomitances, yet they are a remembrance... Now tell me: how could we be aware of them if there was no contact between you and us, if you certainly had them before we did, and although we had them, we do not know how we got them? We still ignore one another, in many things. So how could we, thousands of years ago, have legends which are remembrances of Your Truth? »

« Woman, you ought to be the last one to ask Me. Because you have read works which could answer your questions by themselves. Today, by association of ideas, from the remembrance of your native mountains you have gone on to the remembrance of native myths and comparisons. Is that right. Why? »

« Because my awakened thought remembered. »

« Very well. Also the souls of the very ancient people who gave a

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religion to your land remembered. Vaguely, as someone who is imperfect can do, someone separated from the revealed religion. But they have always remembered. There are many religions in the world. Now, if we had here in a clear picture all their details, we would see that there is something like a golden thread, lost in much mud, a thread with many knots in which fragments of the real Truth are enclosed. »

« But do we not all come of the same stock? You say so. So why were the very ancient ones, who came of the original stock, why were they not able to bring the Truth with them? Was it not unjust to deprive them of it? »

« You have read Genesis, have you not? What have you found? A complex sin at the beginning, a sin embracing the three states of man: matter, thought, spirit. Then a fratricide. Then a double homicide to counterbalance the work of Enoch to keep light in hearts, then corruption, when the sons of God, out of lust, married the daughters of man. And notwithstanding the purification by the Deluge and the remaking of the race from good seed, not from stones as your myths state, likewise the first clay modelled by God to His image and in the shape of man was endowed with life through the work of God by the infusion of vital Fire, and not through the theft of vital fire by man, there was a fresh outburst of pride, an insult to God: "Let us touch the sky" and the divine curse: "Let them be scattered and let them no longer understand one another"... And the only stock became divided, like water clashing against a rock is divided into little streams and does not come together again, and the race was divided into races. Mankind driven away by its sin and by divine punishment was scattered and never came together again, carrying with itself the confusion created by pride. But souls remember. There is always something left within them. And the most virtuous and wise see a light indistinctly, a feeble light in the dark of myths: the light of Truth. It is the remembrance of the Light seen before life, which inspires them with some truth, in which are fragments of the revealed Truth. Is that clear to you? »

« Only partly. But I will think about it. Night is the friend of those who meditate and collect their thoughts. »

« Well, let us go and collect our thoughts. Let us go, My friends. Peace to you, women. Peace to you, My disciples. Peace to you, Alexander Misace. »

« Goodbye, my Lord. God be with You » replies the merchant bowing...

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286. From Ramoth to Gerasa.

26th September 1945.

The peculiarity of this village lying on a raised rocky platform in the middle of a crown of mountain tops, some of which are higher, some lower than it, appears in all its typical beauty in the rather hard light of a somewhat windy morning. It looks like a huge granite tray with buildings, little houses, bridges, fountains lying on it, for the amusement of a gigantic child.

The houses seem to be engraved in calcareous rock which is the basic matter in the area. They are square shaped and built with blocks laid one upon another, some are not plastered, the blocks of some are still in their rough natural state, they really look like the little houses decorating a Christmas crib built with cubes by a big clever boy.

And around the little village one can contemplate its fertile country, covered with trees, variously cultivated, so that from above it looks like a carpet of squares, trapezia, triangles, some of which are brown owing to the recently hoed earth, some emerald green because of the grass grown after autumn rain, some reddish because of the last leaves of vineyards and orchards, some greygreen because of poplars or willows, or enamel green because of oaks and carobs, or bronze-green owing to cypresses and conifers. Beautiful, really beautiful!

And one can see roads which, like ribbons parting from a knot, run from the village to the remote plain, or towards the high mountains and dive under woods or divide with a grey line the green meadows or brown ploughed fields.

And there is a pleasant stream of water, which is silvery beyond the village towards its spring, and blue fading to jade on the other side, where it flows down to the valley between gorges and slopes, and it appears and disappears playfully, and it grows stronger and stronger and bluer and bluer as its water increases, thus preventing the reeds and grass, which have grown in its bed during the droughty months, from tinging it green and it thus reflects the sky, after burying the stalks in its deep water.

The sky is unreal blue: a precious scale of deep enamel blue, without the least impure flaw in its wonderful texture.

And the caravan sets off again, with the women still on horseback, because, as the merchant says, the road is very difficult after the village and it is necessary to walk fast in order to get to Gerasa before night. They are all muffled up and they proceed swiftly, as they are well rested, along a road which climbs up through wonderful woods, skimming the highest slopes of a solitary mountain, which rises like a huge block resting on the shoulders of the other mountains under it. A real giant as one can see in the highest parts of our Apennines.

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« Galaad » says the merchant, pointing at it; he has remained near Jesus Who is leading the Virgin's little mule holding its reins. And the merchant adds: « After this the road is much better. Have You ever been here? »

« No, never. I wanted to come here in springtime. But I was rejected at Galgala. »

« You rejected? How dreadful! »

Jesus looks at him and is silent.

The merchant has taken Marjiam up on his saddle, as the boy with his short legs was finding it difficult to keep up with the quick pace of the horses. And Peter is well aware that it is a quick pace! He is plodding along with all his might, imitated by the others, but he is always outdistanced by the caravan. He is perspiring, but is happy because he can hear Marjiam laugh, he sees that Our Lady is resting and the Lord is happy. He puffs and blows while speaking to Matthew and his brother Andrew, who are left behind with him, and he makes them laugh saying that if in addition to his legs, he had wings, he would be happy that morning. He got rid of all loads, like the rest, tying the bags to the saddles of the women's mounts, but the road is really frightful, the stone being slippery with dew. The two Jameses with John and Thaddeus are more clever as they are keeping up with the pace of the women's mules. Simon Zealot is speaking to John of Endor. Timoneus and Ermasteus are also leading mules.

At last the worst of the road is over and an entirely different scenery is displayed to their amazed eyes. The Jordan valley has definitely disappeared. To the east one's eyes rove over an imposingly wide tableland, where only a ripple of hills attempt to rise in order to interrupt the evenness of the landscape. I would never have thought there could be any such thing in Palestine. It seems that after the rocky storm of mountains, the storm itself has calmed down and become petrified in a huge billow which has been left hanging between the bottom level and the sky, with only one remembrance of its original fury in the tiny lines of hills, the foam of the crests solidified here and there, whilst the water of the billow has spread out over a wonderful and magnificent plain surface. And one reaches this bright peaceful area through a last gorge, as wild as the abyss between two clashing billows, the last two waves of a sea-storm, in the depths of which there is a fresh foaming torrent flowing westwards and coming from the east, in a tormented enraged way between rocks and waterfalls in dire contrast with the remote peace of the huge tableland.

« The road will be good now. If You do not mind I will give the order to stop » says the merchant.

« I am being guided by you, man. You know that. »

They all dismount and spread out along the slopes in search of

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wood to cook the food, and of water for their tired feet and parched throats. The animals, once relieved of their loads, graze the thick grass or go down to the limpid torrent to water. The smell of resins and roast meat rises from the little fires lit to cook some lambs.

The apostles have lit a fire of their own on which they heat some salt fish after washing it in the cool water of the torrent. But the merchant sees them and he comes bringing a little skinned lamb, or a little kid, whichever it may be, and makes them accept it. And Peter gets ready to roast it after stuffing it with fresh mint.

The meal is soon prepared and is soon over. And under the perpendicular midday sunshine they resume marching along a better road, which follows the torrent north-eastwards in a wonderfully fertile and well cultivated area, rich in sheep and swine herds, which run away grunting before the caravan.

« That walled town is Gerasa, my Lord. A town with a great future. It is now developing, and I don't think I am wrong in saying that it will soon be competing with Joppa, Ashkelon, with Tyre and many more towns, in beauty, trade and wealth. The Romans have realised its importance, on this road which from the Red Sea, that is, from Egypt goes to the Euxine Sea through Damascus. And they are helping the Gerasenes to build... They are sharpsighted and have a good nose. For the time being it only has a very good trade, but later!... Oh! It will be beautiful and rich! A little Rome, with temples, piscinae, circuses, thermal baths. I only traded with them. But now I have bought much ground, to build emporia, which I will sell later at a high price, and perhaps I will build a real gentleman's house there, where I can stay in my old days, when Balthazar, Nabor, Felix and Sydmia will be able to look after and manage respectively the emporia at Sinope, Tyre, Joppa and Alexandria on the mouth of the Nile. In the meantime the other three boys will grow up and I will give them the emporia at Gerasa, Ashkelon and perhaps at Jerusalem. And the rich and beautiful girls will be sought-after and they will make very good matches and give me many grandchildren... » the merchant has golden and rosy day-dreams for the future.

Jesus asks him calmly: « And then? »

The merchant rouses himself, looks at Him perplexedly and then says: « And then? That is all. Then death will come... It is sad. But that is it. »

« And will you leave all business? Your emporia? Your affections? »

« My Lord! I would not like to. But as I was born I must also die. And I shall have to leave everything » and he heaves such a long sigh as to push the caravan forward with it...

« But who told you that once you are dead you leave everything? »

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« Who? The facts of life! Once you are dead... that is all. You have no hands, no eyes, no ears... »

« You are not only hands, eyes and ears. »

« I am a man. I know. I have other things. But they all end with death. It is like the setting of the sun. Its setting destroys it... »

« But dawn creates it once more, or rather it presents it again. You are a man, you said so. You are not an animal like the one you are riding. An animal, once it is dead, is really finished. Not you. You have a soul. Do you not know? Do you not even know that any more? »

The merchant hears the sad reproach, a sad but kind reproach, and he lowers his head whispering: « I still know that... »

« So? Do you not know that the soul survives? »

« I know. »

« Well, then? Do you not know that it still has an activity in the next life? A holy activity if it is holy. A wicked one if it is wicked. And it has its sentiments. Oh! It has them indeed! Loving ones, if it is holy. Hateful ones, if it is damned. Hateful against whom? Against the causes of its damnation. In your case: your business, the emporia, your exclusively human affections. Loving affections for whom? For the same things. And -what blessings can a soul bring upon its children and their activity when it is in the peace of the Lord! »

The man is pensive. He says: « It is late. I am old, now. » And he stops his mule.

Jesus smiles and replies: « I will not force you. I advise you » and He turns round to look at the apostles, who in the halt before entering the town are helping the women to dismount and are picking up their bags.

The caravan sets out again and soon enters the busy town through the gate watched over by towers.

The merchant goes back to Jesus: « Do You want to remain with me? »

« If you do not drive Me away, why should I not want to? »

« Because of what I said to You. I must make You, the Holy One, sick. »

« Oh! no! I have come for people like you, whom I love because You are the most needy. You do not know Me as yet. But I am the Love who passes by begging for love. »

« So You do not hate me? »

« I love you. »

Tears shine in the man's deep eyes. But he says smiling: « In that case we shall stay together. I am stopping at Gerasa on business for three days. I leave the mules here and take camels. I have a caravan stage in the major halting places and a servant looks after the animals I leave in each place. And what will You do? »

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« I will evangelize on the Sabbath. I -would have left you, if you had not stopped, because the Sabbath is sacred to the Lord. »

The man knits his brows, is pensive and with some difficulty he agrees: « ... Of course... It is true. It is sacred to the God of Israel. It is sacred... it is indeed... » He looks at Jesus: « If You allow me, I will consecrate it to You. »

« To God. Not to His Servant. »

« To God and to You, by listening to You. I will do my business today and tomorrow morning. And then I will listen to You. Are You coming to the hotel now? »

« I have no option. I have the women and I am not known here. »

« Here it is, it is mine. It is mine because my stables are here year after year. I have large rooms for the goods. If You wish... »

« May God reward you. Let us go. »

287. Preaching at Gerasa.

27th September 1945.

He thought He was unknown! When He sets foot outside Alexander's building the following morning, He finds people already waiting for Him. Jesus is with the apostles only. The women and disciples are still in the house, resting. The people greet Him gathering round Him and they say that they know Him because a man He had freed from demons has spoken to them about Him. The man is not there now because he has gone on with two disciples, who passed by some days ago.

Jesus listens kindly to what they say and at the same time He walks through the town in some areas of which the noise of building yards is dreadfully loud. Masons, diggers, stone-cutters, blacksmiths, carpenters are working building, levelling, filling gaps, chiselling stones for walls, working iron for various purposes, sawing, planing, making poles out of strong trunks. Jesus passes by watching, He crosses a bridge on a babbling torrent flowing in the middle of the town, with a row of houses on each side pretending to form a riverside. He goes up to the higher part of the town, which is built on a rising ground so that the south east side is higher than the northern one, but they are both higher than the town centre, which is divided by the little stream.

The view from the point where Jesus has stopped is beautiful. The whole town is displayed before the onlooker, and behind it, on the eastern, southern, western sides there is a horse-shoe shaped chain of low green hills, whereas to the north the eye roves over a wide open plain, with a ground elevation on the horizon, so tiny that it cannot even be called a hill, but it is beautifully golden in the morning sunshine, which tinges with a yellowish hue the leaves of the vines which cover the ground, as if it intended to

mitigate the melancholy of the withering leaves with the splendour of a touch of gold.

Jesus is admiring the view and the people of Gerasa are looking at Him. He wins the regard of the people by saying to them:

« This town is really beautiful. Make it beautiful also in justice and holiness. The hills, the stream, the green plain were given to you by God, Rome is now helping you to have homes and beautiful buildings. But it is up to you only to have your town called holy and just. A town is what its citizens make it. Because a town is a part of society closed within its walls, but it is the citizens that make the town. A town in itself does not commit sin. The stream, the bridge, the houses, the towers cannot sin. They are matter, not souls. But those who are within the town walls, in houses, shops, those who cross the bridge or bathe in the stream they can all sin. If a town is factious and ruthless, people say: "It is a very bad town". But that is wrong. It is not the town, it is the citizens who are very bad. Those individuals by joining together become one complex thing, as well as one thing only, which is called "town".

Now listen. If in a town ten thousand inhabitants are good, and only one thousand are not good, can we say that that town is wicked? No, we cannot. Likewise: if in a town of ten thousand inhabitants there are many parties and each struggles to favour his own, can we say that that town is still united? No, we cannot. And do you think that that town will thrive? No, it will not.

You people of Gerasa are now all united striving to make your town great. And you will succeed because you all want the same thing and you vie with one another in achieving your purpose. But if tomorrow opposed parties should arise among you and one said: "No, it is better to expand eastwards" and another party said: "Not at all. We will build in the north where the plain is", and a third one should say: "Neither here nor there. We all want to live close together in the centre, near the river", what would happen? It would happen that the work you have started would stop, those who have lent capitals would withdraw them, those who intended to settle here would go to another town with more agreeable people, and what you have already done would go to rack and ruin, as it would be exposed to the inclemency of the weather, before being completed, as a result of the quarrels of citizens. Is that right or not? You say it is, and you are right. So the harmony of the citizens is required for the welfare of the town, and consequently of the citizens themselves, because the welfare of a society is the welfare of its members.

But there is not only the society of which you are thinking, the society of citizens, of fellow-countrymen, or the little dear family society. There is a vaster society, an infinite one: the society of

spirits.

Each living man has a soul. The soul does not die with the body, but survives for ever. The idea of God, the Creator, who gave each man his soul, was that all the souls of men should be gathered in one place only, in Heaven, forming the Kingdom of Heaven, whose monarch is God and whose blissful subjects were to be all men, after a holy life and a placid limbo of expectancy. Satan came to divide and upset, destroy and grieve God and spirits. And he set sin in the hearts of men and with sin he brought death to the body at the end of its existence, hoping to give death to spirits as well. But the death of spirits is their damnation, which is still existence, but devoid of what is true life and eternal joy, that is, devoid of the beatific vision of God and of His eternal possession in eternal light. And Mankind became divided in its desires, like a town divided by opposed parties. And it was thus brought to ruin. I said elsewhere to those who were accusing Me of expelling demons with the assistance of Beelzebub: "Every kingdom divided in itself will be brought to ruin". In fact if Satan expelled himself, he and his gloomy kingdom would ruin.

I have come, for the love that God has for mankind created by Him, to remind people that one Kingdom only is holy: the Kingdom of Heaven. And I have come to preach it, so that the better people may go towards it. Oh! I would like everybody, even the worst ones, to come to it, becoming converted, freeing themselves from the demon who keeps them enslaved, either openly, through corporal and spiritual possession, or secretly through a mere spiritual one. That is why I move about curing sick people, expelling demons from possessed people, converting sinners, forgiving in the name of the Lord, preaching the Kingdom, working miracles to convince you of My power and prove that God is with Me. Because no one can work a miracle unless God is his friend. So if I expel demons with the power of God, and I cure sick people, I cleanse lepers, convert sinners, announce and preach the Kingdom and I call people to it in the name of God, and God's compliance with Me is clear and indisputable, so that only disloyal enemies may assert the contrary, it is a sign that the Kingdom of God is among you and must be established because the hour of its foundation has come.

How is the Kingdom of God established in the world and in hearts? By going back to the Mosaic Law or by becoming acquainted with it if one is ignorant of it and, above all, by abiding by it absolutely, in every event and moment of our life. Which is that Law? Something so severe as to be impracticable? No. It is a set of ten holy easy precepts, which even a really morally good man feels he must respect, even if he lives in the most impervious forest of mysterious Africa. It says:

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"I am the Lord your God, you shall have no gods except Me.

You shall not utter the name of God in vain.

You shall keep the Sabbath according to the commandment of God and to the needs of the human body.

Honour your father and mother so that you may have a long life and be blessed both on the earth and in Heaven.

You shall not kill.

You shall not steal.

You shall not commit adultery.

You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour.

You shall not covet your neighbour's wife.

You shall not covet your neighbour's goods".

Which good natured soul, contemplating what is around him, even if he is a savage, will not say: "All this was not formed by itself. Therefore there must be One, more powerful than nature and than man himself, who made this"? And he worships the Powerful One Whose Most Holy Name he may or may not know, but he feels He must exist. And he has such reverence before Him, that when he utters the name which he has given Him or has been taught to utter to name Him, he trembles with respect and he feels that he prays when uttering it reverently. In fact it is a prayer to utter the Name of God with the intention of worshipping Him or making Him known to those who do not know Him.

Likewise, out of moral prudence alone every man feels that he must grant some rest to his limbs, so that they may resist as long as his life lasts. By deeper reason, a man who knows the God of Israel, the Creator and Lord of the Universe, feels that he must consecrate his bodily rest to the Lord, so that he may not be like a beast of burden which rests, when tired, on litter crushing fodder with its strong teeth.

Blood also calls for love for those from whom we originate, as we can see in that colt that is now running braying towards its mother which is coming from the market. It was playing in the herd, it saw its mother, it remembers it was fed by her and licked with loving care, defended and warmed by its mother, and see? It rubs her neck with its tender nostrils and jumps joyfully rubbing its young crupper against the sides that carried it. It is a duty and a pleasure to love one's parents. And there is no animal which does not love the mother which gave birth to it. What? Will man be more vile than worms living in mud?

A morally good man does not kill. He has a strong dislike of Violence. He feels that it is not lawful to take anybody's life, and that God only, Who gave it, has the right to take it. He abhors homicide.

Likewise, he who is morally sound does not take advantage of other people's property. He prefers to eat plain bread with a clear

conscience near a silvery fountain, rather than have a rich roast which is the fruit of a theft. He prefers to sleep on the ground with his head on a stone and friendly stars above him, pouring peace and comfort on his honest conscience, rather than toss about in a stolen bed.

And if he is morally sound, he is not eager for more women, which are not his, and he will not cowardly disgrace the nuptial bed of his neighbour. And he will consider his friend's wife as a sister and will not cast lustful glances at her, as no one does at a sister.

A man with a righteous soul, even if only naturally righteous, with no other knowledge of Good but what comes to him from his honest conscience, will never take the liberty of giving false witness, as he would consider that the same as homicide and theft, which it is. But his lips are as honest as his heart, and his glances are honest, so he does not desire his neighbour's wife. He does not crave for anything, as he knows that that is the first incentive to sin. And he is not envious. Because he is good. A good man is never envious. He is happy in his lot.

Do you think that this law is so exacting as to be impracticable? Do not wrong yourselves! I am sure that you will not do that. And if you do not, you will establish the Kingdom of God within yourselves and in your town. And you will be happily joined one day to those whom you loved and who like you have gained the eternal Kingdom in the everlasting joy of Heaven.

But we have within us passions, which are like citizens closed within the circle of town walls. It is necessary for all the passions of men to want the same thing: that is, holiness. Otherwise some will tend to Heaven in vain, if others leave the doors unguarded and let the seducer enter or counteract the actions of part of the spiritual citizens through disputes or laziness, making the interior part of the town perish and abandoning it to nettles, poison, couchgrass, snakes, scorpions, mice and jackals, and owls, that is, to wicked passions and to Satan's angels. You must be unceasingly vigilant, like sentries placed at the walls, to prevent the Evil one from entering where we want to build the Kingdom of God.

I solemnly tell you that as long as the strong man watches in arms the hall of his house, he is sure of everything which is in it. But if one stronger than he is comes, or if he leaves the door unguarded, then the stronger man will defeat him and disarm him, and when he is deprived of the weapons on which he relied, he loses heart and surrenders and the stronger man makes him a prisoner and takes his spoils. But if man lives in God, through loyalty to the Law and justice practised holily, God is with him, I am with him, and no harm can befall him. Union with God is the weapon which no strong man can overcome. Union with Me is certainty of victory and of abundance of eternal virtues through

which he will be given an eternal seat in the Kingdom of God. But he who turns his back on Me or becomes My enemy, rejects thereby the weapons and certainty of My Word. He who rejects the Word, rejects God. He who rejects God invokes Satan. He who invokes Satan destroys what he had to conquer the Kingdom.

Therefore, he who is not with Me is against Me. And he who does not cultivate what I have sown, will reap what the Enemy has sown. He who does not harvest with Me, dissipates and will be poor and nude when he comes to the Supreme Judge, Who will send him to the master to whom he sold himself by preferring Beelzebub to Christ.

Citizens of Gerasa: build the Kingdom of God within yourselves and in your town. »

The trilling voice of a woman is clearly heard like the song of a skylark above the whispering of the admiring crowd, and it sings a new beatitude, that is the glory of Mary: « Blessed be the womb that bore You and the breast that suckled You. »

Jesus turns towards the woman who extolled His Mother admiring Her Son. He smiles, because He is pleased with the praise for His Mother. But He then says: « More blessed are those who listen to the word of God and practise it. Do that, woman. »

He then blesses the crowds and goes towards the country, followed by the apostles who ask Him: « Why did You say that? »

« Because I tell you solemnly that in Heaven they do not use the same measure as is used on the earth. And My Mother will be blessed not so much because of Her immaculate soul as for listening to the word of God and practising it through obedience. It was a prodigy of the Creator "that Mary's soul was immaculate". And He is to be praised for that. But the "let what you have said be done to Me" is a prodigy of My Mother. Her merit therefore is great. So great that the Saviour of the world came only because of Her capability of listening to God, speaking through Gabriel's lips, and because of Her will to practise the word of God, without weighing the difficulties and the immediate and future sorrows connected with Her assent. You can thus see that She is My blessed Mother not only because She bore and suckled Me, but because She listened to the word of God and practised it through obedience. But let us go home now. My Mother knew that I was going to be out for a short while and She may be worried because of My delay. We are in a half-pagan country. But in actual fact it is better than others. But let us go. And let us go round the walls to avoid the crowds which Would keep Me back. Come down quick behind this thicket... »

3-1344

288. The Sabbath at Gerasa.

28th September 1945.

The hours of the day are long when one does not know what to do. And those who are with Jesus do not know what to do on that Sabbath, in a town where they have no acquaintances, in a house where they do not feel at home because of different languages and habits, without taking into account the Jewish prejudices which keep them apart from Alexander Misace's camel-drivers and servants. Many, therefore, have stayed in bed or are dozing in the sun that makes the large square yard of the house comfortably warm. It is a yard suited to receive caravans, as it is fitted with basins and rings fixed to the walls or columns of a rustic porch, which runs along the four sides, with many stables and lofts for hay and straw on three sides. The women are in their rooms. I do not see even one of them.

Marjiam amuses himself also in the closed yard, watching the work of the stable-men, who curry mules, change litters, examine hoofs, fasten loose horse-shoes, or, what is of greater interest to him because it is something entirely new, he is spellbound watching how the cameleers deal with the camels, preparing in advance the load for each animal, in proportion to each of them, balancing it, and how they make a camel kneel down and rise in order to load and unload it, rewarding each one with a handful of dry legumes, which I think are broad beans, and at the end they gave them carobs, which the men also chew with relish.

Marjiam is utterly amazed and he looks round to find someone with whom he may share his amazement. But he is disappointed because adults are not interested in camels. They are either speaking to one another or dozing. He goes to Peter who is sleeping blissfully with his head resting on soft hay, and shakes his arm. Peter half opens his eyes and asks: « What is it? Who wants me? »

« I do. Come and see the camels. »

« Let me sleep. I have seen so many of them... Ugly animals. »

The boy then goes to Matthew, who is checking his accounts, as he is the treasurer during this trip: « You know, I have been to see the camels. They eat like sheep, did you know? And they kneel down like men and they look like boats moving up and down. Have you seen them? »

Matthew, who has lost his count owing to the interruption, replies sharply: « Yes » and resumes counting his money.

Another disappointment... Marjiam looks round... There is Simon Zealot speaking to Judas Thaddeus... « How lovely camels are! And how good! They loaded and unloaded them and they lay down on the ground so that the cameleer should not have to work too hard. And they eat carobs. The men also were eating them. I would like... But I cannot make myself understood. Come with me... » and he takes Simon by the hand.

Simon, who is engrossed in peaceful conversation with Thaddeus, replies absentmindedly: « Yes, dear... Go... and watch that you do not hurt yourself. »

Marjiam is astonished... Simon has not replied to the point. The boy is almost weeping. He goes away downheartedly and leans against a column...

Jesus comes out of a room and sees that he is sulky and alone. He goes towards the boy and lays a hand on his head. « What are you doing all alone and so sad? »

« No one will listen to me... »

« What did you want from them? »

« Nothing... I was speaking of the camels... They are lovely... I like them. It must be like being on a boat to be up there... And they eat carobs; the men also eat them... »

« And you want to go up there and eat carobs. Come, let us go to the camels » and Jesus takes him by the hand and goes to the end of the yard with the child, who has become cheerful once again.

He goes straight to a cameleer and greets him with a smile. The man bows to Him and continues examining his animal, adjusting its halter and reins.

« Man, do you understand Me? »

« Yes, Lord. I have known Your people for twenty years. »

« This boy has a big desire: to climb up on a camel... And a little one: to eat a carob » and Jesus smiles once again more lively.

« Your son? »

« No, I have no children. I am not married. »

« You, so handsome, so strong, You have not found a woman? »

« I have not looked for one. »

« You have never felt the desire of a woman? »

« No. Never. »

The man looks at Him and is spellbound. He then says: « I have nine children at Ischilo... I go: one son. I go: another son. Always. »

« Do you love your children? »

« They are of my blood! But my work is hard. I am here, my children are there. We are far apart... But I do it for their bread. Do you understand? »

« I do. So you can understand the boy who would like to mount a camel and eat carobs. »

« Yes. Come. Are you afraid? No? Good. Lovely boy! I have one, too, like you. Dark like you. Here. Take and hold it tight » and he Puts into Marjiam's hand the strange handle which is in the front part of the saddle. « Hold it. I will come on now. And the camel will stand up. You are not afraid, eh? » And the man climbs up on the high saddle, he makes himself comfortable and spurs the camel, which stands up obediently with a heavy pitch.

Marjiam laughs happily. And he is all the more happy because

the cameleer has put a delicious carob into his mouth. The camel ambles along the yard, then the driver puts it into a trot, finally, seeing that Marjiam is not afraid, he shouts something to one of his companions, who opens the very wide door at the rear of the yard and the cameleer disappears with his load in the green country.

Jesus goes back towards the house and enters a large room where the women are. He smiles so happily that Mary asks Him: « What has happened, Son, that You are so happy? »

« I am as happy as Marjiam who is galloping on a camel. Come out so that we may see him coming back. »

They all go out into the yard and sit on the low wall near the basins. The apostles who are not sleeping approach them. Those who are at the windows in the rooms upstairs, look down, they see the group and go down to join them. Their shrill youthful voices, they are in fact the voices of John and of the two Jameses, awake also Peter and Andrew and arouse Matthew. They are now all together because John of Endor and the two disciples have also joined the group.

« But where is Marjiam? I don't see him » asks Peter.

« He has gone for a run on a camel. None of you would listen to him... I saw that he was so sad and I took care of him. »

Peter, Simon and Matthew remember: « Of course! He was talking about camels... and carobs. But I was sleepy! »; « I had to check my accounts as I wanted to inform You of what I had received from the Gerasenes and what I had given to the poor »; « And I was speaking of faith with Your brother. »

« It does not matter. I saw to it. But, incidentally, I tell you that to take care of children's games is also love... But now let us talk of something else. The town is full of merriment. The only remembrance of our Sabbath is general mirth. So it is better to stay indoors. So much so because if they want, they can find us as they know where we are. There is Alexander inspecting his camels. I will now tell him that one is missing through My fault. » And Jesus hastens towards the merchant and speaks to him.

They come back together. The merchant says: « Very well. He will enjoy himself and a run out in the sun will do him good. You may rest assured that the man will treat him well. Calipius is a clever man. In exchange for the run, I ask You to tell me something. Last night I was thinking of Your words... those I heard at Ramoth, which You exchanged with the woman, and those You spoke yesterday. And I thought I was climbing up a high mountain, like those where I live, the tops of which reach up to the clouds. You were carrying me higher and higher. I was under the impression of being caught by an eagle, one of those eagles of our highest mountain, the first to emerge from the Deluge. I saw entirely new things, of which I had never thought before, all made of

a light... And I understood them. Then I became confused. Tell me more. »

« What shall I tell you? »

« I don't know... Everything was so beautiful. What You said about meeting again in Heaven... I understood that we will love there in a different way, and yet it will be the same. For instance: we shall not be worried as we are now, it will be as if we were one family only: one for all and all for one. Am I wrong? »

« No. On the contrary! We shall one family also with the living. Souls are not separated by death. I am speaking of the just. They form one large family. Just imagine a large temple in which some worship and pray, and some work. The former pray also for those who are working, the latter work for those who are praying. The same applies to souls. We work on the earth. They help us with their prayers. But we must offer our sufferings for their peace. It is a chain which does not break. It is Love that ties those who were to those who are. And those who are must be good to be able to join those who were and want us to be with them. »

Syntyche makes an involuntary gesture, which she soon checks. But Jesus notices it and invites her to come out of her habitual selfrestraint.

« I was thinking... I have been thinking about it for some days, and if I must tell the truth, I am worried, because I feel that if I believe in Your Paradise, I will lose my mother and sisters for ever... » a sob breaks the voice of Syntyche, who stops to stifle tears.

« What thought worries you so much? »

« I now believe in You. I can only think of my mother as a heathen. She was good... Oh! very good! And my sisters, too. Little Ismene was the best daughter there ever was on the earth. But they were heathens... Now, when I was like them, I thought of Hades and I used to say: "We will meet there again". Now Hades no longer exists. There is Your Paradise, the Kingdom of Heaven for those who have served the True God in justice. And what about those poor souls? It is no fault of theirs if they were born in Greece! None of the priests in Israel ever came to say: "Our God is the True God". So? Are their virtues and sufferings worth nothing? Will they be in eternal darkness and separated from me for ever? I tell You: it is a torture! I seem to have almost disowned them. Forgive me, my Lord... I am weeping... » and she falls on her knees weeping disconsolately.

Alexander Misace says: « There You are! I also was wondering whether, if I become a just man, I will ever find my father, mother, my brothers and friends... »

Jesus lays His fingers on Syntyche's brown-haired head and says: « One is at fault when one knows the Truth, but persists in Error. Not when one is convinced of being in the Truth, and no voice

has ever come to say: "The Truth is what I am bringing you. Forsake your chimeras for this True God and you will gain Heaven". God is just. Can you believe that He will not reward virtue which was perfected all by itself in the corruption of the heathen world? Do not worry, My daughter. »

« What about the original sin? And their nefarious cult? And... » More objections would come from the Israelites to grieve Syntyche's already desolate soul, if Jesus with a gesture did not impose silence.

He says: « The original sin is common to everybody, whether one is from Israel or not. It is not a peculiarity of heathens. The pagan cult will be sinful after the Law of Christ has been spread throughout the world. Virtue will always be virtue in the eyes of God. And in virtue of My union with the Father I say, and I say this in His name, translating His Most Holy Thought into words, that the ways of God's merciful power are manifold, and they are so intent on giving joy to virtuous people that they will remove barriers between souls, and peace will be given to those who deserve peace. Not only, but I say that in future those who follow the religion of their ancestors with justice and holiness, convinced of being in the Truth, will not be disliked and punished by God. Wickedness, bad will, deliberate refusal of the known Truth, above all refutation of the revealed Truth and opposition to it, vicious living will really separate for ever the souls of the just from those of sinners. Take heart, Syntyche. Such dejection is an assault of hell due to Satan's wrath against you, as you are a prey he has lost for ever. There is no Hades. There is My Paradise. But it is not the cause of grief, but of joy. Nothing of the Truth is to be the cause of dejection or doubt, on the contrary it must give you strength for a greater faith and cheerful certainty. Always inform Me of your anxieties. I want the light in you to be as certain and steady as the light of the sun. »

Syntyche, still kneeling, takes His hand and kisses it...

The cry of the cameleer makes the group understand that the camel is about to come back, at a slow pace, without making any noise on the thick grass outside the rear door, which a servant opens at once. And Marjiam comes back, he is happy and his face is flushed after the run. He is a tiny little man hoisted onto the high back of the camel, and he laughs waving his arms, while the camel kneels down and he slides down from the odd saddle, caressing the swarthy cameleer. He then runs towards Jesus shouting: « How lovely! Did the Wise men come from the East on those animals to worship You? I will go on them to preach You all over the world! The world seems larger when seen from up there and it says: "Come, you who know the Gospel!". Oh! Do You know?... That man also is in need of it... And you, too, merchant, and all your servants...

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How many people are waiting and die without receiving it... More people than the sand in the river... They are all without you, Jesus! Oh! Make haste and announce it to everybody! » and he clings to Jesus' sides looking up at Him.

And Jesus bends kissing him and promising: « You will see the Kingdom of God evangelized as far as the most remote borders of Rome. Are you happy? »

« I am. And then I will come and say to You: "This, that, and that other Country... they all know You". I will then know the names of those remote Countries. And what will You say to me? »

« I will say: "Come, little Marjiam. Have a crown for every country in which you have preached Me and then come here beside Me, as on that day at Gerasa, and rest after all your work, because you have been a faithful servant and it is right that you should be happy in My Kingdom". »

289. From Gerasa to the Fountain of the Cameleer.

29th September 1945.

The caravan leaves Alexander's large courtyard, in perfect order as if it were on a military parade. Jesus is at the rear with all His group. The camels are proceeding, their heavy loads swaying rhythmically and their heads, on their arched necks, seem to be asking at each step: « Why? Why? » in their silent but familiar gait, like the movement of doves, which at each step seem to be saying: « Yes, Yes » to everything they see. The caravan has to cross the town and it does so in the clear morning air. Everyone is all wrapped up because it is cool. The harness-bells of the camels, the cries of the camel-drivers, the screech of a camel regretting the idle stable inform the Gerasenes of Jesus' departure.

The news spreads as fast as lightning and some Gerasenes rush to greet Him offering fruit and other foodstuffs. There is also a man with a sick little boy. « Bless him, that he may recover. Have mercy, on us! »

Jesus raises His hand and blesses the child saying: « Go and do not worry. Have faith. »

And the man says « yes » so trustfully, that a woman asks: « Would You cure my husband whose eyes are ulcered? »

« I will, if you can believe. »

« Well, I will go and bring him here. Wait for me, Lord » and she runs away as fast as a swallow.

Wait! Easier said than done! The camels are moving on. Alexander, at the head of the caravan, does not know what is wanted at its rear. The only thing to be done is to send word to the man.

« Run, Marjiam. Go and tell the merchant to stop before going out of the walls » says Jesus. And Marjiam dashes away to fulfil his

mission.

The caravan stops and the merchant comes towards Jesus. « What is the matter? »

« Stay here and you will see. »

The woman of Gerasa is soon back with her husband whose eyes are diseased. It is much worse than ulcers! His eyes are two holes full of suppuration. They look dimmed, reddened, half-blind in the centre of the holes, among repulsive dripping tears. As soon as the man lifts the dark bandage dimming the light, tears flow more copiously as the light increases the pain of the diseased eyes.

The man moans: « Have mercy! I suffer so much! »

« You have also sinned very much. Are you not complaining of that? Are you only grieved at the possibility of losing the poor sight of the world? Do you know nothing about God? Are you not afraid of eternal darkness? Why did you sin? »

The man is weeping and he bends without speaking. His wife is also weeping and she moans: « I have forgiven... »

« And I will forgive him as well, if he swears to Me that he will not relapse into his sin. »

« Yes, I do! Forgive me. I now know the consequences of sin. Forgive me. Forgive me as my wife did. You are the Good One.. »

« I forgive you. Go to that stream, wash your face in the water and you will be cured. »

« Cold water will make him worse, Lord » moans the woman.

But the man is not concerned with anything else and he begins to grope until the apostle John pitifully takes him by the hand and leads him by himself at first, until the wife supports him by the other hand. The man goes down as far as the edge of the ice cold water babbling among stones, he bends. He takes some water cupping his hands and washes his face. He does not show any sign of pain. On the contrary, he appears to be relieved.

He then climbs up the bank, with his face still wet, and goes back to Jesus, Who asks him: « Well? Are you cured? »

« No, Lord. Not yet. But You said so and I will be cured. »

« Well, remain in your hope. Goodbye. »

The woman collapses weeping... She is disappointed. Jesus beckons to the merchant that they can go on. And the merchant, who is also disappointed, passes the word on. The camels march off again with their motion resembling a boat which raises and lowers its prow with its cut-water on the waves; they go out of the walls and take to the wide dusty caravan-route south-westwards.

The last couple of the apostolic group, that is, John of Endor and Simon Zealot, have just left the walls a few yards behind, when a shrill cry is heard in the silent air. It seems to spread all over the world, and is repeated in a higher and higher pitch, singing hosannas happily: « I can see! My blessed Jesus! I can see! I believed. I see!

Jesus! Jesus! My blessed Jesus! » and the man, whose face is completely cured, with two beautiful eyes: two carbuncles full of light and life, rushes to Jesus' feet and falls almost under the camel of the merchant, who manages to move his mount away from the prostrated man just in time.

The man kisses Jesus' garment repeating: « I believed! I believed and I can see! My blessed Jesus! »

« Stand up and be happy. And, above all, be good. Tell your wife to believe unreservedly. Goodbye. » And Jesus frees Himself from the grasp of the miraculously cured man and resumes His way.

The merchant strokes his beard pensively... At last he asks: « And if he had not persisted in believing, after his disappointment in washing? »

« He would have remained as he was. »

« Why do You exact so much faith to work a miracle? »

« Because faith witnesses the presence of hope and love of God. »

« And why did You want repentance first? »

« Because repentance makes God friendly. »

« Since I have no disease, what should I do to testify that I have faith? »

« You should come to the Truth. »

« And could I come without God's friendship? »

« You could not come without God's goodness. God allows those who look for Him to find Him, even if they are not yet repentant; because man generally repents when he knows God, either consciously or even with a faint consciousness of what his soul wants. Before he is like a blockhead led only by instinct. Have you ever felt the need to believe? »

« Many a time. Well, I was not satisfied with what I had. I felt there was something else. Something stronger than money, than my children, my hope... But I did not bother to try to find out what I was unknowingly seeking. »

« Your soul was seeking God. God's kindness has let you find God. Repentance for your remote idle past will give you the friendship of God. »

« So... in order to have the miracle of seeing the Truth with my soul, I should repent of my past? »

« Certainly. You ought to repent and decide to change your life completely... »

The man begins to stroke his beard once again and he stares so intently that he seems to be studying and counting the hairs on his camel's neck. He unintentionally strikes with his heel the camel which takes the stroke as a spur to quicken its step and it obeys taking the merchant towards the head of the caravan.

Jesus does not keep him back. On the contrary He stops thus allowing the women and apostles to overtake Him, until Simon

Zealot and John of Endor reach Him. Jesus joins them.

« Of what are you speaking? » He asks.

« We were speaking of the depression that those must feel who do not believe in anything or have lost the faith they had. Syntyche was really dejected yesterday, although she has come to a perfect faith » replies the Zealot.

« I was saying to Simon that if it is grievous to pass from Good to Evil, it is also disconcerting to pass from Evil to Good. In the former case one is tortured by one's reproaching conscience. In the latter case one is... tormented... Like one who is taken to a completely unknown foreign country... Or it is the dismay of a man, who being a poor unlearned wretch, should find himself at a king's Court, among learned people and gentlemen. It is a pain... I know... Such a long suffering... One cannot believe that it is true, that it can last... that one can deserve it particularly when one's soul is stained... as mine was... »

« And now, John? » asks Jesus.

And John of Endor's worn out sad face brightens with a smile which makes it look less emaciated. He says: « Now, it is no longer so. Only gratitude to the Lord remains, nay, it increases. This the Lord wanted. There is still the memory of the past to keep me humble. But there is certainty. I feel acclimatised, I am no longer a foreigner in this kind world of forgiveness and love which is Yours. And I am serene, happy and in peace. »

« Do you consider your experience a good one? »

« Yes, I do. If I were not sorry for having sinned, because I grieved God through my sin, I would say that I feel that my past was a good thing. It can help me considerably to support willing but mislaid souls, in the first stages of their new belief. »

« Simon, go and tell the boy not to jump about so much. He will be exhausted this evening. »

Simon looks at Jesus, but he understands the truth behind the order. He smiles intelligently and goes away leaving the two all alone.

« Now that we are alone, John, listen to this desire of Mine. For a number of reasons, none of My followers have the breadth of judgement and thought which you have. And your culture is wider than the average learning of Israelites. So I ask you to help Me... »

« Am I to help You? How? »

« On behalf of Syntyche. You are such a clever teacher! Marjiam learns quickly and well with you. So much so that I am thinking of leaving you together for some months, because I want Marjiam to have a wider knowledge than that of the little world of Israel. And it gives you pleasure to take care of him. And I rejoice seeing you together, you teaching, him learning; you growing young again, him maturing in learning. But you should take care of Syntyche as

well, as if she were a lost sister. You said it yourself: one feels lost... Help her to become acclimatised in My atmosphere. Will you do Me this favour? »

« It is a grace for me to do it, my Lord! I did not approach her because I considered myself superfluous. But if You wish so... She reads my rolls. There are some which are sacred, some are only cultural: rolls from Rome and Athens. I see that she goes through them and meditates... But I never intervened in order to assist her. If You want... »

« Yes, I do. I want you to be friends. Like Marjiam and you, she will be staying in Nazareth for some time. It will be lovely: My Mother and you the teachers of two souls opening to God. My Mother: the angelical Teacher of the Science of God; you: the experienced master of human knowledge, which you can now explain with supernatural references. It will be lovely and useful. »

« Yes, my blessed Lord! Too beautiful for poor John!... » and the man smiles at the thought of the oncoming peaceful days with Mary, in Jesus' house...

And the road winds along a beautiful country, which is now completely flat after skirting a few little hills just out of Gerasa, in the mild sunshine which is becoming warmer and warmer. It is a well kept road on which it is comfortable to travel and to take to it again after the midday rest.

It is almost evening when I hear Syntyche laugh wholeheartedly for the first time; Marjiam in fact has said something to her which makes all the women laugh. I see the Greek woman bend to caress the boy and kiss him lightly on his forehead. The boy then resumes jumping about as if he did not feel at all tired.

But all the others are tired and are glad for the decision to spend the night at the Fountain of the Cameleer. The merchant says: « I always stop here overnight. The leg from Gerasa to Bozrah, is too long both for men and animals. »

« The merchant is humane » remark the apostles, comparing him to Doras...

The « Fountain of the Cameleer » is only a handful of houses around several wells. It is a kind of oasis, not in the arid desert, because there is no aridity here, but an oasis in the vast uninhabited fields and orchards which follow one another for miles and which, as the October evening draws on, give the same sad sensation as the sea at twilight. Thus, the sight of houses, the noise of voices, of crying children, the smell of smoking chimneys and the first lights to be lit are as pleasant as one's arrival at home.

While the cameleers stop to water the camels for the first time, the apostles and the women follow Jesus and the merchant who enter... the rather prehistoric inn which will shelter them during the night...

3-1354

... They are all gathered near a very large fireplace which takes up the whole of the narrow wall of a large smoky room where they have taken their meal, and where the men will sleep and servants are already preparing straw beds on mats. The fire is on because it is a cold damp evening.

« Let us hope that it will not start raining » says Peter with a sigh.

The merchant reassures him: « The bad weather will not begin until this lunation is over. It is always like this in the evening here. But it will be sunshine tomorrow. »

« It's for the women, you know? Not for me. I am a fisherman and I live in water. And I can assure you that I prefer water to mountains and dust. »

Jesus is speaking to the women and His two cousins. John of Endor and the Zealot are also listening to Him. Instead Timoneus and Ermasteus are reading one of John's rolls and the two Israelites are explaining to Ermasteus the Bible passages which are more obscure to him.

Marjiam is listening spellbound, but he looks sleepy. Mary of Alphaeus notices it and says: « That child is tired. Come, dear, let us go to bed. Come, Eliza, come Salome. Old people and children are better in bed. And you had all better go as well. You are tired. »

But besides the elder ones, with the exception of Marcella and Johanna of Chuza, no one moves.

After they have gone, after being blessed, Matthew whispers: « Who would have told these women, only a short while ago, that they were to sleep on straw beds, so far from their homes! »

« I have never slept so well » states Mary of Magdala resolutely. And Martha confirms her statement.

But Peter admits that his companion is right: « Matthew is right. And I wonder why the Master has brought you here, something I fail to understand. »

« Because we are His disciples! »

« Well, if He went where... lions are, would you go? »

« Of course, Simon Peter! What an effort to go for a little walk! And with Him! »

« Well: in actual fact it is a long walk. And for women who are not used to it... »

But the women protest and Peter shrugs his shoulders and becomes silent.

James of Alphaeus, on looking up, sees such a bright smile on Jesus' face, that he asks Him: « Will You tell us, privately, the real purpose of this journey, with the women... and with so little fruit, as compared to its fatigue? » I

« Could you expect to see now the fruit of the seed buried in the fields which we have crossed? »

« I could not. I will see it in springtime. »

3-1355

« I also say to you: "You will see it in due time". »

The apostles do not reply.

The silvery voice of Mary is heard: « Son, we were talking today of what You said at Ramoth. And each of us had different impressions and reflections. Would You tell us Your thought? I said that it was better to call You at once. But You were speaking to John of Endor. »

« In actual fact I raised the question. Because I am a poor heathen and I do not have the splendid light of your faith. You must sympathise with me. »

« I would like to have your soul, my dear sister! » says the Magdalene impulsively. And exuberant as she is, she embraces Syntyche clasping her with one arm. Her wonderful beauty seems to give light by itself to the miserable dwelling and to decorate it with the wealth of her sumptuous house. The Greek woman, who is entirely different and yet has such a singular personality while embraced by the Magdalene, adds a meditative note to the cry of love which seems to be always bursting forth from passionate Mary, meanwhile the Blessed Virgin, sitting with Her gentle face raised towards Her Son, Her hands clasped as if She were praying, Her most pure profile outstanding against the black wall, is the perpetual Adorer.

Susanna is dozing in the shadow of a corner, while Martha, who is active notwithstanding her weariness and the pressure of the others, takes advantage of the light of the fireplace to fasten some buckles on Marjiam's garment.

Jesus says to Syntyche: « But it was not a grievous thought. I heard you laugh. »

« Yes, because of the boy, who solved the question easily, saying: "I do not want to come back unless Jesus does. But if you want to know everything, go to the next world, then come back and tell us whether you remember". »

They all laugh again and say that Syntyche was asking Mary for a clarification on the explanation, which she had not understood properly, of the remembrance which souls have and which explains a certain possibility for heathens to have vague recollections of the Truth.

« I was saying: "Does that perhaps confirm the theory of reincarnation in which many heathens believe?" and Your Mother was telling me that what You say is something entirely different. Will You explain also this to me, my Lord? »

« Listen. You must not believe that the fact that souls have spontaneous recollections of Truth proves that we live several lives. By now you have already learned enough to be aware of how man was created, how he sinned and was punished. You have also been told that God incorporated a single soul in each man. That soul is

created from time to time and is never again used for subsequent incarnations. This certainty would seem to cancel My statement concerning the recollections of souls. It should cancel it with regard to any other being with the exception of man, who is gifted with a soul made by God. Animals cannot remember anything, as they are born once only. But man can remember, although he is born once only. He remembers with his better part: his soul. Where do souls come from? The soul of each man" From God. Who is God? The most intelligent, powerful, perfect Spirit. This wonderful thing which is a soul, a thing created by God to give man His image and likeness as an unquestionable sign of His Most Holy Paternity, shows signs of the qualities characteristic of Him Who creates it. It is therefore intelligent, spiritual, free, immortal, like the Father Who created it. It is perfect when it originates from the divine thought and in the instant of its creation it is identical, for a thousandth of instant, with the soul of the first man: a perfection which understand s the Truth through free gift. A thousandth of an instant. Then, once it is formed, it is stained by original sin. To make it clearer for you I will say that it is as if God were pregnant with the soul which He creates and the creature, in being born, were wounded by an indelible mark. Do you understand Me? »

« Yes, I do. While it is thought it is perfect. The creating thought lasts a thousandth of an instant. The thought then becomes actual fact and the fact is subject to the law brought about by Sin. »

« Your reply is correct. A soul becomes thus incarnate in a human body, bringing with it the memory of the Creator, that is of the Truth, as a secret gem in the mystery of its spiritual being. A baby is born. It may become good, very good or wicked. It may become anything because it is endowed with free will. The angelical ministry throws light on its "memories" and the tempter darkness. If man craves after light and thus for a greater and greater virtue, making his soul the master of his being, the faculty of remembering increases in the soul, as if virtue made the wall interposed between soul and God thinner and thinner. That is why virtuous people in every country perceive the Truth, not in a perfect way, as they are dulled by contrasting doctrines or by lethal ignorance, but in a sufficient manner to give pages of morn] perfection to the peoples to whom they belong. Have you understood? Are you convinced? »

« Yes. In conclusion, the religion of virtue practised heroically predisposes the soul to the true Religion and to the knowledge of God. »

« Exactly. And now go and rest and may you be blessed. And You, too, Mother, and you sisters and disciples. May you rest in the peace of God. »

3-1357

290. Going to Bozrah.

30th September 1945.

The merchant was right. October could not have granted the pilgrims a lovelier day. After the sun had dispelled the haze which veiled the country, as if nature had laid a veil over the sleeping plants at night, the country appears in its solemn stretch of cultivated fields warmed by the sun. The fog seems to have gathered together on remote mountain tops decorating them with a transparent foam, thus softening them even more against the serene sky.

« What are those? Mountains we have to climb? » asks Peter anxiously.

« No. They are the Hauran mountains. We shall be on the plain, on this side of the mountains. Before evening we shall be at Bozrah in Hauran. A beautiful good town. Much trade » says the merchant encouraging Peter and praising the town, considering, as usual, commercial prosperity as the basis of the beauty of a place.

Jesus is all alone, in the rear, as He is wont to do at times when He so wishes. Marjiam turns round several times looking at Him. When he can resist no longer, he leaves Peter and James of Zebedee, he sits on the edge of the road, on a stone which must be a Roman military landmark, and waits. When Jesus is at his level, the boy stands up and without speaking he goes beside Jesus, remaining a little behind Him so as not to annoy Him, and he watches Him...

And he continues watching until Jesus comes out of His meditation and turns round on hearing the light footstep behind Him and He smiles stretching His hand out to the boy and saying: « Oh! Marjiam! What are you doing here all alone? »

« I was looking at You. I have been looking at You for days. Everybody has eyes but not everybody sees the same things. I have noticed that now and again You want to remain all alone... On the first days I thought You were hurt by something. Then I noticed that You do it always at the same time and that Mother, Who always comforts You When You are sad, does not say anything to You when Your countenance is like that. On the contrary, if She happens to be speaking, She becomes quiet and concentrates on meditation. I notice things, You know? Because I always look at You and Her, in order to do what You do. I asked the apostles what You do, because You certainly do something. They said to me: "He prays". And I asked them: "What does He say?". No one replied, because they do not know. They have been with You for years, and they do not know. Today I followed You every time I noticed that countenance and I watched You while You were praying. But Your countenance is not always the same. This morning, at dawn, You looked like a bright angel. You looked at things with such bright eyes that I think they dispelled darkness more than the sun did. And You looked at things and

people like that. And then You looked at the sky and Your face was the same as when You offer the bread at table. Later, when we were crossing that little village, You remained alone, in the rear, and You seemed to me a father, as You were so anxious to say kind words to the poor people of the village, while passing by. You said to one: "Endure your suffering with patience, because I will soon relieve you and others like you". He was the slave of that bad man who set his dogs on us. Then, while the food was being prepared, You looked at us with eyes full of kind love. You looked like a mother... But Your countenance was now sorrowful... What do You think, Jesus, when You are always like that?... But also in the evening, at times, if I am not asleep, I see that You are very serious. Will You tell me how You pray, why You pray? »

« Of course, I will tell you. So that you can pray with Me. The day is given to us by God. The whole day: the bright one and the dark one: day and night. It is a gift to live and have light. Our way of living is a means of sanctification. Is that right? So we must sanctify the moments of the whole day, to persevere in holiness and have the Most High and His bounty present in our hearts, and at the same time, keep the Demon away. Watch the little birds. They sing at sunrise. They bless the light. We must bless the light as well, because it is a gift of God, and we must bless God Who grants it to us and Who is the Light. We must crave for God as from daybreak to put a seal, a note of light on the whole oncoming day, that it may be entirely bright and holy. And we must join the whole creation in praising the Creator. Then, as the hours go by, and going by they make us aware of how much sorrow and ignorance there is in the world, we must pray again that sorrow may be relieved and ignorance may vanish and God may be known, loved and prayed to by all men, who, if they knew God, would be comforted in their sufferings. And at the sixth hour we must pray out of love for our family, to enjoy the gift of being united to those who love us. That is also a gift of God. And we must pray that our eating, instead of being useful, may not become an occasion of sin. And at sunset we pray remembering that death is the inevitable end waiting for all of us. And we must pray that our end, be it today or later, may take place with our souls in grace. And when the lights are lit, we must pray to thank for the day which is over and to ask for protection and forgiveness, so that we may go to sleep without any fear of a sudden judgement or assaults of the demon. And, finally, we must pray at night - but this applies only to adults - to make amends for the sins of the night, to keep Satan away from weak people, and that culprits may ponder, repent and make good resolutions which will become facts at sunrise. That is how and why a just person prays during the whole day. »

« But You have not told me why You are so absorbed, so grave

and imposing at the ninth hour... »

« Because... I say: "Through the Sacrifice of this hour, let Your Kingdom come to the world and may all those who believe in Your Word be redeemed". Say the same yourself... »

« What sacrifice is it? You said that incense is offered in the morning and evening, and the victims at the same hour, every day, on the altar of the Temple. And that the victims for vows and expiation are offered at any hour. There is no indication of a special rite for the ninth hour. »

Jesus stops and takes the boy with both hands, and lifts him holding him in front of Himself, and as if He were saying a psalm, with His face raised, He says: « "And between the sixth and ninth hour, He Who has come as Saviour and Redeemer, He of Whom the prophets speak, will consume His Sacrifice after eating the bitter bread of betrayal and after giving the sweet Bread of Life, after crushing Himself like grapes in a vat and quenching with His whole being the thirst of men and plants, and making for Himself a Royal purple with His own blood, and putting on a crown and seizing the sceptre, and taking His throne on the high place, so that Zion and Israel and the world might see it. Lifted up in the purple garment of His numberless wounds, in the dark to give Light, in death to give Life, He will die at the ninth hour and the world will be redeemed". »

Marjiam is frightened and pale and looks at Him with dismayed eyes and trembling lips on the point of bursting into tears. With faltering voice he says: « But You are the Saviour! So will You be dying at that hour? » Tears begin to stream down his cheeks and his little mouth sips them, while he awaits a denial.

But Jesus says: « I will, My little disciple. For you, too. » And as the child bursts into convulsive sobs, He presses him to His heart and says: « Are you sorry that I die? »

« Oh! My only joy! I do not want that! I... Let me die in Your place... »

« You are to preach Me all over the world. That is settled. But listen. I will die happily because I know that you love Me. Then I will rise from the dead. Do you remember Jonah? He was more handsome when he came out of the belly of the whale well rested and strong. So will I, and I will come to you at once and I will say to you: "Little Marjiam, your tears quenched My thirst. Your love kept Me company in the Sepulchre. I have now come to say to you: 'Be My priest' " and I will kiss you with the scent of Paradise still on Me. »

« But where will I be? Will I not be with Peter or Mother? »

« I will save you from the evil waves of those days. I will save the most weak and innocent ones. Except one... Marjiam, little apostle, will you help me to pray for that hour? »

3-1360

« Oh! Yes, I will, Lord! And the others? »

« That is a secret between you and Me. A great secret. Because God loves to be revealed to the little ones... Do not weep any more. Smile-at the thought that afterwards I will suffer no more and I will only remember all the love of men, and yours first. Come. Look how far the others are. Let us run and join them » and He puts him down and holding him by the hand they start running until they reach the group.

« Master, what have You done? »

« I was explaining the hours of the day to Marjiam. »

« And has the boy wept? He must have been naughty, and You are excusing him out of kindness » says Peter.

« No, Simon. He watched Me praying. You have not done that. He asked Me why. I told him. The boy was moved by My words. Now leave him alone. Go to My Mother, Marjiam. And you all, listen to Me. The lesson will do no harm to you either. »

And Jesus explains once again the usefulness of prayer at the main hours of the day, leaving out the explanation of the ninth hour and concluding: « Union to God is to have Him present every moment to praise and invoke Him. Do so and you will make progress in the life of the spirit. »

Bozrah is now close at hand. Stretched out on the plain it looks a large beautiful town with walls and towers. The evening which is drawing on, tones down the shades of houses and country into a greyish languid lilac, in which all contours become vague, while grunting pigs and bleating sheep in the enclosures outside the walls, break the silence of the country. The silence comes to an end as soon as the caravan goes through the gate entering a labyrinth of narrow streets which disappoint those who from the outside thought the town was beautiful. Voices, smells and... stench stagnate in the twisted lanes and accompany the pilgrims as far as a square, the market square, where the inn is.

They thus arrive at Bozrah.

291. At Bozrah.

1st October 1945.

Bozrah looks very dull in the morning mist, both because of the season and because the town is closed in its narrow streets. It looks dull and dirty. The apostles, who have come back from their shopping at the market, are talking about it. Hotel practice in those days and in such places is so utterly antiquated, that one has to see to one's victuals. Innkeepers obviously do not want to lose any money. So they only cook what customers bring them, and let us hope that they do not steal any of that. Or at most they buy food for customers or sell them what they have in stock, working as

butchers, if necessary, preparing poor lambs to be roasted.

Peter does not like buying from the innkeeper and is now squabbling with him. The man, with a rather roguish face, goes to the point of insulting the apostle, calling him « Galilean », while Peter answers back, pointing to a little pig, which the host has just slaughtered for some guests: « I am a Galilean, and you are a pig, you pagan. I would not stay in your stinking inn for one hour, if it depended on me. You thief and... (and he adds here a very clear epithet... which I leave in my pen). » I realise that between the people of Bozrah and the Galileans there is one of the many regional or religious incompatibilities, of which Israel, or rather Palestine was full.

The host shouts louder: « If you were not with the Nazarene, and I were not better than your filthy Pharisees who hate Him without any good reason, I would wash your face with the blood of the pig, so you would have to get out of here and rush to purify yourself. But I respect Him, Whose power is known. And I tell you, that notwithstanding all your fuss, you are sinners. We are better than you are. We do not lay snares neither do we betray. You, faugh! You are a lot of unfair traitors and rascals and you do not even respect the few holy people among you. »

« Who are you calling traitors? Us? Ah! In God's truth I... » Peter is furious and is about to break upon the man, when his brother and James hold him back, and Simon Zealot intervenes with Matthew.

But Peter's wrath is abated not so much by their intervention as by the voice of Jesus Who appears at one of the doors and says: « You now, Simon, will be quiet. And you, too, man. »

« Lord, this man was the first to insinuate and threaten. »

« Nazarene, I was offended first. »

I, he. He and I. The two culprits cast blame on each other.

Jesus comes forward seriously and calmly. « You are both wrong. And you, Simon, more than he is. Because you know the doctrine of love, of forgiveness, of meekness, of patience and brotherhood. In order not to be ill-treated as a Galilean, you must make yourself respected as a saint. And you, man, bless the Lord if you feel that you are better than others and endeavour to be worthy of becoming better and better. And above all, do not foul your soul with false charges. My disciples neither betray nor lay snares. »

« Are You sure, Nazarene? Well, then, why did those four come and ask me whether You had come, with whom You were and so many more questions? »

« What? Who are they? Where are they? » The apostles gather round him, forgetting that they are drawing close to a person still wet with the blood of a pig, which struck them with horror shortly before and kept them away.

« Go and mind your own business. You may stay, Misace. »

3-1362

The apostles go into the room from which Jesus came out, and only Jesus and the innkeeper are left in the yard, one facing the other. The merchant is a few steps from Jesus and is watching the scene spellbound.

« Tell Me the truth, man. And forgive if blood made one of My disciples furious. Who are those four and what did they say? »

« I do not know exactly who they are. They are certainly scribes and Pharisees from the other side. I do not know who brought them here. I have never seen them. But they are well informed of You. They know from where You have come, where You are going, with whom You are. But they wanted confirmation from me. No. I may be a rascal. But I know my business. I know nobody and I see nothing. I know nothing. With regard to others, of course. As far as I am concerned, I know everything. But why should I tell others, particularly those hypocrites, what I know? Am I a rascal? Yes. If necessary I side also with robbers. In any case, You know... But I could not steal or try to steal Your freedom, honour and life. And those - I am no longer Phara of Ptolemy if what I say is not true and those are lying in wait for You, to do You harm. And who sent them? Perhaps someone from Perea or the Decapolis? Or someone from Trachonitis or Gaulanitis or Hauran? No. We either do not know You, or if we have heard of You, we respect You as a just man, if we do not believe in You as a saint. So, who sent them? Someone on Your side and perhaps one of Your friends, because they know too many things... »

« It is easy to be informed of my caravan... » says Misace.

« No, merchant. Not of you, but of the others who are with Jesus. I do not know and I do not want to know. I do not see and I do not want to see. But I say to You: if You are guilty, make amends, if You know that You have been betrayed, take the necessary action. »

« I am neither guilty, man, nor betrayed. The only trouble is that Israel does not understand Me. But how do you know about Me? »

« Through a boy. A mischievous boy who had a bad reputation at Bozrah and Arbela. Here, because he came here to commit his sins, there because he dishonoured his family. Then he became converted and more honest than a just man. And he passed by with Your disciples, a disciple himself, and is waiting for You at Arbela, to honour You with his father and mother. And he tells everybody that You changed his heart through his mother's prayers. If this region ever becomes a holy one, Philip of James will have the merit of having sanctified it. And if there is anyone who believes in You in Bozrah, it is due to him. »

« Where are the scribes now, who came here? »

« I don't know. They went away because I told them that I had no rooms for them. I had them, but I did not want to give hospitality

to snakes and thus have them close to the dove. They are certainly in this area. Be careful. »

« Thank you, man. What is your name? »

« Phara. I did my duty. Remember me. »

« Yes. And you must remember God. And forgive My Simon. The great love he has for Me at times blinds him. »

« No harm. I offended him as well... But it hurts to be insulted. You do not insult... »

Jesus sighs... He then says: « Will you help the Nazarene? »

« If I can... »

« I would be glad to speak from this yard... »

« And I will let You speak. When? »

« Between the sixth and ninth hour. »

« Go wherever You want and do not worry. Bozrah will know that You are going to speak. I will see to it. »

« May God reward you for it » and Jesus smiles at him, a smile which is already a reward. He then goes to the room where He was before.

Alexander Misace says: « Master, will You smile at me as well, like that?... I am also going to tell the citizens to come and listen to the Bounty Which is speaking. I know many. Goodbye. »

« May God reward you, too » and Jesus smiles at him.

He enters the room. The women are around Mary, Whose face is sorrowful and She gets up at once and goes towards Her Son. She does not speak. Her whole attitude is uncertainty. Jesus smiles at Her and He replies to Her saying to everybody: « Be free by the sixth hour. I will speak here to many people. In the meantime go, everybody, with the exception of Simon Peter, John and Ermasteus. Go and announce Me and give plentiful alms. »

The apostles go away.

Peter slowly approaches Jesus Who is near the women and asks: « Why did You not send me as well? »

« When one is too impulsive, one stays at home. Simon, Simon! When will you learn to be charitable to your neighbour? For the time being it is a burning flame, but only for Me, it is a straight and stiff blade, but only for Me. Be mild, Simon of Jonah. »

« You are right, Master. Your Mother has already reproached me, as She knows how to, but without hurting. But it penetrated right into me. But... reproach me as well, but do not look at me so sadly. »

« Be good... Syntyche, I would like to speak to you privately. Come up to the terrace. Will you come, as well, Mother... »

And on the rustic terrace, which covers one wing of the building, in the sunshine which warms the air, walking slowly between Mary and the Greek woman, Jesus says: « Tomorrow we will part for a little while. When near Arbela, you women with John of

Endor, will go towards the Sea of Galilee and will continue together as far as Nazareth. But as I do not want to send you by yourselves with an almost disabled man, I will get My brothers and Simon Peter to accompany you. I can foresee that there will be some reluctance to separate. But obedience is the virtue of the just, When you go through the country over which Chuza watches in Herod's name, Johanna can find some more people to escort you on the rest of the way. You will then send back Alphaeus' sons and Simon Peter. But the reason why I asked you to come up here is as follows. I want to tell you, Syntyche, that I have decided for you to stay for some time in My Mother's house. She already knows. John of Endor and Marjiam will be staying with you. Stay there willingly, perfecting yourself more and more in Wisdom. I want you to take great care of poor John. I am not saying this to My Mother because She does not need any advice. You can understand John and sympathise with him, and he can do you much good because he is an experienced master. I will come later. Oh! Quite soon! And we will often meet. I hope to find you wiser and wiser in the Truth. I bless you particularly, Syntyche. This is My farewell from you, for this time. You will find love and hatred in Nazareth as anywhere else. But in My house you will find peace. Always. »

« Nazareth will ignore me and I will ignore Nazareth. I will live nourishing myself with the Truth and the world will be nothing to me, Lord. »

« Very well. You may go, Syntyche. And do not mention it to anybody, for the time being. Mother, You know... I trust these dearest pearls of Mine to You. While we are in peace, among ourselves, Mother, let Your Jesus refresh Himself in Your caresses... »

« How much hatred, Son! »

« How much love! »

« How much bitterness, My dear Jesus! »

« How much sweetness! »

« How much incomprehension, My Son! »

« How much comprehension, Mother! »

« Oh! My darling, My Dear Son! »

« Mother! Joy of God and Mine! Mother! »

They kiss each other and remain together, on the stone bench against the low terrace wall: Jesus embracing His Mother, a loving protector, Mary reclining Her head on Her Son's shoulder, Her hands in His: happy... The world is so distant... buried in the waves of love and faithfulness...

3-1365

292. The Sermon and Miracles at Bozrah.

2nd October 1945.

... And the world is so close with its waves of hatred, betrayal, sorrow, need, curiosity. And the waves come, like those of the sea in a harbour, to die here, in the yard of the inn at Bozrah, which the respectful host, whose heart is better than his face makes one suppose, has cleaned of excrement and dirt. There is a large crowd of people, both local and strangers, but of the same region. And there are people whose conversation gives me to understand that they come from very far, from the lake area or beyond the lake. I catch the names of villages, and parts of sorrowful stories in the conversation of the people awaiting Jesus. Gadara, Hippo, Gerghesa, Gamala, Aphek, Nain, Endor, Jezreel, Magdala and Korazim, are mentioned by many people together with the stories of the reasons why they have come from so far.

« When I heard that He had come through Trans-Jordan, I was discouraged. But some disciples came when I was about to go back to Jezreel and they said to us, who were waiting at Capernaum: "He is certainly beyond Gerasa by now. Waste no time, go to Bozrah or Arbela" and I came with these people... »

« I, instead, saw some Pharisees pass through Gadara. They were asking where was Jesus of Nazareth, Whom they knew to be in the area. My wife is ill. I joined them. Then yesterday at Arbela I heard that He was coming to Bozrah first, so I came here. »

« I have come from Gadara for this boy. He was gored by a furious cow. He has been left in that state... » and he shows his son who is utterly shrivelled and unable to move his arms.

« I could not bring mine. I come from Megiddo. What do you think? Will He cure him from here also? » moans a woman whose face is red with weeping.

« No, the sick person must be present. »

« No. It is enough to have faith. »

« No. Unless He imposes His hands, one is not cured. His disciples also do that. »

« You have come a long way for nothing, woman. »

The woman begins to weep saying: « Poor me! I left him when he was almost dying, hoping... He will not cure him, and I will not comfort him in his death... »

Another woman consoles her: « Don't believe that, woman. I have come to thank Him because He worked a great miracle for me, without leaving the mountain on which He was speaking. »

« What was the matter with your son? »

« It was not my son. It was my husband who had become mad... » "And the two women continue speaking in low voices.

« It is true. Also a mother at Arbela had her son redeemed without the Master seeing him » says a man from Arbela and he

goes on speaking to some people near him...

« Make way, for pity's sake! Make way! » shout some bearers of a litter which is completely covered.

The crowds open out and the litter goes by with its sorrowful load, and stops at the end of the yard, almost behind a rick of straw. Is it a man or a woman lying on the litter? Who knows!

Two Pharisees come in: they are vainglorious and well preserved and more proud than ever. They assault the poor host as if they were mad, shouting: « You cursed liar! Why did you tell us that He was not here? Are you His accomplice? How dare you despise us, the holy ones in Israel, to favour... Whom, after all? How do you know who He is? What is He to you? »

« What is He? What you are not. But I did not lie. He came a few hours after you had left. He did not hide Himself, neither do I hide Him. But as I am the boss here, I tell you at once: "Get out of my house!". You do not insult the Nazarene here. Do you understand? And if you do not understand my words, I can speak to you in a more factual way, you jackals! »

The robust innkeeper seems so decided to come to blows that the two Pharisees change tone and become like creeping pups menaced by lash. « But we are looking for Him to revere Him! What are you thinking of? The thought that we might not see Him through your fault made us furious. We know Who He is. The holy and blessed Messiah, to Whom we are not worthy to raise our eyes. We are dust, He is the glory of Israel. Take us to Him. Our souls are yearning to hear His words. »

The host imitates their voices and gestures in a wonderful way: « Oh! Of course! And how could I ever suspect it was not so, since I am so well aware of the fame of Pharisees' justice?! Of course! You have come to worship Him! You are yearning for that! I will go and tell Him! I am going... No, by Satan! You shall not follow me! Neither will you, or I will strike you so much, you poisonous mummies, that I will make one knock into the other. Stay here. You stay here, where I am putting you. And you here. And I am sorry I cannot knock you into the ground up to your necks and use you as pegs to tie the pigs to be slaughtered » and he passes from words to deeds by seizing the leaner Pharisee by his armpits, lifting him up and dropping him so violently on the ground, that if it were not very hard the poor fellow would have sunk into it up to his ankles. But the ground is hard and the Pharisee remains standing like a puppet, after being tossed about so much. Then the host gets hold of the other man, and although he is rather fat, the innkeeper raises and drops him with the same fury, and as the Pharisee reacts wriggling, he knocks him down and makes him sit: a bundle of flesh and cloth... He then goes away uttering a nasty word which is lost among the moans of the two and the laughter of many more.

He goes through a corridor into a small yard, he climbs a little staircase, reaches a porched gallery and enters a large room in which Jesus and His group are about to finish their meal with the merchant.

« Two of the four Pharisees have come. You had better see what You must do. For the time being I have seen to them. They wanted to come with me. But I did not want them. They are now down in the yard with many sick people and many others. »

« I will come at once. Thank you, Phara. You may go. »

They all get up. Jesus orders His disciples and the women to stay where they are, with the exception of His Mother, Mary Clopas, Susanna and Salome. But seeing the sad countenance of those who have been excluded, He says: « Go up to the terrace. You will hear Me just the same. »

He goes out with the apostles and the four women. He goes back the same way as the host came and enters the large yard. The crowds crane their necks to see, and those who are sly climb up on to straw stacks, on carts standing on one side, or on the edge of reservoirs...

The two Pharisees go and meet Him ceremoniously. Jesus greets them with His usual salutation as if they were His most faithful friends. But He does not stop to reply to their unctuous questions: « Are you so few? And without disciples? So they have left You? »

Jesus continuing to walk replies gravely: « No one left Me. You have come from Arbela where you met those who precede Me, and in Judaea you met Judas of Simon, Thomas, Nathanael and Philip. »

The stout Pharisee no longer dare follow Him and he stops all of a sudden blushing. The other, who is more barefaced, insists: « That is true. But as we knew that You were with faithful disciples and with some women, we were surprised at seeing You with so few people. We wanted to see Your new conquests and congratulate You » and he gives a false smile.

« My new conquests? There they are! » and Jesus makes a wide semicircular gesture, pointing at the crowds, which are mainly from the region beyond the Jordan, that is from this region where Bozrah is. And without giving the Pharisee time to retort, He begins to speak.

« Those who previously did not inquire about Me, have been looking for Me. And those who previously did not look for Me, have found Me. And I said: "Here I am" to a nation which did not invoke My Name. Glory be to the Lord Who speaks the truth through the lips of the prophets! Looking at this crowd which has gathered round Me I really rejoice in the Lord because I see that the promises, which the Eternal Father made to Me when He sent Me to the world, have been fulfilled. Those promises which I Myself, with the Father and the Paraclete, put in the thoughts, on

the lips and in the hearts of the prophets, the promises of which I was aware before becoming Flesh and which encouraged Me to be made flesh. And they encourage Me. Yes, they encourage Me against hatred, malice, mistrust and falsehood. Those who previously did not inquire about Me, have been looking for Me. And those who did not look for Me, have found Me. How come, if I was instead rejected by those to whom I had stretched out My hands saying: "Here I am"? And yet they knew Me, whereas these people here did not know Me. So?

Here is the key to the mystery. It is not a fault to ignore, but it is a fault to deny. And too many of those who know Me and to whom I stretched My hands, have denied Me as if I were illegitimate or a thief, a corrupting demon, because their pride has extinguished their faith and they have gone astray along bad, twisted sinful ways, leaving the way which My voice points out to them. Sin is in the heart, on the table, in the beds, in the hearts, in the minds of this people which rejects Me and which, seeing its own filth reflected everywhere, sees it on Me also, and its bitterness piles it up more and more, and it says to Me: "Go away, because You are unclean".

So what will He say, Who is coming with His robe dyed red, handsome in His garment, and is walking in the power of His strength? Will He accomplish already what Isaiah says, and will He not be quiet, but will He pour on their laps what they deserve? No, He will not. First He has to tread the winepress alone, abandoned by everybody, to make the wine of Redemption. The wine that exhilarates the just and makes them blessed, the wine that exhilarates the guilty of the great sin, to crush their sacrilegious power into crumbs. Yes, My wine, which is maturing hour by hour in the sun of Eternal Love, will be the ruin and salvation of many, as it is stated in a prophecy not yet written, but deposited in the unsplit rock from which the Vine giving the Wine of eternal Life sprang up.

Do you understand? No, you doctors of Israel do not understand. But it does not matter whether you understand. The darkness of which Isaiah speaks is descending upon you: "They have eyes and do not see. They have ears and do not hear". You shield the Light with your hatred, so that one can say that the Light was repelled by darkness and the world refused to know it.

But exult, you who were in the dark and believed in the Light which was announced to you, and you desired it, sought it and found it. Exult, o faithful people who have come to Salvation crossing mountains, valleys and lakes without considering the burden of the long journey. The same applies to the other spiritual journey which will take you, o people of Bozrah, from the darkness of ignorance to the light of Wisdom.

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Exult, o people of Hauran! Exult in the joy of knowledge. Truly it refers also to you and to your neighbouring peoples, when the Prophet sings that your camels and dromedaries will crowd the streets of Naphtali and Zebulun to worship the true God, and to be His servants in the holy mild law, which does not impose anything in order to give divine paternity and eternal happiness but compliance with the ten commandments of the Lord: to love the true God with one's whole being, to love one's neighbour as oneself, to keep the Sabbath without desecrating it, to honour one's parents, not to kill, not to steal, not to commit adultery, not to bear false witness, not to covet the wife or property of other people. Oh! you are blessed if coming from farther away you will go beyond those who belonged to the house of the Lord and went out of it, urged by the ten commandments of Satan: dislike of God, love of oneself, corruption of cult, harshness towards parents, murderous desire, attempt to steal other people's holiness, fornication with Satan, false witness, envy of the nature and mission of the Word, and the horrible sin which ferments and matures in the depth of hearts, of too many hearts.

Exult, you who are thirsty! Exult, you who are hungry! Exult, you who are afflicted! Were you rejected? Were you proscribed? Were you despised? Were you strangers? Come! Exult! It is no longer so. I give you homes, wealth, paternity and fatherland. I give you Heaven. Follow Me, because I am the Saviour! Follow Me, because I am the Redeemer! Follow Me, because I am the Life! Follow Me, because I am He to Whom the Father refuses no grace! Exult in My love! Exult! And that you may realise that I love you, you who have sought Me in your sorrows, you who have believed in Me even before knowing Me, that this may be a day of true exultation, I pray thus: "Father, Holy Father! On all the wounds, diseases, sores of bodies, on the grief, tortures, remorse of hearts, on all the faithful who are springing up, on those who are vacillating, on those who are strengthening, let health, grace, peace descend! Peace in My Name! Grace in Your Name! Health through Our reciprocal love! Bless them, o Most Holy Father! Gather and form one fold with these lost children of Yours and Mine! Let them be where I will be, one with You, Holy Father, with You, with Me and with the Most Divine Spirit". »

Jesus, with His arms stretched out crosswise, His palms upwards towards the sky, His face raised, His voice blaring like a silver tuba, is overwhelming in His speech... He remains thus, silent, for some moments. Then His sapphire eyes stop looking at the sky to look at the large yard crowded with people who are sighing deeply moved or are quivering with hope; He joins His hands moving them forward and with a smile which transfigures Him, He utters a final cry: « Exult, you who believe and hope! People

3-1370

of sufferers, rise and love the Lord your God! »

The healing of the diseased is simultaneous and general. Trilling voices and roaring shouts praise the Saviour. A woman squeezes through the crowd, from the far end of the yard, dragging the sheet that had covered her and collapses at the feet of the Lord. This time the terrified crowds utter a different shout: « Mary, the leprous wife of Joachim! » and they run in all directions.

« Be not afraid! She is cured. Contact with her can do you no harm » says Jesus reassuring them. And He says to the prostrated female: « Stand up, woman. You have been rewarded for your great hope and you are forgiven for neglecting prudence towards your brothers. Go back home after the salutary ablutions. »

The woman, who is young and quite beautiful, stands up weeping. Jesus shows her to the crowds who have come back and admire the miracle shouting out of astonishment.

« Her husband, who adored her, had built a shelter for her at the end of his fields and went to its border every evening and gave her some food weeping... »

« She became infected through her pity, taking care of a beggar who did not say that he was a leper. »

« But how did Mary, the good woman, come here? »

« On that litter. How did we not notice Joachim's two servants? »

« They ran the risk of being stoned for that. »

« Their mistress! They love her, she is so kind that they love her more than themselves... »

Jesus makes a gesture and they all become silent: « You can see that love and goodness bring miracles and joy. So, be good. Go, woman. No one will do you any harm. Peace be with you and with your household. »

The woman, followed by the servants who have burnt the litter in the middle of the yard, goes out and many people follow her.

Jesus dismisses the crowd after listening to some people and He retires to the house followed by those who were with Him.

« What words, Master! »

« How transfigured You were! »

« What a voice! »

« And what miracles! »

« Did you see the Pharisees flee? »

« They went away like two creeping lizards immediately after the first words. »

« The people of Bozrah and of all the villages here have a wonderful recollection of You... »

« Mother, what do You say? »

« I bless You, Son, on their behalf and Mine. »

« Well, Your blessing will follow Me until we meet again. »

« Why do You say that, Lord? Are the women leaving us? »

3-1371

« Yes, Simon. Tomorrow at daybreak Alexander is leaving for Aera. We will go with him as far as the road to Arbela and we will then leave him. And with regret, believe Me, Alexander, because you have been a kind guide for the Pilgrim. I will always remember you, Alexander. »

The old man is moved. He is standing with his arms folded on his chest, in the deep eastern salutation, bending a little in front of Jesus. But when he hears His words, he says: « Above all, remember me when You are in Your Kingdom. »

« Do you wish that, Misace? »

« Yes, my Lord. »

« I also wish something of you. »

« Which, Lord? If I can I will give it to You, even if it were the most precious thing I possess. »

« It is the most precious. I want your soul. Come to Me. I told you, at the beginning of our journey, that I hoped to give you a gift at the end of it. My gift is Faith. Do you believe in Me, Misace? »

« I do believe, Lord. »

« Then sanctify your soul so that faith may not be for you not only an inert but also a harmful gift. »

« My soul is old. But I will endeavour to make it new. Lord, I am an old sinner. Absolve me and bless me, because as from this moment I am beginning a new life. I will take Your blessing with me as the best escort in my journey towards Your Kingdom... Shall we ever meet again, Lord? »

« Not on this earth. But you will hear of Me and you will believe even more because I will not leave you without evangelization. Goodbye, Misace. We shall not have much time tomorrow to say goodbye to each other. Let us do so now, before taking our food together for the last time. » He embraces and kisses him.

The apostles and disciples also do so. The women greet him all together.

But Misace kneels down almost in front of Mary saying: « May Your light of a pure morning star shine in my mind until my death. »

« Until Life, Alexander. Love My Son and you will love Me, and I will love you. »

Simon Peter asks: « But shall we be going from Arbela to Aera? I am afraid we may be caught in bad weather. There is so much fog... We have had it for three days at dawn and sunset... »

« That is because we have been coming down here. Do you not think that we have come down a good deal? It is so. Tomorrow you will be climbing towards the mountains of the Decapolis and there will be no more fog there » explains Misace.

« Come down? When? It was a flat road... »

« Yes, but in continuous descent. Oh! so slowly that one does not notice it. But in many miles... »

3-1372

« How long shall we be staying at Arbela? »

« You, James and Judas, not even one hour » replies Jesus resolutely.

« James and Judas... I... not even one hour? And where am I going if I am not staying with you all? »

« You are going away. As far as the land in the guardianship of Chuza. You will take My Mother and the women there, with the others. They will then proceed by themselves with Johanna's servants and you will come back and join Me at Aera. »

« Oh! Lord! You are angry with me and You are punishing me... How much You grieve me, Lord! »

« Simon, he feels that he is punished who knows that he is guilty. Being guilty must grieve you, not the punishment in itself. But I do not think that it is a punishment to accompany My Mother and the women disciples on their way back home. »

« But would it not be better if You came with us? Never mind Aera and these places and come with us. »

« I promised to go and I will go. »

« Then I will come, too. »

« You will obey without complaining, as My brothers do. »

« And if You meet some Pharisees? »

« You are certainly not the most suitable to convert them. It is just because I will meet some that I want you, James and Judas to go away with the women and with John of Endor and Marjiam before Arbela. »

« Ah!... I see! All right. »

Jesus turns round to the women and blesses them one by one, giving each of them suitable advice.

The Magdalene on bending to kiss the feet of her Saviour asks: « Shall I see You again before I go back to Bethany? »

« Most certainly, Mary. In the month of Ethanim I will be on the lake. »

293. Farewell to the Women Disciples.

3rd October 1945.

The reverential respect of Misace is shown the following morning, when he makes the pilgrims go the first miles on the camels after adjusting their loads, turning them into comfortable cradles for the inexperienced riders. And it is quite funny to see dark or fair-haired heads emerging from bundles and cases, with long hair reaching down to the men's ears, or tresses showing through the women's veils. As the camels are moving very fast, the wind now and again blows back the veils and the bright golden hair of Mary Magdalene or the milder fair hair of the Blessed Virgin shines in the sunshine, while the dark or brown-haired heads of Johanna,

Syntyche, Martha, Marcella, Susanna and Sarah show indigo or dark bronze reflections, and the grey-haired heads of Eliza, Salome and Mary Clopas seem to be sprayed with silver dust in the clear warm sun. The men are proceeding bravely on the new means of transport and Marjiam is laughing happily.

They realise that the merchant's statement is true, when, turning round, they see Bozrah down in the valley, with its towers and high houses in the labyrinth of the narrow streets. Low hills appear to the north-west. The road to Aera runs at their feet; the caravan stops to let the pilgrims dismount and part. The camels kneel down with remarkable pitching which makes more than one woman scream. I now see that wisely the women had been fastened to the saddles with belts. The women are somewhat stunned with so much rolling, but they are well rested.

Misace dismounts as well; he had taken Marjiam up on his saddle, and while the cameleers resettle the loads in the usual way, he approaches Jesus to bid Him goodbye once again.

« Thank you, Misace. You have saved us a lot of fatigue and time. »

« Yes. We have covered twenty miles in a short time. The camels have long legs, even if they do not amble smoothly. I do hope that the women have not suffered too much because of that. »

All the women reassure him that they are well rested and have not suffered.

« You are now six miles from Arbela. May Heaven accompany you and make your journey smooth. Goodbye, my Lord. Allow me to kiss Your holy feet. I am happy to have met You, Lord. Remember me. » Misace kisses Jesus' feet, he mounts again and his cry makes the camels rise... And the caravan leaves at a gallop on the flat road, in a cloud of dust.

« A good man! I am all bruised, but in compensation, my feet have had a rest. But how much knocking! A north wind storm on the lake is nothing in comparison! Are you laughing? But I did not have the cushions the women had. Long live my boat! It is still the cleanest and safest thing. And now let us pick up our bags and move on. »

They compete with one another in loading themselves. The winners are those who will be staying with Jesus, that is, Matthew, the Zealot, James and John, Ermasteus and Timoneus, who take everything to spare the three who will be going with the women, or rather the four, because there is also John of Endor, whose help must be very relative, owing to the poorly state he is in.

They walk fast for a few miles. When they reach the top of a low hill which acted as a screen to the west, a fertile plain appears, surrounded by a ring of hills, which are higher than the one they met previously, and in the middle of the plain there is a long isolated

hill. There is a town in the plain: Arbela. They descend and are soon in the plain.

They proceed for a little while, then Jesus stops saying: « This is where we part. Let us take our food together and then we shall part. This is the cross-road to Gadara. You will take that road, It is the shortest one and before evening you will be in the territory watched over by Chuza. »

There is not much enthusiasm... But they obey.

While taking their food Marjiam says: « Well, it is also the moment to give You this pouch. The merchant gave it to me when I was in the saddle with him. He said to me: "You will give it to Jesus before parting from Him and you will tell Him to love me as He loves you". Here it is. It was heavy here, in my tunic. It seems to be full of stones. »

« Let us see! Money is heavy! » They are all curious.

Jesus undoes the thin twisted leather strips which fasten the pouch made with gazelle leather, I think, because it looks like chamois leather, and empties its contents on His lap. Some coins roll out. But they are the least. Many small bags of very fine byssus roll out as well: little bundles tied with a thread. Beautiful hues shine through the very light linen tissue and the sun seems to light a tiny fire in each little bundle, as if they were embers under a thin veil of ash.

« What is it? Undo them, Master. »

They are all bending over Jesus Who calmly unties the knot of a little bundle shining with golden reflections: topazes of various sizes, still unrefined, sparkle freely in the sun. Another little bundle: rubies, drops of coagulated blood. Another one: a precious delightful display of green emerald chips. Another one: bits of sky in pure sapphires. Another one: languid amethysts. Another: violet indigo of beryls. Another: wonderful black onyxes... And so on for twelve little bundles. In the last one, the heaviest, a golden sparkling of chrysolites, there is a small parchment: « For Your Rational (1) of true Pontiff and King ».

Jesus' lap is a little meadow strewn with bright stripped petals... The apostles plunge their hands into that light which has become many-coloured matter. They are bewildered...

Peter whispers: « If Judas of Kerioth were here!... »

« Be quiet! It is better that he is not » says Thaddeus resolutely.

Jesus asks for a piece of cloth to make one parcel only of the stones and He is pensive while the others continue commenting.

The apostles say: « That man was rich indeed! » and Peter makes everybody laugh exclaiming: « We have been trotting on a throne of

(1) The Rational was the precious pectoral of judgement worn by the High Priest when he went into the presence of Yahweh (See Exodus 28, 15-30).

3-1375

gems. I did not think I was sitting on such splendour. I wish it had been softer! What will You do with it now? »

« I will sell it for the poor. » He looks up at the women smiling.

« And where will You find a jeweller here, who can buy those things? »

« Where? Here. Johanna, Martha, Mary, will you buy My treasure? »

The three women, without even consulting with one another, say: « Yes » impulsively. But Martha adds: « We have little money here ».

« You will let Me have it at Magdala at the new moon. »

« How much do You want, Lord? »

« For Myself, nothing. For My poor, very much. »

« Give me it. You will have very much » says the Magdalene, and she takes the purse and conceals it in her breast.

Jesus keeps only the money. He stands up. He kisses His Mother, His aunt, His cousins and then he kisses Peter, John of Endor and Marjiam. He blesses the women and dismisses them. And they go away, looking back now and again, until they disappear round a bend.

Jesus goes with the rest towards Arbela. It is only a small group now, only eight people in all. They walk fast without speaking towards the town which is becoming closer and closer.

294. At Arbela.

4th October 1945.

The very first person they approach when inquiring about Philip of Jacob makes them realise how much work the young disciple has done. The person they asked is a little old wrinkled woman, who is carrying with difficulty a jug full of water. Gazing with her little deep-set eyes at the handsome face of John who asked her the question, after greeting her « Peace be with you » so gently as to enrapture her, she says: « Are you the Messiah? »

« No. But I am His disciple. He is coming, He is over there. »

The old woman puts her jug on the ground and hobbles in the direction pointed out to her and kneels down in front of Jesus.

John, who has remained wit h Simon near the pitcher which has turned over spilling half of its contents, says to his companion smiling: « We had better pick up this jug and join the old woman. » He does so while his companion adds: « We can use it to drink. We are all thirsty. »

When they reach the old woman - who not knowing what to say exactly continues to repeat: « Lovely, holy Son of the most holy Mother » still on her knees and drinking in with her eyes the figure of Jesus, Who smiles at her repeating in His turn: « Stand up,

mother » - when they reach her, John says to her: « We have taken your jug. But it turned over and there is little water left in it. If you give it to us, we will drink this water and then we will fill the jug for you. ».

« Yes, my sons, of course. And I am sorry that I have but water for you. I wish I had milk in my breast as when I fed my Judas, in order to give you the sweetest thing there is on the earth: the milk of a mother. I would like to have wine, choice wine, to strengthen you. But Marianne of Elisha is old and poor... . »

« Your water is wine and milk to Me, mother, because it is given with love » replies Jesus and He is the first to drink out of the jug handed to Him by John. Then the others drink.

The old woman, who has at last stood up, looks at them as if she were looking at Paradise and when, after they have all drunk, she sees that they are about to throw away the water left in the jug, to fill it at the fountain gurgling at the end of the street, she rushes forward, defending her jug and saying: « No, don't. This water is more holy than lustral water, as He drank out of it. I will keep it carefully so that I may be cleansed with it when I die. » And she seizes her jug saying: « I will take it home. I have some more and I will fill them. But come first, o Holy One, that I may show You Philip's house » and she trots along swiftly, all bent, with a smile on her wrinkled face and her little eyes shining with joy. She trots along holding the hem of Jesus' mantle in her hand, as if she were afraid He might run away from her, and she defends her jug from the insistent apostles, who do not want her to carry that weight. She trots along blissfully, looking at the street and the houses in Arbela, the former deserted, the latter already closed as it is getting dark, and she looks like a conquerer, happy in her victory.

Finally, they pass from the side street into a more central one, where there are people hastening home - and the people watch her spellbound, pointing at her and questioning her - and, after waiting to have a circle of people around her, she shouts: « I have here Philip's Messiah. Run and tell everybody and first of all Jacob's household. So that they may be ready to honour the Saint. » She shouts at the top of her voice. She can make herself obeyed. It is the moment of authority of a poor, lonely, unknown little old woman of the people. And she sees the whole town deeply moved by her command.

Jesus, so much taller than she is, smiles at her when she looks at Him now and again and He lays His hand on her venerable head, in a filial caress which overwhelms her with happiness.

Jacob's house is in a central street. It is open and lit up and through the door one can see a long hall in which there are people holding lights, and they rush out joyfully as soon as Jesus appears in the street: the young disciple Philip, his father and mother,

relatives, servants and friends.

Jesus stops and replies gravely to Jacob's deep bow, He then bends over Philip's mother who has knelt down to revere Him, and He makes her stand up blessing her and saying: « Be always happy because of your faith. » He then greets the disciple who has come with the other man who was with him, and whom Jesus greets as well.

Old Marianne, however, does not leave the hem of the mantle or her place beside Jesus until they are about to enter the entrance hall. She then whispers: « Bless me that I may be happy! You will now stay here... I am going to my poor house and... and this beautiful thing is all over! » How much regret there is in her ageing voice!

Jacob, to whom his wife has spoken in a low voice, says: « No, Marianne of Elisha. Stay in my house as if you were a disciple. Stay as long as the Master will be with us and be thus happy. »

« May God bless you, man. You know what charity is. »

« Master... she brought You to my house. You have brought me grace and love. I am only giving back, and in a poor way, what I have received from You and from her so abundantly. Come in, and let my house welcome You. »

The crowds outside in the street see them go in and shout: « And what about us? We want to hear His word. »

Jesus turns round: « It is night and you are tired. Prepare your souls through a holy rest and tomorrow you will hear the Voice of God. For the time being, peace and blessings be with you. » And the front door closes on the happiness of this house.

James of Zebedee watches the Lord during the purification after the journey: « Perhaps it was better to speak at once and depart at dawn. There are some Pharisees in town. Philip told me. They will vex You. »

« Those who might have been vexed by them are far away. The trouble they may cause Me is of no importance. There is love that will cancel it... »

The following morning... Jesus goes out among the joyful relatives of Philip and the apostles. The old woman follows them. He meets the people of Arbela who are patiently waiting for Him. He goes to the main square where He begins to speak.

« We read in the eighth chapter of the second book of Ezra, what I will now repeat to you: "When the seventh month came... " (Jesus says to me: "Do not write anything else. I will repeat the words of the book in full").

When does a people return to its country? When it goes back to the land of its ancestors. I have come to take you back to the land of your Father, to the Kingdom of the Father. And I can do that because I was sent for that. So I have come to take You to the

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Kingdom of God and it is therefore fair to compare you to those who repatriated with Zorobabel to Jerusalem, the city of the Lord, and it is fair to do with you what Ezra the scribe did with the people gathered once again within the sacred walls. Because it is incomparable foolishness to rebuild a town dedicating it to the Lord, without restoring souls, which are like as many little towns of God.

How can these little spiritual towns, dilapidated by so many events, be restored? Which materials should be used to make them solid, beautiful, lasting? The materials are in the precepts of the Lord: the ten commandments, of which you are aware, because Philip, a son of your town and My disciple, has reminded you of them. The two most holy of the holy precepts are: "Love God with your whole being. Love your neighbour as yourself ". They sum up the Law. And I preach them because through them you are certain to conquer the Kingdom of God. In love you find the strength of persevering in holiness or becoming holy, the strength of forgiveness, the strength of heroism in virtue. Everything can be found in love. Fear does not save: the fear of the judgement of God, the fear of human sanctions, the fear of diseases. Fear is never constructive. It shakes, shatters, throws into disorder, it crushes. Fear leads to despair, it leads only to crafty concealment of evil-doing, it makes one fear when fear is useless, because evil is already within us.

Who thinks of behaving wisely, for the sake of his body, when one is healthy? No one. But as soon as the first shiver of fever runs through our veins or a stain makes us think of unclean diseases, then fear becomes an added torture to the disease and it becomes a disintegrating strength in a body already broken down by illness. Love instead is constructive. It builds, solidifies, unites and preserves. Love brings hope in God. Love removes from evildoing. Love makes man deal wisely with his own person, which is not the centre of the universe, as egotists believe and make it, the false lovers of themselves, because they love one part only: the less noble one, to the detriment of the immortal and holy part; but which it is our duty to preserve healthy, as long as God so wishes, in order to be useful to ourselves, to our relatives, to our town and to the whole country.

Diseases inevitably come. It is not true that every disease is the consequence of vice or punishment. There are holy diseases sent by the Lord to His just people, so that in the world, which considers itself the end and the means of pleasure, there may be holy people who are like war-hostages for the safety of others, and they pay personally expiating through their suffering, the portion of guilt which the world daily accumulates and which would end by crashing on Mankind, burying it under its malediction.

Do you remember old Moses praying while Joshua was fighting

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in the name of the Lord? You must consider that those who suffer holily, give the greatest battle to the fiercest warrior there is in the world, concealed under the appearances of men and peoples, to Satan, the Torturer, the Origin of all evils, and they fight on behalf of all men. But how much difference there is between such holy diseases sent by God, and those caused by vice through a sinful love of senses! The former are a proof of God's merciful will; the latter are a proof of diabolical corruption. It is therefore necessary to love, in order to be holy, because loves creates, preserves and sanctifies.

Like Nehemiah and Ezra, I also, announcing this truth, say to you: "This day is sacred to the Lord our God. Do not be mournful, do not weep". Because all mourning ends, when one lives the day of the Lord. The harshness of death comes to an end, because the loss of a son, of a husband, a father, mother or brother becomes a temporary and limited separation. Temporary because it ends with our death. Limited because it is confined to the body and sense. Our soul does not lose anything when a relative of ours dies. Its freedom is limited in one party only, in us, as survivors with our souls still enclosed in the flesh, while the other party, the one who has passed to second life, enjoys the liberty and power to watch over us and obtain for us much more than when it loved us from the prison of its body.

Like Nehemiah and Ezra I say to you: "Go, eat the fat meat, drink the sweet wine and send a portion to the man who has none, for this day is sacred to the Lord, and therefore nobody must suffer during it. Do not be sad, because the joy of the Lord Who is among you, is the stronghold of those who receive the grace of the Most High Lord within their walls and in their hearts".

You can no longer erect Tabernacles. Their time is over. But erect spiritual ones in your hearts. Climb the mountain, that is, rise towards Perfection. Gather branches of olive, myrtle, palm, oak, hyssop and of every beautiful tree. Branches of the virtues of peace, purity, heroism, mortification, strength, hope, justice, of all virtues. Adorn your souls celebrating the feast of the Lord. His Tabernacles are awaiting you. His. And they are beautiful, holy, eternal, open to all those who live in the Lord. And together with Me, decide today to do penance for the past and to begin a new life.

Do not be afraid of the Lord. He calls you because He loves you. Be not afraid. You are His children like everybody in Israel. Also for you He created the Universe and Heaven, He sent Abraham and Moses, He opened the sea, He created the guiding cloud, He descended from Heaven to give the Law, and He opened the clouds that they might rain manna, and He made the rocks fruitful that they might give water. And now for you also He is sending the living Bread of Heaven to satisfy your hunger and the true Vine and

the Fountain of eternal Life to quench your thirst. And through My lips He says to you: "Enter and possess the Land over which I have raised My hand to give it to you". My spiritual Land: the Kingdom of Heaven. »

The crowds exchange enthusiastic words... Then it is the turn of sick people. There are so many. Jesus has them lined up in two rows, and while this is being done, He asks Philip of Arbela: « Why did you not cure them? »

« That they might have what I had: to be cured by You. »

Jesus passes blessing the sick people one by one and the usual prodigy is repeated: the blind see, the deaf hear, the dumb speak, cripples stand straight, fever and weakness cease.

The healing is over. At the end, after the last sick person, there are the two Pharisees who went to Bozrah together with two more. « Peace to You, Master. Are You not saying anything to us? »

« I spoke to everybody. »

« But we do not need those words. We are the saints of Israel. »

« To you, who are masters, I say: comment upon the subsequent chapter, the ninth of the second book of Ezra, remembering how many times so far God has had mercy on you, and repeat the end of the chapter, as if it were a prayer, beating your chests. »

« Quite right, Master, quite right. And do Your disciples do it? »

« They do. It is the first thing I exact of them. »

« All of them? Also the murderers who are in Your group? »

« Does blood smell bad to you? »

« It is a voice crying to Heaven. »

« Then do not imitate those who shed it. »

« We are not assassins! »

Jesus gazes at them piercing them with His eyes. They dare not add one word for some time. But they follow the group which goes back to the house of Philip, who feels bound to invite them to enter and join in the banquet.

« With great pleasure! We will stay longer with the Master » they say bowing very low.

But once in the house they behave like bloodhounds... They watch, they peek, they ask the servants astute questions, and they approach even the old woman, who seems to be attracted by Jesus as iron is by a magnet. But she replies promptly: « Yesterday I saw these only. You must be dreaming. I brought them here, and there was only one John: that fair-haired boy who is as good as an angel. »

They fulminate against the old woman and turn elsewhere. But a servant, without replying to them directly, bends over Jesus, Who is sitting speaking to the landlord, and asks Him: « Where is John of Endor? This gentleman is looking for him. »

The Pharisee casts a withering glance at the servant and

stigmatises him as a « fool ». But Jesus is now aware of their intentions and it is necessary to remedy in the best possible manner. The Pharisee says: « It was to congratulate You, Master, on this wonder of Your doctrine and honour You through the convert. »

« John is far away for good and he will be farther and farther away. »

« Has he relapsed into sin? »

« No. He is ascending towards Heaven. Imitate him, and you will find him in the next life. »

The four do not know what to say and they wisely change the subject. The servants announce that the meal is ready and they all go into the dining-room.

295. Going to Aera.

6th October 1945.

Arbela also is now far away. In the group there are also Philip of Arbela and the other disciple, whose name I hear is Mark.

The road is muddy because of the heavy rain. The sky is overcast. A little river, but quite worthy of this name, crosses the road to Aera. Swollen with the rain which has stormed in this area it is certainly not sky-blue; it is reddish yellow as if the water had been flowing through ferrous ground.

« The weather is now bad. You did the right thing in sending the women away. It is no longer the season for them to be on the roads » states James sententiously.

And Simon the Zealot, who is always calm in his devotion to the Master, proclaims: « Everything He does, the Master does well. He is not dull like us. He sees and arranges everything for the best, and more to our behalf than to His own. »

John, who is happy to be beside Him, looks up at Him with a smiling face and exclaims: « You are the dearest and best Master the earth ever had, has or will have, besides being the most holy. »

« Those Pharisees... What a disappointment! Also the bad weather has helped to convince them that John of Endor was not there. But why are they so hostile to him? » asks Ermasteus, who is very fond of John of Endor.

Jesus replies: « Their hatred is not against him or because of him. He is an implement which they manoeuvre against Me. »

Philip of Arbela says: « Well, the rain has more than convinced them that it was useless to wait for and suspect John of Endor. Long live the rain! It served also to keep You in my house for five days. »

« I wonder how worried those at Aera are! It is surprising that my brother has not come to meet us » says Andrew.

« Meet us? He will be following us » remarks Matthew.

« No. He was taking the road along the lake. Because he was going

from Gadara to the lake and by boat to Bethsaida to see his wife and tell her that the boy is at Nazareth and that he will be soon going back. From Bethsaida through Merom he will take the road to Damascus for a little while, and then the road to Aera. He is certainly at Aera. »

There is silence. Then John says smiling: « But that little old woman, Lord! »

« I thought that You were going to grant her the joy of dying on Your chest, as You did with Saul of Kerioth » remarks Simon Zealot.

« I have loved her even more. Because I will wait to call her to Me, when the Christ is about to open the gates of Heaven. The little mother will not have to wait long for Me. She now lives with her remembrance, and with the assistance of your father, Philip, her life will not be so sad. I bless you and your relatives once again. »

John's joy is darkened by a cloud thicker than the ones in the sky. Jesus notices it and asks: « Are you not glad that the old woman will soon be coming to Paradise? »

« Yes... but I am not as it means that You will be going... Why die, Lord? »

« Those who are born of woman, die. »

« Will You have her only? »

« Oh! no! How joyfully will those proceed, whom I save as God, and whom I loved as man... »

They cross two more little rivers, one close to the other. It is beginning to rain on the flat region which stretches in front of the pilgrims after they have climbed the hills at the junction with the road, which follows a valley and runs northwards. A mighty mountain chain appears to the north, or rather to the north-west, but more north than west, with many clouds piling on the mountain tops, forming almost unreal new tops on the real ones, covered with woods on the sides and with snow on the peaks. But the chain is very far away.

« There is water down here, and snow up there. That is the chain of the Hermon. It has covered its summit with a large white blanket. If there is sunshine at Aera, you will see how beautiful it looks when the sun tinges the high peak with pink » says Timoneus, who is urged by the love for his fatherland to praise the beauty of the country.

« But it is raining now. Is Aera still far? » asks Matthew.

« Yes, very. We shall not be there until this evening. »

« In that case, may God save us from aches and pains » concludes Matthew, who is not very keen on walking in such weather.

They are all wrapped up in their mantles, under which they hold their travelling sacks to protect them from dampness, so that they may change their clothes on arrival, as the ones they are

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wearing are dripping wet and the bottom parts are heavy with mud.

Jesus is ahead of them, engrossed in thought. The others are nibbling at their pieces of bread and John says jokingly: « There is no need to look for fountains to quench our thirst. It is enough to hold our heads back and open our mouths and the angels will give us water. »

Ermasteus, who being young is like Philip of Arbela and John so lucky as to take everything humorously, says: « Simon of Jonah was complaining of the camels. But I would rather be on one of those towers shaken by an earthquake than in this mud. What do you think? »

And John: « I say that I am comfortable everywhere, providing Jesus is there... »

The three young men go on talking incessantly. The four older ones quicken their steps and reach Jesus. The remaining couple, that is, Timoneus and Mark follow the rest speaking...

« Master, Judas of Simon will be at Aera... » says Andrew.

« Of course. And Thomas, Nathanael and Philip will be with him. »

« Master... I will regret these peaceful days » says James with a sigh.

« You must not say that, James. »

« I know... But I cannot help it... » and he draws another deep sigh.

« There will be also Simon Peter with My brothers. Does that not make you happy? »

« It does, very much! Master, why is Judas of Simon so different from us? »

« Why do rain and sunshine, warm and cold, light and darkness alternate? »

« Because it is not possible to have the same situation all the time. Life would come to an end on the earth. »

« Quite right, James. »

« Yes, but that has got nothing to do with Judas. »

« Tell Me. Why are all the stars not like the sun, that is, huge, warm, beautiful, mighty? »

« Because... because the earth would go on fire with so much heat. »

« Why are the trees not all like those walnut-trees? By trees I mean all vegetables. »

« Because animals would not be able to eat of them. »

« Well, why are they not all like grass? »

« Because... we would have no wood to light fires, to build houses, to make tools, carts, boats, furniture. »

« Why are the birds not all eagles, and the animals are not all

elephants or camels? »

« We would be in a mess if it were so! »

« So, do you think that such varieties are a good thing? »

« Undoubtedly. »

« So you think... Why, according to you, did God make them? »

« To give us all possible help. »

« So, for a good purpose. Are you sure? »

« As I am sure that I am now alive. »

« Well, if you consider that it is right that there should be different kinds of animals, vegetables and stars, why do you expect all men to be alike? Each man has his mission and his temperament. Do you think that the infinite variety of species is a sign of the power or powerlessness of the Creator? »

« Of His power. One species enhances another. »

« Very well. Judas also serves the same purpose, as you do with your companions, and your companions with you. You have thirty-two teeth in your mouth and if you examine them carefully, you will see that one is quite different from another. Not only in their three basic groups, but each individually in its group. And consider their task when you eat. You will see that also those which seem of little use and to be doing little work, are instead the ones which fulfil the first task of breaking the bread and conveying it to others which crunch it and then pass it to others which turn it into soft pulp. Is it not so? You think that Judas does nothing or does wrong. I remind you that he evangelized southern Judaea very well, and, as you said yourself, he is very tactful with Pharisees. »

« That is true. »

Matthew remarks: « He is also very clever in collecting money for the poor. He can ask for it better than I can... Probably because money disgusts me now. »

Simon Zealot bends his head and he blushes so much that his face turns crimson.

Andrew notices it and asks him: « Are you not feeling well? »

« No... Fatigue... I don't know. »

Jesus gazes at him and he blushes more and more. But Jesus does not say anything.

Timoneus comes forward running: « Master, over there you can see the village before Aera. We can stop there or get some donkeys. »

« The rain is now ceasing. It is better to go on. »

« As You wish, Master. But, if You allow, I will go ahead. »

« You may go. »

Timoneus runs away with Mark. And Jesus remarks smiling: « He wants us to have a triumphal entrance. »

They are all together in a group once again. Jesus lets them get

excited talking about the difference of regions and He then withdraws to the rear of the group taking the Zealot with Him. As soon as they are alone He asks: « Why did you blush, Simon? »

The apostle turns crimson again but does not reply. Jesus repeats His question. Simon blushes more and more but remains silent. Jesus asks him once again.

« My Lord, You already know! Why do You want me to tell You? » shouts the Zealot sorrowfully, as if he were tortured.

« Are you certain? »

« He did not deny it. But he said: "I do so because I am provident. I have common sense. The Master never thinks of the future". Which we can say is true. But... it is always... it is always... Master, tell me the right word. »

« It is always a proof that Judas is only a "man". He cannot elevate himself to be a spirit. But, you are all more or less alike. You are afraid of silly things. You worry about useless providence. You cannot believe that Providence is powerful and always present. Well: let us keep that to ourselves. All right? »

« Yes, Master. »

There is silence. Then Jesus says: « We shall soon be going back to the lake... . A little concentration after so much travelling will be lovely. You and I will be going to Nazareth for some time, towards the feast of the Dedication. You are alone... The others will be with their families. You will stay with Me. »

« My Lord, Judas, Thomas and Matthew are also alone. »

« Do not worry about that. Everyone will celebrate the festivity in his own family. Matthew has a sister. You are alone. Unless you want to go to Lazarus... »

« No, Lord » exclaims Simon. « No. I love Lazarus. But to be with You is to be in Paradise. Thank You, Lord » and he kisses Jesus' hand.

They have just left the little village behind when, in another heavy shower Timoneus and Mark appear on the flooded road shouting: « Stop! Simon Peter is coming with some donkeys. I met him on the way. He has been coming for three days to this place with the donkeys, always in the rain. »

They stop under a thicket of oak-trees which shelter them somewhat from the downpour. And then Peter appears riding a donkey and leading a line of donkeys; he looks like a friar under the blanket which covers his head and shoulders.

« May God bless You, Master! I said that He would be drenched like one who had fallen into the lake! Come on, quick, all of you, mount the donkeys, because Aera has been on fire for three days, as the people have kept the fireplaces lit to dry You! Quick... Look what a state He is in! But you... could you not keep Him back? Ah! if I am not there! But I say: just look at that! His hair is hanging as

if he were drowned. You must be frozen. In all this rain! How thoughtless! And what about you all? You reckless ones! And you first of all, my stupid brother, and all the rest of you. How pretty you all look! You are like sacks soaked in a pond. Come on, quick. I will never trust Him to you again. I am almost dying with horror... »

« And with talking, Simon » says Jesus calmly while His donkey trots along beside Peter's at the head of the caravan of donkeys. Jesus repeats: « And with talking. And with talking uselessly. You have not told Me whether the others have arrived. Whether the women left. Whether your wife is well. You have told Me nothing. »

« I will tell You everything. But why did You leave in all this rain? »

« And why did you come? »

« Because I was anxious to see You, my Master. »

« Because I was anxious to join you, My Simon. »

« Oh! My dear Master! How much I love You! Wife, boy, house? They are nothing, nothing is beautiful without You. Do You believe that I love You so much? »

« I do. I know who you are, Simon. »

« Who? »

« A big boy full of little faults, under which so many lovely qualities are buried. But one is not buried. And that is your honesty in everything. Well, who was there at Aera? »

« Your brothers Judas and James, Judas of Kerioth with the others. Judas seems to have done a lot of good. Everybody praises him... »

« Did he ask you any questions? »

« Oh! So many! I did not reply to any of them, I said that I did not know anything. In fact, what do I know, except that I took the women as far as Gadara? You know... I did not tell him anything about John of Endor. He thinks that John is with You. You ought to tell the others. »

« No. Like you, they do not know where John is. There is no point in saying anything else. But all these donkeys!... For three days!... What an expense! And the poor? »

« The poor... Judas has loads of money and he sees to them. The donkeys cost me nothing. The people of Aera would have given me a thousand for You, without any charge. I had to raise my voice against them to avoid coming here with an army of donkeys. Timoneus is right. Everybody believes in You here. They are better than we are... » and he sighs.

« Simon, Simon! In Trans-Jordan they honoured us; a galleyslave, some heathen women, prostitutes, women gave you a lesson in perfection. Remember that, Simon of Jonah. Always. »

« I will try, Lord. Here are the first people from Aera. Look how many! There is the mother of Timoneus. There are Your brothers

among the crowds. There are the disciples whom You sent ahead of those who came with Judas of Kerioth. And there is the richest man in Aera with his servants. He wanted You to stay in his house. But Timoneus' mother asserted her rights and You will be staying with her. Look, look! They are irritated because the rain is putting out their torches. There are many sick people, You know. They remained in town, near the gates, to see You at once. A man who owns a timber store sheltered them under the sheds. The poor people have been there for three days, since we arrived and we were surprised that You were not here. »

The shouts of the crowds prevent Peter from going on speaking, so he becomes quiet riding beside Jesus like an equerry. The crowds, whom they have now reached, part and Jesus passes through them on his little donkey, blessing them unceasingly.

They enter the town.

« To the sick people at once » says Jesus, Who pays no attention to the protestations of those who would like to take Him into their houses to give Him food and warmth, lest He might suffer too much. « They suffer more than I do » He replies.

They turn right and there is the rustic enclosure of the timber store. The door is wide open and complaining lamentations can be heard through it: « Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on us! »

It is an imploring chorus as unchanging as a litany: voices of children, of women, of men, of old people. They are as sad as the bleating of suffering lambs, as melancholy as the voices of dying mothers, as dejected as the voices of those who have but one hope left, as trembling as the voices of those who can but weep...

Jesus enters the enclosure. He stands up as much as He can in the stirrups and with His right hand up He says with His powerful voice: « To all those who believe in Me, health and blessing. »

He sits in the saddle once again and is about to go back to the road, but the crowds press Him and the cured people throng round Him. And in the light of the torches, which burn in the shelter of the sheds and illuminate the twilight, the crowds can be seen acclaiming the Lord in a frenzy of joy. And the Lord disappears in a flowery collection of cured children, whom mothers have put on His arms, on His lap and even on the neck of the little donkey, holding them so that they might not fall. Jesus' arms are full of them, as if they were flowers, and He smiles happily, kissing them as He cannot bless them, since His arms are engaged in supporting them. The children are then taken away, and it is the turn of the old people who have also been cured and are now weeping out of joy; they kiss His mantle and are followed by the men and women...

It is dark when He can enter Timoneus' house and rest near the fire wearing dry clothes.

296. Jesus Preaches at Aera.

7th October 1945.

Jesus is speaking in the main square at Aera:

« ... And I am not going to tell you, as I did elsewhere, the first and essential things you must know and do to be saved. You know them very well, through the work of Timoneus, a wise head of the synagogue of the old Law, who is now most wise, because he renews it in the light of the new Law. But I want to warn you against a danger which you cannot see in your present state of mind. The danger of being diverted by pressure and insinuations aiming at detaching you from the faith you have now in Me. I will leave Timoneus with you for some time. And with other disciples he will explain to you the words of the Book in the new light of my Truth which he has embraced. But before leaving you, and after scanning your hearts and seeing that they are willing, humble and sincere in their love, I want to comment with you upon a point of the fourth book of Kings.

When Hezekiah, king of Judah, was attacked by Sermacherib, the three great men of the hostile king came to him to terrorise him, pointing out to him the alliances which had been broken off and the armies which were already surrounding him. Eliakim, Shebnah and Joah replied to the words of the powerful messengers saying: "Speak to us in such a way that the people may not understand you" so that the terrorised people might not ask for peace. But that was what the messengers of Sennacherib wanted, and at the top of their voices they said in perfect Hebrew: "Do not let Hezekiah delude you... Do with us what is useful to you and surrender and everyone of you will eat the fruit of his own vine and of his own fig-tree and drink the water of his own cistern until we come and deport you to a country like your own, a land of corn and good wine, a land abounding in bread and vineyards, a land of olive-trees, of oil and of honey, and you will live and will not die... " And it is written: "The people did not reply, because the king had ordered them not to reply".

Now, out of pity for your souls besieged by forces which are even fiercer than those of Sermacherib, who was able to harm bodies but could not damage souls, whereas war is declared to your souls by a hostile army led by the fiercest and most cruel despot there is in creation, I prayed his messengers, who, in order to damage Me through you, endeavour to terrorise both Me and you threatening dreadful punishments, I prayed saying: "Speak to Me only. But leave in peace the souls which are now being born to the Light. Vex Me, torture Me, accuse Me, kill Me, but do not rage against these children of the Light. They are still weak. One day they will be strong. But now they are weak. Do not be merciless towards them. Do not be merciless against the freedom of souls to

choose their own way. Do not be pitiless towards the right of God of calling to Himself those who seek Him in their simple love".

But can one who hates yield to the prayer of him whom one hates? Can one seized by hatred know what love is? No. So with fiercer harshness and cruelty they will come and say to you: "Do not let the Christ delude you. Come with us and you will have all good things". And they will say to you: "Woe betide you if you follow Him. You will be persecuted". And they will urge you with insincere kindness: "Save your souls. He is Satan". They will say so many things against Me, to persuade you to abandon the Light.

I say to you: "Reply to the tempters with your silence". When the Strength of the Lord descends into the hearts of those who believe in Jesus Christ, the Messiah and Saviour, then you will be able to speak, because you will not speak, but the very Spirit of God will speak through your lips, and your souls will be firm in Grace, strong and invincible in Faith.

Be persevering. That is all I ask of you. Remember that God cannot agree to the witchcraft of His enemy. Let your sick people, those who have been comforted and whose souls have received peace, speak among you, only through their presence, of Him Who came among you to say to you: "Persevere in My love and in My doctrine and you will receive the Kingdom of Heaven". My works speak even more than My words, and although it is perfect blessedness to be able to believe without the need of any proof, I let you see the wonders of God, so that you may be fortified in your faith. When your intelligence is tempted by the enemies of the Light, reply to them with the words of your souls: "I believe because I have seen God in His works". Reply to the enemies by means of an active silence. And with those two replies, proceed towards the Light. May peace be always with you. »

And He dismisses them and then leaves the square.

« Why did You speak so little to them, Lord? Timoneus might be disappointed » says Nathanael.

« He will not, because he is just and he understands that to warn one of a danger is to love one with greater love. That danger is really present. »

« Always the Pharisees, eh? » asks Matthew.

« Those and others. »

« Are You downhearted, Lord? » asks John worriedly.

« No. Not more than usual... »

« And yet You were happier during the past days... »

« It may be sadness due to the absence of the disciples. But why did You send them away? Do You perhaps wish to go on travelling? » asks the Iscariot.

« No. This is the last place. We will go home from here. But it was not possible for the women to proceed in this weather. They have

done a great deal. They must do no more. »

« And what about John? »

« John is ill, and is in a hospitable house, as you were. »

Jesus then takes leave of Timoneus and other disciples who will be remaining in that area and to whom He has certainly given instructions for the future, because He does not give any further advice.

They are at the door of Timoneus' house, because Jesus wanted to bless the landlady once more. The crowds look at Him respectfully and follow Him when He sets out again towards the outskirts, the vegetable gardens and the open country. The more persevering people follow Him for a little while, in a group which becomes thinner and thinner, until only nine people are left, then five, three, finally one... And the last one, too, turns round and goes back to Aera, while Jesus walks westwards, with only the twelve apostles, because Ermasteus remained with Timoneus.

Jesus says:

« And the journey, the second long apostolic journey is over. We now go back to the well-known countryside of Galilee.

Poor Mary, you are more exhausted than John of Endor. I authorise you to omit the descriptions of the places. We have given so much to curious searchers. And they will always be "curious searchers". Nothing else. That is enough now. Your strength is diminishing. Keep it for the word. I notice the uselessness of so much labour of yours, with the same spirit with which I noticed the uselessness of so much of My toil. That is why I say to you: "Spare yourself for the word". You are the "mouthpiece". Oh! One must really repeat for you the saying: "We played the pipes for you and you would not sing, we sang dirges and you would not be mourners". You repeated My words only, and difficult doctors turned up their noses. You added your descriptions to My words, and they find faults with them. And they will find more to object. And you are worn out. I will tell you when you are to describe the journey. I, and no one else.

I have struck you for almost one year. But before the year is over, do you wish to rest once again on My Heart? Come then, little martyr... »

297. The Little Orphans Mary and Matthias.

8th October 1945.

I see the lake of Merom again, in a dull wet day... Mud and clouds. Silence and fog. The horizon disappears in the fog. The Hermon chains are buried under blankets of low clouds. But from the place where I am - a high tableland near the little lake, which is

grey and yellowish because of the mud of a thousand swollen little streams and because of the November overcast sky - one has a good view of this little sheet of water fed by the High Jordan, which flows out of it to feed the larger lake of Gennesaret.

It is getting dark and the evening is becoming more and more gloomy and wet while Jesus walks along the road which crosses the Jordan after lake Merom, and He then takes a lane towards a house...

(Jesus says: « You will put here the vision of the little orphans Matthias and Mary, which you saw on August 20th, 1944. »)

20th August 1944.

Another sweet vision of Jesus and two children. I say so because I see that Jesus, while passing along a path between fields which must have been sown recently, because the soil is still soft and dark as it looks just after being sown, stops to caress two children: a little boy not more than four years old and a little girl about eight or nine. They must be very poor children because they are wearing poor faded garments, which are also torn and their faces are sad and thin.

Jesus does not ask any questions. He only gazes at them while He caresses them. He then hastens towards a house at the end of the path. It is a country house, well built, with an outside staircase leading from the ground up to a terrace on which there is a vine pergola, now bare of grapes and leaves. Only an odd yellow leaf, hangs swinging in the damp wind of a bad autumn day. Some doves are cooing on the parapet of the house waiting for the rain which the overcast sky is promising.

Jesus, followed by His apostles, pushes the little rustic gate of the low rubble wall surrounding the house, and enters the yard, which we would rather call a threshing-floor, where there is a well and a stone-oven in a corner. I suppose that is what the little closet is, the walls of which are black with smoke, which is coming out even now and is blown towards the ground by the wind.

Hearing the sound of footsteps a woman looks out of the closet and when she sees Jesus she greets Him joyfully and runs to inform the people in the house.

Am elderly stout man comes to the door of the house and hastens towards Jesus. « It is a great honour, Master, to see You! » he exclaims greeting Him.

Jesus greets him: « Peace be with you » and adds: « It is getting dark and it is about to rain. I beg you to give shelter and a piece of bread to Me and My disciples. »

« Come in, Master. My house is Yours. The maid-servant is about to take the bread out of the oven. I am happy to offer it to You with the cheese of my sheep and the fruit of my fields. Come in, because

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the wind is cold and damp... » and he kindly holds the door open and bows when Jesus passes. But he suddenly changes tone addressing somebody he sees and he says wrathfully: « Are you still here? Go away. There is nothing for you. Go away. Have you understood? There is no room here for vagabonds... » And he mumbles: a... « and perhaps thieves like you. »

A thin weeping voice replies: « Have mercy, sir. At least a piece of bread for my little brother. We are hungry... »

Jesus, Who had gone into the large kitchen, which is cosy because of the big fire which serves also as a light, comes to the threshold. His countenance has already changed. With a severe and sad expression He asks, not the host, but in general, He seems to be asking the silent yard, the bare fig-tree, the dark well: « Who is it that is hungry? »

« I, sir. I and my brother. Just a piece of bread and we shall go away. »

Jesus is by now outside, where it is getting darker and darker because of the twilight and the impending rain. « Come here » He says.

« I am afraid, sir! »

« Come, I tell you. Do not be afraid of Me. »

The poor girl appears from behind the corner of the house. Her little brother is holding on to her shabby little tunic. They look timidly at Jesus and with fear in their eyes at the landlord, who casts a nasty look at them and says: « They are vagabonds, Master. And thieves. Only a little while ago I found her scraping near the oil-mill. She certainly wanted to go and steal something. I wonder where they come from. They do not belong to this area. »

Jesus pays little or no attention to him. He gazes at the little girl's emaciated face and untidy plaits, two pigtails beside her ears, tied at the ends with strips of a rag. But Jesus' countenance is not severe while He looks at the poor wretch. He is sad, but He smiles to encourage her. « Is it true that you wanted to steal? Tell Me the truth. »

« No, sir. I asked for a little bread, because I am hungry. They did not give me any. I saw an oily crust over there, on the ground, near the oil-mill and I went there to pick it up. I am hungry, sir. I was given only one piece of bread yesterday and I kept it for Matthias... Why did they not put us into the grave with our mother? » The little girl weeps desolately and her little brother imitates her.

« Do not weep. » Jesus comforts her caressing her and drawing her close to Himself. « Tell Me: where are you from? »

« From the plain of Esdraelon. »

« And have you come so far? »

« Yes, sir. »

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« Has your mother been dead long? Have you no father? »

« My father died killed by sunstroke at harvest time and my mother died last month... and the baby she was giving birth to died with her... » She weeps more and more.

« Have you no relatives? »

« We come from so far! We were not poor... Then my father had to work as a servant. But he is now dead and mother with him. »

« Who was his master? »

« Ishmael, the Pharisee. »

« Ishmael, the Pharisee! (it is not possible to describe how Jesus repeats that name). Did you come away of your own will, or did he send you away? »

« He sent me away, sir. He said: "The street is the place for starving dogs". »

« And you, Jacob, why did you not give some bread to these children? Some bread, a little milk and a handful of hay on which they might rest their tired bodies?... »

« But... Master... I have just enough bread for myself... and there is only little milk in the house... They are like stray animals. If you treat them kindly, they will not go away any more... »

« And you have no room and food for these two unhappy children? Can you truthfully say that? The rich crops, the plenty wine, the much oil and fruit which made your estate famous this year, why did they come to you? Do you remember? The previous year hail destroyed your crops and you were worried about your future life... I came and I asked for some bread. You had heard Me speak one day and you remained faithful to Me... and in your affliction you opened your heart and your house to Me and you gave Me bread and shelter. And what did I say to you going out the following morning? "Jacob, you have understood the Truth. Be always merciful and you will receive mercy. Because of the bread you gave the Son of man, these fields will give you rich crops and your olive-trees will be laden with olives like the grains of sand on the sea shore and the branches of your apple-trees will bend towards the ground". You received all that and this year you are the richest man in the district. And you refuse two children a piece of bread!... »

« But You were the Rabbi... »

« And because I was, I could have turned stones into bread. They cannot. I now say to you: you shall see a new miracle and you shall regret it very sorely... But beating your chest then say: "I deserved it". »

Jesus turns to the children: « Do not weep. Go to that tree and pick the fruit. »

« But it is bare, sir » objects the little girl.

« Go. »

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The girl goes and comes back with her dress lifted up and full of beautiful red apples.

« Eat of them and come with Me » and to the apostles: « Let us go and take these two little ones to Johanna of Chuza. She remembers the benefits she received and out of love she is merciful to those who were merciful to her. Let us go. »

The dumbfounded and mortified man endeavours to be forgiven: « It is night, Master. It may rain while You are on the way. Come back into my house. There is the maid-servant going to take the bread out of the oven... I will give You some also for them. »

« It is not necessary. You would give it for fear of the punishment I promised you, not out of love. »

« So is this not the miracle? » (and he points at the apples picked on the bare tree and which the two starving children are eating greedily).

« No. » Jesus is most severe.

« Oh! Lord, have mercy on me! I understand. You want to punish me in the crops! Have mercy, Lord! »

« Not all those who call Me "Lord" will have Me, because love and respect are not testified by words, but by deeds. You will receive the mercy which you had. »

« I love You, my Lord. »

« That is not true. He loves Me who loves his neighbour. That is what I taught. You love but yourself. When you love Me as I taught, the Lord will come back. I am now going. My abode is to do good, to comfort the afflicted, to wipe the tears of orphans. As a mother hen stretches its wings over the helpless chicks, so I spread My power over those who suffer and are tormented. Come, children. You will soon have a home and bread. Goodbye, Jacob. »

And not satisfied with going away, he orders the apostles to take up the tired girl: Andrew takes her up in his arms and envelops her in his mantle, while Jesus takes the little boy and they thus proceed along the path which is now dark, with their pitiful loads which no longer weep.

Peter says: « Master! These children were very lucky that You arrived. But for Jacob!... What will You do, Master? »

« Justice. He will not starve, because his granaries are well stocked for a long time. But he will suffer shortage, because the seed he sows will yield no corn and his olive and apple-trees will be covered with leaves only. These innocent children have received bread and shelter from the Father, not from Me. Because My Father is the Father of orphans also. And He gives nests and food to the birds of forests. These children and all poor wretches with them, the poor wretches who are His "innocent and loving children" can say that God put food in their little hands and leads

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them with fatherly love to a hospitable home. »

The vision ends thus and I am left with a great peace.

Jesus says:

« This is just for you, o soul which weeps looking at the crosses of the past and at the clouds of the future. The Father will always have bread to put in your hand and a nest to shelter His weeping dove.

The lesson that I am the "Just Lord" applies to everybody. And I am not deceived or adulated by false homage. He who closes his heart to his brother, closes it to God and God to him.

Men, it is the first commandment: Love and love. He who does not love lies in professing to be a Christian. It is useless to frequent the Sacraments and rites, it is useless to pray if one lacks charity. They become formulae and even sacrileges. How can you come to the eternal Bread and satisfy your hunger with it, when you have denied a starving person a piece of bread? Is your bread more precious than Mine? Is it more holy? O hypocrites! I put no limit in giving Myself to your misery, and you, who are misery itself, have no pity on the miseries which, in the eyes of God, are not so hideous as yours. Because those are misfortunes, yours are sins. Too often you say to Me: "Lord, Lord", to have Me propitious to your interests. But you do not say so for your neighbour's sake. You do nothing for your neighbour in the name of the Lord. Look: what have your false religion and true lack of charity given you, both with regard to your community and to its individuals? To be abandoned by God. And the Lord will come back when you learn to love as I taught.

But I say to you, little flock of good people who suffer: "You are never orphans. You are never waifs. There would have to be no God, before His children could lack Providence. Stretch out your hands: the Father will give you everything, as a 'father', that is, with love which does not humiliate. Wipe your tears. I will take you and lead you because I have pity on your languor". Man is the best loved in creation. Can you doubt that the Father may be more merciful to birds than to faithful men, since He is indulgent towards sinners and gives them time and the opportunity to come to Him? Oh! if the world understood what God is!

Go in peace, Mary. You are as dear to Me as the two little orphans you saw, and you are even dearer. Go in peace. I am with you. »

21st August 1944.

Mary says:

« Mary, Mother is speaking. My Jesus has spoken of the infancy of the spirit, a necessary requisite to conquer the Kingdom. Yesterday He showed you a page of His life as a Master. You saw

some children. Some poor children. Is there nothing else to be said? Yes, there is, and I am saying it to you, as I want to make you dearer and dearer to Jesus. It is a nuance in the picture which spoke to your spirit, on behalf of the spirits of many people. But it is nuances that make a picture beautiful and reveal the skill of the painter and the erudition of the observer.

I want to point out the humility of My Jesus to you.

That poor girl, in her ignorant simplicity, does not treat the hard-hearted sinner differently from My Son. She is not aware of the Rabbi or the Messiah. She has never heard Him or seen Him, because she lived, almost like a little savage in the fields and in a house where the Master was despised, in fact the Pharisee did despise My Jesus.

Her father and mother, worn out by the hateful work which their cruel master exacted, had no time and possibility of raising their heads from the clods they broke up. While they were mowing hay or cutting crops or picking fruit and grapes, or crushing olives at the mill, they may have heard people singing hosannas and may have raised their tired heads for a moment. But fear and fatigue lowered those heads at once under their yoke. And they died thinking that the world was nothing but hatred and sorrow. Whereas the world was love and wealth since the most holy feet of My Jesus trod upon it. The poor servants of a cruel master died without seeing even once the look and smile of My Jesus, without hearing His word, which gave comfort to souls, so that the poor felt as if they were rich, the hungry as if they were full, the sick as if they were healthy, the sorrowful as if they were comforted.

Jesus does not say: "I am the Lord and I say to you: do that". He remains anonymous. And the little girl, who was so ignorant that she did not understand even when she saw the miracle of the apple-tree bare of leaves, a branch of which became laden with apples to satisfy their hunger, continues to call Him: "sir", as she called Ishmael, her master, and the cruel Jacob. She feels attracted to the good Lord, because kindness always attracts. But nothing more. She follows Him confidently. And the poor girl lost in the world and in the ignorance encouraged by the world, by the "great world of mighty pleasure-loving people", who are keen in keeping inferiors in darkness in order to torture them more easily and exploit them more greedily, the poor girl loves Him at once instinctively.

She will learn later who was that " sir", who was as poor, as homeless and motherless as she was, who had no food, because He had left everything out of His love for men, also for her, a poor little frail girl; and she will understand that the Lord had given her miraculous fruit, to remove from her lips and from her heart the bitterness of human wickedness, which makes poor people hate

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mighty ones, and He had done so by means of a fruit of the Father, and not by means of a crust of bread, which was offered too late and in any case would have savoured of hardship and tears. Those apples really called to mind the apple of the Earthly Paradise. They appeared on the branch for Good and for Evil, they were the sign of redemption from all miseries, first of all from the ignorance of God, with regard to the two little orphans, and the sign of punishment for the man, who, although he already was aware of the Word, had behaved as if he were not. And she will learn from the good woman who made her welcome in Jesus' name, who was Jesus. He was her manifold Saviour: from starvation, from the inclemency of the weather, from the dangers of the world and from original sin.

But Jesus always had for her the light of that day, and He always appeared to her in that light: the good Lord, as good as in fairy-tales, the Lord Who had caresses and gifts, the Lord Who had made her forget that she had no father, mother, home and clothes, because He had been as kind to her as a father, as sweet as a mother, He had given a home to their tired bodies and clothes to their naked limbs, with His own chest and mantle and with the assistance of other good people who were with Him. A kind fatherly light which did not fade in a stream of tears, not even when she learned that He had died tortured on a cross, not even when, a little faithful believer of the early Church, she saw how the face of her "Lord" had been disfigured by blows and thorns and she considered how He was now, in Heaven, at the right hand of the Father. A light that smiled at her in her last hour on the earth, leading her fearlessly towards her Saviour, a light that smiled once again at her, in such an ineffably sweet manner, in the splendour of Paradise.

Jesus looks also at you thus. Always think of Him as your remote namesake did and be happy to be loved by Him. Be as simple, humble, and faithful as the poor little Mary you have known. See how far she arrived, notwithstanding that she was a poor little ignorant girl of Israel: at the Heart of God. Love revealed Himself to her as He did to you and she became learned in the true Wisdom.

Have faith. Be at peace. There is no misery which My Son cannot turn into riches and there is no solitude which He cannot replenish as there is no fault which He cannot cancel. The past no longer exists, once love has cancelled it. Not even a dreadful past. Are you going to be afraid when Disma, the robber, was not? Love and be afraid of nothing.

Mother leaves you with Her blessing. »

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298. Mary and Matthias Are Entrusted to Johanna of Chuza.

11th October 1945.

The lake of Tiberias is a grey sheet of water. It looks like tarnished mercury, so heavy it is in the dead calm which allows just the resemblance of tired waves, which are not successful in making foam, and stop and calm down after making a slight movement, mingling with the dull water under a dull sky.

Peter and Andrew, James and John around their respective boats on the little beach of Bethsaida, are preparing to sail. There is a smell of grass and wet earth, and a light mist on the green stretch towards Korazim. November gloominess lies heavy on everything.

Jesus comes out of Peter's house, holding by the hands Matthias and Mary whom Porphirea has tidied up with motherly care replacing Mary's little dress with one of Marjiam's. But Matthias is too small to have the same treatment and he is still shivering in his little faded cotton tunic, so much so that Porphirea, who is always so full of pity, goes back into the house and brings out a blanket in which she envelops the child as if it were a mantle. Jesus thanks her while she kneels down in taking leave and then withdraws after kissing the two orphans once more.

« Just to have children she would have taken these two as well » remarks Peter, who has been watching the scene and who in turn bends to give the two children a piece of bread spread with honey, which he had aside under a seat of the boat. Andrew laughs at him and says: « You wouldn't, would you? You even stole your wife's honey, to make these two happy. »

« Stole? It's my honey! »

« Yes, but my sister-in-law is jealous of it, because it is for Marjiam. And since you are aware of that, last night you stole into the kitchen, barefooted like a thief, and took enough of it to prepare that bread. I saw you, brother, and I laughed because you were looking about like a child who is afraid of his mother's slaps. »

« You horrible spy » replies Peter, laughing and embracing his brother, who kisses him saying: « My dear big brother. »

Jesus watches them and smiles frankly standing between the two children who eat up their bread.

The other eight apostles arrive from Bethsaida. Perhaps they were the guests of Philip and Bartholomew.

« Quick! » shouts Peter and he embraces the two children together to take them to the boat without getting their bare feet wet. « You are not afraid, are you? » he asks them while he paddles in the water with his short strong legs, bare to about a span above his knees.

« No, sir » says the girl, but she clings convulsively to Peter's neck closing her eyes when he puts her into the boat, which sways

under Jesus' weight, Who also gets into it. The little boy, who is braver, or perhaps more astonished, does not say one word. Jesus sits down drawing the little ones to Himself, and covers them with His large mantle, which looks like a wing stretched out to protect two chicks.

They are all on board, six men in each boat. Peter removes the landing board, he pushes the boat farther out and jumps into it, imitated by James in the other boat. Peter's action has caused the boat to sway heavily and the girl moans: « Mummy! » hiding her face in Jesus' lap and grasping His knees. But they are now moving smoothly, although it is laborious for Peter, Andrew and the servant who have to row with the help of Philip who is the fourth oarsman. The sail hangs loose in the heavy damp calm and is of no use. They must row.

« We are having a good row! » shouts Peter to those in the other boat, in which the Iscariot is the fourth oarsman and Peter praises his perfect rowing.

« Come on, Simon! » replies James. « Row with all your might or we shall beat you. Judas is as strong as a galley-slave. Well done, Judas! »

« Yes. We will make you head of the crew » confirms Peter who is rowing as hard as two. And he laughs saying: « But you will not succeed in beating Simon of Jonah's record. When I was twenty years old I was already first oarsman in competitions among villages » and he joyfully gives the stroke to his crew: « Heave ho!... Heave ho! » Their voices spread in the silence of the lake deserted in the early morning.

The children pluck up courage again. Their emaciated faces look up from under the mantle, one on each side of Jesus, Who embraces them, and they smile faintly. They take an interest in the work of the rowers and exchange comments.

« I seem to be going in a cart without wheels » says the boy.

« No. In a cart on the clouds. Look! We seem to be walking in the sky. Look, we are climbing on a cloud! » says Mary when she sees the prow of the boat plunge into a spot which mirrors a huge woolly cloud. And she laughs faintly.

But the sun dissipates the mist and although it is a wan autumn sun, the clouds become golden and the lake mirrors them shining. « Oh! How beautiful! We are now going to a fire. How lovely! » exclaims the boy clapping his hands.

But the little girl becomes silent and bursts into tears. They all ask her why she is weeping. She explains sobbing: « Mother used to say a poem, a psalm, I don't know, to keep us quiet, that we might be able to pray even with so much grief... and the poem mentioned a Paradise which will be like a lake of Light, of a gentle fire where there will be nothing but God and joy and where all those who are

good will go... after the Saviour has come... This golden lake reminded me of it... My mummy! »

Matthias also is weeping and everyone pities them.

But Jesus' sweet voice rises above the murmur of the various voices and the moans of the little orphans: « Do not weep. Your mother brought you to Me, and she is here now with us, while I am taking you to a mother who has no children. She will be happy to have two good children in place of her own baby, who is now where your mummy is. Because she wept, too, you know? Her baby died as your mother did... »

« Oh! so we are now going to her and her baby will go to our mother! » says Mary.

« That is right. And you will all be happy. »

« What is this woman like? What is she? A peasant? Has she a good master? » The little ones are anxious to know.

« She is not a peasant, but she has a garden full of roses and she is as good as an angel. She has a good husband. He will love you as well. »

« Do You think so, Master? » asks Matthew who is somewhat incredulous.

« I am certain. And you will be convinced. Some time ago Chuza wanted Marjiam to make a knight of him. »

« Most certainly not! » shouts Peter.

« Marjiam will be a knight of Christ. That is all, Simon. Be quiet. »

The lake turns grey again. The wind rises and ripples the lake. The sail is filled and the boat sails swiftly along vibrating. But the children are dreaming of their new mother and are not afraid.

Magdala passes by with its white houses among the green vegetation. And the countryside between Magdala and Tiberias passes by. The first houses of Tiberias appear.

« Where, Master? »

« To Chuza's little harbour. »

Peter veers and gives instructions to the servant. The sail drops when the boat goes near the little harbour, and then enters it, stopping near the little pier, followed by the other boat. They are one beside the other like two tired ducks. They all land and John runs ahead to inform the gardeners.

The little ones press timorously against Jesus and Mary, pulling His tunic, asks with a big sigh: « But is she really good? »

John comes back: « Master, a servant is opening the gate. Johanna is already up. »

« Very well. Wait here. I will go ahead. »

And Jesus goes away alone. The others watch Him go commenting on His action more or less favourably. There is considerable doubt and criticism. But from the place where they are they can

only see Chuza hastening towards Jesus; he bows almost to the ground at the gate and then enters the garden on Jesus' left. Then nothing else can be seen.

But I can see. I can see Jesus proceeding slowly beside Chuza who shows how happy he is to have the Master as his guest: « My Johanna will be delighted. And I am, too. She is feeling better and better. She told me about the journey. What a triumph, my Lord! »

« Did you mind? »

« Johanna is happy. And I am happy to see her thus. I might have lost her months ago, my Lord. »

« Yes, you might have... And I gave her back to you. Be grateful to God for that. »

Chuza looks at Him perplexedly... he then whispers: « A reproach, Lord? »

« No, an advice. Be good, Chuza. »

« Master, I am Herod's servant... »

« I know. But your soul is the servant of no one but God, if you wish so. »

« That is true, Lord. I will amend my way of living. Sometimes I am seized by the fear of public opinion... »

« Would you have minded last year when you wanted to save Johanna? »

« Oh! No. At the cost of losing all respect I would have applied to anyone who could save her. »

« Do likewise for your soul. It is even more precious than Johanna. Here she is coming. »

They quicken their steps towards Johanna who is running along the avenue to meet them.

« My Master! I did not hope to see You so soon. Which kindness of Yours has brought You to Your disciple? »

« A favour, Johanna. »

« A favour? Which? Tell us and if we can, we will help You » they both reply together.

« Yesterday evening on a desert road I found two poor children, a little girl and a little boy... they were barefooted, ragged, starving, all alone... and I saw them being driven away, as if they were wolves, by a hard-hearted man. They were dying of starvation... Last year I gave so much wealth to that man. And he denied two orphans a piece of bread. Because they are orphans. Orphans wandering on the roads of a cruel world. That man will receive his punishment. Do you want to receive My blessing? I am stretching My hand out to you, a Beggar of love, for those orphans who have no home, no clothes, no food, no love. Will you help Me? »

« But, Master, why ask? Tell me what You want, how much You want; tell us everything!... » says Chuza impulsively.

Johanna does not speak, but with her hands pressed on her

heart, tears on her long eyelashes, a smile of desire on her red lips, she waits and her silence is more eloquent than words.

Jesus looks at her and smiles: « I would like those to have a mother, a father, a home; and the mother's name to be Johanna... » He has no time to finish because Johanna's cry is like that of one freed from prison, while she prostrates herself to kiss the feet of her Lord.

« And what do you say, Chuza? Will you receive in My name My beloved ones, who are much dearer to My heart than jewels? »

« Master, where are they? Take me to them and upon my honour I swear to You that from the moment I lay my hand on their innocent heads, I will love them in Your name as if I were their real father. »

« Come, then. I knew that I was not coming for nothing. Come. They are coarse and frightened, but good. You can trust Me because I can read the hearts of men and the future. They will give peace and strength to your union, not so much now as in the future. You will find yourselves again in their love. Their innocent embraces will be the best lime for your home of a married couple. And Heaven will always be benign, and merciful towards you because of your charity. They are outside the gate. We came from Bethsaida... »

Johanna does not listen any more. She runs away, seized by a great desire to caress them. And she does so, falling on her knees to clasp the two little orphans to her heart, kissing their emaciated cheeks, while they are amazed looking at the beautiful lady with garments adorned with jewels. And they look at Chuza, who caresses them and takes Matthias in his arms. And they look at the beautiful garden and at the servants who gather round them... And they admire the house which opens its halls full of riches to Jesus and His apostles. And they look at Esther who covers them with kisses. The world of dreams is open to the little waifs...

Jesus watches and smiles...

299. At Nain, in the House of Daniel Raised from the Dead.

12th October 1945.

It is a feast day for the people of Nain. Jesus is their guest for the first time since the miracle of young Daniel, who was raised from the dead.

Jesus is going through the town, blessing, preceded and followed by a large number of people. The people of Nain have been joined by incomers from other villages, who have come from Capernaum, where they had gone looking for Jesus, and from where they were sent to Cana and then to Nain. I am under the impression that now

that Jesus has many disciples, He has set up a kind of information network, so that pilgrims looking for Him can find Him, although He moves around continuously, even for a few miles a day, as the season and the short days allow. And among those who have come looking for Him, there are some Pharisees and scribes, apparently respectful...

Jesus is a guest in the house of the young man raised from the dead. The notables of the place have also gathered there. And Daniel's mother, when she sees the scribes and Pharisees - seven of them, like the deadly sins - humbly invites them, apologising for not being able to offer them a worthier abode.

« There is the Master, woman, and that attaches great importance even to a cave. But your house is much more than a cave and we enter it saying: "Peace to you and to your house". »

The woman in fact, although she is certainly not rich, has done her utmost to honour Jesus. All the wealthy families in Nain have certainly entered the lists, joining their efforts to adorn the house and the table. And the various women who have collaborated are casting glances, from all possible spots, at the group passing through the hall towards two rooms, facing each other, in which the landlady has laid the tables. Perhaps that is all they have asked for, as compensation for the loan of kitchenware, tablecloths and seats, and for their work in the kitchen: to see the Master close at hand and breathe the same air as He does. And now they appear here and there, flushed, covered with flour or ashes, or with dripping hands, according to their tasks in the kitchen; they watch Him closely, they take their little share of divine sight, of divine voice, drinking in with their eyes and ears His kind blessing and figure and look delighted when they go back to the kitchen stove, cupboards and sink, more flushed than ever.

The happiest is the one who offers with the landlady the basins for the ablutions to the guests of consequence. She is a young dark-haired and dark-eyed girl, but her complexion is suffused with pink. And she blushes even more when the landlady informs Jesus that she is the fiancee of her son and that they will soon be getting married. « We waited for You so that the whole house might be sanctified by You. Please bless her as well, that she may be a good wife in this house. »

Jesus looks at her, and as the little bride bows, He imposes His hands on her head saying: « May the virtues of Sarah, Rebecca and Rachel flourish again in you and may you give birth to true children of God, for His glory and the happiness of this house. »

Jesus and the notables have now completed the purification rite and they enter the dining-room, with the young landlord, while the apostles and less influential persons of Nain go into the opposite room. And the banquet begins.

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From their conversation I gather that before my vision began, Jesus had preached and cured in Nain. But the Pharisees and scribes pay little attention to that; they, instead, harass with questions the people of Nain for details of the disease of which Daniel died, of how many hours had elapsed between his death and resurrection, and they ask whether they had completed his embalming etc. etc. Jesus pays no attention to such investigations and converses with the revived man who is very well and is eating with a wonderful appetite.

But a Pharisee calls Jesus to ask Him whether He was aware of Daniel's disease.

« I was coming from Endor by mere chance, as I wanted to please Judas of Kerioth as I had pleased John of Zebedee. I did not even know I would be passing through Nain when I set out on our Passover pilgrimage » replies Jesus.

« Ah! Had -you not gone to Endor deliberately? » asks an amazed scribe.

« No. I had not the least intention of going there, at that time. »

« Why did You go then? »

« I told you: because Judas of Simon wanted to go there. »

« And why that fancy? »

« To see the cave of the sorceress. »

« Perhaps You had spoken about it... »

« Never! There was no reason why I should. »

« I mean... perhaps with that episode You explained other witchcraft, to initiate Your apostles in... »

« In what? To initiate anyone in holiness, there is no need of pilgrimages. A cell or a desert barren land, a mountain top or a solitary house serve the same purpose: providing there is austerity and holiness in the teacher, and the will to become holy in the disciple. That is what I teach and nothing else. »

« But the miracles which Your apostles now work what are they if not wonders and... »

« The will of God. That is all. And the more holy they become, the more miracles they will work, through prayer, sacrifices and obedience to God. By no other means. »

« Are You sure of that? » asks a scribe holding his chin in his hand and looking Jesus up and down. His tone is rather ironical and pitiful.

« I gave them those weapons and that doctrine. If among them, and they are many, there should be anyone who becomes corrupted through base practices, out of pride or for other reasons, he will not have received such advice from Me. I can pray to see the culprit redeemed. I can undertake hard penance in expiation, imploring God to help him particularly with the light of His wisdom so that he may see his error. I can throw Myself at his feet to entreat

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him with all My love of Brother, Master and Friend to abandon his sin. And I would not consider that a humiliation, because the price of a soul is such that it is worth suffering any humiliation to save that soul. But I can do no more. And if after all he perseveres in his fault, the eyes and heart of the betrayed and misunderstood Master and Friend will shed tears and blood. » How much kindness and sadness there is in Jesus' voice and expression!

The scribes and Pharisees look at one another. They exchange meaningful glances, but say no more on the subject.

They instead ask young Daniel questions. Does he remember what death is? What did he feel when he came back to life? And what did he see in the gap between death and life?

« I know that I was suffering from a mortal disease and I suffered agony. Oh! what a dreadful thing! Don't make me remember it!... And yet the day will come when I will have to suffer it once again! Oh! Master... » He looks at Him and is so terrified that he goes pale at the idea of having to die once again.

Jesus kindly comforts him saying: « Death is in itself expiation. By dying twice you will be completely cleansed of faults and you will rejoice at once in Heaven. Let this thought make you live a holy life, so that you may have only involuntary and venial faults. »

But the Pharisees return to the attack: « But what did you feel when you came back to life? »

« Nothing. I was alive and healthy as if I had awaked from a long sound sleep. »

« But did you remember that-you had died? »

« I remembered that I was very ill, in agony, and that is all. »

« And what do you remember of the other world? »

« Nothing. There is nothing. A black hole, an empty space in my life... Nothing. »

« So, according to you, there is no Limbo, no Purgatory, no Hell? »

« Who says there isn't? Of course there are. But I do not remember them. »

« But are you sure that you were dead? »

The people of Nain lose their temper:« Was he dead? What more do you want? When we put him into the coffin, he was about to smell. In any case, with all those balms and bandages even a giant would die! »

« But do you not remember that you were dead? »

« I have told that I don't » the young man is losing his patience and he adds: « But what are you getting at with all these questions? That the whole village was pretending that I was dead, including my mother and my fiancee, who was dying with grief in her bed, including myself, all bandaged up and embalmed, while it was not true? What are you saying? That in Nain we were all children or idiots in a jesting mood? My mother's hair turned white in a few

hours. My fiancee had to be treated because sorrow and joy had almost driven her mad. And you doubt it? And why should we have done all that? »

« Why? That's true! Why should we have done it? » exclaim those of Nain.

Jesus does not speak. He toys with the tablecloth as if He were absent. The Pharisees do not know what to say... But Jesus begins to speak all of a sudden, when the conversation on the subject seemed to have come to an end, and He says: « I will tell you why. They (and He points at the Pharisees and scribes) want to prove that your resurrection from the dead was a cleverly contrived game to increase My reputation with the crowds. I, the inventor, you the accomplices to deceive God and our neighbour. No. I leave fraud to worthless people. I do not need witchcraft, or tricks or accomplices to be what I am. Why do you want to deny God the power of giving a soul back to a body? If He creates a soul and gives it when the body is being formed, will He not be able to give it back to the body, when the soul, being restored to the body through the prayer of His Messiah, is an incentive for many people to come to the Truth? Can you deny God the power of miracle? Why do you want to deny it? »

« Are You God? »

« I am Who I am. My miracles and My doctrine testify Who I am. »

« But why does he not remember while the spirits evoked can tell what the next world is? »

« Because this soul speaks the truth, sanctified as it is by the penance of a first death, instead what is spoken by the lips of necromancers is not the truth. »

« But Samuel... »

« Samuel came by the order of God, not of the sorceress, to bring to the traitor of the Law the verdict of the Lord, Who is not to be derided in His commandments. »

« Then why do Your disciples do it? » The arrogant voice of a Pharisee, who stung to the quick raises his voice, draws the attention of the apostles, who are in the opposite room, separated by a corridor a little more that a yard wide, but not isolated by doors or heavy curtains. When they hear themselves being referred to, they stand up and come noiselessly into the corridor to listen.

« In what do they do it? Speak frankly, and if your accusation is true, I will warn them not to do anything against the Law. »

« I know in what they do it, and many others know as well. But since You raise people from the dead and You say that You are more than a prophet, find out for Yourself. We shall certainly not tell You. In any case, You have eyes to see also many other things which Your apostles have done, when they are not to be done, or they did not do, when they are to be done. And You do not mind. »

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« Tell Me some of them. »

« Why do Your disciples infringe the traditions of our ancestors? We saw them today. Also today! Not more than an hour ago! They went into the dining-room to eat without purifying their hands beforehand! » If the Pharisees had said: « and they slaughtered citizens beforehand » they would not have spoken in such a horrified manner.

« You have watched them, of course. There are so many things to be seen. Good and beautiful things which make us bless the Lord for creating or permitting such things and for giving us our lives so that we may see them. And yet you do not watch them. And many others do as you do. But you waste your time and your peace running after things which are not good.

You look like jackals, or better still, like hyenas running in the trail of a stench, neglecting the waves of perfumes brought by the wind from gardens full of aromatic herbs. Hyenas do not love lilies and roses, jasmines and camphor, cinnamon and cloves. They are unpleasant smells to them. But the stench of a decomposing corpse in the bottom of a ravine, or on a cart road, or buried under bramble where a murderer threw it, or washed ashore by stormy waves, swollen, violaceous, burst, horrible, oh! that is a delightful smell for hyenas! And as the evening wind condenses and carries all the smells which the sun has distilled from the things it has warmed, they sniff at it to smell that vague inviting scent, and once they discover it and find where it comes from, they run away, with their snouts in the air, showing their uncovered teeth in their quivering jaws, like a hysterical laugh, to go where there is putrefaction. And be it the corpse of a man or a quadruped, or a snake killed by a peasant, or a beech-marten killed by a housewife, or be it a poor mouse, oh! they relish it! And they sink their fangs into the revolting stench, they feast and lick their lips...

But it is a matter of no interest, if some men improve in holiness day by day! But if one only does wrong, or more omit not a divine commandment, but a human practice - you may call it tradition, precept, as you wish, but it is always a human thing - then it is noticed. And one runs after even a suspicion... to rejoice, if the suspicion is true.

You who have come here not out of love, or faith or honesty, but for a wicked purpose, tell Me: why do you infringe the commandment of God, for the sake of your tradition? Are you going to tell Me that a tradition is more than a Commandment? And yet God said: "Honour your father and your mother, anyone who curses father or mother must die"! You instead say: "Anyone who says to his father and mother: what you should have from me is corban (1)

(1) Corban: offering to God, especially one made in fulfilment of a vow.

is no longer obliged to give it to his father and mother". So with your tradition you have cancelled the commandment of God.

Hypocrites! Isaiah rightly said of you when he prophesied: "This people honours Me only with lip-service while its heart is far from Me, therefore they honour Me in vain as they teach human doctrine and commandments".

And while you neglect the precepts of God, you keep the traditions of men, the ablutions of amphorae and chalices, of dishes and hands and other such things. While you justify the ingratitude and avarice of a son, by offering him the excuse of a sacrifice so that he may not give a piece of bread to those who gave birth to him and need his help and whom it is his duty to honour, because they are his parents, you are scandalised because one does not wash one's hands. You alter and infringe the word of God in order to obey words invented by you and imposed by you as precepts. You therefore proclaim yourselves more just than God. You arrogate to yourselves the rights of legislators, whereas God alone is the Legislator of His people. You... » and He would continue, but the hostile group goes out, in the hail of accusations, bumping into the apostles and those who were in the house, guests or women helping the landlady, and who had gathered in the corridor, attracted by Jesus' thundering voice.

Jesus, Who had stood up, sits down again, beckoning to all those present to enter where He is, and He says to them: « Listen to Me and understand the truth. There is nothing outside man which going into his mouth can make him unclean. It is what comes out of the mouth that makes him unclean. Let those who have ears hear and use their reason to understand and their will to act. And now let us go. People of Nain, persevere in good and may My peace be always with you. »

He stands up, He greets the landlord and landlady in particular and He sets out along the corridor. But He sees the friendly women, who are enraptured looking at Him and He goes towards them saying: « Peace to you as well. May Heaven reward you for assisting Me with such love that I did not regret My Mother's table. I perceived your motherly love in every crumb of bread, in every sauce and bit of roast, in the sweet honey and in the cool scented wine. Love Me always thus, o good women of Nain. But do not work so hard for Me the next time. A piece of bread and a handful of olives, dressed with your motherly smiles and your honest good looks, are quite enough for Me. Be happy in your homes because the gratitude of the Persecuted One is upon you and He is leaving comforted by your love. »

The women, weeping in their happiness, are all on their knees, and in passing by He lightly touches their white or dark-haired heads, one by one, blessing them. He then goes out and sets out

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again...

The early shades of evening hide the pallor of Jesus, Who is embittered by too many things...

300. In the Sheepfold at Endor.

13th October 1945.

Jesus goes back to Endor only. He stops at the first house of the village, which is a sheepfold rather than a house. But just because it is such, with low closed stables full of hay, it can shelter the thirteen pilgrims. The landlord, a coarse but good man, hastens to bring a lamp and a small pail of frothy milk, with some small loaves of very dark bread. He then withdraws blessed by Jesus Who remains with only the Twelve.

Jesus offers and hands out the bread, and as they lack bowls or cups, each of them dips his bread into the little pail and drinks out of it, when thirsty. Jesus drinks only a little milk. He is grave and silent... So much so, that after the meal, when they have satisfied their appetite, which is always very good, they at last become aware of His quietness.

Andrew is the first to ask: « What is the matter with You, Master? You look sad or tired to me... »

« I do not deny that I am. »

« Why? Because of those Pharisees? You should be accustomed to them by now... I have almost got accustomed myself! And You know how I used to react to them earlier. They always sing the same song!... Snakes can but hiss, in fact, and none of them will ever be able to imitate the singing of a nightingale. One ends up by not paying attention to them » says Peter, both earnestly and to cheer up Jesus.

« And that is how one loses one's control and falls into their coils. I ask you to never get accustomed to the voice of Evil as if it were harmless. »

« Oh! Well! If that is the only reason why You are sad, You are wrong. You can see how the world loves You » says Matthew.

« But is that the only reason why You are so sad? Tell me, my good Master. Or have they told You lies, or made slanderous insinuations or insinuated suspicion, or I do not know what, about us who love You? » asks the Iscariot solicitously and kindly, embracing with one arm Jesus, Who is sitting beside him on the hay.

Jesus turns towards Judas. His eyes flash like phosphorus in the flickering light of the lamp laid on the ground in the middle of the circle of the apostles sitting on the hay. Jesus stares at Judas of Kerioth and asks him: « And do you know Me to be so silly as to accept as true anybody's insinuations, to the point of being upset by them? It is real facts, Judas of Simon, which upset Me » and His

eyes do not stop for one moment piercing, like a probe, the brown eyes of Judas.

« Which real facts are upsetting You, then? » insists the Iscariot in a tone of confidence.

« The ones I see in the depths of hearts and on dethroned foreheads. » Jesus lays stress upon the word.

Everybody becomes excited: « Dethroned Why? What do You mean? »

« A king is dethroned when he is unworthy of remaining on the throne, and the first thing they tear off him is the crown, which is on his forehead, the most noble part of man, the only animal with his forehead erect towards the sky, as he is animal with regard to matter, but supernatural as a being gifted with a soul. But it is not necessary to be king on an earthly throne to be dethroned... Every man is king because of his soul, and his throne is in Heaven. But when a man prostitutes his soul and becomes a brute and demon, he then dethrones himself. The world is full of dethroned foreheads which are no longer erect towards Heaven, but are stooped towards the Abyss, weighed down by the word which Satan has carved on them. Do you want to know it? It is the one I read on foreheads. There is written: "Sold!". And that you may have no doubt as to who the buyer is, I tell you that it is Satan, by himself or through his servants in the world. »

« I have understood! Those Pharisees, for instance, are the servants of a servant who is greater than they are and who is Satan's servant » says Peter earnestly.

Jesus does not reply.

« But... Do You know, Master, that those Pharisees, after hearing Your words, were scandalised when they went away? They said so, when they bumped into me while going out... You were very resolute » remarks Bartholomew.

And Jesus replies: « And very truthful. It is not My fault, but theirs, if certain things must be said. And it was charitable of Me to say them. Any plant which was not planted by My Heavenly Father is to be uprooted. And the useless moorland of parasitic, suffocating thorny herbs, which destroy the seed of the holy Truth, was not planted by Him. It is charitable to uproot traditions and precepts which suffocate the Decalogue, misinterpreting it, and making it inert and impossible to abide by. It is charitable to do so for the sake of honest souls. As far as those insolent obstinate persons are concerned, who are deaf to every advice and action of Love, leave them alone and let them be followed by those whose souls and inclinations are like theirs. They are blind men leading blind men. If one blind man leads another, both can but fall into a pit. Let them feed on their own uncleanness, which they call "cleanliness". It cannot contaminate them any further, because it

lies on the matrix from which it originates. »

« What You are saying now is connected with what You said in Daniel's house, is it not? That it is not what goes into the mouth of man that makes him unclean, but what comes out of it » asks Simon the Zealot gravely.

« Yes » replies Jesus briefly.

After a moment's silence, as Jesus' gravity freezes even the most exuberant characters, Peter asks: « Master, I, and I am not the only one, have not understood the parable very well. Please explain it to us. How is it that what goes in does not make unclean, and what comes out does? If I take a clean amphora and I pour dirty water into it, I will dirty it. So what goes into the amphora makes it unclean. But if from an amphora full of clean water I pour some of it on to the ground, I will not make the amphora unclean, because clean water comes out of it. So? »

And Jesus says: « We are not amphorae, Simon. We are not amphorae, My friends. And not everything is clean in man! Do even you not understand? Consider the case with which the Pharisees charged you. They stated that you were unclean because you were taking food to your mouths with dusty, sweaty hands, that is, with unclean hands. But where did that food go? From your mouths into your stomachs, from your stomachs into your intestines and from your intestines into the sewer. Can it thus make your whole body unclean, and what is contained in your body, if it only goes through the passage destined to fulfil the task of nourishing the flesh, and the flesh only, and then ending in a sewer, as it is right it should? That is not what makes man unclean. What makes man unclean is what is entirely and exclusively his own, procreated and brought forth by his ego. That is, what he has in his heart, and from his heart rises to his lips and to his head, corrupting his thoughts and words and making him wholly unclean. From the heart come evil intentions, murder, adultery, fornication, theft, false witness, blasphemy. From the heart come avarice, lust, pride, envy, wrath, immoderate desires and sinful idleness. From the heart come incentives to all actions. And if the heart is wicked, they will be as wicked as the heart. All actions: from idolatry to insincere grumbling... All these wicked things, which from inside come outside, make man unclean, not eating without washing one's hands. The science of God is not a base thing, mud upon which any foot can tread. It is something sublime, which lives among stars, from which it descends with rays of light to perfect the just. Do not, at least you, tear it from Heaven to disgrace it in Mud... Go and rest now. I am going out to pray. »

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301. From Endor to Magdala.

14th October 1945.

Rain, rain, rain... The apostles who are not very happy to walk in the rain, suggest to Jesus that it might be better to take shelter at Nazareth, which is not far... and Peter says: « And then I could leave with the boy... »

Jesus' « no » is so resolute that no one dare insist. Jesus is walking ahead of them, all alone... The others are following Him, in two sullen groups.

But Peter cannot resist any longer and he approaches Jesus. « Master, can I stay with You? » he asks in a rather mortified tone.

« You are always dear to Me, Simon. Come. »

Peter cheers up. He trots along beside Jesus, Who goes a long way with His strides, without any effort. After a little while he says: « Master... it would have been lovely to have the boy for the feast... »

Jesus does not reply.

« Master, why do You not make me happy? »

« Simon, you are running the risk of having the boy taken away from you. »

« No! Lord! Why? » Peter is frightened by the threat and looks desolate.

« Because I do not want you to be tied to anything. I told you when I gave you Marjiam. You, instead, are getting stranded in your affection. »

« It is not a sin to love. And to love Marjiam. You love him, too... »

« But My love does not prevent Me from devoting Myself entirely to My mission. Do you not remember My words on human affections and My advice, which was as clear as an order, concerning those who want to put their hands to the plough? Are you getting tired, Simon of Jonah, of being My disciple heroically? »

Peter's voice is broken by sobs when he replies: « No, Lord. I remember everything and I am not tired. But I am under the impression that it is the other way round... You are tired of me, of poor Simon who left everything to follow You... »

« You mean: who found everything in following Me. »

« No... Yes... Master... I am a poor man... »

« I know. And that is exactly why I am working on you. To make of the poor man a man, a saint, My Apostle, My Stone. I am hard to make you hard. I do not want you to be as soft as this mud. I want you to be a perfectly squared block: the foundation Stone. Do you not understand that that is love? Do you not remember the Wise Man? He says that he who loves is severe. But understand Me! At least you! Can you not see how I am overwhelmed and desolate because of so much misunderstanding, because of too much feigning, of so much indifference, and of even more disappointments? »

« Is that... is that how You feel, Master? Oh! Divine Mercy! And I never realised it! What a blockhead I am!... But for how long?... By whom? Tell me... »

« It is of no avail. You would not be able to do anything. I can do nothing Myself... »

« Could I not do anything to relieve You? »

« I told you: you should understand that My sternness is love and see love in every act of Mine concerning you. »

« Yes, of course. I will not speak any more. My dear Master! I will say no more. Forgive this blockhead. Give me a sign that You really forgive me... »

« A sign! My "yes" should really be enough for you. But I will give you it. Listen: I cannot go to Nazareth because, besides Marjiam, John of Endor and Syntyche are there. And that is not to be known. »

« Not even to us? Why?... Ah! Master?! Are You afraid of any of us? »

« Prudence teaches that when something is to be kept secret, two people who are aware of it are too many. Even a careless word can be detrimental. And men are not all and always thoughtful. »

« Really... I am not thoughtful either. But when I want, I can be silent. And I will! I will indeed! I will no longer be Simon of Jonah, if I do not hold my tongue. Thank You, Master, for Your esteem. It is indeed a great sign of love... So we are now going to Tarichea? »

« Yes. Then we will go to Magdala by boat. I must collect the gold of the jewels... »

« You can now see that I am able to hold my tongue! I never said anything to Judas, You know? »

Jesus makes no comment on the interruption. He goes on: « Once I have received the gold, I will leave you all free until the day after the Dedication. If I should want any of you, I will call you to Nazareth. The apostles from Judaea, with the exception of Simon Zealot, will take Lazarus' sisters and their handmaids, and Eliza of Bethzur, to their house in Bethany. They will then go to their homes for the Dedication. It will be quite all right if they come back by the end of Shebat, when we shall start going round again. You are the only one to know, is that right, Simon Peter? »

« Yes, I am the only one. But... You will have to tell the others... »

« I will tell them at the right moment. Go now to your companions and be sure of My love. »

Peter obeys and is happy and Jesus becomes absorbed in thought once again.

The waves are breaking against the little beach of Magdala, when the two boats land there in a late November afternoon. They are not big waves, but they are annoying for those landing, as their clothes get wet. But the prospect of being sheltered at once in the

house of Mary of Magdala makes them put up with the undesired bath without any grumbling.

« Put the boats away and then join us » says Jesus to the servants. And He sets out at once along the shore because they landed in a cove a little outside the town, where there are other boats of fishermen from Magdala.

« Judas of Simon and Thomas, come here with Me » says Jesus calling them. They run up to Him. « I have decided to entrust you with a confidential task, and a pleasant one at the same time. This is the task: you will take Lazarus' sisters to Bethany. And Eliza will go with them. I think highly enough of you to entrust the women disciples to you. And you will take a letter of Mine to Lazarus. Then, when you have fulfilled your task, you will go home for the Dedication... Do not interrupt Me, Judas. We shall all celebrate the Dedication at home this year. It is too rainy a winter to travel about. You can see that also sick people are thinning out. So we will take advantage of the situation and make our families happy. I will wait for you at Capernaum by the end of Shebat. »

« But are You staying at Capernaum? » asks Thomas.

« I am not yet sure where I will be staying. Here or there it is the same to Me, providing My Mother is with Me. »

« I would have preferred to celebrate the Dedication with You » says the Iscariot.

« I believe you.- But if you love Me, please obey. All the more because your obedience will give you the possibility of helping the disciples, who are once again spread out everywhere. You must help Me with them. In a family it is the elder sons who help the parents to bring up the younger ones. You are the elder brothers of the disciples, and they the younger ones, and you ought to be happy that I rely on you. It proves that I am satisfied with your recent work. »

Thomas simply says: « It's too kind of You, Master. But, as far as I am concerned, I will endeavour to do even better, now. But I am sorry to leave You... But time flies... And my old father will be happy to have me for the feast... and my sisters too... My twin sister above all!... She must have had, or is about to have a baby... The first nephew... If it is a boy, and is born when I am there, what name shall I give him? »

« Joseph. »

« And if it is a girl? »

« Mary. There are no sweeter names. »

But Judas, proud of the appointment, is already strutting about and making plans... He has completely forgotten that he will be leaving Jesus and that shortly before, about the time of the Tabernacles, if I remember rightly, he had protested, like an unbroken horse, against Jesus' order to part from Him for a little while. He

forgets also how at the time he suspected that it was Jesus' desire to send him away. He has forgotten everything and he is happy to be considered one who may be entrusted with delicate tasks. He promises: « I will bring You much money for the poor » and he takes out his purse and says: « Here, take this. It is all we have. I have nothing else. Give me provisions for our journey from Bethany home. »

« But we are not leaving this evening » objects Thomas.

« It does not matter. No money is required in Mary's house, so... I am happy that I do not have to handle any more... When I come back I will bring Your Mother some flower seeds. I will get them from my mother. And I want to bring a present for Marjiam... » He is elated. Jesus looks at him...

They are now in the house of Mary of Magdala. They make themselves known and go in. The women run joyfully to meet the Master, Who has come to take shelter in their home...

And after supper, when the tired apostles have withdrawn, Jesus, sitting in the centre of a hall, in the circle of the women disciples, informs them of His desire that they should leave as soon as possible. Unlike the apostles, not one of them protests. They bow their heads in assent and then go out to pack their luggage. But Jesus calls back the Magdalene, who is already on the threshold.

« Well, Mary? Why did you whisper to Me, when I arrived: "I must speak to You privately"? »

« Master, I sold the precious stones. At Tiberias. Marcella sold them with the assistance of Isaac. I have the money in my room. I did not want Judas to see... » and she blushes deeply.

Jesus stares at her but does not say anything.

The Magdalene goes out and comes back with a heavy purse which she hands to Jesus: « Here it is » she says. « They paid a very good price for them. »

« Thank you, Mary. »

« Thank You, Rabboni, for asking this favour of me. Have You anything else to ask me?... »

« No, Mary. And have you anything else to tell Me? »

« No, my Lord. Bless me, Master. »

« Yes, I bless you... Mary... are you happy to go back to Lazarus? Supposing I were no longer in Palestine, would you go back home willingly? »

« Yes, my Lord. But... »

« Go on, Mary. Do not be afraid to tell me what you think. »

« I would have gone back more willingly, if Simon the Zealot had been in the place of Judas of Kerioth, because he is a great friend of our family. »

« I need him for an important mission. »

3-1416

« Your brothers, then or John, whose heart is as innocent as a dove. Anyone of them, except him. My Lord, do not look at me so severely... Who has fed on lust, perceives it when it is near... I am not afraid of it. I can hold at bay someone who is much more than Judas. And I am terrified at not being forgiven, and it is my ego, and it is Satan who wanders round me, and it is the world... But if Mary of Theophilus is not afraid of anybody, Mary of Jesus is disgusted at the vice which had subdued her, and she... Lord... The man who craves for sensuality disgusts me... »

« You are not alone on the journey, Mary. And I am sure that while he is with you he will not come back... Remember that I must send Syntyche and John to Antioch and who is not prudent must not know anything about it... »

« That is true. So I will go... Master, when shall we meet again? »

« I do not know, Mary. Perhaps only at Passover. Go in peace, now. I will bless you this evening and every evening, together with your sister and good Lazarus. »

Mary bends to kiss Jesus' feet leaving Him alone in the silent room.

302. Jesus at Nazareth for the Dedication.

15th October 1945.

It is a dark, cold, windy December evening. Apart from the leaves torn off the trees which still have a few, and which rustle blown by a whistling wind, there is no other noise in the streets of Nazareth, which is as dark as a dead city. No light or noise filters through the bolted doors. It is really a horrible evening.

And yet, the Lamb of God is walking through the deserted streets of Nazareth, on His way home. A tall dark shadow in a dark tunic, He almost vanishes in the dark, starless night and His step is just a rustling noise when He treads on a heap of dry leaves, which the wind has laid on the ground, after whirling them around, and is ready to pick up again and blow elsewhere.

He arrives near the house of Mary Clopas. He stands for a moment undecided as to whether He should enter the garden and knock at the kitchen door or proceed... He proceeds without stopping. He is now in the little street where is His house. One can already see the tormented olive-trees swaying on the hillock against which the house is placed, dark shadows swaying against the black sky. He quickens His step and arrives at the door. He listens carefully. It is so easy to hear what is happening in that little house! If one presses against the door post, there are only a few inches of wood between the outside listener and the speaker within... And yet no voice is heard.

« It is late » He says with a sigh. « I will wait until dawn before

knocking. »

But when He is about to go away, He hears the rhythmical noise of the loom. He smiles and says: « She is up and She is weaving. It is certainly She... That is Mother's rhythm. » I cannot see His face but I am sure that He is smiling because I can perceive a smile in His voice which was previously sad and now is cheerful.

He knocks. The noise stops for a moment, then there is the sound of a chair being pushed back, and finally the silvery voice asks: « Who is it? »

« It is I, Mother! »

« Son! » A loving cry of joy, even if uttered in a low voice. The noise of the bolt being withdrawn is heard, and the door opens letting out a golden flash into the dark night. Mary falls into Jesus' arms, on the door step, as if He could wait no longer to receive Her and She to throw Herself onto His heart.

« Son! My Son! » Kisses and the sweet words « Mother - Son »... They go in and the door is closed silently.

Mary explains in a low voice: « They are' "all sleeping. I was awake... Since Judas and James came back saying that You were following them, I have been staying up until late. Are You cold, Jesus? Of course You are, You are frozen. Come. I kept the fire lit. I will put a faggot on it and You will warm Yourself. » And She leads Him by the hand as if He were still the Child Jesus...

The flame shines brightly and crackles in the stirred hearth. Mary looks at Jesus Who holds His hands out to warm them. « How pale You are! You were not like that when we parted... You are becoming thinner and paler, My Child. Once Your complexion was like milk and roses, but now You look like old ivory. What has happened to You recently, Son? Still the Pharisees? »

« Yes... and other worries. But now I am happy, here with You, and I will be all right at once. This year we are celebrating the Dedication here, Mother! I will reach the perfect age here beside You. Are You glad? »

« Yes. But Your perfect age, My darling, is still remote... You are young, and with regard to Me, You are always My little Child. Here, the milk is warm. Will You drink it here or in the other room? »

« In the other room, Mother. I am warm now. I will drink it while You cover Your loom. »

They go back into the little room and Jesus sits on the chest near the table and drinks His milk. Mary looks at Him and smiles. She smiles even more when She takes Jesus' bag and puts it on a shelf. She smiles so much that Jesus asks: « What are You thinking of? »

« I was thinking that You have come just on the anniversary of our departure to Bethlehem... Also then there were bags and cases open or full of clothes and particularly of swaddling-clothes... for a

Little One, Who might be born, I used to say to Joseph; Who was to be born, I said to Myself, in Bethlehem of Judah... I had hidden them in the bottom, because Joseph was afraid of that... He did not yet know that the birth of the Son of God would not be subject, both for Himself and for His Mother, to the common miseries of childbirth. He did not know... and he was afraid of being away from Nazareth with Me in that state. I was sure that I would be a Mother there... You exulted too much in My womb for the joy of Your oncoming Birthday, and of the Birthday of Redemption, so I could not be deceived. Angels whirled round the Lady Who carried You, My God... It was no longer the sublime Archangel, or My most sweet guardian Angel, as in the first months. Now choirs of angels darted from the Heaven of My God to My little Heaven: My womb, where You were... And I heard them sing and exchange brilliant words... words of anxiety to see You, God Incarnate... I heard them when, driven by love, they fled from Paradise to come and worship You, Love of the Father, concealed in My womb. And I endeavoured to learn their words... their songs... their ardour... But no human creature can repeat or have Heavenly things... »

Jesus listens to Her, He is sitting, She is standing near the table, dreaming as much as He is blissful... with one hand resting on the dark wood and the other pressed against Her heart... And Jesus lays His long darker hand on the little white, gentle, holy hand and presses it in His own... And when She becomes silent, almost regretting that She had not been able to learn the words, songs and ardour of the angels, Jesus says: « All the words of the angels, all their songs, all their ardour, could not have made Me happy on the earth, if I had not had Yours, Mother! You said and gave Me what they could not give Me. You did not learn from them, but they learned from You... Come here, Mother, beside Me and tell Me more... Not of the past... but of the present. What were You doing? »

« I was working... »

« I know. But at what? I am certain that You were overworking Yourself for Me. Let Me see... »

Mary becomes redder than the cloth on the loom as Jesus gets up to look at it.

« Purple? Who gave it to You? »

« Judas of Kerioth. I think that he got the fishermen of Sidon to give it to him. He wants Me to make a king's robe for You. Of course, I will make the robe for You. But You do not need purple to be a king. »

« Judas is more stubborn than a mule » is the only comment on the purple gift... He then asks His Mother: « And can You make a full robe with what he gave You? »

« Oh! no, Son! It can be used as a border of a tunic and mantle. But not more than that. »

3-1419

« Very well. I understand why You are weaving it in low strips. Well... Mother: I like the idea. Keep those strips aside for Me and one day I will tell You to use them for a beautiful tunic. But there is plenty time. Do not tire Yourself. »

« I work when I am at Nazareth... »

« That is true... And what have the others done during this time? »

« They have improved their knowledge. »

« That is: You have improved their knowledge. What do You think of them? »

« Oh! They are very good. If I except You, I never had more diligent and kind pupils. I have also endeavoured to make John a little stronger. He is very ill. He will not live long... »

« I know. But it is a good thing for him. In any case, he wishes that himself. He spontaneously understood the value of suffering and of death. And what about Syntyche? »

« It is a pity to have to send her away. She is worth one hundred disciples because of her holiness and her capacity for understanding the supernatural. »

« I realise that. But I must do it. »

« What You do, Son, is always well done. »

« And the boy? »

« He is learning too. But he is very sad these days... He remembers the misfortune of a year ago... Oh! there is not much mirth here!... John and Syntyche sigh thinking of their departure from here, the boy weeps thinking of his dead mother... »

« And what about You? »

« I... You know, Son. There is no sunshine when You are away. There would not be even if the world did love You. But at least there would be a serene sky... Instead... »

« There is weeping. Poor Mother!... Have they asked You questions about John and Syntyche? »

« And who would ask Me? Mary of Alphaeus knows and is silent. Alphaeus of Sarah has already seen John and is not curious. He calls him "the disciple". »

« And the others? »

« With the exception of Mary and Alphaeus, no one comes to see Me. Only a woman occasionally for some work or advice. But the men of Nazareth no longer cross My threshold. »

« Not even Joseph and Simon? »

« ... No... Simon sends Me oil, flour, olives, firewood, eggs... as if he wanted to be forgiven for not understanding You, and he wanted to speak through gifts. But he gives them to Mary, his mother, and he does not come here. In any case, if anyone came, they would only see Me, because Syntyche and John withdraw if someone knocks... »

3-1420

« A very sad life. »

« Yes. And the boy suffers very much, so much so that Mary of Alphaeus now takes him with her when she does My shopping. But now we shall no longer be sad, My Jesus, because You are here! » « I am here... Now let us go to bed. Bless Me, Mother, as You used to do when I was a little boy. »

« Bless Me, Son. I am Your disciple. »

They kiss each other... They light another little lamp and go out to go and rest.

303. Jesus with John of Endor and Syntyche at Nazareth.

16th October 1945.

« Master! Master! Master! » The three shouts of John of Endor, who coming out of his little room to go to the fountain and wash himself, meets Jesus coming from it, awake Marjiam, who runs out of Mary's room wearing only a short sleeveless tunic, still barefooted, with eyes and mouth wide open to see and shout: « Jesus is here! » and runs at full speed to climb up to Jesus' arms. The shouts awaken also Syntyche who sleeps in Joseph's old workshop, and who comes out after a few moments, already dressed but with her dark plaits only half done and hanging loose on her shoulders.

Jesus, with the boy still in His arms, greets John and Syntyche and urges them to go back into the house because the north wind is very strong. And He enters first, carrying the half naked Marjiam, whose teeth are chattering notwithstanding his enthusiasm. He puts the boy near the fire, which is already lit, and where Mary is busy warming some milk and the boy's clothes, so that he may not catch a cold.

The other two do not speak, but they look like the personification of ecstatic joy. Jesus, Who is sitting with the boy in His lap while the Blessed Virgin wraps him up quickly in the warmed garments, looks up and smiling says to them: « I did promise you that I would come. And Simon Zealot will be coming today or tomorrow, too. I sent him on an errand. But he will soon be here and we will be together for many days. »

Marjiam is soon dressed and his little cheeks, which had turned pale with the cold, colour once again. Jesus puts him down and goes into the next room followed by everybody. Mary goes in last holding the boy by the hand. And She reproaches him kindly: « What should I do to you, now? You disobeyed. I said to you: "Stay in bed until I come back", instead you came before... »

« John's shouts awoke me... » replies Marjiam apologetically.

« That is exactly when you should have obeyed. To stay in bed while one sleeps is no obedience and there is no merit in doing so.

You should have been able to do it when there was merit, because it exacted your will power. I would have brought Jesus to you. And you would have had Him all to yourself, without running the risk of catching a cold. »

« I did not know that it was so cold. »

« But I did. It grieves Me to see you disobey. »

« No, Mother. It grieves me more to see You thus... If it had not been for Jesus I would not have got up even if You had forgotten Me in bed without any food, my beautiful Mother!... Give me a kiss, Mummy. You know that I am a poor boy!... »

Mary takes him in Her arms and kisses him, stopping thus the tears running down his cheeks and making him smile once again with the promise: « I will never, never, never again disobey You! »

Jesus in the meantime is speaking to the two disciples. He inquires about their progress in Wisdom, and as they state that everything becomes clear to them through Mary's words, He says: « I know. The supernaturally bright Wisdom of God becomes clear light also for the most hard-hearted people, when spoken by Her. But you are not hard-hearted, and thus you fully benefit from Her teaching. »

« You are here now, Son. The teacher becomes a pupil once again. »

« Oh! no! You will continue to be the teacher. I will listen to You as they do. I am only "the Son" these next days. Nothing else. You will be the Mother and Teacher of Christians. You are so even now: I am Your First-Born and first pupil, and they, and Simon when he comes, are the others... See, Mother? The world is here. The world of the future in the little pure Israelite who will not even be aware of becoming the "Christian"; the world, the old world of Israel in the Zealot; mankind in John, the Gentiles in Syntyche. And they all come to You, the Holy Mother Who gives the milk of Wisdom and Life to the world and to centuries. How many mouths have desired to suckle at Your breast! And how many will do so in future! Patriarchs and Prophets longed for You, because the Nourishment of man was to come from Your fertile womb. And "My followers" will seek You to be forgiven, taught, defended, loved, like as many Marjiams. And blessed are those who will do so! Because it will not be possible to persevere in Christ, unless grace is fortified by Your help, Mother full of Grace. »

Mary looks like a rose in Her dark dress, as She blushes so much at Her Son's praise. A splendid rose in a very humble dress, of coarse dark brown wool...

They knock and Mary of Alphaeus, James and Judas come in together, the latter laden with pitchers of water and faggots. Their joy to meet again is reciprocal. And it increases when they learn that the Zealot will be coming soon. That Alphaeus' sons are fond

of him is obvious, even without the words spoken by Judas in reply to his mother's remark commenting their joy: « Mother, just in this house and one very sad evening for us, he showed us the love of a father and still has that love for us. We cannot forget it. He is for us "the father". We are for him "his sons". Which sons do not rejoice in seeing a good father? »

Mary of Alphaeus is pensive and sighs... Then, being very practical even in her grief, she asks: « And where will you let him sleep? You have no room. Send him to my house. »

« No, Mary. He will live under My roof. But it is soon settled. Syntyche will sleep with My Mother, I with Marjiam, Simon in the workshop. Nay, we had better prepare at once. Let us go. »

And the men go out into the kitchen garden, while the two Maries go to do their work in the kitchen.

304. Jesus' Lesson to Marjiam.

17th October 1945.

Jesus goes out of the house, holding the boy by the hand. They do not go to the centre of Nazareth, on the contrary they leave the village going along the same road which Jesus took the first time He left His house for His public life. When they arrive at the first olive-groves, they leave the main road and follow little paths among trees, in search of the warm sun after the stormy days.

Jesus urges Marjiam to run and jump, but the boy replies: « I prefer to stay with You. I am big, now, and I am a disciple. »

Jesus smiles at the... authoritative profession of age and dignity. It is true that it is a little adult who is walking beside Him. No one would say that he is more than ten years old. But no one can deny that he is a disciple, and least of all Jesus, Who just says: « But you will be bored being silent while I pray. I brought you here so that you may enjoy yourself. »

« I cannot enjoy myself these days... But it is a great relief to me to be beside You... I have longed for You so much these days... because... because... » The boy tightens his trembling lips and speaks no more.

Jesus lays a hand on his head saying: « He who believes in My word must not be as sad as those who do not believe. I always speak the truth. Also when I assure you that there is no separation between the souls of the just people who are in Abraham's bosom and the souls of the just people on the earth. I am Resurrection and Life, Marjiam. And I have brought the latter even before fulfilling My mission. You have always told Me that your parents were longing for the coming of the Messiah and they asked God to live long enough to see Him. So they believed in Me. They died in that faith. Therefore they have already been saved by it, and have risen again

and are alive through it. Because My faith gives life by giving thirst for justice. Consider how many times they must have resisted temptations to be worthy of meeting the Saviour... »

« But they died without seeing You, Lord... And they died in that manner... I saw them, You know, when they extracted all the dead people of village from the earth... My mother, my father... my little brothers... What do I care if they said to me to comfort me: "Your relatives are not like these. They did not suffer"? Oh! They did not suffer! So, was it feathers and not rocks that fell on them? And was it air and not earth and water which suffocated them? And did they not suffer thinking of me, when they felt they were dying?... » The boy is shaken by grief. He gesticulates vivaciously standing in front of Jesus, and is almost aggressive...

But Jesus understands his grief, and his need to express it and lets him talk. Jesus is not one of those who says: « Be quiet. You are scandalising me » to those who rave in their grief.

The boy goes on: « And after? What happened after? You know what happened! If You had not come, I would have become a beast or I would have died in the wood like a snake. And I would not have gone to join my mother, father and brothers, because I hated Doras and... and I no longer loved God as I did before, when there was my mother who loved me and made me love my neighbour. I almost hated birds, as they filled their crops, had warm feathers and built their nests, whilst I was hungry, my clothes were torn and I was homeless... And I who love birds, would chase them away, as I was seized by wrath comparing myself with them, and then I would weep realising that I had been bad and had deserved Hell... »

« Ah! So you repented of being bad? »

« Yes, my Lord. But how could I be good? My old father was good. But he used to say: "It will soon be all over. I am old... But I was not old! How many years would I have had to wait before I could work and eat like a man and not like a stray dog? I would have become a thief, if You had not come. »

« You would not, because your mother was praying for you. You can see that I came and took you. That is the proof that God loved you and that your mother was watching over you. »

The boy becomes silent and thoughtful. He seems to be seeking enlightenment from the ground upon which he is treading, walking beside Jesus on the short grass dried up by the north wind of the previous days. He looks up and asks: « But would it not have been a lovelier proof if He had not let my mother die? »

Jesus smiles at the human logic of his young mind. And He kindly but earnestly explains: « Now, Marjiam. I will make you understand the situation by means of a comparison. You told Me that you like little birds, did you not? Now listen. Were little birds

created to fly or to be closed in cages? »

« To fly. »

« Good. And what do the mothers of the little birds do to nourish them? »

« They feed them. »

« Yes. But with what? »

« With seeds, flies, grubs, or crumbs of bread, or bits of fruit which they find flying about. »

« Very well. Now listen. If in springtime you should find a nest on the ground, with little ones in it and their mother on them, what would you do? »

« I would take it. »

« All of it? As it is? Including the mother? »

« All of it. Because it is too unpleasant to be little ones without a mother. »

« But in Deuteronomy it is written that one must take the little ones only, letting the mother free, as it is her mission to pro-life rate. »

« But if she is a good mother, she will not go away. She will fly to her little ones. That is what my mother would have done. She would not have given me to You either for good, because I am still a boy. Neither could she have come with me because my brothers were younger than I am. So she would not have let me go. »

« Very well. But listen: according to you, would you love that mother of the little birds and the little ones more if you kept the cage open so that she might come and go with suitable food, or if you kept her in prison as well? »

« Eh!... I would love her more by letting her come and go until the little ones have grown up... and my love would be complete if I kept them and once they have grown up, I let the mother free, because birds were created to fly... Really... to be utterly good... once the little ones have grown up I should let them free as well, and let them fly away... It would be the best love I could have for them... And the most just... Of course! The most just because I would do nothing but allow what God wanted for birds to be accomplished... »

« Very clever of you, Marjiam! You have spoken as a wise man. You will be a great teacher of your Lord, and those who listen to you will believe you, because you will speak to them as a wise man! »

« Really, Jesus? » His little face, previously worried and sad, then absorbed in thought, reserved in the effort of judging what was best, settles down and brightens for the joy of the praise.

« Yes, really. Now look! You have judged thus, because you are a clever boy. Now consider how God will judge, since He is Perfection itself, with regard to souls and what is best for them. Souls

are like birds, enclosed in the cages of bodies. The earth is the place where they are brought with their cages. But they yearn for the freedom of Heaven; for the Sun which is God; for Nourishment suitable to them, which is the contemplation of God. No human love, not even the holy love of a mother for her children or of children for their mother, is so strong as to suffocate such yearning of souls to be rejoined to their Origin, which is God. Likewise God, because of His perfect love for us, finds no reason so strong as to exceed His desire to be rejoined to the soul longing for Him. What happens then? Sometimes He loves it so much that He says to it: "Come! I will free you". And He -says so even if there are some children around a mother. He sees everything. He knows everything. What He does, He does well. When He frees a soul - the limited intelligence of men may not think so, but it is true - when He frees a soul, He always does it for a greater welfare of the soul itself and of its relatives. As I have already told you, He then adds to the ministry of the guardian angel the ministry of the soul which He has called to Himself, and which loves its relatives with a love free from human burdens, because it loves them in God. When He frees a soul, He binds Himself to take its place in taking care of the survivors. Has He not done that with you? Has He not made you, little child of Israel, My disciple, My future priest? »

« Yes, my Lord, He has. »

« Now consider this. Your mother will be freed by Me and will not need your suffrages. But had she died after Redemption and were she in need of suffrages, you could pray for her as a priest. Just think: all you could have done was to spend some money to give an offering to a priest of the Temple so that he would make on her behalf a sacrifice of victims, such as lambs or doves or other fruits of the earth. That in case you had remained the little peasant Jabez near your mother. Instead, you, Marjiam, the priest of Christ, could offer directly for her the true Sacrifice of the perfect Victim, in Whose name all forgiveness is granted! »

« And will I no longer be able to do it? »

« Not for your father, mother and little brothers. But you will be able to do it for friends and disciples. Is that not beautiful? »

« Yes, Lord. »

« Well, then, let us go back home and be cheerful once again. »

« Yes... But I did not let You pray!... I am sorry... »

« But we did pray! We considered the truth, we contemplated God in His bounty... All that is prayer. And you did it as a true adult. Come on, now. Let us sing a psalm of praise for the joy which is within us. » And He begins to sing: « "My heart is stirred by a noble theme... " »

Marjiam joins his silvery voice to the bronze and golden voice of Jesus.

3-1426

305. Simon Zealot at Nazareth.

18th October 1945.

It gets dark early in December, the lights are lit early and families gather in one room. That happens also in the little house in Nazareth, and while the two women work, one at the loom, the other doing needlework, Jesus and John of Endor, sitting near the table, are talking in low voices, and Marjiam is about to finish polishing two chests laid on the floor.

The boy is working vigorously when Jesus stands up and bending over the wood says: « That is enough now. It is smooth enough and tomorrow we will be able to paint it. Put everything away now, because we will be working again tomorrow. » And while Marjiam goes out with his polishing tools - stiff spatulas on which rough fish skin is nailed to do the work of our sandpaper, and implements like knives, but certainly not steel, for the same purpose - Jesus lifts with His strong arms one of the chests and takes it into the workshop, where they must have been working because there are sawdust and wood-shavings near one of the benches, which has been placed in the centre of the room for the occasion. Marjiam has put his tools back in their rests and is now picking up the shavings to throw them on the fire, as he says, and would also like to sweep up the sawdust, but John of Endor prefers to do it himself.

Everything has been tidied up when Jesus comes back with the second chest, which He puts near the first one. The three of them are about to come out when they hear someone knock at the door and immediately afterwards the grave voice of the Zealot resounds in a deep salutation to Mary: « Hail, Mother of my Saviour, I bless Your kindness which allows me to live under Your roof. »

« Simon has arrived. We will now learn why he is late. Let us go... » says Jesus.

When they enter the little room where the apostle is with the women, Simon is taking a large bundle off his shoulders.

« Peace to you, Simon... »

« Oh! Blessed Master! I am late, am I not? But I have done everything and well... »

They kiss one another. Simon then continues his story: « I went to see the carpenter's widow. Your assistance arrived at the right moment. The old woman is very ill and expenses have thus gone up. The little carpenter does his best to make little items, and always remembers You. They all bless You. I then went to see Nara, Samira and Sirah. Their brother is more difficult than ever. But they are peaceful, holy as they are, and they eat their poor bread dressed with tears and forgiveness. They bless You for the assistance sent to them. But they ask You to pray that their harsh brother may turn. Old Rachel also blesses You for Your alms. Finally

I went to Tiberias to shop. I hope I got the right things, The women can now look at them... But I was held in Tiberias by some people who thought I was Your forerunner. They sequestrated me for three days... Oh! I may say that it was a golden prison! But it was still a prison... They wanted to know so many things... I told them the truth explaining that You had dismissed us all and that You had retired for the worst period of winter... When they were convinced that it was true, also because they went to Simon of Jonah and Philip without finding You and without learning anything else, they let me go. Even the excuse of the bad weather was of no use, as the weather was lovely. That is why I am late. »

« It does not matter. We have plenty time to be together. I thank you for everything... Mother, look at the contents of the parcel with Syntyche and let Me know whether You think it is enough for what You know... » and while the women are opening the parcel, Jesus sits down and talks to Simon.

« And what have You done, Master? »

« I made two chests, to avoid being idle and because they will be useful. I went for walks, I enjoyed being at home... »

Simon stares at Him... But does not say anything.

The exclamations of Marjiam, who sees lengths of linen and woollen cloths, sandals, veils and belts come out of the parcel, make Jesus and His two companions turn round.

Mary says: « Everything is all right. We will begin to sew at once and everything will soon be ready. »

The boy asks: « Are You getting married, Jesus? »

Everybody laughs and Jesus asks: « What makes you think so? »

« All these things for a man and a woman and the two chests You made. They are for Your trousseau and for Your bride's. Will You let me make her acquaintance? »

« Do you really want to meet My bride? »

« Oh! Yes! She must be beautiful and good! What is her name!... »

« It is a secret for the time being. Because she has two names, like you, who were first Jabez and then Marjiam. »

« And can I not know them? »

« Not just now. You will know them one day. »

« Will You invite me to the wedding? »

« It will not be a feast for children. I will invite you to the wedding party. You will be one of the guests and a witness. All right? »

« How long will it be? In a month's time? »

« Oh! much longer! »

« In that case why did You work so hurriedly as to get blisters on Your hands? »

« I got them because I no longer work with My hands. See, My dear child, how painful idleness is? Always. When one resumes working one suffers twice as much because one becomes too

3-1428

delicate. Now, if it hurts one's hands so much, how much will it hurt one's soul? See? This evening I had to ask you to help Me, because My hands were so sore that I could not hold the rasp, whereas only two years ago I could work for fourteen hours without feeling any pain. The same happens to those whose fervour and will become loose. One becomes flaccid and feeble and grows weary of everything very easily, as the poisons of spiritual diseases affect those who are weak. On the other hand, it is twice as difficult to do good actions, which previously, when one was always in practice, cost no effort. Oh! It never pays to be idle saying: "After this period of time I will resume working with fresh energy"! One would never succeed, or would succeed with the greatest difficulty. »

« But You have never been idle! »

« No. I have done other work. But you can see that the idleness of My hands has been detrimental to them.. » And Jesus shows His hands which are red and blistered.

Marjiam kisses them saying: « My mother used to do that to me when I hurt myself, because love heals. »

« Yes, love heals many things... Well... Come, Simon. You will sleep in the carpenter's room. Come and I will show you where you can put your clothes and... » they go out and it all ends.

306. An Evening at Home in Nazareth.

19th October 1945.

The loom is idle because Mary and Syntyche are busy sewing the cloth brought by the Zealot. The material has been cut into pieces which have been folded and laid in an orderly pile on the table, shade by shade, and now and again the women take one piece and baste it on the table, so that the men have been pushed back towards the corner of the idle loom; they are close to the women but are not interested in their work.

The apostles James and Judas of Alphaeus are also there and are watching the busy women, without asking any questions, but not without curiosity, I think. The cousins speak of their brothers, and particularly of Simon, who has come with them as far as Jesus' door and then gone away « because his son is not well », says James, to mitigate the sad news and excuse his brother. But Judas is more severe and says: « That is why he should have come. But he also seems to have become dull-witted. Like all the Nazarenes, after all, if we except Alphaeus and the two disciples, about whose present whereabouts I wonder. It is clear that nothing else is good in Nazareth, and what was good has all been spat out, as if it tasted unpleasant to our town... »

« Do not say that » begs Jesus. « Do not poison your soul. It is no

fault of theirs... »

« Whose fault is it, then? »

« Of many things... Do not be inquisitive. Not everybody in Nazareth is hostile. Children... » « Because they are children. »

« Women... »

« Because they are women. But neither children nor women will assert Your Kingdom. »

« Why not, Judas? You are wrong. Today's children will be tomorrow's disciples and will propagate the Kingdom all over the world. And women... Why can they not do it? »

« You certainly cannot make apostles of women. At most they may be women disciples, who will assist disciples, as You said. »

« You will change your mind about many things in future, My dear brother. But I will not even attempt to make you change it. I would clash with a mentality which comes to you as the result of centuries of wrong conceptions and preconceptions concerning women. I only ask you to observe and make a note of the differences which you see between disciples and women disciples and to watch how they respond to My teaching. You will see, beginning with your mother, who we can say was the first disciple in order of time and of heroism, and still is, as she bravely makes headway against the whole town which sneers at her because she is faithful to Me, and she resists the voice of her own blood which spares her no reproach because she is faithful to Me, and you will see that women disciples are better than you disciples. »

« I admit that, it is true. But which women disciples are there in Nazareth? Alphaeus' daughters, the mothers of Ishmael and Aser and their sisters. And that is all. Too few. I would rather not come back to Nazareth not to see all that. »

« Poor mother! You would give her deep sorrow » says Mary intervening in the conversation.

« That's true » says James. « She hopes so much to reconcile our brothers to Jesus and to us. I don't think that she wishes anything else. But we shall certainly not do it by staying away. So far I have listened to you by remaining alone. But as from tomorrow I want to go out and approach people... Because if we are to evangelize even Gentiles, shall we not evangelize our own town? I refuse to believe that it is so wicked and cannot be changed. »

Judas Thaddeus does not reply but he is obviously annoyed.

Simon Zealot who has been silent all the time, intervenes: « I do not wish to insinuate a suspicion. But let me ask you a question to relieve your minds. My question is: are you sure that in the stiffness of Nazareth no alien powers are involved, which have come from outside and which work satisfactorily here on a factor which, if men reasoned according to justice, should be the best guarantee

that the Master is the Holy Man of God? The knowledge of the perfect life of Jesus, a citizen of Nazareth, should make it very easy for the Nazarenes to accept Him as the promised Messiah. I, and with me many of my age here in Nazareth, have known, more than you have, several alleged Messiahs, at least by repute. And I can assure you that their private lives discredited the most stubborn assertion of their Messianism. Rome persecuted them fiercely as rebels. But apart from their political ideas, which Rome could not allow where she rules, those false Messiahs deserved being punished for many private reasons. We stirred their blood and supported them because they helped to satisfy our spirit of rebellion against Rome. We countenanced them because, dull as we are, we thought - until the Master did not clarify the truth, and unfortunately, even so, we still do not believe as we ought to, that is completely - we thought that they were the promised "king". They lulled our dejected souls with hopes of national independence and reconstruction of the kingdom of Israel. But, oh! how miserable! What a fleeting and corrupt kingdom it would have been?! No, in actual fact to call those false Messiahs kings of Israel and founders of the promised Kingdom, was to deeply humiliate the Messianic idea. In the Master a holy life is joined to profound doctrine. And Nazareth is aware of that, as no other town is. Neither do I think of accusing Nazareth of misbelief in His supernatural birth, with which the Nazarenes are not acquainted. But His life!... Now, so much hatred, so much impenetrable resistance, nay, so much increased resistance... could it not originate from hostile manoeuvres? We know Jesus' enemies. We know what they are worth. Do you think that they have been inactive or absent only here, when they have preceded us, or marched side by side with us, or followed us everywhere to destroy the work of the Christ? Do not accuse Nazareth of being the only culprit. But weep for it, for it has been misled by Jesus' enemies. »

« What you have said, Simon, is very true. Weep for it... » says Jesus. And He is very sad.

John of Endor remarks: « You are quite right also in stating that a favourable factor changes into an unfavourable one, because the thoughts of man are seldom according to justice. The first obstacle here is the humble birth, the humble childhood, the humble boyhood, the humble youth of our Jesus. Man forgets that real values are concealed under modest appearances whereas nonentities are disguised as great people in order to impose themselves on the crowds. »

« It may be... But nothing will change my opinion of my fellow citizens. Whatever they have been told, they should have judged the Master by His real deeds and not by the words of unknown people. »

3-1431

There is a long silence, broken only by the noise of cloth being divided into strips by the Blessed Virgin to make borders. Syntyche has never spoken, but has been most attentive. Her attitude is always one of deep respect and reservedness, and it is not quite so rigid only with Mary and the boy. But the boy has fallen asleep sitting on a little stool at Syntyche's feet, with his head on his folded arm resting on her knees. She does not move and waits for Mary to hand her the strips.

« What an innocent sleep... He is smiling » remarks Mary bending over the sleeping child.

« I wonder what he is dreaming » says Simon smiling.

« He is a very intelligent boy. He learns quickly and he wants lucid explanations. He asks very shrewd questions and wants clear answers on everything. I admit that at times I am embarrassed in giving him an answer. Certain topics are above his age and sometimes they are above my capability to explain them » says John.

« Sure! Like that day... Do you remember, John? You had two vexing pupils that day! And very ignorant » says Syntyche smiling quietly and looking at the disciple with deep eyes.

John smiles too and says: « Yes. And you had a very poor teacher, who had to call the true Teacher to help him... because in none of the books which he had read, had that silly teacher found the answer to give to a child. Which proves that I am still an ignorant teacher. »

« Human science is still ignorance, John. The teacher was not inadequate, but what they had given him in order to be a teacher was not sufficient. Poor human science! How mutilated it looks to me! It makes me think of a deity which was honoured in Greece. Only pagan materialism could believe that the Greeks would possess the goddess of Victory for ever, because she was wingless! Not only they stripped Victory of her wings, but they deprived us of our freedom... It would have been better if she had had her wings, in our belief. We could have believed that she was capable of flying and stealing celestial thunderbolts to strike our enemies. But in the state she was she gave us no hope, but only dejection and sadness. I could not look at her without suffering... And she seemed to be suffering and looked humiliated by her mutilation. She looked a symbol of sorrow, not of joy... And she was. And man does to Science what he did to Victory. He cuts off its wings, which could achieve supernatural knowledge and thus give him the key to discover many secrets of knowledge and of creation. They believed and believe that they can keep it a prisoner by cutting off its wings... And have thus made it dull and deficient... Winged Science would be Wisdom. As it is, it is only partial understanding. »

« And did My Mother reply to you that day? »

3-1432

« Yes, She did, with perfect lucidity and chaste words, suitable to be heard by a boy and two adults of different sex, so that none of us had to blush. »

« What was it about? »

« The original sin, Master. I wrote Your Mother's explanation, so that I would remember it » says Syntyche, and John of Endor also says: « So did I. I think it will be one of the points we will be asked to clarify, if we go among the Gentiles one day. But I do not think I will be going because... »

« Why, John? »

« Because I will not live long. »

« But would you go willingly? »

« More than many people in Israel, because I am not biased. And also... Yes, also because I have set a bad example among the Gentiles at Cintium and in Anatolia. I would have liked to do some good where I did wrong. The good to be done: take Your word there and make You known... But it would have been too great an honour... I do not deserve it. »

Jesus looks at him smiling but does not say anything in that connection. He asks: « And have you no other questions to ask? »

« I have one. It occurred to me the other evening when You were talking to the boy about idleness. I endeavoured to find an answer, but I was not successful. I intended to wait until the Sabbath and ask You, when our hands are not active and our souls, in Your hands, are elevated to God » says Syntyche.

« You may ask Me now, while we are awaiting bedtime. »

« This is it, Master. You said that those who become slack in their spiritual work grow feeble and are predisposed to spiritual diseases. Is that right? »

« Yes, woman. »

« Now that appears to me to be in contrast with what I have heard from You and from Your Mother on original sin, its effects in us and the fact that we will be freed from it through You. You taught me that Redemption will cancel the original sin. I do not think that I am wrong if I say that it will not be cancelled in everybody, but only in those who believe in You. »

« Which is true. »

« So I will not take into account the others, but only one of those who have been saved. I will consider him after the effects of Redemption. His soul is no longer stained with original sin. He is therefore once again in the possession of Grace as our First Parents were. Does that, then, not give his soul a strength unassailable by any weakness? You will say: "Man commits personal sins also". I agree. But they will vanish as well through Your Redemption. I will not ask You how. But I suppose that You will leave some means, some symbols... as evidence that Your Redemption has actually

3-1433

taken place; and I do not know how it will happen, although what is referred to You in the Holy Book makes one shudder, and I hope that it will be a symbolical suffering, confined to the morale, although moral grief is not a false impression and is perhaps more dreadful than physical pain. You will leave some means, some symbols. Every religion has them, and at times they are called mysteries... The baptism, at present in force in Israel, is one, is it not? »

« It is. Also in My Religion there will be signs of My Redemption to be applied to souls to purify, strengthen, enlighten, support, nourish and absolve them, but with a different name from the one mentioned by you. »

« So? If they are absolved also of personal sins, they will always be in grace... So how can they be weak and predisposed to spiritual diseases? »

« I will make a comparison for you. Let us take a new born baby, who is healthy and strong and was born of very healthy parents. He has no physical hereditary taint. His body is perfect both with regard to its skeleton and its organs and his blood is wholesome. He has therefore all the necessary requisites to grow strong and sound, also because his mother has plenty nourishing milk. But in the early days of his life he suffered from a very serious disease, of unknown origin. It was a real deadly disease. He recovers with difficulty by the mercy of God, Who keeps him alive when life was on the point of departing from his little body. Well, do you think that later that boy will be as strong as if he never had had that disease? No, he will suffer from an everlasting state of debility. Even if it is not evident, it will still be there and he will be predisposed to diseases with greater ease than if he had never been ill. Some organ of his will not be as wholesome as previously. And his blood will not be quite so strong and pure as previously. And thus he will catch illnesses more easily. And such illnesses, every time he contracts them, will make him more exposed to be taken ill. The same applies in the spiritual field. The Original sin will be cancelled in those who believe in Me. But their souls will still have an inclination to sin, which they would not have had, had there been no Original sin. It is therefore necessary to continuously watch and take care of one's soul, as a solicitous mother does with her little son, who has been left weak by an infantile disease. So you must not be idle, but always active to grow stronger in virtue. If one falls into sluggishness or tepidity, one will be more easily seduced by Satan. And each grave sin, which is like a serious relapse, will always predispose one to diseases and spiritual death. But if Grace, restored by Redemption, is assisted by an active indefatigable will, it will remain. Nay, it will increase, because it will be associated with the virtue achieved by man. Holiness and Grace! Which safe wings to fly to God! Have you understood? »

3-1434

« Yes, my Lord. You, that is the Most Holy Trinity, give the basic Means to man. Man with his work and care must not destroy it. I understand. Every grave sin destroys Grace, that is, the health of the spirit. The signs which You will leave us, will give health back, that is true. But an obstinate sinner, who does not struggle to avoid sin, will become weaker each time, even if he is forgiven each time. One must therefore be vigilant in order not to perish. Thank You, Master... Marjiam is waking up. It's late... ».

« Yes. Let us pray all together and then we will go to rest. »

Jesus stands up, imitated by everybody, also by the boy still half asleep. And the « Our Father » resounds loud and harmonious in the little room.

307. Jesus and the Wife of His Cousin Simon.

20th October 1945.

Jesus with Simon Zealot and Marjiam goes through Nazareth towards the country stretching towards Cana. And He crosses His sceptical hostile town, along the more central streets, and cuts diagonally across the market square, crowded in the early morning. Many turn to look at Him; very few citizens greet Him, women, particularly elderly ones, smile at Him, but with the exception of few children, no one comes to Him. People whisper after He has gone by. Jesus certainly sees everything, but pretends He does not. He speaks to Simon or to the boy, who is between them, and proceeds on His way.

They are now at the last houses. A woman, about forty years old, is on the door step of one of them. She seems to be waiting for someone. When she sees Jesus, she makes the gesture of moving, then she stops and lowers her head blushing.

« She is a relative of Mine. She is the wife of Simon of Alphaeus » says Jesus to the apostle.

The woman seems to be on tenterhooks, overwhelmed by clashing sentiments. She changes colour, raises and lowers her head, and her face expresses a keen desire to speak, which is restrained by some reason.

« Peace to you, Salome » greets Jesus when He arrives near her.

The woman looks at Him as if she were surprised at the kindness in the voice of her Relative and she replies, blushing even more: « Peace to... » A lump in her throat prevents her from ending the sentence. She hides her face in her folded arm and weeps desolately, leaning against the doorpost.

« Why are you weeping thus, Salome? Is there anything I can do to console you? Come here, round the corner, and tell Me what the matter is... » and He takes her by the elbow and leads her into a little lane between her house and her neighbour's kitchen garden.

Simon stays at the entrance of the lane with Marjiam who is utterly astonished. « What is the matter, Salome? You know that I have always loved you. I have always loved you all. And I still love you. You must believe that and trust Me... »

She stops weeping now and again, as if she wanted to listen to those words and understand their true meaning, then she resumes weeping more loudly, uttering disconnected words: « Yes, You... We But not I... Not even Simon... But he is more foolish than I am I said: "Call Jesus"... But the whole village is against us... against You me... and my boy... » When she touches the tragical point, her weeping becomes tragical, too. She writhes and moans striking her face as if she were mad with grief.

Jesus grasps her hands saying: « Don't do that. I am here to comfort you. Speak, and I will do everything... »

The woman looks at Him with eyes wide open with astonishment and grief. But hope gives her energy to speak and to speak in an orderly way: « Will You have mercy on me, even if Simon is guilty? Will You?... Oh! Jesus... You save everybody! My boy! Alphaeus, the last one, is ill... he is dying!... You loved Alphaeus. You used to carve toys in wood for him... You lifted him up that he might pick the grapes and figs of Your trees... and before You left... to travel about, You used to teach him so many good things... Now You would not be able... He is as good as dead... He will never eat grapes or figs again. He will never learn anything... » and she weeps her heart out.

« Salome, be good. Tell Me, what is the matter with him? »

« He is seriously ill with stomach trouble. He has been shouting, suffering terribly and delirious for days. Now he does not speak any more. He is like one whose head has been struck. He moans but does not answer. He can hardly moan. He is deathly pale and his body is getting cold. For days I have begged Simon to come to You. But... Oh! I have always loved him, but now I hate him because he is a fool and for a foolish idea he is allowing my son to die. But, if he dies, I will go away. I will go back to my house. With the other children. He is not capable of being a father at the right moment. And I am defending my children. I will go away. Yes, I will. People can say what they like. But I am going away. »

« Do not say that. Give up your idea of revenge. »

« Of justice. I rebel against them all. See? I had to wait for You, because none of them would say to You: "Come". But I do. And I had to do it as if it were something wrong. And I cannot say to You: "Come in", because Joseph's relatives are in the house and... »

« It is not necessary. Can you promise Me that you will forgive Simon? That you will always be a good wife to him? If you promise Me, I will say to you: "Go home, your son is cured and will smile at You" - Can you believe that? »

3-1436

« I believe in You. Against the whole world, I do believe in You. »

« And can you forgive as you believe? »

« ... But... will You really cure him? »

« Not only I will. But I promise you that Simon will cease doubting about Me, and little Alphaeus, your other children, you and your husband will all come back to My house. Mary speaks of you so often... »

« Oh! Mary! Mary! She was there when Alphaeus was born... Yes, Jesus. I will forgive. I will not say anything to him... No. I will say to him: "This is how Jesus replies to your behaviour: giving your son back to you". I can say that! »

« Yes, you can... Go, Salome. Go. Weep no more. Goodbye. Peace to you, good Salome. Go now. » He takes her back to the door, He watches her go in, He smiles seeing that in her anxiety she runs along the vestibule without even closing the door, and He sets it ajar, slowly, and closes it.

He then turns to His two companions and says: « And now let us go where we had to go... »

« Do You think that Simon will turn? » asks the Zealot.

« He is not an infidel. He only allows stronger people to dominate him. »

« Well, then! Stronger than a miracle! »

« You can see that you have replied by yourself... I am glad I saved the child. I saw him when he was only a few hours old, and he has always been very fond of Me... »

« As I am? And will he become a disciple? » asks Marjiam keenly and he looks rather sceptical that anyone can love Jesus as he does.

« You love Me as a boy and as a disciple. Alphaeus loved Me only as a boy. But later he will love Me also as a disciple. But for the time being he is only a little boy. He will soon be eight years old. You will meet him. »

« So I am the only boy and disciple? »

« You are, at present. You are the head of the boy disciples. When you are a man remember that you were as good a disciple as men, and so open your arms to all the children who will come to you seeking Me and will say: "I want to be a disciple of Christ". Will you do that? »

« I will » Marjiam promises gravely...

They are now in the open sunny country and they move away from me in the bright sunshine...

308. Simon Goes Back to Jesus.

21st October 1945.

They are made welcome in a poor house where there is a little grandmother surrounded by a little group of children, from ten

down to about two years old. The house is situated in the middle of fields, rather neglected, many of which are meadows with a few surviving fruit-trees.

« Peace to you, Johanna. Are things better today? Did they come and help you? »

« Yes, Master and Jesus. And they told me that they will come back to sow. It will be late, but they tell me that it will grow. »

« Of course, it will. What would be a miracle of the earth and of seed, will become a miracle of God. So a perfect miracle. Your fields will be the best in this area, and these little birds which are around you will have plenty corn for their mouths. Do not weep any more. Next year the situation will improve very much. But I will still help you. Or better: a good lady whose name is the same as yours, and who is never sated with doing good, will help you. Look: this is for you. It will enable you to make both ends meet until harvest-time. »

The old woman takes the purse and Jesus' hand at the same time and weeping kisses the latter. She then asks: « Tell me who this good lady is, that I may mention her name to the Lord. »

« A disciple of Mine and a sister of yours. Her name is known to Me and to the Father in Heaven. »

« Oh! It's You!... »

« I am poor, Johanna. I give what people give Me. Of My own I have but miracles. And I am sorry that I did not hear of your misfortune before. I came as soon as Susanna told Me. Too late now. But the work of God will shine brighter thus. »

« Late! Yes, it is late! Death was so quick in mowing here! And it took the young ones. Not me, now useless. Not these: immature ones. But those fit to work. Cursed be the moon of Elul, laden with evil influence! »

« Do not curse the planet. It has nothing to do with it... Are these little ones good? Come here. See? Also this boy has no father or mother. And he cannot even live with his grandfather. But God does not abandon him. And will not abandon him as long as he is good. Is that right, Marjiam? »

Marjiam nods assent and speaks to the little ones who have gathered round him, they are younger than he is, but some of them are a good bit taller. He says: « Oh! It is true that God does not abandon one. I can say so. My grandfather prayed for me. And Your father and mother certainly prayed for you in the next world. And God heard those prayers, because He is Very Good, and He always hears the prayers of just people, whether they are living or dead. Your deceased parents and your dear granny here have certainly prayed for you. Do you love her? »

« Yes, yes... » the peeping of the orphan swarm rises enthusiastically.

3-1438

Jesus becomes silent in order to listen to the conversation of His little disciple and the orphans.

« That's right. We must not make old people weep. In actual fact we must not make anybody weep, because those who grieve their neighbour, grieve God. But old people! The Master is kind to everybody. But He is more than kind and loving with old people and children. Because children are innocent and old people suffer. They have already wept so much! We must love them twice, three times, ten times, for those who no longer love them. Jesus always says that he who does not honour an old person is doubly-wicked, like he who ill-treats a child. Because old people and children cannot defend themselves. So be good to your old mother. »

« Sometimes I do not help her... » says one of the bigger ones.

« Why? After all you eat the bread which she procures for you with her work! Does it not taste of tears when you upset her? And you, woman, (the woman is ten years old at most and she is a very thin pale girl) do you help her? »

The little brothers reply all together: « Oh! Rachel is good! She stays up until late to spin the little wool we have and she became feverish working in the field to prepare it to be sown when our father was dying. »

« God will reward you for that » says Marjiam gravely.

« He has already rewarded me by relieving my granny of her worry. »

Jesus intervenes: « Do you not want anything else? »

« No, Lord. »

« But are you cured? »

« No, Lord. But it does not matter. Even if I die now, my grandmother is assisted. Previously I was sorry to die because I helped her. »

« But death is dreadful, child... »

« As God helps me in life, He will help me in death and I will go to my mother... Oh! don't weep, grandmother! I love you, too, dear grandmother. I will not say that again if it makes you weep. Nay, if you wish so, I will ask the Lord to cure me... Don't weep, my little mother... » and she embraces the desolate old woman.

« Cure her, Lord. You made my grandfather happy because of me. Make this old woman happy now. »

« Graces are obtained through sacrifices. What sacrifice will you make to obtain it? » asks Jesus seriously.

Marjiam thinks... He seeks the most painful thing to give up... and then he smiles: « I will have no more honey for a whole month. »

« That is not much! The month of Chislev is already far gone... »

« When I say a month I mean the four phases of the moon. And just think... during these days there is the Feast of Lights and honey cakes... »

3-1439

« That is true. Well, Rachel will recover, thanks to you. Now let us go. Goodbye, Johanna. I will come back before I go away. Goodbye, Rachel, goodbye, Toby. Be good. Goodbye, you little ones. May My blessing rest upon you all, and My peace be with you. »

They go out followed by the blessing of the old woman and the children.

Marjiam, after being « apostle and victim » begins to jump like a little kid and runs ahead.

Simon remarks with a smile: « His first sermon and his first sacrifice. He is a promising boy, don't You think so, Master? »

« Yes, I do. But he has preached before. Also to Judas of Simon... »

« ... and the Lord seems to make children speak to him... Probably to avoid revenge by him... »

« Not revenge... I do not think he would go so far. But strong reactions, yes... He who deserves being reproached, does not love the truth... But it must be spoken... » says Jesus with a sigh.

Simon watches Him, then he asks: « Master, tell me the truth. You have sent him away, and You decided to send everybody home for the Dedication, to prevent Judas from being in Galilee just now. I will not ask You and I do not want You to tell me why it is better that the man from Kerioth should not be with us. I only wish to know whether I have guessed right. We all think so, You know? Even Thomas. He said to me: "I will go without reacting because I realise that there is a serious reason behind it". And he added: "The Master is right in doing what He does. There are too many Nahums, Sadocs, Johanans and Eleazars among Judas' friends... " Thomas is not stupid!... And he is not bad, although he is very much a man. He is very sincere in his love for You... »

« I know. And what you all suspected is true. You will soon learn the reason... »

« We are not asking You to tell us. »

« But I will have to ask you to help Me and I must tell you. »

Marjiam runs back and says: « Master over there, at the junction of the path with the main road, there is Your cousin Simon; he is all of a sweat like one who has been running. He asked me: "Where is Jesus?". I replied: "He is here, behind me, with Simon Zealot". He said to me: "Will He be passing here?". "Of course" I replied. "He will pass here to go back home, unless He does what birds do: they fly from all directions to go back to their nests. Do you want Him?" I asked him. He remained uncertain. And yet I am sure that he wants You. »

« Master, he has already seen his wife... Let us do this. Marjiam and I will leave You free. We will go round the back of Nazareth. In any case... we are not in a hurry. And You will go along the main road. »

« Yes, thank you, Simon. I will see you later. »

3-1440

They part and Jesus quickens His step towards the main road. There is Simon, leaning against a trunk, panting and drying his perspiration. As soon as he sees Jesus, he raises his arms... he then drops them and lowers his head dejectedly.

When Jesus arrives near him, He lays a hand on his shoulder asking: « What do you want, Simon? To make Me happy with a word of love, which I have been awaiting for many days? »

Simon lowers his head even more and is silent...

« Speak, then. Am I perhaps a stranger to you? No, you really are always My good brother Simon, and I am your little Jesus, Whom you used to carry in your arms, with some difficulty, but with so much love, when we came back to Nazareth. »

The man covers his face with both hands and falls on his knees: « Oh! My Jesus! I am the guilty one, but I have been punished enough... »

« Come on, stand up! We are relatives. What is it that you want? »

« My boy! He is... » a lump in his throat prevents him from speaking.

« Your boy? What about him? »

« He is dying. And Salome's love is dying with him... and I am left with double remorse: I am losing son and wife at the same time... Last night I thought that he was really dead and she looked like a hyena. She shouted at me: "Murderer of your son!". I prayed that that might not happen, and I swore to myself that I would come to You, if the boy recovered a little, also at the cost of being driven away - as I actually deserve - to tell You that You are the only one who can avert my calamity. At dawn the boy recovered a little... I ran from my house to Yours, round the back of the town, to avoid any possible hindrance... I knocked at the door. Mary opened and was amazed. She could have ill-treated me. But she only said: "What is the matter with you, poor Simon?". And She caressed me as if I were a child... And that made me weep. And my pride and hesitancy ceased thus. What Judas told us cannot be true, I mean Judas Your apostle, not my brother. I did not say that to Mary, but I say it to myself, beating my chest, and casting contumelies on myself ever since. I asked Her: "Is Jesus in? It's for Alphaeus. He is dying... Mary replied: "Run! He has gone towards Cana with the boy and an apostle. He is on the Cana road. But you must be quick. He went out at dawn. He is about to come back. I will pray that you may find Him". Not one word of reproach, not even one, although I deserve so many! »

« Neither will I reproach you. But I open My arms to you to... »

« Alas! To tell me that Alphaeus is dead!... »

« No. To tell you that I love you. »

« Come, then! Quick! »

« No. It is not necessary. »

3-1441

« Are You not coming? Ah! Are You not forgiving me? Or is Alphaeus dead? But even if he is, Jesus, since You raise the dead, give me back my son! Oh! Good Jesus!... Holy Jesus! Whom I abandoned!... Jesus... Jesus... » The solitary road is filled with the tears of the man, who, kneeling down, fingers Jesus' mantle convulsively, or kisses His feet, tortured by sorrow, remorse and paternal love...

« Did you not go home before coming here? »

« No. I ran here like a madman... Why? Is there more trouble? Has Salome already run away? Has she become mad? She seemed mad last night... »

« Salome has spoken to Me. She wept, she believed. Go home, Simon. Your son is cured. »

« You!... You!... You have done that, for me who offended You by believing that snake? Oh! Lord! I do not deserve so much! Forgive me! Tell me what You want me to do to make amends, to let You know that I love You, to convince You that I suffered in being stand-offish, to tell You that I wanted to speak to You, since You have been here, even before Alphaeus was so ill!... But... but... »

« Never mind. It is all over. I have forgotten about it. Do the same yourself. And forget also the words of Judas of Kerioth. He is a boy. All I want from you is this: that you will never repeat those words to My disciples, to My apostles, and least of all, to My Mother. That is all. Now go home, Simon. Go and be in peace... Do not delay in taking part in the joy which has filled your house. Go. » He kisses him and gently pushes him towards Nazareth.

« Are You not coming with me? »

« I will wait for you with Salome and Alphaeus in My house. Go. And remember that the present joy comes to you, thanks to your wife, who believed the truth. »

« Do You mean that I... »

« No. I mean that I have understood that you have repented. And you repented because of her cry accusing you... God really shouts through the mouths of good people, reproaching and advising!... And I saw the firm humble faith of Salome. Go, I tell you. Do not wait any longer to thank her. »

And Jesus almost pushes him roughly to persuade him to go. And when Simon finally goes away, He blesses him... and then shakes His head in mute soliloquy and tears slowly run down His pale cheeks... One word only hints at the trend of His thought: « Judas! »...

He sets out along the same road taken by the Zealot, behind the boundary of the village, towards His house.

3-1442

309. Simon Peter at Nazareth.

22nd October 1945.

It is late in the morning when Peter, all alone and unexpected, arrives at the house in Nazareth. He is laden like a porter with baskets and little sacks. But he is so happy that he feels neither weight nor fatigue.

He smiles blissfully at Mary, Who goes to open the door, and He greets Her with joy and veneration at the same time. He then asks: « Where are the Master and Marjiam? »

« They are on the embankment, above the grotto, but towards Alphaeus' house. I think that Marjiam is picking olives and Jesus is certainly meditating. I will call them. »

« I will see to that. »

« Leave all your bundles first. »

« No. They are a surprise for the boy. I like to see him open his eyes wide and rummage eagerly... It makes him so happy, poor boy. »

He goes out into the kitchen garden, he goes under the embankment, he hides in the cavity of the grotto, and he then shouts, altering his voice a little: « Peace to You, Master », and then in his natural voice: « Marjiam!... »

Marjiam's shrill voice, which filled the peaceful air with exclamations, becomes quiet... There is a pause, then the almost girlish voice of the boy asks: « Master, but was that not my father calling me? »

Jesus was perhaps so engrossed in thought that He did not hear anything, and He openly admits it.

Peter calls once again: « Marjiam! » and he laughs his usual hearty laugh.

« Oh! it is him! Father! Father! Where are you? » He leans out to look in the kitchen garden, but does not see anything...

Jesus also comes forward and looks... He sees Mary Who is smiling on the doorstep and John and Syntyche who are also smiling from the room at the end of the kitchen garden near the stone-oven.

But Marjiam comes to a decision: he jumps from the embankment, just near the grotto, and Peter is ready to catch him before he touches the ground. It is touching to see how they greet each other. Jesus, Mary and the two disciples at the end of the kitchen garden watch them, smiling, and then they all gather round the little fond group.

Peter frees himself, as best he can, from the grip of the boy to bow to Jesus and greet Him once again. Jesus embraces him with the boy, who is still clinging to the apostle and asks: « And mother? »

But Peter replies to Jesus Who asks him: « Why did you come so soon? »

3-1443

« Did You think I could stay away so long without seeing You? And then... Eh! then there is Porphirea who did not leave Me in peace: "Go and see Marjiam. Take him this. Take him that". She seemed to think that Marjiam was among highwaymen or in a desert. The other night she got up just to make honey cakes and as soon as they were baked, she sent me off... »

« Ah! honey cakes!... » shouts Marjiam. Then he becomes silent.

« Yes. They are in here with figs dried in the oven, olives and red apples. And she baked an olive oil loaf for you. And she sent you some cheese made with the milk of your sheep. And there is also a water resistant tunic. And then, and then... I don't know what else there is. What? Are you no longer in a hurry? Are you weeping? Oh! Why? »

« Because I would have preferred you to bring her here, instead of all these things... I am very fond of her, you know? »

« Oh! Divine Mercy! Who would have thought that?! If she were here listening to you, she would melt like butter... »

« Marjiam is right. You could have come with her. She certainly wishes to see him after such a long time. We women are just like that with our children... » says Mary.

« Well... But she will see him before long, won't she, Master? »

« Yes, after the Dedication, when we go away... No... When you come back, after the Dedication, you will come with her. She will stay here with him for a few days, and then they will go back to Bethsaida together. »

« Oh! How lovely! I will be here with two mothers! » The boy is cheerful once again and happy.

They all go into the house and Peter relieves himself of his bundles.

« Here is some dried, pickled and fresh fish. It will be useful to Your Mother. And here is some of that cream cheese, which You like so much, Master. And here are some eggs for John. I hope they are not broken... No. Good. And some grapes. I got them from Susanna at Cana, where I slept. Then... Ah! Look at this Marjiam! Look how clear it is. It seems to be made with Mary's hair »... And he opens a jar of treacly honey.

« Why so much stuff? You have gone to a lot of trouble, Simon » says Mary looking at the bundles, parcels, vases and jars on the table.

« Trouble? No. I had a good haul and I made a good profit. That, as far as the fish is concerned. With regard to the rest: it is all home made. It costs nothing but gives so much joy to bring it. In any case... We are now at the Dedication... That is the custom. Isn't it? Are you not tasting the honey? »

« I cannot » says Marjiam seriously.

« Why? Are you not well? »

3-1444

« No. But I cannot take it. »

« But why? »

The boy blushes but does not reply. He looks at Jesus and is silent. Jesus smiles and explains: « Marjiam made a vow to obtain a grace. He cannot eat honey for four weeks. »

« All right. You will eat it after... Take the jar just the same... Just imagine! I didn't think he was... so... »

« So generous, Simon. He who becomes accustomed to penance from his childhood, will find the path of virtue easy throughout life » says Jesus, while the boy goes away with the jar in his hands.

Peter watches him go and is amazed. He then asks: « Is the Zealot not in? »

« He has gone to Mary of Alphaeus. But he will soon be back. You will be sleeping together tonight. Come into the next room, Simon Peter. »

They go out while Mary and Syntyche tidy up the room invaded by bundles.

« Master... I have come to see You and the boy. That is true. But also because I have been thinking a lot these days, particularly after the arrival of three poisonous hornets... whom I told more lies than there are fish in the sea. They are now going to Gethsemane as they think that John of Endor is there and then they will be going to Lazarus, hoping to find Syntyche and You there. Let them walk!... But they will come back and... Master, they want to cause You trouble because of those two wretched people... »

« I made all the necessary arrangements months ago. When they come back looking for these two persecuted people, they will not find them anywhere in Palestine. See these chests? I made them for John and Syntyche. Did you notice all those folded garments near the loom? They are for them. Are you surprised? »

« Yes, Master. Where are You sending them? »

« To Antioch. »

Peter whistles meaningfully and then asks: « To whom? And how will they go there? »

« To a house belonging to Lazarus. The last one Lazarus has where his father governed in the name of Rome. And they will go by sea... »

« Ah! I see! Because if John had to go there on foot... »

« By sea. I am glad I can speak to you about it. I was going to send Simon to say to you: "Come", to prepare everything. Listen. Two or three days after the Feast of the Dedication we will leave from here few at a time, in order not to attract anybody's attention. The group will be formed by Me, you, your brother, James and John, My two cousins, John and Syntyche. We will go to Ptolemais! From there you will take them by boat to Tyre. There you will board a ship sailing to Antioch, as if you were proselytes going back home.

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You will then come back and you will find Me at Achzib. I will be on the mountain top every day. In any case the Spirit will guide you... »

« What? Are You not coming with us? »

« I would be noted too much. I want to give peace to John's soul. »

« And what will I do since I have never been away from here? »

« You are not a child... and soon you will have to go much farther than Antioch. I trust you. You can see that I esteem you very much... »

« And what about Philip and Bartholomew? »

« They will come and meet us at Jotopata and will evangelize while waiting for us. I will write to them and you will take the letter. »

« And... those two over there, do they already know their destiny? »

« No. I want them to celebrate the Feast in peace... »

« H'm. Poor people... Fancy that! People are persecuted by criminals and... »

« Do not foul your mouth, Simon. »

« No, Master... Listen... How will we carry these chests? And John? He looks seriously ill to me. »

« We will take a donkey. »

« No. We will take a cart. »

« And who will drive it? »

« Eh! If Judas of Simon learned to row, Simon of Jonah will learn to drive a cart. It should not be difficult to lead a donkey by the bridle. We will put the chests and those two in the cart... and we will go on foot. Yes, it is better to do that, believe me. »

« And who will give us the cart? Remember that I do not want our departure to be noted. »

Peter thinks... He makes up his mind: « Have You any money? »

« Yes. Still quite a lot of the money we got for Misace's jewels. »

« In that case it is easy. Give me a sum. I will get a donkey and cart from someone and... yes... we will make a present of the donkey to some poor wretch and the cart... we will see... I am glad I came. And must I really come back with my wife? »

« Yes. It is better. »

« Good. But those two poor wretches! I am sorry that we shall no longer have John with us. True, we would not have had him for long... But, poor man! He might have died here, like Jonah... »

« They would not have allowed him. The world hates those who redeem themselves. »

« He will feel humiliated... »

« I will find a reason to make him leave with- a relieved mind. »

« Which reason? »

« The same as I used to send away Judas of Simon: to work for

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Me. »

« Ah!... The difference is that in John it will be holiness, whereas in Judas it is only pride. »

« Simon, do not backbite. »

« That is more difficult than to make a fish sing! It is the truth, Master, it is not backbiting... But I think that Simon has come with Your brothers. Let us go... »

« Let us go. Not a word to anybody. »

« Are You telling me? I cannot omit mentioning the truth when I speak, but I can be silent, if I want. And I do want! I swore it to myself. Imagine me going to Antioch! To the ends of the earth! Oh! I wish I were already back! I shall sleep no more until it is all over... »

They go out and I see no more.

310. Jesus Speaks about the Holy Economy of Universal Love.

23rd October 1945.

I do not know whether it is the same day, but I suppose it is, because Peter is sitting at the family table in Nazareth. The meal is almost over and Syntyche gets up to put on the table some apples, nuts, grapes and almonds which end the supper, because it is evening and lamps have already been lit.

They are talking about lamps when Syntyche brings the fruit. Peter says: « This year we will light an extra lamp, and then more and more, for you, son. Because we want to light it for you, even if you are here. It is the first time we light one for a boy... » and Simon is moved when he ends: « It would certainly be lovelier, if you were there... »

« Last year, Simon, it was I who sighed for My Son far away, and with Me, Mary of Alphaeus, Salome and also Mary of Simon in her house at Kerioth, and Thomas' mother... »

« Oh! Judas' mother! Her son will be with her this year... but I do not think she will be happier... Never mind... We were at Lazarus'. How many lights!... It looked like a sky of gold and fire. Lazarus has his sister this year... But I am sure of speaking the truth when I say that they will be sighing because You are not there. And where will we be next year? »

« I will be very far away... » whispers John.

Peter turns round to look at him, as he is sitting beside John, and he is on the point of asking something, but fortunately he controls himself, because of a meaningful look of Jesus.

Marjiam asks: « Where will you be? »

« By the mercy of the Lord I hope to be in Abraham's bosom... »

« Oh! do you want to die? Do you not want to evangelize? Are you

not sorry to die before evangelizing? »

« The word of the Lord is to be announced by holy lips. It is a great favour if He allowed me to hear it and redeem myself through it. I would have liked... But it is late... »

« And yet you will evangelize. You have already done so. So much so that you have attracted people's attention. You will therefore be called just the same an evangelizing disciple, even if you do not travel about preaching the Gospel; and in the next life you will receive the prize reserved for My evangelizers. »

« Your promise makes me desire death... Every minute in life may conceal a snare, and weak as I am, I may not be able to overcome it. If God receives me, being satisfied with what I have done, is that not great bounty, which I must bless? »

« I solemnly tell you that death will be supreme bounty for many, who will thus know to what extent man raves, from a place where peace will comfort them for such knowledge, and will change it into hosanna because it will be linked to the unutterable joy of liberation from Limbo. »

« And where shall we be in future years, Lord? » asks Simon Zealot who has been listening diligently.

« Where it will please the Eternal Father. Do you want to engage the remote future, when we are not certain of the moment in which we live and whether we will be granted to end it? In any case, whatever the place where the future Dedications will be celebrated, it will always be a holy one provided you are there to fulfil the will of God. »

« Provided we are? And what about You? » asks Peter.

« I will always be where My beloved ones are. »

Mary has never spoken, but Her eyes have not ceased for one moment to scan the face of Her Son...

She is roused by Marjiam's remark who says: « Mother, why have You not put the honey cakes on the table? Jesus likes them and they are good for John's throat. And my father likes them, too... »

« And you, too » concludes Peter.

« As far as I am concerned... they do not exist. I promised... »

« That is why I did not put them on the table, My dear... » says Mary caressing him, because Marjiam is between Her and Syntyche, on one side of the table, while the four men are on the opposite side.

« No, no. You can bring them. Nay: You must bring them. And I will hand them out to everybody. »

Syntyche takes a lamp, goes out and comes back with the cakes. Marjiam takes the tray and begins to hand them out. He gives Jesus the most beautiful one, golden and raised like one made by a master confectioner. The next one in perfection is for Mary. Then it

is the turn of Peter, Simon and Syntyche. But in order to serve John, the boy gets up and goes beside the old sick teacher and says to him: « I am giving you yours and mine, with a kiss, to thank you for what you teach me. » He then goes back to his place, lays the tray in the middle of the table resolutely and folds his arms.

« You make this delicious cake go the wrong way » says Peter, when he sees that Marjiam does not take any. And he adds: « At least a little bit. Here, take some of mine, so that you will not die to have some. You are suffering too much... Jesus will let you have it. »

« But if I did not suffer, I would have no merit, father. I offered this sacrifice exactly because I knew that it would make me suffer. After all... I have been so happy since I made it, that I seem to be full of honey. I taste it in everything, and I even seem to breathe it in the air... »

« That's because you are dying to have some... »

« No. It's because I know that God says to me: "You are doing the right thing, My son". »

« The Master would have satisfied you, even without this sacrifice. He loves you so much! »

« Yes. But it is not fair that I should take advantage of it, just because He loves me. In any case, He says that great is the reward in Heaven even for a cup of water offered in His name. I think that if it is great for a cup of water given to other people in His name, it must be great also for a cake or a little honey which one gives up out of love for a brother. Am I wrong, Master? »

« No, you have spoken wisely. In fact, I could have granted you what you asked for in favour of little Rachel, also without your sacrifice, because it was a good thing to do and My Heart desired it. But I did it with greater joy because I was helped by you. The love for our brothers is not confined to human means and limits, but it rises to much higher levels. When it is perfect, it really touches the throne of God and blends with His infinite Charity and Bounty. The communion of saints is just this continuous activity, as God works continuously and in every way, to assist our brothers both in their material and spiritual needs, or in both, as it is in the case of Marjiam, who relieves Rachel of her illness, by obtaining her cure, and at the same time he relieves the dejected spirit of old Johanna and kindles greater and greater trust in the Lord in all the hearts in the family. Even a spoonful of honey, offered as a sacrifice, can help to bring peace and hope to an afflicted soul, as a cake or any other food given up out of love, may obtain some bread, offered miraculously, for some starving person, who is remote from us and will never be known to us; and an angry word, not uttered out of spirit of sacrifice, although justified, may prevent a remote crime, as to resist the desire to pick a fruit, out of love,

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may bring about a thought of resipiscence in a thief and thwart a theft. Nothing is lost in the holy economy of universal love: neither the heroic sacrifice of a boy before a dish of honey cakes, nor the holocaust of a martyr. Nay, I tell you that the holocaust of a martyr often originates from the heroic upbreeding imparted to him since his childhood for the love of God and his neighbour. »

« So it is really a good thing that I should always make sacrifices. For the time when we will be persecuted » says Marjiam earnestly.

« Persecuted? » asks Peter.

« Yes. Don't you remember that He said so? "You will be persecuted in My name". You told me, the first time you came all alone to Bethsaida, in summer, to evangelize. »

« This boy remembers everything » comments Peter admiring him.

The supper is over. Jesus stands up. He prays for everybody and blesses them. And while the women go to tidy up the kitchen, Jesus and the men take seats in a corner of the room, where He begins to carve a piece of wood, which under the amazed eyes of Marjiam, takes the shape of a little sheep...

311. John of Endor Will Have to Go to Antioch. End of the Second Year.

24th October 1945.

It is a wet winter morning. Jesus is already up and is busy in His workshop. He is making small items. But in a corner there is a new loom, not a very big one, but well-shaped and polished.

Mary comes in with a cup of steaming hot milk. « Drink this, Jesus. You have been up so long. And it is damp and cold... »

« Yes, but at least I have been able to finish everything... The eight feast days had paralysed My work... » Jesus has sat down on the carpenter's bench, a little sideways, and drinks the milk while Mary looks at the loom and rubs Her hand on it caressingly.

« Are You blessing it, Mother? » asks Jesus smiling.

« No, I am caressing it because You made it. You blessed it by making it. It was a good idea to make it. It will be very useful to Syntyche. She is a very skilful weaver. It will help her to approach women and girls. What else have You made, I see thin shavings, of olive, I think, near the lathe? »

« I have made useful things for John. See? A stylus case and a writing board. And these desks in which he can keep his rolls. I could not have made all these things if Simon of Jonah had not thought of getting a cart. But now we can load these as well... and also through these little things they will feel that I love them... »

« You suffer in sending them away, do You not? »

« I do... For Myself and for them... I have waited up to the present moment to tell them and it is strange that Simon has not yet arrived with Porphirea I must tell them now... I have had this pain in My heart all these days and even the light of the many lamps looked sad to Me... A suffering which I must now communicate to others... Ah! Mother, I would have liked to have kept all to Myself »

« My good Son! » Mary caresses His hand to comfort Him.

There is silence... Then Jesus resumes speaking: « Is John up? »

« Yes. I heard him cough. He is perhaps in the kitchen taking his milk. Poor John!... » tears stream down Mary's cheeks.

Jesus stands up: « I am going... I must go and tell him. It will be easier with Syntyche... But with him... Mother, go to Marjiam, wake him up and pray while I speak to that man... I feel as if I had to rummage in his bowels. I may kill or paralyse his spiritual vitality... How painful, Father!... I am going... » and He is really depressed when He goes out.

He walks the few steps which separate Him from John's room, which is the same one where Jonah died, that is, Joseph's room. He meets Syntyche, who is coming in with a faggot from the stone oven and who greets Him, completely unaware of the situation. Although engrossed in thought He replies to the Greek woman's salutation and stops to look at a bed of lilies which are beginning to show a tiny tuft of leaves. But I am not sure that He really sees them... He then makes up His mind. He turns round and knocks at John's door, who opens and whose face brightens on seeing Jesus coming to him.

« May I come in for a moment? » asks Jesus.

« Oh! Master! Of course! I was writing what You said last night on prudence and obedience. I think You had better have a look at it, because I do not think that I remember everything on prudence. »

Jesus has entered the little room, which has already been tidied up and in which they have put a small table for the convenience of the old master. Jesus bends over the parchments and reads. « Very well. You have repeated it very well. »

« Here, see. I thought this sentence was not quite correct. You always say that it is not necessary to be solicitous about tomorrow and one's body. Now I thought that it was wrong to say that prudence, also with regard to things concerning tomorrow, is a virtue. An error of mine, of course. »

« No. You are not wrong. That is exactly what I said. The exaggerated and fearful anxiety of a selfish person is different from the prudent care of a just person. It is sinful to be avaricious for the future, which, perhaps, we shall never see. But it is not sinful to be thrifty to secure a piece of bread, also for one's relatives, when there is a shortage. The selfish care of one's body in sinful, when a

person demands that all those around him should worry about him, and avoids all work or sacrifice lest his body should suffer, but it is not sinful to preserve it from wasteful diseases, the result of imprudent behaviour, which diseases are a burden for relatives and a loss of profitable work for ourselves. Life is given by God. It is a gift of His. Consequently we must make a holy use of it, without being imprudent or selfish. See? At times prudence suggests actions, which foolish people may consider cowardly or inconstant, whereas they are the result of holy prudence in the light of new events, which have occurred. For instance: if I sent you now right in the middle of people who might do you harm... for instance your wife's relatives or the watchmen of the mines where you worked, would I do a good or a bad thing? »

« I... I would not like pass judgement on You. But I would say that it would be better to send me elsewhere, where there is no danger of my little virtue being put to too hard a test. »

« There you are! You would judge wisely and prudently. That is why I would never send you to Bithynia or Mysia, where you have already been. Neither would I send you to Cintium, although you have a spiritual desire to go there. Your spirit might be overwhelmed by much human harshness and might fall back. Prudence therefore teaches Me not to send you where you would be valueless, whereas I could send you elsewhere with a good profit for Me, for the souls of your neighbours and your own. Is that not right? »

As John is completely unaware of what his destiny has in store for him, he does not catch Jesus' allusions to the possibility of a mission outside Palestine. Jesus scans his face and sees that he is calm, completely happy to listen to Him, and quick in replying: « Of course, Master, I would be more useful elsewhere. When some days ago I said: "I would like to go among the Gentiles to set a good example where I set a bad one", I reproached myself saying: "Among the Gentiles, yes, because you are not biased as the Israelites. But not at Cintium, nor on the desolate mountains, where I lived as a convict and like a wolf in the lead mines and in the quarries of precious marbles. Not even for the sake of a perfect sacrifice could you go there. Your heart would be upset by recollections of cruelty, and if they recognised you, even if they did not act cruelly against you, they would say: 'Be quiet, murderer. We cannot listen to you' so it would be quite useless to go there". That is what I said to myself. And I was right. »

« You can therefore see that you possess prudence. I possess it, too. That is why I took you away from the hard work of apostolate, as is practised by the others, and I brought you here, to rest and be in peace. »

« Oh! yes! How peaceful it is! If I lived here for a hundred years, it

would still be the same. It is a supernatural peace. And if I went away, I would take it with me. I will take it also to the next life... Recollections may still stir my heart and offences may make me suffer, because I am a man. But I will never be able to hate again, because hatred has been sterilised here for good, as far as its most remote ramifications. And I no longer have an aversion to women, whom I considered the filthiest and meanest animals on the earth. Your Mother is out of question. I venerated Her from the first moment I saw Her because I felt that She was different from all women. She is the perfume of woman, but the perfume of holy woman. Who does not love the scent of the purest flowers? But also the other women, the good women disciples, loving and patient under their sorrowful burdens, like Mary Clopas and Eliza; generous like Mary of Magdala, so complete in her change of life; kind and pure like Martha and Johanna; dignified, intelligent, thoughtful and upright, like Syntyche, have reconciled me with women. Syntyche, I admit it, is the one I like best. Affinity of mind and of circumstances make her dear to me: she was a slave, I a convict, and that allows me to be on familiar terms with her, which the difference with the others forbids. She is peace and tranquillity to me. I could not tell You exactly what she means to me and what I consider her. As I am old compared to her, I see her as a daughter, the wise and studious daughter I would have liked to have... But I, a sick man whom she cures with so much love, a sad and solitary man who has grieved for and regretted his mother throughout his life, and has sought a mother in every woman, without ever finding one, I now see my dream becoming true in her and I feel the dew of motherly love descend upon my tired head and upon my soul while I am going towards my death... You can see that, as I perceive in Syntyche the soul of a daughter and of a mother, I see in her the perfection of womanhood and for her sake I forgive all the evil I received from women. If, what is an impossible case, that wretch of my wife, whom I killed, should rise from the dead, I feel that I would forgive her because I have now understood the soul of woman, prone to love, generous in giving herself... both in good and in evil. »

« I am glad that you have found all that in Syntyche. She will be a good companion to you for the rest of your days and you will do much good together. Because I will associate you... »

Jesus scans John once again. But there is no sign of roused attention in the disciple, although he is not a superficial person. Which divine mercy conceals his sentence until the crucial moment? I do not know. I know that John smiles saying: « We shall endeavour to serve You to the best of our ability. »

« Yes. And I am sure that you will do so, without discussing the work or the place, which I will allot to you, even if it should not be

what you wish... »

John has a first inkling of what awaits him. His countenance and colour change. He becomes grave and pale and his only eye stares attentively and inquisitively at the face of Jesus, Who continues: « Do you remember, John, when I said to you, to dispel your doubts about God's forgiveness: "To let you understand Mercy I will employ you in special merciful deeds and I will apply to you the parables of mercy"? »

« Yes. And You did. You have convinced me and You have granted me the possibility to do deeds of mercy, and I would say, the most delicate ones, such as giving alms and teaching a boy, a Philistine and a Greek woman. That made it clear to me that God was aware of my true repentance, and thus He entrusted me with innocent souls or the souls of converts, that I might perfect them. »

Jesus embraces John, and draws him close to His side, as He is wont to do with the other John, and turning pale because of the grief He has to cause, He says: « Also now God is going to entrust a delicate holy task to you. A task of predilection. Only you who are generous, unreserved and unbiased, wise, and above all, have offered yourself to all renunciations and penances to expiate the remaining purgation and debt you still had with God, only you can do it. Anybody else would refuse, and quite rightly, because he would be lacking the necessary requisites. Not one of My apostles possesses what you have, to go and preach the ways of the Lord... Further, your name is John. So you will be a Precursor of My Doctrine... you will prepare the way for your Master... nay, you will act in place of your Master, Who cannot go so far... (John starts and endeavours to free himself from Jesus' arm, in order to look at Him in the face, but he is not successful, because Jesus' hold is kind but authoritative, while His lips give the final blow...)... He cannot go so far... as far as Syria... as far as Antioch... »

« Lord! » shouts John, freeing himself with violence from Jesus' embrace. « Lord! To Antioch? Tell me that I have misunderstood You! Tell me, please!... » He is standing... His whole attitude is a supplication: his only eye, his face which has turned ashen-grey, his trembling lips, his outstretched shaking hands, his lowered head, which seems to be burdened by the news.

But Jesus cannot say: « You have misunderstood. » He opens His arms, standing up to receive the old teacher on His heart, and He opens His lips to confirm: « Yes, to Antioch. To a house of Lazarus'. With Syntyche. You shall leave tomorrow or the day after. »

John's desolation is really heart-rending. He half-frees himself from the embrace, and face to face, with his thin cheeks wet with tears, he cries: « Ah! You do not want me any longer!! In what have I offended You, my Lord? » He gets free of Jesus' grasp and throws himself on the table, in an outburst of heart-rending sobs interrupted

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by fits of coughing, insensible to Jesus' caresses and he moans: « You are driving me away, You are rejecting me, I will never see You again... »

Jesus is clearly grieved and He prays... He then goes out slowly and sees Mary with Marjiam at the kitchen door. The boy is frightened by John's weeping... A little farther away, there is Syntyche, who is also astonished. « Mother, come here a moment. »

Mary goes at once. She is pale. They go in together. Mary bends over the weeping man as if he were a poor boy, saying: « Good, be good, poor son of Mine! Do not weep like that! You will hurt yourself. »

John raises his convulsed face and shouts: « He is sending me away!... I will die all alone, far away... Oh! He might have waited a few months and let me die here. Why this punishment? In what have I sinned? Have I ever troubled You? Why give me all this peace, and then... and then... » He collapses once again on the table, weeping louder, panting...

Jesus lays a hand on his lean trembling shoulders, saying: « And can you possibly believe that if I could have, I would not have kept you here? Oh! John! There are dreadful necessities on the way of the Lord! And I am the first to suffer thereby, as I have to bear My sorrow and the sorrow of the whole world. Look at Me, John. See whether My face is the face of one who hates you, and is tired of you... Come here, in My arms, and feel how My heart is throbbing with grief. Understand Me, John, do not misunderstand Me. This is the last expiation God imposes on you, to open the gates of Heaven to you. Listen... » and He lifts him up and holds him in His arms. « Listen... Mother, go out for a moment... Listen now, that we are alone. You know who I am. Do you firmly believe that I am the Redeemer? »

« Of course I do. That is why I wanted to stay with You, for good, until death... »

« Death... My death will be a dreadful one!... »

« Mine, I mean. My death... »

« Yours will be placid, comforted by My presence, which will instil the certainty of God's love into you, and consoled by the love of Syntyche, as well as by the joy of having prepared the triumph of the Gospel in Antioch. But Mine! You would see My body reduced to a mass of flesh covered with wounds, covered with spittle, outraged, abandoned to an enraged crowd, put to death hanging from a cross like a criminal... Could you bear all that? »

John, who at each detail of how Jesus will be dealt with during His Passion has groaned: « No, no! », shouts a sharp « no » and adds: « I would begin to hate mankind again... But I will be dead, because You are young and... »

« And I will see but one more Dedication. »

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John looks at Him, struck with terror...

« I told you secretly to let you know that that is one of the reasons why I am sending you away. But you will not be the only one. I will send away, beforehand, all those whom I do not want to be upset more than their strength can possibly stand. And do you think that is lack of love?... »

« No, my martyr God... But I have to leave You... and I will die far away from You. »

« In the name of the Truth which I am, I promise you that I will be bent over the pillow of your agony. »

« How can that be, if I am so far away and You say that You cannot come so far? You say that to make my departure less sad... »

« Johanna of Chuza, dying at the foot of Lebanon, saw Me although I was far away and she did not yet know Me and from where I was I brought her back to the poor life of this world. Believe Me, on the day of My death she will regret having survived!... But for you, the joy of My heart during this second year of My teaching, I will do more. I will come to take you to peace, and I will entrust to you the mission to say to those who are waiting: "The hour of the Lord has come. As springtime is coming to the earth, so the springtime of Paradise is rising for us". But that will not be the only time I will come... I will come... you will perceive Me... always... I can and I will do it. You will have the Master within you, as you do not have Me even now. Because Love can be communicated to its beloved ones, and so sensitively as to touch not only their spirits, but also their senses. Are you more tranquil now, John? »

« Yes, my Lord. But how sorrowful! »

« However, you are not rebelling... »

« Rebel? Never! I would lose You completely. I say "my" Our Father: Thy will be done. »

« I knew that you would understand Me... » He kisses John's cheeks, still wet with continuous although calmer tears.

« Will You let me say goodbye to the boy?... That is another grief... I was fond of him... » he weeps bitterly again...

« Yes. I will call him at once... And I will call Syntyche also. She will suffer, too. You must help her, you, a man... »

« Yes, my Lord. »

Jesus goes out while John weeps and kisses and caresses the walls and furnishings of the little hospitable room.

Mary and Marjiam come in together.

« Oh! Mother! Did You hear? Did You know? »

« I knew. And I was sorry... But I also parted with Jesus... And I am His Mother... »

« That is true!... Marjiam, come here. Do you know that I am going away and we shall not see each other again?... » He wants to be

brave. But he takes the boy in his arms, he sits on the edge of the bed and weeps on the dark-haired head of Marjiam, who imitates him at once.

Jesus enters with Syntyche, who asks: « Why so much weeping, John? »

« He is sending us away, do you not know? Have you not been told yet? He is sending us to Antioch! »

« Well? Did He not say that where there are two people assembled in His name, He will be among them? Come on, John! So far, perhaps, you have chosen your lot yourself, and thus the imposition of another will, even if a loving one, frightens you. I... I am accustomed to accepting the fate imposed on me by other people. And what a destiny!... So I now willingly submit to this new fate. Why not? I did not rebel against despotic slavery, except when it wanted to rule over my soul. And should I now rebel against this sweet slavery of love, which does not injure but elevates our souls and bestows on us the honour of being His servants? Are you afraid of tomorrow because you are not well? I will work for you. Are you afraid of being left alone? But I will never leave you. Be sure of that. I have no other aim in life but to love God and my neighbour. And you are the neighbour whom God entrusts to me. Consider, therefore, whether you are dear to me! »

« You need not work to live, because you will be in Lazarus" house. But I advise you to make use of teaching as a means of approaching people. You, John, as a teacher, and you, Syntyche, with needlework. It will be useful to your apostolate and will give an aim to your daily life. »

« It will be done, Lord » replies Syntyche resolutely.

John is still holding the boy in his arms and is weeping quietly. Marjiam is caressing him...

« Will you remember me? »

« I will, John, always, and I will pray for you... Nay... Wait a moment... » He runs out.

Syntyche asks: « How shall we go to Antioch? »

« By sea. Are you afraid? »

« No, Lord. In any case, You are sending us, and that will protect us. »

« You will go with the two Simons, My brothers, Zebedee's sons, Andrew and Matthew. From here to Ptolemais you will go by cart, in which we shall put the chests and a loom which I made for you, Syntyche, with some articles which will be useful to John... »

« I imagined something when I saw the chests and the garments. And I prepared my soul for the separation. It was too beautiful to live here!... » a stifled sob breaks Syntyche's voice. But she collects herself to support John's courage. She asks in a firm voice: « When are we leaving? »

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« As soon as the apostles come, tomorrow probably. »

« Well, if You do not mind, I will go and pack the garments in the chests... Give me your rolls, John. » I think that Syntyche is anxious to be alone so that she may weep...

John replies: « Take them... but give me that roll tied with a blue ribbon. »

Marjiam comes in with his jar of honey.

« Here, John, take it. You will eat it in my place... »

« No, my child! Why? »

« Because Jesus has said that a spoonful of honey offered as a sacrifice can give peace and hope to an afflicted soul. You are afflicted... I am giving you all the honey that you may be completely comforted. »

« But it is too big a sacrifice for you, boy. »

« Oh! no! In Jesus' prayer we say: "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil". This jar was a temptation to me... and might have been an evil because it might have made me infringe my vow. Now I will not see it any more... and it is easier... and I am sure that God will help you, because of this new sacrifice. But do not weep any more. And you, too, Syntyche... »

In fact the Greek woman is now weeping, noiselessly, while taking John's rolls. And Marjiam caresses them in turn, with a keen desire to weep himself. Syntyche goes out laden with rolls and Mary follows her with the jar of honey.

John is left with Jesus, Who is sat beside him, and with the boy in his arms. He is calm, but depressed.

« Put your last writing in the roll » suggests Jesus. « I think that you want to give it to Marjiam... »

« Yes... I have a copy for myself... Here, boy. These are the words of the Master. The words He spoke when you were not here and others as well... I wanted to continue copying them for you, because you have a whole life in front of you... and goodness knows how much you will evangelize... But I cannot do it any more... Now it is I who will be left without His words... » And he begins to weep bitterly once again.

Marjiam is kind and virile in his new gesture. He throws his arms round John's neck and says: « I will write them for you now and I will send them to you... Is that right, Master? It can be done, can it not? »

« Of course it can. And it will be great charity to do so. »

« I will do it. And when I am not there, Simon Zealot will do it. He loves me and he loves you and he will do it out of charity. So do not weep any more. And I will come to see you... You will certainly not go very far... »

« Oh! how far! Hundreds of miles... And I will die soon. »

The boy is disappointed and down-hearted. But he collects

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himself with the beautiful serenity of a child who thinks everything is easy. « If you can go there, so I can come with my father. And... we will write to each other. When one reads the holy scriptures, it is like being with God, isn't it? So when we read a letter, it is like being with the person we love and who wrote it. Come on, let us go into the next room, come with me... »

« Yes, let us go, John. My brothers will soon be here with the Zealot. I sent for them. »

« Do they know? »

« Not yet. I am waiting to tell them until they are all here... »

« All right, my Lord. Let us go... »

The old man who leaves Joseph's room is really bent with age. And he seems to be saying goodbye to every stem, to every trunk, to the fountain and the grotto, while going towards the workshop where Mary and Syntyche are silently laying things and garments in the chests...

And Simon, Judas and James find them thus... silent and sad. They watch them... but ask no questions and I wonder whether they realise the truth.

Jesus says:

« To give the readers a clear indication, I had indicated the place of John's prison expiation, with the name now in use. Someone is objecting to this. So I will now clarify the matter: Bithynia and Mysia, for those who want the ancient names. But this is the Gospel for simple people and little ones, not for doctors, to the majority of whom it is unacceptable and useless. And simple people' and the little ones understand "Anatolia" better than "Bithynia or Mysia". Is that not right, little John, who are weeping over John of Endor's grief? But there are so many Johns of Endor in the world! They are the forlorn brothers for whom I made you suffer last year. Rest now, little John, as you will never be sent far away from the Master, nay you will be closer and closer to Him.

And the second year of preaching and public life ends thus: the year of Mercy... And I can but repeat the lamentation dictated at the closing of the first year. But it does not implicate My mouthpiece, who continues her work struggling against all kinds of obstacles. It is not really the "great" people but the "little" ones who proceed along the paths of heroism, levelling them through their sacrifices, also for those who are weighed down by too many things. The "little" ones, that is those who are simple, meek, pure in their hearts and intellects: "little children". And I say to you, o little children, and to you, Romualdo, and to you, Mary, and to all those who are like you: "Come to Me to hear again and always the Word Who speaks to you because He loves you and He speaks to you to bless you. My peace be with you". »

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THE THIRD YEAR OF THE PUBLIC LIFE

3-1460

312. The Beginning of the Third Year at Nazareth, while preparing for Departure.

29th October 1945.

John, James, Matthew and Andrew have already arrived in Nazareth and while waiting for Peter, they are walking round the kitchen garden, playing with Marjiam or talking among themselves. I do not see anybody else, as if Jesus were not in the house and Mary were busy. As there is smoke coming from the stone-oven chimney, I would say that She is in there baking bread.

The four apostles are glad to be in the Master's house and they show their joy. Marjiam says to them three times: « Do not laugh like that! ». His third warning draws the attention of Matthew, who asks: « Why, boy? Are we not right in being happy here? You have enjoyed this place, eh? We are enjoying it now » and fillips him fondly on the cheek. Marjiam looks at him very seriously, but he does not reply.

Jesus comes in with His cousins Judas and James, who greet their companions with much affection: they have been separated from them for many days. Mary of Alphaeus, flushed and covered with flour, looks out from the stone-oven and smiles at her big boys.

The last to arrive is the Zealot, who says: « I have done everything, Master. Simon will be here shortly. »

« Which Simon? My brother or Simon of Jonah? »

« Your brother, James. He is coming with the whole family to greet you. »

In fact a few minutes later, knocking at the door and noisy chattering announce the arrival of the family of Simon of Alphaeus, who is the first to enter holding by the hand a little boy about eight years old; behind him there is Salome, surrounded by her group of children. Mary of Alphaeus runs out of the stone-oven and kisses her grandchildren and is very happy to see them there.

« So, are You leaving again? » asks Simon while his children make friends with Marjiam who, I think, is familiar only with Alphaeus, the boy who has been cured.

« Yes. It is time. »

« You will still have wet weather. »

« It does not matter. Springtime is approaching day by day. »

« Are You going to Capernaum? »

« I will certainly go there as well. But not at once. I am now going round Galilee and beyond it. »

« I will come to see You when I hear that You are in Capernaum. And I will bring Your Mother and mine to You. »

« I will be grateful to you. For the time being, do not neglect Her. She will be all alone. Bring your children here. They will not become corrupted here, you may be sure of that... »

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Simon blushes at Jesus' allusion to his past thoughts and because of an expressive look cast at him by his wife, who seems to be saying: « Do you hear that? It serves you right. » But Simon changes the subject saying: « Where is Your Mother? »

« She is baking bread. She will soon be here... »

Simon's children, however, wait no longer and they go to the stone-oven following their grandmother. And a little girl, not much taller than Alphaeus, the boy who had been cured, comes out almost immediately saying: « Mary is weeping. Why? Eh! Jesus? Why is Your Mother weeping? »

« Is She weeping? Oh! dear! Let me go to Her » says Salome solicitously.

And Jesus explains: « She is weeping because I am going away... But you will come and keep Her company, will you not? She will teach you how to embroider and you will make Her happy. Will you promise Me? »

« I will come, too, now that my father lets me come » says Alphaeus eating a hot bun which has just been given to him.

But although the bun is so hot that he can hardly hold it with his fingers, I think it is ice-cold compared to the heat suffered by Simon of Alphaeus, who blushes with shame at the words of his little boy. Although it is a rather cold winter morning, with a northern breeze blowing away the clouds in the sky and making one's skin tingle, Simon is sweating profusely, as if it were summer time...

But Jesus pretends not to notice it and the apostles pretend they are interested in what Simon's children are saying, and so the incident is over, and Simon can collect himself and ask Jesus why all the apostles are not there.

« Simon of Jonah is about to arrive. The others will join Me at the right moment. It has all been settled. »

« All of them? »

« Yes. »

« Also Judas of Kerioth? »

« Yes... »

« Jesus, come with me for a moment » begs His cousin Simon. And once they have moved away, towards the end of the kitchen garden, Simon asks: « But do You really know who is Judas of Simon? »

« He is an Israelite. Nothing more, nothing less. »

« Oh! You are not going to tell me... » he is on the point of getting excited and raising his voice.

But Jesus calms him, interrupting him and laying a hand on his shoulder, saying: « He is what prevailing ideas and those who approach him, have made him. Because, for instance, if he had found an upright soul and an intelligent mind in everybody here (and He

lays stress on the words) he would not have been anxious to sin. But he did not find them. On the contrary, he found an entirely human element to which he adapted most comfortably his very human ego, which dreams and works for Me and sees in Me the king of Israel, in the human meaning of the word, as you dream and would like to see Me, and for Whom you would feel inclined to work, and your brother Joseph with you, as well as Levi, the head of the synagogue in Nazareth, and Mattathias and Simon and Matthias and Benjamin, and Jacob and, with the exception of three or four people, everybody in Nazareth. And not only in Nazareth... He has difficulty in perfecting himself, because you all contribute to his perversion. He is the weakest of My apostles. But for the time being, he is but a weak apostle. His impulses are good, his intentions are honest and he loves Me. He loves Me in a devious way, but it is still love. You do not help him to separate these good qualities from the bad ones that form his ego, on the contrary you aggravate them by adding to them your own incredulity and human limitations... But let us go home. The others have gone there ahead of us... »

Simon follows Him and looks a little humiliated. They are almost on the threshold when he holds back Jesus and says: « Brother, are You angry with me? »

« No, I am not. But I am endeavouring to perfect you as I do with all the other disciples. Did you not say that you want to be one? »

« Yes, Jesus. But in the past You did not speak thus, not even when You were reproaching... You were kinder... »

« And of what avail was it? I was kinder once. I have been so for two years... Everybody here has become loose resting on My patience and kindness or has sharpened teeth and nails... You have all taken advantage of My love, to harm Me. Is it not so?... »

« Yes, it is. It is true. So, will You no longer be good? »

« I will be just. And even so, I shall be such as you do not deserve, you people of Israel, who will not acknowledge Me as the promised Messiah. »

They go into the little room that is so crowded with people, that the apostles had to move into the kitchen and into Joseph's workshop, with the exception of Alphaeus' two sons, who have remained with their mother and sister-in-law. The latter are joined by Mary, Who comes in holding little Alphaeus by the hand. Mary's face shows clear signs of weeping.

While She is about to reply to Simon, who assures Her that he will come to see Her every day, a cart is proceeding along the little street with such a clanging of harness bells that it draws the attention of Alphaeus' children and the door is opened at the same time as they hear knocking outside. Simon Peter's merry face appears: he is still sitting on the cart, knocking at the door with the handle

of the whip... Beside him, shy but smiling, there is Porphirea, sitting on cases and boxes, as on a throne.

Marjiam runs out and climbs on the cart to greet his adoptive mother. The others also come out, including Jesus.

« Master, here I am. I brought my wife, on this cart, as she is not fit for long walks. Mary, may the Lord be with You. And with you, Mary of Alphaeus. » He looks at everybody while getting off the vehicle and helps his wife to get off, and greets them all together.

They would like to help him unload the cart. But he objects resolutely. « Later, later » he says, and without ceremony, he goes to the large door of Joseph's workshop and opens it wide, endeavouring to take the cart in, as it is. But it cannot go in, of course. However the manoeuvre helps to distract the attention of the guests and make them understand that they are not wanted... And in fact Simon of Alphaeus takes leave with all his family... "

« Oh! now that we are, by ourselves, let us attend to' our business... » says Simon of Jonah, driving back the donkey, which is making a dreadful noise, covered as it is with harness-bells, so much so that James of Zebedee cannot help laughing and asks: « Where did you find it, harnessed like that? »

But Peter is busy taking the cases from the cart and handing them to John and Andrew, who expect to feel them heavy and are surprised because they are light, and they say so...

« Run into the kitchen garden and do not behave like frightened sparrows » orders Peter, getting off the cart with a little case that is really heavy, and is placed in a corner in the little room.

« And now the donkey and the cart. The donkey and the cart? Yes... That is the problem!... And yet we must put everything inside... »

« Through the kitchen garden, Simon » says Mary in a low voice. « There is an opening in the fence, at the end. You cannot see it, because it is covered by branches... But it is there. Follow the path along the house, between the house and our neighbour's kitchen garden, and I will come and show you where the passage is... Who is coming to remove the bramble covering it? »

« I am... I am... » They all run to the end of the kitchen garden while Peter goes away with his noisy equipage and Mary of Alphaeus closes the door... With a sickle they clear the rustic railing and open a passage through which the donkey and cart come in.

« Oh! Well! And now let us take all this away. They have deafened me! » and Peter hastens to cut the strings which fasten the bells to the harness.

« Why did you leave them on, then? » asks Andrew.

« So that everyone in Nazareth could hear me arrive. And it was a success... I am now taking them off, so that no one in Nazareth may hear us depart. And that is why I loaded the cart with empty

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cases... We will leave with full ones and no one, should anybody see us, will be surprised seeing a woman sitting beside me on the cases. Our friend, the one who is far away from us just now, boasts that he has a good practical sense. But I have it, too, when I want... »

« Excuse me, brother. Why is all this necessary? » asks Andrew who has watered the donkey and taken it to the rustic wood-store near the stone-oven.

« Why? Don't you know?... Master, do they not know yet? »

« No, Simon. I was waiting for you. Come into the workshop, all of you. The women are all right where they are. You did the right thing in doing what you did, Simon of Jonah. »

They go into the workshop, while Porphirea with the boy and the two Maries remain in the house.

« I wanted you here, because you must help Me to send John and Syntyche away, very far away. I decided so at the Feast of the Tabernacles. You have clearly seen that it was not possible to keep them with us, neither can we keep them here, without risking their peace. As usual, Lazarus of Bethany is helping Me in this plan. They have already been informed. Simon Peter was told a few days ago. You are being informed now. We are leaving Nazareth tonight, even if it should rain or be windy instead of moonlight of the first quarter. We should have already left. But I suppose that Simon of Jonah must have had difficulties in finding transport... »

« I did, indeed! I was almost giving up hope. But at long last I got it from a slimy Greek in Tiberias... And it will be useful... »

« Yes, it will be very useful, particularly for John of Endor. »

« Where is he? I have not seen him » asks Peter.

« In his room with Syntyche. »

« And... how did he take it? » asks Peter again.

« Very sorrowfully. Also the woman... »

« And You as well, Master. Your forehead is furrowed with a wrinkle, which was not there before, and Your eyes are sad and severe » remarks John.

« It is true. I am deeply grieved... But let us speak of what we have to do. Listen to Me carefully, because we shall have to part. We will leave this evening, half way through the first watch. We shall leave like people who run away... because they are guilty. But we are not going away to do anything wrong, neither are we escaping because we have done it. We are going away to prevent other people from harming those who would not be strong enough to bear it. So we are leaving... We will go via Sephoris... We will stop in a house half-way and then leave at dawn. It is a house with many porches for animals. There are shepherds there who are friends of Isaac. I know them. They will give Me hospitality

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without asking any questions. Then we must reach Jiphthahel by evening and rest there. Do you think the donkey will be able to do it? »

« Certainly That crafty Greek made me pay for it, but he gave me a good strong animal. »

« Very good. The following morning we will go to Ptolemais, and we will part there. Under the guidance of Peter, who is your head, and whom you must obey unconditionally, you will go to Tyre by sea. You will find a ship there sailing to Antioch. You will go on board and give this letter to the owner of the ship. The letter is from Lazarus of Theophilus. You will be believed to be his servants, sent to his land at Antioch, or rather to his garden at Antigonea. And you are to be such for everybody. Be careful, serious, wise and quiet. When you arrive at Antioch, go at once to Philip, Lazarus' steward, and give him this letter... »

« Master, he knows me » says the Zealot.

« Very well. »

« But how can he believe that I am a servant? »

« In the case of Philip it is not necessary. He knows that he has to receive and give hospitality to two friends of Lazarus' and help them in every way. That is written in the letter. You have taken them there. Nothing else. He calls you: "his dear friends from Palestine". And that is what you are, united by faith and by the action that you are accomplishing. You will rest there until the ship sails again for Tyre after the unloading and loading operations are completed. From Tyre you will come by boat to Ptolemais and join Me at Achzib... »

« Why do You not come with us, Lord? » asks John with a sigh.

« Because I am staying to pray for you, and particularly for those two poor people. I am staying to pray. And My third year of public life begins. It begins with a very sad departure; like the first and second ones. It begins with a great prayer and penance, as the first one did... Because this year has the sorrowful hardships of the first year, and even more. I was then preparing to convert the world. I am now preparing for a wider and more powerful action. But listen to Me carefully and bear in mind that if in the first year I was the Man-Master, the Wise Man Who invites to Wisdom with perfect humanity and intellectual perfection, and in the second I was the Saviour and Friend, the Merciful Master Who passes by receiving, forgiving, pitying, bearing, in the third year I will be the Redeemer God and King, the Just Man. Do not, therefore, be surprised if you see new aspects of Me, and if in the Lamb you see flashes of Strength. What has Israel replied to My invitation of love, to My opening My arms saying: "Come: I love and forgive"? It replied with its ever growing deliberate dullness and hardheartedness, with falsehood and deceit. Let it be so. I called every

class of Israel, bowing My head to the dust. They spat on Holiness that humbled itself. I invited them to become holy. They replied by becoming demons. I did My duty in everything. They called My duty "sin". I was silent. They called My silence a proof of guilt. I spoke. They called My word blasphemy. Enough of that, now! They gave Me no peace. They granted Me no joy. And My joy consisted in bringing up in the life of the spirit the new-born to Grace. They lie in wait for them, and I have to tear them from My chest, causing them and Myself the grief of parents and children torn from one another, in order to save them from evil-minded Israel. They, the mighty ones in Israel, who call themselves "sanctifiers" and boast of being so, prevent Me, would like to prevent Me from saving souls and from taking delight in those I have saved. I have now had for many months Levi, a publican, as a friend and at My service, and the world can see whether Matthew is scandal or emulation. But the charge stands. And it will stand for Mary of Lazarus and for all the others I will save. That is enough! I will go My way, which is more and more difficult and wet with tears... I am going... Not one of My tears will fall in vain. They cry to My Father... And later... a much more powerful humour will cry. I am going... Let those who love Me follow Me and be virile, because the severe hour is coming. I Will not stop. Nothing will stop Me. Neither will they stop... But woe betide them! Woe to them! Woe to those for whom Love becomes Justice!... The sign of the new time will be of severe Justice for all those who are obstinate in their sin against the words of the Lord and the action of the Word of the Lord!... »

Jesus seems a punishing archangel. His eyes are so bright that I would say that they are like flames against the smoky wall... Even His voice seems to be bright, as it has shrill tones of bronze and silver struck violently.

The eight apostles have turned pale and have almost become smaller for fear. Jesus looks at them... full of pity and love. He says: « I am not referring to you, My friends. These threats are not for you. You are My apostles and I chose you. » His voice has become kind and deep. He concludes: « Let us go into the house. Let us make the two persecuted disciples feel that we love them more than ourselves, and I would remind you that they believe they are leaving to prepare My way in Antioch. Come... »

313. Departure from Nazareth.

30th October 1945.

It is evening. Another farewell evening for the little house in Nazareth and its inhabitants. Another supper during which grief makes people silent and unwilling to eat. Jesus, John, Syntyche,

Peter, John, Simon and Matthew are sitting at the table. It was not possible for the others to sit there. The table in Nazareth is so small! It was made just for a small family of honest people, who at most can invite to sit at it a pilgrim or an afflicted person to give them refreshment of love rather than of food! Marjiam might have been able to sit at it tonight, as he is a very thin boy and takes up little room... But Marjiam is very serious and silent and is eating in a corner, sitting on a little stool at the feet of Porphirea, whom Mary has sat on the seat of Her loom and who, meek and reserved as she is, is eating the food which they have given her, looking with eyes full of pity at the two about to depart, who endeavour to swallow their food with lowered heads to conceal their faces reddened by weeping. The others, that is, the two sons of Alphaeus, Andrew and James of Zebedee have settled in the kitchen, near a kind of kneading trough. But they can be seen through the open door.

The Blessed Virgin and Mary of Alphaeus come and go serving this one and that one, with motherly care although they are worried and sad. And if the Blessed Virgin caresses with Her smile, so sad this evening, those whom She approaches, Mary of Alphaeus, less reserved and more informal, adds actions and words to her smiles, and more than once she encourages with a caress or a kiss, according to whoever benefits by it, this one or that one to take the food most suitable to their needs and in consideration of the imminent journey. I think that out of loving pity for John, who is exhausted and has become even thinner during the days of expectation, she would give herself as food to him, so anxious she is to convince him he should eat this or that dish, the flavour and beneficial properties of which she praises. But notwithstanding her... enticement, the food remains almost intact on John's plate and Mary of Alphaeus is distressed like a mother who sees her unweaned babe refuse her breast.

« But you cannot leave like that, son! » she exclaims. And in her motherly love she does not consider that John is about her own age and that the name « son » is not appropriate. But she sees in him only a suffering human being and thus does not find any other name to comfort him... « It will do you no good to travel on an empty stomach, on that shaking cart, in the cold dampness of the night. And then! Goodness knows what you will eat during the dreadful long journey!... Eternal mercy! At sea for so many miles! I would be frightened to death. And along Phoenician coasts and later!... even worse! And the owner of the ship will certainly be a Philistine, or a Phoenician or from some other hellish country... and will have no mercy on you... So, while you are still close to a mother who loves you, eat!... a little bit of this exquisite fish. Just to please Simon of Jonah who prepared it at Bethsaida with so much love and taught

me how to cook it for you and Jesus, so that it may nourish you. You definitely do not want it?... Well... Oh! You will eat this! »... and she runs into the kitchen and comes back with a tureen full of a steaming pudding. I do not know what it is... It is certainly a kind of flour or corn mashed with milk: « Look, I made this because I remembered that one day you spoke of it as a sweet remembrance of your childhood... It is good and will do you good. Come on, just a little. »

John lets her put some spoonfuls of the soft meal in his plate and tries to swallow it, but tears stream down his face adding their salt to the food, while he lowers his head even more towards his plate.

All the others do ample justice to the dish, which is perhaps exquisite. Their faces have brightened up in seeing it and Marjiam has stood up... but then he felt that he had to ask the Blessed Virgin: « May I eat some? It wants five days to the end of my vow... »

« Yes, son. You may have some » says Mary caressing him.

But the boy is still uncertain and Mary, to appease the scruple of the little disciple, asks Her Son: « Jesus, Marjiam wants to know whether he can eat the pudding of barley meal... because of the honey which makes it a sweet dish, You know... »

« Of course you can, Marjiam. I dispense you this evening from your sacrifice, providing John eats his honey pudding as well. See how keen the boy is to have it? Help him, so that he may have some » and Jesus, Who is near John, takes his hand and holds it while John obediently strives to finish his helping.

Mary of Alphaeus is now happier. And she makes a fresh assault with a lovely dish of steaming pears, baked in the oven. She comes back in from the kitchen garden with her tray and says: « It's raining. It has just begun. What a nuisance! »

« No! On the contrary! There will be no one in the streets. It is always sad to say goodbye when one leaves... It is better to go away sailing before the wind, without running into sandbanks or rocks which make one stop or slow down. And curious people are just like sandbanks and rocks... » says Peter who sees sails and sailing in every action.

« Thank you, Mary. But I do not want anything else » says John in an attempt to refuse fruit.

« Ah! Not these! Mary cooked them. Are you going-to despise the food that She prepared? Look how well She prepared them! With spices in the little cavity... dressed with butter... They are food fit for a king. A julep. She got brown Herself standing near the fire to glaze them like that. And they are good for your throat and your cough... They warm and cure you. Mary, tell him how they helped my Alphaeus when he was ill. But he wanted You to cook them. Of course! Your hands are holy and bestow health!... The food that

You prepare is blessed indeed!... My Alphaeus was calmer after eating Your pears... he breathed more freely... My poor husband!... » and Mary takes advantage of her recollection to be able to weep at last and to go out to weep. Perhaps I am evil-minded, but I do not think that Mary would have shed a tear for her « poor Alphaeus » that evening, had she not felt pity for the two who were about to leave... Mary of Alphaeus was so deeply grieved for John and Syntyche and so distressed at the departure of Jesus, James and Judas, that she burst into tears in order not to suffocate.

Mary now replaces her and lays a hand on the shoulder of Syntyche, who is sitting opposite Jesus, between Simon and Matthew. « Come on. Eat up. Are you going to leave and let Me worry also because you have gone away on almost empty stomachs? »

« I have eaten, Mother » says Syntyche looking up and showing her tired face marked by several days' weeping. She then lowers her head towards her shoulder, on which Mary's hand is resting, and rubs her cheek on the little hand to be caressed. With Her other hand Mary caresses her hair and draws towards Herself the head of Syntyche, whose face now rests on Her breast.

« Eat, John. It will really do you good. You must not get cold. Simon of Jonah, you will see that every evening he has some hot milk with honey, or at least some hot water and honey. Remember that. »

« I will see to that, as well, Mother. You may rest assured » says Syntyche.

« I am sure in fact. But you will do that when you are settled in Antioch. Simon of Jonah will see to it, for the time being. And remember, Simon, to give him much olive oil. That is why I gave you the little oil jar. Watch that it does not get broken. And if you see that he has difficulty in breathing, do as I told you, using the other little vase of balm. Take enough of it to rub his chest, shoulders and kidneys. Warm it first so that you can touch it without burning yourself, then rub it on and cover him immediately with the woollen bands I gave you. I prepared the balm for that special purpose. And you, Syntyche, remember its composition, so that you can make more. You will always be able to find lilies, camphor, dittany, resin and cloves with laurel, artemisia and the rest. I hear that Lazarus has gardens of essence plants at Antigonea. »

« And they are wonderful » says the Zealot who has seen them. And he adds: « I do not want to advise anything. But I say that that place should be more healthy for John, both for his spirit and his body, than Antioch. It is sheltered from winds, light air comes from thickets of resin plants on the slopes of a little hill, which protects from sea winds but allows benign sea salts to spread there,

it is serene and quiet and yet cheerful because of the large variety of flowers and birds that live there in peace... You will see yourselves what suits you best. Syntyche is so sensible! It is better to rely upon women in certain matters. Is it not? »

« In fact I entrust My John just to Syntyche's good sense and kind heart » says Jesus.

« And so do I » says John of Endor. « I... I... I have no more vigour... and... I will never be of any use... »

« Do not say that, John! When autumn strips trees of their leaves, it does not mean that they are already inert. On the contrary they work with concealed energy to prepare the triumph of the next fructification. It is the same with you. You have been stripped by the cold wind of your pain. But in actual fact in the depths of your soul you are already working for new ministries. Your very grief will be a spur to be active. I am sure of that. And then you, always you, will be the one to help me, a poor woman, who has still so much to learn to become something of Jesus. »

« Oh! What do you expect me to be?! There is nothing I can do... I am a done man! »

« No. It is not right to say that! Only a dying man can say: "I am a finished man". Nobody else. Do you think that you have nothing else to do? You still have to do what you told me one day: to complete the sacrifice. How can you, but by suffering? It is silly, John, to quote wise authors to you, a school master, but I would remind you of Gorgias of Leontina (or Leontine). He taught that one does not expiate, in this life or in the next one, but through sorrow and suffering. And I would remind you also of our great Socrates: "To disobey who is above us, be it god or a man, is evil and shameful". Now, if it was right to do so for an unjust judgement, passed by unjust men, what will it be if done by order of the most holy Man and of our God? Obedience is a great thing, simply because it is obedience. So, most great is the obedience to a holy order, which I consider, and you must consider with me, a great mercy. You always say that your life is approaching its end and that you do not yet feel that you have cancelled your debt with Justice. So why do you not consider this deep grief as a means of cancelling your debt, and do so in the short time you still have? A great grief to achieve a great peace! Believe me, it is worth suffering it. The only important thing in life is to have conquered Virtue when we arrive at the hour of our death. »

« You encourage me, Syntyche... Please always do so. »

« I will. I promise you here. But comply with me, as a man and as a Christian. »

The meal is over. Mary collects the pears which have been left and puts them in a vase, which She hands to Andrew, who goes out and comes back in saying: « It is raining harder and harder. I would

say that it is better... »

« Yes. It is always an agony to wait. I am going at once to prepare the donkey. And you can come as well, with the chests and everything else. You, too, Porphirea. Quick! You are so patient that even the donkey is subdued and allows you to dress it (he says exactly that) without reacting. Afterwards Andrew will do it, as he is like you. Quick, all of you! » And Peter pushes everybody, with the exception of Mary, Jesus, John of Endor and Syntyche, out of the room and the kitchen.

« Master! Oh! Master, help me! The hour has come... and I feel that my heart is breaking! It has really come! Oh! why, good Jesus, did You not let me die here, after I had received the dreadful news of my sentence and I had striven to accept it?! » And John collapses on Jesus' chest, weeping distressingly.

Mary and Syntyche endeavour to calm him, and Mary, although always so reserved, detaches him from Jesus, embracing and calling him: « My dear son, My darling son »...

Syntyche in the meantime kneels at Jesus' feet saying: « Bless me, consecrate me, that I may be fortified. Lord, Saviour and King, I, here, in the presence of Your Mother, swear and profess that I will follow Your doctrine and serve You until I breathe my last. I swear and profess that I will devote myself to Your doctrine and its followers for Your sake, my Master and Saviour. I swear and profess that there will be no other purpose in my life and that everything that is world and flesh is definitely dead, as far as I am concerned, whilst, with the help of God and of the prayers of Your Mother, I hope to defeat the Demon so that he may not lead me into error and I may not be condemned at the hour of Your Judgement. I swear and profess that allurements and threats will not bend me and I will remember everything, unless God allows otherwise. But I hope in Him and I believe in His bounty, whereby I am sure that He will not leave me at the mercy of obscure powers, stronger than my own. Consecrate Your servant, o Lord, that she may be protected from the snares of every enemy. »

Jesus lays His hands on her head, as also priests do, and prays over her.

Mary leads John beside Syntyche and makes him kneel saying: « Bless this one, too, Son, that he may serve You with holiness and peace. »

And Jesus repeats the gesture on the lowered head of poor John. He then lifts him and makes Syntyche stand up, and putting their hands in the hands of Mary He says: « And let Her be the last one to caress you here » and He goes out quickly, I do not know where.

« Mother, goodbye! I will never forget these days » moans John.

« Neither will I forget you, dear son. »

« I, too, Mother... Goodbye. Let me kiss You once more... Oh!

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after so many years I had satisfied my desire for maternal kisses!... But no longer now... » Syntyche weeps in the arms of Mary Who kisses her.

John sobs unreservedly. Mary embraces him also, She now has both of them in Her arms, the true Mother of Christians, and with Her most pure lips She touches John's wrinkled face lightly: a chaste, but so loving kiss. And with Her kiss there are tears of the Blessed Virgin on the emaciated cheek...

Peter comes in: « It's ready. Come on... » and he cannot say anything else because he is deeply moved.

Marjiam, who follows his father like a shadow, clings on to Syntyche's neck and kisses her, he then embraces John and kisses him repeatedly... But he is weeping as well.

They go out. Mary is holding Syntyche by the hand, and John has taken Marjiam's.

« Our mantles... » says Syntyche and she makes the gesture of going back to the house.

« They are here. Quick, take them... » Peter feigns coarseness as he does not want to show that he is moved, but with the back of his hand he wipes off his tears standing behind the two who are enveloping themselves in their mantles.

Over there, beyond the hedge, the little swinging lamp of the cart gives a yellowish light in the dark air... The rain rustles among the olive leaves and resounds in the fountain full of water... A dove, awakened by the light of the lamps, which the apostles are shielding under their mantles, holding them low to illuminate the paths full of puddles, is cooing lamentingly...

Jesus is already near the cart over which a blanket has been spread to act as a roof.

« Come on, quick, it's raining hard! » urges Peter. And while James of Zebedee replaces Porphirea at the bridle, Peter, without ceremony, lifts Syntyche off the ground and puts her on the cart, and with greater speed he grasps John of Endor and throws him on. He gets on himself and gives the poor donkey such a strong blow with the whip, that it bounces forward almost running over James. And Peter insists until they are on the main road, a good distance from houses... A last farewell cry reaches the persons who are leaving and who weep unreservedly...

Peter stops the donkey outside Nazareth, waiting for Jesus and the others, who soon join him walking fast in the increasing rain.

They take a road among the vegetable gardens, to go again to the north of the town, without crossing it. But Nazareth is dark and asleep in the ice-cold rain of a winter night... and I think that the noise of the donkey's hooves, hardly audible on the wet beaten ground, cannot be heard even by those who are awake...

The group proceeds in dead silence. Only the sobs of the two can

be heard, mingled with the sound of rain on olive leaves.

314. Towards Jiphthahel.

31st October 1945.

It must have rained all night. But at dawn a dry wind has blown the clouds southwards, beyond the hills of Nazareth. Thus a timid winter sun dares to peep out and light with its beam a diamond on every olive leaf. But they are gala dresses which the olive-trees soon lose, because the wind shakes them off the leaves, which seem to be weeping diamond chips, which get lost among the dewy grass or on the muddy road.

Peter is preparing the cart and donkey with the help of James and Andrew. The others have not appeared as yet. But they soon come out, one after the other, from a kitchen, probably, because they say to the three who are outside: « You can go now and have something to eat. » And they go and come out shortly afterwards with Jesus.

« I have put the cover on again because of the wind » explains Peter. « If You really want to go to Jiphthahel, we shall have it in our faces... and it will be biting. I do not understand why we do not take the direct road to Sicaminon and then the one along the coast... It is longer but not so hard. Did You hear what the shepherd said, the man I encouraged to speak? He said: "Jotopata in the winter months is isolated. There is only one road to go there, but it is not possible to go there with lambs... You cannot carry anything on your shoulders because there are passes where you proceed more with your hands than with your feet, and lambs cannot swim. There are two rivers, which are often in flood, and the very road is a torrent that flows on a rocky bed. I go there after the Tabernacles and in full spring, and I do good business, because they buy supplies for months". That is what he said... And we... with this thing... (and he kicks the wheel of the cart)... and with this donkey... bah!... »

« The direct road from Sephoris to Sicaminon is better. But it is very busy. Remember that we must not leave traces of John... »

« The Master is right. And we may find Isaac with some disciples... At Sicaminon in any case!... » says the Zealot.

« Let us go then... »

« I am going to call those two... » says Andrew.

And while he does so, Jesus takes leave of an old woman and a boy who are coming out of a sheepfold with buckets of milk. Also some bearded shepherds arrive and Jesus thanks them for the hospitality given to Him during the rainy night.

John and Syntyche are already in the cart, which sets out along the road, driven by Peter. Jesus with the Zealot and Matthew at

His sides, and followed by Andrew, James, John and the two sons of Alphaeus, quickens His step to reach it.

The wind bites their faces and swells their mantles. The cover stretched over the arches of the cart snaps like a sail notwithstanding the rain of the night has made it heavy: « Never mind, it will soon dry! » moans Peter looking at it. « Providing the lungs of that poor man do not dry up!... Wait, Simon of Jonah... This is what you do. » And he stops the donkey, takes his mantle off, gets on the cart and envelops John carefully in it.

« Why? I already have one... »

« Because pulling the donkey I am already as warm as I would be in a bread oven. And I am used to being naked on the boat, particularly when there is a storm. The cold spurs me and I am quicker. Come on, make sure you are well covered. Mary made so many recommendations to me in Nazareth, that if you were taken ill, I would not be able to face Her any longer... »

He gets off the cart, takes the bridle again and spurs the donkey. But he soon has to call his brother and also James to help the donkey get out of a muddy spot in which a wheel had sunk. And they proceed, pushing the cart in turns to help the donkey that digs its strong feet in the mire and draws the cart. The poor animal is panting and puffing with fatigue and greediness because Peter entices it to move on by offering it bits of bread and cores of apples, which, however, he lets it have only when they stop for a moment.

« You are cheating, Simon of Jonah » says Matthew jokingly after watching Peter's manoeuvring.

« No. I am getting it to do its duty, and I am doing it kindly. If I did not do that, I would have to use the whip. And I do not like that. I do not strike my boat when she is wayward, although she is of wood. Why should I flog the donkey, which is flesh? This is my boat-now... it is in water... it is indeed! So I am dealing with it as I deal with my boat. I am not Doras, you know? I wanted to name it Doras, before I bought it. Then I heard its name, and I liked it. So I did not change it... »

« What is its name? » they ask curiously.

« Guess! » and Peter laughs through his beard.

The strangest names are mentioned including those of the fiercest Pharisees and Sadducees etc. etc. But Peter always shakes his head. They give it up.

« Antonius is its name! Isn't it a beautiful name? That cursed Roman! Obviously also the Greek who sold me the donkey must have had a grudge against Antonius! »

They all laugh while John of Endor explains: « He is probably one from whom money was extorted after Caesar's death. Is he old? »

« He is about seventy... and must have done all kinds of jobs... He

now owns a hotel at Tiberias... »

They are at the cross-roads of Sephoris with the Nazareth-Ptolemais, Nazareth-Sicaminon, Nazareth-Jotopata roads (I would point out that they pronounce J as a very soft G). On the consular milestone there are the three indications of Ptolemais, Sicaminon, Jotopata.

« Are we going to Sephoris, Master? »

« It is quite useless. Let us go to Jiphthahel, without stopping. We shall eat something while walking. We must be there before evening. »

They proceed and cross two little torrents in flood, and begin to climb the slopes of a range of hills lying south-northwards with a large steep mass to the north stretching eastwards.

« Jiphthahel is over there » says Jesus.

« I cannot see anything » remarks Peter.

« It is to the north. The coast is very steep in our direction, as well as to the east and the west. »

« So we must go right round all that mountain? »

« No. There is a road at the foot of the highest mountain, in the valley. It is a short cut, but the road is very steep. »

« Have You been there? »

« No. But I know. »

The road is steep indeed! So much so, that when they arrive there, they are frightened. Night seems to fall all at once, so dark it is at the bottom of the valley, which is so horrifying and precipitous that it reminds me of Dantesque Malebolge; it is a road cut in the rock, so steep that it almost ascends in steps, a narrow wild road, enclosed between a furious torrent and an even more rugged mountain side that becomes steeper as one proceeds northwards.

If the light increases little by little as one ascends higher, fatigue also increases, and in fact they unload the cart of personal baggage and Syntyche also gets off to make the cart as light as possible. John of Endor, who after his few words has not opened his mouth but to cough, would like to get off as well. But they do not let him and he remains where he is, while all the others push or pull cart and donkey sweating at each gradient of the road. But no one complains. On the contrary they all pretend to be satisfied with the exercise in order not to embarrass the two disciples for whom they do it and who have more than once expressed their regret for so much work.

The road turns at a right angle, then there is another corner, a shorter one, which ends in a town perched on such a steep slope that, as John of Zebedee says, it seems on the point of sliding down to the valley with all its houses.

« It is, instead, very solid. All one with the rock. »

« Like Ramoth then... » says-Syntyche who remembers the place.

« Even more. The rock here is part of the houses, not just their foundation. It reminds one more of Gamala. Do you remember it? »

« Yes, and we remember those pigs as well... » says Andrew.

« It was from there that we departed to go to Tarichea, the Tabor and Endor... » says Simon Zealot.

« It is my fate to let you have painful recollections and hard work... » says John of Endor with a sigh.

« Never! You have given us faithful friendship and nothing else, my friend » says Judas of Alphaeus impulsively. And everybody joins him to confirm his statement.

« And yet... I have not been loved... No one tells me... But I can meditate and put together various facts, as in a picture. This departure was not foreseen and it was not a spontaneous decision... »

« Why do you say that, John? » asks Jesus kindly, although He is afflicted.

« Because it is true. I was not wanted. I was chosen to go far away, no one else, not even the great disciples. »

« And what about Syntyche, then? » asks James of Alphaeus, grieved at the lucidity of thought of the man of Endor.

« Syntyche is coming so as not to send me away alone... to conceal the truth pitifully... »

« No, John!... »

« Yes, Master. See? I could also tell You the name of my torturer. Do You know where I can read it? Just by looking at these good eight ones I read it! Only by considering the absence of the others I can read it! The one through whom I was found by You is also the one who would like me to be found by Beelzebub. And he drove me to this hour, and he drove You to it, Master, because You suffer as much as I do, perhaps more, and he drove me to this hour to make me fall back into despair and hatred. Because he is bad, cruel, envious. And much more. Judas of Kerioth is the dark soul amongst Your servants, who are all as clear as light... »

« Do not say that, John. He is not the only one missing. They were all away for the Dedication, with the exception of the Zealot, who has no family. One cannot come from Kerioth in this season in a few stages. It is about two hundred miles' walk. And it was fair that he should go and see his mother, like Thomas. I spared also Nathanael, because he is old, and Philip, to give him as a companion to Nathanael... »

« Yes. Three more are absent... But, o good Jesus! You know men's hearts, because You are the Holy One. But You are not the only one to know them! Also the wicked know the wicked, because they know one another. I was wicked, and I saw myself again, with my worst instincts, in Judas. But I forgive him. For one

reason only I forgive him for sending me to die so far away: because it was just through him that I came to You. And may God forgive him for the rest... for all the rest. »

Jesus does not deny... He is silent. The apostles look at one another while pushing the cart on the slippery road.

It is almost night when they reach the town, where unknown amongst unknown people, they put up at a hotel situated on the southern end of the town. It is on the brink of a gorge, which makes one giddy looking down it, as it so steep and deep. At the bottom: a noise and nothing else in the shadow of peace already in the valley, where a torrent roars.

315. Jesus' Farewell to the Two Disciples.

1st November 1945.

It is along the same road, which in any case is the only one in this village that looks like an eagle's nest on a solitary mountain top, that they set out again the following day, tormented by cold wet weather hindering their march. John of Endor also is compelled to get off the cart, because a downhill road is more dangerous than an uphill one, and if the donkey by itself would be in no danger, the weight of the cart, thrust forward by the slope, makes the situation very awkward for the poor animal. The apostles also are in trouble today, as they perspire not pushing but holding back the vehicle, which might crash down causing a disaster or, at least, the loss of the load.

The road is dreadful for about one third of its total length, the last stretch towards the valley. It then forks, and the branch running westwards becomes more comfortable and level. They stop to rest wiping their perspiration and Peter rewards the donkey, which is shaking its ears trembling and panting, obviously engrossed in deep meditation on the painful situation of donkeys and the whims of men who choose certain roads. Apparently Simon of Jonah ascribes to such considerations the thoughtful expression of the animal and to raise its spirits he hangs from its neck a bag of small beans, and while the donkey crushes the hard food with greedy relish, the men also eat bread and cheese and drink milk of which their little flasks are full.

The meal is over. But Peter wants to water « his Antonius that deserves more honour than Caesar » he says, and taking a bucket from the cart he fetches some water from a torrent flowing towards the sea.

« We can go now... And we would like to trot the donkey because I think that the country is flat beyond that hill... But we cannot. However, we shall proceed fast. Come on, John, and you, woman. Get on and let us go. »

« I am getting on as well, Simon, and I will drive. You will all follow us... » says Jesus as soon as the two are in the cart.

« Why? Are You not well? You look so pale!... »

« No, Simon. I want to speak to them alone... » and He points at the two, who have also turned pale, as they realise that the moment of farewell has come.

« Ah! All right. Get on and we will follow You. »

Jesus sits on the plank used as a seat by the driver and says: « Come here beside Me, John. And you, Syntyche, come near Me... »

John sits on the Lord's left and Syntyche at His feet, almost on the edge of the cart, with her back to the road, and her face raised towards Jesus. In her present position, sitting on her heels, relaxed as if she were burdened by a weight exhausting her, her hands abandoned on her lap and clasped to hold them still, as they were trembling, with her tired face and most beautiful dark violet eyes dimmed by the many tears shed, in the shade of her veil and mantle lowered over her forehead, she seems a desolate Pieta.

Not to mention John!... I think that if his scaffold were at the bottom of the road, he would not be so upset.

The donkey is now ambling and is so obedient and sensible that Jesus is not compelled to keep a close watch on it. And Jesus takes advantage of the situation to drop the reins and take John's hand and lay the other one on Syntyche's head.

« My children, I thank you for all the joy you have given Me. This has been for Me a year strewn with flowers of joy, because I was able to take your souls and hold them in front of Me, to hide the ugly things of the world, to scent the air corrupted by the sins of the world, to instil kindness into Myself and confirm My hope that My mission is not useless. Marjiam, you, My John, Ermasteus, you, Syntyche, Mary of Lazarus, Alexander Misace and others... The triumphal flowers of the Saviour, Whom only people with upright hearts can perceive as such... Why are you shaking your head, John? »

« Because You are good and You are putting me amongst people with right hearts. But my sin is always present to me... »

« Your sin is the fruit of the flesh stirred by two wicked people. Your heart's righteousness is the substratum of your honest ego, desirous of honest things, but unfortunate because they were taken away from you by death or by wickedness, but even so your ego was not less alive under the burden of so much grief. It was sufficient for the voice of the Saviour to penetrate into the depth of your heart, where your ego was languishing, and you sprang to your feet, shaking every burden off you, to come to Me. Is it not so? So you are righteous of heart. More, much more than others who do not have your sin, but have many worse ones, because they were premeditated and stubbornly preserved alive...

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May you, therefore, you the flowers of My triumph as Saviour, be blessed. In this dull hostile world, which sates the Saviour with bitterness and disgust, you have represented love. Thank you! In the most grievous hours of this year I bore you in mind to be comforted and supported. In the more grievous ones, which I am to suffer, I will bear you even more in mind. Until My death. And you will be with Me for ever. I promise you.

I entrust you with My dearest interests, that is, the preparation of My Church in Asia Minor, where I cannot go, because the place of My mission is here, in Palestine, and also because the backward mentality of the mighty ones in Israel would injure Me in every possible way, if I went elsewhere. I wish I had more Johns and more Syntyches for other countries, so that My apostles would find the soil already ploughed to spread the seed in the hour to come!

Be kind and patient, and strong at the same time, in order to penetrate and tolerate. You will come across dullness and mockery. Do not let that discourage you. Say: "We are eating the same bread and drinking the same chalice as our Jesus is". You are not worth more than your Master and you cannot expect to have a better lot. This is the greatest fortune: to share the lot of the Master. I give you one order only: do not be disheartened, do not endeavour to give yourselves an answer to why you have been sent away; you are not being sent into exile, as John is inclined to think, nay you are being placed on the threshold of your Fatherland before everybody else, because you are perfected servants, as no one else is. Heaven has come down upon you like a maternal veil and the King of Heaven is already welcoming you to His bosom, and will protect you under His bright wings of love, as the first-born of the numberless swarm of the servants of God, of the Word of God, Who in the name of the Father and of the Eternal Spirit blesses you now and for ever.

And pray for Me, the Son of Man, Who is going towards all the tortures of the Redeemer. Oh! My Humanity is about to be crushed by the most bitter experience!... Pray for Me. I will need your prayers... They will be caresses... They will be professions of love... They will help Me, that I may not go to the extent of saying: "The whole of Mankind is made of demons"...

Goodbye, John! Kiss Me goodbye... Do not weep... I would have kept you with Me, at the cost of tearing bits of flesh off My body, had I not seen all the good that this separation will bring about both for you and for Me. Eternal good... Goodbye, Syntyche. Yes, you may kiss My hands, but bear in mind that, if the difference of sex prevents Me from kissing you as a sister, I give My brotherly kiss to your soul... And let your souls wait for Me. I will come. I will be close to your work and to your souls. I certainly will, because if My love for man has closed My divine Nature in mortal flesh, it did not limit its freedom. And as God I am free to go to

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those who deserve to have God with them. Goodbye, My children, The Lord is with you... »

And He tears Himself away from the convulsive grip of John, who had grasped His shoulders, and of Syntyche, who was clinging to His knees, and He jumps from the cart, waving goodbye to His apostles, running away along the road He came, as fast as a chased deer... The donkey has stopped, feeling that the reins, which were previously on Jesus' knees, had dropped completely. The eight astonished apostles have a so stopped and are looking at the Master Who is moving farther and farther away.

« He was weeping... » whispers John.

« And He was as pale as a dead body... » whispers James of Alphaeus.

« He has not even taken His sack... There it is on the cart... » remarks the other James.

« And what will He do now? » asks Matthew.

Judas of Alphaeus shouts at the top of his powerful voice: « Jesus! Jesus! Jesus!... »The echo of the hills replies far away: « Jesus! Jesus! Jesus!... » But the green trees at a bend of the road conceal the Master, Who does not even look back to see who is calling Him...

« He has gone... All we can do is to go as well... » says Peter desolately, getting on the cart and taking the reins to spur the donkey.

And the cart starts off and its squeaking is mingled with the rhythmical sound of the iron shoes of the donkey and the anguished weeping of the two disciples, who forlorn on the bottom of the cart are moaning: « We will never see Him again, never, never again... »

316. Jesus' Sorrow, Prayer and Penance.

2nd November 1945.

Jesus is once again at the foot of the massive height on which Jiphthahel is built. But He is not on the main road (let us call it so) or mule-track, along which the cart came. He is instead on a little footpath fit for ibexes, so steep it is, strewn with large stone splinters and deep crevices, and seems to be stuck on to the mountain side; I would say that it is engraved on the vertical face of the mountain, which looks as if it were scratched by a huge claw. At its edge there is a precipice, a sheer deep drop, at the bottom of which an angry torrent foams along. To slip there means to fall hopelessly, bouncing from one bush to another of bramble or other wild plants, which have grown between the crevices of the rocks, I do not know how, as they have not come up vertically, as is normal with plants, but obliquely and even horizontally, compelled by their ubication. To slip there means to be torn to pieces by the

thorns of such plants, or to have one's back broken by the impact on rigid tree trunks protruding over the abyss. To slip there means to be lacerated by the sharp-edged stones sticking out from the face of the precipice. To slip there means to drop bleeding and in pieces into the foamy water of the angry torrent and be drowned, and lie submerged on a bed of pointed rocks and be lashed by the impetuous water. And yet Jesus is walking along that path, that scratch in the rock, which is even more dangerous because of the dampness that rises steaming from the torrent, or drops from the overhanging surface and from the plants growing on that vertical face, which I would say is lightly concave.

He proceeds slowly, cautiously, watching each step on the sharp stones, some of which are wobbly, at times He is compelled to squeeze against the mountain side when the path narrows; and to pass over some particularly dangerous spots, He has to get hold of branches hanging from the rocks. He goes round the western side thus and reaches the southern one, where the mountain, after a perpendicular drop from the summit, becomes more concave than elsewhere, allowing the path thus to widen a little, but reducing its height, so that Jesus now and again must lower His head to avoid knocking it against the rocks.

Perhaps He intends to stop there, where the path ends abruptly, because of a landslide. But when He sees that under the cliff there is a cave, a fissure in the mountain rather than a cave, He lets Himself down among the fallen stones. He goes in. There is a cleft at first, then a large grotto inside, as if the mountain had been hollowed out a long time ago by man, for some unknown reason. One can clearly see that the natural curves of the rock have been enlarged by man, who, on the side opposite the entrance, opened a narrow corridor, at the end of which there is a streak of light, and remote forests can be seen, which proves that the corridor cuts through the mountain spur from the southern side to the eastern one.

Jesus slips into the narrow semidark tunnel and goes along it until He reaches its opening, which is above the road on which He came with the apostles and the cart to go up to Jiphthahel. The mountains surrounding the lake of Galilee are in front of Him, beyond the valley, and to the north-east the great Hermon shines in its snowy mantle. Rough steps have been dug on the mountain side, which is not so steep here, neither upwards nor downwards and the steps lead to the mule-track, which is in the valley, and also to the mountain top where is Jiphthahel.

Jesus is satisfied with His exploration. He goes back into the large cave and looks for a sheltered place where He heaps up dry leaves that the wind has blown inside. A very poor pallet, a thin layer of dry leaves laid between His body and the bare icy soil...

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He drops on it and remains inert, lying with His hands under His head, staring at the rocky vault, absorbed, I would say bewildered, like one who bears a strain or is struck by sorrow greater than one's strength.

Then tears, without sobs, begin to drop slowly from His eyes and stream down both sides of His face, disappearing in His hair, near His ears, and ending among the dry leaves... He weeps thus, for a long time, without speaking or moving... He then sits up, and with His head between His raised knees, embraced by His clasped hands, He calls His far away Mother, with all His soul: « Mother! Mother! Mother of Mine! My eternal sweetness! Oh! Mother, I wish You were near Me! Why do I not always have You, the only comfort of God? »

Only the hollow cave replies to His words and His sobs with the whisper of a faint echo, and it seems to be weeping and sobbing itself through its edges and rocks and the few and still small stalactites hanging in a corner, the one which is probably most exposed to the internal activity of water.

Jesus continues weeping, although more calmly, as if the simple invocation of His Mother consoled Him and His weeping slowly changes into a monologue. « They have gone... Why? Whose fault is it? Why did I have to grieve them thus? And grieve Myself, since the world fills each day of Mine with affliction?... Judas! »...

I wonder where Jesus' thought wanders when He lifts His head from His knees and looks in front of Himself with wide open eyes and the tense face of a person engrossed in the vision of future spiritual events or in deep meditation. He no longer weeps. But he is evidently suffering. He then seems to be replying to an invisible interlocutor. And He stands up to do so.

« I am a man, Father. I am the Man. The virtue of friendship, which was wounded and torn from Me, is writhing and moaning sorrowfully... I know that I must suffer everything. I know as God and as God I want it for the good of the world. As man also I know, because My divine spirit informs My humanity. And also as man I want it, for the good of the world. But how grievous it is, o Father! This hour is much more sorrowful than the one I lived with Your spirit and Mine in the desert... And much stronger is the present temptation not to love and not to bear at My side the slimy tortuous being, whose name is Judas, the cause of the deep sorrow with which I am sated and which tortures the souls to whom I had given peace. Father, I perceive it. You are becoming more and more severe as I approach the end of My expiation on behalf of Mankind. Your kindness is moving farther and farther away from Me, and Your countenance appears more and more severe to My spirit, which is rejected more and more into the depth, where Mankind, struck by Your punishment, has been moaning for

millennia. It was pleasant to suffer, pleasant was the way at the beginning of My life, it was pleasant also when from the son of a carpenter I became the Master of the world, tearing Myself away from a Mother to give You, Father, to man who had fallen. It was still pleasant to Me, as compared with the present hour, to struggle with the Enemy, in the Temptation in the desert. I faced him with the boldness of a hero with intact strength... Oh! Father!... My strength is now encumbered by the indifference of too many people and the knowledge of too many things... I knew that Satan would go, when the temptation was over, and he did go, and the angels came to comfort Your Son for being a man, subject to the temptation of the Demon. But the temptation will not cease now, after this hour, in which the Friend suffers because of the friends sent away, and because of the perjured friend who injures Him both when he is near and far away. It will not cease. Your angels will not come to comfort Me in this hour and after it. But the world will come, with all its hatred, its mockery and incomprehension. And the traitor who sold himself to Satan will come and he, the perjurer, will be more and more tortuous and slimy. Father!!... » It is really a cry of anguish, of fear and of invocation and Jesus is agitated and reminds me of the hour at Gethsemane.

« Father! I know. I can see... While I suffer here and will suffer, and I offer My suffering to You for his conversion and for those who have been torn away from My arms and who are going towards their destiny with broken hearts, he is selling himself to become greater than I am: the Son of Man! I am, am I not, the Son of Man? Yes, but I am not the only one. Children were born of mankind, of prolific Eve, and if I am Abel, the Innocent One, Cain is not missing among the children of Mankind. And if I am the First-Born, because I am what the children of man should have been, without stain in Your eyes, he, who was born in sin, is the first of what men have become after eating the poisoned fruit. And now, not satisfied with having in himself the disgusting blasphemous incentives of falsehood, anti-charity, of thirst for blood, of greed for money, of pride and lust, he is raving to be the man who becomes a demon, whilst he is a man who could become an angel... "And Lucifer wanted to be like God and was therefore driven out of Paradise and changed into a demon and he dwelt in Hell". But Father! Oh! Father! I love him... I still love him. He is a man... He is one of those for whom I left You... Save him, because of My humiliation... grant Me to redeem him, Most High Lord! I offer this penance more for him than for anybody else! Oh! I am aware of the incongruity of what I am asking, because I know everything!... But, Father, do not consider Me Your Word for a moment. Look only at the Humanity of the Just One... and let Me be for a moment only the "Man" in Your grace, the Man who is not

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aware of the future, who can deceive himself... the Man who not being aware of ineluctable fate can pray with absolute hope, to wring a miracle out of You. A miracle! A miracle of Jesus of Nazareth, for Jesus of Mary of Nazareth, Our eternal Beloved One! A miracle that violates what has been set down and cancels it! The salvation of Judas! He has lived beside Me, he has drunk in My words, has shared food with Me, has slept on My chest... No, do not let him be My satan!... I am not asking You not to be betrayed... That must happen, and will happen... so that all falsehood may be cancelled by My sorrow of being betrayed, as all avarice may be expiated by My grief for being sold, as amends may be made for all blasphemy through My torment at being cursed, and faith may be given to those who are and will be without faith, through My torture at not being believed, and all the sins of flesh may be cleansed by My being scourged... But I beg You: not him, not Judas, My friend, My apostle! I would like no one to be a traitor... No one... Not even the remotest inhabitant of the hyperborean ice fields or of the torrid zone... I would like You alone to be the Sacrificer... as You already have been in the past when You set fire to the holocausts by means of Your flames... But since I am to die by the hand of man, and since the traitor friend will be a more brutal executioner than the real executioner, the putrid traitor who will have in himself the stench of Satan, and is already inhaling it to be like Me in power... that is what he thinks in his pride and lust... since I am to die by the hand of man, Father, do not let him whom I called friend and I loved as such, be My Traitor. Increase My torment, Father, but give Me Judas' soul... I am putting this prayer on the altar of My victim Person... Accept it, Father!... Heaven is closed and silent!... Is this therefore the horror that I shall have with Me until My Death? Heaven is silent and closed!... Is this therefore the silence and the prison in which I shall breathe My last? Heaven is closed and silent!... Is this therefore the supreme torture of the Martyr?... Father, may Your will be done, not Mine... But because of My suffering, oh! grant Me at least this: give peace and illusion to Judas' other martyr, to John of Endor, Father... He is really better than many. He has already gone a long way, such as few are or will be able to go. Redemption has already been completed for him. Give him, therefore, Your total complete peace, so that I may have him in My Glory, when everything will be completed also for Me in Your honour and obedience... Father!... »

Jesus has slowly fallen on His knees and is now weeping with His face on the ground, and while He prays the light of the short winter day fades precociously in the dark cavern, and the roar of the torrent seems to grow louder as the shade in the valley becomes darker...

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317. Leaving Ptolemais for Tyre.

3rd November 1945.

The town of Ptolemais looks as if it is to remain overwhelmed by a low leaden sky, without a gleam of azure, without any change in its dullness. There is not a cloud, a cirrus, a nimbus sailing all alone in the closed vault of heaven. The firmament looks like a solid convex heavy lid on the point of crashing on a case. A huge lid of dirty, sooty, dull, oppressive tin. The white houses of the town seem to be made of chalk, of coarse rough chalk that looks desolate in this light... the green of evergreens seems dull and sad, the faces of people look wan or ghastly and the shades of their clothes colourless. The town is stifled with heavy sirocco.

The sea matches the sky with similar deadly dullness. An infinite, still, lonely sea. It is not even leaden, it would be wrong to describe it as such. It is a limitless expanse, and I would say rippleless, of an oily substance, as grey, I suppose, as lakes of crude petroleum must be, or rather, if it were possible, lakes of silver mixed with soot and ashes, to make a pomade with a special brightness of quartziferous scales, which however is so deadly dull that it does not seem to shine. Its gleaming is noticed only through the discomfort it causes to one's eyes, dazzled by such flickering of blackish mother-of-pearl, which tires them without delighting them. There is not a wave as far as the eyes can see. One can see as far as the horizon, where the dead sea touches the dead sky, without seeing a wave stir; but one realises that the water is not solidified because there is an underwater gurgle, which is hardly perceptible on the surface through the dark glittering of the water. The sea is so still that at the shore the water is as motionless as the water in a vat, without the slightest indication of waves or surf. And the sand bears clean marks of dampness at a metre or little more from the water, proving thus that for many hours there has been no movement of waves on the shore. There is dead calm.

The few boats in the harbour do not stir. They are so still that they seem to be nailed on a solid substance, and the few strips of cloth stretched out on the high decks, ensigns or garments, whatever they may be, are hanging motionless.

The apostles with the two bound for Antioch are coming from a lane in the working-class district near the harbour. I do not know what has happened to the donkey and the cart. They are not there. Peter and Andrew are carrying one chest, James and John the other one, while Judas of Alphaeus is carrying on his shoulder the dismantled loom and Matthew, James of Alphaeus and Simon Zealot are laden with all the bags, including Jesus'. Syntyche is holding only a basket with foodstuffs. John of Endor is not carrying anything. They walk fast among the people coming back mostly from the market with their shopping, while seamen are hastening

towards the port to load or unload ships or repair them, according to their requirements.

Simon of Jonah is proceeding resolutely. He must be already aware of where to go, because he does not look around. He is flushed while holding the chest, on one side, by a loop of a rope which serves as a handle, and Andrew does likewise on the other side. And one can see, both in them and in their companions, their efforts in carrying their weights, as the muscles of their calves and arms bulge, in fact, in order to move freely, they are wearing only short sleeveless undertunics and are thus like porters hurrying from warehouses to ships or vice versa, doing their work. They thus pass by completely unnoticed.

Peter does not go to the large quay, but along a squeaky footbridge he goes to the little one, a little arched pier forming another much narrower dock for fishing boats. He looks around and cries out.

A man replies, standing up in a stout rather large boat. « Do you really want to go? Mind you, sails are of no use today. You will have to row. »

« It will warm me up and give me an appetite. »

« But are you really capable of sailing? »

« Hey! man! I could not say "mummy" yet, and my father had already put line and sail ropes in my hands. I sharpened my milkteeth on them... »

« It's because... you know... this boat is all my wealth... you know?... »

« You already told me yesterday... Don't you know any other song? »

« I know that if you go to the bottom, I will be ruined and... »

« I will be ruined, because I shall lose my life, not you! »

« But this is all I own, it's my bread, my joy and the joy of my wife, it's my little girl's dowry, and... »

« Ugh! Listen, don't get on my nerves, which are already seized with a cramp... a cramp! more dreadful than a swimmer's. I have given you so much that I could say: "I bought your boat", I did not haggle over the price requested by you, you sea-thief, I proved to you that I am more familiar with oars and sails than you are, and everything was settled. Now, if the leek-salad you had last night and your mouth stinks like a bilge - has given you nightmares and remorse, I don't care. The business was done in the presence of two witnesses, one was yours and the other one mine, and that's all. Get out of there, you shaggy crab, and let me get in. »

« But I... at least some guarantee... If you die, who will pay for my ship? »

« Your ship? Are you calling this hollowed pumpkin a ship? You miserable proud man! But I will reassure you, providing you make

up your mind: I will give you another hundred drachmas. With this lot and what you wanted as rent you can buy three more of such moles... No, just a moment. No money. You would be equally capable of saying that I am mad and asking for more when I come back. Because I will come back, you may rest assured. Even if I have to come back to teach you a lesson by boxing your ears if you have given me a boat with a faulty keel. I will pledge the donkey and cart to you... No! Not even that! I will not trust you with my Antonius. You might change trade and from a boatman become a carter, and slink off while I -am away. And my Antonius is worth your boat ten times over. It is better if I give you some money. But mind you, it is a pledge, and you will give it back to me when I come back. Is that clear? Hey, you of the boat! Who is from Ptolemais? »

Three faces appear from a nearby boat: « We are. »

« Come here. »

« No, it's not necessary. Let us settle the matter between ourselves » begs the boatman.

Peter scans his face, ponders upon it, and when he sees that the other man leaves the boat and hastens to put on board the loom that Judas had left on the ground, he whispers: « I see! ». He shouts to those in the other boat: « It's no longer necessary. Stay where you are » and taking some coins out of a small purse, he counts them and kisses them saying: « Goodbye, my dear! » and he hands them to the boatman.

« Why did you kiss them? » asks the amazed man.

« Just a... rite. Goodbye, you thief! Come on, all of you. And you, man, at least hold the boat. You will count them later and will find that they are right. I do not want to be your companion in hell, you know? I am not a thief. Heave ho! Heave ho! » and he pulls the first chest on board. He then helps the others to stow theirs, as well as the bags and everything else, balancing the weight and arranging the various items so as to be free to manoeuvre. And after the objects he arranges the passengers. « You can see that I know how to do it, you blood-sucker! Let go and go to your destiny. » And with Andrew he presses an oar against the little pier to depart from it.

When the boat is in the flow of the current he hands the rudder over to Matthew saying: « You used to come and catch us when we were out fishing, in order to fleece us properly and you can handle it fairly well » and he sits on the first bench at the prow, with his back to the bows, and Andrew sits beside him. James and John of Zebedee are sitting in front of them and are rowing with strong regular strokes.

The boat is sailing fast and smoothly, although it has a heavy load, skimming the sides of large ships, from the boards of which words can be heard praising their perfect rowing. Then there is the

open sea, beyond the break-waters... The whole of Ptolemais appears before the eyes of the departing group, as the town is stretched along the beach with the port to the south. There is dead silence in the boat. Only the squeaking of the oars in the rowlocks can be heard.

After a long while, when Ptolemais has already been left behind, Peter says: « However, if there had been a little wind... But nothing! Not a breath of it!... »

« Providing it does not rain!... » says James of Zebedee.

« H'm! It looks very much like it... »

There is silence for a long time while the men row hard.

Then Andrew asks: « Why did you kiss the coins? »

« Because those who part always greet one another. I will never see them again. And I am sorry. I would have preferred to give them to some poor wretch... Never mind! The boat is really a good one, it is strong and well built. It is the best one in Ptolemais. That is why I gave in to the demands of the owner. Also to avoid many questions about our destination. That is why I said to him: "To make purchases at the white Garden"... Ah! It's beginning to rain. Cover yourselves up, you who are in a position to do so, and you, Syntyche, give John his egg. It's time... Much more so, because with a sea like this, nothing will upset his stomach... And what will Jesus be doing? I wonder what He is doing! With no clothes, no money! Where will He be now? »

« He will certainly be praying for us » replies John of Zebedee.

« Very well. But where?... »

Nobody can say where. And the boat proceeds heavily, laboriously, under a leaden sky, on the grey bitumenous sea, in a drizzling rain as fine as fog and as boring as protracted tickling. The mountains, which after a flat area are now close to the sea, look livid in the foggy air. The sea nearby continues to irritate one's eyes with its strange phosphorence, and farther away it fades into a hazy veil.

« We will stop at that village to rest and eat » says Peter who rows untiringly. The others agree.

They reach the village. A little group of fishermen's houses built on a mountain spur protruding towards the sea.

« It is not possible to land here. There is no bottom... » grumbles Peter. « Well, we shall eat where we are. »

In fact the oarsmen eat with appetite, whereas the two exiles take some food unwillingly. It begins and stops raining alternately.

The village is deserted as if there were no inhabitants in it. And yet flights of doves from one house to another and clothes hanging Out on roof-terraces prove that there are people in it. At last a halfnaked man appears in the street and goes towards a little beached boat.

« Hey, man! Are you a fisherman? » shouts Peter holding his hands like a speaking-trumpet.

« Yes. » His assent is heard feebly owing to the distance.

« What will the weather be like? »

« Long sea shortly. If you are not from this place, I tell you to round the cape at once. Over there it is not so rough, particularly if you keep close to the shore, which you can do, as the sea is deep. But go at once... »

« Yes, I will. Peace to you! »

« Peace and good luck to you. »

« Let's go then » says Peter to his companions. « And may God be with us. »

« He certainly is. Jesus is certainly praying for us » replies Andrew resuming rowing.

But the sea is, in fact, already long and the waves push and drag the poor boat alternately, while the rain becomes thicker... and a blustery wind joins in to torture the poor people in the boat. Simon of Jonah gratifies it with all the most picturesque epithets, because it is a wicked wind that cannot be used to sail and it pushes the boat towards the rocks of the cape, which is now close at hand. The boat proceeds with difficulty in the curve of the little gulf, which is as black as ink. They row with difficulty, flushing, sweating, clenching their teeth, without wasting the least particle of strength in words. The others, sitting opposite them - I can see their backs - are silent in the boring rain: John and Syntyche in the centre, near the sail mast, Alphaeus' sons behind them, Matthew and Simon are last, struggling to hold the rudder straight against each breaker.

It is a difficult task to round the cape. But they succeed at last... And the oarsmen, who must be exhausted, have a little rest. They consult whether they should take shelter in a little village beyond the cape. But the idea prevails that « the Master is to be obeyed even against common sense. And He said that they must arrive at Tyre in one day ». So they go on...

The sea calms all of a sudden. They notice the phenomenon and James of Alphaeus says: « The reward of obedience. »

« Yes, Satan has gone because he did not succeed in making us disobey » confirms Peter.

« But we shall arrive at Tyre at night. We have been greatly delayed... » says Matthew.

« It does not matter. We shall go to bed and we shall look for the ship tomorrow » replies Simon Zealot.

« But shall we find it? »

« Jesus said so. So we shall find it » says Thaddeus confidently.

« We can hoist the sail, brother » remarks Andrew. « The wind is favourable and we will move fast. »

The wind in fact fills the sail, although not very much, but enough to make rowing less necessary and the boat glides, as if it had been lightened, towards Tyre, the promontory of which, or rather, its isthmus, is white, to the north, in the last light of the day.

And night falls fast. And it is strange, after so much dullness of sky, to see stars appear in an unforeseeable clear sky and the Great Bear shine brightly in its stars, while the sea is illuminated by placid moonlight, which is so white that it seems to be dawning after a painful day, without an intervening night...

John of Zebedee looks at the sky and smiles and he suddenly begins to sing, pulling his oar with his song and modulating his words to the rhythm of rowing:

« Hail, Star of the Morning,
Jasmine of the night,
Golden Moon of my Heaven,
Holy Mother of Jesus.
The sailor hopes in You,
Who suffers and dies dreams of You,
Shine, holy pious Star,
Upon those who love You, Mary!... »

He sings out happily in a tenor voice.

« What are you doing? We are talking of Jesus and you are singing of Mary? » asks his brother.

« He is in Her and She is in Him. But He is because She was... Let me sing... » And he starts singing with his whole heart, leading all the others...

They thus reach Tyre where they land without any difficulty in the little port, south of the isthmus, lit up by lamps hanging from many boats, with the help also of people present there.

While Peter and James remain in the boat to look after the chests, the others, with a man from another boat, go to a hotel to rest.

318. Departure from Tyre on a Cretan Ship.

4th November 1945.

Tyre awakes among gusts of mistral. The sea is sparkling with bright white-blue little waves, under a blue sky and white cirri moving up there, as the foaming waves move down here. The sun is enjoying a clear day after so much dull bad weather.

« I see » says Peter, standing up in the boat where he slept. « It's time to go. And "it" (and he points at the sea, which is rough even within the entrance of the port) sprayed us with lustral water...

H'm! Let us go and fulfil the second part of the sacrifice... Tell me, James... Don't you think that we are taking two victims to be sacrificed? I do. »

« So do I, Simon. And... I thank the Master for thinking highly of us. But... I would have preferred not to see so much grief. And I would never have thought I was to see all this... »

« Neither would I... But... You know? I say that the Master would not have done this, if the Sanhedrin had not poked their noses into the matter... »

« He in fact said so... But who told the Sanhedrin? That is what I would like to know... »

« Who? Eternal God, make me be silent and do not let me think! I made this vow to get rid of the suspicion that tortures me. Help me, James, not to think. Speak of something else. »

« Of what? Of the weather? »

« Yes, it's better. »

« The trouble is that I know nothing about the sea... »

« I think that we are going to be tossed... » says Peter looking at the sea.

« No! Only small waves. It's nothing. It was worse yesterday. It will be lovely to look at this moderate sea from the upper deck of the ship. John will like it... It will make him sing. Which ship will it be? »

He stands up as well, looking at the ships on the other side, the high superstructures of which become visible particularly when their boat is raised by the up-and-down motion of the waves. They examine the various ships, guessing... The port is becoming alive with people.

Peter asks a boatman, or the like, who is bustling on the -dock: « Can you tell me whether in the port over there, there is the ship of... wait a moment till I read his name... (and he takes out of his belt a tied parchment), here it is: Nicomedes Philadelphius of Philip, a Cretan from Paleocaster... »

« Oh! The great navigator! Who does not know him? I think that he is known not only from the Pearl Gulf to the pillars of Hercules, but also as far as the cold seas, where they say that night lasts for months! You are a sailor, how come you do not know him? »

« No. I don't know him, but I shall soon meet him, because I am looking for him on behalf of our friend Lazarus of Theophilus, formerly governor in Syria. »

« Ah! When I was a sailor - I am old now - he was in Antioch... Wonderful times... Your friend? And you are looking for Nicomedes, the Cretan? You need not worry, then. See that ship over there, the highest one, with flying colours? That's his ship. He will sail before the sixth hour. He is not afraid of the sea!... »

« In fact there is no need to be afraid of it. It's not really rough. » But a high wave gives him the lie, drenching both of them from

head to foot.

« Yesterday it was too calm, today too rough. It's really mad. I prefer the lake... » grumbles Peter drying his face.

« I advise you to go into the basin. Everybody goes there. »

« But we are leaving. We are going in the ship of... of... wait: Nicomedes, and all the rest! » says Peter who cannot -remember the strange names of the Cretan.

« You are not going to load your boat also on the ship? »

« Of course not! »

« Well, there is room in the basin for boats and men to look after them until you come back. A coin a day until you come back. I suppose you are coming back... »

« Certainly. We are going and will come back after seeing the state of Lazarus' garden, that's all. »

« Ah! You are his stewards? »

« Yes, and something more... »

« Well. Come with me. I will show you the place. It's really made for those who leave their boats there, like you... »

« Wait... Here are the others. We will be with you in a moment. » And Peter jumps on the quay and runs to meet his companions who are approaching.

« Did you sleep well, brother? » asks Andrew kindly.

« Like a baby in a cradle. And I was lulled to sleep with a lullaby... »

« I think that you had also a good wash » says Thaddeus smiling.

« Yes! The sea... is so kind that it washed my face to wake me up. »

« It looks very rough to me » remarks Matthew.

« Oh! But if you knew with whom we are going! One who is known even to the fish of the ice-cold seas. »

« Have you already seen him? »

« No, but I was told by one who says that there is a place for boats, a depot... Come, we will unload the chests and will go, because Nicodemus, no, Nicomedes, the Cretan, will be sailing soon. »

« In the Cyprus channel we shall be tossed about in good style » says John of Endor.

« Shall we? » asks Matthew anxiously.

« Yes. But God will help us. »

They are near their boat once again.

« Here we are, man. We are unloading this luggage and then we will go, since you are so kind. »

« We help one another... » says the man from Tyre.

« Of course! We help one another, we ought to help one another. We ought to love one another, because that is the Law of God... »

« I am told that a new Prophet has risen in Israel and that is what He preaches. Is it true? »

« Is it true! That and much more! And the miracles that He works!

3-1494

Come on, Andrew, heave ho! heave ho! a little to your right. Right, when the wave lifts the boat... There you are, it's up!... I was saying, man: and what miracles! Dead people rise from death, sick people are cured, the blind see, thieves repent and even... See? If He were here, He would say to the sea: "Be still" and the sea would calm down... Can you manage, John? Wait, I'll come and help you. Hold the boat still and close... Up, up... a little more... Simon, take the handle... Watch your hand, Judas! Up, up... Thank you, man... Watch you don't fall into the water, you sons of Alphaeus... Up... Here we are! Praised be the Lord! We had less trouble in stowing them than in pulling them up... But my arms are sore after yesterday's exercise... So, I was saying about the sea... »

« But is it true? »

« True? I was there and saw it! »

« Were you? Oh!... But where was it? »

« On the lake of Gennesaret. Come in the boat, while going to the basin, I will tell you... » and he goes away with the man and James, rowing in the canal towards the basin.

« And Peter says that he does not know how to do... » remarks the Zealot. « Instead he has a talent for telling things in a simple way and he is more efficient than anybody else. »

« What I like so much in him is his honesty » says the man from Endor.

« And his perseverance » adds Matthew.

« And his humility. He does not pride himself on being our "head"! He works more than anybody and worries more about us than about himself... » says James of Alphaeus.

« And he is so virtuous in his feelings. A good brother. Nothing more... » concludes Syntyche.

« So it is all settled: you will be considered as brother and sister? » the Zealot asks the two disciples after some time.

« Yes, it is better so. And it is not a lie, it is spiritual truth. He is my elder brother, of different marriage, but of the same father. The Father is God, the different marriages: Israel and Greece; and John is older, as one can see, by age, and - and one cannot see it but it is true - by being a disciple before me. Here is Simon coming back... »

« It's all done. Let's go. »

Through the narrow isthmus they pass into the other port carrying the chests on their shoulders. The man from Tyre, familiar as he is with the place, takes them through the narrow passages between piles of bales of goods under very wide sheds, to the powerful ship of the Cretan, who is preparing to depart. He shouts to those on board to lower the gangway that they had already lifted.

« It's not possible. We have finished loading » shouts the head of the crew.

3-1495

« He has letters to hand to you » says the man pointing to Simon of Jonah.

« Letters? From whom? »

« From Lazarus of Theophilus, the former governor of Antioch. »

« Ah! I will tell the boss. »

Simon says to the other Simon and to Matthew: « You will speak now. I am too coarse to speak to a man like him... »

« No. You are the head and you will speak because you are doing very well. We will help you, eventually. But there will be no need. »

« Where is the man with the letters? Let him come up » says a man as swarthy as an Egyptian: he is thin, handsome, agile, severe looking, about forty years old, or a little older, and looks down from the high ship's side. And he orders the gangway to be lowered.

Simon of Jonah, who has put on his tunic and mantle while waiting for a reply, goes up with a dignified bearing. The Zealot and Matthew follow him.

« Peace to you, man » greets Peter gravely.

« Hail. Where is the letter? » asks the Cretan.

« Here it is. »

The Cretan breaks the seal, unfolds the roll and reads.

« The messengers of Theophilus' family are welcome! The Cretans have not forgotten that he was good and kind. But be quick. Have you much to load? »

« What you see on the quay. »

« And how many are you... »

« Ten. »

« Good. We will find accommodation for the woman. You will adapt yourselves as best you can. Quick. We must set sail before the wind becomes stronger and that will happen after the sixth hour. »

With rending whistling he orders the chests to be loaded and stowed. Then the apostles and the two disciples go on board. The gangway is lifted, the ship's side is closed, the moorings are picked up, the sails are hoisted. And the ship sets out rolling steeply while leaving the harbour. Then the sails stretch out creaking, as the wind fills them, and pitching heavily the ship puts out to sea sailing fast towards Antioch...

Notwithstanding the very strong wind, John and Syntyche, one close to the other, holding on to a tackle, aft, are looking at the coast, the land of Palestine move away, and they weep...

3-1496

319. Storm and Miracles on the Ship.

5th November 1945.

The Mediterranean is an enraged expanse of green-blue water, with very high foam-crested billows clashing one against the other. There is no thick fog today. But the sea water, pulverised by the continuous pounding of breakers, is turned into a burning salty dust that penetrates even into people's clothes, reddens eyes, irritates throats, and seems to spread like a veil of salt powder everywhere, both in the air, making it opaque as thin fog does, and on things that seem sprayed with bright flour: the minute salt crystals. That happens, however, where there is no pounding of billows, or where the waves do not wash the deck from one side to the other, crashing on to it, rushing over the ship's side, then falling again into the sea, with the roar of a waterfall, through bilge drain holes in the opposite side. And the ship rises and plunges into the water, a twig at the mercy of the ocean, a mere nothing compared to it, squeaking and moaning from the bilges to the tops of the masts... The sea is really the master and the ship its plaything...

With the exception of those manoeuvring the boat, no one is on the deck. There are no goods either, only the lifeboats. And the crewmen, first of all the Cretan Nicomedes, half-naked, rolling like the ship, run here and there, refitting and securing, a difficult task because of the flooded slippery deck. The locked hatchways make it impossible to see what is happening below deck. But I am sure that they cannot be very happy down there!...

I cannot make out where they are, because there is nothing but sea around and a remote coast, which appears to be a mountainous one, with real mountains, not hills. I would say that they have been sailing for more than one day, because it is certainly morning, as the sun, which appears and disappears among thick clouds, is shining from the east.

I think that the ship is making little progress, notwithstanding that she is tossed about so much. And the sea seems to become more and more precipitous.

With a frightening crash a part of a mast, the precise name of which I do not know, breaks off, and in falling, dragged by an avalanche of water which collapses on the deck together with a real whirlwind, knocks down part of the ship's side.

Those below must feel that the ship is foundering... And that is proved, after a moment, when a hatch is half-opened and Peter's grey haired head juts out. He looks around, sees, and closes the hatch just in time to prevent a torrent- of water from falling through it. But later, in a moment of calm, he opens it again and jumps out. He clings to supports and watches all hell let loose and he whistles and mumbles commenting the situation.

Nicomedes sees him: « Away! Go away! » he shouts. « Close that hatch. If the ship becomes heavier, she will sink. We are lucky if I do not have to throw the cargo overboard... Never seen a storm like this! I'm telling you, get away! I don't want landlubbers in my way. This is no place for gardeners, and... » He cannot continue because another wave sweeps the deck drenching all those on it. « See? » he shouts to Peter who is dripping wet.

« I see. But it doesn't surprise me. I am not capable only of looking after gardens. I was born on water, of a lake, that's true... But even a lake!... Before being a gardener I was a fisherman and I know... »

Peter is very calm and he knows how to be with the rolling of the ship perfectly well with his sturdy legs wide apart. The Cretan watches him while he moves to go near him.

« Are you not afraid? » he asks him.

« I wouldn't dream of it! »

« And the others? »

« Three are fishermen like me, that is, they were... The others, with the exception of the sick man, are strong. »

« Also the woman?... Watch! Look out! Hold on! »

Another avalanche of water invades the deck. Peter waits until it is over and then says: « I could have done with this coolness last summer... Never mind! You were asking what the woman is doing. She is praying... and you had better do the same. But where are we now, exactly? In the Cyprus channel? »

« I wish we were! I would sail to the island and wait for the elements to calm. We are just off Colonia Julia, or Beritus, if you prefer so. Now we will get the worst of it... Those are the Lebanon mountains. »

« Could you not go in there, where the village is? »

« It's not a good port, reefs and rocks. It's not possible. Watch!... »

Another whirlwind and another piece of a mast falls striking a man, who is not washed overboard only because the wave carries him against an obstacle.

« Go below deck! Go! See? »

« I see, I see... but that man?... »

« If he is not dead he'll come round. I cannot look after him... You can see!... » In fact the Cretan has to have eyes in the back of his head for the sake of everybody's life.

« Give him to me. The woman will look after him...

Anything you want, but go away!... »

Peter creeps as far as the motionless man, gets hold of his foot and pulls him towards himself. He looks at him, whistles... He grumbles: « His head is split like a ripe pomegranate. The Lord should be here... Oh! if He were! Lord Jesus! My Master, why have You left us? » There is deep sorrow in his voice... He loads the dying

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man on his shoulder, being drenched himself with blood, and goes back to the hatch.

The Cretan shouts to him: « It's quite useless. Nothing doing. See!... »

But Peter, loaded as he is, makes a gesture as if to say: « We shall see » and he presses against a pole to resist a new wave. He then opens the hatch and shouts: « James, John, come here! » and with their help he lowers the wounded man, then descends himself securing the hatch.

In the smoky light of hanging lamps they see that Peter is bleeding: « Are you wounded? » they ask him.

« No, not I. It's his blood... But... you may as well pray because... Syntyche, look here. You told me once that you know how to cure wounded people. Look at this head... »

Syntyche leaves John of Endor, whom she was supporting, as he is suffering a great deal, and goes to the table on which they have laid the poor man, and she looks...

« A bad wound! I have seen the like twice, in two slaves, one was struck by his master, the other by a stone at Caprarola. I would need water, a lot of water to clean it and stop the blood... »

« If you want just water!... There is even too much! Come, James, with the tub. We will handle it better in two. »

They go and come back dripping wet. And Syntyche with wet cloths washes and applies compresses to the nape of his neck... But the wound is a nasty one. The bone is bare from the temple to the nape. And yet the man opens his eyes vaguely and grumbles while gasping for breath. He is seized by the instinctive fear of death.

« Good! Be good! You will recover » says the Greek woman comforting him with motherly love and she speaks to him in Greek as Greek is his language.

The man, although stunned, is amazed and looks at her with a faint smile upon hearing his mother tongue and searches for Syntyche's hand... man who becomes a child as soon as he suffers and looks for a woman who is always a mother in such cases.

« I am going to try with Mary's ointment » says Syntyche when the wound bleeds less.

« But that is for pains... » objects Matthew, who has turned deadly pale, I do not know whether because of the rough sea or at the sight of blood, or because of both.

« Oh! Mary prepared it, with Her own hands! I will use it praying... Will you pray, too. It can do no harm. Oil is always a medicine... »

She goes to Peter's sack, takes a vase out of it, a bronze vase I would say, opens it, and takes a little ointment, which she warms on a lamp in the same lid of the vase. She pours it on a folded piece of linen cloth and applies it to the wounded head. She then bandages

it tightly with linen strips. She places a folded mantle under the head of the wounded man who seems to doze off and she sits near him praying; the others also pray.

The storm is still raging on the deck and the ship is pitching awfully. After some time a hatch is opened and a sailor rushes in.

« What's the matter? » asks Peter.

« We are in danger. I have come to get incense and offerings for a sacrifice... »

« Forget about such nonsense! »

« But Nicomedes wants to sacrifice to Venus! We are in her sea... »

« Which is as frantic as she is » grumbles Peter in a low voice. Then a little louder: « You, come with me. Let's go on deck. Perhaps there is work to be done... Are you afraid to stay with the wounded man and those two? » The two are Matthew and John of Endor, who are worn out by seasickness.

« No. You may go » replies Syntyche.

While getting on deck they run into the Cretan who is endeavouring to light the incense and who attacks them furiously to send them below, shouting: « Can't you see that without a miracle we shall be shipwrecked? It's the first time! The first time since I have been sailing! »

« Just listen: he will now say that we have cast a spell! » whispers Judas of Alphaeus.

In fact the man shouts louder: « Cursed Israelites, what have you got on you? You dogs, you have cast a spell on me! Go away? I am now going to offer a sacrifice to new-born Venus... »

« No, not at all. We will sacrifice... »

« Go away! You are pagans, you are demons, you are... »

« Do you hear that? I swear to you that if you let us do what we want to do, you will see the miracle. »

« No. Go away! » and he lights the incense and he throws into the sea, as best he can, some liquids that he had previously offered and tasted, as well as some powders, which I do not recognise. But the waves put the incense out and the sea, instead of calming, rages more and more, washing away all the paraphernalia of the rite and nearly sweeping away Nicomedes as well...

« Your goddess is giving you a beautiful answer! It's our turn now. We have One as well, purer than that one made of foam, but then... Sing, John, as you did yesterday, and we will follow you, and let us see! »

« Yes, let us see! But if it comes to the worst, I will throw you overboard as propitiatory victims. »

« All right. Come on, John! »

And John strikes up his song, followed by all the others, including Peter, who usually does not sing, as he is always out of tune. The Cretan is watching them, with folded arms and a smile

that is half angry and half ironical. After the song, they pray with their arms stretched out. It must be the « Our Father » but it is in Hebrew and I do not understand it. They then sing louder. They thus alternate songs with prayers without fear or interruptions, although they are struck by the waves. They do not even hold on to supports, and yet they are so self-confident as if they were one thing with the wood of the deck. And the violence of the waves really begins to abate slowly. It does not cease completely, as the wind does not drop entirely. But the storm is not as furious as previously, neither do the waves wash the deck.

The face of the Cretan is a poem of amazement... Peter casts sidelong glances at him and continues praying. John smiles and sings louder... The others follow him exceeding the roar of the waves more and more clearly as the sea calms down into a normal motion and the wind begins to blow favourably.

« Well? What do you think of it?... »

« But what did you say? What formula is it? »

« That of the True God and of His holy Handmaid. You may hoist your sails and sort things out, here... Is that not an island? »

« Yes, it's Cyprus... And the sea is even calmer in its channel... How strange! But that star that you worship, who is it? Venus, isn't it? »

« You should say: that you venerate. We worship God only. But She has nothing to do with Venus. She is Mary. Mary of Nazareth, the Hebraic Mary, the Mother of Jesus, the Messiah of Israel. »

« And that other thing, what was it? That wasn't Hebrew... »

« No, it was our dialect, the dialect of our lake, of our fatherland. But we cannot tell you, a pagan. It's a speech addressed to Jehovah, and only believers can learn it. Goodbye, Nicomedes. And don't regret what has gone to the bottom. A... spell less to cause you misfortune. Goodbye, eh? Are you dumbfounded? »

« No... But... Excuse me... I insulted you! »

« Oh! It does not Matter! The effects of... Venus' cult... Come on, boys, let's go to the others... » and smiling happily Peter goes towards the hatchway.

The Cretan follows them: « Listen! And what about the man? Is he dead? »

« Not at all! We may give him back to you safe and sound very shortly... Just another trick of our... spells... »

« Oh! Please excuse me! But tell me, where can one learn them in order to be helped? I am prepared to pay for that... »

« Goodbye, Nicomedes! It's a long story... and it's not allowed... Sacred things are not to be given to heathens. Goodbye! Fare you well, my friend! »

And Peter, followed by all the others, goes below deck, smiling. Also the sea is now a pleasant sight, a fair mistral now favours

navigation while the sun is setting and a slice of the waxing moon looms in the east...

320. Arrival and Landing at Seleucia.

6th November 1945.

The town of Seleucia appears in a beautiful sunset like a huge white mass on the edge of the blue water of the sea, which is placid and pleasantly bright, while the breeze plays among the little waves under a cloudless sky that blends its cobalt blue with the purple of sunset. The ship is heading under sail towards the remote town and is so flooded by the splendour of the setting sun, that she seems ablaze with lights of joy for the arrival now close at hand.

On the deck, among sailors no longer busy or worried, there are passengers who see that their destination is approaching. The injured sailor is sitting beside John of Endor, who is much more emaciated than when he left. The man's head is still dressed with a light bandage and he is as pale as ivory because of the blood he has lost. But he is smiling and he speaks to those who saved him and to his companions who, as they pass, congratulate him on his return to deck.

The Cretan also sees him and entrusting his post for a moment to the coxswain, he comes to greet his « very good Demetes », who has come back on deck for the first time after being hurt. « And thanks to all of you » he says to the apostles. « I did not think he could survive, after being struck by the heavy beam and by the iron, which made it even heavier. Demetes, these people have really brought you back to life, because you were as good as dead, and not once, but twice. The first time when you were lying like a bale of goods on the deck, and because of the blood you were losing and of the waves that would have washed you overboard, you would have died and gone down to the kingdom of Neptune among Nereids and Tritons. The second time because they cured you with their wonderful ointments. Let me see your wound. »

The man undoes the bandage and shows a smooth healed scar, like a red mark from his temple to his nape, just under his hair, which appears to be cut, probably by Syntyche, to keep it out of the wound. Nicomedes touches the mark lightly: « Even the bone is healed! Marine Venus did love you! And she wanted you only on the surface of the sea and on the shores of Greece. May Eros be gracious to you, now that we land, and assist you to forget your misfortune and the terror of Thanatos as you were already in his grip. »

Peter's face displays his feeling on hearing so many mythological embellishments. Leaning against a mast, with his hands behind his back, he does not speak, but everything speaks in him

fastening a biting epithet on heathen Nicomedes and his heathenism, and expressing his disgust at the whole of Gentilism.

The others are not less disgusted... Judas of Alphaeus is frowning as he normally does when in a bad temper, his brother is moving around showing a great interest in the sea. James of Zebedee decides that the best thing to do is to leave them all and go below deck to get the bags and the loom, Matthew is toying with his belt and the Zealot imitates him, busying himself exceedingly with his sandals, as if they were something new, and John of Zebedee is hypnotised contemplating the sea.

The contempt and annoyance of the eight apostles is so obvious - and the mutism of the two disciples sitting near the wounded man is just as clear - that the Cretan becomes aware of it and he apologises: « It's our religion, you know? As you believe in yours, we all believe in ours... »

No one replies and the Cretan wisely decides to leave his gods in peace and descend from Olympus on the earth, or rather on the sea, on his ship, inviting the apostles to go on to the prow to have a good view of the town that they are approaching. « There it is, see? Have you ever been here? »

« I was here, once, but I came by land » says the Zealot gravely and dryly.

« Very well! So you know that Seleucia is the real port of Antioch. The sea-town is at the mouth of the river Orontes, which is also gracefully suitable to receive boats that can go up the river as far as Antioch when the water is deep. The town you see, the larger one, is Seleucia. The other one, to the south, is not a town, but the ruins of a devastated place. They are deceiving, but it is a dead place. That chain is the Pierios, after which the town is called Seleucia Pieria. The mountain top farther inland, beyond the plain, is mount Casius, and it dominates like a giant the plain of Antioch. The other chain to the north is the Amanus. Oh! You will see the work the Romans have done in Seleucia and in Antioch! They could not have done anything greater. A port with three basins, which is one of the best, canals, jetties and breakwaters. There is not so much in Palestine. But Syria is better than other provinces in the Empire... »

His words fall in deathlike silence. Even Syntyche, who being Greek is less squeamish than the others, sets her lips, and her face becomes more than ever as sharp as a face sculptured on a medal or a bas-relief: the face of a goddess disdainful of earthly contacts.

The Cretan notices it and he apologises: « What do you expect! After all I make my money from the Romans!... »

Syntyche's reply is as sharp as a sabre-cut: « And gold blunts the sword of national honour and freedom », and she says so in such a way and in such pure Latin that the man is dumbfounded...

Then he dares to ask: « But are you not Greek? »

« I am Greek. But you love the Romans. I am speaking to you in the language of your masters, not in mine, which is the language of our martyred Fatherland. »

The Cretan is embarrassed while the apostles silently rejoice at the lesson given to the praiser of Rome. And the Cretan changes the subject and asks by which means they will be going from Seleucia to Antioch.

« On foot, man » replies Peter.

« But it is evening. And it will be night by the time you land... »

« There will be a place where we can sleep. »

« Of course. But you can sleep here until tomorrow. »

Judas Thaddeus, who has seen that they have already prepared everything necessary for a sacrifice to the gods, to be offered likely at their arrival in the port, says: « It is not necessary. We thank you for your kindness, but we prefer to land. Is that right, Simon? »

« Yes, it is. We also have our prayers to say, and it is... either you and yours gods, or us and our God. »

« Do as you like. I would have liked to do a good turn to Theophilus' son. »

« And we would have liked to do one to the Son of God, convincing you that there is only one God. But you are a rock that will not move. As you can see, we are on the same standing. But perhaps we shall meet again one day and you may not be so persistent... » says the Zealot gravely.

Nicomedes makes a gesture as if he wished to say: Perhaps. A gesture of ironic carelessness concerning the invitation to acknowledge the true God and forsake the false one. He then goes to the pilot's place as the harbour is close at hand.

« Let us go below and get the chests. Let us do it by ourselves. I am dying to get away from this pagan stench » says Peter. And they all go below with the exception of Syntyche and John.

The two exiles are close to each other and are watching the breakwaters that are coming closer and closer.

« Syntyche, another step towards the unknown, another tug from the happy past, another agony, Syntyche... I cannot bear it any longer... »

Syntyche takes his hand. She is very pale and sorrowful. But she is still the strong woman who knows how to encourage people. « Yes, John, another tug, another agony. But do not say: another step towards the unknown... It is not right. We know what our mission is here. Jesus told us. So we are not going towards the unknown, on the contrary we blend more and more with what we know, with the Will of God. It is not even right to say: "another tug". We are being united to His will. A tug separates. We are being united. So we are not being pulled apart. We are only parting with

the sensitive delights of our love for Him, our Master, reserving super-sensitive delights for ourselves, transferring love and duty to a supernatural level. Are you convinced that it is so? You are? Well, you must not even say: "another agony". Agony presupposes impending death. But by reaching a spiritual level to make it our abode, our atmosphere and our food, we do not die, "we live". Because what is spiritual, is eternal. We therefore rise to a more lively life, an anticipation of the great Life in Heaven. So, cheer up! Forget that you are the man-John, and remember that you are destined to Heaven. Reason, act, think and hope only as a citizen of that immortal Fatherland... »

The others come back with their loads, when the ship is entering the large port of Seleucia majestically.

« And now let us make off as quickly as possible, to the first hotel we come across. There must be some in the neighbourhood, and tomorrow... by boat or by cart we will go to our destination. »

The ship docks by directions given by whistling and the gangway is lowered

Nicomedes approaches the departing passengers.

« Goodbye, man. And thank you » says Peter on behalf of everybody.

« Goodbye, Israelites. And I thank you. If you go along that street you will find lodgings at once. Goodbye. »

The apostles come down on this side, and he goes in the opposite direction, and while Peter and the others, laden like porters, go to rest, the heathen begins his useless rite...

321. From Seleucia to Antioch.

[No date].

« You will certainly find a cart at the market. If you want mine, I will give it to you, in memory of Theophilus. If I am a happy man, I owe it to him. He defended me because he was a just man. And one cannot forget certain things » says the old hotel-keeper standing before the apostles in the early morning sunshine.

« The trouble is that we would be keeping your cart for several days... And in any case who would drive it? I can manage with a donkey... But a horse... »

« But it's the same, man! I won't give you a fiery colt, but a wise draught horse, as good as a lamb. And you will go in a short time and without any difficulty. You will be at Antioch by the ninth hour, also because the horse is familiar with the road and will go by itself. You will give it back to me when you want, without any interest on my side, as I am interested only in doing something pleasant to Theophilus' son, and you can tell him that I am always indebted to him, that I remember-him and I am his servant. »

« What shall we do? » Peter asks his companions.

« Whatever you think is better. You decide and we will obey. »

« Shall we try with the horse? I am thinking of John... and also to be quick... I feel as if I am taking a man to the scaffold and I am dying to see it all over... »

« You are right » they all say.

« Well, I will take it, man. »

« And I am delighted to give it to you. I am going to prepare the vehicle. »

The hotel-keeper goes away. Peter can now get the load off his chest: « I have lost half of my lifetime in the past few days. How grievous! I wish I had Elijah's charriot, the mantle taken by Elisha, anything that is quick in doing things... And above all, at the cost of suffering death myself, I would have liked to give something that might comfort those poor wretches, making them forget... I don't know!... In a few words, something that would not make them suffer so much... But if I find out who is the main cause of all this grief, I am no longer Simon of Jonah, if I don't wring his neck like a wet cloth. I don't mean... killing him. No! But I'll squeeze him as h e squeezed joy and life out of those two poor people... »

« You are right. It is very sorrowful. But Jesus says that we must forgive affronts... » says James of Alphaeus.

« Had they given offence to me, I would forgive... And I could. I am strong and sound, and if anybody offends me, I have enough strength to react against grief. But poor John! No, I cannot forget an affront to the man redeemed by the Lord, to a man who is dying broken-hearted... »

« I am thinking of the moment when we shall be saying goodbye to him... » says Andrew with a sigh.

« So do I. It's a fixed idea and it torments me more and more as that moment draws near... » whispers Matthew.

« Let us do it as quickly as possible, for goodness sake » says Peter.

« No, Simon. Forgive me, if I point out to you that you are wrong in wanting that. Your love for your neighbour is becoming devious and that must not happen to you, as you are always righteous » says the Zealot calmly laying a hand on Peter's shoulder.

« Why, Simon? You are learned and kind. Show me where I am wrong, and if I see that I am at fault, I will say to you: "You are right". »

« Your love is becoming unwholesome because it is changing into selfishness. »

« How? I am grieved over them, and I am selfish? »

« Yes, brother, because by excess of love - every excess is disorder and thus leads to sin - you are becoming cowardly. You do not want to suffer seeing other people suffer. That is

selfishness, my brother in the name of the Lord. »

« That is true! You are right! And I thank you for telling me. That is what should be done among good companions. Well. I will no longer be in a hurry... But tell me the truth, is it not a pitiful situation? »

« It is indeed... » they all say.

« How shall we leave them? »

« I would say that we should leave them after Philip has given them hospitality... we could remain for some time in Antioch, hiding ourselves, calling on Philip to find out how they are adjusting themselves... » suggests Andrew.

« No. Such sudden parting would make them suffer too much » says James of Alphaeus.

« Well, let us take part of Andrew's suggestion. We will remain in Antioch, but in Philip's house. And for a few days we will go and visit them, but less and less frequently, until we stop going » says the other James.

« We would renew their sorrow and disappoint them bitterly. No. It must not be done » says Thaddeus.

« What shall we do, Simon? »

« Ah! As far as I am concerned, I would rather be in their position than have to say: "I bid you goodbye" » says Peter who is downhearted.

« I suggest this. Let us go with them to Philip's house and remain there. Then we will all go to Antigonea. It is a pleasant place... And we will stay there. When they have become acclimatised, we will withdraw, in a sorrowful but manly manner. That is what I would say. Unless Simon Peter has received different instructions from the Master » says Simon Zealot.

« Me? No. He said to me: "Do everything well, with love, without being sluggish, but without rushing, in the way which you think is best". So far I think I have done so. There is only one thing: I said I was a fisherman!... But if I had not said that, he would not have allowed me on the deck. »

« Don't have silly scruples, Simon. They are snares of the demon to upset you » says Thaddeus comforting him.

« Yes. Quite right! I think he is around us as never before, creating obstacles and endeavouring to frighten us to drive us to cowardly actions » says the apostle John, and he concludes in a low voice: « I think he wanted to drive those two to despair by keeping them in Palestine... and now that they are avoiding his snares, he is avenging himself on us... I feel that he is around me like a snake hiding in the grass... And I have felt him like that for months... But here is the hotel-keeper coming from one side and John with Syntyche from the other. I will tell you the rest later, when we are alone, if it is of interest to you. »

3-1507

In fact a sturdy cart drawn by a strong horse is coming forward on one side of the yard, driven by the host, while the two disciples are coming towards them on the other side.

« Is it time to go? » asks Syntyche.

« Yes, it is. Are you well covered, John. Is your pain improving? »

« Yes. I am enveloped in woollen garments and the ointment has helped me. »

« Get on, then, and we shall be with you in a moment. »

... And when they have finished loading, and everyone is in the cart, they go out through the wide door, after being repeatedly assured by the host of the docility of the horse. They cross a square as pointed out to them and take a road near the walls until they go out through a gate and they then proceed along a deep canal first and later along the river. It is a fine well kept road, running northeastwards, following the turns of the river. On the other side there are mountains, the slopes, creeks and gorges of which are very green, and in the most sunny spots one can see the swollen gems of many shrubs in the undergrowth thickets.

« How many myrtles! » exclaims Syntyche.

« And laurels! » adds Matthew.

« Near Antioch there is a place sacred to Apollo » says John of Endor.

« Perhaps the winds have blown the seeds as far as here... »

« Perhaps. But the whole area here is full of lovely plants » says the Zealot.

« Since you have been here, do you think that we shall pass near Daphne? »

« We must. You will see one of the most beautiful valleys in the world. Apart from the obscene cult, which has degenerated into dirty orgies, it is a valley of earthly paradise, and if Faith enters it, it will become a true paradise. Oh! how much good you will be able to do here! I wish you hearts as fertile as the soil... » says the Zealot to arouse consoling thoughts in the two disciples. John lowers his head and Syntyche sighs.

The horse trots with a rhythmical step and Peter does not speak, tense as he is in the strain of driving, although the horse proceeds safely without any need of guidance or spur. They travel thus quite fast until they stop at a bridge to eat and let the horse rest. The midday sun is shining and all the beauty of a most beautiful country is visible.

« But... I prefer this to the sea... » says Peter looking around.

« What a storm! »

« The Lord prayed for us. I felt that He was near us when we were praying on the deck. As close as if He were among us... » says John smiling.

« I wonder where He is. I have no peace thinking that He has no

clothes... And if He gets wet? And what will He eat? He is quite capable of fasting... »

« You may rest assured that He does so to help us » says James of Alphaeus confidently.

« And for other reasons as well. Our brother has been very depressed for some time. I think that He mortifies Himself continuously to defeat the world » says Thaddeus.

« You mean the demon who is in the world » says James of Zebedee.

« It's the same thing. »

« But He will not succeed. My heart is weighed down with fear... » says Andrew with a sigh.

« Oh! Now that we are far away, things will improve! » says John of Endor rather bitterly.

« Don't you believe that! You and Syntyche were nothing compared to the "great faults" of the Messiah according to the mighty ones in Israel » says Thaddeus sharply.

« Are you sure? Over and above all my troubles, I have also this aching pain in my heart: that I have harmed Jesus by coming to Him. If I were sure that it is not so, I would not suffer so much » says John of Endor.

« Do you think that I am sincere, John? » asks Thaddeus.

« Yes, I do. »

« Then, in the name of God and mine I assure you that you have given Jesus but one sorrow: that of having to send you here on a mission. You have nothing to do with all His past, present and future griefs. »

The first smile, after sad days of gloomy melancholy brightens the hollow cheeks of John of Endor, who says: « What a relief you give me! The day seems brighter to me, my disease less troublesome, and my heart is more comforted... Thank you, Judas of Alphaeus, thank you! »

They get into the cart again and after crossing the bridge they go along the other bank of the river, following the road that goes straight to Antioch, through a very fertile area.

« There you are! Daphne is in that poetic valley with its temple and thickets. And over there, in the plain, there is Antioch and its towers on the walls. We will enter the gate near the river. Lazarus' house is not very far from the walls. His most beautiful houses have been sold. This one is left, once it was the place where Theophilus' servants and clients stopped and rested and it has many stables and granaries. Philip lives in it. A good old soul faithful to Lazarus. You will be at home there. And we will go to Antigonea where the house is in which Eucheria lived with her children, who were very young then... »

« This town is well fortified, isn't it? » asks Peter, who is now

relaxing, as he has realised that his test as a charioteer has been successful.

« Yes, very. Walls of great height and width, over one hundred towers, which, as you can see, look like giants standing on the walls, with impassable moats at their feet. And mount Silpius has also lent its tops to assist the defence system, as a buttress in the weakest part of the walls... Here is the gate. It is better if you stop and go in holding the horse by the bit. I will guide you as I know the way... »

They go through the gate watched by Romans.

The apostle John says: « I wonder whether the soldier of the Fish Gate is here... Jesus would be happy to know... »

« We will look for him. But go on now » orders Peter, who is obviously worried at the idea of going to an unknown house.

John obeys without speaking; he only looks carefully at every soldier he sees.

After a short distance, there is a strongly built but simple house, that is, a high wall with no windows. There is only a large door in the central part of the wall.

« Here we are. Stop » says the Zealot.

« Oh! Simon! Be good! Will you speak now?! »

« Yes, I will, if it is going to make you happy » and the Zealot knocks at the heavy door. He makes himself known as a messenger from Lazarus. He goes in by himself. He comes out with an old dignified man, who bows profusely and orders a servant to open the gate and let the cart go in. And he apologises for letting them all go in there and not through the main door.

The cart stops in a large yard with porches, well kept, with a huge plane-tree in each of the four corners and two in the centre sheltering a well and watering trough for horses.

« Take care of the horse » the steward orders the servant. He then says to the guests: « Please come with me and may the Lord be blessed for sending me His servants and the friends of my master. Your servant is at your disposal, please give me your orders. »

Peter blushes because the steward's words and bows are addressed mainly to him, and he does not know what to say... The Zealot comes to his rescue.

« The disciples of the Messiah of Israel, of whom Lazarus of Theophilus speaks to you, and who from now on will live in your house to serve the Lord, need nothing but rest. Will you show them their rooms? »

« Oh? There are rooms always ready for pilgrims, as in the days of my mistress. Come... » And followed by everybody he goes along a corridor into a little yard at the end of which is the real house. He opens the door, goes along a passage, then he turns to the right. There is a staircase. They go upstairs, where there is another corridor

with rooms on both sides.

« Here you are. And may your stay be a pleasant one. I am now going to order water and some linen. May God be with you » says the old man and he goes away.

They open the windows of the rooms they choose. The walls and towers of Antioch are opposite the rooms on one side; the peaceful yard adorned with creeping rose-bushes, which are now bare because of the season, can be seen from the rooms on the other side of the corridor.

And at last, after so much travelling, a house, a room, a bed... A resting place for some, the final destination for others...

322. At Antigonea.

7th November 1945.

« My son Ptolmai has come to the market. He is going back to Antigonea today at the sixth hour. It is a mild day. Do you still wish to go as you had planned? » asks old Philip while serving hot milk to his guests.

« We shall certainly go. When did you say? »

« At the sixth hour. You can come back tomorrow, if you wish, or the evening before the Sabbath, if you prefer so. All the Hebrew servants and those who have embraced our faith come for the Sabbath service. »

« We will do that. And that place may still be chosen as the residence for these two. »

« I will be pleased even if I lose them. Because it is a wholesome place. And you could do much good among the servants, some of whom are still the ones left by our master. Some are there through the bounty of our blessed mistress who ransomed them from cruel masters. So they are not all Israelites. But by now they are not pagans either. I am referring to the women. All the men have been circumcised. Do not disdain them... But they are still very far from the justice of Israel. The saints of the Temple would be scandalised at them, as they are perfect... »

« Of course! They would indeed! Well! They will now be able to improve by breathing in wisdom and goodness from the messengers of the Lord... Have you heard how much you have to do? » concludes Peter, addressing the two.

« We will do it. We will not disappoint the Master » promises Syntyche. And she goes out to prepare what is necessary to take.

John of Endor asks Philip: « Do you think that at Antigonea I could do some good also to other people, as a teacher? »

« Much good. Old Plautus died three months ago and the children of the Gentiles have no school now. With regard to the Jews, there is no master for them because all our people keep away from that

place, which is close to Daphne. It would take one like... like Theophilus... Without rigidity for... for... »

« Yes, without Pharisaism, you mean » concludes Peter promptly.

« That's it... yes... I do not want to criticise... But I think... It's of no use cursing... It would be better if they helped... As our mistress used to do... she brought more people to the Law with her smiles and in a better way than a rabbi. »

« That is why the Master sent me here! I am the man with the right qualifications... Oh! I will do His will. Till I breathe my last. I now believe, I firmly believe that my mission is nothing but a mission of predilection. I am going to tell Syntyche. You will see that we will stay there... I am going to tell her » and he goes out, full of life as he had not been for a long time.

« Most High Lord, I thank You and bless You! He will still suffer, but not so much as previously... Ah! What a relief? » exclaims Peter. He then feels that it is his duty to give Philip some kind of explanation, as best he can, of his joy: « You must realise that John was made the object of the attacks of the... "rigid ones" in Israel... You call them "rigid ones"... »

« Ah! I see! He was persecuted for political reasons like... like... » and he looks at the Zealot.

« Yes, like me and more, and for other reasons as well. Because he provokes them not only because he is of a different caste, but also because he belongs to the Messiah. So - and let this be said once for all - both he and Syntyche are entrusted to your loyalty... Do you understand? »

« Yes, I do. And I know how to behave. »

« What will you say they are? »

« Two teachers recommended by Lazarus of Theophilus, he is a teacher for boys, and she for girls. I see that she embroiders and has a loom... A considerable amount of needle work is done and sold in Antioch by foreigners. But it is rough and coarse stuff. Yesterday I saw that she had a piece of work which reminded me of my good mistress... They will be in great demand... »

« Once again may the Lord be praised » says Peter.

« Yes. That will soothe our grief in parting. »

« Are you going to leave already? »

« We must. We have been delayed by the storm. At the beginning of Shebat we must be with the Master. He is already waiting for us, because we are late » explains Thaddeus.

They part, each attending to his own business, that is, Philip goes where a woman calls him, the apostles to a high ground, in the sunshine.

« We could leave the day after the Sabbath. What do you say? » asks James of Alphaeus.

« As far as I am concerned!... I don't mind!... Every morning I get

up tormented by the idea that Jesus is alone, without clothes, without anyone looking after Him, and every night I go to bed with the same fixed idea. But we shall decide today. »

« Tell me. But was the Master aware of everything? I have been wondering for days how He knew that we were going to meet the Cretan, how he could foresee John's and Syntyche's work, how... That is... many things » says Andrew.

« Actually I think that the Cretan stops at Seleucia on fixed dates. And perhaps Lazarus told Jesus, and so He decided to leave without waiting until Passover... » explains the Zealot.

« Indeed! That's right. And how will John manage at Passover? » asks James of Alphaeus.

« Like every other Israelite... » says Matthew.

« No. That would mean falling into the wolf's mouth! »

« Not at all! Who is going to find him out among so many people? »

« The Iscar... Oh! What have I said! Forget about it. It's only a trick of my mind... » Peter is flushed and sad, because he has spoken.

Judas of Alphaeus lays a hand on his shoulder and smiling with his severe smile, he says: « Never mind! We are all thinking of the same thing. But we won't tell anybody. And let us bless the Eternal Father for diverting John's mind from this thought. »

They are all silent, engrossed in thought. But as they are true Israelites, the thought of how the exiled disciple will be able to celebrate Passover in Jerusalem worries them... and they begin to speak about it again.

« I think that Jesus will see to it. Perhaps John already knows. We have only got to ask him » says Matthew.

« No, don't. Don't put desires and thorns where peace is just springing up » begs the apostle John.

« Yes. It is better to ask the Master Himself » confirms James of Alphaeus.

« When shall we see Him? What do you think? » asks Andrew.

« Oh! If we leave the day after the Sabbath, by the end of the moon we shall certainly be at Ptolemais... » says James of Zebedee.

« If we find a ship... » remarks Judas Thaddeus.

And his brother adds: « And if there is no storm. »

« There are always ships leaving for Palestine. And if we pay, we will call at Ptolemais, even if the ship is heading for Joppa. Have you any money left, Simon? » the Zealot asks Peter.

« Yes, I have, although that thief, the Cretan, fleeced me in no uncertain manner, notwithstanding his protestations that he wanted to do a favour to Lazarus. But I have to pay for the custody of the boat and the keeping of Antonius... I do not want to touch the money given to me for John and Syntyche. It is sacred. At the cost of starving, I will leave it as it is. »

« That is the right thing. That man is very ill. He thinks that he

will be able to teach. I think he will be ill all the time, and soon... » states the Zealot.

« I am of the same opinion. Syntyche will be busier preparing ointments than working » confirms James of Zebedee.

« What do you think of that ointment? What a wonderful thing! Syntyche told me that she wants to make it here and use it to become familiar with local families » says John.

« A very good idea! A sick person who is cured always becomes a disciple and relatives follow suit » states Matthew.

« Oh! no! Certainly not » exclaims Peter.

« What? Do you mean that miracles do not attract people to the Lord? » Andrew asks him together with two or three companions.

« Oh! little babies! One might say that you have just come down from Heaven! But don't you see what they do to Jesus? Did Eli of Capernaum turn? Or Doras? Or Oshea of Korazim? Or Melkia of Bethsaida? And - excuse me you from Nazareth - the whole of Nazareth, after the five, six, ten miracles worked there, up to the last one for your nephew? » asks Peter.

Nobody replies, because it is the bitter truth.

« We have not found the Roman soldier yet. Jesus had given to understand... » says John after a little while.

« We will tell those who are staying. It will be another opportunity for them » replies the Zealot.

Philip comes back: « My son is ready. He finished early. He is with his mother who is preparing gifts for her grandchildren. »

« Your daughter-in-law is good, isn't she? »

« She is. She consoled me for the loss of my Joseph. She is like a daughter to me. She was Eucheria's maid, and was brought up by her. Come and have something to eat before leaving. The others are already taking something. »...

... And they trot towards Antigonea, preceded by the cart of Ptolmai, Philip's grandson... They soon reach the little town. Situated as it is among fertile gardens, shielded from winds by chains of mountains around it, far enough not to oppress it, but sufficiently close to protect it and pour on to it the scents of their woods of resinous and essential plants, full of sunshine, it cheers up one's sight and heart only by going through it.

Lazarus' gardens are in the southern part of the town and are preceded by an avenue, which is now bare, along which are the houses of the gardeners. Low but well kept houses, from the doors of which children and women appear watching curiously and greeting smiling. The different races can be told by the different faces.

As soon as he enters the gate, where the estate begins, Ptolmai cracks his whip in a special way when passing in front of each house; it must be a signal. And the inhabitants of each house, after

hearing it, go into their houses and then come out, closing the doors and walking along the avenue, behind the two carts, as the horses are ambling and they stop at the centre of radial paths stretching in every direction like the spokes of a wheel, among numberless fields arranged as flower beds, some of which are bare, some full of evergreens, protected by laurels, acacias or similar trees and by other trees which ooze odoriferous milklike juices and resins through cuts in their trunks. There is in the air a mixed scent of balsamic, resinous, aromatic fragrances. There are beehives everywhere, as well as irrigation vats where show-white doves are drinking. And in special areas white hens are scratching about on the bare ground, which has just been hoed, while some girls are watching over them.

Ptolmai cracks his whip repeatedly, until all the subjects of the little kingdom have gathered round the arrivals. He then begins his little speech: « Listen. Philip, our head and the father of my father, has sent and recommends these holy people from Israel, who have come here by the will of our master, and may God be always with him and his family. We have been complaining because there was no rabbi here to speak to us. Now the bounty of God and of our master, who although so far is so affectionate to us - may God give him the welfare that he gives his servants - have procured for us what our hearts desire so keenly. The Messiah promised to peoples has risen in Israel. They had told us at the Feasts in the Temple and in the house of Lazarus. But now the time of grace has really come because the King of Israel has taken care of His lowest servants and has sent His ministers to bring us His words. These are His disciples and two of them will live with us, either here or in Antioch, teaching us the Wisdom of Heaven and the science that is necessary on the earth. John, a schoolmaster and a disciple of Christ, will teach our children the former and the latter wisdom. Syntyche, a disciple and a teacher of needlework, will teach our girls the science of the love of God and the art of needlework. Welcome them as a blessing from Heaven, and love them as Lazarus of Theophilus and Eucheria loves them - glory to their souls and peace - and as the daughters of Theophilus love them: Martha and Mary, our beloved mistresses and disciples of Jesus of Nazareth, the Rabbi of Israel, the promised King. »

The little group of men, wearing short tunics and holding garden tools in their earthy hands, and of women and children of every age, listen in utter astonishment, they then whisper and finally bow their heads very low.

Ptolmai begins to introduce them: « Simon of Jonah, the head of the messengers of the Lord; Simon the Cananean, a friend of our master; James and Judas, brothers of the Lord; James and John, Andrew and Matthew » and then to the apostles and disciples:

3-1515

« Anne, my wife, of the tribe of Judas, as my mother was, because we are pure Israelites and we came here with Eucheria of Judas. Joseph, the son consecrated to the Lord, and Theocheria, our firstborn, who is called after our just masters, a wise daughter who loves God as a true Israelite. Nicolaus and Dositeus. Nicolaus is a Nazirite; Dositeus, our third born, has been married for several years (he says that with a big sigh) to Hermione. Come here, woman... »

A very young swarthy woman comes forward holding an unweaned babe in her arms.

« Here she is. She is the daughter of a proselyte and a Greek mother. My son saw her at Alexandroscene in Phoenicia, when he was there on business... and wanted her... and Lazarus did not object, on the contrary he said to me: "Better so than debauched". And it is better. But I wanted someone with Jewish blood... »

Poor Hermione has lowered her head as if she were accused. Dositeus trembles with anger and suffers. Anne, his mother, looks at him with sorrowful eyes...

Although the youngest of all the apostles, John feels that it is necessary to raise the humiliated spirits and says: « In the Kingdom of the Lord there are no longer Greeks or Israelites, Romans or Phoenicians, but only the children of God. When you learn the Word of God from those who have come here, your heart will rise to a new light and this woman will no longer be "the foreigner", but the disciple of our Lord Jesus, like yourself and all the rest. »

Hermione raises her mortified head and smiles gratefully at John and the same expression of gratitude can be seen on the faces of Dositeus and Anne.

Ptolmai replies gravely: « God grant it, because apart from her origin, I cannot blame my daughter-in-law for anything. The child in her arms is Alphaeus, her last born, called after her father, a proselyte. The little girl with sky-blue eyes and ebony curls is Myrthica, who was called after Hermione's mother, and this one, the first born, is Lazarus, as our master wanted, and the other one is Hermas. »

« The fifth must be called Ptolmai and the sixth Anne, to tell the Lord and the world that your heart has opened to new understanding » says John again.

Ptolmai bows without speaking. He then resumes the introductions: « These are two brothers from Israel: Miriam and Silvian, of the tribe of Naphtali. And these are Elbonides, a Danite, and Simeon, a Judaean. And here are the proselytes, Romans or sons of Romans, whom Eucheria's charity redeemed from slavery and heathenism: Lucius, Marcellus, Solon the son of Elateus. »

« A Greek name » remarks Syntyche.

3-1516

« From. Thessalonica. The slave of a servant of Rome » - and there is manifest contempt in saying "servant of Rome" - « Eucheria took him with his dying father, in troubled times, and if his father died a heathen, Solon is a proselyte... Priscilla, come forward with your children... »

A tall thin woman with an aquiline nose comes forward pushing a girl and a boy, with two lovely little girls hanging to her skirt.

« This is Solon's wife, a freedwoman of a Roman lady now dead, and this is Marius, Cornelia, and the twins Mary and Martilla. Priscilla is experienced in essences. Amiclea, come with your children. She is the daughter of proselytes. And her boys Cassius and Theodorus are also proselytes. Tecla, don't hide yourself. She is Marcellus' wife. She is grieved because she is sterile. She is the daughter of proselytes, too. And these are the farmers. Let us go to the gardens now. Come. »

And he leads them through the vast estate followed by the gardeners who explain the various cultivations and work, while the girls go back to their hens, which have taken advantage of their absence to trespass on to other ground.

Ptolmai explains: « They are brought here to free the soil from grubs before sowing the yearly cultivations. »

John of Endor smiles at the cackling hens and says: « They look like those I had once... » and he bends throwing bread crumbs taken from his sack, until he is surrounded by pullets and he laughs because a cheeky one snatches the bread from his fingers.

« That's not so bad! » exclaims Peter nudging Matthew and pointing to John who is playing with the chicken and to Syntyche who is speaking Greek to Solon and Hermione.

They then go back to the house of Ptolmai, who explains: « This is the place. But if you want to teach, we can make room. Are you staying here or... »

« Yes, Syntyche! Here! It's lovelier! Antioch oppresses me with recollections... » John begs his companion in a low voice.

« Of course... As you wish. Providing you are well. It is all the same to me. I no longer look back... Only forward... Cheer up, John! We shall be all right here. Children, flowers, doves, hens for us, poor human beings. And for our souls... the joy of serving the Lord. What do you all say? » she asks addressing all the apostles.

« We are of the same opinion as you, woman. »

« Well, that is settled. »

« Very well. We will leave with relieved minds... »

« Oh! Don't go away! I will not see you again! Why so early? Why?... » John relapses into a state of depression.

« But we are not going away now! We are staying until you are... » Peter does not know what to say John will be, and to hide his tears he embraces weeping John endeavouring to console him thus...

3-1517

323. Farewell to Antioch after Preaching.

8th November 1945.

The apostles are once again in the house at Antioch with the two disciples and all the men from Antigonea, who are not wearing their clothes tucked up to work, but have on their long best garments. I thus understand that it is the Sabbath.

Philip begs the apostles to speak to everybody at least once before their departure, which is now imminent.

« On what? »

« On anything you like. You have heard our conversation during the past days. You may speak accordingly. »

The apostles look at one another. Whose duty is it? Peter's, of course. He is the head! But Peter would rather not speak but surrender the honour to James of Alphaeus or to John of Zebedee. And only when he sees that they are inflexible, he makes up his mind to speak.

« Today in the synagogue we heard the explanation of chapter 52 of Isaiah. A learned comment according to the world, a defective one according to Wisdom. But the commentator is not to be blamed, because he gave what he could within the limits of his own wisdom: without the knowledge of the Messiah and of the new Time brought by Him. But let us not find fault with him, let us instead pray that he may achieve the knowledge of these two graces and accept them without difficulty. You told me that at Passover you heard some people speak of the Master with faith, some with sneering words. And that only because of the great faith that fills the hearts of the house of Lazarus, all their hearts, you were able to bear the unease that the innuendoes of other people caused to your hearts, particularly because these other people were rabbis of Israel. But to be learned does not mean to be holy or to possess the Truth. And this is the Truth: Jesus of Nazareth is the promised Messiah, the Saviour of Whom the Prophets speak, and the last of them went to rest in Abraham's bosom only recently, after his glorious martyrdom, which he suffered for the sake of justice. John the Baptist said, and those who heard his words are here now: "There is the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world". His words were believed by the most humble of those present, because humility helps to reach Faith, whereas it is difficult for proud people - laden as they are with unnecessary things - to reach the mountain top where chaste bright Faith dwells. Those humble people, both- because they were such and because they believed, deserved to be the first in the army of the Lord Jesus. You can thus see how necessary humility is in order to attain instant faith, and how faith is rewarded, particularly when one believes against adverse appearances. I exhort and stimulate you to possess these two qualities and you will then be in the army of

the Lord and will conquer the Kingdom of Heaven... It is your turn, Simon Zealot. I have spoken. Please continue. »

The Zealot, caught so suddenly and so clearly pointed out as the second speaker, can but move forward without delay or complaint. And he says:

« I will continue the sermon of Simon Peter, the head of us all by the will of the Lord. And I will continue taking up the subject of chapter 52 of Isaiah, as seen by one who knows the Incarnate Truth, Whose servant he is for good. It says: "Awake, clothe yourself in strength, Zion, put on your richest clothes, city of the Holy One". And that is how it should really be. Because when a promise is fulfilled, peace is made, punishment comes to an end, and the time of joy comes; hearts and towns should put on their best clothes and raise their mortified foreheads, realising that they are no longer hated, defeated, beaten, but are instead loved and freed. We are not here to institute proceedings against Jerusalem. Charity, the first of all virtues, forbids it. Let us not watch the hearts of other people, let us, instead, look at our own. Let us clothe our hearts in strength by means of that faith of which Simon has spoken and let us put on our richest clothes because our age-old faith in the Messiah is now crowned by the real fact. The Holy Messiah, the Word of God is really among us. And both souls and bodies have evidence of this: the former hear the words of Wisdom, which fortify them and infuse holiness and peace, the latter, thanks to the Holy One, to Whom everything is granted by the Father, are released from the most dreadful diseases, even from death, so that the hills and valleys of Israel, our Fatherland, may resound with hosannas to the Son of David and to the Most High Who has sent His Word, as He had promised the Patriarchs and Prophets. I, who am speaking to you, was a leper, destined to die, after years of unrelenting distress, in the brutal solitude familiar to lepers. A man said to me: "Go to Him, to the Rabbi of Nazareth, and you will be cured". I had faith. I went. I was cured. In my body. In my heart. The former was freed from the disease that separates lepers from other men. The latter was freed from the hatred that separates from God. And with a new spirit, from a troubled, sick exile I became His servant, called to the happy mission of going among men, loving them in His Name, teaching them the one and only necessary knowledge: that Jesus of Nazareth is the Saviour and that blessed are those who believe in Him. It's your turn to speak now, o James of Alphaeus. »

« I am the brother of the Nazarene. My father and His were brothers, born of the same mother. And yet I cannot say that I am His brother, but His servant. Because the paternity of Joseph, my father's brother, was a spiritual paternity and I solemnly tell you; that the Most High, Whom we worship, is the true Father of our

Master Jesus. God allowed the Second Person of God One and Trine to become incarnate and to come upon the earth, remaining however God and always united to the Persons Who dwell in Heaven. Because God, Who is infinitely Almighty can do that. And He does it out of Love, which is His nature. Jesus of Nazareth is our brother, men, because he was born of a woman, and is like us in His humanity. He is our Master because He is the Wise One, He is the very Word of God and has come to speak to us to take us to God. And He is our God, being One with the Father and the Holy Spirit, with Whom He is always united in love, power and nature. May this Truth, which the Just One, my relative, was granted to know through clear evidence, become also your possession. And when the world will endeavour to tear you away from the Christ, saying: "He is just an ordinary man", reply: "No. He is the Son of God, He is the Star born of Jacob, He is the Sceptre that arises in Israel, He is the Ruler". Let nothing deter you. That is Faith. It's your turn, Andrew. »

« That is Faith. I am a poor fisherman of the lake of Galilee, and when fishing in the silent nights, in the light of the stars, I had silent conversations with myself. I used to say: "When will He come? Will I be still alive? Many years are still missing, according to the prophecy". For man, whose life is short, even a few dozen years are as long as centuries... I used to ask myself: "How will He come? Where? From whom?". And my dull human mind made me dream of royal splendour, of royal abodes, processions, clangour, power and unbearable majesty... And I would say: "Who will be able to look at this great King?". I thought that He would be more terrifying, in His manifestation, than Jehovah Himself on Mount Sinai. And I used to say: "The Hebrews saw the mountain lighten, but they were not burned to ashes, because the Eternal Father was beyond the clouds. But here He will look at us with mortal eyes and we shall die... I was a disciple of the Baptist. And when we were not fishing I used to go to him with other companions. It was a day of this month... The banks of the Jordan were crowded with people who shivered when hearing the words of the Baptist. I had noticed a young handsome man come calmly towards us along a path. His garments were plain, His countenance kind. He seemed to be asking for love and to be giving love. His blue eyes rested for a moment on me, and I felt something that I have never felt again. I felt as if my soul were being caressed, as if I were being lightly touched by the wings of angels. For a moment I felt that I was so far away from the earth, so different, that I said: "I shall die now! This is God calling my soul". But I did not die. I was fascinated contemplating the young unknown man, whose blue eyes were now staring at the Baptist. And the Baptist turned round, ran to Him and bowed. They spoke to each other. And as

John's voice was as loud as thunder, their mysterious words reached me, who was listening, tense as I was in the keen desire to know who the unknown young man was. My soul felt that He was different from everybody. They were saying: "I should be baptised by You... ... Never mind just now. It is necessary to fulfil all justice"... John had already said: "Someone will come and I am not fit to undo the straps of His sandals". He had already said: "There is among you, in Israel, One Whom you do not know. His winnowing-fan is already in His hand and He will clear His threshing-floor and He will bum the chaff in a fire that will never go out". I had in front of me a young man of the common people, whose countenance was mild and humble, and yet I felt that He was the One, Whose sandal-straps not even the Holy One in Israel, the last Prophet, the Precursor was fit to undo. I felt that He was the One, Whom we did not know. But I was not afraid. On the contrary, when John, after the enrapturing thunder of God and after the unimaginable brightness of the Light in the shape of a dove of peace, said: "Here is the Lamb of God", I cried: "I believe!" with the voice of my soul, rejoicing because I had foreseen the King Messiah in the young man who looked so mild and humble. Because of this faith I am His servant. Be so yourselves, and you will have peace. Matthew, it is your turn now to relate the other glories of the Lord. »

« I cannot use the same serene words of Andrew. He was a just man, I was a sinner. Therefore my word has not the joyful note of happiness, but it has the confident peace of a psalm. I was a sinner. A great sinner. I was living in utter error. I had hardened in it and I felt no discomfort. If at times the Pharisees or the head of the synagogue lashed me with their insults and reproaches, reminding me of God, the inexorable Judge, I was terrified for a moment... then I would relax thinking foolishly: "In any case I am as good as damned. Let me have a good time, therefore, as long as I can". And I sank deeper and deeper into sin. Two years ago an Unknown man, came to Capernaum in springtime. He was unknown also to me. He was in fact unknown to everybody, because He was at the beginning of His mission. Only a few men knew who He really was: those whom you see here, and few more. I was greatly surprised at His demeanour, which was more chaste than a virgin's. That was the first thing that amazed me. I saw that He was austere and yet He was always willing to listen to the children who went to Him as bees fly to flowers. Their innocent games and ingenious words were His only relaxation. Then His power amazed me. He worked miracles. I said: "He is an exorciser, a holy man". I felt that I was so disgraceful as compared to Him, that I shunned Him. He was looking for me. Or that was my impression. Every time He passed near my bench He would look at me with His kind rather

sad eyes. And every time I felt my torpid conscience start and it never fell back to the same level of stupor. One day, as people exalted His words, I felt like listening to Him. And hiding behind the corner of a house I heard Him speak to a little group of men. He spoke informally, on charity, which is like an indulgence with regard to our sins... As from that evening, I, the greedy hardhearted man, wanted my many sins to be forgiven by God. I did things secretly... But He knew that it was I, because He knows everything. Once I heard Him explain just chapter 52 of Isaiah: He said that the lewd and those whose hearts are not circumcised will not enter His Kingdom, the heavenly Jerusalem, and He promised that that Celestial City, the beauty of which He described so convincingly that I felt nostalgia for it, would belong to those who went to Him. And then... Oh! On that day His look was not a sad one, but a commanding one. He broke my heart, He stripped my soul, He cauterised this poor soul of mine, He took it in His hands and tortured it with His exacting love... and I had a new soul. Repentance and desire led me towards Him. He did not wait for me to say: "Have mercy, my Lord!". He said to me: "Follow Me!". The Mild One had defeated Satan in the sinner's heart. May this tell you, if anyone among you is worried because of his sins, that He is the good Saviour and that you must not shun Him, on the contrary, the more one is a sinner, the more one must go to Him with humility and repentance, in order to be forgiven. James of Zebedee, will you speak now? »

« I do not really know what to say. You have spoken and said what I would have said. Because that is the truth and it cannot be changed. I was with Andrew at the Jordan as well, but I only noticed Him when He was pointed out by the Baptist. But I believed at once, and when He left, after His bright manifestation, I was like one who after being on a sunny mountain top, is imprisoned in a dark jail. I was longing to find the Sun again. The world was dark, after the Light of God had appeared to me, and then had disappeared. I was alone among men. I had satisfied my appetite, but I was hungry. While sleeping I was awake with my better part, and money, business, affections, everything had been left far behind my great desire for Him and nothing allured me. Like a child who has lost his mother I moaned: "Come back, Lamb of the Lord! Most High Lord, as You sent Raphael to guide Tobias, send Your angel to lead me to the way of the Lord, that I may find Him... !" And yet, when He appeared on the path coming from the desert, after we had been waiting for Him in vain for weeks, and we had been looking for Him anxiously, which vain efforts made us feel more sorely the loss of our John who had been arrested for the first time, I did not recognise Him at once. And now, my brothers in the Lord, I want to teach you another way to go to Him and recognise Him.

3-1522

Simon of Jonah said that faith and humility are required to know Him. Simon Zealot has confirmed the absolute necessity of Faith to acknowledge in Jesus of Nazareth what He is in Heaven and on the earth, according to what has been said. And Simon Zealot needed a truly great faith, also on behalf of his incurable body. That is why Simon Zealot says that Faith and Hope are the means to attain the Son of God. James, the brother of the Lord, has mentioned the power of Strength to keep what has been found. The Strength that prevents the snares of the world and of Satan from undermining our Faith. Andrew has shown the necessity of joining a holy thirst for Justice to Faith, endeavouring to know and maintain the Truth, whatever be the holy mouth announcing it, not out of human pride to be learned, but out of desire to know God. The man who improves his mind in the Truth will find God. Matthew, once a sinner, has pointed out to you another way to attain God: to divest oneself of sensuality out of spirit of imitation, I would say by reflection of God, Who is infinite Purity. The first thing that impressed him, a sinner, was the "chaste demeanour" of the Unknown man who had come to Capernaum, and as if it had the power to revive his dead continence, he refrains first of all from sensual carnality, clearing the way for the coming of God and for the resurrection of the other dead virtues. From continence he passes on to mercy, from mercy to contrition, he then surpasses himself and arrives at union with God. "Follow Me". "I am coming". But his soul had already said: "I am coming", and the Saviour had already said: "Follow Me", when for the first time the Virtue of the Master had drawn the attention of the sinner. Imitate him. Because the experience of other people, even if painful, is a guide to avoid evil and find good for those who are of good will. As far as I am concerned, I say that the more man strives to live for the spirit, the more fit he is to recognise the Lord, and an angelic life favours that in the highest degree. Of us disciples of John, he who recognised him, after His absence, was the virgin soul. Better than Andrew, he recognised Him, notwithstanding penance had altered the visage of the Lamb of God. So I say: "Be chaste to be able to recognise Him". Judas, will you speak now? »

« Yes, be chaste to be able to recognise Him. But be chaste also to be able to keep Him within you with His Wisdom and His Love, with His whole Self. It is still Isaiah who in chapter 52 says: "Touch nothing unclean... purify yourselves, you who carry the vessels of the Lord". Really, every soul that becomes His disciple is like a vase full of the Lord, and the body containing the soul is like one who carries the sacred vase to the Lord. God cannot be where there is impurity. Matthew told you how the Lord explained that nothing unclean or separated from God will be in the celestial Jerusalem. Yes. But it is necessary not to be unclean or

separated from God, to be able to enter it. Wretched are those people who wait until the last hour to repent. They will not always have time to do so. Likewise those who now slander Him will have no time to make amends at the moment of His triumph, and therefore will not enjoy its fruit. Those who in the holy humble King hope to see an earthly monarch, and even more those who are afraid to see in Him an earthly monarch, will not be prepared for that hour; deceived and disappointed in their thoughts, which are not the thoughts of God, but poor human thoughts, they will sin even more. The humiliation of being the Man is upon Him. We must remember that. Isaiah says that all our sins mortify the Divine Person under common appearance. When I consider that the Word of God has around Himself, like a filthy crust, all the misery of mankind since it began to exist, I think with deep compassion and understanding of the suffering that His faultless soul must endure. The horror of a healthy man who was covered with the rags and filth of a leper. He is really pierced by our sins, and covered with sores by man's lust. His soul, living among us, must shudder with horror at such contact, as a body trembles with a high temperature. And yet He does not speak. He does not open His mouth to say: "You horrify Me". But He opens it only to say: "Come to Me, that I may take away your sins". He is the Saviour. In His infinite bounty He veiled His unbearable beauty. If He had appeared in all His beauty, as He is in Heaven, He would have reduced us to ashes, as Andrew said. But His beauty has become engaging, like a mild Lamb, in order to approach us and save us. His oppression, His condemnation will last until, consumed by the effort of being the perfect Man among imperfect men, He is raised above the multitude of those He has redeemed, in the triumph of His holy regality. God Who submits to death, to take us to Life! May these thoughts make you love Him above all things. He is the Holy One. I can say so, as I was brought up with Him, together with James. And I say and will say so, ready to give my life to confirm this profession, so that men may believe in Him and have eternal Life. John of Zebedee, it is your turn to speak. »

« How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of the messenger! Of the Messenger of peace, Who announces happiness and preaches salvation, Who says to Zion: "Your God is King!". And those feet have been walking untiringly for two years across the mountains in Israel, gathering the sheep of the herd of God, consoling, curing, forgiving, giving peace. His peace. I am really surprised at seeing that the hills and rivers of our Fatherland do not exult and rejoice at the caress of His feet. But what amazes me most is to see that the hearts of men do not exult or rejoice saying: "Praised be the Lord! The Expected One has come! Blessed be He Who comes in the name of the Lord!". He Who bestows graces and blessings, peace and

3-1524

health, and calls us to His Kingdom opening the way for us, above all He, Who pours forth love with every action of His, with every word, glance, breath... What is therefore this world as to be blind to the Light that is living among us? Which slabs, thicker than the stone closing the entrance of a sepulchre, has it placed on the sight of its soul not to see this Light? What mountain of sins has it on itself to be so oppressed, separated, blinded, deafened, chained, paralyzed as to stand inert before the Saviour? What is the Saviour? He is Light blended with Love. The mouths of my brothers have praised the Lord, they have recalled His works, and have pointed out the virtues to be put into practice in order to reach His way. I say to you: love. There is no other virtue that is greater or more like His Nature. If you love, you will practise every virtue without difficulty, beginning from chastity. It will be no burden to you to be chaste, because by loving Jesus you will love no one immoderately. You will be humble, because with the eyes of lovers you will see infinite perfections in Him, and thus you will not pride yourselves on your scanty ones. And you will believe. Who does not believe in him whom one loves? You will be contrite with sorrow that saves, because your sorrow will be honest, that is, you will be sorry for the pain you have caused Him, not for the pain deserved by you. And you will be strong. Oh! yes'. When one is united to Jesus, one is strong! Strong against everything. You will be full of hope, because you will not doubt the Heart that loves you with His whole Self. And you will be wise. You will be everything. Love Him Who announces true happiness, Who preaches salvation, Who goes across mountains and valleys tirelessly, gathering the herd, on Whose way there is Peace, as there is peace in His Kingdom, which is not of this world, but it is true as God is true. Flee from any direction that is not His. Get rid of every fog. Go to the Light. Do not be like the world which does not want to see the Light, which does not want to know it. But go to our Father, Who is the Father of lights, Who is infinite Light, go to Him through His Son, Who is the Light of the world, to enjoy God in the embrace of the Paraclete, Who is the brightness of the Lights in one only beatitude of love that concentrates the Three into. One. Infinite ocean of Love, without storms, without darkness, do receive us! All of us! Both those who are innocent and those who have repented. All of us! In Your Peace, for ever! All of us! Everybody on the earth, that we may love You, God, and our neighbour, as You want. Everybody, in Heaven, that we may still and always love but You and the celestial inhabitants, that we may love also our brothers militant on the earth in expectation of peace, and like angels of love, we may defend them and support them in their struggles and temptations, so that they may be with You in Your Peace, for the eternal glory of our Lord Jesus

3-1525

the Saviour, the Lover of man, until the limitless limit of sublime annihilation. »

As usual, John soaring in his flights of love, draws with him souls where there is refined love and mystic silence.

Only after some time the listeners begin to speak. And Philip is the first, addressing Peter: « Is John, the teacher, not speaking? »

« He will always be speaking to you. Leave him now in his peace and let us be alone with him for a little while. Saba, do what I told you, and you as well, o good Berenice... »

They all go out and only the eight apostles and two disciples are left in the large room. There is grave silence. They all look rather pale, the apostles because they know what is about to happen, and the two disciples because they foresee it.

Peter opens his mouth to speak, but finds only these words: « Let us pray », and he intones the « Our Father ». Then, and he is really so pale that he will probably not look like this when he dies, he says, going between the two and laying his hands on their shoulders: « We have now to part, my children. What shall I say to the Lord on your behalf? He will certainly be anxious to hear about your spiritual state. »

Syntyche falls on her knees covering her face with her hands and John imitates her. Peter has them at his feet and he instinctively caresses them biting his lips not to yield to emotion.

John looks up, his face is heart-rending, and says: « You will tell the Master that we are doing His Will... » And Syntyche: « And ask Him to help us to fulfil it until the end... » Tears prevent longer sentences.

« All right. Let us kiss one another goodbye. This hour was to come... » also Peter stops speaking, choked by a lump in his throat.

« Bless us first » begs Syntyche.

« No. Not I. Better one of Jesus' brothers... »

« No. You are the head. We shall bless with our kisses. Bless us all, both us who are leaving, and them, who are staying » says Thaddeus, and he is the first to kneel down.

And Peter, poor Peter, who is flushed both because of the effort to steady his voice, and by the excitement of stretching out his hands to bless the little group prostrated at his feet, repeats the Mosaic blessing, in a voice made harsher by weeping, almost the voice of an old man...

He then bends forward, kisses the forehead of the woman, as if she were his sister, lifts up and embraces John, kissing his cheek... and runs bravely out of the room, while the others imitate his gesture with the two who are staying...

The cart is ready outside. Only Philip and Berenice are present, and the servant who is holding the horse. Peter is already in the

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« You will tell the Master not to worry about those He recommended » says Philip to Peter.

« Tell Mary that I feel the peace of Eucheria since she has become a disciple » says Berenice to the Zealot in a low voice.

« Tell the Master, Mary, everybody, that we love them, and that... Goodbye! Goodbye! Oh! We will never see them again! Goodbye, brothers! Goodbye... »

The two disciples run out into the street... But the cart which left at a trot, has already gone round the corner... Disappeared...

« Syntyche! »

« John! »

« We are alone! »

« God is with us!... Come, poor John. The sun is setting, it will do you no good to stay here... »

« The sun has set for ever, as far as I am concerned... Only in Heaven it will rise again. »

And they go back to the room where they were before with the others. They lean on a table, weeping without restraint...

Jesus says:

« And the torture brought about by a man, wanted only by a wicked man, was accomplished, stopping as a river stops in a lake after completing its course. I wish to point out to you how also Judas of Alphaeus, although more nourished with wisdom than the others, explains the passage of Isaiah, dealing with My sufferings as Redeemer, in a human way. And everybody in Israel did the same, as they refused to accept the prophetic reality and they contemplated the prophecies on My sorrows as allegories and symbols. The grave error whereby in the hour of Redemption only very few people were able to still see the Messiah in the Convict. Faith is not only a wreath of flowers. It contains also thorns. And he is holy who believes both in the hours of glory and in those of tragedy, and loves God whether He covers him with flowers or lays him on thorns. »

324. Return of the Eight Apostles and Arrival at Achzib.

10th November 1945.

Jesus, Who is so pale, thin and sad that I would say that He must be suffering, is on the highest point of a little mountain, where there is also a village. But Jesus is not in the village, which although on the mountain top, stretches down the south-east slope. Jesus instead is on a little spur, on the highest point, facing northwest; actually more west than north.

As Jesus is looking in various directions, He can see an undulating chain of mountains the extreme north-west and southwest

ends of which jut out into the sea, to the south-west with Mount Carmel, which fades away in the clear day, to the northwest with a sharp cape, similar to the ram of a ship, very much like our Apuanian Mountains particularly in respect of white rocky veins shining in the sunshine. Torrents and streams, all very full of water at this time of the year, descend from this undulated chain of mountains and across the plain along the coast they flow into the sea. The river Kishon, the most significant of all of them, flows into the sea near the wide bay of Sicaminon, after forming a sheet of water at the confluence with another little stream near its mouth. The water of the streams glitter like topazes or sapphires in the midday sunshine of a clear day, while the sea looks like a huge sapphire veined with light strings of pearls.

Springtime in the south is already beginning to appear through the new leaves bursting from the open buds, tender shiny leaves, so fresh that I would call them virginal, unaware of dust, of storms, of bites of insects and of the contact of men. And the branches of almond-trees are already tufts of white pinkish foam, so soft and ethereal that they seem to be on the point of flying away from their native branches to sail like little clouds in the serene air. Also the fields in the plain, which is fertile although not large, delimited by the north-west and south-west capes, are verdant with corn, which makes them a pleasant sight, whereas shortly before they were bare.

Jesus is looking. Three roads can be seen from where He stands. One comes from the village and ends where He is: a narrow road suitable only for pedestrians and two other roadways, which descend from the village forking in opposite directions, towards north-west and south-west.

How sickly Jesus looks! There are more traces of penance on His face now than when He fasted in the desert. He had then grown pale, but He was still young and vigorous. He is now worn out by complex suffering that crushes both physical and moral strength. His eyes are sad, sweetly and severely sad at the same time. His thin cheeks enhance even more the spirituality of His profile, of His high forehead, long straight nose, and lips absolutely devoid of sensuality. An angelical face excluding all materiality. His beard is longer than usual, and has grown on His cheeks becoming mixed with His long hair, which hangs down over His ears, so that of His face one can only see His forehead, eyes, nose and His thin cheek-bones as pale as ivory without the least hint of colour. His hair is ruffled and dull and as a souvenir of the cave in which He has been, there are little parts of dry leaves and twigs entangled in it. His creased dusty tunic and mantle also bear witness to the wild Place in which they were worn without ever being changed.

Jesus is looking around... The midday sunshine is warming Him

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and He seems to enjoy it because He avoids the shade of some oaktrees to stand in the sunshine, but although the sun is bright and clear it does not enliven His dusty hair or His tired eyes; neither does it tinge His emaciated face.

It is not the sun that restores or brightens Him up, but it is the sight of His dear apostles who are coming up gesticulating and looking towards the village from the north-west road, the less steep one. His metamorphosis then takes place. His eyes brighten up and His face seems to become less emaciated because of a rosy nuance that spreads over His cheeks and above all because His smile lights it up. He stretches out His arms, which were folded, and exclaims: « My dear ones! ». He says so raising His face, casting His eyes round, as if He wanted to communicate His joy to stalks and plants, to the clear sky, to the air, which already smells of springtime. He gathers His mantles round His body so that it may not get caught in the bushes and He runs down along a short cut to meet the apostles who are coming up, but have not yet seen Him. When He is within hearing range He calls them, to stop them going towards the village.

They hear the distant call, but perhaps from the spot where they are they cannot see Jesus, Whose dark mantle blends with the darkness of the wood that covers the slope. They look around gesticulating... Jesus calls them again... At last a clearing in the wood shows Him to them, in the sunshine, with His arms stretched out, as if He already wanted to embrace them. Then a loud cry reechoes along the coast: « The Master! » and they start running up the crags, leaving the road, scratching themselves, stumbling, panting, without feeling the weight of their sacks or the difficulty in climbing... urged as they are by joy of seeing Him again.

The younger and more agile ones are naturally the first to reach Him, that is, Alphaeus' sons, as they proceed with the steady steps of people who live among hills, and John and Andrew, who run as fast as fawns, laughing happily. And they fall at His feet lovingly and reverently, beaming with happiness... Then James of Zebedee arrives and next the ones who are less experienced in races and mountains, Matthew and the Zealot who arrive almost together, and last... Peter.

But he elbows his way through the group in no uncertain manner to reach the Master, Whose legs have been embraced by the first arrivals, who are still kissing His mantle or His hands. He grasps John and Andrew who are clinging to Jesus' garments like oysters to a rock, and panting because of the exertion, he pushes them aside so that he can fall at Jesus' feet saying: « Oh! My Master! I am now back to life, at last! I could not bear it any longer. I have grown old and thin as if I had been seriously ill. Look whether it is true, Master... » and he raises his head to be looked at by Jesus. But

in doing so he sees the change in Jesus and he stands up shouting: « Master!? But what have You done? How foolish we are! Just look! Can't you see anything? Jesus has been ill!... Master of mine, what happened to you? Tell Your Simon! »

« Nothing, My friend. »

« Nothing? With that face? Then someone has hurt You? »

« No, Simon. »

« It's not possible. You have either been ill or persecuted! I have eyes to see!... »

« So have I. And I see that in fact you have grown old and thin. So, why are you so? » the Lord asks, smiling at Peter who is scanning Him as if he wanted to find out the truth from Jesus' hair, skin, beard...

« But I have suffered! And I do not deny it. Do You think it was pleasant to see so much grief? »

« You have said it! I suffered also for the same reason... »

« Just for that, Jesus? » asks Judas of Alphaeus with so much pity and love.

« Yes, because of that grief, My brother. Because of the grief caused by the necessity to send away... »

« And by the grief of being compelled by... »

« Please!... Be silent! Silence on My injury is dearer to Me than any word uttered to console Me, saying: "I know why You have suffered". In any case, you may all know, that I suffered for many reasons, not just for that one. And had Judas not interrupted Me, I would have told you. » Jesus is austere in saying so. They are all subdued.

But Peter is the first to collect himself and he asks: « But where have You been, Master? And what have You done? »

« I was in a grotto... praying... meditating... fortifying My spirit, obtaining strength for you in your mission, and for John and Syntyche in their suffering. »

« But where? Without clothes, without money! How did You manage? » Simon is excited.

« In a grotto I did not need anything. »

« But what about food, fire, a bed, everything... I mean! I was hoping that You would be a guest, like a lost pilgrim, at Jiphthahel, or elsewhere in a house, I mean. And that gave me some peace. But... eh?! Tell Him whether I was tormented by the thought that He was without clothes, without food, without the possibility of getting any, and above all, without the will of getting it. Ah! Jesus! You should not have done that! And You will never do it again! I will not leave You for one hour. I will sew my tunic to Yours, so that I can follow You like a shadow, whether You like it or not. I will part from You only if I die. »

« Or if I die. »

3-1530

« Oh! not You. You must not die before me. Don't say that. Do You really want to break my heart? »

« No. On the contrary I want to rejoice with you and with everybody in this lovely hour that brings My dearest friends back to Me. See! I am already feeling better because your sincere love nourishes, warms and consoles Me in everything » and He caresses them one by one, while their faces shine with happy smiles, their eyes sparkle with joy and their lips tremble with emotion at those words, and they ask: « Really, Lord? », « Is that so, Master? », « Are we so dear to You? »

« Yes. So dear. Have you any food with you? »

« Yes. I was sure that You would be exhausted and I got some on the way. I have bread and roast meat, milk, cheese and apples; and a flask of generous wine and some eggs for You. Providing they are not broken... »

« Well, let us sit down here, in this lovely sunshine, and eat. While eating you can tell Me... »

They sit in the sun on a terrace and Peter opens his sack and examines his treasure: « Everything is all right » he exclaims. « Also the honey from Antigonea. Well! Didn't I tell you! On our way back, if they had put us in a barrel and had got a madman to roll it, or if they had put us in a boat without oars, even if the boat leaked, and there was a storm, we would have come back safe and sound... But going there... The more I think of it the more convinced I am that the demon was interfering with us. To prevent us from going with those two poor wretches... »

« Of course! On our way back there was no purpose... » confirms the Zealot.

« Master, did You do penance for us? » asks John, who is so intent in contemplating Jesus that he forgets to eat.

« Yes, John. My thought followed you. I perceived your dangers and your affliction. I helped you as I could... »

« Oh! I felt it! I even told you. Do you remember? »

« Yes. It is true » they all confirm.

« Well, you are now giving back to Me what I gave you. »

« Did You fast, Lord? » asks Andrew.

« Of course He did! Even if He wanted to eat, as He was without money, in a cave, how could you expect Him to get food? » replies Peter.

« All for our sake! How sorry I am! » says James of Alphaeus.

« Oh! no! Do not worry! I did not do it for you only, but for the whole world as well. As I did when I began My mission, so I did now. Then, at the end, I was assisted by angels. I am assisted by you now. And believe Me, it is a double joy to Me. Because the ministry of charity is unbreakable by angels. But it is not so easily found among men. You are practising it. And from men, for My

sake, you have become angels having chosen to be holy at all costs. You therefore make Me happy, both as God and as Man-God. Because you give Me what comes from God: Charity, and you give Me what pertains to the Redeemer: your elevation to Perfection. That is what comes from you and it is more nourishing than any food. Also then, in the desert, I was nourished with love after fasting. And it restored Me. And what happened then, is happening now! We have all suffered. Both you and I. But not in vain. I think, I know that it has helped you more than a full year of teaching. Sorrow, meditation on the harm man can do to his neighbour, the piety, faith, hope, charity you had to practise, all by yourselves, have matured you like children who become men... »

« Oh! yes! I have grown old, I have indeed. I will never again be the same Simon of Jonah as I was when I left. I have understood how sorrowful, how toilsome is our mission, notwithstanding all its beauty... » says Peter with a sigh.

« Well, we are all together now. Tell Me... »

« Speak, Simon. You can speak better than I can » says Peter to the Zealot.

« No. As a good leader you must speak on behalf of everybody » replies the other.

And Peter begins, stating as a preliminary introduction: « But help me. » He recounts everything in good order until the departure from Antioch. He then begins to speak of their return:« We were all grieved, as You can readily understand. I will never forget the last words of those two... » With the back of his hand Peter wipes two big tears streaming down his cheeks... « They sounded like the last cry of someone drowning... Listen... you had better go on... I cannot... » and he gets up and goes away to control his emotion.

Simon Zealot resumes: « None of us spoke for a long while... We could not... We had a lump in our throats, which were aching... And we did not want to weep... because if one of us had begun, it would have been the end... I had taken the reins, because Simon of Jonah, to conceal his sorrowful state, had gone to the end of the cart pretending to search for something in the sacks. We stopped at a little village half way between Antioch and Seleucia. Although moonlight became brighter and brighter as night became darker, we stopped there, because we were not familiar with the roads. And we dozed there, lying on our belongings. None of us would eat... because we could not. We were thinking of those two... At daybreak we crossed the bridge and before the third hour we were at Seleucia. We took the horse and cart back to the hotel-keeper and since he was such a kind man, we asked his advice with regard to the ship. He said: "I will come to the port with you. I know people and they know me". And that is what he did. He found three boats

leaving for ports in this area. But on one there were some... queer fellows, with whom we did not want to be. Our man told us, as he had heard of them from the owner of the boat. The second one was from Ashkelon and they refused to call at Tyre, unless we paid a sum of money that we could not afford. The third one was a really miserable little boat, with a load of timber. A poor boat, with few hands and I think with a great deal of misery. That is why they agreed to call at Tyre, although they were heading for Caesarea, providing we paid for one day's meals and wages for the whole crew. It suited us. Actually both Matthew and I were somewhat worried. There are storms at this time of the year... and You know what happened on our way there. But Simon Peter said: "Nothing will happen". So we went on board. The boat sailed so smoothly and fast that angels seemed to be acting as sails. We reached Tyre in only half of the time which had taken us to get there and when we arrived the owner of the boat was so kind that he agreed to tow our boat until we were near Ptolemais. Peter, Andrew and John had gone into it to handle it... But it was very easy... Nothing like our outward voyage. At Ptolemais we parted. And we were so pleased that before getting into our boat where all our things were, we gave him more money than we had agreed upon. We stopped one day at Ptolemais, and then we came here... But we will never forget what we suffered. Simon of Jonah is right. »

« And are we not right also in saying that the demon interfered with us only on our outward voyage? » some of the apostles ask.

« You are right. Now listen. Your mission is over. We shall now go towards Jiphthahel, waiting for Philip and Nathanael. And we must do that at once. Then the others will come... In the meantime we shall evangelize here, at the borders of Phoenicia and in Phoenicia itself. But what has recently happened is to be buried in your hearts for ever. You shall not reply to anybody enquiring about it. »

« Not even to Philip and Nathanael? They know that we came with You... »

« I will speak to them. I have suffered very much, My dear friends, as you have seen yourselves. With My suffering I paid for John's and Syntyche's peace. Do not let My suffering be useless. Do not overburden My shoulders with another weight. I have already so many!... And their weight becomes heavier day by day, hour by hour... Tell Nathanael that I have suffered very much. Tell Philip, and tell them to be good. Tell the other two. If you tell them that you have understood that I have suffered, and that I confirmed it, you are telling them the truth. Nothing else is needed. »

Jesus is speaking wearily... The eight look at Him sorrowfully, and Peter dares to caress His head, standing behind His back. Jesus raises His head and looks at His honest Peter with a sad loving

3-1533

smile.

« Oh! I cannot bear to see You like that! It seems... I feel that the joy of our reunion is over and that only its holiness is left! Well... Let us go to Achzib. You will change Your clothes, shave Your cheeks and tidy Your hair. You cannot stay like that! I cannot bear to see You like that... You look like one... who has escaped from cruel hands, like one who has been beaten, or is exhausted... You look like Abel of Bethlehem in Galilee, freed from his enemies... »

« Yes, Peter. But it is the heart of your Master that has been illtreated... and it will never recover again... On the contrary it will be hurt more and more. Let us go... »

John sighs:« I am sorry... I would have liked to inform Thomas, who is so fond of Your Mother, of the miracle of the song and of the ointment... »

« You will tell him one day... Not now. One day you will tell everything. You will then be allowed to speak. I Myself will say to you: "Go and tell everything you know". In the meantime see the truth in the miracle. That is: the power of Faith. John and Syntyche calmed the sea and cured the man not by means of words or of the ointment. But through the faith with which they mentioned the Name of Mary and made use of Her ointment. And also because your faith was there as well, and your charity. Charity towards the injured man. Charity towards the Cretan. You saved the life of the former and tried to give faith to the latter. But if it is easy to cure bodies, it is very difficult to cure souls... There is no disease more difficult to wipe out, than a spiritual one... » and Jesus gives a deep sigh.

They are within sight of Achzib. Peter goes ahead with Matthew looking for lodgings. The others follow gathered round Jesus. The sun sets fast, while they enter the village...

325. At Achzib with Six Apostles.

11th November 1945.

« Lord, during the night I have been thinking... Why do You want to come so far, and then come back to the Phoenician border? Let me go with one of my companions. I will sell Antonius... I regret having to do it... but we do not need it any more and it would attract people's notice. And I will go and meet Philip and Bartholomew. They can only come along that road and I shall certainly meet them. And You may rest assured that I will not speak. I do not wish to grieve You... You can rest here with the others and it will save us all going all the way to Jiphthahel... and we will save time » says Peter while coming out of the house where they slept. And they look less haggard, as they are wearing clean clothes and their beards and hair have been dressed by skilful

hands.

« It is a good idea. I will not stop you. You may go with whichever companion you wish. »

« With Simon, then. Bless us, o Lord. »

Jesus embraces them saying: « With a kiss. Go. »

They watch them descend quickly towards the plain-.

« How good Simon of Jonah is! During the past days I have appreciated him as I had never done before » says Judas Thaddeus.

« So did I » says Matthew. « He is never selfish, proud or exacting! »

« He has never taken advantage of the fact that he was our head. On the contrary, he seemed to be the last one, still maintaining his position » adds James of Alphaeus.

« We are not surprised. We have known him for years. He is hot tempered but very kind-hearted. And so honest! » says James of Zebedee.

« My brother is good, even if he is coarse. But since he has been with Jesus, he has become twice as good. My nature is entirely different and sometimes it made him angry, because he knew that I was suffering because of my character. He got angry because he was fond of me. When one understands him, one gets along with him very well » says Andrew.

« During the past days we have always understood one another and we have always been of one mind » states John.

« That's true! I noticed that myself. During the whole month, also in moments of excitement, we have never been at variance among ourselves... Whereas sometimes... I don't know why... » monologises James of Zebedee.

« Why? But it is easily understood! Because we are righteous in our intentions. We are not perfect; but we are righteous. We therefore accept the good which one proposes and we reject the evil which is pointed out to us as such, whereas previously we had not realised that by ourselves. Why? It is easily said! Because the eight of us are of the same mind: to do things in such a way as to please Jesus. That's all! » exclaims Thaddeus.

« I do not think that the others are of a different mind » says Andrew in a conciliatory tone.

« No. Neither Philip nor Bartholomew, although the latter is rather elderly and very much an Israelite... Neither is Thomas, although he is inclined to be much more human than spiritual. I would do them wrong, should I accuse them of... Jesus, You are right. Forgive me. But if You knew what it means to me to see You suffer! And because of him! I am Your disciple, like all the rest. But over and above I am Your brother and friend and I have Alphaeus' fiery blood in my veins. Jesus, don't look at me so severely or so sadly. You are the Lamb and I... the lion. And believe me, I find it hard to refrain from tearing with a blow of my

paw the network of slander that is enveloping You and from knocking down the shelter in which the true enemy is hiding. I would like to see the real side of his spiritual face, which I call... and perhaps it is calumny; and if I could identify him without the least fear of error, I would mark him in such a way that for the rest of his life he would not dream of hurting You » says Thaddeus passionately, although Jesus had cast a glance at him to stop him, when he began to speak.

James of Zebedee replies to him: « You would have to mark half of the people in Israel!... But Jesus will proceed just the same. During the past days you have seen whether anything can stop Jesus. What shall we do now, Master? Have You spoken here? »

« No. I have not been on these slopes one day yet. I slept in the wood. »

« Why did they not want You? »

« Their hearts rejected the Pilgrim... I was penniless... »

« They are hard-hearted then! What were they afraid of? »

« That I might be a highwayman... But it does not matter. The Father Who is in Heaven made Me meet with a goat, which was either lost or had run away. Come, I will show her to you. She lives in the thicket with her kid. But she did not run away when she saw Me arrive. On the contrary, she let Me milk her... into My mouth, as if I were her little one, too. And I slept near her, with the little kid almost on My heart. God is good to His Word! »

They go towards the place where they met yesterday, a thorny thicket. In the middle there is an age-old oak tree, surviving I know not how, split as it is, as if the ground had opened breaking apart its robust trunk, all covered with green ivy and bramble bare of leaves at present. The goat is grazing nearby with her little kid and seeing so many men she levels her horns ready to defend herself. But she soon recognises Jesus and calms down. They throw some bread crusts to her and withdraw.

« I slept over there » explains Jesus. « And I would have stayed here, if you had not come. I was hungry. The purpose in fasting was over... And it was not necessary to insist on other things that can no longer be changed... »

Jesus is sad once again... The six cast sidelong glances at one another, but do not say anything.

« And now? Where are we going? »

« We shall stay here today. Tomorrow we will go down and preach on the road to Ptolemais and then we will go towards the Phoenician border and come back here before the Sabbath. »

And they slowly return to the village.

3-1536

326. Evangelizing at the Border of Phoenicia.

[No date].

'The road coming from Phoenicia towards Ptolemais is a beautiful road which cuts straight across the plain between the sea and the mountains. Because it is well kept, it is very busy. There are various junctions with secondary roads running from inland towns to towns on the coast, and at the numerous crossroads there is generally a house, a well and a rudimentary forge for quadrupeds that may need shoes.

Jesus, with the six apostles left with Him, covers a good stretch of the road, about two kilometres, seeing the same things all the time. He stops at last near one of those houses with a well and a farriery, at a crossroad near a torrent crossed by a bridge, which although strongly built, is just wide enough to let one cart pass at a time and thus travellers are compelled to stop alternately, because the two opposite currents of traffic cannot pass at the same time. And as far as I can see, that gives the travellers of different races, Phoenicians and true Israelites, the opportunity to join in one only intent: that of cursing Rome, although they hate one another... And yet, without Rome, they would not have that bridge and when the torrent is in flood, I do not know how they would be able to cross it. But such is life! An oppressor is always hated, even if he does useful things!

Jesus stops near the bridge, in the sunny corner where the house is; on its side along the torrent there is an ill-smelling smithy shop, where they are forging shoes for a horse and two donkeys, which have lost theirs. The horse is harnessed to a Roman wagon in which some soldiers take delight in making faces at the cursing Jews. And they throw a handful of horse manure on an old bignosed man, the most rancorous of all of them, with a real viperous mouth, someone who I think would willingly bite the Romans to poison them. One can imagine what happens! The old Jew runs away as if he had been infected with leprosy and other Jews join him. The Phoenicians shout ironically: « Do you like the new manna? Eat it, it will give you energy to shout against those who are too good to you, you hypocritical vipers! » The soldiers laugh scornfully... Jesus is silent.

The Roman wagon at last departs and they greet the farrier shouting: « Hail, Titus, may your stay be prosperous! » The man, who is vigorous, elderly, bull -necked, clean shaven with very dark eyes above a sturdy nose and under a wide protruding forehead, which is bald at the temples, while his hair is short and frizzly, raises a heavy hammer waving them goodbye and then goes back to the anvil, on which a young man had laid a red-hot iron, while another boy sears the hoof of a little donkey preparing it to be shod.

3-1537

« Almost all the farriers along the roads are Romans. Soldiers who remained here when they finished their service. And they earn a lot of money... Nothing ever prevents them from curing animals... And a donkey may lose a shoe before sunset on a Sabbath, or at the time of the Dedication... » remarks Matthew.

« The man who shod Antonius was married to a Jewess » says John.

« And foolish women are more numerous than wise ones » states James of Zebedee.

« And to whom do the children belong? To God or to paganism? » asks Andrew.

« They generally belong to the stronger of the two » replies Matthew. « And, unless the woman is an apostate herself, they are Hebrews, because men, at least these men, do not interfere. They are not even very... fanatical about their Olympus. I think that now they believe in nothing but the necessity of money. They have all large families. »

« But they are mean people. They have no faith, no fatherland... they are disliked by everybody... » says Thaddeus.

« No. You are wrong. Rome does not despise them. On the contrary, Rome always helps them. They are more useful now than when they were armed. They penetrate into our country more by corruption of blood than by violence. It is the first generation, eventually, that suffers. Then they spread and... the world forgets... » says Matthew who seems to be well informed.

« Yes, it is the children that suffer. But also the Jewish women, married like that... For themselves and for their children. I feel sorry for them. Nobody speaks to them of God any longer. But that will not happen in future. Then there will be no such separations of people and countries, because souls will be united in one Fatherland only: Mine » says Jesus, Who has been silent so far.

« But they will be dead by then!... » exclaims John.

« No. They will be gathered in My-Name. No longer Romans or Libyans, Greeks or people from the Black Sea area, Iberians or Gauls, Egyptians or Hebrews, but souls of Christ. And woe betide those who will distinguish souls, whom I equally loved and for whom I equally suffered, according to their nationalities. He who should do that would prove that he has not understood Charity, which is universal. »

The apostles understand the covert reproof and lower their heads without speaking...

The clangor of iron beaten on the anvil has ceased and the hammer blows on the last hoof of a donkey are deadening. And Jesus takes advantage of the situation to speak loud so that the crowds may hear Him. He seems to be continuing His conversation with the apostles, in actual fact He is speaking to the passersby and

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perhaps also to those in the houses, certainly to some women, as women's voices calling one another can be heard in the mild air.

« There is always a relationship among men, even if it does not appear to exist: that is, the origin from One only Creator. If later the children of the Only Father have become separated, the tie of their origin has not changed, as the blood of a son who disowns his father's house does not change. In Cain's veins there was Adam's blood also after the crime which compelled him to roam in the wide world. And in the veins of the children born after Eve's grief, weeping over her murdered son, there was the same blood that boiled in the veins of far away Cain. The same, and for a purer reason, applies to the equality of the children of the Creator. Are they lost, exiled, apostates, guilty, speaking languages different from ours, do they believe in faiths which we loathe, are they corrupted by marrying heathens? Yes? But their souls came from One God, and they are always the same, even if they are torn, lost, exiled, corrupt... Even if they are the cause of grief to the God Father, they are still souls created by Him. The good children of a very good Father must have good feelings. Good towards the Father, good towards brothers, whatever they may have become, because they are children of the same Father. Good towards the Father by endeavouring to console Him for His grief, taking His children back to Him, as they are the cause of His grief, either because they are sinners or because they are apostates or pagans. Good towards them because they have souls created by the Father, enclosed in guilty, sullied bodies and have become dull through wrong religions, but are always souls of God equal to our own.

Remember, you people of Israel, that there is no one, not even the idolater most remote from God because of his idolatrous religion, not even the most pagan of pagans or the most atheistic man, who is completely devoid of some trace of his origin. Remember, you who have gone wrong, in getting detached from our just Religion by descending to mixing sexes, which is condemned by our Religion, that even if you think that everything that was Israel is now dead in you, suffocated by the love for a man of different faith and race, it is not dead. There is something still alive, and that is Israel. And it is your duty to blow the dying fire, to foster the spark still existing by the will of God, so that it may overwhelm carnal love. That love ends with death, but your souls do not. Remember that. And you, whoever you may be, who see, and at times are horrified at seeing the hybrid marriage of a daughter of Israel with a man of different race and faith, remember that it is your duty and obligation to assist the mislaid sister charitably, so that she may find her way back to the Father. This is the new holy Law, agreeable to the Lord: that the followers of the Redeemer may redeem whoever is to be redeemed, so that

God may smile because of the souls that go back to the Father's House and the sacrifice of the Redeemer may not be made unfruitful and mean.

To leaven dough the housewife takes a little of the dough of the previous week. Oh! only a tiny bit of the whole mass! And she buries it in the dough, and protects it from harmful draughts in the favourable warmth of the house. Do likewise yourselves, you followers of Good, and you, too, who have gone away from the Father and from His Kingdom. Let the former give a tiny part of their yeast to support and reinforce the latter, who will add it to the particle of justice still existing in them. And both of you, protect the new yeast from the hostile draughts of Evil in the warmth of Charity, according to what it is in you: your mistress, or a persistent, although now languishing survivor. Support with the warmth of your homes, with the faith of the same religion what is fermenting in the heart of a mislaid co-religionist, so that she may feel that she is still loved, she is still a daughter of Zion and a sister of yours, and her good will may materialise and the Kingdom of Heaven may come to all souls. »

« But who is He? » people ask, and they no longer seem in a hurry to cross the bridge although it is now clear, or to go on their way, if they have already crossed it.

« A rabbi. »

« A rabbi of Israel. »

« Here? At the Phoenician borders? It is the first time that that happens! »

« And yet it is so. Aser told me that He is the Holy One, as people call Him. »

« Perhaps He is seeking refuge here because they persecute Him on the other side. »

« They are reptiles indeed! »

« It is a good thing if He stays with us! He will work miracles... »

I In the meantime Jesus has gone away along a path in the fields...

327. Arrival at Alexandroscene.

12th November 1945.

They reach the road once again after a long tour through fields and after crossing the torrent by a little bridge of squeaky boards, fit only for people: a footbridge rather than anything more substantial. And they continue walking along the plain, which becomes narrower and narrower as the hills come closer to the coast, so much so that after another torrent, with the usual essential Roman bridge, the road leaves the plain and becomes mountainous and forks at the bridge: one road, which is not so steep, runs northwards along a valley, the other one, which Jesus takes

following the indication of the Roman mile stone: « Alexandroscene - V m. », is a real flight of steps in the steep rocky mountain, the sharp ends of which drop into the Mediterranean, while the view of the sea becomes wider and wider as they climb. Only pedestrians and little donkeys can go along that road, or flight of steps, as it should be called. But probably because it is a good short cut, it is very busy and people curiously watch the unusual Galilean group going along it.

« That must be the cape of the storm » says Matthew pointing to the promontory jutting out into the sea.

« Yes, down there is the village of which the fisherman spoke to us » confirms James of Zebedee.

« I wonder who built this road? »

« Who knows how long it has been here! Phoenician work perhaps... »

« From the top we shall see Alexandroscene beyond which there is the White Cape. You will see a large expanse of sea, My dear John » says Jesus laying an arm on the shoulders of the apostle.

« That will make me happy. But it will soon be dark. Where are we stopping? »

« At Alexandroscene. See? The road is already going down. Down there the plain stretches as far as that town which you can see over there. »

« It is the town of the woman from Antigonea... How can we satisfy her request? » asks Andrew.

« You know, Master, she said to us: "Go to Alexandroscene. My brothers have stores there and they are proselytes. Tell them about the Master. We are children of God, too... " and she wept because, as she is a daughter-in-law, she is rather frowned upon... so her brothers never go to see her and she never hears of them... » explains John.

« We will look for her brothers. If they welcome us as pilgrims, we shall be able to satisfy her... »

« But how can we prove that we have seen her? »

« She works for Lazarus. And we are Lazarus' friends » says Jesus.

« That is true. You can speak... »

« Yes. But quicken your pace so that we may find the house. Do you know where it is? »

« Yes, it is near the Fort. They deal very much with the Romans to whom they sell many goods. »

« Very well. »

They cover the beautiful level road quickly, a real consular road, linked with roads coming from the mainland and it proceeds towards the mainland after the steep flight of steps across the rocky promontory near the coast.

Alexandroscene is more a military than a civil town. It must be of strategic importance, but I do not know why. Enclosed between two promontories it looks like a sentry watching that part of the sea. Now that it is possible to see both capes, many military towers are visible on them, forming a chain with those in the plain and in town, where the imposing Fort dominates near the sea-shore.

They enter the town after crossing another little torrent near the gate and they proceed towards the severe mass of the Fort looking around inquisitively and being watched curiously. There are numerous soldiers and they appear to be on good terms with the citizens, which makes the apostles mumble: « These Phoenicians have no sense of honour! »

They reach the stores of Hermione's brothers, while the last customers are coming out laden with all kinds of goods, from pieces of cloth to kitchenware, to hay, corn, oil, foodstuffs. The large entrance hall smells of leather, spices, hay, straw, raw wool and it leads into a yard as wide as a square, with storehouses under the porches.

A swarthy bearded man goes to meet them: « What do you need? Foodstuffs? »

« Yes... and lodgings, if you do not mind giving hospitality to pilgrims. We come from far and have never been here before. Welcome us in the name of the Lord. »

The man looks carefully at Jesus Who has spoken on behalf of everybody. He scans His face, then says: « Actually we do not give lodgings. But I like You. You are a Galilean, are You not? Better Galileans than Judaeans. Too much mould in the latter. They never forgive us for not having pure blood. It would be much better if their souls were pure. Come, come in here, I will be back at once. I am closing up, it is already dark. » It is in fact twilight and it is even darker in the yard overlooked by the powerful Fort.

They go into a room and, tired as they are, they sit down on seats scattered here and there...

The man comes back with two more brothers, an older and a younger one, and shows them the guests, who stand up greeting, saying: « Here they are. What do you think? They seem to be honest... »

« Yes. You have done the right thing » says the oldest brother to his younger one, and then addressing the guest, or rather, Jesus, Who clearly appears to be the head, he asks: « What are your names? »

« Jesus of Nazareth, James and Judas also of Nazareth, James and John of Bethsaida and Andrew as well, and Matthew of Capernaum. »

« How come you are here? Persecuted? »

« No. We are evangelizing. We have been all over Palestine more

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than once, from Galilee to Judaea, from one sea to the other. And we have been beyond the Jordan, as far as Hauran. We have now come here to teach. »

« A rabbi here? It's amazing, isn't it, Philip and Elias? » asks the oldest brother.

« Yes, very. To which caste do you belong? »

« To none. I belong to God. The good people of the world believe in Me. I am poor and I love the poor, but I do not despise rich people, whom I teach to love, to be merciful and to be detached from riches, as I teach the poor to love their poverty trusting in God Who does not let anybody perish. Among My rich friends and disciples there is Lazarus of Bethany... »

« Lazarus? A sister of ours is married to one of his servants. »

« I know. That is also one of the reasons why I came. To tell you that she sends you her regards and loves you. »

« Have You seen her? »

« I have not. But these who are with Me, were sent to Antigonea by Lazarus. »

« Oh! Tell us! How is Hermione? Is she really happy? »

« Her husband and mother-in-law are very fond of her. Her father-in-law respects her... » says Judas Thaddeus.

« But he does not forgive her her mother's blood. Say so. »

« He is about to forgive her. He praised her very highly. And she has four lovely kind children, who make her happy. You are always in her heart and she asked us to bring you the Divine Master. »

« But... what?... Are You the one who is said to be the Messiah? »

« I am. »

« You really are the... We were told in Jerusalem that You are, that they call You the Word of God? Is that true? »

« Yes, it is. »

« But are You the Word for those over there, or for everybody? »

« For everybody. Can you believe that I am the Word of God? »

« It costs nothing to believe, particularly when one hopes that what one believes in can remove what makes us suffer. »

« That is true, Elias. But do not say that. It is an impure thought, much more impure than mixed blood. Do not rejoice at the hope that what makes you suffer as a man despised by other people may vanish, but rejoice at the hope of conquering the Kingdom of Heaven. »

« You are right. I am half a pagan, Lord... »

« Do not lose heart. I love you also and I have come for you, too. »

« They must be tired, Elias. You are keeping them here talking. Let us go and have supper and then we will take them to rest. There are no women here... None of the women from Israel wanted us, whereas we wanted one of them... Forgive us, therefore if the

house will seem cold and bare. »

« Your kind hearts will warm and adorn it for us. »

« How long are You staying? »

« Not more than one day. I want to go towards Tyre and Sidon and I would like to be at Achzib before the Sabbath., »

« It's not possible, Lord. Sidon is far away! »

« I would like to speak here tomorrow. »

« Our house is like a port. Without going out You will have as many listeners as You wish, all the more so as tomorrow is market day. »

« Let us go, then, and may the Lord reward you for your charity. »

328. The Day after at Alexandroscene. Parable of the Vineyard Labourers.

13th November 1945.

One half of the yard of the three brothers is in the shade, the other is in bright sunshine. And it is full of people coming and going, doing their shopping, while outside the main door, in the little square, people are bustling about the noisy market of Alexandroscene, buying donkeys, sheep, lambs, poultry; because it is obvious that people are not so fussy here and thus they take poultry to the market without any fear of contamination. Braying, bleating, cackling of hens and triumphant cock-a-doodle-doos of cockerels mingle with the voices of people in a merry chorus, the notes of which now and again become dramatically high because of some quarrel.

Also the yard of the brothers is very busy and people often wrangle over prices or because a customer has taken what somebody else intended to purchase. Then there is the querulous moaning of beggars in the square, near the main door, wailing over their misfortunes in a singsong as sad as the lamentation of a dying man.

Roman soldiers move imperiously about the square and warehouses. I suppose that they are on duty as I see that they are armed and never alone among the Phoenicians who are all armed.

Jesus also walks up and down the yard with the six apostles, waiting for the right moment to speak. He then goes out into the square, and passing near the beggars He gives them alms. People pause for a moment to look at the Galilean group and ask who the foreigners are. And there are some who tell them, as they have already enquired of the three brothers about their guests.

A murmur follows Jesus' steps as He walks about peacefully caressing the children He meets on His way. There is also someone who sneers and utters unpleasant epithets at the Hebrews, as well as people who honestly wish to hear this « Prophet », this « Rabbi »,

this « Holy Man », this « Messiah » of Israel, as those are the names by which they refer to Him, according to their faith and their sense of righteousness.

I hear two mothers say: « But is it true? »

« Daniel told me himself. When in Jerusalem he spoke to people who had seen the miracles of the Holy Man. »

« Yes, I agree! But is this the same man? »

« Oh! Daniel told me that it cannot be but Him, because of what He says. »

« Well... what do you think? Will He grant me the grace, even if I am only a proselyte? »

« I would say so... Try. Perhaps He will not come back here again. Try! He will certainly not hurt you! »

« I am going » says the little woman leaving the vendor of kitchenware with whom she was haggling over some soup-plates. The man, who had heard the conversation of the two women, disappointed and irritated because a good deal had come to nothing, rails at the remaining woman: « Cursed proselyte. Jewish blood. Corrupted woman » etc. etc.

I hear two grave bearded men say: « I would like to hear Him. They say that He is a great Rabbi. »

« A Prophet, you should say. Greater than the Baptist. Elias told me certain things! Wonderful things! And he knows because his sister is married to a servant of a very wealthy man of Israel, and to get news of her he calls on his fellow-servants. That rich man is a great friend of the Rabbi... »

A third man, a Phoenician perhaps, who being close to the two has heard what they said, thrusts forth his thin satyric face between the two and says laughing scornfully: « Lovely holiness! Dressed with wealth! As far as I know a holy man should live in poverty! »

« Hold your cursed tongue, Doro. You, heathen, are not fit to judge these things. »

« Ah! You are fit, particularly you, Samuel. You had better pay me that debt of yours. »

« Here, take it, and don't come near me any more, you faun-faced vampire! »...

I hear an old half-blind man, led by a little girl, ask: « Where is the Messiah? » and the girl says: « Make room for old Mark! Please tell old Mark where the Messiah is! »

The feeble trembling voice of the old man and the girl's argentine and steady one spread in vain over the square, until another man says: « Do you want to go to the Rabbi? He has gone back towards Daniel's house. There He is, standing over there, speaking to the beggars. »

I can hear two Roman soldiers say: « He must be the one whom

hose crooks of the Jews persecute! Only by looking at Him you an see that He is better than they are. »

« That is why He annoys them. »

« Let's go and tell the ensign. That is the instruction. »

« How silly, o Caius! Rome bewares of lambs and puts up with, nay I would say: caresses tigers. » (Scipio).

« I don't think so, Scipio! Pontius puts people to death quite easily! » (Caius).

« Yes, but he does not close his house to the creeping hyenas who flatter him. » (Scipio).

« Politics, Scipio! Politics! » (Caius).

« Cowardice, Caius, and stupidity. He should make friends with this Man. He would receive help to keep this Asiatic rabble obedient. Pontius serves Rome badly by neglecting this good man and flattering wicked people. » (Scipio).

« Do not criticise our Proconsul. We are soldiers and our superior is as sacred as a god. We have sworn obedience to divine Caesar and the Proconsul is his representative. » (Caius).

« That is all right with regard to our duty towards our sacred and immortal fatherland. But not with regard to one's personal judgment. » (Scipio).

« But obedience is based on judgment. If your judgment is against an order and criticises it, you will not obey wholeheartedly. Rome relies on our blind obedience to defend its conquests. » (Caius).

« You speak like a tribune and you are quite right. But I would point out to you that if Rome is queen, we are not slaves. We are subjects. Rome has no slave citizens, and must not have any. It is slavery to prevent citizens from speaking their minds. I say that it is my opinion that Pontius is wrong in not taking care of this Israelite, call Him Messiah, Holy, Prophet., Rabbi, as you like. And I feel that I can say so because my loyalty to Rome is in no way impaired. Neither is my love. Nay, that is what I would like, because I feel that by teaching people to respect the laws and the Consuls, He cooperates to the welfare of Rome. » (Scipio).

« You are a learned man, Scipio... You will go a long way. You are already well ahead! I am a poor soldier. But look over there. There is an assemblage of people round the Man. Let us go and tell our superiors. » (Caius)...

In fact near the main door of the three brothers there is a group of people round Jesus, Who is well visible because of His height. Then all of a sudden a shout is heard and the people become excited. Many people rush from the market towards the group while others leave the group and run towards the square and beyond it. Questions... answers...

« What happened? »

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« What is the matter? »

« The Man from Israel has cured old Mark! »

« The veil has vanished from his eyes. »

Jesus in the meantime has gone into the yard followed by a train of people. Behind them all, moving with great difficulty there is one of the beggars, a cripple, who is dragging himself along more with his hands than with his feet. But if his legs are crippled and weak, so that without crutches he would not be able to move, his voice is quite strong! He sounds like a siren rending the sunny morning air: « Holy! Holy! Messiah! Rabbi! Have mercy on me! » He is shouting at the top of his voice unrelentingly.

Two or three people turn round: « Spare your breath! Mark is a Jew, you are not. »

« He grants graces to true Israelites, not to the sons of a dog! »

« My mother was Hebrew... »

« And God struck her because of her sin, giving her a monster like you. Away, you son of a she-wolf! Go back to your place, you filthy mud... »

The man leans against the wall, he is down-hearted and frightened by threatening fists...

Jesus stops, turns round, looks at him. He orders: « Man, come here! »

The man looks at Him, looks at those threatening him... and dare not come forward.

Jesus squeezes through the little crowd and goes to him. He takes him by the hand, that is, He lays His hand on the man's shoulder and says: « Be not afraid. Come with Me » and looking at the merciless people He says severely: « God belongs to all men who seek Him and are merciful. »

They take a hint and are now the ones to be left at the rear of the crowd, or rather, they remain where they are.

Jesus turns round again. He sees that they are embarrassed and on the point of going away, and He says to them: « No, you may come forward as well. It will do you good, too, it will straighten and fortify your souls as I am going to straighten and fortify this man, because he has faith. Man, I tell you, be cured of your infirmity. » And He takes His hand off the shoulder of the cripple, after the latter has something like a shock.

The man straightens himself up on his legs now steady, throws away his worn out crutches and shouts: « He has cured me! Praised be the God of my mother! » and he kneels down to kiss the hem of Jesus' mantle.

The tumult of those who wish to see, or have seen and are making comments, rises to the highest pitch. In the long entrance hall, leading from the square to the yard, the clamour resounds with the resonance of a well and is echoed by the walls of the Fort.

The soldiers think that there is a brawl - which is likely to be the case in places like this one with so many contrasting races and religions - and a squad rushes to the spot; they elbow their way violently through the crowd asking what is the matter.

« A miracle, a miracle! Jonah, the cripple, has been cured. There he is, over there, near the Galilean. »

The soldiers look at one another. They do not speak until the whole crowd has passed by and more people have piled up behind it coming from the warehouses and the square, where only the vendors are left; they are fretting with indignation at the sudden distraction, which has caused the market to be a complete failure that day. Then, when they see one of the three brothers pass by, the ask him: « Philip, do you know what the Rabbi is going to do now? »

« He will be speaking and teaching in my yard! » replies Philip all overjoyed.

The soldiers consult with one another: « Shall we stay? Shall we go away? »

« The ensign told us to watch... »

« Whom? The Man? As far as He is concerned we may as well go and amuse ourselves dicing for an amphora of wine of Cyprus » says Scipio, the soldier who had previously defended Jesus talking to his companion.

« I would say that He needs protection, not the rights of Rome! See Him over there? Amongst all our gods there is not one so mild and yet so manly looking. The mob here are unworthy of Him. And the unworthy are always wicked. Let us stay and protect Him. If necessary we will defend Him and will dust these galley-slaves' jackets » says another one half sarcastically and half admiringly.

« You are right, Pudens. Nay, Actius, go and call Procorus, the ensign who is always dreaming of plots against Rome... and of promotions for himself, as a reward for his keen watching over the health of divine Caesar and of goddess Rome, the mother and mistress of the world, so that he may convince himself that he will not gain any arm-band or crown here. »

A young soldier runs away and comes back at once saying: « Procorus is not coming. He is sending triarius Aquila... »

« Very well! Better him than Cecilius Maximus himself. Aquila has served in Africa, in Gaul, and in the wild forests where Varus and his legions were wiped out. He knows Greeks and Britons and he is clever at telling... Oh! Hail! Here is our glorious Aquila! Come, teach us poor wretches how to judge the value of men! »

« Long live Aquila, the master of armies! » they all shout shaking the old soldier whose face, bare arms and calves are marked with scars.

He smiles in a friendly manner and exclaims: « Long live Rome',

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the mistress of the world! Not me, a poor soldier. What is the matter? »

« We are to watch that tall man, whose hair is as fair as very light copper. »

« Good. But who is He? »

« They say He is the Messiah. His name is Jesus and He comes from Nazareth. You know, He is the one about whom the order was issued... »

« H'm! May be... But I think that we are chasing shadows. »

« They say that He wants to proclaim Himself King and supplant Rome. The Sanhedrin, Sadducees, Pharisees and Herodians have denounced Him to Pontius. You know that the Jews have that fixed idea in their heads, and a king pops up now and again... »

« I know, I know... But if they are worried about this one... In any case let us listen to what He says. I think that He is going to speak. »

« I heard from the centurion's soldier that Publius Quintillianus said to him that He is a divine philosopher... The imperial ladies are enthusiastic for Him.... » says another young soldier.

« I am sure they are! I would be enthusiastic myself if I were a woman and I would like to have him in my bed... » says another young soldier laughing wholeheartedly.

« Shut up, you wanton fellow! Lust is devouring you! » remarks another one jokingly.

« And not you, Fabius! Anna, Syra, Alba, Mary... »

« Be quiet, Sabinus, He is speaking and I want to listen to Him » orders the triarius. They all become silent.

Jesus has got on a case placed against a wall. He can thus be seen by everybody. His kind greeting has spread through the air and is followed by the words: « Children of one only Creator, listen », and in the heedful silence of the crowd, He continues.

« The Time of Grace has come not only for Israel, but for everybody in the world. Men of Israel, who are here for various reasons, proselytes, Phoenicians, Gentiles, everybody, listen to the Word of God, understand Justice and become familiar with Charity. If you have Wisdom, Justice and Charity, you have the means of attaining the Kingdom of God, which is not exclusive to the children of Israel, but belongs to all those who from now on will love the One True God and will believe in the word of His Word.

Listen. I have come from very far, but not with the ambition of a usurper or with the violence of a conqueror. I have come to be only the Saviour of your souls. Property, wealth, offices, do not seduce Me. They mean nothing to Me and I do not even look at them. Or rather I look at them to pity them, for I feel sorry for them, because they are chains that hold your souls prisoners, preventing

them from coming to the One, Eternal, Universal, Holy, Blessed Lord. I look at them and I approach them as if they were the greatest miseries. And I endeavour to rid them of their fascinating but cruel deceit that seduces the sons of man, so that they may use them with justice and holiness, not as cruel weapons that wound and kill men, and first of all the souls of those who do not make a holy use of them.

But I solemnly tell you that it is much easier for Me to cure a deformed body than a perverted soul; it is easier for Me to give light back to blind eyes or health to a dying body, than light to souls and health to diseased spirits. Why? Because man has lost sight of the true purpose of his life and devotes himself to what is transient. Man does not know or does not remember, or although he remembers, he does not want to obey the holy order of the Lord - and I say this also to the Gentiles who are listening to Me - to do Good, which is Good in Rome as in Athens, in Gaul as in Africa, because the moral law exists under every sky, in every religion and in every righteous heart. And religions, from that of God to that of individual morals, say that our better part survives and its destiny in the next life will be according to how it acted on the earth. The aim of man, therefore, is to achieve peace in the next life, not revelry, usury, arrogance, pleasure in this world for a short time, to be paid for with the most dreadful tortures for ever and ever. Well, man does not know, or does not remember, or does not want to remember that truth. If he does not know, he is less guilty. If he does not remember, he is somewhat guilty, because the truth is to be kept alight, like a holy torch, in minds and hearts. But if man does not want to remember it, and when it, shines he closes his eyes not to see it, as he considers it as hateful as the voice of a pedantic rhetor, then his fault is grave, very grave indeed.

And yet God forgives it, if the soul disowns its wrong doing and proposes to pursue, for the rest of its life, man's true purpose, which is the conquest of eternal peace in the Kingdom of the true God. Have you so far followed an evil path? Are you downhearted and are you thinking that it is late to follow the right way? Are you desolate and are you saying: "I knew nothing of all this! And now I am ignorant and I do not know what to do"? No. Do not think that it is the same as with material matters and that it takes a long time and much work to start all over again, but in a holy manner. The bounty of the Eternal True Lord God is such that He will not make you walk back all the way to put you at the junction where, erring, you left the right path for the wrong one. His bounty is such, that from the moment you say: "I want to belong to the Truth", that is, to God, because God is Truth, God, through an entirely spiritual miracle, infuses Wisdom into you, whereby from

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being ignorant you become possessors of the supernatural Science, like those who have possessed it for years.

Wisdom means to want God, to love God, to cultivate one's soul, to tend to the Kingdom of God, repudiating everything that is flesh - world, Satan. Wisdom means obedience to the Law of God, which is the law of Charity, Obedience, Continence, Honesty. Wisdom means to love God with one's whole being and to love our neighbour as ourselves. Those are the two essential elements to be wise in the Wisdom of God. And our neighbours are not only those of our own blood, of our race and religion, but all men, whether rich or poor, wise or ignorant, Hebrews, proselytes, Phoenicians, Greeks, Romans... »

Jesus is interrupted by a threatening howling of some excited people. Jesus looks at them and says: « Yes. That is love. I am not a servile master. I speak the truth because that is what I must do to sow in you what is necessary to gain eternal Life. Whether you like it or not, I must tell you, to do My duty as Redeemer. It is for you to do your duty as souls needing Redemption. So we must love our neighbour. All our neighbours. And love them with a holy love, not in a questionable communion of interests, whereby a Roman, Phoenician or proselyte are "anathema" or viceversa, as long as there is no sensuality or money involved, whereas if you are anxious to share sensuality or money with them, they are no longer "anathema"... »

The crowd is once again in an uproar, while the Romans, from their place in the hall exclaim: « By Jove! He does speak well! »

Jesus waits for the noise to calm down, then He resumes: « We must love our neighbour as we would like to be loved ourselves. Because we do not like to be ill-treated, harassed, robbed, oppressed, calumniated, insulted. Everybody has the same national or personal feelings. Do not let us do, therefore, the evil which we would not like done to us.

Wisdom means obedience to the ten Commandments of God:

"I am the Lord your God. You shall have no gods except Me. You shall have no idols and shall not worship them. You shall not utter the Name of God to misuse it. It is the Name of the Lord your God and God will punish those who use it without any reason, to curse it or to validate a sin. Remember to sanctify feast days. The Sabbath is sacred to the Lord, Who rested on it after Creation and blessed it and sanctified it. Honour your father and your mother that you may live peacefully for a long time on the earth and eternally in Heaven. You shall not kill. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour. You shall not covet your neighbour's house; you shall not covet his wife, his servant, man or woman, or his ox, or his donkey or anything that belongs to him".

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That is Wisdom. Who does that is wise and conquers Life and the Kingdom for ever. So, as from today, propose to live according to Wisdom, by preferring it to the poor things of the earth.

What are you saying? Speak up. Are you saying that it is late? No. Listen to a parable.

A landowner went out at daybreak to hire workers for his vineyard and he made an agreement with them for one denarius a day. He went out again at the third hour and thinking that the workers he had hired were too few and seeing other people idle in the square waiting to be hired, he took them and said to them: "Go to my vineyard and I will give you what I promised the others". And they went. He went out again at the sixth hour and at the ninth and seeing some more workers, he said to them: "Will you work for me? I give my workers one denarius a day". They agreed and went. Finally he went out about the eleventh hour and saw some more standing in the sunshine and he asked them: "Why are you standing here idle? Are you not ashamed of standing here all day without doing anything?". "Because no one hired us for the day. We would have liked to work and earn our living. But no one asked us to go and work". "Well, I am asking you to go to my vineyard. Go and you will have the same pay as the others". He said so because he was a good landowner and felt sorry for the dejection of his neighbour.

In the evening, when the work was finished, the man called his bailiff and said: "Call the workers and pay them their wages, as agreed, beginning with the last arrivals, who are the most needy, as they have not had any food during the day, whereas the others have been fed once and some several times, and who out of gratitude to me, as I felt sorry for them, have worked harder than all the others; I, in fact, have been watching them. Then dismiss them so that they may go and rest, as they deserve, and may enjoy with their families the fruit of their work". And the bailiff did as the landowner ordered, and gave each man one denarius.

When the last ones came, those who had worked from daybreak, they were surprised at receiving one denarius each and they complained to the bailiff who said to them: "That is the order I was given. Go and complain to the landowner, not to me". And they went and said: "You have not been fair! We have worked for twelve hours, first in the dewy moisture, then in the heat of the sun and once again in the dampness of the evening, and you have given us the same wages you gave the lazy workers who worked for one hour only!... Why?". And one of them in particular raised his voice saying that he had been betrayed and exploited undeservedly.

"My friend, in what have I wronged you? What did I agree with you at daybreak? One full day's work and the wages of one

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denarius. Did I not?".

"Yes, that is true. But you have given the same wages to those who have worked much less...

"Did you agree to that pay because it seemed fair?".

"Yes. I agreed because others pay less".

"Were you ill-treated by me?".

"In all conscience... no".

"I granted you a long rest during the day and I gave you some food, did I not? You had three meals. And food and rest were not agreed upon. Is that right?".

"Yes. They were not agreed upon".

"Why did you accept them, then?".

"Well... You said: 'I prefer to do so, so that you will not get tired going back home'. And we could hardly believe that it was true... Your food was good, and we saved, and...

"It was a favour that I was doing you gratuitously and that none of you could pretend. Is that right?".

"That is true".

"So I did you a good turn. Well, why are you complaining? I should complain of you, because, although you realised that you were dealing with a good master, you worked lazily, whereas those who came after you and had one meal only, and the last arrivals who had none at all, set to work with a will and in a shorter time they did the same work that you did in twelve hours. I would have betrayed you if I had halved your wages to pay them. But that is not the case. So take what is yours and go away. Are you going to come to my house and impose me to do what suits you? I do what I like and what is fair. Don't be malicious and don't compel me to be unfair. For I am good".

I solemnly say to all of you who are listening to Me, that the Father God makes the same agreement with all men and promises the same reward to everybody. Those who serve the Lord diligently will be treated by Him with justice, even if they do little work, being close to death. I solemnly tell you that the first will not always be the first in the Kingdom of Heaven, where we shall see that the last are first and the first are last. We shall see there that men who do not come from Israel are holier than many men of Israel... I have come to call everybody, in the name of God. But if many are called, few are chosen, because few want Wisdom. He is not wise who lives according to the world and to flesh, but not according to God. He is neither wise for the earth nor for Heaven. Because on the earth he will make enemies, will receive punishment and will feel remorse. And he will lose Heaven for ever.

I repeat: be good to your neighbour, whoever he may be. Be obedient and leave to God the task of punishing those who are unjust in giving orders. Be continent by resisting sensuality, be honest

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by resisting gold, be coherent by saying anathema to what deserves it, not when it suits you, considering yourselves free to get in touch later with what you previously cursed. Do not do to other people what you would not like done to yourselves, and then... »

« Go away, You boring prophet! You have spoiled our market!... You have taken our customers away!... » shout the vendors, rushing into the yard... And those who had shouted previously in the yard, at the beginning of Jesus' sermon - not only Phoenicians, but also Jews who are in this town for reasons unknown to me - join the vendors insulting, threatening and above all driving away...

They do not like Jesus because He does not advise evil things... He crosses His arms and looks. He is sad, but solemn.

The people, divided into two parties, are quarrelling, defending or offending the Nazarene. Insults, praises, curses, blessings; some shout: « The Pharisees are right. You have sold Yourself to Rome. You are the lover of prostitutes and publicans ». Some contradict them: « Be quiet, blasphemous tongues! You have sold yourselves to Rome, you infernal Phoenicians! », « You are demons! », « May hell swallow you! », « Go away! », « Go away, you thieves and usurers who have come to this market! » and so on...

The soldiers intervene saying: « Rather than an instigator, He is a victim! » And with their spears they drive everybody out of the yard and close the door.

Only the three proselyte brothers and the six disciples are left inside with Jesus.

« Why on earth did you make Him speak? » the triarius asks the three brothers.

« So many people speak! » replies Elias.

« Of course. But nothing happens, because they teach what people like. He does not. And He is a bore... » The old soldier stares at Jesus Who has got down off the case and is standing, apparently thinking of something else.

The crowds are still quarrelling outside. In fact more troops come from the barracks led by the centurion himself. They knock at the door and have it opened, while some remain outside to drive away both those who shout: « Long live the King of Israel! » and those who curse Him.

The centurion comes forward and he looks worried. His anger explodes against old Aquila: « Is that how you protect Rome? By letting people acclaim a foreign king in a subject region? »

The old soldier salutes stiffly and replies: « He was teaching respect and obedience and was speaking of a kingdom not of this earth. That-is why they hate Him. Because He is good and respectful. There was no reason why I should enjoin silence on a man who

was not offending our law. »

The centurion calms down and mumbles: « So it is another sedition of this foul mob... Well. Tell the man to go away at once. I do not want trouble here. Carry out my instructions and escort Him out of town as soon as the road is clear. He may go wherever He likes. To hell, if He wants. As long as He gets out of my jurisdiction. Have you understood? »

« Yes, we have, and we will act accordingly. »

The centurion turns round displaying his bright cuirass and causing his purple mantle to flutter, and he goes away without even looking at Jesus.

The three brothers say to the Master: « We are sorry... »

« It is no fault of yours. And be not afraid. No harm will happen to you. I tell you... »

The three change colour... Philip says: « How are You aware of our fear? »

Jesus smiles kindly, a smile which is like a ray of sunlight on His sad face: « I know what is in hearts and what is in the future. »

The soldiers are waiting in the sunshine casting sidelong glances and making comments...

« Can they possibly love us, when they hate even that man who does not oppress them? »

« And who works miracles, you should say... »

« By Hercules! Who was it that came to tell us that there was a suspect to be watched? »

« It was Caius! »

« The zealous man! In the meantime we have missed our rations and I foresee that I am going to miss the kiss of a girl!... Ah! »

« Epicurean! Where is the beautiful girl? »

« I am certainly not going to tell you, my friend! »

« She is behind the potter's, at the Foundations. I know. I saw you there some nights ago... » says another one.

The triarius goes towards Jesus and walks round Him, looking at Him all the time. He does not know what to say... Jesus smiles to encourage him. The man does not know what to do... But he goes closer. Jesus points to his scars: « All wounds, are they? So, you are a valiant and loyal soldier... »

The praise makes the old soldier blush.

« You have suffered very much for the sake of your Fatherland and of your emperor... Would you not be prepared to suffer something for a greater Fatherland: Heaven? For an eternal Emperor: God? »

The soldier shakes his head and says: « I am a poor pagan. But I may still arrive at the eleventh hour. But who will teach me? You have seen!... They are expelling You. And that is a wound which is sore, not mine!... At least I gave them back to my enemies. But

what do You give those who hurt You? »

« Forgiveness, soldier. Forgiveness and love. »

« So, I am right. It is foolish to suspect You. Goodbye, Galilean. »

« Goodbye, Roman. »

Jesus is left alone until the three brothers and the disciples come back with some food, which the brothers offer to the soldiers, and the apostles to Jesus. They eat without relish, in the sunshine, whilst the soldiers eat and drink merrily.

Then a soldier goes out to have a look at the silent square. « We can go » he shouts. « They have all gone away. The patrols only are there. »

Jesus stands up submissively, He blesses and comforts the three brothers, with whom He fixes an appointment for Passover at Gethsemane, and He goes out, escorted by the soldiers, and followed by the mortified disciples. They proceed along the empty road until they reach the country.

« Hail, Galilean » says the triarius.

« Goodbye, Aquila. Please, do not ill-treat Daniel, Elias and Philip. I only am the guilty one. Tell the centurion. »

« I will not tell him anything. He has already forgotten all about it and the three brothers supply us with many good things, particularly with the Cyprus wine that the centurion loves more than his own life. Go in peace. Goodbye. »

They part. The soldiers go back to the gate, Jesus and His disciples set out eastwards towards the silent countryside.

329. The Sons of Thunder. Going towards Achzib with the Shepherd Annas.

14th November 1945.

Jesus is walking across a very mountainous region. The mountains are not high, but the road runs up and down hills all the time; and there are many torrents, which flow merrily in the cool fresh season, and are as clear as the sky and as fresh as the first leaves that are beginning to grow more and more copiously on the trees. But although the season is so beautiful and cheerful as to comfort one's heart, Jesus' humour does not appear to be much relieved and the apostles look even more worried than He is. They are walking very quietly along the bottom of a valley. Shepherds and flocks are the only visible life. But Jesus does not even seem to see them.

A down-hearted sigh of James of Zebedee and his sudden words, the obvious result of a concerned mind, draw Jesus' attention... James says: « And defeats!... and defeats!... We seem to be cursed... »

Jesus lays a hand on his shoulder: « Do you not know that that is the lot of the better ones? »

« Eh! I know since I have been with You! But now and again we would need something different, which we did get in the past, to cheer up hearts and faith... »

« Do you doubt Me, James? » How much grief there is in Jesus' trembling voice.

« No!... » His "no" is certainly not a very definite one.

« But you do doubt. What, then? Do you no longer love Me as you did before? The fact that you have seen Me expelled, derided, or only neglected near the Phoenician borders, has perhaps weakened your love, has it? » There is deep grief in Jesus' trembling words, although there are no sobs or tears. His very soul is weeping.

« No, my Lord, not that! On the contrary, the more I see You misunderstood, rejected, humiliated, afflicted, the more my love for You increases. And I would willingly offer my life as a sacrifice, in order not to see You thus, and to be able to change the hearts of men. You must believe me. Do not crush my heart, which is already so depressed, by doubting that I do not love You. Otherwise... otherwise I will go to extremes. I will go back and I will revenge myself upon those who grieve You, to prove that I love You, to remove Your doubt, and if they catch me and kill me, I will not care in the least. I will be satisfied with giving You a proof of my love. »

« Oh! son of thunder! Whence so much impetuosity? Do you want to be an exterminating thunderbolt? » Jesus smiles at the ardour and intentions of James.

« Oh! At least I see You smile' That is already one result of my intentions. What do you say, John? Shall we carry out my intentions to relieve the Master, Who is depressed because of so many repulses? »

« Oh! yes. Let us go. We will go back and speak to them. And if they still insult Him saying that He is king only by word, or is a laughing-stock king, a penniless or a mad king, we will give them a good thrashing until they realise that the king has an army of faithful men, who are not prepared to stand their mockery. Violence can be useful at times. Let's go, brother! » John replies to him, and angry as he is, he seems to be another man, so different from the ever mild John.

Jesus places Himself between the two, catches them by the arms to hold them back and says: « Just listen to them! And what have I been preaching for such a long time? Oh! What a wonderful surprise! Also John, My dove, has become a hawk! Look how ugly, gloomy, perturbed he looks, disfigured by hatred. Oh! shame! And you are surprised because some Phoenicians remain indifferent, some Jews are resentful, some Romans expelled Me, while you are the first who have not understood anything after being with Me

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for two years, and you have become gall because of the hatred in your hearts, and you cast My doctrine of love and forgiveness out of your hearts and you reject it as if it were a foolish thing, and you welcome violence as a good ally! Oh! Holy Father! This is a defeat indeed! Instead of being hawks sharpening their beaks and claws, would it not be better if you were angels praying the Father to give relief to His Son? When has a storm ever done any good with its thunderbolts and hailstones? Well, in memory of this sin of yours against Charity, in memory of the moment when I saw the animal-man come to light on your faces instead of the man-angel whom I always wish to see in you, I will call you "the sons of thunder". »

Jesus is half serious while speaking to the two excited sons of Zebedee. But His reproach does not last long, because as soon as they repent He clasps them both to His heart, His face shining with love, saying: « Never again I want to see you like that. And thank you for your love. And thank you for yours, My friends » He says addressing Andrew, Matthew and His two cousins. « Come here, that I may embrace you as well. Do you not know, that if I had nothing else but the joy of doing the will of My Father and your love, I would always be happy, even if the whole world smacked Me? I am sad, not about Myself, or about My defeats, as you call them, but because I feel sorry for the souls that reject Life. Good, we are all happy now, are we not, you big babies? Come on, then. Go to those shepherds who are milking the sheep and ask them to give you some milk in the name of God. Be not afraid » He says seeing the desolate look of the apostles. « Obey with faith. You will get milk, not a thrashing, even if the man is a Phoenician. »

And the six go off while Jesus waits for them on the road. And the sad Jesus, Whom no one wants, prays in the meantime...

The apostles come back with a little pail of milk, and they say: « The man asks You to go over there, he wants to speak to You, but he cannot leave his unreliable goats to young shepherds. »

Jesus says: « Well, let us go there and eat their bread. »

And they go to the edge of the ditch where the goats are chewing precariously.

« Thank you for the milk you have given Me. What do you want of Me? »

« You are the Nazarene, are You not? The one who works miracles? »

« I am the one who preaches Eternal Salvation. I am the Way to go to the true God, the Truth that gives itself, the Life that enlivens you. I am not a wizard that works wonders. The miracles that I work are a manifestation of My goodness and of your weakness that needs proofs in order to believe. But what do you want of Me? »

3-1558

« Well... Were You at Alexandroscene two days ago? »

« Yes, I was. Why? »

« I was there, too, with my kids, and when I realised that there was going to be a quarrel, I went away, because they are in the habit of stirring up trouble to steal what is in the market. They are thieves, all of them: the Phoenicians... and the others. I should not say so because I am the son of a proselyte father and a Syrian mother and a proselyte myself. But it is the truth. Well. Let us go back to my story. I took shelter in a stable with my kids, waiting for my son's cart. And in the evening, when I was leaving the town, I met a woman, who was weeping, with her little daughter in her arms. She had walked eight miles to come to You. Because she lives out in the country. I asked her what was the matter, as she is a proselyte. She had come to sell some goods and do some shopping. She had heard of You and hope had filled her heart. She ran home to get the little girl. But one walks slowly with a load'. When she arrived at the warehouse of the brothers, You were no longer there. The brothers said to her: "They expelled Him. But last night He told us that He would go back via the steps of Tyre". As I am a father, too, I said to her: "Well, go there". But she replied to me: "If after what happened He goes back to Galilee by a different road?". I said to her: "Now listen. It is either that road or the one along the border. I am pasturing my flock between Rohob and Lesemdan, on the border road between here and Naphtali. If I see Him I will tell Him, I promise you on my honour". And I have told You. »

« And may God reward you. I will go to the woman. I Must go back to Achzib. »

« Are You going to Achzib? Well, we can go together, if You do not scorn the company of a shepherd. »

« I scorn no one. Why are you going to Achzib? »

« Because my lambs are there. Unless... I have lost them all. »

« Why? »

« Because there is a disease... I do not know whether it was witchcraft or something else. I know that my lovely flock has been taken ill. That is why I brought the goats here, as they are still healthy and I keep them away from the sheep. Two of my sons will look after them here. They are now in town, shopping. But I am going back there, to see them die, my beautiful woolly sheep... » The man sighs... He looks at Jesus and he apologises: « It is foolish to speak to You of these things, considering who You are, and to distress You, as You must be already distressed by the way they treat You. But our sheep are love and money to us, You know?... »

« I understand. But they will recover. Did you get anyone, who is familiar with these things, to see them? »

« Oh! They have all said the same thing: "Kill them and sell the

skins. There is nothing else to be done", and they have also threatened me if I take them about... They are afraid of the disease... for their own sheep. So I have to keep them in and they die quicker. They are bad, You know, those of Achzib »

Jesus says simply: « I know. »

« I say that they have bewitched them... »

« No. Do not believe such nonsense... Will you be leaving at once when your sons arrive? »

« Yes, I will. They will be here any moment now. Are these Your disciples? Only these? »

« No. I have more. »

« Why do they not come here? Once, I met a group of them near Merom. A shepherd was their head. So they said. A tall strong man, Elias was his name. It was in October, I think. Either before or after the Tabernacles. Has he left You now? »

« None of My disciples have left Me. »

« I was told »

« What? »

« That You that the Pharisees... In short, that Your disciples had left You because they were afraid, and that You were... »

« A demon. You may say it. I know. Double merit for you, as you believe just the same. »

« And because of that merit, could You not... but perhaps I am asking for a sacrilege... »

« Tell Me. If it is wicked, I will let you know. »

« Could You not bless my flock, when passing by? » the man says very anxiously...

« I will bless your flock. This one... » and He raises His hand blessing the goats scattered around « ... and your flock of sheep. Do you believe that My blessing will save them? »

« As You save men from diseases, so You must be able to save animals. They say that You are the Son of God. Sheep were created by God. So they belong to the Father. I... did not know whether it was respectful to ask You. But if it is possible, please do it, Lord, and I will take large offerings to the Temple. Nay, I will not! I will give them to You for the poor. It will be better. »

Jesus smiles and is silent. The shepherd's sons arrive and shortly afterwards Jesus, the apostles and the old man set out, leaving the young men to look after the goats. They walk fast as they want to reach Kedesh soon and then proceed at once towards the road that from the sea takes to the mainland. It must be the road that forks at the foot of the promontory, the one they took going to Alexandroscene. At least that is what I understand from the conversation of the shepherd with the disciples. Jesus is ahead of them, all alone.

« But shall we not have further trouble? » asks James of Alphaeus.

3-1560

« Kedesh is not in the jurisdiction of the centurion. It is outside the Phoenician border. And if one does not provoke them, centurions do not interfere with religion. »

« In any case we are not stopping... »

« Will you be able to cover more than thirty miles in one day? » asks the shepherd.

« Oh! We are perpetual untiring pilgrims! »

They walk on... They reach Kedesh and pass by it without any trouble. They take the straight road. Achzib is indicated on the milestone. The shepherd points it out saying: « We shall be there tomorrow. You will come with me tonight. I know farmers in the valleys, but many of them are within the Phoenician borders... Well... we will cross the frontier. And we will certainly not be found out... Oh! Their vigilance! They had better look out for robbers!... »

The sun sets and daylight is dimmed in the woody valleys. But the shepherd is familiar with the road and proceeds resolutely.

They reach a little village, just a handful of houses.

« If they give us hospitality here, we shall be with Israelites. We are at the border. If they will not take us in, we will go to another village, a Phoenician one. »

« I am not biased, man. »

They knock at a door.

« Is that you, Annas? With friends? Come in, and may God be with you » says an elderly woman.

They go into a large kitchen, with a gaily blazing fireplace. The members of a large family of all ages are sitting round the table but they kindly make room for the new arrivals.

« This is Jonah. This is his wife, his sons and grandchildren and daughters-in-law. A family of patriarchs faithful to the Lord » says Annas, the shepherd, to Jesus. He then addresses old Jonah: « And this man who is with me is the Rabbi of Israel, Whom you wanted to meet. »

« I bless the Lord that I can give you hospitality as I have room tonight. And I bless the Rabbi Who has come to my house, and I ask Him to bless us. »

Annas explains that Jonah's house is like an inn for pilgrims travelling from the sea to the mainland.

They all sit down in the warm kitchen and the women serve the guests. There is so much respect that it is almost embarrassing. But Jesus overcomes the difficulty by gathering all the children around Him, when the meal is over, and taking an interest in them, and they soon fraternise. And after the children, in the short time between supper and bedtime, also the men in the house become bold and they inform Jesus of what they have learned about the Messiah and ask Him questions. And Jesus explains,

confirms, rectifies in a kind peaceful conversation, until both guests and members of the household go to rest, after Jesus has blessed them all.

330. The Cananean Mother.

15th November 1945.

« Is the Master with you? » the old farmer Jonah asks Judas Thaddeus who is entering the kitchen, where the fire is already blazing to warm the milk and the room, which is rather chilly in the early hours of a beautiful end of January morning, I think, or early February.

« He must have gone out to pray. He often goes out at dawn, when He knows He can be alone. He will be here shortly. Why are you asking? »

« I have asked also the others, who have gone out looking for Him, because there is a woman in the next room, with my wife. She comes from a village on the other side of the border, and I don't really know how she found out that the Master is here. But she knows and she wants to speak to Him. »

« All right. She will speak to Him. Perhaps she is the woman He is expecting, with her little sick daughter. Her spirit must have brought her here. »

« No. She is alone. There are no children with her. I know her because our villages are close to each other... and the valley belongs to everybody. In any case I do not think that we should be rude to our neighbours, even if they are Phoenicians, if we wish to serve the Lord. I may be wrong, but... »

« Also the Master always says that we must be merciful to everybody. »

« He is merciful, is He not? »

« He is indeed. »

« Annas told me that He was ill-treated even recently. Always illtreated!... In Judaea, in Galilee, everywhere. Why is Israel so bad to its Messiah? I am referring to the mighty ones in Israel. Because the people love Him. »

« How are you aware of such things? »

« Oh! I live here, far away. But I am a faithful Israelite. It is sufficient to go to the Temple on holy days of obligation to learn all the good and all the evil! But one hears more of evil things than of good ones. Because good is humble and does not praise itself. Those who receive it should proclaim it. But only few people are grateful after receiving a grace. Man receives assistance and forgets it... Evil instead blows its trumpets loud and has its words heard even by those who do not want to hear them. You, His disciples, are you not aware of how much they run down and accuse

the Messiah in the Temple! In their teaching the scribes speak of nothing else. I think they must have made a collection of lessons on how to accuse the Master as well as a collection of facts that they exhibit as plausible charges against Him. And one's conscience must be righteous, firm and free to be able to resist and judge wisely. Is He aware of such manoeuvres? »

« He is aware of everything. And we are more or less aware as well. But He does not worry. He continues His work and disciples and believers in Him are increasing day by day. »

« God grant they may persevere until the end. But man changes his mind. And weak... Here is the Master coming towards the house with three disciples. »

And the old man goes out, followed by Judas Thaddeus, to pay his respects to Jesus, Whose appearance is imposing while He walks towards the house.

« Peace be with you today and always, Jonah. »

« Glory and peace to You, Master, for ever. »

« Peace to you, Judas. Have Andrew and John not come back yet? »

« No. I did not hear them go out. I did not hear anybody. I was fast asleep. »

« Come in, Master. Come in, everybody. The air is cool this morning. It must have been very cold in the wood. There is warm milk for everybody over there. »

They are taking their milk and everybody, with the exception of Jesus, dips large slices of bread into it, when Andrew and John arrive with Annas, the shepherd.

« Ah! You are here! We had come back to tell the rest that we had not found You... » exclaims Andrew.

Jesus wishes peace to the three and adds: « Quick. Take your share and let us leave because I want to be at least at the foot of the mountain of Achzib before evening. The Sabbath begins this evening. »

« What about my sheep? »

Jesus smiles and replies: « They will recover after I bless them. »

« But they are on the eastern side of the mountain! You are going westwards to see that woman... »

« Leave it to God, and He will see to everything. »

The meal is over and the apostles go upstairs to get their travelling bags and be ready to leave.

« Master... that woman in the next room... are You not listening to her? »

« I have no time, Jonah. I have a long way to go and in any case I have come for the sheep of Israel. Goodbye, Jonah. May God reward you for your charity. I bless you and all your relatives. Let us go... »

3-1563

But the old man begins to shout at the top of his voice: « Children Women! The Master is going away! Come, quick! »

As a brood of chicks scattered in a stack-yard rush towards the broody-hen calling them, so women and men - some already busy, some still half asleep - rush from every side, together with halfnaked children who are smiling although they have just woken up... They all gather round Jesus, Who is in the middle of the threshing-floor, and the mothers envelop their children in their wide skirts to protect them from the cool air, or they hold them in their arms until a maid-servant brings their clothes and puts them on them.

Also a woman, who is not of the household, comes forth. A poor weeping shy woman... She stoops and comes forward almost creeping and when she reaches the group where Jesus is, she begins to shout: « Have mercy on me, o Lord, Son of David! My daughter is tormented very badly by a demon who makes her do shameful things. Have mercy on -me because I am suffering so much, as everybody sneers at me because of that, as if my child were guilty of what she does... Have mercy, o Lord, You can do everything. Raise Your voice and Your hand and order the unclean spirit to go out of Palma. She is my only daughter and I am a widow... Oh! don't go away! Mercy!... »

Jesus, in fact, after blessing each member of the household and reproaching the elder ones for telling people of His arrival there - and they justify themselves saying: « We have not said anything, believe us, Lord! » - goes away; He is inexplicably hard towards the poor woman, who is dragging herself along on her knees with her arms stretched out in suppliant attitude, while she says panting: « I saw You yesterday while You were crossing the torrent and I heard them call You: "Master". I followed You, among the bushes, and I heard what these people were saying. I understood who You are... And I came here this morning before daybreak and I remained here, on the threshold, like a little dog, until Sarah got up and made me go in. Have mercy, my Lord, on a mother and a little girl! »

But Jesus is walking fast and turns a deaf ear to her entreaties.

The people of the household say to her: « Resign yourself! He will not listen to you. He said so Himself: He has come for the children of Israel... »

She is desperate but at the same time full of faith, and she stands up saying: « No. I will pray until He listens to me. » And she follows the Master shouting her entreaties, which draw to the doors of the houses in the village all those who are already awake and who, like the people of Jonah's household, begin to follow her to see what happens.

In the meantime the apostles, seized with astonishment, look at

one another and whisper: « Why is He doing that? He has never done it before!... »

And John says: « He cured also those two people at Alexandroscene. »

« But they were proselytes » replies Thaddeus.

« And what about the woman He is going to cure now? »

« She is a proselyte as well » says the shepherd Annas.

« Oh! but how many times has He cured Gentiles or heathens! And what about the Roman girl?... » says Andrew desolately, as he cannot set his mind at rest seeing Jesus' harsh behaviour towards the Cananean woman.

« I will tell you what it is » exclaims James of Zebedee. « The Master is angry. His patience has come to an end before so many attacks of human wickedness. Can't you see how changed He is? He is quite right! From now on He will devote Himself only to those with whom He is familiar. And He is doing the right thing! »

« Good. But in the meantime this woman is following us howling and a train of people are coming behind her. Although He does not want to be noticed, He has found the way to draw even the attention of trees... » grumbles Matthew.

« Let us go and tell Him to send her away... Look at the lovely procession there is behind us! If we arrive at the consular road like this, we will be in trouble! And she will not leave us, unless He drives her away... » says Thaddeus who is very annoyed. He even turns round and says to the woman in a commanding voice: « Be quiet and go away! ». And James of Alphaeus is solid for his brother.

But she is not impressed by threats or orders and continues to implore.

« Let us go and tell the Master to send her away, since He does not want to hear her. This cannot go on! » says Matthew, while Andrew whispers: « Poor woman! », and John repeats continuously: « I do not understand... I do not understand... » John is dumbfounded at Jesus' behaviour.

They quicken their pace and reach the Master Who is walking as fast as if He were chased. « Master, please dismiss that woman! It's a scandal! She is shouting after us! She is pointing us out to everybody! The road is getting more and more crowded with people... and many are following her. Tell her to go away. »

« You can tell her yourselves. I have already replied to her. »

« She will not listen to us. Please! You must tell her. And very severely. »

Jesus stops and turns round. The woman takes it as a sign of grace, she quickens her step, she raises the already shrill tone of her voice while her face becomes pale with her increased hope.

« Be quiet, woman. And go home. I have already told you. I have come for the sheep of Israel. To cure the ones that are ill and find

the ones that are lost. You are not from Israel. »

But the woman is already at His feet and she kisses them, worshipping Him, holding His ankles tight, as if she were a shipwrecked person who had found a rock of salvation, and she moans: « Lord, help me! You can help me, Lord. Give the order to the demon, since You are holy... Lord, You are the master of everything, of graces and of the world. Everything is subject to You, my Lord. I know. I believe it. Take therefore Your power and use it for my daughter. »

« It is not right to take the bread of the children of the house and throw it to the dogs in the street. »

« I believe in You. And through my faith, from a dog of the street I have become a dog of the house. I told You: I came before daybreak to lie down on the threshold of the house in which You were, and if You had come out there, You would have trampled on me. But You went out from the other side and did not see me. You did not see this poor distressed dog, starving for Your grace, waiting to go in, creeping, where You were, to kiss Your feet, imploring You not to drive it away... »

« It is not right to throw the bread of the children to dogs » repeats Jesus.

« But dogs go into the room where the landlord is eating with his children, and they eat what falls from the table, or the remnants of food, which the family gives them, as they are of no further use. I am not asking You to treat me as a daughter and let me sit at Your table. But give me at least the crumbs... »

Jesus smiles. Oh! What a transfiguration that joyful smile works on His face!...

The people, the apostles, the woman look at Him with admiration... they realise that something is about to happen.

And Jesus says: « Oh! woman! Great is your faith. And you comfort My spirit by it. Go, therefore, and it will be done to you as you wish. As from this moment, the demon has gone out of your daughter. Go in peace. And as from a stray dog you wanted to be a dog of the house, endeavour in the future to be a daughter sitting at the table of the Father. Goodbye. »

« Oh! Lord! My Lord!... I would like to run away and see my beloved Palma... And I would like to stay with You, and follow You! Blessed! Holy! »

« Go, woman. Go in peace. »

And Jesus resumes His way while the Cananean woman, more agile than a young girl, runs away along the road she came, followed by the crowd anxious to see the miracle...

« But, Master, why did You make her implore You so much, before listening to her? » asks James of Zebedee.

« Through your fault and the fault of all of you. That is not a

defeat, James. I was not expelled, derided or cursed here... Let that be a relief to your disheartened spirits. I have already had today My most delicious food. And I bless God for it. And now let us go and see this other woman who believes and can wait with firm faith. »

« And what about my sheep, Lord? In a short while I should take a road, which is different from Yours, to go to my grazing ground... »

Jesus smiles but does not reply.

It is beautiful to walk now that the sun warms the air and makes the new leaves of woods and the grass of meadows sparkle like emeralds, changing each flower-cup into a setting for the drops of dew shining on the many-coloured wild flowers. And Jesus proceeds smiling. And the apostles, immediately relieved, follow Him smiling...

They reach the road-junction. The shepherd Annas, who looks mortified, says: « And I should leave You here... Are You really not coming to cure my sheep? I believe, too; and I am a proselyte... Promise, at least, that You will come after the Sabbath! »

« Oh! Annas! Is it possible that you have not yet understood that your sheep were cured when I raised My hand near Lesemdan? You may go, too, to see the miracle and to bless the Lord. »

I think that Lot's wife, when she was turned into a pillar of salt, was very much like the shepherd, who has remained as he was, a little bent forward, with his face looking up to see Jesus, with one arm half stretched out in mid-air... He looks like a statue. And a label could be placed under it: "The Petitioner". He then comes round and prostrates himself saying: « You are blessed! Holy! Good!... But I promised You a lot of money, and I have only a few drachmae with me... Come to see me after the Sabbath... »

« I will come. Not for the money, but to bless you once again for your simple faith. Goodbye, Annas. Peace be with you. »

And they part...

« And that was not a defeat either, My friends! Neither have they derided, expelled or cursed Me here... Come on, quick! There is a mother who has been waiting for us for days... »

And their march continues, with a short rest to eat some bread and cheese and drink at a spring...

It is midday when they see the road junction appear.

« That is where the steps of Tyre begin, over there » says Matthew. And he cheers up considering that they have covered most of the road.

Leaning on a Roman mile stone there is a woman. At her feet, on a folding-seat there is a little girl, about seven or eight years old. The woman is looking in all directions. Towards the steps in the rock. Towards the Ptolemais road. Towards the road on which

Jesus is walking, and now and again she bends to caress her child, to protect her head from the sun with a piece of cloth, to cover her feet and hands with a shawl...

« There is the woman! I wonder where she slept these past days? » asks Andrew.

« Perhaps in that house near the cross-road. There are no other houses nearby » replies Matthew.

« Or out in the open » says James of Alphaeus.

« No. Not with the child, surely! » replies his brother.

Jesus does not speak. But He smiles. All in a row, with Jesus in the centre, three on each side, they take up all the road, at this time of the day, when travellers stop to eat, wherever they happen to be at midday. Jesus, tall, handsome, in the centre of the row, smiles and His face is so radiant that all the light of the sun seems to be concentrated on it while rays of light emanate from it.

The woman looks up... They are now about fifty metres apart. Jesus stares at her, which perhaps draws her attention, diverted for a moment by the child's weeping. She looks at Him and in an involuntary gesture of anxiety, she presses her hands against her heart.

Jesus smiles more broadly. And His bright inexpressible smile must tell the woman a great deal, as she is no longer anxious, but smiling, as if she were already happy, she bends to pick up her child, and holding her in the folding-seat, with stretched out arms, as if she offered her to God, she comes forwards, and when she arrives at Jesus' feet, she kneels down, lifting as much as she can the child in the seat, who looks ecstatically at Jesus' most handsome face.

The woman does not say one word. And what else could she say that is not already deeply expressed in her whole attitude?...

And Jesus says but one word, a little, but powerful gladdening word, like God's « Fiat » at the creation of the world: « Yes. » And He lays His hand on the chest of the little girl.

And the child, with the cry of a woodlark freed from a cage, shouts:« Mummy! » and all of a sudden sits up and slides down on to her feet and embraces her mother, who, exhausted as she is, staggers and is on the point of falling back, in a swoon brought about by tiredness, by anxiety that is calming down, by joy that overwhelms the strength of her heart, already weak by so much suffering.

Jesus is ready to hold her. A much stronger support than the little girl's, who overburdening her mother with her own weight, is certainly not the best means to support her mother on her knees. Jesus makes her sit down and instils strength into her... And He looks at her while silent tears stream down the tired but happy face of the woman. Then words come to her lips: « Thank You, my

Lord! Thanks and blessings! My hope has been crowned... I waited for You so long... But I am happy now... »

The woman, after she comes round, kneels down once again, worshipping, holding the little girl in front of her, while Jesus caresses the child. And she explains: « A bone had been rotting in her back for two years, paralysing her and leading her slowly to death with great pain. We had her visited by doctors at Antioch, Tyre, Sidon and even at Caesarea and Paneas, and we spent so much on doctors and medicines that we were compelled to sell the house we had in town and retire to the one in the country, dismissing the servants of the house and keeping only those who worked in the fields, selling the crops that we used to consume ourselves... But nothing helped her! I saw You. I was aware of what You have done elsewhere. I hoped to receive grace myself... And I did! I will now go back home, without any worries, and thoroughly happy... and I will make my husband happy... It was my James who set hope in my heart by telling me what Your power works in Galilee and Judaea. Oh! Had we not been afraid of not finding You, we would have come with the girl. But You are always travelling around!... »

« And travelling I came to you... But where did you stay these past days? »

« In that house... But at night only the child was in there. There is a good woman who looked after her for me. I remained here all the time, because I was afraid that You might pass by at night. »

Jesus lays a hand on her head: « You are a good mother. That is why God loves you. You can see that He has helped you in every way. »

« Oh! Yes! I could perceive it when I was coming here. I came to town hoping to see You, so I had little money with me and I was alone. Then, following the advice of that man, I came here. I sent word home and I came... and I have never lacked anything: neither bread, nor shelter, nor courage. »

« With that weight on your arms all the time? Could you not get a cart?... » asks James of Alphaeus, who is moved to pity.

« No. She would have suffered too much: it would have been enough to kill her. My Johanna came to Grace in the arms of her mother. »

Jesus caresses both of them on their heads: « You may go now and be always faithful to the Lord. May the Lord and My peace be with you. »

Jesus resumes walking on the road to Ptolemais.

« And that is not a defeat either, My friends. And I was not expelled, derided or cursed here either. »

Following the straight road they soon reach the forge near the bridge. The Roman farrier is resting in the sunshine, sitting against the wall of his house. He recognises Jesus and greets Him.

3-1569

Jesus returns the greeting and says: « Will you allow Me to stop here and rest a little, while we eat some bread? »

« Of course, Rabbi. My wife wanted to see You... because I told her what she had not heard of Your speech the last time You were here. Esther is Hebrew. But since I am a Roman, I did not dare to tell You. I would have sent her after You... »

« Call her, then. » And Jesus sits on the bench against the wall, while James of Zebedee hands out bread and cheese...

A woman about forty years old comes out, she looks embarrassed and blushes.

« Peace to you, Esther. Have you been anxious to meet Me? Why? »

« Because of what You said... Rabbis despise us, because we are married to Romans... But I have children and I have taken them all to the Temple and the boys have all been circumcised. I told Titus beforehand, when he wanted to marry me... And he is good... And he leaves me completely free with the children. Everything is Hebrew here, customs, rites!... But rabbis and heads of synagogues curse us. You don't... You have compassionate words for us. Oh! Do You know what that means to us? It is like being embraced by our fathers and mothers, who disowned us and cursed us and are severe with us... It is like going back to the homes we left and not feeling like strangers in them... Titus is kind. On our holy days he closes the farriery, with a heavy loss of money, and takes me and the children to the Temple. Because he says that one cannot live without religion. He says that his religion is now his family and his work, as previously it was his duty as a soldier... But I... my Lord... I wanted to speak to You about one thing... You said that the followers of the true God must take a little of their holy yeast and put it into the good flour to make it rise holily. I have done that with my husband. I have tried, during the twenty years we have been together, to work his soul, which is good, with the yeast of Israel. But he cannot make up his mind... and he is old... I would like to have him with me in the next life... United by faith as we are now by love... I am not asking for riches, welfare, health. What we have is sufficient, praised be the Lord for it! But that is what I would like... Pray for my husband! That he may belong to the true God... »

« He will. You may be sure of that. You are asking for something holy and it will be granted to you. You have understood the duty of a wife to God and to her husband. I wish all wives did! I solemnly tell you that many of them should imitate you. Continue like that and you will have the joy of having your Titus beside You, in prayer and in Heaven. Now show Me your children. »

The woman calls her numerous issue: « Jacob, Judas, Levi, Mary, John, Anne, Eliza, Marcus. » She then goes into the house and comes out again with one who can hardly walk and one of three

3-1570

months, at most: « And this one is Isaac and this little one is Judith » she says ending the introductions.

« Plenty! » says James of Zebedee laughing.

And Judas exclaims: « Six boys! And every one circumcised! And with pure names! Very good! »

The woman is happy and she praises Jacob, Judas and Levi, who help their father « every day except on Sabbaths, when Titus works by himself shoeing horses with shoes made previously » she says. And she praises Mary and Anne « who help their mother. » But she does not forget to praise also the four little ones « as they are good and not naughty. Titus helps me to bring them up, as he was a disciplined soldier » she says casting a loving glance at the man, who, leaning against the door post, with a hand resting on his side, has listened to everything his wife has said, with a hearty smile on -his honest face, and who now becomes elated hearing his merits as a soldier being mentioned.

« Very well. The discipline of the army is not disliked by God, when soldiers do their duty humanely. The essential point is to be always morally honest, in every task, in order to be always virtuous. Your past discipline, which you now instil into your children, must prepare you to enter a higher service: the service of God. We must part now. I will just manage to reach Achzib before sunset. Peace to you, Esther, and to your house. May you all belong to the Lord, before long. »

The mother and children kneel down while Jesus raises His hand blessing them. The man, as if he were once again a soldier of Rome in front of his emperor, stands stiffly at attention and salutes in Roman style.

And they go away... After a few steps Jesus -lays a hand on James' shoulder: « And once again, the fourth time today, I would point out to you that that was not a defeat, and we were not expelled, derided, cursed... What do you say about it now? »

« That I am a fool, my Lord » says James of Zebedee impulsively.

« No. You, and all the others, are still and always too human and you have all the alternatives of those who are ruled more by their human nature than by their spirits. When the spirit is sovereign, it is not affected by every breath of wind that cannot always be a scented breeze... It may suffer, but will not change. I always pray that you may reach such sovereignty of spirit. But you must help Me with your efforts... Well! We have come to the end of our journey. During it I have sown what is necessary to prepare the work for you, when you will be evangelizing. We can now begin our Sabbath rest with the consciousness that we have done our duty. And we shall wait for the others... Then we shall set out... again... always... until everything is accomplished... . »

3-1571

331. Bartholomew Has Understood and Suffered.

17th November 1945.

Jesus is with the six apostles in a room where there are some very poor beds, placed very close to one another. The free space is barely sufficient to let them go from one end of the room to the other. They eat their very plain food sitting on the beds, because there are no chairs or table in the room. At one point, John goes and sits on the window-sill, to be in the sunshine. That is why he is the first to see Peter, Simon, Philip and Bartholomew coming towards the house. He shouts to them and then runs out followed by all the rest. Only Jesus remains inside and He stands up and turns towards the door...

The new arrivals come in. It is easy to imagine the exuberance of Peter, as it is easy to imagine the deep respect of Simon Zealot. But the attitude of Philip and particularly of Bartholomew is a real surprise. I would say that when they come in they look afraid and worried, and although Jesus opens His arms wide towards them, to exchange the kiss of peace, which He has already given Peter and Simon, they fall on their knees, and bend their foreheads to the floor, kissing Jesus' feet, and they remain thus... and Bartholomew's stifled sighs indicate that he is weeping silently on Jesus' feet.

« What is worrying you, Bart? Are you not coming to be embraced by your Master? And you, Philip, why are you so timid? If I did not know that you are two honest people, in whose hearts no wickedness can dwell, I should suspect that you are guilty. But it is not so. Come, therefore! I have been waiting so long to receive your kisses and see the limpid look of your faithful eyes... »

« So have we... Lord... » says Bartholomew raising his face on which tears shine. « We have desired nothing but You, and we have been wondering how we might have displeased You to deserve to be kept away from You for such a long time. And we thought that it was unfair... But now we know... Oh! forgive us, Lord! We ask You to forgive us. I, in particular, because Philip was separated from You because of me. And I have already asked him to forgive me. I... I am the guilty one, I... the old Israelite, who is so reluctant to change, and who has grieved You... »

Jesus bends and forces him to stand up, as He forces Philip and He embraces them together saying: « But of what are you accusing yourself? You have done nothing wrong. Neither has Philip. You are My dear apostles, and today I am very happy to have you here with Me, re-united for ever... »

« No... For a long time we have been unaware of the reason why You rightly distrusted us to the extent of excluding us from the apostolic family. But now we know... and we ask You to forgive us, and I in particular ask You, Jesus, my Master... » And

Bartholomew looks at Him full of anxiety, of love and compassion. Old as he is, he seems a father who looks at his afflicted son and scans his face thinned by grief, which he had not noticed, neither had he noticed how that face had thinned and aged... And fresh tears stream down Bartholomew's cheeks. And he exclaims: « But what have they done to You? What have they done to us, to make us all suffer like this? An evil spirit seems to have come among us to upset us, to make us sad, weak, listless, foolish... So stupid that we did not understand that You were suffering... On the contrary we increased Your suffering through our meanness, dullness, respect for public opinion and our old humanity... Yes, the old man has always triumphed in us, and Your perfect vitality has never been able to renew us. That is what disturbs me! Notwithstanding all my love, I have not been able to change, to understand You and follow You... I have followed You only with my body... But You wanted us to follow You with our souls... to understand Your perfection... in order to be able to perpetuate You... Oh! My Master! You will leave us one day, after so many struggles, snares, so much disgust and sorrow, and You will be grieved seeing that we are still unprepared!... » And Bartholomew inclines his head on Jesus' shoulder and weeps desolately, afflicted with the knowledge that he has been a dull disciple.

« Do not lose heart, Nathanael. You see all that like an absurdity that surprises you. But your Jesus knew that you are men... and He does not expect more than you can give. Oh! You will give Me everything. But now you must grow and be perfected... It is slow work. But I can wait. And I rejoice at your perfecting. Because it is a continuous improvement in My Life. Also your tears, also the harmony among those who were with Me, also the kindness that follows the harshness typical of your nature, and comes about after selfishness and spiritual greed, even your present gravity, everything is a stage of your growing in Me. So, do not worry. Set your mind at rest, for I know. Everything. Your honesty, your good faith, your generosity, your sincere love. Should I doubt My wise Bart and Philip, so sensible and loyal? I would wrong My Father, Who granted Me to have you among My dearest ones. Now... Let us sit down here, and those who have already rested can look-after their tired hungry brothers giving them food and relief. In the meantime tell your Master and brothers what they do not know. »

And He sits on His little bed with Philip and Nathanael beside Him, while Peter and Simon sit on the next bed, opposite Jesus, knees to knees.

« Will you speak, Philip? I have already spoken. And you have been more just than I have, all this time... »

« Oh! Bartholomew! Just! I had only understood that if the

3-1573

Master had not taken us with Him, it was not because of inconstancy or animosity towards us... And I endeavoured to set your mind at peace... preventing you from thinking of things as later you would have repented of your thoughts and would have felt remorse. I had one remorse only... for preventing you from disobeying the Master when you wanted to follow Simon of Jonah who was going to Nazareth to get Marjiam... Later... I saw both your body and soul suffer so much, that I said: "It would have been better if I had let him go! The Master would have forgiven his disobedience and Bartholomew would not be poisoning his soul with such ideas"... But... see? If you had gone, you would never have had the key to the mystery... and perhaps your suspicion of the Master's inconstancy would never have been dispelled. Instead... »

« Yes. Thus... I understood. Master, Simon of Jonah and Simon Zealot, whom I harassed with questions to find out many things and have confirmation of things I already knew, said only this to me: "The Master has suffered very much, so much that He has grown thin and old. And the whole of Israel, and first of all we ourselves, are to be blamed for that. He loves and forgives us. But He does not want to speak of the past. So we advise you not to ask questions and not to say anything... But I want to say something. I will not ask any question. But I must speak, so that You may know. Because nothing of what is in the soul of Your apostle is to be concealed from You. One day - Simon and the others had already gone away a few days before - Michael of Cana came to me. He is a distant relation, a good friend and an old schoolmate... I am sure that he came in good faith. Because he is fond of me. But he who sent him is not in good faith. He wanted to know why I had remained at home... while the others had left. And he said to me: "So it is true? You parted from them because, as a good Israelite, you could not approve of certain things. And the others, beginning with Jesus of Nazareth, let you go quite willingly, because they know that you would not help them, not even as a silent accomplice. You are doing the right thing! I see that you are still the man of good old days. I thought you had become corrupt by denying Israel. You are doing the right thing for your spirit, your own welfare and for your relatives. Because the Sanhedrin will not forget what is happening, and those who are taking part in it will be persecuted". I said to him: "What are you talking about? I told you that I was instructed to stay at home both because of the season and to send eventual pilgrims to Nazareth or inform them to wait for the Master at Capernaum by the end of Shebat, and you are talking about parting, complicity, persecutions? What do you mean?... Philip, that is what I said, did I not? »

Philip nods assent.

3-1574

Bartholomew resumes: « Michael then told me that it was a known fact that You were rebelling against the advice and order of the members of the Sanhedrin by keeping John of Endor and a Greek woman with You... My Lord, I am grieving You, am I not? But I must tell You. I ask You: is it true that they were at Nazareth? »

« Yes, it is. »

« Is it true that they left with You? »

« Yes, it is. »

« Philip: Michael was right! But how did he know? »

« That's no problem! It's those snakes who stopped me and

Simon, and goodness knows how many more. The usual vipers » says Peter impulsively.

Jesus instead asks quietly: « Did he not tell you anything else? Be sincere with your Master, to the very end. »

« Nothing else. He wanted to know from me... And I told Michael a lie. I said: "I will be staying at home until Passover". I was afraid he might follow me, or... I don't know... I was afraid I might injure You... Then I understood why You had left me... You realised that I was still too much an Israelite... » Bartholomew begins to weep again... « ... and You had doubts about me... »

« No. Absolutely not. It was not necessary for you to be with your companions at that particular moment, whereas you were necessary, and you can see that yourself, at Bethsaida. Each man has his mission; every age has its work... »

« No. Don't put me aside because of work, Lord. Don't worry about that... You are good. But I want to be with You. It is a punishment to be away from You... And I, although silly and incapable... I could have at least comforted You, if I could have done nothing else. I have understood... You sent these ones here away with those two. Don't tell me. I don't want to know. But I feel that it is so, and I say so. Well, in that case, I could and should have been with You. But You did not take me to punish me for being so reluctant to become "new". But I swear it to You, Master, what I suffered has changed me and never again will You see the old Nathanael in me. »

« So you can see that our suffering has come to a joyful end for everybody. And now we shall slowly go to meet Thomas and Judas, without waiting for them to go to the appointed place. And we shall set out again with them... There is so much to be done!... We will set off tomorrow. Quick. »

« And You will be doing the right thing. Because the weather is changing in the north. A calamity for cultivations... » says Philip.

« Yes! The recent hailstorms have destroyed strips of the country. You should see them, Lord! Certain places seem to have been burned out by fire. And the strange thing is that the disaster happened as I said: in strips » says Peter.

3-1575

« While you were away, we had many hailstorms. One day, about the middle of Tebeth, it looked like a real scourge. I am told that down in the plain they have to sow all over again. It was warmer previously. But since then sunshine is a pleasure. We are going backwards... What strange signs! What will they be? » asks Philip.

« Nothing but the effect of lunations. Do not worry about it. These things should not impress you. In any case we are going towards the plain and it will be pleasant to travel. It will be cold, but not very, and in return it will be dry weather. Come with Me in the meantime. There is lovely sunshine on the terrace. We can rest up there, all together... »

332. On the Way Back to Galilee.

18th November 1945.

« And now that we have satisfied also the shepherd, what shall we do? » asks Peter, who is alone with Jesus, while the others are in a group a few metres behind them.

« We are going to the road along the coast, towards Sicaminon. »

« Are we?! I thought we were going to Capernaum... »

« It is not necessary, Simon of Jonah. Not necessary. You have had news of your wife and of the boy, and with regard to Judas... it will be easier to go and meet him. »

« Exactly, my Lord. Is he not coming by the inland road, along the river and the lake? It is the shortest and the best sheltered one... »

« But he is not coming that way. Remember that he has to watch over the disciples and they are mostly scattered on the western side in this season, which is also very cold once again. »

« All right. If You say so... I am satisfied with being with You and seeing that You are not so sad. And... I am in no hurry to meet Judas of Simon. I wish we did not meet him!... We have been so well among ourselves!... »

« Simon, Simon! Is that your brotherly charity? »

« Lord... it is my truth » says Peter frankly. And he says so with such impetuosity and expression that Jesus finds it difficult not to laugh. But how can anyone reproach such a frank and loyal man severely?

Jesus prefers to be silent, showing extreme interest in the slopes on their left, while the plain expands on their right. The other nine, in group, are following them talking, and John seems a good shepherd, as he is carrying a lamb on his shoulders, probably a present from Annas, the shepherd.

After a little while Peter asks once again: « Are we not going to Nazareth? »

« We shall certainly go. My Mother will be pleased to hear of the

journey of John and Syntyche. »

« And to see You! »

« And to see Me. »

« Will they have left at least Her in peace? »

« We shall find out. »

« But why are they so ruthless? There are so many people like John even in Judaea, and yet... Nay, to spite Rome, they protect them and hide them... »

« You must convince yourself that they do it, not because of John, but because he is a witness for the prosecution against Me. »

« But they will never find him now! You organised everything very well... You sent us all alone... by sea... in a little boat for several miles, and later, on the other side of the frontier, by ship... Oh! all well organised! I really hope that they will be disappointed. »

« They will be. »

« I am anxious to see Judas of Kerioth, to practise a little astrology on him, like a sky swept by winds and full of signs, to see whether... »

« Now, that is enough! »

« You are right. It's a fixed idea I have in here » and he strikes his forehead.

Jesus, to divert his attention, calls all the others and points out to them the strange destruction worked by hail and cold that took place when people would presume that the risk was over for that year... Some say one thing, some another, but they are inclined to consider it a divine punishment for insolent Palestine that will not accept the Lord. And the more learned among them cite similar events, mentioned by ancient stories, while the younger and less educated ones listen with great astonishment and attention.

Jesus shakes His head. « It is the effect of the moon and of remote winds. I have already told you. In the hyperborean countries a phenomenon has taken place and whole regions are suffering from its consequences. »

« But why, then, some fields are beautiful? »

« Hail does that. »

« But could it not be a punishment for the most wicked ones? »

« It could be. But it is not. It would be dreadful if it were... »

« Almost all our Fatherland would become arid and desolate, would it not, Lord? » says Andrew.

« But in the prophecies it is stated, through symbols, that evil will befall those who do not accept the Messiah. Can the Prophets possibly tell lies? »

« No, Bartholomew. And what was said, will happen. But the Most High is so infinitely good, that He wants much more than what is happening at present, to punish people. You must be good,

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too, and not always wish punishment for those whose hearts and minds are hardened. You must wish them conversion, not punishment. John, hand the lamb to one of your companions and come and look at the sea from the top of those dunes. I am coming, too. »

In fact they are on a road very close to the sea, and it is separated from it only by a large strip of undulating dunes, on which some thin palm-trees are swaying, or ruffled tamarisks, mastic trees and other sand plants grow.

Jesus goes with John. But who leaves Him? Nobody. And soon they are all up there, in the pleasant beautiful sunshine, facing the clear charming sea...

The town of Ptolemais is very near with its white houses.

« Are we entering it? » asks Judas of Alphaeus.

« It is not necessary. We will stop and eat at the first houses. I want to be at Sicaminon by evening. We may find Isaac there. »

« How much good he is doing, eh? Did You hear Abel, John and Joseph? »

« Yes. But all the disciples are very active. I bless My Father, day and night, for that. You all... My joy, My peace, My security... » and He looks at them with so much love that tears come to the eyes of the ten apostles...

And with such loving look my vision ends.

333. Meeting Judas Iscariot and Thomas.

19th November 1945.

Although the sun is shining in the clear sky, it is bitter cold in the Kishon valley, swept by an icy wind blowing across the northern hills and destroying the tender plants, which shiver and crumple up, nipped as they are, destined to die with their new verdant foliage.

« Is this cold going to last long? » asks Matthew enveloping himself in his heavy mantle, through which only a tiny part of his face can be seen, that is his nose and eyes.

Bartholomew replies in a voice stifled by his large mantle that covers his mouth: « Perhaps until the end of this lunation. »

« In that case, we are in for it! But never mind! Fortunately we shall be staying in hospitable houses in Nazareth... And in the meantime it will be over. »

« Yes, Matthew. As far as I am concerned, it is already over, now that I see that Jesus is not so depressed. Don't you think that He is more cheerful? » asks Andrew.

« He is. But I... well, it seems impossible to me that He got so run down just because of what we know. Has there really been nothing else, as far as you know? » asks Philip.

« No. Nothing. On the contrary I can tell you that at the Syro-Phoenician

border the believers there made Him very happy and He worked those miracles about which we told you » replies James of Alphaeus assuring him.

« He has been very much with Simon of Jonah these last days. And Simon has changed a lot... Of course, you have all changed. I don't know... You seem to be... more austere, I would say » says Philip.

« That is only your impression!... In actual fact we are what we were. Certainly, it was not pleasant to see the Master so depressed for so many reasons, and hear how fierce they are against Him... But we will defend Him. Oh! They will not do Him any harm if we are with Him. Last night, after I heard what Hermas was saying, and he is serious and reliable, I said to Him: "You must no longer remain alone. You now have disciples who, as You can see, are active and are doing well, and are continuously increasing. So we will stay with You. I do not mean that You will have to do everything. It is time for You to cheer up, my dear brother. You will stay with us, among us, like Moses on the mountain, and we will fight for You, and will be ready, if necessary, to defend You also physically. What happened to John the Baptist must not happen to You". Because, after all, if the disciples of the Baptist had not been reduced to two or three faint-hearted ones, he would not have been caught. And we are twelve and I want to persuade some of the most faithful and vigorous disciples to join us or, at least, to be near us. For instance, those who were with John at Machaerus. They are brave and faithful men: John, Matthias and also Joseph. Do you know that he is a promising young man? » says Thaddeus.

« Yes. Isaac is an angel, but his strength is entirely spiritual. Joseph is strong also physically. He is almost our age. »

« And he learns quickly. Did you hear what Hermas said? "If he had studied he would be a rabbi besides being a just man". And Hermas knows what he is talking about. »

« I, however... would keep close to us also Stephen and Hermas, and John, the priest. Because of their knowledge of the Law and of the Temple. Do you know what their presence means for scribes and Pharisees? A check, a restraint... And for people in doubt it means: "Also the best people in Israel are with the Rabbi as His pupils and servants!" » says James of Alphaeus.

« You are right. Let us tell the Master. You heard what He said yesterday: "You must obey, but it is also your duty to open your minds to Me and say what you think is right, so that you may learn how to instruct people in future. And, if I see that what you say is just, I will accept your ideas" » says the Zealot.

« Perhaps He does that to show that He loves us, seeing that we are all more or less convinced that we are the cause of His suffering » remarks Bartholomew.

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« Or He is really tired of having to see to everything and of being the only one who takes decisions and responsibility. Perhaps He also realises that His perfect holiness is... I would say almost an imperfection, considering what is in front of Him: the world that is not holy. We are not perfect saints. Just not as bad rascals as other people... and therefore more able to reply to those who are just like us » says Simon Zealot.

« And to know them, you should say! » adds Matthew.

« Oh! as far as that is concerned, I am sure that He knows them, too. Nay, He knows them better than we do, because He can read the hearts of people. I am as certain as I am sure that I am alive » says James of Zebedee.

« Well, then, why at times does He behave as He does, exposing Himself to trouble and danger? » asks Andrew desolately.

« Who knows? I cannot tell you » says Thaddeus shrugging his shoulders. And the others agree with him.

John is silent. His brother teases him: « Since you always know everything about Jesus - at times you seem to be very close to each other - has He ever told you why He behaves like that? »

« Yes. I asked Him also recently. He always replied: "Because I must. I must act as if the whole world were of ignorant but good people. I teach everybody the same doctrine and thus the children of Truth will be separated from those of Falsehood". He also said to me: "See, John? This is like a first judgement, not a universal or collective one, but a single judgement. According to their action of faith, charity and justice, lambs will be separated from kids. And that will last also afterwards, when I shall no longer be here, but there will be My Church, for ever and ever, until the end of the world. The first judgement of the mass of human people will take place in the world, where men act freely, in front of Good and Evil, Truth and Falsehood. As the first judgement took place in the Earthly Paradise, in front of the tree of Good and Evil, infringed by those who disobeyed God. Then at the death of each individual, the judgement already written in the book of human actions by a faultless Mind will be ratified. The Great, the Terrible Judgement will be the last one, when the mass of men will be judged again. From Adam to the last man. They will be judged for what they freely wanted for themselves on the earth. Now, if I should select by Myself those who deserve the Word of God, Miracle, Love and those who do not - and I could do it by divine right and ability those who are excluded, even if they were demons, on the day of their individual judgement, would shout loud: 'Your Word is the culprit because He did not want to teach us'. But they will not be able to say that... or rather, they will say so, lying once more. And they will therefore be judged". »

« So to refuse His doctrine is to be a reprobate? » asks Matthew.

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« I don't know about that, whether all those who do not believe will be reprobates. If you remember, while speaking to Syntyche He gave us to understand that those who act honestly in life are not reprobates, even if they believe in other religions. But we can ask Him. Israel, which is aware of the Messiah and now believes in Him partly and badly, or rejects Him, will certainly be severely judged. »

« The Master speaks a lot to you, and you know many things which we don't » remarks his brother James.

« It's your fault and the fault of all of you. I ask Him questions with simplicity. At times I ask Him questions that must make His John appear a big fool to Him. But I do not mind. All I want is to know what He thinks and keep it within me to make it mine. You ought to do the same. But you are always afraid! Of what? Of being ignorant? Of being superficial? Of being blockheads? You should be afraid only of not being yet prepared when He goes away. He always says so... and I always repeat it to myself to be prepared for the separation... But I feel that it will be very sorrowful... »

« Don't make me think of it! » exclaims Andrew. And the others echo his words sighing.

« But when will it happen? He always says: "Soon". But that could be within a month or within years. He is so young and time flies so fast... What is the matter, brother? You have turned very pale... » Thaddeus asks James.

« Nothing! I was thinking... » replies immediately James of Alphaeus with his head lowered.

And Thaddeus bends to see his face... « You have tears in your eyes! What is the matter?... »

« Not more than you have... I was thinking of when we will be alone. »

« Oh! What is the matter with Simon of Jonah who is running ahead -shouting like a merganser on a stormy day? » asks James of Zebedee, pointing to Peter who has left Jesus alone and has run away shouting words that the wind prevents his companions from hearing.

They quicken their pace and see that Peter has taken a little path coming from Sephoris, which is now close at hand (so the apostles say, asking one another whether Jesus has ordered him to go to Sephoris by that short cut). But, looking carefully they see that Thomas and Judas are the only two travellers coming from the town towards the main road.

« Look at that! Here? Just here? Oh! What are they doing here? If they were to go anywhere, from Nazareth they were to go to Cana and then to Tiberias... » many remark.

« Perhaps they were coming here looking for disciples. That was

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their mission » says wise Zealot, who feels suspicion being roused in the hearts of many like an awakened snake.

« Let us quicken our pace. Jesus is alone and He seems to be waiting for us... » advises Matthew.

They go and reach Jesus at the same time as Peter, Judas and Thomas.

Jesus is very pale, so much so that John asks Him: « Are You not feeling well? » Jesus smiles and makes a gesture of denial while He greets the two who have come back after such a long absence.

He embraces Thomas first; he is as prosperous and cheerful as usual, but he becomes serious when he sees the Master so changed and he politely asks: « Have You been ill? »

« No, Tom. I have not. And have you always been well and happy? »

« Yes, I have, Lord. I have always been well and always happy. I missed You, had You been there my heart would have been utterly happy. My father and mother are grateful to You for sending me home for a little while. My father was not very well, so I worked for him. I went to my twin sister's and saw my little nephew and I had him named as you suggested. Then Judas came and he made me go round like a little dove in love, up and down, wherever there were disciples. He had already gone round very much on his own. But he will tell You now, as he worked for ten and deserves to be listened to by You. »

Jesus lets him go and it is now Judas' turn, who has been waiting patiently and now comes forward in a frank, easy, triumphant attitude. Jesus pierces him with His sapphire eyes. But He kisses him and is kissed by him, exactly as He did with Thomas. And the words that follow are full of love: « Was your mother happy to see you, Judas? Is the holy woman well? »

« Yes, Master, and she blesses You for sending her Judas to her. She wanted to send You some gifts. But how could I bring them, since I had to go here and there, across mountains and valleys. You need not worry, Master. All the groups of disciples whom I visited are working in a holy manner. The news is spreading out more and more. I wanted to make a personal check on the consequences with the most powerful scribes and Pharisees. I was acquainted with many and I met more now, for Your sake. I approached Sadducees and Herodians... Oh! I can assure You that my dignity was utterly crushed!... But it was for Your sake! I am prepared to do that and more. I received disdainful answers and anathemas. But I was also able to give rise to appreciative understanding in people biased against You. I do not want to be praised by You. It is enough for me that I did my duty and I thank the Eternal Father for helping me all the time. In some cases I had to make use of miracles. And I was sorry, because they deserved thunderbolts, not blessings. But

You say that we must love and be patient... I behaved thus to the honour and glory of God and for Your joy. I hope that many obstacles have been removed for good, also because I guaranteed upon my honour that those two, who cast such a gloomy shadow over us, are no longer with You. Later I had a scruple about stating what I did not know for certain. So I decided to check in order to do what might be necessary, as I did not want them to find out that I had lied, which would have made those to be converted suspect me for ever. Imagine! I approached also Annas and Caiaphas!... Oh! They wanted to annihilate me with their reproaches... But I was so humble and persuasive, that they ended up by saying to me: "Well, if the situation is really like that... We were told it was different. The rectors of the Sanhedrin, who were in a position to know about it, told us the opposite and... »

« You are not going to say that Joseph and Nicodemus are liars » interrupts the Zealot, who has controlled himself so far, but can no longer do so, and is livid with his effort.

« Who said so? On the contrary, Joseph saw me when I was coming out of Annas' house and he said to me: "Why are you so upset?". I told him everything, and how, following his advice and Nicodemus', You, Master, had sent away the galley-slave and the Greek woman. Because You have sent them away, have You not? » says Judas staring at Jesus with his jet eyes, which shine to the point of being phosphorescent. He seems to be wishing to pierce Jesus with his eyes in order to read what He has done.

Jesus, Who is still in front of him and very close, says calmly: « Please go on, I am very interested in what you are saying. It is an accurate report and can be very useful. »

« Ah! so I was saying that Annas and Caiaphas have changed their minds. That means a lot to us, does it not? And then!... Oh! I will make you laugh now! Do you know that I was caught in the middle by rabbis who examined me, like a minor who becomes of age? And what an examination! Well. I convinced them and they let me go. Then I became suspicious and I was afraid I had said something that was not true. So I decided to take Thomas and go once again where the disciples were, or where one could presume that John and the Greek woman were sheltered. I went to Lazarus, to Manaen, to Chuza's palace, to Eliza in Bethzur, to Johanna's garden in Bether, to Gethsemane, to Solomon's little house beyond the Jordan, to the Clear Water, to Nicodemus, to Joseph... »

« But had you not seen him? »

« Yes. And he had assured me that he had not seen those two any more. But You know... I wanted to be sure... In short: I inspected every place where I expected him to be... And do not think that I suffered not finding him. You would do me wrong. Every time and Thomas can confirm this - every time I came out of a place

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without finding him and without any trace of him, I would say: "Praised be the Lord!", and I said: "O Eternal Father, grant that I may never find him!". I did! It was the desire of my soul... Esdraelon was the last place... Ah! By the way! Ishmael ben Fabi, who is in his country house at Megiddo, wishes to have You as his guest... But if I were You, I would not go... »

« Why not? I will certainly go. I am anxious to see him, too. Nay, we will go there at once. Instead of going to Sephoris, we will go to Esdraelon, then to Megiddo the day after tomorrow, which is the Sabbath eve, and from there to Ishmael's house. »

« No, Lord! Why? Do You think that he is fond of You? »

« But if you have approached him and changed him in My favour, why do you not want Me to go? »

« I did not approach him... He was in the fields and he recognised me. But I - is that true, Thomas? - I wanted to run away when I saw him. But I could not, because he called me by my name. I can but advise You to never go to any Pharisee, or scribe or the like. It will do You no good. Let us be among ourselves, all alone, with the people, and nothing else. Including Lazarus, Nicodemus and Joseph... It will be a sacrifice... But it is better to make it, to avoid jealousies, hatred... and laying ourselves open to censure... When at table You speak... and they work underhand at Your words. But let us go back to John... I was now going to Sicaminon, although Isaac, whom I met at the border of Samaria, swore to me that he had not seen him since October. »

« And Isaac swore the truth. But what you are advising, concerning contacts with scribes and Pharisees, clashes with what you said before. You defended Me... That is what you did, is it not? You said: "I have demolished many prejudices against You". You said so, did you not? »

« Yes, Master, I did. »

« Well, then, why can I not complete My defence Myself? So we will go to Ishmael. And you will now go back and warn him. Andrew, Simon Zealot and Bartholomew will come with you. We shall go to the peasants and rest with them. As far as Sicaminon is concerned, we have just come from there. And we were eleven. We confirm to you that John is not there. Neither is he at Capernaum or Bethsaida, at Tiberias, Magdala, Nazareth, Korazim, Bethlehem in Galilee, and so forth for all the other places you perhaps wished to call at... to make sure that John is not among disciples or in friendly houses. »

Jesus speaks calmly, in a natural tone... And yet there must be something in Him that upsets Judas, who changes colour for a moment. Jesus embraces him as if He wanted to kiss him... And while His cheek is against Judas', He whispers to him in a low voice: « You wretch! What have you done with your soul? »

3-1584

« Master... I... »

« Go away! You stink of hell more than Satan himself! Be quiet!... And repent, if you can. »

Judas... I would have run away at full speed. Not he' He impudently says in a loud voice: « Thank You, Master. But I beg You, before I go, may I speak to You privately for a moment? »

All the others move a good distance away.

« Why, Lord, did You say those words to me? You grieved me... »

« Because it is the truth. Who deals with Satan, smells like Satan. »

« Ah! is it because of necromancy? Oh! You frightened me! That was a joke! Nothing but the joke of a curious child. And it helped me to approach some Sadducees and to lose all desire to meet them again. So You can see that You can absolve me without any worry. They are things of no importance when one has Your power. You were right. Come on, Master! My fault is a very light one!... Great is Your wisdom. But who told You? »

Jesus looks at him severely but does not reply.

« But have You really seen the sin in my heart? » asks Judas somewhat frightened.

« And it disgusted Me. Go away! And say no more. » And He turns His back to him and goes back to the disciples, whom He orders to change route, after saying goodbye to Bartholomew, Simon and Andrew, who join Judas and go away quickly, while those who have remained walk away slowly, unaware of the truth, which is known to Jesus only.

They are so unaware that they praise Judas for his activity and sagacity. And honest Peter sincerely accuses himself of his heart's rash judgement on his fellow-disciple...

Jesus smiles... a mild, rather tired smile, as if He were abstracted and could just hear the chattering of His companions, who know of events only what their human nature allows them to know.

334. Ishmael Ben Fabi. The Parable of the Banquet.

11th September 1944.

I see Jesus walk fast along a main road, which the cold wind of a winter morning sweeps and hardens. The fields on both sides of the road are covered with a thin green veil of corn, which has just began to grow and is a promise of future bread, although a promise that is even difficult to imagine. There are drills in the shade, which are still devoid of that blessed green down, and only those in the more sunny places have the light green veil that is so joyous as it announces the oncoming springtime. Fruit-trees are still bare, none of the dark branches have yet put forth buds. Only olive-trees

have their everlasting green-grey foliage, which is as sad in the August sunshine as it is in the first light of this winter morning. Also the thick leaves of cacti are green, a mellow green of freshly painted ceramic.

As usual, Jesus is walking two or three steps ahead of His disciples. They are all enveloped in their woollen mantles. At a certain point Jesus stops and turning round He asks the disciples: « Are you familiar with the road? »

« This is the road, but we do not know where the house is, because it is farther inland... Perhaps it is over there, where those olive-trees are... »

« No. It must be down there, at the bottom, where those big bare trees are... »

« There should be a road for carts... »

In short: they do not know anything precisely. There are no people to be seen on the road or in the fields. They proceed at random, looking for the road.

They find a little house of poor people, with two or three little fields around it. A little girl is drawing water from a well.

« Peace to you, little girl » says Jesus stopping at the hedge where there is a passage way.

« Peace to You. What do You want? »

« Some information. Where is the house of Ishmael, the Pharisee? »

« You are on the wrong road, Lord. You must go back to the crossroads and take the road that goes in the direction where the sun sets. But it is a long way, a very long one, because You have to go back to the cross-roads and then walk a good distance. Have You had anything to eat? It is cold and one feels the cold more on an empty stomach. Come in, if You wish. We are poor. But You are not rich either. You can make the best of it. Come. » And in her shrill voice she shouts: « Mother! »

A woman about thirty-five forty years old comes to the door. Her face is honest but rather sad. She is holding in her arms a halfnaked child about three years old.

« Come in. The fire is lit. I will give You bread and milk. »

« I am not alone. I have these friends with Me. »

« Let them all come in and may the blessing of God come with the pilgrims to whom I am giving hospitality. »

They enter a low dark kitchen that is made cheerful by a blazing fire. They sit here and there on rustic chests.

« I will have something ready in a moment... It is still early... I have not tidied anything up yet... Excuse me. »

« Are you alone? » It is Jesus who asks.

« I am married and I have seven children. The first two are still at the market in Nain. They have to go because their father is not

well. It's a very sad situation... The girls help me. This is the last one. But I have another one just a little older. »

The little one, who is now wearing his little tunic, runs barefooted towards Jesus and looks at Him inquisitively. Jesus smiles at him. They have made friends.

« Who are You? » asks the boy confidently.

« I am Jesus. »

The woman turns round looking at Him attentively. She stops between the fireplace and the table, with a loaf of bread in her hands. She opens her mouth to speak, but does not say anything.

The boy continues: « Where are You going? »

« Along the roads of the world. »

« What for? »

« To bless good children and their homes where people are faithful to the Law. »

The woman makes a gesture. Then she nods to Judas Iscariot who is closest to her. He bends towards the woman who asks: « But who is your friend? »

And Judas replies conceitedly (one would think that the Messiah is what He is, thanks to Judas' kindness): « He is the Rabbi of Galilee: Jesus of Nazareth. Don't you know, woman? »

« This is a secluded road and I have so many sorrows!... But... could I speak to Him about them? »

« You can » replies Judas condescendingly. He seems an important person of the world granting an audience.

Jesus is still speaking to the boy who asks Him whether He has any children.

While the girl seen at the well and another older one bring milk and bowls, the woman approaches Jesus. She remains for a moment in suspense, then she stifles a cry: « Jesus: have mercy on my husband! »

Jesus stands up. He dominates her with His height, but looks at her so kindly that she plucks up courage again. « What do you want Me to do? »

« He is very ill. He is swollen like a wineskin and he cannot bend to work. He cannot rest because he chokes and tosses about... And we still have little children... »

« Do you want Me to cure him? But why do you want that of Me? »

« Because You are You. I did not know You, but I heard people speak of You. My good luck has brought You to my house after I looked for You three times at Nain and Cana. My husband was with me twice. He was looking for You, although travelling by cart makes him suffer so much... Even now he has gone with his brother... We were told that the Rabbi, after leaving Tiberias, was going towards Caesarea Philippi. He has gone there waiting for You... »

« I did not go to Caesarea. I am going to see Ishmael, the Pharisee and then I shall go towards the Jordan... »

« What? You, a good man, are going to Ishmael? »

« Yes, I am. Why? »

« Because... because... Lord, I know that You say that we must not judge, that we must forgive and love one another. I have never seen You before. But I have tried to learn as much as I could about You, and I have prayed the Eternal Father to grant me to hear You at least once. I do not want to do anything which may displease You... But how can one not judge Ishmael and how can one love him? I have nothing in common with him and therefore I have nothing to forgive him. We just shake off the insolent words he says to us when he meets our poverty on his way, with the same patience with which we shake off the dust and mud when he splashes us passing by in his fast coaches. But it is too difficult to love him and not judge him... He is so bad! »

« Is he so bad? To whom? »

« To everybody. He oppresses his servants, he lends on usury and exacts pitilessly. He loves but himself. He is the most cruel man in the countryside. He is not worth it, Lord. »

« I know. You have spoken the truth. »

« And You are going there? »

« He invited Me. »

« Do not trust him, Lord. He did not do it out of love. He is not capable of loving. And You... You cannot love him. »

« I love also sinners, woman. I came to save those who are lost... »

« But You will not save him. Oh! Forgive me for judging! You know... Everything You do is good! Forgive my silly tongue and do not punish me. »

« I will not punish you. But do not do it again. Love also wicked people. Not because of their wickedness, but because it is through love that mercy is granted to them, that they may convert. You are good and willing to become even better. You love the Truth and the Truth speaking to you says that He loves you because you are pitiful to guests and pilgrims according to the Law and you have brought up your children accordingly. God will be your reward. I must go to Ishmael who invited Me to show Me to many of his friends who want to meet Me. I cannot wait any longer for your husband, who, incidentally, is on his way back home. But tell him to be patient for another little while and to come immediately to Ishmael's house. And I ask you to come as well. I will cure him. »

« Oh! Lord!... » the woman is on her knees at Jesus' feet and looks at Him smiling and weeping. She then says: « But this is the Sabbath!... »

« I know. I need it to be the Sabbath to say something to Ishmael concerning it. Everything I do, I do for a definite unerring purpose.

3-1588

You must all be aware of that, including you, My friends, who are afraid and would like Me to follow a behaviour according to human convenience to avoid eventual damage. You are led by love. I know. But you must love in a better way those whom you love. Do not postpone the interests of God to the interests of the person you love. Woman, I must go now, I will wait for you. May peace last for ever in this house in which God and His Law are loved, marriage is respected, children are brought up holily, the neighbour is loved and the Truth sought. Goodbye. »

Jesus lays His hand on the heads of the woman and of the two young girls, He then bends to kiss the little ones and goes out.

Winter sunshine now mitigates the very cold air. A boy about fifteen years old is waiting with a rustic ramshackle cart.

« This is all I have. But it will be quicker and more comfortable for You. »

« No, woman. Keep the horse fresh to come to Ishmael's house. Just show Me the shortest road. »

The boy walks at His side and through fields and meadows they go towards an undulating ground, beyond which there is a well cultivated dell a few acres wide, in the middle of which there is a beautiful large low house, surrounded by a well-kept garden.

« That is the house, Lord » says the boy. « If You no longer need me, I will go back home to help my mother. »

« Go and be always a good son. God is with you. »

... Jesus enters Ishmael's magnificent country house. Many servants rush to meet the Guest, Who is certainly expected. Some go and inform the landlord, who comes out to meet Jesus bowing deeply.

« You are welcome to my house, Master! »

« Peace to you, Ishmael Ben Fabi. You wanted to see Me. Here I am' Why did you want Me? »

« To have the honour of having You and to introduce You to my friends. I want them to be Your friends as well. As I want You to be my friend. »

« I am the friend of everybody, Ishmael. »

« I know. But, You know! It is wise to have friends high up. And I and my friends are such. Forgive me for telling You, but You neglect too much those who can help You... »

« And are you one of those? Why? »

« I am. Why? Because I admire You and I want You to be my friend. »

« Friend! But do you know, Ishmael, the meaning I attach to that word? Friend to many people means acquaintance, to some it means accomplice, to some servant. To Me it means: faithful to the Word of the Father. Who is not such, cannot be My friend, neither can I be his. »

3-1589

« I want Your friendship, Master, just because I want to be faithful. Do You not believe me? Look: there is Eleazar coming. Ask him how I defended You with the Elders. Hallo, Eleazar. Come here, the Rabbi wants to ask you something. »

They exchange greetings with low bows and inquisitive looks.

« Will you repeat, Eleazar, what I said for the Master the last time we met? »

« Oh! A true praise! An impassioned speech! Ishmael spoke so well of You, Master, as of the greatest Prophet who ever came to the people of Israel, that I have longed to hear You ever since. I remember that he said that no one had wiser words than Yours, or greater charm, and that if You can draw Your sword as well as You can speak, there will be no greater king than You in Israel. »

« My Kingdom!... That Kingdom, Eleazar, is not a human one. »

« But the King of Israel! »

« Open your minds -to understand the meaning of the arcane words. The Kingdom of the King of kings will come. But not according to human standards. Not with regard to what perishes; but with regard to what is eternal. You do not enter it along a flowery road of triumph or on a carpet made purple by enemy blood; but climbing a steep path of sacrifices and a mild staircase of forgiveness and love. Our victories over ourselves will give us that Kingdom. And God grant that most people in Israel may under--and Me. But it will not be so. You are thinking of what does not exist. A sceptre will be in My hand, and it will be put there by the people of Israel. A regal eternal sceptre. No king will ever be able to take off My House. But many people in Israel will not be able to look at it without shuddering with horror, because it will have a dreadful name for them. »

« Do You think that we are not capable of following You? »

« If you wanted, you could. But you do not want. Why do you not want? You are elderly now. Your age should make you understand and be just, also for your own sake. Young people... may make mistakes and then repent. But you! Death is always close to elderly people. Eleazar, you are less entangled in the theories of many people of your rank. Open your heart to the Light... »

Ishmael comes back with five more pompous Pharisees: « Come in » says the landlord. They leave the hall, which is well furnished with seats and carpets, and they enter a room into which amphorae are brought for ablutions. They then pass into the dining room, in which everything has been magnificently arranged.

« Jesus beside me. Between me and Eleazar » orders the landlord. And Jesus, Who had remained at the end of the room, near the rather intimidated and neglected disciples, has to sit at the place of honour.

The banquet begins with numerous dishes of roast meat and fish.

3-1590

Wines and syrups, I think, or at least water sweetened with honey, are served several times.

Everybody tries to make Jesus speak. A shaky old man asks in a decrepit clucking voice: « Is it true what people say, that You are going to change the Law? »

« I will not change one iota of the Law. On the contrary (and Jesus emphasises His words) I have come to complete it again, as it was given to Moses. »

« Do You mean that it was modified? »

« No, never. It only had the same fate as all sublime things entrusted to man. »

« What do You mean? Explain Yourself. »

« I mean that man, through ancient pride or the ancient incentive of treble lust, wanted to touch up the straightforward word and the result was something that oppresses faithful believers, whilst, with regard to those who touched it up, it is nothing but a pile of sentences... to be left to other people. »

« But, Master! Our rabbis... »

« That is an accusation! »

« Don't disappoint our desire to be of assistance to You!... »

« Hey! They are quite right in saying that You are a rebel! »

« Silence! Jesus is my guest. Let Him speak freely. »

« Our rabbis began their work with the holy purpose of making the application of the Law easier. God Himself began that school when He added detailed explanations to the words of the Ten Commandments. So that man could not find the excuse that he had not understood. The work therefore of those teachers who break into crumbs for the children of God the bread given by God for their souls, is holy work. But it is holy when it pursues a righteous aim. Which was not always the case. And least of all it is nowadays. But why do you want Me to speak, when you take offence if I enumerate the faults of the mighty ones? »

« Faults! Have we nothing but faults? »

« I wish you had nothing but merits! »

« But we do not have them. That is what You think and what Your eyes say. Jesus, one does not make powerful friends by criticising them. You will not reign. You are not acquainted with that art. »

« I do not ask to reign according to your ideas, neither do I beg for friendship. I want love. Honest holy love. A love that extends from Me to those whom I love and is displayed by making use of what I preach to use: mercy. »

« Since I heard You, I have not lent on usury any more » says one.

« And God will reward you for that. »

« God is my witness that I have not thrashed my servants any more, although they deserve to be lashed, after I heard one of Your

parables » says another one.

« And what about me? I left over ten bushels of barley in the fields for the poor! » states a third one.

The Pharisees praise themselves excellently.

Ishmael has not spoken. Jesus asks him: « And what about you, Ishmael? »

« Oh! I! I have always used mercy. I have but to continue as I behaved in the past. »

« Good for you! If it is really so, you are really the man who feels no remorse. »

« No! I really do not. »

Jesus' sapphire glance pierces him.

Eleazar says touching His arm: « Master, listen to me. I have a special case to submit to You. I recently bought a property of a poor wretch who ruined himself for a woman. He sold it to me, without telling me that there was an old servant, his nurse, in it. She is now blind and feeble-minded. The vendor does not want her. I... would not like to have her either. But to throw her out... What would You do, Master? »

« What would you do if you were to advise somebody else? »

« I would say: "Keep her. A piece of bread will not be your ruin". »

« Why would you say so? »

« Well!... because I think that is what I would do and what I would like to be done to me... »

« You are very close to Justice, Eleazar. Do as you would advise and the God of Jacob will always be with you. »

« Thank You, Master. »

The others are grumbling among themselves.

« What have you to grumble about? » asks Jesus. « Is what I said not just? And has Eleazar not spoken justly? Ishmael, since you have always been merciful, defend your guests. »

« Master, You are right but... if one always did that!... One would become the victim of other people. »

« Whereas, according to you, it is better if other people become our victims, is that right? »

« I don't mean that. But there are cases... »

« The Law says that we must be merciful... »

« Yes, to a poor brother, to a stranger, a pilgrim, a widow, to an orphan. But this old woman, who turned up in Eleazar's property, is not his sister, a pilgrim, a stranger, an orphan or a widow. She is nothing to him. She is just an old piece of furniture, which does not belong to him, and was forgotten by her true master in the sold property. Eleazar, therefore, could throw her out without any scruple at all. He would not be responsible for the death of the old woman. Her true master would... »

3-1592

« ... and he cannot keep her any longer because he is poor himself and thus he is free from obligations as well. So if the old woman dies of starvation, it is her own fault. Is it not so? »

« It is, Master. It is the destiny of those who... are no longer of any use. Sick, old, unfit people are condemned to misery, to begging. And death is the best thing for them... It has always been like that since the beginning of the world, and it will ever be so... »

« Jesus, have mercy on me! » A moaning voice is heard through the closed windows; the room is in fact closed and the chandeliers are lit. Perhaps because it is cold.

« Who is calling Me? »

« A nuisance of a fellow. I will have him driven away. Or a beggar. I will have a piece of bread given to him. »

« Jesus, I am ill. Save me! »

« As I said, it is a pestering fellow. I will punish the servant for letting him in. » And Ishmael stands up.

But Jesus Who is at least twenty years younger than he is and head and shoulders over him, makes him sit down again, laying a hand on his shoulders and ordering: « Stay, Ishmael. I want to see the man who is looking for Me. Let him in. »

A dark-haired man comes in. He must be about forty years old. But he is as swollen as a barrel and as yellow as a lemon, his half open lips are violaceous and he is panting. The woman seen in the first part of the vision is with him. The man comes forward with difficulty because of his disease and because he is afraid. He in fact sees that he is being looked at with such evil eyes!

But Jesus has left His place and has gone towards the unhappy man taking him by the hand and leading him to the middle of the room, in the empty space of the 'U' shaped table, right under the chandelier. « What do you want from Me? »

« Master... I have sought You so much, for such a long time... I want nothing but health... for the sake of my children and of my wife... You can do everything... See in what a state I am... »

« And do you believe that I can cure you? »

« I do believe it!... Every step... every jerk is painful... and yet I have travelled for miles and miles looking for You... and I followed You also by cart, without ever reaching You... Of course I believe!... I am surprised that I have not already been cured, since -my hand has been in Yours, because everything in You is holy, o Holy Man of God. »

The poor man is puffing and blowing owing to the effort of speaking so much. His wife looks at him and at Jesus and weeps.

Jesus looks at them and smiles. He then turns round and asks: « You, old scribe (He addresses the trembling old man who was the first to speak) tell Me: is it lawful to cure on a Sabbath? »

« It is not lawful to do any work on the Sabbath. »

3-1593

« Not even to save a man from despair? It is not manual work. »

« The Sabbath is sacred to the Lord. »

« Which deed is more worthy of a sacred day than get a son of God to say to the Father: "I love and praise You because You have cured me"?! »

« He must do so even when he is unhappy. »

« Hananiah, do you know that your most beautiful wood is on fire this very moment and the whole slope of the Hermon is bright in the purple flames? »

The old man jumps as if he had been bitten by an asp: « Master, are You telling the truth or are You joking? »

« I am speaking the truth. I see and I know. »

« Oh! Poor me! My most beautiful wood. Thousands of shekels reduced to ashes! Damn! Cursed be the dogs that set it on fire! May their bowels bum like my wood! » The little old man is in despair.

« It is only a wood, Hananiah, and you are complaining! Why do you not praise the Lord in your misfortune? This man is not losing just wood, which will grow again, but his own life and the bread for his children, and he should praise the Lord, while you do not. Well, scribe, am I allowed to cure him on the Sabbath? »

« Cursed be You, him and the Sabbath! I have more important things to think of... » and pushing Jesus aside, Who had laid a hand on his arm, he rushes out furiously and he can be heard shouting in his clucking voice to have his cart.

« And now? » says Jesus looking around at the others. « Now, will you tell Me? Is it lawful or not? »

No reply. Eleazar lowers his head, after moving his lips, which he sets again, shocked by the cold atmosphere in the hall.

« Well, I will speak » asks Jesus. His countenance is imposing and His voice thundering as usual, when He is about to work a miracle. « I will speak. And I say: man, let it be done to you according to your faith. You are cured. Praise the Eternal God. Go in peace. »

The man remains dumbfounded. Perhaps he thought that he would become as thin as in the past all of a sudden. And he does not think that he is cured. But I wonder what he feels... He shouts with joy and throws himself at Jesus' feet and kisses them.

« Go. You may go! Be always good. Goodbye! »

And the man goes out followed by the woman, who turns round until the last moment to greet Jesus.

« But, Master... In my house... On the Sabbath... »

« You do not approve? I know. That is why I came. You are My friend? No. You are My enemy. You are neither sincere with Me nor with God. »

« Are You offending me now? »

« No. I am speaking the truth. You said that Eleazar is not obliged to keep that old woman because she does not belong to him. But

you had two orphans who belonged to you. They were the children of two faithful servants of yours, who died working for you, the man with a sickle in his hand, the woman killed by too much work, because she had to serve you both for herself and for her husband, as you exacted from her, in order to keep her. In fact you' said: "I made the agreement for the work of two people and if you want to stay here, I want your work and the work of your dead husband". And she gave you that and died with the child she had conceived. Because that woman was a mother. And for her there was not even the compassion one feels for an animal about to give birth to its little one. Where are those two children now? »

« I don't know... They disappeared one day. »

« Do not tell lies now. It is enough to have been cruel. It is not necessary to add falsehood to make your Sabbaths hateful to God, even if they are free from servile work. Where are those children? »

« I do not know. Believe me. »

« I know. I found them one cold, wet, dark November evening. I found them starving and shivering, near a house, like two little dogs looking for a mouthful of bread... Cursed and expelled by a man with the entrails of a dog, but who was worse than a dog, because a dog would have felt pity for those two little orphans. But you and that man did not feel any. Their parents were no longer of any use to you, is that right? They were dead. And the dead can only weep, in their graves, hearing their unhappy children's sobs, which other people neglect. But the dead, with their souls, take their tears and the tears of their orphans to God and say: "Lord, take vengeance on our behalf because the world oppresses us when it can no longer exploit us". The two little ones were not yet able to serve you, is that right? Perhaps the girl might have been able to glean... And you drove them away and denied them also the few things, which belonged to their father and mother. They might have died of starvation and cold, like two dogs on a cart-road. They might have lived, becoming one a thief and the other a prostitute. Because starvation leads to sin. But what did it matter to you? A little while ago you were quoting the Law to support your theories. Well, does the Law not say: "You must not be harsh with the widow, or with the orphans, if you are harsh with them and they cry out to Me, I shall hear their cry and My anger will flare and I shall kill you with the sword, your own wives will be widows, your own children orphans"? Does the Law not state that? Well, then, why do you not keep it? And you defend Me against other people? Why, then, do you not defend My doctrine in yourself? You want to be My friend? Why, then, do you do the opposite of what I say? One of you is running at break-neck speed, tearing his hair, because of the ruin of his wood. And he does not tear it because of the ruin of his heart! And what are you

waiting for to do so? "Why do you, whom destiny has placed high up, always want to consider yourselves perfect? And supposing you were perfect in something, why do you not endeavour to be so in everything? Why do you hate Me, because I open your wounds? I am the Doctor of your souls. Can a doctor cure a sore if he does not open it and clean it? Do you not know that many people, and that woman who has just gone out is one of them, deserve the first places in the banquet of God, although they apparently look miserable? Outward appearance does not count; it is the heart and the soul that matter. God sees you from the height of His throne. And He judges you. How many He sees who are better than you are! So listen. As a rule, always act as follows: When you are invited to a wedding banquet, always choose the last place. Double honour will come to you when the landlord says to you: "Come forward, my friend". Honour to your merit and your humility. Whereas... It will be a sad moment for a proud man to be shamed and hear the landlord say: "Go down there to the end, because there is someone here more worthy than you are". And do the same in the secret banquet of your souls at the wedding with God. He who humbles himself will be exalted and he who exalts himself will be humbled. Ishmael, do not hate Me for curing you. I do not hate you. I came to cure you. You are more seriously ill than that man. You invited Me to give prestige to yourself and satisfaction to your friends. You often invite people, but you do it out of pride and for pleasure. Do not do that. Do not invite rich people, relatives and friends. Open your house and your heart to the poor, to beggars, cripples, to lame people, orphans and widows. In return they will give you blessings. And God will change them into graces. And at the end... what a happy destiny for all the merciful who will be rewarded by God at the resurrection of the dead! Woe to those who cherish only hopes of profit and later close their hearts to the brothers who can no longer serve them. Woe to them! I will revenge the forlorn. »

« Master... I... I want to please You. I will take those children again. »

« No, you will not. »

« Why? »

« Ishmael?!... »

Ishmael lowers his head. He wants to appear humble. But he is a viper deprived of its poison and does not bite because it knows it has none, but waits for the opportunity to bite...

Eleazar endeavours to restore peace saying: « Blessed are those who feast with God, in their souls and in the eternal Kingdom. But, believe me, Master. At times it is life that hinders us. Offices... occupations... »

At this point Jesus tells the parable of the wedding feast and

3-1596

concludes: « Offices... occupations, you said. It is true. That is why I said to you, at the beginning of this banquet, that My Kingdom is conquered through victories over ourselves, not by means of victories in the battle field. The places at the Great Supper are for the humble-hearted, who are great through their faithful love, which takes no account of sacrifices and overcomes all difficulties to come to Me. Even one hour is sufficient to change a heart. Providing that heart wants to change. And one word is sufficient. I have told you many. And I am looking... A holy tree is springing up in a heart. In the others, there are thorns for Me, and in the thorns there are asps and scorpions. It does not matter. I will proceed in My straight way. Let those who love Me follow Me. I go round calling... Let righteous people come to Me. I go round teaching... Let the seekers of justice approach the Fountain. With regard to the others... the Holy Father will judge. Ishmael, I say goodbye to you. Do not hate Me. Meditate. You will see that I was severe out of love, not out of hatred. Peace to this house and to those who dwell in it, peace to everybody, if you deserve peace. »

335. Jesus at Nazareth with His Cousins and with Peter and Thomas.

20th November 1945.

Ishmael Ben Fabi. Jesus says: « You will put here the vision that you saw on 11th September 1944. »

Jesus is once again with His disciples on the road that from the Esdraelon plain takes one to Nazareth. They must have spent the night somewhere, because it is early morning. They walk for some time in silence. Jesus is ahead of them, alone, then He calls Peter and Simon and walks with them, finally they are all in a group until they reach a cross-roads where the Nazareth road joins the road that leads to the north.

Jesus beckons those who are speaking to be quiet and says: « We shall now part. I am going to Nazareth with My brothers, with Peter and Thomas. Under the guidance of Simon Zealot, along the Tabor and caravan road, you will go to Debaret, Tiberias, Magdala, Capernaum, and then towards Meron. You will stop at Jacob's to see whether he has been converted and you will take My blessing to Judas and Anne. You will stay in those houses where they offer you hospitality more insistently. You will stay one night only in each place, because on the Sabbath evening we will meet on the Saphet road. I will spend the Sabbath at Korazim, in the house of the widow. Call on her and tell her. In this way we will at last give peace to the soul of Judas, who will be convinced that John is not in any of those hospitable places... »

3-1597

« Master! But I believe it!... »

« But it is always better to make sure, so that you will not blush before Caiaphas and Annas, as I do not blush before you or any other man when I say that John is no longer with us. I am taking Thomas to Nazareth, so that he may rest assured also with regard to that place, as he will be able to see with his own eyes... »

« But, Master... I! What do I care? I am only sorry that that man is no longer with us. He may have been what he was. But since we have known him, he has always been better than many famous Pharisees. It is enough for me to know that he did not deny You and did not grieve You and then... whether he is on the earth or in Abraham's bosom, I do not care. Believe me. If he were in my house... I would not disdain him. I hope that You do not think that in the heart of Your Thomas there is more than a natural curiosity, but no animosity, no spur of a more or less honest investigation, no inclination to voluntary or involuntary or authorised espionage, no desire to be harmful... »

« You are offending me! You are insulting me! You are lying! You have seen that I have always acted in a holy way during this time. So why do you say that? What can you say about me? Speak up! » Judas is furious and wild.

« Be silent. Thomas will reply to Me. To Me only, as I spoke to him. I believe Thomas' words. But that is what I want, and that will be done, and none of you are entitled to reprove My conduct. »

« I am not reproaching You... But his insinuation struck me and... »

« You are twelve. Why did it strike you only, when I spoke to everybody? »

« Because I looked for John. »

Jesus says: « Also other companions of yours did so, and other disciples will do so, but none will feel offended by Thomas' words. It is not a sin to ask after a fellow disciple in an honest manner. Words like those just uttered do not hurt, when our hearts are full of love and honesty and nothing pricks them or makes them supersensible having already been bitten by remorse. Why do you want to remonstrate thus in the presence of your companions? Do you want to be suspected of sin? Wrath and pride are two bad companions, Judas. They drive one to frenzy, and a frenzied person sees what does not exist, and says what should not be said... just as greed and lust drive people to guilty actions in order to be satisfied... Get rid of such wicked servants... And in the meantime you had better know that during the many days while you were away, there has always been very good harmony among us, as well as obedience and respect. We love one another, do you understand?... Goodbye, My dear friends. Go and love one another. Is that clear to you? Love one another and bear with one another, speak little and act well. Peace be with you. »

3-1598

He blesses them and while they go to the right, Jesus continues on His way with His cousins, Peter and Thomas.

They proceed in dead silence. Then Peter explodes in a thundering solitary: « Who knows! » as a consequence of I wonder what long meditation. The others look at him...

Jesus immediately wards off possible questions by saying: « Are you two happy to come to Nazareth with Me? » and He lays His arms round the shoulders of Peter and Thomas.

« Can You doubt it? » says Peter in his exuberance.

Thomas, more calmly, with his plump face shining with joy, adds: « Do You not know that to be near Your Mother is such a joy that I cannot find words to explain it to You? Mary is my love. I am not a virgin, and I was not against having a family and I had already set my eyes on some girls, but I was uncertain as to which I should choose as my wife. But now! No... My love is Mary. The love exceeding sense. Sense dies only by thinking of Her! The love that fills the soul with delight. I compare all the good I see in women, also in the dearest ones, such as my mother and my twin sister, to what I see in Your Mother, and I say to myself: "All justice, grace and beauty is in Her. Her loving soul is a bed of heavenly flowers... Her appearance is a poem... Oh! in Israel we dare not think of angels and with fearful reverence we look at the Cherubim of the Holy of Holies!... How foolish of us! As we do not tremble ten times as much with venerable fear looking at Her! Because I am sure that in the eyes of God She exceeds all angelical beauty... »

Jesus looks at His apostle who loves His Mother so much that he seems to become almost spiritualised, as his feelings for Mary change his good-natured countenance so deeply. « Well, we shall be with Her for a few hours. We shall stay until the day after tomorrow. Then we shall go to Tiberias to see the two children and to get a boat to Capernaum. »

« And what about Bethsaida? »

« We will go there on our way back, Simon, to get Marjiam for the Passover pilgrimage. »...

... It is the evening of the same day, at Nazareth, in the peaceful little house, where Peter and Thomas are already sleeping. Mother and Son are conversing gently.

« Everything went well, Mother. And they are now in peace. Your prayers helped the pilgrims and are now soothing their grief, like dew on parched flowers. »

« I would like to soothe Yours, Son! How much You must have suffered! Look. Your temples and Your cheeks have become hollow, and a wrinkle furrows Your forehead like the cut of a sword. Who hurt You like that, My darling? »

« The grief of having to grieve, Mother. »

« Just that, My Jesus? Did Your disciples distress You? »

3-1599

« No, Mother. They have been as good as saints. »

« Those who were with You... But I mean: everyone... »

« You see that I brought Thomas here to reward him, and I would have liked to bring also those who did not come here the last time. But I had to send them elsewhere, ahead... »

« And Judas of Kerioth? »

« Judas is with them. »

Mary embraces Her Son, and reclines Her head on His shoulder, weeping.

« Why are You weeping, Mother? » asks Jesus caressing Her hair.

Mary is silent and weeps. Only after a third question, She whispers: « Because I am terrified... I would like him to leave You... It is a sin, is it not, to wish that? But I am so much afraid of him, for You... »

« Things would change only if he disappeared dying... But why should he die? »

« I am not so bad as to wish that... He has a mother as well! And a soul... A soul, which may still be saved. But... oh! Son! Would death perhaps not be a good thing for him? »

Jesus sighs and whispers: « Death would be a good thing for many people... » He then asks in a loud voice: « Have You heard of old Johanna? What about her fields?... »

« I went to see her with Mary of Alphaeus and Salome of Simon after the hailstorms. But as her corn had been sown late, it had not yet come up and so it suffered no damage. Mary went back to see her three days ago. She says the fields are like carpets. The nicest fields in the district. Rachel is well and the old woman is happy. Mary of Alphaeus also is happy now that Simon is all in Your favour. You will certainly see him tomorrow. He comes here every day. He had just gone away today when You arrived. You know? No one noticed anything. They would have spoken if they had noticed that they were here. But if You are not really tired, tell Me all about their journey... »

And Jesus tells His Mother everything, except His suffering in the cave at Jiphthahel.

336. The Crippled Woman of Korazim.

21st November 1945.

Jesus is in the synagogue in Korazim which is slowly becoming crowded with people. The elders of the town must have insisted that Jesus should speak there on this Sabbath. I gather that by their arguing and by Jesus' replies.

« We are not more arrogant than Judaeans or the people of the Decapolis » they say « and yet You go there several times. »

« I do the same here. I have taught you both with words and

works, and with silence and action. »

« But if we are duller than others, You should insist all the more... »

« All right. »

« Of course it is all right! We allow You to use our synagogue as a place where You can teach, because we think that it is right to do so. Accept, therefore, our invitation and speak. »

Jesus opens His arms, beckoning the people present to be silent, and He begins His speech giving a slow emphatic recitation in the tone of a psalm: « "Araunah replied to David: 'Let the lord my king take and offer as he likes. Here are the oxen for the holocaust, the threshing-sled and the oxen's yoke for the wood; Araunah, o king, gives all this to the king'. And he added: 'May the Lord your God accept your offering'. But the king replied and said: 'It shall not be done as you wish. No. I will pay you in money, as I will not offer the Lord my God holocausts that cost me nothing' ". »

Jesus lowers His eyes, because He was speaking with His face turned towards the ceiling, and He stares at the head of the synagogue and the four elders who were with Him and asks: « Have you understood the meaning? »

« That is the second book of the Kings, when the holy king bought the threshing floor of Araunah... But we do not understand why You recited it. There is no pestilence here and no sacrifice to be offered. You are not a king... We mean: not yet. »

« I solemnly tell you that your minds are slow in understanding symbols and your faith is uncertain. If it were certain, you would see that I am already King, as I said, and if your understanding were quick, you would realise that there is a plague here that is more serious than the one that worried David. You are afflicted by the plague of unbelief, which causes you to perish. »

« Well! If we are dull and incredulous, give us intelligence and faith and explain to us what You meant. »

« I say: I do not offer forced holocausts to God, those which are offered for mean interests. I do not agree to speak, if that is granted only to Him Who has come to speak. It is My right and I assert it. Out in the sun or within closed walls, upon the mountains or down in valleys, on the seaside or sitting on the banks of the Jordan, everywhere it is My right and My duty to teach and to buy through My work the only holocausts that are pleasing to God: converted hearts made faithful by My Word. Here, you people of Korazim, have granted the Word to speak, not out of respect and faith, but because there is in your hearts a voice that torments you like a woodworm gnawing at a piece of wood: "This chilly punishment is due to the harshness of our hearts". And you want to make amends, for your purses, not for your souls. Oh! Pagan obstinate Korazim! But not everyone in Korazim is such, and I will speak to

those who are not such, by means of a parable.

Listen. A silly rich man took a lump of material as fair as the finest honey to a craftsman and told him to make an ornate amphora with it.

"This material is not good to work at" said the craftsman to the rich man. "See? It is soft and resilient. How can I carve it and shape it?"

"What? It is not good? It is a valuable resin and a friend of mine has a small amphora made with it and his wine acquires an exquisite taste in it. I paid it as dear as gold, to have a larger amphora and thus mortify my friend, who boasts of his. Make it at once. Or I will tell everyone that you are a poor craftsman".

"But your friend's amphora must be of clear alabaster".

"No. It is made with this material".

"It is perhaps made of fine amber".

"No. It is the same matter as this".

"Let us suppose that it is made of this matter, but it must have been made solid and hard by age or by mixing it with other solidifying ingredients. Ask him, then come and let me know how it was done".

"No. He sold me this himself and he assured me that it is to be used as it is".

"In that case he cheated you to punish you for envying his beautiful amphora".

"Watch what you say! Do the work or I will take your shop from you to punish you, in any case everything you possess is not worth what I paid for this wonderful resin".

The desolate craftsman began to work. He kneaded... But the paste stuck to his hands. He tried to solidify part of it with mastic and powders... But the resin lost its golden transparency. He put it close to his blast-furnace hoping that the heat would harden it, but clasping his brow he had to take it away, because it liquefied. He had frozen snow brought from Mount Hermon and he immersed the resin into it... It hardened and was beautiful. But he could not mould it. "I will carve it with a chisel" he said. But at the first stroke with the chisel the resin broke into pieces.

The desperate craftsman decided to make a last trial, although he was already convinced that it was impossible to work on the material. He gathered all the pieces together and liquefied them in the heat of the furnace, he then froze them, but not too much, with snow, and he tried to work with chisel and broad knife on the softish mass. It moulded! But as soon as he removed chisel and broad knife it resumed its previous shape, just like dough rising in the kneading trough.

The man gave up. And to avoid being retaliated to and ruined by the rich man, during the night he loaded wife, children, furnishings

and working tools on a cart and fled beyond the border, after leaving in the middle of his workshop, now completely empty, the fair mass of resin with a note on top of it with the words: "It cannot be worked".

I have been sent to shape hearts according to Truth and Salvation. I have had in My hands hearts made of iron, lead, tin, alabaster, marble, silver, gold, jasper, gem. Hearts that were hard, wild, too tender, inconstant, hearts hardened by sorrows, precious hearts: hearts of all kinds. I worked at every one of them. And I moulded many according to the desire of Him Who sent Me. Some hurt Me while I was working at them, some preferred to break into pieces rather than be completed. But they will always have a recollection of Me, even if it may be a hateful one.

It is not possible to work on you. Nothing is of any avail with you: warm love, patience in teaching you, severe reproaches, chisel work. As soon as I move My hands away from you, you become again what you were. There is only one thing you should do to change: to abandon yourselves entirely to Me. But you do not do that. And you never will do it. The desolate Workman leaves you to your destiny. But, as it is fair, He does not abandon everyone in the same way. In His desolation He can still choose those who deserve His love and He comforts and blesses them. Woman, come here! » He says pointing to a woman who is near a wall and is so bent that she looks like a question mark.

The people look where Jesus is pointing, but they cannot see the woman, neither can she see Jesus and His hand from her position. Several people say to her: « Go, Martha! He is calling you. » And the poor woman plods along with her walking stick, with her head just reaching to the top of it.

She is now before Jesus, Who says to her: « I will give you a souvenir of My passing here and a reward for your silent humble faith. Be cured of your infirmity » He shouts finally, laying His hands on her shoulders.

And the woman stands up at once, as straight as a palm-tree, and raising her arms she cries: « Hosanna! He has cured me! He has seen His faithful servant and has helped her. Praise be to the Saviour and King of Israel! Hosanna to the Son of David! »

The crowd sing their hosannas with the woman, who is now on her knees at Jesus' feet, kissing the hem of His tunic, while He says to her: « Go in peace and persevere in your Faith. »

The head of the synagogue, who obviously still resents the words spoken by Jesus before the parable, wants to repay reproaches with poison and shouts angrily, while the crowds open to let the cured woman pass: « There are six days to work, six days to ask and to give. So come during those six days, both to ask and to give. Come and be cured during those days, without infringing

the Sabbath, you sinners and misbelievers, corrupted and corrupters of the Law! » and he tries to push everybody out of the synagogue, as if he were driving profanation out of the place of prayer.

But Jesus, Who sees that he is being helped by the four elders seen previously and by others scattered amongst the crowd, who appear to be the most scandalised and... tormented by Jesus' crime, with His arms folded on His chest, looks at him in an imposing severe attitude and shouts: « Hypocrites Which of you on this day has not untied his ox or his donkey from the manger and taken it out for watering? And who has not taken a sheaf of grass to his sheep and milked their full udders? If you have six days to do so, why have you done it also today, just for a little milk, or for fear that your ox or your donkey might die of thirst and you might lose it? And should I not have freed this woman from her chains after Satan had held her bound for eighteen years, only because this is the Sabbath? Go. I was able to relieve her from a misfortune that she did not want. But I will never be able to relieve you from yours, because you want them, o enemies of Wisdom and Truth! »

The good people, among the many malicious ones in Korazim, approve and agree, while the others, livid with rage, run away, deserting the livid synagogue-leader.

Jesus also leaves him and goes out of the synagogue, surrounded by good people who go with Him as far as the countryside, where He blesses them for the last time. He then takes the main road with His cousins, Peter and Thomas...

337. Going towards Saphet. The Parable of the Good Farmer.

22nd November 1945.

The road to Saphet leaves the plain of Korazim and climbs a remarkable mountain range thickly covered with trees. A stream flows down the mountains towards the lake of Tiberias.

The pilgrims are waiting at a bridge for those who were sent to Merom. And they do not have to wait long. The others in fact walking fast arrive punctually at the rendezvous and meet the Master and their companions with great joy and inform them of their journey, which was blessed also with some miracles, worked in turn by « all the apostles ». But Judas of Kerioth rectifies: « With the exception of me, as I was not able to do anything. » His mortification in admitting it is painful.

« We told you that it was due to the fact that we were dealing with a great sinner » replies James of Zebedee. And he explains: « You know, Master? it was Jacob and he was very ill. That is why he invokes You, because he is afraid of death and of God's judgement.

But he is more avaricious than ever, now that he foresees a real disaster for his crops, which have been completely ruined by frost. He lost all his seed-corn and he cannot sow any more because he is ill and his maid-servant is not fit to plough the field, because she is worn out by fatigue and starvation, as he economises also on flour for bread, seized as he is with fear that he may be left without any food one day. We ploughed a large extension of ground for him, and perhaps we sinned, because we worked all day on Friday, also after sunset until it was dark, and even then with torches and bonfires. Philip, John and Andrew know how to do it, so do I. We worked hard... Simon, Matthew and Bartholomew followed us removing the corn that had come up and had been ruined, and Judas went in Your name to ask Judas and Anne for a little seed, promising that we would call on them today. He got it and it was chosen seed. So we said: "We will sow it tomorrow". That is why we are a little late. Because we started at the beginning of sunset. May the Eternal Father forgive us considering the reason why we sinned. Judas, in the meantime, remained near Jacob's bed, to convert him. He can speak better than we can. At least that is what Bartholomew and the Zealot said spontaneously. But Jacob turned a deaf ear to all his arguments. He wanted to be cured, because his disease costs him money and he insulted the servant calling her a sluggard. Since he said: "I will be converted if I recover", Judas imposed his hands on him to calm him down. But Jacob remained as ill as before. Judas was discouraged and told us. We tried before going to bed. But we did not obtain a miracle. Now Judas maintains that it is because he has lost Your favour, as he displeased You and is now down-hearted. But we say that it is because we had in front of us an obstinate sinner, who pretends to get everything he wants and lays down terms and gives orders to God. Who is right? »

« You seven. You have spoken the truth. What about Judas and Anne? And their fields? »

« Only slightly ruined. But they have means... and everything has already been repaired. And they are good people! Here. They have sent You this offering and this food. They hope to see You some time. It is Jacob's frame of mind that is sad. I would have liked to cure his soul, rather than his body... » says Andrew.

« And what about the other places? »

« Oh! On the way to Deberet, near the village, we cured a man actually Matthew did - who suffered from bouts of fever. He was just coming back from a doctor who had given him up. We stopped at his house and he did not have a temperature from sunset till dawn and he said that he was feeling well and strong. Then at Tiberias Andrew cured a boatman, who had broken his shoulder falling on the bridge. He imposed his hands and the shoulder was

cured. You can imagine the man! He insisted on taking us free of charge to Magdala and Capernaum and then to Bethsaida and he remained there, because there are several disciples there: Timoneus of Aera, Philip of Arbela, Ermasteus and Marcus of Josiah, one of those who were freed from the demon near Gamala. Also Joseph, the boatman, wants to become a disciple... The children, at Johanna's, are very well. They do not seem to be the same. They were playing in the garden with Johanna and Chuza... »

« I saw them. I was there, too. Go on. »

« At Magdala Bartholomew converted an evil heart and cured a wicked body. How well he spoke! He explained that disorderliness of the spirit engenders disorder in the body and that every concession to dishonesty degenerates into a loss of peace, of health and finally of the soul. When he saw that the man was repentant and convinced, he imposed his hands and the man was cured. They wanted to keep us at Magdala. But we obeyed Your instructions and the following morning we went on our way to Capernaum. There were five people there who wanted to be cured by You. And they were about to go away, as they were discouraged. We cured them. We did not see anybody, because we left at once by boat for Bethsaida, to avoid questions by Eli, Uriah and companions. At Bethsaida! But, Andrew, will you tell your brother... » concludes James of Zebedee who has spoken all the time.

« Oh! Master! Oh! Simon! If You saw Marjiam! You would not recognise him!... »

« Goodness gracious! He has not become a girl? » exclaims and asks Peter.

« On the contrary! A fine young man; he is tall and thin, as he has grown so much... He is wonderful! We could hardly recognise him. He is as tall as your wife and as me... »

« Oh! well! Neither you, nor Porphirea nor I are palm-trees! At most we could be compared to thorn-bushes... » says Peter, who, however, is overjoyed at the news that his adoptive son has grown up.

« Yes, brother. But at the recent feast of the Dedication he was still a stunted boy who hardly reached up to our shoulders. Now he is really a young man, with regard to height, voice and seriousness. He has behaved like those plants that stagnate for years then all of a sudden they become surprisingly luxuriant. Your wife has been very busy lengthening his garments and making new ones. And she makes them with wide hems and flounces at the waist, because she rightly foresees that Marjiam will grow more. And he is growing even more in wisdom. Nathanael in his wise humility did not tell You that for almost two months Bartholomew was the master of the youngest and most heroic of Your disciples, who gets up before daybreak to pasture the sheep, split wood,

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draw water, light the fire, sweep the floors, do the shopping, out of love for his putative mother, and then in the afternoon, until late at night, he studies and writes like a little doctor. Just imagine! He gathers all the children of Bethsaida together, and on the Sabbath he gives them short evangelical lessons. Thus the little ones, who are excluded from the synagogue, lest they should disturb the service, have their day of prayer, just like grown up people. And mothers tell me that it is beautiful to hear him speak and that children love and obey him with respect and are becoming very good. What a disciple he will be! »

« Well, well! I... am moved... My Marjiam! Even at Nazareth, eh! his heroism... for that little girl. Rachel, was it not? » Peter stops in time, blushing for fear he might have said too much.

Fortunately Jesus comes to his rescue and Judas is engrossed in thought and inattentive. Or he pretends he is. Jesus says: « Yes, Rachel. You are right. She is cured. And the fields will yield a good crop of corn. James and I have been there. The sacrifice of a young child can do so much. »

« At Bethsaida James worked a miracle for a poor cripple, and Matthew, in the street, near Jacob's house, cured a boy. And today, in the square of that village near the bridge, Philip cured a man with diseased eyes and John a boy who was possessed. »

« You have all done well. Very well. We shall now go to that village on the slopes and will stop in one of the houses to sleep. »

« And You, my dear Master, what have You done? How is Mary? And the other Mary? » asks John.

« They are well and they send you their regards. They are preparing garments and all that is necessary for the springtime pilgrimage. And they are longing to make it in order to be with us. »

« Also Susanna, Johanna and our mother are just as anxious » says John.

Bartholomew says: « Also my wife and daughters want to come this year, after so many years, to Jerusalem. She says that it will never be as beautiful as this year... I don't know why she says so. But she maintains that she feels it in her heart. »

« In that case also mine will come. She has not told me... But what Anne does, Mary does, too » says Philip.

« And Lazarus' sisters? You have seen them... » asks Simon Zealot.

« They comply with the Master's instructions and with necessities, but they suffer... Lazarus looks very poorly, doesn't he, Judas? He has to lie down most of the time. But they are anxiously awaiting the Master » says Thomas.

« It will soon be Passover and we shall go to Lazarus' house. »

« But what have You done at Nazareth and at Korazim? »

« At Nazareth I greeted relatives and friends and the relatives of

the two disciples. At Korazim I spoke in the synagogue and I cured a woman. We stayed at the house of the widow, whose mother died. It was a grief and a relief at the same time, because of their scanty resources and of the working time that the widow lost to take care of the invalid; she is now spinning for other people. But she is no longer in despair. What is indispensable for her, is now secured and she is thus happy. Every morning Joseph goes to work with a carpenter near the Well of Jacob to learn the trade. »

« Have those of Korazim become any better? » asks Matthew.

« No, Matthew. They are becoming worse and worse » Jesus admits frankly. « And they ill-treated us. The mighty ones did, of course. Not the simple people. »

« It is a very awkward place. Don't go there any more » says Philip.

« It would grieve the disciple Elias, the widow and the woman I cured today, and all the other good people. »

« Yes. But they are so few that... I would not worry any more about that place. You said it Yourself: "It is unworkable" » says Thomas.

« Resin is one thing and hearts are a different thing. Something will remain, like seed buried under very hard clods of earth. It will take a long time to spring up, but it will at last come up. The same applies to Korazim. What I have sowed will begin to grow one day. One must not give up the first time one is defeated.

Listen to this parable. It could be called: "The parable of the good farmer".

A rich man owned a beautiful large vineyard, in which there were various kinds of fig-trees. The vineyard was cultivated by a servant, an expert vine-dresser and pruner of fruit-trees, who did his work with love for his master and for the trees. Every year, at the right season, the rich man used to go to his vineyard several times to see his grapes and figs ripen and to taste them, picking the fruit with his own hands. One day he went towards a fig-tree of a very good quality, the only one of that quality in the vineyard. But also on that day, as in the previous two years, he found that it was all leaves without any fruit. So he called the vine-dresser and said: "For three years I have come looking for fruit on this fig-tree and I have found nothing but leaves. It is obvious that the tree has finished yielding fruit. So cut it down. It is useless to have it here taking up room and wasting your time without any profit. Cut it down, burn it, clean the ground of its roots and put another young tree in its place. In a few years' time it will yield fruit". The vinedresser, who was patient and loving, replied: "You are right. But leave it to me for another year. I will not cut it down. Nay, I will dig the ground with greater care, I will manure it and trim it. It may yield fruit again. If after this last trial it does not bear fruit, I will comply with your desire and cut it down".

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Korazim is the tree that does not bear fruit. I am the Good Farmer. You are the impatient rich man. Leave it to the Good Farmer. »

« Very well. But the parable is not finished. Did the fig-tree bear fruit the following year? » asks the Zealot.

« It did not and it was cut down. But the farmer was justified for cutting down a tree which looked young and flourishing, because he had done all his duty. I also wish to be justified for cutting off some people with an axe and removing them from My vineyard, in which there are unfruitful and poisonous plants, nests of snakes, sap-suckers, parasites or poisons that spoil or injure their fellowdisciples, or they penetrate creeping with their wicked roots to proliferate, without being called into My vineyard, where they rebel to being grafted, as they entered only to spy, to denigrate and to make My field sterile. I will cut them off after trying everything to convert them. For the time being, instead of an axe, I make use of shears and of the pruner's knife, and I thin out branches and engraft... Oh! it will be hard work. Both for Me Who does it and for those who undergo the treatment. But it is to be done. So that in Heaven they may say: "He has accomplished everything, but the more He pruned, grafted, hoed and manured them, shedding perspiration, tears and blood while working, the more sterile and wicked they have become... There is the village. Go ahead, all of you and look for lodgings. You, Judas of Kerioth, stay with Me. »

They remain alone and in the twilight they proceed close to each other, in dead silence.

At last Jesus says, as if He were speaking to Himself: « And yet, even if we lose God's favour by infringing His Law, we can always become what we were, by renouncing sin... »

Judas does not reply.

Jesus resumes: « And if one understands that it is not possible to have the power of God, because God is not there where Satan is, one can easily remedy, by preferring what God grants to what our pride desires. »

Judas is silent.

They have by now reached the first house of the village and Jesus, still speaking to Himself, says: « And to think that I did severe penance that he might mend his ways and go back to his Father... »

Judas starts, raises his head, looks at Him... but does not say anything.

Jesus also looks at him... and then He asks: « Judas, to whom am I speaking? »

« To me, Master. It is because of You that I no longer have power. You took it off me to increase it in John, Simon, James, in everybody, except me. You do not love me, that's what it is! And I

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will end up by not loving You and by cursing the hour when I did love You and I ruined myself in the eyes of the world for a cowardly king, who is overwhelmed even by the populace. I was not expecting this from You! »

« Neither I from you. But I have never deceived you. And I have never forced you. So why do you remain with Me? »

« Because I love You. I cannot part with You. You attract me and You disgust me. I desire You as much as I desire air to breathe and... You frighten me. Ah! I am cursed! I am damned! Why do You not drive the demon out of me, since You can? » Judas' face is livid and upset, he looks like a madman full of hatred and fear... He reminds me, although faintly, of the satanic mask of Judas on Good Friday.

And Jesus' face reminds me of the scourged Nazarene, Who sitting on an upturned tub in the courtyard of the Praetorium, looks at His sneerers with all His loving pity. He says, and a sob already appears to be in His voice: « Because there is no repentance in you, but only hatred against God, as if He were guilty of your sin. »

Judas utters a horrible curse between his teeth...

« Master, we have found lodgings. There is room for five in one place, for three in another, for two in a third place and then two places can accommodate one each. We could not find anything better » say the disciples.

« All right. I will go with Judas of Kerioth » says Jesus.

« No. I prefer to be alone. I am upset. You would not be able to rest... »

« As you wish... I will go with Bartholomew. You can do as you like. In the meantime let us go where there is more room, so that we may all have supper together. »

338. Going towards Meiron.

23rd November 1945.

A beautiful springtime dawn makes the sky rosy and the hills a pleasant sight. The disciples rejoice at the sight while gathering at the entrance of the village waiting for the late-comers.

« It is the first day that it is not cold, after the hailstorms » says Matthew, rubbing his hands.

« It was time! This is the new moon of the month of Adar! » exclaims Andrew.

« Very well! If we had to go up on the mountains with the cold weather of the past days!... » comments Philip.

« But where are we going? » asks Andrew.

« I wonder... From here we can go either to Saphet or to Meiron. And then? » replies James of Zebedee and he turns round to ask the sons of Alphaeus: « Do you know where we are going? »

« Jesus told us that He wants to go to the north. That is all » says Judas of Alphaeus laconically.

« Again? At the next moon we must begin our Passover pilgrimage... » says Peter not very enthusiastically.

« We have plenty time » remarks Thaddeus.

« Yes. But no time to rest at Bethsaida... »

« We shall certainly go there to get the women and Marjiam » replies Philip to Peter.

« What I ask of you is not to look bored or indifferent or the like. Jesus is most depressed... Yesterday evening He was weeping. I found Him weeping while we were preparing supper. He was not praying out on the terrace, as we thought. He was weeping » says John.

« Why? Did you ask Him? » they all ask.

« Yes, I did. But all He said was: "Love Me, John". »

« Perhaps... it's because of the people of Korazim. »

The Zealot, who has just arrived, says: « The Master is coming here with Bartholomew. Let us go and meet Him. »

And they set out, but they continue their conversation: « Or it is because of Judas. They remained alone last night... » says Matthew.

« That's right! And Judas had previously stated that he was upset and wanted to be alone » remarks Philip.

« He did not want to stay even with the Master! Whereas I would have been so glad to be with Him! » says John with a sigh.

« And I! » says everybody. I

« I do not like that man... He is either ill, or bewitched, or mad, or possessed... There is something wrong with him » says Thaddeus resolutely.

« And yet, believe me, on our way back here he was a model disciple. He always defended the Master and the interests of the Master, as none of us ever did. I saw him and heard him myself! And I hope you do not doubt my word » states Thomas.

« Do you think that we do not believe you? No, Thomas! And we are pleased to hear that Judas is better than we are. But you can see it yourself. He is strange, is he not? » asks Andrew.

« Oh! He certainly is. Perhaps innermost problems worry him... Or probably because he did not work any miracle. He is rather proud. Oh! for a good purpose! But he is keen on doing things and he likes to be praised for them... »

« H'm! It may be! But the Master is sad. Look at Him over there: He does not look like the man we have always known. But, long live the Lord! If I find out who is making the Master suffer... Well! That's all! I know what I will do to him » says Peter.

Jesus, Who is talking intently to Nathanael, sees them and quickens His pace smiling. « Peace to you. Are you all here? »

« Judas of Simon is missing... I thought he was with You, because

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at the house, where he slept, they told me that they found his room empty and tidied up... » explains Andrew.

Jesus knits His brows for a moment and becomes engrossed in thought, lowering His head. He then says: « It does not matter. Let us go just the same. Tell the people in the last houses that we are going to Meiron and to Giscala. If Judas should look for us ask them to direct him there. Let us go. »

They all feel that the atmosphere is stormy and they obey without uttering a single word.

Jesus continues His conversation with Bartholomew and is a few steps ahead of the others. I can hear famous names being mentioned by them during their conversation: Hillel, Jael, Barak and glorious events of Israel, which they recollect, commenting and admiring the great doctors, while Bartholomew regrets the past...

« Oh! if Wise Hillel were still alive! He was good and strong. He would not have been upset. He would have judged You by himself, independently of others! »

« Do not worry, Bartholomew! And bless the Most High Who has received him in His peace. The spirit of the Wise Man thus did not become aware of the excitement of so much hatred against Me... »

« My Lord! Not only hatred!... »

« More hatred than love, My friend. And it will always be so. »

« Do not be sad. We will defend You... »

« It is not death that grieves Me... It is the sight of men's sins... »

« Death!... No!... Don't speak of death. They will not go to that extent... because they are afraid... »

« Hatred will be stronger than fear. Bartholomew, when I am dead, and when I am far away, in Holy Heaven, say to men: "He suffered more because of your hatred, than because of His death"... »

« Master! Don't say that! No one will hate You so much as to cause You to die. You can always prevent it. You are powerful... »

Jesus smiles sadly, I would say wearily, while with measured steps He climbs the mountainous road leading to Meiron, and the more the road climbs, the wider becomes the beautiful view of the lake of Tiberias, visible through an opening in a gorge, on nearby arch-shaped hills, which, however, obstruct the sight of lake Merom, while the view extends beyond the lake of Tiberias, on the tableland beyond the Jordan, as far as the remote indented mountains of Hauran, Trachonitis and Perea.

But Jesus points to north-northeast saying: « After Passover we will have to go there, to Philip's tetrarchy. And we shall just have enough time to do so, as we shall have to be in Jerusalem once again for Pentecost. »

« Would it not be more convenient to go there now? We could go beyond the Jordan, towards its sources... and then come back

through the Decapolis... »

Jesus passes His hand across His brow, with the tired gesture of one whose mind is clouded, and He whispers: « I do not know, I do not know yet!... Bartholomew!... » How much depression, sorrow, entreaty there is in His voice!...

Bartholomew bends a little, as if he were hurt by Jesus' strange unusual tone, and he says with loving anxiety: « Master, what is the matter with You? What do You want from old Nathanael? »

« Nothing, Bartholomai... Your prayer... That I may see clearly what is to be done... But they are calling us, Bartholomai... Let us stop here... » And they stop near a group of trees.

The others appear round a bend of the path; they are in a group: « Master, Judas is running after us at breakneck speed... »

« Let us wait for him. »

And in fact Judas soon appears, running... « Master... I am late... I overslept and... »

« Where, if I did not find you in the house? » asks Andrew who is amazed.

Judas remains dumbfounded for a moment, but he is quick in collecting himself and he says: « Oh! I am sorry that my penance has become known to everybody! I was in the wood, all night, praying and doing penance... . At dawn I was overcome by sleep. I am weak... But the Most High Lord will pity His poor servant. Is that right, Master? I woke up late and I was aching all over. »

« In fact you look rather worn out » remarks James of Zebedee.

Judas laughs: « Of course! But my soul is delighted. Prayer does one good. Penance makes one's heart joyful. And it grants humility and generosity. Master, forgive Your foolish Judas... » and he kneels at Jesus' feet.

« Yes. Stand up and let us go. »

« Give me peace with a kiss of Yours. It will be a sign that You have forgiven the bad mood I was in yesterday. I did not want You, that is true. But it was because I wanted to pray... »

« We could have prayed together... »

Judas laughs and says: « No, You could not have prayed with me last night, or be where I was... »

« Oh! That's nice! Why not? He has always been with us and He taught us to pray! » exclaims Peter who is utterly amazed.

They all laugh. But Jesus does not laugh. He stares at Judas who has kissed Him and is now looking at Him with eyes glaring with biting malice, as if he wanted to defy Him. He dares to repeat: « Is it not true that You could not have been with me last night? »

« No, I could not. Neither will I ever be able to share the embraces of My soul with the Father, with a third party, nothing but blood and flesh, like you, and in the places where you go. I love solitude peopled with angels, to forget that man is the stench of flesh

corrupted by sensuality, by gold, by the world and by Satan. »

Judas no longer laughs, not even with his eyes. He replies gravely: « You are right. Your spirit has seen the truth. So where are we going? »

« To venerate the tombs of the great rabbis and heroes of Israel. »

« What? Gamaliel does not love You. And the others hate You » many of the apostles say.

« It does not matter. I bow to the tombs of the just awaiting Redemption. I am going to say to their bones: "He Who inspired your souls will soon be in the Kingdom of Heaven, ready to descend from there on the last Day, to make you live again and for ever in Paradise". »

They proceed until they find the village of Meiron. A lovely village, well kept, full of light and sunshine, situated among fertile hills and mountains.

« Let us stop. In the afternoon we will leave for Giscala. The great sepulchres are scattered along these slopes, awaiting the glorious resurrection. »

339. At Hillel's Sepulchre at Giscala.

24th November 1945.

From the village of Meiron Jesus and His apostles take a mountainous road that runs north-west through woods and pastures rising all the time. They have perhaps already venerated some sepulchres, because I can hear them speak about them.

The Iscariot is now ahead with Jesus. At Meiron they must have received and given alms, and Judas is now giving an account of what he received and what he gave. He concludes saying: « And here is my offer. I swore last night I would give You it for the poor and as a penance. It is not much. I have not much money with me. But I convinced my mother to send me some frequently through many friends. In the past, when I came away from home, I had a good deal of money. But this time, as I had to travel across mountains by myself or with Thomas only, I took only what was sufficient for our journey. I prefer to do that. The only thing is... sometimes I will have to ask You for permission to leave You and go and see my friends. I have already arranged everything... Master, shall I continue to keep the money? Do You still trust me? »

« Judas, you are saying everything by yourself. And I do not know why you do that. You must know that nothing has changed as far as I am concerned... because I hope that you will change and become once again the disciple you were in the past, and that you will become a just man, for whose conversion I pray and suffer. »

« You are right, Master. But with Your help I will certainly become So. In any case... they are minor imperfections. Things of

no importance. Nay, they help us to understand our fellow-men and cure them. »

« Your morals, Judas, are strange indeed! And I should say more than that. I have never heard of any doctor falling voluntarily ill in order to be able to say: "Now I know how to cure people affected by this disease". So am I an incapable man? »

« Who says that, Master? »

« You do. As I do not commit sins, I cannot cure sinners. »

« You are You. But we are not You, and we need experience to learn... »

« That is your old idea. The very same idea of twenty months ago. The only difference is that you then thought that I should commit sin to be able to redeem. I am really surprised that you have not tried to correct this... fault of Mine, according to your way of judging, and to gift Me with this... ability to understand sinners. »

« You are joking, Master. And I am glad. I felt sorry for You. You were so sad. And it is double joy to me that I have made You joke. But I never thought of claiming to be Your master. In any case, as You can see Yourself, I have corrected my way of thinking as I now say that this experience is necessary only to us. To us, poor men. You are the Son of God, are You not? Your wisdom, therefore, needs no experience to be what it is. »

« Well, you had better know that innocence is also wisdom, a much greater wisdom than the low dangerous knowledge of sinners. When the holy ignorance of evil should limit our ability to guide ourselves and other people, then the angelical ministry, which is always present in pure hearts, makes up for that. And you may rest assured that the angels, who are most pure, can tell Good from Evil and they can lead the pure souls, whom they guard, on the just path and to just deeds. Sin does not increase wisdom. It is not light. It is not a guide. Never. It is corruption, it is derangement of mind, it is chaos. Thus, he who commits it, tastes its flavour but at the same time loses the ability to savour many other spiritual things and no longer has an angel of God, a spirit of order and love, to guide him, instead, he has an angel of Satan to lead him into greater and greater disorder, because of the unappeasable hatred that devours those diabolical spirits. »

« Listen, Master. And if one wanted to attain angelical guidance again? Is repentance sufficient, or does the poison of sin last even after one has repented and has been forgiven?... You know? For instance, one who has taken to drinking, even if he swears that he will not get drunk again, and is really determined in swearing so, always feels the stimulus to drink. And one suffers... »

« One certainly suffers. That is why one should never become the slave of evil. But to suffer is not to sin. It is expiation. And as a repentant drunkard commits no sin but gains merits if he resists

the stimulus heroically and does not drink any more, so he who has sinned, and repents and resists all stimuli, gains merit and will not lack supernatural help to resist. It is not a sin to be tempted. On the contrary it is a battle that brings victory. And believe Me, in God there is only the desire to forgive and help who has done wrong but has later repented... »

Judas is silent for a little while... Then he takes Jesus' hand and kisses it, remaining bent over it: « Last night I exceeded the limit. I insulted You, Master. I told You that I would end up by hating You... How much I blasphemed! Can I ever be forgiven? »

« The greatest sin is to despair of God's mercy... Judas, I said: "Every sin against the Son of man will be forgiven". The Son of Man has come to forgive, to save, to cure, to lead souls to Heaven. Why do you want to lose Heaven? Judas! Look at Me! Wash your soul in the love emanating from My eyes... »

« Do I not disgust You? »

« Yes, you do... But love is stronger than disgust. Judas, poor leper, the greatest leper in Israel, come and invoke health from Him Who can give it to you... »

« Give me it, Master. »

« No. Not that way. There is no true repentance or firm will in you. There is only a faint effort of surviving love for Me and for your past vocation. There is a hint of repentance, but it is entirely human. That is not entirely bad. Nay, it is the first step towards Good. Cultivate it, increase it, graft it into the supernatural, change it into real love for Me, make it a real return to what you were when you came to Me, at least that! Make it not a temporary, emotional inactive throb of sentimentalism, but a true active feeling attracting you to Good. Judas, I will wait. I can wait. I will pray. I will take the place of your disgusted angel, while waiting. My pity, patience and love are perfect and therefore greater than the pity, patience and love of angels, and I can remain beside you, in the disgusting stench of what is fermenting in your heart, in order to help you... »

Judas is moved, he is really moved, he is not simulating. With trembling lips and voice made shaky by his emotion, looking pale, he asks: « Do You really know what I have done? »

« I know everything, Judas. Do you want Me to tell you or shall I spare you this humiliation? »

« I... cannot believe it... »

« Well let us go over the past few days and tell the incredulous apostle the truth. This morning you lied several times. With regard to the money and to where you spent the night. Last night you tried to suffocate in lust your feelings, your hatred, your remorse. You... »

« That's enough! That's enough! For pity's sake, say no more! Or I

will run away from Your presence »

« On the contrary, you ought to cling to My knees and ask to be forgiven. »

« Yes, forgive me, Master! Forgive me! Help me! It's stronger than I am. Everything is stronger than I am. »

« Except the love you ought to have for Jesus... But come here, that I may help you to resist temptation and relieve you of it. » And He takes Judas in His arms shedding silent tears on his dark, haired head.

The others, who are a few yards behind, have wisely stopped and comment:

« See?! Perhaps Judas is really in trouble. »

« And this morning he has spoken to the Master about it. »

« What a fool! I would have done so straight away. »

« It is probably something painful. »

« Oh! It is certainly not bad behaviour of his mother! She is a holy woman! What can be so painful? »

« Perhaps business not doing well... »

« No! He spends and helps people generously. »

« Well! It's his business! The important thing is that he is in agreement with the Master, and that seems to be the case. They have been talking for some time and peacefully. They are now embracing each other... Very well. »

« Yes, because he is very capable and has many acquaintances it is a good thing that he is of good will and in agreement with us and above all with the Master. »

« Jesus at Hebron said that the tombs of the just are places where miracles are worked, or something like that... There are many of them here. Perhaps those of Meiron worked a miracle for Judas' perturbation. »

« Oh! if so, he will become entirely holy now at Hillel's sepulchre. Is it not at Giscala? »

« Yes, Bartholomew. »

« And yet last year we did not come this way... »

« No wonder! We came from the other side! »

Jesus turns round and calls them. They run towards Him joyfully.

« Come. The town is close at hand. We must cross it to arrive at Hillel's tomb. Let us proceed in one group » says Jesus without any further information, while the eleven apostles cast inquisitive side glances at Him and Judas. The latter's face looks pacified and humble, and Jesus' is certainly not radiant. He is solemn but grave.

They enter Giscala, a beautiful large well-kept town. There must be a flourishing rabbinical centre because I see many groups of doctors with disciples listening to their lessons. The apostles passing

through and the Master especially draw the attention of many people and a great deal of them follow the group. Some sneer, some call Judas of Kerioth. But he is walking beside the Master and does not even turn round.

They go out of town towards the house in the neighbourhood of which is Hillel's sepulchre.

« How impudent of You! »

« He is imprudent and impudent! »

« He is provoking us. »

« Desecrator! »

« Tell Him, Uzziel. »

« I will not be contaminated. Saul, you are only a pupil, you can tell Him. »

« No. Let us tell Judas. Call him. »

The young man, whose name is Saul, a thin pale fellow with very large eyes and mouth, approaches Judas and says to him: « Come. The rabbis want you. »

« I will not come. I am staying where I am. Leave me alone. »

The young man goes back to his masters and tells them.

In the meantime Jesus, in the middle of His apostles, is praying reverently near Hillel's whitewashed sepulchre.

The rabbis approach the group slowly, like silent snakes, and watch, and two elderly bearded ones pull the tunic of Judas, who, since they gathered to pray, is no longer protected by his companions.

« Well, what do you want? » he asks in a low but resentful voice. « Is one not even allowed to pray? »

« Just one word. Then we will leave you in peace. »

Simon Zealot and Thaddeus turn round and tell the noisy disturbers to be quiet.

Judas moves a few steps aside and asks: « What do you want? »

I do not hear what the older man whispers in Judas' ear. But I distinctly see the gesture of Judas who steps aside resolutely saying: « No. Leave me in peace, poisoned souls. I don't know you, I don't want to have anything more to do with you. »

The rabbinical group burst into a scornful laugh and threaten: « Watch what you do, you silly boy! »

« You had better watch. Go away! You can go and tell the others. All the others. Have you understood? You can apply to anybody You like, but not to me, you devils » and he leaves them. He has spoken so loudly that the apostles turn round dumbfounded. Jesus does not. Not even after the scornful laugh and threat: « We will see you again, Judas of Simon! We will meet again! » that resounds in the silence of the place.

Judas goes back to his place, he moves aside Andrew who had gone close to Jesus, and as if he wished to be defended and protected,

he takes the hem of Jesus' mantle in his hands.

The angry men then rage against Jesus. They come forth threatening and shouting: « What are You doing here, You, anathema of Israel? Go away? Don't make the bones of the Just man, whom You are not worthy to approach, stir in the grave. We will tell Gamaliel and will have You punished. »

Jesus turns round and looks at them, one at a time.

« Why are You looking at us like that, You demoniac? »

« To become better acquainted with your faces and your hearts. Because not only My apostle will see you again. I will, as well. And I want to know you well so that I can recognise you at once. »

« Well: have You seen us? Go away. If Gamaliel were here, he would not allow You to be here. »

« I was here last year with him... »

« That is not true, You liar! »

« Ask him, and since he is an honest man, he will tell that I was here with him. I love and venerate Hillel, I respect and honour Gamaliel. They are two men through whose justice and wisdom the origin of man is revealed, as they remind us that man was made in the likeness of God. »

« We don't, do we? » interrupt the energumens.

« It is dimmed in you by interests and hatred. »

« Listen to Him! That is how He speaks and offends in the house of other people. Go away from here, corrupter of the best people in Israel! Or we will have to pick up stones. Rome is not here to protect You, You intriguer with the heathen enemy... »

« Why do you hate Me? Why do you persecute Me? What wrong have I done you? Some of you have benefited from Me; everybody has been respected by Me. So why are you so cruel against Me? » Jesus is humble, meek, afflicted and loving. He implores them to love Him.

They take it as a sign of weakness and fear and they become more furious. The first stone flies skimming James of Zebedee, who quickly makes the gesture of reacting by throwing it against the assailers, while all the others gather round Jesus. But they are twelve against about one hundred. Another stone strikes Jesus' hand while He is telling His disciples not to react. The back of His hand is injured and bleeds. It seems to be already wounded by the nail...

Jesus then stops praying. He straightens up imposingly, looks at them and crushes them with a glare. But another stone strikes the temple of James of Alphaeus and it begins to bleed.

Jesus is now compelled to paralyse their action by means of His power, to defend His apostles, who obeying Him, receive the volley of stones without reacting. And when the cowards are overwhelmed by Jesus' will and by His frightful imposing attitude, He

says: « I am going. But you must know that Hillel would have cursed you for what you are doing. I am going away. But remember that not even the Red Sea prevented the Israelites from going on the way pointed out to them by God. Everything flattened out and became a level road for the passing God. The same applies to Me. As Egyptians, Philistines, Amorites, Canaanites and other peoples could not stop the triumphal march of Israel, so you, who are worse than they were, will not be able to stop My march and mission: Israel. Remember what they sang at the well of the water given by God: "Rise, o well, that was sunk by the princes and dug by the leaders of the people, with the giver of the Law, with their staves". I am that Well! It was dug by Heaven in response to the prayers and the justice of the true princes and leaders of the holy People, which you are not. No. You are not. The Messiah would never have come for you, because you do not deserve Him. In fact His coming is your ruin. Because the Most High is aware of all the thoughts of men and has always been aware of them, even before Cain, from whom you descend, existed, and before Abel, whom I resemble, before Noah, My symbol, and before Moses who first used My symbol, before Balaam who prophesied the Star, before Isaiah and all the prophets. And God knows your hearts and is struck with horror at them. He has always been horrified at them as He has always rejoiced at the just for whose sake it was just to send Me and who really drew Me from the depths of Heaven, that I might bring Living Water for the thirst of men. I am the Source of eternal Life. But you do not wish to drink at it. And you will die. »

And He walks slowly through the paralysed rabbis and their pupils and goes on His way, slowly, solemnly, in the amazed silence of men and things.

340. The Deaf-Mute Cured near the Phoenician Border.

25th November 1945.

I do not know where the pilgrims spent the night. I know that it is morning once again, that they are on their way, still across mountainous places, that Jesus' hand is bandaged, and so is the forehead of James of Alphaeus, while Andrew is limping badly and James of Zebedee is without his bag, which his brother John is carrying.

Twice Jesus has asked: « Can you manage to walk, Andrew? »

« Yes, Master. I walk badly because of the bandage. But it is not very painful. » And the second time he adds: « And what about Your hand, Master? »

« A hand is not a leg. It is resting and it is not very sore. »

« H'm! Swollen as it is and with the wound into the bone, I can hardly believe that it is not very sore... Oil is good for it. But

perhaps we should have got some of that ointment of Your Mother's from... »

« From My Mother. You are right » says Jesus quickly on hearing what is about to escape the lips of Peter, who blushes with embarrassment and looks desolately at Jesus. The Master smiles at him and lays His injured hand on Peter's shoulder to draw him to Himself.

« It will hurt if You hold it thus. »

« No, Simon. You love Me and your love is a very wholesome oil. »

« Oh! In that case You should already be cured! We have all suffered seeing You ill-treated like that, and there are some of us who wept. » And Peter looks at John and Andrew...

« Oil and water are good medicines, but tears of love and pity are more powerful than anything. See? I am much more cheerful today than yesterday. Because today I know how obedient you are and how much you love Me. Everyone. » And Jesus looks at them with His habitually sad mild eyes, which this morning are shining, although faintly, with joy.

« But what hyenas they are! Never seen so much hatred! » says Judas of Alphaeus. « They must have been all Judaeans. »

« No, brother. Regions have nothing to do with it. Hatred is the same everywhere. Remember that I was driven out of Nazareth months ago and they wanted to pelt Me with stones. Do you not remember? » says Jesus calmly, which comforts the Judaean apostles for Thaddeus' words.

They are in fact so consoled that the Iscariot says: « But I will tell them that! Oh! I will indeed! We were not doing anything wrong. We did not react, and He spoke of nothing but love from the very beginning. And they threw stones at us, as if we were snakes. I will tell them. »

« And who are you going to tell, if they are all against us? »

« I know who I will tell. In the meantime, I will tell Hermas and Stephen as soon as I see them. And Gamaliel will know at once. But at Passover I know who I will tell. I will say: "It is not fair to do that. Your fury is against the law. You are guilty, not He". »

« It would be better if you did not approach those men!... I think that you are guilty in their eyes, as well » advises Philip wisely.

« That's true. It is better if I never get in touch with them again. Yes. It is better. But I will tell Stephen. He is good and has no poison... »

« Never mind, Judas. You would not change anything for the better. I have forgiven them. Let us forget about it » says Jesus calmly and convincingly.

Twice, crossing two little streams both Andrew and the two Jameses dampen the bandages on their bruises. Jesus does not. He proceeds peacefully as if He felt no pain.

3-1621

But His hand must be really sore, if He has to ask Andrew to break His bread, when they stop to eat; and if He has to beg Matthew to tie His sandal, when the sandal laces come undone... Above all, if, when going down a steep short cut, He bumps into a tree trunk, because His foot has slipped, and He cannot help moaning, while His bandage becomes stained once again with blood. In fact they stop at the first house of the village, where they arrive at sunset, to ask for some water and oil to doctor His hand, which, once the bandage has been removed, looks all swollen with a large bluish bruise on the back and the red wound in the middle. While waiting for the landlady to come with what they have asked for, they all bend to look at the wound and they make their comments. But John moves away to one side to hide his tears.

Jesus calls him: « Come here. It is nothing serious. Do not weep. »

« I know. If I had it, I would not weep. But You have it. And You are not telling us how painful is this dear hand, which has never harmed anybody » replies John, to whom Jesus has abandoned His wounded hand; and John gently caresses the finger-tips, the wrist, all around the bruise and then gently turns it over to kiss the palm and rest his cheek in the hollow of the hand saying: « It is hot!... How painful it must be! » and loving tears drop on it.

The woman brings water and oil and John with a piece of linen cleans the blood that stains the hand, gently pouring some lukewarm water on the wound, which he then dresses with oil, and binds up with clean strips of cloth and finally kisses the binding. Jesus lays His other hand on John's lowered head.

The woman asks him: « Is He your brother? »

« No. He is my Master. Our Master. »

« Where have you come from? » she asks the others.

« From the Sea of Galilee. »

« So far! Why? »

« To preach Salvation. »

« It is almost evening. Stop in my house. It's a poor house. But we are honest. I can give you some milk as soon as my sons come back with the sheep. My husband will be pleased to welcome you. »

« Thank you, woman. We will stay here if the Master wishes so. »

The woman goes away to do her housework while the apostles ask Jesus what to do.

« Yes. It is a good idea. Tomorrow we will go to Kedesh and then towards Paneas. I have been thinking, Bartholomew. It is better to do as you suggested. You gave Me a good piece of advice. I hope I will thus be able to find other disciples and send them ahead of Me to Capernaum. I know that some must have already been to Kedesh, and the three shepherds from Lebanon are among them. »

The woman comes back and asks: « Well? »

« Yes, good woman. We are staying here for the night. »

3-1622

« And for supper. Oh! accept my invitation. It is no burden to me. And after all we have been taught to be merciful by some men who are the disciples of that Jesus of Galilee, who is called the Messiah and works so many miracles and preaches the Kingdom of God. But He has never been here. Perhaps because we are at the SyroPhoenician border. But His disciples came. And that is already a lot! Here in the village, we all want to go to Judaea at Passover, to see if we can find this Jesus. Because we have some sick people and His disciples cured some of them but not everyone. Among the latter there is the young son of a brother of my brother-in-law's wife. »

« What is the matter with him? » asks Jesus smiling.

« He is... He does not speak and he does not hear. Perhaps a demon entered the womb of his mother to make her suffer and drive her to despair. But he is good, not like a possessed. The disciples said that Jesus of Nazareth is needed for him, because there must be something missing, and only that Jesus... Oh! here are my sons and my husband! Melkiah, I have welcomed these pilgrims in the name of the Lord and I was telling them about Levi... Sarah, go and milk the sheep and you, Samuel, go down into the grotto and bring some oil and wine and get also some apples in the attic. Hurry up, Sarah, we will prepare the beds upstairs. »

« Do not tire yourself, woman. Any place will suit us. Could I see the man of whom you were speaking? »

« Yes... But... Oh! Lord! Are You perhaps the Nazarene? »

« I am. »

The woman drops on her knees shouting: « Melkiah, Sarah, Samuel! Come and worship the Messiah! What a day! And I have Him in my house! And I have been speaking to Him! And I brought Him water to cleanse His wound... Oh!... » she is choking with emotion. She then runs to the basin and sees that it is empty: « Why have you thrown that water out? It was holy water! Oh! Melkiah! The Messiah is here with us. »

« Yes, but be good, woman and do not tell anybody. Go and get the deaf-mute and bring him here... » says Jesus smiling...

... And Melkiah is soon back with the deaf-mute, his relatives and at least half of the people in the village... The mother of the poor fellow worships Jesus and implores Him.

« Yes, it will be done as you wish » and He takes the deaf-mute by the hand and draws him away from the crowd, who are pressing together and whom the apostles are busy pushing back, to protect Jesus' wounded hand. Jesus draws the deaf-mute close to Himself, puts His forefingers into his ears, touches his lips with His tongue, then raising His eyes to the sky, which is growing dark, He breathes on the face of the man and shouts in a loud voice: « Be opened! » and lets him go.

3-1623

The young man looks at Him for a moment while the crowds whisper. The change in the countenance of the deaf-mute is surprising: from listless and sad it becomes amazed and smiling. He touches his ears with his hands, presses them, takes his hands away... He persuades himself that he can really hear, he opens his mouth saying: « Mother! I can hear! Oh! Lord, I adore You! »

The crowd is seized by the usual enthusiasm, also because they ask one another: « How can he be able to speak if he never heard a word since he was born? A miracle in the miracle! He loosened his tongue and opened his ears and at the same time He taught him to speak. Long live Jesus of Nazareth! Hosanna to the Holy Messiah! »

And they press against Jesus Who raises His wounded hand to bless them, while some, urged by the woman of the house, wet their faces and limbs with the remaining drops of water left in the basin.

Jesus sees them and shouts: « Because of your faith you are all cured. Go home. Be good and honest. Believe in the word of the Gospel. And keep to yourselves what you know, until it is time to announce it in the squares and throughout the whole world. May My peace be with you. »

And He goes into the large kitchen where the fire is blazing and the light of two lamps flickers.

341. At Kedesh. The Signs of the Times.

26th November 1945.

The town of Kedesh is built on a little mountain, at a short distance from a long chain of mountains, on its eastern side, stretching from north to south. A parallel chain of hills stretches also from north to south on its western side. The two parallel lines, however, bend inwards at their central part forming a rough 'X'. In the narrowest part, a little closer to the eastern chain, there is the mountain on the slopes of which Kedesh is built. The town stretches from the top down to the almost flat slopes and dominates a fresh green valley, which is very narrow to the east and wider to the west.

It is a beautiful walled town, with lovely houses and a magnificent synagogue; there is also an imposing fountain with many jets that pour abundance of cool water into a basin, from which little streams flow to feed other fountains or, probably, to water gardens. I do not know.

Jesus enters the town on a market day. His hand is no longer bandaged, but there is still a dark scab and a large bruise on the back of it. James of Alphaeus also has a small dark reddish scab on his temple and a large bruise around it. Andrew and James of

Zebedee, who were not so badly injured, show no sign of the past incident and they walk fast, looking around, and particularly at their sides and behind them, as the apostles have formed little groups around the Master. I am under the impression that they have stopped for two or three days at the place that I described yesterday or in its neighbourhood, perhaps to rest or to keep at a good distance from rabbis, in the event the latter should turn their steps towards the main towns, hoping to catch them at fault and injure them again. At least that is what I gather from their conversation.

« But this is a city of refuge! » says Andrew.

« And would you expect them to respect the refuge and holiness of any place! How simple you are, brother! » Peter replies to him.

Jesus is walking between the two Judases. James and John are ahead of Him, in the van, and behind them there is the other James with Philip and Matthew. Peter, Andrew and Thomas are behind the Master. Simon Zealot and Bartholomew are the last two.

Everything goes well as far as the entrance to a beautiful square, the one with the fountain and the synagogue, where many people are discussing business. The market, instead, is farther down, to the south-west of the town, where two roads join: the main road from the south, and the road along which Jesus came, from the west; the two roads meet at a right angle and form one road only that enters through the gate and widens into a rectangular square, where there are donkeys, mats, vendors, buyers and the usual clamour...

But when they reach the most beautiful square - the heart of the town, I think, not so much because it is equidistant from the perimeter of the walls, but because the spiritual and commercial life of Kedesh thrives here, as appears also from its high dominating position, above most of the town, which is suitable to be defended like a citadel - trouble begins. Like snarling dogs awaiting to attack a defenceless puppy, or rather, like bloodhounds on the watch for game that they smell in the wind, a large number of Pharisees and Sadducees are leaning against the wide portal, ornate with sculptures and decorations, of the synagogue. Mingled with them, to poison them completely, there is a handful of the rabbis we saw at Giscala, and among them there is Uzziel. They immediately point out Jesus and the apostles to one another.

« Alas! Lord! They are here as well! » exclaims John, who is obviously frightened, turning round to speak to Jesus.

« Be not afraid. Go on fearlessly. But if any of you do not feel like facing those rogues, let them go back to the hotel. I definitely want to speak here, in this Levitical city of refuge. »

They all protest: « Can You believe that we would leave You alone?! Let them kill us all, if they want. We will share Your lot. »

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Jesus passes before the enemy group and stops near the wall of a garden where a pear-tree is shedding its white blossoms. The dark wall and the white cloud outline the Christ Who has His twelve apostles before Him.

Jesus begins to speak: « Come and listen to the Gospel, all of you who are gathered here, because the conquest of the Kingdom of Heaven is more important than trade and money... » His beautiful loud voice fills the square and makes people turn towards Him.

« Oh! That is the Galilean Rabbi! » says one. « Come, let us go and listen to Him. Perhaps He will work a miracle. »

And another adds: « I saw Him work one at Bethginna. How well He speaks! Nothing like those predatory hawks and astute snakes. »

Jesus is soon surrounded by a crowd. And He continues to speak to the attentive listeners.

« From the heart of this Levitical town I do not wish to remind you of the Law. I know that it is present in your hearts, as in few towns in Israel, as is proved by the order I have noticed here, by the honesty I found in your merchants from whom I bought food for Myself and My little flock, and by this synagogue, which is as ornate as is suitable to the place where God is worshipped. But in each of you there is also a place where God is honoured, a place where the most holy yearnings are, where the sweetest words of hope resound with the most ardent prayers that your hope may become true. Your souls. The holy unique place that speaks of God and to God, while waiting for the Promise to be accomplished. And the Promise is accomplished. Israel has its Messiah, Who brings you the news and the certainty that the time of Grace has come, that Redemption is close at hand, that the Saviour is among you, and the invincible Kingdom has begun. How many times have you heard Habakkuk! And the more meditative ones among you whispered: "I also can say: 'How long, o Lord, am I to cry for help, while You will not listen?'". Israel has been wailing thus for ages. But the Saviour has now come. The great robbery, the endless trouble, disorder and injustice brought about by Satan are about to collapse, because the envoy of God is on the point of restoring man to his dignity of son of God and coheir of the Kingdom of God. Let us look at Habakkuk's prophecy with fresh eyes and we will see that it bears witness to Me, and it already speaks the language of the Gospel, which I bring to the children of Israel. But now it is I who must wail: " Sentence was passed, but opposition is triumphing". And I moan so sorrowfully. Not so Much for My own sake, as I am above human judgement, as for those who are in opposition and thus condemn themselves, and for those who are misled by opposers. Are you surprised at what I am saying? Among you there are merchants from other parts of Israel.

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They can confirm that I am not lying. I do not lie by leading a life that is the opposite of what I teach, by not doing what people expect the Saviour to do, neither do I lie by stating that human opposition sets itself up against the judgement of God, Who sent Me, and against the judgement of humble sincere crowds who have heard Me and judged Me for what I am. »

Some of the people in the crowd whisper: « That is true! It is true indeed! We belong to the people and we want Him and we know that He is holy. But they (and they point to the Pharisees and their companions) are hostile to Him. »

Jesus continues: « And because of that opposition the Law is torn to pieces, and will be torn more and more, until it will be abolished, in order to do a supreme wrong, which, however, will not last long. And blessed are those, who during the short fearful pause, when opposition will appear to have triumphed over Me, have continued to believe in Jesus of Nazareth, in the Son of God, in the Son of man, predicted by the Prophets. I could fulfil the judgement of God to the very end, by saving all the children of Israel. But I will not be able because the impious will triumph against themselves, against their own better part, and as they trample on My rights and oppress My believers, so they will trample on the rights of their souls, which need Me to be saved and which are presented to Satan in order to deny them to Me. »

The Pharisees begin to murmur. But a stately old man has just approached the place where Jesus is, and now, in a pause of His speech, he says: « Please. Come into the synagogue and teach us there. No one is more entitled to do so than You are. I am Matthias, the head of the synagogue. Come, and may the Word of God be in my house as it is on Your lips. »

« Thank you, o just man of Israel. My peace be always with you. »

And Jesus, through the crowd that opens to let Him pass and then closes like a wake following Him, crosses the square again and enters the synagogue, after passing before the snarling Pharisees. But they enter the synagogue as well, elbowing their way overbearingly. But the people look unfavourably on them saying: « Where are you from? Go and wait for the Rabbi in your own synagogues. This is our house and we do not want strangers here. » And the rabbis, Sadducees and Pharisees must put up with the situation and remain quietly near the entrance to avoid being thrown out by the citizens of Kedesh.

Jesus is near the head of the synagogue and other people of the synagogue; I do not know whether they are his sons or assistants. He resumes speaking: « Habakkuk says: - and how lovingly he invites you to meditate! - "Cast your eyes over the nations, look, and be amazed and astounded, for something has happened in your

own days, which no man will believe when he is told of it". Even nowadays we have physical enemies in Israel. But let us leave out the little detail of the prophecy and consider only the great prediction contained in it. Because prophecies always have a spiritual meaning, even when they appear to have a material reference. So the event that has taken place - and is such that no one will accept it unless one is convinced of the infinite goodness of the True God - is that He has sent His Word to save and redeem the World. God Who parts from God to save the guilty creature. And I have been sent for that. And none of the powers in the world will be able to hold back the impetus of My Triumph over kings and tyrants, over sin and stupidity. I will win because I am the Triumpher. »

A scornful laugh is heard together with a shout from the end of the synagogue. People protest and the head of the synagogue, whose eyes are closed, as he is so engrossed in listening to Jesus, stands up and commands silence, threatening to have the disturbers expelled.

« Let them speak. Invite them to expound their objections » says Jesus in a loud voice.

« Oh! good! Very well! Let us come near You. We want to ask You some questions » shout the contradictors ironically.

« Come. People of Kedesh, let them pass. »

And the crowd, casting hostile glances and making faces at them - with a few reviling epithets as well - let them pass.

« What do you want to know? » Jesus asks severely.

« So You say that You are the Messiah? Are You really sure? »

Jesus, standing with folded arms, looks at the man who has spoken with such overwhelming authority, that his irony immediately vanishes and he becomes silent.

But another one resumes speaking: « You cannot expect us to believe You on Your word. Anyone can lie, even in good faith. One needs proofs to believe. So prove to us that You really are what You say. »

« Israel is full of My proofs » replies Jesus sharply.

« Oh! those!... Trifles that any holy man can work. They have already been done and will be done again by the just in Israel! » says a Pharisee.

Another one adds: « Neither is it certain that You do them through holiness and the help of God! In fact they say, and it is really credible, that You are helped by Satan. We want other proofs. Of a superior level. That Satan cannot give. »

« Of course! A victory over death... » says another one.

« You have already had it. »

« They were cases of catalepsy. Show us a decomposed body that and is recomposed, for instance. So that we may be sure that God is with You. God: the Only One Who can give life back to

mud that is becoming dust again. »

« No one ever asked the Prophets for that in order to believe them. »

A Sadducee shouts: « You are greater than a Prophet. You are the Son of God, at least so You say!... Ah! Ah! So why do You not act as God? Come On! Give us a sign! »

« Yes! A sign from Heaven proving that You are the Son of God, we will then worship You » shouts a Pharisee.

« Certainly! You are right, Simon! We do not want to commit Aaron's sin again. We will not worship an idol, the golden calf. But we could worship the Lamb of God! Are You not it? Providing Heaven proves that You are » says the one named Uzziel, and who was at Giscala, laughing sarcastically.

Another one shouts: « Let me speak, for I am Sadoc, the golden scribe. Listen to me, Christ. You have been preceded by too many false Christs. We have had enough frauds. We want a sign that You really are Christ. And if God is with You, He cannot deny You that. And we will believe in You and help You. Otherwise You know what is due to You, according to the Commandment of God. »

Jesus raises His injured hand and shows it to His interlocutor. « Do you see this sign? You did it. You have pointed out a further sign. And when you see it incised in the flesh of the Lamb, you will rejoice. Look at it! Can you see it? You will see it also in Heaven, when you appear to give an account of your way of living. Because I will be your Judge, and I will be there with My glorified Body, with the signs of My ministry and of yours, of My love and of your hatred. And you will see it, too, Uzziel, and you, Simon, and Caiaphas and Annas will see it, and many more, on that Last Day, the day of wrath, the dreadful day, and you will then prefer to be in the abyss, because the sign on My injured hand will torture you more than the fire of Hell. »

« Oh! those are blasphemous words! You will be in Heaven with Your body?! Blasphemer! You will be judge in the place of God?! Anathema on You! You are insulting the Pontiff! You deserve to be stoned » shout in chorus Pharisees, Sadducees and doctors.

The head of the synagogue stands up again: he looks patriarchal and stately in his old age, like a Moses, and he shouts: « Kedesh is a city of refuge and a Levitical city. Respect it... »

« That's an old story! It doesn't count any more! »

« Oh! Blasphemous tongues! You are sinners, not He, and I will defend Him. He is not saying anything wrong. He is explaining the Prophets and has brought us the Good Promise, and you are interrupting, provoking and offending Him. I will not allow that. He is under the protection of old Matthias of the stock of Levi by father and of Aaron by mother. Go out and let Him instruct my old age and the youth of my sons. » And he lays his old wrinkled hand on

Jesus' forearm, in a gesture of protection.

« Let Him give us a real sign and we will be convinced and go away » the hostile group shout.

« Do not be upset, Matthias. I will speak » says Jesus calming the head of the synagogue. And addressing the Pharisees, Sadducees and doctors, He says: « In the evening you scan the sky, and if it is red at sunset, you state, according to an old saying: "The weather will be fine tomorrow, because sunset has reddened the sky". Likewise at dawn, when the heavy foggy damp air prevents the sun from shining as brightly as gold, you say: "There will be a storm before the day is over". So you can tell the future of the day by the changeable signs of the sky and by the even more inconstant signs of winds. And you cannot tell the signs of times? That does no credit to your minds and your science, and brings utter dishonour on your souls and your alleged wisdom. You belong to a wicked adulterous generation, born in Israel of a marriage of one who fornicated with Evil. You are their heirs and you increase your wickedness and adultery by repeating the sin of the fathers of that error. Well, listen, Matthias, and you, citizens of Kedesh and whoever is present here either as a believer or as an enemy, listen! This is the prophecy that I make, of My own, in the place of the one of Habakkuk, which I wanted to explain to you: this wicked and adulterous generation, which is asking for a sign, will be given no other sign but the sign of Jonah... Let us go. Peace be with everyone of good will. » And through a side door that opens on a quiet street among gardens and houses, Jesus goes away with His disciples.

But the people of Kedesh do not give in. Some follow Him, and when they see Him enter a small hotel in the eastern suburbs of the town, they inform the head of the synagogue and their fellow citizens. And Jesus is still eating when the sunny yard of the hotel becomes crowded with people and the old head of the synagogue and other elders of Kedesh go to the door of the room in which Jesus is, and the old man, bowing, implores: « Master, the desire to Your word is still in our hearts. The prophecy by Habakkuk was so beautiful, as You were explaining it! Are those who love You and believe in Your Truth to be left without the knowledge of You, only because there are some people who hate You? »

« No, father. It would not be fair to punish the good because of the wicked. Well, listen... » (and Jesus stops eating and goes to the door to speak to those who have thronged in the peaceful yard).

« The words of your head of the synagogue echo those of Habakkuk. On his own behalf and yours, he confesses and professes that I am the Truth. Habakkuk confesses and professes: You have been since the beginning and You are with us and we shall not die". And so it will be. He who believes in Me will not

perish. The Prophet describes Me as the One Whom God has appointed to judge, as the One Whom God made strong in order to punish, as the One Whose eyes are too pure to rest on wickedness and Who cannot bear iniquity. But while it is true that sin disgusts Me, you can see that, as I am the Saviour, I open My arms to those who have repented of their sins. I thus turn My eyes towards culprits and I invite the impious to repent...

People of the Levitical city of Kedesh, the city sanctified by the proclamation of charity towards those who are guilty of crimes and every man is guilty towards God, his soul and his neighbour come to Me, the Refuge of sinners. Here, in My love, not even the anathema of God would strike you, because My imploring glance would change the anathema of God into blessings of forgiveness for you.

Listen! Write this promise in your hearts as Habakkuk wrote his certain prophecy on a roll. It is written there: "If it comes slowly, wait, because He Who is to come, will come without fail". Now: He Who was to come, has come: it is I.

"He who is incredulous, has not a righteous soul" says the Prophet and his word condemns those who provoked and insulted Me. I do not condemn them. But the Prophet, who foresaw Me and believed in Me, condemns them. As he describes Me, the Triumpher, so he describes a proud man, saying that he is not honourable, as he opened his soul to greed and insatiability, as hell is greedy and insatiable. And he threatens: "Trouble is coming to the man who amasses goods that are not his and loads himself with thick mud". Evil deeds against the Son of man are that mud, and the desire to deprive Him of His holiness so that it may not dim one's own, is greed.

The Prophet says: "Trouble is coming to the man who grossly exploits others for the sake of his house, to fix his nest on high and so evade the hand of misfortune". He who does that disgraces himself and kills his own soul. "Trouble is coming to the man who builds a town with blood and founds a city on crime". Really too many in Israel build the castles of their covetousness on tears and blood, and are awaiting the last blood to make a richer mixture. But what can a fortress do against the arrows of God? And what can a handful of men do against the justice of the whole world shouting for horror at the unequalled crime?

Oh! How well Habakkuk says! "What is the use of a carved image?". And the false holiness of Israel is nothing but an idolatrous statue. The Lord only is in His holy Temple and to Him only the earth will bow and tremble with adoration and fear, while the promised sign will be given a first time and a second time and the true Temple in which God rests will ascend gloriously to say in Heaven: "It has been accomplished!", as He will have whispered it to the

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earth, to cleanse it through His announcement.

"Fiat!" said the Most High. And the world was created. "Fiat" the Redeemer will say, and the world will be redeemed. I will give the world the means to be redeemed. And those will be redeemed who want to be so.

Now stand up. Let us say the prayer of the Prophet, but as it is right to say it in this time of grace:

"I heard, o Lord, Your announcement and I rejoiced". It is no longer the time of fright, o believers in the Messiah.

"Lord, Your work is in the middle of the course of years, make it live, notwithstanding the snares of enemies. In the middle of the course of years You will manifest it". Yes. When the time is completed, the work will be accomplished.

"His mercy will shine, notwithstanding His wrath" because His wrath will strike only those who have cast nets or laid snares or shot arrows at the Lamb Saviour.

"From the Light God will come to the world". I am the Light that came to bring you God. My splendour will inundate the earth springing in torrents "where the pointed horns" will have torn to pieces the Flesh of the Victim, the last victory "of Death and of Satan, who will be beaten and will flee before the Living Holy One".

Glory to the Lord! Glory to the Creator of the world! Glory to the Giver of the sun and stars! To the Maker of the mountains. To the Creator of the seas. Glory, infinite Glory to the Good Lord, Who wanted the Christ to save His people and redeem man.

Join Me, sing with Me, because Mercy has come to the world and the time of Peace is close at hand. He Who stretches out His hands to you, exhorts you to believe and live in the Lord because Israel will be shortly judged with justice.

Peace to you who are present here, to your families and to your homes. »

Jesus makes a wide gesture blessing them and is about to withdraw.

But the head of the synagogue begs Him: « Stay a little longer. »

« I cannot, father. »

« At least send us Your apostles. »

« You will have them without fail. Goodbye. Go in peace. »

They are alone...

« I would like to know who sent them our way. They look like necromancers... » says Peter.

The Iscariot turns pale and comes forward. He kneels at Jesus' feet. « Master, I am the culprit. I spoke in that village... to one of them, whose guest I was... »

« What? Was that your penance? You are... »

« Be silent, Simon of Jonah! Your brother is accusing himself

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sincerely. Respect him because of his humiliation. Do not worry, Judas. I forgive you. You know that I forgive. But be wiser the next time... And now let us go. We will walk as long as it is moonlight. We must cross the river before dawn. Let us go. The wood begins over there. Both the good and the wicked will lose trace of us. Tomorrow we will be on the way to Paneas. »

342. Going towards Caesarea Philippi. Peter's Primacy.

27th November 1945.

The Jordan runs across a plain before flowing into lake Merom. It is a beautiful plain where cereals grow more and more vigorously day by day and fruit-trees blossom. The hills beyond which Kedesh lies, are now behind the pilgrims, who are walking fast at daybreak. They appear to be very cold, as they cast keen glances at the rising sun and they look for it, as soon as its rays shine on meadows and caress leaves. They must have slept out in the open, or at most in a stack-yard, because their garments are creased and show particles of straw and dry leaves, which they remove as they see them in the light, which is becoming clearer and clearer.

The river is detected through its gurgling, which sounds loud in the silent morning in the country, and by the sight of a thick line of trees, the new leaves of which are quivering in the light morning breeze. But it cannot be seen as yet, sunken as it is in the flat plain, although it is swollen by many torrents flowing into it from the eastern hills. When they can see its blue water sparkle through the new greenery on its banks, they are almost on its bank.

« Shall we walk along the bank as far as the bridge, or shall we cross the river here? » they ask Jesus, Who was alone, pensive, and has now stopped waiting for them.

« See if there is a boat to cross over. It is better to cross here... »

« Yes, at the bridge, which is just on the road to Caesarea Paneas, we might come across someone who has been sent to follow our footsteps » remarks Bartholomew frowning, while he looks at Judas.

« No. Don't look black at me. I did not know that we were coming here, and I have not said anything. It was easy to understand that from Saphet Jesus would go to the sepulchres of the rabbis and to Kedesh. But I would never have thought that He wanted to go as far as Philip's capital. So they know nothing about it. So we shall not find them through my fault or through their own decision. Unless Beelzebub himself leads them » says calmly and humbly the Iscariot.

« Very well. Because with certain people... We must be sharpsighted and speak very carefully, without letting them have any clue of our plans. We must watch everything. Otherwise our

evangelization will become a perpetual flight » replies Bartholomew.

John and Andrew come back. They say: « We found two boats. They will take us to the other side for a drachma each boat. Let us go down the embankment. »

And they cross to the other side in the two little boats, in two trips. There is a fertile plain also on this side, fertile but not thickly populated. Only the local farmers live there.

« H'm! What shall we do for bread? I am hungry. And there are no Philistine ears of corn here... Grass and leaves, leaves and flowers. I am neither a little sheep nor a bee » grumbles Peter to his companions who smile at his remark.

Judas Thaddeus turns round - he was a little ahead - and he says: « We will buy some bread in the next village. »

« Providing they don't make us flee » concludes James of Zebedee.

« You, who say that we have to watch everything, be careful lest you pick up the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees. I think that is what you are doing, without considering the wrong you are doing. Be careful, very careful! » says Jesus.

The apostles look at one another and whisper: « What is He saying? The bread was given to us by the woman of the deaf-mute and by the inn-keeper at Kedesh. I still have it here. It is the only bread we have. And we do not know whether we will be able to find any more to satisfy our hunger. So why does He say that we buy bread of Sadducees and Pharisees with their yeast? Perhaps He does not want us to buy any in the villages here... »

Jesus, Who once again was ahead of them all alone, turns round. « Why are you afraid to be left without bread? Even if all the people here were Sadducees and Pharisees, you would not be without ",read, because I told you not to buy any. I am not speaking of the yeast which is in bread. So you can buy bread anywhere you like lo satisfy your hunger. And if nobody would sell you any, you would not be left without bread just the same. Do you not remember the five loaves with which five thousand people appeased their hunger? Do you not remember that you collected twelve baskets full of the scraps remaining? I could do for you, who are twelve and have one loaf, what I did for five thousand people with five loaves. Do you not understand to which yeast I am referring? To the yeast that rises in the hearts of Pharisees, Sadducees and doctors, against Me. It is hatred. It is heresy. You are now going towards hatred, as if part of the Pharisaical yeast had entered your hearts. Not even your enemy is to be hated. Not even a very small inlet is to be opened to anything that is not God. After the first element, others opposed to God would enter. Sometimes one perishes or is defeated, because one wants to fight enemies with equal weapons. And once you have been defeated, you could by contact absorb their doctrine. Be charitable and

reserved. You are not yet in a position to oppose such doctrines, without being infected. Because you have some of their elements as well. And hatred is one of them. I would also warn you that they may change method in order to entice you and take you away from Me, by being extremely polite, showing that they are repentant and anxious to make peace. You must not avoid them, but when they try to imbue you with their doctrines, you must reject them. That is the yeast to which I was referring. Animosity, which is against love, and false doctrines. I say to you: be prudent. »

« That sign which the Pharisees asked for yesterday, was it "yeast", Master? » asks Thomas.

« It was yeast and poison. »

« You did the right thing in not giving it to them. »

« But I will give it to them one day. »

« When? » they ask curiously.

« One day... »

« And what sign is it? Are You not telling even us, Your apostles? So that we may recognise it at once » asks Peter who is anxious to know.

« You should not need a sign. »

« Oh! It is not to be able to believe in You! We have not many ideas as the people have. All we want is to love You » says James of Zebedee passionately.

« But the people you approach in a simple friendly way, more than I do, without making them feel uneasy, as I may do, who do they say that I am? And who do they say the Son of Man is? »

« Some say that You are Jesus, that is the Christ, and they are the best. Some say that You are a Prophet, some only a Rabbi, others, and You know, say that You are mad and possessed. »

« But some call You by the same name that You use and they say: "Son of man". »

« And some say that that is not possible, because the Son of man is a different thing. But that is not always a denial. Because in actual fact they acknowledge that You are more than the Son of man: You are the Son of God. Others instead say that You are not even the Son of man, but a poor man agitated by Satan or deranged by madness. You can thus see that there are many different opinions » says Bartholomew.

« What is the Son of man, therefore, according to the people? »

« He is a man in whom there are all the most beautiful virtues of men, a man gifted with all the requisites of intelligence, wisdom, grace, which we think were in Adam, to which some add the gift of not having to die. You know that there is already a rumour that John the Baptist is not dead. They say that he was only carried elsewhere by angels and that Herod, and above all, Herodias, to prevent people from saying that they had been defeated by God,

killed a servant, had him beheaded and then showed his mutilated body saying it was the corpse of the Baptist. People say so many things! So many think that the Son of man is either Jeremiah, or Elijah, or one of the Prophets, or the Baptist, who was gifted with grace and wisdom and said that he was the Precursor of the Christ. Christ: the Anointed of God. The Son of man: a great man, born of man. Some cannot admit, or do not want to admit, that God has sent His Son to the earth. You said so yesterday: "Only those will believe, who are convinced of the infinite goodness of God". Israel believes more in God's severity than in His goodness... » says Bartholomew again.

« Yes. They feel so undeserving that they consider it impossible that God has been so good as to send His Word to save them. The degraded state of their souls is a hindrance to their believing that » confirms the Zealot. And he adds: « You say that You are the Son of God and of man. In fact in You there is all grace and wisdom as man. And I really think that he who was born of Adam in the state of grace, would have been like You in beauty and intelligence and all virtues. The power of God shines in You. But who can believe that, among those who consider themselves gods and judge God by their standards in their infinite pride? Cruel, hateful, greedy, impure as they are, they cannot possibly think that God has gone to such an extreme of kindness as to give Himself to redeem them, His love to save them, His generosity to be at their mercy, His purity to sacrifice His life among men. Since they are so inflexible and captious in looking for faults and punishing them, they cannot believe that. »

« And who do you say that I am? Tell Me your own personal opinion, without taking into account My words or the words of other people. If you were compelled to judge Me, who would you say that I am? »

« You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God » exclaims Peter, kneeling down with his arms stretched upwards, towards Jesus, Who looks at him with His face bright with love and Who bends to raise and embrace him, saying:

« Simon, son of Jonah, you are a happy man! Because it was not the flesh and blood that revealed this to you, but My Father in Heaven. Since the first day you came with Me, you have been asking yourself that question, and because you are simple and honest, you have been able to understand and accept the reply that came to you from Heaven. You did not see supernatural manifestations as your brother, John and James did. You did not know My holiness as son, workman, citizen, as My brothers Judas and James did. You did not receive any miracle neither did you see Me work any; I showed no sign of power to you as I did with Philip, Nathanael, Simon Cananean, Thomas and Judas, who saw them. You were not

subdued by My will, as Levi the publican was. And yet you exclaimed: "He is the Christ!". You believed since the first moment you saw Me, and your faith was never shaken. That is why I called you Cephas. And that is why on you, Peter, I will build My Church and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven. Whatever you bind on earth, shall be bound also in Heaven. And whatever you loose on the earth shall be loosed also in Heaven, o prudent faithful man, whose heart I have been able to test. And now, from this moment you are the head, to whom obedience and respect are due as to another Myself. And I proclaim him such before all of you. »

If Jesus had crushed Peter under a hailstorm of reproaches, Peter would not have wept so copiously. He is weeping and is shaken by sobs, with his face on Jesus' chest. His weeping can be compared only to the tears he will shed in his grief for denying Jesus. He now weeps for many good humble feelings... A little of the old Simon - the fisherman of Bethsaida who had laughed incredulously and facetiously at his brother's first announcement saying: « Of course, the Messiah would appear just to you!... » - a good little of the old Simon crumbles under those tears, and from his vanishing frail human nature, Peter appears, more and more clearly, the Pontiff of the Church of Christ.

When he raises his shy embarrassed face, he can make only one gesture to say everything, to promise everything, to strengthen himself completely for his new ministry: he throws his arms round Jesus' neck, compelling Him to bend and kiss him, mingling his somewhat bristly grizzled hair and beard with the soft golden hair and beard of Jesus. And he looks at Jesus with his large, loving, imploring and adoring eyes, still shining and red with tears, holding the Master's ascetic face, bent over his own, in his rough large stumpy hands, as if it were a vase from which a vital liquid flowed... and he drinks kindness, grace, confidence and strength from Jesus' face, eyes and smile...

They separate at last, and resume their journey towards Caesarea Philippi, and Jesus says to everybody: « Peter has spoken the truth. Many guess it, you are aware of it. But for the time being, do not say to anybody who the Christ is, in the full truth known to you. Let God speak to the hearts of people, as He speaks to yours. I solemnly tell you that those who add perfect faith and perfect love to My statements or yours, will learn the true meaning of the words "Jesus, the Christ, the Word, the Son of man and of God". »

3-1637

343. At Caesarea Philippi.

28th November 1945.

The town must have been built recently, like Tiberias and Ashkelon. Situated on an inclined plane it culminates in a massive fortress with many towers, flanked with Cyclopean masonry and protected with deep moats into which flows part of the water of two little rivers that first come close together forming an angle, then part, as one runs out of the town and the other flows through it. Beautiful streets, squares, fountains, and buildings in Roman style give to understand that here also servile homage prevailed in Tetrarchs, trampling on all respect for the customs of the Fatherland.

The town is very busy and crowded, probably because it is the junction of important main roads and caravan-tracks for Damascus, Tyre, Saphet and Tiberias, as indicated on mile-stones at each gate. Pedestrians, horsemen, long caravans of donkeys and camels meet in the wide well-kept streets, and groups of business men or idlers are standing in the squares, under the porches, near the magnificent buildings, perhaps there are also some Thermae, discussing business or in idle conversation.

« Do you know where we can find them? » Jesus asks Peter.

« Yes, I do. Those whom I asked told me that the disciples of the Rabbi meet for their meals in the house of some faithful Israelites, near the citadel. And they described the house to me. I cannot go wrong: it is a Jewish house also on the outside, the front has no windows and there is a high main door with spy-hole, on the side of the wall there is a little fountain, the high walls of the garden extend on two sides along two lanes, and there is a roof-terrace with many doves. »

« Very well. Let us go then. »

They cross the whole town as far as the citadel. They arrive at the house they are looking for, and knock. The wrinkled face of an old woman appears at the peep-hole.

Jesus moves forward and greets her: « Peace be with you, woman. Have the disciples of the Rabbi come back? »

« No, man. They are at the "Great Spring" with other people who have come from many towns on the other side of the river looking for the Rabbi. They are all waiting for Him. Are You waiting for Him as well? »

« No. I am looking for the disciples. »

« Well, look: see that street which is almost opposite the fountain? Take that one and go up until You arrive in front of a massive wall of rock, from which water comes out and flows into a kind of vat and then becomes a little stream. You will find them there. But have You come from far? Do You want to come in and refresh Yourself and wait for them here? If You wish so, I will call my

masters. They are good Israelites, You know? And they believe in the Messiah. They are disciples although they have only seen Him once in Jerusalem, in the Temple. But now the disciples of the Messiah have taught them and have worked miracles here, because... »

« Very well, good woman. I will come back later with the disciples. Peace to you. You may go back to your housework » says Jesus kindly but firmly to stop the avalanche of words.

They resume walking and the younger apostles laugh wholeheartedly at the performance of the woman and they make Jesus smile as well.

« Master » says John « I thought that she was the "Great Spring". Don't You think so? She poured out continuous waves of words and treated us as vats that become streams because they are full of words... »

« Yes. I hope that the disciples have not worked a miracle on her tongue... We would have to say: you have worked too big a miracle » says Thaddeus, who contrary to his habit, laughs heartily.

« There will be fun when we go back and she finds out who the Master is! Who will be able to keep her quiet then? » asks James of Zebedee.

« No, she will be so shocked that she will become dumb » says Matthew, joining in the conversation of the younger ones.

« I will praise the Most High, if astonishment paralyses her tongue. It is probably because I have not had any breakfast yet, but the flood of her words certainly made me feel dizzy » says Peter.

« And how she shouted! Is she perhaps deaf? » asks Thomas.

« No. She thought we were deaf » replies the Iscariot.

« Leave the poor old woman alone! She is good and a believer. Her heart is as generous as her tongue » says Jesus half-seriously.

« Oh! Master! In that case the old woman is so generous that she is heroic » says John laughing heartily.

The calcareous rocky wall can now be seen and the gurgle of the water falling into the vat is heard.

« There is the stream. Let us follow it... There is the spring... and there... Benjamin! Daniel! Abel! Philip! Ermasteus! We are here! The Master is here! » shouts John to a large group of men gathered round someone who, however, is not visible.

« Be quiet, boy, or you will be like that old hen » suggests Peter.

The disciples have turned round. They have seen: and to see and rush down from the terrace is all one thing. Now that the group has opened out, I can see that people from Kedesh and from the village of the deaf-mute have joined the many disciples, who are all seniors by now. They must have taken more direct routes, because they

3-1639

have preceded the Master.

Their joy is great. Their questions and answers are numerous. Jesus listens and replies patiently until thin Isaac appears smiling, laden with supplies, together with two more people.

« Let us go to the hospitable house, my Lord. And when there You will be able to explain to us what we have not been able to clarify, because we do not know it ourselves... These people here, the last arrivals - they have been with us only a few hours - want to know what the sign of Jonah is, the one You promised to give this wicked generation that persecutes You » says Isaac.

« I will explain it to them while going... »

Going! It is not so easy! Like bees attracted by the scent of flowers that has spread in the air, people rush from all directions to join those who are around Jesus.

« They are our friends » explains Isaac. « People who have believed and have been waiting for You... »

« People who have received graces from the disciples and from him in particular » shouts one in the crowd pointing at Isaac.

Isaac blushes and as if he wanted to apologise he says: « But I am a servant. He is the Master. Here is the Master, for Whom you have been waiting. Here is Jesus! »

It was the last straw! The peaceful district of Caesarea, a little out of the way, in the suburb area, becomes busier than a market. And noisier. Hosannas! Acclamations! Entreaties! Everything!

Jesus proceeds very slowly, hemmed in on all sides by so much love. But He smiles and blesses. He proceeds so slowly that some people have time to run away and spread the news, and then come Lack with friends or relatives, holding their children high up in order to arrive safely close to Jesus, Who caresses and blesses them.

They thus arrive at the house seen previously and knock. The same old servant, on hearing all the voices, opens without any hesitation. But... she sees Jesus in the middle of the cheering crowd, and she understands... She drops to the floor moaning:« Have mercy, my Lord. Your servant did not recognise You and did not worship You! »

« No harm, woman. You did not recognise the man, but you believed in Him. That is what is required to be loved by God. Stand up and take Me to your masters. »

The old woman obeys, trembling with respect. But she sees her masters, overwhelmed with respect, leaning against the wall at I lie end of the rather dark entrance-hall. She points at them: « There they are. »

« Peace to you and to this house. May the Lord bless you for your faith in the Christ and for your charity to His disciples » says Jesus going towards the two old people, who are either husband and

wife, or brother and sister.

They worship Him and then take Him to the wide verandah where several tables are laid under a heavy velarium. The view stretches over Caesarea as far as the mountains behind it and on its sides. Doves fly from the terrace to the garden full of trees in blossom.

While an old servant adds more places to the tables, Isaac explains: « Benjamin and Anne welcome not only us, but whoever comes looking for You. They do so in Your Name. »

« May Heaven bless them every time they do so. »

« Oh! We have means, but have no children. At the end of our days, we are adopting the poor of the Lord » says simply the old woman.

And Jesus lays His hand on her grey-haired head saying: « And that makes you mother more than if you had conceived seven times and seven times. But now allow Me to explain to these people what they wanted to know, so that we can then dismiss them and sit down to our meal. »

The terrace is crammed with people and more continue to arrive taking up every possible bit of room. Jesus is surrounded by children who look at Him ecstatically with their large innocent eyes. His back is turned to the table and He smiles at the children even when talking of the important subject. He seems to be reading on their innocent faces the words of the requested truth.

« Listen. The sign of Jonah that I promised to the wicked, and I promise to you as well, not because you are wicked, on the contrary, that you may reach perfection in believing when you see that it is accomplished, is this.

As Jonah remained in the belly of the sea-monster for three days and then was vomited on the shore to convert and save Nineveh, so it will happen to the Son of man. To calm the billows of a great satanic storm, the mighty ones in Israel will deem it necessary to sacrifice the Innocent. But they will only increase their dangers, because in addition to Satan who will perturb them, they will have God Who will punish them after the crime. They could defeat the storm by believing in Me. But they will not believe, because they see in Me the cause of their perturbation, of their fears, dangers and refutation of their false holiness. But when the hour comes, the insatiable monster, that is, the bowels of the earth, which swallow every man who dies, will open up to give the Light back to the world that denied it.

So as Jonah was a sign of the power and mercy of the Lord for the people of Nineveh, so the Son of man will be the sign for this generation. With the difference that Nineveh was converted whereas Jerusalem will not be converted, because it is full of the wicked generation of which I spoke. So the Queen of the South

will rise on Doomsday against the men of this generation and will condemn them. Because she came, in her days, from the end of the world to listen to Solomon's wisdom, whilst this generation, which has Me with them, will not listen to Me and they persecute and drive Me away as if I were a leper and a sinner, and yet I am much greater than Solomon. Also the people of Nineveh will rise on Doomsday against the wicked generation that will not turn to the Lord its God, because they were converted by the preaching of a man.

And I am greater than any man, be it Jonah or any other Prophet. I will therefore give the sign of Jonah to those who ask for a definitely unequivocal sign. I will give one and one sign to those who arrogantly refuse to bow to the proofs that I have already given them of people rising from death by My command. I will give all signs. The sign of a decomposed body that becomes alive and wholesome, and the sign of a Body that rises by Itself from death because Its Spirit is gifted with almighty power. But they will not be graces. They will not smooth the situation. Neither here, nor in the eternal books. What is written, is written. And proofs will pile up, like stones for a lapidation. They will pile up against Me, to harm Me, but unsuccessfully. And against them to crush them for ever by the sentence of God reserved for the wicked incredulous.

That is the sign of Jonah of which I spoke. Have you any more questions to ask Me? »

« No, Master. We will inform our head of the synagogue, who was very close to the truth when considering the promised sign. »

« Matthias is a just man. And the Truth is revealed to the just as it is revealed to these innocent children who know Who I am, better than anybody else. Before I dismiss you, let Me hear these angels of the earth praise the mercy of God. Come here, children. »

The children who have been quiet with some difficulty so far, run towards Him.

« Tell Me, children without malice, which is My sign for you? »

« That You are good. »

« That You cured my mother by means of Your Name. »

« That You love everybody. »

« That You are so handsome as no other man can be. »

« That You make bad people become good, as You did with my father. »

Each child announces a loving distinctive feature of Jesus, or recollects sufferings that Jesus has changed into smiles.

But the dearest of them all is a lively little child, about four years old, who climbs up on Jesus' lap and clasps His neck saying: « Your sign is that You love all children, and children love You. A love big like that... » and he opens his little plump arms wide, and

laughs, and he then embraces Jesus' neck once again, rubbing his childish cheek against Jesus', Who kisses him asking: « But why do you love Me if you have never seen Me before? »

« Because You look like the angel of the Lord. »

« But you have not seen him, My dear little fellow... » says Jesus tempting him and smiling.

The child remains dumbfounded for a moment. He then smiles displaying all his little teeth and he says: « But my soul did see him! Mummy says that I have it, and it's here, and God sees it, and my soul has seen God and the angels, and sees them. And my soul knows You, because You are the Lord. »

Jesus kisses his forehead saying: « May this kiss increase in you the light of your intellect » and He puts him down. The child runs to his father, holding a hand on his forehead where it was kissed, and he shouts: « To mummy, to mummy! So that she may kiss here, where the Lord kissed, and her voice will come back to her and she will not weep any more. »

They explain to Jesus that the child's mother suffers from throat trouble and was very anxious to receive a miracle; but the disciples were unable to cure her disease as it was too deep and untouchable.

« The youngest disciple, her little boy, will cure her. Go in peace, man. And have faith... like your son » He says dismissing the child's father.

He then kisses the other children who are anxious to have the same kiss on their foreheads and He dismisses the citizens. Only His disciples, the people from Kedesh and the other places remain with Him.

While waiting for the meal to be served, Jesus organises the departure of the following day of all the disciples, who will precede Him to Capernaum, where they will join the others who will have gone there from other places. « You will then take with you Salome, the wives and daughters of Nathanael and Philip, Johanna and Susanna, as you proceed towards Nazareth. You will get My Mother there, and the mother of My brothers and you will take them to Bethany, to the house in which Joseph lives, in Lazarus' property. We will come through the Decapolis. »

« And what about Marjiam? » asks Peter.

« I said: "you will precede Me to Capernaum". I did not say: go". But from Capernaum you will be able to inform the women of our arrival, so that they may be ready, when we go towards Jerusalem via the Decapolis. Marjiam, who is now a young man, will go with the disciples escorting the women... »

« The fact is... that I wanted to take also my wife, poor woman, to Jerusalem. She has always wanted to go, but she never came, because I did not want any trouble. But I would like to make her

3-1643

happy this year. She is so good! »

« Of course, Simon. That is another reason for sending Marjiam with her. We shall travel very slowly and we shall all meet there... »

The old landlord says: « Such a short time with me? »

« Father, I have still so much to do. I want to be in Jerusalem at least eight days before Passover. Remember that the first phase of the moon of Adar is already over... »

« That is true. But I longed so much for You!... I seem to be in the light of Heaven with You here... and that the light will go out as soon as You go away. »

« No, father. I will leave it in your heart. I will leave it also to your wife and to everybody in this hospitable house. »

They sit at the tables and Jesus offers and blesses the food, which a servant passes to the various tables.

344. At the Castle in Caesarea Paneas.

29th November 1945.

The meal in the hospitable house is over. And Jesus goes out with the Twelve, His disciples and the old landlord. They go back to the Great Spring. But they do not stop there. They continue along the same road, which is uphill all the way, northwards.

The road, although very steep, is comfortable, because it is manageable also to carts and horses. At the end of it, on the top of the mountain, there is a massive castle or fortress, whichever it may be, and it is amazing because of its peculiar shape. It seems to consist of two buildings, placed at different levels, so that the rear one, which is also more warlike looking, is a few metres higher than the front one, which it dominates and defends. Between the two buildings there is a high broad wall fortified with square squat towers; but it must be one building only because it is surrounded by an ashlar wall, with slanting ashlars at the base to support the weight of the rampart. I cannot see the western side. But the northern and southern sides fall sheer down to the mountain, which is isolated and drops vertically on both sides. I think that the western side is similar.

Old Benjamin, who, like all of us, is proud of his town, explains the importance of the Tetrarch's castle, which besides being a castle, is also a fortress for the town, and he points out its beauty, its Powerful solidity, its attributes such as cisterns, vats, space, wide view all around, position etc. « Also the Romans say that it is beautiful. And they are good judges!... » concludes the old man. He then adds: « I am familiar with the superintendent. That's why I can go in. I will show you the widest and most beautiful view of Palestine. »

3-1644

Jesus listens to him kindly. The others smile faintly: they have seen so many views... but the old man is so kind that they have not the heart to mortify him and they countenance him in his desire to show beautiful things to Jesus.

They reach the summit. The view is really magnificent even from the emplacement before the main iron gate. But the old man says: « Come... come!... It is more beautiful inside. We will go to the top of the highest tower in the citadel... You will see... »

And they enter a dark corridor dug in the wall, which is several metres wide, until they reach a yard where the superintendent is waiting for them with his family.

The two friends greet each other and the old man explains the reason for the visit.

« The Rabbi of Israel?! What a pity that Philip is not here. He was so anxious to see Him, because we heard of His fame. He is very fond of true rabbis, because they are the only ones who defended his rights, and also to spite Antipas who does not like them. Come, come!... » The man eyed Jesus very carefully first and then decided to honour Him by giving Him a bow worthy of a king.

They go through another corridor into a second yard where there is another iron postern admitting to a third yard, beyond which there is a deep moat and the turreted wall of the citadel. Faces of curious warriors and batmen appear from everywhere. They enter the citadel and then, climbing a narrow staircase, they reach the bastion and then a tower. Only Jesus, the superintendent, Benjamin and the Twelve enter the tower, and they are packed like sardines, so the others cannot go in and they remain on the bastion.

Jesus and those who are with Him enjoy a superb view when they go out on the little terrace at the top of the tower and look over the high stone parapet! Leaning out over the abyss on this western side, the highest part of the castle, they can see the whole of Caesarea stretched out at the foot of the mountain, and they can see it very well, because it is not on level ground, but on gentle slopes. Beyond Caesarea there is a fertile plain that extends as far as lake Merom. And it looks like a little green sea, the water of which sparkles like light turquoises, strewn over the green expanse like particles of clear sky. And then there are beautiful hills, spread here and there at the borders of the plain, like necklaces of dark emerald streaked with the silver of olive-trees. And airy plumes of trees in blossom, or trees in blossom as compact as huge balls... And looking to the north and the east there is the powerful Lebanon and the Hermon shining in the sun with its pearly snow and the mountains of Ituraea; and one can catch a glimpse of the imposing Jordan valley, enclosed between the hills of the sea of Tiberias and the mountains of Gaulanitis, fading away in the

distance like a dream.

« How beautiful! It is very beautiful! » exclaims Jesus admiring the view and He seems to be blessing or to be wishing to embrace these beautiful places by opening His arms wide and smiling joyfully. And He replies to the apostles asking for this or that elucidation, pointing out the places where they have already been, that is to the various regions and the directions in which they lie.

« But I cannot see the Jordan » says Bartholomew.

« You cannot see it, but it is over there, in that expanse, between the two chains of mountains. The river is immediately beyond the western one. We will be going down there, because Perea and the Decapolis are still awaiting the Evangelizer. »

But He turns round, as if He were listening to the air, because of a long choked wailing that He has heard more than once. He looks at the superintendent, as if to ask him what is happening.

« It is one of the women of the castle. A young wife. She is about to have a baby. It will be her first and last one because her husband died at the beginning of the month of Chislev. I do not know whether she will live, because since her husband died, she has been doing nothing but melt into tears. She has worn herself to a shadow. Can You hear her? She has not even got the strength to cry... Of course... A widow at seventeen years... And they were very fond of each other. My wife and my mother-in-law keep saying to her: "You will find your Toby in your son". But they are just words... »

They come down from the tower and go round the bastions admiring the place and the view. The superintendent then insists in offering the guests some fruit and drinks and they enter a large room in the front of the castle, to which the servants bring what has been ordered.

The moaning becomes more heart-rending and is closer, and the superintendent apologises also because the incident keeps his wife away from the Master. But a cry, which is even more painful than the previous moaning, is now heard and hands carrying fruit or cups to mouths are left mid air.

« I am going to see what happened » says the superintendent. And he goes out while the painful noise of cries and weeping is heard more distinctly through the half-open door.

The superintendent comes back: « The baby died as soon as it was born... What a torture! She is trying to revive it with her failing strength... But it does not breathe any more. It is purple!... » and shaking his head he says: « Poor Dorca! »

« Bring Me the baby. »

« But it is dead, Lord. »

« Bring Me the baby, I said. As it is. And tell the mother to have faith. »

3-1646

The superintendent runs away. He comes back: « She does not want to give it. She says that she will not give it to anybody. She seems to be mad. She says that we are trying to take it away from her. »

« Take Me to the door of her room, so that she may see Me. »

« But... »

« Never mind! I will be purified later, if necessary... »

They go quickly along a dark corridor as far as a closed room. Jesus Himself opens the door and remains on the threshold facing the bed on which a very pale woman is pressing to her heart a little baby giving no sign of life.

« Peace to you, Dorca. Look at Me. Do not weep. I am the Saviour. Give Me your baby... »

I do not know what there is in Jesus' voice. I know that the poor wretch, as soon as she sees Him, clasps the new-born baby to her heart in a wild attitude, then she looks at Him and her distressed countenance changes and becomes sorrowful but hopeful at the same time. She hands the baby enveloped in linen swaddling bands to the superintendent's wife... and remains motionless, with her hands stretched out, with her wide eyes full of faith and life, deaf to the entreaties of her mother-in-law, who would like her to lie down on the bed pillows.

Jesus takes the bundle of swaddling clothes containing the half cold child, holds it straight by its armpits, lays His lips on the little half-closed lips of the baby, bending a little because the little head is leaning back. He blows hard down the inert throat... and remains for a moment with His lips pressed against the little mouth... then moves away... and a chirping trembles in the still air... then a louder one... a third one... and finally a real cry from a little quivering head... The baby moves its hands and feet and in the meantime during its long triumphant cry, its bald head and tiny face begin to colour. And its mother asserts: « My son! My love! The offspring of my Toby! On my heart! Come to my heart!... that I may die a happy death... » she murmurs, dropping her voice to a whisper, which ends in a kiss and in an understandable reaction of relaxation.

« She is dying! » shout the women.

« No. She is beginning to rest, as she deserves. When she wakes up tell her to call the baby: Jesai Tobias. I will see her at the Temple on the day of her purification. Goodbye. Peace be with you. » He slowly closes the door and turns round to go back to His disciples. But they are all there, deeply moved at what they have seen and looking at Him full of admiration.

They go back together to the yard. They say goodbye to the dumbfounded superintendent, who keeps repeating: « How sorry the Tetrarch will be that he was not here! » and they begin to descend

3-1647

towards the town.

Jesus lays His hand on the shoulder of old Benjamin saying: « Thank you for what you have shown to us and for being the occasion for a miracle. »...

345. Jesus Predicts His Passion for the First Time. Peter is Reproached.

30th November 1945.

Jesus must have left the town of Caesarea Philippi at daybreak, because the town is now far behind with its mountains, and Jesus is once again in the plain going towards lake Merom, from where He will go to the lake of Gennesaret. His apostles are with Him together with all the disciples who were at Caesarea. But no one is surprised to see such a numerous caravan on the road, because there are many more caravans of Israelites or proselytes going to Jerusalem from all parts of the Diaspora, as they wish to remain for some time in the Holy City to listen to the rabbis and breathe the air of the Temple for a long time.

They proceed quickly but although the sun is already high in the sky, it is not troublesome, as springtime sunshine gently warms new leaves, trees in blossom and makes flowers open everywhere. The plain before the lake is like a flowery carpet, and the pilgrims looking at the hills surrounding it see them spotted with white, rosy, pink or almost red blossoms of the various fruit-trees, or on passing near the houses of farmers or forges on the roadside, they enjoy the sight of the first rose-bushes full of flowers in gardens, along hedges or against the walls of houses.

« Johanna's gardens must be all in flower » remarks Simon Zealot.

« Also the garden in Nazareth must look like a basket full of flowers. Mary is the sweet bee that passes from one rose-bush to another, then to the jasmines, which will soon be blooming, to the lilies, which are already in bud, and She will pick a branch of the almond-tree, as She is wont to do, nay, She may pick a branch of the pear-tree or of the pomegranate, to put it into the amphora in Her little room. When we were young boys, every year we used to ask Her: "Why do You always have a flowery branch there, and You do not put the early roses in it?". And She replied: "Because on those petals I can see an order written, which came to Me from God and I smell the pure scent of celestial air". Do you remember, Judas? » James of Alphaeus asks his brother.

« Yes. I do. And I remember that when I grew up, I used to wait anxiously for springtime, so that I could see Mary walking in Her garden, under Her trees, the blossoms of which were like clouds, or among the bushes of the early roses. I never saw anything more

beautiful than the eternal girl passing lightly among Her flowers, while doves were flying around Her... »

« Oh! Let us go to Her soon, Lord! That I may see all that as well! » implores Thomas.

« All we need do is quicken our steps and rest less, at night, to arrive in Nazareth in good time » replies Jesus.

« Will You really take me there, Lord? »

« Yes, Thomas, I will. We shall all go to Bethsaida and then to Capernaum, where we shall part. We shall proceed to Tiberias by boat and then to Nazareth. Thus, with the exception of you Judaeans, we shall all be able to get lighter garments, as winter is now over. »

« Yes. And we shall go and say to the Dove: "Rise, make haste, my beloved one, and come, for winter is past, the rains are over and gone, the flowers appear on the earth... Rise, my friend, and come, my dove hiding in the clefts of the rock, show me your face, let me hear your voice". »

« Well done, John! You sound like a sweetheart singing a song to his girl! » says Peter.

« I am. I am full of love for Mary. I will never see other women excite my love. Except Mary, Whom I love with my whole self. »

« I said the same a month ago, didn't I, Lord? » says Thomas.

« I think that we are all full of love for Her. Such a noble, celestial love!... As only that Donna can inspire. And our souls love Her soul completely, our minds love and admire Her intelligence, our eyes admire and delight in Her pure grace, which gives joy without any anxiety, as when one looks at a flower... Mary, the Beauty of the earth, and, I think, the Beauty of Heaven... » says Matthew.

« That is true! We all see in Mary what is sweetest in women: the pure girl, and the most sweet mother. And we do not know whether we love Her more for the former or the latter grace... » says Philip.

« We love Her because She is "Mary". That's it! » remarks Peter.

Jesus has been listening to them and He says: « You have all spoken very well. Simon Peter is quite right: one loves Mary because She is "Mary". On our way to Caesarea I told you that only those who join perfect faith to perfect love will be successful in understanding the true meaning of the words: "Jesus, the Christ, the Word, the Son of God and the Son of man". But I can now tell you that there is another name full of meaning. And it is the name of My Mother. Only those who add perfect faith to perfect love will succeed in understanding the true meaning of the name "Mary", of the Mother of the Son of God. And the true meaning will begin to appear clearly to the true faithful and loving ones in a dreadful hour of torture, when the Mother is to be tortured with Her Son,

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when She co-redeems with the Redeemer, in the eyes of the whole world and for ever and ever. »

« When? » asks Bartholomew, while they stop by the side of a large stream where many disciples drink.

« Let us stop here and eat our bread. It is midday. We shall be at lake Merom by evening and we shall be able to get boats and shorten our journey » replies Jesus evasively.

They all sit down on the tender grass on the bank of the stream, in the warm sunshine, and John says: « It is a pity to spoil these little flowers, which are so gentle. They look like little bits of the sky, which have fallen here, on these meadows. » There are hundreds and hundreds of myosotis.

« They will grow more beautifully tomorrow. They have bloomed to turn the earth into a dining room for their Lord » says his brother James to comfort him.

Jesus offers and blesses the food and they all eat happily. All the disciples, like sunflowers, are looking at Jesus, Who is sat in the centre of the row of His apostles.

The meal is soon over, it was made tasty by serenity and pure water. As Jesus remains sitting, no one moves. The disciples move a little to come closer and hear what Jesus is saying to the apostles who have asked Him questions on what He said before about His Mother.

« Yes. Because it would be a great thing indeed to be My Mother according to the flesh. You must consider that Anne of Elkanah is remembered as Samuel's mother. And he was only a prophet. And -;et his mother is mentioned because she bore him. Thus, Mary would be remembered with the greatest praise, for giving Jesus, the Saviour, to the world. But it would be too little, as compared with what God exacts from Her to fill the measure required for the redemption of the world. Mary will not disappoint God's desire. She has never disappointed Him. She has given and will give Herself completely both with regard to requests of total love and to those of total sacrifice. And when She has accomplished the supreme sacrifice, with Me and for Me, and for the world, then the true faithful and loving believers will understand the real meaning of Her Name. And for ever in the future, each true faithful and loving believer will be granted to know it. The Name of the Great Mother, of the Holy Nurse, Who will nourish all the children of Christ with Her tears, to bring them up for the Life in Heaven. »

« Tears, Lord? Must Your Mother weep? » asks the Iscariot.

« Every mother weeps. And Mine will weep more than any other. »

« Why? I made mine weep sometimes, because I have not always been a good son. But You! You never grieve Your Mother. »

« No. I do not grieve Her as Her Son. But I will deeply distress

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Her as Redeemer. There are two who will make My Mother weep endless tears: I, to save Mankind, Mankind by its continuous sinning. Every man who has lived, is living or will live, costs Mary tears. »

« Why? » asks James of Zebedee, who is obviously astonished.

« Because every man costs Me suffering to redeem him. »

« But how can You say that with regard to those who are already dead or not yet born? The living, the scribes, Pharisees, Sadducees may make You suffer through their charges against You, their jealousy, their wickedness. But nothing more than that » states Bartholomew confidently.

« John the Baptist was also killed... and he is not the only prophet killed by Israel, or the only priest of the eternal Will, killed because he was disliked by those who disobeyed God. »

« But You are greater than a prophet and than the Baptist himself, Your Precursor. You are the Word of God. The hand of Israel will not rise against You » says Judas Thaddeus.

« Do you think so, brother? You are wrong » replies Jesus.

« No. It cannot be! That cannot happen! God will not allow it! It would be a perpetual humiliation of His Christ! » Judas Thaddeus is so excited that he stands up.

Jesus also stands up and stares at his pale face and sincere eyes. He says slowly: « And yet, it will happen » and He lowers His right arm, which He had raised, as if He were swearing an oath.

They all stand up and press closer round Him: a circle of sad incredulous faces; voices can be heard whispering: « Of course... if it were really so... Thaddeus would be right. »

« What happened to the Baptist was wrong. But it extolled the man, a hero till the very last. If instead it should happen to the Christ, it would diminish His fame. »

« Christ can be persecuted, but not humiliated. »

« The unction of God is upon Him. »

« Who would continue to believe in You, if they saw You at the mercy of men? »

« We will not allow that. »

James of Alphaeus is the only one who makes no comment. His brother chides him: « Are you not saying anything? Are you not reacting? Have you not heard? Defend the Christ against Himself! »

James does not reply, but he covers his face with his hands and moves aside weeping.

« He is a fool! » utters his brother.

« Perhaps not such a fool as you think » replies Ermasteus. And he goes on: « Yesterday, when explaining the prophecy, the Master spoke of a decomposed body that is recomposed and of a body that will rise from death by itself. I think that one cannot rise again, unless one dies first. »

3-1651

« But one may die a natural death, or die of old age. And even that would be too much for the Christ! » retorts Thaddeus, and many say that he is right.

« Yes, but in that case, it would not be a sign given to this generation, which is much older than He is » remarks Simon Zealot.

« Of course not. But He did not necessarily speak of Himself » retorts Thaddeus, who is obstinate in his love and respect.

« No one, but the Son of God can rise by oneself from the dead, as no one but the Son of God can be born as He was born. I maintain that, as I saw the glory of His birth » says Isaac as a fully confident witness.

Jesus has been listening to them, looking at each while he was speaking, with His arms folded on His chest. He now makes a gesture that He wants to speak and He says: « The Son of man will be handed over into the power of men because He is the Son of God, but He is also the Redeemer of man. And there is no redemption without suffering. My body, flesh and blood will suffer, to make amends for the sins of the flesh and of the blood. I will suffer morally to make amends for the sins of intentions and passions. And I will suffer spiritually for the sins of souls. My suffering will be complete. Therefore at the appointed time I will be captured in Jerusalem and after suffering grievously at the hands of the Elders and High Pontiffs, of the scribes and Pharisees, I will be sentenced to disgraceful death. And God will let them do so, because it must be so, as I am the Lamb Who is to expiate the sins of the whole world. And in deepest anguish, which My Mother and few more people will share with Me, I will die on the scaffold, and three days later, exclusively through My own divine will, I will rise again to eternal glorious life as Man and once again I will be God in Heaven with the Father and the Spirit. But I must first suffer all infamy and My heart is to be pierced by Falsehood and Hatred. »

A chorus of scandalised shouts spreads through the warm scented springtime air.

Peter, who is also daunted and scandalised, takes Jesus by the arm and pulls Him aside and whispers in His ear: « Oh! Lord! Don't say that. It's not right. See? They are scandalised. You lose their esteem. On no account You must allow that; in any case such a thing will never happen. So why speak of it as something real? You must rise higher and higher in the eyes of men, if You want to assert Your authority, and eventually end by working a last miracle, such as crushing Your enemies. But You must never lower Yourself to the level of a punished criminal. » And Peter looks like a master or a sorrowful father kindly reproaching a son who has said something silly.

Jesus, Who was lightly bent to hear Peter's whispering,

straightens Himself up and with a severe countenance and eyes blazing with anger, He shouts so that everybody may hear Him and learn the lesson: « Go away from Me, as you are now Satan advising Me to disobey My Father! But that is why I came! Not to be honoured! By advising Me to be proud, disobedient and uncharitably severe, you are spurring Me to evil things. Go away! You are scandalising Me! Do you not understand that greatness does not lie in honours, but in sacrifice and that it is of no importance to be considered worms by men, if God considers us angels? You, foolish man, understand neither God's greatness nor His reasons, and you see, judge, feel and speak according to what is purely human. »

Poor Peter is crushed by the severe reproach and feeling humiliated he moves aside and weeps... But his tears are not the tears of joy of a few days ago. He weeps his heart out because he realises that he has sinned and has grieved the person whom he loves. And Jesus lets him weep. He takes off His sandals, pulls His clothes up and wades the stream.

The others follow Him silently. No one dare say a word. Poor Peter is the last in the group and in vain Isaac and the Zealot endeavour to console him.

Andrew turns round several times to look at him and then whispers something to John, who is utterly depressed. But John shakes his head in denial. Andrew then makes up his mind. He runs forward and reaches Jesus. He calls Him in a low trembling voice: « Master! Master!... »

Jesus lets him call several times. At last He turns round and with a severe countenance He asks: « What do you want? »

« Master, my brother is distressed... he is weeping... »

« He deserved it. »

« That is true, Master. But he is a man... One can make mistakes when speaking. »

« In fact what he said today was quite wrong » replies Jesus. But He is not quite so severe now and the sparkle of a smile mitigates His divine eyes.

Andrew takes heart again and redoubles his efforts in favour of his brother. « But You are just and You know that he erred through his love for You... »

« Love must be light, not darkness. He turned it into darkness and bandaged his soul with it. »

« That is true, Lord. But bandages can be removed if one wants. It is not as if the spirit itself were in darkness. Bandages are the outside. The spirit is the inside, the living nucleus... The inside of my brother is good. »

« Well, let him remove the bandages that he put on it. »

« He will certainly do so, Lord! He is already doing it. If You turn

round You will see how disfigured his face is by tears, which You are not comforting. Why are You so severe with him? »

« Because it is his duty to be the "first", as I gave him the honour to be so. He who received much, must give much... »

« Oh! Lord! Yes, that is true. But do You not remember Mary of Lazarus? Or John of Endor? Or Aglae? Or the Beautiful woman of Korazim? Or Levi? You gave them everything and they had only shown You their intention of being redeemed Lord!... You heard my entreaties on behalf of the Beautiful woman of Korazim and of Aglae... Would You not listen to my entreaties on behalf of Your Simon and mine, who erred through his love for You? »

Jesus looks at His mild apostle who has become bold and insistent in favour of his brother, as he was silently insistent for the Beautiful woman of Korazim and Aglae, and His face shines brightly: « Go and call your brother » He says « and bring him here. »

« Oh! Thank You, my Lord! I will go at once... » and he runs away as swiftly as a swallow.

« Come, Simon. The Master is no longer angry with you. Come, because He wants to tell you. »

« No. I am ashamed... He rebuked me only a little while ago... He wants me to reproach me again... »

« How little you know Him! Come on! Do you think that I would take you to Him to make you suffer again? I would not insist if I were not sure that a great joy is expecting you there. Come. »

« But what shall I tell Him? » Peter asks, setting out somewhat reluctantly: he is restrained by his human nature, but at the same time he is urged by his soul that cannot bear to be without Jesus' condescension and love. « What shall I say to Him? » he continues to ask.

« Nothing! Show Him your face and that will be sufficient » his brother says encouraging him.

All the disciples, as the two brothers overtake them, look at them smiling, as they understand what is happening.

They arrive where is Jesus. But at the last moment Peter stops. Andrew wastes no time. With a strong push, as he is wont to do when driving his boat into the lake, he hurls him forward. Jesus stops Peter raises his face... Jesus lowers His... They look at each other Two large tears stream down Peter's flushed cheeks...

« Come here, My big rash boy, that I may act as a father and wipe your tears » says Jesus, and He raises the hand on which the scar made by the stone at Giscala is still visible and with His fingers He wipes the two tears.

« Oh! Lord! Have You forgiven me? » asks Peter in a trembling voice, taking Jesus' hand in his own and looking at Him with loving imploring eyes, as a faithful dog that wants to be forgiven by its angry master.

3-1654

« I never condemned you... »

« But before... »

« I loved you. It is love not to allow deviations of sentiments and wisdom to strike root in you. You must be the first in everything, Simon Peter. »

« So... so, You still love me? You still want me with You? Not because I want to be the first, You know. I am happy to be even the last one, providing I am with You, at Your service... and I die at Your service, Lord, my God! »

Jesus puts His hand round Peter's shoulders and draws him close to Himself.

And Peter, who has been holding the other hand of Jesus all the time, smothers it with kisses... He is happy and whispers: « How much I suffered!... Thank You, Jesus. »

« You had better thank your brother. And in future make sure you carry your burden with justice and heroism. Let us wait for the others. Where are they? »

They are standing where they were when Peter reached Jesus, to leave the Master free to speak to His mortified apostle. Jesus beckons them to come forward. With them there is a little group of peasants, who had left the work in the fields to come and speak to the disciples.

Jesus, still resting His hand on Peter's shoulder, says:

« After what has happened, you have understood that it is a grave matter to be at My service. I reproached him. But My reproach applies to all of you. Because the same thoughts were in most of your hearts, either fully developed or in germ. I have thus demolished them for you, and he who still cherishes them proves that he does not understand My Doctrine, My Mission or My Person.

I have come to be Way, Truth and Life. I give you the Truth through My teaching. I mark out the road, I point it out and level it for you through My sacrifice. But I give Life to you through My Death. And remember that whoever answers My call and follows Me to cooperate in the redemption of the world must be prepared to die to give Life to other people. Thus, whoever wants to follow Me must be prepared to deny himself, his old self with its passions, inclinations, customs, traditions and thoughts, and follow Me with his new self.

Let every man take his cross, as I will take Mine. He must take it even if it looks too defamatory to him. He must let the weight of his cross crush his human self to free his spiritual self, which the cross does not fill with horror, on the contrary it is a support and an object of veneration because the spirit knows and remembers. And let him follow Me with his cross. And at the end of his life will an ignominious death be waiting for him, as it is waiting for Me?

3-1655

It does not matter. He must not grieve over that, on the contrary let him rejoice, because the ignominy of the earth will change into a great glory in Heaven, whereas it will be dishonourable to behave in a cowardly way in front of spiritual heroism.

You always state that you are prepared to follow Me and face death with Me. Follow Me, then, and I will lead you to the Kingdom along a hard but holy glorious road, at the end of which you will attain the immutable Life for ever. That is "to live". To follow, instead, the ways of the world and of the flesh is "to die". So he who wants to save his life on the earth will lose it, whereas he who loses his life on the earth for My sake and for the sake of My Gospel, will save it. But remember: of what avail will it be to man to conquer the whole world, if he loses his soul?

And be very careful, both now and in future, not to be ashamed of My words and My deeds. To do so, would be "to die" as well. Because he who is ashamed of Me and of My words among this stupid, adulterous, sinful generation, of which I spoke to you, and in the hope of gaining protection and profit flatters it denying Me and My Doctrine and throwing My words to the foul mouths of pigs and dogs - the recompense of which will be excrement and not money - will be judged by the Son of Man, when He comes in the glory of His Father with angels and saints to judge the world. He will then be ashamed of those adulterers and fornicators, of those cowards and usurers and will expel them from His Kingdom, because in the celestial Jerusalem there is no room for adulterers, cowards, fornicators, blasphemers and thieves. And I solemnly tell you that some of those who are now present among My disciples and women disciples will not savour death before seeing the Kingdom of God being established and its King crowned and anointed. »

They take to the road again talking animatedly while the sun is slowly setting in the sky...

346. Prophecy on Peter and Marjiam. The Blind Man at Bethsaida.

1st December 1945.

They are not walking any longer, but are running in the fresh dawn, which is more pleasant and clearer than the previous mornings; sparkling dewdrops and many-coloured petals fall on their heads and in the meadows, adding other hues to the countless shades of the little flowers growing on the banks of streams and in fields, and glistening on the grass like diamonds. They are running in the middle of warbling birds and in a light breeze that rustles among branches and caresses the hay and corn that grow higher and higher day by day; and they hear the cheerful babbling of

brooks flowing within their banks and gently bending the stems of flowers touching their clear water. They are running as if they were going to a tryst. Even the elderly ones, such as Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, the Zealot share the joyful haste of the younger ones. And the same is happening among the disciples, where the older ones vie with the younger ones in walking fast.

The meadows are still wet with dew when they reach the area of Bethsaida, enclosed in a little space between the lake, the river and the mountain. A youth bent under bundles of sticks is coming down from the wood in the mountain. He is coming down very fast, almost running, but he cannot see the apostles from his posture... He is singing happily while running under his burden of sticks, and as soon as he reaches the main road, at the first houses in Bethsaida, he throws his load to the ground and straightens himself up to rest, pushing back his dark hair. He is tall and thin, erect, and his body, although slender and agile, is strong. He is a handsome looking adolescent.

« It's Marjiam » says Andrew.

« Are you mad? That's a man » replies Peter.

Andrew cups his hands to his mouth and calls him in a loud voice. The young man, who was about to bend to pick up his load, after fastening the belt of his short tunic, which barely reaches his knees and is open at his chest probably because it is rather tight, turns round in the direction of the call and sees Jesus, Peter and the others who are looking at him, standing near a group of willows dipping into a large stream, the final left-hand tributary of the Jordan before the lake of Galilee, just outside the village. He drops the bundle, raises his arms and shouts: « My Lord! My father! » and he darts off.

Peter also dashes off, wading the brook in his sandals, he just pulls his garments up, and then runs along the dusty road, leaving the wet marks of his sandals on the dry ground.

« Father! »

« Son! »

They embrace each other and Marjiam is really as tall as Peter, and thus his dark hair falls on Peter's face when they kiss each other. But as Marjiam is so slender, he looks taller.

Then, Marjiam breaks away from the loving embrace and resumes his race towards Jesus, Who is now on this side of the stream and is coming slowly forward surrounded by the apostles. Marjiam falls at His feet, with his arms raised and he exclaims: « Oh! My Lord, bless Your servant! »

But Jesus bends, lifts him up and presses him to His heart kissing both his cheeks and wishing him « everlasting peace and increase in wisdom and grace in the ways of the Lord. »

The apostles also give a hearty welcome to the boy, particularly

those who have not seen him for months and they congratulate him on his growth.

But Peter!... If he had procreated him he would not have been so pleased! He walks round him, looks at him, touches him, and asks the others: « Isn't he handsome? Isn't he well built? Look how straight he is! What a broad chest! And his straight legs!... A bit thin, not very sinewy as yet. But he is promising! Very good! And his face? Tell me whether he looks like the poor little fellow I carried in my arms last year, when he looked like a frail, miserable, sad, frightened bird... Well done, Porphirea! Ah! she has been very clever feeding him with plenty honey, butter, oil, eggs and fish liver. I must congratulate her at once. Do You mind, Master? May I go to see my wife? »

« Go, Simon. I will soon be with you. »

Marjiam, whose hand is still in that of Jesus, says: « Master, my father will certainly tell mother to prepare a meal for You. Let me go and help her... »

« Yes, go. And may God bless you for honouring your father and mother. »

Marjiam runs away, picks up his bundle of firewood, puts it on his shoulder, reaches Peter and walks beside him.

« They look like Abraham and Isaac climbing the mountain » remarks Bartholomew.

« Oh! Poor Marjiam! That would be the last straw indeed! » says Simon Zealot.

« And poor brother of mine! I don't know whether he would have the strength to act as Abraham... » says Andrew.

Jesus looks at him and then looks at the grey head of Peter, who is moving away close to his Marjiam, and He says: « I solemnly tell you that the day will come when Peter will rejoice knowing that his Marjiam has been imprisoned, beaten, scourged, sentenced to death, and that he would have the heart to lay the boy on the scaffold himself to clothe him with the purple of Heaven and to fertilise the earth with the blood of a martyr, and he will be jealous and sorrowful for one reason only: that he is not in the place of his son and subordinate, because his election to Supreme Head of My Church will compel him to spare himself for the Church until I say to him: "Go and die for it". You do not know Peter yet. I do. »

« Do you foresee martyrdom for Marjiam and my brother? »

« Are you sorry, Andrew? »

« No. I am sorry that You do not foresee it also for me. »

« I solemnly tell you that you will all be clad with purple, except one. »

« Who?... Who?... »

« Let us be silent on the grief of God » Jesus says sadly but solemnly. And they are all silent, looking frightened and pensive.

3-1658

They walk along the first road in Bethsaida, among vegetable gardens full of fresh greenery. Peter, with other people of Bethsaida, is leading a blind man towards Jesus. Marjiam is not there. He must have stayed at home to help Porphirea. Among the people of Bethsaida and the relatives of the blind man, there are many disciples who have come from Sicaminon and other towns, and among them there are Stephen, Hermas, John the priest, John the scribe and many more. (It is now quite a problem to remember them all: they are so many).

« I brought him to You, Lord. He has been waiting here for several days » explains Peter, while the blind man and his relatives singsong: « Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on us! », « Touch with Your hand the eyes of my son, and he will see », « Have mercy on me, Lord! I believe in You! »

Jesus takes the blind man by the hand and walks back a few steps with him, to put him in the shade, as the street is flooded with sunbeams. He places him against a foliage-covered wall of the first house in the village, and stands in front of him. He wets both His forefingers with saliva and rubs the man's eyes with his moist fingers, He then presses His hands against his eyes, with the base of each hand against an eye-socket and His fingers spread out among the hair of the poor fellow. He prays and then removes His hands, asking: « What do you see? »

« I see some men. They must be men. But that is how I imagined trees in bloom. But they are certainly men, as they are walking and making signs to me. »

Jesus imposes His hands once again, then He removes them asking: « And now? »

« Oh! Now I clearly see the difference between trees planted in the ground and those men who are looking at me... And I see You! How handsome You are! Your eyes are like the sky and Your hair seems sunbeams... and Your look and Your smile come from God. Lord, I adore You! » and he kneels down kissing the hem of His tunic.

« Stand up and come to your mother who, for years has been your light and comfort and whose love you only know. »

He takes the man by the hand and leads him towards his mother, who has knelt down a few steps away in adoration, as shortly before she had done imploring.

« Stand up, woman. Here is your son. He now sees daylight and may his heart wish to follow the eternal Light. Go home and be happy. And live holily out of gratitude to God. But going through villages do not tell anybody that I cured you, lest the crowds should rush here and prevent Me from going where it is just that I should go, to confirm the faith and take light and joy to other children of My Father. »

And He quickly disappears along a little path among kitchen

3-1659

gardens, going toward Peter's house, which He enters greeting Porphirea kindly.

347. From Capernaum to Nazareth with Manaen and the Women Disciples.

2nd December 1945.

When they set foot on the little beach of Capernaum they are welcomed by shouting children who vie with swallows, now busy abuilding their new nests, so quickly they run from the beach to the houses, screeching in their shrill voices, cheerful with the simple joy of children, to whom everything is a wonderful sight and a mysterious object: a little fish found dead on the shore, or a pebble smoothed by the waves and that owing to its hue, looks like a precious stone, or a flower growing between two stones, or the iridiscent scarab captured in flight. All wonderful things to be shown to their mothers so that they may take part in the joy of their children.

But those little human swallows have now seen Jesus and all their flights converge towards Him, Who is about to set foot on the beach. And it is a warm live avalanche of children, a gentle chain of tender little hands, it is the love of children's hearts that welcome Jesus, Who is pressed, surrounded and warmed, as if they were a gentle fire.

« Me! Me! »

« A kiss! »

« To me! »

« Also to me! »

« Jesus! I love You! »

« Don't go away any more for such a long time! »

« I came here every day to see whether You were coming. »

« And I used to go to Your house. »

« Take this flower, it was for my mother, but I give it to You. »

« Another kiss to me, a big one. You did not kiss me the first time, because Jael pushed me back... »

And their shrill voices continue to shout, while Jesus endeavours to walk in the midst of the loving net.

« Leave Him now! Go! That's enough now! » shout the apostles and disciples trying to loosen the press. Not a hope! They are like lianas equipped with suckers. They are detached here and they adhere there.

« Leave them! With a little patience we shall get there » says Jesus smiling and He takes extraordinarily short steps in order to proceed without treading on the children's bare feet.

What frees Him from the loving press is the arrival of Manaen with other disciples, among whom are the shepherds who were in

Judaea.

« Peace to You, Master! » thunders Manaen who is imposing in his magnificent garment and no longer wears jewels on his forehead and fingers; a wonderful sword is instead hanging on his side and it excites the respectful admiration of the children, who, at the sight of the magnificent knight dressed in purple and carrying such a marvellous weapon on his side, move aside obviously frightened.

And Jesus can thus embrace him and Elias, Levi, Matthias, Joseph, John, Simeon and I do not know how many more. « How come you are here? And how did you know that I had landed? »

« We knew by the shouting of the children. They pierced walls like arrows of joy. But I came here thinking that Your next trip to Judaea is now close at hand and that also the women will be taking part in it... I want to be there as well... To protect You, my Lord, if I am not too proud in thinking so. There is a great deal of excitement in Israel against You. I regret having to say so. But You are aware of it. »

And while speaking thus, they reach the house and go in. Manaen continues his speech after the landlord and his wife have worshipped the Master.

« By now the excitement and interest in You have pervaded every place, rousing and drawing the attention even of the most dull-minded people, who are normally concerned with entirely different matters. The news of what You have worked has passed even through the filthy walls of Machaerus and has reached the lustful refuges of Herod, that is: his palace in Tiberias, the castles of Herodias and the splendid royal palace of the Asmoneans near the Sixtus market. Like a wave of light and power the news passes through dark vile barriers, it demolishes the piles of sins placed as trenches to cover up the foul love affairs of the Court and its cruel crimes, it darts like an arrow of fire writing words that are by far graver than those written on the lewd walls of the lewd bedchambers and throne and banquet halls at Belshazzar's feast. The news shouts Your Name and power, Your Nature and Your Mission. And Herod trembles with fear; Herodias tosses in her bed fearing that You may be the revenging King, who will take her wealth and freedom, if not her very life, leaving her at the mercy of the populace, who will take revenge for her many crimes. They tremble at Court, because of You. They tremble with human and superhuman fear. Since they cut off John's head, a fire seems to be burning the bowels of his murderers. They do not even enjoy any longer their previous miserable peace, the peace of pigs sated with orgies, who silence their reproachful consciences in drunkenness or in copulation. Nothing can appease them... They are persecuted... And they hate each other, after making love, disgusted with each

other, accusing each other of committing a crime that now perturbs them as it overstepped the limit. Salome, as if she were possessed by a demon, is shaken by such eroticism that would degrade even a slave girl. The Royal palace stinks more than a sewer. Herod has asked me about You several times. And every time I always replied to him: "As far as I am concerned He is the Messiah, the King of Israel of the unique royal stock: David's. He is the Son of man foretold by the Prophets, He is the Word of God, He, Who being the Christ, the Anointed of God, has the right to reign over all living beings". And Herod goes pale with fear as he realises that You are the Revenger. And as his courtiers, in order to comfort him say that You are John, erroneously believed to be dead, thus making him faint with horror, or that You are Elijah or some other prophet of the past, he fights against his fear and the cry of his conscience devoured by remorse, saying: "No. He cannot be John! I had John beheaded and his head is safely kept by Herodias. And He cannot be one of the prophets. One does not live again after dying. Neither can He be the Christ. Who says that He is? Who dares to tell me that He is the King of the unique royal stock? I am the king! Nobody else is! The Messiah was killed by Herod the Great: He was drowned in a sea of blood, as soon as He was born. He was slaughtered like a little lamb... and He was only a few months old... Can you not hear Him weep? His bleating is always resounding within my head together with John's roar: 'It is against the Law for you to have her'... Is it against the Law for me?! No, it isn't! I am allowed everything, because I am 'the king'. I want wine and women here, if Herodias refuses my embraces, and let Salome dance to rouse my senses, which your fearful tales have frightened". And he gets drunk with the girl-mimes of the Court, while in her rooms the mad woman howls curses against the Martyr and threats to You, and Salome, in her rooms, realises what it means to be born of two lewd parents and to give assent to a crime and to have it committed by yielding one's body to the lubricious craving of a filthy man. When Herod comes to his senses, he wants to be informed about You and would like to see You. That is why he is in favour of my visits to You, as he hopes that I may take You to him. Which I will never do as I am not prepared to take Your holiness into a den of foul beasts. And Herodias would like to have You to strike You. And she shouts so holding her stiletto in her hands... And Salome would like to have You, as she saw You at Tiberias, without Your knowing it, last Ethanim and is mad for You... That is the Royal Palace, Master! But I am remaining there so that I can keep an eye on what they intend doing to You. »

« And I am grateful to you for it and the Most High blesses you. That is also a way to serve the Most High in His decrees. »

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« That is what I thought. And that is why I carne. »

« Manaen, since you have come, I ask you to do Me a favour. Do not come towards Jerusalem with Me, but go with the women. I shall go with My disciples along an unknown road and no one will be able to injure Me. But they are women and unprotected and he who is to accompany them is a meek soul and has been taught to offer his other cheek to anyone who should strike him. Your presence will be a safe protection. I understand that it is a sacrifice, but we shall be together in Judaea. My dear friend, do not deny Me this favour. »

« Lord, every desire of Yours is law to Your servant. I am at the service of Your Mother and of the women disciples as from this moment, until You wish so. »

« Thank you. Also this obedience of yours will be written in Heaven. Now, while waiting for the boats, let us cure the sick people who are waiting for Me. »

And Jesus goes down into the kitchen garden where there are stretchers and sick people and He cures them at once, while Jairus and a few friends of Capernaum pay their respects to Him.

In the meantime the women - that is: Porphirea and Salome, Bartholomew's elderly wife and Philip's less elderly one with her young daughters - are busy preparing food for the large crowd of disciples whose hunger will be satisfied with the baskets of fish offered by the people of Bethsaida and Capernaum. And a great deal of gutting the still wriggling silvery fish, of washing them in basins and grilling them is done in the kitchen while Marjiam and some other disciples keep the fire going and bring pitchers of water to help the women.

The meal is soon ready and soon over. And as sufficient boats have already been assembled, all they have to do is to embark for Magdala, on an enchanting lake, which is so serene and angelical in the emerald green setting of its shores.

The hospitable house and gardens of Mary of Magdala welcome the Master and His disciples in the midday sun, and the whole of Magdala rushes to greet the Rabbi, Who is going towards Jerusalem.

And the faithful crowd march nimbly and happily along the cool slopes of the Galilean hills, followed by a comfortable wagon in which there are Johanna with Porphirea, Salome, the wives of Bartholomew and Philip with the latter's two young daughters and the two cheerful little orphans adopted by Johanna, Matthias and Mary, whose aspects have altered beyond recognition from what they were five months ago. Marjiam is marching bravely with the grown up people, and as instructed by Jesus he is in the apostolic group, between Peter and John, and does not miss a word;

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of what Jesus says.

The sun is shining in a very clear sky and gusts of warm wind carry the scents of woods, mint, violets, early lilies of the valley, rose-bushes full of flowers, and above all, the fresh lightly bitterish scent of the blossoms of fruit-trees, which everywhere pour a shower of snow-white petals on the grassland. They all have petals in their hair while they proceed among the continuous warbling of birds, among enticing songs and anxious calls from one thicket to another, between bold males and demure females, while sheep graze, fat through their maternity, and the first little lambs knock their little muzzles against the round udders to increase the secretion of milk, or they jump about the meadows covered with tender grass, like happy children.

They soon reach Nazareth after Cana, where Susanna joins the other women, taking with her the products of her land in baskets and vases and a whole shoot of red roses, all in bud and about to open, « to be offered to Mary » she says.

« I have some, too, see? » says Johanna uncovering a kind of box, in which many roses have been laid among damp moss: « They are the first and the most beautiful ones. But still nothing for Her, Who is so dear! »

I see that every woman has brought food for the Passover pilgrimage and with the food some have brought flowers, some plants for Mary's garden. Porphirea apologises for bringing only a vase of camphor, which is magnificent with its tiny blue-green leaves that exhale their aroma even when they are lightly touched. « Mary wanted this balsamic plant... » she says. And they all praise her for the luxuriant beauty of the young tree. « Oh! I have watched over it all winter, protecting it from frost and hail in my room. Marjiam helped me to take it out in the sun every morning, and bring it in at night... And if there had been no boat and no wagon, that dear boy would have loaded it on his shoulder to carry it to Mary, to do Her and me a favour » says the humble woman, who takes heart more and more through Johanna's kindness and who is beside herself with the joy of going to Jerusalem with the Master, her husband and Marjiam.

« Have you never been there? »

« When my father lived I used to go every year. But later... My mother did not go any more... My brothers would have taken me, but I was a help to my mother and she would not let me go. Then I married Simon and my health has not been very good. The journey would have taken Simon a long time and he was bored... So I stayed at home waiting for him... The Lord saw my desire... and it was the same as if I offered my sacrifice in the Temple... » says the meek woman.

And Johanna, who is near her, lays her hand on her wonderful

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plaits, saying: « My dear! ». And there is so much love, understanding and meaning in that adjective.

There is Nazareth... there is the house of Mary of Alphaeus who is already in the arms of her sons; and with her hands, which are dripping and red as she is doing the washing, she caresses them, and then, drying her hands in her coarse apron, she runs to embrace Jesus... And there is the house of Alphaeus of Sarah, immediately before Mary's house. Alphaeus tells his oldest grandchild to run and tell Mary, and he strides towards Jesus holding an armful of grandchildren in his arms and he greets Him together with the children held in his arms like a bunch of flowers offered to Jesus. And there is Mary: She appears at the door, in the sunshine, wearing a light blue dress, which is slightly faded, with Her golden hair shining on Her virginal forehead and forming a heavy knot of plaits on Her nape; She falls on the chest of Her Son, Who kisses Her with all His love.

The others stop discreetly to leave them free in their first meeting. But Mary moves away, turns round, Her face, unaltered by age, is now rosy because of the surprise and Her bright smiles, and She greets with Her angelical voice: « Peace to you, servants of the Lord and disciples of My Son. Peace to you, sisters in the Lord » and She exchanges a sisterly kiss with the women disciples, who have come off the wagon.

« Oh! Marjiam! I will no longer be able to hold you in My arms! You are a man now. But come to the Mother of all good children, I can still give you a kiss. My dear! My God bless you and make you grow in His ways, as strongly as your young body is growing, and even more. Son, we must take him to his grandfather. He will be so happy to see him thus » She then says turning round to Jesus.

She then embraces James and Judas of Alphaeus. And She gives them the news that certainly pleases them most of all: « Simon this year is coming with Me, as a disciple of the Master. He told Me. »

And She greets one by one the more familiar ones, the more influential ones, saying graceful words to each of them. Manaen is led towards Her by Jesus, Who introduces him as Her escort in the journey to Jerusalem.

« Are You not coming with us, Son? »

« Mother, I have other places to evangelize. We shall meet at Bethany. »

« May Your will be done now and always. Thank you, Manaen. You: a human angel; our guardians: the angels in Heaven; and we shall be as safe as if we were in the Holy of Holies. » And She offers Her little hand to Manaen in token of friendship. And the knight, who has been brought up in courtly manners, kneels down to kiss the gentle hand offered to him.

In the meantime the flowers and what is to be left in Nazareth

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has been unloaded. The wagon is taken to one of the stables in town.

The little house looks like a rosary with the roses that the women disciples have strewn everywhere. But Porphirea's plant, laid on a table, is the one that is mostly admired by Mary, Who has it taken to a suitable place according to the directions of Peter's wife.

They cannot certainly all go into the little house or the kitchen garden, which is not an estate, but is seems to rise toward the sky and become airy, so many are the clouds of blossoms on the trees in the garden. And Judas of Alphaeus asks Mary smiling: « Have You picked Your branch for Your amphora today? »

« Most certainly, Judas. And I was contemplating it when you arrived... »

« And You were dreaming once again, Mother, of Your remote mystery... » says Jesus, embracing Her with His left arm and drawing Her close to His heart.

Mary raises Her flushed face and says with a sigh: « Yes, Son, and I was dreaming again of the first throb of Your heart within Me... »

Jesus says: « Let the women disciples, the apostles, Marjiam, the shepherd-disciples, John the priest, Stephen, Hermas and Manaen stay here. The others can spread out looking for lodgings... »

« Many can stay with me... » shouts Simon of Alphaeus from the door where he has been stopped. « I am their fellow-disciple and I claim them. »

« Oh! brother, come in, that I may kiss your » says Jesus effusively, while Alphaeus of Sarah, Ishmael and Aser, the two disciples, formerly donkey drivers, of Nazareth, say: « Come to our houses! »

The disciples who have not been chosen to stay, go away and the door can be closed... but it is opened once again immediately afterwards, for the arrival of Mary of Alphaeus, who cannot stay away, even if her washing is going to be spoiled. They are about forty people and they spread through the warm peaceful garden, until food is handed out, and everybody finds it has a celestial flavour, so happy they are to take it in the house of the Lord, and handed out by Mary.

Simon comes back after settling the disciples and says: « You did not call me with the others, but I am Your brother and I am staying here just the same. »

« Very well, Simon, come here. I wanted you to be here to meet Mary. Many of you know Mary as the "mother"; some as the "spouse". But no one knows Her as the "virgin" Mary. I want you to become acquainted with Her in this garden in bloom, to which your hearts desire to come when you are compelled to be far away, as to a resting place after your apostolate work.

I listened to you apostles, disciples and relatives speak, and I

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heard your impressions, your recollections and your statements concerning My Mother. I will transfigure all that, which is admirable although still very human, into a supernatural knowledge. Because My Mother is to be transfigured, before Me, in the eyes of the most deserving, to show Her as She is. You see a woman. A woman different from other women, because of Her holiness, but in actual fact you see Her as a soul enveloped in a body, just like all women Her sisters. But now I wish to reveal to you the soul of My Mother. Her true and eternal beauty.

Come here, Mother. Do not blush. Do not withdraw shyly, sweet dove of God. Your Son is the Word of God and He can speak of You and of Your mystery, of Your mysteries, o sublime Mystery of God. Let us sit down here, in the pleasant shade of the trees in blossom near the house, near Your holy room. Thus! Let us lift this fluttering curtain, so that waves of holiness and Paradise may come out of this virginal room, to saturate us all with Your virtues... Yes. Me as well. That I may smell of You, o perfect Virgin, so that I may be able to bear the stench of the world, in order that I may see purity after saturating My eyes with Your Purity... Marjiam, John, Stephen come here, and you, women disciples, stand directly in front of the open door of the chaste abode of the most Chaste amongst women. And you, My friends, stand behind. And You, My beloved Mother, here, beside Me.

A little while ago I said to you: "the eternal beauty of the soul of My Mother". I am the Word, and thus I can make use of words without erring. I said: eternal, not immortal. And I deliberately said so. He is immortal who, after being born, does not die. Thus the souls of the just are immortal in Heaven, the souls of sinners are immortal in Hell, because a soul, once it has been created, does not die but to grace. But a soul has life, it exists from that moment that God thinks it (1). It is the Thought of God that creates it. The soul of My Mother was thought by God from everlasting. It is therefore eternal in its beauty, in which God poured every perfection to receive delight and comfort from it.

It is written in the Book of our ancestor Solomon, who foresaw You, and can thus be called Your prophet: "God possessed me from the beginning of His works, from the very beginning, before Creation. From everlasting I was firmly set, from the beginning, before the Earth came into being. The deep was not yet, and I was conceived. There were no springs to gush with water, the mountains were not yet settled on their huge mass, and I already was. Before the hills I came to birth. He had not yet made the Earth, the rivers, or the poles of the world, and I already existed. When He

(1) The verb to think, in this particular case, means to create, as is clarified by the sentence which immediately follows it: « It is the Thought of God that creates it. »

prepared the sky and Heaven I was present. When with inviolable law He closed the abyss under the vault, when He fixed firm the celestial vault and He suspended there the sources of water, when He assigned the sea its boundaries and He ordered the water not to pass its limit, when He laid down the foundations of the earth, I was by His side arranging everything. I was always joyfully at play in His presence. I played in the universe".

Yes, Mother, with Whom God, Immense, Sublime, Virgin, Uncreated, was pregnant and carried You like a most sweet burden, rejoicing at feeling You stir within Him, when with Your smiles He created the Universe! He laboriously gave birth to You to give You to the world, most gentle soul, born of the Deity to be the "Virgin", the Perfection of Creation, the Light of Paradise, the Advice of God, Who looking at You forgave Sin, because You alone, by Yourself can love as all Mankind put together cannot love. In You is the Forgiveness of God! You are the Treatment of God, You are the caress of the Eternal Father on the wound that man inflicted on God! In You is the Salvation of the world, Mother of the Love Incarnate and of the granted Redeemer! The soul of My Mother! Merged in Love with My Father, I looked at You within Me, o soul of My Mother!... And Your splendour, Your prayer, the idea of being carried by You comforted Me for ever and ever for My destiny of sorrow and inhuman experience of what the corrupted world is for the most Perfect God. Thank You, Mother! When I came I was already full of Your consolation, I descended perceiving You alone, Your perfume, Your song, Your love... Joy, My joy!

Now that you know that one only is the Woman in Whom there is no stain, that one only Human Being costs the Redeemer no injury, listen to the second transfiguration of Mary, the Elect Daughter of God.

It was a clear afternoon in the month of Adar and the trees were in bloom in the silent kitchen garden, and Mary, Joseph's bride, had picked a flowery branch to replace the one that was in Her room. Mary, taken from the Temple to adorn a house of saints, had recently come to Nazareth. And with Her soul divided among Temple, house and Heaven, She was looking at the flowery branch, considering that by means of a similar branch, which had bloomed in an unusual manner, a branch cut off in this garden in the depth of winter and had bloomed as if it were springtime before the Ark of the Lord - perhaps the Sun-God beaming in His Glory had warmed it - God had revealed His will to Her... And She was thinking also that on the day of their wedding Joseph had brought Her other flowers, but never like the first one on the thin petals of which it was written: "I want You united to Joseph"... She was thinking of many things... And while thinking She ascended to God. Her

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hands were busy with distaff and spindle and were spinning a yam that was thinner than the hair of Her young head...

Her soul was weaving a carpet of love, moving quickly, like a shuttle on a loom, from the earth to Heaven. From the needs of the house, of Joseph, to those of the soul, of God. And She sang and prayed. And the carpet was forming on the mystical loom, it rolled off from the earth to Heaven, it ascended to get lost up there... Formed with what? With the thin, perfect strong threads of Her virtues, with the flying thread of the shuttle, which She thought was "Hers", whereas it was God's: the shuttle of the Will of God, on which was rolled the will of the little, great Virgin of Israel, Unknown to the World, Known to God, rolled and made one with the Will of the Lord. And the carpet was adorned with the flowers of love, of purity, with palms of peace and palms of glory, with sweet-smelling violets, with jasmines... Every virtue flowered on the carpet of love, which the Virgin of God unrolled invitingly from the earth to Heaven. And as the carpet was not sufficient She thrust Her heart singing: "Let My Beloved come into His garden and eat the fruit of His trees... Let My Beloved come down to His garden, to the bed of spices, to pasture in the gardens and gather lilies. I am My Beloved's and My Beloved is Mine. He pastures among the lilies!". And from infinite distance, among torrents of Light, a Voice came that human ear cannot hear and human throat cannot utter. And it said: "How beautiful You are, My love! How beautiful You are!... Your lips distill wild honey... You are a garden enclosed, a sealed fountain, My sister, My promised bride... " and the two voices joined together to sing the eternal truth: "Love is stronger than death. Nothing can quench or drown 'our' love". And the Virgin was thus transfigured when Gabriel descended and called Her back to the Earth, with his ardour, and joined Her soul to Her body again, so that She might hear and understand the request of Him, Who had called Her "Sister" but wanted Her to be His "Bride".

And the Mystery took place there... And a modest woman, the most modest of all women, Who was not even aware of the instinctive incentive of the flesh, fainted before the Angel of God, because even an angel upsets the humility and modesty of the Virgin, and only when She heard him speak She calmed down, and She believed, and She said the word, whereby "their" love became Flesh and will defeat Death and no flood will be able to quench it or wickedness to submerge it... »

Jesus bends gently over Mary Who has slid to His feet, almost ecstatically, in the recollection of the remote hour, shining with a special light, which seems to issue from Her soul, and He asks Her in a low voice: « Which was Your reply, Most Pure Mother, to him who assured You that by becoming Mother of God, You would not

lose Your perfect Virginity? »

And Mary, almost in a dream, slowly, smiling, Her eyes shining with joyful tears: « I am the handmaid of the Lord! Let it be done to Me according to your Word » and She reclines Her head on the knees of Her Son, adoring Him.

Jesus covers Her with His mantle, concealing Her from everybody's eyes and He says: « And it was done. All will be done until the end. Until Her next transfiguration and the one after that. She will always be the "Handmaid of God". She will always act according to what "the Word" says. My Mother! That is My Mother. And you ought to begin to become fully acquainted with Her holy Figure... Mother! Mother! Raise You face, My Beloved... Call Your devout admirers back to the Earth, where we are for the time being... » He says uncovering Mary after a little while, during which no noise was heard except the humming of bees and the gurgling of the little fountain.

Mary raises Her face wet with tears and whispers: « Why did You do that to Me, Son? The secrets of the King are sacred... »

« But the King can reveal them whenever He wishes. Mother, I did it, so that the words of the Prophet may be understood: "A Woman will enclose the Man in Herself", and the words of the other Prophet: "The Virgin will conceive and give birth to a Son". And also that My disciples, who are struck with horror at too many things that they consider degrading for the Word of God, may have, as counterbalance, many other things confirming them in the joy of being "Mine". Thus they will no longer be scandalised and will conquer Heaven... Now those who have to go to the house where they are guests, may go. I am staying with the women and Marjiam. All the men must be here tomorrow at dawn, because I want to take you to a place nearby. We shall then come back and say goodbye to the women, and then we shall go to Capernaum to gather other disciples and tell them to follow the women... »

348. The Transfiguration and the Curing of the Epileptic.

3rd December 1945.

Which man has never seen, at least once, a clear dawn in the month of March? If such a man exists, he must be very unhappy, because he is unaware of one of the most beautiful charms of nature awakening in springtime, when she becomes the virgin girl as creation must have been on its first day.

In such graceful charm, which is pure from every point of view, from its fresh dewy herbs, to the little flowers that are opening, like babies who are born, to the first smile of daylight, to the birds that awake flapping their wings and utter their first chirps, which sound like questions and are a prelude to all their singing conversation

of the day, to the very smell of the air that during the night has lost all pollution of dust, smoke and smell of human bodies through the lavation of dew and the absence of man, Jesus is proceeding with His apostles and disciples. Simon of Alphaeus is with them, too. They are going southwards, crossing the hills that encircle Nazareth and a torrent, and are walking across a narrow plain between the Nazarene hills and a group of mountains to the east. These mountains are preceded by the semi-truncate cone of the Tabor, the top of which strangely reminds me of the cocked-hat of our carabineers, seen in profile.

They reach it. Jesus stops and says: « Peter, John and James of Zebedee will come up the mountain with Me. The rest will spread out at its foot, going in groups towards the roads that run along it, to preach the Lord. I want to be back in Nazareth by evening. So do not go too far away. Peace be with you. » And addressing the three He had called, He says: « Let us go. » And He begins to climb without turning back any more and with such a quick pace that Peter finds it difficult to follow Him.

When they rest for a moment, Peter, flushed and perspiring, asks Him panting: « But where are we going? There are no houses on the mountain. On the top there is only that old fortress. Do You want to go and preach there? »

« I would have gone up the other side. But you can see that I have turned My back to it. We are not going to the fortress, and those who are in it, will not even see us. I am going to be united to My Father, and I wanted you to be with Me, because I love you. Come on, quick! »

« Oh! My Lord! Could we not go a little slower, instead, and speak of what we heard and saw yesterday, which kept us awake all night to talk about it? »

« You always go quickly to the appointments with God. Come on, Simon Peter. I will let you rest up there. » And He resumes climbing...

(Jesus says: « Put here the Transfiguration seen on August 5th 1944, but without the dictation added to it. After copying the Transfiguration of last year, P.M. will copy what I am going to show you now. »).

5th August 1944.

I am with my Jesus upon a high mountain. Peter, James and John are with Jesus. They climb higher up and their eyes rove over open horizons, the details of which are well defined, even in the distance, in the beautiful clear day.

The mountain is not part of a range of mountains like the one in Judaea; it rises isolated, with the east in front, with respect to the

place where we are, the north to the left, the south to the right, and at the rear, to the west, the summit, which is about one hundred steps higher up. It is very high and the view extends over a very wide range.

The lake of Gennesaret looks like a strip of sky that has come down to be set in the green of the earth, an oval turquoise enclosed by emeralds of various shades, a mirror that trembles and ripples in a light breeze, and on which boats in full sail glide as nimbly as sea-gulls, lightly bent towards the blue water, exactly with the grace of the flight of a kingfisher skimming the water in search of prey. Then a vein flows out from the vast turquoise, it is pale blue where the river-bed is wider, and darker where the banks narrow and the water is deeper and in the shade of the trees that grow luxuriantly near the river, nourished by its water. The Jordan looks like an almost straight stroke of a brush in the greenery of the plain.

Some villages are scattered here and there on both sides of the river. Some are only a handful of houses, others are somewhat larger, with the airs of little towns. The main roads are yellowish lines among the green. But here, on the side of the mountain, the plain is more cultivated and fertile and it is really beautiful. The various hues of the several growths are a most pleasant sight in the beautiful sunshine of a very clear day.

It must be springtime, perhaps the month of March, if I take into account the latitude of Palestine, because I see the corn, which is already high, although still green, waving like a blue-green sea and I see the crests of the early fruit-trees decorate this little vegetable sea with something like tiny white and rosy clouds, and meadows strewn with the flowers of the high hay, where grazing sheep look like piles of snow spread here and there on the green grass.

Just near the mountain, on the low short hills at its foot, there are two little towns, one to the south and the other to the north. The very fertile plain extends particularly and more widely to the south.

Jesus, after a short rest in the cool shade of a group of trees, a pause which He certainly granted out of pity for Peter, who clearly has great difficulty in climbing, resumes going up. He goes almost to the top, where there is a grassy tableland with a semicircle of trees near the side of the mountain.

« You may rest, My friends. I am going over there to pray. » And He points to a large stone, a rock that appears on the surface of the mountain and is not near the slope, but it lies internally, towards the summit.

Jesus kneels on the grass and rests His hands and head on the rock, in the posture that He will take also when praying in

Gethsemane. The top of the mountain protects Him from the sun. The remaining part of the grass-covered clearing is in the bright sun as far as the bordering trees, where the apostles are sitting in the shade.

Peter takes off his sandals, shakes off dust and grit and remains barefooted, with his tired feet on the cool grass, almost lying down, with his head resting on an emerald green tuft, as a pillow. James does the same, but in order to be comfortable he looks for a tree, against which he leans his mantle and rests his back. John remains sitting looking at the Master. But the calm of the place, the fresh breeze, silence and fatigue overcome him also and he droops his head and eyes. None of them are fast asleep, but they are in the state of summer drowsiness that stuns people.

They are roused by a brilliancy that is so striking that it overwhelms the brightness of the sun and spreads and penetrates even into the shade of bushes and trees where the apostles are.

They open their eyes and are astonished at seeing Jesus transfigured. He is exactly as I see in the visions of Paradise. Of course He has no Wounds and there is no banner of the Cross. But the majesty of His Face and Body is the same, the brightness is also the same and His garment, too, is identical: from deep red it has changed into an immaterial fabric of diamonds and pearls, in which He is clad in Heaven. His Face shines with an extremely intense sidereal light in which His sapphire eyes are beaming. He looks taller, as if His glorification had increased His height. I cannot say whether the brilliancy, which makes even the tableland phosphorescent, emanates entirely from Him, or whether His own is mingled with the brightness that all the light of the Universe and of Heaven has concentrated on Him. I can only say that it is something indescribable'

Jesus is now standing, I would say that He is raised off the ground, because between Him and the green meadow there is something like a luminous vapour, a space consisting only of a light upon which He seems to be standing. But it is so bright that I may be wrong, and the fact that I no longer see any green grass under Jesus' feet may be due to the bright light that vibrates and waves, as is often seen in bonfires. It is a snow-white incandescent light. Jesus is looking at the sky and smiling at a vision that enraptures Him.

The apostles are almost afraid and they call Him, as He is transfigured so much that He no longer appears to be their Master. « Master, Master » they call in low voices, full of anxiety.

He does not hear.

« He is in an ecstasy » says Peter trembling. « I wonder what He sees? »

The three are now standing up. They would like to approach

Jesus, but they dare not.

The light increases further because of two lights that descend from the sky and take place at Jesus' sides. When they settle on the tableland, their veils open and two majestic bright personages appear. One is more elderly than the other, with a sharp severe countenance, and he has a double-pointed beard. Two horns of light depart from his forehead and make me understand that he is Moses. The other one is emaciated, bearded and hairy, more or less like the Baptist, whom I would say he resembles in height, leanness, structure and severity. While the light emanating from Moses is white, like that of Jesus, particularly with regard to the beams issuing from their foreheads, the light of Elijah is like the bright flame of the sun.

The two Prophets take a reverential attitude before their God Incarnate and although He speaks to them with familiarity, they do not drop their respectful attitude. I do not understand even one of the words they speak.

The three apostles fall on their knees trembling and covering their faces with their hands. They would like to look, but they are afraid. At last Peter says: « Master, listen to me. » Jesus looks round smiling towards His Peter, who takes heart again and says: « It is wonderful to be here with You, Moses and Elijah. If You wish, we will make three tents, one for You, one for Moses and one for Elijah, and we will stay here to serve you... »

Jesus looks at him again and smiles more warmly. He looks also at John and James. A glance that is a loving embrace. Also Moses and Elijah stare at the three. Their eyes flash fire. They must be like rays piercing hearts.

The apostles dare not say anything more. Frightened as they are, they lapse into silence. They look as if they were inebriated, like people who are bewildered. But when a veil, which is neither fog, nor a cloud, nor a ray, envelops the Three glorious personages behind a screen that is even brighter than the one that surrounded them previously, and hides them from the sight of the apostles, a powerful harmonious Voice vibrates filling the air, the three bow down with their faces on the grass.

« This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased. Listen to Him. »

Peter, on falling flat on his face, exclaims: « Have mercy on me, a sinner! It is the Glory of God descending! ». James does not utter a single word. John whispers with a sigh, as if he were about to swoon: « The Lord is speaking! »

Even when there is total silence again, none of them dare raise their heads. Thus they do not even see that the light has come back to its natural state of daylight and that Jesus is alone and has become the usual Jesus wearing His red mantle.

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He walks towards them smiling, touches them and calls them by their names. « Stand up. It is I. Be not afraid » He says, because the three dare not raise their faces and are imploring mercy for their sins, fearing that the Lamb of God wants to show them to the Most High. « Stand up, now. I order you » repeats Jesus authoritatively. They look up and see Jesus smile.

« Oh! Master, my God! » exclaims Peter. « How shall we be able to live near You, now that we have seen Your Glory? How shall we be able to live among men and among ourselves, since we are sinners, and we have heard the Voice of God? »

« You will have to live beside Me and see My glory until the end. Be worthy of that because the time is close at hand. Obey My Father and yours. Let us now go back among men because I came to stay with them and to bring God to them. Let us go. Be holy, strong and faithful in remembrance of this hour. You will take, part in My greater glory. But do not speak now to anybody of what you have seen. Do not tell your companions either. When the Son of man has risen from the dead and gone back to the glory of the Father, then you will speak. Because it will be necessary to believe then, to take part in My Kingdom. »

« But is Elijah not to come to prepare people for Your Kingdom? So the rabbis say. »

« Elijah has already come to prepare the way for the Lord. Everything is happening as was revealed. But those who teach Revelation do not know and do not understand it, neither do they see or recognise the signs of the time or the messengers of God. Elijah has come back once. He will come for the second time when the last time is close at hand to prepare the last for God. He now came to prepare the first for the Christ, and men refused to acknowledge him, they tortured him and put him to death. They will do the same to the Son of man, because men do not want to acknowledge what is good for them. »

The three lower their heads and become pensive and sad while descending the mountain with Jesus by the same road they came up.

[3rd December 1945].

... And it is Peter again who says, while stopping half way down: « Ah! Lord! I also say what Your Mother said yesterday: "Why did You do that to us?", and I also say: "Why did You tell us that?". Your last words have destroyed in our hearts the joy of the glorious sight! This has been a great day of fear! First we were frightened by the great light that roused us, it was stronger than if the whole mountain had been ablaze, or the moon had descended to light up the tableland right in front of us; then Your sight and Your rising from the ground as if You were going to fly away. I

was afraid that You, being disgusted with the iniquity of Israel, were going back to Heaven, perhaps by order of the Most High. Then I was frightened when I saw Moses appear, as the people of his days could not look at him without a veil, so brightly the reflection of God shone on his face, and he was still a man, whereas now he is a blessed spirit inflamed with God, and Elijah... Divine Mercy! I thought I had come to my last moment, and all the sins of my life, since the time I was a child and used to steal fruit in the pantry, to the last one, when some days ago I gave You wrong advice, came to my mind. And trembling with fear I repented! Then I got the impression that those two just men were fond of me... and I dared to speak. But even their love frightened me, because I do not deserve the love of such spirits. And then!... The most dreadful of all fears! The voice of God!... Jehovah has spoken! He said to us: "Listen to Him!". You! And He proclaimed You: "His Beloved Son in Whom He is well pleased". What a fright! Jehovah!... to us!... It was certainly Your power only that kept us alive!... When You touched us, and Your fingers burnt like points of fire, I had the last fright. I thought that the hour had come when I was to be judged and that the Angel touched me to take my soul to the Most High... But how could Your Mother see... hear... and live, in that hour that You told us yesterday, and not die, and She was alone, a young girl, without You? »

« Mary, the Immaculate, could not be afraid of God. Eve was not afraid, while she was innocent. And I was there. I, the Father and the Spirit, We, Who are in Heaven and on the earth and everywhere, and Who had our Tabernacle in the heart of Mary » says Jesus gently.

« How wonderful!... But later You spoke of death... And our joy came to an end... But why all that just to us three? Was it not better to give the vision of Your glory to everybody? »

« Just because you become senseless when you hear Me speak of death, and death by torture, of the Son of man, the Man-God decided to fortify you for that hour and for the future, by means of the foreknowledge of what I will be after Death. Remember all that, so that you may tell people in due time... Have you understood? »

« Oh! yes, Lord. It is not possible to forget it. And it would be quite useless to tell people. They would say that we are "drunk". »

They resume their way down towards the valley. But when they arrive at a certain point, Jesus takes a very steep side path towards Endor, that is in the opposite direction to the place where He left the disciples.

« We will not find them » says James. « The sun is beginning to set. They will be gathering where You left them, waiting for You. »

« Come and do not worry about foolish thoughts. » In fact, where the brushwood opens on to a grassland that slopes

gently as far as the main road, they see at the foot of the mountain the whole group of the disciples, who are very excited and with them there are some curious wayfarers and some scribes who have come from I do not know where.

« Alas! Scribes!... And they are discussing already! » says Peter pointing at them. And he walks down the last few metres halfheartedly.

But the apostles down there have also seen them and they point them out to one another and then they begin to run towards Jesus shouting: « How come, Master, You are here? We were about to go to the appointed place. But we have been held back by a discussion with scribes and by the entreaties of a worried father. »

« What were you discussing? »

« We were disputing about a possessed man. The scribes sneered at us because we were not able to free him. Judas of Kerioth tried several times out of pique. But in vain. So we said to them: "Try yourselves". They replied: "We are not exorcisers". Some people coming from Caslot-Tabor happened to pass by and among them there were two exorcisers. But they did not succeed either. Here is the father coming to implore You. Listen to him. »

A man in fact comes forward imploring and he kneels before Jesus, Who is still on the sloping meadow and is thus at least three metres higher up than the road and clearly visible to everybody.

The man says to Him: « Master, I went to Capernaum with my son, looking for You. I took my unhappy son to You, that You might free him, as You expel demons and You cure all diseases. He is often possessed by a mute spirit. When it takes him, he can but shout hoarsely, like an animal that is choking. The spirit throws him on the ground, where he rolls grinding his teeth, foaming like a horse biting the bit, or he injures himself, or he risks dying drowned or burned or smashed, because the spirit more than once has thrown him into the water, in the fire or down the steps. Your disciples tried, but they were not successful. Oh! Good Lord! Have mercy on me and on my child! »

Jesus blazes with majesty while He shouts: « O wicked generation, o satanic crowd, rebel legion, incredulous and cruel people of Hell, how long will I have to be in touch with you? How long shall I have to put up with you? » He is so imposing that there is dead silence at once and the sneers of the scribes stop.

Jesus says to the father: « Stand up and bring your son here. »

The man goes away and comes back with other men and in the middle of the group there is a boy about twelve or fourteen years old. He is a handsome boy, but looks rather dull-witted, as if he were bewildered. There is a long red wound on his forehead and under it an old white scar. As soon as he sees Jesus Who stares at him with His magnetic eyes, he utters a hoarse cry and his whole

body writhes convulsively and he falls to the ground foaming and rolling his eyes, so that only the white globes can be seen, while he rolls on the ground in a typical epileptic fit.

Jesus comes forward a few steps to be close to him and says: « How long has that been happening to him? Speak in a loud voice, so that everybody may hear you. »

And while the crowds press closer and the scribes go above Jesus to dominate the scene, the man shouting says: « Since he was a boy. I told You: he often falls on the fire, into water or down the steps or from trees, because the spirit attacks him suddenly and throws him about to kill him. He is covered with scars and burns. He is lucky that the flames of the fireplace have not blinded him. No doctor, no exorciser, not even Your disciples have been able to cure him. But You, if, as I firmly believe, can do something, have mercy on us and help us. »

« If you can believe thus, everything is possible to Me, because everything is granted to those who believe. »

« Oh! Lord, I do believe! But if I do not believe sufficiently, increase my faith, so that it may be complete and I may obtain the miracle » says the man weeping, while he kneels beside his son, who has fallen into a more severe convulsive fit.

Jesus straightens Himself up, takes two steps back, and while the circle of the crowd presses closer and closer, He shouts loudly: « Cursed spirit, who make this boy deaf and mute and torture him, I order you: go out of him and never go back into him! »

The boy, although lying on the ground, bounces frightfully, arches his back with feet and head on the ground, utters inhuman cries; and after a last bounce, he turns round, falls flat on his face striking his forehead and mouth against a large stone emerging from the grass, which becomes stained with blood, and lies motionless.

« He is dead! » many shout. « Poor boy! », « Poor father! » say the better ones pitying them. And the scribes, sneering say: « The Nazarene has served you well! », or: « Master, how come? Beelzebub has made You cut a bad figure this time... » and they laugh spitefully.

Jesus replies to no one. Not even to the father, who has turned his son round and is wiping the blood off the injured forehead and lips, moaning and imploring Jesus. And the Master bends, takes child by the hand. And the boy opens his eyes with a deep sigh, as if he were awaking from sleep, he sits up and smiles. Jesus draws him close to Himself, makes him stand up and hands him to his father, while the crowds cheer enthusiastically, and the scribes run away chased by the mockery of the crowd...

« And now let us go » says Jesus to His disciples. And after dismissing the crowds He goes round the side of the mountain

3-1678

towards the road along which He came in the morning.

Jesus says:

« And here P.M. can now put the comment on the vision of August 5th 1944 (copybook A 930) beginning from the words: "I am not choosing you for the only purpose of making you acquainted with the sadness and the sorrows of your Master. Those who are able to stay with Me sharing My grief must share My glory as well". And you, My faithful little John, have a rest, because you well deserve it. May My peace bring joy to you. »

[5th August 1944].

Jesus says:

« [...]. I am not choosing you for the only purpose of making you acquainted with the sadness and the sorrows of your Master. Those who are able to stay with Me sharing My grief must share My joy as well.

When you are before your Jesus and He shows Himself to you, I want you to have the same feelings of humility and repentance as My apostles had. You must never be proud. You would be punished by losing Me. You must always bear in mind Who I am and who you are. You must always remember your faults and My perfection so that your heart may be cleansed by contrition. But at the same time you must put so much trust in Me.

I said: "Be not afraid. Stand up. Let us go. Let us go among men, because I have come to be with them. Be holy, strong and faithful in remembrance of this hour". I say so also to you and to all My favourites among men, to those who have Me in a special way.

Be not afraid of Me. I show Myself to you to elevate you all, not to incinerate you.

Stand up: may the joy of the gift give you energy and do not let it blunt your minds with the savour of quietism, considering yourselves already saved because I have shown Heaven to you.

Let us go together among men. I have invited you to superhuman deeds by means of superhuman visions and lessons, so that you may be of greater help to Me. I make you partners in My work. But I have never had and I never have a minute's rest. Because Evil never rests and Good must be always active to make void the work of the Enemy as much as possible. We shall rest when the Time is accomplished. Now we must proceed untiringly, we must work continuously and sacrifice ourselves unremittingly for the harvest of God.

May My continuous contact sanctify you, may My continuous teaching fortify you and may My fond love for you make you faithful against all snares. Do not be like the old rabbis who taught the Revelation but did not believe in it, to the extent of not

being able to recognise the signs of the time and the messengers of God. Ensure that you recognise the precursors of the Christ in His second coming, because the powers of the Antichrist are on the march and, making an exception on the limit I have imposed on Myself, because I know that you drink in certain truths not with a supernatural spirit but out of thirst for human curiosity, I solemnly tell you that what many people think is the victory over the Antichrist, the peace now close at hand, will be only a pause to give the Enemy of the Christ time to acquire new strength, to dress his wounds and gather his army for a fiercer struggle.

Since you are the "voices" of your Jesus, of the King of kings, of the faithful and truthful king who judges and fights with justice and will defeat the Beast and his servants and prophets, ensure that you know what is your Good and follow it for ever. Let no false appearance entice you, let no persecution terrify you. Let your "voices" repeat My words. Let your lives be devoted to this work. And if on the earth you should share the same destiny as the Christ, as His Precursor and Elijah, a sanguinary destiny or a destiny subjected to moral torture, smile at the future safe destiny you will enjoy with the Christ, with His Precursor and His Prophet.

We shall be equal in our work, in our grief, in our glory. Here I am the Master and the Example. There I shall be the Reward and the King. To have Me will be your blessedness. It will mean forgetting sorrow. It will be what no revelation is yet sufficient to make you understand, because the joy of the future life is by far superior to the possibility of imagination of a human creature still joined to a human body. »

349. Lesson to the Disciples after the Transfiguration.

4th December 1945.

They are now once again in the house in Nazareth: or, more precisely, they are scattered on the terrace of the olive-trees, waiting to part and go to rest. And they have lit a little bonfire to illuminate the night, because it is already dark and the moon rises late. It is a warm evening, « even too warm » state the fishermen, who foresee rain. And it is pleasant to be there, all together, the women in the flowery garden round Mary, the men up here; and Jesus on the edge of the terrace, between the two groups, replying to various questions of the disciples, while the women listen attentively. They must have spoken of the lunatic who was cured at the foot of the mountain and they are still making comments.

« It took You to do it! » exclaims His cousin Simon.

« Oh! But those falcons were not convinced even when they saw that their own exorcisers could not do anything, although they

admitted that they had used the strongest formulae! » says Solomon, the ferryman, shaking his head.

« And even if they tell the scribes their conclusions, they will not persuade them. »

« Of course not! I got the impression that they spoke well, did they not? » asks one whom I do not know.

« Very well. They excluded all demoniac witchcraft from Jesus, power stating that they felt they were pervaded with a deep peace, when the Master worked the miracle, whereas when it comes from a wicked power, they said that they feel it is painful » replies Hermas.

« However, it was a strong spirit! It did not want to go away! But why did it not always possess the boy? Was it an expelled or lost spirit, or was the boy so holy that he expelled it by himself? » asks another disciple whose name I do not know.

Jesus, without being questioned, replies: « I have explained several times to you that every disease, as it is a torment and a disorder, may conceal Satan and Satan may hide himself in a disease, causing it and making use of it to torture a soul and make it curse God. The boy was ill, he was not possessed. He is a pure soul. That is why I was so pleased to free his soul from the most cunning demon who wanted to dominate it and make it impure. »

« In that case, if it was only a simple disease, why did we not succeed in curing it? » asks Judas of Kerioth.

« Of course it is obvious that the exorcisers could not do anything if he was not possessed! But we... » remarks Thomas.

And Judas of Kerioth, who is not prepared to swallow his humiliating failure, as he made several attempts with the child with the only result of getting him into a frenzy if not into a convulsive fit, says: « On the contrary, we seemed to be making things worse. Do you remember, Philip? You were helping me and you heard and saw how he gibed at me. He even said to me: "Go away! Of the two of us, you are the worse demon". Which made the scribes laugh at me behind my back. »

« And were you sorry for that? » asks Jesus with indifference.

« Of course! It is not pleasant to be gibed at. And it is not useful when one is Your apostle. One loses one's authority. »

« When you have God with you, you are authoritative even if the whole World sneers at you, Judas of Simon. »

« Very well. But increase our power, at least the power of Your apostles, so that we may not suffer such defeats again. »

« It is not right for Me to increase your power and it would be of no avail. You must do that by yourselves, in order to succeed. It is through your insufficiency that you failed, and also because you diminished what I gave you by means of unholy elements, which you wanted to add hoping to attain greater triumphs. »

« Are You referring to me, Lord? » asks the Iscariot.

3-1681

« You know whether you deserve it. I am speaking to everybody. »

Bartholomew asks: « Then, what is necessary to cast out such demons? »

« Prayer and fasting. Nothing else is required. Pray and fast. And not only in your bodies. It is good for you that your pride has been left devoid of satisfaction. Satisfied pride makes mind and soul listless and prayer becomes tepid and inert, just as the body, when it is too full, becomes sleepy and sluggish. And now let us go and have a well deserved rest. Tomorrow morning at dawn, you will all be on the road to Cana, except Manaen and the shepherd disciples. Go. Peace be with you. »

But He keeps Isaac and Manaen and gives them special instructions for the following day, when the women disciples and Mary will begin their Passover pilgrimage with Simon of Alphaeus and Alphaeus of Sarah.

« You will go through Esdraelon, so that Marjiam may see his old grandfather. You will give the peasants the purse that I asked Judas of Kerioth to give you. And with the other purse, which I gave you a short while ago, you will assist any poor people you come across on your way. When you arrive in Jerusalem go to Bethany and tell them to wait for Me at the new moon of Nisan. I will not be very late after that date. I entrust the person Who is dearest to Me and the women disciples to you. But I am not worried as I know they will be safe. Go. We will meet at Bethany and will be together for a long time. »

He blesses them, and while they disappear in the night, He jumps clown into the kitchen garden and goes into the house, in which the women disciples and His Mother are already tying with Marjiam the strings of the travelling bags and arranging everything for their absence, which they do not know how long it will last.

350. The Tribute to the Temple and the Stater in the Mouth of the Fish.

5th December 1945.

The two boats that -they took to go back to Capernaum are gliding on an extraordinarily calm lake: a real large slab of blue crystal, which becomes one smooth piece again, as soon as the two boats pass. But they are not the boats of Peter and James, but two boats which they probably hired at Tiberias. And I can hear Judas complaining because he is left without any money after this last expenditure.

« He has seen to everybody else. But what about us? What shall we do now? I was hoping that Chuza... But nothing... We are in the same state as a beggar, one of the many who beg for alms of

3-1682

pilgrims on the roads » he grumbles in a low voice to Thomas.

But the latter replies good-naturedly: « What does it matter, if it is so? I am not at all worried. »

« Of course! But when it is time to eat, you are the one who wants to eat more than anybody else. »

« Certainly! I am hungry. I am brave even in that respect. Well, today instead of asking any man for some bread and a dish of something, I will ask God directly. »

« Today! But tomorrow we shall be in the same situation; and the day after tomorrow it will be the same again; and we are going towards the Decapolis where we are unknown; and they are halfheathens there. And it is not only a question of bread, there are sandals that wear out, and the poor who pester you, and one could be taken ill... »

« And if you go on like this, you will have me as good as dead shortly and you will have to think about my funeral. Oh! how many worries! I... am not worried at all. I am happy and calm, just like a new-born baby. »

Jesus, Who appeared to be engrossed in thought, sitting on the prow almost on the edge, turns round and says in a loud voice to Judas who is astern, but He says it as if He were speaking to everybody: « It is very good to be penniless. The paternity of God will shine more brightly even in the most humble things. »

« Everything has been all right for You recently. It is all right if we cannot work miracles, it is all right if we get no offerings, it is all right if we have given away everything we had: in a few words, everything is all right... But I feel ill at ease... You are a dear Master, a holy Master, but as far as material life is concerned... You are worth nothing » says Judas without bitterness, as if he were criticising a good young brother, of whose improvident kindness he was proud.

And Jesus replies to him smiling: « It is my greatest quality to be a man worth nothing with regard to material life... And I say again: it is very good to be penniless » and He smiles broadly.

The boat rubs the shingly shore and stops. They land while the other boat comes close and is about to stop. Jesus goes towards the house with Judas, Thomas, Judas and James, Philip and Bartholomew.

Peter lands from the second boat with Matthew, the sons of Zebedee, Simon Zealot and Andrew. But while everybody sets out towards the house, Peter remains on the shore to speak to the boatmen who brought them there and with whom he is perhaps acquainted, and later helps them to set sail. He then puts on his long tunic and walks up the shore towards the house.

While he is crossing the market square two men go towards him and stop him saying: « Listen, Simon of Jonah. »

3-1683

« I am listening. What do you want? »

« Your Master, only because He is such, does He or does He not pay the two drachmas due to the Temple? »

« Of course He does! Why should He not? »

« Well... because He says that He is the Son of God and... »

« And He is » retorts Peter decidedly and he is already flushing with rage. And he adds: « But, as He is also a son of the Law, and the best son the Law has, He pays His drachmas like every Israelite... »

« We have no proof of that. We are told that He does not pay and we advise Him to do so. »

« H'm » mumbles Peter who is on the point of losing his temper. « H'm... My Master does not need your advice. Go in peace and tell those who have sent you here that the drachmas will be paid at the first opportunity. »

« At the first opportunity!... Why not at once? Who can assure us that He will? He is always wandering about aimlessly! »

« He cannot pay at once because He is penniless. If you turned Him upside-down, not a penny would drop to the ground. We are all penniless, because we, who are not Pharisees, who are not scribes, who are not Sadducees, who are not rich, who are not spies, who are not asps, we give what we have to the poor, according to His doctrine. Have you understood? And now we have given everything, and until the Most High provides, we can die of starvation, or stand at the street-corner and beg. Inform those who say that He is a glutton also of that. Goodbye! » and he leaves them grumbling and seething with anger.

He goes into the house and upstairs where Jesus is listening to one who begs Him to go to a house on the mountain beyond Magdala, where a man is dying.

Jesus dismisses the man promising to go there at once, and after the man has left, he turns towards Peter, who is sitting in a corner engrossed in thought, and says to him: « What is your opinion, Simon? As a rule, from whom do the kings of the earth take toll or tribute? From their sons or from foreigners? »

Peter starts and says: « How do You know, Lord, what I was going to say to You? »

Jesus smiles making a gesture as if to say: « Never mind »; He then says: « Answer My question. »

« From foreigners, Lord. »

« Well, then, the sons are exempt, as in fact is right. Because a son is of the same blood and household of his father and therefore he must pay only tribute of love and obedience to his father. So I, the Son of the Father, should pay no tribute to the Temple, which is the house of the Father. You gave them the right answer. But as there is a difference between you and them, which is: that you

believe that I am the Son of God, while they and those who sent them do not, in order not to scandalise them, I will pay the tribute and at once, while they are still in the square collecting the money. »

« But how, if we have not one penny? » asks Judas, who has approached them with the others. « You can see whether it is necessary to have something! »

« We can ask the landlord to lend it to us » says Philip.

Jesus makes a gesture with His hand commanding silence and says: « Simon of Jonah, go to the beach and cast a line with a strong hook as far as you can. And as soon as a fish bites, draw the line. It will be a big fish. Open its mouth on the shore and you will find a stater inside it. Take it, go to these two men and pay for Me and for you. Then bring the fish here. We will roast it and Thomas will give us the charity of a little bread. We will eat and then go at once to the man who is dying. James and Andrew: prepare the boats, we will go in them to Magdala and we will walk back in the evening in order not to interfere with the fishing of Zebedee and Simon's brother-in-law. »

Peter goes away and shortly afterwards he is seen climbing onto a half-beached boat; he throws a thin strong line, fitted with a little stone or lead, at the end, to which is attached the real fishingline. The water of the lake forms silvery spray when the weight sinks into it, then it becomes calm again when concentric circles slowly move away...

But shortly afterwards, the little rope which hung loose in Peter's hands, is pulled taut and vibrates... Peter pulls the cord, which is shaken more and more vigorously. With a last jerk the fishing line emerges with the catch that whirls over the fisherman's head and falls on the yellowish sand where it writhes tortured by the hook that rends its palate and by incipient asphyxia.

It is a magnificent fish, the size of a brill weighing at least three kilogrammes. Peter tears the hook from its fleshy lips, thrusts his finger into its throat and pulls out a large silver coin. He lifts it up holding it between his thumb and forefinger to show it to the Master, Who is at the parapet of the terrace. He gathers the thin rope, rolls it up, picks up the fish and runs away towards the square.

All the apostles are dumbfounded... Jesus smiles and says: « And we will thus remove a scandal... »

Peter comes in: « They were coming here. And Eli, the Pharisee is with them. I endeavoured to be as kind as a young girl, and I called them saying: "Hey, messengers of the Fisc! Take this. That's four drachmas, isn't it? Two for the Master and two for me. We are now square, are we not? I will be seeing you in the Valley of Jehoshaphat, particularly you, my dear friend". They took offence

3-1685

at my mentioning the "Fisc". "We are of the Temple, not of the Fisc". "You collect taxes like excisemen. Every tax collector, as far as I am concerned, is of the Fisc" I replied. And Eli said to me: "You insolent one! Are you wishing me to die?". "No, my friend, never! I wish you a pleasant journey to the Valley of Jehoshaphat. Are you not going to Jerusalem for Passover? So we can meet there, my dear friend". "I do not wish and I do not want you to take the liberty of calling me your friend". "In fact it is too big an honour" I replied. And I came away. The amusing side is that half the people of Capernaum were there and they saw that I paid for You and for me. And that old snake will not be able to say anything now. »

The apostles could not help laughing on hearing the story and -seeing Peter's miming. Jesus wants to be serious. But a light smile slips from His lips while He says: « You are worse than mustard » and He concludes: « Cook the fish and let us make haste. I want to be back here by sunset. »

351. The Greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven. Little Benjamin of Capernaum.

6th December 1945.

And just when the sky and the lake seem to be catching fire in the blazing sunset, they come back towards Capernaum. They are happy. They are speaking to one another. Jesus speaks very little, but He smiles. They point out that if the messenger had given more precise information, they could have saved some of the road. But they also say that it was worth the trouble, because a group of little children had their father cured when death was so close at hand, that his body was already getting cold, and also because they are no longer penniless.

« I told you that the Father would provide for everything » says Jesus.

« And was he an old lover of Mary of Magdala? » asks Philip.

« Apparently... According to what they told us... » replies Thomas.

« What did the man tell You, Lord? » asks Judas of Alphaeus.

Jesus smiles evasively.

« I have seen her with him several times, when I used to go to Tiberias with friends. I know it for a certainty » states Matthew.

« Yes, brother, tell us... Did the man ask You only to be cured or also to be forgiven? » asks James of Alphaeus.

« What a senseless question! When has the Lord granted a grace Without exacting repentance? » says the Iscariot rather angrily to James of Alphaeus.

« My brother has not been speaking nonsense. Jesus cures or casts

out demons and then He says: "Go and do not sin any more" » replies Thaddeus.

« Because He has already seen repentance in their hearts » insists the Iscariot.

« In possessed people there is neither repentance nor will to be freed. Not one of them has ever shown any such signs. If you go over each case, you will see that they either ran away, or they hurled themselves at us in a hostile attitude, or they tried to do both, and they did not succeed only because their relatives held them back » replies Thaddeus.

« And Jesus' power, too » confirms the Zealot.

« So Jesus takes into account the will of relatives who represent the will of the possessed person, who would like to be freed if he were not hindered by the demon. »

« How much subtlety! And what about sinners? I think He uses the same words, even when they are not possessed » says James of Zebedee.

« He said to me: "Follow Me" and I had not said one word to Him, with regard to my situation » remarks Matthew.

« But He read your heart » says the Iscariot, who always wants to be right, at all costs.

« All right! But that, man, who according to public opinion was a big lewd sinner, although not demoniac, or rather not possessed, because with all his sins he must have had a demon as teacher if not as possessor, and he was dying and so on, what did he ask for? I think this is a lot of idle talk... Let us go back to the first question » says Peter.

Jesus satisfies him: « That man wanted to be alone with Me, to be able to speak freely. He did not speak at once about his health... but about his soul. He said: "I am about to die, but actually I am not so ill as I made people believe in order to have You here quickly. I need to be forgiven by You to be cured. But that is all I need. If You do not want to cure me, I will resign myself. I deserved it. But save my soul" and he confessed his many sins. A nauseating chain of sins... » says Jesus, but His face shines with joy.

« And You are smiling, Master! I am surprised! » remarks Bartholomew.

« Yes, Bartholomew. I am smiling because they no longer exist, and because with his sins I learned also the name of his redeemer. The apostle was a woman in this case. »

« Your Mother! » many of them say. Some say:« Johanna of Chuza! As he often went to Tiberias, perhaps he knows her. » Jesus shakes His head. So they ask Him: « Who was it, then? »

« Mary of Lazarus » replies Jesus.

« Did she come here? Why did she not come to see any of us? »

« She did not come. She wrote to her old partner in sin. I read her

3-1687

letters. They all supplicate him for one thing: to listen to her, to redeem himself, as she redeemed herself, to follow her in Virtue, as he had followed her in sin, and with heart-rending words they beg him to relieve Mary's soul of the remorse of seducing his soul. And she converted him. So much so, that he retired to the country to overcome the temptations of town. His disease, which was more remorse of his soul than physical trouble, completed his preparation for Grace. That is all. Are you happy now? Do you understand now why I am smiling? »

« Yes, Master » they all reply. And when they see that Jesus quickens His steps, to be alone, they begin to whisper to one another...

They are already in sight of Capernaum, when at the junction of their road with the one coming along the lake from Magdala, they meet the disciples, who have come on foot from Tiberias evangelizing. They are all there, with the exception of Marjiam, the shepherds and Manaen, who have gone from Nazareth towards Jerusalem with the women. The disciples are actually more numerous as they have been joined by other fellow-disciples, who have come back from their mission with new proselytes of the Christian doctrine.

Jesus greets them kindly but He immediately stands aloof once again, deeply engrossed in meditation and prayer, a few steps ahead of the others. The apostles, instead, mix with the disciples, particularly with the more influential ones, that is, Stephen, Hermas, John the priest, John the scribe, Timoneus, Joseph of Emmaus, Ermasteus (who, according to what I understand, is making great progress in the way to perfection), Abel of Bethlehem in Galilee, whose mother is at the rear of the crowd with other women. And the disciples and apostles ask questions and give information on what has happened since they parted. They thus talk of today's curing and conversion, and of the miracle of the stater in the mouth of the fish... And because of the circumstance which brought this miracle about, it rouses the interest of many and the discussion spreads from one row to the next one like fire set to straw...

Jesus says: « You will put here the vision of March 7th, 1944: "Little Benjamin of Capernaum", without the comment. And you will continue with the rest of the lesson and of the vision. Go on. »

So I am omitting the last sentence: « The vision ends here etc. » It would be out of place as the vision goes on.

7th March 1944.

I see Jesus walking along a country road surrounded and followed by His apostles and disciples.

The calm blue lake of Galilee, which is not far away, shines in

3-1688

the beautiful sunshine of spring or autumn, because the sun is not as strong as in summer. But I would say that it is springtime, because the countryside is very fresh, without the golden tired hues typical of autumn.

As it is getting dark, Jesus seems to be retiring to the hospitable house and He therefore turns His steps towards the village, which is already in sight. As He often does, Jesus is walking a few steps ahead of His disciples. Only two or three steps, not more, to be alone with His thoughts, as He needs tranquillity after evangelizing for a full day. He is absorbed in thought while walking, holding in His hand a green twig, which He must have plucked from some bush and He lightly whips the grass on the edge of the road with it; He is lost in thought.

Behind Him, on the other hand, the disciples have entered into an animated discussion. They are recalling the events of the day and they are rather heavy-handed in appraising other people's faults and shortcomings. They all criticise more or less severely the fact that those responsible for the collection of the Temple tribute exacted payment from Jesus.

Peter, who is always impulsive, states that it is a sacrilege because the Messiah is not obliged to pay the tribute: « It is asking God to pay Himself » he says. « And it is not right. And if they do not believe that He is the Messiah, it becomes a sacrilege. »

Jesus turns round for a moment and says: « Simon, Simon, there will be many people who will mistrust Me! Also among those who think that their faith in Me is safe and unshakable. Do not judge your brothers, Simon. Always judge yourself first. »

Judas smiling ironically says to Peter, who feels mortified and has lowered his head: « That's for you. Simply because you are the oldest, you always want to play the doctor. It is not true that one's merits are judged according to one's age. Among us there are some who are above you by knowledge and social power. »

They thus enter into discussion on their respective merits. And some boast of being among the first disciples, some base their preferential argument on the influential position they gave up to follow Jesus, and there is who says that no one has the same rights as he has because no one has turned so much by changing from a publican to a disciple. The discussion lasts a long time and if I were not afraid of offending the apostles, I would say that it takes the tone of a real quarrel.

Jesus pays no attention to them. He does not seem to hear them. They have in the meantime reached the first houses of the village, which I know is Capernaum. Jesus proceeds, the others follow Him discussing all the time.

A little boy of seven or eight years runs tripping after Jesus. He overtakes the vociferous group of the apostles and reaches Him.

3-1689

He is a lovely boy with short curly dark-brown hair. His dark eyes shine intelligently in his little dark face. He calls the Master confidentially as if he were very familiar with Him. He says: « Jesus, will You let me come with You as far as Your house? »

« Does your mother know? » asks Jesus smiling at him kindly.

« Yes, she does. »

« Is it true? » although smiling, Jesus casts a piercing glance at him.

« Yes, Jesus, it is true. »

« Come then. »

The boy jumps for joy and takes the left hand of Jesus Who stretches it out to him. With how much loving reliance the child places his little swarthy hand into Jesus' long hand! I wish I could do the same myself!

« Tell me a nice parable, Jesus » says the boy skipping beside Jesus and looking up at Him, his face shining with joy.

Jesus also looks at him with a cheerful smile, which opens His lips shaded by His moustache and His reddish golden beard, which shines like gold in the sun. His dark sapphire eyes sparkle with joy while He looks at the child.

« What will you do with a parable? It is not a game. »

« It is better than a game. When I go to bed, I think about it then I dream of it and the following day I remember it and I repeated to myself to be good. It makes me good. »

« Do you remember it? »

« Yes, I do. Shall I repeat to you all the ones You told me? »

« You are clever, Benjamin, more clever than men, who forget. As a prize I will tell you a parable. »

The boy no longer hops about. He walks seriously and as gravely as an adult, he does not miss one word or any inflexion of Jesus, Whom he watches carefully, without even worrying where he puts his feet.

« A very good shepherd found out that in a certain place many sheep had been abandoned by bad shepherds, and they were in great danger along rough roads and in harmful pastures, and were wandering about closer and closer to dark ravines. So he went to that place and sacrificing everything he had, he bought the sheep and lambs. He wanted to take them to his own kingdom, because that shepherd was also a king, like many kings in Israel. In his kingdom those sheep and lambs would find wholesome pastures, cool water, safe roads and protected shelter against thieves and wild wolves. So the shepherd gathered all his sheep and lambs together and said to them: "I have come to save you, to take you where you will no longer suffer and where you will find no snares. Love me, follow me, because I love you so much and I have made every possible sacrifice in order to rescue you. But if you love me,

I will not regret my sacrifice. Follow me and let us go". And they set out towards the kingdom of happiness, the shepherd before then, and the sheep after him. The shepherd turned round every moment to make sure that the sheep were following him, to exhort those which were tired, to encourage the ones which were downhearted, to assist the sick ones and to caress the little lambs. How much he loved them! He used to give them his bread and salt, and he always tasted the water of fountains first, to make sure that it was good and he blessed it to make it holy. But the sheep - would you believe it, Benjamin? - the sheep became tired. First one, then two, then ten, then one hundred remained behind grazing and stuffing themselves with so much grass that they could no longer move, and they lay down in the dust and mud when they were tired and full. Some went close to the brinks of precipices, notwithstanding that the shepherd said to them: "Don't do that"; and as he stood near the most dangerous places to prevent them from going there, some bumped into him trying to make him fall into the precipice and they did that several times. And thus many fell into ravines and died miserably. Some butted each other and killed each other. Only one little lamb never went astray. It ran about bleating as if to say to the shepherd: "I love you"; it always ran behind the good shepherd and when they arrived at the gates of his kingdom, they were the only two: the shepherd and the little faithful lamb. Then the shepherd did not say: "go in", but he said: "come" and he took it in his arms, close to his chest, and he took it inside calling all his subjects and saying to them: "Here. This little lamb loves me. I want it to be with me for ever. And you must love it because it is the pet of my heart". And that is the end of the parable, Benjamin. Now can you tell Me: who is that good shepherd? »

« It's You, Jesus. »

« And who is the little lamb? »

« It's me, Jesus. »

« But I will be going away now. You will forget Me. »

« No, Jesus. I will not forget You because I love You. »

« Your love will come to an end when you no longer see Me. »

« I will repeat to myself the words that You spoke to me and it will be the same as if You were present. I will love You and obey You thus. And tell me, Jesus: Will You remember Benjamin? »

« Always. »

« And how will You remember? »

« I will say to Myself that you promised to love and obey Me and I will thus remember you. »

« And will You give me Your Kingdom? »

« I will, if you are good. »

« I will be good. »

« What will you do? Life is long. »

3-1691

« But Your words are very good, too. If I repeat them to myself and I do what they say I should do, I will be good all my life. And I will do that because I love You. When one loves, it is not difficult to be good. I do not find it difficult to obey my mother, because I love her. And it will not be difficult for me to obey You, because I love You. »

Jesus stops and looks at the little face, which is lit by love more than by the sun. Jesus' joy is so deep that another sun seems to be burning in His soul and shining through His eyes. He bends and kisses the forehead of the child.

He has stopped near a humble house with a well in front. Jesus sits down near the well where He is joined by the disciples, who are still arguing over their prerogatives.

Jesus looks at them. Then He calls them: « Come here, round Me and listen to the last lesson of the day, you who have shouted yourselves hoarse celebrating your own merits and believe that you will gain a position according to them. See this child? He is in the truth more than you are. His innocence gives him the key to open the gates of My Kingdom. In his simplicity of a child, he has understood that the strength necessary to become great lies in love and that obedience practised with love is required to enter My Kingdom. Be simple and humble, be affectionate not to Me only, but to one another, obey My words, all of them, also the ones I am speaking to you now, if you wish to reach the place that these innocent souls will enter. Learn from the little ones. The Father reveals the truth to them, but He does not reveal it to the wise. »

Jesus is speaking holding Benjamin against His knees, with His hands on the boy's shoulders. Jesus' countenance is majestic. He is serious, not angry, but grave. As it becomes a Master. His fairhaired head is a blaze of light in the last sunbeams.

The vision ends here leaving me full of sweet happiness notwithstanding my sorrows.

[6th December 1945].

So, the disciples have not been able to go into the house. This was natural because of their number and out of respect. They never go in unless they are all invited, or one in particular is invited by the Master. I notice in them great respect and reservedness, notwithstanding the kindness of the Master and His long lasting familiarity. Even Isaac, who I can say is the first disciple, never takes the liberty of approaching Jesus unless he is called by the Master with at least a smile.

Somewhat different, is it not? to the rash almost farcical manner in which many people deal with what is supernatural... This is my comment and I feel that it is correct, because I cannot suffer people to treat what is above us with manners that we would not use for

men like ourselves, if they are only a little better than we are... Well!... And let us go on...

The disciples are scattered on the shore of the lake to buy fish and bread and whatever is necessary for supper. James of Zebedee comes back and calls the Master, Who is sitting on the terrace with John crouched at His feet in loving conversation... Jesus stands up and leans over the parapet.

James says: « How much fish, Master! My father says that You blessed the nets by coming here. Look: this is for us » and he shows a basket full of silvery fish.

« May God grant him grace for his generosity. Prepare it, because after supper we will go on the shore with the disciples. »

They do so. The lake is black at night, waiting for the moon, which rises late. And rather than see it, one can hear it grumble and lap on the shingly shore. Only the exceptionally bright stars of eastern countries are mirrored in calm waters. They sit in a circle round an upturned boat on which Jesus has sat. And the little lamps of boats placed in the centre of the circle hardly illuminate the faces closer to them. Jesus' face is lit up from below by a lantern placed near His feet, and thus everybody can see Him well, while He talks to this one or that one.

"At first it is a simple home-like conversation. But it soon takes the tone of a lesson. Jesus says so openly:

« Come and listen. We shall be parting shortly and I wish to instruct you to perfect you further.

I heard you dispute today, and not always charitably. I have already given the seniors among you the lesson, but I want to give it to you as well, and it will do the seniors no harm to hear it again. Little Benjamin is no longer here, standing against My knees. He is sleeping in his bed and dreaming his innocent dreams. But perhaps his innocent soul is here among us just the same. But imagine that he, or some other boy, is here, as an example for you.

Each of you has in his heart a fixed idea, a curiosity, a danger. That is: to be the first in the Kingdom of Heaven; to know who the first will be; and at last the danger: the still human desire to hear the reply: "You are the first in the Kingdom of Heaven" uttered by your obliging companions or by the Master, above all by the Master, of Whose veracity and knowledge of the future you are aware. Is it not so? The questions tremble on your lips and dwell in the depth of your hearts.

Your Master, for your own good, yields to that curiosity, although He loathes giving assent to human curiosity. Your Master is not a charlatan whom one can ask questions for a few coins in the uproar of a market. Neither is He possessed by the spirit of the Python, which assists Him in making money by divining, to comply with the narrow-mindedness of man who wants to

know the future in order to decide how "to act". Man cannot act wisely by himself. God will assist him if man has faith in Him! And it is of no avail to know the future, or to think that one knows it, if one has no means to avert the prophesied future. There is one means only: to pray the Father and Lord that His mercy may assist us. I solemnly tell you that a confident prayer can change punishment into blessings. But he who has recourse to men in order to avert the future, as a man and with human means, cannot pray at all, or prays very badly. As this curiosity may teach you a good lesson, I will reply to it for this once, although I abhor curious and disrespectful questions.

You are asking: "Which of us will be the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven?".

I do not take into consideration the limitation "of us" and I extend the frontiers to the whole present and future world and I reply: "He is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven, who is the least among men". That is: he who is considered "the least" by men: the simple, the humble, the trustful, the unaware. That is a child, or he who can make his soul be like the soul of a child once again. Neither science, nor power, nor wealth, nor industry, not even good industry, will make you "the greatest" in the blessed Kingdom. It is necessary to be like children with regard to loving kindness, humility, simplicity, faith.

Watch how children love Me, and imitate them. How they believe in Me, and imitate them. How they remember what I say, and imitate them. How they do what I teach them, and imitate them. How they do not pride themselves on what they do, and imitate them. How they do not become jealous of Me and of their companions, and imitate them. I solemnly tell you that if you do not change your ways of thinking, of acting and of loving, and you do not remould them on the pattern of children, you will not enter the Kingdom of Heaven. They know the essential elements of My doctrine, as you know them, but how differently they practise what I teach! For every good action you accomplish, you say: "I did that". A child says to Me: "I remembered You today, I obeyed for Your sake, I loved, I refrained from quarrelling... and I am happy, because I know that You are aware when I am good and You are pleased". And watch children when they are at fault. How humbly they confess: "Today I was naughty. And I am sorry because I grieved You". And they do not find excuses. They know that I know. They believe. They are sorry because I am sorry.

Oh! How dear children are to My heart: there is no pride, no duplicity, no lust in them! I tell you once again: become like children if you wish to enter My Kingdom. Love children, as they are angelical examples still at your disposal. Because you ought to be like angels. As an excuse you may say: "We do not see angels".

3-1694

But God gives you children as examples, and you have children amongst you. And if you see a child who is physically or morally forlorn and who may perish, welcome him in My Name, because they are greatly loved by God. And he who welcomes a child in My Name, welcomes Me, because I am in the innocent souls of children. And he who welcomes Me, welcomes Him Who sent Me, the Most High.

And beware lest you should scandalise one of these little ones, whose eyes see God. You must never scandalise anybody. But woe betide three times those who soil the innocent purity of children! Let them be like angels as long as possible. The world and flesh are too repugnant to souls coming from Heaven! And a child, through his innocence, is still entirely a soul. Respect the soul of a child and his body as you respect a sacred place. And a child is sacred also because he has God within himself. The temple of the Spirit is in every body. But the temple of a child is the most sacred and intimate, it is beyond the double Veil. Do not even allow the wind of your passions to shake the curtains of their unawareness of concupiscence.

I would like a child in every family, among every gathering of people, to check the passions of men. A child sanctifies, brings solace and freshness through the simple glance of his innocent eyes. But woe to those who despoil children of their holiness through their scandalous behaviour! Woe betide those who teach children wickedness through their debauchery! Woe betide those who by means of their words and irony injure the faith children have in Me! It would be better if a millstone were tied round the neck of each of them and they were thrown into the sea to be drowned together with their scandal. Woe to the world that scandalises such innocent souls! There must indeed be scandals, but alas for the man who provides them.

No one is entitled to do violence to his body or to his life. Because life and body are given to us by God and He only is entitled to take them entirely or in part. I tell you that if your hand causes you to sin, it is better that you cut it off, and if your foot causes you to give scandal, it is better if you cut it off. It is better for you to enter into Life crippled or lame, than to be thrown into eternal fire with two hands and two feet. And if it is not sufficient to have one hand or foot cut off, have also the other hand or foot cut off, so that you may no longer scandalise, but you may have time to repent before being thrown into the unquenchable fire, which tortures like a worm for ever. And if your eye should cause you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. It is better to be one-eyed, than be in hell with both eyes. With one eye or without eyes you could see in Heaven the Light, whereas with two scandalous eyes you would see darkness and horror in hell. And nothing else.

3-1695

Remember that. Do not scandalise the little ones, do not despise them, do not deride them. They are worth more than you are, because their angels always see God, Who tells them the truth to be revealed to children and to those whose hearts are like those of children.

And love one another like children, without disputes and without pride. And be at peace with one another. Be peaceful-minded towards everybody. You are brothers, in the name of the Lord, not enemies. There must be no enmity among Jesus' disciples. The only Enemy is Satan. Be his fierce enemies and join battle with him and with the sins that install Satan in the hearts of men.

Be tireless in fighting Evil, whichever form it may take. And be patient. There is no limit to the activity of an apostle, because there is no limit to the activity of Evil. The demon never says: "That is enough. I am tired now and I am going to rest". He is indefatigable. He passes from one man to another as quick as thought, and even quicker, and he tempts and takes, he seduces and tortures and gives no peace. He attacks treacherously and demolishes, if one is not more than vigilant. At times he installs himself as conqueror, encouraged by the weakness of the person he assails, at times he enters as a friend, because the prey he is after, already lives as an ally of the Enemy. Sometimes, when he is cast out of a man, he wanders around and assaults a better prey to avenge himself for the affront suffered at the hands of God or of a servant of God. But you must say what he says: "I will not rest". He does not rest in order to people hell. You must not rest in order to people Paradise. Give him no quarter. I foretell you that the more you fight him the more he will make you suffer. But you must not worry about that. He can overrun the earth, but he cannot enter Heaven. So he will not be able to trouble you there and all those who have fought him will be in Heaven... »

Jesus stops abruptly and asks: « Why are you worrying John? What do they want from you? »

John blushes and Bartholomew, Thomas and the Iscariot lower their heads seeing that they have been found out.

« Well? » asks Jesus peremptorily.

« Master, my companions want me to tell You something. »

« Tell Me, then. »

« Today, when You were with the sick man, and we were going round the village, as You told us, we saw a man, who is not a disciple of Yours, and whom we have never seen among those who listen to Your sermons, and he was casting out demons in Your name, in a group of pilgrims going to Jerusalem. And he was successful. He cured a man who trembled so much as to be unable to work, and he made a girl recover the use of speech, which she had lost, because she was assailed in a forest by a demon in the form of

3-1696

a dog, which had tied her tongue. He said: "Go away, cursed demon, in the name of the Lord Jesus, the Christ, the King of the issue of David, the King of Israel. He is the Saviour and the Winner. Flee before His Name!" and the demon really fled. We resented that and we told him that he was not allowed to do so. He said to us: "Am I doing anything wrong? I honour the Christ by clearing His way from demons who are not worthy to see Him". We replied: "You are not an exorciser according to Israel and you are not a disciple of Christ. You are not allowed to do that". He said: "One is always allowed to do good things" and he rebelled against our order saying: "And I will continue to do what I am doing". That is what they wanted me to tell You, particularly because You just said that all those who fight Satan will be in Heaven. »

« All right. That man will be one of them. He was right and you were wrong. The ways of the Lord are infinite and it is not true that only those who take the straight road arrive in Heaven. Everywhere, at all times, in countless different ways, there will be people who will come to Me, even along initially wrong ways. But God will see their good intentions and will lead them on to the right way. Likewise there will be some who through treble concupiscent inebriation will leave the good way to take one that will lead them far away and mislead them all together. So you must never judge your fellow-men. God only sees. Endeavour never to leave the right way, on which the will of God more than your own put you. And when you see one who believes and acts in My Name, do not call him stranger, enemy, or say that he is sacrilegious. He is a friendly faithful subject of Mine, because he believes spontaneously in My Name, and he believes more than many among you. That is why My Name on his lips works miracles like yours, and perhaps greater than yours. God loves him because he loves Me and will end by taking him to Heaven. No one who works miracles in My name can be My enemy or speak ill of Me. On the contrary he honours the Christ and bears witness to faith. I solemnly tell you that belief in My Name is sufficient to save your souls. Because My Name is Salvation. So I say to you: if you see him again, do not hinder him. But call him "brother", because he is such, even if he is still outside the enclosure of My Fold. He who is not against Me, is with Me. He who is not against you, is with you. »

« Have we sinned, Lord? » asks John sorrowfully.

« No. You acted out of ignorance, but without malice. So there is no sin. But, since you are now aware of the situation, it would be a sin in future. And now let us go home. Peace be with you. »

The dictation that follows the vision of little Benjamin (7.3.44) can put here at the end of today's vision. As you wish.

3-1697

[7th March 1944].

Jesus then says:

« I will tell you also, what I told My little disciple. The Kingdom belongs to the faithful lambs who love and follow Me without getting lost in allurements. They love Me till the end.

And I say to you what I said to My senior disciples: "Learn from the little ones". The fact that you are learned, rich, bold, will not make you conquer the Kingdom of Heaven. Not if you are so from a human point of view. But you will conquer it, if you are supernaturally learned, rich and bold through the knowledge and practice of love. How love does enlighten one to understand the Truth! How it makes one rich to conquer it! How bold it makes one to conquer it! How much confidence and certainty it inspires!

Behave like little Benjamin, My little flower who scented My heart that evening and sang angelical music, which overwhelmed the scent of humanity seething in the disciples, and the noise of human altercations.

And do you wish to know what happened later to Benjamin? He remained the little lamb of Christ, and when he lost his Great Shepherd, Who had gone back to Heaven, he became a disciple of the one who was more like Me, by whom he was baptised with the name of Stephen, My first martyr. He was faithful unto death and so were his relatives, conquered to Faith by their little apostle. Is he not known? Many people are known to Me in My Kingdom, but they ire unknown to men. And they are happy for that. Worldly fame does not add even a tiny spark to the glory of the blessed souls.

Little John, always walk with your hand in Mine. You will proceed safely and when you arrive at the Kingdom I will not say to you: "Go in" but "Come" and I will take you in My arms to put you where My love has prepared a place for you and that your love has deserved.

Go in peace. I bless you. »

352. Second Miracle of the Loaves.

28th May 1944, Whit Sunday, 2 a.m.

A tranquil vision. I see a place which is neither a plain nor a mountain. There are some mountains to the east, but they are rather far away. Then there is a little valley and minor flat risings of ground, like grass-grown tablelands. They seem to be the lower lopes of a group of hills. The ground is rather parched and bare here is only short sparse grass scattered over the stony ground. Here and there is a small group of very low thorny bushes. The horizon opens wide and bright to the west. I can see nothing else. It is still daylight, but I would say that evening is approaching,

3-1698

because the western sky is red in the sunset, whilst the mountains to the east are already violaceous in the incipient twilight. Deep crevices also look darker in the fading light, while higher parts are tinged with violet.

Jesus is standing on a large stone speaking to a very huge crowd dispersed on the tableland. His disciples are around Him. From His high position He dominates the crowds of people of every age and social condition around Him.

He must have worked some miracles because I hear Him say: « You must praise and be grateful to Him Who sent Me, not to Me. And your praise must not come from inattentive lips like the sound of rustling wind. True praise rises from your hearts and is the true feeling of your hearts. And it is pleasing to God. Let those who have been cured love the Lord faithfully. And the relatives of those who have been cured must love Him likewise. Do not misuse the gift of your recovered health. Fear more the diseases of your souls than those of your bodies. And do not sin. Because every sin is a disease. And some of them may bring about death. So, all of you who are now rejoicing, do not destroy the blessings of the Lord by committing sin. Your joy would come to an end, because evil deeds destroy peace, and where there is no peace, there is no joy. But be holy and perfect, as the Father wants you to be, because He loves you and He wants to give a Kingdom to those whom He loves. But only those who are perfect through their loyalty to the Law will enter His holy Kingdom. May the peace of God be with you. »

And Jesus lapses into silence. He crosses His arms on His chest and watches the crowds around Him. He then looks around, at the clear sky, which is becoming darker and darker in the fading light. He is pensive. He comes down from the large stone. He says to His disciples: « I feel sorry for these people. They have followed Me for three days. They have no more food supplies with them and we are far from any village. I am afraid that the weaker ones would suffer too much, if I send them away without feeding them. »

« And how do You want to do that, Master? You said it Yourself, that we are far from every village. Where can we find bread in this lonely place? And who would give us so much money to buy enough for everybody? »

« Have you not got any with you? »

« We have a few fish and some pieces of bread. What was left over from our meal. But it is not enough for anybody. If You give it to those who are near You, there will be a riot. You will deprive us and not help anybody » says Peter.

« Bring Me what you have. »

They bring a little basket with seven pieces of bread. They are not whole loaves. They look like thick slices of a large loaf. The

little fish are a handful of tiny things burnt on the fire.

« Make the crowds sit down in groups of fifty people and tell them to be calm and quiet if they want to eat. »

The disciples, either climbing on stones or going round among the crowds, busy themselves to arrange the people as requested by Jesus. By dint of great efforts, they are successful. Some of the children whimper because they are hungry or sleepy, some whine because their mothers or some relatives have given them a slap to make them obey.

Jesus takes the bits of bread, not all of them: one in each hand, He offers them, puts them down and blesses them. He takes the little fish, they are so few that they are contained in the hollow of His long hands. He offers them, too, puts them down and blesses them.

« And now take them, go round the crowd and give everybody plenty. »

The disciples obey.

Jesus, standing, watches them and smiles: His white figure dominates the people sitting in wide circles all over the tableland.

The disciples move farther and farther, handing the food out all the time. And the basket is always full of food. The people eat while night falls and there is total silence and a great peace.

Jesus says:

« And this is another thing which will annoy difficult doctors: the application of this evangelical vision. I will not make you mediate on My power and kindness, or on the faith and obedience of the disciples. Nothing of that. I want to show you the analogy of the episode with the work of the Holy Spirit.

See: I give My word. I give everything you can understand and assimilate to nourish your souls. But you have been made so dull by fatigue and inanition that you cannot assimilate all the nourishment which is in My word. You would need so much of it. But you are not able to receive much. You are so poor in spiritual strength! It burdens you without giving you blood or strength. And the Spirit then works the miracle for you. The spiritual miracle of the multiplication of the Word. It enlightens for you, and thus multiplies all its most secret meanings, so that you can feed on it and thus not collapse exhausted along the desert of life, thus you do not have to encumber yourselves with a load that would crush you without strengthening you.

Seven pieces of bread and a few fish!

I preached for three years and, as My beloved John says, "if all the parables I told and all the miracles I worked were to be written to give you substantial food, capable of taking you as far as the Kingdom, without fainting through weakness, the whole Earth

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would not suffice to contain all the volumes". And even if all that had been written, you could not have read so many books. You do not even read, as you ought to, the little which has been written about Me. And it is the only thing you should know, as you have known the more necessary words since your childhood.

So Love comes and multiplies. He, too, Who is One with Me and the Father, "feels sorry for you who are dying from starvation" and with a miracle that is being repeated throughout centuries, He multiplies twice, ten times, a hundred times the nourishment of each word of Mine. You thus have an infinite treasure of celestial food. It is offered to you by the Charity. Draw from it without fear. The more you draw from it, the more it will grow, as it is the fruit of Love.

God has no limit in His wealth and possibilities. You are relative. He is not. He is infinite. In all His works. Also in His power to give you, every moment and for every event, the light you need, in any particular moment. And as on the day of Pentecost the Spirit, infused in the apostles, made their word understandable to Parthians, Medians, Scythians, Cappadocians, to the inhabitants of Pontus, to Phrygians, and made it like their mother tongues to Egyptians, Romans, Greeks and Libyans, so it will comfort you when you weep, will advise you when you ask for advice, it will share your joy when you rejoice, through the same Word.

Oh! if the Spirit elucidates to you the sentence: "Go in peace and do not sin", those words are really a reward for those who have not sinned, they are encouragement for those who are still weak but do not want to sin, they are forgiveness for repentant souls, and mild merciful reproach for those who show only a shadow of repentance. And it is only a sentence. And one of the most simple ones. But how many there are in My Gospel! How many, which, like flower buds after a shower and springtime sunshine, open in large numbers on the branch where there was only one, and cover it all, to the joy of those who admire it.

Rest now. The peace of Love be with you. »

353. The Bread from Heaven.

The vision of the second miracle of the loaves given on 28th May 1944 and relevant dictation are to be put before the vision of 7th December.

7th December 1945.

The beach at Capernaum is crowded with people disembarking from a flotilla of boats of all sizes. And the first to land spread among the crowds looking for the Master, or an apostle or at least a

disciple. And they ask after them...

A man at last replies: « The Master? The apostles? No, they are not here. They went away immediately after the Sabbath and have not come back. But they will come back, because some of the disciples are here. I spoke just now to one of them. He must be an important disciple. He speaks as well as Jairus! He went along the coast towards that house in the fields. »

The man who asked the question, spreads the news and they all rush towards the house. But after about two hundred metres they meet on the beach a group of disciples coming towards Capernaum gesticulating animatedly. They greet them and ask: « Where is the Master? »

The disciples reply: « During the night, after the miracle, He went with His disciples by boat to the other side of the sea. We saw the sails in the moonlight going towards Dalmanuta. »

« Ah! We looked for Him at Magdala, at Mary's house, but He was not there! However... the fishermen of Magdala should have told Us! »

« They probably did not know. He may have gone up the Arbela mountains to pray. He has been there before, last year, before Passover. I met Him then, by the great grace of the Lord to His poor servant » says Stephen.

« But is He not coming back here? »

« He will certainly come back. He has to give us instructions before sending us away. But what do you want? »

« We want to hear Him again, to follow Him and become His disciples. »

« He will be going to Jerusalem. You will find Him there. And in the House of God, the Lord will speak to you and you will know whether you ought to follow Him. Because you must know that, although He does not reject anybody, there are tendencies in us which reject the Light. Now, he who has so many of them as to be not only saturated with them - which is not a great evil because He is Light and when we firmly decide to become His loyal followers His Light penetrates into us and overwhelms darkness but to be also deeply attached to them, as to one's own body, then it is better for him to refrain from coming, unless he is prepared to demolish his old being and form a completely new one. Consider, therefore, whether you have the strength to take on a new spirit, a new way of thinking and wanting. Pray in order to see the truth concerning your vocation. Then come, if you should so decide. And may the Most High, Who guided Israel in the "passage", guide you also in this "Pesach", so that you may follow in the wake of the Lamb, from the desert, towards the eternal Earth, the Kingdom of God » says Stephen, speaking on behalf of all his companions.

3-1702

« No, no! Now! At once! No one does what He does. We want to follow Him » shout the crowds in tumult.

Stephen smiles meaningly. He opens his arms and says: « Do you want to come because He gave you plenty good bread? Do you think that in future He will give you only that? He promises His followers what is His own lot: sorrow, persecution, martyrdom. Not roses, but thorns; not caresses, but slaps; not bread but stones are awaiting the followers of Christ. And I say so without becoming a blasphemer, because His true followers will be anointed with the holy oil made by His Grace and His suffering; and we shall be "anointed" to be the victims on the altar and the kings in Heaven. »

« Well? Are you jealous perhaps? If you are there, we want to be there as well. The Master belongs to everybody. »

« All right. I told you because I love you and I want you to know what it means to be "disciples", so that you may not become deserters later. Let us now go all together and wait for Him at His house. The sun is already setting and the Sabbath is about to begin. He will come to spend it here before departing. »

And they go towards the town, talking. And many ask Stephen and Hermas, who has joined them, many questions, as they are both placed in a very favourable light in the eyes of the Israelites, because they are Gamaliel's dearest pupils. Many ask: « But what does Gamaliel say about Him? », and some: « Did he send you? », and some: « Did he not regret losing you? », or: « What does the Master say of the great rabbi? »

The two disciples reply patiently: « Gamaliel speaks of Jesus of Nazareth as of the greatest man in Israel. »

« What? Greater than Moses? » exclaim some, who are almost scandalised.

« He says that Moses is one of the many precursors of the Christ. But he is only the servant of the Christ. »

« So, according to Gamaliel, this man is the Christ? Is that what he says? If rabbi Gamaliel says that, the matter is settled. He is the Christ! »

« He does not say that. He cannot yet believe that, unfortunately for him. But he says that the Christ is on the earth, because he spoke to Him many years ago. Both he and wise Hillel. And he is waiting for the sign that Christ promised him so that he may recognise Him » says Hermas.

« But how could he believe that that man was the Christ? What did He do? I am as old as Gamaliel, but I never heard of anyone doing the things that the Master does. If he is not convinced by these miracles, what miracles did he see in that Christ that he believed in Him? »

« He saw Him anointed with the Wisdom of God. So he says » replies Hermas once again.

3-1703

« Well, then, what is this one according to Gamaliel? »

« The greatest man, master and precursor in Israel. If he could say: "He is the Christ", the wise and just soul of my first master would be saved » says Stephen and he concludes: « And I pray that that may happen, at all costs. »

« But if he does not believe that He is the Christ, why did he send you to Him? »

« We wanted to come. He let us come saying that it was a good thing. »

« Perhaps he wanted to find out things and report them to the Sanhedrin... » insinuates one.

« Man, what are you saying? Gamaliel is honest. He does not play the spy for anybody, and particularly for the enemies of an innocent person! » objects Stephen and he is so indignant and almost beaming with holy indignation that he looks like an archangel.

« But he must have been sorry to lose you » states another man.

« He was and was not. As a man who was fond of us, yes. As a very righteous spirit, no. Because he said: "He is greater than I am and younger than I am. So I will be able to breathe my last peacefully, as far as your future is concerned, as I know that you are with the 'Master of masters' ". »

« And what does Jesus of Nazareth say of the great rabbi? »

« Oh! He speaks but highly of him! »

« Is He not envious of him? »

« God does not envy » replies Hermas severely. « Do not make sacrilegious suppositions. »

« So He is God according to you. Are you sure? »

And the two reply together: « As we are sure that we are alive just now. » And Stephen concludes: « And believe it yourselves if you wish to possess eternal Life. »

From the beach they go into the square, which they cross going towards the house. Jesus is at the door caressing some children.

The disciples and some curious people crowd round Him asking: « Master, when did You come? »

« A few minutes ago. » Jesus' countenance is still as majestically solemn, somewhat ecstatic, as when He has been engrossed in prayer for a long time.

« Have You been praying, Master? » asks Stephen in a low voice out of respect, and for the same reason he has stooped.

« Yes, I have. What makes you understand that, My son? » asks Jesus laying His hand on the disciple's dark hair with a kind caress.

« Your angelical face. I am a poor man, but the expression of Your face is so clear that one can read on it the emotions and deeds of Your spirit. »

« Yours also is clear. You are one of those who remain children... »

« And what is there on my face, Lord? »

3-1704

« Come aside and I will tell you » and Jesus takes him by the wrist and leads him into a dark corridor. « Charity, faith, purity, generosity, wisdom; God gave them to you and you have improved them and you will do so even more in future. Finally, in accordance with your name, you have a crown: it is of pure gold with a large gem glittering in front. On the gold and on the gem there are two expressions engraved: "Predestination" and "Early Fruit". Be worthy of your destiny, Stephen. Go in peace with My blessing. » And once again He rests His hand on Stephen's dark hair while he kneels down and bends to kiss His feet.

They go back to the others.

« These people have come to hear You... » says Philip.

« It is not possible to speak here. Let us go to the synagogue. Jairus will be pleased. »

They go to the beautiful synagogue of Capernaum: Jesus leads the way and is followed by the procession of all the others. Jairus greets Him and He enters, giving instructions to leave all the doors open, so that those who cannot go inside may hear Him from the street and square beside the synagogue.

Jesus goes to His place, in the friendly synagogue, in which, fortunately, there are no Pharisees today. They have probably already left for Jerusalem in full plumage. And He begins to speak.

« I solemnly tell you: You are looking for Me not to hear Me or because of the miracles which you have seen, but because of the bread that I gave you to eat to your fill and without any expense. That is why three quarters of you were looking for Me, and also out of curiosity and that is why you came from every part of our Fatherland. So there is no supernatural spirit in your quest, dominated by human spirit with its unsound curiosities or at least with childish curiosity, not because it is simple like that of children, but because it is maimed like the intelligence of a dullminded person. And linked to such curiosity there is sensuality and vitiated feeling. Sensuality, as subtle as the demon whose daughter it is, hides behind appearances and seemingly good deeds, and vitiated feeling is simply a morbid deviation of sentiment, and like everything which is "disease" it needs and craves after drugs, which are not plain food, good bread, good water, unadulterated oil, the first milk which is sufficient to live and live well. Vitiated feeling needs extraordinary things to be roused, to feel the thrill of pleasure, the sickly thrill of paralysed people who need drugs to feel the sensation, which beguiles them into believing that they are still healthy and virile. The sensuality that wants to satisfy one's gluttony without work, in this case, with bread which was not hard-earned, but given by God's bounty.

The gifts of God are not common ordinary things, they are

special ones. One cannot claim them nor can one become lazy and say: "God will give them to me". It is written: "You shall eat bread moistened with the sweat of your forehead", that is the bread earned through hard work. If He Who is Mercy said: "I feel sorry for these people, who have followed Me for three days and have nothing left to eat and may faint on the way before they reach Hippo on the lake, or Gamala, or any other town", and He provided accordingly, that does not imply that He is to be followed just because of that. I am to be followed for much more than a little bread, which becomes excrement after it is digested. I am to be followed not for the food that fills the stomach, but for that which nourishes the soul. Because you are not only animals, which must browse and ruminate, or grout and get fat. You are souls! That is what you are! Your body is the garment, your being is the soul. It is the soul that lasts. Your body, like every garment, wears out and comes to an end and it is not worth taking care of it, as if it were something perfect deserving every care.

Seek, therefore, what is just to attain, not what is unjust. Endeavour to get not the food that does perish, but that which lasts for eternal life. The Son of man will always give it to you, whenever you want it. Because the Son of man has at His disposal everything that comes from God, and He can give it; He is the Master, the generous Master of the treasures of the Father God, Who has impressed His seal on Him so that no honest eye may be confused. And if you have the food that does not perish, you will be able to do the works of God, having been nourished with the food of God. »

« What shall we do, to work the deeds of God? We keep the Law and respect the Prophets. Thus we are already nourished with the food of God and we do the works of God. »

« That is true. You keep the Law. Or better still: you "know" the Law. But to know is not to practise. For instance, we know the laws of Rome, but no faithful Israelite puts them into practise, except in those specific cases when he is compelled to do so as a subject. Otherwise, I am referring to faithful Israelites, we do not put into practise the heathen customs of the Romans, although we know them. The Law which you know and the Prophets should, in fact, nourish you with God and make you capable of working the deeds of God. But in order to do so, they should have become one thing with you, like the air you breathe and the food you assimilate, which become your life and your blood. Instead they are like strangers to you, although they belong to your house, just like an object in the house, which is known and useful to you, but will not interfere with your life if it were lost. But try not to breathe for a few minutes, or to go without food for days... and you will see that you cannot live. And that is how your ego should

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feel in your malnutrition and asphyxia of the Law and Prophets, known to you but not assimilated and thus not all one with you. This is what I have come to teach you and to give you: the juice, the air of the Law and of the Prophets, to give blood and breath back to your souls dying from inanition and asphyxia. You are like children whom a disease has made unable to tell what can nourish them. You have plenty food in front of you, but you do not know that it must be eaten to be changed into something vital, that is, that it must really become part of us, through pure generous loyalty to the Law of the Lord, Who spoke to Moses and the Prophets on behalf of all of you. It is your duty, therefore, to come to Me to receive the air and juice of eternal Life. But that duty presupposes faith in you. Because if one has no faith, one cannot believe My words, and if one does not believe, one cannot come to Me and say: "Give me the true bread". And if you do not have the true bread, you cannot work the deeds of God, because you are unable to do them. So in order to be nourished by God and to work the deeds of God, you must do the basic work, which is: to believe in Him Whom God sent. »

« But what miracles do You work that we may believe that You have been sent by God and we may see the seal of God upon You? What do You do, which the Prophets have not already done, although in a more modest form? Nay, Moses exceeded You, because he fed our ancestors with wonderful food not once, but for forty years. It is in fact written that our forefathers ate manna in the desert for forty years, and it is written that Moses gave them the bread of heaven to eat, as he was able to do so. »

« You are wrong. Not Moses but the Lord was able to do so. And in Exodus we read: "Now I will rain down bread from the heavens. Let the people go out and gather what is sufficient for each day, so that I may test whether the people will follow My law or not. And on the sixth day they will gather twice as much, out of respect for the seventh day, which is the Sabbath". And the Hebrews every morning saw the desert become covered with that "delicate thing that resembles what is pounded in a mortar and is like hoarfrost and coriander seed and has the lovely taste of flour kneaded with honey". So it was not Moses but God who supplied manna. God can do everything. He can punish and bless. He can grant and take away. And I tell you that He always prefers to bless and grant rather than punish and take away.

God, as the Book of Wisdom states, out of love for Moses - who, according to Ecclesiasticus, "was beloved by God and men, of blessed memory, and was made by God the equal of the holy ores in glory, and strong to the terror of his enemies, and was able to work miracles and stop them, and was raised high in the respect of kings, and was His minister before the people, and saw the glory

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of God and heard the voice of the Most High, and was the guardian of the precepts and of the Law of life and science" - God, I was saying, out of love for Moses, nourished His people with the bread of angels and from heaven untiringly sent them bread already prepared, containing every delight, satisfying every taste. And remember what Wisdom says - as it came from heaven, from God, and demonstrated His sweetness towards His children, it tasted as each eater wished and produced the effects that each person wanted, and was thus useful to babies, whose stomachs are still delicate, and to adults enjoying good appetite and healthy digestions, and to delicate girls and to decrepit old people. And, to testify that it was not the work of man, it overturned the laws of elements, and the mysterious bread, which at sunrise melted like frost, endured fire. Or rather - it is still Wisdom speaking - fire forgot its own nature out of respect for the work of God, its Creator, and for the needs of the just people of God, so that, while it burns to torture, in this case it became mild to assist those who confided in God. Thus by transforming itself in many ways, it served the grace of the Lord, nourishing everyone, according to the will of those who prayed the Eternal Father, so that the beloved children might learn that it is not the reproduction of fruit which nourishes men, but it is the word of the Lord that preserves those who believe in God. In fact it did not consume the sweet manna, as it was able to do, not even when it flared, whereas the mild morning sunshine could melt it, so that men should learn and remember that the gifts of God are to be sought from the very beginning of the day and of life, and that one must anticipate Light to receive them, and rise and pray the Eternal Father at daybreak.

That is what manna taught the Hebrews. And I am reminding you because that duty still lasts and will last for ever. Seek the Lord and His celestial gifts without idling until the late hours of day or of life. Rise and praise Him before the rising sun does, and feed on His word, which consecrates, preserves and leads to True life. It was not Moses who gave you the bread of Heaven, but it was God the Father, and now I solemnly tell you that it is My Father Who gives you the true Bread, the new Bread, the eternal Bread, which descends from Heaven, the Bread of mercy, the Bread of Life, the Bread that gives Life to the world, the Bread that satisfies every hunger and removes all languor, the Bread that gives eternal Life and eternal joy to those who eat it. »

« Give us some of that bread, Lord, and we shall not die. »

« You will die as every man dies, but you will rise to eternal Life, if you feed holily on that Bread, because those who eat it, become Incorruptible. With regard to giving it, it will be given to those who ask My Father for it with pure hearts, upright intentions and holy charity. That is why I taught you to say: "Give us our daily

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Bread". But those who eat it unworthily, will become swarms of infernal worms, like the baskets of manna kept contrary to instructions received. And the Bread of health and life will become conviction and death for them. Because the greatest sacrilege will be committed by those who place that Bread on a corrupt foul spiritual table and profane it by mixing it with the sink of their incurable passions. It would have been better if they had never taken it! »

« But where is that Bread? How can one find it? What is its name? »

« I am the Bread of Life. You will find it in Me. Its name is Jesus. He who comes to Me will never be hungry again, and he who believes in Me will never be thirsty again, because celestial rivers will flow into him quenching all material ardour. I have already told you. And you have known Me by now. And yet you do not believe Me. You cannot believe that everything is in Me. And yet it is so. All the treasures of God are in Me. And everything pertaining to the earth has been given to Me; thus the glorious Heavens and the militant earth are united in Me and even the expiating and expecting mass of those who died in the grace of God are in Me, because all power has been given to Me and is in Me. And I tell you: everything the Father gives Me, will come to Me. And I will not reject those who come to Me, because I descended from Heaven not to do My will, but the will of Him Who sent Me. And this is the will of My Father, of the Father Who sent Me: that I may lose not even one of those He gave Me, but I may raise them from death on the last day. Now the will of the Father Who sent Me is that whoever knows the Son and believes in Him, will have eternal Life and I may raise him on the Last Day, seeing that he is nourished with faith in Me and is signed with My seal. »

People begin to grumble both inside and outside the synagogue because of Jesus' new hardy words. And the Master, after taking breath, looks with ecstatically shining eyes towards the people who are grumbling more loudly, that is towards the groups in which there are some Judaeans. He resumes speaking.

« Why are you grumbling among yourselves? Yes, I am the Son of Mary of Nazareth, the daughter of Joachim of the house of David, a virgin consecrated in the Temple and then married to Joseph of Jacob, of the house of David. Many of you have known the just parents of Joseph, a royal carpenter, and those of Mary, the virgin heiress of the royal stock. And you thus say: "How can He say that He descended from Heaven?", and you become doubtful.

I remind you of the Prophets who prophesied the Incarnation of the Word. And I remind you that it is a dogma, more for us Israelites than for any other people, that He, Whose name we dare not mention, could not become Flesh according to the laws of mankind, and an impoverished mankind at that. The Most Pure Uncreated One, if He humiliated Himself by becoming Man for the

sake of man, could but choose the womb of a Virgin purer than lilies to clothe His Divinity with Flesh. The Bread that descended from Heaven in the days of Moses, was placed in the gold Ark, which supported the Mercy Seat and was Watched over by Cherubim, behind the veils of the Tabernacle. And the Word of God was with the Bread. And it was right that it should be so, because the deepest respect is to be paid to the gifts of God and to the tables of His most holy Word. So what will God have prepared for His own Word and for the true Bread that has come from Heaven? A more immaculate and precious Ark than the gold one, to support the precious Mercy Seat of His pure will to immolate Himself, watched over by the cherubim of God, veiled by virginal purity, by perfect humility, sublime charity and all the most holy virtues.

So? Do you not understand yet that My Paternity is in Heaven, and that, consequently, I come from there? Yes, I descended from Heaven to fulfil the decree of My Father, the decree of salvation of men, according to what He promised at the same moment of condemnation, and He repeated to Patriarchs and Prophets. And that is faith. And faith is given by God to souls of good will. No one, therefore, can come to Me, unless My Father leads him to Me, as although He sees that he is in darkness, He knows that he is craving for light. It is written in the Prophets: "They will be all taught by God". So, that was decided. It is God Who instructs them where to go to be taught by God. Therefore, whoever has heard God speak in the depth of his righteous soul, has learned from the Father to come to Me. »

« And who has ever heard God or seen His Face? » ask many who begin to show signs of irritation and scandal. And they conclude: « You are either raving or You are a day-dreamer. »

« No one has seen God except Him Who came from God: He has seen the Father. And I am He.

And now listen to the Creed of future Life, without which no one can be saved.

I solemnly tell you that he who believes in Me has eternal Life. I solemnly tell you that I am the Bread of eternal Life.

Your fathers ate manna in the desert and they died. Because manna was a holy but temporary food and gave life as was required to reach the Land Promised by God to His people. But the Manna Which I am, will have no limit of time or power. It is not only celestial, but divine and produces what is divine: the incorruptibility and immortality of what God created to His image and likeness. It will not last forty days, forty months, forty years, forty centuries. But it will last until the end of Time and will be given to all those who hunger for what is holy and pleasing to the Lord, Who will rejoice at giving Himself incommensurably to men, for whom He became incarnate, that they may have the Life which

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does not die.

I can give Myself, I can transubstantiate for the sake of men, so that the bread may become Flesh and the Flesh may become Bread, for the spiritual hunger of men, who without that Food would die of starvation and spiritual diseases. But if one eats this Bread with justice, one will live for ever. The bread which I will give is My Body sacrificed for the Life of the world, is My Love spread in the houses of God, so that all loving or unhappy souls may come to the Table of the Lord, and may find solace to their need to be united to God and relief to their sorrows. »

« But how can You give us Your flesh to eat? Who do You think we are? Blood-thirsty beasts? Savages? Murderers? Blood and crime disgust us. »

« I tell you solemnly that man is very often more cruel than beasts, that sin makes men savages, that pride makes them bloodthirsty murderers and that blood and crime will not disgust all the people present here. And also in future man will be the same, because Satan, sensuality and pride make him brutal. Man therefore with greater care must rid himself of the dreadful germs through the infusion of the Holy One. I tell you solemnly that if you do not eat the Flesh of the Son of man and you do not drink His Blood, you will not have Life in you. He who eats My Flesh worthily and drinks My Blood, has eternal Life and I will raise him up on the Last Day. For My Flesh is real Food and My Blood is real Drink. He who eats My Flesh and drinks My Blood lives in Me, and I live in him. As the living Father sent Me, and I live for the Father, so whoever eats Me will live also for Me and will go where I send him, and will do what I want, and will live austerely, as a man, and as ardently as a Seraph, and will be holy, because in order to be able to feed on My Flesh and My Blood, he will abstain from sin and will live ascending and finish his ascent at the feet of the Eternal Father. »

« He is mad! Who can live like that? In our religion only the priest is to be purified to offer the victim. He wants to make us victims of His madness. His doctrine is too painful and his language too hard! Who can listen to Him and practise what He says? » whisper the people present and many are disciples known as such.

The crowds disperse making their comments. And when the Master is alone in the synagogue with His most faithful followers, the number of disciples has diminished considerably. I cannot count them, but I would say that, more or less, they are about one hundred. So there must have been a remarkable defection also in the group of the old disciples by now at the service of God. Among those left there are the apostles, John the priest and John the scribe, Stephen, Hermas, Timoneus, Ermasteus, Agapo, Joseph, Solomon, Abel of Bethlehem of Galilee, and Abel the leper of

3-1711

Korazim, with his friend Samuel, Elias (the one who did not bury his father to follow Jesus), Philip of Arbela, Aser and Ishmael of Nazareth, and some whose names I do not know. They are speaking to one another in low voices commenting on the defection of the others and the words of Jesus, Who with folded arms is leaning against a high lectern.

« Are you scandalised at what I told you? And if I told you that one day you will see the Son of man ascend to Heaven where He was before, and sit beside His Father? What have you understood, assimilated and believed so far? And how have you heard and assimilated? Only through your humanity? It is the spirit that gives life and is important. The flesh is of no avail. My words are spirit and life, and they are to be heard and understood through the spirit to have life. But there are many among you whose spirits are dead because they are without faith. Many of you do not really believe. And they are staying with Me in vain. They will not receive Life, but Death. Because they are staying with Me, as I said at the beginning, either out of curiosity, or for human pleasure, or worse still, for more worthless purposes. They have not been led here by My Father, as a reward to their good will, but by Satan. Nobody can really come to Me, unless it is granted to him by My Father. You may go, you who find it difficult to remain here, because you are ashamed, from a human point of view, to leave Me, but you are more ashamed to stay at the service of One Who seems "mad and hard" to you. Go. It is better for you to be far away, than be here and do harm. »

Many of the disciples withdraw, among them there is John, the scribe, Marcus, -the possessed Gerasene, who was cured by Jesus and the devils possessing him were sent into pigs. The good disciples consult with one another and run after their faithless companions endeavouring to stop them.

In the synagogue there is only Jesus with the chief of the synagogue and the apostles...

Jesus turns towards the twelve apostles, who are deeply humiliated and are standing in a corner and says to them: « Do you want to go as well? » He says so without bitterness and without sadness, but very seriously.

Peter replies with sorrowful transport: « Lord, where can we go? To whom? You are our life and our love. You alone have words of eternal Life. We know that You are the Christ, the Son of God. If You wish, send us away. But we will not leave You of our own free not even... not even if You should not love us any more... » and Peter sheds large tears silently...

Andrew, John, Alphaeus' two sons also weep openly, and the -hers, who are either pale or flushed through emotion, do not weep, but are clearly suffering.

3-1712

« Why should I send you away? Did I not choose you twelve?... »

Jairus has wisely withdrawn to leave Jesus free to console or reproach His apostles. Jesus, Who has noticed his silent withdrawal, sits down; He is tired, disgusted, grieved and depressed, as if the revelation He is about to make, cost Him a greater effort than He can possibly bear, and He says: « And yet, one of you is a demon. »

His words drop slowly, frighteningly, in the synagogue, where only the light of the lamps seems to be cheerful... and no one dare speak. They look at one another with fearful disgust and painful inquisitiveness and each one examines himself with even greater anguish and uncertainty...

No one moves for a while. And Jesus remains alone, on His seat, with His hands crossed on His knees and lowered face. He at last looks up and says: « Come. I am not a leper! Or do you think I am?... »

John then rushes forward and throwing his arms round Jesus, neck he says: « I will be with You, then, my only love, in Your leprosy. I will be with You in Your conviction, in Your death, if that is what You think is awaiting You... »; and Peter creeps at His feet, takes them in his hands and laying them on his shoulders he says sobbing: « Press them here, tread on me! But do not make me think that You do not trust Your Simon. »

When the others see that Jesus is caressing the first two, they come forward and kiss Jesus' clothes, His hands and hair... Only the Iscariot dares to kiss Him on His cheek.

Jesus springs to His feet and His movement is so sudden that He seems to be repelling him rudely, and- He says: « Let us go home. Tomorrow night we will leave for Hippo by boat. »

354. Nicolaus of Antioch. Second Announcement of the Passion.

9th December 1945.

Jesus is all alone on the terrace of Thomas' house in Capernaum. The town is quiet on the Sabbath and its population is already greatly reduced, as the most zealous in practising their religion have already left for Jerusalem, as well as those who go there with their families and have children who cannot march long distances and thus compel adults to make frequent stops and short journeys. One thus misses the bright note of cheerful children, even more so on a rather cloudy day. Jesus is pensive. He is sitting on a low bench in a corner near the parapet, with His back to the staircase, almost hidden by the parapet; He is resting one elbow on His knee and reclines His head on His hand with a tired almost painful gesture.

He is interrupted in His meditation by the arrival of a little boy

who wants to say goodbye to Him before leaving for Jerusalem.« Jesus! Jesus! » he calls at each step, as he cannot see Jesus because the low wall conceals Him from the sight of whoever is below. And Jesus is so engrossed in thought that He does not hear the light voice or the step of the child, which is as light as a dove's... so that when the boy arrives on the terrace, He is still in the same painful position. And the little boy is frightened. He stops on the threshold, puts a finger between his lips and thinks... he then makes up his mind and moves slowly forward... he is now almost behind Jesus' back... he bends to see what He is doing... and says: « No, lovely Jesus! Don't weep! Why? Because of those bad ugly men of yesterday? My father was saying to Jairus that they are not worthy of You. But You must not weep. I love You. And my little sister, and James and Toby, and Johanna, and Mary and Micah and all the children in Capernaum, they all love You. Don't weep any more... » and he clasps Jesus' neck caressing Him and concludes: « Otherwise I will weep, too and I will weep during all the journey... »

« No, David, I am not weeping any more. You have consoled Me. Are you alone? When are you leaving? »

« After sunset. We are going by boat as far as Tiberias. Come with us. My father loves You, You know? »

« Yes, I know, My dear. But I must go to other children... Thank you for coming to say goodbye to Me. I bless you, little David. Let us kiss each other goodbye and then you will go back to your mother. Does she know that you are here?... »

« No, she doesn't. I ran away because I did not see You with Your disciples and I thought that You might be weeping. »

« I am not weeping any more, as you can see. Go back to your mother, who perhaps is looking for you and is worried. Goodbye. Watch the donkeys of the caravans. See? They stop everywhere. »

« Are You really not weeping any more? »

« No. I am no longer grieved. You have comforted Me. Thank you, My child. »

The boy runs down the steps while Jesus watches him. He then shakes His head and goes back to His place in the same sorrowful meditation as before.

Some time goes by. The setting sun appears now and again when the cloudy sky clears.

A heavy step is heard coming up the staircase. Jesus looks up. He sees Jairus going towards Him. He greets him. Jairus replies respectfully.

« How come you are here, Jairus? »

« Lord! Perhaps I have done the wrong thing. But as You see the, hearts of men You know that there was no ill-will in mine. I did not invite You to speak in the synagogue today. But I suffered for

3-1714

You so much yesterday, and I saw You suffer so much... that I did not dare. I spoke to Your disciples. They said to me: "He wishes to be alone"... But a little while ago Philip, David's father, came to me saying that his son had seen You weep. He said that You thanked him for coming to see You. So I came, too. Master, the people who are still in Capernaum, are about to meet in the synagogue. And my synagogue is Yours, Lord. »

« Thank you, Jairus. Other people will speak there today. I will come as a simple believer... »

« And You would not be obliged to come. The world is Your synagogue. Are You not really coming, Master? »

« No, Jairus. I am staying here with My spirit before the Father Who understands Me and finds no fault in Me. » Jesus' sad eyes shine with tears.

« Neither do I find fault in You... Goodbye, Lord. »

« Goodbye, Jairus. » And Jesus sits down once again, meditating.

Jairus' daughter, in a white dress, goes upstairs as lightly as a dove. She looks round... She then calls in a low voice: « My Saviour! »

Jesus looks round, sees her, smiles and says: « Come near Me. »

« Yes, my Lord. But I would like to take You to the others. Why is the synagogue to be silent today? »

« There is your father and many others to fill it with words. »

« But they are words... Yours is the Word. Oh! My Lord! Through Your word You gave me back to my mother and father, and I was dead. But look at those who are now going towards the synagogue! Many of them are more dead than I was. Come and give them Life. »

« My dear daughter, you deserved it; they... No word can give life to those who choose death for themselves. »

« Yes, my Lord. But come just the same. There are also some who live more intensely when they hear You... Come. Give me Your hand and let us go. I am the witness of Your power and I am ready to bear witness also before Your enemies, even at the cost of being deprived of this second life, which in any case is no longer mine. You gave it to me, my dear Master, out of pity for a mother and a father. But I... » the girl, a beautiful girl, almost a young woman, with large bright eyes and a pure intelligent face, stops choked by tears, which from her long eyelashes stream down her cheeks.

« Why are you weeping, now? » asks Jesus laying His hand on her hair.

« Because... I was told that You say that You will die... »

« Everybody must die, my girl. »

« But not as You say!... I... oh! now I would not have liked to be brought back to life, in order not to see that, not to be there when... that horrible thing will happen... »

3-1715

« In that case, you would not have been here either to comfort Me as you are doing now. Do you not know that a word, even one word only, of a pure soul who loves Me, takes all grief away from Me? »

« Does it? Oh! Then You must no longer be grieved because I love you more than I love my father, my mother and my own life! »

« It is so. »

« Then come. Don't be alone. Speak for me, for Jairus, for my mother, for little David, for those who love You. We are many, and we will be more. But do not be alone. It makes You sad » and through motherly instinct, like every honest woman, she ends saying: « No one will hurt You if I am near You. In any case, I will defend You. »

Jesus stands up and pleases her. With His hand in hers, they cross the street and enter the synagogue by a side door.

Jairus, who is reading a roll in a loud voice, stops reading and bowing lowlily says: « Master, please speak to those whose hearts are righteous. Prepare us for Passover with Your holy word. »

« You are reading the Book of Kings, are you not? »

« Yes, Master. I was endeavouring to make them consider that those who part from the true God become idolaters of golden calves. »

« You are quite right. Does anybody wish to speak? »

The crowd begins to whisper. Some want Jesus to speak, some shout: « We are in a hurry. Let us say the prayers and dismiss the congregation. We are going to Jerusalem in any case and we will hear the rabbis there. » Those who shout thus are the deserters who have been held up in Capernaum because of the Sabbath.

Jesus looks at them with deep sadness and says: « You are in a hurry. That is true. God also is in a hurry to judge you. You may go. » Then addressing the people who are reproaching them He says: « Do not rebuke them. Each tree bears its own fruit. »

« Master! Repeat the gesture of Nehemia! Since You are the High Priest, speak against them! » shouts Jairus indignantly and the apostles, the faithful disciples and the people of Capernaum join in with him.

Jesus stretches out His arms crosswise; He is very pale and His countenance is most sorrowful, although very kind while He cries: « Remember Me, My God! Remember Me propitiously! And remember them propitiously, too! I forgive them! »

The synagogue is soon empty, only those who are faithful to Jesus have remained... There is a stranger in a corner. A strong man whom no one notices and to whom no one speaks. On the other hand he does not speak to anybody. He stares at Jesus, so much so that the Master turns His eyes towards him and asks Jairus who he is.

« I do not know. He must be a passer-by. »

3-1716

Jesus asks him: « Who are you? »

« Nicolaus, a proselyte from Antioch. I am going to Jerusalem for Passover. »

« Whom are you looking for? »

« For You, Lord, Jesus of Nazareth. I wish to speak to You. »

« Come, then. » And when he comes near, Jesus goes out with him into the kitchen garden behind the synagogue, to listen to him.

« I spoke in Antioch with a disciple of Yours, whose name is Felix. I have longed to meet You. He told me that you are often in Capernaum and that Your Mother lives in Nazareth. And that You go to Gethsemane or to Bethany. The Eternal Father has granted me to find You in the first place. I was here yesterday... And I was near You this morning, while You were weeping and praying near the fountain... I love You, Lord, because You are holy and meek. I believe in You. Your actions and Your words had already conquered me. But Your mercy of a little while ago, on the culprits, has finally convinced me. Lord, accept me in place of those who leave You! I will come to You with everything I have: my life, my wealth, everything. » He has knelt down while saying the last words.

Jesus gazes at him... then He says: « Come. As from today you belong to the Master. Let us go to your companions. »

They go back into the synagogue where the disciples and apostles are discussing animatedly with Jairus.

« Here is a new disciple. The Father has comforted Me. Love him as your brother. Let us go and share with him our bread and salt. Then, during the night, you will leave for Jerusalem with him and we will go to Hippo by boat... And do not tell anybody which way I am going so that I shall not be held up. »

In the meantime the Sabbath is over and those who want to shun Jesus have gathered on the beach haggling over the price of boats to Tiberias. And they quarrel with Zebedee who does not want to hire out his boat, which is ready near Peter's to depart during the night with Jesus and the Twelve.

« I will go and help him! » says Peter who is annoyed.

To avoid too big a clash, Jesus holds him back saying: « We will all go, not just yourself. »

And they go... And they experience a bitter disappointment seeing the fugitives go away without even a nod, avoiding all contact in order to go away from Jesus... and they hear some unpleasant epithets also and acrid advice to the faithful disciples...

Jesus turns round to go back home after the hostile crowd has left, and He says to the new disciple: « Have you heard them? That is what you are to expect if you come with Me. »

« I know. That is why I am staying. I saw You one glorious day when the crowds cheered You and hailed You "king". I shrugged

3-1717

my shoulders saying: "Another poor day-dreamer! Another plague for Israel!", and I did not follow You because You looked like a king and I forgot all about You. I will now follow You because I see the promised Messiah in Your words and kindness. »

« You are really more just than many others. But once again I warn you. He who hopes that I am an earthly king, should go away. He who feels that he will be ashamed of Me before the world accusing Me, should go away. He who will be scandalised seeing Me treated as an evil-doer should go away. I am telling you so that you may do so before being compromised in the eyes of the world. Imitate those who are escaping in those boats, if you feel that you cannot share My lot in disgrace, to be able to share it later in glory. Because this is what is about to happen: the Son of man is about to be accused and put into the hands of men, who will kill Him as a criminal and will believe that they defeated Him. But they will have accomplished their crime in vain. Because after three days I will rise from the dead and triumph. Blessed are those who will be able to stay with Me till the end! »

They have now reached the house and Jesus entrusts the newcomer to the disciples, and goes upstairs where He was before. He goes into the upper room and sits down meditating.

Shortly afterwards the Iscariot goes upstairs with Peter. « Master, Judas has made me ponder on certain matters that I think are right. »

« Tell Me. »

« You have accepted this Nicolaus, a proselyte, whose past is unknown to us. We have already had so much trouble... and we are still experiencing it. And now? What do we know about him? Can we trust him? Judas quite rightly says that he may be a spy sent by our enemies. »

« Of course! A traitor! Why does he not want to tell us where he comes from and who sent him? I have asked him, but he says only: "I am Nicolaus from Antioch, a proselyte". I am very suspicious. »

« I would remind you that he came because he saw that I was betrayed. »

« It may be a lie! It may be treachery! »

« He who sees falsehood and treachery everywhere, is a soul capable of such things, because he measures himself on his own model » replies Jesus seriously.

« Lord, You are offending me! » shouts Judas indignantly.

« Leave Me, then, and go with those who abandoned Me. »

Judas goes out slamming the door very rudely.

« But, Lord, Judas is not entirely wrong... In any case, I would not like that man... to mention John. It must be Felix, the man of Endor, who sent him to You... »

« It is certainly so. But John of Endor is a wise man and he resumed

3-1718

his old name. Do not worry, Simon. A man who becomes a disciple because he realises that My human cause is lost, can but be a righteous spirit. Quite different from him who just went out and who came to Me because he was hoping to become the prince of a powerful king... and he cannot convince himself that I am King only for the spirit... »

« Do You suspect him, Lord? »

« I suspect no one. But I solemnly tell you that the apostle Judas of Simon, an Israelite and Judaean, will never go as far as Nicolaus, a disciple and proselyte. »

« Lord, I would like to ask Nicolaus after... John. »

« No, do not. John has not entrusted him with any task, because he is wise. Do not be the unwise one. »

« No, Lord, I was only asking You... »

« Let us go downstairs and hasten the supper. At dead of night we will leave... Simon... do you love Me? »

« Oh! Master! What are You asking? »

« Simon, My heart is darker than the lake in a stormy night and as agitated as it... »

« Oh! Master of mine!... What shall I tell You, if I am more sullen and agitated than You are? I can only say: "Here is Your Simon. And if my heart can comfort You, take it". It is the only thing I have, but it is sincere. »

For a moment Jesus rests His head on Peter's wide strong chest and then stands up and goes downstairs with him.

355. Going towards Gadara.

10th December 1945.

Jesus is already beyond the Jordan. And from what I understand, the town I can see on top of a green hill, is Gadara and it is the first town they reach after landing on the south-east coast of the lake of Galilee. In fact that is where they landed, as they did not disembark at Hippo, where they were preceded by the boats carrying the people hostile to Jesus. I think that they set ashore opposite Tarichea, where the Jordan flows out of the lake.

« You know the shortest road to Gadara, do you not? Do you remember it? » asks Jesus.

« Of course I do! When we are at the hot springs near the river Yarmuk, all we have to do is to follow the road » replies Peter.

« And where will you find the springs? » asks Thomas.

« Oh! Your nose will tell you where they are. They smell a mile away! » exclaims Peter turning up his nose in disgust.

« I did not know that you were troubled with pains... » remarks Judas Iscariot.

« Pains? Me? Never! »

« Hey! if you are so familiar with the hot springs at the Yarmuk, you must have been there. »

« I never needed hot springs to be fit! The poison in my bones always came out with the perspiration of my honest work... in any case, as I worked more than I enjoyed myself, there was always very little poison in me... »

« That one is for me, isn't it? I am guilty of everything... » says Judas angrily.

« Who bit you? You asked me a question and I replied to you, as I would have replied to the Master or to a companion. And I think that none of them, not even Matthew... who was a pleasureseeking person, would have taken it amiss. »

« Well, I do! »

« I did not know that you are so touchy. But I apologise for the assumed insinuation. For the Master's sake, you know. He is so stressed by strangers that there is no need for us to vex Him further. Instead of running after your own touchiness, look at Him, -.Id you will realise how much He needs peace and love. »

Jesus does not speak. He simply looks at Peter and smiles gratefully.

Judas does not reply to Peter's fair remark. He is taciturn and irritated. He wants to appear kind, but the anger, bad mood, and disappointment of his heart are clearly revealed by his eyes, voice and countenance, and even by his overbearing gait, as he stamps the ground angrily giving vent to what boils within him.

But he strives to look calm and be kind, he does not succeed, but he tries... He asks Peter: « Well, then, how do you know these places? Perhaps you have been here for your wife? »

« No, we passed here when in the month of Ethanim we came to Hauran with the Master. I took His Mother and the women disciples to Chuza's estate. Coming via Bozrah, we passed by here » replies Peter sincerely and wisely.

« Were you alone? » asks Judas ironically.

« Why? Do you think that I by myself am not as good as several people when it is the case of showing how clever you are, and there is an important task to be done and one does it with all good will? »

« Oh! How proud you are! I would have loved to see you! »

« You would have seen a grave man accompanying holy women. »

« But were you really alone? » asks Judas with the true attitude of an inquisitor.

« I was with the Lord's brothers. »

« Ah! You are beginning to make admissions! »

« And you are beginning to get on my nerves! Can you tell me what is the matter with you? »

« That's true. It is a shame » says Thomas.

« It's time you stopped it » corroborates James of Zebedee.

3-1720

« It is not right for you to sneer at Simon » states Bartholomew reproachingly.

« You ought to remember that he is the Head of us all » concludes the Zealot.

Jesus is silent.

« Oh! I am not sneering at anybody, and nothing is the matter with me. I just like to tease him a little... »

« That is not true! You are a liar! You ask sly questions because you want to arrive at some conclusion. A sly man thinks that everybody is sly. We have no secrets. We were all there, and we all did the same thing: what the Master told us. And there is nothing else. Is that clear? » shouts the other Judas who is really angry.

« Be quiet. You are like quarrelsome women. You are all wrong. And I am ashamed of you » says Jesus severely.

There is total silence while they go towards the town on the hill. Thomas breaks the silence exclaiming: « What a dreadful smell! »

« It's the springs. That is the Yarmuk and those buildings are the Roman Thermae. Beyond them there is a beautiful paved road that takes one to Gadara. Romans like to travel in comfort. Gadara is beautiful! » says Peter.

« It is even more beautiful because we will not find certain... beings here, at least not many of them » grumbles Matthew between his teeth.

They cross the bridge over the river in the pungent smell of sulphur water. They pass near the Thermae, among Roman vehicles, and they take a beautiful road, paved with large slabs, which takes to the town on the top of the hill, a beautiful town enclosed by walls.

John approaches the Master and asks: « Is it true that in old days a damned soul was hurled down into the bowels of the earth where those waters are? My mother used to tell us that when we were little children to make us understand that one must not commit sin, otherwise hell opens under the feet of a soul cursed by God and swallows the sinner. And then in memory and as a warning, cracks remain through which smell, heat and water of hell come up. I would be afraid to bathe in there... »

« Afraid of what, boy? It would not infect you. It is easier to be infected by those men who have hell within themselves and exhale the stench and poison of hell. But only those are contaminated who are inclined to become so by themselves. »

« Could I be contaminated? »

« No. Not even if you were among a crowd of demons. »

« Why not? What has he got which is different from everybody else? » asks Judas of Kerioth at once.

« He is pure in every way and thus he can see God » replies Jesus and Judas laughs maliciously.

3-1721

John asks once again: « So those springs are not mouths of hell? »

« No. On the contrary they are good things made by God for His children. Hell is not enclosed in the earth. It is on the earth, John, in the hearts of men. And it expands further there. »

« But does Hell really exist? » asks the Iscariot.

« What are you saying? » ask his companions who are thoroughly scandalised.

« I am asking: does it really exist? I don't believe it does, and I am not the only one. »

« Heathen! » they shout with horror.

« No. Israelite. Many of us in Israel do not believe such nonsense. »

« Well, how can you believe in Paradise? », « And in God's justice? », « Where do you put sinners? », « What about Satan? » many of the apostles object shouting.

« I say what I think. A short while ago I was blamed for being a liar. I am proving that I am sincere, even if what I say scandalises you and makes me hateful in your eyes. In any case I am not the only one in Israel, since Israel has improved in knowledge through contacts with Hellenists and Romans, who are of such opinion. And the Master, the only one whose opinion I respect, cannot reproach me or Israel, as He protects Romans and Greeks and is openly their friend... I base myself on the following philosophical concept. If everything is controlled by God, everything we do depends on His will, and He must reward us all in the same way, because we are only automata moved by Him. We are beings devoid of will. The Master Himself says so: "The Will of the Most High. The Will of the Father". That is the only Will. And it is so infinite that it crushes and destroys the limited will of creatures. Consequently, both the Good and the Evil, which we appear to do, is done by God, Who imposes it on us. Thus He will not punish us for evil deeds and His justice will be administered that way, because our sins are not voluntary but they are imposed by Him Who wants us to commit them, so that both good and evil may be on the earth. He who is bad is the means of expiation for those who are not so bad. And he suffers within himself as he cannot be considered good, and thus expiates his part of sin. Jesus said so. Hell is on the earth and in the hearts of men. I do not perceive Satan. He does not exist. Once I believed he existed. But for some time I have convinced myself that it is a lot of nonsense. And one attains peace through such belief. »

Judas expounds such... theory with so much ostentation that the others stand breathless with astonishment... Jesus is silent. And Judas teases Him: « Am I not right, Master? »

« No. » His « no » is so sharp that it sounds like an explosion.

« And yet I... I do not perceive Satan, neither do I admit free will

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or Evil. And all the Sadducees are of my opinion as well as many other people in Israel. No, Satan does not exist. »

Jesus looks at him. His glance is so complex that it cannot be analysed. It is the glance of a Judge, of a Doctor, of a grieved astonished man... There is everything in it...

Judas, who is already launched out, concludes: « Perhaps it is because I am better and more perfect than the others, that I have overcome the terror of men for Satan. »

And Jesus is silent. But Judas teases Him: « Speak! Why am I not terrified? »

Jesus keeps silent.

« Are You not replying, Master? Why? Are You afraid? »

« No. I am Charity. And Charity withholds its opinion until it is compelled to give it... Leave Me and go away » He says at last, because Judas tries to embrace Him, and when He is held by force in the arms of the blasphemer, He whispers to him: « You disgust Me! You do not see or perceive Satan, because he is all one with you. Go away, you demon! »

Judas kisses Him impudently and laughs, as if the Master had praised him secretly. He goes back to the others who are so aghast that they have stopped and he says to them: « See? I know how to open the Master's heart. And I make Him happy by showing Him my confidence and I learn. You, instead!... You never dare speak to Him. Because you are proud. Oh! I will know more about Him than anybody else. And I will be able to speak... »

They reach the gates of the town. They all go in together, because Jesus has waited for them. But while going through the entrance hall, Jesus commands: « My brothers and Simon, go ahead and gather the people. »

« Why not I, Master? Are You not giving me any more missions to fulfil? Are they no longer necessary now? You -gave me two, one after the other, and they lasted for months... »

« And you complained and said that I wanted to keep you away. Are you now complaining because I want to keep you with Me? »

Judas does not know what to reply and is silent. He goes ahead with Thomas, the Zealot, James of Zebedee and Andrew. Jesus stops to let Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew and John pass, as if He wished to be left alone. They do not interfere.

But the loving heart of John, whose eyes have often been shining with tears during the blasphemous dispute of Judas, compels the apostle to turn round shortly afterwards, just in time to see Jesus press His forehead with His hands, with a gesture of sorrow, and bend forward like one in great pain. Jesus does so thinking He was unobserved in the little lonely street, which is also dark owing to the many arches across it. Fair-headed John leaves his companions and goes back to his Master: « What is the matter, my Lord?

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Are you Suffering once again as when we found You at Achzib? Oh! My Lord! »

« It is nothing, John! Help Me with your love. And do not say anything to the others. Pray for Judas. »

« Yes, Master. He is very unhappy, is he not? He is in darkness, and does not know. He thinks that he has attained peace... Is it peace? »

« He is very unhappy » says Jesus dejectedly.

« Don't be so sad, Master. Think of how many sinners have become good, although they were hardened in sin. Judas will do the same. Oh! You will certainly save him! I will spend the night praying for that. I will tell the Father to make me capable only of loving, I do not want anything else. I was hoping to give my life for You or to make Your power shine through my work. Now no longer so. I renounce everything, I choose the most humble and common life and I will ask the Father to give what is mine to Judas... to make him happy... so that he may turn to holiness... Lord... I should tell You something... I think I know why Judas is like that. »

« Come tonight. We will pray together and speak. »

« And will the Father listen to me? Will He accept my sacrifice? »

« The Father will bless you. But you will suffer... »

« Oh! No! It is enough for me to see that You are happy... and that Judas... and that Judas... »

« Yes, John. Look, they are calling us. Let us run. »

The little street becomes a beautiful one, adorned with porches and fountains. And it is embellished with beautiful squares: each one being more beautiful than the others. It crosses another main street, which is just as beautiful, and at the end of it there is an amphitheatre. Several sick people have already gathered in a corner of the porches waiting for the Saviour.

Peter comes towards Jesus: « They have retained faith in what we told them about You in the month of Ethanim. They came at once. »

« And I will reward their faith at once. Let us go. »

And while the sun is setting and tingeing the marble buildings with red, He goes to heal those who are waiting for Him with faith.

356. The Night at Gadara and the Sermon on Divorce.

11th December 1945.

The magnificent stars of a clear night in the month of March are shining in the eastern sky and they are so large and bright that the vault of heaven seems to have stooped down like a canopy over the terrace of the house that welcomed Jesus. It is a very tall house, situated in one of the highest parts of the town, so that the infinite

horizon spreads out before those who look in every direction. And if the earth disappears in the darkness of the night, which is not brightened by moonlight, as the moon is waning, the sky is glittering with countless stars. It is really the victory of the firmament, which triumphantly displays its garden beds of stars, its Galatea grasslands, its planetary giants and forests of constellations in opposition to the fleeting vegetation of the earth, which, even when it is age old, is still one hour old, as compared with those that exist since God made the firmament. And when one is lost looking up there, and one's eyes roam along the wonderful avenues, where the trees are stars, one seems to hear the voices and songs of those splendid forests, of that huge organ of the most sublime cathedral, in which I like to imagine that the winds of racing stars are bellows and registers and the stars launched in their trajectories are voices. And one seems to perceive all that, particularly because the silence of the night, while Gadara is asleep, is total. No fountain whispers, no bird sings. The world is asleep, as well as all creatures. Men, who are less innocent than other creatures, are sleeping more or less peacefully in their dark homes.

But a tall dark shadow, which is just visible because of the contrast of the white face and hands against its dark garment, comes out of the door of the room that opens onto the lower terrace, there is in fact another higher one on the upper room, and is followed by another lower shadow. They are walking on tiptoe to avoid awaking those who are perhaps sleeping in the room underneath and they climb on tiptoe the outside little staircase, which takes to the top terrace. They then take each other's hand and they go and sit down on the bench that lies against the high parapet surrounding the terrace. The low bench and the high parapet conceal everything from their eyes. Even if it were bright moonlight illuminating the world, they would see nothing. Because the town is completely concealed and also the dark shadows of nearby mountains are hidden in the darkness of the night. Only the sky is displayed to them with its springtime constellations and the magnificent stars of Orion: of Rigil and Betelgeuse, of Aldebaran, of Perseus, Andromeda and Cassiopeia and the Pleiades united like sisters. And Sapphirine Venus covered with diamonds, and Mars of pale ruby, and the topaz of Jupiter are the kings of the starry population and they palpitate as if they wished to greet the Lord, hastening their palpitations of light for the Light of the world.

Jesus raises His head to look at them and rests it against the high wall, and John imitates Him getting lost looking up there where the world can be ignored... Then Jesus says: « And now that this contemplation has cleansed us, let us pray. » He stands up and John does likewise. A long, silent, pressing prayer, said with all their

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souls, their arms stretched out crosswise, with their faces raised towards the east, where the first pale hint of moonlight appears. And then the « Our Father » said together, slowly, not once but three times, with increasing insistence in asking, as is clearly expressed by their voices. And their entreaty is so ardent that it separates their souls from their bodies, launching them along the ways of the Infinite.

Then there is silence. They sit down where they were before, while the moon whitens the sleeping earth more and more.

Jesus lays His arm on John's shoulder and draws him towards Himself saying: « So tell Me what you feel you must tell Me. What has My John seen, with the assistance of spiritual light, in the gloomy soul of his companion? »

« Master... I regret having said that to You. I will commit two sins... »

« Why? »

« Because I will grieve You revealing what You do not know, and... because... Master, is it a sin to speak of the evil we see in other people? It is, isn't it? So, how can I speak about it, offending against charity!... » John is depressed.

Jesus enlightens his soul: « Listen, John. According to you, who is worth more, the Master or a fellow-disciple? »

« The Master, Lord. You are worth the most. »

« And what am I according to you? »

« The Beginning and the End. You are Everything. »

« Since I am Everything, do you think that I know everything? »

« Yes, my Lord. That is why there is a great contrast in me. Because I think that You know and suffer. And because I remember that one day You told me that at times You are the Man, only the Man, and thus the Father lets You know what it is to be a man, who must behave according to reason. And I think also that God, out of pity for You, may conceal this unpleasant truth from You... »

« Cling to that idea, John, and speak confidently. It is not a sin to confide what you know to Him Who is "Everything" for you. Because He Who is "Everything" will not be scandalised, will not grumble or lack charity, not even by thought, towards the unhappy fellow. It would be a sin if you said what you know to anyone who is not capable of being full of love, to your companions for instance, who would backbite and assail the culprit mercilessly, injuring him and themselves. It is therefore necessary to be merciful, the more merciful, the poorer the soul is in front of us, affected by many diseases. A doctor, a compassionate nurse, a mother are not much upset if a person is not seriously ill and they do not fight hard to cure him. But if a son, or a man, is seriously ill, and his life is in danger, either because of intervening gangrene or

paralysis, how they strive to cure him overcoming repugnance and fatigue. Is it not so? »

« Yes, it is, Master » replies John who has taken his habitual posture with his arm round the Master's neck and his head reclined on His shoulder.

« Well, not everybody knows how to be merciful to diseased souls. Consequently one must be careful in revealing their trouble, so that the world may not shun them and hurt them through contempt. A sick man who realises that he is being derided, becomes gloomy and gets worse. If instead he is nursed with cheerful hope, he may recover because the hopeful good humour of those nursing him inspirits him and stimulates the effect of medicines. But you know that I am Mercy and I will not humble Judas. So you may speak without scruple. You are not a spy. You are a son who with loving anxiety confides to his father the evil discovered in a brother so that the father may cure him. Come on... »

John heaves a long sigh, then lowers his head further, letting it slide on to Jesus' chest, and says: « How grievous it is to speak of putrid things!... Lord... Judas is lewd... and tempts me to commit obscene things. I do not mind if he derides me. But it grieves me that he should come to You, filthy with his love affairs. Since he came, he has tempted me several times. When we happen to be alone - and he takes advantage of every opportunity - he does nothing but speak of women... and I am as disgusted with it as if I were immersed in some fetid matter that threatened to enter my mouth... »

« Are you deeply upset by that? »

« What? Upset? My soul shudders. Reason cries against such temptations... I do not want to be corrupted... »

« How does your body react? »

« It shrivels with disgust. »

« Nothing else? »

« No, Master, and I weep because I think that Judas could not cause a graver offence to a man who has consecrated his life to God. Tell me: will that be detrimental to my offering? »

« No. Not more than a handful of mud thrown against a diamond plaque. It will not affect or penetrate the plaque. A cup of clean water poured over it is enough to clean it. And it becomes more beautiful than before. »

« Cleanse me, then. »

« Your charity and your angel cleanse you. There is nothing left on you. You are a clean altar on which God descends. What else does Judas do? »

« Lord, he... Oh! Lord! » John's head slides lower.

« What? »

« He... It is not true that the money he gives You for the poor

belongs to him. It is the money of the poor that he steals, to be praised for being generous, which is not true. He was wild because when You came back from mount Tabor, You took all the money away from him. And he said to me: "There are spies among us". I replied: "Spies of what? Have you stolen, perhaps?". "No" he replied to me, "but I am far-sighted and I have two purses. Someone told the Master and He ordered me to hand everything over, and He was so authoritative that I was compelled to do so". But it is not true, Lord, that he does so because he is provident. He does that to have money for himself. I could bear witness to that and I am almost certain that I would be telling the truth. »

« Almost certain! That uncertainty is indeed a slight fault. You cannot accuse him of being a thief, if you are not absolutely certain. The actions of men at times appear to be faulty, whereas they are good. »

« That is true, Master. I will not accuse him any more, not even in my own mind. But it is true that he has two purses, and that the one he says belongs to him and he gives to You, is instead Yours and he does so to be praised. I would not do that, because I feel that it is not right. »

« You are right. What else have you to tell Me? »

John raises his frightened face, opens his mouth to speak, then closes it and falls on his knees hiding his face in the tunic of Jesus, Who lays a hand on his head.

« So, speak up! You may have misjudged things. I will help you to consider them properly. You must also tell Me what you think of the probable causes of Judas' sinning. »

« Lord, Judas feels that he does not have the strength he would like to have to work miracles... You are aware that it has always been his ambition... Do You remember Endor? Instead... he is the one who works fewer miracles. Since he came back, he has not been able to do anything... and during the night he moans in his dreams, as if they were nightmares and... Master! »

« Come on. Tell Me, everything. »

« And he curses... and practises witchcraft. This is not a lie and there is no doubt about it. I saw him myself. He chooses me as his companion, because I sleep soundly. Nay, because I used to sleep soundly. Now, I must admit it, I watch him and my sleep is not so sound, because I hear him as soon as he moves... Perhaps I did the wrong thing. But I pretended to be asleep to see what he was doing. And twice I have heard and seen him do horrible things. I am not an expert in sorcery, but that is what it is. »

« Does he do that by himself? »

« Sometimes he does, sometimes he does not. I followed him at Tiberias. He went into a house. I inquired later who lives there. It is a man who practises sorcery with other people. And when Judas

came out, almost at daybreak, I gathered from the words they spoke that they are familiar with one another and they are many... and not all strangers. He asks the demon to give him the Power that You do not give him. That is why I renounce my part so that the Father may give it to him and he may sin no more. »

« You ought to give him your soul. But neither the Father nor I would allow that... »

There is a long silence. Then Jesus says with a tired voice: « Let us go, John. Let us go downstairs. We will rest until dawn. »

« You look more depressed than before, Lord! I should not have told You! »

« No. I already knew. But you have taken a load off your chest... and that is what matters. »

« Lord, must I avoid him? »

« No. Do not be afraid. Satan can do no harm to people like John. He terrorises them, but he cannot take away the grace that God continuously grants them. Let us go. I will speak in the morning and then we will go to Pella. We must make haste, because the river is already swollen with the thawing snow and the rain of the past days. It will soon be in spate, particularly because a haloed moon forebodes heavy rain... »

They go downstairs and disappear in the room underneath the terrace.

It is morning. A morning in the month of March, when the sky clears and becomes overcast alternately. But clouds overwhelm clearings, trying to take possession of the sky. The breaths of warm air make the air heavy with a veil of dust that is probably blown from the tableland.

« If the wind does not change, there is going to be rain » states Peter coming out of the house with the others.

Jesus comes out last; He says goodbye to the women of the house, while the landlord joins Him. They go towards a square.

After a few steps, they are stopped by a Roman non-commissioned officer who is with other soldiers. « Are You Jesus of Nazareth? »

« Yes, I am. »

« What are You doing? »

« I am going to speak to the crowds. »

« Where? »

« In the square. »

« A sedicious speech? »

« No. Precepts of virtue. »

« Be careful! Don't tell lies! Rome has had enough of false gods. »

« If you come, too, you will see that I am not telling lies. »

The man who gave Jesus hospitality feels that he must put in a

word: « Since when is a rabbi asked so many questions? »

« He has been denounced as agitator. »

« Agitator Him? You are making a blunder, Marius Severus. He is the meekest man on the earth. I can assure you. »

The officer shrugs his shoulders and replies: « So much the better for Him. But that is the denunciation that the centurion received. He may go. He has been warned. » And he turns round and goes away with his subordinates.

« Who has done that? I don't understand! » many of the people present say.

Jesus replies: « Never mind. It does not matter. Let us go while there are many people in the square. Later we shall go away from here, too. »

The square looks like a business place. It is not a market, but not much different from a market, because there are warehouses around it, with all kinds of goods stored in them. And they are crowded with people. So there are many people also in the square and as some of them point out Jesus, a crowd soon gathers round the « Nazarene ». In the crowd there are all kinds of people and of every country. Some are there out of veneration, some out of curiosity.

Jesus makes a gesture that He is about to speak.

« Let us listen to Him! » says a Roman coming out of a warehouse.

« Shall we not be listening to a lamentation? » replies his companion.

« Don't you believe that, Constant. He is not so boring as our usual orators. »

« Peace to those listening to Me! It is written in Ezra, in Ezra's prayer: "What shall we say now, my God, after what happened? Because, if we have deserted Your commandments, which You ordained through Your servants... " »

« Stop, You who are speaking. We will give You the subject » shout a handful of Pharisees who elbow their way through the crowd. The escort appears almost immediately and stops at the nearest corner. The Pharisees are now before Jesus. « Are You the Galilean? Are You Jesus of Nazareth? »

« I am! »

« Praised be the Lord that we have found You! » Their ugly faces are so rancorous that they do not show much joy for the meeting...

The oldest one speaks: « We have been following You for several days, but You had always left when we arrived. »

« Why are you following Me? »

« Because You are the Master and we want to be instructed by You with regard to a dark passage of the Law. »

« There are no dark passages in the Law of God. »

« Not in the Law. But, eh! eh!... "superimpositions", as You say,

eh! eh!, have been made to the Law and have caused obscurity. »

« A dim light, at most. And it is enough to turn one's mind to God to dispel it. »

« Not everybody can do that. We, for instance, are left in the dim light. You are the Rabbi, eh! eh! So help us. »

« What is it that you want to know? »

« We want to know whether it is lawful for a man to repudiate his wife for any reason whatsoever. It is something that happens frequently and every time it causes a stir wherever it happens. People apply to us to know whether it is lawful. And we reply according to each case. »

« And you approve what happened in ninety per cent of the cases. And the remaining ten per cent, which you do not approve, concerns the poor or your enemies. »

« How do You know? »

« Because that is what happens in all human things. And I would add a third group of people: those who would be more entitled to it, if divorce were lawful: that is, real pitiful cases, such as incurable leprosy, life imprisonment, or unmentionable diseases... »

« So, according to You, it is never lawful. »

« Neither according to Me, nor according to the Most High, or anyone with a righteous soul. Have you not read, that the Creator, at the beginning of times, created man and woman? And He created them male and female; and it was not necessary for Him to do so, because He could have created a different way of procreation for the king of Creation, whom He made in His image and likeness, and it would have been a good way, even if it differed from every other natural way. And He said: "For this reason man will leave his father and mother and will join himself to his wife and they will become one body". So God joined them in one unity. Thus they are no longer "two", but "one" body only. So, what God united, because He saw that "it is a good thing", man must not divide, because if that should happen, it would no longer be a good thing. »

« Why then did Moses say: "If a man has taken a wife, but she does not find favour with him through something disgraceful, he will give her a writ of dismissal and send her away from his house"? »

« He said so because of the hardness of your hearts, to avoid, by means of his order, too grave disorders. That is why' he allowed you to repudiate your wives. But it was not so from the beginning. Because a woman is worth more than an animal, which according to the caprice of its master or the free circumstances of nature, copulates with this or that male, a soulless body that copulates for procreation. Your wives have souls, as you do, and it is not fair that you should tread on them pitilessly. If in her condemnation it

is said: "You will be subject to the power of your husband and he will lord it over you", that must take place according to justice and not with arrogance offending against the rights of a free soul worthy of respect. By repudiating your wives, which is not lawful, you give offence to the soul of your companion, to the twin body which joined yours, to the whole woman, whom you married, demanding honesty in her, whilst you, o perjurers, are dishonest, disabled, at times corrupt, when you go to her, and you continue to be so, taking every opportunity to strike her and give a wider scope to your unappeasable lust. Prostitutors of your wives! On no account can you separate from the woman who is joined to you according to the Law and Blessing. Only in the case that grace touches you, and you understand that woman is not a possession but a soul, and has therefore equal rights as yours to be recognised as part of man and not an object for his pleasure, and only in the case that your heart is so hard as not to be able to raise her to the dignity of wife, after enjoying her as a prostitute, only to remove the scandal of two who live together without the blessing of God on their union, you may send her away. Because in that case yours is not union but fornication, often not honoured by the birth of children, because they are suppressed against nature or sent away as a disgrace. In no other case. Because if you have illegitimate children from your concubine, it is your duty to put an end to the scandal by marrying her, if you are free. I am not taking into consideration the case of adultery consumed to the detriment of an unaware wife. In that case the stones of lapidation and the fire of Sheol are holy. But for him who sends away his legitimate wife because he is satiated with her, to take another one, there is but one sentence: he is an adulterer. And also he who takes the repudiated woman is adulterer, because if man has arrogated to himself the right to separate what God has joined, the matrimonial union continues in the eyes of God, and cursed is the man who takes a second wife without being a widower. And cursed is he who, after repudiating his wife and abandoning her to the dangers of life, which compel her to get married again to have her daily bread, takes her back when she becomes a widow of her second husband. Because, although she is a widow, she was an adulteress through your fault, and you would redouble her adultery. Have you understood, Pharisees, who are tempting Me? »

They go away thoroughly humiliated, without replying.

« He is a severe man. If He were in Rome He would see that the filth there is even more fetid » says a Roman.

Also some of the Gadara people grumble: « It is difficult to be men, if one must be so chaste!... »

And some say in louder voices: « If that is the situation of a man with respect to his wife, it is better not to get married. »

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And the apostles also make the same remarks while they resume going towards the country, after leaving those of Gadara. Judas says so scornfully. James of Zebedee speaks with respect and consideration, and Jesus replies to both of them: « Not everybody understands that properly. Some in fact prefer to remain single in order to be free to indulge their vices. Some to avoid the possibility of sin, not being good husbands. But only few are granted to understand the beauty of being free from sensuality and also from the honest desire of woman. And they are the holiest, the freest, the most angelical on the earth. I am referring to those who become eunuchs for the Kingdom of God. Some men are born such. Some are made such. The former are monstrosities to be pitied, the latter are abuses to be repressed. But there is a third category: the voluntary eunuchs, who without any violence against themselves, and thus with double merit, comply with God's request and live like angels, so that the forlorn altar of the earth may still have flowers and incense for the Lord. They deny their inferior part satisfaction, so that their superior part may grow greater and bloom in Heaven in the flower-beds closest to the throne of the King. And I solemnly tell you that they are not mutilated, on the contrary they are gifted with what most men lack. They are thus not the object of foolish sneering words, but of great veneration. Let those understand that who should understand it, and respect it, if they can. »

Those who are married among the apostles whisper to one another.

« What is the matter with you? » asks Jesus.

« And what about us? We were not aware of that, and we got married. But we would like to be as You say... » says Bartholomew on behalf of everybody.

« You are not forbidden to do so as from now onwards. Live continently, considering your companion as a sister and you will have great merit in the eyes of God. But quicken your steps, so that we may be at Pella before it begins to rain. »

357. At Pella.

12th December 1945.

The road which takes one from Gadara to Pella runs through a fertile area between two rows of hills, one higher than the other. They look like two huge steps of a staircase for fabulous giants, to climb from the Jordan valley up to the Hauran mountains. Where the road runs closer to the western mountain-terrace, the view extends not only as far as the mountains on the other bank, which I think are those of southern Galilee and certainly those of Samaria, but it reaches also the beautiful green vegetation that forms a double hedge along both sides of the blue river. Where, instead, the

road is closer to the eastern chain, then one loses sight of the Jordan valley, but the green mountain tops of the Samaria and Galilean chains can still be seen standing out against the grey sky on a sunny day it would be a beautiful view with charming bright hues. But today the sky is already overcast with low clouds, driven by sirocco, which is becoming stronger and stronger and blows fresh masses of clouds onto those already existing, lowering the sky with so much grey ruffled wadding, and thus the view loses its bright green shades, which look toned down as if they were seen through mist.

A village is reached now and again and left behind without anything remarkable happening. The Master is received with and followed by indifference. Only beggars show interest in the group of Galilean pilgrims and ask for alms. And there are the usual blind people whose eyes in most cases have been destroyed by trachoma, or the almost blind people, who walk with lowered heads, as they cannot bear light, along the walls, all alone or in the company of a woman or a boy. In a village, where the road to Pella crosses the Bozrah-Gerasa road to the lake of Tiberias, there is a crowd of blind people who assail the caravans with their moaning, which resembles the whining of dogs and is interrupted now and again by howling. They are standing against the walls of the first houses, listening, in a group of misery, filth and rags, nibbling bread-crusts and olives, or dozing, while flies feed at will on their ulcerated eye-lids; but at the first noise of hooves or shuffling of feet they all stand up and move like a ragged chorus of an ancient tragedy, uttering the same words and making the same gestures to the new-comers. When a coin or a crust of bread is thrown to them, the blind or half blind people grope in the dust and filth for the offering.

Jesus watches them and says to Simon Zealot and Philip: « Take some money and bread to them. Judas has the money, John the bread. »

The two go away promptly to do what they were told and they stop to speak, while Jesus comes forward slowly, as He is delayed by a line of donkeys, which bar the road.

The beggars are amazed at the greetings and kindness with which they are spoken to and assisted by the new-comers and they asks: « Who are you, who are so kind to us? »

« The disciples of Jesus of Nazareth, the Rabbi of Israel. He, Who loves the poor and the unhappy because He is the Saviour, and He passes by, announcing the Gospel and working miracles. »

« This is the miracle » says one whose eyelids are dreadfully ravaged. And he strikes his clean piece of bread, like an animal that understands and appreciates only material things.

A woman, who is passing by holding copper pitchers and has

heard him, says: « Be quiet, you dirty sluggard. » She then addresses the disciples saying: « He is not of our village. He is quarrelsome and violent to his fellow-men. He should be driven away because he robs the poor of the village. But we are afraid he may take vengeance upon us », then in a very low voice, which can hardly be heard, she whispers: « They say that he is a robber and for years he has been robbing and killing, and he came down from the mountains of Caracamoab and Sela, which is now called Petra by the rulers, those who make roads in the deserts. They say that he is a deserter from the army of that Roman who came... to make Rome known... Helius, I think, and another name... If you give him a drink, he will tell you... Now he is blind and he happened to come here... Is that the Saviour? » she asks, pointing at Jesus, Who has gone straight on.

« Yes, He is. Do you want to speak to Him? »

« Oh! no! » says the woman with indifference.

The two apostles say goodbye to her and they set out to join the Master. But a riot breaks out among the blind people while a child is heard weeping. Several people turn round and the woman seen previously, who is now standing at the door of her house, says: « It must be that cruel man taking the money from the weaker ones. He always does that. »

Jesus also turns round to look...

In fact a boy, or rather a youth, comes out of the group bleeding and weeping and he complains: « He took everything from me! And my mother has no more bread! »

Some pity him, some laugh at him...

« Who is he? » Jesus asks the woman.

« A youth from Pella. He is poor and comes here begging. They are all blind in the family, as they have infected one another. The father died and the mother stays at home. The youth asks passersby and peasants for alms. »

The young fellow comes forward with his little stick, wiping his tears and the blood streaming down his forehead with the edge of his worn-out mantle.

The woman calls him: « Stop, Jaia. I will wash your forehead and give you some bread! »

« I had money and bread for several days! I have nothing now! Mother is waiting for me to have something to eat... » complains the unhappy youth while wiping his forehead with the water of the woman.

Jesus moves forward and says: « I will give you what I have. Do not weep. »

« But, Lord! Why? How will we pay for our lodgings? What shall we do? » asks Judas anxiously.

« We will praise the Lord for keeping us healthy. It is a great

grace. »

The youth says: « Oh! It is indeed. If I could see! I would work for my mother. »

« Would you like to be cured? »

« Yes, I would. »

« Why do you not go to a doctor? »

« None of them has ever cured us. We have been told that there is One in Galilee, Who is not a doctor, but can cure. But how can one go to Him? »

« Go to Jerusalem. To Gethsemane. It is an olive grove on the side of the mount of Olives near the road to Bethany. Ask for Mark and Jonah. Everyone in the district of Ophel will tell you. You can join a caravan. There are so many going by. Ask Jonah where Jesus of Nazareth is... »

« That's it! That is the name! Will He cure me? »

« He will, if you have faith. »

« I have faith. Where are You going, Who are so good? »

« To Jerusalem, for Passover. »

« Oh! Take me with You. I will not cause You any trouble. I will sleep in the open air and a piece of bread will be quite enough for me! Let us go to Pella... You are going there, are You not? And we will tell my mother, and then we will go... Oh! If I could see! Be good, Lord!... » And the youth kneels down searching for Jesus' feet to kiss them.

« Come. I will take you to the light. »

« May You be blessed! »

They resume walking and Jesus' tapering fingers hold the youth by the arm to guide him with dispatch. And the youth asks: « Who are You? A disciple of the Saviour? »

« No. »

« But do You know Him, at least? »

« Yes, I do. »

« And do You think that He will cure me? »

« I do. »

« But... will He want money? I have none. Doctors ask for so much! We have gone to ruin to be cured... »

« Jesus of Nazareth wants but faith and love. »

« He is very good, then. But You are good, too » says the youth and to take the hand leading him and caress it, he feels the sleeve of the tunic. « What a fine garment You have! You are a gentleman! Are You not ashamed of me, as I am in rags? »

« I am ashamed only of sins, which disgrace man. »

« My fault is that at times I complain of my situation and I want warm clothes, bread, and above all sight. »

Jesus caresses him: « Those are not disgracing faults. But try to avoid even those imperfections and you will be holy. »

3-1736

« If I get cured, I will no longer have them... Or... I do not get cured, and You will know, and will You prepare me for my destiny, and teach me to become holy like Job? »

« You will be cured. But afterwards, above all afterwards, you must always be happy with your condition even if it is not one of the most pleasant ones. »

They arrive at Pella. The kitchen gardens, which are always met outside towns, show the fertility of the soil through their luxuriant vegetation. Some women working in the fields or busy with their laundry greet Jaia and say to him: « You are back early today. Had you a good day? » Or: « Have you found a protector, poor son? » An elderly woman shouts from the far end of her kitchen garden: « Jaia! If you are hungry there is a plate of soup for you. Or for your mother. Are you going home? Take it. »

« I am going to tell my mother that I am going with this kind gentleman to Jerusalem to be cured. He knows Jesus of Nazareth and will take me there. »

The road, near the gate of Pella, is crowded with people. There are some merchants and also some pilgrims.

A fine looking woman, travelling on a donkey's back, in the company of a maidservant and a servant, turns round on hearing Jesus being mentioned, then draws rein, stops the donkey, dismounts and goes towards Jesus. « Do You know Jesus of Nazareth? Are You going to Him? I am going too... To have a son cured. I would like to speak to the Master because... » she bursts into tears under her thick veil.

« What is the matter with your son? Where is he? »

« He is from Gerasa. But now he is going towards Judaea. He wanders about like one possessed... Oh! What have I said! »

« Is he possessed? »

« Lord, he was and he was cured. Now... he is worse than before because... Oh! I can only tell Jesus of Nazareth! »

« James, take the boy between you and Simon and go on with the others. Wait for Me on the other side of the gate. Woman, you can send your servants on. We will be able to speak to each other, just the two of us. »

The woman says: « But You are not the Nazarene! To Him only I will speak. Because He only can understand and have mercy. »

They are now alone. The others have all gone ahead on their own. Jesus waits until the road is clear and then says: « You may speak. I am Jesus of Nazareth. »

The woman utters a deep groan and is about to fall on her knees.

« No. People must not know for the time being. Let us go. There is a house that is open over there. We will ask them to let us rest and we will be able to speak. Come. »

Along a lane between two kitchen gardens they go to a house of

common people where children are romping on the threshing floor.

« Peace be with you. Will you allow Me to let this woman rest here for a few minutes? I must speak to her. We have come from far away to speak to each other and God has made us meet before the appointed place. »

« Come in. A guest is a blessing. We will give you milk and bread and some water for your tired feet » says an old woman.

« It is not necessary. All we need is a quiet place where we can talk. »

« Come » and she takes them to a terrace decked with a vine blossoming with emerald-green leaves.

They are left alone. « Speak, woman. I have already said that God made us meet before the end of our journey, for your relief. »

« There is no more relief for me! I had a son. He became possessed. He behaved like a wild beast among sepulchres. Nothing stopped him. Nothing cured him. He saw You. He adored You with the demon's lips and You cured him. He wanted to come with You. But You thought of his mother and you sent him to me, to restore my life and mind, which the grief of a possessed son made vacillate. And You sent him also to preach You, since he wanted to love You. Oh!... to be a mother once again... and of a holy son! Of a servant of Yours! But tell me! When You sent him back to me, did You know that he was... that he would become a demon again? Because he is a demon, who has left You after receiving so much good, after knowing You, after being chosen for Heaven... Tell me! Did You know? But I am raving! I am speaking but I have not told You why he is a demon... For some time he has become like a madman again, oh! only a few days! but much more grievous to me than the long years when he was possessed... And then I thought I could never be more grieved than then... He came... he destroyed the faith that Gerasa had for You through Your merit and his, and he spoke infamously of You. And he is preceding You towards the ford of Jericho, doing harm to You! »

The woman, who has never removed the veil behind which she is sobbing desolately, throws herself at Jesus' feet imploring: « Go away! go away! Don't let them insult You! I came away in full agreement with my sick husband, praying God that I would find You. He heard my prayer! Oh! May He be blessed for that! I do not want You, the Saviour, to be ill-treated because of my son! I will not allow that! Oh! why did I bring him into the world? He betrayed You, Lord! He misreports Your words. The demon has taken him once again. And... oh! Most High and Holy Lord! Have mercy on a mother! And he will be damned. My son! Previously it was not his fault if he was possessed by demons. It was a misfortune, which befell him. But now that You had cured him, now that he had known God and had been taught by You! Now he wanted to

be a demon and no power will free him again! Oh! » The woman is lying on the ground, a heap of clothes and flesh shaken by sobs. And she moans: « Tell me, tell me, what must I do for You, for my son? To make amends! To save him! No. To make amends! You can see that my grief is atonement. But to save him! I cannot save the disowner of God. He is damned... And what is that to me, an Israelite? It's torture. »

Jesus bends. He lays a hand on her shoulder. « Stand up, calm down! You are dear to Me. Listen, poor mother. »

« Are You not cursing me because I gave birth to him?! »

« Oh! no! You are not responsible for his error, and for your own relief you must know that you can bring about his salvation. The ruin of sons can be repaired by mothers. And that is what you will do. Your grief, since it is sincere, is not sterile, it is prolific. The soul you love will be saved through your suffering. You are expiating for him, and with such righteous intention that you are the indulgence of your son. He will go back to God. Do not weep. »

« But when? When? »

« When your tears will dissolve in My Blood. »

« Your Blood? So it is true what he says? That You will be killed because You deserve death?... Horrible blasphemy! »

« The first part is really true. I shall be killed to make you worthy of Life. I am the Saviour, woman. And salvation is granted through word, through mercy and through holocaust. That is what is required for your son and that is what I will give. But... help Me. Give Me your grief. Go with My blessing. Keep it in your heart, so that you may be merciful and patient with your son, and remind him thus, that Another One was merciful to him. Go, go in peace. »

« But You must not speak at Pella. Don't speak in Perea. He has set them against You. And he is not alone. But I see and speak only of him... »

« I will speak by means of a deed. And it will suffice to demolish the work of the others. Go home in peace. »

« Lord, now that You have absolved me for giving birth to him, look at my face, that You may know what the face of a mother is like when her heart is torn to pieces » and she uncovers her face saying: « Here is the face of the mother of Mark of Josiah, the denier of the Messiah and the torturer of his mother » and then she lowers the thick veil over her face disfigured by weeping and moans: « No other mother in Israel will be as deep in grief as I am! »

They leave the hospitable house and take to the road again. They enter Pella and the woman joins her servants and Jesus His disciples. But the woman follows Him, as if she were fascinated, while Jesus follows the youth who is going towards his hovel, situated in a basement of a building leaning against the side of the mountain, which is typical of this town built on mountain terraces,

3-1739

so that the ground on the western side is the first floor of the eastern side, but in actual fact, it is ground even there, because one can reach it from the overhanging road, which is on the same level as the top floor. I do not know whether I have made myself understood.

The boy shouts in a loud voice: « Mother! Mother! »

A blind woman, who is still young and moves about freely and easily, as she is familiar with the surroundings, comes out of the dark miserable cave. « Are you already back, my son? Have the alms been so bountiful as to allow you to come back while the sun is still high? »

« Mother, I found one who knows Jesus of Nazareth, and who says he will take me to Him to be cured. He is very kind. Will you let me go, mother? »

« Of course, Jaia! Even if I have to remain alone, you may go, and may you be blessed and look at the Saviour also on my behalf! » The consent and the faith of the woman are total.

Jesus smiles. He says: « Woman, do you not doubt Me or the Saviour? »

« No, I don't. If You know Him and are His friend, You must be good, too. And with regard to Him!... Go, son. Don't wait a moment. Give me a kiss and go with God. »

They kiss each other, groping...

Jesus leaves on the coarse table a loaf of bread and some coins. « Goodbye, woman. You can buy food for yourself with what I left here. Peace be with you. »

They come out. The group resumes walking while the first drops of rain fall.

« Are we not stopping? It is raining... » say the apostles.

« We will stop at Jabesh-Gilead. Walk on now. »

They pull their mantles over their heads and Jesus covers the head of the boy with His own. The mother of Mark of Josiah follows Him with her servants, on her little donkey. She seems to be unable to part from Him.

They leave Pella. They advance into the green country, which looks sad in the rainy day.

After about a kilometre Jesus stops. He takes the head of the blind boy in His hands and kisses his blind eyes saying: « And now go back. Go and tell your mother that the Lord rewards those who have faith and tell the people in Pella that I am the Lord. » He lets the boy go and moves away quickly.

But within less than three minutes the boy shouts: « But I can see! Oh! Don't run away! You are Jesus! Let me see You as the first thing! » and he falls on his knees on the wet road.

The Gerasene woman and her servants on one side, the apostles on the other run to see the miracle.

3-1740

Jesus also comes back, slowly, smiling. He bends to caress the boy. « Go, go to your mother and believe in Me... always. »

« Yes, my Lord... But nothing for my mother?! Is she to remain in the dark, although she believes as I do? »

Jesus smiles more broadly. He looks around and on the roadside He sees a bunch of daisies wet with rain. He bends and picks them, He blesses them and hands them to the boy. « Pass them on Your mother's eyes, and she will see. I am not coming back. I must go on. Let those who are good follow Me with their souls and speak of Me to those who are doubtful. Speak of Me to the people of Pella, whose faith is wavering. Go. God is with you. »

He then turns to the woman of Gerasa: « And you follow him. This is the reply of God to all those who are trying to weaken the faith of men in the Christ. And let that strengthen your faith and Josiah's. Go in peace. »

They part. Jesus resumes His march southwards. The boy, the Gerasene woman and the servants go northwards. The heavy rain separates them like a veil of smoke...

358. In Matthias' House beyond Jabesh-Gilead.

13th December 1945.

The deep woody valley where Jabesh-Gilead is situated is resounding with a swollen little torrent, which flows foaming towards the nearby Jordan. The dim twilight and dull day increase the gloomy sight of the woods and the village thus looks sad and inhospitable at first sight.

Thomas, who is always good-humoured, notwithstanding that his garments are just as wet as if they had been taken out of a washing tub and he is covered in mud from head to foot, says: « H'm! I would not like this village to revenge itself on us for the unpleasant surprise they received from Israel. Well, let us go and suffer for the Lord. »

The people did not kill them, that is true, but they drove the apostles away from everywhere, calling them thieves and worse names, and Philip and Matthew had to run as fast as they could, to get rid of a big dog, which a shepherd had set on them, when they knocked at the door of his sheep-fold, asking for shelter for the night « at least under the shed of the sheep ».

« What shall we do now? »

« We have no bread. »

« And no money. And without money one can find no bread and no lodgings. »

« And we are wet to the skin, frozen and starving. »

« And it is getting dark. We shall be a lovely sight tomorrow morning, after a night in the wood. »

Seven of the Twelve are grumbling openly, three are clearly dissatisfied, even if they do not say so. Simon Zealot is proceeding with his head lowered and the expression of his face is undecipherable. John is greatly embarrassed and with grievous countenance he casts rapid glances at Jesus and the grumblers alternately. Jesus continues to go personally to knock from door to door, as the apostles refuse to do so, or they do so fearfully, and He patiently walks along the little streets, which have become slippery foul quagmires. But He meets with refusal everywhere.

They are at the end of the village, where the valley widens out on the pastures of the Trans-Jordan plain. There are still a few houses... and each one is a disappointment...

« Let us look in the fields. John, can you climb up that elm-tree? From the top of it you will be able to see. »

« Yes, my Lord. »

« The elm-tree is slippery because of the rain. He will not be able to climb it and he will hurt himself. And we will thus have an injured companion as well » grumbles Peter.

And Jesus replies meekly: « I will climb it, then. »

« Certainly not! » they shout in chorus. And the fishermen shout louder than the others, adding: « If it is dangerous for us fishermen, what do You expect to do if You have never climbed up masts or ropes? »

« I was going to do it for your sake, to find shelter for you. I do not mind, it is not the rain that troubles Me... » How much sadness! What a sad appeal for loving understanding there is in His voice!

Some listen and become silent. Bartholomew and Matthew say: « It is now too late to do anything. A decision should have been taken earlier. »

« Of course! And not be guided by whim, by deciding to depart from Pella, when it was already raining. You have been obstinate and imprudent and now we are all paying for it. What can You do now? If our purse had been full, all the houses would have been open to us! But You!... Why do You not work a miracle, at least one miracle for Your apostles, since You work miracles even for undeserving people? » says Judas of Kerioth, gesticulating like a madman; he is so aggressive that the others, although they more or less agree with him, feel it is necessary to remind him to respect the Master.

Jesus is already like the Convict looking meekly at His executioners. And He is silent. This silence, which for some time has become more and more frequent in Jesus, foreshadowing His « great silence » before the Sanhedrin, Pilate and Herod, makes me feel so sorry for Him. It reminds me of the silent pauses in the meaning of a dying man, which are not due to soothing of pain, but are the prelude to death. Jesus' silence seems to be much more eloquent

3-1742

than words, as they express all His grief at men's lack of understanding and love. And because of His meekness which does not react and of the lowered posture of His head, He looks as if He were already put in chains and handed over to the hatred of men.

« Why don't You speak? » they ask Him.

« Because I would utter words which your hearts would not understand just now... Let us go. We will walk not to freeze... And forgive Me... »

He turns round quickly, leading the group, while some of its members pity Him, some accuse Him, some contradict their companions.

John remains slowly behind, deliberately avoiding notice by anyone. He then goes towards a very tall tree, a poplar, I think, or an ash-tree, and after taking off his mantle and tunic, he begins to climb it, half naked as he is, with some difficulty, until the first branches make his ascent easier. He climbs up as swiftly as a cat. At times he slips, but he immediately collects himself and is almost at the top. He scans the horizon in the last light of the day, which is clearer here in the open plain, than in the valley, also because the dark clouds have thinned out. He looks carefully in every direction and at last he makes a gesture of joy. He slides down to the ground very rapidly, puts his clothes on and begins to run. He reaches his companions, overtakes them and is soon beside the Master. Panting because of the effort of climbing and running he says: « There is a hut, Lord... a hut to the east... But we will have to go back... I climbed up a tree... Come... »

« I am going with John this way. If you want to come, do so, otherwise go on as far as the next village on the river. We will meet there » says Jesus seriously and decisively.

Drenched with rain, they all follow Him through the fields.

« But we are going back to Jabesh! »

« I can't see any houses... »

« I wonder what the boy has seen! »

« Perhaps a shed. »

« Or the hut of a leper. »

« We shall get soaked through. These fields are like sponges » grumble the apostles.

But it is neither a shed nor a leper's hut what appears behind a group of trees. It is a hut, a low large hut like a poor sheep-fold, half of the roof is thatched and the mud walls can hardly support the four pillars made of coarse stone. A pile-work enclosure is around the hovel and inside it there are vegetables dripping water.

John gives a shout. An old man appears. « Who is it? »

« Pilgrims going to Jerusalem. Give us shelter in the name of God! » says Jesus.

« Certainly. It's my duty. But you are unlucky. I have little room

and no beds. »

« It does not matter. You will at least have a fire. »

The man bestirs himself at the gate and opens it. « Come in and peace be with you. »

They go through the tiny kitchen garden. They go into the only room which is kitchen and bed room at the same time. A fire is lit in the fireplace. There is order and poverty, and not one utensil more than is necessary.

« See! Only my heart is large and ornate. But if you wish to make the best of it... Have you any bread? »

« No. Just a handful of olives... »

« I have not got enough bread for everybody. But I will prepare something with milk. I have two sheep. They are enough for me. I will go and milk them. Will you give me your mantles? I will hang them up in the fold, at the rear. They will dry a little and tomorrow we will do the rest with the fire. »

The man goes out laden with the damp clothes. They are all standing near the fire enjoying its warmth.

The man comes back with a coarse mat, which he lays on the floor. « Take your sandals off. I will wash the mud off them and hang them up so that they may dry. And I will give you some warm water so that you may wash your feet. The mat is coarse, but it is clean and thick. You will feel it is more comfortable than the cold floor. »

He takes a cauldron full of greenish water, in which some vegetables are boiling, and pours half of it into a basin and half into another vessel. He then adds cold water and says: « There you are. It will refresh you. Wash yourselves. This is a clean cloth. »

In the meantime he busies himself at the fireplace. He makes up he fire, pours the milk into a pot, which he places on the fire. And as soon as it begins to boil he adds some seeds, which look like ground barley or hulled millet. And he stirs the mush.

Jesus, Who is one of the first to wash Himself, approaches him: « May God grant you grace for your charity. »

« I am only giving back what I received from Him. I was a leper. I was a leper from my thirty-seventh to my fifty-first year of age. Then I became cured. But in the village I found that my wife and relatives had died and my house had been plundered. In any case I was the "leper"... So I came here. And I built my home here, by myself and with the help of God. At first I made a hut with bog grass, then a wooden one. Then I built the walls... Something new each year. Last year I built the fold for the sheep. I bought them selling the mats and wooden utensils that I make. I have an appletree, a pear-tree, a fig-tree and a vine. I grow vegetables in the front of the house and I have a small barley field in the rear. I have four couples of doves and two sheep. I will have lambs before long.

3-1744

And I hope they are ewe-lambs this time. I bless the Lord and I ask for no more. And who are You? »

« A Galilean. Have you a prejudice against them? »

« None, although I am of Judaean extraction. If I had had children, I could have had one like You... I now act as a father to my doves... I have become accustomed to being alone. »

« And at Festivities? »

« I fill the mangers and go. I hire a donkey. I rush there, do what I have to do and come back. I never had as much as a leaf stolen. God is good. »

« Yes, both to those who are good and those who are not so good. But good people are under His wings. »

« Yes, Isaiah also says so... He protected me, He did. »

« But you were a leper » remarks Thomas.

« And I became poor and was left alone. But, this is a grace of God, to become a man again and to have a roof and bread. Job was my model in misfortune. I hope to deserve the blessing of God, as he did, not in wealth, but in grace. »

« You will receive it. You are a just man. What is your name? »

« Matthias. » He takes the pot off the fire and puts it on the table. He adds butter and honey and puts it back on the fire and says: « I have only six pieces of crockery between plates and bowls. You will have to eat in turn. »

« And what about you? »

« The host is the last to be served. First the brothers sent by God. Here you are. It is ready. And this will do you good. » And he pours ladelfuls of steaming mush into four plates and two bowls. There is no shortage of wooden spoons.

Jesus advises the younger to eat.

« No, You must eat, Master » says John.

« No. Judas had better have his fill, so that he may realise that there is always food for the children. »

The Iscariot changes colour but he eats.

« Are You a rabbi? »

« Yes, I am, and these are My disciples. »

« I used to go to the Baptist, when I was at Bethabara. Do You know anything about the Messiah? They say that He exists and that John pointed Him out. When I go to Jerusalem I always hope to see Him. But I have never been successful. I fulfil the rite and I do not stop there. Probably that is why I never see Him. I am isolated here and then... The people in Perea are not good. I spoke to some shepherds who come here to pasture. They knew Him and told me about Him. What wonderful words! I wonder how beautiful they must be when spoken by Him!... »

Jesus does not reveal Himself. It is His turn now to eat and He does so peacefully near the good old man.

3-1745

« And now? What shall we do for beds? I give you my bed. But it is one only... I will go to the sheep-fold. »

« No, we will go there. Hay is good enough for those who are tired. »

The meal is over and they decide to lie down in order to be able to leave at dawn. But the old man insists and Matthew who has a bad cold, sleeps in his bed.

But it is raining torrents at dawn. How can they leave in such heavy rain? They listen to the old man and stay. In the meantime they brush their clothes and dry them, they grease their sandals and rest. The old man cooks barley again in milk for everybody and he puts some apples under the ashes. That is their meal and they are eating it when they hear a voice from outside.

« Another pilgrim? What shall we do? » says the old man. But he gets up, envelops himself in a coarse woollen water-resistant blanket and goes out. It is warm in the kitchen, but there is no good humour in it. Jesus is silent.

The old man comes back with his eyes wide open. He looks at Jesus and then at the others. He seems to be afraid... he looks uncertain and inquisitive. At last he says: « Is the Messiah among you? Tell me, because the people of Pella are looking for Him to adore Him, because of a great miracle He worked. They have been knocking all night at the doors of all the houses as far as the river, as far as the first village... Now, on their way back, they thought of me. Somebody pointed out my house to them. They are outside, in wagons. A large crowd! »

Jesus stands up. The Twelve say: « Don't go. If You said that it was wise to avoid staying at Pella, there is no sense in showing Yourself now. »

« So! O Blessed! You are Blessed and He Who sent You to me. And received You! You are Rabbi Jesus, Who... Oh! » The man is on his knees, with his forehead on the floor.

« Yes, I am. But let Me go to those who are looking for Me. Then I will come to you, My good man. » He frees His ankles from the hands of the old man and goes out into the flooded kitchen garden.

« Here He is! Hosanna! » They jump out of the wagons. There are men and women, the young blind fellow cured yesterday and his mother, and also the Gerasene woman. They kneel down, without paying any attention to the mud and they implore: « Come back with us to Pella. »

« No, to Jabesh » shout other people, obviously from that place. « We want You! We are sorry that we drove You away! » shout those from Jabesh.

« No, to Pella with us, as Your miracle is still alive there. You have given light to their eyes. Give light to our souls. »

3-1746

« I cannot. I am going to Jerusalem. You will find Me there. »

« You are angry because we expelled You. »

« You are disgusted because You know that we believed the slander of a sinner. »

Mark's mother covers her face weeping.

« Jaia, please tell Him, Who loved you, to come back. »

« You will find Me in Jerusalem. Go and persevere. Do not be like the winds, which blow in every direction. Goodbye. »

« No. Come. We will abduct You, if You do not come. »

« You shall not raise one hand against Me. That is idolatry, not faith. Faith believes even without seeing. It perseveres even when it is persecuted. It grows greater even without miracles. I am staying with Matthias, who believed without seeing anything and who is a just man. »

« At least accept our gifts: money and bread. We have been told that You gave everything You had to Jaia and his mother. Take a wagon. You can travel in it. You will leave it at Jericho, with Timon, the hotel keeper. Take it. It is raining and will rain. You will be sheltered and will travel quicker. Give us a sign that You do not hate us. »

They are on the other side of the fence, Jesus is on this side: they look at one another and those on the other side are full of excitement. Behind Jesus there is old Matthias, on his knees, with his mouth wide open, and then the apostles, who are all standing.

Jesus stretches out His hand saying: « I will accept your offerings for the poor. But I will not accept the wagon. I am the Poor One among the poor. Please do not insist. Jaia, and you, woman, and you from Gerasa, come here, that I may give you a special blessing. » And when they approach Him, as Matthias has opened the fence, He caresses, blesses and dismisses them. He then blesses all those who have crowded at the gate to give the apostles money and foodstuffs and He dismisses them.

He goes back into the house...

« Why did You not speak to them? »

« The miracle of the two blind people is My sermon. »

« Why did You not accept the wagon? »

« Because it is better to travel on foot. » And He addresses Matthias: « I would have rewarded you with My blessings. I can now add a little money to cover the expenses that you have met... »

« No, Lord Jesus... I don't want it. I did that wholeheartedly. And I am doing it now to serve the Lord. The Lord does not pay. He is not obliged to pay. I am the one who received, not You! Oh! this day! It will come with me, with its recollections, as far as the next life! »

« You are right! You will find your mercy towards pilgrims written in Heaven, as well as your prompt faith... As soon as it clears

up a little, I will leave you. Those people might come back. They insist as long as they are roused by miracles, then they become as torpid as they were before, or even hostile. I will proceed. So far I have stopped trying to convert them. I now come and pass by, without stopping. I am going towards My destiny, which urges Me. God and man urge Me and I can no longer stop. Love and hatred spur Me. Let those who love Me, follow Me. But the Master will no longer run after indocile sheep. »

« Do they not love You, divine Master? » asks Matthias.

« They do not understand Me. »

« They are wicked. »

« Lust makes them dull. »

Old Matthias no longer dare be as confidential as he was previously. He seems to be standing in front of an altar. Jesus, on the contrary, since He is no longer the Unknown One, is less reserved and speaks to the old man as if he were a relative.

The hours thus go by until early afternoon. The clouds begin to dissipate, promising the end of the rain. Jesus gives order to depart. And while the old man goes to get the dry mantels, He puts some coins in a box and has some bread and cheese put into a kitchen cupboard.

The old man comes back and Jesus blesses him. He then takes to the road again, turning round now and again to look at the white head leaning over the dark fence.

359. Rose of Jericho.

14th December 1945.

The plain on the eastern bank of the Jordan is like a lagoon because of the continuous rain, particularly where Jesus and the apostles are just now. They have just crossed a torrent that flows down from a narrow gorge in the nearby hills, which seem to form a Cyclopean dam, from north to south, along the Jordan, interrupted now and again by narrow valleys in which torrents inevitably flow. It looks as if God had placed here a range of hills, shaped like a huge scallop-edge, as a contour to the large Jordan valley. I would say that it is a rather monotonous scallop-edging, as its projections, aspects and distances are so much alike. The apostolic group is between the last two torrents, which have overflown their banks and are thus wider, particularly the southern ore, as it conveys an imposing mass of water from the mountains and it roars turbulently towards the Jordan. One can hear also the roar of the river, particularly where its natural bends, which I would say are like continuous narrowings, or the confluence of affluents, cause obstructions to the water. Well, Jesus is in this truncated triangle, formed by three watercourses in flood, and it

is not an easy task to lift one's feet out of that quagmire.

The apostolic humour is duller than the weather. And that say everything. Each one wishes to express his own opinion. And everything they say implies reproach, although expressed as advice. It is the moment of sentences like: « I told you », or « If You had done what I suggested » etc. which annoy so much anybody who has made a mistake and is already depressed at having made it.

Some say: « It was better to cross the river in the Pella area and then proceed on the other side, which is not so bad », or « We ought to have taken the wagon! We wanted to be clever, and then... », and some remark: « If we had stayed up on the mountains, there would not have been all this mud! »

John says: « You are prophets of past events. Who foresaw all this rain? »

« This is its time. It should have been foreseen » remarks Bartholomew.

« In past years it was not like this before Passover. I came to you and the Kidron was certainly not in spate and last year we had a spell of drought. You are complaining, and you have forgotten how much we suffered from thirst in the Philistine plain! » says the Zealot.

« Eh! Of course! The two wise men have spoken and they contradict us! » says Judas of Kerioth ironically.

« You ought to be quiet. You are good only at criticising. But at the right moment, when one should speak to a Pharisee or the like, you are always silent, as if your tongue had been tied » Thaddeus says to him angrily.

« Yes. He is right. Why did you not answer one word to those three snakes in the last village? You were aware that we had been to Giscala and Meiron, that we behaved respectfully and that it was the Master Himself Who wanted to go there, as He respects the great dead rabbis. But you did not say anything! You know how He expects us to respect the Law and priests. But you did not say one word! But you are speaking now, because there is the opportunity of speaking ironically of the best ones among us and you are criticising what the Master does » insists Andrew, who is usually patient, but today is very irritable.

« Will you be quiet! Judas is wrong, he who is the friend of many, too many Samaritans... »

« Me? Who are they? Mention their names, if you can. »

« Yes, my dear! All the Pharisees, Sadducees and powerful people of whose friendship you brag so much and who certainly know you. They never greet me. But they greet you! »

« You are jealous! But I am one of the Temple, you are not. »

« Thanks be to God, I am a fisherman. Yes, and I am proud of it. »

« So stupid a fisherman that you could not even foresee this

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weather. »

« No! I said: "If the new moon of Nisan is wet, rain in torrents one may expect" » replies Peter.

« Ah! I caught you! And what do you say, Judas of Alphaeus? And you, Andrew? Peter also, our Head, criticises the Master! »

« I am not criticising anybody. I quoted a proverb. »

« Which is criticism and reproach for anyone who can understand it. »

« Yes... but I don't think that will help to dry the ground. We are now here and we will have to stay here. Let us spare our breath to get our feet out of this quagmire » says Thomas.

And what about Jesus? Jesus is silent. He is a little ahead of everybody, wallowing in mud, or looking for emerging turves. But even they splash water up to half of one's shin, as soon as one treads on them, as if they were bladders and not turves. He is silent and lets them speak, discontented as they are, behaving just like men, nothing more than men, whom the least inconvenience makes irritable and unfair.

The most southern of the rivers is now close at hand, and when Jesus sees a man on muleback pass along the flooded bank, He asks him: « Where is the bridge? »

« Farther up. I am crossing there as well. The other one, the one farther down the valley, the Roman bridge, is already under water. »

They all grumble again... in chorus. But they hasten to follow the man who is speaking to Jesus.

« But You had better follow the mountain path » he says. And he concludes: « Come back to the plain when you find the third river after the Yaloc. You will then be near the ford. But make haste. Don't stop. Because the river is swelling hourly. What a terrible season! Frost first, then rain. And so heavy! It's a punishment of God. But it is just! When we do not stone the blasphemers of the Law, God punishes us. And we have many of them! You are a Galilean, are You not? So You will know the One from Nazareth, Whom good people are now leaving because He is the cause of all troubles. His words attract thunderbolts! Such punishments! You should hear what those, who were with Him, say about Him. The Pharisees are right in persecuting Him. He must be a great robber. And he must frighten people as if he were Beelzebub. I wanted to go and hear Him, because previously they spoke so highly of Him. But... it was the men of his gang who spoke so. People without scruples like Him. Good people are now abandoning Him. And quite rightly. I am not going to see Him any more. And if by chance I should come across Him, I will pelt Him with stones, as it is our duty to do with blasphemers. »

« Stone Me, then. I am Jesus of Nazareth. I am not running away,

neither will I curse you. I have come to redeem the world by shedding My Blood. Here I am. You may sacrifice Me, but become a just man. »

Jesus says so opening His arms a little towards the ground, He speaks slowly, meekly and sadly. But if He had cursed the man, He would not have impressed him more; in fact he draws reins so abruptly that the mule swerves and nearly falls from the embankment into the river in spate. Jesus seizes the bit and holds the animal, just in time to save man and mule.

The man does nothing but repeat: « You! You!... » and seeing the gesture that has saved him, he shouts: « But I told You that I would stone You... Do You not understand? »

« And I tell you that I forgive you and that I will suffer for you as well, to redeem you. That is the Saviour. »

The man looks at Him again, he spurs his mule and runs away... He flies away... Jesus lowers His head...

The apostles feel that it is necessary to forget mud, rain and all the other miseries, in order to comfort Him. They gather round Him and say: « Do not grieve! We are in no need of bandits. And that is what he is. Because only a wicked person can believe such slander and be afraid of You. »

« But » they also say « how unwise of You, Master! And if he hurt You? Why say that You are Jesus of Nazareth? »

« Because it is the truth... Let us go towards the mountains as he suggested. We will lose a day, but you will get out of the quagmire. »

« And You, too » they remark.

« Oh! It does not concern Me. It is the quagmire of dead souls that worries Me » and tears stream down His face.

« Do not weep, Master. We grumble, but we love You. If we should meet Your slanderers, we will take vengeance upon them. »

« You shall forgive, as I do. But let Me weep. I am the Man, after all! And it grieves Me to be betrayed, disowned, abandoned! »

« Look at us, consider us. We are few but good. None of us will betray or abandon You. Believe us, Master. »

« Certain things should not even be mentioned! The thought that we may betray You, is an insult to our souls! » exclaims the Iscariot.

But Jesus is distressed. Silent slow tears stream down the pale cheeks of His tired emaciated face.

They approach the mountains. « Shall we go up there or shall we go along the foot? There are villages half way up the hills. Look. On both sides of the river » they point out to Him.

« It is getting dark. Let us try and reach a village, any village at all. »

Judas Thaddeus, whose eye sight is very good, scans the sides of

the mountains. He approaches Jesus and says: « In case of need there are fissures in the mountains. Can You see them there? We can take shelter in them. It will be better than being in mud. »

« We will light a fire » says Andrew to console everybody.

« What? With damp wood? » asks Judas of Kerioth ironically.

No one replies to him. Peter whispers: « I bless the Eternal Father that neither the women nor Marjiam are with us. »

They cross the bridge, a very old one, at the foot of the valley and they go along its southern side, on a mule-track, to a village. It is getting dark very quickly, so much so that they decide to take shelter in a large cave to avoid a heavy shower. The grotto is probably used as a shelter place by shepherds, because there is straw, dirt and a rough fireplace.

« It is of no use as a bed. But to light a fire... » says Thomas pointing at the dirty twigs spread on the ground together with dry ferns and branches of juniper and similar plants. He draws them with a stick close to the fireplace, and once he has made a heap of them, he sets them alight.

Smoke and foul smell rise from the fire together with the smell of resins and juniper. Yet the warmth of the fire is pleasant and they all form a semicircle round it, eating bread and cheese in the flickering light of the flames.

« We could have tried to reach the village » says Matthew, who is hoarse and is suffering from a cold.

« What? To go through the same trouble as three nights ago? No one will drive us away here. We will sit on those logs over there and keep the fire going as long as we can. We can now see that there is plenty wood in here! Look! And straw! It is a sheep-fold, which they use in summer or when they migrate. And what is this? Where does this take to? Take a branch aflame, Andrew, as I want to see » says Peter, who is moving about curiously. Andrew obeys. They slip through a narrow fissure in a wall of the grotto.

« Make sure there are no unpleasant beasts in there! » shout the others. « Or lepers » says Thaddeus.

After a moment Peter's voice can be heard: « Come, come in here. It's much better here. It is clean and dry and there are some wooden benches and firewood. It's a palace for us! Bring some of the burning branches, so that we may light a fire at once. »

It must be a shelter for shepherds. And this is the grotto where some sleep while the others, who are on guard, watch the sheep. It is an excavation in the mountain, much smaller than the other one, and probably made by man, or at least enlarged and reinforced by means of poles supporting the vault. A very old rustic chimney is bent in the shape of a hook towards the outer cave, to draw the Smoke that otherwise would have no outlet. Rough benches and straw are placed against the walls, in which there are some hooks

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to hang up lamps, clothes or bags.

« Lovely! Let us make a big fire! We shall be warm and our mantles will dry. Give me your belts: we will join them together and hang our mantles on them » says Peter, while he sorts out benches and straw. And he concludes:« And now we will sleep and keep the fire burning in turns, so that we shall have light and shall be warm. What a grace of God! »

Judas grumbles between his teeth. Peter turns round angrily. « This is a royal palace, as compared to the grotto in Bethlehem, where the Lord was born. If He was born there, we can spend a night here. »

« And it is also more beautiful than the grottoes at Arbela. There was nothing beautiful there, except our hearts, which were kinder then » says John and he gets lost in his mystical remembrance.

« And it is also much better than the one where the Master stayed to prepare Himself for the office of a preacher » says the Zealot gravely, looking at the Iscariot as if he wanted to tell him to stop it.

Jesus is the last to speak: « And it is by far warmer and more comfortable than the one in which I did penance for you, Judas of Simon, in this month of Tebeth. »

« Penance for me? Why? There was no need of it! »

« Really, you and I ought to spend our lives in penance to free you from what overburdens you. And still... it would not be enough. »

The sentence, pronounced calmly but decidedly, drops like a thunderbolt on the dumbfounded group... Judas lowers his head and withdraws to a corner. He dare not react.

« I will remain awake and look after the fire. You can sleep » orders Jesus after some time.

And shortly afterwards, the heavy breathing of the tired Twelve, lying on the benches among the straw, mingles with the crackling of the fire. And when the straw falls off anyone, leaving his body uncovered, Jesus gets up and covers him again, with the loving care of a mother. And He weeps while contemplating the hermetic faces of some of His sleeping apostles, some in fact are placid, some worried. He looks at the Iscariot, who seems to be grinning also in his sleep, with a grim countenance and clenched fists... He looks at John sleeping with one hand under his cheek, while his rosy face is veiled by his fair hair, and he looks as serene as a child in a cradle. He looks at the honest face of Peter, at the severe face of Nathanael, at the pock-marked face of the Zealot and at the aristocratic one of His cousin Judas. And He contemplates for a long time James of Alphaeus who is so much like a very young Joseph of Nazareth. He smiles upon hearing the monologues of Thomas and Andrew, who appear to be speaking of the Master. He carefully covers Matthew who is breathing with difficulty,

and He gets more straw with which He covers his feet, after warming it near the fire. He smiles hearing James proclaim:« Believe in the Master and you will have Life »... and continue to speak to people in his dream. And He bends to Pick up a bag in which Philip keeps dear souvenirs, and lays it gently under his head. And in the intervals He meditates and prays...

The Zealot is the first to awake. He sees Jesus near the fire in the pleasantly warm grotto. And from the pile of wood of which there is hardly anything left, he understands that many hours have gone by. He gets up from his straw-bed and approaches the Master on tip-toe. « Master, are You not going to sleep? I will watch. »

« It is dawn, Simon. I was out there a little while ago and I saw that the sky is beginning to grow light. »

« Why did You not call us? You are tired, too! »

« Oh! Simon! I needed to think... and to pray so much » and He leans His head on the apostle's chest.

The Zealot, standing close to the Master, Who is sat, caresses Him and sighs. He asks: « To think of what, Master? There is no need for You to think, as You know everything. »

« I need not think of what I have to say, but I must think of what I have to do. I am disarmed against the shrewd world, because I do not possess the wickedness of the world or the cunning of Satan. And the world defeats Me... And I am so tired... »

« And sorrowful. And we help in increasing Your grief, dear Master, Whom we do not deserve. Forgive me and my companions ask you on behalf of everybody. »

« I love you so much... I suffer so much... Why do you not understand Me so often? »

Their whispering awakes John, who is closest to them. He opens his blue eyes, looks around in amazement, he then remembers and gets up at once, and he comes behind the two who are talking. He hears Jesus' words: « Your love and your understanding would be quite enough to make all hatred and misunderstanding become a mere trifle, which I could easily bear... Instead you do not understand... And that is My first torment. And a very heavy one! But it is not your fault... You are men... You will regret not having understood Me, when you can no longer make amends... And as you will then expiate your present superficiality, meanness and dullness, I forgive you and I say before time: "Father, forgive them, because they do not know what they are doing or the grief they are causing Me". »

John slides forwards on to his knees, he embraces the knees of his grieved Jesus and is on the point of bursting into tears when he whispers: « Oh! My Master! »

3-1754

The Zealot, on whose chest Jesus' head is still resting, bends to kiss His hair saying: « And yet we love You so much! But we would expect in You the ability to defend Yourself and us and to triumph. It disheartens us to see that You are a man, subject to men, to the inclemency of the weather, to misery, to wickedness, to the needs of life... We are foolish. But it is so. As far as we are concerned You are the King, the Triumpher, God. We fail to understand Your sublime self-abnegation to all that for our sake. Because You only are capable of loving. We are not... »

« Yes, Master. Simon is right. We cannot love as God loves: as You do. And we mistake for weakness what is infinite goodness and infinite love and we take advantage of it... Increase our love, increase Your love, and as You are its source, let it overflow, as rivers are now overflowing, soak us in it, sate us with it, like the meadows along the valley. No wisdom, no worth or austerity is required to be perfect as You want us. Love is sufficient... Lord, and I confess, also on behalf of everybody, that we do not know how to love. »

« You, the two who understand more, are accusing yourselves. You are humility. But humility is love. Only a screen prevents the others from being like you. And I will demolish it. Because I am King, Victor and God for ever. But now I am the Man. My forehead is already weighed under the torture of My crown. It has always been a torturing crown to be the Man... Thank you, My friends. You have comforted Me. Because this is the advantage of being men: to have a loving mother and loyal friends. Let us call your companions. It is no longer raining. Our mantles are dry and our bodies well rested. You may eat and then let us go. »

He raises His voice slowly until the words « let us go » become a definite order. They all get up and regret having slept all the time while Jesus was watching. They tidy themselves, they have something to eat, take their mantles, put out the fire, and go out on the damp path and begin to descend down to the mule-track that follows the hillside and is not a quagmire because of its steepness. The light is still dim because the sky is overcast and there is no sunshine. But it is sufficient to see.

Andrew and the two sons of Alphaeus are ahead of them all. At a certain moment they stop, they look and run back. « There is a woman. She seems to be dead! She bars the way. »

« Oh! What a nuisance! It's a bad start. What shall we do now? We will have to purify ourselves! » It is the first grumbling of the day.

« Let us go and see whether she is dead » says Thomas to Judas Iscariot.

« I'm certainly not going » replies the Iscariot.

« I will come with you, Tom » says the Zealot and he goes ahead.

They approach her, then bend and Thomas runs back shouting.

3-1755

« She was probably murdered » says James of Zebedee.

« Or she died with cold » replies Philip.

But Thomas joins them and shouts: « She has on the torn garment of lepers... » and he is so frightened that he seems to have seen the devil.

« But is she dead? » they ask him.

« Who knows? I ran away. »

The Zealot stands up and comes at once towards Jesus. He says: « Master, a leper sister. I do not know whether she is dead. I do not think so. Her heart seems to be beating. »

« Did you touch her?! » shout many of them, moving away.

« Yes, I did. I am not afraid of leprosy since I have been with Jesus. And I feel sorry for her because I know what it is to be a leper. Perhaps the poor woman has been struck, because her head is bleeding. Perhaps she came down here looking for food. It is dreadful, you know, to die of starvation and to have to defy men to get some bread. »

« Is she run down? »

« No, and I do not know why she is among lepers. She has neither scabs, nor sores nor gangrene. Perhaps she has not been here very long. Come, Master, please. Have mercy on a leper sister as you had on me! »

« Let us go. Give Me some bread, cheese and the little wine that is still left. »

« You are not going to let her drink where we drink! » shouts the Iscariot struck with terror.

« Be not afraid. She will drink from My hand. Come, Simon. »

They go... but curiosity spurs the others to follow them. Without being annoyed at the water on the foliage and that drops on their heads from the shaken branches, and without minding the soaking moss, they climb up the hillside to see without being near the woman. And they see Jesus bend, take her by her armpits and make her sit against a rock. Her head hangs, as if she were dead.

« Simon, hold her head back so that I may pour a little wine into her mouth. »

The Zealot obeys without fear and Jesus, holding the gourd high up lets a few drops of wine fall between her half-open deathly pale lips. And He says: « The poor woman is frozen! And she is soaked. »

« If she were not a leper, we could take her where we were » says Andrew who is deeply moved.

« That would be the last straw! » exclaims Judas.

« But if she is not a leper! There is no sign of leprosy on her. »

« She has the garment. That's enough. »

The wine in the meantime has its effect. The woman sighs wearily. Jesus pours some into her mouth ensuring that she swallows it. The woman opens her dimmed frightened eyes. She sees the men.

3-1756

She tries to stand up and run away shouting: « I am infected! » But her strength does not support her. She covers her face with her hands moaning: « Don't stone me! I came down because I am hungry... No one has thrown anything to me for three days... »

« There is bread and cheese here. Eat it. Do not be afraid. Drink a little wine out of My hand » says Jesus pouring some wine into the hollow of His hand and giving it to her.

« But are You not afraid? » says the poor wretch who is dumbfounded.

« I am not afraid » replies Jesus. And He smiles standing up, but He remains near the woman who eats the bread and cheese avidly. She looks like a starving animal. She pants in her anxiety to nourish herself.

Then, after she appeases the gnawing hunger of her empty stomach, she looks around... She counts in a loud voice: « One... two... three... thirteen... So? Oh! Who is the Nazarene? You are, are You not? You are the only one who can pity a poor leper... » The woman goes on her knees with difficulty owing to her weakness.

« Yes, I am. What do you want? To be cured? »

« Also that... But I must tell You something first... I knew about You. Some passersby told me some time ago... A long time ago? No. It was in autumn. But for a leper... every day is a year... I would have liked to see You. But how could I come to Judaea, to Galilee? They call me "the leper woman". But I have only one sore on my breast and I got it from my husband, who married me when I was a virgin and healthy, but he was not healthy. But he is a mighty one... and can do anything, even saying that I had betrayed him as I was ill when I married him. He thus repudiated me to take another woman with whom he had fallen in love. He denounced me as a leper and as I wanted to exculpate myself, I was pelted with stones. Was that fair, Lord? Yesterday evening a man passed through Bethjabbok saying that You were coming and that he was coming to drive You away. I was there... I came down as far as the houses because I was hungry. I would have rummaged among dunghills to find something to eat... I, who was once "the lady", would have tried to snatch some sour chicken-feed from poultry... »

She weeps... Then she resumes: « My anxiety to find You, to say to You on Your behalf: "Go away!", and on my behalf: "Have mercy on me!", made me forget that, contrary to our law, dogs, pigs and poultry are allowed to live near houses in Israel, but a leper cannot come down to ask for some bread, not even if a woman is a leper only by name. And I came down, asking where You were. As I was in the shade they did not see me at once and they said to me: "He is coming along the embankment of the river". Then they saw me and they gave me stones instead of bread. I ran away in the night to come and meet You and to escape the rogues. I was

hungry, cold and afraid. I fell where You found me. Just here. I thought I was going to die. Instead I found You. Lord, I am not a leper. But this scab here on my breast prevents me from going back among the living. I do not ask to become once again Rose of Jericho as in the days of my father, but at least to be allowed to live among men and to follow You. Those who spoke to me in October told me that You have women disciples and that You were with them... But first save Your own life. Do not die, You are so good! »

« I will not die until My hour comes. Go over there, to that rock. There is a safe grotto. Have a rest and then go to the priest. »

« Why, Lord? » asks the woman trembling with anxiety.

Jesus smiles: « Become once again the Rose of Jericho that blooms in the desert and is always alive, even when it appears to be dead. Your faith has cured you. »

The woman half-opens her dress over her breast, she looks and shouts: « There is nothing now! Oh! Lord, my God! » and she prostrates herself on the ground.

« Give her bread and some food. And you, Matthew, give her a pair of your sandals. I will give her a mantle. She will then be able to go to a priest, after she has refreshed herself. Give her also the offering for the purification, Judas. We will wait for her at Gethsemane to give her to Eliza, who asked Me to let her have a daughter. »

« No, Lord, I do not want to rest. I will go at once, immediately. »

« Go down to the river, then. Wash yourself and put on the mantle... »

« Lord, I will give my leper sister one. Let me do it and I will take her to Eliza. I will be cured a second time as I will see myself in her and so happily » says the Zealot.

« Do as you wish. Give her what she needs. Woman, listen to Me carefully. You will go and be purified, then you will go to Bethany and you will look for Lazarus, and you will ask him to give you hospitality until I arrive. Go in peace. »

« Lord! When will I be able to kiss Your feet? »

« Soon. Go. But you must be aware that only sin disgusts Me. And forgive your husband, because through him you found Me. »

« That is true. I forgive him. I am going... Oh! Lord! Do not stop here where they hate You. Remember that I walked all night, although I was exhausted, to come and tell You and that if I had met other people, instead of meeting You, I might have been stoned like a snake. »

« I will remember. Go, woman. Burn your clothes. Go with her, Simon. We will follow you and will join you at the bridge. »

They part.

« Now we must all purify ourselves. We are all unclean. »

3-1758

« It was not leprosy, Judas of Simon. I can assure you. »

« Well, I will purify myself. I do not want uncleanness on me. »

« What a snow-white lily! » exclaims Peter. « If the Lord does not feel unclean, how can you feel so? »

« And because of a woman who the Lord said was not a leper? But what was the matter with her, Master? Did You see her scab? »

« Yes. A fruit of male lewdness. But it was not leprosy. And if the man had been honest, he would not have rejected her, because he was more affected by disease than she was. But lewd people take advantage of everything to satisfy their lust. Judas, if You wish, you may go. We will meet at Gethsemane. And purify yourself! But the first purification is sincerity. You are a hypocrite. Remember that. But you may go. »

« No, I will stay. If you say so, I believe You. So I am not unclean and I will stay with You. You mean that I am lustful and that I was taking advantage of the situation to... I am now proving that You are my love. »

They go quickly down the hill.

15th December.

Jesus says: « You will put here the vision of the "Miracle of the

Jordan in flood", which you had on September 17th, 1944. »

360. Miracle on the Jordan in Flood.

17th September 1944.

At last I can write what has kept my mental sight and hearing busy as from early dawn this morning, making me suffer from the strain in hearing the noise of worldly matters from outside and in the house, while I must see and hear the things of God, and making me impatient of everything different from what my spirit sees.

How much patience is required... not to lose my patience while waiting for the moment to say to Jesus: « Here I am! Now You can go on! » Because - I have said so many times and I will repeat it when I cannot continue or begin to write what I see, the scene stops at the very beginning or when I am interrupted, and is resumed again when I am free to follow it. I think that God wants that so that I may not omit any detail or make even a slight error, what might happen if I had to write some time after seeing.

I can assure you in all conscience that what I write, because I see or hear it, I do write it while seeing or hearing.

So here is what I have been seeing as from this morning, and my internal warner tells me that it is the beginning of a beautiful long vision.

In very stormy weather Jesus is walking along a very muddy country road. The road is a little river of yellowish sticky mud,

which splashes at each step, is as slippery as soft soap, sticks to sandals, it sucks them like a sucker and at the same time it slips under them, making it thus most painful to walk.

It must have rained continuously during those days. And the sky promises more rain, covered as it is with dark low clouds blown by sirocco or north-east winds, which make the air so heavy that it tastes, in one's mouth, sickly sweet, like a sweetish coating. No relief is brought by the wind that blows bending grass and branches, then stops and everything becomes heavily immobile in the stormy sultriness. Now and again a huge cloud bursts and large warm drops, which seem to be coming from a hot shower, reach the ground forming bubbles in the mud that splashes garments and legs even more.

Although Jesus and His apostles have pulled up their tunics, bagging them at their waists with the cords used as belts, the lower part of their tunics is completely splashed with mud, which is damp at the bottom but almost dry higher up. Their mantles also, which they carry as high as possible, and have folded in two, both to keep them clean and to have double protection against the short but heavy showers, are completely soiled. On their feet and their legs, up to half their shins, they seem to be wearing thick coarse woollen stockings, it is instead mud encrusted on them.

So far the beginning. It now continues.

The disciples complain a little of the weather and of the road, and we may as well say so, of the Master's not very healthy liking for going about in such weather.

Jesus does not seem to hear. But He does. And two or three times He turns slightly round - they are walking in single file to keep to the left hand side of the road, which is a little higher than the right hand side and thus not so muddy - to look at them. But He does not say anything.

The last time it was the oldest of the disciples who said: « Oh! poor me! With all this dampness that is drying on me I am going to be tortured by pain! I am old! I am no longer thirty years old! »

And Matthew grumbles, too: « And what about me? I was not used to this... When it rained at Capernaum, and you know very well, Peter, I did not go out. I put servants at the tax-bench and they brought me the people who had to pay. I organised a proper service for that. Of course... who would venture to go out in nasty weather? H'm! Only a melancholy fellow, but no one else. Markets and marches are done in good weather... »

« Be quiet! Because He will hear you! » says John.

« No, He will not hear us! He is thinking and when He thinks... we practically do not exist » says Thomas.

« And when He takes an idea into His head, there is no reason whatsoever that may move Him from His determination. He will

do what He wants. He trusts no one but Himself and that will be His ruin. If He only consulted a little with me... I am aware of so many things! » says Judas with the self-sufficiency of a « sagacious man who is more clever than anybody else ».

« What do you know? » asks Peter at once and he has become as red as a beetroot. « You know everything! What friends have you got? Are you perhaps a great man in Israel? Away you go! You are a poor man like me and the others... A little more handsome... But handsomeness of youth is a flower that lasts one day! I was handsome, too! »

A hearty laugh of John clears the atmosphere. Also the others laugh and joke at Peter's wrinkles, at his legs, which are wide apart like the legs of every sailor, at his goggle-eyes reddened by the winds of the lake.

« You may laugh, but it is so. In any case, do not interrupt me. Tell me, Judas. What friends have you got? What do you know? If you know what you want us to believe that you know, you must have friends among Jesus' enemies. And who has friends among enemies, is a traitor. Hey! boy! Be careful, if your handsomeness matters to you! Because if it is true that I am no longer handsome, it is also true that I am still strong and I would have no difficulty in giving you a thrashing » says Peter.

« What a manner of speaking! The language of a rude fisherman! » says Judas with the contempt of an offended prince.

« Yes, sir, and I am proud of it. A fisherman, but as sincere as my lake, which, if it is going to be stormy, does not say: "I'll be dead calm", but it stirs and puts such clouds as witnesses in the vault of heaven, that if one is not a fool or drunk, one realises its meaning and acts accordingly. You... you look like this mud that seems to be hard, but look » (and with a sudden jerk of his foot he splashes the mud up to the chin of the handsome Iscariot).

« Peter! Your manners are disgusting! The Master's words on charity have a lovely effect on you! »

« The same applies to you with regard to His words on humility and sincerity. Come on. Spit it out! What do you know? Is it true that you know or do you give yourself airs to make people believe that you have powerful friends? You are a poor worm! »

« I know what I know, and I am not going to tell you to start a brawl, which you, being a Galilean, would like. I would repeat that if the Master were less obstinate, it would be much better. And He ought to be less violent. People get tired of being offended. »

« Violent? If He were, He should throw you into the river, at once. He should make you fly over those trees. You would thus wash off the mud that soils your profile. I wish it would help to wash your heart, which, if I am not mistaken, is more crusty than

my muddy legs. » As Peter, in fact, is hairy and short, his legs are very muddy. Both his and Matthew's legs seem to be made of clay up to their knees.

« Will You stop it! » says Matthew.

John, who has noticed that Jesus has slackened His pace, suspects that He may have heard, and quickening his pace, he overtakes two or three companions, he reaches Jesus and walking beside Him, he calls Him: « Master! » very gently, as usual, and with a loving glance, looking up at Him, as he is shorter and also because he is in the middle of the road, beyond the little rising of the ground on which they are all walking.

« Oh! John! You have reached Me! » says Jesus smiling at him.

John, studying His face with love and anxiety to find out whether He has heard, replies: « Yes, my dear Master. Do You want me? »

« I always want you. I would like all of you, with hearts like yours! But if you continue to walk where you are, you will get drenched. »

« It does not matter, Master! Nothing matters, as long as I am near You! »

« Do you always want to be with Me? Do you not think that I am imprudent and I may cause trouble to you as well? Do you not feel offended because I do not listen to your advice? »

« Oh! Master! So You have heard! » John is dismayed.

« I heard everything. From the very first words. But do not be upset about that. None of you is perfect. I knew since I chose you. And I do not expect any of you to become perfect rapidly. You will all have to change from wild to domestic beings by means of two grafts... »

« Which ones, Master? »

« One is blood, the other is fire. Afterwards you will be the heroes of Heaven and will convert the whole world, beginning from yourselves. »

« Blood? Fire? »

« Yes, John. Blood: Mine... »

« No, Jesus! » John interrupts Him with a deep groan.

« Be calm, My friend. Do not interrupt Me. Be the first to listen to this truth, because you deserve it. The Blood is Mine. You already know. That is why I came. I am the Redeemer... Think of the prophets. They did not leave out one iota in describing My mission. I will be the Man described by Isaiah. And the Blood, which I will shed, will fecundate you. But I will not confine Myself to that. You are so -imperfect and weak, dull and timorous, that I, sitting gloriously beside the Father, will send you the Fire, the Strength that proceeds from My being through generation by the Father and that binds the Father and the Son in an indissoluble ring, making

Three of One: the Thought, the Blood, the Love. When the Spirit of God, nay, the Spirit of the Spirit of God, the Perfection of Divine Perfections, will come to you, you will no longer be as you are. But you will be new, powerful, holy... But for one of you Blood and Fire will be of no avail. Because Blood will have for him the power of damnation and he will for ever know another fire, in which he will bum belching blood and swallowing blood, because he will see blood wherever he lays his material or spiritual eyes, having betrayed the Blood of a God. »

« Oh! Master! Who is it? »

« You will know one day. For the time being, forget about it. And for the sake of charity do not even endeavour to inquire into it. Investigation presupposes suspicion. You must not suspect Your brothers, because suspicion is already lack of charity. »

« I will be satisfied if You assure me that neither James nor I will betray You. »

« Oh! Not you! Nor James. You are My comfort, My good John! » and Jesus lays an arm on his shoulders, draws him to Himself and they walk thus together.

They are silent for some time. The others also are quiet. Only the shuffling of their feet in the mire can be heard. They then hear another noise. It is a rustling gurgling noise, I would say the deep snoring of a person affected by catarrh. It is a monotonous grumbling interrupted now and again by light crashes.

« Can you hear that? » says Jesus. « The river is close at hand. »

« But we will not arrive at the ford before night. It will soon be dark. »

« We will sleep in a hut somewhere. And we will cross the river tomorrow. I would have liked to arrive there earlier, because the flood is increasing hourly. Listen! The reeds on the banks are breaking under the pressure of the swollen water. »

« They kept You so long in those villages of the Decapolis! We said to the sick people: "The next time!" but... »

« Who is ill, Wants to be cured, John. And he who pities them, cures them at once, John. It does not matter. We will cross over just the same. I want to do the other side before going back to Jerusalem for Pentecost. »

They become silent once again. It gets dark very quickly, as is usual on wet days. It becomes more and more difficult to walk in the deepening twilight. The trees along the road also increase the darkness with their foliage.

« Let us cross to the other side of the road. We are now very close to the ford. We will look for a hut. »

They cross over and are followed by the others. They cross a little muddy ditch, with more mud than water, which flows gurgling towards the river. They almost grope their way among the trees,

3-1763

making for the river, the noise of which is becoming louder and louder.

A first moonbeam pierces the clouds, it penetrates between two clouds and descends making the miry water of the Jordan shine, in a spot where the river is swollen and very wide. (If my reckoning is correct, the river is about fifty/sixty metres wide. I am a silly goose with regard to measurements, but I think that my house could have gone into that river-bed nine or ten times and it was about five and a half metres wide). It is no longer the beautiful calm blue Jordan, the quiet low water of which leaves uncovered the fine sand on the banks, where the reef-thickets begin to grow and rustle continuously. The water has now submersed everything and the first reef-thickets have been bent and broken and thus are not visible, with the exception of an odd leaf that undulates on the surface of the water and seems to be waving goodbye or imploring help. The water has already reached the foot of the first large trees. I do not know what trees they are. They are tall and leafy, as compact as a wall and dark in the dark night. Some willows dip the top of their withered foliage into the yellowish water.

« It is not possible to wade here » says Peter.

« Not here. But it is possible over there. See? They are still wading » says Andrew.

In fact two quadrupeds are cautiously crossing the river. The water reaches up to the stomachs of the animals.

« If they can pass, so can boats. »

« However, it is better to cross over at once, even if it is dark. The clouds have thinned out and it is moonlight. Do not let us miss this opportunity. Let us look for a boat... » And Peter utters three times a long moaning cry: « Hey! »

There is no reply.

« Let us go down, right down to the ford. Melkiah and his sons must be there. This is his best season. He will take us across. »

They walk as fast as they can on the little path along the river, which almost laps on it.

« But is that not a woman? » says Jesus looking at the two people who have already crossed the river on horseback and are now standing on the path.

« A woman? » Peter and the others cannot see or tell whether the person in dark clothes, who has dismounted and is now waiting, is a man or a woman.

« Yes. It is a woman. It's... Mary. Look now that she in the moonbeam. »

« You are lucky that you can see. Blessed be your eyes! »

« It is Mary. What will she be wanting? » and Jesus shouts: « Mary! »

« Rabboni! Is it You? Praised be God that I have found You! » and Mary runs as fast as a gazelle towards Jesus. I do not know how

she does not stumble on the uneven road. She drops her heavy mantle and is now coming forward with her veil and light mantle held tight against her dark dress.

When she reaches Jesus she drops at His feet without worrying about the mud. She is panting, but happy. She repeats: « Glory be to God Who made me find You! »

« Why, Mary? What is happening? Were you not at Bethany? »

« I was at Bethany with Your Mother and the women, as You told us... But I came to meet You... Lazarus was not able to come, because he is suffering too much... So I came with a servant... »

« You are about, all alone, with a boy and in this weather? »

« Oh! Rabboni! You are not going to tell me that You think that I was afraid. I was not afraid to do so much evil... I am not afraid now to do something good. »

« So? Why did you come? »

« To tell You not to cross over... They are waiting for You on the other side to injure You... I found out... I was told by one of the Herodians who once... who once loved me... Whether he told me out of love, still, or out of hatred, I do not know... I know that the other day he saw me through the gate and he said to me: "You silly Mary, are you waiting for your Master? You are doing the right thing, because it will be the last time, in fact as soon as He crosses the river and comes into Judaea, He will be captured. Look at Him carefully and then run away because it is not wise to be near Him, now... Then... You can imagine how anxiously... I inquired... You know... I know many people... and even if they say that I am mad or possessed... they still speak to me... And I found out that it is true. Then I took two horses and I came, without saying anything to Your Mother, not to worry Her... Go back at once, Master. If they find out that You are here, beyond the Jordan, they will come here. Herod also is looking for You... and You are too close to Machaerus now. Go away, for pity's sake, Master!... »

« Do not weep, Mary... »

« I am afraid, Master! »

« What! You afraid? No, you have been so brave as to cross the river in flood by night!... »

« But that is a river, whereas those are men and they are Your enemies and they hate You... I am afraid of their hatred for You... Because I love You, Master. »

« Do not be afraid. They will not get Me as yet. It is not My hour. Even if they placed many formations of soldiers along all the roads, they would not capture Me. It is not My hour. But I will do as you wish. I will go back... »

Judas grumbles something between his teeth and Jesus replies: « Yes, Judas. Exactly as you say. But just in the first part of your sentence. I am listening to her, of course I am. But not because she

3-1765

is a woman, as you are insinuating, but because she is the one who has made most progress in love. Mary, go home, while you can. I will go back and cross over... wherever I can, and I will go to Galilee. Come with My Mother and the other women to Cana, to Susanna's house. I will tell you there what there is to be done. Go in peace and may you be blessed. God is with you. »

Jesus lays His hand on her head, blessing her. Mary takes Jesus' hands, kisses them, stands up and then goes back. Jesus watches her go away. He sees her pick her heavy mantle and put it on; she then reaches her horse, mounts it and goes to the ford and crosses over.

« And now let us go » He says. « I wanted to let you rest, but I cannot. I have your safety at heart, although Judas thinks otherwise. And believe Me, if you should fall into the hands of My enemies, that would do your health more harm than water and mud... »

They all lower their heads as they understand the implied reproach given in reply to their previous conversation.

They walk all night in changeable weather, in fitful showers. At a lurid dawn they find themselves near a very poor village, the muddy houses of which are lying close to the river. The river is a little narrower than at the ford. Some boats have been beached as far as the houses to protect them from the flood.

Peter utters his cry: « Hey! »

A vigorous- elderly man comes out of a hovel. « What do you want? »

« Boats to cross over. »

« Impossible The flood is too dangerous... The current... »

« Hey you! Are you telling me? I am a fisherman from Galilee. »

« The sea is one thing... but this is a river... I do not want to lose my boat. In any case... I have but one and you are many. »

« You liar! Are you telling me that you have one boat only? »

« May I go blind, if I am lying, I... »

« Watch that you may really go blind. This is the Rabbi from Galilee Who gives sight to blind people and Who can satisfy you by making you go blind... »

« Oh! Mercy! The Rabbi! Forgive me, Rabboni! »

« Yes, I do. But you should never tell lies. God loves sincere people. Why say that you have but one boat when the whole village can give you the lie? To lie and to be found out is too severe a humiliation for man! Will you give Me your boats? »

« All of them, Master. »

« How many do we need, Peter? »

« In normal conditions two would be enough. But with the river in flood it is more difficult to manoeuvre them and we need three. »

« Take them, fisherman. But how will I get them back? »

« Come in one of them. Have you no sons? »

3-1766

« I have one son, two sons-in-law and some grandchildren. »

« Two in each boat are enough to bring them back. »

« Let us go. »

The man calls the others and with the help of Peter, Andrew James and John they push the boats into the water. The current is strong and threatens to drag them away. The ropes holding them to the closest tree-trunks are as taut as bows and creak under the stress. Peter looks. He looks at the boats, at the river and shakes his head, he ruffles his grey hair with one hand and casts an in quisitive glance at Jesus.

« Are you afraid, Peter? »

« Well!... almost... »

« Be not afraid. Have faith. And you, too, man. He who carries God and His messengers must not be afraid. Let us get into the boats. I will go into the first one. »

The owner of the boats makes a gesture of resignation. He must be thinking that his relatives' last hour or his has come. He must at least be afraid of losing his boats or ending no one knows where.

Jesus is already in the boat. He is standing in the bow. All the others embark, some in the same boat, some in the other two. Only an old man remains on the embankment, a servant perhaps, watching the ropes.

« Are we all on board? »

« Yes, we are. »

« Are the oars ready? »

« They are. »

« Let go, you, on the bank. »

The old man untwists the ropes off the wooden pin which held them in a knot on a tree-trunk. As soon as the boats are free, they list for a moment southwards towards the centre of the current.

But the power of miracle shines on Jesus' face. What He says to the river I do not know. I know that the current almost stops. The Jordan flows slowly as when it is not in spate. The boats cut across the water without any difficulty, nay, they are so fast that their owner is amazed.

They are now on the other side. They disembark with ease and the current does not threaten to drag the boats away even when the oars are still.

« Master, I see that You are really powerful » says the owner of the boats. « Bless Your servant and remember me, a sinner. »

« Why powerful? »

« Ehi! That was no trifle! You stopped the current of the Jordan in flood!... »

« Joshua had already worked that miracle, and it was even greater, because the water of the river disappeared to let the Ark pass... »

3-1767

« And You, man, have carried across the true Ark of God » says, Judas with self-sufficiency.

« Most High God! Yes, I do believe it! You are the true Messiah! The Son of the Most High God. Oh! I will tell the towns and villages along the river what You did and what I saw! Come back, Master! There are many sick people in my poor village. Come and cure them! »

« I will come. In the meantime preach in My Name faith and holiness to be acceptable to God. Goodbye, man. Go in peace. And be not afraid about your return. »

« I am not afraid. If I were afraid I would ask You to have mercy on my life. But I believe in You and in your goodness and I am going away without asking for anything. Goodbye. »

He gets into his boat, he stands off and departs. He is sure of himself and soon reaches the other bank.

Jesus, Who has remained still until He sees him on the other bank, makes a gesture of blessing. He then withdraws towards the road.

The river resumes its vorticose flowing... And it all ends thus.

361. On the Other Bank. Jesus Meets His Mother and the Women Disciples.

16th December 1945.

They are now on the other side of the Jordan and they are walking fast southwestwards, towards a second chain of hills, higher than the first one, beyond which is the Jordan plain. I gather from their conversation that they came away from the plain to avoid the mud that they left on the other side and they are thinking of going to their destination along internal routes, which are better kept and more practicable, for walking, particularly in wet weather.

« Whereabouts are we? » asks Matthew who finds his bearings with difficulty.

« We are certainly between Shiloh and Bethel. I recognise the mountains » says Thomas. « We passed here not long ago with Judas, who was the guest of a Pharisee at Bethel. »

« You could have been his guest, too, but you would not come. Neither he nor I said to you: "Do not come". »

« I am not saying that you did say so. I am only saying that I preferred to stay with the disciples who were evangelizing here. »

And the argument is over. Andrew in fact is glad and says: « If there are friendly Pharisees in Bethel, we shall not be attacked. »

« But we are going in the other direction, not to Jerusalem » they Point out to him.

« We shall have to go there for Passover in any case! I don't know how we shall manage... »

« Of course! Why did He say that He is going back to Cana? The women could have come back and we could have made our pilgrimage... »

« It is my wife's destiny that she should not spend Passover in Jerusalem! » exclaims Peter.

John asks Jesus Who is talking animatedly to the Zealot: « Master, how shall we manage to go and come back in time? »

« I do not know. I trust in God. If we are late, it will not be My fault. »

« You were right in being prudent » says the Zealot.

« Oh! As far as I am concerned, I would have gone on. Because it is not yet My hour. I can feel that. But how would you all have put up with the adventure, considering that for some time you have been so... tired? »

« Master... You are right. A demon seems to have been blowing poison among us. We have changed so much! »

« Man does get tired. He wants things quickly. And he dreams of silly things. When he realises that his dreams are different from reality, he becomes upset and, if he is not of good will, he surrenders. He does not remember that the Almighty, Who could have made the Universe out of Chaos in a moment, made it in orderly separate stages in periods of time called days. From the spiritual Chaos of the whole world I have to make the Kingdom of God. And I will do so. I will build its foundations, I am now building them, and I have to split a very hard rock to lay the foundations that will not collapse. You will slowly build the walls. Your successors will continue the work, both in height and in width. As I shall die in the work, so will you and there will be many more who will die with or without bloodshed, consumed by this work for which spirit of sacrifice and generosity, tears, blood and endless patience are required... »

Peter thrusts his grey-haired head between Jesus and John: « Do you mind telling me what you are saying? »

« Oh! Simon! Come here. We were talking of the future Church. I was explaining that, contrary to your hurry, your tiredness, your discouragement and so forth, it exacts calm, perseverance, exertion and trust. I was saying that the sacrifice of each of its members is required. Starting with Me, the Founder. I am, in fact, its mystical Head, for you, for all the disciples, for all those who will be called Christians and will belong to the universal Church. And really in the great classification of the hierarchy the most humble people, who seem to be simple "numbers", will be the ones who will make the Church truly vital. In actual fact I will often have to seek refuge in them, to continue to keep alive the faith and the strength of the continuously renewed apostolic colleges, and I will have to allow those apostles to be tortured by Satan and by

3-1769

envious, proud, incredulous men. And their moral martyrdom will not be less painful than a material one, as they will find themselves between the active will of God and the wicked will of man, who will act as an instrument of Satan and by every means and effort will endeavour to make them appear as mendacious, mad, possessed persons, in order to paralyze My work in them and the fruits of My work, which are as many victorious blows against the Beast. »

« And will they resist? »

« They will resist, even if I am not physically with them. They will have to believe not only what is their duty to believe, but also in their secret mission, and they will have to believe that it is holy and useful, and that it originated from Me, while Satan will hiss around them to terrorise them and the world will shout to deride them and the not always perfectly bright ministers of God to condemn them. That is the destiny of My future voices. And yet I will have no other means to rouse men and bring them back to the Gospel and to the Christ! But for everything I have asked of them and imposed on them and received from them, oh! I will grant them eternal joy, a special glory. In Heaven there is a closed book. God only can read it. All the truth is contained in it. But God at times removes the seals and revives the truth already revealed to men, selecting a man, chosen for that destiny, to know past, present and future, as contained in that mysterious book. Have you ever seen a son, the best in the family, or a schoolboy, the most clever at school, being called by his father or teacher to read a book for adults and have it explained to him? He stands beside his father or teacher, embraced by one of their arms, while the other hand of the father or teacher points at the lines which he wants to be read and understood by his dearest child. God behaves likewise with those consecrated to such destiny. He draws them to Himself and holds them with His arm and forces them to read what He wants, and to understand the meaning and to repeat it later and suffer derision and grief because of it. I, the Man, am the Founder of the family of those who speak the Truth of the heavenly book, and I therefore suffer mockery, grief and death. But the Father is already preparing My Glory. And once I have risen to it, I will prepare the glory of those whom I compelled to read in the closed book that which I wanted, and in the presence of the whole risen Mankind and of the angelical choruses I will point them out for what they were, calling them beside Me while I open the seals of the Book, which it will no longer be necessary to keep closed, and they will smile seeing and reading once again the words that were clarified to them when they suffered on the earth. »

« And what about the others? » asks John who has paid great attention to the lesson.

3-1770

« Which others? »

« The others, who like me have not read that book on the earth, will they never know what it says? »

« Everything will be known to the blessed souls in Heaven. Being engrossed in the Infinite Wisdom, they will know. »

« Immediately As soon as they die? »

« As soon as they enter Life. »

« Why then on the Last Day You will let everybody see that You call them to know the Book? »

« Because not only the blessed souls will be there to see that. All Mankind will be there. And on the side of the damned souls there will be many who laughed at the voices of God, as if they were the voices of mad or possessed people and tormented them because of their gift. It will be a long expected but fair revenge granted to those martyrs of the dull wickedness of the world. »

« How beautiful it will be to see all that! » exclaims John enraptured.

« Yes. And to see all the Pharisees grind their teeth, seized with anger » says Peter rubbing his hands.

« Oh! I think I will look only at Jesus and the blessed souls reading the Book with Him... » replies John, dreaming of that hour, while his light-blue eyes, lost in I wonder what vision of light, are made brighter by emotional tears, which have welled in them, and an innocent smile appears on his red lips.

The Zealot looks at him; Jesus also looks at him. But Jesus does not say anything. The Zealot instead says: « You will look at yourself, then! Because if among us there is one who will be the "voice of God" on the earth and will be elected to read the passages of the sealed Book, you are that one, John, the favourite disciple of Jesus and the friend of God. »

« Oh! Do not say that! I am the most ignorant among you. And if Jesus did not say that the Kingdom of God belongs to children, I would think that I could never enter it, as I am good for nothing. Is that right, Master, that my only merit is that I am like a child? »

« Yes, you belong to blessed childhood. And may you be blessed because of that! »

They continue to walk for some time, then Peter, who looks back along the track on which they are, exclaims: « Merciful Providence! That is the women's wagon! »

They all turn round. It is in fact Johanna's heavy wagon that is coming forward drawn by two strong horses. They stop waiting for it. As the leather tilt is completely lowered, it is not possible to see who is in the wagon. Jesus beckons to the driver to stop and the man utters an exclamation of joy when he sees Jesus standing on the edge of the road with His arm raised.

While the man stops the two panting horses, the lean face of

Isaac appears through an opening in the tilt: « The Master! » he shouts. « Mother, rejoice! He is here! »

One can hear voices of women and shuffling of feet in the wagon, but before one of them gets off, Manaen, Marjiam and Isaac have jumped down and are worshipping the Master.

« Are you still here, Manaen? »

« I have remained faithful to orders, particularly now, as the women are afraid... But... We obeyed, because it is our duty to obey, but I can assure You that there was nothing to worry about. I know for certain that Pilate has called riotous fellows to order, stating that anyone giving rise to rebellions during the feast days would be severely punished. I think that Pilate's wife and above all her lady friends are connected with such protection. At the Court we know everything and nothing. But we know enough... » and Manaen moves to one side to make room for Mary, Who has got off the wagon and has walked a few steps towards them, and is clearly very anxious and deeply moved.

They kiss each other while all the women disciples worship the Master. Neither Mary nor Martha of Lazarus are there.

Mary whispers: « How much anguish since that evening! How everybody hates You, Son! » and tears stream down the red lines left on Her face by the many tears shed during the previous days.

« But You can see that the Father sees to everything. So do not weep! I defy all the hatred of the world bravely. But one tear of Yours depresses Me. Cheer up, Holy Mother! » and embracing Her with one arm, He turns round to greet the women disciples, and particularly Johanna, who came back to accompany Mary.

« Oh! Master! There is no difficulty in staying with Your Mother. Mary was held up in Bethany because her brother is suffering so much. So I came. I left the children with the wife of the guardian of the mansion, as she is kind and motherly. But there is also Chuza to look after them, so You can imagine whether Matthias, who is my husband's pet, will lack anything! But Chuza also told me that it was not necessary to leave. The Proconsul's warning has caused Herodias also to draw her claws in. The Tetrarch, too, is trembling with fear and he is worried about one thing only: that Herodias may ruin him in the eyes of Rome. The death of John has destroyed many situations that were favourable to Herodias. And Herod is fully aware that the people are against him because of John's murder. The old fox realises that the worst punishment for him would be to lose the hateful illusory protection of Rome. The people would attack him at once. So do not worry! He will do nothing on his own initiative! »

« In that case, let us go back to Jerusalem! You can proceed without any fear about your safety. Let us go. Let the women get into the wagon again, and Matthew and whoever is tired will go

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with them. We will rest at Bethel. Let us go. »

The women obey. Matthew and Bartholomew go with them, The others prefer to follow the wagon on foot together with Manaen, Isaac and Marjiam. And Manaen tells them how he inquired to find out how much truth there was in the boasting of the Herodian who had caused so much anxiety in the peaceful gathering at Bethany, near Lazarus « who was suffering so much » says Manaen.

« Did a woman come to Bethany? »

« No, Lord. But we have been away three days. Who is she? »

« A disciple. I will give her to Eliza because she is young, alone and without means. »

« Eliza is in Johanna's mansion. She wanted to come. But she has a bad cold. She was dying to see You. She used to say: "But do you not understand that the sight of Him gives me peace?" »

« I will give her also joy through this young woman. And what about you, Marjiam.? Are you not saying anything? »

« I am listening, Master. »

« The boy listens and writes. He makes this one and that one repeat Your words and he writes them. But have we repeated them correctly? » says Isaac.

« I will examine the work of My disciple and add anything which should be missing » says Jesus caressing the bronzed cheek of Marjiam. And He asks: « And what about your old father? Have you seen him? »

« Oh! yes! He did not recognise me. He wept for joy. But we shall see him at the Temple, because Ishmael is sending them. He has even given them more days this year. He is afraid of You. »

« I should think so! After what happened to Hananiah in the month of Shebat! » says Peter laughing.

« But the fear of God does not build, it demolishes. It is not friendship. It is only expectation that often changes into hatred. But everybody gives what one can... »

They go on their way and I lose sight of them.

362. At Ramah. The Number of the Elect.

17th December 1945.

Thomas, who was at the rear of the group speaking to Manaen and Bartholomew, leaves his companions and catches up with the Master, Who is in front with Marjiam and Isaac. « Master, we shall soon be near Ramah. Would You come and bless my sister's baby? She is so anxious to see You! We could stop there. There is room for everybody. Make me happy, Lord! »

« I will, and with great joy! We shall enter Jerusalem tomorrow and we shall be well rested. »

« Oh! I will go ahead and warn them! May I go? »

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« Yes, go. But remember that I am not a wordly friend. Do not compel your relatives to spend a lot of money. Treat Me as a "Master". Is that clear? »

« Yes, my Lord, it is. I will tell my relatives. Are you coming with me, Marjiam? »

« If Jesus will allow me... »

« You may go, son. »

The others, who have seen Thomas and Marjiam go towards Ramah, situated on the left hand side of the road, which, I think, takes one from Samaria to Jerusalem, quicken their paces to find out what is happening.

« We are going to the house of Tom's sister. I have stayed in all the houses of your relatives. It is fair that I should go to his as well. And that is why I sent him ahead. »

« Well, if You do not mind, I will go away, too. I want to see whether there is anything new. If there is bad news, I will be at the Damascus Gate when You arrive there. Otherwise I will meet You... Where, Lord? » says Manaen.

« At Bethany, Manaen. I am going to Lazarus' house at once. But I am leaving the women in Jerusalem. I will be going alone. Nay, I would ask you to escort the women to their houses after today's est. »

« As You wish, Lord. »

« Tell the driver to follow us to Ramah. »

In fact the wagon is coming up slowly behind the apostolic group. Isaac and the Zealot stop waiting for it, while all the others take the side road, which with a good gradient leads to the very low little hill on which Ramah is built.

Thomas, who is beside himself with joy and looks even more rubicond as his face is so bright, is waiting at the entrance of the village. He runs to meet Jesus: « How happy we are, Master! All the family is here! My father who was so anxious to see You, my mother, my brothers!... How happy I am! » And he walks beside Jesus strutting through the village like a conqueror in triumph.

The house of Thomas' sister is at a cross-roads on the eastern side of the town. It is the typical house of a well to do Israelite, with very few windows, with an iron door with judas-hole, a terraced roof and high dark walls enclosing the garden also at the rear of the house, with tall fruit trees standing above them.

Today the maidservant does not have to look through the peephole. The door is wide open and all the inhabitants of the house are lined up in the hall where the adults are busy holding back boys and girls, who, excited at the news, are restless and are continuously rushing to the front, thus infringing the hierarchical order, as the first row, the place of honour, is for Thomas' parents, his sister and her husband.

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But when Jesus appears at the door, no one can hold the children back. They are like a brood of chickens coming out of their nest after a night's rest. And Jesus receives the impact of the kind garrulous group who clash against His knees and press Him, raising their little faces to be kissed, and will not move away notwithstanding the fact that their fathers and mothers call them and Tom gives a few slaps to restore order.

« Leave them! Leave them alone! I wish the whole world were like that! » exclaims Jesus Who has stooped to please all the children.

At last He can go in and is welcomed by the more respectful greetings of the adults. What I particularly like is the greeting of Thomas' father, a typical elderly Jew, who is raised from his knees by Jesus, Who wants to kiss him « out of gratitude for his generosity in giving Him an apostle ».

« Oh! God has loved me more than He loved anybody else in Israel, because while every Jew has one son, the first-born, consecrated to the Lord, I have two: the first and the last one; and the last one is even more sacred, because, although he is neither a Levite nor a Priest, he does what not even the High Priest does: he constantly sees God and receives His commands! » he says in the trembling voice of elderly people, made even more trembling by emotion. And he concludes: « Tell me one thing only to make my soul happy. Since You do not lie, tell me: this son of mine, by the way he follows You, is he worthy of serving You and deserving eternal Life? »

« You may rest in peace, father. Your Tom has a great position in the heart of God because of his behaviour, and he will have a great place in Heaven because of the way he will serve God till he breathes his last. »

Thomas gasps for air like a fish out of water, deeply moved by what he has heard. The old man raises his trembling hands, while tears stream down the deep wrinkles of his face and disappear in his patriarchal beard, and he says: « May the blessing of Jacob descend upon you; the blessing of the patriarch upon the just one among his sons: may the Almighty bless you with the blessings of Heaven above, blessings of the deep lying below, blessings of breasts and womb. May the blessings of your father exceed those of his ancestors and until the desire of the eternal hills comes, may they rest upon the head of Thomas, upon the head of him who is nazirite among his brothers! »

And they all reply: « Amen. »

« And now, my Lord, will You please bless this house and above all these little ones who are blood of my blood » says the old man pointing at the children.

And Jesus, stretching His arms out, says the Mosaic blessing in a

loud voice and He adds: « May God, in Whose presence your ancestors walked, God Who has nourished Me since My childhood to the present day, may the angel who has delivered Me from all evil, bless these children; may they be named after Me and after My ancestors and may they multiply copiously upon the earth » and He ends by taking the last born from his mother's arms to kiss his forehead saying: « And may the chosen virtues that dwelt in the just Man, after whom you have been named, descend upon you like butter and honey, making your name worthy of Heaven and adorned like a palm-tree laden with golden dates and a cedar covered with royal leaves. »

Everybody is moved and enraptured. Then they all utter a cry of joy while Jesus enters the house and they stop only when He is in the yard, where He introduces His Mother, the women disciples, the apostles and the disciples.

It is no longer morning, neither is it noon. The weak ray of sunlight which pierces with difficulty the ruffled clouds while the weather is still so unsettled, makes me understand that the sun is about to set and that twilight is approaching.

The women are no longer here. Neither are Isaac and Manaen. Marjiam instead is with Jesus, and is so happy to be with Him, while He goes out with the apostles and all the male relatives of Thomas to see some vineyards, which appear to be of a special quality. Both the old man and Thomas' brother-in-law enlarge upon the position of the vineyard and the rarity of the vines, which at present have but a few tender leaves.

Jesus listens kindly to the explanations showing an interest in pruning and hoeing, as if they were the most useful things on the earth. At the end He says to Thomas smiling: « Shall I bless this dowry of your twin sister? »

« Oh! My Lord! I am neither Doras nor Ishmael. I know that Your very breath, Your presence in a place is already a blessing. But if You wish to raise Your hand on these plants, please do so, and their fruit will certainly be holy. »

« And will it not be plentiful? What do you say, father? »

« Holy... is enough. And I will press the grapes and will send You the wine for next Passover, so that You may use it in the ritual chalice. »

« Very well. I will look forward to that. At next Passover I want to use the wine of a true Israelite. »

They leave the vineyard to go back to the village.

The news of the presence of Jesus of Nazareth in the village has spread and the people of Ramah are all in the streets and are anxious to approach Him.

Jesus notices it and says to Thomas: « Why do they not come? Are

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they perhaps afraid of Me? Tell them that I love them. »

Oh! Thomas does not wait to be told twice! He goes from one group to another so quickly that he looks like a large butterfly fluttering from flower to flower. And those who hear the invitation do not wait to be told twice either. They all run, passing the word round, and gather round Jesus, so that when they arrive at the cross-roads, where Thomas' house is, there is quite a large crowd speaking respectfully to the apostles and Thomas' relatives, asking various questions.

I realise that Thomas has worked hard during the winter months and much of the Gospel is already known in the village. But they wish to have detailed elucidations and one who has been deeply affected by the blessing given by Jesus to the little ones of the hospitable house and by what the Master said of Thomas, asks: « Will they thus all be just, because of Your blessing? »

« Not because of it, but because of their actions. I gave them the strength of My blessing to strengthen them in their actions. But it is for them to perform deeds and only good deeds to attain Heaven. I bless everybody... but not everybody in Israel will be saved. »

« On the contrary, only very few will be saved, if they continue to behave as they are behaving now » grumbles Thomas.

« What are you saying? »

« The truth. Those who persecute the Christ and calumniate Him, those who do not practise what He teaches, will have no part in His Kingdom » says Thomas in his deep voice.

One pulls him by the sleeve asking: « Is He very severe? » pointing at Jesus.

« No, He is not. Nay, He is too good. »

« What do you think, shall I be saved? I am not one of the disciples. But you know what I am like and that I always believed what you said. But I do not know what I should do, in addition to that. What should I do exactly to be saved, besides what I already do? »

« Ask Him. His judgement will be more truthful and kind than mine. »

The man comes forward. He says: « Master, I comply with the Law, and since Thomas repeated Your words to me, I try to comply more and more. But I am not very generous. I do what I must do. I refrain from doing what it is not right to do, because I am afraid of Hell. But I am very fond of a comfortable life and, I admit it, I endeavour to do things in such a way that while I do not commit sin, I do not trouble myself too much either. Shall I be saved by behaving so? »

« You will. But why be avaricious with good God Who is so generous with you? Why do you expect only to be saved, and with some difficulty, and you do not wish to attain great holiness, which gives eternal peace at once? Come on, man! Be generous

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with your soul! »

The man says humbly: « I will think about it, my Lord. I feel that you are right and that I am wronging my soul by compelling it to go through a long purification period before having peace. »

« Very well. Your thought is already the beginning of perfectioning. »

Another man from Ramah asks: « Lord, are only few people saved? »

« If man knew how to behave with respect towards himself and with reverential love towards God, all men would be saved, as God desires. But man does not behave thus. And like a fool, he plays with tinsel, instead of taking pure gold. Be generous in wishing Good. Does it pain you? That is where is the merit. Strive to go through the narrow door. The other one, which is wide and ornate, is an allurement of Satan to lead you astray. The gate of Heaven is narrow, low, barren and rough. In order to enter it one must be agile, light, without pomp and without materialism. One must be spiritual to be able to do so. Otherwise when the hour of your death comes, you will not be able to pass through it. And many will be really seen trying to pass through it without being successful, as they are so laden with materialism, so decked out with worldly pomp, so stiffened by the crust of sin, unable to stoop because of their pride, which acts as a skeleton. And the Landlord of the Kingdom will then come to close the gate, and those who are outside, those who have not been able to go in at the right time, will knock at the door shouting: "Lord, open the gate to us. We are here as well". But He will reply: "I really do not know you, neither do I know where you come from". And they will say: "What? Do You not remember us? We ate and drank with You and we listened to You when You preached in our squares". But He will reply: "I really do not know you. The more I look at you the more you seem to be sated with what I declared was impure food. The more I examine you, the more I see that you do not belong to My family. Now, I really see whose sons and subjects you are: the Other one's. Satan is your father, the Flesh your mother, Pride your nurse, Hatred your servant, sin is your treasure, vices your gems. On your hearts there is written: 'Selfishness'. Your hands are dirty with the robberies committed against your brothers. Away from here! Away from Me, all of you, operators of iniquity". Then, while Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and all the prophets and the just of the Kingdom of God will come from the heights of Heaven shining with glory, those who did not love but were selfish, who did not sacrifice themselves but lived in the lap of luxury, will be driven away and confined to the place where there is eternal weeping and nothing but terror. And those who have risen gloriously and have come from east and west, from north and south, will

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gather round the nuptial table of the Lamb, the King Of the Kingdom of God. And then one will see that many who appeared to be "the least" in the army of the earth, will be the first in the city of the Kingdom. And one will also see that not all the mighty ones in Israel are mighty in Heaven, and not all those chosen by the Christ to be His servants have deserved to be elected to the nuptial table. Instead one will see that many, who were considered to be "the first" will be not only the last, but not even the last. Because many are called, but few are those who can turn their election into true glory. »

While Jesus is speaking, some Pharisees arrive with a pilgrimage on its way to Jerusalem, or coming from Jerusalem looking for lodgings, the Holy City being overcrowded. They see the concourse of people and approach them to see. They soon see Jesus' fair-haired head shining against the dark wall of Thomas' house.

« Let us pass, because we want to speak to the Nazarene » they shout overbearingly.

The crowds open out with no enthusiasm and the apostles see the group of Pharisees come towards them.

« Peace to You, Master! »

« Peace to you. What do you want? »

« Are You going to Jerusalem? »

« Like every faithful Israelite. »

« Don't go! A serious danger threatens You there. We know because we have come from Jerusalem to meet our families. And we came to warn You because we heard that You were at Ramah. »

« Who told you, if you do not mind Me asking you? » asks Peter who has become suspicious and is ready to begin a discussion.

« It does not concern you, man. All you need know, since you call us snakes, is that there are many snakes near the Master and that you ought to mistrust the too many and too powerful disciples. »

« Hey! You are not insinuating that Manaen or... »

« Be silent, Peter. And you, Pharisee, you ought to know that no danger can dissuade a faithful believer from fulfilling his duty. If one loses his life, it is nothing. What is grave, is to lose one's soul by infringing the Law. But you know. And you know that I know. So why are you tempting Me? Do you perhaps not know that I am aware why you are doing it? »

« I am not tempting You. It is the truth. Many among us are hostile to You. But not everybody. We do not hate You. We know that Herod is looking for You and we say to You: go away. Go away from here, because if Herod captures You, he will certainly kill You. That is what he wants. »

« It is what he wants, but he will not do it. I know that for certain. In any case you may go and tell the old fox that He, Whom he is seeking, is in Jerusalem. In fact I come expelling demons and

curing people, without hiding Myself. And I do and will do it today, tomorrow and the day after tomorrow, until My time is over. But I must proceed until I reach the end. And I must enter Jerusalem today and then once more, and once more and once more again, because it is not possible for Me to stop before. And it must be fulfilled with justice, that is, in Jerusalem. »

« The Baptist died elsewhere. »

« He died in holiness, and holiness means: "Jerusalem". If Jerusalem now means "Sin", that is only because of what is only earthly and will soon no longer be. But I am talking of what is eternal and spiritual, that is, of the Heavenly Jerusalem. All the just and the prophets die in it, in its holiness. And I will die in it and in vain you are trying to lead Me into sin. And I will die also among the hills of Jerusalem but not by Herod's hand, but by the will of him who hates Me more subtly than Herod does, because he sees in Me the usurper of the longed for Priesthood and the Purifier of Israel from all the infectious diseases polluting it. So do not throw on Herod all the eagerness to kill, but each of you should take his share, because, truly, the Lamb is on a mountain which wolves and jackals are climbing on every side to slaughter it and... »

The hailstorm of burning truth makes the Pharisees flee.

Jesus watches them run away. He then looks southwards, towards a clearer brightness, which perhaps indicates the area of Jerusalem and He sadly says: « Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you that kill your prophets and stone those who are sent to you, how often have I longed to gather your children, as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you refused! So be it! Your House will be left to you devoid of its true Master. He will come, He will act, as prescribed by the rite, as the first and last son of Israel must act, and then He will go away. He will no longer stay within your walls to purify you by means of His presence. And I assure you that you and your inhabitants will no longer see Me, in My true figure, till the time comes when you say: "Blessings on Him Who comes in the name of the Lord"... And you people of Ramah, remember these words and ill the others so that you may not be involved in the punishment of God. Be faithful... Go. Peace be with you. »

And Jesus withdraws to the house of Thomas with all his relatives and the apostles.

363. At the Temple. The "Our Father" and a Parable on True Sons.

1st January 1946, 6.35 a.m.

Jesus says:

« Get up, Mary. Let us sanctify the day with a page of the Gospel. Because My Word is sanctification. See, Mary. Because to see the

days of Christ on the earth is sanctification. Write, Mary. Because to write about Christ is sanctification, because to repeat what Jesus says is sanctification, because to preach Jesus is sanctification, because to teach our brothers is sanctification. A great reward will be given to you for that charity. »

Jesus has left Ramah (vision of 17th December 1945) and is already in sight of Jerusalem. He is proceeding, as He did last year, singing the prescribed psalms. Many of the people on the crowded road turn round to look at the apostolic group passing by. Some greet them reverently; some look only stealthily at them, smiling with respect, and they are mainly women; some watch them only; some smile ironically and contemptuously; lastly, some pass by haughtily and with evident ill-will. Jesus is walking tranquilly in His best clothes. Like everybody else He has changed in order to enter the holy city decently, and I would say, elegantly dressed.

Marjiam also is equal to the situation in his new garments this year and he is walking beside Jesus, singing at the top of his voice, which, in actual fact, is somewhat harsh, as it is not yet manly. But his imperfect tone is lost in the full chorus of his companions' voices and it emerges as clear as silvery trilling only in the top notes, which he still sings in a steady boy's voice. And he is happy...

During a pause in singing, while they are already in sight of the Damascus Gate - that is where they are entering to go straight to the Temple - they stop to let an impressive caravan pass, as it takes up the whole road obstructing the traffic. While wise people stop at the roadside, Marjiam asks: « My Lord, will You tell me another beautiful parable for Your son who is so far away? I would like to add it to those I have already written, because I am sure that at Bethany we shall meet his messengers and have his news. And I am dying to give him a joy, which I promised him and which both his heart and mine desire... »

« Yes, My son. I will certainly tell you one. »

« One that will really comfort him, that will make him understand that he is still Your beloved... »

« I will do that. And I will rejoice, too, because it will be the truth. »

« When will You tell it, Lord? »

« Very soon. We will go straight to the Temple, as is our duty, and I will speak there before they prevent Me from doing so. »

« And will You speak for him? »

« Yes, son. »

« Thank You, Lord! It must be so painful to be separated thus... » says Marjiam, whose dark eyes begin to shine with tears.

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Jesus lays a hand on his head and He turns round to beckon to the Twelve to approach Him and set out again. The Twelve, in fact, had stopped to listen to some people, I do not know whether they believe in the Master or are anxious to know Him, and they had stopped for the same reason that had compelled Jesus and His apostles to stop on the roadside.

« We are coming, Master. We were listening to those people among whom there are some proselytes who have come from far, and they were asking us where they could meet You » says Peter moving towards Him.

« Why do they want to meet Me? »

And Peter, now beside Jesus Who has set out again, says: « They want to hear You speak and to be cured from some diseases. See that tilted cart, behind them? There are some proselytes from the Diaspora in it, who have come by sea or from distant countries, urged to make this pilgrimage by their faith in You, besides their respect for the Law. Some are from Ephesus, some from Perga, some from Iconium and there is a poor fellow from Philadelphia, whom they, being mostly rich merchants, have received in their cart out of pity, hoping thus to gain the Lord's favour. »

« Marjiam, go and tell them to follow Me to the Temple. And they will have both health for their souls through My word and health to their bodies, if they can have faith. »

The boy goes away quickly. But the Twelve raise a chorus of disapproval because of the « imprudence » of Jesus, Who wants to make Himself conspicuous in the Temple...

« We are going there specially to show them that I am not afraid. To prove to them that no threat can make Me infringe the precept. Have you not understood their trick yet? All their threats, all their apparently friendly advice aim only at making Me commit sin, so that they may have a real charge against Me. Do not be cowardly. Have faith. My hour has not come. »

« But why do You not go and reassure Your Mother first? She is waiting for You... » says Judas Iscariot.

« No. I am going to the Temple first, which, until the moment prearranged by the Eternal Father for the new era, is the House of God. My Mother will suffer less waiting for Me than She would, knowing that I am preaching in the Temple. And I thus honour My Father and Mother, by devoting my very first hour in Jerusalem to the Former, and by granting tranquillity to the Latter. Let us go and be not afraid. Those who are afraid may to go Gethsemane and brood over their fear among the women. »

The apostles, reprimanded by this last remark, no longer speak. They line up, in threes except in the front line, where Jesus is, where they are four, and when Marjiam arrives they are five, and in fact Thaddeus and the Zealot place themselves behind Jesus,

leaving Him in the middle between Peter and Marjiam.

At the Damascus Gate they see Manaen. « Lord, I thought it was better for me to come and remove every doubt about the situation. I can assure You that there is no danger for You, except the ill-will of the Pharisees and scribes. You can go without any fear. »

« I knew, Manaen. But I am grateful to you. Come to the Temple with Me. If it is no burden to you... »

« Burden? I would defy the whole world on Your behalf! I Would do anything! »

The Iscariot mumbles something.

Manaen turns round resentfully. He says in a firm voice: « No, man, those are not just "words". I ask the Master to prove my sincerity. »

« There is no need, Manaen. Let us go. »

They proceed among the obstructing crowds and when they arrive at the house of some friends, they get rid of their sacks, which James, John and Andrew leave on behalf of everybody in a long dark hall, and then join their companions.

They enter the enclosure of the Temple passing through the Antonia. The Roman soldiers are watching, but they do not move. They talk in low voices among themselves. Jesus looks to see whether there is anyone He knows. But He does not see Quintillian or Alexander, the soldier.

They are now in the Temple, in the not very sacred swarm of the first yards, where are merchants and money-changers. Jesus looks and quivers with indignation. He turns pale and walks so stately that He seems to be taller in stature.

The Iscariot tempts Him: « Why do You not repeat the holy gesture? See? They have forgotten... and there is desecration once again in the House of God. Do You not grieve at that? Are You not rising against them? » Judas' dark handsome face, which is ironical and false notwithstanding every effort he makes to avoid it appearing so, is even vulpine, as he says those words, bending a little, as if he were paying respectful homage, looking Him up and down.

« It is not the hour. But all that will be purified. And for ever!... » says Jesus resolutely.

Judas smiles a little and comments: « The "for ever" of men!! It's very precarious, Master! You can see!... »

Jesus does not reply to him, intent as He is on greeting from afar Joseph of Arimathea, who is passing by enveloped in pompous robes, followed by other people.

They say the ritual prayers and then go back to the Court of the Gentiles, under the porches of which many people have gathered.

The proselytes, previously met in the street, have followed Jesus all the time. They have taken the sick people with them and

have now laid them in the shade of the porches, near Jesus. Their women, who have been waiting for them here, now come slowly close. They are all veiled. But one is already sat, probably because she is ill, and her companions take her near the other sick people. More people crowd round Jesus. I can see that there is astonishment and confusion among the groups of rabbis and priests because of the open arrival and preaching of Jesus.

« Peace be with you, with each of you listening to Me! Holy Passover brings the faithful children back to the House of the Father. This blessed Passover of ours is like a mother who is thoughtful of the welfare of her children and calls them at the top of her voice, that they may come from everywhere leaving all matters pending for a greater matter. The only great and important one: to honour the Lord and Father. From that we understand that we are brothers, and the command and care to love our neighbour as ourselves derive also from that, through kind witness. Have we never met before? Did we not know each other? We did not. But if we are here, because we are the children of One Father Who wants us in His House for the Passover Banquet, then, we feel, if not with our material senses, but certainly with our superior part, that we are all equal, all brothers, who have come from One only, and thus we love one another, as if we had been brought up together. And our union of love is an anticipation of the other more perfect one that we will enjoy in the Kingdom of Heaven, under the eyes of God, all embraced by His Love: I Son of God and of Man, with you men, sons of God; I, the First-born, with you, brothers beloved beyond all human measure, to the extent that I became the Lamb for the sins of men.

But while we are enjoying our brotherly union in the House of the Father, let us think of our brothers who are far away, but still our brothers: in the Lord or through their origin. Let them be in our hearts. Let us take our absent brothers in our hearts to the holy altar. Let us pray for them, gathering their remote voices in our spirits, together with their yearning to be here. And as we collect the conscious longing of remote Israelites, let us collect also the yearning of souls belonging to men, who are not aware of having a, soul and of being the children of One Father only. All the souls in the world cry to the Most High from the prisons of their bodies. In dark prisons they moan towards the Light. Let us have mercy on them, since we are in the light of the true Faith.

Let us pray: Our Father, Who are in Heaven, may Your Name be held holy by all mankind! To know it is to set out towards holiness. Let Gentiles and heathens become aware of Your existence, o Holy Father, and let them come to You, Father, like the three wise men in days gone by but not inert, because nothing pertaining to the coming of the Redemption of the world is inert, let them come to

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You guided by the Star of Jacob, by the Morning Star, by the King and Redeemer of the stock of David, by Your Anointed Son, Who has already been offered and consecrated to be the Victim for the sins of the world.

Let Your Kingdom come to every place on the earth where You are known and loved, and where You are not yet known. And above all let it come to the three times sinners, who know You but do not love You in Your works and manifestations of Light, and endeavour to reject and suffocate the Light that came to the world, because they are souls of darkness, who prefer the works of darkness and they do not know that to suffocate the Light of the world is to offend You, because You are the Most Holy Light and the Father of all lights, beginning from the One that became Flesh and Word to bring Your Light to all men of good will.

May Your Will, Most Holy Father, be done by every heart in the world, that is, may every heart be saved, and let none be left without the fruit of the Sacrifice of the Great Victim, because that is Your Will: that man be saved and may enjoy You, Holy Father, after the forgiveness which is about to be granted.

Give us Your help, o Lord, all Your help. And give it to those who are awaiting it, to those who do not know that they are awaiting it, give it to sinners with repentance that saves, give it to heathens with the force of your rousing call, give it to unhappy people, to prisoners, to exiles, to those whose bodies or spirits are diseased, give it to everybody, as You are Everything, and the time of Mercy has come.

Forgive, o Good Father, the sins of Your children. Forgive the sins of Your people, which are the gravest, the sins of those who want to persist in error, whilst Your predilection love gave Light just to this people. And forgive those who are brutalised by corrupt paganism that teaches vice, and are drowned in the idolatry of such dull mephitic heathenism, whereas there are valuable souls among them, whom You love having created them. We forgive, I am the first to forgive, so that You may forgive, and we implore Your protection over the weakness of men, that You may free Your creatures from the Principle of Evil, from whom all crimes, idolatries, sins, temptations and errors come. Free them, O Lord, from the dreadful Prince, so that they may come to Your eternal Light. »

The crowd have followed this solemn prayer with great attention. Famous rabbis have also approached the group and among them there is Gamaliel, holding his bearded chin thoughtfully... A group of women has also come close to them, they are wearing mantles with a kind of hood that covers their faces. And the rabbis have moved away haughtily... Many faithful disciples have hastened there having heard that the Master had arrived; among

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them there are Hermas, Stephen, John the priest, then Nicodemus and Joseph, the inseparable two, and many friends of theirs, whom I think I have seen previously.

In the pause after the prayer of the Lord, Who becomes engrossed in thought, looking gravely austere, Joseph of Arimathea is heard saying: « Well, Gamaliel? Do you still not think that this is the word of the Lord? »

« Joseph, I was told: "These stones will shake at the sound of My words" » replies Gamaliel.

Stephen cries rashly: « Work the miracle, o Lord! Give the order, and they will tumble down! It would be a great gift, if the building collapsed and the walls of Your Faith rose in their hearts! Do that for my master! »

« Blasphemer! » shout an angry group of rabbis with some of their pupils.

« No » shouts in turn Gamaliel. « My disciple has spoken an inspired word. But we cannot accept it because the Angel of God has not yet cleansed us of our past with the live coal taken from the Altar of God... And perhaps, even if the cry of His voice » and he points at Jesus « should unhinge these doors, we would not yet believe... » He lifts the hem of his wide snow-white mantle and pulls it over his head, almost covering his face, and goes away.

Jesus watches him go... He then resumes speaking and replies to some people who are grumbling among themselves and seem scandalised and to make their scandal more obvious, they heap insults on Judas of Kerioth, who puts up with them without reacting, but shrugs his shoulders with dissatisfied countenance.

Jesus says:

« I solemnly tell you that those who seem to be illegitimate are instead true sons, and those who are true sons become illegitimate. Listen to this parable.

Once there was a man who had to absent himself from home for a long time because of some business engagements, when his sons were still very young. From the place where he was, he used to write letters to the older sons to keep them in due respect for their father, who was far away, and to remind them of his teaching. The last son, who was born after the father had left, was still at nurse with a woman who lived far from there, in the country of the man's wife, who was not of his race. The wife died when the son was still a baby and away from home. His brothers said: "Let us leave him where he is, with our mother's relatives. Perhaps our father will forget about him and we will gain by it, as there will be one less to divide the property with, when our father dies". And they did so. The child was thus brought up by his mother's relatives, he was unaware of his father's teaching, he did not even know that he had a father and brothers and, what is worse, he bitterly

considered: "They have all disowned me as if I were illegitimate", and he even thought that he was, as he was so deeply hurt at being rejected by his father.

It so happened that when he grew up and found a situation because, embittered as he was by the above considerations, he had conceived a strong aversion also for the family of his mother, whom he deemed guilty of adultery - he went to the town where his father was. And without knowing who he was, he approached him and had the opportunity to hear him speak. His father was a wise man. As he did not receive any satisfaction from his remote sons - who by now behaved as it pleased them and were on conventional terms with their remote father, purely to remind him that they were "his" sons and therefore he should bear that in mind in his will - the old man devoted himself to giving good advice to the young people he approached in the land where he was. The young son was attracted by such righteousness, which was so fatherly for many young men and he not only approached him but he availed himself of every word of the old man, thus soothing his embittered spirit. The man was taken ill and had to decide to go back to his fatherland. And the young man said to him: "Sir, you are the only person who has spoken to me with justice, elevating my spirit. Allow me to follow you as your servant. I do not want to relapse into my previous evil state". "Come with me. You will take the place of a son, of whom I have never been able to get news". And they went back to the paternal house together.

Neither the father, nor the brothers, nor the young man himself realised that the Lord had once again gathered together those of the same blood under one roof. But the father had to shed many tears because of the sons known to him, because he found that they had forgotten his teaching, had become greedy and hard-hearted, without faith in God, but with many idolatries in their hearts: pride, avarice and lust were their gods and they would not listen to anything which was not human profit. The stranger, instead, approached the Lord more and more, and he became just, kind, loving and obedient. His brothers hated him, because their father loved him, although he was a stranger. But he forgave them and loved them, because he had understood that peace is to be found in love.

One day the father, who was disgusted with the behaviour of his sons, said: "You have taken no interest in your mother's relatives, and not even in your brother. You remind me of the behaviour of Jacob's sons towards their brother Joseph. I want to go to that country to find out about him. I may find him and be comforted by him". And he took leave both of the sons known to him and of the young stranger, whom he gave a sum of money that he might go back to the place from which he had come and start a little business

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there.

When he arrived in the country of his dead wife, her relatives told him that the forsaken son had changed his original name Moses into Manasseh, because by his birth he had really made his father forget that he was a just man, as he had abandoned his child.

"Do not do me wrong! I was told that all traces of the boy had been lost, and I did not even hope to find any of you. But tell me. What is he like? Has he grown into a strong man? Is he like his mother who died in giving birth to him? Is he kind? Does he love me?".

"He is strong, indeed, and he is as handsome as his mother was beautiful, but his eyes are dark. And on his side he has the same birthmark as his mother. And he has a slight lisp, like you. He was grown up when he left here, exacerbated by his fate, as he doubted his mother's modesty and he bore you ill-will. He would have been kind if he had had no ill-will in his soul. He went across mountains and rivers as far as Trapetius to... "

"Did you say Trapetius? In Synopy? Tell me! I was there and I met a young man with a slight lisp, he was alone and sad, and he was so kind although he appeared to be rather harsh. Was it him? Tell me!"

"Perhaps it was. Look for him. On his right hand side he has a dark birthmark in relief, as your wife had".

The man departed at once, hoping to find the stranger in his house. But he had left to go back to the colony of Synopy. And the man followed him... He found him. He made him go to his house to examine his side. He identified him. He fell on his knees praising God Who had restored his son to him, a son who was much better than the others who were becoming more and more brutish, whereas this one had become more and more holy during the months which had intervened. And he said to his good son: "You will have the share of your brothers because, without being loved by anyone, you have become more just than they are".

Was it not fair? It was. I solemnly tell you that those are true sons of God who, although rejected by the world, despised, hated, insulted, forsaken as if they were illegitimate children, considered a disgrace and calamity, know how to surpass the sons who grew up at home but rebelled against its laws. The fact that one comes from Israel does not entitle one to enter Heaven, neither is that destiny guaranteed by the fact that one is a Pharisee, a scribe or a doctor. It is necessary to have good will and follow the Doctrine of love generously, becoming new in it and children of God in spirit and truth through it.

You, who are listening to Me, must bear in mind that many who feel safe in Israel will be supplanted by those whom they consider publicans, prostitutes, Gentiles, pagans and galley-slaves. The

Kingdom of Heaven belongs to those who can put new vigour and faith into their lives by accepting Truth and Love. »

Jesus turns round and goes towards the group of sick proselytes. « Can you believe what I said? » He asks in a loud voice.

« Yes, Lord! » they reply in chorus.

« Do you want to accept Truth and Love? »

« Yes, Lord. »

« If I gave you nothing but that, would you be satisfied? »

« Lord, You know what we need most. Give us Your peace and eternal Life above all. »

« Stand up and go and praise the Lord! You are all cured in the holy Name of God. »

And He quickly turns His steps towards the nearest gate, mingling in the crowds who have filled up Jerusalem, before the excitement and amazement in the Court of Pagans becomes a delirious search for Him.

The bewildered apostles lose sight of Him. Only Marjiam, who never let go the hem of His mantle, is running happily beside Him and says: « Thank You so much, Master! Thanks, on behalf of John! I wrote everything while You were speaking. I have only to add the miracle. Oh! It's wonderful! Just for him! It will make him so happy!... »

364. At Gethsemane and Bethany.

3rd January 1946.

Jesus enters the quiet green Garden of Gethsemane.

Marjiam is still with Him and he laughs thinking of how anxiously Peter must be rushing to join them. He says: « Oh! Master! I wonder how he must be grumbling! And if You had gone on to Bethany instead of stopping here, he would be in a desolate state. »

Jesus also smiles looking at the youth and He replies: « Yes. He will overwhelm Me with his moaning. But it will teach him to be more careful the next time. While I was speaking, he was not paying attention, but talking to other people... »

« There were asking him questions, Lord » says Marjiam, who no longer laughs, but tries to justify Peter.

« One can make a gesture with good grace that one will reply later, when the Word of the Lord has finished speaking. Remember that, for your future life, when you will be a priest. You must exact the greatest respect while you teach and in the place where you teach. »

« But then, Lord, it will be poor Marjiam who will be speaking... »

« It does not matter. It is always God Who speaks through the lips of His servants, in the hours of their ministry. And as such He is to be listened to in silence and with respect. »

Marjiam pulls a wry face, which is expressive of his internal feeling.

Jesus notices it and says: « Are you not convinced? Why such an expression? Speak, son, without any fear. »

« My Lord, I was just wondering whether God is on the lips and in the hearts of His priests at present, and I wag terrorised at the thought that future priests may be like them... And I concluded saying that... many priests make the Lord cut a poor figure... I have certainly committed a sin... But they are so nasty and greedy, so arid... that... »

« Do not judge. But remember your sensation of disgust. Bear it in mind in future. And with all your strength avoid being like those who disgust you and ensure that those under your direction are not like them either. Make the evil you see be useful for a good purpose. Every action and piece of knowledge must be changed into good through righteous judgement and will. »

« Oh! Lord! Before we go into the house, which is already in sight, please reply to another question! You do not deny that priests at present are faulty. You tell me not to judge. But You judge. And You can do so. And You judge with justice. Now listen, Lord, to my question. When priests of the present speak of God and of religion, we know what the majority of them are like, but I am referring to the worst among them, are we to listen to them as being truthful? »

« Yes, My son, always. Out of respect for their mission. When they perform actions pertaining to their ministry, they are no longer Annas, a man, or Sadoc, a man, and so forth. They are "the priest". Always separate poor humanity from ministry. »

« But if they act even so badly... »

« God will provide. And then!... Listen, Marjiam! There is no man entirely good or entirely wicked. And no one is so entirely good as to be entitled to judge his brothers as being completely wicked. We must bear in mind our own faults, and set against them the good qualities of those we want to judge, we shall then have the right measure for a charitable judgement. I have not yet found a completely wicked man. »

« Not even Doras, Lord? »

« Not even him, because he is an honest husband and a loving father. »

« Not even Doras' father? »

« He, too, was an honest husband and a loving father. »

« But he was nothing but that! »

« He was nothing but that. But in that respect he was not wicked. So he was not totally wicked. »

« Is Judas not wicked either? »

« No. »

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« But he is not good. »

« He is not totally good as he is not totally wicked. Are you not convinced of what I am saying? »

« I am convinced that You are totally good and that You are completely devoid of wickedness. Yes, I am persuaded that You are so. So much so, that You never accuse anyone... »

« Oh! My dear son! If I uttered the first syllable of a word of accusation, you would all assail the person accused, like wild beasts!... I prevent you from doing so, so that you may not get stained with the sin of rash judgement. Try to understand Me, Marjiam. It is not the question that I do not see evil, where there is evil, or that I do not see the mixture of good and evil in some people. Neither it is the question that I do not understand whether a soul rises above or falls below the level to which I led it. It has nothing to do with all that, son. But it is a matter of prudence to avoid lack of charity in you. And I will always do so. Also in future, when I shall have to declare My opinion on a person. Do you not know, son, that at times a word of praise and of encouragement is of more avail than many reproaches? Do you not know that out of one hundred very bad cases, considered as relatively good, at least half become really good, because, after being helped by My word, they are assisted also by very kind people, who would otherwise shun men who are pointed out as being very wicked? Souls are to be supported, not depressed. But if I were not the first to support them and cover up their faults, pressing you to be kind to them and assist them, you would never devote yourselves to them with active clemency. Remember that, Marjiam... »

« Yes, Lord... (a deep sigh). I will remember that... (another deep sigh)... But it is so difficult in the face of certain evidence... »

Jesus stares at him. But He can only see the upper part of the forehead of Marjiam, who has lowered his face.

« Marjiam, look up. Look at Me. And tell Me: which evidence is it difficult to ignore? »

Marjiam gets mixed up... His bronzed face blushes... He replies: « Well... there are many, Lord... »

Jesus insists: « Why did you mention Judas? Because he is one "evidence". Perhaps the one which is more difficult for you to overcome... What has Judas done to you? In what did he scandalise you? » and Jesus lays His hand on the shoulder of the youth, who has blushed so much that he has become deep purple.

Marjiam looks at Him with tears shining in his eyes, he then frees himself and runs away shouting: « Judas is a desecrator!... But I cannot tell... Respect me, Lord!... » and he hides in the wood, called in vain by Jesus, Who makes a gesture of disheartened grief.

But His voice has drawn the attention of the people in the house at Gethsemane. And Jonah appears at the kitchen door with Jesus'

Mother, followed by the women disciples: Mary of Clopas, Mary Salome and Porphirea. When they see Jesus they set out to meet Him.

« Peace be with you all! Here I am, Mother! »

« All alone? Why? »

« I came ahead of the others. I left them at the Temple... But I was with Marjiam.... »

« And where is my son now? I don't see him » asks Porphirea who looks rather upset.

« He went up there... But he will be here shortly. Have you enough food for everybody? The others will soon be here. »

« No, Lord, we have not. You said that You were going to Bethany... »

« Of course... But later I thought that it was better to come here. Go quickly to get what is necessary and come back at once. I will stay here with My Mother. »

The women disciples obey at once without any objection.

Jesus remains alone with Mary and they walk slowly under the thick tree branches, through which thin needlelike sunbeams filter delineating tiny golden circles on the green grass.

« I am going to Bethany after our meal, with Simon. »

« Simon of Jonah? »

« No, Simon Zealot. And I am taking Marjiam with Me... » Jesus becomes silent and pensive.

Mary notices and asks: « Has Marjiam displeased You? »

« No, Mother. On the contrary! What makes You think so? »

« Why are You pensive?... Why were You calling him so insistently? And why did he leave You? Why did he run away from You as if he were ashamed? He did not even come to greet his mother and Me! »

« The boy ran away because of a question of Mine ».

« Oh!... » Mary is deeply astonished. She is silent for a short while, then She whispers, as if She were talking to Herself: « The couple in the Earthly Paradise ran away after their sin, when they heard the voice of God... But we must understand the boy, Son. He is growing into a man... and perhaps... Satan bites every man, Son » says Mary in a pitiful imploring voice...

Jesus looks at Her and says: « How motherly You are! You are the "Mother"! But do not think that the boy has sinned. On the contrary, I assure You that he is suffering because he has been hurt by a striking disclosure. He is pure and very good... I will take him with Me today, so that he may realise, without being told, that I understand him. Words would be of no use, and in any case I would not be able to find any which could justify the desecration of innocence. » Jesus utters the last words in a severe voice.

« Oh! Son! Is it as bad as that? I will not ask You any name. But if

any of us was able to upset the boy, it could only be one... What a demon! »

« Let us go and look for Marjiam, Mother. He will not run away from You. »

They go and find him behind a hawthorn bush.

« Were you gathering flowers for Me, My dear son? » asks Mary going towards him and embracing him...

« No, but I was longing for You » says Marjiam with his face still wet with tears.

« And I have come. Let us go now, because today you are going to Bethany with My Jesus! And you must be dressed properly. »

Marjiam's face shines with joy, as he has already overcome his embarrassment, and he says: « Just He and I? »

« And Simon Zealot. »

Marjiam, who is still a boy, leaps for joy and runs out of his hiding place and falls on Jesus' chest. He is excited.

But Jesus smiles and encourages him saying: « Go and see whether your father has arrived. » And while Marjiam runs away, Jesus remarks: « He is still a child, although so sensible in thought. It is a real crime to upset his heart. But I will take the necessary action » and He walks towards the house with Mary.

Before they arrive there they see Marjiam running back towards them. « Master... Mother... There are some people... some of those who were in the Temple... The proselytes... There is a woman... A woman who wants to see You, Mother... She says that she met You in Bethlehem... Her name is Naomi. »

« I met so many women, then! But let us go... »

They arrive at the little opening where the house is. A group of people are waiting for Jesus and as soon as they see Him they prostrate themselves. But a woman stands up at once and runs towards Mary throwing herself at Her feet and calling Her by Her name.

« Who are you? I do not remember you. Stand up. »

The woman stands up and is about to speak when the apostles arrive panting.

« Lord, why did You do that? We have been running about Jerusalem like crazy people. We thought that You had gone to Johanna's or to Annaleah's... Why did You not remain with us? » they ask rather confusedly.

« Since we are now all together, there is no sense in explaining why. Let this woman speak in peace. »

They all gather round her to listen to her.

« You do not remember me, o Mary of Bethlehem. But for thirty-one years I have remembered Your name and Your face as the symbols of mercy. I had come from far, too, from Perga, because of the Edict. And I was pregnant. But I was hoping to get back home in time. My husband was taken ill on the way and he languished and

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died in Bethlehem. I gave birth to my child twenty days before he died. And my crying pierced the sky and desiccated my breast and turned my milk into poison. And both my son and I became covered with blisters... And we were thrown into a cavern and left there to die... Well... You were the only one who came cautiously, now and again, for a full month, and You brought us food and treated our sores, weeping with me and suckling my child, who owes his life to You... You risked being stoned because they called me the "leper woman"... Oh! My sweet star! I have not forgotten that. I went away when I was cured. And at Ephesus I heard of the slaughter. I looked for You for such a long time. I could not believe that You had been killed with Your Son during that dreadful night. But I never found You. Last summer a man from Ephesus heard Your Son, he found out who He was, he followed Him for some time and was with Him and with other people at the Tabernacles... And when he came back, he told me. And I came to see You, Holy Mother, before I die. I came to bless You for every drop of milk You gave my John, depriving Your blessed Son of it... » The woman is weeping, in a respectful attitude, with her head slightly bent, holding Mary's arms with her hands...

« One should never refuse to feed a baby, sister. And... »

« Oh! no. I cannot be Your sister! You are the Mother of the Saviour, and I was a poor forlorn woman, far from her house, a widow with a suckling, whose breast was as dry as a torrent in summer... I would have died without You. You gave me everything and I was able to go back to my brothers, who are merchants in Ephesus, thanks to You. »

« We were two mothers, two poor mothers, with two babies, in the wide world. It was your grief to be a widow, and Mine to be pierced because of My Son, as old Simeon told me in the Temple. I only did my duty as a sister by giving you what you no longer had. Is your son alive? »

« He is over there. And Your holy Son cured him this morning. May He be blessed for that! » And she prostrates herself before the Saviour shouting: « John, come and thank the Lord. »

A man, of the same age as Jesus, leaves his companions and comes forward. He is strong and his face is honest, even if he is not handsome. But the expression of his deep eyes is beautiful.

« Peace to you, brother of Bethlehem. Of what disease did I cure you? »

« Of blindness, Lord. I had lost one eye, and I was about to lose the other one. I was the head of the synagogue, but I could no longer read the sacred rolls. »

« You will now read them with greater faith. »

« No, Lord. I will now read You. I want to remain with You as one of Your disciples, without setting up a claim for the milk that I

sucked from the breast that nourished You. The days of one month are nothing and cannot create any tie, but the mercy of Your Mother in the past and Yours this morning are everything. »

Jesus addresses the woman: « And what do you say? »

« That my son will belong to You twice. Accept him, Lord. And the dream of poor Naomi will be fulfilled. »

« Very well. You will belong to the Christ. » And turning towards His apostles He says: « Receive your companion in the name of the Lord. »

The proselytes are elated with emotion. All the men would like to remain, but Jesus says firmly: « No. You will remain what you are. Go back to your homes, preserve your faith and wait for the hour to be called. And may the Lord be always with you. Go. »

« Shall we find You here again? » they ask.

« No. Like birds that fly from branch to branch, I move around without resting. You will not find Me here. I have no itinerary and no dwelling place. But if it is just, we shall meet again and you will hear Me. Go. Let the woman stay with the new disciple. »

And He enters the house followed by the women and the apostles who are deeply moved and comment on the episode which they ignored so far, and on Mary's sublime charity.

And Jesus goes to Bethany at a good pace. Simon Zealot and Marjiam are beside Him. They are both very happy to have been chosen for that visit.

Marjiam, who is now in better spirits, asks many questions about the woman who came from Ephesus and whether Jesus was aware of the fact.

« I did not know. The kind actions of My Mother are countless and are done in such mild silence that they are generally unknown. »

« But the episode is really beautiful » says the Zealot.

« Yes, so much so that I want to let John of Endor know. What do You think, Master? Shall we find his letters at Bethany? »

« I am almost certain that we shall. »

« We should find also the woman who was cured of leprosy » remarks the Zealot.

« Yes. She complied with the precepts faithfully. But the time of her purification must now be over. »

Bethany appears on its tableland. They pass in front of the house where once there were peacocks, flamingoes and stilt-birds. The house is now closed and forsaken. Simon notices it.

But his remark is- interrupted by the cheerful greeting of Maximinus, who appears at the gate. « Oh! Holy Master! How much happiness in so much grief! »

« Peace to you. Why grief? »

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« Because Lazarus is suffering terribly with his ulcerated legs. And we do not know what to do to relieve his pain. But he will feel better, at least spiritually, when he sees You. »

They go into the garden and while Maximinus runs ahead, they walk slowly towards the house.

Mary of Magdala runs out shouting adoringly: « Rabboni » and she is followed more calmly by Martha. They both look very pale like people who have suffered and lost sleep.

« Stand up. Let us go to Lazarus at once. »

« Oh! Master! Master, You can do everything, cure my brother! » implores Martha.

« Yes, good Master! He suffers more than he can bear! He is worn out and he groans with pain. He will certainly die, if he continues so. Have mercy on him, Lord! » urges Mary.

« I am full of mercy. But the time of miracle has not yet come for him. Let him be strong and be strong with him. Help him to do the will of God. »

« Ah! Do You mean that he must die?! » asks Martha moaning and weeping.

And Mary, whose eyes are shining with tears and love, a double love, for Jesus and her brother, exclaims: « Oh! Master, but in this way You prevent me from following and serving You, and You prevent my brother from enjoying my resurrection. Do You not want Lazarus' house to rejoice because of a resurrection? »

Jesus looks at her smiling kindly and wittily and He says: « Just for one? One only? Come on! You do not think much of Me if you think that I can do one thing only! Be good and strong. Let us go. And do not weep like that. You would dispirit him with grievous suspicion. » And He sets outs ahead of them.

In order to nurse Lazarus more comfortably, they have placed him in a room near the library, opposite the dining hall. Maximinus shows Him the door, but lets Jesus go in alone.

« Peace to you, Lazarus, My dear friend! »

« Oh! Holy Master! Peace to You. There is no more peace for me, for my body. And my soul is depressed. I am suffering so much, Lord! Give me the dear order: "Lazarus, come out" and I will rise completely cured to serve You... »

« I will give it to you, Lazarus. But not now » replies Jesus embracing him.

Lazarus is very thin and yellowish, with deep-set eyes. He is clearly very ill and weak. He weeps like a child showing his bluish swollen legs, with sores, which I think are varicose and are bleeding in several parts. He perhaps hopes that by showing Jesus the dreadful situation, He may be moved and work the miracle. But Jesus covers the sores delicately with the linen bandages sprayed with balm.

3-1796

« Have you come to stay here? » asks Lazarus disappointedly.

« No, but I will come here frequently. »

« What? Are You not spending Passover with me this year either? I made them bring me here on purpose. At the Feast of the Tabernacles You promised me that You would stay with me for a long time after the Dedication... »

« And I will. But not now. Shall I annoy you if I sit here, on the edge of your bed? »

« Oh! no. On the contrary the coolness of Your hand seems to mitigate the heat of my fever. Why are You not staying, Lord? »

« Because as you are tormented by sores, I am tormented by enemies. Although Bethany is considered to be within the limits for the Supper for everybody, in My case it would be considered a sin, if I celebrated Passover here. Everything I do is considered sinful by the Sanhedrin and the Pharisees... »

« Ah! the Pharisees! That is true! But in my house, then... At least that! »

« Of course! But I will mention it at the last moment, as a precaution. »

« Yes! Do not trust them. Everything went well with John. You know? Ptolmai came yesterday with other people and he brought some letters for You. My sisters have them. But where are Martha and Mary? Are they not doing the honours of the house to You? » Lazarus is restless like many sick people.

« Do not worry. They are outside with Simon and Marjiam. I came with them. And I do not need anything. I will call them. » And He calls those who had wisely remained outside.

Martha goes out and comes back with two rolls which she hands to Jesus. In the meantime Mary informs them that a servant of Nicodemus has said that he has come ahead of his master, who is coming with Joseph of Arimathea. And at the same time Lazarus remembers a woman who « came yesterday in Your name » he says.

« Ah! Yes! Do you know who she is? »

« She told us. She is the daughter of a rich man from Jericho, who went to Syria many years ago, when he was young. He called her Anastasica in remembrance of the flower of the desert. However, she would not reveal the name of her husband » explains Martha.

« It is not necessary. He repudiated her and thus she is only "the disciple". Where is she? »

« She was tired and she is sleeping. She had a hard time during the last days and nights. If You wish so, I will call her. »

« No. Let her sleep. I will see to her tomorrow. »

Lazarus looks at Marjiam admiringly. Marjiam is on tenterhooks. He would like to know the contents of the rolls. Jesus notices it and opens them. Lazarus says: « What? Does he know? »

« Yes, he does, as well as the others, with the exception of

Nathanael, Philip, Thomas and Judas... »

« You did the right thing in not letting him know » exclaims Lazarus. « I have many doubts and fears... »

« I am not unwise, My dear friend » says Jesus interrupting him and He reads the rolls and then He relates the main pieces of news, that is, that the two have settled down, that the school is thriving and that everything would be proceeding very well, if John's health were not declining. But He can say no more because they are informed of the arrival of Nicodemus and Joseph.

« May God protect You, Master! Always, as this morning! »

« Thank you, Joseph. And you, Nicodemus, were you not there? »

« No, I was not. But I heard that You had arrived and I thought I should come to Lazarus's house, as I was almost certain that I would find You here. And Joseph joined me. »

They speak of the events of the morning, standing around the bed of Lazarus, who is greatly interested in them and seems relieved of his suffering.

« But Gamaliel, Lord! Did You hear him? » asks Joseph of Arimathea.

« Yes, I did. »

Nicodemus says: « I instead say: But Judas of Kerioth, Lord! After You left I found him shouting like a demon in the middle of a group of disciples of the rabbis. He was accusing and defending You at the same time. And I am sure that he was convinced that he was doing the right thing. They wanted to find fault with You, and were certainly instigated to do so by their teachers. He refuted their accusations heatedly saying: "My Master has one fault only! He does not enhance His power enough. He misses good opportunities. He wearies good people with His excessive meekness. He is King! And He must act as a King. You treat Him as a servant because He is so meek. He ruins Himself by being nothing but meek. The only thing that counts with you, vile cruel people, is the lash of absolute violent power. Oh! why can I not make a violent Saul of Him!" »

Jesus shakes His head without saying anything.

« And yet, he loves You in his own way » remarks Nicodemus.

« What a disconcerting man! » exclaims Lazarus.

« Yes. You are right. Although I have been with him for two years, I do not understand him yet » confirms the Zealot.

Mary of Magdala stands up with the majesty of a queen and in her beautiful voice she proclaims: « I have understood him more than anybody else: he is abomination placed close to Perfection. And there is nothing else to be said » and she goes out to perform a task and takes Marjiam with her.

« Perhaps Mary is right » says Lazarus.

« I think so, too » says Joseph.

3-1798

« And what do You think, Master? »

« I say that Judas is a "man". As Gamaliel is. A limited man close to infinite God. Man is so limited in thought, that unless he breathes in a supernatural atmosphere, he can accept one idea only, with which he becomes encrusted and remains for ever. And he does so even against evidence, stubbornly and obstinately, even out of faith in what has struck him most. Gamaliel, after all, has faith, like few people in Israel, in the Messiah, Whom he recognised and of Whom he got a glimpse in a Child. And he is faithful to the words of that Child... And the same applies to Judas. Saturated as he is with the Messianic idea, as most people in Israel entertain it, and in which he was confirmed by the first manifestation he had of Me, he sees and wants to see Christ as king. An earthly powerful king... and he is faithful to such opinion. Oh! How many, even in future, will ruin themselves because of an erroneous concept of faith, stubborn against reason! But what do you think? That it is easy to follow truth and justice in everything? What do you think? That it is easy to reach salvation just because one is Gamaliel or the apostle Judas? No. I solemnly tell you that it is easier for a boy, for a common believer to be saved, than it is for one elevated to a special task or mission. Generally the pride of their vocation overwhelms those who are called to a special destiny, and such pride opens the door to Satan and rejects God. It is easier for stars to fall than it is for stones. The Cursed One strives to put stars out and he insinuates himself crookedly to lever up the chosen ones and thus overturn them. If a thousand or ten thousand men fall into common errors, their ruin effects them only. But if one appointed to a special destiny falls and becomes the instrument of Satan instead of God's, his voice instead of "mine", his disciple instead of "mine", then the ruin is much greater and may even bring about deep heresies, which injure countless souls. The good I give will bear much good if it falls on humble ground, which will remain humble. But if it falls on proud ground or which becomes proud because of the gift received, then the good turns into evil. Gamaliel was granted one of the first manifestations of the Christ. It was to be his early call to the Christ. That is why he is deaf to My Voice calling him. Judas was granted to be an apostle: one of the twelve apostles among the thousands of men in Israel. It was to be his sanctification. But what will it be?... My friends, man-is the eternal Adam... Adam had everything. Everything except one thing. He wanted that one. And if man would only remain Adam! Very often he becomes Lucifer. He has everything except divinity. He wants that. He wants the supernatural to astonish, to be applauded, feared, known, celebrated... And in order to have something which God only can give gratuitously, he embraces Satan, who is the Monkey

3-1799

of God and gives simulated supernatural gifts. Oh! How horrible is the fate of those demons! I leave you, My friends. I will withdraw for a little while. I need to concentrate on God... »

Jesus, Who is quite upset, goes out... Those who are left: Lazarus, Joseph, Nicodemus and the Zealot, look at one another.

« Did you notice how upset He was? » Joseph asks Lazarus in a low voice.

« I did. He seemed to be seeing a dreadful sight. »

« What can be worrying Him? » asks Nicodemus.

« He only and the Eternal Father know » replies Joseph.

« Do you know what it is, Simon? »

« No. He has certainly been depressed for months. »

« May God save Him! But hatred is certainly growing. »

« Yes, Joseph. Hatred is growing... I am afraid that Hatred will soon overcome Love. »

« Don't say so, Simon! If that must happen I will no longer ask to be cured! It is better to die than watch the most dreadful error. »

« The most dreadful sacrilege, you should say, Lazarus... »

« And yet... Israel is quite capable of that. It is ready to repeat the gesture of Lucifer by going to war with the Blessed Lord » says Nicodemus with a sigh.

Sad silence follows, as if each of them had a lump in his throat... It is getting dark in the room where four honest people are meditating on future criminals.

365. Letters from Antioch.

22nd January 1946.

Jesus has left Bethany together with those who were with Him, that is, Simon Zealot and Marjiam. But they have been joined by Anastasica, who is completely covered by her veil and is walking beside Marjiam, while Jesus is a little behind them with Simon. The two couples are speaking while walking. They are talking on their own of what is closest to their hearts.

Anastasica says to Marjiam, continuing on the same subject of their conversation: « I am dying to meet Her. » The woman is perhaps speaking of Eliza of Bethzur. « Believe me, I was not so deeply moved when I got married or when I was declared a leper. How shall I greet Her? »

And Marjiam with a kind smile, which is grave at the same time, replies: « Oh! with Her true name! Mother! »

« But I do not know Her! Is that not too familiar? After all, who am I, as compared with Her? »

« What I was last year. Nay, you are much more than I was! I was a poor, dirty, frightened, coarse little orphan. And yet from the very first moment She always called me son and She has been a

real mother to me. Last year I was trembling with excitement waiting to see Her. But when I saw Her, I no longer trembled. I no longer suffered from the terror that had remained in my blood since I had seen, with my eyes of a boy, first the fury of nature which destroyed my house and family completely and later... and later, still with my eyes of a child, I had to see how man can be more cruel than jackals and vampires... And I trembled... I wept... all the time... and I felt here a painful sensation of fear, of grief, of hatred, of everything... In a few months I became acquainted with all the evil, sorrow and cruelty there is in the world... And I could not believe that there was still kindness, love, protection... »

« How? When the Master took you?!... And when you were among His disciples, who are so good?! »

« I still trembled, sister... and I still hated. Oh! It took me a long time to be convinced that I was not to be afraid... And it took even longer to be able not to hate those who had made my soul suffer by acquainting it with what man can be: a demon clad as a beast. One does not suffer without long lasting consequences, particularly when one is a child... A mark is left, because a child's heart is still tender and warm with the kisses of his mother and it hungers more for kisses than for bread. And instead of kisses he receives blows... »

« Poor child! »

« Yes. Poor. So poor! I no longer had any hope in God or respect for men... I was afraid of man. Even when I was close to Jesus or in Peter's arms, I was afraid... I used to say: "Is it possible? Oh! This will not last. They will get tired of being good, too... And I was longing to be with Mary. A mother is always a mother, is she not? And in fact, when I saw Her, when I was in Her arms, I was no longer afraid. I understood that my past was over and that from hell I had come to paradise... When I saw that they were forgetting about me and leaving me aside, I was upset for the last time... I always suspected mischief. And I cried. Oh! How lovingly She embraced me then. I never mourned my mother's death again since that moment and I did not tremble any more... Mary is kindness and peace for unhappy people... »

« And I need kindness and peace, too... » says the woman with a sigh.

« And you will shortly have peace. See the greenery down there? That is where it is hidden, in the house at Gethsemane. »

« And will Eliza be there as well? What shall I say to them. What will they say to me? »

« I do not know whether Eliza is there. She was ill. »

« Oh! She will not die?! If she did, who would accept me as a daughter? »

« Be not afraid. He said: "You will have a mother and a home".

3-1801

And that is what will happen. Let us walk a little quicker. I cannot restrain myself when I am near Mary. »

They quicken their steps and I can no longer hear them speak.

The Zealot notices that they are almost running along the crowded road and he says to Jesus: « They look like brother and sister. See how friendly they are. »

« Marjiam is good company for anybody. It is a difficult virtue and it is so necessary for his future mission. I am taking care to increase such favourable disposition in him, because it will be very useful to him. »

« You are training him according to Your own taste. Is that right, Master? »

« Yes. His age allows Me to do so. »

« And yet, You were able to mould also old John Felix... »

« Yes. Because he let Me destroy him and re-create him completely. »

« That is true. I have noticed that the greatest sinners, once they turn, exceed in justice us, who are relatively guilty. Why? »

« Because their contrition is proportionate to their sin. Immense. Consequently it crushes them under the millstone of sorrow and humility. "I have my sin constantly in mind" says the psalmist. That keeps their spirits humble. It is a good remembrance when it is joined to hope and trust in Mercy. Half perfections, and even less than half, very often come to a stand, because they are not spurred by the remorse of having committed grave sins and by the necessity of making amends in order to proceed towards true perfection. They stagnate like still waters and they are satisfied because they are clear. But even the clearest water will become slimy and foul, unless motion purifies it of the particles of dust and rubble that the wind blows into it. »

« And are the imperfections, which we allow to exist and persist in us, dust and rubble? »

« Yes, Simon. You are still too stagnant. Your movement towards perfection is almost imperceptible. Do you not know that time flies? Do you not consider that in the time which is left, you ought to strive to become perfect? If you do not possess the strength of perfection, to be achieved by means of a firm will in the time which is still left, how will you be able to resist the storm that Satan and his followers will raise against the Master and His Doctrine? The day will come when you will be completely bewildered and you will ask yourselves: "Why were we utterly overwhelmed, since we were with Him for three years?". The answer is within you, in your behaviour! He who strives more to become perfect in the time still left, will be more able to remain faithful. »

« Three years... So... Oh! my Lord!... So shall we be losing You

3-1802

next spring? »

« These trees have their little fruits and I will taste them when they are ripe. But after the fruit of this year, I shall not taste the new crop... Do not be distressed, Simon. Distress is sterile. Strengthen yourself in justice in order to be able to be faithful at the dreadful moment. »

« Yes, I will. With all my strength. Can I tell the others as well? So that they may be prepared, too? »

« Yes, you can. But only those with a strong will, will do it. »

« And what about the others? Will they be lost? »

« No. But they will be severely tried by their attitude. They Will be like one who thought that he was strong and finds himself knocked down and defeated. They will be dumbfounded and humiliated. Humble, at last! Because, believe Me, Simon, if there is no humility, it is not possible to proceed. Pride is the stone on which Satan's pedestal stands. Why keep it in your hearts? Is that dreadful being a pleasant master? »

« No, Master, he is not. »

« And yet you keep in your hearts the supporting point, the chair for his lessons. You are full of pride. You have it for everything and for every reason. You are even proud of being "My disciples". But, how silly of you, does the comparison of what you are with Him Who chose you, not cure you? Not because I called you, you will be saints. It will depend on what you have become after My call. Holiness is a building that each one builds by himself. Wisdom can teach him the method and plan. But it is up to you to do the material work. »

« That is true. So, we shall not be lost. After the trial, will we be more holy because we are humble?... »

« Yes. » A short severe « yes ».

« Is that how You say it, Master? »

« Yes, that is how I say it. »

« You would like us to be holy before the trial... »

« Yes, I would, with regard to everybody.- »

« Everybody Shall we not be all equal in the trial? »

« Neither before it, nor during it, nor after it you will be equal. And yet I gave everyone the same word... »

« And the same love, Master. We are very guilty towards You... »

Jesus sighs...

The Zealot, after a rather long silence, is about to speak. But the apostles and disciples who have met Marjiam at the lower slopes of Gethsemane, are hurrying towards them, and Simon is silent while Jesus replies to the greeting of everyone and then goes towards the olive-grove and the house, walking beside Peter.

Peter informs Him that they have been on the look-out since dawn, that Eliza is still ill in Johanna's house, that some Pharisees

3-1803

had come the previous evening, that... that... a bundle of rather confused news, and at last the question: « And what about Lazarus? », to which Jesus replies in detail. Peter, who is very curious, cannot refrain from asking: « And... nothing, Lord? No... news? »

« Yes. You will be told in good time. Where is Marjiam with the woman? Already in the house? »

« Oh! no. The woman did not dare to go on. She is sitting on the roadside waiting for You. Marjiam... Marjiam... disappeared. Has he run to the house? »

« Let us quicken our steps. »

But no matter how much they hurry, they do not arrive at the house before Mary with Her sister-in-law, Salome, Porphirea, the wives of Bartholomew and Philip, have come out to venerate Him.

Jesus greets them from afar and turns His steps towards the place where Anastasica is sitting humbly, He takes her by the hand and leads her towards His Mother and the women. « Here is the flower of this Passover, Mother. One only this year. May it be pleasing to You because I brought it. »

The woman has knelt down. Mary bends and raises her saying: « Daughters are in the hearts not at the feet of their mothers. Come, My daughter. Let us become familiar with our faces, as our souls already know one another. Here are some of our sisters. Some more will be coming. Let it be a kind family full of love for all its members and full of holiness for the glory of God. »

The women disciples kiss one another lovingly and exchange greetings. They enter the house and go up to the terrace, which is surrounded by the white blossoms of hundreds of olive-trees. The groups part: Jesus with the men, the women with the newcomer. Susanna, who had gone to town, comes back with her husband. Johanna arrives with the children. Annaleah appears with her angelical face; and Jairus, who was with the disciples while they were running towards Jesus, comes back with his daughter, who joins the group of the women, near Mary, Who caresses her.

There is peace and love in the gathering. Then the sun sets and before dismissing those who have to go back to their own houses or to the ones where they are guests, Jesus gathers them all together to pray and blesses them. He then dismisses them and remains with those who prefer to crowd in the house at Gethsemane or to spend the night under the olive-trees, rather than go away. So the women - who remain are: Mary, Mary of Alphaeus, Salome, Anastasica, Porphirea; the men are: Jesus, Peter, Andrew, James and Judas of Alphaeus, James and John of Zebedee, Simon Zealot, Matthew and Marjiam.

Supper is soon over. Then Jesus invites His Mother and Mary of Alphaeus to go with Him and the disciples into the silent olive-grove.

3-1804

Perhaps the other women would like to go as well. But Jesus does not invite them, on the contrary He says to Salome and Porphirea: « Entertain our new sister speaking of holy things and then go to bed without waiting for us. Peace be with you. » So the three women resign themselves to their destiny.

Peter is rather sulky and he becomes silent; all the others, instead, are talking while going in group towards the rock of Jesus, future agony. They sit on its edge, facing Jerusalem, which is slowly calming down, after the confusion of the day.

« Light some branches, Peter. »

« Why? »

« Because I want to read to you what John and Syntyche have written. Since you are dissatisfied, you had better know that that is the reason why I did not let the three women come. »

« But my wife was there that evening!... »

« But it would have been impolite to exclude Salome only of the old women disciples... In any case it will give you the opportunity to give vent to your desire to speak, as you will be able to tell your prudent wife what you are now going to hear. »

Peter, rejoicing at the praise of his wife and at the permission to inform her of the secret, is no longer sulky and he busies himself lighting a bright fire, from which flames rise straight and still in the calm air.

Jesus takes out of His waist the two letters, He unfolds them and reads them in the middle of the circle of eleven attentive faces.

« "To Jesus of Nazareth honour and blessings. To Mary of Nazareth blessings and peace. To my holy brothers peace and good health. To my beloved Marjiam peace and caresses.

Tears and smiles are in my heart and on my face as I sit down to write this letter to you all. Recollections, nostalgia, hope and peace for the duty I have accomplished, are with me. All the past, which is of value to me, that is, the past, which began twelve months ago, is before me and a psalm of gratitude to God rises from my heart, as He has been too merciful towards me, a culprit. May You be blessed and with You the Holy Mother Who gave birth to You in this world, and the other mother whom I remember as mercy incarnate. And with You may Peter, John, Simon, James and Judas, and the other James, and Andrew and Matthew be blessed. And last may my dearest Marjiam be blessed, and I have taken him on my heart to bless him. May you all be blessed for what you have given me, from the moment I met you until the moment I left you! Oh! not of my own will! May God forgive those who tore me away from you! May God forgive them. And may He increase in me the strength to do it. For the time being, through His help and with Him I can -do it. But alone, no, I would not yet be able to do it, because too scorching is the injury that they did to me by tearing

3-1805

me away from true Life, from You, Most Holy Jesus. It is still too scorching, notwithstanding Your consolation is a continuous balmy shower to me... " »

Jesus glances over several lines without reading them. And He resumes: « "My life... " » but Peter, who to let the Master see, has taken a blazing branch and is holding it high, standing near Him and craning his neck to see what is written, says: « No, it is not so! Why are You not reading it, Master? You have left something out! I am an ass, but not to the extent that I cannot read slowly. I can read: "Your promises have exceeded my hope... »

« You are an awful bore! You are worse than a boy! » says Jesus smiling.

« Of course I am! I am almost old! So I am more cunning than a boy. »

« You ought to be also more prudent. »

« Prudence is good with enemies. Here we are with friends. John says something beautiful about You. And I want to know. So that I will know which way to turn in the event You should send me elsewhere, like a bale of goods. Please, read everything! Mother, Please tell Him that it is not fair to give selected news, as If it were little fish. Give us everything: seaweed, mud, small fish and exquisite fish, everything! Will you all help me! You look like dummies to me. And you make me angry! And you are laughing! »

It is almost impossible not to laugh seeing the excitement of Peter who is jumping about, like a restive colt, waving his blazing branch, heedless of the sparks falling on him.

Jesus has to give in, in order to calm him and continues to read.

« "Your promises have exceeded my hope in Your promises. Oh! Holy Master! When in that sad winter morning You promised me that You would come to comfort Your depressed disciple, I did not understand the true value of Your promise. Sorrow and man's limitation were oppressing the power of my spirit, which was too dull to be able to understand the extent of Your promise.

May You be blessed, o spiritual Visitor of my nights, which thus are not desolation and grief as I foresaw, but expectation of You, or joyful meeting with You. Night, the dread of sick people, of exiles, of lonely people, of culprits, has become for me Felix, really happy to do Your will and serve You, the waiting of the wise virgins for the arrival of the bridegroom'. My poor soul has even more. It has the blessing of being the bride awaiting her Love, who comes to the nuptial room to give her every time the joy of their first meeting and the fortifying ecstasy of their union.

Oh! my Master and Lord, while I bless You for giving me so much, I beg You to remember the other two promises that You made me. The most important one, for the very weak man I am, is not to let me be alive at the hour of Your passion. You are aware of

3-1806

my weakness! Do not let him, who for Your sake despoiled himself of hatred, do not let him put on again the thorny scorching uniform of hatred, through his hatred for Your executioners. The other promise is for Your poor disciple, who is also too weak and imperfect: be near me, as You told me, at the hour of my death. Now that I know that there is no distance for You, and that seas, mountains, rivers and the will of men cannot prevent You from giving the comfort of Your tangible presence to those whom You love, I no longer doubt that I can have You when I breathe my last. Come, Lord Jesus! Come soon to lead me to peace.

Now that I have spoken to You of my soul, I will inform You of my work.

I have many pupils, of every race and country. In order not to hurt any of them, I have divided them, and one day I teach the heathens and the next day the believers, with good profit, owing to the shortage of teachers here. I give the money I earn to the poor, whom I thus attract to the Lord. I have resumed my old name, not because I am fond of it, but out of prudence. When I am in the world, I am 'Felix'. During the hours in which I belong to Jesus, I am 'John': the grace of God. I explained to Philip that my true name was Felix and that I was called John only to be distinguished from my brothers. And he was not amazed owing to the common habit of changing names or calling people by nicknames. I hope to do a good deal of work here, to prepare thus the road for my holy brothers. If I were stronger I would like to go into the country and make Your Name known there. Perhaps I will be able to do so in early summer or when it is cooler in autumn. If I am fit, I will do so. The pure air at Antigonea, the gardens, which are so placid and beautiful, the flowers, children, little hens, the loving kindness of the gardeners and above all the deep, wise, filial fondness of Syntyche do me a lot of good. I would say that my health has improved. But Syntyche is not of the same opinion, although I only gather her opinion through the diligent continuous care she has for me, for my food, for my resting and to ensure that I do not get cold... But I do feel better. Is this perhaps not the sensation that comes from one's duty accomplished heroically? That is what Syntyche says. And I would like to know whether she is right. Because duty is a moral matter, whilst disease is a bodily matter. I would also like to know whether You come to me really or whether You just appear to my spiritual senses, but so perfectly that I cannot tell where the material reality of Your Presence ends. Dear blessed Master, Your John kneels down asking for Your blessing. Peace and blessings to Your Mother, to Mary and to the holy brothers. A kiss to Marjiam that he may remember to send me Your holy words, which are bread for the exiles working in the vineyard of the Lord".

3-1807

That is John's letter... What do you think of it? »

They all exchange their impressions... But the outstanding point is in regard to Jesus' Presence. They harass Him with questions... how it can be, whether it can be, and whether Syntyche sees, and so on...

Jesus beckons to them to be silent and He unfolds Syntyche's roll. He reads:

« "Syntyche to the Lord Jesus with all the love of which she is capable. Veneration and praise to our Blessed Mother. Gratitude and blessings to my brothers in the Lord. The embrace of his far away sister to Marjiam.

John has told You about our life, Master. He has told You very synthetically what he does and what I do in a womanly way. My little school is full of girls and I make a good spiritual profit, because I lead them to You, my Lord, speaking of the true God while we work together. In this region where so many races have mingled, there is an intricate tangle of religions. It is so intricate that... that they are nothing but impracticable religions, shreds of religions of no further use. In the middle there is the rigid uncompromising faith of Israelites, which breaks with its weight the worn out threads of the other religions without achieving anything. As John has pupils, he must act wisely. I can proceed more freely with my girls. Women are always considered inferior beings, so much so that families of different religions do not care if the girls mix in one school. It is enough if they learn the fruitful art of embroidery. And blessed be the scornful concept the world has of us women, because it allows me to widen the field of my action more and more. Our embroidery work is selling easily and rapidly, our renown is spreading, noblewomen come from afar. I thus have the opportunity of speaking to all of them of God... Oh! how even threads, which become flowers, animals, stars on our looms and on the cloth, are useful to direct souls to the Truth, if one so wishes. As I know several languages I can speak Greek to Greeks, Latin to Romans, Hebrew to Hebrews. With John's assistance I am improving my knowledge of the last language.

Mary's ointment is another means of penetration. I have made a large fresh lot of it, with the essences we have here, and I added a particle of the original ointment, to sanctify it. Ulcers and sores, wounds and chest trouble simply disappear. It is true, however, that while I rub and bandage sore parts, I continuously mention the two holy Names of Jesus and Mary. Nay, playing on the Greek name of Christ, I have called the balm: 'Anointed Myrrh'. Is it not so? Is the healthy essence of the Myrrh of God, Whose begotten Son You are, not in it, o precious Oil, which makes us kings? I very often have to stay up to prepare more fresh ointment and I would ask our Holy Mother to make some more and send it to me for the

3-1808

Feast of the Tabernacles, so that I can mix it with what the humble servant of God has made. But if I am wrong in doing so, tell me, Lord and I will stop doing it.

Dear John praises me a great deal. And what should I say about him? He endures bitter pain, but his strength is wonderful. If I did not know his secret, I would be amazed. But since that night, when coming back from a sick person, I found him in ecstasy and transfigured, and I heard his words, and I prostrated myself as I realised that You were present with Your servant, I can no longer be surprised. Perhaps some of my brothers will be amazed on hearing that I do not regret that I did not see, too. Why should I? Everything You give is good and sufficient. And each of us receives what we deserve and what we need. It is therefore right that John has You visibly, while I have You in my soul only.

Am I happy? As a woman I regret the time I spent with You and Mary. But as a soul, I am very happy, because now only I serve You, my Lord. I consider that time is nothing. I consider that obedience is money to enter Your Kingdom. I consider that to help You is a grace that exceeds even what the poor slave could have dreamed in an hour of rapture and that You have granted me to help You. I consider that although I am parted from You now, I will finally have You for all eternity. And I sing John's song as wood-larks do in springtime in the golden fields of Hellas. My girls sing it because they say that it is beautiful. I let them sing on the rhythm of the loom, which is so like the rhythm of the oar on that remote day, because I think that the mention of Your name, Mother, predisposes one to Grace.

John is asking me to add the information that he sent You a very good citizen from Antioch. His name is Nicolaus. He is his first conquest for Your flock. We sincerely hope that Nicolaus will not disappoint the high reputation we hold him in our hearts.

Bless Your servant, Lord. Bless her, Mother; bless me all, you saints, and you, too, blessed child, who are growing in wisdom near the Lord".

That is what Syntyche wrote. And she added a foot-note, unknown to John. She says: "John excels and becomes stronger only in his soul. The rest is declining notwithstanding cures. He relies much on early summer. I do not think that he will be able to do what he says. I am afraid that winter will chill his feeble life... But he is in peace. And he is sanctified by his deeds and his suffering. Support his strength with Your presence, my Lord! I ask You to subject me to every kind of pain in exchange for this gift for Your disciple. As we are sending these letters by Ptolmai, to Lazarus, I beg You to tell him and his sisters that we remember their kindness to us and that we pray constantly and ardently for them". »

Once again they all exchange their impressions.

3-1809

Andrew bends to ask Mary something and he is amazed at seeing ears on Her face. « Are You weeping? » he asks Her.

« Why are You weeping, Mother » many of them ask.

« I know why She is weeping » says Marjiam.

« Why then? »

« Because John has mentioned the Lord's death. »

« Of course! Is that true? And how does he know, when he no longer was with us, when You predicted it? »

« Because I told him to comfort him. »

« H'm! Comfort!... »

« Yes, comfort. The promise that he will not have to wait long to enter the Kingdom. He deserves it because he excelled you in will and obedience. Let us go back to the house. We will prepare our replies to be given to Ptolmai and you will add your rolls, Marjiam. »

« Ah! I see! He was writing for them!... »

« Yes. Let us go. Tomorrow we will go to the Temple... »

366. The Thursday before Passover. Morning Preliminaries.

23rd January 1946.

Dawn is breaking. Men are emulating birds, when they become active flying, working and singing in the early morning. The house at Gethsemane is awaking slowly, but it is forestalled by the Master, Who is coming back from the prayers He went out to say at daybreak, but He may have been out all night praying.

The nearby camp of the Galileans on the tableland of the Mount of Olives is slowly awaking, and shouts and calls can be heard in the clear air, and although they are dulled by distance, they are sufficiently distinct to make one understand that the pious pilgrims gathered there are about to resume the Passover ceremonies interrupted the previous evening.

The town awakes, and the clamour begins with which it is filled during these overcrowded days, with the braying of marketgardeners' donkeys, and the pressure of lamb vendors at the entrance gates, and with the touching bleating of hundreds of little lambs, which are carried on carts, pack-saddles or on shoulders to their tragic destiny, calling their mothers bleating plaintively, not knowing that they should weep because their lives have come so prematurely to an end. And the clamour increases more and more with the shuffling of feet in the streets and people calling one another from one terrace to another, or from terraces to streets and viceversa. And the noise, deadened by distance, reaches the calm valley of Gethsemane, like the roar of sea waves.

An early sunbeam strikes one of the precious domes of the Temple and makes it shine as if it were a sun descended upon the earth,

a little sun resting on a snow-white pedestal, so beautiful although so small. The men and women disciples look at the golden Spot admiringly. It is the House of the Lord! It is the Temple! To understand what that place meant to Israelites it is enough to watch them staring at it. They seem to be seeing the Most Holy Face of God flashing in the glowing gold lit by the sun. Adoration and love for their country, holy pride of being Hebrews are more clearly expressed by their looks than they could possibly be revealed by their words.

Porphirea, who has not been to Jerusalem for many years, is moved to tears and unawares presses the arm of her husband, who is showing I do not know what to her, and she leans a little against him and like a bride, in love with her bridegroom, admires him and is happy to be instructed by him.

In the meantime the other women are talking in very low voices, in monosyllables, asking one another what is to be done during the day, and Anastasica, who feels like a lost stranger, is a little aside, engrossed in her thoughts.

Mary, Who was speaking to Marjiam, sees her and approaches her embracing her waist with Her arm. « Are you feeling rather lonely, My dear daughter? You will feel better today. See? My Son is telling the apostles to go to the houses of the women disciples to inform them that they are to gather and wait for Him at Johanna's house in the afternoon. He wants to speak to us women and before doing so He will certainly give you a mother. She is very good. I have known her since I was in the Temple. Even then she acted as a mother to the younger virgins. And she will understand your heart because she has suffered very much, too. My Son cured her last year of a deadly melancholy, with which she was affected after the death of her two sons. I am telling you this so that you may know who will be loving you from now on and whom you will love. But as last year I said to Simon Peter, who was receiving Marjiam as his son, I now say to you: "Do not let this affection weaken your heart in its will to serve Jesus". If that should happen, the gift of God would be more harmful than leprosy, because it would extinguish in you the good will that one day will give you the possession of the Kingdom. »

« Do not be afraid, Mother. As for me, I will turn this affection into a flame to excite myself more and more in the service of the Saviour. I will not grow heavier in it, neither will I make Eliza dull, on the contrary we will support each other and in a holy competition, with the help of the Lord, we will fly along His way. »

While they are speaking some old and new disciples arrive from the camp of the Galileans, from the town, from houses spread along the slopes of the Mount, from the hamlet or suburb, whichever it may be, just outside the town, on one of the two roads

that from Jerusalem go to Bethany, and precisely on the longer one, which Jesus seldom takes. The last to arrive are Philip with his family, Thomas all alone and Bartholomew with his wife.

« Where are the sons of Alphaeus, Simon and Matthew? » asks Thomas not seeing them.

« They have gone ahead. The last two to Bethany, to tell the sisters to be at Johanna's house in the afternoon. The first two have gone to Johanna and Annaleah, to tell Johanna that I will be at her house this afternoon. We will meet at the third hour at the Golden Gate. In the meantime let us go and give alms to beggars and lepers. Let Bartholomew and Andrew go ahead and buy foodstuffs for them. We will follow them slowly and will stop at the suburb of Ophel, near the Gate, and later we will go to the poor lepers. »

« All of us? » ask some, who are not very enthusiastic.

« All the disciples and all the women disciples. Passover has got us all together, as it was never possible before. Let us do together what will be future duties of men and women operating in My Name. Here is Judas of Simon coming in a hurry. I am glad because want him to be with us as well. »

In fact Judas arrives panting. « Am I late, Master? It's my mother's fault. Contrary to her habit and to what I told her, she came. I found her yesterday evening in the house of a friend of ours. And this morning she kept me conversing... She wanted to come with me. But I did not let her come. »

« Why not? Does Mary of Simon perhaps not deserve to be where you are? She deserves so much more than you do. So run and get her and join us at the Temple, at the Golden Gate. »

Judas goes away without objecting. Jesus sets out, He is ahead with His apostles and disciples. The women, with Mary in the middle, are behind the men.

367. The Thursday before Passover. At the Temple.

24th January 1946.

I do not see food being distributed to the lepers of Hinnom, I only hear the apostles speak of them. But I do not think that any miracle has been worked among them, because Simon Peter says: « Cruel solitude has prevented them from believing and realising where Health is. »

They then enter the town through the Gate leading to the noisy populated suburb of Ophel.

After a few steps, Annaleah runs out joyfully from a half-open door and venerates the Master saying: « My mother has given me permission to stay with You, Lord, until evening. »

« Will Samuel not be disappointed? »

3-1812

« There is no Samuel in my life any longer, Lord. And may the Most High be thanked for that. May He grant me, however, that Samuel may not leave You, my God, as he left me. » A smile appears heroically on her young lips, while tears shine in her chaste eyes.

Jesus looks steadily at her and as a reply, He simply says: « Join the women disciples » and He resumes walking.

But Annaleah's old mother, who is older more because of her sorrows than because of her age, approaches Jesus too, stooping in a venerable but dispirited salutation, and she says: « Peace to You, Master. When can I speak to You? I am so worried!... »

« At once, woman. » And addressing those who are with Him, He says: « Remain here outside. I am going into this house for a moment » and He is about to follow the woman.

But Annaleah calls Him from the group of the women disciples, with one word only: « Master! », but how meaningful it is! And in uttering it she joins her hands, as if she were imploring...

« Be not afraid. Be in peace. Your case is in My hands and so is your secret » replies Jesus reassuringly. He then goes in quickly through the half-open door.

Outside both men and women comment curiously on the event, as they are all anxious to know...

Inside Jesus is listening to the old woman. Leaning with His back against the door, which He Himself has closed after entering, with arms folded on His chest, He is listening to the weeping mother, who informs Him of the inconstancy of her daughter's fiance, who has seized an opportunity to release himself completely from his bond... « So that Annaleah is as good as repudiated, and she will never get married now, because she stated that You do not approve of people getting married after being repudiated. But it is not so. She is still a girl! She is not giving herself to another man, because she has not been of any man. And he is guilty of cruelty. And even more. Because he wants to get married to another woman and my daughter will be considered the guilty one and the world will laugh at her. See to it, Lord, because all this is happening because of You. »

« Because of Me, woman? In what have I sinned? »

« Oh! You have not sinned. But he says that Annaleah is in love with You. And he feigns jealousy. He came here last night, but she was with You. He flew into a passion and swore that he would not marry her any more and Annaleah who arrived just then, replied to him: "You are doing the right thing. I am only sorry that you are clothing the truth with falsehood and slander. You know that one loves Jesus only with one's soul. But it is your soul that is now corrupt and is leaving the Light to follow the flesh, whilst I am leaving the flesh to follow the Light. We can no longer be of one mind

3-1813

as a married couple ought to be. You may go then, and may God watch over you". She did not shed one tear, see? Nothing that would touch the man's heart! My expectations are disappointed! She... is causing her own ruin, through frivolity. Call her, Lord and speak to her. Make her reason. Look for Samuel. He is staying with Abraham, his relative, at the third house after the Fountain of the fig-tree. Help me! But speak to her first, just now... »

« As far as speaking is concerned, I will speak to her. But you ought to thank the Lord Who is undoing a human tie, which was not promising anything good. The man is inconstant and unjust towards God and towards his woman... »

« Yes, but it is dreadful that the world should consider her guilty and You as well, only because she is Your disciple. »

« The world accuses and then forgets. Heaven instead is eternal. Your daughter will be a flower of Heaven. »

« Why did You make her live then? She would have been a flower without being lashed with slander. Oh! As You are God, call her, make her reason and then make Samuel consider... »

« Remember, woman, that not even God can crush the will and freedom of man. Samuel and your daughter are entitled to follow what they feel is good for them. Annaleah in particular is entitled... »

« Why? »

« Because she is loved by God more than Samuel is. Because she loves God more than she loves Samuel. Your daughter belongs to God! »

« No. That does not apply in Israel. A woman must get married... She is my daughter... Her wedding was giving me peace for the future... »

« Your daughter would have been in her grave for one year if I had not cured her. Who am I, according to you? »

« The Master and God. »

« And as God and Master I tell you that the Most High is entitled to His children more than anybody else, and that much is about to change in Religion and that from now on it will be possible for virgins to remain such for ever, out of love for God. Do not weep, mother. Leave your house and come with us, today. Come! My Mother is out there with other heroic mothers who have given their children to the Lord. Join them... »

« Speak to Annaleah... Try, Lord! » moans the woman sobbing.

« All right. I will do as you wish » says Jesus. And He opens the door and calls: « Mother, come in with Annaleah. »

They go in at once.

« My child, your mother wants Me to tell you to reconsider the matter. She wants Me to speak to Samuel. What shall I do? What is your opinion? »

3-1814

« You may speak to Samuel. Nay, I implore You to do so. But only because I would like him to become just upon hearing You. As far as I am concerned, You know. I beg You to give my mother the most truthful reply. »

« Have you heard, woman? »

« So which is the reply? » asks in a broken voice the old woman, who at the first words of her daughter had hoped in her repentance, but then she realised that that was not the case.

« The reply is that for one year your daughter has belonged to God and her vow will last as long as her life. »

« Oh! poor me! Which mother is more unhappy than I am?! »

Mary lets go the hand of the girl to take the woman in Her arms saying to her kindly: « Do not sin with your thought and Your tongue. It is not unhappiness, but great glory to give a child to God. You told Me one day that you were sorry that you had but one daughter, because you would have loved to have a son sacred to the Lord. You do not have a son, but an angel who will precede the Saviour in His triumph. And you say that you are unhappy? My mother spontaneously consecrated Me to the Lord from the first moment she perceived Me in her womb, having conceived Me at an old age. And she had Me for three years only. And I had her but in My heart. And yet it gave her peace, at the moment of her death, that she had given Me to the Lord... Be good now... come to the Temple to sing the praise of Him Who loves you so much as to choose your daughter as His bride. Let your heart be really wise. And true wisdom consists in putting no limitations to our generosity towards the Lord. »

The woman no longer weeps. She listens... She then makes up her mind. She takes her mantle and envelops herself in it. But passing in front of her daughter she says with a sigh: « First your disease, then the Lord... Ah! I was not to have you!... »

« No, mother. Don't say that! You never had me as you do now. Both you and God. God and you. You two only... till my death... » and she embraces her kindly saying: « Your blessing, mother! Your blessing... because I have suffered so much having to make you suffer. But God wanted me thus... »

They kiss each other, weeping. They then go out preceded by Jesus and Mary and they close the door and join the women disciples...

... « Why are we going in here, Lord? Was it not better to go in on the other side? » asks James of Zebedee.

« Because, on entering here, we shall pass in front of the Antonia. »

« And You hope... Be careful, Master!... The Sanhedrin is spying upon You » says Thomas.

« How do you know? » Bartholomew asks him.

3-1815

« It is sufficient to consider how anxious the Pharisees are to understand. I am told that they come continuously with many pretexts to watch what we do!... Why, if not to find fault with the Master? »

« You are right. So don't let us pass by the Antonia, Master. If the Romans do not see You, so much the better. »

« And the reason for that is not so much your concern for Me as your disgust for them, is that right, Bartolomai? How wise you would be if you removed such meanness from your heart! » replies Jesus, Who, however, proceeds on His way, without listening to anybody.

To go to the Antonia, they must pass through the Sixtus where the buildings of Johanna and Herod are, one close to the other. And Jonathan is at the door of Chuza's building and as soon as he sees Jesus, he informs the people in the house. Chuza comes out at once and bows to Jesus. Johanna follows him, and she is ready to join the group of the women disciples.

Chuza says: « I heard that You will be staying with us today. Grant Your servant to have You as his guest at a dinner-party. »

« Yes. Providing you will allow Me to make it a charity dinnerparty for poor and unhappy people. »

« As You wish, my Lord. Give me Your orders and I will do what You wish. »

« Thank you. Peace be with you, Chuza. »

Johanna asks: « Have You any instructions for Jonathan? He is at Your disposal. »

« I will let him have them after I have been to the Temple. Let us go, because they are waiting for us. »

Shortly afterwards they pass by the beautiful palace of cruel Herod. But it is closed, as if no one lived in it. They pass near the Antonia. The soldiers watch the little procession of the Nazarene.

They go into the Temple; while the women stop in the lower part, the men proceed to the place allocated to them. They thus reach the place where children are presented and women are purified. There is a little group of people with a young mother, watching the ceremony of the rite.

« A little child sacred to the Lord, Master! » says Andrew watching the scene.

« If I am not mistaken, she is the woman from Caesarea Philippi, the woman of the castle. She passed in front of me while we were waiting for You at the Golden Gate » says James of Alphaeus.

« Yes. And her mother-in-law and Philip's superintendent are there, too. They did not see us. But we saw them » adds Thaddeus.

And Mattheus says: « Instead we saw Mary of Simon with an old man. But Judas was not there. The woman looked very sad. She looked around worriedly. »

3-1816

« We will look for her later. Let us pray now. And you, Simon of Jonah, make the offer at the treasury on behalf of everybody. »

They pray for a long time, while people watch them and point the Master out to one another.

A short dispute, in which the shrill voice of a woman stands out, makes those who are not engrossed in prayer turn their heads round.

« If I came here to offer my son to God, I can remain a little longer to offer him to Him Who saved him for the Lord » says the shrill voice.

And nasal voices of men insist: « Women are not allowed to stop here after the rite. Go away. »

« I will, but after Him. »

« Call Him, then, and go away with Him. »

« Just a moment! Let the woman speak and explain how she can say that the Nazarene saved the child for God » says the drawling voice of a man.

« What does it matter, Jonathan of Uziel? »

« What does it matter!? There is certainly another sin here. Fresh evidence. Listen to me, woman. How did that man save your son? Will you tell us, the persevering seekers of truth? » asks mellifluously this Pharisee, who is not new to me.

« I certainly will, and with gratitude. I was in despair because the baby was born dead. I am a widow and this child is everything to me. He came and brought him back to life. »

« When? Where? »

« At Caesarea Philippi. I come from the castle of Caesarea. »

« Back to life! It was probably only a fainting-fit on the part of the child... »

« No. He was dead. My mother can tell you. And the superintendent of the castle can tell you as well. The Nazarene came and breathed into his mouth and the baby seethed and cried. »

« And where were you? »

« In bed, sir. I had just given birth to the child. »

« Oh, how horrible! »

« Ah! Anathema! »

« Impure! »

« Sacrilegious! »

« See? I was right in interrogating her. »

« You are wise, Jonathan of Uziel! How did you know? »

« I know the man. I saw Him desecrate the Sabbath in my property in the plain to satisfy His hunger... »

« Let us drive Him away from here! »

« Let us report the matter to the Princes of priests. »

« No, let us ask Him whether He has purified Himself. We cannot accuse without knowing... »

« Be quiet, Eleazar. Do not soil yourself with a silly defence. »

3-1817

young Dorcas, as she is caught in the middle of so much turmoil, bursts into tears and shouts: « Oh! do not injure Him because of me! »

But some hot-headed men have rehaced the Lord and they imperiously say to Him: « Come here and reply to us. »

The apostles and disciples are seized with anger and fear. Jesus follows calmly and solemnly those who have called Him.

« Do You recognise this woman? » they shout pushing Him into the middle of the circle which has formed round Dorcas and pointing at her as if she were a leper.

« Yes, I do. She is a young widow and mother from Caesarea Philippi. And that is her mother-in-law. And that is the superintendent of the castle. So? »

« She is accusing You of going into her room while she was still being delivered of her child. »

« That is not true, Lord! I did not say that. I said that You revived my son. And nothing else! I wanted to honour You, instead I am injuring You. Oh! Forgive me! »

Philip's superintendent intervenes to help her and he says: « It is not true. You are lying. The woman did not say that and I am witness to it, and I am ready to swear to it, and also that the Rabbi did not go into the room, but He worked the miracle standing at the door. »

« You be silent, you servant. »

« No. I will not. And I will tell Philip who respects the Rabbi more than you do, you false devotees of the Most High God. »

The subject of the dispute changes from the woman to politics and religion. Jesus is silent. Dorcas is weeping.

Eleazar, the honest guest at the banquet in the house of Ishmael, says: « I think that the doubt has been cleared and that the charge no longer stands, thus the Rabbi is free to go. »

« No. I want to know whether He has purified Himself after touching the corpse. Let Him swear to it on Jehovah! » shouts Jonathan of Uziel.

« I did not purify Myself because the child was not dead, it had difficulty only in breathing. »

« Ah! It now suits You to say that he was not revived, eh? » shouts another Pharisee.

« Why do You not boast about it as You did at Kedesh? » asks another one.

« Don't let us waste time! Let us drive Him away and take the new charge to the Sanhedrin. A bunch of charges! »

« Which are the others? » asks Jesus.

« Which? That You touched the woman-leper and did not purify Yourself. Can You deny it? That You swore at Capernaum, so much so that Your more honest disciples abandoned You. Can You deny it? »

3-1818

« I deny nothing. But I am without sin, because you, Sadoc, who are now accusing Me, were told by Anastasica's husband that she is not a leper, and you know, you matchmaker of Samuel's adultery, and you lied before the world with him, to foster the lust of the filthy man, calling leprosy what was not such and condemning a woman to the torture of being called a "leper" in Israel, only because you are the accomplice of her guilty husband. »

Sadoc, the scribe, one of those who were at Giscala and later at Kedesh, is struck home by Jesus' statements and slips away without any further remark, while the crowds shout at him mockingly.

« Be silent! This place is sacred » says Jesus. And He says to the woman and to those who are with her: « Let us go. Come with Me where they are waiting for Me. » And He sets out gravely and stately, followed by His disciples.

The woman, who in the meantime is questioned by many people, tells her story, repeating each time: « My son belongs to Him and I will consecrate him to Him. »

The superintendent, instead, approaches Jesus and says: « Master, I informed Philip of the miracle. He sent me to inform You that he likes You. Bear it in mind with regard to the snares of Herod... and of other people. But he would like to hear You, too, and see You. Would You come to His house today? He would be happy to welcome You, also in the Tetrarchy. »

« I am neither a histrion nor a wizard. I am the Master of Truth. Let him come to the Truth and I will not reject him. »

They are in the Women's Court. « Here He is! » exclaim the women disciples informing Mary who is anxious about the delay.

They all gather together and Jesus would like to dismiss the people from Caesarea to go and look for Mary, Judas' mother, but Dorcas kneels down and says: « I have been looking for You before this woman, whom You want to find, and who is the mother of one of Your disciples. I was looking for You to say to You: "This son is Yours. He is my only son and I consecrate him to You. You are the Living God. Accept him as Your servant". »

« Do you know what that means? It means that you are consecrating your son to sorrow, that you will lose him as a mother and you will gain him back as a martyr in Heaven. Do you feel you can be a martyr through your child? »

« Yes, my Lord. I would have been a martyr through his death, and I would have suffered the martyrdom of a poor mother. For Your sake I will be a more perfect martyr, pleasing to the Lord. »

« Let it be so!... Oh! Mary of Simon, when did you come? »

« Just now. With my relative Ananias... I was looking for You, too, Lord... »

« I know. I sent Judas to tell you to come. Did he not come? »

3-1819

Judas' mother lowers her head and whispers: « I left the house immediately after him and I went to Gethsemane. But You had already gone away from there!... I ran to the Temple... And now I have found You... In time to hear this girl, who is already a mother and so happy!... Oh! I wish I could speak to You as she did, Lord, of a newly-born Judas... so meek... like one of these little lambs... » and weeping she points at the bleating lambs that are going to be sacrificed. She envelops herself in her mantle to conceal her tears.

« Come with Me, mother. We will talk in Johanna's house. This is not the right place. »

The women disciples take Judas' mother into the middle of their group, while her relative Ananias mixes with the disciples. Dorcas and her mother-in-law also go with the women disciples, and Mary of Alphaeus and Salome are enraptured while fondling the child.

They go towards the exit. But before they arrive there, a Roman slave brings a waxed tablet to Johanna, who reads it and replies: « Say that it is all right. This afternoon in my house. »

Then it is the joyful cry of Jaia and his mother when they see the Saviour: « Here He is, here is the Giver of light! May You be blessed, Light of God! » and they prostrate themselves, beaming with happiness. People gather, wonder, understand, praise.

Then there is old Matthias, the man who gave Jesus and His disciples hospitality in the stormy night near Jabesh-Gilead, and he venerates and blesses the Master.

And there is Marjiam's grandfather and the other peasants, to whom Jesus says, after speaking to Johanna: « Come with Me » as He already said to Dorcas, Jaia and Matthias.

But near the Golden Gate they meet Mark of Josiah, the faithless disciple, who is speaking animatedly to Judas Iscariot. Judas sees the Master coming and he tells his companion, who turns round when Jesus is already behind him. Their eyes meet. What a glance Jesus casts at him! But he is now deaf to all holy power. In order to run away at once, he almost pushes Jesus against a column. And Jesus reacts only by saying: « Mark, stop. Have mercy on your soul and on your mother! »

« Satan! » shouts the other. And he goes away.

« How horrible! » shout the disciples. « Curse him, Lord! » and the Iscariot is the first to say so.

« No. I would no longer be Jesus, if I did... Let us go. »

« But how has he become like that? He was so good! » says Isaac, who is so depressed by Mark's change, that he looks as if he were pierced by an arrow.

« It's a mystery. It cannot be explained! » say many of them.

And Judas of Kerioth says: « I made him speak. Everything he said was heresy, but he said things in such a way that he almost convinced you. He was not so wise when he was a just man. »

3-1820

« You should say that he was not so foolish when he was possessed near Gamala! » says James of Zebedee.

And John asks: « Why, Lord, did he not injure You so much whet, he was possessed? Could You not cure him so that he may not injure You? »

« Because he has now accepted an intelligent demon in himself. Formerly he was the abode of a legion of demons, who had occupied it through violence. But he did not consent to having them. Now his intelligence wanted Satan and Satan has placed an intelligent demoniacal strength in him. And I can do nothing against this latter possession. I would have to do violence to the free will of man. »

« Does it grieve You, Master?! »

« Yes, it does. It is My anguish... My defeat... And it distresses Me, because such souls are lost. Only because of that. Not because of the harm they do Me. »

They are now all standing in one group, waiting for the road to be cleared of a jam of people and mounts. And Judas' mother looks at her son so intently that the latter asks her: « Well? What is the matter with you? Is it the first time you see my face? You are really ill and I must have you treated... »

« I am not ill, son! And it is not the first time that I see you! »

« So? »

« So... nothing. I only wish you did not deserve such words of the Master. »

« I am not forsaking Him and I am not accusing Him. I am His apostle! »

They resume walking until Jesus stops to greet Johanna and the women disciples who are going to Johanna's house with her. All the men, instead, go to Gethsemane.

« We could have all gone there. I would have liked to hear what Eliza says. »

« You will see her. Because only today she will be told, and by Me, that I am entrusting Anastasica to her. »

« And is there a banquet this evening? »

« Yes, I told Johanna what to do. »

« What has she to do? When did You tell her? »

« You will see. I told her before she left us, while I was saying goodbye to her. Let us go quickly in order to be in Johanna's garden in good time. »

368. The Thursday before Passover. Instructions to the Apostles.

25th January 1946.

On their way back to Johanna's house, while they are spread

out among the people crowding the streets and separating from one another the many disciples who are following Jesus, Peter, who is with the Master and the two sons of Alphaeus, asks: « Lord, now that we can speak a little to each other, will You tell me something, about which I have been thinking since last night? »

« Of course, Simon. Tell Me, and I will answer you. »

« Since last night I have been thinking of the great grace that You grant John at Antigonea. You know, it's really a great grace! Something unique. Granted to him only! And yet Syntyche also deserves as much... And there are many good people... who would deserve to see You... but they only see You when they are close to You. For instance, what a comfort it would have been to us, when You sent us out into the world! And there have been times when a word of Yours would have cleared up doubtful points for us... But You never appear to us... Why this difference? »

« In conclusion, My dear Simon, are you perhaps a little jealous?... »

« No! But... Well, I would like to know three things: why is it granted to John of Endor; whether it is granted to him only; and whether one day it should happen to us as well, for instance to me, to see You miraculously and be informed by You how I should behave. »

« And this is My reply. The grace is granted to John because he is a most willing spirit, but he, because of his past adventures, has some weaknesses, which are more physical than anything else, and might spoil the edifice of his elevation to God, which he built. See, My dear friend? Our past, which has been upon us for a long time like a deeply rooted crust, not only cuts indelible signs, but leaves also everlasting inclinations in every man. Look, for instance, at that little house built at the foot of the mountain. The water, which runs down the mountain side when it rains, has slowly penetrated into it. At present there is warm sunshine, which will last for months. But the mould that has penetrated the mortar will always be present like blotches of leprosy. The house has been abandoned because it has been declared infected. In more severe days the house would have been demolished completely, according to the Law. Why did such a disaster happen to the poor house? Because its owners did not have little ditches dug around it to prevent water from stagnating at its foundations and to keep away from the side facing the mountain the water descending from it. The house is now not only ugly looking, but it is also undermined by dampness. If a man with good will saw to those expedients and then cleaned it, scraping the walls and replacing the infected bricks with new ones, it could be used once again. But it would always be affected by such weaknesses, that in the event of an earthquake it would be the first to collapse. John was penetrated

for years by the poisonous evil of the world. Through his will power he had it cut off from his soul, when it became alive again. But there are weaknesses still left, hidden in his flesh, in his inferior part... His spirit is strong, but his body is weak and the flesh causes storms when its incentives link up with elements of the world, capable of shaking one's ego. John!... How many particles of his past have been removed by what happened! I help his resistance, his purification, his victory over his resurgent past. I give solace to his too bitter suffering, as best I can. Because he deserves it. Because it is just to help a holy will when all the wickedness of the world attacks it. Are you convinced? »

« Yes, Master, I am... And do You appear to him only? »

Jesus smiles looking at Peter who is gazing at Him from below like a child watching the face of his father. He replies: « Not to him only. To others also, who are far away, building up their holiness, laboriously and all alone. »

« Who are they? »

« There is no need to know that. »

James of Alphaeus asks: « And what about us, for instance, when we shall be alone and, who knows, how we shall be tortured by the world?... Will You not help us with Your presence? »

« You will have the Paraclete with His light. »

« All right... But I... I do not know Him... and... I think that I will never succeed in understanding Him. You instead... I will say: "Oh! Here is the Master" and I will ask You what I must do, knowing for sure that it is You... » says Peter. And he concludes: « The Paraclete! Too high for a poor fisherman! I wonder how difficult His language is and how light He is: a passing whiff... Who will perceive it? I need a violent shaking, a shout, so that, blockheaded as I am, I may awake and understand. But if You appear to me, I will see You, so!... Promise me, nay, promise us, promise that You will appear to us, too. But as You are! In flesh and blood. So that one may see You well and hear You better. »

« And if I came to reproach you? »

« It does not matter! At least - you two agree, don't you? - we shall at least know what is to be done! »

Alphaeus' two sons nod assent.

« Well, I do promise you. However, believe Me, the Paraclete will make Himself understood by your souls. But I will come and say to you: "James, do this and that. Simon Peter, it is not right for you to do that. Judas, fortify yourself to be ready for this or that". »

« Oh! very good. I feel better now. And come often, mind You! Because I shall be like a poor lost child, who does nothing but weep and... do the wrong thing... » And Peter almost begins to weep now...

Judas Thaddeus asks: « Could You not do so for everybody, even

3-1823

now? I mean: for those who are doubtful, guilty, abjurers. Perhaps a miracle... »

« No, brother. A miracle does a lot of good, particularly that kind of miracle, when it is granted at the right time and in the right place, to people who are not mischievously guilty. When, instead, it is granted to people mischievously guilty, it increases their guilt, because it increases their pride. They mistake the gift of God for weakness of God, as if God implored such proud people to allow Him to love them. They consider the gift of God the result of their great merits. They say: "God humbles Himself before me, because I am holy". Then the ruin is complete. The ruin of Mark of Josiah, for instance, and of other people with him... Woe to those who take that Satanic road. The gift of God changes in them into poison of Satan. To be blessed with unusual gifts is the greatest and safest test of the degree of elevation and holy will in man. Very often man becomes humanly exhilarated with them, and from spiritual he becomes entirely human, he then descends lower and becomes a demon. »

« Why does God grant them then? It would be better if He did not! »

« Simon of Jonah, when your mother wanted you to learn to walk, did she keep you in swaddling-clothes and in her arms all the time? »

« No. She put me on the floor with my legs free. »

« Did you ever fall? »

« Innumerable times! Also because I was very... Well, since I was a child, I wanted to do things by myself and I maintained that I did everything well. »

« But you no longer fall now! »

« Of course not! Now I know that it is dangerous to climb on the back of a chair, that it is wrong to make use of rain-pipes to descend from the roof to the ground and that it would be foolish to try to fly from the fig-tree into the house, just like a bird. But when a child, I did not know. And if I did not get killed it is a real mystery. But little by little I learned to make the right use of my legs and also of my brains. »

« So God did a good thing in giving you legs and brains, and your mother also did a good thing in letting you learn at your own expense? »

« Most certainly! »

« And God does likewise with souls. He gives them gifts, and like a good mother He warns and teaches them. But then everybody must consider by himself how to use them. »

« And if one is a blockhead? »

« God does not give gifts to blockheads. He loves them, because they are unhappy, but He does not give them what they could not

appreciate. »

« But supposing He did give them, and they used them wrongly? »

« God would treat them for what they are: disabled people, and consequently not responsible. He would not judge them. »

« And if one is intelligent when one receives them, and later becomes silly or mad? »

« If the change is due to disease, one is not guilty of not using the gift. »

« But... one of us, for instance? Mark of Josiah... or... somebody else, then? »

« Oh! In that case it would be better for him not to be born! But that is how the good are separated from the wicked... A painful but just operation. »

« Which is the interesting subject of your conversation? Does it not concern us? » ask the other apostles who, thanks to the width of the street, have been able to join Jesus.

« We were speaking of many things. Jesus told me a parable on the leprosy of houses. I will repeat it to you later » replies Peter.

« What superstition, however! Really worthy of those days. Walls are not affected by leprosy. Foolish ancient people applied animal characteristics to clothes and walls. Absurd theories which make us ridiculous » remarks the Iscariot displaying his learning.

« Not quite as you say, Judas. Under an apparent fiction, suited to the mentality of those days, they achieved an important scope, which corresponded to holy foresight. Just like many other precepts of old Israel. Precepts safeguarding the health of the people. It is the duty of legislators to keep people healthy, it honours and serves God because people are creatures of God. Therefore they are not to be neglected, as we do not neglect animals and plants. It is true that the houses that are called leprous, do not have the physical disease of leprosy. But they have position and construction faults, which make them unhealthy and are revealed by stains called "leprosy of the walls". In the long run they are not only unhealthy for man, but they become dangerous because they can easily fall. Thus the Law prescribes what is right and orders the houses to be abandoned and restored and even to be pulled down, if after being repaired, they still show signs of the disease. »

« Oh! What harm can a little dampness do? It can be dried with braziers. »

« Then the dampness will not show exteriorly and the deception is greater. The dampness will grow in depth and corrode, and one fine day the house collapses burying those who are in it. Judas, Judas! It is better to be exceedingly watchful than imprudent. »

« I am not a house. »

« You are the house of your soul. Do not let evil filter into your house and crush it to pieces... Watch over the safety of your soul.

3-1825

you must all be watchful. »

« I will watch, Master. But tell me the truth, have my mother's words made a deep impression on You? She is ill. She imagines things. I must have her treated. Cure her for me, Master. »

« I will comfort her. But you are the only one who can cure her, relieving her anxiety. »

« She is anxious about nothing. Believe me, Lord. »

« Better so, Judas. Better so. But try to remove her anxiety completely, through a more and more just behaviour. If it is there, there must be a reason for it. Cancel the very memory of it, and your mother and I will bless you. »

« Master, are You afraid that I should come to terms with Mark of Josiah? »

« I am afraid of nothing. »

« Ah! Good! Because I was really trying to convince him. And I think it was my duty to do so. No one does it! But I am zealous for souls, I really am! »

« Be careful that no harm befalls you » says Peter, goodnaturedly.

« What do you mean? » asks Judas aggressively.

« Just this: to handle what is burning you must use something which is fireproof. »

« What, in our case? »

« What? Great holiness. »

« And I have none, have I? »

« Neither you, nor I, nor anyone among us. So... we might bum ourselves and be left with scorch marks. »

« So, who will take care of souls? »

« The Master, for the time being. Later, when we have the means to do so, according to His promise, we will. »

« But I want to do so now. One never works too early for the Lord. »

« Yes, I think that you are right. But the first work for the Lord is to be done within ourselves. To go preaching holiness to other people before preaching it to ourselves, is... »

« You are selfish. »

« Not at all. »

« Yes, you are. »

« No, I'm not. »

The dispute begins. Jesus intervenes: « Most of what Peter says is right. There is also some truth in what you say. Because preaching is to be based on facts. So you must sanctify yourselves in order to be able to say: "Do what I do because it is right". And that corroborates what Peter says. But to work on other souls also helps to perfect our own, because we are compelled to improve ourselves, lest those to be converted should criticise us. But here we are at

3-1826

Johanna's house... Let us go in and enjoy being among workers of the Lord, and preach, through facts, future times. »

369. The Thursday before Passover. In Johanna of Chuza's House.

26th January 1946.

« Peace to this house and all the people in it » is the salutation from Jesus as He enters the magnificent wide entrance-hall, all lit up, notwithstanding it is daytime. And the lamps are not unnecessary. Because while it is true that it is daytime and that the sun is dazzling outside, in the streets, and on the whitewashed facades, it is also true that in here the light must be normally dim. In fact the entrance-hall is like a corridor, the length of the house, running from the massive front door to the garden, the greenery of which can be seen at the other end of the corridor, in the bright sunshine. And the garden looks remote, because of the play of perspective. Thus the dim light in the hall must be like a real shadow, particularly for people coming from outside, whose eyes are dazzled by the bright sunshine. Chuza has therefore arranged for the many wide embossed copper pans, fixed on the two walls of the hall at regular intervals, to be fully lit, as well as the central light, a large vessel of pink alabaster with embedded jaspers and other many-coloured precious scales, which, because of the light, coming from inside the transparent alabaster, shine like stars, casting rainbows on the deep-blue walls, on people's faces and on the cipolin floor. And tiny mobile many-coloured stars seem to alight on walls and faces, because the lamp sways gently in the draught of the long hall and thus the facets of the precious scales change position continuously.

« Peace to this house » repeats Jesus, while He proceeds, blessing incessantly servants prostrated to the floor and the guests who are astonished at being gathered in a princely palace, so close to the Master...

The guests! Jesus' idea appears now clearly. The banquet of love, which He wanted to have in the house of the good woman disciple, is a page of the Gospel put into action. There are beggars, lame, blind, old people, orphans, young widows with their little ones hanging on to their skirts or sucking the scanty milk of their undernourished mothers. Johanna's wealth has already taken care of the replacement of their ragged clothes with simple ones, which are, however, new and clean. But if their hair, which has been tidied as a providential step for cleanliness, and their clean clothes make these poor wretches, whom the servants are lining up or helping to reach their seats, look less miserable than they did, when Johanna had them brought to her house from lanes, crossroads,

and cart-roads leading to Jerusalem, where their misery was either concealed shamefully or displayed in order to receive alms, there are still visible signs of hardships on their faces, as well as diseases on their bodies, and misfortune and solitude in their eyes...

Jesus passes and blesses them. Each unhappy person receives a blessing, and if Jesus' right hand is raised to bless, His left one is lowered to caress the trembling white heads of old people or the innocent heads of children. He thus goes up and down the hall, blessing everybody, also those who come in while He is already blessing and who, being dressed in rags, hide timorously and shyly in a corner, until the servants kindly take them elsewhere, to be washed and clad with clean clothes, like those who have preceded them.

A young widow passes by with her little group of children... What a pitiful sight! The youngest is completely naked, covered by the worn veil of his mother... the bigger ones have on only what is necessary to be decent. Only the oldest son, a lean tall boy, is wearing a suit worthy of that name, but he is bare-footed.

Jesus watches the woman, then He calls her saying: « Where have you come from? »

« From the plain of Sharron, Lord. Levi has become of age... And I had to take him to the Temple... because his father is dead » and the woman weeps silently, the silent weeping of a woman who has shed too many tears.

« When did your husband die? »

« A year last Shebat. I had been pregnant for two months... » and she swallows her sobs, not to annoy Jesus, bending over her little one.

« So the baby is eight months old? »

« Yes, Lord. »

« What was your husband? »

The woman whispers something in such a low voice, that Jesus does not understand. He bends to hear her and says: « Tell Me, and do not be afraid. »

« He was a farrier in a forge... But he was very ill... he suffered from sores that festered. » And she ends in a very low voice: « He was a Roman soldier. »

« But you are an Israelite? »

« Yes, Lord. But do not reject me as unclean. That is what my brothers did when I went and implored them to have mercy on us when Cornelius died... »

« Be not afraid of that! What do you do now? »

« I work as a servant, if anyone wants me, as a gleaner, a fuller, a hemp-beater... I do anything... to feed the children. Levi will now work as a peasant... if they will take him on... because he is of mixed race. »

3-1828

« Trust in the Lord! »

« If I had not trusted, I would have killed myself with all my children, Lord! »

« Go, woman. We shall meet again » and He dismisses her.

Johanna in the meantime has come and she is on her knees, waiting for the Master to see her.

He in fact turns round and sees her. « Peace to you, Johanna. You have obeyed Me to perfection. »

« It is my joy to obey You. But I have not been the only one to assemble the "court" that You wanted. Chuza helped me in every way and so did Martha and Mary. And Eliza, too. Some sent their servants to get what was necessary and to help my servants to gather the guests, some helped the maidservants and servants at the baths to wash "the beloved ones", as You call them. Now, if You will allow me, I will give everybody a snack, so that they may not starve waiting for their meal. »

« Of course, do. Where are the women disciples? »

« On the upper terrace where I have prepared the tables. Have I done the right thing? »

« Yes, Johanna, you have. We shall all have peace up there. »

« Yes, that is what I thought. In any case, in none of the halls I could have laid tables for so many people... And I did not want to separate them, to avoid jealousy and suffering. Unhappy people are so sensitive and so easily upset... They are one big sore and a glance is enough to make them suffer... »

« Yes, Johanna. You have a heart full of pity and you understand. May God bless you for your sympathy. Are there many women disciples. »

« Oh! All those who are in Jerusalem!... But, Lord... perhaps I have done something wrong... I would like to speak to You privately. »

« Take Me where we can be alone. »

They go into a room, which one understands is Mary and Matthias' play-room, as there are toys scattered everywhere.

« Well, Johanna? »

« O my Lord, I have certainly been thoughtless... But I acted so spontaneously, so impetuously! Chuza has reproached me. But now... One of Plautina's slaves came to the Temple with a tablet. Plautina and her companions were asking whether they could see You. I replied: "Yes, this afternoon in my house". And they will come... Did I do the wrong thing? Oh! Not with regard to You!... But because of the others, because of those who are all Israel... and they are not love as You are. If I made a mistake, I will see that the situation is rectified... But I am so anxious that the world, the whole world, should love You, that... that I did not consider that You alone are Perfect in the world and that too few people try to

imitate You. »

« You did the right thing. Today I will preach to you through deeds. And the presence of Gentiles among the believers in Jesus Saviour will be one of the things to be done in future by those who believe in Me. Where are the children? »

« They are everywhere, Lord » replies Johanna smiling, as she is now reassured, and she concludes: « They are excited by the entertainment and are running everywhere like little happy birds. »

Jesus leaves her, He goes back into the hall, beckons to the men who were with Him, and He sets out towards the garden to go up to the wide terrace.

A joyful activity has filled the house from the underground cellars to the roof. Some people go to and fro with foodstuffs and household goods, with bundles of clothes, with chairs, accompanying guests, replying to those who ask questions, and they are all full of love and joy. Jonathan supervises, watches and advises and he is indefatigable and solemn in his office of superintendent.

Old Esther, who is happy to see Johanna so lively and healthy, is laughing in the middle of a circle of poor children, to whom she gives cakes, while telling them wonderful stories. Jesus stops a moment to listen to the magnificent conclusion of one of them, which says « that God granted much help to good Dawn of May, who never rebelled against the Lord because of the trouble that had come to her house, so that Dawn of May was the salvation and wealth also of her little brothers. Angels used to fill her little bread-bin, and finish the work on the loom to help the good girl, saying: "She is our sister because she loves the Lord and her neighbour. She is to be helped by us". »

« May God bless you, Esther! I would almost like to stop Myself and listen to your parables! Will you let Me? » says Jesus smiling.

« Oh! My Lord! I must listen to You! But for these little ones I am good enough, although I am a poor old foolish woman! »

« Your just soul is useful also to adults. Go on, Esther, go on... » and He smiles at her while going away.

The guests are by now scattered through the large garden and are having their snack, looking around and at one another with astonishment. They speak exchanging comments on their unexpected good fortune. When they see Jesus pass by, they stand up, if they can do so, or they bow respectfully.

« Eat up, in full freedom and bless the Lord » says Jesus passing by on His way to the gardeners' rooms, where the outside staircase begins, leading to the large terrace.

« Oh! My Rabboni! » shouts the Magdalene running out of a room with her arms full of swaddling clothes and little vests for babies. Her voice is as soft as a golden organ and fills the shady avenue full of festoons of roses.

3-1830

« Mary, God be with you. Where are you going in such a hurry? »

« Oh! I have ten babies to dress! I have washed them and I am now going to dress them. I will then bring them to You, as fresh as flowers. I must run, Master, because... Can You hear them? They are like ten little bleating lambs... » and she runs away laughing. She looks splendid and serene in her simple refined dress of white linen, tightened at her waist by a thin silver belt and her hair fastened in a simple knot on the nape of her neck, supported by a white ribbon, which is tied in a knot on her forehead.

« How different she is from what she was on the Mountain of Beatitudes! » exclaims Simon Zealot.

In the first flight of steps they meet Jairus' daughter and Annaleah, who are coming down so fast that they seem to be flying.

« Master! », « Lord! » they exclaim.

« God be with you. Where are you going? »

« To get some tablecloths. Johanna's handmaid sent us. Will You be speaking, Master? »

« Certainly! »

« Oh! run, then, Mirjiam! Let us be quick! » says Annaleah.

« You have all the time you need to do what you have to do. I am waiting for other people. But when did you change your name to Mirjiam? » He says looking at Jairus' daughter.

« Today. Just now. Your Mother gave me it. Because... is that right, Annaleah? This is a great day for four virgins... »

« Yes, it is! Shall we tell the Lord, or shall we let Mary tell Him? »

« Let Mary tell Him. Go, my Lord. Your Mother will tell You » and they run away nimbly, in the prime of youth; they are human in their beautiful figures, but look like angels because of their bright eyes...

On the third flight they meet Eliza of Bethzur, who is coming down, looking very serious, with Philip's wife.

« Ah! Lord! » exclaims the latter. « You give to some people, but You take away from others!... But may You be blessed just the same! »

« What are you talking about, woman? »

« You will soon know... How grievous and how glorious, Lord! You are crippling me and crowning me. »

Philip, who is close to Jesus, says: « What are you saying? What are you talking about? You are my wife and I am entitled to know what is happening... »

« Oh! You will be told, Philip. Go with the Master now. »

Jesus in the meantime asks Eliza whether she has recovered completely. And the woman, whom deep past sorrows have given the stateliness of a sorrowful queen, replies: « Yes, my Lord. But to suffer with peace in one's heart is no pang. And I now have peace

in my heart. »

« And you will soon have more. »

« What, Lord? »

« Go, and when you come back you will be told. »

« Jesus is here! Jesus is here! » shout the two children, whose faces are leaning against the railings ornamented with arabesques bordering the terrace on the two sides overlooking the garden, and from which branches of roses and jasmine in bloom are hanging. It is, in fact, a large hanging garden over which a many-coloured velarium has been spread as a protection against the sunshine.

All the people on the terrace who are busy preparing the tables turn round at the shouts of Mary and Matthias, and leaving their work unfinished, they come towards Jesus, to Whose knees the two children are clinging.

Jesus greets the many women who crowd round Him. Among the true and proper disciples or wives, sisters, daughters of the apostles and disciples, there are some less known and familiar, such as the wife of His cousin Simon, the mothers of the donkey drivers of Nazareth, the mother of Abel from Bethlehem in Galilee, Anne of Judas (from the house near lake Merom), Mary of Simon the mother of Judas of Kerioth, Naomi from Ephesus, Sarah and Marcella from Bethany (Sarah is the woman whom Jesus cured on the Mountain of Beatitudes and sent to Lazarus with old Ishmael; I think she is now the handmaid of Mary of Lazarus), then there is the mother of Jaia, the mother of Philip of Arbela, Dorcas, the young mother from Caesarea Philippi and her mother-in-law, Annaleah's mother, Mary of Bozrah, the woman cured of leprosy who has come to Jerusalem with her husband, and many more whose faces are not new to me, but whose names I cannot remember.

Jesus proceeds along the large rectangular terrace, one side of which overlooks the Sixtus and He stops near the low cube-shaped room on the northern side of the terrace, where I think the internal staircase ends. The whole of Jerusalem and its surroundings are visible. It is a magnificent view. All the women disciples and the other women stop laying the tables and have gathered round Him. The servants go on with their work.

Mary is near Her Son. In the golden light filtering through the large velarium spread over most of the terrace and which becomes a delicate emerald light where it reaches faces, after filtering through entangled rose bushes and jasmines forming a pergola, She looks even younger and slimmer; a sister of the younger women disciples, just a little older and as beautiful as the most beautiful of the roses blooming in the hanging garden or in the large flower pots placed around it and containing roses, jasmines, lilies of the valley and other delicate plants.

3-1832

« Mother, my wife has spoken in a queer way!... What happened, why did she say that she is crippled and crowned at the same time? » asks Philip, who is anxious to know.

Mary smiles kindly looking at him, and although She is averse to familiarities, She takes his hand saying: « Would you be able to give My Jesus what is dearest to you? You really ought to... because He gives you Heaven and the Way to get there. »

« Of course I would, Mother... particularly if what I gave Him would make Him happy. »

« It would. Philip, your daughter also is consecrating herself to the Lord. She told Me and her mother a little while ago, in the presence of many women disciples... »

« What? You! » exclaims Philip dumbfounded pointing his finger at the gentle girl, who clings to Mary as if she wished to be protected. The apostle swallows with difficulty this second blow that deprives him for good of the hope of having grandchildren, He wipes the sudden flow of perspiration caused by the news... and looks at the people around him. He is struggling and suffering.

His daughter moans: « Father... forgive me... and bless me » and she throws herself at his feet.

Philip caresses her brown hair mechanically and clears his throat. At last he speaks: « One forgives children who commit sins... By consecrating yourself to the Master you are not committing a sin... and your poor father can but say to you: "May you be blessed"... Ah! my daughter!... How sweet and terrible is the will of God! » and he bends, lifts his daughter, embraces her, kissing her forehead and hair. He then moves towards Jesus and says to Him: « Here. I am her father. But You are her God! Your right is stronger than mine... Thank You, Lord, for... for the joy that... » and he cannot go on... He kneels at Jesus' feet and bends to kiss them moaning: « No grandchildren... never... My dream!... The smile of my old age!... Forgive my tears, my Lord... I am a poor man... »

« Stand up, My dear friend. And be happy because you are giving the early flowers to the angelical flowerbeds. Come. Come here, between Me and My Mother. Let us hear from Her how this happened, because I can assure you that I am neither to be blamed or praised for it. »

Mary explains: « I know very little Myself. We women were speaking to one another, and as often is the case, they were asking Me about My virginal vow. They were also asking Me what future virgins will be like, which work and which glory I foresaw for them. And I was replying as best I could... And I foresaw for them a life of prayer and of relief to the suffering caused to My Jesus by the world. I said: "It will be the virgins who will support the apostles and will purify the foul world, clothing and scenting it

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with their purity; they will be the angels singing praises to cover up the blasphemy of the world. And Jesus will be happy, and will grant graces to the world and will have mercy on it, thanks to these lambs spread among wolves... " and I was saying other things. Jairus' daughter then said to Me: "Give me a name, Mother, for my future as a virgin, because I cannot allow any man to have pleasure out of my body, which was revived by Jesus. This body of mine belongs to Him only until its flesh will be in the grave and its soul in Heaven", and Annaleah said: "That is what I also felt I should do. And now I feel happier than a swallow, because all ties are broken". It was then that your daughter, Philip, said: "I will be like you, too: a virgin for ever!". Her mother - there she is coming - pointed out to her that one cannot take such a decision just like that. But she would not change her mind. And when she was asked whether it was an old idea she had, she replied "no" and to those who asked how she got it, she said: "I do not know. It was as if a beam of light had pierced my heart and I understood of what love I love Jesus". »

Philip's wife asks him: « Have you heard that? »

« Yes, woman. Our flesh moans... whereas it should rejoice because this is its glorification. Our heavy flesh has procreated two angels. Do not weep, woman. You said yourself that He has crowned you... A queen does not weep when she receives her crown... »

But Philip is weeping as well, and many more, both men and women, are weeping, now that they are all gathered on the terrace. Mary of Simon has burst into unrestrained weeping in a corner. Mary of Magdala is weeping in another corner, pulling and twisting her linen dress, from which she mechanically tears off the threads trimming the hem. Anastasica is weeping and she tries to conceal her sorrowful face with her hand.

« Why are you weeping? » asks Jesus.

No one replies.

Jesus calls Anastasica and asks her once again. She replies: « Because, Lord, for the nauseating pleasure of one night only, I lost the possibility of being one of Your virgins. »

« Every condition is good, if one serves the Lord in it. In the future Church both virgins and matrons will be required. They are both useful for the triumph of the Kingdom of God in the world and for the work of their brother priests. Eliza of Bethzur, come here. Comfort this very young woman... » And with His own hands He places Anastasica between Eliza's arms. He watches them while Eliza caresses Anastasica, who relaxes in her motherly arms and He then asks: « Eliza, do you know her story? »

« Yes, Lord. I do. And I feel sorry for her, for she is like a dove without nest. »

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« Eliza, do you love this sister? »

« Do I love her? Yes, I do, very much. But not as a sister. She could be my daughter. And now that I am holding her in my arms, I feel as if I were becoming the happy mother of days gone by. To whom are You going to entrust this gentle gazelle? »

« To you, Eliza. »

« To me? » The woman unfastens her arms to look at the Lord incredulously.

« To you. Do you not want her? »

« Oh! Lord! My Lord! »... Eliza crawls on her knees towards Jesus and she does not know what to say or how to express her joy.

« Stand up and be a holy mother to her and let her be a holy daughter to you, and may you both proceed in the way of the Lord. Mary of Lazarus, you were so cheerful a little while ago, why are you weeping now? Where are the ten flowers you were going to bring Me?... »

« They are replete with food and are sleeping in their purity, Master... And I am weeping because I shall never have the purity of virgins and my soul will weep for ever, without ever being sated... because I have sinned... »

« My forgiveness and your tears make you purer than they are. Come here and weep no more. Leave tears to those who have something of which they are ashamed. Come on. Go and get your flowers; and you may go as well, you mothers and virgins. Go and tell the guests of God to come up here. We will have to dismiss them before the Gates close, because many of them live out in the country. »

They all obey and depart, so that on the terrace there are left only Jesus, Who is caressing Mary and Matthias, Eliza and Anastasica, who a little farther off are holding each other's hands, looking at each other, smiling and weeping for joy, Mary of Simon over whom Mary bends in pity, and Johanna, who is standing at the door of the room, looking towards Jesus in an uncertain attitude. The apostles and disciples have gone downstairs with the women to help the servants bring up the long staircase the crippled, blind, lame and old people bent with age.

Jesus raises His head, which was bent over the two children, and sees Mary stooped over Judas' mother. He gets up and goes towards them. He lays His hand on the grey head of Mary of Simon and asks: « Why are you weeping, woman? »

« Oh! Lord! I gave birth to a demon! No mother in Israel will be as grieved as I am! »

« Mary, another mother and for the same reason as yours, said to Me and still says those words. Poor mothers!... »

« Oh! My Lord, is there therefore another man, who, like my Judas, is wicked and cruel to You? Oh! It cannot be! He has You,

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and yet he is addicted to foul practices. Although he lives in Your atmosphere, he is lustful and a thief and he will perhaps become a homicide. He... oh! His mind is deceitful! He lives in agitation. Make him die, Lord, out of pity! Make him die! »

« Mary, your heart makes him worse than he is. Fear is driving you insane. But you must be calm and reasonable. What proof have you of his behaviour? »

« I have no proof of anything against You. But it is an avalanche which is about to fall. I caught him and he could not deny the evidence that... Here he is... For pity's sake, be quiet! He is looking at me. He suspects. He is my grief. There is no mother in Israel more unhappy than I am!... »

Mary whispers: « I am... because I add the sorrows of all unhappy mothers to My own... Because My sorrow is caused by the hatred of the whole world, not of one man only. »

Johanna calls Jesus and He goes towards her; in the meantime Judas approaches his mother, who is still being comforted by Mary, and he lashes her: « Have you been able to show your frenzy and calumniate me? Are you happy now? »

« Judas! Is that how you speak to your mother? » asks Mary severely. It is the first time I see Her thus...

« Yes. Because I am tired of her persecution. »

« Oh! My son, it is not persecution! It is love! You say that I am ill. But it is you who are ill! You say that I calumniate you and I listen to your enemies. But you are wronging yourself, because you follow and are friendly with wicked people who will ruin you. Because you are weak, son, and they are aware of your weakness... Listen to your mother. Listen to Ananias, who is old and wise. Judas! Have mercy on me! Judas!!! Where are you going, Judas?! »

Judas, who is almost running across the terrace, turns round and shouts: « Where I am useful and respected » and he rushes down the staircase, while the unhappy mother, leaning over the parapet, shouts to him: « Don't go! Don't go! They want to ruin you! Son! My son!... »

Judas has arrived downstairs where the trees prevent his mother from seeing him. He reappears for a moment in an empty space before entering the hall.

« He has gone!... Pride devours him! » moans his mother.

« Let us pray for him, Mary. Let us pray together, the two of us... » says the Blessed Virgin holding the hand of the sad mother of the future deicide.

Meanwhile the guests begin to come up... and Jesus is speaking to Johanna. « All right. Let them come. It is much better if they have put on Jewish clothes, to avoid rousing the prejudices of many people. I will wait for them here. Go and call them » and leaning against the doorpost He watches the arrival of the guests,

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whom apostles and disciples of both sexes kindly lead to the tables according to a pre-arranged order. In the centre there is a low table for children, parallel to which on both sides are all the other tables.

And while the blind, lame, crippled and old people bent with age, and the widows take seats, with the stories of their sorrows impressed on their faces, large baskets and small chests, which have been turned into cradles and look as pretty as flower baskets, are brought in, with the babies of poor mothers sleeping in them. And Mary of Magdala, who is now in better spirits, approaches Jesus saying: « The flowers have arrived. Come and bless them, my Lord. »

At the same time Johanna appears at the top of the inside staircase saying: « Master, here are the heathen women disciples. » They are seven women, wearing plain dark clothes like those of Jewish women. Each has a veil over her face and a mantle reaching down to her feet. Two of them are tall and stately, the others are of middle height. But when they take their mantles off, after greeting the Master reverently, Plautina, Lydia and Valeria are easily recognised, as well as Flavia, the freedwoman who wrote Jesus' words in Lazarus' garden; then there are three strangers. One of them, who looks as if she were accustomed to giving orders, kneels down saying to the Lord: « And may Rome prostrate itself at Your feet with me. » One is a buxom matron about fifty years old. The last one is a girl who is as slim and beautiful as a wild flower.

Although the Roman ladies are dressed like Jewesses, Mary of Magdala recognises them and she whispers: « Claudia!!! » and looks at her with wide-open eyes.

« It is I. I am tired of hearing His words from other people. Truth and Wisdom are to be drawn straight from their source. »

« Do you think that they will recognise us? » Valeria asks Mary of Magdala.

« I do not think so, unless you betray your identities by calling one another by name. In any case I will put you in a safe place. »

« No, Mary. Let them be at the tables, serving the beggars. No one will think that patrician ladies are serving the poor and lowest people in the Jewish world » says Jesus.

« Your sentence is a wise one, Master. Because pride is inborn in us. »

I « And humility is the clearest sign of My doctrine. Those who want to follow Me must love Truth, Purity and Humility, they must be charitable to everybody and heroic in defying the opinion of men and the violence of Tyrants. Let us go. »

« Forgive me, Rabbi. This girl is a slave and the daughter of slaves. I ransomed her because she is of Jewish extraction and Plautina is keeping her in her own house. But I wish to offer her to

you, because I think that it is the right thing to do. Her name is Eglah. She belongs to You. »

« Take her, Mary. Later we will decide what to do... Thank you, woman. »

Jesus goes on the terrace to bless the children. The ladies arouse much curiosity. But dressed in almost poor garments and combed in Jewish style, they do not awaken suspicion. Jesus goes to the centre of the terrace, to the children's table and He prays, offering the food to the Lord on behalf of everybody, He blesses it and tells them to begin eating.

The apostles, disciples, women disciples and ladies are the servants of the poor, and Jesus sets the example turning up the wide sleeves of His red tunic and looking after the children with the help of Mirjiam of Jairus and John. The mouths of so many undernourished people are very busy but their eyes are all turned towards the Lord. When it begins to get dark, the large velarium is removed and servants bring lamps, although they are not yet necessary.

Jesus moves about the tables. He encourages everybody with words and with His own help. He passes several times near the two stately ladies, Claudia and Plautina, who humbly break bread for guests who are blind, paralytic or maimed or they help them to drink wine; He smiles at His virgins who are looking after the women, and at the mother-disciples who kindly assist the unhappy people; He smiles at Mary of Magdala who is doing her very best at the table of some old men, the most sad of all the tables, as it is full of coughing and trembling people, whose toothless mouths chew food with their gums and slaver. He assists Matthew who is shaking a child, as a crumb of a cake, which he was sucking and biting with his new teeth, has gone down the wrong way. And He congratulates Chuza, who arrived at the beginning of the meal and is now carving meat and serving it like an expert waiter.

The meal is over. The more colourful faces and the brighter eyes of the poor people clearly show their satisfaction.

Jesus bends over an old trembling man and asks him: « What thought is making you smile, father? »

« I was just thinking that it is not a dream. Up to a little while ago I thought I was sleeping and dreaming. But now I feel that it is really true. But who makes You so good, that You make Your disciples so kind? Long live Jesus! » he shouts finally.

And all the voices of the poor wretches, and they are hundreds, shout: « Long live Jesus! »

Jesus goes once again towards the centre of the terrace and He opens His arms wide, beckoning to them to be quiet and still and He begins to speak, sitting down with a child on His knees.

« Yes, long live Jesus, not because I am Jesus. But because Jesus

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means the love of God, Who became flesh and descended among men to be known and to make known the love that will be the sign of the new era. Long live Jesus, because Jesus means "Saviour And I will save you. I will save everybody, rich and poor, children and old people, Israelites and heathens, everybody, provided that you give Me your will to be saved. Jesus is for everybody, not just for this one or that one. Jesus belongs to everybody. He belongs to all men and is for all men. I am merciful Love and sure Salvation. What must one do to belong to Jesus and thus be saved? Few things. But great things. Not great in the sense that they are difficult, like things accomplished by kings. They are great because they want man to put new vigour and faith into his life to do them and to belong to Jesus. Thus love, humility, faith, resignation, pity are required. Now, you disciples, what great thing have You done today? You may say: "Nothing. We served a meal". No. You have served love. You have humbled yourselves. You have treated as brothers unknown people of all races, without asking them who they are, whether they are healthy or good. And you have done that in the name of the Lord. Perhaps you were expecting great words from Me, for your education. I made you do great things. We began the day with prayer, we have helped lepers and beggars, we have worshipped the Most High in His House, we have begun brotherly agapes and we have taken care of pilgrims and poor people, we have served because to serve for love is to be like Me, Who am the Servant of the servants of God, a Servant to the extent of being destroyed by death in order to serve you with salvation... » "Jesus is interrupted by shouting and shuffling of feet. A group of excited Israelites runs up the staircase. The Roman ladies who are best known, that is, Plautina, Claudia, Valeria and Lydia, withdraw cautiously covering their faces with their veils. The disturbers rush onto the terrace and seem to be looking for I wonder what.

Chuza, who feels offended, faces them and asks: « What do you want? »

« Nothing concerning you. We are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, not for you. »

« Here I am. Can you not see Me? » asks Jesus putting down the child and standing up imposingly.

« What are You doing here? »

« You can see yourselves. I am doing what I teach, and I teach what is to be done: to love the poor. What have you been told? »

« We heard shouts of sedition. And as there is sedition wherever You are, we came to see. »

« There is peace where I am. The shout was: "Long live Jesus". »

« Exactly. And both at the Temple and at Herod's palace they thought that people were conspiring here against... »

3-1839

« Against whom? Who is the king of Israel? Neither the Temple, nor Herod. Rome rules here and whoever thinks of becoming king where Rome rules, must be mad. »

« You say that You are a king. »

« Yes, I am a king. But not of this kingdom. It is too trivial for Me! Also the Empire is too trivial. I am the King of the Kingdom of Heaven, of the Kingdom of Love and of the Spirit. Go in peace. Or you may stay, if you so wish, and learn how one reaches My Kingdom. Here are My subjects: the poor, the unhappy, the oppressed; and the good, the humble, the charitable. Stay here and join them. »

« But You always feast in splendid houses, among beautiful women and... »

« That's enough! You cannot throw out innuendos against the Rabbi and insult Him in my house. Go out! » thunders Chuza.

But the slender figure of a veiled girl jumps onto the terrace from the inside staircase. She runs as lightly as a butterfly as far as Jesus, where she drops her veil and mantle, throwing herself at [is feet and trying to kiss them.

« Salome! » shouts Chuza and other people do likewise.

Jesus has withdrawn so vigorously to avoid her contact, that His seat turns over and He takes advantage of the situation to put it between Himself and Salome as a partition. His eyes are so phosphorescent and dreadful that they rouse fear in everybody.

Salome smirking impudently says: « Yes, it is I. The acclamation was heard in the Palace. Herod has sent word to tell You that he wants to see You. But I have forestalled his messenger. Come with me, Lord. I love You so much and I am so anxious to have You! I am flesh of Israel, too. »

« Go back to your house. »

« The Court is waiting for You to honour You. »

« This is My Court. I do not know any other Court or other honours » and with His hand He points at the poor people sitting at he tables.

« I have brought You gifts for it. Here are my jewels. »

« I do not want them. »

« Why are You refusing them? »

« Because they are filthy and offered for a filthy purpose. Go away! »

Salome stands up, she is dumbfounded. She casts a quick glance at the Terrible Most Pure One, Who fulminates her with His arm stretched out and eyes flashing fire. She looks furtively at everybody and sees derision or disgust on everybody's face. The Pharisees are petrified watching the potent scene. The Roman ladies dare come forward to have a better view.

Salome makes a last attempt: « You approach even lepers... » she

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says submissively and imploringly.

« They are diseased. You are a wanton girl. Go away! »

This last « go away! » is so powerful that Salome picks up her veil and mantle and stooping and crawling she goes towards the staircase.

« Be careful, Lord!... She is powerful... She might be harmful to You » whispers Chuza in a low voice.

But Jesus replies in a very loud voice, so that everybody, and the expelled girl first of all, may hear: « It does not matter. I would rather be killed than be allied with vice. The perspiration of a lewd woman and the gold of a prostitute are poisons of hell. A cowardly alliance with the mighty ones is sinful. I am Truth, Purity and Redemption. And I will not change. Go. Show her out. »

« I will punish the servants who let her in. »

« Do not punish anybody. One only is to be punished: the girl. And she is punished. And she should know, and you all should know that I am aware of her intentions, which make Me sick. Let the snake go back to her hole. The Lamb is going back to His gardens. »

He sits down. He is perspiring. He then says: « Johanna, give an offering to each of them, so that their life may not be so sad for a few days... What else can I do for you, o children of sorrow? What do you want Me to give you? I can read your hearts. Peace and health to the sick ones who can believe! »

There is a short pause, then a cry... and many stand up completely cured. The Jews who had come to catch Him are amazed and in the general enthusiasm for the miracle and for Jesus' purity no one pays any attention to them, when they go away.

Jesus smiles kissing the children. He then dismisses the guests, but He holds back the widows and speaks to Johanna on their behalf. Johanna takes note and invites them for the following day. They go away, too. The last to go are the old people...

The apostles, the disciples of both sexes and the Roman ladies remain with Jesus, Who says: « That is how future meetings must be. Words are not needed. Let the evidence of facts speak to spirits and minds. Peace be with you. »

He goes towards the inside staircase and disappears followed by Johanna and the others.

At the foot of the staircase He meets Judas, who says: « Master, do not go to Gethsemane! Your enemies are looking for You there. Well, mother, what do you say now? You accuse me, but if I had not gone, I would not have found out about the snare that has been laid for the Master. Let us go to another house! »

« Come to ours, then. Only the friends of God enter Lazarus' house » says Mary of Magdala.

« Yes. Let those who were at Gethsemane yesterday come to

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Lazarus' house with his sisters. Tomorrow we will take the necessary measures. »

370. The Thursday before Passover. The Evening.

27th January 1946.

The followers of Jesus certainly do not stand out for their courage! The news brought by Judas has the same effect as the apparition of a hawk over a threshing-floor crowded with chicks or the presence of a wolf on the edge of a cliff close to a flock of sheep! The faces of most of them, particularly of the men, show signs of fear or at least of anxiety. I think that many of them are under the impression that a sword or a lash is already pressing against their skin or that they will be thrown into dungeons awaiting trial and that is probably the least penalty of which they are thinking. The women are not so excited. More than anything else they are worried about their sons or husbands, whom they advise to steal away in little groups through the country.

Mary of Magdala rebels against such waves of exaggerated fear: « Oh! How many gazelles there are in Israel! Are you not ashamed of trembling thus? I told you that in my house you will be safer than in a stronghold. So come! And upon my word I can assure you that nothing will happen to you. If in addition to those mentioned by Jesus there are other people who feel that they will be safer in my house, let them come. There are enough beds for a century. Come on, make up your minds, instead of fainting with fear! I only ask Johanna to send her servants after us with foodstuffs. Because there is not enough in the house for everybody, and it is now evening. A good meal is the best cure for a faint-heart. » She is not only imposing in her white dress, but her beautiful eyes are also quite ironical and she looks down on the frightened group crowding into Johanna's hall.

« I will send them at once. You may go, Jonathan will follow you with the servants, and I will come as well, because I want to have the pleasure of following the Master, without being afraid, I can assure you, so much so, that I will bring the children with me » says Johanna. She withdraws to give the necessary instructions while the vanguard of the frightened army look cautiously out of the main door, and when they see that there is nothing to be afraid of, they dare go out into the street and set out, followed by the others.

The group of the virgins is in the centre, immediately after Jesus, Who is in the first lines. The women are behind the virgins... and then the less brave ones, whose backs are protected by Mary of Lazarus, who has joined the Roman ladies, as they have decided not to part from the Master so early. Then Mary of Lazarus runs ahead to say something to her sister and the seven Roman ladies

3-1842

are left with Sarah and Marcella, who are also in the rearguard by order of Mary, also with a view to letting the seven Roman ladies pass unnoticed.

Johanna arrives quickly holding the children by the hand, and behind her there is Jonathan and some servants laden with bags and baskets. They bring up the rear, but no one pays attention to the little group, as the streets are crowded with people going home or to their camps and in the faint light faces are not easily recognised. Mary of Magdala is now in the first line with Johanna, Anastasica and Eliza, and she leads the guests to her house through narrow side-streets.

Jonathan is walking quite close to the Roman ladies, to whom he speaks as if they were the servants of the richest women disciples. Claudia takes advantage of the situation to say to him: « Man, please go and call the disciple who brought the news. Tell him to come here. But speak to him in such a way as not to draw the attention of other people. Go! » Her dress is a plain one, but her attitude is unintentionally imposing, typical of a person accustomed to giving orders. Jonathan opens his eyes wide, trying to see, through her lowered veil, who is the woman speaking to him thus. But he cannot see the flashing eyes of the imperious woman. He must realise that the woman who has spoken to him is not a servant, and he bows to her before departing.

He reaches Judas of Kerioth who is talking animatedly to Stephen and Timoteus, and he pulls his sleeve.

« What do you want? »

« I have something to tell you. »

« Tell me. »

« No. Come with me. You are wanted, for alms, I think... »

The excuse is a good one and it is accepted peacefully by Judas' companions and enthusiastically by Judas himself, who goes back quickly with Jonathan.

He is now at the rear line. « Woman, this is the man you wanted » says Jonathan to Claudia.

« Thank you for serving me » she replies with her veil still lowered. She then addresses Judas: « Please stop for a moment and listen to me. »

Judas, who has heard her refined way of speaking and has seen two wonderful eyes through her thin veil and perhaps feels there is the prospect of a great adventure, agrees without any objection.

The group of the Roman ladies parts. Plautina and Valeria remain with Claudia, the others go on. Claudia looks around. She sees the lonely little street in which they have stopped, and with her beautiful hand she removes her veil, uncovering her face.

Judas recognises her and after a moment's astonishment, he bows greeting her with a mixture of Jewish gestures and a Roman

word:« Domina! »

« Yes, it is I. Stand up and listen. You love the Nazarene. You are anxious about His welfare. You are right. He is a virtuous man and must be defended. We respect Him as a great just man. The Jews do not respect Him. They hate Him. I know. Listen. Understand properly what I say, remember it well and act accordingly. I want to protect Him. Not like the lewd girl of a little while ago, but honestly and virtuously. When your love and your sagacity make you understand that there is a danger for Him, come or send someone. Claudia dominates over Pontius. Claudia will obtain protection for the Just One. Is that clear? »

« Perfectly clear, domina. May our God protect you. If at all possible, I will come myself. But how can I get to you? »

« Always ask for Albula Domitilla. That is another name I use, but no one is amazed if she speaks to Jews, because she takes care of my liberality. They will think that you are a client. Will that humiliate you? »

« No, domina. It is an honour to serve the Master and have your protection. »

« Yes, I will protect you. I am a woman but I belong to the Claudi family. I am more powerful than all the mighty ones in Israel, because Rome is behind me. In the meantime take this. It's our offering for the poor of the Christ. But... I would like to remain among the disciples this evening. Arrange that for me and you will be protected by Claudia. »

The words of the patrician have a miraculous effect on a man like the Iscariot. He is in his seventh heaven!... He dares to ask her: « But will you really help Him? »

« Yes, I will. His Kingdom deserves to be established, because it is a kingdom of virtue. It is welcome, against the foul waves that cover present kingdoms and disgust me. Rome is great, but the Rabbi is by far greater than Rome. We have eagles on our banners and the proud monogram. But He will have Genii and His holy Name on His. Rome and the Earth will be really great when they put that Name on their banners, and His sign will be on standards, temples, arches and columns. »

Judas is astonished, ecstatic, in a dream. He tosses the heavy purse given to him, and does so mechanically, nodding assent all the time...

« Now let us go and join them. We are allied, are we not? Allied to protect your Master and the King of honest souls. »

She lowers her veil and nimbly runs off to reach the group ahead of her, followed by the other ladies and by Judas, who is panting not so much because of his physical effort as for what he has heard. The last disciples are entering Lazarus' building when they reach them. They go in quickly and the heavy iron door is closed with a

3-1844

loud noise of latches bolted by the keeper.

A solitary lamp, held by the keeper's wife, hardly lights up the white square hall of Lazarus' house. The house is obviously uninhabited, although it is well kept and tidy. Mary and Martha lead the guests into a large room, certainly used for banquets, the walls of which are covered with precious cloths showing their arabesque decorations as chandeliers are lit and lamps are placed on sideboards, on precious chests laid around the walls, or on the tables, which are on one side, ready to be used, but which have not been used for a long time. Mary orders them to be brought to the centre of the room and laid for supper with the foodstuff that Johanna's servants are taking out of bags and baskets and putting on the sideboards.

Judas takes Peter to one side and whispers something in his ear,

I see Peter open his eyes wide and shake his hand as if he had burned his fingers, while he exclaims: « By thunders! What are you saying? »

« Yes, look. Just imagine! We no longer need be afraid! There is no longer any reason to be so depressed! »

« But that's too much! But what did she say? That she will really protect us? May God bless her! But which one is she? »

« The tall slender one, wearing a turtle-dove dress. She is looking at us... »

Peter looks at the tall woman, whose face is regular and grave, and whose eyes are kind but imperious.

« And... how did you manage to speak to her? Did you not feel... »

« No, not at all. »

« And yet you hated their contact! Like me, like everybody... »

« Yes, but I overcame that feeling for the Master's sake. As I overcame my desire to part company with my old companions of the Temple... Oh! Everything for the Master! My mother and you all think that I am shady. You recently blamed me for the friends I have. But if I did not cultivate their friendship, which is very painful to me, I would not learn many things. There is no sense in closing our eyes or sealing our ears with wax lest the world should come into us through our eyes or ears. When one is in an enterprise like ours, one's eyes and ears must be absolutely free and watchful. We must watch over Him, His wealth, His mission, and the foundation of this blessed kingdom... »

Many of the apostles and some disciples have approached them and are listening, nodding assent. In fact no one can say that Judas is wrong in what he is saying!

Peter, being honest and humble, admits it and says: « You are quite right! Forgive me for my reproaches. You are worth more than I am and you know what to do. Oh! Let us go and tell the Master, His Mother and yours! She was so worried! »

3-1845

« Because evil tongues have hinted... But be silent for the time being. Later... See? They are sitting at the table and the Master is beckoning to us to go... »

... It is a quick meal. Also the Roman ladies, sitting at the table of the women and mixed with them, so that Claudia is between Porphirea and Dorcas, are eating in silence what is put before them. They exchange mysterious smiles and meaningful nods with Johanna and Mary of Magdala. They look like schoolchildren on holiday.

When supper is over Jesus tells them to form a square with their seats and sit down in order to listen to Him. He places Himself in the centre and begins to speak in the middle of a square of attentive faces, where only the little innocent eyes of Dorcas' baby, who is sleeping in his mother's lap, are closed, while the eyes of Mary, sat on Johanna's knees, and those of Matthias, cuddled on Jonathan's, are becoming heavy with sleep.

« O disciples gathered here in the Name of the Lord, or attracted here by the desire of Truth, a desire that still comes from God, Who wants light and truth to be in all hearts, listen.

This evening we have been allowed to be all together, and this has been caused by wicked people who want us to be scattered. Owing to the limitations of one's senses, one is not in a position to realise how deep and vast is this union, true dawn of the future unions that will take place when the Master is no longer among you in His body, but will be with you with His spirit. You will then know how to love, and how to practice My doctrine. For the time being you are like babies who are breast-fed. You will then be like adults and will be able to take all kinds of food without any harm. And then you will be able to say, as I say now: "Come to me, all of you, because we are all brothers and because He sacrificed Himself for us all".

There are too many prejudices in Israel! And they are like arrows injuring charity. I am speaking openly to you, loyal followers, because there are no traitors among you, or people with prejudicial ideas, which separate or lead to misunderstanding, obstinacy and hatred against Me, Who points out to you the ways of future times. I cannot speak in a different way. And from now on I will speak less, because I see that words are useless or almost useless. You have heard enough to become perfectly holy and learned. But you have made little progress, you brother-men particularly, because you like My words but you do not practise them. From now on, in a more and more pressing manner, I will make you do what you will have to do when the Master has gone back to Heaven, from which He came. I will let you watch what the future Priest is. Rather than My words, you must pay attention to My deeds, repeat them, learn them, add them to My teaching. You will

thus become perfect disciples.

What has the Master done and what has He made you do and practise to day? Charity in its multiform ways. Charity towards God. Not just the charity of vocal ritual prayer. But active charity, which renews you in the Lord, despoiling you of the spirit of the world and of the heresies of heathenism, which is to be found not only in heathens, but also in Israel, in the many customary practices that have replaced the true holy Religion, as open and simple as all things coming from God. Not good deeds, or apparently good to be praised by men, but holy deeds to deserve the praise of God.

Every man who was born will die. You are aware of that. But life does not end with death. It continues in a different form and lasts for ever with a reward for those who were just, and a punishment for those who were wicked. The knowledge of a definite judgement must not paralyse you during your lifetime or at the hour of your death. It must be a spur and a restraint, a spur urging you to do good, a restraint deterring you from evil passions. So be true lovers of the true God, always operating with the aim of deserving Him in the future life.

You men, who love grandeur, which grandeur is greater than to become children of God, that is, gods? And you who shun pain, which certainty of suffering no longer is there as that awaiting you in Heaven? Be holy. Do you want to establish a kingdom on the Earth? Do you feel that snares are laid for you and are you afraid that you may not succeed? If you behave as holy people, you will succeed. Because the very authority ruling over us will not be able to stop you, notwithstanding all its cohorts, because you will convince the cohorts to follow My holy doctrine as I, without any violence, have convinced the women of Rome that the Truth is here... »

« Lord!... » exclaim the Roman ladies seeing that their presence has been disclosed.

« Yes, women. Listen and remember. I tell My followers from Israel and I tell you, who are not from Israel but whose souls are just, what is the statute of My Kingdom.

No rebellions. They are of no use. We are to sanctify the authorities imbuing them with our holiness. It will be a long but successful work. With meekness and patience, without foolish haste or human deviations, by obeying when obedience is not noxious to your own souls, you will succeed in turning the authorities, now ruling over us in a pagan way, into Christian authorities protecting us. Do your duty as subjects towards authorities, as you do your duty as believers towards God. You must consider each authority a means of elevation, not of oppression, because it gives you the opportunity to sanctify it and yourselves, through examples and heroism.

3-1847

And as you are faithful believers and good citizens, be also good husbands and wives; be holy, chaste, obedient, fond of each other, united to bring up your children in the Lord. Be fatherly and motherly to your servants and slaves, because they also have bodies and souls, feelings and affections like yourselves. If death deprives you of your husband or wife, if possible, do not be anxious to get married again. Love orphans, also on behalf of your deceased companion. You, servants, be subject to your masters, and if they are faulty, sanctify them through your own example. You will have great merit in the eyes of the Lord. In future, in My Name, there will be no more servants and masters, but brothers. There will be no different races, but brothers. There will be no more oppressors and oppressed, hating one another, because those who are oppressed will call their oppressors brothers.

And you, who are of the same faith, love one another, helping one another, as I made you do today. But do not confine your help to the poor, to the pilgrims, to the sick people of your own race. Open your arms to everybody, as Mercy opens them to you. Let those who have more, help those who have little or nothing. Let those who are more learned teach those who do not know or know little, and let them teach patiently and humbly, remembering that you really knew nothing before I taught you. Seek Wisdom not to add lustre to your names, but to obtain assistance in proceeding in the way of the Lord.

Let married women love virgins, and the latter love the former, and both love widows. You are all useful in the Kingdom of the Lord. The poor must not envy the rich and the rich must not cause hatred through display of wealth and hardness of heart. Take care of orphans, sick and homeless people. Open your hearts, before opening your purses and your homes, because if you give assistance with an ill grace, you do not honour but you offend God, Who is present in every unhappy person.

I solemnly tell you that it is not difficult to serve the Lord. It is enough to love the true God and your neighbour, whoever that may be. I will be present every time you cure a sore or a disease. And everything you do for Me in future, if it is good, it will be done to Me; if it is bad, it will still be done to Me. Do you want to make Me suffer? Do you want to lose the Kingdom of peace, do you want to miss the opportunity of becoming gods, just by not being good to your neighbour?

Never again shall we be all united as we are now. More Passovers will come... but it will not be possible for us to be together for many reasons, first because of partly holy and partly excessive caution, and every excess is faulty, so that we will have to be separated; secondly because I shall not be with you in future Passovers... But remember this day. In future you are to do, not

3-1848

only at Passover, but always, what I made you do today.

I have never deceived you, stating that it is easy to belong to Me. To belong to Me means not only living in the Light and Truth, but it also implies eating the bread of conflict and persecution. But the stronger you are in love, the stronger you will be in struggles and persecutions.

Believe in Me. For what I really am: Jesus Christ, the Saviour, Whose Kingdom is not of this world, Whose coming means peace to good people, Whose possession means knowledge and Possession of God, because he who has Me in himself and has himself in Me, is in God, and has God in his spirit now, and will have Him later in the celestial Kingdom for ever.

Night has fallen. Tomorrow is Preparation Day. Go. Purify yourselves, meditate, celebrate a holy Passover.

And you women of a different race, but whose spirits are righteous, go. May the good will by which you are animated be for you the way to come to the Light. In the name of the poor, as I am poor Myself, I bless you for your generous alms, and I bless you for your kind intentions to the Man Who has come to bring love and peace to the Earth. Go! And you, Johanna, and anybody else who is not afraid of snares, may go. »

A whispering of astonishment runs through the meeting while the Roman ladies, who are now only six as Eglah is staying with Mary of Magdala, put into a bag the waxed tablets written by Flavia while Jesus was speaking, and go out after bidding goodbye to everybody collectively. The astonishment is such that no one moves, with the exception of Johanna, Jonathan and Johanna's servants, who are carrying the sleeping children in their arms. But after the hollow noise of the main door being closed tells the remainders that the Romans ladies have gone, the whispering becomes a clamour.

« Who are they? »

« Why were they here? »

« What have they done? »

And above all Judas shouts: « Lord, how do You know about the rich offering they gave me? »

Jesus calms the uproar with a gesture and He says: « They were Claudia and her lady-companions. And while the other ladies of Israel, fearing the wrath of their husbands, or having the same minds and hearts of their husbands, dare not become My followers, the despised pagan ladies, with holy astuteness know how to come to learn the Doctrine which, even if for the time being it is accepted in a human way, still serves to elevate... And this girl, previously a slave, but of Jewish extraction, is the flower offered by Claudia to Christ's followers, as she has been made free and entrusted to the faith of Christ. With regard to My knowing

3-1849

about their offering... Oh! Judas! Everybody but you should ask Me that question! You know that I see in men's hearts. »

« So You know that I spoke the truth when I said that they were laying snares and that I baffled them when I went to make... guilty people speak? »

« That is true. »

« Please say that in a loud voice, that my mother may hear... Mother, I am boy, but not a scoundrel... Mother, let us make peace. Let us love and understand each other, united in serving our Jesus. »

And Judas goes humbly and lovingly to embrace his mother, who says: « Yes, son! Yes, my Judas. Good! Good! Be always good, my child! For yourself, for the Lord! For your poor mother! »

The hall is now full of excitement and comments, and many state that it was not wise to receive the Roman ladies and they reproach Jesus.

Judas hears them, He leaves his mother and hastens to defend the Master. He informs them of his conversation with Claudia and concludes: « Her help is not to be neglected. We have been persecuted even before she came among us. Let her do as she wishes. And remember, it is better not to say a word to anybody. Consider that if to be friendly with heathens is dangerous for the Master, it is just as dangerous for us. The Sanhedrin which, after all, is held back by fear of Jesus because of a lively dread of lifting its hand against the Anointed of the Lord, would not hesitate one moment to kill us like dogs, as we are poor common men. Instead of putting on scandalised looks, remember that only a little while ago you were like frightened sparrows and bless the Lord for helping us through unexpected means, even if you may think they are not legal. They are, however, strong enough to establish the Kingdom of the Messiah. We shall be able to do anything if Rome defends us! Oh! I am no longer afraid! This is a great day! More for this thing than for anything else... Ah! when You will be our Head! What a meek, strong, blessed power! What peace! What justice! The strong friendly Kingdom of the Just One! And the world will be coming slowly to it!... Prophecies will be fulfilled! Crowds, nations... the world will be at Your feet! Oh! Master! You will be the King, and we will be Your ministers... Peace on the Earth, glory in Heaven... Jesus Christ of Nazareth, King of the stock of David, Messiah and Saviour, I greet You and adore You! » and Judas, who seems to be in raptures, concludes prostrating himself: « Your Name is known on the Earth, in Heaven and even in Hell. Your power is infinite. Which strength can resist You, o Lamb and Lion, Priest and King, three times Holy? » and he remains prostrated on the floor in the hall, which is struck dumb with amazement.

3-1850

371. Preparation Day. The Morning.

30th January 1946.

Men are lying asleep everywhere in Lazarus' palace, which has been changed into a dormitory for one night. I do not see any women. They have perhaps been taken to the rooms upstairs. The clear daybreak whitens the city slowly, it invades the courtyards of the palace, rousing the first timid chirping of birds in the branches of the shady trees, and the early cooing of doves resting in the cavity of the cornice. But the men do not wake up. Tired and full of food and excitement as they are, they are sleeping and dreaming...

Jesus goes into the hall and then into the main courtyard. He washes Himself at a fountain of clear water gurgling in its centre, in a square of myrtle, at the foot of which there are little lilies, similar to the so called French lilies of the valley. He tidies Himself and without making any noise He goes to the staircase leading to the rooms upstairs and to the roof terrace. He goes up there to pray and meditate...

He walks slowly to and fro and the doves are the only ones to see Him: stretching their necks and cooing, they seem to be asking one another: « Who is that? » He then leans against the little wall and remains still, engrossed in thought. Finally He raises His eyes, probably because His attention is drawn by the sudden appearance of the sun, rising behind the hills concealing Bethany and the Jordan valley, and He contemplates the view before Him.

Lazarus' palace is on one of the many ground elevations that make the streets in Jerusalem, particularly the less beautiful ones, so undulated. It is in the centre of the city, slightly south-west. It is situated in a beautiful street leading to the Sixtus, forming a T with it, and it overlooks the lower part of the town and faces towards Bezetha, Moriah and Ophel and the Mount of Olives, which is behind them; behind it there is Mount Sion, the area to which it belongs, while on both sides one's eyes rove over the southern hills, whereas Bezetha to the north hides most of the view. But beyond the Gihon valley, Golgotha comes into view looking yellowish in the pink light of dawn: it seems dismal even in that joyful light.

Jesus is looking at it... His look, although more manly and pensive, reminds me of that of the remote vision of Jesus disputing with the doctors, when He was twelve years old. But it is not a terrified look as it was not then. It is the dignified look of a hero contemplating the field of his last battle.

He then turns round to look at the hills to the south of the town and He says: « Caiaphas' house! » and His eyes follow the itinerary from that spot to Gethsemane, then to the Temple, He then looks beyond the town walls, towards Calvary...

The sun has now risen and the town is full of light...

3-1851

Someone knocks loudly and uninterruptedly at the main door of the palace. Jesus leans out to see who is knocking, but the projecting cornice and the fact that the door is in the inner side of the thick walls, prevent Him from seeing anyone. But He hears the noise of the voices of the men who are beginning to wake up, while the door, which was opened by Levi, is closed with a bang. And He then hears many voices of men and women calling His Name... He hastens downstairs saying: « Here I am. What do you want? »

As soon as those who were calling Him, hear Him, they rush upstairs shouting. They are the oldest apostles and disciples, and amongst them there is Jonah, the caretaker of Gethsemane. They are all speaking at the same time and it is thus impossible to understand what they say.

Jesus has to order them sternly to stop where they are and to be silent, in order to calm them. He then approaches them asking: « What is the matter? »

There is great confusion once again, caused by their shouting, which cannot be understood. Behind those who are shouting there are women and disciples who look sad or astonished.

« Let one speak at a time. You, Peter, first. »

« Jonah came... He said that there were many of them and that they looked for You everywhere. He was upset all night and when the gates were opened, he went to Johanna's and was told that You were here. What shall we do? We have to keep Passover after all! »

Jonah of Gethsemane confirms the information saying: « Yes, they even ill-treated me. I told them that I did not know where You were and that perhaps You were not coming back. But they saw all your clothes and they understood that you were coming back to Gethsemane. Don't cause me any harm, Master! I have always given You hospitality with all my heart, and last night I suffered because of You. But... »

« Be not afraid! From now on I will not expose you to any danger. I will no longer stay in your house. I will come there when I happen to be passing through, at night time, to pray... You cannot forbid Me... » Jesus is most kind to frightened Jonah of Gethsemane.

But the golden voice of Mary of Magdala bursts out vehemently: « Since when, man, are you forgetting that you are a servant and that our compliance makes you behave as if you were the master? To whom does the house and the olive grove belong? We are the only ones who can say to the Rabbi: "Do not go and cause harm to our property". But we will not say that. Because it would still be the greatest of blessings, if the enemies of the Christ should destroy trees walls and even make the hill slide down, because everything would be destroyed for giving hospitality to Love, and Love would repay us, His faithful friends, with love. Let them come and destroy everything. What does it matter, if He loves us and is

3-1852

unhurt?! »

Jonah is seized with the fear of his enemies and of his earnest mistress, and he whispers: « What about if they injure my son?... »

Jesus comforts him saying: « I am telling you not to be afraid will not stop there any more. You can tell those who ask you, that the Master no longer lives at Gethsemane... No, Mary! It is better to do so. Leave it to Me! I thank you for your generosity... But it is not My hour, it is not yet My hour! I suppose they were Pharisees... »

« And members of the Sanhedrin, and Herodians, and Sadducees... and Herod's soldiers... and... everybody... I am still trembling with fear... But You can see, Lord! I ran to warn You... at Johanna's... then here... » The man is anxious to point out that he has done his duty on behalf of the Master, at the risk of his own peace.

Jesus smiles kindly and sympathetically and says: « Yes, I see. May God reward you for it. Go home in peace now. I will let you know where you should send our bags or I will send somebody to collect them Myself. »

The man goes away and everybody, with the exception of Jesus and Our Blessed Lady, blames or mocks him. Peter's remarks are biting, the Iscariot's caustic and Bartholomew's ironic. Judas Thaddeus does not say anything, but looks at him in such a way! The whispering and the reproachful glances continue also among the women, ending in the final blow of Mary of Magdala, who replies to the bow of the servant-peasant: « I will tell Lazarus to come and get poultry crammed at Gethsemane for the banquet of the feast. »

« I have no hen-house, Madame. »

« You, Mark and Mary: three wonderful capons! »

Everybody laughs at the angry and... meaningful witty remark of Mary of Lazarus, who is furious at the fear of her subjects and at the discomfort of the Master, Who is deprived of the quiet resting place at Gethsemane.

« Do not be upset, Mary! Peace! Not everybody has a heart like yours! »

« Oh! Unfortunately not! If everybody had a heart like mine, Rabboni! Not even spears and arrows shot at me, would separate me from You! »

The men whisper... Mary hears them and replies at once: « Of course! We shall see! And I hope soon, whether this will help you to pluck up courage. Nothing will frighten me, if I can serve my Rabbi! Yes, serve Him! And, my brothers, one helps when there is danger! When there is no danger, one does not serve, one enjoys oneself!... And the Messiah is not to be followed by us, just for the sake of enjoying ourselves! »

3-1853

The men lower their heads, stung by the truth.

Mary squeezes through the crowd and comes before Jesus. « What have You decided, Master? It is Preparation Day. Where will You celebrate Your Passover? Give Your orders... and if I have found grace with You, grant me to offer You my supper-room and to see to everything... »

« You have found grace with the Father of Heaven, and thus you have found it with the Son of the Father. Every movement of the Father is sacred to the Son. But if I accept the supper-room, let Me go to the Temple, to sacrifice the lamb, as a good Israelite... »

« And if they catch You? » many exclaim.

« They will not catch Me. They may dare to do so at night, in the dark, as rascals are wont to do. But not in the middle of crowds who worship Me. Do not become cowardly!... »

« Oh! In any case there is Claudia now! » shouts Judas. « The King and Kingdom are no longer in danger!... »

« Judas, please! Do not let them collapse within you! Do not lay snares for them within yourself. My Kingdom is not of this world. I am not a king like those sitting on thrones. Mine is the Kingdom of the spirit. If you lower it to the meanness of a human kingdom, you are laying snares for it and causing it to collapse within you. »

« But Claudia!... »

« But Claudia is a heathen. She cannot, therefore, appreciate the value of the spirit. It is a lot if she understands and supports Him, Who, according to her, is a Wise Man... Many people in Israel do not even consider Me wise!... But you are not a heathen, My dear friend! Do not allow your providential meeting with Claudia to become detrimental to you, and likewise do not allow the gift, granted by God to strengthen your faith and your will to serve the Lord, to become a spiritual disaster for you. »

« How could it, my Lord? »

« Easily. And not in you only. If a gift given to assist the weakness of man, instead of fortifying him and making him desirous of supernatural good or even simply of moral good, should instead weigh him down with human desires and divert him from the right way to vicious ways, then the gift would become a damage. Pride is sufficient to turn a gift into a damage. The disorientation caused by something that elates man is sufficient, whereby one loses sight of the supreme good Purpose, and the gift becomes harmful. Are you convinced? Claudia's coming should give you only the support of one consideration. This one: if a heathen has perceived the greatness of My doctrine and the necessity that it should triumph, you, and all the disciples with you, should feel that more intensely and, consequently, devote yourselves entirely to that. But always in a spiritual way. Always... And now let us decide. Where do you think we ought to

3-1854

celebrate this Passover? I want you to be in the peace of spirit for this ritual Supper, in order to feel God, Who is not perceived in a state of agitation. We are many. But I would love to be all together so that you may be able to say: "We celebrated one Passover with Him". Choose therefore a place where, being divided according to the rite, we can form groups, each group being sufficient to consume its own lamb, and we may be able to say: "We were all united, and one could hear the voice of his brother". »

Some mention this place, some that one. But Lazarus' sisters are the winners. « Oh! Lord! Here! We shall send for our brother. We have many halls and rooms here. We will be all together and according to the rite. Accept our offer, Lord! The palace has rooms suitable for at least two hundred people divided into groups of twenty people each. But we are not so many. Make us happy, Lord! Do it for our Lazarus who is so sad... and so ill » and the two sisters conclude weeping: « ... we do not think that he will live to eat another Passover... »

« What do you all think? Do you think we should agree with the good sisters? » says Jesus, putting the question to everybody.

« I would say yes » says Peter.

« And I, too » says the Iscariot and many more with him.

Those who do not speak, nod assent.

« Do the necessary, then. And we will go to the Temple to prove that he who is sure that he is obeying the Most High, is not afraid and is not a coward. Let us go. My peace to those who are remaining. »

And Jesus goes down the rest of the staircase, He crosses the hall and goes out with the disciples into the street crowded with people.

372. Preparation Day. At the Temple.

31st January 1946.

Jesus enters the Temple. And from His very first steps in it one easily understands the evil disposition of minds towards the Nazarene. They leer at Him and give orders to the Temple guards to watch « the disturber », and they give them in public, so that everybody may hear and see; they shout coarse scornful words at those who are with Him and deliberately push the apostles... In short their hatred is such that the manners of the wonderful Pharisees, scribes and doctors are coarse beyond comprehension and they do not realise, blinded as they are with malice, that their behaviour disgraces them also as human beings.

Jesus passes by calmly as if their attitude did not concern Him! And whenever He sees any important person who either by sacred rank or power belongs to the « ruling » class of the Jewish world, He

is the first to greet him. And if that person does not greet in return, Jesus does not change His attitude. When He looks away from such proud people and He sees one or more of the many humble people around Him, His face brightens with a very gentle smile. And there are many of the beggars and sick people whom He gathered together yesterday and who, through their unexpected good luck, are now in a position to celebrate Passover as perhaps they had not done for years, and who have spontaneously formed groups and are now going to buy the lambs to be sacrificed, and the poor wretches look so happy as they are now just like everybody else, both with regard to their clothes and their means. And He stops and kindly listens to them, to their resolutions, to their amazing stories, to their blessings... Old people, children, widows, people sick yesterday: now cured; miserable, ragged, starving, forlorn yesterday: today clad and happy to be like all other men in the days of the great Feast of the Unleavened Bread!

Jesus is greeted, accompanied and followed by a variety of voices, from the silvery ones of children to the trembling voices of old people and between those two extremes there are the timid voices of women. Kisses rain upon His garments and His hands. And Jesus smiles and blesses whilst His enemies, who are as livid with anger as He is bright with peace, chafe with powerless rage.

I hear scraps of conversation...

« You are right! But if we lifted a finger, they (and a Pharisee points at the people pressing round Jesus) would tear us to pieces. »... « Just imagine! He gathered us together, He fed us, He gave us clothes and cured us, and many have found work and help through His rich disciples. But in actual fact, everything came from Him, may God always save Him! » says a man, who probably yesterday was ill and a beggar.

... « No wonder! That is how the rebel bribes people, and stirs them against us » says a scribe threateningly, speaking to a colleague.

« One of His disciples took my name and she told me to go to her after Passover, because she will take me to her property at Bether. Do you realise what that means? She will be taking me and my children. So I will be working. It is a pleasure to work when one is protected and safe. And my Levi will not break his back working in the fields. The lady who is taking us on will employ him in the rose-gardens... It will be a pastime, I say! Ah! May the Eternal Father grant glory and welfare to His Messiah! » says the widow from the plain of Sharron to a well to do Israelite woman, who was questioning her.

« Oh! and could I not help?... Are you all settled, you who were gathered together yesterday? » asks the wealthy Israelite.

« No, we are not, woman. There are still some widows with

3-1856

children and some men. »

« I would like to ask Him whether He will allow me to help Him. »

« Call Him. »

« I dare not. »

« Go, Levi and tell Him that a woman wishes to speak to Him... »

The boy runs away and informs Jesus.

In the meantime a Sadducee ill-treats an old man who is lecturing in the middle of a crowd from beyond the Jordan and is singing the praises of the Master of Galilee.

The old man defends himself saying: « Am I doing anything wrong? Did you want to be praised? All you had to do was do what He does. But you, may God forgive you, you despise poverty and old age, instead of loving them, because you are a false Israelite, as you do not respect Deuteronomy by having mercy on the poor. »

« Do you hear that? That is the result of the doctrine of the instigator! He teaches common people to offend the saints of Israel. »

A priest of the Temple replies to him: « But it is our fault, if that happens! We do nothing but utter threats, without carrying them out! »

... Jesus in the meantime says to the woman of Israel: « If you really want to be a mother to orphans and a sister to widows, go to Chuza's palace at the Sixtus. Tell Johanna that I have sent you. And may the ground be as fruitful to you as Eden, because of your pity. And may your heart be more fruitful in a deeper and deeper love for your neighbour. »

At the same time He sees the guards drag the old man who had spoken previously. He shouts:« What are you doing to the old man? And what has he done? »

« He insulted the officials who were reprimanding him. »

« That is not true. A Sadducee maltreated me because I was speaking of You to those pilgrims. And as he lifted his hand against me, because I am old and poor, I told him that he is a false Israelite who tramples on the words of Deuteronomy. »

« Set the old man free. He is with Me. He spoke the truth. Not sincerity: the Truth. If God speaks through the lips of children, He speaks also through the lips of old people. It is written: "Do not despise a man in his old age, because those who have grown old belong to us". It is also written: "Do not ignore the talk of the wise, be conversant with their proverbs, since from these you will learn wisdom and the theory of intelligence", and also: "Do not be talkative where there are old men". Let Israel remember that, that part of Israel which says that it is perfect, otherwise the Most High will give the lie to it. Father, come here beside Me. »

The old man approaches Jesus, while the Sadducees, impressed by the reproach, go away angrily.

« I am a Jewess of the Diaspora, o expected King. Could I serve

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you like that woman whom You sent to Johanna? » says a woman, who is very much like that one, named Nicky, who wiped Jesus' face on Golgotha and received the Towel. But Jewesses are very much alike and after many months after that vision, I might be wrong.

Jesus looks at her. He sees a woman about forty years old, well dressed, of frank manner. He asks her: « You are a widow, are you not? »

« Yes, I am. And I have no children. I came back recently and I bought some land at Jericho, to be close to the Holy City. But now I see that You are greater than it is. And I will follow You. And I beg You to accept me as Your servant. I heard of You from Your disciples, but You exceed what they told me. »

« All right. But what do you want exactly? »

« To help You with the poor people and make people love You and know You, as best I can. I know many people in the colonies of the Diaspora, as I used to follow my husband in his business. I have means, but I need little for myself. So I can do quite a lot. And I am anxious to do much for Your sake and to pray for the soul of him who married me twenty years ago and who was my loving companion until he breathed his last. He told me when he was dying. He seemed to prophesy: "When I am dead, deliver this flesh of mine, which loved you, to the tomb and go back to our country. You will find the Promised One. Oh! You will see Him! Look for Him and follow Him. He is the Redeemer and the Reviver and He will open the door of Life to me. Be kind and help me to be ready when He will open Heaven to those who have no debts with Justice and be good in order to deserve to meet Him soon. Swear that you will do so and that you will turn the unfruitful tears of widowhood into active strength. Follow the example of Judith, my darling, and all the nations will know your name". My poor husband! I ask You only to take cognizance of me... »

« I will know you as a good disciple. You may go to Johanna as well and may God be with you. »

... As busy as bees Jesus' enemies attack Him once again while He is making His way to the enclosure of the Temple, after He has sacrificed His lamb and has waited for those of the disciples to be sacrificed, in order to have enough for everybody.

« When are You going to stop posing as a king? You are not a king! And You are not a prophet! How long do You intend to trespass on our kindness, You sinner, rebel and cause of evil to Israel? How many times have we to tell You that You have no right to act as a Rabbi in here? »

« I came to sacrifice a lamb. You cannot forbid that. In any case I would remind you of Adonijah and Solomon. »

« What have they got to do with it? What do You mean? Are You

3-1858

Adonijah? »

« No. Adonijah made himself king by fraud, but Wisdom was watching and advising, and Solomon only became king. I am not Adonijah. I am Solomon. »

« And who is Adonijah? »

« All of you. »

« We? How can You say that? »

« With truth and justice. »

« We comply with the Law, with every point of it, we believe in the prophets and... »

« No. You do not believe in the prophets. They mention Me, but you do not believe in Me. You do not comply with the Law. It prescribes just deeds, which you do not do. Even the offerings, which you come here to make, are not honest. It is written: "The sacrifice of an offering unjustly acquired is a mockery". It is written: "The Most High takes no pleasure in offerings from wicked people, He pays no attention to their offerings, multiplying sacrifices will not gain His pardon for sin". It is written: "Offering sacrifice from the property of the poor is as bad as slaughtering a son before his father's very eyes". That is what is written, Johanan! It is written: "A meagre diet is the very life of the poor, he who withholds it is a man of blood". That is what is written, Ishmael! It is written: "A man murders his neighbour if he robs him of his livelihood". That is what is written, o Doras son of Doras. It is written: "He who sheds blood and he who withholds an employee's wages are brothers". That is what is written, o Johanan, Ishmael, Hananiah, Doras, Jonathan. And remember that it is also written: "Whoever turns a deaf ear to the cries of the poor, will cry too, but he will not be listened to". And you, Eleazar ben Annas, remember and remind your father that it is written: "Let My priests be holy, they must not allow themselves to be contaminated for any reason whatsoever". And you, Cornelius, had better know that it is written: "Anyone who curses father and mother, must die", and death is given not only by the executioner. A more severe death awaits those who sin against their parents: the eternal dreadful death. And you, Tolme', remember that it is written: "He who practises magic, will be exterminated by Me". And you, Sadoc, golden scribe, remember that between an adulterer and his procurer of adultery there is no difference in the eyes of God and that it is written that he who swears falsehood will be devoured by everlasting flames. And tell him, who has forgotten it, that he who marries a virgin and when he is satiated with her, he rejects her with false accusations, is to be condemned. Oh! not in this world. In future life, because of his deceit, his perjury, the damage caused to his wife and his adultery. What? Are you all running away? Before the Defenceless One Who is

3-1859

speaking words that are not His own, but belong to those whom you declare to be the saints of Israel, thus you cannot say that the Defenceless One is a blasphemer, because if you did, you would call blasphemers the Books of Wisdom and those of Moses, which were dictated by God? Are you fleeing from the Defenceless One? Are perhaps My words stones? Or are they rousing your consciences by striking the hard bronze of your hardened hearts, and your consciences feel that it is their duty to become purified, not only in your bodies, in this Preparation Day, so that you may consume the holy lamb without any sin of impurity? Oh! if it is so, praised be the Lord! Because, since you wish to be praised as wise men, remember that it is true wisdom to know oneself, to confess one's errors, to repent and thus celebrate the rites with "true" devotion. That is, with the cult and rite of your souls, and not with an external cult... They have gone! Let us go as well to give peace to those who are waiting for us... »

373. Preparation Day. In the Streets of Jerusalem.

2nd February 1946.

They come out of the Temple, overcrowded with people and plunge into the swarming streets, where everybody is making haste in the last preparations for Passover and late-comers are anxiously looking for a room, a hall, any place at all, to use as a supper-room, where to consume the lamb.

It is thus easy to meet people but it is also easy not to recognise one another in the dense agitated crowd, as one sees faces of all ages, of all the regions where there are Israelites, and where the pure blood of Israel, through mixture of blood or simply through mimicry, has become like other races. One can thus see Jews who are like Egyptians or look like Nubians because of their thick prominent lips, snub noses and facial angle; others with small fine features, slender bodies, witty eyes make one understand that they come from the Greek colonies or are crossed with Greeks; whereas tall robust men, with rather square faces, clearly show that they are connected with the Latin race; and there are many who modem people would say are Circassians or Persians with a resemblance of Mongolian or Indian eyes in the very white faces of the former and the olive-hued faces of the latter. A beautiful kaleidoscope of faces and garments! The result is that one's eyes become tired and one ends up by looking without seeing. But what escapes one is noticed by another.

It is therefore understandable that what escapes the Master, Who is always absorbed in thought when He is left in peace, without being asked questions, is noticed by this one or that one of His followers. And the apostles, those who are closer to Jesus,

point out to one another what they see and talk to one another in low voices making worldly comments... on the people they Point out.

One such biting comment on an ex-disciple who passes by haughtily, pretending he does not see them, is heard by Jesus, Who asks: « To whom were those words referred? »

« To that blockhead over there » says James of Zebedee. « He pretended he did not see us, and he is not the only one to do so. But when he wanted to be cured and was looking for You, he did see us! I hope he gets a malignant pustule! »

« James!! Are you standing beside Me with such feelings while you are getting ready to consume the lamb? In actual fact you are more inconsistent than he. He went away openly when he felt he could not do what I said. You, instead, have remained but you do not do what I say. Are you not perhaps a greater sinner than he? »

James blushes so deeply that he looks congested, and he withdraws behind his companions, as he is humiliated.

« It hurts to see them behave like that, Master! » says John to support his brother who has been reproached. « Our love rebels seeing their estrangement... »

« Of course. But do you think that you can bring them back to love by so doing? Discourteous acts, bad words, insults have never brought a rival or a man of different opinion to where he should be led. It is through kindness, patience, charity, persevering notwithstanding refusals, that you achieve your purpose. I understand and pity your hearts, which suffer seeing that I am not loved. But I would like to see and know that you are more supernatural in your acts and means to make Me loved. Come on, James, come here. I did not speak to humiliate you. Let us love and understand one another, at least among ourselves, My dear friends... There is already so much incomprehension and sorrow for the Son of man! »

James, who is cheerful again, goes back beside Him.

They walk for some time in silence, then Thomas bursts into a thundering exclamation: « But it's really a shame! »

« What? » asks Jesus.

« The meanness of so many people! Master, don't You see how many pretend they do not know You? »

« So what? Will their behaviour change one iota of what has been written about Me? No, it will not. Only with regard to themselves what could be written will change. Because in the eternal books it could be said of them: "Good disciples", whereas it will be written: "They were not good, the coming of the Messiah meant nothing to them". Dreadful words, you know? Worse than: "Adam and Eve sinned". Because I can cancel that sin. But I will not be able to cancel the sin of those who deny the Word Saviour... Let us go this way. I will stop with My brothers, with Simon Peter and

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James in the suburb of Ophel. Judas of Simon also will remain with Me. But Simon Zealot, John and Thomas will go to Gethsemane to get the bags... »

« Yes, so Jonah's lamb will not go down his throat the wrong way » says Peter, who is still angry. The others laugh...

« Be good! There is no reason to be astonished if he is afraid. You might feel the same tomorrow. »

« Me, Master? The sea of Galilee is more likely to turn into wine than I am to be afraid » states Peter confidently.

« And yet... the other evening... Oh! Simon! You did not look so brave on the staircase of Chuza's palace » remarks Judas of Kerioth pungently, without being too ironic... but sufficiently sarcastic to bite Peter.

« I was afraid for the Lord, that is why I was worried! For no other reason. »

« Very well! Let us hope that we shall... never be afraid, so that we may not cut a bad figure, eh! » replies Judas of Kerioth, clapping him on his shoulder, protectingly and maliciously...

At any other moment his behaviour would have given rise to a reaction. But Peter, since the previous evening, is full of... admiration for Judas and puts up with him in everything.

Jesus says: « Philip and Nathanael with Andrew and Matthew, please go to Lazarus' palace and tell them that we are coming. »

The four apostles part and the others proceed with Jesus. The disciples, with the exception of Stephen and Isaac, go with the apostles sent to the palace.

At the Ophel suburb there is a further parting. Those bound for Gethsemane go away quickly with Isaac. Stephen remains with Jesus, the sons of Alphaeus, Peter, James and the Iscariot and to avoid stopping at the cross-roads, they proceed slowly in the same direction as those who have gone to Gethsemane. They go along the same little street along which Jesus will be taken by His torturers on the evening of Holy Thursday. Now, about midday, it is empty. After a short distance they come to a little square with a fountain shaded by a fig-tree, which is opening its little tender leaves above the calm water.

« There is Samuel of Annaleah » says James of Alphaeus, who must know him well. The young man is about to enter a house carrying a lamb... and other foodstuffs.

« He is preparing the Passover supper also for his relative » remarks Judas of Alphaeus.

« Has he settled here now? Had he not gone away? » asks Peter.

« Yes, he has settled here. They say that he is flirting with the daughter of Cleopas, the sandal-maker. She is wealthy... »

« Ah! So why does he say that Annaleah left him? » asks the Iscariot. « That's a lie! »

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« Man often makes use of lies. And he does not realise that by doing so he takes the wrong path. The first step, one step, is enough, and one can no longer get free... It is birdlime... it is a labyrinth... a snare... A sloping snare... » says Jesus to Judas of Kerioth.

« What a pity! He seemed such a good man last year! » says James of Zebedee.

« Yes. I really thought that he would imitate his girl-friend devoting himself entirely to You and forming a couple of married angels and Your servants. I would have sworn to it!... » says Peter.

« My dear Simon! Never swear on the future of man. It is the most uncertain of all things. No element, existing at the time of the oath, can guarantee a safe oath. There are criminals who become saints, and there are just people, or apparently just, who become criminals » Jesus replies to him.

Samuel in the meantime, after going into the house, has come out once again to draw water at the fountain... He thus sees Jesus. He looks at Him with obvious contempt and hurls at Him what is certainly an insult, although I do not understand it, as it was spoken in Hebrew.

The Iscariot jumps forward all of a sudden, he catches him by the arm, shaking him like a tree from which one wants ripe fruit to drop: « Is that how you speak to the Master, you sinner? Down, on your knees, at once! Apologise to Him, you foul tongue of a dirty pig! Down! Or I'll break your neck! » Handsome Judas is furious in his sudden violence! His countenance has changed fearfully. Jesus tries to calm him in vain. He does not release his hold until he sees the sinner kneeling on the muddy earth around the fountain.

« Forgive me » says the unlucky fellow between his teeth, feeling Judas' fingers torture him like pincers. But he says so badly, only because he is forced to it.

Jesus replies: « I am not angry. But you still are, notwithstanding what you say. Words are useless unless they are uttered with one's heart. But you are still cursing Me in your heart. And you are thus twice guilty. Because you accuse Me and you hate Me for a reason, which your conscience, from its very depth, tells you is not true. And because you are the only one who is at fault, not Annaleah, not I. But I forgive you everything. Go and try to become honest and pleasing to God. Let him go, Judas. »

« I am going. But I hate You! You have led Annaleah astray, and I hate You... »

« But you have found consolation with Rebecca, the sandalmaker's daughter. And you have sought consolation since Annaleah was your fiancee, and although ill, she thought of you only... »

« I was a widower... I thought I already was... and I was looking for a wife... I have now gone back to Rebecca because... because Annaleah does not want me » says Samuel to justify himself, when

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he realises that his mischief has been discovered.

Judas Iscariot concludes: « ... and because Rebecca is very rich. She is as ugly as an old worn-out sandal... and as old as a sole lost along the way... but rich, oh! very rich!... » and he laughs sarcastically, while the other runs away.

« How do you, know? » asks Peter.

« Oh!... it is easy to find out where there are virgins and money! »

« Well! Shall we go along this little street, Master? This square is as hot as an oven. It is shaded and windy » implores Peter who is perspiring.

They walk slowly, waiting for the others to come back. The street is deserted.

A woman comes out of a door and prostrates herself at Jesus' feet weeping.

« What is the matter? »

« Master!... Are You already purified? »

« Yes. Why are you asking Me? »

« Because I wanted to tell You... But You cannot approach him. He is all rotten... The doctor says that he is infected. I will call the priest after Passover... and... Hinnom will receive him. Don't say that it is my fault. I did not know... He worked at Joppa for many months and he came back saying that he had injured himself. I have used balms and I have bathed him with aromatic herbs... But they do not help. I applied to a herbalist. He gave me some powders for the blood... I separated the children... the bed... because I was beginning to realise. He got worse. I sent for the doctor. He said to me: "Woman, you know what your duty is and I know mine. It is an injury caused by lust. Separate him from yourself, I will separate him from the people, the priest from Israel. He should have thought about it when he was offending God, you and himself. Let him expiate now". He promised not to say anything until after the Feast of the Unleavened Bread. But if You had mercy on the sinner, on me who love him and on the five innocent children... »

« What do you want Me to do for you? Do you not think that he who sinned should expiate? »

« Yes, Lord! But You are the Living Mercy! » All the faith of which a woman is capable is in her voice, in her eyes, in her kneeling attitude, with her arms stretched out towards the Saviour.

« And what are his feelings? »

« He is disheartened... What else could he be, Lord? »

« A supernatural feeling of repentance, of justice would be sufficient to obtain mercy!... »

« Justice? »

« Yes. He should say: "I have sinned. My sin deserves this and much more, but I ask those whom I offended to have mercy on

3-1864

me". »

« I have already had pity on him. You, God, have mercy on him. I cannot say to You: come in... I am not touching You myself either... But if You want I will call him and I will make him speak from the terrace. »

« Yes, do. »

The woman, with her head inside the door of the house, shouts in a loud voice: « Jacob! Jacob! Go up to the roof. Look out. Don't be afraid. »

A few moments later the man appears at the parapet of the terrace. His face is yellowish and swollen, his neck and one hand are bandaged... the wreck of an infected man... He looks with the watery eyes of a man affected by dishonourable diseases. He asks: « Who wants me? »

« Jacob, the Saviour is here... » The woman says no more but she looks as if she wanted to hypnotise the sick man and instil her thoughts into him...

The man, whether he perceives her thoughts, or through a spontaneous act, stretches his arms and says: « Oh! free me! I believe in You! It is terrible to die like this! »

« It is terrible to fail in one's duty. You did not think of that! You did not think of your children! »

« Have mercy, Lord... On them, on me... Forgive me! » And he leans on the low wall weeping. His bandaged hand is protruding as well as his arm, which is uncovered as his sleeve is pulled up and is spotted with pustules, and swollen: a repulsive sight... The man, in his present position, is like a macabre puppet or a corpse abandoned there and about to decay. A pitiful and disgusting sight at the same time.

The woman is weeping, still on her knees, in the dust. Jesus seems to be waiting for a further word.

At last it is heard among sobs: « I implore You with contrition in my heart! At least assure me that they will not starve... and then... I will go with resignation... But save my soul, o Blessed Saviour! At least that! »

« Yes, I will cure you. For the innocent children's sake and to give you the opportunity to become just. Do you understand? Remember that the Saviour cured you. God will absolve you of your sins according to how you respond to this grace. Goodbye. Peace to you woman. » And He almost runs away to meet those who are coming from Gethsemane. Not even the shouts of the man who feels and sees that he has been cured can stop Him, or those of his wife...

« Let us go along this lane, to avoid passing there again » says Jesus after He has joined the others.

They walk along a miserable lane, which is so narrow that two

3-1865

people can hardly go along it walking side by side and if one should meet a donkey with a pack-saddle, one would have to stick to the wall like a stamp. The light is very faint because the roofs almost touch each other. It is a solitary, silent, bad smelling lane. They proceed in single file to the end of it. Then at a little square, crowded with boys, they all get together.

« Why did You say those words to that man? You never said them before... » asks Peter curiously.

« Because that man will be one of My enemies. And his future sin will aggravate his present fault. »

« And You cured him?! » they all ask with surprised countenance.

« Yes. For the innocent children's sake. »

« H'm! He will fall ill again... »

« No, he will take care of his body, after the fright he had and what he suffered. He will not be taken ill again. »

« But he will sin against You, as You said. I would have let him die. »

« You are a sinner, Simon of Jonah. »

« And You are too good, Jesus of Nazareth » replies Peter.

They disappear in a central street and I no longer can see them.

A note of mine.

I have recognised both the man who was cured and Samuel. The former is the man who hit Jesus' head with a stone at His Passion. I recognise him better than his wife, who was sorrowful then as she is now and I recognise the house, which has a characteristically tall door with three steps. Likewise, notwithstanding the mask of hatred that transforms him, I recognise in Samuel the young man who kills his mother with a kick in order to be able to go and strike the Master with a cudgel.

374. Preparation Day. The Evening.

3rd February 1946.

When Jesus enters the palace, He sees that it is crowded with servants from Bethany, who are busy making preparations. Lazarus, who is lying on a little bed and is suffering very much, greets the Master with a faint smile. He hastens towards him, bending kindly over the little bed and asking: « You have suffered a great deal, My dear friend, because of the jolting of the wagon, have you not? »

« Very much, Master » replies Lazarus, so exhausted that the very memory of what he felt makes tears well up in his eyes.

« Through My fault! Forgive Me! »

Lazarus takes one of Jesus' hands up to his face, rubs his skinny cheek against it, kisses it and whispers: « Oh! It was no fault of

Yours, Lord! I am so happy that You are celebrating Passover with me... my last Passover!... »

« With God's will, notwithstanding everything, you will celebrate many more, Lazarus. And your heart will always be with Me. »

« Oh! I am a finished man! You are consoling me... but it is all over. And I am sorry... » He weeps.

« See, Lord? Lazarus does nothing but weep » says Martha compassionately. « Tell him not to cry. He wears himself out! »

« The body still has its rights. It is painful to suffer, Martha, and the flesh weeps. And it needs relief. But the soul is resigned, is it not, My friend? Your just soul is willing to do the will of the Lord... »

« Yes... But I weep because, since You are so persecuted, You will not be able to assist me at the hour of my death... I shudder at the thought of death, I am afraid to die... But if You were here, I would not feel thus. I would take shelter in Your arms... and I would fall asleep like that... What shall I do? How shall I be able to die without feeling that I do not want to obey the dreadful Will? »

« Cheer up! Do not let that worry you! See? You are making your sisters weep... The Lord will help you so paternally that you will not be afraid. Sinners must be afraid... »

« But You, if You can, will You come to me when I am in agony? Promise me! »

« I promise that and even more. »

« While they are preparing, tell me what You have done this morning... »

And Jesus, sitting on the edge of the little bed, holding one of Lazarus' skinny hands in His own, tells him in detail what happened, until Lazarus, who is exhausted, falls asleep. Jesus does not leave him even then. He remains still in order not to disturb his refreshing slumber and makes signs to make the least possible noise, so much so that Martha, after bringing a refreshment to Jesus, withdraws on tiptoe, drawing the heavy curtain and closing the solid door. The noise of the busy house is thus deadened to a barely perceptible low sound. Lazarus is sleeping. Jesus is engrossed in prayer and meditation.

Some hours pass thus, until Mary of Magdala brings a small lamp, because it is getting dark and the windows are closed.

« Is he still sleeping? » she whispers.

« Yes. He is very calm. It will do him good. »

« He has never slept so long for months... I think that the fear of death made him restless. With You close to him he is not afraid of anything... He is fortunate! »

« Why, Mary? »

« Because he will be able to have You beside him when he dies.

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But I... »

« Why not? »

« Because You want to die... soon. And who knows when I will die. Let me die before You, Master! »

« No, you will have to serve Me for a long time yet. »

« So I am right in saying that Lazarus is fortunate! »

« All the beloved ones will be as fortunate as he is, even more so... »

« Who are they? The pure, are they not? »

« Those who know how to love totally. You, for instance, Mary. »

« Oh! My Master! » Mary throws herself down, on the multicoloured mat that covers the floor of this room, and she remains there, adoring her Jesus.

Martha, who is looking for her, looks into the room. « Come on, then! We must prepare the red hall for the supper of the Lord. »

« No, Martha. Give that room to the most humble guests, to Johanan's peasants, for instance. »

« Why, Master? »

« Because each poor man is Jesus and I am in all of them. Always love the poor whom no one loves, if you want to be perfect. Prepare for Me in the entrance-hall. If you leave open the doors of the many rooms opening on to it, everybody will be able to see Me and I shall see everybody. »

Martha, who is not very happy, objects: « What? You in the entrance-hall?... It is not worthy of You!... »

« Go, do as I say. It is most worthy to do what the Master advises. »

Martha and Mary go out noiselessly and Jesus remains patiently to watch His friend who is resting with a distribution of the guests, which

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Supper has now begun, from a human point of view is not very just, but with a superior view aiming at giving honour and love to those who are usually neglected by the world.

Thus Johanan's peasants with Marjiam, Isaac and other disciples, to make up the ritual number, are sitting in the splendid regal red hall, the vault of which is supported by two columns of red porphyry, between which a long table has been placed. In the hall where they had supper the previous evening there are some more of the most humble disciples. In the white hall, a dream of white splendour, there are the virgin-disciples, and with them, only four in number, there are Lazarus' sisters and Anastasica and other young women. But the queen of the feast is Mary, the preeminent Virgin. In the next room, which is perhaps a library because all around the walls there are tall dark bookcases, which perhaps contain or contained rolls, there are the widows and the

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wives and they are looked after by Eliza of Bethzur and Mary of Alphaeus. And so on.

But what strikes one is to see Jesus in the marble entrance-hall. It is true that the refined taste of Lazarus' sisters has turned the square entrance into a large hall, which is brighter, more embellished and splendid than any hall. But it is still the entrance! Jesus is with the Twelve, but Lazarus is beside Him. And with Lazarus there is also Maximinus.

The supper proceeds according to the rite... and Jesus shines with joy and pleasure being in the centre of all His faithful disciples.

When the supper is over, the last chalice has been consumed and the last psalm sung, all those who were in the different rooms crowd into the entrance. But they cannot all go in, because the table takes up much room.

« Let us go into the red hall, Master. We will push the table against the wall and we will all be around You » suggests Lazarus beckoning to the servants to do so.

Jesus, Who is sitting in the centre, between the two precious columns, under the bright chandelier, on a tall pedestal formed with two bed-seats used for the supper, now really looks like a king on a throne in the midst of His courtiers. His linen tunic, which He put on before supper, shines as if it were woven with precious threads, and looks even whiter against the opaque red of the walls and the bright red of the columns. And His countenance is really divine and regal while He speaks or listens to those around Him. Even the most humble ones, whom He wanted near Him, speak confidently, mentioning their hopes, their worries with simplicity and faith, as they feel that they are loved in a brotherly way by the others.

But the happiest among so many happy people is Marjiam's grandfather! He does not part from his grandson even for one moment, and he delights in looking at him and listening to him... Now and again, as he is sitting beside Marjiam, who is standing, he rests his white head on the chest of his grandson, who caresses it.

Jesus sees him do this several times and He asks him: « Father, is your heart happy? »

« Oh! very happy, my Lord! I cannot believe that it is true. I have but one desire now... »

« Which? »

« The one I mentioned to my son. But he does not approve of it. »

« What is your desire? »

« I would like to die, if possible, in this peace. Soon, at least. Because I have already received the greatest blessing. No human being can have more on the Earth. I want to go... suffer no more... go... How rightly You spoke in the Temple, Lord! "Offering sacrifice from the property of the poor is as bad as slaughtering a

3-1869

son before his father's very eyes". Only his fear of You prevents Johanan from emulating Doras. He is forgetting what happened to the other one, his fields are thriving and he fertilises them with our perspiration. Is perspiration not the property of the poor workman, his very self that is worn out with work exceeding his strength? He does not beat us, he gives us enough to enable us to work. But does he not exploit us more than his oxen? Will you tell Him, o my companions... »

Johanan's new and old peasants nod assent.

« H'm! I think that... Yes, that Your words have made him a greater vampire... to their detriment... Why did You say them, Master? » asks Peter.

« Because he deserved them. What do you say, you workers of his fields? »

« Oh! yes! The first months... it was all right. But now... it is worse than before » avers Micah.

« The bucket of the well is pulled down by its own weight » declares John the priest.

« Yes, and a wolf soon grows weary of looking like a lamb » confirms Hermas.

The women, who are deeply moved, whisper to one another.

Jesus looks at the poor peasants with eyes wide with pity, and He is anguished at not being able to relieve them.

Lazarus says: « I offered absurd amounts of money to have those fields and give these men peace. But I did not succeed in getting them. Doras hates me, he is exactly like his father. »

« Well... we shall die thus. It is our destiny. But the time for us to rest in Abraham's bosom will certainly come! » exclaims Saul, another peasant of Johanan's.

« In God's bosom, son! In God's bosom. Redemption will be completed, Heaven will be open and you will go to Heaven and... »

Somebody hammers at the main door, which resounds loudly. The guests become agitated.

« Who is it? »

« Who goes about in Passover evening? »

« Soldiers? »

« Pharisees? »

« Herod's soldiers? »

But while the agitation spreads, Levi, the caretaker of the palace, appears. « Forgive me, Rabbi » he says « there is a man who wants You. He is in the entrance. He looks very depressed. He is old and looks like a man of the people. He wishes to see You at once. »

« Hey! This is no evening for miracles! Tell him to come back tomorrow... » says Peter.

« No. Every evening is the hour for miracles and mercy » says

3-1870

Jesus standing up and descending from His seat to go towards the hall.

« Are You going alone? I will come with You » says Peter.

« No, stay where you are. » He goes out with Levi.

Near the heavy main door, at the other end of the entrance, which is now in half-darkness as all the lights have been put out, there is a very excited old man. Jesus approaches him.

« Stop, Master. I have perhaps touched a dead body and I do not want to contaminate You. I am the relative of Samuel, Annaleah's fiance. We were eating our supper and Samuel drank all the time... as it is not right to do. But the young man seems to have become mad for some time. It's remorse, Lord! He was half-drunk and while drinking again he was saying: "So I cannot remember whether I told Him that I hate Him. Because, I must tell you that I cursed the Rabbi". And he looked like Cain to me, because he went on repeating: "My wickedness is too great. I do not deserve to be forgiven! I must drink! I must drink to forget. Because it is written that he who curses his God will carry his sin and must die". He was raving like that when a relative of Annaleah's mother came into the house to ask about the repudiation. Samuel, who was almost drunk, replied with coarse words and the man threatened to take him to justice for the damage he was causing to the family honour. Samuel slapped his face. They came to blows... I am old, my sister is old, the servant and the maid are also old. What could the four of us and the two girls, Samuel's sisters, do? All we could do was to shout and try to separate them! Nothing else... And Samuel took the hatchet with which we had prepared the firewood for the lamb and hit the man on the head with it... He did not split his head, because he hit him with the butt-end and not the blade. The man staggered babbling and fell... We did not shout any longer... as we did not wish to attract the attention of people... We bolted the door... We were terrified... We poured some water on the man's head hoping he would come round. But he babbled all the time. He was certainly dying. At times he seemed dead. So I ran here to call You. His relatives will be looking for him tomorrow, perhaps earlier. And they will come to us, because they certainly know that he came. And they will find him dead... And Samuel, according to the Law, will be killed... Lord! Lord! Disgrace is already on top of us... We don't want that! For the sake of my sister, Lord, have mercy on us! He cursed You... But his mother loves You... What shall we do? »

« Wait for Me here. I will come » and Jesus goes back to the hall and from the door He calls: « Judas of Kerioth, come with Me. »

« Where, Lord? » asks Judas obeying promptly.

« You will see. All of you stay here in peace and love. We shall soon be back. »

3-1871

They go out the hall, through the entrance and leave the house. Through deserted dark roads they soon reach the tragic house.

« Samuel's house?! Why?... »

« Be quiet, Judas. I brought you with Me, because I rely on your common sense. »

The old man has made himself known. They go in. They go upstairs, to the supper room, where they dragged the injured man.

« A dead man?! But Master, we will be contaminated! »

« He is not dead. You can see that he breathes and you can hear him groan. I will now cure him... »

« But his head has been struck! It's a crime! Who committed it?... And on the day of the lamb! » Judas is terrified.

« It was he » says Jesus pointing at Samuel, who is curled up in a corner, closer to death than the dying man, panting for breath with terror as the other man has the death-rattle in his throat, with part of his mantle over his head not to see and not to be seen, looked at with terror by everybody, except his mother, who with horror at the crime feels the torture of a guilty son already condemned by the rigid law of Israel. « Do you see to what result a first sin leads? To this, Judas! He began by perjuring himself over the girl, then over God; he then became slanderer, liar, blasphemer, then he took to drinking and now he is a murderer. That is how one becomes subject to Satan, Judas. Always bear it in mind... » Jesus is dreadfully solemn while He points at Samuel with His arm outstretched.

He then looks at Samuel's mother, who clinging to a shutter can hardly stand up and struck with terror seems to be dying, and He sadly says: « Judas, that is how poor mothers are killed by no weapon other than the crimes of their sons!... I feel sorry for her. I feel sorry for mothers! I, the Son, Who will see no mercy for His Mother... »

Jesus weeps... Judas looks at Him in bewilderment...

Jesus bends over the dying man and lays His hand on his head. He prays.

The man opens his eyes. He looks stunned and amazed... but he soon revives. He sits up helping himself with his arms. He looks at Jesus and asks: « Who are You? »

« Jesus of Nazareth. »

« The Holy One! Why are You here with me! Where am I! Where is my sister and her daughter? What happened? » He tries to remember.

« Man, you called Me the Holy One. So, do you believe that I am such? »

« Yes, Lord. I do. You are the Messiah of the Lord. »

« So, is My word sacred to you? »

« Yes, Lord, it is. »

3-1872

« Then... » Jesus stands up. He is imposing: « Then I, as Master and Messiah, order you to forgive. You came here and You were insulted... »

« Ah! Samuel! Of course!... The hatchet! I will denounce... » he says getting up.

« No. Forgive in the name of God. That is why I cured you. You care for Annaleah's mother because she has suffered. Samuel's mother would suffer even more. So forgive. »

The man hesitates somewhat. He looks at the injurer with evident ill-feeling. He looks at the anguished mother. He looks at Jesus Who commands him... He cannot make up his mind.

Jesus stretches His arms towards him, and draws him to His chest saying: « For My sake! »

The man begins to weep... To be thus in the arms of the Messiah, to feel His breath in his hair and a kiss where the wound was!... He weeps...

Jesus says: « Yes, is that true? You forgive him for My sake? Oh! blessed be the merciful! Weep, do weep on My Heart. Let all ill-feeling come out with your tears! All new! All pure! There you are! Be meek! Oh! meek, as a child of God ought to be... »

The man looks and, still weeping, says: « yes. Your love is so sweet! Annaleah is right! I now understand her... Woman, do not weep any more! Let bygones be bygones. No one will learn anything from my mouth. Enjoy your son, providing he can give you joy. Goodbye woman. I am going back to my house » and he is on the point of going out.

Jesus says to him: « I am coming with you, man. Goodbye, mother. Goodbye, Abraham. Goodbye, girls. » Not a word to Samuel, who finds no word either.

His mother tears the mantle off his head, and as a result of what she suffered, she rushes upon her son: « Thank your Saviour, you heartless man! Thank Him, you worthless man!... »

« Leave him, woman. His word would be of no value. Wine makes him silly and his soul is dull. Pray for him... Goodbye. »

He goes downstairs, in the street He joins Judas and the other man, He frees Himself from old Abraham, who wants to kiss His hands, and He begins to stride out in the early moonlight.

« Do you live far from here? » He asks the man.

« At the foot of Moriah. »

« Then we must part. »

« Lord, You have preserved me for my children, my wife, my life. What shall I do for You? »

« Be good, forgive and be quiet. Never, for any reason whatsoever, are you to say one word on what happened. Will you promise? »

« I swear to it on the Sacred Temple! However, I regret I cannot

3-1873

say that You saved me... »

« Be just, and I will save your soul. And you will be able to say that. Goodbye, man. Peace be with you. »

The man kneels down greeting Him. They part.

« How dreadful! » says Judas now that they are alone.

« Yes. Horrible. Judas, you are not to speak either. »

« No, Lord, I will not. But why did You want me with You? »

« Are you not happy to have My confidence? »

« Oh! Very! But... »

« But because I wanted you to ponder on what falsehood, greed for money, orgy and the lifeless practice of a religion, which is no longer felt and practised spiritually, can lead to. What did the symbolic supper mean to Samuel? Nothing! A guzzling. A sacrilege. And through it he became homicidal. Many in future will be like him, and with the taste of the Lamb in their mouths, not of a lamb born of a sheep, but of the divine Lamb, they will commit crimes. Why? How? Are you not inquiring why? I will tell you just the same: because they will have prepared that hour through previous deeds performed carelessly first, and stubbornly later. Remember that, Judas. »

« Yes, Master, I will. But what shall we tell the others? »

« That a man was seriously ill. It is the truth. »

They turn the corner of a street and I no longer see them.

375. The Sabbath of the Unleavened Bread.

4th February 1946.

Many disciples, both men and women, have taken leave and have gone back to the houses where they are guests, or have set out for home again.

On this wonderful afternoon in late April only the true and proper disciples, and particularly those more devoted to preaching, have remained in Lazarus' house. That is, the shepherds Hermas and Stephen, John the priest, Timoneus, Ermasteus, Joseph of Emmaus, Solomon, Abel of Bethlehem in Galilee, Samuel and Abel of Korazim, Agapo, Aser and Ishmael of Nazareth, Elias of Korazim, Philip of Arbela, Joseph the boatman from Tiberias, John of Ephesus, Nicolaus of Antioch. Besides the well-known women disciples, also Annaleah, Dorcas, Judas' mother, Myrtha, Anastasica and Philip's daughters have remained. I do not see Mirjiam of Jairus any longer or Jairus himself. Perhaps they have gone back to the house that offered them hospitality.

They are walking slowly in the courtyards, or on the terrace of the house, while almost all the women and all the old women disciples are around Jesus, Who is sitting near Lazarus' little bed. They are listening to Jesus Who is speaking to Lazarus, describing

the villages they have been through during the last weeks before their Passover trip.

« You arrived just in time to save the little one » remarks Lazarus after hearing the story of the castle of Caesarea Philippi, pointing at the baby who is sleeping peacefully in his mother's arms. And Lazarus adds: « He is a lovely boy! Woman, will you let me see him here, near me? »

Dorcas stands up and silently but triumphantly she offers her child to the admiration of the sick man.

« A lovely boy! Really lovely! May the Lord protect him and make him grow healthy and holy. »

« And faithful to his Saviour. I would rather see him dead now, than know that he is not faithful to Him. I can stand anything, but I could not bear my son to be ungrateful to the Lord Who saved him » says Dorcas resolutely, going back to her seat.

« The Lord always arrives in time to save » says Myrtha, the mother of Abel from Bethlehem. « My son was just as close to death, and what a death!, as Dorcas' baby. But He came... and He saved. What a frightful moment!... » The very memory makes Myrtha go pale.

« So You will come in time also for me, will You not? To give me peace... » says Lazarus, caressing Jesus' hand.

« But are you not feeling a little better, brother? » asks Martha. « As from yesterday you look somewhat relieved... »

« Yes, I do. And I am surprised myself. Perhaps Jesus... »

« No, My dear friend. The fact is that I instil My peace into you. Your soul is sated with it and that dulls the pain of your body. It is God's decree that you must suffer. »

« And die. You may as well say so. Well... may His will be done, as You teach us. From now on I will not ask to be cured or relieved. I have received so much from God (and he unintentionally looks at Mary, his sister) that it is just that I should repay for what I had with my submission... . »

« Do more than that, My dear friend. It is a great thing to be resigned and bear sorrow. But you can give it greater value. »

« Which, my Lord? »

« Offer it for the redemption of men. »

« I am a poor man myself, Master. I cannot aspire to be a redeemer. »

« You say so, but you are wrong. God became Man to help men. But men can help God. The deeds of the just will be united to Mine in the hour of Redemption. Of the just who died ages ago, who are still alive, or will live in future. Add yours, as from now. It is so beautiful to merge with the infinite Bounty by adding to it what we can give of our limited bounty and say: "I am cooperating too, Father, to the welfare of my brothers". There can be no greater

3-1875

love for the Lord and for our neighbour, than this ability to suffer and die to give glory to the Lord and eternal salvation to our brothers. To save ourselves for our own sake? It is very little. It is the "least" degree of holiness. It is beautiful to save other people, by sacrificing ourselves, to love to such an extent as to become a sacrificing fire to save our neighbour. Love is then perfect. And great will be the holiness of such generous souls. »

« How beautiful that is, isn't it, sisters? » exclaims Lazarus with a dreamy smile on his thin face.

Martha, deeply moved, nods assent.

Mary, who is sat on a cushion at Jesus' feet, in her usual posture of humble ardent worshipper, says: « Am. I perhaps costing my brother such suffering? Tell me, Lord, that my anguish may be complete!... »

Lazarus exclaims: « No, Mary, no... I was to die of this. Do not pierce your heart. »

But Jesus, Who is sincere to the utmost, says: « Yes, Mary, you most certainly are! I heard the prayers and the heart-throbs of your good brother. But this must not cause a dull anguish to you, on the contrary it must urge your will to become perfect, for what you cost. And rejoice! Rejoice because Lazarus, for snatching you from the demon... »

« Not I! You did, Master. »

« ... for snatching you from the demon, has deserved from God a future reward, whereby peoples and angels will speak of him. And as for Lazarus, they will speak of other people, and particularly of other women, who through their heroism have snatched the prey from Satan. »

« Who are they? » ask the women curiously, each hoping to be one.

Mary of Judas does not speak. But she looks at the Master... Jesus also looks at her. He could beguile her, but He does not. He does not mortify her, but He does not deceive her. He replies to them: « You will know in Heaven. »

Judas' mother, who is still full of anguish asks: « And if she should not succeed, although she is willing, what will her destiny be? »

« As her good soul deserves. »

« Heaven? But, Lord, a wife, a sister, or a mother who should fail in saving those whom she loves and should see that they are damned, could she enjoy Paradise, even if she were in Paradise? Do You not think that she will never be able to rejoice because... the flesh of her flesh and the blood of her blood have deserved eternal damnation? I think that she will not be able to rejoice seeing her beloved ones in dreadful pain... »

« You are wrong, Mary. The vision of God, the possession of God are the sources of such infinite beatitude that no grief can exist for

the blessed souls. While they are active and diligent in helping those who can be saved, they no longer suffer for those who are separated from God, and consequently from themselves who are in God. The Communion of saints is for the saints. »

« But if they help those who can still be saved, it means that those who are helped are not yet saints » objects Peter.

« But they have a will, at least a passive will, to be saints. The saints of God help also in material needs, to make them pass from a passive to an active will. Do you understand Me? »

« I do and I don't. For instance, supposing I were in Heaven and I saw, let us say, a fleeting kind attitude in... Eli, the Pharisee, what would I do? »

« You would find all the means to increase his kind attitude. »

« And if it did not help in any way? Then? »

« Then, when he were damned, you would be unconcerned about him. »

« And if he deserved to be damned, as he does now, but he were dear -to me - which will never be the case - what should I do? »

« First of all, you had better know that you are in danger of being damned by saying that he is not dear to you and never will be; secondly you must know that, if you were in Heaven, you would pray for him and for his salvation, until the moment of his judgement. There will be souls that will be saved at the last moment, after a whole life of prayer for them. »

A servant comes in saying: « Manaen has come. He wishes to see the Master. »

« Let him come. He certainly wishes to speak of some grave matter. »

The women withdraw discreetly, followed by the men. But Jesus calls back Isaac, John the priest, Stephen and Hermas, Matthias and Joseph, who are all shepherd-disciples. « It is better for you to be informed as well, since you are disciples » He explains.

Manaen enters and bows to Jesus.

« Peace to you » greets Jesus.

« Peace to You, Master. The sun is setting. My first step after the Sabbath is for You, my Lord. »

« Did you have a good Passover? »

« Good!! There can be no good where there is Herod and Herodias! I hope it was the last time that I ate the lamb with them. At the cost of my life I will not stay any longer with them! »

« I think you are making a mistake. You can serve the Master by remaining... » objects the Iscariot.

« That is true. And that is what has kept me there so far. But how nauseating! Chuza could replace me... »

Bartholomew points out to him: « Chuza is not Manaen... He wangles. He would never denounce his master. You are more

sincere. »

« That is true. And what you say is true. Chuza is a courtier. He is spellbound by royalty... Royalty! What am I saying!? By the mud of royalty! But he thinks that he is a king, by being with the king... And he is terrified of royal disfavour. The other evening he looked crestfallen, when he almost crept before Herod who had sent for him after he had heard the complaints of Salome, whom You had chased away. Chuza was in dire difficulty. His desire to get out of trouble, at all costs, even by accusing You, stating that You were wrong, was clearly visible on his face. But Herod... wanted only to laugh at the girl behind her back, as he loathes her, now, as he loathes her mother. And he laughed like a madman on hearing Chuza repeat Your words. He kept saying: "Such words are by far too kind for that young... (and he uttered such an obscene word that I will not repeat it to You). He should have trodden on her lustful breast... But He would have become contaminated!" and he laughed. Then he became grave and said: "But... the insult deserved by the woman cannot be allowed with regard to the crown. I am generous (it is his fixed idea that he is, and as nobody tells him, he does so himself) and I will forgive the Rabbi, also because He told Salome the truth. But I want Him to come to Court so that I may forgive Him completely. I want to see Him, hear Him and make Him work miracles. Let Him come and I will be His protector". That is what he said the other evening. And Chuza did not know what to say. Hi did not want to say no to the monarch and he could not say yes. Because You certainly cannot yield to Herod's whims. Today he said to me: "You are certainly going to see Him... Tell Him what I want". I have told You but I already know the answer. However, tell me, so that I may refer to him. »

« No! » A thundering no.

« Will You not make him a powerful enemy against You? » asks Thomas.

« He may become My executioner. But I can only reply: "no". »

« He will persecute us... »

« Oh! In three days' time he will have forgotten all about it » says Manaen shrugging his shoulders. And he adds: « They have promised him... some pantomime dancers... They are arriving tomorrow... And he will forget everything!... »

The servant comes back: « Nicodemus, Joseph, Eleazar and other Pharisees and leaders of the Sanhedrin are here, Master. They wish to greet You. »

Lazarus looks at Jesus inquiringly. Jesus understands: « Let them come! I will be happy to greet them. »

Joseph comes in shortly afterwards with Nicodemus, Eleazar (the just man at Ishmael's banquet), John (the guest at the remote banquet of Joseph of Arimathea), another man whose name I hear

3-1878

is Joshua, a Philip, a Judas and lastly a Joachim. They seem to go on greeting for ever. The room is fortunately a large one, otherwise there would be no room for so much bowing, embracing and rich vestments. But although it is so large, it becomes so full that the disciples clear out. Only Lazarus remains with Jesus. The disciples perhaps can hardly believe that they are not being looked up and down by the eyes of so many members of the Sanhedrin!

« We heard that you were in Jerusalem, Lazarus. And we came » says the one whose name is Joachim.

« I am amazed and happy. I had almost forgotten what your face looks like... » replies Lazarus somewhat ironically.

« Well... you know... We always wanted to come. But... You disappeared... »

« And you could not believe that it was true! It is in fact rather difficult to visit an unhappy fellow! »

« No! Don't say that. We... respected your desire. But now that... now that... is that right Nicodemus? »

« Yes, Lazarus. Old friends come back. Also to hear your good news and venerate the Rabbi. »

« What news have you brought me? »

« H'm... Well... The usual things... The world... Of course... » they cast sidelong glances at Jesus, Who is sitting erect on His seat, rather engrossed in thought.

« How come you are all together today, when the Sabbath is just over? »

« We had a special meeting. »

« Today?! What was so urgent?... »

The visitors look at Jesus furtively and significantly. But He is engrossed... « There were many reasons... » they eventually reply.

« And do any concern the Rabbi? »

« Yes, Lazarus. Him as well. But we also passed judgement on a grave fact, while we were all gathered in town for the festivity... » explains Joseph of Arimathea.

« A grave fact? Which? »

« An... error of youth... H'm. Of course! A nasty discussion because... Rabbi, listen to us. You are among honest people. Although we are not Your disciples, we are not Your enemies. In the house of Ishmael You told me that I am not far from justice » says Eleazar.

« That is true. I confirm it. »

« And I defended you against Felix at Joseph's banquet » says John.

« That is also true. »

« And these people are of the same opinion as we are. Today we were summoned to decide... and we are not happy about the decision. Because we were defeated by a majority verdict. As You are

wiser than Solomon, we ask You to listen to us and let us have Your opinion. »

Jesus pierces them with a deep glance. He then says: « Speak. »

« Are we sure that no one can hear us? Because it is... a dreadful thing... » says the man whose name is Judas.

« Close the door and draw the curtain, and we will be in a grave » replies Lazarus.

« Master, yesterday morning You told Eleazar of Annas that for no reason whatsoever he was to become contaminated. Why did You tell him? » asks Philip.

« Because it was to be said. He does become contaminated. I do not. The holy books tell us. »

« That is true. But how do You know that he is contaminated? Did the girl perhaps speak to You before she died? » asks Eleazar.

« Which girl? »

« The girl who died after she was raped and her mother died with her, and it is not known whether grief killed them, or they committed suicide, or they were poisoned to prevent them from speaking. »

« I know nothing about that. I saw the corrupt soul of Annas' son. I smelt the stench of him. I spoke. I did not know or see anything else. »

« But what happened? » asks Lazarus with deep concern.

« Eleazar, the son of Annas, saw a girl, the daughter of a widow and... he called her saying that he had some work to give her, because they earned their living doing needlework, and... he seduced her. The girl died three days later, and her mother died, too. But before dying they told their only relative everything, notwithstanding that they had been threatened not to... And their relative went to Annas, to accuse his son, and as he was not satisfied, he told Joseph, me and other people... Annas had him arrested and put into prison. From there he will be taken to the scaffold or he will never be free again. Today Annas wanted to have our opinion on the matter » says Nicodemus.

« He would not have asked us, if he had not known that we were already aware of the fact » grumbles Joseph between his teeth.

« Of course not... Well, with sham voting and counterfeited justice, judgement was passed on the honour and life of three unhappy people and on the punishment for the culprit » concludes Nicodemus.

« So? »

« So! It is obvious. We, who had voted for the freedom of the man and punishment for Eleazar, were threatened and expelled as being unjust. What do You say? »

« That I am horrified at Jerusalem and that the Temple is the most fetid bubo there is in Jerusalem » says Jesus slowly and fearfully.

3-1880

And He concludes: « And you may relate that to those of the Temple. »

« And what did Gamaliel do? » asks Lazarus.

« As soon as he heard of the fact, he covered his face and went out saying: "May the new Samson come soon to crush corrupt Philistines". »

« He was right. And he will soon come. » There is silence.

« And was no mention made of Him? » asks Lazarus pointing at Jesus.

« Yes. Before everything else. Someone reported that You had said that the kingdom of Israel is "Mean". So they said that You are a blasphemer, nay, a sacrilegious person. Because the kingdom of Israel comes from God. »

« Did they? And what did the Pontiff say the seducer of a virgin is? He who disgraces his ministry? Tell Me! » asks Jesus.

« He is the son of the High Pontiff. Because Annas is the real king in there » says Joachim, who is frightened by the stateliness of Jesus, Who is standing in front of him, with His arm stretched out...

« Yes. The king of corruption. And shall I not call "mean" a Country in which we have a filthy and murderous Tetrarch, a High Pontiff who is the accomplice of a seducer and murderer?... »

« Perhaps the girl committed suicide or died of grief » whispers Eleazar.

« Still murdered by her seducer... And are they not preparing now the third victim in the relative who has been imprisoned so that he may not speak? And is the altar not being desecrated by those who approach it with so many crimes? And is justice not being hushed up by enjoining silence on the too rare just members of the Sanhedrin? Yes, let the new Samson come and destroy this desecrated place, let him exterminate in order to reform!... As this wretched Country makes Me feel sick, I not only say that it is mean, but I am going away from its corrupt heart, full of nameless crimes... the very den of Satan... I am going away. Not because I am afraid of death. I will prove to you that I am not afraid. I am going away because My hour has not yet come and I do not give pearls to the swine of Israel, but I will take them to the humble people scattered in hovels, in the mountains and valleys of poor villages, where they still know how to believe and to love, if there is someone to teach them, where under coarse garments there are souls, whilst here sacred vestments and even more so the Ephod and the Pectoral cover up filthy carrions and conceal murderous weapons. Tell them that in the name of the True God I consecrate them to their condemnation and as a new Michael I drive them out of Paradise. For ever. As they wanted to be gods, whereas they are demons. It is not necessary for them to die to be judged. They are

3-1881

already judged. With no forgiveness. »

The imposing members of the Sanhedrin and the Pharisees seem to become smaller, and in fact they cower before the dreadful wrath of the Christ, Who, on the contrary, seems to become a giant, so dazzling is His appearance and so domineering His attitude.

Lazarus moans: « Jesus! Jesus! Jesus! »

Jesus hears him and changing His tone and appearance He asks: « What is the matter, My dear friend? »

« Oh! Be not so terrible! It's no longer You! How can one hope in mercy, if You appear so dreadful? »

« And yet I will be thus, and even more, when I judge the twelve tribes of Israel. But cheer up, Lazarus. He who believes in the Christ is already judged... » And He sits down once again.

There is silence.

At last John asks: « As we preferred to be insulted rather than make a false statement against justice, how will we be judged? »

« With justice. Persevere and you will reach the place where Lazarus already is: God's friendship. »

They stand up.

« Master, we are going. Peace to You. And to you, Lazarus. »

« Peace to you. »

« What was said in here, is to remain here » some of them say imploringly.

« Be not afraid! Go. May God always guide you. »

They go out.

Jesus is left alone with Lazarus. After a short while the latter says: « How horrible! »

« Yes. How horrible!... Lazarus, I am going to arrange our departure from Jerusalem. I will be your guest at Bethany until the end of the Unleavened Bread. » And He goes out...

376. Mary Has Chosen the Better Part.

14th August 1944.

I realise at once that we are still dealing with the Magdalene, because she is the first person I see, wearing a plain pink lilac dress like the mallow flower. She is not wearing any precious ornament, her hair is plaited and collected at the back of her neck. She looks younger than when she wore sumptuous dresses. Her eyes are no longer shameless, as when she was a « sinner », neither are they discouraged as when she was listening to the parable of the lost sheep, or shameful and shining with tears as when she was in the hall of the Pharisee... Her eyes are now peaceful and they have become as clear as those of a boy and they shine with a calm look.

She is leaning against a tree near the border of the Bethany property,

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looking towards the road. She is waiting. She then utters a cry of joy. She turns towards the house and shouts loudly - to be heard by everybody - in her earnest unmistakable voice: « He is arriving!... Martha, they told us the truth. The Rabbi is here! » and she runs to open the heavy creaking gate. She does not give the servants time to open it and she runs out onto the road, with her arms stretched out, as does a boy towards his mother, and with a cry of loving joy: « O Rabboni! » (I am writing « Rabboni » because I see that it is spelt so in the Gospel. But every time I hear Mary call Him, she seems to be saying « Rabboni », with an 'm' and not with an 'n') she prostrates herself at Jesus' feet, kissing them in the dust of the road.

« Peace to you, Mary. I have come to rest under your roof. »

« O my Master! » repeats Mary, looking up with an expression of respect and love, which is so meaningful... it is thanksgiving, joy, an invitation to come in, happiness because He is entering...

Jesus has laid His hand on her head and seems to be absolving her once again.

Mary stands up and walking beside Jesus she goes into the enclosure of the property. In the meantime servants and Martha have arrived, the servants with amphoras and cups. Martha with just her love, which is so great.

The apostles, who are warm, take the fresh drinks poured by the servants. They would like to give some to Jesus first, but Martha has forestalled them. She has taken a cup full of milk and has offered it to Jesus. She must be aware that He likes it very much.

After the disciples have taken some refreshments, Jesus says to them: « Go and inform the believers. I will speak to them this evening. »

The apostles scatter in various directions as soon as they are out of the garden.

Jesus proceeds between Martha and Mary.

« Come, Master » says Martha. « While waiting for Lazarus have a rest and take some refreshment. »

While they are entering a cool room which opens onto the shady porch, Mary, who had gone away quickly, comes back. She is carrying a pitcher of water and is followed by a servant with a washhand basin. But it is Mary who wants to wash Jesus' feet. She unlaces His dusty sandals and hands them to the servant to be cleaned, together with His mantle, which needs brushing. She then dips His feet in the water, which some spices have made pale pink, she dries them and kisses them. She then changes the water, and offers it to Jesus for His hands. And while waiting for the servant with the sandals, crouching on the carpet at Jesus' feet, she caresses them, and before putting His sandals on, she kisses them once again saying: « O holy feet, which have walked so far looking

3-1883

for me! »

Martha, who is more practical in her love, considers the human side and asks: « Master, is anybody else coming, besides Your disciples? »

And Jesus replies: « I am not sure, as yet. But you can prepare for five more people in addition to the apostles. »

Martha goes away.

Jesus goes out into the cool shady garden. He is wearing His dark-blue tunic only. His mantle, which Mary has carefully folded, is lying on a chest in the room. Mary goes out with Jesus.

They walk along well-kept paths, among blooming flowerbeds, as far as the fish-pond, which looks like a mirror lying in the greenery. The very clear water is rippled here and there by the silvery wriggling of fish and by the drizzle of a very tall slender jet in the centre of the pond. There are seats around the wide basin, which looks like a little lake with irrigation canals departing from it. Actually I think that one of the canals feeds the pond, while the other smaller ones discharge the water for irrigation purposes.

Jesus sits on a seat placed against the border of the pond. Mary sits at His feet, on the green well-kept grass. At first they do not speak. Jesus is clearly enjoying the silent restful cool garden. Mary delights in looking at Him.

Jesus plays with the clear water of the pond. He dips His fingers into it, He combs its surface forming little wakes and then He immerses His whole hand in the pure cool water. « How lovely this clear water is! » He says.

And Mary: « Do You like it so much, Master? »

« Yes, Mary. Because it is so limpid. Look. There is not the least trace of mud. The basin is full of water, but it is so clear that it does not seem to contain anything, as if the water were not a material but a spiritual element. On the bottom we can read the words which the little fish whisper to one another... »

« As one can read in the depth of pure souls. Is that right, Master? » and Mary sighs with secret regret.

Jesus perceives the stifled sigh and reads her regret disguised by a smile and He at once relieves Mary's grief.

« Mary, where do we find pure souls? It is easier for a mountain to walk than it is for a human being to be pure with the three purities. Too many things stir and ferment around adults. And it is not always possible to prevent them from penetrating inside. Only children have angelical souls, which their innocence preserves from knowledge liable to change into mud. That is why I love them so much. I can see in them a reflection of the Infinite Purity. They are the only ones who have within themselves this remembrance of Heaven. My Mother is the Woman with a child's soul. Even more. She is the Woman with an angel's soul. As Eve was when the

3-1884

Father made her. Can you imagine, Mary, what the first lily in bloom in the earthly garden was like? Also these ones, which lead to this water are beautiful. But the first one, which came out of the hands of the Creator! Was it a flower or a diamond? Were they petals or plates of the most pure silver? And yet My Mother is purer than that first lily that scented the winds. And Her scent of inviolate Virgin fills Heaven and Earth, and good people will follow it in future centuries. Paradise is light, perfume, harmony. But if in it the Father did not delight in contemplating the Most Beautiful Lady Who changes the Earth into a paradise, if Paradise in future should not have the living Lily in Whose bosom are the three pistils of fire of the Divine Trinity, the light, perfume and harmony, which are the delight of Paradise, would be halved. The purity of My Mother will be the gem of Paradise. But Paradise is boundless! What would you think of a king who had but one gem in his Treasure? Even if it were the pre-eminent Gem? When I open the gates of the Kingdom of Heaven... - do not sigh, Mary, I have come for that - many souls of just people and children will come in, like a brilliant immaculate wake, behind the purple of the Redeemer. But they will be too few to populate Heaven with gems and form the citizens of the eternal Jerusalem. And later... after My Doctrine of truth and holiness has become known to men, after My Death has restored Grace to men, how could men conquer Heaven, if the poor life of men is continuously soiled with mud, which makes them impure? So, will My Paradise be populated only by children? Oh! no! One must learn how to become like a child. The Kingdom is open also to adults. Like children... That is purity. See this water? It looks so limpid. But watch: if I only stir its bottom with this rush, it becomes muddy. Waste and mud come to the surface. From clear it becomes yellowish and no one would drink it any more. But if I remove the rush, it settles and little by little it becomes once again limpid and beautiful. The rush: sin. The same applies to souls. It is repentance, believe Me, that cleanses... »

Martha arrives panting: « Are you still here, Mary? And I am so busy!... Time is flying. The guests will soon be here and there is so much to be done. The maids are busy baking bread, the servants flaying and cooking. I am preparing drinks, dishes and I am laying the tables. But the fruit is still to be picked and the honey and mint water is to be prepared... »

Mary does not pay much attention to her sister's complaints. Smiling blissfully she continues to look at Jesus, without moving from her position.

Martha begs Jesus' help: « Master, look how hot I am. Do You think that I should be the only one to be so busy? Tell her to help me. » Martha is really annoyed.

Jesus looks at her smiling half kindly and half ironically, or

3-1885

rather jokingly.

Martha becomes rather impatient: « I really mean it. Look how idle she is while I am so busy. And she sees... »

Jesus becomes serious: « It is not idleness, Martha. It is love. It was idleness previously. And you wept so bitterly because of that worthless idleness. Your tears lent wings to My efforts to save her and bring her back to your honest love. Do you want to forbid her to love her Saviour? Would you prefer her to be far from here, so that she would not see you work, but would be far also from Me? Martha, Martha! Have I to say that she (and Jesus lays His hand on her head) who has come from so far, has excelled you in love? Have I to say that she, who did not know one word of love, is now learned in the science of love? Leave her to her peace! She was so ill! She is now convalescent and she is recovering by drinking what fortifies her. She was tormented so violently... Now that she has come out of her nightmare, she looks around and within herself and finds herself new and discovers a new world. Let her become certain. With her "new ego" she has to forget her past and conquer what is eternal... And the latter will not be conquered only through work, but also through adoration. He who gives a piece of bread to an apostle and a prophet will receive his reward. But double reward will be given to him who will forget to feed himself in order to love Me, because his soul will be greater than his body, a soul that will cry even louder than human needs, also when the latter are lawful and right. You worry and fret about too many things, Martha. She is concerned with one only. That which is sufficient for her soul and above all for her and your Lord. Forget useless things. Imitate your sister. Mary has chosen the better part, which will never be taken from her. When all virtues become superfluous, because they are no longer necessary to the citizens of the Kingdom, Charity alone will remain. It will last for ever. Alone and supreme. That is what Mary has chosen and has taken as her shield and pilgrim's staff. Through it, as if she were flying with angelical wings, she will come to My Heaven. »

Martha, who feels mortified, lowers her head and goes away.

« My sister loves You very much and is anxious to honour You... » says Mary to excuse her.

« I know, and she will be rewarded for that. But she needs to be purified of her human way of thinking, as this water was purified. Look how limpid it has become again, while we were speaking. Martha will be purified by the words I spoke to her. You... through the sincerity of your repentance. »

« No, through Your forgiveness, Master. My repenting was not sufficient to wash my great sin... »

« It was and will be sufficient for the sisters who will imitate you. It will be sufficient for all the poor whose souls are diseased.

3-1886

Sincere repentance is a purifying filter; love, then, preserves from further defilement. Thus, those who through life become adults and sinners, will be able to become as innocent as children again and enter My Kingdom like them. Let us go home now. So that Martha may not be left too long in her grief. Let us go and smile at her as Friend and sister. »

Jesus says:

« No comment is required. The parable of the water is the comment on the repenting action of hearts.

You have thus seen the complete cycle of the Magdalene. From her death to the Life. Of all the resurrected people of My Gospel she is the greatest. She was raised from seven deaths. She was reborn. You have seen her raise the stalk of her new flower higher and higher above the mud of the earth, like a flowery plant, and then bloom and smell sweetly for Me, and die for Me. You have seen her when she was a sinner, then when, thirsty, she approached the Fountain, then when she repented, then when she was forgiven, then you saw her as a lover, then as a pitiful woman bent over the slain Body of her Lord, then as a servant of My Mother, Whom she loves because She is My Mother; and finally you have seen her as a repentant soul at the threshold of her Paradise.

O souls who are afraid, learn not to be afraid of Me by reading the life of Mary of Magdala. O souls who love, learn from her how to love with seraphic ardour. O souls who have erred, learn from her the Science that will prepare you for Heaven.

I bless you all to help you to rise. Go in peace. »

377. Jesus Speaks at Bethany.

The vision dated 14th August 1944: The sheep in the fold at the feet of the Good Shepherd, is to be put before this chapter.

6th February 1946.

Jesus is at Bethany and the fertile country is full of blossoms and flowers in this beautiful month of Nisan, which is so serene and clear that creation seems to have been cleansed of all filthiness. But the crowds who have been looking for Him in Jerusalem and do not wish to go away without hearing Him, to take away in their hearts His words, soon find Him. And they are so numerous that Jesus orders His disciples to gather them all together, so that He may teach them. And the twelve apostles and the seventy-two disciples, who have formed a group of approximately that number with the new disciples who joined them recently, spread out in all directions to carry out His instructions.

In the meantime Jesus, in Lazarus' garden, takes leave of the

women, and particularly of His Mother, as they are all going back to Galilee, as instructed by Him, escorted by Simon of Alphaeus, Jairus, Alphaeus of Sarah, Marjiam, Susanna's husband and Zebedee. They greet one another and weep. Many wish they did not have to obey. A desire brought about by their love for the Master. But the power of their perfect love for the Most Holy Word, being entirely supernatural, is stronger, and that power makes them obey and accept the painful separation.

The one who speaks least is Mary, His Mother. But Her countenance is more eloquent than all the words of the others put together. Jesus understands Her grief, and He reassures and comforts Her, overwhelming Her with caresses, if a mother, and particularly that Mother, can ever be overwhelmed, as She is full of love and in great distress for Her persecuted Son. And the women depart at last, turning round several times to greet the Master, their sons and the lucky Judaean women disciples who are still staying with the Master.

« They have suffered in going away... » remarks Simon Zealot.

« But it is better that they have gone, Simon. »

« Do You foresee sad days? »

« Troubled, at least. Women cannot bear fatigue as we do. In any case, now that I have almost as many Judaeans as Galileans, it is better if they are divided. They will have Me in turns, and in turns they will have the joy of serving Me, and I the consolation of their holy love. »

The crowds are continuously increasing in numbers. The orchard between Lazarus' house and that which belonged to the Zealot is swarming with people. There are people of all castes and conditions, as well as Pharisees from Judaea, members of the Sanhedrin and veiled women.

The members of the Sanhedrin who on Passover Sabbath had called on Lazarus in Jerusalem, come out of Lazarus' house, with other people, in one group, close to a litter in which Lazarus is carried. When passing by, Lazarus waves his hand and smiles happily at Jesus. And Jesus returns the salutation, while He follows the little procession to where the people are waiting for Him.

The apostles join Him and Judas Iscariot, who has been exulting for some days, in a very happy mood, turns his very dark bright eyes here and there and reports to Jesus what he discovers.

« Oh! look! There are also some priests!... Look! There is also Simon of the Sanhedrin. And there is Helkai. What a liar! Only a few months ago he used to speak evil of Lazarus, and now he pays his respects to him as if he were a god!... And Doro the Elder and Trison are over there. See? He is greeting Joseph. And Samuel the scribe with Saul... And Gamaliel's son! And over there there is a group of Herodians... And that group of women with veils... must

3-1888

be the Roman ladies... They are standing on one side, but look how they are watching where You are going, so that they can change place and hear You! I recognise them notwithstanding their large mantles. See? Two are tall, one is broader than taller, the others are of middle height, but well shaped. Shall I go and greet them? »

« No. They have come here as strangers, as anonyms who wish to hear the word of the Rabbi. We must consider them as such. »

« As You wish, Master. I wanted to remind... Claudia of her promise... »

« It is not necessary. And even if it were, we must never become beggars, Judas. Is that right? Heroism in faith is to be perfected among difficulties. »

« It was for Your sake, Master. »

« And for your everlasting idea of a human triumph. Do not cherish false hopes, Judas. Neither with regard to My future behaviour, nor with regard to promises you have received. You believe in what you say to yourself. But nothing will be able to change the thought of God, which is, that I am Redeemer and King of a spiritual Kingdom. »

Judas does not reply.

Jesus is now in His place, in the middle of the apostles. Lazarus is in his little bed, almost at His feet. Not far from Him there are the Judaean women disciples, that is Lazarus' sisters, Eliza, Anastasica, Johanna with the children, Annaleah, Sarah, Marcella, Nike. The Roman ladies, or at least those pointed out by Judas as such, are a little behind, almost at the end, mingled in a group of common people. Members of the Sanhedrin, Pharisees, scribes, priests are in the first row, which is unavoidable. But Jesus begs them to make room for three small litters with sick people, whom Jesus asks questions, but He does not cure them at once.

Jesus, as a starting point for His speech, draws the attention of the audience to the large number of birds that nestle in the trees in Lazarus' garden and in the orchard where His listeners are gathered.

« Watch them. Some are indigenous, some exotic, they are of all breeds and sizes. And when it gets dark, they will be replaced by night birds, which are also very numerous, although we are inclined to forget about them, because we do not see them. Why so many birds here? Because they find what they need to live happily: sunshine, peace, plenty foodstuff, safe shelter, cool water. And they gather coming here from east and west, north and south, if they are migrant birds, and they stay here permanently if they are indigenous. So? Shall we thus see that the birds of the air exceed the sons of man in wisdom? How many of these birds are the young ones of birds that are now dead, but last year or farther back in time, built their nests here and were happy here. They told their

little ones, before dying. They showed them this place and the young ones obeyed and came here. The Father, Who is in Heaven, the Father of all men, did He perhaps not tell His saints the truth, did He not give them all the necessary instructions for the welfare of His children? All the instructions: those concerning the welfare of the body and those concerning the welfare of the spirit. But what do we see? We see that while what was taught for the health of the body - from the hide tunics, which He made for the First Parents, stripped in their own eyes of the dress of innocence, which was torn by sin, to the latest discoveries made by man through the light of God - is remembered, handed down and taught, the rest, which was taught, ordered and pointed out for the spirit, is not kept, or taught or practised. »

Many people of the Temple begin to whisper. Jesus calms them with a gesture.

« The Father, Whose goodness exceeds by far man's understanding, sent His Servant to remind men of His teaching, to gather birds in healthy places, to give them clear knowledge of what is useful and holy, to establish the Kingdom, where every angelical bird, every soul, will find grace and peace, wisdom and health. And I solemnly tell you that as the birds born in this place, in springtime will say to the birds of other places: "Come with us, because there is a good place where you will enjoy peace and the bounty of the Lord", and thus next year new birds will be seen gathering here, in the same way, we shall see numerous spirits rush from every part of the world, as predicted by the prophets, towards the Doctrine, which has come from God, and towards the Saviour, the founder of the Kingdom of God. But the day-birds are mixed in this place with night-birds, which are birds of prey, disturbers and quite capable of terrifying and killing the good little birds. And those birds have been such for years, for generations, and nothing can flush them, because they work in darkness and in places impenetrable by man. They work in darkness, with their cruel eyes, their silent flights, their voracity, their cruelty and unclean as they are, they spread filth and sorrow. To whom shall we compare them? To those who in Israel do not want to accept the Light that has come to illuminate darkness, the Word that has come to teach, Justice that has come to sanctify. I have come for them in vain. Nay, I am the cause of sin for them, because they persecute Me and My faithful believers. So what shall I say? What I have already said many a time: "Many will come from east and west and will sit with Abraham and Jacob in the Kingdom of Heaven. But the children of this kingdom will be thrown out into the dark". »

« The children of God in the dark? You are blaspheming! » shouts one of the hostile members of the Sanhedrin. It is the first sprinkle

3-1890

of the slaver of the reptiles, who have been silent for too long and who can no longer be quiet, otherwise they would be drowned in their own poison.

« Not the children of God » replies Jesus.

« You said so! You said: "The children of this kingdom will be thrown out into the dark". »

« And I repeat it. The children of this kingdom. The kingdom that is ruled by flesh, blood, avarice, fraud, lust, crime. But that is not My Kingdom. My Kingdom is the Kingdom of Light. Yours is the kingdom of darkness. Righteous spirits, including those that at present are heathens, idolaters, despised by Israel, will come to the Kingdom of Light from east and west, north and south. And they will live in holy communion with God, having accepted the light of God within themselves, while waiting to ascend to the true Jerusalem, where there are no tears, no sorrow and above all no falsehood. The Falsehood that now rules over the world of darkness and gluts its children to such extent that they cannot hold a tiny beam of the divine Light. Oh! Let the new children come and replace the disowning children! Let them come! And wherever they come from, they will be enlightened by God and will reign for ever and ever! »

« You have spoken to insult us! » shout the hostile Judaeans.

« I spoke to tell you the truth. »

« Your power lies in Your language, by which You, the new snake, allure and mislead the crowds. »

« My power is the strength that comes to Me by being One with My Father. »

« Blasphemer! » shout the priests.

« Saviour! You, who are lying at My feet, what are you suffering from? »

« I broke my spine when I was a child and I have been lying on my back for thirty years. »

« Rise and walk! And what are you suffering from, woman? »

« My legs have been hanging lifelessly since my son, who now carries me about with my husband, was born » and she points at a young man who is at least sixteen years old.

« Rise, too, and praise the Lord. And why is that child not walking by himself? »

« Because he was born feeble-minded, blind, deaf and dumb. He is a lump of breathing flesh » explain those who are with the poor child.

« In the Name of God, have intelligence, speech, sight and hearing. I want it!. » And after working the third miracle, He turns to His enemies and asks: « What do you say now? »

« Dubious miracles. Why do You not cure Your friend and supporter, if You can do anything? »

3-1891

« Because God wants otherwise. »

« Ah! Ah! God! A fine excuse! If we bring You a sick man, nay, two, will You cure them? »

« I will, if they deserve it. »

« Wait then » and they go away quickly, grinning sarcastically.

« Be careful, Master! They may set a trap for You » some say.

Jesus makes a gesture as if He wanted to say: « Let them do as they like! » and He bends to caress the children, who little by little have approached Him, leaving their relatives. Some mothers imitate them, taking to Him those who are not yet steady in their first steps or sucklings.

« Bless our children, Blessed One, because we are lovers of the Light! » say the mothers.

And Jesus imposes His hands, blessing them. That brings about a bustle in the crowd. All those with children want the same blessing and they push and shout to make their way through the crowd.

The apostles, both because they have been irritated by the usual mischievousness of scribes and Pharisees, and because they feel pity for Lazarus, who risks being carried away by the wave of relatives taking their little ones to the divine blessing, become impatient and shout reproaching and pushing back this one and that one, particularly the little children who have come by themselves. But Jesus says kindly and lovingly: « No, do not do that! Never prevent children from coming to Me, nor their relatives from bringing them to Me. Because the Kingdom is of these innocent souls. They will not be guilty of the great Crime, and they will grow up in My Faith. Let Me therefore consecrate them to it. Their angels are leading them to Me. »

Jesus is now in the middle of a crowd of children looking at Him ecstatically; so many little faces looking up at Him, so many innocent eyes, so many little smiling mouths...

The veiled ladies take advantage of the confusion to go round at the rear of the crowd and come behind Jesus, as if they were urged by curiosity to do so.

The Pharisees and scribes come back with two sick people who seem to be suffering from severe pain. One particularly is moaning in his little litter, and is completely covered with a mantle. The other one, apparently, is not so seriously ill, but is certainly very ill, because he is reduced to a skeleton and is panting.

« Here are our friends. Cure them. They are really ill. Particularly that one! » and they point to the moaning one.

Jesus lowers His eyes and looks at the sick people, He then looks up at the Jews. He darts a dreadful look at His enemies. Standing behind the group of innocent children, who do not reach up to His groin, He seems to be rising from a wreath of purity, to be the Avenger, as if from that purity He were drawing the strength to be

3-1892

so. He opens His arms and shouts: « Liars! That man is not ill! I tell you! Uncover him! Or he will be really dead in a moment, for attempting to deceive God. »

The man jumps out of his litter shouting: « No, no! Don't strike me! Here, you cursed ones, take your money! » and he throws a purse at the feet of the Pharisees and takes to his heels...

The crowds howl, laugh, boo, applaud...

The other sick man says: « And what about me, Lord? They forced me out of my bed and they have been using violence on me since this morning... But I did not know that I was in the hands Of Your enemies... »

« Be cured, poor son, and may you be blessed! » and He imposes His hands on him, after making His way through the children.

The man lifts for a moment the blanket covering his body and he looks at I do not know what... He then stands up. He is nude from his thighs downwards. And he shouts and shouts until he becomes hoarse: « My foot! My foot! But who are You, Who can give back what was lost? » and he throws himself at Jesus' feet. He then stands up, jumps precariously on his little litter shouting: « My disease was eating away my bones. The doctor had torn off my toes, he had cauterised my flesh and had cut me up to the bone of my knee. Look! Look at the scars. But I was going to die just the same. And now... It is all cured! My foot has been restored... It is no longer painful! I feel well... strong... My chest is free... My heart is sound! Oh! mother! I am coming to share my joy with you! »

He begins to run away. But gratitude stops him. He goes back to Jesus and he kisses His blessed feet repeatedly, until Jesus, caressing his head, says to him: « Go! Go to your mother and be good. » He then looks at His enemies, who have been held up to ridicule and says: « And now? What should I do to you? What should I do, people, after this ordeal? »

The crowds shout: « Let the offenders of God be stoned! Death to them! No more snares for the Holy One! May you be cursed! » and they begin picking up lumps of earth, branches, little stones, ready to throw them.

Jesus stops them. « That is the word of the crowds. That is their answer. Mine is different. I say: Go away! I will not soil My hands striking you. The Most High will take care of you. He is my defence against the wicked. »

The culprits, instead of being silent, do not hesitate to offend the Master, and although they are afraid of the people, they shout foaming with anger: « We are Judaeans and we are powerful! We order You to go away. We forbid You to teach. We banish You. Go away! Enough of You. The power is in our hands and we are making use of it; and we will use it more and more, persecuting You, cursed usurper... »

3-1893

They are about to say more in a tumult of cries, tears, hisses, when the tallest veiled woman comes forward, placing herself between Jesus and His enemies with swift imperious movement, with even more imperious countenance and voice; she uncovers her face and her sentence drops sharper and more lashing than a whip on galley-slaves or an axe on a neck: « Which of you is forgetting that he is a slave of Rome? » She is Claudia. She lowers her veil again. She bows lightly to the Master. She goes to her place. It was enough.

The Pharisees calm down at once. One only, on behalf of everybody, says with creeping servility: « Forgive us, domina! But He is upsetting the old spirit of Israel. As you are powerful, you should forbid Him and get the brave just Proconsul to forbid Him to do so; long life and health to him! »

« That does not concern us. It is enough that He does not disturb the order of Rome. And He does not! » replies scornfully the patrician, who then gives a sharp order to her companions and goes away towards a thicket of trees at the end of the path and disappears behind it. She reappears in a creaky covered wagon, all the curtains of which she has ordered to be lowered.

« Are You happy now that You had us insulted? » ask the Judaeans, Pharisees, scribes and their companions, making a fresh attack.

The crowds shout contemptuously. Joseph, Nicodemus and all those who have proved to be friends - among them there is Gamaliel's son, who has not joined them but has spoken the same words - feel that they must interfere and reproach the others for passing all bounds. The altercation thus passes from Jesus' enemies to the two opposite groups, leaving out the One most interested in it.

Jesus is silent, with arms folded, listening, and I think that He emanates a power to hold the crowds back and particularly the apostles, who are beside themselves with rage.

« We must defend ourselves and other people » shouts a hotheaded Jew.

« We are tired of seeing fascinated crowds run after Him » says another one.

« We are the powerful ones! Nobody else! We are the only ones to be listened to and followed » cries a scribe.

« Away from here! Jerusalem is ours! » shouts a priest as red as beetroot.

« You are wicked! »

« You are more than blind! »

« The crowds have left you, because you deserve it. »

« Be holy if you want to be loved. If you vex and insult people, you lose your power, which is based on the reputation of the people for its governors! » shout those of the opposite party and many

3-1894

of the crowd.

« Silence! » orders Jesus. And when there is silence, He says: « Oppression and imposition cannot change love or the consequences of good received. I gather what I gave: love. By persecuting Me, you only increase such love, which compensates Me for your indifference. In all your wisdom, do you not know that to persecute a doctrine serves no other purpose but to increase its power, particularly when the doctrine in actual fact corresponds to what it teaches? Listen to a prophecy of Mine, people of Israel. The more you persecute the Rabbi of Galilee and His followers, trying to destroy by violence His Doctrine, which is divine, the more you will help it to thrive and spread throughout the world. Every drop of blood of the martyrs killed by you, hoping to triumph and reign with your corrupt hypocritical laws and precepts, which no longer correspond to the Law of God, every tear of saints oppressed by you, will become the seed of future believers. And You will be defeated just when you think that you are going to triumph. Go. I am going as well. Those who love Me should look for Me at the borders of Judaea and beyond the Jordan, or they can wait for Me there, because like lightning flashing from east to west, so fast will be the movement of the Son of man, until He ascends the altar and the throne, new Pontiff and King, and will remain there firmly in the presence of the world, of creation and of Heaven, in one of His many epiphanies, which only good people can understand. »

The hostile Pharisees and their companions have gone. All the others have remained. Gamaliel's son struggles against himself to come to Jesus, but he goes away without speaking...

« Master, You will not hate us because we belong to the same castes as they do? » asks Eleazar.

« I never strike with anathema a single person only because his class is guilty. Be not afraid » replies Jesus.

« They will now hate us... » whispers Joachim.

« That will be an honour for us! » exclaims John, the member of the Sanhedrin.

« May God fortify wavering souls and bless strong ones. I bless everybody in the name of the Lord » and opening His arms He gives the Mosaic blessing to all the people present.

He then takes leave of Lazarus, his sisters, Maximinus, the women disciples, and He sets out...

The green country on the sides of the road to Jericho receives Him while its green is growing red in a glorious sunset.

378. Towards Mount Adomin.

7th February 1946.

« It is getting dark, where are we going? » the apostles ask one

another. They are talking in low voices of what happened. They are not saying anything loud, as they do not want to depress the Master, Who is clearly very pensive.

Night falls while they proceed, following the Master Who is still very serious. A village appears at the foot of a chain of very rough mountains.

« Let us Stop here for the night » orders Jesus. « Or rather, you stop here. I will go up those mountains to pray... »

« By Yourself? Ah! no! You are not going by Yourself up Mount Adomin! With all those thieves who are lying in wait for You, no, You are not going!... » says Peter quite firmly.

« What can they do to Me? I have nothing! »

« You have... Yourself. I am talking of the real thieves, of those who hate You. And Your life is quite enough for them. You are not going to be killed like... like... thus, I mean, in a cowardly ambush. you would give Your enemies the opportunity to invent goodness knows what story to divert the crowds also from Your doctrine » insists Peter.

« Simon of Jonah is right, Master. They would be quite capable of getting rid of Your body and then saying that You have fled because You had realised that You had been unmasked. Or... they could even take You to places of evil fame, to the house of a prostitute, and then say: "See where and how He died? In a quarrel over a prostitute". You quite rightly said: "To persecute a doctrine is to increase its power" and I noticed that Gamaliel's son, whose sight I never lost, was nodding assent while You were saying so. But it is also right to say that to hold a saint and his doctrine up to ridicule is the safest weapon to confute his doctrine and make him lose the esteem of the crowds » says Judas Thaddeus.

« Of course. And that must not happen to You » concludes Bartholomew.

« Don't lend Yourself to the tricks of Your enemies. Consider that not only You would be damaged, but also the Will of Him Who sent You would be made void by such imprudence, and one would see that the children of Darkness have defeated, at least temporarily, the children of Light » adds the Zealot.

« That's right! You always say, and You pierce our hearts, that You will be killed. I remember when You reproached Simon Peter and I will not say to You: "Let that never happen". But I do not think that I am Satan if I say: "At least let that be to Your glorification, as unequivocal seal of Your Holiness, and definite conviction of Your enemies. So that the crowds may know and have valid reasons to distinguish and believe". At least that, Master. The holy mission of the Maccabees never appeared so holy as when Judas, the son of Mattathias, died as a hero and saviour in the battlefield. Do You want to go up Mount Adomin? We will

3-1896

come with You. We are Your disciples! Where You go as our Head, we will come as Your ministers » says Thomas, and I have seldom heard him speak with such solemn eloquence.

« That is very true! And if they attack You, they will have to attack us first » several of them say.

« Oh! They will not attack us so easily! They are curing the smart of Claudia's words and... they are very... too cunning! They must certainly consider that Pontius would know whom to punish for Your death. They have betrayed themselves in the eyes of Claudia and they will ponder over that and think of traps more reliable than vulgar aggression. Perhaps it is foolish of us to be afraid. We are no longer the poor unknown people of the past. There is Claudia now! » says the Iscariot.

« Very well... But don't let us run any risk. What do You want to do on Mount Adomin? » asks James of Zebedee.

« I want to pray and find a place where you can all pray in the next days, to be ready for fresh fiercer and fiercer struggles. »

« Against our enemies? »

« Also against our egos. I am in great need of being fortified. »

« But did You not say that You wanted to go to the borders of Judaea and beyond the Jordan? »

« Yes, and I will. But after praying. I will go to Achor and then to Jericho via Doco. »

« No, Lord! They are inauspicious places for the saints of Israel. Don't go there. I tell You, I can feel it! There is something within me that tells me. Don't go! In the name of God, don't go! » shouts John, who seems to be on the point of losing consciousness, as if he were seized by ecstatic fear...

They all look at him in amazement, as they have never seen him thus before. But no one sneers at him. They all feel that they are in' the presence of a supernatural fact and they respectfully remain silent.

Jesus also is silent until He sees John regain his normal composure and hears him say: « O my Lord! How much I suffered! »

« I know. We shall go to Mount Cherith. What does your spirit say? » I am deeply impressed by the respect with which Jesus addresses His inspired apostle...

« You are asking me, Lord? You, the Most Holy Wisdom, are asking a poor foolish boy! »

« Yes, I am asking you. The least is the greatest when he humbly communicates with his Lord for the welfare of his brothers. Tell Me. »

« Yes, Lord. Let us go to Mount Cherith. There are gorges there where we can safely collect our thoughts in meditation, and the roads to Jericho and Samaria are not far. We will descend the mountain to gather those who love You and hope in You and we

3-1897

will bring them to You, or take You to them, and we will also nourish our souls with prayer... And the Lord will descend and speak to our spirits... and will open our ears, which hear the Word but do not fully understand Him... and above all will inflame our hearts with His fire. Because only if we are aflame, shall we be able to bear the torments of the Earth. Because only if we first suffer the sweet martyrdom of total love, shall we be ready to suffer the torture of human hatred... Lord... what have I said? »

« My words, John. Be not afraid. Let us stop here then, and tomorrow at dawn we will go up the mountains. »

379. After the Retreat upon Mount Cherith.

9th February 1946.

It is occasionally possible to catch glimpses of parts of the Dead Sea, which lies to the south of the place where the apostles are with the Master, from a group of mountains, which seem intent on rising more and more. And, I would say, every phase of their effort is marked by a rough chain of rocky hills, with sheer sloping sides, severed by narrow valleys similar to gigantic slashes and crowned with wild peaks. It is not possible to see the Jordan and its peaceful fertile valley, or Jericho or other towns. One can see nothing but mountains rising towards Samaria, and the gloomy Dead Sea through the narrow gorge between two acuminated mountains. Down in the valley there is a stream flowing from west to east towards the Jordan. There is loud screeching of hawks and croaking of ravens in the bright blue sky. Many birds are chirping among the branches of the wild slopes. The winds whisper as mellow as flutes among the gorges, carrying remote scents and noises, or overwhelming those which are near, according to whether they are light or strong. An odd harness-bell is heard now and again from the road, which must be down in the valley. One can also hear the bleating of sheep grazing on the tablelands and the noise of water dripping from rocks or murmuring in torrents. But the season is good, dry and mild, the mountain sides are covered with bright flowers standing out against the emerald green of the grass, and bunches of flowers and festoons hang from tree trunks and branches and the sight of the place is most pleasant.

The faces of the thirteen men gathered there are very happy, shining with a supernatural happiness. The world has been forgotten... It is remote... Their spirits have recovered from many shocks, they are once again in the halo of God, that is, in peace. And peace is visible on their countenances.

But the rest is over, and Jesus tells them so. And Peter repeats his prayer of Mount Tabor: « Oh! Why do we not stop here? It is beautiful to be here with You! »

3-1898

« Because there is work awaiting us, Simon of Jonah. We cannot be only contemplative. The world is waiting for our teaching. The workers of the Lord cannot stop when there are fields to be sown. »

« Then... since I become a little good only when I live apart as now, I will never be able to... The world is so great! How shall we be able to work it all and then concentrate on You before dying? »

« You will certainly not work it all. It will take hundreds and hundreds of years. And when a part has been worked, Satan will go there to spoil what has been done. It will thus be a continuous work lasting until the end of the world. »

« Well, then, how shall I be able to be ready to die? » Peter is really depressed.

Jesus reassures him embracing him and says: « You will have time. It does not take long. An act of perfect concentration is sufficient to prepare you to appear before God. And you will have all the time you need. In any case you must realise that by fulfilling the will of God one is always preparing to die in holiness. If God wants you to be active and you obey, you are preparing better by obeying than you would by retiring among the most solitary rocks to pray and meditate. Are you convinced? »

« Certainly! You say So! So what shall we do? »

« Go along the roads in the valley. Gather together those who are waiting for Me and preach the Lord and Faith until I come. »

« Are You remaining alone here? »

« Of course. Be not afraid. You can see that at times evil is of some help to good. Elijah here was fed by crows. We can say that fierce vultures fed us. »

« Do You think that it was a kind of beginning of conversion? »

« No. But charity, although it was urged by the consideration that by treating us generously, they would put us in a situation not to betray them... »

« But we would not have betrayed them! » exclaims Andrew.

« No. But the wretched thieves do not know that. There is no spiritual feeling in them, laden as they are with crimes. »

« Lord, You were saying that charity... What were You going to say? » asks John.

« I wanted to say: the fact that they treated us charitably will be rewarded, at least among the better ones. The conversion, which did not take place now, may work slowly, but it can take place. That is why I said to you: "Do not refuse their offerings". And I accepted them although I smelt the stench of sin in them. »

« But You did not eat any... »

« But I did not mortify the sinners by rejecting them. They had initial good feeling. Why destroy it? That torrent down there, does it not originate in the spring that trickles from that crag? Always remember that. It is a lesson for your future life, when I shall no

3-1899

longer be among you. If in your apostolic travels you should come across criminals, do not behave like Pharisees, who despise everybody, and they do not consider that they should despise themselves first, corrupt as they are. But approach them with great love. I would like to be able to say with "infinite love". Nay, I say so. And that is possible, although man is "finite, limited" in his acts and actions.

Do you know how man can possess infinite love? By being so united to God, as to be all one with God. Then, as the creature disappears in the Creator, it is the Creator Who really acts, and He is infinite. And My apostles must be like that, all one with their God through the power of love, which is so close to the Origin as to dissolve in it. It is not the way in which you speak, but the way in which you love, that will convert hearts. Will you find sinners? Love them. Will you suffer because of disciples who go astray? Try to save them through love. Remember the parable of the lost sheep. Oh! for ever and ever it will be the sweet appeal made to sinners. But it will also be the definite order given to My priests. With every artifice, with every sacrifice, at the cost of losing your own lives in the attempt to save a soul, you must patiently go and look for those who are lost and bring them back to the Fold. Love will give you joy. It will say to you: "Be not afraid". It will give you such a power to expand all over the world, as I did not possess Myself. No longer is the love of future just people to be set as a seal on the heart and on the arm, as the Song of Songs says. But it is to be set in the heart. It must be the spur urging souls to all actions. And each action must be superabundance of charity, which is no longer satisfied with loving God or one's neighbour only mentally, but it enters the lists against the enemies of God, to love God and neighbour concretely, also through material deeds, which lead to wider and more perfect actions aiming at the redemption and sanctification of brothers.

Through contemplation one loves God, through action one loves one's neighbour, but the two loves are not separated, because there is one love only, and loving our neighbour we love God Who orders this love and gave us our neighbour as a brother. Neither you nor Future priests will be able to say that you are My friends, if your charity and theirs is not entirely devoted to the salvation of souls, for whom I became incarnate and for whom I will suffer. I give you the example of how one must love. But you and those who will come after you, must do what I do. The new time has come. The time of love. I have come to cast this fire into hearts and it will grow greater after My Passion and Ascension, and it will inflame You when the Love of the Father and of the Son descends to consecrate you to your ministry.

Most Divine Love! Why do You delay in consuming the Victim,

3-1900

in opening the eyes and ears, in loosening the tongues and limbs Of this flock of Mine, so that they may go among wolves and teach that God is Charity, and that he who has no charity is a brute and a demon? Oh! come, most sweet and strong Spirit, and inflame the Earth, not to destroy it, but to purify it. Inflame hearts! Make other Christs of them, like Me, that is, anointed by love, active for love, holy and sanctifying through love.

Blessed are those who love, because they will be loved, and their souls will never stop singing to God together with the angels until they will sing the eternal glory in the light of Heaven. So be it for you, My friends. Now go and do with love what I told you. »

380. The Parable of the Unfaithful Steward. Essenes and Pharisees.

10th February 1946.

Waiting for the Master many people are scattered over the lower slopes of a rather isolated mountain, which rises from intertwined valleys surrounding it; in certain places the slopes rise sheer from the valleys. To reach the top there is a path cut in the calcareous rock like a scratch winding up the slope. In some parts the borders of the path are the steep incline of the mountain on one side, and a deep precipice on the other. And the dark yellowish-red rugged path, looks like a ribbon thrown among the low dusty-green thorny bushes, full of aculei; I would say the aculei are the very leaves that cover the arid rocky slopes and adorn themselves with bright violet-red flowers, like tassels or flocks of silk torn from the garment of some unfortunate person who happened to pass along the thicket of thorn bushes. And this blue-green tormenting vegetation, full of sharp thorns, is as sad as if it were spread with impalpable ashes and extends in stripes also at the foot of the mountain and in the plain between the mountain and other mountains, both north-west and south-east, alternating with places where there are real bushes and real grass, which are neither tormenting nor useless.

The crowds have camped on the green grass, patiently waiting the arrival of the Master. It must be the day after the speech to the apostles, because it is a cool morning and the dew has not yet evaporated from all the stems. It particularly decorates those thorns and leaves which are in the more shady spots, transforming the quaint flowers of the thorny bushes into tassels studded with diamonds. This is certainly the beauty hour for the sad mountain. Because during the other hours, in the scorching sun or in moonlit nights, it must look like a horrible place of hellish expiation. A large wealthy town can be seen to the east, in the very fertile plain. Nothing else is visible from this hillside, which is still low,

3-1901

where the pilgrims are, but from the top the eye must enjoy a wonderful sight of the nearby districts. Taking into account the height of the mountain I think that one's eyes would rove over the Dead Sea and the area to the east of it, as far as the mountain chains of Samaria and those that hide Jerusalem. But I have not been to the top, so...

The apostles are moving about among the crowds, trying to keep them quiet and orderly and to put sick people in the best places. They are assisted by some disciples, perhaps those who are active in that locality and had led to the borders of Judaea the pilgrims anxious to hear the Master.

Jesus appears all of a sudden. He is wearing a white linen tunic and a red mantle, to make the heat of the sunny days compatible with the coolness of the nights, as we are not yet in summer. He has not yet been seen and He looks at the crowds waiting for Him and smiles. He seems to be coming from behind the eastern side of the mountain, half-way up the hill, and He comes down quickly along the difficult path.

It is a boy, who, either because he was looking at the flight of birds nestling among the bushes and which take off when a stone rolls down the mountain side and frightens them, or because his eyes were attracted by the sudden appearance, sees Jesus and bouncing to his feet shouts: « The Lord! »

They all turn round and see Jesus, Who is now about two hundred metres away. They start running towards Him, but with a gesture of His arm and with His voice, which is heard clearly, perhaps because it is echoed by the mountain, He says: « Remain where you are. » And smiling all the time He comes down as far as those waiting for Him and stops at the highest spot of the tableland. He greets them from there: « Peace to everybody » and with a particular smile He repeats His salutation to the apostles and disciples who have gathered round Him.

Jesus is beaming with beauty. With the sun in front of Him and the greenish hillside behind His back, He looks like the vision of a dream. The hours spent in solitude, something unknown to us, or perhaps an overflow on Him of fatherly caresses, I do not know what, accentuate His ever perfect beauty, they make it glorious, imposing, peaceful, serene, I would say joyful, as becomes a person who comes back from a tryst and whose countenance, smiles and eyes show all his happiness. The evidence of this divine encounter shines infinitely more brightly than can normally be seen after the meeting of poor human lovers, and the Christ appears dazzling with it. And He subdues all the people present who contemplate Him silently with admiration, as if they were intimidated by the intuition of a mysterious reunion of the Most High with His Word... It is a secret, a secret hour of love between the Father

3-1902

and the Son. No one will ever know it. But the Son keeps its seal, as if, after being the Word of the Father, as He is in Heaven, He could hardly be once again the Son of man. Infinity, sublimity find it difficult to become « the Man » again. Divinity overflows, explodes, radiates from Humanity like sweet oil from a porous earthen jar or like the light of a furnace through the veil of ground glass.

And Jesus lowers His beaming eyes, His blissful face, He conceals His wonderful smile, bending over the sick people, whom He caresses and cures while they are seized with astonishment looking at the bright loving face bent over their misery to make them happy. But at last He must stand up and show the crowds the Face of the Peaceful, Holy One, of the God Incarnate, still wrapped in the brightness of the ecstasy. He repeats: « Peace to you. » Even His voice is more melodious than usual, as it resounds with sweet triumphant notes... It spreads powerfully over the silent listeners, searching for their hearts, caressing them, shaking them and inviting them to love.

Everybody is deeply moved, with the exception of that group of Pharisees, who are more arid, coarse, prickly and harsh than the mountain itself and are standing like statues full of incomprehension and hatred in a corner, and with the exception of the other group, all dressed in white and standing aloof, listening from a brow and whom Bartholomew and the Iscariot point out as « Essenes ». And Peter grumbles: « And so there is another extra fowl-run of hawks! »

« Oh! Never mind. The Word is for everybody! » says Jesus, smiling at Peter, referring to the Essenes.

He then begins to speak.

« It would be lovely if man were as perfect as the Father in Heaven wants him. Perfect in every thought, affection, deed. But man does not know how to be perfect and misuses the gifts of God, Who has given freedom of action to man, ordering, however, good things, advising perfect things, so that man might not say: "I did not know".

What use does man make of the freedom given to him by God? The greatest part of men use it as a child would; or as a fool; the rest use it as criminals. Then death comes and man is subject to the Judge Who asks severely: "How did you use or misuse what I gave you?". A dreadful question! How less worthy than motes will then look the goods of the Earth, for which man so often becomes a sinner! Poor in eternal misery, divested of a garment that nothing can replace, he will stand dejected and trembling before the Majesty of the Lord, and will find no word to justify himself. Because it is easy to justify oneself, deceiving poor men. But that cannot happen in Heaven. God cannot be deceived. Never. And God does not

3-1903

resort to any compromise. Never.

Now, then. How can one be saved? How can man make everything be of use to his salvation, even what has originated from Corruption, which taught men to use metals and gems as instruments of wealth and fostered their eager desire for power and pleasure of the flesh? So will man, who, however poor he may be, can always sin by desiring gold, offices, women immoderately, - and at times he becomes the thief of such things to have what rich people have - so will man, rich or poor as he may be, never be able to save himself? Of course he will. How? By exploiting wealth on behalf of Good; exploiting misery on behalf of Good. The poor man who is not envious, who does not curse, who does not attempt to take what belongs to other people, but is happy with what he has, exploits his humble condition in order to achieve future holiness, and in actual fact, most poor people know how to do that. But the rich are not so capable, as wealth is a continuous trap, set by Satan, of the treble concupiscence.

But listen to a parable and you will see that the rich also can save themselves although they are rich, or they can make amends for their past wrongs, by making good use of their riches, even if they were unjustly obtained. Because God, the Most Good God, always grants many means to His children so that they may save themselves.

So there was a rich man who had a steward. Some enemies of the latter, who were envious of the good position he had, or because they were very friendly with the rich man and therefore mindful of his wealth, accused the steward saying to his master: "He squanders your wealth. He embezzles your goods. Or he does not make them yield any fruit. Be careful. Defend yourself!".

The rich man, after hearing such repeated accusations, summoned the steward. And he said to him: "I have been told so and so. Why have you done that? Give me an account of your stewardship, because I will not allow you to keep it any longer. I cannot trust you and I cannot make an example of injustice and servile tolerance, which would induce the other servants to act as you did. Go and come back tomorrow with your documents, that I may examine them and ascertain the situation of my property before handing it to another steward". And he dismissed the steward, who went away and began to worry saying to himself: "And now? What shall I do now that the master is taking the stewardship from me? I have no savings, because, as I was sure that I would get away with it, I spent in enjoyment everything I usurped. I do not feel like working as a peasant, subject to other people, because I am no longer used to digging, and I have grown heavier with orgies. And I dislike begging even more. It is too humiliating! But what shall I do?'

3-1904

He thought it over and over again and he found a way out from his painful situation. He said: "I have found it! As I secured a pleasant life for myself so far, in the same way I will make sure that my friends will offer me hospitality out of gratitude, when I am dismissed from my office. He who does good always has friends. Let us go, therefore, and help people, in order to be helped, and let us go at once, before the news spreads and it is too late".

And he went to the sundry debtors of his master and he said to the first one: "How much do you owe my master for the money he lent you three years ago in springtime?".

And the debtor replied: "One hundred measures of oil for money and interest".

"Oh! Poor fellow! What, with such a large family and with your children afflicted by diseases, you have to give so much?! But did he not give you money to the value of thirty measures?!".

"Yes, but I needed it urgently and he said to me: 'I will give it to you, but on condition that you will pay me back whatever the sum will yield to you in three years'. It yielded the equivalent of one hundred measures. And I must give them".

"But that is usury! Don't! He is rich, while you are not far from starving. He has a small family, you have a large one. Write here that it yielded to the value of fifty measures and forget about it. I will swear that it is the truth. And you will benefit by it".

"But will you not betray me? And if he finds out?".

"Do you think it is possible? I am the steward and what I swear is sacred. Do as I tell you and do not worry".

The man signed the document, handed it to him and said: "May you be blessed! You are my friend and saviour. How can I compensate you?".

"In no way! But if I should get into trouble and be dismissed because of this, you will welcome me out of gratitude".

"Of course! Certainly! You may rely on that!".

The steward went to another debtor and talked to him more or less in the same way. This debtor was to give back one hundred measures of wheat, because the drought had destroyed his crops for three years, and he had to borrow what was necessary to feed his family.

"Forget about doubling what he gave you! How can one deny wheat and exact twice as much when a fellow and his family are starving and one's wheat is eaten by worms in the barns, because there is superabundance of it! Write eighty measures".

"But if he remembers that he gave me twenty, then another twenty, and then ten?".

"How can you expect him to remember? I gave them to you and I do not want to remember. Do as I say and it is all settled. There must be justice between rich and poor people! If I were the master,

3-1905

I would accept only the fifty measures, and perhaps I would remit them as well".

"You are good! I wish they were all like you! Remember that my house is open to you".

The steward called on other debtors, in the same way, stating that he was willing to get into trouble to put matters right according to justice. And offers of help and blessings rained upon him.

When he was reassured about his future, he went to his master, who, in turn, had dogged his steps and discovered his trick. The master, however, praised him saying: "What you did is not right and I do not praise you for that. But I must praise you for your cunning. The children of this world are really more cunning than the children of Light".

And I repeat to you what the rich man said: "Fraud is not right, and I will never praise anyone for it. But I exhort you to be shrewd, at least like the children of this world, with the means of this world, to make them serve as money to enter the Kingdom of Light". That is, make good use of earthly riches, which are means distributed unjustly and used to purchase a fleeting welfare, which is of no value in the eternal Kingdom, so that they may open its door to you. Assist the poor with the means you have, give back what you or any other member of your family took unjustly, break with the evil guilty love for riches. And all these things will be like friends who in the hour of your death will open the eternal gates to you and will receive you in the blissful abode.

How can you expect God to give His heavenly goods, if He sees that you cannot make good use even of earthly goods? As an impossible supposition, do you want Him to accept squanderers in the heavenly Jerusalem? No, never. Up there one will live with charity, generosity and justice. Everybody for One and everyone for everybody. The Communion of Saints is an active and honest society, it is a holy society. And no one who has proved to be unjust and unfaithful can enter it.

Do not say: "But we shall be faithful up there, because we shall have everything up there without any fear". No. He who is unfaithful in little, would be unfaithful even if he possessed Everything, and he who is unjust in little is unjust in much. God does not trust true wealth to those who in the earthly test prove that they do not know how to use earthly riches. How can God entrust you one day in Heaven with the mission of supporting spirits of your brothers on the Earth, when you have shown that extortions, frauds and greed are your prerogatives? He will, therefore, deny you your treasure, which He had kept for you, and He will give it to those who were shrewd on the Earth, by using also what is unjust and unwholesome in deeds which make them just and wholesome.

3-1906

No servant can serve two masters. Because he will belong to one or to the other, and he will hate one or the other. The two masters whom man can choose are God or Mammon. But if he wishes to belong to the former, he cannot wear the colours, or follow the voice, or use the means of the latter. »

A voice rises from the group of the Essenes: « Man is not free to choose. He is forced to follow a fate. We do not state that it is distributed unwisely. On the contrary the perfect Mind has fixed, according to its own perfect plan, the number of those who will be worthy of Heaven. All the others strive in vain to become so. That is the situation. And it cannot be otherwise. As one coming out of a' house may be killed by a stone falling from a cornice, whereas one in the thick of the battle may not suffer the slightest wound, likewise he who wants to save himself, but it is not written so, will only commit sin even unawares, because his damnation is fated. »

« No, man. It is not so. And change your mind. By thinking so you do the Lord wrong. »

« Why? Tell me and I will change my mind. »

« Because, by saying so, you mentally confess that God is unjust with His creatures. He created them in the same way and with the same love. He is a Father. Perfect in His paternity, as He is in everything else. How can He, therefore, make distinctions and curse a man when he is being conceived and is an innocent embryo? When he is incapable of committing sin? »

« To take His revenge for the offence received from man. »

« No. God does not take His revenge thus! He would not be satisfied with a miserable sacrifice like that, with an unjust forced sacrifice. The offence made to God can be removed by the God made Man. He will be the Expiator. Neither this nor that man. Oh! I wish it had been possible for Me to have to remove only the original sin! I wish there had been no Cain on the Earth, no Lamech, no corrupt sodomite, no homicide, thief, fornicator, adulterer, blasphemer, no one without love for one's parents, no perjurer, and so forth! But of each of those sins, the sinner is guilty and the author, not God. God left His children free to choose between Good and Evil. »

« And that was wrong » shouts a scribe. « He tempted us beyond measure. Although He knew that we were weak, ignorant, poisoned, He led us into temptation. That is either imprudence or wickedness. Since You are just, You must grant that what I say is the truth. »

« You are telling lies to tempt Me. God had given Adam and Eve all the necessary advice, to what avail? »

« He did the wrong thing even then. He should not have put the tree, the temptation, in the Garden. »

« In that case, where is the merit of man? »

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« He would have done without it. He would have lived with no merit of his own, but only with the merit of God. »

« They are tempting You, Master. Leave those serpents alone, and listen to us, who live in continence and meditation » shouts once again the Essene.

« Yes, you live. But badly. Why do you not live holily? »

The Essene does not reply to the questions, but he asks: « As You gave me a convincing answer on free will, and I will meditate on it with good will, hoping that I will be able to accept it, now tell me. Do You really believe in the resurrection of bodies and in the life of souls completed by it? »

« And do you want God to put an end to the life of man thus? »

« But the soul... Since the soul is happy with its reward, why make matter rise again? Will it increase the happiness of the blessed souls? »

« Nothing will increase the bliss of a saint when he possesses God. Or rather, one thing only will increase it on the Last Day: the knowledge that there is no longer sin. But do you not think that it is fair, that as during this day body and soul were united in the struggle to possess Heaven, they should be united also in the eternal Day to enjoy the reward? Are you not convinced? Why do you live in continence and meditation, then? »

« To be... a more perfect man, the lord over the other animals that obey their instinct without control and to be better than most men who are soiled with animality even if they display phylacteries, fringes, tassels and wide garments and they call themselves "the separated ones". »

Anathema! The Pharisees, upon hearing the pungent remark, which is approved by the crowds with a murmur, become excited and shout like madmen. « He is insulting us, Master! You are aware of our holiness. Defend us » they shout gesticulating.

Jesus replies: « He, too, is aware of your hypocrisy. Garments have nothing to do with holiness. When you deserve to be praised, I will be able to speak. But My answer to you, Essene, is that you sacrifice yourself for too little. Why? For whom? For how long? For human praise. For a mortal body. For as short a time as the flight of a falcon. Raise your sacrifice. Believe in the true God, in the blissful resurrection, in the free will of man. Lead an ascetic life, but for those supernatural reasons. And with your risen body you will enjoy eternal happiness. »

« It is late! I am old! I have perhaps wasted my life in an erroneous sect... It's the end!... »

« No. It is never the end for those who want good! Listen, sinners, and you, who are in error, or you, whatever your past may have been. Repent. Come to Mercy. It opens its arms to you. I show you the way. I am the pure vital fountain. Get rid of what has misled

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you so far. Undress and come to the fountain. Clothe yourselves with light. Revive. Have you stolen like highwaymen, or like gentlemen and craftily in business or in offices? Come. Have you had bad habits or lustful passions? Come. Have you oppressed your neighbour? Come. Repent. Come to love and to peace. Oh! Let the love of God flow upon you. Relieve that love, which is in anguish because of your resistance, your fear, your hesitation. I beg you in the name of My Father and yours. Come to Life and to the Truth, and you will have eternal life. »

A man shouts from the crowd: « I am rich and a sinner. What shall I do to come? »

« Give up everything for the sake of God and of your soul. »

The Pharisees grumble and scoff at Jesus, calling Him « vendor of illusions and heresies », and « sinner feigning holiness », and they warn Him that heretics are always heretics and that such are the Essenes. They say that sudden conversions are nothing but passing enthusiasm and that an impure man will always be impure, a thief will always be a thief and a murderer a murderer. They conclude by saying that, as they live in perfect holiness, they are the only ones entitled to Heaven and to preaching.

« This was a happy day. Seeds of holiness were falling into hearts. My love, nourished by the kiss of God, was giving life to the seed. The Son of man was happy in sanctifying... You have poisoned the day. But it does not matter. I say to you - and if I am not gentle, the fault is yours - I say to you that you are the ones who show themselves just, or try to do so, in the eyes of men, but you are not just. God knows your hearts. What is great in the eyes of men, is abominable before the immensity and perfection of God. You quote the old Law. Why, then, do you not live according to it? You alter the Law in your favour, aggravating it with burdens that give you a profit. Why, then, do you not allow Me to alter it to the benefit of these little ones, removing all the tassels and heavy useless burdens of the precepts made by you, which are so many and such that the essential Law disappears under them and is smothered? I feel sorry for these crowds, for these souls, who seek fresh air in Religion and find a slip-knot. They seek love and find terror... No. Come, little ones of Israel. The Law is love! God is love! This is what I say to those who are frightened among you. The severe Law and the threatening prophets who foretold Me, but notwithstanding the cries of their distressing prophecies they were not able to withhold sin, end with John. After John comes the Kingdom of God, the Kingdom of love. I say to the humble: "Go in. It is for you". And everyone with a good will strives to go in. But for those who will not lower their heads, beat their chests and say: "I have sinned", there will be no Kingdom. It is written: "Circumcise your heart and be obstinate no longer". This land saw the

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prodigy of Elisha, who made the foul water wholesome, by throwing some salt into it. And do I not throw the salt of Wisdom into your hearts? Why are you then worse than water and you do not change your spirits? Mix My salt with your formulae and they will have a fresh taste, because they will give the Law its primitive strength. In you, first of all, as you are the most needy. Do you say that I change the Law? No. You tell lies. I give the Law its original form, which you distorted. Because it is the Law that will last as long as the Earth, and both sky and earth will disappear before one only of its elements or its advice. And if you alter it, because you like to do so, and if you draw fine distinctions looking for loop-holes for your faults, you had better know that it is of no avail. It is of no avail, Samuel! Of no avail, Isaiah. It is written: "You shall not commit adultery" and I complete it adding: "He who sends back his wife to marry another one, is adulterous, and he, who marries a woman repudiated by her husband, is adulterous, because what God joined, death only can separate". But harsh words are for obdurate sinners. Those who have sinned, but grieve desolately for doing so, must know and believe that God is Goodness, and let them come to Him Who absolves, forgives and admits to Life. Go with this certainty. Spread it in people's hearts. Preach mercy, which gives you peace, blessing you in the name of the Lord. »

The crowds disperse slowly, both because the path is narrow and because they are attracted by Jesus. But they disperse.

The apostles remain with Jesus and while speaking they make their way. They seek the shade walking close to a thicket of ruffled tamarisks. But there is an Essene in it. The one who spoke to Jesus. He is taking off his white clothes.

Peter, who is ahead of everybody, is dumbfounded seeing that the man is left with only his drawers on, and he runs back saying: « Master! A madman! The one who was speaking to You, the Essene. He is undressed and is weeping and sighing. We cannot go there. »

But the man, who is lean, bearded, with no clothes on his body except his drawers and sandals, is already coming out of the thicket and he turns his steps towards Jesus weeping and beating his chest. He prostrates himself: « I am the one whose heart has been miraculously cured. You have cured my soul. I will obey Your word. I want to clothe myself with light, leaving every other thought, which might clothe me with errors. I will live apart to meditate on the true God, to obtain life and resurrection. Is that enough? Give me a new name and tell me a place where I can live of You and of Your words. »

« He is mad! We could not lead such a life and we have heard so many of His words! And he... just after one sermon... » say the

3-1910

apostles to one another.

But the man, who has heard them, says: « Are you going to put limitations to God? He has broken my heart to give me a free spirit. Lord!... » he implores, stretching his arms out towards Jesus.

« Yes. Your name is Elijah and be fire. That mountain is full of caves. Go there, and when you hear the earth quake because of a dreadful earthquake, come out, and look for the servants of the Lord to join them. You will then be re-born and you will be a servant, too. Go! »

The man kisses His feet, gets up and goes away.

« But is he going nude like that? » ask the dumbfounded apostles.

« Give him a mantle, a knife, tinder and flint, and some bread. He will walk today and tomorrow and then he will retire to pray where we stopped and the Father will see to His son. »

Andrew and John run after him and they reach him when he is about to disappear round a bend.

They come back saying: « He took everything. We also told him where we were. What an unexpected prey, Lord! »

« God makes plants flower also on rocks. And in the deserts of hearts He makes spirits of good will rise to comfort Me. Now let us go towards Jericho. We will stop in some house in the country. »

381. In Nike's House.

12th February 1946.

Although the road runs through a green country, with leafy trees along its sides, it is as hot as an oven in the midday sun. Heat and the aroma of bread being baked in an oven come from the fields, where the crops are maturing rapidly. The light is dazzling. Each ear of corn looks like a tiny gilded lamp among the golden glumes and the pointed awns, and the sunshine sparkling on the straw of the cornstalks is as troublesome to the eye as the dazzling road. In vain the pilgrims seek relief in the leaves. If they look up at them, they expose their eyes even more to the glare of the oppressive sunshine, and they must lower them at once, to shun such violence, and close them, leaving a narrow gap between their dusty reddened irritated eyelashes. Perspiration trickling down their dusty cheeks leaves shiny streaks on them. They drag their tired feet raising more dust, which increases their torture.

Jesus comforts His tired apostles. Although He is perspiring as well, He has covered His head with His mantle, to protect it from the sun, and advises the others to do likewise. They obey without speaking. They are too exhausted to waste their breath on one of their usual complaints. They are proceeding like drunk men...

« Cheer up. There is a house over there in the fields... » says Jesus.

« If it is like the others... there will be nothing but the distress of

walking so much through fiery fields to no purpose » grumbles Peter within his mantle. The others confirm uttering a depressed « h'm! ».

« I will go. You stay here in this little shade. »

« No. We will come with You. They will have at least a well, as there is no shortage of water here... and we will have a drink to quench the fire within us. »

« It will do you harm to drink while you are so hot. »

« We shall die... but it will be better than what we have now... »

Jesus does not reply. He sighs and He goes ahead of them along a path through fields of corn.

The fields do not stretch as far as the house, but they end at the border of a wonderful shady orchard, which forms a rich refreshing ring round the house, as both light and heat are mitigated in it. And the apostles thrust themselves into it, with an « ah! » of relief. But Jesus goes on, heedless of their entreaties to stop for a little while.

The cooing of doves, the creaking of pulleys and the calm voices of women are heard from the house and spread in the dead silence of the country.

Jesus arrives at a little esplanade, which surrounds the house like a wide clean pavement, over which a pergola of grapes spreads its entangled leafy branches and a protecting shade. There are two wells, one on the left and one on the right hand side of the house, shaded by the vine. There are some flowerbeds against the walls of the house. Light dark-striped curtains are fluttering at the open doors. Voices of women and noise of dishes come from a room. Jesus goes towards it and as He passes by, a dozen doves, which were pecking cereals spread on the ground, take flight with loud flapping of wings. The noise draws the attention of those in the room and it is contemporaneous with the drawing of the curtain, which Jesus moves to the right with His hand, while a servants pulls it to the left and remains astonished before the Unknown visitor.

« Peace to this house! May I, as a pilgrim, have some refreshment? » asks Jesus standing on the threshold of the room, a large kitchen in which servants are washing the dishes used for the midday meal.

« The landlady will not reject You. I will go and tell her. »

« There are twelve more people with Me, and if I should get refreshment only for Myself, I would prefer to have none. »

« We will tell the mistress and she certainly... »

« Master and Lord! You here? In my house? What grace is this? » interrupts a voice, and a woman, Nike, rushes forward and kneels to kiss Jesus' feet.

The maidservants are left like statues. The one who was washing

3-1912

the dishes is standing with a towel in her right hand and a dripping dish in her left one, reddened by the boiling water. Another one, who was polishing knives, crouching in a corner, gets up on her knees to see better, and the knives fall on the floor with a crash. A third one, intent on removing ashes from the cookers, raises her face covered with ashes and remains thus, emerging open mouthed from the level of the fireplace.

« I am here. Many houses rejected us. We are tired and thirsty. »

« Oh! Come! Not here. Let us go into the rooms facing north, which are cool and shady. And you, prepare water so that they can wash, and bring some aromatic drinks. And you, girl, go and awake the steward and ask him to let you have some snacks, while waiting for the meal... »

« No, Nike! I am not a worldly guest. I am your persecuted Master. I ask for shelter and love, rather than for food. I ask for pity, more for My friends than for Myself... »

« Yes, Lord. But when did You have Your last meal? »

« They... I do not know. I, yesterday at dawn, with them. »

« So You can see... I will not commit excesses. But as a sister or a mother I will give everybody what is necessary, and as a servant and disciple, I will give You honour and assistance. Where are the brothers? »

« In the orchard. But I think that they are coming. I can hear their voices. »

Nike runs out, she sees them and calls them and then she leads them with Jesus into a cool entrance-hall, where there already are basins and towels, so that they can wash their faces, hands and feet and get rid of dust and perspiration.

« I beg you, take off your dusty clothes and give them to the servants at once. You will feel much better with clean clothes and cool sandals on. Then come into that hall. I will wait for you there. »

And Nike goes out closing the door...

... « Ah! It is lovely in this shade and so refreshing! » says Peter with a sigh entering the room where Nike is waiting for them kindly and respectfully.

« My joy in giving you relief is certainly greater than your relief, o apostle of my Lord. »

« H'm! Apostle... Of course... But, listen, Nike, let us do without ceremony. You: without attaching importance to the fact that you are rich and wise; I, without attaching importance to the fact that I am an apostle. So... like good brothers and sisters, who need each other's help for their souls and their bodies. The thought that I am an "apostle" frightens me too much. »

« What are you afraid of? » asks the amazed woman smiling.

« Of being... too big... with regard to the clay I am, and that I may collapse because of the weight... I am afraid of... becoming arrogant

3-1913

with pride... I am afraid that... the others, I mean the disciples and good souls, knowing that I am the apostle, may keep away from me and hold their tongues even if I make mistakes... And I do not want that because among the disciples, also among those who believe in a simple way, there are many who are better than I am, some with regard to this, some with regard to that, and I want to do as... as that bee over there, which has come in, and of the baskets of fruit that you ordered to be brought in for us, it sucked a little here and a little there, and now, to complete the task, is sucking those flowers and then it will go out and suck clover and cornflowers, camomiles and bindweeds. It takes a little of everything. And I must do likewise... »

« But you suck the most beautiful flower! The Master. »

« Yes, Nike. But from Him I learn to become a son of God. Men will teach me to become a man. »

« You are. »

« No, woman. I am little less than an animal. And really I do not know how the Master puts up with me... »

« I put up with you because you know what you are, and I can work on you as easily as one can knead dough. But if you were stubborn and offered resistance, and above all if you were proud, I would drive you away as if you were a demon » says Jesus.

Some maidservants come in with cups of cold milk, and porous amphoras, which keep liquids very cool.

« Take some refreshment » says Nike. « Then you will be able to rest until evening. There are rooms and beds in the house. And if I did not have them, I would give you mine, to let you rest. Master, I will now withdraw to attend to household matters. You all know where to find me and the maidservants. »

« Go and do not worry about us. »

Nike goes out. The apostles do ample justice to the snack offered to them. And while eating with a good appetite, they speak and make comments.

« Lovely fruit! »

« And a good disciple. »

« Beautiful house. Not magnificent, not poor. »

« And it is controlled by a woman who is both kind and firm. There is order, neatness, respect, and tenderness at the same time. »

« There are beautiful fields round it! A fortune! »

« Yes. And a furnace!... » says Peter, who has not forgotten what he suffered. The others laugh.

« But it is very pleasant here. Did You know that Nike lived here? » asks Thomas.

« Not any more than you did. I knew that she had recently bought some property near Jericho. But that was all. The dear angel of pilgrims led us here. »

3-1914

« Actually, he led You. We did not want to come. »

« I was ready to throw myself on the ground and let the sun burn me, rather than take another step » says Matthew.

« It is not possible to travel during the day. The sun is very strong this year. It seems to be going mad as well. »

« Yes, we will travel during the first hours in the morning and in the evening. But we shall soon be up on the mountains. It is milder there. »

« To my house? » asks the Iscariot.

« Yes, Judas. And to Juttah and to Hebron. »

« Not to Ashkelon, eh? »

« No, Peter. We will go where we have never been. We shall still have to suffer from sunshine and heat. A little sacrifice for My sake and for the sake of souls. Rest now. I am going into the orchard to pray. »

« But are You never tired? Would it not be better if You had a rest as well? » asks Judas of Alphaeus.

« Perhaps the Master wishes to stop here... » remarks the Zealot.

« No. We will leave at dawn to wade across the river in the cool hours. »

« Where are we going beyond the Jordan? »

« The crowds are going home after Passover. Too many looked in vain for Me in Jerusalem. I will preach and cure at the ford. Then we will go and tidy up Solomon's house. It will be invaluable to us... »

« But are we not going back to Galilee? »

« We will go there, too. But we will remain in these southern parts for a long time, and a shelter will be most useful to us. Sleep. I am going. »

Supper must be over. It is night. Dew drops fall from cornices and resound on the vine leaves. There is an unbelievable number of stars in the sky and eyes get lost contemplating them. Chirps of crickets and night birds. The silence of the country.

The apostles have already withdrawn. But Nike is up and she is listening to the Master. He is sat stiffly on a stone seat against the house. The woman is standing before Him, in an attitude of respectful attention.

Jesus must be concluding a speech already started. He says: « Yes. The remark is correct. But I was sure that the penitent, or rather the "reviving man" would not be left without the help of the Lord. While we were having supper and you were serving and asking questions, I was thinking that you are the help. You said: "I can only follow You for short periods of time, because I have to watch over the house and the new domestic staff ". And you regretted that and you said that if you had known you were going to find

3-1915

Me so soon, you would not have bought the property, which is now binding you. You can see that it has served to give hospitality to the evangelizers. So it is good. And it may be useful again... while waiting to serve your Lord perfectly. I now ask a service of you, for the sake of that soul, who is reviving and is full of good will, but is very weak. Excessive penance might distress him, and Satan might take advantage of such distress. »

« What must I do, my Lord? »

« Go to him. Go to him every month, as if it were a rite. It is a rite of brotherly love. You will go to the Cherith and climbing up the path among the bushes you will call: "Elijah! Elijah!". He will look out in amazement and you will greet him thus: "Peace to you, brother, in the name of Jesus the Nazarene". You will take him as many pieces of bread baked twice, as the days of a month. Nothing else in summer. From the Feast of the Tabernacles onwards, you will take him also four jars of oil each month, together with the bread. And at the Tabernacles take him a garment made of goatskin, a heavy one, water resistant, and a blanket. Nothing else. »

« And no word? »

« Only those strictly useful. He will ask after Me. Tell him what you know. He will confide his hesitations, his hopes and low spirits to you. You will tell him what your faith and piety inspire you. The sacrifice, in any case, will not last long... Not even twelve months... Will you be merciful to Me and to the penitent? »

« Yes, my Lord... But why are You so sad? »

« And why are you weeping? »

« Because in Your words I hear a foreboding of death... Will I be losing You so soon, Lord? » Nike weeps behind her veil.

« Do not weep! There will be so -much peace for Me, afterwards... No more hatred. No more ambushes. No more all this... horror of sin against Me and around Me... No more atrocious contacts... Oh! Do not weep, Nike! Your Saviour will be in peace. He will be victorious... »

« But before... I always read the prophets with my husband And we shuddered with horror at the words of David and Isaiah But will it really be like that for You? »

« That and more... »

« Oh!... Who will comfort You? Who will let You die still hopeful? »

« The love of My disciples and particularly of My women disciples. »

« Also mine, then. Because at no cost I will be far from my Saviour. Only... oh! Lord! Exact any kind of penance from me, any sacrifice, but give me manly courage for that hour. When you will be like "a dry potsherd", "with Your tongue stuck to Your jaw" out of thirst, when You will look "like a leper who covers his

3-1916

face", grant that I may recognise You as the King of kings and I may assist You, as a devoted servant. Do not conceal Your tortured face from me, o my God! But as You now allow me to delight in Your brightness, o Morning Star, let me look at You then and may Your face be impressed in my heart, because, oh! also my heart, like Yours, will melt like wax on that day, through grief... » Nike is now on her knees, almost prostrated and now and again she raises her weeping face to look at her Lord, Whose body is white in the white moonlight against the dark wall.

« You will have all that. And I shall have your pity. And it will come with Me to the scaffold and from there it will rise to Heaven. Your crown for ever. Angels and men will utter the most beautiful praise of you: "In the hour of calamity, of sin, of doubt, she was faithful, she did not sin and she assisted her Lord". Stand up, woman. And may you be blessed as from now and for ever. »

He lays His hands on her head while she is getting up, and they then go into the silent house, for their night's rest.

382. At the Ford between Jericho and Bethabara.

14th February 1946.

The banks of the Jordan near the ford are exactly like a camp of nomads during these days, when caravans are returning to their home towns. Tents or just blankets, tied to two tree-trunks, or resting on branches planted in the ground, or tied to the high saddle of a camel, fixed, in short, somehow, to enable people to get under them, and be sheltered from the dew which must be just like rain in these places below sea level, are spread everywhere along the woods, which form a green frame round the river.

When Jesus arrives with His disciples near the river banks, to the north of the ford, the camps are slowly awaking. Jesus must have left Nike's house at dawn, because the sun has not yet risen and the place is beautiful, cool and serene. The more earnest people, awakened by the neighing, braying, the strange cries of horses, donkeys and camels, by the quarrels or songs of hundreds of sparrows and other birds among the branches of willows, of reed-thickets, of the tall trees forming green tunnels above the flowery banks, begin to steal out of the gaily-coloured tents and go down to the river to wash. One can hear some children weeping and the sweet voices of mothers speaking to their children.

All the signs of life revive minute by minute. All kinds of vendors arrive from the nearby town of Jericho, with new pilgrims, guards and soldiers responsible for watching over and keeping order during these days, when tribes of every region meet and do not spare themselves insults and reproaches, and when there are frequent thefts by highwaymen, who mix with the crowds disguised

3-1917

as pilgrims in order to steal; and there is no shortage of prostitutes, who have come on « their » Passover pilgrimage, that is, to squeeze money and gifts out of the more wealthy and lustful passengers in payment for an hour's pleasure, which miserably neutralises all Passover purifications... The honest women, who among the pilgrims have husbands and grown up sons, shout like upset magpies calling their men, who stand enraptured, or at least mothers and wives think so, watching the prostitutes. And the shameless women laugh and give sharp answers to the titles addressed to them by the honest women. The men, and the soldiers in particular, laugh and willingly joke with the prostitutes. Some Israelites, morally rigid, or only hypocritically rigid, go away indignantly, whilst others... make use of the deaf-and-dumb alphabet in advance, because they make themselves clearly understood with the prostitutes by gestures.

Jesus does not follow the straight road that would take Him to the middle of the camp. He goes down to the gravel bed of the river, takes His sandals off and walks where the water washes against the grass. The apostles follow Him.

The elder ones, who are more uncompromising, grumble: « And to think that the Baptist preached penance here! »

« Yes! And this place is now worse than a porch in the Roman thermae! »

« And those who call themselves saints do not disdain to amuse themselves there! »

« Did you see them, too? »

« Of course I did! I have eyes as well!... »

The younger or less rigid apostles - such as Judas of Kerioth who laughs and watches very carefully what is happening in the camps and does not disdain contemplating the beautiful impudent women who have come looking for customers; and Thomas, who laughs watching the angry wives and the indignant Pharisees; and Matthew, who cannot speak severely against vices and corrupt people, as once he was a sinner himself, and is content with sighing and shaking his head; and James of Zebedee, who watches without interest and without criticising, indifferently - follow their little group, ahead of which there is Jesus with Andrew, John and James of Alphaeus.

Jesus' face is uncommunicative, as if it were carved in marble. And it becomes more and more uncommunicative, as from the top of the embankment He hears words of admiration or shameless conversations between a not very honest man and a prostitute. He looks straight ahead all the time, fixedly. He does not want to see. And His attitude makes His intention very clear.

But a young man, magnificently dressed, who is speaking to two prostitutes with other fellows like him, says in a loud voice to one

3-1918

of the women: « Go! We want to have a good laugh. Go and offer yourself! Comfort Him! He is sad because, poor as He is, he cannot buy women. »

Jesus' ivory face blushes and then becomes pale once again. But He does not look round. His blushing is the only sign that He has heard.

The impudent woman, with her necklaces tinkling loudly and her dress flapping lightly, utters an affected cry and jumps from the low embankment on to the gravel bed, and in doing so, she succeeds in showing much of her secret beauty. She falls just at Jesus' feet and with trilling laughter on her beautiful lips, inviting eyes and figure, she shouts: « Oh! handsome one among those born of woman! For a kiss of Your lips, I give all myself without payment! »

John, Andrew and James of Alphaeus are paralysed with scandalised astonishment and cannot make a gesture. But Peter! He springs like a panther and from his group he falls heavily on the unfortunate woman, now on her knees and leaning backwards, he shakes her, lifts her, hurls her, with an awful epithet, against the embankment, then charges her to give her the rest.

Jesus says: « Simon! » A cry which is more than a sermon.

And Simon goes back to his Lord, red with anger. « Why do You not let me punish her? »

« Simon, you do not punish a garment which has become dirty. You wash it. Her garment is her filthy body and her soul is polluted. Let us pray to cleanse her soul and her body. » He says so kindly, in a low voice, but loud enough to be heard by the woman, and setting out again, He now does cast a glance with His mild eyes at the wretched woman for one moment. One glance only! For one moment only! But all the power of His merciful love is in it! And the woman lowers her head, picks up her veil and covers herself with it... Jesus continues on His way.

He is now at the ford. The shallow water allows adults to cross to the other side on foot. It is enough to lift one's clothes above one's knees and look for the large white stones submerged in the crystal-clear water forming a kind of pavement for the people wading across. Those on horseback cross over downstream.

The apostles wallow happily in the water half way up their thighs and Peter cannot believe that it is true. And he promises the others and himself a refreshing bath when they stop in Solomon's house, as compensation for yesterday's roasting.

They are now on the other side. Here also the crowds are becoming active after the night's rest, or people are drying themselves after wading.

Jesus orders: « Spread around and inform people that the Rabbi is here. I am going near that fallen tree-trunk and I will wait for

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you there. »

Many people are soon informed and they flock to hear Him.

Jesus begins to speak. A sad procession passes by following a litter, on which there is a young man who has been taken ill in Jerusalem, and as the doctors have condemned him, he is now being rushed home to die there. Everybody is speaking about him because he is rich and still young. And many say: « It must be very sad to die when one is so wealthy and so young! » And some say perhaps they are people who already believe in Jesus -: « It serves him right! He will not believe. The disciples went to his relatives and said to them: "The Saviour is here. If you have faith and you ask Him, He will cure him". But he was the first to refuse to come to the Rabbi. » Criticism follows pity. And Jesus refers to that to begin His speech.

« Peace to everybody!

Rich and young people certainly do not like to die, when they are rich only in money and young in age. But those, who are rich in virtue and young because of their pure habits, are not sorry to die. A truly wise person, from the age of discretion onwards, acts in such a way as to die peacefully. Life is preparation for death, just as death is preparation for a greater Life. The true wise man, when he understands the truth of living and dying, the truth of dying to rise again, strives in every possible way to divest himself of what is useless, and to become enriched with what is useful, that is, with virtues and good deeds, in order to have a supply of goods before Him Who summons him to judge him, to reward or punish him with perfect justice. The true wise man leads a life that makes him more adult in wisdom than an old man, and younger than a teenager, because by living virtuously and justly, he keeps such pure feelings in his heart that even youths at time do not possess. How sweet then it is to die! The wise man reclines his tired head on the bosom of the Father, he relaxes in His embrace, and in the midst of the mist of fleeing life he says: "I love You, I hope in You, I believe in You", saying so for the last time on the Earth, to repeat then the jubilant "I love You!", for ever and ever in the brightness of Paradise.

Is death a harsh thought? No. A just decree for all mortals, it is a grievous worry for those who do not believe and are full of sins. In vain man says, to explain the troubled anxiety of a man who is dying and who was not good during his lifetime: "It's because he would not like to die as yet, because he has not done any good, or only very little, and he would like to live to make amends". In vain he says: "If he had lived longer, he could have had a greater reward, because he would have done more good". A soul knows, at least vaguely, how much time it has been given. No time, as compared to eternity. And the soul spurs the whole ego to act. But,

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poor soul! How often it is overwhelmed, trodden upon, gagged, in order not to hear its words! That happens to those who lack good will. Whilst just men, from their very childhood, listen to their souls, obey their advice, and are continuously active; and saints die young in age but rich in merits, at times at the dawn of life; and not even by the addition of one hundred or one thousand years, would they become holier than they are, because the love for God and their neighbour, practised in every form and with utter generosity, makes them perfect. What matters in Heaven is not how long, but how one has lived.

People mourn for corpses and weep over them. But corpses do not weep. People tremble at the thought that they must die. But they do not worry about living in such a way as not to tremble at the hour of their death. Why do people not mourn for and weep over living corpses, the real corpses, those who have in their bodies, as in graves, dead souls? And those who weep thinking that their bodies must die, why do they not weep over the corpses they have within themselves? How many corpses I see, and they laugh and joke, but they do not weep over themselves! How many fathers, mothers, husbands, wives, brothers, sons, friends, priests, teachers, I see who foolishly weep for a son, a wife, a husband, a brother, a parent, a friend, a believer, a disciple who died in clear friendship with God, after a life that was a crown of perfection and who do not weep over the corpses of the souls of a son, a husband, a wife, a brother, a father, a friend, a believer, a disciple, who is dead through vices and sins, and is dead and lost for ever, unless he repents! Why not try to revive them? That is love, you know? It is the greatest love. Oh! foolish tears for dust, which has become dust! Idolatry of affections! Hypocrisy of affection! Weep, but over the dead souls of your dearest relatives. Try to bring them to Life. And I speak in particular to you, women, who can influence so much those whom you love.

Let us now consider together what Wisdom indicates as the cause of death and shame.

Do not insult God by misusing the life He gave you, soiling it with evil deeds which dishonour man. Do not insult your parents through behaviour that flings mud at their white hair and causes violent sorrow to their last days. Do not abuse those who assist you, so that you will not be cursed for the love you tread upon. Do not abuse those who govern you, because it is not by rebelling against rulers that countries become great and free, but it is through the holy life of citizens that you obtain the assistance of the Lord, Who can touch the hearts of rulers or remove them from their places or even from life, as our history of Israel has shown several times, when they pass all bounds and especially when the people, sanctifying themselves, deserve the forgiveness of God,

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Who thus removes the oppressive yoke from the necks of the punished citizens. Do not abuse your wives by putting an affront of adulterous love upon them, and do not abuse the innocence of your children with the knowledge of unlawful love. Live holily in the eyes of those who, both because of their love and of their duty, consider you the person who is to be the example of their lives. You cannot sever your holiness in respect of your closest neighbour from your holiness towards God, because one germinates the other, as the two loves: of God and neighbour germinate each other.

Be just with your friends. Friendship is a kinship of the soul. It is written: "How delightful it is for friends to proceed all together". But it is delightful if they proceed on the path of virtue. Woe to those who pollute and betray friendship by turning it into selfishness, treason, vice or injustice. Too many are those who say: "I love you" to find out their friends' business and exploit the information to their own benefit'! Too many are those who usurp the rights of their friends!

Be honest with judges. With all judges. From the most high judge, Who is God and cannot be defrauded or deceived through hypocritical practices, to the intimate judge, that is, your conscience, to the loving, suffering judges, watchful of their love, which are the eyes of your relatives, to the severe judges of the people. Do not lie invoking God to corroborate your lies.

Be honest in selling and buying. When you are selling, and your greed says to you: "Steal to have a bigger profit", whilst your conscience says to you: "Be honest because you would be sorry if you were robbed", listen to the latter voice, remembering that we must not do to others what we would not like done to ourselves. The money given to you in exchange for goods is often wet with the perspiration and tears of the poor. It costs hard work. You do not know how much grief it costs, how much sorrow and pain there is behind that money, which you vendors think that it is always too little for what you give. Sick people, fatherless children, old people short of money... Oh! holy grief and holy dignity of the poor, which the rich do not understand, why are you not taken into consideration? Why are people honest when selling to the powerful and mighty ones, for fear of retaliation, whereas they take advantage of defenceless unknown brothers? That is rather a crime against love than against honesty itself. And God curses it, because the tears squeezed out of poor people, who have but tears as a reaction against abuse of power, cry to the Lord with the same voice as the blood drained from the veins of a man by a murderer, by a Cain of his fellow creature.

Be honest in your looks, as you are in your words and deeds. A look, given to those who do not deserve it, or denied to those who do deserve it, is like a noose and a dagger. The look that meets the

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impudent eyes of a prostitute, and says to her: "You are beautiful!", and replies to her inviting look with assent, is worse than the slip knot for a hanged man. The look denied to a poor relative or to a friend fallen into poverty, is like a dagger that pierces the hearts of those unhappy people. And likewise the glance of hatred or of contempt cast at one's enemy or at a beggar. Enemies are to be forgiven and loved at least with your souls, if your bodies refuse to love them. Forgiveness is love of the spirit. Not to take revenge is love of the spirit. A beggar is to be loved because nobody comforts him. It is not sufficient to throw a mite and pass by scornfully. The offering serves for the starving, naked, homeless body. But the pity that smiles in offering, that takes an interest in the tears of the unhappy fellow, is bread for his heart. Love, love, love.

Be honest in tithes and customary practices, be honest in your homes, without exploiting servants beyond measure and without tempting the maidservant sleeping under your roof. Even if the world is unaware of the theft committed in the secrecy of your house against your unaware wife and against the maidservant you debauch, God is aware of your sin. Be honest in speaking. Be honest in bringing up your sons and daughters. It is written: "Keep a sharp look-out, that your daughter does not make you the laughing stock of the town". I say: "Keep a sharp look-out that the soul of your daughter may not die".

And now go. I also will go away, after giving you provisions of wisdom. May the Lord be with those who strive to love Him. »

He blesses them with a gesture, He descends quickly from the fallen tree and takes a lane among the trees going upstream and soon disappears among the green vegetation.

The crowds make comments animatedly with opposing opinions. The unfavourable comments, of course, are made by the few scribes and Pharisees who are among the crowds of humble people.

383. In Solomon's House. Old Ananias.

15th February 1946.

Solomon's little house, which I saw in the vision of the resurrection of Lazarus in 1944, without knowing its owner, is one of the last houses in the only road that takes one to the river, in this poor out-of-the-way village: one little village of boatmen, where the houses of the... wealthier people are situated along the little dusty road, and the others are spread at random among the trees of the embankments. They are not many. I do not think that they are fifty in all. And they are so small, that they could be all contained in one of those tenement houses in large modern towns. Springtime now makes them appear less miserable, because it adorns them

with its freshness, while garlands of bindweed or festoons of vines, or cheery smiling yellow flowers of vegetable marrows adorn the coarse fences marking the boundaries of properties, the borders of roofs, the doors of houses. There is also an odd rose, which seems out of place in its beauty in the midst of baskets and nets, of yellow mustards in bloom and of the early pods of humble swinging beans.

Also the road looks prettier, because the cane-brake at its end, has not only the hard berries of the dusty knots, but it is also decorated with plumes, and wild gladioli display their swordshaped leaves and bright-coloured flower spikes, while light bindweeds with threadlike stems embrace canes and knots winding round them and at each twirl they put forth the very delicate chalice of their little lilac-pink flower. And myriads of birds make love among the reed-thickets, flirting on the canes, swinging on the bearbines, enlivening the green marshy embankments with their chirping and many-coloured feathers.

Jesus pushes the little rustic gate admitting to a small kitchen garden or courtyard. If it was a kitchen garden, now it is certainly a wild entanglement of grass, if it was a courtyard it is still a disorder of weeds sown by the wind. Only some vegetable marrows have been wise by clinging to the only vine and fig-tree, climbing up to put forth the smiling mouths of their flowers close to the miniature bunches of grapes of the vine, or to the tiny tender fig leaves, which at their joints, in the cradles of the stalks, have the hard gems of the fig-flowers just formed. Stinging-nettles are tormenting the apostles' bare feet, so much so that Peter and Thomas pick up two worm-eaten oars and are busy beating the irritating plants to lessen their poisonous effect.

In the meantime James and John are trying to turn the big rusty lock, and when they succeed, they open the rustic door, entering a kitchen room smelling mouldy and close. Dust and cobwebs decorate the walls. A rough table, some benches and seats and a shelf furnish it; there are two doors in one of the walls.

Peter explores... « There is a little room with one bed only. It's good for Jesus... And there? Ah! I see! This is the store-room, the lumber-room, the barn and the rats' nest... Look how they run! They have gnawed away everything these months. But now I will see to you, don't you worry. Master... can we act as if we were at home here? »

« That is what Solomon said. »

« Very well! Listen, brother, and you, James. Come here and close all these holes. And you, Matthew stand here at the door with Judas, and make sure that not even one mouse gets out. Just imagine that you are still the kind toll-collector at Capernaum. No customer escaped you then, not even if he became as thin as a

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lizard after hibernating... And you go and get as much weed as you can in the kitchen garden and bring it here. And You, Master, go... wherever You like, while I will fix these filthy devils, which have ruined these good nets and have eaten the whole keel of a boat... » And while speaking he gathers together gnawed bits of wood, bits of nets reduced like tow, faggots... everything in the middle of the room, and when he gets the green grass, he places it on top of the rest and then sets fire to the lot and runs out when the first spirals of smoke rise from the pile. And he laughs saying: « Let all the Philistines die! »

« But you are not going to set everything on fire? » asks Simon Zealot.

« No, my dear. Because the damp green grass chokes the flames, and the flames exhale smoke from the grass and thus, as good allies, the dry and green elements help each other in taking revenge. Can you smell how it stinks? And before long you will hear screams! Who told me that swans sing before dying? Ah! Syntyche did! The mice will be singing, too, shortly. »

Judas Iscariot suddenly stops laughing and remarks: « We have not been able to find out anything about her. And we have heard nothing of John of Endor. I wonder where they have ended up. »

« In the right place certainly » replies Peter.

« Do you know where? »

« I know that they are no longer here to be harassed by ill-will. »

« Have you ever inquired about them? I have. »

« I have not. I am not interested in knowing where they are. I am quite satisfied thinking and praying that they may persevere in holiness. »

Thomas says: « Some rich Pharisees asked me about them. They are customers of my father. I replied that I do not know. »

« And are you not anxious to know? »

« I am not and that is the truth... »

« Listen! Listen! The smoke is having effect. But let us go out, otherwise we shall be choking, too » says Peter. And the distraction puts an end to the discussion.

Jesus is in the kitchen garden and is straightening the stems of legumes, creeping on the ground, which have come up from seed fallen there.

« Are You working as a kitchen gardener? » asks Philip smiling.

« Yes. It upsets Me to see a plant creep uselessly, whereas it is destined to rise towards the sun and bear fruit. »

« A beautiful subject-matter for a sermon, Master » remarks Bartholomew.

« Yes. Beautiful. But everything can be used as a subject, when one knows how to meditate. »

« We will help You, too. Come on! Who will go down to the river

3-1925

to get some canes for the legumes? »

The younger disciples go away laughing, and the elder ones get busy weeding carefully.

« Oh! One can see that it is a kitchen garden like that. There is no salad. But there are leeks, garlic, vegetables, fine herbs and legumes. And vegetable marrows! How many of them! The vine needs pruning and the fig-tree wants to be cleared... »

« But, Simon, we are not staying here!... » says Matthew.

« But we shall come here often. He said so. And it will do us no harm to have a little order here. Look! There is also a jasmine, poor thing, under this cascade of marrows. If Porphirea saw this plant so dejected, she would weep over it, and she would talk to it as to a child. Of course, before she had Marjiam she used to talk to her flowers as if they were her children... Here you are! I have made room here. I removed the marrow because... Oh! Here are the boys with the canes and a... Master, there is work for You. He is blind! »

In fact James, John, Andrew and Thomas come in, laden with canes, and Thomas is almost carrying a poor old man, covered with rags; his eyes are white with cataracts.

« Master, he was trying to find chicory on the banks and almost fell into the water. He has been left alone for some months, because the son who kept him died, and his daughter-in-law went back to her house and he... lives as best he can. Is that right, father? »

« Yes, it is. Where is the Lord? » he says turning round his veiled eyes.

« He is here. Can you see that long whiteness? It's Him. »

But Jesus comes forward and takes him by the hand. « Are you alone, poor father? And you cannot see? »

« No, I cannot. When I could, I made baskets and eel-pots and I made also nets. But now... I can see more with my fingers than with my eyes, and looking for herbs, I make mistakes, and at times I have suffered from stomach disorder because of harmful herbs. »

« But in the village... »

« Oh! They are all poor and with many children, and I am old... If a donkey dies... one is sorry. But if an old man dies!... What is an old man? What am I? My daughter-in-law took everything away. If she had only taken me with her, like an old sheep, that I might be near my grandchildren... my son's children... » he weeps resting his head on the chest of Jesus, Who holds him in His arms caressing him.

« Have you got a house? »

« She sold it. »

« And how do you live? »

« Like an animal. At first the people in the village helped me, Then they became tired... »

3-1926

« Solomon in that case is no longer of the same race, because he is generous » remarks Matthew.

« With us, though. Why did he not give the house to the old man? » asks Philip.

« Because the last time he came here, I had a house. Solomon is good. But for some time the people of the village have said that he is mad, and they no longer do what Solomon had taught them » says the old man.

« Would you be willing to stay with Me? »

« Oh! I would no longer regret my grandchildren! »

« Even if you were to remain poor and blind, would you be happy just by serving Me? »

« Yes! » A trembling yes, and yet so firm...

« All right, father. Listen. You cannot travel about as I do. And I cannot remain here. But we can love each other and do each other a good turn. »

« You can, yes, to me. But I... What can old Ananias do? »

« You can take care of the house and of the kitchen garden so that I may find them in good order when I come back? Do you like the idea? »

« Yes, I do! But I am blind... The house I will become accustomed to the walls. But the kitchen garden How can I take care of it, if I cannot tell one herb from another? Oh! How lovely it would be to serve You thus, Lord! And end my life thus... » The old man is pressing his hands against his heart, dreaming of what is impossible.

Jesus bends smiling and kisses his dimmed eyes...

« But I... I am beginning to see... I can see... Oh! Oh!... » He staggers in his joy and would fall if Jesus did not support him.

« Eh! what joy does!... » says Peter in a deeply moved voice.

« And hunger... He says that he has been living for days on chicory, without any oil or salt... » concludes Thomas.

« Yes, that is why we brought him here. To feed him... »

« Poor old soul! » they all exclaim sympathetically.

The old man recovers his senses and weeps. The poor tears of old people so sad also when they are tears of joy, and he whispers: « Now... now I can serve You, Blessed One! » and he wants to bend to kiss Jesus' feet.

« No, father. Now we shall go inside and we shall have something to eat. Then we will give you a tunic and you will be among sons, and we shall have a father who will welcome us every time we come back and will bless us every time we depart. We will go and find two doves, so that you may always have living creatures around you. We will get seed for the kitchen garden and you will sow them in the soil and you will sow faith in Me in the hearts of the people here. »

3-1927

« I will teach them charity, for they have none! »

« Yes, also charity. But be kind... »

« Oh! I will be. I did not say one harsh word to my daughter-inlaw when she left me. I understood and I forgave. »

« I read that in your heart. That is why I loved you. Come. Come with Me... » And Jesus goes into the house holding the old man by the hand.

Peter looks at them, and with the back of his hand he wipes off a tear, before resuming his work.

« Are you weeping, brother? »

Peter does not reply.

Andrew insists: « Why are you weeping, brother? »

« Mind your own business, the weeds in this case. If I am weeping it's because... it's because I know why... »

« Tell us, too, be good » say several apostles.

« It's because, these lessons... given so... they touch my heart more than when He thunders imposingly... »

« But we see the King in Him then! » exclaims Judas.

« And here we see the Saint. Peter is right » says Bartholomew.

« But He must be powerful in order to reign. »

« And He must be holy in order to redeem. »

« I agree, with regard to souls. But with regard to Israel... »

« Israel will never be Israel unless souls become holy. »

The conflicting opinions bounce backwards and forwards.

The old man comes out with a water-jug in his hand. He is going to the fountain. He is so happy that he is entirely different from the man he was previously.

« Old father, listen. According to you, what does Israel need to become great? » Andrew asks him. « A king or a saint? »

« It needs God. That God Who is praying and meditating in there. Ah! My sons! Be good, you who follow Him! Be good, very good! Ah! what a gift the Lord has given you! What a gift! » and he goes away raising his arms towards the sky whispering: « What a gift! What a gift! »...

384. At the Cross-Road near Solomon's Village. Parable of the Labour Agents.

16th February 1946.

The little group comes out of the house; there is also the old man who admires himself in the tunic of one of the rather short apostles.

« If you wish to remain here, father... » says Jesus.

But the old man interrupts Him: « No, I will come, too. Oh! let me come. I had a meal yesterday! Last night I slept, and in a bed! And my heart is no longer grieved! I feel as strong as a youth... »

3-1928

« Come, then. You-will stay with Me, with Bartholomew and My brother Judas. The rest will go around in twos as I said. We shall all be here again by the sixth hour. Go! and peace be with you. »

They part, some go towards the river, some towards the country. Jesus lets them go away and He then sets out last. He crosses the village slowly and He is looked at by the fishermen coming back from the river or going there and by the industrious housewives, who have got up at dawn to do the washing, or water their kitchen gardens or bake bread. But none of them speak.

Only a boy, who is leading seven sheep to the river, asks the old man: « Where are you going, Ananias? Are you leaving the village? »

« I am going with the Rabbi. But I will come back with Him. I am His servant. »

« No. You are My father. Every just old man is a father and a blessing for the place giving him hospitality and for those who assist him. Blessed are those who love and respect the old » says Jesus with solemn countenance.

The boy looks at Him and seems to be frightened. He then whispers: « I always gave some of my bread to Ananias... » as if he wished to say: « Do not reproach me, for I do not deserve it. »

« Yes. Michael was good to me. He was a friend of my grand children... and he is still a friend of their grandfather. His mother is also good and she would help. But she has eleven children and they make their living by fishing... »

Some women approach them out of curiosity and listen.

« God will always help those who do what they can for the poor. And there is always a way to help them. Very often it is a lie to say: "I cannot". Because if one is willing, one will always find a superfluous mouthful, an old blanket, a garment that is no longer worn, and give it to someone who has none. And Heaven rewards for the gift. God will give you back, Michael, the mouthfuls you gave the old man. » Jesus caresses the boy and walks away.

The women remain mortified where they were, they ask the boy questions and he tells them what he knows. And the stingy women are seized with fear, as they had closed their hearts to the needs of the old man...

In the meantime Jesus has arrived at the last house and, He turns His steps towards a cross-road, which from the main road leads towards the little village. From there they can see caravans on the main road going back to the towns of the Decapolis and Perea.

« Let us go over there and preach. Do you want to preach, too, father? »

« I am not capable. What can I say? »

« You are capable. Your soul is aware of the wisdom in forgiving and being faithful to God and resigned also in the hours of grief. And you know that God assists those who hope in Him. Go and tell

3-1929

the pilgrims. »

« Oh! I can do that! »

« Judas, go with him. I will remain here at the cross-road with Bartholomew. »

And when He is there He stops in the shade of a group of leafy plane-trees and waits patiently.

The nearby fields have beautiful crops and orchards. They look fresh in the early morning and it is a pleasure to admire them. And the caravans pass along the road... Only few people look at the two leaning against the trunks of the plane-trees. Perhaps they think that they are tired travellers. But some recognise Jesus and point Him out or they bow greeting Him.

At last there is one who stops his little donkey and those of his relatives, dismounts and goes towards Jesus saying: « God be with You, Rabbi! I come from Arbela. I heard You in autumn. This is my wife, this is her sister, a widow, and this is my mother. This elderly man is her brother. And that young man is my wife's brother. And these are our children. Give us Your blessing, Master. I heard that You spoke at the ford. But I arrived there last night... Will you not say a word to us? »

« The Word never refuses. But wait a few minutes, because other people are arriving... »

In fact the people of the village are arriving at the cross-road and they look very dejected. Other people, who had passed by along the main road, going north, come back, while others stop out of curiosity dismounting from their horses or remaining on horseback. The little group of listeners is increasing more and more.

Judas of Alphaeus also comes back with the old man; there are also two sick people with them and many more healthy ones.

Jesus begins to speak.

« Those who go along the roads of the Lord, the roads indicated by the Lord, and they do so with good will, end up by finding the Lord. You have found the Lord coming here after fulfilling your duty of faithful Israelites at holy Passover. And here is Wisdom speaking to you, as you wished, at this cross-road, where Divine Providence has made us meet. Man comes to many cross-roads on the way of his life. More supernatural cross-roads than material ones. Every day our conscience has to face the road-forks and cross-roads of Good and Evil. And one must choose carefully to avoid making mistakes. And if one does make a mistake, one must come back humbly, when one is called and warned. And even if the way of Evil, or also the way of tepidness, looks more beautiful, one must choose the rough but safe road of Good.

Listen to a parable.

A group of pilgrims, who had come from remote regions looking for work, arrived at the frontier of a nation. At the frontier there

3-1930

were agents sent by various masters to employ labour. Some were looking for men for mines, some for woods and forests, some for servants for a wicked rich man, and some for soldiers for a king who lived in a castle on the top of a mountain, which could be reached by a very steep road. The king needed soldiers, but he wanted them to be not so much men of violence as of wisdom, to send them to his various towns to sanctify his subjects. That is why he lived up there, in a kind of hermitage, to perfect his servants, preventing them from being corrupted by worldly distractions, which delay or annul the perfecting of their spirits. He did not promise high wages, or a comfortable life. But he assured them that they would obtain holiness and a reward at his service. That is what his agents said to those who arrived at the frontier. The agents of the owners of mines and fields instead said: "It will not be a comfortable life, but you will be free and you will earn enough to enjoy yourselves". And those who were looking for servants for a wicked master promised rich meals, an idle life, enjoyment, wealth: "All you need do is to give consent to his exacting whims - oh! not at all painful! - and you will be able to enjoy yourselves like satraps".

The pilgrims consulted with one another. They did not want to part... They asked: "The fields and mines, the palace of the wealthy man and that of the king, are they close to one another?".

"Oh! no!" replied the agents. "Come to that cross-roads and we will show you the different roads".

They went.

"Now! This wonderful, shady, flowery, smooth road, with cool fountains, leads to the palace of the wealthy man" said the agents looking for servants.

"Now! This dusty one, through pleasant fields, leads to the fields. It is exposed to the sun, but you can see that it is beautiful, after all" said those of the fields.

"Now! This one furrowed by heavy wheels and stained with dark spots, takes to the mines. It is neither beautiful nor ugly" said those of the mines.

"Now! This steep path, cut in the rocks inflamed by the sun, spread with thorn-bushes and ravines, which delay people, but are excellent defence against attacks of enemies, leads eastwards, to the severe, we could almost say sacred castle, where spirits are perfected in Good" said those of the king.

And the pilgrims looked and looked. They reckoned... They were tempted by many things, of which one only was entirely good. And they slowly parted. They were ten. Three went towards the fields... and two towards the mines. The remainders looked at one another and two of them said: "Come with us, to the king. We shall not make a profit and we shall not enjoy ourselves on the Earth,

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but we shall be saints for ever".

"That path there? Do you think we are mad? No profit? No enjoyment? It was not worth leaving everything and coming into exile to have even less than what we had in our country. We want to earn much and enjoy ourselves...

"But you will lose the eternal Good! Have you not heard that he is a wicked person?".

"Nonsense! After a little while we will leave him, but we shall have had a good time and we shall be rich".

"You will never get rid of him. The first were wrong in complying with their greed for money. But you! You are led by your greed for pleasure. Oh! Do not exchange your eternal destiny for a fleeting hour!".

"You are fools and you believe in idealistic promises. We are after facts. Goodbye!... " and they began to run along the beautiful, shady, flowery, smooth road, rich in water, at the end of which the magic palace of the wicked epicurean was shining in the sunshine.

The two remainders took the steep path weeping and praying. And they almost lost heart after a few metres, as it was so hard. But they persevered. And their bodies seemed to become lighter and lighter the more they proceeded and their fatigue was comforted by a strange rejoicing. They were panting and scratched all over when they arrived at the top of the mountain and were admitted to the presence of the king, who told them what he expected from them in order to make them his brave men, and he concluded saying: "Think about it for eight days and then let me know".

And they thought it over and struggled fiercely with the Tempter, who wanted to frighten them with their bodies which said: "You are sacrificing us", with the world, the remembrance of which was still alluring. But they won. They remained. They became heroes of Good. Death came, that is their glorification. From the height of Heaven they saw in the abyss those who had gone to the wicked master. They were in chains also after their lifetime and were groaning in the darkness of Hell. "And they wanted to be free and enjoy themselves!" said the two saints.

And the three damned souls saw them and cursed them and everybody, God first of all, in a horrid manner, saying: "You have all deceived us!".

"No. You cannot say that. You were warned of the danger, You wanted your own ruin" replied the blessed souls, who were serene even when seeing and hearing their obscene mockery and curses cast at them.

And they saw those of the fields and of the mines in various regions of Purgatory, and those saw them and said: "We were neither good nor bad, and we are now expiating our tepidity. Pray for us!".

3-1932

"Oh! We will! But why did you not come with us?".

"Because we were not demons, but men... We lacked generosity. We loved what is temporary, even if honest, more than what is Eternal and Holy. We are now learning to know and love with justice".

That is the end of the parable. Every man is at a cross-roads. At a perpetual cross-roads. Blessed are those who are firm and generous in following the ways of Good. May God be with them. And may God touch and convert those who are not so and lead them to become so. Go in peace. »

« And what about the sick people? »

« What is the matter with that woman? »

« Malign fever, which distorts her bones. She has gone as far as the Great Sea. But without any relief. »

Jesus bends over the sick woman and asks her: « Who do you think that I am? »

« He Whom I have been looking for. The Messiah of God. Have mercy on me, for I have looked for You so much! »

« May your faith give health both to your limbs and to your heart. And what about you, man? »

The man does not reply. The woman who accompanies him, replies on his behalf: « A tumor is eating his tongue. He cannot speak and he is dying of hunger. » The man in fact is a skeleton.

« Have you faith that I can cure you? »

The man nods assent.

« Open your mouth » orders Jesus. And with His face close to the horrible mouth eaten away by the tumor, He breathes into it saying: « I want it! »

After a moment two cries are heard: « My bones are sound again »; « Mary, I am cured! Look! Look at my mouth. Hosanna! Hosanna! » and he wants to stand up, but he staggers through weakness.

« Give him something to eat » orders Jesus. And He is about to withdraw.

« Don't go away! Other sick people will be coming! Others are coming back... Cure them, too! » shout the crowds.

« Every morning I will be here from dawn until the sixth hour. Volunteers should gather the pilgrims together. »

« I will, Lord! » several people say.

« May God bless you for that. »

And Jesus turns towards the village with His first companions and with the other disciples who have come, few at a time while He was speaking, and who have brought other people with them.

« But where are Peter and Judas of Kerioth? » asks Jesus.

« They have gone to the nearby town. They have a lot of money. They have gone shopping... »

« Yes. Judas worked a miracle and he is jubilant » remarks Simon

3-1933

Zealot smiling.

« Also Andrew, and he got a sheep, as a souvenir. He cured the broken leg of a shepherd, who rewarded him thus. We will give it to the old father. Milk is good for old people... » says John, caressing the old man who is happy.

They go into the house and prepare some food...

They are about to sit at the table, when the two missing apostles arrive, laden like donkeys and followed by a cart with a load of those mats used as beds by poor people in Palestine.

« Forgive me, Master. But this was needed. We are all right now » says Peter.

And Judas: « Look. We bought the bare necessities, clean and poor. As You like things » and they are busy unloading, dismissing the carter.

« Twelve little beds and twelve mats. A few dishes. Here is the seed. And here are the doves. There is the money. And tomorrow there will be many people. Phew! How warm it is! But everything is all right now. And what have You done, Master?... »

And while Jesus tells him, they sit happily at the table.

385. Towards the Western Bank of the Jordan.

17th February 1946.

Jesus is once again on the way. Facing south He walks along the meanderings of the river, looking for someone who may ferry Him across. His apostles are all around Him, discussing the events of the few days spent in Solomon's village and in his house. From what I gather, they remained there until the news of Jesus' presence there spread in hostile surroundings, and when that happened, they left, entrusting old Ananias, now serene in his no longer desolate poverty, with the care of the house, which had just been set in order again.

« Let us hope that their present mood may last » says Bartholomew.

« If we come back here often, as the Master says, we will keep them in the same frame of mind » replies Judas of Alphaeus.

« He was weeping, poor old soul! He had become fond of us... » says Andrew, who is also deeply moved.

« And I liked his last speech. He spoke as a wise man, Master, didn't he? » says James of Zebedee.

« He spoke as a holy man, I would say! » exclaims Thomas.

« Yes, he did. And I will bear in mind his desire » replies Jesus.

« What did he say exactly? I had gone with John to tell Michael's mother to remember to do what the Master had told her, so I do not know » says the Iscariot.

« He said: "Lord, if You happen to go through the village of my

3-1934

daughter-in-law, tell her that I bear her no grudge and that I am happy that I am no longer forsaken, because thus the judgement of God will not be so severe on her. Tell her to bring up my grandchildren in the faith of the Messiah, so that I will have them with me in Heaven, and as soon as I am in the peace of God, I will pray for them and for their good health". And I will tell her. I will look for the woman and I will tell her because it is the right thing to do » says Jesus.

« Not one word of reproach! On the contrary he is happy that the woman's sin is no longer so grave, since he is not dying of starvation or dereliction. He is admirable! » remarks James of Alphaeus.

« But will the fault of the daughter-in-law really diminish in the eyes of God? That is what I would like to know! » says Judas of Alphaeus.

The opinions are conflicting. Matthew asks Jesus: « What is Your opinion, Master? Will the situation remain as before or will it change? »

« It will change... »

« See... I was right! » exclaims Thomas triumphantly.

But Jesus beckons to them to let Him speak and He says: « It will change for the old man, also in Heaven as it changed on the Earth because of his indulgent kindness. It will not change for the woman. Her sin will always cry in the eyes of God. Only if she should repent, His severe judgement may change. And I will tell her. »

« Where does she live? »

« At Masada, with her brothers. »

« And do You wish to go as far as that? »

« Those places are to be evangelized as well... »

« And what about Kerioth? »

« We will come back to Kerioth from Masada, and we will go to Juttah, Hebron, Bethzur, Bether, and we shall be back in Jerusalem for Pentecost. »

« Masada is one of Herod's places... »

« What does it matter? It is a fortress. But he is not there. And even if he were!... It will not be the presence of a man to prevent Me from being the Saviour. »

« Where shall we cross the river? »

« Near Gilgal. From there we will go along the coast, following the mountains. The nights are cool and the new moon of Civ is bright in the serene sky. »

« If we are going through those places, why do we not go to the mountain where You fasted? It is fair that everybody should become acquainted with it » says Matthew.

« We shall go there as well. But there is a boat. Negotiate the price so that we may cross to the other side. »

3-1935

386. At Gilgal. The Beggar Ogla. The Twelve Stones.

18th February 1946.

I do not know what Gilgal is like now. When Jesus enters it, it is an ordinary Palestinian town, quite densely populated, situated on a low hill covered mainly with vineyards and olive groves. But there is so much sunshine, that cereals also can be cultivated, at random, under trees or between rows of vines. And they ripen notwithstanding the foliage above them, because the sun is very warm and the effect of the nearby desert is felt.

There is the dust, noise, dirt and confusion of market days. And inflexible as fate, there are the usual zealous not convinced Pharisees and scribes, who are discussing with great gestures and displaying their learning in the best corner of the square, pretending they do not see Jesus or they do not know Him.

Jesus goes straight on and takes His meal in a little side square, almost in the outskirts, well shaded by interlaced branches of all kinds of plants. I am under the impression that it is part of the mountain recently annexed to the village and still keeping a semblance of its natural state.

The first person to approach Jesus, Who is eating bread and olives, is a man in ragged clothes. He asks for a little bread. Jesus gives him His portion with all the olives that He is holding in His hand.

« And what about You? You know that we have no money » remarks Peter. « We gave everything to Ananias... »

« It does not matter. I am not hungry. But I am thirsty... »

The beggar says: « There is a well at the rear of the village... But why did You give me everything? You could have given me half of Your bread... If You are not disgusted at taking it back... »

« Eat it. I can do without it. But to remove every possible doubt that I feel disgusted with you, give Me with your own hands just a mouthful and I will eat it to be your friend... »

The man's face, so far sad and gloomy, brightens in a smile of surprise and he says: « Oh! It is the first time since I became poor Ogla that anyone says to me that he wants to be my friend! » and he gives a mouthful of bread to Jesus. And he asks: « Who are You? What is Your name? »

« I am Jesus of Nazareth, the Rabbi of Galilee. »

« Ah!... I heard of You from other people... But... are You not the Messiah?... »

« I am. »

« And You, the Messiah, are You so good to beggars? The Tetrarch gets his servants to beat us, if he sees us in his way... »

« I am the Saviour. I do not beat, I love. »

The man stares at Him. And he begins to weep slowly.

« Why are you weeping? »

3-1936

« Because... I would like to be saved... Are You no longer thirsty, Lord? I could take You to the well and speak to You... »

Jesus understands that the man wishes to confess something and He gets up saying: « Let us go. »

« I am coming, too! » exclaims Peter.

« No. I shall be back at once, in any case... And we must respect those who repent. »

He goes with the man behind a house, beyond which there is the country.

« The well is over there... Have a drink and then You can listen to me. »

« No, man. Pour first your anxiety into Me and then... I will drink. And perhaps I shall have for My thirst a fountain even more pleasant than the water of this well. »

« Which, Master? »

« Your repentance. Let us go under those trees. The women are watching us here. Come » and laying His hand on the man's shoulder He leads him towards a thicket of olive-trees.

« How do You know that I am guilty and that I am repentant? »

« Oh!... Speak and be not afraid of Me. »

« Lord... We were seven brothers born of one father, but I was born of the woman whom my father married when he became a widower. And I was hated by the other six. When my father died, he left the same amount to each of us. But after his death my six brothers bribed the judges, took everything away from me, and drove my mother and me away with infamous accusations. She died when I was sixteen years old... and she died of want... And since then no one has ever loved me... » he says weeping uncontrollably. He calms down and goes on: « My six brothers were rich and happy and they throve also with what belonged to me, while I was dying of starvation, because I was taken ill assisting my feeble mother... But God struck them one by one. I cursed and hated them so much, that I set the evil eye on them. Was I doing the wrong thing? Certainly. I know. And I knew. But how could I not hate them and curse them? The last one, who in actual fact was the third born, was withstanding all curses, nay he was prospering with the property of the other five, as he legally got the goods of the three younger brothers who had died without dependants, and he married the widow of the first born who had died childless, and he had fraudulently taken possession of the property of the second born, cheating his widow and orphans whom he deprived of most of their share with tricks and loans. And when he met me by chance at the market, where I used to go as the servant of a rich man to sell victuals, he insulted and beat me... I met him one evening... I was alone and he was alone. He was intoxicated with wine... I was intoxicated with recollections and hatred... It was the

tenth anniversary of my mother's death... He insulted me and my dead mother... He called her "filthy bitch" and he called me "son of the hyena... " Lord... if he had not insulted my mother, I would have endured him But he insulted her... I caught him by the neck. We struggled I only wanted to beat him... But he slipped and fell on the ground... and the sloping ground was covered with slippery grass... and below there was a ravine and a torrent... Drunk as he was, he turned over and fell... They are still looking for him after so many years... He is buried among the stones and the sand of one of the torrents in Lebanon. I did not go back to my master. And he never went back to Caesarea Paneas. I have been wandering without peace... Ah! The curse of Cain! To be afraid of living... and to be afraid of dying I was taken ill... And later... I heard of You... But I was afraid They told me that You could read the hearts of men. And the rabbis of Israel are so bad!... They do not know what mercy is... You, the Rabbi of rabbis, were my terror... And I fled before You. And yet, I would like to be forgiven... » He is prostrated on the ground and is weeping...

Jesus looks at him and whispers: « I will take also those sins upon Me!... Listen, son! I am Mercy, not terror. I have come also for you. Be not ashamed before Me... I am the Redeemer. Do you want to be forgiven? Of what? »

« Of my crime. Why ask me? I killed my brother. »

« You said: "I only wanted to beat him" because you had been offended and you were angry. But when you hated and cursed not one, but six brothers, you were not offended or angry. You did it as spontaneously as you breathe. Hatred and curses, and the delight in seeing them struck was your spiritual bread, is that right? »

« Yes, Lord. It was my bread for ten years. »

« So, your greatest crime began the moment you hated and cursed. You are six times the murderer of your brothers. »

« But, Lord, they had ruined and hated me... And my mother died of starvation... »

« Do you mean that you had a reason to avenge yourself? »

« Yes, I do. »

« You had no reason. It was for God to punish. You should have loved. And God would have blessed you on the Earth and in Heaven. »

« So, will He never bless me? »

« Repentance brings blessings again. But how much grief, how much anxiety you caused yourself! You caused much more through your hatred than your brothers did!... »

« That is true! My horror has lasted twenty-six years. Oh! forgive me in the name of God. You can see that I am grieved for my sin! I am not asking anything for my life. I am a beggar and I am ill. And I wish to remain such, to suffer and expiate. But give me the peace

3-1938

of God! I offered sacrifices at the Temple and I starved to put together the money for the holocaust. But I could not confess my crime and I do not know whether the sacrifice was accepted. »

« It was not. Even if you offered one every day, what value could it have for you, when you were acting with falsehood? A rite which is not preceded by a sincere confession of sins is superstitious and of no value. It is sin added to sin, and thus more than useless. A sacrilegious offer. What did you say to the priest? »

« I used to say: "I have sinned out of ignorance, doing what the Lord had forbidden, and I want to expiate". I used to think: "I know in what I have sinned, and God knows. But I cannot tell any man openly. God, Who sees all things, knows that I am thinking of my sin". »

« Mental reservations, mean expedients. The Most High hates them. When one sins, one must expiate. Never do that again. »

« No. Lord. And shall I be forgiven? Or must I go and confess everything? And pay with my life for the life I took? All I want is to die with God's forgiveness. »

« Live to expiate. You cannot give her husband back to the widow or their father to the children... One ought to think before killing, before letting hatred become one's master! But rise and walk along the new way. On your way, you will find My disciples. They are certainly in the mountains of Judaea and you will find them if you go from Tekoah to Bethlehem and farther towards Hebron. Tell them that Jesus has sent you and that He said that before Pentecost He will go up to Jerusalem via Bethzur and Bether. Look for Elias, Joseph, Levi, Matthias, John, Benjamin, Daniel, Isaac. Will you remember those names? Apply especially to them. Let us go now... »

« But are You not having a drink? »

« I have drunk your tears. A soul returning to God! There is nothing more refreshing for Me. »

« So, I am forgiven?! You said: "Returning to God"... »

« Yes. You are forgiven. But never hate anybody again. »

The man bends again, as he had stood up, and kisses Jesus' feet.

They go back to the apostles and find them disputing with some scribes.

« Here is the Master. He will be able to reply to you and tell you that you are sinners. »

« What is the matter? » asks Jesus, Who greets respectfully but is not greeted in return.

« Master, they are harassing us with questions and mockery... »

« It is an act of mercy to put up with troublesome people. »

« But they are offending You. They are making You a laughing stock... and people hesitate. See? We had been successful in gathering many people... But who is left now? Two or three women... »

3-1939

« Oh! no! You have also a man, a filthy man! He is even too much for you! But, Master, don't You think that You are becoming too contaminated, since You always say that filth disgusts You? » says scoffingly a young scribe pointing at the beggar beside Jesus.

« He is not filth. He is not the filth which disgusts Me. He is a "poor man". Poor people do not disgust. Their misery must inspire souls with feelings of brotherly pity. I feel disgusted with moral miseries, with fetid hearts, with souls torn to shreds, with injured spirits. »

« And do You know that he is not such? »

« I know that he believes and hopes in God and in His mercy, now that he has become acquainted with it. »

« Acquainted? Where does it live? Tell us, that we may go as well to see its face. Ah! The terrible God, Whom Moses did not dare to look at, must have a dreadful face even in His mercy, even if His rigour has softened after so many centuries! » insists the young scribe laughing and his laughter is more negatory than blasphemy.

« I, Who am speaking to you, am the Mercy of God! » shouts Jesus, standing upright, dazzling with the power of His eyes and gesture.

I do not know why the other one is not terrified... But although he does not run away, he can no longer be sarcastic and he becomes silent, while another scribe replaces him: « Oh! how many useless words! We would only like to be able to believe. We could not ask for anything better. But in order to believe, we must have proofs. Master, do You know what Gilgal is to us? »

« Do you think that I am a blockhead? » says Jesus. And in the tone of a psalm, in a slow rather drawling utterance, He begins: « "And Joshua, rising before daybreak, struck camp. And he set out from Shittim with all the Israelites and arrived at the Jordan where they stopped for three days, after which the heralds went through the camp shouting: 'When you see the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord your God carried by the levitical priests, you must leave as well and follow them, between you and the Ark, however, keep a distance of two thousand cubits, so that you may see from afar which road you have to take as you have never gone this way before and...' " »

« That is enough. You know the lesson. Now, in order to believe, we would like a similar miracle from You. At Passover we were dinned in the Temple with the news brought by a boatman that You had stopped the river in spate. Now, if for an ordinary man You did so much, we, who are much more than a common man, ask You to go down into the Jordan with Your disciples and cross it without wetting your feet, as Moses did at the Red Sea and Joshua at Gilgal. Come on! Sorcery serves only with ignorant people. But we shall not be deceived by Your necromancy, although it is well known that You are familiar with Egyptian secrets and magical

3-1940

formulae. »

« I do not need them. »

« Let us go down to the river and we will believe in You. »

« It is written: "You shall not put the Lord your God to the test"! »

« You are not God! You are a poor fool. You are one who subverts ignorant crowds. That is easy for You because Beelzebub is with You. But with us, who are adorned with the power of exorcism, You are less than nothing » says a scribe bitingly.

« Do not offend Him! Beg Him to satisfy our request. The way you treat Him, He will lose both heart and power. Come on, Rabbi of Nazareth! Give us a proof and we will worship You » says a venomous old scribe, who is more hostile in his crooked flattery than the others in their open fierceness.

Jesus looks at him. He then turns southwestwards and stretching His arms out He says: « The desert of Judah is over there and there the Evil Spirit asked Me to put the Lord My God to the test. And I replied: "Be off, Satan! It is written that God only is to be worshipped; He is not to be put to the test. And He is to be given priority over flesh and blood". I say the same to you. »

« Are You giving us the name of Satan? Are You? Ah! Curse You! » and behaving more like urchins than doctors of the Law, they start picking up stones on the ground to strike Him, and they shout: « Go away! May You be damned for ever! »

Jesus looks at them fearlessly. He paralyses them in their sacrilegious gesture, picks up His mantle and says: « Let us go! Man, go ahead of Me » and He goes back towards the well and into the olive-grove of the confession... And He lowers His head, looking utterly crushed, while two unrestrainable tears stream down His pale face.

They arrive at a road. Jesus stops and says to the beggar: « I cannot give you any money, because I have none. I bless You. Goodbye. Do what I told you. » They part...

The apostles are distressed. They cast furtive glances at one another...

Jesus breaks the silence resuming the tone of the psalm interrupted by the scribe: « "And the Lord said to Joshua: 'Choose out twelve men, one man from each tribe, and tell them to take from mid-Jordan, where the feet of the priests stood, twelve very hard stones and to put them in the camp where you will put up your tents tonight'. And Joshua called twelve men chosen from the children of Israel, one from each tribe, and he said to them: 'Pass on before the Ark of the Lord your God into mid-Jordan, and each of you take one stone on his shoulder, matching the number of the tribes of Israel, to make a memorial in your midst. And when in future your sons ask you: What do these stones mean? you will reply to them: The waters of the Jordan disappeared in front of the

Ark of the Covenant of the Lord, when it crossed them, and these stones are an everlasting reminder of this to the Israelites' ". »

He then raises His head, and turns His eyes towards the apostles who are looking at Him. In a different voice, the voice of the moments of deepest sadness, He says: « And the Ark was in the river. Not the waters, but the sky opened out of respect for the Word Who was sanctifying them and making them more holy than the Ark did, standing in the bed of the river. And the Word chose twelve stones. He chose very hard ones, because they are to last until the end of the world, and they are to be the foundation of the new Temple and of the eternal Jerusalem. Twelve. Remember' that. That is to be the number. And then He chose twelve more as second witnesses. The first shepherd-disciples and Abel the leper and Samuel the cripple, those cured first... and grateful... They are very hard as well, because they will have to withstand the blows of Israel, who hates God!... Who hates God!... »

How sorrowful and feeble is Jesus' voice - it almost sounds like a boy's voice - as He weeps over the harshness of Israel. He resumes: « Time and men scattered the memorial stones in the river... Hatred will scatter My twelve on the Earth. On the banks of the river, time and men have destroyed the remembrance altar... The first and the second stones can no longer be identified: the bitter hatred of demons, who dwell not only in hell, but also in the hearts of men, have used them for all purposes. Some have been used also for killing. And how do I know that among the stones lifted against Me, there were no splinters of the very hard stones chosen by Joshua? Very hard! Hostile! Oh! Very hard! Also among My followers some perverted ones will act as a pavement for the demons marching against Me... and they will become stones to strike Me... and they will no longer be the chosen stones... but demons... Oh! James, My dear brother! How hard is Israel to its Lord! » and, what has never been seen before, Jesus, overwhelmed by I do not know which impressively deep depression, leans on the shoulder of James of Alphaeus and embraces him weeping...

387. Towards Engedi. Taking Leave of Judas Iscariot and Simon Zealot.

19th February 1946.

They must have continued their journey during the moonlit night, and after resting for a few hours in a cave, they have set out again at dawn. And they are obviously fatigued after walking on crushed stones, through thorny bushes and creeping liane, which often entangle their feet. Simon Zealot is leading the way, as he appears to be thoroughly familiar with the area and he apologises for the difficult road, as if he were the cause of the difficulty.

3-1942

« When we are once again up on those mountains, which you can see, it will be easier and I promise you plenty wild honey and ample water... »

« Water? I will dive into it! The sand has corroded my feet as if I had been walking on salt and my skin is smarting. How horrible these places are! Oh! One feels that we are close to the districts that Heaven punished with fire! The stench is still in the wind, in the earth, in the thorns, everywhere! » exclaims Peter.

« And yet it was beautiful here once, is that right, Master? »

« Very beautiful indeed. In the early centuries of the world, this area was a little Eden. The soil was very fertile and rich in spring waters suitable for many purposes. But they were so well arranged that they were a blessing. Then... the disorder of men seemed to affect the elements. And it was the end. The wise men of the heathen world explain the dreadful punishment in many ways. That is, in human terms, at times with superstitious terror. But believe Me: it was only the will of God that changed the order of the elements; and those of the sky involved those of the abyss, they broke loose clashing one against the other in malefic turmoil, thunderbolts set on fire the bitumen that the open veins of the earth had scattered everywhere in great disorder and fire from the bowels of the earth and on the earth and thunderbolts struck the earth, which was shaken in dreadful convulsion, and burned, destroyed and corroded acres of ground, which were previously a paradise, and turned it into the hell that you now see and where existence is impossible. »

The apostles are listening carefully...

Bartholomew asks: « Do You think that, if we could drain the dense salty water, we would find the ruins of the punished towns on the bottom of the Great Sea? »

« Certainly. And almost intact; because the muddy water acts as mortar on the buried towns. But the Jordan has spread a great deal of sand on them. So they are buried twice, that they may never rise again, the symbol of those who, persisting in sin, are inexorably buried by God's malediction and by the overbearance of Satan, whom they served so keenly in this life. »

« And did Mattathias of John of Simeon seek refuge here: the just Hasmonean who is with his son the glory of Israel? »

« Yes, here. Among the mountains and in the deserts and here he reorganised the people and the army, and God was with him. »

« But, at least... It was easier for him, because the Hasidaeans were more just than the Pharisees are with You! »

« Oh! It is easy to be more just than Pharisees! Even easier than it is for this thorn to prick me and stick in my leg... Look here! » exclaims Peter, who, while listening did not look where he was walking and is entangled in a thorny bush which has made his leg bleed.

3-1943

« There are not so many up in the mountains. See how they are already thinning out? » says Simon Zealot comforting him.

« H'm! You know the place well... »

« I lived here when I was in exile and persecuted... »

« Oh! In that case... »

In fact the greenery is becoming less troublesome on the little mountains, which, however, are not very shady and the herbs on them are rather short but sweet-smelling and are strewn with flowers forming a many-coloured carpet. Bees suck them and then fly to the caves on the mountain sides where they deposit the honey in natural hives under curtains of ivy and honeysuckle.

Simon Zealot goes into one of the caves and comes out with combs of golden honey; he then goes into other caves until he has enough for everybody, and offers them to the Master and his friends who relish the sweet trickling substance.

« I wish we had some bread! It is delicious! » says Thomas.

« Oh! It is very good also without it! Much better than Philistine ears of corn. And... let us hope that no Pharisee will come to tell us that we cannot eat it! » says James of Zebedee.

They eat while walking and arrive at a reservoir, into which the waters of some streams flow and are then conveyed I know not where. The water that overflows from the basin is cool and clear, as it is protected from the sun and from pollution by the vault of the huge rock, in which the cistern has been dug; it flows down into a tiny lake in the blackish siliceous rock.

The apostles are evidently delighted in taking off their clothes and bathing in turns in the unexpected basin. But they wanted Jesus to be the first to enjoy it, « so that their bodies might be sanctified » says Matthew.

They resume walking, they are refreshed but more hungry than before, and the ones who are most hungry, in addition to the honey, nibble at the stalks of wild fennel and other edible shoots, the names of which I do not know.

One enjoys a beautiful view from the tablelands of these strange mountains, the peaks of which seem to have been cut off by a sword-thrust. Parts of other green mountains and of fertile plains can be seen to the south, as well as stretches of the Dead Sea, which is visible to the east, with the remote mountains of the other side fading in the mist of light clouds rising from south-east; the remote green Jordan plain can be seen to the north between mountain crests, while the high mountains of Judaea are visible to the west.

The sun is becoming warm and Peter states that « those clouds over the mountains of Moab are the sign of great heat. »

« We will now go down into the Kidron valley. It is shady... » says Simon.

« The Kidron!?! Oh, how have we come so soon to the Kidron? »

3-1944

« Yes, Simon of Jonas. It is a rough road, but it cuts the journey short! Going along its valley we shall soon be in Jerusalem » explains the Zealot.

« And in Bethany... I should send some of you to Bethany, to tell the sisters to take Eglah to Nike. She begged Me so much, and quite rightly. The childless Widow will also have a holy love and the orphan girl a true Israelite mother, who will bring her up in our old faith and in Mine. I would like to go too... A peaceful rest for My saddened spirit... In Lazarus' house the heart of the Christ finds but love... But the journey I want to make before Pentecost is a long one! »

« Send me, Lord. And with me, someone with good legs. We will go to Bethany and then to Kerioth and we will meet there » says the Iscariot with enthusiasm. The others, instead, while waiting for someone to be selected for the journey, which would separate them from the Master, are not at all enthusiastic.

Jesus is thinking, and while thinking, He looks at Judas. He is undecided whether He should agree or not.

Judas insists: « Say yes, Master. Make me happy!... »

« You are the least suitable, Judas, to go to Jerusalem! »

« Why, Lord? I know the town better than anybody else! »

« That is why!... The town is not only well known to you, but it affects you more than anybody else. »

« Master, I give You my word that I will not stop in Jerusalem and I will not look for anybody from Israel... But let me go. I will arrive at Kerioth before You and... »

« And you will not put pressure on anybody to pay human homage to Me. »

« No, Master, I will not. I promise. »

Jesus is still pensive.

« Why do You hesitate so much, Master? Why do You not trust me? »

« You are so weak, Judas. And as soon as you go away from the Strength, you fall! You have been so good for some time! Why do you want to become upset and grieve Me? »

« No, Master, I do not want that! But one day I shall have to be without You! And then? What shall I do, if I do not prepare beforehand? »

« Judas is right » several of the apostles say.

« All right!... Go, then. Go with My brother James. »

The others give sighs of relief. James sighs heavily but he says kindly: « Yes, my Lord! Bless us and we will depart. »

Simon Zealot feels sorry for him and says: « Master, fathers willingly replace their children to make them happy. I took him as my son together with Judas. Time has gone by, but my mind is still the same. Listen to my prayer... Send me with Judas of Simon. I am

3-1945

old, but I am as strong as a young man, and Judas will not have to complain about me. »

« No, it is not fair that you should sacrifice yourself, leaving the Master, in my place. It would certainly grieve you not to be with Him... » says James of Alphaeus.

« Grief is relieved by the joy of leaving you with the Master. Later you will tell me what you have done... In any case... I go to Bethany willingly... » concludes the Zealot, as if he wished to belittle the value of his offer.

« All right. You two will go. In the meantime let us proceed towards that village. Who will go up to get some bread in the name of God? »

« I will! I will! » They all want to go.

But Jesus holds back Judas of Kerioth. When they have all gone, Jesus takes his hands and speaks to him face to face. He seems to be wanting to instil His thought into him, influencing him to such an extent that Judas may not have any other thoughts than those wanted by Jesus. « Judas... Do not harm yourself, My dear Judas! Have you not been calmer and happier for some time, free from the burden of your lower ego, of the human ego, which is so easily at the mercy of Satan and of the world? Of course you know that you have! Well, protect your peace and your welfare. Do not injure yourself, Judas. I can read you. You are in such a happy period at this moment! Oh! If I could only keep you thus, at the cost of all My Blood, and destroy the last bulwark in which a great enemy of yours hides, and make you completely spiritual, with spiritual intellect, spiritual love, completely a... spirit! »

Judas, face to face with Jesus, his hands in the hands of the Master, is almost dumbfounded. He whispers: « Injure myself? Last bulwark? Which one?... »

« Which one?! You know. You know how you injure yourself! By cherishing thoughts of human grandeur and friendships, which you suppose are useful to procure such grandeur. Believe Me, Israel does not love you. It hates you as it hates Me, as it hates whoever may seem a probable victor. And since you do not conceal your ambition to be such, you are hated. Do not believe their false words, their deceitful questions, by which they pretend to take an interest in your plans in order to help you. They circumvent you to hurt you, to find out and injure you. I am not begging you on My behalf, but only on your own. If I am the target of iniquity, I am still the Lord. They may torture My body and kill it. But not beyond that. But in your case, they would kill your soul... Shun temptation, My friend! Tell Me that you will shun it! Speak this word of peace to your poor persecuted worried Master! »

Jesus clasps him in His arms and, cheek to cheek, speaks in his ear and His golden hair mixes with the thick dark curls of Judas.

3-1946

« I know that I have to suffer and die. I know that My crown will be the crown of a martyr. I am aware that My Blood will be My purple. I came for that. Because through such martyrdom I will redeem Mankind, and love has been urging Me for endless time to do so. But I would not like any of My followers to be lost. Oh! All men are dear to Me, because in them there is the image and likeness of My Father and the immortal souls that He created. But you, My loved and beloved ones, you, the blood of My blood and the apples of My eyes, must not be lost! Oh! No torture could be like that, not even if Satan, who is Sin, Horror, Disgust, should pierce Me with his weapons burning with the sulphur of hell and he should bite and grasp Me, no torture could make Me suffer as much as I would for one of My chosen ones who should be lost... Judas, My Judas! Shall I ask My Father to let Me suffer My dreadful Passion three times, so that two of them may be offered to save you alone? Tell Me, My friend, and I will do that. I will ask Him to multiply My suffering infinitely for that purpose. I love you, Judas, I love you so much. And I would like to give you Myself, to make you Myself, to save you from yourself... »

« Do not weep, do not say that, Master. I love You, too. I also would give myself to see You strong, respected, feared, triumphant. I may not love You perfectly. I may not think perfectly. But I use and perhaps I misuse my whole being, because I am anxious to see You loved. But I swear to You, I swear on Jehovah, that I will not approach scribes, or Pharisees, or Sadducees, or Jews, or priests. They will say that I am mad. But it does not matter. I shall be quite happy provided You are not worried about me. Are You happy? A kiss, Master, as Your blessing and protection. »

They kiss each other and part while the others are running down the hill displaying cakes and fresh cheeses. They sit down on the green grass of the banks and divide the food, saying that they were made welcome, because the people of the few houses know the shepherd-disciples and are in favour of the Messiah.

« We did not tell them that You are here, otherwise... » concludes Thomas.

« We will endeavour to come back here some other time. We must not neglect anybody » replies Jesus.

The meal is over. Jesus stands up and blesses the two who are going to Bethany and who do not wish to wait until evening to set out, as the valley is shady and rich in water.

Jesus and the ten who are staying with Him, lie down on the grass and rest awaiting sunset, when they will go back to the Engedi and Masada road, as I hear them say.

3-1947

388. Arrival at Engedi.

20th February 1946.

The pilgrims, although tired after a long march, which they perhaps covered in two stages from sunset to today's dawn, along difficult roads, cannot help uttering exclamations of admiration when, after a long stretch of road along a hill-side, which sparkles like diamonds in the early morning sunshine, they encounter the full view of the Dead Sea displayed before them, from shore to shore. The western side has a narrow plain between the sea and the Judaean type of luxuriant hills in the hinterland, while on the west the mountains drop sheer to the sea basin. One gets the impression that the ground, in a frightful telluric catastrophe, slid down with a clean cut, leaving crevices vertical to the lake, from which torrents descend, more or less rich in waters, destined to evaporate into salt in the dark cursed water of the Dead Sea. In the distance, beyond the lake, and the first range of hills, there are many more slopes, which are beautiful in the morning sunshine. To the north one can see the green-blue mouth of the Jordan, and mountains framing the lake to the south.

It is grand, solemn, sad, majestically admonishing scenery, in which the charming view of the mountains mingles with the gloomy one of the Dead Sea, the sight of which seems to remind one of what sin and the wrath of the Lord can bring. Because such a large expanse of water without a sail, a boat, a bird, an animal crossing it, flying over it or drinking on its shores, is really frightening! And, in contrast to the punitive sight of the sea, there are the wonders of the sun on the little mountains, on the dunes, as far as the desert sands, where the salt crystals look like precious jaspers spread on the sand, on stones, on the rigid stems of desert plants, and thus everything is beautiful, brightened by the diamond dust. And even more wonderful is the fertile aspect of a tableland, about one hundred and fifty metres above sea level, with luxuriant palm-trees and all kinds of trees and vines, and where blue waters flow and a beautiful town has been built, surrounded by a flourishing countryside. When one looks at this landscape, which is so pleasant, charming and flowery, after contemplating the gloomy sight of the sea, the tormenting view of the eastern shore, which displays a sad tranquillity only in a low green strip of land jutting out into the south-eastern part of the sea, the desolate desert of Judah, the severe view of the Judaean mountains, one seems to awake suddenly from an oppressive nightmare that turns into a gentle vision of peace.

« This is Engedi, celebrated by the poets of our Fatherland. Look how beautiful the district is, nourished by so much graceful water, in the midst of so much desolation! Let us go down and plunge into its gardens, because everything here is garden: meadow, forest,

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vineyard. This is the ancient Hazazon-Tamar, a name that evokes its beautiful palm-trees, under which it was even more beautiful to build huts and cultivate the land, love one another, and bring up children and raise flocks in the sweet-sounding rustling of palm leaves. This is the pleasant oasis, the survivor of the lands of Eden punished by God, surrounded, like a pearl in a bezel, by paths accessible only to goats and roe-deer, as is written in the Book of Kings, and along those paths there are caves for persecuted, tired and forlorn people. Remember David, our king, and how kind he was to his enemy Saul. This is Hazazon-tamar, now Engedi, the fountain, the blessed town, the beauty from which the enemies moved against Jehoshaphat and the children of his people, who were frightened and were comforted by Jahaziel, son of Zechariah, through whom the Spirit of God spoke. And they won a great victory because they had faith in the Lord and they deserved His help, as they did penance and prayed before the battle. This is the town sung by Solomon, as a comparison of the beauty of the Most Beautiful of all beautiful women. It was mentioned by Ezekiel, because it was nourished by the waters of the Lord... Let us go down! Let us go and take the living Water, that descends from Heaven, to the gem of Israel. » And He starts running down a very steep path, which zigzags down the reddish calcareous rock, that in the spots closest to the sea reaches the edge of the mountain, that is, its ledge. A path that would make giddy even the most expert mountaineers.

The apostles are hardly able to follow Him, and the older ones are left far behind when the Master stops at the first palm-trees and vineyards of the fertile tableland, where crystal-clear waters are gurgling and all kinds of birds are singing. White sheep are grazing under the rustling roofs of palm-trees, of mimosae, of balm-plants, of pistachio-trees and others exhaling sweet or pungent aromas, which mingle with those of rose-bushes, lavander in bloom, cinnamon, myrrh, incense, saffron, jasmines, lilies, lilies of the valley, and of the flower of aloe, which is very big here, of cloves and benzoins, which exude with other resins from incisions in tree-trunks. This is really « the garden enclosed, the fountain of the garden », and fruit, flowers, sweet scents, beauty are found everywhere! There is no place in Palestine as beautiful as this one, in size and natural charm. While contemplating it, one understands many writings of Eastern poets, where they celebrate the beauty of oases as if they were paradises spread over the Earth.

The apostles, perspiring but full of admiration, join the Master and all together they go down a well-kept road towards the sea shore, where they arrive after crossing several cultivated embankments, from which beneficent waters flow in small smiling cascades to nourish all the vegetation as far as the plain, which ends at the beach. Half-way down the hill-side they enter the

white town, among rustling palm-trees and sweet-smelling rosebushes and thousands of flowers of its garden, and they look for lodgings, in the name of God, at the first houses. And the houses, as gentle as nature, open without any hesitation, while their inhabitants ask who is « the Prophet Who looks like Solomon, dressed in linen and beaming with beauty. »...

Jesus, with John and Peter, enters a house where there is a widow with her son. The others scatter in various directions, after being blessed by the Master and agreeing to meet in the main square at sunset.

389. Preaching and Miracles at Engedi.

21st February 1946.

Towards sunset, a fiery one that ruddies the very white houses of Engedi and makes the Dead Sea a sheet of black nacre, Jesus sets out towards the main square. He is now with the boy who gave Him hospitality and who is now leading Him through the streets of the town, with its distinctly oriental architecture.

To protect themselves from the sun - which must be very strong in this place so exposed to the heavy expanse of the Salt Sea, which I understand must exhale hot fumes in the summer months, and is so isolated in the midst of a bare desert on which the sun blazes down mercilessly burning the ground - the inhabitants of Engedi built very narrow streets, which look even more narrow because of the projecting eaves and cornices of the dwellings, so that anyone looking up can see only a very thin strip of the deep blue sky.

The buildings are tall, most of them being two storey houses, with vine-clad roof terraces, giving shade and delightful grapes, which must be as sweet as raisins, when they fully ripen in the golden sun and the reflected heat of the walls and terrace-floors. And the vines compete in giving comfort to men and the many birds, from sparrows to doves, which nest in Engedi, with the towering palm-trees, which have grown everywhere, and with magnificent opulent fruit-trees, which have come up in yards, in house gardens, and peep out over little lanes, hanging down white walls with their branches already laden with fruit ripening in the bright sun, reaching down below the numerous archivolts, which in some parts really form tunnels, interrupted here and there for architectonic reasons, and they rise towards the blue sky, a sky so uniform and mellow, that if it could be touched, it would be like touching thick velvet or smooth leather, painted and dyed by a cunning craftsman with that perfect, beautiful, unforgettable hue, which is darker than a turquoise and lighter than a sapphire.

And waters... How many fountains, large and small, must be gurgling in the yards and gardens of houses, among thousands of

plants! Walking along the narrow streets, still deserted, as the people are either at work or at home, one can hear them dripping, gurgling, rustling like the notes of a harp played by a hidden harpist. And the charm is increased by the many archivolts and corners that gather together the sounds of the waters, amplifying them and increasing them through numerous echoes, composing a harmonious arpeggio.

And endless palm-trees!... Where there is a little square, even if only the size of a room, the very tall slender trunks rise towards the sky, and their tops, tufts of rustling leaves tied like brushes round the trunks, hardly move up there, and their shadows at midday fall perpendicular to the little square, covering it completely, whilst now they are forming fantastical designs on the higher terraces.

The town is clean as compared with Palestinian towns. Perhaps the fact that houses are so close together and each has a yard and cultivated garden has helped to teach the population not to throw garbage into the streets, but to gather such waste and animal excrement into special dunghills to be used as fertilizer for trees and flower-beds, or it is... a very rare case of cleanliness. The little streets are clean, dried by the sun and there is no unpleasant display of waste vegetables, old sandals, dirty rags, excrement and the like, as can be seen even in Jerusalem, in streets quite near the town centre.

There is the first farmer coming back from his work, riding a little grey donkey. To protect the animal from flies, the man has caparisoned it with jasmine branches and the beast is now trotting away shaking its ears and harness-bells under the wavy scented screen of branches. When the man turns round and greets him, the boy says: « Come to the main square. You will hear the Rabbi who is staying with me. »

Now there is a flock of sheep invading the street coming from a little square beyond which one can see the country background. They proceed close to one another, each putting its feet in the places where the one preceding it puts them, with their heads stooped as if they were too heavy for their necks - so thin compared with their fat bodies - trotting in their strange fashion and their obese bodies looking like bundles resting on four sticks... Jesus, John and Peter imitate the man who is with them, and they lean against the warm wall of a house to let them pass. A man and a boy are following the flock. They look and greet. The young man says: « Put the sheep in the fold and come to the main square with your relatives. The Rabbi of Galilee is here with us and He is going to speak to us. »

And there is the first woman to come out, surrounded by a group of children, going I wonder where. The young man says: « Come with John and his sons to hear the Rabbi, Whom they call the

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Messiah. »

The houses open little by little in the oncoming evening, showing green backgrounds of gardens, or peaceful yards where doves are having their last feed. The youth peeps in at each door and shouts: « Come to listen to the Rabbi, the Lord. »

They finally come to a straight road, the only straight one in this town, which was not built as people would have liked, but as palm-trees or the mighty age-old pistachio-trees wanted, and which are respected as notables by the citizens, who are indebted to them for not dying of sunstroke. At the end there is a square where many trunks of palm-trees act as columns. It looks like a hypostyle hall of temples and ancient palaces, which consisted of a large room with columns placed at symmetrical intervals forming a stony forest to support the roof. The palm-trees here act as columns and, thick as they are, with their dense rustling foliage they form an emerald ceiling over the white square in the middle of which there is a tall square fountain full of crystal-clear water gushing out from a little column in the centre of the basin, and falling into lower basins, where animals can water. Tame docile doves have rushed to it just now and they are drinking or dancing a minuet with their little pink legs on the upper edge, or they are spraying their feathers which shine increasing their iridiscent hues as the drops of water rest for a moment on the barbs of the feathers.

There are many people. And there are the eight apostles who had gone in various directions looking for lodgings, and each of them has gathered some followers, who are anxious to hear Him, Whom the apostle has pointed out as the promised Messiah. The apostles hasten towards the Master from all directions trailing, like comets, the little groups they have conquered.

Jesus raises His hand to bless His disciples and the people of Engedi.

Judas of Alphaeus speaks on behalf of everyone: « Here, Master and Lord. We have done what You told us and these people are aware that the Grace of God is among them. But they want also the Word. Many know You having heard of You. Many because they met You in Jerusalem. Everybody, and the women in particular, wish to know You, and first of all, their head of the synagogue. There he is. Come here, Abraham. »

The man, who is very old, comes forward. He is moved. He would like to speak, but moved as he is, he cannot find any of the words he had prepared. He stoops to kneel down, leaning on his stick, but Jesus stops him, embracing him at once and saying: « Peace to the old just servant of God! » and the man, who is more and more moved, can only reply: « Praise be to God! My eyes have seen the Promised Messiah! What else shall I ask of the Lord? » and raising his arms, in hieratic attitude, he intones David's 40th

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psalm: « "I waited anxiously for the Lord and He has stooped to me". » But he does not recite it all. He repeats only the passages which are more appropriate to the occasion: « "He heard my cry and has pulled me out of the pit of misery, out of the slough of the marsh...

He has put a new song in my mouth.

Happy the man who puts his trust in the Lord.

How many wonders You have done for us, o Lord my God! You have no equal. I would like to proclaim them again and again, but they are more than I can count.

You, Who wanted no sacrifice or oblation, opened my ear... (he is moved more and more).

It is written that I must do Your will... I have always loved Your Law from the depths of my being.

I have always proclaimed Your righteousness in the Great Assembly. I did not close my lips, as You know well, o Lord.

I have never kept Your righteousness to myself, but I have proclaimed Your faithfulness and saving help...

For Your part, o Lord, do not withhold Your kindness from me...

More misfortunes beset me than I can count (he is now weeping copiously, uttering his words in a voice that is even more trembling and senile because of his tears)...

I am a poor wretch, but the Lord takes care of me. You are my help, my protector, my God, do not delay!...

That is the psalm, my Lord, and I add of my own: "Say to me: 'Come' and I will say to You what the psalm says: 'Here I come!'". »

He becomes silent and weeps with all his faith gathered in his eyes dimmed by age.

People explain: « His daughter died and left young grandchildren to him. His wife has become blind and dull-witted through grief, and they do not know what happened to their only son. He disappeared all of a sudden... »

Jesus lays His hand on the shoulder of the old man and says to him: « The sufferings of the just are as swift as a swallow, as compared with the duration of the eternal reward. But we shall give back to Sarah the eyesight of bygone days and the intelligence of her youth, so that she may comfort your old age. »

« Her name is Colomba » informs one of the people...

« She is his princess. But listen to the parable I am going to tell you... »

« Will You not free first from darkness the eyes and the mind of my wife, so that she also may relish Wisdom? » asks the old head of the synagogue anxiously.

« Do you believe that God can do everything and that His power spreads over the universe? »

« Yes, my Lord, I do. I remember one evening many years ago. I

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was then happy, but even in joy I was a believer. Because that is what man is like! While he is happy, he can also forget about God. But I believed in God also in those happy days, when my wife was young and healthy, and my daughter Eliza was growing as beautiful as a palm tree and was already engaged, and Elisha was as handsome as she was beautiful, but he exceeded her in strength as befits a man... I had gone with the boy to the fountains near the vineyard, which is Colomba's dowry, while my wife and daughter remained at home to weave the girl's trousseau... But perhaps I am boring You... A poor wretch dreams remembering his past happiness... but other people are not interested... »

« Go on, go on! »

« I had gone with the boy... The fountains If You came along the western road, You know where they are The fountains were at the boundary of the blessed place, and looking beyond the desert, one could see the white stones of the Roman road, which was then still visible among the sands of Judah... Later... that landmark also disappeared! It does not matter if a landmark disappears among sands! But it is bad that the sign of God, sent to point You out, should dissolve in the hearts of Israel. In too many hearts! My son said: "Father! Look! A great caravan, with horses and camels, and servants and gentlemen going towards Engedi. They are perhaps coming to the fountains before it gets dark As I was attending to the vine-branches, I raised my eyes, so tired after the abundant vintage, and I saw... The men were really coming to the fountains. They dismounted, they saw me and they asked whether they could camp there for one night.

"Engedi has hospitable homes and it is not far" I replied.

"No. We will be keeping watch to be ready to flee, because Herod is pursuing us. Our guards will be able to control every road from here and it will be easy to escape from those seeking us".

"What sin have you committed?" I asked, as I was surprised and willing to show them the caves of our mountains, as is our sacred custom to assist those who are persecuted. And I added: "You are strangers and you come from different places... I do not see how you can have sinned against Herod

"We have worshipped the Messiah Who was born in Bethlehem of Judah and to Whom we were led by the star of the Lord. Herod is looking for Him, and that is why he wants to find us, so that we may tell him where the Child is. But he is looking for Him to kill Him. We will perhaps die in the deserts, on a long unknown road, but we will not reveal where is the Holy Child, Who descended from Heaven!".

The Messiah! The dream of every true Israelite! My dream! And He was in the world! In Bethlehem of Judah as it was foretold!... And pressing my son to my heart, I asked for more information

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and details, saying: "Listen, Elisha! Remember! You will certainly see Him!". I was already fifty years old and I no longer hoped to see Him... neither did I hope to live so long as to see Him grown into a man... Elisha... can no longer worship Him... »

The old man is weeping again. But he collects himself and says: « The three Wise Men spoke kindly and patiently and they described You in Your holy infancy, and Your Mother and father... I could have spent the night with them... but Elisha was falling asleep in my lap. I said goodbye to the three Wise Men and I promised that I would not say one word that might be detrimental to them. But I told Colomba everything in our bedroom and that was our only joyful expectation in our subsequent misfortunes. Later we heard of the slaughter... and for years I did not know whether You were alive. Now I know. But I am the only one, because Eliza died, Elisha is no longer with us, and Colomba cannot understand the happy news... But my faith in the power of God, which was already alive, became perfect after that remote evening, when three men, of different races, bore witness to the power of God by being united, through the voices of stars and of their souls, on the road of God, to worship His Word. »

« And your faith will be rewarded. Now listen.

What is faith? Like the hard seed of a palm-tree, at times it is tiny and consists in a short sentence: "God exists", supported by one only statement: "I have seen Him". As the faith Abraham had in Me, through the words of the three Wise Men from the East. Like the faith of our people, from the most ancient patriarchs, transmitted from one generation to the next one, from Adam to his descendants, from Adam sinner, who, however, was believed when he said: "God exists, and we exist because He created us. And I have known Him". Like the faith that came later, and was more perfect because more deeply based on revelation, and is our heritage, shining with divine manifestations, with angelical apparitions and the light of the Spirit. But still a tiny seed as compared with the Infinite. A tiny seed. But it takes root, and splitting the hard bark of animal nature with its doubts and inclinations, and triumphing over the harmful herbs of passions, of sins, over stale discouragement and corroding vices, over everything, it rises in hearts, it grows, it rushes towards the sun, to Heaven, rising, rising... until it gets rid of the limitations of the flesh and merges with God, in its perfect knowledge and full possession, beyond life and death, in True Life.

Who possesses faith, possesses the way of Life. Who can believe, does not err. A believer sees, knows, serves the Lord and has eternal salvation. The Decalogue is of vital importance to him and each commandment is a gem, which will adorn his future crown. The promise of the Redeemer is salvation for him. It does not matter if the believer died before I came to the Earth. His faith makes

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him equal to those who now approach Me with faith and love. The deceased just will soon be rejoicing because their faith is about to be rewarded. After fulfilling the will of My Father, I will go to them and say: "Come!", and all those who died in Faith will ascend with Me to the Kingdom of the Lord.

Let your faith be like the palm-trees of your country, which sprout from tiny seeds, but are so determined in growing up straight, that they forget the earth and are in love with the sun, the stars and the sky. Have faith in Me. Believe what too few people believe in Israel, and I promise that you will possess the heavenly Kingdom, through forgiveness of the original sin and the just reward to all those who practise My doctrine, which is the most sweet perfection of the perfect Decalogue of God.

I will stay with you today and tomorrow, which is the holy Sabbath, and I will leave at dawn the day after the Sabbath. Let those who suffer come to Me! Let those who are in doubt come to Me! Let those who want Life come to Me! Without any fear, because I am Mercy and Love. »

And Jesus makes a wide gesture to bless and dismiss His listeners, so that they may go and have their evening meal and rest and He is about to set off, when a little old woman, so far concealed by the corner of a narrow street, makes her way through the crowds still around the Master, and amid the crying people, she goes and kneels at Jesus' feet shouting: « May You be blessed and the Most High Who has sent You! And blessed be the womb that bore You, as it is greater than the womb of women, if it was able to bear You! »

The shouting of a man mingles with the woman's: « Colomba! You see! You understand! You are speaking wisely recognising the Lord! Oh! God! God of my fathers! God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob! God of the prophets! God of John, the Prophet! God! My God! Son of the Father! King like the Father! Saviour obedient to the Father! God like the Father, and my God, God of Your servant! May You be blessed, loved, followed, worshipped for ever! »

And the old head of the synagogue kneels down beside his wife, embracing her with his left arm, pressing her to his heart, he stoops and makes her stoop to kiss the feet of the Saviour, while the joyful shouting of the crowds is so loud that it makes treetrunks vibrate and frightens the doves, which take flight from the nests where they were already resting and fly over Engedi, as if they wished to spread over the whole town the news that the Saviour is within its walls.

3-1956

390. Elisha of Engedi.

22nd February 1946.

They must have advanced the time of their departure, and perhaps the inhabitants of Engedi advised them to do so, because it is the dead of night and the moon almost full illuminates the town with a very bright light. The narrow streets look like silver ribbons lying among the cube-shaped houses and garden walls, the lime of which seems to have been changed into sculptural marble by the magic rays of moonlight. Palm-trees and other trees look mysterious, enveloped in the lunar phosphorescence. Fountains and rivulets are little waterfalls and diamond necklaces. And from tree branches nightingales pour forth strings of golden notes thus adding their wonderful voices to the gurgle of waters, which can be heard very clearly in the night.

The town is asleep. But there are some persons with Jesus, Who is departing. They are the men of the houses that gave hospitality to Jesus and His disciples and they have been joined by other people. The head of the synagogue is walking beside Jesus. Oh! He does not want to stop accompanying Him, not even when Jesus begs him to go back, before proceeding into the open country. They go straight towards the road leading to Masada, not the lower road along the Dead Sea, which I hear is unhealthy and dangerous at night; but to the internal one, built on the slopes, almost on the crests of the hills bordering the lake.

The oasis is wonderful in the lunar night! One seems to be walking in dream-land. Then the oasis comes to an end and palm-trees thin out. Then there is the real mountain, with its forest trees, its meadows and its slopes split by caves, like almost all the Palestinian mountains. But I would say that the caves are more numerous here and their strange mouths, long or flat, straight or slanting, round or like fissures, have a frightening look in the moonlight.

« Abraham., the road is farther down. Why are you climbing up, going the long way round, on this impracticable path? » says one of Engedi, warning the old head of the synagogue.

« Because I have to show something to the Master and ask Him to do one thing more, to be added to the great gifts He has already granted us. But if you are tired, go home, or wait for me here. I will go by myself » replies the old man, who plods on panting, along the difficult steep path.

« Oh! no! We will come with you. But it grieves us to see you tire so. You are breathless... »

« Oh! it is not the path!... It is something else! It is a sword piercing my heart... and it is hope swelling it. Come, my children, and you will see how much grief there was in the heart of the man who relieved all your sorrows! How much... not despair, certainly not, but... he who always told you to hope in the Lord Who can do

3-1957

everything, realised he could not possibly expect to have joy any more... I taught you to believe in the Messiah... Do you remember when I used to speak of Him without any fear, when I could do so without harming Him? And you would say to me: "What about Herod's slaughter?". Yes. It was a sore thorn in my heart! But I clung to hope with my whole being... I used to say: "If God sent His star to three men, who were not even from Israel, to invite them to worship the Child Messiah, and He led them by it to the poor house unknown to the rabbis of Israel, to the princes of priests and scribes, if in a dream He informed them not to go back to Herod, in order to save the Child, is it possible that, even with greater power, He did not inform His father and Mother to flee taking the hope of God and of man to a safe place?". And my faith in His safety grew stronger and was attacked in vain by human doubt and the words of other people And when... and when the deepest grief for a father seized me when I had to take a living being to the sepulchre and say to him: "Remain here as long as your life lasts... and consider that if the desire for your mother's caresses or any other reason should urge you towards the town, I would have to curse you and be the first to strike you and relegate you where not even my most desolate love could relieve you", when I had to do that... I had to cling even more to my faith in God, the Saviour of His Saviour, and say to myself and to my son... to my leprous son... see?... leprous... : "Let us bow our heads to the will of the Lord and believe in His Messiah! I Abraham... you Isaac, immolated by disease, not by fire, let us offer our sorrow to have a miracle And every month, at each new moon, when I came here secretly, laden with foodstuffs... clothes... love... which I had to leave far from my son... because I had to come back to you... my children... to my blind wife, to my feeble-minded wife, whom dreadful grief had made blind and dull... and I had to come back to my childless home... without the peace of reciprocal conscious love... and to my synagogue to speak to you of God of His wonders... of the beautiful things He spread in the universe and I could see with my eyes the corroded sight of my son... whom I could not even defend when I heard people speak ill of him, saying that he was an ungrateful son, or a criminal who had run away from home... and every month, when making this pilgrimage to the sepulchre of my living son, as I was saying, I used to repeat to him, to encourage him: "The Messiah is on the earth. He will come. He will cure you Last year at Passover, when I was looking for You in Jerusalem, during the short time that I was away from my blind wife, I was told: "He really exists. He was here yesterday. He cured also some lepers. He is going round the whole of Palestine curing, comforting, teaching". Oh! I came back so quickly that I looked like a young man going to a wedding! I did not

3-1958

even stop at Engedi, but I came here and I called my son, my boy, my dying seed, and I said to him: "He will come!". Lord... You have done all sorts of good to our town. You are going away, but there are no sick people left... You have blessed even our trees and animals... And will You not... You have already cured my wife... but will You not have mercy on the fruit of her womb?... A son to a mother! Give back a son to his mother, You, the perfect Son of the Mother of all graces! In the name of Your Mother have mercy on me, on us!... . »

Everybody is weeping with the old man who has spoken with such powerful and heart-rending feelings...

And Jesus clasps him in His arms, while he is sobbing, and He says to him: « Do not weep any more! Let us go to your Elisha. Your faith, justice and hope deserve that and much more. Do not weep, father! Do not let us delay any longer from freeing a man from such horror. »

« The moon is setting. The road is a difficult one. Could we not wait until dawn? » say some people.

« No. There are many resinous plants here around us. Pick some branches, light them and let us go » orders Jesus.

They climb up a narrow troublesome path; it looks like the dried bed of alluvial water. The reddish smoky torches crackle spreading a strong smell of resins through the air.

A cave with a narrow opening, almost hidden by thick bushes which have grown near the edges of a spring, appears beyond a narrow tableland split in the middle by a crevice into which flows the water of the spring.

« Elisha has been there, for years... awaiting death or the grace of God... » says the old man in a low voice, pointing at the cavern.

« Call your son. Console him. Tell him not to be afraid, to have faith. »

And Abraham shouts in a loud voice: « Elisha! Elisha! Son! » and he repeats his cry, trembling with fear because there is no reply.

« Is he perhaps dead? » some ask.

« No. Dead, just now, no! At the end of his torture! With no joy, no! Oh! my boy! » moans the father...

« Do not weep. Call him again. »

« Elisha! Elisha! Why are you not answering your... »

« Father! Father! Why have you come at this unusual time? Is mother perhaps dead, and you have come to... » the voice, which was previously far, has come nearer, and a spectre moves the branches concealing the entrance; a horrible spectre, a half-naked corroded skeleton... who seeing so many people with torches and sticks, imagines I wonder what, and withdraws shouting: « Father, why have you betrayed me? I have never left this place... Why have you brought people to stone me?! » The voice moves away and only the undulating branches are left to remind people of the apparition.

3-1959

« Comfort him! Tell him that the Saviour is here! » urges Jesus.

But the old man has no strength left... He weeps desolately...

Jesus then speaks: « Son of Abraham and of the Father in Heaven, listen. What your just father prophesied, is now being accomplished. The Saviour is here and your friends of Engedi are with Him and the disciples of the Messiah have come to rejoice at your resurrection. Come and be not afraid! Come as far as the crevice, and I will come, too, and I will touch you, and you will be cleansed. Do not be afraid, come to the Lord Who loves you! »

The branches are shifted once again and the frightened leper looks out. He looks at Jesus, a white figure walking on the grass of the tableland and stopping at the edge of the crevice... He looks at the others... and especially at his father who appears to be fascinated and follows Jesus with his arms stretched out and his eyes staring at the face of his leprous son. He is reassured and comes forward. He walks with a limp, because of the sores on his feet... he stretches out his arms with their corroded hands... He comes before Jesus... He looks at Him... And Jesus holds out His beautiful hands, He raises His eyes to Heaven, He gathers, He seems to be gathering within Himself all the light of the infinite stars, shedding its pure brightness on the impure, putrid, corroded flesh that looks even more dreadful in the red light of the burning branches, which people are waving to give more light.

Jesus leans over the crevice, with the tips of His fingers He touches the tips of the leprous fingers and says: « I want it! », with such a beautiful smile that it cannot be described. He repeats: « I want it! » twice more. He prays and commands with that word...

He takes one step back opening His arms crosswise and says: « And when you have been cleansed preach the Lord, because you belong to Him. Remember that God loved you so that you might be a good Israelite and a good son. Get married and bring your children up for the Lord. Your very bitter bitterness has been cancelled. Bless the Lord and be happy! »

He then turns round and says: « You with torches, come forward and see what the Lord can do for those who deserve it. »

He lowers His arms, as open and covered by the mantle they prevented people from seeing the leper, and He moves aside.

The first cry is from the old man kneeling behind Jesus: « Son! Son! You are as handsome as when you were twenty years old. And just as healthy! Handsome, oh! you are more handsome now!... Oh! a board, a branch, something, that I may come to you! » and he is on the point of rushing forward.

But Jesus holds him back: « No! Joy must not make you infringe the Law. He is to be purified first. Look at him! Kiss him with your eyes and with your heart, but be strong now as you have been for

3-1960

so many years. And be happy... »

In fact this is a complete miracle. It not only cured, but it restored what had been destroyed by disease, and the man, about forty years old, is as whole as if he had not suffered from any disease; he is only very thin, which gives him an ascetic fineness, which is not common but supernatural. He waves his hands, kneels down and blesses... he does not know what to do to tell Jesus that he thanks Him. At last he sees some flowers among the grass, he picks them, kisses them and throws them beyond the crevice at the Saviour's feet.

« Let us go! You people of Engedi, stay here with your head of the synagogue. We will go on towards Masada. »

« But you don't know... You cannot see... »

« I know the way. I know everything! Both the ways of the Earth and those of hearts, along which God and the Enemy of God pass, and I see those who accept the latter or the Former. Remain here with My peace! In any case it will soon be daybreak and with the burning branches we shall have light till dawn. Abraham, come here, that I may kiss you goodbye. May the Lord always be with you, as He has been so far, and with your family and your kind town. »

« Will you not come back to us again, Lord? To see my happy home? »

« No. My road is about to come to its end. But you will be in Heaven with Me, and your dear ones will be with you. Love me and bring the little ones up in the faith of the Christ... Goodbye to everybody. Peace and blessings to all those who are here and to their families. Peace to you, Elisha. Be perfect out of gratitude to the Lord. My apostles, come with Me... »

And He sets off at the head of the little procession, walking with burning branches held aloft. He turns round a projecting rock and disappears with His white mantle; then the apostles disappear one by one, the shuffling of their feet fades away, the reddish light of the branches vanishes...

Father and son remain on the tableland, sitting on the edges of the crevice, contemplating each other... Behind them, in a group, whispering their admiration, the people of Engedi... They await dawn to go back to the town with the news of the wonderful cure.

391. At Masada.

25th February 1946.

They are climbing up a very steep hill towards a town, which looks like an eagle's nest on an Alpine crest. They are proceeding with great difficulty, going eastwards and leaving behind a continuous chain of mountains, which are part of the Judaean range

3-1961

and which, like the buttress of a huge wall, extend towards the southern end of the Dead Sea. The crest on which the town is built, is very high, solitary and steep, such as eagles are fond of for their regal lovemaking, as they disdain witnesses and community.

« What a road, my Lord! » moans Peter.

« It is even worse than the road to Jiphthahel » confirms Matthew.

« But it is not raining here, it is not damp and the road is not slippery. And that is not so bad » remarks Judas Thaddeus.

« Yes. That is a consolation But it is the only one. Don't worry! Your enemies will not capture you! If an earthquake does not demolish you, no deed of man will ever destroy you » says Peter addressing the town-fortress, enclosed in the narrow circle of its defences, with its houses crowded one against the other, like the seeds of pomegranates in their tough rind.

« Do you think so, Peter? » asks Jesus.

« Do I think so? I see it. Which is better! »

Jesus shakes His head but does not reply.

« Perhaps it would have been better if we had come along the sea. If Simon were here... he is familiar with this area » says Bartholomew sighing, as he is exhausted.

« When we are in town and you see the other road, you will thank Me for choosing this one. A man can climb up here, although with some difficulty. A goat can hardly climb up the other one » replies Jesus.

« How do You know? Did anybody tell You, or... ? »

« I know. In any case Ananias' daughter-in-law lives here. I want to speak to her, as first thing. »

« Master... will there be no danger up there?... Because we cannot get out in a hurry here, and if they should chase us we will never see our homes again. Look at those fearful precipices! And the sharp rocks!... » says Thomas.

« Be not afraid. We shall not find another Engedi. Only few towns are like Engedi in Israel. But no harm will befall us. »

« It's because... Do You know that it is one of Herod's strongholds?... »

« So? Be not afraid, Tom! Until it is the hour, nothing serious will happen. »

They proceed and they arrive at the not very attractive walls, when the sun is already high. But the height moderates the heat.

They go into the town through the arch of a narrow gloomy gate. The bastion walls are huge, with frequent towers and narrow crenels.

« What a trap for game! » says Matthew.

« I am thinking of the poor wretches who had to carry all the materials up here, those blocks, these iron plates... » says James of Alphaeus.

3-1962

« The holy love for their fatherland and independence made the weights light for the men of Jonathan Maccabee. Wicked selfishness and the fear of the people's wrath imposed a heavy yoke, not on subjects, but on people worse than slaves, by the will of Herod the Great. It was baptised in blood and tears, it will perish in blood and tears, when the hour of divine punishment comes. »

« Master, but what have the inhabitants got to do with it? »

« Nothing. And everything. Because when subjects vie with their leaders in faults or in merits, they receive the same prize or punishment as their leaders. But here is the house, the third one in the second street, with the well in front of it. Let us go... »

Jesus knocks at the door of a high narrow house. A boy opens the door.

« Are you a relative of Ananias'? »

« I am called after him, because he is the father of my father. »

« Call your mother. Tell her that I have come from the town where Ananias lives and where is the tomb of her dead husband. »

The boy goes away and comes back. « She said that she does not care to have any news of the old man. That You can go. »

Jesus' countenance becomes very severe. « I will not go away unless I speak to her. Child, go and tell her that Jesus of Nazareth, in Whom her husband believed, is here and wishes to speak to her. Tell her not to be afraid. The old man is not here... »

The boy goes away again. The wait is long. People have stopped to watch and some of them ask the apostles questions. But the atmosphere is unpleasant or indifferent or ironical... The apostles try to be kind, but it is obvious that they are frightened. And they become more so when the notables of the town arrive with some soldiers. Both the former and the latter look like... real jail-birds and neither inspire confidence.

Jesus, engrossed in thought, waits patiently, leaning against the doorpost, with folded arms.

The woman comes at last. She is tall and swarthy, her eyes are hard and her profile sharp. She is neither ugly nor old, but her countenance makes her look old and ugly. « What do You want? Hurry up, because I am busy » she says haughtily.

« I do not want anything. You may be sure. I am only bringing you Ananias' forgiveness, his love and prayers... »

« I will not have him again with me! It's no good begging of me. I don't want old mournful people. It's all over with him. In any case I am getting married again and I cannot impose a coarse peasant like him on the house of a rich man. I have suffered enough through my mistake in marrying his son! But I was a silly girl then and I was only looking at the handsomeness of the man. Woe is me! Woe is me! Cursed be whatever brought him my way! Let even his memory be anathema... » she shouts looking really wild.

3-1963

« That is enough! Respect the living and the dead whom you did not deserve to have; your heart, woman, is harder than a stone. Woe to you! Yes. Woe to you! Because there is no love for your neighbour in your heart, and consequently Satan is in you. But watch, woman. Watch, lest the tears of the old man and those of your husband, whom you certainly oppressed through your lack of love, should become fire raining on what is dear to you. You have children, woman!... »

« Children! I wish I did not have them! Also the last tie would be broken! But I do not want to hear anything. I do not want to hear You. Go away! I am in my house, in my brother's house. I don't know You. I don't want to remember the old man. I don't... » she shouts like a magpie plucked alive. She is a real harpy.

« Be careful » says Jesus.

« Are You threatening me? »

« I am calling you back to God, to His Law, as I feel sorry for your soul. How can you bring your children up, if you have such feelings? Are you not afraid of the judgement of God? »

« Oh! That's enough. Saul, go and call my brother and tell him to come here with Jonathan. I will show You! I... »

« Oh! no. It is not necessary. God will not compel -your soul. Goodbye. » And Jesus goes away elbowing His way through the crowd. The road is narrow, between high houses. The defence centre of the fortress town is in the eastern side, where everything falls sheer for hundreds of metres and where a narrow winding path, strikingly steep, climbs up to the top of the peak, from the plain and from the sea-shore. Jesus goes just there, where there is an emplacement for engines of war, and He begins to speak, repeating once again His invitation to the Kingdom of Heaven, of which He describes the main features.

And He is about to elucidate them, when some notables come forward, forcing their way through the crowd and shouting to one another. As soon as they are before Jesus, they enjoin: « Go away! We are quite enough here to educate the children of Israel », but they say so rather confusedly, as they all speak at the same time and seem to agree only to drive away Jesus.

« Go away! Our women need not be reproached by You, a Galilean! »

« Go away, offender! How dare You offend the woman of a Herodian, in one of the favourite towns of the great Herod? Usurper, since Your birth, of his sovereign rights! Away from here! »

Jesus looks at them, at the last ones in particular, and He says one word only: « Hypocrites! »

« Go away! Away! »

There is a real uproar of discordant voices, each accusing or defending his own caste. It is impossible to understand anything.

3-1964

In the small square women shout and faint, children cry, soldiers try to make their way coming out from the fortress, and in doing so they hurt the people crushed in the square, who react cursing Herod and his soldiers, the Messiah and His followers. A real hubbub! The apostles, pressing round Jesus, are the only ones who defend Him more or less bravely and they also shout biting insults, and being sailors they are not in any way short of suitable vocabulary!

Jesus calls them saying: « Let us get out of here. We will go round the back of the town and will go away... »

« And for good, mind You! » shouts Peter, whose face is purple with anger.

« Yes, for good... »

They file off one after the other, and notwithstanding the pressure put on Him by the apostles, Jesus is the last. The guards, although they jeer at the « mocked prophet », as they say, playing all sorts of tricks on Him, have enough common sense to make haste and close the gate and lean against it, with their weapons turned towards the square.

Jesus takes a very narrow path along the walls, a tiny path about two palms wide, below which there is the void and death. The apostles follow Him avoiding looking down at the frightening abyss. They are now near the gate through which they entered the town. Jesus proceeds downhill, without stopping. The gate is closed also on this side of the town...

When they are at some distance from the town Jesus stops and lays His hand on the shoulder of Peter, who says wiping his perspiration: « We had a narrow escape! Cursed town! And cursed woman! Oh! poor Ananias! That woman is worse than my mother-in-law! What a viper! »

« Yes. She has the cold heart of a snake... Simon of Jonah, well, what do you think? Notwithstanding all its defences, do you think that this town is safe? »

« No, Lord! It does not have God in it. I say that it will be doomed with Sodom and Gomorrah. »

« You are right, Simon of Jonah! It is attracting upon itself the thunderbolts of divine wrath, not so much because it expelled Me, but because all the commandments of the Decalogue are infringed in it. Let us go now. A cave will receive us in its cool shade, during the hot hours. And at sunset we will go towards Kerioth, as far as moonlight will allow us... »

« My Master! » moans John bursting suddenly into tears.

« What is the matter with you? » they all ask him.

John does not reply. He is weeping covering his face with his hands, with his head lowered... He looks like the distressed John of Good Friday...

3-1965

« Do not weep! Come here... There are still pleasant hours ahead of us » says Jesus drawing him to Himself. But what comforts the heart, increases also tears.

« Oh! Master! My Master! What shall I do? What shall I do? »

« For what, brother? », « For what, dear friend? » ask James and the others.

John has difficulty in speaking, then raising his face and throwing his arms round Jesus' neck, thus compelling Him to bend over his distressed face, he shouts and replies to Jesus instead of those who had asked him the question: « Seeing You dying! »

« God will help you, His beloved child! You will not be without His help. Do not weep any more. Let us go!... » and Jesus walks away holding by the hand the apostle blinded by tears...

392. At the Country House of Mary Mother of Judas.

26th February 1946.

They arrive at Judas' country house on a wonderful cool morning. The orchards are wet with dew and the grass beneath the trees is a flowery carpet over which bees are buzzing. The windows of the house are already open. The woman who manages it, a strong woman who moderates her command with great kindness, is giving orders to the servants and peasants and is herself handing out the food to each of them before sending them to their work. Through the large wide open door of the kitchen she can be seen passing backwards and forwards in her dark dress, speaking to this one and that one, and making portions according to the needs of each worker. A flock of doves are cooing before the door, waiting to have their share.

Jesus proceeds smiling and He is almost at the door, when Mary of Simon looks out, with a little bag of corn in her hand, saying: « It's your turn now, my doves. Here is your first meal, then go away happily, in the sunshine, praising the Lord. Be good, be good! There is enough for everyone and there is no need for you to peck one another... » And she scatters the corn in all directions to avoid violent brawls among the greedy doves. She does not see Jesus, because she has stooped to caress also some of the birds, which are pecking her toes out of affection. Mary takes one in her hands and caresses it. She then puts it down, and sighs.

Jesus takes a step forward saying: « Peace to you, Mary, and to your house! »

« The Master! » exclaims the woman, dropping the little bag she was holding under her arm, and she runs towards Jesus, putting the doves to flight, but they immediately alight on the ground and busy themselves pecking the string of the little bag and the bag itself to loosen and open it and thus satisfy their greed. « Oh! Lord!

3-1966

What a holy and happy day! » and she is about to kneel to kiss Jesus' feet.

But He stops her saying: « The mothers of My apostles and the Holy women of Israel must not lower themselves like slaves in My presence. They have given Me their faithful souls and their sons. I give them love of predilection. »

Judas' mother deeply moved kisses His hands whispering: « Thank You, Lord! » She then raises her head and sees the group of the apostles, who have stopped at the nearest trees, and as she is surprised that her son is not coming to meet her, she looks at them more closely. She turns pale with fear. She almost shouts asking: « My son, where is he? » and she looks at Jesus trembling with fright.

« Be not afraid, Mary. I have sent him with Simon Zealot to Lazarus' house on a mission. If I could have stopped at Masada as long as I had decided, I would have found him here. But I could not stop there. The hostile town rejected Me. And I came here at once to find comfort in a mother and to give her the pleasure of learning that her son is serving the Lord » says Jesus laying stress on the last words, to make them more impressive.

Mary resembles a withered flower that revives. Colour comes back to her cheeks and light to her eyes. She asks: « Really, Lord? Is he good? Are You happy with him? You are? Oh! what joy! Joy of his mother's heart! I have prayed so much! So hard! I gave so many alms! And I did so much penance... so much... And what would I not do to make my son holy? Thanks, my Lord! Thanks for loving him so much. Because it is Your love that saves my Judas... »

« Yes. It is "our" love that... supports him... »

« Our love! How kind You are, Lord! You put my poor love close, nay united to Your divine love!... Oh! what words You have told me! How much certainty, how much comfort and peace You are giving me! If it were only my poor love, Judas would not profit much by it. But You, with Your forgiveness... because You are aware of his faults, You... with Your infinite love, which seems to grow the more he needs it after committing an offence, oh! You... my Judas will be able to control himself, at last, and for ever. Is that right, Master? » The woman stares at Him with her deep serious eyes, her hands joined in prayer.

Jesus... oh! Jesus Who cannot reply « yes » but does not wish to deprive her of this hour of peace, finds words, which are neither a lie nor a promise, but which the woman can accept with relief. He says: « His good will joined to our love can work real miracles, Mary. Let peace prevail in your heart always thinking that God loves you so much. He understands you. And He will be your friend for ever. »

Mary kisses His hands once again to thank Him. She then says:

3-1967

« Come, then, into my house, awaiting Judas. Love and peace are here, blessed Master. »

And Jesus calls His apostles and enters the house to take some refreshment and to rest.

It is evening. Night falls slowly in the country. Noises cease one after the other and only a light breeze can be heard among the leaves: there is deep silence. Then there is the first cricket in the field full of ripe crops. Then another one... and another... And the whole country chirrs in the monotonous sound... until a nightingale utters its first canorous question to the stars... it becomes silent, then resumes singing. It is silent once again... What is it awaiting? Perhaps the first ray of the moon?... It is now whispering in a low voice, it must have flown to the thick walnut-tree near the house, where perhaps is its nest. It seems to be chattering to its mate that is perhaps brooding... Insistent bleating in the distance. The sound of harness-bells on the Kerioth road. Then silence.

Jesus is sat near Mary on the benches in front of the house. He is resting peacefully among His disciples and the servants of the house. The atmosphere is pleasant and peaceful, relieving both bodies and spirits. Jesus is not talkative, He speaks now and again. He lets the apostles speak of Engedi, of the old head of the synagogue, of the miracle. Mary and the servants are listening diligently.

Something moves near the apple-trees. But whilst here, in the open space before the house, one can see faintly, because it is a clear starry evening, there is no light under the thick trees and one can hear only the noise of something moving.

« A night animal? A lost sheep? » asks several of the apostles. And the mention of a sheep reminds many of the sheep lamenting because they had taken her lamb to kill it.

« That poor sheep cannot resign herself! » says the farmer. « I am afraid her udders will harden. She has not eaten anything all day and she does nothing but bleat... Listen to her!... »

« She'll get over it... They lamb so that we can eat their lambs » says a servant philosophically.

« But they are not all alike. This one is not so stupid and suffers more. Listen! Doesn't it sound like weeping? Don't say that I am silly, Master... It affects me like the weeping of a woman for her lost child... »

« Instead, mother, you have found your child! » says Judas of Kerioth appearing behind them with Simon and making everybody start with surprise. « Master! Bless our return as You blessed our departure. »

« Yes, Judas » and Jesus embraces them both.

« And you, too, mother... » Mary also kisses and embraces her son.

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« We were not expecting to find you here, Master. We walked untiringly, taking short cuts most of the time to avoid being held back. But we met some disciples and we informed Johanna and Eliza that we shall soon be calling on them » explains Simon.

« Yes. And Simon walked as fast as a young man. Master, we gave the message. Lazarus is very ill. And the heat increases his suffering. He implores You to go to him soon... Master, with the exception of the Antonia, where I went to please Eglah who wanted to thank Claudia before leaving for Jericho, I did not go anywhere else. Is that right, Simon? »

« Yes, that is true. And we went to the Antonia at the sixth hour, on a sultry day, when it was wise to stay at home. While Judas was speaking to Claudia, whom Albula Domitilla had called into the garden, I was asked questions by the other women. I do not think I did the wrong thing in explaining, as best I could, what they wanted to know. »

« You did the right thing. They are really anxious to know the truth. »

« And Claudia is really willing to help You. She dismissed Eglah, who went to greet Plautina and the other women, and she asked me many questions. If I understood her properly she wants to persuade Pontius not to believe the slander of Pharisees, Sadducees and so on. Pontius trusts his centurions only to a certain extent, as they are good warriors but not such good messengers. And he often makes use of his wife, who must be very intelligent and shrewd, to have precise information. Claudia is really the true Proconsul. He must be a nonentity and keeps his position only because she is so powerful and advises him. They gave us some money for Your poor. Here it is. »

« When did you arrive? Are you not tired and dusty? » asks James of Zebedee.

« Between the third and the sixth hour. We went to Kerioth to see whether my mother was there and inform her of your arrival. But I behaved as You wish, Master. I did not give in to human desires. Is that true, Simon? »

« Yes, it is true. »

« Very well. Be always obedient and you will be saved. »

« Yes, Master. Oh! now that I know that Claudia is with us, I will no longer be led by my foolish haste. But it was all for the sake of love. You must agree. Disorderly love... because it felt as if it were not protected, as if it had no help to reach its purpose, which is to have You loved, respected as You deserve, and as it must be. Now I am calmer. I am no longer afraid. And it is pleasant also to wait... » says Judas day-dreaming.

« Do not give free course to dreams, Judas. Follow the truth. I am the Light of the world and light will always be disliked by

3-1969

darkness... » warns Jesus.

The moon has risen. In its white light the country shines, faces look pale, houses and trees are like silver. The eastern side of the walnut tree is fully lit. The nightingale accepts the lunar invitation and begins its long melodious song, which it had kept in reserve, to greet the moon and night.

393. Farewell to Kerioth. Parable of the Two Wills.

27th February 1946.

Jesus is speaking in the synagogue of Kerioth, which is incredibly crowded. He is replying to several people who have asked Him private advice, and is speaking to each separately. When He has satisfied them all, He begins to speak in a loud voice.

« People of Kerioth, listen to My farewell parable. We shall call it: "The Two Wills".

A perfect father had two sons. He loved both with the same wise love, he directed both towards the right ways. Although there was no difference in the way he loved and taught them, there was a remarkable difference in the two sons. One, the first-born, was humble, obedient; he did his father's will without discussion, he was always joyful and happy in his work. The other one, although younger, was often unhappy, he argued with his father and within himself. He always pondered, with deep human meditation, on the advice and orders that he received. And instead of carrying them out exactly as they were given, he took the liberty of modifying them completely or partially, as if they had been imparted by a fool. His elder brother used to say to him: "Don't do that. You are grieving our father!". But he would reply: "You are foolish. A great big strapping man such as you are, first-born over and above, and grown up, oh! I would not remain in the place where father put you. I would like to do more. I would impose myself on the servants, so that they might realise that I am the master. Owing to your perpetual meekness you look like a servant yourself. Can't you see that no one pays attention to you, notwithstanding your primogeniture? Some even laugh at you... The second-born son, tempted by Satan, or rather, a disciple of Satan, whose advice he carried out diligently, tempted his brother. But the latter, faithful to the Lord and respecting His Law, was faithful also to his father, whom he honoured with his perfect behaviour.

Years went by and the younger brother, annoyed at not being in a position to rule, after imploring his father several times saying: "Authorise me to act in your name, for your own honour, instead of letting that fool do so, as he is meeker than a lamb", and after trying to urge his brother to do more than the father ordered, to impose himself on the servants, on fellow-citizens and neighbours,

said to himself: "Oh! that's enough! Our good name is at stake! Since no one wants to do it, I will do it myself ". And he began to do things his own way, yielding to pride and falsehood and disobeying without the slightest hesitation. His father used to say to him: "Son, listen to your brother. He knows what he does". Or he would say: "I have been told that you have done such a thing. Is it true?". And the younger son, shrugging his shoulders would reply to his father's questions: "He knows, he knows! He is too shy and irresolute. He misses the opportunity to take command". Or he would reply: "I did not do such a thing". His father used to say to him: "Don't seek help from this one or that one. Who do you think can help more than we can, to give fame to our name? False friends influence you so that later they may laugh at you behind your back". But the second-born son replied: "Are you jealous because I am the one with spirit of enterprise? In any case I know that I am doing the right thing".

Time passed. The elder brother was growing more and more in justice, whilst the younger one fostered evil passions. At last the father said: "It's time to put an end to this. You either comply with what I order, or you will lose my love". And the rebel went and told his false friends. "Are you worried about that? Don't! There is a way to make it impossible for a father to prefer one son to another. Hand him over to us and we will see to it. You will be free from material blame and your property will flourish because, after removing him who is too good, you will be able to make it famous. Do you not know that forcible action, although painful, is better than inertness, which is harmful to property?" they replied. And the younger son, by now sated with wickedness, gave assent to the conspiracy.

Now tell Me. Can the father be blamed for educating his sons in two different ways? Can we say that he was an accomplice? No, we cannot. Why, then, was one son a saint, and the other, wicked? Is the will of man perhaps given in advance in two different manners? No, it is not. It is given in one way only. But man is free to change it, and he who is good makes his will good, and who is wicked makes it wicked.

I exhort you, people of Kerioth - and this is the last time that I exhort you to follow the ways of wisdom - I exhort you to follow only your good will. Almost at the end of My ministry I repeat to you the words that were sung at My birth: "There is peace for men of good will". Peace! That is, success, victory on the Earth and in Heaven, because God is with those who are willing to obey Him. God does not look so much at the high-sounding deeds that man does on his own initiative, as at the humble, prompt, faithful obedience to the work which He proposes.

I would remind you of two episodes in the history of Israel,

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which prove that God is not with the man who wishes to act by himself, trampling on the order received.

Let us see the Maccabees. It is written that while Judas Maccabee was going with Jonathan to fight in Gilead and Simon was going to relieve his countrymen in Galilee, Joseph of Zechariah and the people's leader Azariah were ordered to remain in Judaea to guard it. And Judas said to them: "Take care of this people and do not engage the pagans until we return". But Joseph and Azariah, upon hearing of the great exploits of the Maccabees, wanted to do the same, and said: "Let us make a name for ourselves and go and fight the nations around us". But they were defeated and routed and "so the people met with a great reverse, because they had not listened to Judas and his brothers, but had relied on their own prowess". Pride and disobedience.

And what do we read in the Book of the Kings? We read that Saul was reproved a first time and the second he was reproved so much for his disobedience, that David was elected in his place. Because he had disobeyed! Remember! "Does the Lord perhaps want holocausts and victims or does He not prefer people to obey His voice? Obedience is worth more than sacrifices, and to listen is worth more than offering the fat of rams; because rebellion is a sin of sorcery, presumption a crime of idolatry. Now, since you have rejected the word of the Lord, He has rejected you as king".

Remember! When Samuel obediently filled his horn with oil and went to Jesse of Bethlehem, because the Lord had chosen Himself another king there, Jesse went to the banquet with his sons after the sacrifice and his sons were introduced to Samuel. Eliab, handsome, young and tall, was the first one. But the Lord said to Samuel: "Take no notice of his appearance or his height, because I have rejected him. I do not see as man sees. Because man looks at appearances, but the Lord looks at the heart". And Samuel did not want Eliab as king. Abinadab was then presented to him. But Samuel said: "The Lord has not chosen this one either". And Jesse presented Shammah to him. But Samuel said: "He is not the chosen one of the Lord either". And he said the same with regard to all the seven sons of Jesse present at the banquet. And Samuel asked: "Are all your sons here?". "No" replied Jesse. "There is still one left, the youngest, who is looking after the sheep". "Send for him, because we will not sit down to eat until he comes". And David came. He was a fair-haired boy, of fresh complexion and pleasant bearing. And the Lord said: "Anoint him, for he is the king". Because, and always bear this in mind, God chooses whoever He wants, and He deprives those who forfeit His favour by depraving His will through pride and disobedience.

I will not come back here again. The Master is about to fulfil His ministry. Afterwards, He will be more than Master. Prepare

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your souls for that hour, and remember that as My birth was salvation for those who had good will, so My accession will be salvation for those who had good will in following Me, as Master, in My doctrine, and for those who will follow Me in it, also after My accession.

Goodbye men, women and children of Kerioth! Goodbye. Let us look at one another straight in the eyes! Let us make our hearts, yours and Mine, blend in a loving embrace of farewell, and may our love be always alive, also when I shall no longer be among you... The first time I came here, a just man breathed his last in the kiss of his Saviour, in a vision of glory... And now, the last time I have come here, I bless you with love...

Goodbye!... May the Lord grant you faith, hope and charity in perfect measure. May He give you love, love, love. For Himself, for Me, for the good, for the unhappy, for the guilty, for those who are burdened with the weight of a fault which is not theirs...

Remember. Be good. Do not be unjust. Remember that I have always forgiven not only guilty people, but I have embraced the whole of Israel with My love. The whole of Israel, which consists of good and not good people, as in every family there are good and not good members, and it would be unfair to say that a whole family is bad, only because one member is so.

I am going... If anyone still wishes to speak to Me, let him come before evening to the country house of Mary of Simon. »

Jesus raises His hand and blesses, and then goes out quickly through the back door followed by His apostles.

People whisper: « He is not coming back any more! »

« What did He mean? »

« Tears welled in His eyes when saying goodbye... »

« Did you hear? He said that He will be raised! »

« So Judas is right! Of course, later, as king, He will not be among us as now... »

« But I spoke to His brothers. They say that He will not be king, as we imagine. But He will be the King of Redemption as the prophets say. He will be the Messiah, of course! »

« Not at all! The King Redeemer. The man of sorrows. »

« Yes. »

« No »...

In the meantime Jesus is walking fast towards the country.

394. Anne of Kerioth. Farewell to Judas' Mother.

28th February 1946.

« Lord, would You come with me, with me alone, to see an unhappy mother. I desire this more than anything else » says Mary of Simon, standing respectfully before Jesus, while after the midday

3-1973

meal, the apostles have scattered to rest before resuming their journey in the evening. Jesus instead is resting in the shade of the apple-trees laden with small green apples about to ripen and Mary seems to be resuming a conversation previously begun.

« Yes, woman. I also wish to be with you, all alone in these last hours, as I was the first time I came here. Let us go. » And they go into the house where Jesus takes His mantle and Mary her veil and mantle.

They follow paths through fields, orchards and forest trees. It is still warm. Waves of warm air come from the fields where the crops are ripe. But the mountain breeze moderates the heat which would have been unbearable down in the plain.

« I am sorry to make You walk in this heat. But later... it would no longer be possible. And I have always longed for this thing, without ever daring to ask You. A short while ago You said to me: "Mary, to show that I love you, as if you were My mother, I say to you: ask Me whatever you wish to have and I will satisfy you" and so I dared. Lord, do You know where we are going? »

« No, woman. »

« We are going to the house of the woman, who was to be Judas' mother-in-law... (Mary sighs heavily). She was to... She is not and never will be, because Judas left the girl who died of a broken heart... and her mother now bears me and my son ill-will. She always curses us... Judas is so... weak and inclined to Evil, that he needs blessings only!... I would like You to speak to her... You can convince her... and tell her that it was a mercy that the marriage did not take place... that it is no fault of mine... that she may die without any grudge; because she is dying slowly with such grief in her soul. I would like to be at peace with her... because I have suffered and I was ashamed of what happened and it grieves me to see that the person who has been my companion since I came here when I got married, is no longer my friend. In short, Lord, You know... »

« Yes, do not worry. Your request is an honest one and I will fulfil the task because it is a good thing. »

After crossing a little valley, they climb up another hill, on which there is a village.

« Anne has lived here since her daughter died. In her estate. Before she was at Kerioth. But while she lived there, her reproaches broke my heart every time we met. »

They take a side path just before the village and arrive at a low house, in the fields.

« Now! My heart is trembling, now that I am here! She will refuse to see me... she will reject me... she will be upset and her poor heart will suffer even more... Master... »

« Yes, I will go. You stay here, till I call you. And pray in order to

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assist Me. »

And Jesus goes, all alone, as far as the wide-open door of the house, which He enters greeting with His kind salutation.

A woman comes towards Him: « What do You want? Who are You? »

« I have come to bring relief to your mistress. Take Me to her. »

« Are You a doctor? It is of no avail! There is no hope. Her heart is dying. »

« There is still her soul to be saved. I am the Rabbi. »

« You are of no use even as such. She is displeased with the Eternal Father and does not want to listen to sermons. Leave her alone. »

« I have come just because she is in that frame of mind. Let me go in and she will not be so unhappy in her last days. »

The woman shrugs her shoulders and says: « Come in! »

There is a cool half-dark corridor with several doors. At the end of the corridor the last door is half-open and moaning can be heard from it. The woman enters the room saying: « My mistress, there is a rabbi who wants to speak to you. »

« Why?... To tell me that I am cursed? That I will have no peace not even in the next life? » says the sick woman panting and upset.

« No. To tell you that your peace will be complete, if you only wish so, and you will be happy for ever with your Johanna » says Jesus appearing at the door.

The sick woman, whose face is yellow and swollen, and who is panting in her little bed, leaning on many pillows, looks at Him and says: « Oh! What words! It is the first time that a rabbi does not reproach me... What hope!... My Johanna... with me... blessed... no more grief... the grief caused by a cursed man... she who gave birth to him did not avoid it... she betrayed me... after enticing me... My unhappy daughter... » she pants more and more.

« See? You are making her feel worse. I knew. Come away. »

« No. You go away. Leave me alone with her... »

The woman goes out shaking her head.

Jesus approaches the bed slowly. He kindly wipes the perspiration on the face of the woman, who finds difficulty in doing so because her hands are incredibly swollen, and He fans her head with a fan made with palm leaves. He helps her to drink as she seeks some refreshment in the liquor on the night table. He seems a son near a diseased mother. He finally sits down, kindly but firmly determined to fulfil His mission.

The woman watches Him and calms down, and with an agonising smile she says: « You are handsome and kind. Who are You, Rabbi? You are as gentle as my beloved daughter was in comforting me. »

« I am Jesus of Nazareth! »

3-1975

« You?!... And You have come to me?... Why?... »

« Because I love you. I have a mother, too, and in every mother I see Mine, and in the tears of mothers, I see My Mother's... »

« Why? Does Your Mother weep? Why? Has another son of Hers died? »

« Not yet... I am Her only Son and I am still alive. But She already weeps because She knows that I must die. »

« Oh! Poor woman! How dreadful to know beforehand that a son must die. But how does She know? You are healthy. You are strong. You are good. I deluded myself until she died, and she was so ill!... How can Your Mother know that You must die? »

« Because I am the Son of man, foretold by the prophets. I am the Man of sorrows seen by Isaiah, the Messiah sung by David and described as the tortured Redeemer. I am the Saviour, the Redeemer, woman. And death, a dreadful death is awaiting Me... and My Mother will be present... and My Mother has been aware, since I was born, that Her heart will be broken by sorrow like My own... Do not weep... Through My death I will open the gates of Heaven to your Johanna... »

« Also to me! To me!... »

« Yes. In due course. But first you must learn to love and forgive. To begin to love again. To be just. And to forgive... Otherwise you will not be able to go to Heaven, with Johanna, and with Me... »

The woman weeps uncontrollably. She moans: « To love... To love when men have taught us to hate... when God has ceased to love us having no mercy on us... it is difficult... How can we love, when men have tortured us, and our friends have hurt us and God has abandoned us?... »

« No. He has not abandoned you. I am here. To make heavenly promises to you. To assure you that your grief will turn into joy, if you so wish. Listen to Me, Anne... You are weeping because the marriage was cancelled, and that has become the cause of all your grief, and because of that you say that a man is a murderer and his poor mother an accomplice. Listen, Anne. In the next few months you will realise that it was a grace from Heaven that Johanna did not get married to Judas... »

« Don't mention his name to me! » shouts the woman.

« I am mentioning it, to tell you that you must thank the Lord and you will be thanking Him in a few months' time... »

« I will be dead... »

« No. You will be alive and you will remember Me, and you will understand that there are sorrows greater than yours... »

« Greater? It's not possible! »

« What about My Mother Who will see Me die on a cross? » Jesus has stood up. He is imposing. « And what about the grief of the mother of the betrayer of Jesus Christ, the Son of God? Think,

3-1976

woman, of that mother... You... The whole of Kerioth, the country around it and beyond it have sympathised with you in your grief! You have been as proud of it as of the crown of a martyr. But that mother! Like Cain, without being Cain, being instead Abel: victim of her traitorous son, the killer of God, a sacrilegious cursed son, she will not be able to stand the look of men, because each glance will be like a stone of lapidation, and in every word, in every voice of man, she will seem to be hearing a curse, an abuse and she will never find shelter on the Earth until her death, until God, Who is just, takes the martyr with Himself making her forget that she is the mother of the murderer of God, by giving her the possession of God... Is that mother's sorrow not greater? »

« Oh! immense sorrow!... »

« You understand... Be good, Anne. Admit that God was good in what He did... »

« But my daughter is dead! Judas made her die, to have a richer dowry... His mother approved... »

« No. That is not true. I can assure you, and I read hearts. Judas he is My apostle but I tell you - behaved badly and will be punished for it. But his mother is innocent. She loves you, and would like to be loved by you... Anne, you are two unhappy mothers. But you are proud of your dead child, who was innocent and pure, celebrated and honoured by the world... Mary of Simon cannot be proud of her son. His conduct is reproved by men. »

« That is true. But if he had married Johanna, he would not be reproved. »

« But in a short time you would see Johanna die of a broken heart, because Judas will die a violent death. »

« What are You saying? Oh! poor Mary! When? How? Where? »

« Soon. And in a dreadful way... Anne! You are good! You are a mother! You are aware of the sorrow of a mother! Anne, become Mary's friend once again! Let sorrow join you as joy was to unite you. Let me go away happily, knowing that she will have a friend, one only, at least one »

« Lord... to love her means to forgive her It is very hard... I seem to be burying my daughter once again to be killing her myself... »

« Such thoughts originate in Darkness! Do not listen to them. Listen to Me, the Light of the world. The Light of the world tells you that Johanna's destiny has been less bitter dying a virgin than dying the widow of Judas. Believe Me, Anne. And consider that Mary of Simon is more unhappy than you are... »

The woman is pensive, she struggles, weeps and says: « But I have cursed her, both her and the fruit of her womb! I have sinned... »

« And I absolve you. And the more you love her, the more you

3-1977

will be absolved in Heaven. »

« But if I become her friend... I will meet Judas. Lord, I cannot do that!... »

« You will never meet him again. I will never come back to Kerioth again, neither will Judas. We have already said goodbye to the people... »

« Oh! You said... »

« That I will not come back again. Judas said that he will not be able to come back until after My accession. But he believes he will be seeing Me ascending a throne. Instead death on a cross is waiting Me. And he thinks that he will become one of My ministers. Death instead is awaiting him. But You shall not tell anybody that. Never. His mother is not to know until everything has been accomplished. You said: "Poor woman! To know beforehand that her son must die". But if My Mother's suffering, also because of that, is already increasing the merits of My Sacrifice, silence is compassion for Mary of Simon. You shall not speak. »

« No, my Lord. I swear to it in the name of my Johanna. »

« I want another promise! A great, holy one! You are good. You already love Me... »

« Yes, so much. I have been at peace since You came here... »

« When Mary of Simon no longer has her son and the world insults her with sneering words, you, you only, will open your heart and your house to her. Will you promise Me? In the names of God and of Johanna. She would have done that, because Mary was still the mother of the man she still loved » insists Jesus.

« ... Yes! » replies the woman shedding tears.

« May God bless you, woman, and give you peace... and good health. Come let us go and meet Mary, and give her the kiss of peace »

« But Lord I cannot walk. My legs are swollen and I cannot move them. See? I am here, all dressed, but I am just a trunk... »

« You were. Come! » and Jesus stretches out His hand invitingly.

The woman, staring at Jesus' eyes, moves her legs, she stretches them out of the little bed, lays her bare feet on the floor, stands up and walks... She seems fascinated. She is not even aware that she has already been cured... She goes out into the dim corridor, her hand still in Jesus'... She goes towards the door. She is almost there when she meets the servant seen previously, who utters a cry of joyful fear... Other servants rush there, fearing she was dying, whereas they see that their mistress, who shortly before was about to breathe her last and hated Mary of Simon, is now walking fast with her arms stretched out, after leaving Jesus' hand, towards poor Mary, whom she calls and embraces to her heart, while they both weep...

... On their way back to the house, after the peaceful farewell,

3-1978

Mary of Simon thanks her Lord and asks: « When will You come back to do more good? »

« Never, woman. I have already told the citizens. But My heart will always be with you. Remember, always remember that I loved you and I love you. Remember that I know that you are good, and that is why God loves you. Always bear that in mind, also in the most dreadful hours. You must never think that God considers you guilty. In His eyes your soul appears and will always appear adorned with the gems of your virtues and the pearls of your suffering. Mary of Simon, mother of Judas, I want to bless you, I want to embrace you and kiss you so that your faithful sincere maternal kiss may compensate Me for any other one... and My kiss may make amends for all your sorrows. Come, mother of Judas. And thank you, thank you for all the love and honour you have given Me » and He embraces her and kisses her forehead, as He does with Mary of Alphaeus.

« But we will meet again! I will come at Passover... »

« No. Do not come. I beseech you. Do you want to make Me happy? Do not come. Women at next Passover... no! »

« But why?... »

« Because... there will be a frightful rising in Jerusalem next Passover. It is no place for women! Nay... Mary, I will order your relative to join you. You must stay together. You need him because... Judas from now on will not be able to assist you or to come... »

« I will do as You say... So never again I shall see Your face which reflects the peace of Heaven? How much peace You have infused from Your eyes into my sorrowful heart!... » says Mary weeping.

« Do not weep. Life is short. Later you will see me for ever in My Kingdom. »

« So You think that your humble servant will enter it?... »

« I already see your seat among the martyrs and co-redeemers. Do not be afraid, Mary. The Lord will be your eternal compensation. Let us go. Night is falling and it is time for Me to resume My journey... »

And they go back the same road through fields and orchards, towards the house, where the apostles are waiting.

Jesus bids goodbye hurriedly, blesses and sets out at the head of His apostles... While He goes away, Mary weeps, on her knees...

395. Farewell to Juttah.

5th March 1946.

Jesus is speaking to the people of Juttah on a quiet morning. Oh! one can really say that the whole of Juttah is at His feet. Little shepherds, who are generally scattered on the slopes of mountains

are also there with their sheep, at the edge of the crowd. Also those who usually go elsewhere, to fields, woods, markets, are there. Decrepit old people are there, and close to Jesus there are smiling children, and young girls, and new brides, and women about to give birth to a child, and those giving their children suck are all there. The whole of Juttah.

The mountain spur projecting southwards is the amphitheatre where the tranquil people are gathered. Sitting on the grass or sitting astride a low dry-stone wall, with the wide horizon around, the boundless sky above, the torrent below, which shines and smiles in the morning sunshine, the beautiful green woody mountains rising all around, the people of Juttah are listening to the Master, Who is speaking, standing against a very tall walnut-tree, His white linen garment outstanding against the dark tree-trunk, smiling, His eyes sparkling with the joy of being loved, His hair lit up by the caresses of sunbeams from the east. In the respectful heedful silence broken only by the twittering of birds and the torrent gurgling below, His words descend slowly into hearts, and His perfect voice fills the quiet air with its harmony.

While I am writing, He is repeating once again that it is necessary to comply with the Decalogue, perfected by His doctrine of love in its application to hearts « to build in souls the abode where the Lord will dwell until those who have lived keeping the Law faithfully go to live in Him in the Kingdom of Heaven » He says. And He goes on:

« Because it is so. The inhabitation of God in men and of men in God is accomplished through obedience to His Law, which begins with a precept of love and is all love from the first to the last precept of the Decalogue. That is the true abode that God wants and in which God dwells, and the reward in Heaven, achieved through obedience to the Law, is the true Home in which you will live with God for ever. Because - remember Isaiah's 66th chapter - God does not dwell on the Earth, which is only a footstool for His immensity, and His throne is Heaven, which is too small, a mere nothing, to contain the Infinite, but His abode is in the hearts of men. Only the most perfect goodness of the Father of all love can grant His children to receive Him, and it is an infinite mystery, which becomes more and more perfect, that the One and Trine God, the most pure Triniform Spirit may be in the hearts of men. Oh! Holy Father, when will You allow Me to make of these people who love You, not just a temple for Our Spirit, but, through Your perfection of love and forgiveness, a tabernacle, so that each faithful heart may become an ark, in which the true Bread of Heaven will dwell, as it did in the womb of the Blessed Mother amongst all women?

Oh! dearest disciples of Juttah who were prepared for Me by a

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just soul, bear in mind the Prophet and what he says, as it is the Lord Who speaks, addressing-those who build empty temples of stone, in which there is no justice or love, and they cannot build in themselves the throne of their Lord by obeying His commands. The Prophet says: "What house will you build Me, what place could you make for My rest?". And He means: "Do you think that you can possess Me just because you build poor walls for Me? Do you think that you give Me joy by means of your false practices, which are not supported by a holy life?". No. God cannot be possessed through vain appearances that conceal sores and emptiness, like a golden mantle thrown on a leper or on a clay statue, which is empty inside, without the life of the soul. And the Lord, the Master of the world, confessing that He is a poor King with too few subjects and a poor Father of too many children who have run away from His residence, says: "To whom shall I turn My eyes, if not to the man of humbled and contrite spirit, who trembles at My word?". Why does he tremble? Only with fear of God? No. With deep respect and true love. Because he is a humble subject and son, who says and acknowledges that the Lord is Everything while he is nothing, and he trembles with emotion feeling that he is loved, forgiven and supported by the Lord Who is Everything.

Oh! do not look for God among proud people! He is not there. Do not look for Him among hard-hearted people. He is not there. Do not look for Him among unrepentant souls. He is not there. He is with the simple, the pure, the merciful, the poor in spirit, the meek people, with those who weep without cursing, with those who seek justice, with those who are persecuted, with peaceful souls. God is there. He is in those who repent and desire forgiveness and seek expiation. And none of these offer the sacrifice of a bull or a sheep or any other oblation, to be praised or from superstitious terror of punishment or motives of pride, that they might appear perfect. But they offer the sacrifice of their contrite and humbled hearts, if they are sinners; of their hearts obedient to the point of heroism, if they are just. That is what the Lord likes. Those are the offerings for which He grants Himself with His ineffable treasures of love and supernatural delights. He does not give Himself to the others. They already have their poor trite delights, and it is useless for God to call them to His ways, because they have already chosen their own. He will let them have nothing but neglect, fear and punishment, because they have not replied to the Lord, they have not obeyed, they have done evil in the eyes of God contemptuously and wickedly.

But you, beloved people of Juttah, who tremble with love in the knowledge of God, will be happy, whilst the others will be put to shame. Because you have been sneered at like fools by the mighty ones, and notwithstanding their mockery you have persisted in

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loving Me. Because you have been rejected because of My Name, and you will be rejected even more in future, nay, you will be disowned as outcasts of Israel, unacceptable to God, whereas the scion of eternal Life is grafted into you and into people like you, the scion of Him Who is rooted in the Father, and you are therefore part of God, living on His sap. And yet people would like to convince you that you are in error and in your eyes, simple but enlightened by Grace, they would like to justify themselves in order not to appear impious and evil-doers. Because it was said to you: "Let the Lord show His glory and we shall acknowledge Him as joyfully as you do". They will be confused.

Oh! I can already hear the vipers say, after the tumult in which they will be crushed without becoming any better, and they will cease being harmful only when their execrable heads are trodden on, and they will bite and kill even when they are broken into two and only their heads emerge after an overwhelming manifestation of God, I can already hear them shout: "How can the Lord have given birth to his new people all of a sudden, if we, who have been so long in His womb, are not yet born to Light? Can a woman be delivered of a child before filling the house with the cries of throes? Can the Lord have given birth before His time was due? Can the Earth give birth in one day and can the people of a country be born all together?".

This is My reply and remember it to give it to those who will persecute you scoffing at you: "Those who are dead fruit in the womb of God could never have been born to Light, because they became detached from the matrix and thus dried up remaining inert like something evil concealed in the womb, instead of being developing embryos. And to eject the dead seed from His womb and have children, so that His Name might not die on the Earth, God became prolific of new children, marked with His Tau and secretly and silently, so that Satan and his followers serving Lucifer could not be harmful, He gave birth to His Son before time, due to passionate love, and at the same time He gives birth to His new people, because the Lord can do everything". Oh! He puts these words into the mouth of the prophet Isaiah: "Shall I not be able to bring forth, I who make other people give birth? Shall I be sterile, I who make other people prolific?".

Rejoice with the Jerusalem of Heaven, be glad with her, all you who love the Lord! Rejoice with her, you who are waiting, hoping and suffering!

Oh! Come back to Me, words! Words spoken by the Word of God. Words spoken by the mouthpiece of God: Isaiah, His prophet. Come back to the Source, o eternal words, to be spread on this flower-bed of God, on this flock, on this offspring! Oh! Come! This is one of the hours and of the meetings for which you were given, o

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prophetic words, sounds of love and voices of truth! Here they are! They are coming back to Him Who inspired them! I now repeat them, in the name of the Father, of My Being, and of the Spirit, to these people beloved by God, chosen among the flock of God, which was to consist entirely of lambs, and became corrupted with rams and even with more unclean animals. You will be suckled and filled from the breast of Divine Consolation and you will savour with delight the multifarious glory of God.

The Lord says to you: I will send towards you flowing peace, like a river, and like a stream in spate, a greater glory than that of the nations. The glory of Heaven will flood you. You will suck it, carried at His breast and you will be fondled in His lap. Yes, as a mother caresses her child, as I am fondling this little boy, whom I gave My name (and Jesus takes little Jesai from the arms of his mother, who is almost at His feet with her three children), so I will console you who love Me and will continue to love Me and you will soon be comforted for ever in My Kingdom. You will see it and your hearts will be delighted, and your bones will revive like fresh grass, you who are free from fear because you are faithful to Me, when the Lord comes in a coach of fire like a whirlwind to lead souls in the fire of love and justice, to punish or to praise, separating lambs from wolves, that is, from those who thought that they were sanctifying themselves and becoming pure, whereas they were becoming idolaters.

The Lord, Who is now departing, will come back and blessed are those whom He will find persevering until the end. This is My farewell and My blessing. Kneel down that I may fortify you by it. May the Lord bless you and protect you. May He show His face to you and have mercy on you. May the Lord give you His peace. Go! Allow Me to take leave of the good people among the good inhabitants of Juttah. »

The people go away reluctantly. But when a boy is the first to say: « Lord, allow me to kiss Your hand », and Jesus agrees, everybody wishes to kiss the holy body of the Lamb of God, and those who had already gone away towards the village, come back, and children kiss His cheeks, old people His hands, and women his bare feet on the grass, weeping and uttering words of farewell and blessings.

Jesus receives them patiently and bids each of them goodbye.

At last they have all been satisfied... Only the hospitable family is left... And they gather round Jesus. And Sarah says: « Will You really not come back again? »

« No, woman. Never again. But we shall not be separated. My love will always be with you and your family, and yours with Me. You will not forget Me, I know. But I say to you: even in the most dreadful hours which are to come, do not welcome Falsehood, not

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even as a guest passing through or a sudden invader... Give me the baby, Sarah. »

The woman hands Jesai to Him and Jesus sits on the grass with the child in His lap and He speaks with His face bent over the head of the little boy: « Always remember that I am the Lamb, Whom Isaac taught you to love even before you became acquainted with Me. And that a lamb is always innocent, like this child, even if they envelop it in the skin of a wolf to make it look like an evildoer. Remember that I am even more innocent than this baby... who, fortunate fellow! because of his innocence and age will not be able to understand the slander of men about his Lord and, therefore, will not be upset by it... and he will continue to love Me thus... as now... Have hearts like his, for the Lamb, the Friend, the Innocent One, the Saviour, Who loves you and blesses you in a very special manner. Goodbye, Mary! Come and give Me a kiss... Goodbye, Immanuel! Come here as well... Goodbye, Jesai, little lamb of the Lamb... Be good... Love Me... »

« Are You weeping, Lord!? » asks the little girl who is surprised seeing a tear shine on Jesai's hair.

« Is He weeping? » asks Sarah's husband.

« Are You weeping, Master! Why? » asks the woman.

« Do not grieve at My tears. They are love and blessing... Goodbye, Sarah. Goodbye, man. Come, like the others, to kiss your departing Friend... » and after the two have kissed His hands, He puts the baby in his mother's arms, He blesses once again and then He quickly begins to descend the same road by which He came up.

He is followed by the farewell greetings of those who remained: by the deep voice of the man, the moved one of the woman, the trilling cries of the children, down to the foot of the hill. Then only the torrent, which He walks upstream northwards, greets the Master, Who leaves the land of Juttah for good.

396. Farewell to Hebron.

7th March 1946.

And here is Hebron in the middle of mountains covered with forests and meadows. On entering the town Jesus is greeted with cries of hosanna by the first people who see Him, some of whom run away to give the news to the whole village. The head of the synagogue, those who were miraculously cured the previous year and the notables, all rush towards Him. Everyone wishes to have the Lord as his guest.

But Jesus, thanking them all, says: « I am only stopping long enough to speak to you... So let us go to the poor holy house of the Baptist, so that I may pay My respects to it as well... It is the land of miracles. You are not aware. »

3-1984

« Oh! We are, Master. The people who were cured are among us!... » say many.

« Long before last year it was the land of miracles. The first time was thirty-three years ago, when the Grace of the Lord revived the withered womb to make it the tree that bore the sweet apple of My Precursor. And it was thirty-two years ago, when by mysterious deed, I presanctified him, while he and I were two fruits maturing in deep wombs. And then again, when I loosened the tongue of John's father. But a great miracle of two years ago, of which none of you is aware, is to be added to the secret deeds of the not yet born Incarnate. Do you remember the woman who lived in there?... »

« Who? Aglae? » ask many.

« Yes. I revived her, not her womb, but her soul withered by paganism and sin, and I made her prolific of justice, freeing her from her fetters, as I was assisted by her good will. And I propose her to you as a model. Do not be scandalised. I solemnly tell you that she is to be held up as an example to be imitated, because few people in Israel have gone as far as the heathen and sinner to reach the sources of God. »

« We thought that she had gone away with other lovers... Some people said that she had changed and had become good... But we said: "It's a whim of hers!". There were also some people who said that she had come to You... to sin... » explains the head of the synagogue.

« She did come to Me. But to be redeemed. »

« We committed a sin of rash judgement... »

« That is why I say: "Do not judge". »

« And where is she now? »

« God only knows. She is certainly doing severe penance. Pray to support her... I salute you, o holy house of My Relative and Precursor! Peace to you! Although you are now alone and desolate, may peace always be with you, o holy dwelling of peace and faith! » Jesus goes in, blessing the garden, which has become wild and He walks along what once were pergolas or tidy laurel or box espaliers and which are now ruffled clusters of plants oppressed by twining ivy, clematis and convolvuli. He goes to the end, where are the remains of the sepulchre, and stops there.

The people crowd round Him silently and orderly.

« Children of God, people of Hebron, listen! I have come to confirm and fortify you in your faith, so that you may not be upset and deceived in judging your Saviour, as you were with regard to the woman who lived here in sin. I have come to give you the viaticum of My word, so that it may shine brightly in you in the hour of darkness and Satan may not make you lose the way to Heaven.

Before long your hearts will moan the words of the psalm of

3-1985

Asaph, the poet prophet, and you will say: "Why, o God, have You rejected us for good? Why are You raging at the flock You used to pasture?", and then you will really be able to raise the already accomplished Redemption as a right of protection, and shout: "This is Your people whom You redeemed!" to implore protection against the enemies, who will have done all sorts of evil in the true Sanctuary where God is as in Heaven, in the Christ of the Lord, and after prostrating the Holy One, they will strive to demolish His wall: His believers. True desecrators and persecutors of God, worse than Nebuchadnezzar and Antiochus and all future persecutors, they are already raising their hands to knock Me down in their limitless pride, which does not want to be converted and does not want to have faith, charity, justice, and like yeast in a heap of flour, it swells and overflows from the Sanctuary, which has become the citadel of the enemies of God.

Children, listen! When they will persecute you for loving Me, fortify your hearts considering that I was persecuted before you. Remember that they already have in their throats howling cries of triumph, and they are preparing flags to wave them in the hour of victory, and on each flag there will be a lie against Me, and I shall seem the Defeated One, the Evil-Doer, the Cursed One.

Are you shaking your heads? Do you not believe Me? Your love is preventing you from believing... Love is a great thing! A great strength... and a great danger! Yes, danger. The impact of realities in the hour of darkness will be violent in a superhuman way in the hearts which love, not yet perfectly settled, blinds. You cannot believe that I, the King, the Powerful One, can be at the mercy of nonentities. Above all, you will not be able to believe it later, and the doubt will arise: "Was it really Him? And if it was, how could He be defeated?".

Strengthen your hearts for that hour! Remember that if "in a moment" the enemies of the Holy One have knocked the doors down, demolishing everything, and set the fire of hatred to the Word of God, if they have pulled down the Tabernacle of the Most Holy Name, saying in their hearts: "Let us stop all the feasts of God on the Earth", because it is a feast to have God among you, and saying: "Let His insignia never be seen again, let there be no prophet who knows what we are", He Who gave the sea its boundaries and crushed the filthy heads of the sacred crocodiles and of their worshippers in the waters, He Who opened springs and torrents and dried up inexhaustible rivers, He Who is the master of day and night, of summer and springtime, of life and death, of everything, will make His Christ rise quickly, even more quickly, as it is written, and He will be King for ever. And those who have been firm in their faith will reign with Him in Heaven.

Remember that. And when you see Me raised and scorned, do not

3-1986

vacillate. And when you will be raised and despised, do not vacillate.

Oh! Father! My Father! On behalf of these people, who are dear to You and to Me, I implore You. Hear Your Word, listen to the Propitiator! Do not leave to wild beasts the souls of those who praise You by loving Me, do not forget for ever the souls of Your little children. Remember Your promises, o good God, because the dark places of the Earth are haunts of wickedness from which terror comes out to frighten Your little ones. Father! Oh! My Father! Do not let the humble who hope in You go away confused! Let the poor and the needy praise Your Name because of the assistance You will give them! Rise, o God! I implore You for that hour, for those hours! Rise, o God! For the sake of the sacrifice of John and of the holiness of Your patriarchs and prophets! For the sake of My sacrifice, o Father, defend this flock of Yours and Mine! Grant them light in darkness, faith and strength against seducers! Grant them Yourself, Father! Give them Us, now, tomorrow and always, until they enter Your Kingdom! Let Us be in their hearts until they will be for ever and ever where We are. Amen. »

And since there are no miracles to be worked, Jesus walks through the almost ecstatic crowds blessing His listeners one by one. And He resumes His journey in the sun, which is already high but is made tolerable by leafy trees and the cool mountain air.

Behind Him, in a group, the apostles are talking. They are speaking eagerly to one another.

« What sermons! They make one shudder! » says Bartholomew.

« But how sad they are! They make you weep! » says Andrew with a sigh.

« Eh! It's His farewell. I am right. He is really moving towards His throne » exclaims Judas Iscariot.

« Throne! H'm! I think He refers to persecutions rather than honours! » remarks Peter.

« Not at all! The time of persecutions is over! Ah! I am happy! » shouts the Iscariot.

« You are lucky! I would like to be back in the days when we were not known, two years ago... or at the Clear Water... I tremble thinking of future days... » says John.

« Because you are faint-hearted... But I! I already see the future... Processions!... Singers!... People prostrated!... Homage by other countries!... Oh! It's time! Camels will really come from Midian and crowds from everywhere... and there will be a multitude... not just the three poor Wise Men... Israel as great as Rome... Greater than Rome... The glory of the Maccabees, of Solomon... all glories will be exceeded... He... the King of kings... and we... His friends... Oh! Most High God! Who will give me strength for that hour?... I wish my father were still alive!... » Judas is elated. He is bright

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evoking the future which he dreams of living.

Jesus is far ahead. But He stops. The future king according to Judas, is thirsty and cups His hands to get some water from a little stream, and drink... like a bird or a grazing lamb. He then turns round and says: « There are some wild fruits here. Let us pick some to appease our appetite... »

« Are You hungry, Master? » asks the Zealot.

« Yes, I am » Jesus confesses humbly.

« No wonder! You gave everything to that poor wretch yesterday evening! » exclaims Peter.

« But why did You not want to stop at Hebron? » asks Philip.

« Because God calls Me elsewhere. You do not know. »

The apostles shrug their shoulders and begin to pick the sour fruits of wild plants scattered over the mountain slopes. They look like tiny wild apples. And the King of kings feeds on them with His companions, who make wry faces because of the sourness of the wild unripe fruit. Jesus, engrossed in thought, eats and smiles.

« You almost make me angry! » exclaims Peter.

« Why? »

« Because You could have been comfortable and the people of Hebron would have been happy, instead You are ruining Your stomach and teeth with this poison, which is more bitter and sour than grass dressed with vitriol. »

« Oh! I have you who love Me! When I am raised and I am hungry and thirsty, I will think with longing desire of this hour, of this food, of you who are now with Me, and who then... »

« But you will be neither hungry nor thirsty then! A king has everything! And we will be even closer to You! » exclaims the Iscariot.

« You say so. »

« And do You think that that will not happen, Master? » asks Bartholomew.

« No, Bartholmai. When I saw you under the fig-tree, its fruit was so sour that any man who had eaten of it, would have had his tongue and throat scorched... But the sour fruit of a fig-tree or of these plants is sweeter than a honeycomb compared to what My accession will be for Me... Let us go... » and He sets forth again, ahead of everybody, meditating, while the apostles behind Him whisper...

397. Farewell to Bethzur.

9th March 1946.

It is hardly daybreak when the untiring walkers arrive in sight of Bethzur. Tired as they are, with their garments creased after an uncomfortable rest in a wood, they look at the little town now

3-1988

close at hand with joy, as they are sure that they will find hospitality there.

The peasants going to work are the first to meet Jesus, and they wisely think that it is better to forget about their work and go back to town to listen to the Master. And some shepherds do likewise after asking whether He is going to stop in town.

« I will leave Bethzur in the evening » replies Jesus.

« And are You going to speak, Master? »

« Certainly. »

« When? »

« At once. »

« We have our flocks... Could You not speak here, in the country? The sheep would graze and we would not miss Your word. »

« Follow Me. I will speak in the pastures north of the town. I must see Eliza first. »

With their sticks the shepherds make the sheep turn back and they follow the men with their bleating flocks. They go through the town.

But the news has already reached Eliza's house. And it is in the square before the house that Eliza and Anastasica pay their homage of disciples to the Master, Who blesses them.

« Come into my house, Lord. You relieved it of distress and now its inhabitants and everything in it wish to be of comfort to You » says Eliza.

« Yes, Eliza. But do you see how many people are following us? I will now speak to everybody and later, after the third hour, I will come and stay in your house, and I will depart in the evening. And we will be able to talk to each other... » promises Jesus to console Eliza, who was hoping He would be staying longer and thus looks disappointed hearing Jesus' intentions

But Eliza is a good disciple and does not object. She only asks to be allowed to give instructions to the servants, before following Jesus. And she does so quickly. She is quite different from the inert woman of the previous year...

Jesus is standing in a large meadow on which the sun filters joyfully through the light leaves of forest-trees, which, if I am not mistaken, are ash-trees, and He is curing a boy and an old man, the former suffering from some internal disease, the latter from eye trouble. There are no other sick people, and Jesus blesses the little ones offered by their mothers, while waiting patiently for Eliza and Anastasica. They arrive at last.

Jesus begins to speak at once.

« People of Bethzur, listen. Last year I told you what is to be done to gain the Kingdom of God. I now wish to confirm it, so that you may not lose what you have earned. This is the last time that the Master speaks to you thus, in a meeting where no one is missing.

3-1989

Hereafter I may meet you by chance, one at a time, or in small groups, along the roads of our earthly fatherland. Later, much later, I will be able to see you in My Kingdom. But it will never be like this.

In future you will be told many things of Me, against Me, of yourselves and against yourselves. They will try to terrorise you. I say to you with Isaiah: do not be afraid, for I have redeemed you and I have called you by your name. Only those who abandon Me, will have reason to fear. Not those, who being faithful, are Mine. Be not afraid! You are Mine and I am yours. Neither the waters of rivers, nor the fire of stakes, nor stones, nor swords will be able to separate you from Me, if you persevere in Me, on the contrary, fire, water, swords and stones will join you to Me more and more and you will be like Me and will receive My reward. I will be with you in the hours of torture, in your trials, I will be with you until the hour of death; and afterwards nothing will be able to separate us.

Oh! My people! People whom I have called and gathered, whom I will call and gather even more when I am raised, drawing everything to Me, o chosen people, holy people, do not be afraid, because I am and will be with you and you will announce Me and will be therefore called My ministers, and I will give you, nay, I give you now, the order to speak to the north, south, east and west, to make everybody become the children of God, also those at the farthest borders of the world, so that everybody may recognise Me as their King and invoke Me by My true Name, and may partake of the glory for which they were created and may be the glory of Him Who created them and perfected them. Isaiah says that tribes and nations will invoke witnesses of My glory in order to believe. And where shall I find witnesses if the Temple and the Royal Palace, and the mighty castes hate Me and lie because they do not want to say that I am Who I am? Where shall I find them? Here are, My God, My witnesses! These people to whom I taught the Law, whose bodies and souls I cured, who were blind and now see, were deaf and now hear, were dumb and now can pronounce Your Name, these who were oppressed and have been freed, all these people to whom Your Word has been Light, Truth, Way and Life. You are My witnesses, servants chosen by Me that you may understand and believe and know that it is I.

I am the Lord, the Saviour. Believe that for your own welfare. Apart from Me there is no other Saviour. Believe that regardless of human or satanic innuendoes. Forget everything else which you might have been told by a mouth that is not Mine and which differs from My word. Reject everything else which you may be told in future. To anybody wishing you to abjure the Christ say: "His works speak to our souls" and persevere in your faith. I have done much to give you an intrepid faith. I cured your sick people and

3-1990

relieved your sorrows, I taught you like a good Master, I listened to you like a Friend, I broke bread with you and shared drinks with you. But those are still the deeds of a saint and a prophet. But I will work more and such deeds that will remove every doubt which darkness may raise, as a whirlwind raises stormy clouds in a clear summer sky. Let the cloud go by remaining firm in your love for your Jesus, for this Jesus Who left the Father to come and save you and Who will give His life to give you Health.

You, whom I loved and I still love more than Myself, because there is no greater love than sacrificing oneself for the sake of those whom one loves, must not be inferior to those who in the prophecy of Isaiah are called wild beasts, dragons and ostriches, that is, heathens, idolaters, pagans, unclean people. Because when by Myself I witness the power of My love and of My Nature, defeating even Death by Myself - which is something that can be verified and no one will be able to deny, unless one is falsehood personified - they will say: "He was the Son of God!" and overcoming obstacles, apparently insurmountable, of centuries and centuries of filthy paganism, of darkness, of vice, they will come to the Light, to the Source, to Life. Be not like too many in Israel who do not offer Me holocausts, who do not honour Me with sacrifices, on the contrary they trouble Me with their iniquity and victimise Me with their hard hearts, and to My forgiving love they reply with their deceitful hatred, which undermines the ground to make Me fall and thus be able to say: "See? He fell because God struck Him".

Citizens of Bethzur, be strong. Love My word, because it is true, and love My Sign, because it is holy. May the Lord be always with you and may you be with the servants of the Lord, all together, so that each of you may be where I am going and an eternal abode may be made in Heaven for all those who, after overcoming affliction and winning the battle, die in the Lord and rise in the Lord for ever! »

« Lord, what do You mean? There are cries of triumph and cries of sorrow in Your words! » say some citizens.

« Yes. You are like one who is surrounded by his enemies » other people remark.

« And You almost infer that we shall be, too » others say.

« What is there in Your future, Lord? » ask some.

« Glory! » shouts Judas of Kerioth.

« Death! » whispers Eliza sighing and weeping.

« Redemption. The fulfilment of My mission. Be not afraid. Do not weep. Love Me. I am happy to be the Redeemer. Come, Eliza. Let us go to your house... » and He is the first to set out, squeezing through the crowd, which is upset by contrasting emotions.

« But why, Lord, do You always deliver such speeches? » asks

3-1991

Judas grumbling and reproaching. And he adds: « They do not befit a king. »

Jesus does not reply to him. He instead replies to His cousin James who asks Him, with tears shining in his eyes: « Brother, why do You always quote passages of the Bible in Your farewell speeches? »

« So that those accusing Me may not say that I talk nonsense or I blaspheme, and those who do not want to yield to the reality of facts may realise that from the very beginning Revelation has always shown Me as the King of a Kingdom that is not human, but is intended, built and cemented by the immolation of the Victim, of the only Victim capable of re-creating the Kingdom of Heaven, destroyed by Satan and the First Parents. Pride, hatred, falsehood, lust, disobedience destroyed it. Humility, obedience, love, purity, sacrifice will rebuild it... Do not weep, woman. Those whom you love and who are waiting, are pining for the hour of My immolation... »

They enter the house and while the apostles are busy refreshing themselves and appeasing their appetite, Jesus goes into the tidy flowery garden with Eliza, who says to Him: « Master, I am the only one who knows that Johanna wants to speak to You secretly. She sent Jonathan to me. He said: "For very grave matters". Not even the daughter You gave me - and may You be blessed for Your gift - knows about it. Johanna sent servants everywhere looking for You. But they could not find You... »

« I was very far away, and I would have gone even farther, if My spirit had not urged Me to come back... Eliza, you will come with Me and the Zealot to Johanna's. The others will remain here for two days' rest and then they will come to Bether. You will come back here with Jonathan. »

« Yes, my Lord... » Eliza looks at Him with motherly love, she scans His face. She cannot help saying: « Are You suffering? »

Jesus shakes His head and although His gesture is not denial it is a clear sign of depression.

« I am a mother... You are my God... but... Oh! my Lord! What do You think Johanna wants? You have been speaking of death, and I understood because in the Temple the virgins often read the Scriptures which mention You Saviour, and I remember those words. You were speaking of death and Your face was shining with heavenly joy... But it is not shining now... Mary was like a daughter to me... and You are Her Son... So, if it is not a sin to say so, I see You somehow as my son... Your Mother is far away... But a mother is beside You. Blessed Son of God, can I not relieve Your grief? »

« You are already relieving it, because You love Me. What do I think about what Johanna wants to tell Me? My life is like this

3-1992

rosery. You good women disciples are the roses. But if you take the roses away, what is left? Thorns... »

« But we will remain with You until death. »

« That is true. Until death! And the Father will bless you for the comfort you give Me. Let us go home and rest. At sunset we will leave for Bether. »

398. At Bether.

12th March 1946.

Jesus, followed by the Zealot who is leading by the reins the little donkey on which Eliza is riding, knocks at the door of the keeper at Bether. They have not taken the same road as the last time and they have arrived at Johanna's estate from the village spread on the western slopes of the mountain on which the castle rises.

The keeper, who recognises the Lord, hastens to open the gate wide, which is beside his little house and admits to the garden before the residence and is the beginning of the land of dreams, that is, of the rose gardens of Johanna. A strong scent of fresh roses and of attar of roses stagnates in the warm air at twilight and when the first evening breeze blows from the east causing the rosebushes to undulate, the scent becomes stronger, fresher and more genuine, because it comes from the hillocks planted with roseries and it overwhelms the heavy smell of the essence coming from a low wide shed placed against the western wall of the estate.

The keeper says: « My mistress is over there. She goes there every evening, where the workers, who pluck the flowers and make the essence, gather. She speaks to them, asks them questions, cures them and comforts them. Oh! our mistress is good. She has always been. But... since she has been Your disciple... I will call her now... This is a very busy time and the usual workers are not enough, although since Passover she has taken on new servants and maidservants. Wait here, Lord... »

« No, I will go to her. May God bless you and give you peace » says Jesus raising His hand to bless the old keeper, to whom He has been listening patiently. And He goes towards the low wide shed.

The noise of His steps on the hard ground makes Matthias - a rather curious little boy - look out and rush out with a cry, arms outstretched, inviting and desiring an embrace. « Jesus is here! Jesus is here! » he shouts while running. And when he is already in the arms of the Lord, Who kisses him, Johanna looks out from the middle of her servants.

« The Lord! » she shouts, too, and falls on her knees on the spot to venerate Him at once. She prostrates herself and then stands up,

with her face tinged purple with emotion, like the petal of a bright rose. She then moves towards Jesus. And she stoops to kiss His feet.

« Peace to you, Johanna. Did you want Me? I have come. »

« Yes, I wanted You, Lord... » Johanna turns pale and grave.

Jesus notices it. « Stand up, Johanna. Is Chuza well? »

« Yes, my Lord. »

« And little Mary, whom I do not see here? »

« Also, Lord... She has gone with Esther to take some medicines to a servant who is ill. »

« Is that why you called Me? »

« No, Lord... It was for... You. » Johanna clearly does not want to speak in the presence of all the people who have crowded round them.

Jesus understands and says: « All right. Let us go and see your roseries... »

« You must be tired, Lord. You will have to eat... You must be thirsty... »

« No. During the hot hours we stopped in the house of disciples of the shepherds. I am not tired... »

« Let us go then... Jonathan, prepare everything for the Lord and for those who are with Him... Come down, Matthias... » she orders the steward, who is standing respectfully beside her, and the little boy, who has cuddled in Jesus' arms, resting his dark-haired head in the hollow of Jesus' neck, like a little dove under its father's wing. The boy sighs heavily, but he hastens to obey.

But Jesus says: « No. He will come with us and will give us no trouble. He will be the little angel in whose presence nothing scandalous can be said or done and will thus prevent the least suspicion from arising in anybody's heart. Let us go... »

« Master, shall Eliza and I go into the house, or do You want us to come with You? » asks the Zealot.

« You may go. »

Johanna leads Jesus along the wide avenue, which divides the garden, towards the roseries that climb up and down the opposite slopes of her flowery estate. And she proceeds further, as if she wished to stand aloof where there are only rose-bushes, trees and little birds among the branches, in their last quarrels to find a place where to sleep or preparing their nestlings for the night. The roses, which this evening are closed buds and will open tomorrow and be cut with shears, smell sweetly before resting in the dew. They stop in a little valley between two undulations of the ground, where festoons of flesh-coloured roses smile on one side, and roses as red as congealing blood on the other. There, is a rock that is used as a seat, or as a table on which gatherers place their baskets. Shrivelled roses and petals lying among the grass and on the rock

3-1994

witness the day's work.

With her ring-adorned hand Johanna sweeps the waste flowers off the seat and says: « Sit down, Master. I have quite a lot to tell You. »

Jesus sits down and Matthias begins to run about on the grass until he finds it very interesting to chase a big frog, which had come there to enjoy the cool of the evening and he follows the poor creature, shouting and jumping joyfully, until his attention is attracted by the hole of a cricket and he begins to rummage in it with a little stick.

I « Johanna, I am here to listen to you... Are you not going to speak? » asks Jesus after a moment's silence and He stops watching the boy, to look at the disciple who is standing before Him serious and silent.

« Yes, Master. But... it is very difficult and I think it will be painful to hear... »

« Speak with simplicity and confidence... »

Johanna kneels on the grass half-sitting on her heels, below Jesus, Who is sat higher up, on the seat, in an austere rigid attitude; as a man, He is more distant than if He were separated quite away by several obstacles, but as God and a Friend, He is close because of the kindness of His glance and His smile. And Johanna looks at Him in the mild twilight of a May evening. At last she speaks: « My Lord... before speaking... I must ask You a question... to know what You think... to ascertain whether I have misunderstood Your words I am a woman, a foolish woman... perhaps I have dreamed and only now I know the real situation... as You explained things, as You prepared them, as You want them for Your Kingdom... Perhaps Chuza is right... and I am wrong... »

« Has Chuza reproached you? »

« He has and he has not, Lord. He only said to me, with the authority of a husband, that if the situation is as recent facts make him think it is, I must leave You, because he, as Herod's dignitary, cannot allow his wife to conspire against Herod. »

« And when have you been a conspiratress? Who is thinking of harming Herod? His poor throne, which is so filthy, is inferior to this seat among these rose-bushes. I am sitting here, but I would not sit there. Chuza need not worry! I have no desire for Caesar's throne, never mind Herod's. They are not My thrones, or My kingdoms. »

« Oh! Is that so, Lord? May You be blessed! How much peace You give me! I have been suffering for days because of that! My holy and divine Master, my dear Master, my Master as I always understood, saw and loved You, so high, so high above the Earth, so... so divine, o my Lord and heavenly King! » and Johanna takes

3-1995

Jesus' hand and respectfully kisses the back of it, on her knees, as if she were in adoration.

« But what happened? Something of which I am unaware, which could upset you so much as to dim in you the pellucidity of My moral and spiritual figure? Tell Me! »

« What? Master, the fumes of error, of pride, of greed, of stubbornness have risen as if from fetid craters and have obscured You in the opinion of some men and women... and they tried to do the same with me. But I am Your Johanna, Your grace, o God. And I would not have got lost. At least I hope so, knowing how good is God. But who is only the embryo of a soul struggling to improve, may die through deceit. And he who is in an oozy sea, roughened by heavy currents, and strives to reach the shore, the harbour, to be purified and find other places of peace and justice, may be overcome by tiredness, if he loses confidence in the shore and those places, and may be swept away again by the currents and the mud. And I was sorry for and worried about the ruin of such souls, for whom I implore Your Light. The souls we perfect in the eternal Light are dearer to us than the bodies we give birth to in the earthly light. I now understand what it is to be the mother of a body and the mother of a soul. We mourn over the death of a child of ours. But it is only our grief. But for a soul which, we have endeavoured to perfect in Your Light and which dies, we do not suffer by ourselves. We suffer with You, with God... because in our grief for the spiritual death of a soul there is also Your sorrow, the infinite sorrow of God... I do not know whether I have made myself understood... »

« Yes, you have. But give Me a precise account, if you want Me to comfort you. »

« Yes, Master. You sent Simon Zealot and Judas of Kerioth to Bethany, did You not? It was in regard to that Jewish girl who was given to You by the Roman ladies and who was sent by You to Nike... »

« Yes, I did. So?... »

« And she wanted to say goodbye to her good mistresses, and Simon and Judas took her to the Antonia. Did You know? »

« I did. Well? »

« Master... I am afraid I must grieve You... Master, You are really only a spiritual King? You are not aiming at earthly kingdoms? »

« Of course not, Johanna. How can you still doubt that? »

« Master, only to have once again the joy of seeing You as a divine being, nothing but a divine being. And just because You are such, I must give deep sorrow to You... Master, the man from Kerioth does not understand You, neither does he understand those who respect You as a wise man, a great philosopher, as Virtue on the Earth, and admire You and promise to protect You as such. It is strange that

3-1996

heathen ladies should understand what one of Your apostles does not understand, after being such a long time with You... »

« His human nature, his human love blind him. »

« You excuse him... But he is injuring You, Master. While Simon was speaking to Plautina, Lydia and Valeria, Judas spoke to Claudia on Your behalf, as Your ambassador. He wanted to wring from her promises for the restoration of the kingdom of Israel. Claudia asked him many questions... And he told her a good lot. He certainly thinks that he is on the threshold of his silly dream, when a dream becomes reality. Master, Claudia was irritated. She is a daughter of Rome... The empire is in her blood... Is it possible that a daughter of the Claudi family would plot against Rome? She was so shocked that she began to doubt about You and the holiness of Your doctrine. She still cannot conceive or understand the holiness of Your Origin... But she eventually will, because she is full of good will. She will understand, when she is reassured about You. For the time being You seem a false greedy rebel and usurper to her... Plautina and the other ladies have tried to reassure her... But she wants an immediate reply from You. »

« Tell her not to fear. I am the King of kings, I create them and judge them, and I will have no other throne but that of the Lamb, first sacrificed and then triumphant in Heaven. Let her know at once. »

« Yes, Master. I will go personally. Before they leave Jerusalem, because Claudia is so irritated that she does not want to stay any longer at the Antonia, as she says... that she does not want to see the enemies of Rome. »

« Who told you that? »

« Plautina and Lydia. They came... and Chuza was present... and later... he put me in the dilemma: either You are the spiritual Messiah or I must leave You for good. »

A sad smile appears on Jesus' face, which has turned pale with grief at the report of Johanna and He asks: « Is Chuza not coming here? »

« Tomorrow is the Sabbath and he will come. »

« And I will reassure him. Do not fear. Let no one fear. Chuza must not fear for his position at Court, or Herod for possible usurpations, or Claudia for the sake of Rome, and you must not be afraid of being deceived or of the possibility of being separated... Let no one be afraid... I only must fear... and suffer... »

« Master, I wish I could not have grieved You thus. But not informing You, would have been as good as deceiving You... Master, how will You behave with Judas?... I am afraid of his reactions... only and always for Your sake... »

« With sincerity. I will make him understand that I know and that I disapprove of his action and his obstinacy. »

3-1997

« He will hate me because he will understand that I told You... »

« Are you sorry for that? »

« Your hatred would upset me. Not his. I am a woman. But I am more virile in serving You than is he. I serve You because I love You, not to receive favours from You. If because of You in future I should lose my wealth, the love of my husband, and my very freedom and life, I would love You even more. Because in that case I would have but You to love and to be loved by » says Johanna impulsively, standing up.

Jesus also stands up and says: « May you be blessed, Johanna, for what you have said. And be in peace. Neither Judas' hatred nor his love can change what is written in Heaven. My mission will be accomplished, as it was decided. Feel no remorse, never. Be as tranquil as little Matthias, who after working to make a house - a nicer one, according to him - for his cricket, has fallen asleep with his forehead on petals of roses, and is smiling... thinking that it is on roses. Because life is beautiful when one is innocent. I also smile, even if My human life has no flowers, but only withered petals that have fallen. But in Heaven I shall have all the roses of those who have been saved... Come. Night is falling. We shall soon not be able to see the path. »

Johanna is about to take the boy in her arms.

« Leave him... I will take him. Look how he smiles! He is certainly dreaming of Heaven... of his mother... of you... I also, in My grief of every hour, dream of Heaven... of My Mother and of good women disciples. »

And they slowly set out towards the house...

399. Jesus at Bether with Peter and Bartholomew.

13th March 1946.

Jesus is walking through the rose thickets where the gatherers are busy. He has thus the opportunity of speaking to this person and that one, and also to the widow, whom Johanna charitably employed as a servant at Passover, after the poor people's banquet. Her children are also there and they now look better. Thriving and serene they are working happily, each according to his own ability, while the younger ones, who cannot yet tell one rose from another or choose them according to their shades and freshness, are playing with other little children in the quietest places and their chattering mingles with the chirruping of nestlings greeting from tree branches the return of their parents with beakfuls of food.

Jesus turns His steps towards these little ones, bending over them, caressing them, settling little quarrels and lifting up those who have fallen and are whimpering, as they have dirtied themselves

3-1998

with earth or have scratched their hands or faces on the ground. And tears, quarrels, jealousies subside at once under the caresses and the words spoken by the Innocent One to innocents, and the cause of the quarrel or of the fall, that is a golden scarab, a coloured or shiny little stone, a flower... becomes an offer made to Jesus, Who has hands and belt full of them and Who, without being noticed, puts scarabs and ladybirds on the leaves of plants releasing them.

How many times I have now noticed Jesus' perfect tact towards little ones, in order not to mortify and disappoint them! With fascinating art He knows how to improve them and He makes Himself loved with what is apparently a mere trifle, but is instead the perfection of love adapted to the smallness of children... and to me.

Oh! He has always treated me as a « baby » to improve my misery, to make Himself loved! Afterwards, when I loved Him with my whole self, He treated me with a heavy hand, as an adult, turning a deaf ear to my entreaties: « Can You not see that I am a good-for-nothing? » He smiled and compelled me to perform the work of adults... Oh! only when poor Mary is thoroughly distressed, He becomes once again the Jesus of children for my poor soul, which is so incapable, and He is pleased with... my scarabs, little stones... flowers... with what I can give Him... and He makes me understand that He finds that they are lovely... and that He loves me because I am « a nonentity that relies on and is lost in The Infinite. »

My dear Jesus! Loved, madly loved! Loved with my whole self! Yes, I can declare it! On the eve of my forty-ninth birthday, on the eve of men's judgement on my work as mouthpiece, if I examine myself carefully, if I diligently search my spirit and my whole self to decipher the true words that are in me, I can now say that I love God, I realise that I love my God with my whole self. It took me forty-eight years to get to this total love, so total as not to have one thought of personal fear in the prevision of a condemnation, as I only worried about the repercussions such conviction might have in the souls that were led to God by me, and are convinced that they were redeemed by Jesus living in me, and would break off from the Church, the link joining mankind to God. Some people may say: « Are you not ashamed of having taken such a long time? » No, not in the least. I was so weak, such a mere nothing, that it took me all that time. In any case I am convinced that it took me exactly the time that Jesus wanted. Not one minute more, not one less; because I can say this: since I began to understand what is God, I have never refused God anything. Since the time, when I a four-year-old girl - felt Him to be so omnipresent that I believed Him to be even in the wood of the back of the chair on which I sat and I apologised to Him for turning my back on Him and leaning

3-1999

on Him; since the time when - still a four-year-old girl - even in my sleep I pondered how our sins had wounded and killed Him, and I would stand up on my bed, in my long night-gown, and without looking at any holy picture, but addressing my beloved Jesus killed on our behalf, I would implore Him: « Not I! Not I! Let me die but don't tell me that I wounded You! » And my heart rose...

You are aware, o my Love, of my fervent emotions. You are acquainted with every one of them... You know that a simple hint of a proposal of Yours was accepted at once by Your Mary. Even if You proposed that I should give You the love of a sweetheart nay just then, at Christmas in 1921, my love for You was confirmed - or the love of relatives, or my life, health, wealth... and that I should become more and more a « nonentity » in social life, a piece of wreckage looked upon with pity or derision by the world, one that cannot take a glass of water by herself if she is thirsty and there is no one who hands it to her, one nailed like You, yes like You, and as I have so eagerly wished to be, and as I would like to become immediately once again, if You should cure me. Everything! The nonentity has given everything, her whole being as a creature... Well, even now, yes even now, when I may be judged badly and interdicted and I may be struck, what shall I say to You? « Remain with me, You and Your Grace. All the rest is nothing. I only beg You not to deprive me of Your love and not to allow those, whom I brought to You, to fall back into darkness. »

But where have I gone, o my Sun, while You are walking around the rose thickets? Where my heart, that has made an effort of love for You, leads me. And it throbs and inflames the blood in my veins. And people will say: « She has a temperature and is suffering from palpitations. » No. The fact is that this morning You are rushing into mg with the strength of a divine hurricane of love, and I... and I vanish in You as You pervade me, and I no longer think straight as a human creature, but I experience what it must be to live as seraphim... and I am inflamed and delirious and I love You, I love You, I love You. Have pity, in Your love! Have pity, if You want me to live on and serve You, o most divine eternal Love, o most sweet Love, o Love of Heaven and of Creation, God, God, God... No! Do not have pity! Even more love! Even more! To the extent of death on the stake of love! Let us melt into each other! Let us love each other! That we may be in the Father, as You said praying for us: « Let those who love Me be where We are. One thing only. » One thing only! That is one of the words of the Gospel that have always made me sink into an abyss of loving adoration. What You asked for us, o my Divine Master and Redeemer! What You asked, o my Divine Master, mad in love! That we may be one only with You, with the Father, with the Holy Spirit, because who is in One is in the Three, o inseparable and yet free Trinity of the God

3-2000

One and Trine! Blessed! Blessed! Blessed with each throb and breathing of mine!...

But let us go back to the vision since... I now see Peter coming forward with so rapid a step that his garments flutter like a sail swollen by the wind. He is followed by Bartholomew who is proceeding more calmly. Peter arrives unexpectedly behind Jesus, Who is bent fondling some sucklings, the children of the gatherers, lying on folding seats in the shade of trees. « Master! »

« Simon! How come you are here? And you, too, Bartholomew? You were to leave tomorrow evening, after the sunset of the Sabbath... »

« Master, do not reproach us... Listen to us first. »

« I will listen to you. And I do not reproach you because I believe that you must have a grave reason for disobeying. But reassure Me that none of you is ill or hurt. »

« No, no, Lord. No harm befell us » Bartholomew hastens to add.

But Peter, always sincere and impulsive, states: « H'm! As far as I am concerned, it would have been better if each of us had broken legs, or even if our heads were injured, rather than... »

« But what happened? »

« Master, we thought that it was better to come to put an end to... » Bartholomew is saying, when Peter interrupts him: « Hurry up in telling Him! » And he concludes: « Judas has become a demon since You left. We could no longer speak or reason. He has quarrelled with everybody... And he has scandalised all the servants of Eliza and other people as well... »

« Perhaps he has become jealous because You took Simon with You... » says Bartholomew apologetically, when he sees that Jesus' countenance has become very severe.

« Nonsense! What jealousy?! Stop excusing him!... Or I will start quarrelling with you to give vent to my feelings, since I did not brawl with him... Because, Master, I succeeded in being quiet! Just imagine! Quiet! To obey You and for Your sake... What an effort! Well. When Judas went away slamming the door, we consulted with one another... and we thought it was better to leave in order to put an end to the scandal in Bethzur and... to avoid boxing his ears... And Bartholomew and I left at once. I asked the others to let me go at once, before he came back... because... because I felt that I could not control myself any longer... Well. I have told You. You can now reproach me if You think that I made a mistake. »

« You have done the right thing. You have all done the right thing. »

« Also Judas? Oh! no, my Lord! Don't say that! He made a deplorable spectacle of himself! »

« No. He did not do the right thing. But it is not for you to judge him. »

3-2001

« No, Lord... » His « no » is uttered with great difficulty.

There is a moment's silence. Then Peter asks: « But will You at least tell me why Judas has become thus all of a sudden? He seemed to have become so good! Everything was so pleasant! I said prayers and made sacrifices that it might last... Because I cannot see You depressed. And You are distressed when we misbehave... And since the feast of the Dedication I know that even the sacrifice of a spoonful of honey is of great value... A disciple, the youngest disciple, a poor boy, had to teach this truth to me, Your stupid apostle. But I did not neglect it. Because I saw its fruit. Because I also, although a blockhead, have understood something through the light of Wisdom that bent benignly over me, touching me, a coarse fisherman, a sinner. I have understood that we must love You not only with words, but by saving souls with our sacrifice, in order to give You joy, and not see You as You are now, as You were at Shebat. You are so pale and sad, my Master and Lord, Whom we are not worthy to have, Whom we do not understand, as we are worms near You, the Son of God, we are mud near You, the Star, we are darkness, You are Light. But it was of no avail! It is true! My poor offerings... so poor... so badly made... What purpose could they serve? It was pride on my part to believe that they might serve... Forgive me. But I gave You what I had. I offered myself to give You what I have. And I thought that I was justified, because I love You, my God, with all myself, with all my heart, and with all my soul, with all my strength, as it is written. And now I understand also this and I also say what John, our angel, always says, and I beg You (and he kneels at Jesus' feet) to increase Your love in Your poor Simon, so that my love may increase for You, my God. » And Peter prostrates himself to kiss Jesus' feet, and remains thus.

Bartholomew, who has been listening admiring and assenting, imitates him.

« Stand up, My friends. My love grows deeper and deeper in you and will grow more and more. And may you be blessed because of your hearts. When are the others coming? »

« Before sunset. »

« Very well. Also Johanna, Eliza and Chuza will come back before sunset. We shall spend the Sabbath here, and then we shall leave. »

« Yes, my Lord. But why did Johanna send for You so urgently? Could she not have waited? It had been arranged for us to come here! Through her imprudence she has caused all this trouble!... »

« Do not reproach her, Simon of Jonah. She acted out of prudence and love. She sent for Me because there were souls to be confirmed in their good will. »

« Ah! In that case I will say no more... But, my Lord, why has

Judas changed so much? »

« Forget about it! Enjoy this Eden, so full of flowers and peace. Enjoy your Lord. Leave and forget about humanity in all its worse forms, in its attacks against the soul of your poor companion. Remember only to pray for him... very hard. Come. Let us go to those little ones who are looking at us full of amazement. I was speaking to them of God, a little while ago, from soul to soul, with love, and I was talking to the bigger ones through the beautiful things of God... » And He embraces the waists of His two apostles and turns His steps towards a group of children waiting for Him.

400. Farewell to Bether.

16th March 1946.

I do not know how I shall manage to write, worn out as I am with continual heart attacks by day and by night... But I am beginning to see and I must write.

I see Jesus before the mansion-house of Johanna at Bether. The garden in front of it widens out forming a semicircular open space by means of two green pincer-shaped wings. The central part of the open space is bare and is bordered by old tall leafy trees rustling in the light breeze blowing on the top of this hill, and casting a pleasant shade that protects from the sun in afternoons. Hedges of roses beneath the trees form a colourful sweet-smelling semicircle around the open space.

The sun is about to set and, as this castle is on a high position, one can clearly see that it is descending towards the horizon and is about to hide behind the western mountains. Andrew points those mountains to Philip, reminding him of their fear, when they had to announce the Lord at Bethginna. Bethginna is in fact on those mountains, where the Lord the previous year cured the daughter of the hotel-keeper, at the beginning of His pilgrimage towards the Mediterranean shores, if my memory does not fail me. I am all alone, so I cannot get anyone to give me the copy-books of months ago to check, and my head just cannot remember.

All the apostles are present. I do not know what happened when Jesus and Judas met. Apparently everything went very well, because I do not see any stand-offishness or excitement in anybody and Judas is free and easy and cheerful, as if nothing had happened. In fact he is very kind also to the most humble servants, which is most unusual of him, particularly when he is upset.

Eliza is still here and also Anastasica, who has certainly come here with the apostles and Eliza's maidservant. And there is Chuza, who is very ceremonious and is holding Matthias by the hand. Johanna is near Eliza and little Mary is beside her. Jonathan is behind his mistress.

3-2003

Jesus is protected from the sun, which is still shining on the western side of the house, by a tent that has been stretched out on ropes and poles, like a canopy. All the servants and gardeners of Bether, including casual labourers from the village, which comes under the castle, are before Jesus. They are in the shade of the leafy trees of the semicircle, protected from the sun and are standing in silence, lined up, awaiting the blessing of the Master, Who seems to be on the point of departing and is only waiting for sunset to indicate the end of the Sabbath.

Jesus is now speaking to Chuza a little aside. I do not know what He is saying to him, because they are speaking in low voices. But I see that Chuza is lavish in bows and protestations, and presses his right hand against his breast, as if to say: « Upon my word, You may rest assured that as far as I am concerned » etc.

The apostles have gathered discreetly in a corner. But no one can prevent them from watching, and if Peter and Bartholomew are watching with the simple naturalness of people who are already somehow aware of the situation, the others, and particularly James of Alphaeus, John, Simon and Andrew, appear to be anxious and sad, while Judas of Alphaeus looks upset and severe. The Iscariot is the only exception, as he wishes to appear free and easy, whereas he watches more keenly than the others, and he seems to be anxious to make out, from the gestures of their hands and from their lips, what Jesus and Chuza are saying.

The women disciples are also watching silently and respectfully, and Johanna smiles unintentionally, a somewhat ironical smile in its sadness, and she seems to be pitying her husband when Chuza, raising his voice at the end of the conversation, declares: « My debt of gratitude is such that in no way will I ever be able to free myself from my obligation. I, therefore, give You what is dearest to me: my Johanna... But You must understand my provident love for her... Herod's wrath... her self-defence... They would have given vent to their anger by taking reprisals upon our property,... and our influence... and Johanna is accustomed to these things, she is delicate... she needs them... I protect her interests. But I swear to You that now that I am sure that Herod will not be angry at me, as if I were an accomplice of his enemy, although his servant, I will do nothing but serve You with perfect joy, granting complete freedom to Johanna... »

« Very well. But remember that to barter eternal goods for a fleeting human honour, is like bartering one's birthright for a dish of lentils. And it is even much worse... »

The women disciples have heard the words. The apostles have also heard them. And while most of them consider it an academic speech, Judas of Kerioth perceives a special purport and he changes colour and countenance, casting a frightened angry glance

3-2004

at Johanna... I realise that so far Jesus has not spoken of what happened, and that only now Judas begins to suspect that his trick has been found out.

Jesus addresses Johanna saying: « Well, let us make our good disciple happy. As you wished, I will speak to your servants before leaving. »

He comes forward, as far as the limit of the shade, which is growing longer and longer as the sun sets slowly, and now looks like an orange mutilated of its lower part; and the mutilation increases as the sun sets behind the mountains of Bethginna setting the clear sky ablaze.

« My beloved friends Chuza and Johanna, and you, her good servants, who have known the Lord for many years through the words of My disciple Jonathan, and through Johanna's, since she has been My faithful disciple, listen.

I have taken leave of all the Judaean villages, where My disciples are more numerous through the work of the first disciples, the shepherds, and because they have responded to the Word, Who passed by teaching them in order to save them. I am now taking leave of you because I will never come back to this Eden, which is so beautiful, not only because of the rose-bushes and peace reigning here, not only because of the excellent mastery which is sovereign here, but above all because you believe in the Lord and you live according to His Word. A paradise! Yes. What was the paradise of Adam and Eve? A wonderful garden where they lived without sin, where the voice of God resounded and His first two children loved and listened to it with joy...

Well, I exhort you to watch that what happened in Eden may not happen to you: that the serpent of falsehood, of calumny, of sin may creep in and bite your hearts separating you from God. Be watchful and firm in your Faith... Do not fret. Do not be incredulous. That might happen because the Cursed One will enter, will strive to enter everywhere, as he has already entered many places, to destroy the work of God. And as long as the Sly, Cunning, Indefatigable One enters places, and searches, eavesdrops, lies in wait, slavers, endeavours to seduce, there is no great harm. Nothing and no one can prevent him from doing that. He did that in the Earthly Paradise... But it is much worse to let him stay there without driving him out. The enemy who is not chased away ends up by becoming the master of the place as he settles there and builds his defensive and offensive structures. Pursue him at once, put him to flight using the weapons of Faith, Charity, Hope in the Lord. But the greatest evil, the supreme evil is to let him live not only undisturbed amongst men, but to allow him to penetrate inside from the outside, and let him build his nest in the hearts of men. Oh! Then!!

3-2005

And yet many men have already received him in their hearts, against the Christ. They have welcomed Satan with his wicked passions driving away the Christ. If they had not yet known Christ in all His truth, if their knowledge of Him had been only superficial, as wayfarers know one another, when they meet by chance on a road, looking very often at one another just for a moment, people unknown to one another who meet for the first and last time, at times exchanging only few words to inquire about the right road, to ask for a pinch of salt, for tinder to light a fire, or a knife to cut some meat, if such were the knowledge of the Christ in such hearts, which today, and even more tomorrow drive the Christ away, more and more, to make room for Satan, they might still be pitied and treated mercifully because they did not know the Christ. But woe to those who know Me for what I really am, who have been nourished with My word and My love, and now drive Me away, receiving Satan who allures them with false promises of human triumphs, the reality of which will be eternal damnation.

You who are humble and do not dream of thrones and crowns, who do not seek human glory, but the peace and triumph of God, His Kingdom, love and eternal life, and nothing else, do not imitate them. Be vigilant! Keep free from corruption, be strong against insinuations, against threats, against everything. »

Judas, who has realised that Jesus knows something, has become livid with anger. He darts angry looks at the Master and at Johanna... He withdraws behind his companions, as if he wished to lean against the wall. In actual fact he does so to conceal his disappointment.

After a short interruption, which serves to separate the first part of His speech from the second one, Jesus goes on. He says:

« There was once Naboth, a Jezreelite, who had a vineyard close by the palace of Ahab, king of Samaria. It was the vineyard of his ancestors, therefore most dear and almost sacred to him, as it had been bequeathed to him by his father, who had inherited it from his father, who in turn, had received it by inheritance from his father and so on. Generations of relatives had worked hard in that vineyard to make it more flourishing and beautiful. Naboth was very fond of it. Ahab said to him: "Give me your vineyard that is near my house, as I want to use it as a vegetable garden for myself and my family. In exchange for it I will give you a better vineyard, or if you prefer, I will give you its worth in money". But Naboth replied: "I am sorry to disappoint you, king. But I cannot satisfy your request. I received that vineyard by inheritance from my ancestors and it is sacred to me. God forbid that I should give you the inheritance of my ancestors".

Let us meditate on that reply. It has been meditated on too little and by too few Israelites. Those whom I mentioned before, the majority

3-2006

of people, who are inclined to drive away the Christ to welcome Satan, do not have much respect for the inheritance of their ancestors, and provided they get much money or a great deal of land, that is, honours and the certainty that they will not be easily supplanted, they agree to give away the inheritance of their ancestors: that is, the Messianic idea for what it really is, as it was revealed to the saints of Israel, and should be held sacred in all its details, also the least ones, without tampering with it, or altering it, or degrading it with human limitations. How many barter the bright Messianic idea, entirely holy and spiritual, for a puppet of human regality, which they agitate as a bugaboo to injure and curse authorities and truth!

I, Mercy, do not go to the extent of anathematising them with the dreadful maledictions of Moses against the transgressors of the Law. But behind Mercy there is Justice. Let everybody bear that in mind! I, as far as I am concerned, remind them - and if there is anyone present here, let him accept My warning with good grace I remind them of other words of Moses, addressed to those who wanted to count more than God had decided for them.

Moses said to Korah, Dathan and Abiram, who said that they were equal to Moses and Aaron and rebelled against being considered only as the sons of Levi among the people of Israel: "Tomorrow the Lord will reveal who is His, who are the consecrated men that He will allow to come near Him. Those He allows to come near Him are the ones He has chosen. Put fire in your censers and incense on the fire before the Lord, and come, you and your followers with Aaron. And we shall see whom the Lord chooses. You take too much on yourselves, sons of Levi!".

My good Israelites, you know how God answered those who wanted to extol themselves too much, forgetting that God only allots positions to His children, electing them with justice to the right position. I also must say: "There are some who wish to exalt themselves too much and they will be punished so that good people will understand that they cursed the Lord".

Those who barter the Messianic idea, as it was revealed by the Most High, for their poor, human, dull, limited, revengeful idea, are they not like those who wanted to judge the sacredness of Moses and Aaron? Do you not think that those who want to take initiatives of their own, proudly stating that they are better than God's, so that they may attain their object and have their poor plans accomplished, do you not think that they want to exalt themselves too much and pass illegally from the stock of Levi to the stock of Aaron? Those who dream of a poor king of Israel and prefer him to the spiritual King of kings, those whose eyes are diseased with pride and greed, whereby they see the eternal truth written in the holy books distorted, and those who cannot understand

3-2007

the most clear words of the revealed Truth because of the fever of their lustful humanity, are they not the ones who barter the heritage of the whole race, the most sacred heritage, for a worthless nothing?

But if they do so, I will not barter the inheritance of the Father and of our ancestors, and I will die faithful to the promise, which has been alive since there was the need for redemption, and I will be faithful to the obedience which has always existed, because I have never disappointed My Father, and I will never disappoint Him for fear of death, however dreadful death may be. Let My enemies produce false witnesses, let them feign zeal and perfect practices. That will not change their crime or affect My holiness. But he and those who, after corrupting him, have become his accomplices, think that they can take possession of what is Mine, will find dogs and vultures feeding on their blood and bodies on the Earth, and demons feeding on their sacrilegious deicide souls in Hell.

I told you that, so that you may know. So that everybody may know. So that who is wicked may repent, while he is still in time, imitating Ahab, and who is good may not be upset in the hour of darkness.

Goodbye, children of Bether. May the God of Israel always be with you and may Redemption let dew descend on a clean field, so that all the seed, sown in your hearts by the Master, Who loved you even unto death, may germinate. »

Jesus blesses them and watches them go away slowly. The sun has set. Only a red hue, which slowly fades into violet, remains as remembrance of the sun. The Sabbath rest is over. Jesus can leave. He kisses the little ones, greets the women disciples and Chuza. And when He is near the gate, He turns round again and says in a loud voice, so that everybody may hear: « I will speak, when I can, to those people. But you, Johanna, do the necessary to let them know that I am the enemy of Sin only and the King of the spirit. And remember that, too, Chuza. And be not afraid. No one must be afraid of Me. Not even sinners, because I am Salvation. Only those who are unrepentant unto death must fear the Christ, Who will be Judge after being Infinite Love... Peace be with you » and He is the first to go out and begin to descend...

401. Simon of Jonah' Struggle and Spiritual Victory.

25th March 1946. In Nomine Domini.

And I am resuming, at long last, to write about you, o sweet Gospel, following my Master holily along the roads of Palestine! I resume you after fulfilling all my tasks in obedience to the orders. It would be better to say: « You resume me. »

3-2008

I do not know whether anyone ponders on the mute but so instructive lesson that the Lord gives through His silence, brought about by three different reasons:

1st pity for the weakness of His sick mouthpiece who at times is almost dying; 2nd silence as a punishment for those who do not conform properly to His gift; 3rd the lesson that He gives me, and of which I wish to speak, of our duty to always obey, even if obedience may seem inferior to the work we have to interrupt in order to obey.

Oh! it is not easy to be a « mouthpiece »! One lives in continuous vigilance and obedience. And Jesus, Who is the Master of the world, does not take the liberty of allowing His instrument to disobey an order, when obedience is exacted by a person authorised to do so.

During the past days I had to obey the orders given to me by Father Migliorini. They were bureaucratic matters and thus rather boring. But Jesus never interfered because I had to obey. And my obedience was to be precise and complete, as Azariah said yesterday explaining Holy Mass.

But now, as I have done everything, I can contemplate You, my Lord, while You descend the steep path towards the fertile valley, leaving behind the castle of Bether, still bright in the dying day, up there, on the flowery hill... leaving there the love of the women disciples, of the little ones, of the humble people, descending towards the roads that take to Jerusalem, towards the world, towards the lower part... And it is darker there not only because it is a « valley » and thus sunshine and light are no longer there, but above all because down there, in the world, there are snares, bitter hatred, so much evil waiting for You, my Lord...

Jesus is ahead of them all: a white silent figure, walking stately also while descending uncomfortable abrupt paths, taken to shorten the journey. In the descent His long tunic and wide mantle trail on the ground and Jesus seems already enveloped in a royal mantle with a train behind His steps.

Behind Him, not so majestic, but equally silent, are the apostles... Judas, a little outdistanced, is last: he looks ugly in his rage. Now and again the more simple ones: Andrew, Thomas, turn round and look at him, and Andrew says to him: « Why are you remaining all alone, so far behind? Are you not feeling well? ». His question brings about a sharp reply: « Mind your own business » that surprises Andrew, also because it is followed by a rude epithet.

Peter is second in the line of the apostles, behind James of Alphaeus, who is immediately behind the Master. And Peter hears the rude reply, in the deep silence of the evening. And he turns round abruptly and is about to go back towards Judas. But he stops. He is pensive for a moment, then runs towards Jesus, He

3-2009

takes Him brusquely by the arm and shakes Him saying eagerly: « Master, can You assure me that what You told me the other evening is really true? That sacrifices and prayers never lack success, even if they seem to serve no purpose?... »

Jesus, meek, sad, pale, looks at His Simon who is perspiring in the effort not to react at once to the insult, and is purple and trembling, and perhaps is hurting Him as he is holding His arm so roughly, and He replies with a peaceful sad smile: « They are never without reward. You may rest assured. »

Peter leaves Him and goes away, not to his place, but to the slope of the mountain, among the trees and he gives vent to his feelings by breaking shrubs and young plants with a violence that was directed elsewhere but is discharged here on tree-trunks.

« What are you doing? Are you mad? » many ask him.

Peter does not reply. He goes on breaking. He lets all the apostles, including Judas, overtake him, while he breaks... and breaks. He is so fast that he seems to be on piece-work. At his feet there is a bundle of sticks that would suffice to roast a veal. He loads it on to his shoulder with some difficulty and he strives to reach his companions. I do not know how he can manage - hampered as he is by his mantle - the weight, his haversack and the uncomfortable path. But he proceeds with a stoop, as if he were under the yoke...

And Judas laughs seeing him and says: « You look like a slave! »

Peter looks up with difficulty from under the yoke and is about to say something. But he remains silent, he grinds his teeth and goes on.

« I will help you, brother » says Andrew.

« No. »

« But that wood is too much for a lamb » remarks James of Zebedee.

Peter does not reply. He proceeds. He must be exhausted. But he does not give up.

At last, at a grotto almost at the bottom of the descent, Jesus stops with all the apostles. « We are staying here, and we will leave at daybreak » orders the Master. « Prepare the supper. »

Peter then throws his load on the ground and sits on it, without explaining to anybody the reason for his great effort, while there is plenty firewood about.

But when the apostles move around, some to get drinking water, some to clean the floor of the grotto, some to wash the lamb before cooking it, and Peter is left alone with his Master, Jesus, standing up, lays His hand on Simon's grey-haired head, and caresses that honest head... Peter then clasps that hand and kisses it, he holds it against his cheek, kisses it again and caresses it... A drop falls on the white hand, a drop which is not perspiration of the coarse honest apostle, but a silent tear of love and suffering, of victory

3-2010

after the struggle. And Jesus bends and kisses him saying: « Thank you, Simon! »

Peter is certainly not a handsome man. But when he throws back his head to look at his Jesus Who has kissed him and thanked him, because He only has understood, veneration and joy do make him handsome...

And the vision ends on this transformation.

402. Going towards Emmaus on the Plain.

27th March 1946.

Dawn is casting a milky-green luminosity on the vault of heaven, high above the cool silent valley. And its glimmer, which is and is not yet light, reaches the top of the two slopes. It seems to be caressing lightly the highest parts of the Judaean mountains, saying to the old trees which crown them: « Here I am, I am descending from heaven, I am coming from the east, preceding daybreak, and I drive away darkness and bring light, activity and the blessing of a new day granted to you by God. » And the mountain tops are roused by the rustling leaves and the chirping of the first birds awakened by the trembling branches and the first faint light. And dawn descends lower, down to the undergrowth, to the grass, to declivities, lower and lower, greeted by the increasing chirping among branches and the rustling noise of green lizards among the grass. And it finally reaches the little stream, down at the bottom, and changes its dark waters into a dull silvery sparkling that becomes steadily clearer and clearer and more and more brilliant. And in the meantime, up there, in the sky, where the indigo of the night has faded into a greenish pale blue, the first announcement of sunrise appears, making it azure tinged with pink... And a cirrus appears, small, fluffy, already rosy foam...

Jesus comes out of the grotto and looks... He then washes in the stream, He tidies Himself, puts on His clothes, looks into the grotto... But He does not call... Instead He climbs the mountain, and goes to pray on a protruding peak, which is so high that it is possible to see a wide view to the east, now completely rosy at dawn, and to the west still tinged with indigo. He prays... ardently, on His knees, with His elbows on the ground, almost prostrate... And He prays thus, until He hears the voices of the awakened disciples calling Him.

He stands up and replies: « I am coming! » And the echo of the narrow valley repeats several times the echo of the perfect voice. And the valley seems to be spreading over the plain, dimly visible to the west, the promise of the Lord: « I am coming » so that the plain may rejoice in advance.

Jesus sets out with a sigh and a sentence that summarises His

long prayer and clarifies it: « Father, comfort Me... »

He descends quickly and when He arrives at the bottom, He greets His apostles with a most kind smile and the usual words: « Peace be with you on this new day. »

« And with You, Master » they all reply.

Judas also is not so grim and solitary, I do not know whether because he is reassured by Jesus' silence, Who has not reproached him and treats him exactly as the others, or because during the night he has worked out a plan to his own advantage. In fact he asks on behalf of everybody: « Are we going to Jerusalem? If we are, we will have to go back a little and cross that bridge. On the other side there is a road that takes one straight to Jerusalem. »

« No. We are going to Emmaus on the plain. »

« Why? And what about Pentecost? »

« There is time. I want to go to see Nicodemus and Joseph, along the plains, towards the sea... »

« But why? »

« Because I have not been there yet and those people are waiting for Me... And because the good disciples wish so. We shall have time for everything. »

« Is that what Johanna told You? Is that why she called You? »

« There was no need for that. They told Me personally at Passover. And I keep My promises. »

« I would not go there... Perhaps they are already in Jerusalem... The festivity is close at hand... And in any case... You might meet some enemies, and... »

« I meet enemies everywhere, they are always close to Me... » and Jesus darts a glance at the apostle, who is His grief...

Judas speaks no more. It is too dangerous to go into details! He realises it and becomes silent.

John and Andrew come back with some little fruits, which seem to belong to the raspberry or strawberry families, but are a little darker, almost like unripe blackberries, and they offer them to Jesus: « You like them. We saw them yesterday evening and we went up now to pick them for You. Eat them, Master. They are good. »

Jesus caresses the two good young apostles who are offering Him the fruit on a large leaf washed in the stream, and who, more than their fruit, offer Him their love. Jesus picks the nicest ones and gives some to each of the apostles who eat them with some bread.

« We tried to get some milk for You. But there are no shepherds about as yet... » says Andrew apologising.

« It does not matter. Let us walk fast so that we may be at Emmaus before it gets very warm. »

And they set out and those who are more hungry continue to eat, while walking along the cool valley, which becomes wider and wider, ending in a very fertile plain, where reapers are already

3-2012

working hard.

« I did not know that Nicodemus had houses at Emmaus » remarks Bartholomew.

« Not at Emmaus. Farther on. Relatives' fields which he inherited... » explains Jesus.

« How beautiful the country is! » exclaims Thaddeus.

It is in fact a sea of golden ears interlaced with orchards, which are a real dream, and with vineyards already promising glorious grapes. Well-watered as it is, because the nearby mountains pour numberless little torrents into it in the months when irrigation is required most, and because it is provided with underground streams, it is a real agricultural Eden.

« H'm! It is more beautiful than last year's » grumbles Peter. « At least there is water and fruit... »

« The plain of Sharron is even more beautiful » replies the Zealot.

« But is this not it? »

« No, it is after this one. But this one is already affected by it... » The two apostles move away from the group speaking to each other.

« It belongs to Pharisees, does it not? » asks James of Zebedee, pointing at the beautiful country.

« It certainly belongs to Judaeans. They usurped the best estates, taking them off the previous owners in many ways » replies Thaddeus, who perhaps remembers his ancestors' property in Judaea, from which they were driven away suffering a severe loss.

The Iscariot takes offence at the remark and says: « If they were taken off you it is because you, Galileans, are less holy, you are inferior... »

« May I remind you that Alphaeus and Joseph were of the house of David. So much so that the Edict compelled them to go and register at Bethlehem in Judah. And that is why He was born there » calmly replies James of Alphaeus, anticipating a biting reply from his impetuous brother, and pointing at the Lord Who is speaking to Matthew and Philip.

« Oh! Well! I would say that there is good and bad everywhere. In our trade we approached people of all races and I assure you that I have found honest and dishonest people in every race. In any case... why boast of being Judaeans? Did we perhaps want that? H'm! When I was in my mother's womb I knew nothing about being Judaean or Galilean! I was there... and that was all. And when I was born, I was enveloped comfortably in swaddling clothes, without worrying whether I was breathing Judaean or Galilean air... I was aware only of my mother's teat... And you were all like me. So why be upset now, because one was born in the north and another in the south? Do we not all belong to Israel? » says Thomas kindly and rightly.

3-2013

« You are right, Thomas » replies John. And he concludes: « And now we belong to one stock only: to Jesus'. »

« And He is of Judaean extraction, but was conceived and resides in Galilee, after He was born in Bethlehem, as if He wanted to tell us, through the evidence of events, that He is the Redeemer of all Israel, from the north to the south. And I think that the Most High wanted that to teach us that divisions are against the love for our neighbour and that He has been sent to gather everybody like the brooding-hen mentioned in the Holy Books. Just because He is called "the Galilean", one ought not to disregard Galileans » says James of Alphaeus kindly but firmly.

Jesus, Who seemed inattentive while speaking to Matthew and Philip, a few steps ahead of the others, turns round and says: « You are right, James of Alphaeus. You understand the Truth and the truths, and the justice of every act of God. Because God, and this should be always borne in mind by everyone, never does anything aimlessly, as He never leaves without a reward what upright people do. Blessed are those who can see the reasons of God even in the least events and the answers of God to the sacrifices of men. »

Peter turns round and is about to speak. But he remains silent and he only smiles at his Master, Who is back in the group of His apostles, as they are now walking on a wide main road between golden fields.

They proceed towards Emmaus, which is already close at hand, a group of white dazzling houses among the golden hue of ripe corn and the green of fertile orchards.

« Master! Master! Stop! Here are Your disciples! » shout voices from afar, and a handful of men, departing from some peasants resting in the shade of an apple-orchard, run towards Jesus along a sunny path. They are Matthias and John, formerly shepherds and later disciples of the Baptist, and with them there are Nicolaus, Abel once a leper, Samuel, Ermasteus and others.

« Peace to you. You are here? »

« Yes, Master. We have been along all the shores of the sea. We are now going towards Jerusalem. Farther north there is Stephen with other disciples. And farther up there is Hermas with others. And Isaac, our little master, is even farther north. At least he was. As Timoneus was in the region beyond the Jordan. But by now they are all about to come to the feast of Pentecost. We thus formed many groups, small ones, but active. And if they should persecute us, they may capture some, but not all of us » explains Matthias.

« You have done the right thing. I was surprised at not finding you anywhere in southern Judaea... »

« Master... You were going there... Who could do better than You? In any case... Oh! Judaea has had more than is needed to become holy!... And yet!... They throw stones at those who take the word of

Heaven to them. Elias and Joseph were beaten in the gorges of the Kidron and they went beyond the Jordan to Solomon's house. Joseph was almost killed by a stone that struck his head. They lived for eight days in a deep grotto, with the man You sent and who knew all the secrets of the mountains. Then at night, they slowly passed to the other side... »

The disciples and apostles are excited in recalling and hearing of such persecutions. But Jesus calms them saying: « The Innocents tinged with the purple of their innocent blood the way of the Christ. But that way is to be purpled over and over again, to erase the traces of Evil from the way of God. It is a regal road. Martyrs purple it for My sake. Blessed among the blessed are those who suffer persecutions for My sake. »

« Master, we were speaking to those peasants. Will You speak to them now? » asks John, the ex-shepherd.

« Go and tell them that I will speak at sunset near the gate of Emmaus. The sun prevents Me now. Go. And may God be with you. I will be at the end of this road. »

He blesses them and sets out again seeking shade, because the sun is very warm on the white road, on the sides of which two rows of plane-trees give very little shade.

403. Little Michael and Preaching near Emmaus on the Plain.

28th March 1946.

Near the gate of Emmaus there is a house of peasants. It is silent, because they are all in the fields, working. The sheaves of the previous day are already piled up on the threshing-floor. And hay is heaped in rustic hay-lofts. A warm smell comes from the hay and the sheaves in the scorching midday sun. With the exception of the cooing of doves and the chirping of gossipy quarrelsome sparrows, no other noise can be heard. Both fly unrelentingly from the roof or the nearby trees to the piles of sheaves and hay and first among those who will enjoy those products, they peck the stiff ears, they deal one another blows with their wings, they struggle to snatch more seed or to steal the most tender blades of hay, like greedy unscrupulous warriors. They are the only thieves in Israel, where I noticed there is the greatest respect for other people's property. Houses may be left open and threshing-floors and vineyards unguarded! Apart from true robbers, the highwaymen who attack people in the gorges of mountains, there are no petty thieves, not even greedy people who would steal fruit or a little pigeon belonging to other people. Everybody goes his own way and also when they walk through their neighbour's property, they seem to have no eyes or hands. It is true that hospitality is so widely

practised, that there is no need to steal in order to get something to eat. Only with regard to Jesus, and because hatred is so bitter as to compel people to neglect the age-old habit of being hospitable to pilgrims, only with regard to Him it happens that houses deny hospitality and food. But, generally speaking, they feel pity for other people, and the lower classes in particular do so.

Thus, after knocking at a door and not getting any answer, the apostles without any fear have taken shelter in a shed, where there are agricultural tools and empty pitchers and, as if everything belonged to them, they have taken some hay to sit on, some buckets to draw water from the well and pitchers to drink, and thus moisten the stale bread and cold lamb, which they eat almost in silence, as they are so sleepy and stupefied by the sun. And with the same freedom with which they used hay and pitchers, they lie down on the sweet-smelling hay and there is soon a snoring chorus varied in tone and duration.

Jesus also is tired. More than tired, He is sad. He looks for some time at the sleeping apostles. He is praying and thinking... He is thinking while His eyes follow mechanically the quarrelling sparrows and doves and the swallows darting over the sunny threshing-floor. The screams of those swift masters of flight seem to be resolute positive answers to the grievous questions that Jesus is asking Himself. Then He lies on the hay, too, and His sweet sad sapphire eyes are soon covered by His eyelids. And His face becomes motionless in sleep, and perhaps because He has fallen asleep with a heavy heart, His countenance is very much as tired and grievous as it will be at His death...

The peasants who own the house have come back: men, women and children. And the disciples seen previously are with them. They see Jesus and His apostles sleeping on the hay and their voices fade into whispers not to awake them. Some mothers smack their children who will not keep quiet, or they threaten to do so.

A little fellow, with the steps of a little dove and a finger in his mouth, approaches Jesus and watches Him - « He is the nicest » he says - while He sleeps with His head resting on His folded arm as on a pillow. And all the rest, barefooted, on the tips of their toes, end up by imitating him, Matthias and John being the first, and they are deeply moved seeing Him sleep on the hay and Matthias remarks: « As in His first sleep... He is now... our Master, but less happy than then... He misses His Mother also... »

« Yes, He does. Only persecution is always close to Him. But we will always love Him, we have always loved Him as we did then... » replies John.

« Even more, Matthias. Much more. Then we loved Him only out of faith and because it is pleasant to love a baby. But now we love Him also because we know Him... »

3-2016

« He has been hated since He was a baby, John. Remember what they did in order to strike Him!... » and Matthias goes pale remembering.

« That is true... But blessed be that sorrow! We lost everything but Him. And that is what matters. What use would it have been to us if we still had relatives, our homes and our little properties, if He were dead? »

« That's true. You are right, Matthias. And of what avail will it be to us to have the whole world, when He will no longer be in the world? »

« Don't tell me... Then we shall really be forlorn... You may all go. We are staying here near the Master » says John dismissing the peasants.

« We are sorry that we never thought of giving them the key. They could have come in and have been more comfortable... » says the oldest man of the household.

« We will tell Him... But He will be happy also because of your love. Go now... »

The peasants go home and the smoke rising from the chimney tells everybody that they are preparing food. But they do so gracefully, checking the children, making little noise... and likewise, they noiselessly take the food to the disciples and whisper: « We have kept theirs aside... for when they awake. »

Then silence envelops the house once again. Perhaps the reapers, who have worked since dawn, are lying on their beds to rest during these hours when it would be impossible to remain in the fields in the scorching sun. The disciples also are dozing... And doves and sparrows are also resting... Only the swallows keep darting indefatigably, and their swift flights write azure words in the sky and shadowy words on the white threshing-floor...

The little fellow seen a short time ago, who is now beautiful in his very short shirt, the only garment he has on in this torrid hour, puts his little dark head out of the kitchen door, watches closely, and comes forward cautiously with his tender little feet aching on the hot ground. His loose little shirt almost slips off his plump shoulders. He reaches the disciples and tries to step over them to go and look at Jesus once again. But his little legs are too short to get over the sturdy bodies of adults, and he stumbles falling on Matthias who awakes and sees the little face of the mortified child, ready to cry. He smiles and understanding the reason for the little fellow's manoeuvre, he says: « Come here, I will put you between Jesus and myself. But you must be silent and still. Let Him sleep, because He is tired. »

And the child sits down happily, adoring Jesus' beautiful face. He looks at Him, studies Him, and is dying to caress Him and touch His golden hair. But Matthias is vigilant smiling and does

3-2017

not allow him. The child then asks in a low voice: « Does He always sleep like that? »

« Always like that » replies Matthias.

« Is He tired? Why? »

« Because He walks and talks so much. »

« Why does He talk and walk? »

« To teach children to be good and to love the Lord to go to Heaven with Him. »

« Up there? How does one do that? It's far... »

« Your soul, do you know what a soul is? »

« No! »

« It is the nicest thing we have, and... »

« More than our eyes? My mummy says that my eyes are two stars. Stars are beautiful, you know?! »

The disciple smiles and replies: « It is more beautiful than the little stars of your eyes, because a good soul is more beautiful than the sun. »

« Oh! Where is it? Where have I got it? »

« Here. In your little heart. And it hears and sees everything and it never dies. And when one is never bad and dies as a just person, one's soul flies up there, with the Lord. »

« With Him? » and the child points at Jesus.

« With Him. »

« But has He got a soul? »

« He has soul and divinity. Because that Man you are looking at is God. »

« How do you know? Who told you? »

« The angels did. »

The boy, who was sitting leaning on Matthias, cannot take in the news quietly, and he jumps to his feet asking: « Have you seen the angels? » and he looks at Matthias opening his big eyes wide. The news is so astonishing that he forgets Jesus for a moment and thus he does not see that He has half-opened His eyes, awakened by the boy's exclamation. Jesus closes His eyes once again smiling and turns His head round to the other side.

« Be quiet! See? You are waking Him up... I will send you away. »

« I'll be good. But what are the angels like? When did you see them? » His voice is a whisper again.

And Matthias patiently tells the boy, who is sat again in an ecstasy on his chest, what happened on Christmas Night. And he patiently replies to all the boy's questions: « Why was He born in a stable? Had He no home? Was He so poor that He could not find a house? Has He got a house now? Has He no Mother? Where is His Mother? Why does She leave Him all alone, since She knows that they wanted to kill Him? Does She not love Him?... » A hail of questions and one of answers. And the last one - to which Matthias,

3-2018

replies: « His holy Mother loves Her Divine Son very much, but She makes a sacrifice of Her sorrow for letting Him go about, so that men may be saved. And to console Herself She considers that there are still good men capable of loving Him » - brings about this reply: « Does She not know that there are good children who love Him? Where is She? Tell me, because I will go and say to Her: "Do not weep. I will give all my love to Your Son". What do you think? Will She be pleased? »

« So much, my child » says Matthias kissing him.

« And will He be glad? »

« Yes, very much. You will tell Him when He awakes. »

« Oh! yes!... But when will He awake? » The boy is anxious...

Jesus can resist no longer. He turns round, with His eyes wide open and a bright smile, and He says: « You have already told Me, because I have heard everything. Come here, child. »

Oh! the boy does not need to be told twice and he throws himself on Jesus, caressing and kissing Him, touching His forehead, His golden eyebrows and eyelids with his little finger, looking at himself in His blue eyes, rubbing himself against His soft beard and silky hair, repeating at each discovery: « How lovely You are! Lovely! Lovely! » Jesus and Matthias smile.

Then as the others wake up, because the boy is not so careful now about making too much noise, the disciples and apostles smile seeing such an accurate examination by the little man in the bud, halfnaked, plump, who moves blissfully up and down Jesus' body, scanning it from head to foot and ends up by saying: « Turn round! » and he explains why: « to see Your wings » and when he is disappointed he asks: « Why have You not got them.? »

« I am not an angel, My child. »

« But You are God! How can You be God if You are not full of wings? How will You be able to go up to Heaven? »

« I am God. Just because I am God I do not need wings. I do what I want and I can do everything. »

« Well, then, make my eyes like Yours. They are beautiful. »

« No. I gave you the ones you have and I like them as they are. Ask Me, instead, to make your soul just, so that you can love Me more and more. »

« You gave me that as well, so You must like it as it is » replies the little one with childish logic.

« Yes, I like it very much now because it is innocent. But while your eyes will always be the hue of ripe olives, your soul may change from white to black, if you are bad. »

« No, not bad. I love You and I want to do what the angels said when You were born: "Peace to God in Heaven and glory to men of good will" » says the boy mistaking, which makes the adults guffaw, and the little fellow mortified becomes dumb.

3-2019

But Jesus comforts him while correcting him: « God is always Peace, My child. He is the Peace. But the angels were giving Him glory because the Saviour was born and they were giving men the first rule to obtain the peace, which was to derive from My birth: "to have good will". The one you want. »

« Yes, give me it. Put it here where that man said that I have my soul » and with his forefingers he beats his little chest several times.

« Yes, My little friend. What is your name? »

« Michael! »

« The name of the powerful Archangel. Well, I give good will to you, Michael. And may you be a confessor of the true God, saying to persecutors what your angelic patron said: "Who is like God?". May you be blessed now and always » and He imposes His hands on him.

But the little one is not convinced. He says: « No, kiss me here. On my soul. And Your blessing will go into it and will remain closed in it » and he uncovers his chest to be kissed without anything being interposed between his body and Jesus' divine lips.

All those who are present smile and are moved at the same time. And quite rightly! The wonderful faith of the innocent child, who has gone to Jesus, some may say by instinct, but I say: urged by his soul, is really touching, and Jesus points it out saying: « Eh! if everybody had the heart of a child!... »

Hours have gone by in the meanwhile. The house becomes busy again. The voices of women, children and men can be heard. And a mother calls: « Michael! Michael! Where are you? » and she appears at the door and with fear in her eyes she looks at the low well with a dreadful thought in her heart.

« Be not afraid, woman. Your son is with Me. »

« Oh! I was afraid... He likes to play with water so much... »

« And in fact he came to the Living Water that descends from Heaven to give Life to men. »

« He has troubled You... But he slipped away so silently that I did not hear him... » says the woman apologising.

« Oh! no! He has not disturbed Me. He comforted Me! Children never grieve Jesus. »

Men and other women approach Jesus. The head of the family says: « Come in and take some food. And forgive us if we did not make You the master of our house the first moment we saw You... »

« I have nothing to forgive you. I have been very comfortable here. I feel honoured by your respect. We had food, and your well is cool and your hay soft. More than what is necessary for the Son of Man. I am not a Syrian satrap. »

And Jesus followed by His apostles enters the wide kitchen to take some food while the men prepare the threshing-floor to make room for those who are already coming from all around to hear the

3-2020

Master, and others are busy preparing food and drinks and skinning a little lamb to be given to the evangelizers as provisions for their journey. Some women bring eggs and butter, which brings a protest from Peter who says rightly that butter cannot be carried in their haversacks as it would melt immediately in the heat. But jugs can be useful... And the women fill one with butter, which they cover and lower into the well to keep as cool as possible.

Jesus thanks them and would like to limit the offerings. Impossible! He wastes His breath. More presents arrive from everywhere and everyone apologises for giving so little...

Peter whispers: « It is well seen that the shepherds have been here. Reclaimed ground... good ground. »

The threshing-floor is crowded with undaunted people although -the day is still warm and the last rays of the sun shine on the floor.

Jesus begins to speak: « Peace be with you! I will not repeat what you already know, as I see that the doctrine of the Master of Israel is already known here, through the work of My good disciples. I leave to them the glory and the task of teaching you and of doing so more and more in order to make you perfectly certain that I am the One Promised by God, and that My Word is from God. »

« And Your miracles are from God, may You be blessed! » shouts a woman from the middle of the crowd, and many turn round to look in her direction. The woman lifts up in her arms a ruddy smiling boy and shouts: « Master, this is little John whom You cured at the Clear Water. The little boy with fractured legs whom no doctor could cure and I brought to You with faith and You cured him and You held him in Your lap. »

« I remember, woman. Your faith deserved the miracle. »

« My faith has increased, Master. All my relatives believe in You. Go, son, and thank the Saviour. Let him go to Him... » begs the woman.

And the crowds part to let him through and he runs towards Jesus, his arms outstretched to embrace Him. And they embrace each other in the middle of the hosannas and comments of the townsfolk and of foreigners, because the country people are already aware of the fact and are not surprised.

Jesus resumes speaking holding the boy by the hand.

« And thus a grateful mother has confirmed My Nature and the power of faith in the heart of God, Who never disappoints the trustful just requests of His children.

I ask you to remember Judas Maccabee when he appeared on this plain to study the formidable encampment of Gorgias, which was five thousand foot and one thousand cavalry strong, all trained to battle, well protected by armour and weapons and war towers. Judas was watching with his three thousand men who had neither shields nor swords, and he could perceive fear insinuate itself into

the hearts of his soldiers. He then spoke, strong of the right that was approved of by God, because it aimed not at abuse of power, but at defence of their invaded and desecrated Fatherland. And he said: "Do not be afraid of their numbers, and do not flinch at their attack. Remember how our ancestors were delivered at the Red Sea, when Pharaoh was pursuing them in force". And after reviving their faith in the power of God, Who is always on the side of just people, he taught them how to obtain assistance. He said: "Now let us raise our voices to Heaven, and the Lord will have mercy on us, and remembering His covenant with our ancestors, He will destroy this army confronting us today, and all the nations will know for certain that there is a Saviour Who delivers Israel".

Now, I will show you two capital points to have God with you, to assist you in just undertakings. The first: to have Him as your ally, you must have the upright souls of our ancestors. Remember the holiness and prompt obedience of the patriarchs to the Lord, whether the request was of little or great importance. Remember with what loyalty they remained faithful to the Lord. We complain bitterly in Israel that the Lord is no longer as benign to us as He was in the past. But has Israel the spirit of her ancestors? Who broke and repeatedly breaks off the alliance with the Father?

The second capital thing to have God with you: humility. Judas Maccabee was a great Israelite, he was a valiant soldier. But he does not say: "I will destroy that army today and the nations will know that I am the saviour of Israel". No. He says: "And the Lord will destroy that army confronting us, because we are not able to do that, weak as we are". Because God is a Father and He takes care of His little ones and to prevent them from perishing, He sends His powerful formations to fight the enemies of His children with superhuman weapons. When God is with us, who can defeat us? Always bear that in mind, now and even more in future, when they will endeavour to beat you, and not in matters of relative importance, such as a national battle, but in things of wider interest both in time and consequences, concerning your souls. Do not be overcome by dismay or pride. They are both harmful. God will be with you if you are persecuted because of My Name and He will give you strength in persecutions. God will be with you if you are humble, if you admit that by yourselves you can do nothing, whereas you can do everything if you are united to the Father.

Judas does not show off adorning himself with the title of Saviour of Israel. But he gives that title to the Eternal Father. In fact men busy themselves in vain, if God does not assist their efforts. Whereas he wins without bustling about, who trusts in the Lord, Who knows when it is right to reward people with victories, and when it is just to punish with defeats. Foolish is the man who

wants to judge God, advising or criticising Him. Can you imagine an ant, which watching the work of a marble-cutter, should say: "You are no good at doing that. I could do better and quicker than you"? He who wants to teach God, cuts the same poor figure. And to his ridiculous figure he adds ingratitude and arrogance, forgetting what he is: a creature, and what God is: the Creator. Now if God created such a perfect creature, who may think that he can advise God Himself, what will the perfection of the Author of all creatures be like? That simple thought should be enough to abase pride, destroying that wicked satanic plant, the parasite which creeps into man's intellect and destroys it, and supplants, suffocates and kills every good tree, every virtue which makes man great on the Earth, really great, not because of great wealth or coronets, but because of justice and supernatural wisdom, and makes him happy in Heaven for ever and ever.

And let us consider another good piece of advice given to us by the great Judas Maccabee and by the events of that day in this plain. When they joined battle, Judas' troops, with whom God was, defeated and routed their enemies, pursuing some as far as Gezer, Azotus, Idumaea and Jamnia, as history tells us, and killing some by the sword, leaving over three thousand men dead in the fields. But Judas said to his warriors excited with the victory: "Never mind the booty, for we have another battle ahead of us. Gorgias and his forces are in the mountains not far from us. We must go on fighting against our enemies and defeat them completely and then we can collect the booty at leisure". And they did so. And they won a great victory and they carried off rich booty, and they returned chanting praises to God because "He is good, and His mercy is everlasting".

Man also, every man, is like the fields around the holy city of the Judaeans. He is surrounded by external and internal enemies, who are all cruel and anxious to join battle with the holy city of each man: that is, with his soul, and to do so all of a sudden, to take it by surprise by means of numberless tricks and destroy it. Passions, which Satan cultivates and instigates, and which man does not watch with all his will to check, as they are dangerous if one does not bridle them, whereas they are harmless if one keeps a check on them as on a robber enchained, and the world that from outside conspires with passions through the allurements of the flesh, of wealth, of pride, are very much like the powerful armies of Gorgias, armoured, equipped with war towers, skilled bowmen, fast cavalrymen, always ready to attack under Evil's orders. But what can Evil do if God is with the man who wants to be just? Man may suffer and be wounded, but his freedom and life will be saved and he will enjoy victory after the good battle. But that does not happen once only, but it happens again and again as long as life

3-2023

lasts, or until man divests himself of his humanity and becomes spirit more than body, a spirit so united to God that arrows, bites, the fire of war can no longer injure him severely, and they fall after striking him superficially, as a drop of water falls on a hard brilliant jasper.

Do not stop to plunder, do not divert your attention, until you are on the threshold of life, not of this life on the Earth, but of the true Life in Heaven. Then, having won, you can carry off your booty and go in, and move forward, gloriously, before the King of kings and say: "I have won. Here is my booty. I collected it with Your help and my good will and I bless You, Lord, because You are good and Your mercy is everlasting".

This applies to everybody in general. But for you who believe in Me there is another battle lying in wait. Nay, several battles. The battle against doubt. The battle against the words you will be told. And the battle against persecutions.

I am about to be raised to the place, for which I came from Heaven. That place will frighten you, and will seem to disprove My words. No. Look at the event with spiritual eyes. And you will see that what happens is the confirmation of what I really am. Not the poor king of a poor kingdom. But the King foretold by the prophets, to the foot of Whose only immortal throne, all the nations of the Earth will come, as rivers flow to the ocean, and will say: "We worship You, King of kings and eternal Judge, because through Your holy Sacrifice You have redeemed the world".

Resist doubt. I do not lie. I am He of Whom the prophets speak. Like John's mother a little while ago, raise the remembrance of what I have done for you, and say: "These deeds come from God. He left them with us in memory, as confirmation and assistance to believe, and believe in this very hour". Fight and you will win against doubt that chokes the breath of souls. Fight against the words that you will be told. Remember the prophets and My works. And reply to hostile words with the prophets and the miracles, which you have seen Me work. Be not afraid. And do not be ungrateful out of fear, being silent about what I have done for you. Fight against persecutions. But do not fight by persecuting your persecutors, but by making a heroic confession to those who, with threats of death, will try to convince you to deny Me. Always fight against all your enemies. Against your humanity, your fears, unworthy compromises, utilitarian alliances, pressure, threats, torture, death.

Death! I am not a leader who says to his people: "Suffer for Me, while I have a good time". No. I am the first to suffer to set the example for you. I am not the commander of armies who says to his soldiers: "Fight to defend Me. Die to save My life". No. I am the first to fight. I will be the first to die, to teach you how to die. As I

3-2024

have always done what I told people to do, and preaching poverty, continence, moderation, justice, forgiveness, I have remained poor, chaste, moderate, just, and I have forgiven and will forgive; as I have done all that, I will do the last thing. I will teach you how to redeem. I will teach you not by words, but by deeds. I will teach you to obey, by obeying the hardest obedience: the obedience of My death.

I will teach you to forgive, forgiving in My last torture, as on the straw of My cradle I forgave Mankind for tearing Me from Heaven. I will forgive as I have always forgiven. Everybody. Everybody as far as I am concerned. I will forgive My little enemies, the inert, indifferent, changeable, and My big enemies, who not only grieve Me by being apathetic to My power and desire to save them, but they deeply distress and will distress Me by being deicides. But I will forgive. And as I will not be able to absolve unrepentant deicides, I will still pray, in My final distress, the Father for them... that He may forgive them... as they are intoxicated with a satanic liqueur... I will forgive... And I ask you to forgive in My name. And love. Love as I love, as I love you and will love you for ever.

"Goodbye. It is growing dark. Let us pray together, and then you may all go back to your homes with the words of the Lord in your hearts, and may they become well-shaped ears of corn for your future hunger, when you will be wishing to hear again your Friend, the Master, your Saviour, and only by elevating your souls to Heaven you will be able to find Him Who loved you more than Himself.

Our Father Who are in Heaven... » and Jesus, with outstretched arms, like a majestic white cross against the dark wall of the northern facade, says the Our Father slowly.

He then blesses with the Mosaic blessing. He kisses the children and blesses them once again. He takes leave and goes northwards, going round the town-walls of Emmaus, without entering the town. The violet hues of twilight slowly absorb the gentle vision of Jesus, Who proceeds more and more towards His destiny.

In the half-dark yard there is the silence of sorrowful peace... Almost of expectation. Then the weeping of little Michael, like the plaintive bleating of a little lamb which is all alone, breaks the spell and tears well up in many eyes while many lips repeat the innocent words of the little boy: « Oh! Why has He gone away? Come back! Come back!... Lord, make Him come back! » And when Jesus disappears completely, there is the desolate ascertainment of reality: « Jesus is no longer here! » In vain his mother tries to comfort little Michael, who is weeping as if he had lost more than his mother, and from her arms he cannot take his eyes off the spot where Jesus disappeared and with his arms outstretched he calls: « Jesus! Jesus! »

3-2025

... Jesus waits to be at a little distance, then He says: « We shall go to Joppa. The disciples have worked hard there and the people are awaiting the word of the Lord. »

There is not much enthusiasm for the proposed further prolongation of the road, but Simon Zealot points out that it is a quick journey and on a good road from Joppa to the estates of Nicodemus and Joseph, and John is happy to be going towards the sea. And the others, convinced by such considerations, end up by going more willingly along the road that takes to the sea.

Jesus says: « You will put here the vision of September 20th 1944: "Jesus and the Gentiles in a seaside-town", which you will entitle: "At Joppa Jesus speaks to Judas of Kerioth and to some Gentiles", because the episode took place there after a day of miracles and preaching. »

404. At Joppa Jesus Speaks to Judas of Kerioth and to Some Gentiles.

20th September 1944.

I see Jesus sitting in the inner yard of a house, which is modest although not splendid. He looks very tired. He is sitting on a stone bench near a well with a low parapet, above which a green pergola forms an arch. The bunches of grapes are just beginning to form. The flowers must have fallen off recently and the tiny grapes are like millet-seeds hanging from small green stalks. Jesus has put His right elbow on His right knee and His chin is resting in the hollow of His hand. At times, He lays His folded arm on the edge of the well and His head on His arm, as if He wished to be more comfortable: as if He wanted to sleep. His hair then falls down veiling His tired face, which, when visible, looks pale and grave, framed by curly red-blondish locks.

A woman goes backwards and forwards, her hands covered with flour, and she passes from a room in the house to a smaller room on the other side of the yard where the oven must be. She looks at Jesus every time she passes, but she does not disturb Him. It must be almost evening, because the sunbeams skim the top of the terraced roof more and more faintly and soon vanish completely.

About a dozen doves are about to descend cooing to the yard for a last meal. They wheel round Jesus, as if they wished to ascertain who is the stranger and distrustfully dare not land on the ground. Jesus forgets His worries and smiles, He stretches out one hand, palm upwards, and says: « Are you hungry? Come » as if He were speaking to human beings. The most daring one alights on His hand, followed by two more. Jesus smiles: « I have nothing » He says in reply to their cooing requests. He then calls in a loud voice:

3-2026

« Woman? Your doves are hungry. Have you any corn for them? »

« Yes, Master. It's in the sack under the porch. I'll come at once. »

« Never mind. I will give it to them. I like doing it. »

« They will not come to You. They do not know You. »

« Oh! They are on My shoulders and even on My head!... »

Jesus is in fact walking with a strange crest: a leaden dove, the breast of which is so iridiscent that is seems a precious breastplate.

The woman looks out of the door incredulously and exclaims: « Oh! »

« See? Doves are better than men, woman. They perceive who loves them. Men... do not. »

« Master, forget about what happened. Only a few people hate You. The others, if they do not all love You, at least respect You. »

« Oh! I will not lose heart because of that. I only wish to point out to you that animals are often better than men. »

Jesus has opened the sack, He puts His long hand into it and pulls out some golden corn, which He places in the folded edge of His mantle. He closes the sack again and returns to the yard, defending Himself from the intrusive doves that want to help themselves. He unfolds His mantle and scatters the corn on the floor and laughs at the bustle and brawl of the greedy birds. The meal is soon over. The doves drink from a hollow dish near the well and look at Jesus again.

« Go now. I have nothing else. »

They fly about for a little while landing on Jesus' shoulders and knees and then go back to their nests. Jesus becomes engrossed in meditation again.

There is a loud knocking at the door. The woman rushes to open. It is the disciples.

« Come » says Jesus. « Have you given the money to the poor? »

« Yes, Master, we have. »

« To the last coin? Remember that what is given to us is not for us, but it is to be given in Charity. We are poor and we live on the mercy of other people. Miserable is the apostle who exploits his mission for human ends! »

« And if one day we are without bread and we are accused of infringing the Law because we imitate sparrows, eating grains of corn as they do, what shall we do? »

« Have you ever lacked anything, Judas? Anything essential since you have been with Me? Have you ever fallen exhausted along the road? »

« No, Master. »

« When I said to you: "Come" did I promise you comfort and riches? And speaking to those who listen to Me, have I ever said that I will give "My disciples" profit on the Earth? »

« No, Master. »

« Well, Judas? Why have you changed so much? Do you not know,

3-2027

do you not realise that your dissatisfaction and your indifference grieve Me? Do you not see that your discontent affects also your brothers? Why, Judas, My friend, are you forsaking Me now, whereas you have been called to so great a destiny, and you came to My love and to My Light with so much enthusiasm? »

« Master, I am not forsaking You. I am the one who takes most care of You, of Your interests, of Your success. I would like to see You triumph everywhere, believe me. »

« I know. You want that in a human way. It is a great thing. But I do not want that, Judas, My friend... I have come for something by far greater than a human triumph and a human kingdom... I have not come to give My friends the crumbs of a human triumph. But I have come to give you a great, substantial, abundant reward, a reward that is no longer a reward, -as it is so complete: it is participation in My eternal Kingdom, it is union in the rights of the children of God... Oh! Judas! Why are you not elated by this sublime inheritance, which one achieves through renunciation, but which knows no decline?

Come closer to Me, Judas. See? We are alone. The others have understood that I wanted to speak to you, the dispenser of My... riches, of the alms that the Son of Man, the Son of God receives to give them, in the name of God and of Man, to man. And they have withdrawn into the house. We are alone, Judas, in this sweet hour of the evening, when our hearts fly to our remote homes, to our mothers, who certainly think of us, while preparing their solitary supper, and they caress with their hands the place where we used to sit before this hour of God, when His Most Holy Will took us to make Him loved in spirit and truth.

Our mothers! Mine, so holy and pure, Who is so fond of you all and prays for you, the friends of Her Jesus... Mine, Who has but this peace, in the anxiety of Her Maternity of Mother of the Christ: to know that I am surrounded by your love... Do not disappoint, do not injure that heart of a Mother, My dear friends. Do not break it through any evil action of yours! Your mother, Judas. Your mother, who the last time we passed through Kerioth could not stop blessing Me and wanted to kiss My feet, because she is happy that her Judas is in the Light of God, and she used to say to Me: "Oh! Master! Make my Judas holy! What does the heart of a mother seek, but the welfare of her child? And which welfare is better than the eternal Good?". In fact! And which welfare, Judas, is there greater than the one to which I want to lead you all, and which one reaches following My Way? Your mother is a holy woman, Judas. A true daughter of Israel. I did not allow her to kiss My feet. Because you are My friends and because in each of your mothers, in every good mother, I see Mine, Judas. And I would like you to see in your mothers Mine, with Her tremendous destiny of

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Co-Redeemer, and I would like you not to wish to kill Her because... because you would feel that you were killing your own.

Judas, do not weep. Why weep? If you feel no remorse in your heart with regard to your mother or Mine, why shed those tears? Come here, rest your head on My shoulder and tell your Friend your anxiety. Have you done wrong? Do you feel you are about to do wrong? Oh! do not remain alone! Defeat Satan with the help of Him Who loves you. I am Jesus, Judas. I am the Jesus Who cures diseases and expels demons. I am the Jesus Who saves... and Who loves you so much, that He worries at seeing you so enfeebled. I am the Jesus Who teaches to forgive seventy times seven. But I, personally, forgive you not seventy, but seven hundred, seven thousand times... and there is no fault, Judas, there is no fault, Judas, there is no fault, Judas, that I do not forgive, that I do not forgive, that I do not forgive, if the repentant culprit says to Me: "Jesus, I have sinned". Even less: if he only says: "Jesus!". And even less: if he only looks at Me imploringly. And the first faults that I forgive, do you know, My friend, whom I forgive them? The most guilty and the most repentant. And do you know which are the very first ones that I forgive? Those committed against Me.

Judas?... Can you not find one word to reply to your Master?... Is your anguish so severe that it makes words die on your lips? Are you afraid that I may denounce you? Be not afraid! I have been longing for such a long time to speak to you thus, holding you on My heart, like twins in a cradle, born of the same mother, almost one flesh only, two babies who have sucked in turn the same warm nipple, each savouring his brother's saliva together with his mother's sweet milk. I now have you and I will not let you go away until you tell Me that I have cured you. Be not afraid, Judas. I want your confession. But your companions will think that this is a friendly conversation, because after it our faces will beam so much with reciprocal peace and love. And I will get them to believe so more and more, by holding you against My chest at supper this evening, dipping in the dish My own bread for you and offering it to you as to a favourite, and you will be the first to whom I will give the cup, after giving thanks to God. You will be the king of the banquet, Judas. And you will really be so. You will be the Bride of the Groom, o soul that I love, if you become clean and free, depositing your dust in My purifying lap.

Are you not going to speak to tell Me your grief? »

« You have spoken so kindly to me... of my mother... of home... of Your love... A moment of weakness... I am so tired!... And I thought that You had not loved me thus for some time... »

« No. It is not so. Only one thing of what you said is true, and that is that you are tired. But you are not tired of the road, of dust, of the sun, of mud, of crowds. You are tired of yourself. Your soul is

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tired of your body and of your mind. So tired that it will end extinguished by deadly tiredness. Poor soul, which I called to eternal brightness! Poor soul, which is aware of My love for you and reproaches you for tearing it away from My love! Poor soul, which reproaches you in vain - as in vain I caress you - for acting underhandedly with your Master. But it is not you who acts. It is he who hates you and Me. That is why I said to you: "Do not remain alone". Now, listen. You know that I spend most of My nights in prayer. If one day you should feel the courage of being a man and you wanted to be Mine, come to Me when your companions are sleeping. Stars, flowers, birds are good wise witnesses. And they are discreet and compassionate. They are struck with horror at the crime committed in their presence, but they do not utter any word to say to men: "This man is the Cain of his brother". Have you understood, Judas? »

« Yes, Master, I have. But believe Me: I am only tired and deeply moved. I love You with all my heart and... »

« All right. That is enough. »

« Will You give me a kiss, Master? »

« Yes, Judas. I will give you a kiss now and many in future... »

Jesus draws a heavy sigh, with grief. But He kisses Judas on the cheek. He then takes his head between the palms of His hands, and holding it tight, in front of Himself, only a few inches from His face, gazes at him, scrutinises him, pierces him with His magnetic eyes. And Judas, a wretched miserable man, does not turn a hair. He seemingly remains impassive while being examined. He only grows wan and closes his eyes for a moment. And Jesus kisses his closed eyelids, his lips and then his heart, bending His head to look for the heart of His disciple... and He says: « There you are: to dispel haze, to make you feel Jesus' kindness and fortify your heart. » He then lets him go and directs His steps towards the house, followed by Judas.

« You have come at the right moment, Master! Everything is ready. We were waiting only for You » says Peter.

« Well. I was speaking to Judas about many things... Is that right, Judas? We will also have to see to that poor old man whose son was killed. »

« Ah! » Judas leaps at the good opportunity to recover completely and divert the suspicion of the others, if they had any. « Ah! You know, Master? We were stopped today by a group of Gentiles along with Jews of the Roman colonies in Greece. They asked many questions. We replied as best we could. But we certainly did not convince them. However they were kind to us and gave us much money. Here it is, Master. We will be able to do much good with it. » And Judas produces a large purse of soft leather that gives a silvery sound when laid on the table. It is the size of a

child's head.

« All right, Judas. You will distribute the money impartially. What did the Gentiles want to know? »

« Information on future life... whether man has a soul and whether it is immortal. They mentioned the names of their masters. But... what could we say? »

« You should have told them to come. »

« We told them. Perhaps they will come. »

They continue to eat. Judas is near Jesus Who gives him some bread dipped into the sauce in the dish containing some roast meat.

They are eating small black olives, when they hear someone knock at the door. And shortly afterwards the landlady enters saying: « Master, You are wanted. »

« Who are they? »

« Strangers. »

« But it's not possible! », « The Master is tired! », « He has been walking and speaking all day! », « In any case! Gentiles in the house! Now then! ». The Twelve are in a turmoil, like a beehive which has been disturbed.

« Hush! Peace! It does not trouble Me to listen to those who look for Me. It is relaxation to Me. »

« It might be a trap! At this time of the day!... »

« No. It is not. Be calm and have a rest. I rested while waiting for you. I will go. I will not ask you to come with Me... although... although I tell you that it is to the Gentiles that you will have to take your Judaism, which will be nothing but Christianity. Wait for Me here. »

« Are You going alone! No! Never! » says Peter standing up.

« Stay where you are. I am going alone. »

He goes out. He looks out of the main door. In the twilight there are many men waiting for Him.

« Peace be with you. Do you want Me? »

« Hail, Master » replies an old imposing man. He is wearing a Roman garment that shows under a short round mantle with hood on his head. « We spoke to your disciples today. But they could not tell us much. We would like to speak to You. »

« Are you the ones of the rich offering? Thank you on behalf of the poor of God. » Jesus turns round towards the landlady and says: « Woman, I am, going out with these people. Tell My disciples to come and meet Me near the seashore because, if I am right, these people are merchants of the trade centre... »

« And seafarers, Master. You are right. »

They all go out together on to the main road, which is bright in the moonlight.

« Have you come from afar? » Jesus is in the middle of the group

3-2031

and beside Him there is the old man who spoke previously, a handsome old man with a sharp Latin profile. On the other side there is another elderly man, whose features are clearly Jewish. Around them there are two or three thin people with olive complexion, lively and somewhat ironical eyes, and then some sturdier people of different ages: about a dozen people all together.

« We come from the Roman colonies in Greece and Asia. Some of us are Jews, some Gentiles... That is why we dared not come... But we were assured that You do not despise Gentiles... as other people do... The observant Judaeans, I mean, those of Israel, because elsewhere also Judaeans are not so severe. In fact I, a Roman, am married to a Judaean from Lycaonia, whereas this gentleman, a Jew from Ephesus, is married to a Roman woman. »

« I do not despise anybody... But we must be indulgent to those who cannot yet consider that: As there is one only Creator, all men are of one blood. »

« We know that You are great among philosophers. And what You say confirms it. You are great and good. »

« He is good who does good things. Not who speaks well. »

« You speak well and do good things. So You are good. »

« What did you want to know from Me? »

« Today, forgive us, Master, if we annoy You with our inquisitiveness. But it is a good inquisitiveness because it seeks the Truth with love... Today we wanted to learn from Your disciples the truth concerning a doctrine, which was already mentioned by ancient philosophers of Greece and which You, so we are told, are now preaching once again, making it more extensive and beautiful. Eunice, my wife, spoke to some Judaeans who had heard You, and she repeated Your words to me. Eunice, You know, is Greek and learned and she knows the words of the wise men of her country. She found a resemblance between Your words and those of a great Greek philosopher. And Your words have reached also Ephesus. And as we came to this port, some on business and some to celebrate the rite, we found ourselves among friends and we talked. Business does distract people from thinking also of other higher matters. After filling our emporia and holds, we have time to resolve our doubt. You say that a soul is eternal. Socrates said that It is immortal. Do You know the words of the Greek master? »

« No. I did not study in the schools of Rome and Athens. But tell Me. I will understand you just the same. I am acquainted with the thought of the Greek philosopher. »

« Socrates, contrary to what we Romans believe, and also to what your Sadducees think, states and maintains that man has a soul and that it is immortal. Consequently he says that death is nothing but liberation for the soul that passes from prison to a free place, where it joins those whom it loved and where it meets the wise

men with whose wisdom it was acquainted, and great people, heroes, poets, and where it no longer finds injustice or sorrow. There is instead eternal happiness in a peaceful residence open to the immortal souls which lived in justice. What do You say, Master? »

« I solemnly tell you that the Greek master, although in the error of a false religion, was stating the truth saying that the soul is immortal. As a searcher after truth and a lover of Virtue, he heard the Voice of the unknown God whisper in the depth of his soul: the Voice of the True God, of the Only God: the Most High Father from Whom I come to take men to the Truth. Man has a soul, One, True, Eternal, Mistress, worthy of reward and of punishment. It is entirely his. Created by God it is destined in God's Thought to go back to God. You, Gentiles, devote yourselves too much to the cult of your bodies. The human body is really a wonderful work, on which there is the mark of the eternal Finger. You admire your minds too much; man's mind is a jewel enclosed in the coffer of his head from which it sends forth its sublime beams. A great celestial gift of God Creator, Who made you according to His Thought with regard to your figure, that is, a perfect work of organs and members, and He gave you His likeness with His Thought and Spirit. But the perfection of the likeness is in the Spirit. Because God has no members or dull flesh, as He is not subject to sensuality or incentive of lust. But He is a most pure Spirit, He is eternal, perfect, immutable, indefatigable in acting, continuously reviving in His works, which He paternally adapts to the ascensional march of His creature. The spirit, created in all men by the same Source of power and bounty, knows no variation of the original perfection, but knows many of them after it is infused in the body. One only is the uncreated and most perfect Spirit, and it has always been such. Three are the spirits that were created perfect and... »

« You are one, Master. »

« Not I. In My body I have the divine Spirit that was not created, but was generated by the Father through exuberance of Love. And I have the soul created for Me by the Father, as I am, now, the Man. A perfect soul as befits the Man God. But I am speaking of other spirits. »

« Which, then? »

« The two first parents from whom the race descends; they were created perfect and then they voluntarily fell into imperfection. The third one, created for the delight of God and of the Universe, is too superior to the possibilities of thought and faith of the present world to be pointed out to you. The spirits, as I was saying, created by the same Source with the same degree of perfection, are subject, through their own will and merit, to a double metamorphosis. »

« So You admit a second life? »

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« There is but one life. In it the soul, which was originally made in God's likeness, passes, through justice faithfully practised in everything, to a more perfect likeness, I would say, to a second creation of itself, whereby it evolves towards a double likeness to its Creator, becoming capable of possessing holiness, which is perfection of justice and likeness of children to the Father. It is to be found in the blessed souls, that is in those who your Socrates says live in Hades. Whereas I say that when Wisdom will have spoken its words and signed them with its blood, they will be the blessed souls of Paradise, that is, of the Kingdom of God. »

« And where are they now? »

« In expectation. »

« Of what? »

« Of the Sacrifice. Of Forgiveness. Of Liberation. »

« They say that the Messiah will be the Redeemer, and that You are such... Is it true? »

« It is true. It is I Who am speaking to you. »

« So, You will have to die? Why, Master? The world is in such great need of Light, and You want to leave it? »

« You, a Greek, are asking Me this? You, who are dominated by Socrates' words? »

« Master, Socrates was a just man. You are holy. Consider how much the Earth needs holiness. »

« It will be raised to the ten thousandth power for each sorrow, each wound and drop of My Blood. »

« By Jove! Never was there a Stoic greater than You, as You do not just preach the contempt of life, but You are preparing Yourself to throw it away. »

« I do not despise life. I love it as the most useful thing to buy the salvation of the world. »

« But You are too young, Master, to die! »

« Your philosopher says that what is holy is dear to the gods, and you said that I am holy. If I am holy I must long to go back to the Holiness from Which I came. So never young enough not to have such longing. Socrates also says that he who is holy loves to do things pleasant to the gods. What is more pleasant than restoring to the embrace of the Father the children whom sin had banished, and giving man peace with God, the source of all wealth? »

« You say that You do not know Socrates' words. How come then, that You know the ones You have spoken? »

« I know everything. The thoughts of men, when they are good thoughts, are nothing but the reflection of a thought of Mine. When a thought is not good, it is not Mine, but I have read it in the succession of times and I knew, I know and will know, when it was, is and will be spoken. I know. »

« Lord, come to Rome, the light of the world. You are surrounded

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by hatred here. You will be surrounded by veneration there. »

« It would surround man, not the Master of the supernatural. I have come for the supernatural. I must bring it to the children of the People of God, although they are the most stubborn against the Word. »

« So Rome and Athens will not have You? »

« They will have Me. Be not afraid. They will have Me. Those who want Me will have Me. »

« But if they are going to kill You... »

« The spirit is immortal. The spirit of every man is immortal. Will Mine not be so, the Spirit of the Son of God? I will come with My active Spirit... I will come... I can see numberless crowds and the Houses erected in My Name... I am everywhere... I will speak in cathedrals and in hearts... My evangelization will know no rest... The Gospel will travel all over the Earth... all good people towards Me... and there... I go by at the head of My multitude of saints and I lead it to Heaven. Come to the Truth... »

« Oh! Lord! Our souls are enveloped in formulae and errors. How can we open the doors to them? »

« I will unlock the doors of Hell, I will open the doors of your Hades and of My Limbo. And will I not be able to open yours? Say: "I want it" and like locks made with wings of butterflies they will collapse as if they were pulverised at the passing of My Ray. »

« Who will come in Your Name? »

« See that man who is coming here with the other fellow who is little more than a teenager? They will come to Rome and to the world. And many more with them. As solicitous as they are now, for My love that spurs them and gives them no rest but beside Me, they will come, for the sake of those redeemed by My Blood, to gather you together and lead you to the Light. Peter! John! Come here. I think I have finished and I can be with you. Have you anything else to tell Me? »

« Nothing else, Master. We will go away taking Your words with us. »

« May they germinate within you with eternal roots. Go. Peace be with you. »

« Hail, Master. »

And the vision ends...

Jesus says also to me: « Are you exhausted? A laborious dictation. A dictation rather than a vision. But the subject is wanted by certain people. Who? You will know on My Day. Now you may go in peace as well. »

Of my own I wish to add that the conversation of Jesus with the Gentiles took place along the sea-front of a seaside-town. In the

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moonlight one could see very clearly the calm waves lap the rocks of the breakwater of a large port full of ships. I could not mention this before because the group spoke all the time and if I had described the place I would have lost the thread of the conversation. They spoke walking up and down a long stretch of the seafront near the port. The place is solitary as there are no passengers and the seafarers have all gone back to the boats, the red lamps of which can be seen shining like rubies in the night. I do not know which town it is. It is certainly beautiful and important (1).

(1) It is the town of Joppa, as mentioned at the end of Chapter 403.

405. In the Estate of Nicodemus. The Parable of the Two Sons.

29th March 1946.

Jesus arrives there at dawn, when the air is fresh and cool. And the fertile fields of good Nicodemus are beautiful in the early sunshine. They are beautiful notwithstanding that the corn has been cut in many of them and they thus have the tired look of fields after the death of the corn, which in golden piles, or stretched on the ground like corpses, awaits being carried to the threshing floors. And many other flowers die with the corn: sapphire starshaped cornflowers, violet snapdragons, the minute corollas of scabiouses, the ephemeral chalice of harebells, the smiling radiant crowns of camomiles and daisies, showy scarlet poppies, and hundreds of other flowers, which star-shaped, in spikelike clusters, in bunches, in radiant crowns were previously smiling where there is now yellowish stubble. But the pain of the ground despoiled of its corn is comforted by the foliage of the fruit trees, which look more and more joyful because of the fruit growing on them with many different hues and on which dew drops, not yet dried by the sun, shine like diamond dust.

Farmers are already busy at their work. They are happy because the hard work of harvest time is almost over. And they sing while cutting, and laugh happily, competing with one another in cutting quicker with the sickle or tying sheaves... There are several groups of well-fed peasants who are happy to work for their good master. At the edges of the fields or behind the reapers, there are children, widows, old people, waiting to glean and they are waiting peacefully, because they know that there is plenty for everybody, as is customary, « by Nicodemus' order », as a widow explains to Jesus, Who had asked her.

« He watches to ensure that a large number of ears are deliberately not tied in the sheaves, and left for us » she says. « And not satisfied with so much charity, after taking a just quantity of corn

in proportion to the seed, he gives out the rest to us. Oh! He does not wait for the Sabbatical year to do that! But he always does that to help the poor with his crops, and he does the same with his olive-trees and vineyards. That is why God blesses him with wonderful harvests. The blessings of the poor are like dew on seeds and flowers, and thus each seed yields more ears and no flower falls before the fruit sets. And he told us that this year the whole lot will be given to us, because this is a year of grace. I do not know to which grace he refers. Unless it is because, as is rumoured among us poor people and among his happy servants... because he is secretly a disciple of Him, Who is said to be the Christ, and preaches one should love the poor, in order to show love to God... Perhaps You know Him, if You are Nicodemus' friend... because friends are generally fond of the same people... Joseph of Arimathea, for instance, is a great friend of Nicodemus, and it is rumoured that he, too, is a friend of the Rabbi... Oh! what have I said! May God forgive me! I have wronged the two good masters of our plain!... » The woman is upset.

Jesus smiles and asks: « Why, woman? »

« Because... Oh! tell me, are You a true friend of Nicodemus and Joseph, or are You one of the Sanhedrin, one of the false friends who would harm those two good people, if they knew for certain that they are friends of the Galilean? »

« Do not worry. I am a true friend of those two good men. But you know many things, woman! How did you get to know them? »

« Oh! we all know! The high classes with hatred; the low ones with love. Because, even if we do not know Him, we love the Christ, we the forlorn ones, whom He only loves and teaches to love. And we tremble for Him... The Judaeans, Pharisees, scribes and priests are so wicked!... But I am scandalising You... Forgive me. My tongue... is the tongue of a woman and cannot keep quiet... But it is because they are the cause of all our sorrows, the powerful ones who oppress us mercilessly, and compel us to fast on days which are not prescribed by the Law, but imposed by the necessity of finding money to pay all the tithes which they, the rich ones, have levied on poor people... And it is because all our hopes are in the Kingdom of this Rabbi, Who, if He is so good now that He is persecuted, what will He be when He is king? »

« His Kingdom is not of this world, woman. He will have neither palaces nor armies. He will not impose human laws. He will not make donations of money. But He will teach the better ones to do so. And the poor will find not two or ten or one hundred friends among the rich, but all those who believe in the Master will join their wealth together to assist their needy brothers. Because from now on your fellow-creature will no longer be called "neighbour", but "brother", in the name of the Lord. »

3-2037

« Oh!... » The woman is astonished, dreaming of such an era of love. She caresses her children, smiles, then raises her head and says: « So You assure me that I have not wronged Nicodemus... speaking to You? I did it so spontaneously... Your eyes are so kind!... Your countenance so serene!... I don't know... I feel as safe as if I were near an angel of God... That's why I spoke... »

« You have done no harm. Be sure of that. On the contrary, you have praised My friend so highly that I will commend him as well, and he will be dearer to Me than ever... Do you live here? »

« Oh! no, Lord. I come from a village between Lydda and Bethdagon. But when one needs relief, Lord, one runs even if the road is a long one! The winter months... the months of starvation are longer... »

« And eternity is longer than life. People ought to have for their souls the same care they have for their bodies, and run where there are words of life... »

« And that is what I do with the disciples of Rabbi Jesus, the good one, You know? The only good Rabbi of the too many rabbis we have. »

« You do the right thing, woman » says Jesus smiling, but making gestures to Andrew and James of Zebedee, who are with Him whereas the others have gone towards Nicodemus' house, to stop gesticulating to make the woman understand that it is Rabbi Jesus Who is speaking to her.

« Of course I do the right thing. I do not want to be guilty of not loving and believing Him... They say that He is the Christ... I do not know Him. But I want to believe. Because I think that those who refuse to accept Him as such will be in trouble. »

« And supposing His disciples were mistaken? » asks Jesus tempting her.

« That's not possible, Lord. They are too good, humble and poor, to think that they are following a man who is not holy. In any case... I have spoken to people who were cured by Him. Do not commit the sin of not believing, Lord! You would damn Your soul... After all... I think that if we were all mistaken and He were not the promised King, He is certainly holy and a friend of God, if He speaks those words and cures souls and bodies... And it is always a good thing to esteem good people. »

« What you say is true. Persist in your faith... There is Nicodemus... »

« Yes, with the disciples of the Rabbi. In fact they go round the country evangelizing the reapers. Yesterday also we ate their bread. »

Nicodemus, with his tunic tucked up, is coming forward without noticing the Master and he tells the peasants not to pick up any of the ears that have been cut. « We have enough bread for ourselves... Let us give the gift of God to those who have none. And let us give

it to them without any fear. A late frost might have destroyed our crops. Not one seed has been lost. Let us give God's bread back to Him by giving it to His unhappy children. And I can assure you that next year's harvest will be even more plentiful, ten times richer, because He said so, "an overflowing measure will be given to those who give". »

The peasants, respectful and happy, listen to their master nodding assent. And Nicodemus, from one field and one group to another, repeats his kind instructions.

Jesus, half-hidden by a curtain of canes near a partition ditch, approves and smiles. The more Nicodemus approaches Him, the more He smiles, as their meeting and the disciple's surprise are now very close at hand.

In fact Nicodemus jumps over the ditch to go into other fields... and becomes petrified before Jesus Who stretches His arms towards him. At last he recovers his power of speech: « Holy Master, how come You are here with me, may You be blessed? »

« To become acquainted with you, if there was any such need, through the words of the most sincere witnesses: those whom you overwhelm with charity... »

Nicodemus is on his knees, prostrated on the ground and also the disciples, led by Stephen and Joseph from Emmaus on the mountains, are on their knees. The peasants and the poor people present understand and they all prostrate themselves venerating the Master, seized with astonishment.

« Stand up. Up to a little while ago I was the Wayfarer who inspired confidence... Continue to consider Me as such. And love Me without any fear. Nicodemus, I sent the ten apostles who are missing, to your house... »

« I spent the night outside to watch that an order was carried out... »

« Yes, and God blesses you for that order. Which voice told you that this year, and not the next one, is a year of grace, for instance? »

« ... I do not know... And I know... I am not a prophet. But I am not a fool. And a light from Heaven was added to my intelligence. My Master... I wanted the poor to enjoy the gifts of God, while God is still among the poor... And I dared not hope to have You, to give a sweet flavour and sanctifying power to these crops, to my olivegroves, vineyards and orchards, which will be for the poor children of God, my brothers... But now that You are here, raise Your blessed hand and bless them, so that with the nourishment of the body, the holiness emanating from You may descend into those who will feed on them. »

« Yes, Nicodemus. Yours is a just desire approved of by Heaven. » And Jesus opens His arms to bless.

3-2039

« Oh! Wait! That I may call the peasants » and with a whistle he whistles three times and the shrill sound spreads in the calm air causing reapers, gleaners and curious people to rush from everywhere. A little crowd...

Jesus opens His arms and says: « Through the power of the Lord, for the desire of his servant, may the grace of health, both of soul and body, descend upon every grain, every grape, olive and fruit and may it prosper and sanctify those who eat of them with good spirit, free from concupiscence and hatred, and willing to serve the Lord by obeying His divine perfect Will. »

« So be it » reply Nicodemus, Andrew, James, Stephen and the other disciples... « So be it » reply the people of the crowd standing up, as they had knelt down to be blessed.

« Stop the work, My friend. I want to speak to them. »

« A gift in a gift. Thank You on their behalf, Master! »

They go into the shade of a thick orchard and wait for the arrival of the ten who had been sent to the house. They in fact arrive panting and disappointed at not finding Nicodemus.

Jesus then begins to speak:

« Peace be with you. I wish to propose a parable to all of you standing here around Me, so that each of you may avail himself of the teaching and of the part that is more suitable to him. Listen.

A man had two sons. He approached the first one and said: "Son, come and work in your father's vineyard today". It was a great sign of honour on his father's side. He in fact thought that his son was capable of working where up to then his father had worked. He obviously saw in his son good will, perseverance, capability, experience and love for his parent. But the son, whose mind was somewhat distracted by worldly things and who was afraid of being taken for a servant - Satan makes use of such mirages to avert people from Good - fearing mockery and perhaps also reprisal from his father's enemies, who dared not threaten him but would not have so much respect for the son, replied: "I will not go. I do not feel like it". The father then went to the other son, saying to him what he had already said to the first one. And the second son replied: "Yes, father, I will go at once". But what happened? The first son, whose mind was honest, after a first moment of weakness in temptation, a moment of rebellion, repented having disgusted his father, and without saying anything went to the vineyard, where he worked all day until late in the evening, and then went back home with peace in his heart, having fulfilled his duty. The second son, instead, untruthful and weak, went out, that is true, but he then wasted his time wandering about the town, making useless visits to influential people from whom he hoped to get some benefit. And he said to himself, in his heart: "Father is old and will not leave the house. I will tell him that I

obeyed and he will believe me... But when evening came also for him and he went back home, his tired look of an idle person, his creaseless clothes, and his uncertain way of greeting caused his father to watch him and compare him with his first son. The latter, in fact, had come back tired, dirty, untidy, but jovial and sincere. He looked humble and kind, as if he wished to say to' his father, without boasting, that after all he had fulfilled his duty: "I love you truly, so much so, that to make you happy I resisted temptation". And the comparison spoke clearly to the intelligent father, who embraced his son saying: "May you be blessed because you have understood love!".

In fact, what do you think? Which of the two had loved? You will certainly say: "He who did the will of his father". And who did it? The first or the second son? »

« The first » replies the crowd by one consent.

« Yes, the first. Also in Israel, and you complain about it, in the eyes of God are not holy those who beat their chests saying "Lord! Lord!", without being really repentant of their sins in their hearts - in fact their hearts become harder and harder - neither are those holy, who ostentate devote rites to be regarded as saints, whereas in private they lack charity and justice, neither those are holy who rebel against the Will of God Who sends Me, and they contest it as if it were the will of Satan, which will not be forgiven, those are not the ones who are holy in the eyes of God. But those are holy who acknowledging that everything that God does is well done, accept the Messenger of God and listen to His word in order to be able to do what the Father wants in a better and better way: they are holy and dear to the Most High. I solemnly tell you: ignorant and poor people, publicans and prostitutes will go before many who are called "masters", "powerful", "holy", and they will enter the Kingdom of God. And it will be just. Because John came to Israel to lead her on the ways of Justice and too many in Israel did not believe him - Israel who calls herself "learned and holy" - but publicans and prostitutes did believe him. And I came, and the learned and holy ones do not believe Me, but poor and ignorant people and sinners do believe in Me. And I have worked miracles; and they did not believe even them, neither do they repent for not believing. On the contrary, they hate Me and those who love Me. Well, I say: "Blessed those who can believe in Me and thus do the will of God, in Whom there is eternal salvation". Increase your faith and persevere. You will possess Heaven, because you knew how to love the Truth. Go. May God be always with you. »

He blesses them and dismisses them and then, walking beside Nicodemus, He goes towards the house of His disciple to rest during the hot hours of the day.

3-2041

406. At the Estate of Joseph of Arimathea.

31st March 1946.

Here also the reapers are working hard. Nay, it would be better to say: the reapers have worked hard. Sickles, in fact, are no longer needed, as not one ear has been left uncut, the fields being closer to the Mediterranean shores than Nicodemus'. Jesus in fact has not gone to Arimathea, but to Joseph's estate in the plain, towards the sea, and the fields here before harvest time must have looked like another little sea of ears, they are so large.

In the middle of the bare fields there is a low, wide white house: a country house, but well kept. Its four threshing-floors are being filled with sheaves arranged in groups, as soldiers do with baggage-trains when they stop at camps. Numerous carts carry the precious goods from the fields to the threshing-floors, where many men unload them and pile them up, while Joseph moves from one threshing-floor to another, checking that everything is done properly.

From the top of a heap on a cart a peasant announces: « Master, we have finished. All the corn is on your threshing-floors. This is the last cart of the last field. »

« Very well. Unload the cart, unyoke the oxen and take them to the watering place and then to the stables. They have worked hard and deserve a rest. And you all have done a good job and deserve a rest. But the last job will be a light one because kind hearts are relieved by the joy of other people. We shall now get the children of God to come here and we will give them the gift of the Father. Abraham, go and call them » he then says addressing a patriarchal peasant, who is perhaps the first of the peasant servants in Joseph's estate. I think he must be, because I see that the other servants have great respect for the old man, who does not work, but supervises and assists the master with his advice.

And the old man goes... I can see him direct his steps to a very low large building, which is more like a shed than a house, with two huge doors which reach up to the eaves gutter. I think that it is a kind of storehouse where carts and other agricultural implements are kept. He goes in and then comes out followed by a miserable heterogeneous crowd of people of every age... and of every degree of misery. There are emaciated people but without any physical defect, and there are cripples, blind and maimed persons, and people with diseased eyes... Many widows with little orphans around them, and wives of sick men, sad, shabby, feeble through waking and sacrificing themselves to cure their husbands.

They come forward with the typical aspect of poor people going to a place where they will be assisted: with shy countenance, the bashfulness of the honest poor, but, nevertheless, with a smile which just appears on their lips shading the sadness impressed on

their wan faces by days of sorrow, but, nevertheless with a tiny spark of triumph, which is almost a reply to the ruthless obstinacy of destiny during continuous sad days, as if to say: « Today is a feast-day also for us, it is a feast, mirth, relief for us! »

The little ones open their eyes wide before the heaps of sheaves, which are higher than the house, and pointing at them they say to their mothers: « Are they for us? Oh! How lovely! ». The old people whisper: « May the Blessed One bless the merciful one! ». The beggars, cripples, the blind and maimed people and those with defective sight: « We also shall have bread at last, without having to stretch out our hands begging for it! ». And the sick people say to their relatives: « At least we shall be able to follow treatment knowing that you are not suffering because of us. Medicines will do us good, now. » And relatives reply to the sick people: « See? Now you will no longer say that we fast to let you have a morsel of bread. So be happy now!... » And the widows to their little orphans: « Dear children, we will have to bless the Father in Heaven most sincerely, as He acts as your father, and also good Joseph who is His administrator. Now we shall not hear you cry any more because you are hungry, poor children, who have but your mothers to assist you... Poor mothers who have no riches but their hearts... » It is a joyful chorus and sight, but it also makes tears well up in one's eyes...

And when the unhappy crowd is before him, Joseph begins to walk up and down their lines, calling them one by one, asking how many they are in the family, how long have they been widows, or ill and so on... and he takes notes. And for each case he gives instructions to the peasant servants: « Give ten. Give thirty. »

« Give sixty » he says after listening to an almost blind old man who comes up to him with seventeen grandchildren, all under twelve, the children of a son and a daughter of his who died, the former at reaping time the previous year, the latter of childbirth... and the old man says: « her husband consoled himself getting married again after one year, and he sent his five children to me saying that he would see to them. Instead, never one penny!... Now my wife also died and I am left... with these... »

« Give sixty to the old father. And you, father, wait here, later I will give you some clothes for the little ones. »

The servant points out that if they continue to give sixty sheaves every time, there will not be enough corn for everybody...

« And where is your faith? Am I perhaps storing up the sheaves for myself and sharing them out? No. No they are for the children dearest to the Lord. The Lord Himself will see that there is enough for everybody » replies Joseph to the servant.

« Yes, master. But numbers are numbers... »

« And faith is faith. And to show you that faith can do everything,

I order you to double the quantities given to the first ones. Let him who had ten have ten more, and who had twenty, twenty more and give the old man one hundred and twenty. Go! Do that! »

The servants shrug their shoulders and carry out the order. And the distribution continues while the amazed beneficiaries rejoice seeing that they are receiving a quantity that exceeds the most optimistic hopes. And Joseph smiles, caressing the little ones who are busy helping their mothers, or he helps the cripples who are arranging their little piles, he helps those who are too old to do so, or the women who are too emaciated, and he has two sick people put to one side to let them have further assistance, as he did the old man with seventeen grandchildren.

The piles which were higher than the house, are now very low, almost on ground level. But everybody has had his share, and an abundant one. Joseph asks: « How many sheaves are there still left? »

« One hundred and twelve, master » reply the servants after counting the remainder.

« Well. You will take... » Joseph glances over the list of names which he had written, and then he says: « You will take fifty and put them aside for seed, because it is holy seed. And the rest will be given one each to every head of the family who is present here. They are exactly sixty-two. »

The servants obey. They take fifty sheaves under a porch and hand out the rest. Now there are no more huge golden piles on the threshing-floors. But on the ground there are sixty-two little heaps, of different sizes, and their owners are busy tying them and loading them on to rudimentary wheelbarrows, or on stunted little donkeys that they untied from a fence at the rear of the house.

Old Abraham, who has been chatting with the main peasant servants, approaches his master along with them and the master asks him: « Well? Have you seen? There was enough for everybody! And with surplus! »

« Master! There is a mystery here! Our fields cannot have yielded all the sheaves that you have distributed. I was born here and I am seventy-eight years old. I have been reaping for sixty-six. And I know. My son is right. Without a mystery we could not have given so much!... »

« But it is a matter of fact that we have given them, Abraham. You were beside me. The sheaves were handed out by the servants. There is no sorcery. It is not a dream. You can still count the sheaves. They are still there, although divided into many lots. »

« Yes, master. But... It is not possible that the fields have yielded so many! »

« And what about faith, my children? What about faith? What shall we do with our faith? Could the Lord belie His servant who

3-2044

made a promise in His Name and for a holy purpose? »

« Then, you have worked a miracle?! » exclaim the servants, ready to sing hosannas.

« I am not the type of man who works miracles. I am a poor man. The Lord worked it. He read my heart and saw two wishes in it: the first one was to lead you to my faith. The second was to give much, so much to these unhappy brothers of mine. God consented to my desires... and He worked. May He be blessed for that! » says Joseph bowing reverently as if he were before an altar...

« And His servant with Him » says Jesus Who has been in hiding hitherto behind the corner of a little house surrounded by a hedge; I do not know whether it is the bakehouse or the oil-mill. And He now appears openly on the threshing-floor, where Joseph is standing.

« My Master and my Lord!! » exclaims Joseph falling on his knees to venerate Jesus.

« Peace to you. I have come to bless you in the name of the Father, and to reward your charity and your faith. I shall be your guest this evening. Do you want Me? »

« Oh! Master! Are You asking me? Only... Only I will not be able to honour You here... I am with servants and peasants... in my country house... I have no fine table-cloths, no butler, no experienced servants... I have no refined food... no choice wines... I have no friends here... It will be a very poor hospitality indeed... But You will understand... Why, my Lord, did You not inform me beforehand? I would have provided... Hermas was here the day before yesterday with his friends... In fact I made use of them to inform these people, to whom I wanted to give what belongs to God... But Hermas did not say anything to me! If I had known!... Allow me, Master, to give instructions, so that I may try to find a remedy... Why are You smiling thus? » at last asks Joseph, who is in utter confusion with the sudden joy and because of the situation that he considers... a disaster.

« I am smiling at your unnecessary pains. Joseph, what are you looking for? For what you have? »

« What I have? I have nothing. »

« Oh! What a material man you are now! Why are you no longer the spiritual Joseph of a little while ago, when you spoke as a wise man? When you were promising, full of confidence, for your faith and to give faith? »

« Oh! did You hear me? »

« I heard and saw you, Joseph. That laurel hedge is very useful, as from it I could see that what I have sown in you is not dead. That is why I say that you are worrying about trifles. You have no butlers or experienced servants? But where charity is practised, there is God, and where God is, there are His angels. So which

house-stewards more experienced than they are do you want? You have no delicious food or choice wines? Which food do you want to give Me, which drink more delicious than the love you had for these people and you have for Me? You have no friends to honour Me? And what about these? Which friends are dearer to the Master, Whose name is Jesus, than the poor and the unhappy? Come on, Joseph! Even if Herod should be converted and he should open his halls to give Me honour and hospitality, in a purified palace and the heads of all the castes were there, I would not have a more select court than this one, to which I also wish to say a word and give a gift. Will you allow Me? »

« Oh! Master! I want everything You want! Tell me. »

« Tell them to gather together, and get the servants also to assemble here. There will always be some bread for us... It is better for them to listen to My word now, rather than run here and there busying themselves with trifles. »

The astonished people crowd around quickly...

Jesus says: « You have realised here that faith can multiply corn when such desire is based on a desire of love. But do not confine your faith to material necessities. God created the first grain of wheat and since then wheat ears for the bread of men. But God created also Paradise and it awaits its citizens. It was created for those who live according to the Law and remain faithful notwithstanding the sorrowful trials of life. Have faith and you will be able to remain holy with the help of the Lord, just as Joseph was able to allot a double quantity of corn to make you happy twice and confirm his servants in the faith. I solemnly tell you that if man had faith in the Lord, and if it were for a just reason, not even mountains, the rocky bowels of which are rooted in the earth, could resist, and they would shift from one place to another at the order of anyone who has faith in the Lord. Have you faith in God? » He asks addressing everybody.

« Yes, Lord! »

« Who is God according to you? »

« The Most Holy Father, as the disciples of the Christ teach us. »

« And what is Christ to you? »

« The Saviour. The Master. The Holy One! »

« Only that? »

« The Son of God. But we must not say that, because if we do, the Pharisees will persecute us. »

« But do you believe that He is the Son of God? »

« Yes, Lord. »

« Well, increase your faith. Even if you are silent, stones, plants, stars, the ground, everything will proclaim that Christ is the true Redeemer and King. They will proclaim it in the hour of His accession, when He will be in the most holy purple with the wreath of

Redemption. Blessed are those who will believe that as from now and will believe even more then, and will have faith in the Christ and consequently eternal life. Have you such unshakeable faith in Christ? »

« Yes, Lord. Tell us where He is, and we will beg Him to increase our faith in order to be blessed as You say. » Not only the poor, but also the servants, the apostles and Joseph take part in the last prayer.

« If you have as much faith as the size of a mustard seed, and you keep the precious pearl of your faith in your hearts, without allowing any human, or superhuman or wicked thing to take it away from you, each of you will be able to say to that mighty mulberrytree which shades Joseph's well: "Uproot yourself and be transplanted in the waves of the sea". »

« But where is Christ? We are expecting Him to be cured. His disciples did not cure us, but they said: "He can do it". We would like to be cured to be able to work » say the sick and unfit men.

« And do you think that Christ can do it? » asks Jesus making signs to Joseph not to say that He is the Christ.

« We do believe it. He is the Son of God. He can do everything. »

« Yes. He can do everything... and He wants everything! » shouts Jesus stretching out His right arm imperiously and then lowering it as if to swear. And He concludes with a powerful cry: « And let that be done, to the glory of God! »

And He is about to turn round towards the house. But those who have been cured, about twenty people, shout, rush, surround Him in a confusion of hands stretched out to touch, bless, find His hands, garments, to kiss and caress Him. They isolate Him from Joseph, from everybody...

And Jesus smiles, caresses, blesses... He slowly frees Himself, and still followed by the people, He disappears into the house while hosannas rise in the sky, which is becoming violet in the incipient twilight.

407. In the House of Joseph of Arimathea on a Sabbath. John, a Member of the Sanhedrin.

2nd April 1946.

Joseph of Arimathea is resting in a half-lit room, because all the curtains have been lowered as a protection from the sun. There is deathlike silence in the entire house. Joseph is dozing in a low seat covered with mats... A servant enters, he goes towards his master and touches him to wake him. Joseph opens his sleepy eyes and looks at the servant inquisitively.

« Master, your friend John is here... »

« My friend John?! How is he here if the Sabbath is not yet over?! »

3-2047

Joseph has woken up with a start, surprised at the visit of a member of the Sanhedrin on a Sabbath. And he orders: « Let him come in at once. »

The servant goes out and, while waiting, Joseph walks pensively up and down the semi-dark cool room...

« May God be with you, Joseph! » says John, the member of the Sanhedrin we already saw at the first banquet offered to Jesus at Arimathea, and also in Lazarus' house at last Passover, always as a person not hostile to Jesus, although not a disciple.

« And with you, John! But... as I know that you are just, I am astonished at seeing you before sunset... »

« That's true. I have infringed the Sabbatic law. And I sinned knowing that I was sinning. So, grave is my sin... And great will be the sacrifice that I will consume to be forgiven. And momentous is the reason that instigated my commission of this sin... Jehovah, Who is just, will be indulgent to His guilty servant in view of the important motive that drove me to sin... »

« Once you did not speak like that. The Most High was only rigid severity as far as you were concerned. And you were perfect because you feared Him as an inexorable God... »

« Oh! perfect!... Joseph, I have never confessed my secret faults to you... But it is true. I did judge God inexorable. Like many in Israel. We were taught to consider Him thus: the God of vengeance... »

« And you have continued to believe so even after the Rabbi came to let His people know the true Face of God, His true Heart... The Face, the Heart of a Father... »

« It's true. But... I had never heard Him speak for any length of time... But... you will remember, since the first time I saw Him at the banquet in your house, I assumed an attitude of... respect, if not of love for the Rabbi. »

« That is true... But for the love I have for you I would like you to pass on to an attitude of love for Him. Respect is too little... »

« You love Him, don't you, Joseph? »

« Yes, I do. And I am telling you, although I know that the Chief Priests hate those who love the Rabbi. But you are not capable of delation... »

« No. I am not... And I would like to be like you. But shall I ever succeed? »

« I will pray that you may succeed. It would be your eternal salvation' my dear friend... »

Silence follows full of reflections...

Then Joseph asks: « You told me that a grave motive drove you to infringe the Sabbath. Which? Can I ask you without being too indiscreet? I think that you have come to have help from your friend... And I must know, in order to help you... »

3-2048

John rubs his forehead with his hand, he presses his broad forehead, which is beginning to go bald, as is typical of men in full virility, he mechanically caresses his grizzly hair, his thick squarecut beard... He then raises his head, stares at Joseph saying: « Yes. An important reason. And A painful one. And... a great hope... »

« Which? »

« Joseph, can you believe that my house is like hell and will soon no longer be a home... as it will soon be devastated, dispersed, destroyed, crushed? »

« What? What are you saying? Are you raving? »

« No, I am not... My wife wants to leave me... Are you surprised? »

« ... Yes... I am... because I have always known her to be good... and because your family seemed to be a model one... you all kindness... she all virtue... »

John sits down holding his head in his hands...

Joseph goes on: « Now... this... decision... I... Well... I cannot believe that Anne has done anything wrong... or that you have... But I believe even less with regard to her... entirely devoted to her home and children... No!... There can be no fault in her!... »

« Are you sure? Really sure? »

« Oh! my poor friend! I have not the eye of God. But as far as I can judge, that is what I think... »

« Do you not think that Anne is... unfaithful... ? »

« Anne?! But, my friend! Has the summer sun injured your brain? Unfaithful with whom? She never leaves the house, she prefers the country to town. She works as the best of her servants, she is nothing but humble, modest, active, loving with you and the children. A light woman does not love such things. Believe me. Oh! John, on what do you ground your suspicion? Since when? »

« I have always suspected. »

« Always? Well, yours is a disease!... »

« Yes. And... Joseph, I have many faults. But I do not want to confess them to you only. The day before yesterday some disciples and poor people passed by my house. They said that the Rabbi was on His way to your house. And yesterday... yesterday was a very stormy day for my house... so much so that Anne took the decision I told you... During the night - and what a night - I have pondered very much... And I came to the conclusion that only He, the perfect Rabbi... »

« Divine, John, divine! »

« ... As you wish... That He only can cure me and repair... rebuild my house, giving Anne... my children... everything back to me... » The man is weeping and while shedding tears he continues: « Because He only sees and speaks the truth... and I will believe Him... Joseph, my friend, let me stay here and wait for Him... »

« The Master is here. He will leave after sunset. I will go and call

3-2049

Him for you » and Joseph goes out...

After a few minutes the curtain is drawn again to let Jesus pass... John stands up and bows respectfully.

« Peace to you, John. Why have you been looking for Me? »

« That You may help me to see... and You may save me. I am very unhappy. I have sinned against God and against my wife. And from one sin to another I have come to the point of infringing the Sabbatic law. Absolve me, Master. »

« The Sabbatic law! A great holy law! And far be it from Me the idea of considering it of no importance and old-fashioned. But why do you put it before the first commandment? What? You ask Me to absolve you for infringing the Sabbath and you do not ask absolution for lacking charity and torturing an innocent soul, driving to despair and to the threshold of sin the soul of your wife? You ought to be distressed about that more than anything else! About calumniating her... »

« Lord, I have only spoken to Joseph about it, a short time ago. I have not mentioned it to anybody else, believe me. I kept my grief so secret that my good friend Joseph was not aware of anything, and he was amazed when I told him. He has now told You, in order to help me. Joseph is a just man and he will not talk to anybody about it. »

« He has not mentioned it to Me. He only told Me that you wanted Me. »

« Oh! How do You know then? »

« How do I know? As God knows the secrets of hearts. Shall I tell you the state of your heart? »...

Joseph is about to withdraw discreetly. But John himself stops him saying: « Oh! Stay. You are my friend! Since you were groomsman at my wedding, you can help me with the Rabbi!... » and Joseph remains.

« Shall. I tell you? Do you want Me to help you to know yourself? Oh! be not afraid! I do not have a cruel hand. I can uncover wounds but I do not make them bleed to cure them. I can understand and be indulgent. And I know how to cure and heal, provided one wants to be cured. And you do want it. So much so that you have looked for Me. Sit here, beside Me, between Joseph and Me. He was your groomsman at your earthly wedding. I would like to be the best man of your spiritual wedding... Oh! I would love that!... Now, listen to Me carefully. And answer all My questions frankly. What do you think of the action of God Who created man and woman, so that they should be united? Was it a good or a bad thing? »

« A good one, Lord. Like all the things made by God. »

« You are right. Now tell Me: if the action was good, what were to be its consequences? »

« Equally good, Lord. And they were good, although Satan came

3-2050

to upset them, because Adam was always comforted by Eve, and Eve by Adam. And their consolation was more deeply felt when alone, exiles on the Earth, they supported each other. Also material consequences were good, that is, their children, through whom mankind propagated, and the power and goodness of God shone. »

« Why? Which power and goodness? »

« Well... the one carried out in favour of men. If we look back... yes... there are just punishments, but there are many, more numerous good deeds... And the Covenant made with Abraham and renewed with Jacob is infinite goodness... and up to the present day. And repeated by truthful lips: the prophets... up to John... »

« And by the Rabbi, John » interrupts Joseph.

« Those are not the lips of a prophet... or the lips of a Master... They are... much more. »

Jesus smiles lightly at the... still restricted profession of faith of the member of the Sanhedrin, who does not go to the extent of saying: « They are divine lips » although he already thinks so.

« So God did the right thing in joining man and woman together. Agreed. But how did He want man and woman to be? » asks Jesus.

« One body only. »

« All right. Now, can the body hate itself? »

« No. »

« Can one member hate another member? »

« No. »

« Can one member separate from another? »

« No. Gangrene only, or leprosy or an accident can amputate a member from the rest of the body. »

« Very well. Therefore only a sorrowful or wicked thing can separate what by God's will is one unit only? »

« It is so, Master. »

« Well, then, although you are convinced of such things, why do you not love your body, and you hate it so much, that you get gangrene to grow between one member and another, whereby the weaker member, the mortified one, separates and leaves you all alone? »

John lowers his head, becomes silent while fretting the fringes of his garment.

« I will tell you why. Because Satan, the usual disturber, has come between you and your wife. Nay: he has come into you, with a disorderly love for your wife. And when love is disorderly, it becomes hatred, John. Satan has worked on your virile sensuality to get you to commit sin. Because that is where your sin began. From one disorder that has brought about new and much graver disorders. In your wife you have not seen only a good companion and the mother of your children, but also an object of pleasure.

3-2051

And that has made your eyes like those of an ox, which sees everything altered. You saw things as you were seeing them. That is how you saw your wife. An object of pleasure for you, you considered her such also for other people, whence your feverish jealousy, your irrational fear, your sinful arrogance, which made of her a frightened, imprisoned, tortured, slandered woman. What does it matter if you do not beat her, if you do not revile her in public? Your suspicion is a stick, your doubt is slander! You calumniate her thinking that she could go to the extent of being unfaithful to you. What does it matter if you treat her as your rank demands? In the privacy of your home she is worse than a slave for you, because of your beastlike lust, which degrades her beyond endurance, and which she has suffered silently and submissively, hoping to convince you, to calm you, to make you good, and which has only served to irritate you more and more, to the extent of turning your house into a hell, in which the demons of lust and jealousy are roaring. Jealousy! What can you think of more slanderous for a wife than jealousy? And what is a clearer indication of the state of a heart than jealousy? You may rest assured that wherever it nestles, foolish, irrational, groundless, offensive, obstinate as it is, there can be no love for one's neighbour or for God. But there is selfishness. You ought to be grieved over all that, not at infringing the close of the Sabbath! And to be forgiven you must repair the ruin caused by you... »

« But Anne wants to go away, by now... Come and convince her... You are the only one who can judge whether she is really innocent, after hearing her speak, and... »

« John!! You want to be cured and yet you do not want to believe what I say? »

« You are right, my Lord. Change my heart. It is true. I have no well-grounded reason to suspect. But I love her so much... lewdly, it is true... You have seen the real situation... Everything is shadowy to me... »

« Come into the Light. Come out of the burning confusion of sensuality, which is so fierce. It will cost you at first... But it would cost you much more to lose a good wife and deserve hell, expiating your sins of lack of love, slander and adultery, and hers as well, because I remind you that who drives a woman to divorce, places himself and her on the way to adultery. If you can resist your demon for one month, at least for one month, I promise you that your nightmare will come to an end. Will you promise Me? »

« Oh! Lord! Lord! I would like to... But it is a fire... Put it out, You are powerful!... » John has fallen on to his knees before Jesus and is weeping with his head in his hands as he kneels on the floor.

« And I will appease it. I will limit it. I will check and restrain this demon. But you have sinned much, John, and you must work

by yourself at your revival. Those who have been converted by Me, came to Me willing to become new, free... They had already worked, with their own strength only, the beginning of their redemption. Such as Matthew, Mary of Lazarus and many more. You have come here only to find out whether she is guilty and to be helped by Me not to lose the fountain at which your pleasure drinks. I will limit the power of your demon for three months, not for one. During that time meditate and rise. Resolve to start a new life as a husband. The life of a man gifted with soul. Not the life of a brute as you have led so far. And fortified by prayer and by meditation, by the peace which I will give you as a gift for three months, learn to struggle and conquer eternal Life and win back the love and peace of your wife and of your home. Go. »

« But what shall I tell Anne? I may find her ready to leave... Which words shall I speak after so many years of... insults, to persuade her that I love her and that I do not want to lose her? Please come with me... »

« I cannot. But it is so simple... Be humble. Call her to one side and confess your torment. Tell her that you came to Me because you want to be forgiven by God. And tell her to forgive you because God's forgiveness will be given to you only if she invokes it for you and she is the first to give you it... Oh! unhappy man! How much good, how much peace you have dissipated through your lust! How much evil is brought about by the unruliness of senses and by the disorder of affections! Rise and go away with a peaceful mind. Do you not understand that your wife, who is good and faithful to you, is more distressed than you are at the thought of having to leave you and is waiting only for one word from you so that she may say to you: "You have been forgiven everything"? You may go now, as the sun is already set. So you are not committing any sin in going back to your house... And the Saviour absolves you of the sin you committed in coming to Him. Go in peace. And sin no more. »

« Oh! Master! Master!... I do not deserve such words!... Master... I... want to love You from now on... »

« Yes, of course. Go and do not delay. And remember this hour when I will be the slandered Innocent. »

« What do You mean? »

« Nothing. Go. Goodbye » and Jesus withdraws leaving the two members of the Sanhedrin moved and excited in judging Him really holy and wise as only God can be.

408. The Apostles Speak.

5th April 1946.

« I am dying to be up in the mountains! » exclaims Peter puffing

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and blowing and wiping the perspiration that trickles down his cheeks and neck.

« What? You hated mountains, and now you want them? » sarcastically asks Judas Iscariot, who has become overbearing and bold once again, now that he sees that his fear of being found out has come to nothing.

« Yes, now I really want them. At this time of the year they are the right place. Not just like my sea... That one, ah! But... I do not understand why fields are warmer after harvest time. The sun is still the same, and yet... »

« It is not a question that they are warmer. The fact is that they are gloomier and one feels more depressed looking at them thus, than when they are full of corn » sensibly replies Matthew.

« No. Simon is right. They are unbearably warm after they have been reaped. I never felt so warm » says James of Zebedee.

« Never? And what about the heat we suffered going to Nike? » retorts Judas of Kerioth.

« It was never as bad as this » replies Andrew.

« No wonder! Summer is now forty days ahead and consequently the sun is scorching hot » insists Judas.

« It is a fact that stubble gives off more heat than fields full of corn, and the reason is clear. The sunbeams, which previously stopped on the top of the ears, now blaze down directly on the bare burnt ground and the latter reflects its heat upwards, in opposition to the sun that descends from above, and thus man finds himself between two fires » sententiously says Bartholomew.

The Iscariot laughs ironically and he gives a low bow to his companion saying: « Rabbi Nathanael, I greet you and thank you for your learned lesson. » He is as offensive as one can be.

Bartholomew looks at him... but is silent. Philip instead defends him: « There is no need to be ironical! What he said is correct! You are surely not going to deny a truth that millions of people with good common sense have judged to be true, logical and verifiable. »

« Of course! Of course! I know, that you are all learned, experts, sensible, good, perfect people... You are everything! Everything! I only am the black sheep in the white herd!... I only am the bastard lamb, the disgrace that is disclosed and puts on ram-horns... I only am the sinner, the imperfect one, the cause of all the evil among us, in Israel, in the world... perhaps also in the stars... I cannot stand this any longer! Not so much because I see that I am the last, but because I see that nonentities, like those two fools who are speaking to the Master, are admired as if they were two holy oracles, I am tired of... »

« Listen, boy... » Peter begins to say, while red in the face not so much from the heat, as from his efforts in controlling himself.

But Judas Thaddeus interrupts him: « Are you judging other people

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by your own standard? Try and be a "nonentity" yourself like my brother James and John of Zebedee, and there will no longer be imperfections in the apostolic group. »

« See now, whether I am right! I am imperfection! Ah! that's too much! But it is... »

« Yes, I think that it was too much the wine that Joseph made us drink and in this heat it is upsetting you... just a reaction of the blood... » says very calmly Thomas, to make a joke of the quarrel, which is about to arise.

But Peter has worn out his patience and with set teeth and clenched fists to continue to master himself, he says: « Listen boy. There is one thing only advisable for you: part for a little while... »

« I? Part? By your order? The Master only can give me orders and I will obey Him only. Who are you? A poor... »

« An ignorant, coarse, good-for-nothing fisherman. You are right... I am the first to say that. And before the omnipresent, allseeing Jehovah, I testify that I would prefer to be the last, instead of the first, I declare that I would like to see you or anybody else in my place, but you above all, so that you might be freed from the monster of jealousy, which makes you unfair, and I wish I had but to obey you, my boy... And believe me, it would cost me much less trouble than having to speak to you as the "first". But He, the Master, appointed me the "first" among you... And I must obey Him first of all and more than I have to obey anybody else. And you must obey. And with my good sense of a fisherman I tell you to part, not as you have understood, mistaking my soothing words for fiery ones, but to go away for a short while and be alone, to meditate... You were behind us all from Bether to the valley. Do that again... The Master ahead... you in the rear... we... the nonentities, in the middle All one has to do to understand and to calm down is to be alone Listen to me... It is better for everybody, and for you first of all » And he takes him by the arm and pulls him out of the group, saying: « There, stay there while we join the Master. Then... come slowly, slowly... and you will gee that the storm will soon be over » and he leaves him, joining his companions who are already a few metres ahead.

« Ugh! I perspired more speaking to him than walking... What temperament! Shall we ever be able to get something from him? »

« Never, Simon. My brother persists in keeping him. But... He will never get any good out of him » replies Judas Thaddeus to him.

« He is a real punishment for us! » whispers Andrew, and he concludes: « John and I are almost afraid of him and we always keep quiet fearing further quarrels. »

« It is in fact the best policy » says Bartholomew.

« I just cannot keep quiet » admits Thaddeus.

« I am not very successful either... But I have found the secret to

become so » says Peter.

« Which? Tell us... » they all say.

« Working like an ox at the plough. Even a useless job... Something that serves to get off my chest the load that is brewing up inside me... something that is not Judas. »

« Ah! I understand! That is why you made such havoc of plants when descending to the valley! That's why, eh? » asks James of Zebedee.

« That's it... But today... here... I had nothing to break without causing damage. There are only fruit trees and it would be a sin to spoil them... I worked three times as hard... breaking myself... so that I would not be the old Simon of Capernaum... And my bones are aching... »

Bartholomew and the Zealot make the same gesture and utter the same words: they embrace Peter exclaiming: « And you are astonished that He appointed you the first among us? You are a teacher to us... »

« Me? Because of that?... A trifle!... I am a poor man... I ask you only to love me by giving me wise advice, simple loving advice. Love and simplicity that I may become like you... And only for His sake as He is already so grieved... »

« You are right. That we at least may not be the cause of His grief! » exclaims Matthew.

« I had a terrible fright when Johanna sent for Him. You two, who have gone ahead, do you really not know anything? » asks Thomas.

« No, nothing for certain. But we have been thinking that it was in connection with that fellow behind there... who has been up to something » replies Peter.

« Be quiet! I suspected the same when I heard the Master speak on the Sabbath » admits Judas Thaddeus.

« So did I » answers James of Zebedee.

« Oh!... I never thought of that... not even when I saw Judas so gloomy, so rude that evening, I must say » says Thomas.

« Well. Let us forget about it. And let us try to... improve him, with our love and sacrifices. As Marjiam taught us... » says Peter.

« What will Marjiam be doing? » asks Andrew smiling.

« Who knows!?... We shall soon be with him. I am dying to see him... These separations really cost me so much. »

« I wonder why the Master wants this. Now... Marjiam also could be with us. He is no longer a little frail boy » remarks James of Zebedee.

« And then... If he walked such a long way last year when he was so weak, he could walk all the more now » says Philip.

« I think that it is to avoid him seeing certain disgraceful things... » says Matthew.

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« Or being in touch with certain people... » grumbles Thaddeus who just cannot put up with the Iscariot.

« Perhaps you are both right » says Peter.

« Surely not! He must be doing it to let the boy grow stronger. You will see that next year the boy is with us » states Thomas.

« Next year! Will the Master still be with us next year? » asks Bartholomew pensively. « His speeches seem... so allusive to me... »

« Don't say that! » implore the others.

« I don't like to say so. But not saying does not serve to remove what is destined to happen. »

« Well... That is another reason why we should improve much during the next months... In order not to grieve Him by not being ready. I mean, now that we shall be resting in Galilee, He should teach us twelve particularly as much as possible... In any case we shall soon be there... »

« Yes. And I am longing for that. I am old and these marches in this heat cause much personal trouble to me » confesses Bartholomew.

« And to me. I was a vicious man and if you count my years I am older than you think. Excesses... eh! I feel all their consequences in my bones now... And we children of Levi suffer from such trouble by nature... »

« And what about me? I was ill for years... and that life in caves, with scanty miserable food. One feels the effect of such situations!... » says the Zealot.

« But you have always said that since you were cured you have been feeling strong? » asks Judas who has joined them and is behind the Zealot. « Has perhaps the effect of the miracle come to an end? »

The disfigured but expressive face of the Zealot makes a typical grimace, and seems to say: « He is here! Lord, grant me patience! » But he replies most kindly: « No. The effect of the miracle is not over. And you can see that. I have not been taken ill again. I am strong and healthy. But years are years and fatigue is fatigue. And this heat, which causes us to get as wet with perspiration as if we had fallen into a ditch, and the nights, which I would say are icecold as compared with the heat of the day and freeze perspiration on our bodies, while the dew adds more humidity to our garments already wet with sweat, all that certainly does me no good. And I am longing to have a rest so that I can take care of myself. In the morning, particularly when we sleep under the open sky, I am stiff all over. If I become an invalid, of what use shall I be? »

« You will be able to suffer. Jesus says that suffering is as good as work and prayer » Andrew replies to him.

« That's all right. But I prefer to serve Him apostolically and... »

« And you are tired, too. Admit it. You are tired of continuing

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this life without any prospect of pleasant hours, on the contrary, with the prospect of persecutions and... defeat. You are beginning to consider that you are running the risk of becoming an outlaw once again » says Judas of Kerioth.

« I am not considering anything. I am saying that I feel that I am going to fall ill. »

« Oh! as He cured you once!... » and Judas laughs ironically.

Bartholomew feels that another squabble is approaching and to divert it he calls Jesus. « Master! Is there nothing for us? You are always ahead of us!... »

« You are right, Bartholmai. But we are going to stop now. See that little house? We will go there because the sun is too strong. We will set out again in the evening. We must make haste in going back to Jerusalem, because Pentecost is close at hand. »

« What were you speaking of? » Judas Thaddeus asks his brother.

« Just; imagine! We began to speak about Joseph of Arimathea and we ended up by talking about the old property of Joachim at Nazareth and about his habit - as long as he was able to do so - of taking half of the crops for himself giving the rest to the poor, which the old people in Nazareth remember so well. How abstinent were those two just people, Anne and Joachim! No wonder they were granted the miracle of a Daughter, of that Daughter!... And with Jesus I was recalling the past, when we were children... » And they continue talking while going towards the house through sunny fields.

Jesus says: « You will put here the vision of the miraculous gleaning on behalf of the little old woman (in the plain between Emmaus on the plain and the mountains towards Jerusalem) which you had on September 27th 1944. »

409. The Miraculous Gleaning in the Plain.

27th September 1944.

Jesus is passing with His apostles through a country completely golden with crops. Although early morning it is very warm. The reapers are mowing along furrows thick with ears, making empty spaces among the golden grain. The sickles shine for a moment in the sun, they disappear among the tall ears, they reappear for a moment on the other side and the sheaf bends and lies down on the earth warmed by the sun, as if it were tired of standing up for so many months. Some women follow the reapers, tying the sheaves. The whole country is busy at this work. The harvest has been very good and the reapers are overjoyed.

Many men, when they are near the road along which the apostolic group passes, stop working for a moment leaning on their

scythes and wiping their perspiration and they look... The women binding the sheaves do the same. In their light clothes, their heads covered with a white cloth, they look like flowers emerging from the earth deprived of the corn: poppies, cornflowers, daisies. The men, in short grey or yellowish tunics, are not so showy. The only light article they wear is a piece of cloth tied to their heads with a cord and hanging over their necks and cheeks. Their tanned faces, framed by the white cloth, seem ever darker.

When Jesus sees that they are looking at Him, He passes greeting: « The peace and blessing of God be with you » and the others reply: « May the blessing of God come back to You » or more simply: « Also with You. »

Some who are more talkative, interest Jesus in the harvest saying: « It is very good this year. Look at these well-shaped ears and see how thick they are in the furrows. It is hard work to cut them. But it's bread!... »

« Be grateful to the Lord. And you know that one must show one's gratitude not by words, but by deeds. Be merciful in your harvest, thinking of the Most High Who mercifully granted dew and sunshine to your fields, so that you might have a plentiful crop. Remember the precept of Deuteronomy. When harvesting the wealth given to you by God, think of those who have none, and leave them some of yours. It is a holy prevarication as it is charity for your neighbour and God sees it. It is better to be willing to give than greedy in gathering. God blesses generous people. There is more happiness in giving than in receiving, because it compels God, Who is just, to give a more abundant reward to him who was compassionate. » Jesus passes repeating His advice of love.

The sun becomes warmer. The reapers stop working and those who are near their houses go back to them, those who are far from them gather in the shade of trees and they rest, eat and doze there.

Jesus also takes shelter in a thicket in the middle of the country and sitting on the grass, after praying and offering their frugal food, consisting of bread, cheese and olives, He hands out the portions and eats talking to His apostles. There is shade, coolness and perfect silence. The silence of sunny hours in summer. A silence inviting one to sleep. Most of them, in fact, are dozing after eating. Jesus is not dozing. He is resting leaning with His back against a tree, and He takes an interest in insects working on flowers.

At a certain moment he beckons to John, Judas Iscariot and to one of the older apostles, whom He calls Bartholomew, and when they are close to Him, He says: « Just watch the work this little insect is doing. Look. I have been watching it for some time. It wants to take from this chalice, which is so tiny, the honey that fills the bottom part of it, and as it cannot get into it, look: it stretches out first one little leg and then the other one, it dips them into the

honey and then feeds on it. It has almost emptied it. See what a wonderful thing is God's Providence! Not ignoring that without certain organs the olive-green insect, created to fly over green meadows, would not be able to nourish itself, Providence gifted it with tiny hairs along its legs. Can you see them? Can you, Bartholomew? No? Look. I will now catch it and show it to you against the light », and He delicately takes the scarab, which looks like burnished gold, and lays it upside-down on the back of His hand.

The scarab pretends to be dead and the three examine its tiny legs. Then the insect begins to kick its legs about, in order to run away. It does not succeed, of course, but Jesus helps it and stands it on its legs. The little creature walks on the palm of Jesus' hand, as far as His finger-tips, it dangles and opens its wings. But it is distrustful. « It does not know that I want nothing but the welfare of every being. It has only its little instinct, which is perfect if compared with its nature, and sufficient to all its needs. But it is so inferior to human thought. An insect, therefore, is not responsible if it does anything wrong. Man is, because he has within himself a superior light of intelligence, which will be greater the more he is indoctrinated in the things of God. And consequently he is responsible for his actions. »

« So, Master, since we are taught by You, have we a heavy responsibility? » asks Bartholomew.

« Yes, very heavy. And it will be even heavier in future when the Sacrifice is accomplished, and Redemption has come together with Grace, which is strength and light. And after it, One will come Who will make you understand will-power even better. And he who does not want that, will be held responsible. »

« Very few only, then, will be saved! »

« Why Bartholomew? »

« Because man is so weak! »

« But if he fortifies his weakness by trusting Me, he becomes strong. Do you think that I am not aware of your struggles? See? Satan is like that spider that is laying its snare from that tiny branch to this stem. It is so thin and treacherous! Look how that cobweb shines. It looks like the silver of impalpable filigree. It will be invisible at night and at dawn, tomorrow, it will shine with gems, and imprudent flies, which roam at night looking for unclean food, will fall into it, as well as light butterflies, which are attracted by what shines... »

The apostles have approached the Master and are listening to the lesson taken from the vegetable and animal kingdoms.

« ... Well, My love does, with regard to Satan, what My hand is doing now. It destroys the cobweb. Look how the spider runs away and hides. It is afraid of what is stronger. Satan also is afraid of

what is stronger. And what is stronger is Love. »

« Would it not be better to destroy the spider? » asks Peter, who is very practical in his conclusions.

« It would be better. But the spider is doing its duty. It is true that it kills the poor little butterflies, which are so beautiful, but it exterminates a large number of filthy flies, which carry diseases and infection from sick to healthy people, from corpses to living persons. »

« But in our case what does the spider do? »

« What does it do, Simon? (Simon also is an elderly man and is the one who was complaining of rheumatism). It does what your good will does. It destroys tepidity, apathy, vain conceit. It compels you to be vigilant. What makes you worthy of prize? Struggle and victory. Can you win if you do not fight? The presence of Satan compels continuous vigilance. Love, then, Who loves you, makes his presence not necessarily harmful. If you keep close to Love, Satan will tempt but he will be rendered unable to cause real damage. »

« Always? »

« Always. In great and little things. For instance, a little thing: he in vain advises you to take care of your health. A treacherous piece of advice to try to take you away from Me. But Love holds you tightly, Simon, and your pains become of no importance even in your eyes. »

« Oh! Lord! You know?... »

« Yes, I do. But do not lose heart. Cheer up! Love, Who is the first to smile at your human nature trembling because of its rheumatism, will give you so much courage... » Jesus laughs at His embarrassed apostle and clasps him in His arms to comfort him. Even when laughing He is full of dignity. The others also laugh.

« Who is coming to help that poor old woman? » says Jesus pointing at a little old woman who, defying the great heat, is gleaning in the fields already reaped.

« I » reply John, Thomas and James.

But Peter takes John by the sleeve and pulling him a little aside, says to him: « Ask the Master what is making Him so happy. I asked Him but all He said to me was: "My happiness is in seeing that a soul is looking for the Light". But if you ask Him... He tells you everything. »

John is in a state of uncertainty, drawn one way by reservedness and another by desire to know and to please Peter. He slowly joins Jesus Who is already gleaning in the field. The old woman, seeing so many young people, makes a desolate gesture and busies herself endeavouring to work faster.

« Woman! Woman! » cries Jesus. « I will glean for you. Do not stand in the sun, mother. I am coming. »

The little old woman, dumbfounded at so much kindness, stares

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at Him, she then obeys and stooping and trembling a little all over her lean body she moves towards the thin strip of shade along the edge of the field. Jesus moves about quickly gathering ears. John follows Him close at hand. Thomas and James are a little farther away.

« Master » says John panting. « How come You find so many ears? In the adjoining furrow I find so few! »

Jesus smiles but does not speak. I could not swear to it, but I think that ears, which have been cut but not picked up, spring up wherever Jesus' divine eyes rest. He gathers them and smiles. He has a big bunch of ears in His arms.

« Take Mine, John. So you will have many as well and the little mother will be happy. »

« But, Master... You are working a miracle? It is not possible for You to find so many! »

« Hush! It's for the little mother... thinking of your mother and Mine. Look, what a little old soul she is!... Good God, Who feeds new-born little birds, wants to fill the tiny granary of this grandmother. She will have bread for the months she has still left. She will not see the next harvest. But I do not want her to starve during her last winter. You will now hear her exclamations. John, be ready to have your ears rent, as I will be ready to be washed by her tears and kisses... »

« How cheerful You have been for some days,. Jesus! Why? »

« Do you want to know or has someone sent you? »

John, already flushed with fatigue, becomes crimson.

Jesus understands: « Tell him who sent you that there is a brother of Mine who is ill and wants to be cured. His good will to recover fills Me with joy. »

« Who is it, Master? »

« A brother of yours, one whom Jesus loves, a sinner. »

« So, not one of us? »

« John, do you think that there is no sin among you? Do you think that I rejoice only because of you? »

« No, Master. I know that we are sinners, too, and that You want to save all men. »

« So? I said to you: "Do not be inquisitive" when there was evil to be discovered. I say the same now that good is dawning... Peace to you, mother! Here are the ears we have picked. My companions will come with theirs. »

« May God bless You, son. How did You find so many? It's true that I cannot see very well. But these are really two big sheaves... very big... » The old woman feels them, her trembling hand caresses them, she wants to lift them... But she cannot.

« We will help you. Where is your house? »

« That one » and she points at a little house beyond the fields.

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« You are alone, are you not? »

« Yes, how do You know? And who are You? »

« I am one who has a mother. »

« Is this your brother? »

« He is My friend. »

From behind Jesus' back, His friend makes wide gestures to the old woman. But with her veiled eyes she cannot see them. In any case, she is too intent on watching Jesus. Her old mother's heart is deeply moved.

« You are in a sweat, son. Come here in the shade of this tree. Sit down. Look how You are streaming with perspiration! Dry Yourself with my veil. It's worn but clean. Here, take it, son. »

« Thank you, mother. »

« Blessed be Your mother, the mother of so good a son. Tell me Your name and Hers. That I may mention them to God to bless You. »

« Mary and Jesus. »

« Mary and Jesus... Mary and Jesus... Wait. Once I shed bitter tears... The son of my son was killed for defending his baby boy and my son died of grief... and at that time they said that the innocent was killed because they were looking for one whose name was Jesus... Now I am on the threshold of death and that Name is coming back to me... »

« You wept then, mother, because of that Name. May that Name now bless you... »

« You are that Jesus... say so to a poor woman who is about to die and who has lived without cursing because she was told that her grief served to save the Messiah for Israel. »

John doubles his gestures. Jesus is silent.

« Oh! tell me! Is it You? You... blessing me at the end of my life? In the name of God, speak. »

« It is I. »

« Ah! » the old woman prostrates herself on the ground. « My Saviour! I have lived in expectation and I no longer hoped to see You. Shall I see Your triumph? »

« No, mother. Like Moses, you will die without knowing that day. But I will give you the peace of God in advance. I am Peace. I am the Way. I am Life. You, a mother and the grandmother of just children, will see Me in another eternal triumph and I will open the gates to you, to your son, to the son of your son and to his baby boy. That baby who died for Me is sacred to the Lord! Do not weep, mother!... »

« And I have touched You! And You gathered ears for me! Oh! How did I deserve such honour?! »

« Through your holy resignation. Come, mother, to your house. And may this wheat nourish your soul more than your body. I am

the true Bread that descended from Heaven to satisfy the hunger of every heart. You (Thomas and James have joined them with their sheaf)... take these sheaves and let us go. »

And the three apostles laden with the sheaves walk away, followed by Jesus and the grandmother who weeps and whispers prayers. They arrive at the little house: two small rooms, a tiny kitchen, a fig-tree and a small vineyard. Tidiness and poverty.

« Is this your home? »

« Yes, it is. Bless it, Lord! »

« Call me: son. And pray that My Mother may find solace in Her grief, since you know what the grief of a mother means. Goodbye, mother. I bless you in the name of the true God. »

And Jesus raises His hand and blesses the small house. He then bends and embraces the little old woman, He presses her to His heart and kisses her head covered with thin white hair. And she weeps rubbing her lips against Jesus' hands with veneration an love... and crushes me with grief. Because I think of my mother who was afraid of You, Jesus, when she saw You... Why be afraid of You, Jesus?

Jesus says:

« Why? There are many whys in your heart after this dictation. But I will begin from the last one. [...]

The other query you have in your heart is always whether I knew that Judas would not be saved notwithstanding that effort to save him. I knew. Why then was I happy? Because also the simple desire that was present, a flower in the barren land of Judas' heart, made the Father look benignly at My disciple whom I loved and whom I could not save. The eye of God on a heart' What would I like except that the Father should look at all of you with love? And I had to be happy to give the poor wretch also that means to revive. The incentive of My joy seeing him come back to Me.

One day, after My Death, John became acquainted with this truth and he told Peter, James, Andrew and the others, because I had ordered My best-loved Apostle, who was acquainted with the all the secrets of My heart, to do so. He was informed and he told them, so that everyone should have a rule in guiding disciples and believers later.

The soul that after falling comes to the minister of God and confesses its error, the friend, the son, the husband or the brother, who after erring, comes saying: "Keep me with you. I do not want to make mistakes any more so that I may not grieve God and you", are not to be deprived, among other things, of the satisfaction of seeing our happiness in realising that they are anxious to make us happy. Infinite tact is required in curing hearts. I, the Wisdom, had such tact to teach everybody the art of redeeming and of helping

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those who are redeeming themselves, although I knew that in the case of Judas it was useless.

And now I say to you what I said to Simon of Cana: "Cheer up", and I clasp you in My arms to make you feel that there is someone who loves you. My hands give punishments, but they give caresses as well, and My lips speak severe words and also words of satisfaction and the latter are more numerous and uttered with so much more joy.

Go in peace, Mary. You have not grieved your Jesus, and may that be your comfort. »

410. The Lily of the Valley.

8th April 1946.

The apostolic group has left the plain behind and along hilly roads, among mountains and valleys, it is going towards Jerusalem. To shorten the journey they have not taken the main roads, but solitary tiring short cuts, which are, however, very quick.

At present they are in the bottom of a green valley rich in waters and little flowers. There are also many sweet-smelling lilies of the valley, which causes Thaddeus to remark that it is only right to call such flowers « lilies of the valley » and praise their fragile yet resistant beauty and their delicate fragrance.

« But they are upside-down lilies » remarks Thomas. « They look down instead of looking up. »

« And how tiny they are! We have flowers which are more pompous than those. I do not understand why they praise them so much... » says Judas scornfully, striking a little tuft of lilies of the valley in flower.

« No! Why? They are so gentle looking! », intervenes Andrew defending the poor flowers and he bends to pick up the broken stems.

« They look like hay, nothing else. The agave is more beautiful, it is so majestic and imposing. Worthy of God and of flowering for God. »

« I see God more in these minute chalices... Look how graceful they are!... Indented, so concave... They look like alabaster, pure wax and they seem to have been made by very tiny hands... Instead it was the Immense One Who made them! Oh! Power of God!... » Andrew is almost ecstatic in contemplation meditating on flowers and the perfection of the Creator.

« You look like a poor little woman suffering from nervous trouble!... » teases Judas of Kerioth laughing maliciously.

« No. In actual fact I also - and I am a goldsmith and thus an expert in the matter - I also find that these stems are perfect. It is

more difficult to reproduce them in metal than it is to reproduce an agave. Because you ought to know, my friend, that it is the infinitely small that reveals the ability of a craftsman. Give me a stem, Andrew... And you, whose goggle eyes admire only grand things, come here and look. Which craftsman could make cups so light and perfect as these, decorating them with those tiny topazes down there, in the bottom, and joining them to the stem by means of this graceful curved filigree... It's wonderful!... »

« Oh! what poets have risen among us! You, too, Thomas, so... »

« I am neither a fool nor a poor little woman, you know! I'm an artist. A sensitive artist. And J am proud of it. Master, do You like these flowers? » Thomas asks Jesus Who has been listening without saying anything.

« I like the whole of Creation. But these flowers are among the ones of which I am particularly fond... »

« Why? » ask several apostles. And at the same time Judas asks: « Do you like vipers as well? » and he laughs.

« Yes, they also serve... »

« What purpose? » ask many.

« To bite. Ah! Ah! Ah! » says Judas laughing offensively.

« In that case you should like them very much » retorts Thaddeus interrupting Judas' laughter with a very clear allusion. The others are now laughing at the witty remark.

Jesus does not laugh. On the contrary, He is pale and sad. He looks at His twelve apostles and particularly at the two antagonists who are watching each other, one angrily, the other severely, and He replies to them all, in order to reply to the Iscariot in particular.

« If God created them, it means that they serve. Nothing in creation is useless or entirely harmful. Evil only is clearly and solely noxious and woe to those who allow it to bite them. One of the effects of its bite is the inability to tell Good from Evil, then there is the deviation of reason and of conscience led astray towards evil things, and then spiritual blindness, because of which, Judas of Simon, one does not see the power of God shine on things, even when they are tiny. And His power is written on this flower, through its beauty and scent, and its shape, which is so different from any other flower, and through this drop of dew which trembles and glitters suspended on the waxen edge of the tiny petal and seems a tear of gratitude to the Creator, Who made everything well, useful and varied. But it is written that everything was beautiful for the first parents, until their eyes became opaque with sin... And everything spoke to them of God until the fluid, which distorted their capacity for seeing God, was instilled into things, or rather, into their eyes. Even nowadays, the more the spirit is the sovereign in a human creature, the more God reveals

3-2066

Himself... »

« Solomon sang the wonders of God and so did David... and yet their spirits were not their sovereigns! Master, I caught You out this time. »

« How impudent you are! How dare you say that? »

« Let him speak... I do not take into consideration his words, which the wind dispels and which do not scandalise herbs and trees. We are the only ones to hear them and we know how to attach to them the importance they deserve, do we not? And we do not remember them any longer. Youth is often thoughtless, Bartholmai. You Must pity it... But someone was asking Me why I prefer the lily of the valley... This is My reply: "Because of its humility". Everything in it speaks of humility... The spots it loves... the attitude of the flower... It makes Me think of My Mother... This flower... so tiny! And yet how sweet is the perfume of one flower alone. The air around it is scented by it... My Mother also... humble, reserved, unknown, She asked only to remain unknown... And yet the perfume of Her holiness was so strong that it drew Me from Heaven... »

« Do You see a symbol of Your Mother in that flower? »

« Yes, I do, Thomas. »

« And do You think that our ancestors foresaw Her, when they praised the lily of the valley? » asks James of Alphaeus. « They compared Her then with other plants and flowers: with the rose, the olive-tree, and with the most gentle animals: turtle-doves, woodpigeons... »

« They all ascribed to Her the most beautiful things they saw in creation. And She is really the Beauty of creation. But I would call Her Lily of the valley and peaceful Olive-tree, if I had to sing Her praises » and Jesus cheers up and brightens thinking of His Mother, and He quickens His pace to be alone...

They continue to walk, notwithstanding the heat of the day, because in the hollow of the valley there is a succession of trees protecting from the sun.

After some time Peter lengthens his stride and joins the Master. He calls Him in a low voice: « My Master! »

« My Peter! »

« Will I disturb You, if I come with You? »

« No, My friend. What have you so urgent to tell Me, that it compels you to come to your Master? »

« A question... Master, I am an inquisitive man... »

« So? » Jesus smiles looking at His apostle.

« And I like to know many things... »

« Which is a fault, My Peter. »

« I know... But I do not think it is a fault this time. If I wanted to know something unbecoming, or knavish actions so that I might

criticise who did them, oh! in that case it would be a fault. But You know that I did not ask You whether Judas was somehow connected with Your being called to Bether and because... »

« But you were dying to know... »

« Yes. That's true. But it is a greater merit, isn't it? »

« It is a greater merit. As it is a great merit to control oneself. It proves in him, who behaves thus, real good progress in spiritual life, real active understanding and assimilation of the lessons of the Master. »

« Is that so? And are You glad? »

« Oh! Peter, why ask Me? I am more than happy. »

« Are You really? O my Master! Then is it Your poor Simon who makes You so happy? »

« Yes, it is. Did you not know? »

« I dared not believe it. But seeing You so happy, I got John to ask You yesterday. Because I thought that it might be Judas also who was improving... although I have no proof of that... But I may be a bad judge. John told me that You said that You are happy because there is one who is becoming holy... Just now You told me that You are happy because I am becoming better. Now I know. The one who makes You happy and cheerful is me, poor Simon... But now I wish my sacrifice could make Judas change. I am not envious. I would like everybody to be perfect, to make You perfectly happy. Shall I succeed? »

« Confide, Simon, confide and persevere. »

« I will! I certainly will! For Your sake... and for his as well. Because I am sure that he cannot be glad to be always like that. After all... he could be my son... H'm! Actually I prefer to be Marjiam's father! But... I will be a father to him, working to give him a soul worthy of You. »

« And of you, Simon » and Jesus bends and kisses his hair.

Peter is overjoyed... After some time he asks: « Are You not telling me anything else? Is there no more good news, a flower among the thorns, which You find everywhere? »

« Yes, there is. One of Joseph's friends who is coming to the Light. »

« Really? A member of the Sanhedrin? »

« Yes, but we must not tell anybody. We must pray and suffer for that purpose. Are you not asking Me who it is? Are you not anxious to know? »

« Very much so. But I am not going to ask You. A sacrifice for the unknown man. »

« May you be blessed, Simon! You are making Me really happy today. Continue like that and I will love you more and more and so will God. Now let us stop and wait for the others... »

3-2068

411. In Jerusalem for Pentecost.

9th April 1946.

The city is full of people. The Temple is crowded. Jesus ascends to it as soon as He enters Jerusalem and He goes in through the gate near the Bethesda, that is, almost immediately, before the people realise that He is in Town and before the news may spread from the house where they leave their baggage and where they wash and tidy themselves, in order to enter the Temple clean and free from dust and perspiration.

There is the usual indecorous din of vendors and moneychangers, and the usual kaleidoscope of colours and faces.

Jesus, with the apostles who have bought what is necessary for the offering, goes straight to the place of prayer and remains there for a long time. Of course, He is noticed by many people, both good and bad, and a whisper spreads like the wind and with the noise of leaves rustling in the wind, through the large outer yard, where people stop to pray. And when, after praying, He retraces His steps, a train of people, which becomes bigger and bigger, follows Him through the other atria, porches, yards, until they become a crowd, which surrounds Him and asks Him to speak.

« Another time, children! And in some other place! » says Jesus and He raises His arm to bless, trying to go away.

Scribes, Pharisees, doctors and their disciples, scattered among the people, sneer saying to one another sharp phrases, which are real mockery, such as: « Prudence is advising » or: « Eh! somewhat afraid... » or: « He has reached the age of reason » or also: « Not such a fool as we thought... » But the greater part, those who know and love Him or those who sincerely wish to know Him, and thus nurse no grudge against Him, insist in saying: « Are You going to deprive us of a feast in the Feast? Good Master, You cannot do that! Many of us have made sacrifices to remain here waiting for You... » and some hiss the mockers or give them sharp answers.

It is very obvious that the mass would be ready to overwhelm the wicked minority, who, shrewd and crafty as they are, take the hint, and they not only become quiet, but endeavour to go away. And although they are in the enclosure of the Temple, many do not hesitate to scoff at or hurl abuse at those who are departing, whilst others, mainly elderly people, and thus more reflective, ask Jesus: « Since You know, please tell us, what will happen to this place, to this town, to the whole of Israel, who will not surrender to the Voice of the Lord? »

Jesus looks at those grey or white haired heads pitifully and replies:

« Jeremiah told you what will happen to those who reply to the flash of divine wrath by increasing their sins, and consider divine mercy as a proof of weakness on God's side. Because God is not to

be derided, children. You, as the Eternal God said through the lips of Jeremiah, are like clay in the hands of the potter, as clay are those who consider themselves mighty, as clay are the inhabitants of this place and those of the royal palace. There is no human power that can resist God. And if the clay resists the potter and wants to take strange horrible shapes, the potter turns it into a handful of clay again and starts afresh and works it into another vessel until it realises that the potter is the stronger and thus it yields to his will. And it may also happen that the vessel breaks into pieces, because it persists in not being modelled, as it refuses the water with which the potter moistens it in order to be able to shape it without cracks. The potter then throws the refractory clay and the useless unworkable bits and pieces into the garbage-can and he takes fresh clay and moulds it as he thinks best. Does the Prophet not say so when explaining the symbol of the potter and the clay vessel? That is what he says. And repeating the words of the Lord, he says: "As the clay is in the potter's hand, so you, Israel, are in the hand of God". And the Lord adds, as a warning to those who are refractory, that only penance and repentance, when God reproaches man, can change the decree of God to punish a rebellious people.

Israel did not repent. Thus the threats of God have struck Israel many times. Israel is not repenting even now that not a prophet, but One Who is more than a prophet speaks to her. And God Who has had supreme mercy on Israel and has sent Me, now says to you: "As you do not listen to My own Voice, I will regret the good I have done to you and I will prepare a disaster for you". And I, Who am Mercy, although I know that I am speaking in vain, I shout to Israel: "Each one of you, turn back from your evil ways. Amend your conduct and your inclinations. So that, when the plan of God will be carried out against the guilty Nation, at least the better ones in it may preserve their spirits free from sin in the general loss of goods, of freedom, of union, and united to God they may not lose the eternal goods as they lost the earthly ones".

The visions of prophets have always one aim: to warn men of what may happen. And it is stated by the symbol of the earthenware vessel, broken in the presence of the people, what is in store for towns and kingdoms that do not surrender to the Lord, and... »

The elders, scribes, doctors and Pharisees, who had gone away previously, must have gone to inform the Temple guards and the magistrates in charge of order. And one of them, followed by a handful of comical cardboard soldiers, whose faces only seem belligerent, as they are a mixture of stupidity with a little malice and much harshness, not to say criminality, comes towards Jesus. The Master is speaking leaning against a column of the porch of Pagans and as the magistrate cannot get through the crowds,

3-2070

which have formed an impenetrable circle round Jesus, he shouts: « Go away! Or I will get my soldiers to throw You out of the enclosure... »

« Ugh! The big green flies! Heroes against lambs! Can you not go in and put in prison those who have turned Jerusalem into a brothel, and the Temple into a market? Go away, you chickenhearted man, go away and stay with beech-martens... Ugh! Ugh! » The people turn against the grotesque soldiers and make it clear that they will not let the Master be insulted.

« I am carrying out the instructions I received... » says apologetically the leader of those... policemen.

« You are carrying out Satan's instructions and you do not realise that. Go away now, and implore God's mercy as you dared insult and threaten the Master! You dare not touch the Master! Is that clear to you? You are our oppressors, He is the Friend of the poor. You are our corruptors, He is our holy Master. You are our ruin, He is our Salvation. You are perfidious, He is good. Go away, or we shall do to you what Mattathias did at Modein. We will hurl you down the slope of Moriah like idolatric altars, and we will cleanse the place you have desecrated, washing it with your blood, and the feet of the only Holy Man in Israel will tread upon that blood to go to the Holy of Holies and reign there, as He deserves! Away from here! You and your masters! Away, you hired ruffians serving hired assassins... »

It is a frightful uproar... Roman guards rush from the Antonia led by an elderly severe hasty non-commissioned officer.

« Make room, you stinkers! What's happening? Are you tearing one another to pieces over some of your scabby lambs? »

« They are rebelling against the soldiers... » the magistrate endeavours to explain.

« By invincible Mars! These... soldiers? Ah! Ah! Go and fight cockroaches, you wine-cellar warrior. » He then addresses the people saying: « Tell me... »

« They did not want to let the Galilean Rabbi speak. They wanted to drive Him away. Perhaps they wanted to capture Him... »

« The Galilean Rabbi? Non licet. I say to you in the language of Rome the word of John Decollate. Ah! Ah! March to your kennel you and your curs. And tell the mastiffs to lie down as well. The She-Wolf knows how to tear to pieces those, too... Is that clear? Rome only has the right to judge. And You, Galilean... You may go on telling Your stories... Ah! Ah! » and he turns round all of one piece, his breastplate shining in the sun, and goes away.

« Exactly as with Jeremiah... »

« As with all the prophets, you ought to say... »

« But God triumphs just the same. »

« Master, go on speaking. The vipers have run away. »

3-2071

« No, let Him go, lest the new Pashhurs should come back with greater strength and put Him in chains... »

« There is no such danger... While the lion roars the hyenas do not come out... »

The people speak making their comments in utter confusion.

« You are wrong » says an unctuous Pharisee enveloped in his pompous mantle, followed by his likes and by some doctors of the Law. « You are wrong. You must not think that the entire caste is like some of its members. Eh! Eh! There is good and bad on every tree. »

« Yes. In fact figs are generally sweet. But if they are unripe or too ripe they are sour or acid. You are acid. Like the figs of the very bad basket of the prophet Jeremiah » says one from the middle of the crowd: a man I do not know, but he must be well known to the crowds and is also a mighty one, because I see the people wink approvingly while the Pharisee pockets the blow without reacting.

On the contrary, in an even more sugary manner, he turns towards the Master and says to Him: « A wonderful subject for Your Wisdom. Rabbi, do speak to us on this subject. Your elucidations are so... new... so... learned... We savour them with greedy appetite. »

Jesus stares at the Pharisaic champion and then replies to him: « You, Helkai, and your friends have also another unavowed appetite. But you will be given also that food... which is even more acid than figs. And it will contaminate your hearts as sour figs infect bowels. »

« No, Master. I swear to it in the name of the living God! My friends and I hunger only to hear You speak... God sees whether... »

« That's enough. Honest people need not swear. Their deeds are their oath and witness. But I shall not speak of the very good and very bad figs... »

« Why not, Master? Are You afraid that facts may contradict Your explanations? »

« Oh! no! On the contrary... »

« So You foresee torment, shame, sword, plague, famine for us? »

« All that and even more. »

« Even more? What? So God no longer loves us? »

« He loves you so much that He fulfilled His promise. »

« You? Are You His promise? »

« I am. »

« In that case, when are You going to establish Your Kingdom? »

« Its foundations have already been laid. »

« Where? »

« In the hearts of good people. »

« But that is not a kingdom. That is teaching! »

3-2072

« As My Kingdom is a spiritual one, spirits are its subjects. And spirits need no palaces, houses, armies, walls. They need to know only the Word of God and practise it. Which is happening in good people. »

« But can You speak that Word? Who authorises You? »

« The possession. »

« Which possession? »

« The possession of the Word. I give what I am. One who has life, can give life. One who has money, can give money. By My eternal Nature I have the Word that translates the Divine Thought and I give the Word, because the Love to make known the Thought of the Most High, Who is My Father, urges Me to give that gift. »

« Mind what You say! It's an audacious language! It may be detrimental to You! »

« It would be more detrimental to lie, because it would imply perverting My Nature and disowning Him from Whom I proceed. »

« So You are God, the Word of God? »

« I am. »

« And You say so like that? In the presence of so many witnesses who could report You? »

« The Truth does not lie. The Truth does not make calculations. The Truth is heroic. »

« And that is the truth? »

« The Truth is He Who is speaking to you. Because the Word of God translates the Thought of God, and God is Truth. »

The crowds are all ears, paying attention, in silence, to the discussion, which, however, is carried on without harshness. More people have rushed there from other parts, and the yard is crammed: hundreds of faces all turned towards one spot. And more faces, with stretched necks, appear from the openings leading to this yard, anxious to see and hear...

Helkai, the member of the Sanhedrin, and his friends look at one another... A rapid exchange of anxious glances. But they control themselves. Nay, an old doctor asks very kindly: « What should we do to avoid the punishments that You foresee? »

« You ought to follow Me, and above all believe Me. And even more: love Me. »

« Are You a mascot? »

« No. I am the Saviour. »

« But You have no armies... »

« I have Myself. Remember, you should all remember, for your own sake and out of pity for your souls, remember the words of the Lord to Moses and Aaron, when they were still in the land of Egypt: "Each man of the people of God must take a lamb without blemish, a male one year old. One animal for each household, and if the number of persons in the family is too small to eat all the

animal, they must join with their neighbour. And you shall immolate it on the fourteenth day of the month of Abib, which is now called Nisan, and with the blood of the immolated animal you shall wet the doorposts and the lintel of your houses. And the same night you shall eat the flesh roasted over the fire, with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. And you shall bum what might be left over. And you shall eat it with a girdle round your waist, sandals on your feet, a staff in your hand, you shall eat it hastily, because it is the passover of the Lord. And that night I will pass and strike down all the first-born of man and animal, that are in the houses not marked with the blood of the lamb". At present, in the new passover of God, the truest passover, because God really passes amongst you in a visible manner, recognizable by His signs, those will be saved who are marked with the salutary mark of the Blood of the Lamb. Because, truly, you will all be marked with it. But only those who love the Lamb and will love His Sign, will receive salvation from that Blood. With regard to the others it will be the mark of Cain. And you know that Cain no longer deserved to see the face of the Lord and had no more peace. And chased by remorse, by punishment, by Satan, his cruel king, he became a fugitive and wanderer over the Earth as long as he lived. He is a really great figure of the People who will strike the new Abel... »

« Ezekiel also speaks of the Tau... Do You think that Your Sign is Ezekiel's Tau? »

« It is. »

« So You accuse us because there is abomination in Jerusalem? »

« I wish I could not do so. But it is so. »

« And are there no sinners amongst those marked with the Tau? Can You swear to that? »

« I do not swear anything. But I say that if there are sinners among those who are marked, their punishment will be even more dreadful, because adulterers of the spirit, abjurers, the killers of God, who become so after being His followers, will be the greatest in Hell. »

« But those who cannot believe that You are God, will not commit sin. They will be justified... »

« No. If you had not known Me, if you had not been able to verify My deeds, if you had not had the opportunity to examine My words, you would not be guilty. If you were not doctors in Israel, you would not be in the wrong. But you know the Scriptures and you see My works. You can make a comparison. And if you do so honestly, you will see Me in the words of the Scripture and you will see the words of the Scripture in Me, translated into My actions. Thus you will not be justified for failing to recognise Me and for hating Me. There are too many idols, too much abomination, too much fornication, where God only should be. And the same applies

to every place where you are. Salvation consists in disowning all that and in accepting the Truth that speaks to you. Consequently, where you kill or you try to kill, you will be killed. And that is why you will be judged at the border of Israel, where all human power lapses, and the Eternal Father only is the Judge of His creatures. »

« Why do You speak so, Lord? You are severe. »

« I am truthful. I am the Light. The Light was sent to illuminate Darkness. But the Light must shine freely. The Most High would have sent His Light in vain, if He had hidden that Light under a bushel. Not even men do so when they light a lamp, otherwise there would be no sense in lighting it. If they light it, they do so that it may give light and those in the house may see. I have come to give light to the darkened earthly house of My Father, so that those who are in it may see. And the Light shines. And bless it, if its most pure beams disclose reptiles, scorpions, traps, cobwebs, cracks in the walls. It does so for your sake, to give you the opportunity to know yourselves, to cleanse yourselves, driving away harmful animals, that is, passions and sins, so that you may rebuild yourselves before it is too late, and you may see where you set your foot: on Satan's trap, before you fall into it. But in order to see, in addition to a clear light, one needs a clear eye. No light can illuminate an eye that a disease has covered with pus. Cleanse your eyes and your spirits, so that the Light may descend into you. Why perish in Darkness when the Most Good God sends you Light and Medicine to cure you? It is not too late yet. In the time still left to you, come to the Light, the Truth, the Life. Come to your Saviour Who stretches His arms to you, and opens His heart to you, imploring you to receive Him for your own eternal good. »

Jesus is really imploring, yearning lovingly, and nothing but love emanates from Him... Even the most stubborn beasts, even those who are most intoxicated with hatred, perceive so, and their weapons avow defeat and their poison fails to spit out its acid bitterness.

They look at one another. Then Helkai speaks on behalf of everybody: « You have spoken the truth, Master! I beg You to accept the banquet which I offer to honour You. »

« The only honour I ask for, is to conquer your souls. Leave Me in My poverty... »

« You will not offend Me by refusing?! »

« No offence. I beg you to leave Me with My friends. »

« They are invited as well, who could doubt it? They are invited with You. A great honour for my house!... You go to other great people! Why not come to Helkai? »

« Well... I will come. But, believe Me, in the secret of your house I will not be able to speak words different from those that I have

spoken here, among the people. »

« Neither will I! Nor my friends! Do You perhaps doubt it?... »

Jesus looks at him. He then says: « I doubt only what I do not know. But I do know the thoughts of men. Let us go to your house... Peace to those who have listened to Me. »

And beside Helkai He directs His steps out of the Temple, followed by the train of His apostles mixed, but not enthusiastic about it, with Helkai's friends.

412. Jesus at the Banquet of Helkai, the Pharisee and Member of the Sanhedrin.

10th April 1946.

Jesus enters the house of His host, not far from the Temple, towards the district at the foot of the Tophet. It is the decorous, rather austere house of a strict observant, nay, of an exaggerated observant. I believe that even nails have been placed in number and position as prescribed by one of the sixhundred and thirteen precepts. There is no design on the cloths, not one ornament on the walls, not a knickknack... not one of the little things, which in the houses of Joseph and Nicodemus and of the very Pharisees in Capernaum., are present to decorate them. Here... the spirit of the owner breathes in every part. It is icy, so bare it is of ornament. The dark heavy furniture, shaped like sarcophagi, makes it dull. It is repellent. A house which does not welcome, but is hostile to those entering it.

And Helkai points it out boasting. « See, Master, how observant I am? Everything says so. Look: curtains without any design, unadorned furniture, no sculptured vases or chandeliers imitating flowers. There is everything, but everything complies with the precept: "You shall not make yourself a carved image or any likeness of anything in heaven or on the earth or in the waters under the earth". And it is so in the house and also with regard to my garments and those of the household. For instance, I do not approve of the needlework on the tunic and mantle of this disciple of Yours (the Iscariot). You will object: "Many wear them". Or: "It is only a Greek fret". All right. But with those angles and curves, it is too strong a reminiscense of the signs of Egypt. Horrible! Diabolic cyphers! Necromantic signs! Beelzebub's monogram! It is not an honour to you, Judas of Simon, to wear them, or to You, Master, to allow him. »

Judas replies with a sly sarcastic laugh. Jesus replies humbly: « Rather than the signs of their clothes, I watch that there are no signs of horror in their hearts. But I will ask, nay I ask My disciple now, to wear less ornate garments in order not to scandalise anybody. »

3-2076

Judas has a good gesture: « In actual fact my Master has told me several times that He would prefer my clothes to be more simple. But I... I did what I liked, because I like to be dressed thus. »

« Which is bad, very bad. It's very bad that a Galilean should teach a Judaean, particularly with regard to you, as you were one of the Temple... oh! » Helkai appears to be utterly scandalised and his friends join in with him.

Judas is already tired of being kind. He retorts: « Oh! in that case there are many pompous things that you members of the Sanhedrin should forgo! If you had to remove all the drawings with which you have covered the faces of your souls, you would really look ugly. »

« How can you say that? »

« As one who knows you. »

« Master! Do You hear him? »

« I do, and I say that humility is necessary on both sides, as well as truth. And you ought to be indulgent to one another. God only is perfect. »

« Well said, Rabbi! » says one of the friends... A feeble solitary voice in the group of Pharisees and doctors.

« It's wrong, instead » replies Helkai. « Deuteronomy is clear in its curses. It says: "A curse on the man who carves or casts an idol, a detestable thing, the work of a craftsman's hands and... " »

« But these are clothes, they are not sculptures » replies Judas.

« Be silent. Your Master will speak. Helkai, be fair and make the necessary distinction. Cursed be he who makes idols, not he who makes patterns copying the beautiful things which the Creator put in creation. We pick flowers to adorn... »

« I don't pick any and I do not want to see any room adorned with them. Woe to my women if they commit such a sin in their rooms. God only is to be admired. »

« Quite right. God only. But we can admire God also in a flower, confessing that He is the Craftsman of the flower. »

« No, no! Heathenism! Heathenism! »

« Judith adorned herself, so did Esther for a holy purpose... »

« Females! And a female is always a despicable thing. But I beg You, Master, go into the dining-room, while I withdraw for a moment as I have to speak to my friends. »

Jesus agrees without discussion.

« Master... I am breathing with difficulty!... » exclaims Peter.

« Why? Are you not feeling well? » ask some apostles.

« No, but I feel uncomfortable... like one who has fallen into a trap. »

« Do not get excited. And be very prudent, all of you » advises Jesus.

They remain standing in a group, until the Pharisees come in

3-2077

followed by the servants.

« Let us sit down at once. We have a meeting and we cannot be late » orders Helkai. And he assigns the seats while the servants serve the food.

Jesus is beside Helkai and Peter is at His side. Helkai offers the food and the meal begins in deathlike silence... They then begin to speak and the first words, of course, are addressed to Jesus, because the Twelve are neglected, as if they were not there.

The first question is asked by a doctor of the Law. « Master, are You sure of what You say? »

« I do not say so by Myself. The prophets said so before I was among you. »

« The prophets!... Since You deny that we are the holy ones, You may accept as true my assertion that our prophets may be braggarts. »

« The prophets are saints. »

« But we are not, are we? But remember that Zephaniah joins prophets and priests together when condemning Jerusalem: "Her prophets are braggarts, they are impostors, and her priests profane the holy things, they do violence to the Law". You continuously reproach us with that. But if You accept the latter words of the prophet, you must accept also the former and thus admit that one cannot rely on the words of braggarts. »

« Rabbi of Israel, reply to My question. When a few lines later Zephaniah says: "Shout for joy, daughter of Zion... the Lord has repealed your sentence... the King of Israel is in your midst", does your heart accept those words? »

« It is my glory to repeat them to myself dreaming of that day. »

« But they are the words of a prophet, of a braggart, so... »

The doctor of the Law remains dumbfounded for a moment. One of his friends assists him. « No one can doubt that Israel will reign. Not one, but all the prophets, and the patriarchs before the prophets, have mentioned that promise of God. »

« And not one of the patriarchs and prophets has failed to point out Who I am. »

« Oh! Well! But we have no proof! You may be a braggart as well. What proof can You give us that You are the Messiah, the Son of God? Give me a time-limit, that I may judge. »

« I do not refer you to My Death described by David and Isaiah, but to My Resurrection. »

« You? Rise again? And who will make You rise again? »

« Not certainly you. Neither the Pontiff, nor the monarch, nor the castes, nor the people. I will rise again by Myself. »

« Do not blaspheme, Galilean, and do not lie! »

« I am doing nothing but pay honour to God and speak the truth. And with Zephaniah I say to you: "Wait for Me at My resurrection".

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Up to that time you may doubt, you all may doubt and work to make the people dubious. But it will no longer be possible for you to feel dubious when the Eternal Living One, after redeeming mankind, will rise by Himself from the dead to die no longer. Intangible Judge, perfect King, with His sceptre and Justice He will rule and judge until the end of the world and will continue to reign for ever in Heaven. »

« Do You not realise that You are speaking to doctors and members of the Sanhedrin? » asks Helkai.

« And so what? You ask Me questions, and I reply to them. You show desire to learn, and I explain the truth to you. After calling to My mind the curse of Deuteronomy, because of a drawing on a garment, you are not going to remind Me of another curse of the same Book: "A curse on him who strikes down his neighbour insecret". »

« I am not striking You down. I am giving You food. »

« No. But your insidious questions are blows in the back. Be careful, Helkai. Because God's maledictions follow one another, and the one I just quoted, is followed by another one: "A curse on him who accepts a bribe to take an innocent life". »

« In this case You are accepting the gift, since You are my guest. »

« I do not even condemn culprits, if they are repentant. »

« Then, You are not just. »

« Yes, it is just. Because He considers that repentance deserves forgiveness, and therefore He does not condemn » says the man who already consented to Jesus in the hall of the house.

« Will you be quiet, Daniel! Do you think you know better than we do? Or are you seduced by One upon Whom much is still to be decided and Who does nothing to help us decide in His favour? » says one of the doctors.

« I know that you are the wise ones and I am a simple Judaean and I do not even know why you often want me to be with you... »

« Because you are a relative! That is easily understood! And I want those who become my relatives to be holy and wise! I cannot allow ignorance in the Scriptures, in the Law, in Halacha, Midrash and Haggada. And I cannot suffer that. Everything is to be known and complied with... »

« And I am grateful to you for so much attention. But I, a simple tiller, once I undeservedly became your relative, I have been anxious about nothing but to know the Scriptures and the Prophets, to have comfort in my life. And with the simplicity of an unlearned person, I confess that in the Rabbi I recognise the Messiah, preceded by His Precursor, who pointed Him out to us... And you cannot deny that John was possessed by the Spirit of God. »

There is silence. They do not want to deny that the Baptist was infallible. Neither do they wish to admit that he was.

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Then another one says: « Well... Let us say that the Precursor is the precursor of that angel that God sends to prepare the way to Christ. And... let us admit that in the Galilean there is enough holiness to consider Him such angel. After Him there will come the times of the Messiah. Do you not think that this idea of mine is conciliative for everybody? Will you agree to it, Helkai? And what about you, my friends? And You, Nazarene? »

« No. », « No. », « No. » Three definite noes.

« Why? Why do you not approve of it? »

Helkai is silent. His friends also say nothing. Jesus only replies frankly: « Because I cannot approve of an error. I am more than an angel. The Baptist was the angel, the Precursor of the Christ, and I am the Christ. »

There is a long deathlike silence. Helkai, his elbow resting on his couch and his cheek leaning on his hand, is pensive, severe, as uncommunicative as his whole house.

Jesus turns round, looks at him, then says: « Helkai, do not confuse the Law and the Prophets with trifles! »

« I see that You have read my thought. But You cannot deny that You have sinned infringing the precept. »

« As you, and by craft, and thus with a bigger sin, have infringed the duty of a host, and you did so deliberately, you distracted My attention and you sent Me here, while you were purifying yourself with your friends, and when you came back you begged us to make haste, because you had a meeting, and you did all that in order to be able to say to Me: "You have sinned". »

« You could have reminded me of my duty to let You have what was necessary for Your purification. »

« I could remind you of many things, but it would only serve to make you more intolerant and hostile. »

« No. Tell me. We want to listen to You and... »

« And inform the Chief Priests accusing Me. That is why I reminded you of the last two curses. I am aware of it and I know you. I am here defenceless among you. I am here, isolated from the people who love Me and before whom you dare not assail Me. But I am not afraid. I do not resort to compromises, neither do I act in a cowardly way. And I tell you your sin, yours and of your entire caste, o Pharisees, the false pure ones of the Law, o doctors, the false wise ones, who intentionally confuse and mix the true and the false good, who impose on other people and exact from them perfection even in exterior things, while you exact nothing from yourselves. You blame Me, together with your host and Mine, for not washing Myself before dining. You know that I have just come from the Temple, which one enters after being purified of dust and the dirt of the road. Do you want perhaps to confess that the Holy Place is contamination? »

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« We purified ourselves before the meal. »

« And we were ordered: "Go there and wait". And later: "Let us sit down without any delay". So on your walls free from designs, there was a design: your plan to deceive Me. Which hand wrote on your walls the reason for a possible accusation? Your spirit or another power, which controls your spirit and to which you listen? Now listen, all of you. »

Jesus stands up and with His hands resting on the edge of the table He begins His speech:

« You Pharisees wash the outside of the cup and of the plate, and you wash your hands and feet, as if plate and cup, hands and feet were to enter your spirits that you love to proclaim pure and perfect. But it is not for you, but for God to proclaim that. Well, listen to what God thinks of your spirits. He thinks that they are full of falsehood, of filth and robbery, they are full of iniquity and nothing from the outside can corrupt what is already corrupted. »

He lifts His right hand from the table and begins unintentionally to gesticulate with it, while He continues:

« Who made your spirits, as He made your bodies, can He not exact at least the same respect for your inside as you have for your outside? O stupid people, who confuse the two values and invert their importance, will the Most High not want a greater care for the spirit, which was made in His likeness and loses eternal Life through corruption, than He exacts for a hand or a foot, the dirt of which can be cleansed easily and which, even if they remained dirty, would not affect your interior cleanliness? And can God worry about the neatness of a cup or a tray, which are things without a soul and cannot influence your souls?

I read your thought, Simon Boetos. No, it does not stand. You do not carry out those purifications thinking of your health, as a protection for your bodies, your lives. Carnal sins, nay the sins of gluttony, of intemperance, of lust are certainly more harmful to the body than a little dust on your hands or on a plate. And yet you commit them without worrying about protecting your lives or the safety of your relatives. And you commit sins of various kinds, because besides polluting your souls and bodies, squandering your wealth, lacking respect to your relatives, you offend the Lord by desecrating your bodies, the temple of your souls, and in that temple there ought to be the throne of the Holy Spirit; and you offend the Lord also because you think that you have to protect by yourselves your bodies from diseases caused by a little dust, as if God could not intervene to protect you from physical trouble, if you had recourse to Him with pure spirit.

But He Who created the inside did not perhaps create the outside also, and viceversa? And is the inside not nobler and more marked by divine likeness? Do then good works worthy of God, not mean

3-2081

actions that do not rise from the dust for which and of which they are made, of the poor dust, which is man considered as an animal creature, mud formed into shape and which will become dust again, dust which the wind of time disperses. Do lasting works, that is holy regal works, crowned with divine blessing. Be charitable, give alms, be honest and pure in your deeds and in your intentions, and without resorting to ablutionary waters, everything will be pure in you.

What do you think? That you are in order because you pay tithes on spices? Woe to you, Pharisees, who pay the tithes of mint and rue, of mustard and cumin, of fennel and every other kind of herbs, and then you neglect the justice and love of God. It is your duty to pay tithes and it is to be done. But there are higher duties and they are to be done as well. Woe to those who respect exterior things and neglect the interior ones based on the love of God and of our neighbour. Woe to you, Pharisees, who love the first seats in synagogues and meetings, and like to be greeted obsequiously in the market squares and you do not worry about doing deeds that can give you a seat in Heaven and make you deserve to be revered by the angels. You are like hidden sepulchres, which do not disgust him who passes near them without noticing them, but would give him a shiver of horror if he saw what is closed in them. But God sees the most secret things also and cannot be deceived when He judges. »

Jesus is interrupted by a doctor of the Law who also stands up to contradict Him. « Master, You are offending us as well, by speaking so; and that is not advantageous to You, because we have to judge You. »

« No. Not you. You cannot judge Me. You will be judged, you are not the judges, and it is God Who will judge you. You can speak and utter sounds with your lips. But even the most powerful voice cannot reach up to Heaven or resound all over the world. After a short space it is silence... And after a short time it is oblivion. But the judgement of God is a lasting voice that is not subject to oblivion. Ages have gone by since God judged Lucifer and Adam. But the voice of the judgement has not gone out. And its consequences still last. And if I have come to bring back Grace to men, through the perfect Sacrifice, the sentence on Adam's action remains what it is, and it will always be called "Original sin". Men will be redeemed, they will be washed with a purification exceeding every other one, but they will be born with that stain, because God has decided that that stain is to be in every man born of woman, with the exception of Him, Who was made not by deed of man, but by the Holy Spirit, and with the exception of the Preserved Woman and the Presanctified Man, virgins for ever. The Former, that She might be the Virgin Mother of God, the latter that he might be the precursor of

the Innocent, being born already pure, through a pre-fruition of the infinite merits of the Saviour Redeemer.

And I tell you that God judges you. And He judges you saying: "Woe to you, doctors of the Law, because you load people with unbearable weights, turning into a punishment the fatherly Decalogue of the Most High to His People". He had given it out of love and for love, so that man might be supported by a fair guide, man, the eternal imprudent ignorant child. And the loving leadingstrings, by which God supported His creatures, so that they might proceed along His way and arrive at His heart, have been replaced by you with mountains of heavy, sharp harassing stones, a labyrinth of prescriptions, a nightmare of scruples, whereby man loses heart, becomes confused, stops, fears God as an enemy. You prevent hearts from going to God. You separate the Father from His children. Through your impositions, you deny such sweet, blessed true Paternity. You, however, do not even touch with your fingers those weights, which you load on other people. You consider yourselves justified, simply because you gave them. But, o fools, do you not know that you will be judged for what you considered necessary for salvation? Do you not know that God will say to you: "You said that your word was sacred and just. Well, I judge it such as well. And since you imposed it on everybody and you judged your brothers according to how it was accepted and practised, now I judge you by your own word. And since you did not do what you said was to be done, be damned"?

Woe to you who build sepulchres to the prophets killed by your fathers. What? Do you think that you will thus reduce the gravity of your fathers' sin or that you will cancel it in the eyes of posterity? No. On the contrary you give evidence of such deeds of your fathers. Not only, but you approve of them, and you are ready to imitate them and build later a sepulchre to the persecuted prophet, so that you say to yourselves: "We have honoured him". Hypocrites! That is why the Wisdom of God said: "I will send them prophets and apostles. And they will kill some and persecute some, so that it may be possible to call this generation to account for the blood of all the prophets, shed from the creation of the world onwards, from the blood of Abel down to the blood of Zacharias, slain between the Altar and the Sanctuary". Yes, I solemnly tell you that of all that blood of saints an account will be asked of this generation, which cannot tell where God is, and it persecutes and distresses the just who are a living comparison for their injustice. Woe to you, doctors of the Law, who have usurped the key of science and have closed its temple, in order not to enter it and be judged by it, neither have you allowed others to enter it. Because you know that if the people were taught the true Science, that is, Holy Wisdom, they could judge you. You, therefore, prefer them to

be ignorant, that they may not judge you. And you hate Me because I am the Word of Wisdom and before the time you would like to close Me in prison, in a sepulchre, so that I may no longer speak.

But I will speak as long as My Father likes Me to speak. And afterwards My deeds will speak more than My words. And My merits will speak even more than My deeds, and the world will be taught and will know, and it will judge you. The first judgement is upon you. Then the second will come: an individual judgement at the death of each of you. And then the last one: The Universal one. And you will remember this day and these days, and you, you alone will know the terrible God, Whom you have striven to show as a nightmarish vision to the spirits of simple people, whilst you, inside your sepulchres, derided Him and you neither respected nor obeyed His commandments, from the first and main one: the commandment of love, to the last one given on Sinai.

It is of no avail to you, Helkai, that you have no images in your house. Neither is it of any avail to you all, that you have no sculptures in your houses. Inside your hearts you have an idol, several idols. The idol whereby you believe that you are gods, the idols of your concupiscence. Come, My disciples, let us go. »

And preceded by the Twelve He goes out last.

Silence...

Those remaining clamour shouting all together: « We must persecute Him, catch Him at fault and find counts of indictment! We must kill Him! »

Then silence again.

Then, while two of them go away disgusted with the hatred and intentions of the Pharisees - one is Helkai's relative and the other the man who defended the Master twice - those left ask one another: « But how? »

There is silence once again.

Then with a hoarse laughter Helkai says: « We will have to talk Judas of Simon round... »

« Of course! It's a good idea! But you offended him!... »

« I'll see to that » says the one whom Jesus called Simon Boetos. « Eleazar of Annas and I... We will entrap him... »

« Some promises... »

« A little fear »

« Much money »

« No. Not much Promises of much money... »

« And then? »

« What do you mean: and then? »

« Eh! Then. When it is all done, what shall we give him? »

« Nothing! Death. So... he will not speak any more » slowly and cruelly says Helkai.

3-2084

« Oh! death »

« Are you horrified? Go away! If we kill the Nazarene Who is a just man we can kill the Iscariot as well, as he is a sinner... »

There is hesitation

But Helkai, standing up, says: « We will hear also what Annas says And you will see that he will say that it is a good idea. And you will come, too Oh! you will certainly come »

They all go out after their host who goes away saying: « You will come You will come! »

413. At Bethany.

11th April 1946.

Sunset reddens the sky when Jesus arrives at Bethany. His hot dusty apostles follow Him. And Jesus and the apostles are the only ones to brave the burning road - as hot as a furnace - which receives little shade from the trees extending from the Mount of Olives to the slopes of Bethany. Summer burns, but hatred rages even more. The fields are bare and scorched they are like furnaces reverberating blasts of heat. But the souls of Jesus' enemies are even more devoid - I do not mean of love - but of honesty, of human morals, raging with hatred... And there is but one home, one shelter for Jesus: Bethany. There is love, relief, protection and loyalty there... The persecuted Pilgrim directs His steps there, in His white garment, sad of countenance, with the tired step of one who cannot stop, being urged on by enemies close behind, with the resigned look of one who already contemplates death approaching every hour, at every step, and which one accepts, out of obedience to God...

The house, in the middle of its large garden, is closed and silent, awaiting cooler hours. The garden is empty and deserted, and the sun only reigns despotically there.

Thomas calls in his loud baritone voice.

A curtain is drawn, a face looks out... Then a cry: « The Master! » and the servants rush out, followed by the surprised mistresses, who were certainly not expecting Jesus at that hot hour of the day.

« Rabboni! », « My Lord! » Martha and Mary greet from afar, already stooping, ready to prostrate themselves, as they do, as soon as the gate is opened and Jesus is no longer separated from them.

« Martha, Mary: peace to you and to your house. »

« Peace to You, Master and Lord... But why at this hour? » ask the sisters, dismissing the servants so that Jesus may speak freely.

« To rest My body and soul where I am not hated... » sadly says Jesus, stretching out His hands, as if to say: « Do you want Me? » and He strives to smile, but His very sad smile is belied by His sorrowful eyes.

« Have they hurt You? » asks Mary flushing.

« What happened to You? » asks Martha and she adds maternally: « Come, I will give You some refreshment. How long have You been walking, since You are so tired? »

« Since dawn... and I can say without stopping, because the short rest in the house of Helkai, the member of the Sanhedrin, was worse than a long journey... »

« Was it there that they grieved You? »

« Yes... and previously at the Temple... »

« But why did You go to that snake? » asks Mary.

« Because if I had refused to go, it would have served to justify his hatred, which would have accused Me of despising the members of the Sanhedrin. But now... whether I go or not, the measure of Pharisaic hatred is full... and there will be no truce... »

« Have we got to that? Stay with us, Master. They will not hurt You here... »

« I would fail in My mission... Many souls are waiting for their Saviour. I must go... »

« But they will prevent You from going! »

« No. They will persecute Me by letting Me go, so that they may watch every step of Mine, allowing Me to speak to study every word, watching over Me as bloodhounds track a quarry, so that they may have... something, which may look like a fault... and everything will serve... »

Martha, who is always so respectful, is so moved to pity, that she lifts her hand to caress His emaciated cheek, but she stops blushing and says: « Forgive me! I felt sorry for You as I do for our Lazarus! Forgive me, Lord, for loving You as a suffering brother! »

« I am the suffering brother... Love Me with pure sisterly love... But what is Lazarus doing? »

« He is languishing, Lord... » replies Mary and this avowal together with the grief of seeing her Master so distressed makes her shed the tears already welling in her eyes.

« Do not weep, Mary, neither for him nor for Me. We are doing the divine will. One should weep over those who do not know how to do that will... »

Mary bends to take Jesus' hand and kisses the tips of His fingers.

They have meanwhile arrived at the house and as they enter they go to Lazarus at once, while the apostles rest refreshing themselves with what the servants offer them.

Jesus bends over Lazarus, who is becoming more and more emaciated, and kisses him to relieve the sadness of His dear friend.

« Master, how much You love me! You did not even wait until evening to come to me. In this heat... »

« My dear friend, I enjoy your company and you enjoy Mine. The rest does not matter. »

3-2086

« That is true. It is nothing. Even my suffering no longer matters to me... Now I know why I suffer and what I can achieve by suffering » and Lazarus smiles an intimate spiritual smile.

« Yes, it is so, Master. One could almost say that our Lazarus rejoices at being ill and... » a sob breaks Martha's voice and she becomes silent.

« Come on, you may as well say it: at death. Master, tell them that they must help me, as the Levites help the priests. »

« To do what, My friend? »

:To consume the sacrifice...

« And yet, up till recently, you trembled at the idea of death! So you no longer love us? You no longer love the Master? Do you not want to serve Him?... » asks Mary, who is stronger but pale with grief, and she caresses the yellowish hand of her brother.

« And you are asking me, just you, ardent and generous soul? Am I not your brother? Have I not the same blood as you have, and the same holy loves: Jesus, souls, and you, my beloved sisters?... But since Passover my soul has received a great word. And I love death. My Lord, I offer it to You, for Your own intentions. »

« So you are not going to ask Me to cure you any longer? »

« No, Rabboni. I ask You to bless me that I may be able to suffer... and die... and if I am not asking for too much... to redeem... You said so... »

« I did. And I bless you to give you all the necessary strength. » And Jesus imposes His hands on him and then kisses him.

« We will be together and You will teach me... »

« Not just now, Lazarus. I am not staying. I have come only for a few hours. I am leaving tonight. »

« But why? » ask the three disappointed relatives.

« Because I cannot stay... I will come back in autumn. And then I will stay here for a long time and I will do much here... and in the surroundings... »

There is sad silence. Then Martha begs Him: « At least take some rest, some refreshment... »

« Nothing will refresh Me more than your love. Let My apostles rest and let Me stay here, with you, thus, in peace... »

Martha goes out weeping, she then comes back with some cups of cold milk and some early fruit...

« The apostles have had something to eat, and tired as they were, they are now sleeping. My Master, do You really not want to rest? »

« Do not insist, Martha. Before dawn they will be looking for Me here, at Gethsemane, at Johanna's, in every hospitable house. But at dawn I will be far away. »

« Where are You going, Master? » asks Lazarus.

« Towards Jericho, but not along the usual road... I am going towards Tekoa and then I will come back towards Jericho. »

3-2087

« A hard journey in this season!... » whispers Martha.

« That is why the road is solitary. We will walk at night. The nights are clear even before the moon rises... And it is soon dawn... »

« And then? » asks Mary.

« And later beyond the Jordan. And at the height of northern Samaria, I will cross the river and come to this area. »

« Go to Nazareth soon. You are tired... » says Lazarus.

« I must go to the coast area first... Then... I will go to Galilee. But they will persecute Me even there... »

« You will always have Your Mother to comfort You... » says Mary.

« Yes, poor Mother! »

« Master, Magdala is Yours. You know » Mary reminds Him.

« I know, Mary. I am aware of all the good and of all the evil... »

« Separated thus!... for such a long time! Shall I still be alive, when You come back, Master? »

« Do not doubt it. Do not weep... We must get accustomed also to parting. Separations serve to test the strength of affections. The hearts we love are better understood when we see them with spiritual eyes, from afar. When we are not enticed by the human pleasure of being physically close to the person we love, we can meditate on the spirit and love of that person... and have a better understanding of the ego of our far away beloved... I am sure that, thinking of your Master, you will understand Him better, when you see and contemplate My deeds and love peacefully. »

« Oh! Master! But we are not dubious of You! »

« Neither I am of you. I know. But you will know Me better. And I am not telling you to love Me, because I know your hearts. I say only: pray for Me. »

Lazarus and his sisters weep... Jesus is so sad!... How can one not weep?

« What do you want? God had put love amongst men. But men have substituted hatred... And hatred not only separates enemies from one another, but it insinuates itself to separate friends. »

There is a long silence.

Then Lazarus says: « Master, go away from Palestine for some time... »

« No. My place is here: to live, to evangelize, to die. »

« But You have seen to John and the Greek woman. Go and stay with them. »

« No. They were to be saved. I must save. And that is the difference that clarifies everything. The altar is here, and the chair is here. I cannot go elsewhere. In any case... do you think that would change what has been decided? No. Neither on the Earth nor in Heaven. It would only blemish the spiritual purity of the Messianic figure. I would be "the coward" who saves himself fleeing. I

3-2088

must set an example for the present and future generations that in the matters concerning God, in holy things, one must not be a coward... »

« You are right, Master » says Lazarus with a sigh...

And Martha, pushing the curtain aside, says: « You are right... It is getting dark... The sun has set... »

Mary weeps distressingly, as if that word had the power to crush her moral courage, which had so far confined her grief to silent tears. She is weeping more heartbrokenly than she did in the house of the Pharisee, when she implored the Saviour with her tears to forgive her...

« Why are you weeping thus? » asks Martha.

« Because you have spoken the truth, sister! There is no more sunshine... The Master is going away... There is no more sunshine for me... for us... » (1)

« Be good. I bless you and may My blessing remain with you. And now leave Me with Lazarus who is tired and needs calmness. Watching My friend I will rest. Provide for the apostles and ensure that they are ready for the hour of shadows... »

The women disciples withdraw and Jesus remains silent, engrossed in thought, sitting near His languishing friend, who happy for such closeness, falls asleep with a light smile on his face.

(1) Maria Valtorta, the author of this Work, in the last years of her life, when her mind seemed to be vacant and she spoke only a few words, now and again used to exclaim at any time of the day, and sometimes repeatedly: « Oh! How much sunshine there is here! » No one ever understood what she meant. Perhaps it is possible to conjecture the meaning in the light of the above exclamation of Mary Magdalene, for whom Jesus was the Sun.

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INDEX*

*Volumes 1 and 2 contained Summary-Indexes giving summaries of the numbered paragraphs into which each chapter of the volume had been divided.

Starting from volume 3, this Summary-Index has been suspended and has also been suppressed in reprints of volumes 1 and 2, as the summaries of the paragraphs will be issued more suitably with the various indexes to be compiled at a later date.

Consequently, each volume now contains only the Index of the titles of the chapters.

414. The Beggar on the Road to Jericho.

17th May 1944.

I see Jesus on a very dusty and sunny main road. There is not the smallest patch of shade, there is not a blade of grass. There is dust on the road, there is dust on the waste country bordering on it. There are certainly none of the pleasant hills of Galilee nor of the woody mountains of Judaea, so rich in waters and pastures. The land here is not a desert by its nature, but only because man has made it so by leaving it uncultivated. It is a flat country and I cannot see one hill, not even in the distance. As I am not familiar with Palestine, I cannot say which region it is. It is certainly one which I have never seen in previous visions. On one side of the road there are heaps of crushed stones, perhaps to repair the road, which is in a very bad state. At present one sinks into the dust: when it rains it must become a torrent of mud. I can see no houses, neither near the road nor far away.

Jesus, as usual, is walking a few metres ahead of the apostles, who, hot and tired, follow Him in a group. To protect themselves from the sun, they have pulled their mantles over their heads and they look like a confraternity dressed in many-coloured robes. Jesus, instead, is bare-headed. The sun does not seem to annoy Him. He is wearing a white linen short-sleeved tunic. It is very wide and loose. He is not even wearing His usual cord belt. His clothes are most suitable for this torrid place. His mantle also must be of sky-blue linen because it is very light and falls loosely over His body, which is thus less enveloped than usual. His shoulders are covered, but His arms are free. I do not know how He has fastened it to keep it thus.

A man is sitting, nay, he is half-lying on one of the heaps of crushed stones. He must be a poor beggar. His garment (so to speak) is a dirty tattered short tunic, which perhaps once was white, but now is the colour of mud. He is wearing two shabby worn-out sandals: two soles with holes, held together with pieces of string. In his hands he has a stick made from the branch of a tree. He has a dirty bandage on his forehead and another dirty rag, stained with blood, on his left leg, between his knee and hip. The poor fellow is emaciated, a heap of bones, dejected, dirty, hairy, uncombed.

Before he invokes Jesus, Jesus goes to him. He approaches the Poor wretch and asks him: « Who are you? »

« A poor man begging for bread. »

« Along this road? »

« I am going to Jericho. »

« The road is a long one and the country is depopulated. »

«I know, but the Gentiles who pass here are more likely to give me a piece of bread and a coin, than the Jews from whom I have

come. »

« Have you come from Judaea? »

« Yes, from Jerusalem. But I had to go a long way round to see some good people in the country, as they always give me something. Townsfolk don't give anything. There is no mercy there. »

« You are right. There is no mercy. »

« But You have mercy. Are You Judaean? »

« No. I come from Nazareth. »

« Once the Nazarenes had a poor reputation. But now we must say that they are better than the people in Judaea. Even in Jerusalem, only the followers of that Nazarene, Who they say is a Prophet, are good. Do You know Him? »

« And do you know Him? »

« No. I went there because, see, my leg is numb and contracted, and I drag myself along with difficulty. I am not fit to work and I am dying of starvation and blows. I was hoping to meet Him, because I was told that He cures whoever He touches. It is true that I do not belong to the chosen people… but they say that He is good to everybody. I was told that He was in Jerusalem for the Feast of Weeks. But I walk slowly… and I was beaten and I was left suffering on the road… When I arrived in Jerusalem, He had left, because they told me that the Jews had ill-treated Him as well. »

« And did they maltreat you? »

« They always do. Only the Roman soldiers give me a piece of bread. »

« And what do the people in Jerusalem say of that Nazarene? »

« That He is the Son of God, a great Prophet, a Saint, a Just man. »

« And what do you think He is? »

«I… I am an idolater. But I think He is the Son of God. »

« How can you believe that, if you do not even know Him? »

« I know His works. Only God can be as good and speak words as He does. »

« Who told you of those words? »

« Other poor people, people who were cured, children who bring me some bread… Children are good and they know nothing of believers and idolaters. »

« But where do you come from? »

«… »

« Tell Me. I am like children. Be not afraid. But be sincere. »

« I am… a Samaritan. Don't beat me… »

« I never beat anybody. I never despise anyone. I feel sorry for everybody. »

« Then… Then You are the Rabbi of Galilee! »

The beggar prostrates himself, from the heap of stones he falls on the dust like a dead body, in front of Jesus.

« Stand up. It is I. Be not afraid. Stand up and look at Me. »

The beggar looks up, still on his knees: he is all contracted because of his deformity.

« Give this man some bread and something to drink » says Jesus to the apostles who have just arrived.

It is John who gives bread and water.

« Make him sit down, so that he may eat comfortably. Eat, brother. »

The poor man weeps. He does not eat. He looks at Jesus with the eyes of a stray dog, which is caressed and fed, for the first time, by a compassionate person.

« Eat up! » orders Jesus smiling.

The poor fellow eats between one sob and another and tears moisten his bread. But there is also a smile among his tears. He slowly regains confidence.

« Who wounded you here? » asks Jesus touching with His fingers the dirty bandage on the man's forehead.

« A rich Pharisee deliberately ran me over with his cart… I was standing at a cross-roads begging for bread. He drove his horses against me so quickly, that I was not able to move aside. I was on the point of death because of it. I still have a hole in my head, from which putrid matter comes out. »

« And who struck you there? »

« I had approached the house of a Sadducee, where there was a banquet, asking for some of the remains, after the dogs had chosen the best ones. He saw me and set the dogs on me. One of them tore my thigh to pieces. »

« And what about this large scar that maims your hand? »

« A scribe gave me a blow with a club three years ago. He found out that I was a Samaritan and he struck me breaking my fingers. That is why I cannot work. With my right hand maimed, my leg numbed, how can I earn my living? »

« But why are you leaving Samaria? »

« It's bad to be in need, Master. We are very unhappy and there is not enough bread for everybody. If You helped me… »

« What do you want Me to do for you? »

« To cure me so that I may work. »

« Do you think I can? »

« Yes, I do believe it, because You are the Son of God. »

« Do you believe that? »

« I do. »

« You, a Samaritan, believe that? Why? »

« I do not know why. I know that I believe in You and in Him Who sent You. Now that You have come, there is no difference in worshipping. It is enough to worship You in order to worship Your Father, the eternal Lord. Where You are, there is the Father. »

« Have you heard, My friends? (Jesus addresses His disciples). This man is speaking through the Spirit Who enlightens the truth for him. And I solemnly tell you that he is superior to scribes and Pharisees, to cruel Sadducees, to all those idolaters who falsely call themselves the children of the Law. The Law prescribes to love our neighbour, after God. And they give blows to the neighbour asking for bread, they drive horses and dogs on suppliants, on the neighbour who lowers himself below the dogs of a rich man, they set the very dogs on him, to make him even more unhappy than his diseases do. Disdainful, cruel, hypocrites, they do not want God to be known and loved. If they did want that, they would make Him known through their deeds, as this man said. It is deeds, not practices, which make people see the living God in the hearts of men and lead men to God. And you, Judas, since you reproach Me for being imprudent, tell Me, shall I not reprimand them? To be silent, to feign that I approve of them, would mean approving of their behaviour. No. For the glory of God, Whose Son I am, I cannot allow humble, unhappy, good people to believe that I approve of their sins. I have come to make the Gentiles sons of God. But I cannot do that if they see that the children of the Law - they call themselves so, but they are illegitimate children - practise a paganism more guilty than theirs, because these Jews have been acquainted with the Law of God, and now, just like unclean animals, they spit the regurgitations of their satisfied passions on it. Am I to believe, Judas, that you are like them? You, who reproach Me for the truth I speak? Or must I think that you are worried about your own life? He who follows Me must not be concerned with human worries. I told you, Judas, you are still in time to choose between My way and the way of the Judaeans, whom you approve of. But consider that My way goes to God; the other to God's Enemy. Consider that and make up your mind. But be sincere. And you, My friend, rise and walk. Remove those bandages. Go back home. You are cured because of your faith. »

The beggar looks at Him dumbfounded. He dare not stretch out his hand… but he tries. It is uninjured, exactly as his left one. He drops his stick, and pushing his hands on the heap of stones, he rises. He can stand. The paralysis contracting his leg is cured. He moves his leg, bends it… takes one step, two, three. He walks… He looks at Jesus with a cry and tears of joy. He rips off the bandage from his forehead. He touches the back of his head, where the infected hole was. There is nothing. It is all cured. He tears the bloodstained rag off his leg: the skin is intact.

« Master, Master and my God! » he shouts, lifting his arms, and then falling on his knees to kiss Jesus' feet.

« Go home now, and always believe in the Lord. »

« And where shall I go, Master and God, but after You, Who are good and holy? Do not reject me, Master… »

« Go to Samaria. And speak of Jesus of Nazareth. The hour of Redemption is close at hand. Be My disciple with your brothers. Go in peace. »

Jesus blesses him and they then part. The cured man walks fast northwards, turning round now and again to look.

Jesus, with His apostles, leaves the road and they proceed eastwards through uncultivated fields, taking a little path which cuts across the main road and which widens out only much farther on. It is perhaps the road to Jericho. I do not know.

415. The Conversion of Zacchaeus.

17th July 1944.

I see a large square, which looks like a market and is shaded by palms and other lower leafy trees. The palm-trees grow here and there, without any order and their top leaves rustle in the warm upper breeze, which raises a reddish dust, as if it came from a desert or from uncultivated places of reddish earth. The other trees, instead, form shady porches along the sides of the square, and vendors and buyers have taken shelter under them, in a restless shouting din.

In a corner of the square, exactly where the main road leads into it, there is a primitive excise office. There are scales and measures, and a bench at which is sat a little man who oversees, watches and deals in cash and to whom everybody speaks, as if he were very well known. I know that he is Zacchaeus, the exciseman, as many people address him, some to ask about the events of the town, and they are mainly strangers, some to pay their taxes. Many are surprised at seeing him worried. He seems in fact absent-minded and engrossed in thought. He replies in monosyllables and at times with gestures, which amazes many, who know that Zacchaeus is usually talkative. Some ask him whether he is not feeling well or if any of his relatives is ill. But he says no.

Only twice he shows keen interest. The first time when he questions two people who have come from Jerusalem and are speaking of the Nazarene, of His miracles and teaching. Zacchaeus then asks many questions: « Is He really as good as they say? And do His words correspond to facts? Does He really make use of the mercy which He preaches? On behalf of everybody, also of publicans? Is it true that He does not reject anybody? » And he listens, thinks and sighs. The second time when someone points out to him a bearded man, who is passing by with a little donkey laden with household goods. « See, Zacchaeus? That is Zacharias, the leper. He lived in a sepulchre for ten years. Now that he is cured, he has

bought the furnishings for his house, which was emptied according to the Law, when he and his relatives were declared lepers. »

« Call him. »

Zacharias comes.

« Were you a leper? »

« I was and so were my wife and my two children. My wife was the first to be infected and we did not notice it at once. The children became infected sleeping with their mother, and I, when I approached my wife. We were all lepers! When it was found out, they sent us away from the village… They could have left us in our house, as it was the last one… at the end of the street. We would not have caused any trouble… I had already grown a very high hedge, so that we might not even be seen. It was already a sepulchre… but it was our home… They sent us away. Away! Away! No town wanted us. And quite rightly! Not even our own town had wanted us. We stayed near Jerusalem, in an empty sepulchre. Many poor wretches are there. But the children died, in the cold of the cave. The disease, cold and starvation soon killed them… They were two boys… they were beautiful before the disease. They were strong and beautiful, dark brown like two blackberries in August, curly and lively. They had become two skeletons covered with sores… They had no hair left, their eyes were sealed with scabs, their feet and hands were falling off in white scales. I watched the bodies of my children waste away!… They no longer looked like human beings the morning they died… one after the other within a few hours… I buried them under a little earth and many stones, like the carrion of animals, while their mother screamed… A few months later their mother died… and I was left alone… I was waiting to die and no one would dig a hole to bury me…

I was almost blind when one day the Nazarene passed by. From my sepulchre I shouted: "Jesus! Son of David, have mercy on me!" A beggar, who was not afraid to bring me his bread, had told me that he had been cured of his blindness, by shouting that invocation. And he said: "He did not only give me the sight of my eyes, but also of my soul. I saw that He is the Son of God and I see everyone through Him. That is why, brother, I do not shun you, but I bring you bread and faith. Go to the Christ. So that one more soul may bless Him". I could not go. My feet, ulcerated to the bone, would not let me walk… in any case… I would have been stoned, if they saw me. I waited carefully for Him to pass. He often passed by coming to Jerusalem. One day I saw, as far as I could see, a cloud of dust on the road and many people and I heard shouts. I dragged myself to the brow of the hill, where the sepulchral caves were, and when I thought I could see a bare fair-haired head shine among other covered ones, I shouted aloud, at the top of my voice. I shouted three times, until my voice reached Him.

He turned round. He stopped. Then He came towards me: all alone. He came right under the spot where I was and He looked at me. He was handsome, kind, with a voice, a smile!… He asked: "What do you want Me to do for you?".

"I want to be cleansed".

"Do you believe that I can? Why?" He asked me.

"Because You are the Son of God".

"Do you believe that?".

"I believe it" I replied. "I see the Most High flash in His glory above Your head. Son of God, have mercy on me!".

He then stretched out a hand and His face was ablaze. His eyes seemed two blue suns, and he said: "I want it. Be cleansed" and He blessed me with a smile!… Ah! What a smile! I perceived a strength enter me. Like a sword of fire which ran searching for my heart, it ran through my veins. My heart, which was so diseased, became as it was when I was twenty years old, and the ice-cold blood became warm and fast-flowing in my veins. No more pains, no more weakness, and a joy, what a joy!… He was looking at me; with His smile He made me blissful. He then said: "Go, show yourself to the priests. Your faith has saved you".

I then realised that I had been cured and I looked at my hands and legs. There were no more sores. There was fresh rosy flesh where previously the bone was uncovered. I ran to a little stream and I looked at myself. My face also was clean. I was clean! Clean after being loathsome for ten years!… Oh! Why did He not pass by before? When my wife and children were alive? He would have cured us. Now, see? I am buying things for my house… But I am all alone!… »

« Have you not seen Him any more? »

« No, but I know that He is in this area and that is why I have come. I would like to bless Him once again and be blessed by Him to have strength in my solitude. »

Zacchaeus lowers his head and is silent. The group breaks up.

Some time passes. It gets warmer. The market place empties. The exciseman with his head resting on one hand is pensive, sitting at his desk.

« Here is the Nazarene! » shout some children, pointing at the main road.

Women, men, sick people, beggars rush towards Him. The square is empty. Only some donkeys and camels, tied to the palmtrees, remain where they were, and Zacchaeus remains at his desk.

He then stands up and climbs on his desk. But he cannot see anything because many people have pulled off branches and are waving them joyfully and Jesus is bending over sick people. Zacchaeus then takes off his garment and having on only his short tunic he climbs one of the trees. He goes up the large smooth trunk

with difficulty as his short arms and legs make climbing difficult. But he succeeds and sits astride two branches as on a perch. His legs hang from that kind of railing and from his waist upwards he leans out as if he were at a window and he watches.

The crowds arrive in the square. Jesus looks up and smiles at the solitary spectator perched on the branches. « Zacchaeus, come down at once. I am staying at your house today » He orders.

And Zacchaeus, after a moment of astonishment, his face purple with excitement, lets himself slide down on the ground like a sack. He is so excited that he is hardly able to put on his clothes. He closes his books and cash-desk with gestures which he would like to be very fast, but instead are very slow. But Jesus is patient: He caresses some children while waiting.

Zacchaeus is ready at last. He approaches the Master and leads Him to a beautiful house with a large garden around it, in the centre of the town. A beautiful town. Not much inferior to Jerusalem with regard to its buildings, if not to its size.

Jesus goes in and while waiting for the meal to be made ready, he takes care of sick and healthy people. With such patience… as He only is capable.

Zacchaeus comes and goes, busying himself. He is beside himself with joy. He would like to speak to Jesus. But Jesus is always surrounded by a crowd of people.

At last Jesus dismisses everybody saying: « Come back at sunset. Go to your homes now. Peace be with you. »

The garden empties and the meal is served in a beautiful cool hall facing the garden. Zacchaeus has done things in great style. I do not see any other relatives, so I think that Zacchaeus is single and lives only with many servants.

At the end of the meal, when the disciples scatter in the shade of bushes to rest, Zacchaeus remains with Jesus in the cool hall. In actual fact Jesus remains alone for a little while, because Zacchaeus withdraws to let Him rest. But he comes back and looks through a slit in the curtains. He sees that Jesus is not sleeping, but is pensive. He then approaches Him. He is carrying a heavy coffer, which he lays on the table near Jesus and says: « Master… they have spoken to me about You. For some time. One day on a mountain side You said so many truthful things, that our doctors cannot excel them. They remained in my heart… and since then I have been thinking of You… Then I was told that You are good and that You do not reject sinners. I am a sinner, Master. They told me that You cure sick people. My heart is diseased, because I defrauded, I practised usury, I have been a depraved fellow, a thief, hard on the poor. But now, I have been cured, because You spoke to me. You approached me and the demon of sensuality and riches fled. And as from today, I belong to You, if You do not reject me, and to prove

to You that I am reborn in You, I divest myself of the ill-acquired riches and I give You half of my wealth for the poor and I will use the other half to give back, multiplied by four, what I got by fraud. I know whom I cheated. Then, after handing back to each of them what belongs to them, I will follow You, Master, if You allow me… »

« I do want that. Come. I have come to save and call people to the Light. Today Light and Salvation have come to the house of your heart. Those who over there, beyond the gate, are grumbling because I have redeemed you sitting at your banquet, are forgetting that you are a son of Abraham as they are, and that I have come to save who was lost and to give Life to those whose spirits were dead. Come, Zacchaeus. You have understood My word better than many people who follow Me only to be able to accuse Me. Therefore you will be with Me as from now on. »

The vision ends here.

18th July 1944.

Jesus says:

« There is yeast and yeast. There is the yeast of Good and the yeast of Evil. The yeast of Evil, a Satanic poison, ferments more easily than the yeast of Good, because it finds matter more suitable for fermentation in the heart of man, in the thought of man, in the flesh of man, seduced all three by a selfish will, contrary therefore to the universal Will, which is the Will of God.

The will of God is universal because it is never confined to a personal thought, but it takes into consideration the welfare of the whole universe. Nothing can increase the perfection of God in any way, as He has always possessed everything in a perfect manner. Thus there can be no thought in Him of personal gain inciting any of His actions. When we say: "This is done to the greater glory of God, in the interest of God", we do not mean that divine glory is in Itself susceptible to improvement, but that everything which in Creation bears the mark of good and any person doing good, and thus deserving to possess it, is adorned with the sign of divine Glory and thus gives glory to Glory itself, Which has created all things gloriously. It is, in short, the testimony which people and things bear to God, giving evidence, with their deeds, of the perfect Origin from Which they come.

Thus, when God orders or advises you to do an action or inspires you with one, He does not aim at any selfish interest, but at your welfare, with altruistic charitable mind. That is, therefore, the reason why the Will of God is never selfish, on the contrary it is a Will which aims entirely at altruism and universality. It is the only and true Strength in the universe which considers universal welfare.

On the contrary, the yeast of Good, spiritual embryo coming

from God, grows through difficulties and hardships, as it has against itself the reactions propitious to the other one: the flesh, the heart, the thought of man, pervaded with selfishness, the antithesis of Good, which by its origin can be but Love. Most men lack the will of Good and consequently Good becomes sterile and dies, or lives so poorly that it does not leaven: it remains as it was. There is no grave fault. But there is not even the effort to do the greatest good. The spirit thus lies inert: not dead, but unfruitful.

Bear in mind that not to do evil serves only to avoid Hell. To enjoy at once beautiful Paradise one must do good. It is essential. As much good as one can do, struggling against oneself and other people. Because I said that I had come not to bring peace but war, also between father and children, brothers and sisters, when such war was to defend the Will of God and His Law against the abuse of human wills aiming at what is contrary to what God wants.

In Zacchaeus the tiny quantity of yeast of good had leavened a huge mass. Only an original small particle had fallen into his heart: they had related My Sermon on the Mount to him. And they had done it so badly, mutilating it of many parts, as happens with reported speeches.

Zacchaeus was a publican and a sinner, but not through bad will. He was like one who sees things badly because the veil of cataract covers his eye-lenses. But he knows that once the veil is removed, he can see properly once again. And that sick person wants the veil to be removed. Zacchaeus was like that. He was neither convinced nor happy. He was not convinced of Pharisaic practices, which had already replaced the true Law. And he was not happy with his way of living.

He was instinctively seeking Light. The true Light. He saw a flash of it in that fragment of My speech and he hid it in his heart like a treasure. Because he loved it - bear this in mind, Mary because he loved it, the flash became more and more lively, vast and vehement, and caused him to see Good and Evil clearly and to choose rightly, generously cutting off all the tentacles which previously, from things to his heart and from his heart to things, had enveloped him in a net of malicious slavery.

"Because he loved it". That is the secret of success or failure. One succeeds when one loves. One has little success when one loves niggardly. One has no success at all when one does not love. In anything. All the more in the things of God, where, as God is invisible to corporal senses, I dare say, one must love perfectly, as far as a creature can reach perfection, in order to succeed in an enterprise. In holiness, in this case.

Zacchaeus, disgusted with the world and the flesh, as he was disgusted with the meanness of Pharisaic practices, so captious and severe for other people, so indulgent for them, loved the little

treasure of a word of Mine, which reached him by chance, speaking from a human point of view. He loved it as the most beautiful thing that his forty-year-old life had ever possessed, and from that moment he concentrated his heart and thought on that point.

It is not only in evil that man's heart is where his treasure is. But also in good. Did saints perhaps during their lifetime not have their hearts where their treasure was: in God? Yes, they did. And that is why, looking only at God, they passed on the Earth, without contaminating their souls with the mud of the Earth.

That morning, even if I had not appeared there, I would have conquered a proselyte. Because the speech of the leper had completed Zacchaeus' metamorphosis. At the bench of the excise-house there was no longer a cheating vicious publican, but a man repenting his past and decided to change life. If I had not gone to Jericho, he would have closed his office, he would have taken his money and come looking for Me, because he could no longer live without the water of Truth, without the bread of Love, without the kiss of Forgiveness.

The usual harsh critics who always watched Me to reproach Me, did not see that and they could understand it even less. And that is why they were amazed at My having a meal with a sinner. Oh! I wish you never judged, leaving that task to God, you poor blind people, who cannot even judge yourselves! I never went with sinners to approve of their sin. I went to remove them from sin, because they often had only the exterior aspect of sin: their contrite souls had already changed into new souls, living to expiate. So was I with a sinner? No, I was with a redeemed soul, in need only of a guide to stand up in its weakness of a soul risen from death.

How much Zacchaeus' episode can teach you! The power of upright intention that excites desire. Upright desire that urges one to seek deeper and deeper knowledge of Good and to long for God continuously until one reaches Him, true repentance that gives the courage of abnegation. Zacchaeus had the upright intention of listening to words of true Doctrine. When he heard some, his upright desire urged him to greater desire and thus to uninterrupted research for that Doctrine; the research for God, hidden in the true Doctrine, detached him from the mean gods of richness and sensuality and made him a hero of renunciation.

"If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and follow Me" I said to the rich young man, but he did not do that. But Zacchaeus, although more hardened in avarice and sensuality, was able to do it. Because, through the few Words related to him, like the blind beggar and the leper cured by Me, he saw God. Can a soul that has seen God, find any more attraction in the little things of the Earth? Is that ever possible, My little bride? »

19th July 1944.

Jesus says:

« In My several beatitudes I enunciated the requisites necessary to achieve them and the rewards that will be given to the blessed ones. But while the categories mentioned are different, the reward is the same, if you consider the situation carefully: to enjoy the same things that God enjoys.

Different categories. I have already explained that God with His thought creates souls of different tendency, so that the Earth may enjoy a just balance in all its inferior and superior necessities. If the rebellion of man upsets that balance, as he always wants to go against the divine Will, Which guides him lovingly along the just way, it is not God's fault. Men, perpetually dissatisfied with their situation, invade or upset other people's estates, either by means of true and proper abuse of power, or by attempts at such abuse. What are world wars, family feuds, professional warfare, but such active abuse? What are social revolutions, what are the doctrines that clothe themselves with the name "social", but in actual fact are nothing but arrogance and the very opposite of charity, because they neither want nor practise the justice they preach, on the contrary they overflow with outbreaks of violence, which do not relieve oppressed people, but increase their numbers to the advantage of a few arrogant fellows?

But where I, God, reign, such alterations do not take place. Nothing upsets order in My Kingdom and in the spirits which are really Mine. Thus the several -aspects of the multiform holiness of God are lived and rewarded, because God is just, pure, peaceful, merciful, free from the greed of fleeting riches, joyful in the happiness of His love. Some souls tend to one form, some to another. They tend in an eminent manner, because all virtues are present in saints. But one predominates, and on account of it, that saint is particularly celebrated among men. But I bless and reward him on account of all of them, because the reward is "to enjoy God" both for the peaceful and the merciful, for those who love justice and for those who are persecuted by injustice, for the pure and the distressed, for the meek and for the pure in spirit.

The pure in spirit! How badly is this definition always understood, even by those who perceive its right meaning! According to human superficiality and to foolish human irony, and according to ignorance, which considers itself wise, pure in spirit means "stupid".

The better class of people think that the spirit is intelligence, thought; those who are more material consider it artfulness and malice. No. The spirit is by far superior to intelligence. It is the king of everything in you. All physical and moral qualities are subjects and servants of that king. That is the situation where a

creature devoted to God in a filial manner knows how to keep things in the right place. Where instead a creature is not devoted in a filial manner, idolatries take place, and the maidservants become queens and depose the spirit king. Anarchy which causes disaster like all anarchies.

Poverty in spirit consists in having the sovereign freedom from everything that is the delight of man, and for which man goes to the extent of committing material crime or the unpunished moral crime that too often escapes human law, but does not make fewer victims, on the contrary it makes more and with consequences which are not limited to taking the life of the victim, but often deprive both the victims and their relatives of their good reputation and livelihood.

The man poor in spirit is no longer enslaved by riches. Even if he does not go so far as to repudiate them materially, depriving himself of them and of every comfort by joining a monastic order, he knows how to use them sparingly for himself, which is a double sacrifice, in order to be prodigal of gifts to the poor of the world. He has understood My sentence: "Make friends by means of unjust riches". Of his money, which might be the enemy of his spirit, leading it to lust, greed and anticharity, he makes a servant that levels the way to Heaven for him - the rich: poor in spirit - a way completely spread with his mortifications and his charitable deeds for the miseries of his fellow-creatures. How many injustices the man poor in spirit mends and cures! His own injustices of the time when, like Zacchaeus, he was but a greedy hard-hearted man. Injustices of his neighbours, whether alive or dead. Social injustices.

You erect monuments to people who were great only because they were overbearing. Why do you not erect monuments to the secret benefactors of destitute mankind, to the poor and working classes, to those who use their wealth not to make their own lives a perpetual feast, but to make life brighter, better and more elevated for those who are poor, for those who suffer, for those whose functional faculties are impaired, for those left in ignorance by overbearing people, because ignorance serves their hateful aims better? How many there are, also among those who are not rich, nay, who are little less than poor, and yet they can sacrifice the "two farthings" they possess, in order to relieve a misery, which, being without the Light which they have - and their behaviour makes one understand that they do have it - is greater than their own!

Those are poor in spirit who, losing their possessions, whether large or small, know how to keep their peace and hope, without cursing or hating anyone, either God or men.

The wide category of the "poor in spirit", which I mentioned as the first one - because I could say that without such freedom of

the spirit from all the delights of life, it is not possible to have the other virtues which give beatitude - is divided and subdivided into many forms.

Humility of thought which does not swell with pride an does not proclaim itself super-thought, but makes use of the gift of God acknowledging its Origin, for Good. Only for that.

Generosity in affections, whereby one can deprive oneself also of them, in order to follow God, also of life, the most real wealth and the most loved instinctively by the animal creature. All My martyrs were generous in that way, because their spirits had become poor, in order to become "rich" in the only eternal riches: God.

Justice in loving our personal things. It is our duty to love them, because they are testimony of Providence in our favour. I have already spoken about that in previous dictations. But we must not love them more than we love God or His Will; you must not love them to the extent of cursing God, if man snatches them from you.

And finally, I would repeat it, freedom from the slavery of money.

Those are the different forms of that spiritual poverty that I said will possess Heaven out of justice. Put under your feet all the fleeting riches of human life to possess the eternal riches. Consider the Earth and its deceitful fruit, which is sweet outside and bitter inside, as the last thing, and live working to conquer Heaven. Oh! there is no fruit there with a false flavour. There is the ineffable fruit of the enjoyment of God.

Zacchaeus had understood that. That sentence was the arrow that opened his heart to Light and Charity. It opened it to Me as I approached him to say to him: "Come". And when I came up to him to call him, he was already "poor in spirit". He was therefore capable of possessing Heaven. »

416. At Solomon's Village.

Jesus says:

« You will put here the vision of Jesus and the beggar on the road to Jericho, which you had on 17th May 1944, and immediately after it, the vision of the conversion of Zacchaeus, of 17th July 1944. »

13th April 1946.

Jesus arrives there at dead of night. The position of the moon makes me think that it is about two o'clock a.m. A beautiful moon, just beginning to wane is beaming in the middle of the clear sky spreading peace on the earth. Peace and abundant dew, the heavy dew of warm countries, beneficial to plants after the parching heat of the sun during the day.

The pilgrims must have followed the gravel bed of the river, which is dry near the banks, as the river is more restricted in its bed because of the summer drought. And from the cane-brake they climb up to the wood limiting the banks and supporting them with the network of the roots of the trees growing near the water.

« Let us stop here and await morning » says Jesus.

« Master… I am aching all over… » says Matthew.

« And I am afraid I have a temperature. A river is not a healthy place in summer… as You know » adds Philip.

« But it would have been worse if from the river we had gone up to the Judaean mountains. That is also well known » says the Zealot, who feels sorry for Jesus, to Whom they all tell their fears and complaints, but Whose mood no one understands.

« Never mind, Simon. They are right. But we shall have a rest shortly… Please, only another short distance… And a short rest here. You can see how the moon is going down westwards. Why wake the old man and Joseph, who is perhaps still ill, when it will soon be daybreak?… »

« The trouble is that everything is wet with dew here. One does not know where to sit… » grumbles the Iscariot.

« Are you afraid of spoiling your garment? Never mind, after these forced marches among dust and dew, there is no strutting about in it! In any case… kind Helkai would prefer it as it is. Your Greek frets… ha! ha! those at the hem and round the sleeves are hanging in ribbons on the thorny bushes of the Judaean desert, and the one round your neck has been ruined by your perspiration… You are now a perfect Judaean… » says Thomas, who is always merry.

« I am perfect a wretch, dirty as I am, and disgusted with it » retorts Judas angrily.

« It is enough for you to have a clean heart, Judas » says Jesus calmly. « That is important… ».

« Important! Important! We are exhausted with fatigue, with starvation… We are ruining our health, and that only is important » replies rudely Judas.

« I am not compelling you to stay… It is you who want to stay. »

« After all this time!… I had better do so. I am… »

« You may as well say the word that makes your lips rankle: "You are compromised in the eyes of the Sanhedrin". But you can always make amends… and regain their confidence… »

« I do not want to make amends… because I love You and I want to stay with You. »

« In actual fact you say so in such a manner that rather than love it sounds like hatred… » grumbles between his teeth Judas of Alphaeus.

« Well… every man has his own way of expressing his love. »

« Of course! There is also who loves his wife but kills her with blows… I would not like that kind of love » says James of Zebedee endeavouring to put an end to the incident with a jest. But no one laughs. But no one, thanks be to God, replies.

Jesus advises: « Let us go and sit down on the threshold of the house. The eaves are wide and will protect us from the dew, and there is a footing at the base of the little house… »

They obey without speaking and when they arrive at the house they sit in a row along the wall.

But Thomas' simple remark: « I am hungry. These night marches make one hungry » revives the argument.

« Marches don't come into it! The fact is that for days we have been living on nothing! » replies the Iscariot.

« Actually at Nike's and at Zacchaeus' we had good meals, and Nike gave us so much food that we had to give it to the poor, otherwise it would have gone bad. We have never been short of bread. The caravan guide also gave us bread and butter… » remarks Andrew.

Judas, who cannot contradict, is silent.

A cock crows in the distance greeting the first sign of daylight.

« Oh! good! It will soon be dawn! » says Peter stretching himself, as he had almost fallen asleep.

They wait for daybreak in silence.

A bleating in a sheep-fold… Then a harness-bell in the distance on the main road, poles apart from them… The nearby cooing of Ananias' doves. The hoarse voice of a man in the cane-brake… It is a fisherman coming back with his night catch and he is cursing because it is scanty. He sees Jesus and stops. He hesitates, then says: «If I give it to You, will You promise me plenty in future? »

« For profit or for your needs? »

« For my needs. I have seven children, my wife and her mother. »

« You are right. Be charitable and I promise you that you will not lack what is necessary. »

« Here, then. In there, there is also the injured man who is not recovering despite treatment… »

« May God reward you and give you peace » says Jesus.

The man says goodbye and goes away, leaving his fish strung through the mouth with a willow twig.

Silence falls on them again, just broken by the rustling of the canes, by the trills of some birds… Then a creaking is heard nearby. The rustic little gate, which Ananias made, creaks when opened and the little old man appears on the road scanning the sky. A sheep follows him bleating…

« Peace to you, Ananias! »

« Master! But… how long have You been there? Why did You not call, so that I could open the door for You?! »

« Not long. I did not want to disturb anyone… How is Joseph? »

« You know?… He is not well. Pus runs out of his ear and he suffers from headaches. I think he will die. That is, I thought. You are here now and I think that he will recover. I was going out to get some herbs to make a poultice… »

« Are Joseph's companions here? »

« Two of them. The others have gone ahead. Solomon and Elias are here. »

« Did the Pharisees annoy you? »

« Immediately after You left. Not afterwards. They wanted to know where You had gone. I said: "To my daughter-in-law, at Masada". Did I do the wrong thing? »

« No, you did not. »

« And… have You really been there? » The little old man is anxious.

« Yes, I was there. She is well. »

« But… did she not listen to You?… »

« No, she did not. We must pray very much for her. »

« And for the little ones… That she may bring them up for the Lord… » says the old man and two large tears stream down his face to say what he does not speak. He concludes: « Did You see them? »

« I can say that I saw one… I got a glimpse of the others. They are all well. »

« I offer my renunciation and forgiveness to God… But… it is so grievous having to say: "I will never see them again"… »

« You will soon see your son and you will be in peace with him in Heaven. »

« Thank You, Lord. Come in… »

« Yes. Let us go at once to the injured man. Where is he? »

« In the best bed. »

They go into the well-kept kitchen garden, and from it into the kitchen and from the kitchen into the little room. Jesus bends over the sick man who moans in his sleep. He bends… and breathes into the ear enveloped in lints already impregnated with pus. He stands up and withdraws noiselessly.

« Are You not waking him? » asks the old man in a low voice.

« No. Let him sleep. He is no longer suffering. He will rest. Let us go to the others. »

Jesus sets the door ajar without making any noise and goes into the large room where are the little beds purchased the last time. The two disciples, being tired, are still sleeping.

« They keep vigil until morning. I keep watch over him from morning till evening. So they are tired. They are so good. »

The two must be sleeping with their ears cocked, because they awake at once: « Master! Our Master! You came just in time! Joseph is… »

« Cured. I have already seen to him. He is sleeping and does not

know. There is nothing wrong with him now. All he has to do is to purge himself of the pus and he will be as healthy as previously. »

« Oh! In that case purge us as well, because we have sinned. »

« How? »

« In order to assist Joseph we did not go to the Temple… »

« Charity makes every place a temple. And in the Temple of charity there is God. If we all loved one another, the whole Earth would be a Temple. Do not worry. The day will come when Pentecost means "Love". A manifestation of love. You have celebrated, anticipating times, the future Pentecost, because you have loved your brother. »

From the other room Joseph's voice is heard calling: « Ananias! Elias! Solomon! But I am cured! » and the man, thin and still pale, but no longer suffering, appears covered only with his short tunic. He sees Jesus and says: « Ah! It was You, my Master! » and he runs to kiss His feet.

« May God grant you peace, Joseph, and forgive Me if you suffered because of Me. »

« I glory in having shed my blood for You, as my father did. I bless You for making me worthy of that! » Joseph's simple plain face shines with joy uttering these words and looks noble, with the handsomeness which originates from an interior light.

Jesus caresses him and says to Solomon: « Your house serves to do much good. »

« Oh! because it is Yours, now. Previously it served only for the sound sleep of the ferryman. But I am glad that it has been useful to You and to this just man. We shall now have some good days here with You. »

« No, My friend. You will leave at once. We are no longer granted any rest. This period of time will be a real test and only those with a strong will will remain faithful. We shall now break the bread together and then you will leave at once, going along the river, preceding Me by half a day. »

« Yes, Master. Joseph also? »

« Yes. Unless he is afraid of new injury… »

« Oh! Master! Would to God that I had to precede You in death shedding my blood for You! »

They go out into the dewy kitchen garden shining in the early sun. And Ananias does the honours of the house by picking some early figs from the branches better exposed, and he apologises for being unable to offer a young pigeon because the two broods were used for the sick man. But there is the fish and they get busy preparing the food.

Jesus is walking between Elias and Joseph who tell Him of the recent adventure and of the strength of Solomon, who carried the injured man on his back for miles and miles, which they covered a

little at a time, by night…

« But you, Joseph, have forgiven those who injured you, have you not? »

« I never had a grudge against those unhappy people. I offered forgiveness and my sufferings for their redemption. »

« That is what one must do, My good disciple! And what about Ogla? »

« Ogla has gone with Timoneus. I do not know whether he will go on with him or whether he will stop at Mount Hermon. He always said that he wanted to go to Lebanon. »

« Well. May God inspire him to do what is best. »

Many birds now chirp in chorus among the branches, while bleatings, the voices of children and women, braying donkeys, squeaking pulleys of wells, tell that the village is awake.

In the kitchen garden the bread is broken, the fish handed round and they have their meal. Immediately afterwards, the three disciples, blessed by Jesus, leave the house and walk fast along the road, as far as the river, and vanish into the cool shady canebrakes… They can no longer be seen…

« And now let us rest until evening and then we will follow them » orders Jesus.

And some lie down on the little beds, some on the piles of nets, which Ananias made, saying that thus he is not idle and he earns his daily bread, and they all seek a refreshing sleep.

In the meantime Ananias, after picking up the garments wet with perspiration, goes out noiselessly, closes the door and the gate and goes down to the river to wash them, so that they may be fresh and dry by evening…

Jesus says:

« And here you will put the vision: "Jesus in a little village of the Decapolis" of 2nd October 1944, and then the other one: "The Demoniac of the Decapolis" of 29th September 1944. »

417. In a Little Village of the Decapolis. Parable of the Sculptor.

2nd October 1944.

This is what I see. A little river in a village consisting of few modest houses. It must be the one from which Jesus came when, in a boat, He crossed the Jordan in flood, because I see the boatman and his relatives come to meet Jesus, Who had sent the Iscariot and Thomas ahead, to prepare the way for Him.

The boatman, when he sees Jesus coming from afar, quickens his step and when he is before Him, he bows most reverently saying: « You are welcomed, Master, by our sick people. They are waiting

for You. I told them much about You. The entire village greets You through my lips saying: "Blessed be the Messiah of the Most High God!" »

« Peace to you and to this village. I am here for you. You will not be disappointed in your hopes. Those who believe will find Heaven merciful. Let us go. » And Jesus proceeds towards the centre of the village, walking beside the boatman.

Men, women and children appear at the doors and then follow the little procession, as it advances. At every step the people grow in numbers as many more join those already there. Some greet, some bless, some invoke.

« Master » shouts a mother « my son is ill. Come, Blessed One! »

And Jesus deviates towards a poor house, He lays one hand on the shoulder of the mother in tears and asks: « Where is your son? »

« Here, Master, come. »

The mother, Jesus, the boatman, Peter, John, Thaddeus and some local people go in. The others crowd at the door and look in craning their necks to see.

In a corner of the poor dark kitchen there is a little bed near the glimmering fireplace. On the bed there is the little corpse of a child about seven years old. I say a little corpse because he is so emaciated, yellowish, motionless. One is aware only of the heavy panting of the little chest, affected, I would say, by tuberculosis.

« Look, Master. I have spent all my resources to save at least this one. I am a widow, the other two sons died at the same age as this one is at present. I took him as far as Caesarea on the Sea to have him visited by a Roman doctor. But all he could say to me was: "Resign yourself. Caries is corroding him". Look… »

And the mother uncovers the poor little thing, pushing the blankets back. Where there are no bandages, there are little bones protruding from a parched yellowish skin. But only a tiny part of the body is uncovered. The rest is covered with bandages and linens and when the mother removes them, they show the characteristic dripping holes of osseus caries. A pitiful sight. The sick boy is so prostrate that he makes no gesture. He does not even seem to be involved. He just opens his hollow dull eyes, he casts an indifferent, I would say annoyed, glance at the people and then closes them again.

Jesus caresses him. He lays His long hand on the little abandoned head, and the child opens his eyes again, looking with more interest at the unknown man, who is touching him with so much tenderness and is smiling with so much sympathy.

« Do you want to be cured? » Jesus says to him in a low voice, bending over his wan face. He had previously covered the little body saying to the mother, who wanted to put some more bandages: « It is not necessary, woman. Leave him thus. »

The little patient nods without speaking.

« Why? »

« For my mother » he says in a very faint voice. His mother weeps more grievously.

« Will you always be good if you are cured? A good son? A good citizen? A good believer? » He asks the questions separating them clearly, to give the child time to answer each one. « Will you always remember what you are now promising? »

The feeble, yet so deep in desire, « yes », is uttered repeatedly, like a succession of sighs from his soul.

« Give me your hand, My little one. » The little patient wants to give his healthy one, the left one. But Jesus says: « Give Me the other one. I will not hurt you. »

« Lord » says the mother « it's one big sore. Let me bandage it. For You… »

« It does not matter, woman. I am disgusted only at the impurities of hearts. Give Me your hand and say with Me: "I want to be always good as a son, as a man, as a believer in the true God". »

The boy repeats stressing his voice. Oh! His whole soul is in his voice, and his hope as well… and certainly also his mother's.

A solemn silence has fallen in the room and in the street. Jesus, Who is holding the boy's right hand with His left one, lifts His right one, with the gesture as when He announces a truth, or when He imposes His will on diseases and elements, and standing solemnly upright, He says in a powerful voice: « And I want you to be cured. Rise, child, and praise the Lord » and He releases the little hand which is now completely healed, thin, but without the least excoriation, and He says to the mother: « Uncover your child. »

The woman, who looks as if she were between a death sentence and one of mercy, removes the blankets hesitantly… and she utters a cry and throws herself on the very lean but wholesome body, kissing and embracing it… mad with joy. So much so that she does not see Jesus going away from the bed towards the door.

But the boy sees and says: « Bless me, Lord, and allow me to bless You. Mother… are you not thanking? »

« Oh! forgive me… » The woman, with the child in her arms, throws herself at Jesus' feet.

« I understand, woman. Go in peace and be happy. Goodbye, boy, Be good. Goodbye, everybody. » And He goes out.

Many women lift up their children so that Jesus' blessing may preserve them from evil in future. Little ones creep through adults to be caressed. And Jesus blesses, caresses, listens, He stops to cure also three people with diseased eyes and a man trembling as if he were affected by St. Vitus' dance. He is now in the centre of the village.

« There is a relative of mine here, deaf-and-dumb from birth. He

is quick-witted, but he cannot do anything. Cure him, Jesus » says the boatman.

« Take Me to him. »

They enter a small kitchen garden at the end of which there is a young man, about thirty years old, who is drawing water from a well and pouring it on vegetables. As he is deaf and with his back turned, he does not notice what is happening and he calmly goes on with his work, notwithstanding that the shouts of the crowd are so loud as to frighten the doves on the roofs.

The boatman goes towards him, takes him by the arm and leads him to Jesus.

Jesus stands in front of the unhappy fellow, very close to him, body against body, so that with His tongue He touches the tongue of the dumb man, who is standing with his mouth open, and with His middle-fingers in the ears of the deaf-mute, He prays for a moment with His eyes raised to the sky. He then says: « Be opened! » and removing His fingers He steps aside.

« Who are You Who have loosened my tongue and ears? » shouts the man cured miraculously.

Jesus makes a gesture and tries to proceed going out from the rear of the house. But both the cured man and the boatman hold Him back, one saying: « He is Jesus of Nazareth, the Messiah » and the other exclaiming: « Oh! stay, that I may worship You! »

« Worship the Most High God and be always faithful to Him. Go. Do not waste time in useless words, and do not turn the miracle into a human pastime. Make use of your tongue to do good, and listen to the voices of the Creator Spirit Who loves and blesses you, with your heart, rather than with ears. »

Of course, it is quite useless to tell a man, who is so happy, not to talk of his happiness! The cured man makes up for so many years of mutism and deafness, by speaking to all the people present.

The boatman insists on Jesus entering his house to rest and take some refreshments. He feels that he is the maker of all the respect surrounding Jesus and is proud of it. He wants his right to be acknowledged.

« But I am the notable elder of the village » says an old imposing man.

« But if I had not been there with my boats, you would not have seen Jesus » replies the boatman.

And Peter, who is always frank and impulsive, says: « Actually… if I had not told you a little thing, you… the boats… »

Jesus interferes providentially, making everybody happy. « Let us go near the river. While waiting for our food there - and let it be frugal and sparing, because food is to serve the body and not be the aim of the body - I will evangelize. Anyone wishing to hear Me or ask Me questions, may come with Me. »

I can say that the entire village follows Him.

Jesus gets into a boat beached on the gravel bed and from that improvised pulpit He speaks to His listeners, who are sat in front of Him, in a semicircle, on the bank and among the trees.

He takes as a starting point the question asked by a man: « Master, our Law seems to point out as struck by God those who were born wretched, in fact He forbids them to serve at the altar. How can they be guilty? Would it not be fair to consider guilty their parents who give birth to wretched sons? Mothers in particular? And how are we to behave with those born unfortunate? »

« Listen. A great perfect sculptor one day carved a statue and he made such a perfect job, that he was pleased and he said: "I want the Earth to be full of such marvels". But by himself he could not cope with such a task. He therefore called other people to help him and said to them: "On this model make for me one thousand, ten thousand statues equally perfect. I will then give them the final touch, instilling expression into their features". But his assistants were not capable of so much, because besides being much inferior to their master in skill, they had become somewhat intoxicated eating of a fruit, the juice of which brings about delirium and dullness. The sculptor then gave them some moulds and said: "Mould the material in them; it will be a perfect work and I will complete it, enlivening it with a final touch". And the assistants set down to work.

But the sculptor had a great enemy. A personal enemy and the enemy of his assistants, and he tried with every means to make the sculptor cut a poor figure and rouse disagreement between him and his assistants. Thus he attacked their work with his cunning, altering the material to be poured into the moulds, or reducing the fire, or praising the assistants exaggeratedly. It thus happened that the ruler of the world, in an effort to prevent as far as possible the work from going out in imperfect copies, imposed heavy sanctions on those models issued in an imperfect state. And one of the sanctions was that such models could not be displayed in the House of God, where everything must be, or ought to be perfect. I say: ought to be, because it is not so. Even if appearances are good, facts are not so. Those present in the House of God seem faultless, but the eye of God discovers the gravest faults in them. The faults which are in their hearts.

Oh! the heart! It is with the heart that one serves God; indeed: it is with the heart. It is not necessary, neither is it enough to have clear eyes and perfect hearing, harmonic voice, beautiful limbs, to sing the praises pleasing to God. It is not essential or sufficient to have beautiful clean and scented garments. The spirit is to be pure and perfect, harmonic and well shaped in sight, hearing, voice, in spiritual forms, and these are to be adorned with purity; that is the

beautiful clean dress scented with charity: that is the oil saturated with essence that God likes.

And what kind of charity would be the attitude of a man, who being happy and seeing an unhappy fellow, should despise him and hate him? On the contrary, double and treble charity is to be given to those who, although not guilty, were born poor wretches. Wretchedness is a pain that gives merit to those who bear it and to those who, united with the victims, suffer seeing them bear it out of love of relationship, and perhaps they strike their chests thinking: "I am the cause of such pain through my vices". And it must never become the cause of spiritual fault in those who see it. It becomes a fault if it becomes anti-charity. So I say to you: "Never be without charity towards your neighbour. Was he born a poor wretch? Love him because he endures a great pain. Did he become unhappy through his own fault? Love him because his fault has already become a punishment. Is he the parent of a wretch born such or who became such? Love him because there is no deeper sorrow than the grief of a parent struck in his child. Is it a mother who has given birth to a monster? Love her because she is literally crushed by such grief, which she considers the most inhuman. It is inhuman".

But even deeper is the grief of a woman who is the mother of a son, who is a monster in his soul, as she realises that she has given birth to a demon dangerous for the Earth, for the Fatherland, for the Family, for friends. Oh! the poor mother of a cruel, vile son, of a murderer, of a traitor, of a thief, of a corrupt man, dare not even raise her forehead! Well. I say to you: Love those mothers also, the most unhappy ones. Those who in history will be known as the mothers of murderers, of traitors.

Everywhere the Earth has heard the weeping of mothers whose hearts were broken because of the cruel death of their sons. From Eve onwards how many mothers have felt their bowels being lacerated more painfully than in labour, nay, they felt their bowels and their hearts being torn off by a cruel hand, in the presence of their sons murdered, tortured, martyred by men, and they howled their pangs, throwing themselves with the frenzy of convulsive sorrowful love on the corpses which could not hear them any longer, neither could they be warmed by their warmth, nor could they say with a look, a gesture, since they could not do so with their lips: "Mother I can hear you".

And yet I tell you that the Earth has not yet heard the cry and has not collected the tears of the most holy Mother and of the most unhappy one among all those who will be remembered for ever by man: the Mother of the Killed Redeemer and the mother of the man who will be His traitor. Those two mothers, martyrs in different ways, will be heard mourning miles apart, and the innocent

and holy Mother, the most innocent, the Innocent Mother of the Innocent, will be the one Who will say to Her far away sister, the martyr of a son more cruel than anything on the Earth: "Sister, I love you".

Love to be worthy of that Woman Who will love everybody and on behalf of everybody. It is love that will save the Earth. »

And Jesus comes down from His rustic pulpit and bends to caress a little boy rolling on the grass of the gravel bed half-naked in his little shirt. After so many sublime words from a Master, it is pleasant to see Him thus, taking interest in a child, like a common man, and then breaking the bread, offering it round and handing it to those close to Him, sitting and eating like every man, while He certainly already hears in His heart the cry of His Mother and sees Judas beside Him.

Such control over His feelings impresses me, who am so impulsive, more than many other things. It is a continual lesson to me. Those present, instead, seem to be really fascinated. They are pensive and silent while eating and they look with veneration at the kind Master of love.

418. The Demoniac of the Decapolis.

29th September 1944.

Jesus and His apostles are still moving about the country. The mowing season is now over and the fields display scorched stubble. Jesus is walking along a shady path and is speaking to some men who have joined the group of the apostles.

« Yes » says one. « Nothing can cure him. He is more than mad. And he terrorises everybody, women in particular, because he chases them with obscene jibes. It would be a tragedy if he caught them! »

« One never knows where he is » says another man. « On the mountains, in the woods, in the fields… he appears all of a sudden like a snake… Women are terrified of him. One of them, a young girl, who was coming back from the river, died in a few days of a high temperature because she had been grasped by the madman. »

« The other day my brother-in-law went to the place where he prepared a sepulchre for himself and his relatives, because his father-in-law had died, and he wanted to make all the preparations for the burial. But he had to run away because the demoniac, nude and howling as usual, was inside and threatened to strike him with stones… He chased him almost as far as the village, then went back to the sepulchre and the dead man had to be buried in my sepulchre. »

« And what about the time when he remembered that Tobias and Daniel had taken him by force, had tied him and taken him back

home? He waited for them hiding among the canes and the mud of the river and when they got into the boat to go fishing or to ferry, I am not sure which, with the strength of a demon he lifted the boat and turned it upside down. They saved themselves by a miracle, but what was in the boat was lost and the very keel of the boat was damaged and the oars were broken. »

« But have you not shown him to the priests? »

« Yes, he was taken to Jerusalem tied like a bale… What a journey!… I was there and I can tell You that I do not need to go to hell to learn what happens and is said there. But it was of no avail… »

« Just as bad as before? »

« Worse! »

« And yet… the Priest!… »

« But what can You expect!… It would be necessary… »

« What? Go on… »

There is silence.

« Speak up. Be not afraid, I will not accuse you. »

« Well… I was saying… but I do not want to commit a sin… I was saying… that… well… the priest might be successful if… »

« If he were a holy man, you mean, but you dare not say so. I say to you: do not judge. But what you say is true. It is regretfully true! … »

Jesus becomes silent and sighs. A short embarrassed silence.

Then one dares to take up the thread of the speech again: « If we should meet him, will You cure him? Will You clear this countryside? »

« Do you hope that I may be able to do so? Why? »

« Because You are holy. »

« God is holy. »

« And You who are His Son. »

« How do you know? »

« Eh! people talk, in any case, we live here, near the river, and we know what You did three months ago. Who can stop a river in spate, but the Son of God? »

« And what about Moses? And Joshua? »

« They worked in the name of God and for His glory. And they were able to do so because they were holy. You are greater than they were. »

« Will You do it, Master? »

« I will, if we meet him. »

They proceed. The increasing heat makes them leave the road and seek shelter in a thicket along the river, which is not ruffled as when it was in flood. Although still rich in water, the water is calm and blue, shining in the sun. The path widens and white houses appear at the end of it. They must be approaching a village. At the borders of it there are some small very white buildings, with only

one opening in one wall. Some are open. Most of them are hermetically closed. There is no one about. They are spread over bare uncultivated ground, which seems to be abandoned. There are only weeds and boulders.

« Go away! Away! Go back or I will kill You! »

« The demoniac has seen us! I am going away. »

« I, too. »

« And I will follow you. »

« Be not afraid. Remain here and watch. »

Jesus is so sure of Himself that the… brave ones obey, but they go behind Jesus. The disciples also remain behind Him. Jesus proceeds alone and solemnly, as if He saw and heard nothing.

« Go away! » The voice is a rending cry. It sounds like a growl and a howl. It seems impossible that it can be uttered by a human being. « Go away! Back! I will kill You! Why are You persecuting me? I do not want to see You! » The possessed man bounds, he is nude, swarthy, with long ruffled hair and beard. His dark bristly locks strewn with dry leaves and dust fall over his grim bloodshot eyes, which roll in their sockets, and reach down to his mouth. And his mouth, open in howls and bursts of laughter of a madman - they sound like a nightmare - is foaming and bleeding, because he is striking it with a sharp stone and he says:« Why can I not kill You? Who is binding my strength? Is it You? You? »

Jesus looks at him and proceeds.

The madman rolls on the ground, bites himself, foams even more, strikes himself with his stone, springs to his feet, points his forefinger towards Jesus, Whom he stares at fixedly and wildly and says: « Listen! Listen! He Who is coming is… »

« Be silent, demon of the man! I order you. »

« No! No! I will not be silent. What is there between You and us? Why do You not leave us in peace? Are You not satisfied with confining us to the kingdom of hell? Is it not enough for You that You have come to snatch man from us? Why do You force us back down there? Allow us to dwell in our preys! Since You are great and powerful, pass and conquer, if You can. But let us rejoice and be harmful. We exist for that. Oh! cur… No! I cannot say that! Don't make me say that to You! I cannot curse You! I hate You! I persecute You! I am waiting for You to torture You! I hate You and Him from Whom You proceed and I hate Him Who is Your Spirit. I hate Love, because I am Hatred! I want to curse You! I want to kill You! But I cannot! I cannot! Not yet! But I will wait for You, o Christ, I will wait for You. I will see You dead! O what a joyful hour! No! Not joyful! You dead? No. Not dead. And I defeated! Defeated! Always defeated!… Ah!… » Paroxysm is at its utmost.

Jesus continues towards the demoniac keeping him under the radiation of His magnetic eyes. Jesus is now all by Himself. The

apostles and the other people have remained behind. The people are behind the apostles, who are at least thirty metres from Jesus.

Some inhabitants of the village, which appears to be thickly peopled and I think is also wealthy, have come out, attracted by the shouts, and are watching the scene, ready to run away just like the other group. So the scene is as follows: in the centre the possessed man and Jesus, now a few metres apart from each other; behind Jesus, to the left, the apostles and the people of the country; on the right hand side, behind the demoniac, the citizens.

Jesus, after ordering the demon to be silent, has not spoken any more. He only stares at the demoniac. But now He stops and raises His arms, He stretches them towards the possessed man and is about to speak. The man's cries are now dreadful. He writhes, he jumps to the right, to the left, upwards. He looks as if he wanted either to run away or hurl himself upon Jesus, but he cannot. He is riveted there and apart from his writhing, he can make no other movement.

When Jesus stretches out His arms, His hands extended as if He were taking an oath, the madman howls louder and after cursing, laughing and swearing, he begins to weep and implore. « No, not in hell! Don't send me there! My life is dreadful even here, imprisoned in man, because I want to travel through the world and tear Your creatures to pieces. But not there! No! No! Leave me outside!… »

« Come out of him. It's an order. »

« No! »

« Come out. »

« No! »

« Come out. »

« No! »

« In the name of the true God, come out! »

« Oh! Why do You defeat me? But I am not coming out, no. You are the Christ, the Son of God, but I am… »

« Who are you? »

« I am Beelzebub, the Master of the world and I will not surrender. I defy You, o Christ! »

The demoniac becomes motionless all of a sudden, stiff, almost dignified, and stares fixedly at Jesus with phosphorescent eyes, hardly moving his lips to utter unintelligible words and making light gestures with his hands near his shoulders and his elbows bent.

Jesus also has stopped. With His arms folded over His chest He gazes at him. Jesus also moves His lips lightly, but I cannot hear any word.

The people present are waiting, but they do not agree with one another:

« He cannot do it! »

« Yes, the Christ will now succeed. »

« No. The other one is winning. »

« He is strong. »

« Yes, he is. »

« No, he isn't. »

Jesus opens His arms. His face flashes command, His voice sounds like thunder. « Come out. For the last time. Come out, o Satan! It is I Who command! »

« Aaaaah! » (it is a very long cry of never-ending torture. Not even a man slowly pierced by a sword would yell thus). And the cry ends in words: « I am coming out. Yes, You have defeated me. But I will avenge myself. You are driving me away, but there is a demon beside You and I will go into him and possess him, investing him with my full power. And no order of Yours will be able to take him away from me. In every age, in every place I, the author of Evil, procreate sons for myself. And as God procreated Himself by Himself, I procreate myself by myself. I conceive myself in the heart of man and he gives birth to me, he gives birth to a new Satan, who is he himself and I rejoice having so many children! You and men will always find those creatures of mine, who are as many Satans. I am going, o Christ, to take possession of my new kingdom, as You wish, and I leave You this poor wretch whom I maltreated. In his place, as I am leaving him to You, the alms of Satan to You, God, I will take one thousand and ten thousand now, and You will find them when Your body in lurid tatters will be given as a plaything to dogs, and I will take ten thousand and one hundred thousand in future centuries to use them as an instrument for me and a torture for You. Do You think that You will win by raising Your Sign? My followers will knock it down and I will be the winner… Ah! It is not true that I will win! But I will torture You both in Yourself and in Your followers!… »

A loud crash, like thunder, is heard, but there is neither flash of light nor rumbling of thunder. Only a sharp lacerating crack, and as the demoniac falls like a dead body to the ground and remains there, a huge tree-trunk collapses near the apostles, as if it had been cut about one metre from the ground by a saw working as quickly as lightening. The apostolic group moves away just in time, while the local people run away.

But Jesus, Who has bent over the prostrated man and has taken him by the hand, turns round, still stooping and with the hand of the cured man in His own, He says:« Come. Be not afraid! » The people approach timorously. « He is cured. Bring a garment. » A man runs away to fetch one.

The man comes round slowly. He opens his eyes and meets Jesus'. He sits up. With his free hand he wipes off perspiration,

blood and foam, he pushes his hair back and looks at himself. When he realises that he is nude in the presence of so many people, he feels ashamed. He crouches and asks: « What happened? Who are You? Why am I here? Nude? »

« Nothing, My friend. They will now bring you some clothes and you will go back home. »

« Where have I come from? And where are You from? » He speaks with the faint tired voice of a sick person.

« I come from the Sea of Galilee. »

« And how come You know me? Why are You helping me? What is Your name? »

Some men arrive with a tunic which they put on the man cured miraculously. And an old woman arrives weeping and she presses the cured man to her heart.

« Son! »

« Mother! Why did you leave me for such a long time? »

The old woman weeps even more and kisses and caresses him. Perhaps she would speak more words, but Jesus dominates her with His eyes and inspires her with more pitiful ones: « You have been so ill, son! Praise God Who has cured you and the Messiah Who acted in the name of God. »

« Him? What's His name? »

« Jesus of Galilee. But His name is Goodness. Kiss His hands, son, and ask Him to forgive you for what you did or said… you certainly spoke in your… »

« Yes, he spoke when he was feverish » says Jesus to prevent unwise words. « But it was not he who spoke and I am not severe with him. Let him be good now. Let him be continent. » Jesus stresses the word. The man lowers his head, embarrassed.

But what Jesus spares him is not spared by the rich citizens who have by now approached them. Among them there are some ineffable Pharisees. « You have been lucky! It is a good job that you met Him, the master of the demons. »

« I… a demoniac? » The man is terrified.

The old woman bursts out: « You cursed ones! You have neither mercy nor respect! You greedy cruel vipers! And you as well, you useless minister of the synagogue. The Holy One master of the demons! »

« And who do you think has power over them but their king and father? »

« Oh! Impious people! Blasphemers! Be c… »

« Be silent, woman. Be happy with your son. Do not curse. They do not upset or worry Me. You may all go in peace. My blessing to good people. Let us go, My friends. »

« May I follow You? » It is the cured man who asks the question.

« No. Stay here. Be My witness and your mother's joy. Go. »

And among cheering shouts and whispered mockery Jesus crosses part of the little town and then goes back to the shade of the trees along the river.

The apostles crowd round Him.

Peter asks: « Master, why did the unclean spirit offer so much resistance? »

« Because it was a complete spirit. »

« What does that mean? »

« Listen to Me. Some people give themselves to Satan by opening a door to one capital vice. Some give themselves twice, some three times, some seven times. When one has opened his spirit to the seven vices, then a complete spirit enters him. Satan, the black prince, enters. »

« How could that man, still young, be possessed by Satan? »

« Oh! My friends! Do you know along which path Satan comes? Generally three are the beaten paths, and one is never missing. Three: sensuality, money, pride of the spirit. Sensuality is the one which is always present. Courier of the other concupiscences, it passes spreading its poison and everything flourishes with satanic flowering. That is why I say to you: "Be the masters of your flesh". Let that control be the beginning of everything else, as that slavery is the beginning of everything else. The man enslaved by lust, becomes thief, swindler, cruel, murderer, in order to serve his mistress. The very thirst for power is also related to the flesh. Do you not think so? It is so. Meditate on that and you will see whether I am mistaken. It was through the flesh that Satan entered man and through the flesh he goes back into man, and he is happy if he can do so. He, one and sevenfold, enters with the proliferation of his legions of minor demons. »

« You said that Mary of Magdala had seven demons. You said so and they were certainly demons of lust. And yet You freed her very easily. »

« Yes, Judas. That is true. »

« So? »

« So, according to you, My theory is wrong. No, My friend. That woman wanted, by that time, to be freed from her possession. She wanted. Will power is everything. »

« Why, Master, do we notice that many women are possessed by the demon, and we can say, by that demon? »

« See, Matthew. Woman is not equal to man in her formation and in her reaction to the original sin. Man has other aims for his desires which may be more or less good. Woman has one aim only: love. Man has a different formation. Woman has this one, sensitive, which is even more perfect, because its purpose is procreation. You know that every perfection brings about an increase in sensitiveness. A perfect ear can hear what escapes a less perfect

ear and is glad of that. The same applies to the eyes, to the palate and to olfaction. Woman was to be the sweetness of God on the Earth, she was to be love, the incarnation of that fire which moves Him Who is, the manifestation, the testimony of that love. God had therefore gifted her with a supereminent sensitive spirit, so that, one day as a mother, she could and would know how to open the eyes of the hearts of her sons to the love for God and their fellow-creatures, as man would open the eyes of intelligence of his children to understanding and acting. Consider the command of God to Himself: "Let us make a helpmate for Adam". God-Goodness could but want to make a good helpmate for Adam. He who is good loves. Adam's helpmate, therefore, was to be able to love to succeed in making Adam's day happy in the blissful Garden. She was to be so capable of loving as to be the second, collaborator and substitute of God, in loving man, His creature, so that even when God did not reveal Himself to His child with His loving voice, man should not feel unhappy for lack of love. Satan was aware of such perfection. Satan knows so many things. It is he who speaks through the lips of pythonesses telling lies mixed with truth. And - bear this in mind all of you, both you who are present here and those who will come in future - he speaks such truth, which he hates because he is Falsehood, only to seduce you with the chimera that it is Light that speaks and not Darkness. Satan, cunning, tortuous and cruel, crept into such perfection, he bit there and left his poison. The perfection of woman in loving has thus become Satan's instrument to dominate man and woman and spread evil… »

« What about our mothers, then? »

« John, do you fear for them? Not every woman is an instrument for Satan. Perfect as they are in their feelings, they exceed in action: angels if they want to be of God, demons if they wish to be of Satan. Holy women, and your mother is one of them, want to be of God and they are angels. »

« Do You not think that the punishment of woman is unfair, Master? Man also sinned. »

« And what about the reward then? It is written that Good will come back to the world through Woman and Satan will be defeated. »

« Never judge the work of God. That is the first thing. But consider that as Evil came into the world through woman, it is fair that through the Woman Good should come into the world. A page written by Satan is to be cancelled. And the tears of a Woman will do that. And as Satan will shout his cries for ever, the voice of a Woman will sing to drown those cries. »

« When? »

« I solemnly tell you that Her voice has already descended from

Heaven where Her hallelujah has been sung from eternity. »

« Will She be greater than Judith? »

« Greater than every woman. »

« What will She do? »

« She will turn Eve upside down with her treble sin. Absolute obedience. Absolute purity. Absolute humility. She will rise on that: a victorious queen… »

« But, Jesus, is Your Mother not the greatest, having given birth to You? »

« Great is he who does the will of God. And that is why Mary is great. Every other merit comes from God. But that one is entirely Hers and may She be blessed for it. »

And it all ends.

Jesus says:

« You have seen a man "possessed" by Satan. There are many replies in My words. Not so much for you as for other people. Will they be of any use? No. They will be of no use to those who need them most. Rest with My peace. »

419. The Yeast of the Pharisees.

22nd April 1946.

After the Holy Week and the consequent penitence of not having any visions, the spiritual vision of the Gospel comes back to me this morning. And all my anxiety is forgotten in this joy that is foretold by an indescribable sensation of superhuman jubilation…

… And now I see Jesus, Who is still walking along the thickets on the banks of the river, and He stops and orders the apostles to have a rest during the hours which are too warm to travel. Because, while it is true that the thickly interlacing branches protect from the sun, they form a kind of canopy which obstructs the very light breezes, and thus the air in there is warm, still, heavy, and damp; dampness in fact rises from the ground near the river, and far from being a relief it is a sticky torture, which mixes with and increases the troublesome perspiration streaming down their bodies.

« Let us stop until evening. We will then go down to the whitish gravel bed still visible in starlight and we will proceed by night. Let us take some food and a rest now. »

« Ah! before taking any food I will refresh myself in the water. The water will be warm, too, like a decoction for a cough, but it will wash my sweat away. Who is coming with me? » asks Peter.

They all go with him: everyone, Jesus also, as, like everybody else, He is perspiring and His tunic is heavy with dust and sweat. Each of them takes a clean tunic from his sack and they all go down to the river. On the grass, to mark their stop, there are only

thirteen sacks and the small water flasks, watched over by old trees and countless birds, which look curiously with their tiny jet eyes at the thirteen full multicoloured sacks spread over the grass.

The voices of the bathers fade away and mingle with the murmuring water. Only now and again the sharp laughter of the younger ones resounds like a high note above the low monotonous tone of the river.

But silence is soon broken by the shuffling of feet. Some heads appear from behind a thicket; they cast sidelong glances and say with an expression of satisfaction: « They are here. They have stopped. Let us go and tell the others » and they disappear behind the bushes…

… In the meantime the apostles come back with the Master. They are refreshed, their hair is still wet, although they have dried it hurriedly, they are barefooted and are holding their dripping washed sandals by the straps, and they are wearing fresh clothes and the other ones are hanging in the cane-brake after being washed in the blue water of the Jordan. They are obviously in very good form after the long bath.

Unaware of the fact that they have been discovered, they sit down, after Jesus has offered and handed out the food. And after the meal, sleepy as they are, they would like to lie down and slumber, when a man arrives and after him another one, and then a third one…

« What do you want? » asks James of Zebedee, who sees them arrive and stop behind a large bush, undecided about moving forward or not. The others, including Jesus, turn round to see to whom James is speaking.

« Ah! it's the people of the village… They have followed us! » says Thomas without enthusiasm, as he was preparing to have a little nap.

In the meantime the visitors reply somewhat timorously, seeing the obvious reluctance of the apostles to receive them: « We wanted to speak to the Master… To tell Him that… Is that right, Samuel?… » and they stop not daring to say anything more.

But Jesus benignly encourages them: « Speak up. Have you more sick people?… » and He stands up directing His steps towards them.

« Master, You are even more tired than we are. Have a little rest and let them wait… » say some of the apostles.

« There are creatures here who want Me. So their hearts have no rest either. And the weariness of a heart is heavier than the tiredness of limbs. Let Me listen to them. »

« All right! Farewell to our rest!… » grumble the apostles, who are so affected by fatigue and heat as to reproach the Master in the presence of strangers, so much so, that they say to Him: « And when Your lack of prudence will have caused us all to be taken ill,

You will realise too late that we were necessary to You. »

Jesus looks at them… compassionately. There is nothing else in His kind tired eyes… And He replies: « No, My friends. I do not expect you to imitate Me. Look, you stay here, and rest; I will speak and listen to these people and then I will come and rest with you. »

His reply is so kind that it achieves more than a reproach would obtain. The kind hearts and affections of the Twelve are awakened and overwhelm them: « No, Lord! Stay where You are and speak to them. We will go and turn our clothes round so that the other side may dry. We will thus overcome sleep, and then we will come back and rest all together. » And the more sleepy ones go towards the river… Matthew, John and Bartholomew remain.

In the meantime the three citizens have become more than ten and their number increases more and more…

« So? Come here and speak without any fear. »

« Master, after You left, the Pharisees have become even more violent… They attacked the man freed by You… and it will be a new miracle if he does not become mad… because… they said to him… that You freed him from a demon who hampered only his reason and that You gave him a stronger demon, so strong that he defeated the previous one and is stronger than the previous one, because this one damns and possesses his soul, and thus, while in next life he would not have had to bear the consequences of the first possession because his actions were not… what did they say, Abraham?… »

« They said… oh! a strange word… In short God would not have asked him to give an account of those actions because he had not done them with a free mind, whereas now, by adoring You through the imposition of the demon he has in his heart, placed there by You - oh! forgive us for telling You - by You, the prince of demons, by adoring You with a mind which is no longer mad, he is impious, cursed and will be damned. Consequently the poor wretch regrets his previous state and… he almost curses You… So he is more insane than previously… and his mother is in despair because her son has given up hope of being saved… -and all their joy has become a torture. We have been looking for You so that You may give him peace, and an angel certainly guided us here… Lord, we believe that You are the Messiah. And we believe that the Messiah has in Himself the Spirit of God. He is therefore Truth and Wisdom. And we ask You to give us peace and an explanation… »

« You are in justice and in charity. May you be blessed. But where is the poor wretch? »

« He is following us with his mother, shedding desperate tears. See? The entire village, except them, the cruel Pharisees, is coming here, disregarding their threats. Because they have threatened to

punish us for believing in You. But God will protect us. »

« God will protect you. Take Me to the man I cured. »

« No. We will bring him here. Just wait » and many of them depart towards the larger group of people who are coming making gestures, while two shrill cries overwhelm the confused noise of the talk of the crowd. The others, those who have remained, are already so many, and when they are joined by the group surrounding the cured demoniac and his mother, a really large crowd is pressing among the trees around Jesus, climbing even the trees to find a place to hear and see.

Jesus goes towards the cured demoniac, who begins to tear his hair as soon as he sees Him, and kneeling down he says: « Give the first demon back to me! Out of pity for me, for my soul! What have I done to You that You should injure me so much? »

And his mother, also on her knees, says: « He is raving mad with fear, Lord! Do not pay attention to his blasphemous words, but free him from the fear that those cruel people have infused into him, so that he may not lose the life of his soul. You have already freed him once!… Oh! for the sake of a mother, free him once again! »

« Yes, woman. Be not afraid' Listen, child of God! » And Jesus lays His hands on the ruffled hair of the man delirious with supernatural fear: « Listen. And judge. Judge by yourself because your reason is free and you can judge according to justice. There is an unerring way to find out whether a prodigy comes from God or from a demon. And it is what a soul feels. If the extraordinary event comes from God, it infuses peace into the soul, peace and solemn joy. If it comes from the demon, it brings about perturbation and sorrow. And peace and joy come also from the words of God, whereas perturbation and sorrow come from those of a demon, be it a demon spirit or a demon man. And also the closeness of God grants peace and joy whereas the closeness of wicked spirits or men bring about perturbation and sorrow. Now consider, child of God. When, by yielding to the demon of lust, you began to receive your oppressor within you, did you enjoy happiness and peace? »

The man ponders and blushing replies: « No, Lord. »

« And when your everlasting Enemy captured you completely, did you enjoy peace and happiness? »

« No, Lord. Never. As long as I could understand, as long as a particle of my mind was free, I was distressed and grieved by the arrogance of the Enemy. Later… I do not know… My mind was no longer able to understand what I suffered… I was lower than a beast… But even in that state when I seemed to be less intelligent than an animal… oh! how much I could still suffer! I cannot say what… Hell is dreadful! It is nothing but horror… and it is not

possible to say what it is… »

The man shivers remembering what he suffered when he was possessed. He trembles, blanches, perspires… His mother embraces him and kisses his cheek to distract his mind from that nightmare… People whisper their comments.

« And when you woke up with your hand in Mine, what did you feel? »

« Oh! Such a wonderful sensation… and such a joy and an even greater peace… I seemed to be coming out from a dark prison, where countless snakes had been my chains and the air was permeated with the stench of a putrid sewer, and I seemed to be entering a garden full of flowers, of sunshine, of songs… I became acquainted with Paradise… but even that cannot be described… » The man smiles as if he were enraptured by the remembrance of his recent short hour of happiness. He then sighs and concludes: « But it was soon all over… »

« Are you sure? Now that you are close to Me and far from those who upset you, tell Me, what do you feel? »

« Peace once again. Here with You, I cannot believe that I am damned, and their words sound like blasphemy to me… But I believed them… So did I not sin against You? »

« You did not sin; they did. Rise, child of God, and believe in the peace within you. Peace comes from God. You are with God. Do not sin and be not afraid » and He removes His hands from the head of the man making him stand up.

« Is it really so, Lord? » ask many.

« It is really so. The doubt raised by the deliberately harmful words was the final revenge of Satan, who had come out of him defeated, but anxious to recapture the lost prey. »

With much good common sense a man of the people says: « Then… the Pharisees… assisted Satan! » and many applaud the keen remark.

« Do not judge. There is Who judges. »

« But at least we are sincere in our judgment… And God sees that we judge evident sins. They pretend to be what they are not. They act deceitfully and with wicked purposes. And yet they are more successful than we are, although we are honest and sincere. They are our terror. They extend their power even on the freedom of faith. One must believe and practise to their liking and they threaten us because we love You. They strive to reduce Your miracles to witchcraft and to frighten You. They conspire, they oppress, they injure… » The people speak excitedly.

With a gesture Jesus imposes silence and says:

« Do not receive in your hearts anything originating from them, neither their suggestions nor their methods, not even the thought: "they are wicked and yet they are successful". Do you not

remember the words of Wisdom: "Fleeting is the triumph of the wicked", and the words of Proverbs: "Son, do not follow the examples of sinners and do not listen to the words of the wicked because they will become entangled in the chains of their sins and they will be deceived by their own great stupidity"? Do not put into yourselves what comes from them and which you, although imperfect, consider wrong. You would, in fact, put within yourselves the same yeast which corrupts them. The yeast of the Pharisees is hypocrisy. Let it never be in you, neither with regard to the forms of worship of God nor with regard to your behaviour with your brothers. Beware of the yeast of the Pharisees. Remember that there is nothing concealed which cannot be disclosed, there is nothing hidden which is not revealed in the end.

You can see that yourselves. They allowed Me to leave and then they sowed darnel where the Lord had scattered chosen seed. They thought they had acted artfully and successfully. And it would have been enough if you had not found Me, if I had crossed the river leaving no trace of Myself on the water, which resumes its normal aspect after the bows open it, and their wickedness, under the appearance of good, would have triumphed. But their trick was soon found out and their evil deed was annulled. And the same applies to all the actions of man. At least One is aware of them and provides: God. What is spoken in the dark, ends up by being disclosed by Light, and what is plotted in the secrecy of a room can be disclosed as if it had been planned in a square. Because every man may have an informer. And because every man is seen by God Who can intervene and unmask offenders.

So one must always live honestly in order to live peacefully. And those who live thus need not be afraid, neither in this life nor with regard to the next one. No, My friends, I tell you: who acts righteously need not be afraid. They must not fear those who kill, yes, those who can kill the body, but can do nothing else. I will tell you what you must be afraid of. Be afraid of those who after putting you to death, can send you to hell, that is, of vices, of evil companions, of false teachers, of all those who insinuate sin or doubt into your hearts, of those who try to corrupt your souls more than your bodies, to detach you from God and to drive you to despair of divine Mercy. I repeat to you that that is what you are to be afraid of, because in that case you will be dead for ever. But be not afraid for the rest, for your lives. Your Father does not lose sight even of one of these tiny birds which builds its nest in the leafy branches of trees. Not one of them is caught in the net without its Creator being aware of it. And yet their material value is tiny: five sparrows for two pennies. And their spiritual value is nil. And yet God takes care of them. Will He, therefore, not take care of you? Of your lives? Of your welfare? Every hair on your heads is known to

the Father, and no wrong done to His children passes unnoticed by Him, because you are His children, that is, you are worth much more than the sparrows which nest on roofs or among leafy branches.

And you remain His children until, by your own free will, you renounce to be so. And one renounces such filiation when one denies God and the Word Whom God sent amongst men to lead men to God. Then, when a man will not acknowledge Me in the presence of men, because he is afraid of being damaged by such acknowledgement, God will not acknowledge him as His child, and the Son of God and of man will not acknowledge him in the presence of the angels in Heaven, and those who disown Me in the presence of men, will be disowned as children in the presence of God's angels. And those who have spoken ill of the Son of man or against Him will still be forgiven, because I will plead with the Father for their forgiveness, but those who blaspheme against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven.

Why that? Because not everybody can understand the extent of Love, its perfect infinity and see God in a body like the body of every man. The Gentiles, the heathens cannot believe that through faith, because their religion is not love. Also among us the fearful respect of Israel for Jehovah can prevent people from believing that God has become man and the humblest of men. It is a fault not to believe Me. But when it is based on excessive fear of God, it is still forgiven. But he cannot be forgiven, who does not yield to the truth shining through My deeds, and denies that the Spirit of Love has kept the promise to send the Saviour at the fixed time, the Saviour preceded and accompanied by the signs foretold.

Those who are persecuting Me, are acquainted with the prophets. The prophecies are full of Me. They are acquainted with the prophecies and they know what I do. The truth is evident. But they deny it because they want to deny it. They systematically deny that I am not only the Son of man, but also the Son of God, foretold by the prophets, He Who was born of a Virgin, not by the will of man, but of the Eternal Love, of the Eternal Spirit, Who announced Me so that men could recognise Me. In order to be able to say that the night of the Expectation of the Christ is still enduring, they persist in keeping their eyes closed, so that they may not see the Light which is in the world, and therefore they deny the Holy Spirit, Its Truth and Its Light. And they will be judged more severely than those who do not know. Neither will they be forgiven for saying that I am "satan", because the Spirit works divine, not satanic deeds for Me. And they will not be forgiven for driving people to despair, when Love had led them to peace. Because those are all offences against the Holy Spirit. Against this Paraclete Spirit Who is Love and grants love and asks for love and

Who is awaiting My holocaust of love in order to spread out in wise love, illuminating the hearts of My believers. And when that has happened and they will still persecute you, accusing you before magistrates and princes of synagogues and in courts, do not worry about how to defend yourselves. The same Spirit will tell you what to say to serve the Truth and conquer Life for yourselves, just as the Word is giving you what is necessary to enter the Kingdom of eternal Life.

Go in peace. In My Peace. In that Peace with God and which God sheds to saturate His children with it. Go and be not afraid. I have not come to deceive you, but to teach you, not to lose you, but to redeem you. Blessed are those who will believe My words. And you, man, who have been saved twice, be firm and remember My peace, so that you may say to tempters: "Do not try to seduce me. My faith is that He is the Christ". Go, woman. Go with him and be in peace. Goodbye. Go back to your homes and leave the Son of man to His humble rest on the grass, before resuming His persecuted journey in search of other people to be saved, until the end. My peace be with you. »

He blesses them and goes back to the place where they had their meal. The apostles are with Him. After the people disperse, they lie down, resting their heads on their sacks and they soon go to sleep, in the sultry heat of the afternoon and in the heavy silence of those torrid hours.

420. Consider Yourselves Unprofitable Servants.

24th April 1946.

The gravel bed is white in the moonless but very clear night, as thousands of large, unusually large stars are shining in the Eastern sky. It is not an intense light like moonlight, but it is already a pleasant phosphorescence, which enables those whose eyes are accustomed to darkness, to see where they walk and what is around them. Here, on the right hand side of the wayfarers, who are going up northwards along the river, the mild starlight shows the vegetable border made by cane-brakes, willows and then by tall trees, and as the light is faint, they look like a compact continuous wall, without any interruption, impossible to penetrate, with a gap where a stream or torrent bed, completely dry, draws a white line that runs eastwards and disappears at the first curve of the tiny tributary now dried up. On the left hand side, instead, the travellers discern the glittering waters that flow down towards the Dead Sea grumbling, sighing, rustling, quiet and serene. And between the shining line of the blue indigo waters, in the night, and the dark opaque mass of grass, bushes and trees, the clear strip of the gravel bed, in places wider, in others narrower, is now and

again interrupted by tiny ponds, remainders of previous floods, with still a little water, which is slowly absorbed by the soil and in which there are still some tufts of green grass, which elsewhere is dried up in the gravel bed parched in the hours of sunshine.

The apostles are compelled by those tiny ponds or by tangles of dry bulrushes, as dangerous as blades for their feet half-naked in sandals, to part now and again and then join again in a group round the Master, Who is proceeding with vigorous strides, always solemn, silent most of the time, with His eyes raised to the stars rather than bent to the ground. But the apostles are not silent. They are talking to one another, summarising the events of the day, drawing conclusions or foreseeing future developments. A few rare words of Jesus, often spoken in reply to a direct question or to correct a wrong or uncharitable opinion, punctuate the chattering of the Twelve. And the march proceeds in the night, marking the night silence with new elements for those desert banks: human voices and shuffling of feet. Nightingales are silent among the branches, surprised at the discordant harsh sounds mixing with and disturbing the usual murmur of water and whispering of breezes, the customary accompaniments of their virtuosi solos.

But a direct question, not concerning what has happened but what is to happen, breaks not only the peace of the night, but also the more intimate peace of hearts, with the violence of a rebellion in addition to the sharp tone of voices upset by scorn and anger. Philip asks whether and in how many days they will be home. A latent need of rest, an unexpressed but understood desire for family love is in the simple question of the elderly apostle, who is a husband and father besides being an apostle, and has interests to look after…

Jesus perceives all that and turns round to look at Philip, He stops waiting for him, as Philip is a little behind with Matthew and Nathanael, and when he is near, He embraces him with one arm saying: « Soon, My friend. But I ask you to be kind enough to make another small sacrifice, providing you do not wish to part from Me before… »

« Me? Part from You? Never! »

« Then… I will keep you away for some time from Bethsaida. I want to go to Caesarea on the Sea via Samaria. On our way back we will go to Nazareth and those who have no family in Galilee will remain with Me. Then, after some time, I will join you at Capernaum… And I will evangelize you there to make you even more capable. But if you think that your presence at Bethsaida is necessary… you may go, Philip. We shall meet there… »

« No, Master. It is more necessary for me to stay with You! But You know… Home is sweet… and my daughters… I do not think that I will have them very much with me in future… and I would

like to enjoy a little of their modest kindness. But if I have to choose between them and You, I choose You… and for many reasons… » ends Philip with a sigh.

« And you are doing the right thing, My friend. Because I will be taken away from you before your daughters… »

« Oh! Master!… » says grievously the apostle.

« It is so, Philip » concludes Jesus kissing the temple of the apostle.

Judas Iscariot, who has been grumbling between his teeth since Jesus mentioned Caesarea, raises his voice as if the kiss given to Philip has made him lose control of his actions. And he says: « How many useless things! I don't really understand why it is necessary to go to Caesarea! » and he says so with angry impetuosity; he seems to imply: « and You Who want to go there are a fool. »

« It is not for you to judge the necessity of what we do, but for the Master » Bartholomew replies to him.

« Really, why not? As if He saw natural necessities clearly! »

« I say! Are you mad or sane? Do you realise of Whom you are speaking? » asks Peter shaking him by the arm.

« I am not mad. I am the only one with sound brains. And I know what I am saying. »

« You are saying lovely things! », « Beg God not to take them into account! », « Modesty is not your strong point! », « One might think that you are afraid that by going to Caesarea you might be found out for what you are » say James of Zebedee, Simon Zealot, Thomas and Judas of Alphaeus respectively.

The Iscariot addresses the last one: « I have nothing to be afraid of and you have nothing to find out. But I am tired of seeing that we pass from one error to another, ruining ourselves. Conflicts with the members of the Sanhedrin, arguments with Pharisees. The Romans are the last straw… »

« What? Less than two months ago you were overjoyed, you were full of confidence, you were, you were… you were everything because Claudia was your friend! » remarks Bartholomew ironically who, being the most… uncompromising, is the one who does not rebel against contacts with the Romans only out of obedience to the Master.

Judas is speechless for a moment because the logic of the ironical remark is obvious, and unless he is prepared to appear illogical, he cannot contradict what he said previously. But he soon collects himself and says: « It is not because of the Romans that I am saying that. I mean because of the Romans as enemies. They… after all they are only four Roman ladies, four, five, six at most, they promised to help us and they will. But it is because that will increase the hatred of His enemies, and He does not realise that and… »

« Their hatred is intense, Judas. And you know that as well as I

do, even better than I do » says Jesus calmly stressing the word « better ».

« Me? Me? What do You mean? Who knows things better than You do? »

« Just now you said that you are aware of necessities and how to make use of them… » retorts Jesus.

« With regard to natural things, yes. I say that You know spiritual matters better than anybody. »

« That is true. But I was just saying to you that you know better than I do, unpleasant, disgraceful, natural things, if you wish to call them so, such as the hatred of My enemies, such as their purposes… »

« I know nothing! I do not know anything. I swear to it on my soul, on my mother, on Jehovah… »

« That is enough! It is written that you must not swear » orders Jesus with such severity that even His countenance seems to become petrified in the perfection of a statue.

« Well, I shall not swear. But I must be allowed to say, since I am not a slave, that it is not necessary, that it serves no purpose, on the contrary it is dangerous to go to Caesarea, to speak to the Romans… »

« And who told you that that will happen? » asks Jesus.

« Who? Everything! You need to make sure of something. You are on the track of a… » he stops realising that wrath is making him say too much. He then resumes: « And I tell You that You ought to think also of our interests. You have deprived us of everything: home, earnings, affections, peace. We are persecuted because of You and we shall be persecuted even later. Because You, You say so in every possible way, will go away one fine day. But we are staying. We shall be ruined, but we… »

« You will not be persecuted when I am no longer among you. I, who am the Truth, tell you so. And I tell you that I have taken what you spontaneously and insistently gave Me. So you cannot say that I have taken away from you, with abuse of power, even one of the hairs that fall off when you tidy them. Why are you accusing Me? » Jesus is now less severe, His sad countenance expresses the desire to bring Judas back to reason kindly and I think that his compassion, so full and so divine, acts as a check on the others, who would not be so sympathetic towards the culprit.

Judas also perceives that and with one of the brusque changes of his soul urged by two opposed forces, he throws himself on the ground striking his head and chest and shouting: « Because I am a demon. I am a demon. Save me, Master, as You save so many demoniacs. Save me! Save me! »

« Do not let your desire to be saved be inactive. »

« It exists. You can see that. I want to be saved. »

« By Me. You expect Me to do everything. But I am God and I respect your free will. I will give you the strength so that you may get to say: "I do want". But to want not to be a slave must come from you. »

« I do want! I do want! But do not go to Caesarea. Don't go! Listen to me as You listened to John, when You wanted to go to Achor. We have all the same rights. We all serve You in the same manner. You are obliged to satisfy us for what we do… Treat me as You treated John! I want it! What difference is there between him and me? »

« The soul is different! My brother would never have spoken as you did. My brother does not… »

« Be silent, James. I will speak. To everybody. And you stand up and behave as a man, as I treat you, not like a slave moaning at the feet of his master. Be a man, since you are so anxious to be treated as John, who, truly, is more than a man because he is chaste and full of Charity. Let us go. It is late. I want to cross the river at dawn. The fishermen will be coming back then after hauling the lobster-pots and it is easy to find a ferry-boat. The moon in her last days raises her thin crescent higher and higher. We will be able to walk faster in her increased light.

Listen. I solemnly tell you that no one must boast of doing his duty and exact for that, which is an obligation, special favours.

Judas has reminded Me that you have given Me everything. And he told Me that it is My duty to satisfy you for what you do. But just listen. Among you there are some fishermen, some landowners, some own a workshop, and the Zealot had a servant. Now then. When the boat servants, or the men who helped you like servants in the olive grove, in the vineyard, or in the fields, or apprentices in the workshop, or even the faithful servant who looked after the house and meals, finished their work, did you begin to serve them? Is it not so in every house and in every task? Which man, with a servant ploughing or minding sheep, or a workman in a workshop, would say to him when he finishes his work: "Go and have your meal immediately"? No one. But whether he comes back from the fields or he lays down his working tools, every master says: "Get my supper laid, get yourself tidy and with clean clothes wait on me while I eat and drink. You will eat and drink afterwards". Neither can one say that that is insensibility. Because a servant must serve his master, and the master is not obliged to him, because the servant has done what the master had ordered him to do in the morning. Because, while it is true that the master must be kind to his servant, so it is the duty of the servant not to be lazy or a squanderer, but he must cooperate for the welfare of the master who feeds and clothes him. Would you bear your boat assistants, your peasants, workmen, your house servant

to say to you: "Serve me because I have worked"? I do not think so.

So with you, when you consider what you have done and you do for Me - and, in future, considering what you will do to continue My work and to continue to serve your Master - you must always say, because you will see that you have always done much less than was fair to do to be on a par with what you received from God: "We are unprofitable servants because we have done but our duty". If you reason thus, you will see that you will no longer feel pretensions and bad temper arise in you, and you will act according to justice. »

Jesus is silent. They are all pensive.

Peter nudges John, who is pondering staring with his blue eyes at the waters, which from indigo have become silver-blue in the moonlight, and says to him: « Ask Him when is it that one does more than one's duty. I would like to be able to do more than my duty, I… »

« I, too, Simon. I was just thinking of that » replies John with his beautiful smile and in a loud voice he asks: « Master, tell me: will the man who serves You never be able to do more than his duty to tell You that he thus loves You entirely? »

« Child, God has given you so much, that in all fairness, all your heroism would always be too little. But the Lord is so good that He does not measure what you give Him with His infinite measure. He measures it with the limited measure of human capability. And when He sees that you have given without parsimony, with a full measure, overflowing generously, He then says: "This servant of Mine has given Me more than it was his duty. I will therefore give him the superabundance of My rewards". »

« Oh! How happy I am! I will give You an overflowing measure to have that superabundance! » exclaims Peter.

« Yes, you will give Me it. You will all give Me it. All those who are lovers of the Truth, of the Light, will give Me it. And they will be supernaturally happy with Me. »

421. The Repentant Sinner Is always To Be Forgiven.

25th April 1946.

They are now on the other bank. On their right are mount Tabor and the little Hermon, on their left the mountains of Samaria, the Jordan is behind them, and in front of them, beyond the plain in which they are, the hills in front of which is Megiddo; (if my memory does not fail me, I heard this name in a remote vision, the one in which Jesus joins Judas of Kerioth and Thomas, after the separation brought about by the necessity of concealing the departure of Syntyche and John of Endor).

They must have rested all day in some hospitable house, because it is evening once again and it is evident that they have rested. It is still warm, but dew is already beginning to form, mitigating the heat. And violet shadows of twilight are falling after the last red flares of a blazing sunset.

« We can walk without difficulty here » remarks Matthew happily.

« Yes. If we proceed this fast, we shall be at Megiddo before cockcrow » the Zealot replies to him.

« And at dawn we shall be beyond the hills, in sight of the plain of Sharon » concludes John.

« And of your sea, eh? » says his brother teasing him.

« Yes. Of my sea… » replies John smiling.

« And with your spirit you will depart on one of your spiritual wanderings » says Peter pressing his arm with strong fatherly affection. And he concludes: « Teach me as well, how to draw certain… angelical thoughts from the sight of things. I have looked at water so many times… I have loved it… but… but it has never been of any avail to me other than to earn my living by fishing in it. What do you see in it?… »

« I see water, Simon. Like you and everybody else. As I now see fields and orchards… But then, beside the eyes of my body, I have other eyes in here, and I no longer see grass and water but words of wisdom come out from those material things. It is not I who think. I would not be able. It is somebody else who thinks in me. »

« Are you perhaps a prophet? » asks the Iscariot somewhat ironically.

« Oh! no! I am not a prophet… »

« What then? Do you think that you possess God? »

« Even less so… »

« You must be raving then. »

« It might well be so, I am so small and weak. But if it is so, it is pleasant raving and leads me to God. My disease then becomes a gift and I bless the Lord for it. »

« Ha! Ha! Ha! » Judas guffaws maliciously.

Jesus, Who has been listening, says: « He is not ill, he is not a prophet. But a pure soul possesses wisdom. It is wisdom that speaks in the heart of a just man. »

« In that case I will never get there, because I have not always been good… » says Peter, somewhat discouraged.

« What about me, then? » replies Matthew.

« My friends, only few people, too few could possess wisdom because they have always been pure. But repentance and good will make man, previously guilty and imperfect, just, and then the conscience is purified in the bath of humility, contrition and love, and thus purified, it can vie with those who are pure. »

« Thank You, Lord » says Matthew bending to kiss the hand of the Master.

There is silence. Then Judas exclaims: « I am tired! I don't know whether I will be able to walk all night. »

« No wonder! Today you wandered about like a blowfly, while we were sleeping! » James of Zebedee replies to him.

« I wanted to see if I met any of the disciples… »

« What did it matter to you? The Master did not tell you. So… »

« Well, I did it. And if the Master allows me, I will stop at Megiddo. I think a friend of ours is there, he goes there every year, at this time, after harvest-time. I would like to speak to him of my mother and… »

« Do as you wish. After your errand you will go to Nazareth. We will meet you there. You can thus inform My Mother and Mary of Alphaeus that we shall soon be home. »

« I also say to You, as Matthew did: "Thank You, Lord". »

Jesus does not reply, and He receives the kiss on His hand as He received Matthew's. It is not possible to see His countenance because it is the moment in the evening when daylight has disappeared completely and there is no starlight as yet. It is so dark that they are proceeding along the road with difficulty and to avoid all possible trouble Peter and Thomas decide to light some twigs, which they have taken from hedges and which bum with a crackle. But the lack of light previously and the smoky moving light later do not enable one to see the expressions of faces.

In the meantime they are approaching the hills, the dark tops of which are visible because they are darker than the mown fields, where the stubble looks whitish against the black of the night, and they become more and more visible as they are approached and as the light of the first stars illuminates them…

« I would leave You here, as my friends lives a little outside Megiddo. I am so tired… »

« You may go. May the Lord watch over your steps. »

« Thank You, Master. Goodbye, friends. »

« Goodbye, goodbye » say the others without attaching much importance to their greetings.

Jesus repeats: « May the Lord watch over your actions. »

Judas goes away quickly.

« H'm! He doesn't look so tired » remarks Peter.

« True! He was dragging his feet here. But now he is running like a gazelle over there… » says Nathanael.

« Your farewell was a holy one, Brother. But unless the Lord overwhelms him with His will, the assistance of God will not help him to take good steps and do fair actions. »

« Judas, the fact that you are My brother does not exempt you from being reproached! I therefore reproach you for being harsh

and pitiless towards your companion. He has his faults. But you also have yours. And the first is that you do not endeavour to help Me to perfect his soul. You exasperate him with your words. It is not with violence that you bend hearts. Do you think that you are entitled to censor every action of his? Do you consider yourself so perfect as to be able to do so? May I remind you that I, your Master, do not do so, because I love that imperfect soul. It moves Me to pity more than any other soul… just because it is imperfect. Do you think that he is happy with his state? And how will you be able to be a master of spirits in future, if with one of your companions you do not practise to make use of the infinite charity which redeems sinners? »

Judas of Alphaeus has bent his head as from the first words. But at the end he kneels on the ground saying: « Forgive me. I am a sinner. And reproach me when I am wrong, because reproof is love, and only a fool does not appreciate the grace of being corrected by a wise person. »

« You can see that I do it for your own good. And forgiveness is joined to My reproach because I can understand the reason for your severity and because the humility of the person corrected disarms him who corrects. Stand up, Judas, and sin no more » and He keeps him beside Himself with John.

The other apostles exchange comments with one another, whispering at first, then in louder voices out of their habit of speaking aloud. I can thus hear them make comparisons between the two Judases.

« If it had been Judas of Kerioth to get that reproach, I wonder how he would have reacted! Your brother is good » says Thomas to James.

« But… well… We cannot say that what he said was wrong. He said one thing which is true with regard to Judas of Kerioth. Do you believe the story of the friend who goes to Judaea? I don't » says Matthew frankly.

« It must be… vineyard matters as it happened at the Jericho market » says Peter referring to the scene which he cannot forget. They all laugh.

« It certainly takes the Master to pity him so much… » remarks Philip.

« So much? Always, you should say » replies James of Zebedee.

« If it were I, I would not be so patient » says Nathanael.

« Neither would I. Yesterday's scene was disgusting » confirms Matthew.

« The man cannot be completely sound of mind » says the Zealot conciliatorily.

« But he knows how to look after his business. He is even too clever. I would bet my boat, my nets, even my house, sure that I

would not lose anything, that he has gone to see some Pharisee to beg for protection… » says Peter.

« That's right. Ishmael! There is Ishmael at Megiddo! How come we never thought of that?! We must tell the Master! » exclaims Thomas striking his forehead vigorously with his hand.

« It is of no use. The Master would excuse him once again and would reproach us » says the Zealot.

« Well let us try. James, go: He loves you and you are a relative of His »

« We are all alike, as far as He is concerned. Here, He does not see us as relatives or friends, He sees only apostles and He is impartial. But I will go, just to please you » says James of Alphaeus. And he quickens his step to depart from his companions and join Jesus.

« You think that he has gone to see a Pharisee. This one or that one… it does not matter… But I think he did it in order not to come to Caesarea. He does not come there willingly… » says Andrew.

« He seems to have been disgusted with the Roman ladies for some time » remarks Thomas.

« And yet… while you were going to Engedi and I was going with him to Lazarus, he was so happy to speak to Claudia… » says the Zealot.

« Yes… but… I think that he did something wrong just then. And I think that Johanna knows and that is why she sent for Jesus and… and I have been making many suppositions since Judas flew into a passion at Bethzur… » grumbles Peter between his teeth.

« Do you mean that? » asks Matthew curiously.

« Well… I don't know Ideas… We shall see… »

« Oh! Don't let us think of evil things! The Master does not approve of that. And we have no proof that he did anything wrong » says Andrew imploringly.

« You are not going to tell me that he acts rightly in grieving the Master, in lacking in respect to Him, in causing ill feelings… »

« Be good, Simon! I can assure you that he is somewhat mad… » says the Zealot.

« Well. He may be. But he sins against the kindness of our Lord. If he spat in my face, if he boxed my ears, I would put up with that and offer it to God for his redemption. I have taken it into my head to make every sacrifice for that and I bite my tongue and I run my nails into the palms of my hands when he plays the fool, in order to control myself. But I cannot forgive him for being bad to our Master. The sin he commits against Him, it's the same as if he committed it against me, and I cannot forgive him. Then… if it were only now and again! But he is always at it! I cannot get over the anger boiling within me about one of his quarrels, and he makes a fresh scene! Once, twice, three times… There is a limit! » Peter is almost shouting his words and is gesticulating impetuously.

Jesus, Who is about ten metres ahead of them, turns round, a white shadow in the night, and He says:

« There is no limit to love and forgiveness. There is none. Neither in God nor in the true children of God. As long as there is life, there is no limit. The only obstacle to the descent of forgiveness and love is the impenitent resistance of the sinner. But if he repents, he is always to be forgiven, even if he sinned not once, twice or three times a day, but much more frequently. You also sin and you want to be forgiven by God and you go to Him saying: "I have sinned! Forgive me". And forgiveness is pleasant to you and it is pleasant to God to forgive. And you are not gods. Consequently the offence given to you by people like yourselves is less grave than that given to God, Who is not like anybody else. Do you not think so? And yet God forgives. Do likewise yourselves. Be careful! Watch that your intolerance does not become detrimental to you by causing God to be intolerant towards you. I have already told you, but I will repeat it once again. Be merciful in order to have mercy. No one is so sinless as to be inexorable towards a sinner. Look at your own burdens before considering those weighing on the hearts of other people. Remove yours from your souls and then turn to those of other people to show them not the severity that condemns, but the love that teaches and helps to be freed from evil. In order to be able to say - and not be silenced by a sinner - in order to be able to say: "You have sinned against God and against your neighbour" it is necessary not to have sinned or at least to have made amends for the sin. In order to be able to say to those who are dejected because they have sinned: "Have faith that God forgives those who repent" - as servants of God Who forgives repentant souls - you must show so much mercy in forgiving. Then you will be able to say: "See, repentant sinner? I forgive your sins seven and seven times, because I am a servant of Him Who forgives countless times those who repent of their sins as many times. Consider then how the Perfect One forgives, if I know how to forgive, simply because I serve Him. Have faith!". You must be able to say so, and say so with your deeds, not just with words. You must say so forgiving. So if your brother sins, admonish him kindly, and if he repents, forgive him. And if at the end of the day he has sinned seven times and says to you seven times: "I repent", forgive him seven times. Have you understood? Will you promise Me that you will do that? While he is away, do you promise Me to be indulgent to him and to help Me to cure him making the sacrifice of controlling yourselves when he does anything wrong? Do you not want to help Me to save him? He is your brother in spirit as he comes from one sole Father, by race as he comes from one sole people, by mission as he is an apostle like you. So you ought to love him three times. If in your family you had a brother who grieved your father

and exposed himself to censure, would you not try to correct him so that your father suffered no longer and no one spoke ill of your family? So? Is your family not a greater and holier one as its Father is God and I am the First-born? Why, then, do you not want to console the Father and Me and help us to improve the poor brother who, believe Me, is not happy to be so?… »

Jesus is anxiously imploring on behalf of the apostle who is so full of faults… And He concludes: « I am the Great Beggar and I ask you for the most valuable alms: I ask you to give Me souls. I go about looking for them, but you must help Me… Satisfy the hunger of My Heart, which seeks love and finds it only in too few people. Because those who do not aim at perfection are like as many loaves of bread of which My spiritual hunger is deprived. Give souls to your Master Who is distressed at not being loved and understood… »

The apostles are moved… They would like to say so many things, but every word seems too mean… They press round the Master, each one wishing to caress Him, to make Him feel that they all love Him.

At last it is meek Andrew who says: « Yes, Lord. With patience, silence and sacrifice, the powerful means of conversion, we will give You souls. Also that one… if God helps us… »

« Yes, Lord. And You help us with Your prayer. »

« Yes, friends. And in the meantime let us pray together for your companion who has gone away. "Our Father Who art in Heaven… »

Jesus' perfect voice repeats the words of the Our Father pronouncing them distinctly and slowly. The others chorus in a subdued tone. And while praying they move away in the night.

422. Martyrdom for Love Is Absolution.

27th April 1946.

From the tops of the last risings of the ground, which cannot be called hills, as their height is so minimal, a large stretch of the Mediterranean coast appears; it is limited to the north by the Carmel promontory, while to the south it stretches freely as far as human eyes can see. A placid almost straight coast with behind it a fertile plain interrupted by slight undulations of the ground. Coast-towns are visible with their white houses situated between the green of the country and the blue of the sea, which is placid and serene, a bright blue reflecting the pure azure of the sky.

Caesarea is a little to the north of the place where the apostles are with Jesus and with some disciples, whom they probably met in the villages they passed through in the evening or at dawn. It is now later than daybreak and dawn, although it is very early in the

morning. In those beautiful hours of summer mornings, when the sky, after rosy dawn becomes again blue, the air is fresh and clear and fresh is the country. No sail appears on the sea. They are the pure hours of the day, when fresh flowers begin to open and the dew, drying in the early sun, exhales the sweet smells of herbs, bestowing freshness and perfume on the light breath of the morning breeze, which moves the leaves on stems just lightly and barely ripples the smooth expanse of the sea.

The town appears stretched along the shore, as beautiful as every place where Roman refinement has settled. Thermal baths and marble buildings exhibit their whiteness like solid blocks of snow in the districts closer to the sea, overlooked by a tall white square tower near the harbour: perhaps a Castrum or a look-out post. Then there are the more modest little suburban houses, in Jewish style, and everywhere there are green pergole, roofgardens built more or less splendidly on the flat roofs of houses, and tall trees growing everywhere.

The apostles admire the view resting in the shade of a group of plane-trees almost on the top of the hill.

« The sight of this immensity lightens one's heart! » exclaims Philip.

« And you seem to be already feeling all the coolness of those beautiful blue waters » says Peter.

« True! After so much dust, stones, thorns… look what a marvel! How fresh and peaceful! The sea always brings peace… » remarks James of Alphaeus.

« H'm! Except when… it slaps your face and whirls you and the boat round like tops in the hands of boys… » replies Matthew who probably remembers being seasick.

« Master… I think… I think of all the words of our psalmists, of the book of Job, of the words of the wisdom books, where the power of God is celebrated. And, I do not know why, the thoughts coming from what I see make me feel that we shall be elevated to perfect beauty on a blue bright purity thus, if we are just until the end in the great gathering, in Your eternal Triumph, the one which You described to us and which will be the end of Evil… And I seem to be seeing this azure immensity peopled with bright risen bodies and You, shining more than a thousand suns, in the middle of the blessed souls… and no more sorrow, tears, insults, disparagement like yesterday evening's… and peace, peace, peace… But when will Evil stop being harmful? Will it perhaps blunt its arrows against Your Sacrifice? Will it be convinced that it has been beaten? » asks John, who at first was smiling and now is depressed.

« Never. It will always think that it is triumphant, notwithstanding all the contradictions of the just. And My Sacrifice will not blunt its arrows. But the hour will come, the final hour, when Evil

will be defeated, and in a beauty even more infinite than that foreseen by your spirit, the chosen ones will be the only People, the eternal, holy true People of the true God. »

« And shall we all be there? » ask the apostles.

« Yes, all. »

« And what about us? » ask the already large group of the disciples.

« You will all be there, too. »

« All the ones present or all those who are Your disciples? We are many now, notwithstanding those who parted from us. »

« And you will be more and more. But not everyone will be faithful until the end. But many will be with Me in Paradise. Some will have their reward after expiation, some immediately after their death, but the reward will be such that, as you forget the Earth and its sorrows, so you will forget Purgatory with its penitential longing for love. »

« Master, You told us that we will suffer persecutions and martyrdom. They may capture and kill us before we have time to repent, or our weakness will prevent us from being resigned to violent death… So? » asks Nicolaus of Antioch who is among the disciples.

« Do not believe that. Owing to your human weakness you could not suffer martyrdom with resignation. But supernatural assistance will be instilled by the Lord into the great spirits who must bear witness to the Lord… »

« Which? Insensibility, perhaps? »

« No, Nicolaus. Perfect love. They will achieve such complete love that torture, accusations, separations from relatives, from life, from everything, will no longer be depressing matters, on the contrary they will become the base to rise to Heaven, to receive it, to see it and therefore to stretch arms and hearts towards tortures, in order to go where their hearts already are: to Heaven. »

« One who dies thus will be much forgiven » says an old disciple whose name I do not know.

« Not much, but completely forgiven, Papias. Because love is absolution, and sacrifice is absolution, and heroic confession of faith is - absolution. You can thus see that martyrs will have treble purification. »

« Oh! then… I have sinned much, Master, and I have followed these disciples to be forgiven, and yesterday You forgave me and because of that You were insulted by those who do not forgive and are guilty. I think that Your forgiveness is valid. But for my long years of sin give me the absolution of martyrdom. »

« You are asking for a great deal, man! »

« Not as much as I have to give to have the beatitude which John of Zebedee has described and You have confirmed. I implore You,

Lord. Let me die for You, for Your doctrine… »

« You are asking for very much, man! The life of man is in the hands of My Father… »

« But every prayer of Yours is heard, as every judgement of Yours is heard. Ask the Eternal Father that forgiveness for me… »

The man is on his knees at the feet of Jesus, Who looks him in the eye and then says: « And do you not think that it is martyrdom to live when the world has lost all attraction and the heart yearns for Heaven, and to live to teach other people to love and to become acquainted with the disappointments of the Master and to persevere tirelessly to give souls to the Master? Always do the will of God, even if your own should appear to you to be more heroic, and you will be holy… But here are your companions coming with supplies. Let us set out to arrive in town before the torrid hours. »

And He sets out first down the light descent that soon arrives at the plain marked by the white ribbon of the road leading to Caesarea on the Sea.

423. At Caesarea on the Sea. Parable of the Father Who Gives Each of His Children the Same Amount of Money.

30th April 1946.

Caesarea has large markets where fine victuals pour in for the refined Roman tables, and near the market squares where, in a kaleidoscope of faces, colours and races, more common foodstuffs can be found, there are stores with richer delicacies, imported both from the various Roman colonies and from remote Italy, to make the separation from the Fatherland less painful. And stores selling wines and delicatessen imported from abroad are in deep porches, because the Romans do not like being burned by the sun or drenched by rain while purchasing refined foodstuffs for their banquets. While satisfying their gluttony like Epicureans, they do not neglect the other parts of their bodies… thus cool shady porches and arches protecting from the rain lead from the Roman district - which is almost entirely grouped around the building of the Proconsul, between the coast road and the square of barracks and tollhouse - to the Roman stores near the Jewish markets.

There are many people under these porches, the end part of which near the markets is comfortable if not beautiful. There are people of all races. There are slaves and freedmen and an occasional pleasure-loving gentleman surrounded by slaves, passing listlessly from one shop to another, after leaving his litter in the street, and doing his shopping which the slaves take to his house. And when two Roman gentlemen meet, one can hear the usual idle talk: the weather, the tedium of the town which does not offer the pleasures of remote Italy, regret for great performances, plans for

banquets and licentious speech.

A Roman, preceded by about a dozen slaves laden with bags and parcels, meets two friends. Reciprocal greetings: « Hail, Ennius! »

« Hail, Florus Tullius Cornelius! Hail, Marcus Heracleus Flavius! »

« When did you come back? »

« The day before yesterday, at dawn, exhausted. »

« You, exhausted? You are never in a sweat! » the young man named Florus says teasing playfully.

« Don't jeer at me, Florus Tullius Cornelius. I am drudging even now on behalf of my friends! »

« Your friends? We did not ask you to drudge » objects the elder friend, named Marcus Heracleus Flavius.

« But my love thinks of you. You cruel people who sneer at me, see this procession of slaves laden with goods? Others have gone before them with other goods. And it's all to honour you. »

« So this is your work? A banquet? »

« Why? » shout the two friends loudly.

« Sh! Noble patricians making such a terrible din! You sound like the plebeians of this country where we are wearing ourselves out in… »

« Orgies and idleness. Because we do nothing else. I am still asking myself: why are we here? What tasks have we got? »

« To be bored to death is one. »

« To teach the hired female mourners here how to live is another. »

« And… to sow Rome in the sacred pelvises of Jewish women is another one. »

« And to enjoy, here as anywhere else, our wealth and power, to which everything is allowed, is a further one. »

The three alternate as in a litany and laugh. But young Florus suddenly stops and becomes gloomy and he says: « But for some time a fog has been hanging over the merry Court of Pilate. The most beautiful women look like chaste vestals and their husbands comply with their whims. And that spoils the habitual feasts a great deal… »

« Of course! The caprice for that coarse Galilean… But it will soon be over… »

« You are wrong, Ennius. I know that Claudia also is conquered by Him and thus… good morals have strangely installed themselves in her palace. Roman republican austerity seems to be revived there… »

« Alas! What a mouldy smell! Since when? »

« Since sweet April, suitable for love affairs. You don't know… You were not here. But our ladies came back as sad as the mourners of cinerary urns and we poor men have to look elsewhere

for many of our amusements. Which we are not even allowed in the presence of the modest ladies! »

« One reason more why I should help you. A great dinner this evening… and a greater orgy in my house. I was at Cyntium and I found delightful things which these stinkers consider impure: peacocks, partridges, and all kinds of moorhens, and little wild boars removed alive from their mother, which had been killed, and bred for our dinners. And wines… Ah! sweet, precious wines of the Roman hills, of my warm shores near Liternum and of your sunny coast near Aciri!… And sweet-smelling wines from Chios, of which Cintium is the pearl. And inebriating wines from Iberia, suitable to excite senses for the final enjoyment. Oh! It must be a great feast, to dispel the tedium of our exile and to convince ourselves that we are still virile!… »

« Will there be women as well? »

« Of course… And more beautiful than roses. Of every colour and… taste. I spent a treasure for all the goods, including the women… But I am generous to my friends!… I was just finishing my shopping here. What might have gone bad during the journey. After the banquet, let us have love!… »

« Did you have a good voyage? »

« Very good. Aphrodite Anadyomene was friendly to me. In any case I am dedicating tonight's rite to her… »

The three men laugh grossly anticipating the on-coming shameful pleasures…

But Florus asks: « But why this exceptional feast? What's the reason for it?… »

« Three reasons: my beloved nephew in the next few days will begin to wear his toga virilis. I must celebrate the event. Obedience to the foreboding that Caesarea was changing into a distressing abode and that it was necessary to discredit fate by means of a rite to Venus. The third reason… I will whisper it to you: I am invited to a wedding… »

« You? Liar! »

« I am invited to a wedding. It is a "wedding" every time one relishes the first sip from a sealed amphora. And I am doing that this evening. Twenty thousand sesterces, or if you prefer so, two hundred gold pieces I paid for her, because in actual fact that is what I had to give for her, including brokers and the like. But even if Venus had given birth to her at dawn in April, and had made her with foam and golden beams, I would not have found her more beautiful and pure! A bud, a closed but… Ah! And I am her master! »

« Profaner! » says Marcus Heracleus jokingly.

« Do not play the censor, for you are my equal… After Valerian left, we were bored to death here. But I am replacing him… We

must take advantage of the experience of our forefathers. But I will not be so foolish to wait, as he did, for the girl, who is fairer than honey and whom I have called Galla Ciprina, to be spoiled by the sadness and the theories of emasculated philosophers who do not know how to enjoy the pleasures of life… »

« Bravo!!! But… Valerian's slave was a learned woman and… »

«… and became mad reading philosophers… Soul!… second life!… virtue!!!… a lot of nonsense!… To live is to enjoy oneself! And we live here. Yesterday I burned every mournful scroll and I ordered the slaves, under pain of death, not to remember the miseries of philosophers and of Galileans. And the girl will know me only… »

« But where did you find her? »

« Well! Somebody was very shrewd and bought slaves after the Gallic wars and used them only as reproducers, treating them well, obliging them only to procreate, to give fresh flowers of beauty… And Galla is one of them. She is now pubescent and her master sold her and I bought her… ah! ah! ah! »

« You lustful! »

« If it had not been me, it would have been somebody else… So She should not have been born a girl… »

«If He heard you… Oh! Here He is! »

« Who? »

« The Nazarene Who cast a spell on our ladies. He is behind you »

Ennius turns round as if he had an asp behind him. He looks at Jesus Who is coming forward slowly among the people pressing round Him, the poor common people and some Roman slaves as well, and he contemptuously says: « That ragamuffin?! Women are depraved. But let us run away, lest He should cast a spell on us as well! » Then addressing his poor slaves, who have been standing all the time with their loads, like caryatids for whom there is no mercy, he orders: « Go home quickly, because you have been wasting your time so far, and those who are making preparations are waiting for spices and perfumes. Run! Quick! And remember that you will be scourged if everything is not ready by sunset. »

The slaves go away at a run and the Roman follows them slowly with his two friends…

Jesus advances. He is sad, because He heard the end of Ennius' conversation and from the height of His stature He looks with infinite compassion at the slaves running under their burdens. He turns round, looking for the faces of more Roman slaves… He sees some, trembling with fear of being caught by superintendents or being driven away by the Jews, mixed among the crowds surrounding Him. He stops and asks: « Is there anyone among you belonging to that household? »

« No, Lord. But we know them » reply the slaves present.

« Matthew, give them abundant offerings. They will share them

with their companions, so that they may know that there is someone who loves them. And remember, and tell the others that sorrow comes to an end with life only for those who were good and honest in their chains, and with sorrow ends also the difference between rich and poor, between free people and slaves. Afterwards there is only one just God for everybody, Who, without taking into account wealth or chains, will reward the good and punish the wicked. Bear that in mind. »

« Yes, Lord. But we, who belong to the households of Claudia and Plautina, are quite happy, like those who belong to Livia and Valeria, and we bless You because You have improved our lot » says an old man to whom everyone listens as if he were their chief.

« To show Me your gratitude be always good and you will have the true God as your eternal Friend. »

And Jesus raises His hand as if to dismiss and bless them and He then leans against a column and begins to speak in the attentive silence of the crowd. The slaves do not go away, they remain listening to the words uttered by the divine lips.

« Listen. A father of many children gave each of them, when they became adults, two coins of great value and said to them: "I no longer intend to work for each of you. You are now old enough to earn your living. So I am giving each of you the same amount of money, so that you may invest it as you please and to your own profit. I will remain here waiting, ready to advise you and also to assist you, if through misfortune you should lose all or part of the money that I am now giving you. But remember that I will be inexorable towards those who squander it mischievously, and towards sluggards who waste it or leave it as it is through idleness or vices. I have taught each of you Good and Evil. You cannot therefore say that you are facing life without knowing what life is. I have set for everyone an example of wise, just activity and of honest life. So you cannot say that I have contaminated your spirits through my evil examples. I have done my duty. It is for you now to do yours, as you are neither stupid, nor unprepared, nor illiterate. Go » and he dismissed them and remained alone, waiting, in his house.

His sons scattered through the world. They all had the same things: two valuable coins of which they could dispose freely, and a greater treasure of health, energy, knowledge and their father's examples. So they should have all been successful in the same way. But what happened? Some of the sons employed their money wisely and by means of untiring honest work and a simple honest life, in accordance with their father's teaching, they soon owned a large honest treasure; some at first made an honest fortune, but later they squandered it through idleness and orgies; some made money practising usury or dealing in contemptible business; and

some did nothing because they were inactive, lazy, undecided and they finished their valuable coins before they could find any employment.

After some time the father of the family sent servants wherever he knew that his sons were and said to the servants: "You will tell my sons to meet in my house. I want them to give me an account of what they have done during this time and I wish to ascertain myself what is their situation". And the servants went everywhere, they met the children of their master, they gave the message and each of them went back with the master's son whom they had met.

The father received them with great solemnity, as a father, but also as a judge. And all the relatives of the family were present with friends, acquaintances, servants, fellow-villagers and people from neighbouring villages. A solemn meeting. The father was on his seat of head of the family, and around him, in a semicircle there were all the relatives, friends, acquaintances, servants, fellow-villagers and people from the neighbourhood. In front of him, in a line, his sons. Even without being questioned, their different countenances expressed the truth. Those who had been active, honest, of good morals and had made a holy fortune looked prosperous, peaceful and well-off, like people who are wealthy, enjoy good health and a clear conscience. They looked at their father with a kind, grateful, humble but at the same time triumphant smile; they were shining with joy having honoured their father and family and because they had been good children, good citizens and faithful believers. Those who had squandered their assets in laziness or vices were mortified, low-spirited, haggardfaced and shabby, with the signs of orgies or starvation clearly visible. Those who had made a fortune by contemptible means had an aggressive hard countenance, with the cruel upset look of beasts which are afraid of the tamer and are prepared to react…

The father began to question these last ones: "How come you who looked so serene when you left, now look like beasts ready to tear people to pieces? Where did you get that mien?".

"Life gave it to us. And your severity in sending us away from home. You put us in touch with the world".

"All right. And what did you do in the world?".

"What was possible for us to obey your orders to earn a living with the mere nothing you gave us".

"All right. Stand in that corner… And now it is your turn, you emaciated, sick looking and shabby people. What did you do to come to this state? You were healthy and well dressed when you left".

"Clothes wear out in ten years…" objected the sluggards.

"So there are no more looms in the world to make cloth for men's

garments?".

"Yes… But one needs money to buy it

"You had it".

"In ten years… it is more than finished. Everything which has a beginning comes to an end".

"Yes, if you take from it and never put anything back into it. But why have you only taken from it? If you had worked, you could have added to it and taken from it and the money would not have come to an end, on the contrary you could have increased it. Have you been ill, perhaps?".

"No, father".

"Well, then?".

"We felt lost… We did not know what to do, what was right… We were afraid of doing the wrong thing. And not to do wrong, we did not do anything".

"And had you no father to whom you could apply for advice? Have I ever been an uncompromising frightening father?".

"Oh! no! But we were ashamed of having to say to you: 'We are not capable of taking the initiative'. You have always been so active… We hid ourselves out of shame".

"All right. Stand in the middle of the room. It's your turn now! What are you going to tell me? From your outward looks you seem to have suffered not only hunger but also from illness. Were you perhaps taken ill because you had worked too hard? Be frank and I will not reproach you".

Some of the children who were questioned threw themselves on their knees striking their breasts and saying: "Forgive us, father! God has already punished us and we deserved it. But you, who are our father, forgive us!… We began well, but we did not persevere. As we had become wealthy so easily we said: 'Well, let us enjoy ourselves a little, as our friends suggest, then we will go back to work and make up for it'. And we really wanted to do so: go back to the two coins and make them yield again, as if it were a game. And twice (say two), three times (says one) we were successful. Then our good luck abandoned us… and we finished all our money".

"But why did you not return to reason after the first time?".

"Because the bread spiced with vice corrupts the palate, and one can no longer do without it

"There was your father

"True. And we longed for you with regret and homesickness. But we offended you… We implored Heaven to inspire you to send for us, so that we might receive your reproach and your forgiveness; that is what we wanted and are now asking for, more than riches which we do not want any more because they led us astray".

"All right. Stand in the middle of the room beside those who

were questioned before you. And you who are sick and poor like those, but are silent and show no sign of grief, what are you going to say?".

"What the first ones said. That we hate you, because your unwise way of doing things has been the cause of our ruin. Since you knew us, you should not have exposed us to temptations. You hated us and we hate you. You set that trap for us to get rid of us. May you be cursed".

"Very well. Stay with the first ones in that corner. And now it is your turn, my prosperous, serene, wealthy sons. Tell me. How did you do so well?".

"By carrying out your teaching, your examples, advice, orders, everything. We resisted temptations, out of love for you, blessed father who gave us life and wisdom".

"Very well. Come to my right hand side and listen all of you to my judgement and to my defence. I gave each of you the same money, examples and wisdom. My sons have reacted in different manners. From a hard working, honest moderate father different children have come forth: some are like him, some are lazy, some an easy prey to temptations, and some so cruel that they hate their father, their brothers and neighbours, on whom, even if they do not say so, but I know, they have practised usury and committed crimes. And among the weak and lazy ones there are some who are penitent and some impenitent. This is my judgement. The perfect ones are already on my right hand side, equal to me in glory and in deeds; those who are repentant, like children to be educated, will come once again under my authority until they reach a degree of capability which will prove that they are adults again; the unrepentant and guilty ones will be driven out of my property and will be persecuted by the malediction of him who is no longer their father, because their hatred for me annuls our relationship of father and son. But I wish to remind you all that each son has been the author of his own fate, because I gave everybody the same things, which, however, have brought about four different situations in those who received them and I cannot be accused of desiring their evil lot".

The parable is over and I will now explain it to you who have listened to it.

The Father in Heaven is symbolised by the father of the large family. The two coins given by the father to each of his children before sending them into the world are: time and free will, that God grants to every man to be used as he wishes, after being taught and perfected by the Law and the examples of just people. Everyone receives the same gifts. But every man makes use of them as he wishes. Some treasure up time, means, education, wealth, everything, for a good purpose and remain holy and

sound, the owners of increased riches. Some begin well, then become tired and lose everything. Some do nothing as they expect other people to do it. Some accuse the Father of their mistakes; some repent and are willing to make amends; some do not repent and they accuse and curse as if their ruin has been brought about by other people. And God grants rewards to the just at once; He grants mercy to those who repent and time to expiate, so that they may achieve a reward through repentance and expiation; and He gives malediction and punishment to those who trample on love through impenitence, the consequence of their sins. He gives every man what is due to him.

So do not waste the two coins: time and free will, but make the right use of them to be on the right hand side of the Father, and if you fail, repent and have faith in Merciful Love. Go. Peace be with you! »

He blesses them and looks at them moving away in the sun flooding the square and streets. But the slaves are still there…

« Are you still here, My poor friends? Will you not be punished? »

« No, Lord, if we say that we have been listening to You. Our mistresses venerate You. Where are You going now, Lord? They have been wishing to see You for such a long time… »

« To the rope-maker near the harbour. But I am leaving this evening, and your mistresses will be at the party… »

« We shall tell them just the same. Months ago they told us to in, form them every time You come here. »

« All right. Go. And make good use of your time and thoughts, which are always free, even if a man is in chains. »

The slaves bend to the ground and go away towards the Roman quarters. Jesus and His apostles go towards the harbour, along a narrow street.

424. At Caesarea on the Sea. The Roman Ladies and the Slave Galla Ciprina.

1st May 1946.

Jesus is a guest of the rope-maker's humble family. Their house is low, with a saltish smell, close as it is to sea water. At the rear there are some smelly storehouses where goods are unloaded before they are collected by the various buyers. At the front there is a dusty road, furrowed by heavy wheels, very noisy because dockers, urchins, carters and seamen come and go incessantly. Beyond the street there is a little dockyard with dirty water soiled by the rubble thrown into it, and by its own stagnation. From the dockyard a canal flows into the actual port, capable of taking large ships. On the western side there is a large sandy square where ropes are made with squeaky twisting winches worked by hand.

On the eastern side there is another little square, much smaller but more noisy and untidy, where men and women are patching up nets and sails. And beyond lie low hovels with a saltish smell, crowded with half-naked children.

One certainly cannot say that Jesus has chosen a magnificent abode. Flies, dust, bustle, the smell of stagnant water, the stink of hemp steeped before being used, reign there. And the King of kings, lying with His apostles on heaps of coarse hemp, tired as He is, falls asleep in that poor environment, partly a lumber-room, partly a storeroom, which is at the rear of the little house and from which, through a door as black as tar, one can enter the kitchen, which is also black, and through a worm-eaten door, corroded by dust and salt, so that it looks whitish-grey like pumice-stone, one comes out into the square where ropes are being made and from which comes the stench of steeped hemp.

The sun is blazing down on the square notwithstanding that there are four huge plane-trees, two at each end of the rectangular square, under which are the winches to twist the hemp. I do not know whether I am giving the implement the right name. The men, wearing tunics reduced to the bare essential for decency, running with sweat as if they were under a shower, keep turning their winches with continuous motion, as if they were galley-slaves… They speak only to say the words indispensable to their work. Thus, without the squeaking of the winch wheels, and the creaking of the hemp stretched in twisting, there is no other noise in the square, a strange contrast with the din in the other places around the house of the rope-maker.

Thus the exclamation of one of the workers is most surprising as it is uttered unexpectedly: « What? Women? At this awful time of the day?! Look! They are coming here… »

« They may be in need of ropes to tie their husbands… » says a young rope-maker jokingly.

« They may need some hemp for some work. »

« H'm! It's unlikely that they need ours, which is so coarse, when they can get it combed!? »

« Ours is cheaper. See? They are poor… »

« But they are not Jewesses. See, their mantles are different… »

« Perhaps they are not Jewesses. There are all races in Caesarea now… »

« Perhaps they are looking for the Rabbi. They may be ill… See how they are all covered, even in this heat… »

« Provided they are not lepers… Poverty, yes, but leprosy, no; I do not want it, not even to be resigned to God » says the rope-maker whom everybody obeys.

« But did you not hear the Master?: "We must accept everything God sends us". »

« But leprosy is not sent by God. It is sent by sins, vices, contagion… »

The women are now behind them, not behind those who are speaking and are at the very end of the square, but behind those who are on the side near the house, thus the first to be met, and one of them bends to say something to one of the rope-makers, who turns round astonished and remains like a blockhead.

« Let us go and listen to them… Covered like that… With all the children I have, leprosy would be the last straw!… » says the owner who has stopped turning his winch and goes towards the women. His companions follow him…

« Simon, this woman wants something, but she speaks a foreign language. Since you have travelled, listen to her » says the man to whom the woman had spoken.

« What do you want? » asks the rope-maker rudely, trying to see her through the dark dyed byssus which covers her face.

And in the purest Greek the woman replies: « The King of Israel. The Master. »

« Ah! I see. But… are you lepers? »

« No. »

« Who can assure me? »

« He can. Ask Him. »

The man hesitates… He then says: « Well. I will make an act of faith and God will protect me… I am going to call Him. Stay where you are. »

The four women do not move, a greyish silent group, looked at with amazement and evident fear by the rope-makers, who have gathered together a few steps apart.

The man goes into the storeroom and touches Jesus Who is sleeping. « Master… Come out. They are looking for You. »

Jesus wakes and gets up immediately asking: « Who? »

« Who knows!… Some Greek women… they are all covered… They say that they are not lepers and that You can assure me… »

« I will come at once » says Jesus tying His sandals which He had taken off, and buttoning the top part of His tunic near His neck, and putting on the belt which He had taken off to be more free in His sleep. And He goes out with the rope-maker.

The women make the gesture of starting towards them. « Stay where you are, I tell you! I do not want you to walk where my children are playing… I want Him to say first that you are healthy. » The women stop.

Jesus joins them. The tallest one, not the one who previously spoke Greek, says a word in a low voice. Jesus addresses the ropemaker: « Simon, you need not worry. The women are healthy and I have to listen to them in peace. May I go into the house?… »

« No. The old woman is there and she is more curious and chatty

than a magpie. Go over there, to the end, under the shed of the vats. There is also a little room. You will be alone there and in peace. »

« Come… » says Jesus to the women. And He goes with them to the end of the square, under the unsavoury shed, into the little room as narrow as a cell, where there are broken tools, rags, refuse hemp, huge cobwebs, and where the smell of macerating-vats and mould is so strong as to catch their throats. Jesus, Who is very grave and pale, smiles lightly saying: « It is not a place in accord with your tastes… But I have nothing else… »

« We do not see the place, because we see Him Who lives in it just now » replies Plautina removing her veil and mantle, imitated by the other ladies, who are Lydia, Valeria and Albula Domitilla, a freedwoman.

« From which I infer that after all you still believe that I am a just man. »

« More than a just man. And Claudia has sent us precisely because she believes that You are more than just and she does not take into consideration the words she heard. But she wishes to have Your confirmation to double her veneration for You. »

« Or to deprive Me of it, should I appear as they tried to picture Me. But you can assure her. I have no human ambitions. My ministry and My desire are only and entirely supernatural. I do want to gather all men into one only kingdom. But what part of men? Their flesh and blood? No. I leave that, a fleeting matter, to fleeting monarchies, to unsteady empires. I want to gather under My sceptre only the spirits of men, immortal spirits in an immortal kingdom. I reject all other accounts of My will, irrespectively of whoever gave them, if they differ from that one. And I beg you to believe and to tell her who sent you, that the Truth has but one word… »

« Your apostle was so sure of himself when he told us… »

« He is an overexcited youngster. He is to be listened to as such… »

« But he is detrimental to You! Reproach him… Send him away… »

« And what about My mercy? He acts through mistaken love. So must I not pity him? And what would change if I sent him away? He would do double harm to himself and to Me. »

« So he is like a cannon-ball tied to Your foot!… »

« He is a poor wretch to be redeemed… »

Plautina falls on her knees stretching out her arms and saying. « Ah! Master, greater than anybody else, how easy it is to believe that You are holy when one feels Your heart in Your words! How easy it is to love and follow You because of Your charity, which is even greater than Your intelligence! »

« Not greater. But more understandable for you… whose intellects

are hampered by too many errors and you are not generous in clearing them to receive the Truth. »

« You are right. Your divination is as great as Your wisdom. »

« As wisdom is a form of holiness it gives enlightenment of judgement, both on past or present events, and on forewarning of future ones. »

« So your prophets… »

« Were holy. God therefore communicated with them in great fullness. »

« Were they holy because they belonged to Israel? »

« They were holy because they belonged to Israel and because they were just in their actions. Because not all Israel is or was holy, although they belonged to Israel. The fact that one belongs by chance to a people or to a religion cannot make one holy. Those two conditions can be of great assistance to be so, but they are not the essential factors of holiness. »

« Which is then the factor? »

« The will of man. The will that leads the actions of man to holiness if it is good, to wickedness if it is bad. »

« Then… it is not fair to say that just people cannot be found also among us. »

« Certainly not. Nay, some just people were certainly among your ancestors, and there are certainly some among those who are living now. Because it would be too dreadful if the whole heathen world were made of demons. Those among you who feel attraction to Good and Truth and repulsion to Vice, and shun evil deeds as disgracing man, believe Me, they are already on the path of justice. »

« Claudia then… »

« Yes. And you as well. Persevere. »

« But if we should die before being… converted to You?… Of what use would it be to have been virtuous?… »

« God is just in judging. But why hesitate to come to the true God? »

The three ladies lower their heads… Silence… Then the great confession, the one which explains so many cruelties and so much resistance of the Romans against Christianity… « Because, by doing so, we would appear to be betraying our Fatherland… »

« On the contrary you would serve your Fatherland, making it morally and spiritually greater, strengthened by the possession and protection of God, in addition to its armies and riches. Rome, the City of the world, the City of the universal Religion!… Just think of that… »

There is silence…

Then Livia, blushing like a peony, says: « Master, some time ago we were seeking information on You also in the pages of our Virgil. Because, as far as we are concerned, prophecies in no way

connected with any of the beliefs of Israel are of greater value to us than those of your prophets, as we feel that the latter are influenced by millenary beliefs… And we discussed the matter… comparing those who presaged You in all times, nations and religions. But no one presaged You so justly as our Virgil… How much we spoke on that day with Diomed also, the Greek freedman, an astrologer dear to Claudia! He maintained that that happened because the time was nearer and the stars spoke with their conjunctions… And in support of his thesis he put forward the fact of the three Wise men from the three Eastern countries, who had come to worship You, still a baby, causing the massacre, which struck Rome with horror… But we were not persuaded because… for over fifty years none of the wise people in the world spoke of You explaining the voices of the stars, although we are even closer to Your present revelation. Claudia exclaimed: "We would need the Master! He would speak the truth and we would know the place and the immortal destiny of our greatest poet!". Would You tell us… for Claudia… A gift to prove that she is not disliked by You because of her doubt about You… »

« I understood her reaction of a Roman and I have had no grudge against her. You may reassure her. And listen. Virgil was not great only as a poet, was he? »

« Oh! no! Also as a man. In the midst of a society already corrupt and vicious he shone with spiritual purity. No one knew him to be lewd, fond of orgies and debauchery. His writings are chaste, but even chaster was his heart. So much so that where he lived mostly, he was called the "little virgin" with mockery by vicious people, with respect by good people. »

« So, could God not be reflected in the limpid soul of a chaste man, even if that man was a heathen? Will perfect Virtue not have loved the virtuous man? And if he was granted love and the sight of Truth because of the pure beauty of his soul, could he not have had a flash of prophecy? As prophecy is nothing but the truth which is revealed to those who deserve to know the Truth as a reward and a spur to greater and greater virtue? »

« So… he did prophesy You? »

« His mind inflamed with purity and genius was elevated to the knowledge of a page concerning Me, and he can be called the just heathen poet, a pre-Christian prophetic spirit as a reward to his virtues. »

« Oh! Our Virgil!! And will he be rewarded? »

« I said: "God is just". But do not imitate the poet stopping at his limit. Go on, because the Truth did not reveal itself to you by intuition and partly, but completely and it spoke to you. »

« Thank You, Master… We are going away. Claudia told us to ask You if she can be useful to You in moral matters » says Plautina

without replying to Jesus' remark.

« And she told you to ask Me, if I was not an usurper… »

« Oh! Master! How do You know? »

« I am more than Virgil and the prophets… »

« It is true! It is all true! Can we serve You?… »

« For Myself I need but faith and love. But there is a creature who is in great danger and whose soul will be killed this evening. Claudia could save her. »

« Here? Who? Soul killed? »

« One of your patricians is giving a dinner-party and… »

« Ah! Yes! Ennius Cassius. My husband also is invited… » says Livia.

« And mine… And we, too, really. But as Claudia is not going, we will not go either. We had decided to withdraw immediately after dinner, in the event we had gone… Because… our dinners end in orgies… which we can no longer bear… And with the contempt of neglected wives we let our husbands remain… » says Valeria severely.

« Not with contempt… With pity for their moral misery… » corrects Jesus.

« It is difficult, Master… We know what happens there… »

« I also know many things which happen in hearts… and yet I forgive… »

« You are holy… »

« You must become so. Urged by My desire and spurred by your will… »

« Master!… »

« Yes. Can you say that you are as happy now as you were before meeting Me, happy with the poor brute sensual happiness of heathens unaware that they are more than flesh, now that you know a little of Wisdom?… »

« No, Master. We admit it. We are discontented, annoyed, like one who is looking for a treasure and cannot find it. »

« And it is in front of you! What annoys you is the yearning after Light of your spirits, which suffer because of your delay… in giving them what they ask for… »

There is silence… Then Plautina, without replying to Jesus' remark, says: « And what could Claudia do? »

« She could save that creature. A girl purchased for pleasure by the Roman. A virgin who will not be such tomorrow. »

« If he bought her… she belongs to him. »

« She is not a piece of furniture. Within her body there is a soul… »

« Master… our laws… »

« Women: the Law of God!… »

« Claudia is not going to the feast… »

« I am not telling her to go. I am telling you to say to her: "The Master, to be sure that Claudia does not blame Him, asks her for

help for the soul of that girl"… »

« We will tell her. But she will not be able to do anything… A slave purchased… is an object of which one may dispose… »

« Christianity will teach you that a slave has a soul like the soul of Caesar, in most cases even better, and that that soul belongs to God, and he who corrupts it is cursed. » Jesus is imposing while saying so.

The women perceive His authority and severity. They bow without discussing. They put on their mantles and veils again and say: « We will report. Hail, Master. »

« Goodbye. »

The women go out into the warm square. But Plautina turns round and says: « With regard to everybody we were Greek women. Is that clear? »

« I understand. Go without worrying. »

Jesus remains under the low porch and they go away along the same road they came.

The rope-makers go back to their work…

Jesus walks back to the storeroom slowly. He is pensive. He does not lie down again. Sitting on a pile of rolled up ropes He prays fervently… The eleven apostles are still fast asleep…

Some time goes by thus… About one hour. Then the rope-maker looks in and beckons Jesus to go to the door. « There is a slave who wants You. »

The slave, a Numidian, is outside in the square still exposed to the sun. He bows and without speaking he gives Jesus a waxed tablet.

Jesus reads it and says: « Tell her that I will wait until dawn. Have you understood? »

The man nods assent and to make Jesus understand why he does not speak, he opens his mouth to show that his tongue has been cut off.

« Poor wretch! » says Jesus caressing him.

Two tears stream down the dark cheeks of the slave who takes Jesus' white hand in his dark ones, which are so much like those of a big monkey, and he rubs it against his face, he kisses it, and then throws himself on the ground. He takes Jesus' foot and lays it on his head… A language of gestures to express his gratitude for that gesture of pitiful love…

And Jesus repeats: « Poor wretch! » but He does not cure him.

The slave stands up and wants the waxed tablet back… Claudia does not wish to leave any trace of her correspondence… Jesus smiles and hands the tablet to him. The Numidian departs and Jesus approaches the rope-maker.

« I must remain here until dawn… Will you allow Me?… »

« Everything You wish. I am sorry that I am poor… »

« I am pleased that you are honest. »

« Who were those women? »

« Foreigners needing advice. »

« Healthy? »

« As you and Me. »

« Good!… Here are Your apostles… »

In fact, rubbing their eyes, stretching themselves, still half sleeping, the Eleven come out of the storeroom and go toward the Master.

« Master… we will have to have supper if You wish to leave this evening… » says Peter.

« No. I am not leaving until dawn. »

« Why? »

« Because I have been asked to do so. »

« But why? Who asked You? It was better to walk by night. It's new moon now… »

« I hope to save a creature… And that is brighter than the moon and more refreshing for Me than the coolness of the night. »

Peter draws Him aside: « What has happened? Have You seen the Roman ladies? What mood are they in? Is it them who are becoming converted? Tell me… »

Jesus smiles: « If you let Me reply I will tell you, o most inquisitive man. I saw the Romans. They are going towards the Truth only very slowly. But they are not going back. It is already a lot. »

« And… with regard to what Judas said… what is the situation? »

« That they are continuing to respect Me as a wise man. »

« But… for Judas? Is he not involved?… »

« They came to see Me, not him… »

« Why then was he afraid to meet them? Why did he not want You to come to Caesarea? »

« Simon, it is not the first time that Judas is strangely capricious… »

« That is true. And… are the Romans coming tonight? »

« They have already come. »

« Why are we waiting until dawn, then? »

« And why are you so inquisitive? »

« Master, be good… Tell me everything. »

« Yes, I will… to remove all doubt… You also heard the conversation of those three Romans… »

« Yes, I did. Filthy! Plague! Demons! But what have we got to do with that?… Ah! I see! The Roman ladies will go to the dinner and then they will come and ask to be forgiven for taking part in filthiness… I am surprised that You agree. »

« And I am surprised at your rash judgement! »

« Forgive me, Master! »

« Yes, you had better know that the Roman ladies are not going to the dinner-party and that I asked Claudia to intervene on behalf of that girl… »

« Oh! But Claudia can do nothing! The girl was bought by the Roman and he can do what he likes with her! »

« But Claudia can exert much influence upon the Roman. And Claudia sent word to Me to wait until dawn before leaving. Nothing else. Are you satisfied? »

« Yes, Master, I am. But You have not rested… Come now… You are so tired! I will watch to ensure that You are left in peace… Come… » and lovingly tyrannical he pulls and pushes Jesus, compelling Him to lie down once again…

Hours go by. It is sunset, work comes to an end, and children shout louder in the streets and little squares and swallows screech in the sky. The first shades of evening descend upon the earth, and swallows go back to their nests, and children to bed. One by one all noises cease, so that one can hear only the light rippling of the water in the canal and the louder lapping of the waves on the shore. Houses, the houses of tired workmen are closed, lights go out and rest descends to make everyone blind and dumb… remote… The moon rises and adorns with her silver also the dirty sheet of water of the little dockyard, which now looks like a sheet of silver…

The apostles are sleeping once again on the hemp… Jesus, sitting on one of the winches, His hands in His lap, is praying, thinking, waiting… He does not lose sight of the street coming from town.

The moon rises, rises… She is perpendicularly above His head. The noise of the sea is louder, the smell of the canal is stronger, and the cone of the moon which plunges its beams into the sea becomes wider and wider, embracing all the expanse in front of Jesus, and fades away farther and farther: a path of light which seems to be coming towards Jesus from the end of the world, along the canal, finishing in the basin of the dockyard. And a little white boat is coming along that path. It is proceeding without leaving any trace on the liquid path, as the water becomes smooth again after it passes… It comes up the canal… It is now in the silent dockyard… It draws closer and stops. And three shadows land from it. A robust man, a woman and between them a slender figure. They direct their steps towards the house of the rope-maker.

Jesus stands up and goes to meet them. « Peace to you. Whom are you looking for? »

« For You, Master » says Lydia unveiling her face and coming forward alone. And she goes on: « Claudia has fulfilled Your desire because it was a just and completely moral matter. That is the girl. Valeria will take her later as a nurse for little Fausta. In the meantime she asks You to keep her, or, better still, to entrust her to

Your Mother or to the mother of Your relatives. She is completely pagan. Nay, more than pagan. The master who brought her up, put absolutely nothing into her. She knows nothing about Olympus or anything else. She has only a holy terror of men, because life was revealed to her in all its brutality only a few hours ago… »

« Oh! How sad! Too late? »

« No, not from a material point of view… But he was preparing her for his… let us say: sacrilege. And the girl is terrified… Claudia had to leave her with that satyr while dinner lasted, as she intended to take action when wine had impaired his capability of pondering. I need not remind You that if man is always lewd in his sensual love affairs, he is much more so when he is drunk… But only then he is a laughing-stock who can be urged by force and despoiled of his treasure. And Claudia took advantage of the situation. Ennius wants to go back to Italy, whence he was sent away as he had fallen out of favour… Claudia promised his return in exchange for the girl. Ennius swallowed the bait… But tomorrow, when he is sober, he will rebel, will look for her, he will cause an uproar. It is true that tomorrow Claudia will have the means to silence him. »

« Violence? No!… »

« Oh! violence used for a good purpose is useful! But it will not be used… Only Pilate, still stunned by the quantity of wine he drank this evening, will sign the order for Ennius to go and report to Rome… Ha! Ha!… And he will leave with the first military ship. But in the meanwhile… it is wise for the girl to be elsewhere, lest Pilate should repent and revoke the order… He is so uncertain! And it is better for the girl to forget, if she can, human filth. Oh! Master!… We went to the dinner for that purpose… But how were we able to go to such orgies up to a few months ago, without feeling sick? We ran away as soon as we achieved our purpose… Our husbands are there just now emulating brutes… How disgusting, Master!… And we have to receive them after they… »

« Be austere and patient. You will improve your husbands through your exemplary conduct. »

« Oh! it is not possible!… You do not know… » The woman weeps more out of scorn than sorrow. Jesus sighs. Lydia resumes: « Claudia asked me to tell You that she did this to prove to You that she reveres You as the Only Man Who deserves veneration. And she wants me to inform You that she thanks You for teaching her the value of a soul and of purity. She will never forget that. Do You want to see the girl? »

« Yes. And who is the man? »

« The dumb Numidian whom Claudia employs in the most secret matters. There is no danger of delation… He has no tongue… »

As in the afternoon Jesus repeats: « Poor wretch! » But even now

He does not work a miracle.

Lydia goes and takes the girl by the hand and almost drags her before Jesus. She explains: « She knows few Latin words and even fewer Judaean… A little wild animal… Just an object of pleasure. » And she says to the girl: « Don't be afraid. Say "thanks" to Him. It is He Who saved you… Kneel down. Kiss His feet. Cheer up! Do not tremble!… Forgive her, Master! She is terrorised by the last caresses of drunken Ennius… »

« Poor girl! » says Jesus laying His hand on the veiled head of the girl. « Be not afraid! I will take you to My Mother, for some time. To a Mother, do you understand? And you will have so many brothers around you… Be not afraid, My dear daughter! »

What is there in Jesus' voice and looks? Everything: peace, confidence, purity, holy love. The girl perceives that, she throws back her mantle with hood to look at Him better, and the slender figure of a girl hardly at the threshold of puberty, almost still a little child, somewhat immature in comeliness, innocent looking, appears in a dress too wide for her…

« She was half-naked… I put on her the first garments I found, and I put some also in her sack… » explains Lydia.

« A little girl! » says Jesus compassionately. And stretching out His hand towards her, He asks: « Do you want to come with Me, without any fear? »

« Yes, sir. »

« No. I am not your owner. Call Me: Master. »

« Yes, Master » says the girl with more confidence and a timid smile replaces the expression of fear previously visible on her very pale face.

« Are you capable of walking a long distance? »

« Yes, Master. »

« Then you will rest at My Mother's, in My house, awaiting Fausta… a little girl of whom you will be very fond… Are you pleased? »

« Oh! Yes!… » and the girl confidently raises her clear grey-blue eyes, which are most beautiful between her golden eyebrows and she dares to ask: « No more that master? » and a flash of terror upsets her once again.

« Never again » Jesus promises once more laying His hand again on the girl's thick hair of the shade of blond honey.

« Goodbye, Master. In a few days' time we shall be on the lake as well. Perhaps we shall meet again. Pray for the poor Roman ladies. »

« Goodbye, Lydia. Tell Claudia that these are the conquests which I expect, and nothing else. Come, child. We are leaving at once… » And holding her by the hand He looks in at the door of the storeroom calling the apostles.

While the boat, without leaving any trace of its voyage sails back to the open sea, Jesus and the apostles, with the girl enveloped in a

mantle in the middle of the group, go towards the country through narrow desert streets of the outskirts…

425. Aurea Galla.

2nd May 1946.

Summer dawns are so early that the time between the setting of the moon and daybreak is short. So that, although they have walked very quickly, at the darkest hour of the night they are still in the neighbourhood of the town of Caesarea, and a branch of thorn-bush which they have lit, does not give sufficient light. They are compelled to stop for some time, also because the girl, who is not accustomed to walking by night, often stumbles over stones half buried in the dust.

« It is better to stop for a little while. The girl cannot see and she is tired » says Jesus.

« No, I can go on… Let us go far, far away… He may come. We passed here to go to that house » says the girl with chattering teeth, mixing Hebrew and Latin in a new language to make herself understood.

« We will go behind those trees and nobody will see us. Do not be afraid » Jesus replies to her.

« Yes, be not afraid. That… Roman is dead drunk under the table by now… » says Bartholomew to reassure her.

« And you are with us. And we love you! We will not let anybody hurt you. I say! We are twelve strong men… » says Peter, who is little taller than she is, but as sturdy as she is lean, and as burnt by the sun as she is snow-white, a poor flower brought up in the shade so that she might be more exciting and valuable.

« You are a little sister. And brothers defend their sisters… » says John.

The girl, at the last flash of light of the improvised torch, looks at her consolers; with her clear iron-grey eyes, lightly tinged with blue, two limpid eyes still shining with the tears shed in the moment of terror shortly before… She is suspicious. And yet she trusts them. And together with the others she crosses the dry rivulet beyond the road to enter an estate at the end of which there is a thick orchard.

They sit down in the dark, waiting. The men perhaps would like to sleep. But every noise makes the girl moan and the gallop of a horse causes her to cling convulsively to the neck of Bartholomew, who, perhaps because he is old, inspires confidence and trust. It is thus impossible to sleep.

« Don't be afraid! When one is with Jesus, nothing harmful happens any more » says Bartholomew.

« Why? » asks the girl trembling and still clinging to the apostle's

neck.

« Because Jesus is God on the Earth, and God is stronger than men. »

« God? What is God? »

« Poor creature! How have they brought you up? Have they not taught you anything? »

« To keep my skin white, my hair shiny, to obey masters… to always say yes… But I could not say yes to the Roman… he was ugly and he frightened me… He frightened me all day long… He was always there… at the bath, when I was getting dressed… those eyes… and hands… oh!… And who does not say "yes" gets beaten… »

« You will not be beaten. Neither the Roman nor his hands are here any longer… There is peace… » Jesus replies to her.

And the others remark: « It is horrible! Treated like valuable animals, no better than animals! Worse!… Because an animal knows at least that they teach it to plough, to have a saddle on and a bit, because that is its task. But this girl was thrown there without knowing anything!… »

«If I had known I would have thrown myself into the sea. He had said: "I will make you happy"… »

« And he did make you happy. But in a way that he had never imagined. Happy for the Earth and for Heaven. Because to know Jesus is happiness » says the Zealot.

There is silence: everybody is meditating on the horrors of the world. Then, in a low voice, the girl asks Bartholomew: « Will you tell me what is God? And why He is God? Because He is good and handsome? »

« God… How can one teach you, since you are completely devoid of religious ideas? »

« Religious What is it? »

« Most High Wisdom! I am like one who is getting drowned in a deep sea! What shall I do in front of this abyss? »

« What seems so difficult to you, Bartholomew, is so simple. It is an abyss, but an empty one. And you can fill it up with the Truth. It is worse when the abyss is full of filth, poison, snakes… Speak with simplicity, as you would speak to a baby. And she will understand you better than an adult would. »

« Oh! Master! But could You not do it? »

« I could. But the girl will accept the words of one like her more easily than she would listen to My words of God. And in any case… You will have to face such abysses in future, and fill them with Me. After all, you must learn to do so. »

« That is true! I will try. Listen, girl… Do you remember your mother? »

« Yes, sir. Flowers have bloomed for seven years without her. But before that I was with her. »

« All right. And do you remember her? Do you love her? »

« Oh! » a sob joined to her exclamation says everything.

« Don't weep, poor creature… Listen… The love you feel for your mother… »

«… and my father… and my little brothers… » says the girl sobbing.

« Yes… for your family, the love for your family, your thoughts for it, your desire to go back to it… »

« Never again!!… »

« Who knows!… All that is something which can be called the religion of the family. So religions, religious ideas, are the love, the thought, the desire to go where He or they are, in whom we believe, whom we love and desire. »

« Ah! If I believe in that God there, I will have a religion… It is easy! »

« Well. What is easy? To have a religion or to believe in that God there? »

« Both. Because it is easy to believe in a good God like that one there. The Roman mentioned so many of them and swore… He used to say: "by goddess Venus!", "by god Cupid". But they could not be good gods because he did things which were not good, while mentioning them. »

« The girl is not stupid » remarks Peter in a low voice.

« But I still do not know what is God. I see Him a man like you… So God is a man. And how can one tell? In what is He stronger than everybody? He has neither swords nor servants… »

« Master, help me… »

« No, Nathanael! You are doing so well… »

« You are saying so out of kindness… However, let us see how we can proceed. Listen, girl… God is not a man. He is like a light, a look, a sound, so big that He fills the sky and the earth illuminating everything, He sees everything, directs everything and gives orders to everything… »

« Also to the Roman? Then He is not a good God. I am afraid! »

« God is good and gives good orders, and He had ordered men not to make war, not to make slaves, to leave little girls to their mothers and not to frighten them. But men do not always listen to the orders of God. »

« But you do… »

« Yes, I do. »

« But if He is stronger than anybody else, why does He not make men obey Him? And how can He speak if He is not a man? »

« God… oh! Master!… »

« Go on, Bartholomai. You are so wise a teacher, you can express the most sublime thoughts with so much simplicity, and you are afraid? Do you not know that the Holy Spirit is on the lips of those who teach Justice? »

« It seems so easy when we listen to You… and all Your words are in here… But to draw them out when we have to do what You do! … Oh! misery of us poor men! What worthless teachers we are! »

« To acknowledge your worthlessness is to predispose your spirits to the teaching of the Paraclete Spirit… »

« All right. Listen, girl. God is strong, very strong, stronger than Caesar, than all men put together with their armies and warmachines. But He is not a cruel master who makes people always say yes, under pain of the lash if one does not say so. God is a father. Did your father love you? »

« So much! He named me Aurea Galla because gold is precious and Gaul is our fatherland, and he used to say that I was dearer to him than the gold he had once possessed and than our fatherland… »

« Did your father beat you? »

« No. Never. Even if I was naughty he used to say to me: "My poor daughter!" and he wept… »

« There you are! That is what God does. He is a father and He weeps if we are bad, but He does not compel us to obey Him. But those who are bad will be punished one day with horrible tortures… »

« Oh! lovely! The master who took me away from my mother and took me to the island and the Roman in tortures! And will I see them? »

« You will be near God and you will see, if you believe in Him and you are good. But to be good you must not hate even the Roman. »

« No? How can I do that?!… »

« Praying for him or… »

« What is to pray? »

« It is to speak to God telling Him what we want… »

« But I want a dreadful death for my masters! » says the girl with wild vehemence.

« No, you must not. Jesus will not love you if you say so… »

« Why? »

« Because we must not hate those who injured us. »

« But I cannot love them… »

« Forget them for the time being… Try to forget them. Later, when you know more about God, you will pray for them… So we were saying that God is powerful but He leaves His children free. »

« Am I a child of God? Have I two fathers? How many sons has He? »

« All men are children of God, because He made them all. See the stars up there? He made them. And these plants? He made them. And the earth on which we are sitting, and that bird which is singing and the sea which is so big, everything and all men. And men are His children more than anything else, as they are His children because of that thing which is called soul and which is light, sound,

look, not as big as His, which fill Heaven and Earth completely, but are beautiful and they never die as He never dies. »

« Where is the soul? Have I got one? »

« Yes and it is in your heart, and it is that thing that made you understand that the Roman was bad, and that certainly will not make you wish to be like him. Is that right? »

« Yes… » The girl ponders after her uncertain yes… She then says with confidence: « Yes! It was like a voice within me and a need to have help… and with another voice, but that one was mine, I called my mother… because I did not know that there was God, that there was Jesus… If I had known, I would have called Him with that voice which I had within me… »

« You have understood well, child, and you will grow in Light. I am telling you., Believe in the true God, listen to the voice of your soul, devoid of acquired wisdom, but devoid also of evil will, and you will have a Father in God, and in death, which is the passage from the Earth to Heaven for those who believe in the true God and are good, you will have a place in Heaven, near your Lord » says Jesus laying His hand on the head of the girl, who changes position and kneels down saying:

« Near You. It is nice to be with You. Do not part from me, Jesus. I now know who You are and I prostrate myself. At Caesarea I was afraid to do so… But You seemed a man to me. I now know that You are a God hidden in a man and You are a Father and Protector to me. »

« And Saviour, Aurea Galla. »

« And Saviour. You saved me. »

« And I will save you even more. You will have a new name… »

« Are You going to deprive me of the name which my father gave me? The master on the island called me Aurea Quintillia, because they divided us according to complexion and number and I was the fifth blonde… But why do You not leave me the name given to me by my father? »

« I am not taking it off you. But you will have in addition to your old name, a new one, the eternal one. »

« Which? »

« Christian. Because the Christ saved you. But it is dawning. Let us go… See, Nathanael, it is easy to speak of God to empty abyssess… You spoke very well. The girl will improve quickly in Truth… Aurea, go ahead with My brothers… »

The girl obeys but timidly. She would prefer to remain with Bartholomew, who understands and promises: « I am coming at once, too. Go, be obedient… » And when he is with Jesus, Peter, Simon and Matthew, he remarks: « It's a pity that Valeria will have her. She is always a heathen… »

« I cannot impose her on Lazarus… »

« There is Nike, Master » suggests Matthew.

« And Eliza… » says Peter.

« And Johanna… She is a friend of Valeria and Valeria would cede the girl to her willingly. She would be in a good home » says the Zealot.

Jesus is pensive and silent…

« You will decide… I am going to join the girl, as she is always turning round. She trusts me because I am old… I would keep her… one daughter more… But she is not from Israel… » and he goes away, the good but too Israelite Nathanael.

Jesus looks at him depart and shakes His head.

« Why that gesture, Master? » asks the Zealot.

« Because it grieves Me to see that wise people are also slaves to prejudice… »

« However let us keep this to ourselves… Bartholomew is right… and in actual fact… You should provide… Remember Syntyche and John… Don't let the same thing happen… Send her to Syntyche… » says Peter who is afraid of trouble in case the heathen girl should stay with them.

« John will not live long… Syntyche is not yet mature enough to be the teacher of a girl like this one… It is not a suitable place… »

« And yet You must not keep her. Consider that Judas will soon be with us. And Judas, Master, allow me to tell You, is a lustful man and a… one who is inclined to speak to gain some profit… and he has too many friends among the Pharisees… » insists the Zealot.

« That's it! Simon is right! Just what I was thinking! » exclaims Peter. « Do as he says, Master!… »

Jesus ponders but is silent… He then says: « Let us pray! And the Father will help us » and, at the rear of the others, they pray fervently.

Dawn is breaking They pass by a village and resume walking in the country… The sun is becoming warmer and warmer. They stop to eat in the shade of a huge walnut-tree.

« Are you tired? » Jesus asks the girl who is eating with no relish. « Tell Me and we will stop. »

« No, no. Let us go… »

« We have asked her several times. But she always says no… » says James of Alphaeus.

« I can go on, I am fit! Let us go far away… »

They resume their journey. But Aurea remembers something. « I have a purse. The ladies said to me: "You will give it when you are near the mountains". The mountains are here and I am giving it. » And she rummages in the sack where Livia put some clothes for her… She takes out the purse and gives it to Jesus.

« Their offerings… They did not want to be thanked. They are better than many among us… Take it, Matthew. And keep this

money. It will be used as secret alms. »

« Shall I not tell Judas of Kerioth? »

« No. »

« He will see the girl… »

Jesus does not reply… They set out again, but they proceed with difficulty because of the intense heat, the dust and dazzling light. Then they begin to climb the first ramifications of Mount Carmel, I think. Although it is more shady and cooler here, Aurea walks slowly and often stumbles.

Bartholomew goes back to the Master. « Master, the girl is feverish and exhausted. What shall we do? »

They consult. Should they stop? Or proceed carrying her? They are undecided. At last they decide that they must at least reach the road to Sicaminon to ask assistance of some wayfarer on horseback or in a wagon. And they would like to carry the girl in their arms, but she is heroic in her will to go farther away and keeps repeating: « I can walk, I am fit! » and wants to proceed by herself. She is flushed, her eyes are feverish and she is really exhausted. But she does not give up… She walks slowly, agreeing to be supported by Bartholomew and Philip… But she proceeds… They are all really tired. But they realise that they must go on and they do so…

They are on the top of the hill. There is the opposite slope… The plain of Esdraelon is down there, and beyond it the hills among which is Nazareth…

« If we do not find anybody, we will stop at the peasants… » says Jesus…

They go on… Almost down on the plain they see a group of disciples. There is Isaac and John of Ephesus with his mother, and Abel of Bethlehem with his mother, and other disciples whose names I do not know. For the women there is a rustic cart drawn by a strong little mule. There are also two shepherds, Daniel and Benjamin, Joseph the boatman and others.

« It is Providence helping us! » exclaims Jesus and He tells everybody to stop while He goes to speak to the disciples and to the two women in particular.

He takes them aside with Isaac and tells them part of Aurea's adventure: « We took her away from a lustful master… I would like to take her to Nazareth to cure her because she is suffering from fear and exhaustion. But I have no vehicle. Where were you going? »

« To Bethlehem in Galilee, to Myrtha's. It is impossible to stand the heat in the plain » replies Isaac.

« Go to Nazareth first, I ask you to do so out of charity. Take the girl to My Mother and tell Her that I will be with Her in two or three days' time. The girl has a temperature, so pay no attention to her raving. I will tell you later… »

« Yes, Master. As You wish. We will leave at once. Poor creature! Did he thrash her? » ask the three.

« He wanted to profane her. »

« Oh!… How old is she? »

« About thirteen… »

« The coward! The lewd rogue! But we will love her. We are true mothers, not because we have been promoted such by merit, is that right, Naomi? »

« Of course it is, Myrtha. Lord, are You keeping her as a disciple? »

« I do not know yet… »

«If You keep her, we are here. I am not going back to Ephesus. I have sent friends to sell everything. I am staying with Myrtha… Remember us for anything the girl needs. You saved our sons and we want to save her. »

« We will see later… »

« Master, the two women disciples are reliable because of their holiness… » says Isaac pleading.

« It does not depend on Me… Pray fervently and do not mention anything to anybody. Have you understood? To anybody. »

« We will hold our tongues. »

« Come with the cart. » And Jesus goes back followed by Isaac who is driving the cart and by the two women.

The girl is lying on the grass seeking refreshment for her high temperature.

« Poor creature! But she will not die, will she? »

« What a beautiful girl! »

« My dear, do not be afraid. I am a mother, you know? Come… Hold her up, Myrtha… She is tottering Help us, Isaac… Over here where she will not be jolted so much Put her sack under her head… Let us put our mantles under her Isaac, wet these linens and we will put them on her forehead… What a temperature, poor child… »

The two women are careful and motherly. Aurea is so overwhelmed by the high fever, that she is almost absent…

Everything is ready… The cart can start… Isaac before using his whip remembers: « Master, if You go to the bridge, You will find Judas of Kerioth. He is waiting for You like a beggar… It was he who told us that You were coming here. Peace to You, Master. We will get to Nazareth during the night! »

« Peace to You, Master » say the women disciples.

« Peace to you! »…

The cart trots away…

« Thanks be to the Lord!… » says Jesus.

« Yes. It is a good thing for the girl and because of Judas… It is better if he knows nothing… »

« Yes. It is better. So much better that I ask your hearts to make a sacrifice. We will part before arriving at Nazareth, and you people of the lake will go to Capernaum with Judas, whereas I with My brothers, Thomas and Simon will go to Nazareth. »

« We will do that, Master. And what will You say to these disciples who are waiting for You? »

« That it was urgent for us to inform My Mother of My arrival… Let us go… » and He joins the disciples who are so happy to be with their Master, that they do not ask any question.

426. Parable of the Vineyard and of Free Will.

4th May 1946.

« Peace to you, My friends. The Lord is good. He grants us to meet for a brotherly meal. Where were you going? » Jesus asks the ex-shepherds while making His way into a thicket to protect Himself from the sun.

« Some towards the sea, some towards the mountains. We came here together, growing in numbers all the time, as other groups joined us along the road » says Daniel, formerly a shepherd in Lebanon.

« Yes, and the two of us would like to go as far as Great Hermon to nourish our hearts where we pastured our flocks » says his companion Benjamin.

« It is a good idea. I will go to Nazareth for some time, later I will be at Capernaum and Bethsaida until the new moon of Elul. I am telling you so that you may find Me in case of need. Sit down and let us put together our victuals to share them according to justice. »

They do so spreading their… wealth on a piece of cloth: cakes, cheese, salt fish, olives, some eggs, the first apples… and they share out the food as cheerfully as they had laid it down, after Jesus has offered and blessed it.

How pleased they are with the unhoped-for feast of love! They forget tiredness and heat, lost as they are in the joy of listening to Jesus, Who inquires about what they have done, gives them advice, or tells them what He has done. And although the very warm hour of a sultry day would make one drowsy, they are so interested that no one yields to sleep. And when the meal is over and the few provisions left have been collected and divided into equal parts among them, they move into the thickest part of the nearest brushwood on the hill, and sitting around Jesus in the shade of the trees, they beg Him to tell them a beautiful parable, which they may use as a practical rule of life and teaching.

Jesus, Who is sat facing the plain of Esdraelon, now bare of crops but luxuriant in vineyards and orchards, turns His eyes round looking at the panorama as if He were looking for a subject

in what He sees. He smiles. He has found it. He begins with a general question: « The vineyards in this plain are beautiful, are they not? »

« Yes, very beautiful. They are extraordinarily laden with grapes which are maturing. And they are very well kept. That is why they yield so much. »

« They must be plants of great value… » insinuates Jesus. And He concludes: « As the plain is divided into estates belonging to rich Pharisees, they have cultivated it with good plants regardless of expenses. »

« Oh! It would have been of no use to purchase the best plants, if they had not been taken care of continually. I am an expert in the matter because I grow vines in all my property. But if I do not toil hard, that is, if I had not toiled hard at it, as my brothers continue to do now, believe me, Master, I would not be able to offer You at vintage time grapes like those of last year » says a strong man, about forty years old, whom I think I have already seen, but whose name I do not remember.

« You are right, Cleopas. The whole secret to have good fruits is to take care of our property » say another man.

« Good fruits and good profits. Because if the land gave only what one spends on it, it would still be a bad investment of money. The land must yield the fruit of the capital it costs us, plus a profit enabling us to increase our wealth. Because we must consider that a father has to divide his property among his sons. And of one property, be it land or money, he has to make several parts, one for each son, to give each of them what to live on. I do not think that we are to be blamed if we increase our property for the benefit of our children » insists Cleopas.

« You are not, if you achieve it by honest work and in an honest manner. So you say that notwithstanding the good quality of the seedlings planted out, it is necessary to toil hard at them to have a profit? »

« Most certainly so! Before we have the first bunches… Because it takes time, you know! Because one must have patience and work as well while the young shoots have only leaves. And later, when they begin to yield fruit and are strong, one must watch that there are no useless vine-branches, harmful insects and that parasitic grass do not impoverish the soil. And you have to ensure that the vine-branches are not suffocated by the foliage of bushes and bindweed and you have to dig round the foot of the vine forming circles so that dew may penetrate and water may stagnate a little longer than elsewhere nourishing the plant, and you have to spread manure… Hard work! But it is necessary, even if it is unpleasant, because grapes, so sweet, so beautiful, that each bunch seems a collection of precious stones, grow exactly by sucking fetid black

manure. It seems impossible but it is so! And one has to thin out the leaves so that the sun may shine on the bunches, and when vintage is over, one has to arrange the vines, tying and pruning them, covering the roots with straw and excrement, to protect them against frost, and also during winter one has to go and see whether the wind or some robber has pulled off the stakes and whether the weather has loosened the withes by which the branches are tied to the stakes… Oh! there is always something to be done until the vine is completely withered… And then there is still work to be done to remove it from the soil, which is to be cleaned out taking away all the roots so that it may be ready to receive a new plant. And do You know how one must work patiently with a light hand and eyes wide awake extricating the vine-shoots of the dead plants entangled with those of the vines still alive? If one acted foolishly and with a heavy hand, how much damage would be caused! One must be of the trade to know that!… The vines? They are like children! And before a child becomes a man, how hard one has to work to keep him sound in body and mind!… But I am speaking all the time and I am not letting You speak… You promised us a parable… »

« Actually you have already told it. It would be sufficient to apply your conclusion and say that souls are like vines… »

« No, Master! You must speak. I… I have talked nonsense and we cannot do the work of application by ourselves… »

« All right. Listen.

When we had an animal body in the womb of our mother, God created a soul in Heaven to make the future man in His likeness and He infused it into the body which was forming in the womb. And man, when it was time for him to be born, was born with a soul, which up to the age of reason was like land left uncultivated by its master. But when man reached the age of reason, he began to reason and to tell Good from Evil. He then realised that he had a vineyard to cultivate to his liking. And he became aware that he had a vine-dresser in charge of his vineyard: his free will. In fact the freedom to guide himself, which God granted to man, His son, is like an efficient servant, granted by God to man, His son, to assist him to make his vineyard fertile, that is his soul.

If man did not have to work by himself to become rich, to build for himself an eternal future of supernatural prosperity, if he should have had to receive everything from God, what merit would he have in re-creating himself in holiness, after Lucifer had corrupted the initial holiness given gratuitously by God to the first parents? It is already a great gift that the creatures, who had fallen by inheritance of fault, are granted by God the possibility to deserve a reward and become holy, by being born again, through their own will, to the initial nature of perfect creatures, as the

Creator had given to Adam and Eve, and to their children, if the first parents had remained free from the original Fault. Man, who had fallen, must become a chosen man through his free will. Now, what happens to souls? This. Man entrusts his soul to his will, to his free will, which begins to work the vineyard that had remained so far a piece of ground without vines, a good ground, but bare of durable plants. During the first years of its existence only frail grass and caducous flowers had grown on it: the instinctive goodness of a child who is good because he is an angel still unaware of Good and Evil.

You may ask: "How long does he remain such?". We generally say: for the first six years. But in actual fact there are precocious reasons so that we have children who are responsible for their actions before the age of six. There are children who are responsible for their actions also at three, four years of age, and they are responsible because they know what is Good and what is Evil, and they freely want the former or the latter. The moment a child can tell a good action from a bad one, that child is responsible. Not before. Thus a fool, even if one hundred years old, is irresponsible, but his guardians are responsible in his place and they must lovingly watch over him and his neighbour who may be damaged by the dull-witted or foolish fellow, so that he may not harm himself or other people. But God does not impute any fault to the idiot or fool, because unfortunately they are deprived of reason. But we are talking of intelligent beings, sound in mind and body.

So man entrusts his uncultivated vineyard to his vine-dresser: his free will, which begins to cultivate it. The soul, that is the vineyard, has a voice and makes the free will hear it. It is a supernatural voice nourished by supernatural voices which God never denies souls: the voice of the Guardian, those of the spirits sent by God, the voice of Wisdom, those of the supernatural remembrances which every soul recollects, although man does not have a precise perception of them. And the vineyard speaks to the free will, in a kind and imploring voice, begging it to adorn it with good plants, to be active and wise so that it may not become a wild, sterile, poisonous thicket of thorn-bushes, where serpents and scorpions nest, foxes have their earths and martens and other evil quadrupeds their holes.

Free will is not always a good cultivator. It does not always watch over the vineyard and defend it with an impassable hedge, that is with firm good will, aiming at protecting the soul from robbers, from parasites, from all harmful things, from strong winds which might cause the little flowers of good resolutions to fall off when they have hardly begun to be desired. Oh! what a high strong hedge is required around the heart to save it from evil! How one must watch to ensure that it is not forced, and that no one opens

either large gaps through which dissipations may enter, or sly little openings, at its base, through which vipers creep in: the seven capital vices! How necessary it is to hoe, to bum weeds, to prune, to trench, to manure through mortification and take care of one's soul through love for God and for our neighbour. And it is necessary to watch with wide-open bright eyes and mind wide awake that the vine-shoots which appeared to be good, do not turn out to be bad, and if that should happen, they are to be extirpated mercilessly. One plant only, but perfect, is better than many useless or noxious ones.

We have hearts, we have therefore vineyards which are always cultivated, in which new vines are planted by an extravagant cultivator who piles up new plants: he wants to do this work and that one, he has ideas, which are not even wicked, then he neglects them and they become evil, they fall on the ground, they degenerate and die… How m any virtues perish because they are mingled with sensuality, they are not cultivated, because, in short, free will is not supported by love! How many thieves enter to rob, to tamper with things, to extirpate, because one's conscience falls asleep instead of being vigilant, because one's will loses its strength and becomes corrupted, because one's free will is seduced, and although free, it becomes a slave to Evil. But consider! God made it free and yet free will becomes a slave to passions, to sin, to concupiscence, to Evil in a word. Pride, wrath, avarice, lust, first mixed with, then triumphant over good plants!… A disaster! How much drought there is that parches plants, because people no longer pray, whereas prayer is union with God, and therefore a dew of beneficial juices for the soul! How much frost freezes roots through lack of love for God and our neighbour! How much poorness of soil, because people refuse the manuring of mortification and humility! What an inextricable tangle of good and bad vine-shoots, because one has not the courage to suffer cutting off what is noxious! That is the state of a soul whose guardian and cultivator is an extravagant free will inclined to Evil.

Whereas the soul whose free will lives in an orderly way - and therefore in submission to the Law given so that man may know what is order, how it is and how it is kept - and is heroically faithful to Good, because Good elevates man and makes him similar to God, whereas Evil makes him brutal and similar to a demon, is a vineyard bedewed with the pure, plentiful useful waters of faith, appropriately shaded by trees of hope, warmed by the sun of charity, controlled by will, matured by mortification, tied with obedience, pruned by strength, guided by justice, watched over by wisdom and conscience. And Grace increases assisted by so much help, Holiness increases and the vineyard becomes a wonderful garden, where God descends for His delight. Providing

the vineyard always remains a perfect garden till the death of the creature, God has such work of a willing good free will brought by His angels into the great eternal Garden of Heaven.

You certainly want that lot for yourselves. So watch that the Demon, the World and the Flesh do not seduce your free will and ruin your souls. Watch that there is love in you, but not selfregard, which extinguishes love and puts the soul in the power of various sensualities and disorder. Be vigilant until the end and storms may wet you but not hurt you, and laden with fruit you will go to your Lord for the eternal reward.

I have finished. Now meditate and rest until sunset while I retire to pray. »

« No, Master. We must not delay in setting out to arrive at some house » says Peter.

« Why? There is time until sunset! » say many.

« I am not thinking of sunset or of the Sabbath. I am thinking that within an hour there will be a violent storm. See those tongue shaped dark clouds which are rising slowly from the mountain ranges of Samaria? And those which are so white and are progressing rapidly from the west? A lower wind is blowing the former, an upper wind the latter. But when they are here above us, the upper wind will yield to sirocco and the dark clouds, laden with hailstones, will come down and clash with the white ones, laden with lightning, and then you will hear some music! Come on, quick! I am a fisherman and I can read in the sky. »

Jesus is the first to obey and they all set off quickly towards the farm-houses in the plain…

At the bridge they meet Judas who shouts: « Oh! My Master! How much I have suffered without You! Praised be the Lord Who has rewarded my perseverance in waiting for You here! How did things go at Caesarea? »

« Peace to you, Judas » briefly replies Jesus and He adds: « We will speak in the house. Come, a storm is impending »

In fact gusts of wind begin to raise clouds of dust from the parched roads, the sky becomes overcast with clouds of all shapes and shades, and the air is yellow and lurid… And the first large, warm, sparse drops begin to fall and the first lightning furrows the sky, which is now almost dark…

They begin to run and goaded by the desire not to get drenched to the skin, they arrive at the first house when, amid the roar of a thunderbolt which falls nearby, a deluge of rain and hailstones falls upon the area causing a strong smell of damp earth and of ozone exhaling from the incessant lightning.

They go in and fortunately the house is provided with porches and is inhabited by peasants believing in the Messiah. And with veneration they invite the Master to make Himself at home with

His companions « as if He were in His own house. But raise Your hand and disperse the hail, out of pity for our work » they say crowding round Jesus.

Jesus raises His hand and blesses the four cardinal points, and rain only pours from the sky to water orchards, vineyards, meadows and to purify the heavy atmosphere.

« May You be blessed, Lord! » says the head of the family. « Come in, my Lord! »

And while the rain is pelting down, Jesus enters a very large room, a storeroom, and tired as He is, He sits down surrounded by His apostles.

427. Going about the Plain of Esdraelon.

6th May 1946.

It must have continued to rain all the previous day and during the night, because the ground is very damp and the roads are becoming muddy. But to compensate for this the atmosphere is clear, free from dust at all levels. And the sky smiles up there, and looks as fresh and clear after the storm as if it were springtime, and the earth also smiles, dewy, fresh, clean, with a reminiscence of spring in the serene fresh dawn. And the last drops of rain, held by the entangled foliage or hanging from vine-tendrils shine like diamonds in the sun, while fruits washed by the heavy rain display the hues of their skins, the pastel shades of which are becoming day by day the perfect hues of full maturity. Olives and grapes, still hard and unripe, mingle with the green foliage, but each little olive has a tiny drop hanging from its base, and the compact bunches of grapes are like a network of tiny drops hanging from the stalks of the grapes.

« It is pleasant to walk today! » say Peter trampling joyfully on the ground which is not dusty, does not scorch and is not slimy either.

« You seem to breathe purity. But look at the hue of the sky! » Judas Thaddeus replies to him.

« And those apples? That bunch over there, all around that branch. I do not know how it can hold the weight and come out of the mass of fruits with a cluster of leaves? How many colours! The green of the hidden ones is shading into yellow, the others are turning to red, and the two which are more exposed are completely red where the sun shines. They look as if they were covered with sealing wax! » says the Zealot.

And they walk on happily contemplating the beauties of creation until Thaddeus, immediately imitated by Thomas and the others, intones a psalm celebrating the creative glory of God.

Jesus smiles upon hearing them sing so happily and He joins in

the chorus with His beautiful voice. But He cannot finish because the Iscariot, while the others continue to sing, approaches Him and says: « Master, while they are busy and inattentive singing, tell me: how did the trip to Caesarea go and what did You do? You have not told me yet… And this is the first moment that we are alone and can speak about it. At first there were our companions and the disciples and the peasants who welcomed us, then our companions and the disciples, now that the disciples have gone ahead of us… I have never been able to ask You… »

« You are greatly interested… But at Caesarea I did not do what I will do in Johanan's estate. I spoke of the Law and of the Kingdom of Heaven. »

« To whom? »

« To the citizens. Near the markets. »

« Ah! Not to the Romans?! Did You not see them? »

« How is it possible to be at Caesarea, the residence of the Proconsul, and not see Romans? »

« I know. But I say… Well… You did not speak to them personally? »

« I repeat: you are greatly interested! »

« No, Master. Simple curiosity. »

« Well. I did speak to the Roman ladies. »

« To Claudia also? What did she say to You? »

« Nothing, because Claudia did not come. Nay, she made Me understand that she does not wish anyone to know that she is in touch with us. »

Jesus lays much stress on the sentence and diligently watches Judas who, although an impudent fellow, changes colour, blushes lightly and then blanches.

But he soon collects himself and says: « She does not want? She no longer esteems You? She is mad.- »

« No, she is not mad. She has a well-balanced mind. She can tell and distinguish her duty as a Roman lady from her duty towards herself. And if she procures light and breath for herself, for her soul, by coming towards Light and Purity, as she is a creature who instinctively seeks the Truth and will not rest in the falsehood of paganism, at the same time she does not want to be detrimental to her Fatherland, not even in theory, as she might be by making people think that she sides with a possible competitor of Rome… »

« Oh! but… You are King of the spirit!… »

« But you apostles, although you know that, cannot convince yourselves that it is true. Can you deny that? »

Judas blushes again and then grows pale, he cannot lie and says: « No! But it is our excessive love that… »

« Even more so who does not know Me, that is Rome, can mistrust Me as a competitor. Claudia is acting righteously both towards God and her Fatherland, by honouring Me as king and master of

the spirit, if not as God, and by being loyal to her Fatherland. And I admire loyal, just, non-obstinate spirits. And I would like My apostles to deserve the praise which I give the heathen woman. »

Judas does not know what to say. He is about to part from the Master. But curiosity goads him again. Rather than curiosity it is the desire to find out how much the Master knows… and he asks: « Did they ask after me? »

« Neither after you nor any other apostle. »

« What did you speak about, then? »

« Of chaste life. Of their poet Virgil. You can see that the subject was of no interest to Peter, John or anybody else. »

« But what had that got to do with it? A useless conversation… »

« No. It helped Me to make them consider that a chaste man has a bright intellect and an honest heart. Very interesting for heathen ladies… and not only for them. »

« You are right… I will not keep You further, Master » and he almost runs away to join those who have finished singing and are waiting for the two left behind…

Jesus joins them more slowly and He says: « Let us take that path in the wood. We will shorten the road and will be sheltered from the sun which is already becoming strong. We will also be able to stop in the thick of the wood and eat in peace. »

And they do so going towards north-west, towards Johanan's estate, because I can hear them talk about the peasants of that Pharisee…

Jesus says: « And you will put here the vision of 16th June 1944: Jesus, the fallen nest and the Pharisee.. »

428. The Fallen Nest and the Scribe Johanan ben Zaccai.

16th June 1944. Later, 10.30 a.m.

I see Jesus wearing a white tunic with His dark-blue mantle thrown over His shoulder, while He is walking along a woody path. It is woody because there are trees and shrubs on both sides. Narrow tracks cut through the green entanglement, but it is not a solitary place remote from any village, as they often meet other people. I would say that it is the road linking two villages close to each other, running through the fields of the villagers. The country is flat, and mountains can be seen in the distance. I do not know what place it is.

Jesus, Who was speaking to His disciples, stops and listens, looking round, He then takes a little path in the thicket and goes towards a large group of small trees and shrubs. He bends and searches. And He finds. There is a nest in the grass. I do not know whether it was knocked down by a storm, as one would think from

the damp soil and the branches still dripping, as is usual after a storm, or whether anybody tampered with it and left it there, not to be caught with the brood in his hands. I do not know. I can only see a small nest interwoven with hay and full of dry leaves, down of plants and wool, among which five little birds, only a few days old, are stirring and chirping: they are reddish, without feathers, rather ugly looking because of their wide open beaks and bulging eyes. High above, on a tree, their parents are screeching desperately.

Jesus picks up the little nest carefully. He holds it in the hollow of one hand and He looks for the spot where it was or where it can be placed safely. He finds a tangle of brambles so compact that it looks like a little basket, and so deep in the bush as to be safe. Without minding the thorns which scratch His arms, after handing the nest to Peter - and the apostle so elderly and stout looks funny with the little nest in his short rough hands - Jesus rolls up His long wide sleeves and works to make the entangled branches more concave and thus safer. It is done. He takes the nest and places it in the bush and secures it by pulling long cylindrical blades of grass which look like very thin reeds. The nest is now safe. Jesus stands aside and smiles. He then gets one of the apostles, who is carrying his sack across his shoulder, to give Him a piece of bread and He crumbles some on the ground, on a stone. Jesus is now happy. He turns round to go back to the main road while the birds fly down to the rescued nest screeching with joy.

A little group of men is standing on the roadside. Jesus finds them facing Him and looks at them. His smile fades away and His face becomes very severe, I would say sombre, while it was so compassionate when He was picking up the nest and so happy when He had arranged it safely.

Jesus stops. And He continues to look at His unexpected witnesses. He seems to be looking at their hearts with their secret thoughts. He cannot go any farther because the group have blocked the path. But He is silent.

But Peter does not keep quiet. « Let the Master pass » he says.

« Be quiet, Nazarene » replies one of the group. « How did your Master take the liberty of going into my wood and do manual labour on the Sabbath? »

Jesus looks straight at him with a strange expression. It is and it is not a smile. And if it is a smile it is not one of approval. Peter is about to reply. But Jesus asks: « Who are you? »

« The landlord of this place. Johanan ben Zaccai. »

« A renowned scribe. For what do you reproach Me? »

« For profaning the Sabbath. »

« Johanan ben Zaccai, do you know Deuteronomy? »

« Are you asking me? Me, a true rabbi of Israel? »

« I know what you want to tell Me: that I, as I am not a scribe, but

a poor Galilean, cannot be a "rabbi". But I ask you once again: "Do you know Deuteronomy?". »

« Certainly better than You do. »

« To the letter… certainly, if you wish to think so. But do you know it in its true meaning? »

« What is said is said. There is but one meaning. »

« True, there is but one meaning. And it is a meaning of love; or, if you do not want to call it love, of mercy; or if it annoys you to call it so, say: of humanity. And Deuteronomy says: "If you see your brother's sheep or his ox straying, even if they are not close at hand, you must not make off, but you will take them back to him, or you will keep them until he comes for them". It says: "If you see your brother's donkey or ox fall, do not pretend you have not seen, but help him to put it on its feet again". It says: "If in a tree or on the ground you find a nest with the mother bird sitting on the chicks or the eggs, you must not take the mother (because she is sacred to procreation) you may take the chicks only". I saw a nest on the ground and the mother weeping over it. I felt sorry for her because she was a mother. And I gave her chicks back to her. I did not think I was profaning the Sabbath by consoling a mother. We must not let the sheep of our brother go astray, but the Law does not say that it is a sin to put a donkey on its feet again on a Sabbath. It says only that we must have mercy on our brother and humanity for the donkey, a creature of God. I thought that God had created that mother that she might procreate, and that she had obeyed God's command, and that to prevent her from bringing up her offspring was to interfere with her obedience to a divine command. But you do not understand that. You and your friends consider the letter, not the spirit. You and your friends do not consider that you infringe the Sabbath twice, nay, three times, by degrading the divine Word to the pettiness of human mentality, by interfering with a command of God and by lacking in mercy towards your neighbour. In order to injure by means of a reproach, you do not consider that it is wrong to speak unnecessarily. This, which is also work, but neither useful, nor necessary, nor good, does not seem a profanation of the Sabbath to you. Johanan ben Zaccai, listen to Me. As today you have no mercy on a blackcap and according to Pharisaic practice you would let her die of grief, and you would let her offspring perish miserably, left at the mercy of asps or wicked people, likewise tomorrow you will have no mercy on a mother and you will make her die a miserable death and you will have her offspring killed, saying that it is right to do so out of respect to your law. To yours, not to God's. To the law which you and those like you have made to oppress the weak so that you, the strong ones, may triumph. But see. The weak always find a saviour. Whereas the proud, those who are strong according to the

law of the world, will be crushed under the weight of their own heavy law. Goodbye, Johanan ben Zaccai. Remember this hour and mind you do not profane yourself another Sabbath with the satisfaction of a crime committed. »

And Jesus casts a fulminating glance at the irascible old man, whose face is red with anger, and looking down on him, because the scribe is short and stout and Jesus seems a palm-tree compared with him, He passes by walking on the grass, because the scribe does not step aside.

Jesus says:

« I wanted to uplift your spirit with a true vision, even if it is not mentioned in the Gospels.

This is the lesson for you: that I have so much mercy on little birds without nests, even if the name instead of being blackcap, is Mary or John. And I take care to give them a nest again, when an event has deprived them of it.

And this is the lesson for everybody. That too many know the words of the Law, still too many although they are few, because everybody ought to know them, but they know the "words" only. They do not live them. That is the error.

Deuteronomy prescribed humane laws, because men in those days, because of their spiritual childhood, were brutal and halfsavage. They had to be led by hand along the flowery paths of pity, respect, love for the brother who lost an animal, for the animal which fell, for the bird sitting on eggs, to teach them to rise to higher pity, respect, love. But when I came I perfected the Mosaic rules and I opened wider horizons. The letter was no longer "everything". The spirit became "everything". Beyond the little human act for a nest and its inhabitants, it is necessary to consider the secret meaning of My gesture: that I, the Son of the Creator, bowed before the work of the Creator. That brood also is His work.

Oh! happy those who can see God in everything and serve Him with spirit of reverent love! And woe to those, who like a snake, cannot raise their heads above their filth and as they cannot sing the praises of God, Who reveals Himself in the work of their brothers, they bite them because of the excess of poison choking them. There are too many who torture the better ones saying, to justify their perversity, that it is right to do so out of respect to the law. Their law. Not God's. But if God cannot stop their wicked deeds, He can avenge His "little ones".

And let this be given to those who deserve it. May My vigilant Peace be with you. »

429. The Journey in the Plain of Esdraelon Continues.

6th May 1946.

After the incident they continue to walk for some time in silence. But when they arrive at a road junction in the country, James of Zebedee says: « Here we are! This road here will take us to Micah's house… But… are we still going there? That man will certainly be waiting for us in his property in order to ill-treat us… »

« And to prevent You from speaking to the peasants. James is right. Don't go there » advises the Iscariot.

« They are waiting for Me. I sent word that I am going there. Their hearts are rejoicing. I am the Friend Who is coming to console them… »

« You can go some other time. They will resign themselves » says Judas shrugging his shoulders.

« You do not resign yourself so easily when you are deprived of something for which you hoped. »

« My matters are serious ones. Theirs… »

« And what is more serious or greater than the perfecting and relief of a heart? Everything tries to separate those hearts from peace and hope… And they have but one hope: that of a future life. And they have but one means to go there: My help. No. I will go to see them at the cost of being stoned. »

« No, Brother! No, Lord! » say together the Zealot and James of Alphaeus. « It would only serve to have those poor servants punished. You did not hear him, but Johanan said: "So far I have tolerated the situation, but I will no longer do so. And woe betide the servant who will go to Him or welcome Him. He is a reprobate and a demon. I don't want corruption in my household", and he said to a companion: "Even if I have to kill them, I will cure them of their devilish attachment to that cursed man". »

Jesus lowers His head thinking… and suffering. His grief is evident… The others are sorry, but what can they do?

The situation is resolved by Thomas' practical serenity: « Let us do this. We will stay here until sunset, in order not to infringe the Sabbath. In the meantime one of us will steal away to the houses and say: "At dead of night, at the fountain outside Sephoris". And we will go there after sunset and wait for them in the thickets at the foot of the mountain on which is Sephoris. The Master will speak to those poor people and comfort them, and at daybreak they will go back to their houses and we will cross over the hill and go to Nazareth. »

« Thomas is right. Bravo Thomas! » say many.

But Philip remarks: « And who will go and warn them? He knows everyone of us and he may see us… »

« Judas of Simon could go. He knows the Pharisees well… » says Andrew innocently.

« What are you trying to insinuate? » replies Judas aggressively.

« I? Nothing. I am saying that you know them because you were for such a long time at the Temple and you have good friends there. You always boast about them. They will do no harm to a friend… » says meek Andrew.

« Don't you believe that, in no way. Let no one believe it. If we were still protected by Claudia, perhaps… I could… but not now. Because now, in short, she has disengaged herself, hasn't she, Master? »

« Claudia continues to admire the Wise Man. She has done nothing else or more than that. From such admiration she may pass to believe in the true God. But only the illusion of an excited mind could believe that she nourished other feelings for Me. And if she did, I would not want them. I can accept their heathenism, because I hope to change it into Christian faith. I cannot accept what would be idolatry on their side: that is, the adoration of a poor idol Man on a poor human throne. » Jesus says so calmly, as if He were speaking to everyone lecturing them. But He is so resolute as to leave no doubt about His intention and His decision to repress every possible deviation in that direction among His apostles.

No one therefore replies in regard to human regality, but they ask: « So what are we going to do for the peasants? »

« I will go. I made the proposal, I will go, if the Master allows me. The Pharisees will certainly not eat me… » says Thomas.

« You may go. And may your charity be blessed. »

« Oh! It is such a trifle, Master! »

« It is such a great thing, Thomas. You understand the desires of your brothers: Jesus and the peasants, and you feel sorry for them. And your Brother in the flesh blesses you also on their behalf » says Jesus laying a hand on the lowered head of Thomas, who is deeply moved and whispers: « I… Your… brother?! It is too great an honour, my Lord. I Your servant, You my God… That yes… I am going. »

« Are you going alone? I will come, too! » say Thaddeus and Peter.

« No. You are too impetuous. I can turn everything into laughter… the best means to disarm certain… characters. You become furious at once… I will go by myself. »

« I will come » say John and Andrew.

« Yes! One of you, yes, also one like Simon Zealot or James of Alphaeus. »

« No. I never react. I keep quiet and I act » insists Andrew.

« Come » and they go away in one direction while Jesus and those left with Him go in the other…

430. Near Sephoris, with Johanan's Peasants.

8th May 1946.

« Will they come? » Matthew asks his companions who are sat in a wood of holm-oaks in the lower slopes of the hill on which Sephoris rises. The Esdraelon plain is no longer visible, as it is beyond the hill where they are. But there is a much smaller plain between this hill and those in the region of Nazareth and which can be seen clearly in the bright moonlight.

« They promised. And they will come » replies Andrew.

« At least some of them. They were going to leave half-way through the first watch and they will be here at the beginning of the second one » says Thomas.

« Later » says Thaddeus.

« It took us less than three hours » objects Andrew.

« We are men and in full strength. They are tired and will have women with them » replies Thaddeus again.

« Provided their master does not find out! » says Matthew with a sigh.

« There is no danger. He left for Jezreel, where he will be the guest of a friend. The superintendent is there. But he is coming as well, because he does not hate the Master » says Thomas.

« Will that man be sincere? » asks Philip.

« Yes, because there is no reason why he should not be. »

« Well! To get into his master's good graces and… »

« No, Philip. When vintage time is over he will be dismissed by Johanan just because he does not hate the Master » replies Andrew.

« Who told you? » several of them ask.

« He himself and the peasants… each on his on account. And when two people of different categories agree in saying the same thing, it means that what they say is true. The peasants were weeping because the superintendent is leaving. He was very humane. And he said to us: "I am a man and not a clay puppet. Last year he said to me: 'Honour the Master, approach Him, become one of His believers'. I obeyed. Now he says to me: 'Woe betide you if you love my enemy and if you allow the servants to love Him. I do not want my land to be anathematised by receiving that cursed man'. But now that I know Him, how can I consider that order just? I said to the master: 'Last year you spoke differently, but He is always the same'. He beat me a first time. I said: 'I am not a slave, and even if I were, you would not be in possession of my thought. My thought judges Him to be holy Who you say is cursed'. He beat me again. This morning he said to me: "The anathema of Israel is in my property. Woe to you if disobey my order. You will no longer be my servant'. I replied: 'You are right. I will no longer be your servant. Look for another one who has a heart like yours and who is as rapacious about your property

as you are about other people's souls'. And he threw me on the ground and struck me… But the work of the year will soon be over and at the new moon of Tishri I will be free. I am only sorry for these…" and he pointed at the peasants » says Thomas.

« But where did you see him?… »

« In the wood, as if we were highwaymen. Micah, to whom we had spoken, had informed him and he came while he was still bleeding and servants and maid-servants came a few at a time… » says Andrew.

« H'm! so Judas was right! He is familiar with the mood of the Pharisee… » remarks Bartholomew.

« Judas knows too many things!… » says James of Zebedee.

« Be quiet! He may hear you! » advises Matthew.

« No. He has gone away saying that he is sleepy and has a headache… » replies James.

« Moon! Moon in the sky and moon in his head. It is so: he is more changeable than the wind » pronounces Peter who has been silent so far.

« Yes! A real misfortune among us! » says Bartholomew with a sigh.

« No, don't say that! Not a misfortune! On the contrary: a way to sanctify oneself… » says the Zealot.

« Or to damn oneself, because he makes one lose one's virtues… » says Thaddeus resolutely.

« He is a poor wretch! » remarks Andrew sadly.

There is silence. Then Peter asks: « But is the Master still praying? »

« No. While you were dozing He passed by and joined John and his brother James, placed as sentries on the road. He wants to be with the poor peasants at once. Perhaps it is the last time He will see them » replies the Zealot.

« Why the last time? Why? Don't say that. It seems to bring bad luck! » says Thaddeus excitedly.

« Because you can see it… We are persecuted more and more… I don't know what we will do in future… »

« Simon is right… Eh! it will be lovely to be all spiritual… But… if we had been permitted to have a little… humanity… a pinch of protection from Claudia would have done no harm » says Matthew. « No. It is better to be alone… and above all to be free from contacts with the heathens. I… do not approve of them » says Bartholomew resolutely.

« Not much myself… But… the Master says that His Doctrine must spread all over the world. And that we have to do that… We have to sow His words everywhere… So we will have to adapt ourselves to approaching Gentiles and idolaters… » says Thaddeus.

« Impure people. It seems to me something sacrilegious. Wisdom

to pigs!… »

« They have a soul, too, Nathanael! You felt sorry for the girl yesterday… »

« Because… she is… a mere nothing which is to be perfected. She is like a new-born baby… But the others!… And she is not a Roman… »

« Do you think that the Gauls are not idolaters? They have their cruel gods as well. You will find out if you have to go and convert them!… » says the Zealot who is more learned than the others, I would say, in a cosmopolitan manner.

« But she does not belong to the race of those who are profaning Israel. I will never preach to the enemies of Israel, neither to the present nor to the old ones. »

« Then… you will have to go very far away, among the hyperboreans, because… it does not seem so, but Israel has had a taste of all the neighbouring peoples… » says Thomas.

« I will go far away… But here is the Master. Let us go and meet Him. How many people! They have all come! Even the children… »

« The Master will be happy… »

They join the Master Who is advancing with difficulty on the meadow, pressed as He is by so many surrounding Him.

« Is Judas still absent? » asks Jesus.

« Yes, Master. But we will call him, if You wish so… »

« It is not necessary. My voice will reach him where he is. And his free conscience speaks to him with its own voice. It is not necessary for you to add your voices and force a will. Come, let us sit down here with our brothers. And forgive Me if I have not been able to break the bread with you in a feast of love. »

They sit in a circle with Jesus in the centre, and Jesus wants around Him all the children who press against Him affectionately and full of confidence.

« Bless them, Lord! That they may see what we long to see: freedom to love You! » shouts a woman.

« Yes. They are depriving us also of that. They do not want Your words to be impressed in our souls. And now by forbidding You to come, they are preventing us from meeting… and we will have no more holy words! » moans an old man.

« If we are abandoned thus, we will become sinners. You taught us to forgive… You gave us so much love that we could bear our master and his ill-will… But now… » says a young man. I cannot see their faces very well, so I do not know exactly who is speaking. I base myself on the tones of the voices.

« Do not weep. I will see that you do not lack My word. I will come again, as long as I can… »

« No, Master and Lord. He is wicked and so are his friends. They could injure You and because of us. We will make the sacrifice of

losing You, but do not give us the sorrow of having to say: "He was caught because of us". »

« Yes, save Yourself, Master. »

« Do not be afraid. We read in Jeremiah how the prophet told his secretary Baruch to write what the Lord dictated to him and to go and read what he had written to those who had gathered in the house of the Lord, and to read it in place of the prophet who was in prison and could not go there. I will do the same. Among My apostles and disciples I have many faithful Baruchs. They will come and tell you the word of the Lord and your souls will not perish. And I will not be caught through your fault, because the Most High God will conceal Me from their eyes until the hour when the King of Israel is to be shown to the crowds so that the whole world may know Him. And do not be afraid either of losing the words which are in you. We read, always in Jeremiah, that also after the destruction of the scroll by Jehoiakim, king of Judah, who by burning the scroll hoped to destroy the eternal truthful words, what God had dictated remained, because the Lord gave this order to the prophet: "Take another scroll and write down all the words that were written on the scroll burnt by the king". And Jeremiah gave a scroll to Baruch, a scroll without any writing, and he dictated once again to his secretary the eternal words and he added some more as well to complete the previous ones, because the Lord mends the damages caused by men when such amends are useful to souls, and He does not allow hatred to cancel the work of love. Well, even if I, comparing Myself to a scroll full of holy verities, should be destroyed, do you think that the Lord would let you perish without the help of other scrolls, which will contain My words and those of My witnesses telling you what I cannot tell you, as I am a prisoner of Violence and destroyed by it? And do you think that what is impressed in the scrolls of your hearts can be cancelled with the passing of time on the words? No. The angel of the Lord will repeat those words to you, keeping them fresh in your souls eager for Wisdom. Not only. But he will explain them to you and you will be wise through the word of your Master. You seal your love for Me by means of the seal of sorrow. Can what resists persecution perish? It cannot. I am telling you. God's gifts cannot be cancelled. Sin only can cancel them. But you certainly do not wish to commit sin, do you, My friends? »

« No, Lord. It would mean losing You in the next life » reply many.

« But they will make us sin. He has ordered us not to leave his fields any more on Sabbaths… and there will be no more Passovers for us. So we will commit sin… » say others.

« No. You will not sin. He will. He only, as he does violence to the right of God and of His children to embrace and love one another

in sweet conversation of love and teaching on the day of the Lord. »

« But he makes amends through many fasting-days and offerings. We cannot, because the food we get is already too scanty as compared with the work we do, and we have nothing to offer… We are poor… »

« You offer what is appreciated by God: your hearts. Isaiah speaking to false penitents in the name of God says: "Look, on your fast-days your will is revealed and you oppress your debtors. Look, you fast to quarrel and squabble and fight cruelly. Do not fast any more as you have done so far, if you want to make your voice heard on high. Is that the sort of fast that pleases Me? That man for one day should just afflict his soul and torment his body and lie down on ashes? Is that what you call fasting, a day acceptable to the Lord? The fasting I prefer is a different one. Break the chains of sin, undo oppressive obligations, let the oppressed go free, remove all burdens. Share your bread with the hungry, shelter the poor and pilgrims, clothe the naked and do not despise your neighbour". But Johanan does not do that. You are his creditors because of the work you do for him making him rich, and he treats you worse than defaulting debtors and he raises his voice to threaten you and his hand to strike you. He is not merciful and he despises you because you are servants. But a servant is a man just like his master, and if it is his duty to serve, it is also his right to receive what is necessary to a man, with regard both to his body and to his spirit. The Sabbath is not honoured even if a man spends it in the synagogue, if on the same day the man who keeps it puts chains on his brothers and gives them aloe to drink. Keep your Sabbaths talking with one another of the Lord, and the Lord will be among you. Forgive and the Lord will glorify you.

I am the Good Shepherd and I have mercy on all My sheep. But I certainly love with particular fondness those which idolatrous shepherds have beaten, so that they may go away from My way. For them, more than for any other, I have come. Because your Father and Mine ordered Me: "Pasture these sheep for slaughter, killed mercilessly by their masters who have sold them saying: 'We have become rich!' and on which the shepherds had no mercy". Well, I will pasture the flock for slaughter, o poor people of the herd, forsaking to their wickedness those who distress you and afflict the Father Who suffers in His children. I will stretch out My hand to the little ones among the children of God and I will draw them to Me, so that they may have My glory. The Lord promises that through the lips of the prophets who celebrate My pity and power as Shepherd. And I promise directly you who love Me. I will provide for My flock. To those who accuse good sheep of making the water turbid or spoiling the pasture to come to Me, I will say: "Go away. You are the ones who cause the springs of My children

to dry up and their pastures to parch. But I have led and will lead them to other pastures; to the pastures which satisfy the spirit. I will leave you a pasture for your big bellies, I will leave you the bitter spring which you made well up and I will go with My sheep, separating the true sheep of God from the false ones, and My lambs will no longer be distressed by anything, but they will exult for ever in the pastures of Heaven".

Persevere, My beloved children! Be patient a little longer, as I am. Be faithful, doing what your unfair master allows you to do. And God will judge that you have done everything and will reward you for everything. Do not hate, even if everything urges and teaches you to hate. Have faith in God. See: Jonah was relieved of his suffering and Jabez was taken towards love. And what the Lord did to the old man and to the boy, He will do to you: partly in this life, completely in the next one.

I have but money to give you to make your material situation less painful. I will give it to you. Give it to them, Matthew, so that they may share it. It is much, but always too little for you who are so many, and so poor. But I have nothing else… materially. But I have My love, and the power of being the Son of the Father, so that I can ask infinite supernatural treasures for you, to comfort your grief and enlighten your darkness. Oh! your sad life can be made bright by God! By Him alone!… And I say: "Father, I pray You for them. I do not pray You for the happy and rich people in the world. But I pray for these, who have but You and Me. Let them rise so high in the ways of the spirit, that they may find all comfort in Our love, and let us give Ourselves to them with love, with all our infinite love, to fill their days and their work with peace, serenity, courage, with supernatural peace, serenity and strength, so that, as if they were estranged from the world through Our love, they may endure their calvary and after their death, they may have You, Us, infinite beatitude". »

Jesus has prayed standing up, slowly freeing Himself from the children who had fallen asleep leaning against Him. And He is solemn and kind in His prayer.

He now lowers His eyes and says: « I am going. You must go now, to be back in your homes in time. We will meet again. And I will bring Marjiam. But even when I can no longer come, My Spirit will always be with you and My apostles will love you as I did. May the Lord lay His blessing upon you. Go! » And He bends to caress the sleeping children and He gives Himself up to the effusive warmheartedness of the poor people who cannot make up their minds to Part from Him…

At last they all go their ways and the two groups part while the moon is setting and branches of trees are to be lit to illuminate the road. And the pungent smoke of the dampish branches is a good

excuse for shining eyes…

Judas is waiting for them leaning against the trunk of a tree. Jesus looks at him and does not say anything, not even when Judas says: « I feel better. »

They go on thus, as best they can during the night, then much quicker at dawn.

When they are in sight of a cross-roads Jesus stops and says: « Let us part. Thomas Simon Zealot and My brothers will come with Me. The others will go to the lake and wait for Me. »

« Thank You, Master… I did not dare ask You. But You are helping me. I am really tired. And if You allow me, I will stop at Tiberias… »

« At a friend's » James of Zebedee cannot refrain himself from saying.

Judas opens his eyes wide… but nothing else.

Jesus hastens to say: « As far as I am concerned it is enough if you go to Capernaum on the Sabbath with your companions. Come, that I may kiss you, you who are leaving Me. » And He fondly kisses the apostles who are departing, giving each of them a piece of advice in a whisper…

No one objects. Peter only, when leaving, says: « Come soon, Master. »

« Yes, come soon » say the others, and John concludes: « The lake will look very sad without You. »

Jesus blesses them again and promises: « I will see you soon! » and then they all go their own way.

431. Arrival at Nazareth.

9th May 1946.

Coming from the Sephoris countryside one enters Nazareth on the north-eastern side, that is, on the highest and rockiest side. The entire amphitheatre, on the terraces of which Nazareth is spread, appears when one reaches the top of the hill, which is the last one coming from Sephoris and which slopes down rather steeply through ravines towards the town. If I remember correctly, because a long time has passed and many mountain places are alike, the spot where Jesus is, is the precise one where His fellowcitizens tried to stone Him, but He stopped them with His power, walking through them.

Jesus stops to look at His dear yet hostile town, and a smile of happiness brightens His face. What a blessing, ignored and undeserved by the Nazarenes, is His divine smile, which certainly pours and spreads graces on the land which received Him when He was a child, saw Him grow up and where His Mother was born and She became the Spouse of God and the Mother of God! Also the two cousins look at their town with evident joy, but Thaddeus' happiness

is tempered by austere reserved gravity, whereas James' is more open and kind, more like Jesus'.

Although it is not his town, Thomas' face shines brightly with joy, and pointing at Mary's little house, from the stone oven of which rings of smoke are rising, he says: « The Mother is at home and She is baking bread… » and he utters these simple words with such fervent love, that he seems to be speaking of his mother with all the affection of a son.

The Zealot, more calm because of his age and upbringing, smiles saying: « Yes, and Her peace is already arriving in our hearts. »

« Let us go down quickly » says James. « We will go down this path and it is unlikely that any of the Nazarenes will see us arrive. They would delay us… »

« But you will be going away from your home… Your mother also is anxious to see you. »

« Oh! You may be sure, Simon, that our mother is with Mary. She is almost always there… And she will be there because they are baking and because of the sick girl. »

« Yes, let us go this way. We will pass at the rear of Alphaeus' kitchen garden and we will arrive at the hedge of ours » says Jesus.

They go down quickly along a path which at first is very steep, then it becomes more gentle near the town. They go through olivegroves and small fields bare of crops. They pass near the first kitchen gardens in town. And the tall leafy hedges around the gardens and over which hang branches of trees laden with fruit, or the little dry-stone walls all covered with branches hanging outside from orchards, prevent their passing from being noticed by housewives moving about the gardens, or doing the washing or spreading it on the patches of grass near the houses…

The hedge bordering one side of Mary's kitchen garden, which is a tangle of thorns in winter, then thick with leaves in summer, after the hawthorn blooms in spring or the little fruits become ruby-colour in autumn, is now adorned with a luxuriant jasmine and with the undulating calyces of a flower, the name of which I do not know, and which from the inside of the garden throw their branches onto the hedge making it thicker and more beautiful. A blackcap is singing in the thick of the hedge and the cooing of doves is heard from inside the garden.

« The fence also is protected and entirely covered with branches in bloom » says James who has run ahead to look at the rustic gate at the rear of the garden, the one which, after not being used for years, was opened to let Peter's cart go in and out for John and Syntyche.

« We will go along the lane and will knock at the door. My Mother Would suffer seeing this protection destroyed » replies Jesus.

« Her enclosed garden! » exclaims Judas of Alphaeus.

« Yes. And She is its rose » says Thomas.

« As a lily among the thistles » says James.

« The sealed fountain » says the Zealot.

« Better: the well of living water which gushing impetuously from the beautiful mountain gives the Water of Life to the Earth and spurts towards Heaven with its scented beauty » says Jesus.

« She will soon be delighted to see You » says James.

« Tell me, Brother, something which I have been longing to know for some time. How do You see Mary? As a Mother or as a subject? She is Your Mother, but She is a woman and You are God… » asks Thaddeus.

« As sister and as bride, as delight and rest of God and as comfort of Man. I see everything and I have everything in Mary, as God and as Man. She Who was the Delight of the Second Person of the Trinity in Heaven, Delight of the Word as well as of the Father and of the Spirit, is the Delight of the God Incarnate, and She will be the Delight of the Man God Glorified. »

« What a mystery! So God has deprived Himself twice of His delights? In You and in Mary and He gave You to the Earth… » meditates the Zealot.

« What love! You ought to say. Love induced the Trinity to give Mary and Jesus to the Earth » says James.

« And, not with regard to You, Who are God, but with regard to His Rose, was He not afraid to entrust Her to men, who are all unworthy of protecting Her? » asks Thomas.

« Thomas, the Song of Songs replies to you: "The Peaceful One had a vineyard and he entrusted it to vine-dressers who, being profaners instigated by the Desecrator, would have paid large amounts to have it, that is, all allurements to seduce it, but the beautiful Vineyard of the Lord looked after itself by itself, and would not give its fruits to anybody but to the Lord and it unbosomed itself to Him generating the priceless Treasure: the Saviour". »

They have now arrived at the door of the house. While Jesus knocks, Judas of Alphaeus comments: « It would be the case to say: "Open, my sister, my spouse, my beloved immaculate dove"… »

But when the door opens, and the sweet face of the Virgin appears, Jesus utters the sweetest word, stretching out His arms to receive Her: « Mother! »

« Oh! Son! Blessed! Come in and may peace and love be with You! »

« And with My Mother and the house and those in it » says Jesus entering, followed by the others.

« Your mother is in there, and the two women disciples are busy baking and doing the washing… » explains Mary after exchanging greetings with the apostles and Her nephews, who discreetly withdraw leaving Mother and Son alone.

« Here I am with You, Mother. We will be together for some time… How sweet it is to come back… the house and You above all, Mother, after so much travelling amongst men… »

« And men become more and more acquainted with You and through such knowledge of You they become divided into two groups: those who love You… and those who hate You… And the latter group is the bigger… »

« Evil perceives that it is about to be defeated and it is furious… and makes people furious… How is the girl? »

« A little better… But she was on the point of death… And her words, now that she is not delirious correspond, although they are more reserved, to those which she spoke while raving. It would be a lie to say that we have not reconstructed her history… Poor girl! … »

« Yes, but Providence watched over her. »

« And now?… »

« Now… I do not know. Aurea does not belong to Me as a creature. Her soul is Mine, her body belongs to Valeria. For the time being, she will stay here, to forget… »

« Myrtha would like to have her. »

« I know… But I am not entitled to do anything without permission of the Roman lady. I do not even know whether they purchased her with money or simply used the weapon of promises… When the Roman lady will claim her… »

« I will go in Your place, Son. It is not right that You should go… Let Your Mother see to it… We women… the least beings for Israel, are not noticed so much if we go and speak to Gentiles. And Your Mother is so unknown to the world! No one will notice the Jewess of the common people going through the streets in Tiberias, enveloped in her mantle, and knocking at the door of a Roman lady… »

« You could go to Johanna's… and speak to the lady there… »

« I will do that, Son. May Your heart be relieved, Jesus!… You are so distressed… I understand… and I would like to do so much for You… »

« And You do so much, Mother. Thank You for everything You do… »

« Oh! I am a very poor help, Son! Because I am not successful in making You loved, in giving You… joy… as long as You are allowed to enjoy some… So what am I? A poor disciple, indeed… »

« Mother! Mother! Do not say that! My strength comes to Me through Your prayers. My mind rests thinking of You, and, see, My heart finds comfort thus, with My head against Your blessed heart… Mother of Mine!… » Jesus has drawn His Mother to Himself, as She was standing in front of Him, while He was sitting on the chest against the wall, and He leans His forehead on the

breast of Mary, Who gently caresses His hair… A pause of love.

Jesus then raises His head, stands up and says: « Let us go to the others and to the girl » and He goes out with His Mother into the kitchen garden.

The three women disciples, standing at the door of the room where the sick girl is, are talking to the apostles. But when they see Jesus, they become quiet and kneel down.

« Peace to you, Mary of Alphaeus, and to you, Myrtha and Naomi. Is the girl sleeping? »

« Yes, she is. She is still feverish and her temperature stupefies and consumes her. If it persists like this, she will die. Her frail body will not resist the disease and her mind is upset by remembrances » says Mary of Alphaeus.

« Yes… and she does not react because she says that she wants to die, so that she may not see any more Romans… » confirms Myrtha.

« And that grieves us because we are already fond of her… » says Naomi.

« Be not afraid! » replies Jesus going as far as the threshold of the little room and lifting the curtain…

On the little bed against the wall, facing the door, appears the little thin face of the girl, bright red at the cheek-bones, while all the rest is snow-white, buried in the mass of her long golden hair. She is sleeping restlessly, muttering incomprehensible words through her teeth and with her hand abandoned on the blankets she now and then makes a gesture as if she were rejecting something.

Jesus does not enter. He looks at her with pitiful eyes. He then calls her in a loud voice: « Aurea! Come! Your Saviour is here. »

All of a sudden the girl sits up in her bed, she sees Jesus and with a cry she gets up and runs barefooted in her long loose tunic towards Him, and kneels at His feet saying: « Lord! Now You have really freed me! »

« She is cured. See? She could not die because she must become acquainted with the Truth first. » And to the girl who is kissing His feet He says: « Rise and live in peace » and He lays His hand on the no longer feverish head.

Aurea, in her long linen dress, perhaps one of the Virgin's, so long as to form a train, her loose hair falling over her slender figure like a mantle, her grey-blue eyes still bright because of the temperature which has just dropped and of the joy which has just filled her, looks like an angel.

« Goodbye! We are withdrawing into the workshop while you look after the girl and the house… » says the Master and followed by His four apostles he goes into Joseph's old workshop and they sit on the benches no longer used…

432. Parable of Painted Wood.

10th May 1946.

The rustic workshop fireplace has been lit after not being used for such a long time, and the smell of glue boiling in a can mingles with the characteristic smell of sawdust and fresh shavings, which are just piling up at the foot of a bench.

Jesus is working with zest to transform some timber, with the help of saw and plane, into legs for chairs, drawers and so forth. Some pieces of furniture, the modest furniture of the little house in Nazareth, have been taken into the workshop to be repaired: the kneading trough, one of Mary's looms, two stools, a garden ladder, a little chest and the door of the stone oven, the lower part of which I think has been perhaps gnawed away by mice. Jesus is working to repair what usage and old age have consumed.

Thomas, instead, with a complete outfit of a goldsmith's tiny tools, which he must have taken out of his sack lying on his little bed placed against the wall like the Zealot's, is working with a light hand at some thin silver plates. And the tapping of his little hammer on the burin, giving a silvery sound, mingles with the loud noise of the working tools used by Jesus.

Now and again they exchange a few words, and Thomas is so happy to be there with the Master and at his work of goldsmith and in fact he says so - that in the intervals of conversation he whistles softly. Now and again he raises his eyes and thinks, and absorbed in thought he stares at the smoky wall of the large room.

Jesus notices that and asks: « Are you drawing your inspiration from that black wall, Tom? It is true that it was the long work of a just man that made it so, but I do not think that it can inspire a goldsmith… »

« No, Master, a goldsmith in fact cannot reproduce with rich metals the poetry of holy poverty… But with his metal he can imitate the beautiful things in nature and thus ennoble gold and silver reproducing with them the flowers and leaves which are in creation. I think of those flowers and leaves, and to remember their details precisely I become fixed thus, with my eyes on the wall, but in actual fact I see the woods and meadows of our Fatherland, the light leaves, the flowers resembling chalices or stars, the bearing of stalks and leafy branches… »

« You are a poet, then, a poet singing in metal what another person sings with ink on parchment. »

« Yes. A goldsmith in fact is a poet who writes on metal the beautiful things of nature. But our work, artistic and beautiful, is not worth Yours, which is humble and holy, because ours serves the vanity of rich people, whereas Yours serves the sanctity of the house and the usefulness of the poor. »

« What you say is right, Thomas » says the Zealot, who has appeared

at the door opening on to the kitchen garden, with his tunic tucked up, his sleeves rolled up, with an old apron in front of him and a tin of paint in his hand.

Jesus and Thomas turn round looking at him and they smile. And Thomas replies: « Yes, what I say is right. But I want that once in a while the work of a goldsmith may serve to adorn a… good holy thing… »

« What? »

« It's a secret of mine. I have had this idea for a long time, and since we were at Ramah I have been carrying a goldsmith's little outfit, waiting for this moment… And what about your work, Simon? »

« Oh! I am not a perfect craftsman like you, Tom. It is the first time that I have held a brush in my hand and what I paint is uneven, notwithstanding all my good will. That is why I began from the… most simple things… to acquire skill… and I can assure you that my inexperience made the girl laugh heartily. But I am glad! She is reviving hourly to a serene life, and that is what is required to cancel her past and renew her for You, Master. »

« H'm! perhaps Valeria will not give her up… » says Thomas.

« Oh! what do you think it matters to Valeria to have her or not? If she had kept her, it would have been only to prevent her from being left forlorn in the world. It would certainly be a good thing if the girl were safe for ever and in everything, above all in her spirit. Is that right, Master? »

« That is true. We must pray hard for that. The girl is really simple and good, and if she were brought up in the Truth, she could yield much. She is instinctively inclined to the Light. »

« I quite believe it! She has no consolation on the Earth… and she seeks it in Heaven, poor soul! I think that when Your Gospel is announced all over the world, the first and the most numerous to receive it will be the slaves, those who have no human comfort and who will take shelter in Your promises to have some… And I say that if the honour of preaching You falls to me, I will love those poor wretches with a special love… »

« And you will do the right thing, Tom » says Jesus.

« Yes. But how will you approach them? »

« Oh! I will be a goldsmith for the ladies and… a master of their slaves. A goldsmith calls at houses or the servants of rich people come to his… and I will work… Two metals: those of the Earth for the rich… those of the spirit for slaves. »

« May God bless you for your good intentions, Tom. Persevere in them… »

« Yes, Master, I will. »

« Well, now that You have replied to Thomas, please come with me, Master… to see my work and to tell me what I must paint now.

Simple things again, because I am a very incapable apprentice. »

« Let us go, Simon… » and Jesus lays down His tools and goes out with the Zealot…

They come back after some time and Jesus points at the garden ladder. « Paint that. Paint makes wood impenetrable and preserves it longer, in addition to making it more beautiful. It is like the defence and ornament of virtues on a human heart. It may be rough, coarse… But as soon as virtues clothe it, it becomes beautiful and pleasant. See, to have a beautiful paint which serves its purpose, one must take care of many things. First of all: you have to choose carefully what is necessary to make it. That is, a clean can free from mould and residues of old paints, good oils and good colours, and then you have to mix them patiently, working on them to make a liquid which is neither too thick nor too thin. And you must not tire working until the least clot is dissolved. When that is done, you have to take a brush the bristles of which do not come off, and they must be neither too hard nor too soft; the brush is to be cleaned of any previous paint, and before applying the paint, you have to remove from the wood all roughness, the peelings of old paints, dirt, everything, and then neatly, with a steady hand and much patience, you spread the paint, working in the same direction all the time. Because on the same board you meet different resistances. On knots, for instance, the paints remains smoother, that is true, but it does not cover them well, as if the wood rejected it. Viceversa, the paint sticks well on the soft parts of the wood, but the soft parts are generally not very smooth and thus blisters or stripes form… One then must remedy the defect by spreading the paint with a steady hand. Then in old pieces of furniture there are new parts, like this rung, for instance. And in order not to show that the poor ladder has been botched, but is very old, one must get the new rung and the old ones to be alike… There you are, like that! » Jesus bent at the foot of the ladder is working and speaking at the same time…

Thomas, who has left his burins to come near Jesus and see, asks: « Why did You begin from the bottom and not from the top? Was it not better the other way round? »

« It would appear to be better, but is not. Because the lower part is more worn out and will wear out more because it rests on the ground. So you must paint it several times. A first coat, a second and a third one if necessary… and not to waste time waiting for the lower part to dry and thus be ready for a new coat, you paint the top and then the central parts of the ladder. »

« But in doing so, one might stain one's clothes and spoil what was painted previously. »

«If you are careful you do not stain your clothes and you do not spoil anything. See? This is how you do it. You gather your clothes

and stand apart. Not out of disgust for the paint, but not to spoil the paint which, being fresh, is delicate » and Jesus with His arms raised up paints the top of the ladder.

And He continues to speak:

« And you do the same with souls. At the beginning I told you that paint is like the ornament of virtues on human hearts. It adorns and protects wood from wood-worm, from rain, from the sun. Woe to the landlord who does not take care of painted fittings and allows them to deteriorate! When one sees that the wood is losing its paint, one must not waste time, but fresh paint is to be put on. Paints must be refreshed… Also virtues acquired in a first fit of enthusiasm towards justice may grow feeble or fade away completely if the landlord does not watch, and body and soul, laid bare, at the mercy of inclement weather and of parasites, that is, of passions and dissipations, can be attacked and lose the garment which adorns them, and end by being… good only for the fire. Therefore, with regard both to ourselves and to those whom we love as our disciples, when we notice that the virtues which serve to defend our egos are being shattered or are fading away, we must provide at once with diligent patient work until the end of our lives, so that we may go to sleep, when we die, with body and soul worthy of a glorious resurrection. And in order to ensure that your virtues are true and good, you must begin with pure courageous intentions, which remove all rubbish and mould, and you must work not to leave any imperfection in the building up of virtues, and then take an attitude, which is neither too hard nor too lenient, because both intolerance and excessive indulgence are harmful. And the brush: your will. Let it be free from pre-existent human inclinations which might vein the spiritual hue with material disfigurements, and prepare yourselves or other people, with suitable operations, which are laborious, it is true, but necessary, to cleanse the old ego from any ancient leprosy, so that it may be pure to receive virtue. Because you cannot mix what is new with what is old.

You then begin to work: in good order, with consideration. You must not jump here and there without a good reason. You must not work a little in one direction and then a little in another. One would get less tired, that is true. But the paint would be uneven. As happens in disorderly souls. They display perfect points, then close to them there are deformities, different shades… One must insist on the spots resisting the paint, on the knots: confusion of matter or of dissolute passions, which, of course, have been mortified by will, which like a plane has laboriously smoothed them, but they remain to offer resistance like a knot amputated but not destroyed. And they deceive at times, as they appear to be well clad with virtue, whereas it is but a light veil which soon falls off.

Beware of the knots of concupiscence. Ensure that virtue covers them over and over again, so that they may not flourish again disfiguring the new ego. And cover the soft parts, which receive the paint too easily, but they do so to their own liking: if there are blisters and stripes you must insist with isinglass, smoothing and smoothing in order to give one or more coats of paint, so that such parts may become as glossy as hardened enamel. And watch that you do not overload. To exact too much from virtue makes the creature rebel, boil over and blister at the first impact. No. Neither too much nor too little. Be fair when working on yourselves and on creatures made of flesh and soul.

And if, as in most cases - because girls like Aurea are an exception, not the rule - there are new parts mixed with old ones, as Israelites have, passing from Moses to the Christ, as well as heathens with their mosaic of beliefs which cannot be cancelled all of a sudden and will surface with nostalgic memories, at least in the most pure matters, then one must be more vigilant and tactful and insist until the old part is homogeneous with the new one making use of pre-existent situations to complete the new virtues. For instance, the Romans hold in high esteem patriotism and manlike courage. They are both considered almost as myths. Well, do not destroy them but inculcate a new spirit on patriotism, that is, the spirit of making Rome great also spiritually as the Centre of Christendom and make use of Roman manliness to strengthen in Faith those who are strong in battle. Another instance: Aurea. Her disgust at a brutal revelation urges her to love what is pure and to hate what is impure. Well, make use of both feelings to lead her to perfect purity hating corruptness, as if it were the brutal Roman.

Do you understand Me? And use habits as means of penetration. Do not destroy brutally. You would not dispose at once of what is needed to build. But slowly replace what must not remain in a convert, with charity, patience and tenacity. And since matter overwhelms people, heathens in particular as, even if they are converts, they are always in touch with the heathen world, in which they live, you must insist on the necessity of shunning sensual pleasures. All the rest comes in after sensuality. Watch the exasperated sensuality of heathens and which, let us admit it, is very strong also among us, and when you notice that the contact with the world spoils the preservative paint, do not continue to paint the top, but go back to the lower part, balancing spirit and flesh, top and bottom. But always start from the flesh, from material vice, to prepare the soul to receive the Guest Who does not cohabit in impure bodies or with spirits stinking with carnal corruption… Do you understand me?

And do not be afraid of becoming corrupted if you touch with your garment the lower parts, that is the material ones, of those

whose spirits you are curing. Act wisely, so that at all times you may reconstruct rather than bring about ruination. Live engrossed in your ego nourished with God, enveloped with virtue, proceed gently particularly when you have to take care of the most sensitive spiritual ego of other people, and you will certainly succeed in changing even the most despicable beings into creatures worthy of Heaven. »

« What a beautiful parable You have told us! I want to write it for Marjiam! » says the Zealot.

« And for me, as all of me is to be made beautiful for the Lord » says slowly trying to find the words, Aurea who, barefooted, has been standing for some time at the door of the kitchen garden.

« Oh! Aurea! Were you listening to us? » asks Jesus.

« I was listening to You. It is so beautiful! Have I done wrong? »

« No, girl. Have you been here long? »

« No. And I am sorry because I do not know what You said previously. Your Mother has sent me to tell You that the meal will be ready shortly. The bread is about to be taken out of the oven. I have learned how to bake it… How lovely! And I have learned to bleach linen, and Your Mother has told me two parables concerning bread and linen. »

« Has She? What did She say? »

« That I am like flour still in the sieve, that Your goodness purifies me, Your grace works in me, Your apostolate perfects me, Your love cooks me and from coarse flour mixed with so much bran I will end up, if I allow myself to be worked on by You, by being flour for hosts, flour and bread of sacrifice, good for the Altar. And on the linen, which was dark, oily and coarse, and which after so much borit grass (1) and so many blows of mortification has become clean and soft, the sun will now shine, and it will become white… And She said that that is what the Sun of God will do with me, if I always remain in the Sun and I accept to be cleansed and mortified to become worthy of the King of kings, of You, my Lord. What lovely things I am learning… I seem to be dreaming… Lovely! Everything is beautiful here… Do not send me away, Lord! »

« Would you not like to go with Myrtha and Naomi? »

« I would prefer to stay here… But… also with them. But not with Romans, no, Lord… »

« Pray, child! » says Jesus laying His hand on her honey-blond hair. « Have you learned the prayer? »

« Oh! yes! It is so lovely to say: "My Father!" and think of Heaven… But the will of God frightens me a little… because I do not know whether God wants what I want… »

« God wants your welfare. »

(1) Soap-wort.

« Does He? You say so?! In that case I am no longer afraid… I feel that I will remain in Israel… to become more and more acquainted with this Father of mine… And… to be the first disciple of Gaul, my Lord! »

« Your faith will be satisfied because it is good. Let us go… »

And they all go out towards the basin under the spring of water to wash themselves, while Aurea runs to Mary and their two feminine voices are heard: Mary's, which is fluent in speaking, whereas the other is uncertain, of a person trying to find words. And one can hear their shrill voices laughing when a language error is made and which Mary corrects kindly…

« The girl is learning well and quickly » remarks Thomas.

« Yes. She is good and willing. »

« And then! With Your Mother as teacher!… Not even Satan could resist Her!… » says the Zealot.

Jesus sighs without speaking…

« Why are You sighing thus, Master? Was I not right? »

« Yes, quite right. But there are men more resistant than Satan, who at least runs away from Mary's presence. There are men who are close to Her and who, although taught by Her, do not improve… »

« But not us, eh? » says Thomas.

« No, not you… Let us go… »

They go into the house and it all ends.

433. The Sabbaths in the Peace of Nazareth.

13th May 1946.

The Sabbath is a day of rest. That is already known. And men rest as well as having tools covered up or neatly arranged in their places.

Now that the red sunset of a summer Friday is almost over, Mary, Who is sat at Her smaller loom in the shade of the huge apple-tree, stands up, covers it and with the help of Thomas She carries it back to its place in the house. And She asks Aurea, who is sitting on a little stool at Her feet sewing with still unskillful hand the dresses given to her by the Roman ladies and fitted on her by Mary, to fold her work tidily and put it on the shelf in her little room. And while Aurea is doing so, the Mother with Thomas goes into the workshop where Jesus and the Zealot are busy putting straight saws, planes, screwdrivers, hammers, tins of paint and glue and sweeping away sawdust and shavings from benches and the floor. Of all the work done so far only two small planks of wood remain, gripped in a vice, at an angle, so that the glue may dry up at the joints (it may be a future drawer), and a stool, half painted, besides the strong smell of fresh paint.

Aurea also goes in and she bends over Thomas's burin work, which she admires and asks, somewhat curious and instinctively coquettish, what it is for and whether it would suit her.

« It would suit you fine, but it suits you better to be good. These ornaments embellish the body only, but are of no use to the spirit. Nay, by cherishing coquetry, they are harmful to the spirit. »

« Why do you make them, then? » asks the logical girl. « Do you want to harm a spirit? »

Thomas, who is always kind-hearted, smiles at the remark and says: « What is superfluous is harmful to a weak spirit. But in the case of a strong spirit, an ornament remains exactly what it is: a brooch to hold a garment in place. »

« For whom are you making it? For your bride? »

« I have no bride and will never have one. »

« For your sister, then. »

« She has more than she needs. »

« For your mother, then. »

« Poor old soul! What would she do with it? »

« But it is for a woman… »

« Yes, but it is not you. »

« Oh! I would not even think of it… And, now that you have said that those things there are harmful to the spirit, I would not like to have it. And I will take the fringes off my dresses. I do not want to do any harm to what belongs to my Saviour! »

« Clever girl! See, with your good will you have done a nicer work than mine. »

« Oh! You are saying so because you are kind!… »

« I am saying it because it is true. See: I took this piece of silver, I reduced it to thin plates as I needed them, then with a tool, or rather with many tools, I folded it thus. But I still have to do the most important work: join the parts together in a natural manner. At present, only these two tiny leaves joined to their little flower are complete » and Thomas with his big fingers lifts a graceful stem of a lily of the valley joined to a leaf which is a perfect imitation of a natural one. It is impressive to see the trinket shining with the brilliancy of pure silver held by the strong dark fingers of the goldsmith.

« Oh! lovely! There were many on the island and we were allowed to pick them before sunrise. Because we blond girls had never to take the sun, so that we might be more valuable. They compelled brunettes instead to stay out in the sun, until they felt sick, to become darker. They… What do you say when one sells something saying that it is one thing, whereas it is another?… »

« Who knows!… Deceit… swindle… I don't know. »

« See, they deceived them saying that they were Arabs or that they came from the Upper Nile, where it rises. They sold one girl

saying that she was a descendant of the Queen of Sheba. »

« Fancy that! They did not deceive the girls, but the purchasers. So you say: they cheated. What a race! A wonderful surprise for the purchaser when he saw… the false Ethiopian grow lighter! Did You hear that, Master? How many things we do not know!… »

« Yes, I heard. But the sad side is not the cheating of the purchasers… it is the destiny of the girls… »

« That is true. Souls desecrated for ever. Lost… »

« No. God can always intervene… »

« He did on my behalf. You saved me!… » says Aurea turning her clear serene eyes towards the Lord. And she concludes: « And I am so happy! » and as she cannot go and embrace Jesus, she clasps Mary with one arm bending her fair-haired head on the Virgin's shoulder in a gesture of confident love. The two fair-haired heads stand out, in their different shades, against the dark wall. A most gentle group.

But Mary has to see to the supper. They part and go away.

« May I come in? » says the rather hoarse voice of Peter at the workshop door which opens onto the road.

« Simon! Open the door! »

« Simon! He could not stay away! » exclaims Thomas laughing while he runs to open.

« Simon! This was to be expected… » says the Zealot smiling.

But it is not only Peter's face which appears at the door. All the apostles from the lake are there, with the exception of Bartholomew and the Iscariot. And Judas and James of Alphaeus have already joined them.

« Peace to you! But why did you come in this heat? »

« Because… we could not stay away any longer. It's two and a half weeks, You know? Do You understand? We have not seen You for two and a half weeks! » and Peter seems to be saying: « Two hundred years! An enormity! »

« But I told you to wait for Judas on every Sabbath. »

« Yes, but he did not come on the last two Sabbaths… and we have come here on the third one. Nathanael remained there because he is not too well. And he will receive Judas, if he goes there… But he will not go… Passing through Tiberias to come to us, before going to the Great Hermon, Benjamin and Daniel told us that they had seen him at Tiberias and… Of course. I will tell You later… » says Peter who has stopped speaking because of a tug at his tunic by his brother.

« All right. You will tell Me… But you were all so anxious to have a rest, and now that you had a chance you have been running about like this! When did you leave? »

« Yesterday evening. The lake was like a mirror, We landed at Tarichea to avoid Tiberias… so that we would not meet Judas… »

« Why? »

« Because, Master, we wanted to enjoy Your company in peace. »

« You are selfish! »

« No. He already has his joys Well! I don't know who gives him so much money to enjoy it with Yes, I have understood, Andrew. But don't pull my tunic so violently. You know that it is the only one I have. Do you want me to go back in rags? »

Andrew blushes. The others laugh. Jesus smiles.

« Well. We landed at Tarichea also because, well, don't reproach me… It may be the heat, it may be that I become wicked when I am far away from You, it may be the thought that he left you to join Listen, stop tearing at my sleeve! You see that I can stop in time! So, Master, it may be for many reasons… I did not want to commit a sin and if I had seen him I would have committed one. So I went straight to Tarichea. And at dawn we set off. »

« Did you pass through Cana? »

« No. We did not want to come the long way round… But it was a long way all the same. And the fish was beginning to go bad… We gave it to the people in a house, to have shelter for a few hours… the warm hours. And we left after the ninth hour, about the middle of the following hour… It was like an oven!… »

« You could have saved yourselves the trouble. I was coming soon… »

« When? »

« When the sun comes out of Leo. »

« And do You think we could stay so long without You? We will defy a thousand of such hot days and we will come to see You. Our Master! Our adored Master! » and Peter embraces his lost Treasure.

« And yet, when we are together you do nothing but complain of the weather, of the length of journeys… »

« Because we are foolish. Because, while we are together we do not really understand what You are for us… But here we are. We are all already settled. Some will stay with Mary of Alphaeus, some with Simon of Alphaeus, some with Ishmael, some with Aser and some here, nearby, with Alphaeus. We will rest now and tomorrow evening we will leave, and we will be more happy. »

« On last Sabbath we had Myrtha and Naomi here, they came to see the girl again » says Thomas.

« You can see that whoever can manage to do so, comes here! »

« Yes, Peter. And what have you done during these days? »

« We have fished… painted the boats… mended the nets… Marjiam often goes fishing with the servants, which reduces the insults of my mother-in-law against "the sluggard who lets his wife die of starvation after bringing an illegitimate son to her". And yet Porphirea has never been so well as now that she has Marjiam for her heart… and for everything else. The sheep from three have

become five and will soon be more… It is a great help for a little family like ours! And Marjiam by fishing makes up for what I do not do, except very rarely. But that woman has the tongue of a viper, whereas her daughter has the tongue of a dove… But I see that You have been working as well… »

« Yes, Simon. We have worked. All of us. My brothers in their house, these apostles and I in Mine. To make our mothers happy and let them rest. »

« Well, we have been working, too » say the sons of Zebedee.

« My wife and I have worked at the beehives and in the vineyard » says Philip.

« And what about you, Matthew? »

« I have no one to make happy… so I made myself happy by writing down the things that I like to remember… »

« Oh! in that case we will tell you the parable of the paint. I, a very inexperienced painter, was the cause of it… » says the Zealot.

« But you soon learned the trade. Look how smooth he made this seat! » says Thaddeus…

They are in perfect harmony. And Jesus, Who looks more rested since He has been at home, is bright with joy at having His dear apostles with Him.

Aurea comes and remains on the threshold surprised.

« Oh! here she is! Look how well she is! She looks like a true little Hebrew, dressed like that! »

Aurea blushes and does not know what to say. But Peter is so good natured and fatherly, that she soon recovers and says: « I am striving to become one… and with the help of my Teacher I hope to be one soon… Master, I am going to tell Your Mother that these people are here… » and she goes away quickly.

« She is a good girl » states the Zealot.

« Yes. I would like her to remain with us in Israel. Bartholomew lost a good chance and much joy by refusing her… » says Thomas.

« Bartholomew is very respectful of… formulae » says Philip excusing him.

« His only fault » remarks Jesus.

Mary comes in…

« Peace to You, Mary » say those who came from Capernaum.

« Peace to you… I did not know that you were here. I will provide at once… Come in the meantime… »

« Our mother is coming from our house with some provisions, and Salome is coming as well. Do not worry, Mary » says James of Alphaeus.

« Let us go into the kitchen garden… The evening breeze is rising and it is pleasant in there… » says Jesus.

And they go into the kitchen garden and sit here and there, conversing fraternally, while the doves coo competing for the last

meal which Aurea is spreading on the ground… It is then time to water the flower-beds and the beautiful vegetables so useful to man. And the apostles want to do it cheerfully, while Mary of Alphaeus, who has just arrived, and Aurea and the Virgin prepare a meal for the guests. And the smell of sizzling food mingles with that of the moist earth, as the chirping of birds competing cheekily for a good spot among the thick leaves above the garden, mingles with the deep or shrill voices of the apostles…

434. Before Being a Mother, the Blessed Virgin Is a Daughter and Servant of God.

14th May 1946.

And the Sabbath wears on. It is the true Sabbath. In the wonderful morning, when the air is still fresh and cool, it is beautiful to sit in a brotherly peaceful gathering under the shady pergola, or where the apple-tree, close to the fig and almond-trees, forms with them patches of shade extending that of the pergola on which grapes are ripening. And it is nice to walk up and down the paths between the flower-beds going from the beehives to the dove-cot and then to the little grotto, and, passing behind the women Mary, Mary of Clopas, the daughter-in-law of the latter: Salome of Simon, Aurea - going towards the few olive-trees which from the cliff hang over the peaceful kitchen garden. And that is what Jesus and His disciples, Mary and the other women are doing. And Jesus teaches unintentionally, and so does Mary. And the apostles of the Former and the women disciples of the Latter are carefully listening to the words of the two Teachers.

Aurea, sat on her usual little stool at Mary's feet, almost in a squatting posture, is embracing her knees with joined hands, her face is raised and her wide-open eyes are staring at Mary's face. She looks like a little girl who is listening to a wonderful tale. But it is not a tale. It is a beautiful truth. Mary is telling the little heathen of yesterday the ancient stories of Israel and the other women, although they already know them, are listening attentively. Because it is pleasant to hear the story of Rachel, that of the daughter of Jephthah, that of Hannah of Elkanah, flowing from Her lips!

Judas of Alphaeus comes near slowly and listens smiling. He is behind Mary Who therefore cannot see him. But the smiling look of Mary of Clopas at her Judas tells Mary that someone is behind Her and She turns round: « Oh! Judas? Have you left Jesus to hear Me, a poor woman? »

« Yes. I left You to go to Jesus, because You were my first teacher. But at times it is pleasant for me to leave Him and come to You, and become again a boy as when I was Your disciple. Go on,

please… »

« Aurea wants her reward each Sabbath. And the reward consists in telling her what impressed her most in our History, a little of which I explain to her every day while working. »

The others also have come near… Thaddeus asks: « And what do you like, child? »

« So much, I could say everything… But Rachel very much, and Hannah of Elkanah, then Ruth… then… ah! beautiful! Tobit and Tobias with the Angel, and then the bride who prays to be freed… »

« And Moses, no? »

« He frightens me… Too great… And of the prophets I like Daniel who defends Susanna. » She looks around and then whispers: « I also was defended by my Daniel » and she looks at Jesus.

« But also Moses' books are beautiful! »

« Yes. Where they teach not to do what is bad. And where they speak of that star which will be born of Jacob. I know its name now. I knew nothing before. And I am more fortunate than that prophet because I can see it and close by. She told me everything and I know as well » she concludes with an air of triumph.

« And do you not like Passover? »

« Yes… but… also the children of other people are the sons of mothers. Why kill them? I prefer the God Who saves to the God Who kills… »

« You are right… Mary, have You not told her anything yet of His Birth? » asks James pointing at the Lord Who is listening in silence.

« Not yet. I want her to know the past well before the present. She will thus understand the present which has in the past its reason for being. When she knows it, she will see that the God Who frightens her, the God of Sinai, is but a God of severe love, but still a God of love. »

« Oh! Mother! Tell me now! It will be less difficult for me to understand the past when I know the present, which, as far as I know, is so beautiful and makes one love God without fear. I need not to be afraid! »

« The girl is right. You must remember that truth when you will be evangelizing. Souls need not to be afraid in order to go to God with full confidence. It is what I am striving to do, all the more when people, either through ignorance or because of their faults, are likely to be much afraid of God. But God, also the God Who struck the Egyptians and Who frightens you, Aurea, is always good. See: when He killed the sons of the cruel Egyptians, He had mercy on the sons, who did not grow up and did not become sinners like their fathers and He gave their parents time to repent of their evil doings. So it was severe goodness. One must be able to tell true goodness from loose upbringing. Also when I was a little baby, many little children were killed on the very laps of their

mothers. And the world cried with horror. But when Time exists no more for individuals or for all Mankind, for a first time and for a second time you will realise that those were fortunate, blessed in Israel, in the Israel of the times of Christ, who slaughtered in their infancy, were preserved from the biggest sin, that of being accomplices in the death of the Saviour. »

« Jesus! » shouts Mary of Alphaeus springing to her feet, frightened, looking around as if she were afraid to see deicides appear from behind hedges and trunks of trees. « Jesus! » she repeats looking at him painfully.

« What? Do you perhaps not know the Scriptures, since you are so surprised at what I say? » asks Jesus.

« But… But… It is not possible… You must not allow that… Your Mother… »

« She is Saviour like Me, and She knows. Look at Her. And imitate Her. »

Mary is in fact austere, regal in Her deep pallor. She is motionless, with Her hands in Her lap clasped as if in prayer, Her head straight, looking into space…

Mary of Alphaeus looks at Her. She then addresses Jesus again: « All the same, You must not mention that horrible future! You are piercing Her heart with a sword. »

« That sword has been in Her heart for thirty-two years. »

« No! It's not possible! Mary… always so serene… Mary… »

« Ask Her, if you do not believe what I say. »

« I will ask Her! Is it true, Mary? You know?… »

And Mary in a gentle but firm voice says: « It is true. He was forty days old and I was told by a holy man… But also previously… Oh! When the Angel told Me that while remaining the Virgin I would conceive a Son, Who would be called the Son of God and is such because of His divine conception, when I was told that, and that in the barren womb of Elizabeth a fruit had been formed by a miracle of the Eternal Father, I had no difficulty in remembering the words of Isaiah: "The Virgin will give birth to a son and they will call Him the Immanuel"… All, all Isaiah! And where he speaks of the Precursor… And where he speaks of the Man of sorrows, stained with blood, unrecognizable… a leper… for our sins… The sword has been in My heart since then and everything has served to drive it in more deeply: the song of the angels and the words of Simeon and the visit of the Kings from the East, and everything… »

« But which other everything, Mary? Jesus is triumphing, Jesus works miracles, Jesus is followed by larger and larger crowds… Is that not the truth? » says Mary of Alphaeus.

And Mary, always in the same posture replies to each question: « Yes… » without anguish, without joy, only a quiet assent, because

it is so…

« Well then? Which other everything is piercing Your heart with a sword? »

« Oh!… Everything… »

« And You are so calm? So serene? Always the same as when You arrived here, a young bride, thirty-three years ago, and I remember it so well that it seems yesterday to me… But how can You? I would be mad… I would do… I don't know what I would do… I No! It is not possible for a mother to know that and to be calm! »

« Before being a Mother, I am a daughter and servant of God… Where do I find My tranquillity? In doing the will of God. From where does My serenity come? From doing that will. If I had to do the will of a man, I might be upset, because a man, even the wisest, can always impose a wrong will. But the will of God! If He wanted Me to be the Mother of His Christ, have I perhaps to think that that is cruel, and in that thought lose My serenity? Am I to be upset by the thought of what Redemption will be to Him and to Me, also to Me, and how I will be able to overcome that hour? Oh! it will be dreadful… » Mary gives an involuntary start, She suddenly shudders and clenches Her hands to prevent them from trembling, as if She wanted to pray more fervently, while Her face grows even paler and Her delicate eyelids close on Her kind sky-blue eyes with an expression full of anguish. But She steadies Her voice after a deep sigh of anxiety and She concludes: « But He, Who imposed His will on Me and Whom I serve with confident love, will grant Me His assistance for that hour. He will grant it to Me, to Him… Because the Father cannot impose a will that exceeds the strength of man… and He succours… always… And He will succour us, My Son… He will succour us… and there is no one but He, with His infinite means, who can succour us… »

« Yes, Mother. Love will succour us, and in love we will succour each other. And in love we will redeem… » Jesus has gone beside His Mother and lays His hand on Her shoulder and She raises Her face to look at Him, at Her handsome healthy Jesus destined to be disfigured by torture, killed with a thousand wounds, and She says: « In love and in sorrow Yes. And together… »

No one speaks any more Standing around the two chief Protagonists of the future tragedy of Golgotha, the apostles and women disciples look like pensive statues…

Aurea, on her little stool, is petrified… But she is the first to collect herself and without standing up she slides on her knees and thus finds herself facing Mary. She embraces Her knees and bends her head on Her lap saying: « All that also for me!… How much I cost You and how much I love You for what I cost! Oh! Mother of my God, bless me, that my cost may not be fruitless… »

« Yes, My daughter. Be not afraid. God will help you as well, if you always accept His will. » She caresses her hair and cheeks and

feels them wet with tears. « Do not weep! The first thing of the Christ with which you have become acquainted is His sorrowful destiny, the end of His mission as Man. It is not fair, having learned that, that you should be unacquainted with the first hour of His life in the world. Listen… Everybody will be pleased to come out of the dark bitter contemplation by recalling the sweet hour, full of light, of songs, of hosannas, of His Birth… Listen… » and Mary, explaining the reason for Her journey to Bethlehem in Judah, the town predicted to be the birthplace of the Saviour, in a soft gentle voice tells the story of the night of Christ's Nativity.

435. Jesus and His Mother Converse.

15th May 1946.

I do not know whether it is the evening of the same Sabbath. I know that I see Jesus and Mary, sitting on the stone seat against the house, near the door of the dining-room, from which comes the faint light of an oil lamp placed close to the door. The little flame palpitates in the air, rising and sinking, as if it were breathing. It is the only light in the moonless night: a faint light visible in the kitchen garden where it illuminates the small strip of ground before the door and dies on the first rose-bush in the flower-bed. But the feeble light is sufficient to illuminate the profiles of the Two engaged in intimate talk in the calm night full of the scent of jasmines and other summer flowers.

They are speaking of their relatives… of Joseph of Alphaeus persistently stubborn, of Simon not very brave in his profession of faith, overwhelmed as he is by his eldest brother, who is as overbearing and obstinate in his ideas as his father was. It is the great sorrow of Mary Who would like all Her nephews to be disciples of Her Jesus.

Jesus comforts Her and to excuse His cousin He points out his strong Israelitic faith: « An obstacle, You know? A real obstacle. Because all the formulae and precepts form a barrier against the acceptance of the Messianic idea in its truth. It is easier to convert a heathen, provided his spirit is not completely corrupt. A heathen ponders and sees the good difference between his Olympus and My Kingdom. But Israel… the more learned part of Israel… finds it difficult to follow the new concept!… »

« And yet it is always that concept! »

« Yes. It is always that Decalogue, those prophecies. But their nature has been perverted by man. He has taken them, and from the supernatural spheres -where they were, and has brought them down to the level of the Earth, in the atmosphere of the world, he has handled them with his humanity altering them… The Messiah, the spiritual King of the great Kingdom - which is called

Kingdom of Israel, because the Messiah is born of the throne of Israel, but it would be more correct to call it: the Kingdom of Christ, because Christ centralises the better part of Israel, both past and present, and sublimates it in His perfection of God-Man - according to them the Messiah, cannot be the meek poor man, without yearning after power and riches, obedient to those who rule over us by divine punishment, because obedience is holiness when it does not invalidate the great Law. We can therefore say that their faith works against the true Faith. Of such stubborn people convinced that they are right, there are many… in every class… and even among My relatives and apostles. Believe, Mother, that their dullness in believing in My Passion lies in that. Their errors in valuation originate from that… Also their obstinate aversion to consider Gentiles and idolaters, not looking at man, but at the spirit of man, that spirit which has only one Origin and to which God would like to give only one Destiny: Heaven. Take Bartholomew… He is an instance. Very good, wise, willing to do everything to honour and comfort Me… But before, I will not say an Aglae or a Syntyche, who is already a flower compared with poor Aglae, whom penance only restores from filth to a flower, but not even before a child, a poor child whose lot excites pity and whose instinctive modesty draws admiration, does his disgust for the Gentiles vanish, neither does My example convince him, nor My words that I have come for everybody. »

« You are right. Nay, Bartholomew and Judas of Kerioth, the two most learned, or at least: the learned Bartholomew, and Judas of Kerioth, who I do not know to which class he belongs exactly, but who is imbued and saturated with the air of the Temple, are the most resistant. But… Bartholomew is good and his resistance can still be excused. Judas… no. You heard what Matthew, who went to Tiberias on purpose, said… And Matthew is a man of experience, particularly of that life… And the remark of James of Zebedee is correct: "Who is it that gives so much money to Judas?". Because that life costs… Poor Mary of Simon! »

Jesus makes His gesture with His hands, to say: « It is so… » and He sighs. He then says: « Did You hear that? The Roman ladies are at Tiberias… Valeria has not told Me anything. But I must know before I resume My journey. Mother, I want You to come to Capernaum with Me for some time… You will then come back here, I will go towards the Syro-Phoenician border, and I will come back to say goodbye to You before going down towards Judaea, the obstinate sheep of Israel… »

« Son, I will go tomorrow evening… I will take Mary of Alphaeus with Me. Aurea will stay with Simon of Alphaeus, because her staying here with You for several days would certainly be criticised… Such is the world… And I will go… To Cana as first stage,

then at dawn I will leave and stop at the house of the mother of Salome of Simon. Then I will set out again at sunset and we will arrive at Tiberias in daylight. I will stay in the house of Joseph, the disciple, because I want to go personally to Valeria's house, and if I went to Johanna's, she would want to go… No. I, the Mother of the Saviour, will appear in her eyes, different from the disciple of the Saviour… and she will not say no to Me. Do not be afraid, Son! »

« I am not afraid. But I am sorry for all Your trouble. »

« Oh! to save a soul! What are twenty miles in a good season? »

« It will also be a moral strain. To beg… perhaps to be humiliated… »

« A passing trifle. But a soul remains! »

« You will be like a lost swallow in corrupt Tiberias… Take Simon with You. »

« No, Son. Just the two of us, two poor women… But two mothers and two disciples. That is, two great moral strengths… I will not be long. Let Me go… Just bless Me. »

« Yes, Mother. With all My heart as Son, and with all My power as God. Go and may the angels escort you along the way. »

« Thank You, Jesus. Well, let us go in. I will have to get up at dawn to prepare everything for those who leave and for those who are staying. Say the prayer, Son… »

Both Jesus and Mary stand up and they say together the Our Father… They then go back into the house, they close the door… the light disappears and human voices are heard no more. Only the rustling of the breeze among the leaves can be heard and the soft gurgling of the water in the fountain basin…

436. The Blessed Virgin at Tiberias.

16th May 1946.

Tiberias is already in sight when the two tired pilgrims are proceeding in the darkening twilight.

« It will soon be dark… And we are still in the middle of the country… Two women alone… And near a large town full of… Ugh! what people! Beelzebub! Beelzebub mostly… » says Mary of Alphaeus looking around frightened.

« Be not afraid, Mary. Beelzebub will do us no harm. He harms only those who receive him in their hearts… »

« These pagans have him!… »

« Not only pagans are in Tiberias. And also among the heathens there are just people. »

« What? They have not our God!… »

Mary does not reply because She understands that it would be useless. Her good sister-in-law is but one of the many Israelites who believe that they are the only depositaries of virtue… simply

because they are Israelites.

They are silent: only the shuffling of the sandals on their tired dusty feet can be heard.

« It was better to take the usual road… We knew that one… it is more beaten by people… This one… among vegetable gardens, solitary… unknown… I am afraid, that's all! »

« No, Mary. Look. The town is over there, a few steps from here. And here are peaceful kitchen gardens of the cultivators of Tiberias, and over there is the shore, only a few steps from here. Do you want to go to the shore? We will find fishermen there… We have only to go across these vegetable gardens. »

« No! We would be going away from town again! And then… The boatmen are almost all Greeks, Cretans, Egyptians, Romans… » and it seems as if she were mentioning infernal classes. The Blessed Virgin cannot help smiling in the shadow of Her veil.

They go on. The road becomes an avenue, and thus darker… and Mary of Alphaeus is more frightened than ever and she invokes Jehovah at every step, while they proceed slower and slower.

« Come on, take heart! Make haste, if you are afraid! » says Mary urging her after replying: « Maran Atha! » at each invocation.

But Mary of Alphaeus stops and asks: « But why did You want to come here? To speak perhaps to the Iscariot? »

« No, Mary. Or at least that is not exactly the reason. I have come to speak to Valeria, the Roman lady… »

« Goodness gracious! Are we going to her house? Ah! no! Mary! Don't do that! I… I am not coming with You! But why are You going there? To those… those… anathemas!… »

The kind smile of the Blessed Virgin becomes a severe expression while She asks: « And do you not remember that Aurea is to be saved? My Son began her liberation. I will complete it. Is that how you practise love for souls? »

« But she is not from Israel… »

« Truly, you have not understood one word of the Gospel! You are a very imperfect disciple… You do not work for your Master and you grieve Me so deeply. »

Mary of Alphaeus lowers her head… But her heart, full of the prejudices of Israel but congenitally kind, gets the upper hand and bursting into tears she embraces Mary and says: « Forgive me! Don't say that I grieve You and I do not serve my Jesus! Yes! I am very imperfect and I deserve to be reproached… But I will not do it again… I will come! Even to Hell if You should go there to save a soul and give it to Jesus… Give me a kiss, Mary, to tell me that You forgive me… »

Mary kisses her and they resume their journey, walking fast, cheered up by love…

They are now in Tiberias, near the little harbour of the

fishermen. They look for the little house of Joseph, the fisherman disciple… They find it and knock at the door…

« The Mother of my Master! Come in, o Donna! And may God be with You and with me, who am giving You hospitality. And you, come in, too, and peace be with you, the mother of apostles. »

They go in while the wife and young daughter come to greet them followed by a little group of younger children…

The frugal meal is soon over and Mary of Clopas, being tired, withdraws with the children. On the high terrace, from which the lake can be seen - it can be heard lapping the bank, rather than be seen, because there is no moonlight as yet - are the Blessed Virgin, the boatman and his wife, who endeavours to be good company, but in actual fact is nodding…

« She is tired!… » says Joseph excusing her.

« Poor woman! Housewives are always tired in the evening. »

« Yes, they do work. They are not like those there, who lead a gay life! » says the boatman disdainfully, pointing at some illuminated boats departing from the shore among songs and music. « They are going out now! They begin to work at this time, when honest people go to sleep! And they do harm to workers, because they go to the best spots, pretending that they are fishing, and they drive away us, who earn our living on the lake… »

« Who are they? »

« Roman women and the like. And among the latter you can count Herodias and her lustful daughter and some Jewesses as well… Because we have many Maries of Magdala… I mean Maries before repentance… »

« They are poor wretches… »

« Poor wretches? We are poor wretches because we do not stone them to rid Israel of those who have become corrupted and bring down on us the curses of God. »

In the meantime other boats have left and the lake reddens with the lights of the revellers' boats.

« Can you smell resin burning? First they become intoxicated with smoke, and they do the rest in the course of banquets. They are quite capable of going to the hot springs on the other side… In those Thermal baths… Infernal things take place! They will come back at daybreak, at dawn, perhaps later… drunk, lying one on top of the other, men and women, just like sacks, and their slaves will carry them home, to sleep it off… All the beautiful boats are going out this evening! Look! Look!… But I am more angry with the Jews who mix with them. With regard to them… we know! Shameless animals. But we!… Donna, do You know that Judas, the apostle is here? »

« I know. »

« He is not setting a good example, You know? »

« Why? Does he go with those people?… »

« No… but… with bad companions… and a woman… I have not seen him… None of us has seen him in such company. But some Pharisees have sneered at us saying: "Your apostle has changed master. Now he has a woman and he is in the good company of publicans". »

« Do not judge, Joseph, what you have only heard people say. You know that the Pharisees do not love you and they do not even praise the Master. »

« That is true… But the rumour is spreading… and is harmful… »

« As it rose, so it will fall. Do not sin against your brother. Where does he live? Do you know? »

« Yes, with a friend, I think. One who has a warehouse of wines and spices. The third warehouse on the eastern side of the market, after the fountain… »

« Are all the Roman women alike? »

« Oh! more or less!… They do wrong, even if they do not let people see it. »

« Which are the ones that do not let people see? »

« The ones who came to Lazarus' at Passover. They are more retired… I mean… they do not always go to banquets. But they go so often that people can say that they are impure. »

« Are you saying so because you are sure, or is it your Jewish prejudice that makes you say so? Think it over carefully… »

« Well… really… I don't know… I have not seen them any more in the boats of the filthy ones… But they go out on the lake at night. »

« You go out, too. »

« Certainly If I want to go out fishing! »

« It is very warm! Only out on the lake is there relief at, night. You said so yourself while we were having supper. »

« That is true. »

« So, why not consider that they go on the lake for that? »

The man is silent… He then says: « It is late. The stars say that it is the second watch. I am withdrawing, Donna. Are You not coming? »

« No. I will stay here and pray. I will go out early. Do not be surprised if you do not see Me at dawn. »

« You are free to do as You like. Anne! Come on! Let us go to bed! » and he shakes his wife who is fast asleep. They go away.

Mary remains alone… She kneels down and prays… but She never loses sight of the boats sailing on the lake, the boats of rich people, all bright with lights, with flowers, singing and smell of incense… Many sail eastwards, they become very small in the distance, their singing is no longer heard. A splendent solitary boat remains out on the lake in a sheet of water upon which the Moon, setting in front of Tiberias, is shining brightly. It sails slowly up and down… Mary watches it until She sees it steer towards

the shore.

Mary then stands up saying: « Lord, help Me! Let it be… » She then goes downstairs nimbly, She enters a room the door of which is half open… In the moonlight it is possible to see a little bed. Mary bends over it and calls: « Mary! Wake up! Let us go! »

Mary of Alphaeus wakes up and, overwhelmed with sleep, rubbing her eyes she asks: « Is it already time to go? Is it already daylight? » She is so sleepy that she does not realise that it is not the light of dawn but moonlight the feeble phosphorescence which enters through the open door. She becomes aware of it when she is outside, on the small piece of cultivated ground in front of the boatman's house.

« But it's night-time! » she exclaims.

« Yes. But we will finish sooner and we will get out of this town sooner… at least I hope so. Come! This way, along the shore. Quick! Before the boat sets ashore… »

« The boat? Which boat? » asks Mary. But she runs after the Virgin, Who is walking very fast on the deserted shore, towards the little pier, where the boat is heading.

They arrive panting a few moments before it… Mary is watching carefully. She exclaims: « Praised be the Lord! It is they! Follow Me now… because we must go where they go… I do not know where they live… »

« But Mary… for pity's sake!… They will think that we are prostitutes!… »

The Most Pure Mother shakes Her head and whispers: « The important thing is not to be one. Come! » and She draws her into the shadow of a house.

The boat lands and while it is manoeuvring, a litter, which was waiting nearby, is brought forward towards it. Two women get on it, while two remain outside and walk beside it, when it leaves carried by four Numidians walking in step and wearing very short sleeveless tunics, which hardly cover their trunks…

Mary follows it, notwithstanding that Mary of Alphaeus protests in a low voice: « Two women alone!… Behind those men! They are half-naked… Oh!… »

After a few metres the litter stops. A woman gets off while the leader knocks at a portal.

« Goodbye, Lydia! »

« Goodbye, Valeria! A caress to Faustina from me. Tomorrow evening we will read again in peace, while the others revel… »

The portal is opened and Valeria, with her slave or freedwoman, is about to go in.

Mary goes forward and says: « Domina! A word! »

Valeria looks at the two women enveloped in very plain Jewish mantles lowered over their faces, and thinks that they are beggars.

She orders: « Barbara, give them offerings! »

« No, domina. I am not asking for money. I am the Mother of Jesus of Nazareth and this is a relative of Mine. I have come in His Name to ask a favour of you. »

« Domina! Your Son is perhaps… persecuted »

« Not more than usually. But He would like »

« Come in, Domina. It does not become You to remain here in the street like a beggar. »

« No. A few words will suffice if you can listen to me in secret… »

« Go away, all of you! » Valeria orders her slave or freedwoman, whatever she may be, and the doorkeepers. « We are alone. What does the Master want? I did not come because I did not want to harm Him in His town. He did not come in order not to harm me, perhaps, with my husband? »

« No. I advised Him not to come. My Son is hated, domina. »

« I know. »

« And He finds comfort only in His mission. »

« I know. »

« He does not seek honours, or armies; He does not aspire to kingdoms or riches. But He asserts His rights on souls. »

« I know. »

« Domina… He should hand that girl back to you… But do not be offended if I tell you, she could not perfect her soul for Jesus here. You are better than the others… But around you… there is too much filth of the world. »

« That is true. So? »

« You are a mother… My Son has the feelings of a father for every soul. Would you allow your daughter to be brought up among people who can ruin her?… »

« No. I understand… Well… Say these words to Your Son: "In memory of Faustina, saved in her body, Valeria gives You Aurea that You may save her soul". It is true! We are too corrupt… to assure a saint… Domina, pray for me! » and she withdraws quickly, before Mary can thank her. She withdraws, I would say, weeping…

Mary of Alphaeus is dumbfounded.

« Let us go, Mary… We will leave during the night and tomorrow evening we will be in Nazareth »

« Let us go… She gave her up as if she were a thing… »

« She is a thing to them. To us she is a soul. Come. Look… It is already dawning over there. One can say that there is no nighttime in this month… »

They go along a road which is no longer semi-dark and which opens in front of them, instead of taking the shore. It is a road behind a row of modest houses… When they are half way along it, Judas springs out from a corner, manifestly drunk. A Judas returning from who knows what party, with dishevelled hair,

crumpled clothes, his face beaten.

« Judas! You? In this state? »

Judas does not have time to feign that he does not know Her and he cannot run away… Surprise clears his thoughts and keeps him fixed where he is, immobile.

Mary approaches him, overcoming the repulsion which the sight of the apostle stirs in Her, and She says to him: « Judas, wretched son, what are you doing? Are you not thinking of God? Of your soul? Of your mother? What are you doing, Judas? Why do you want to be a sinner? Look at Me, Judas! You have no right to kill your soul… » and She touches him trying to take his hand.

« Leave me alone. I am a man after all. And… I am free to do what everybody does. Tell Him, Who has sent You to spy on me, that I am not yet all spirit, and I am young! »

« You are not free to ruin yourself, Judas! Have pity on yourself… If you behave like that you will never be a happy spirit… Judas… He did not send Me to spy on you. He prays for you. Only that, and I pray with Him. In the name of your mother… »

« Leave me alone » says Judas rudely. Then realising that he has been rude, he rectifies himself: « I do not deserve Your pity… Goodbye… » and he runs away…

« What a demon!… I will tell Jesus » exclaims Mary of Alphaeus. « My Judas is right! »

« You will not say anything to anybody. You will pray for him. Yes… »

« Are You weeping? Weeping for him? Oh!… »

« I am weeping… I was happy having saved Aurea… I am now weeping because Judas is a sinner. But to Jesus, Who is distressed, we will take only the good news. And we will snatch the sinner from Satan by penance and prayers… As if he were our son, Mary! As if he were our son!… You are a mother, too, and you know… For that unhappy mother, for this soul of a sinner, for our Jesus… »

« Yes, I will pray… But I do not think that he deserves it… »

« Mary, do not say that!… »

« I will not say it… But it is so. Are we not going to Johanna's? »

« No. We will come back soon, with Jesus… »

437. Aurea Does the Will of God.

20th May 1946.

The Virgin is very tired when She sets foot again in Her little house. But She is very happy. And She looks at once for Her Jesus, Who is still working, in the last light of the dying day, at the stone oven door, which He is repairing. Simon opens the door to Her, and after greeting Her, he wisely withdraws into the workshop. I do not see Thomas. Perhaps he is out.

Jesus lays down His tools as soon as He sees His Mother, and goes towards Her cleaning His greasy hands (He is oiling hinges and latches to make them run smoothly) on His apron. Their reciprocal smiles seem to brighten up the kitchen garden where it is growing dark.

« Peace to You, Mother. »

« Peace to You, Son. »

« How tired You are! You have not rested… »

« I did, from dawn to sunset in Joseph's house… But if it had not been so warm, I would have left at once to come and tell You that Aurea is Yours. »

« Yes?! » The joyful surprise makes Jesus' face look even younger. It seems the face of a man about twenty years old, and as joy rids Him of the gravity which is generally on His face and in His gestures, He resembles even more His Mother, Who is always such a serene girl in Her deportment and looks.

« Yes, Jesus. And I achieved that without any effort. The lady agreed at once. She was moved admitting that she and her friends are too corrupt to educate a creature for God. Such a humble, sincere, true avowal! It is not easy to find people who admit they are faulty without being forced to do so. »

« No, it is not. Many in Israel are not capable. They are beautiful souls buried under a crust of filth. But when the filth falls off… »

« Will that happen, Son? »

« I am sure it will. They tend instinctively to Good. They will end up by adhering to it. What did she say? »

« Oh! Only a-few words… We understood each other at once. But we had better have Aurea here at once. I want to tell her this, but only if You wish so, Son. »

« Yes, Mother. We will send Simon » and in a loud voice He calls Simon who comes immediately.

« Simon, go to Simon of Alphaeus' house and tell him that My Mother is back, then come here with the girl and Thomas, who must be there finishing the little job which Salome asked him to do. »

Simon bows and goes away at once.

« Tell Me, Mother… Your journey… your conversation… Poor Mother, how tired You are because of Me! »

« Oh! no, Jesus! It is no trouble when You are happy… » and Mary tells Him about Her journey and Mary of Alphaeus' fears, their rest in the house of the boatman, the meeting with Valeria, and She concludes: « I preferred to see her at that time, since Heaven allowed it. She was freer, I was freer, and Mary of Clopas was comforted sooner, because she was terrified at the idea of two women being all alone in Tiberias and only her love for You' and the thought of serving You overcame her terror… » and Mary smiles

remembering Her sister-in-law's anxiety…

And Jesus smiles saying: « Poor woman! She is the true woman of Israel, the ancient woman, reserved, wholly devoted to her family, the strong woman according to Proverbs. But in the new Religion women will not be strong only at home… Many will exceed Judith and Jael, being gifted with the same heroism as the mother of the Maccabees… And our Mary will be such. But for the time being… she is what she is… Did You see Johanna? »

Mary smiles no longer. She is perhaps afraid of a question about Judas. And She replies quickly: « I did not want to cause more worries to Mary. We remained in the house until half the time between the ninth hour and evening, resting, and then we left… I thought that we shall soon be seeing her on the lake… »

« You did the right thing. You have given Me proof of the feeling of the Roman ladies with regard to Me. If Johanna had intervened, we could have thought that they were yielding to their friend. We will now wait until the Sabbath and if Myrtha does not come we will go to her with Aurea. »

« Son, I would like to stay here… »

« I can see that You are very tired. »

« No, not because of that… I think that Judas may come here… As it is right that someone should always be in Capernaum to wait for him and give him a friendly welcome, it is equally right that someone should be here to receive him with love. »

« Thank You, Mother. You are the only one who understands what can still save him… »

They both sigh thinking of the disciple who causes grief…

Simon and Thomas come back with Aurea who runs towards Mary. Jesus leaves her with His Mother and goes into the house with His apostles.

« You have prayed very much, My daughter, and the good God has listened to you… » begins Mary.

But the girl interrupts Her with a cry of joy: « I am staying with You! » and she throws her arms round the Virgin's neck kissing Her.

Mary returns the kiss and holding Aurea in Her arms all the time She says: « When one does a great favour, it is necessary to reciprocate it, is that right? »

« Oh! Yes! And I will repay You with so much love. »

« Yes, My dear. But above Me there is God. It is He Who did you this great favour, this immeasurable grace of receiving you among the members of His people and making you a disciple of the Master Saviour. I have been but the instrument of the grace, but He, the Most High, granted the grace. What will you, therefore, give the Most High to tell Him that you thank Him? »

« Well… I don't know… Tell me, Mother… »

« Love, that is certain. But love, to be really such, is to be united to sacrifice, because a thing has more value if it costs, has it not? »

« Yes, Mother. »

« Then, I would say that, with the same joy with which you shouted: "I am staying with You!", you should shout: "Yes, o Lord" when I, His poor servant, tell you the will of the Lord concerning you. »

« Tell me, Mother » says Aurea whose countenance becomes grave.

« The will of God entrusts you to two good mothers, Naomi and Myrtha… »

Two big tears shine in the clear eyes of the girl, and stream down her rosy cheeks.

« They are good women. They are dear to Jesus and to Me. Jesus saved the son of one of them, I suckled the baby of the other one. And you have seen that they are good… »

« Yes… but I was hoping to stay with You… »

« My daughter, it is not possible to have everything! You see that I am not always with My Jesus. I have given Him to you all, and I am far, so far from Him, when He goes about Palestine preaching, curing and saving girls… »

« That is true… »

«If I had wanted Him all for Myself, you would not have been saved… If I had wanted Him all for Myself, your souls would not be saved. Consider how great is My sacrifice. I am giving you a Son to be sacrificed for your souls. In any case, you and I will always be united, because women disciples are and will always be united around Christ, forming a large family united by our love for Him. »

« That is true. And then… I will come here again, will I not? And we will meet again? »

« Certainly. As long as God wants… »

« And You will always pray for me… »

« And I will always pray for you. »

« And when we are together, will You still teach me? »

« Yes, My dear… »

« Ah! I wanted to become like You. Will I ever be able? To know, in order to be good… »

« Naomi is the mother of a head of a synagogue and a disciple of the Lord. Myrtha is the mother of a son who deserved the grace of a miracle and is a good disciple. And the two women are good and wise, besides being so full of love. »

« Can You assure me? »

« Yes, My daughter. »

« Then… bless me and may the will of the Lord be done… as Jesus, prayer says. I have said it so many times… It is only right that now I should do what I said to obtain the grace of not going

any more among the Romans… »

« You are a good girl. And God will always help you. Come, let us go and tell Jesus that the youngest woman disciple knows how to do the will of God… » and holding her by the hand Mary goes back into the house with the girl.

438. Another Sabbath at Nazareth.

21st May 1946.

Another Sabbath at Nazareth. That is, another beginning of a Sabbath, because Myrtha and Naomi arrive with young Abel, just when the sunset of Friday is beginning. They dismount from their little donkeys, which Abel takes away, obviously to a stable, probably to that of the two friendly ass-drivers of Nazareth, who have become disciples. The women go in through the workshop door, which has been left open to ventilate the large room, where up to a short time before, the heat of the coarse fireplace has joined the intense summer heat.

Thomas is putting away his tools, Simon is sweeping the sawdust, while Jesus is cleaning pots of glue and paint.

« Peace to You, Master, and to you, disciples greet the two women, bowing low as soon as they enter and then, after walking across the workshop, prostrating themselves at Jesus' feet.

« Peace to you. You are very faithful, to come in this heat! »

« Oh! nothing! One feels so well here, that one forgets everything. Where is Your Mother? »

« She is in there, finishing a dress for Aurea. You may go in. »

The two women walk away with their knapsacks and one can hear their clear voices, which are rather deep, blend with the shrill rather strident voice of Aurea and with the silvery voice of Mary.

« They will be happy now! » says Thomas.

« Yes. They are good women » replies Jesus.

« Master, Myrtha has not only kept the son she had, but she got another child. And in little more than one year… » says the Zealot.

« Yes! In little more than one year! It is already over a year since Mary of Lazarus was converted. How time flies! It seems yesterday… How many things last year! The lovely retreat before the election! Then John of Endor! Then Marjiam! Then Daniel of Nain, then Mary of Lazarus and then Syntyche… But where is Syntyche? I often think about her and I cannot understand why… » Thomas stops speaking to himself, because Jesus and Simon do not reply to him, on the contrary they go out into the kitchen garden to wash themselves and then join the women disciples.

And we begin to see again… Abel of Bethlehem in Galilee comes back and finds Thomas who is still pensive, in front of the place where he generally works, moving, lost in thought, his tiny

masterpieces in gold-work.

« Have you found work? » asks the disciple bending over the tiny objects.

« Oh! I have made all the women in Nazareth happy. I would never have thought that there were so many buckles, bracelets, necklaces and lilies to be repaired. I had to ask Matthew to bring me some metal from Tiberias. I have more customers… ha! ha! (he laughs happily) than my father has. It is true that I do not ask for money… »

« You lose everything? »

« No. I charge only the value of the metal. My work is a present. »

« You are generous. »

« No. I am wise. I am not idle. I set an example of industriousness and detachment from-money and… I preach… Be quiet! I think that I have preached more by doing so, without telling a parable, without saying a word in the synagogue, than I would have done if I had spoken incessantly. And then… I do a bit of training. I have promised myself to propagate our faith with my work when I will have to go and preach Jesus among the infidels. And I am training myself. »

« You are wise both as a goldsmith and as an apostle. »

« I strive to be so for Jesus' sake. So you have acquired a sister. Treat her well, you know? She is like a little dove in its nest. I am telling you, because in my trade I am accustomed to dealing with women. She is a candid dove who was scared to death by a hawk, and who is looking for motherly and brotherly wings to defend her. If your mother had not wanted her, I would have asked to have her for my twin sister. One child more, one less! My sister is so good, you know? »

« Also my mother. She lost a little daughter when she remained a widow. Perhaps her milk had gone bad, grieved as she was over the death of her husband… I can hardly remember my little sister… and perhaps I would not remember her at all if my mother did not mourn her death so often, and if every poor girl in Bethlehem were not entitled to some food and clothing in our house, in memory of the dead baby… But as I was brought up in the company of my mother only, I have ended up by loving little girls very much myself… I realise that this one is not a little girl… but I will consider her such,, because of her heart, if she is as my mother, Naomi and you say… »

« You can be sure. Let us go into the other room. »

In the other room, that is, in the dining room, are the women, Jesus and the Zealot. And Myrtha, who came full of hope, is winning over Aurea by fitting for her a linen dress which she made for the girl.

« It fits you really well » she say's taking it off her and caressing

her while she adjusts her dress which had become crumpled when putting on the new one « It really fits well. And everything will be all right. You will see, my dear daughter… Oh! here is my Abel. Come here, son. Here is Aurea. She will be a member of our family now, you know? »

« I know, mother, and I am happy with you. » He looks at the girl… he studies her… his dark eyes stare at and get lost in her large pale blue ones. He is satisfied with his examination. He smiles at her. He says to her: « We will love each other in the Lord Who saved us and we will love Him and have Him loved. And I will be a brother to you in spirit and in affection. I promise it in the presence of the Master and of my mother » and with a beautiful limpid smile of a pure youth, well advanced in high spirituality, he holds out his strong tanned hand to her.

Aurea hesitates and then, blushing, she puts her left hand into the right hand offered to her and says: « We will do that. In the Lord. »

The adults smile…

« One can enter here without knocking at the doors… »

« Here is Simon of Jonah! This time he could not resist temptation… » says Thomas laughing, while he runs out.

« Yes! I did not resist… Peace to You, Master! » He kisses Jesus and is kissed by Him. « Who can resist? » He sees Mary and bows greetings, he then resumes: « But, to satisfy our consciences, we came by Tiberias and we looked for Judas. Because we are all here, eh?! The others are coming. Including Marjiam. So I was saying that we came by Tiberias. H'm! Yes! to look for Judas in the event that… he should think of coming to Capernaum, at least on the fourth Sabbath It would not be nice if we were all away… And we found him yes! Nay, Isaac found him, as he had gone to see Jonathan… Because Isaac ended up by coming to Capernaum waiting for You with I don't know how many more, who have remained there to become more learned under the good guidance of Hermas and Stephen, of your son, Naomi, and of John, the priest… But Isaac came with us, because he, too, will die if he does not see You… Poor Isaac! he was not made welcome by Judas. But Isaac, during his long sickness, must have destroyed all feelings of impatience, grudge and anger… He never reacts! Even if they box his ears, he smiles… What a peaceful man! Well. He said to us: "I saw Judas. He is not coming. Do not insist". I understood. I asked him: "Did he answer you insolently? Tell me. I am the chief and I must know Oh! no" he replied. "He did not answer insolently, but his insolence did. He is to be pitied…" Well, let us pity him… Well, we are here. And happy to… Here are the others… »

And with the others there are Judas and James of Alphaeus with their mother and the disciples of Nazareth: Aser, Ishmael and

Simon of Alphaeus, and, a rarity, also Joseph of Alphaeus,

They unburden themselves of their bags. Nathanael has brought some apples and Philip a basketfull of grapes as golden as Aurea's hair. Peter and Zebedee's sons some pickled fish. Matthew, who has no home cared for by women and thus has nothing good, has brought a jar full of earth with inside it a slender trunk, which judging by its foliage, I would say is a lemon or orange-tree or another citrus-tree and he explains: « It's a rarity… Only who goes to Cyrene can get them, and I know a man who was at Cyrene, one of the revenue authorities like me once. He has now retired at Ippo. I went to him to get the plant because it must be planted out at the new moon. The fruit is beautiful and good, its flower is sweet-smelling and looks like a waxen star, a star like Your name… Here » and he offers the plant to Mary.

« But what a trouble for you, Matthew, all this weight! I am grateful to you. My garden is becoming more and more beautiful, thanks to you all. Porphirea's camphor, Johanna's roses, you rare plant, Matthew, the other flower plants brought by Judas of Kerioth… How many beautiful things, how kind you all are to Jesus' Mother! »

All the apostles are moved; they only cast sidelong glances at each other when Mary mentions Judas' name.

« Yes. They love You. But we love You, too » says gravely and stiffly Joseph of Alphaeus.

« Of course! You are the dear children of My dear relative Alphaeus and of Mary, who is so good. And You love Me. It is natural. We are relatives… These instead are not our blood, and yet they are like sons to Me, like brothers to Jesus, as they love Him so much and follow Him… »

Joseph takes the hint immediately, he clears his throat, searching for words… He finds them… He says: « Of course! But if I am not yet with them, it is because I think also of the consequences for Him, for You… and… and… Well! I love You, too, You especially, poor woman, as You are left all by Yourself too long… And I have come to tell Jesus that I am glad that He has remembered also the needs of His Mother and has done what was necessary here… » and, satisfied with being the « head » of the kindred and thus in a position to praise and admonish, he deigns to commend Jesus for all the work of carpentry, painting and other jobs done in that month: « That is how it should be done! One can now see that this woman has a son! And I am happy to be able to say that I have found again My wise Jesus of Joseph. Bravo! »

And the wise Jesus of Joseph, the most wise Divine Word humiliated in our flesh, meek and humble, accepts the praises mixed with… the authoritative advice of His cousin Joseph, smiling so kindly, that it helps to check any untimely reaction of the apostles

in His favour.

And Joseph, having set off, seeing that they listen to him, does not stop, but he continues: « I do hope that from now on Nazareth will no longer see a poor woman forlorn, while Her Son unwisely leaves the trodden path to beat paths which are uncertain, both with regard to their ends and their consequences. I will speak to my friends, to the head of the synagogue… We will forgive You… Oh! Nazareth will be happy to open out her arms to You, as to a son who has come back… as an example of virtue to all the citizens. Tomorrow I will take You to the synagogue myself and… »

Jesus raises His hand imposing silence and calmly but very resolutely, He says: « I will certainly come to the synagogue, as a believer, exactly as I went there on the other Sabbaths. But it is not necessary for you to plead in My favour. Because one hour after sunset I will set out again to evangelize, as it is My duty to obey the Most High. »

A bad let-down for Joseph!… A very bad one!… All his good naturedness is shattered and his hostile intolerance comes to light again: « All right! But do not look for me in the hour of need. I have done my duty and Your certain misfortunes will not fall on me. Goodbye. I am one too many here because I cannot understand you, and you cannot understand me. I am going away, with no grudge, but very sad… May the Lord protect You as He protects all those who… are simple-minded, incomplete… Goodbye, Mary! Take heart, poor Mother! »

« Goodbye, Joseph. But I must take heart for you, not for Him. Because you are the one who is out of the path of God and you grieve Me » says Mary calmly but sure of Herself.

« You are a fool, that's what you are! And if you were not the head of the family I would give you a thrashing, as you are a creature of my blood but not of my spirit… » shouts Mary of Alphaeus. And she would have said more, but Mary implores her: « Be quiet! For My sake. »

« I'll be quiet. Yes. But… tell me if I have to see a rascal like him among my sons!… »

The rascal in the meantime has gone away, while good Mary of Alphaeus unburdens her soul with regard to that stubborn son. And she ends giving vent to her feelings by bursting into tears, and sobbing she expresses her greatest pain: « And I will not have him with me in Heaven, I will not have him! I will see him in torments! Oh! Jesus! It's for You to work the miracle! »

« Yes, Mary! Do not weep! His hour will come, too. The eleventh perhaps. But it will come. I can assure you. Do not weep… »says Jesus comforting her… And when her weeping is over He says to the apostles and disciples: « Let us go into the olive grove while the women prepare their things. We will speak among ourselves. »

439. The Departure from Nazareth and the Journey towards Bethlehem in Galilee.

22nd May 1946.

It is the evening of the true Sabbath and life begins again after the Sabbatical rest. Here, in the little house in Nazareth, it begins, after the rest, with the preparations for departure. Provisions are packed, clothes are crammed in knapsacks, the straps of which are fastened tightly, sandals are examined to ensure that the leather laces and buckles are in good condition, and the little donkeys are watered and fed near the hedge of the kitchen garden… and greetings and tears shed among smiles and blessings, and promises to meet again soon… And the unexpected offer of Thomas to Mary: a buckle, we could call it a brooch, to keep a dress closed at the neck. It is made of three thin, airy, perfect stems of lily of the valley, enclosed in two leaves, so like real ones, as the metal has been wrought by a master-hand.

« I know, Mary, that You will never wear it, but please accept it just the same. I have been anxious to make it since the day when my Lord spoke of You comparing You with the lilies of the valley… I have done nothing for Your house… but I made this for You, so that the praise of Your Son may be expressed in a symbol for You Who deserve it more than any other woman. And if I have not been able to give the stem the softness of a living one and the sweet scent of the flower, may my sincere respectful love for You soften it like a caress and put on it the scent of my devotion for You, Mother of my Lord. »

« Oh! Thomas! It is true. I never wear jewels, as they seem vain things to Me. But this one is not so. This is love of My Jesus and of His apostle, and it is dear to Me. I will look at it every day and think of good Thomas who loves his Master so much, that he remembers not only His Doctrine, but also His most humble words about the most humble thing and the most humble insignificant people. Thank you, Thomas. Not for its value, but for your love, thanks! »

Everybody admires the perfect work and Thomas, beaming with joy, pulls out a smaller piece of work: three tiny jasmine stars with a tiny leaf bound in a thin circle, and gives it to Aurea. « Because you did not behave coquettishly to have it, because you were here when the jasmine bloomed, and so that these little stars may remind you of our Stan But mind! With your virtues you must Perfume flowers and be a flower yourself, a candid, beautiful pure flower scenting towards Heaven. If you do not do that, I will take my brooch back. Come on, do not weep… everything passes… and we will soon come back to Mary's or She will come to us… and… » But Thomas, seeing that Aurea is shedding more and more tears, feels that it is better not to continue and he goes out, mortified,

saying to Peter: «If I had known that… it was going to make her weep more, I would not have given it to her… I made that brooch just to comfort her in this hour… I guessed wrongly… »

And Peter, in the confusion of the moment, does not control himself and says: « It is always like that when parting… You should have seen Syntyche… » and he realises that he has spoken, he wants to correct himself, he becomes purple… but… it is done…

Thomas understands, and kindly throws his arm round Peter's neck saying: « Don't be distressed, Peter. I know how to be quiet. And I understand why you have not said anything… Because of Judas of Simon. On the God of our fathers I swear to you that what I have learned involuntarily is forgotten. Do not be upset, Simon!… »

« It's because the Master did not want… »

« He certainly had good reasons for that. I don't take offence. »

« I know. But what will He say? »

« Nothing, because He will not know. You can trust me. »

« Ah! No! I will not resort to subterfuges with the Master. I made a mistake. I deserve to be reproached. And at once. I will not have peace unless I confess my error to Him. Thomas, be good. Go and call Him… I am going into the workshop. Go, and come back with Him. I am too upset to go and the others would notice me. »

Thomas looks at him with compassion full of admiration and goes back into the house to call Jesus: « Master, please come here for a moment. I have something to tell You. »

Jesus, Who was saying goodbye to Mary of Alphaeus, follows him at once. « What do you want? » He asks while walking beside him.

« I, nothing. Simon wants to speak to You. There he is… »

« Simon! What is the matter, why are you so upset? »

Peter throws himself at Jesus' feet moaning: « I have sinned! Absolve me! »

« Sinned? How? You were there with us, happy and peaceful… »

« Ah! Master, I disobeyed You. I told Thomas about Syntyche… I was upset because of the tears and he was more upset than I was; he thought that he had increased them… to comfort him I said: "It is always like that when parting… If you had seen Syntyche…" and he understood!… » Peter raises his troubled face, he looks mortified and desolate.

« Praised be God, My Simon! I thought you had done something much graver than that. And your sincerity cancels even that. You spoke without malice, you spoke to one of your companions. Thomas is good and will not divulge the news… »

« He swore it to me, in fact… But see? Now I am afraid that I am too foolish and that I cannot keep a secret. »

« You have kept it so far. »

« Yes, but just consider! Never one word to Philip and Nathanael! And now… »

« Come on, stand up! Man is always imperfect. But when he is so without malice, he commits no sin. Be careful, but do not distress yourself any more. Your Jesus can but kiss you. Thomas, come here. » Thomas approaches Him. « You have certainly understood the reasons for being silent. »

« Yes, Master. And I swore to respect them as far as I am concerned and capable. I have already told Simon… »

« The foolish Simon » says Peter with a sigh.

« No, my friend. You have edified me through your perfect humility and sincerity. You have taught me a great lesson, which I will never forget. For prudential reasons I shall not be able to make it known, and that grieves me, because only a few among us are or would be as just as you have been… But they are calling us! Let us go. »

Many in fact are already in the street and the three women Naomi, Myrtha and Aurea - have already mounted their little donkeys. Mary and Her sister-in-law are near Aurea, and they kiss her again, and when they see Jesus approaching, they kiss the two women disciples and they greet Jesus last and are blessed by Him, before He sets out…

And the Blessed Virgin and Mary of Clopas go back into the house… where, in remembrance of what was there a short while before, there are chairs out of place, kitchenware lying about… the disorder which takes place at every departure.

Mary, lost in thought, caresses the little loom on which She taught Aurea to work… Her eyes are shining with tears She has restrained.

« You are suffering, Mary! » says Mary of Clopas who is weeping without any effort to hold back her tears. « You had grown fond of her!… They come here… then they go away… and we suffer… »

« It is our life of women disciples. You heard what Jesus said today: "That is what you will do in future; you will be hospitable, supernaturally hospitable, seeing in every creature a brotherly soul, considering yourselves pilgrims and welcoming your guests as Pilgrims. You will give them help, comfort, advice, and then you will let your brothers go to their destiny, without holding them back with jealous love, sure as you are that you will meet them after your death. Persecutions will come and many will leave you to go towards martyrdom. Do not be cowardly and do not advise cowardice to anybody. Remain in your empty house praying to support the courage of martyrs, unperturbed to fortify the weaker ones, strong in order to be ready to imitate heroes. Get accustomed to separations, to heroism, to the apostolate of brotherly charity, as from now… And we do so. Suffering… certainly! We are creatures made of flesh… But the spirit rejoices with a supernatural happiness which is to do the will of the Lord and cooperate to His glory. On the other hand… I am the Mother of everybody… and I must not

be the Mother of one only. I am not even the Mother of Jesus exclusively… You see how I let Him go away without holding Him back… I would like to be with Him, that is true. But He deems that I must stay here until He will say: "Come". And I am staying. His days of rest here? My joys of a mother. My peregrinations with Him? My joys of a disciple. My solitude here? My joys of a believer who does the will of Her Lord. »

« That Lord, Mary, is Your Son… »

« Yes. But He is still My Lord… Are you staying with Me, Mary? »

« Yes, if You will allow me… My house is so sad during the first hours, when my sons go away!… Tomorrow it will be different… And this time, I would weep even more… »

« Why, Mary? »

« Because I have been weeping my heart out since yesterday… I am like a cistern… A cistern in the rainy season. »

« But why, My dear? »

« Because of Joseph… yesterday… Oh! I don't know whether I should go and reprimand him severely, because after all he is my son, because I carried him in my womb and I suckled him at my breast and no first-born son is above his mother,… or whether I should not speak any more to that rascal who was born of me and offends my Jesus and You and… »

« You will do nothing of the kind. You will always be his "mother". The mother who pities her stubborn, sick, perverted son and soothes him with her kindness, and leads him to God with prayers and patience… Cheer up, do not weep!… Come with Me. We will pray for him in My room, and for those who are travelling, for the girl, that she may not suffer too much and she may grow in holiness… Come, Mary » and She takes her away…

The pilgrims in the meantime are going their way southwestwards. The women are in front, on their donkeys, which, being well fed and rested, are trotting lively, compelling Marjiam and Abel, who for prudential motives are at either side of Aurea, as she is in the saddle for the first time, to proceed almost at a running pace. But although it is tiring, it helps to take the girl's mind off the sorrowful separation from Mary. Now and again, to let the two young men take breath, Myrtha reins in her donkey and makes a halt. And she resumes going only when the apostolic group joins them. And during such pauses, Aurea becomes sad again, as she is not distracted by the adventures of horseback riding…

Marjiam, who is experienced in the misfortunes of a little orphan taken in, out of charity, by an adoptive mother after he had known Mary, comforts her telling her how one becomes attached to the adoptive mother « exactly as if she were one's own mother »,

and mentions his own impressions and relates how happy are Mary and Matthias with Johanna, and Anastasica with Eliza.

Aurea listens to the stories, and when Marjiam concludes by saying: « Believe me, the women disciples are all good, and Jesus knows to whom we poor wretches should be entrusted », and Abel corroborates saying: « And you must trust my mother who is so happy to have you and has prayed so much during these days to have you from God », Aurea replies: « I believe it. And I love her… But Mary is Mary… and you must bear with me… »

« Yes. But we are sorry to see you sad… »

« Oh! but I am not so sad as I was in the house of the Roman or during the first hours after my liberation… I am only… lost. For years I have never received a caress… Only Mary caressed me after I had been subjected to masters for many years… »

« My darling! But I am here to caress you! I will be another Mary for you. Come here, near me… If you were a little girl, I would take you in the saddle with me, as I used to do with my Abel when he was a little boy… But you are already a woman… » says Myrtha approaching her and taking her by the hand. « You are my little woman and I will teach you many things, and when Abel goes away evangelizing, you and I will receive pilgrims as the Lord says, and we will do much good in His Name. You are young and you will help me… »

« But look at that light over there, beyond that hill! » exclaims James of Zebedee, who has come up to the women.

« Is it a wood on fire? »

« Or a village? »

« Let us run up there and see… »

No one is tired any longer, because curiosity overwhelms all sensations. Jesus follows them benevolently, leaving the road to take a path which climbs up a hillock. They soon reach the top…

But it is neither a wood nor a village which is on fire, but a large hollow moor all covered with heather, lying between two hills. The heather, parched by the summer heat, has caught fire perhaps because of a spark which escaped the woodmen working higher up cutting trees, and is now burning: a carpet of low but bright flames which move around seeking new heather to bum, after having consumed where they had been burning previously. The woodcutters try to fight the fire by striking the flames. But in vain. They are too few and if they work on one side, the fire spreads on another.

« If it reaches the wood, it will be a disaster. There are resin trees there » says Philip.

Jesus, with folded arms, standing on the extreme edge of the hillock, looks and smiles… thinking…

The contrast between the white moonlight to the east and the red glow of the flames to the west, is strong and the backs of the

onlookers are white in the moon-beams, whereas their faces are red in the reverberation of the flames. And the flames spread unceasingly, like water which rises, overflows and floods… The fire is now only a few metres from the wood and it is already lighting up the piles of wood placed at its borders, while the light, which is becoming brighter and brighter, shows the little houses of a village on the top of the hill where the fire is climbing.

« Poor people! They will lose everything! » say many. And they look at Jesus, Who is smiling, but does not speak…

Then… He unfolds His arms and cries: « Stop! Die down! I want it. »

And suddenly, as if a huge bank of earth had fallen to suffocate the flames, the fire goes out prodigiously, the lively nimble dance of the flames changes into red flameless embers, then the red becomes violet, grey-red… an occasional flash quivers among the ashes… and then only the silvery moonlight shines on the forests.

In the clear light the woodcutters are seen while they gather gesticulating, looking around, above… for the angel of the miracle…

« Let us go down. I will work on those souls through the unforeseen opportunity given to Me and we will stop in the village instead of resting in the town. We will leave at dawn. They will certainly have room for the women. The wood is quite enough for us » says Jesus and He goes down quickly followed by the others.

« But why were You laughing? You looked very happy! » asks Peter.

« You will find out from My words. »

They are already where the fallow ground is covered with ashes still warm and creaking under their sandals. They go across it. When they are in the middle, where the moon shines fully, they are seen by the woodcutters.

« Oh! I told you! He is the only one who could do that! Let us run and venerate Him » shouts a woodman and he does so by throwing himself on the ashes at Jesus' feet.

« What makes you think that I could do it? »

« Because only the Messiah can do that. »

« And how do you know that I am the Messiah? Do you know Me, perhaps? »

« No. But only the Good One Who loves the poor can have had pity, and only the Holy One of God can have given an order to the fire and be obeyed. Blessed be the Most High Who sent us His Messiah! And blessed be the Messiah Who came in time to save our homes! »

« You ought to be more anxious to save your souls. »

« We save them by believing in You and endeavouring to do what You teach. But You realise, Lord, that the distress of being deprived of everything can weaken our already weak souls… and lead us to

doubt Providence- »

« Who informed you of Me? »

« Some of Your disciples… Here are our families… We had them woken because we were afraid that the whole hill would catch fire… Come here… Then we sent another man to inform them that a miracle had been worked and to come and see. Here they are, Lord. Mine. Jacob's, this one is Jonathan's, this one Mark's, this is the family of my brother Tobias, this one is of my brother-in-law Melkia, this is Philip's and this is Eleazar's. The others are the families of the shepherds who are now at the pastures up in the high mountains… »

It is a group of about two hundred and fifty people at most, including the little ones, sucking infants or babies just weaned, whimpering half asleep, or sleeping unaware of the danger in which they had been.

« Peace to you all. The angel of God has saved you. Let us praise the Lord together. »

« You saved us! You are always present where faithful people believe in You! » say many women… And the men nod solemnly.

« Yes. Providence is present where there is faith in Me. But one must act with constant circumspection both in spiritual matters and in material ones. What set fire to the moor? Probably a spark from one of your fires or a little branch which one of the boys wanted to light on the fire to play with it, waving it and throwing it down the slope with the thoughtlessness of his age. It is in fact pleasant to see an arrow of fire furrow the air at dusk. But you can see what an imprudent act may cause! It can cause serious damage. A spark or a little branch which fell on the dry heather was enough to set a valley on fire, and if the Eternal Father had not sent Me, the whole wood would have become a bonfire, which in the grip of fire would have consumed your goods and your lives.

The same applies to matters of the spirit. You must pay continual prudent attention to ensure that no arrow of fire or spark may cling to your faith and destroy it, after smouldering unnoticed in your hearts, by means of arson wanted by those who hate Me and committed to deprive Me of believers. Since the fire was stopped here in time, from malefic it became beneficent, destroying the useless heath which you allowed to flourish in the valley, and preparing, by such destruction and the fertilizing ashes, a ground which you can exploit with useful cultivations, if you are willing to do so. But with hearts it is quite a different matter! When all the Good has been destroyed, nothing but bramble for the fodder of demons will grow in them. Remember that and be vigilant against My enemies' insinuations, which will be thrown into your hearts like infernal sparks. Be ready to fight the fire then. And what is that fight? A stronger and stronger Faith, a firm

will to belong to God. It means to belong to a holy Fire. Because fire does not consume fire. Now, if you are fire of love for the true God, the fire of hatred against God will not be able to harm you. The Fire of love defeats every other fire. My Doctrine is love and those who accept it enter the Fire of Charity and cannot be tortured by the fire of the Demon.

From the top of that hill, while I was watching the heather burning and I heard the words of your souls to the Lord their God, more than I noticed your actions aiming at putting out the flames, I was smiling. And one of My apostles asked Me: "Why are You smiling?". I promised him: "I will tell you when speaking to those who have been saved". And I am doing that now. I was smiling thinking that as the flames spread among the heather of the valley, in vain restrained by your efforts, so My Doctrine will spread throughout the world, persecuted in vain by those who reject Light. And it will be light. It will be purification. It will be beneficent. How many little snakes have perished among these ashes, and other harmful insects with them! You were afraid to come to the valley, because there were too many asps in it. Well, not even one has survived. Likewise the world will be freed of many heresies, of many sins, of many sorrows, when it becomes acquainted with Me and is cleansed by the fire of My Doctrine. Cleansed and freed of harmful vegetation, it will be ready for the seed, and will become rich in holy fruits. That is why I was smiling… In the fire which was advancing, I saw a symbol of the spreading of My Doctrine in the world. Then the love for our neighbour, which is never to be separated from that for the Lord, made Me consider your necessities. And I lowered My thoughts from the contemplation of the interests of God to that of the interests of My brothers, and I stopped the fire, so that while rejoicing, you might praise the Lord. You can thus see that My thought rose to God, it descended from Him made more powerful, because union with God always increases our powers, and rose, once again, to God with yours. Thus, through charity, I did at the same time promote the interests of the Father and of My brothers. Do likewise in your future lives.

And now I ask you to give shelter to these women for the night. The moon is setting and the fire has delayed our journey. We cannot therefore proceed to the next town. »

« Come! Come all of you! There is room for everybody. We might have been homeless! Our homes are yours. Our houses are poor, but clean. Come and they will be blessed » they all shout.

And they slowly climb the rather steep slope as far as the little village, which miraculously escaped destruction, then each pilgrim disappears with his host…

440. Judas of Kerioth with the Blessed Virgin at Nazareth.

23rd May 1946.

Dawn is breaking and the eastern sky is just beginning to redden, when Judas of Kerioth knocks at the door of the little house in Nazareth.

On the road there are only peasants, or rather: small landowners of Nazareth, who are going to their vineyards or olive-groves with their working tools and are greatly surprised at seeing the man knock at Mary's door so early in the morning. They speak in low voices to one another.

« He is a disciple » says one replying to the remarks of another. « He is certainly looking for Jesus of Joseph. »

« It's no use. He went away yesterday evening. I saw Him myself. I will tell him… » says another man.

« Never mind! It's Judas of Kerioth. I don't like him. Perhaps we are guilty of much wrong doing with regard to Jesus and we are making a mistake. But he, that man over there, did much harm to us here last year… We might have been converted. But he… »

« What? How do you know? »

« I was present one evening in the house of the head of the synagogue and I foolishly believed everything at once… Now… that's enough! I think I have sinned and… »

« Perhaps he also realised that he had sinned and… »

They move away and I can hear nothing else.

Judas knocks once again at the little door, to which he has been clinging, his face pressed against the wood, as if he wished to avoid being seen and recognised. But the little door remains closed. Judas makes a gesture of disappointment and he goes away along a path skirting the kitchen garden and he goes to the rear of the house. He casts a glance over the hedge of the quiet garden. Only the doves animate it.

Judas considers what to do. He talks to himself: « Has She perhaps gone away, too? And yet… I would have seen Her. And then! No. I heard Her voice yesterday evening… Perhaps She has gone to sleep at Her sister-in-law's… Ugh! This is as annoying as a bee on one's face, because She will come back with her, and I want to speak to Her alone, without that old woman as a witness. She is gossipy and would raise objections. And I don't want any. And she is as sly as every old wife of the people. She would not accept my excuses and she would point that out to that stupid dove of her sister-in-law… I know I can make a fool of Her… in every way. She is as dull as ditch-water… And I must put right what happened at Tiberias. Because if She speaks… I wonder whether She has mentioned it or has kept quiet? If She has spoken, it is more difficult to Put matters right… But She will not have spoken… She confuses virtue with foolishness. Like Mother like Son… And the others are

busy while they are fast asleep. In any case they are right. Why leave them aside if they seem to be wanting… But what do they want after all?… My notions are foggy… I must stop drinking and… Of course! But money is a temptation, and I am like a colt which has been kept inside too long. Two years, I say! Even longer! Two years of all kinds of abstinence… But in the meantime… What did Helkai say the day before yesterday? Eh! He is not a bad teacher! Certainly! Everything is legal providing we succeed in putting Jesus on the throne. But if He does not want that? But He must certainly consider that if we do not triumph, we will all end up like the followers of Theudas or of Judas the Galilean… Perhaps I ought to part company with them because… well, I do not know whether what they want is right. I don't trust them very much… They have changed too much recently… I would not like to… How dreadful! I to be the means to damage Jesus? No. I will part company. But it is sad to have dreamt of a kingdom and have to go back to what? To nothing… But better nothing than… He always says: "He who will commit the great sin". Hey!? It won't be me, eh! Me? Me? I will sooner drown myself in the lake… I'll go away. It is better for me to go away. I will go to my mother, I will get her to give me some money, because I certainly cannot ask the members of the Sanhedrin to give me the money to go away. They help me because they hope that I will help them to get over their state of uncertainty. Once Jesus is acknowledged as king, we will be settled. The crowds will side with us… Herod… who will bother about him? Neither the Romans nor the people. They all hate him! And… and… But Jesus is quite capable of renouncing the throne as soon as He is proclaimed king. Oh! Well! When Eleazar ben Annas assures me that his father is ready to crown Him king!… Afterwards He cannot remove His sacred character. After all… I am doing what the unfaithful steward of His parable did… I am having resort to my friends on my behalf, that is true, but also on His. So I am making unfair means serve as… Well, no! I must try once again to persuade Him. I am not convinced that I am doing the right thing by resorting to this subterfuge… and… Oh! If I could only convince Him! Because it would be so beautiful! Yes… very! That is the best solution: to tell the Master everything frankly. To implore Him… Providing Mary has not told Him about Tiberias… What did I say I should tell Mary?… Ah! yes! The refusal of the Roman ladies. Cursed be that woman! If I had not gone to her, I would not have met Mary that evening! But who could have imagined that Mary was in Tiberias? And yet I never went out on the day before the Sabbath, on the Sabbath or the day after it, as I did not want to see any of the apostles… What a fool! I could have gone to Hippo, to Gerghesa to find a woman! No! I had to go just there! To Tiberias through which the people of Capernaum must pass to come here…

And all that because of the Roman ladies… I was hoping… No, that is what I must say to excuse myself, but it is not true. There is no sense in saying that to myself, as I know why I went: to meet some of the powerful people in Israel and to have a good time, since I had plenty money… But… how quickly money goes. I will soon have none left… Ha! Ha! I will invent some story for Helkai and his partners and they will give me some more… »

« O Judas! Have you gone mad? I have been watching you for some time from the top of this olive-tree. You are gesticulating, speaking by yourself… Has the sun of the month of Tammuz harmed you? » shouts Alphaeus of Sarah leaning out of the forked branches of a huge olive-tree, about thirty metres away from the spot where Judas is standing.

Judas starts, looks round, sees him and moans: « May death rake you! Cursed village of spies! » But smiling affably he shouts: « No. But I am worried because Mary is not opening… Is She perhaps not well? I have knocked several times!… »

« Mary? You can knock as long as you like! She is in the house of a poor old woman who is dying. They sent for Her at the third watch… »

« But I must speak to Her. »

« Wait. I will come down and I will go and tell Her. But do you really need Her? »

« Eh! I should say so! I have been here since sunrise. »

Alphaeus climbs down the tree solicitously and runs away.

« He has seen me, too! And he will certainly come back with that other woman! Everything is going awry? » and he hurls a string of insults at Nazareth, the Nazarenes, Mary of Alphaeus, and even at the Blessed Virgin's charity for the dying woman and at the dying woman herself…

He has not yet finished when the door, which from the diningroom leads into the kitchen garden, is opened and Mary appears looking very pale and sad.

« Judas! », « Mary! » they say simultaneously.

« I will now open the door to you. Alphaeus said to Me only: "Go home. There is someone wanting You" and I ran here, also because the old woman no longer needs Me. She has finished suffering because of a bad son… »

Judas, while Mary is speaking, runs along the path and goes back to the front of the house… Mary opens the door.

« Peace to you, Judas of Kerioth. Come in. »

« Peace to You, Mary. »

Judas is somewhat hesitant. Mary is kind, but serious.

« I knocked so much, at dawn. »

« Yesterday evening a son broke his mother's heart… And they came looking for Jesus. But Jesus is not here. I am saying that to

you, too: Jesus is not here. You came late. »

« I know that He is not here. »

« How do you know? You have just arrived… »

« Mother, I will be frank with You, since You are good: I have been here since yesterday… »

« And why did you not come? Your companions came here every Sabbath, except one… »

« Eh! I know! I went to Capernaum but I did not find them. »

« Do not lie, Judas. You never went to Capernaum. Bartholomew remained there all the time and he never saw you. Bartholomew came here only yesterday. But you were not here yesterday… So… Why are you telling lies, Judas? Do you not know that a lie is the first step towards theft and homicide?… Poor Esther died, killed by grief because of the behaviour of her son. And Samuel, her son, became the shame of Nazareth through little lies, which became bigger and bigger… And from them he passed on to all the rest. Do you, an apostle of the Lord, wish to imitate him? Do you want your mother to die broken-hearted? »

She reproaches him slowly, in a low voice. But Her words bear heavily on him. Judas does not know what to reply. He sits down abruptly, his head in his hands.

Mary watches him. She then says: « Well? Why did you want to see Me? While assisting poor Esther I prayed for your mother… and for you… Because I feel sorry for both of you, and for two different reasons. »

« Then, if you pity me, forgive me. »

« I have never had ill-feelings. »

« What?… Not even because… of that morning at Tiberias?… You know? I was in that state because the evening before the Roman ladies had maltreated me as madman and… as the traitor of the Master. Yes, I admit it. I did the wrong thing in speaking to Claudia. I was mistaken with regard to her. But I do it for a good purpose. I grieved the Master. He has not mentioned it to me, but I am aware that He knows that I spoke. It was certainly Johanna who told Him. Johanna has never liked me and the Roman ladies grieved me… To forget, I drank… »

Mary's expression of compassion is unintentionally ironic, and She says: « Jesus, then, should get drunk every night, considering the grief He supposedly enjoys every day… »

« Did You tell Him? »

« I do not increase the bitterness of the chalice of My Son with the news of fresh defections, falls, sins, snares… I have been and will be silent. »

Judas falls on his knees trying to kiss Mary's hand, but She withdraws, without being rude, but quite decided not to be touched or kissed.

« Thank You, Mother! You are saving me. That is why I came here… and that You might make it easier for me to approach the Master without being reproached or ashamed. »

« To avoid that, all you had to do was to go to Capernaum and then come here with the others. It was very simple. »

« That is true… But the others are not kind, and they had me spied upon in order to reproach an accuse me. »

« Do not give offence to your brothers, Judas. Stop committing sins! You have been spying here, in Nazareth, the fatherland of the Christ, you… »

Judas interrupts Her: « When? Last year? They have distorted my words! But believe me, I… »

« I do not know what you did or said last year. I am referring to yesterday. You have been here since yesterday. You know that Jesus went away. So you have been investigating. But not in the friendly houses of Aser, Ishmael, Alphaeus, or of the brother of Judas and James, or of Mary of Alphaeus, or of any of the few people here who love Jesus. Because if you had done so, they would have come and told Me. Esther's house became crowded with women at dawn, when she died, but none of them had heard of you. They are the best among the women of Nazareth, those who love Me and love Jesus, and they strive to practise His Doctrine notwithstanding the hostility of their husbands, fathers and children. So you made inquiries among those who are enemies of My Jesus. What do you call that? I do not want to know. I tell you this only. Many swords will be plunged into My heart, which will be pierced over and over again, mercilessly, by the men who grieve My Jesus and hate Him. And one of the swords will be yours, and it will never be withdrawn. Because the memory of you, Judas, who do not want to be saved, who are ruining yourself, who are frightening Me, not because I am afraid for Myself, but for your soul, the memory of you will never be forgotten by My heart. Just Simeon pierced my soul with one sword, while I was carrying My Baby, My holy little Lamb, against My heart… You… you are the other sword. The point of your sword is already torturing My heart. But you are not yet satisfied with distressing a poor woman thus… and you are waiting to thrust your sword, like an executioner, right through the heart which has given you nothing but love… But it is foolish of Me to expect pity from you, who have none for your own mother!… On the contrary, now, I tell you! With one blow you will transfix Me and her, o wretched son, whom the prayers of two mothers cannot save!… »

Mary weeps while speaking, but her tears do not fall on Judas' dark-haired head, because he has remained where he fell on his knees, apart from Mary… The holy tears are absorbed by the brick floor. And the scene reminds me of Aglae, on whom, instead,

Mary's tears fell, because she was pressing against Mary in sincere desire of redemption.

« Can you not find one word, Judas? Can you not find within yourself the strength for a good purpose? Oh! Judas! Judas! Tell Me: are you satisfied with your way of living? Examine yourself, Judas. First of all, be humble and sincere with yourself, and then with God, so that you may go to Him, after removing your burden of stones from your heart, and say to Him: "Here I am. For Your sake I got rid of these stones". »

« I haven't… the courage to confess to Jesus. »

« You have not the humility to do it. »

« That is true. Help me… »

« Go to Capernaum and wait for Him, humbly. »

« But You could… »

« I can but tell you to do what My Son always does: to have mercy. I do not teach Jesus, but it is Jesus Who teaches Me, His disciple. »

« You are His Mother. »

« And that concerns My heart. But, by right, He is My Master. Exactly the same as He is for all the other women disciples. »

« You are perfect. »

« He is the Most Perfect One. »

Judas is silent and pensive. He then asks: « Where has the Master gone? »

« To Bethlehem in Galilee. »

« And then? »

« I do not know. »

« Is He coming back here? »

« Yes, He is. »

« When? »

« I do not know. »

« You do not want to tell me! »

« I cannot tell you what I do not know. You have followed Him for two years. Can you say that His itinerary was always certain? How many times did the will of men compel Him to change it? »

« True. I will go away… To Capernaum. »

« The sun is too strong to travel. Stay here. You are a pilgrim like all the others. And He said that the women disciples are to take care of them. »

« My presence is unpleasant to You… »

« The fact that you do not want to be cured is grievous to Me! Only that… Take off your mantle… Where did you sleep? »

« I did not sleep. I waited until dawn as I wanted to see You all alone. »

« Then you must be tired. In the large room there are the little beds which Simon and Thomas used. It is still quiet and cool in

there. Go and sleep while I prepare some food for you. »

Judas goes away without discussion. And Mary, without a rest after sitting up the whole night, goes into the kitchen to light the fire and then into the kitchen garden to get some vegetables. And tears and tears fall silently while She bends over the fireplace arranging the firewood, or when She stoops to pick the vegetables, and while She washes them in the basin and prepares them… And tears fall with the golden grains of corn when She feeds the doves, and they fall on the clothes which She takes out of the wash-tub and hangs out in the sun… The tears of the Mother of God… of the Faultless Mother, Who was not exempt from sorrow and suffered more than any other woman, in order to be the Co-Redeemer…

441. The Death of Marjiam's Grandfather.

25th May 1946.

Jesus must have left the women because He is with the apostles, Isaac and Marjiam. They are going down the last slopes towards the Esdraelon plain while it is slowly getting darker.

Marjiam is very glad that the Lord is taking him to his dear grandfather. The apostles are not so happy, as they remember the recent incident with Ishmael. But they are gravely silent, in order not to grieve the boy, who rejoices that he has not touched the honey which Porphirea gave him, « because » he says « I was hoping that the Lord would satisfy the desire of my heart by letting me see my grandfather. I do not know why… but for some time he has always been present to my spirit, as if he were calling me. I told Porphirea and she said to me: "It happens to me as well, when Simon is away". But I don't think it is as she says, because it never happened to me before. »

« Because you were a little boy previously. Now you are a man and you ponder more over things » Peter says to him.

« I have also two small round pieces of cheese and some olives. Just what I could bring of my own to my beloved grandfather. Then I have a hemp tunic and another hemp garment. Porphirea wanted to make them for me. But I said to her: "If you love me, make them for the old man". He is always so tattered and torn, so hot wearing clothes of coarse wool!… He will have some relief. »

« And so you are left without any cool clothes, and you are sweating like a sponge wearing woollen ones » Peter says to him.

« Oh! It does not matter! My grandfather went very often without food to give it to me, when I lived in the wood… At last I also can give him something. I wish I could save enough to give him what he needs to redeem himself! »

« How much have you got so far? » asks Andrew.

« Little. I earned one hundred and ten didrachmas with the fish.

But I will soon be selling the lambs and then… If I could do it before it gets very cold!… »

« Will you be keeping him? » Nathanael asks Peter.

« Yes. We shall not be ruined if the poor old man has a morsel of our food… »

« And then… He will be able to do little jobs… He can come to Bethsaida, where we are, is that right, Philip? »

« Of course… We will help you, Simon, and thus make our good Marjiam and the old man happy… »

« Let us hope that Johanan is not there… » says Judas Thaddeus.

« I will go ahead and warn them » says Isaac.

They walk fast in the moonlight… At a certain point Isaac parts from them quickening his step, while the group follows him more slowly. There is dead silence in the plain. Even nightingales are quiet. I

They walk on, until they see two shadows running towards them. « One is certainly Isaac… The other… may be Micah or the steward. One is as tall as the other » says John.

They are now close… very close It is the steward followed by Isaac who looks dismayed.

« Master… Marjiam poor son! Come quickly… Your grandfather, Marjiam, is ill very ill… »

« Ah! Lord!… » shouts the boy sorrowfully.

« Let us go, let us go… Be strong, Marjiam » and Jesus takes his hand and starts almost to run while He says to the apostles: « You can follow us. »

« Yes… But don't make too much noise… Johanan is there » shouts the steward who is already far away.

The poor old man is in Micah's house. Even a fool can understand that he is really dying. He is lying languidly, his eyes closed, his features relaxed, as is typical of a dying person. He is waxer, with the exception of his cheek-bones, where a cyanotic red persists.

Marjiam bends over the little bed calling: « Grandpa! My grandpa! I am Marjiam! Do you understand? Marjiam! Jabez! Your Jabez! … O Lord! He no longer hears me… Come here, Lord… Come here. Will You try… Cure him… Let him see me, let him speak to me… Must I see all my relatives die thus, without a parting word to me?… »

Jesus approaches him, He bends over the dying man, He lays a hand on his head saying: « Son of My Father, listen to Me. »

Like one who awakes from a deep sleep, the old man takes a deep breath, he opens his already glassy eyes looking vaguely at the two faces bent over his. He tries to speak, but his tongue is powerless. But now he must have been able to recognise, because he smiles and tries to take the hands of the two to lift them to his

lips.

« Grandpa… I had come… I prayed so hard that I might come!… I wanted to tell you… that I will soon have enough money… that I will be able to give you what you need to redeem yourself… and you will come with me, to Simon and Porphirea, who are so good, so kind to your Jabez… and to everybody… »

The old man succeeds in moving his tongue and he says with difficulty: « May God reward them… and reward you… But it is late… I am going to Abraham… to suffer no more… » He turns towards Jesus and eagerly asks: « It is so, is it not? »

« It is. Be in peace! » and Jesus straightens Himself imposingly saying: « With My power of Judge and Saviour, I absolve you of all faults and omissions you may have committed during your lifetime, and of any feeling of your heart against charity and against those who hated you. I forgive you everything, son. Go in peace! » Jesus has held His hands stretched out high above the little bed as if He were before an altar and He, the Priest, were consecrating a victim.

Marjiam is weeping, while the old man smiles gently whispering: « One falls asleep peacefully with Your help… Thank You, Lord… » and he collapses…

« Grandpa! Grandpa! Oh! he is dying! he is dying! Let us give him some honey… his tongue is dry… He is cold… honey warms one… » shouts Marjiam and he tries to search in the sack with one hand while he supports with the other his grandfather's head, which is becoming heavier.

The apostles have appeared on the threshold… and are watching in silence…

« All right, Marjiam. I will hold your grandfather » says Jesus… and then, addressing Peter: « Simon, come here… »

And Simon comes forward, deeply moved.

Marjiam tries to give a little honey to the old man. He puts a finger into the little vase and takes it out covered with liquid honey, which he places on the lips of his grandfather, who opens his eyes again, looks at him, smiles and says: « It's good. »

« I made it for you… And also the tunic of fresh hemp… »

The old man lifts his trembling hand and endeavours to lay it on the brown-haired head saying: « You are good… better than honey… And that… the fact that you are good, does me good… But Your honey… does not serve any more… Neither does your cool tunic… Keep them… keep them with my blessing… »

Marjiam falls on his knees and weeps with his head resting on the edge of the little bed moaning: « All alone! I am remaining all alone! »

Simon goes to the other side of the bed and in a voice made more hoarse than ever by emotion, he caresses Marjiam's hair saying:

« No… Not alone… I love you. Porphirea also loves you… The disciples… as many brothers… And then… Jesus… Jesus Who loves you… Don't weep, my son! »

« Your… son… yes… I… happy… Lord!… Lord… » the old man whispers confusedly… he feels the end is approaching.

Jesus embraces him with one arm, lifts him up, and intones slowly: « I lift my eyes to the mountains, whence help will come to me » and He continues till the end of psalm 120. He then stops watching the man who is dying in His arms placated by those words… He intones psalm 121. But He says little of it, because as soon as He starts the fourth verse He stops, saying: « Go in peace, just soul! » and He lays him down again slowly and closes his eyelids with His hand.

Such a placid death that no one, except Jesus, noticed it. But they realise seeing the gesture of the Master and they begin to whisper.

Jesus makes a gesture requesting silence. He goes beside Marjiam, who has not noticed anything, as he is weeping with his head on the bed, He bends and embraces the boy and tries to lift him up saying: « He is in peace, Marjiam! He does not suffer any more. This is the greatest grace of God for him: death, and in the arms of the Lord! Do not weep, dear son. Look how peaceful he is… In peace… Few people in Israel had the reward which this just man had, to die on the breast of the Saviour. Come here, in My arms… You are not alone. And there is God, and that is everything, and He loves you for the whole world. »

Poor Marjiam is really in a pitiful state, but he still finds the strength to say: « Thank You, Lord, for coming… and you, Simon, for bringing me here… And to you all, thanks… for what you gave me for him… But it is of no further use… But… the garment is… We are poor… We cannot have him embalmed… Oh! grandfather! I cannot even give you a sepulchre!… But if you trust me, if you can… meet the expenses and in October I will give you the money of the lambs and of the fish… »

« Hey! I say: you still have a father! I will see to it, at the cost of selling a boat. The old man will receive full honours. The important thing is to have a loan… and someone who can give a sepulchre… »

The steward says: « In Jezreel there are some disciples among the people. They will not deny anything. I will go at once and I will be back by the third hour… »

« Good, but… the Pharisee? »

« Don't worry. I will let him know that there is a dead man and in order not to be contaminated, he will not come out of the house. I am going… »

And while Marjiam, bent over his grandfather, weeps and

caresses him, and Jesus speaks in a low voice to the apostles and to Isaac, Micah and the others are busy preparing the last honours to their dead companion.

And I make here a personal comment. I happened to be in similar situations several times, and I often noticed that the people present, with good intentions or with blameworthy intolerance, contradict those who grieve over the loss of a relative. I point out the kindness of Jesus, Who bears with the suffering of the orphan and does not exact an unnatural heroism from him… How much there is to be learned from each least act of Jesus!…

442. Jesus Speaks of Charity to the Apostles.

30th May 1946 (Ascension-Day).

« Where did you leave the boats, Simon, when you came to Nazareth? » asks Jesus while walking north-eastwards, leaving behind the Esdraelon plain and proceeding towards Mount Tabor.

« I sent them back, that they may go fishing, Master. But I told them to be at Tarichea every third day… I did not know how long I would be staying with You. »

« Very well. Which of you wants to go to tell My Mother and Mary of Alphaeus to join us at Tiberias? Joseph's house will be the meeting place. »

« Master… we would all like to go. But it is better if You say who is to go. »

« Then, Matthew, Philip, Andrew and James of Zebedee. Let the others come with Me to Tarichea. You will explain to the women the reason for the delay. And tell them to close the houses and to come. We will be together for the whole duration of the moon. Go, because this is where the road diverges. And may peace be with you. » He kisses the four who part, and He takes to the road again with the others.

But after a few steps He stops and watches Marjiam who is walking with his head lowered a little behind the group. When the boy comes up with Him, Jesus passes His hand under his chin forcing him to raise his head. Tears are streaming down the boy's tanned face.

« Would you like to go to Nazareth, too? »

« Yes, Master… But do as You wish. »

« I want you to be consoled, son… Go… Run after them. My Mother will comfort you. » He kisses the boy and lets him go, and Marjiam starts running and soon comes up with the four apostles.

« He is still a boy… » remarks Peter.

« And he is suffering much… Yesterday evening, as I found him weeping in a corner of the house, he said to me: "It is as if my

father and mother had died yesterday… The death of my old grandfather has renewed all the grief in my heart…" » says John.

« Poor son!… But it was a good thing that he was present at that death… » says the Zealot.

« He had so fondly cherished the illusion that he might be able to help the old man!… Porphirea told me that he made all sorts of sacrifices in order to be able to save money. He worked in fields, he made faggots for bakers, he fished, he did not eat any cheese or honey, so that he might sell them… He had that fixed idea in his heart and wanted the old man with him… who knows! » says Peter.

« He is a serious-minded and strong-willed man. Sacrifice and work are no burden to him. Good points » says Bartholomew.

« Yes, he is a good son and will be one of the best disciples. You can see how strictly he controls himself even in the most troubled circumstances… His afflicted heart was longing for Mary, but he did not ask to go. He has understood so well what strength there is in praying, that he exceeds many adults » says Jesus.

« Do you think that he makes sacrifices with an intent fixed in advance? » asks Thomas.

« I am sure he does. »

« It is true. Yesterday he gave some fruit to an old man saying: "Pray for my father's father, who died recently", and I remarked to him: "He is in peace, Marjiam. Do you not consider Jesus' absolution valid?". He replied to me: "I do consider it valid. But when offering sacrifices, I think of the souls for whom no one prays, and I say: if my grandfather no longer needs this, let these sacrifices be atonement for those who are forgotten by everybody". And I remained edified » says James of Alphaeus.

« Yes » says Peter. « Yesterday he came to me and throwing his arms round my neck, because, after all, he is still a boy, he said to me: "Now you really are my father… and I am giving back to you what your kindness had allowed me to save. My old grandfather no longer needs that money… and you and Porphirea are doing so much for me… I, I found it difficult to restrain my tears, I replied to him: "No, son. We will use that money as alms to poor old people or to orphans and God will make use of your alms to increase the peace to your old grandfather". And Marjiam kissed me twice so fondly that… well… I could not hold back my tears. And how grateful he is to you, Bartholomew, for meeting the expenses. He said to me: "As far as I am concerned the honour paid to my old grandpa is priceless. I will tell Bartholomew to keep me as his servant". »

« Oh! poor son! Not even for one hour! He serves the Lord and edifies us all. I honoured a just man. I was able to do it because my name is well known and it is easy for me to find people willing to advance a sum of money. When in Bethsaida I will have the little

debt settled, after all it was a trifle… »

« Yes. With regard to money it was not much, because those in Jezreel were generous. But your love for a fellow disciple is not a trifle. Because each act of love is of great value.

You are being perfected in your neighbour's love, which is the latter part of the fundamental precept of the Law of God, and which had been gravely neglected in Israel. The many precepts, the minuteness which followed the simple, yet complete, although brief Law of Sinai, have distorted the former part of the fundamental precept, converting it into a heap of exterior rites which lack what gives them strength, value, truth: that is they lack active consistence of the interior with the exterior forms of cult, through deeds performed and temptations overcome. What value can the ostentation of a cult have in the eyes of God, when internally a heart does not love God, does not annihilate itself in respectful love for God, when a heart does not praise and admire God by loving what He made, and first of all by loving man, who is the masterpiece of the terrestrial Creation?

Do you understand how the mistake was made in Israel? It happened because, at first, of one precept they made two, and afterwards, with the decline of spirits, they cut the latter neatly off from the former, as if it were a useless branch. It was not a useless branch, there were not even two branches. It was one trunk only, which from its very base had adorned itself with the individual virtues of the two loves. Look at that big fig-tree which has grown up there, on that hillock. It grew spontaneously, and almost from its roots, that is, as soon as it sprang up from the ground, it split into two branches, which are so united that the two barks have adhered together. But each branch has put forth its own foliage at the sides, in such an eccentric manner, that the little village on this hillock has been named after it the "House of the twin fig-tree". Now, if one should want to separate the two trunks, which are actually one trunk only, one would have to use a hatchet or a saw. But what would one do? One would cause the tree to die, or, if one were so skilful as to handle the hatchet or the saw in such a way as to injure one only of the two trunks, one would be saved whilst the other would inexorably die, and the survivor, although still alive, would live poorly and would probably wither, bearing no fruit or very little.

The same happened in Israel. They wanted to divide, to separate the two parts, which were so united as to really be one thing only, they wanted to touch up what was perfect. Because each work, each thought and work of God is perfect. Therefore, if God on Sinai ordered man to love the Most High God and his neighbour, by means of one only precept, it is evident that they are not precepts which may be practised independently one from the

other, but they are one precept only. And as I am never satisfied with perfecting you in this sublime virtue, the greatest of them all, because it rises with the spirit to Heaven and is the only one which subsists in Heaven, I insist on it, the soul of the whole life of the spirit, which dies if it loses Charity, because it loses God.

Listen to Me. Suppose one day a very wealthy couple came and knocked at your door, asking to be given hospitality for their lifetime. Could you say: "We accept the husband, but we do not want the wife" without hearing the husband reply to you: "That is not possible, because I cannot part with the flesh of my flesh. If you do not want to accept her, I cannot stay with you, and I will go away with all my treasures, which I would have shared with you"?

God is joined to Charity. And Charity is truly, and more intimately and really the spirit of His Spirit even than is a married couple who love each other deeply. God Himself is Charity. Charity is but the most manifest and illustrative aspect of God. Of all His attributes Charity is the sovereign and original one, because all the other attributes of God originate from Charity. What is Power but active charity? What is Wisdom but teaching charity? What is Mercy but forgiving charity? What is Justice but ruling charity? And I could go on thus with regard to all the numberless attributes of God. Now, after what I have said, can you believe that he, who has no Charity, has God? No, he has not. Can you imagine that he may accept God, but not Charity? There is one Charity only and it embraces Creator and creatures and it is not possible to have only one half of it: that for the Creator, without having also the other half: that for our neighbour.

God is in His creatures. He is in them with His indelible sign, with His rights of Father, Spouse and King. The soul is His throne, the body His temple. Now he who does not love one of his brothers and despises him, holds in contempt, grieves and underestimates the Landlord of his brother's house, the King, the Father, the Spouse of his brother, and it is natural that this great Being Who is Everything, and Who is present in a brother, in all brothers, should consider as given to Him the offence given to a lesser being, to a part created by Everything, that is to a single man. That is why I taught you the corporal and spiritual works of mercy, that is why I taught you not to scandalise your brothers, that is why I taught you not to judge, not to have contempt or to reject your brothers, whether they are good or not good, faithful or Gentiles, friends or enemies, rich or poor.

When on a nuptial bed a conception takes place, it is performed through the same action, whether it happens on a golden bed or on straw in a stable. And the creature which forms in a royal womb is not different from that which forms in the womb of a beggar. To conceive, to form a new being, is the same in every spot of the

Earth, irrespective of parents' religion. All creatures are born as Abel and Cain were born of Eve's womb. And to the equality of conception, formation and manner of birth of the children of man and woman on the Earth, corresponds another equality in Heaven: the creation of a soul to be infused into the embryo, so that it may be the soul of a man and not of an animal, and it may accompany him from the moment of its creation until death, and may survive expecting the universal resurrection, when it will join the risen body and have with it a reward or a punishment. A reward or punishment according to the deeds accomplished in the earthly life. Do not think that Charity is unfair, and that only because many people do not belong to Israel or to Christ, although they are virtuous in the religion which they follow convinced that it is the true one, they are to remain for ever without reward.

After the end of the world no other virtue will survive except Charity, that is, the Union of all the creatures who lived in justice, with the Creator. There will not be several Heavens: one for Israel, one for Christians, one for Catholics, one for Gentiles, one for heathens. There will be one Heaven only. And likewise there will be one reward only: God, the Creator, Who rejoins His creatures who lived according to justice, and in whom, because of the beauty of the souls and bodies of saints, He will admire Himself with the joy of Father and of God. There will be one Lord only. Not one Lord for Israel, one for Catholicism, one for each of the other religions.

I will now reveal a great truth to you. Remember it. Hand it down to your successors. Do not always wait for the Holy Spirit to clarify the truth after years or centuries of darkness. Listen. You may say: "Then, what justice is there in belonging to the holy religion, if at the end of the world we shall be treated exactly as the Gentiles?". I reply to you: the same justice which there is and it is true justice - for those who, although they belong to the holy religion, will not be beatified, because they they did not lead a holy life. A virtuous heathen, only because he lived according to choice virtue, convinced that his religion was good, will have Heaven at the end. When? At the end of the world, when of the four abodes of the dead, two only will remain: that is, Paradise and Hell. Because Justice, at that time, will only be able to keep and give the two eternal kingdoms to those, who from the tree of free will, chose good fruits or wanted wicked ones. But what a long expectation before a virtuous heathen achieves that reward!… Do You not think so? And that expectation, particularly from the moment when Redemption will have taken place with all its consequent wonders and the Gospel will have been preached all over the world, will be the purgation of the souls which lived with justice in other religions, but were not able to enter the true Faith, after

they became acquainted with its existence and the proof of its reality. Their abode will be Limbo for centuries and centuries, until the end of the world. The believers in the true God, who were not heroically holy, will have a long Purgatory, which may last until the end of the world for some of them. But after expiating and waiting, the good, irrespective of their provenance, will all sit at the right hand of God; the wicked, whichever their provenance may be, at the left hand and then in the dreadful Hell, while the Saviour will enter the eternal Kingdom with all the good souls. »

« Lord, forgive me if I do not understand. What You say is very difficult… at least for me… You always say that You are the Saviour and that You will redeem those who believe in You. So those who do not believe, either because they did not know You, as they lived before You, or because - the world is so large! - they had no news of You, how can they be saved? » asks Bartholomew.

« I told you: because of their just lives, of their good deeds, and through their faith which they believe is the true one. »

« But they did not have recourse to the Saviour… »

« But the Saviour will suffer also for them. Do you not consider, Bartholomew, what ample value My merits of Man-God will have? »

« My Lord, they will always be inferior to those of God, to those You have always had. »

« Your reply is and is not correct. The merits of God are infinite, you say. Everything is infinite in God. But God does not have any merits in the sense that He has not merited. He has attributes, virtues of His own. He is He Who is: Perfect, Infinite, Almighty. But to merit, it is necessary to do something, and with effort, superior to our nature. For instance, to eat is not a merit. But to eat frugally can become a merit, if we make real sacrifices, in order to give to the poor what we save. It is no merit to be silent. But it becomes a merit if we are quiet instead of retorting an insult. And so forth. Now, you know that God does not need to make any effort, because He is Perfect, Infinite. But the Man-God can make an effort by humiliating His infinite divine Nature within human limitations, by defeating human nature, which is not absent or metaphorical, but real, in Him, with all its senses and feelings, with its possibility of suffering and dying, with its free will. No one loves death, particularly when it is painful, untimely and undeserved. No one loves it. And yet, every man must die. So man ought to look at death with the same calm with which he sees every living being come to an end. Well, I force my Humanity to love death. Not only. But I chose life to be able to have death. For the sake of Mankind. Thus, in my condition of Man-God I gain those merits which I could not have gained if I had remained God. And through them, which are infinite, because of the manner in

which I gain them, because of the divine Nature joined to the human nature, because of the virtues of Charity and Obedience, with which I put Myself in condition to deserve them, because of Fortitude, Justice, Temperance, Prudence, because of all the virtues which I put in My heart to make it acceptable to God, My Father, I will have infinite power, not only as God, but also as Man, Who sacrifices Himself for the sake of everybody, that is, Who reaches the extreme limit of Charity. It is sacrifice which gives merit. The greater the sacrifice, the greater the merit. A complete merit for a complete sacrifice. Perfect merit for a perfect sacrifice. And it may be used according to the holy will of the victim, to whom the Father says: "Let it be as you wish!", because the victim has loved both God and his neighbour measurelessly. I tell you. The poorest man can be the richest and benefit countless brothers, if he can love to the extent of sacrifice. I tell you: even if you did not have a crumb of bread, a glass of water, a ragged garment, you can always help. How? By praying and suffering for your brothers. Help whom? Everybody. In which way? In a thousand holy ways, because if you can love, you will be able to act, teach, forgive, administer as God does, and to redeem, as the Man-God redeems. »

« O Lord, grant us that charity! » says John with a sigh.

« God gives you it, because He gives Himself to you. But you must receive it and practise it more and more perfectly. No event is to be separated from charity, as far as you are concerned. Both with regard to material and to spiritual events. Everything is to be done with charity and for Charity. Sanctify your actions, your days, put salt in your prayers, and light in your actions. Light, flavour, sanctification are Charity. Without it rites are of no value, prayers are vain, offerings false. I solemnly tell you that the smile with which a poor man greets you as brothers is of greater value than a sack of money which one may throw at your feet only to be noticed. Love, and God will always be with you. »

« Teach us how to love thus, Lord. »

« I have taught you for two years. Do what you see Me do and you will be in Charity and Charity will be in you, and on you there will be the seal, the chrism, the crown, which will really make you known as the ministers of God-Charity. Let us stop now in this shady place. The grass is thick and long and the trees mitigate the heat. We will proceed in the evening… »

443. Arrival at Tiberias. Parable of the Rain on the Vine.

3rd June 1946.

Jesus arrives at Tiberias with His apostles on a stormy morning. He has come along the short route from Tarichea to Tiberias, with

the boats tossing terribly on the very rough lake which is greyish like the sky, where large clouds chase one another threateningly.

Peter scans the sky and the lake and orders the servants to put the boats in a safe place: « Before long you will hear some fine music! I am no longer Peter the fisherman, if the downpour and the billows of the lake do not cause damage shortly. Is there anybody on the lake? » he asks himself scanning the heavy sea of Galilee. And he sees that it is deserted, with billows sweeping it more and more violently, under the vault of heaven which is becoming more and more threatening. He takes comfort seeing that it is deserted and thinking that it will not cause any harm to human beings, and he happily follows the Master, Who is proceeding among such strong gusts of wind, that the apostles walk with difficulty in clouds of dust, while their garments flap fiercely in the storm.

In Tiberias, in this part of the town where ordinary people live, families of fishermen or of poor workmen employed in jobs connected with fishing, people are busy coming and going to put back in the houses what could be damaged by the storm. Some run laden with nets, some with the oars from boats which have already been beached safely, and some drag their working tools into the houses, and all this takes place in the howling wind which raises clouds of dust and makes doors bang. The other part of Tiberias, the northern one, with buildings lined along the lake and beautiful parks visible along the curved shore, is sleeping idly. Only some servants or slaves, according to whether the house belongs to Israelites or to Romans, are busy removing curtains from roof-terraces, beaching sport-boats, and taking away chairs lying about in gardens…

Jesus, Who has come to this part, says to Simon Zealot and to His cousin Judas: « Go and ask the door-keeper of Johanna of Chuza whether any of our friends have been looking for us. I will wait here. »

« All right. And what about Johanna? »

« We will see her later. Go and do what I told you. »

The two go away quickly, and while the others are awaiting their return, Jesus sends them, some here, some there, to get a little food « for themselves and for the women, because it is not fair to be a burden to the family of the disciple » says Jesus. And He remains alone, leaning against the wall of a garden, from which comes the roar of a hurricane, so violent is the struggle of its tall trees against the wind.

Jesus is engrossed in thought, enveloped in His clothes, which He holds tight under His mantle, the top part of which He has pulled over His head like a hood, to protect Himself against the wind, which blows His hair in His eyes. And thus, covered in dust, with His face half hidden by the edge of His mantle, leaning against a

wall almost at the corner of a road, which crosses a beautiful thoroughfare coming from the lake towards the town centre, He looks like a beggar waiting for alms. Some people pass by and look at Him. But since He does not say anything and does not ask for anything and is keeping His head lowered, no one stops to give Him anything or to speak to Him. The storm in the meantime has become more violent and the noise of the lake stronger, filling the whole town with its roar.

A tall man, who is walking stooped to defend himself from the wind - he also is completely enveloped in his mantle, which he is holding tight under his chin with one hand - is coming from the internal road towards the coast one, and, on looking up to avoid a file of donkeys of market-gardeners who, after leaving the vegetables at the market, are going back to their gardens, he sees Jesus (and I see that the young man is Judas of Kerioth).

« Oh! Master! » he exclaims from the other side of the donkey file. « I was just coming to Johanna's looking for You. I was at Capernaum looking for You, but… » The last donkey has gone by and Judas rushes towards the Master, ending his speech: «… but there was nobody at Capernaum. I waited for days, then I came back here, and I went to Joseph's and to Johanna's every day looking for You… »

Jesus looks at him with His piercing eyes, and stops those impetuous words by saying simply: « Peace be with you. »

« It's true! I did not even greet You! Peace be with You, Master. But You always have such peace! »

« And have you not? »

« I am a man, Master. »

« A just man has peace. Only the guilty man is upset. Are you such? »

« I… No, Master. At least… Of course, if I have to tell You the truth, the fact that I was far from You did not make me happy… but that was not exactly being deprived of peace. I missed You, because I am fond of You… But peace is something different, is it not? … »

« Yes. It is. Separations do not impair the peace of the heart, if the heart of the separated person does not do things which his conscience tells him to be such as to grieve the person he loves, if the latter should hear of them. »

« But those who are absent do not know… Unless somebody tells them. »

Jesus looks at him and is silent.

« Are You alone, Master? » asks Judas trying to change the subject to more usual topics.

« I am waiting for those whom I sent to Johanna to find out whether My Mother has come from Nazareth. »

« Your Mother? Are You making Your Mother come here? »

« Yes, I am. I will stay with Her at Capernaum for the whole month, and I will go by boat to the villages on the banks of the lake, returning every day to Capernaum. There must be many disciples… »

« Yes… Many… » Judas has lost his gift of the gab. He is pensive…

« Have you nothing to tell Me, Judas? We are alone now… Has nothing happened to you, during the time of this separation, no incident about which you feel the need of a word of your Jesus? » Jesus asks kindly, in such a manner as to help the disciple to confess by making him feel all His merciful love.

« And do You know of anything in me which needs Your word? If You know - and I really do not know of anything which deserves such word - speak up. It is burdensome for a man to have to remember his sins and faults and confess them to another man… »

« I, Who am speaking to you, am not another man, but… »

« No. You are God. I know. That is why it is not even necessary that I should speak. You know… »

« I was saying that I am not another man, but I am your most loving Friend. I am not saying your Master, your superior, I am saying: your Friend… »

« It's still the same thing. And it is always boring to pry into what one has done in the past, as such confession may cause reproaches. But the annoying part is not so much to be reproached, as to lose a friend's esteem… »

« At Nazareth, the last Sabbath I was there, Simon Peter inadvertently told a companion something which he should not have mentioned. It was not a voluntary disobedience, it was not slander, it was not anything which might have injured his neighbour. Simon Peter had mentioned it to an honest heart and to a serious man, who realising that he had become acquainted with a secret, although neither he nor Peter wished so, swore that he would not repeat the secret to anybody else. Simon could have set his mind at rest… But he did not resign himself until he confessed his fault to Me. At once… Poor Simon! He called it a fault! But if in the hearts of My disciples there were only such faults, and so much humility, so much confidence, so much love, as Peter has, oh! I should proclaim Myself the Master of a crowd of saints!… »

« And so You want to tell me that Peter is holy and I am not. It's true. I am not a saint. Send me away, then… »

« You are not humble, Judas. Pride is ruining you. And you do not know Me yet… » concludes Jesus most sadly.

Judas perceives His grief and whispers: « Forgive me, Master!… »

« Always. But be good, son! Be good! Why do you want to harm yourself? »

Tears well up in Judas' eyes, whether they are true or not I do not know, and he seeks shelter in Jesus' arms, weeping on His shoulder.

And Jesus caresses his hair whispering: « Poor Judas! Poor Judas, who is seeking elsewhere, where he cannot find it, his peace and who may understand him… »

« Yes. It is true. You are right, Master. Peace is here… In Your embrace… I am a wretch… You are the only one who understands and loves me… You alone… I am the fool… Forgive me, Master. »

« Yes, be good, be humble. If you fall, come to Me and I will raise you. If you are tempted, run to Me. I will defend you, from yourself, from those who hate you, from everything… But stand up. The others are coming… »

« A kiss, Master… A kiss… »

And Jesus kisses him… And Judas recomposes himself… But in the meantime he has not confessed his faults at all, at least I do not think so…

« We are a little late because Johanna was already up and the door-keeper wanted to tell her. She will come today, to pay her respects to You, at Joseph's house » says Thaddeus.

« At Joseph's? If we get all the rain which heaven is promising, those streets will be like quagmires. Johanna will certainly not come to that hovel and along those streets. We had better go to her house… » says Judas who has already become sure of himself once again.

Jesus does not reply to him, but He replies to His cousin asking: « Did any of our friends look for us at Johanna's? »

« No, not yet. »

« All right. Let us go to Joseph's house. The others will join us… »

« If I were sure that our mothers are on the way here, I would go and meet them… » says Judas of Alphaeus.

« It would be a good thing. But there are several roads from Tiberias. And perhaps they did not take the main one… »

« That's true, Jesus… Let us go… »

They walk away fast, while the first thunder and lightning furrow the leaden sky, rumbling in the gorges of the hills which surround the lake almost completely. They enter Joseph's poor house, which in the stormy atmosphere looks poorer and darker. There is only one bright thing, the face of the disciple, and those of his relatives, who are so happy to have the Master in their house.

« But You are unlucky, Lord » apologises the boatman. « I could not go out fishing on a lake like this and I have nothing… but vegetables… »

« And your kind heart. But I have provided. Our companions are coming now with what is necessary. Do not tire yourself, woman… We can sit also on the floor. It is so clean. You are a clever woman, I

know. And the tidiness which I see here confirms it. »

« Oh! my wife! She is really a strong woman! My, nay, our joy » proclaims the boatman, who is thrown into a transport of delight by the praise of the Lord, Who has sat down peacefully on the lower edge of the fireplace in which no fire is lit, almost on the floor, holding between His legs a little boy, who looks at Him full of amazement.

Those who had gone to do the shopping arrive at the moment of the first downpour and they shake mantles and sandals on the threshold, to avoid carrying water and mud into the house. It seems the end of the world because of thunder, lightning, rain and wind. The roaring of the lake sounds like an accompaniment to the soli of thunderbolts and howling wind.

« Good health! Summer is wetting its feathers and drenching the fireplace… We will feel better afterwards… Providing it does not damage the vines… May I go upstairs to have a look at the lake? I want to see in what mood it is… »

« Go. The house is yours » the disciple replies to Peter.

And Peter, wearing only his tunic, goes out happily to enjoy the storm. He climbs up the outside staircase and remains on the terrace to freshen himself and to give his responses to those inside the house, as if he were on the deck of his boat giving orders for manoeuvres.

The others are sitting about in the kitchen, where they can hardly see, as they are compelled to keep the door ajar because of the rain, and only a thread of greenish light comes in through the fissure, interrupted by the short dazzling flashes of lightning…

Peter comes back in, wet through as if he had fallen into the lake and he states: « It's above our heads now. It's moving away towards Samaria. It's going to drench all there… »

« It has already soaked you! You are running like a fountain » remarks Thomas.

« Yes. But I feel so well after so much heat. »

« Come inside. It will do you no good to stand at the door wet as you are » advises Bartholomew.

« No! I am like seasoned wood… I was not yet able to say "father" well, when I began to remain in dampness. Ah! How well one breathes!… The street, however, is like… a river… You should see the lake! It's all the colours of the rainbow and is boiling like a pot. You cannot even see which way the billows are running. They boil on the spot… But it was needed… »

« Yes, we needed rain. The walls were not cooling down any more, they were so heated by the sun. The leaves of my vines were curled up and dusty… I watered the roots… but… What can a little water do when all the rest is like fire? » says Joseph.

« It does more harm than good, my friend » states Bartholomew.

« Plants need water from heaven, because their leaves also drink it, eh?! It does not seem so, but it is true. Roots, roots! Very well. But leaves are there, too, for some reason and they have their rights… »

« Master, do You not think that Bartholomew is proposing the subject for a beautiful parable? » asks the Zealot provoking Jesus to speak.

But Jesus, Who is lulling the little boy frightened by the thunder, does not relate the parable, however, He agrees saying: « And how would you propose it? »

« Badly, certainly, Master. I am not You… »

« Tell it as best you can. It will be a great help to you to preach by means of parables. Get accustomed to doing it. I am listening, Simon… »

« Oh!… You are the Master, I… a fool… But I will obey. I would say this: "A man had a beautiful vine. But as he did not own a vineyard, he had planted the vine in the little kitchen garden near his house, so that it might climb up to the terrace to give shade and grapes, and he took great care of his vine. But it was growing amid houses, near the street, so the smoke of kitchens and ovens and the dust of the road began to molest it. And while the rain still descended from heaven in the month of Nisan, the leaves of the vine were cleaned of impurities and enjoyed sunshine and air without any ugly crust of dirt on their surfaces preventing it. But when summer came and no more water descended from heaven, smoke, dust, excrement of birds formed thick layers on the leaves, while the sun, which was too strong, dried them up. The owner of the vine watered the roots deeply set in the ground, and thus the plant did not die, but it vegetated with difficulty, because the water sucked by the roots nourished only the central part, and the poor leaves did not enjoy any of it. On the contrary, fumes of fermentation rose from the torrid soil, wetted with little water and spoiled the leaves with spots resembling malignant pustules. But at last a torrential rain came from heaven and the water descended on the leaves, it ran along the branches, the trunk, the grapes, it quenched the fierce heat of walls and ground, and after the storm, the owner of the vine saw that his plant was clean, fresh, enjoying and giving joy under the serene sky". That is the parable. »

« Good. But what about the comparison with man?… »

« Master, do it Yourself. »

« No. You must do it. We are among brothers, so you must not be afraid of cutting a bad figure. »

« I am not afraid of a bad figure, as if it were something grievous. On the contrary I love it, because it helps me to be humble. But I Would not like to say anything wrong… »

« I will correct you. »

« Oh! In that case I would say: "The same applies to a man who does not live isolated in the garden of God, but lives in the midst of the dust and smoke of worldly things. They, in fact, encrust him slowly, almost inadvertently, and he finds that his spirit is sterilised under such a thick layer of humanity, that the breeze of God and the sun of Wisdom can no longer be of any avail to him. And in vain he tries to make up for it with a little water drawn from practices, and given with so much humanity to the inferior part, that the superior part does not enjoy any of it… Woe to the man who does not cleanse himself with the water from Heaven, as it cleans out impurities, it extinguishes the ardours of passions, and gives true nourishment to his whole ego". I have spoken. »

« You have spoken well. I would also say that, unlike plants, which have no free will and are fixed to the ground, and consequently they are not free to go and look for what helps them and shun what is harmful for them, man can go and look for the water of Heaven and avoid the dust, the smoke and the ardour of the flesh, of the world and of the demon. The teaching would then be more complete. »

« Thank You, Master. I will remember that » replies the Zealot.

« We do not live a solitary life… We live in the world… So… » says Judas of Kerioth.

« So what? Do you mean that Simon has spoken foolishly? » asks Judas of Alphaeus.

« I don't mean that. I am saying that as we cannot live all alone… we are bound to be covered with things of the world. »

« The Master and Simon are just saying that we must seek the water of Heaven to keep ourselves clean notwithstanding that the world is around us » says James of Alphaeus.

« Sure! But is the water of Heaven always available to cleanse us? »

« Of course it is » replies John sure of himself.

« Is it? And where do you find it? »

« In love. »

« Love is fire. It will bum you even more. »

« Yes, it is fire. But it is also water which cleanses. Because it removes everything which belongs to the Earth and gives all the things which come from Heaven. »

«… I do not understand these operations. It removes, it gives… »

« No. I am not mad. I say that it removes what is humanity and it gives you what comes from God and is therefore divine. And a divine thing can but nourish and sanctify. Day after day love cleanses you of what the world gave you. »

Judas is about to reply, but the little child who is in Jesus's lap says: « Another parable, a beautiful one… for me… » which puts an end to the argument.

« On what, child? » asks Jesus condescending.

The little fellow looks around and he finds it. He points at his mother and says: « On mothers. »

« A mother is for the soul and the body what God is for them. What does a mother do for you? She looks after you, she takes care of you, she teaches you, she loves you, she watches that you do not hurt yourself, she keeps you under the wings of her love, just as a dove does with its little ones. And a mother is to be obeyed and loved, because everything she does, she does it for our good. Good God also, and much more perfectly than the most perfect of mothers, keeps His children under the wings of His love, He protects them, He teaches them, He helps them and He thinks of them day and night. But also good God, just like, even much more than a mother - because a mother is the greatest love on Earth, but God is the greatest and eternal love on Earth and in Heaven - is to be obeyed and loved, because everything He does, He does it for our good… »

« Also thunderbolts? » interrupts the boy who is frightened of them.

« Yes. »

« Why? »

« Because they clean the sky and the air and… »

« And then appears the rainbow!… » exclaims Peter, who, half inside and half outside the house, has listened and been quiet. And he adds: « Come, little dove, and I will show it to you. Look how beautiful!… »

In fact the weather is clearing up, as the storm is over, and a huge rainbow, from the shores of Hippo, stretches its arched ribbon across the lake, disappearing beyond the mountains behind Magdala.

They all go to the door, but in order to see the lake, they have to take off their sandals, because the yard is a little pond of yellowish water, which is slowly decreasing. The only remembrance of the storm is the lake, that has become yellowish, while its waves are beginning to calm down. But the sky is clear and the air fresh. The shades of leaves have brightened up.

And Tiberias becomes busy again… And along the road still full of water and mud, they soon see Johanna come with Jonathan. She looks up to greet the Master, Who is on the terrace, where she climbs up quickly to prostrate herself, full of happiness… The apostles are speaking to one another, with the exception of Judas, who, half way between Jesus and Johanna on one side and the apostles on the other, is absent-minded, pensive. I wager that he is all ears listening to the words of Johanna, whose attitude towards Judas is not known, as she greeted all the apostles, just saying: « Peace to you. » But Johanna is speaking only of the children and of

the permission she got from her husband to go to Capernaum by boat while the Master is there. And Judas' suspicions subside and he joins his companions…

With the lower parts of Her garments splashed with mud, but dry elsewhere, there appears the Most Holy Virgin Mary coming forward with Mary of Alphaeus and the five who had gone to bring Her here. Mary's smile while She goes up the short staircase is more beautiful than the rainbow still visible in the sky.

« Your Mother, Master! » announces Thomas.

Jesus goes to meet Her, followed by all the others. And they congratulate the women on their having had no other trouble but a little mud on the edges of their garments.

« As soon as it began to rain we stopped at a market-gardener's » explains Matthew. And he asks: « Have you been waiting long for us? »

« No. We arrived at dawn. »

« We are late, because of a poor wretch… » says Andrew.

« Well. Now that you are all here and that the weather is clearing up, I would say that we should leave for Capernaum this evening » says Peter.

Mary, Who is always agreeable, this time objects: « No, Simon. We cannot leave, if first… Son, a mother has implored Me to ask You - as You are the only one who can do it - to convert the soul of her only son. I beg You, listen to Me, because I promised… Forgive him… Your forgiveness… »

« He has already forgiven, Mary. I have already spoken to the Master… » interrupts Judas thinking that Mary is referring to him.

« I am not speaking of you, Judas of Simon. I am referring to Esther of Levi, a woman of Nazareth, a mother killed by the behaviour of her son. Jesus, she died the night You left. Her invocations to You were not for herself, a poor mother martyr of a disgraceful son, but for her son… because we mothers are solicitous about you sons, not about ourselves… She wants her Samuel to be saved… But now that she is dead, Samuel, a prey to remorse, seems mad and will not listen to reason… But You, Son, can cure his intellect and spirit… »

« Is he repentant? »

« How can You expect him to be so if he is desperate? »

« In fact to have killed one's mother by grieving her continuously, must make one desperate. The first commandment of love for our neighbour cannot be infringed with impunity. Mother, how can You expect Me to forgive and God to give peace to this impenitent matricide? »

« Son, that mother is asking for peace from the other life… She was good… she suffered so much… »

« She will have peace… »

« No, Jesus. There is no peace for the spirit of a mother, if she sees that her child is deprived of God… »

« It is just that he should be deprived. »

« Yes, Son. Of course. But for poor Esther's sake… Her last word was a prayer for her son… And she asked Me to tell You… Jesus, during her lifetime Esther never had any joy, You know that. Give her this joy now that she is dead, give it to her spirit which is suffering because of her son. »

« Mother, I tried to convert Samuel when I stopped at Nazareth. But I spoke to him in vain because love was extinguished in him… »

« I know. But Esther offered her forgiveness, her sufferings, that love might revive in Samuel. And, who knows? Could his present torment not be love coming back to life again? A painful love, and one could say: a useless love, since his mother can no longer enjoy it. But You… but I, we know, I through faith, You by knowledge, that the charity of the dead is vigilant and close at hand. They do not lose interest, neither do they ignore what happens to the beloved ones they left here… And Esther may still enjoy this late love which her ungrateful son, now tortured by remorse, has for her. My Jesus, I know, this man fills You with disgust because of the enormity of his sin. A son who hates his mother! A monster, for You, Who are full of love for Yours. But just because You are full of love for Me, listen to Me. Let us go back to Nazareth together, at once. The road is no burden to Me, nothing is of any trouble to Me, if it helps to save a soul… »

« All right. You have won, Mother… Judas of Simon, take Joseph with you and leave for Nazareth. You will bring Samuel to Me at Capernaum. »

« I, Why I? »

« Because you are not tired. The others are. They walked for such a long time, while you were resting… »

« I have walked, too. I went to Nazareth looking for You. Your Mother can tell You. »

« Your companions went to Nazareth every Sabbath and they have just come back from a long tour. Go and do not argue… »

« The fact is… they do not like me at Nazareth… Why send me? »

« They are not fond of Me either, and yet I go to Nazareth. It is not necessary to find love in a place to go there. Go and do not argue, I am telling you again. »

« Master… I am afraid of madmen… »

« The man is deranged by remorse, but he is not mad. »

« Your Mother said that he is… »

« And for the third time I say to you: go and do not argue. It will do you nothing but good to ponder on the consequences which may be brought about by making a mother suffer… »

« Are You comparing me with Samuel? My mother is the queen in

her house. I am not even close to her to control her or to be a burden to her by keeping me… »

« Such things are no burden to mothers. But the lack of love of their sons, the fact that they are imperfect in the eyes of God and of men… are rocks that crush them. Go, I tell you. »

« I am going. But what shall I tell the man? »

« To come to Capernaum, to Me. »

« If he never obeyed even his mother, do You expect him to obey me, particularly now, that he is so desperate? »

« And have you not yet understood that if I am sending you, it means that I have already worked on the spirit of Samuel, freeing him from the delirium of desperate remorse? »

« I am going. Goodbye, Master. Goodbye, Mary. Good bye, friends. » And he leaves, not at all enthusiastic, followed by Joseph, who, on the contrary, is overjoyed at being chosen for that mission.

Peter sings something softly between his teeth…

Jesus asks him: « What are you saying, Simon of Jonah? »

« I was singing an old lake song… »

« Which is? »

« It says: "Always so! Farmers like fishing, fishermen don't!". And here, truly, we have seen that the disciple was more anxious to go fishing than the apostle… »

Many laugh. But Jesus does not laugh, He sighs.

« Have I grieved You, Master? » asks Peter.

« No. But do not criticise all the time. »

« My Cousin is grieved because of Judas » says Judas of Alphaeus.

« Will you be silent, too, and above all in the bottom of your heart. »

« But has Samuel really received a miracle already? » asks Thomas who is curious and somewhat incredulous.

« Yes, he has. »

« Then there is no need for him to come to Capernaum. »

« It is necessary. I have not cured his heart completely. He must seek to be cured, by himself, that is, he must ask for forgiveness through holy repentance. But I have enabled him to reason again. It is for him to achieve the rest through his free will. Let us go downstairs. We will go among the humble people… »

« Not to my house, Master? »

« No, Johanna. You can come to Me whenever you wish so. They are tied to their work and I am going to them… »

And Jesus descends from the terrace and goes out into the street followed by the others, also by Johanna, who has sent Jonathan home and who is quite determined not to part from Jesus, since Jesus is not willing to go to her house.

They go among poor little houses, towards poorer and poorer

suburbs… And the vision ends thus.

444. Arrival at Capernaum.

4th June 1946.

I do not know whether spontaneously or because she was informed by somebody, Porphirea is on the little shore of Capernaum when the boats arrive there, and they are three instead of two, which makes me think that someone went to Capernaum ahead of the others, to inform that the Master was arriving, and to get another boat for the women and Marjiam. And with Porphirea are the daughters of Philip and Mirjiam of Jairus, in addition to the mother of James and John.

But my attention is attracted by Porphirea who, ignoring the wavelets which beat upon the shore with merry and somewhat cheeky laps, as the lake is not yet completely calm, goes into the water, up to her knees, and she leans on the boat, in which Marjiam is, and kisses him saying: « I will love you also on his (1) behalf. My dear son, I will love you on behalf of everybody! » and she is deeply moved when saying so. And as soon as the boat stops, and the people in it land, Porphirea embraces Marjiam, as she does not wish to cede to anybody the task of making the boy feel that he is deeply loved.

She then joins the group of the other boat to venerate the Master and be able to do so before the people of Capernaum and the many disciples, who have been waiting for the arrival of the Master for a long time, may take possession of Jesus, depriving the women disciples of the joy of having Him to themselves. The women crowd around the Master, and only the children of Capernaum can break their circle squeezing their slim bodies between the women and thus arrive at Jesus, Who is going slowly towards the house.

As it is early morning, there are not many people in the streets; they are mostly women going to the fountain or to the market, surrounded by their host of children, or some fishermen, who are coming back taking oars and nets to the boats, to prepare them to go out fishing in the evening. But there are no notables, with the exception of Jairus, who comes forward respectfully to venerate Jesus and to express his happiness, as he has heard that the Master will be staying for some weeks, going at night to the towns on the lake, to speak there in the morning, coming back to Capernaum to rest during the day. And it is Jairus, on account of the respect which he inspires in his fellow citizens, who is the first to succeed in placing himself beside Jesus. And he is successful because he Pushes aside his daughter with paternal authority. After him the

(1) Porphirea is referring to Marjiam's grandfather, who had died recently.

more influential disciples are able to join Jesus, that is, those to whom, out of instinctive motion of justice, the others surrender the first places after the apostles, that is the old priest John (the ex leper), Stephen, Hermas, Timoneus, Naomi's son John, Nicolaus and the shepherd disciples, who are all present, with the exception of the two who went towards Lebanon.

Jesus takes an interest in the others, those who are absent, and He inquires after them of their companions. Are they still fervent? Oh! very! Are they resting at home? No. They are working in their towns or in nearby villages making new disciples. And what about Ermasteus? Ermasteus has gone along the coast and is going down to his own town. He is with Joseph, the disciple from Emmaus, and they want to speak of the Saviour along all the coasts, and they have been joined by their two friends Samuel and Abel, who want to show what the Lord can do, as one was a cripple and the other a leper.

Questions and answers, and the road is not sufficient to exhaust them, neither can Thomas' house in Capernaum receive so many people who are now pressing around the Master, Who has come back after such a long absence. And Jesus decides to go towards the country, so that He may stay with them all, without any preferences.

445. Preaching at Capernaum.

22nd June 1946.

It is the Sabbath. I think it is, because I see people gathered in the synagogue. But they may have gathered there to avoid being in the sun, or to be more tranquil in Jairus' house. And the people are pressing, paying attention, notwithstanding the heat which not even the doors and windows left open to have currents of air can alleviate. Those who have not been able to enter the synagogue, in order not to be roasted in the sun outside, have taken shelter in the shady garden behind the synagogue, Jairus' garden rich in thick pergolas and leafy fruit-trees. And Jesus is speaking near the door opening onto the garden, so that He may be heard both by these listeners and by those inside the synagogue. Jairus is beside Him, listening attentively. The apostles are in a group near the door which opens onto the garden. The women disciples, with Mary in the middle, are sitting under a pergola, which almost touches the house. Mirjiam of Jairus and Philip's two daughters are sitting at Mary's feet.

From the words I hear I gather that there has been an incident between the usual Pharisees and Jesus and that the people are upset because of that. Jesus in fact is exhorting them to be peaceful and to forgive, saying that the word of God cannot bear fruit in

hearts which are upset.

« We cannot bear You to be insulted » shouts someone from the crowd.

« Leave it to My Father and yours and imitate Me. Be patient, and forgive. Enemies are not convinced by returning insult for insult. »

« They are not convinced either by continual meekness. You are letting them tread upon You » shouts the Iscariot.

« My apostle, do not cause scandal by setting an example of wrath and criticism. »

« Your apostle, however, is right. His words are just. »

« The heart which utters them is not just, neither is the heart which listens to them. He who wants to be My disciple must imitate Me. I tolerate and I forgive. I am meek, humble and peaceful. The children of wrath cannot stay with Me, because they are the children of the century and of their passions. Do you not remember the fourth Book of Kings? In a passage it says that Isaiah spoke against Sennacherib who thought he could attempt everything, and prophesied that nothing would save him from God's punishment. He compares him with an animal, through the nostrils of which a ring is put and a bit through its lips to subdue its wicked fury. You know how Sennacherib perished by the hands of his own sons. In fact cruel people perish through their own cruelty. They perish both in their bodies and in their souls. I do not love cruel people. I do not love proud people. I do not love wrathful, greedy, lustful people. I have not confirmed by word or set an example for you of such things, on the contrary I have always taught you the virtues which are the opposite of such evil passions. How beautiful is the prayer of our king David, when, re-sanctified by sincere repentance of past sins and by years of wise behaviour, he praised the Lord, meek and resigned to the decree by which he was not allowed to be the builder of the new Temple! Let us say it together, praising the Most High Lord… » And Jesus intones the prayer of David (1 Paralipomena 29, 10-19), while those who are sitting stand up and those leaning against the wall assume an attitude of respect moving away from their support.

Then, in His habitual tone, Jesus resumes: « You must always remember that everything is in the hands of God, every enterprise, every victory. Magnificence, power, glory and victory belong to the Lord. And He grants this or that thing to man, if He deems that it is the right time to grant it for a certain good purpose. But man cannot pretend anything. God did not allow David to build the Temple, although he had been forgiven, as he was still in need of victory over himself, after his past errors: "You have shed much blood and fought too many battles; it is not for you to build a house for My Name since you have shed so much blood in My

presence. But a son will be born to you and he will be a man of peace… he will therefore be named Peaceful (1)… he shall build a house for My Name". That is what the Most High said to His servant David. I say the same to you. Are you willing, because of your wrath, not to deserve to build in your hearts the house for the Lord your God? Reject, therefore, every feeling which is not love. Have perfects hearts, as David invoked for his son, the builder of the Temple, so that, by keeping My commandments and doing everything according to what I taught you, you may succeed in building within your hearts the abode of your God, while waiting to go yourselves to His eternal joyful house. Give Me a parchment, Jairus. I will explain to them what God wants. »

Jairus goes where the rolls are piled and he takes one at random in the middle of the pile, and after dusting it, he hands it to Jesus, Who unrolls it and reads: « "Jeremiah, chapter 5. Rove to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, look, watch, search her squares, if you can find one man who does right and tries to be faithful, and I will be merciful unto her". » (The Lord says to me: « Do not continue. I will read the whole chapter. »)

Jesus, after reading it all, hands the roll back to Jairus and speaks.

« My children. You have heard which dreadful punishments are laid aside for Jerusalem, for Israel, for not being just. But do not rejoice at that. She is our Fatherland. Do not rejoice thinking: "Perhaps we shall no longer be here". She is always full of your brothers. Do not say: "Serves her right, because she is cruel with the Lord". The misfortunes of the Fatherland, the sorrows of fellow-citizens must always grieve those who are just. Do not measure as other people do, but as God measures, that is, mercifully. What are you, therefore, to do with respect to this Fatherland and these fellow-countrymen, whether by Fatherland and fellow-countrymen you mean the great Fatherland and its inhabitants, the whole of Palestine, or this little one, that is, Capernaum, your hometown, whether you mean all the Hebrews, or these few, who are hostile to Me, in this little town of Galilee? You must accomplish deeds of love. Endeavour to save Fatherland and fellow-countrymen. How? Perhaps through violence? With scorn? No. By love, by patient love to convert them to God. You have just heard. "If I find one man who does right, I will pardon him". Strive, therefore, so that hearts may come to justice and become just. In actual fact in their injustice they say of Me: "It is not Him", and they thus believe that by persecuting Me, no harm will befall them. They really say: "Such things will never happen. The prophets spoke at random". And they will try to make you speak as

(1) Peace is shalom; « Solomon » is derived from it.

they do. You who are present here, are faithful. But where is Capernaum? Is this all Capernaum? Where are those whom the other times I saw crowd around Me? So the yeast, which fermented the last time I was here, has ruined many hearts? Where is Alphaeus? Where is Joshua with his three sons? Where is Haggai of Malachi? Where are Joseph and Naomi? Where is Levi, Abel, Saul, Zacharias? Have they forgotten the undeniable help they received, because false words overwhelmed it? But can words destroy facts? You can see! This is only a small place. In this place, where is the largest number of people assisted, envious malice has been able to devastate faith in Me. I see gathered here only those who are perfect in faith. And could you expect remote events, remote words to keep all Israel faithful to God? That should be the case, because faith must be such also without the support of facts. But it is not so. And the greater is science, the smaller is faith, because learned people think that they are exempted from simple sound faith, which believes through the strength of love and not by means of the assistance of science. It is love which you must hand down to posterity and inflame. And to do that you must be inflamed. You must be convinced, heroically convinced, in order to convince. In place of ill manners, in reply to insults, you must have humility and love. And with them you must go and remind of the words of the Lord those who no longer remember them: "We must fear the Lord Who gives us the rain of the early and later season". »

« They would not understand us! On the contrary they would offend us saying that we are sacrilegious, teaching without the right to do it. You know who are the scribes and Pharisees!… »

« Yes. I know. But even if I had not known, I would know now. But it does not matter what they are. It matters what we are. If they and priests clap their hands to false prophets who prophesy what gives them some profit, forgetting that hands should be clapped only to the good deeds which the Decalogue commands, that is no reason why my faithful believers should imitate them or feel discouraged and just stand looking, as if they had been defeated. You must work as hard as Evil works… »

« We are not Evil » shouts from the threshold, on the street, the husky voice of Eli the Pharisee, who tries to enter shouting all the time: « We are not the Evil ones, instigator. »

« Man, you are the disturber, go away! » says at once a centurion who must have been there watching, as his intervention is so fast.

« You, a pagan, you dare impose on me… »

« I, a Roman, do. Go out! The Rabbi is not disturbing you, but you are disturbing Him. You cannot… »

« We are the Rabbis, not the Galilean carpenter » cries the old man, who resembles more a barrow woman than a master.

« One more, one less… You have hundreds of them, and they are

all wicked teachers. Here is the only virtuous one. I order you to go out. »

« Virtuous, eh?! Virtuous the man who pays Rome for His safety! Sacrilegious! Unclean! »

The centurion utters a cry and the heavy steps of soldiers mingle with Eli's shrill insults. « Take that man and throw him out! » orders the centurion.

« Me? Pagan hands touching me? The feet of pagans in one of our synagogues! Anathema! Help! They are polluting me!… »

« I beg you, soldiers. Let him go! Do not come in. Please respect this place and his old age » says Jesus from His place.

« As You wish, Rabbi. »

« Ha! Ha! Intriguer! But the Sanhedrin will be informed. I have the proof! Now I believe the words which were related to us. I have the proof. Anathema on You! »

« And my sword on you if you say another word. Rome defends what is right. She does not intrigue, you old hyena, with anybody. The Sanhedrin will be informed of your lies. The Proconsul will have my report. I am going to write it at once. Go home and remain there at the disposal of Rome » and the centurion makes a perfect right-about turn and goes away followed by four soldiers, leaving Eli astounded and trembling cravenly…

Jesus resumes speaking as if nothing had interrupted Him: « You must work as hard as Evil works, to build within you and around you the house of the Lord, as I was saying at the beginning. You must act with great holiness so that God may descend again into hearts and on our dear Fatherland, which is already punished so severely and does not know which clouds of misfortune are piling up for her in the north, in the strong country which already rules over us and will rule more and more, because the deeds of citizens are such as to disgust the Most Kind Lord and to arouse the strong ruler. And with the indignation of God and of the ruler, do you expect perhaps to have peace and welfare? Be good, children of God. Strive to have not one, but hundreds of good people in Israel, to ward off the dreadful punishments of Heaven. I told you at the beginning that where there is no peace, there can be no word of God, which heard peacefully may yield fruit in hearts. And you know that this meeting has been neither tranquil nor fruitful. There is too much agitation in hearts… Go. We will still have some hours to be together. And pray, as I do, that those who upset us, may mend their ways… Let us go, Mother » and squeezing through the crowd, He goes out into the street.

Eli is still there and, as white as death, he throws himself at Jesus' feet. « Have pity! You saved my grandson once. Save me, that I may have time to mend my ways. I have sinned! I confess it. But You are good. Rome… Oh! what will Rome do to me? »

« She will remove the summer dust from you with a good thrashing » shouts one, and the people laugh while Eli utters a painful groan as if he already felt the scourge, and he moans: « I am old… aching all over… Alas! »

« The cure will do you good, you old jackal! »

« You will be restored to youth and will be able to dance… »

« Silence! » Jesus orders the scoffers. And He says to the Pharisee: « Stand up. Be dignified. You know that I do not conspire with Rome. So, what do you want Me to do for you? »

« That is true. Yes. It is true. You do not conspire. Nay, You disdain the Romans, You hate them, You c… »

« Nothing of the kind. Do not lie praising Me, as you lied previously accusing Me. And you had better know that it would be no praise to Me to say that I hate this one or that one, or I curse this or that one. I am the Saviour of every soul, and there are no races or faces in My eyes, but souls only. »

« That is true! Very true! But You are just and Rome knows and that is why she defends You. You keep the crowds calm, You teach them to respect the laws and… »

« Is that perhaps a fault in your eyes? »

« Oh! no! It is justice! You know how to do what we should all do, because You are just, because… »

The crowds sneer and murmur. Several epithets, such as « Liar! Coward! This very morning he spoke differently! » and so forth can be heard, although spoken in a low key.

« Well? What shall I do? »

« Go! Go to the centurion. Quick! Before the messenger leaves. See? They are getting the horses ready! Oh! Have mercy! »

Jesus looks at him: small, trembling, wan with fear, miserable… and examines him… compassionately. Only four eyes look at him pitifully: those of Jesus and of His Mother. All other eyes are either ironical, or severe, or upset… Even the eyes of John and Andrew are stern with disdainful severity.

« I have pity. But I will not go to the centurion… »

« He is Your friend… »

« No. »

« He is grateful to You, I mean… because You cured his servant. »

« I cured also your grandson. And you are not grateful to Me, although you are an Israelite like Me. Beneficent help creates no obligation. »

« Yes, it does. Woe to those who are not thankful to… » Eli realises that he is condemning himself and becomes quiet, stammering. The crowds sneer at him.

« Quick, Rabbi. Great Rabbi! Holy Rabbi! He is giving orders, see?! They are on the point of leaving! You want me to be laughed at! You want me dead! »

« No. I am not going to remind him of a favour. Go and say to him: "The Master tells you to be merciful". Go! »

Eli runs away and Jesus sets out in the opposite direction towards His house.

The centurion must have agreed, because I see the soldiers, who had got into the saddles, dismount and hand back a wax tablet to the centurion and then take the horses away.

« What a pity! It would have served him right! » exclaims Peter, and Matthew replies to him: « Yes. The Master should have let him be punished! A blow for each insult to us. Hateful old man! »

« And so he is ready to start all over again! » exclaims Thomas.

Jesus turns round severely: « Have I followers, or have I demons? Go away, you with merciless hearts! Your presence is unpleasant to Me. »

The three remain where they are, petrified by the reproach.

« Son! You are already so grieved! And I am in such great pain! Do not add this one… Look at them!… » implores Mary.

And Jesus turns round to look at the three. Three desolate faces, with eyes full of hope and of sorrow. « Come! » orders Jesus.

Oh! Swallows are not as swift as the three.

« And let it be the last time that I hear you speak such words. You, Matthew, have no right to speak thus. You, Thomas, are not yet dead, to judge who is imperfect, thinking that you are saved. And you, Simon of Jonah, behaved like a rock carried with great difficulty to a mountain top and then rolled down to the valley. Understand Me for what I mean… And now listen. It is useless to speak here in the synagogue, or in town. I will speak from the boats on the lake, now here, now there. Prepare the boats, as many as are needed and we will go out in the placid evenings or at the cool dawns… »

446. At Magdala. Parable on Good and Bad Will.

24th June 1946.

« Where, Master? » asks Peter who has completed the manoeuvres and preparations for navigation and is with his boat at the head of the little flotilla which, laden with people, is ready to follow the Master.

« To Magdala. I promised Mary of Lazarus. »

« All right » replies Peter and he manoeuvres the rudder in order to tack in the right direction.

Johanna is in the boat with the Master, the Blessed Virgin, Mary of Clopas, Marjiam, Matthew, James of Alphaeus and a man whom I do not know: she points at the many boats on the lake in the quiet summer evening, which softens the glow of sunset with cascades of purple veils, as if heaven rained showers of amethysts or of trusses

of wistaria in bloom. She remarks: « Perhaps the boats of the Roman ladies are among those. It is one of their favourite amusements to simulate fishing in these placid evenings. »

« But they will be farther south » observes the man whom I do not know.

« Oh! no, Benjamin. They have fast craft and experienced sailors. They come up as far as here. »

« For all they have to do… » grumbles Peter, and he continues through his beard, as he is an intolerant fisherman who considers navigation and fishing a profession, not a pastime, almost a religion completely regulated by severe useful laws, and its improper usage seems a profanation to him: « With their incense, their flowers and perfumes and other demoniacal things they contaminate the water; with their music, loud cries and language they disturb the fish; with their smoky lamps they frighten them; with their cursed nets cast inconsiderately they spoil the bottom and damage reproduction… It should be forbidden. The Sea of Galilee belongs to Galileans, who are also fishermen, not to prostitutes and their partners… If I were the master! I would fix you, you filthy heathen boats, you floating sinks of vice, alcoves sailing to bring here, on these waters of God, of our God, to His children, your… Oh! look! They are coming straight here! Can one stand that!… Can one allow… Can… »

Jesus interrupts the accusatory oration, by which Peter gives vent to his spirit of Israelite and fisherman, flushing, suffocating with rage, panting as if he were struggling against infernal forces, and He says with a peaceful smile: « It is a good job that you are not the master. Fortunately you are not! For them and for yourself. Because you would prevent them from following a good impulse, thus an impulse impressed on their spirits - pagan, I agree, but naturally good - impressed on their spirits by the Eternal Mercy which guides these creatures, who are not guilty of being born Romans and not Jews. And God looks at them with merciful eyes because He sees that they tend to what is good. And you would harm yourself because you would commit an act against charity and one against humility… »

« Humility I don't understand… Being the master of the lake, it would be lawful for me to dispose of it as I like. »

« No, Simon of Jonah. No. You are wrong. Also the things which belong to us, belong to us because God grants them to us. So, even if we possess them for a limited period of time, we must always consider that He Who possesses everything without any limitation of time or measure is One only. One only is the Master. Men… Oh! they are only administrators of crumbs of the great Creation. But He is the Master, My Father and yours and of all living beings. Further, He is God, thus most perfect in all His thoughts and actions.

Now: if God looks benignly at the movement of these heathen hearts towards the Truth, and does not only look, but encourages such movement, communicating to it a stronger and stronger motion towards Good, do you not think that you, a man, by wanting to stop it, actually want to prevent God from doing something? And when do you stop anything? When you do not consider it good. So this is what you would be thinking of your God: that He is doing a deed which is not good. Now, if it is not right to judge our brothers, because every man has his faults and his faculty of knowing and judging is so limited that seven times out of ten his judgement is wrong, it is absolutely wicked to judge God in His action. Simon, Simon! Lucifer wanted to judge God in one of His thoughts and he considered it wrong and wanted to take the place of God, thinking that he was more just than God. You know, Simon, what Lucifer achieved. And you know that all the pains we suffer have come because of that pride… »

« You are right, Master! I am a poor wretch! Forgive me, Master! » And Peter, who is always impulsive, leaves the tiller of the rudder to throw himself at Jesus' feet, while the boat, suddenly left to itself, and just on the crest of a wave, yaws and heels in a fearful manner amidst the screams of Mary of Clopas and Johanna and the shouts of those in the light twin boat, when they see Peter's heavy boat coming straight for them.

Fortunately Matthew is quick in taking the rudder, and the boat resumes its course after pitching dreadfully, also because the others, to keep away from it, have used their oars with vigorous strokes, thus agitating the water.

« Hey! Simon! Once you were insolent to the Romans, whom you treated as landlubbers, because they were coming straight for us. But now you are cutting a bad figure… and, what is more, in their presence. Look how they are all standing in their boats to see… » says the Iscariot teasing Peter and pointing at the Roman boats, which are now so close, in the sheet of water before Magdala, that those on board are able to see clearly, notwithstanding that the purple veils of the evening have become darker and darker dimming daylight.

« You have also lost a hamper and a small bucket, Simon. Shall we try to fish them up with the hooks? » says James of Zebedee, from another boat, which is now close at hand, because, after the incident, they have all crowded round Peter's boat.

« But how did you manage to do that? It never happens to you! » exclaims Andrew from another boat.

Peter replies to them all, one after the other, whilst they have almost spoken all together. « Have they seen me? It does not matter! I wish they had seen also my heart in the same way and… Well, better not say that, Peter… But you must know that you are not hurting me. It was not a wrong manoeuvre, it happened for a good

purpose, one that can mortify me… Don't worry, James! Old things went to the bottom… I wish I could throw out after them also the old man persisting in me! I would be prepared to lose everything, even my boat, to be just as the Master wants me… How did I manage? Eh! I proved to myself, to my pride, which wants to teach even God things of the spirit, that I am an utter beast also in matters concerning boats… It serves me right. I made a parable of myself for myself… Didn't I, Master? »

Jesus smiles nodding… Sitting astern, in His habitual place, white against the darkening air, tranquil, His hair blowing gently in the evening breeze, He stands out in the twilight like an angel of peaceful brightness.

The Roman boats have reached them.

« They have very good boats and perfect sails… not to mention the sailors! They go as fast as halcyons! They exploit every puff of wind and even the slightest currents… »

« Almost all the oarsmen are from Crete or from the Nile region » explains Johanna.

« The sailors of the delta are most skilled, and so are those from Crete. But also those from Italy are very good… They pass through Scylla and Charybdis… and that is enough to say that they are very good » admits the unknown man whose name is Benjamin.

« Where are we going, Lord? To Magdala, or… Look! Those of Magdala are coming here… »

In fact all the little boats of that village hasten to depart from the shingly shore and the little harbour, laden, nay, frightfully overladen with people, so much so that the gunwales are almost on a level with the surface of the water and they are steering with difficulty towards the boats from Capernaum.

« No. Let us stop here offshore from the town. I will speak from the boat… »

« The trouble is that… Those imprudent people want to be drowned. Look, Master' It is true that the lake is as smooth as a millpond… but water is always water… and weight is weight… and there… they seem to think that they are on land and not on water… Tell them to go back… They will be drowned… »

« Man of little faith! Do you not remember that while you believed in My invitation, you walked on water as on solid ground? They have faith. And thus, in spite of the laws of balance between weight and density, the waters will support those overloaded boats. »

« If that happens… this is really the evening of a great miracle… » murmurs Peter shrugging his shoulders, casting the little anchor to secure the boat, which remains thus in the centre of a circle of boats, some from Capernaum, some from Magdala and some from Tiberias. These last ones are those of the Roman ladies, and they

prudently remain behind those from Capernaum, towards the centre of the lake.

Jesus faces away from them. He looks towards those of Magdala, towards the large shady garden of Mary of Lazarus, towards the little houses, the whiteness of which, spread as they are along the shore, stands out in the night.

The lake, no longer agitated by prows and oars, has become calm again: a large sheet of plateglass veined with silver in the early moonlight and strewn with scales of topazes and rubies where the flames of torches or the light of lamps, placed on every prow, are mirrored in the lake.

Faces look strange in the contrast of the red-yellow lights or of the moonbeams; some appear very clear, some can hardly be seen as they are, some seem cut into two, lengthwise or horizontally, with only the forehead or only the chin lit up, or with one cheek only, half a face, with a clean-cut profile, as if there was nothing on the other side. Some eyes are shining, some look like empty eyesockets, and likewise, some mouths are seen smiling cheerfully displaying strong teeth, while others seem to be erased from the shaded faces.

But to make it possible for everybody to see Jesus, the boats from Capernaum and Magdala hand over a large number of lamps, which -are placed at Jesus' feet, on the little benches, while some are hung on the inactive oars, some are placed in the bow and stern, and some are even hung up in clusters on the mast, the sail of which has been struck. Jesus' boat is thus resplendent in a circle of boats left without lamps, and He is now clearly visible, as He is floodlit. Only the Roman boats still look reddish because of their red torches, the flames of which flicker in the very light breeze.

« Peace be with you! » begins Jesus standing up, steady notwithstanding the light pitching of the boat, and stretching out His arms to bless. He then goes on, speaking slowly, to be heard by everybody, and His voice carries powerfully and harmoniously over the silent lake.

« A short time ago one of My apostles suggested a parable to Me which I will now propose to you and it may be useful to everybody, as everybody can understand it. Listen to it.

A man, sailing on the lake on a calm evening like this and feeling sure of himself, presumed that he was faultless. He was most skilled in manoeuvring and consequently he considered himself superior to all the other people he met on the lake, many of whom were on it to amuse themselves and thus they lacked the experience which comes from habitual work done to earn one's living. Further, he was a good Israelite and so he thought that he possessed all virtues. Finally, he was really a good man. Now, one evening when he was sailing confidently, he took the liberty of

passing judgement on his neighbour. A neighbour, according to him, so remote as not to be considered as neighbour. No tie of nationality, or of trade or faith joined him to that neighbour and thus, without any restraint of national, religious or professional solidarity, he derided him frankly, nay, severely, and he complained at not being the master of the place, because, if he were, he would drive his neighbour from it, and in his intolerant faith, he almost reproached the Most High for allowing those other people, who were different from him, to do what he did and to live where he lived.

In his boat was a friend, a good friend who loved him with justice and therefore wanted him to be wise and, when necessary, corrected his wrong ideas. So that evening, this friend said to the boatman: "Why such thoughts? Is not the Father of men one only? Is He not the Lord of the Universe? Does perhaps His sun not shine on all men to warm them, and do His clouds perhaps not rain on the fields of Gentiles as they do on those of Hebrews? And if He does that for the material needs of man, will He not provide likewise for their spiritual necessities? And would you suggest to God what he must do? Who is like God?".

The man was good. In his intolerance there was much ignorance, many wrong ideas, but his will was not evil, he had no intention of offending God, on the contrary it was his intention to defend His interests. Upon hearing those words he threw himself at the feet of his wise friend and asked him to forgive him for speaking foolishly. He asked him so impetuously, that he almost caused a disaster, sinking the boat and drowning those in it, because in his anxiety to ask for forgiveness, he neglected rudder, sails and currents. Thus after his first mistake of evil judgement, he made another error of wrong maneuver, and proved to himself that he was not only a poor judge but also a clumsy sailor.

That is the parable. Now listen. According to you, was that man forgiven by God or not? Remember: he had sinned against God and his neighbour by judging the actions of both and he almost became the homicide of his companions. Meditate and reply… »

And Jesus folds His arms and looks around at all the boats, as far as the most remote ones, at the Roman boats, which display a line of attentive faces of patricians and oarsmen, looking over the gunwales…

The people speak in low voices and confer with one another… A hardly audible murmur of voices which mingles with the barely sensible lapping of the water against the hulls. The judgement is a difficult one. The majority, however, are of the opinion that the man was not forgiven because he had sinned. No, he was not forgiven at least as far as the first sin was concerned…

Jesus hears the murmur become louder in that sense and smiles

while His most beautiful eyes shine even at night like two sapphires in the rays of the moon, which is more and more beautiful and bright, so much so that many Put out torches and lamps and remain with only the phosphorescent moonlight.

« Put out these lights as well, Simon. They are as tiny as sparks when compared with the stars and planets with which this sky is strewn » says Jesus to Peter who is in suspense waiting to hear the judgement of the crowds. And Jesus caresses His apostle, while the latter stretches out to detach the lamps, and He asks him in a low voice: « Why do you look so upset? »

« Because this time You are having me judged by the people… »

« Oh! Why are you afraid of them? »

« Because… like me… they are unfair… »

« But it is God Who judges, Simon! »

« Yes. But You have not yet forgiven me and You are now awaiting their judgement to do so… You are right, Master… I am incorrigible… But… why this judgement of God for Your poor Simon?… »

Jesus lays His hand on his shoulder and He does so easily because Peter is in the lower part of the boat and Jesus is standing on a stem board, thus much above Peter. And He smiles… but does not reply to him. He instead asks the people: « Well? Speak up. Boat by boat. »

Alas! Poor Peter! If God had judged him according to the opinion of the people who are present, He would have condemned him. With the exception of three boats, all the others, including the apostolic ones, condemn him. The Romans do not give their opinions, and they are not asked to do so, but it is obvious that they also judge that the man is to be condemned, because they wave from one boat to the other - there are three of them - with thumbs down.

Peter's frightened rolling eyes look up at Jesus' face and they meet an even kinder glance coming from His sapphire eyes, just like peace, and he sees a face bright with love bend over him while he feels being drawn against Jesus' side, so that his grey-haired head is against Jesus' chest, while the arm of the Master clasps him embracing his shoulder.

« That is how man judges. But God does not judge so, My children! You say: "He was not forgiven". I say: "The Lord did not even see in him anything to be forgiven". Because forgiveness presupposes fault. But in this case there was no fault. No, do not grumble, shaking your heads. I repeat: there was no fault here. When is it that a fault occurs? When there is the will to commit a sin, the knowledge of sinning and the persistence to want to sin also after knowing that a certain action is sinful. It all depends on the will by which one performs an action, whether it is virtuous or

sinful. When one does something which is apparently good, but does not know that it is a good action, nay, one believes that it is a bad action, one commits a sin as if one had performed a bad action, and viceversa.

Take, as an instance, a man who has an enemy who knows that he is ill. He knows that by the doctor's order his enemy must not drink any cold water, nay, any liquid whatsoever. He goes to visit him, feigning friendliness. He hears him moan: "I am thirsty! I am thirsty!" and simulating pity, he hastens to give him some icy water from a well, saying: "Drink, my friend. I love you and I cannot bear to see you suffer so much from thirst. Look. I brought you this water on purpose, it is so cool. Drink it, for a great reward is given to those who assist sick people and give drink to the thirsty" and by giving him to drink, he causes his death. Do you think that that action, good in itself because it comprised two works of mercy, is a good one now that it has been performed for a wicked purpose? No, it is not.

And again: a son who has a drunken father and who locks the wine-cellar so that he may not drink himself to death, takes his money and imposes himself severely on him so that he may not go about the village, drinking and ruining himself, do you think that he sins against the fourth commandment simply because he reproaches his father and he acts as head of the family also with regard to his father? To all appearance he makes his father suffer and seems to be guilty. In actual fact he is a good son, because his will is good, as he wants to save his father from death. It is always one's will which sets value on one's deeds.

And again: is the soldier who kills in war a homicide? No, if his spirit does not agree to slaughter and if he fights because he is compelled to do so, and he does so with the least humanity which the hard law of war and his subaltern situation impose.

Therefore that boatman, who through the good will of believer, patriot and fisherman, could not stand those who, according to him, were desecrators, did not sin against the love for his neighbour, but he only had the wrong idea of love for our neighbour. Neither did he sin against respect for God, because his resentment against God came from his good, but not well balanced or bright spirit of believer. And he did not commit homicide because he caused the boat to heel through his good will to ask for forgiveness.

So you must always distinguish. God is Mercy more than intransigence. God is good. God is a Father. God is Love. That is the true God. And the true God opens His heart to everybody, saying to everybody: "Come", pointing His Kingdom to everybody. And He is free to do so, because He is the Only, Universal, Creator, Eternal Lord.

I beg you, you people of Israel. Be just. Remember these things. Beware lest they should be understood by those whom you consider unclean, while they remain incomprehensible to you. Also excessive and disorderly love for religion and fatherland is sinful, because it becomes selfishness. And selfishness is always the reason and cause of sin.

Yes. Selfishness is a sin, because it sows in hearts an evil will, which makes people rebel against God and His commandments. The mind of a selfish person no longer sees God or His truth clearly. Pride exhales fumes in the egoist and dims the truth. The mind, which in the fog no longer sees the pure light of truth as it saw it before becoming proud, begins the process of queries, and from queries it passes on to doubt, from doubt to indifference not only with regard to love and trust in God and His justice, but also in respect of the fear of God and of His punishment. And thus the easiness to sin, and from such easiness the solitude of the soul which departs from God, and as it no longer has the will of God as guidance, it lapses into the law of its own will of sinner.

Oh! the will of a sinner is a nasty chain, one end of which is in the hands of Satan, and the other end is fastened together with a cannon ball to the feet of man to hold him there, a slave, in filth, bent, in darkness. Is it then possible for man not to commit mortal sins? Is it possible for him not to commit them, if he is urged only by his evil will? Only then God does not forgive. But when man is animated by good will, and performs also spontaneous acts of virtue, he certainly ends up by possessing the Truth, because good will leads to God, and God, the Most Holy Father, bends lovingly, pitifully, leniently to assist, to bless, to forgive His children who have good will.

So the man of that boat was fondly loved because, as he did not wish to sin, he had committed no sin.

Go in peace, now, to your homes. The stars have filled the whole sky and the moon is clothing the world with purity. Go, and be as obedient as the stars and become as pure as the moon. Because God loves those who are obedient and pure in spirit, and He blesses those who in all their actions apply their good will to love God and their brothers and to work for His glory and their benefit. Peace be with you! »

And Jesus stretches out His arms again blessing, while the circle of the boats move away, breaks up, and each boat resumes its course.

Peter is so happy that he does not think about moving.

Matthew shakes him: « Are you not moving, Simon? I am not very experienced… »

« That's true!… Oh! My Master! So You had not condemned me?' And I was so afraid… »

« Be not afraid, Simon of Jonah. I took you to save you, not to lose you. I took you because of your good will… Cheer up. Take the rudder and look at the North Star and go with confidence, Simon of Jonah. Never hesitate… In all your navigations… God, your Jesus, will always be standing beside you in the prow of your spiritual boat. And He will always understand you, Simon of Jonah. Do you understand? Always. And He will not have to forgive you because you may also fall, like a weak child, but you will never have the evil will to fall… Be happy, Simon of Jonah. »

And Peter nods… he is too moved to be able to speak, suffocated by love, and his hand is rather shaky on the rudder, but his face shines with peace, with confidence, with love, while he looks at His Master standing beside him, on the edge of the little boat, like a bright white archangel.

447. Little Alphaeus of Meroba.

25th June 1946.

« Take provisions and clothes for several days. We are going to Hippo and then to Gamala and Aphek, we will then go down to Gherghesa and come back here before the Sabbath » orders Jesus, standing on the threshold of the house and caressing absentmindedly some children of Capernaum, who have come to greet their great Friend, as soon as the setting sun is no longer deadly scorching and allows people to leave their houses. And Jesus is one of the first to do so in the little town which revives after the suffocating torpor of the hot hours of the day.

The apostles do not appear to be very enthusiastic about the order they have received. They look at one another, they cast glances at the sun, which is so pitiless, they touch the walls of the house and feel that they are still hot, with their bare feet they touch the ground and say: « It is as hot as a brick near the fire… » implying by such pantomime that one must be mad to go about…

Jesus stands off the door-post against which He was leaning lightly and He says: « Anyone who does not feel like coming may remain here. I do not force anybody. But I do not want to leave this area without My word. »

« Master… don't say that! We are all coming… Only… we thought it was still early to go about… »

« Before the Feast of the Tabernacles I want to go towards the north, so much farther and where boats cannot go. Consequently we must do this area now, as travelling by lake we can save much of the road. »

« You are right. I am going to prepare the boats… » and Simon of Jonah goes out with his brother and the two sons of Zebedee and some disciples, to prepare for departure.

Jesus is left with the Zealot, His cousins, Matthew, the Iscariot, Thomas and the inseparable Philip and Bartholomew, who are preparing their sacks and filling flasks, packing loaves of bread, fruit, everything that is needed.

A little child is whining leaning against Jesus' knees.

« Why are you weeping, Alphaeus? » asks Jesus, bending to kiss him…

No reply… He whimpers more loudly.

« He has seen the fruit and wants it » says the bored Iscariot.

« Oh! poor little fellow! He is right! One must not let children see certain things, without giving them some. Take this, son. Don't cry! » says Mary of Alphaeus, picking a golden bunch of grapes from a vine branch, placed in a basket with all the leaves and bunches still attached to it.

«I don't want the grapes… » and he cries louder.

« He wants honeyed water, certainly » says Thomas and he offers his little flask saying: « Children like it and it is good for them. Also my little nephews… »

«I don't want your water… » and his crying increases in tone and intensity.

« What do you want then? » asks Judas of Alphaeus half serious and half annoyed.

« Two slaps, that's what he wants! » says the Iscariot.

« Why? poor boy! » asks Matthew.

« Because he is a bore. »

« Oh! If we had to box all the boring persons' ears… we would have to spend our lives boxing our own » says Thomas very calmly.

« Perhaps he is not feeling well. Fruit and water, water and fruit… make tummies ache » states Mary Salome who is among the women disciples.

« If he gets bread, water and fruit, he is lucky… They are so poor! » says Matthew, who by his experience as tax collector is aware of all the financial situations in Capernaum.

« What is the matter with you, my little son? Is it sore here?… But you are not feverish… » says Mary of Clopas who is kneeling beside the little child.

« Oh! Mother! He is just being naughty!… Can't you see it? You would spoil everybody. »

« I did not spoil you, my dear Judas. But I loved you. And you did not realise, son, that I loved you to the extent of protecting you against the rigours of Alphaeus… »

« That's true, Mother… I was wrong in reproaching you. »

« No harm, son. But if you want to be an apostle, strive to have the heart of a mother for believers. They are like children, you know… and one must be patient and loving with them… »

« Well said, Mary! » says Jesus approvingly.

« We will end up by being taught by women » grumbles Judas Iscariot. « And perhaps even by pagan females… »

« Without any doubt. They will exceed you in many things, if you remain what you are, and you above all, Judas. You will certainly be surpassed by everybody, by little children, by beggars, by ignorant people, by women, by heathens… »

« You could say that I will be the abortion of the world and You would be quicker » replies Judas with a sneer.

« The others are coming back… and we had better leave, don't you think so? » says Bartholomew to put an end to the scene, which is grievous for many, although in different ways.

The crying of the little boy reaches its peak.

« Well, what is it that you want? What is the matter with you? » shouts the Iscariot shaking the boy rudely to take him away from Jesus' knees, to which the child is clinging, and above all to give vent to his anger on the innocent boy.

« With You! With You!… Go away… and blows, blows… »

« Ah!… Oh! poor child! It is true! Since his mother got married again, the children of her first husband… are like beggars… as if they were not born of her… She sends them about like beggars and… oh! there is no bread for them… » says the wife of the landlord and she seems to be well informed of facts and their protagonists. And she concludes: « It would be a good thing if someone adopted the three forlorn sons… »

« Don't tell Simon of Jonah, woman. You would get his mother-in-law to have a mortal hatred of you; she is very angry at him and at all of us. Even this morning she insulted Simon, Marjiam and me, as I was with them… » says Matthew.

« I will not tell Simon… But that is the situation… »

« And would you not take them? You have no children… » says Jesus gazing at her…

« I… oh! I would like… But we are poor… and then… Thomas… He has nephews… and I also… and… and… »

« And above all you do not want to help your neighbour… Woman, yesterday you criticised the Pharisees of Capernaum as being hard-hearted, you criticised your fellow-citizens for turning a deaf ear to My words… But in what are you behaving differently, having known Me for over two years?… »

The woman lowers her head teasing her dress with her fingers… But she does not speak one word in favour of the little child who is still crying.

« We are ready, Master » shouts Peter who is arriving.

« Oh! to be poor!… And persecuted!… » says Jesus with a sigh, raising His arms and shaking them in a gesture of discouragement…

« Son!… » says Mary, Who has been silent so far, to comfort Him. And Her word is sufficient to console Him.

« Go ahead with the provisions. I am going with My Mother to the boy's house » Jesus orders those who are arriving and those who are already with Him, and He sets out with His Mother, Who is carrying the child in Her arms…

They go towards the country.

« What will You tell her, Son? »

« Mother, what do You expect Me to tell a mother whose heart has no love even for the children who are the fruit of her womb? »

« You are right… So? »

« So… Let us pray, Mother. »

They walk praying.

An old woman asks them: « Are You taking Alphaeus to Meroba? Tell her that it is time that she should take care of them. They can but become thieves… They are like locusts wherever they happen to go… I am indignant at her, not at those three poor wretches… Oh! How unfair death is! Could Jacob not have survived, and could she not have died? You should make her die, so… »

« Woman, old as you are, are you not yet wise? And you say such words, while you may die any moment? In actual fact, you are as unfair as Meroba. Repent and sin no more. »

« Forgive me, Master… It's her guilty behaviour that makes me talk nonsense… »

« Yes, I forgive you. But never speak those words again, not even to yourself. You do not correct errors by cursing, but by loving. If Meroba died, would the fate of these children change? Perhaps the widower would get married again and he would have children of a third marriage and the boys would have a stepmother… Thus their destiny would be worse. »

« That is true. I am old and foolish. Here is Meroba. She is cursing already… I leave You, Master. I do not want her to think that I have been talking to You about her. She is a viper… »

But her curiosity is stronger than her fear for the « viper », and the little old woman, even if she moves away from Jesus and Mary, does not go far, instead she bends to root out on the roadside some grass, which a nearby fountain has moistened, in order to listen without being noticed.

« You are here? What have you done? Go home! You are always wandering about like stray animals, like dogs with no master, like… »

« Like children with no mother. Woman, are you aware that it is an adverse testimony for a mother the fact that her little children are not always close to her skirt? »

« It's because they are bad… »

« No. I have been coming here these last thirty months. Previously, when Jacob was alive and during the first months of widowhood, it was not so. Then you got married again… and with

the memory of your previous wedding, you lost also that of your children. But what is the difference between them and the one who is maturing in your womb? Did you not bear them as well? Did you not suckle them? Look at that dove over there… How tenderly it takes care of that little pigeon… And yet it is already sitting on other eggs… Look at that sheep. She no longer suckles the lamb of the previous litter because she is pregnant again. And yet see how she licks its little snout and she lets the lively little lamb bump against her side? Are you not replying to Me? Woman, do you pray the Lord? »

« Of course I do. I am not a heathen… »

« And how can you speak to the just Lord if you are unjust? And how can you go to the synagogue and listen to the rolls of parchment which speak of the love of God for His children, without feeling remorse in your heart? Why do you not speak, and your attitude is so arrogant? »

« Because I did not ask for Your words… and I do not know why You have come to annoy me… My condition deserves respect… »

« And does the condition of your soul not deserve any? Why do you not respect the rights of your soul? I know what you mean: that a fit of anger may risk the life of the unborn child… But do you not take care of the life of your soul? It is more valuable than the unborn child's… You know that… Death may be the end of your state. And do you want to face that hour with an upset, sick unjust soul? »

« My husband says that You are one to whom nobody should listen. I will not listen to You. Alphaeus, come… » and she is about to go away amidst the screams of the little boy who knows that he is going to get a thrashing and does not want to leave Mary's arms. And Mary sighing tries to persuade the woman and says to her: « I am a mother as well and I can understand so many things. And I am a woman… I can therefore pity women. You are going through a difficult period, are you not? You suffer but you are not good at suffering… you become embittered thus… Sister, listen. If I gave you little Alphaeus now, you would be unfair to him and to yourself. Leave him with me for a few days, oh! only a few days. You will see that when he is no longer with you, you will pine for him… because a son is such a dear thing, that when he is away from us, we feel poor, cold, with no light… »

« But take him! Take him! I wish You would take the other two as well! But I don't know where they are… »

« Yes, I will take him. Goodbye, woman. Come, Jesus. » And Mary turns round quickly and goes away sobbing…

« Do not weep, Mother. »

« Do not judge her, Son… »

The two sentences are uttered simultaneously and then, with one

thought only, their lips speak the same words: « If they do not understand natural love, can they understand the love which is in the Gospel? » and Son and Mother look at each other, over the little head of the innocent child who now relaxes confidently and happily in Mary's arms…

« We will have one disciple more than we foresaw, Mother. »

« And he will enjoy days of peace… »

« Have You seen, eh! She is as deaf as a door-post. I had warned You! And now? And later? »

« Now there is peace. Later God grant there may be a pitiful heart… Why not yours, woman? A glass of water given out of love is taken into account in Heaven. But for those who love an innocent child for My sake… oh! what beatitude for those who love the little ones and save them from evil!… »

The little old woman remains pensive… and Jesus takes a short cut to the lake. When He arrives there, He takes the little boy from Mary's arms to let Her get into the boat more easily, and He lifts the child up as far as He can, to show him and He smiles brightly saying to those who are already in the boats: « Look! This time our preaching will certainly be fruitful, because an innocent is with us » and He walks with steady steps on the board although it sways, He goes into the boat and sits beside His Mother, while the boat moves away from the shore, steering at once south-east, towards Hippo.

448. At the Village before Hippo.

26th June 1946.

Hippo is not on the shore of the lake, as I thought, when I saw some houses on the shore almost at the southeastern end. I realise that from the words of the disciples. That group of houses, I would say, is the forefront of Hippo, which is farther back in the hinterland. Like Ostia with regard to Rome, or the Lido with regard to Venice, it represents the outlet on the lake for the inland town which makes use of the lake routes for imports and exports, and also to shorten journeys from this area to the Galilean shores on the other side, and finally, as a place of amusement for the idle citizens of the town and for the supplies of fish procured by the many fishermen of the village.

In the calm evening they land here, near a little natural port formed by the bed of a torrent at present dry, and where the sky-blue water of the lake comes in calmly for a few metres, as it is no longer driven back by the water of the torrent. On the shore there are large and small houses of fishermen, who toil the waters abounding in fish, and of market-gardeners, who cultivate a strip of rich moist ground, which is irrigated by the nearby waters and

stretches from the shore inland, more northwards than southwards, ending sharply at the beginning of the high cliff, which rises almost sheer from the lake. It is the same cliff from which the pigs of the miracle of the Gerasenes rushed into the lake.

As it is evening, the inhabitants are on the terraces or in the kitchen gardens having supper. But as the kitchen gardens are surrounded by low hedges and the terraces by low walls, their inhabitants soon see the little flotilla of boats moor in the little harbour and many get up and go to meet those who have arrived, some out of curiosity, some because they know them.

« It's the boat of Simon of Jonah together with that of Zebedee. So it can be no one but the Rabbi Who has come here with His disciples » declares a fisherman.

« Woman, take the child at once and follow me. Perhaps it is Him. He will cure him. The angel of God has brought Him to us » a kitchen gardener orders his wife, whose face is tear-stained.

« As far as I am concerned, I believe. I remember that miracle very well! All those pigs! The pigs which extinguish with water the heat of the demons possessing them… The torture must have been dreadful, if the pigs, which are always so disdainful of cleanliness, threw themselves into the water… » says a man who hastens there in support of the Master.

« Oh! You are right! It must have been real torture. I was there as well, and I remember. The bodies exhaled fumes, so did the waters. The lake became warmer than the water of Hamatha. And the wood and the grass across which they ran were burnt. »

« I went there but I saw no change… » a third man observes.

« No change! Well your eyes are covered with scales! Look! You can see it from here. See over there? Where the dry river-bed is? Look a little farther away and you will see whether… »

« No! That devastation was brought about by the Roman soldiers when they were looking for that rogue in the cold nights of the month of Tebeth. They camped there and lit fires. »

« And did they burn all the wood to light fires? Look how many trees are missing there! »

« A wood! Two or three oak-trees! »

« And is that nothing? »

« No. But you know! As far as they are concerned, our property is of no account. They are the rulers and we the oppressed people. Ah! Until… » the discussion moves from the supernatural to the Political field.

« Who will take me to the Rabbi? Have mercy on a blind man! Where is He? Tell me. I looked for Him in Jerusalem, at Nazareth, at Capernaum. Ha had always left before I arrived… Where is He? Oh! Have mercy on me! » moans a man about forty years old groping about with a stick.

Those whose legs or backs are struck abuse him, but no one feels pity for him and everybody knocks against him passing by, without stretching out a hand to guide him. The poor blind man stops, frightened and depressed…

« The Rabbi! The Rabbi! Ahc-Ahc, il il leee! » (I am striving to reproduce… the word of a shrill cry of the women modulating it. But it is a cry, not a word! It resembles more the chirping of some birds than a human word.)

« He will bless our children! »

« His word will startle the fruit which I have in my womb. Rejoice, my creature! The Saviour is speaking to you » says a buxom wife caressing her swollen abdomen under her loose dress.

« Oh! Perhaps He will make mine prolific! It would be joy and peace between Elisha and me. I have been to all the places where they say that a woman becomes fertile. I drank the water of the well near Rachel's tomb and that of the stream in the grotto where His Mother gave birth to Him… I went to Hebron to take for three days the earth of the place where the Baptist was born… I fed on the fruit of Abraham's oak-tree and I wept invoking Abel where he was delivered and killed… I have tried all the holy things, all the miraculous things of Heaven and earth, as well as medicines, and doctors, and vows, and prayers, and offerings… but my womb has not opened to the seed, and Elisha can hardly put up with me and he finds it difficult not to hate me!!! Alas! » moans an already withered woman.

« You are old now, Sella! Resign yourself! » reply those women with pity mixed with slight contempt and evident triumphant mien - who pass by with their wombs swollen with maternity or with sucklings feeding at their flourishing mammae.

« No! Don't say that! He raised the dead! Will He not be able to give life to my womb? »

« Make room! Make room! Make room for my sick mother » shouts a young man who is holding the shafts of an improvised litter, which is held at the other end by a very depressed girl. On the litter is a woman, still young, but reduced to a yellowish skeleton.

« We will have to inform Him of poor John and show Him where he is. He is the most unhappy of all, because he is a leper and he cannot go looking for the Master… » says an authoritative old man.

« We are first! If He goes towards Hippo, we have no hope. The townspeople will take Him for themselves and we will be neglected as usual. »

« But what is happening there? Why are the women shouting thus over there, on the shore? »

« Because they are silly! »

« No. They are shouts of joy. Let's run… »

The road is thronged with people moving towards the shore and

the gravel-bed, where Jesus and His apostles have been blocked by the people who flocked there first.

« A miracle! A miracle! Eliza's son, who was given up by doctors, has been cured! The Rabbi cured him by putting some saliva in his throat. »

The « Ahc-Ahc-il-il-leee » of the women become more trilling and piercing, mingled with the loud hosannas of men.

Jesus is literally overwhelmed notwithstanding His height. The apostles do everything they can to make room for Him. Nothing doing! The women disciples with Mary in the middle of them are separated from the group of the apostles. The little boy is frightened and is crying in the arms of Mary of Alphaeus. And his weeping draws the attention of many people to the group of the women disciples, and there is the usual well-informed man who says: « Oh! there is also the Mother of the Rabbi and the mothers of the disciples!… »

« Which? Which are they? »

« The Mother is the pale fair-haired one wearing a linen dress, and the others are the old ones, the one with the little boy and the one with a basket on her head. »

« And who is the little boy? »

« Her son, eh! Can't you hear him call her mummy? »

« Whose son? The old woman's? Not possible! »

« The young woman's. Can't you see that he wants to go to her? »

« No. The Rabbi has no brothers. I know that for certain. »

Jesus, moving with difficulty, manages to reach the litter on which is lying the sick woman carried by her children and He cures her. Meanwhile some women, who have overheard the conversation, curious as they are, go towards Mary.

But one of them is not curious. She throws herself at Her feet saying: « For the sake of Your maternity, have mercy on me. » She is the barren woman.

Mary bends and asks: « What do you want, sister? »

« To be a mother… A son!… Only one!… I am hated because I am barren. I believe that Your Son can do everything, but I have such a great faith in Him, that I think that as He was born of You, He made You as holy and powerful as He is. Now I beg You… for Your joys of mother I beg You: make me fertile. Touch me with Your hand and I will be happy… »

« Your faith is great, woman. But faith is to be given to Him, Who is entitled to it: to God. Come, therefore, to My Jesus… » and She takes her by the hand asking with graceful insistance to be allowed to Pass until She reaches Jesus.

The other women disciples follow Her in the wake which opens in the crowd and the women who had approached Mary do likewise and in the meantime they ask Mary of Alphaeus who is

the little boy whom she is holding up above the crowds.

« A little boy who is no longer loved by his mother. He has come to the Rabbi seeking love… »

« A little boy no longer loved by his mother!?! »

« Have you heard, Susanna? »

« Who is the hyena? »

« Alas! And I am suffering agonies because I have none! Give him to me, give him to me, that a son may kiss me at least once!… » and Sella, the barren woman, almost tears the little child from the arms of Mary of Alphaeus and she presses him to her heart, still trying to follow Mary, Who has become separated from her the moment that Sella left Mary's hand to take the child.

« Jesus, listen. There is a woman asking a grace. She is barren… »

« Do not trouble the Master for her, woman. Her womb is dead » says one who is not aware that he is speaking to the Mother of God. Then, embarrassed because of his mistake about which he is warned, he endeavours not to be noticed and to disappear while Jesus replies both to him and to the suppliant woman saying: « I am the Life. Woman, let it be done to you what you have asked » and He lays His hand on Sella's head for a moment.

« Jesus! Son of David, have mercy on me! » shouts the blind man mentioned previously. He has slowly arrived near the crowd and from the outskirts of it he cries his invocation.

Jesus, Who had lowered His head to hear Sella's words of supplication, raises His head again and looks in the direction from which the voice of the blind man comes, syncopated like the cry of a shipwrecked person.

« What do you want Me to do for you? » He shouts.

« That I may see. I am in darkness. »

« I am the Light. I want it! »

« Ah! I see! I can see again! Let me pass! That I may kiss the feet of my Lord! »

« Master, You have cured everybody here. But there is a leper in a hut in the wood. He always begs us to take You to him… »

« Let us go! Please! Let Me go. Do not hurt yourselves! I am here for everybody… Please, make room. You are hurting women and children. I am not leaving yet. I will be here tomorrow and I will be in this area for five days. You can follow Me, if you wish so… »

Jesus tries to discipline the crowd, to ensure that the citizens, in order to benefit by His visit, may not harm themselves. But the crowd is like an elastic substance which dilates then presses round Him once again, it is like an avalanche, which by natural law can but become more compact the more it descends, it is like particles of iron attracted by a magnet… Thus progress is slow, encumbered, difficult… They are all perspiring, the apostles are bawling, elbowing their way through the crowd, kicking shins at the same

time… All efforts are vain! It takes them a quarter of an hour to cover ten metres.

A woman about forty years old succeeds through sheer perseverance in making her way as far as Jesus and touches His elbow.

« What do you want, woman? »

« That little boy… I heard about him… I am a widow and I have no children… Remember me. I am Sarah of Aphek, the widow of the mat vendor. Remember. My house is near the square of the red fountain. But I own also some vineyards and a wood. I can afford to assist those who are alone… and I would be happy… »

« I will remember that, woman. May your pity be blessed. »

The village, which stretches more parallelly than vertically to the lake, is soon crossed and they find themselves in the peaceful silent country at twilight. However, it does not get dark, as the transition from daylight to moonlight is imperceptible. They go towards the ramifications of the high cliff, which farther south stretches out as far as the lake. On the cliff there are some grottoes, I do not know whether they are natural ones or dug on purpose in the rock; many have been walled up and whitewashed outside and are certainly sepulchres.

« Here we are! Let us stop in order not to be infected. We are close to the leper's hideout and this is the time when he comes to that rock to collect offerings. He was rich, You know? We remember him. And he was also good. But now he is a holy man. The more sorrow struck him, the more holy he became. We do not know how it happened. They say that it was brought about by some pilgrims to whom he gave hospitality. They were going to Jerusalem, so they said. They appeared to be sound, but they were certainly lepers. The fact is that after they left, the wife and the servants first, then the children, finally he, became infected with leprosy. All of them. The first - and it was their hands that became infected - were those who had washed the feet and the clothes of the pilgrims, that is why we say that they must have been the cause of it all. The children: three, died soon. Then the wife, and she died more of grief than of disease… He… When the priest declared them all lepers, he bought this part of the mountain with his money which had now become useless and he had provisions stored there for himself and his family… including servants, together with hoes and picks… and he began to dig the sepulchres… and one by one he buried them all: his little children, then his wife, the servants… He is the only one left all alone, poor, because everything comes to an end, as time passes… and the situation has lasted fifteen years… And yet… never one complaint. He was a learned man: he repeats the Scriptures by heart. He repeats them to the stars, to herbs, to trees, to birds, he repeats them to us who have so much to learn

from him, and he comforts our sorrows… he, wonder of wonders! comforts our sorrows. People come from Hippo and Gamala and even from Gherghesa and Aphek to hear him. When he heard of the miracle of the two men possessed… oh! he began to preach faith in You. Lord, if men greeted You with Your name of Messiah, if women greeted You as victor and king, if children know Your name and that You are the Holy One of Israel, that is due to the poor leper » relates on behalf of everybody the old man who was the first to speak of John.

« Will You cure him? » ask many.

« And are you asking Me? I have mercy on sinners, so what will I have for a just man? But is it perhaps he who is coming? Over there, among those bushes… »

« It is certainly him. What wonderful sight You have, Lord! We can hear the rustling noise, but do not see anything… »

The rustling also stops. There is dead silence and expectation…

Jesus is clearly visible, alone, a little ahead of the others, because He has gone forward as far as the rock on which some provisions have been laid; the others disappear in the dim light of some trees, mingling with trunks and bushes of the unbroken ground. Children also are silent, either because they have fallen asleep in their mothers' arms, or because they are frightened of the silence, of the sepulchres, of the bizarre shadows which the moon casts illuminating trees and rocks.

But the leper must see, and see well, from his hiding-place. He must be able to see the tall solemn person of the Lord, handsome and all white in the white moonlight. The tired glances of the leper certainly meet Jesus' bright eyes. What language is spoken by those divine, wide eyes, as bright as stars? What language is uttered by the lips open in a smile of love? Above all, what does the heart of the Christ say? A mystery. One of the many mysteries between God and souls in their spiritual relationship. The leper certainly understands because he shouts: « Here is the Lamb of God! Here is He Who has come to cure all the sorrows of the world! Jesus, blessed Messiah, our King and Saviour, have mercy on me! »

« What do you want? How can you believe in the Unknown One and see in Him the Expected One? What am I for you? The Unknown… »

« No. You are the Son of the living God. How do I know and see? I do not know. Here, within me, a voice has shouted: "Here is the Expected One! He has come to reward your faith". Unknown? Yes. The face of God is not known to anybody. Thus You are the "Unknown One" in Your appearance. But You are the Known One because of Your Nature and Your Royalty. Jesus, Son of the Father, Word Incarnate and God like the Father. That is who You are, and I greet You and beg You, believing in You. »

« And if I were not able to do anything and your faith were disappointed? »

« I would say that that is the will of the Most High and I would continue to believe and love, always hoping in the Lord. »

Jesus turns to the crowds who are listening in suspense to the conversation and He says: « I solemnly tell you that this man has the faith which shifts mountains. I solemnly tell you that true charity, faith and hope are tested more in sorrow than in joy, because the excess of joy is often the ruin of a spirit not yet perfected. It is easy to believe and be good when life is a placid succession of days all alike, even if not a pleasant one. But he who is able to persist in faith, hope and charity, also when diseases, poverty, death, misfortunes cause him to be left all alone, forlorn, avoided by everybody, and he does nothing but say: "Let that be done, which the Most High deems is useful to me", he truly not only deserves help from God, but, I tell you, his seat is ready in the Kingdom of Heaven and he will suffer no delay in expectation, because his justice has cancelled all debts of his past life. Man, I say to you: "Go in peace, as God is with you!". »

He turns round in saying so and stretches His arms out to the leper, with His gesture He almost draws him towards Himself, and when he is close at hand and clearly visible, He orders: « I want it! Be cleansed!… » and with her silvery beams the moon seems to cleanse and wipe away the pustules, the wounds, the nodules and the scabs of the horrible disease.

The body recomposes its features and becomes sound. It is an old dignified man, ascetic in his leanness, who, as soon as he becomes aware of the miracle through the hosannas shouted by the crowd, bends to kiss the ground, as he cannot touch Jesus or any other man before the time prescribed by the Law.

« Stand up. They will bring you clean clothes so that you may present yourself to the priest. But always present yourself to your God in purity of spirit. Goodbye, man. Peace be with you! »

And Jesus joins the crowds and slowly goes back to the village to rest.

449. Morning Sermon in the Village on the Lake.

27th June 1946.

It is a cool morning when the people wait for Jesus to come out of a house in the lake village to begin His preaching.

I think that the inhabitants slept very little that night, deeply moved as they were by the miracles which had been worked, by the joy of having the Master with them, by their desire not to waste one moment of His presence. They were late in going to sleep, because of the long talking in houses, recapitulating the

events, examining whether their spirits were endowed with faith, hope and charity, firm against every painful event, praised by the Master and proclaimed sure means to obtain grace from God in this and in the next life. And they woke early fearing that the Master might come out and go away early in the morning and they might not be present when He departed. Thus houses opened early to let their inhabitants go out into the streets, where, seeing that they were so many, practically all, and all prompted by the same thoughts, they said to one another: « It is really the first time that one only thought has urged our hearts and united them » and with fresh, kind, brotherly friendship, by mutual consent, they all set out towards the house where Jesus has been given hospitality and they crowded round it, noiselessly, waiting patiently and untiringly, quite decided to follow the Master, as soon as He comes out.

And many market-gardeners have picked in their gardens the fruits still covered with dew and are protecting them from the rising sun, from dust and flies, by covering them with fresh vineleaves or large fig-leaves, through the indentations of which peep red apples, which seem to have been painted by a miniaturist, and grapes like amber or onyx, or soft round figs of all kinds, some firmly closed within their skin delicately withered on the sweet pulp, some turgid and smooth as if they were covered with well-ironed silk and decorated with diamond drops at their lower ends, some open in a smile of their blond, rosy, deep red fibres, according to qualities. And some fishermen have brought some fish in small baskets, fish which they certainly caught during the night, sacrificing their sleep, because some are still alive and are gasping in their last painful aspirations and spasms of agony, while their panting and faint wriggling increase the silvery or delicately blue hues of their stomachs and backs, lying on a bed of grey-green leaves of willow-trees or poplars.

The lake, in the meantime, has changed from the delicate milky hue which light bestows on waters at daybreak - a hue so pure, I would say so angelical, almost abstract, so calmly the water rests on the shingly shore, just murmuring delicately among the pebbles - to the resplendent, more human, I would say carnal hue of dawn, which tinges the water with red as the rosy clouds are reflected in the lake. And the lake becomes sky-blue in the pure light of dawn and begins to live again, to pulsate, with its wavelets which stir and run joyfully breaking into foam on the shore, then run back to dance with other wavelets, adorning the entire sheet of the lake with a light snow-white lace, thrown on the silky blue water, rippled by the morning breeze. Then the first ray of sunlight strikes the water over there, towards Tarichea, where it was so green-blue because of the woods which it reflected, and it

assumes a golden hue and shines like a broken mirror struck by the sun, and the mirror expands incessantly, tinging with gold and topazes waters still blue, cancelling the rosy hues of the clouds reflected in the water, enveloping the keels of the last boats which are returning to port after fishing, as well as the keels of the first boats going out, while the sails, in the triumphal light of the risen sun, are as white as the wings of an angel against the blue of the sky and the green of the hills. Magnificent lake of Galilee which with its fruitful shores reminds me of our Lake Garda, and with its mystical peace Lake Trasimeno, gem of Palestine, worthy surroundings for most of the public life of Jesus!

Jesus appears at the door of the hospitable house and He smiles, praising His arms to bless the patient citizens awaiting Him.

« Peace be with you all.

Were you waiting for Me? Were you afraid that I might run away without saying goodbye to you? I always keep My promises. I am with you today to evangelize you and I will remain with you as I promised, to bless your houses, your gardens and boats, so that each family may be sanctified, and your work may be sanctified as well. But, remember, My blessing is to be assisted by your good will in order to be fruitful. And you know which is the good will that must enliven a family so that the house sheltering it may be holy. The husband is to be the head, but not the despot, of the wife, of the children and of the servants, and at the same time he is to be the king, the true king in the biblical sense of word.

Do you remember chapter eight of the first Book of the Kings? The elders of Israel gathered together and went to Ramah, where Samuel lived and they said to him: "Look, you are old and your children do not follow your ways. So give us a king to judge us, like the other nations". King, therefore, means judge, and he should be a just judge in order not to make his subjects unhappy here on the earth with wars, abuse of power, unfair heavy taxes, or in eternal life with a kingdom permissive of lasciviousness and vice. Woe to those kings who fail in their ministry, who turn a deaf ear to the voices of their subjects, who turn a blind eye to the evils of the nation, who become responsible for the sufferings of the people through alliances formed against justice for the only purpose of strengthening their power with the help of allies! But woe also to those fathers who fail in their duties, who are blind and deaf to the needs and faults of the members of their families, who are the cause of scandal or grief for it, who stoop to arrange worthless marriages by compromise, in order to enter into an alliance with rich powerful families, without considering that matrimony is intended, besides procreation, for the elevation and comfort of man and woman; it is a duty, a ministry, not a bargain, it is not sorrow, it is not debasement of either husband or wife. It is love,

not hatred. The head of the family, therefore, must be just without excessive hardness or pretensions and without excessive compliance and weakness. But if you had to choose between the former excess and the latter, pick the latter, because God, with regard to it, may say to you: "Why were you so good?" and will not condemn you, because excess in kindness is already a punishment for man through the overbearing action which other people take the liberty of performing against good persons; whereas He would always reproach you for your hardness, which is lack of love for your closest neighbour.

And the wife at home must be just with her husband, her children and servants. She must obey, respect, console and help her husband. She is to be obedient, providing her obedience does not imply consent to sin. The wife must be submissive but not degraded. Beware, o wives, that the first to judge you, after God, for certain guilty condescensions, are your very husbands, who persuade you to comply. They are not always desires of love, but they are also tests for your virtue. Even if he does not think about it at the moment, the day may come when the husband may say to himself: "My wife is very sensual" and thence he may begin to be suspicious of her fidelity. Be chaste in your conjugality. Behave in such a way that your chastity may impose on your husbands that reservedness which one has for pure things, and they may consider you as their equals, not as slaves or concubines kept only for "pleasure" and rejected when they are no longer liked. The virtuous wife, I would say the wife who also after conjugality retains that virginal "something" in attitude, in words, in her transports of love, can lead her husband to an elevation from sensuality to sentiment, whereby the husband divests himself of lewdness and becomes really "one thing" with his wife, whom he treats with the same respect with which a man treats a part of himself, which is just, because the wife is "bone from his bones and flesh from his flesh" and no man ill-treats his bones or his flesh, on the contrary he loves them, and therefore husband and wife, like the first married couple, look at each other without seeing their sexual nakedness, but let them love each other because of their spirits, without degrading shame.

Let the wife be patient and motherly with her husband. Let her consider him as the first of her children, because a woman is always a mother and man is always in need of a patient, prudent, affectionate, comforting mother. Blessed is the woman who knows how to be the companion and at the same time the mother of her husband to support him, and his daughter to be guided by him. A wife must be industrious. Work, while it does away with daydreams, is good for honesty and to one's purse as well. She should not torture her husband with foolish jealousies, which serve no

purpose. Is the husband honest? A stupid jealousy, by driving him out of the house, exposes him to the danger of falling into the snares of a prostitute. Is he not honest and faithful? The fury of a jealous wife will not correct him, but her grave attitude, free from grudge and rudeness, her dignified and loving, still loving behaviour, will make him ponder and return to reason. Learn how to win back your husbands, when a passion separates them from you, through your virtue, just as you conquered them in your youth through your beauty. And, to gain strength for such duty, and resist the grief which might make you unfair, love your children and consider their welfare.

A woman has everything in her children: joy, a royal crown for the cheerful hours when she is really the queen of the house and of her husband, and a balm in sorrowful hours, when betrayal or other grievous experiences of married life scourge her forehead and above all pierce her heart with the thorns of her sad regality of martyr spouse. Are you so depressed as to wish to go back to your family, divorcing, or to find compensation in a false friend who craves for the female but feigns to feel pity for the heart of the betrayed wife? No, women, no! Your children, your innocent children, who are already upset and prematurely sad because of the domestic milieu, which is no longer serene or just, are entitled to their mother, to their father, to the comfort of a house, where, if one love has perished, the other remains vigilant to watch over them. Their innocent eyes look at you, they study you and they understand more than you think, and they mould their spirits according to what they see and understand. Never scandalise your innocent children, but take shelter in them, as in a bulwark of adamantine lilies, against the weakness of the flesh and the snares of snakes.

And let the woman be a mother. The just mother who is the sister as well as the mother, who is the friend as well as the sister of her sons and daughters. And who, above all and in everything, is an example. She must watch over her sons and daughters, correcting them gently, supporting them, making them ponder, and all that without preferences; because the children were all born of the same seed and of the same womb and if it is natural that good children are well-liked, because of the joy they give, it is also fair that children who are not good should be loved as well, although with sorrowful love, bearing in mind that man must not be more severe than God, Who loves not only good people, but also those who are not good, and He loves them to try and make them good, to give them means and time to become so, and He is patient until the death of man, reserving to Himself the right to become just Judge when man can no longer make amends.

And let Me tell you now something which does not concern this

subject, but is useful for you to bear in mind. Very often, too often, we hear people say that wicked persons are better off than good persons and that that is not fair. First of all I say to you: "Do not judge by appearances and by what you do not know". Appearances are often misleading and the judgement of God is not known on the Earth. You will become aware of it in the next life and you will see that the fleeting welfare of the wicked was granted as a means to attract them to Good and as a reward for the little good which even the most wicked man may do. But when you see things in the right light of future life, you will realise that the joyful time of the sinner was shorter than the life of a blade of grass, which began to grow in spring in the gravel-bed of a torrent, which dries up in summer, whereas one moment of glory in Heaven is greater than the most triumphant life any man ever lived, because of the joy which it confers on spirits who delight in it. Therefore, do not envy the prosperity of the wicked, but strive, through good will, to possess the eternal treasure of the just.

And reverting to how the members of a family and the inhabitants of a house should be, so that My blessing may remain fruitful in it, I tell you, children, to be submissive to your parents, to be respectful and obedient, so that you may be so also with the Lord your God. Because if you do not learn to obey the simple orders of your fathers and mothers, whom you see, how will you be able to obey the commands of God, which are given to you in His name, but you neither see nor hear Him? And if you do not learn to believe that he who loves, as a father and a mother love, can but order good things, how can you believe that the things, which are related to you as commands of God, are good? God loves, you know? and is a Father. And just because He loves you and wants you to be with Him, dear children, He wants you to be good. And the first school where you learn to become so, is your family. You learn there to love and to obey and there begins for you the way that leads to Heaven. So be good, respectful, docile. Love your fathers also when they correct you, because they do so for your own good, and love your mothers if they restrain you from doing actions which by their experience they know are not good. Honour your parents and do not make them blush because of your wicked deeds. Pride is not a good thing, but there is a holy pride, the pride of saying: "I did not grieve my father or my mother". Such behaviour, which makes you enjoy their company while they are alive, is peace on the wound of their death, whereas the tears, which a son causes his parents to shed, scorch the heart of the wicked son like melted lead, and notwithstanding every effort to soothe the injury, it is painful, and all the more so when the parent's death prevents the son from making amends… Oh! children, be good, always, if you want God to love you.

Lastly, holy is that house in which, through the justice of the masters, the servants also become just. Masters should remember that bad behaviour exacerbates and spoils servants, and the servants should bear in mind that their bad behaviour disgusts masters. Let each stay in his own place, but with a tie of love for the neighbour to fill the division existing between servants and masters.

Then the house blessed by Me will keep its blessing and the Lord will dwell in it. And likewise, My blessing and thus My protection will remain on boats, kitchen gardens, working and fishing implements, when you lead your lives as fishermen or marketgardeners working holily on days permitted and holily devoted to worshipping God on holy Sabbaths, and you do not cheat when selling or weighing, and you do not curse your work, neither do you make it the sovereign of your lives by preferring it to God. Because if work gives you a profit, God gives you Heaven.

And now let us go and bless houses and boats and oars and kitchen gardens and hoes, then we will go and speak near the place where John is, before he goes to the priest. Because I will not come back here again, and it is fair that he should hear Me at least once. Take some bread, fish and fruit; we will take them into the wood and we will eat in the presence of the cured leper giving him the best bits, so that also his body may rejoice and he may feel that he is already a brother among the believers in the Lord. »

And Jesus sets out, followed by the people of the village and by other people who have come from nearby towns, where, during the night some inhabitants of this village perhaps went with the news that the Saviour is on this shore.

450. Near the Place of the Leper. Parable on the Ten Commandments.

29th June 1946.

« My Lord! » shouts the ex-leper dropping on his knees as soon as he sees Jesus appear in the unbroken ground in front of the rocky place, where he has lived for so many years. Then, standing up, he shouts again: « Why have You come back to me? »

« To give you the viaticum of My word after that of your health. »

« Viaticum is given to him who is about to depart, and in fact this evening I am leaving for my purification. But I am leaving to come back and join Your disciples, if You will accept Me. Lord, I no longer have home or relatives. I am too old to resume an activity in life. They will reinstate me in my property. But what will my house be like after fifteen years of neglect? What shall I find there? Perhaps dilapidated walls… I am a bird with no nest. Let me join the group which follows You. In any case… I no longer belong to

myself, I belong to You for what You have given me, I do not belong any more to the world, which cast me away for such a long time, and quite rightly as I was unclean. Now, after becoming acquainted with You, I find that the world is impure and I want to flee from it and come to You. »

« And I will not reject you. But I tell you that I would like you to stay in this area. Aera and Arbela have one of their sons who is a disciple and evangelizes there. I ask you to be such a disciple for Hippo, Gamala, Aphek and nearby villages. I will be going down to Judaea shortly and I will not come back to this area any more. But I want some evangelizers here. »

« Your will makes every renouncement dear to me. I will do what You wish. I will begin as soon as purifications are over. I had made up my mind not to take care of my house any more. Now instead I will have it repaired, so that I can live in it and receive during winter the souls which are anxious to hear of You. And I will ask one of the disciples who has been following You for years, to come with me, because if You want me to be a little master, I need to be taught by someone more learned than I am. And in spring I will go about like the others preaching Your Name. »

« That is a good plan. God will help you to fulfil it. »

« I have already begun it by burning everything I possessed: that is, my poor pallet and the utensils which I used, the clothes I wore until yesterday, everything that I had touched with my diseased body. The grotto in which I lived is black with the smoke of the fire which I lit in it to destroy and purify. Nobody will be infected going into it to take shelter in a stormy night. And then… (the man's voice becomes feeble, it almost breaks, his speech slows down…) and then… I had an old chest, by now falling to pieces… worm-eaten… it seemed that leprosy had corroded it as well… But to me… it was more valuable than the wealth of the world… It contained my dear things… mementos of my mother… the wedding veil of my Anne… Ah! when I, so happy, took it off her the evening of our wedding and I contemplated her face, as beautiful and pure as lilies, who could have told me that a few years later I was to see it all covered with sores! And… the garments of my children… their toys… which their little hands had played with while they were able to hold… an object… and… oh! my grief is so deep… forgive my tears… It is so painful now that I have burned them for the sake of justice… without being able to kiss them any more… because they had belonged to lepers… I am unfair, Lord… I am showing You tears… But bear with me… I have destroyed the last memory of them… and now I am like a man lost in a desert… » The man collapses weeping near the heap of ashes, the remembrance of his past…

« You are not lost, John, and you are not alone. I am with you.

And your dear ones will soon be with Me, in Heaven, waiting for you. Those remains reminded you of them, disfigured by disease, or lovely and healthy before the calamity. Sorrowful remembrances all of them. Leave them among the ashes of the fire. Cancel them in My assurance that you will find them, happy and beautiful in the joy of Heaven. The past is dead, John. Do not mourn any more over it. Light does not delay to look at the darkness of the night, but it is happy to part from it and to shine climbing the sky behind the sun every morning. And the sun does not delay in the east, but it rises, springs and rushes until it shines high in the vault of heaven. Your night is over. Forget it. Rise with your spirit up there, where I, the Light, will lead you. Through sweet hope and beautiful faith, you will already find joy there, because your charity will be able to communicate with God and your beloved ones awaiting you. It is but a rapid climb… and you will soon be up there, with them. Life is a puff of air… eternity is the eternal present. »

« You are right, Lord. You are comforting and teaching me how to overcome this hour with justice… But You are standing in the sun to be as close to me as You are allowed. Withdraw, Master. You have given me enough. The sun, already strong, might harm You. »

« I have come to stay with you. We have all come for that. But you can move as well towards the trees and we will be near each other without any danger. »

The man obeys departing from the rock at the foot of which is the heap of ashes, his past, and he goes towards the spot, for which Jesus is making, where the apostles, deeply moved, are with the women and the people of the village and those who have come from other towns to hear the Master.

« Light the fires to cook the fish. We will share the food in a banquet of love » orders Jesus.

And while the apostles do so, He goes about under the trees which have grown in a disorderly way in this place, which everybody has shunned because of the presence of the leper. A thick wild tangle of trees unaware of pruning-knives or axes since they began to come up. People suffering or depressed are in the propitious shadow of the brushwood and they speak to Jesus of their distresses, and Jesus cures, advises or comforts, patiently and powerfully. Farther away, in a small meadow, the boy from Capernaum is playing with the children of the village and their joyful cries compete with the singing of many birds in the thick trees, while their many-coloured garments, waving while they run on the green grass, make them look like large butterflies fluttering from flower to flower.

The food is ready and they call Jesus. He kindly asks a basket of a peasant who had brought some figs and grapes, and He fills it with

bread, with the nicest fish, with tasty fruit, He adds His flask of water sweetened with honey, and He turns His steps towards the ex-leper.

« You will be left without a flask, Master » says Bartholomew warning Him. « He cannot give it back to You. »

And Jesus replies smiling: « There is still so much water for the thirst of the Son of man! There is the water which the Father put into deep wells. And the Son of man can drink from His cupped hands, while they are still free… The day will come when I will have neither free hands nor water… not even the water of love to give refreshment to the Thirsty One… Now I have so much love around Me… » and He goes on carrying with both hands the wide round low basket and laying it on the grass a few metres from John, to whom He says: « Take and eat. It is the banquet of God. »

He then returns to His place. He offers and blesses the food and has it handed out to the people present who add what they had of their own. They all eat with relish and in peaceful joy, and Mary takes care of little Alphaeus with motherly love.

When the meal is over, Jesus stands between the crowd and the ex-leper and He begins to speak, while mothers take in their laps the children satiated with food and tired of playing and they lull them to sleep, so that they may not disturb.

« Listen everybody. In a psalm David, the psalmist, asks: "Who will dwell in the Tabernacle of God? Who will rest on the mountain of God?". And he goes on to enumerate who will be the fortunate people and why they will be so. He says: "The man whose way of life is blameless and who does what is right. He who speaks the truth from his heart and does not plot deceit with his tongue, who does no wrong to his fellow, who does not listen to words discrediting his neighbour". And in a few lines, after describing those who will enter the dominions of God, he says what good these blessed souls do after having done no wrong. Here: "In his eyes the reprobate is nothing. He honours those who fear God. When he swears to his neighbour he stands by his pledge. He does not ask interest on loans, he will not be bribed to victimise the innocent". And he concludes: "The man who does all that will never waver". I solemnly tell you that the psalmist spoke the truth and I confirm with My wisdom that he who does such things will never waver.

The first condition to enter the Kingdom of Heaven: "To live without fault".

But can man, a weak creature, live without fault? The flesh, the world and Satan, in continuous ferment of passions, inclinations and hatred squirt out their spray to stain souls, and if Heaven were open only to those who lived without fault ever since the age of reason, very few men would enter Heaven, just as very few are

the men who arrive at death without experiencing more or less grave diseases during their lifetime. So? Are the children of God barred from Heaven? And will they have to say: "I have lost it" when an attack of Satan or a storm of the flesh causes them to fall and they see their souls stained? Will there be no more forgiveness for the sinners? Will nothing delete the stain which disfigures the spirit? Do not fear your God with unjust fear. He is a Father and a father always stretches out a hand to his wavering children, he offers help so that they may rise again, he comforts them with kind means so that their dejection may not degenerate into despair, but it may flourish into humility willing to make amends and thus become again pleasing to the Father.

Now. The repentance of the sinner, the good will to make amends, both brought about by true love for the Lord, cleanse the stain of fault and make one worthy of divine forgiveness. And when He Who is speaking to you has completed His mission on the Earth, the most powerful absolution which the Christ will have achieved for you at the cost of His sacrifice, will be added to the absolutions of love, of repentance and of good will. With souls purer than those of new-born babies, much purer, because from the bosoms of those who believe in Me, rivers of living water will spring deterging also the original sin, the first cause of weakness in man, you will be able to aspire to Heaven, to the Kingdom of God, to His Tabernacles. Because the Grace which I am about to restore to you will help you to practise justice which, the more it is practised, the more it increases the right, that a faultless spirit gives you to enter the joy of the Kingdom of Heaven. Infants will enter Heaven and they will rejoice, because of the beatitude given to them gratuitously, as Heaven is joy. But also adults and old people will enter it, those who have lived, fought, won and who to the snow-white crown of Grace will add the many-coloured one of their holy deeds, of their victories over Satan, the world and the flesh, and great, very great will be their beatitude of winners, so great, that man cannot imagine it.

How does one practise justice? How does one gain victory? Through honesty of words and deeds, through charity for one's neighbour. Acknowledging that God is God, not placing the idols of creatures, money, power in the place of the Most Holy God. By giving everybody the place to which they are entitled, without trying to give more or to give less than what is right. He who honours one because he is a friend or a mighty relative and serves him also in evil deeds, is not just. On the contrary, he who harms his neighbour because he has no hope of receiving any kind of profit from him and bears false witness against him on oath, or is bribed to testify against the innocent or to judge partially, not according to justice but according to the profit he may gain with his unfair

judgement from the more powerful of the competitors, is not just and vain are his prayers and offers, because they are stained with injustice in the eyes of God.

You can see that what I am telling you is the Decalogue. The word of the Rabbi is always the Decalogue. Because good, justice, glory consist in doing what the Decalogue teaches and orders us to do. There is no other doctrine. In days gone by it was given amid the flashes of lightning on Mount Sinai, now it is given in the refulgence of Mercy, but the Doctrine is the same. It does not change. It cannot change. Many in Israel will say, as an excuse, to justify their lack in holiness, even after the passage of the Saviour on the Earth: "I did not have the possibility to follow and listen to Him". But their excuse is of no value. Because the Saviour did not come to impose a new Law, but to confirm the first, the only Law, nay, to reconfirm it in its holy plainness, in its perfect simplicity. To reconfirm with love and the promises of the assured love of God what previously was said with severity on one side and listened to with fear on the other.

To make you understand properly what are the ten Commandments and how important it is to abide by them, I will now tell you a parable.

The father of a family had two sons. He loved them both equally and wanted to be their benefactor impartially. This father, in addition to the house in which his sons lived, owned some property in which great treasures were hidden. The sons were aware of such treasures, but did not know the way to go there because the father, for reasons of his own, had not revealed the road which led there, and that had been the situation for many many years. But one day he called his sons and said: "The time has now come when you ought to know where the treasures are, which I laid aside for you, so that you may go there when I tell you. You had better know the road and the signals which I put on it, so that you may not go astray. So listen to me. The treasures are not in a plain where waters stagnate, where dog days scorch, where dust spoils everything, thorns and bramble suffocate, and where robbers can easily go and rob you. The treasures are on the top of that high rugged mountain. I put them on the top there and they are waiting for you up there. There is more than one path on the mountain, in actual fact there are many. But one only is the right one. Of the others some end up in precipices, some in caves with no exit, some in ditches full of muddy water, some in nests of vipers, some in craters of burning sulphur, some against insurmountable walls. The right road, instead is a difficult one, but it arrives at the top without any interruption of precipices or other obstacles. In order to enable you to recognise it, I placed along it, at regular intervals, ten stone monuments, on each of which is carved these three identification

words: 'Love, obedience, victory'. Follow that path and you will reach the place of the treasure. I will come along another road, which is known to me alone and I will open the doors to you, so hat you may be happy".

The two sons said goodbye to the father who, as long as they could hear him, repeated: "Follow the path I told you. It's for your own good. Do not yield to the temptation to follow the others, even if they seem better to you. You would lose both the treasure and me…

They arrive at the foot of the mountain. The first monument was there, at the beginning of the path, which was in the middle of several paths radiating in different directions towards the mountain top. The two brothers began to climb the good path. At first it was very good, although there was not the least shade. From the sky the sun darted down on it, flooding it with light and heat. The white rock in which the path had been dug, the clear sky above them, the warm sun embracing their bodies: that is what the brothers saw and felt. But still animated by good will, by the remembrance of their father and by his advice, they climbed joyfully toward the top. Then the second monument… and later the third one. The path had become more and more difficult, solitary, warm. They could not even see the other paths with grass, trees or clear waters, and above all, where the slope was more gentle, because it was not so steep and the tracks were laid on ground and not on rocks.

"Our father wants us dead when we get there" said one of the sons on arriving at the fourth monument. And he began to slacken his pace. The other encouraged him to go on saying: "He loves us as his very own and even more because he saved the treasure for us in such a wonderful way. He dug this path in the rock and it takes one from the foot of the mountain to its top without any risk of getting lost. And he put these monuments to guide us. Just consider that, my brother! He did all that by himself, for our sake! To give it to us! To ensure that we arrive there without the possibility of mistakes and without any danger".

They continued to walk. But the paths they had left down in the valley reappeared now and again close to the track in the rock and they did so more and more frequently as the cone of the mountain became narrower near the top. And how beautiful, shady and attractive they were!…

"I think I will take one of those" said the discontented brother, when he arrived at the sixth monument. "It goes to the top as well".

"You cannot be sure of that… You cannot see whether it goes up or down…

"There it is, up there!".

"You do not know whether it is this one. In any case our father

told us not to leave this good path

The listless brother continued to climb against his will. At the seventh monument he said: "Oh! I am definitely going away".

"Don't, brother!".

They went on their way up the path, which was now very difficult, but the top was now close at hand…

They arrived at the eighth monument and very close to it was the flowery path. "Oh! you can see that this one goes up as well, although not in a straight line!".

"You don't know if it is the same one".

"I do. I recognise it".

"You are mistaken".

"No. I'm going".

"Don't. Think of father, of the dangers, of the treasure".

"They can all go to the dogs! What am I going to do with the treasure if I will be as good as dead when I get up there? Which danger is greater than this path? And which hatred is stronger than our father's, who fooled us with this track to let us die? Goodbye. I will arrive before you, and alive…" and he jumped on to the adjacent path, and disappeared with a joyful exclamation behind the tree trunks shading it.

His brother went his way sadly… Oh! the last part of the track was really dreadful! The man was exhausted. He felt worn out with fatigue and heat! At the ninth monument he stopped panting, leaning against the carved stone and reading the engraved words mechanically. Nearby there was a shady path with water and flowers… "I almost… No! It is written there, and it was my father who wrote it: 'Love, obedience, victory'. I must believe in his love, in his truthfulness, and I must obey to show my love… Let us go… May love support me He is now at the tenth monument… Exhausted, burnt by the sun, he walked stooping, as if he were under a yoke… It was the loving holy yoke of faithfulness, which is love, obedience, strength, hope, justice, prudence, everything… Instead of leaning on the monument he sat down in the narrow shade which it cast on the ground. He felt that he was dying… From the nearby path came the gurgle of streams and the smell of forests… "Father, help me with your spirit, in this temptation… help me to be faithful until the end!".

From afar the joyful voice of his brother shouted: "Come, I will wait for you. Eden is here… Come

"And if I went?…" and shouting loud: "Does it really go to the top?".

"Yes, come. There is a cool tunnel which takes one up. Come! I can already see the top beyond the tunnel, in the rock

"Shall I go? Shall I not?… Who will help me?… I will go He pushed his hands on the ground to help himself get up and while

doing so he noticed that the engraved words were not as clear as those on the first monument. "At each monument the words were less distinct… as if my father, being exhausted, had found it difficult to engrave them. And… look!… Here also is the dark red mark, which has been visible as from the fifth monument… The only difference is that here it fills the hollow of each letter and it has overflowed, furrowing the rock as if it were dark tears, tears… of blood With a finger he scratched a blotch as large as two hands. And the blotch crumbled into dust leaving uncovered and clear these words: "Thus I loved you. To the extent of shedding my blood to lead you to the Treasure".

"Oh! oh! Father! And I was thinking of not obeying your order?! Forgive me, father. Forgive me". The son wept leaning on the rock, and the blood filling the words became fresh and as bright as a ruby, and the tears became food and drink and strength for the good son… He stood up… out of love he called his brother aloud… He wanted to tell him of his discovery… of their father's love, and say to him: "Come back". But no one replied…

The young man resumed his way, almost on his knees on the hot rock, because his body was exhausted with fatigue, but his spirit was serene. There was the top… and his father.

"Father!".

"My beloved son!".

The young man threw himself on his father's breast, his father embraced him and kissed him fondly.

"Are you alone?".

"Yes… But my brother will soon be here

"No. He will never arrive. He left the way of the ten commandments. He did not come back to it after the first warning disappointments. Do you want to see him? There he is. In the abyss of fire… He persisted in his error. I would have forgiven and awaited him if, after realising his mistake, he had retraced his steps and, although late, he had passed where love had passed first, suffering to the extent of shedding the best part of his blood, the dearest part of himself for you".

"He did not know

"If he had looked with love at the words engraved in the ten monuments, he would have understood their true meaning. You read it as from the fifth monument and you called his attention to it when you said: 'Our father must have injured himself here!' and You read it in the sixth, seventh, eighth and ninth… clearer and clearer, until by instinct you discovered what was under my blood. Do you know the name of that instinct? 'Your true union with me'. The fibres of your heart, blended with my fibres, startled and they said to you: 'You will have here the measure of how much your father loves you'. Now, since you are affectionate, obedient, for

ever victorious, take possession of the Treasure and of me".

That is the parable.

The ten monuments are the ten commandments. Your God engraved them and placed them on the path that takes to the eternal Treasure, and He suffered to lead you to that path. Do you suffer? God does, too. Do you have to force yourselves? God has, too. Do you know to what extent? Suffering to separate Himself from Himself and striving to know what it means to be a human being with all the miseries of mankind: to be born, to suffer from cold, starvation, fatigue, to suffer sarcasm, affronts, hatred, snares, and at the end to die, shedding all His Blood to give you the Treasure. God, Who descended to save you, suffers all that. God suffers that in Heaven, allowing Himself to suffer it.

I solemnly tell you that no man, however laborious his path may be to reach Heaven, will ever follow a more laborious and sorrowful way than the one along which the Son of man has to go to come from Heaven to the Earth and from the Earth to the Sacrifice, to open the doors of the Treasure to you. On the tablets of the Law there is already My Blood. On the Way which I am tracing out for you there is My Blood. It is the gush of My Blood that opens the door of the Treasure. Your souls become pure and strong through the purification and nourishment of My Blood. But to prevent it from being shed in vain, you must follow the immutable way of the ten commandments.

Let us rest now. At sunset I will go towards Hippo, John will go to be purified, and you will go home. May the peace of the Lord be with you. »

451. At Hippo. Love for the Poor. Cure of an Old Slave.

Please excuse me if this notebook is particularly badly written. The episodes were seen when I was between life and death after the unlucky 2nd July 1946 I wrote them lying in bed with very high temperatures in addition to very severe pains

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2nd July 1946.

Jesus enters Hippo on a clear morning. He must have spent the night in the country house of an inhabitant of the town, who had gone to listen to Him, in order to go to town early in the morning of a noisy market-day. Many people of Hippo are with Him and many more run to meet Him when they are told that the Rabbi has arrived. But not only citizens of Hippo are around Jesus. Also those of the village on the lake are present. Only a few women are absent, whether because of their physical conditions or because their children are too young to allow them to leave their homes.

The town appears to be a nice one. It is situated a little above

lake-level and stretches out on the first undulations of the tableland, which lies beyond the lake and rises eastwards, extending to south-east as far as the mountains of Hauran, and to northeast as far as the mountain range dominated by the great Hermon. The town is important not only because of its flourishing trade and wealth, but also because it is a road junction linking many regions beyond the lake, as is evidenced by the road signs placed in its neighbourhood, bearing the names of Gamala, Gadara, Pella, Arbela, Bozrah, Gherghesa and others. It is densely populated and much frequented by foreigners who come from the nearby villages to purchase or to sell or on other business. I see that among the crowd there are many Romans, both civilians and soldiers and I notice that the people here, either because it is a characteristic of this town or it is typical of the whole region, do not appear to be so hostile or adverse to the Romans. Perhaps business relationships have linked them with bonds of expediency, if not of friendship, more than in any other area on the opposite shore.

The crowds increase as Jesus moves towards the town centre, where He stops in a large square planted with trees, in the shade of which the market takes place, that is, the more important business is negotiated, as retail selling and buying of foodstuffs and utensils is done beyond this square, on an embankment, on which the sun is already darting down and buyers and vendors protect themselves from it by means of sheets, which are stretched on small poles and cast small patches of shadow on the goods exposed on the ground. This place, covered as it is with sheets of all shades, set up not far from the ground and swarming with people wearing gaily-coloured garments, looks like a meadow adorned with huge flowers, partly immobile, partly moving around the tiny paths between the many-coloured sheets. The place has thus a pleasant sight, which, however, disappears when the old-fashioned booths are removed and the embankment appears in the yellowish desolation of a barren wild place. It is at present animated with people bawling. How loud these people yell and how many words they shout bargaining even for a wooden bowl, a sifter or a handful of seed! And the bawling of buyers and vendors is increased by a chorus of beggars who strain their voices to be heard above so much noise.

« You cannot speak here, Master! » exclaims Bartholomew. « Your Voice is powerful but it cannot overwhelm this noise! »

« We will wait. See? The market is about to end. Some people are already taking their goods away. In the meantime go and give alms to the beggars with the offerings of the local rich people. It Will be the prologue, to and the blessing on the sermon, because alms given with love passes from the degree of material relief to that of love of neighbour and attracts graces » replies Jesus.

The apostles go away to carry out the order.

Jesus continues to speak among the attentive crowds. « The town is rich and flourshing. At least this part of it. I see You wear beautiful clean garments. And you look well fed. Everything tells Me that you do not suffer poverty. I would now like to ask you whether those people, who are complaining over there, are from Hippo or are occasional beggars who have come here from other villages to have relief. Be sincere… »

« Well. We will tell You, although Your words already sound like a reproach. Some are foreigners, most of them are from Hippo. »

« And is there no work for them? I see that you are building many houses here, and there should be work for everybody… »

« It is mostly the Romans who engage workers… »

« Mostly. You are right. Because I have seen also some of the local people supervise jobs. And I have noticed that many of them have engaged foreigners. Why not help your fellow citizens first? »

« Because… It is difficult to work here because, particularly some years ago, before the Romans built good roads, it was a hard task to bring big rocks here and open new roads… And many were taken ill or became crippled… and they are now beggars, because they are no longer fit to work. »

« But you enjoy the work they did? »

« Certainly, Master! See how beautiful and comfortable the town is, with plenty water in deep cisterns and beautiful roads which connect this town with other rich ones. See what solid constructions. See how many laboratories. See… »

« I see everything. And you were helped to build these things by those, who now in a mournful voice ask you to give them a piece of bread? You say that you were? Well, then, if you now enjoy what they helped you to possess, why do you not give them a tiny bit of enjoyment? Some bread, without them asking for it. A bed, so that they may not be compelled to share dens with wild animals. Some assistance for their diseases, which, if cured, would no longer prevent them from still being able to do something, instead of losing heart in forced mortifying idleness. How can you sit happily at meals sharing with joy plentiful food with your smiling children, knowing that, not far from you, some of your brothers are hungry? How can you go and rest in a well protected bed, when you are aware that outside, in the night, there are men who have no beds and can get no rest? Are your consciences not tortured by those coins which you put away in safes, when you know that many people have not even a farthing to buy some bread?

You told Me that you believe in the Most High Lord and that you comply with the Law, that you are acquainted with the prophets and the Books of Wisdom. You told Me that you believe in Me and you are anxious to know My Doctrine. You must, therefore,

have kind hearts, because God is love and He prescribes love, because the Law is love, because the prophets and the Books of Wisdom advise love and My doctrine is a doctrine of love. Sacrifices and prayers are vain unless their base and altar is love for your neighbour and particularly for the poor and needy, to whom you can give all forms of love by means of bread, beds, clothes, comfort and doctrine, leading them to God. Poverty, by disheartening people, causes spirits to lose that faith in Providence, which is beneficial to resist the trials of life. How can you expect a poor man to be always good, patient, pious, when he sees that those who have received everything from life, and thus, according to common opinion, from Providence, are hard-hearted, without true religion - because their religion lacks the first and most essential part: love - they are without patience and, although they have everything, they cannot even tolerate the entreaties of a starving man? At times they curse God and you? But who induces them to such sin? Do you ever consider, o rich citizens of a rich town, that your duty is great: that is: to lead poor wretches to Wisdom through your own behaviour?

I have heard some of you say to Me: "We would all like to be Your disciples, in order to preach You". I say to you all: you can do so. Those who come here timidly, and are shy because of their ragged clothes, with emaciated faces, are the ones who are awaiting the Gospel, which is given above all for the poor, that they may have a supernatural comfort in the hope of a glorious life after the reality of their present sad life. You can practise this doctrine of Mine with less material fatigue, but with greater spiritual difficulty, because riches are dangerous to holiness and justice. They can do so with all kinds of difficulties. The lack of bread, insufficient garments, their being homeless, urge these people to ask themselves: "How can I believe that God is my Father, when I do not have what the birds of the air possess?". How can the hardness of neighbours make them believe that they must love one another like brothers? It is your duty to assure them that God is a Father and, through your active love, that you are their brothers. Providence does exist and you, the rich people of the world, are its ministers. The fact that you are its means is to be considered by You as the greatest honour granted to you by God and as the only way to make dangerous riches holy.

And behave as if in each of them you saw Me. I am in them. I wanted to be poor and persecuted to be like them and so that the remembrance of the Christ poor and persecuted may last throughout centuries, casting a supernatural light on those who are poor and persecuted like the Christ, a light that would make you love them as if they were Myself. I am in fact in the beggar Who has been given food, a drink, clothes, lodgings. I am in the orphan

who has been taken in out of love, in the widow who has been assisted, in the pilgrim who has been given hospitality, in the patient who is cured. And I am in the afflicted who are comforted, in the doubtful who are assured, in the ignorant who are instructed. I am wherever love is received. And anything done to a brother, who is poor in material or spiritual means, is done to Me. Because I am the Poor One, the Afflicted One, the Man of Sorrows, and I am thus, in order to give Wealth, Joy, supernatural Life to all men who many a time - they do not know but it is so - are rich and joyful only apparently, and are all poor in true riches and joys, because they are without Grace through the Original Sin which deprives them of it. You know that without Redemption there is no Grace, without Grace there is no joy or Life. And to give you Grace and Life I did not want to be born a king or a mighty man, but I chose to be poor, a common humble man, because crown, throne, power are nothing for Him Who comes from Heaven to lead souls to Heaven, whereas the all important thing is the example which a true Master must set in order to give strength to his Doctrine. Because the majority of people are poor and unhappy, whereas the powerful and happy are few. Because Goodness is Pity.

That is why I came and the Lord anointed His Christ: that I may announce the Gospel to meek people and cure those who are broken-hearted, that I may preach freedom to slaves, release to prisoners, that I may console those who weep and put on the children of God - the children who know how to remain such both in joy and in sorrow - their diadem, the robe of justice, and transform them from wild plants into trees of the Lord, into His champions and His glory. I am completely devoted to everybody and I want everybody with Me in the Kingdom of Heaven. It is open to everybody providing one lives in justice. Justice is in the practice of the Law and in the exercise of love. One does not enter that Kingdom by right of wealth, but by heroism in holiness. He who wants to enter it should follow Me and do what I do: he should love God above everything and his neighbour as I love him, he should not curse the Lord, he should observe holy days and honour his parents, he should not raise a violent hand on his fellow-man, he should not commit adultery, or rob his neighbour in any way, or give false testimony, or wish what he does not have and other people possess, but he should be satisfied with his destiny, always considering it a fleeting state, a way and means to conquer a better and eternal fate, he should love the poor, the afflicted, the least on the Earth, orphans, widows, and he should not practise usury. He who does that, whatever his nationality and language, his condition and wealth, will be able to enter the Kingdom of God: the gates of which I will open to you.

Come to Me, all you of good will. Be not afraid of what you are or you were. I am Water that cleanses the past and fortifies for the future. Come to Me, you who are poor in wisdom. Wisdom is in My word. Come to Me, start a new life on new ideas. Be not afraid of not knowing, of not being able to do it. My Doctrine is easy, My yoke is light. I am the Rabbi Who gives without asking for recompense, without asking for any recompense but your love. If you love Me, you will love My Doctrine and consequently your neighbour and you will have Life and the Kingdom. Rich people, divest yourselves of your attachment to riches, and buy with them the Kingdom by means of all the words of merciful love for your neighbour. Poor people, divest yourselves of your dejection and come onto the way of your King. With Isaiah I say: "Oh, come to the water all you who are thirsty, and you as well who have no money come and buy". With love you will buy what is love, what is unperishable food, the food which satisfies and fortifies.

I am going away, o rich, poor men and women of Hippo. I am going away to obey the Will of God. But I want to depart less afflicted than I was when I arrived. It is your promise which will relieve My affliction. For the welfare of you rich people, for the welfare of this town of yours, be and promise to be merciful towards the least among you in future. Everything is beautiful here. But as a dark stormy cloud frightens even the most beautiful town, so the hardness of your hearts is an impending danger here, like a shadow which causes beauty to fade away. Remove your hardness and you will be blessed. Remember: God promised not to destroy Sodom, if ten just people were found in it. You do not know the future. I do. And I solemnly tell you that it is more laden with punishments than a summer cloud is with hail. Save your town with your justice and your mercy. Will you do that? »

« We will, Lord, in Your name. Speak, please, go on speaking to us! We have been hard-hearted and sinners. But You are saving us. You are the Saviour. Speak to us… »

« I will be with you until evening. But I will speak through My deeds. Now, while the sun is flaming, go to your houses and meditate on My words. »

« And where are You going, Lord? Come to my house! To mine! » All the rich people in Hippo want Him and they almost contend with one another to justify the reason why Jesus should go with this man or that one.

He raises His hand imposing silence. He achieves it with difficulty. He says: « I am staying with these. » And He points at the poor People who, gathered in a group at the end of the crowd are looking at Him with the attitude of people who, although derided, feel that they are loved. And He repeats: « I am staying with them to comfort them and share our bread with them. I want to give them

an advance of the happiness of the Kingdom where the King will be sitting among His subjects at the same banquet of love. And in the meantime, as their faith is written on their faces and in their hearts, I say to them: "Let be done to you what your hearts desire, and may your bodies and souls rejoice in the first cure of Your health which the Saviour grants you". »

The poor people must number fully one hundred. At least two thirds of them are suffering from physical disability, or are blind, or clearly ill; the other third are children begging on behalf of their widow mothers or of their grandparents… Well: it is wonderful to see deformed arms, dislocated hips, misshapen backs, lifeless eyes, exhausted people dragging themselves along, all kinds of painful diseases and misfortunes, contracted through labour accidents or excess of fatigue and privations, be restored to normal healthy state, thus allowing the poor wretches to begin to live once again and feel that they are in a position to look after themselves. Their cries fill the large square and resound in it.

A Roman elbows his way through the delirious crowd and reaches Jesus while He, with as much difficulty, is going towards the poor people who have just been cured and are blessing Him from where they are standing, as it is impossible for them to squeeze through the compact mass of people.

« Hail, Rabbi of Israel. What You have done, is it only for the members of Your people? »

« No, man. Neither what I have done, nor what I have said. My power is universal, because My love is universal. And My doctrine is universal because there are no limitations of castes, religions or nations for it. The Kingdom of Heaven is for all Mankind who can believe in the true God. And I am here for those who can believe in the power of the true God. »

« I am a pagan. But I believe that You are a god. I have a slave, who is dear to me. An old slave who has followed me since I was a little boy. Paralysis is now killing him slowly and with great pain. But he is a slave and perhaps You… »

« I solemnly tell you that I know only one slavery which disgusts Me: the slavery of sin, and of obstinate sin. Because he who sins and repents meets with My pity. Your slave shall be cured. Go and get rid of your error by entering the true faith. »

« Are You not coming to my house? »

« No, man. »

« Actually… I have asked for too much. A god does not go to the houses of mortals. We read about that only in fables… But no man ever gave hospitality to Jupiter or Apollo. »

« Because they do not exist. But God, the true God enters the homes of those who believe in Him and bestows health and peace to them. »

« Who is the true God? »

« He Who is. »

« Not You? Do not lie! I feel You are god… »

« I am not lying. What you said is true: I am God. I am the Son of God Who has come to save also your soul as I saved your beloved slave. Is that not him coming shouting at the top of his voice? »

The Roman turns round, he sees an old man, who is followed by other people and is running, enveloped in a blanket, shouting: « Marius! Marius! My master! »

« By Jove! It's my slave! How!… I… said: Jove… No: I say: by the Rabbi of Israel. I… I… » the man does not know what to say…

The crowds open out willingly to let the old man, who has just been cured, pass through.

« I am well, master. I felt something like a fire in my limbs and I heard an order: "Get up!". I thought it was your voice. I got up… I could stand… I tried to walk… and I was able… I tried to touch my bedsores… they had disappeared. I shouted. Nereus and Quintus came. They told me where you were. I did not wait to get some clothes. Now I can still serve you… » the old man, on his knees, is weeping kissing the tunic of the Roman.

« Not me. This Rabbi cured you. We will have to believe, Aquila. He is the true God. He cured those people just with His voice and you… I do not know how… We must believe… Lord… I am a heathen, but… here… No. It's too little. Tell me where You are going and I will honour You. » He offers a purse, then puts it away.

« I am going with them under that dark porch. »

« I will send You an offering for them. Hail, Rabbi. I will tell those who do not believe… »

« Goodbye. I will wait for you on the ways of God. »

The Roman goes away with his slaves. Jesus goes away with His poor people, with His apostles and the women disciples.

The porch - it is more like a sheltered road than a porch - is shady and cool, and the joy is so great that even the place looks beautiful, although it is a very common one. Now and again a citizen comes and gives offerings. The slave of the Roman comes back with a heavy purse. And Jesus gives words of light and support in money, and when the apostles come back with a variety of foodstuffs, He breaks the bread and blesses the food, which He then hands out to the poor people, to His poor people…

452. Towards Gamala. The Blessed Virgin's Love in Doing the Will of God.

3rd July 1946.

Night is falling bringing cool breezes which refresh after so much heat, and also twilight which is a relief after so much bright

sunshine.

Jesus takes leave of the people of Hippo as He is quite firm in His decision not to delay departure, in order to be at Capernaum for the Sabbath. The people depart from Him reluctantly and a few obstinate persons follow Him even out of town.

Among them is the woman from Aphek, the widow who in the village on the lake begged the Lord to choose her as guardian for little Alphaeus, who is not wanted by his mother. She has joined the group of the women disciples, as if she were one of them, and she has now become so familiar with them, that they regard her as one of the family. She is now with Salome, to whom she is speaking animatedly in a low voice.

Mary is farther back with Her sister-in-law, and they adapt their steps to the pace of the little boy who is walking hand in hand between them and enjoys himself jumping over every stone in the road, which, being paved with regular slabs, was certainly built by the Romans. And at each jump he laughs and says: « See how clever I am? Look, look again! ». It is a game which I think all children in the world have played when they are held by the hand by people who they perceive are fond of them. And the two holy women who are leading him by the hand show great interest in his game and praise him for being so clever in jumping. The poor little fellow has flourished in a few days of peaceful loving life, his eyes are cheerful like those of happy children and his silvery laughter makes him more beautiful and above all more puerile, without the expression of a sad little man, as he had looked the evening he left Capernaum.

Mary of Alphaeus, considering the situation, when she hears some words of Sarah, the widow, says to her sister-in-law: « That would be ideal! If I were Jesus, I would give her the boy. »

« He has a mother, Mary… »

« Mother? Don't call her that! A she-wolf is more motherly than that wretch. »

« That is true. But even if she does not feel any obligation towards her son, she always has a claim on him. »

« H'm! To make him suffer! Look how much he has improved! »

« I know. But… Jesus has no right to take children away from mothers, not even to give them to those who would love them. »

« Neither are men entitled to… Better not say more. I know what… »

« Oh! I understand You… You mean: neither are men entitled to take Your Son away from You, and yet they will do so… But by doing so - a cruel action from a human point of view - they will bring about infinite good. In this case, instead, I do not know whether it would do that woman any good… »

« But it would do the child much good. But why… did He tell us

that dreadful thing? I have had no peace since I heard of it… »

« And did you not know even previously that the Redeemer was to suffer and, die? »

« Of course I did! But I did not know that it was Jesus. I have been very fond of Him, You know? I loved Him more than my own sons. So handsome, so kind… Oh! I envied You Him, my dear Mary, when He was a boy, and always later… always… Even a puff of air worried me, lest it should harm Him and… I cannot believe that He will be tortured… » Mary of Clopas weeps under her veil.

And Mary, the Mother, comforts her. « Mary, My dear, do not look at the matter from a human point of view. Think of its fruits… You can imagine how I see daylight fading away every evening… When it dies out I say: one day less to have Jesus… Oh! Mary! For one thing above all I thank the Most High: for granting Me to achieve perfect love, as perfect as a creature can possess it, because such love allows Me to cure and fortify My heart saying: "His sorrow and Mine are useful to My brothers, therefore blessed be Sorrow". If I did not love My neighbour thus… I could not endure the thought that they will put Jesus to death… »

« So, what love is Yours? What love must a mother have to say such words? In… in order not to run away with her son, to defend him and say to her neighbours: "My first neighbour is my son and I love him above all things"? »

« He Who is to be loved above everything is God. »

« And He is God. »

« He does the Will of the Father and I do it with Him. What love is Mine? What love is required to be able to say those words? The love of fusion with God, complete union, total surrender, to be lost in Him, to be nothing but a part of Him, as your hand is part of you and does what your head commands. That is My love and such is the love which one must have to do always the Will of God willingly. »

« But You are You. You are the Blessed One among all creatures. You were certainly such even before You had Jesus, because God chose You to have Him, and it is easy for You… »

« No, Mary. I am the Woman and the Mother like every woman and mother. The gift of God does not suppress the creature. She is as human as any other creature, even if the gift gives her a very strong spirituality. You know, by now, that I had to accept the gift, of My own free will, and with all the consequences which it involved. Because each divine gift is a great beatitude, but also a great obligation. And God does not force any man to accept His gifts, but He asks man and if the latter replies: "No" to the spiritual voice speaking to him, God does not force him. Every soul is interrogated by God at least once in its lifetime whether… »

« Oh! I have not been! He never asked me anything! » exclaims

Mary of Alphaeus confidently.

The Blessed Virgin smiles kindly and replies: « You did not notice it and your soul replied without you being aware of it; and the reason for that is that you already love the Lord very much. »

« I am telling You that He has never spoken to me!… »

« Why, then, are you here, a disciple following Jesus? And why are you so anxious that your sons, all of them, should be followers of Jesus? You know what it implies to follow Him, and yet you want your sons to follow Him. »

« Certainly I would like to give them all to Him. I could then truly say that I bore my children to the Light. And I pray that I may give them to It, to Jesus, with true, eternal maternity. »

« You see! And why that? Because God interrogated you one day and He said: "Mary, would you give Me your sons to be My ministers in the new Jerusalem?". And you replied: "Yes, Lord". And even now that you are aware that a disciple is not superior to the Master, you reply to God, Who questions you again to test your love.- "Yes, my Lord. I now want them to be Yours!". Is it not so? »

« Yes, Mary, it is. That's true. I am so ignorant that I cannot understand what happens in a soul. But when Jesus or You make me ponder, I say that it is true. It is really true. I say that… I would rather see them killed by men than be hostile to God… Certainly… if I saw them die… if… oh! But the Lord… Eh! Would the Lord help me in that hour… or will He help You alone? »

« He will help all His faithful daughters, who are martyrs in the spirit, or in the spirit and in the flesh for His glory. »

« But who is to be killed? » asks the little boy, who has stopped jumping upon hearing their conversation, and has been all ears. And he asks again, partly out of curiosity, partly out of fear, looking about the lonely country which is growing dark: « Are there highwaymen about? Where are they? »

« There are no highwaymen, My child. And no one, for the time being, is to be killed. Jump, go on jumping… » replies the Most Holy Virgin.

Jesus, Who was far ahead, has stopped waiting for the women. Of the people who followed Him from Hippo, three men and the widow are still present. The others made up their minds, one after the other, to leave Him and go back to their town. The two groups come together again. Jesus says: « Let us wait here until the moon rises. We will then set out in order to arrive at the town of Gamala at dawn. »

« But Lord! Do You not remember how they drove You out of it? They begged You to go away… »

« So? I went away, now I am going back. God is patient and prudent. Then, in their excitement, they were not in a state to receive the Word, which, in order to be fruitful, is to be received with a

peaceful spirit. Remember Elijah and his meeting with the Lord on the Horeb and take into account that Elijah was a spirit beloved by the Lord and accustomed to hearing Him. Only in the peace of a gentle breeze, when, after being dismayed, his spirit was resting in the peace of creation and of his honest ego, only then the Lord spoke. And the Lord has waited for the fright, left by the legion of demons in remembrance of their passage through that region because if the passing of God is peace, the passing of Satan is perturbation - and the Lord has waited for such fright to come to an end and for their hearts and minds to become crystal clear, before going back to the people of Gamala, as they are still His sons. Be not afraid! They will do us no harm! »

The widow from Aphek comes forward and prostrates herself: « And are You not coming to my house, Lord? Aphek also is full of sons of God… »

« The road is a difficult one and our time is short. We have the women with us and we must go back to Capernaum for the Sabbath. Do not insist, woman » says the Iscariot resolutely, almost rejecting her.

« The fact is… I wanted Him to be convinced that I can keep the boy properly. »

« But do you not understand that he has his mother? » says the Iscariot once again, and he says so rudely.

« Do you know any short cuts between Gamala and Aphek? » Jesus asks the mortified woman.

« Oh! yes! There is a road across the mountains, but it is good and cool, because it runs through woods. And it is possible to hire some donkeys for the women, and I will pay for them… »

« I will come to your house to console you, even if I cannot give you the child, because he has a mother. But I promise you that in the event that God should judge that the innocent with no love should find love again, I will think of you. »

« Thank you, Master. You are good » says the widow, and she looks at Judas in a way that means: « And you are bad. »

The little boy, who has listened and understood, at least in part, and has grown fond of the widow, who has conquered him with caresses and dainties, both by natural instinct of reflection and by the spirit of imitation typical of children, repeats exactly what the widow has done, the only difference being that he does not prostrate himself at Jesus' feet, but he clings to His knees, raising his little face which looks bright in the moonlight, and he says: « Thank You, Master. You are good. » And he does not stop at that; he wants to make his mind quite clear and he concludes: « And you are bad » and to ensure that there is no error of person, he lightly kicks the Iscariot's foot.

Thomas bursts out laughing, which makes the others laugh as

well, while he says: « Poor Judas! It is really a fact that children do not like you! Now and again one of them judges you, and they always say that you are bad!… »

Judas has so little sense of humor that he shows his anger, an unfair anger, out of proportion to the cause and object giving rise to it and to which he gives vent by tearing the child away from Jesus, knees very coarsely and throwing him backwards, shouting: « This is what happens when in serious matters we have pantomimes it is neither decent nor useful to take with us a train of women and parentless children… »

« No, you can't say that. You met his father, too. He was the legitimate husband, and a just man » remarks Bartholomew severely.

« So? Is he not a tramp and a future thief? Is he not the cause of unpleasant remarks uttered behind our backs? Some people thought he was Your Mother's son… And where is Your Mother's husband to justify a son of his age? Or they suppose that he is the son of one of us, and… »

« Enough of that. You are speaking the language of the world. But the world speaks a filthy language to frogs, to water snakes, to lizards, to all unclean animals… Come, Alphaeus. Do not weep. Come to Me. I will carry you in My arms. »

The little boy is deeply grieved. All his sorrow of an orphan rejected by his mother and which had calmed down during the previous peaceful days, comes to light again, boils over and overflows. He is weeping not so much because of the bruises on his forehead and hands, which were injured when he fell on stoney ground, bruises which the women are cleaning and kissing to comfort him, as because of his grief of a son who is not loved. A long heart-rending weeping, during which he cries for his dead father, his mother… Oh! poor child!

And I weep with him, as men never care for me, and with him I take shelter in the arms of God, today, the anniversary of my father's funeral; today when an unfair decision deprives me of receiving Holy Communion frequently…

Jesus takes him, kisses him, lulls and comforts him, walking ahead of everybody, with the innocent child in His arms, in the moonlight… And as his weeping slowly abates and his sobbing becomes less frequent, in the silence of the night Jesus' voice can be heard saying: « I am here, Alphaeus. I am here for everybody. I will be father and mother to you. Do not weep. Your father is near Me and he kisses you with Me. The angels look after you like mothers. If you are good and innocent, all our love is with you… »

And the hoarse voice of one of the three men who came from Hippo is heard saying: « The Master is good and He attracts people. But His disciples are not. I am going away… »

And in a severe voice the Zealot says to the Iscariot: « Do you see what your behaviour does? »

Only the widow from Aphek remains with the women disciples and sighs with them. As the three men from Hippo have gone away, one can hear only the reduced shuffling of feet. The situation remains unchanged until they stop near a large grotto, where shepherds perhaps take shelter, because there is a layer of heather and ferns, which have been recently cut, laid on the ground to dry.

« Let us stop here. Let us assemble this bed of Providence for the women. We can lie down just outside, on the grass » says Jesus. And they do so, while the full moon sails in the vault of heaven.

453. Near Gamala, Jesus Entrusts the Church to the Blessed Virgin and Speaks of Mercy on Oppressed People.

8th July 1946.

Day is just dawning when Jesus awakes and sits up on His rustic bed made of earth and grass. He then stands up, picks up His sandals and the mantle with which He had covered Himself as a protection from dew and the chill of the night, and cautiously steps over the tangle of legs, arms, bodies and heads of the apostles asleep around Him. He moves away a few steps, with keen eyes to see where He lays His feet in the subdued gleam of dawn, which under the leafy trees is barely a feeble light. He arrives at an open meadow, from which, through an opening between trees and rocks, one can catch a glimpse of a little strip of a lake which is waking up and a large piece of the sky which is becoming clearer, passing from the grey-blue hue typical of the vault of heaven at daybreak, to sky-blue, while to the east it is already fading into a light yellow shade which becomes more and more defined and deeper and deeper changing into a rosy yellow and finally into a most beautiful pale coral hue.

Dawn promises a lovely day, despite a very light haze which is reluctant to surrender the eastern sphere of the sky to daylight, and moves forward in such light veils of clouds that the blue sky does not suffer by it: on the contrary it is embellished as if it were an ornament of snow-white muslin fringed with gold and corals constantly changing, and becoming more and more beautiful, as if it were striving to reach the perfection of its fleeting beauty before being destroyed by daylight with its triumphant sunshine. To the west, on the other hand, a few stars are still visible, although deprived of their bright night twinkling as light increases, and the moon, about to set behind the tops of mountains, sails on looking very pale, with no moonbeams, like a dying planet.

Jesus, standing barefooted on the dewy grass, His arms folded

across His chest, His head raised watching the rising day, is pensive… or is speaking to the Father in a spiritual conversation. There is dead silence, so much so that the large drops of abundant dew can be heard falling on the ground.

Jesus, still standing with arms folded, lowers His head and becomes engrossed in an even deeper meditation. He is completely absorbed in Himself. His magnificent wide open eyes are fixed on the ground as if they wished to wring a reply from the herbs. But I am sure that they do not even see the slow movement of stems quivering in the cold breeze of dawn, like people who wake up, stretch, turn round, stir themselves in order to awake completely and be thus alert in all their nerves and muscles. He looks, but does not see the awaking of herbs and wild flowers, with their little branches, leaves, corollas shaped like umbrellas, or growing in clusters, spikes and tufts. Some of the flowers are isolated in calyces, some are shaped like radiant crowns or snapdragons, cornucopias, plumes or berries. Some are stiff on their stalks: some are soft, hanging from stems which are not their own and round which they have twined, some are lying and creeping on the ground: some are grouped in families of many little low humble plants: some are solitary, large, violent in hue and carriage: they are all intent on shaking off their petals the dew-drops, which they no longer want, eager as they are now for sunshine only, as whimsical in their desires as in their lay-out. They are thus very much like men, who are never satisfied with what they have.

Jesus seems to be listening. But He certainly does not hear either the rustling of the wind, which is becoming stronger and is amusing itself in shaking the dew-drops and making them fall, or the ever increasing whispering of little birds, which are awaking and telling one another their dreams of the night, or are exchanging their views on the warm canorous nests in which, among down and soft hay, nestlings so far bare, are beginning to show plumage or are opening their huge beaks wide showing their greedy red throats and screeching in their first exacting request for food. Jesus seems to be listening. But He certainly does not hear the first scoffing call of the blackbird, the first sweet song of the blackcap or the golden trilled note of the skylark, which rises joyfully towards the early sun, or the shrieking, which rends the quiet air, of the many swallows, which leave the rocks, where they built their nests, and begin to weave their untiring flights from the earth to the sky. Neither does He hear the wild cry of a magpie perched on a branch of an oak near Him and seems to be asking: « Who are You? What are You pondering? » deriding Him. Not even that interrupts His meditation.

But who does not know that magpies are spiteful? This one, tired of seeing an intruder on the little meadow which is perhaps its territory,

tears off the oak-tree two lovely acorns joined on one single stem, and with the precision of a first-class shot, drops them on Jesus' head. It is not a heavy shell, capable of hurting, but taking into account the height from which it is dropped, it is sufficiently solid to shake the Pensive One, Who looks up and sees the bird which, with its wings opened out and nodding in a funny way, rejoices at its shot. Jesus smiles gently, shakes His head, He sighs as a conclusion of His meditation and He moves away walking up and down. The magpie with a laugh and a mocking cry flies down to the meadow, flapping its wings, searching and scratching about the grass freed from the Intruder.

Jesus looks for some water, but He does not find any. He resigns Himself to going back to the apostles, but birds teach Him where to find it. Flocks of them fly towards some very wide calyx-shaped flowers, which in actual fact are little cups containing water, or they alight on wide hairy leaves, where each hair has retained a drop of dew, and they quench their thirst there or have their ablutions. Jesus imitates them. He collects in the hollow of His hands the water of some calyces and refreshes His face, He picks some wide hairy leaves and with them He removes the dust from His bare feet, He cleans His sandals and puts them on, and with some more leaves He washes His hands until He sees that they are clean and He smiles whispering: « The divine perfections of the Creator! »

He is now refreshed, tidy, because with His wet hand He has tidied up His hair and beard and as the first sunbeams turn the meadow into a mat studded with diamonds, He goes to wake up the apostles and the women.

Both groups are hardly able to awaken, tired as they are. Mary is awake but She is unable to move because of the little boy who is sleeping clinging to Her breast, with his little head under Her chin. And the Mother, on seeing Jesus appear at the entrance of the grotto, smiles at Him with Her kind blue eyes, while Her face becomes rosy out of the joy of seeing Him. And She frees Herself from the child, who whimpers a little on being moved, She gets up and goes towards Jesus with Her silent slightly rolling gait of a modest dove.

« May God bless You, Son, today. »

« May God be with You, Mother. Was the night unpleasant for You? »

« No. On the contrary, very pleasant. I seemed to have You, a little Baby, in My arms… And I dreamed that a kind of golden river was flowing from Your mouth, emitting such a sweet sound that it cannot be described, and a voice said… oh! what a voice: "This is the Word which enriches the world and gives beatitude to those who listen to it and obey it. Without any limitation of power, time or space, It will save". Oh! My Son! And You, My Child, are that

Word! How will I be able to live so long and to do so much as to be able to thank the Eternal Father for making Me Your Mother? »

« Do not worry about that, Mother. Every beat of Your heart pleases God. You are the living praise of God, and You will always be so, Mother. You have been thanking Him since You… »

« I do not seem to be doing it sufficiently, Jesus. It is so great, so great what God did for Me! After all, what do I do more than all those good women do, who, like Me, are Your disciples? Son, tell our Father to give Me the opportunity to thank Him as His gift deserves. »

« Mother! And do You think that the Father needs Me to ask Him that for You? He has already prepared for You the sacrifice which You will have to consume for this perfect praise. And You will be perfect when You have accomplished it… »

« My Jesus!… I understand what You mean… But will I be able to think in that hour?… Your poor Mother… »

« The Blessed Spouse of the eternal Love! Mother, that is what You are. And the Love will be thinking in You. »

« You say so, Son, and I relax on Your Word. But You… pray for Me, in that hour that none of these understands… and which is already impending… That is true, is it not? »

It is impossible to describe the expression of Mary's face during this conversation. No writer can possibly translate it into words without spoiling it with mawkishness or uncertain hues. Only he who has a heart, a kind heart, even if a virile one, can mentally give Mary's face the real expression which it has in this moment.

Jesus looks at Her… Another expression untranslatable into poor words. And He replies to Her: « And You will pray for Me in the hour of death… Yes. None of these understands… It is not their fault. Satan is creating fumes so that they may not see, that they may be like drunken people who do not understand, and therefore unprepared… and easier to bend… But You and I will save them, despite Satan's snares. Mother, I entrust them to You as from this moment. Remember these words of Mine: I entrust them to You. I give You My inheritance. I have nothing upon the Earth, except a Mother, and I offer Her to God: Victim with the Victim; and My Church, and I entrust it to You. Be her Nurse. A short time ago I was wondering in how many people, in future, the man of Kerioth will be reviving with all his faults. And I was thinking that anyone, who were not Jesus, would reject that faulty being. But I will not reject him. I am Jesus. During the time that You will remain on the Earth, and You are second to Peter with regard to ecclesiastical hierarchy, he being the Head and You a believer, but first as Mother of the Church having given birth to Me, Who am the Head of this mystical Body, do not reject the many Judases, but assist and teach Peter, My brothers, John, James,

Simon, Philip, Bartholomew, Andrew, Thomas and Matthew not to reject, but to assist. Defend Me in My followers, and defend Me from those who want to disperse and dismember the dawning Church. And in future centuries, Mother, always be She Who pleads for and protects, defends and helps My Church, My Priests, My believers, from Evil and Punishment, from themselves… How many Judases, o Mother, in future centuries! And how many will be like half-wits who cannot understand, or like blind and deaf people who cannot see or hear, or like cripples and paralytic people who cannot come… Mother, let them all be under Your mantle! You alone can and will be able to change the punishment decrees of the Eternal Father for one soul or for many of them. Because the Trinity will never be able to deny its Flower anything. »

« I will do that, Son. As far as it depends on Me, You may go to your goal in peace. Your Mother is here to defend You in Your Church, always. »

« May God bless You, Mother… Come! I will pick for You some calyces of flowers full of scented water, and You will refresh Your face with it, as I did. Our Most Holy Father prepared them for us, and the birds have pointed them out to Me. See how everything is useful in the orderly Creation of God! This elevated tableland close to the lake, so fertile because of the mists which rise from the Sea of Galilee and of the tall trees which attract dew, allowing this luxuriance of herbs and flowers, even in the excessive summer heat. This abundant fall of dew to fill these calyces so that His beloved children may wash their faces… That is what the Father has arranged for those who love Him. Here. The water of God, in calyces of God, to refresh the Eve of the new Paradise. » And Jesus picks the very wide flowers, the name of which I do not know, and He pours into Mary's hands the water collected in them…

The others in the meantime have tidied themselves up and are coming looking for Jesus Who had moved a short distance away from the resting place.

« We are ready, Master. »

« All right. Let us go this way. »

« But is it the right one? The woods come to an end here; the last time we walked through woods… » objects James of Zebedee.

« Because we were coming up from the lake. But now we can take the right road. See? Gamala is over there, south-east, and this is the only road. The other three sides are impassable, except for wild goats. »

« You are right. We will avoid the deep barren valley, from which we saw the men who were possessed come » says Philip.

They walk fast and are soon out of the wood in which they slept, along a stoney path running beyond a little valley that grows Wider the more they approach the bizarre mountain to which

Gamala clings and which is very steep on three sides, that is, to the east, north and west and is linked to the remaining area only by this road which runs straight from south to north, and is elevated between two wild stoney valleys that separate it from the country on the eastern side and from woods of oak-trees on the western side.

Many swineherds pass by in the middle of their grunting herds, going to the oak-woods. Carts laden with squared stones pass squeaking, drawn by slow oxen yoked in pairs. Some horsemen pass at a trot raising clouds of dust. Teams of ragged emaciated diggers - I think most of them are slaves or men condemned to hard labour for some reason - pass by going to their work under the strict surveillance of supervisors.

As they draw closer to the mountain and the road begins to climb, they can see fortified ditches surrounding the mountain like rings fastened to its sides. It must be a difficult task to dig out those works, particularly in certain spots which are almost sheer. And yet many men are working to repair existing fortifications, to build new ones and are carrying on their bare shoulders stone cubes which bend the poor wretches and leave bleeding wounds on their naked shoulders.

« What are those citizens doing? It is perhaps wartime that they should work thus? They are mad » say the apostles to one another while the women pity the unhappy men who are half -naked, ill-fed and compelled to do works exceeding their strength.

« But who compels them to work? The Tetrarch or the Romans? » ask the apostles once again and they discuss the matter among themselves because it would appear that Gamala is, so to say, independent of the Tetrarchy of Philip and of that of Herod, and because it seems impossible to some of the apostles that the Romans should busy themselves in building in foreign countries fortifications which in future might be used against them. And the eternal idea, as fixed as a maniacal idea, of the temporal kingdom of the Messiah, is displayed as the insignia of already certain victory, of glory and national independence.

They shout so much that some supervisors approach them and listen. They are coarse men, clearly not of Jewish race, many are elderly, several of them have scars on their bodies. But their identity is clarified by the scornful remark of one of them: « "Our kingdom"! Did you hear that, Titus? O big-nosed people! Your kingdom is already crushed under these stones. He who uses the enemy to build against the enemy serves the enemy. Publius Corfinius tells you. And if you do not understand, live long enough; and the stones will explain the enigma to you » and he laughs raising his lash because he sees an exhausted workman stagger and sit down, and he would strike him if Jesus did not stop

him moving forward and saying: « You are not allowed to do that. He is a man like you. »

« Who are You Who meddle with and defend a slave? »

« I am Mercy. My name as a man would not mean anything to you. But My attribute reminds you to be merciful. You said: "He who uses the enemy to build against the enemy serves the enemy". You spoke a sorrowful truth. But I will tell you a bright one: "Who does not use mercy will not find mercy". »

« Are You a rhetor? »

« I told you, I am Mercy. »

Some people from Gamala, who are going towards their hometown, say: « He is the Rabbi of Galilee. He Who gives orders to diseases, to the winds, waters and demons, Who changes stones into bread and Whom nothing can resist. Let us run to town to tell the people. So that sick people may come! And we may hear His word. We belong to Israel, too! » and some of them run away, some gather round the Master.

The supervisor mentioned previously asks: « Is it true what they are saying about You? »

« Yes, it is. »

« Work a miracle and I will believe. »

« You do not ask for miracles to believe. You ask faith to believe, and thus obtain a miracle. Faith and pity for your neighbour. »

« I am a heathen… »

« That is not a valid reason. You live in Israel which gives you money… »

« Because I work. »

« No. Because you make people work. »

« I know how to make people work. »

« Yes, mercilessly. But have you never considered that if instead of being a Roman you were a Jew, you might have been in the place of one of these men? »

« Eh!… Of course… But I am not, through the protection of the gods. »

« Your vain idols could not protect you if the true God wanted to strike you. You are not dead yet. So be merciful in order to receive mercy… »

The man would like to retort and discuss, but he shrugs his shoulders disdainfully and turning his back he goes away and strikes a man who had stopped working with his pick in a hard rocky layer.

Jesus looks at the unhappy fellow who has been struck and He looks at the striker as well. Two glances of the same, and yet different, pity. And they are so deeply sad, that they remind me of certain glances of Christ during His passion. But what can He do? As He has no power to interfere, He resumes His way, with the

burden of the misfortunes just seen lying heavy on His heart.

But some citizens, certainly notables, run down from Gamala, and they reach Jesus before Whom they bow deeply inviting Him to enter their town and speak to the people, who are coming in flocks of their own accord.

« You can go wherever you wish. They (and He points at the workers) cannot. It is now cool and we are protected here from the sun. Let us go towards those poor wretches so that they may hear the Word of Life as well » replies Jesus. And He sets out first retracing His steps and taking an uneven path which leads down the mountain, where it is more painful to work. He then addresses the notables saying: « If it is in your power to do so, order the work to be stopped. »

« We certainly can! We are the ones who pay and if we pay some hours for nothing, no one can complain » reply the men from Gamala and they go to speak to the supervisors and a few moments later I see the latter shrug their shoulders, as if to say: « If you are happy, why should we worry? » They then whistle to the gangs, a signal which obviously means rest.

Jesus in the meantime has spoken to other people from Gamala, and I see them nod assent and walk away fast back to town.

The workers hurry around the supervisors looking frightened. « Stop working. Your noise is annoying the philosopher » orders one of them, probably the head of them all.

The workmen look with tired eyes at the one pointed out as the philosopher who is giving them the gift of a rest. And the philosopher looking at them pitifully, replies to their glances and to the words of the supervisor saying: « Their noise does not annoy Me, but their misery grieves Me. Come, My children. Rest your bodies and even more your hearts near the Christ of God. »

The population, the slaves, the condemned men, the apostles and disciples crowd in the free space between the mountain and the trenches, and those who do not find any room there, climb up to the upper trenches on the ground, and the less lucky ones resign themselves to going onto the road, where the sun is already shining. And more people come from Gamala and many travellers coming from other towns and going to Gamala stop as well.

There is a large crowd. And those who had gone away a short time before are elbowing their way through the crowd. They are carrying heavy baskets and containers. They push their way as far as Jesus, Who has instructed the apostles to bring the workmen to the front row. They lay baskets and amphorae at Jesus' feet.

« Give them the offerings of charity » orders Jesus.

« They have had their food and there is still some water mixed with vinegar and bread. If they eat too much, they will feel heavy at work » shouts one of the supervisors.

Jesus looks at him and repeats His order: « Give them food suitable for men, and bring Me their food. »

The apostles with the help of volunteers execute His order.

Their food! A kind of a hard dark crust, not suitable for animals, and some water mixed with vinegar. That is the nourishment of the convicts! Jesus looks at it and has the poor food placed near the mountain side. And He looks at those who were to eat it, underfed bodies in which only the muscles, overdeveloped through excessive fatigue, can hold out with sheaves of fibres swelling out from the flaccid skin, feverish frightened eyes, avid mouths which seem even bestial in biting the good, plentiful unexpected food, in drinking the real corroborating fresh wine…

Jesus waits patiently for them to finish their meal. And He does not have to wait long because their avidity is such that everything is soon consumed.

Jesus stretches out His arm in the habitual gesture when He is about to speak, to draw the attention of people and impose silence. He says:

« What do the eyes of man see in this place? Valleys dug deeper than they were created by nature, hills formed by man with massive ramparts, winding roads penetrating into the mountain like dens of animals. And why all that? To stop a danger which is not known whence it may come, but is felt impending like a hailstorm from a stormy sky.

In actual fact they have acted here in a human way, with human power and human means, at times also inhuman, to defend themselves and prepare means of offence, unmindful of the words of the Prophet, who teaches his people how it is possible to defend oneself from human misfortunes through superhuman means, the most valid ones. He cries: "Console my people… comfort Jerusalem, because her slavery is ended, her sin is atoned for, because she has received from the hand of the Lord double punishment for all her crimes". And after the promise he explains the way to make it become real: "Prepare the ways of the Lord, make straight the ways of God across the desert. Every valley will be filled in, every mountain will be laid low, the winding way will become straight, the hard one will become comfortable. Then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all men, without any exception shall see it, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken". Those words 'were taken up by the man of God, John the Baptist, and death only silenced them on his lips.

That is, o men, the true defence against the misfortunes of mankind. Not weapon against weapon, defence against offence, not pride, not fierceness. But supernatural weapons, but virtues achieved in solitude, that is, in the interior of the individual, all alone with himself, who works to sanctify himself, erecting mountains

of charity, lowering peaks of pride, straightening twisted ways of concupiscence, removing sensual obstacles from his way. Then the glory of the Lord will appear and man will receive the defence of God against the spiritual and material snares of enemies. What do you expect a few trenches, a few glacis, a few forts to be against God's punishment which the wickedness or just the tepidness of man draws upon himself? Against punishments which will be named: Romans, as in the past they were named: Babylonians, Philistines, or Egyptians, but in actual fact are divine punishments, and nothing else, deserved by the excessive pride, sensuality, greed, falsehood, selfishness, disobedience to the holy Law of the Decalogue. A man, even the strongest one, can be killed by a fly. Even the most fortified town can be taken by storm when neither man nor town enjoy God's protection, which vanishes or is driven away by the sins of man or of the town.

The Prophet goes on saying: "All flesh is grass and all its glory is like a wild flower. The grass withers, the flower fades as soon as the breath of the Lord blows on them".

Today, by My will, you are looking at these men with pity, whereas up to yesterday you had looked at them like machines compelled to work for you. Today, because I put them, brothers among brothers, amid you, who are rich and happy, today you see them for what they are: men. Contempt or indifference have disappeared from many hearts and pity has replaced them. But consider them more intimately, beyond their oppressed flesh. In it, in them, there is a soul, a thought, feelings as in you. Once they were like you: healthy, free, happy. Later they were no longer so. Because if the life of man is like grass which withers, his well-being is even more fragile. Those who are healthy today, may be taken ill tomorrow, those who are free today, may become slaves tomorrow, those who are happy today, may be unhappy tomorrow. Some of these men are certainly guilty. Do not judge their faults, do not rejoice at their expiation. For many reasons, you might be guilty yourselves tomorrow and compelled to make hard expiation. So be merciful, because you do not know your future, which may be so different from your present time, that you may need all divine and human mercy. Be prone to love and forgiveness. There is no man on the Earth who does not need to be forgiven by God and by some of his own fellow-men. So forgive, to be forgiven.

The Prophet goes on to say: "Grass withers, flowers fade; but the word of the Lord remains for ever".

That is the weapon and defence: the eternal Word which has become the law of all your actions. Raise that true bulwark against the impending danger and you will be saved. So accept the Word, Him Who is speaking to you, but do not receive it in a material way, just for one hour within the walls of the town, but in

your hearts, for ever, because I am He Who knows, Who acts and Who rules with power. And I am the good Shepherd, Who pastures the flock which relies upon Him, and I neglect nobody, not the little ones, or those who are tired, injured or hit by bad fortune, or those who bewail their errors, or those who, although rich and happy, disregard everything to achieve true riches and happiness: that is, to serve God until their death.

The Spirit of the Lord is over Me because the Lord has sent Me to announce the Good News to the meek, to cure those whose hearts are broken, to preach freedom to slaves and liberation to prisoners. Neither can anyone say that I am an instigator, because I do not instigate to rebellion, neither do I advise slaves and prisoners to evade, but I teach the man in chains and the slave true freedom and true liberation, which cannot be taken away from them or even limited, as the more man gives himself up to it, the greater it grows: spiritual freedom, liberation from sin, meekness in sorrow, I teach him to see God beyond men fettering prisoners, to believe that God loves those who love Him, and forgives when man does not forgive, to hope for an eternal place of reward for those who are successful in being good in misfortunes, who can repent their sins and be faithful to the Lord. Do not weep, men, to whom I am particularly referring. I have come to comfort, to gather those who have been rejected, to bring light to their darkness, peace to their souls, to promise a joyful abode both to those who repent and to those who are not guilty. There is no past which may prevent this Present that waits in Heaven for those who serve the Lord in the situation in which they are.

It is not difficult, My poor children, to serve the Lord. He has granted you an easy way to serve Him, because He wants you to be happy in Heaven. To serve the Lord is to love. To love the will of God because you love God. The will of God is hidden even in the most apparently human things. Because - I am speaking to you who have perhaps shed the blood of brothers - because if it certainly was not the will of God that you should be violent, it is now His will that through expiation you should cancel your debts towards Love. Because, if it was not God's will that you should rebel against your enemies, it is now His will that you should become as humble as once you were proud, to your own detriment. Because if it was not God's will that you should obtain by fraud, whether big or small, what did not belong to you, it is now God's will that you should be punished, so that you may not present Yourselves to God with your sins in your hearts. And that should not be forgotten by those who are at present happy, by those who think that they are safe, and through such silly safety do not Prepare in themselves the Kingdom of God, and in the hour of the (trial will be like children remote from the house of the Father, at

the mercy of the storm, under the lash of pain.

You must act with justice, all of you, and raise your eyes to the house of the Father, to the Kingdom of Heaven, which, once its gates have been opened wide by Him, Who came to open them, will not refuse to accept anyone who has achieved justice. You, who are mutilated in your bodies, cripples, eunuchs; or you, who are mutilated in your spirits, cripples, eunuchs in the power of the spirit, rejected in Israel, be not afraid of having no place in the Kingdom of Heaven. Mutilations, crippling, impairment of bodies come to an end with bodies. The moral ones, such as prison and slavery, will come to an end one day as well; those of the spirit, that is the fruit of past faults, are mended through good will. And material mutilations do not count in the eyes of God, and spiritual ones are cancelled in His eyes when loving repentance covers them.

The fact that one does not belong to the holy People does not prevent one from serving the Lord. Because the time has come when all frontiers of the Earth disappear before the Only King, the King of all kings and peoples, the King who gathers all peoples into one only to make it His new People. That people from which only those will be excluded who try to deceive the Lord with false obedience to His Decalogue, which all men of good will can follow, whether they are Jews, Gentiles or idolaters. Because where there is good will, there is natural inclination to justice, and he who is prone to justice, will have no difficulty in adoring the true God, once he gets to know Him, in respecting His Name, in observing holy days, in honouring parents, in not killing, stealing, bearing false witness, in not being an adulterer or fornicator, in not desiring what does not belong to him. And he who has not done that so far, should do it as from now onwards, so that his soul may be saved and he may conquer his place in Heaven. It is written: "I will give them a place in My House if they keep My Covenant and I will make them joyful". And that is said with regard to all men of holy will, because the Holy of Holies is the common Father of all men.

I have finished. I have no money for these people. Neither would it be of any use to them. But I say to you, people of Gamala, who have made so much progress in the way of the Lord since the first time we met, that you should build the most valid defence for your town: that of love for one another and for these men, by assisting them in My Name while they work for you. Will you do that? »

« Yes, Lord » shout the crowds.

« Let us go then. I would not have entered your town if the hardness of your hearts had replied "no" to My request. May you, who are remaining here, be blessed… Let us go… »

And He goes back to the road, now flooded with sunshine and

goes up to the town which is almost built in the rock like a troglodytic town, but has well-kept houses and a most beautiful varied view, according to the direction in which one looks, to the mountains of Hauran or the sea of Galilee, to the remote Great Hermon or to the green Jordan valley. The town is cool because of the way it is built, high up, and with streets which protect from the hot sun. It looks more like a huge castle than a town, a chain of fortresses, because the houses, half brickwork and half dug in the mountain, seem forts.

In the main square, the highest of them all, in the highest part of the town - one's eyes therefore enjoy a vast panorama of mountains, forests, lakes, rivers, all lying underneath - are the sick people of Gamala. And Jesus passes curing them…

454. From Gamala to Aphek.

13th July 1946.

They must have spent the night at Gamala, because it is now morning, a windy morning. Perhaps the town enjoys the wind, so pleasant in eastern countries, because of its location and terraced construction from the top of the town down to the walls, which are massive and equipped with massive ironshod gates, typical of fortresses. If the town looked beautiful to me yesterday, when it was exposed to the sun, now it seems most beautiful. The houses, arranged as they are, do not obstruct the sight of the vast view, because the terrace of one house is on the same level as the upper street, so that each street looks like a long terrace from which it is possible to admire the horizon. The full circle of the horizon can be seen from the top of the mountain, whereas farther down it is a semicircle, but still vast and very beautiful.

At the foot of the mountain the greenery of the oak-groves and of the country form an emerald setting beyond the deep barren valley surrounding the mountain of Gamala. Then to the east, as far as the eye can see, the cultivations of the tableland, of the plateau. (I think that is the name of the large low elevations of the crust of the earth, but if I am wrong, please correct it in my name because I have no dictionary within reach. In fact I am alone in my room and it is impossible for me to take the dictionary which is on the writing-desk, less than three metres away from me. I am saying this to remind you that she who is writing is crucified to her bed.) Beyond the large plateau are the mountains of Hauran and farther back the highest peaks of Bashan; to the south the fertile strip between the blue Jordan and the continuous compact rising ground which is on the eastern side of the river and is similar to a buttress-like projection of the vast plateau, to the north the remote mountains of the Lebanese chain dominated by the imposing

Hermon adorned with countless shades in this early morning' And down, in the near west, the gem of the Sea of Galilee. A real gem fastened to a blue necklace of a different shade of the Jordan flowing into and out of the lake, narrower where it flows in, wider where it resumes flowing southwards, shining in the sun, placid between its green banks, really biblical. The little lake of Merom, instead, is not visible, hidden as it is behind the hills north of Bethsaida, but one can imagine where it is by the luxuriant greenery of the surrounding country, which stretches northwestwards between the Sea of Galilee and the lake of Merom, in the plain where Korazim rises. I think that in the past I have heard the apostles say that it is the plain of Gennesaret.

Jesus takes leave of the citizens, who, proud of their town, are busy showing Him the beautiful sights of the horizon and those of the town provided with aqueducts, thermal baths and beautiful buildings. « It was all done with our work and our money. Because we have learned from the Romans and we have followed their example as far as useful things are concerned, but we are not like the other peoples in the Decapolis! We pay the Romans and they serve us. But that's all! We are faithful. Also our isolation is a sign of faithfulness… »

« Ensure that your faithfulness is not just formal, but real, intimate, just. Otherwise your defence works will be of no avail. I repeat that. See? You have built this aqueduct. It is solid and useful. But if it were not fed by a remote spring, would it give you water for your fountains and thermal baths? »

« No. It would not give us anything. It would be quite useless. »

« You have said it: useless. Likewise natural or artificial defences are useless unless those who build them make them powerful by means of the help of God, and God does not help those who are not His friends. »

« Master, You are speaking as if You knew that we have great need of God… »

« All men are in need of God, and for everything. »

« Yes, Master. But… it seems that we are going to have more need than any other town in Palestine and… »

« Oh!… » a sorrowful exclamation…

The people of Gamala look at Him disconcertedly. The boldest man among them asks: « What do You think? That we shall experience the old horrors once again? »

« Yes, and even more dreadful ones, and lasting longer… longer!… oh! My Fatherland! So much longer… And that will happen if you do not receive the Lord! »

« We have received You. So we are safe! The last time we behaved foolishly, but You have forgiven us… »

« Make sure that you persevere in your present justice towards

Me, and that you grow in justice according to the Law. »

« We will do that, Lord. »

They would like to follow Him and keep Him longer, but Jesus wants to join the women who have gone ahead on little donkeys and He tears Himself away from their insistence going quickly down the road by which He came up yesterday. He slows down only when He is where the labourers are working, to raise His hand to bless the unhappy men who look at Him as one looks at God.

At the foot of the mountain the road divides into two branches, one goes towards the lake, the other inland. The four little donkeys are on the latter and they are trotting along raising dust from the road parched by summer, and shaking their long ears. Now and again one of the women turns round to see whether Jesus is joining them, and they would like to stop to wait for Him, but with His hand He beckons them to proceed in order to get quickly off the uncovered stretch of the road on which the sun is already blazing down, and thus reach the woods which climb towards Aphek. It is cool in the woods which interlace a green vault over the track. They enter them happily, with exclamations of relief. Aphek is much further inland than Gamala. It is among the mountains and so it is no longer possible to see the lake of Galilee. In actual fact it is not possible to see anything because the road climbs between two ridges which are like screens.

The widow is ahead of them to point out the shortest way, that is, she leaves the track and takes a path which climbs up the mountain and is even cooler and shadier. But I understand the reason for the deviation when, turning round on her saddle, Sarah says: « Look. These woods are mine. Valuable trees. They come from as far as Jerusalem to buy them to make chests for rich people. And these are old trees; but I have also seedling nurseries. Come. See… » and she drives her little donkey down steep slopes, then up crests and then down once again, following a little path through her woods where are in fact zones with old trees, ready to be cut down, and zones with tender plants, at times only a few centimetres off the ground, among green herbs, smelling of all mountain aromas.

« This place is beautiful and well kept. You are a wise woman » says Jesus praising her.

« Oh!… But just for myself… I would take care of everything more willingly, if I had a son… »

Jesus does not reply. They go on. Aphek can now be seen in the middle of apple-orchards and other fruit trees.

« That orchard is mine as well. Too much for me alone!… It was already too much when I had my husband. In the evenings we used to look at each other in the house which was too empty, too large, with too much money and with accounts of crops too plentiful for

us and we used to say to each other: "And for whom?". And I say that even more now… » All the sadness of a sterile marriage stands out from the woman's words.

« There are always poor people… » says Jesus.

« Oh! yes! And my house is open to them every day. But afterwards… »

« Do you mean when you are dead? »

« Yes, Lord. It will be painful to leave, to whom?… the things I have taken care of… »

Jesus smiles faintly, a smile full of sympathy. But He replies kindly: « You are wiser with regard to the things of the Earth than you are for those of Heaven, woman. You take care to ensure that your trees grow well and that no glades are left in your woods. You grieve at the thought that afterwards they will not be looked after as they are now. But such thoughts are not very wise, nay they are completely foolish. Do you think that in the next life such poor things as trees, fruits, money, houses will be of any value? And that it will be distressing to see them neglected? Revise your ideas, woman. The ideas of this world do not exist there, in none of the three kingdoms. In Hell hatred and punishment dim minds savagely. In Purgatory the craving for expiation cancels every other thought. In Limbo the blissful expectation of the just is not profaned by any sensuality. The Earth is remote, with its miseries; it is instead close with its supernatural needs, the needs of souls, not with the needs of things. The dead, who are not damned, turn their spirits towards the Earth only out of supernatural love, and they address their prayers to God on behalf of those who are on the Earth, not for any other reason. And when the just will enter the Kingdom of God, what can you expect this miserable prison, this place of exile named: Earth, to be for a soul contemplating God? What, the things left there? Can daytime look back with regret on a smoky lamp, when it is lit up by the sun? »

« Oh! no »

« So? Why do you sigh for what you will leave? »

« But I would like an heir to continue to… »

« To enjoy earthly riches and be prevented by them from becoming perfect, whereas detachment from wealth is the means to possess the eternal riches? See, woman? The greatest obstacle preventing you from having this innocent boy is not his mother with her rights on her son, but your heart. He is an innocent, a sad innocent, but still an innocent who is dear to God because of his suffering. But if you made him avaricious, greedy, perhaps vicious, through the means which you possess, would you not deprive him of God's predilection? And since I take care of these innocent children, could I be a thoughtless master who allows one of his innocent disciples to go astray? Take care of yourself first,

divest yourself of your still exceedingly alive humanity, free your justice from the crust of humanity depressing it, and you will then deserve to be a mother. Because not only who gives birth to a child is a mother, or who loves an adopted son and takes care of him and looks after his needs of animal creature. Also the mother of this boy gave birth to him. But she is not a mother because she does not take care either of his body or of his spirit. A woman is a mother when she takes care above all of what does not die, that is of the spirit, not only of what dies, that is of material things. And believe Me, woman, those who love the spirit, will love also the body, because they possess the right love and therefore they will be just. »

« I see that I have lost the son… »

« Not necessarily. Let your desire urge you to become holy and God will satisfy you. There will always be orphans in the world. »

They are now at the first houses. Aphek is not a town which can compete with Gamala or Hippo. It is more rural than anything else, but perhaps because it is an important road junction, it is not a poor town. As a transit town for caravans travelling from the hinterland to the lake, or from the north southwards, it is bound to be equipped to supply pilgrims with lodgings, clothes, sandals and victuals, and consequently there are many stores and hotels.

The widow's house is near a hotel in the square and the ground floor is a large store with all kinds of goods and is run by an old big-nosed bearded man, who is shrieking like one of the damned at some stingy buyers.

« Samuel! » calls the woman.

« Mistress! » replies the old man bowing as low as the bales of goods piled up in front of him allow him.

« Send Elias or Philip here and meet me in the house » orders the widow and then, addressing the Master, she says: « Come. Come into my house and be my welcome guest. »

They all go in, passing through the warehouse, while the little donkeys are taken I do not where by a tall boy who has come for them. Beyond the warehouse, which does not give the house a very artistic appearance, is a fine yard with porches on two sides. In the middle there is a fountain, or, at least, a basin, because no water is running. Vigorous plane-trees at the sides shade the whitewashed walls. A staircase climbs to the terrace. Doors open into rooms on the porchless sides: the farthest from the warehouse.

« Previously, in the days of my husband, it was full here, and we gave lodgings to merchants overtaken by the night. The porches are for goods, there are stables for animals and the fountain over there to water them. Come into the rooms » and she crosses the yard diagonally going towards the nicest part of the house. She calls: « Mary! Johanna! »

Two maid-servants come, one with her hands soiled with dough, the other with a broom in her hand.

« Mistress! Peace be with you and with us, now that you are back. »

« And with you. Any trouble these past days? »

« Joseph, that light-headed man, broke the rose-bush of which you were so fond. I gave him a good thrashing. You should thrash me for allowing him to go near the plant. »

« It is of no value… » but tears well up in the eyes of Sarah who justifies them saying: « My husband brought me it the last spring that he was healthy… »

« And Elias broke his leg, which has made Samuel furious, because he has no help in these days of busy markets… He fell from the staircase on the other side of the house, while he was hanging out to have the walls whitewashed for you » says the other woman and she concludes: « He is suffering very much and he will remain lame. And you, mistress, did you have a pleasant journey? »

« As I could never have hoped. I have come back with the Rabbi of Galilee. Quick! Make preparations for my guests. Come in, Master! »

They enter the house passing before the two dumbfounded maidservants.

They are received in a large cool room, in dim light, furnished with seats and chests. The widow goes out to give instructions, and Jesus calls the apostles to send them through the town to prepare people for His coming. Samuel comes in, transformed from salesman to butler, followed by maid-servants with amphorae and basins, for the purifications before taking food, which is carried in large trays: bread, fruit, milk.

The mistress comes back: « I told my servant that You are here. He begs You to be merciful to him and I ask You to be merciful to me as well. Many people pass through here for the Feast of the Tabernacles. And the traffic begins immediately after the new moon of Tishri. I do not know how we will manage, if he is not well… »

« Tell him to come here. »

« He cannot. He cannot stand. »

« Tell him that the Rabbi is not going to him, but wants to see him. »

« I will get Samuel and Joseph to bring him. »

« That would be the last straw! I am old and tired » grumbles Samuel.

« Tell Elias to come on his own legs. I want it. »

« A poor rabbi! Not even Gamaliel could do that » mumbles again the old servant.

« Be quiet, Samuel!… Forgive him, Master! He is a faithful servant.

He was born here of servants of my husband's family, he is diligent and honest… but stubborn in his ideas of an old Israelite… » explains the widow in a low voice to excuse him.

« I understand his spirit. But the miracle will change him. Go and tell Elias to come and he will come. »

The widow goes and comes back: « I told him. And I ran away at once as I did not want to see him put his black swollen leg on the floor. »

« Do you not believe in a miracle? »

« Yes, I do. But that leg is horrifying… I am afraid that it will become gangrenous and rot completely. It is shiny, so shiny… horrible and… Oh! »

Her interruption and exclamation are due to the fact that she sees Elias run towards them, more nimbly than a healthy man, and throw himself at Jesus' feet saying: « Praised be the King of Israel. »

« Praised be God alone. How did you come? How did you dare? »

« I obeyed. I thought: "The Holy One cannot lie. Neither can He order foolish things. I have faith, I believe" and I moved my leg. It was no longer sore, I could move it. I put my foot on the floor, my leg was firm. I took a step. I was able to walk. I ran here. God does not disappoint those who believe in Him. »

« Stand up, man. I solemnly tell you that few people have faith like this man. From whom did it come to you? »

« From Your disciples who came here preaching You. »

« Were you the only one who heard them? »

« No, everybody heard them, because they were our guests here after Pentecost. »

« And you alone believed… Your spirit is well advanced in the ways of the Lord. Proceed… »

Old Samuel is drawn this way and that by conflicting sentiments… But, like many in Israel, he cannot detach himself from the old mentality for the new one, and he remains firm in his standpoint saying: « Magic! Magic! It is written: "My people shall not be contaminated by magicians and diviners. If a man has recourse to them, I shall set My face against him and destroy him". Tremble with fear, mistress, lest you should be unfaithful to the laws! » and he goes away with a stem shocked look, as if he had seen the demon installed in the house.

« Do not punish him, Master! He is old! He has always believed thus… »

« Be not afraid. If I had to punish all those who say that I am a den-ion, many sepulchres would open to swallow the preys. I can wait… I will speak at sunset… Then I will leave Aphek. I now agree to remain under your roof. »

455. Preaching at Aphek.

15th July 1946.

Jesus is speaking to the people of Aphek from the doorstep of Sarah's warehouse. And He is addressing a mixed crowd, which is more curious than attentive and in which the Jews are not as numerous as the other people, mainly merchants and pilgrims who are passing through, some going towards the lake, some ready to go down to the Jericho ford, some coming from eastern towns on their way to coastal-towns.

At present it is not really a speech, but replies of Jesus to this man and that one, dialogue to which everybody listens, although with different feelings, clearly shown by their countenances and by their words, which make me understand who they are and where they are going. The dialogue at times changes in tone and interlocutors, because, while Jesus is left aside, it becomes a debate among the people present for reasons of race and difference of opinions.

Thus an old man of Joppa quarrels with a merchant from Sidon, as the latter defends the Master against the disbelief of the Jew, who will not admit that Jesus is the One Expected by nations. And there is a turmoil of quotations from the Holy Scriptures, applied rightly or wrongly, confuted by a simple statement of the Syro-Phoenician who says: « I am not interested in those words, but I say that it is He, because I have seen His miracles and heard His words. » The dispute expands, as other people take part in it, and those against Christ shout: « Beelzebub helps Him. The Holy Man of God is not like that. He is a King. He is not a false rabbi and a beggar », whilst those who are of the same opinion as the man from Sidon reply: « Wise people are poor because they are honest. Philosophers are not clad in gold and arrogance like your false rabbis and priests. » And one gathers that they say so because they are not Jews, but Gentiles from various countries, who are by chance in Palestine or naturalised there, but still pagan-minded.

« Impious people! »

« You are impious, because you do not even perceive the divinity of His thought » reply some.

« You do not deserve to have Him. But, by Jove! We condemned Socrates and we suffered the consequences of that. I say, mind what you do. Be careful lest you should be struck by the gods, as we were several times » shouts one, certainly a Greek.

« Ah! Gentiles defending the king of Israel! »

« And some Samaritans! And we are proud of being so, because we would look after the Rabbi better than you do, if He came to Samaria. But you… You have built the Temple. It is beautiful, but it is a sepulchre full of rottenness even if you have covered it with gold and valuable marbles » shouts from the end of the crowds a

tall personage dressed in linen, with flounces and embroidery work, with sashes round his waist, ribbons, bracelets…

« Ah! a Samaritan! » and they seem to be saying: « the devil » so loud the intolerant horrified Jews shout stepping aside as if the man were a leper. And running away they shout to Jesus: « Drive him away! He is impure… »

But Jesus does not drive anybody away. He tries to impose order and silence, with the help of the apostles, without much success. Thus, to put an end to disputes, He begins His sermon.

« When the people of God, after Miriam's death at Kadesh, rebelled in the desert because of lack of water and shouted against Moses, their saviour and leader from the land of sin to the promised land, as if he were their mad destroyer, and they inveighed against Aaron as a useless priest, Moses entered the Tabernacle with his brother and they spoke to the Lord requesting a miracle to stop the complaining of the people. And the Lord, although He is not obliged to yield to every request, particularly if the request is a violent one coming from spirits who have lost holy trust in the Father's Providence, spoke to Moses and Aaron. He could have spoken to Moses only, because Aaron, although High Priest, one day had forfeited God's favour by adoring the idol. But God wanted to try him again and give him the opportunity to increase in grace in His eyes. And He ordered them to take Aaron's branch, which had been deposited in the Tabernacle after it had bloomed in open flowers and leaves, which later turned into almonds, and to go with it and speak to the rock, as the rock would give water for men and animals. And Moses with Aaron did what the Lord commanded but both of them did not believe in the Lord completely. And the one who believed less was the High Priest of Israel: Aaron. The rock, struck by the branch, split and poured out so much water as to quench the thirst of people and animals. And that water was called the water of Contradiction, because the Israelites contended there with the Lord and censured His actions and orders and they were not all equally loyal, on the contrary, it was the very High Priest who gave rise to doubt about the truth of God's divine words. And Aaron was removed from the living and was not allowed to reach the Promised Land.

Also now the people rebel against the Lord saying: "You have brought us here to die, both as people and as individuals, under the rule of oppressors". And they shout to Me: "Make Yourself our king and free us". But of which freedom 'are you speaking? Of what punishment? Of material ones? Oh! in material things there is neither salvation nor punishment! A much greater punishment and a much greater salvation is within your free will's reach and You can make your choice. God allows you. I am saying this for the Israelites who are present here, for those who should be able to

read the figures of the Scriptures and understand them. But as I feel pity for My people whose spiritual King I am, I want to help you to understand at least one figure, so that it may assist you to realise Who I am.

The Most High said to Moses and Aaron: "Take the branch and speak to the rock and streams of water will gush out to quench the thirst of the people so that they may complain no longer". The Most High, to put an end to the complaints of His people, has said once again to the Eternal Priest: "Take the branch which germinated from the stock of Jesse and a flower, untouched by human filth, will spring from it and it will become a fruit: a sweet almond full of unction. And with that almond of the root of Jesse, with its wonderful shoot upon which the Spirit of the Lord will descend with its seven gifts, strike the stone of Israel so that copious water may gush for its salvation". The Priest of God is Love Himself. And Love formed a Body making its shoot germinate from the root of Jesse, which no dirt had soiled, and it was the Body of the Word Incarnate, of the expected Messiah Who had been sent to speak to the rock so that it might split. That it might split its hardcrust of pride and greed and might receive the waters sent by God, the waters gushing from His Christ, the sweet oil of His love and thus become malleable, kind and holy, receiving in its heart the gift of the Most High to His people. But Israel does not want the living Water in her bosom. She remains closed and hard, particularly in her great people to whom the branch which bloomed and bore fruit speaks in vain and whom it strikes uselessly. And I solemnly tell you that many who belong to this people will not enter the Kingdom, whereas many who do not belong to it, will enter it, because they will believe what the priests of Israel refused to believe. That is why I am among you like a sign of contradiction and you will be judged according to the manner in which you have understood Me. To the others who do not belong to Israel I say: the house of God, lost by the children of His people, is open to those seeking Light. Come. Follow Me. If I am placed as a sign of contradiction, I am placed also as a sign for all Nations and those who love Me will be saved. »

« You love foreigners more than You love us. If You evangelized us, we would end up by loving You! But You are everywhere except in Judaea » says a Judaean moved by Jesus' words.

« I will come down to Judaea as well, and I will stop there for a long time. But that will not change the stones in the hearts of many. They will not even change when the Blood will fall upon them. You are the head of a synagogue, are you not? »

« Yes, I am, how did You know? »

« I know. Well, you can thus understand what I am saying. »

« The blood must not fall on the stone. It is a sin. »

« You will pour the Blood on the stone with joy, that it may remain there. And the stone on which the Blood of the true Lamb will be poured will seem a trophy of victory to you. Then the day will come when you will understand… You will understand the real punishment and which was the true salvation offered to you. Let us go… »

A man elbows his way forward: « I am Siro-Phoenician. Many of us believe in You, although they have never met You… and we have many sick people… Will You not come to us? »

« No, I will not come to you. I have no time. But now, after the Sabbath, I will leave this place and I will go towards your borders. Whoever is in need of graces should wait at the border passes. »

« I will tell my fellow-countrymen. God be with You, Master. »

« Peace to you, man. »

Jesus takes leave of the widow, that is, He would like to take leave of her, but she kneels down and declares her decisions: « I have decided to leave Samuel here - he is better as a servant than as a believer - and I will come to Capernaum to be near You. »

« I will be leaving Capernaum soon, and for good. »

« But You have good disciples there. »

« That is true. »

« That is my decision… I will thus prove to You that I can become detached from riches and love with justice. I will use the money which accumulates here for Your poor people and I will consider the boy as the first of the poor, if his mother wants to keep him, even if she does not love him. In the meantime, take this » and she offers a heavy purse to Jesus.

« May God bless you with His blessings and with those of the people you assist. You have made much progress in a few hours. »

The woman blushes. She looks round, then she avows: « It was not I who made so much progress. Your apostle taught me. That one over there, the one who is hiding behind the dark-haired young man. »

« Simon Peter. The Head of the apostles. So, what did he tell you? »

« Oh! he spoke to me in such a simple manner and so well! He humbled himself, he the apostle, admitting that he also was like me, unfair in his desires. Oh! I cannot believe that! But he said that he strove to become good in order to deserve what he wanted and that he strives more and more to become so, as he does not want to turn into evil the good that he has received. You know, the things said among ourselves, poor people, are understood better… Am I offending You, Lord? »

« No. You are giving glory to God through your sincerity and Your praises for My apostle. Do as he advised you and may God be always with you who are tending to justice. »

He blesses her and is the first to set out, going north-west, under green orchards rustling in the wind which has risen suddenly.

456. At Gherghesa and Return to Capernaum.

16th July 1946.

They arrive on the shore of the lake, in the immediate neighbourhood of Gherghesa, when the red sunset is changing into a violet peaceful twilight. The shore is crowded with people preparing their boats for night fishing or bathing joyfully in the lake, lightly rippled by the wind blowing over it.

Jesus is seen and recognised at once, so that before He enters the town, the people know that He has come and crowds rush as usual to hear Him.

A man elbows his way through the crowd saying that some people had come in the morning from Capernaum looking for Him and that He was to go there as soon as possible.

« This very night. I am not stopping here, and as our boats are not here, I ask you to lend Me yours. »

« As You wish, Lord. But will You speak to us before You depart? »

« Yes, I will, also to say goodbye to you. I will be leaving Galilee soon… »

A woman, who is weeping, calls Him from the middle of the crowd, begging the people to let her pass, so that she may go to the Master.

« It is Arria, the Gentile who has become a Jewess out of love. You have already cured her husband once. But… »

« I remember. Let her pass! »

The woman comes forward. She throws herself at Jesus' feet weeping.

« What is the matter with you, woman? »

« Rabbi! Rabbi! Have mercy on me. Simeon… »

A man from Gherghesa helps her to speak: « Master, he misuses the health You gave him. He has become hard-hearted and greedy and does not even look like an Israelite any longer. The woman is really much better than he is, although she was born in a heathen country. And his hardness and greed cause brawls and draw hatred upon him. His head was seriously injured in a fight and the doctor says that he will almost certainly become blind. »

«If that is the case, what can I do? »

« You… cure… She, as You can see, is in despair… She has many children, and they are still young. The blindness of her husband would mean poverty for the family… It is true that it is money earned through evil deeds… But his death would be a disaster because a husband is always a husband, and a father is always a

fat her, even if in place of love and bread he gives infidelity and blows… »

« I cured him once and I said to him: "Sin no more". He has sinned even more. Had he perhaps not promised that he would not sin any more? Had he not vowed that he would no longer be a usurer and thief, if I cured him, that where possible, he would give back what he had usurped, and where it was not possible he would use it for the poor? »

« Master, that is true. I was present. But… the man is not firm in his purposes. »

« What you said is true. And Simeon is not the only one. As Solomon says, many have two weights and false scales, not only in a material sense, but also in the way they judge, act and behave towards God. And Solomon again says: "It is ruinous for man to devour saints; and to repent after making a vow". But too many people do that… Woman, do not weep. Listen to Me and be just, because you have chosen the religion of Justice. If I proposed two alternatives to you, which one would you choose? Here they are: that I should cure your husband and let him live so that he may continue to mock God and pile up sins on his soul, or I should convert him, forgive him and then let him die? Make your choice. I will do whatever you decide. »

The poor woman is in a dire struggle. Natural love, the necessity of a man who somehow or other earns a living for his children, would urge her to ask for « life ». Her supernatural love for her husband incites her to ask for « forgiveness and death ». The crowds are silent, attentive, moved, awaiting her decision

At last the poor woman, throwing herself once again on the ground, grasping Jesus' tunic as if she wished to draw strength from it, moans: « Eternal Life… But help me, Lord… » and she collapses with her face on the ground as if she were about to die.

« You have chosen the better part. May you be blessed. Few people in Israel would equal you in fear of God and justice. Stand up. Let us go to your husband. »

« But will You really make him die, Lord? And what shall I do? » The human creature rises once again from the fire of the spirit like the mythological phoenix; and she suffers and is dismayed humanly…

« Be not afraid, woman. You, I, we all entrust everything to the Father in Heaven and He will act with His love. Can you believe that? »

« Yes, my Lord… »

« Well, let us go, saying the prayer of all petitions and of all consolations. »

And while walking, surrounded by the crowd and followed by a train of people, He says the Our Father slowly. The apostolic

group joins in and the harmonious chorus raises the words of the prayer above the buzz of the people who, wishing to hear the Master pray, become silent little by little, so that the last petitions can be heard very clearly in the solemn silence.

« The Father will give you your daily bread. I can assure You in His Name » says Jesus to the woman and addressing not only her but all the people, He goes on to say: « And your sins will be forgiven, if you forgive this man who has offended and harmed you. He needs your forgiveness to be forgiven also by God. And everybody needs the protection of God in order not to fall into sin as Simeon did. Bear that in mind. »

They have now arrived at the house which Jesus enters with the woman, Peter, Bartholomew and the Zealot.

The man, lying on a little bed, his face covered with bandages and wet pieces of cloth, is restless and delirious. But Jesus' voice, or His will, make him come round again and he shouts: « Forgive me! Forgive me! I will not fall into sin again. Forgive me as You did the last time! And cure me, as the last time! Arria! Arria! I swear it. I will be good. I will no longer make use of violence or fraud, I will not… » the man is willing to make all kinds of promises, afraid as he is of death…

« Why do you want all that? » asks Jesus. « To expiate or because you are afraid of God's judgement? »

« That, that! Not to die now! Hell!… I have stolen, I have stolen the money of poor people! I have lied. I hit my neighbour and I have made my relative suffer. Oh!… »

« Fear is not sufficient. Repentance is required. Sincere firm repentance. »

« Death or blindness! Oh! what punishment! Not to be able to see any more! Darkness! Darkness! No!… »

« If blindness of the eyes is dreadful, is the blindness of the heart not more horrible? And are you not afraid of the eternal horrible darkness of Hell? Of the perpetual privation of God? Of continuous remorse? The grief of having killed yourself for ever, in your spirit? Do you not love this woman? Do you not love these children? And your father, mother, brothers, do you not love them? Well, do you not consider that you will not have them with you any longer if you are damned? »

« No! No! Forgive me! Forgive me! Expiation here, yes, here… Also blindness, Lord… But Hell no… Do not let God curse me! Lord! You expel demons and forgive sins. Do not raise Your hand to cure me, but to forgive me and free me from the demon possessing me… Lay Your hand on my heart, on my head… Free me, Lord… »

« I cannot work two miracles. Consider that. If I free you from the demon, I will leave you with your illness… »

« It does not matter! Be the Saviour. »

« Let it be as you wish. Make sure that you avail yourself of My grace, which is the last I will grant you. Goodbye. »

« You have not touched me. Your hand! Your hand! »

Jesus pleases him by laying His hand on the head and chest of the man who, blinded by bandages and the wound, gropes convulsively for Jesus' hand, and having found it, weeps on it, reluctant to leave it, until he falls asleep like a tired child, still holding Jesus' hand pressed against his feverish cheek.

Jesus withdraws His hand cautiously and goes out of the room noiselessly, followed by the woman and the three apostles.

« May God reward You, Lord. Pray for Your servant. »

« Continue to grow in justice, woman, and God will always be with you. » He lifts His hand to bless the house and the woman and goes out into the street.

The buzz of the crowd becomes louder when countless curious questions are asked. But Jesus beckons them to be quiet and to follow Him. He goes back to the main road. Night is falling slowly. Jesus gets into a boat which is bobbing up and down near the shore and He speaks from there.

« No. He is not dead and he has not been cured, according to the flesh. His spirit has meditated on his sins and has indicated the right direction to his thoughts, he has been forgiven because he asked to expiate in order to be forgiven. You, all of you, must support him in his journey towards God.

Consider that we are all responsible for the soul of our neighbour. Woe to those who scandalise! But woe betide also those who through their intolerant behaviour frighten a man just reborn to Good and with their intransigence drive him away from the path on which he has set out. Every man can somehow be a master and a kind master to his neighbour and all the more so when his neighbour is weak and unaware of the wisdom of Good.

I exhort you to be patient, docile and longanimous with Simeon. Do not show hatred, grudge, contempt, irony. Forget his past and do not remind him of it. A man who rises after being forgiven, after repenting, after sincere resolutions, is willing, but he is also burdened by the weight, by the heritage of passions and habits of his past life. It is necessary to help him to get rid of them. And very discreetly. Without making allusions to his past: they are imprudent both with regard to charity and to the human being. To remind a repentant culprit of his faults is to dishearten him. His awakened conscience is sufficient for that. To remind a man of his past, is to give rise to revivals of passions and, at times, to returns to passions already overcome, to fresh consent. In the best of cases it always implies leading into temptation.

Do not tempt your neighbour. Be prudent and charitable. If God

has preserved you from certain sins, praise Him. But do not ostentate your justice in order to humiliate whoever has not been just. Learn to understand the imploring look of a repentant man who would like you to forget and who, in the event that he is aware that you have not forgotten, implores you at least not to mortify him by reminding him of his past. Do not say: "He was a leper in his soul" to justify the fact that you have forsaken him. A man affected with leprosy, after the purifications following his recovery, is readmitted among the people. Let the same apply to him who has been cured of sin. Do not be like those who consider themselves perfect, whilst they are not such because they lack charity towards their brothers. On the contrary, with your love you are to surround your brothers who have risen again to grace, so that good companionship may prevent fresh failures.

Do not wish to be more exacting than God, Who does not reject the sinner who repents, but forgives him and readmits him to His company. And even if that sinner caused you a damage which can no longer be mended, do not revenge yourselves now that he is not an overbearing fellow to be frightened of; but forgive him and take much pity on him because he lacked the treasure which every man can have, if he only wishes so: goodness. Love him because by grieving you he has given you the means to deserve a greater reward in Heaven. Join your means to his forgiveness, and your prize will grow even more in Heaven. And do not despise anybody, not even if they belong to another race. You can see that when God attracts a spirit, even the spirit of a heathen, He transforms it in such a way that it exceeds many of the chosen people in justice.

I am going. Remember now and always these words and the others which I have spoken to you. »

Peter, who was ready, pushes the boat away from the bank with the oar and starts on the voyage followed by the other two boats. The lake, which is not very calm, causes the boats to roll, but no one is frightened because the voyage is a short one. The red lamps are reflected like red rubies on the dark water or they tinge the white foam with a red hue.

« Master, will that man recover or not? I have not understood anything » asks Peter after a short time, without taking his hand off the rudder.

Jesus does not reply. Peter beckons to John who is sitting at the end of the boat at Jesus' feet, with his head reclined on Jesus knees. And John repeats the question in a low voice.

« He will not recover. »

« Why, Lord? According to what I heard, I thought that he would recover in order to expiate. »

« No, John. He would sin again, because his spirit is weak. »

John rests his head again on the Master's knees saying: « But You

could have made him strong… » and it sounds like a kind reproach.

Jesus smiles running His fingers through John's hair and raising His voice so that everybody can hear Him, He gives the last lesson of the day: « I solemnly tell you that also when granting a grace, it is necessary to take into account its opportunity. Life is not always a gift, wealth is not always a gift, a son is not always a gift, yes, even an election is not always a gift. They become gifts and remain such when he who receives them uses them rightly and for supernatural aims of sanctification. But when good health, wealth, affections, mission are used to ruin one's spirit, it would be better not to have them. And at times God gives such a great gift that He could not grant a greater one, by not giving what men would like to have or would think it was right to have as being a good thing. The father of a family or a wise doctor knows which things are to be given to the children or to sick people in order not to make them more sick or not to let them be taken ill. Likewise God knows what is to be given for the well-being of a spirit. »

« So that man will die? Unhappy household! »

« Would it be happier if a reprobate lived in it? And would he be happier if, while living, he should continue to sin? I solemnly tell you that death is a gift when it serves to prevent more sins and a man dies while he is reconciled with his Lord. »

The keel rubs against the sandy bottom of the lake at Capernaum.

« Just in time. There will be a storm tonight. The lake is raging, the sky is starless, it is as black as pitch. Can you hear the roar behind the mountains? Can you see those lights? Thunder and lightning. There will be a downpour any moment now. Quick! Let us beach the boats which do not belong to us! Let the women and the boy go away before it starts raining. Hey, you! Give us a hand! » shouts Peter to other fishermen who are drawing nets and baskets.

With the strength of their arms they beach the boats as the first billows come to lash their half-naked bodies and the gravel on the shore. They then run home while the first large drops of rain raise the dust of the parched land giving off a strong smell, and it is flashing already above the lake and the basin formed by the hills around the lake are full of the roar of thunder.

457. Be as Wise as Serpents and as Simple as Doves.

17th July 1946.

« In the room upstairs there are some men from Nazareth. And your brothers came yesterday looking for You. And then some Pharisees came, and many sick people. And a man from Antioch » says the Iscariot as soon as he sees them enter the house.

« Have they gone away, perhaps? »

« No. The man from Antioch has gone to Tiberias, but he is coming back after the Sabbath. The sick people are scattered in various houses. But the Pharisees wanted your brothers as their guests and paid much honour to them. They are now in the house of Simon, the Pharisee. »

« H'm!… » mumbles Peter.

« What's the matter with you? Are you not glad that they honour the Master in His relatives? » asks the Iscariot.

« Oh! if it is true honour and a useful meeting… I am very happy! »

« To mistrust is to judge. The Master does not want us to judge. »

« Of course! But to be certain I will wait before judging. I will thus avoid being a fool and a sinner. »

« Let us go upstairs, to see the people from Nazareth. We will go to the sick people tomorrow » says Jesus.

The Iscariot addresses Jesus: « You cannot. It is the Sabbath. Do You want to be reproached by the Pharisees? If You are not concerned about Your honour, I am » says Judas very theatrically. And he concludes: « By the way, as I realise that You are anxious to cure at once those who are looking for You, well, we will go and impose our hands on them in Your Name and… »

« No. » A very sharp « no » allowing no discussion.

« You do not want us to work miracles? You want to work them Yourself? Well… we will go and tell them that You are here and that You promise to cure them. They will be happy… »

« It is not necessary. The fishermen have seen us. So it is already known that I am here. And they know that I cure those who have faith in Me, in fact they have come looking for Me. »

Judas is silent, dissatisfied, his face momentarily dark and unpleasant.

Jesus goes outside, heedless of the storm and of the heavy showers of rain, and He goes upstairs. He pushes the door and goes inside. The apostles follow Him. The women are already up there talking to the Nazarenes. In a corner there is a man unknown to me.

« Peace to you. »

« Master! » The Nazarenes bow and then they say: « Here is the man » pointing at the unknown person.

« Come here » orders Jesus.

« Do not curse me! »

« To do that it was not necessary to tell you to come here. Is that the only word you have for the Saviour? » Jesus is austere, but encouraging at the same time.

The man looks at Him… He then bursts into tears and throwing himself on the ground he shouts: « If You do not forgive Me, I will have no peace… »

« Why did you reject Me, when I wanted to make you good? Now

it is late to make amends. Your mother is dead. »

« Ah! don't tell me! You are cruel! »

« No. I am the Truth. And I was the Truth when I told you that you would kill your mother. And I am the Truth now. And you laughed at Me then. Why are you looking for Me now? Your mother is dead. You have sinned and you have continued to sin although you knew that you were sinning. I had told you. That is your grave sin: you wanted to sin rejecting the Word and Love. Why complain now that you have no peace? »

« Lord! Lord! Have mercy on me! I was insane and You cured me, I have hoped in You, before I had lost all hope, in everybody. Do not disappoint my hope… »

« And why had you lost all hope? »

« Because… I caused my mother to die of grief… also the last evening… she was exhausted… and I was merciless… I hit her, Lord!!! » A cry of real despair fills the room. « I struck her! She died during the night! And she had only told me to be good My mother!… I killed her »

« You killed her years ago, Samuel! Since you stopped being just. Poor Esther! How many times have I seen her weep! And how many times she asked Me to caress her in your place… And you know that I used to come to your house not because I was friendly with you, who are My age, but out of pity for her… I should not forgive you. But two mothers have begged Me to help you, and your repentance is sincere. So I forgive you. With an irreproachable life you must obliterate from the hearts of your fellowcitizens the memory of Samuel sinner and win back your mother. You will achieve that if through a life of justice you conquer Heaven and your mother at the same time. But remember - and bear this very clearly in mind - that your sin was very grave and consequently your justice must be great in proportion in order to cancel your debt. »

« Oh! You are good! You are not like that disciple of Yours who went out immediately after he came in. And he came to Nazareth only to terrify me! These people can tell You… »

Jesus turns round… Of all the apostles only the Iscariot is missing. So it is he who ill-treated Samuel. What is Jesus to do? In order not to have the apostle criticised, as apostle if not as man, he says: « Every man can but be severe with regard to your sin. When one commits an evil deed one ought to consider that men judge the evil-doer, and that one gives them the opportunity to judge… But one must bear no grudge. Put the mortification you receive on the scales of God as expiation. Let us go. Here, the just are rejoicing because of your redemption. You are among brothers who do not despise you. Because every man can sin, but a man is contemptible Only when he persists in sinning. »

« I bless You, Lord. I ask You to forgive me also for all the times I sneered at You… I do not know how to thank You… Peace, You know?, is coming back to me » and he weeps calmly…

« Thank My Mother. If you have been forgiven, if I have cured your delirium to enable you to repent, it was through Her intercession. Let us go downstairs. Supper is ready and we will share the food. » And He goes out holding the man by the hand.

Supper is in fact ready. But Judas is not even downstairs. He is not in the house. The landlady explains: « He went out. He said: "I will be back soon". »

« All right. Let us sit down and have our meal. »

Jesus offers, blesses and hands out the food. But a glacial shadow is in the room lit up by two lamps and the fireplace. Outside the storm is still raging…

Judas comes back, panting, soaked through as if he had fallen into the lake. Although he had covered his head with his mantle, his hair looks smooth, wet, sticking to his cheeks and neck, when he throws the drenched cloak on the floor. They all look at him. But no one speaks. Although no one asks him anything, he wants to apologise saying: « I ran to Your brothers to tell them that You are here. But I obeyed You. I did not go to the sick people. It was not possible, in any case. What a downpour!… But I wanted to honour Your relatives at once… Are You not glad, Master? You are not speaking!… »

« I am listening. Take this and eat. And while waiting to go and rest, let us talk among ourselves.

Listen: it is written that we must not confide secrets to a foreigner, because we do not know his habits. But can we say that we know the hearts even of our fellow-citizens? Or the hearts of our friends? Or of our relatives? God alone has perfect knowledge of the heart of man, and man has one means only to know the heart of a fellow-man and understand whether he is a true fellow-countryman, or a true friend and relative. Which is the means? Where is it to be found? In our neighbour and in ourselves. In his actions and words and in our upright judgement. When through our honest judgement we perceive that there is no good in the words or actions of our neighbour, or in the actions required of us, then we can say: "This man has not an honest heart and I must distrust him". But he is to be treated charitably, because he is a poor wretch affected by the gravest unhappiness: that of a diseased spirit, but his actions are not to be imitated, his words are not to be, taken as true and wise, least of all is his advice to be followed.

Do not allow yourselves to be harmed by the following proud thoughts: "I am strong and the evil of other people will not affect me. I am just, and even if I listen to unjust people, I will remain just". Man is a deep abyss in which all the elements of good

and evil can be found. The former, that is, the help of God, assists us in improving and becoming kings; the latter, that is, evil passions and bad friendship help men to grow more wicked and to reign noxiously. All the germs of evil and all the longing for good are latent in man by God's loving will, and by the wicked will of Satan, who influences, tempts and instigates, whereas God attracts, comforts and loves. Satan tries to seduce, he works to conquer God. And God does not always win, because creatures are heavy until they choose love as their law, and being heavy they debase themselves and crave more easily for anything which is immediate satisfaction and gratification of the lowest instincts of man.

From what I am telling you about human weakness, you can understand how necessary it is not to trust yourselves and to watch your neighbour very carefully, lest you should join the poison of an impure conscience to that already fermenting in you. When you understand that a friend is the ruin of your hearts, when his words upset your consciences, when his advice is the cause of scandal, you must forsake the harmful friendship. If you persist you would end by seeing your souls perish, because you would pass on to actions which remove from God and prevent a hardened conscience from understanding God's inspirations. If every man guilty of grave sins could or wanted to speak explaining how he came to commit such sins, one would see that there is always a bad friendship at the origin… »

« That is true! » admits Samuel of Nazareth in a low voice.

« Do not trust those who after fighting you without any reason, load you with honours and gifts. Do not trust those who praise every action of yours and who praise everybody and everything: they commend loungers as being hard workers, adulterers as faithful husbands, thieves as honest people, violent fellows as being meek, liars as being sincere, wicked people as being loyal and they point out the worst disciples as exemplary ones. They do so to ruin you and to make use of your downfall for their artful aims. Shun those who want to intoxicate you with praises and promises to make you do things, which you would refuse to do if you were not intoxicated. And when you have sworn loyalty to a man, have nothing to do with his enemies. They would approach you only to harm him whom they hate and do so through your very help. Keep Your eyes open. I said: be as wise as serpents besides being as simple as doves. Because simplicity is holy when dealing with spiritual matters, but to live in the world without damaging oneself and one's friends, it is necessary to possess the cunning which is capable of finding out the artfulness of those who hate saints. The world is a nest of snakes. You must become acquainted with the world and its systems. And then, staying like doves not in the Mire where serpents are, but in the shelter of a high cliff, have

the simple hearts of the children of God. And pray and pray, because I solemnly tell you that the great Serpent is hissing around you, and you are therefore in great danger and those who are not vigilant will perish. Yes, among the disciples there are some who will perish with great joy of Satan and infinite grief of the Christ. »

« Who, Lord? Perhaps one who does not belong to us, a proselyte, one… who is not from Palestine, one… »

« Do not investigate. Is it not written that abomination will enter, and has already entered the Temple? Now, if it is possible to sin in the Holy Place, will a Galilean or a Judaean among My followers not be able to sin? Be vigilant, My friends. Watch over yourselves and other people, take heed of what other people say to you and of what your consciences tell you. And if you cannot see clearly by yourselves, come to Me, for I am the Light. »

Peter bustles and whispers something standing behind John who shakes his head in denial. Jesus turns His eyes and sees… Peter strikes an attitude and feigns to be going away. Jesus stands up, He smiles gently… He then intones the prayers, He blesses and dismisses the crowds. And He remains alone to go on praying.

458. The Sabbath at Capernaum.

18th July 1946.

« Are You not taking the boy back to his mother? » Bartholomew asks Jesus, when he sees Him on the terrace deeply engrossed in prayer.

« No. I will wait until she comes back from the synagogue… »

« Are You hoping that the Lord will speak to her there… and that she… will understand her duty? You are thinking wisely. But she is not wise. Any other mother would have run here yesterday evening to get her child. After all… we had been sailing on a stormy sea… she did not know whence we came… Was she anxious to ascertain whether her child had suffered? Will she be coming this morning? Look how many mothers are already up, although it is so early, as they are anxious to hang out the best clothes and dry them thoroughly so that they may be clean and ready to be worn by the children on the Lord's day. A Pharisee might say that they are doing servile work by hanging out those little garments. I say that they are doing a work of love, towards God and towards their children. They are mostly poor women. Look, over there is Mary of Benjamin and Rebecca of Micah. And on that poor terrace Johanna is patiently disentangling the fringe of the old mantle of her son so that it may look less shabby when he goes to the holy ceremony. And over there, on the shore which will soon be completely exposed to the sun, Selida is spreading out coarse cloth so that it may

look finer, whereas it is beautiful only on account of the sacrifice it costs her: so many morsels of bread, of which she deprived her hungry stomach, to change them into tows of hemp. And is that not Adina who is rubbing her daughter's discoloured dress with greens in order to make it look more colourful? But I cannot see her… »

« May the Lord change her heart! There is nothing else to be said… »

They remain leaning on the low wall of the terrace, looking at nature refreshed by the storm which has cleaned both atmosphere and greenery. The lake, which is not yet completely calm, is not as blue as usual, because it is streaked with the waters of torrents which, in flood for a few hours, have dragged down the dust of their parched beds, but is beautiful despite those ochre infusions. It looks like a huge lapis-lazuli striped with pearls, and it smiles in the serene sun which is shining at present from behind the western mountains and is glittering in all the rain drops still hanging from branches and leaves. Swallows and doves are joyfully furrowing the purified air and all kinds of birds are trilling and chirping in the leafy branches.

« The warm season is ending. And this season is beautiful, rich and beautiful. Like ripe age. Isn't it, Master? »

« Yes… lovely… » But Jesus is obviously lost in thought.

Bartholomew looks at Him… He then asks: « What are You thinking about? Of what You will be saying in the synagogue today? »

« No. I was thinking that the sick people will be waiting for us. Let us two go and cure them. »

« Just the two of us? »

« Simon, Andrew, James and John have gone to haul the lobsterpots which Thomas cast foreseeing our return. The others are sleeping. Let us two go. »

They go down towards the country, to the houses scattered among vegetable-gardens, or in the fields, looking for sick people sheltered in the houses of poor people, who are always hospitable.

But some people run ahead of Him, guessing where He is going and some say to Him: « Wait here, in my kitchen garden. We will bring them to You here… » And soon, like the waters of tiny brooks which gather in one pond only, the sick people come from all directions or are brought to Him, Who cures them. The miracles have been worked.

Jesus dismisses them saying: « If anybody should question you, do not say that I cured you. Go back to the houses where you were. This disciple of Mine will bring some assistance to the more needy ones before sunset. »

« No, do not mention Him, because you would harm Him. Remember that this is the Sabbath and many people hate Him »

corroborates Bartholomew.

« We will not harm Him Who has helped us. We will tell the people in our villages, without mentioning the day on which we were cured » says a man who was previously a paralytic.

« Nay, I would say that we should spread out in the country awaiting sunset. The Pharisees know where we were given hospitality and they might come to see… » says one whose diseased eyes have been cured.

« You are right, Isaac. Yesterday we were asking for too much and too many things… They will think that, being tired of waiting, we left before sunset. »

« But did the apostle see us yesterday evening? » asks one who was blind. « Was it not him who was speaking? »

« No. It was one of the Lord's brothers. He will not betray us. »

« Just tell me where you are going so that I may find you when I come » says Bartholomew.

The sick people consult with one another. Some would like to go towards Korazim, some towards Magdala. They leave it to Jesus to decide.

And Jesus says: « Go to the fields along the road to Magdala. Follow the second torrent and shortly afterwards you will find a house. Go there and say: "Jesus sent us". They will receive you as brothers. Go and God be with you and you with God, not committing any sin in future. »

And Jesus sets out again, but He does not go straight back to the village by the way He came. Walking along a semicircular lane among the kitchen gardens He arrives at the spring near the lake, while the women have assailed it wishing to get their supplies of water when it is still cool and the sun is not high in the sky.

« The Rabbi! The Rabbi! » There is a rush of women, children and also of men, mainly old ones, who are idle because of the Sabbath.

« A word, Master, to make this day a happy one » says an old man, who is holding a boy by the hand, perhaps a grandchild, because if the man is certainly almost one hundred years old, the little boy is not more than six.

« Yes, please old Levi, and us at the same time. »

« You will have Jairus' explanation today. I am here to hear him You have a wise synagogue leader… »

« Why do You say that, Master? You are the head of all synagogue leaders, the Master of Israel. We acknowledge but You. »

« No, you must not do that. The synagogue leaders have been appointed as your masters, to practise the cult with you, setting a good example, in order to make you faithful Israelites. There will still be synagogue leaders when I am no longer here. They will have a different name and their ceremonies will be different, but they will still be the ministers of the cult. You must love them and

pray for them. Because where is a good synagogue leader there are good believers and, consequently, God is there. »

« We will do that. But speak to us now. We have been told that You are about to leave us… »

« I have so many sheep scattered throughout Palestine. They are all waiting for their Shepherd. But you have My disciples, who are becoming more and more numerous and wise… »

« Yes, but what You say is always good and easy to be understood by our ignorant minds. »

« What shall I tell you?… »

« Jesus, we have been looking for You everywhere! » shouts Joseph of Alphaeus, who has just arrived with his brother Simon and a group of Pharisees.

« And where can the Son of man be if not among the humble and simple-hearted people? Did you want Me? Here I am. But allow Me to say a word to these people first… Listen. You have been told that I am about to leave you. It is true. I have not denied it. But before leaving you I give this commandment to you: watch over yourselves very carefully in order to know yourselves well, and approach the Light more and more so that you may see. My word is Light. Preserve it in your hearts and when in its light you discover stains or shadows, persecute them to drive them out of your hearts. You must no longer be what you were before I met you. You must be much better because now you know much more. Previously you were in a kind of twilight, now you have the Light within you. You must thus be the children of Light. Look at the sky in the morning when it clears up at dawn: it may seem clear only because it is not completely covered with storm-clouds, but as the light increases and the bright sun appears from the east, then our surprised eyes see rosy spots in the blue sky. What are they? Oh! little light clouds, so light that they did not seem to be there while the light was faint, but now, lit up by the sun, they are like light foam in the vault of heaven. And they remain there until the sun melts them dispelling them with its splendour. Do likewise with your souls. Take them closer and closer to the light to discover even the lightest mist and then keep them under the great Sun of Charity. It will consume your imperfections as the sun evaporates the light humidity condensed in those flimsy little clouds which the sun dissolves at dawn. If you remain firmly in Charity will work continuous wonders in you. Go now and be good… »

He dismisses them and goes towards His two cousins, whom He kisses after giving low bows to the Pharisees present, among whom is Simon the Pharisee of Capernaum. The others are unknown to me.

« We have been looking for You more on behalf of these people

than for ourselves. They came from Nazareth looking for You, so… »

« Peace to you. What do you need? »

« Oh! nothing. We only wanted to see You, listen to You and hear the wisdom of Your words… »

« Just for that? »

« Actually, to give You some advice as well… You are too good and the people take advantage of it. These people are not good. And You know that. Why do You not curse sinners? »

« Because the Father orders Me to save them, not to lose them. »

« You will get into trouble… »

« It does not matter. I cannot disobey the order of the Most High for any human profit. »

« And if… You know… It is murmured that You caress the crowds to make use of them in a rebellion. We have come to ask You whether it is true. »

« Have you come or have you been sent? »

« It is the same thing. »

« No, it is not. But I reply to you and to those who have sent you that the water overflowing from My bucket is water of peace, that the seed which I spread is the seed of renunciation. I trim proud branches. I am ready to bare the roots of evil trees, so that they may not harm good ones, if they are unsuitable to be engrafted. But what I call "good" is not what you say is good. Because I call good obedience, poverty, renunciation, humility and the charity which embraces all humble and pitiful situations. Fear no one. The Son of man does not lay snares for the powers of men, but has come to inculcate strength into souls. Go and relate that the Lamb will never be a wolf. »

« What do You mean? You are misunderstanding us and we are misunderstanding You. »

« No. We understand each other very well… »

« Well, in that case do You know why we came? »

« Yes, to tell Me that I must not speak to the crowds. And you do not consider that you cannot interdict Me from going, like every Israelite, where the Scriptures are read and explained and where every circumcised man is entitled to speak. »

« Who told You! It was Jairus, was it not? We will report that. »

« I have not seen Jairus yet. »

« You are lying. »

« I am the Truth. »

A man in the crowd which has gathered again says: « He is not lying. Jairus left before sunset with his wife and daughter; he took them to see his mother, who is dying and he will come back only after the purifications. He left his assistant here. »

The Pharisees do not have the pleasure of proving that Jesus is

lying, but they rejoice finding out that He is without His most powerful friend in Capernaum. They look at one another: a display of meaningful glances.

Joseph of Alphaeus, the eldest son in the family, feels it is his duty to defend Jesus and he addresses Simon the Pharisee saying: « You honoured me by sharing your bread and salt with me and the Most High will take into account such honour paid to the offspring of David. You showed yourself to be just. My brother is being accused by these Pharisees. Yesterday they said to me, the head of the family, that their only grief was that Jesus neglected Judaea, because, as the Messiah of Israel it was His duty to love and evangelize the whole of Israel in the same manner. I found their argument just and I was going to tell my brother. But why are they speaking so differently today? They should at least say why He must not speak. As far as I know He does not say anything against the Law or the Books. Tell me the true reason and I will convince Jesus to speak differently. »

« What you say is right. Reply to the man… » says Simon the Pharisee. « Has He said… anything sacrilegious? »

« No. But the Sanhedrin accuse Him of dividing, of trying to divide the Nation. The King must be the King of Israel, not of Galilee alone. »

« Dear is all the Fatherland, most dear, in the Fatherland, is the birthplace. His love for Galilee is not such a grave reason as to deserve to be punished. In any case, we belong to David, so… »

« Let Him come to Judaea then. And tell Him not to despise us. »

« Have You heard that? That is an honour for You and for the family! » says Joseph half severely and half haughtily.

« Yes, I have. »

« I advise You to yield to their desire. It is good and honourable. You say that You want peace. Put an end, then, to the variance between the two regions, since You are loved by both of them. You will certainly do it. Oh! He will certainly do it. I can assure you on His behalf as He is obedient to His elders. »

« It is written: "There is no one greater than I am. There is no other god except Me". I will always do what God wants. »

« Have you heard Him? So, you may go in peace. »

« We have heard Him. But, Joseph, before going away, we want to know what He means by "what God wants". »

« What God wants is that I do His will. »

« Which is? Tell us. »

« That I may gather the sheep of Israel and unite them in one flock only. And I will do that. »

« We will bear Your words in mind. »

« That is good. May God be with you » and Jesus turns away from the group of Pharisees and goes towards the house.

His cousin Joseph stands beside Him, half happy, half unhappy, and with a patronising attitude points out to Him that if one knows how to deal with them (as he did), if one relies on relatives (as was the fortunate case today), if one remembers one's right to the throne (as David's offspring), and so forth, even Pharisees become good friends.

Jesus interrupts him saying: « And you believe that? You believe their words? Truly, pride and false praises are sufficient to make people absolutely blind. »

« But I would… please them. You cannot expect them to carry You shoulder-high shouting hosanna, all of a sudden… You must conquer them, Jesus, with a little humility, a little patience. Honour deserves every sacrifice… »

« Enough of that! You are speaking human words, and even worse. May God forgive you, and give you light, brother. But go away, because you are grieving Me. And do not mention such silly advice to your mother and brothers or to My Mother. »

« You want to be ruined! You are the cause of our ruin and of Your own! »

« Why have you come if you are still the same? I have not yet suffered for you. But I will, and then… »

Joseph has gone away… upset.

« You disgust him… He is like our father, You know. He is an old Israelite… » whispers Simon.

« When he understands, he will see that My action, which he now considers disgusting, was holy… »

They are at the door of the house. They go in. Jesus says to Peter: « Have the boat ready at sunset. We will take the two Maries to Tiberias and Simon will see them home. Matthew will come with you in addition to your companions, the fishermen. The others will remain here and wait for us. »

Peter draws Jesus apart: « And if the man from Antioch comes? I am asking You because of Judas of Kerioth… »

« Your Master tells you that we will meet him on the pier at Tiberias. »

« Oh! well! » and in a loud voice: « The boat will be ready. »

« Mother, come upstairs with Me. We will be together during these hours. »

Mary follows Him without speaking. They go upstairs into a room which is cool and shady because it is covered by a vine and is protected from the sun by curtains.

« You are going away, My Jesus!? » Mary is very pale.

« Yes. It is time. »

« And have I not to come for the Tabernacles? Son!… » says Mary with a sob.

« Mother! Why? It is not the first time that we part! »

« No, that is true. But… Oh! I remember what You told Me in the wood near Gamala… Son! Forgive a poor woman. I will obey… With the help of God I will be strong… But I want a promise from You… »

« Which, Mother? »

« That You will not conceal the dreadful hour from Me. Not out of pity, not out of mistrust of Me… It would be too grievous… and too much torture… Grief because… I would learn everything all of a sudden and not from people who love Me as You love this poor Mother… And it would be a torture if I were to think that while I am spinning, or weaving or looking after the doves, You, My Creature, are put to death… »

« Be not afraid, Mother. You will know… But this is not our last farewell. We shall meet again… »

« Really? »

« Yes. We shall meet again. »

« And will You say to Me: "I am going to fulfil the Sacrifice"? Oh!… »

« I will not say so. But You will understand… And then it will be peace. So much peace… Just consider: to have done everything that God wants from us, His children, for the welfare of all the other children. So much peace… The peace of perfect love… » He holds Her to His bosom, holding Her tight in a filial embrace: He so much taller and stronger, She smaller, young in Her incorrupt youth of body and countenance, added to the eternal youth of Her immaculate spirit.

And She repeats heroically, so heroically: « Yes. What God wants… »

There are no other words. The two Perfect Ones are already consuming the sacrifice of their hardest obedience. No tears are shed. No kisses are given. There are only Two Who love perfectly and lay their love at the feet of God.

459. At Johanna of Chuza's. Letters from Antioch.

23rd July 1946.

All the inhabitants of Tiberias have rushed on to the lake shores or to the lake itself to find relief in the breeze blowing over the water and stirring the foliage of trees in the gardens along the shore. The rich people of this town, where many races have gathered and mingled for many reasons, are finding comfort in comfortable sport boats, or from the shade of their green gardens they are watching the movements of boats on the turquoise waters, which have already been cleared of the yellowish hue ensuing from the downpour of the previous evening. The poor people, and children in particular, are romping on the shore, where

the wavelets come to die, and their shrill screams, when the cold water wets them higher up than they would wish, sound like the screeching of swallows.

The boats of Peter and James come close to the shore and steer towards the little pier.

« No. To Johanna's garden » orders Jesus.

Peter obeys without speaking and the boat, followed by her twin sister, veers round perfectly leaving a foamy wake, shaped like a question mark, and steers towards the landing place at Chuza's garden, which it approaches and stops. Jesus is the first to land and gives a hand to the two Maries helping them to disembark on the pier.

« You will now go to the main mole and preach the Lord there. You will see a man, who will approach you, asking where I am. He is the man from Antioch. Bring him to Me after you have dismissed the crowds. »

« Yes… but… What are we to tell the people? Are we to tell them that You have come, or preach Your doctrine? »

« That I have come. Tell them that at dawn I will speak at Tarichea and I will cure the sick people. One of you should look after the boats, or get one of the disciples to do that, so that they may be ready to depart. Go, and peace be with you. » And He sets out towards the gate which closes on the landing-stage. The two Maries follow Him in silence.

There is no one to be seen in the large garden, in which some tenacious roses are still blooming, although very sparsely. But one can hear the happy cries of the two little ones who are playing.

Inserting His hand through the arabesques of the gate, Jesus tries to make the bolt slide without success. He looks for something with which to make a noise and attract attention, but does not find anything. Then, hearing the voices of the two children closer, He calls in a loud voice: « Mary! ». The two voices become silent all of a sudden… Jesus repeats: « Mary! »…

Then in the middle of the lawn, which is as smooth as a carpet with the well kept rose-bushes rising from it, a little girl appears, walking with short wary steps, a little finger pressed on her lips, her searching eyes scanning in all directions, then a few steps behind her there is Matthias, followed by a little lamb as white as foam.

« Mary! Matthias! » shouts Jesus.

His voice guides the innocent eyes. The two children look towards the gate and they see Jesus, His face against the bars, smiling at them.

« The Lord! Run, Matthias, call mother… Tell Elias or Micah to come and open… »

« You can go. I am going to the Lord… » and they both start running

with their arms stretched out, like two butterflies, one white, the other rosy with a little dark head.

But, fortunately, while running they call the servants, who rush out still holding watering-cans and rakes, so that at last the gate is opened and the children take shelter in the arms of Jesus, Who kisses them and crosses the threshold holding them by the hands.

« Mummy is in the house with her friends. They always send us away, because they do not want us » says Matthias promptly.

« Don't speak so harshly. Mummy sends us away because those ladies are Romans and they still speak of their gods and we, who have been saved by Jesus, must know Him only. That is why, Lord. Matthias is still too young and he does not understand » she says gracefully with the wisdom of a creature who has suffered and is thus more mature and more adult than her age would suggest.

« Father also sends us away when those of the Court come. And I would like to stay because almost every one is a soldier… a warrior… War! War is beautiful! It makes one win! It sends the Romans away. Down with Rome! Hurrah for the Kingdom of Israel » shouts the boy proudly.

« War is not beautiful, Matthias, and very often one does not win the war and then one from subject becomes a slave. »

« But Your Kingdom must come. And to make it come a war will be waged. And everybody will be sent away, also Herod, and You will be king. »

« Be silent, silly boy. You know that you are not to repeat what you hear. They are right in sending you away. Don't you know that you can harm father, mother and also Jesus by saying that? » says Mary. And then she explains: « One day, that man who is like a prince and is a relative of Herod and is also Your disciple came to speak to father. And they shouted so much, they were not alone, but with many more people… »

« They were all handsome, with lovely swords and they spoke of war… » interrupts Matthias.

« Be quiet, now! They shouted so much that we could hear them, and since then this fool does nothing but speak of it. Tell him that he must not… Mummy told him and father has threatened to take him to the top of the Great Hermon, and leave him in a grotto with a deaf and dumb slave, until he learns to be silent. And he would have to be silent there, because if he speaks to the slave, the latter will not hear him and will not reply to him, and if he shouts, eagles and wolves will come to eat him… »

« A really terrible punishment » says Jesus smiling and caressing the child who has lost his boldness and presses against Jesus as if he already saw eagles and wolves ready to devour him completely, including his little imprudent tongue. « A really dreadful punishment! » He repeats.

« Yes, and I am afraid that that is what is going to happen to him and that I will be left without Matthias, and I cry… But he feels no pity for me or for mummy and will make us die broken-hearted… »

« I don't do it deliberately… I say… what I hear… It is so nice… to think that the Romans are defeated, that Herod and Philip are expelled and that Jesus is the King of Israeli he concludes in a whisper concealing his face against Jesus' tunic to deaden even more the sound of his voice.

Matthias will never say these things again. He will promise Me and will keep his promise. Is that right? So he will not be devoured and Johanna and Mary will not die broken-hearted. Chuza will not be upset and I will not be hated. Because, see, Matthias? You have Me hated, by saying such things. Are you glad if Jesus is persecuted? Just imagine how remorseful it would be if one day you had to say to yourself: "I made people persecute Jesus Who saved me, because I repeated what I heard people say by chance". They were men. And men often lose sight of God because they are sinners. As they do not see God, they do not see Wisdom and they make well-intentioned mistakes, or what they think such. But children are good. Their spirits see God and God rests in their hearts. Thus they must understand things in a wise manner and say that My Kingdom will not be established through violence on the Earth, but with love, in the hearts of men. And they must pray so that men may understand this Kingdom of Mine as children understand it. The prayers of children are taken to Heaven by their angels and the Most High converts them into graces. And Jesus needs such graces to change men, who think of war and of a temporal kingdom, into apostles who understand that Jesus is peace and that His Kingdom is spiritual and heavenly. See this little lamb? Could it tear anything to pieces? »

« Eh! no! If it could do that, father would not have given it to us not to have us torn to pieces. »

« Exactly, you are right. Also the Father Who is in Heaven would never have sent Me if I had had the power and will to tear to pieces. I am Lamb and Shepherd. And I am as meek and docile as a lamb and I am He Who gathers with love, with the crook of a good Shepherd and not with the lance and sword of a warrior. Have you understood? And will you promise Me, just Me, that you will never speak of these things again? »

« Yes, Jesus. But… help me… because by myself… »

« I will help you. Look, I will caress your lips and thus they will be able to remain closed. »

« My Master. This is a holy evening, as it allows me to see You! » says Jonathan coming from the house and prostrating himself at Jesus' feet.

« Peace to you, Jonathan. Can I see Johanna? »

« She is coming. She has dismissed the Roman ladies to come to You. »

Jesus looks at him inquisitively but does not ask anything. He walks towards the house listening to Jonathan who is speaking of Chuza « much disgusted with Herod » and who says: « For my mistress' sake I beg You to stop him, because he wants to do things which… would not do any good to You or to him, above all to You. »

Johanna hastens towards the Lord and heedless of her beautiful dress she prostrates herself in the dust of the path and kisses Jesus' feet. She is wearing a splendid white dress, over which from her head hangs a veil that looks like silver filigree so closely is it embroidered with silver threads - and I do not know how such light cloth can support that silver brocade embroidery - and on her head a thin diadem point-shaped in front, like a mitre studded with pearls, heavy pearl earrings, a pearl necklace and pearl bracelets and rings: an appearance of beauty, purity and grace.

« Peace to you, Johanna. »

« When You are with me there is always peace in me and in my house… Mother!… » and she wants to kiss the feet of Mary, Who, instead, receives her in Her arms kissing her. A kiss is exchanged with Mary of Alphaeus as well.

After the greetings, Jesus says: « Johanna, I must speak to you. »

« Here I am, Master. Mary, my house is Yours. Order what You need. I am going with the Master… »

Jesus has already gone onto the lawn, where He can be seen by everybody, but is so isolated that no one can hear Him. Johanna joins Him.

« Johanna, I have to receive a messenger from Antioch, who is certainly coming from Syntyche. I was thinking of doing so in your house. Here, in your garden… »

« You are the master of everything that belongs to Johanna. »

« Also of your heart? » Jesus stares at her.

« You know already, Master! I was almost certain. Now I am completely sure. Chuza… The incoherency of men is really great! Their attachment to interests is very strong! And their pity for their wives is really so faint! We are… Even we, the wives of the best husbands, what are we? A jewel which is displayed or concealed according to its usefulness… A mime who must laugh or weep, attract or reject, speak or be silent, show or hide herself in compliance with her man's wishes… always in his interest… Our destiny is a sad one, Lord! And degrading as well! »

« As compensation your spirits are enabled to climb higher. »

« That is true. Did You find out by Yourself or did they speak to You about it? Have You seen Manaen? He was looking for You… »

« No. I have not seen anybody. Is he here? »

« Yes, we are all here… I mean: all the courtiers of Herod… and

many to hate him. Among them there is also Chuza since Herod, by Herodiad's will, delighted in mortifying his superintendent… Lord, do You remember that at Bether I told You that he wanted to separate me from You because he was afraid of falling into Herod's disfavour? Only a few months have gone by… And he now wants me to… Yes, Lord. He would like me to persuade You to accept his help to become king in place of the Tetrarch… I must tell You because I am a woman, thus subject to man, and a Jewish woman over and above, thus subject to the will of her husband more than ever. And I am telling You… And I do not advise You… because I hope that I am already aware that You… oh! You will not make Yourself king with the help of hired lancers. Oh!… what have I said! I should not have spoken thus… I should have let You listen to Chuza, Manaen and others first… And if I had kept silent, would I not have done the wrong thing?… Lord, help me to see what is just… »

« What is just is in your heart, Johanna. Neither with Roman cohorts, nor with Israelite lancers will I make Myself king, even if Rome and Israel decided to pacify this region through Me. I have already understood enough to reconstruct facts. Matthias has spoken imprudent words. Jonathan has mentioned people being disgusted. You are telling the rest. I will complete the picture thus: a foolish idea of My kingdom is inducing good people, who are not yet just, like Manaen, to create risings capable of establishing the kingdom of Israel according to the fixed idea of the majority of people. A sharp passionate need to revenge themselves of an affront is urging others, among whom your husband, to do the same thing. The shrewdness of Pharisees, Sadducees, scribes and also of Herod plays on those two motives to succeed in getting rid of Me, by making Me appear in the eyes of our rulers what I am not. You have dismissed the Roman ladies to tell Me this, in order not to betray Chuza, Manaen or the others. But I tell you that in actual fact the Gentiles have understood Me more than anybody else. They call Me a philosopher, perhaps they consider Me a dreamer, an unrealist, an unhappy man, according to their mentality which bases everything on violence. But they have understood, at least they have understood this: that I do not belong to the Earth, that My Kingdom does not belong to the Earth. They are not afraid of Me, but of My followers. They are right. My followers, some out of love, some out of pride, would be quite capable of doing anything to realise their idea: to make of Me, Who am the King of kings, the universal King, the poor king of a small nation… I really must watch this snare very carefully, as it works in the shade, instigated by My true enemies, who are not in the proconsular building at Caesarea, or in that of the Governor in Antioch, or in the Antonia. They are under the tephilim, the fringes and zizith of

Jewish garments and particularly under the wide tephilim and the fluffy zizith attached to the large garments of Pharisees and scribes to prove their even greater compliance with the Law. But the Law is in hearts, not on garments… If it were in their hearts, those who hate one another, but who are now united forgetting their hatred in order to do harm - the hatred which digs deep ravines between one cast of Israel and another and which now is no longer separated but has been levelled because the ravines have been filled with hatred for Me - if the Law were in their hearts, and riot hanging or attached to their garments, foreheads, hands, just as a savage wears amulets, shells, bones, beaks of vultures out of superstition or as ornaments, if this Law were in their hearts, if Wisdom were not written in the tephilim but on the fibres of their hearts, they would understand who I am and that they cannot go against Me to destroy Me as Word and as Man. I must therefore defend Myself from friends and from enemies, unfair equally in their hatred and in their love. I must try to guide their love and appease their hatred. I do so, to do My duty. And I will do so until I build My Kingdom, wetting the stones with My Blood to cement them. When I have sprinkled you with My Blood, Your hearts will no longer vacillate. I am speaking of hearts faithful to Me. Of yours, Johanna, who are struggling between two forces and two loves which are on you and in you: Chuza-I. »

« But You will win, Lord. »

« Yes, I will win. »

« But try to save Chuza as well… Love whom I love. »

« I love him who loves you. »

« Love Chuza who loves You…

Falsehood does not befit that forehead which is as pure as the pearls adorning it and is now blushing in the effort of wishing to persuade itself and Me of Chuza's love for Me. »

« And yet he loves You. »

« Yes. For his own interest. As for his interest he did not love Me at Zio and Siram… But here is Simon of Jonah with the stranger. Let us go and meet them… »

They go as far as the large vestibule at the rear of the house, rather a semicircular porch than a vestibule, open on the park, which extends as far as the house. The semicircular vestibule, open on the garden, is adorned with columns with branches of rosebushes at present without flowers and delicate branches of jasmines full of flowers, and with other purple creepers, the names Of which I do not know.

« Peace be with you, foreigner. Did you want Me? »

« Health and glory, Lord. I wanted You. I have a letter for You. A Greek woman gave it to me at Antioch. I am… No, I am no longer Greek, because I became a Roman citizen to continue my contract

work. I am purveyor to the Roman troops. I hate them. But it is profitable to supply them with provisions. For what they have done to us, I should mix hemlock with their flour. But they should all be poisoned. A few is of no avail. It would be worse… They think that they are allowed to do anything because they are strong. They are barbarians, as compared with the Greeks. They have robbed us of everything to adorn themselves with our art and appear civilised. But if you scratch the crust which is Coloured with the hue of our civilization, you will always find an Amulius, a Romulus, a Tarquinius… You always find a Brutus, the murderer of his benefactor. At present they have Tiberius! Still not enough for them! They have Seianus. They have what they deserve. Swords, chains, crimes committed by them are turning against them and biting the flesh of the Roman brutes. Still too little. But the law will not fail. When the monster becomes huge, it will collapse because of its own weight and will rot. And the vanquished will laugh at the enormous corpse and will become once again the winners. Let it be so. May the feet of all the conquerors crush her who crushed everything in her brutal expansion… But forgive me, Lord. I have been carried away once again by my perpetual grief… I was saying that a Greek woman gave me a letter for You and she told me that You are the perfect Virtuous Man. Virtuous… You are young to be so… The great spirits of Hellas spent all their lives to become a little virtuous… And yet the woman informed me of Your Idea. If You really believe in what You teach, You are great… Is it true that You live to prepare Yourself to die in order to give the world the wisdom of living as gods and not as brutes, as men do at present? Is it true that You maintain that there is only one wealth worth achieving: that of virtues? Is it true that You have come to redeem but that redemption begins in ourselves, following Your teaching? Is it true that we have a soul and that we must take care of it, as it is a divine thing, everlasting, incorruptible by its nature, but that we, by living as brutes, can deprive it of its divine character, although we cannot destroy it? Answer, o Great One! »

« It is true. It is all very true. »

« By Jove! Also our Greatest One said so. But it sounded like music lacking a note, like a lyre lacking a chord. Now and again one perceived an empty space, which the philosopher never crossed. You have filled it up, if You have really come not only to teach but also to die, not compelled by anybody, but through Your own will to obey God, which changes Your death from suicide to sacrifice… By divine Pallas! None of our gods ever did that. I infer" therefore, that You are above them. The Greek woman says that they do not exist, and that You only are… So am I speaking to a God? And can a God listen thus to a purveyor, to a miserable thief who hates his

enemies? Why do You listen to me? »

« Because I see your soul. »

« You see it?!!! What is it like? »

« Twisted, dirty, snake-haired, bitter, ignorant, although your intellect is quite different from that of a barbarian. But within your ugly temple you have an altar which is waiting, like the one in the Aeropagus, and it is waiting for the same thing: the true God. »

« For You, then, because the Greek woman says that You are the true God. But, by Jove, what You say of my soul is true. You are more explicit and certain than the Delphic oracle. But You preach peace, love and forgiveness. Difficult virtues. And You preach continence and all kinds of honesty… To be all that is to be gods greater than the gods, because they… oh! they are not pacific, honest, generous!… They are the perfection of the wicked passions of men, with the exception of Minerva who is at least wise… Even Diana!… Pure but cruel… Yes, to be what You preach is to be greater than the gods. If I became so… by the most beautiful Ganymede! He: he was abducted by the Olympic eagle and became a divine cup-bearer. But Zeno from supplier of fodder to barbarian rulers will become god… But let me dwell on this thought, and in the meantime You can read the letter of the woman… » and the man begins to walk up and down like a peripatetic.

Peter, being tired and seeing that the conversation was a long one, has sat down comfortably on a seat in the hall, and has begun to doze peacefully in the cool place, on the soft cushions lying on the seat… But he must have been sleeping with one eye open, because he is roused by the noise of the seal being broken and of the unrolling parchment, and he rises to his feet, rubbing his sleepy eyes. He approaches the Master, Who is reading standing under a chandelier made of mica plates of a delicate violet hue. As the light is faint, suitable to light up the place without depriving it of the charm of moonlight in clear nights, Jesus is holding the parchment high up in order to see the words, and Peter, who is much smaller than the Master, standing beside Him, tries to stretch his neck, standing on the tips of his toes, in order to see, but without success.

« It's Syntyche, eh? What does she say? » he asks twice and he begs: « Read in a loud voice, Master! »

And Jesus replies: « Yes, it is she… Later… » and He goes on reading, and when He finishes the first sheet, He rolls it up, He Puts it in the folds of His belt and begins to read the second sheet.

« What a long letter she has written, eh? How is John? And who is that man? » Peter is as insistent as a boy.

Jesus is so engrossed that He no longer listens to him. Also the second sheet is finished and is put away as the first one. « They will get spoilt there. Give them to me. I will keep them… »

and he certainly thinks: « and I will have a look at them. » But when he raises his eyes to look at Jesus' hand unrolling the third and last sheet, he sees a tear shine on Jesus' fair eyelashes. « Master?! Are You weeping?! Why, Master? » he says, and he presses against Him embracing Him with his short muscular arm.

« John is dead… »

« Oh! poor man! When did he die? »

« At the beginning of summer… wishing so much to see us… »

« Oh! poor John… Of course… he was already at his end!… And his grief in parting… All because of some snakes! I wish I knew their names!… Read aloud, Lord. I was fond of John! »

« Later. I will read it to you later. Be quiet now. »

Jesus reads attentively… Peter stretches himself even more to see… The reading is over. Jesus rolls the sheet and says: « Call My Mother. »

« Are You not going to read? »

« I am waiting for the others… In the meantime I will dismiss that man. »

And while Peter goes into the house where the women disciples are with Johanna, Jesus approaches the Greek: « When are you leaving? »

« Oh! I have to go to the Proconsul at Caesarea and then to Joppa after I purchase some goods. I will be leaving in a month's time, in time to avoid the November storms. I am going by sea. Do You need me? »

« Yes, to send a reply. The Greek woman says that I can trust you. »

« They say that we are false. But we are also able not to be so. You can trust me. You can prepare Your letter and look for me at the Tabernacles at Cleanthes' house; he supplies me with the cheese of Judaea for the tables of the Romans. It is the third house after the fountain in the village of Bethphage. You cannot go wrong. »

« You cannot go wrong either if you proceed along the path on which you have set foot. Goodbye, man. Greek civilization leads you to the Christian one. »

« Are You not reproaching me for hating? »

« Do you feel that I should? »

« Yes, because You disapprove of hatred as being a contemptible passion and You abhor vengeance. »

« And what is your opinion on the matter? »

« I think that he who does not hate and forgives is greater than Jupiter. »

« Achieve, then, that greatness… Goodbye, man. May your family love Syntyche, and in the exile in which you are at present take the paths that lead to the eternal Fatherland: Heaven. Those who believe in Me and practise My words will have that Fatherland. May Light enlighten you. Go in peace. »

The man says goodbye and goes away. He then stops, comes back and asks: « Will I not hear You speak? »

« I will speak at dawn, at Tarichea. Then I will be going towards Syro-Phoenicia and later, I do not know by which road, to Jerusalem. »

« I will look for You. And I will be at Tarichea tomorrow to see whether You are as eloquent as wise. »

He goes away finally.

The women are in the hall and with Peter they are commenting on John's death. Also the other apostles have come, the ones who had been left in town to inform the people that the Rabbi would be at Tarichea the following morning. They all speak of poor John of Endor and are anxious to know.

« He died, Son! »

« Yes. He is in peace. »

« He has really finished suffering. »

« He has been freed from prison definitely. »

« He should not have suffered the last affliction of exile. »

« An additional purification. »

« Oh! I would not like that kind of purification for myself. Any other… but not to die far from the Master! »

« And yet… we shall all die thus… Master… take us away with You! » says Andrew after the others have spoken.

« You do not know what you are asking, Andrew. This is your place until I call you. But listen to what Syntyche writes.

"Syntyche of Christ greets Christ Jesus.

The man who will bring You these sheets is a compatriot of mine. He has promised to look for You until he finds You, using as last resort Bethany, where he will leave the letter with Lazarus, in the event he should not succeed in finding You anywhere. He is one who is making up, as best he can, for all the wrong he and his ancestors have received from Rome. Rome has struck them three times, in many ways and with her usual methods. He says, with Greek humour, that he is now milking the cows of the Tiber to make them spit out the Greek goats. He is purveyor to the Governor and to many Roman families of this little Rome and great town queen of the East. Further, after the delicatessen for rich people, with his astute manners of servile flattery concealing his incurable hatred, he has been successful in securing the contract for supplying the Eastern cohorts. I do not approve of his methods. But everybody has his own ways. I would have preferred the bread begged in the street to the gold coffers given to him by the oppressor. And I would have always behaved thus, if I were not urged by another reason, which brings no profit to me, to imitate the Greek for my own purpose.

After all, he is a good man and his wife is good as well as his

three daughters and his son. I met them at the little school at Antigonea and with the balm I cured the mother who had been taken ill at the beginning of spring and so I began to go to their house. Many families would have welcomed me with pleasure as a teacher and embroideress: noble families and business people, but I preferred this one for a reason which has nothing to do with their being Greeks. I will explain the situation to You.

I beg You to bear with Zeno, even if You cannot approve of his mentality. He is like certain arid grounds, which are quartziferous on the surface, but very good under the hard crust. I hope to succeed in removing this hard crust brought about by so much grief and thus lay bare the good soil. It would be of great assistance to Your Church, as Zeno is well known and in touch with many people in Asia Minor and Greece, in addition to Cyprus and Malta and even in Iberia, where he has relatives and friends everywhere, Greeks persecuted like himself, as well as Roman soldiers and magistrates, who could be very useful to Your cause one day.

Lord, while writing, from the terrace of the house I can see Antioch with her wharves on the river, the Governor's building in the island, her regal streets and walls with hundreds of powerful towers, and if I turn round I can see the top of Sulpius dominating me with its barracks, and the other building of the Governor. I am thus between the two displays of Roman power, I, a poor woman, all alone. But they do not frighten me. On the contrary I think that what the fury of the elements and the strength of a rebelling nation cannot do, will be done by the weakness which does not outshine anybody, by an apparent weakness despised by the mighty ones, the weakness of Him Who is true strength because He possesses God: You.

I think, and I tell You, that this Roman strength will be Christian strength when it becomes acquainted with You and that our work should begin from the citadels of heathen Roman spirit, because they will always be the masters of the world and a Christian Roman spirit will mean universal Christendom. When? I do not know. But I feel that it will happen. So I look at these witnesses of Roman power smiling, thinking of the day when they will place their insignia and their power at the service of the King of kings. I look at them as one looks at helpful friends who are not yet aware of their usefulness, and who will cause sufferings before they are conquered, but once they have been conquered, they will take You and the knowledge of You as far as the end of the world.

I, a poor woman, dare say to my older brothers in You, that when the time comes, the conquest of the world to Your Kingdom will have to begin not from Israel, too closed in its mosaic rigorism exacerbated by the Pharisaic one and by the other castes to be conquered, but from here, from the Roman world and from its

ramifications. The conquest of souls to the Truth must begin from the tentacles by which Rome strangles every faith, every love, every freedom which is not as she wants and is not useful to her.

You know that, Lord. But I am speaking for my brothers who cannot believe that we also, the Gentiles, yearn after Good. I say to my brothers that under the heathen cuirass there are hearts disappointed of heathen emptiness, sick of the life they lead simply because such is the custom, tired of hatred, of vice, of harshness. There are honest spirits who do not know on what to rely to find satisfaction to their yearning for Good. Give them a faith which may satisfy them. They will die for its sake, carrying it further and further ahead, like a torch in darkness, as the athletes of the Hellenic games do". »

Jesus rolls up the first sheet and while the listeners comment on the style, strength and ideas of Syntyche, and they wonder why she is no longer at Antigonea, Jesus unrolls the second sheet.

Peter, who has remained seated so far, comes closer once again as if he wanted to hear better and he begins to stand on the tips of his toes to see, pressing against Jesus.

« Simon, it is so warm, and you are oppressing Me » says Jesus smiling. « Go back to your place. Have you not heard so far? »

« Heard? Yes, I have. But I have not seen. And now I want to see because it was at this sheet that Your countenance changed and You wept… And not only because of John… We knew that he was about to die… »

Jesus smiles, but to prevent Peter from casting side glances at the sheet from behind His back, He leans against the nearest column, ignoring that He is moving away from the light of the chandelier which, as compensation, illuminates Jesus' face brightly, if it no longer lights up the sheet.

Peter, who is thoroughly determined to see and understand, drags a stool in front of Jesus and sits down staring at the Master's face.

« "I am so convinced of this that when I remained alone, I left Antigonea for Antioch, as I was sure that I could work more in this area, where, as in Rome, all races blend and mingle, than where Israel rules… I, a woman, cannot set out to conquer Rome. But if Rome is out of my reach, I will scatter the seed from the most beautiful daughter of Rome, the city most like her mother in the Whole World… On how many hearts will it fall? In how many will it germinate? In how many will it be carried elsewhere awaiting the apostles to germinate? I do not know. I do not ask to be told. I Will work and I offer my work to the God, Whom I have known and Who gratifies my spirit and my intellect. I believe in this God as the only almighty God. I know that He does not disappoint those who are full of good will. That suffices for me and supports

me in my work.

Master: John died on the sixth day before the nones of June according to the Romans, almost at the new moon of Tammuz according to the Jews. Lord… Why tell You what You know? I am saying so for my brothers. John died as a just man, and considering what he really suffered, I should say as a martyr. I assisted him with all the pity which a woman can have, with all the respect which one has for a hero, with all the love which one has for a brother. But that did not prevent me from suffering so much, that I, not out of disgust or tiredness, but out of pity, I prayed the Eternal Father to call him to peace. He used to say: 'To freedom'.

What words he spoke! Can a man, who had fallen so low in the underworld, as he used to say, rise to so much light of Wisdom? Oh! death is really the mystery which reveals our origin, and life is the scenery which conceals the mystery. A scenery which is given to us without any drawing and on which we can work whatever we wish. He had written many things on it, but they were not all beautiful. The last ones, however, were sublime. From the dull sky of the underworld, on which were drawings of human sorrow and human violence, he passed, like a wise craftsman, to more and more luminous signs, adorning with virtue the end of his Christian life and attaining the refulgent brilliancy of a soul lost in God. I tell You: he did not speak, but he sang his last poem. He did not die: he rose. And I was not able to tell exactly when it was the man who spoke or when it was already the spirit son of God speaking.

Lord, You know that I have read all the works of philosophers searching for a pasture for my soul tied with the double chain of slavery and heathenism. But they were the works of men. Here it was not the voice of man: they were the words of a super-man, of a royal spirit, even more: of a semi-divine spirit. I watched over the mystery, which on the other hand, would not have been understood by those who gave us hospitality: they were kind to the man but they were Israelites in the most wide and complete sense of the word… And when in the last touches of love John was nothing but an expression of love, I sent everybody away and I alone received what You certainly know…

Lord… that man is dead, and 'having come out at last from prison, has entered freedom' as he used to say beneath his breath in his last days, and with his eyes enraptured, pressing my hand and revealing Paradise to me with his words. That man died teaching me how to live, to forgive, to believe, to love. He died preparing me for the last period of Your life. Lord, I know everything. In the winter evenings he instructed me in the prophets. I know the Book like a true Israelite. But I know also what is not specified in the Book… My Master and my Lord… I will imitate him! And I would like to have the same favour, but I think

that it is more heroic not to ask it, and to do Your will… " »

Jesus rolls up the sheet and is about to take the third one.

« No, Master! It cannot be… There is something else. It is not possible that the sheet finished so soon! » exclaims Peter. « You are not reading everything! Why, Lord? You, all of you! Protest. Syntyche has written more for us than for Him and He is not reading the letter to us. »

« Do not insist, Peter! »

« I do insist! Of course I do! I noticed, You know, that Your eyes went to the bottom of the sheet all of a sudden; the sheet is transparent and You have not read the last lines. I will not be quiet until You read again the end part of that sheet. Before… You were weeping!… What? Is there any reason for weeping in what You have read? Of course we are sorry to hear that he is dead… but such a death does not make people weep! I thought that he had died an evil death, losing his spirit… Instead… Come on, read it! Mother! John! You who obtain everything… »

« Hear him, Son, and if it is something sorrowful to learn, we will all drink the chalice… »

« Let it be as you wish…

"I know the Book like a true Israelite. But I know also what is not specified in the Book, that is, that Your Passion will not be delayed, because John is dead, and You promised him a short expectation in Limbo. He told me. He told me that You had promised to take him before he knew how far the hatred of Israel against You could go and thus prevent him from hating Your torturers out of love for You. He is now dead… and You are therefore about to die… No. To live. To really live through Your Doctrine, with Yourself in us, with Your Divinity in us after Your Sacrifice has given us the life of our souls, Grace, union with the Father, with the Son, with the Holy Spirit.

Master, my Saviour, my King, my God… I am strongly tempted, nay I have been strongly tempted to join You now that John is sleeping with his body in the tomb and is resting with his soul in expectation. I would like to come to You to be with the other women near Your altar. But altars are to be adorned not only with the victim, but also with garlands in honour of the God in Whose honour the sacrifice is celebrated. I lay my violet garland of a remote disciple at the foot of Your altar. I lay there the obedience, the work, the sacrifice of not seeing and hearing You… Ah! It will really be hard! It is really hard now that Your supernatural conversations with John are over and I no longer enjoy them!… Lord, raise Your hand on Your servant that she may be able to do only Your Will and she may know how to serve You". »

Jesus rolls up the sheet and looks at the faces of the listeners. They are pale. But Peter whispers: « I do not understand why You

were weeping… I thought that there was something else… »

« I was weeping because I was comparing the uxoricide, the galley slave of the past and the heathen slave woman with too many people in Israel. »

« I see! It grieves You that Hebrews are inferior to Gentiles, and priests and princes to galley slaves. You are right. It was foolish of me! What a woman she is! It's a pity that she had to go away… »

Jesus unrolls the third sheet.

« "And that she may imitate in everything the disciple and brother who is already in peace, and is resting there after accomplishing every purification… in Your honour and to alleviate Your sufferings". »

« Ah! certainly not! » Peter has jumped with agility on to the seat before Jesus can move aside, and sees that it is not possible to be already where Jesus is looking. It is to be borne in mind that the parchment rolls up as its upper part is released and thus many lines are hidden at the top of the sheet.

Jesus raises His head, and with a more melancholy than sad countenance, He gently but firmly repels His apostle and says: « Peter, your Master knows what is good for you! Let Me give you what will do you good… »

Peter is moved by those words and even more by the way Jesus looks at him, so imploringly, His eyes shining with tears about to stream down His face. He descends from the stool saying: « I obey… But what can ever be there?! »

Jesus resumes reading:

« "And now that I have written about other people I will write about myself. I left Antigonea after John's burial. Not because I was ill-treated. But because I felt that it was not my place. Why did I feel that? I do not know. I felt it. As I told You, I had become acquainted with many families, because many people had come to us. I preferred to settle down with Zeno's family, because it is in the environment in which I intend to work.

A Roman woman wanted me in her magnificent house near Herod's Colonnades. A very rich Syrian woman invited me as teacher to the textile factory which her husband, a man from Tyre, has set up in Seleucia. A widow proselyte, the mother of seven daughters, living near the Seleucus bridge, wanted me out of respect for John, the teacher of her sons. A Greek-Assyrian family with stores in a street near the Circus asked me to stay with them because I could have been useful when games are on. Finally Roman, a centurion I think, certainly a soldier, who has remained here with I do not know exactly what task and who was also cured with the balm, insisted on having me. No. I did not want rich people or merchants. I wanted souls, Greek and Roman souls, because I feel that the spreading of Your Doctrine in the world must begin

with them.

And here I am in Zeno's house, on the slopes of mount Sulpius, near the barracks. The citadel impends threatingly from its top. And yet, coarse as it is, it is better than the rich buildings of the Onpholus and Nympheus and I have friends there. A soldier, whose name is Alexander, knows You. The simple heart of a child enclosed in the huge body of a soldier. And the very tribune, who came here recently from Caesarea, has a righteous heart under his chlamys. Alexander is closer to the Truth in his coarse simplicity. But also the tribune, who admires You as a perfect rhetor, as a 'divine' philosopher, as he says, is not hostile to Wisdom, even if he cannot as yet accept the Truth. But to conquer these men and their families through the least knowledge of You means to scatter the seed of such knowledge north, south, east and west, because soldiers are like grains stirred by the winnowing-fan, or rather, like chaff which the whirlwind, in our case the will of the Caesars and the demands of dominion, scatter everywhere.

When one day Your apostles, like birds set free to fly, will spread throughout the world, it will be of great help to them to find in the places of their apostolate one, one only, even only one person who knows that You existed. For this idea I treat also the aching limbs of old gladiators and the wounds of young ones. That is why I no longer shun Roman women and I put up with people who grieved me… Everything. For You. If I am wrong, advise me with Your wisdom. I only ask You to consider - and You know that my mistakes are caused by incapacity and not by wickedness.

Lord, Your servant has told You so much… a mere nothing of what I have in my heart. But You see my spirit. Lord… When shall I see Your face? When shall I see Your Mother? My brothers?… Life is a passing dream. Our separation will pass. I will be in You, and with them, and it will be joy and freedom for me, also for me, as for John.

I prostrate myself at Your feet, my Saviour. Bless me with Your peace. To Mary of Nazareth, to the women disciples, peace and blessings. To the apostles and disciples, peace and blessings. To You, Lord, glory and love".

I have finished reading. Mother, come with Me. You can wait for Me, or rest. I am not coming back in. I am staying with My Mother to pray. Johanna, should anybody look for Me, I am in the bower near the lake. »

Peter has- taken Mary aside and speaks to Her excitedly, but in a low voice. Mary smiles at him and whispers something. She then joins Her Son Who is going along the path hardly visible in the night.

« What did Simon of Jonah want? »

« He wanted to know, Son. He is like a boy… a big boy… But he is

so good. »

« Yes, very good. And he begged You, Who are very good, to know… He has found out the weak points: You and John. I know. I pretend I do not know, but I know. But I cannot always give in, to please him… It was not necessary, Jonathan. We could have stayed also in the dark » Jesus says seeing Jonathan hurrying towards Him with a silver lamp and some cushions which he lays on the table and the seats in the bower.

« Johanna told me to bring them. Peace to You, Master. »

« And to you. »

They remain alone.

« I was saying that I cannot always please him. This evening it was impossible. You are the only one who can be informed of what I omitted. That is why I wanted You with Me, also to be with You, Mother… To be with You in the last hours before parting is to gather so much gentle strength as to have enough for many hours of solitude in the world which does not understand Me or misunderstands Me. And to be with You in the first hours when I come back is to acquire new strength at once through Your kindness, after all the chalices I have to drink in the world… and which are so bitter and disgusting. »

Mary caresses Him without speaking. Standing beside Him, while He is seated, She is the Mother Who comforts Her Son. But He makes Her sit down and says: « Listen… » and then Mary, in attentive attitude, sitting in front of Him, becomes the disciple hanging on the lips of Jesus Master.

« Speaking of Antioch Syntyche writes: "I am not wise and so I cannot tell where the will of men ends and the will of God begins, but a will, stronger than my desire, has brought me here and I wonder whether it was the will of God. One thing is certain - and I am almost sure it is by the grace of Heaven - I love this town now, as with the summits of Casius and Amanus watching over it on two sides and the green crests of the black Mountains farther away, it reminds me of my lost Fatherland. And this seems to me the first step back to my land, not the tired step of a weary pilgrim returning to die, but of a messenger of life coming to give life to her who was her mother. It seems to me that from here, well rested like a swallow before resuming its flight and nourished with Wisdom, I am about to fly back to the town where I was born and from which I want, I would like to rise towards the Light after giving that Light which was given to me.

I am aware that my brothers in You would not approve of this idea. They want Your Wisdom exclusively for themselves. But they are wrong. One day they will understand that the world is waiting and that the world which is now despised is the better one. I am preparing the way from them. Not only here, but with all

those who come here and then depart for other countries and it makes no difference to me whether they are Gentiles or proselytes, Greeks or Romans, or whether they belong to other colonies of the empire or of the Diaspora. I speak to them, I excite in them the desire to know You… The sea is not made by one cloud pouring its water into it. It is made by clouds and clouds and clouds which pour their waters onto the Earth and flow into the sea. I will be a cloud. The sea will be Christendom. I want to spread the knowledge of You to contribute to form the sea of Christendom. I, a Greek woman, know how to speak to Greeks, not so much through their language as by understanding them… I, previously the slave of Romans, know how to deal with Romans, of whose sensitive points I am aware. And since I lived among the Hebrews I know also how to deal with them, particularly here where there are many proselytes. John died for Your glory. I will live for Your glory. Bless our spirits".

And farther down, where she speaks of John's death, where I did not let Simon read, she writes: "John died after accomplishing every purification, also the last one, by forgiving those who killed him through their behaviour and compelled You to send him away. I know their names, at least the name of the main one. John revealed it to me saying: 'Never trust him. He is a traitor. He betrayed me, he will betray Him and his companions. But I forgive the Iscariot as Jesus will forgive him. The abyss in which he lies is already so deep that I do not want to make it any deeper by not forgiving him for killing me by separating me from Jesus. My forgiveness will not save him. Nothing will save him, because he is a demon. I should not say that, as I was an assassin, but in my case an offence had driven me mad. He inveighs against those who have done him no harm and he will end up by betraying his Saviour. But I forgive him because God's kindness has turned his hatred against me into good for me. See? I have expiated everything. He, the Master, told me yesterday evening. I have expiated everything. I am now going out of prison. I am now really entering freedom, free even of the weight of the remembrance of Judas of Kerioth's sin towards a poor wretch, who had found peace near his Lord'.

I also, following John's example, forgive him for tearing me away from You, from Your blessed Mother, from my sister disciples, from listening and following You until death, to be present at Your triumph of Redeemer. And I do so for Your sake, in Your honour and to alleviate Your sufferings. Be in peace, my Lord. The name of the disgraceful man among Your followers will never pass my lips, neither will anything pass of what I heard from John when his ego spoke with Your invisible gladdening Presence. I was in doubt whether I should come to see You before

settling in my new residence. But I felt that I would betray myself with my horror for the Iscariot and that I might damage You with Your enemies. So I made a sacrifice also of that consolation… feeling certain that the sacrifice would not be without fruit and without reward".

There You are, Mother. Could I have read that to Simon? »

« No. Neither to him nor to the others. In My grief I am happy for John's holy death… Son, let us pray that he may feel our love and… and that Judas may not be the shame… Oh! it is dreadful!… And yet… we will forgive… »

« Let us pray… » They stand up and pray in the flickering light of the lamp in the middle of screens of hanging branches, while the surf breaks rhythmically on the shore…

460. At the Thermal Baths of Emmaus of Tiberias.

26th July 1946.

The lake is just like a huge sardonyx within the setting of the hills, hardly visible in the starlight, as the moon has already set. Jesus is alone in the green bower with His head reclined on His forearms which are resting on the table near the lamp, which is about to go out. But He is not sleeping. Now and again He raises His head, He looks again at the sheets unrolled on the table, held thus by the lamp placed at the top of the sheet and by His forearms at the other end, and He reclines His head once again.

Silence is unbroken. Even the lake seems to be asleep in the dead sultry calm. And then suddenly and all at the same time, the wind rustles among the leaves, a solitary wave laps the shore, there is a change in nature, I would say that it is the creaking of awakening elements. The very dim light at the beginning of dawn, when day is about to break, is already light, although one's eyes do not yet perceive it when one looks round the deserted garden. It is the sheet of the lake which gives an indication of the first appearance of light, because its black, leaden sardonyx becomes clearer and reflecting the whitening sky, from leaden it slowly becomes slategrey and then iron-grey, then opal and finally it reflects the sky and its waters become paradisiacal blue.

Jesus stands up, He picks up the sheets, takes the lamp which has gone out at the first whiff of breeze, and He goes towards the house. He meets a maid-servant who bows, then a gardener, who is going towards the flower-beds and He exchanges greetings with him. He enters the hall where other servants are accomplishing the first tasks of the day.

« Peace to you. Could you call My apostles? »

« They are already up, Lord. And the wagon for the women is ready. Johanna also is up. She is in the inner hall. »

Walking through the house Jesus goes to the hall which is on the street side. They are in fact all gathered there.

« Let us go. Mother, the Lord be with You. Mary, and with you, and may My peace accompany you. Goodbye, Simon. Take My peace to Salome and the children. »

Jonathan opens the heavy gate. A covered wagon is on the road. The road between the houses is still almost dark and it is completely deserted. The women get in the wagon with their relative and they set out.

« Let us leave at once as well. Andrew, run to the boats and tell the servants to meet us at Tarichea. »

« What? Are we going on foot? We shall be late… »

« It does not matter. You may go ahead while I take leave of Johanna. »

The apostles set out…

« I will follow You, Lord. Or rather: I will precede You because I am coming by boat. »

« You will have to wait for a long time… »

« It does not matter. Let me come. »

« As you wish. Is Chuza here? »

« He did not come home, Lord. »

« Give him My regards and tell him that I exhort him to be just. Caress the children on My behalf. And… since you have understood your Master, convince Chuza that he and all those who want to make a temporal king of the Christ, are in error. »

Jesus also goes out and He soon joins the apostles. « Let us go along the Emmaus road. Many unhappy people go to the springs, some to be cured, some to receive assistance. »

« But we do not have a farthing… » objects James of Zebedee.

Jesus does not reply.

The roads are soon crowded with two very different classes of people, that is, with market-gardeners, vendors, servants, slaves, common people hurrying to the market, and with rich pleasureseekers who in litters or on horseback are also going towards the springs, which I suppose are hot ones, if they are curative.

Tiberias must be really a rather cosmopolitan city because people of various nations can be seen amongst its inhabitants. Romans who have become corpulent through an idle vicious life, smartly dressed Greeks as dissolute as the Romans, but with masks of vice which differ in expression from those of the Latins, people from the Phoenician coast, Hebrews, mainly elder ones, people speaking different languages with different accents, and wearing different clothes, pale faces of sick men and women, or the tired faces of noble women… or the faces of hedonists of both sexes proceeding in groups on horseback near litters or in litters, joking, talking of frivolous subjects, making wagers…

The street is a beautiful one. A shady avenue from which, through the gaps between the trees it is possible to see the lake on one side and the country on the other. The sun which has now risen brightens up the hues of the waters and greenery.

Many people turn round to look at Jesus Who is followed by whispers: admiring words of women, satires of men, at times sneering words or grumbling ones, a few entreaties of suffering people, the only ones, among the many, to whom Jesus listens and whom He satisfies.

When He restores agility to the limbs stiffened by arthritis of a man from Tyre, the ironical indifference of many Gentiles is roused.

« Eh! » exclaims an old Roman with the debauched face of a reveller. « Eh! It is lovely to be cured like that. I will call Him. »

« It is not for you, old Silenus. What would you do in the event that you were cured? »

« I would begin to enjoy myself all over again! »

« In that case there is no sense in going to the sad Nazarene. »

« I will go and I bet everything I have that… »

« Don't bet. You'll lose. »

« Let him wager. He is still drunk. We will have a good time with his money. »

The old man staggers out of his litter and reaches Jesus, Who is listening to a Jewish mother speaking to Him of her daughter, a deadly pale girl whom she is leading by the hand.

« Be not afraid, woman. Your daughter will not die. Go back home. Do not take her to the springs. She would not recover the health of her body there, but she would lose the purity of her soul. It is a place of degrading licentiousness » and He says so in a very loud voice, so that everybody may hear.

« I have faith, Rabbi. I am going back home. Bless Your servants, Master. »

Jesus blesses them and is about to set out.

The Roman plucks His sleeve: « Cure me » he orders.

Jesus looks at him and asks: « Where? »

The Romans, with some Greeks and Phoenicians, have gathered together and are sneering and betting. Some Israelites, who have moved aside grumbling: « Desecration Anathema! » and other similar words, stop, however, inquisitively…

« Where? » asks Jesus.

« Everywhere. I am unwell… oh! oh! oh! » I do not know whether he is laughing or weeping, so strange is the sound passing his lips. It sounds as if the flaccid fat, accumulated in years of vicious living, affects even his vocal chords. The man enumerates his troubles and expresses his fear of dying.

Jesus looks at him severely and replies: « You must in fact fear death because you have killed yourself » and turns His back on

him. The Roman tries to pull Him once again by His clothes, while the people present laugh scornfully. But Jesus frees Himself from the man's grasp and goes away.

« Thumbs down, Appius Fabius! Thumbs down! The so called king of the Jews has not granted you the grace. Give us your purse you lost the bet. » The Greeks and Romans make a terrible din surrounding the disappointed man who pushes them aside and begins to run, as best he can, being so obese, pulling up his clothes and lurching with all his tallowish mass. But he stumbles and falls in the dust amid the guffaws of his friends who drag him towards a tree, against the trunk of which the drunk man presses weeping the silly tears of drunkards.

The springs must be close at hand now because the crowd is becoming larger and larger as people flow from many streets towards the same spot. The smell of sulphurous water stagnates in the air.

« Shall we go down towards the shore to avoid these unclean people? » asks Peter.

« They are not all unclean, Simon. There are many people from Israel as well among them » says Jesus.

They arrive at the thermal baths. A series of white marble buildings, separated by avenues, facing the lake from which they are separated by a kind of large square planted with trees, under which people are taking a walk awaiting a bath or relaxing during its reaction after it. Bronze heads of Medusa, protruding from the wall of a building, pour steaming water into a marble basin, which is white outside and reddish inside, as if it were covered with rusty iron. Many Jews go to the fountains and drink the mineral water out of chalices. I can see Jews only do that in this pavilion believe that I am right in guessing that observant Israelites have demanded a place of their own to avoid contact with Gentiles.

Many sick people are on litters awaiting treatment and seeing Jesus many of them shout: « Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me. »

Jesus turns His steps towards them: people suffering from paralysis, arthritis, ankylosis; with fractured bones which will not knit, or suffering from anaemia, glands, women withered before time, children prematurely adults. And under the trees beggars who moan asking for alms.

Jesus stops near the sick people. The rumor spreads that the Rabbi will speak and cure. People, also those belonging to other races, come close to see.

Jesus looks around. He smiles seeing the Greek sent by Syntyche Corning out of the baths with his hair still wet after a shower. He raises His voice at once to make Himself heard: « Mercy opens the door to grace. Be merciful in order to receive mercy. Every man is

poor in something: some in money, some in affection, some in freedom, some in health. And all men are in need of help from God, Who created the universe and Who, being the only Father, can assist His children. »

He stops, as if He wanted to give people time to make up their minds whether they should come to listen to Him or go to the baths. Most of them forget about the baths. Israelites or Gentiles crowd to listen and some sceptical Romans conceal their curiosity saying jokingly: « We have a rhetor today to make this place resemble Roman thermal baths. »

Zeno, the Greek, elbows his way through the crowd shouting: « By Jove! I was about to go to Tarichea and I find You here! »

Jesus continues: « Yesterday they said to Me: "It is difficult to accomplish what You do". No, it is not difficult. My doctrine is based on love, and love is never difficult to be accomplished. What does My doctrine preach? The cult of a true God, love for our neighbour. Man, the eternal child, is afraid of shadows and follows chimeras because he does not know love. Love is wisdom and light. It is wisdom because it descends to teach. It is light because it comes to enlighten. Where there is light shadows disappear, and where there is wisdom chimeras die. There are Gentiles among those who are listening to Me. They are saying: "Where is God?". They are asking: "Who can assure us that Your God is the true one?". Or: "How can You assure us that You are speaking the truth?". And the Gentiles are not the only ones to say so. Other people ask Me: "With what power do You do these things?". With the power that comes to Me from the Father, from that Father Who has placed everything at the service of man, His favourite creature and Who sends Me to teach men, My brothers. Can the Father, Who gave power to the bowels of the Earth to make spring water medicinal, can He have limited the power of His Christ? And who, which God, but the true God, can grant the Son of man to work miracles which re-create destroyed limbs? In which temple of idols do you ever see blind people recover their sight and paralytics motion, in which temple do dying people, at the command: "I want" of a man, rise healthier than healthy people? Well, I, in order to praise the true God and have Him known and praised by you, I say to all those who are gathered here, whichever their religion and race may be, that they will recover the health which they expected from water, and they will receive it from Me, the living Water, as I give the life of the body and of the spirit to those who believe in Me and I work deeds of mercy with righteous hearts. I do not ask for difficult things. I ask for a motion of faith and one of love. Open your hearts to faith. Open your hearts to love. Give in order to receive. Give poor coins to have help from God. Begin to love your brothers. Learn how to be merciful. Two thirds of you are sick

because they are selfish and lustful. Demolish selfishness, repress just. You will gain physical health and wisdom. Crush pride. And you will receive help from the true God. I ask you to give Me alms for the poor and then I will give you the gift of good health. »

And Jesus raises the hem of His mantle and holds it out to receive the money: the large number of coins which heathens and Israelites hasten to throw into it. And not only coins, but also rings and other jewels are thrown freely by Roman women who look at Jesus when they approach Him and some of them whisper a few words to which Jesus nods assent or replies briefly.

The offering is over. Jesus calls the apostles and tells them to bring the beggars to Him and the whole amount disappears as quickly as it was put together. Some jewels remain and Jesus hands them back to the donors because there is no one who can buy them and thus change them into money. And to comfort the women who offered them He says: « Your desires are as good as accomplished actions. The offerings you made are as precious as if they had been distributed, because God sees the thoughts of men. »

He then stands up and shouts: « From whom does My power come? From the true God. Father, let Your power shine brightly in Your Son. In Your name I give this order to diseases: go away! »

And there is the usual sight which has been seen so often: crippled people stand up straight, paralytics move, faces become healthily coloured, eyes begin to shine, shouting of hosannas, reciprocal congratulations of Romans, among whom two women and a man have been cured and they want to imitate the cured people of Israel; but as they are not yet prepared to humble themselves like the Hebrews by kissing Jesus' feet, they stoop, take the hem of His mantle and kiss it.

Jesus then sets out eluding the crowds. But He cannot evade them because, with the exception of a few stubborn Gentiles and some Hebrews even more guiltily obstinate, they all follow Him along the road to Tarichea.

461. At Tarichea. Galatia, the Sinner.

27th July 1946.

The little peninsula of Tarichea stretches out on the lake forming a deep creek south-westwards, so that it is correct to say that, rather than a peninsula, it is an isthmus almost completely surrounded by water, only a small strip being joined to the mainland. At least it was so in Jesus' days, in which I see it. I do not know whether later, in the course of twenty centuries, sand and pebbles carried by a little torrent which flows just into the southwestern inlet may have altered the aspect of the place, silting up the little bay and widening the strip of land of the isthmus. The bay is calm,

clear blue with jade streaks where it reflects the green trees leaning from the coast towards the lake. Many boats undulate gently on the almost calm water.

What surprises me is a strange dam which, with its arches based on the gravel of the shore, forms a kind of promenade, a pier, I would say, extending westwards. I do not understand whether it is an ornament or whether it was built for some useful purpose of which I am unaware. The promenade, or dam or pier, is covered with a thick layer of earth in which trees have been planted so thickly that, although they are not large ones, they form a green gallery above the road. Many people wander idly under the rustling gallery, which is pleasantly cooled by the breeze, the water and the leafy branches.

One can clearly see the mouth of the Jordan and the water of the lake flowing into the river-bed, forming whirlpools and obstructions near the piers of a bridge, which I would say is a Roman one, judging by its architecture with robust pillars, placed like breakwaters, against the corners of which the current breaks up with a pearly play of light of the spray in the sunshine, while the water forces its way into the deeply embanked gorge of the river, after having so much space in the lake. Almost at the end of the bridge, on the opposite shore, is a little white town spread out in the green fertile country. And farther up, to the north, on the eastern coast of the lake, is the village preceding Hippo and woods high above the cliff, beyond which is Gamala clearly visible on top of the hill.

Jesus, with a train of people who have followed Him from Emmaus and who have increased in numbers with, those already waiting for Him at Tarichea - among whom is Johanna who came by boat - directs His steps towards the dam planted with trees. And He stops in the middle of it, with the lake on His right hand side and the shore on His left. Those who can find room on the shady road stop there, otherwise they go down to the shore, which is still somewhat damp after the high tide of the previous night or for other reasons, and is partly shaded by the leafy branches of the trees on the dam. Other people ask the boatmen to come close to the shore and they sit in the shade of the sails.

Jesus raises His hand indicating that He wants to speak and everybody becomes silent.

« It is written: "You marched to save Your people, to save them through Your Christ". It is written: "And I will rejoice in the Lord and I will exult in God my Jesus". The people of Israel have taken these words for themselves and have given them a national, personal selfish meaning, which does not correspond to the truth concerning the person of the Messiah. They have given those words a restricted meaning which degrades the greatness of the Messianic idea to a common display of human power and of overwhelming

victory over the rulers found by the Christ in Israel.

But the truth is different. It is great, unlimited. It comes from the true God, from the Creator and Lord of Heaven and Earth, from the Creator of Mankind, from Him Who multiplied the stars in the vault of heaven and covered the Earth with all kinds of plants, and peopled it with animals and placed fish in the waters and birds in the air, and likewise He multiplied the children of Man created by Him to be the king of Creation and His favourite creature. Now, how could the Lord, the Father of all mankind, be unfair to the children of the children of the children born of the Man and the Woman, formed by Him with matter: the earth, and with soul: His divine breath? And how could He treat these differently from those, as if they did not come from one only source, as if other branches had been created by some other supernatural antagonist, not by Him, and were consequently strangers, illegitimate, contemptible?

The true God is not a poor god of this or of that people, an idol, an unreal figure. He is the supreme Reality, the universal Reality, the Only Supreme Being, the Creator of all things and of all men. He is therefore the God of all men. He knows them even if they do not know Him. He loves them: even if they, not knowing Him, do not love Him, or if they do not know Him well and they do not love Him well, or even if they know Him, they do not know how to love Him. Paternity does not cease when a son is ignorant, silly or wicked. A father strives to teach his son, because it is love to instruct him. A father works hard to make a mentally deficient son less silly. A father tries to correct a wicked son and make him good with tears, being indulgent, with beneficial punishments and forgiving him mercifully. That is what a man-father does. And will the God-Father be perhaps inferior to the man-father? So the God-Father loves all men and wants their salvation. He, the King of an infinite Kingdom, the eternal King, looks at His people, which comprises all the peoples spread all over the Earth, and He says: "This is the people of those I created, the people to be saved through My Christ. This is the people for whom the Kingdom of Heaven was created. It is now time to save them by means of the Saviour".

Who is the Christ? Who is the Saviour? Who is the Messiah? There are many Greeks here, and many, even if they are not Greeks, know what the word Christ means. Christ is therefore the consecrated person, the person anointed with regal oil to fulfil His mission. Consecrated to what? Perhaps to the fleeting glory of a throne? Perhaps to the greater glory of priesthood? No. He is consecrated to gather under one only sceptre, into one only people, in one only doctrine, all men, so that they may be brothers to one another and children of one only Father, children who know their

Father and comply with His Law to take part in His Kingdom.

Christ, a king in the name of the Father Who sent Him, reigns as it becomes His Nature, that is, divinely, as God. God has placed the world as the foot-stool of His Christ, not because He should oppress, but that He may save. His name is in fact Jesus, which in Hebrew means Saviour. When the Saviour saves His people from the fiercest snare and wound, a mountain will be under His feet and a multitude of people of every race will cover the mountain to symbolise that He reigns and rises above the whole Earth and above all peoples. But the King will be bare without any riches, except His Sacrifice, to symbolise that He tends only to spiritual things, and that spiritual things are conquered and redeemed with spiritual bra-very and heroical sacrifice, not with violence and gold. He will be like that to reply to those who fear Him and also to those who through false love exalt and degrade Him while wishing Him to be king according to the world. He will be like that to those as well who hate Him solely for fear of being deprived of what is dear to them. For His response is that He is a spiritual King and nothing else, sent to teach spirits how to conquer the Kingdom, the only Kingdom that I have come to establish.

I will not give you new laws., I confirm the Law of Sinai for Israelites; to Gentiles I say: the law to possess the Kingdom is nothing but the law of virtue which every man of noble morals imposes on himself and which, through faith in the true God, from moral law and human virtue becomes a superhuman moral law.

O Gentiles! It is your custom to proclaim gods the great men of your countries, and you place them among the many unreal gods with whom you people Olympus, created by you to have something in which to believe, because religion is a necessity for man, exactly as faith is a necessity, because faith is the permanent state of man and incredulity is the accidental abnormality. And those men raised to the rank of gods are not always worthy even as men, as at times they are great because of their brutal strength, at times through powerful cunning, at times also because of the power which they somehow achieved. So they carry with themselves, as qualifications of supermen, certain miseries which a wise man recognises for what they are: the rottenness of unrestrained passions. That I am speaking the truth is proved by the fact that in your chimerical Olympus you have not put a single one of those great spirits who sensed by intuition the supreme Being and were the intermediate agents between man and Divinity, which was instinctively perceived by them through their contemplative virtuous spirit. Between the reasoning spirit of a philosopher, of a true great philosopher, and the spirit of a true believer who worships the true God, the gap is small, whereas between the spirit of the believer and the ego of a cunning or overwhelming man, or of a

man who is a hero only in a material way, there is an abyss. And yet you have not placed in your Olympus those who had been elevated by their virtuous lives so much above the human mass that they approached the kingdoms of the spirit, whereas you have put those whom you feared as cruel masters, or whom you adulated as servile slaves, or you admired as living examples of those free animal instincts which your abnormal appetites consider as the aim and purpose of life. And you have envied those who have been numbered among the gods, neglecting those who were closer to divinity because of their honest practices and of the doctrine, which they taught and according to which they lived virtuously.

I now solemnly tell you that I will give you the means to become gods. He who does what I say and believes in what I teach, will climb the true Olympus and will be god, god son of God, in a Heaven where there is no corruption whatsoever and where Love is the only law. In a Heaven where we love one another spiritually, without the dullness and snares of senses making its inhabitants hostile to one another, as it happens in your religions. I have not come to request deeds which are noisily heroical. I have come to say to you: live as becomes creatures gifted with soul and reason, not as brutes. Live in such a way as to deserve to live, to really live, with your immortal part, in the Kingdom of Him Who created you. I am the Life. I have come to teach you the Way to go to Life. I have come to give Life to you all, and I give it to you that you may rise from death, from your sepulchres of sin and idolatry. I am Mercy. I have come to call you and gather you all together. I am the Christ Saviour. My Kingdom does not belong to this world. And yet a kingdom is established in the hearts of those who believe in Me and in My word, even from the present days, and it is the Kingdom of God, the Kingdom of God within you.

It is written of Me that I am He Who will bring justice among nations. It is true. Because if the citizens of each nation did what I teach, hatred, wars, overbearing actions would come to an end. It is written of Me that I would not raise My voice to curse sinners or My hand to destroy those who are like cracked canes and smoky wicks because of their unbecoming way of living. It is true. I am the Saviour and I have come to strengthen those who are weak, to give humour to those whose light is smoky through lack of the necessary essence. It is written of Me that I am He Who opens the eyes of blind people, and frees prisoners from jail and takes light to those who were in the darkness of prison. It is true. The blindest of blind people are those who cannot see the Light, that is, the true God, even with the sight of their souls. I, the Light of the world, have come that they may see. The most imprisoned prisoners are those whose chains are their wicked passions. Every other chain

vanishes with the death of the prisoner. But the chains of vice last and enchain even after the death of the body. I have come to loosen them. I have come to relieve from the darkness of the dungeons of ignorance of God all those whom paganism smothers under the mass of its idolatries.

Come to Light and to Salvation. Come to Me because My Kingdom is the true one and My Law is good. All I ask of you is to love the Only God and your neighbour, and consequently to repudiate the idols and passions which harden your hearts and make you arid, sensual, thieves, homicides. The world says: "Let us oppress the poor, the weak, the lonely. Let force be our right, harshness our habit, intolerance, hatred, ferocity, our weapons. Let us crush the just man, since he does not react, let us oppress the widow and the orphan whose voices are weak". I say: be kind and meek, forgive your enemies, assist the weak, be honest in selling and purchasing, be generous also when asserting your rights, without taking advantage of your possibility to crush those who are oppressed. Do not avenge yourselves. Leave to God the care of protecting you. Be sober in all your dispositions, because moderation is proof of moral strength, whilst lust is proof of weakness. Be men and not brutes, and never fear of having fallen so low that you cannot rise again.

I solemnly tell you that as muddy water can become pure again evaporating in the sun, which purifies it by heating it, so that it may rise to the sky and fall as beneficial rain or dew, free from defilement, providing it is exposed to the sun, so the spirits which approach the great Light which is God and shout to Him: "I have sinned, I am filth, but I yearn for You, o Light" will become purified spirits which ascend to their Creator. Remove horror from death converting your lives into money to purchase the Life. Divest yourselves of your past as if it were a dirty garment and clothe yourselves with virtue. I am the Word of God and in His Name I tell you that those who have faith in Him and good will, those who repent of their past and make righteous resolutions for the future, whether they are Hebrews or Gentiles, will become the children of God and will possess the Kingdom of Heaven.

At the beginning of My speech I asked you: "Who is the Messiah?". I now say to you: It is I Who am speaking to you and My Kingdom is Your hearts if you are willing to receive it, and then it will be in Heaven, which I will open to you, if you persevere in My Doctrine. That is the Messiah and nothing else. He is the King of a spiritual kingdom, the gates of which He will open to all men of good will through His Sacrifice. »

Jesus has finished speaking and is about to go towards a short flight of stairs which takes one from the dam to the shore. Perhaps He wants to go to Peter's boat which is pitching near a rough

landing-place. But he suddenly turns round, looks at the crowds and shouts: « Who has invoked Me for the spirit and body? »

Nobody replies. He repeats the question and casts His beautiful eyes round at the crowds who have crowded round His back, not only on the road, but also down on the shore. Still no reply.

Matthew remarks: « Master, who knows how many have sighed for You under the emotion of Your words… »

« No. A soul has cried: "Mercy" and I heard it. And to tell you that it is true I reply: "Let it be done to you as you have asked because the motion of your heart is fair". » And tall as He is, He looks wonderful as He stretches His hand imperiously towards the shore.

He tries once again to set out towards the short flight of steps, but Chuza, who has obviously come off a boat, stands in front of Him and greets Him bowing low. « I have been looking for You for many days. I have made the tour of the lake following You all the time, Master. I must speak to You urgently. Be my guest. I have many friends with me. »

« I was at Tiberias yesterday. »

« They told me. But I am not alone. See those boats sailing towards the other shore? There are many in them who want You, including some of Your disciples. Please, come to my house, beyond the Jordan. »

« It is useless, Chuza. I know what you want to tell Me. »

« Come, Lord. »

« Sick people and sinners are waiting for Me; leave Me… »

« We also are waiting for You and we are sick with anxiety for Your welfare. And there are some people who are physically sick, also… »

« Have you heard My words? So why do you insist? »

« Lord, do not reject us, we… »

A woman has elbowed her way through the crowd. I am by now sufficiently familiar with Jewish garments to realise that she is not a Jewess, and I know enough of… decent dresses to understand that she is indecent. But to cover her features and her charms, perhaps too immodest, she has enveloped herself in a veil, which is sky-blue like her wide dress, but still provoking because of its shape which leaves her beautiful arms uncovered. She throws herself on the ground, creeping on the dust until she reaches Jesus' mantle, which she clasps with her fingers, kissing its hem and weeps, sobbing convulsively.

Jesus, Who was about to reply to Chuza saying: « You are wrong and… » casts down His eyes and says: « Was it you who invoked Me? »

« Yes… but I am not worthy of the grace which You granted me. I should not have called You even with my soul. But Your word…

Lord… I am a sinner. If I uncovered my face, many people would tell You my name. I am… a courtesan… an infanticide… and because of my vice I became diseased… I was at Emmaus, I gave You a jewel… You gave it back to me… and Your glance… pierced my heart… I have followed You… You have spoken. I repeated to myself Your words: "I am filth, but I yearn after You, the Light". I said: "Cure my soul, and then, if You wish so, my body". Lord, my body has been cured… and what about my soul?… »

« Your soul has been cured by your repentance. Go and sin no more. Your sins have been remitted. »

The woman kisses the hem of Jesus' mantle once again and stands up. In doing so her veil slips off her face.

« Galatia! Galatia! » shout many and cast contumelies on her, they pick up pebbles and sand and throw them at the woman who stoops frightened.

Jesus raises a hand severely and imposes silence. « Why are you insulting her? You did not do so when she was a sinner. Why do it now when she is redeeming herself? »

« She is doing that because she is old and ill » shout many sneeringly.

Actually, although the woman is no longer very young, she is far from being old and ugly, as they say. But crowds are like that.

« Go ahead of Me and get into that boat. I will take you home along a different way » orders Jesus and He says to His apostles: « Keep her in the middle of you and accompany her. »

The anger of the crowd, instigated by some intolerant Israelites, explodes against Jesus and amidst shouts of: « Anathema! False Christ! Protector of prostitutes! Who protects them, approves of them! Worse! He approves of them because He enjoys them » and similar phrases shouted or rather howled particularly by a small group of Hebrew madmen, I do not know of which caste, amidst such howling, they throw handfuls of damp sand which strikes Jesus on the face soiling it.

He lifts His arms and cleans His cheek without any protest. Not only, but with a gesture He stops Chuza and some other people who would like to react defending Him and He says: « Leave them. I would stand much more for the salvation of a soul! I forgive them! »

Zeno, the man from Antioch, who had never moved away from the Master, exclaims: « Now I really know who You are! A true god and not a false rhetor! The Greek woman told me the truth! Your words at the thermal baths had disappointed Me, but the present ones have conquered me. The miracle amazed me, Your forgiving the offenders has conquered me. Goodbye, Lord. I will think of You and of Your words. »

« Goodbye, man. May the Light enlighten your heart. »

Chuza insists once again while they are going towards the landing-place, and while there is a violent quarrel on the dam between Romans and Greeks on one side and Israelites on the other.

« Come! Only for a few hours. It is necessary. I will bring You back myself. You are kind to prostitutes and do You want to be inflexible with us? »

« All right. I will come. It is in fact necessary… » He addresses the apostles who are already in the boats: « You can go now. I will join you… »

« Are You going alone? » asks Peter who is not very happy.

« I am with Chuza… »

« H'm! And can we not come? Why does he want You with his friends? Why did he not come to Capernaum? »

« We did come. You were not there. »

« You could have waited for us. That's all! »

« Instead we decided to follow your tracks. »

« Come to Capernaum now. Why must the Master come to you? »

« Simon is right » say the other apostles.

« But why do you not want Him to come with me? Is it perhaps the first time that He comes to my house? Do you perhaps not know me? »

« Yes, we know you. But we do not know the others. »

« And of what are you afraid? That I am a friend of the Master's enemies? »

« I know nothing! But I remember the end of John, the prophet! »

« Simon! You are offending me. I am a man of honour. I swear to you that I would let them pierce me through before they dare touch a hair of the Master's head. You must believe me! My sword is at His service… »

« Eh!… If they pierced you… What purpose would it serve? Afterwards… Yes, I believe that, I believe you… But once you are dead, it would be His turn. I prefer my oar, my poor boat to your sword, and above all our simple hearts at His service. »

« But there is Manaen with me. Do you trust Manaen? And there is also Eleazar, the Pharisee, the one you know, and Timoneus, the head of the synagogue, and Nathanael ben Fada. You do not know him, but he is an important leader and he wants to speak to the Master. And there is John, named Antipas from Antipatris, a favourite of Herod the Great, now old and powerful, the owner of the whole valley of Gaash, and… »

« That's enough! You are mentioning great names, but they mean nothing to me, with the exception of two… and I will come as well… »

« No. They want to speak to the Master… »

« They want! And who are they? They want?! And I don't want. Get in the boat, Master, and let us go. I will not hear of anybody, I

won't, I trust no one but myself. Come on, Master. And you can go in peace and tell those people that we are not vagabonds. They know where they can find us » and he pushes Jesus rather coarsely while Chuza protests in a loud voice.

Jesus settles the matter definitely saying: « Be not afraid, Simon. No harm will happen to Me. I know. And it is better that I should go. For My own sake. Try to understand Me… » and He stares at him as if He wanted to say: « Do not insist. Understand Me. There are reasons which advise Me to go. »

Simon yields unwillingly. But he gives in, as if he were subdued… Nevertheless he grumbles between his teeth with a dissatisfied expression.

« Go without worrying, Simon. I will personally bring you back your Lord and mine » promises Chuza.

« When? »

« Tomorrow. »

« Tomorrow?! Does it take so long to exchange a few words? We are now between the third and the sixth hour… If He is not with us before evening, we will come to you, bear that in mind. And we will not be alone… » and he says so in a tone of voice which leaves no doubt about his intentions.

Jesus lays a hand on Peter's shoulder. « I am telling you, Simon, that they will do Me no harm. Bear evidence that you believe in My true nature. I am telling you. I know. They will do Me no harm. They only want to explain things to Me… Go… Take the woman to Tiberias, you may stop at Johanna's, you will thus be able to see that they are not abducting Me with boats and armed men… »

« Right, but I know his house (and he points at Chuza). I know that there is land behind it, it is not an island, there is Galgala and Gamala, Aera, Arbela, Gerasa, Bozrah, Pella and Ramoth and many more towns!… »

« But do not be afraid, I tell you! Be obedient. Give Me a kiss, Simon. Go! And you, too » and He kisses and blesses them. When He sees the boat depart He shouts to them: « It is not My hour. And until that moment, nothing and no one will be able to raise a hand against Me. Goodbye, friends. »

He turns towards Johanna who clearly looks upset and worried and He says to her: « Be not afraid. It is a good thing that this should happen. Go in peace. » And He says to Chuza: « Let us go. To show you that I am not afraid. And to cure you… »

« I am not ill, Lord… »

« You are. I tell you. And many with you. Let us go. »

He gets into the fast rich boat and sits down. The oarsmen begin to row on the calm waters making a detour to avoid the strong current at the end of the lake, where the water flows into the riverbed.

462. In Chuza's Country House. The Tempting Proposal Made to Jesus and Made Known by the Disciple Jesus Loved.

30th July 1946.

On the other shore, at the end of the bridge, a covered wagon is already waiting.

« Get in, Master. You will not get tired although the journey is a long one, because I gave instructions to have yokes of oxen here all the time in order not to give offence to guests more observant of the Law… They are to be pitied… »

« But where are they? »

« They have preceded us in other wagons. Tobit! »

« Master? » says the driver who is yoking the oxen.

« Where are the other guests? »

« Oh! Far ahead. They must almost be at the house. »

« Do You hear that, Master? »

« And if I had not come? »

« Oh! We were certain that You would come. Why should You not have come? »

« Because!! Chuza, I have come to prove to you that I am not a coward. Only wicked people are cowardly, those who are at fault and consequently are afraid of justice… Of the justice of men, unfortunately, whereas they ought to be afraid first of all of the only one, of God's justice. But I am not in the wrong and I am not afraid of men. »

« But Lord! All those who are with me revere You! As I do. And there is no reason whatsoever why we should frighten You! We want to honour You, not to insult You! » Chuza is grieved and almost angry.

Jesus, Who is sitting in front of him, while the wagon proceeds slowly creaking amidst the green countryside, replies: « Rather than the open war of enemies I must fear the underhand one of false friends, or the unjust zeal of true friends who have not yet understood Me. And you are one of them. Do you not remember what I said at Bether? »

« I have understood You, Lord » whispers Chuza, but he is not very sure of himself and does not answer the question directly.

« Yes. You have understood Me. During the wave of sorrow and joy your heart had become as clear as the sky with a rainbow after a storm. And you saw things in a just manner. Then… Turn round, Chuza, and look at our Sea of Galilee. It looked so limpid at dawn! During the night the dew had cleansed the atmosphere and the cold air had mitigated the evaporation of the waters. Sky and lake were two sheets of clear sapphire reflecting their respective beauties, and the hills, all around, were fresh and clean as if God had created them during the night. Look now. The dust of the coastal roads, trodden by people and animals, the heat of the sun,

which makes woods and gardens steam like boilers on a hearth and inflames the lake making its water evaporate, look how they have disturbed the view. The shores previously looked close at hand, so neat they were in the very clear air; but look now… They look dimmed, blurred and seem to be trembling, like objects seen through a veil of impure water. The same has happened to you. Dust: humanity. Sun: pride. Chuza, do not upset yourself… »

Chuza lowers his head, toying mechanically with the ornaments of his robe and with the buckle of his rich sword-belt. Jesus is silent, with His eyes almost closed as if He were sleepy. Chuza respects His sleep or what he thinks is such.

The wagon proceeds slowly south-eastwards, towards the light undulations which form, at least I think so, the first terraces of the tableland that circumscribes the Jordan valley on this eastern side. The country is fertile and beautiful owing to the abundance of underground waters or to some stream; grapes and fruit are hanging on every tree.

The wagon leaves the main road and takes a private one, entering an avenue thick with trees, under which is shade and cool air, at least relatively cool, as compared with the sunny main road which is like a furnace. A low white magnificent looking house is at the end of the avenue. More modest houses are scattered here and there in the fields and vineyards. The wagon crosses a little bridge and a borderline, beyond which the orchard changes into a garden with an avenue strewn with pebbles. Jesus opens His eyes at the different noise of the wheels on the pebbles.

« We have arrived, Master. Here are the guests, who have heard us and are now coming » says Chuza.

And in fact many men, all well off, crowd at the beginning of the avenue and with ostentatious bows greet the Master Who is arriving. I see and recognise Manaen, Timoneus, Eleazar and I think I can see other people, who are not new to me, but whose names I do not know. And there are many more whom I have never seen or at least I have never noticed them particularly. Many are wearing swords, others in the place of swords display the plentiful Pharisaic and priestly or rabbinical furbelows.

The wagon stops and Jesus is the first to get off bowing in a collective greeting. The disciples Manaen and Timoneus move forward and exchange personal greetings with the Master. Then Eleazar (the good Pharisee at the banquet in Ishmael's house) comes forward with two scribes who push through the crowd to make themselves known. One is the man whose son was cured at Tarichea on the day of the first multiplication of loaves, and the other offered food to everybody at the foot of the mountain of beatitudes. And another man pushes his way through: the Pharisee, who in Joseph's house, at harvest time, was instructed

by Jesus on the real reason for his unjust jealousy.

Chuza proceeds with introductions which I will omit for the benefit of everybody. Because one would lose one's head with all the Simons, Johns, Levis, Eleazars, Nathanaels, Josephs, Philips and so forth; Sadducees, scribes, priests, Herodians mostly, nay I would say that the Herodians are the most numerous, a few proselytes and Pharisees, two members of the Sanhedrin and four heads of synagogues and one Essene, who got in here I know not how.

Jesus bows at each name, casting a sharp glance at each face, and at times smiling gently when someone, to be more clearly identified, mentions the circumstances of a previous contact with Jesus.

Thus a Joachim from Bozrah says: « My wife Mary was cured by You of leprosy. May You be blessed. »

And the Essene says: « I heard You when You spoke near Jericho and one of our brothers left the shores of the Salt Sea to follow You. And I also heard of You with regard to the miracle for Elisha of Engedi. We also live in that part of the country, awaiting… »

What they are awaiting I do not know. But I know that while saying so the Essene looks with a rather elated superior air at the others who certainly do not pose as mystics, as most of them seem to enjoy merrily the wealth which their positions afford them.

Chuza takes his Guest away from the ceremonial greetings and leads Him to a comfortable bathroom where He leaves Him to the customary ablutions, certainly pleasing in so much heat, and he goes back to his guests, with whom he talks animatedly, in fact they almost come to an altercation, because of their different opinions. Some want to start the conversation at once. Which? Some instead suggest that the Master should not be assailed immediately but that He should be persuaded beforehand of their deep respect. The latter suggestion prevails as it is supported by the majority and Chuza, the landlord, calls some servants to order a banquet for the evening, leaving time to Jesus, « Who is tired, as everybody can see, to rest. » This decision is accepted by everybody, and in fact when Jesus appears, all the guests take their leave bowing low, leaving Him with Chuza, who takes Him to a shady room where there is a low couch covered with rich rugs.

But Jesus, Who has been left all alone after He handed a servant His sandals and tunic so that they might be brushed and tidied after the journey of the previous day, does not sleep. Sitting on the edge of the couch, His bare feet on the floor-mat, a short tunic or vest covering His body as far as His elbows and knees, He is engrossed in thought. And if His scanty attire makes Him look younger in the splendid perfect harmony of His virile body, the intensity of His thoughts, which are certainly not joyful, wrinkle

and contract His face in a painful expression of tiredness, which makes Him look older.

There is no noise in the house, and there is nobody in the country, where the grapes are ripening in the oppressive heat. The dark curtains hanging at doors and windows are motionless.

Hours pass thus… Twilight increases as the sun sets. But the heat persists. And Jesus' meditation persists as well.

At last the house appears to be awaking. One can hear voices, shuffling of feet, orders.

Chuza slowly moves the curtain aside to see without disturbing.

« Come in! I am not sleeping » says Jesus.

Chuza goes in: he is already wearing a trimmed robe for the banquet. He looks and realises that the couch shows no sign that anyone has lain on it. « Have You not slept? Why? You are tired… »

« I have rested in the silence and the shade. It is enough for Me. »

« I will have a tunic brought to You… »

« No. Mine is certainly dry. I prefer it. I intend to leave as soon as the banquet is over. I beg you to have a wagon and boat ready for Me. »

« As You wish, Lord I would have liked to keep You here until dawn tomorrow… »

« I cannot. I must go… »

Chuza goes out bowing… I can hear many people talk in low voices…

More time passes. The servant comes back with the linen garment, which has just been washed, sweet-smelling of sunshine, and with the sandals, which have been brushed and softened with oil or fat, and are thus shiny and flexible. Another servant follows him with a basin, an amphora and some towels and he leaves everything on a low table. They go out…

… Jesus joins the guests in the hall that divides the house from north to south, forming a pleasantly ventilated room, provided with seats and adorned with light variegated curtains, which modify the light without interfering with the air. As they are now drawn, one can see the green border surrounding the house.

Jesus is imposing. Although He has not slept, He seems to be full of energy and His gait is as majestic as a king's. The linen garment, which He has just put on, is snow-white and His hair, bright after the bath in the morning, shines gently framing His face with its golden hue.

« Come, Master. We were waiting for You only » says Chuza and leads Him before everybody into the room where the tables are laid.

They sit down after the thanksgiving prayer and a supplementary ablution of hands, and dinner begins, as pompous as usual, in silence at first. Then the ice is broken.

Jesus is near Chuza and Manaen is on the other side with Timoneus as companion. The others have been placed by Chuza, with the experience of a courtier, on the sides of the U-shaped table. The Essene only has obstinately refused to take part in the banquet and sit at the table with the others, and only when a servant, on instructions from Chuza, offers him a precious basket full of fruit, he agrees to sit at a low table, after I do not know how many ablutions, and after rolling up the wide sleeves of his white tunic lest he should stain them, or for some rite, I do not know.

It is a strange banquet as they communicate with one another by means of glances rather than by words. They only exchange few words of courtesy and scrutinise one another, that is, Jesus studies His fellow-guests and is studied by them.

At the end Chuza beckons to the servants to withdraw after laying on the table large trays of fruit, which is fresh and cool having probably been kept in a well, and is really beautiful, I would say that it is almost frozen as it is covered with that kind of hoar-frost that is typical of fruit kept in ice-boxes. The servants go out after lighting also the lamps, which are at present not required as it is still clear in the long summer sunset.

« Master » begins Chuza « You must have wondered why we held this meeting and why we have been so silent. But what we have to tell You is very grave and is not to be heard by imprudent ears. We are now alone and we can speak. As You can see, all the people present have the greatest respect for You. You are among men who venerate You as Man and as Messiah. Your justice, Your wisdom, the gifts of which God has made You master, are known and admired by us. You are for us the Messiah of Israel. Messiah according to the spiritual idea and the political one. You are the Expected One who will put an end to the grief and dejection of a whole population. And not only of this people within the borders of Israel, or rather, of Palestine, but of the People of all Israel, of the countless colonies of the Diaspora, spread all over the Earth, which make the Name of Jehovah resound under every sky and make known the promises and hopes, which are now being fulfilled, of a Restorer Messiah, of a Revenger, of a Liberator and creator of true independence and of the Fatherland Israel, that is, of the greatest Fatherland in the world, the Fatherland, queen and ruler, which will cancel all remembrance of the past and every existing sign of servitude, Hebraism triumphing over everybody and everything, and for ever, because that was said and that is being accomplished. Lord, You have here, before You, all Israel in the representatives of the several classes of this eternal people, Punished but beloved by the Most High Who proclaims it "His". You have the pulsating wholesome heart of Israel with the members of the Sanhedrin and the priests, You have power and

holiness with Pharisees and Sadducees, You have wisdom with scribes and rabbis, You have politics and value with Herodians, You have wealth with rich people, the population with merchants and landowners, You have the Diaspora with proselytes, You have even those who are separated, as they are now inclined to become united since they see in You the Expected One: the Essenes, the unreachable Essenes. Look, o Lord, at this first wonder, at this great sign of Your mission, of the truth concerning You. Without violence, without means, without ministers, without troops, without swords, You are gathering together all Your people, as a reservoir collects the waters of countless springs. Almost without any word, without whatever imposition You have gathered us, a people divided by misfortunes, by hatred, by political and religious ideas, and You have reconciled us. O Prince of Peace, rejoice at having redeemed and restored even before assuming sceptre and crown. Your kingdom, the expected Kingdom of Israel, has begun. Our wealth, our power, our swords are at Your feet. Speak! Order! The hour has come. »

Everybody approves of Chuza's speech. Jesus, His arms folded on His chest, is silent.

« Are You not speaking? Are You not replying, Lord? You are perhaps amazed at the situation… Perhaps You feel unprepared and You doubt above all whether Israel is prepared… But it is not so. Listen to our voices. I am speaking, and Manaen with me, with regard to the Court. It no longer deserves to exist. It is the rotten disgrace of Israel. It is shameful tyranny which oppresses the people and stoops servilely to flatter the usurper. Its hour has come. Rise, o Star of Jacob, and dispel the darkness of that chorus of crimes and shame. Here are present those who are called Herodians: they are the enemies of the profaners of the name of the Herods, which is sacred to them. My friends, it is for you to speak now. »

« Master. I am old and I remember the splendour of days gone by. To call the degenerate descendants of Herod after him, is like calling a stinking carrion after a hero, so much are they disgracing our people. It is time to repeat the gesture made several times by Israel when unworthy monarchs reigned over the suffering people. You alone are worthy of accomplishing such gesture. »

Jesus is silent.

« Master, do You think that we can possibly be doubtful? We have scrutinised the Scriptures. You are the promised one. You must reign » says a scribe.

« You must be King and Priest. A second Nehemiah, greater than the first one, You must come and purify. The altar is desecrated. May the zeal of the Most High urge You » says a priest.

« Many of us have fought against You. Those who are afraid of

Your wise manner of reigning. But the people is with You and the best of us are with the people. We are in need of a wise man. »

« We need a pure man. »

« A true king. »

« A saint. »

« A Redeemer. We are more and more enslaved to everything and to everybody. Defend us, Lord! »

« We are trodden down in the world because although we are great in number and wealth, we are like sheep without a shepherd. Rally Your people with the old cry: "Return to your tents, Israel!", and from every spot of the Diaspora Your subjects will spring up like a lever, overthrowing the tottering thrones of the mighty ones who are not loved by God. »

Jesus is still silent. He is the only one to be sitting calmly, as if the matter did not concern Him, in the middle of about forty hotheaded men, of whose arguments I can grasp only a tiny part as they are all speaking at the same time making a terrible din. He maintains His attitude and remains silent.

They all shout: « Say a word! Answer! »

Jesus stands up slowly, pushing His hands on the edge of the table. There is dead silence. While eighty eyes aflame with curiosity stare at Him, He opens His lips and the others do likewise, as if they wanted to inhale His reply. And the reply is short, but resolute: « No. »

« What? Why? Are You betraying us? You are betraying Your people! He is disowning His mission! He is repudiating God's order! … » What a hullabaloo! What an uproar! Many faces become crimson while eyes are inflamed and hands are agitated threateningly… Rather than loyal supporters they look like enemies. But such is life: when hearts are dominated by political ideas, also meek people become like wild animals against anyone opposing their ideas.

A strange silence follows the uproar. It looks as if, having exhausted their strength, they all feel worn out and overwhelmed. They look at one another inquisitively, desolately… some are upset…

Jesus looks around and says: « I knew that this was the reason why you wanted Me. And I knew that your attempt was useless. Chuza can confirm that I told him at Tarichea. I came to prove to You that I am not afraid of any deceit, because My hour has not come yet. Neither will I be afraid when the ambush against Me takes place, because I came just for that. And I came to convince you. Not everybody, but many of you are in good faith. But I must correct the error into which you have fallen in good faith. See? I do not reproach you. I do not reproach anybody, not even those, who being My faithful disciples, ought to act with justice and control

their passions with justice. I do not reproach you, My just Timoneus; but I tell you that at the bottom of your love that is anxious to honour Me there is still your ego that is excited and dreams of better days, when you may see those struck who struck you. I do not reproach you, Manaen, although you appear to have forgotten the wisdom and the completely spiritual examples you had from Me and from the Baptist before Me; but I say that in you as well there is a root of humanity which flourishes again after the ardour of My love. I do not reproach you, Eleazar, so just because of the old woman left to you, always just, but not now; neither do I reproach you, Chuza, although I ought to, because in you, more than in all those who want Me to be king in good faith, is your ego alive. Yes, you want Me to be king. There is no deceit in what you say. You have not come to catch Me out, to denounce Me to the Sanhedrin, to the King, to Rome. But rather than out of love - you think that everything is love but it is not so - rather than out of love you are acting to avenge yourself for the offences given to you by the court. I am your guest. I should not mention the truth concerning your feelings, but I am the Truth in everything, and I am speaking for your own good. And the same applies to you, Joachim of Bozrah, and to you, scribe John, and to you, to you, to you. » And He points at this one and that one, without resentment, but with sadness… and He continues: « I do not reproach you, because I know that you do not want this, spontaneously. It is Deceit, it is the Enemy who is working in you, and you are, without being aware of it, entirely dominated by him. Also of your love, o Timoneus, o Manaen, o Joachim, and you all who really love Me, also of your veneration, you who feel that I am the perfect Rabbi, also of all that, he, the Cursed One, makes use to harm people and to harm Me. But I say to you, and to those who do not share your feelings and, with aims which sink lower and lower, to the extent of becoming treason and crime, would like Me to agree to become king, I say: No. My Kingdom is not of this world. Come to Me, that I may establish My Kingdom in you, and nothing else. And now let Me go. »

« No, Lord. We are quite determined. We have already made our wealth available, we have prepared plans and decided to get out of this uncertainty, which is upsetting Israel, and of which other people are taking advantage to harm Israel. Snares are being laid for You, that is true. You have enemies in the very Temple. I, an Elder, do not deny it. But there is means to put an end to that: Your unction. And we are willing to do that. It is not the first time that in Israel a man is proclaimed king thus, to put an end to national calamities and contentions. There is here who can do that in the name of God. Let us do so » says one of the priests.

« No. It is not lawful. You do not have such authority. »

« The High Priest is the first to want that, contrary to appearances. He can no longer allow the present situation of Roman rule and royal scandal. »

« Do not lie, priest. Blasphemy is twice impure on your lips. Perhaps you do not know and you are deceived. But in the Temple they do not want that. »

« Do You consider our assertion to be a false one? »

« Yes, I do. If not of all of you, of many among you. Do not lie. I am the Light and I enlighten hearts… »

« You can believe us » shout the Herodians. « We do not like Herod Antipas or anybody else. »

« No. You love no one but yourselves. That is true. And you cannot love Me. I would be used as a lever to overthrow the throne and thus open for you the way to greater power and to let you oppress the people more sorely. A deceit for Me, for the people and for yourselves. Rome would crush everybody after your crushing. »

« Lord, among the colonies of the Diaspora there are many ready to rise… our wealth will support them » say the proselytes.

« And mine and the full support of Hauran and Trachonitis » shouts the man from Bozrah. « I know what I am saying. Our mountains can keep an army free from snares, and then launch it like a flock of eagles at Your service. »

« Perea as well. »

« And Gaulanitis. »

« The valley of Gaash is with You! »

« And with You are the shores of the Salt Sea with the nomads who believe that we are gods, if You agree to join us » shouts the Essene and he continues with a long-winded harangue typical of hot-headed people, but his words are lost in the uproar.

« The mountaineers of Judaea belong to the race of strong kings. »

« And those of High Galilee are heroes of the same temperament as Deborah. Also women, even children are heroes! »

« Do You think we are too few? We form numerous troops. All the population is with You. You are the king of the stock of David, the Messiah! This is the cry on the lips of wise and of ignorant people, because it is the cry, of their hearts. Your miracles… and Your words… The signs… » The confusion is such that I cannot follow what they say.

Jesus, like a Solid rock in a windstorm, does not move, He does not even react. He is impassive. And the confusion of prayers, impositions, reasons, goes on.

« You are disappointing us! Why do You want our ruin? Do You want to do it by Yourself? You cannot. Mattathias Maccabee did not refuse the help of the Hasidaeans and Judas freed Israel with their assistance… Accept!!! » Now and again they all shout this word together.

Jesus does not yield.

One of the Elders, a very old man, talks in a low voice to a priest and a scribe, both older than he is. They come forward and impose silence. The old scribe, who has called near him also Eleazar and the two scribes named John, begins to speak: « Lord, why will You not put on the crown of Israel? »

« Because it is not Mine. I am not the son of a Hebrew prince. »

« Lord, perhaps You do not know. One day I was summoned with these two because three Wise Men had come asking where was He Who was born king of the Jews. See? "Born king". We, the chief priests and scribes of the people, were summoned by Herod the Great, to give the reply. And Hillel the Just was with us. Our answer was: "at Bethlehem in Judah". We are told that You were born there and great signs occurred at Your birth. Among Your disciples are some witnesses of them. Can You deny that You were worshipped as King by the three Wise Men? »

« I do not deny it. »

« Can You deny that miracles precede You, accompany You and follow You as a sign from Heaven? »

« I do not deny it. »

« Can You deny that You are the promised Messiah? »

« I do not deny it. »

« Well then, in the name of the living God, why do You want to deceive the hopes of the people? »

« I have come to accomplish the hopes of God. »

« Which? »

« The redemption of the world, the formation of the Kingdom of God. My Kingdom is not of this world. Lay aside your wealth and your weapons. Open your eyes and spirits to read the Scriptures and Prophets and to receive My Truth and you will have the Kingdom of God within you. »

« No. The Scriptures mention a King liberator. »

« From satanic slavery, from sin, from error, from the flesh, from Gentilism, from idolatry. Oh! what did Satan do to you, o Hebrews, wise people, to make you fall into error concerning the prophetic truths? What is he doing to you, o Hebrews, My brothers, to make you so blind? What is he doing to you, My disciples, that you, as well, no longer understand? The greatest misfortune of a people and of a believer is to fall into false interpretation of signs. And such misfortune is taking place now. Personal interests, prejudice, craziness, false love of the fatherland, everything helps to create the abyss… the abyss of error in which a people will perish failing to recognise its King. ».

« You are failing to recognise Yourself. »

« You are failing to recognise yourselves and Me. I am not a human king. And you… Three quarters of you who are gathered

here, want to harm Me, not to help Me, and you are aware of that. You are acting out of hatred, not out of love. But I forgive you. I say to honest-hearted people: "Come to your senses, do not be the unconscious servants of evil". Let Me go. There is nothing further to be said. »

They all become silent, greatly surprised…

Eleazar says: « I am not hostile to You. I thought I was doing the right thing. And I am not the only one… Some good friends think as I do. »

« I know. But tell Me, and be sincere: what does Gamaliel say? »

« The rabbi?… He says… Yes, he says: "The Most High will give the sign if He is His Christ". »

« He is right. And what does Joseph the Elder say? »

« That You are the Son of God and will reign as God. »

« Joseph is a just man. And Lazarus of Bethany? »

« He suffers… He does not say much… But he says… that You will reign only when our spirits receive You. »

« Lazarus is wise. When your spirits receive Me. For the time being you, as well as those whom I considered to be well disposed spirits, are not accepting the King and the Kingdom, and that is what grieves Me. »

« In brief, are You going to refuse? » shout many. « You have said it. »

« You have made us compromise ourselves, You are harming us, You… » shout others: Herodians, scribes, Pharisees, Sadducees, priests…

Jesus leaves the table and goes towards the group darting glances at them. What flashing eyes! They unintentionally become silent and press against the wall… Jesus goes really face to face with them and in a low voice, but with incisiveness cutting like a slash, He says: « It is written: "A curse on him who strikes down his neighbour in secret and accepts a bribe to take an innocent life". I say to you: I forgive you. But your sin is known to the Son of man. If I did not forgive you… Many people in Israel were incinerated by Jehovah for much less. » But He is so terrible in saying so, that no one dare move, and Jesus moves aside the double heavy curtain and goes out into the hall without anyone daring to make a gesture.

Only when the curtain stops waving, that is, after a few minutes, they rouse.

« We must reach Him… We must hold Him… » say the most enraged ones.

« We must get Him to forgive us » say with a sigh the better ones, that is, Manaen, Timoneus, some proselytes, the man from Bozrah, in brief, the honest-hearted ones.

They rush out of the room. They look for Him, they ask the servants:

« The Master, where is He? »

The Master? No one has seen Him, not even those who were at the two doors in the hall. He is nowhere… With torches and lamps they search for Him in the shadows of the garden, in the room where He had rested. He is not there, neither can they find the mantle He had left on the bed, or the bag which had been left in the hall…

« He has escaped from us! He is a Satan! No. He is God. He does what He likes. He will betray us! No. He will know us for what we are. » The clamour of different opinions and reciprocal insults. The good ones shout: « You have led us astray. Traitors! We should have imagined all this! » The wicked ones, that is, the majority, reply threateningly, and having lost the scapegoat and thus being unable to assail it, the two groups fight against each other…

And where is Jesus? I see Him, of His own accord, when He is very far away, near the bridge across the inlet of the Jordan. He is walking fast, as if He were carried by the wind. His hair is waving round His pale face and His mantle is flapping like a sail as He walks with vigorous strides. Then, when He is sure that He is at a good distance, He plunges into the bog grass near the shore and takes the eastern bank and as soon as He finds the first rocks of the high cliff, He begins to climb up, heedless of the danger in climbing the cliffy coast in faint light. He climbs up as far as a rock jutting out over the lake and watched over by an age-old oak-tree. He sits down there, He rests an elbow on one of His knees and His chin in the palm of His hand, and staring with His eyes at the darkening vast expanse, just visible mainly because of His white garments and the pallor of His face, He keeps still…

But someone has followed Him: John. John is half-naked, that is, he is wearing the short tunic of fishermen, his hair is stiff and smooth as is typical of people who have been in water, he is panting and nevertheless wan. He approaches his Jesus slowly: he seems a shadow sliding on the rugged cliff. He stops not very far away. He watches Jesus… He does not move. He looks like a rock fixed to the rock. His dark tunic makes him even more inconspicuous: only his face and bare legs and arms can just be seen in the darkness of the night.

But when he hears, rather than sees Jesus weep, he can resist no longer and he approaches Him and then calls Him: « Master! »

Jesus hears the whisper and looks up: He gathers His clothes ready to flee.

But John shouts: « What have they done to You, Master, that You no longer recognise John? »

And Jesus recognises His Beloved. He stretches out His arms and John throws himself into them and they both weep over two different sorrows and one only love.

When their weeping subsides Jesus is the first to see things clearly. He feels and sees John half-naked, with a damp tunic, frozen and barefooted. « How come you are here in this state? Why are you not with the others? »

« Oh! Don't scold me, Master. I could not stay… I could not let You go… I took my clothes off, everything except this, I dived into the lake and I swam back to Tarichea, and from there I ran along the shore to the bridge and then I followed You. I remained in the ditch near the house, ready to come to help You, or at least to know whether they abducted or harmed You. And I heard many voices quarrelling, then I saw You run past me. You looked like an angel. To follow You without losing sight of You I fell into ditches and bogs and I am all covered in mud. I must have soiled Your mantle… I have been watching You since You came here… Were You weeping?… What have they done to You, my Lord? Did they insult You? Did they strike You? »

« No. They wanted to make Me king. A poor king, John! And many were in good faith, they were acting out of love, for a good purpose… Most of them… to be able to denounce Me and get rid of Me… »

« Who are they? »

« Do not ask. »

« And the others? »

« Do not ask their names either. You must not hate or criticise… I forgive… »

« Master… were there any disciples?… Tell me just that. »

« Yes, there were. »

« And apostles? »

« No, John. No apostle. »

« Really, Lord? »

« Really, John. »

« Ah! May the Lord be praised for that… But why are You still weeping, Lord? I am with You. I love You on behalf of everybody. And also Peter, Andrew and the others… When they saw me dive into the lake they said that I was mad and Peter was furious, and my brother said that I wanted to get drowned in the whirlpools. But later they understood and they shouted to me: "May God be with you. Go. Go… We love You. But no one loves You as much as I do, although I am only a poor boy. »

« Yes. No one like you. You are cold, John! Come here, under My mantle… »

« No, at Your feet, thus… My Master! Why does everybody not love You as much as the poor boy who is I? »

Jesus draws him upon His heart, sitting beside him. « Because they do not have your heart of a child… »

« They wanted to make You king? But have they not understood

yet that Your Kingdom is not of this Earth? »

« They have not understood! »

« Without mentioning any names, tell me all about it, Lord… »

« But will you not tell what I tell you? »

«If You do not want, Lord, I will not mention it… »

« You will make no mention of it, except when men want to present me as a common popular leader. That will happen one day. You will be there and you shall say: "He was not a king of the Earth because He did not want to be one. Because His Kingdom was not of this world. He was the Son of God, the Incarnate Word, and He could not accept what belongs to the earth. He wanted to come into the world and take a body to redeem bodies and souls and the world, but He was not subjected to the pomp of the world or to the incentives of sin, and there was nothing sensual and worldly in Him. The Light was not enveloped in Darkness, the Infinite did not accept finite things, but of creatures limited by flesh and sin, He made creatures more like Himself by elevating those who believed in Him to true royalty, and founding His Kingdom in the hearts of men, before founding it in Heaven, where it will be complete and eternal with all those who have been saved". You shall say that, John, to all those who consider Me entirely a human being and to those who maintain that I am entirely spiritual, to those who deny that I was subject to temptation… and to grief… You shall tell men that the Redeemer wept… and that they, men, were redeemed also by My tears… »

« Yes, Lord. How much You are suffering, Jesus!… »

« How much I redeem! But you console Me in My suffering. We shall depart from here at dawn. We shall find a boat. If I say to you that we shall be able to proceed without oars, will you believe Me? »

«I would believe You even if You said that we can go without a boat… »

They remain embraced, enveloped only in Jesus' mantle, and John, tired as he is, ends up by falling asleep in the warmth, like a child in its mother's arms.

31st July 1946.

Jesus says:

« It is for upright-hearted people that this evangelical page, unknown and so explanatory, is given. John, when writing his Gospel after many years, alludes briefly to the fact. He reveals to men this detail, of which they were unaware, and he thus obeys the wish of his Master, Whose divine nature he illustrates more clearly than any other evangelist, and he reveals it with the virginal demureness which enveloped all his actions and words with discreet humble modesty.

John, to whom I confided the gravest events of My life, never made any pretentious displays of My favours. On the contrary, if you read him properly, you will see that he seems to suffer in revealing them and to say: "I must say this because it is true and it exalts my Lord, but please forgive me if I have to appear as being the only one aware of it" and he concisely mentions the detail known to him alone.

Read the first chapter of his Gospel, in which he tells of his meeting with Me: "John the Baptist was once again with two of his disciples… Hearing this, the two disciples… Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter, was one of the two who had heard the words of John and had followed Jesus. The first to be met by Andrew… He makes no mention of himself, on the contrary he hides behind Andrew, whom he brings into prominence.

He was with Me at Cana, and he says: "Jesus was with His disciples… and His disciples believed in Him". It was the others who were in need to believe. He already believed. But he puts himself with the others, as if he needed to see miracles in order to believe.

Although he was a witness to the first expulsion of dealers from the Temple, to the discourse with Nicodemus, to the episode of the Samaritan woman, he never says: "I was there", but he maintains the policy he had adopted at Cana and says: "His disciples" also when he was alone or with another companion. And he continues thus, never mentioning his name, always putting his companions forward, as if he had not been the most faithful, the always faithful and perfectly faithful disciple.

Remember how delicately he refers to the episode of the Last Supper, as it shows that he was the favourite and was recognised as such also by the others who apply to him when they want to be informed of the secrets of the Master: "So the disciples began to look at one another wondering which He meant. One of the disciples, the one Jesus loved, was leaning on His breast. Simon Peter signed to him and asked: 'To whom is He referring?'. And he, leaning as he was on Jesus' breast, asked Him: 'Who is it, Lord?'".

Neither does he mention his name as being called into Gethsemane with Peter and James. He does not even say: "I followed the Lord". He says: "Simon Peter and another disciple followed Him, and as this disciple was known to the high Priest, he went with Jesus into the high Priest's palace". Without John I would not have had the comfort of seeing him and Peter during the first hours after I had been captured. But John does not boast about it.

One of the main personages during the hours of My Passion, the only apostle to be lovingly, pitifully, heroically present near the Christ, near His Mother, in front of the unchecked fury of Jerusalem, he leaves out his name also in the outstanding episode of the

Crucifixion and of the words of the Dying Christ: "Woman, this is Your son", "This is your mother". He is the "disciple", the nameless one, with no other name but the one which is his glory after being his vocation: "the disciple".

Even after the honour of becoming the "son" of the Mother of God he does not become elated and describing the Resurrection he says once again: "Peter and the other apostle (who had been informed by Mary of Lazarus of the empty tomb) came out and went… They ran… but the other disciple ran faster than Peter and arrived first, and he bent down and saw… but did not go in… A gesture of gentle humility! He, the favourite, the faithful disciple, lets Peter, the chief, although a cowardly sinner, enter first. He does not judge him. He is his Pontiff. Nay, he supports him with his holiness, because also "chiefs" may need, they do actually need subjects to support them.

How many subjects are better than their "chiefs"! O holy subjects, never refuse to be pitiful towards your "chiefs", who bend under the weight which they cannot bear, or who are made blind or inebriated by the vanity of honours. O holy subjects, be the Simons of Cyrene for your Superiors, and you, too, My little John, because I am speaking to you on behalf of everybody, of all the "Johns" who run ahead and lead the "Peters", and then stop letting them go in, out of respect for their office, and who - oh! what a masterpiece of humility! - in order not to mortify the "Peters" who, are not capable of understanding and believing, go as far as to appear and make people believe that they also are as dull and incredulous as the "Peters".

Read the last episode on the lake of Tiberias. Once again it is John who, repeating the gesture made several times, recognises the Lord in the Man standing on the shore, and after sharing the food together, in Peter's question: "And what about him?", he is still "the disciple", nothing else.

He humbles himself in everything concerning him. But when there is something to be said which may make the Incarnate Word of God shine with a brighter and brighter divine light, then John lifts the veils and reveals a secret.

In the sixth chapter of his Gospel he says: "When He realised that they wanted to abduct Him to make Him king, He escaped back to the hill by Himself". And that hour in the life of the Christ is made known to believers so that they may know that the Christ was subjected to manifold and complex temptations and struggles in His several distinctive features of Man, Master, Messiah, Redeemer, King and that men and Satan - the eternal instigator of men - spared the Christ no deceit to diminish, demolish and destroy Him. Satanic and human wickedness assailed the Man, the Eternal Priest, the Master as well as the Lord, disguised with

pretexts most acceptable as good ones and they teased and tempted all the passions of the citizen, of the patriot, of the son, of the man, to find a weak spot upon which they might act.

Oh! My children, who ponder only on the initial temptation and the last one, and consider only the last part of My work of Redeemer to be "fatigue", and only My last hours to be grievous, and My last experience bitter and disappointing, take My place for an hour, and imagine that it is to you that they propose peace with compatriots, their help, the possibility of accomplishing the necessary purifications to impart sanctity to your beloved Country, the possibility of restoring and gathering together the scattered limbs of Israel, to put an end to sorrow, serfdom and sacrilege. And I do not mean: replace Me, thinking that you have been offered a crown. I only ask you to have My Heart of Man for one hour and tell Me: how would you feel after the alluring proposal? Triumphers faithful to the divine Idea, or rather defeated? And would you come out of it more holy and spiritual than ever, or would you destroy yourselves by assenting to temptation or yielding to threats? And with what heart would you come out of it, after verifying to what extent Satan urged his armies to wound Me in My mission and in My affections, leading astray, on the wrong way, My good disciples and compelling Me to openly fight My enemies, by now unmasked and made furious by the fact that their plots had been found out?

Do not stand with compasses and small measuring vessels, with microscope and human science, with pedantic reasoning of scribes trying to measure, compare and discuss whether John has spoken the truth and to what extent this or that is true. Do not superimpose John's sentence on the episode shown yesterday to ascertain whether the outlines fit properly. John did not make a mistake out of senile weakness, neither did little John make a mistake out of weakness in illness. The latter related what she saw. Great John, many years after the event told what he knew and subtly linking together places and events he revealed tile secret, of which he alone was aware, of the attempt perpetrated maliciously at the incoronation of the Christ.

At Tarichea, after the first miracle of the loaves, the people began to think of making the Rabbi from Nazareth king of Israel. Manaen, the scribe and many more people were present and as they were still spiritually imperfect but honest-hearted, they picked up the idea and supported it to honour the Master, to put an end to the unfair fight against Him, owing to an error in interpreting the Scriptures, an error spread all over Israel blinded with dreams of human regality. They also hoped to sanctify the Fatherland contaminated by many things.

And many, as was natural, welcomed the idea in a simple manner.

And many pretended underhand to welcome it in order to harm Me. Hatred against Me joined the latter together, making them forget their hatred of castes which had always divided them, and they entered into an alliance to tempt Me in order to give a legal appearance to the crime already settled in their hearts. They were hoping in My weakness and in My pride. And My pride and weakness, and My consequent acceptance of the crown they offered Me, would justify the charges they wanted to bring against Me. And later… And later they would serve to give peace to their sly spirits feeling remorse, because they would say to themselves, hoping to be able to believe it: "It was Rome, not us, who punished the Nazarene agitator". The legal elimination of their Enemy, such was the Saviour to them…

Those are the reasons for the attempted proclamation. That is the explanation of their subsequent more bitter hatred. And that, finally, is the sublime lesson of the Christ. Do you understand it? It is a lesson of humility, of justice, of obedience, of strength, of prudence, of loyalty, of forgiveness, of patience, of vigilance, of endurance, towards God, towards one's mission, towards friends, towards day-dreamers, towards enemies, towards Satan, towards those men who are his instruments of temptation, towards things, towards ideas. Everything is to be contemplated, accepted, rejected, loved or not loved, looking at the holy aim of man: Heaven, the Will of God.

Little John. This has been one of Satan's hours for Me. As the Christ had them so, will the little Christs have them. One must suffer them and overcome them with humility and confidence. They are not without a purpose. And a good purpose. But be not afraid. During such hours God does not forsake, but He supports those who are faithful. Then Love descends to make the faithful ones kings. And even more, when the hour of the Earth is over, the faithful ones ascend to the Kingdom, in peace for ever, victorious for ever…

My peace, little John, crowned with thorns… My peace… »

463. At Bethsaida and Capernaum. Departure on a New Journey.

1st August 1946.

« Steer the boat towards Bethsaida » orders Jesus Who is with John in a little boat, a real nutshell, in the middle of the lake, which is becoming clear as day breaks.

John obeys without speaking. A rather strong breeze fills the little sail and drives the boat so fast that the latter heels. The eastern coast passes by rapidly and the curve of the northern side of the lake comes nearer and nearer.

« Land before the village. I want to go to Porphyrea without being seen by anybody. You can meet Me at the usual place and wait for Me in the boat. »

« Yes, Master. And if anybody should see me? »

« Converse with everybody without saying where I am. I will not be long. »

John finds a good landing spot on the shore as he remembers a sandy stream from which men have taken away sand for their needs, forming thus a small gulf a few meters wide where a boat can reach the shore, which is about half a meter above water level. He steers the boat there. The boat rubs lightly on the shingly shore but it can reach the dry beach where John holds it fast grasping a root sticking out of the sand. Jesus jumps on the beach. John presses an oar against it making an effort to push the boat back on the lake. He is successful. He raises his face, bright with his good smile and says: « Goodbye, Master. »

« Goodbye, John » and Jesus sets out among the trees while John steers his little boat along the coast.

Jesus turns towards the inland and passes through the vegetable gardens at the rear of Bethsaida. He is walking fast to enter the village before it rouses. He arrives at Peter's house without meeting anybody. He knocks at the kitchen door. After a moment Porphyrea's head looks out cautiously above the little wall of the terraced roof. When she sees Jesus she utters an « Oh! » of surprise. With one hand she collects her beautiful hair - her only beauty - falling loose on her shoulders and runs down the little staircase, barefooted as she is, in her hurried morning toilet.

« Lord, You! All alone? »

« Yes, Porphyrea. Where is Marjiam? »

« He is sleeping. He is still sleeping. The boy has been somewhat sad, rather languid… and I spare him a little. It is also his age… he is growing… While sleeping he does not think and does not weep. »

« Does he weep often? »

« Yes, Master. I think that it is his present weakness. And I try to strengthen him… and comfort him… But he says: "I am left alone. All those whom I love go away. When Jesus is no longer with us…" and he says so as if You were about to leave us… Of course… he has suffered much in his lifetime… But Simon and I love him… so much, Master, believe me. »

« I know. But his soul is sensitive… Porphyrea, I must speak to you just about this. That is why I came, without Simon, at this time of the day. Where can we go and speak so that Marjiam may not hear us and nobody will disturb us? »

« Lord… I have but my bedroom, or the room where the nets are stored… Marjiam is upstairs, I was up there as well, because to escape the heat, we went to sleep up there… »

« Let us go into the room where the nets are. It is farther away and Marjiam will not hear us even if he should wake. »

« Come, Lord » and Porphyrea leads Him into the large rustic room encumbered with all sorts of things: nets, oars, provisions, hay for the sheep, a loom…

Porphyrea hastens to clear a kind of table placed against the wall, dusting it with a flock of tow so that the Master may sit on it.

« It does not matter, woman. I am not tired. »

Porphyrea raises her mild eyes towards Jesus' depressed tired face and she seems to be saying: « Of course You are. » But, being accustomed to be silent, she does not speak.

« Listen, Porphyrea. You are a clever woman and a good disciple. I have been very fond of you since I met you and it was with great joy that I accepted you as a disciple and I entrusted the boy to you. I am aware that only few women are as wise and prudent as you. And I know that you can keep silent: a very rare virtue in women. For all those reasons I have come to speak to you secretly and confide to you something of which no one is aware, not even the apostles, not even Simon. I am confiding it to you because I must tell you how you are to behave in future with Marjiam… and with everybody… I am sure that you will meet your Master's request and that you will be as prudent as ever… »

Porphyrea, who has really become purple on hearing the praise of her Lord, can only nod assent, as she is too moved to be able to utter any word expressing her agreement; she is in fact so timid and accustomed to being pressed by overbearing people giving her orders without knowing whether she is disposed to agree…

« Porphyrea… I will never come back again to this part of the country. Never again, until everything is accomplished… You are aware of what I must accomplish, are you not?… »

At these words Porphyrea drops her hair, which she was still holding against the nape of her neck with her left hand and emits a sound which is more like a sob than a cry and which she stifles pressing her face with both hands while she falls on her knees moaning: « I know, Lord, my God… » And weeps so silently that her weeping is revealed only by the tears falling on the floor through her fingers compressing her face.

« Do not weep, Porphyrea. I came just for that. I am ready… and ready are those who, by serving Evil, will serve Good, in actual fact, because they will cause the hour of Redemption to begin. It could be fulfilled even now because both they and I are ready… and every further hour that passes or event which takes place will do nothing but… perfect their crime… and My Sacrifice. But also these hours, and they will be numerous, which are to pass before that hour, will serve… There is still something to be done and said, so that all the things which were to be accomplished to make Me

known, may be done… But I will not come back here again… I am looking at this place for the last time… and I have come into this honest house for the last time… Do not weep… I did not want to go away without saying goodbye to you and giving you the blessing of your Master. I will take Marjiam with Me. I will take him with Me now while going towards the Phoenician borders and also later when I go down to Judaea for the feast of the Tabernacles. There will be no problem in sending him back here before the depth of winter. Poor boy! He will enjoy My company for some time. And then… Porphyrea, it is not right that Marjiam should be present at My hour. So you shall not let him depart for Passover… »

« The precept, Lord… »

« I absolve him from the precept. I am the Master, Porphyrea, and I am God, as you know. As God, I can absolve, in advance, from an omission which is not even such, because I am commanding it out of justice. Obedience to My command is by itself absolution from the omission of the precept, because obedience to God which is also a sacrifice for Marjiam - is always superior to everything else. And I am a Master. He who cannot measure the capability and reactions of a disciple and does not consider the consequences which an effort greater than that which the disciple can stand may cause him, is not a good Master. Also when imposing virtuous deeds one must be prudent and not exact a maximum which the spiritual perfection or the general strength of the person involved cannot give. By exacting too great a virtue or spiritual control as compared with the degree of spiritual, moral and also physical strength attained by a person, one can cause a loss of the strength already stored up as well as the shattering of the human being in its three degrees: the spiritual, moral and physical ones. Marjiam, poor boy, has already suffered too much and is too familiar with the brutality of his fellow-creatures, to the extent of almost hating them. He would not be able to bear what My Passion will be: a sea of grievous love in which I will wash the sins of the world, and a sea of satanic hatred which will try to overwhelm all those whom I loved and to destroy all My work as a Master. I solemnly tell you that also the strongest ones will bend under the pressure of Satan, at least for a short time… But I do not want Marjiam to bend or to drink of that distressing water… He is innocent… and is dear to Me… I feel pity, much pity, for those who have already suffered more than their strength would permit… I have called back to the hereafter the soul of John of Endor… »

« Is John dead? Oh! Marjiam had written many rolls for him… Another sorrow for the child… »

« I will inform him of John's death… I was saying that I took him away from this world to preserve him as well from the impact of

that hour. John also had suffered too much from men. Why awake appeased feelings? God is good. He tries His children, but He is not a rash experimenter… Oh! if men were able to do as much' How fewer hearts would be ruined, or simply, how many fewer dangerous storms in hearts!… But reverting to Marjiam, he must not come to the next Passover. Say nothing for the time being. When the time comes, say to him: "The Master ordered me not to send you to Jerusalem. And He promises you a special reward if you will obey Him". Marjiam is good and will obey… Porphyrea, that is what I want from you. Your silence, your loyalty, your love. »

« Anything You want, my Lord. You honour Your poor servant too much… I do not deserve so much… Go in peace, Master and God. I will do what You want… » but sorrow overwhelms her and she collapses with her face on the floor - she had been kneeling all the time, relaxing on her heels, staring at Jesus' face - she collapses on the floor completely covered by the mantle of her raven hair sobbing in a loud voice: « How grievous, Master! Oh! How grievous! What is coming to an end! What is coming to an end for the world! Particularly for us who love You! And for Your servant! The Only One! The Only One Who really loved me! Who never despised me! Who has never been overbearing with me! Who treated me like the others, although I am so ignorant, poor and stupid! Oh! Marjiam and I - because Marjiam was the first to tell me - had set our minds at rest… Everybody said that it could not be true… Everybody: Simon, Nathanael, Philip… and their wives… and they know, they are learned… and Simon yes! my Simon, if You chose him, he must be worth something! and they all said that it is not possible But now You are saying it is… and we cannot doubt Your word » She is really desolate and moving in her grief.

Jesus stoops to lay a hand on her head: « Do not weep thus… Marjiam will hear you… I know… No one believes it, no one wants to believe it… and their very learning and love are the reason of their not believing… But it is so… Porphyrea, I am going away. Before leaving you I bless you now and for ever. Always remember that I loved you and that I am pleased with your love for Me. I will not say: persevere in it. I know that you will, because the remembrance of your Master will always be your solace and you will take shelter in it. Your solace and peace, also at the hour of death. Consider then that your Master died to open Paradise to you and that He is waiting for you there… Now, stand up. I will go and wake Marjiam and speak to him. Remove the traces of your tears and join us. John is waiting for Me to take Me to Capernaum. If you have something to send to Simon, prepare it. Remember that he will need his heavy clothes… »

Porphyrea, a true submissive and obedient person, kisses Jesus' feet, and is on the point of standing up when a wave of love makes her lose her head and, blushing deeply, takes Jesus' hands and kisses them once, twice, ten times. She then stands up and lets Him go…

Jesus goes out and up to the terrace, He passes under a kind of canopy formed by sails stretched on ropes, under which are two little beds. Marjiam is still sleeping with his face downwards, pressed against the little pillow. Only one cheek-bone of his little dark face and a long lean arm can be seen outside the sheet which covers him.

Jesus sits on the floor near the little bed and gently caresses the ruffled locks which fall on the pale cheek of the sleeping boy, who stirs but does not wake up as yet. Jesus repeats His gesture and bends to kiss on the forehead the face which is now uncovered.

Marjiam opens his eyes and sees Jesus beside him, bending over him. He can hardly believe it, perhaps he thinks that he is dreaming, but Jesus calls him and the youth then sits up and throws himself into Jesus' arms and takes refuge there… « You are here, Master? »

« I have come to take you away with Me for some months. Are you glad? »

« Oh! And Simon? »

« He is at Capernaum. I came with John… »

« Has he come back as well? He will be happy! I will give him what I wrote. »

« I am not speaking of John of Endor, but of John of Zebedee. Are you not glad? »

« Yes. I am fond of him. But I am fond also of the other one… almost more… »

« Why, Marjiam? John of Zebedee is so good. »

« Yes, but the other one is so unhappy and I was unhappy, too, and I still am a little… People who suffer understand and love one another… »

« Would you be happy to learn that he no longer suffers and that he is very happy? »

« Of course I would. But he cannot be happy unless he is with You. Or… Is he perhaps dead, Lord? »

« He is in peace and we must be pleased with that, without being selfish, because he died as a just man and because his spirit is no longer separated from ours. We have another friend praying for us. »

Two large tears stream down Marjiam's very thin pale face and he whispers: « It is true. »

Jesus says nothing further, neither does He make any remark concerning the physical and moral state of Marjiam, who has clearly

grown weaker. On the contrary He says: « Let us go. I have already spoken to Porphyrea. She has certainly prepared your clothes. Tidy yourself up, because John is waiting for us. We will give Simon a surprise. Is that not his boat coming back to Capernaum? Perhaps he has been fishing on his way back… »

« Yes, it is that one. Where are we going, Lord? »

« To the north and then to Judaea. »

« For a long time? »

« Yes, for a long time. »

Marjiam, excited by the idea of being with Jesus, gets up quickly and runs down to wash himself in the lake, and he goes back with his hair still wet, shouting: « I have seen John. He waved to me. He is at the mouth of the stream, among the reeds… »

« Let us go. »

They go downstairs. Porphyrea is closing two bags and she says: « I have decided to send the heavy garments later, by my brother who will be coming to Gethsemane for the feast of the Tabernacles. Both you and your father will be able to walk more quickly » and while she finishes tying the straps, she mentions what she has prepared: milk, bread, fruit…

« We will take everything and eat in the boat. I want to go before the shore becomes crowded. Goodbye, Porphyrea. May God bless you always and may the peace of the just be always with you. Come, Marjiam. »…

They cover the short stretch of the road quickly and while Marjiam goes to John, Jesus goes to the boat, where He is soon joined by the two who run through the reed-thicket and jump into the boat and at once press an oar against the shore to push the boat out into deep water.

The short voyage is soon over and they stop at the little beach of Capernaum awaiting Peter's boat, which is just arriving. The early hour saves them from being assailed by the crowds and they can eat their bread and fruit in peace, lying on the sand in the shade of the boat.

Simon does not know to whom the little boat belongs and thus only when he sets foot on the shore and sees Jesus stand up from behind it, he notices Him. « Master! and you, Marjiam! How long have you been here? »

« Just now. I called at Bethsaida. Be quick. We must leave at once… »

Peter looks at Him but does not say anything. With his companions he unloads the catch, the bags of garments, including John's, who at last can get dressed. And Simon asks something of his companion, who makes a gesture meaning: « Wait… »

They go to the house and enter. The remaining apostles gather there.

« Make haste. We are going away at once. Take everything because we are not coming back here » orders Jesus.

The apostles cast sidelong glances at one another and one group gesticulates to the other. But they obey. Actually I think that they act quickly to be able to speak among themselves in the other rooms…

Jesus remains in the kitchen with Marjiam and He takes leave of the landlords. But He does not say to them: « I will not come back again » neither does He say so to the people of Capernaum who meet Him in the streets and greet Him. He greets them in a simple manner, as He always does when departing. He stops only at Jairus' house. But Jairus is not back yet…

At the fountain He meets the little old woman who lives near the house of little Alphaeus' mother and He says to her: « A widow will be coming here shortly. She will look for you. She is going to settle here. Be friendly to her and be very good to the boy and to his brothers… Do it in a holy way, in My name… »

He proceeds saying: « I would have liked to say goodbye to all the children… »

« You can do so, Master. Why did You not take a rest? You are very tired. You look pale and Your eyes are tired. It is not good for You… It is still warm and You certainly did not sleep either at Tiberias or at Chuza's… »

« I cannot, Simon. I have to go to certain places and time is short… »

They are near the shore. Jesus calls Peter's workmen and says goodbye to them instructing them to take the little boat to the village before Hippo and give it to Saul of Zacharias.

He takes the shady road along the river. He continues on it as far as a cross-road and proceeds along the latter.

« Where are we going, Lord? » asks Simon who had spoken so far to his companions in a low voice.

« To Judas and Anne and then to Korazim. I want to say goodbye to My good friends… »

The apostles cast more sidelong glances at one another and talk in low voices.

Finally James of Alphaeus moves forward and joins Jesus Who is ahead of them all with Marjiam. « Brother, are we not coming back any more to these parts, since You say that You wish to say goodbye to Your friends? We wish to know. »

« Of course, you will come back. But after many months. »

« And what about You? »

Jesus makes an evasive gesture… Marjiam withdraws discreetly and joins the others, that is, everybody, with the exception of James of Alphaeus, who is with Jesus, and of the Iscariot who is alone, behind them all, somewhat gloomy, as if he were listless.

« Brother, what has happened to You? » asks James laying one hand on Jesus' shoulder.

« Why are you asking Me? »

« Because… I do not know. We are all wondering. You seem to be changed… You came with John only… Simon said that You had been Chuza's guest… You are not resting… You greet only few people… It would appear that You do not want to come back here… And Your face… Do we no longer deserve to be informed? Not even I… You were very fond of me… You told me things of which I only am aware… »

« I still love you. But I have nothing to say. I lost one day more than I expected. I must make up for it. »

« Was it necessary to go to the north? »

« Yes, brother, it was. »

« Then… Oh! You have suffered. I can see it… »

Jesus embraces him, passing His arm round His cousin's shoulder: « John of Endor is dead. Did you know? »

« Simon told me when I was preparing my clothes. What else?… »

« I parted from My Mother. »

« What else? » James, who is smaller than Jesus, looks up at Him, insistingly, inquiringly.

« And I am happy to be with you, with all of you, with Marjiam. I am going to keep him with Me for a few months. He needs it. He is sad and is suffering. Have you seen him? »

« Yes. But that has nothing to do with the matter… You do not want to tell me. It does not matter. I love You even if You do not treat me as a friend. »

« James, you are more than a friend to Me. But My heart is in, need of rest… »

« And therefore it is also in need of not speaking of what is grieving You. I see. Is it Judas who is grieving You? »

« Judas? Your brother? »

« No. The other one. »

« Why do you ask Me that question? »

« I do not know. While You were away, a messenger, we do not know whose, looked for Judas several times. He rejected him every time, but… »

« As far as you all are concerned, every action of Judas is always a crime. Why do you all lack charity?… »

« Because he is so grim, upset. He avoids his companions. He is unwilling… »

« Leave him alone. He has been with us for over two years and has always been like this… Consider how happy the two old people will be. And do you know why I am going there? I want to recommend the little carpenter of Korazim to them… »

They move away speaking. Behind them, in a group, come the

apostles who have waited for Judas, in order not to leave him behind all alone, although he is so obviously unwilling as not to encourage anybody to share his company.

464. In the House of Judas and Anne near Lake Merom.

3rd August 1946.

When they arrive they are warm although they have walked among thick orchards bent under the weight of ripe fruit. From the numerous beautiful vineyards comes the typical aroma of vines when bunches are already ripe and leaves are beginning to wither in autumn.

The first people to be seen are two peasants who are coming back from the orchards laden with baskets of beautiful apples and they inform a servant who passes the news round. In the meantime the two peasants greet Jesus and tell Him that « many disciples who have come from the mountains of Gaulanitis and from Ituraea have stopped in the house on their way to Jerusalem » and that « their masters have decided to go with them to the Tabernacles through Decapolis and Perea. » But they have no time to finish their information as their lords rush out of the house to meet the Master, preceded and followed by many disciples.

Among the disciples are almost all those who were shepherds at Bethlehem and there are others as well, such as the first leper to be cured and his friend, the cripple, who was also restored to health, that is, those from beyond the Jordan, with the exception of Timoneus. I do not see Isaac, or Stephen or Hermas, or Hermasteus and Joseph from Emmaus, or Abel from Bethlehem, or Nicolaus from Antioch or John from Ephesus. They are joined by servants and peasants, among whom is the boy who was miraculously cured of paralysis during the previous vintage and his mother.

« Peace to you all and to this house » says Jesus raising His hand to bless them.

« Come in, Master, and rest under our roof. The season is still warm to walk during these hours. But we will give You refreshment and the rooms are cool at night. »

« I shall only stay here a few hours. I shall leave in the evening. It will shortly be the feast of the Tabernacles and I have still to call at many places. »

The landlords are disappointed but they do not insist. They only say: « We were hoping that You would wait for us. We are picking the grapes tomorrow and we have already begun to pick the fruit. After the wine-pressing we should have all left together, with these disciples of Yours. We are old and the roads are very unsafe since gangs of highwaymen have come, we do not know whence, to infest this bank of the Jordan. They hide in the mountains of Rabbah

Ammon and Gilead and along the Jabbok valley and they assault caravans. The Roman legionaries chase them… But… Is it pleasant to meet them? We prefer to be with these… They are Your disciples and God will certainly protect them. »

Jesus smiles wittily but does not say anything on the matter. He goes into the house and welcomes the refreshments which the hosts offer in the way of ablutions and drinks and He then listens to the disciples who inform Him of the work they have done in the mountains: « But with little fruit, Master. Little also at Caesarea Philippi, where, however, we were not molested. But we will go back with You. And then! »

Jesus looks at them, He does not disillusion them and replies: « If you persevere, you will certainly convert them. God always helps His servants. »

Jesus then leaves them and joins the landlady who is laying the tables herself and He invites her to go out with him, as He has to speak to her. The good old lady does not make Him repeat His request twice and to avoid going outside, where it is so warm, she leads Jesus into a long cool room in the northern side of the house.

« Anne, you always say that you would like to serve Me in every possible way… »

« Yes, my Lord. Both Judas and I. But You never apply to us. This is a great feast for us because Your disciples are somehow part of You, and having them in the house, we seem to be serving You. »

« It is in fact so, because what is done to a disciple is done to the Master and even one glass of water or a piece of bread given to assist those who work for Me will be rewarded by God Himself. The disciples take care of the spirits of believers and believers must love and assist disciples considering that they have given up everything and are ready to give up their lives in order to show believers the Way, Life and Truth which the Master taught them with instructions to give it to believers. »

« Oh! Lord, let me call my Judas. Your word is so holy!… »

« Call your Judas » agrees Jesus smiling. And the woman goes out and comes back again with her husband to whom she is repeating the Master's words.

« Believe me, we would do it willingly. But we are out of the way, and that is certainly the reason why Your disciples seldom come here » says the old man and I feel that he regrets being left aside.

«I will tell them to come here frequently. In the meantime I ask you to grant me a grace… »

« You? It is a grace for us to serve You! Give us Your order, Lord. We are old and we cannot follow You as many people do. But we are anxious to serve You. What is it that You want? If these

vineyards and this house, which are so dear to us because they belonged to my father and our children were born here, are to Your liking and if You want them, we will give them to You. We only ask You to promise us divine mercy on our spirits. »

« You can be sure that it will be with you. But I am not asking for such a sacrifice. Listen. I am going to Judaea and winter is drawing near. At Korazim there is a widow with many children and the oldest is little more than a boy. His father was a carpenter… »

« Ah! The carpenter! Oh! everybody has spoken about Your action… But Korazim was not converted, although Your deed more than Your word should have achieved that. Their mother worked here at harvest time… But she is not healthy… We know, we know. »

« Well, I am not asking you to let them lead an idle life, but to assist them. You will always need someone to repair this thing or that one. Think of Joseph and let his fair reward be completed by your pity and love. »

« Oh! Master! Is that all? I would say, what do you say, woman? I think we should take the two little girls who gleaned here. The house is large and you are old, and Mary and Naomi are also old… For little things… »

« That is what we will do, Judas. In remembrance of our little girl… Our only daughter, Lord… She flourished for three years… and then… So many years have gone by… but my heart still aches… If You had been here with us, she would not have died… I would not have lost her… A daughter is always a smile… » The old woman is moved and the old man sighs.

« She is not lost… She is waiting for you… She is an innocent soul and you may be sure that you will find her. It is necessary to be more afraid for those children who are adult but do not live completely in the ways of the Lord… »

« That is true! It is true!… You are aware, Lord… You know everything. In this house, which is so peaceful, there is such sorrow… Master, can a sacrifice obtain a grace at times? »

« Not at times. Always. »

« Ah! it is pleasant to hear You say so. Go in peace, Master. The widow of Korazim will be helped and You will find them to be happy at springtime. Because if You recommend them for the winter months, it means that You are not coming back until spring. »

« I am not coming back… I am going down to Judaea and I am not coming back. »

« And is also the little disciple coming to Judaea? »

« Yes, Marjiam is coming to Judaea… »

« A long journey, Master. He looks very sickly… »

« He lost his last relative. You know his story… and this new

grief has debilitated him. »

« It is also his age and his growing… But we know… we are aware of the good he does. A little master, a real little master… His relative was in the plain of Esdraelon, was he not? And did he die there? And did he suffer there? »

« Yes, woman. Why are you asking? »

« Because… Master, I should not be telling You, Who are a Master. But I am a woman and a mother and I have wept… I say: why do You want to take him towards those places? Leave him with me as far as Jerusalem… I will feel as if I were going down to the holy City with my young sons once again… and he will not get tired and will not suffer any longer. The other disciples are coming as well… »

Jesus is pensive. He objects: « Marjiam is happy to be with Me and I with him. »

« Yes, but if You tell him, he will be happy to obey. You will be separated only for a few days. What is a little more than two weeks for one who is so young? He has time to enjoy Your company… »

Jesus looks at her and at the old man, who are so unaware that the time left to enjoy the Saviour is not very long. But He does not say anything. He stretches out His arms as if to say: « Let it be done as you wish » and He only says: « Then, call Marjiam and Simon. »

The old man goes out and comes back with the two. Simon looks around inquiringly. He seems to be suspicious of who knows what. But when he hears the reason he calms down and says: « May God bless you! The boy is run down and, to tell you the truth, I thought it was imprudent to make him walk so far… »

« But I was willing to come! I was with the Master, and if the Master was taking me with Him it means that I was fit to go… He does everything well… » and Marjiam's voice is almost choked by tears.

« That is true, Marjiam. But one must be compliant. These are two good friends: to Me and to all My friends. I agree to their wish and you… »

« As You wish, my Master. But at Jerusalem… »

« At Jerusalem you will come with Me » promises Jesus. And Marjiam, a good boy, does not reply.

They leave the room and Jesus joins the disciples who are so happy because of the unexpected meeting.

The old landlord loiters round the group. Jesus notices it and interrogates him.

« Well, the fact is that I would like to hear You speak. You are tired, I can see that. But before the meal, before we withdraw to rest, because You will be resting at least until evening, will You not say anything? »

« I will speak before I leave. So also the servants of the house and

of the fields will be able to hear Me. Your wife is calling us now, see?… »

And Jesus stands up and goes into the room where the tables have been laid for the blessed guests.

465. Parable on the Distribution of Waters.

5th August 1946.

The news that the Master is there and that He is going to speak before evening has certainly spread and the surroundings of the house are crowded with people speaking in low voices, because they are aware that the Master is resting and they do not want to wake Him. They are waiting patiently under the trees, which protect them from the sun but not from the heat which is still strong. There are no sick people, at least I think so, but, as usual, there are children and Anne, to keep them quiet, has some fruit given to them.

But Jesus does not sleep for long and the sun is still high when He appears pushing aside the curtain and smiling at the crowds. He is alone. The apostles are probably still sleeping. Jesus goes towards the people and stops near the lower edge of a well which is certainly used to water the trees of the orchard, because little irrigation canals depart radially from the well spreading out among the trees. He sits on the lower edge and begins to speak at once.

« Listen to this parable.

A wealthy man had many subordinates in numerous places of his estate, but not every place was rich in water and fertile soil. Several places suffered from lack of water, and people suffered even more because if the ground was cultivated with trees which could withstand the drought, people suffered very much from the shortage of water. The rich owner instead had, close to the house in which he lived, a lake rich in water which gushed from underground springs.

One day he decided to make a tour of his estate and he saw that some places, those closest to the lake, were rich in water, whereas others, which were remote, had none, except the small quantity which God sent as rain. And he also noticed that those who had plenty water were not kind to their brothers who were deprived of it, and grudged them even a pail of water with the excuse that they were afraid of being left without. The lord meditated on the situation. And he decided thus: "I will divert the waters of my lake towards those who are closer to it and I will order them not to refuse water any longer to my distant servants who are suffering because of the parched land".

And he undertook the work at once and had canals dug to take the good water of the lake to the nearest parts of his property,

where he dug large cisterns so that abundant water should gather there increasing the supplies already existing, and from each part he had smaller canals built to feed other more remote cisterns. He then summoned the people living in those places and said to them: "Remember that I have not done all this work to give you superfluous quantities of water, but I did it to assist, with your help, those who lack also what is necessary. Be, therefore, as Merciful as I have been" and he dismissed them.

Some time passed and the rich owner wished to visit all his possessions once again. He saw that the nearest ones had become more beautiful and abounded not only in useful plants, but also in ornamental ones, in vats, swimming-pools, fountains placed everywhere around the houses.

"You have turned these houses into abodes of rich people" remarked the lord. "I do not have so much superfluous beauty myself ", and he asked them: "Do the others come? Have you given them plenty water? Are the smaller canals fed?".

"Yes. They have been given as much as they asked. And they are over particular, they are never pleased, they are neither prudent nor moderate, they come and ask at any time, as if we were their servants and we have to defend ourselves to protect what belongs to us. They were no longer satisfied with the small canals and cisterns. They come as far as the large ones".

"Is that why you have enclosed these places and placed these wild dogs in each of them?".

"Yes, that is the reason, sir. They used to come in without any consideration and pretended to take everything away and they spoiled…

"But have you really given water to them? Do you realise that I did all this for them and I used you as an intermediate link between the lake and their parched land? I do not understand… I had as much water diverted from the lake as to satisfy everybody, without any waste".

"And yet you must believe us: we never denied them water".

The lord set out towards his remote possessions. The tall trees fit for arid ground were green and leafy. "They have spoken the truth" said the lord seeing them rustling in the distance. But when he approached them and walked under them he saw the parched soil, the almost withered grass on which emaciated sheep grazed with difficulty, the sandy vegetable gardens near houses, and then the first farmers: sickly, with feverish eyes, downhearted… They looked at him and lowered their heads withdrawing as if they were frightened.

He was surprised at their behaviour and he called them. They approached him trembling. "What are you afraid of? Am I no longer your good master who has taken care of you and with provident

work has relieved you of the shortage of water? Why are your faces so sickly looking? Why is this land so arid? And the sheep so lean? And why do you seem to be frightened of me? Speak without fear. Tell your master what is afflicting you".

One man spoke on behalf of everybody. "Lord, we have been badly disappointed and deeply grieved. You promised to help us and we have lost also what we had previously and we have given up every hope in you".

"How? Why? Did I not let water come abundantly to the nearest people with instructions that the abundance was for you?".

"Is that what you said? Really?".

"Most certainly. The level of the ground prevented me from bringing the water here directly. But with good will you could have gone to the little canals of the cisterns with goatskins and donkeys and taken as much as you wanted. Did you not have enough donkeys and goatskins? And was I not there to give you some?".

"There you are! I told you! I said: 'It is not possible that the lord has given instructions to deny us water'. I wish we had gone for it!".

"We were afraid. They told us that the water was a reward for them and that we were to be punished". And they informed the good master that the tenant farmers of the privileged possessions has told them that the landlord, in order to punish the servants of the arid fields because they were not producing more, had given instructions to measure not only the water of the cisterns but also that of the old wells, so that while previously they had two hundred baths of water a day for themselves and the land, and they had to carry it with much fatigue for a long distance, now they did not even have fifty and to have enough for men and animals they had to go to the brooks at the borders of the fortunate places, where water overflowed from gardens and baths and take that muddy water, and they were dying. They were dying of diseases and thirst, and vegetables and sheep were also perishing…

"Oh! that is too much! And I must stop it. Take your goods and chattels and your animals and follow me. You will fatigue a little, worn out as you are, but then you will have peace. I shall proceed slowly to allow you to follow me, in spite of your weakness. I am a good master, a good father to you and I see to my children". And he sets out slowly, followed by the sad crowd of servants and animals who, however, were already rejoicing in the solace of their good master's love.

They arrived at the possessions very rich in water. When they were at the borders, the master took some of the strongest men and said to them: "Go and ask for some water in my name".

"And if they set the dogs on us?".

"I shall be behind you. Be not afraid. Go and say that I sent you

and tell them not to close their hearts to justice, because the water belongs to God and all men are brothers. Tell them to open the canals at once".

They went and the landlord followed them. They stopped at a gate and the master hid himself behind the enclosure wall. They called and the tenant farmers went to the gate.

"What do you want?".

"Have mercy on us. We are dying. The landlord has sent us with instructions to take the water which he brought here for us. He says that God gave the water to him, he gave it to you for us because we are brothers and that you are to open the canals at once".

"Ha! Ha!" laughed the cruel people. "These ragged people are our brothers? You are dying? So much the better. We will take over your places, and we will take water there. We will certainly take it there in that case! And we will make the soil fertile. Water for you? You are stupid! The water is ours".

"Have mercy. We are dying. Open the canals. It's the master's order".

The wicked tenants consulted with one another, and then they said: "Wait a moment" and they went away. They then came back and opened the gate. But they had dogs with them and heavy clubs… The poor people were afraid. "Come in, come in… Are you not coming in now that we have opened the gate? And then you will say that we were not generous… One of the men went in imprudently and a shower of blows rained on him while the unleashed dogs rushed upon the others.

The landlord appeared from behind the wall. "What are you doing, you cruel people? Now I know you and your animals and I will strike you" and he shot arrows at the dogs and he went in. He was severe and angry. "Is that how you carry out my orders? Is that why I gave you this wealth? Call all your people. I want to speak to you. And you" he said to the parched servants "come in with your women and children, with your sheep and donkeys, with your doves and all your animals, and drink and refresh yourselves, and pick this juicy fruit and you, little innocent children, play among the flowers. Enjoy yourselves. There is justice in the heart of your good master and there will be justice for everybody".

And while the thirsty people ran to the cisterns, dived into the swimming-pools, and the cattle went to the vats and they were all full of joy, the others came from all directions looking frightened.

The landlord climbed on to the edge of a cistern and said: "I had all this work done and I made you trustees of my order and of this treasure, because I had chosen you as my ministers. But you failed in the test. You appeared to be good. You should have been good, because welfare makes people good, grateful to their benefactor

and I had always assisted you by giving you the tenancy of this well-watered land. Such wealth and choice has made you hardhearted, more arid than the land which you have made completely arid, and more sick than these people parched with thirst. Because water can cure them, whereas you, with your selfishness, have parched your spirits which are not likely to recover, and the water of charity will flow back into you with great difficulty. I will now punish you. Go into their lands and suffer what they suffered".

"Mercy, lord! Have mercy on us! Do you want us to perish? Are you less compassionate towards us men than we are towards animals?".

"And who are these? Are they not men, your brothers? What mercy did you have on them? They were asking for water and you gave them blows with clubs and treated them sarcastically. They were asking for what was mine and which I had given, and you refused them saying that it was 'yours'. Whose water is it? Even I will not say that the water of the lake is mine although the lake is mine. Water belongs to God. Which of you has created one single drop of dew? Go!… And to you, to you who have suffered, I say: be kind. Do to them what you would have liked done to you. Open the canals which they closed and let the water flow towards them, as soon as possible. I make you my dispensers to these guilty brothers to whom I leave means and time to redeem themselves. And the Most High entrusts you with the wealth of His water. More than I do, so that you may be providential for those who have none. If you can do this with love and justice, being satisfied with what is necessary, giving what is superfluous to the poor, being honest, not calling yours what is a gift given to you, a deposit more than a gift, great will be your peace and God's love and Mine will always be with you".

That is the end of the parable and everybody can understand it. I only say to you that rich people are only the depositaries of the wealth granted to them by God with instructions to distribute it to those who suffer. Consider the honour which God grants you by calling you to be partners in the work of Providence in favour of poor and sick people, of widows and orphans. God could rain money, garments, food on poor people. But in that case He would deprive rich people of great merits: those of charity towards their brothers. Not all rich people can be learned, but they can all be good. Not all rich people can take care of sick people, bury the dead, visit invalids and prisoners. But all rich people, and even those who are not poor, can give a piece of bread, a drop of water, cast-off garments, and they can welcome to their fireplaces those who are shivering, and can give hospitality to those who are homeless, and are exposed to rain and dog-days. He is poor who lacks what is necessary to live. The others are not poor, they have

scanty means, but they are still rich as compared with those who die of starvation, privations and cold.

I am going away. I can no longer assist the poor people of this area. And My Heart suffers thinking that they are losing a friend… Well I Who am speaking to you, and you know Who I am, I ask you to be the providence of the poor who are being left without their merciful Friend. Give them alms and love them in My name and in memory of Me… Be My continuators. Relieve My depressed heart with this promise: that you will always see Me in the poor and that you will receive them as the most true representatives of Christ Who is poor, Who wanted to be poor out of love for the most unhappy people on the Earth, and to expiate, through His own indigence and ardent love, the unfair prodigality and selfishness of men.

Remember! Charity and mercy are rewarded for ever. Remember! Charity and mercy are absolution from sins. God remits very much to those who love. And love for the poor who cannot reciprocate is the most deserving in the eyes of God. Remember these words of Mine until the end of your lives and you will be saved and blissful in the Kingdom of God.

May My blessing descend upon those who accept the word of the Lord and practise it. »

The apostles and Marjiam have come out of the house quietly while He was speaking and are in a compact group behind the crowds. But they come forward when Jesus ends His speech, and while doing so they collect the alms offered by many people. And they take the money to Jesus.

A shabby sickly looking man follows them. He is walking with his head so bent that I cannot see his face. He approaches Jesus and striking his chest he moans: « I have sinned, Lord, and You punished me. I deserved it. But at least forgive me before You depart. Have mercy on Jacob, a sinner! » He raises his face and I recognise, rather because he mentions his name than by his worn-out appearance, the fanner who was helped first and later punished through his harshness towards the two little orphans.

« My forgiveness! Some time ago you wanted to be cured by this apostle. And you were worried because your corn was spoiled. And these apostles sowed for you (1). Are you perhaps without bread? »

« I have enough. »

« And is that perhaps not forgiveness? » Jesus is very severe.

« No. I would rather die of starvation but feeling that my mind is at rest. I tried to make amends as best I can… I have prayed and wept… But You only can forgive and give peace to my spirit. Lord, I ask but to be forgiven… »

Jesus stares at him… He makes him raise his face, which he had

(1) For full details on this incident see Vol. 3, Chapter 297.

bowed and pierces him with His bright eyes, bending slightly over him… He then says: « Go. You will or will not be forgiven according to how you live in the time left to you. »

« Oh! my Lord! Not thus! You have forgiven graver sins… »

« They were not persons who had been assisted like you and they had not sinned against innocent children. The poor are always sacred, but orphans and widows are the most sacred of all. Do you not know the Law?… »

The man is weeping. He wanted to be forgiven at once.

Jesus resists: « You have fallen twice and you have not been in a hurry to rise… Remember. What you, a man, allowed yourself, God can allow Himself. God is still very good if He tells you that He is not denying you forgiveness in an absolute manner, but He conditions it to the way you will live until your death. Go. »

« At least bless me… so that I may have more strength to be just. »

« I have already given My blessing. »

« No, not like that. Bless me in particular. See my heart… »

Jesus lays His hand on the man's head and says: « I have warned you. But may this caress convince you that, although I am severe, I do not hate you. My love is severe to save you, to treat you as an unhappy friend, not because you are poor, but because you have been bad. Remember that I loved you, that I had mercy on your spirit and may this remembrance make you anxious to have Me no longer as a severe friend. »

« When, Lord? Where shall I find You if You say that You are going away? »

« In My Kingdom. »

« Which one? Where are You establishing it? I will come there… »

« My Kingdom will be in your heart if you make it good and then it will be in Heaven. Goodbye. I must leave because it is getting dark and I must bless those whom I am leaving » and Jesus dismisses him turning to His disciples and to the landlord and landlady, and He blesses them one by one.

He then resumes His journey after giving the money to Judas… He disappears in the green country as He walks south-westwards towards Capernaum…

« You are walking too much, Master! » exclaims Peter. « We are tired. We have covered so many stadia… »

« Be good, Simon. We shall soon be in sight of Korazim. You will enter the town calling at the few houses which are friendly to us and in particular at the widow's. And tell little Joseph that I want to greet him at dawn. You will bring him to Me on the road which goes up to Giscala… »

« But are You not coming to Korazim? »

« No. I am going up the mountain to pray. »

« You are exhausted. You are pale. Why do You neglect Yourself?

And why are You not coming with us? Why are You not coming to town? » They overwhelm Him with questions. Their fondness is at times heavy.

But Jesus is patient… and He replies patiently: « You know very well! Prayer is rest for Me. It is fatigue to be among people when I am not there to cure or to evangelize. So I will go up the mountain. Where I have been other times. You know the place. »

« On the path that takes one to Joachim's house? »

« Yes. You know where to find Me. At dawn I will come and meet you… »

« And shall we be going towards Giscala? »

« It is the right road to go towards the Syro-Phoenician borders. I told the people at Aphek that I would go there and I will go. »

« It's because… Don't You remember the last time? »

« Be not afraid, Simon. They have changed system. At present they honour Me… »

« Oh! So they love You. »

« No. They hate Me more than they did previously. But as they cannot overthrow Me by means of their strength, they try to do so by deceit. They are trying to seduce the Man… And to seduce one makes use of honours, even if they are false. Nay… Come here near Me, all of you » He says to the others who were proceeding in a group seeing that Jesus was speaking to Peter privately.

They gather together. Jesus says: « I was saying to Simon - and I will say it to everybody as I have no secrets for My friends - I was saying to Simon that those who are hostile to Me have changed their way to harm Me, but they have not changed their minds with regard to Me. So whilst previously they made use of insults and threats, now they have resort to honours. Not only with regard to Me, but also to you. So be strong and wise. Do not let their false words, their gifts and seductions deceive you. Remember what Deuteronomy says: "Gifts blind the eyes of wise men and alter the words of just people". Remember Samson. He was God's nazirite from his birth, from his mother's womb and she conceived and formed him in abstinence by order of the angel so that he might be a just judge of Israel. But where did so much good end? And how? And through whom? And was virtue not demolished many other times by means of honours, money and hired women to play into the enemies' hands? So be shrewd and vigilant in order not to be deceived and not to serve enemies even unawares. Strive to remain as free as birds, which prefer scanty food and a branch on which to rest to golden cages where food is plentiful and where they can rest comfortably, but where they are prisoners of the whims of men. Remember that you are My apostles, servants, therefore, of God only, as I am servant only of the Will of the Father. They will try to seduce you, perhaps they have already

done so, catching each of you by your weak points, because the servants of Evil are cunning as they are taught by the Evil One. Do not believe their words. They are not sincere. If they were, I would be the first to say to you: "Let us greet these people as good brothers of ours". Instead we must mistrust their deeds and pray for them, that they may become good. I do so. I pray for you, that you may not be deceived by the new form of war, and I pray for them, that they may stop laying snares for the Son of man and they may cease offending God His Father. Imitate Me. Pray the Holy Spirit fervently. That He may give you light to see. And be pure, if you want Him to be your friend. Before leaving you I want to fortify you. I absolve you if you have sinned up to the present time. I absolve you of everything. Be good in future. Good, wise, chaste, humble and faithful. May the grace of My absolution fortify you… Why are you weeping, Andrew? And why are you upset, My brother? »

« Because this sounds like a farewell… » says Andrew.

« And do you think that I would say goodbye to you so briefly? It is only a piece of advice for the present days. I see that you are all upset. That must not happen to you. Agitation upsets peace. Peace must always be with you. You are in the service of Peace and She loves you so much that She has chosen you as Her first servants. She loves you. Therefore you must consider that She will always help you, also when you are left alone. God is Peace. If you are faithful to God, He will be with you. And if He is with you, of what can you be afraid? And what can separate you from God, if you do not get into a situation whereby you may lose Him? Sin only separates from God. But the rest: temptations, persecutions, death, no, not even death separates from God. On the contrary, they join one more to God, because every temptation which is overcome raises man by one step towards Heaven, because persecutions achieve for you double protecting love of God and the death of a saint or of a martyr is but union with the Lord God. I solemnly tell you that with the exceptions of the children of perdition, none of My great disciples will die before I open the gates of Heaven. Consequently none of My faithful disciples will have to wait for the embrace of God after passing away from this dark exile into the light of the other life. I would not tell you this if it were not true. You can see it yourselves. Also today you have seen a man who after going astray has come back to the way of justice. One ought not to sin. But God is merciful and forgives those who repent. And he who repents can surpass also one who has not sinned, if his repentance is absolute and if his virtue, following his repentance, is heroical. It will be so pleasant to meet up there! To see you come up to Me, while I run to meet you and embrace you, taking you to My Father saying: "Here is one of My beloved. He always

loved Me and thus he always loved You since I spoke to him of You. He has come now. Bless him, Father, and may Your blessing be his bright crown". My friends… Friends here and in Heaven. Do you not think that every sacrifice is light if it achieves such eternal joy? You have cheered up now. Let us part here. I am going up there and you must be good… Let Me kiss you… » And He kisses them one by one.

Judas weeps when he kisses Him. He waited to be the last, although he usually seeks to be the first, and he clings to Jesus, kissing Him several times and whispering through His hair, close to His ear: « Pray, pray for me… »

They part, Jesus goes towards the hill and the others proceed towards Korazim, whose white houses already appear through the green trees.

Jesus says: « You will put here the vision of 23rd September 1944. There is no better rest for Me than to say: "I have saved one who was perishing", and the dictation that follows. »

466. Judas Iscariot Fills Jesus with Joy.

23rd September 1944.

Jesus says:

« In the meantime I tell you that, if you are going to do a regular work, the episode of Wednesday 20th September is to be placed a year before My death [404], because it happened at harvest time in My 32nd year of age. The necessity to comfort and instruct you, My beloved, and others, has compelled Me to follow a special order when giving visions and relevant dictations. But in due course I will show you how to distribute the episodes of the three years of My public life.

The order of the Gospels is good, but not perfect as a chronological order. A diligent observer notices that. He who could have given the exact order of events, having been with Me from the beginning of the Evangelization to My Ascension, did not do so, because John, a true son of the Light, devoted himself to and worried about making the Light shine brightly through its appearance of a Body in the eyes of the heretics, who contested the truth of the Divinity enclosed in a human body. John's sublime Gospel achieved its supernatural purpose, but the chronology of My public life has not been improved by it. The other three evangelists show resemblances to one another with regard to events, but they alter their order with regard to time, because only one of the three was present at almost all My public life: Matthew, and he wrote it only fifteen years later, whilst the others wrote theirs even later, after hearing the story from My Mother, from Peter, from other apostles

apostles and disciples.

I want to give you a guide to collect together the events of the three years, year by year.

And now see and write. The episode follows that of Wednesday (20th September). »

I see Jesus walking slowly up and down a little country path in bright moonlight. The moon is full and shines with her smiling face in a very clear sky. By her position in the sky - she is beginning to set - I infer that it must be past midnight.

Jesus is certainly thinking and praying, although I do not hear any word. But He does not lose sight of what is around Him. He stops once and smiles listening to the loud song of a nightingale in love: the bird sings a melody with arpeggios and trills and a solo, notes which are held so well, so loud and for so long that it seems impossible that they come forth from that little bunch of feathers. In order not to disturb it with the shuffling of His sandals on the little stones of the path and with the rustling of His tunic on the grass, Jesus stops with folded arms and smiles raising His face. He even half-closes His eyes to concentrate better on hearing it, and when the nightingale comes to the end with a high note which rises and rises by thirds (I am not sure whether I remember correctly) and finishes with a very high note held as long as its breath allows, He expresses His approval and applauds silently nodding two or three times with a happy smile.

Now, instead, He bends over a tuft of honeysuckle in bloom, which exhales a strong scent from its numerous calyces like yawning serpents' mouths, in which the tongues of yellowish pistils tremble and a golden mark shines on the lower petal. The flowers look whiter, almost silvery, in the moonlight. Jesus admires and smells them and caresses them with His hand.

He retraces His steps. The place must be slightly high because in the moonlight one can see to the south something that shines like a wet piece of glass illuminated by the moon, certainly a tiny part of a lake, because it is neither a river nor the sea, as it is surrounded by hills on the side opposite to the one where Jesus is standing. Jesus looks at the placid calm waters sparkling in the peaceful summer night. He then turns round, from south to west, and looks at a village, standing out in its whiteness, about two kilometres away, probably less. It is quite a large village. He stops looking at it and shakes His head following a thought which distresses Him deeply.

He then resumes walking slowly and praying. Finally He sits on a large stone at the foot of a very tall tree, and assumes His usual posture, with His elbows 'resting on His knees, His forearms stretched out and His hands joined in prayer.

He remains thus for some time and would remain longer if a

man, like a shadow, did not come towards Him from the thicket calling Him: « Master? »

Jesus turns round, because the person is coming from behind Him, and He says: « Judas? What do you want? »

« Where are You, Master? »

« At the foot of the walnut-tree. Come here. » And Jesus stands up and goes onto the path, in the moonlight, so that Judas may see Him. « Have you come, Judas, to keep your Master company for a little while? » They are now close to each other and Jesus lovingly lays an arm on His disciple's shoulder. « Or am I needed at Korazim? »

« No, Master. There is no need for You. I wanted to come to You. »

« Come then. There is room for both of us on this stone. »

They sit down close to each other and remain silent. Judas does not speak, he looks at Jesus. He is struggling. Jesus wants to help him. He looks at him kindly, but keenly.

« What a beautiful night, Judas! Look how everything is pure! I do not think that the first night which smiled at the Earth and at Adam's sleep in the earthly Paradise was purer. Smell how scented are these flowers. Smell them. But do not pick them. They are so beautiful and pure! I also have refrained from picking them because to pluck them is to profane them. It is always wrong to do violence, to plants as to animals, to animals as to men. Why deprive them of their lives? Life is so beautiful when it is spent well!… And those flowers spend their lives well because they are sweet smelling, they cheer up people with their beautiful appearance and scents, they give honey to bees and butterflies and they transfer to the latter the gold of their pistils to place tiny drops of topaz on their pearly wings, and are used to make beds in nests… If you had been here a little while ago, you would have heard a nightingale sing so sweetly its joy of living and praising the Lord. Dear little birds! What an example they are for men! They are satisfied with little and only with what is legal and holy. A tiny grain and a little worm as given to them by the Father Creator; and if there is none, they do not become angry or irritated, but they deceive the hunger of their bodies with the ardour of their hearts, which makes them sing the praises of the Lord and the joy of hope. They are happy to be tired after flying from dawn to sunset to build a nest for themselves, a tepid, soft, safe nest, not out of selfishness, but out of love for their offspring. And they sing urged by the joy of loving each other honestly: the nightingale for its mate and both for their little ones. Animals are always happy because they have no remorse or reproach in their hearts. We make them unhappy, because man is bad, disrespectful, overbearing, cruel. And he is not happy to be so with his like. His wickedness overflows on inferiors. And the more he feels remorse,

the more his conscience spurs him and the more pitiless he is towards other people. I am sure, for instance, that that horseman who today was spurring his horse so cruelly, although it was wet with perspiration and tired, and he lashed it to the point of leaving swollen marks on the hair of its neck and sides, and even on its nostrils so tender, and on its dark eyelashes, which closed painfully on its eyes so resigned and mild, I am sure that his soul was not in peace. He was either going to commit a crime against Honesty, or he was coming from one. » Jesus becomes silent and pensive.

Judas is silent and pensive, too. He then says: « How beautiful it is, Master, to hear You speak thus! Everything becomes clear to the eyes, to the mind, to the heart… and everything becomes easy. Also to say: "I want to be good!". Also to say to You… also to say to You: "Master, my soul is upset as well! Do not be disgusted at me, Master, since You love so much those who are pure!". »

« Oh, Judas! I disgusted? My dear friend, My dear son, what is upsetting you? »

« Keep me with You, Master. Hold me tight… I have sworn to be good after You spoke to me so kindly. I have sworn to become the Judas of the first days, when I followed and loved You as a groom loves his bride and I yearned for nothing but You, as I found every satisfaction in You. That is how I loved You, Jesus… »

« I know… and that is why I loved you… But I still love you, My dear hurt friend… »

« How do You know that I am hurt? And do You know by what?… »

There is silence. Jesus looks at Judas so kindly… Tears seem to make His eyes wider and kinder, tempering their brightness: the eyes of an innocent defenceless child who gives himself completely in love.

Judas drops at His feet with his face on Jesus' knees and clasping His sides with his arms he moans: « Keep me with You, Master… keep me… My flesh is howling like a demon… and if I give in, then all evil befalls me… I know that you are aware of it, but You wait for me to tell You… But it is hard, Master, to say: "I have sinned." »

« I know, My friend. That is why one ought to act correctly. So that later one may not have to lower oneself saying: "I have sinned". But, Judas, that is also a very good medicine. The fact that one has to make an effort to confess one's sin restrains one from committing it; and if it has been committed the pain in accusing oneself is already redeeming repentance. And if one suffers not so much out of pride or for fear of punishment, but because one realises that by sinning one has caused sorrow, then I tell you that the sin is cancelled. It is love that saves. »

« I love You, Master. But I am so weak… Oh! You cannot love me! You are pure and You love the pure… You cannot love me because

I am… I am… Oh! Jesus, relieve me of the hunger of sensuality! Do You know what a demon it is? »

« I know. I did not listen to it, but I know what its voices sound like. »

« See? See? You are so much disgusted by it that by simply mentioning it You look very upset… Oh! You cannot forgive me! »

« Judas. And do you not remember Mary? Or Matthew? Or the publican who became a leper? Or that woman, the Roman prostitute, for whom I prophesied a place in Heaven, because being forgiven by Me she will have the strength to live holily? »

« Master Master… Oh! How sick at heart I am!… This evening I ran away from Korazim because if I had remained, I would have been lost. You know it is like one who drinks and is taken ill… The doctor forbids him to drink wine and any intoxicating drink and he recovers and is healthy as long as he does not taste such liquors… But if he gives in, once only, and he tastes them again he is thirsty… thirsty for such liquids… he no longer resists and drinks and drinks and is taken ill again for ever… mad… possessed by his demon by that demon of his Oh! Jesus, Jesus, Jesus!… Don't tell the others… Don't tell them… I blush with shame before them all… »

« But not before Me. »

Judas misunderstands. « That is true! I ought to blush more before You than anybody else, because You are perfect… »

« No, son. I did not mean that. Your grief, your distress, your dejection must not confound you. I said that you may blush before everybody, but not before Me. A son is not afraid or ashamed of a good father neither is an invalid of a clever doctor. And confession is to be made to both without any fear, as one loves and forgives, and the other understands and cures. I love and understand you. So I forgive and cure you. But tell Me, Judas. What is it that puts you into the hands of your demon? Is it I? Your brothers? Corrupt women? No. It is your will. I now forgive you and cure you… With what joy you have filled Me, My Judas! I was already rejoicing at this clear, scented night, which sweet songs made delightful, and I was praising the Lord for it. But the joy which you are now giving Me exceeds this clear moonlight, these scents, this peace, these songs. Can you hear it? The nightingale seems to join Me in telling you that it is glad of your good will, as the little singing bird is so willing to do that for which it was created. And likewise, this early morning breeze, which blows over flowers awaking them and letting dewy diamonds drop into the hollow calyces, so that butterflies and sunbeams may find them very soon, the former to refresh themselves, the latter to have their great brightness reflected by the tiny mirrors. Look: the moon is setting. Dawn is being announced by that cock crowing far away. The darkness and

phantasm of the night are vanishing. See how quickly and pleasantly time has passed, whereas, if you had not come to Me, you would have spent it in disgust and remorse? You ought to come to Me every time you are afraid of yourself. One's own ego!!! A great friend, a great tempter, a great enemy and a great judge, Judas! And see? While it is a sincere loyal friend if you have been good, it can be an insincere friend if you are not good, and after being your accomplice, it rises to the office of implacable judge and tortures you with its reproaches… It is cruel in reproaching… Not I! Well, let us go. The night is over… »

« Master, I did not let You rest… and today You have to speak so much… »

« I have rested in the joy which you gave Me. There is no better rest for Me than to say: "Today I have saved one who was perishing". Come… Let us go down to Korazim! Oh! if this town only knew how to imitate you, Judas! »

« Master… what will You tell my companions? »

« Nothing, if they do not ask Me… If they ask Me, I will say that we spoke of God's mercy… It is such a true and boundless subject that a very long life is not sufficient to treat it. Let us go… »

And they go down, both tall, differently handsome but equally young, One beside the other, and they disappear behind a group of trees…

Jesus says:

« It is an episode of mercy like those of the Magdalene. But if you make a book, it will be better if you put the periods in orderly succession rather than the categories, simply stating at the beginning or end of each episode to which category it belongs.

Why do I elucidate Judas' figure? Many may wonder why.

I reply. Judas' figure has been distorted too much in the course of time. And lately it has been completely perverted. Some schools have sung his praises as if he had been the second and indispensable author of Redemption. Many also think that he succumbed to a sudden fierce assault of the Tempter. No. Every fall has premisses in time. The graver the fall, the more it is prepared. Antecedent factors explain the fact. One does not collapse or rise all of a sudden, either in Good or in Evil. There are long insidious factors in descents, and patient holy ones in ascents. Judas' unfortunate drama can teach you so well how to save yourselves and how to become acquainted with the method of God and His mercy in saving and forgiving those who descend towards the Abyss.

One does not arrive at the satanic delirium in which you saw Judas struggle after the Crime, unless one is completely corrupted by Hellish habits, which one has taken up voluptuously for years. When one commits a crime driven by a sudden event, which deranges

one's mind, one suffers but is capable of expiation, because some parts of the heart are still free from infernal poison. To the world denying Satan, because it has him so much in itself that it no longer notices him, it has absorbed him and has become part of his ego, I prove that Satan exists. He is eternal and immutable in the method employed to make you his victims.

That is enough now. Remain with My peace. »

467. Farewell to the Few Believers in Korazim.

6th August 1946.

It is not yet dawn when Jesus meets the eleven apostles and in the middle of them the little carpenter Joseph, who darts off like an arrow as soon as he sees Jesus, Whose knees he clasps with the simplicity of one who is still a child. Jesus bends to kiss his forehead and then, holding him by the hand, He goes towards Peter and the others.

« Peace be with you. I was not expecting to meet you here. »

« The boy woke when it was still dark and he wanted to come lest he might be late » explains Peter.

« His mother will be here soon with the other children. She wants to greet You » adds Judas of Alphaeus.

« Also the woman who was a cripple is coming, and Isaac's daughter, Elias' mother and others who were cured by You. They gave us hospitality… »

« And the others? »

« Lord… »

« Korazim perseveres in its harsh spirit. I understand. It does not matter. The good seed has been sown and it will germinate one day… thanks to these… » and He looks at the boy.

« Will he be a disciple and will he convert people? »

« He is a disciple, are you not, Joseph? »

« Yes. But I am not good at speaking, and as far as I know, they do not listen to me. »

« It does not matter. You will speak through your goodness. »

Jesus presses the child's little face in His long hands and bending lightly over his raised face He speaks to him.

« I am going away, Joseph. Be good and be a good worker. Forgive those who do not love you. Be grateful to those who help you. Always bear this in mind: that God is present in those who assist you and thus accept all assistance respectfully, without pretending, without saying: "I will idle about as there is someone who takes care of me", without spoiling the assistance you received. Work, because work is holy and you, a boy, are the only man in your family. Remember that by assisting your mother you honour her. Remember that to set a good example to your little

brothers and to watch over the honour of your sisters is a duty. Wish for what is just and work to have it, but do not envy the rich and do not wish to be wealthy to have a grand time. Remember that your Master taught you not only the word of God, but also love for work, humility and forgiveness. Be always good, Joseph, and one day we shall be together again. »

« But are You not coming back any more? Where are You going, Lord? »

« I am going where the will of the Father Who is in Heaven wants Me to go. His will must always be stronger than ours, and dearer to us than ours, because it is always a perfect will. You also, during your lifetime, are not to put your will before that of God. All the obedient people will meet in Heaven and it will be a great feast then. Give Me a kiss, child. »

A kiss! The boy gives Him many kisses shedding many tears, and his mother finds him thus, clinging to Jesus' neck, when she arrives with the crowd of her children and very few people, seven in all, from Korazim.

« Why are you weeping, son? » asks the woman after greeting the Master.

« Because every farewell is sorrowful. But even if we are separated we shall always be united if your hearts continue to love Me. You know how to love Me and in what your love for Me consists. In doing what I taught you, because he who does what someone has taught him, shows that he holds in high esteem that person, and esteem is always love. So do what I taught you with My words and examples, and do what My disciples will teach you in My name. Do not weep. Time is short and we shall soon be reunited and in a better manner. And do not weep out of selfishness. Think of how many people are still waiting for Me, of how many will die without seeing Me, of how many will have to love Me without ever knowing Me. You have had Me here several times and faith and hope are made easier for you by our mutual love. They instead will have to have a great faith, a blind faith, in order to be able to say: "He is really the Son of God, the Saviour, and His word is truthful". A great faith to be able to have the great hope of eternal life and immediate possession of God after a life of justice. They will have to love Him Whom they never met, Whom they never heard, Whom they never saw work miracles. And yet, only if they love thus, they will have eternal Life. You ought to bless the Lord Who has privileged you by granting you to know Me. Go now. Be faithful to the Law of Sinai and to My new commandment to love everybody like brothers, because there is God in love. Love also those who hate you, because God was the first to set the example of loving men who, through their sins, show hatred to God. Always forgive as God forgave men by sending His Word

Redeemer to cancel the Sin, the cause of grudge and separation. Goodbye. May My peace be with you. Let your hearts remember My deeds, to fortify them against the words of those who will try to convince you that I am not your Saviour. And keep My blessing for your strength in the trials of future life. »

Jesus stretches out His hands repeating the Mosaic blessing on the little herd prostrated at His feet. He then turns round and goes away…

468. Jesus Speaks of Matrimony to a Mother-in-law.

7th August 1946.

The fertile woody mountains where Giscala is situated afford refreshment of greenery, breezes, water and views which are varied and beautiful according to the different directions of the road. To the north is a series of wooded summits covered with the most varied green shades. I would say that the Earth seems to rise towards the blue vault of heaven, offering it, in grateful homage for the waters and sunbeams granted by it, all the vegetable beauties of nature. To north-east the eye stops fascinated contemplating the jewel of the Great Hermon which changes its colour according to time and light and raises its highest peak like a gigantic obelisk of diamond, of opal, of very pale sapphire, or of very delicate ruby, or of lightly hardened steel - according to whether the sun kisses it or leaves it and the ruffled clouds blown by winds cause play of light on its perpetual snow - then the eye descends along the emerald slopes of the tablelands, along ridges, gorges and peaks, which are at the base of the royal giant. Then turning farther eastwards one sees the green expanse of the plateaux of Gaulanitis and Hauran bordered at their eastern ends by mountains vanishing in distant haze, and delimited on the western side by the different shade of green which lies along the Jordan and marks its valley. And closer at hand, are two lakes, as splendid as two sapphires: the lake of Merom within the low circle of a well watered plain, and the lake of Tiberias, as graceful as a delicate pastel amid the hills surrounding it, different in shape and shades, with its shores perennially full of flowers: an eastern dream with groups of palm-trees waving their tops in the breeze from nearby mountains, the poetry of our lakes most beautiful for the calm of their waters and the cultivations of their shores. And then to the south, mount Tabor with its typical summit, and the little Hermon, completely green, watching over the plain of Esdraelon, the vast extent of which is revealed by the long horizon uninterrupted by mountain chains, and farther down, to the south, the high powerful mountains of Samaria stretching beyond man's sight towards Judaea. The only one which is not visible is the western

side, where mount Carmel must be and the plain stretching to the north, towards Ptolemais, both hidden by a mountain chain higher than this one, so that they cannot be seen. It is one of the most beautiful sights in Palestine.

Jesus is proceeding following the road among the mountains, at times all alone, at times joined by this or that apostle.

He stops once to caress a shepherd's children who are playing near the flock and He accepts the milk that the shepherd, who has recognised Him as the Rabbi described by other people who had seen Jesus, wants to give Him saying: « For You and for Your friends. »

He stops again to listen to an old woman who, not knowing who He is, tells Him her family troubles caused by a daughter-in-law who is shrewish and disrespectful.

Although He pities the old woman, Jesus exhorts her to be patient and to convince her daughter-in-law to be kind through her own kindness: « You must be a mother to her, even if she is not your daughter. Be sincere: if instead of being your daughter-in-law she were your daughter, would her faults appear to you so grave? »

The old woman ponders… and she then confesses: « No… But a daughter is always a daughter… »

« And if one of your daughters should tell you that in the house of her husband her mother-in-law ill-treated her, what would you say? »

« That she is bad. Because she ought to teach the customs of the house - as every house has its own - kindly, particularly if the wife is young. I would say that she should remember when she was a newly-wed bride herself, and how pleased she was to be loved by her mother-in-law, if she had been lucky to have a good one, and how she had suffered, if she had had a bad one. And that she should not make her daughter-in-law suffer what she had not suffered, or not make her suffer because she knows what it is to suffer. Oh! I would defend my daughter! »

« How old is your daughter-in-law? »

« She is eighteen years, Rabbi. She has been married to Jacob three years. »

« She is very young. Is she faithful to her husband? »

« Oh! yes. She is a stay-at-home and she is full of love for him and for little Levi and for the little girl, whose name is Anne, like mine. She was born at Passover… She is so beautiful!… »

« Who wanted her to be named Anne? »

« Mary did! Levi was the name of the father-in-law and Jacob called his first son after him, and when Mary had the girl she said: "We will give her the name of your mother". »

« And do you not think that that is love and respect? »

The old woman is pensive… Jesus insists: « She is honest, she is

fond of her home, she is a loving wife and mother, she is anxious to make you happy… She could have given her daughter the name of her own mother, instead she called her after you… she honours your house with her behaviour… »

« Oh! That is true! She is not like that wretch of Jezebel. »

« Well, then! Why do you complain and lay information against her? Do you not think that you are using two measures in judging your daughter-in-law in a different manner than you would judge a daughter of yours?… »

« The trouble is… is… that she has deprived me of the love of my son. Before he was all for me, now he loves her more than he loves me… » The real reason of prejudices of mothers-in-law overflows at last from the old woman's heart together with tears from her eyes.

« Does your son leave you wanting anything? Has he neglected you since he got married?… »

« No. I cannot say that. But, in brief, he belongs to his wife now… » and she weeps moaning more loudly.

Jesus smiles a quiet pitiful smile for the jealous old woman. But, being as kind as ever, He does not reproach her. He feels pity for the suffering mother and tries to cure her. He lays His hand on her shoulder as if He wanted to guide her, because she is blinded by tears, perhaps to make her feel, through His contact, so much love that she may be comforted and cured, and He says to her:

« Mother, and is it not right that it is so? Your husband did so with you, and his mother did not lose him, as you say and think, but she felt that he belonged less to her because your husband divided his love between his mother and you. And your husband's father, in his turn, stopped belonging completely to his mother, to love the mother of his children. And so on from generation to generation, going back in time to Eve: the first mother who saw her children divide with their wives the love which they previously had exclusively for their parents. But does Genesis not say: "This at last is bone from my bones and flesh from my flesh… This is why a man will leave his father and mother and will join himself to his wife and they will become one body". You may object: "It was the word of a man". Yes, but of what man? He was in the state of innocence and grace. He thus reflected without any shadow the Wisdom which had created him and he was aware of its truth. Through Grace and his innocence he possessed also the other gifts of God in full measure. As his senses were subdued to his reason, his mind was not obscured by the fumes of concupiscence. And because science was proportionate to his state, he spoke words of truth. So he was a prophet. Because you know that prophet means a person who speaks in the name of another person. And as true prophets always speak of matters concerning the spirit and the future, even if relating apparently to the present time and the body

- because in the sins of the flesh and in the facts of the present time are the seeds of future punishments, or facts of the future have roots in ancient events: for instance the coming of the Saviour originates from Adam's sin, and the punishments of Israel, foretold by the prophets, were brought about by the behaviour of Israel - so He Who urges their lips to speak things of the spirit can but be the Eternal Spirit Who sees everything in an eternal present. And the Eternal Spirit speaks through saints, because he cannot dwell in sinners. Adam was a saint, because justice was complete in him and every virtue was present in him, because God had instilled the fullness of His gifts into His creature. Man has to work hard now, to attain justice and possess virtues, because the incentives of evil are in him. But such incentives were not in Adam, on the contrary Grace made him little inferior to God his Creator. So his lips spoke words of grace. And this is a truthful word: "A man will leave his father and mother for a woman and he will join himself to his wife and they will become one body". And it is so absolutely true, that the Most Good Lord in order to comfort mothers and fathers included the fourth Commandment in the Law: "Honour your father and your mother". A Commandment that does not end with the marriage of man, but lasts beyond marriage. Previously good people instinctively honoured their relatives also after they left them to set up a new family. Since Moses it is an obligation of Law. And the purpose of it is to mitigate the grief of parents who were too often forgotten by their children after they got married. But the Law has not cancelled the prophetic words of Adam: "Man will leave his father and mother for his wife". They were just words and they are still valid. They reflected the thought of God. And the thought of God is immutable because it is perfect. So, mother, you must accept without selfishness the love of your son for his wife. And you will be holy as well. On the other hand, every sacrifice is compensated on the Earth. Is it not pleasant for you to kiss your grandchildren, the children of your son? And will the evening of your life not be peaceful and your last sleep placid with the delicate love of a daughter near you, to take the place of those daughters who are no longer in your house?… »

« How do You know that my daughters, who are all older than my son, are married and live far away?… Are You a prophet, too? You are a Rabbi. I can tell by the tassels of Your mantle and even if You did not have them, Your word reveals it. Because You speak like a great doctor. Are You perhaps a friend of Gamaliel? He was here just the day before yesterday. Now I do not know… And there were many rabbis with him, and many of his favourite disciples. Perhaps You have arrived late. »

« I know Gamaliel. But I am not going to him. I am not even going

into Giscala… »

« But who are You? You are certainly a rabbi. And You speak even better than Gamaliel… »

« Then… do what I told you. And you will have peace. Goodbye, mother. I am going on My way. You are certainly going to town. »

« Yes Mother!… The other rabbis are not so humble with a poor woman She Who bore You is certainly holier than Judith, if She gave You such a kind heart for every creature. »

« She is holy, indeed. »

« Tell me Her name »

« Mary. »

« And Yours? »

« Jesus. »

« Jesus!… » The little old woman is bewildered with astonishment. The news has paralysed her and riveted her where she heard it.

« Goodbye, woman. Peace be with you » and Jesus goes away quickly, He almost runs away before she may recover from the shock.

And the apostles follow Him with vigorous strides, amid much fluttering of garments, in vain chased by the shouts of the woman who implores: « Stop! Rabbi Jesus! Stop! I want to tell You something… » They slow down when the thick of the wooded mountains conceal them again and they can no longer see the road which takes one to Giscala and from which their mule-track branches off.

« How well You spoke to the woman » says Bartholomew.

« The lesson of a doctor! A pity that she was alone… » remarks James of Alphaeus.

«I want to remember those words… » exclaims Peter.

« The woman understood, or almost, after Your Name Now she will talk of You in town… » says Thomas.

« Provided she does not tease the wasps hurling them after us! » murmurs Judas of Kerioth.

« Oh! we are far away now!… And one does not leave traces in these woods, so we shall not be troubled » says Andrew optimistically.

« Even if we were!… I restored peace in a family » Jesus replies to everybody.

« How peculiar they are! Mothers-in-law are all alike! » says Peter.

« No. We have met some good ones. Do you remember the mother-in-law of Jerusa of Doco? And the mother-in-law of Dorcas from Caesarea Philippi? »

« Of course, James… There are some good ones… » agrees Peter; but he certainly thinks that his mother-in-law is a torture.

« Let us stop and eat. Then we will have a rest, so that we may arrive at the village in the valley before night » orders Jesus.

And they stop in a green dell, like the inside of a huge emerald green shell encrusted in the mountain and open to receive pilgrims in its peace. Light is mild, despite the time of the day, as tall mighty trees form a rustling vault over the meadow. And the temperature is mild because of the breeze blowing from the mountains. A little spring pours a silvery stream between two dark rocks and murmurs in a low voice disappearing among the thick herbs, in a tiny bed which it has dug, about a palm wide and all covered with the stalks growing on the banks, and waving in the light breeze; it then descends, in a tiny waterfall, on a rock below. The horizon, as seen between two large tree trunks, looks hazy and distant, towards the mountains of Lebanon, and is wonderful…

469. Jesus Speaks to Barnabas of the Law of Love.

10th August 1946.

It is pleasant to rest on the small tableland. But it is wise to descend to the valley while it is daylight, because it would be dark very early under the thick trees covering the mountain.

Jesus is the first to get up and He goes to freshen up His face, hands and feet in the tiny stream running from the little spring. He then calls His apostles, who are sleeping on the grass, and invites them to get ready to depart. And while they imitate Him, one after the other, washing themselves in the cool brook and filling their flasks at the fine stream flowing from the rock, He goes to the edge of the little meadow waiting for them near two age-old trees delimiting its eastern side, and He looks at the distant horizon.

Philip is the first to join Him, and looking in the same direction as his Master, he says to Him: « This sight is beautiful! You are admiring it… »

« Yes, but I was not looking only at its beauty. »

« At what, then? Were You perhaps thinking of the time when Israel will be great, of those places beyond Lebanon and Orontes, which in the course of centuries vexed us and are still distressing us, because the heart of the power which oppresses us through its Ambassador resides there? The prophecies concerning them made by several prophets are terrible indeed: "I will break Assyria in my country, I will crush him on my mountains… This is the hand stretched out against all the nations… And who will be able to hold it back?… Damascus is going to cease to be a city, she will become a heap of ruins… Such will be the lot of our plunderers". Isaiah speaks thus! And Jeremiah says: "I will light a fire inside the walls of Damascus, it shall devour the palaces of Ben-hadad". And that

will happen when the King of Israel, the Promised One, takes His sceptre, and God has forgiven His people by sending the King Messiah to them… Oh! Ezekiel says so: "Mountains of Israel, grow branches and bear fruit for my people Israel, who will soon return… I will lead my people back to you, and they will have you for their own domain… I shall never again let you hear the insults of the nations… And the psalms sing with Ethan the Ezrahite: "I have found my servant David and anointed him with my holy oil. My hand will assist him… His enemy will not be able to do anything against him… His fortunes shall rise in my name… He will stretch his hand over the sea and his right hand over rivers… And I will make him the first-born, the sovereign among the kings of the Earth". And Solomon sings: "He will endure like sun and moon… His empire shall stretch from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the Earth… All the kings of the Earth will do him homage, all nations will become his servants… You, Messiah, because all the signs of the spirit and of the flesh are in You, all the signs given by the prophets. Alleluia to You, Son of David, King Messiah, holy King! »

« Alleluia! » shout in chorus the others who have joined Jesus and Philip and have heard the latter's words. And alleluia echoes through gorges and hills…

Jesus looks at them very sadly… And He replies: « But do you not remember what David says of the Christ, and what Isaiah says of Him… You are taking the sweet honey and the inebriating wine of the prophets… but you are not considering that in order to be the King of kings the Son of man will have to drink bile and vinegar and dress Himself with the purple of His own Blood… But it is not your fault if you do not understand… Your error in understanding is love. I would like a different love in you. But for the time being you cannot… Ages of sin are against men preventing them from seeing the Light. But the Light will demolish the walls and will enter you… Let us go. »

They go back to the mule-path which they had left to go up to the remote plateau and they descend quickly towards the valley. The apostles speak to one another in low voices…

Then Philip runs ahead, joining the Master and asks: « Have I displeased You, Lord. I did not want to… Are You angry with me? »

« No, Philip, I am not. But I would like you at least to understand. »

« You were looking there with such keen desire… »

« Because I was thinking of how many places have not yet had Me… And will not have Me… because My time flies… How short is the time of man! And how slow man is in acting!… How much the spirit feels such limitations of the Earth!… But… Father, may Your will be done! »

« But You have covered all the regions of the old tribes, my Master. You have sanctified them at least once, so one can say that You gathered in Your hands the twelve tribes… »

« That is true. But, afterwards, you will do what time did not let Me do. »

« Since You can stop rivers and calm seas, could You not slow down time? »

« I could. But the Father in Heaven, the Son on the Earth, the Love in Heaven and on the Earth, are eager to accomplish Forgiveness… » and Jesus becomes engrossed in deep meditation which Philip respects leaving Him alone and joining his companions to whom he relates his conversation.

… The valley is now close at hand and a road can already be seen, a real main road, which from the south proceeds westwards, bending just at the foot of the mountain and running along its base. It then runs straight towards a fine village lying in the green near a little river, the bed of which is covered with stones, with a few resisting reeds here and there, particularly in the middle, where a little stream, just a tiny stream, persists in flowing towards the sea.

They all gather together before taking the main road, and they have only walked a few metres when two men come towards them waving their hands to greet them.

« Two disciples of rabbis, and one is a Levite. What do they want? » the apostles ask one another and they are not at all happy to meet them. I do not know how they can infer that the two are disciples and that one is a Levite. I do not yet understand the meaning of tassels and fringes and other secrets of Israelite garments.

When Jesus is about two metres away from the two men, and when no misunderstanding is possible as the road is now clear of wayfarers hurrying towards the village on foot or on horseback, He returns their repeated greetings and stops waiting.

« Peace to You, Rabbi » says the Levite who previously had just made low bows.

« Peace to you. And to you » says Jesus, addressing the other one.

« Are You the Rabbi named Jesus? »

« I am. »

« A woman came into town before the sixth hour and she said that she had spoken on the road to a rabbi greater than Gamaliel, because besides being wise He is good. The news reached us and our masters put off our departure for Jerusalem and sent us all out to look for You: two of us on each road going down from Giscala to the roads in the plain. In their names and through us they say to You: "Come into town, because we want to consult You". »

« Why? »

« That You may declare Your opinion on an event which took place in Giscala and of which the consequences are still lasting. »

« And have you not got the great doctors in Israel to give you their opinions? Why apply to the unknown Rabbi? »

«If You are He, Whom the rabbis say, You are not unknown. Are You not Jesus of Nazareth? »

« I am. »

« Your wisdom is known to the rabbis. »

« And their bitter hatred for Me is known to Me. »

« Not in all of them, Master. The greatest and just one does not hate You. »

« I know. But he does not love Me either. He studies Me. But is rabbi Gamaliel in Giscala? »

« No. He already left to be at Sephoris before the Sabbath. He left immediately after the sentence. »

« So why are you looking for Me? I have to keep the Sabbath as well and I can just reach that place in time. Do not keep Me any longer. »

« Are You afraid, Master? »

« I am not afraid because I know that so far no power has been given to My enemies. But I leave the joy of judging to wise people. »

« What do You mean? »

« That I do not judge. I forgive. »

« You can judge better than anybody else. Gamaliel said so. He said: "Only Jesus of Nazareth would judge with justice in this case". »

« All right. But you have already judged. And the matter can no longer be mended. My opinion would have been to calm passions before striking. If there was a fault the guilty man might have repented and redeemed himself. If there was no fault, there would have been no punishment, which according to some people is, in the eyes of God, the same as willful murder. »

« Master! But how do You know? The woman swore that You spoke with her only of her matters… and… You know… So are You really a prophet? »

« I am Who I am. Goodbye. Peace to you. The sun is descending to the west » and He turns round and goes towards the village.

« You have done the right thing, Master! They were certainly lying in wait for You! » The apostles are solid for the Master.

But their praises and reasons are cut short by the two previous men who reach them entreating Jesus to go up to Giscala.

« No. Sunset would overtake Me on the way. Tell those who sent you that I comply with the Law, I always do, when its observance is not prejudicial to the Commandment which is greater than the Sabbatic one- that of love. »

« Master, Master, we implore You. This is just a case of love and

justice. Come with us, Master. »

« I cannot. Neither can you go back up in time. »

« We have permission to do it in this case. »

« What? They reproached Me if I cured a sick man and absolved him on a Sabbath, and you are allowed to infringe the Sabbath for an idle discussion? Are there perhaps two measures in Israel? Go! Go and let Me go. »

« Master, You are a prophet and so You know. I believe it and this man believes it. Why are You rejecting us? »

« Because!… » Jesus stares at them and stops. His severe eyes, which pierce and penetrate beyond the veils of the body to read their hearts, scrutinise domineeringly the two men in front of Him. And then His eyes, so unsustainable in severity, so mild in love, change assuming such a loving and merciful expression that if previously a heart trembled with fear because of their powerful look, now it trembles with emotion in the presence of the bright love of the Christ. « Because! » He repeats… « Not I, but men reject the Son of man, and He must distrust His brothers. But to those whose hearts are without malice I say: "Come" and I also say: "Love Me" to those who hate Me… »

« So, Master… »

« So I am going to the village for the Sabbath. »

« At least wait for us. »

« I am leaving at sunset of the Sabbath. I cannot wait. »

The two men look at each other, they consult each other remaining behind; then the one whose face is more open and who has spoken almost all the time, runs back. « Master, I am staying with You until after the Sabbath. »

Peter, who is beside Jesus, plucks His tunic compelling Him to turn to his side and whispers: « No. A spy. » Judas Thaddeus who is behind his Cousin, says in a soft voice: « Don't trust him. » Nathanael, who had gone ahead with Simon and Philip, turns round and looks sternly meaning: « No. » Even the two most trustful ones, Andrew and John, shake their heads from behind the pestering fellow.

But Jesus does not pay attention to their suspicious fears and He replies briefly: « Stay » and the others must resign themselves.

The man is now happy and feels more at home. He also feels that he must tell his name, who he is, why he is in Palestine although he was born in the Diaspora, that he was consecrated to God from his birth, because he was « the consolation of his parents » who, grateful to the Lord for having him, entrusted him to relatives in Jerusalem, that he might be of the Temple. It was there, while serving the House of God, that he met Gamaliel and became his diligent and loved disciple. « They named me Joseph because like the ancient one, I relieved my mother of the grief of being barren.

But my mother always said "my consolation" when she fed me, so I became Barnabas for everybody. Also the great Rabbi calls me thus because he finds solace in his best disciples. »

« Ensure that God also may say that of you, and above all that He may call you so » says Jesus.

They enter the village.

« Are you familiar with this place? » asks Jesus.

« No, I have never been here. It is the first time that I come here, to Naphtali. The rabbi brought me here with other people, because I am all alone, I have no relatives… »

« Is God your Friend? »

« I hope so. I try to serve Him as best I can. »

« Then you are not alone. A sinner is alone. »

« I may sin, too. »

« As you are the disciple of a great rabbi, you are certainly aware of the conditions whereby an action becomes a sin. »

« Everything, Lord is sin. Man sins continuously, because the precepts are more numerous than the moments in a day. And consideration and circumstances do not always help us to avoid sin. »

« It is true that circumstances above all often lead us to sin. But have you a clear conception of the main attribute of God? »

« Justice. »

« No. »

« Power. »

« Neither. »

«… Severity. »

« Less than ever. »

« And yet it was so on Sinai and even later… »

« The Most High was then seen amidst lightning which encircled the face of the Father and Creator with awful haloes. You really do not know the true face of God. If you knew Him and His spirit, you would know that the main attribute of God is Love, and merciful Love. »

« I know that the Most High has loved us. We are the chosen people. But it is tremendous to serve Him! »

« If you know that God is Love, how can you say that He is tremendous? »

« Because by sinning we lose His love. »

« I have already asked you whether you know the conditions whereby an action becomes a sin. »

« When it is not an action of the six hundred and thirteen precepts, or of the traditions, decisions, customs, blessings and prayers, besides the ten commandments of the Law, or it does not comply with the teaching of the scribes, then it is a sin. »

« Even if man does not do it with full knowledge and perfect consent of will? »

« Yes, even so. Because who can say: "I do not sin"? Who can hope to have peace in Abraham after death? »

« Are the spirits of men perfect? »

« No, because Adam sinned and we have that fault in us. It makes us weak. Man has lost the Grace of the Lord, the only strength to support us… »

« And does the Lord know that? »

« He knows everything. »

« So, do you think that He has no mercy taking into account what makes man weak? Do you think that He exacts from the smitten descendants what He could exact from the first Adam? That is where lies the difference which you do not take into consideration. God is justice, I agree. He is Power, I agree. He may also be Severity with the unrepentant sinner who perseveres in his sin. But when He sees that one of His children - all men are children on the Earth which is one hour of eternity for the spirit, that becomes adult at its spiritual examination of eternal majority at the moment of the particular judgement - when He sees that one of His children errs because he is absent-minded, or slow in distinguishing, or not very well educated, or because he is very weak in one or more things, do you think that the Most Holy Father may judge him with inflexible severity? You said it yourself, that man lost Grace, the strength to react against Temptation and incentives. And God knows that. And one must not be afraid of God and shun Him as Adam did after his sin. But man ought to remember that He is Love. His face shines upon men, not to reduce them to ashes, but to comfort them as the sun comforts with its beams. Love, not severity radiates from God: sunbeams, not flashes of lightning. In any case… What did Love impose of His own will? A burden which cannot be carried? A code of numberless chapters easy to be forgotten? No. Just ten commandments, to bridle like a colt the animal man, who without bridle goes to rack and ruin. But when man is saved, when Grace is given back to him, when the Kingdom of God is established, that is, the Kingdom of love, the children of God and subjects of the King will be given one only commandment which will comprise everything: "Love your God with your whole self and your neighbour like yourself". Because, believe, o man, that God-Love can but alleviate the yoke and make it pleasant and love will make it pleasing to serve God, when He is no longer feared but loved. Only loved, loved for Himself and loved in our brothers. How simple the last Law will be! As God is, Who is perfect in His simplicity. Listen: love God with your whole self, love your neighbour as yourself. Meditate. Are the burdensome six hundred and thirteen precepts and all the prayers and blessings not already included in these two sentences, divested of useless cavils, which are not religion but slavery towards

God? If you love God you will certainly honour Him every hour of the day. If you love your neighbour, you will not do anything which may grieve him. You will not lie, steal, kill or injure, you will not commit adultery. Is it not so? »

« It is… Just Master, I would like to stay with You. But Gamaliel has already lost to You his best disciples… I… »

« It is not yet the hour for you to come to Me. When it comes, your very master will tell you, because he is a just man. »

« He is, is he not? Do You say so? »

« I say so because it is the truth. I am not one who knocks people down to rise above those who have been knocked down. I recognise everybody's rights… But they are calling us… They must have found lodgings for us. Let us go… »

470. A Judgement of Jesus.

12th August 1946.

« I am not at all happy to stay here with this man who has joined us… » grumbles Peter who is with Jesus in a thick orchard.

It must be the afternoon of the Sabbath, because the sun is still high, whereas it was already twilight when they arrived at the village.

« We shall depart after the prayers. It is Sabbath. We were not allowed to walk and this rest has done us good. We shall not stop any more until the next Sabbath. »

« But You have not rested very much. All those sick people!… »

« So many are now praising the Lord. To spare you so much road, I would have stopped here for two days to give the people whom I cured time to take the news beyond the borders, but you did not agree. »

« No! I would like to be already far away. And… do not trust people too much, Master. You talk and talk! But do You know that every word of Yours becomes poison against You on certain lips? Why did they send him to us? »

« You know why. »

« Yes, but why did he stay? »

« He is not the first one to remain with us after approaching Me. »

Peter shakes his head, he is not convinced. And he grumbles: « A spy!… A spy!… »

« Do not judge, Simon. You might repent of your present judgement one day… »

« I am not judging. I am afraid. For You. And that is love. And the Most High cannot punish me because I love You. »

« I am not saying that you would repent of that, but of having a bad opinion of a brother of yours. »

« He is the brother of those who hate You. So he is not my

brother. »

From a human point of view his logic is correct, but Jesus remarks: « He is a disciple of Gamaliel and Gamaliel is not against Me. »

« But he is not with You either. »

« He who is not against Me is with Me, even if he does not appear to be so. You cannot expect Gamaliel, the greatest doctor at present in Israel, a well of rabbinical knowledge, a real mine in which is all the… essence of rabbinical science, to disown everything at once to accept… Me. Simon, it is difficult even for all of you to accept Me, forsaking all your past… »

« But we have accepted You! »

« No. Do you know what it means to accept Me? It means not only to love Me and follow Me. That is very much the merit of the Man I am and Who is an attraction for you. To accept Me is to accept My doctrine, which is identical to the ancient one in the divine Law, but which is completely different from that law, from that heap of human laws which have been piling up in the course of ages forming a code and a formulary which has nothing divine. You, all the humble people in Israel and also some important very just people, complain of and criticise the formalistic subtleties of scribes and Pharisees, their intolerance and hardness… but you are not immune yourselves. It is not your fault. In the course of ages, you Hebrews have slowly absorbed the… the human exhalations of those who have adulterated the pure superhuman Law of God. You know. When a man continues to live for years in a way which is different from that of his native country, because he is in a foreign country and his children and the children of his children live there, it happens that his offspring end up by becoming like the people of the place where they are. They become so acclimatised that they lose even their national physical appearance, in addition to moral habits, and unfortunately, also the religion of their ancestors… But here are the others. Let us go to the synagogue. »

« Are You going to speak? »

« No. I am a simple believer. I spoke this morning through miracles… »

« Provided that it is not going to be detrimental… » Peter is really dissatisfied and worried, but he follows the Master Who has joined the other apostles and meets on the road with the man from Giscala and other people, probably from the village.

In the synagogue the minister, out of deference to Jesus, addresses Him asking: « Will You explain the Law, Rabbi? »

But Jesus refuses and like a simple believer follows all the ceremonies, kissing like the others the parchment presented to Him by the assistant (I call him thus because I do not know what name to give the assistant of the synagogue minister) and listening

to the explanation of the passage chosen by the minister. However, although He does not speak, His aspect is already a sermon owing to the way He prays… Many look at Him. Gamaliel's disciple does not lose sight of Him for one moment. And the apostles keep good watch on the disciple, suspicious as they are.

Jesus does not even turn round when some people speak in low voices at the entrance of the synagogue distracting many believers. But the rite comes to an end and the people go out into the square of the synagogue. Although Jesus was closer to the back than to the front of the synagogue, He is one of the last to come out and He goes towards the house to get His sack and depart. Many people of the town follow Him and among them is Gamaliel's disciple, who at a certain moment is called by three men leaning against the wall of a house. He speaks to them and then elbows his way with them towards Jesus.

« Master, these men wish to speak to You » he says attracting the attention of Jesus Who was speaking to Peter and His cousin Judas.

« Scribes! I told You! » exclaims Peter already upset.

Jesus bows to the three men who greet Him and He asks: « What do you want? »

The oldest man says: « As You did not come, we came. And that no one may think that we have infringed the Sabbath, we inform everybody that we covered the road in three different periods of time. The first until the last light of sunset lasted. The second, of six stadia, while moonlight illuminated the paths. The third ended just now and it did not exceed the legal measure. We say that for your souls and ours, but for our minds we apply to Your wisdom. Are You aware of what happened in the town of Giscala? »

« I came from Capernaum. I do not know anything. »

« Listen. A man who had been away from home for a long time on business, learned, when he came back, that during his absence his wife had been unfaithful to him, to the extent of giving birth to a child, who could not be of her husband, as he had been away for fourteen months. The man killed his wife secretly. But he was denounced by a man who had been informed by the maid-servant and was killed, according to the law of Israel. The lover, who according to the Law should be stoned, has taken shelter at Kedesh and he will certainly try to go to other places. The illegitimate child, whom the husband wanted to kill as well, was not handed to him by the woman who suckled him and she went to Kedesh to excite the pity of the true father and convince him to take care of his son, because her husband is opposed to keeping the illegitimate child in his house. But the man rejected her and his son stating that the latter would be a hindrance to him in his flights. What is Your opinion on the matter? »

« I do not think that it can be judged any more. All judgement, whether right or wrong, has already been given. »

« Which judgement, according to You, is just and which is unjust. There is disagreement among us concerning the punishment of the murderer. »

Jesus stares at them, one after the other. He then says: « I will speak. But first answer My questions, whatever their weight may be. And be sincere. Did the man who murdered his wife belong to this town? »

« No. He settled here when he married the woman who is from here. »

« Did the adulterer come from here? »

« Yes, he did. »

« How did the man find out that his wife had been unfaithful to him? Was their sin known in public? »

« Not really, and we do not know how the man was able to find out. The woman had been away for months saying that, as she did not want to be all alone, she was going to Ptolemais to stay with some relatives, and she came back saying that she had brought with her the little son of a relative of hers who had died. »

« When she was in Giscala was her behaviour impudent? »

« No. In fact we were all surprised to hear that Marcus had an affair with her. »

« My relative is not a sinner. He is accused but he is innocent » says one of the three men who had never spoken so far.

« Was he a relative of yours? Who are you? » asks Jesus.

« The first of the Elders of Giscala. That is why I wanted the life of the murderer, because he not only killed, but he killed an innocent » and he looks sullenly at the third man, who is about forty years old and who replies: « The Law says that the murderer is to be killed. »

« You wanted the lives of the woman and of the adulterer. »

« That is the Law. »

« Had there been no other reason, no one would have spoken. »

The dispute becomes animated and the two antagonists almost forget about Jesus. But the one who was the first to speak, the oldest man, imposes silence saying impartially: « It is not possible to deny that a homicide has been committed, neither can one deny that there has been a fault. The woman confessed it to her husband. But let the Master speak. »

« I say: how did the husband find out? You have not answered My question. »

The man defending the woman says: « Because someone spoke as soon as the husband came back. »

« In that case I say that his soul was not pure » says Jesus lowering His eyelids to veil His eyes so that they may not accuse.

But the forty year old man who wanted the death of the woman and of the adulterer exclaims: « I did not hunger for her. »

« Ah! it is clear now! It was you who spoke! I suspected that, but now you have betrayed yourself! Assassin! »

« And you are an accomplice of the adulterer. If you had not warned him, he would not have escaped us. But he is your relative! That is how justice is done in Israel! That is why you are defending also the memory of the woman: to defend your relative. If she were the only one involved, you would not worry about her. »

« And what about you, who hurled the man against the woman to take vengeance for her refusals? »

« And what about you, the only witness against the man, and you paid a maid-servant in that house to be helped by her? One witness only is not a valid one. That's the Law. » A terrible uproar!

Jesus and the old man try to calm the two men who represent two opposed interests and trends and who reveal an incurable hatred of two families. They succeed with some difficulty and Jesus now speaks calmly and solemnly, after defending Himself from the accusation of one of the two opponents, who said: « You Who protect prostitutes… »

« I not only say that consummated adultery is a crime against God and one's neighbour, but I say: also he who craves lustfully for the wife of another man commits adultery in his heart and commits a sin. It would be dreadful if every man who has craved for the wife of another man should be put to death! Lapidators would need to have stones in their hands all the time. But if the sin often remains unpunished on the Earth, it will be expiated in the next life, because the Most High said: "You shall not commit adultery and you shall not covet your neighbour's wife", and God's word is to be obeyed. But I also say: "Woe betide him who is the cause of scandal and him who informs against his neighbour". In this case everybody is guilty. The husband: was it really necessary for him to leave his wife for such a long time? Did he always treat her with the love that conquers the heart of a companion? Did he examine himself to ascertain whether the woman had not been offended by him before he was offended by her? The law of retaliation says: "An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth". But if it says so to exact amends, are these to be given by one only? I am not defending the adulteress. But I say: "How many times could she have accused her husband of that sin?" »

The people whisper: « It is true! It is true! » and also the old man from Giscala and Gamaliel's disciple agree.

Jesus goes on: «… I say: why did he, who caused such a tragedy out of revenge, not fear God? Would he have liked all that to happen in his family? I say: the man who ran away and who after enjoying himself and causing ruin now disowns also the innocent

child, does he think that by fleeing he will escape the eternal Avenger? That is what I say. I also say: the Law exacted the lapidation of adulterers and the killing of murderers. But the day will come when the Law, necessary to control the violence and lust of men not fortified by the Grace of the Lord, will be modified, and if the commandments: "You shall not kill and you shall not commit adultery" remain, the sanctions against such sins will be referred to a higher justice than that of hatred and blood. A justice, compared with which, the surviving ever false undeserving justice of human judges, all of whom are adulterers, and perhaps several times adulterers, if not even killers, will be less than nothing. I am speaking of the justice of God Who will ask men also the reason for lustful desires which are the causes of revenge, delations, murders, and above all will ask them why they deny guilty people time to redeem themselves and why they compel innocent people to bear the burden of other people's faults. They are all guilty in this case. Everybody. Also the judges urged by opposing reasons of personal revenge. One only is innocent. And My pity is for him. I cannot go back. But which of you will be charitable to the baby and to Me Who am suffering for him? » Jesus looks at the crowd with eyes expressing sad prayer.

Many say: « What do You want? Remember: he is illegitimate. »

« There is a woman in Capernaum whose name is Sarah. She comes from Aphek. She is one of My disciples. Take the child to her and say: "Jesus of Nazareth entrusts him to you". When the Messiah, Whom you are expecting, establishes His Kingdom and issues His laws, which do not cancel the Word of Sinai but they complete it through charity, illegitimate children will no longer be motherless, because I shall be the Father of those who have no father and I will say to My believers: "Love them for My sake". And other things will be changed, because violence will be replaced by love.

Perhaps you were expecting Me to deny the Law when you questioned Me. And that is why you were looking for Me. Say to yourselves and to those who sent you that I came to perfect the Law, not to deny it. Say to yourselves and to the others that He Who preaches the Kingdom of God cannot certainly teach what in the Kingdom of God would be horror and consequently could not be accepted there. Say to yourselves and to the others that you must remember Deuteronomy: "The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet from your country, from your brothers. Listen to him. This is what you asked of the Lord your God at Horeb and you said: 'Do not let me hear again the voice of the Lord my God, nor look any longer on this great fire and I may not die'. And the Lord said to me: 'They have spoken well and I will raise up a prophet like yourself for them from their own brothers and I will

put My words into his mouth and he shall tell them all I command him. And if anyone does not listen to the words that he speaks in My name, I will avenge Myself on him'".

God sent His Word to you that He might speak without killing you with His voice. God had already said so much to man and it was more than man deserved to hear from God. So much was said by means of the Law of Sinai and through the Prophets. But so much was still to be said and God kept it for His prophet of the time of Grace, for the One Promised to His people, in Him is the Word of God and through Him forgiveness will be accomplished. Founder of the Kingdom of God, He will codify the Law with new precepts of love, because the time of love has come. And He will not ask the Most High for vengeance on those who do not listen, but He will only beg that the fire of God may melt the hearts of stone and the Word of God may penetrate them and found in them the Kingdom which is the Kingdom of the spirit, just as its King is a spiritual King. To whoever loves the Son of man, the Son of man will give the Way, Truth, Life to go to God, to know Him and to live the eternal Life. Sources of light will be opened in whoever accepts My word, so that they may know the concealed meaning of the words of the Law and they may see that prohibitions are not threats but invitations of God, Who wants men to be happy, not damned, to be blessed, not cursed.

Once again you have made use of a question already resolved, but not as holiness would have resolved it, but as an inquisitive instrument to catch Me in sin. But I know that I am not sinning. And I am not afraid to speak My mind, which is: for making profit the aim of his life, the murderer has paid first with disgrace and then with death. The woman has paid for her sin with her death and this will surprise you but it is the truth - her confession to convince her husband to have pity for the innocent child, has diminished in the eyes of God the weight of her sin. The others: you and you, and he who fled with no pity even for his own child, are more guilty than the first two. Are you grumbling? You have not paid with your lives, neither have you the extenuating circumstances of the husband of the adulteress or those of the woman for being neglected and for her confession.

You have all committed a sin, all of you with the exception of the wet-nurse of the innocent child: the sin of rejecting the innocent like a shameful evil. You were able to kill the homicide. You would have been able to kill also the adulterers. You have been able to do and would have been able to do what is severe justice. But not one has been or is able to stretch out his arms and have pity for the innocent child. But you are not fully responsible. You do not know… You never know exactly what you do and what ought to be done. And that is your excuse. When this disciple of Gamaliel

came to Me, he said: "Come. They want to consult You with regard to a fact the consequences of which are still lasting". The consequences are the innocent child. Well, now that you are aware of My opinion, are you going to change your judgement where it is still changeable?

I said to this man: "I do not judge. I forgive". Gamaliel said: "Only Jesus of Nazareth would judge with justice in this case". I, as I told this man, would have advised everybody, I say everybody, not to strike until the matter had been carefully examined and passions had subsided. Many things could have been changed without infringing the Law. The matter is over now. And may God forgive those who repented or will repent. I have nothing else to say. Or rather, I have still one thing: may God forgive you once again for tempting the Son of man. »

« Not I, Master! Not I! I… I love Gamaliel as a disciple should love his master: more than a father. More, because a rabbi perfects the intellect, which is greater than the body. And… I cannot leave my rabbi to follow You. But to greet You, I can find no other words but those of Judith's canticle. They rise from the depth of my heart because I found justice and wisdom in all Your words. "Adonai, Lord, You are great and magnificent in Your power. No one can conquer You. No one can resist Your voice. Those who fear You will be great in Your eyes in everything!"… I will go to Capernaum to see the woman You mentioned… Pray for me that my stone may melt and may be pierced by the Word which establishes the Kingdom of God in us… Now I have understood. We are mistaken. And we disciples are the less guilty… »

« What are you saying, you fool? » interrupts violently the Elder of Giscala addressing Gamaliel's disciple.

« What am I saying? I am saying that my master is right. And that he who tempts Him to establish a temporal kingdom is a demon, because He is a true Prophet of the Most High and Wisdom speaks through His lips. Tell me, Master, what must I do? »

« Meditate. »

« But… »

« Meditate. You are an unripe fruit. And you need to be engrafted, too. I will pray for you. » He then tells the apostles to follow Him and when they have picked up their bags, He sets out with them leaving all comments behind.

471. Cure of the Boy Born Blind from Sidon.

15th August 1944.

I see Jesus come out of a synagogue surrounded by His apostles and by a crowd of people. I realise that it is a synagogue, because through the wide open door I can see the same furniture that I saw

in the synagogue of Nazareth, in one of the visions preparing for Passover.

The synagogue is in the main square of the village. A bare square, surrounded only by houses, with a basin in the centre nourished by a fountain pouring lovely clear water from only one jet of stone carved like a bent tile. The basin is used to water quadrupeds and many doves which fly about from house to house; the fountain to fill the jugs of women, beautiful copper amphorae, some of which are hammered, some smooth, all shining in the sun. Because it is sunny and warm. The earth of the square is dry and yellowish, as when it is parched by strong sunshine. There is not even one tree in the square. But branches of fig-trees and vineshoots hang out over the little walls of orchards along the four roads which depart from the square. It must be the end of summer and the end of a day, because ripe bunches of grapes are hanging from the pergolas, and sunbeams are not perpendicular but oblique as at sunset.

In the square some people are waiting for Jesus. But I do not see any miracle among them. Jesus passes, He bends over them, He blesses and comforts them, but does not cure them, at least for the time being. There are also women with children and men of all ages. They appear to be known to the Master, Who greets them calling them by their names and they crowd round Him with familiarity. Jesus caresses the children bending lovingly over them.

In a corner of the square is a woman with a little boy or girl (they are all dressed alike with light coloured little tunics). She does not seem to come from here. I would say that she is of higher social standing than the others. Her dress is more elaborate, with braids and folds; it is not the plain tunic of ordinary women with only a cordon to adorn and shape it. This woman, instead, is wearing an elaborate dress, which, although not a masterpiece like the garments of Mary Magdalene, is very graceful. She has a light veil on her head, much lighter than the other women's veils, which are made of thin linen fabric, whereas hers is almost muslin, so light it is. It is gracefully pinned at the middle of her head, displaying her well combed brown hair, with locks plaited in a simple fashion, but with more skilled care than those of the other women, whose tresses are in a knot on the napes of their necks or form a circle round their heads. On her shoulders she has a real mantle, that is, a cloth which I do not know whether it is sewn or woven in a round shape, with around the neck a braid ending in a silver clasp. The cloth of the mantle falls in beautiful wide folds down to her ankles.

The woman is holding by the hand the little boy or girl I mentioned previously. A lovely boy about seven years old. He is also strong, but not in the least lively. He is standing very quietly beside

his mother, his hand in hers, with his head lowered, without taking an interest in what is happening.

The woman is watching but she dare not approach the group which has gathered round Jesus. She seems undecided, as while she is urged by her desire to go, she is afraid of moving forward. She then decides to take a middle course: to attract Jesus' attention. She sees Him take in His arms a beautiful big rosy smiling baby whom a mother has offered Him and whom He dandles pressing him to His heart while speaking to a little old man. She bends over her little boy and says something to him.

The boy raises his head. I now see a sad little face, with closed eyes. He is blind. « Have mercy on me, Jesus! » he says. The infantile little voice cleaves the still air of the square and arrives as far as the group with its lament.

Jesus turns round and sees him. He moves at once with loving care. He does not even hand back to its mother the child He is holding in His arms. Tall and most handsome as He is, He goes towards the blind boy, who after crying, has lowered his head again, in vain urged by his mother to repeat the cry.

Jesus is now before the woman. He looks at her. She also looks at Him; then she timidly lowers her eyes. Jesus helps her. He has handed the child He had in His arms to the woman who gave it to Him.

« Woman, is this son yours? »

« Yes, Master, he is my first-born. »

Jesus caresses his bent head. Jesus does not seem to have noticed the blindness of the little one. But I think that He does so deliberately to let the mother make her request.

« So the Most High has' blessed your house with numerous children and giving you first the son sacred to the Lord. »

« I have only one son; this one and three girls. And I will not have any more… » She sobs.

« Why are you weeping, woman? »

« Because my son is blind, Master! »

« And you would like him to be able to see. Can you believe? »

« I do believe, Master. I was told that You have opened eyes which were closed. But my boy was born with dried eyes. Look at him, Jesus. There is nothing under his eyelids… »

Jesus raises towards Himself the little face prematurely serious and looks closer lifting the eyelids with His thumbs. There are empty spaces under them. He resumes speaking holding with His hand the little face raised towards Himself.

« Why have you come, then, woman? »

« Because… I know that it is more difficult for my boy… but if it is true that You are the Expected One, You can do it. Your Father created the worlds… Could You not make two eyes for my child? »

« Do you believe that I come from the Father, the Most High Lord? »

« I believe it and I believe that You can do everything. »

Jesus looks at her as if He wished to evaluate how much faith there is in her and how pure is her faith. He smiles. He then says: « Child, come to Me » and He takes him by the hand to a little wall, about half a metre high, built on the road against a house, a kind of parapet to protect it from the road, which has a bend just there.

When the boy is steady on the wall, Jesus becomes grave and imposing. The crowds press round Him, the boy and the anxious mother. I see Jesus from one side, in profile. He is all enveloped in His very dark blue mantle, which He wears over a tunic a little lighter in shade. His face is inspired. He looks taller and even sturdier, as is usual when the power of miracles emanates from Him. But this time He seems more imposing. He lays His hands open on the boy's head, and places His thumbs against the hollow eyesockets. He raises His head praying fervently, but without moving His lips: He is certainly conversing with His Father. He then says: « See! I want it! And praise the Lord! » and to the woman: « Let your faith be rewarded. Here is your son who will be your honour and your peace. Show him to your husband. He will love you once again and your house will be blessed with further happy days. »

The woman, who has uttered a shrill cry of joy when, the divine thumbs being removed, from the empty eye-sockets two deep blue wonderful eyes, like those of the Master, look at her full o f wonder and happiness, under the fringe of dark hair, cries once again, and although she still presses her son against her heart, she kneels at Jesus' feet saying: « Are You aware also of that? Ah! You really are the Son of God. » And she kisses His mantle and sandals and then stands up transfigured with joy and says: « Listen, everybody. I have come from the distant land of Sidon. I came because another mother spoke to me of the Rabbi of Nazareth. My husband, a Jewish merchant, has stores in that town to trade with Rome. He is rich and faithful to the Law, but he has no longer loved me since I, after giving him an unhappy boy, gave birth to three girls and then I became barren. He left the house and although I had not been repudiated, I was living in the same situation as if I had been divorced, and I was already aware that he wanted to get rid of me to have from another woman an heir capable of carrying on his trade and enjoying his wealth. Before coming here I went to my husband and I said to him: "Wait, sir, wait until I come back. If I come back and my son is still blind, you may repudiate me. Otherwise do not break my heart and do not deny your children a father". And he swore to me: "By the glory of the Lord, woman, I swear to you that if you bring back my son cured - I do not know how you will be able to do that as your womb was not able to give

him eyes - I will come back to you as in the days of our first love". The Master did not know of my grief as a wife, and yet He comforted me also in that respect. Glory be to God and to You, Master and King. » The woman is on her knees once again and is weeping for joy.

« Go. Tell Daniel, your husband, that He Who created the worlds, has given two bright stars as eyes to the little one sacred to the Lord. Because God is faithful to His promises and has sworn that he who believes in Him will see all kinds of wonders. Let him now be faithful to his oath and let him not commit a sin of adultery. Tell Daniel that. Go. Be happy. I bless you and this child and with you I bless all those who are dear to you. »

The crowd is a chorus of praises and congratulations and Jesus goes into a nearby house to rest.

The vision ends thus. And I can assure you that I was deeply moved by it.

Jesus says:

« God always surpasses the requests of His children, when they have faith in Him, and gives them even more. Believe it and let everybody believe it. To the woman who came to Me from Sidon with two swords piercing the secrets of her heart and who dared to tell Me the name of only one of them, I gave also a second miracle, because it is more grievous to reveal certain intimate misfortunes than to say: "I am not well".

In the eyes of the world it may have seemed and may still seem much easier to establish reconciliation between husband and wife separated by a reason which has been satisfactorily overcome, than to give two eyes to someone born without them. But it is not so. It is most simple for the Lord and Creator to make two eyes, just as simple as to give the breath of life back to a corpse. The Master of Life and of Death, the Master of everything there is in Creation does certainly not lack the breath of life to be instilled into dead bodies or two drops of humour for a dried eye. If He wants, He can. Because it depends exclusively on His power. But when it is a matter of reconciliation between men, the "will" of men is required together with the desire of God. God only rarely does violence to human freedom. As a rule He lets you act as you wish.

That woman, who lived in a country of idolaters and, like her husband remained faithful to the God of her fathers, already deserves benignity from God. And she deserved a double miracle, because she carried her faith beyond the limit of human measure and overcame the doubts and the denials of most Jewish believers, which is proved by what she said to her husband: "Wait until I come back", as she was certain of going back with her son cured. She deserved also the difficult miracle of opening the eyes of her

husband's spirit, as those eyes had become blind to love and to her grief, as they laid on her a blame, which is not a blame.

I would also like wives in particular, to meditate on the respectful humility of their sister.

"I went to my husband and I said to him: 'Wait, sir'". She was in the right because to blame a mother for a birth defect is foolish and cruel. Her heart was already rent by the sight of her unhappy child. She is doubly in the right because she was neglected by her husband since she became barren, and she was aware of his intention to divorce her, and yet she remained his "wife": that is, the faithful companion, submissive to her companion, as prescribed by God and taught by the Scriptures. She did not harbour thoughts of rebellion or thirst for revenge or intention to find another man in order not to be the "lonely woman". "If I do not come back with my son cured, you can repudiate me. Otherwise do not break my heart and do not deny your children a father". Do you not seem to be hearing Sarah and ancient Hebrew women speak thus?

How different, o wives, is your present language! And how different, too, is what you get from God and from your husbands. And families are ruined more and more.

As usual, in working the miracle, I had to give it a sign to make it more incisive. I had to persuade a world enclosed in the barriers of an age-old way of thinking, led by a sect hostile to Me. Hence the necessity for making My supernatural power shine clearly. But the teaching of the vision does not consist in that. It consists in the faith, humility, faithfulness to one's consort, in the right path undertaken, o wives and mothers, who have found thorns where you expected to have roses, to see new flowery branches grow on the thorns which prick you.

Turn to your Lord God Who created marriage so that man and woman might not be alone and might love each other, forming one only indissoluble body, since they were joined together, and Who gave you the Sacrament so that His blessing might descend upon your marriage, and through My merits you may have what you need in your new life of consorts and procreators. And in order to be able to turn to Him with confident faces and souls, be honest, good, respectful, faithful, true companions of your husbands, not just guests in their houses, or worse still, strangers which chance has gathered under one roof, like two who meet by chance in a hotel of pilgrims.

That happens too often nowadays. Does man make a mistake? He is wrong. But that does not justify the behaviour of too many wives. And you are even less justified when you do not render good for good and love for love to a kind companion. I will not even take into consideration the too common case of your carnal unfaithfulness which makes you like prostitutes with the aggravating

circumstance that you are hypocritically vicious, and you pollute the family altar around which are the angelical souls of your innocent children. But I refer to your moral unfaithfulness to the pact of love sworn before My altar.

Well: I said: "He who looks at a woman with lustful desire commits adultery in his heart"; I said: "He who dismisses his wife with a libel of divorce, exposes her to adultery". But now that too many wives are strangers to their husbands, I say: "Those who do not love their companions with their souls, minds and bodies, incite them to adultery, and if I ask such husbands why they committed adultery, I will also ask their wives the same question, because although they do not perform it, they cause it". It is necessary to understand the Law of God in its full extent and depth and it is necessary to live it in full truthfulness.

Remain with My peace, the above does not apply to you, and keep your heart fixed in Mine. »

472. A Vision that Is Lost in a Rapture of Love.

Jesus says:

« You will put here the vision of 15th August 1944: Jesus cures the boy born blind from Sidon. »

15th August 1946.

As they often do while walking, perhaps to alleviate the monotony of their continuous travelling with this distraction, the apostles speak to one another recapitulating and commenting on the latest events, questioning now and again the Master, Who in general speaks very little, just not to be unkind, making such effort only when it is the case of teaching the crowds or His apostles, or correcting wrong ideas, or comforting unhappy people.

Jesus was the « Word », but He certainly was not a « chatterbox »! As patient and kind as nobody else, He never appeared to be bored when He had to repeat a concept once, twice, ten times, a hundred times to make it enter the heads hardened by pharisaical and rabbinical precepts, neglecting His own tiredness, at times so exhausting as to be painful, in order to relieve the moral or physical suffering of a person. But it is clear that He prefers to be silent, keeping aloof in quiet meditation which may last for many hours, if He is not distracted by someone questioning Him. He generally walks ahead of His apostles, with His head slightly bent, raising it now and again to look at the sky, the country, people, animals. I said to look. But that is wrong. I must say: to love. Because it is a smile, God's smile that from His eyes pours forth to caress the world and creatures: a love-smile. Because it is love that shines forth, spreads, blesses and purifies the light of His eyes, which are

so bright, most bright, when He comes out of intense concentration.

What are His concentrations like? I think - and I am sure that I am not mistaken, because it is enough to watch His countenance to see what they are - I think that they are much more than our ecstasies in which a human creature already lives in Heaven. They are the « sensible reunion of God with God ». Divinity is always present and united to the Christ, Who is God like the Father. On the Earth as in Heaven the Father is in the Son and the Son is in the Father, They love each other and by loving each other They generate the Third Person. The power of the Father is the generation of the Son and the act of generating and being generated creates the Fire, that is, the Spirit of the Spirit of God. The Power turns to the Wisdom Whom It generated and Who turns to the Power in the joy of being One for the Other and of knowing each other for what They are. And since all good reciprocal knowledge creates love - even our imperfect knowledge does - there is the Holy Spirit… There is the One Who, if it were possible to add perfection to divine perfections, ought to be called the Perfection of Perfection. The Holy Spirit! The simple thought of Him fills one with light, joy, peace…

In the ecstasies of the Christ, when the incomprehensible mystery of the Unity and Trinity of God was renewed in the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, what complete perfect, bright, sanctifying, joyful, peaceful production of love must have been engendered and must have spread like heat from a blazing furnace, like incense from a burning thurible, to kiss with the kiss of God the things created by the Father, made by means of the Son-Word, made for the Love, for the only Love, because all the operations of God are Love? And that is the look of the Man-God when as Man and as God He raises His eyes, which have contemplated in Himself the Father, Himself and the Love, to look at the Universe, admiring the creative power of God, as Man; rejoicing, as God, at being able to save it in the royal creatures of such creation: men.

Oh! no one can, no one will ever be able, neither poet, nor artist, nor painter, to make visible to the crowds that look of Jesus, when He comes off the embrace, from the sensible reunion with the Divinity, always united to the Man hypostatically, but not always so deeply sensible to the Man, Who was the Redeemer and Who thus, to His many sorrows, to His many annihilations had to add this one, this very deep grief, of no longer being always able to be in the Father, in the great vortex of the Love, as He was in Heaven: almighty… free… joyful. Wonderful is the power of His look in regard to miracles, most kind is the expression of His eyes as man, very sad the light of sorrow in the hours of grief… But they are still human, although perfect in expression. This look of God, Who has contemplated and loved Himself in the Triniform Unity is

beyond comparison, there is no adjective for it… And the soul prostrates itself before Him, worshipping, having become a mere « nonentity » in the knowledge of God, but blessed in contemplating His infinite love.

The torrents of delight are flowing into my soul… I am blessed! All grief, every memory is made void under the waves of the love of Jesus God… and these waves raise me to Heaven, to Heaven, to You!…

Thanks, my adorable Love!… Thanks!… Now I still serve You… The creature has become a woman again, she is once again the mouthpiece after being for an instant a « seraph ». She is once again a woman, a martyr, perhaps another torment is already behind my back… But the light You gave me is shining in my spirit, the blissful light of contemplating You; neither flood of tears nor cruel tortures will be able to put it out. Thank You, my Blessed One! You alone love me!

I now understand Paul as never before! « Who will be able to separate us from the love of Christ?… We triumph through these trials by the power of Him Who loved us… I am certain that neither death nor life, no angel, no prince, no virtue, nothing that exists, nothing still to come, not any power, or height or depth, nor any created thing, can ever come between us and the love of God that is in Jesus Christ our Lord ». It is the victorious jubilant paean blaring from the groups of the winners, of the lovers, of those saved by love, because this is holiness: salvation received because one has been loved and has loved. It is already blaring! And the spirit, even here, a prisoner on the Earth, hears it and sings its joy, its trust, its certainty… And light, even more light comes, and the luminous words of the Apostle brighten even more, even more… «… the love of God that is in Jesus Christ our Lord ».

Indeed, now I understand the words of Azariah, last winter: « Jesus is the compendium of the love of the Three ». Indeed! All Love is in Him. We men can find this love of God without waiting to go back to God, without awaiting Heaven, by loving Jesus. Yes! Springs of living water, sources of light, sources of love open for those who believe, because those who believe go to Jesus, because those who believe, believe that Jesus is in the Eucharist with His Body, Blood, Soul, Divinity, as He was on the Earth, as He is in Heaven, with His Heart, with His Heart! And in Jesus' Heart there is the love of God. And when a man receives the Most Holy Body of Jesus, he receives in himself the Heart of Jesus. Thus he has in himself not only Jesus, but he has the Love of God, that is, he has God the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit, because the Love of God is the Most Holy Trinity that is one thing only: Love. The Love that divides into three flames to make us trebly happy. Happy to have a Father, a Brother a Friend. Happy to have who provides,

who teaches, who loves. Happy to have God!

Oh! I can no longer bear this!… Lord, Your gift is too great! Who obtains it for me from Heaven? Is it You, Most Blessed Mother, contemplated in Your splendour of Queen of Heaven, where You have been bodily received? Is it you, lover of Christ, kind John of Bethsaida, my friend? Is it you, amiable Patriarch protector of those who are persecuted, solicitous supplier of consolation, most venerable Joseph? Is it you, my great little sister, Therese of the Child Jesus, who obtain for me what I have been asking for these twenty-one years: that the waves of the Love may overflow into my soul? Oh! if it is you, complete the work. Obtain for me to die not in one of these assaults of love. I am a little soul, too, and I do not wish extraordinary things. But to die after one of these assaults of love, when I have become again a « little, very little soul », made even smaller by the knowledge of what is the Infinite Love, after one of these assaults, because after, it is as if one were baptised again by love and no shadows of stains are left in us. Love burns… Or is it you, Azariah, my good friend, who have obtained this hour of blessedness for me, because of all the tears you collected from my eyes and you took to Heaven? If it is you, may you be blessed for that!

But I do not ask you, Therese, Joseph, John and the Blessed Virgin to let me have that ecstasy again, to fill me with joy and fire. But I ask and implore you to let other hearts have it, particularly those known to you, those hearts that torture mine and displease God, Whom they cannot perceive or obey. If those hearts have one instant only of those assaults of love, they will be converted to the Love, to the true Love. They will love. With their whole selves. Above all with their intellects that will reject the barriers of rationalism, of human science, which deny and hamper simple good faith and set limits to the power of God. And with their hearts in which the crusts of selfishness, of envy, of hatred will melt like wax near a fire…

Do that, my dearest ones. I accept to never place my lips again on the refreshing chalice of love, I accept to drink for ever, until my return to God, the bitter chalice of all renunciations, but let them go back to the bright path, let them be sanctified in all their actions to deserve the sight of Jesus-God, as I was granted to enjoy it today. To deserve it here, to possess it for ever in Heaven, as I, hoping in my Lord, confide to possess it as well…

The same day at 12 o'clock.

I read it again. I am thinking of the theologians who will read these pages. Perhaps they will find errors in my description of the ecstasies and of Jesus' concentration. Let them remember that I am a poor ignorant woman, that I know nothing about theology or

theological terms, and that I strive to say what I see as best I can and with the sentences that my poor mind can construct…

16th August 1946

I say to Jesus: « Lord, yesterday You carried me away and everything was lost in You. The vision… ». He smiles with sweet divine joy and He replies caressing me:

« You sang instead of narrating. You sang. The whole of Paradise sang the glories of My Mother yesterday, and you sang with Paradise and at a certain moment Paradise listened to your "a solo". Do you know when? When you asked not to have the enjoyment, but that "they" should be invaded by love to be saved. Loving Heaven listened to you, because to renounce beatitude so that others may have Life is granted only to those who are on the Earth but are already citizens of Heaven. Owing to your singing the Saints remembered when they were the singers on the Earth. The Angels listened looking at your Azariah with brotherly satisfaction. Mary smiled offering your song to the Love. And the Love, oh! My Mary! and the Love kissed you… and still kisses you. Be happy. You have understood the Love. I am in you and, as you have understood, God One and Trine is in Me. Go along the roads of supernatural joy today, instead of the roads in Palestine towards Jesus' grief… Mary, are you not happy to be in the same condition as I was in my last year? That is also a gift, and a light to understand Me. Without a personal proportional experience, a human being could not understand what was My long Passion. But today, as yesterday, go along the paths of heavenly joy. God is with you. Be in peace. »

And thus the conversations of the apostles on the episode of Giscala, on the miracle of the blind boy, on Ptolemais to which they are directing their steps, on the road with steps cut in the rock which they climbed to arrive at the last village on the border between Syro-Phoenicia and Galilee - and it must be the one I saw when they went to Alexandroscene - on Gamaliel and so forth, are now over. Or rather, they are left, for what I heard of them, in my heart. I only say that I wanted to say this. That the apostles, who in the early days, when they were less spiritually perfected, used to disturb the Master for a trifle, now that they are more spiritually developed, respect His isolation and they prefer to speak among themselves, remaining a few steps behind Him. Only when they need some information, or His opinion, or they are urged by their love for the Master, do they approach Him.

473. Going towards Sephoris.

17th August 1946.

« Get up and let us go » Jesus orders the apostles who are sleeping soundly on some hay - probably bog grass rather than hay - piled up near a little river, which is waiting for the autumn rains to fill its bed with water.

The apostles, still half asleep, obey without speaking. They pick up their sacks, put on the mantles which they had used as blankets during the night, and set out with Jesus.

« Are we going via the Carmel? »

« No, via Sephoris. We shall then take the road to Megiddo. We have just enough time… » replies Jesus.

« Yes. And the nights are becoming too damp and cold to sleep in the fields when for some reason no house gives us hospitality » remarks Matthew.

« Men! How easily they forget!… Lord? But will it always be like this? » asks Andrew.

« Yes. Always. »

« Well! If it is like this with You, when it is our turn, as soon as we turn our backs, everything will be cancelled » says Thomas downheartedly.

« But I say that there is someone who makes people forget. Because men, I agree, forget quite easily. But they do not always forget. I see that we men remember the things we have received and those which we have given. With regard to You, instead… No, it is always the same people who strive to cancel the memory of You » says Peter.

« Do not judge without a valid reason » says Jesus.

« Master, I have a good reason! »

« Have you? What have you discovered? » asks the Iscariot with keen interest, and at the same time other apostles ask the same question. But Judas is more eager, I would say that he is anxious.

Peter, who was looking at Jesus, turns round and looks at Judas… a quick, watchful suspicious glance, and he remains silent, while looking at him, for a moment. He then says: « Oh! nothing… and everything, if you do not mind being informed. Enough, if I were anxious to use every possible means to succeed, to go and report many facts to those who rule over us, and I am sure that someone would get into trouble. But I prefer not to be successful, rather than have help from that side. In matters concerning God I take only the help of God, and I would appear to be profaning the things of God if I should get them… to help to crush reptiles. They are reptiles themselves… and… I would not trust them… They are quite capable of crushing those who are denounced together with their denouncers… So… I act on my own. That's it! »

« But do you not realise that you are offending the Master? »

« I am? Why? »

« Because He approaches them. »

« He is He, and if He approached them He does not do it for any profit, but to take them to God. He can do it… and He does. But He does not run after them… You can see that… they have to come to Him to hear "the philosopher" as they say. But I don't think that they are so anxious now. And I am not weeping over it. »

« You seemed to be happy as well at Passover! »

« He seemed. Man is very often foolish. He no longer seems now, and he is not. And I am right. »

« As a person who does not mix human profit with spiritual matters, you are right, Simon. But as an apostle who rejoices at other people moving away from the Light, no, you are not right. If you considered that every soul won over to the Light is a glory for your Master, you would not speak thus » says Jesus.

Judas Iscariot looks at Peter with a sarcastic smile. Peter notices it… but he controls himself and does not say anything.

Jesus also notices it and, addressing Peter, but as if he were speaking to everybody He says: « You must know, however, that an excess of religious scruple, for a good purpose, is more justifiable than overlooking everything with indifference just to achieve a human aim. I have told you several times: it is the good will or the bad will which qualifies an action. And in this case it is good will, even if imperfect in its form, to oppose carrying human interests into superhuman matters, and what one considers unclean in the eyes of God. His intolerance is not fair because I have come for everybody. But his opinion is very close to perfection when he states that in the things of God one must have recourse only to His supernatural help, without begging for interested or utilitarian human help. » And with this impartial judgement Jesus puts an end to the argument.

They have crossed another river-bed parched by summer heat without getting wet, and they have reached the main road which from Sicaminon takes one towards Samaria, I think, if I remember correctly the place I saw previously. The road is very busy because of the oncoming festivity and it has already assumed the typical aspect of Palestinian roads when pilgrimages to the Temple are compulsory. There are wayfarers, donkeys, carts carrying people, tents, household furnishings for stops at halting-places and even in Jerusalem, which is always overcrowded at solemnities, so much so that it is advisable to camp on the surrounding hills, weather permitting. In the present festival of the Tabernacles the emigration of entire families is more noticeable, not because pilgrims are more numerous than at Passover and Pentecost, but as they are compelled to live in tents for some days, they have household furnishings which on the occasion of other solemnities they leave at

home. It is really the exodus of a people who rush from every direction towards the capital as blood, from every vein, flows towards the heart.

To understand even now the obstinate religion of Israel, so tenacious, so compact - whereby co-religionists help one another wherever they are, driven by destiny and, whatever the Country may be where they were born, that does not prevent another Jew of a different Country from always feeling that he is a brother and a fellow-country man of the co-religionist he meets - one must bear in mind that, although they are dispersed, persecuted, derided, apparently without a real Fatherland, they do not feel like that at all. They have their Fatherland, that their Jehovah gave them, they have their capital: Jerusalem, and from all over the world the best of their beings converges there: their spirits, their hearts. Have they sinned? Has God punished them? Have the prophecies come true? Yes, it is true. But they are still left with that bright cause of a shining hope: the reconstruction of the kingdom of Israel… of the Messiah Who is to come… And in the grief trembling with fear of having deserved to be censured by God, and in an everlasting question: « Was Jesus of Nazareth the true Messiah? » they try to be reconstituted as a Nation in order to have the Messiah; they try to keep their firm faith in their religion to deserve to be forgiven by God and see the promise accomplished.

I am a poor woman, I know nothing of political problems, I have never taken an interest in the present Jews and in their troubles, sometimes I even laughed at them as they are still awaiting Him Who has come and Whom they crucified, their tears seemed somewhat crocodilian to me, their actions did not seem and do not seem to be such as to deserve what they hope from God: not the Christ Who will come only on the Last Day, and not even the reconstruction of the scattered Jewish race as an independent Nation. But now that I spiritually see the ancestors of the present Jews, I understand their age-old tragedy and their tenacity, the source of their tenacity. They are still the People of God and by God's will they converge towards the land promised to their Fathers, to the Patriarchs, and for ages they have fulfilled the Mosaic rite, thinking of Jerusalem, of its Temple shining on the Moriah. Are they prevented from going there? Yes, they are. But their spirits go there.

Bayonets, guns, prisons serve against man, not against the spirit. Israel cannot perish because it has remained in its religion. A theoretic, Pharisaic, ritual religion devoid of what is the true life of a religion: the congruity of the spirit with the material rite? As you wish. But around the crumbled body that was a Nation, and is now numberless fragments scattered all over the Earth, there are ties of ideas, of rites, of age-old precepts, coming from

prophets and rabbis, to keep it together and, like a lighthouse visible from all over the world, a place shines: Jerusalem, and its name is like a cry to rally them all, it is like a flag waved to recall them, it is a memento, a promise. No. This people cannot be silenced by any human power. There is a strength in it greater than human power.

All this is understood when one watches these people go along impervious roads, in uncomfortable seasons, heedless of what is painful, cheerful with the joy of going to the Holy City. It is understood seeing them go, rich people with poor fellows, children with old men, from Palestine or from the Diaspora towards their heart: Jerusalem. It is understood hearing them sing their songs… And, I confess it, I wish we, Christians and Catholics, were like them, and we had for the heart of Catholicism, Rome, the Church, and for him who lives in it: the present Peter, the feelings of these people whom I see go on and on untiringly; I wish we had what they have, and in addition our Faith, which is perfect because it is Christian.

One may object: « They are full of faults. » And what about us? Are we faultless? We who have been fortified by Grace and the Sacraments? We who should be « perfect just as the Father Who is in Heaven is perfect »?

I have digressed. But, following the march of the apostles mingled with the other crowds of Israel, my mind is active… At a cross-roads a group of disciples sees the Master and they crowd round Him. Among them there is Abel of Bethlehem, who throws himself immediately at Jesus' feet saying: « Master, I have prayed the Most High so much that He might make me meet You. And I had given up hope. But He has heard me. I beg You now to hear Your disciple. »

« What do you want, Abel? Let us go over there, to the edge of the field. There are too many people here and we are causing trouble to them. »

They all go in a group to the spot pointed out by Jesus and Abel says what he wants. « Master, You saved me from death and from slander and You made me one of Your disciples. So do You love me very much? »

« How can you ask Me that? »

« I am asking You to be sure that You will hear my prayer. When You saved me, You punished my enemies with a terrible chastisement. You gave it, so it must be right. But, oh! Lord! it is so horrible! I looked for those three men. I looked for them every time I came to see my mother: in the mountains, in the caves near my town. But I could never find them. »

« Why were you looking for them.? »

« To speak to them of You, Lord. That believing in You, they

might invoke You and be forgiven and cured. I found them only in summer, but they were not together. One, the one who hated me because of my mother, left the others who went farther up, towards the highest mountains of Jiphthahel. They told me where he is staying… And I was given indications of their whereabouts by some shepherds of Bethlehem, the ones who gave You hospitality that night. Shepherds wander about quite a lot with their flocks, and they know many things. They knew that the two lepers I was looking for were in the mountain of the Beautiful Spring. I went there. Oh… » Horror appears on the face of the young man, who is still an adolescent.

« Go on. »

« They recognised me. But I could not recognise my fellowcitizens in those two monsters… They called me… and they prayed me, as if I were a god… The servant in particular aroused my pity, because of his sincere repentance. He wants nothing but Your forgiveness, Lord… Aser wants also to be cured. He has an old mother, Lord, an old mother who is dying broken-hearted in town… »

« And the other one? Why did he go away? »

« Because he is a demon. He is the most guilty one, he was already an adulterer when he became homicide, he incited Aser, he corrupted Joel's servant who is a bit silly and easily subdued, and he continues to be a demon. From his lips hatred and curses, from his heart hatred and cruelty. I saw him as well… I wanted to convince him to be good. He threw himself against me like a vulture and I found my salvation only in taking to flight, and as I am young and healthy I was able to run fast and for a good distance. But I have not lost all hope of saving him. I will go back… Once, twice, many times with succour and love and I will make him love me. He thinks that I go to sneer at his ruin. But I go to rebuild it. If he succeeds in loving me, he will listen to me, and if he listens to me he will end up by believing in You. That is what I want. Oh! it was easy with the others because they meditated and understood by themselves. And the servant has become the simple master of the other one, because there is so much faith in him and such a great desire to be forgiven. Come, Lord! I promised them that I would take You to see them whenever I met You. »

« Abel, their crime was a grave one, many crimes in one. They have expiated only for a short time… »

« Their torture has been great, and also their repentance. Do come. »

« Abel, they wanted your life. »

« It does not matter, Lord. I want to give them life. »

« Which life? »

« The life You give, the life of the spirit, forgiveness, redemption. »

« Abel, they were your Cains, and no one could have hated you more than they did. They wanted to deprive you of everything: of your life, honour and mother… »

« They have been my benefactors, because I had You through them. I love them because of that gift and I ask You to grant them to be where I am, among Your followers. I want their salvation like mine, more than mine, because their sin is greater. »

« What would you offer God in exchange for their salvation, if He should ask you for an offer? »

Abel thinks for a moment… then he says sure of himself: « Even myself. My life. I would lose a handful of rubbish to possess Heaven. A happy loss. A great, infinite gain: God, Heaven. And two sinners would be saved: the first-born of the flock, which I hope to lead and offer to You, Lord. »

Jesus makes a gesture which He never makes thus in public. He bends, because He is much taller than Abel, and taking his head with His hands, He kisses his lips saying: « Let it be so », at least I think that is what His « Maranatha » means. And He adds: « Because of your feeling let it be done to you according to the request of your words. Come with Me. You will lead Me. John, come with Me. And you can all go on, to Engannim via the Megiddo road. You will wait for Me there, if you do not meet Me before. »

« And we shall preach You and Your doctrine » says the Iscariot.

« No. You will wait. Nothing else, behaving like just and humble pilgrims, nothing else. And be like brothers to one another. And on your way you will call on Johanan's peasants and will give them what you have and tell them that, if possible, the Master will pass through Jezreel at dawn, in two days' time, as from today. Go. Peace be with you. »

474. Jesus with the Leprous Sinners of Bethlehem in Galilee.

19th August 1946.

The rough massif of Jiphthahel dominates to the north concealing the view. But where the steep slopes of this mountainous group begin, and they appear almost sheer to the caravan track running from Ptolemais towards Sephoris and Nazareth, there are many caves among the rocky blocks protruding from the mountain, hanging over the abyss, and placed like roofs and supports to the caverns.

As it is customary near the more important roads, there are some lepers who keep aloof but are sufficiently close to be seen and assisted by wayfarers. It is a small colony of lepers who give their scream of warning and invocation when they see Jesus pass with John and Abel. And Abel looks up at them saying: « This is He of

Whom I spoke to you. I am taking Him to the two men you know. Have you nothing to ask the Son of David? »

« What we ask everybody: bread, water, to eat our fill while pilgrims pass by. Later, in winter, we shall be starving… »

« I have no food today. But I have Health with me… »

But the suggestive invitation to have recourse to the Health is not accepted. The lepers turn their backs and withdraw from the cliff; they go round the spur of the mountain to see whether any pilgrims are coming from the other road.

« I think that they are heathen sailors or idolaters. They came a short time ago, driven out of Ptolemais. They came from Africa. I do not know how they were taken ill. I know that they were healthy when they left their country and after a long tour along the African coasts to get ivory, and I believe also pearls to be sold to Latin merchants, they arrived here and were diseased. The harbour officials isolated them and burned even their ship. Some took the roads to Syro-Phoenicia and some came here. These ones are more dangerously ill, because they can hardly walk any more. But their souls are even more diseased. I tried to instil some faith into them… They ask for nothing but food… »

« Perseverance is required in conversions. What does not succeed in one year, may succeed in two or more. One must insist speaking of God, even if they appear to be like the rocks sheltering them. »

« Am I wrong then in providing food for them?… I always brought them some food before the Sabbath, because the Jews do not travel on Sabbaths and no one thinks of them… »

« You did the right thing. You said it yourself: they are heathens, thus more anxious about their bodies and blood than their souls. The loving care you have for their hunger awakes their affection towards the unknown person who sees to them. And when they love you they will listen to you, also when you speak of something which is not food. Love preludes the desire to follow him whom one has learned to love. They will follow you one day in the ways of the spirit. Corporal works of mercy pave the way for spiritual ones, which make it so free and level, that the entry of God in a man prepared in such a way for the divine meeting takes place without the individual knowing it. He finds God within himself and he does not know whence He entered. Whence! At times behind a smile, behind a compassionate word, behind a piece of bread there is the initial opening of the door of a heart closed to Grace and the beginning of God's journey to enter that heart.

Souls! They are the most varied thing there is. No matter, and there are so many matters on the Earth, is so varied in its aspects as souls in their tendencies and reactions. See this mighty terebinth? It is in the middle of a wood of terebinths like it in species. How many are they? Hundreds and hundreds, perhaps a

thousand, perhaps more. They cover this rough slope of the mountain, exceeding with their sharp healthy smell of resins every other scent of the valley and mountain. But look. They are a thousand and more but, if you watch carefully, there is not one like any other in thickness, height, power, inclination, disposition. Some are as straight as blades, some face north, some south, some east, some west. Some have grown in deep earth, some on a protusion and no one knows how it can support the tree and how it can stand up itself, outstretched as it is over the abyss, almost forming a bridge, with the other versant, high above the torrent, which is now dry, but is so stormy in the rainy season. Some are twisted as if a cruel man had tortured them when they were tender plants, some are faultless. Some are leafy almost as far down as the ground, some are bare with just a tuft of leaves on their tops. Some have branches only on the right hand side. Some are leafy below while their tops have been burned by lightning. This one is withered and survives only in an obstinate branch, one only, which has come up almost from the root, sucking the surviving sap which dried up at the top. And this one, the first one I pointed out to you, as beautiful as a tree can be, has it perhaps a branch, a twig, a leaf - what do I say speaking of one leaf out of the thousands which it bears - which is like any other? They seem to be, but they are not. Look at this branch, the lowest one. Look at its top, just at the top of the branch. How many leaves are on that top? Perhaps two hundred thin green needles. And yet see? Is there one like any other in shade, size, freshness, flexibility, bearing, age? There is not.

It is the same with souls. As numerous as they are, as many are their differences in tendencies and reactions. And he who is not capable of understanding them and working on them according to their various tendencies and reactions, is not a good master and doctor of souls. It is not an easy task, My friends. One must study continuously and be accustomed to meditation which enlightens more than reading fixed texts for a long time. The book which a master and doctor of souls must study are the souls themselves. As many pages as souls and in each page many sentiments and passions of past and present times and in the embryo stage. So what is required is continuous, diligent, meditative study, constant patience, endurance, courage, in doctoring the most putrid wounds, to cure them without showing disgust, which disheartens the patient. And one must act without false pity, which in order not to mortify anybody by uncovering putrefaction and not removing it test the rotten part might suffer, allows it to become gangrenous, poisoning the whole body. And at the same time prudence is needed to avoid irritating the wounds of hearts with too coarse manners and not to be infected by their contact: one must not be so

sure of oneself as to pretend that one is not afraid of being infected when dealing with sinners. And where do all these virtues, necessary to the master and doctor of souls, find light to see and understand, where do they find patience, which at times is heroical, to persevere although they are requited with indifference and often with insults, and their strength to doctor wisely, their prudence not to injure patients and themselves? In love. Always in love. It throws light on everything, it gives wisdom, strength and prudence. It preserves from the curiosity which causes people to take upon themselves the faults which have been cured.

When one is full of love one cannot have any other desire or science but love. See? Doctors say that when a man has been on the point of dying of a disease, it is most unlikely that he will catch the same disease again, because his blood has already been affected by it and has overcome it. The concept is not perfect, but it is not entirely wrong. But love, which is health and not a disease, does what doctors say and with regard to all bad passions. He who is deeply in love with God and his brothers, does not do anything which may grieve God and his brothers, consequently even if he approaches people with diseased spirits and he becomes acquainted with matters which love had so far concealed, he is not corrupted by them, because he remains faithful to love and does not commit sin. What do you expect sensuality to be when one has overcome it through charity? What are riches for those who find all treasures in the love of God and of souls? What are gluttony, avarice, incredulity, indolence, pride for those who crave only for God, for those who give themselves, even themselves to serve God, for those who find all their good in His Faith, for those who are urged by the untiring flame of charity and work indefatigably to give joy to God, for those who love God - to love Him is to know Him - and cannot become proud, because they see themselves as they are with regard to God?

One day you will be priests of My Church. You will therefore be the doctors and masters of spirits. Remember these words of Mine. It will not be the name you bear, or your garment, or the duties you perform that will make you priests, that is, ministers of Christ, masters and doctors of souls, but it will be the love which you possess to make you such. It will give you everything you need to be such, and the souls, although different one from another, will acquire one only likeness: that of the Father, if you know how to work on them with love. »

« Oh! what a beautiful lesson, Master! » says John.

« But shall we ever succeed in being such? » asks Abel.

Jesus looks at both of them, He then lays an arm round the neck of each and draws them towards Himself, one on His right, the other on His left hand side and kisses their hair saying: « You will

succeed because you have understood love. »

They go on walking for some time, with greater and greater difficulty because of the roughness of the path which is cut almost on the brink of the mountain. Below, in the distance, there is a road and one can see people walking along it.

« Let us stop, Master. See, over there, from that rocky platform the two lepers lower with a rope a basket to passersby, and their grotto is beyond the platform. I will call them now. » And he utters a cry moving forward, while Jesus and John remain behind, hidden among thick shrubs.

After a few moments a face appears… - let us call it a face because it is situated on top of a body, but it could be called also a snout, a monster, a nightmare… - and it looks down from a bush of blackberries.

« Is that you? But did you not leave for the Tabernacles? »

« I found the Master and I came back. He is here! »

If Abel had said: « Jehovah is hovering over your heads » very likely the cry, the gestures, the enthusiasm of the two lepers because while Abel was speaking also the other one appeared would not have been so sudden and respectful, in jumping out, onto the platform, in full sunshine, prostrating themselves on the ground and shouting: « Lord, we have sinned. But Your mercy is greater than our sin! » They shout so without even ensuring whether Jesus is really there, or whether He is still afar, on the way towards them. Their faith is such that it makes them see what their eyes - because of the sores on their eyelids and their prompt throwing of themselves on the ground - certainly did not see.

Jesus moves forward while they repeat: « Lord, our sin does not deserve to be forgiven, but You are the Mercy! Lord Jesus, for the sake of Your Name, save us. You are the Love which can overcome Justice. »

« I am the Love. That is true. But above Me is the Father. And He is the Justice » says Jesus severely, moving forward along the path with John.

The two raise their disfigured faces and look at Him through the tears streaming down their cheeks mingled with rotten matter. How horrible are those faces to be seen! Old? Young? Which is the servant? Which is Aser? It is impossible to say. The disease has assimilated them transforming them into two figures of horror and disgust.

I do not know how Jesus must seem to them, as He stands in the middle of the path, while the sun envelops Him with its beams and inflames his golden hair. I know that they look at Him and then they cover their faces moaning: « Jehovah! The Light! » Then they shout again: « The Father sent You to save. He calls You His Beloved One. He is pleased with You. He will not refuse You to

forgive us. »

« Forgiveness or health? »

« Forgiveness » shouts one. And the other: «… and then health. My mother is dying broken-hearted because of me. »

« If I forgive you, the justice of men will still remain, for you in particular. So of what avail is My forgiveness to make Your mother happy? » says Jesus temptingly, to make him say the words which He is waiting for in order to work the miracle.

« It is of great avail. She is a true Israelite. She wants the bosom of Abraham for me. And the place of expectation for Heaven is not for me because I have sinned too much. »

« Too much. You have said it. »

« Too much!… It is true… But You… Oh! Your Mother was there on that day… Where is Your Mother now? She felt pity for Abel's mother. I noticed that. And if She heard me now, She would have mercy on mine. Jesus, Son of God, in Your Mother's name, have mercy on me!… »

« And what would you do afterwards? »

« Afterwards? » They cast frightened glances at each other. The « afterwards » is the sentence of men, it is contempt, or flight, exile. They tremble before the prospect of recovery as if they were about to lose salvation. How attached are men to life! The two, caught in the dilemma of being cured and then being condemned by the law of men, or having to live as lepers, almost prefer to live as lepers. They admit it saying: « The punishment is dreadful! ». I realise that it is Aser in particular, one of the two homicides, to say so…

« It is dreadful. But at least it is justice. You were going to inflict it on this innocent man, you… with lustful aims, and you… for a handful of coins. »

« That is true! O my God! But he has forgiven us. We beg You to forgive us as well. It means that we shall die. But our souls will be saved. »

« Joel's wife was stoned because she was an adulteress. Her four children are living with her mother and are finding it difficult to make both ends meet, because Joel's brothers drove them out as illegitimate children and they took possession of their brother's property. Did you know that? »

« Abel told us… »

« And who will make amends for their misfortune? » Jesus' voice resounds like thunder, it is really the voice of God Judge and it is frightening. All alone in the sunshine, standing straight, He is the figure of terror. The two look at him with fear. Although the sunshine exacerbates their sores, they do not move, neither does Jesus, Who is completely enveloped in it. Elements lose their power in these hours of souls…

After some time Aser says: « If Abel wants to love me

thoroughly, let him go to my mother and tell her that God has forgiven me and… »

« I have not forgiven you yet. »

« But You will, because You can see my heart… And he will tell her that I want everything belonging to me to go to Joel's children. Whether I live or die, I renounce the wealth that made me vicious. »

Jesus smiles. He becomes transfigured in smiling, His countenance from severe becomes pitiful and in a changed voice He says: « I can see your hearts. Stand up. And raise your spirits to God blessing Him. As you are cut off from the world you may go away without the world knowing about you. And the world is waiting for you to give you the possibility to suffer and expiate. »

« Are You saving us, Lord?! Are You forgiving us?! Are You curing us?! »

« Yes, I am. I will let you live because life is painful particularly for those who have recollections like yours. But you cannot get out of here just now. Abel must come with Me, like all Hebrews he must go to Jerusalem. Wait for his return. It will coincide with your recovery. He will take you to the priest and will inform your mother. I will tell Abel what he must do and how to do it. Can you believe My words, even if I go away without curing you? »

« Yes, Lord, we can. But tell us once again that you are forgiving our souls. Do that. Then everything will happen when You wish. »

« I forgive you. May you revive with new spirits and sin no more. Remember that in addition to abstaining from sin, you must accomplish acts of justice directed at the complete cancellation of your debt in the eyes of God, and that consequently your penance is to be continuous, because your debt is a heavy one indeed! Yours in particular concerns all the commandments of the Lord. Think about it and you will see that not one of them is excluded. You forgot about God, you made sensuality your idol, you turned feast days into delirious idleness, you offended and dishonoured your mother, you helped in killing and you wanted to kill, you stole life and you wanted to rob a mother of her son, you deprived four children of their father and mother, you have been lustful, you bore false witness, you lewdly coveted the woman who was faithful to her dead husband, you coveted what belonged to Abel, so much so that you wanted to kill him to take possession of his property. »

Aser moans at each sentence: « It's true, it's true! »

« As you can see, God could have reduced you to ashes without resorting to human punishments. He spared you that I might save another man. But the eyes of God watch you and His Intelligence remembers. Go » and He turns round and goes back to the thicket near Abel and John, who had taken shelter under the trees on the mountain side.

And the two men, still disfigured, perhaps smiling - but who can tell when a leper smiles? - with the typical shrill metallic intermittent voice of lepers intone psalm 114 with sudden tone variations, while Jesus descends the mountain following the dangerous path…

« They are happy! » says John.

« I am happy, too » says Abel.

« I thought that You were going to cure them at once » says John again.

« So did I, as You usually do. »

« They were big sinners. This is a fair expectation for those who have sinned so much. Now listen, Ananias… »

« My name is Abel, Lord » says the surprised young man and he looks at Jesus, as if he were asking himself: « Why is He mistaking? »

Jesus smiles and says: « You are Ananias to Me, because you really seem to be born of the kindness of the Lord. Be so more and more. And listen. On the way back from the Tabernacles you will go to your town and tell Aser's mother what her son decided and that it is to be carried out as soon as possible, giving everything in atonement less one tenth. And that out of pity for the old mother who should leave Bethlehem of Galilee with you and go to Ptolemais, waiting for her son, who will join her and you with his companion. After leaving the woman with some disciple in town, you will go and get what is necessary for the purifications of lepers and you will leave only when everything is over. Make sure that the priest is not one who is aware of their past, and get one from a different town. »

« And then? »

« You will then go back home or join the disciples. And the two men who have been cured, will take the road of expiation. I am saying only what is essential. I leave man free to act afterwards… »

And they continue to go down, without tiring, despite the roughness of the road and the heat of the sun… without tiring and without speaking for a long time.

Then Abel breaks the silence saying: « May I ask a grace of You, Lord? »

« Which? »

« To let me go to my town. I am sorry to leave You. But that mother… »

« Go. But do not be late. You will get to Jerusalem just in time. »

« Thank You, Lord! I shall find but her, poor old soul, ashamed of everything, since Aser sinned. But she will smile once again. What shall I tell her in Your name? »

« That her tears and prayers have achieved grace and that God encourages her to hope more and more and that He blesses her. But

before parting, let us stop for an hour. Not more. It is not the time to stop. Then you will go your way, John and I Mine, taking short cuts. And you, John will go ahead of Me, to My Mother. You will take Her this bag containing linen garments and you will come with woollen ones. You will tell Her that I want to see Her and that I shall be waiting for Her in the wood of Mattathias, the one belonging to his wife. You know it. Speak to Her alone and come at once. »

« I know where is the wood. And what about You? Are You remaining alone? »

« I am remaining with My Father. Be not afraid » says Jesus raising His hand and laying it on the head of His beloved disciple, who is sitting on the grass beside Him. And He smiles at him saying: « But we ought to be there by the evening… »

« Master, when I have to make You happy, I do not get tired. You know that. And to go to Mother!… I feel as if angels were carrying me. But it is not very far. »

« What one does with joy is never far… But you will stay for the night at Nazareth. »

« And You? »

« And I… I will stay with My Father after being with My Mother for a short time. And I will set out at dawn, taking the road of the Tabor, without entering Nazareth. You know that I have to be at Jezreel at dawn the day after tomorrow. »

« You will be very tired, Master. You already are. »

« We shall have time to rest in winter. Do not worry. And do not hope to be able to evangelize all the time, in peace, as you do here. We shall meet with many delays… » Jesus lowers His head pensively, nibbling at His piece of bread more to keep the two disciples company - young as they are and happy to be with the Master they are eating with relish - than to satisfy His hunger. In fact He stops eating and becomes absorbed in deep silence, which the two respect resting quietly in the breeze of the mountain, with their bare feet in the cool grass which has grown round the feet of mighty tree-trunks. And they would also doze, but Jesus raises His head and says: « Let us go. We shall part at the cross-roads. »

And after tying their sandals they set out. The shadow in the wood and the wind blowing from the north help them to bear the sultry heat of the warm hour of the day, although it is not so torrid as in full summer months.

475. Jesus and His Mother in the Wood of Mattathias.

21st August 1946.

Jesus is alone. All alone in a slightly hollow-shaped tableland, which with slight but continuous undulations rises on the slopes of the hills surrounding the lake of Galilee, which I can see below, to the right, as its beautiful blue water becomes darker, because of the oncoming sunset which withdraws the brightly sparkling sunbeams from a wide surface of the lake. Behind the dell, to the north are the mountains of Arbela, and farther back, beyond the lake, the higher mountains of Meiron and Giscala. To north-east, in the distance, the mighty majestic, from whatever side one looks at it, Great Hermon, the highest peak of which is whimsically lit up by the setting sun, so that its western side is a pinkish topaz hue, whilst the rest is an opaline shade verging to the nondescript snowy blue nuance which I have seen at times on the tops of our Alps at the borders.

That is what I see looking north and if I turn to the right I can easily see the lake below, on the left, and the higher hills which obstruct the view of the plain along the coast. But if I face south I can see the Tabor behind smooth hills which are certainly the ones which surround Nazareth. There is a little town down, at the bottom, near a very busy road along which people are hurrying to reach their halting-places.

Jesus does not look at what I am looking. He is only seeking a place where to sit down and He chooses it at the foot of a very powerful holm-oak whose leafy branches have protected the grass growing on the ground around it from dog-days, so that it is fresh and thick, as if parching summer had never passed there. Thus the lake is in front of Jesus, and on His side, among trees, is the path on which He came up, on the opposite side the undulating ground surrounding the northern part of the dell covered with meadows and woods, where He is, and which is completely green, because most trees are holm-oaks, that is evergreens not affected by autumn. Only here and there they show blood-red spots, where leaves change their colour before falling, making room for fresh ones, which in the embryo state are already growing near the withering ones.

Jesus is very tired and leans against the powerful trunk and remains for some time with His eyes closed, to rest. He then takes His usual posture, detaching His back from the trunk, leaning slightly forward, His elbows resting on His knees, His forearms stretched forward, His hands joined and His fingers interlaced. He is pensive. He is certainly praying. Now and again when He hears a noise nearby - birds squabbling over a resting place for the night, some animal among the grass causing a stone, to roll down the mountain side, a branch blown by a solitary gush of wind

knocking against another branch - He raises His eyes, and with a pensive glance which certainly does not see, He looks in the direction of the sound, wondering if it comes from the little road that climbs among the holm-oaks. He then lowers His eyes again concentrating on Himself. Twice He looks attentively at the lake which is already in the shade, and then He turns His head looking westwards where the sun has already set behind the woody hills. The second time He stands up and walks towards the path to see whether anybody is coming up, and then He goes back to His place.

Finally the sound of footsteps is heard and two figures appear: Mary wearing a dark blue garment and John laden with bags. John calls twice: « Master! » and as soon as Jesus turns round he says: « Here is Your Mother » and he helps Her to cross a little stream and to step over some large stones placed on the path for the purpose of consolidating it and making it more comfortable for people going up or down, whereas in actual fact they are pitfalls for people wearing light sandals.

Jesus gets up at once to meet His Mother and helps Her with John to climb the stones of the collapsed dry wall, which was to support the plateau. In actual fact only the roots of the holm-oaks fulfil that function. Mary is now supported by Her Son Who looks at Her and asks: « Are You tired? »

« No, Jesus » and She smiles at Him.

« But I think that You really are tired. I am sorry that I made You come. But I could not come to You… »

« Oh! it does not matter, Son. I am a little hot. But it is pleasant here… But You are very tired, and poor John, as well… »

But John shakes his head smiling and putting down the new well-packed bag of Jesus and his own on the grass, at the foot of the holm-oak and he withdraws saying: « I am going down. I saw a little fountain. I am going to refresh myself in its water. But if You should call me, I shall hear You » and he goes away leaving the Two free.

Mary unfastens Her mantle and takes off Her veil wiping the perspiration beading Her forehead. She looks at Jesus and smiles at Him, and She drinks in His smile, as He also smiles at Her while caressing Her hand and pressing it against His cheek to be caressed. He is so « filial » in that gesture which I have seen Him make more than once! Mary frees Her hand and tidies up His hair, removing a tiny bit of the bark of a tree from His locks, and each movement of Her fingers is a caress, such is the love with which it is made. And She says: « You are in a sweat, Jesus. Your mantle is wet on the shoulders, as if You had been in the rain. But You can take another one now. I will take this one back. Sunshine and dust have discoloured it. I had everything ready, and… Wait! I know that

You have just had something to eat: a crust of stale bread and a handful of olives, which were so salt as to irritate Your throat. I was told by John who did nothing but drink as soon as he arrived. But I brought You some new bread. I had just taken it out of the oven, and a honeycomb which I took from the beehive yesterday, to give it to Simon's children. But I have more honeycombs for them. Take it, Son. It comes from our house… » and She bends to open the bag, in which, on top of all its contents, there is a low wicker basket with some fruit lying on which is a honeycomb enveloped in long vine leaves, and She offers everything to Her Son with some new crisp bread.

And while Jesus is eating, She takes out of the bag the garments which She prepared for the winter months; they are heavy and warm suitable to protect one from cold and rain and She shows them to Jesus, Who says: « How much work, Mother! I still had those of last winter… »

« When men are away from their women, they must have everything new, so that they do not need to have anything mended, in order to be properly dressed. But I have not wasted anything. This mantle of Mine is Your old one, which I shortened and redyed. It is still all right for Me. But not for You. You are Jesus… »

It is impossible to say what there is in this sentence. « You are Jesus ». A simple sentence. But all the love of the Mother, of the disciple, of the ancient Hebrew women for the Promised Messiah, of the Hebrew women of the blessed time in which Jesus lived, is in those few words. If the Mother had prostrated Herself worshipping Her Son as God, Her veneration would have been of a limited form. But Her words express something which is more than the formal adoration of knees that bend, of a back that bows, of a forehead that touches the ground: here it is Mary's whole being, Her flesh, blood, mind, heart, spirit, love, adoring the God-Man completely and perfectly.

I have never seen anything greater, more absolute than these adorations of Mary for the Word of God, Who is Her Son, and Who She always remembers is Her God. None of the people whom I see worship their Saviour, after being cured or converted by Jesus, not even the most fervent ones, not even those who inadvertently behave theatrically in their transport of love, have anything like this. They love completely, but always as creatures lacking something to be perfect. Mary loves, I dare say, divinely. She loves more than a creature. Oh! She really is the daughter of God free from sin! That is why She can love thus!… And I think of what man lost through the original Sin… I think of what Satan stole from us by overwhelming our First Parents. He deprived us of the power of loving God as Mary loved Him… He deprived us of the power of

loving well.

While I am meditating on these matters watching the perfect Couple, Jesus, at the end of His meal, has sat on the grass at Mary's feet, resting His head on Her knees like a tired sad child who takes shelter near the only person who can console him. And Mary caresses His hair, touching Jesus' smooth forehead lightly. She seems to be wishing to dispel all the tiredness and all the grief which are in Her Son by means of Her caresses. Jesus closes His eyes and Mary stops caressing Him; She remains with Her hand resting on His head, looking in front of Her, pensively, still. Perhaps She thinks that Jesus may fall asleep. He is so tired…

But Jesus opens His eyes again almost at once, He sees that it is growing dark, He realises that it is not possible to prolong that hour of solace, so He raises His head, still sitting where He is and He says: « Do You know, Mother, from where I come? »

« Yes, I know. John told Me. Two souls returning to God. A joy for You and for Me. »

« Yes. And I am going down to Jerusalem with that joy. »

« To make up for the disappointment You received the same day that we parted. »

« How do You know? Did John tell You? He is the only one who knows… »

« No. I asked him about it. But John replied: "Mother, You will be seeing Him before long. Ask Him". »

Jesus smiles saying: « John is faithful to a T. » There is a pause, then Jesus asks: « So, who spoke to You about it? »

« Not to Me. Some… men came to Your brother Joseph. And… he came to Me. He was still a little… Yes, Son. It is always better to speak the truth. He was somewhat upset after meeting You at Capernaum and especially after his discussion with Judas and James. They met during Your absence and James, too, nay James above all, was severe… Very severe… I would say too severe. But the Eternal Father, Who is always good, derived some good from their variance. Certainly because it was a variance originating from two sources of love. Different, of course, but still love. Imperfect, that is true. Because if they had been perfect, if at least one source were perfect, it would not have gone so far as to get angry… Anger is perhaps too strong a word to describe James' mood, but he was certainly very severe… You would have certainly reminded him to be charitable. I… did not approve, but I bore with him because I realised what was upsetting so much the ever patient James. One cannot expect him to be perfect… He is a man. And he is still very much of a man, too. Oh! there is still a long way to go before James becomes as just as was My Joseph! He… knew how to control himself and be always good…

But I am digressing! I was speaking of the imperfect love of the

two for You - because they love You so much. Also Joseph does, although at first sight he does not seem to. It is really love for You all the care he takes of Me, a poor woman. And it is love for You his way of thinking, as an old Israelite, firm in his ideas like his father. He would give anything to see You loved by everybody! His way… of course… -. But reverting to the fact, I must tell You that Joseph, whom James' firm behaviour did not harm, began to come to Me every day. And do You know why? That I may explain the Scriptures to him "as You and Your Son understand them" he said. To explain the Scriptures in the light of the Truth!… It is not easy when he who is listening to you is a Joseph of Alphaeus that is, one who firmly believes in the temporal kingdom of the Messiah, in His royal birth and in so many other things!

But it was his own pride that helped Me to make him accept the idea that the King of Israel is to be of royal descent, of David's stock, agreed, but that it is not necessary for Him to be born in a royal palace. He… oh! how proud he is of belonging to the stock of David! I told him many things in a kind way… and I got him to revise that idea. He now admits, in accordance with the prophecies, that You are the predicted one. But… oh! I would not have been successful in convincing him that Your true greatness consists exactly in being the King of the spirit, the only thing that can make You the universal and eternal King, if people had not come on two occasions looking for him… The first, still those from Capernaum with others, after tempting him with dazzling promises of grandeur for the whole household, seeing that he was less inclined to yield to their suggestions - they expected him to force You and to force Me to make You accept a crown - they betrayed themselves when they began to threaten him… The usual half-hidden threats which they use. Sharp knives enveloped in soft wool to make them seem harmless… And Joseph reacted saying: "I am the oldest, but He is of age and I have never been told that in our family there have been fools or madmen. For twenty years, since He became of age, He has been aware of what He does. So go to Him and ask Him, and if He refuses, leave Him in peace. He is responsible for His actions".

Then some of Your disciples came, it was just the eve of the Sabbath… Are You looking at Me, Son? Allow Me not to mention their names, but let Me tell You to forgive them… A son who should lift his hands against his old father, a levite who should desecrate the altar and be afraid of Jehovah's wrath, would not be like them… They came from Capernaum where they had been looking for You… They had come along the lake road from Capernaum to Magdala and then to Tiberias hoping to find You. And they had met with Hermas and Stephen, who were going down to Jerusalem with other people after being Gamaliel's guests for some days. I do

not want to repeat what they said, what they want to tell You and are anxious to tell You. But their words had increased even more the grief of the disciples who had been led astray to the extent of joining those who wished to betray You by means of a false unction. Joseph was with Me when they came. And it was a good thing. Oh! Joseph has not yet reached the Light, but he is already in the twilight of his dawn. Joseph understood the snare and… our Joseph is very fond of You now. He loves You, I dare not say in the right manner, but at least as an adult relative who suffers because of Your suffering, who watches over Your safety, who knows Your enemies…

That is why I know what they did to You, Son. A sorrow… and a joy because more than one recognised You for what You are. Such grief and joy for You and for Me. But we are forgiving everybody, are we not? I have already forgiven those who repented, as far as I am allowed to forgive. »

« Mother, You might have forgiven them also on My behalf. Because I had already forgiven them as I saw their hearts. They are men… What You said is correct!… But I have also the joy of seeing Joseph proceeding towards the dawn of the true Light… »

« Yes. He was hoping to see You. You ought to see him. He was absent today until sunset. And he will be grieved at not seeing You. But he will be able to see You in Jerusalem. »

« No, Mother. I will not be staying in Jerusalem so that people may see Me. I must evangelize the City and the villages in the neighbourhood, and I would be driven out at once if they found Me. So I will have to act like one doing evil, whereas I only want to do good… But it is so. »

« So, will You not see Joseph? He is leaving tomorrow for the Tabernacles. You could have travelled together… »

« I cannot… »

« Are they already persecuting You so fiercely, Son? » How much anxiety is in the Mother's voice!

« No, Mother. No. Not more than previously. Be reassured. On the contrary… kind spirits come to Me. Others, who are not good, stop and meditate, whilst previously they struck without any reason, the disciples are increasing, the older ones are improving in their spiritual training, the apostles are becoming more perfect. I am not referring to John: he has always been a grace granted to Me by the Father, I mean Simon of Jonah and the others. Simon is changing day by day from the man he was into an apostle, and You know what I mean. And he gives Me so much joy. And Nathanael and Philip are freeing themselves from the ties of their ideas. And Thomas and… But what am I saying? All of them. Yes, believe Me. They are all good at present: they are My joy. You must not worry since You know that I am with them: they are the friends, the comforters,

the supporters of Your Son. I wish You were so well defended and loved! »

« Oh! I have Mary, I have the wives of Joseph and Simon and them as well and their children. I have good Alphaeus. And then, who in Nazareth is not fond of Mary of Nazareth? You must not worry… A whole village loves Your Mother. »

« But they do not love Me as yet, with few exceptions. I know and I am aware that their love for You is imbued with the commiseration one feels for the Mother of a mad vagrant. But You know that I am not and that I love You. You know that to part from You is, I will not say the greatest, but the most lovingly sorrowful obedience which the Father requests of Me… »

« Yes, Son! I know. But I do not regret anything. I would certainly like to be with You, I would prefer to be with You, on muddy roads, exposed to winds, sleeping in the open, persecuted, tired, without a home and a fireplace, with no bread, as You are very often, rather than be in My house, while You are far away, and I do not know how You are, when I think of You. If You were with Me and I with You, You would suffer less and I would suffer less… Because You are My Son and I could always hold You in My arms and defend You from the cold, from hard stones, and above all from hardened hearts, with My love, My breast, My arms. You are My Son. I held You so long against My heart in the grotto, in the journey to Egypt, and on the way back, always when the dangers of season and the snares of men might have injured You. Why could I not do it now? Am I perhaps no longer Your Mother, because You are now the Man? So can a mother no longer be everything for her son, because he is no longer a little child? I think that if I am with You they will not be able to injure You… because nobody… No. I am silly… You are the Redeemer… and men - I have noticed it - have no mercy even for their own mothers… But let Me come with You. Everything is better for Me than being away from You. »

« If men were kinder I would come back to Nazareth again. But even Nazareth… It does not matter. They will come to Me. For the time being I am going to other people… And I cannot take You with Me. I will come back here only when they realise Who I am. I am now going to Judaea… I will go up to the Temple… I will then remain in that district… I will go through Samaria once again. I will work where there is more work to be done. So, Mother, I advise You to be ready to join Me early in spring and to settle near Jerusalem. It will be easier for us to meet. I will go up to the Decapolis again and we shall meet again… I hope so. But as a rule, I will remain in Judaea. Jerusalem is the sheep needing more care because she is really more stubborn than an old ram and more quarrelsome than a wild billy-goat. I am going there to spread the

Word like dew which never tires falling on her aridity… »

Jesus stands up, He stops and looks at His Mother Who gazes on Him attentively. He moves His lips and shaking His head He says: « There is still something to be said before the last thing… Mother, if Joseph wants to speak to Me, let it be at dawn the day after tomorrow on the road which from Nazareth goes to Jezreel via the Tabor. I shall be there alone or with John. »

« I will tell him, Son. »

There is silence, dead silence, because the birds have ceased quarrelling among the leafy branches and also the wind is quiet while twilight deepens. Then Jesus, Who seems to have found with difficulty the words to be spoken last, says: « Mother, My pause is over… A kiss, Mother. And Your blessing. » They kiss and bless each other.

Then Jesus, bending to pick up His Mother's veil and calling John as if He wished to make the words less grave, says: « When You come to Judaea bring Me My best tunic. The one which You wove for Me for solemn festivities. In Jerusalem I must be "Master" in the widest meaning and also more human sensitively, because those closed hypocritical spirits look more at the outside: one's garments, than the inside: one's doctrine. And thus also Judas of Kerioth will be happy… and Joseph will be satisfied seeing Me in a royal garment. Oh! it will be a triumph! And the garment woven by You will contribute… » and He smiles to mitigate the harsh truth concealed by those words.

But Mary is not deceived. She stands up and leans on Jesus' arm exclaiming: « Son! » with such heart-rending grief that makes me suffer. Jesus takes Her in His arms and She weeps against His heart…

« Mother, this is the reason why I wanted to speak to You in this hour of peace… I entrust You with My secret and what is dearest to Me here on the Earth. None of My disciples know that we shall not come back to these parts of the country until everything has been accomplished. But You… I have no secrets for You… I promised You, Mother. Do not weep. We still have many hours to spend together. That is why I say to You: "Come to Judaea". To have You near Me will requite Me for the fatigue of the most difficult evangelization of those stone-hearted people who are obstructing the Word of God. Come with the Galilean women disciples. You will be very helpful to Me. John will see to lodgings for You and for them. Let us pray together now, before He comes back. Then You will go back to the village, and I will come, too, during the night… »

They pray together and they are at the last words of the Our Father when John appears and in the dim light, when he is close at hand, he sees the traces of tears on Mary's face and is amazed. But

he makes no remark. He greets the Master and says: « At dawn I shall be on the road outside Nazareth… Come, Mother. Outside the wood it is still daylight and the road, below, is lit up by the lamps of the carts which are travelling… »

Mary kisses Jesus again, weeping under Her veil, and then supported by John who is holding Her by the elbow, She goes down to the path and descends towards the valley.

Jesus is left alone, to pray, to think, to weep. Because Jesus weeps watching His Mother descend. He then goes back to where He was previously and He assumes the same posture as before, while shadows and silence become deeper and deeper around Him.

Jesus says:

« I did not forget this sorrow of Mary, My Mother, either. That I had to torture Her with the expectation of My suffering, that I had to see Her weep. That is why I deny Her nothing. She gave Me everything. I give Her everything. She suffered all sorrows. I give Her all joy.

When you think of Mary, I would like you to meditate on that agony of Hers that lasted thirty-three years and culminated at the foot of the Cross. She suffered that for your sake. For your sake She suffered the mockery of the crowds that considered Her the mother of a madman. For your sake She endured the reproaches of relatives and important people. For your sake She bore My apparent disavowal: "My Mother and My brothers are those who do the will of God". And who did His will more than She did, and a terrible Will, that imposed on Her the torment of seeing Her Son tortured?

For your sake She endured the fatigue of joining Me here and there. For your sake She made sacrifices, from the sacrifice of leaving Her little house and mingling with the crowds, to the sacrifice of leaving Her little fatherland for the tumult of Jerusalem. For your sake She had to be in touch with him who was brooding over betrayal in his heart. For your sake She suffered hearing Me accused of diabolical possession and heresy. Everything for your sake.

You do not know how much I loved My Mother. You do not consider how the heart of Mary's Son was sensitive to affections. And you think that My torture was purely physical, at most you add the spiritual torment of the final abandonment by the Father.

No, children. I experienced also the passions of man. I suffered seeing My Mother suffer, having to lead Her, like a meek ewelamb, to the torture, being compelled to torment Her with continual farewells, at Nazareth before evangelizing, with the one which I have shown you and which precedes My imminent Passion, with the one before the Supper, when Judas had already initiated,

My Passion with his betrayal, and with the dreadful one on Calvary.

I suffered seeing Myself derided, hated, slandered, circumvented by unwholesome inquisitiveness that did not evolve into good, but into evil. I suffered because of all the falsehood that I had to hear or see acting beside Me. The falsehood of the hypocritical Pharisees, who called Me Master and asked Me questions not because they believed in My intelligence but to lay snares for Me; the falsehood of those who had been benefited by Me and who became My accusers in the Sanhedrin and in the Praetorium; the long premeditated subtle falsehood of Judas who sold Me and continued feigning to be My disciple, and indicated Me to the executioners with the sign of love. I suffered because of the lie of Peter, who was seized with human fear.

How much falsehood and so revolting for Me, Who am the Truth! How much there still is, even now, with regard to Me! You say that you love Me, but you do not love Me. You have My Name on your lips, but you adore Satan in your hearts and you follow a law contrary to Mine.

I suffered thinking that with respect to the infinite value of My Sacrifice - the Sacrifice of a God - too few would be saved. All, I say: all those who in the course of the centuries of the Earth would prefer death to eternal life, making My Sacrifice vain, were present to Me. And with that knowledge I went to My death.

You can see, little John, that your Jesus and His Mother suffered bitterly in their moral egos. And for a long time. So be patient, if you will have to suffer. "No disciple is superior to his Master". I said so.

Tomorrow I will speak of the sorrows of the spirit. Rest now, peace be with you ».

476. Jesus Converses with Joseph of Alphaeus.

22nd August 1946.

The sun has just begun to shine on the country which is wet after a shower. It must have rained only recently because the dust on the road is still wet but has not turned into mud. That is why I say that it rained recently and that it was a brief fall. One of the first autumn showers foreshadowing the November rains which will turn the road of Palestine into slimy ribbons. But this shower, favourable to wayfarers, has only moistened the dust - the other calamity for Palestine reserved for summer months, as mud is for the winter ones - and it has washed the atmosphere, leaves and herbs, which are now shining, clean as they are, in the early sunshine. A pleasant clean breeze is blowing among the olive groves covering the hills of Nazareth, and a flight of angels seems to be

passing among the peaceful trees, as the rustling leafy branches resound like large wings in flight and their glossy silvery leaves gleam, when blown all to one side, as if a wake of heavenly light was left behind by the angelical flight.

The town has been left a few stadia behind when Jesus, Who has taken some short cuts along the hills, arrives at the main road which from Nazareth goes towards the plain of Esdraelon, the caravan route now becoming busier every minute with pilgrims. He walks a few more stadia on the road, when at a cross-road near a milestone on the opposite sides of which is inscribed: « Japhia Sidonia-Bethlehem Carmel » to the west, and « Xalot-Naim Scytopolis-Engannim » to the east, He sees, standing on the roadside, His cousins Joseph and Simon, who greet Him at once together with John of Zebedee.

« Peace to you! Are you already here? I was thinking of stopping here waiting for you and that I was going to be the first to arrive… and I find you already here » and He kisses them clearly happy to see them.

« It was not possible for You to be the first to arrive. As we were afraid that You might pass before we arrived, we left by starlight, which was soon dimmed by clouds. »

« I told you that you would see Me. So, John, you have had no sleep. »

« Little, Master, but certainly more than You had. But it does not matter » and a smile brightens John's serene face, a true mirror of his happy character which is always satisfied with everything.

« Well, brother. Did you want to speak to Me? » says Jesus to Joseph.

« Yes… Let us go into that vineyard. It will be more quiet there » and Joseph of Alphaeus is the first to advance between two rows of vines already stripped of their fruit. Only an odd small bunch of grapes is left on the vine-branches, among the yellowing branches about to fall, to satisfy the hunger of poor people and of pilgrims, according to Mosaic prescriptions.

Jesus follows him with Simon. John remains on the road, but Jesus calls him saying: « You may come, John. You are My witness. »

« But… » says the apostle looking perplexedly at Alphaeus' two sons.

« No. Do come. Nay, we want you to listen to our words » says Joseph and John then goes down into the vineyard where they all proceed so far, following the curve of the rows of vines, that they cannot be seen from the road.

« Jesus, I was happy to see that You love me » says Joseph.

« Could you doubt it? Have I not always loved you? »

« And I have always loved You. But… in our love, for some time,

we have not been understanding each other. I… could not approve of what You were doing, because I thought that You were ruining Yourself, Your Mother and us. You know… We, the elderly Galileans, we all remember how Judas the Galilean was struck and how his relatives and followers were scattered and their property confiscated. Those who were not killed were sent to the galleys and their goods were confiscated. I did not want that to happen to us. Because… Well, I thought that it was not true that just from us, of the stock of David, of course, but so… We are not short of bread, definitely not, and may the Most High be praised for that. But where is the regal grandeur which all the prophecies ascribe to Him Who will be the Messiah? Are You the rod that strikes in order to dominate? You were not the light when You were born. You were not even born in Your house!… Oh! I know the prophecies well! We are withered trees now, but nowhere it was said that the Lord would cover them again with leaves. And what are You but a just man? Those are the thoughts which made me oppose You moaning our ruin. And while I was moaning thus, tempters came to make my ideas of grandeur, of royalty flare up even-more… Jesus, Your brother was foolish. I believed them and I displeased You. It is hard to admit it, but I must acknowledge it. And consider that all Israel was in me, as foolish as I was, as certain as I was that the figure of the Messiah is not like the one which You give us… It is unpleasant to say: "I was wrong! We were wrong and we are wrong! We have been wrong for ages". But Your Mother explained the words of the prophets to me. Oh! yes! James is right. And Judas, too. When one hears the prophecies explained by Her, as they did when they were children, one sees that You are the Messiah. That is it. My hair is growing hoary, because I am no longer a boy, neither I was when Mary came back from the Temple and was engaged to Joseph. And I remember those days. And the astonished criticism of my father when he saw that his brother was not completing the marriage in a short time. He was amazed, and Nazareth was amazed. And people spoke slightly. Because it is not customary to let so many months pass before the wedding, putting oneself in condition of sinning and of… Jesus, I think highly of Mary and I honour the memory of my relative. But the world… It was not a good moment according to the world… You… Oh! now I know. Your Mother explained the prophecies. That is why God wanted them to delay the wedding, so that Your birth might coincide with the great Edict and You should be born in Bethlehem of Judah. And… yes… Mary explained everything to me and it was like a light that made me understand also what She did not mention, out of humility. And I say: You are the Messiah. That is what I said, that is what I will say. But to say that did not imply changing my mind… because my mind considers the Messiah a King. The

prophecies speak… and it is difficult to understand a different character in the Messiah than that of king… Are You following me? Are You tired? »

« No, I am listening. »

« Well… Those who were tempting my heart came back and wanted me to force You… And as I did not agree, the veil fell off their faces and they appeared as they are: false friends and true enemies… And more people came, weeping like sinners, and I heard them. They repeated the words which You spoke in Chuza's house… Now I know that You will reign over spirits, that is, You will be the One in Whom all the wisdom of Israel will assemble so that You may give new universal laws. You have the wisdom of the patriarchs, of the judges, and of the prophets, and the wisdom of our ancestors David and Solomon, and the wisdom which led the kings, Nehemiah and Ezra and supported the Maccabees. All the wisdom of a people, of our people, of the People of God. I understand that You will give the world, completely subjected to Your power, Your very wise laws. And Your people will really be a people of saints. But, my dear Brother, You cannot do that by Yourself. Moses, for much less, chose some assistants. And it was but one people! You… All the world! All the world at Your feet!… Ah! But to do that You must make Yourself known… Why are You smiling with Your lips, and closing Your eyes? »

« Because I am listening and I am saying to Myself: "My brother is forgetting that he reproached Me because I was making Myself known, saying that I would harm the whole family!". That is why I am smiling. And I am also thinking that for two and a half years I have done nothing but make Myself known. »

« That is true. But… Who knows You? The poor. Peasants. Fishermen. Sinners. And women! You can count on the fingers of one hand those who are not valueless nonentities among those who know You. I say that You must make Yourself known to the great ones in Israel! To the Priests, to the High Priests, to the Elders, the scribes, the great Rabbis of Israel, to all those, who, although few, are worth a multitude. They must know You! They, those who do not love You, among their charges which I now realise are false, have one which is true and just: that You neglect them. Why do You not present Yourself for what You are and conquer them with Your wisdom? Go up to the Temple and install Yourself in Solomon's Porch - You are of the stock of David and a prophet, and You are entitled to that place and nobody is rightfully entitled to it as You are - and speak. »

« I did speak. That is why they hate Me. »

« Insist. And speak as a king. Do You not remember the power, the majesty of Solomon's deeds? If (what a wonderful "if"!) You are really the One predicted by the prophets, as the prophecies

show if one looks at them with the eyes of the spirit, You are more than a Man. He, Solomon, was but a man. So show Yourself for what You are, and they will worship You. »

« Will the Hebrews, the princes, the heads of the families and the tribes of Israel adore Me? Not everybody, but some who do not adore Me, will adore Me in spirit and truth. But that will not happen now. First I must assume the crown, take the sceptre and put on the purple. »

« Ah! So You are king, You will soon be king! You are saying so! It is just as I thought! As many people think! »

« You really do not know how I shall reign. Only the Most High and I, and few souls to whom the Spirit of the Lord was pleased to reveal it, now and in the past, know how the King of Israel, the Anointed of God, will reign. »

« But listen also to me, Brother. Joseph is right. How can You expect them to love You or fear You if You always avoid astonishing them? Do You not want to call Israel to arms? Do You not want to utter the cry of war and victory? But at least become king by public acclamation, by being able to gain such an acclamation through Your power of Rabbi and Prophet, as it is not the first time that kings have been hailed thus in Israel » says Simon of Alphaeus.

« I already am king. I have always been king. »

« Yes. One of the Temple leaders told us. You were born king of the Hebrews. But You do not love Judaea. You are a deserter king, because You do not go there. You are not a holy king if You do not love the Temple, where the will of a people will anoint You king. Without the will of a people You cannot reign, unless You wish to impose Yourself on them through violence » replies Simon.

« You mean without the will of God, Simon. What is the will of the people? What is the people? For whom is the people? Who supports it as such? God. Do not forget that, Simon. And I shall be what God wants Me to be. By His will I shall be what I must be. And nothing can prevent Me from being so. It will not be My concern to utter the cry to gather the people. The whole of Israel will be present at My proclamation. Neither shall I have to go up to the Temple to be proclaimed. They will carry Me there. All the people will carry Me there that I may ascend My throne. You accuse Me of not loving Judaea… In its heart, in Jerusalem, I shall become the "King of the Jews". Saul was not proclaimed king in Jerusalem, neither was David nor Solomon. But I shall be anointed King in Jerusalem. But I will not go to the Temple in public now and I will not install Myself there, because it is not yet My hour. »

Joseph resumes speaking. « You are letting Your hour pass by. I am telling You. People are tired of foreign oppressors and of our leaders. This is the hour. I am telling You. The whole of Palestine,

with the exception of Judaea, but not all of it, is following You as a Rabbi, and even more than that. You are like a flag hoisted on a mountain top. Everybody is looking at You. You are like an eagle and everybody follows Your flight. You are like a revenger. And everybody is waiting for You to shoot the arrow. Go. Leave Galilee, the Decapolis, Perea, the other regions, and go to the heart of Israel, to the citadel in which all evil is enclosed and from which all good is to come, and conquer it. You have disciples there as well. But they are tepid because they do not know You well. They are few, because You do not stay there. And they are somewhat doubtful because You did not work there the deeds which You worked elsewhere. Go to Judaea so that they also may see who You are through Your deeds. You reproach the Hebrews for not loving You. But how can You expect to be loved by them if You hide Yourself from them? No man seeking or wishing to be acclaimed in public performs his works secretly, but he does them in such a way that people may see them. So if You can work wonders in hearts, bodies and elements, go there and make Yourself known to the world. »

« I told you: it is not My hour. My time has not yet come. You think that it is the right moment, but it is not so. I must act in My time. Not before. Not after. It would be useless before. I would make the world and hearts obliterate Me before I accomplish My work. And the work already done would bear no fruit because it is not completed and helped by God, Who wants Me to fulfil it without omitting one word or one deed. I must obey My Father. And I will never do what you hope for because it would prejudice the design of My Father. I understand you and I pity you. I bear you no grudge. I am not even tired of or annoyed at your blindness… You do not know. But I know. You do not know. You see the surface of the face of the world. I see its depth. The world shows you a face which is still kind. It does not hate you, not because it loves you, but because you do not deserve its hatred. You are a mere trifle. But it hates Me because I am a danger to the world. A danger to the falseness, the greed, the violence which is the world.

I am the Light and light enlightens. The world does not love light because it reveals the actions of the world. The world does not love Me, it cannot love Me because it knows that I have come to defeat it in the hearts of men and in the gloomy king who dominates it and leads it astray. The world does not want to convince itself that I am its Doctor and Medicine and like a madman it would like to destroy Me in order not to be cured. The world does not want to persuade itself yet that I am the Master because what I say is the opposite of what it says. And so it tries to stifle the Voice which speaks to the world in order to lead it to God and show it the true nature of its wicked actions. There is an abyss between Me

and the world. And it is no fault of Mine. I have come to give the world the Light, the Way, the Truth, the Life. But the world will not receive Me and My light becomes darkness for it because it will bring about the condemnation of those who rejected Me. In the Christ is all the Light for those men willing to receive it, but in the Christ is also all the darkness for those who hate Me and reject Me. That is why, at the beginning of My human life I was prophetically pointed out as a "sign of contradiction". Because according to how I am received, there will be salvation or condemnation, death or life, light or darkness.

But I solemnly tell you that those who receive Me will become the children of the Light, that is, of God, born to God, because they received God. So if I came to make men the children of God, how can I make Myself king, as many in Israel wish, out of love or hatred, out of simplicity or wickedness? Do you not realise that I would destroy Myself, the real Myself, that is, the Messiah, not the Jesus of Mary and Joseph of Nazareth, that I would destroy the King of kings, the Redeemer, the One born of a Virgin and called Immanuel, Admirable, Counsellor, Strong, the Father of the future century, the Prince of Peace, God, Whose empire and peace will have no end, sitting on the throne of David with regard to His human descent, but having as His footstool the world and all His enemies, and the Father at His side, as it is written in the book of Psalms, by the superhuman right of His divine origin? Do you not understand that God cannot be Man but through perfection of goodness, in order to save man, but He cannot and must not lower Himself to poor human things? Do you not understand that if I should accept the crown and the kingdom as you conceive it, I would admit that I am a false Christ, I would lie to God, I would disown Myself and the Father and I would be worse than Lucifer, because I would deprive God of the joy of having you, I would be worse than Cain for you, because I would condemn you to perpetual exile from God in a Limbo without hope of Paradise?

Do you not understand all that? Do you not see the snares of men to make Me fall? The trap of Satan to hit the Eternal Father in His Beloved Son and in His creatures: men? Do you not see that this is the sign that I am more than a man, that I am the Man-God? This craving of Mine only for spiritual matters in order to give you the spiritual Kingdom of God?… Do you not understand that the sign that I… »

« Gamaliel's words! » exclaims Simon.

«… that I am not a king, but the King, is all this hatred from hell and of all the world towards Me? I must teach, suffer and save you. That is what I must do. But Satan and his like do not want that. One of you said: "Gamaliel's words". Now. He is not My disciple and will never be while I am in this world. But he is a just man.

Well: is Gamaliel perhaps among those who tempt you and Me with regard to the poor human kingdom? »

« Oh! no! Stephen said that the rabbi, when he heard what happened at Chuza's house, exclaimed: "My spirit startles as I ask myself whether He can really be what He says. But no such question would ever cross my mind, if He had agreed to that proposal. The Child Whom I heard said that slavery and royalty will not be as we believed them, misunderstanding the prophets, that is, material, but spiritual, thanks to the Christ, the Redeemer from Sin and founder of the Kingdom of God in souls. I remember those words. And I judge the Rabbi by them. If in judging Him I should find out that He is inferior to that height, I would reject Him as a sinner and a lier. And I trembled seeing the hope, which the Child had put into them, dissolve into nothing" » says Simon.

« Yes, but in the meantime he does not say that He is the Messiah » remarks Joseph.

« He is waiting for a sign, so he says » replies Simon.

« Give him it, then! And make it a powerful one. »

« I will give him what I promised him. But not now. In the meantime you may go to the feast. I am not coming publicly, as a rabbi, as a prophet, to impose Myself, because it is not yet My hour. »

« But at least You will go to Judaea? You will give the Hebrews proofs that will convince them? So that they may not say… »

« Yes. But do you think that they will be of any avail to My peace? Brother, the more I do that, the more I shall be hated. But I will satisfy you. I will give them such proofs that more incontrovertible ones cannot be produced… and I will speak to them words capable of changing wolves into lambs and hard stones into soft wax. But they will be of no avail… » Jesus is sad.

« Have I grieved You? I was speaking for Your own good. »

« You are not grieving Me… But I would like you to understand Me, My dear brother, and to see Me for what I am… I would like to go away with the happy certainty that you are My friend. A friend understands and protects the interests of his friend… »

« And I tell You that I will do that. I know that they hate You. I am certain by now. That is why I came. But You know. I will watch over You. I am the oldest. I will rebuff slander and I will see to Your Mother » promises Joseph.

« Thank you, Joseph. My burden is heavy and you are relieving it. Sorrow, like a sea, is advancing with its waves to submerge Me and hatred is with it… But it is nothing if I have your love. Because the Son of man has a heart… and this heart needs love… »

« And I will give You it. Yes. In the eyes of God Who sees me I tell You that I will give You it. Go in peace, Jesus, to Your work. I will help You. We were fond of each other. Then… But let us go back to those days. One for the other. You: the Saint, I: the man, but united

for the glory of God. Goodbye, Brother. »

« Goodbye, Joseph. »

They kiss each other and then Simon asks: « Bless us that our hearts may open to all the Light. »

Jesus blesses them and before leaving them He says once again: « I entrust My Mother to you… »

« Go in peace. We shall be like two sons to Her. »

They part.

Jesus goes back to the road and begins to walk fast with John beside Him.

After quite a long time John breaks the silence asking: « But is Joseph of Alphaeus convinced by now or is he not? »

« Not yet. »

« Then, what are You as far as he is concerned? Messiah? Man? King? God? The situation is not clear to me. I think that he… »

« Joseph is like one of those morning dreams when the mind draws near reality relieving itself of the heavy slumber which caused unreal dreams and at times nightmares. Night phantoms recede, but the mind fluctuates in the dream which one would like never to come to an end, because it is beautiful… He is like that. He is approaching the moment when one awakes. But for the time being he is still caressing the dream. He is almost holding it back, because, for him, it is beautiful… But one must learn to take what man can give. And we must praise the Most High for the transformation which has taken place so far. Blessed be children! It is so easy for them to believe! » and Jesus passes an arm round the waist of John, who knows how to be a child and to believe, to make him feel His love.

477. Awaiting Johanan's Peasants near the Jezreel Tower.

24th August 1946.

« You are very tired, John. And yet we should arrive at Engannim tomorrow before sunset. »

« We shall arrive, Lord » says John and he smiles although he is pale with fatigue, having walked more than everybody else. And he tries to walk faster to convince the Master that he is not very tired. But he soon falls back to the pace of one who is exhausted, with stooped shoulders, his head bent forward as if he were oppressed by a yoke, dragging his feet and stumbling along.

« At least give Me the bags. Mine is heavy. »

« No, Master. You are more tired than I am. »

« You must be more tired because from Nazareth you came to Mattathias' wood and then you went back to Nazareth. »

« And I slept in a bed. You did not. You were awake in the wood and You left early. »

« And you, too. Joseph said so. You left by starlight. »

« Oh! but the stars last until dawn!… » remarks John smiling. He then becomes serious and adds: « And it is not the lack of sleep that grieves one… »

« What else, John? What has grieved you? Perhaps My brothers… »

« Oh! no, Lord! They as well… But what makes me feel heavy… no, not heavy… What makes me old is that I saw Your Mother weep… She did not tell me why She was weeping and I did not ask Her, although I felt inclined to do so. But I looked at Her so much that She said: "I shall speak to you at home. Not now, because I would weep more copiously". And in the house She spoke to me so kindly and so sadly that I wept as well. »

« What did She tell you? »

« She told me to love You very much, that I must never be the cause of the least sorrow to You, because later I would regret it bitterly. She said to me: "Let us do all our duty in the remaining months, even more than our duty". Because duty alone is too little for You Who are God. And She also said to me - and it made me suffer so much and if She had not said it I could not believe it and She said to me: "And it is also too little to do only our duty towards One Who is about to go away, and Whom we shall no longer be able to serve… In order to be resigned later, when He is no longer among us, we must have done more than our duty. We must have given everything, all our love, attention, obedience, everything. Then in the torture of separation one can say: 'Oh! I can say that, while it was God's will that I should have Him, I did not neglect to love and serve Him even for one moment'". And I said: "But is the Master really going away? He has still so much to do! There will be time… And She shook Her head saying, and two large tears streamed down from Her eyes: "The true Manna, the living Bread will go back to the Father when man rejoices savouring again bread made with new wheat… And we shall be alone, then, John". In order to comfort Her I said: "A great sorrow. But we must rejoice if He goes back to the Father, because no one will be able to hurt Him any more". And she said moaning: "Oh! but before!", and I thought I understood. But will it be really like that, Lord? Really? See, it is not a question of not believing Your words. The fact is that we love You and… I shall not say to you as Simon did one day: that cannot happen to You. I believe, we all believe… But we love You and… Oh! my Lord! Are the sins of love really sins? »

« Love never sins, John. »

« Then we, who love You, are ready to fight and kill in order to defend You. Galileans are not loved by other peoples because they say that we are quarrelsome. Well, we shall justify that reputation

by defending You. We are in the places where in the days of Deborah, Barak destroyed Sisera's army with his ten thousand men. And those ten thousand came from Naphtali and Zebulun. And we come from there as well. The name is different but the hearts are the same. »

« They were ten thousand… But even if you were ten times ten thousand now, what would you be able to do? »

« What? Are You afraid of the cohorts? They are not so many, and then… They do not hate You. You do not cause them any trouble. You are not thinking of a kingdom which may tear away a prey from the Roman eagles. They will not interfere with us and Your enemies who will soon be destroyed. »

« Even if you were one thousand, ten thousand, one hundred thousand, of what avail would that be against the will of the Father? I must fulfil it… »

John, depressed, speaks no more. How odd is the stubbornness and mental inability even of the best followers of Jesus to understand His greatest mission! They accept Him as Master and as Messiah. They believe in His power to save and redeem. But when they face His way of redeeming, their intellects become blind. The very prophecies seem to lose their value with regard to them. And no more can be said with regard to Israelites, who, we can say, breathe and walk and are nourished and live by means of the prophecies! Everything written in the holy Books is true except this: that the Messiah must suffer and die and be defeated by men. They cannot accept that. To me they look like blind and deaf people to whom Jesus is anxious to show the pictures of His future Passion, that they may read in them what it will be. But they close their eyes. Thus they neither see nor understand.

It is a rather dull evening and it is getting dark when they arrive in sight of Jezreel.

Jesus comforts John, who has not spoken any more and is proceeding like a sleep-walker so tired he is, saying: « We shall soon be there. You will go in and look for a shelter for yourself. »

« And for You. »

« No, John. I shall remain near the road coming from the plain. I think that they will come during the night and I want to comfort them and send them away before dawn. »

« You are so tired… and it may rain as it did last night. At least come until half the watch of the cock's crow. »

« No, John. »

« In that case I will stay with You. We are near the estates of the Pharisees and… And I promised Your Mother and myself. I do not want to have to repent… »

Some towers are at the four corners of Jezreel, but I do not know which purpose they serve. They were already old when I saw

them. They look like four gruff giants placed as jailors to the town which is built on an elevation overlooking the plain now slowly disappearing in the early shadows of a cloudy evening.

« Let us climb that slope near the tower. We shall be able to see all the road without being seen. There is grass on which to lie down and the step before the door will protect us if it should rain » says Jesus.

They go up. They sit down on a very low wall, which is half ruined and is about ten metres away from the tower. It looks like a protection built in olden time around the tower. It is almost completely crumbled and thick grass covers the ruins with huge cascades of wild convolvuli and other herbs which grow among ruins, with large downy leaves, the name of which I do not know.

They nibble at some bread in the last light of the day. They have nothing else. John, although exhausted, eyes the branches of a figtree, which has come up, twisted and dishevelled, among the stones and among the yellowing leaves he discovers some small figs spared by birds and children. They eat them completing their meal. They have water in their little flasks. The meal is soon over.

« Does anybody live in the tower? » asks John who is sleepy.

« I do not think so. No light or sound leaks out of it. Did you want to ask for shelter? You are dead-beat… »

« Oh! no. I was just wondering… But it is pleasant here… »

« At least lie down, John. The grass is thick and it has not rained here yet. The ground is dry. »

«… No… No… Lord. I am not sleepy… Let us speak. Tell me something… A parable… I will sit here at Your feet. I am quite happy if I rest my head on Your knees… » and he sits down leaning his head, with his face looking at the sky, on Jesus' knees. He makes desperate efforts not to fall asleep… He tries to speak to keep awake… He tries to take an interest in what he sees… stars in the sky, lights on the road. The former are becoming more and more numerous, because the wind has blown the clouds away; whilst the latter are rarer and rarer because pilgrims have stopped travelling at night. Only a few obstinate people persist in proceeding with their carts equipped with a lantern dangling from mats or blankets stretched across the arches of the cart.

But silence itself, now deeper and deeper, makes one sleepy… John, in a voice which sounds more and more remote, says: « How many lights in the sky! And look: some seem to have descended upon the Earth and tremble and quiver as they did up there… But they are smaller and not so beautiful… We cannot make stars… There is smoke in ours and they smell of wick… and anything can put them out… You once said that a butterfly is enough to put out a light in us and You compared butterflies with the allurements of the world… And then You said that… while butterflies can put out

a light, the wings of angels, and You called angels spiritual things, make the light within us brighter… I… the angel… the light… » John falls asleep slowly and he lies down unintentionally, exhausted by fatigue.

Jesus waits until he is comfortably settled and then He puts his bag under his head and covers him with a mantle with paternal gestures. In a final flash of lucidity John whispers: « I am not sleeping, Master, You know?… Only… thus I can see more stars and I see You better… » and he passes on to see Jesus and the starry sky better, dreaming of them in a sound sleep.

Jesus goes back to sit on His green seat. He rests His right elbow on His knee and His cheek on the palm of His hand and thinks, prays, looking at the road now deserted, while His Beloved apostle, with one arm folded under his head, sleeps as placidly as a child.

478. Taking to the Road Again towards Engannim.

26th August 1946.

« John, it is dawning. Get up and let us go » says Jesus shaking the apostle so that he may awake.

« Master! The sun has already risen! How long have I slept! And what about You? »

« I slept, too, beside you, under our mantles. »

« Ah! You convinced Yourself that these peasants would not come and You lay down! I had foreseen that… »

Jesus smiles and replies: « They came when the stars of the Great Bear pointed out with their position that crowing was about to begin. »

« Oh! I did not hear anything!… » John is mortified. « Why did You not keep me awake? »

« You were so tired. You looked like a baby sleeping in a cradle. Why awake you? »

« To keep You company! »

« You did that by means of your placid sleep. You fell asleep talking of angels, of stars, of souls, of light… and in your sleep you certainly continued to see angels, stars and your Jesus… Why bring you back to the iniquity of the world when you were so far away from it? »

« And if… if instead of the peasants, some criminals had come up here? »

« I would have called you in that case. But who would come? »

« Well… I do not know… Johanan, for instance… He hates You… »

« I know. But only his servants came. No one betrayed… because that is what you are thinking: that somebody may have spoken to injure Me and them. But no one betrayed. And I did the right thing

in waiting for them here. The new steward is as wicked as his master and has very severe instructions. I do not lack in charity by calling them: cruel. Any other word would be a lie… The peasants ran away as soon as it was dark praying the Lord that He would make them meet Me. God always rewards the faith of His unhappy children and comforts them. If they had not met Me they would have remained here until morning and would have then gone back to be in the fields by dawn… And so I saw them and blessed them… »

« And You are sad because You saw them so oppressed. »

« That is true. So many reasons to be sad… For the reason you mentioned, because I had nothing to give their exhausted bodies, because of the thought that I will not see them again… »

« Did You tell them? »

« No. Why add sorrows where everything is sorrow? »

« I would have willingly said goodbye to them myself for the last time. »

« It is not the last time for you. On the contrary, when I have gone away, you will take great care of them together with your fellow disciples. I entrust all My followers to you, and in particular the most unhappy ones and those whose only comfort is their faith and whose only joy is their hope of Heaven. »

« Oh! My master! As Your brother Joseph, I shall say to You as well: go in peace, Master. I will continue, as best I can. Believe me. »

« I am sure of that. Let us go… The road is becoming busy. Clouds are grouping in the sky and light is decreasing instead of increasing. It is going to rain today and everybody is hastening towards the next halting places. But the clouds have been kind to us. The night was not cold and there was no rain for us who were out in the open. The Father always watches over His beloved children. »

« You are beloved, Master. I… »

« You are loved by Him because you love Me. »

« Oh! that is true. Unto death… »

And mingling with the crowd, they depart southwards…

479. Jesus and John Arrive at Engannim.

27th August 1946.

The weather has really kept its promise and turned into a gloomy persistent drizzle. Those who are in wagons are well protected. But those who are travelling on foot or on donkeys get wet and are annoyed at it, particularly those who are troubled not only by the water wetting their heads and shoulders, but also by the mud which is becoming more and more watery and thus soaks into

their sandals, sticks to their ankles and splashes their garments. The pilgrims have pulled over their heads mantles or blankets, which they have folded double, and they look like hooded monks.

Jesus and John, who are on foot, are drenched. But they take more care in protecting their bags, containing their spare clothes, than themselves. They arrive thus at Engannim and they begin to look for the apostles, separating, in order to find them sooner.

And it is John who finds them, that is, he finds James of Zebedee, who had purchased provisions for the Sabbath.

« We were worried. And if you had not come, we were going to walk back, notwithstanding that it was the Sabbath… Where is the Master? »

« He is looking for you. The first to find you is to go near the blacksmith's. »

« Then… Look. We are staying in that house. She is a good woman with three daughters. Go to the Master at once and come back… » James lowers his voice and whispers looking around: « There are many Pharisees… and… they are certainly evil-minded. They asked us why He was not with us. They wanted to know whether He had gone ahead or was behind. At first we said: "We do not know". They did not believe us. And they were right, because how can we say that we do not where He is? Then the Iscariot - he is not so scrupulous - said: "He is ahead of us" and as they were not convinced and asked with whom, with what, when He had gone, because they knew that last Friday He was near Giscala, he said: "He embarked at Ptolemais and so He preceded us. He will land at Joppa and will enter Jerusalem by the Damascus Gate, and will go at once to see Joseph of Arimathea in his house in Bezetha". »

« But why so many lies? » asks John who is scandalised.

« Who knows?! We told him as well. But he laughed saying: "Eye for eye, tooth for tooth, and lie for lie. Provided the Master is safe. They are looking for Him to hurt Him. I know". Peter pointed out that by mentioning Joseph's name he might cause trouble for him. But Judas replied: "They will rush there and seeing Joseph's astonishment they will realise that it is not true". "They will hate you, then, for making fools of them…" we objected. But he laughed and said: "Oh! I do not give a fig for their hatred. I know how to make it harmless… But go, John. Try to find the Master and come with Him. The rain is helping us as the Pharisees are indoors in order not to wet their bulky garments… »

John gives his brother his bag and is about to run away, but James holds him back to say to him: « And do not mention Judas' lies to the Master. Even if they were told for a good purpose, they are still lies. And the Master hates falsehood… »

« I will not tell Him » and John runs away.

What James said is true. Rich people are already at home. Only

poor people are bustling about in the streets, looking for shelter…

Jesus is in a lobby near the forge. John approaches Him and says: « Come quickly. I found them. We shall be able to put on dry clothes. » He does not say anything else to justify his hurry.

They soon arrive at the house. They go in through the door left ajar. Immediately behind it are the eleven apostles who crowd round Jesus, as if they had not seen Him for months. The landlady, a little withered shrunken woman, peeps at them through a door ajar.

« Peace to you » says Jesus smiling and He embraces them all with the same fondness.

They all speak at the same time wishing to tell Him so many things. And Peter shouts: « Be quiet! And let Him go. Don't you see how wet and tired He is? » And he says to the Master: « I had a warm bath prepared for You… and give me Your wet mantle… and warm clothes. I took them from Your bag… » He then turns round towards the inner part of the house and he shouts: « Hey! woman! The Guest has arrived. Bring the water, because I will see to the rest. »

And the woman, as timid as everybody who has suffered - and it is clear from her countenance that she has suffered - passes through the corridor silently, followed by three girls who are like her in thinness and countenance, to go into the kitchen and get the cauldrons full of boiling water.

« Come, Master. And you, too, John. You are as cold as drowned bodies. I had some juniper boiled with vinegar and I put it in the water. It is good for you. » In fact the smell of vinegar and other aromas has spread from the cauldrons as they passed by.

Jesus, upon entering the little room in which are two large tubs (that is two small wooden vats probably used as wash-tubs) looks at the woman going out with her daughters and He greets her: « Peace to you and to your daughters. And may the Lord reward you. »

« Thank You, Lord… » she replies and she slips away.

Peter goes in with Jesus and John. He closes the door and whispers: « Remember that she does not know Who You are… We are pilgrims… all of us, and You are a rabbi, we are Your friends. Which is true, after all… It isn't… H'm! of course! it is but a half-hidden truth… Too many Pharisees… and too interested in You. Act accordingly… we shall speak later » and he leaves them alone and goes back to his companions who are sitting in a little room.

« And now? What shall we tell the Master? If we tell Him that we lied He will be grieved. But… we cannot hide the truth from Him » says Peter.

« Do not sacrifice yourself' I lied and I will tell Him. »

« And you will make Him even sadder. Have you not noticed how

depressed He is? »

« Yes, I have. But that is because He is tired… In any case… I can also say to the Pharisees: "I told you a lie". That is a trifle. The important thing is that He may not suffer. »

« I would not say anything to anybody. If you tell Him, you will not keep it a secret. If you tell them, you will not be able to save Him from their snares… » remarks Philip.

« We shall see » says Judas confidently.

A short time later Jesus comes in wearing dry clothes and refreshed by the bath. John follows Him.

They speak of everything that happened to the apostolic group and to the Master and John. But no one mentions the Pharisees until Judas says: « Master, I know for certain that those who hate You are looking for You. And in order to save You I spread the rumour that You are not going to Jerusalem along the usual route, but by sea as far as Joppa… They will rush there, aha! aha! »

« But why lie? »

« And why do they lie? »

« But they are they, and you are not, you ought not be like them… »

« Master, I am only one thing: one who knows them and who is fond of You. Do You want to be ruined? I am ready to prevent that. Listen to me carefully and hear my heart speak to You through my words. You shall not go out of here tomorrow… »

« Tomorrow is the Sabbath… »

« All right. But You shall not go out. You will rest, You… »

« Everything but sin, Judas. No consideration will make Me agree to neglect sanctifying the Sabbath. »

« They… »

« Let them do what they want. I will not sin. If I did, in addition to My sin which would weigh on Me, I would put in their hands a weapon to ruin Me. Do you not remember that they already say that I violate the Sabbath? »

« The Master is right » say the others.

« All right… You can do what You like on the Sabbath. But not with regard to the road. Do not let us take the road that everybody takes, Master. Listen to me. Disorientate them… »

« Now, listen! What do you know exactly, since you speak so much? » shouts Simon shaking his short arms. « Master, tell him to speak! »

« Peace, Simon. If your brother has got knowledge of a danger, which may be a risk for him, too, and he warns us about it, we must not treat him as an enemy, but we must be grateful to him. If he cannot tell us everything, because that might involve third persons who are not bold enough to take the initiative in speaking, but are still honest enough not to allow a crime, why do you want

to force him to speak? So let him speak, and I will accept what is good in his project and reject what might not be good. Speak, Judas. »

« Thanks, Master. You are the only One Who knows me for what I am. I was saying. We could proceed safely within the borders of Samaria. Because Rome rules more in Samaria than in Galilee and Judaea and those who hate You, do not wish to get into trouble with Rome. But I say that in order to puzzle spies we should not follow the direct route, but, departing from here, we should turn our steps towards Dothan and then, without going to Samaria, we should cut across the country and pass through Shechem, then down to Ephraim, along Mount Adummim and Cherith and then proceed to Bethany. »

« A long and difficult road, particularly if it rains. »

« Dangerous! The Adummim… »

« You seem to be seeking danger… »

The apostles are not enthusiastic. But Jesus says: « Judas is right. We shall go that way. Afterwards we shall have time to rest. I have still other things to do before the hour comes and is perfect, and I must not, out of stupidity, put Myself in their hands, until everything is accomplished. We shall thus call on Lazarus. He is certainly very ill and is waiting for Me… You may have your meal. I am withdrawing. I am tired… »

« Not even a little food? You are not ill, are You? »

« No, Simon. But I have not slept in a bed for seven nights. Goodbye, My friends. Peace be with you… » And he withdraws.

Judas is overjoyed: « See? He is humble and just and He does not reject what He feels is right… »

« Yes… but… Do you think that He is happy? Really happy? »

« I don't… But He realises that I am right… »

« I would like to know how you managed to become acquainted with so many things. And yet… you have always been with us!… »

« Yes. And you watch over me as if I were a dangerous beast. I know. But it does not matter. Bear this in mind: also a beggar, and even a thief may be useful to find out things, and a woman as well. I spoke to a beggar and I helped him. And I spoke to a robber and I found out… And to… a woman and… how many things a woman may know! »

The astonished apostles look at one another. They cast inquisitive glances at one another. When? Where did Judas find out and get in touch with?…

He laughs and says: « And I spoke to a soldier! Yes. Because the woman had said so much as to make me go to the soldier. And he confirmed. And I made people know… Everything is permitted when it is necessary: also courtesans and soldiers! »

« You are… you are…! » exclaims Bartholomew repressing what

he was about to say.

« Yes. I am I. Nothing more than myself. A sinner according to you. But I, with all my sins, serve the Master much better than you do. In any case… If a courtesan knows what Jesus' enemies want to do, it means that they go to courtesans or they have them, ballerine or mimes, to amuse themselves… And if they have them close at hand… I can have them as well. See? She… she was useful to me. You must consider that at the borders of Judaea He might have been caught. And since I avoided that you ought to say that I was wise… »

They are all pensive and take their food listlessly. Then Bartholomew stands up.

« Where are you going? »

« To look for Him… I do not believe that He is sleeping. I will take Him some warm milk… and I shall see. »

He goes out and is absent for some time. He comes back.

« He was sitting on the bed… and was weeping… You have grieved Him, Judas. Just as I thought. »

« Did He say that? I will go and explain. »

« No. He did not say that. On the contrary He said that you have your merits, too. But I understood Him. Do not go. Leave Him in peace. »

« You are all fools. He suffers because He is persecuted and hindered in His mission. That is the reason » replies Judas in a rebellious tone.

And John confirms: « That is true. He wept also before joining you. He is suffering bitterly, also because of His Mother, His brothers, the unhappy peasants. Oh! such deep grief!… »

« Tell us… »

« It is grievous to leave His Mother… and to see that He is not understood, that no one understands Him. And it grieves Him that Johanan's peasants… »

« Yes! It is really sad to see them!… I am glad that Marjiam did not see them. He would have suffered and hated the Pharisee… » says Peter.

« But have my brothers made Jesus suffer again? » asks Judas Thaddeus severely.

« No, on the contrary. They met and spoke affectionately and they parted in peace and with good promises. But He would like them to be like us… and more than us all… He would like us all to be convinced of His Kingdom and of its nature. And we… » But John says no more… And silence descends upon the little room lit up by a double-flame lamp which illuminates twelve differently pensive faces.

480. Jesus and the Samaritan Shepherd.

28th August 1946.

I cannot say in which part of Samaria we are. We are certainly right in the middle of the Samaritan mountains, although these ones are not the highest. The highest ones, in fact, are farther south, with their steep tops rising towards the sky, which has now cleared up.

The apostles are keeping as close as possible to Jesus while walking, but the path, a short cut, does not allow them to do so very frequently and the group forms and breaks up continuously.

Many shepherds are in the mountains with their flocks and the apostles apply to them to find out whether the path is the right one to take them to the caravan-track which from the sea goes to Pella. Although they are Samaritans, they answer the questions without any rudeness. On the contrary, one of them, at a junction of paths running in all directions and forking again in more branches, says: « I shall be going down to the valley soon. Have a little rest and then we can set out together. If you should get lost in these mountains… it would not be a good thing… » He lowers his voice and adds: « Highwaymen! » and he looks around as if he were afraid that they might be close to him and threatening him. Then, when he is reassured, he says: « They come down from the slopes of Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal and they spread about in these days of pilgrimages. And they are always active, notwithstanding that the Romans reinforce guards on roads… because there are always people who avoid busy roads to travel quicker or for other reasons. »

« You have many rascals, eh? » remarks Philip with a meaningful smile.

« You, a Galilean… do you think that they are Samaritans? » replies the shepherd resentfully.

The Iscariot intervenes as he feels that it is his duty to avoid every unpleasant incident, as he was the promoter of the change of itinerary, and he says: « No, no! It is because people know that you are hospitable and thus those who have done evil deeds elsewhere, come here seeking shelter. It is as if… the whole place were a city of refuge. Evil-doers know very well that nobody, Galileans or Judaeans, would follow them here and they take advantage of that. And nature assists them as well. All these mountains… »

« Ah! I thought that you were considering… The mountains, of course, serve their purpose. The two highest ones, particularly… Yes… but… how many come from the Adummim mountains and from the gorge of Ephraim! They belong to all races, eh!… and the Roman soldiers are shrewd… They do not go to dislodge them. Only snakes and eagles are aware of their dens and can reach them. And dreadful things are reported. But sit down. I will give you some milk… I am a Samaritan, but I know the Pentateuch as well!

And I do not offend those who do not offend me. You… you do not offend, and yet you are Galileans and Judaeans. But they say that a prophet has risen to teach us how to love one another. If I did not consider that according to the scribes and Pharisees of Israel we are cursed, so they say, I would say that the great prophets who loved us, although we are Samaritans, have come back in Him, as some people say, to love once again. But I do not believe it… Here is the milk… But I would like to meet that prophet. They say that the other prophet, the one who took refuge at our borders and whom we did not betray - those who insult us ought to remember that - said that this prophet is greater than Elijah. He called Him the Lamb of God, the Christ. And some Samaritans from Shechem spoke to Him, and they now tell great things of Him, and many people have gone to the main roads, waiting for Him, because they think that He may pass there. Nay - it is the first time that it happened - also some Judaeans, Pharisees and doctors have questioned us in every town, saying that if we see Him, we should run ahead of Him to tell them that He is arriving, because they want to give Him a great welcome. »

The apostles look at one another stealthily, but they wisely remain silent. Judas, with his bright dark eyes, full of triumphant light, seems to be saying: « Have you heard that? Are you now convinced that I was right? »

The shepherd continues to speak: « You certainly know Him. Where do you come from? »

« From Upper Galilee » replies Judas at once.

« Ah! you are… No. You are not Galilean. »

« We come from all places. We went on pilgrimage to the tombs of the doctors. »

« Ah! Perhaps you are disciples… But is this man not a rabbi? » he says pointing at Jesus.

« We are disciples. You are right. Yes, this man is a rabbi. But you know that one rabbi differs from another… »

« I know. He is certainly young and he has still much to learn from the great doctors of your Temple » and there is a touch of contempt in the possessive adjective.

But Judas, who is always ready to answer back, is wonderfully submissive. The others do not speak, Jesus looks absorbed in thought, so the pungent remark provokes no reply. Judas in fact says smiling: « He is very young indeed. But He is the wisest of us all » and to put an end to the conversation which might become dangerous, he says: « Have you to stay here much longer? Because we would like to be down in the valley by night. »

« No. I am coming. I shall gather the sheep and come. »

« All right. In the meantime we shall move on… » and he stands up with the others and takes to the path at once.

When a thicket is between him and the shepherd he laughs and laughs, saying: « How easy it is to tease people! And are you now convinced that I was not lying and I was not foolish? »

« No. You were not lying… but you lied now. »

« Lied? no. How can you say that, Philip? I knew how to speak the truth preventing it from becoming harmful. Do we not come from Upper Galilee? Do we not come from all places? Did we not go one day to venerate the tombs of doctors and were pelted with stones? And did we not go near them also in our last journey towards Giscala? Have I perhaps denied that Jesus is a rabbi? Have I perhaps said that He is not the wisest of us all?… In saying that, I was thinking, and my heart was rejoicing, that by saying "we" I was offending the rabbis, who are all inferior to the Master, although they do not think so, and I was making a fool of the shepherd… Ha! Ha! One must know how to say things… and one can say everything without sinning and without causing any harm. »

Judas of Alphaeus makes a grimace of disgust and says: « As far as I am concerned it is still a lie. »

« Of course! I did it! But did you hear him, eh? They put aside prejudices, disgust, arrogance in order to tell Samaritans to inform them of the passage of the Master, so that they might welcome Him at the borders! Ah! What a welcome! »

« Welcome! They also thought and spoke of something true, while lying… Judas of Kerioth is right » says Thomas.

Jesus turns round and says: « Yes. Their words were deceitful and hateful. But to say one thing for another, even if for a good purpose, is always blameworthy. Do you think that the Lord needs such behaviour to protect His Messiah? Do not lie any more, not even for a good purpose. The mind becomes accustomed to imagining lies, and lips to utter them. No, Judas. Avoid being insincere. »

« I will, Master. But let us be quiet now. The shepherd is running to join us… »

In fact the shepherd arrives pushing forward his sheep, which feeling the fold close at hand begin to run with their shambling gait, bleating, shoving one another, forcing their way through the apostles, whom they almost sweep away. He is followed by the young shepherd and the dog and he stops only when with the help of the boy and the dog he succeeds in holding back the sheep, gathering them together so that they may not scatter about or go to the valley by themselves.

« They are the most stupid animals on the Earth. But they are so useful! » he says wiping his perspiration and he adds with a sigh: « Eh! if Reuben were still here! But with this boy only!… » He shakes his head going down behind his sheep, which the dog and the boy,

at the head of the flock, are keeping together. And talking to himself he says: « If I knew where to find that prophet, although I am a Samaritan, I would speak to Him… »

« And what would you say to Him? » asks Jesus.

« I would say: "I had a wife as good as mountain water is to a thirsty man, and the Most High took her from me. I had a daughter as good as her mother, a Roman saw her and wanted to marry her and took her away. I had my first-born son and he was everything to me… he slid down the mountain one rainy day and broke his back and is motionless and now he has been taken ill as well with an internal disease and the doctors say that he will die. I am not going to ask You why the Eternal Father punished me, but I beg You to cure my son". »

« And do you believe that He could cure him for you? »

« I certainly believe it! But I shall never see Him… »

« Why are you sure? He is not a Samaritan. »

« He is a just man. He is the Son of God, so they say. »

« You, in your fathers, offended God. »

« That is true. But it is also said that God will forgive the Sin of man by sending the Redeemer. This promise can be read in the Pentateuch next to the condemnation of Adam and Eve. And the Book repeats it several times. If He forgives that sin, will He not have mercy on me, who am not guilty of being born a Samaritan? I think that if the Messiah heard of my grief, He would feel pity for me. »

Jesus smiles but does not say anything. Also the apostles smile meaningly, which, however, is not noticed by the shepherd.

« So is that boy not your son? » asks Jesus.

« No. He is the son of a widow who has seven sons and lives in poverty. I have taken him as an assistant… and a son… so that I shall not be left alone… when Reuben is in his grave… » and he sighs.

« But if your son should recover, what would you do with this one? »

« I would keep him. He is good and I feel sorry for him… » he lowers his voice saying: « He does not know… But his father died on the galleys. »

« What had he done to deserve that? »

« Nothing deliberately. But his cart ran over a drunk soldier and was accused of doing it deliberately… »

« How do you know that he is dead? »

« Oh! one does not survive long at the oar! But definite news was given to us by a merchant of Samaria, who had seen his dead body being removed from the shackles and thrown into the sea beyond the Pillars. »

« And you would really keep him with you? »

« I am quite prepared to swear it. He is unhappy, I am unhappy. And I am not the only one to do so. Other people have taken the sons of the widow, who is now left with her three daughters. They are still too many. But it is better to be four than twelve… But I need not swear!… Reuben will die… »

One can now see the road which is very busy with pilgrims hastening to their halting places. It will soon be dark.

« Have You a place where to sleep? » asks the shepherd.

« Not, really. »

« I would like to say to You: "Come", but my house is too small for everybody. But the pen is large. »

« May God reward you as if you had given Me hospitality. But I will go on until the moon sets. »

« As You wish. Are You not afraid of getting lost? Of meeting wicked people?. »

« The poverty of My companions and Mine will protect Me against highwaymen. With regard to the road, I rely on the angel of pilgrims. »

« I must go to the front of the herd. The boy does not yet know… And the road is full of carts… » and he runs ahead to lead the sheep safely.

« Master, the worst is coming now. We have to cover a stretch of the road among people… » whisper the apostles.

They are now on the road, behind the sheep, which are proceeding in a line, closed between the mountain side, the shepherd's crook and the alert dog. The boy is now beside Jesus Who caresses him.

They arrive at a cross road. The shepherd has stopped the herd saying: « Here we are. This is Your road and that one is mine. But if You come towards the village, You will find a shorter one to go to the next village. Look: can You see that huge sycamore? Go as far as that and then turn to the right. You will see a little square with a fountain and after it, a house, black with smoke. It is the forge. The road is beyond it. You cannot go wrong. Goodbye. »

« Goodbye. It was very kind of you and God will comfort you. »

The shepherd goes his way and Jesus takes His. The former is surrounded by sheep, the latter by the apostles. Two shepherds in the middle of their flocks…

They are now separated, concealed by a group of houses built between the main road, followed by the shepherd, and the lane which passes through a poor part of the village, the poorest, I think, silent, solitary… The poor people are already indoors and the fireplaces in the kitchens can be seen through the half-open doors… Night is falling with the darkness of twilight.

« We shall stop just outside the village » says Judas. « I can see some houses over there in the fields. »

« No. It is better to go on. » There are different opinions.

They reach the fountain. They rush towards it to wash themselves and fill their little flasks. There is the smith. He is closing his black workshop. And there is the road towards the fields… They take it…

But a cry is heard from afar, from the village. « Rabbi! Rabbi! My son! Citizens! Come! Where is the Pilgrim? »

« They are looking for us, Master! What have You done? »

« Run. If we reach that wood no one will be able to see us any more. »

They run across a field covered with recently cut hay, they arrive at a hillock which they climb and disappear, followed by the voices, now numerous, and by people who have spread about, outside the village, calling rather than looking, because not much can be seen in the twilight. They stop at the foot of the hillock.

« It was the Rabbi Who went to Shechem, I am telling you. It could be but Him. And He cured my Reuben. And I did not recognise Him. Rabbi! Rabbi! Rabbi! Allow me to worship You! Tell me where You are hidden! »

Only the echo replies and it seems to say: « Abbi! Abbi! Abbi! » and to change the last word into « heaven ».

« But He cannot be far » says the forger. « He passed in front of me shortly before you arrived… »

« And yet He is not here. See. There is nobody on the road. He was to take this one. »

« Will He be in the wood? »

« No. He was in a hurry… » Then he seeks help from his dog. « Find them! Find them! » and for a moment the dog seems to be able to discover the hiding place, because it makes for the wood after sniffing at the meadow. Then the animal stops perplexed, with one paw lifted up, its muzzle in the air… then, disappointed by I do not know what, it starts off in the opposite direction, barking, and the people run after it…

« Oh! Blessed be the Lord! » exclaim the apostles with sighs of relief and they cannot help saying to the Master: « But what have You done, Lord! » and they almost reproach Him for doing it. « You know that it is dangerous for You to be pointed out, and yet You… »

« And was I not to reward faith? And is it not a good thing that they should think that I am on the road which from Dothan takes one to Pella? Do you perhaps no longer want them to have no clear idea about anything? »

« That is true. You are right! But if the dog found You out? »

« Oh! Simon! And do you think that He Who imposes His will, also from a distance, on diseases and elements and drives out demons, is not able to impose it on an animal? Now let us try to

reach the road beyond the bend, and they will not be able to see us any more. Let us go. »

And they proceed almost gropingly through the thicket on the hill, until they get back to the road: a small road, all white in the light of the rising moon, and far from the village now completely concealed by the hill…

481. The Ten Lepers near Ephraim.

29th August 1946.

They are still in the rugged mountains, on paths where no cart can pass but only wayfarers or people riding strong mountain donkeys, which are taller and stronger than the usual little donkeys one finds in more level areas. Many people may consider this remark rather trite, but I am making it just the same.

In Samaria there are customs which differ from those of other places, both with regard to garments and many other things. And one is the large number of dogs, unlike other places, and it surprises me as I was surprised at the presence of pigs in the Decapolis. Perhaps there are many dogs because there are many shepherds in Samaria and there are probably many wolves in the mountains which are so wild. There are many dogs also because I see that in Samaria the shepherds are generally alone, at most with a boy, each one pastures his own flock, whereas elsewhere there are mostly many looking after large herds of rich people. It is a fact that here each shepherd has his dog or more dogs according to the number of sheep of his flock.

Another characteristic are the donkeys, almost as tall as horses, they are robust, fit to climb these mountains with a heavy load on the pack-saddle, also big logs, for I see them coming down from these wonderful mountains covered with age-old woods.

Another distinctive feature: the ease of manner of the inhabitants, who without being sinners as the Judaeans and Galileans considered them, are open and frank, without bigotry and without the silly complications of other people. And they are hospitable. This remark makes me think that in the parable of the good Samaritan there is not only the intention of pointing out that there is good and evil everywhere and among all races, and that also among heretics there may be righteous people, but there is also a real description of Samaritan behaviour towards those who are in need. They may have stopped at the Pentateuch, I hear them speak of it and of nothing else, but they practise it, at least towards their neighbours, with more rectitude than the others, with their six hundred and thirteen precepts etc.

The apostles are speaking to the Master, and although they are convinced Israelites, they are compelled to acknowledge and

praise the attitude of the people of Shechem, who invited Jesus to stay with them, as I understand from the conversation I hear.

« You have heard them, haven't you? » says Peter « how they said very clearly that they are aware of the hatred of Judaeans? They said: "They hate You more than they hate us Samaritans, as many as we are and have ever been. There is no limit to their hatred for You". »

« And that old man? How rightly he said: "After all it is only fair that it should be so, because You are not a man, You are the Christ, the Saviour of the world and thus You are the Son of God, because only God can save the corrupt world. Therefore as You have no limits as God, no limits in Your power, in Your holiness and in Your love, as Your victory over Evil will have no limit, so it is natural that Evil and Hatred, all one thing with Evil, have no limit against You". He really spoke the truth! And that reason explains many things! » says the Zealot.

« What does it explain according to you? I… I say that it explains only that they are fools » says Thomas straightforwardly.

« No. Foolishness would be a justification. But they are not fools. »

« Intoxicated then, intoxicated with hatred » replies Thomas.

« Not even that. Intoxication yields after bursting forth. Their hatred does not yield. »

« It cannot be more unrestrained than it is! And it has been so for such a long time… that it should have subsided by now. »

« My friends, it has not reached its goal yet » says Jesus calmly, as if the goal of that hatred were not His death.

« No?! And yet they never leave us in peace?! »

« Master, they cannot bring themselves to believe that I have spoken the truth. But I did. Oh! I did indeed! And I say also that if it had depended on you, you would have all fallen into the trap, like the Baptist. But they will not succeed because I am on the watch… » says the Iscariot.

And Jesus looks at him. And I look at him as well wondering, and I have been wondering for some days, whether the behaviour of the Iscariot has been brought about by a good real return to the path of virtue and love for the Master, a release from the human and extra-human powers which held him back, or it is more refined work preparatory to the final blow, a greater enslavement to the enemies of Christ and to Satan. But Judas is such a special being that he is not decipherable. God only can understand him. And God, Jesus, draws a veil of mercy and prudence over all the actions and the personality of His apostle… a veil which will be torn, throwing full light on so many questions at present mysterious, only when the books of Heaven are opened.

The idea that the hatred of enemies has not yet reached its goal has worried the apostles so much that they have stopped speaking

for some time. Then Thomas addresses the Zealot saying: « Well then, if they are neither intoxicated nor foolish, if their hatred explains many things but not this one, what does it explain? What are they? You have not told us… »

« What are they? They are possessed. They are what they say He is. That explains their fury which knows no bounds, on the contrary the more His power is revealed, the more it increases. The Samaritan spoke the truth. In Him, Son of the Father and of Mary, Man and God, there is the Infinity of God, and the Hatred which opposes that perfect Infinity is infinite, even if in its limitless being, Hatred is not perfect, because God only is perfect in His actions. But if Hatred could touch the abyss of perfection it would descend to touch it, nay it would hurl itself down to touch it, to bounce back up again, through the very vehemence of its fall into the abyss of hell, against the Christ, in order to wound Him with the weapons snatched from the infernal Abyss. The firmament regulated by God, has one sun only. It rises, it shines and sets leaving the place to the smaller sun which is the moon and the latter, after shining in her turn, sets to give the place to the sun. Stars teach men many things because they are submitted to the will of the Creator. Men are not. The opposition to the Master is an instance of that. What would happen if the moon should say: "I am not going to disappear and I will come back along the route I went"? She would certainly clash against the sun horrifying and damaging the whole of Creation. That is what they want to do, as they think they can shatter the Sun… »

« It is the struggle of Darkness against the Light. We see it every day at dawn and in the evening. The two forces oppose each other dominating the Earth alternately. But darkness is always defeated because it is never absolute. A little light is always shed, even in the most starless night. The very air seems to create it in the infinite spaces of the vault of heaven shedding it, even if it is very scanty, to persuade men that the stars are not extinguished. And I say that likewise in this particular darkness of Evil against the Light which is Jesus, the Light will be there to comfort those who believe in It, despite all the efforts of Darkness » says John smiling at his own thought, in which he is engrossed as if he were talking to himself.

His thought is pursued by James of Alphaeus. « In the Books the Christ is called "Morning Star". So He, too, will know a night, and - it terrifies me! - we also shall be aware of it, of a period of time when the Light will not seem strong, whereas Darkness will appear to be winning. But since He is called the Morning Star in a way that excludes limitation of time, I say that after the momentary night He will be the pure, fresh, virginal morning Light, renovating the world, like the light which followed Chaos on the

first day. Oh! yes. The world will be re-created in His Light. »

« And accursed will be the reprobates who will have raised their hands to strike the Light, repeating the errors already made by Lucifer down to the desecrators of the holy people. Jehovah leaves man free in his actions. But for the sake of man He will not allow Hell to prevail. »

« Oh! it's a good thing that after so much drowsiness of our spirits, whereby we all seemed to be dull and sluggish due to premature old age, wisdom flourishes again on our lips! We no longer seemed ourselves! Now I find the Zealot again, and John, and the two brothers of the good old days! » says the Iscariot congratulating them.

« I do not think we had changed so much as to no longer seem to be ourselves » says Peter.

« We had indeed! All of us. And you were the first. And then Simon and the others, including myself. If there was one who was more or less the same as before, it was John. »

« H'm! I don't really know in what… »

« In what? Uncommunicative, as if we were tired, indifferent, worried… We no longer heard conversations like those of the good old days, like the present one, so useful… »

« For disputes » says Thaddeus remembering how they often turned into squabbles.

« No, for our formation. Because we are not all like Nathanael, or Simon, or like you, the sons of Alphaeus, with regard to birth and wisdom. And those who are less so, learn from those who are more like that » replies the Iscariot.

« Actually… I would say that what is most necessary is to grow in justice. And Simon has given us a wonderful lesson on that » says Thomas.

« Me? You are seeing things the wrong way. I am the most stupid of the lot » says Peter.

« No. You are the one who has changed most. In that respect Judas of Kerioth is right. There is very little left in you of the Simon I met when I came and joined you and who, forgive me, remained as he was for a long time. Since I joined you again, after parting for the Feast of the Dedication, you have done nothing but improve yourself. You are now… yes, I will tell you: you are more fatherly and at the same time more austere. You bear more with your poor brothers than you did previously… And one can see, at least I see it, what it costs you. But you control yourself. And you never commanded so much respect as you do now that you do not speak and do not reproach so much… »

« Well, my dear friend! It is very kind of you to judge me so… I have not changed at all, except for the love for the Master, which grows in me more and more. »

« No. Thomas is right. You have changed very much » many of them confirm.

« Who knows! You say so… » says Peter shrugging his shoulders. And he adds: « Only the Master could give a definite opinion. But I will take good care not to ask Him. He is aware of my weakness and He knows that an undeserved praise might harm my spirit. So He would not praise me, and He would be doing the right thing. I have become more and more acquainted with His heart and His method and I see how just they are. »

« Because you have an upright mind and you love more and more. It is your love for the Master that makes you see and understand. Your Master, the true and greatest Master who makes you understand your Master, is Love » says Jesus Who so far has been listening and has been silent.

« I think… it is also the grief that is within me… »

« Grief? Why? » some of them ask.

« Hey! because of many things, which after all, are one thing only: what the Master suffers… and the thought of what He will suffer. It is not possible for us to be as absent-minded as we were in the early days, like children who do not know, now that we know what men are capable of doing and how one must suffer to save them. Oh! we thought everything was easy in the early days! We thought all we had to do to make the others side with us was to present ourselves! We thought that to conquer Israel and the world was like… casting a net in waters abounding in fish. Dear me! I think that if He does not succeed in having a good haul, we will have none at all. But that is nothing! I think they are wicked and they make Him suffer. And I think that is the reason for our change in general… »

« That is true. As far as I am concerned it is true » confirms the Zealot.

« Also with regard to me. Also with regard to me » say the others.

« I have been worried about that for a long time and I tried to have… some good assistance. But they betrayed me… and you did not understand me… And I did not understand you. I thought you were like that through spiritual tiredness, lack of confidence, disappointment… »

« I never hoped for human joys, so I was not disappointed » says the Zealot.

« My brother and I would like Him to be victorious, but for His own joy. We followed Him out of love as His relatives, rather than as disciples. We have always followed Him since our childhood. He is younger than we are, but always so much greater than we are… » says James with his boundless admiration for his Jesus.

« If there is one thing we must regret, it is that not all His relatives love Him in spirit and only with the spirit. But we are

not the only ones in Israel who love Him in a wrong way » says Thaddeus.

Judas Iscariot looks at him and would probably say something, but his attention is distracted by a cry coming from a hillock dominating the little village, around which they are walking, looking for the road to enter it.

« Jesus! Rabbi Jesus! Son of David and our Lord, have mercy on us. »

« They are lepers! Let us go, Master, otherwise the whole village will rush here and will detain us in their houses » say the apostles.

But the lepers have the advantage of being ahead of them, high up on the road, at least five hundred metres from the village, and they come down limping and rush towards Jesus repeating their cries.

« Let us go into the village, Master. They cannot go in » say some of the apostles, but others remark: « Some women have already come out and are looking. If we go in, we will avoid the lepers, but we will not avoid being recognised and retained. »

And while they are uncertain as to what they should do, the lepers come closer to Jesus, Who heedless of His disciples' ifs and buts, has gone on His way. And the apostles resign themselves to following Him while women with children hanging on to their skirts and a few old men left in the village come to see, remaining at a prudent distance from the lepers who, however, stop at a few metres from Jesus and implore once again: « Jesus, have mercy on us! »

Jesus looks at them for a moment; then, without approaching the sorrowful group, He asks: « Are you from this village? »

« No, Master. We come from different places. But the other side of the mountain where we stay, faces the road to Jericho and it is a good spot for us… »

« Go then to the village which is nearest to your mountain and show yourselves to the priests. »

And Jesus resumes walking, moving to the roadside, so that He may not touch the lepers, who look at Him, while He draws closer, with their poor diseased eyes expressing nothing but hope. And when Jesus reaches them, He raises His hand to bless them.

The people of the village are disappointed and go back to their houses… The lepers clamber up the mountain again going to their grottoes or towards the Jericho road.

« You did the right thing in not curing them. The people in the village would not have let us go away… »

« Yes, and we ought to arrive at Ephraim before night. »

Jesus continues to walk and is silent. The village is now hidden by the bends of the winding road which follows the irregular contour of the mountain at the foot of which it is dug.

But a voice reaches them: « Praise to the Most High God and to His true Messiah. All power, wisdom and mercy is in Him! Praise

to the Most High God Who has granted us peace through Him. Praise Him, o men of the towns in Judaea, Samaria, Galilee and beyond the Jordan. Let the praise to the Most High and to His Christ resound as far as the snow on the very high Hermon, as far as the parched stones in Idumea, as far as the beaches lapped by the waves of the Great Sea. The prophecy of Balaam has been fulfilled. The Star of Jacob is shining in the restored sky of the fatherland reunited by the true Shepherd. And the promises made to the patriarchs are also fulfilled! Here, here is the word of Elijah, who loved us. Listen to it, peoples of Palestine and understand it. One must no longer limp on two sides but one must choose by the light of the spirit, and if the spirit is righteous one will choose correctly. This is the Lord, follow Him! Ah! so far we have been punished because we did not strive to understand! The man of God cursed the false altar prophesying: "A son shall be born to the house of David, Josiah by name, who shall immolate on the altar and bum the bones of Adam. And the altar will burst apart as far as the bowels of the Earth and the ashes of the immolation will be scattered to the north, to the south, to the east and where the sun sets". Do not behave like foolish Ahaziah who sent messengers to consult the god of Ekron when the Most High was in Israel. Do not be inferior to Balaam's donkey which for its respect for the spirit of light would have deserved to live, whereas the prophet who did not see would have been struck down. Here is the Light passing among us. Open your eyes, men whose souls are blind, and see » and one of the lepers follows them drawing closer and closer, also on the main road, where he points Jesus out to pilgrims.

The apostles, annoyed, turn round two or three times ordering the leper, by now completely cured, to be silent. And the last time they almost threaten him.

And he stops shouting for a moment, in order to speak to everybody, and replies: « And do you expect me not to glorify the great things which God has done to me? Do you want me not to bless Him? »

« Bless Him in your heart and be quiet » they reply angrily.

« No, I cannot be quiet. God puts the words on my lips », and he resumes in a louder voice: « People of the two border towns, and you who happen to pass here, stop and worship Him Who will reign in the name of the Lord. I used to laugh at so many words. But now I repeat them because I see that they have been fulfilled. All the peoples are moving and are coming towards the Lord, rejoicing, across the sea and deserts, over mountains and hills. And we also, the people who have been walking in darkness, will go to the great Light which has risen, towards Life, leaving the region of death. We who were like wolves, leopards and lions, we will be born to a new life in the Spirit of the Lord and will love one

another in Him, in the shade of the Shoot of Jesse, which has grown into a cedar, under which will camp the nations gathered by Him at the four cardinal points of the Earth. Here comes the day when the jealousy of Ephraim will end, because there is no longer Israel and Judah, but one Kingdom only: the Kingdom of the Christ of the Lord. Well, I sing the praises of the Lord Who saved me and consoled me. Now, I say: praise Him and come to drink salvation at the fountain of the Saviour. Hosanna! Hosanna to the great things He works! Hosanna to the Most High Who put His Spirit among men and clothed Him with flesh, that He might become the Redeemer! »

He is inexhaustible. The crowds increase in number, they throng and obstruct the road. Those who were behind rush forward, those who were ahead come back. The people of a little village, which is now close at hand, join the passers-by.

« Please make him keep quiet, Lord. He is a Samaritan. That is what the people say. Since You do not allow even us to go ahead of You preaching You, he must not speak of You! » say the angry apostles.

« My dear friends, I will repeat to you the words which Moses spoke to Joshua the son of Nun when he complained because Eldad and Medad were prophesying in the camp: "Are you jealous on my account? Oh! if only the whole people of Yahweh were prophets, and Yahweh gave His Spirit to them all!". However, I will stop and dismiss him to make you happy. »

And He stops turning round and calling the cured leper, who runs towards Him and prostrates himself before Jesus kissing the ground.

« Stand up. And where are the others? Were you not ten in all? The other nine did not feel it was necessary to thank the Lord. What? Out of ten lepers, among whom one only was a Samaritan, not one, except this foreigner, felt it was his duty to come back and give glory to God, before going back to life and to his family? And they say that he is a "Samaritan". So the Samaritans are no longer intoxicated, as they do not see double and they come to the way of Salvation without staggering? Does the Word speak a foreign language if foreigners understand Him and His countrymen do not? »

He turns His wonderful eyes on the crowds from every place in Palestine present there. And those flashing eyes are unsustainable… Many lower their heads and spur their mounts or walk away…

Jesus lowers His eyes on the Samaritan kneeling at His feet and looks at him most kindly. He raises His hand, which was hanging loosely along His side, to bless him and says: « Stand up and go away. Your faith has saved in you something which is more than your flesh. Proceed in the Light of God. Go. »

The man kisses the ground again and before standing up he asks: « Give me a name, Lord. A new name because everything is new in me and for ever. »

« In which part of the country are we now? »

« In Ephraim. »

« And Ephrem is from now onwards your name, because Life has given you life twice (1). Go. »

And the man stands up and goes away.

The local people and some pilgrims would like to hold Jesus back. But He subdues them with a glance, which is not severe, on the contrary it is very gentle, but it must express such a power that no one attempts to detain Him.

And Jesus leaves the road without going into the little village, He walks through a field, He then crosses a little stream and a path and climbs the eastern hillock, all covered with woods, which He enters with His disciples saying: « We will follow the road walking in the wood, so that we shall not get lost. After that bend the road runs along this mountain. We will find a grotto in which we can sleep and at dawn we shall be beyond Ephraim… »

(1) The meaning of « Ephrem » is, in fact: double fruit.

482. At Ephraim. Parable of the Pomegranate.

31st August 1946.

And Jesus in fact thinks that He will be able to get past Ephraim at the first light of dawn, while the town is silent and its streets deserted, without being seen by anybody. He prudently goes round the town, without entering it, despite the very early hour.

But when, coming from the little lane at the rear of the village, they arrive at the main road, they find the whole village, I would say, waiting for them, together with other people from other towns, through which they passed previously, and the latter crowd point out Jesus to the people of Ephraim as soon as they see Him. Fortunately there are no Pharisees, scribes or the like.

The people of Ephraim send on the notables of the town, and one of them, after a solemn greeting, says on behalf of everybody: « We heard that You were here and that You did not disdain to have mercy on anybody. We already knew that You had been merciful to the people of Shechem and so we wished to have You. Now, He Who knows the thoughts of men has led You among us. Stay and speak to us, because we also are children of Abraham. »

« I am not allowed to stop… »

« Oh! we are aware that they are looking for You. But not here. This town is at the border of the desert and of the Mountains of blood. They do not come here willingly. And in this occasion, after

the first ones, we have not seen any more. »

« I cannot stop… »

« The Temple is waiting for You. We know. But believe us. We are considered by you as outlaws because we do not bend our heads to the Pontiffs of Israel. But is the Pontiff perhaps God? We are far from you. But not so far as not to know that your priests are as worthless as ours. And we think that God can no longer be with them. No. The Most High no longer conceals Himself in the cloud of incense. They could stop burning it, and they could enter the Holy of Holies without any fear of being reduced to ashes by the splendour of God standing in His glory. And we worship God feeling that He is outside the deserted stones of the empty temples. And we do not say that our temple is more empty than yours, if you wish to accuse us of having a temple of idols. You can see that we are impartial. So listen to us. »

And he continues in a solemn tone: « It would be better if You stopped here to worship the Father among those who at least admit that they have a spirit of religion devoid of truth like the others who will not admit it and they offend us. Although alone, avoided like lepers, without prophets and doctors, we have at least been able to be united, feeling that we were brothers. And it is our law not to betray, because it is written: "You must not take the side of the greater number in wrong doing, nor side with the majority and give evidence in a lawsuit in defiance of justice". It is written: "See that the man who is innocent and just is not done to death, for I cannot bear impious people. You must not accept a bribe, for a bribe blinds clear-sighted men and is the ruin of a just man's cause. Do not oppress the stranger because you know what it means to be strangers in a foreign country". And in the blessings pronounced on Gerizim, a mountain dear to the Lord if He chose it as a mountain of blessings, all sorts of good things are promised to those who conform to the true Law which is in the Pentateuch. Now if we reject the words of men as if they were idols, but we keep those of God, can people say that we are idolaters? The curse of God is upon him who secretly strikes his neighbour and accepts a reward to sentence an innocent to death. We do not want to be cursed by God because of our actions. Because we shall not be cursed for being Samaritans, as God is Just and He rewards righteousness wherever it is. That is our reliance in the Lord. »

He reflects for a moment, and then he resumes: « That is why we say to You: it would be better for You to stay with us. The Temple hates You and tries to grieve You. And not only the Temple: You will always be too long among those who reject You as a disgrace. No love will come to You from the Jews. »

« I cannot stay here. But I will remember your words. In the meantime I tell you to persevere in the observance of the laws of

justice which you have recalled, and which ensue from the precept of love of our neighbour. The precept, which with that of the love of God, forms the main commandment of the old Religion and of Mine. The path to Heaven is not far from those who live righteously. One step only will take onto the way to the Kingdom of God those who are on the nearby path and who are separated only by obstinacy, by now, rather than by conviction. »

« To Your Kingdom! »

« To Mine. But not the Kingdom as men imagine, the kingdom of fair temporal power, which may be even violent to be mighty. But the Kingdom which begins in the hearts of men, to whom the spiritual King gives a spiritual code and will give a spiritual reward. He will give the Kingdom, in which there will not be exclusively Judaeans or Galileans or Samaritans, but all those who on the Earth had one faith only: Mine, and in Heaven will have one name only: saints. Races, and divisions among races remain on the Earth and are confined to it. In My Kingdom there will not be different races, but only the race of the children of God. The children of One Only Father can but be of one descent. Now let Me go. I still have a long way to go before night. »

« Are You going to Jerusalem? »

« To En-shemesh. »

« We will then show you a road, which only we know, to go to the ford without having to stop and without risks. You can take it as you have no heavy loads or carts. You will be at Your destination at the ninth hour. And it will be a good thing for You to know that path. But rest here with us for an hour and accept our bread and salt and give us Your word in exchange. »

« Let it be done as you wish. But let us stay where we are. It is such a pleasant day and this place is beautiful. »

They are in fact in a little valley overspread with orchards and in the middle of it there is a little stream, which has been nourished by the first rains and flows babbling and shining in the sun towards the Jordan amid large stones, which break its water into pearly foam. The shrubs which have survived the summer heat seem to enjoy the pulverised foam on the two banks and they shine quivering in a mild breeze which brings the smell of ripe apples and fermenting musts.

Jesus goes near the stream, He sits on a huge stone with His head in the light shade of a willow-tree while the stream flows merrily down the valley. The people sit down on the grass which is beginning to grow again on the two banks.

From the village they bring bread, new milk, cheese, fruit and honey, and they offer everything to Jesus for Himself and for His disciples. And they look at Him, while He eats, after offering and blessing the food, so simple as a human being, so supremely handsome

and spiritually imposing as a god. He is wearing a white tunic shading into ivory like the hue of homespun wool and a dark blue mantle which is thrown over His shoulder. The sun, filtering through the willow, lights His hair with golden shafts which shift continuously as the light leaves of the willow move. And a sunbeam caresses His left cheek turning the soft curl at the end of the tuft falling along His cheek into a skein of spun gold and the same hue, somewhat paler, can be seen on His soft not excessively thick beard covering His chin and the lower part of His face. His skin, of an ancient ivory hue, shows in the sunshine the delicate embroidery of the veins on His cheeks and temples and one that runs across His smooth high forehead, from His nose up to His hair…

I think that it was just from that vein that I saw so much blood stream, because a thorn had pierced it during His Passion…

Every time I see Jesus so handsome and tidy in His virile composure, I remember the state to which He was reduced by His suffering and the insults of men…

While eating Jesus smiles at some children who have pressed round Him, resting their heads on His knees, or looking at Him eating, as if they saw I do not know what. And when Jesus arrives at the fruit and honey, He gives them some, putting grapes and soft crumbs dipped into liquid honey into the mouths of the younger ones, as if they were nestlings.

A little boy runs away through the crowds towards an orchard and comes back holding his arms tightly folded against his chest forming thus a live little basket, in which there are three wonderful big beautiful pomegranates - he certainly likes them and hopes to have some - and he offers them insistently to Jesus.

Jesus takes the fruit, He opens two making one part for each of His little friends, to whom He hands them out. Then, He takes the third one in His hand, stands up and begins to speak holding the beautiful pomegranate in the palm of His left hand, so that everybody may see it.

« To what shall I compare the world in general, and Palestine in particular, once united as one Nation, also in accordance with God's thought, and subsequently divided by an error and by the obstinate hatred of brothers? To what shall I compare Israel as she is now reduced through her own will? I will compare her to this pomegranate. And I solemnly tell you that the variances existing between Judaeans and Samaritans, are found, in different form and measure but with the same substantial hatred, among all the nations in the world, and at times among the provinces of the same nation. And they are said to be insuperable, as if they were things created by God. No. The Creator did not make as many Adams and Eves as there are races, adverse to one another, or as many as the tribes and families which are hostile to one another. He made one

only Adam and one only Eve, from whom all men descended, and they spread to fill the Earth with people, as if it were one only house which becomes richer and richer in rooms as the children grow up and get married procreating grandchildren for their parents. So, why so much hatred among men, why so many barriers and incomprehensions? You said: "We know how to be united, feeling like brothers". But it is not enough. You must love also those who are not Samaritans.

Look at this fruit. You know its flavour besides its beauty. Closed as it is, it already promises you the sweet juice inside it. If you open it, it is also a pleasant sight with its serried rows of acini similar to rubies enclosed in a coffer. But woe to the imprudent person who should bite it without removing the very bitter partitions between the families of acini. He would poison his lips and bowels and would throw it away saying: "It is poison". Likewise the separations and the hatred existing between one people and another, between one tribe and another, turn into "poison" what was created to be sweetness. Such separations are of no use, and as in this fruit, they do nothing but create limitations which take away space and cause anxiety and sorrow. They are bitter and they give bitterness which poisons the spirits of those who feed on them, that is those who bite their neighbours whom they do not love but they offend and grieve. Are they indelible? No. Good will cancels them as the hand of a child can remove these partitions of bitterness in the sweet fruit, which the Creator made for the delight of His children.

And the first to have good will is the same Sole Lord, Who is God of Judaeans as well as Galileans, Samaritans and Idumaeans. And He proves that by sending the Unique Saviour Who will save them all without asking them anything but faith in His Nature and Doctrine. The Saviour Who is speaking to you will pass by knocking down the useless barriers, cancelling the past which has divided you, to replace it with a present time which makes you all brothers in His Name. All you and those beyond the border have to do is to follow Him, and hatred will vanish and the dejection which gives rise to rancour will also vanish, as well as the pride which brings about injustice.

This is My commandment: that all men love one another as brothers, which they are. That they love one another as the Father in Heaven loves them and as the Son of man loves them, as He through the human nature which He took upon Himself feels He is the brother of men, and through His Paternity He knows He has the power to defeat Evil with all its consequences. You said: "It is our law not to betray". In that case, as first thing, do not betray your souls depriving them of Heaven. Love one another, love one another in Me, and peace will come to the spirits of men, as was

promised. And the Kingdom of God will come, which is Kingdom of peace and love for all those who want to serve the Lord their God with upright will.

I leave you. May the Light of God enlighten your hearts… Let us go… »

He envelops Himself in His mantle, He throws His bag across His shoulder and is the first to set out, with Peter on one side and the notable, who spoke at the beginning, on the other. The apostles are behind Him and farther back, as it is not possible to proceed in a group on the narrow road along the stream, are some young men from Ephraim…

483. At Bethany for the Feast of the Tabernacles.

2nd September 1946.

The varied green shades of the countryside around Bethany come into sight as soon as one climbs over a spur of the mountain and sets foot on the southern slope, descending along a zigzag path towards Bethany. The silvery green of olive-trees, the bright green of apple-orchards with a few yellow leaves showing early here and there, the ruffled and more yellowish green hue of vines, the dark dense green of oaks and carob-trees mixed with the brown of fields already ploughed and waiting to be sown and with the fresh green of kitchen gardens and of meadows in which new grass is growing, look like a multicoloured carpet to anyone overlooking Bethany and surroundings. And towering over the green below, the fanshaped leaves of date-palms, always elegant and reminiscent of the East.

The little town of En-shemesh, lying in the middle of the greenery and all lit up by the sun which is beginning to set, is soon overcome, and also the large fountain rich in water a little to the north of Bethany is also left behind, then the first houses appear amid the green… They have arrived after a long tiring journey. And although they are very tired, they seem to regain strength simply by being near the friendly house in Bethany.

The little town is quiet, almost empty. Many inhabitants must have already moved to Jerusalem for the feast. So Jesus is unnoticed until He arrives near Lazarus' house. Only when He is near the garden which has now grown wild - where all the stilt-birds were -, He meets two men who recognise and greet Him and then ask: « Are You going to see Lazarus, Master? You are doing a good thing, because he is very ill. We are coming from his house after taking him the milk of our asses, as it is the only food, together with a little fruit juice and honey, which his stomach still accepts. His sisters do nothing but weep. They are worn out with watching at his bedside and with grief… And he does nothing but pine for

You. I think that he would be already dead, if his keen desire to see You had not kept him alive so far. »

« I am going at once. God be with you. »

« And… will You cure him? » they ask inquisitively.

« The will of God will be revealed on him together with the power of the Lord » replies Jesus perplexing them and He hastens towards the gate of the garden.

A servant sees Him and rushes to open it, but without any exclamation of joy. As soon as the gate is opened he kneels down venerating Jesus and says in a sorrowful voice: « You have come at the right moment, Lord! And may Your arrival bring joy to this house full of tears. Lazarus, my master… »

« I know. Be resigned, all of you, to the will of the Lord. He will reward you for sacrificing your wills to His. Go and call Martha and Mary. I will wait for them in the garden. »

The servant hurries away and Jesus follows him slowly after saying to the apostles: « I am going to Lazarus. You can have a rest, as you need it… »

In fact, while the two sisters appear at the door and have difficulty in recognising the Lord, so tired are their eyes with watching and weeping, and the sun shining into their eyes makes it more difficult for them to see, other servants come out of a side door to meet the apostles and they take them away.

« Martha! Mary! It is I. Do you not recognise Me? »

« Oh! the Master! » exclaim the two sisters and they run towards Him prostrating themselves at His feet stifling their sobs with difficulty. Kisses and tears fall upon Jesus' feet as previously in the house of Simon, the Pharisee.

But this time Jesus, while receiving the streaming tears of Martha and Mary, does not remain stiff as He did then. Now He bends down, He touches their heads blessing them and compels them to stand up saying: « Come. Let us go under the jasmine pergola. Can you leave Lazarus? »

More by nodding than by words, while sobbing, they say yes. And they go under the shady bower on whose dark leafy branches a few persistent jasmine little stars are still white and fragrant.

« Now, tell Me… »

« Oh! Master! You have come to a really sad house! We are dazed with grief. When the servant said to us: "There is someone looking for you" we did not think of You. And when we saw You, we did not recognise You. See? Tears have scalded our eyes. Lazarus is dying!… » and fresh tears interrupt the words of the two sisters who have been speaking alternately.

« And I have come… »

« To cure him?! Oh! my Lord! » says Mary, her eyes shining with hope through her tears.

« Ah! I said so! If He comes… » says Martha joining her hands in a joyful gesture.

« Oh! Martha! Martha! What do you know of God's acts and decrees? »

« Alas, Master! Will You not cure him?! » they both exclaim plunging back into grief.

« I say to you: have unlimited faith in the Lord. Persevere in having it despite innuendoes and events, and you will see great things when your hearts no longer have any reason to hope to see them. What does Lazarus say? »

« He echoes Your words. He says to us: "Do not doubt God's kindness and power, no matter what may happen. He will intervene on your and on my behalf, and on behalf of many, of all those who, like me and you, will remain faithful to the Lord". And when he is fit to do so, he explains the Scriptures to us, he does not read anything else nowadays, and he speaks to us of You, and he says that he will die in a happy period of time because the era of peace and forgiveness has begun. But You will hear him… because he says also other things which make us weep even more than we do for our brother… » says Martha.

« Come, Lord. Every minute that passes is stolen from Lazarus' hope. He used to count the hours and would say: "He will certainly be in Jerusalem for the feast and He will come… We know many things which we do not tell Lazarus in order not to grieve him, and we did not have so much hope, because we thought that You would not come to avoid those who are looking for You… Martha was fully convinced of that. I was not so sure… because if I were You, I would face my enemies. I am not a woman who is afraid of men. And now I am not even afraid of God. For I know how good He is to repentant souls… » says Mary and she casts a loving glance at Him.

« Are you not afraid of anything, Mary? » asks Jesus.

« Of sin… and of myself… I am always afraid of falling again into evil. I think that Satan must have a mortal hatred of me. »

« You are right. You are one of the souls most hated by Satan. But you are also one of the most loved by God. Bear that in mind. »

« Oh! I do. And that remembrance is my strength! I remember what You said in Simon's house. You said: "Many sins are forgiven her because she has loved much", and You said to me: "Your sins are forgiven. Your faith has saved you. Go in peace". You said "your sins". Not many. All of them. And so I think that You loved me, my God, without limit. Now if my poor faith of those days, the faith of a soul laden with faults, achieved so much from You, will my present faith not be able to defend me from Evil? »

« Yes, Mary. Be vigilant and watch over yourself. It is humility and prudence. But have faith in the Lord. He is with you. »

They go into the house. Martha goes to her brother. Mary would

like to serve Jesus. But Jesus wants to go to Lazarus first. And they enter the semi-dark room, where the sacrifice is being consumed.

« Master! »

« My friend! »

Lazarus lifts his emaciated arms, while Jesus lowers His to embrace the body of His languishing friend. A long embrace. Then Jesus lays the invalid down again on the cushions and gazes at him compassionately. But Lazarus smiles. He is happy. In his ravaged face only his hollow eyes shine brightly, lit by the joy of having Jesus there.

« See? I have come. And I shall be staying with you for a long time. »

« Oh! You cannot, my Lord. They do not tell me everything. But I know enough to be able to tell You that You cannot. To the sorrow they give You, they have added mine, my part, by not allowing me to die in Your arms. But since I love You I cannot be so selfish as to detain You here with me, in danger. You… I have already seen to it… You must change places continually. All my houses are open to You. The guardians have been given instructions and also the stewards of my lands. But do not go to Gethsemane to stay there. They keep a strict watch over it. I mean the house. You can go among the olive-trees, particularly the upper ones, and You can go there along many paths, without them finding out. Marjiam, do You know that he is already here? He was questioned by some people when he was in the oil-mill with Marcus. They wanted to know where You were and whether You would be coming. The boy gave them a very clever reply: "He is an Israelite and will come. Which way I do not know, as I left Him at Merom". So he did not give them the opportunity to say that You are a sinner and he did not lie. »

« Thank you, Lazarus. I will listen to you. But we will often meet just the same. » And He gazes at him again.

« Are You looking at me, Master? See how I am reduced? Like a tree which in autumn is stripped of its leaves, I am despoiled of my flesh, my strength and of the hours of my life. But I speak the truth when I say that, if I am sorry that I shall not live long enough to see Your triumph, I rejoice at departing so that I shall not see the hatred which is increasing against You, powerless as I am to check it. »

« You are not powerless; you never are. You see to your Friend, even before He arrives. I have two houses of peace, and I can say that they are equally dear to Me: the one in Nazareth and this one. If My Mother is there: the celestial love almost as great as Heaven for the Son of God, here I have the love of men for the Son of man. The friendly, faithful, venerating love… Thanks, My friends! »

« Will Your Mother never come? »

« At the beginning of springtime. »

« Oh! then I shall never see Her again… »

« Yes, you will. I am telling you and you must believe Me. »

« I believe everything, Lord. Also what facts disprove. »

« Where is Marjiam? »

« In Jerusalem with the disciples. But he comes here in the evening. He will be here shortly. And Your apostles? Are they not with You? »

« They are with Maximinus who is succouring them as they are tired and exhausted. »

« Have you walked much? »

« Yes, very much, without stopping. I will tell you about it… But rest now. I bless you for the time being. » And Jesus blesses him and withdraws.

The apostles are now with Marjiam and with almost all the shepherds and they are speaking of the insistence of the Pharisees to find out about Jesus. They say that such inquisitiveness roused their suspicions, so much so that their disciples decided to guard each road leading into Jerusalem in order to warn the Master.

« In fact » says Isaac « we are scattered along all the roads a few stadia from the Gates and we watch one night each in turns. This is our turn. »

« Master » says Judas laughing « they say that at the Joppa Gate there was half of the Sanhedrin and they were quarrelling because some of them remembered the words I spoke at Engannim, some swore that they heard that You had been to Dothan, some instead said that they had seen You near Ephraim, and thus they were furious because they did not know where You were… » and he laughs thinking of the trick he had played on Jesus' enemies.

« They will see Me tomorrow. »

« No. We will go tomorrow. We have already made our plans: all in a group and making ourselves conspicuous. »

« I do not want that. You would tell lies. »

« I swear to You that I will not lie. If they say nothing to me I will say nothing to them. If they ask me whether You are with us, I will reply: "Can't you see that He is not here?", and if they wish to know where You are I will say: "Look for Him yourselves. How do you expect me to know where the Master is just now?". In fact I will certainly not be in a position to know whether You are in the house, here, or in the orchards, or I do not know where. »

« Judas, Judas, I told you… »

« And I say that You are right. But my behaviour perhaps is not the simplicity of a dove, but it is the prudence of a serpent. You are the dove, I the serpent. And together we will form the perfection which You taught us. » He assumes the attitude of Jesus when He teaches and imitating the Master to perfection he says: « "I send you as sheep in the midst of wolves. Be therefore as wise as serpents and as simple as doves… Do not worry about what to say, as the words will then be put on your lips, because it is not you

that speak, but the Spirit speaks in you… When they persecute you in one town, flee into another until the Kingdom of the Son of man comes… I remember them and it is now time to put them into practice. »

« I did not say them thus, neither did I say only those » objects Jesus.

« Oh! at present it is necessary to remember only those and to speak them thus. I know what You mean. But until faith in You is confirmed, and it is a stone in Your Kingdom, it is better not to surrender to the enemies. Later… we will say and do the rest… » And Judas' expression is so brightly intelligent and impish that he conquers everybody, except Jesus, Who sighs. Judas is really the seducer who lacks nothing to triumph over men.

Jesus is pensive and sighs… But He surrenders as He feels that Judas' precaution is not entirely wicked. And the Iscariot expounds his plan triumphantly.

« So we will go tomorrow and the day after tomorrow until the day after the Sabbath. And we will stay in a hut made with branches, in the valley of the Kidron, like perfect Israelites. They will get tired waiting for You… and then You will come. In the meantime You will stay here, in peace and You will rest. You are exhausted, my Master. And we do not want that. When the gates are closed one of us will come and tell You what they do. Oh! it will be lovely to see them disappointed! »

They all agree and Jesus does not offer any resistance. Perhaps the fact that He is really dead tired, perhaps His desire to give comfort to Lazarus, all possible comfort before the final struggle, contribute to His yielding. Perhaps also the real necessity of being free until He can accomplish all the necessary deeds, so that Israel may have no doubt about His Nature before condemning Him… He says: « Let it be so. But avoid discussions and lies. Be silent, but do not lie. Now let us go, because Martha is calling us. Come, Marjiam. I find you in better form… » and He goes away speaking to the boy, with one arm round his shoulder.

484. At the Temple: « The Kingdom of God Does Not Come with Pomp ».

3rd September 1946.

Jesus goes into the Temple. He is with His apostles and with a very large number of disciples, whom I know at least by sight. And behind them all, but united to the group, as if they wanted to be considered as followers of the Master, there are new faces, all unknown to me, with the exception of the shrewd one of the Greek from Antioch. He is speaking to other people, perhaps Gentiles like himself, and while Jesus and His disciples go on and enter the Court of Israel, he stops in the Court of the Gentiles with those

with whom he is conversing.

Of course, Jesus' entrance into the overcrowded Temple does not pass unnoticed. A fresh murmur rises, as if it were a disturbed beehive drowning the voices of the doctors teaching under the Porch of the Gentiles. The lessons are interrupted as though by magic, and the pupils of the scribes run in all directions with the news of Jesus' arrival, so that when He goes through the inner enclosure into the Court of Israel, several Pharisees, scribes and priests are scattered about watching Him. But they do not say anything to Him while He prays and they do not even go near Him. They watch Him only.

Jesus goes back to the Court of the Gentiles. They follow Him. And the train of the ill-intentioned people increases in number, like that of the curious and well-meaning ones. And words uttered under one's breath spread among the crowds. Now and again a louder voice can be heard saying: « Are you convinced now that He would come? He is a just man. He could not fail to come to the feast. » Or: « Why has He come? To mislead the people further? » Or: « Are you happy now? Can you see where He is now? You have asked for Him so keenly! »

Isolated remarks at once choked in throats by the meaningful glances of the disciples and followers who threaten the rancorous enemies with their very love. Ironical poisonous voices of enemies who squirt poison and then quiet down because they are afraid of the crowd. And the crowds are silent after an impressive demonstration in favour of the Master, because they are afraid of the reprisals of the mighty ones. The realm of reciprocal fear…

The only one who is not afraid is Jesus. He walks slowly and with stateliness towards the place where He wants to go, somewhat absorbed but ready to come out of His absorption to caress a child offered to Him by a mother, or to smile at an old man who greets and blesses Him.

In the Porch of the Gentiles, standing in the middle of a group of disciples, there is Gamaliel. With his arms folded across his chest, in his magnificent snow-white very wide garment which looks even whiter against the thick deep red carpet laid under his feet, Gamaliel seems to be engrossed in thought, with bowed head, and not to be interested in what is happening. His disciples, on the contrary, are most excited with keen curiosity. One of them, who is very short, climbs on to a high stool, to have a better view.

But when Jesus is opposite Gamaliel, the rabbi looks up and his deep eyes under his forehead of a thinker stare for a moment at Jesus' peaceful face. An inquisitive, tormenting and tormented glance. Jesus perceives it and turns round. He looks at him. The two flashes: that of the very dark eyes and that of the sapphire ones, meet. Jesus' eyes are meek, open to being scrutinised;

Gamaliel's are impenetrable, anxious to know and to get to the heart of the mystery of truth - the Galilean Rabbi is in fact a mystery to him - but he is pharisaically jealous of his thought, so that he is closed to every survey which does not concern God. They look at each other just for a moment. Then Jesus goes on and Gamaliel lowers his head again, without listening to the frank anxious questions of some of the people around him, or to the sly spiteful ones of others: « Is it Him, master? What do you think of Him? », « Well! What is your opinion? Who is He? »

Jesus goes to the spot which He has chosen. Oh! there are no carpets under His feet! He is not even under the porch. He is simply leaning against a column, standing on the top step, at the end of the porch. It is the lowest spot. Around Him there are the apostles, disciples, followers and curious people; farther back there are Pharisees, scribes, priests, rabbis. Gamaliel remains where he was.

Jesus begins to preach for the hundredth time the advent of the Kingdom of God and the preparation for it. And I could say that He repeats the same concepts, enhanced in power, which He expounded almost in the same place, twenty years previously. He speaks of Daniel's prophecy, of the Precursor foretold by the prophets, He recalls the star of the Wise Men, the slaughter of the Innocents. And after these preliminary recollections to demonstrate the signs of Christ's coming on to the Earth, in order to confirm His coming, He mentions the present signs which characterise Christ Teacher, as the others previously characterised the Advent of Christ Incarnate, that is, He recalls the contradiction which coexists with Him, the death of the Precursor, and the miracles which take place continuously, confirming that God is with His Christ. He never attacks His antagonists. He does not even seem to see them. He speaks to confirm His followers in their faith, to enlighten on the truth those who, through no fault of theirs, are still in complete ignorance of the truth…

A hoarse voice is heard from the far end of the crowd: « How can God be in Your miracles if You work them on forbidden days? Even yesterday You cured a leper on the Bethphage road. »

Jesus looks at His interrupter but does not reply. He continues to speak of the liberation from the domination which oppresses men, and of the establishment of the eternal, invincible, glorious, perfect Kingdom of Christ.

« And when will that happen? » asks a scribe sneeringly. And he adds: « We know that You want to make Yourself king. But a king like You would be the ruin of Israel. Where is Your royal power? Where are Your troops, Your treasures, Your alliances? You are mad! » And many like him shake their heads laughing and mocking at Him.

A Pharisee says: « Don't behave like that. In that way we will

never know what He means by kingdom, which laws it will have and how it will reveal itself. What? Was the ancient kingdom of Israel perfect at once as in the days of David and Solomon? Don't you remember the many uncertainties and hard times before the royal splendour of the perfect king? In order to have the first king it was necessary to form the man who would anoint him, and thus remove the barrenness of Anne of Elkanah and inspire her to offer the fruit of her womb. Meditate on Anne's song. It is a lesson to our hardness and blindness: "There is none as holy as the Lord… Do not speak and speak with haughty words, being proud of them… The Lord gives death and life… He raises the poor… He safeguards the steps of His faithful, but the wicked vanish in darkness, because it is not through his strength that man is strong, but through the strength which comes to him from God". Oh! remember! "The Lord will judge the ends of the Earth, He will endow His king with power and will exalt the horn of His Christ". Was the Christ of the prophecies not to be of the stock of David? So what was foretold from Samuel's birth onwards, is it not to be referred to the kingdom of the Christ? You, Master, are You not of David's issue, born in Bethlehem? » he finally asks Jesus directly.

« Yes, what you said is true » replies Jesus briefly.

« Oh! Gratify then our minds. You see that silence is not a good thing because it excites the clouds of doubt in hearts. »

« Not the clouds of doubt, but of pride, which is even more grave. »

« What? To be in doubt about You is not so grave as being proud? »

« Yes. Because pride is the lust of the mind. And it is a greater sin, because it is the same sin as Lucifer's. God forgives many things, and His Light shines lovingly to enlighten ignorance and dispel doubts. But He does not forgive pride which scoffs at Him pretending to be greater than He is. »

« Which of us says that he is greater than God? We do not blaspheme… » several of them shout.

« You do not say so with your lips. But you confirm it with your deeds. You want to say to God: "It is not possible for the Christ to be a Galilean, a man of the people. It is not possible for this man to be Him". What is impossible to God? »

Jesus' voice resounds like thunder. If previously He looked somewhat modest, leaning like a beggar against His column, now He has straightened Himself, He moves away from the pillar, He raises His head solemnly and crushes the crowd with the glare of His refulgent eyes. He is still standing on the step, but He looks as if He were on a high throne, so regal is His appearance. The people withdraw, they are almost frightened and no one replies to His last question.

Then a rabbi, a small wrinkled man, whose soul is certainly as ugly as his looks, preceding his question with a false clucking sly

laugh, asks: « It takes two people to accomplish lust. With whom does the mind accomplish it? The mind is not corporeal. So, how can it commit a sin of lust? As it is incorporeal, with whom does it copulate to sin? » and he laughs drawling his words and sly laugh.

« With whom? With Satan. The mind of the proud man fornicates with Satan against God and against love. »

« And with whom did Lucifer fornicate to becomes Satan, if Satan did not yet exist? »

« With himself. With his own intelligent and disordered thought. Scribe, what is lust? »

« But… I told You! Who does not know what is lust? We have all experienced it… »

« You are not a wise rabbi, because you do not know the true essence of this universal sin, the trine fruit of Evil. As the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are the Trine Form of Love. O scribe, lust is disorder. Disorder led by a free conscious intelligence, which is aware that its desire is evil, but wants to satisfy it just the same. Lust is disorder and violence against natural laws, against justice and love for God, for ourselves, for our brothers. All lust: the lust of the flesh as that aiming at the riches and power of the Earth, as well as that of those who would like to prevent Christ from accomplishing His mission, because they intrigue with immoderate ambition which is afraid of being struck by Me. »

A great murmur runs through the crowd. Gamaliel, who is all alone on his carpet, raises his head again and casts a sharp glance at Jesus.

« So, when will the Kingdom of God come? You have not replied… » urges again the previous Pharisee.

« When the Christ will be on the throne which Israel is preparing for Him, higher than any other throne, higher than this Temple. »

« But where is it being prepared, as no preparation is evident? Is it possible that Rome will allow Israel to rise again? Have the eagles become so blind that they cannot see what is being prepared? »

« The Kingdom of God does not come with pomp. Only the eye of God can see it being formed, because the eye of God reads inside men. So do not go looking for this Kingdom, where it is being prepared. And do not believe those who say: "They are plotting in Batanaea, they are conspiring in the caves in the desert of Engedi, and on the shores of the sea". The Kingdom of God is in you, within you, in your spirits which receive the Law that came from Heaven, as the law of the true Fatherland, the law, which, when practised, makes one the citizen of the Kingdom. That is why John came before Me to prepare the ways to the hearts of men so that My Doctrine could enter them. The ways have been prepared through penance, through love the Kingdom will rise and the

slavery of sin, which interdicts the Kingdom of Heaven to men, will fall. »

« This man is really great! And you say that He is an artisan? » says in a loud voice a man who was listening attentively. And others, apparently Judaeans judging by their garments, probably instigated by Jesus' enemies, gaze at one another dumbfounded and then approach their instigators asking: « What have you insinuated to us? Who can say that this man is leading the people astray? » And others ask: « We are wondering and would like you to tell us this: if it is true that none of you has taught Him, how can He be so wise? Where did He learn so much wisdom if He never studied with a master? » And they address Jesus asking: « Tell us. Where did You find Your doctrine? »

Jesus looks up full of inspiration and says:

« I solemnly tell you that this doctrine is not mine, but it is of Him Who sent Me among you. I solemnly tell you that no teacher taught Me it, neither did I find it in any living book or parchment or stone monument. I solemnly tell you that I prepared for this hour listening to the Living Being speak to My spirit. The hour has now come for Me to give the people of God the Word which has come from Heaven. And I do so, and will do so to the last, and after I have breathed My last the stones, which heard Me and did not soften, will experience a fear of God greater than that which Moses felt on Sinai, and in such fear, with the voice of truth, blessing or cursing, the words of My rejected doctrine will be engraved on stones. And those words will never be deleted. The sign will remain: light for those who will receive it, at least then, with love; absolute darkness for those who not even then will understand that it is the Will of God that sent Me to establish His Kingdom. At the beginning of Creation it was said: "Let there be light". And there was light in the chaos. At the beginning of My life it was said: "Peace to men of good will". A good will is the one which does the will of God and does not oppose it. Now he who does the will of God and does not oppose it, feels that he cannot fight against Me because he feels that My doctrine comes from God and not from Myself. Do I perhaps seek My own glory? Do I perhaps say that I am the Author of the Law of grace and of the era of forgiveness? No. I do not take the glory which is not Mine, but I give glory to the Glory of God, the Maker of all good things. My glory is to do what the Father wants Me to do, because that gives glory to Him. He who speaks on His behalf in order to be praised, seeks his own glory. But He Who can receive glory from men, even without seeking it, for what He does or says, but rejects it saying: "It is not My glory, created by Me, but it proceeds from the glory of the Father as I proceed from Him", is in the truth and there is no injustice in Him, as He gives each person what belongs to them

without keeping for Himself what is not His own. I am, because He wanted Me. »

Jesus stops for a moment. He scans the crowd prying into consciences. He reads in them and weighs them. He resumes speaking: « You are silent. Half of you admire Me, the other half are wondering how they can make Me be silent. Whose are the ten Commandments? Whence do they come? Who gave them to you? »

« Moses! » shouts the crowd.

« No. The most High. Moses, His servant, brought them to you. But they come from God. You have the formulae, but you do not have the faith, and you say in your hearts: "We did not see God. Neither we nor the Hebrews at the foot of Sinai". Oh! not even the thunderbolts which set the mountain on fire while God shone thundering in the presence of Moses, are sufficient to make you believe that God was present. Not even thunderbolts and earthquakes serve to make you believe that God is among you to write the eternal Pact of salvation and of condemnation. You will see a fresh dreadful epiphany very soon within these walls. And the holy secret places will come out of darkness because the Kingdom of the Light begins and the Holy of Holies will be extolled in the presence of the world and will no longer be concealed under the triple veil. And you will not believe yet. What is therefore needed to make you believe? That the thunderbolts of Justice may strike your bodies? But Justice will be appeased then and flashes of love will descend. And yet, not even they will write the Truth in your hearts, in all your hearts, neither will they give rise to Repentance and then to Love… »

Gamaliel's strained eyes are now gazing at Jesus…

« But you know that Moses was a man among men and the chroniclers of his days left you a description of him. And yet, although you know who he was, from Whom and how he received the Law, do you comply with it? No, none of you observe it. »

The crowds howl protesting.

Jesus imposes silence: « Are you saying that it is not true? That you observe it? Why then do you want to kill Me? Does the fifth commandment not forbid to kill a man? Do you not recognise Me as the Christ? But you cannot deny that I am a man. So why are you trying to kill Me? »

« You are mad! You are possessed! A demon is speaking in You and makes You rave and tell lies! None of us are thinking of killing You! Who wants to kill You? » shout those who actually want just that.

« Who? You. And you are trying to find excuses to do so. And you reproach Me for false faults. You blame Me, and it is not the first time, for curing a man on the Sabbath. Does Moses not say that we must be compassionate to a donkey or an ox which has fallen as it

is of value to your brother? And should I not have mercy on the diseased body of a brother for whom his recovered health is material comfort and a spiritual means to bless the Lord and love Him because of His kindness? And do you not practise also on Sabbaths the circumcision which Moses gave you having received it from the patriarchs. If by circumcising a man on the Sabbath the Mosaic Law is not infringed because it makes a child a son of the Law, why do you remonstrate loudly with Me if on a Sabbath I cured a man completely, both his body and his soul, and I made him a son of God? Do not judge from appearances or to the letter. But judge with sound judgement and according to the spirit, because the letter, formulae and appearances are dead things, painted sceneries but not real life, whereas the spirit of words and of appearances is real life and source of eternity. But you do not understand these things because you do not want to understand them. Let us go. » And He turns round and goes towards the exit, followed and surrounded by His apostles and disciples, who look at Him feeling pity for Him and indignation for His enemies.

Jesus is pale, but He smiles and says to them: « Do not be sad. You are My friends. And you are doing the right thing in being so, because My time is coming to its end. The time will soon come when you will be wishing to see one of these days of the Son of man. But you will no longer be able to see it. It will then be a consolation for you to say: "We loved Him and were faithful to Him while He was among us". And to laugh at you and make you look like fools, they will say to you: "The Christ has come back. He is here! He is there!". Do not listen to those voices. Do not go and do not follow those lying scoffers. The Son of man, once He has gone away, will not come back again until His Day. And His manifestation will be like lightning flashing across the sky, so fast that the eye can hardly follow it. You, and not only you, but no man could follow Me when I will finally appear to gather together all those who were, are or will be. But before that happens the Son of man must suffer much. He must suffer everything. All the grief of Mankind, and further, He is to be rejected by this generation. »

« Then, my Lord, You will suffer all the evil with which this generation will be able to strike You » remarks Matthias, the shepherd.

« No. I said: "All the grief of Mankind". It existed before this generation and will exist, through generations, after this one. And it will always sin. And the Son of man will relish all the bitterness of past, present and future sins, down to the last sin, in His spirit, before being the Redeemer. And after His glory He will still suffer in His spirit of Love seeing that Mankind tramples on His Love. You cannot understand now… Let us go into this house. It is a friendly one. »

He knocks at a door which is opened letting Him go in, while the door-keeper does not seem to be seized with astonishment seeing the number of people going in after Jesus.

485. At the Temple: « Do You Know Me and Where I Come from? ».

4th September 1946.

The Temple is even more crowded than on the previous day. And among the excited crowd filling the first court I see many Gentiles, many more than yesterday. They are all waiting anxiously, both the Israelites and the Gentiles. And the Gentiles are speaking to Gentiles, and the Hebrews to Hebrews, in small groups, scattered here and there, without losing sight of the doors.

The doctors under the porches are busy raising their voices to draw the attention of people and show off their eloquence. But the people are not paying attention and they are preaching to few pupils. Gamaliel is there, in his usual place. But he is not speaking. He is walking up and down on his magnificent carpet, with folded arms, lowered head, meditating, and his long tunic and longer mantle which he has unfastened and is hanging held by two silver rosettes, form a train which he pushes aside with his foot every time he retraces his steps. His disciples, the most faithful ones, leaning against the wall, look at him in silence, intimidated as they are, and they respect the meditation of their master.

Some Pharisees and priests seem to be very busy and they come and go… The people, who are aware of their real intentions, point them out and an occasional remark goes off like a rocket on fire to bum their hypocrisy. But they feign they do not hear. They are few in number compared with the many who do not hate Jesus and on the contrary hate them, so they deem it wise not to react.

« There He is! There He is! He is coming from the Golden Gate today! »

« Let us run! »

« I am staying here. He will come and speak here. I am not going to lose my place. »

« Neither am I, nay, those who are going away are making room for us. »

« But will they let Him speak? »

« If they have allowed Him to come in!… »

« Yes, but it is a different matter. As a son of the Law, they cannot prevent Him from entering. But as a rabbi, they can drive Him out if they wish so. »

« How many discriminations! If they let Him speak to God, why should they not let Him speak to men? » says a Gentile.

« That is true » replies another Gentile. « As we are impure, you do

not let us go there, but we can stay here, as you hope that we will become circumcised… »

« Be quiet, Quintus. That is why they let Him speak to us. They hope to prune us as if we were trees. Instead we come here to graft His ideas like scions into our wild minds. »

« You are quite right. He is the only one who does not loathe us! »

« Oh! When we go shopping with purses full of money, the others do not loathe us either. »

« Look! We Gentiles are the only ones left here. We shall hear Him well and see Him better! I like to see the faces of His enemies. By Jove! A battle of faces… »

« Be quiet! Don't let anyone hear you mentioning Jupiter. It is forbidden here. »

« Oh! Between Jove and Jehovah there is only a tiny difference. And between gods there will be no ill-feeling… I have come urged by a good desire to hear Him. Not to laugh at Him. They speak highly of the Nazarene everywhere! So I said: the weather is fine and I will go and listen to Him. Many people go farther to hear the oracles… »

« Where have you come from? »

« From Perga. And you? »

« From Tarsus. »

« I am almost Jewish. My father was a Hellenist from Iconium. But he married a Roman from Antioch in Cilicia and he died before I was born. But the seed is Hebrew. »

« He is late… Will they have caught Him? »

« Be not afraid. The shouts of the crowd would tell us. These Jews shout like restless magpies, always… »

« Oh! there He is, over there. Will He really come here? »

« Don't you see that they have taken all the places on purpose, except this corner? Can't you hear how many frogs are croaking pretending to teach? »

« But that one over there is silent. Is it true that he is the greatest doctor in Israel? »

« Yes, but… how pedantic he is! I listened to him one day, but to digest his science I had to drink many goblets of Falemian wine at Titus' in Bezetha. » They both laugh.

Jesus approaches slowly. He passes before Gamaliel, who does not even raise his head, and then He goes to the same place as yesterday.

The crowd, now a mixture of Israelites, proselytes and Gentiles, understand that He is about to speak and they whisper: « He is now going to speak in public, and no one says anything to Him. »

« Perhaps the Princes and the Chiefs have recognised Him as the Christ. After the Galilean went away yesterday, Gamaliel spoke to the Elders for a long time. »

« Is it possible? How could they recognise Him all of a sudden, if only a short time ago they considered that He deserved to be put to death? »

« Perhaps Gamaliel had some proofs… »

« What proofs? What proofs do you expect him to have in favour of that man? » asks a man angrily.

« Be quiet, jackal. You are only the last of the scriveners. Who spoke to you? » and they make fun of him.

He goes away. But others take his place, they do not belong to the Temple, but they are certainly incredulous Jews: « We have the proofs. We know where He is from. But when the Christ comes, no one will know where He comes from. We will not know His origin. But this one!!! He is the son of a carpenter of Nazareth, and the whole village can witness against us if we are telling lies… »

In the meantime the voice of a Gentile is heard saying: « Master, speak a little to us today. We have been told that You say that all men come from one God only, Yours. So much so, that You call them the children of the Father. Some of our Stoic poets had a similar idea. They said: "We are descendants of God". Your fellow-countrymen say that we are more impure than animals. How can You reconcile the two trends? »

The question is put according to the custom of philosophical debates, at least I think so. And Jesus is about to reply, when the incredulous Jews and the believing ones begin to dispute more furiously and a shrill voice repeats: « He is a common man. The Christ will not be like him. Everything will be exceptional in Him: His figure, nature, origin… »

Jesus looks in that direction and says in a loud voice: « So you know Me and you know where I come from? Are you sure? And the little you know, does it not mean anything to you? Does it not confirm the prophecies? But you do not know everything about Me, I solemnly tell you that I did not come by Myself and from where you think that I came. It is the very Truth, Whom you do not know, Who sent Me. »

A cry of indignation rises from the enemies.

« The very Truth, Whose deeds you do not know. Neither do you know His way, along which I came. Hatred cannot be acquainted with the ways and deeds of Love. Darkness cannot stand the sight of Light. But I know Him Who sent Me because I belong to Him, I am part of Him and one Whole with Him. And He sent Me to fulfil what His Thought wants. »

There is an uproar. His enemies rush upon Him to lay hands on Him, to capture and hit Him. The apostles, disciples, people, Gentiles, proselytes react to defend Him. Some rush to help the former and would perhaps succeed in doing so, but Gamaliel, who so far seemed remote from everything around him, departs from his

carpet and comes towards Jesus, and as he is driven back by those defending Him under the porch, he shouts: « Leave Him. I want to hear what He says. »

Gamaliel's voice achieves more than the squad of legionaries who have come from the Antonia to put down the riot. The tumult drops like a whirl that breaks and the outcry abates to a whisper. The legionaries remain as a precaution - quite unnecessary now near the external enclosure.

« Speak » Gamaliel orders Jesus. « Reply to those accusing You. » His tone is peremptory, but not mocking.

Jesus moves forward, towards the Court. He calmly resumes speaking. Gamaliel remains where he is and his disciples are busy taking the carpet and stool to him, so that he may be comfortable. But he remains standing, with his arms folded, his head lowered, his eyes closed, engrossed in listening.

« You have accused Me unfairly, as if I had blasphemed instead of speaking the truth. I am speaking, not to defend Myself, but to give you Light, so that you may know the Truth. And I am not speaking on My own behalf, but recalling the words in which you believe and on which you swear. They bear witness to Me. I know that you see in Me nothing but a man like yourselves, inferior to yourselves. And you think that it is impossible for a man to be the Messiah. Or at least you think that the Messiah ought to be an angel, that his origin should be so mysterious that he should be king only by the authority excited by the mystery of his origin. But when ever in the history of our people, in the books forming that history, and which will last as long as the world, because doctors of all countries and all times will draw from them corroboration for their science and their researches into the past by means of the enlightenment of truth, when ever in those books is it said that God spoke to one of His Angels to say to him: "From now on you will be My Son because I begot you"? »

I see that Gamaliel has a tablet and some parchments given to him and he sits down writing…

« The angels, spiritual creatures, servants of the Most High and His messengers, were created by Him, as man, as animals and everything that was created. But they were not begotten by Him. Because God begets only another Himself, as the Perfect One could but beget another Perfect One, another being like Himself, in order not to lower His perfection by begetting a creature inferior to Himself. Now, if God cannot beget the angels or elevate them to the dignity of sons of His, what will the Son be to Whom He says: "You are My Son. I begot You today"? And of what nature will He be, if begetting Him, He says pointing Him out to His angels: "And let all the angels of God adore Him"? And what will this Son be like to deserve to hear the Father say to Him, the

Father by Whose grace men can mention His name with their hearts humbled in adoration: "Sit at My right hand and I will make Your enemies a footstool for You"? That Son can but be God like His Father, with Whom He shares attributes and power, and with Whom He enjoys the Charity which gladdens them in the ineffable and unknowable love of Perfection itself.

But if God did not find it appropriate to elevate an angel to the rank of Son, could He ever have said of a man what He said of Him Who is now speaking to you here - and many of you who now oppose Me were present when He said so - at the ford of Betharabah two years go? You heard Him and trembled. Because the voice of God is unmistakable, and without His, special grace it crushes those who hear it and shakes their hearts. What is therefore the Man Who is speaking to you? Is He perhaps one born of human seed and by the will of man like all of you? And could the Most High have placed His Spirit to dwell in a body, devoid of grace, like those of men born of carnal will? And could the Most High be satisfied with the sacrifice of a man to make amends for the great Sin? Consider this: He does not choose an angel to be the Messiah and Redeemer, can He therefore elect a man? And could the Redeemer be only the Son of the Father-without assuming human nature, but with means and power exceeding human limitations? And could the First-Born of the Father have parents if He is the eternal First-Born? Are your proud thoughts not upset by such questions which rise towards the realms of Truth, closer and closer to it, and find a reply only in a humble heart full of faith?

Who is to be the Christ? An angel? More than an angel. A man? More than a man. A God? Yes, a God. But joined to human flesh that it may complete the expiation of the guilty flesh. Everything is to be redeemed through the same matter by which it sinned. So God should have sent an angel to expiate the sins of the fallen angels, to expiate on behalf of Lucifer and his angelic followers. Because, as you are aware, Lucifer also sinned. But God did not send an angelic spirit to redeem the angels of darkness. They did not worship the Son of God, and God does not forgive the sin against His Word begotten of His Love. But God loves man and He sends the Man, the only perfect Man, to redeem man and obtain peace with God. And it is according to justice that only a Man-God may fulfil the redemption of man and appease God.

And the Father and the Son loved and understood each other. And the Father said: "I want". And the Son said: "I want". And then the Son said: "Give Me". And the Father said: "Take", and the Word was made flesh, the formation of which is mysterious and this flesh was named Jesus Christ, the Messiah, He Who is to redeem men, lead them to the Kingdom, defeat the demon, crush slavery.

To defeat the demon! An angel could not, cannot accomplish what the Son of man can do. That is why God does not call angels but the Man to accomplish the great work. Here is the Man Whose origin you doubt, you deny or are worried about. Here is the Man. The Man acceptable to God. The Man representing all His brothers. The Man like you in appearance, superior to and different from you by origin, begotten not of man but of God and consecrated to His ministry, is in front of the high altar to be Priest and Victim for the sins of the world, supreme eternal Pontiff, High Priest of the order of Melchizedek. Be not afraid! I am not stretching out My hand toward the pontifical tiara. Another crown is awaiting Me. Do not worry! I will not take the Rational away from you. Another one is ready for Me. Fear only that the Sacrifice of the Man and the Mercy of the Christ be of no avail to you. I have loved you so much, I love you so much that I obtained from the Father to annihilate Myself. I have loved you and I love you so much that I asked to consume all the Sorrow of the world in order to give you eternal salvation.

Why do you not want to believe Me? Can you not believe yet? Is it not said of the Christ: "You are Priest of the order of Melchizedek for ever"? But when did priesthood begin? Perhaps in the days of Abraham? No. And you know. Does the King of Justice and Peace, who appears to announce Me, with prophetical figure, at the dawn of our people, not warn you that there is a more perfect priesthood coming directly from God, just as Melchizedek, whose origin was never ascertained by anybody and who is called "the priest" and priest he will remain for ever? Do you no longer believe inspired words? And if you believe that, why, doctors, can you not give an acceptable explanation of the words which say, and they refer to Me: "You are Priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek"? There is, therefore, another priesthood, before and beside Aaron's. And it is said of it "you are". Not "you were". Not "you will be". You are priest for ever. So this sentence announces that the eternal Priest will not belong to the well known stock of Aaron or to any other sacerdotal stock. But it will be of new origin, as mysterious as Melchizedek's. It is of such origin. And if the power of God sends it, it means that He wants to renew the Priesthood and the rite so that they may become useful to Mankind. -

Do you know My origin? No. Do you know My deeds? No. Do you realise which effects they will produce? No. You know nothing of Me. So you can see that also thus I am the "Christ" Whose Origin, Nature and Mission are not to be known until it pleases God to reveal them to men. Blessed are those who will be able to believe and do believe before the dreadful Revelation of God crushes them on the ground with its weight, and nails them there,

striking them with the dazzling powerful truth thundered from Heaven, howled from the Earth: "He was the Christ of God". You say: "He is from Nazareth. Joseph was His father. Mary was His Mother". I have no father who begot Me as man. I have no mother who gave birth to Me as God. And yet I have a body which I assumed through the mysterious deed of the Spirit, and I came among you passing through a holy tabernacle. And I will save you, after forming Myself according to the will of God, I will save you, by letting My true self come out from the Tabernacle of My Body to consume the great Sacrifice of a God Who immolates Himself to save men.

Father, My Father! I told You at the beginning of time: "Here I am to obey Your Will". And I told You at the hour of grace before departing from You to take on a body to be able to suffer: "Here I am to obey Your Will". And I tell You once again to sanctify those for whom I came: "Here I am to obey Your Will". And I will always tell You until Your Will is accomplished… »

Jesus, Who had raised His arms towards heaven, praying, now lowers them and folds them across His chest, He bends His head, closes His eyes and becomes engrossed in secret prayer.

The people whisper. Not everybody has understood, nay most of them (including myself) have not understood. We are too ignorant. But we realise that He has enunciated great things. And we are silent, full of admiration.

The evil-minded persons, who have not understood or did not want to understand, sneer: « He is raving! » But they dare not say more and they move aside or go to the gates shaking their heads. I think that so much prudence is due to the Roman lances and daggers shining in the sunshine against the outer walls.

Gamaliel elbows his way through those who have stayed. He arrives near Jesus, Who is still absorbed in prayer, far from the crowd and the place, and calls Him: « Rabbi Jesus! »

« What do you want, rabbi Gamaliel? » asks Jesus looking up, His eyes still absorbed in an internal vision.

« An explanation from You. »

« Tell Me. »

« Go away, all of you! » orders Gamaliel, and in such a tone that apostles, disciples, followers, curious people and Gamaliel's very disciples, move aside quickly. Jesus and Gamaliel are alone, facing each other. And they look at each other. Jesus is, as usual, meek and kind, Gamaliel unintentionally authoritative and proud looking. A countenance certainly due to years of exaggerated homage.

« Master… Some words of Yours have been related to me. You spoke them at a banquet… of which I disapproved because it was not a genuine one. I fight or I do not fight, but always openly… I

meditated on those words. I compared them with the ones which are in my memory… And I have been waiting for You, here, to ask You about them… But first I wanted to hear You speak… They have not understood. I hope I will be able to understand. I wrote Your words while You were speaking, so that I may meditate on them, not to injure You. Do You believe me? »

« Yes, I do. And may the Most High make them blaze in your spirit. »

« Let it be so. Listen. The stones which are to vibrate, are they perhaps those of our hearts? »

« No, rabbi. These (and He points at the walls of the Temple with a rotary motion of His hand). Why are you asking Me? »

« Because my heart vibrated when the words You spoke at the banquet and Your replies to the tempters were related to me. I thought that throbbing was the sign… »

« No, rabbi. The throbbing of your heart and of the hearts of a few more people is too little to be the sign which leaves no doubts… Even if you, with rare judgement of humble knowledge of yourself, define your heart: stone. Oh! Rabbi Gamaliel, can you really not make of your petrified heart a bright altar receiving God? Not for My benefit, rabbi. But that your justice may be complete… »

And Jesus looks kindly at the elderly master who ruffles his beard and inserts his fingers under his head-dress pressing his forehead and whispering with his head lowered: « I cannot… Not yet… But I hope… Will You still give that sign? »

« Yes, I will. »

« Goodbye, Rabbi Jesus. »

« May the Lord come to you, rabbi Gamaliel. »

They part. Jesus nods to His disciples and leaves the Temple with them.

Scribes, Pharisees, Sadducees, disciples, rabbis rush like vultures around Gamaliel who is putting into his large belt the sheets he has written.

« Well? What do you think of Him? Is He mad? You did the right thing in writing His follies. We will need them. Have you made up your mind? Yesterday… today… More than is needed to convince you. » They are speaking uproariously and Gamaliel is silent while he adjusts his belt, he taps the ink-pot hanging from it, he hands back to his disciple the tablet on which he leaned to write on the parchments.

« Are you not answering? You have not spoken since yesterday… » insists one of his colleagues.

« I am listening, not to you, to Him. And I am trying to recognise in His present words the word which He spoke to me one day, here. »

« And are you successful? » many of them say laughing.

« Like a thunder, which sounds differently, according to whether it is closer or farther away. But still the roar of thunder. »

« So, an inconclusive sound » jeers one.

« Do not laugh, Levi. The voice of God may be found also in thunder, and we may be so stupid as to think that it is the noise of clouds being rent… And you, Helkai, and you, Simon, stop laughing, lest the thunder should change into a thunderbolt and reduce you to ashes… »

« So… you… are almost saying that the Galilean is that boy whom you and Hillel thought a prophet, and that the boy and the man are the Messiah… » some of them ask scoffingly, although slyly, because Gamaliel commands respect.

« I am not saying anything. I am saying that the roar of thunder is always the roar of thunder. »

« Closer or farther away? »

« Alas! The words are stronger, as befits His age. But the twenty years which have gone by have made my intellect twenty times more closed on the treasure which it possesses. And the sound penetrates more weakly… » And Gamaliel droops his head on his chest, meditating.

« Ha! Ha! Ha! You are getting old and foolish, Gamaliel! You are mistaking phantoms for realities. Ha! Ha! Ha! » they all say laughing.

Gamaliel shrugs his shoulders scornfully. He gathers his mantle which was hanging from his shoulders, he envelops himself in it several times, so large it is, he turns his back on everybody, without replying one word, full of contempt in his silence.

486. At the Temple: « I Shall Remain with You for Only a Short Time Now ».

5th September 1946.

Without worrying about other people's malevolence Jesus goes back to the Temple for the third day. But He cannot have slept in Jerusalem because His sandals are very dusty. Perhaps He spent the night on the hills around the city. And His brothers James and Judas with Joseph, the shepherd, and Solomon must have been with Him. He meets the other apostles and disciples near the eastern wall of the Temple.

« They came, You know? Both to us and to the best known disciples. It's a good job You were not there! »

« We must always do that. »

« All right. But we shall talk about it later. Let us go. »

« Many have preceded us extolling Your miracles. How many have become convinced and believe in You! Your brothers were

right, with regard to that » says John, the apostle.

« They went even to Annaleah's looking for You, You know? »

« And to Johanna's mansion. But they only found Chuza… and in a temper! He drove them away like dogs saying that in his house he does not want spies and that he has had enough of them. We were told by Jonathan, who is here with his master » says Daniel, the shepherd.

« You know? The scribes wanted to disperse those who were waiting for You, by convincing them that You are not the Christ. But they replied: "He is not the Christ? And who is He then? Will another man ever be able to work the miracles which He works? Did the others, who said that they were the Christ, work them? No. One hundred, one thousand impostors may rise, perhaps created by you, saying that they are the Christ, but whoever may come will never work miracles like Him and as many as He works". And as the scribes and Pharisees maintained that You work them because You are a Beelzebub, they replied: "Oh! in that case you should work striking ones, because you are certainly Beelzebubs, compared with the Holy One » says Peter and he laughs and they all laugh remembering the witty remark of the crowd and the scandalised scribes and Pharisees, who had gone away full of indignation.

They are now within the Temple and are at once surrounded by a crowd which is even larger than it was the previous days.

« Peace to You, Lord! Peace! Peace! » shout the Israelites.

« Hail, Master! » greet the Gentiles.

« May peace and light come to you » replies Jesus in one greeting.

« We were afraid that they might have caught You, or that You were not coming out of prudence or disgust. And we would have spread out looking for You everywhere » say many.

Jesus smiles lightly and asks: « So you do not want to lose Me? »

« And if we lose You, Master, who will give us the lessons and the graces which You give us? »

« My lessons will remain in you and you will understand them better when I have gone away… And the fact that I am no longer present among men will not prevent graces from descending upon those who pray with faith. »

« Oh! Master! But do You really want to go away? Tell us where You are going and we will follow You. We are in such need of You! »

« The Master is saying so to find out whether we love Him. But where can the Rabbi of Israel go, but here in Israel? »

« I solemnly tell you that I shall remain with you for only a short time and I will go to those to whom the Father has sent Me. Afterwards you will look for Me and you will not find Me. And where I am you will not be able to come. But now let Me go. Today I will not speak in here. I have some poor people who are waiting for Me

elsewhere and they cannot come here because they are seriously ill. After the prayer I shall go to them. » And with the help of His disciples He pushes through the crowd going towards the Court of Israel.

Those who remain look at one another.

« Where will He be going? »

« Certainly to His friend Lazarus. He is very ill. »

« I was saying: where will He go, not today, but when He leaves us for good. Did you not hear that He said that we will not be able to find Him? »

« Perhaps He will go to gather Israel together, evangelizing those of our country who are scattered among the various nations. The Diaspora hopes in the Messiah as we do. »

« Or perhaps He will go and teach the heathens to lead them to His Kingdom. »

« No. That's not possible. We would always be able to find Him, even if He were in remote Asia, or in central Africa, or in Rome, or Gaul, Iberia, Thrace or among the Sarmatians. If He says that we would not find Him even if we looked for Him, it means that He will not be in any of those places. »

« Of course! What do His words mean: "You will look for Me and you will not find Me, and where I am you cannot come"? "I am… Not: "I shall be… So where is He? Is He not here among us? »

« I am telling you, Judas! He looks like a man but He is a spirit! »

« Certainly not! Among the disciples there are some who saw Him when He was a new-born baby. Even more! They saw His Mother pregnant with Him a few hours before He was born. »

« But is He really that child, who has now become a man? Who can assure us that He is not a different person? »

« No! He could be another person and the shepherds could be mistaken. But what about His Mother, his brothers and the whole village?! »

« Did the shepherds recognise the Mother? »

« Of course they did… »

« Well… Then, why does He say: "Where I am you will not be able to come?". For us there is a future: you will be able. For Him it is a present: I am. So has this Man no future? »

« I don't know what to say. It is so. »

« I am telling you. He is mad. »

« Perhaps you are mad, you spy of the Sanhedrin. »

« Me spy? I am a Judaean who admires Him. And did you say that He is going to Lazarus? »

« We have not said anything, old spy. We know nothing. And even if we knew we would not tell you. Go and tell those who sent you, to look for Him themselves. You are a spy, a corrupted spy!… »

The man sees that things are taking a bad turn and he slinks

away.

« But we are staying in here! If we had gone out, perhaps we would have seen Him. Run this way! Run that way!… Tell us which way He went. Tell Him not to go to Lazarus. »

Those with good legs run away… And they come back… « He is no longer here… He mingled in the crowd, and no one can say… »

The disappointed crowd slowly disperses…

… But Jesus is much closer than they thought. After going out through one of the gates, He went round the Antonia and came out of town through the Sheep Gate, descending into the valley of the Kidron which has very little water in the central part of the riverbed. Jesus crosses it jumping on the stones emerging from the water and begins to climb the Mount of Olives. The olive-trees are very thick in that part and are mingled with the bushes which make this side of Jerusalem gloomy, I would say funereal, closed as it is between the dark walls of the Temple which dominates on that side with all its mountain, and the Mount of Olives on the other. Farther south the valley brightens up and widens out, whereas here it is very narrow: the scratch of a gigantic claw which has dug a deep furrow between Mount Moriah and the Mount of Olives.

Jesus is not going towards Gethsemane, He is going in the opposite direction, northwards, walking all the time on the mountain which widens out into a wild valley, where, close to a low circular range of wild hills covered with stones, flows the torrent forming a bend to the north of the town. The olive-trees are replaced there by sterile, thorny, twisted, ruffled little trees, mingled with bushes, the tentacles of which spread in all directions. It is a very sad and solitary place. It gives the impression of an infernal apocalyptical place. There are a few sepulchres, and nothing else, not even lepers. And this solitude, contrasting with the crowds of the town so close and so full of people and noise, is strange indeed. With the exception of the murmur of the water among the pebbles, and the rustle of the wind among the plants which have grown in the midst of stones, no other noise is heard. There is not even the cheerful chirping of birds, which are so numerous among the olivetrees of Gethsemane and of Mount Olivet. The rather strong wind blowing from northeast, raising little vortices of dust, drives back the noise of the town, and silence, the silence of a place of death, reigns oppressively, almost frighteningly.

« But is this the way? » Peter asks Isaac.

« Yes, it is. One can get there also along other routes, starting from Herod's Gate and better still from the Damascus one. But it is better for you to know the less frequented paths. We have been round all the outskirts to find them and show them to you. You will thus be able to go wherever you wish, in the neighbourhood,

without taking the usual ways. »

« And… can we trust those of Nob? » asks Peter again.

« As you can trust your own family. Thomas last winter, Nicodemus all the time, his disciple John the priest, and others have won the little village over. »

« And you did more than all the rest » says Benjamin the shepherd.

« Oh! me!! If I have done anything, then everybody has been at it. But You can be sure, Master, that You have safe places all around the town… »

« Ramah also… » says Thomas who is proud of his town. « My father and my brother-in-law thought of You with Nicodemus. »

« In that case also Emmaus » says a man who is not new to me, but I cannot say exactly who he is, also because I found more than one Emmaus in Judaea, without taking into account the place near Tarichea.

« It is too far to go and come as I do now. But I will come there sometime, without fail. »

« And to my house » says Solomon.

« I will certainly come there at least once to say hallo to the old man. »

« There is also Bether. »

« And Bethzur. »

« I will not go to the houses of the women disciples, but when necessary I will send for them. »

« I have a loyal friend near En-Rogel. His house is open to You. And none of those who hate You will think that You are so close to them » says Stephen.

« The gardener of the royal gardens can give You hospitality. He is hand in glove with Manaen who got him that job… and then… You cured him one day… »

« Did I? I don't know him… »

« He was among the poor people whom You cured in Chuza's house at Passover. A cut by a scythe soiled with manure was causing his leg to putrefy and his former master had dismissed him because of that. He was begging for his children. And You cured him. Then Manaen got him a job in the Gardens, in a good moment of Antipa. He now does everything Manaen tells him. And for You… » says Matthias, the shepherd.

« I have never seen Manaen with you… » says Jesus staring at Matthias, who changes colour and becomes excited. « Come ahead with Me. »

The disciple follows Him.

« Speak! »

« Lord… Manaen made a mistake… and he is suffering very much and Timoneus and a few more people with him. They cannot

set their minds at rest because You… »

« They surely do not think that I hate them… »

« No! But… They are afraid of Your words and of Your face. »

« Oh! What a mistake! Just because they made a mistake they should come to the Remedy. Do you know where they are now? »

« Yes, Master, I do. »

« Well, go to them and tell them that I will be waiting for them at Nob. »

Matthias goes away without wasting time.

The mountain path rises so that the whole of Jerusalem can be seen from the north… Jesus with His disciples turns round and goes in the opposite direction.

487. At Nob. The Miracle on the Wind.

6th September 1946.

It is a fairly well kept village, with houses grouped together. The inhabitants are all in their houses, because a strong wind is blowing. But when the disciples go and inform them that Jesus is there, all the women, children and old people whom age had compelled to stay at home, crowd round Jesus, Who had stopped in the main little square. As the village is on an elevation, the air is clear also on a dull day, one's eyes rove towards Jerusalem to the south and towards Ramah to the north (I say Ramah because it is written on a milestone with the indication of the miles).

The people are deeply moved. It is such a new and touching situation for them to have the privilege of giving hospitality to the Lord! … An old man, a real patriarch, says so on behalf of everybody and the women nod assent.

As they are accustomed to being crushed by the pride of priests and Pharisees, they are timid… But Jesus sets them at once at their ease by taking in His arms a little girl, who is taking her first steps, and caressing the old man, saying: « Had you not seen Me before? »

« From far away… passing by… some people at the Temple. But for us who are close to the town, it is even more difficult to have what other people coming from afar have » says the old man.

« It is always so, father. What seems to make things easy, makes them difficult, because everybody relies on the idea that it is easy. But we shall now get to know one another. Go home, father. The autumn winds are blowing, and they are not propitious to patriarchs. »

« Oh! I am all alone! Days no longer count for me… »

« His daughter got married far from here and his wife died at the feast of the Dedication » explains a woman.

« John, you must not say that, since you have the Rabbi with you

today. You were so anxious to have Him! » a little old woman says to him.

« It's true. But… You are the Messiah, are You not? »

« Yes, father, I am. »

« Well, then, what can I desire further, now that I have seen Him and I see fulfilled the promise made to Abraham? An old man, he was then old, sang one day in the Temple, and I was there, because on that day my Leah became purified of her only childbirth, and I was near her, and before us, a Woman, little more than a girl had fulfilled the rite… an old man sang kissing the New-Born of that Girl: "Now, Lord, let your servant go in peace, because my eyes have seen the Saviour". So You were that New-Born. Oh! how blessed I am! I then prayed the Lord saying: "Let me also die after I have met Him". Now I know You. You are here. The hand of the Lord is resting on my head. His voice has spoken to me. The Eternal God has heard me. And what shall I say but the words of the old learned and just, Simeon? I say them: "Let, Lord, your servant go in peace, because my eyes have known Your Christ!" »

« Do you not want to wait and see His Kingdom? » asks a woman.

« No, Mary. Feasts are not for old people. And I do not believe what most people say. I remember the words of Simeon… He promised a sword in the heart of that Girl because the world will not love the Saviour completely… He said that fall and resurrection would come to many through Him… and there is Isaiah… and there is David… No. I prefer to die and await His grace in the world to come… And His Kingdom in the world to come… »

« Father, you see better than young people. My Kingdom is the Kingdom of Heaven. But My coming is not ruin for you because you know how to believe in Me. Let us go to your house. I am staying with you » and led by the old man He goes to a little white house in a lane between kitchen gardens, which the strong wind is divesting of their leaves, and He goes in with Peter and the two sons of Alphaeus and John.

The others spread among other houses… to come back after some time to cram the little house, the kitchen garden, the terrace on the roof, and they even climb on the dry-stone wall separating one side of the kitchen garden from the road, on a huge walnut-tree and on a robust apple-tree, heedless of the wind which is becoming stronger and stronger, raising clouds of dust. They want to hear Jesus. And Jesus hesitates for a moment, then He begins to speak standing on the threshold of the kitchen so that His voice spreads both inside and outside the house.

« A mighty king, whose kingdom was very vast, one day wanted to go to visit his subjects. He lived in a sublime palace from which, through servants and messengers, he sent his orders and favours to his subjects, who were thus aware of his existence, of his love for

them, of his intentions, but they did not know him personally, neither did they know his voice and language. Briefly, they knew that he was there and was their Lord, but nothing else. And, as is often the case, because of such situation, many of his laws and providential initiatives were distorted, either through evil will or failure to understand them, so that the interests of the subjects and the desires of the king, who wanted them to be happy, suffered damage. He at times was compelled to punish them and suffered thereby more than they did. And punishments did not bring about improvements. He then said: "I will go. I will speak to them directly. I will make myself known. They will love me, they will follow me more diligently and will be happy". And he departed from his sublime abode to come among his people.

His coming caused great surprise. The people were touched and became excited, some with joy, some with terror, some with anger, some with distrust, some with hatred. The king without ever tiring, began to patiently approach those who loved him as well as those who feared him or hated him. He explained his law, he listened to his subjects, he assisted them and put up with them. And many ended by loving him, by no longer avoiding him because he was too great; some, only a few, stopped mistrusting and hating. They were the best. But many remained what they were as they had no good will. But as the king was very wise he endured also that, taking shelter in the affection of the better ones as a reward for his fatigue.

But what happened? It happened that not all the better ones understood him. He came from so far! His language was so new! His will was so different from that of his subjects! And he was not understood by everybody… Nay some grieved him, and caused him sorrow and damage, or risked doing so, as they misunderstood him. And when they realised that they had grieved and hurt him, they were distressed and ran away from his presence and they never went back to him, as they were afraid of his word.

But the king read their hearts and every day he called them lovingly, he prayed eternal God to grant him to find them again so that he might say to them: "Why are you afraid of me? It is true. Your incomprehension has grieved me, but I saw that there is no malice in it, it is only the consequence of your inability to understand my language which differs so much from yours. What distresses me is your being afraid of me. Which means that you have not understood me only as your king, but also as your friend. Why do you not come? Do come back. What you did not understand through the joy of loving me, has become clear to you through your sorrow for grieving me. Oh! come, do come, my friends. Do not increase your ignorance by staying away from me, your darkness by hiding yourselves, your bitterness by depriving yourselves of my love. See? Both you and I are suffering by

being separated. And I more than you. So come and give me joy".

That is what the king wanted to say. And that is what he says. God also speaks thus to those who sin. And the Saviour speaks thus to those who may have made a mistake. And the King of Israel speaks thus to His subjects. The true King of Israel, He Who from the little kingdom of the Earth wants to take His subjects to the great Kingdom of Heaven. Those who do not follow the King, those who do not learn to understand His words and His thought cannot enter His Kingdom. But how can you learn if you avoid the Master at the first error?

Let no man lose heart if he has sinned and repented, if he has made a mistake and admits his error. Let him come to the Fountain which obliterates errors and grants light and wisdom, which burns with the desire to quench his thirst and which has come from Heaven to give itself to men. »

Jesus is silent. Only the wind can be heard howling louder and louder. On the top of the little mountain where Nob is, it rages so furiously that trees creak frighteningly.

The people are compelled to go back to their houses. But when they have dispersed and Jesus goes into the house closing the door, Matthias, followed by Manaen and Timoneus, comes out from behind the little wall and goes into the kitchen garden and knocks at the door.

Jesus Himself comes to open it. « Master, here they are!… » says Matthias pointing at the two who feeling ashamed, have remained at the edge of the kitchen garden and dare not raise their faces to look at Jesus.

« Manaen! Timoneus! My friends! » exclaims Jesus going out into the kitchen garden and closing the door to make those inside the house understand that they are not to come forth, out of curiosity. And He goes towards the two men, with arms stretched out ready to embrace them.

The two look up, touched by the love vibrating in the Master's voice, they see His face and eyes full of love, and their fear vanishes, they rush forward with a cry made hoarse by their tears: « Master! » and they fall at His feet embracing His ankles, kissing His bare feet and wetting them with tears.

« My friends! Not there. Here on My heart. I have waited for you so long! And I have understood so much! Come!… » and He tries to lift them up.

« Forgive us! Oh! forgive us!… Do not say no, Master. We have suffered so much! »

« I know. But if you had come earlier, I would have said to you earlier: "I love you". »

« You love us? Master?! As before?! » Timoneus is the first to ask

looking up inquiringly.

« More than previously, because now you are cured of all humanity in your love for Me. »

« It is true! Oh! my Master! » and Manaen springs to his feet as he can resist no longer. He throws himself on Jesus' chest and Timoneus imitates him…

« See how comfortable it is to be here? Is it not better here than in a poor palace? Where could you have Me more, and more powerful, kind, rich in treasure without end, than having Me as your Saviour, Redeemer, spiritual King and loving Friend? »

« That is true! Very true! Oh! They had seduced us! And we thought we were honouring You and that their idea was a just one! »

« Think no more about it. It is passed. It belongs to the past. Let time, which flies by as fast as the whirlwind now assailing us, carry it far away and disperse it for ever… But let us go in. It is not possible to stay here… »

In fact a real hurricane swoops down on the village from the north. Branches crash to the ground, tiles fly, low walls fall from terraces with a crash. The walnut and the apple-trees twist about as if they wanted to be uprooted.

They go into the house and the four apostles are amazed looking at the disciples' faces still wet with tears in contrast with the smiles on their lips. But they do not say anything.

« I'm afraid there is going to be a disaster » says old John.

« Yes. I don't know what those living in huts will do… » says Peter.

The wind is so strong that the three flames of a lamp, lit to give light to the closed room, flicker although the doors are closed.

The noise of the wind, which is growing stronger and stronger and strikes the house with dust and grains of rubble, which sound like small hailstones, mingles with the cries of women, who can be heard closer and closer. They are frightened wives and anguished mothers: « Our husbands! Our children! They are on the way. We are frightened. The wall of a deserted house has collapsed… Lord! Jesus! Mercy! »

Jesus stands up, with some difficulty He opens the door, against which the wind blows with all its violence. Some women, bent to resist the wind - a real tornado under a frightening sky - are moaning with their arms stretched out.

« Come in. Be not afraid! » says Jesus. And He looks at the sky and at the trees on the point of crashing.

« Come back in, Jesus! Do You not see how branches are breaking off and roof-tiles are falling? It is not wise to stay outside » shouts Judas of Alphaeus.

« Poor olive-trees! These are hailstones. Where they fall, it's the

end of the harvest » states Peter.

Jesus does not go back in. On the contrary, He goes right outside where the wind wrings his clothes and ruffles His hair. He stretches out His arms, prays and then orders: « That's enough! I want it! » and He goes back into the house.

The wind howls for the last time then suddenly drops. The silence after so much noise is impressive. It is such that amazed faces look out from houses. The signs of the tornado are there: leaves, broken branches, shreds of curtains. But everything is quiet. The vault of heaven replies to the Earth, which is no longer upset, by dissipating the clouds, which from dark become clear and spread out without causing any harm, pouring a drizzle which purifies the air of so much dust.

« What happened? »

« How did it stop like that? »

« It looked like the end of the world and now it is clearing up? » Voices ask from house to house.

The women who had rushed towards Jesus, come out hurriedly. « The Lord! The Lord is with us! He worked the miracle! He stopped the wind! He dispersed the clouds! Hosanna! Hosanna! Praise to the Son of David. Peace! Blessings! Christ is with us! The Blessed One is with us! The Holy One! The Holy One! The Holy One! The Messiah is with us! Hallelujah! »

The village pours out all its usual inhabitants and the occasional ones, that is, the apostles and disciples, who all rush to the little house where Jesus is staying. Everybody wants to kiss, touch and exalt Him.

« Praise the Most High Lord. He is the Master of winds and waters. If He listened to His Son, He did so to reward the faith and love you had for Him. »

And He would like to dismiss them. But who can calm a village wild with joy and excited because of an obvious miracle? Particularly if the village is full of women? Jesus' efforts are useless. He smiles patiently while the old man who gave Him hospitality washes His left hand with tears and kisses it.

Here are the first men who have come back from Jerusalem: they are panting and frightened. They are afraid of I do not know what misfortune. They see the people rejoicing. « What is the matter? What happened? But did you not have a storm here? From the mountain we could see the town disappear under clouds of dust. We thought it had collapsed. Instead everything is in order here! »

« The Lord! The Lord! He came in time to save us from ruin. Only the cursed house has collapsed, some tiles and a few branches. And what about you? What happened in Jerusalem? »

Questions and answers are exchanged. But the men elbow their way towards the Saviour to venerate Him. Only later they explain

that everybody in town was afraid because of the impending storm and people ran away from the huts into houses and the owners of olive-groves were already grieving for the loss of the harvest… when the wind suddenly dropped, the sky cleared up… with little rain… and the whole town was amazed. And as imagination becomes immediately lively in certain cases, men relate that while people were running away, many who had been in the Temple on the previous days, seeing that the hill of Moriah was hit the most by the gusts, so much so that the benches of the moneychangers had been turned over and the house of the Pontiff had been damaged, said that it was a punishment from God for the insults to His Messiah. And so on… The more people arrive, the more the story is embellished. It almost becomes more apocalyptical than the relation of Good Friday…

488. Jesus at the Camp of the Galileans with His Apostle Cousins.

10th September 1946.

« Judas and James, come with Me. »

The two sons of Alphaeus do not need to be told twice. They get up at once and go out with Jesus from a little house in a suburb to the south of Jerusalem, where they have been given hospitality today.

« Where are we going, Jesus? » asks James.

« To greet the Galileans on the Mount of Olives. »

They walk for some time towards Jerusalem, then they pass close to some little hills with houses among the greenery, obviously manor-houses, they cross the road to Bethany and Jericho, the southern one ending at Tophet and Siloam, they go round another hill, which is a ramification of the Mount of Olives, they cross the other road which goes directly to Bethany from the Mount of Olives and along a little path among the olive-trees they climb to the camp of the Galileans. Many tents have already been dismantled, and in remembrance of the crowding, there remain withered branches thrown on the ground, the remains of fires which have scorched the grass, ashes, brands, litter, as always happens where there has been a camp. The cold and precociously wet season has speeded up the departure of pilgrims. Caravans of women and children are departing even now. Men, particularly those still strong, have stayed to terminate the feast.

The Galileans who believe in the Lord must have been warned by some disciple perhaps, because I see them all and from every village known to me. Nazareth with the two disciples, Alphaeus, whom Jesus forgave after his mother's death, and a few more. But I do not see Simon or Joseph of Alphaeus. But, as compensation

there are others, among whom the head of the synagogue, who is visibly embarrassed in greeting Jesus with deference after thwarting Him so much. But he helps himself out of the difficult situation by saying that Jesus' relatives are staying with « that friend You know », because of the children who suffered from the wind at night. And Cana is present with Susanna's husband, her father and other people, and also Nain is present with the man brought back to life and others, and Bethlehem of Galilee with many citizens and the western lake-towns with their inhabitants…

« Peace to you! Peace to you! » greets Jesus passing among them, caressing the children still present, His little friends from Galilean places, listening to Jairus who tells Him that he is sorry he was absent the last time.

Jesus asks whether the widow from Aphek has settled at Capernaum and has taken in the orphan from Giscala. « I do not know, Master. Perhaps I had already left… » says Jairus.

« Yes. A woman has come and she gives lots of honey and caresses to children. And she bakes cakes for us. And the children who used to come to You, always go to her house to eat. And the last time she showed us a tiny little baby. She bought two goats to have milk. And she told us that the baby is the son of Heaven and of the Lord. And she did not come to the feast, as she would have liked to do, because she could not travel with such a little baby. And she asked us to tell You that she will love him with justice and that she blesses You. »

The children of Capernaum twitter like little sparrows around Jesus and they are proud that they know what not even the head of the synagogue knows, and that they have to act as ambassadors to the good Master, Who listens to them with the same attention as He would listen to adults, and Who replies: « And you will tell her that I bless her as well and that she is to love children for My sake. And you must love her and not take advantage of the fact that she is good, do not love her only because she gives you honey and cakes, but because she is good. She is so good and kind that she has understood that those who love children in My name make Me happy. And you are to imitate her, all of you, both you children and you adults, always bearing in mind that he who receives a child in My name, has his place allotted in Heaven. Because mercy is always rewarded, even if it is only a cup of water given in My name, but mercy on behalf of children, saving them not only from hunger, thirst and cold, but from the corruption of the world, receives an infinite reward… I have come to bless you before you depart. You will take My blessing to your women, to your homes… »

« But are You not coming back to us, Master? »

« I shall come back… But not now. After Passover… »

« Oh! If You are going to stay away for such a long time, You will forget about the promise… »

« Be not afraid. The sun may stop shining before Jesus forgets those who hope in Him. »

« It will be a long time!… »

« And sad! »

« If we are taken ill… »

« If we have trouble… »

« If death should descend upon our houses… »

« Who will help us? » say several people from different places.

« God will. He is with you if you remain in Me with your will. »

« And what about us? We have believed in You only for a short time. We admit it. So will we have no comfort? And yet now, after seeing You work miracles and hearing You speak in the Temple, oh! we believe You… »

« And it is a great joy to Me, because it is My greatest desire that My fellow citizens should be on the way of Salvation. »

« Do You love us so much? But for a long time we have offended and ridiculed You!… »

« That is in the past. It is no longer so. Be faithful in future and I solemnly tell you that your past is cancelled both on the Earth and in Heaven. »

« Are You staying with us? We shall share our bread as we did many times at Nazareth, when we were all equal and on Sabbaths we rested in the olive-groves, or when You were just Jesus and You used to come with us and like us to Jerusalem for feasts… » There is regret and desire for past times in the voices of the Nazarenes who now believe in Jesus.

« I wanted to go to Joseph and Simon. But I will go later. You are all My brothers in God, and spirit and faith are of greater value to Me than flesh and blood, because the latter perish whilst the former are immortal. »

And while some get busy preparing fires to roast the meat, using bits of olive branches to cook the food, the more elderly people and those of higher rank, from every place in Galilee, gather round Jesus asking Him why that morning and the previous day He was not at the Temple, and whether He would be going the following day, which was the last one of the feast.

« I was not there… But I will certainly be there tomorrow. »

« And will You speak? »

« Yes, if I can… »

Alphaeus of Sarah, looking about himself, whispers in a low voice to Jesus: « Your brothers have gone to secure assistance for You in town… That fellow is aware of many things because he is a relative of one of the Temple through the relationship of some women… Joseph is worried about You, You know? After all… he is

good. »

« I know. And he will become better and better when he is spiritually good. »

More Galileans arrive from town. The number of those around Jesus increases, to the regret of the children who are pushed back by the adults and cannot make their way towards Jesus until He sees the innocent sulky group and He says smiling: « Let the little children come to Me. »

Then while the circle breaks up, once again as happy as a flight of birds, they run towards Jesus, Who caresses them and goes on speaking to the adults. And His long hand, which is still brown after so much exposure to the sun in summer, passes again and again on the little dark and brown heads, with an occasional golden one among so many dark ones, all pressing against Him as much as they can, hiding their faces among His clothes, under His mantle, embracing His knees and sides, eager for His caresses, utterly happy when they receive them.

They eat sitting in a circle after Jesus has blessed the food and handed it out, in a serene friendly union of hearts. The others, who are not Jesus' followers, look from afar, derisively and incredulously. But no one minds them…

The meal is over. Jesus is the first to get up and He calls Jairus, Alphaeus, Daniel of Nain, Elias of Korozim, Samuel (the excripple, I do not know from where), then a certain Uriah, one of the many Johns, one of the many Simons, a Levi, an Isaac, Abel of Bethlehem etc., in brief, one from each village, and with the help of His cousins He divides into equal parts the money of two very full purses and He gives one part to each man He called for the poor of each village.

Then, when He is penniless, He blesses everybody and takes His leave. He would like to depart from them turning His steps towards Gethsemane, to enter the town by the Sheep Gate. But almost everyone follows Him, children in particular, who hold on to His tunic and the hem of His mantle, and certainly annoy Him, but He does not stop them…

And the little boy of Magdala, Benjamin, who one day very clearly said what he thought of Judas of Kerioth, plucks His tunic until Jesus bends to listen to him in particular.

« Have You still got that bad man with You? »

« Which bad man? There are none with Me… » says Jesus to him smiling.

« Of course there are! That tall dark man who laughed… You know, the one whom I told that he was handsome outside and ugly inside… he is bad. »

« He is talking of Judas » says Thaddeus who is behind Jesus and has heard.

« I know » replies Jesus turning round, and then He says to the child: « Of course that man is still with Me. He is one of My apostles. But now he is very good… Why are you shaking your head? You must not have a bad opinion of your neighbour, particularly of people you do not know. »

The boy lowers his head and becomes silent.

« Are you not replying to Me? »

« You do not want me to tell lies… and I promised You not to tell any and I kept my promise. But now if I say to You that I think that he is good, I would say something which is not true, because I think that he is bad. I can keep my mouth closed to please You, but I cannot close my mind not to think. »

His remark is so impetuous and logical in its simplicity, although childish, that all those who hear him cannot help laughing. Everyone, except Jesus, Who sighs and says: « Well, you must do one thing. If he really seems bad to you, you must pray that he may become good. You must be his angel. Will you do that? I will be happier if he becomes good. So if you pray for that, you will pray that I may be happy. »

« I will. But if he is bad and does not become kind to You, my prayer will be of no avail. »

Jesus puts an end to the argument by stopping and bending to kiss the children. He then orders everybody to go back…

When they are alone, Jesus and His two cousins, Judas of Alphaeus, after a short silence, as if he had been so far thinking about it, says concluding: « He is right! He is quite right! I also am of his opinion. »

« But who are you speaking of? » asks his brother James, who, engrossed in thought, was walking a little ahead of him on a narrow path which allows one person to pass at a time.

« I am speaking of Benjamin. And of what he said. And… but You will not hear of it, and I tell You that Judas is… He is not a true apostle… He is not sincere, he does not love You, he does not… »

« Judas! Judas! Why grieve Me? »

« My dear Brother, because I love You. And I am afraid of the Iscariot, I'm more afraid of him than of a snake… »

« You are unfair. If it had not been for him, perhaps I would have been captured by now. »

« Jesus is right. Judas has done very much. He has profusely drawn hatred and derision upon himself, and has worked and still works for Jesus » says James.

« I cannot believe that you are a fool or a liar… And I wonder why you -support Judas. I am not speaking out of jealousy or out of hatred. I am speaking because I feel that he is bad, that he is not sincere… All I can admit, for Your sake, is that he is mad. A poor madman raving one way today, and a different way tomorrow.

But he is definitely not good. Don't trust him, Jesus! Don't!… None of us is good. But look at us carefully. Our eyes are limpid. Watch us diligently. Our behaviour is constant. Does it not mean anything to You that the Pharisees do not make him pay for mocking them? That those of the Temple do not react to his words? That he always has friends among those whom he apparently offends? That he always has plenty money? I am not speaking about us two, but even Nathanael, who is rich, even Thomas, who does not lack means, have only what is necessary. He… Oh!… »

Jesus is silent.

James says: « My brother is partly right. It is a fact that Judas always finds the way to be alone, to go by himself… to… But I do not want to grumble or judge. You know… »

« Yes. I know. And that is why I say that I do not want you to pass judgement. When you are in the world replacing Me, you will find people who are stranger than Judas. What kind of apostles would you be, if you should eliminate them because they are strange? Nay, just because they are strange, you will have to love them patiently to make them lambs of the Lord. Let us go to Joseph and Simon now. You heard the news, did you not? They are working secretly on My behalf. Family love, you may say. True. But still love. You did not part friends the last time. Make it up now. Both you and they are right and wrong. Let everyone acknowledge his fault, let no one raise his voice to assert his rights. »

« He offended me seriously by offending You very seriously » says James.

« You are very much like My father Joseph. And your brother Joseph is like your father Alphaeus. Well: Joseph was often criticised by his elder brother, but he bore with him and always forgave him. Because My father was a great just man! Be the same yourself. »

« And if he should reproach me as if I were still a little child? You know that when he is upset he will not listen to reason… »

« In that case be silent. It is the only remedy to appease one's anger. Be humbly and patiently silent, and if you feel that you can no longer be silent without being rude, go away. To be able to be quiet! To be able to run away! Not out of cowardice, or lack of words, but out of virtue, out of prudence, charity, humility. It is so difficult to keep justice in debates! And the peace of the spirit. Something always descends into the depth of one's heart distorting, confounding, making an uproar. And the image of God reflected in every good spirit is obscured, it vanishes and its words can no longer be heard. Peace! Peace among brothers. Peace also with enemies. If they are our enemies, they are Satan's friends. But shall we also become Satan's friends by hating those who hate us? How

can we lead them to love if we are out of love ourselves? You may say to Me: "Jesus, You have already said so many a time and that is what You do, but they always hate You". I will always say so. When I am no longer with you, I will inspire it into you from Heaven. And I also tell you not to count defeats, but victories. Let us praise the Lord for them! No month goes by without some conquest being made. That is what the workman of the Lord must take notice of, rejoicing in the Lord, without the anger of worldly people when they lose one of their poor victories. If you do so… »

« Peace to You, Master. Do You not recognise Me? » says a young man who from town was going up towards Gethsemane.

« You?… You are the levite who was with us last year together with the priest. »

« It is I. How did You recognise me, since You see a whole world around You? »

« I do not forget the distinctive features of faces and spirits. »

« Which is the feature of my spirit? »

« A good one. But unsatisfied. You are tired of what surrounds you. Your spirit tends to better things. You feel that they exist. You realise that it is time to make up your mind for an eternal Good. You are aware that beyond darkness there is a Sun, the Light. You want the Light. »

The young man throws himself on his knees: « Master, You have said it! It is true. That is what I have in my heart. And I could not make up my mind. Jonathan, the old priest, believed, then he died. He was old. But I am young. I heard You speak in the Temple… Do not reject me, Lord, because not everybody there hates You and I am one of those who love You. Tell me what I must do, considering that I am levite… »

« Do your duty until the new times. Meditate, because by coming to Me you will not be going towards earthly glory, but towards sorrow. If you persevere, you will receive glory in Heaven. Study My doctrine. Be firm in it… »

« How? »

« Heaven itself will confirm you with its signs. My disciples will help you to be confirmed again and to have a deeper and deeper knowledge of what I taught and to practise it. Do that and you will achieve eternal life. »

« I will, Lord. But… can I still serve in the Temple? »

« I told you: until the new times. »

« Bless me, Master. It will be my new consecration. »

Jesus blesses and kisses him. They part.

« See? Such is the life of the workers of the Lord. A year ago the seed fell into that heart. But it did not appear to be a victory, because he did not come to us at once. But here he comes now, after a year, to corroborate the words I spoke a little while ago. A victory.

And does that not make the day a beautiful one for us? »

« You are always right, Jesus… But beware of Judas! It is silly of me to tell You. I know. You are aware… But I have this torment in my heart… I am not telling the others, but it's there… and I am sure that the others have it as well. »

Jesus does not reply. He says: « I am glad that Joseph and Nicodemus gave Me that money. I can now send some assistance to My poor people in Galilee… »

They have arrived at the Gate and they go in mingling with the crowd.

489. On the Last Day of the Feast of the Tabernacles. The Living Water.

13th September 1946.

The temple is really crowded with people. But there are not many women and children. The persistence of a windy season with heavy though short showers must have dissuaded women from setting out with children. But men from all over Palestine and proselytes from the Diaspora are literally crowding the Temple for the last prayers and offerings and to listen to the last lessons of the scribes.

The Galilean followers of Jesus are all there, with the most important chiefs in the first row, and Joseph of Alphaeus, highly conscious of his position as a relative, is in the middle of the group with his brother Simon. Another thick group which is waiting is that of the seventy-two disciples, I mean the disciples chosen by Jesus to evangelize, a group which has changed in number and faces, because some of the older ones are no longer in it, after the defection following the sermon on the Bread of Heaven, whilst new ones, such as Nicolaus of Antioch have joined it. A third group which is also compact and numerous is that of the Judaeans, among whom I see the archsynagogues of Emmaus, Hebron and Kerioth; from Juttah there is Sarah's husband and from Bethzur Eliza's relatives.

They are near the Beautiful Gate and they clearly intend to surround the Master as soon as He appears. In fact Jesus cannot take one step inside the walls without being pressed round by these three groups which almost isolate Him from evil-minded persons and even from people who are simply curious.

Jesus turns His steps towards the Court of Israel to pray there, and the others follow Him compactly, as far as the over-crowding allows them, deaf to the discontent of those who have to move aside and make room for the large number of people around Jesus. He is between His brothers. And the glances of Joseph of Alphaeus, who looks meaningfully at some Pharisees, are not so

kind as Jesus', neither is his bearing so humble…

They pray and then go back to the Court of the Gentiles. Jesus sits humbly on the floor with His back to the wall of the porch and with a semicircle, which is becoming thicker and thicker with people, drawing up behind the rows closer to Him, sitting down or thronging together standing up: a multitude of faces and glances converging on one Face only. The curious and evil-minded people and those who have come from afar and are unacquainted with the Master, are beyond the barrier of believers and they strive to see stretching their necks, standing on the tips of their toes.

Jesus in the meantime listens to this one and that one asking Him for advice or relating information. Eliza's relatives speak of her, asking whether she may come to serve the Master. And He replies: « I am not staying here. She will come later. » And the relative of Mary of Simon, the mother of Judas of Kerioth, says that he remained to look after the farm, whereas Mary is almost always with Johanna's mother. Judas opens his eyes wide in amazement, but does not speak. And Sarah's husband says that he will soon have another son and asks what name he should give it. Jesus replies: « John, if it is a boy, Anne if a girl. » And the old archsynagogue of Emmaus whispers a case of conscience and Jesus replies in a low voice. And so on.

In the meantime the crowd grows larger and larger. Jesus raises His head and looks around. As the porch is a few steps higher than the floor of the court, although He is sitting, He commands a large part of the court, on that side and can thus see many faces.

He stands up and in loud voice, at the top of His well tuned strong voice, He says: « Let those who are thirsty come to Me and drink! Rivers of living water will spring from the bosoms of those who believe in Me. »

His voice fills the wide court, the splendid arcades, it is certainly heard beyond those on this side and spreads elsewhere, it overwhelms every other voice, like a harmonious thunder full of promises. He speaks and then is silent for a moment, as if He wanted to enunciate the theme of His speech and then give time to those not interested in listening to Him, to go away without disturbing later. The scribes and doctors become silent, that is, they lower their voices to a murmur, which is certainly malevolent. I do not see Gamaliel.

Jesus moves forward, through the semicircle which opens out as He approaches it, and then closes up behind Him changing from a semicircle to a ring. He walks slowly, majestically. He seems to be gliding on the polychrome marbles of the floor, with His mantle slightly loose forming a kind of train behind Him. He goes to the corner of the porch, on the step overlooking the court, and stops there. He thus commands two sides of the first enclosure. He raises

His right arm in the gesture customary to Him when He begins to speak, while with His left hand on His chest He holds His mantle.

He repeats His initial words:

« Let those who are thirsty come to Me and drink! Rivers of living water will spring from the bosoms of those who believe in Me!

He who saw the theophany of the Lord, the great Ezekiel, a priest and prophet, after he had prophetically seen the impure acts in the desecrated house of the Lord, and after he had seen, once again in a prophetical way, that only those marked with the Tau will be living in the true Jerusalem, whilst the others will know more than one slaughter, more than one condemnation, more than one punishment - and the time is close at hand, o you who are listening to Me, it is close at hand, closer than you may think, so that I, as Master and Saviour, exhort you not to delay further to mark yourselves with the Sign that saves, not to delay further to put the Light and Wisdom into yourselves, not to delay further to repent and weep, on your own and other people's behalf, so that you may save yourselves - Ezekiel, after seeing all that and even more, speaks of a terrible vision. That of the dry bones.

The day will come when on a dead world, under a dark vault of heaven, bones and bones of dead people will appear at the angelical blare. Like a womb that opens to give birth, the Earth will eject from its bowels every bone of man who died on it and is buried in its mud, from Adam down to the last man. And then it will be the resurrection of the dead for the great supreme judgement after which, like an apple of Sodom, the world will become empty, turning into nullity and the vault of heaven with its stars will come to an end. Everything will come to an end, with the exception of two things which are eternal, remote, at the extremes of two abysses of immeasurable depth, in complete antithesis with regard to form, aspect and way in which the power of God will continue for ever in them: Paradise: light, joy, peace, love; Hell: darkness, sorrow, horror, hatred.

But do you think that the immense field of the Earth is not covered with lifeless, very dry, inert, separated, dead bones, simply because the world is not yet dead and the angelical trumpets are not sounding to gather the dead? I solemnly tell you that it is so. Among the living, because they still breathe, there are numberless people who are like corpses: like the dry bones seen by Ezekiel. Who are they? Those who do not possess the life of the spirit.

Such people are in Israel, and all over the world. And it is natural that among Gentiles and idolaters there are but dead people awaiting to be vitalised by the Life, and it grieves only those who possess true Wisdom, because It makes them understand that the Eternal Father created human creatures for Himself and not for idolatry and He grieves at seeing so many dead. But if the Most

High has such sorrow, and it is great indeed, what will His sorrow be like for those of His People who are white, lifeless, spiritless bones?

Why should those chosen, beloved, protected, nourished, taught by Him directly or by His servants and prophets be culpably dry bones, as He always trickled a fine stream of vital water from Heaven for them and nourished them with the water of Life and Truth? Why did they dry up, considering that they were planted in the Land of the Lord? Why did their spirits die when the Eternal Spirit put a full sapiential treasure at their disposal, that they might draw from it and live? Who, and by which prodigy, will be able to come back to Life, if they left the springs, the pastures, the lights granted by God and are groping in darkness, are drinking at impure sources and are feeding on unholy food?

So will they never become alive again? Yes, they will. I swear to it in the name of the Most High. Many will rise again. God has the miracle ready, nay, it is already active, it has already been worked on some, and arid bones have been reclothed with life because the Most High, Who is forbidden nothing, has kept and keeps His promise and completes it more and more. From the height of Heaven He shouts to these bones awaiting Life: "Now, I shall infuse the spirit into you and you shall live". And He took His Spirit, He took Himself, and He formed flesh to clothe His Word, and He sent Him to these dead people, so that by speaking to them, Life should be infused into them once again.

How many times Israel has shouted throughout ages: "Our bones are dried up, our hope is dead, we are separated!". But every promise is sacred, every prophecy is true. Now, the time has come when the Messenger of God opens tombs to draw the dead out and vivify them and lead them to the true Israel, to the Kingdom of the Lord, to the Kingdom of your Father and Mine.

I am Resurrection and Life! I am the Light which came to enlighten those lying in darkness! I am the Fountain which spurts eternal Life.

Those who come to Me will not know Death. Let those who thirst after Life come to Me and drink. Let those who want to possess Life, that is, God, believe in Me and rivers of living water, not drops, will flow from their bosoms. Because those who believe in Me will form with Me the new Temple from which the wholesome water, of which Ezekiel speaks, flows.

Come to Me, peoples! Come to Me, creatures! Come and form one only Temple, because I do not reject anybody, but out of love, I want you with Me, in My work, in My merits, in My glory.

"And I saw the waters flow from under the door of the house eastwards… And the waters flowed from under the right side, south of the altar".

The believers in the Messiah of the Lord, in the Christ, in the New Law, in the Doctrine of the time of Salvation and Peace, are that Temple. As the walls of this Temple are built with stones, so the mystical walls are formed with living spirits and it will live for ever and will rise from the Earth to Heaven, like its Founder, after the struggle and the test.

That altar from which the water spouts, that altar facing east is I. And My waters spring from the right hand side, because that side is the place for those elected to the Kingdom of God. They spring from Me to flow into those I have elected, to enrich them with the vital waters, that they may bear them and spread them to the north, south, east and west, to give Life to the Earth in its people who are waiting for the hour of Light, the hour that will come, will definitely come for every place before the Earth ceases being.

My waters spring and spread out mingled with those which I personally gave and will give to My followers, and although they are spread out to better the Earth, they will be united in only one river of Grace, which will become deeper and deeper, wider and wider, growing day by day, step by step, with the waters of the new followers, until it becomes like a sea that will wash every place to sanctify the whole Earth.

God wants that and does that. A deluge washed the world killing sinners. A new deluge, of a different liquid from rain, will wash the world giving Life. And through a mysterious act of grace, men will be able to take part in that sanctifying deluge, by joining their wills to Mine, their fatigue to Mine, their sufferings to Mine. And the world will become acquainted with the Truth and Life. And those who want to participate in it, will be able to do so. And only those who do not want to be nourished with the waters of Life will become a marshy pestiferous place, or will remain such, and will not know the rich harvest of the fruits of grace, wisdom, health, with which those living in Me will be acquainted.

I solemnly tell you once again that those who are thirsty and come to Me, will drink and will never be thirsty again, because My Grace will open springs and rivers of living water in them. And those who do not believe in Me will perish like a saline where life cannot exist.

I solemnly tell you that the Fountain will not cease after Me, because I shall not die, but I will live, and after that I have gone, gone but not dead, to open the Gates of Heaven, Another will come, Who is like Me, and will complete My work making you understand what I told you and setting you on fire to make you "lights", because you received the Light. »

Jesus is silent. The crowd, so far silent, held spellbound by the speech, now whispers making different comments.

Some say: « What words! He is a real prophet! »

Some say: « He is the Christ. I am telling you. Not even John spoke like that. And no prophet is so strong. »

« And He makes us understand the prophets, even Ezekiel, whose symbols are so obscure. »

« Did you hear that? The waters! The altar! It is evident! »

« And the dry bones?! Did you see how the scribes, Pharisees and priests became upset? They understood the psalm! »

« Of course! And they sent the guards, who… forgot to capture Him and remained like children to whom angels appear. Look at them over there! They seem to be dumbfounded. »

« Look! Look! An official is calling them and reproaching them. Let us go and hear him! »

Meanwhile Jesus is curing some sick people who have been brought to Him and does not pay attention to anything else until He is reached by a group of priests and Pharisees, elbowing their way through the crowd, led by a man about thirty or thirty-five years old, whom everybody shuns so fearfully that they seem to be terrified.

« Are You still here? Go away! In the name of the High Priest! »

Jesus straightens up - He was bent over a paralytic - and looks at them calmly and mildly. He then bends again to impose His hands on the invalid.

« Go away! Have You understood? You seducer, of crowds. Or we will have You arrested. »

« Go and praise the Lord living holily » says Jesus to the invalid who stands up cured, and that is His only reply, while those threatening Him spit venom and the crowds warn them with their hosannas not to harm Jesus.

But if Jesus is meek, Joseph of Alphaeus is not and straightening up and throwing his head back to look taller, he shouts: « Eleazar, since you and the like of you would like to overthrow the sceptre of the chosen Son of God and David, you had better know that you are cutting down every tree, beginning with your own, of which you are so proud. Because your wickedness agitates the sword of the Lord over your head! » and he would go on speaking, but Jesus lays His hand on his shoulder saying: « Peace, peace, My brother! » and Joseph, purple with anger, becomes silent.

They go towards the exit. And when they are outside the enclosure Jesus is informed that the chiefs of the priests and the Pharisees had reproached the guards for not arresting Him and that they had justified themselves saying that no one had ever spoken like Jesus and that the chiefs of the priests and the Pharisees, among whom there were many members of the Sanhedrin, had been driven wild by their reply. So much so that, to prove to the guards that only stupid people could be allured by a madman, they wanted to come and arrest Him under the charge of

blasphemy, also to teach the crowds to understand the truth. But Nicodemus, who was present, opposed their decision saying: « You cannot proceed against Him. Our Law prohibits us from condemning a man before hearing him and seeing what he does. And in His case we have only heard and seen things which are not condemnable. » And that caused Jesus' enemies to disburden their wrath upon Nicodemus by means of threats, insults and mockery, as if he were a fool and a sinner. And Eleazar ben Annas had gone personally with the most furious ones to drive Jesus out, as he did not dare to do anything else, owing to the feelings of the crowds.

Joseph of Alphaeus is furious. Jesus looks at him and says: « See, brother? » He does not say anything else… but those words mean so much! They are a warning that He is right whether He speaks or is silent, they are a reminder of His words, they are an indication of what the most important castes in Judaea are, of what the Temple is and so forth.

Joseph lowers his head and says: « You are right… » He becomes silent and thoughtful, then, all of a sudden, he throws his arms round Jesus' shoulders and weeps on His chest saying: « My poor Brother! Poor Mary! Poor Mother! » I think that Joseph realised just then, and very clearly, what was Jesus' destiny…

« Don't weep! Do, as I do, the will of our Father! » says Jesus comforting him and kissing him at the same time to console him.

When Joseph has calmed down a little, they set out towards the house where Jesus is given hospitality and they kiss each other goodbye. Joseph is deeply moved and his last words are: « Go in peace, Jesus! Don't worry about anything. I repeat to You what I told You near Nazareth, and I repeat it even more firmly. Go in peace. Take care of Your work only. I will see to the rest. Go and may God comfort You. » And he kisses Him again with paternal attitude, caressing His head, as if he were giving the blessing of the head of the family.

Then Joseph says goodbye to his brothers. He greets Simon as well. But I notice that James, I do not know why, is rather stiff with Joseph, and viceversa. Instead with Simon there is more tenderness. Joseph's last question to James is: « So, have I to say that I lost you? »

« No, brother. You must say that you know where I am and therefore it is up to you to find me. Without ill-feeling. On the contrary, with many prayers for you. But in spiritual matters one must not take two paths at the same time. You know what I mean… »

« You can see that I defend Him… »

« You defend the man and the relative. That is not enough to give you the rivers of Grace of which He was speaking. Defend the Son of God, without any fear of the world, without considering advantages,

and you will be perfect. Goodbye. Look after our mother and Mary of Joseph… »

Jesus - I do not know whether He has heard them, as He was intent on greeting the other Nazarenes and Galileans - when the greetings are over says: « Let us go to the Mount of Olives. Then from there we shall go to some other place… »

490. At Bethany. « One Can Kill in Many Ways ».

14th September 1946.

A sadder and sadder but always pleasant house in Bethany… The presence of friends and disciples does not remove the sadness of the house. There is Joseph with Nicodemus, Manaen, Eliza and Anastasica; as far as I can understand, the two women could not put up with being far from Jesus and they apologise as if they had disobeyed, although they are quite decided not to go away. And Eliza explains her good reasons which are: the impossibility for Lazarus' sisters to follow the Master and take womanly care of Him and of the apostles, as is necessary with a group of men alone and, furthermore, persecuted.

« We are the only ones who can do that. Because Martha and Mary cannot leave their brother. Johanna is not here. Annaleah is too young to come with us. It is better for Nike to stay where she is, so that she may receive You there. My white hair will prevent disparagement. I shall precede You wherever You go, or I shall stay where You tell me, and You will always have a mother near You, and I shall feel as if I still had a son. I will do what You want, but allow me to serve You. »

Jesus agrees when He hears that they all think that it is the right thing to do. Perhaps, in the deep bitterness of His heart, He wishes to have a motherly heart close at hand, to find in it reflections of His Mother's kindness…

Eliza is triumphant in her joy.

Jesus says: « I shall often be at Nob. You will stay in the house of old John. He told Me that I can stay there when I stop at Nob. I shall find you there every time we come back… »

« Are You thinking of going away in spite of the wet weather? » asks Joseph of Arimathea.

« Yes, I am. I want to go towards Perea, stopping in Solomon's house. Then I will go towards Jericho and Samaria. Oh! I would like to go to many more places… »

« Master, don't go too far away from roads and towns garrisoned by a centurion. They are undecided. And the others are undecided as well. Two fears. Two surveillances. Concerning You. And in turn. But You may be sure that, as far as You are concerned, the Romans are less dangerous… »

« They have abandoned us!… » remarks Judas of Kerioth bluntly.

« Do you think so? No. Among those Gentiles who listen to the Master can you perhaps see those sent by Claudia or by Pontius? Among the freedmen of the former and of her lady friends there are many who could speak in the Bel Nidrasc, if they were Israelites. Don't forget that there are learned people everywhere, that Rome enslaves the world, that her patricians love to take the best booty to adorn their houses. If gymnasiarchs and circus managers choose what can give them profit and glory, patricians select those whose learning or beauty may adorn and gratify their houses and themselves… Master, this subject reminds me of something… May I ask You a question? »

« Speak up. »

« That woman, that Greek woman, who was here last year… and was a charge against You, where is she? Many have tried to find out… not for a good purpose. But I have no evil wish… Only… I don't think it is possible that she has gone back to the wrong doctrine. She was gifted with a great intelligence and sincere justice. But she is no longer about… »

« In a part of the Earth, she, a heathen woman, has been able to practise for a persecuted Israelite the charity which Israelites did not have. »

« Are You referring to John of Endor? Is he with her? »

« He is dead. »

« Dead? »

« Yes, and they could have let him die near Me… There was not a long time to wait… Those, and they are many, who worked to have him sent away, committed murder, as if they had raised their hands armed with knives against him. They broke his heart. And although they know that that is why he died, they do not consider themselves homicides. They do not feel remorse for being so. Brothers can be killed in many ways. With weapons and with words or with some wicked deed, such as informing a persecutor of the place where the persecuted person is, or depriving a poor wretch of his refuge of comfort… Oh! in how many ways one can kill… But man does not feel remorse for that. Man, and that is the sign of his spiritual decline, has killed remorse. »

Jesus is so severe in speaking those words, that no one has the courage to speak. They look at one another stealthily, with lowered heads, and even the best and most innocent ones are embarrassed.

After a moment's silence Jesus says: « No one need inform the enemies of the dead man and Mine of what I said, to give them a satanic joy. But should anyone question you, you may reply that John is at peace, with his body in a far away sepulchre and his soul in expectation of Me. »

« Did that grieve You much, Lord? » asks Nicodemus.

« What? His death? »

« Yes. »

« No, it did not. His death gave Me peace because it was his peace. I was grieved, deeply grieved by those who through low feelings informed the Sanhedrin of his presence among the disciples and brought about his departure. But every man has his systems and only a great good will can change instincts and systems. But I say: "He who denounced, will denounce again. He who brought about death, will bring about death again". But woe to him. He thinks he is winning whereas he is losing. And the judgement of God is awaiting him. »

« Why are You looking at me thus, Master? » asks John of Zebedee, becoming uneasy and blushing, as if he were guilty.

« Because if I look at you, nobody, not even the most wicked person, will think that you may have hated a brother of yours. »

« It must have been a Pharisee or a Roman… He supplied them with eggs… » says Judas of Kerioth.

« It was a demon. But he did him good whilst wishing to harm him. He hastened his complete purification and peace. »

« How do You know? Who brought You the news? » asks Joseph.

« Does the Master need to have news brought to Him? Does He not see the actions of men? Did He not go and call Johanna that she might come to Him and be cured? What is impossible to God? » says Mary of Magdala passionately.

« That is true, woman. But few people have your faith… And that is why I asked a silly question. »

« All right. But come, now, Master. Lazarus has awaked and is waiting for You… » And she takes Him away abruptly and resolutely, cutting short any further conversation or question.

491. Near the Fountain of En-Rogel.

16th September 1946.

Jesus comes back from Bethany along the lower road (I mean the longer one, which does not go through the Mount of Olives, but enters the town through the suburb of Tophet).

He stops first to assist the lepers who ask Him for nothing but bread, then He goes straight to a large quadrangular basin, covered and closed on all sides but one. A well, a large covered well, the largest I have seen. It is larger than the well of the Samaritan woman, and it must also be rich in water because the ground around it is nourished by it and looks very fertile, in contrast with the arid sepulchral Hinnom valley, a glimpse of which can be caught to the north-west. Only a solid stone building like that of the well and its roof covering could resist the dampness of

the ground. And the dark huge stones, which even without being an expert one realises are ancient, resist protecting the precious water.

Although it is a dull day and the sepulchres of the lepers are close at hand, and they always diffuse much sadness in the neighbourhood, the place is pleasing both because of its rich fertility and because behind it, to the north, there are large gardens with all kinds of trees raising their thick tops towards the grey sky which hangs low over the town, and in front of it, to the south the Kidron, widens its bed and becomes richer in water, as the valley becomes brighter and richer in light, following for a good stretch the road which goes to Bethany and Jericho.

There are many people: women with amphorae, ass-drivers with buckets, caravans arriving or departing, are stopping near the well and drawing water. A large strip of ground is damp because of the water dripping from buckets while filling containers. Calm sweet voices of women, trilling voices of children, deep hoarse strong voices of men, braying of donkeys and wild cries of camels, which lying down under their loads are awaiting the return of the camel-driver with water.

It is a typical scene at a hazy sunset when the sky is stained with an unnatural sudden yellow which spreads a strange light on everything, while higher up heavy leaden clouds pile up one on top of the other. The upper parts of the town look ghastly in the strange light against the leaden sky marked with streaks the colour of sulphur.

« It looks like water and wind… » says Peter sententiously, and he asks: « Where are we going this evening? »

« To the gardener's. I am going up to the Temple tomorrow and… »

« Again? Watch what You are doing! You had better accept the invitation of the freedmen near the synagogue »suggests Simon Zealot.

« Then, as one synagogue is as good as another, there are many more, which have manifested that they want Him! But why they? » says Judas of Kerioth.

« Because they are the safest. And there is no need to explain why » replies the Zealot.

« Safe!!! What makes you so sure? »

« The fact that they remained faithful notwithstanding all they suffered. »

« Do not quarrel. Tomorrow I am going up to the Temple. That is decided. Let us stay here for a little while. It is always a good place where one may evangelize. »

« Not better than any other. I don't know why You prefer it. »

« Why, Judas? For many reasons which I will explain to those who gather here, and for one which I will tell you all in particular.

The three Wise Men from the East stopped uncertain and disappointed at this well of the fountain of Rogel, as the Star that had guided them from so far had disappeared. Any other man would have mistrusted God and himself. They prayed until dawn near their tired camels, the only ones to be awake among the sleeping servants, and then at dawn they got up and set out towards the gates, daring the danger of being considered mad and instigators and daring also the danger of their lives. Herod, the blood-thirsty king, then reigned, remember that. And much less than what they, the Wise Men, wanted to tell him was enough for him to condemn them to death. But they were looking for Me. They were not seeking glory, riches, honours. They were looking for Me, for Me only. A Baby: their Messiah, their God. The research for God, being good, always gives assistance and courage. Fears, low things are the inheritance of those who dream of base things. They yearned to worship God. They were strong in their love, which, after a few hours, was rewarded, as the Star appeared once again to their eyes, here, in the moonlit night. Those who seek God with justice and love are never without the star of God. The three Wise Men! They could have rested among the false honours which Herod wanted to give them after the response of the chief priests, scribes and doctors. They were so tired!… But they did not stop even for one night and before the gates were closed they came out and stopped here until dawn. Then… not the dawn of the sun but the dawn of God appeared again to make the way as bright as silver; the Star called them with its light and they came to the Light. Blessed! Blessed they and those who know how to imitate them! »

The apostles and Marjiam with Isaac are intent on listening with the blissful look their faces always have when Jesus recalls His birth, and Isaac, enraptured, sighs, smiles, remembering… with an ecstatic face, remote from time and place, having gone back over thirty years, to that night, that Star that he saw when he was with his herd…

More people have come near, because the road is busy, and they listen, and some recollect the wonderful caravan, and the news brought by them… and its consequences.

« This is always a place of meditation. History always repeats itself. This is always a place of trial. For good and for bad people. But the whole life is a trial for the faith and justice of man.

I remind you of Hushai, Zadox and Abiathar, of Jonathan and Ahimaaz, who left from this place to save their king and were protected by God because they were acting according to justice.

I will remind you of an event connected to this same place but did not have a happy outcome because it was an outrage and thus it was not blessed by God. Near the Zoheleth stone, close to the fountain of En-Rogel, Adonijah conspired against the will of his

father and got the men of his party to proclaim him king. But the abuse was of no avail to him, because before the banquet was over the hosannas sung in Gihon informed him, even before Jonathan of Abiathar spoke, that Solomon was the king and that he, who wanted to usurp the throne, had to rely only on Solomon's mercy. Too many people repeat the deed of Adonijah and fight against the true King or plot against Him following the party which seems the strongest one. And too many, by doing so, will be able to cling to the altar horns begging forgiveness and trusting in God's mercy.

Now that we have considered three events that took place near this well, can we say that this place is subject to good or bad influences? No. Not the place. Not the time. Not the events, but it is the will of man that upsets the actions of man. En-Rogel saw the loyalty of David's servants and Adonijah's sin, as it saw the faith of the three Wise Men. It is the same well. Jonathan and Ahimaaz, like Adonijah and his followers, like the three Wise Men leaned on its stones and quenched their thirst with its water. But the water and the stones saw three different things: loyalty to king David, betrayal of king David, and loyalty to God and the King of kings. It is always the will of man that brings about good or evil. And the Will of God throws its light on the will of man and the will of Satan its poisonous vapours. It is up to man to accept the light or the poison and become just or sinner.

A guardian is placed at that well so that no one may infect the water. And in addition to the guardian it was given walls and a roof, so that the wind might not blow into it leaves and dirt, which might defile the precious water. Also to man God gave a guardian: the intelligent and conscious will of man; and He gave him protections: the commandments and angelical advice, so that the spirit of man might not be corrupted consciously or unconsciously. But when man corrupts his conscience, his intellect, he does not listen to the inspirations from Heaven, he tramples on the Law, he is like a guardian who leaves the well unguarded, or like a madman who dismantles its defences. He leaves the field open to devilish enemies, to the concupiscence of the world and of the flesh, and to 'temptations, which, even if they are not yielded to, are to be prudently watched and rejected.

Children of Jerusalem, Hebrews, proselytes, wayfarers who have come here by chance to listen to the voice of God, be wise with true wisdom, which consists in defending one's ego from deeds disgracing man.

I see many Gentiles here. I point out to them that not only riches and merchandise are to be purchased, but there is another thing to be acquired, and that is the life of one's soul; because man has a soul in himself, that is something impalpable, but it makes him live, a thing that does not die when his flesh dies, a thing that is

entitled to live its true life, an eternal life, but cannot live it if man kills his true self by means of his evil deeds.

Idolatry and Gentilism can be overcome. A wise man meditates and says: "Why must I follow idols and live without the hope of a better life, whereas by going to the true God I can achieve eternal joy?". Man is frugal of his days and death horrifies him. The more he is enveloped in the darkness of false religions or in unbelief, the more he fears death. But he who comes to the true Faith is no longer terrified of death because he knows that beyond death there is an eternal life where spirits will meet again and where there will be no more pains or separations. It is not difficult to follow the way of Life. It is sufficient to believe in the Only true God, to love our neighbour and love honesty in every action.

You people of Israel are aware of what is commanded and what is forbidden. But I will repeat such things for these people who are listening to My words and will take them far away… (and He says the Decalogue). True religion consists in that, not in vain pompous sacrifices. It is necessary to obey the precepts of perfect morals, of faultless virtue, to be merciful, to avoid what dishonours man, to give up vanities, deceptive divinations, false augurs, the dreams of the wicked, as the sapiential book says, to make use of the gifts of God with justice, that is health, wealth, riches, intellect, power, not to be proud, as pride is a sign of stupidity because man is alive, healthy, rich, wise, powerful as long as God grants him it, not to cherish immoderate desires that often lead one even to commit crime. Summing up, one must live as a man and not as a brute, also out of respect for oneself.

It is easy to descend, it is difficult to rise. But who would like to live in a putrid abyss only because he has fallen into it, and would not try to come out of it climbing back to the flowery summits bright with sunlight? I solemnly tell you that the life of a sinner is placed in an abyss and likewise a life in error. But those who receive the Word of truth and come to the Truth climb to the tops of the Light.

You may now go to your destinations. And remember that near the fountain of En-Rogel, the Source of Wisdom gave you its water to drink so that you may thirst for it again and you may come back to it. »

Jesus makes His way and sets out towards the town, leaving the people to make comments, to ask questions and reply to them.

492. The Pharisees and the Adulterous Woman.

20th March 1944.

I see the inside of the enclosure of the Temple, that is, one of the many courts surrounded by porches. And I see also Jesus, Who, well enveloped in His mantle that covers His tunic - the latter is dark red and not white, and seems to be made of a heavy woollen cloth - is speaking to a crowd of people standing around Him.

I would say that it is a winter day because I notice that everybody is muffled up, and that it must be rather cold because people, instead of standing, are walking fast as if they wished to warm themselves. The wind is blowing shaking mantles and raising dust in the courts.

The group pressing round Jesus, the only one to be still, whilst all the others standing around this or that master are walking up and down, opens out to let a small group of gesticulating venomous scribes and Pharisees pass. They are spurting venom from their eyes, their livid faces and mouths. What vipers they are! Rather than lead they are dragging a woman, about thirty years old; her hair is ruffled and her dress untidy and she is weeping, as if she had been ill-treated. They throw her at Jesus' feet as if she were a bundle of rags or a dead body. And she remains there, crouched, with her face resting on her arms, which hide it and are like a cushion between it and the ground.

« Master, this woman was caught in the very act of committing adultery. Her husband loved her and ensured that she lacked nothing. She was the queen in her house. And she has been unfaithful to him because she is a vicious ungrateful sinner and profaner. She is an adulteress and as such she is to be stoned. Moses ordered so. In his law he orders us to stone such women like unclean animals. And they are unclean. Because they betray faith and the man who loves them and takes care of them, and because like earth never sated, they always crave for lust. They are worse than prostitutes because without the sting of need they give themselves to satisfy their lewdness. They are corrupted and corrupters. They are to be sentenced to death. Moses said so. What have You to say, Master? »

Jesus, Who had stopped speaking at the tumultuous arrival of the Pharisees and had looked at the pack of angry men with piercing eyes and then had lowered them on the depressed woman thrown at His feet, is silent. Still sitting, He has bent, and with His finger He begins to write on the stones of the porch covered with the dust raised by the wind. While they speak He writes.

« Master? We are speaking to You. Listen to us. Reply to us. Have You not understood? This woman has been caught in the very act of committing adultery. In her house. In the bed of her husband. She has polluted it with her lechery. »

Jesus is writing.

« But this man is a fool! Don't you see that He does not understand anything and that He is drawing signs on the dust like a poor fool? »

« Master, for the sake of Your name, speak. Let Your wisdom reply to our question. We repeat it: this woman lacked nothing. She had clothes, food, love. And she has been unfaithful. »

Jesus is writing.

« She lied to the man who trusted her. With mendacious lips she greeted him and went to the door with him, smiling, she then opened the secret door and let her lover in. And while her husband was away working for her, like an unclean animal, she wallowed in her lewdness. »

« Master, she is a desecrator of the Law as well as of her nuptial bed. She is a rebel, an impious person, a blasphemer. »

Jesus is writing. He writes and cancels with His sandal-shod foot what He has written and writes further on, turning round slowly to find more room. He looks like a little boy playing. But what He writes are not playful words. He has written successively: « Usurer », « False », « Irreverent son », « Fornicator », « Murderer », « Desecrator of the Law », « Thief », « Libidinous », « Usurper », « Unworthy husband and father », « Blasphemer », « Rebellious to God », « Adulterer ». The words are written over and over again while fresh accusers speak.

« Well, Master! Your opinion. The woman is to be judged. She must not contaminate the Earth with her weight. Her breath is poison that upsets hearts. »

Jesus stands up. Good gracious! What a face! His eyes flash like lightning striking the accusers. He holds His head so upright that He looks even taller. And He is so severe and solemn that He seems a king on his throne. His mantle has fallen off one shoulder forming a short train behind Him. But He does not mind that. With stern countenance and not even the least trace of a smile on His lips or in His eyes, He glares with such eyes at the crowds which withdraw as they would before two sharp blades. He stares at them one by one. With such searching intensity that frightens. Those who are stared at try to withdraw into the crowd and hide there. The circle thus widens and breaks up as if it were mined by an occult power.

He finally speaks: « If there is one of you who has not sinned, let him be the first to throw a stone at her. » And His voice sounds like thunder while His eyes flash even more brightly. Jesus has folded His arms across His chest and remains thus: as straight as a judge, awaiting. His eyes give no peace: they search, penetrate and accuse.

First one, then two, then five, then in groups, all the people present

go away with lowered heads. Not only the scribes and the Pharisees, but also those who were previously around Jesus, and others who had approached Him to hear His opinion and the sentence, and both the former and the latter had joined together to abuse the guilty woman and demand her lapidation.

Jesus is left alone with Peter and John. I do not see the other apostles.

Jesus has resumed writing, while the flight of the accusers is taking place, and He now writes: « Pharisees », « Vipers », « Sepulchres of rottenness », « Liars », « Traitors », « Enemies of God », « Revilers of His Word »…

When the court is completely empty and there is a solemn silence in it - only the rustling of the wind and the murmur of a little fountain in a corner can be heard - Jesus raises His head and looks. His countenance is now placid. He is sad, but no longer angry. He casts a look at Peter, who has moved away a little, leaning against a column, and one at John, who almost behind Jesus, looks at Him with his loving eyes. Jesus smiles slightly looking at Peter and more brightly when He looks at John. Two different smiles.

He then looks at the woman, still prostrated and weeping at His feet. He gets up, He adjusts His mantle as if He were about to set off. He beckons to the two apostles to go to the exit.

When He is alone He calls the woman. « Woman, listen to Me. Look at Me. » He repeats His order because she dare not look up. « Woman, we are alone. Look at Me. »

The poor wretch raises her face that tears and dust have turned into a mask of dejection.

« Woman, where are now those who were accusing you? » Jesus is speaking in a low voice, with gravity full of pity. His head and body are lightly bent forward, toward so much misery, and His eyes are full of an indulgent restoring expression. « Did no one condemn you? »

The woman replies sobbing: « No one, Master. »

« Neither do I condemn you. Go. And do not sin any more. Go home. And behave in such a way that you may be forgiven by God and by the man you offended. And do not trespass on the benignity of the Lord. Go. »

And He helps her to get up taking her by the hand. But He does not bless, neither does He greet her with the salutation of peace. He looks at her going away, her head lowered and slightly staggering in her shame, and when she disappears, He sets off Himself with the two disciples.

Jesus says:

« What hurt Me was the lack of charity and sincerity in the accusers.

Not because they lied in accusing. The woman was really guilty. But they were insincere being scandalised at something they had committed thousands of times and that only greater cunning and better luck had allowed to remain concealed. The woman, at her first sin, had not been so cunning and lucky. But none of the accusers, both male and female - because also women accused her in their hearts even if they did not raise their voices - were free from sin.

He is an adulterer who commits the act and he who desires the act and craves for it with all his might. Both he who sins and he who wishes to sin are lustful. It is not sufficient not to do evil. It is also necessary not to desire to do it. Remember, Mary, the first word of your Master, when I called you from the edge of the precipice where you were: "It is not sufficient not to do evil. It is also necessary not to desire to do it" He who cherishes sensual thoughts and excites sensual feelings by means of literature and performances sought for such purpose and through pernicious habits, is equally impure as he who commits the sin materially. I dare say: he is more guilty. Because with his thoughts he goes against nature, not only against morals. I am not referring to those who commit real acts against nature. The only extenuating circumstance for such person is an organic disease or mental illness. He who does not have such an extenuating circumstance is inferior to the filthiest beast by ten degrees.

One ought to be free from sin in order to condemn with justice. I refer you to past dictations, when I speak of the essential conditions to be a judge.

I was not unaware of the hearts of those Pharisees and scribes, or of the hearts of those people who had joined them in insulting the guilty woman. Sinners against God and their neighbour, they had sinned against faith, against their parents, against their neighbour and above all they had committed many sins against their wives. If by means of a miracle I had ordered their blood to write their sins on their foreheads, among the many charges that of "adulterers" by deed or by desire would have reigned supreme. I said: "It is what comes from the heart that contaminates man". And with the exception of My heart there was no one among the judges whose heart was pure. They lacked sincerity and charity. Not even their being like her in their hunger for lust induced them to be charitable.

It was I Who was charitable to the dejected woman. I, the Only One, Who should have been disgusted with her. But remember this: "The kinder one is, the more compassionate one is to culprits". One is not lenient to the fault itself. No. But one is indulgent to weak people who have not resisted temptation.

Man! Oh! More than a fragile reed and a thin bearbine, he is easily

inclined to yield to temptation and to cling to whatever may make him hope to find solace. Because many times sin is committed, particularly by the weaker sex, owing to such search for comfort. I therefore say that he who has no love for his wife, or for his own daughter, is ninety per cent responsible for the sin of his wife or of his daughter and will have to answer for them. Both the stupid love, which is nothing but foolish slavery imposed by a man on his wife or by a father on his daughter, and the neglect of love or even worse, a sin of lechery which leads a man to other love affairs and parents to other cares than their children, are incentives to adultery and prostitution and are condemned by Me as such.

You are beings gifted with reason and guided by a divine law and by a moral law. To degrade yourselves to the behaviour of savages or of brutes should horrify your great pride. But pride, which in this case would be also useful, is used by you for completely different matters.

I looked at Peter and John in different ways, because I wanted to say to the former: "Peter, make sure you are not lacking in charity and sincerity as well", and I also wanted to say to him as My future Pontiff: "Remember this hour and in future judge as your Master did"; whilst to the latter, a young man with the soul of a child, I wanted to say: "You can judge, but you do not, because your heart is like Mine. Thank you, My beloved, for being so much Mine, as to be a second I". I sent the two disciples away before calling the woman as I did not wish to increase her mortification wit the presence of two witnesses. Learn, o pitiless men. No matter how guilty a man is, he is to be treated with respect and charity. You must not rejoice at his annihilation, you must not be pitiless, not even with curious glances. Have mercy on those who fall!

I pointed out to the guilty woman the way she should follow to redeem herself: to go back to her house, to ask humbly to be forgiven and to obtain forgiveness through an upright life; not to yield any more to the flesh; not to trespass on divine Goodness and human kindness in order not to expiate more severely than at present for two or many sins. God forgives and He forgives because He is Goodness. But man, although I said: "Forgive your brother seventy times seven", is not capable of forgiving twice.

I did not wish her peace and I did not give her My blessing because she was not fully detached from her sin, as is required to be forgiven. In her flesh and unfortunately not even in her heart there was no nausea for sin. When Mary of Magdala savoured My Word, she became disgusted with sin and came to Me, full of good will to change completely. But this woman still hesitated between the voices of the flesh and those of the spirit. And in the excitement of the moment, she had not yet been able to use the axe against the stump of the flesh and cut it off in order to go, once she

was mutilated of her greedy weight, to the Kingdom of God. Mutilated of what is ruin, but increased with what is salvation.

Do you want to know whether she was saved? I was not the Saviour for everybody. I wanted to be so, but I was not because not everyone wanted to be saved. And that was one of the most piercing arrows in My agony at Gethsemane.

Go in peace, Mary of Mary, and do not sin any more, not even in trifles. Under Mary's mantle there is nothing but pure things. Bear that in mind.

One day Mary, My Mother, said to you: "I ask My Son with tears to give you to Me". And another time: "I leave it to My Jesus to have Me loved… When you love Me I come. And My coming is joy and salvation".

Mother wanted you. And I gave you to Her. Nay, I took you there, because I know that where I can bend with authority, She takes you with the caress of love and She takes you there even better than I do. Her touch is a seal before which Satan runs away. Now you have Her dress and if you are faithful to the prayers of the two Orders, you will meditate on all the life of our Mother every day: on Her joys and sorrows. That is, My joys and My sorrows. Because since I, the Word, became Jesus, I have rejoiced and wept with Her and for the same reasons.

So you can see that to love Mary is to love Jesus. It is to love Him more easily. Because I make you carry the cross and I put you on the cross. Mother instead carries you or stands at the foot of the cross to receive you on Her heart that can only love. Also at the moment of death Mary's bosom is more pleasant than a cradle. Whoever breathes his last in Her, hears nothing but the voices of the angelical choruses whirling round Mary. He does not see darkness, but sees the sweet ray of the Morning Star. He hears no weeping, but sees Her smile. He knows no terror. Of Us who love Her, who would dare tear from Mary's arms a creature of Her's?

Do not say "Thanks" to Me. Thank Her, Who did not want to remember anything of you, except the little good you have done and the love you have for Me, and that is why She wanted you, to subdue under Her foot what your good will did not succeed in subjugating. Shout: "Long live Mary!" And remain at Her feet at the foot of the Cross. You will adorn your garment with the rubies of My Blood and with the pearls of Her tears. You will have a queen's robe for your entrance into My Kingdom.

Go in peace. I bless you. »

493. Instructions on the Road to Bethany.

Jesus says: « you will put here the vision of the Adulterous Woman of 20th March 1944. »

17th September 1946.

Jesus has joined the ten apostles and the main disciples at the foot of the Mount of Olives, near the fountain of Siloam. When they see Jesus coming, walking with vigorous strides between Peter and John, they go towards Him and they meet just near the fountain.

« Let us go up to the Bethany road. I am leaving the town for some time. While walking I will tell you what you have to do » orders Jesus.

Among the disciples there are also Manaen and Timoneus, who, now cheerful again, have come back to their place. And there are Stephen and Hermas, Nicolaus, John of Ephesus, John the priest, in short, all the ones who Are more notable because of their wisdom, besides others, simple men, but so active by the grace of God and their own good will.

« Are You leaving the town? Has anything happened? » ask many.

« No. But there are places waiting for… »

« What have You done this morning? »

« I spoke… The prophets… Once again. But they do not understand… »

« No miracle, Master? » asks Matthew.

« No. I forgave and defended a person. »

« Who was it? Who was offending? »

« Those who think that they are without sin were accusing a woman who had sinned. I saved her. »

« But if she was a sinner, they were right. »

« Her body was that of a sinner. Her soul… There are many things I should say about souls. And I would not call sinners only those whose guilt is obvious. Also those are guilty, who instigate others to sin. And to a more cunning sin. They play the part of the Serpent and of the Sinner at the same time. »

« But what had the woman done? »

« Adultery. »

« Adultery?! And You saved her?' You shouldn't!! » exclaims Judas Iscariot.

Jesus stares at him then He asks: « Why not? »

« Because… It may be detrimental to You. You know how they hate You and try to find charges against You! Certainly… To save an adulteress is to go against the Law. »

« I did not say that I wanted to save her. I only said that those who were without sin should throw the stones. And no one struck her, because no one was without sin. So I confirmed the Law that inflicts lapidation on adulterers, but I also saved the woman

because not one lapidator could be found. »

« But You… »

« Did you want Me to stone her to death? It would have been justice, because I could have stoned her. But it would not have been mercy. »

« Ah! she had repented! She implored You and You… »

« No… She was not even repentant. She was only dejected and frightened. »

« Then!… Why?… I no longer understand You! Previously I was still able to understand why You forgave Mary of Magdala, John of Endor, also… in short many sin… »

« You may as well say Matthew. I don't take it amiss. On the contrary I will be grateful to you for reminding me of my debt of gratitude to my Master » says Matthew calm and dignified.

« Yes, also Matthew… But they repented their sins, their dissolute lives. But this woman!… I do not understand You any more! And I am not the only one who doesn't… »

« I know. You do not understand Me… You have never understood Me well. And you are not the only one. But that does not change My behaviour. »

« Forgiveness is to be granted to those who ask for it. »

« Oh! If God should forgive only those who ask to be forgiven! And strike at once those who do not repent after sinning! Have you never felt that you had been forgiven before repenting? Can you really say that you repented and that is why you have been forgiven? »

« Master, I… »

« Listen to Me, all of you, because many among you think that I made a mistake and that Judas is right. Peter and John are here. They heard what I said to the woman and they can repeat it to you. I was not foolish in forgiving. I did not say what I said to other souls whom I had forgiven because they were fully repentant. But I gave that soul time and possibility to arrive at repentance and holiness, if she wishes to reach them. Bear that in mind when you are the masters of souls.

It is essential to possess two things to be true masters and worthy of being masters. The first thing: an austere life for oneself, so that one may judge without the hypocrisy of condemning in other people what one forgives oneself. The second thing: patient mercy to give souls the time to recover and fortify themselves.

Not every soul recovers instantaneously from its wounds. Some do so by successive stages, which are often slow and subject to relapses. It does not befit a spiritual doctor to reject, condemn, frighten them. If you drive them away, they will bound back and throw themselves again into the arms of false friends and masters. Always open your arms and hearts to poor souls, so that they may

find in you true and holy confidants, on whose knees they do not feel ashamed to weep. If you condemn them depriving them of spiritual assistance, you will make them more and more unhealthy and weak. If you cause them to be frightened of you and of God, how will they be able to raise their eyes to you and to God?

Man meets man as his first judge. Only he who lives a spiritual life knows how to meet God first. But the creature who has arrived at living spiritually, does not fall into grave sins. His human side may be still weak, but his strong spirit is vigilant and his weaknesses do not become grave faults. Whereas the man who is still subject to flesh and blood commits sin and meets man. Now, if the man who should point out God to him and instruct his spirit, frightens him, how can the guilty person yield completely to him? And how can he say: "I humble myself because I believe that God is good and forgives", if he sees that one of his fellow-creatures is not good?

You are to be the term of comparison, the measure of what God is, just as a farthing is the part that makes one understand the value of a talent. But if you are cruel to souls, you tiny parts who are part of the Infinite and you represent Him, what will they think that God is? What intolerant harshness will they ascribe to Him?

Judas, since you are a severe judge, if just now I said to you: "I will denounce you to the Sanhedrin for magic practices…". »

« Lord! You will not do that! It would be… it would be… You know that it is… »

«I know and I do not know. But you can see how you cry at once for mercy for yourself… and you know that you would not be condemned by them because… »

« What do You mean, Master? Why do You say that? » asks Judas excitedly, interrupting Jesus.

And Jesus, very calmly but with a glance that pierces Judas' heart, and at the same time curbs the upset apostle, who is being gazed at by the other eleven apostles and by many disciples, says: « Because they love you. You have good friends in there. You have said so many a time. »

Judas heaves a sigh of relief, wipes his perspiration, which is strange in a cold windy day, and says: « That is true. Old friends. But I don't think that if I sinned… »

« And is that why you ask for mercy? »

« Yes. I am still imperfect and I want to become perfect. »

« You have spoken the truth. Also that woman is very imperfect. I gave her time to become good, if she wishes. »

Judas does not reply any more.

They are now on the Bethany road, at a good distance from Jerusalem. Jesus stops and says: « Have you given the poor what I gave you? Have you done everything I told you? »

« Everything, Master » reply the apostles and disciples.

« Well, listen. I will now bless you and dismiss you. You will spread out, as usual, through Palestine. You will gather here again for Passover. Do not fail to come… and during these next months fortify your hearts and the hearts of those who believe in Me. Be more and more just, unselfish, patient. Be what I taught you to be. Go round towns, villages, secluded houses. Shun no one. Put up with everything. You are not serving your own egos, as I do not serve the ego of Jesus of Nazareth, but I serve My Father. Serve your Father as well. Thus, His interests, not yours, are to be sacred to you, even if they bring sorrow or detriment to your human interests. Be guided by the spirit of self-denial and obedience. I may send for you or I may tell you to remain where you are. Do not judge My instructions. Obey them, whatever they may be, with the firm belief that they are good and given for your good. And do not be jealous if I send for some and not for others. You know… Some have departed from Me… and I suffered because of that. They were the ones who still wanted to act according to their own wills. Pride is the lever that overturns spirits and the magnet that tears them away from Me. Do not curse those who left Me. Pray that they may come back… My shepherds will be staying by twos in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem. Isaac is coming with Me for the time being together with Marjiam. Love one another. And help one another. My dear friends, may your spirits tell you all the rest, reminding you of what I taught you, and may your angels repeat it to you. I bless you. »

They all prostrate themselves while Jesus recites the Mosaic blessing. They then crowd round Jesus greeting Him. They then depart while He with the twelve apostles, Isaac and Marjiam proceeds along the Bethany road.

« We shall now stop just long enough to greet Lazarus and then we shall go on towards the Jordan. »

« Are we going to Jericho? » asks Judas with interest.

« No. To Betharabah. »

« But… night… »

« There is no shortage of houses and villages from here to the river… »

No one speaks any more and apart from the rustling of olivetrees and the shuffling of feet, no other noise can be heard.

494. At the Village of Solomon and in His House.

18th September 1946.

In order not to be seen by people they go into the village where Solomon's house is, walking along the bank of the river. But I would say that the precaution was quite unnecessary, because it

gets dark early in the November or end of October evenings and people are already at home. There is no one, absolutely no one in the street and if some bleatings were not heard, one would say that the place is deserted.

They shake the little gate. It is closed. Well closed at the entrance of the little kitchen garden, which looks very tidy in the half-light.

« Call him! He is in the kitchen. A thread of light is stealing through the shutters » says Jesus.

Thomas takes upon himself to call with his powerful voice the old man who opens the door at once and looks towards the street. He is uncertain because of the dim light outside, particularly because he comes from the kitchen where there is a fire on and a lamp is lit.

But when Jesus says: « It is us », the old man recognises the voice at once and shouts: « The Master! » and descending the rustic step he runs to open.

« My Lord! Come in, come into Your house, and may this day be blessed because it ends with Your coming! » he says bustling with the lock of the gate and he explains: « I am alone and I close the gate well. The robbers are capable of anything. There are some who cause damage now in one place now in another, and they come down from the Gilead mountains. It is not that I am afraid for my life. But I had prepared for You and… Here, Master. Come. It is a damp evening. Your hair is wet with dew… »

« And you are more diligent than the bride of the Song of Songs, father. The trouble you take to welcome the Pilgrim is no burden to you » says Jesus smiling.

« Trouble? How long this time has been! One day after the other, one after the other. I had sown your seed and I saw the vegetables grow beautifully. I used to say: "If He came, He would certainly like this". But they ripened and You did not come… And I saw the fruit colour up on the trees and I ate of them sadly, because You did not have any. That ewe gave me a lamb, a completely white one. I kept it for such a long time to eat it with You. I was hoping to see You before the Tabernacles. Then… a lamb all for me… Too much! I changed it for a little sheep, and they were good to me, because they did not want anything to balance the deal. But I have kept as much fruit and cheese as I could for You, as well as some dried fish and legumes and I still have a few melons. And a little wine… I don't drink any, but I made some for You, for winter time. »

He is speaking while cleaning the table, he lays the kitchenware on it and pokes the fire, he adds water to the pot and he busies himself happily. He no longer looks like the poor old man of a few months previously.

He goes out and comes back with some milk and he says

apologising: « It is only a little because only one ewe gives some milk. But they will be two shortly. It is enough for You, however. »

He is fatherly; devoted and fatherly at the same time. He has taken the damp mantles and the dirty sandals and has taken them elsewhere. He has come back with some apples and pomegranates and grapes and also some figs half dried and he says: « I dried them like that, just to make You taste them. I thought… I thought of my Ananias who was so fond of them when they were prepared like that!… » His voice, previously serene, lowers to a sad tone while saying these words and he concludes: « and… I thought that You would like them and while I was preparing them I felt as if I were preparing them for the son of my son. » He shakes his head, he strives to smile, with his eyes shining with tears.

Jesus, Who had sat down at the table, stands up, and laying one arm round his shoulders, He draws him to Himself saying: « I like them very much. They remind Me of My childhood… and of My father. But you should not deprive yourself of so many things because of Me. They are good for old people. You must remain healthy and strong to be able to welcome Me thus every time I come. It is so pleasant to find a home like this, with a father waiting for us. Is that right, My dear friends? »

« It is certainly right. It is so beautiful that we grow lazy instead of helping Ananias » says Peter and he stands up exclaiming: « Come on, let us go and make our beds while Jesus speaks to him. »

« Oh! It is not necessary! They are always ready. And everything is clean… The only thing is… that they are not enough. You are more than twelve. But I will go and lie on the hay and… »

« You will certainly not, father. In that case I will go » says John.

« No, I will » say Andrew and others.

« There is no need for that. I will sleep here on this table. It is certainly not harder than the bottom boards of my boat, and Marjiam… » says Peter.

«… will sleep with Me » says Jesus interrupting him.

« Or with me, if you wish so… as little Ananias used to do » says the old man with imploring eyes.

« Yes, Master. You always have me. He… I will go with him » says Marjiam.

Jesus caresses him appreciating his gesture.

« They have come several times looking for You after Pentecost. Then they stopped coming » says the old man.

« Who was looking for Him? »

« Pharisees, hey! And others like them. They wanted to question You. But I said: "He has gone to His village. He is not here, and I don't know when He will be coming here… That was the truth. And they got tired of coming. And they were looking for another man, a certain John, and they said that he was with You and they

perhaps thought that he was hiding here. I said to them: "But that's His apostle and he is with Him". They replied: "Was His apostle blind in one eye? Was he old, sick, dying?". I realised that it was not you and I replied: "I know only John, the apostle, a young man who is kinder than a child and has a wholesome heart and body". They threatened me. But what else could I say? That is the truth… »

« Yes. That is the truth. And be always truthful; even if you should harm Me, father, never tell a lie. »

« Lord, my hair has grown grey and I have always striven to obey the Lord. And among the commandments to be obeyed, there is also not to tell lies. But… why are they looking for You, Lord? I was blind. So I did not go to Jerusalem any more. I went back now… Only for the rite. Because I wanted to be here waiting for You… And I perceived hatred and love around You… and I thought there was more hatred than love among the chiefs of the people. I was in the Temple that morning when they wanted to offend You… and I ran away as I was distressed and I came here to wait for You and weep. Why is man so wicked? »

« Because he has killed his spirit. And with his spirit his capability to feel remorse for being unjust. »

« That is true!… And are they looking for You to hurt You? »

« Yes, they are. »

« Yes!! Israel wants to injure her King? How horrible' Israel is condemning herself to the prophesied punishments!… Oh! I am glad, now, that my son is dead… and I would like to die myself not to see the sin of Israel… »

There is dead silence. Only the crackle of the wood burning in the fireplace can be heard.

« Let us speak of something else! We speak of nothing but death, hatred, betrayal! Enough of that! I cannot stand that! » says the Iscariot, who is upset, surly, agitated and is moving about the kitchen gesticulating excitedly with his legs, his arms, his whole body.

« Judas is right » many say.

« The fact that one does not want to hear, is of no avail. What helps is not to consent » says Jesus, opening His hands on the rustic table, with His palms upwards, in a gesture of resignation.

« What do You mean? To consent! Who consents to that? » Judas, bending over the table, almost lying across it to approach the Master, shakes his fists almost in His face.

« Who? All those who already dream of seeing Me perish in My blood. Blood! The blood of your Messiah! Blood on you, o Earth, who do not want your Lord! A blood brighter than those flames! Blood, a fire in the ice and darkness of a criminal world! They hope to kill the Light by depriving it of its blood. But Light is spirit;

blood is still matter. Matter weighs down the spirit. The blood spread on a sheet of mica dims the light, does it not? Well, I solemnly tell you that as that wood did not shine until it became fire and its resins catching fire turned into brightness, and it is now an incandescent glare, so when everything is completed and the blood and flesh are consumed by the sacrifice, then, like that fire over there, which has changed everything into light, My spirit will shine more brightly than ever on the world and I shall be more than ever the Light. Such a Light that it will dazzle for ever those who hate the Light and kill it. Such a Light that the golden gates of Heaven will melt after being closed to Mankind for ages and Heaven will be open to the just. Such a Light that it will pierce the stones forming the vault of the Abyss and the fierce fire of Hell will become extremely fierce under the thunderbolts of My rays. And woe to those who will have laid snares to the Light! Blood and Light! Those two things will be in front of them until they are driven mad and to despair. Demons! »

Jesus, Who had stood up when saying « I solemnly tell you » and was frightening, so imposing He looked in the low dark-walled kitchen, as the brightness of the flames of the fireplace formed a halo round His head, sits down and becomes silent.

They all look at one another, with the exception of Judas, who seems to be hypnotised looking at the firewood ablaze… Hypnotised and frightened. A fright that depicts a dreadful mask on his face, of a ghastly greenish paleness, which the burning wood tinges with red. It reminds me of his terrible face on Good Friday. He then turns suddenly round and shouts: « Be quiet! Be quiet! Why are You tormenting us?! » and he goes out slamming the door…

« His way, that is true. But he loves You very much… and he suffers hearing certain words » says Thomas. And he concludes: « They hurt us so much as well! But we are not so strange, let us say… strange… »

No one speaks. Jesus also is silent…

« The vegetables are cooked, the milk is warm… » says the old man in a low voice, as he is intimidated and he almost does not dare say such common words after the incident…

« Call Judas and let us have supper » orders Jesus.

John goes out and calls his companion. They come back in… Judas looks tortured. But a torture without peace… But he sits at the table and he stands up with the others when Jesus offers and blesses and he looks stealthily at Him when He hands out the portions keeping the last one for Himself.

Everyone would like to dispel the sadness reigning in the room, but no one succeeds until Jesus addresses the old man asking him whether the little village and nearby places have received the word of the Lord.

« Yes, Master. And they received it very well. I would say better here than on the other side of the river. You know the Baptist still lives in everybody's memory here, and his disciples, who are now Yours, keep it green and through his words they make You known. And then here there are not many Pharisees in Perea and in the Decapolis, so »

495. Jesus and Simon of Jonas.

20th September 1946.

I do not know where I am. Certainly no longer in the Jordan valley, but in mountains bordering on it, because I can see the green valley and the lovely blue river below, whilst peaks of quite high mountains emerge from the vast plateau stretching east of the Jordan.

I see Peter, all alone on a little rising of ground, staring northeast and sighing sadly. There is some firewood at his feet and it has certainly been picked up in the woods covering this hill. A little village nestles among the greenery. Peter is really down-hearted. He ends up by sitting on his bundle of sticks holding his head in his hands, all curled up. He remains thus, forgetful of time and of everything, so absorbed that not even some children who pass by with some whimsical little goats arouse him. The boys look at him and then run away, after their goats, towards the village. The sun is setting slowly and Peter does not stir.

Jesus is proceeding along the path which climbs from the village to the hillock. He is walking slowly and avoids making any noise. He thus reaches the spot where Peter is sitting. And He calls him standing upright in front of him: « Simon! »

« Master! » Peter starts, he raises his head and looks upset while uttering that word.

« What were you doing, Simon? All your companions have come back. You were the only one missing and we were worried. So much so that your brother and the sons of Zebedee with Thomas and Judas have scattered through the mountains, while My brothers with Isaac and Marjiam have gone down towards the plain. »

« I'm sorry… I'm sorry for causing pain and trouble… »

« Your companions are fond of you… Judas was the first one to become anxious and he reproached Marjiam for letting you go by yourself. »

« H'm!… »

« Simon, what is the matter with you? »

« Nothing, Master. »

« What were you doing here, all alone on this hillock, while it is getting dark? »

« I was looking… »

« You may have been looking, Simon. But you were not looking just now… Some boys passed near you and they almost feared that you were dead because you were so bent on yourself. They ran to the fold that gave us hospitality and they told Me. I came… What were you looking at, Simon? »

« I was looking… I was looking towards Ramoth Gilead, towards Gerasa, Bozrah, Arbela… our trip of last year, so beautiful, so The Mother was with us! The women disciples… John of Endor The merchant… Even he was kind and helped to make the journey pleasant How many things have changed! How much difference and how much grief!… That is what I was looking at: the past. »

« And the future, My dear Simon. » Jesus sits on the bundle of sticks beside Peter and lays an arm on his shoulders speaking to him: « You were looking at the horizon… and sadness dimmed it. The present, like a whirl, raised frightening clouds and concealed the serene memory full of promises and hope from you, and it frightened you. Simon, you are subjected to one of those hours of sadness and boredom, which our human nature meets on its way. No one is free from them, because those hours are brought about by him who hates man. And the more a man serves God, the more Satan tries to frighten and tire him to detach him from his ministry. You also are subjected to an hour of tiredness. You are fatigued by the persistent persecutions against your Master. And finally - and you do not know that it is not you, but it is the Tempter - you listen to a voice that whispers to you: "And tomorrow? What will happen tomorrow? »

« Lord, it is true. You are reading my heart. But You also see that if I ask that question, it is not because I am afraid for myself. It's because… No. I could never bear to see You tormented… You often speak of crime, of betrayal. I… Oh! not only I! How many, particularly old people, have asked You to let them die before seeing their King offended? And I!… I, You know, You are everything for me. I am not interested in anything but You. It is not as Judas says, nostalgia for my boat and for my wife… Look: You can see whether I am telling the truth. I insisted so much to have Marjiam. My human nature wanted at least an adoptive son in place of the children that my wife did not give me mortifying my virility that wanted to be perpetuated. But now, but at present I… I do love him. But if You should take him away from me, I would not react. I would only say to You… No! I would not say anything! »

« You would only say to Me? Go on. »

« It is no use, Master. »

« Tell Me! »

« I would say: "Give him to someone who would bring him up as

a just man, better than I could". Nothing else! Or rather… and I am saying this to You, weeping, for him, for myself, for my brother, and also for John and James… and also for the others, but we… we are Your first ones… » Peter falls on his knees, leaning against Jesus' knees, with raised hands, palms upwards, imploring, while tears stream down his cheeks and disappear in his beard… «… I am saying this for ourselves: let us die, take us away before we… Oh! I was thinking, I have always been thinking, for months - and You can see whether it is a thought that tortures me and makes me old, it is an uninterrupted fear that does not even leave me when I sleep - I think that, if it is going to be as You say, I could be the traitor, or Andrew, or John, or James, or Marjiam… And if we don't go to that extent, it might be one of those You mentioned also three evenings ago at Ananias', one of those who go to the extent of wanting to take Your Blood, one, also one of those who, out of cowardice, cannot oppose that and they consent to evil for fear of evil… I… if I should consent only by not reacting, out of fear… Master, oh! my dear Master, I would kill myself to punish myself, or… I would kill Your murderers, if I should meet them. I… if You do not want that, let me die before, at once, here… Life is nothing, but to fail to love You… To be one of those… to be… to see and not… » He is so excited that he lacks even words. He bends with his face on Jesus' knees weeping bitter tears, the tears of a coarse elderly man, not accustomed to weeping, upset by too many feelings.

Jesus lays His hands on Peter's head as if He wished to calm his grief and dispel every perturbing thought and He says: « My dear friend, and do you think that even if you were… not to be perfect at that hour, the Lord, Who is just, would not weigh your mistake with the weight of your love and your present good will? And are you afraid that this golden love and will may weigh less than your temporary imperfection, and may be insufficient to obtain for you indulgence from God, and with that indulgence all the assistance to become yourself again, My beloved Peter? »

« Let me die! Save me! I'm afraid! »

« You are My Stone, Simon. Can I crumble the Stone on which I will found Her who is to perpetuate Me on the Earth? »

« I am not worthy of that. I feel it. I am a poor ignorant man, a sinner. All evil tendencies are in me. I am not worthy, I am not worthy! I shall become perverse. A murderer. All the worst… Let me die. Do You realise that if I should find out who hates You… »

« All the world hates Me, Simon. We must forgive… »

« I am speaking of the main culprit. There must be a main one and… »

« There will be many one, and each will have his main task… »

« Which task? That of… Oh! Don't let me say it! But I… »

« But you must forgive, like Me and with Me. Why are you so

upset, Simon, thinking of what you might do to punish? Leave that task to the Lord. You must love and forgive, be indulgent and forgive. They, all those who will offend against your Jesus, need so much to be helped to be forgiven! »

« There is no forgiveness for them. »

« Oh! how severe you are with your brothers, Simon! Of course there is forgiveness also for them, if they mend their ways. It would be dreadful if all My offenders were not to be forgiven! Come on, stand up, Simon. Your companions will be more worried now, seeing that I am not at the fold either. But even at the cost of letting them suffer a little further, let us pray before going to them. Let us pray together. There is nothing else to be done to regain peace, spiritual strength, love, pity… also for ourselves. Prayer dispels Satan's phantoms, and makes us feel closer to God. And with God near us, we can face and put up with everything justly and meritoriously. Let us pray thus, you and I together, here, from this mountain, from which so much of our Fatherland can be seen, as the Promised Land was seen by Moses from mount Nebo. We are luckier than he was, because we are taking the Word and Salvation to the Land which will belong to the Christ. I first, then you. Look! The Judaean mountains can still be seen in the last light. But beyond them there is the plain, the sea, then other lands, the world… They are waiting for you, Peter. They are waiting for you to learn that there is a true God. A God Who will give the true light to the souls groping in the darkness of Gentilism and idolatry. Look: the earthly light is growing dim. How could wayfarers not lose their way in a lightless night? But there is the Pole-star. It is rising already to guide wayfarers. My Religion will be the star that guides spiritual wayfarers on the way to Heaven. And you will be so united to it as to be one light only with Me and My Doctrine, My dear Peter, My blessed Stone. Let us pray for that hour when men will be saved through My Name. "Our Father Who art in Heaven"… »

He says the « Our Father » slowly, holding Peter by the hand, and He seems to be presenting him to the Father, as He raises His arms and hands, with the apostle's left hand in His right one.

« And now let us go down. And let us leave here any useless sadness and worries about tomorrow. Together with our daily bread the Father will give us His help for tomorrow and for every morrow. Are you convinced, Simon? »

« Yes, Master, I believe that » says Peter resolutely; he no longer looks upset, but austere, as he has been for some months, so that he seems to be quite different from the coarse facetious fisherman of the first two years.

They go down, Jesus ahead, followed by Peter with his bundle of sticks and almost at the first house of the village they meet the

worried apostles.

« But where had you gone? » they ask Peter shouting.

« We would have been here some time ago, but I stopped with him, speaking and looking towards Gerasa… » replies Jesus on his behalf.

They go to the right, to the ruins of a half-demolished sheep-fold. Inside a wooden fence, half of which has collapsed and the rest is mouldy and tottering, there is a dry-wall shed, badly covered and badly closed on three sides by walls and on the fourth by boards. There is nothing inside it, except some straw on the floor and a primitive fireplace in a corner. I think that the village did not give them hospitality and they took shelter there…

496. Jesus to Thaddeus and to James of Zebedee.

21st September 1946.

« Do You really want to go along this road? For a number of reasons I don't think it is wise… » objects the Iscariot.

« Which? Did men from these villages not come to Me, as far as Capernaum, seeking health and wisdom? Are they not creatures of God, too? »

« Yes… But… It is not wise for You to go too close to Machaerus… It's an inauspicious place for Herod's enemies. »

« Machaerus is far away. And I have no time to go so far. I would like to go to Petra and beyond… But I shall be able to go half that distance, perhaps less. In any case, let us go… »

« Joseph advised You… »

« To remain on guarded roads. This is the road that takes one beyond the Jordan and is strictly watched over by the Romans. I am not cowardly, Judas, or imprudent. »

« I would not trust it. I would not go away from Jerusalem. I… »

« Leave the Master alone. He is the Master and we are His disciples. When have you heard of a disciple giving advice to his master? » says James of Zebedee.

« When? It is not years ago that your brother told the Master not to go to Achor and He listened to him. Let Him listen to me now. »

« You are jealous and overbearing. If my brother spoke and was listened to, it means that what he said was right and was to be heeded. It was enough to look at John that day, to understand that it was justice to agree with him! »

« Oh! with all his wisdom he was never able to defend Him, and he never will. Instead what I did coming to Jerusalem is a recent event. »

« You did your duty. My brother also would have done it, if he had had the opportunity, and in a different way, because he is not capable of telling lies, not even for a good purpose, and I am glad

of that… »

« You are offending me. You are calling me a liar… »

« Hey! Do you want me to say that you are sincere, if you lied so skilfully, without changing colour? »

« I was doing it… »

« I know. I know! To save the Master. But I don't like it, and none of us does. We prefer the simple reply of the old man. We prefer to be silent and to be considered stupid, and even maltreated, rather than lie. One begins for a good purpose and ends up with a bad one. »

« When one is wicked. But I am not. When one is a fool. But I am not. »

« That is enough! Even if you are right, you end up by being wrong, not with regard to what you were throwing at each other's face, but because of your lack of charity. You all know what My opinion is on sincerity. I insist on that also in respect of charity. Let us go. Your disputes grieve Me more than the insults of My enemies. »

Jesus is obviously upset and He begins to walk with a rapid step, all alone, along a road which, without being an archaeologist, one understands was built by the Romans. It runs southwards, almost straight as far as the eye can see, between two ranges of high mountains. A monotonous road, dark because of the woody slopes enclosing it and preventing one's eyes from roving over the horizon, but well kept. Now and again there is a Roman bridge across torrents or little rivers, which flow towards the Jordan or the Dead Sea. I am not sure which, because the mountains obstruct the view on the western side where the river and the sea must be. There are some caravans on the road, coming up perhaps from the Red Sea and going goodness knows where, with many camels, camel-drivers and merchants of a race clearly different from the Jewish one.

Jesus is always ahead, lonely. Behind, in two groups, the apostles are talking to one another in low voices. The Galileans are in front, the Judaeans behind, -with Andrew and John and the two disciples who have joined them. One group is trying to comfort James, who is dejected after the Master's reproach, the other is endeavouring to persuade Judas not to be always so obstinate and aggressive. And both groups agree in advising the two reproached apostles to go to the Master and make peace with Him.

« Me? I will go at once. I know I am right. I know what my actions are. It was not I who insinuated evil. And I am going » says the Iscariot. He is bold, I would say: shameless. He quickens his step to catch up with Jesus. I wonder once again whether in those days he was already prepared to betray the Christ and was conspiring with His enemies…

James, instead, who after all is less guilty, is so depressed for grieving the Master that he has not got the courage to approach Him. He looks at his Master, Who is now speaking to Judas… He looks at Him and his desire for His forgiving word is clearly visible on his face. But his very love, so sincere, firm and deep, makes him feel that his misdeed is unpardonable.

The two groups are now together and also Simon Zealot, Andrew, Thomas and James say: « Cheer up! I know Him so well! He has already forgiven you! » and with keen perspicacity, the elderly and wise Bartholomew, laying his hand on James' shoulder says: « I am telling you: to avoid further storms He impartially reproached both of you. But in His heart He meant Judas only. »

« It is so, Bartholomew! My Brother is worrying Himself putting up with that man, whom He insists in wanting to reform and He tires trying to make him appear… as we are. He is the Master, and I… am I… But if I were Him, oh! the man of Kerioth would not be with us! » says Thaddeus while his beautiful eyes, which recall those of Jesus, flash with anger.

« Do you think so? Are you suspicious? Of what? » ask many.

« Nothing. Nothing definite. But I don't like that man. »

« You never liked him, brother. An absurd repugnance that arose at your first meeting. You admitted it to me. It is against charity. You ought to overcome it, even if it were only to give joy to Jesus » says James of Alphaeus calmly and persuasively.

« You are right, but… I am not able. Come, James, let us go to my Brother together » and Judas of Alphaeus takes the arm of James of Zebedee resolutely and drags him away.

Judas hears them coming, turns round, then says something to Jesus, Who stops waiting for them. Judas looks at the mortified apostle with mischievous eyes.

« Excuse me, move over a little. I must speak to my Brother » says Thaddeus. The words are polite, but the tone is very cold.

The Iscariot giggles, then shrugging his shoulders he retraces his steps joining the others.

« Jesus, we are sinners… » says Judas Thaddeus.

« I am a sinner, not you » whispers James with lowered head.

« We are sinners, James, because I thought of what you did, I approved of it, I have it in my heart. So I am a sinner as well. Because my judgement against Judas comes from my heart and contaminates my charity… Jesus, are You not saying anything to Your disciples who acknowledge their sins? »

« What shall I say that you do not already know? Will you change your attitude towards your companion because of My words? »

« No. Not more than he changes because of the words You speak to him » His cousin replies with sincerity for himself and for the others.

« Never mind, Judas, never mind! I made the mistake. I am involved and I have to look after myself, not after the others. Master, don't be annoyed with me… »

« James, I would like one thing from you, from all of you. I am so grieved, because of the many incomprehensions I meet… because of so much stubborn resistance. You are aware of it… For every place that gives Me joy, there are three that refuse Me and they drive Me away like an evil-doer. But I would like to receive at least from you that comprehension and adherence which other people deny Me. That the world should not love Me, that I should feel suffocated by all this hatred, this aversion, enmity, suspicion around Me, by all kinds of base actions, by selfishness, by everything that only My infinite love for man makes Me put up with, is painful. But I endure it with patience. I have come to suffer that from those who hate Salvation. But you! No, I cannot stand that! That you are not able to love one another and thus understand Me. That you do not adhere to My spirit, striving to do what I do.

Do you all think I do not see Judas' errors, and I am unacquainted with his deeds? Oh! be convinced that it is not so. If I had wanted beings that were perfect in their spirits, I would have got angels to become incarnate and I would have surrounded Myself with them. I could have done that. Would it really have been a good thing? No. On My side it would have been selfishness and contempt. I would have avoided the grief caused by your imperfections and I would have despised men created by My Father and so much loved by Him as to send Me to save them. And on man's side it would have been detrimental to his future. When My mission is completed and I ascend once again to Heaven with My angels, what and who would actually be left to continue My mission? Which man would have been able to try and do what I say, if only a God and angels had set the example for a new life guided by the spirit? It was necessary for Me to take a human body to persuade man that if he wishes so, he can be chaste and holy in every way. And it was also necessary for Me to take men, as they are, whose spirits replied to My spirit, without taking into account whether they were rich or poor, learned or ignorant, citizens or countrymen. It was necessary for Me to take them as I found them, and for My will and theirs to transform them slowly into masters of other men.

Man can believe man, the man he sees. But it is difficult for man, who has fallen so low, to believe in God, Whom he does not see. Sinai was still blazing with fire and idolatry had already begun at the foot of the mountain… Moses was not yet dead, and they were already committing sins against the Law, although they could not look at his face. But when you are transformed into masters and

you are like an example, a witness, like yeast among men, they will no longer be able to say: "They are gods who have descended among men and we cannot imitate them". They will have to say: "They are men like us. They have the same instincts, incentives and reactions as we have, and yet they are able to resist their incentives and instincts, and their reactions are completely different from our brutal ones". And they will be convinced that man can be divinised, if he only wishes to follow the ways of God. Look at the Gentiles and idolaters. Are they made any better by all their Olympus and all their gods? No. Because if they are incredulous, they say that their gods are a fable; if they are believers they say: "They are gods and I am a man" and they do not strive to imitate them. You therefore must strive to be like Me. And do not be in a hurry. Man evolves slowly from a reasonable animal into a spiritual being. And bear with one another! No one, except God, is perfect.

And it is all over now, is it not? Improve yourselves with firm will, imitating Simon of Jonas, who in less than one year has made rapid progress. And yet… Who among you was more materially human than Simon with all the defects of a very material humanity? »

« That is true, Jesus. I never stop studying him. And he surprises me » confesses Thaddeus.

« Yes. I have been with him since my childhood. I know him as if he had been my brother. But now I have a different Simon in front of me. I must admit that when You said that he was our chief, I, and I was not the only one, was perplexed. He seemed to be the least suitable of all of us. Simon as compared to the other Simon and Nathanael! Simon in comparison with my brother and with Your brothers! Above all with regard to those five! I really thought it was a mistake… I now say that You were right. »

« And you only see the surface of Simon! But I see his depth. He has still much to do and to suffer to be perfect. But I would like to see his good will, his simplicity, humility and love in everyone… »

Jesus is looking in front of Himself and seems to be seeing I do not know what. He is absorbed in thought and smiles at what He sees. He then lowers His eyes and looks at James smiling.

« So… am I forgiven?! »

« I would like to forgive everybody as I forgive you… There, that town must be Heshbon. The man said so: the town is after the bridge with three arches. Let us wait for the others and go into town all together. »

497. The Man from Petra, near Heshbon.

22nd September 1946.

I cannot see the town of Heshbon. Jesus and His apostles are coming out of it and from their looks I realise that they are disappointed. They are followed, or rather chased, a few metres away, by a bawling threatening crowd…

« These places around the Dead Sea are cursed like the sea itself » says Peter.

« This place! It is still the same as in Moses' days and You are too kind to punish it as it was punished then. But that is what is needed: to subdue the people with the power of Heaven or with that of the Earth, all of them, to the last man and the last place » says Nathanael angrily, his sunk en eyes flashing with wrath. The Jewish race shows up remarkably in the lean elderly apostle in his outburst of indignation and makes him look very much like the many rabbis and Pharisees who always oppose Jesus.

And the Master turns round and lifting His arm He says: « Peace! Peace! They will be drawn to the Truth as well. But peace is necessary. And compassion. We have never been here. They do not know us. Other places were like that the first time, they then changed. »

« The trouble is that these places are like Masada. Corrupted! Let us go back to the Jordan » says Peter insisting.

But Jesus proceeds southwards along the main road, which they have taken again. Those who are most enraged with Him continue to follow Him, drawing the attention of wayfarers all the time.

One, who must be a rich merchant or employed by a merchant, and is driving a long caravan going northwards, watches with astonishment and stops his camel. All the others stop at the same time. He looks at Jesus, he looks at the apostles, whose appearance is so defenceless and benign, he looks at the bawling crowds which arrive threateningly and he asks them what it is all about. I cannot hear his words, but I hear those shouted in reply: « He is the cursed Nazarene, the mad possessed Nazarene. We don't want Him within our walls! »

The man does not ask any further question. He turns the camel round, he shouts something to one of his men who was following him closely and he goads his animal which, with few curvets, reaches the apostles. « In the name of your God, which of you is Jesus the Nazarene? » he asks the apostles Matthew, Philip, Simon Zealot and Isaac, who are in the last group.

« Why do you want to know? Do you want to molest Him as well? Are His fellow-countrymen not enough? Do you want to start, too? » says Philip quite worriedly.

« I am not as bad as they are. And I am seeking grace. Do not reject me. I beg you in the name of your God. »

Something in the man's voice convinces the four apostles and Simon says: « The one ahead of everybody, with the two youngest ones. »

The man goads his camel again -because Jesus, Who was ahead, has gone even farther away during the short conversation of which He is unaware.

« Lord!… Listen to an unhappy man… » he says, as soon as he catches up with Him.

Jesus, John and Marjiam turn round quite astonished.

« What do you want? »

« I come from Petra, Lord. I carry goods coming from the Red Sea as far as Damascus, on behalf of other people. I am not poor. But I am just as unhappy. I have two children, Lord, and a disease has affected their eyes and they are blind; one, who was taken ill first, is completely blind, the other is almost blind and will soon lose his sight completely. Doctors do not work miracles, but You do. »

« How do you know? »

« I know a rich merchant who knows You. He often stops in my enclosure and at times I serve him. When he saw my sons he said to me: "Only Jesus of Nazareth could cure them. Look for Him". I would have looked for You. But I do not have much time and I have to follow the most suitable roads. »

« When did you see Alexander? »

« Between your two springtime festivals. Since then I have made two trips but I never met You. Lord, have mercy! »

« Man, I cannot go down as far as Petra, and you cannot leave the caravan… »

« Of course I can. Arisa is a reliable man. I will tell him to go on slowly. I will fly to Petra. My camel is faster than the wind in the desert and more agile than a gazelle. I will take my children and another faithful servant. I will catch up with You. You will cure them… Oh! light in their dark eyes as beautiful as stars, now dimmed by a thick cloud! Then I will carry on, while they go back to their mother. I see that You are going on, Lord. Where are You going? »

« I was going to Dibon… »

« Don't go there. It is full of those… of Machaerus. Cursed places, Lord. Don't abandon unhappy people, Lord, to give Yourself to those who are cursed. »

« Just what I was thinking » mutters Bartholomew into his beard, and many say that he is right.

By now all the people are around Jesus and the man from Petra. On the contrary, the citizens of Heshbon, seeing that the caravan is well disposed to the persecuted Master, retrace their steps. The caravan, standing still, is awaiting the outcome and the decision.

« Man, if I do not go to the towns in the south, I will go back to the

north. But that does not mean that I will listen to you. »

« I know that I am contemptible for you Israelites. I am uncircumcised and I do not deserve being listened to. But You are the King of the world, and we are in the world, too… »

« That is not the point. The matter is… How can you believe that I can do what doctors were not able to do? »

« Because You are the Messiah of God and they are men. You are the Son of God. Misace told me and I believe it. You can do everything, also for a poor man like me. » His reply is a resolute one and the man completes it by sliding down to the ground, without even getting his camel to kneel down, and he prostrates himself in the dust.

« Your faith is greater than that of many. Go. Do you know where mount Nebo is? »

« Yes, Lord. That is mount Nebo. We also have heard of Moses. A great man! Too great to be ignored. But You are greater. The comparison between You and Moses is like that between a mountain and a stone. »

« Go to Petra. I will be waiting for you on mount Nebo… »

« There is a village at the foot of the mountain for visitors. And there are hotels… I shall be there in ten days' time at most. I will force my camel and if He Who sends You protects me, I shall not meet any storm. »

« Go and come back as soon as possible. I must go to other places… »

« Lord! I… am not circumcised. My blessing is a dishonour for You. But the blessing of a father is never so. I bless You and I am off. »

He takes a silver whistle and blows it three times. The man at the head of the caravan comes back at a gallop. They speak to each other and then say goodbye. The man goes back to the caravan which sets off. The other man mounts his camel again and departs southwards at a gallop.

Jesus and His apostles set forth again.

« Are we really going to mount Nebo? »

« Yes, and we shall leave the towns and climb the slopes of the Abarim mountains. There will be many shepherds. And we shall learn from them the road to mount Nebo and we shall teach them the Way to the mountain of God. And we shall stop there for a few days, as we did on the mountains of Arbela and near mount Cherit. »

« Oh! how lovely it will be! And we shall become better. We were always stronger and better when we came down from those places » says John.

« And You will speak to us of everything that Nebo reminds us of. Brother, do You remember, when we were children, that one

day you played Moses who blessed Israel before dying? » says Judas of Alphaeus.

« Yes. And Your Mother uttered a cry seeing You lie down as if You were dead? Now we are really going to mount Nebo » says

James of Alphaeus.

« And You will bless Israel. You are the true Leader of the people of God! » exclaims Nathanael.

« But You will not die there. You will never die, will You, Master? » asks Judas of Kerioth with a strange giggle.

« I shall die and rise as it has been stated. Many men will die without being dead on that day. And while the just will rise again, even if they have been dead for years, those living in their bodies but whose spirits are definitely dead, shall not rise again. Make sure you are not one of them. »

« And You make sure that no one hears You repeat that You will rise again. They say it is blasphemy » replies Judas of Kerioth.

« It is the truth. And I say it. »

« What faith that man has! And that Misace! » says the Zealot trying to make a digression.

« But who is Misace? » ask those who last year did not take part in the journey beyond the Jordan. And they go away speaking of those events, while Jesus resumes with Marjiam and John the thread of their interrupted discourse.

498. Descending from Mount Nebo.

23rd September 1946.

« I shall always regret this mountain and this rest in the Lord » says Peter while they are getting ready to descend from a very wild hillside to the valley.

They are in a range of very high mountains. To the east, beyond the valley, there are more mountains, and there are mountains to the south and even higher ones to the north. To north-west there is the green valley of the Jordan which flows into the Dead Sea. To the west there is first the gloomy sea and then, beyond it, the arid stony desert, interrupted only by the wonderful Engedi oasis, and then the Judaean mountains. An imposing wide view. One's eyes can reach as far as they wish, forgetting in the vision of so much vegetable life, which one supposes or knows it is inhabited, the gloomy sight of the Dead Sea, devoid of sails and life, still gloomy even in sunshine, sad also in the low peninsula which almost halfway along the eastern side, projects into it. How dreadful are the paths descending to the valley! Only wild animals can feel at their ease on them. If they were not able to hold on to trunks and bushes it would be impossible for them to descend, and that makes the Iscariot grumble.

« And yet, I would like to go back again » replies Peter.

« You have queer tastes. This place is worse than the first and the second one. »

« But not worse than the place where our Master prepared for his mission of a preacher » remarks John objecting.

« Eh! everything seems beautiful to you… »

« Yes. Everything around my Master is beautiful and good and I love it. »

« Be careful, I also am in that everything… and also Pharisees, Sadducees, scribes and Herodians are often in it… Do you love them as well? »

« He loves them. »

« And what about you? ha! ha! are you doing what He does? But He is He, and you are you. I don't know whether you will always be able to love, as you grow pale whenever you hear someone speak of betrayal and death, or you see someone who wishes such things. »

« Which means that I am very imperfect, if I become upset out of fear for Him or out of anger towards culprits. »

« Ah! so anger also upsets you? I didn't think so… So, if one day you should by chance see someone really hurting the Master, what would you do? »

« Me?! Why ask me? The Law says: "Eye for eye, tooth for tooth". My hands would become tongs round his throat. »

« Oh! But He says that one must forgive! Has meditation improved you so much? »

« Leave me alone, you disturber! Why are you tempting and disturbing me? What have you got in your heart? I would like to see it… »

« The mystery of the bottom of the Dead Sea is not revealed to those prying into its waters. Those waters are like a sepulchral stone covering the rottenness they have received » says behind them Bartholomew, who is at the rear. The others are all ahead and have not heard, but Bartholomew did. And he intervenes in their conversation and his glance is an admonition.

« Oh! the wise Bartholomew! But you are not going to say that I am like the Dead Sea! »

« I was speaking to John, not to you. Come with me, son of Zebedee, I shall not upset you » and he takes John by the arm, as if he, an elderly man, were seeking the support of his young agile companion.

Judas is left last and makes an ugly gesture of wrath behind their backs. He seems to be swearing something to himself, or to be threatening…

« What did Judas mean? And what did you mean? » John asks elderly Nathanael.

« Forget about it, my dear friend. Instead let us think of what the Master explained to us during the past days. How well we understood Israel! »

« True. I don't understand why the world does not realise it! »

« We do not understand it fully either, John. We don't want to understand. See how difficult it is for us to accept His Messianic idea? »

« Yes, we believe Him blindly in everything, except that. As you are a learned man, can you tell me why? Since we find the rabbis to be dull-minded as compared with the Christ, why do we also fail to attain the perfect idea of a spiritual regality of the Messiah? »

« I have wondered many a time myself. Because I would like to arrive at what you call a perfect idea. And I think I can set my mind at rest by saying to myself that what opposes such acceptance in us, who are willing to follow Him not only materially and doctrinally, but also spiritually, are all the ages before us… and within us. Within us. See? Look eastwards, southwards, westwards. Every stone has a recollection and a name. Every stone, every fountain, every path, every village or castle, every town, every river, every mountain… what do they remind us of, and what do they shout to us? The promise of a Saviour. The mercy of God on His people. Like a drop of oil from a leaking goatskin, the little initial group, the nucleus of the future people of Israel spread with Abraham over the world, as far as remote Egypt, and then, more and more numerous, came back with Moses to the land of father Abraham, rich in greater and more certain promises and in the signs of God's paternity, established as a true People because it was provided with a Law, which is the holiest in existence. But what happened later? What happened to that summit which a little while ago was shining in the sun. Look at it now. It is enveloped in clouds that change its appearance. If we did not know that it is there and we were to identify it to direct our steps towards a safe road, would we be able to do so, disfigured as it is by thick clouds that look like rounded hills and mountain ridges? That is what happened to us. The Messiah is what God told our fathers, the patriarchs and the prophets. Immutable. But what we have added of our own, to… explain Him, according to our poor human wisdom, has created such a Messiah, such a false moral figure of the Messiah, that we can no longer recognise the true Messiah. And with the ages and generations behind us, we believe in the Messiah we have conceived, in the Avenger, in the very human King, and we are not able to conceive the Messiah and King as He really is, as thought of and wanted by God, although we say that we do believe in Him. That's the situation, my dear friend! »

« But shall we, at least we, never succeed in seeing, believing,

wanting the real Messiah? »

« Yes, we shall succeed. If we were not to succeed, He would not have chosen us. And if Mankind were not to benefit by the Messiah, the Most High would not have sent Him. »

« But He will redeem the Sin also without the help of Mankind! Through His own merit only. »

« My dear friend, the redemption from the original Sin would be a great one, but would not be complete. We have other sins in addition to the original one. And to be cleansed, they need the Redeemer and the faith of those who apply to Him as their Salvation. I think that Redemption will be active until the end of the world. The Christ will not be inactive for a moment, when He becomes the Redeemer and gives Mankind the Life that is in Him, just as a fountain unceasingly gives its water to those who are thirsty, one day after the other, one month after the other, one year after the other, one century after the other. Mankind will always be in need of Life. He cannot cease giving it to those who hope and believe in Him with wisdom and justice. »

« You are a learned man, Nathanael. I am a poor ignorant fellow. »

« You do by spiritual instinct what I do with difficulty by means of mental reflection: our transformation from Israelites into Christians. But you will reach your goal sooner because you can love more than you can reflect. Love carries you off and transforms you. »

« You are kind, Nathanael. If we were all like you! » says John with a deep sigh.

« Forget about it, John! Let us pray for Judas » says the elderly apostle, who has understood John's sighing…

« Oh! you are here as well! We were looking at you coming. What were you talking about so earnestly? » asks Thomas smiling.

« We were speaking of ancient Israel. Where is the Master? »

« He has gone ahead with His brothers and Isaac to see a sick shepherd. He told us to proceed along this road until we come to the one climbing up to the mountain. »

« Let us go, then. »

They are going down now on a path which is not so steep until they arrive at a real mule-track which goes up mount Nebo. There is a small group of houses in the wood. Farther down, almost in the valley, there are the white houses of a true and proper town on the slopes which are now almost flat. From the road where they are they can see people entering the town.

« Shall we wait for the man from Petra over there? » asks Peter.

« Yes, that is the town. Let us hope he has come. If so, tomorrow we will go back towards the Jordan. I don't know. I don't feel at all happy here » says Matthew.

« The Master had told us to go much farther on » says the Iscariot.

« Yes, but I hope He will convince Himself of the opposite. »

« But what are you afraid of? Of Herod? Of his bravoes? »

« Bravoes are not only at Herod's service. Oh! Here is the Master! The shepherds are numerous and happy. These have been conquered. They are nomads. They will go and spread the good news that the Messiah is on the Earth » says Matthew again.

Jesus joins them with a train of shepherds and herds.

« Let us go. We shall be just in time to arrive at the village. These men will give us hospitality, they are known. » Jesus is happy to be among simple people who are capable of believing in the Lord.

499. Parable of the Father Who Praises His Far-away Children. Cure of the Little Blind Children Fara and Tamar.

24th September 1946.

It is a beautiful autumn morning. Apart from the yellow-red leaves covering the ground and reminding one of the season, the grass is so green with some little flowers springing from the tufts revived by the autumn rains, the air moving among the branches partly already bare is so serene, that one is inclined to think it is the beginning of springtime, all the more so as perennials mixed with annuals bring a cheerful note with their little fresh emerald green leaves sprouting at the ends of little branches, near the bare branches of other plants, which thus seem to be putting forth fresh leaves. Sheep come out of folds and they go with the lambs born in autumn towards the grazing grounds bleating. The water of a fountain at the beginning of the village is shining like liquid diamonds in the sun kissing it, and when falling into the dark basin seems to emit multicoloured gleams against the walls blackened by age of a little house.

Jesus sits on a little wall bounding the road on one side, and waits. His apostles and the villagers are around him, while the shepherds, who do not wish to spread out too far, confined as they are by their flock, instead of climbing higher up, remain on both sides of the road towards the plain.

No one is coming at present on the road which from the valley climbs to mount Nebo.

« Will he be coming? » ask the apostles.

« Yes, he will. And we shall wait for him. I do not want to disappoint a dawning hope and destroy a future faith » replies Jesus.

« Are you not happy here? We have given you the best we had » says an old man who is warming himself in the sun.

« Happier than elsewhere, father. And your kindness will be rewarded by God » replies Jesus.

« Then speak to us a little more. Zealous Pharisees and proud

scribes come here at times. But they do not speak to us. It is fair. They are high up, separated from… everything, and sage. We… So are we to know nothing because our fate made us come into the world here? »

« In the House of My Father there are no separations or differences for those who believe in Him and practise His Law, which is the code of His will, that man may live righteously to obtain the eternal reward in His Kingdom.

Listen. A father had many children. Some had always lived close to Him, some, for various reasons, had been comparatively farther away from their father. However, as they were aware of their father's wishes, although they were far away, they were able to act as if he were present. Some more strove to serve their father with regard to the little which, more out of instinct than out of knowledge they knew pleased him, because they were farther away and from the first day of their birth had been brought up by servants who spoke different languages and had different customs. One day the father, who was aware that despite his instructions the servants had refrained from making his thoughts known to these remote children, because in their pride they considered them inferior and no longer loved, only because they did not live with their father, decided to gather all his offspring together. And he summoned them. Well, do you think that he judged them on the lines of human rights, granting the possession of his property only to those who had always been in his house, or who had not been so far as to be prevented from becoming acquainted with his orders and wishes? On the contrary, following a completely different line and taking into consideration the deeds of those who had been just for the sake of their father, whom they knew only by name, and had honoured him with all their actions, he called them near himself saying: "Your being just is doubly meritorious, because you were so only through your own will, without any help. Come and stand around me. You are quite entitled to it! The others have had me all the time and all their actions were guided by my advice and rewarded with my smiles. You had to act out of faith and love. Come, because your places are ready in my house and I do not make any difference between having always been in the house and having been away from it; but the difference is in the deeds accomplished by my children, near me or far from me".

That is the parable. And this is its explanation: the scribes or the Pharisees, living around the Temple, may not be in the House of the Lord on the eternal Day, and many, who are so far as to have only a scanty knowledge of the things of God, may be then in His Bosom. Because what gives the Kingdom is the will of man inclined to obey God, and not a mass of practices and science.

Do, therefore, what I explained to you yesterday. Do it without

excessive fear that paralyses, do it without calculating to avoid punishment. Do it therefore only for love of God Who created you to love you and to be loved by you. And you will have a place in the Father's House. »

« Oh! continue speaking to us! »

« What shall I say to you? »

« Yesterday You said that there are sacrifices more pleasing to God than those of lambs and rams, and also that there are leprosies more disgraceful than those of the body. What You said is not very clear to me » says a shepherd, who concludes: « Before a lamb is a year old and it is the most beautiful in the flock, without any stain or fault, do You realise how many sacrifices one must make and how many times one has to overcome the temptation of using it as the ram of the herd or selling it as such? Now if for a year one resists every temptation, one takes care of it and becomes fond of it, the gem of the herd, do You know how great is the sacrifice of immolating it without any profit and with deep sorrow? Is there a greater sacrifice to be offered to the Lord? »

« Man, I solemnly tell you that the sacrifice does not consist in the animal immolated, but in the effort made by you in keeping it to immolate it. I solemnly tell you that the day is about to come when, as the inspired word says, God will say: "I do not need the sacrifice of lambs and rams" and He will exact one only sacrifice and a perfect one. And from that moment every sacrifice will be spiritual. But ages ago it was said which sacrifice is preferred by the Lord. David exclaims weeping: "If You had wanted a sacrifice, I would have given it to You, but holocausts give You no pleasure. The sacrifice for God is a contrite spirit (and I add: obedient and loving, because one can offer a sacrifice of praises and joy and love, not only of expiation). The sacrifice for God is a contrite spirit; You, o God, will not scorn a contrite and humiliated heart". No, neither does your Father scorn a heart that has sinned and repented. So, how will He receive the sacrifice of a pure just heart that loves Him? That is the most agreeable sacrifice. The daily sacrifice of human will to the divine will as shown to you in the Law, in inspirations and in daily events. And likewise, the leprosy of the flesh is not the most disgraceful disease that excludes people from the presence of men and from places of prayer. But it is the leprosy of sin. It is true that it often passes unnoticed by men. But do you live for men or for the Lord? Does everything come to an end here or does it continue in the next life. You know. So be holy, that you may not be lepers in the eyes of God, Who sees the hearts of men and remain pure in spirit that you may live for ever. »

« And if one is a hardened sinner? »

« Let him not imitate Cain. Let him not imitate Adam and Eve. But let him run to the feet of God and ask for mercy with true repentance.

A sick or wounded man goes to a doctor to be cured. Let a sinner go to God to have forgiveness. I… »

« Are You here, Master? » shouts one who is coming up the road, all enveloped in a mantle among many other people.

Jesus turns round and looks at him.

« Don't You recognise me? I am rabbi Sadoc. We meet now and again. »

« The world is always small when God wants people to meet. We shall meet again, rabbi. In the meantime, peace be with you. »

The other does not reciprocate the salutation of peace, but he asks: « What are You doing here? »

« I have done what you are about to do. Is this mountain not a holy one for you? »

« You have said it. And I come with my disciples. But I am a scribe! »

« And I am a son of the Law. So I venerate Moses as you do. »

« That is a lie. You make void his word with Yours and You exact obedience to Yours, no longer to ours. »

« To yours, no. It is yours. But it is not necessary… »

« It is not necessary? How dreadful! »

« No, not any more than the many flowing zizith adorning your garment are necessary to protect you from the autumn air. It is the garment that protects you. So, of the many words that are taught I accept the holy and necessary ones, the Mosaic ones, and I neglect the others. »

« Samaritan You do not believe the prophets! »

« You do not respect the prophets either. If you did, you would not call Me Samaritan. »

« Leave Him alone, Sadoc. Do you want to speak to a demon? » says another pilgrim who has just arrived with other people. And looking round with hard eyes at the group surrounding Jesus, he sees Judas of Kerioth and greets him scoffingly.

An incident might take place, because the local people want to defend Jesus, but the man from Petra, followed by a servant, elbows his way through the crowd. Both he and the servant are holding a child each in their arms. « Let me pass. Lord, have I kept You waiting too long? »

« No, man. Come to Me. »

The people open out to let him pass. He comes to Jesus and kneels down laying on the ground a little girl whose head is enveloped in linen bandages. The servant imitates him laying down a boy with unseeing eyes.

« My children, Master Lord! » he says, and all the hope and grief of a father quiver in the short sentence.

« You have had much faith, man. Supposing I had disappointed you? Or you had not found Me? Or I said to you that I cannot cure

them? »

« I would not believe You. Neither would I believe the evidence of not seeing You. I would say that You had hidden Yourself to test my faith and I would look for You until I found You. »

« And what about the caravan and your profit? »

« Such things? What are they with respect to You Who can cure my children and give me firm faith in You? »

« Uncover the girl's face » orders Jesus.

« I keep it covered because the light hurts her very much. »

« It will only be a moment of pain » says Jesus.

But the little girl begins to weep desperately and does not want to be unbandaged.

« She is behaving like that because she thinks that You will torture her with fire as the doctors did » explains the father while struggling to remove the child's hands from the bandages.

« Oh! don't be afraid, little girl. What is your name? »

The girl is weeping and does not reply. Her father replies in her stead: « Tamar, from the place where she was born. And the boy Fara. »

« Don't weep, Tamar. I will not hurt you. Feel My hands. I am not holding anything. Come to My lap. In the meantime I will cure your brother and he will tell you what he felt. Come here, child. »

The servant pushes towards Jesus' knees the poor little blind fellow whose eyes have been ruined by trachoma. Jesus caresses his head and asks him: « Do you know who I am? »

« Jesus the Nazarene, the Rabbi of Israel, the Son of God. »

« Will you believe in Me? »

« Yes, I will. »

Jesus lays His hand on the boy's eyes covering more than half of his face. He says: « I want it! And may the light of his eyes open the way to the light of Faith. » And He removes His hand.

The boy utters a cry taking his hands to his eyes, and then says: « Father! I can see! » But he does not run to his father. In his boyish spontaneity he clings to Jesus' neck and kisses His cheeks and remains thus, embracing His neck, with his little head sheltered on Jesus' shoulder, to get his eyes accustomed again to sunshine.

The crowds shout at the miracle while the father would like to remove the boy from Jesus' neck.

« Leave him. He is not disturbing Me. Only, Fara, tell your sister what I have done to you. »

« A caress, Tamar. It felt like mummy's hand. Oh! be cured as well and we shall play again! »

The girl, still somewhat reluctant, has herself placed on the knees of Jesus, Who would like to cure her without even touching her bandages. But the scribes and their companions shout: « It's a trick. The girl can see. It's a plot to take advantage of your confidence

in Him, o inhabitants of this place. »

« My daughter is sick. I… »

« Never mind! Now, Tamar, be good and let Me remove your bandages. »

The girl, who is now convinced, agrees. What a sight when the last linen bandage is removed! Two red, scabby, swollen sores are in the place of her eyes, and tears and pus run down from them. The crowds yell with terror and pity while the little girl takes her hands to her face to protect herself from the light which must make her suffer terribly; two red recent burns appear on her temples.

Jesus removes her little hands and with a light touch He lays His hand on such ruin saying: « Father, Who created light for the joy of the living, and gave eyes even to midges, grant light to this creature of Yours that she may see You and believe in You and from the light of the Earth, she may enter, through Faith, the light of Your Kingdom. » He removes His hand…

« Oh! » they all shout.

There are no more sores. But the girl still keeps her eyes closed.

« Open them, Tamar. Be not afraid. The light will not hurt you. »

The girl obeys rather timorously and opens her eyelids showing two lively dark eyes.

« Father! I can see you! » and she also relaxes on Jesus' shoulder to become slowly accustomed to the light.

The crowds are rejoicing while the man from Petra throws himself at Jesus' feet weeping for joy.

« Your faith has received its reward. From now on may your gratitude lead your faith in the Man to the highest sphere: to the faith in the true God. Stand up and let us go. »

And Jesus puts down the girl who smiles happily and He becomes detached from the boy when He stands up. He caresses them once again and He would like to squeeze through the crowd thronging to see the cured eyes.

« You also ought to ask to have your veiled eyes cured » says a disciple to an old man led by the hand as his eyes are so dimmed.

« Me?! Me?! I don't want light from a demon. On the contrary! I shout to You, eternal God! Listen to me. To me! Complete darkness to me! That I may not see the face of the demon, of that demon, of that impious usurper, blasphemer, deicide! May shadows fall upon my eyes for ever. Darkness, darkness, that I may never see Him! » It is he who seems to be a demon! In his paroxysm he strikes his eye-sockets as if he wanted his eyes to burst.

« Be not afraid. You will not see Me. Darkness does not want the Light and the Light does not impose itself on those who reject it. I am going, old man. You will not see Me again on the Earth. But you will see Me just the same, elsewhere. »

And Jesus is so depressed that the gait typical of very tall people - slightly inclined forward - is more outstanding as He sets out downhill. He is so dejected that He already seems the Condemned man descending the Moriah under the load of the Cross… And the shouts of His enemies, incited by the old madman, are very much like the shouts of the crowds in Jerusalem on Good Friday.

The man from Petra, mortified, with the little girl weeping out of fear in his arms, whispers: « Because of me, Lord! Because of me! You have done so much good to me! But I… to You! I have something for You in the tent on the camel. But what is it compared to the insults which I have brought about? I am ashamed that I came near You… »

« No, man. That is My bitter daily bread. And you the honey sweetening it. The bread is always more than the honey. But a drop of honey is sufficient to make much bread sweet. »

« You are good… But at least tell me: what shall I do to dress those wounds? »

« Keep faith in Me, for the time being as best you can. Before long… Yes, My disciples will come as far as Petra and farther. Then follow their doctrine because I shall speak through them. And for the time being speak to those of Petra of what I did for you, so that when those surrounding Me and others will come in My Name, this Name of Mine is not unknown to them. »

At the end of the descent, on the Roman road, there are three camels. One with just the saddle, the others with baldachins. A servant is watching them.

The man goes to the tent and takes some parcels from it: « Here » he says offering them to Jesus. « They will be useful to You. Do not thank me. It is I who have to bless You for what You have given to me. If You can do it for uncircumcised people, bless me and my children, Lord! » and he kneels down with the children. The servants imitate him.

Jesus stretches out His hands praying in a low voice looking fixedly at the sky.

« Go. Be just and you will find God on your way and you will follow Him without ever losing Him. Goodbye, Tamar! Goodbye, Fara! » He caresses them before each of them climbs on a camel with the servants.

The animals stand up at the cries of the camel-drivers and they turn trotting southwards. Two little brown hands stretch out from the tents and two shrill voices say: « Goodbye, Lord Jesus! Goodbye, father! »

The man is about to mount, too. He bends to the ground and kisses Jesus' garment, he then mounts and departs northwards.

« And now let us go » says Jesus setting out northwards as well.

« What? Are You no longer going where You wanted to go? » they

ask Him.

« No. We cannot go any longer! The voices of the world were right! Because the world is shrewd and is aware of the works of the demon We shall go to Jericho »

How sad is Jesus! They all follow Him, laden with the parcels given by the man, dejected and speechless

500. Divine and Diabolical Possessions.

25th September 1946.

The Bethabara ford has just been crossed. Across the blue river which is quite rich in water as it is nourished by the affluents replenished by the autumn rains, one can see the other bank, the eastern one, with many people gesticulating. On the western bank, instead, where Jesus is with His apostles, there is only one shepherd and a herd grazing the green grass on the bank.

Peter throws himself on the remains of a little wall which is there, without even drying his legs, still wet after wading. Because it is true that in this season they use boats, but to avoid running them aground where the water is shallow, they make use of them only where the water is deeper and stop to disembark the passengers where the keel rubs against submerged herbs. Thus passengers are compelled to walk for a few steps in the water.

« What is the matter with you? Are you not feeling well? »

« No. But I cannot stand this any more. On mount Nebo violence, and before that at Heshbon, and previously at Jerusalem and at Capernaum, after mount Nebo at Callirhoe, and now at Bethabara… Oh!… » he bends his head holding it with his hands and weeps…

« Don't lose heart, Simon. Don't deprive Me of your companion's courage and of yours! » Jesus says to him approaching him and laying His hand on the apostle's heavy grey mantle.

« I cannot stand that! I cannot see You ill-treated thus! If I reacted… perhaps I could. But… having to restrain myself… and hear their insults, and see You suffering, as if I were a powerless baby… oh! it breaks my heart and I feel worn out… How can one bear to see Him thus!? He seems to be ill, to be dying of marshfever… He looks like a chased culprit who cannot find a place where to stop and have a morsel of food or a drop of water, or find a stone on which to rest his head! That hyena on mount Nebo! Those snakes at Callirhoe! That madman who is still over there! (and he points at the other bank). Less of a demon the one from Callirhoe, although You say that only the second one was possessed by Beelzebub! I am afraid of possessed people, I think that if Satan seized them thus, they must have been very bad. But… man may fall without being completely willing to do so. Those instead

who without being possessed behave as they do, with their reason completely free!… Oh! will You never subdue them, considering that You do not want to punish them? And they… will defeat You… » And the faithful apostle, whose tears had stopped during his outburst of anger, resumes weeping bitterly…

« My dear Peter, and do you think that they are not possessed? Do you think that to be possessed one must be like the man from Callirhoe or like other people we have come across? Do you think that obsession is displayed only by unbecoming shouts, by bounds, by fury, by mania for living in dens, by stubborn silence, by impediments in limbs, by benumbed minds, so that the person possessed speaks and acts unconsciously? No. There are also more subtle and powerful obsessions, nay possessions, and they are the most dangerous ones because they do not hinder or weaken reason, so that it may not accomplish good deeds, but they develop it, nay: they expand it so that it may be powerful in serving him who possesses it. When God takes possession of an intellect and makes use of it for His service, He instils into it, in the hours in which it is at God's service, a supernatural intelligence which greatly increases the natural intelligence of the subject. Do you think, for instance, that Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, and the other prophets, if they had had to read and explain those prophecies, as written by others, would not have found the indecipherable obscurities that present-day people find? And yet, I tell you, they understood them perfectly while receiving them. Look, Simon. Let us take this flower which has grown here at your feet. What can you see in the shade enveloping its calyx? Nothing. You can see a deep calyx and a little mouth and nothing else. Now look at it while I pick it and I put it here in the rays of sunlight. What do you see? »

« I see some pistils, some pollen, and a little crown of down which looks like cilia around the pistils and a tiny strip, all beetle-browed, adorning the large petal and the two small ones and I see a tiny drop of dew at the bottom of the calyx… and oh! A midge has gone down into it, to drink, and has become entangled in the beetle-browed down and cannot free itself So! Let me have a better look. Oh! The down is sticky like honey I see! God made it thus, so that the plant may feed on it, or birds may be nourished eating the flies, or the air may be purified… How wonderful! »

« But without the strong sunshine you would not have seen anything. »

« Eh! no! »

« The same happens in the case of a divine possession. Man, who of his own puts only the good will to love his God wholly, to give himself up to His will, to practise virtues and control passions, T's absorbed in God, and in the Light that is God, in the Wisdom that is God he sees and understands everything. Later, when the absolute

action comes to an end, a state takes over in the creature, whereby what has been received is transformed into a rule of life and sanctification, but becomes obscure, or rather, what previously seemed clear becomes crepuscular. The demon, a perpetual mimic of God, causes a similar effect, although limited because God only is infinite, in the mental obsession of those who are possessed because they gave themselves spontaneously to him in order to be triumphant, and he grants them a superior intelligence, devoted exclusively to evil, to harming, to offending God and man. But as the satanic action finds the soul consenting, it is continuous and thus leads it by degrees to a complete knowledge of Evil. They are the worst possessions. Nothing appears outwardly and consequently such possessed people are not avoided. But they exist. As I have often told you, the Son of man will be struck by people possessed that way. »

« But could God not strike Hell? » asks Philip.

« He could. He is the stronger. »

« And why does He not do so to defend You? »

« The reasons of God are known in Heaven. Let us go. And do not lose heart. »

The shepherd, who has been listening without pretending to do so, asks: « Have You a place where to go? Are You expected? »

« No, man. I should go beyond Jericho. But no one is expecting Me. »

« Are You very tired, Rabbi? »

« Yes, I am tired. They would not give us hospitality or allow us to stop as from mount Nebo. »

« Well… I wanted to tell You… I come from near Beth-hoglah, the ancient… My father is blind and I cannot go too far as I do not want to leave him by himself for months. But my heart suffers because of that and so does the herd. If You want… I would give You hospitality. It is not far. The old man believes so much in You. Joseph, Joseph's son, Your disciple, knows. »

« Let us go. »

The man does not wait to be told twice. He gathers the herd and sets it going towards the village, which must be north-west of the place where they are now. Jesus follows the herd with His disciples.

« Master » says the Iscariot after some time « Beth-hoglah will not have anyone who can afford to buy the gifts of that man… »

« We shall sell them when we go to Jericho to see Nike. »

« The fact is… that this man is poor and we will have to requite him, but I have not a penny left. »

« We have food, and plenty of it. Also for some beggars. We need nothing else for the time being. »

« As You wish. But it would have been better if You had sent me

ahead. I could have… »

« It is not necessary. »

« Master, that is lack of trust! Why don't You send us as You did previously, by twos? »

« Because I love you and I take care of your welfare. »

« It is not right to keep us unknown like this. People will think that… we are not worthy, not able… Once You used to let us go, we preached, we worked miracles, we were known… »

« Do you regret that you no longer do so? Did it do you any good to go without Me? You are the only one to complain that you do not go by yourself… Judas!… »

« Master, You know whether I love You! » says Judas resolutely.

« I know. And I keep you with Me that your spirit may not become corrupted. You are the only one who gathers and hands out, sells or barters on behalf of the poor. That is enough. Even too much. Look at your companions, not one of them asks for what you ask. »

« But You allowed the disciples… Such difference is unfair. »

« Judas, you are the only one to say that I am unjust… But I forgive you. Go on and send Andrew to Me. »

And Jesus slackens His pace to wait for Andrew and speak to him privately. I do not know what He says to him. I see Andrew smile gently and bend to kiss the hands of the Master and then go on.

Jesus remains alone, behind them all… and He proceeds with bowed head, wiping His face with the hem of His mantle as if He were perspiring. But the drops streaming down His emaciated pale cheeks are tears, not beads of perspiration.

Jesus says: « You will put here the vision of 3rd October 1944: "The Wife of the Sadducean Necromancer". »

501. The Wife of the Sadducean Necromancer.

3rd October 1944.

Jesus is still travelling tirelessly around Palestine. The river is still on His right hand side and He is proceeding in the same direction as the beautiful blue water, which shines where it is kissed by the sun, and is green-blue near the banks, where the shade of the trees is reflected with its deep green hues.

Jesus is in the middle of His disciples. I hear Bartholomew ask Him: « Are we really going to Jericho? Are You not afraid of an ambush? »

« No, I am not. I arrived in Jerusalem for Passover along a different road and they are disappointed, as they do not know where to get hold of Me without attracting the attention of the crowds too

much. Believe Me, Bartholomew, there is less danger for Me in a thickly populated town than along remote paths. The crowds are good and sincere. But they are also impulsive. And they would rebel if I were captured when I am among them to evangelize and cure people. Snakes work in solitude and darkness. And then… I still have many days to work… The… the hour of the Demon will come and you will lose Me. But you will find Me later. Believe that. And remember to believe it, when events will really seem to be giving Me the lie. »

The apostles sigh worriedly and look at Him lovingly and pitifully and John utters a groan: « No! » while Peter embraces Him with his short strong arms as if to defend Him, saying: « O my Lord and Master! » He does not say anything else, but those few words are so meaningful.

« It is so, My dear friends. That is why I came. Be strong. You can see how I proceed unhesitatingly towards My goal, like one who goes towards the sun smiling at it and being kissed by it. My Sacrifice will be a sun for the world. The light of Grace will descend into hearts, the peace with God will make them productive, the merits of My martyrdom will make men capable of earning Heaven. And what do I want but that? To put your hands into the hands of the Eternal, your Father and Mine and say: "Here: I have brought these children back to You. Look, Father, they are pure. They can come back to You". And see you clasped in His bosom and say: "Love one another at last, because the One and the others are anxious for that and you suffered bitterly for not having been able to love one another". That is My joy. And every day that brings Me closer to the fulfilment of that return, of that forgiveness, of that union, increases My anxiety to consummate the holocaust to give you God and His Kingdom. »

Jesus is solemn, almost ecstatic while saying so. He is walking upright in His blue tunic and darker mantle, bareheaded in this cool hour of the morning, and He seems to be smiling at I wonder which vision, which His eyes can see against the clear blue sky. The sun that kisses His left cheek makes His eyes shine even more brightly and causes His golden hair to sparkle as it is moved by a light breeze and by His step. It stresses the red of His lips open to a smile and seem to inflame all His face with a joy, which actually comes from the inside of His adorable Heart, burning with love for us.

« Master, may I say a word to You? » asks Thomas.

« Which? »

« The other day You said that the Redeemer, You, will have a traitor. How can a man betray You, the Son of God? »

« A man, in fact, would not be able to betray the Son of God, God like His Father. But it will not be a man. It will be a demon in the

body of a man. The most possessed, the most obsessed man. Mary of Magdala had seven demons and the demoniac of a few days ago was dominated by Beelzebub. But in My traitor there will be Beelzebub and all his demoniac court… Oh! Hell will really be in that heart to give him the boldness to sell the Son of God to His enemies, just as a lamb is sold to the butcher! »

« Master, is that man already possessed by Satan now? »

« No, Judas. But he is leaning towards Satan and to lean towards Satan means putting oneself in the condition of falling into him » (Jesus is speaking to the Iscariot).

« And why does he not come to You to be cured of his inclination? Does he know he has such inclination or does he not know? »

« If he did not know he would not be guilty, whereas he is, because he knows that he tends to evil and that he does not persist in his decision to emerge from it. If he persisted, he would come to Me… but he does not come… Poison penetrates and My closeness does not cleanse him because he does not want it, he avoids it… Your error, o men. You fly from Me when you need Me most » (Jesus has replied to Andrew).

« But has he ever come to You? Do You know him? And do we know him? »

« Matthew, I know men even before they know Me. And you know that and your companions know. I called you because I knew you. »

« But do we know him? » asks Matthew insisting.

« And is it possible for you not to know those who come to your Master? You are My friends and share food, rest and fatigue with Me. I have even opened My house to you, the house of My holy Mother. I take you there so that the air one breathes in it may make you capable of understanding Heaven with its voices and orders. I take you to it as a doctor takes his patients, as soon as they recover from a series of diseases, to healthy springs which may fortify them overcoming the remains of the diseases which may become harmful again. So you know everyone coming to Me. »

« In which town did You meet him? »

« Peter, Peter! »

« It's true, Master, I am worse than a gossipy woman. Forgive me. But it is love, You know… »

« Yes, I know, and that is why I tell you that your fault does not disgust Me. But get rid of it. »

« Yes, my Lord. »

The path narrows, limited by a row of trees and a small ditch, and the group stretches out lengthwise. Jesus is speaking to the Iscariot, to whom He gives instructions for expenses and alms. All the others are behind, in twos. In the rear, there is Peter, all alone. He is thoughtful. He is walking with his head bowed, so engrossed

in thought that he does not realise that he has been outdistanced by the others.

« Eh, you! man » a man on horseback shouts to him. « Are you with the Nazarene? »

« Yes, why? »

« Are you going to Jericho? »

« Are you anxious to know? I don't know. I follow the Master and I don't ask questions. Wherever He goes, all is well done. The road is the Jericho one, but we might go back to the Decapolis. Who knows? If you want more information, the Master is over there. »

The man spurs his horse and Peter makes a strange grimace behind his back and mumbles: « I don't trust you, my handsome man. You are a lot of dogs, all of you. I don't want to be the traitor. I swear to myself: "This mouth of mine shall be sealed". There you are » and he makes a sign on his lips as if he were locking them.

The man on horseback has joined Jesus. He is speaking to Him and that gives Peter the opportunity to join the others.

When the man departs, he waves his hand to the Iscariot. Nobody notices it, except Peter, who is at the rear of the group. And he does not appear to be approving of the greeting. He takes Judas by the sleeve and asks him: « Who is he? Do you know him? How come? »

« By sight. He is a rich man of Jerusalem. »

« You have friends in the upper classes! Well… providing it is all right. Tell me: is he the fox-faced man who tells you so many things?… »

« Which things? »

« Well! the ones you say you know about the Master! »

« Me? »

« Yes, You. Don't you remember that stormy evening? At the time of the spate? »

« Ah! No!… But are you still thinking of words spoken in a moment of ill humour? »

« I think of everything that may hurt Jesus: things, people, friends, enemies… And I am always ready to keep the promises I make to whoever wants to harm Jesus. Goodbye. »

Judas looks at him in a strange way, while he goes away. There is amazement, sorrow, anger and I would say something else: hatred.

Peter joins Jesus and calls Him.

« Oh! Peter! Come! » Jesus lays His arm on Peter's shoulder.

« Who was that hispid Judaean? »

« Hispid, Peter? He was smooth and scented! »

« He had a hispid conscience. Don't trust him, Jesus. »

« I told you that My time has not yet come. And when it comes no mistrust will save Me… if I wanted to be saved. Stones also would

shout and would form a chain, if I wanted to save Myself. »

« It may be… But don't trust… Master? »

« Peter? What is the matter? »

« Master… I have something to tell You and a burden in my heart. »

« A thing? A burden? »

« Yes. The burden is a sin. The thing an advice. »

« Start from the sin. »

« Master… I… I hate… I am disgusted, yes, if I do not hate because You do not want us to hate, I am disgusted at one of us. I seem to be near a den from which the stench of snakes in heat comes out… and I would not like any of them to come out to injure You. That man is a mass of snakes and he himself is in heat with the demon. »

« How do you infer that? »

« Well!… I don't know. I am coarse and ignorant, but I am not stupid. I am accustomed to reading winds and clouds… and now I have eyes to read also hearts. Jesus… I am afraid. »

« Do not judge, Peter. And do not suspect. Suspicion creates chimeras. And one sees what is not there. »

« May eternal God grant that there is nothing. But I am not sure. »

« Who is it, Peter? »

« Judas of Kerioth. He boasts of having important friends and even a short time ago that ugly face greeted him as one greets a well known person. He did not have such friends previously. »

« Judas is the one who receives and hands out money. He has the opportunity to approach rich people. He is clever. »

« Yes, he is clever… Master, tell me the truth, do You not suspect? »

« Peter, you are so dear to Me because of your heart. But I want you to be perfect. Who does not obey is not perfect. I said to you: do not judge and do not suspect. »

« But You are not telling me… »

« We shall soon be near Jericho and we shall stop to wait for a woman who cannot receive us in her house… »

« Why? Is she a sinner? »

« No. She is a poor wretch. The man on horseback who worried you so much came to tell Me to wait for her. And I will wait for her although I know I can do nothing for her. And do you know who put her and the horseman on My tracks? Judas. You can see that his acquaintance with that Judaean is an honest one. »

Peter lowers his head and becomes silent and embarrassed. Perhaps he is not yet convinced and is still curious, but he is silent.

Jesus stops outside the town walls and tired as He is, He sits down in the shadow of a group of trees, which give shade to a fountain, near which there are quadrupeds watering. The disciples also sit down waiting. It cannot be an important district of the town because

apart from these horses and donkeys, obviously of travelling merchants, there are no people.

A woman comes forward, all enveloped in a large dark mantle and with her face well covered. Her thick dark veil conceals half of her face. The horseman seen previously, but now on foot, and three men, sumptuously dressed, are with her.

« We greet You, Master. »

« Peace be with you. »

« This is the woman. Listen to her and satisfy her request. »

« If I can. »

« You can do everything. »

« Do you, a Sadducee, think so? » The Sadducee is the horseman.

« I believe in what I see. »

« And have you seen that I can? »

« Yes, I have. »

« And do you know why I can? » There is silence. « May I know why you think that I can? » There is silence.

Jesus no longer minds him or the others. He speaks to the woman: « What do you want? »

« Master… Master… »

« Speak, without fear. »

The woman looks askance at her companions who interpret her glance their way.

« The woman's husband is ill and she asks you to cure him. He is an influential person, at Herod's court. You had better satisfy her. »

« I will satisfy her if I can, not because he is influential, but because she is unhappy. I have already said so. What is the matter with your husband? Why did he not come? And why do you not want Me to go to him? »

Further silence and further look askance.

« Do you wish to speak to me without witnesses? Come. » They move a few steps aside. « Speak. »

« Master… I believe in You. I believe so much that I am sure that You know everything about him, me and our wretched lives… But he does not believe… But he hates You… But he… »

« But he cannot be cured because he has no faith. Not only he has no faith in Me, but not even in the true God. »

« Ah! You are aware! » The woman is weeping desperately. « My house is a hell! A hell! You free possessed people. So You know what the demon is. But do You know this subtle, intelligent, false and learned demon? Do you know to what perversion he leads one? To what sins? Do You know the ruin he causes around himself? My house? Is it a house? No. It is the threshold of hell. My husband? Is he my husband? He is now ill and does not bother about me. But also when he was strong and eager for love, was it a man that embraced

me, held me and had me? No! I was in the coils of a demon, I smelt the breath and felt the viscid body of a demon. I loved him so much and I love him. I am his wife and he took my virginity when I was little more than a girl: I was only fourteen years old. But also when I remembered that first hour and with it I recollected the unsullied sensations of the first embrace that made me a woman, I, at first with the nobler part of myself then with my flesh and blood, I reacted with horror remembering that he is a filthy necromancer. I had the impression that not my man but the dead people he evoked were on me to satisfy themselves… And even now, when I look at him, dying and still immersed in that magic, I am horrified. I do not see him… I see Satan. Oh! How grievous it is! Not even in death I shall be with him, because the Law forbids it. Save him, Master. I ask You to cure him to give him time to recover. » The woman is weeping distressingly.

« Poor woman! I cannot cure him. »

« Why, Lord? »

« Because he does not want it. »

« Yes. He is afraid of death. Of course he wants. »

« He does not want. He is not insane, he is not a man possessed unaware of his state, who does not ask to be freed because he cannot think freely. He is not a man with inhibited will. He is one who wants to be what he is. He knows that what he does is forbidden. He is aware that he is cursed by the God of Israel. But he persists. Even if I cured him, and I would begin from his soul, he would revert to his satanic enjoyment. His will is corrupted. He is a rebel. I cannot. »

The woman weeps more loudly. The men who brought her, come near. « Are You not satisfying her, Master? »

« I cannot. »

« Didn't I tell you? Why? »

« You, a Sadducee, are asking Me why? I refer you to the book of Kings. Read what Samuel said to Saul and what Elijah said to Ahaziah. The spirit of the prophet reproaches the king for disturbing him by evoking him from the reign of the dead. It is forbidden to do it. Read Leviticus, if you no longer remember the word of God, Creator and Lord of everything that exists, the Guardian of life and of the dead. The dead and the living are in the hands of God and you are not allowed to snatch them from them, through vain curiosity, or sacrilegious violence, or cursed incredulity. What do you want to know? Whether there is an eternal future? And you say that you believe in God. If God exists, He will certainly have a court. And what court will it be, but an eternal one like Himself, consisting of eternal spirits? If you say that you believe in God, why do you not believe in His word? Does His word not say: "You shall not practise divination, you shall not observe

dreams"? Does it not say: "If a man has recourse to magicians and diviners and will fornicate with them, I shall set My face against that man and outlaw him from his people"? Does it not say: "Do not cast gods of metal"? And what are you? Samaritans and lost people or are you children of Israel? And what are you: fools or men capable of reasoning? And if by reasoning you deny the immortality of souls, why do you evoke the dead? If the incorporeal parts that animate man are not immortal, what remains of man after death? Rottenness and bones, dry bones emerging from a wriggling mass of worms. And if you do not believe in God, and you have recourse to idols and signs to be cured and obtain money, responses, as this man did, whose health you are asking to be restored, why do you cast gods and believe that they can tell you words, which are more truthful, holier and more divine than the words God speaks to you? I will now give you the same reply that Elijah gave Ahaziah: "Since you sent messengers to consult Beelzebub, the god of Ekron, as if there were no God in Israel to be consulted, the bed you have got into you will not get out of, and you are certainly going to die in your sin". »

« You are always the one who insults and attacks us. I am pointing it out to You. We come to You to… »

« To lure Me into a trap. But I read your hearts. Masks off, you Herodians sold to the enemy of Israel! Masks off, you false cruel Pharisees! Masks off, you Sadducees, true Samaritans! Masks off, you scribes whose words contrast with facts! Masks off, all of you, transgressors of the Law of God, enemies of the Truth, concubines of Evil! Down with you, desecrators of the House of God! Down with you, instigators of weak consciences! Down with you, jackals who scent the victim in the wind that has blown past it and who follow that track and lie in wait, awaiting the right moment to kill, and you lick your lips foretasting the savour of blood and dreaming of that moment!… O swindlers and fornicators who sell for less than a handful of lentils your primogeniture among peoples and are no longer blessed, because other peoples will wear the fleece of the Lamb of God, and true Christs will appear to the eyes of the Most High, Who smelling the fragrance of His Christ emanate from them, will say: "Here is the scent of My Son! Like the scent of a flowery field blessed by God. Upon you the dew of Heaven: Grace. In you the opulence of the Earth: the fruit of My Blood. In you abundance of wheat and wine: My Body and My Blood that I will give for the lives of men and in remembrance of Me. Let peoples serve you, let nations bow to you, because where is the sign of My Lamb, there is Heaven. And the Earth is subject to Heaven. Be the masters of your brothers, because the followers of My Christ will be the kings of the spirit, as they will possess the Light, to which Light the others will turn their eyes hoping in its

help. Let the children of your mother: the Earth, bow to you. Yes, all the children of the Earth will stoop one day to My Sign. Cursed be he who curses you and blessed who blesses you, because blessings and maledictions given to you, come to Me, your Father and God". That is what He will say, o fornicators who fornicate with Satan and his false doctrines, whilst you could have the true faith as the beloved spouse of your souls. That is what He will say, o murderers. Murderers of consciences and murderers of bodies. Here are some of your victims. But if two hearts have been murdered, there is a Body that will be in your possession only for the time of Jonah. Then, joined to Its immortal Essence, It will judge you. »

Jesus is terrible in this severe reproof. Terrible' I think that He will be more or less like that on Doomsday.

« And where are those murdered people? You are talking nonsense! You are a concubine of Beelzebub. You fornicate with him and work miracles in his name. You cannot work one in our case because we are friends of God. »

« Satan does not drive himself out, I expel demons. So in whose name do I do it? » Silence. « Answer My question! »

« It is not worth while bothering with this demoniac. I warned you. You did not believe me. Let Him tell you. Answer, You mad Nazarene. Do You know the sciemanflorasc? »

« I do not need it! »

« Did you hear that? Another question. Have You been to Egypt? »

« Yes, I have. »

« See? Who is the necromancer, the demon? How horrible! Come, woman. Your husband is a saint as compared to Him. Come!… You will have to be purified. You have touched Satan!… » And they go away dragging the woman who is weeping with clear gestures of aversion.

Jesus, with His folded arms, watches them with flashing eyes.

« Master… Master… » The apostles are terrorised both by Jesus' vehemence and by the Judaeans' words.

Peter asks, and he even bends down while speaking: « What did they mean with those last questions? What is that thing? »

« What? The sciemanflorasc? » (1)

« Yes. What is it? »

« Forget about it. They are mixing the Truth with Falsehood, God with Satan, and in their satanic pride they think that God, to yield to the wishes of men, has to be implored by means of His

(1) This word, which is probably spelt incorrectly, is unknown even to experts, who have been consulted on the matter. From its context it would appear to be an expression used for incantations by people practising magic.

Tetragrammaton. The Son speaks the true language with His Father and by means of it, through the reciprocal love of Father and Son, miracles are performed. »

« But why did he ask You whether You have been to Egypt? »

« Because Evil makes use of the most harmless things to make charges against those it wants to strike. My stay when a child in Egypt will be among the counts of indictment in their hour of revenge. You, and those who come after you, must know that with shrewd Satan and his faithful servants double astuteness is required. That is why I said: "Be as cunning as snakes besides being as simple as doves", so as to put only the minimum of weapons in the hands of the demons. And even so, it is of no avail. Let us go. »

« Where, Master? To Jericho? »

« No. We shall take a boat and go back to the Decapolis again. We shall go up the Jordan as far as Enon and then we shall land. On the shores of Gennesaret we shall take another boat and sail to Tiberias, and thence to Cana and Nazareth. I am in need of My Mother, and you need Her, too. What the Christ does not do with His word, Mary does with Her silence. What My power does not do, Her purity does. Oh! My Mother! »

« Are You weeping, Master? Are You weeping? Oh! no! We will defend You! We love You! »

« I am not weeping and I am not afraid because of those who hate Me. I am weeping because hearts are harder than jasper and I can do nothing for many of them. Come, My friends. »

They go down to the bank and they go up the river in a boat. It all ends thus.

"Jesus says:

« You and he who guides you ought to meditate for a long time on My reply to Peter.

People of this world - not exclusively laymen - deny the supernatural, then, in the presence of manifestations of God, they are ready to call into question not the supernatural, but the occult. They mix up one thing with the other. Now listen: supernatural is what comes from God. Occult is what comes from an extraterrestrial source, but has no root in God.

I solemnly tell you that spirits can come to you. How? In two ways. By God's command or by man's violence. Angels and blessed souls and spirits that are already in the light of God, come by God's command. By man's violence those spirits can come over whom also a man has control, as they are immersed in regions lower than the human ones, in which there is still a remembrance of Grace, although it is not active Grace. The former come spontaneously, obeying one order only: Mine. And they bring the truth that I want you to know. The latter come through a complex of

joined powers. The power of an idolatrous man joined to the powers of Satan-idol. Can they give you the truth? No. Never. Absolutely never. Can a formula, even if taught by Satan, bend God to man's will? No. God always comes spontaneously. A prayer can join you to Him, not a magic formula.

And if someone should object saying: "Samuel appeared to Saul", I say: "Not by deed of the sorceress. But by My will in order to rouse the king, rebellious to My Law". Some people may say: "And what about the prophets?". The prophets speak through knowledge of the Truth which is infused into them directly or through angelic ministry. Others may object: "And what about the writing hand at Belshazzar's banquet?". Let those read Daniel's reply: "… you also have defied the Lord of Heaven… praising gods of silver, bronze, iron, gold, wood, stone, Which cannot either see, hear or understand, but you have not given glory to the God Who holds your breath and every movement of yours in His hands. That is why He has sent the finger (which was sent spontaneously, while you, a foolish king and a foolish man, were not thinking about it and were intent on filling your stomach and swelling with pride) the finger of that hand that wrote what is over there".

Yes. At times God admonishes you by means of manifestations that you call "mediumistic", which in fact are the compassion of a Love that wants to save you. But you must not wish to create them yourselves. Those created by you are never sincere. They are never useful. They never bring any good. Do not become enslaved to what ruins you. Do not say and believe that you are more intelligent than the humble people, who submit to the Truth which has been deposited for ages in My Church, only because you are proud people seeking, through disobedience, permission for your illicit instincts. Go back and remain in the Discipline, which is centuries old. From Moses to Christ, from Christ to you, from you to the last day it is that one, and no other one.

Is your science really science? No. Science is in Me and in My doctrine and man's wisdom is in obeying Me. Curiosity without danger? No. Contagion of which later you suffer the consequences. Do away with Satan, if you want to have Christ. I am the Good One. But I will not cohabit with the Spirit of Evil. Either I or he. Make your choice.

O My "mouthpiece": say this to whom it is to be said. It is the last voice that will go to them. And you and he who guides you must be prudent. Proofs become counter-proofs in the hands of the Enemy and of the enemies of My friends. Be careful! Go with My peace. »

502. Death of Ananias.

26th September 1946.

« Get up and let us go. Let us go back to the river and look for a boat. Peter, go with James and get a boat that will take us near Bethabara. We shall stay for a day at Solomon's and then… »

« But were we not to go to Nazareth? »

« No. I made up My mind during the night. I am sorry for you. But I must go back. »

« I am happy! » exclaims Marjiam. « I shall be staying longer with You! »

« Yes, although, My poor child, you see very sad days with Me! »

« So it is a good thing that I love to be with You. To love You. That is all I want. I do not ask for anything else. »

Jesus kisses his forehead.

« And are we passing through Bethabara again? » asks Matthew.

« No. We shall cross the river in the boat of some fisherman. »

Peter comes back with James. « No boats, Master, until this evening… And… must I tell You? »

« Tell Me. »

« Some people must have passed through here… And they must have paid well or uttered strong threats… I don't think that even this evening You will find a boat… They are merciless… » says Peter with a sigh.

« It does not matter. Let us set forth… and the Lord will help us. »

The weather is bad, it is raining. The road is muddy, along the embankment the dew of the night, plentiful near the river, increases the dampness of the rain. But they proceed just the same on the rise in the ground skirting the road, as it is not so muddy and is less exposed to the droplets of the very fine but persisting rain, being somewhat protected by a row of poplars, except when a breath of wind causes all the drops of water retained by the branches to fall suddenly.

« Eh! The rainy season has come! » says Thomas philosophically lifting the hem of his garment.

« It has indeed! » confirms Bartholomew with a sigh.

« We shall dry ourselves somewhere. They will not be all… excited against us » says Peter.

« We may still find a boat… You never know! » adds James of Alphaeus.

« If we had much money we could find anything. But He did not want me to go to Jericho to sell… » says Judas of Kerioth.

« Keep quiet, please! The Master is so depressed! Be silent! » implores John.

« I will keep quiet. Nay, I can but rejoice at His order. So no one can say that those Sadducees from near Jericho were sent by me » and he looks at Peter. But Peter is engrossed in thought and he neither

sees nor replies.

They go on, walking in the drizzle, which is as thin as fog, in the dull day. Now and again they speak to one another. But they seem to be speaking to themselves, so much their words sound like conclusions of dialogues with invisible interlocutors.

« We shall have to end up by stopping somewhere. »

« All places are alike, because they come to all of them. »

« If we are to be persecuted, we may as well stay in town. At least we shall not get wet. »

« But what are they aiming at? »

« Poor Mary! If She knew! »

« Most High God, protect Your servants! » and so forth… They then join together and talk in low voices.

Jesus is in the front, alone… all alone until Marjiam joins Him with the Zealot.

« The others have gone down to the exposed river-bed, to see if there is a boat… It would be quicker. Can we stay with You? »

« Come. What were you speaking of previously? »

« Of Your suffering. »

« And of the hatred of men. What can we do to comfort You and repress their hatred? » asks the Zealot.

« For My grief there is your love… For hatred… one can only put up with it… It is a thing that will come to an end with the life of the Earth… and this thought gives one patience and strength to bear it. Marjiam! My child! Why are you upset? »

« Because this reminds me of Doras… »

« You are right. It is time for Me to send you home… »

« No! Jesus! No! Why do You want to punish me if I have not done anything wrong? »

« I am not punishing you, I am preserving you… I do not want you to remember Doras. To which feelings does that remembrance give rise in your heart? Tell Me… »

Marjiam weeps with lowered head, he then looks up and says: « You are right. My spirit is not capable of seeing and forgiving, it is not yet capable. But why are You sending me away? If You are suffering, it is all the more reasonable that I should be near You. You have always comforted me! I am no longer the foolish boy who last year used to say to You: "Don't let me see Your sorrow". I am a man, now. Let me stay! Lord! Oh! will you tell Him, Simon! »

« The Master knows what is good for us. And perhaps… He wants to entrust you with a task… I don't know… It's only a thought of mine… »

« You are right. I would have let him stay and with so much joy until after the feast of the Dedication. But… But My Mother is lonely up there. The noise of hatred is so loud. She might be afraid more than is necessary. My Mother is all alone. And She certainly

weeps. You will go to Her and tell Her that I send Her My love and I am waiting for Her now. After the Dedication. And you shall not say anything else, Marjiam. »

« And if She asks me? »

« Oh! You can avoid telling a lie saying… that the life of Her Jesus is like this sky in Ethanim: clouds and rain, at times a storm. But there are also sunny days. As yesterday, as tomorrow, perhaps. To be silent is not to lie. You will tell Her of the miracles that you have seen. That Eliza is with Me. That Ananias welcomes Me in his house as if he were My father. That at Nob I am in the house of a good Israelite. The rest… Be silent about the rest. And then you will go to Porphirea. And you will stay there until I send for you. »

Marjiam is weeping louder.

« Why are you weeping thus? Are you not happy to go to Mary's? Yesterday you were… » says Simon.

« Yes, yesterday I was, because we were all going. And I am weeping because I am afraid I shall not see You any more… Oh! Lord! Lord! Never again shall I be as happy as I have been these past days! »

« We shall meet again, Marjiam. I promise you. »

« When? Not before Passover. It's a long time! » Jesus is silent. « Do You really not want me before Passover? »

Jesus throws an arm round his still slender shoulders and draws him to Himself. « Why do you wish to know the future? We are today. Tomorrow we no longer are. Man, even the richest and mightiest one, cannot add one day to his life. It is, as well as all the future, in the hands of God… »

« But for Passover I have to come to the Temple. I am an Israelite. You cannot make me commit sin! »

« You will not sin. And the first sin which you must promise Me not to commit is that of disobedience. You shall obey. Always. Me now, and who will speak to you in My Name later. Do you promise that? Remember that I, your Master and God, obeyed My Father and I will obey Him until the… end of My day. » Jesus is solemn in speaking these last words.

Marjiam, almost fascinated, says: « I will obey. I swear it. Before You and before eternal God. »

There is silence. Then the Zealot asks: « Will he go by himself? »

« Certainly not. With some of the disciples. We shall find more besides Isaac. »

« Are You sending Isaac also to Galilee? »

« Yes, and he will come back with My Mother. »

They are being called from the river. The three move, cross the road and go towards the river.

« Look, Master. We have found one and they do not want

anything. They are the relatives of a man healed miraculously. But they are carrying sand to that village. We have to go over there on foot, and then they will take us. »

« May God reward them. We shall be at Ananias' this evening. »

Peter is happy and he goes back up to the road and sees that Marjiam is upset. « What is the matter with you? What have you done? »

« Nothing wrong, Simon. I told him that when we arrive at the first place where there are disciples, I will send him home. And he has become sad. »

« Home… Of course!… That's right… The weather… » Peter is pensive. Then he looks at Jesus, he plucks His sleeve making Him lower His head towards his mouth. He says in His ear: « Master, why are You sending him without waiting… »

« Because of the season, as you said. »

« Then? »

« Simon, I will tell you the truth. It is better for Marjiam not to poison his heart… »

« You are right, Master. To embitter one's heart… That is just what happens in the end. » He raises his voice: « The Master is quite right. You will go and… we will meet again at Passover. After all… it will not be long… Once Chislev is over… Oh! beautiful Nisan will soon be here. Of course! He is right… » Peter's voice is no longer so steady. He repeats slowly and sadly: « He is right… » and speaking to himself: « What will happen from now until Nisan? » He strikes his forehead with his hand disconsolately.

And they proceed in the damp day. It does not rain until, in mud up to their knees, they get in five small damp boats, overspread with sand, going downstream again. It begins to rain again, and the raindrops, hitting the calm water of the river, which reflects the sky grey with clouds, draw many circles that appear and dissolve continuously with a play of pearly facets.

It looks like a deserted landscape. On the embankments, in the river villages, there is not a soul to be seen. Because of the rain houses are closed and roads desert. So that when at twilight they land where Solomon's village is, they find the road silent and empty, and they arrive at the house without being seen by anybody. They knock. They call. No reply. Only the cooing of doves, the bleating of sheep and the noise of rain.

« There is nobody inside. What shall we do? »

« Go to the houses in the village. To little Michael's first » orders Jesus.

And while the younger apostles go away quickly, Jesus with the elder ones remains near the house watching and making comments.

« Everything is closed… Also the gate is well tied and secured. Look! There is even a big nail. And the windows are closed as at

night time. How sad! And that lamentation of sheep and doves? Will he be ill? What do You think, Master? »

Jesus shakes His head. He is tired and sad…

The apostles come back running. Andrew is the first to arrive and while he is still a few metres away he shouts: « He is dead… Ananias is dead… We cannot go into the house because it has not yet been purified… He was buried a few hours ago. If we could have come yesterday… The woman, Michael's mother, is coming now. »

« What is persecuting us?! » exclaims Bartholomew.

« Poor old man! He was so happy! And so well! What happened? When was he taken ill? » They are all speaking at the same time.

The woman arrives and remaining at a distance from everybody she says: « Lord, peace be with You. My house is open to You… I do not know whether… I prepared the dead man. That is why I am staying away from you. But I can show You the houses that will welcome You. »

« Yes, woman. May God reward you, and those who take pity on wayfarers. But how did he die? »

« Oh! I don't know. He was not ill. The day before yesterday he was all right. Yes, he was certainly well. Michael came in the morning to take his two sheep and join them to ours. That was the arrangement. And at the sixth hour I took back to him some clothes that I had washed for him. He was sitting at the table eating, perfectly sound. In the evening Michael took the sheep back to him and fetched two pitchers of water for him, and Ananias gave him two buns he had baked. Yesterday morning my son came for the sheep. Everything was closed as it is now and no one replied to the cries of the boy. He pushed the gate but he could not open it. It was locked. Michael then became frightened and he ran back to me. My husband and I with other people ran here. We opened the gate and knocked at the kitchen door… we forced the door… He was sitting near the fireplace with his head reclined on the table, the lamp was still near him, but it was out, there was a little knife at his feet with a wooden bowl half carved… That's how he died… A smile hovered on his lips… He was in peace… Oh! how his countenance had become that of a just man! He even looked more handsome… I… I had taken care of him only for a short time. But I had become fond of him… and I weep… »

« He is in peace. You said that yourself. Do not weep! Where have you put him? »

« We knew that You loved him so much, so we put him in the sepulchre that Levi built for himself recently. The only one, because Levi is a wealthy man. We are not. Down there, beyond the road. Now, if You wish so, we will purify everything and… »

« Yes. You will take the sheep and the doves, and keep the rest

for My disciples and Me. So that I may stay here occasionally. May God bless you, woman. Let us go to the sepulchre. »

« Do You want to raise him from the dead? » asks Thomas quite astonished.

« No. It would not be a joy for him. He is happier where he is. In any case that is what he wished… »

Jesus is very depressed. Everything seems to combine to increase His sadness. At the doors of their houses, some women look and greet Him making comments.

The sepulchre is soon reached: a small cube built recently. Jesus prays near it. He then turns round, with tears welling in His eyes and says: « Let us go… to the houses in the village. In our little house there is no longer anyone waiting for us to bless us… O My Father! Solitude envelops Your Son, void is becoming deeper and deeper and gloomier and gloomier. Those who love Me, die, and those who hate Me, remain… O My Father! May Your will always be done and blessed!… »

They go to the village and two here, three there, they enter the houses of those who have not touched the corpse, to have shelter and refreshment.

503. The Parable of the Unscrupulous Judge.

27th September 1946.

Jesus is once again in Jerusalem. A windy dull Jerusalem in winter. Marjiam is still with Jesus and Isaac also is there. They are speaking while going to the Temple.

Joseph and Nicodemus are with the Twelve speaking to the Zealot and Thomas more than to the others. They then part and when passing before Jesus they greet Him without stopping.

« They do not want to enhance their friendship with the Master. It is dangerous! » hisses the Iscariot in Andrew's ear.

« I think they do that with an honest thought, not out of cowardice » replies Andrew defending them.

« After all they are not disciples. So they can do that. They have never been disciples » says the Zealot.

« No?! I thought… »

« Not even Lazarus is a disciple, neither is… »

« But if you go on excluding, who will be left? »

« Who? Those who have the mission of disciples. »

« And the others, then, what are they? »

« Friends. Nothing but friends. Do they perhaps leave their homes, their interests, to follow Jesus? »

« No. But they listen to Him with pleasure and they give Him assistance and… »

« Well, if that's the case, also the Gentiles do it. You know that

near Nike's house we met people who had provided for Him. And those women are certainly not disciples. »

« Don't get excited! I was saying so just for the sake of speaking. Are you so anxious that your friends should not appear to be disciples? I think that you should want the opposite. »

« I am not getting excited and I do not want anything. Neither do I want you to harm them saying that they are His disciples. »

« How can I say that to anybody? I am always with you… »

Simon Zealot casts such a severe glance at him that Judas' giggle dies on his lips, and he deems it wise to change subject by asking: « What were they wanting, today, to speak to you thus? »

« They found a house for Nike. Near the market-gardens. Near the Gate. Joseph knew the owner and he was aware that he would sell if he got a good price. We will let Nike know. »

« How anxious she is to throw away money! »

« It is her money and she can do what she likes with it. She wants to be near the Master. She thus complies with the will of her husband and with her own heart. »

« Only my mother is far away… » exclaims James of Alphaeus with a sigh.

« And mine » says the other James.

« But not for long. Did you hear what Jesus said to Isaac, John and Matthias? "When you come back at the new moon of Shebat, come with the women disciples, in addition to My Mother". »

« I do not know why He does not want Marjiam to come back with them. He said to him: "You will come when I send for you". »

« Perhaps because He does not want Porphirea to be left without help… If no one goes out fishing, they have no food up there. Since we do not go, Marjiam has to go. A fig-tree, a beehive, a few olivetrees and two sheep are not enough to keep a woman, to dress her and feed her… » remarks Andrew.

Jesus, leaning against the enclosure wall of the Temple, watches them coming. Peter, Marjiam and Judas of Alphaeus are with Him. Some poor people get up from the slabs placed on the road going towards the Temple - the one coming from Zion towards Moriah, not that coming from Ophel to the Temple - and they go moaning towards Jesus begging for alms. None of them ask to be cured. Jesus tells Judas to give them some coins. He then goes into the Temple.

There are not many people. After the large multitudes at festivals, there are no more pilgrims. Only those who are compelled to come to Jerusalem on matters of grave interest, or those who live in the town, go up to the Temple. Thus the courts and porches, although not deserted, are much less crowded, and they look larger and more sacred, as they are not so noisy. Also money-changers and vendors of doves and other animals are less numerous, and are

leaning against the walls on the sunny side, although the sun is so faint that it pierces its way through the grey clouds with difficulty.

After praying in the Court of Israel, Jesus retraces His steps and leans against a column watching… and being watched.

He sees a man and a woman, who must be coming back from the Court of Israel, and although they are not weeping, their countenances are more dejected than if they were shedding tears. The man is trying to console the woman, but one can see that he is deeply grieved, too.

Jesus moves away from the column and goes towards them. « What is ailing you? » He asks them compassionately.

The man looks at Him, quite amazed at His concern. Perhaps he also thinks that He is indelicate. But Jesus looks at him so kindly, that he is disarmed. But before expressing the reason for his grief, he asks: « How come a rabbi takes an interest in the sorrow of a simple believer? »

« Because the rabbi is your brother, man. Your brother in the Lord, and he loves you as is prescribed by the commandment. »

« Your brother! I am a poor tiller of the Sharon plain, near Dora. You are a rabbi. »

« Rabbis have sorrows like everybody else. I know what sorrow is like and I would like to comfort you. »

The woman lifts her veil a little to look at Jesus and she whispers to her husband: « Tell Him. He may be able to help us… »

« Rabbi, we had a daughter, we have a daughter. We still have her… We married her with decorum to a young man, recommended to us as a good husband by a common friend. They have been married six years and have had two children. Two only… because later their love passed off… so much so, that her husband now wants to divorce her. Our daughter weeps and is wasting away with grief, that is why we said that we still have her: she will die brokenhearted before long. We have tried everything to persuade her husband. And we have prayed the Most High so much… But neither of them has listened to us… We came here on pilgrimage just for that and we have been here for a full month. We have come to the Temple every day: I to my place, my wife to hers… This morning a servant of my daughter brought us the news that her husband has gone to Caesarea to send her a writ of divorce from there. And that is the answer that our prayers have received… »

« Don't say that, James » implores the wife in a whisper. And she adds with a sigh: « The Rabbi will curse us as if we were blasphemers… and God will punish us. It is our sorrow. It comes from God… and if He has struck us, it means that we deserved it. »

« No, woman. I will not curse you. And God will not punish you. I tell you. As I tell you that it is not God Who gives you this sorrow,

but man. And God allows it to test you and your daughter's husband. Do not lose your faith and the Lord will hear you. »

« It is late. Our daughter has been repudiated and dishonoured by now and she will die… » says the man.

« It is never too late for the Most High. In a moment and because of a persistent prayer, He can change the course of events. Between the cup and the lips there is still time for death to thrust its dagger in and thus prevent him, who was taking the cup to his lips, from drinking of it. And that through the intervention of God. I am telling you. Go back to your places of prayer and persist today, tomorrow and the day after tomorrow, and if you can have faith you will see the miracle. »

« Rabbi, You want to comfort us… but just now… It is not possible, as You know, to make void the writ, once it has been handed to the repudiated woman » says the man insisting.

« I tell you to have faith. It is true it cannot be made void. But do you know whether your daughter has received it? »

« There is not a great distance from Dora to Caesarea. While the servant was coming here, Jacob has certainly gone back home and driven out Mary. »

« There is not a great distance. But are you sure that he has covered it? Can a will superior to man's not have stopped a man, if Joshua, with the help of God, stopped the sun? Is your insistent confident prayer made for a good purpose not a holy will opposed to the evil will of man? And will God not help you in stopping the foolish man on his way, since you are asking for a good thing of Him, Who is your Father? Has He not perhaps already helped you? And even if the man should still persist in going on, would he succeed, if you persist in asking the Father for something that is just? I tell you: go and pray today, tomorrow and the day after tomorrow and you will see the miracle. »

« Oh! let us go, James! The Rabbi knows. If He tells us to go and pray it means that He knows that it is the right thing. Have faith, my spouse. I feel a great peace, a strong hope rise in me where I had so much sorrow before. May God reward You, Rabbi, since You are good and may He listen to You. Pray for us, too. Come, James, come » and she succeeds in convincing her husband, who follows her after greeting Jesus with the usual Hebrew salutation: « Peace be with You », to which Jesus replies with the same formula.

« Why did You not tell them who You are? They would have prayed with more peace » say the apostles, and Philip adds: « I will go and tell them. »

But Jesus holds him back saying: « I do not want that. He would in fact have prayed with peace, but with less value and less merit. As it is, their faith is perfect and will be rewarded. »

« Really? »

« Do you expect Me to lie deceiving two unhappy people? »

He looks at the people who have gathered near Him, about one hundred of them, and He says:

« Listen to this parable that will explain to you the value of a constant prayer.

You know what Deuteronomy says speaking of judges and magistrates. They should be just and merciful listening with impartiality to those who have recourse to them, always judging as if the case that they have to judge were a personal case of their own, without taking into account gifts or threats, without being partial to guilty friends and severe with those who are at variance with the judge's friends. But if the words of the Law are just, men are not as just neither do they obey the Law. Thus we see that human justice is often imperfect, because rare are the judges who know how to keep free from corruption, and are merciful and patient both with the rich and the poor, with widows and orphans, as with those who are not so.

In a town there was a judge who was very unworthy of his office, that he had obtained through powerful relatives. He was most unfair in judging, as he was always inclined to say that the rich and mighty ones, or those recommended by rich and powerful people, or those who bribed him with rich gifts were right. He did not fear God and he derided the complaints of poor and weak people, because they were lonely and without strong supporters. When he did not want to listen to a man who had such evident reasons to prevail over some rich person that he could in no way decide against him, he had him driven away from his presence threatening to put him in prison. And most people suffered his violence withdrawing as if they had been defeated, and resigned to defeat even before the case was debated.

But in that town there was also a widow with many children, and she was entitled to receive a large sum of money from a mighty man for works done by her dead husband for the rich man. Urged by need and motherly love she had tried to obtain from the rich man the sum of money which would enable her to feed her children and clothe them in the oncoming winter. But when all her requests and entreaties to the rich man became vain, she applied to the judge.

The judge was a friend of the rich man who had said to him: "If you admit that I am right, one third of the amount will be yours". So he turned a deaf ear to the words of the widow who begged him saying: "Do me justice against my opponent. You know that I am in need. Everybody can tell you that I am entitled to that amount". He did not listen to her and had her expelled by his assistants. But the woman went back once, twice, ten times, in the morning, at the sixth, at the ninth hour, in the evening, without

ever tiring. And she would follow him in the streets shouting: "Do me justice. My children are hungry and cold. And I have no money to buy bread and clothes for them". She waited for him at the door of his house when he went home to sit at the table with his children. And the cries of the widow: "Do me justice against my opponent, because my children and I are cold and hungry" could be heard even inside the house, in the dining-room, in the bedroom, during the night, as insistent as the cry of a hoopoe: "Do me justice, if you do not want God to strike you! Do me justice. Remember that widows and orphans are sacred to God and woe to those who oppress them! Do me justice if you do not want to suffer one day what we are suffering now. The cold, the hunger we are suffering, you will find them in the next life if you do not do me justice. You mean man!".

The judge feared neither God nor his neighbour. But he was tired of being continuously molested, of seeing that he had become the laughing stock of the whole town, because of the widow's persecution, and that many people blamed him. So one day he said to himself: "Although I do not fear God, or the threats of the widow, or the opinion of the people, yet, to put an end to so much trouble, I will listen to the widow and do her justice by compelling the rich man to pay, providing she stops persecuting me and gets out of my way". And he sent for the rich friend and said to him: "My friend, it is impossible for me to satisfy you. Do your duty and pay, because I cannot put up any more with being molested because of you. That is my decision". And the rich man had to pay the sum according to justice.

That is the parable. It is now for you to apply it.

You have heard the words of a wicked man: "I will listen to the woman to put an end to so much trouble". And he was a wicked person. But will God, the very good Father, be inferior to the bad judge? Will He not do justice to those sons of His who invoke Him day and night? And will He keep them waiting so long for the grace that their depressed souls stop praying? I assure you: He will do them justice at once so that their souls may not lose faith. But it is also necessary to know how to pray, without tiring after the first prayers and asking for good things. And you must rely also on God saying: "But let that be done what Your Wisdom sees is more useful to us".

Have faith. Pray having faith in prayer and faith in God, your Father. And He will do you justice against those who oppress you, whether they are men or demons, diseases or other calamities. A persevering prayer opens Heaven, and faith saves the soul in whatever way the prayer is heard and answered. Let us go! »

And He sets out towards the exit. He is almost outside the enclosure when raising His head to look at the few people following

Him and at the many indifferent or hostile ones watching Him from afar, He exclaims sadly: « But when the Son of man comes back, will He still find faith on the Earth? » and with a sigh He envelops Himself more tightly in His mantle and strides away towards the Ophel suburb.

504. Jesus, Light of the World.

28th September 1946.

Jesus is still in Jerusalem, but not in the courts of the Temple. He is in a beautifully decorated vast room, one of the many to be found within the enclosure, which is as large as a village.

He has just gone in and is still walking beside the person who invited Him to go in probably to protect Him from the cold wind blowing on the Moriah, and He is followed by the apostles and some disciples. I say « some », because besides Isaac and Marjiam there is Jonathan, and among the crowds, who also go in behind the Master, there is the levite Zacharias, who a few days previously told Him that he wanted to be His disciple, and there are two more men, whom I have already seen with the disciples, but whose names I do not know. But among those well-disposed people there are also the usual unavoidable unchangeable Pharisees. They stop almost at the door, just as if they happened to be there by chance to discuss business, but they are there to listen. The people present are eager to hear the word of the Lord.

He looks at the assembly of people of clearly different nationalities, as they are not all Palestinians, although of Jewish religion. He looks at all the people gathered, many of whom will perhaps return tomorrow to the regions from which they came and will relate His word there saying: « We have heard the Man Who is said to be our Messiah. » And He does not speak to them of the Law, as they are already acquainted with it, as He often does when He realises that His listeners are not familiar with it or their faith is shaken; but He speaks of Himself, that they may know Him.

He says: « I am the Light of the world and he who follows Me will not walk in darkness but will have the light of life. » And He becomes silent, after enunciating the theme of His speech, as He usually does when He is going to deliver a momentous speech. He keeps silent to give the people time to decide whether they are interested in the subject or not, and also to give them time to go away if the subject is of no interest to them. None of the people present go away; on the contrary the Pharisees, who were near the door, intent on a forced affected conversation, and who have become silent and have turned towards the interior of the synagogue at Jesus' first word, go in elbowing their way with their unfailing arrogance.

When all the whispering is over, Jesus repeats the aforesaid sentence in an even louder voice and He goes on to say:

« I am the Light of the world because I am the Son of the Father, Who is the Father of the Light. A son is always like the father who begot him and is of the same nature. Likewise I am like and I have the same nature as He Who begot Me. God, the Most High, the perfect and Infinite Spirit, is Light of Love, Light of Wisdom, Light of Power, Light of Goodness, Light of Beauty. He is the Father of the Lights, and he who lives of Him and in Him can see, because he is in the Light, as it is God's desire that men should see. And He gave man intelligence and feelings, that he might see the Light, that is, God Himself, and understand and love it. And He gave man eyes, that he might see the most beautiful of all things created, the perfection of elements, through which Creation is visible and which is one of the first actions of God Creator and bears the most visible sign of Him Who created it: light, the incorporeal, bright, beatific, consoling, necessary light, as is necessary the Father of all: God Eternal and Most High.

By an order of His Thought He created the firmament and the earth, that is, the mass of the atmosphere and the mass of dust, the incorporeal and the corporeal, what is very light and what is heavy, but both still barren, void and shapeless, because they were enveloped in darkness, devoid of stars and lifeless. But to give the earth and the firmament their true features, to make of them two beautiful things, useful and suitable for the continuation of His creative work, the Spirit of God - that hovered over the waters and was one thing with the Creator Who was creating and with the Inspirer Who urged to create, in order to be able to love not only Himself in the Father and in the Son, but also an infinite number of creatures named stars, planets, waters, seas, forests, plants, flowers, animals that fly, wriggle, creep, run, jump, climb, and finally man, the most perfect creature, more perfect than the sun, because he is endowed with soul as well as with matter, with intelligence as well as with instinct, with freedom as well as with rules, man similar to God because of his spirit, similar to animals because of his body, the demigod who becomes god by the grace of God and his own will, the human being who can transform himself into an angel, if he wishes so, the beloved being of sensible Creation, for whom, although He knew that he would be a sinner, even before time existed, He prepared the Saviour, the Victim in the Being loved beyond measure, in the Son, in the Word, for Whom everything was made - but to give the earth and the firmament their true features, as I was saying, the Spirit of God, hovering over the cosmos, shouts, and it is the first time that the Word shows Himself: "Let there be light" and there was light, good, beneficial, strong during the day, dim at night, everlasting until

the end of time. From the ocean of wonders, which is the throne of God, the bosom of God, God draws the most beautiful gem, and it is the light preceding the most perfect gem, that is, the creation of man, in whom there is not a jewel of God, but God Himself, breathing over the dust to make it living flesh and His heir to the heavenly Paradise where He awaits the just, His children, that He may rejoice in them and they in Him.

If at the beginning of creation God wanted light on His works, if to make light He used His Word, if God grants those, whom He beloves, His most perfect likeness: light, material joyful incorporeal light, wise sanctifying spiritual light, is it possible that He has not given the Son of His love what He is Himself? Really the Most High has given everything to Him in Whom He is well pleased from eternity, and He wanted the Light to be the first and the most powerful of everything, so that without waiting to ascend to Heaven men might know the wonder of the Trinity, that makes the blissful heavenly choruses sing because of the harmonious joy they admire, and that angels enjoy contemplating the Light, that is, God, the Light that fills Paradise making all its inhabitants blissful.

I am the Light of the world. He who follows Me will not walk in darkness but will have the light of Life! As light on the shapeless earth made life possible for plants and animals, so My Light makes eternal Life possible for spirits. I, being the Light that I am, create Life in you and I preserve it, I increase it, I re-create you in it, I transform you, I take you to the Abode of God along the ways of wisdom, of love, of sanctification. He who has the Light, possesses God, because the Light is one thing with Charity and he who has Charity has God. He who has the Light possesses the Life, because God is there where His beloved Son is welcomed. »

« You are talking nonsense. Who has seen what is God? Not even Moses saw God, because in Horeb, as soon as he realised who was speaking from the blazing bush, he covered his face; neither could he see Him on the other occasions because of the dazzling lightning. And You say that You saw God? The face of Moses, who had only heard Him speak, remained brightly radiant. But what radiance is there on Your face? You are a poor Galilean with a pale face like most of Your countrymen. You are ill, tired and thin. If You had really seen God and He did love You, You would not look like a dying man. You want to give Your life, when You have not got enough for Yourself? » and they shake their heads pitying Him ironically.

« God is Light and I know which is His Light, because children know their father and each knows himself. I know My Father and I know who I am. I am the Light of the world. I am the Light because My Father is the Light and He begot Me and gave Me His

Nature. The Word does not differ from the Thought because the word expresses what the intellect thinks. In any case, do you no longer know the prophets? Do you not remember Ezekiel and above all Daniel? When the former describes God, seen in the vision, on the chariot of the four animals, he says: "On the throne there was one who looked like a man and within him and around him I saw a kind of yellow amber which resembled fire, and from his loins upwards and downwards I saw a kind of fire and a light all around; like a rainbow in the clouds on rainy days, that is how the surrounding light appeared". And Daniel says: "I was watching until the thrones were set in place and the Ancient of days took his seat. His robe was as white as snow, his hair as pure as wool; his throne was a blaze of flames and the wheels of his throne were a burning fire. A stream of fire poured out issuing from his presence". God is like that and I shall be like that when I come to judge you. »

« Your testimony is not valid. You bear witness to Yourself. So what is the value of Your testimony? As far as we are concerned it is false. »

« Although I bear witness to Myself, My witness is true, because I know from where I came and where I am going. But you know neither from where I come nor where I am going. Your wisdom is what you see. I instead know everything that is unknown to man, and I have come that you may become acquainted with it as well. That is why I said that I am the Light. Because light reveals what was concealed by darkness. In Heaven there is Light, on the Earth there is, above all, the reign of Darkness, which conceals the truth from spirits, because Darkness hates the spirits of men and does not want them to become acquainted with the Truth and the truths, so that they may not be sanctified. And that is why I came. That you may have Light and consequently Life. But you do not want to receive Me. You want to judge what you do not know and you cannot judge it because it is so much higher up than you are and cannot be understood by anyone who does not contemplate it with the eyes of the spirit, of a humble spirit nourished with faith. Instead you judge according to the flesh. So your judgement cannot be true. I instead do not judge anybody, if I can abstain from judging. I look at you mercifully and I pray for you. That you may open out to Light. But when I have to judge, then My judgement is true, because I am not alone, but I am with the Father Who sent Me, and from His glory He can see the interior of hearts. And as He sees yours, He can see Mine. And if He saw an unjust judgement in My heart, for My sake and for the honour of His Justice, He would inform Me. But the Father and I judge in one way only and so we are in two and I am not alone in judging and bearing witness. In your Law it is written that the testimony of two witnesses giving

the same evidence is to be accepted as true and valid. So I bear witness to My Nature and the Father Who sent Me testifies the same thing. So what I say is true. »

« We cannot hear the voice of the Most High. You say that He is Your Father… »

« He spoke of Me at the Jordan… »

« All right. But You were not the only one at the Jordan. There was also John. He might have spoken of him. He was a great prophet. »

« You are condemning yourselves with your own lips. Tell Me: who speaks through the lips of the prophets? »

« The Spirit of God. »

« And was John a prophet according to you? »

« One of the greatest, if not the greatest. »

« Well then, why did you not believe his words and why do you not believe them? He pointed Me out as the Lamb of God, Who had come to cancel the sins of the world. When he was asked whether he was the Christ, he replied: "I am not the Christ, I am one who precedes Him. And behind me there is He Who actually precedes me, because He existed before me, and I did not know Him, but He Who took me from the womb of my mother and invested me with my mission in the desert and sent me to baptise, said to me: 'He upon Whom you will see the Spirit descend, He is the One Who will baptise with the Holy Spirit and fire'". Do you not remember? And yet many among you were present… So why do you not believe the prophet who pointed Me out after hearing the words of Heaven? Have I to tell My Father this: that His people no longer believes in the prophets? »

« And where is Your father? Joseph the carpenter has been sleeping for years in his sepulchre. You no longer have a father. »

« You know neither My Father nor Me. But if you wanted to know Me, you would know also My true Father. »

« You are possessed and a liar. You are a blasphemer as You insist in maintaining that the Most High is Your Father. You deserve to be stoned according to the Law. »

The Pharisees and the others of the Temple shout threateningly while the people look at them grimly, anxious as they are to defend the Christ.

Jesus looks at them without saying anything further, and He then leaves the room by a little side door opening onto a porch.

505. Jesus Speaks in the Temple to the Incredulous Judaeans.

30th September 1946.

Jesus goes back into the Temple with His apostles and disciples. And some of the apostles, and not only the apostles, point out to Him that it is not wise to go in. But He replies: « By what right could they refuse to let Me go in? Have I perhaps been condemned? No, not yet. So I am going up to the altar of God like every Israelite who fears the Lord. »

« But You intend to speak… »

« And is this not the place where rabbis usually gather to speak? To speak and teach outside is an exceptional case, such as the rest taken by a rabbi or a personal necessity. But this is the place where everyone loves to teach disciples. Do you not see people of every nationality around rabbis to hear the famous ones at least once? So that when they go back to their native countries they may say: "We heard a master, a philosopher speak according to the fashion of Israel". A master for those who already are or intend to be Jews; a philosopher for the true and proper Gentiles. Neither do the rabbis disdain being listened to by the latter, as they hope to make proselytes. Without such hope, which would be holy if it were humble, they would not remain in the Court of the Gentiles, but they would demand to speak in that of Israel, and if it were possible, in the very Sanctuary, because, according to the opinion they hold of themselves, they are so holy, that God only is holier… And I, the Master, will speak where teachers speak. But be not afraid! It is not their hour as yet. When their hour comes, I will tell you, that you may fortify your hearts. »

« You will not tell us » says the Iscariot.

« Why not? »

« Because You will not know. No sign will tell You. There is no sign. I have been with You for almost three years and I have always seen You threatened and persecuted. Nay, You were alone then. Now You have the support of the crowds who love You and of whom the Pharisees are afraid. So You are in a stronger position. How do You expect to know when the hour has come? »

« By what I see in the hearts of men. »

Judas remains dumbfounded for a moment, then he says: « And You will not mention it also because… You spare us because You doubt our courage. »

« He keeps silent not to distress us » says James of Zebedee.

« True. But You will certainly not tell us. »

« I will tell you. And until I tell you, whatever violence and hatred you see against Me, be not afraid of it. They will have no consequences. Go on. I am staying here to wait for Manaen and Marjiam. »

The Twelve and those who are with them go on halfheartedly. Jesus retraces His steps towards the gate waiting for the two, He then goes out into the street and walks towards the Antonia.

Some legionaries standing near the fortress point Him out chatting to one another. There seems to be some disagreement in opinion, then one of them says in a loud voice: « I'll ask Him » and he departs from the group coming towards Jesus. « Hail, Master. Are You speaking in there also today? »

« May the Light enlighten you. Yes. I am going to speak. »

« In that case… be careful. One who knows has warned us. And a lady who admires You has ordered us to watch. We shall be near the eastern underground. Do You know where the entrance is? »

« I do. But both ends are closed. »

« Do You think so? » The legionary has a little laugh and in the shadow of his helmet his eyes and teeth shine making him look younger. He then salutes coming to attention and says: « Hail, Master. Remember Quintus Felix. »

« I will. May the Light enlighten you. »

Jesus resumes walking and the legionary goes back to his place and talks to his fellow-soldiers.

« Master, are we late? The lepers were so many! » exclaim together Manaen, who is wearing a plain dark brown garment, and Marjiam.

« No. You have been quick. But let us go. The others are waiting for us. Manaen, was it you who warned the Romans? »

« Of what, Lord? I have not spoken to anybody. And I would not know… The Roman ladies are not in Jerusalem. »

They are once again near the gate of the enclosure. The Levite Zacharias is there, as if he happened to be there just by chance.

« Peace to You, Master. I want to tell You… I will try to be always where You are, in here. And please do not lose sight of me. And if there is a tumult and You see me go away, try to follow me all the time. They hate You so much! I cannot do any more… Please understand me… »

« May God reward and bless you for the pity you take on His Word. I will do what you say. And you may rest assured that no one will be aware of your love for Me. »

They part.

« Perhaps he told the Romans. While in there he may have heard… » whispers Manaen.

They go to pray passing through the crowds who look at them with different feelings and who later gather behind Jesus, when He comes away from the Court of Israel after praying.

Outside the second enclosure Jesus is about to stop, but He is surrounded by a mixed group of scribes, Pharisees and priests. One of the officials of the Temple speaks on behalf of them all.

« Are You here again? Do You not realise that we do not want You? Are You not even afraid of the danger impending over You? Go away. It is already a lot if we allow You to come in to pray. But we do not allow You to teach Your doctrine any more. »

« Yes, go away. Go away, You blasphemer! »

« Yes. I am going away, as you wish. And not only out of these walls. I will go, I am already going farther, where you will not be able to reach Me. And the time will come when you also will be looking for Me, and not just to persecute Me, but through a superstitious terror of being struck for driving Me away, urged by a superstitious anxiety to have your sin forgiven and receive mercy. But I am telling you. This is the time of mercy. This is the time to make friends with the Most High. After the present time, no remedy will be of any avail. You will not have Me any more and you will die in your sin. Even if you travelled all over the Earth and you succeeded in arriving at stars and planets, you would no longer find Me, because you cannot come where I am going. I have already told you. God comes and passes by. Those who are wise receive Him with His gifts while He passes by. Those who are foolish let Him go and no longer can find Him. You come from down here. I come from up there. You belong to this world. I am not of this world. So, once I have gone back to the Abode of My Father, out of this world of yours, you will not be able to find Me any longer and you will die in your sins, because you will not even be able to reach Me spiritually through faith. »

« Do You want to kill Yourself, You devil? We will certainly not be able to join You in Hell, where violent souls descend, because Hell is the place of damned cursed souls, whereas we are the blessed children of the Most High » some of them say.

And others say approvingly: « He certainly wants to kill Himself, because He says that we cannot go where He goes. He realises that He has been found out and has failed the test, and He is going to kill Himself, without waiting to be killed like the other Galilean who was a false Christ. »

And others say benevolently: « And if He really were the Christ and should go back to Him Who sent Him? »

« Where? In Heaven? Abraham is not there, so how can you expect Him to go there? The Messiah is to come first. »

« But Elijah was taken up to Heaven in a chariot of fire. »

« On a chariot, yes. But to Heaven!… Who can assure that? »

And the dispute continues while Pharisees, scribes, officials, priests, Judaeans obsequious to priests, scribes and Pharisees pursue the Christ through the vast porches as a pack of hounds chases roused game.

But some people, that is the good ones among the hostile group, those urged by real honest intentions, elbow their way through the

crowd until they reach Jesus and ask Him the anxious question, which has been heard being asked so often with love or with hatred: « Who are You? Tell us so that we may know how to behave. Tell us the truth in the name of the Most High! »

« I am the Truth itself and I never tell lies. I am what I have always declared to be since the first day I spoke to the crowds, in every place in Palestine, what I said I am, here, several times, near the Holy of Holies, of Whose thunderbolts I am not afraid, because I speak the truth. I have still many things to say and to judge during My day and with regard to this people, and although My evening seems to be close at hand, I know that I shall tell them and I shall judge everybody, because that is what I have been promised by Him Who sent Me and is truthful. He spoke to Me in an eternal embrace of love, telling Me all His Thought, so that I could repeat it by means of My Word to the world, and I shall not be able to be silent, neither will anybody be able to silence Me until I announce to the world what I heard from My Father. »

« Are You still blaspheming? And are You continuing to call Yourself the Son of God? But who do You expect to believe You? Who will ever be able to see the Son of God in You? » shout His enemies shaking their fists at His face, deranged as they are by hatred.

The apostles, disciples and well-meaning people drive them back forming a protective barrier round the Master. Zacharias, the levite, steals slowly close to Jesus, Manaen and Alphaeus' two sons with stealthy movements in order not to attract the attention of the evil ones.

They are now at the end of the Court of the Gentiles as progress is slow owing to the hindering opposition and Jesus stops at His usual place, at the last column of the eastern side. He stops. They cannot eject a true Israelite from the place where even pagans are allowed to stay, unless they wish to rouse the masses. Which they craftily avoid doing. And He resumes speaking replying to His offenders and everybody else: « When you have lifted up the Son of man… »

The Pharisees and scribes shout: « And who do You expect is going to lift You up? Miserable is that Country whose king is a silly charlatan and a blasphemer disliked by God. None of us will lift You up, You may be sure of that. And the little intelligence You are still left with has made You realise that in time, when You were put to the test. You know that we shall never be able to make You our king! »

« I know. You will not raise Me to a throne, and yet you will lift Me up. And while lifting Me up you will think that you are lowering Me. And just when you think that you have lowered Me, I shall be raised. Not only over Palestine, not only over the people of Israel

spread all over the world, but over the whole world, even over pagan countries, even over those countries of which the learned people of the world are still unaware. And I shall be raised not only for the lifetime of a man, but for the whole life of the Earth and the shadow of My throne will spread more and more over the Earth until it covers it completely. Then only, I will come back and you will see Me. Oh! You shall see Me! »

« Listen to His speech of a madman! We shall raise Him by lowering Him, and we shall lower Him by raising Him! He's mad! And the shadow of His throne all over the Earth. Greater than Cyrus! Greater than Alexander! Greater than Caesar! And what about Caesar? Do You think he will allow You to take the Roman empire? And He is going to last on His throne until the end of the world! Ha! Ha! » Their words are more grievous than slaps; their irony is more painful than scourging.

But Jesus lets them speak. He raises His voice to be heard in the outcry of those who deride and of those who defend, filling the place with the roar of a rough sea.

« When you have raised the Son of man, then you will understand who I am and you will realise that I do nothing by Myself, but I say what My Father taught Me and I do what He wants. And He Who sent Me does not leave Me all alone, but He is with Me. As a shadow follows a body, so is the Father behind Me, watchful and present, although invisible. He is behind Me and comforts and helps Me and He does not go away because I always do what He likes. God instead goes away when His children do not obey His laws and His inspirations. He then goes away and leaves them all alone. That is why many people in Israel commit sin. Because when man is left to himself, it is difficult for him to remain just and he easily falls into the coils of the Snake. I solemnly tell you that because of your sin in resisting the Light and Mercy of God, He leaves you and will no longer dwell in this place or in your hearts and what Jeremiah grieved over in his prophecies and lamentations will be fulfilled. Meditate on those prophetical words, tremble and return to your senses with good minds. Do not listen to the threats but to the kindness of the Father Who warns His children while they are still granted the possibility to make amends and save themselves. Listen to God in His words and deeds, and if you do not want to believe My words, because old Israel is suffocating you, believe at least in old Israel. Her prophets proclaim the dangers and misfortunes of the Holy City and of all our Fatherland if she does not convert to the Lord her God and does not follow the Saviour. The hand of God weighed heavily on this people in the past. But the past and present are nothing as compared to the dreadful future, which is awaiting it for not accepting the Messenger sent by God. What is awaiting Israel who repudiates

the Christ cannot be compared with the past in severity and duration. I am telling you, straining My eyes into future ages: like a tree uprooted and thrown into a stormy river, the Hebraic race will be struck by divine anathema. It will stubbornly try to stop on the banks, here or there, and vigorous as it is, it will sprout and take root. But when it thinks it has settled, the violence of the flood will get hold of it again, tearing it away and breaking its roots and shoots, and it will be carried farther away, to suffer, to strike roots again, and then be torn off and scattered once more. And nothing will be able to give it rest, because the flood pursuing it will be the wrath of God and the contempt of peoples. Only by throwing itself into a sea of living sanctifying Blood it could find peace. But it will shun that Blood, because although its voice will be an inviting one, it will sound like the voice of Abel's blood calling it: the Cain of the heavenly Abel. »

A further widespread whispering runs through the large enclosure like the noise of the sea. But the harsh voices of Pharisees, scribes and of the Jews subjected to them, are not part of the whispering. Jesus avails Himself of the opportunity to try to go away.

But some people who were far from Him, approach Him and say: « Master, listen to us. We are not all like them (and they point at His enemies), but we find it difficult to follow You also because Your voice is all by itself against hundreds of voices which state the opposite of what You say. And what they say is just what we have heard from our fathers since our childhood. But Your words induce us to believe in You. But how can we believe fully and have life? We feel as if we were tied by the thoughts of the past… »

«If you settle in My Word, as if you were being born again now, your faith will be complete and you will become My disciples. But you must divest yourselves of the past and accept My Doctrine. It does not delete the past completely. On the contrary it keeps and instils new life into what is holy and supernatural in the past, and it removes the superfluous human additions as it puts the perfection of My Doctrine where now are human doctrines, which are always imperfect. If you come to Me you will know the Truth, and the Truth will make you free. »

« Master, it is true what we said to You, that we feel as if we were tied by the past. But that tie is neither imprisonment nor slavery. We are Abraham's posterity in spiritual matters, because, if we are not mistaken, Abraham's posterity means spiritual posterity as opposed to Hagar's, which is a posterity of slaves. So how can You say that we shall become free? »

« I wish to point out to you that also Ishmael and his children were Abraham's posterity, because Abraham was the father of Isaac and of Ishmael. »

« But it was impure because he was the son of a woman, who was a slave and an Egyptian. »

« I solemnly tell you: there is but one slavery, that of sin. Only he who commits sin is a slave. And of a slavery which no money can ransom; and he is the slave of an implacable cruel master and loses all rights to the free sovereignty in the Kingdom of Heaven. A slave, a man who has become slave through war or misfortunes, may also become the property of a good master. But his welfare is always precarious because his master can sell him to another cruel master. He is merchandise, nothing else. Sometimes he is used as money to settle a debt. And he is not even entitled to complain. A servant instead lives in the house of his master until he is dismissed. But a son remains in the house of his father for good, and the father does not think of expelling him. He can go out only of his own free will. And that is the difference between slavery and servitude, and between servitude and filiation. Slavery puts man in chains. Servitude puts him at the service of a master. Filiation puts him for ever, and with equal rights of life, in the house of the father. Slavery destroys man. Servitude subjects him. Filiation makes him free and happy. Sin makes man the slave and for ever, of the most cruel master: Satan. Servitude, in this case the Ancient Law, makes man fear God as an intransigent Being. Filiation, that is, to come to God with His First-Born, with Me, makes man free and happy, as he knows and trusts in the charity of his Father. To accept My Doctrine is to come to God with Me, the First-Born of many beloved children. I will break your chains, if you only come to Me to have them broken and you will really be happy and coheirs with Me to the Kingdom of Heaven. I know that you are Abraham's posterity. But those among you who seek My death no longer honour Abraham, but Satan, and serve him as faithful servants. Why? Because they reject My word which cannot get to the hearts of many of you. God does not compel man to believe or to accept Me. But He sent Me that I may show you His will. And I tell you what I saw and heard near My Father. And I do what He wants. But those among you who persecute Me, do what they learnt from their father and what he suggests. »

Like a paroxysm which revives after a remission of a disease, the wrath of Judaeans, Pharisees and scribes is roused violently again, although it seemed to have abated. They penetrate like a wedge into the compact circle of people pressing Jesus and they try to approach Him. The crowd sways like opposed billows, as opposed are the feelings of their hearts. The Judaeans, livid with rage and hatred shout: « Abraharn is our father. We have no other father. »

« God is the Father of men. Abraham himself is a son of the universal Father. But many repudiate the true Father for one who is not a

father and has been chosen as such by them because he seems more powerful and willing to satisfy their immoderate desires. Children do the works that they see their father do. If you are sons of Abraham, why do you not do the works that Abraham did? Do you not know them? Shall I enumerate them with regard to their nature and symbol? Abraham obeyed by going to the country pointed out to him by God, and is thus the symbol -of man who must be prepared to leave everything to go where God sends him. Abraham was obliging with his brother's son, whom he allowed to choose the region he preferred, thus symbolising respect for freedom of action and the charitable mind we must have for our neighbour. Abraham was humble after the predilection of God, Whom he honoured in Mamre, always feeling that he was a mere nothing in comparison with the Most High, Who had spoken to him, a symbol of the place of reverential love man must always keep towards his God. Abraham believed and obeyed God also in the most difficult matters to believe and painful to accomplish, and he did not become selfish in order to be safe, but he prayed for the people of Sodom. Abraham did not come to terms with the Lord, by requesting a reward for his manifold obedience, on the contrary, in order to honour Him till the very end, to the extreme limit, he sacrificed his beloved son to Him… »

« He did not sacrifice him. »

« He did sacrifice his beloved son because it is true that his heart had already sacrificed him, during the journey, with his will to obey, which was arrested by the angel when his heart of a father was already breaking, as he was on the point of rending the heart of his son. He was going to kill his son in order to honour God. You are killing the Son of God to honour Satan. So, do you do the works of Him Whom you call your father? No, you do not. You are trying to kill Me because I tell you the truth as I heard it from God. Abraham did not behave thus. He did not try to kill the voice coming from Heaven, but he obeyed it. No, you do not do the works of Abraham, but those pointed out to you by your father. »

« We were not born of a prostitute. We are not illegitimate children. You said Yourself that God is the Father of men, and we are the chosen People and we belong to the chosen castes of this People. So we have God as our only Father. »

« If you recognised God as your Father in spirit and truth you would love Me because I proceed and come from God; I have not come of My own accord, but it is He Who sent Me. So, if you really knew the Father, you would know also Me, His Son and your brother and Saviour. Is it possible for brothers not to know one another? Can the children of One only father not recognise the language spoken in the House of the Only Father? Why, then, do you not understand My language and you cannot bear My words?

Because I come from God and you do not. You left the paternal house and you have forgotten the face and the language of Him Who lives in it. You have spontaneously gone to other regions, to other abodes, where one who is not God reigns, and where another language is spoken. And he who reigns there compels those who want to go in to become his children and obey him. And you have done that and still do it. You abjure and disown God the Father to choose another father for yourselves. And that father is Satan. You have the demon as father and you want to accomplish what he suggests to you. And the wishes of the demon are for sin and violence and you accept them. From the beginning he was a homicide and he did not persevere in the truth, because having rebelled against the Truth, he cannot have in himself any love for the truth. When he speaks, he speaks as he is, that is, as a liar and a gloomy being, because he really is a liar and has procreated and given birth to falsehood after being fecundated with pride and nourished with rebellion. All concupiscence is in his bosom, and he spits it and inoculates it to poison creatures. He is the gloomy, sneering, creeping cursed reptile, the Disgrace and Horror. His deeds have tormented man for ages and their signs and fruits are clear to the intellects of men. And yet you listen to him, although he lies and destroys, whereas if I speak and say what is true and good, you do not believe Me and you say that I am a sinner. But among the many people who have approached Me, with hatred or with love, who can say that he saw Me commit sin? Who can say so truthfully? Where are the proofs to convince Me and those who believe in Me that I am a sinner? Which of the ten commandments have I infringed? Who can swear before the altar of God that he saw Me violate the Law and customs, the precepts, traditions and prayers? Who amongst all men can make Me blush, having convinced Me of sin with definite proofs? No one can do that. No one amongst men, no one amongst angels. God shouts in the hearts of men: "He is the Innocent One". You are all convinced of that, and you who are accusing Me are more firmly persuaded than these people who are undecided as to who is right, you or I. But only who belongs to God listens to the words of God. You do not listen to them, although they resound in your souls day and night, and you do not listen to them because you do not belong to God. »

« We, who live for the Law and in the most detailed observation of the precepts, to honour the Most High, we do not belong to God? And You dare say that? Ah!!! » They seem to be suffocating with horror, as if a halter were fastened round their necks. « And we are not to say that You are possessed and a Samaritan? »

« I am neither, but I honour My Father, even if you deny Him to revile Me. But your insults do not grieve Me. I do not seek My glory. There is One who takes care of it and judges. That is what I

say to you who want to humiliate Me. But to those of good will I say that he who accepts My word, or has already accepted it, and knows how to keep it, will never die. »

« Ah! Now we can see very clearly that the demon possessing You is speaking through Your lips! You said that Yourself: "He speaks like a liar". What You said is a lie, therefore it is a word of the demon. Abraham died and the prophets died. And You say that those who keep Your word will never die. So You will not die? »

« I shall die only as Man, to rise again in the time of Grace, but I shall not die as the Word. The Word is Life and never dies. And he who receives the Word has Life in himself and never dies, but rises in God because I will resuscitate him. »

« Blasphemer Madman! Demon! Are You greater than Abraham and the prophets, who died? Who do You think You are? »

« The Beginning Who am speaking to you. »

There is absolute pandemonium. And while it goes on, the Levite Zacharias pushes Jesus imperceptibly towards a corner in the court, helped by the sons of Alphaeus and by other people, who perhaps assist Him without even knowing what they are doing.

When Jesus is against the wall and is protected by His most faithful ones standing in front of Him and the tumult calms down a little, He says in His voice which is so incisive, beautiful and calm also in the most troubled moments: « If I glorify Myself, My glory is of no value. Anyone can say of oneself what one wishes. But He Who glorifies Me is My Father, Who you say is your God, although He is so little yours that you do not know Him, and you have never known Him, neither do you want to know Him through Me, as I speak to you of Him because I know Him; and if I should say that I do not know Him, to appease your hatred against Me, I would be a liar like you who say that you know Him. I know that I must not lie for any reason whatsoever. The Son of man must not lie even if by telling the truth He will bring about His death. Because if the Son of man should lie, He would no longer be the Son of Truth and the Truth would reject Him from Itself. I know God, both as God and as Man. And as God and as Man I keep His words and comply with them. Israel, think it over! It is here that the Promise is fulfilled. It is accomplished in Me. Recognise Me for what I am! Abraham, your father, longed to see My day. He saw it, prophetically, through a grace of God, and he rejoiced. And you who really live it… »

« Be quiet! You are not yet fifty years old and You are telling us that Abraham has seen You and You have seen him? » and their scornful laugh spreads like a wave of poison or corrosive acid.

« I solemnly tell you: before Abraham was born I am. »

« "I am"? God only can say that, as He is eternal. You cannot! Blasphemer! "I am"! Anathema! Are You perhaps God, that You

may say that? » shouts one, who must be an important personage, because, although he has just arrived, he is already near Jesus, as everybody has moved aside, almost in terror, at his arrival.

« It is you who say it » replies Jesus in a thundering voice.

Everything becomes a weapon in the hands of those who hate. While the last man who has questioned Jesus gives free course to a mimic display of scandalised horror and tears his headgear off his head, ruffles his hair and beard and unfastens the buckles holding his mantle round his neck, as if he were about to faint with horror, handfuls of earth and stones - used by the vendors of doves and other animals to hold tight the ropes of the enclosures, and by money-changers as a prudential protection for their coffers, of which they are more jealous than of their own lives - are thrown at the Master and obviously fall upon the crowd, as Jesus is too far inside the arcade to be struck, and the crowds curse and complain…

Zacharias, the levite, gives Jesus a mighty push, the only means to make Him reach a little low door, hidden in the wall of the court and already set to be opened, and pushes Him inside with the two sons of Alphaeus, John, Manaen and Thomas. The others are left outside in the tumult… its noise arrives weakened in the underground passage, among the mighty stone walls, the correct architectural name of which I do not know. The stones are embedded, I would say, that is, there are large stones and smaller ones, and on top of the smaller ones there are large ones and viceversa. I do not know whether I have made myself clear. They are dark and mighty, coarsely chiselled, hardly visible in the dim light coming from narrow loopholes placed high up at regular intervals to admit air and light so that the place may not be completely murky. It is a narrow tunnel, the purpose of which I do not know, but I am under the impression that it runs right round the court. Perhaps it was built as a protection, as a shelter place, or to double and thus reinforce the walls of the courts, which form enclosures round the true and proper Temple, the Holy of Holies. In brief, I do not know. I am saying what I see. There is a smell of dampness, that kind of dampness that one cannot say whether it is cold or not, as in certain wine-cellars.

« And what are we going to do here? » asks Thomas.

« Be quiet! Zacharias told me that he will come and we must remain silent and still » replies Thaddeus.

« But… can we trust him? »

« I hope so. »

« Be not afraid. He is a good man » says Jesus comforting them.

Outside the noise of the tumult fades away. Some time goes by. Then the dull sound of steps and a tiny flickering light coming from the dark depth.

« Are You there, Master? » asks a voice that wants to be heard but is afraid of being heard.

« Yes, Zacharias, I am here. »

« Praised be Jehovah! Have I kept You waiting? I had to wait for the others to rush to the other exits. Come, Master… Your apostles… I have been able to tell Simon to go all together towards Bezetha and wait there. We go down here… There is not much light, but it's a safe way. It takes us down to the cisterns… and we come out near the Kidron. An old way. Not always used for a good purpose. But this time it is… And that sanctifies it… »

They continue to go down in the deep shade broken only by the flickering light of the lamp, until a different gleam is seen down at the bottom… and beyond it some green appears in the distance… A railing, so heavy and thick that it looks like a door, is at the end of the tunnel.

« Master, I have saved You. You can go. But listen to me. Do not come back for some time. I could not serve You every time without being noticed. And… forget, all of you must forget this passage and me who brought you here » says Zacharias, working some devices of the heavy railing, which he opens just enough to let them go out. And he repeats: « Forget all about this, for my sake. »

« Be not afraid. None of us will speak. And may God be with you for your charity. » Jesus raises His hand and lays it on the bowed head of the young man.

He goes out followed by His cousins and the others. He finds Himself in a small wild open space, covered with bramble, so small that it can hardly contain them all, facing the Mount of Olives. A very steep path runs down among the bramble towards the torrent.

« Let us go. We will climb up again to the height of the Gate of the Sheep and I will go to Joseph's with My brothers, whilst you will go to Bezetha to get the others and will then join Me. We will go to Nob tomorrow evening after sunset. »

506. In Joseph's House at Sephoris. Little Martial Named Manasseh.

7th October 1946.

The house of Joseph is not the house of Joseph of Arimathea, but that of an old Galilean of Sephoris, a friend of Alphaeus' sons, particularly of the older ones, as he was a friend, and perhaps a distant relative of old Alphaeus, now dead. And, if I am not mistaken, he has business dealings with the sons of Zebedee for the dried fish trade, as the fish is imported from the lake of Gennesaret to the capital with other products of Galilee, dear to the Galileans who have emigrated to Jerusalem. That is what I gather

from the conversation of Alphaeus' two sons and John with Thomas.

Jesus instead is a little behind with Manaen, to whom He entrusts the task of going to Joseph of Arimathea and to Nicodemus asking them to call on Him. This Manaen does at once. Jesus joins the three apostles again for a moment, exhorting them once again to be prudent when speaking « for the sake of the levite who has saved them », then He parts from them and strides away towards a little path…

But John soon joins Him.

« Why have you come? »

« We could not leave You all alone… so I came. »

« And do you think that you could defend Me by yourself against so many? »

« I am not sure. But at least I would die before You. And I would be satisfied. »

« You will die a long time after Me, John. But do not regret it. If the Most High leaves you in the world, He does so that you may serve Him and His Word. »

« And after… »

« After you will continue to serve. As long as you should live to serve Me as both our hearts would wish. But you will serve Me also after your death. »

« How shall I do that, my Master? If I am in Heaven with You, I will worship You. I shall not be able to serve You on the Earth after I have departed from it… »

« Do you really think so? Well, I tell you that you will serve Me until My new advent, the final one. Many things will dry up before the last times, just as rivers dry up, and from blue wholesome flowing water-courses they become dusty mould and arid stones. But you will still be a river resounding My word and reflecting My light. You will be the supreme light left to remind people of Christ. Because you will be a completely spiritual light and in the last times there will be a struggle of darkness against light, of the flesh against the spirit. Those who persevere in faith, will find strength, hope and comfort in what you have left after you, and which will still be you… and above all will still be Me, because you and I love each other, and where you are I am, and where I am you are. I promised Peter that My Church, which will have My Stone as its head and foundation, will not be demolished by the repeated and fiercer and fiercer assaults of Hell, but now I tell you that what will still be I, and that you will leave as light for those seeking the Light, will not be destroyed, notwithstanding that Hell will try to annihilate it in every way. Nay: even more! Also those who believe in Me in an imperfect manner, because although they accept Me they will not accept My Peter, will always turn to your

lighthouse like boats without pilots and without compass, which steer in their storms towards a light, because light means also salvation. »

« But what shall I leave, my Lord? I am… poor… ignorant… I have but love… »

« There you are: you will leave love. And the love for your Jesus will be word. And many, also among those who will not belong to My Church, who will not belong to any church, but will seek light and comfort as incentives to their unsatisfied spirits, for need of compassion in their grief, will come to you and will find Me. »

« I wish the first to find You were these cruel Judaeans, these Pharisees and scribes… But I am not of so much use… »

« Nothing can be added to a full vessel. But do not be discouraged… But here we are at Joseph's. Knock and let us go in. »

It is a narrow tall house, with a low storehouse on one side, ranksmelling with stacked goods; and beside the latter there is a yard which is dark because of the wall dominating it and looks almost like an inn, as inns were in those days: porticoes for goods, stables for donkeys, small rooms or dormitories for guests. Here there is a badly paved yard, a basin, two low dark stables, a rustic roofing as portico attached to the house and with a rough door opening into the storehouse. And beyond it, the house I have mentioned, old and dark, with a narrow tall door which opens onto three stone steps worn by use.

John knocks at the door and waits until a peep-hole is opened and the wrinkled face of an old woman looks through it in the dim light: « Oh! John! I'll open at once. God be with you » utters the mouth in the wrinkled face, and the door is opened with the loud noise of bolts.

« I am not alone, Mary. The Master is with me. »

« Peace also to Him, the honour of Galilee, and happy is the day bringing the feet of the Holy One to the house of a true Israelite. Come in, Lord. I am going to inform Joseph at once. He is making the last deliveries because the sun sets early in the sad month of Ethanim. »

« Leave him to his work, woman. We are stopping here until tomorrow. »

« A great joy for us. We have been waiting for You for a long time. And also a few days ago Your brother Joseph sent for news of You. But my husband will give You better information. Now, You can stay here… And I will leave You, Lord, because I am finishing baking the bread. It must be baked before sunset. If there is anything You need, John knows where to find me. »

« Go in peace. We do not need anything except hospitality. »

They remain alone for some time. Then a little swarthy face appears from behind the curtain separating the room from a corridor

and casts sidelong glances, fearful and curious at the same time.

« Who is that boy? » Jesus asks John.

« I don't know, Lord. He was not here on previous occasions. It is true that since I have been with You, I have never come here on my father's business. Come here, child. »

The boy comes forward with short steps.

« Who are you? »

« I am not telling you. »

« Why? »

« I don't want to hear bad words said to me. If you say them, I will answer back, and Joseph does not want that. »

« That's something new! Master, what do You think of that? » and John laughs, amused as he is with the reasons of the little fellow.

Jesus also smiles and lifts His hand to draw the child to Himself and watches him. He then says: « And do you know who I am? »

« Yes, I know! You are the Messiah, Who will conquer all the world, then no bad words will be spoken to children like me. »

« You are not from Israel, are you? »

« I am circumcised… and it was very painful. But… but hunger also was painful and… and not to have mummy any more… and nobody… But it hurts also to hear that one… that we… » he weeps having lost his primitive self-confidence.

« He must be a foreign orphan, John. Joseph must have accepted him out of pity and had him circumcised… » explains Jesus to John, who is amazed at the child's reasoning and tears. And Jesus lifts the boy bodily and puts him on His knees. « Tell Me your name, child. I love you. Jesus loves all children and little orphans in particular. I have one as well, and his name is Marjiam and he… »

« And I, too, because I (his thin voice becomes a hardly audible whisper) because I am a Roman… »

« I told you. And you are an orphan, are you not? »

« Yes… I do not remember my father. My mother… yes, I remember her. She died when I had already grown up… and I was left all alone, and nobody wanted me. From Caesarea on foot, following wayfarers, after the master had gone far away. And so hungry. And if I said my name, blows… Because they understood by my name, eh?! Then I came here, for a feast, and I was hungry. I went into the stables with a caravan and I hid in the straw to eat the forage and carobs of the donkeys. And a donkey bit me and I screamed and they rushed in and wanted to hit me. But Joseph said: "No, He has done it and He says that we must do what He does. And I am taking the boy and will make him an Israelite". And he took me and looked after me with Mary and he gave me another name because mine… But my mother called me Martial… » and tears begin to stream down his cheeks once again.

« And I will call you Martial as your mother did. It was very kind

of Joseph to do what he did. You must love him. »

« Yes, but I must love You more. He says so. He always says: "if one day you should meet Jesus of Nazareth, the Messiah, love Him with your whole being, because it is through Him that you have been saved from error". Mary, in the other room, was saying to the servant that the Messiah was in the house, and I came to see who had saved me. »

« I did not know that Joseph had done this. He was so… stingy… I would never have thought that he could… Poor Joseph! Stingy and disgusted with his sons. They had no respect for his grey hair. »

« I know. But see? Perhaps this child instils new life into him and… he forgets. God rewards him thus for what he did for the boy. What is your name, now? »

« An ugly name. I like only the beginning of it, because it is like mine: Manasseh is my name!… But Mary, who understands, calls me "Man". » And the boy repeats it with such a desolate expression that Jesus and John cannot help smiling.

And Jesus to comfort him explains: « Manasseh is a name with a kind meaning for us. It means: the Lord has made me forget all my suffering. Joseph gave it to you meaning that you will make him forget all his grief. And you will do so, My child, to be grateful to him. You yourself with your new name say that the Lord has loved you so much that he has given you a new father, a new mother and a home. Is it not so? »

« Yes, when it is explained thus, yes… But Joseph says that I must forget also my house. I do not want to forget my mother! »

Jesus looks at John, and John looks at the Master and above the dark head of the boy they exchange meaningful glances…

« Your mother is not to be forgotten. Joseph did not make himself clear, or, more likely, you have misunderstood him. He certainly meant that you must forget all the grief of the past, the sorrow for your house, because now you have this one and you must be happy. »

« Ah! that's all right. And Mary is good to me and makes me happy. Even now she is baking cakes. I will go and see whether they are ready and I will bring some to You as well » and he slides down from Jesus' knees and runs out of the room. The noise of his bare feet fades away in the long corridor.

« There is always this hard tendency even in the best among us, They pretend what is impossible! The children of God's people are more severe than God Himself! Poor child! Can one expect a child to forget his mother because he is now circumcised? I will tell Joseph. »

« I did not really know that he had done this. My father, like many Galileans, comes here at festivals. And he has not spoken to me about this as if he knew nothing about it… But I hear Joseph's

voice… »

Jesus stands up and so does John, ready to greet with due respect the landlord who is coming in and who, in turn, bows repeatedly and ends by kneeling at Jesus' feet.

« Stand up, Joseph. I have come, as you see. »

« Forgive me if I kept You waiting. Friday is always a busy day! Hail, John. Have you news of Zebedee? »

« Not since the Tabernacles, when I saw him. »

« Well, I can tell you that he is well and so is Salome. Fresh news. This morning's. With the last delivery of fish. And I can also tell You, Master, that Your relatives are all well at Nazareth. The man who came will depart the day after the Sabbath. If you wish to send word… Are you alone? »

« No. The others will be here shortly… »

« Very well! There is room for everybody. This is a faithful house. I am sorry that Mary has been busy baking the bread and I with sales. We left you all alone… We failed to honour and keep You company as befits a guest. And a great guest! »

« A son of God like you, Joseph. Those who follow the Law of God are all equal. »

« Eh! no. You are You. I am not a fool like these Judaeans. You are the Messiah! »

« That is by the will of God. But by My will and duty I am a son of the Law like you. »

« Eh! Those who slander You cannot say and do what You are saying now and You always do! »

« But you do much of what I teach. I have seen the boy, Joseph… »

« Ah! Have You seen him? He came! He knows that I do not want that! In Your case… I am glad. But it might have been someone else… »

« So? What would have happened? »

« That… I do not like that, that's it! »

« Why, Joseph? Not to be praised? Your thought is praiseworthy. But the child might think that you are ashamed to show him… »

« And it's true! »

« True? Why? Tell Me. »

« Well. The boy is not a Hebrew born of Hebrews, not even of proselytes, or of a Hebrew mother and heathen father. He is the son of two Romans, a freed couple who lived in the house of a Roman at Caesarea on Sea. He kept the child while he remained there. But when he went away, he left the boy who remained alone. The Hebrews obviously would not accept him. The Romans… You know what the Romans are like… And those Romans of Caesarea above all! The boy, begging… »

« Yes, I know. He arrived here and You accepted him. God has marked your deed in Heaven. »

« And I had him circumcised! And I changed his name. His name! Pagan! Idolatrous! But I do not want him to mix with people and to remember his past. »

« Why, Joseph! » Jesus asks kindly and He continues: « The boy suffers for that. He remembers his mother. It is understandable! »

« But it is also understandable that I should not wish to be criticised for accepting a… »

« An innocent. Nothing else, Joseph. Why are you afraid of the opinion of men, when a higher judgement, the divine one, confirms that your action is a holy one? Why are you ashamed, out of respect for public opinion, or for fear of retaliation, of a good deed? Why do you want to set for the boy an example of duplicity, such as arises from changing his name and cancelling his past, out of fear of being prejudiced? Why do you want to instil into the child contempt for his father and mother? See, Joseph, you have accomplished a praiseworthy deed, but you are covering it with dust, with such… imperfect ideas. You imitated one of My actions. You received My words. Which is good. But why do you not make My imitation perfect by completing it candidly and saying: "Yes. The boy was a Roman. And I did not feel disgust at him, because he is a son of the Creator like you. I only wanted him to be in our Law and I had him circumcised"? Really… The true circumcision is about to come and the new incision will be made in men's hearts, from which the suffocating ring of treble concupiscence will be removed, thus even if the child had remained innocent until that time… But I do not wish to reproach you for that. You, a Hebrew, did the right thing in making him a Hebrew. But leave him his name. Oh! In future how many people named Martial, and Caius, and Felix, and Cornelius, and Claudius and so forth, will belong to the Christ and to Heaven! That is possible also for the boy, who knows nothing about Hebrews and Gentiles, and who will become of age when the new and true Law will be established with the new Temple and new priests, and not as you think, and he will be examined by God and found worthy of His new Temple. Leave him with the name given to him by his mother. It is still a motherly caress to him. I understand what you meant by calling him Manasseh. But let him be Martial. And to those who ask you about him, you may say: "Yes, he is Martial. Almost like the disciple of the Christ, the boy to whom Mary gave that name". Be brave in goodness, Joseph. And you will be great, so great. »

« Master… as You wish. I do not want to upset You. And do You think that… I did the right thing also as a man? »

« Yes, you did. Your sorrow has made you good. So everything you have done is well done. And this deed is a good one. »

Some knocks at the main door interrupt the conversation.

507. The Old Priest Matan (or Natan).

8th October 1946.

When Peter enters the house, he has the same depressed gesture as he had at the Jordan after wading at Bethabara: as if he were exhausted he throws himself onto the first seat he finds, and holds his head in his hands. The others are not so dejected, but they are all more or less upset, pale looking, I would say bewildered. The sons of Alphaeus, James of Zebedee and Andrew hardly reply to the greetings of Joseph of Sephoris and of his wife, who arrives with an old maidservant and some new bread still warm and various foodstuffs. There are traces of tears on Marjiam's cheeks. Isaac rushes towards Jesus, takes His hand and caressing it he whispers: « It is always like the night of the slaughter… And You are safe once again. Oh! my Lord, for how long? For how long will You be able to save Yourself? » His words make the others talkative and they all begin to speak, although confusedly, telling of the ill-treatments, threats and fear they suffered…

There is another knock at the door.

« Alas, have they followed us?! I said that it was wise to come few at a time!… » says the Iscariot.

« Yes, it would have been better. They are shadowing us all the time. But now… » says Bartholomew.

Joseph himself, although somewhat reluctantly, goes to look at the peep-hole, while his wife says: « From the terrace you can descend to the stables and thence into the rear kitchen garden. I will show you… » But while she sets out, her husband exclaims: « Joseph the Elder! What an honour! » and he opens the door letting in Joseph of Arimathea.

« Peace to You, Master. I was there and I saw… Manaen met me while I was coming out of the Temple disgusted to death, as I was not able to intervene, to do anything, in order to be more useful to You, and… Oh! you are here as well, Judas of Kerioth? You could do it, since you are the friend of so many! Do you not feel it is your duty, as you are His apostle? »

« You are a disciple… »

« No. If I were, I would follow Him like many others. I am a friend of His. »

« It's the same thing. »

« No. Lazarus also is His friend, but you are not going to tell me that he is a disciple… »

« He is, in his soul. »

« All those who are not demons are disciples of His word, because they realise that it is the word of Wisdom. »

The petty quarrel between Joseph and Judas of Kerioth comes to an end as Joseph of Sephoris, who only now realises that something unpleasant has taken place, questions this one and that

one with interest and some sorrow. « Joseph of Alphaeus must be told! He must be told. And I will entrust… What do you want of me, Joseph? » he asks addressing the Elder who has touched his shoulder as if he wanted to ask him something.

« Nothing. I only wanted to congratulate you on your healthy look. This is a good Israelite: faithful and just in everything. Eh! I know. We can say of him that God has tested and known him… »

Another knock at the door. The two Josephs go together towards the door to open it and I see Joseph of Arimathea bend to say something in the ear of the other one, who reacts with great surprise and turns round for a moment to look at the apostles. He then opens the door.

Nicodemus and Manaen come in followed by all the shepherd disciples present in Jerusalem, that is, Jonathan and the exdisciples of the Baptist. Then, with them, there is John, the priest, with another very old man and Nicolaus. And, in the rear, Nike with the young girl entrusted to her by Jesus, and Annaleah with her mother. They remove the veils covering their faces, which look upset.

« Master! What is happening? I heard… From people first and then from Manaen… The town is full of this rumour, like a buzzing beehive and those who love You are rushing about looking for You wherever they think You may be. They have certainly come to your house as well, Joseph… I was going to Lazarus' house, too… It's too much! How did You manage to get out of trouble? »

« Providence watched over Me. The women disciples should not weep but they ought to bless the Eternal Father and fortify their hearts. And thanks and blessings to all of you. Love and justice are not completely dead in Israel. And that consoles Me. »

« Yes, Master, but do not go to the Temple any more. Stay away for a long time, and don't go there! » They all agree in repeating the words and the anxious « don't go » re-echoes among the robust walls of the old house in voices of imploring warning.

Little Martial, hidden goodness knows where, hears the noise and rushes towards the room out of curiosity, and peeps through the aperture of the curtains. He sees Mary and goes towards her taking shelter in her arms for fear of being reproached by Joseph of Sephoris. But Joseph is too excited and busy listening to this one and that one, giving advice and approving, and so forth, to pay attention to him, and he notices him only when the boy, to whom old Mary has said something, goes to Jesus and kisses Him throwing his arms round His neck. Jesus embraces him with one arm, drawing him towards Himself, while He replies to the many people who are telling Him what they think is best to do.

« No. I am not moving from here. You may go to Lazarus, who was waiting for Me, and tell him that I cannot go. I, a Galilean and

a friend of the family for years, am staying here until tomorrow evening. Then I will decide where to go… »

« You always say so, then You go back there, but we will not let You go back again. At least I will not. I really thought You were doomed… » says Peter while two tears well in his bulging eyes.

« I have never seen the like. And it's enough. I have made up my mind. If You do not reject me… I am too old for the altar, by now, but I am still strong enough to die for You. And I will die, if necessary, between the sanctuary and the altar, like wise Zechariah, or Onias the defensor of the Temple and of the Treasury, I will die outside the sacred enclosure to which I have devoted all my life. But You will open a holier place to me! Oh! I can no longer bear the abomination! Why did my eyes have to see so much? The abomination seen by the Prophet is already within the walls and it is rising and rising like the impetuous water of a flood on the point of submerging a town! It is rising and rising, invading courts and porches, overflowing steps, advancing further and further! It is rising and is already about to strike against the Holy of Holies! The muddy water is already lapping on the stones paving the holy place! Their precious hues are darkened! The feet of the Priest are soiled with it! His tunic is soaked with it! And the Ephod is made dirty! The stones of the Rational are dimmed by it and its words can no longer be read! Oh! The waves of the abomination are rising to the face of the High Priest and soiling it, and the Holiness of the Lord is under a crust of mud and his tiara is like a piece of cloth which has fallen into a muddy pond. Mud! Mud! But is it rising from outside, or from the top of Moria is it flowing over the town and all over Israel? Father Abraham! Father Abraham! Did you not want to light the fire of the sacrifice there, so that the holocaust of your faithful heart might shine brightly? Slush now gurgles where the fire was to be! Isaac is among us, and the people are immolating him. But if the Victim is pure… if the Victim is pure… the sacrificers are filthy. Anathema on us! On the mountain the Lord will see the abomination of His people!… Ah! » and the old man who is with John, the priest, drops on the ground covering his face and weeping desolately.

« I brought him to You… He has been wishing for that for such a long time… But today, after what he saw, no one could hold him any longer… Old Matan (or Natan) is often inspired with prophetic spirit, and if his eyesight is becoming dimmer and dimmer, his spiritual vision is becoming brighter and brighter. Accept my friend, Lord » says John, the priest.

« I do not reject anybody. Stand up, priest, and raise your spirit. High above there is no mud, and he who knows how to stay high above is not touched by mud. »

The old man before getting up, full of veneration, takes the lowest

hem of Jesus' tunic and kisses it.

The women, and Annaleah in particular, are weeping under their veils, still deeply moved and the words of the old man increase their weeping. Jesus calls them, and with lowered heads they come near Him from the corner where they were staying. If Nike and Annaleah's mother are successful in controlling their tears, concealing them almost completely, the young woman disciple is sobbing loudly, heedless of those who are watching her with different feelings.

« Forgive her, Master. She owes her life to You and she loves You. It is impossible for her to believe that they can harm You. And then she has been left so… lonely and so… sad after… » says her mother.

« Oh! it is not that! No, it is not that! Lord! Master! My Saviour! I… I… » Annaleah is unable to speak, partly because of her sobbing, partly out of shame or something else.

« She was afraid of reprisals because she is a disciple. That is certainly the reason. Many are going away because of that… » says the Iscariot.

« Oh! no! Even less so! Man, you do not understand anything, or you lend your thoughts to other people. But You know, Lord, why I am weeping. I was afraid that You were dead and that You had forgotten the promise… » she says, ending with a sigh, after uttering the first words vigorously, rebelling against Judas' insinuation.

Jesus replies to her: « I never forget. Be not afraid. Go home, in peace, awaiting the hour of My triumph and of your peace. Go. The sun is about to set. Withdraw, women. And may peace be with you. »

« Lord, I am not happy to leave You… » says Nike.

« Obedience is love. »

« True, Master. But why can I not follow You like Eliza? »

« Because you are as useful to Me here as she is at Nob. Go, Nike. Let some men escort the women so that no one may importune them. »

Manaen and Jonathan are ready to obey, but Jesus stops Jonathan asking him: « So, are you going back to Galilee? »

« Yes, Master, the day after the Sabbath. My master is sending me. »

« Have you room in the wagon? »

« I am by myself, Master. »

« Then you will take Marjiam and Isaac with you. You, Isaac, know what you have to do. And you, too, Marjiam… »

« Yes, Master » reply the two, Isaac with his mild smile, Marjiam with a tremor of tears in his voice and on his lips.

Jesus caresses him, and Marjiam, forgetting all reservedness,

throws himself on His chest saying: « Leave You… now that everybody is persecuting You!… Oh! my Master! I shall never see You again!… You have been all my Good. I found everything in You!… Why are You sending me away? Let me die with You! Of what importance is life to me, if I do not have You? »

« I say to you what I said to Nike. Obedience is love. »

« I will go! Bless me, Jesus! »

Jonathan goes away with Manaen, Nike and the other three women. Also the other disciples go away in small groups.

Only when the room, previously overcrowded, is almost empty, the absence of Judas of Kerioth is noticed. And many are surprised, because he was there shortly before, and he has not been given any order.

« He must have gone to do some shopping for us » says Jesus to prevent comments, and He continues to speak to Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, the only ones left besides the eleven apostles and Marjiam, who is close to Jesus, anxious to enjoy His company during these last hours. Jesus is thus between Marjiam, an adolescent, and Martial, a boy, both swarthy, lean, equally unhappy in their youth, and equally accepted by two good Israelites in Jesus' name.

Joseph of Sephoris and his wife have prudently withdrawn to leave the Master free.

Nicodemus asks: « But who is this boy? »

« He is Martial. A boy that Joseph has taken as son. »

« I did not know. »

« No one, or almost no one, knows. »

« He is a very humble man. Anybody else would have made his gesture known » remarks Joseph.

« Do you think so?… Go, Martial. Take Marjiam to see the house… » says Jesus. And when the two have gone, He resumes speaking: « You are mistaken, Joseph. How difficult it is to judge according to justice! »

« But, Lord! To take in an orphan, because he is certainly an orphan, and not boast about it, is surely humility. »

« The boy, his name tells you, is not from Israel… »

« Ah! now I see. He does the right thing then in keeping him hidden. »

« But he has been circumcised… »

« It does not matter. You know… Also John of Endor was… But he was the cause of reproach for You. Joseph, a Galilean in addition, might have trouble, despite the circumcision. There are so many orphans in Israel as well… Certainly with that name… and his features… »

« How "Israel"-minded you all are, even the best! Even in doing good deeds you do not understand and you are not able to be perfect!

Do you not yet understand that One Only is the Father of Heaven, and that each creature is His child? Do you not yet understand that man can have only one reward and only one punishment and that it is really a reward or a punishment? Why become slaves to the fear of men? But that is the fruit of the corruption of the divine Law, which has been altered and oppressed to such an extent by petty human laws, as to dull and obscure even the thought of the just people who practise it. In the Mosaic Law, therefore divine, in the pre-Mosaic law, merely moral or risen through celestial inspiration, is it perhaps stated that those who did not belong to Israel, could not become part of it? Do we not read in Genesis: "When they are eight days old all your male children must be circumcised, no matter whether they be born within the household or bought from a foreigner not one of your descendants"? That was stated. Any further addition is your own. I told Joseph and I am telling you. The ancient circumcision will soon no longer have much importance. A new and truer one will replace it and on a nobler part. But while the first one lasts and you, out of loyalty to the Lord, apply it to males born of you or adopted by you, do not be ashamed of having done it also on the flesh of other races. The flesh belongs to the sepulchre, the soul to God. The flesh is circumcised because it is not possible to circumcise what is spiritual. But the holy sign shines on the spirit. And the spirit comes from the Father of all men. Meditate on that. »

There is silence, then Joseph of Arimathea stands up and says: « I am going, Master. Come to my house tomorrow. »

« No, it is better if I do not come. »

« Then come to me, to the house on the Mount of Olives, on the road to Bethany. There is peace and… »

« No, not even there. I will go to the Mount of Olives, to pray… But My spirit is seeking solitude. Please excuse Me. »

« As You wish, Master. But… do not go to the Temple. Peace to You. »

« Peace to you. »

The two go away…

« I would like to know where Judas has gone! » exclaims James of Zebedee. « I would say to the poor people. But his purse is here. »

« Do not worry… He will come… »

Mary of Joseph comes in with some lamps, as the light no longer shines through a thick sheet of mica placed as skylight in the large room, and also the two boys come back in.

« I am glad to leave You with one whose name is almost like mine. So, when You call him, You will remember me » says Marjiam.

Jesus draws him to Himself.

Judas also come in. The maidservant opened the door to him. He

is bold, smiling, frank! « Master, I wanted to see… The storm has calmed down. And I escorted the women… That virgin is so fearful! I did not say anything to You because You would have stopped me, and I wanted to see whether there was any danger for You. But no one thinks any more about it. The streets are empty on Sabbaths. »

« Very well. Let us stay in peace here now and tomorrow… »

« You are not going back to the Temple already! » shout the apostles.

« No. To our synagogue, as good Galilean believers. »

508. The Cure of the Man Born Blind.

10th October 1946.

Jesus goes out with His apostles and Joseph of Sephoris, turning His steps towards the synagogue. The clear limpid day makes people glad, like a promise of springtime after windy cloudy winter days. Thus many people of Jerusalem are in the streets, some going to synagogues, some coming back from them or from other places, some with their families, wishing to leave the town and enjoy the sunshine in the country. From Herod's Gate, which is visible from the house of Joseph of Sephoris, one can see people go out to enjoy themselves beyond the walls, in the open: a plunge into the green vegetation, into the free open space, away from the narrow streets between high buildings. I think that the rural strip which ran around Jerusalem was purposely wanted by the citizens, who wanted to conciliate the walking limitations of the Sabbath with their wish for air and sunshine, to be enjoyed in the open, and not only on roof-terraces of houses. But Jesus is not going towards Herod's Gate. On the contrary He turns His back to it, bending His steps towards the town centre.

But He has only taken a few steps in the wider street, into which opens the little street where Joseph of Sephoris' house is, when Judas of Kerioth draws His attention to a young man who is proceeding towards them feeling his way by touching the wall with a stick, raising up his face deprived of eyes, in the gait typical of blind people. His garments are poor, although clean, and he must be well known to many people in Jerusalem, because more than one point him out, and some go towards him saying: « Man, you have lost your way today. You have already passed the Moria streets and you are in Bezetha. »

« I am not begging for alms today » replies the blind man with a smile, and still smiling he proceeds towards the northern part of the town.

« Master, look at him. His eyelids are sealed. Nay, I would say that he has no eyelids at all. His forehead is joined to his cheeks

without any cavity and no eyeballs appear to be underneath. The poor fellow was born like that. And he will die like that without seeing even once the light of the sun or the face of a man. Now tell me, Master. He has certainly sinned to be punished so severely. But if he was born blind, as he definitely was, can he have sinned before being born? Perhaps his parents committed sin and God punished them by allowing him to be born thus? »

Also the other apostles and Isaac and Marjiam press round the Master to hear His reply. And two well-to-do men of Jerusalem, who were a little behind the blind man, quicken their paces hastening towards Jesus, as if they were attracted by the height of the Master, Who towers above the crowd. There is also Joseph of Arimathea, who remains at a distance, and leaning against a main door raised on two steps, he looks around watching all the faces.

Jesus replies and His words are clearly heard in the silence which has been created: « Neither he nor his parents have sinned more than any man sins, and perhaps they have sinned less. Because poverty often refrains from sin. But he was born thus, so that once again the power and works of God may be revealed through him. I am the Light which has come to the world so that those of the world who have forgotten God, or have lost His spiritual image, may see and remember Him, and those who seek God, or already belong to Him, may be confirmed in their faith and love. The Father sent Me that I may complete the knowledge of God in Israel and in the world, in the time still granted to Israel. I, therefore, must accomplish the work of Him Who sent Me, testifying that I can do what He can, because I am one with Him, and the world may know and see that the Son is not different to the Father, and may believe in Me for what I am. Later the night will come when it will no longer be possible to work, and it will be dark, and those who have not engraved in themselves My sign and their faith in Me, will no longer be able to do so in the darkness, confusion, sorrow, desolation and ruin, which will overwhelm these places and astonish spirits with the orgasm of anguish. But as long as I am in the world, I am Light and Witness, Word, Way and Life, Wisdom, Power and Mercy. So go, meet the man born blind and bring him here to Me. »

« Will you go, Andrew. I want to stay here and see what the Master does » replies Judas pointing at the Master, Who has bent down on the dusty road, has spat on the ground and with His finger is mixing the dust with the spittle forming a pellet of mud. While Andrew, who is always obliging, goes to get the blind man, who is about to turn into the narrow street where the house of Joseph of Sephoris is, Jesus spreads the mud on both forefingers and remains thus, with His hands raised, as priests hold them at Holy Mass, at the Gospel or at the Epistle. Judas withdraws from

his place saying to Matthew and Peter: « Since you are not very tall, come here and you will see better. » And he stands at the back, almost concealed by the sons of Alphaeus and by Bartholomew, who are tall.

Andrew comes back holding by the hand the blind man who is anxiously repeating: « I don't want money. Let me go. I know where the man named Jesus is. And I am going to ask… »

« This is Jesus, He is here in front of you » says Andrew stopping in front of the Master.

Jesus, contrary to His usual habit, does not ask the man anything. He at once spreads the little mud, which He has on His forefingers, on the closed eyelids and says: « And now go, as quickly as you can, to the Pool of Siloam, and do not stop to speak to anybody. »

The blind man, his face soiled with mud, remains perplexed for a moment and moves his lips to speak. He then closes them and obeys. His first steps are slow, as if he were pensive or disappointed. Then he quickens his pace, grazing the wall with his stick, walking faster and faster, as far as it is possible for a blind man, as if he felt being guided…

The two men of Jerusalem laugh sarcastically shaking their heads and go away. Joseph of Arimathea, and this amazes me, follows them without even a word of greeting to the Master, retracing his steps, that is, going towards the Temple, whilst he was coming from that direction. Thus, the blind man, the two men and Joseph of Arimathea go towards the southern part of the town, while Jesus goes westwards and I lose sight of Him, because the Lord wants me to follow the blind man and his followers.

After passing through Bezetha they all enter the valley which lies between Moria and Zion - I think that in the past I heard it being called Tyropoeon - they go along it as far as Ophel, they walk round it, they come out on the street leading to the Siloam Pool, always in the following order: first the blind man who must be well known in that quarter of common people, then the two men, last, at some distance, Joseph of Arimathea.

Joseph stops near a poor house, and he is half-hidden by a box hedge that sticks out surrounding the little kitchen garden of the poor house. The two men instead go near the pool and watch the blind man who cautiously approaches the large pool and feeling the damp wall puts one hand into the cistern and withdraws it dripping water and washes his eyes once, twice, three times. At the third time he drops his stick and presses his face with the other hand, uttering a cry which sounds like a painful one.

He then removes his hands slowly and his previous painful cry changes into a shout of joy: « Oh! Most High! I can see! » and he throws himself on the ground overwhelmed with emotion, his

hands shielding his eyes and pressing his temples, anxious to see but troubled by the light, and he repeats: « I can see! I can see! So this is the earth! And this is the light! This is the grass which I knew only through its coolness… » He stands up and stoops, like one carrying a weight, his weight of joy, he goes to the stream of the overflowing water and looks at it flowing brightly and joyfully and he whispers: « And this is the water… There you are! That's how I felt it with my fingers (he dips his hand into it) it is cold and cannot be held, but I did not know you… Ah! Beautiful! Beautiful! How beautiful everything is! » He looks up and sees a tree… he approaches it, touches it, stretches out a hand, draws a little branch to himself, looks at it and laughs, laughs, he screens his eyes with his hand and looks at the sky, at the sun, and two tears stream down from his virgin eyelids open to contemplate the world… And he lowers his eyes on the grass where a flower undulates on its stem and sees himself reflected in the water, and he looks at himself and says: « That's how I am! » and he is amazed when he sees a dove come to drink a little farther away, and a little goat tearing off the last leaves of a wild rose bush, and a woman coming to the pool with a baby on her breast. And that woman reminds him of his mother, whose face is unknown to him and raising his arms towards the sky he shouts: « May You be blessed, Most High, because of light, because of my mother, because of Jesus! » and he runs away, leaving his now useless stick on the ground…

The two men have not waited to see all that. As soon as they realised that the man could see, they ran towards the town. Joseph instead remains until the end, and when the blind man - who is no longer blind - darts past him towards the labyrinth of lanes of the working-class neighbourhood of Ophel, he leaves his place and retraces his steps towards the town, looking very pensive…

The Ophel suburb, which is always very noisy, is now in a real turmoil: people are running in all directions, asking questions or replying to them.

« You may have mistaken him for somebody else… »

« No, I am sure. I spoke to him saying: "But is it really you, Sidonia, nicknamed Bartholmai?", and he replied: "It's me". I wanted to ask him how it happened, but he ran away. »

« Where is he now? »

« He is certainly with his mother. »

« Who has seen him? » ask some people who have just arrived.

« I did. I did » reply many.

« But how did it happen? »

«… I saw him running without his stick, with two eyes in his face and I said: "Look! Bartholmai would be like that if… " »

« I tell you that I am still trembling. He came in shouting: "Mother, I see you!". »

« A great joy for his parents. He will now be able to help his father and earn his food… »

« That poor woman! She was so overwhelmed with joy that she was not feeling well. Oh! There is one thing! I had gone to ask for some salt and… »

« Let us go and hear the man himself… »

Joseph of Arimathea is caught in the uproar and, I do not know whether out of curiosity or spirit of imitation, he follows the crowd and ends up in a blind alley, which would lead to the Kidron, if it continued. The people crowd there overcoming with their voices the rustling noise of the water of the torrent, swollen with the autumn rains. And Joseph arrives there when, from another lane joining with this one, the two men previously mentioned come with three more: a scribe, a priest and another one whom I cannot identify by his garments. They elbow their way through the crowds arrogantly and they try to enter the house crammed with people.

The house consists of a large kitchen as black as tar, with a corner cut off by a rustic wooden partition, beyond which there is a couch and a door opening into another room with a bigger bed. Through a door on the opposite wall one can see a small kitchen garden only a few square metres large. That is all.

The cured blind man is speaking leaning on a table, replying to those asking him questions, all poor people like himself, the common people of Jerusalem, of this suburb, which is perhaps the poorest in town. His mother is looking at him, standing beside him, and is weeping drying her tears with her veil. His father, a man worn out by work, is rubbing his beard with a shaky hand.

It is impossible also for the overbearing Judaeans and doctors to go into the house and the five are compelled to listen to the words of the cured man outside.

« How were they opened? That man whose name is Jesus dirtied my eyes with some damp earth and He said to me: "Go and wash yourself in the pool of Siloam". I went there, I washed myself, my eyes opened and I could see. »

« But how did you manage to find the Rabbi? You always said that you were unlucky, because you never met Him, not even when He used to pass here going to Jonah at Gethsemane. And today, now that one never knows where He is… »

« Eh! yesterday evening one of His disciples came and he gave me two coins saying: "Why don't you try to see?". I said to him: "I have tried. But I never find Jesus Who works miracles. I have been looking for Him since He cured Annaleah, a girl of my suburb, but if I come here, He is there… and he said to me: "I am one of His apostles and He does what I want. Come to Bezetha tomorrow and look for the house of Joseph the Galilean, the one who sells dried

fish, Joseph of Sephoris, near Herod's Gate and the arch in the square, on the eastern side, and you will notice that sooner or later He will be passing there or going into the house and I will mention you to the Master". I said: "But tomorrow is the Sabbath". I wanted to say that He would not do anything on a Sabbath. He replied to me: "If you want to be cured, that is the day, because afterwards we are leaving the town and you do not know whether you will ever meet Him again". I said also: "I know that they are persecuting Him. I heard about it at the gates of the Temple enclosure, where I go to beg. So I say that now that they persecute Him, He will be less willing to be persecuted and He will not cure me on a Sabbath". And he replied: "Do as I tell you and on a Sabbath you will see the sun". And I went. Who would not have gone, when one of His apostles says so? He also said to me: "I am the one to whom He listens most and I came specially because I feel sorry for you and because I want His power to be displayed brightly after they despised Him. You, who were born blind, will make it shine. I know what I am saying. Come and you will see". And I went and I had not yet arrived at Joseph's house, when a man took me by the hand, but by his voice I knew that he was not the man who spoke to me yesterday, and he said to me: "Come with me, brother" but I did not want to go, I thought he wanted to give me some bread and money, perhaps some clothes, and I repeatedly asked him to let me go, because I had heard where I could find the man named Jesus, and he said to me: "This is Jesus, here, in front of you". But I could not see anything, because I was blind. I felt two fingers, covered with wet earth, touch me here and here, and I heard a voice say: "Go to the Siloam pool quickly and wash yourself and do not speak to anybody" and I did so. But I was down-hearted, because I was hoping to see at once, and I almost concluded that it was the joke of some heartless youngsters and I almost decided not to go. But I heard a kind of a voice within me say: "Hope and obey", so I went to the pool and I washed myself and I could see. » And the young man stops ecstatically remembering the joy of his first vision…

« Let that man come out. We want to question him » shout the five men.

The young fellow elbows his way through the crowd and goes to the door.

« Where is He Who cured you? »

« I don't know » replies the youth to whom a friend whispered: « They are scribes and priests. »

« What do you mean you do not know? You were saying just now that you knew. Do not lie to the doctors of the Law and to the priest! Woe to those who try to deceive the magistrates of the people! »

« I am not deceiving anybody. That disciple said to me: "He is in that house" and it was true because I was near it when I was taken by the hand and led to Him. But I don't know where He is now. The disciple told me that they were going away. He may be already outside the gates. »

« But where was He going? »

« And what do I know about that?! Perhaps He is going to Galilee… considering how He is treated here!… »

« You disrespectful fool, be careful how you speak, you scum of the mob! I asked you which way did He go? »

« But how can you expect me to know, if I was blind? Can a blind man say which way another man is going? »

« All right. Come with us. »

« Where are you taking me? »

« To the chiefs of the Pharisees. »

« Why? What have they got to do with me? Did they perhaps cure me, and I have to thank them? When I was blind and I used to beg, my hands never felt one of their coins, my ears never heard a merciful word of theirs, and my heart never felt their love. What shall I say to them? I have only one person to thank, in addition to my father and mother who have loved me, a poor wretch, for so many years. And that is Jesus Who cured me, loving me with His heart, as my parents loved me with theirs. I am not coming to the Pharisees. I am staying with my mother and father, enjoying the sight of their faces, while they delight in looking at my newly born eyes, so many springtimes after the one in which I was born but I did not see the light. »

« Stop chattering. Come and follow us. »

« No! I am not coming! Have you ever wiped a tear of my mother, depressed by my misfortune, or a bead of perspiration of my father, exhausted with work? I can do that now with my present appearance, and according to you I should leave them and follow you? »

« We order you to come. Orders are not given by you, but by the Temple and the chiefs of the people. If the pride of being cured blunts your mind so that you do not remember that we give orders, we will remind you. Come on! Go on! »

« But why must I come with you? What do you want of me? »

« We want you to give evidence of the fact. This is the Sabbath. The deed was accomplished on the Sabbath. It is to be recorded as a sin. A sin of yours and of that satan. »

« You are satans! You are sinners! And I should come and testify against Him Who helped me? You must be drunk! I will come to the Temple. To bless the Lord. But not more than that. I have been in the darkness of blindness for many years. But my closed eyelids obscured only my eyes. My intellect has seen the light just the same,

by the grace of God, and it tells me that I must not harm the Only Holy One in Israel. »

« Man, that's enough! Don't you know that there are punishments for those who oppose the magistrates? »

« I know nothing. I am here and I am staying here. And you had better not injure me. You can see that the whole of Ophel is on my side! »

« Yes. Leave him alone! Jackals! He is protected by God. Don't touch him! God is with the poor! God is with us, you profiteers and hypocrites! » The crowd shouts and threatens in one of those spontaneous popular demonstrations which are the outbreak of indignation of humble people against their oppressors, or the explosion of love for their protectors. And they cry out: « Woe betide you if you injure our Saviour! The Friend of the poor! The three times Holy Messiah. Woe to you! We were not afraid of the wrath of Herod or of the Chiefs, when we wanted. We are not afraid of yours, you old toothless hyenas! You jackals with blunt claws! You useless overbearing fellows! Rome does not want tumults and does not oppress the Rabbi, because He is peaceful. But Rome knows you. Go away! Away from the quarters of those whom you oppress with tithes exceeding their means, in order to have money and satisfy your hunger for pleasure and accomplish disgraceful negotiations. You are the descendants of Jason! The descendants of Simon! The torturers of the true Eleazars, of the holy Oniases. You despisers of the prophets, go away! » The tumult becomes fiercer and fiercer.

Joseph of Arimathea, who is crushed against a little wall and so far has been a diligent but passive spectator of the events, climbs on the little wall with agility unforeseeable in an old man and what is more muffled in garments and a wide mantle, and standing on the wall he shouts: « Silence, citizens. And listen to Joseph the Elder! »

One, two, ten heads turn round in the direction of the cry. They see Joseph. They shout his name. The Arimathean must be well known and must stand high in the people's favour because the cries of indignation turn into shouts of joy: « Joseph the Elder is here! Long live Joseph! Peace and long life to the just man! Peace and blessings to the benefactor of the poor! Silence! Joseph is going to speak! Silence! »

The crowd becomes silent with some difficulty and for some moments the rustling of the Kidron can be heard beyond the lane. Everybody is now looking at Joseph, as they have all forgotten what made them look in the opposite direction: the five wretched improvident men who gave rise to the uproar.

« Citizens of Jerusalem, men of Ophel, why are you allowing yourselves to be blinded with suspicion and anger? Why lack

respect and infringe the customs, since you have always been so faithful to the laws of our ancestors? What are you afraid of? Do you perhaps fear the Temple is a Molech who does not give back what he receives? Are you afraid that your judges are all blind, blinder than your friend, blind in their hearts and deaf to justice? Is it not our custom that prodigious events are testified, written and kept by those who are responsible for the Chronicles of Israel? So, also to honour the Rabbi Whom you love, let the miraculously cured man go up to the Temple to give evidence of the work He accomplished. Are you still hesitant? Well I stand surety that no harm will befall Bartholmai. And you know that I do not lie. I will escort him up there like a son dear to me, and then I will bring him back here. Believe me. And do not turn the Sabbath into a day of sin by rebelling against your chiefs. »

« What he says is right! We must not do that. We can believe him. He is a just man. His voice is always predominant in the good resolutions of the Sanhedrin. » The people consult with one another and they end up shouting: « Yes, we will trust our friend to you! » They then address the young man: « Come! Be not afraid. With Joseph of Arimathea you are as safe as you would be with your father and even safer » and they open out so that the young man may go to Joseph, who has come down from his improvised pulpit, and while he passes by they say to him: « We are coming as well. Don't be afraid! »

Joseph, in his beautiful sumptuous woollen clothes, lays one hand on the young man's shoulder and sets out. The grey worn tunic of the young fellow, and his short mantle rub against the dark red wide tunic and the even darker sumptuous mantle of the old member of the Sanhedrin. Behind them there are the five men, then a large crowd from Ophel…

They are now at the Temple, after crossing the central streets, attracting the attention of many people who point out to one another the previously blind man saying: « It's the blind fellow who used to beg! And now he has eyes! Perhaps it's one like him! No. It's certainly the same man and they are taking him to the Temple. Let's go and see » and the train becomes longer and longer until they all disappear within the walls of the Temple.

Joseph leads the young man into a hall, which is not the Sanhedrin, where there are many Pharisees and scribes. Joseph goes in with Bartholmai and the five men follow them. The common people of Ophel are pushed back into the court.

« This is the man. I brought him here myself, because I was present, without being seen, at his meeting with the Rabbi and at his recovery. And I can tell you that it was completely accidental as far as the Rabbi is concerned. The man, you will hear this yourselves, was led or rather invited to go where the Rabbi was,

by Judas of Kerioth, who is known to you. And I heard, and these two who were with me also heard because they were present, how Judas induced Jesus of Nazareth to work the miracle. I now testify here that if there is one who ought to be punished, it is neither the blind man nor the Rabbi, but the man from Kerioth who - God sees whether I am lying in saying what I think - is the only one responsible for what happened, as he provoked it with deliberate manoeuvre. That is my statement. »

« What you state does not cancel the fault of the Rabbi. If one of His disciples sins, the Master must not commit sin. And He sinned by curing this man on a Sabbath. He accomplished a servile work. »

« To spit on the ground is not a servile work. And to touch the eyes of another person is not a servile work either. I am touching the man as well, but I do not think that I am committing a sin. »

« He worked a miracle on the Sabbath. That's why He sinned. »

« To honour the Sabbath by means of a miracle is a grace of God and a sign of His bounty. It is His day. Can the Almighty not celebrate it with a miracle that makes His power shine brightly? »

« We are not here to listen to you. You are not accused. We want to question that man. It's for you to reply. How did you get your eyesight? »

« I have explained that and these people heard me. The disciple of that Jesus said to me yesterday: "Come and I will have you cured". And I came. And I felt some mud being put here and I heard a voice say to me to go to the Siloam pool and wash myself. And I did it and now I see. »

« But do you know who cured you? »

« Of course I do! Jesus. I told you. »

« But do you know exactly who Jesus is? »

« I know nothing. I am poor and ignorant. And up to a short time ago I was blind. I know that. And I know that He cured me. And if He was able to do that, God is certainly with Him. »

« Don't blaspheme! God cannot be with those who do not keep the Sabbath » shout some.

But Joseph and the Pharisees Eleazar, John and Joachim remark: « Neither can a sinner work such prodigies. »

« Have you been seduced as well by that possessed man? »

« No. We are just. And we say that if God cannot be with those who work on the Sabbath, neither can man make a fellow born blind see without the help of God » says Eleazar calmly, and the others nod in assent.

« Are you forgetting about the demon? » shout the evil-minded enemies irritably.

« I cannot believe, neither you believe, that the demon may work a deed capable of making one praise the Lord » says John the Pharisee.

« And who is praising Him? »

« This young man, his relatives, the whole of Ophel, and I with them, and with me all those who are just and God fearing in a holy way » replies Joseph.

The evil-minded ones, now held up to ridicule, not knowing what to object, assail Sidonia nicknamed Bartholmai: « What do you say of Him Who opened your eyes? »

« As far as I am concerned He is a prophet. And He is greater than Elijah with the son of the widow of Zarephath. Because Elijah brought the soul back into the boy. But this Jesus has given me what I had never lost, because I never had it: my eyesight. And if He made my eyes in a flash with nothing, except a little mud, whilst my mother had not been able to make them in nine months with flesh and blood, He must be as great as God Who made man with mud. »

« Go away! Go away! You blasphemer. Liar! Corrupted! » and they eject him as if he were possessed.

« The man is lying. It cannot be true. Everybody knows that a person born blind cannot be cured. It must be one like Bartholmai, and the Nazarene has prepared him… or… Bartholmai has never been blind. »

Upon hearing such an astonishing statement Joseph of Arimathea bursts out: « It is known since the days of Cain that hatred blinds people. But that it makes them fools was not yet known. Do you think it credible that a man may reach maturity pretending that he is blind, just to wait for… a probable and very remote clamorous event? Or that Bartholmai's parents do not recognise their son or that they lend themselves to this deception? »

« Money can do everything. And they are poor. »

« The Nazarene is poorer than they are. »

« You are lying! Sums worthy a Satrap pass through His hands! »

« But don't stay there for a moment. That money is for the poor. It is used for a good purpose, not for falsehood. »

« How you defend Him! And you are one of the Elders! »

« Joseph is right. The truth is to be told whatever the office a man may hold » says Eleazar.

« Go and call the blind man back. Make haste and bring him here again. And let others go to his parents and bring them here » shouts Helkai opening the door and giving orders to some people waiting outside. And his mouth is almost covered with foam, so much is he choking with anger.

Some people run here, some there. The first to come back is Sidonia nicknamed Bartholmai, who is surprised and annoyed. They push him into a corner watching him as a pack of hounds gaze at game… Later, after some time, his parents arrive surrounded by a crowd.

« You two come in. All the others out! »

The two go in looking frightened. They see their son in the corner, unharmed, but under arrest. His mother moans: « Son! And this was to be a happy day for us! »

« Listen to us. Is that man your son? » asks one of the Pharisees rudely.

« Of course he is our son! And who would it be if it were not him? »

« Are you really certain? »

The father and mother are so amazed at the question, that they look at each other before replying.

« Answer my question! »

« Noble Pharisee, do you think that a father and a mother may be deceived with regard to their child? » says the father humbly.

« But… can you swear that… Yes, that for no amount of money you have been asked to say that this is your son, whereas he is one like him? »

« Asked to say? And by whom? Swear? Yes, a thousand times, in the name of the altar and in the Name of God, if you wish so! » His assertion is so resolute that it would discourage the most pigheaded person.

But the Pharisees are not disheartened! They ask: « But was your son not born blind? »

« Yes, he was. His eyelids were closed and there was nothing under them… »

« How come he can now see, he has eyes and his eyelids are open? You are not going to tell me that eyes grow just like that, like flowers at springtime, and that an eyelid opens just like the calyx of a flower!… » says another Pharisee laughing sarcastically.

« We know that this man has really been our son for almost thirty years and that he was born blind, but we do not know how he can now see or who opened his eyes. In any case, ask him. He is not an idiot or a little boy. He is well on in age. Ask him and he will tell you. »

« You are lying. In your house he said how he was cured and by whom. Why do you say that you do not know? » shouts one of the two men who had always followed the blind man.

« We were so dumbfounded with amazement that we did not listen to him » the two reply apologetically.

The Pharisees turn to Sidonia nicknamed Bartholmai saying: « Come here. And give glory to God, if you can! Don't you know that He Who touched your eyes is a sinner? Don't you know? Well, you had better know. We are telling you because we know. »

« Who knows! It may well be as you say. I don't know whether He is a sinner or not. I only know that previously I was blind, and now I can see, and quite clearly. »

« But what did He do to you? How did He open your eyes? »

« I have already told you and you did not listen to me. Now you want to hear it all over again? Why? Do you want to become His disciples? »

« Fool! You can be the disciple of that man. We are the disciples of Moses. And we know everything about Moses and that God spoke to him. But of this man we know nothing, where He comes from and who He is, and no prodigy of Heaven points Him out as a prophet. »

« And that is just what is wonderful! That you do not know where He comes from and you say that no prodigy points Him out as a just man. But He opened my eyes and none of us in Israel had ever been able to do that, not even the love of a mother and the sacrifices of my father. But there is one thing that we all know, both you and I, that is, that God does not hear sinners, but only those who fear God and do His will. In no part of the world it has ever been heard that anyone was able to open the eyes of a man born blind, but this Jesus has done that. If He did not come from God, He would not have been able to do it. »

« You were born a sinner through and through and you are as disfigured in your spirit as you were in your body and even more so, and you pretend to teach us? Go away, cursed abortion and become a demon with your seducer. Go away, all of you, foolish sinful populace! » and they eject the son, father and mother, as if they were three lepers.

The three go away quickly, followed by their friends. But when he is outside the enclosure, Sidonia turns round and says: « And you can stay where you are, and say what you like. The truth is that I see and I praise God for it. You may be demons, not the Good One Who cured me. »

« Be quiet, son! Be quiet! Lest it should be detrimental to us!… » moans his mother.

« Oh! mother! Has the air in that hall poisoned your soul, as you used to teach me to praise God in my misfortune, and now you cannot thank Him in our joy and you are afraid of men? If God has loved me and you so much as to grant us the miracle, will He not be able to defend us from a handful of men? »

« Our son is right, woman. Let us go to our synagogue to praise the Lord, since they have driven us out of the Temple. And let us go at once before the Sabbath is over… »

And hastening their paces they disappear in the lanes in the valley.

509. At Nob. Judas of Kerioth Lies.

11th October 1946.

Jesus is at Nob and He must have been there only for a short time as He is organizing Himself, dividing the twelve apostles into

three groups of four persons each, to distribute them in houses. He keeps Peter, John, Judas Iscariot and Simon Zealot with Himself, while James of Zebedee is the head of the group consisting of Matthew, Judas of Alphaeus and Philip, and Bartholomew is put at the head of the third group with James of Alphaeus, Andrew and Thomas subjected to him.

« After supper you will go where you have been offered hospitality, and you will come back here in the morning, and I will tell you what you have to do. We shall be all together at meal times. Remember what I have told you many times: that you must preach My Doctrine also through your way of living, your way of living together with one another and with those who receive you in their houses. So be sober, patient, honest in speaking, acting, in looking, so that justice may issue from you like a perfume. You know how the eyes of the world are always watching us, to slander us or to study us, and also out of veneration. But those respecting us are the least of the many eyes watching us. And yet we must take the greatest care of those few, because the study of the world is pointed at their faith to pound it, and everything serves as a weapon to destroy the love of good people for Me and consequently for you. So do not lend a hand to the world with an unholy way of living and do not increase the burden of those who have to defend their faith from the snares of My opponents by scandalising them. Scandal perplexes souls, turns them away, weakens them. Woe to the apostle who scandalises souls. He sins against his Master and against his neighbour, against God and the flock of God. I trust you. Ensure that My grief, which is so deep, is not increased by more grief originating from you. »

« Be not afraid, Master. No sorrow will be caused to You by us, unless Satan leads us all astray » says Bartholomew.

Anastasica, who is in the kitchen with Eliza, comes in and says: « Supper is ready, Master. Come down while the food is still warm. You will refresh Yourself. »

« Let us go. » And Jesus stands up following the woman down the little staircase which from the upper room, where some beds have already been prepared, descends to the little kitchen garden. He then enters the kitchen, which is made pleasant by a lively fire.

Old John is near the fireside with Eliza who is busy with the food and turns round to look with a maternal smile at Jesus coming in. She then hastens to pour into a large tureen the wheat or barley cooked in milk, which I already saw Mary of Alphaeus serve at Nazareth before the departure of John and Syntyche.

« Well. I have always remembered that Mary Clopas told me that You like it. And I had kept the best honey to make it also for Marjiam… I am sorry that the boy has not come… »

« Nike kept him with Isaac, as they are leaving tomorrow at

dawn, and she is taking advantage of the wagon as far as Jericho to fulfil the mission of which you are aware… »

« Which mission, Master? » asks the Iscariot with interest.

« A very womanly mission. To bring up an infant. But the infant does not need milk, but faith, because he is an infant in spirit. But a woman is always a mother, and she knows how to do such things. And once she has understood!… She is as good as a man, with the power of her maternal kindness over and above. »

« How kind You are to us, Master! » says Eliza looking at Jesus so lovingly as if she were caressing Him.

« I am truthful, Eliza. We people of Israel, and we are not the only ones, are accustomed to look at and consider woman an inferior being. No. If she is subjected to man, which is just, if she has been struck more severely by punishment for Eve's sin, if her mission is destined to be carried out among veils and in dim light, without showy deeds or words, if everything takes place in her as if it were choked by a curtain, she is not less strong or less capable than men. Even without remembering the great women of Israel, I tell you that there is great strength in the heart of a woman. In her heart. As in the intelligence of us men. And I tell you that the situation of women is about to change with regard to customs as well as with regard to many other things. And it will be just because a Woman will obtain grace and redemption particularly for women as I will do for all men. »

« A woman? And how can You expect a woman to redeem? » remarks Judas of Kerioth with a mocking laugh.

« I solemnly tell you that She is already redeeming. Do you know what to redeem means? »

« Of course I do. It is to remove from Sin. »

« Yes, but to remove from Sin would not help much, because the Opponent is eternal and he would begin to lay snares all over again. But a voice came from the Earthly Paradise, the Voice of God, saying: "I will create enmity between you and the Woman… She will crush your head and you will lay snares for Her heel". Nothing but snares, because the Woman will have, She has in Herself, what defeats the Enemy. So She has been redeeming since She existed. An active, although concealed redemption. But She will soon come out in the presence of the world, and women will be fortified in Her. »

« That You redeem… all right. But a woman who can… I cannot accept it, Master. »

« Do you not remember Tobit? His hymn? »

« Yes. But it deals with Jerusalem. »

« Has Jerusalem any longer a Tabernacle in which is God? Can God from His glory be present at the sins consumed within the walls of the Temple? Another Tabernacle was necessary, a holy

one, to be a star leading errant people back to the Most High. And that is accomplished in the Co-Redeemer Who throughout ages will rejoice at being the Mother of the redeemed. "You shall shine with a bright light. All the peoples of the Earth will prostrate themselves before You. The nations will come to You from afar bringing gifts and will worship the Lord in You… They will invoke Your great name… Those who will not listen to You will be among those cursed, and blessed will be those who gather round You… You will be happy in Your children because they will be the blessed ones gathered near the Lord". The true hymn of the Co-Redeemer. And the angels who see are already singing in Heaven… The new heavenly Jerusalem begins in Her. Oh! Yes, that is the truth. And the world is unaware of Her. And the dull-minded rabbis of Israel do not know Her… » Jesus is engrossed in His thoughts…

« But who is He speaking of? » the Iscariot asks Philip who is beside him.

Before the latter replies, Eliza, who is putting some cheese and black olives on the table, says rather harshly: « He is speaking of His Mother. Don't you understand that? »

« I never knew that She is mentioned by the prophets as a martyr… Only the Redeemer is mentioned, and… »

« And do you think that there is only the torture of the flesh? And don't you know that that is nothing, for a mother, in comparison with the torture of seeing her son die? Your mind - I am not speaking of your heart, for I don't know what it throbs with does your mind, of which you are so proud, not tell you that a mother would suffer torture and death ten times, rather than hear her son moan? Man, you are a man and you are learned. I am only a woman and a mother. But I tell you that you are more ignorant than I am, because you do not even know the heart of your mother… »

« Oh! You are offending me! »

« No. I am old and I am giving you advice. Let your heart be wise and you will avoid tears and punishment. Do that, if you can. »

The apostles, in particular Judas of Alphaeus, James of Zebedee, Bartholomew and the Zealot, cast sidelong glances at one another stealthily, and lower their heads to conceal the derisive smiles appearing on their lips, because of the frank words of Eliza to the apostle who thinks he is perfect. Jesus, still engrossed, does not hear anything.

Eliza addresses Anastasica saying: « Come, while they finish their meal let us go and prepare two more beds, because three are not enough » and she is on the point of going out.

« Eliza, you are certainly not giving us your beds! » exclaims Peter. « That's not right. John and I can sleep on boards. We're used

to that. »

« No, Simon. There are hurdles and mats. They have been laid aside. We will now place them on trestles. » And she goes out with the other woman.

The apostles, tired as they are, are almost dozing in the warmth of the kitchen. Jesus is pensive, His elbow resting on the table, His head on His hand.

There is a knock at the door. Thomas, being nearest to it, gets up to open and he exclaims: « You, Joseph?! And with Nicodemus?! Come in! Come in! »

« Peace to You, Master, and to everybody in this house. We are going to Ramah, Master; Nicodemus invited me there. As we were passing here, we said: "Let us stop to greet the Master". We were anxious to hear whether… You had been bothered again, as they went looking for You at Joseph's. Actually, they have been looking for You everywhere, after You cured that blind man. They did not walk out of the walls, that is true. They did not move a chair, to avoid infringing the Sabbath, and thus they think they are pure. But to look for You, to follow Bartholmai, oh! they went well beyond the limit! »

« How did they know if the Master did not do anything in the street? » asks Matthew.

« True, we did not know either whether he had been cured. We went to the synagogue and then to say goodbye to Nike, Isaac and Marjiam, who were staying with her. Then, after sunset, we came straight here » says Peter.

« You did not know. But the messengers of the Pharisees did. You did not see. But I did. Two of them were present when the Master touched the eyes of the blind fellow. They had been waiting for hours. »

« Why? » asks Judas of Kerioth with an innocent look.

« Are you asking me? »

« It's strange, that's why I am asking. »

« It's even more strange that for some time there are always spies wherever the Master is. »

« Vultures go where there is a prey and wolves approach herds. »

« And thieves where their accomplices say there is a caravan. You are right. »

« What are you insinuating? »

« Nothing. I was completing your proverb applying it to men. Because Jesus is a man; and men are those who lay snares for Him. »

« Tell us, Joseph, tell us… » many of them say.

« If the Master wishes, I came to tell you. »

« Speak up » says Jesus.

And Joseph tells in detail what he had noticed, omitting, however,

one particular, that it was Judas who informed the blind man where Jesus was staying.

Comments are manifold, resentful, sorrowful, according to hearts, and Judas of Kerioth is the most (apparently) afflicted and upset, he is against everybody and in particular against the imprudent blind man, who had come and placed himself in Jesus' way on a Sabbath, confiding in the well known kindness of the Master…

« Or was it you who pointed out the man to him was near you and I heard » says Philip full of amazement.

« To point out does not mean to give an order to do something. »

« Oh! I am sure, as I am also sure that you would not have taken the liberty of ordering the Master to work… » says Thaddeus.

« Me? Far from it. I pointed him out only to ask for a clarification. »

« Yes. But the action of pointing out is at times an invitation to act. And that is what you did » replies Thaddeus.

« You say so, but it is not true » asserts Judas impudently.

« Is it not true? Are you really sure? As sure as you are alive, that you never spoke to the blind man about Jesus, that you did not influence him to apply to Jesus, and, what is more, that you did not encourage him to do so at once, before Jesus left the town? » asks Joseph of Arimathea.

« Of course I am sure. Who ever spoke to that man? I certainly did not. I am always with the Master, day and night, and when I am not with Him, I am with my companions… »

« I thought you had done that yesterday, when you went away with the women » says Bartholomew.

« Yesterday! I went and came back faster than a swallow. How could I look for the blind fellow, find him and speak to him in such a short time? »

« You might have met him… »

« I never saw him! »

« Then that man is a liar because he stated that you told him to come, and where and what to do; and you had assured him that Jesus would listen to you and… » says Joseph of Arimathea.

Judas interrupts him violently: « That's enough! He deserves to be blinded again for all the lies he tells! I, I can swear it on the Sanctuary, I only know him by sight, and I have never spoken to him. »

« Yes, it's really enough. Your soul is in order, Judas of Kerioth, who do not fear God because you know that your actions are holy. You… happy fellow who are afraid of nothing » Joseph says to him, looking at him severely, with piercing eyes.

« No, I am not afraid, because I am without sin. »

« We all sin, Judas. And it is not so bad if we do repent after our first sins, and we do not increase them in number and wickedness! »

says Nicodemus who had never spoken so far. He then addresses the Master saying: « It is sad that Joseph of Sephoris has been threatened with being banished from the synagogue, if he gives You hospitality again and Bartholmai has already been ejected from it. He had gone there with his father and mother; but the Pharisees were waiting for him at his synagogue, they refused to let him go in and they cried anathema on him. »

« That is too much! For how long, o Lord… » shout many.

« Peace! Peace! It is nothing. Bartholmai is already on the way to the Kingdom. So what has he lost? He is in the Light. So is he not a child of God more than he was previously? Oh! Do not confuse values! Peace! Peace! We will no longer go to Joseph's either… I am sorry that Isaac knows that he has to take My Mother and Mary of Alphaeus there… But it would have been for a few hours only, because there is one who has already done what is necessary. » He turns to John of Nob and says: « Father, are you afraid of the Sanhedrin? You can see how much it costs to give hospitality to the Son of man… You are old. You are a faithful Israelite. You may be driven out of the synagogue on your last Sabbaths. Could you put up with that? Speak frankly, and if you are afraid, I will go away. There must be still a den in the mountains in Israel for the Son of God… »

« I, Lord? But of whom shall I be afraid but of God? I do not fear the mouth of the sepulchre, on the contrary I look at it as a friendly thing. And shall I be afraid of the mouths of men? I would be afraid only of the judgement of God, if for fear of men, I should drive away from me Jesus, the Christ of God! »

« All right. You are a just man… I will stay here… when I am not in the nearby villages, as I intend to do once again. »

« Come to Ramah, to my house, Lord » says Nicodemus.

« And if that should harm you? »

« Do the Pharisees not invite you with evil intentions? Could I not do it to study Your heart? »

« Yes, Master. Let us go to Ramah. My father will be so happy, if he is at home. And if he is not there, as often is the case, he will find Your blessing when he comes back » says Thomas imploringly.

« We will go to Ramah, as the first place. Tomorrow… »

« Master, we are going. Our mounts are outside and we shall be at Ramah before the end of the second vigil. The roads are white in the moonlight as if a pale sun were shining on them. Goodbye, Master. Peace be with You » says Nicodemus.

« Peace to You, Master… and, listen to a good piece of advice from Joseph the Elder. Be somewhat shrewd. Look around Yourself. Open Your eyes and keep Your lips closed. Act, but never say beforehand what You are going to do… And do not come to Jerusalem for some time, and if You come, do not stop at the Temple except for the time necessary to pray. Do You understand

me? Goodbye, Master. Peace to You. » Joseph has put much stress on the words that I have underlined, and while saying them he was gazing intensely at Jesus. His very eyes were a warning.

They go out into the little kitchen garden, white in the moonlight. They untie two strong donkeys, which were tied to the trunk of a walnut tree, they mount and depart along the solitary white road…

Jesus goes back into the kitchen with His apostles.

« But what did he mean, after all? »

« And how did the Pharisees find out? »

« What will they do to Joseph of Sephoris? »

« Nothing. Just words. Nothing but words. Forget about it. It is all over and without any consequence. Let us go. Let us say our prayer and part for the night. "Our Father… »

He blesses them, He looks at them go away, then with the four whom He has kept, He goes up to the room where the beds are.

510. Among the Ruins of a Destroyed Village.

12th October 1946.

I do not know in which place is Jesus. He is certainly in the mountains, in a place deserted after it was destroyed either by a cataclysm or by active war. And I would say that the latter is the more likely cause, because the ruins of the houses show signs of fire in the ceilings protected from rain and still visible through the tangle of bramble, ivy and other creepers and parasitic plants, which have grown everywhere. The broad hairy leaves of a plant, whose name I do not know, although I have seen it also in Italy, cover a large ruin which looks like a steep hill. Farther back a wall, standing upright and lonely to contemplate the rest of the collapsed house, is invaded by caper bushes and pellitory, and a clematis, whose branches undulate in the wind like loose hair, hangs from a fretted parapet of what once was a terrace. Another house, the central part of which has collapsed, whilst the outer walls are still erect, looks like a huge flower vase, which in place of stems contains trees which have grown spontaneously in the hollow where rooms previously were. Another house, part of which is still erect, with the remains of the walls rising in steps, looks like an altar prepared for some rite and completely adorned in green. On the very top of the ruins, a poplar, as slender and straight as a blade, seems to be asking the sky the reason for such a disaster. And between house and house, rubble and rubble, obstinate fruit-trees, now degenerate and wild, overwhelmed by other vegetation or overwhelming it, grown from fallen fruit, twisted, straight, creeping, coming out from holds in walls, from a dried well, give the impression of a bewitched forest. And birds

and pigeons coming out of crevices among the ruins, fly avidly towards neighbouring fields once cultivated, where now there are tangles of hard vetch, dried up by the sun, and from their open pods seeds drop to the ground to spring up again at springtime, and tangles of darnel and tares. With fierce blows of their wings the pigeons drive away the smaller birds searching for millet-seed or grains of hemp, which have come up from who knows what remote seed, lasting for years and years in waste land through spontaneous sowing. And the birds, particularly the quarrelsome sparrows, avenge themselves, by tearing off the thin ears of the scrubby millet and taking them away, to their nests, flying with difficulty, all twisted because of the weight and the encumbrance of the millet-cob.

Jesus is not only with His apostles, there is also a large group of disciples, amongst whom Cleopas and Hermas of Emmaus, the sons of the old chief of the synagogue Cleopas, and Stephen. There are also some men and women, as if they had come from some village to invite Jesus to go to their town, or if they were following Him after He had been with them. And Jesus, crossing the ruined site, often makes a pause to look around, and He stops at the highest spot that commands a view over entanglements of rubble and vegetation, where life is represented only by the pigeons which once were certainly mild and tame, whereas now they are wild and fierce. He contemplates the place with His arms folded across His breast, His head lowered, and the more He looks around the paler and sadder He becomes.

« Why are You stopping here, Master? One can clearly see that this place distresses You. Do not stop to contemplate it. I am sorry I made You come this way, but it is such a good short cut » says Cleopas of Emmaus.

« Oh! I am not looking at what you see! »

« At what, then, Lord? Perhaps You see the past event once again? It was certainly a dreadful one. That is the system of Rome… » says the other man from Emmaus.

« And that should make one think. See. There was a town here, it was not a large one, but it was beautiful. It consisted more of luxury houses than of humble ones. And these places, which are now wild forests, belonged to rich people. And these fields, now sterile and covered with bramble, darnel and nettles were also the property of rich people… They were then rich orchards and fields full of crops. And the houses were beautiful, with gardens full of flowers, and wells, and fountains where pigeons bathed and children played. All the inhabitants of this place were happy, but happiness did not make them just. They forgot the Lord and His words… And this is the result! No more houses, no flowers, no fountains, no crops, no fruits. Only the pigeons are left, and they

are no longer as happy as they used to be, and in place of the golden corn and the cumon of which they were so greedy, they now fight to have a little coarse vetch or bitter darnel. And they feast when they find an ear of barley which has come up among the thorns!…

And, as I look, I do not even see the pigeons any more… But faces and faces… Many of which are not yet born… and I see ruins and ruins, bramble and wild grapes and vetch cover the land of our Fatherland… And all that happens because we did not want to accept the Lord. I can hear exhausted children weep, as they are more unhappy than these birds, for which God still provides the minimum assistance to survive, whereas these babies will be destitute of all help, struck by the general punishment, languishing on the dry breasts of their mothers, who will be dying of starvation and sorrow and indefinable fear. And I can hear mothers wailing over their children who died of starvation on their breasts, and the cries of wives deprived of their husbands, and the laments of virgins captured for the pleasure of winners, and the lamentations of men destined to imprisonment after experiencing all dishonour in war and of old men who lived so long as to see the prophecy of Daniel accomplished.

And I hear the untiring voice of Isaiah in the breath of this wind among the ruins, in the wailing of the pigeons among the rubble: "With uncouth words, in a foreign language the Lord will speak to this people to whom He said: 'Here is my rest. Let the weary rest; this is my relief'". But they would not listen. No, they would not listen, and the Lord cannot find rest among His people. The tired One, Who became tired travelling all over its countryside to teach, cure, convert and comfort, does not find rest but persecution, He does not find relief, but snares and treason. The Son is one with the Father. And if the Truth taught you that also a cup of water given to a man will be rewarded, because each act of mercy done to a brother is done to God Himself, what will the punishment be for those who refuse the Son of man even a stone of the road upon which He may rest His head, and the mountain spring which gushes through the bounty of the Creator, and the fruit forgotten on a branch because it was diseased or unripe, and the ear contended with pigeons, and have already prepared the noose to throttle the air in His throat and thus take His life?

Oh! miserable Israel, who have lost justice and the mercy of God!

Here, here is once again the voice of Isaiah in the evening breeze, more dreadful than the cry of the bird of death, almost as dreadful as the voice that resounded in the Earthly Garden to condemn the two culprits, and - oh! what a terrible thing! - the voice of the Prophet is not joined to the promise of forgiveness as it was then!

No, there is no forgiveness for the mockers of God, for those who say: "We have formed an alliance with Death, we have made an agreement with Hell. When the destructive whip goes by, it will not catch us, for we have set our hopes on Falsehood, and we are protected by it, for it is powerful". And here is Isaiah, who repeats what he heard from the Lord: "I will lay a precious select cornerstone as the foundation of Zion… And I will make justice the measure and integrity the plumb-line, and hail will sweep away the hope in Falsehood, and floods will overwhelm the shelter, your covenant with Death will be broken and your pact with Hell will be annulled. When the destructive whip goes by it will crush you, each time it goes by it will seize you, and punishments only will make you understand the lesson".

Miserable Israel! Israel will be like these fields, where only arid vetch and bitter darnel persist and where there is no more corn, and the Land that did not want the Lord will have no bread for her children, and the children who refused to receive the tired One, will wander about, beaten, wild, like galley slaves, the slaves of those whom they considered inferior beings. God will really thrash the proud people under the weight of His justice, and will strangle it with the scutch of His judgement…

That is what I see in these ruins. Ruins! Ruins! To the north, to the south, to the east, to the west, and above all in the centre, in the heart, where the guilty town will be changed into a putrid pit… »

And tears run slowly down the pale face of Jesus, Who raises His mantle to veil it, leaving uncovered only His eyes, dilated by the painful vision.

And He sets out again, while those who are with Him hardly whisper, terrified as they are…

511. At Emmaus in the Mountains. Parable of the Rich Wise Man and of the Poor Ignorant Boy.

14th October 1946.

The square in Emmaus is crowded with people. It is really packed. And in the middle of the square there is Jesus, Who is moving with difficulty so much is He surrounded and pressed by those who are besieging Him. Jesus is between the son of the chief of the synagogue and the other disciple and around Him there are, with the hypothetical intention of protecting Him, the apostles and disciples and among them many children, as they can easily creep everywhere, like little lizards in the tangle of a thick hedge.

The attraction that Jesus exerted on the little ones is wonderful. Wherever He went, whether He was known or unknown, He was at once surrounded by children, happy to cling to His garments, even happier when His hand touched them lightly with a loving

caress, even if at the same time He said grave things to adults; most happy if He sat down on a seat, on a little wall, or stone, or fallen trunk of a tree, on the grass. In that case, as they had Him at their own height, they were able to embrace Him, rest their little heads on His shoulder or knees, creep under His mantle and thus find themselves in His arms, like chicks that had found the most loving and protective defence. And Jesus always defends them from the arrogance of adults, from their imperfect respect for Him, as although imperfect for so many graver reasons, it pretended to be zealous by driving away the little ones from the Master…

Even now the usual sentence of Jesus can be heard in defence of His little friends: « Leave them alone! Oh! they do not disturb Me! It is not children who cause trouble and grief! »

Jesus bends over them, with a bright smile that makes Him young, so that He almost looks like their older brother, a kind accomplice in some of their innocent amusements, and He whispers: « Be good and quiet, so they will not send you away, and we shall be able to be together a little longer. »

« And will You tell us a nice parable? » asks the… boldest one.

« Yes. One all for you. Then I will speak to your relatives. Listen, everybody. What is useful to the little ones is useful also to men.

A man one day was summoned by a great king who said to him: "I heard that you deserve a prize because you are wise and you honour your town with your work and your science. Now, I will not give you this or that thing, but I will take you into the hall of my treasures and you will choose what you like, and I will give it to you. In this way I will also judge whether you are up to your fame".

At the same time the king, approaching the terrace which surrounded his hall, cast a glance at the square in front of the royal palace and saw a poorly dressed boy pass by: a child of a very poor family, perhaps an orphan and a beggar. He turned to his servants saying: "Go to that boy and bring him here".

The servants went and came back with the child to appear in the presence of the king. Although the dignitaries of the court said to him: "Make a bow, salute, say: 'Honour and glory to you, my king. I bend my knee before you, powerful king whom the Earth exalts as the greatest being existing'", the boy refused to bow and repeat those words, and the scandalised dignitaries shook him rudely and said: "O king, this dirty boorish boy is a dishonour in your abode. Let us drive him out of here into the street. If you wish to have a boy near you we will go and look for one among the rich people in town, if you are tired of our children, and we will bring him to you. But not this boorish fellow who does not even know how to greet a person!…

The rich wise man, who had previously humiliated himself with

many deep servile bows, as if he were before an altar, said: "Your dignitaries are right. For the sake of the majesty of your crown you must ensure that your sacred person is given the homage due to it" and while saying these words he prostrated himself to kiss the king's foot.

But the king said: "No. I want this boy. Not only that, but I want to take him as well into the hall of my treasures, so that he may choose what he wants and I will give it to him. I am perhaps not allowed, just because I am a king, to make a poor boy happy? Is he not my subject like each of you? Is it his fault if he is unhappy? No, God be praised! I want to make him happy at least for once! Come, child, and be not afraid of me" and he stretched out his hand which the boy took with simplicity kissing it spontaneously. The king smiled. And between two rows of stooping dignitaries, on purple carpets with golden flowers, he turned his steps towards the treasure room, with the rich wise man on his right hand side, and the poor ignorant boy on his left. And the royal mantle contrasted strikingly with the frayed garment and the bare feet of the poor boy.

They went into the treasure room, the door of which was opened by two great men of the Court. It was a high, round, windowless room. But light flooded in through the ceiling made of a huge plate of mica. A mild light which, however, made the gold knobs of safes shine brightly and the purple ribbons of many parchment rolls glow on high ornate reading-desks. Stately rolls, with precious rods, and clasps and labels adorned with shining stones. Rare works which only a king could possess. And, ignored on a grim dark low desk, a small parchment rolled on a white piece of wood, tied with a rustic thread, as dusty as a neglected thing.

The king said pointing at the walls: "Here are all the treasures of the Earth, and others which are even greater than earthly treasures. Because here are all the works of human genius, and there are also works coming from superhuman sources. Go and take whatever you wish". And he stood in the middle of the room, with folded arms, watching.

The rich wise man went first towards the safes and lifted their covers with more and more feverish anxiety. Gold bars and jewels, silver, pearls, sapphires, rubies, emeralds, opals… were shining in all the coffers… cries of admiration were heard as each one was opened… He then went to the reading-desks, and when reading the titles, his lips uttered new cries of admiration, and at last the man, highly enthusiastic, turned to the king and said: "You have an incomparable treasure: the stones equal the value of the rolls, and the rolls of the stones! Can I really make my choice freely?".

"I told you. As if everything belonged to you".

The man threw himself with his face on the ground saying: "I

worship you, o great king!". And he got up and ran first to the coffers, then to the desks, taking from both the best things he saw.

The king, who had smiled a first time under his beard seeing the excitement with which the man ran from one coffer to another, and a second time seeing him throw himself on the ground worshipping, and a third time seeing the cupidity, the method and preferences by which he chose gems and books, addressed the boy who was standing beside him saying: "And are you not going to choose the beautiful stones and the valuable rolls?".

The boy shook his head in denial.

"Why riot?".

"Because with regard to the rolls, I cannot read them and as far as the stones are concerned… I do not know their value. They are nothing but little stones to me".

"But they would make you rich

"I have no father, no mother, no brother. Of what avail would it be to me to go to my shelter with a treasure in my bosom?".

"But you would be able to buy a house with it

"I would still be alone in it".

"You could buy clothes".

"I would still be cold without the love of relatives". "Food".

"I could not become satiated with my mother's kisses or buy them at any price".

"You could get teachers and learn to read

"I would like that better. But what could I read then?".

"The works of poets, philosophers, wise men… ancient words and the history of peoples".

"Useless things, either vain or past… Not worth it

"What a silly child!" exclaimed the man whose arms by now were full of rolls, and his belt and tunic round his chest were swollen with gems.

The king smiled once again under his beard. And taking the boy in his arms he carried him to the coffers, where he dipped his hand into the pearls, the rubies, the topazes, the amethysts, letting them drop like sparkling rain, tempting the boy to take some.

"No, king, I do not want any. I would like something else

The king took him to the desks and read stanzas of poets, episodes of heroes, descriptions of countries.

"Oh! it is beautiful to read. But that is not what I would like

"What, then? Tell me, and I will give it to you, my boy".

"Oh! I don't think you can, o king, notwithstanding your power. It is not a thing of this world

"Ah! you do not want works of the Earth. Here, then: here are the works which God dictated to His servants. Listen" and he read some of the inspired pages.

"That is much more beautiful. But to understand it properly, one must first know God's language well. Is there no book which teaches that, that can make us understand what is God?".

The king was quite astonished and did not laugh any more, but he pressed the boy to his heart.

The man instead laughed derisively saying: "Not even the wisest men know what God is, and you, an ignorant boy, want to know? If you want to become rich by that!…

The king looked at him sternly while the little fellow replied: "I do not seek riches, I am seeking love and one day I was told that God is Love".

The king took him to the grim desk, where the little dusty roll tied with a string was. He picked it up, unrolled it and read the first lines: "Let little ones come to Me, and I, God, will teach them the science of love. It is in this book, and I…

"Oh! that is what I want! I will know God and by having Him, I shall have everything. Give me this roll, o king, and I shall be happy".

"But it has no value moneywise. That boy is really foolish! He cannot read and he takes a book! He is not wise and he does not want to learn. He is poor and he does not take treasures".

"I will strive to possess love, and this book will teach me. May you be blessed, o king, because you are giving me something which will no longer make me feel a poor orphan!".

"At least worship him as I did, if you think that you have become so happy through him!".

"I do not worship the man, but God Who made him so kind".

"This boy is the true wise person in my kingdom, o man, whereas you have usurped the reputation of being wise. Pride and avidity have intoxicated you to such an extent that you maintain that a creature should be worshipped instead of the Creator, simply because a creature was giving you stones and human works. And you have not considered that you have gems, and I have had them, because God created them, and that you have rare rolls containing the thought of man, because God gave man an intellect. This child who is cold and hungry, who is all alone, who has been struck by all kinds of sorrow, who would be excused and justifiable if he became intoxicated with the sight of riches, this child knows how to express just thanks to God for making my heart kind and he seeks but the one only necessary thing: to love God, to know love in order to have true riches here and in future life. Man, I promised I would give you what you would choose. The word of a king is sacred. So, go with your stones and your rolls: multicoloured pebbles and… straw of human thought. And live trembling with fear of thieves and moths: the former the enemies of gems, the latter of parchments. And be dazzled by the vain flashes-of

those chips, and be disgusted with the sickly sweet flavour of human science, which is only flavour and not nourishment. Go. This child will remain with me and we will strive together to read the book that is love, that is, God. And we shall have no vain flashes of cold gems, nor the sickly sweet flavour of straw of the works of human knowledge. But the fire of the Eternal Spirit will grant us, even in this life, the ecstasy of Paradise and we shall possess Wisdom, which is more fortifying than wine, more nourishing than honey. Come, child, to whom Wisdom has shown her face, that you may desire her as a genuine bride".

And after driving away the man, he kept the child and instructed him in divine Wisdom that he might be a just man and a king worthy of the sacred anointment on the Earth, and a citizen of the Kingdom of God in the other life.

That is the parable promised to the little ones and proposed to adults.

Do you remember Baruch? He says: "Why, Israel, why are you in the country of your enemies, growing older and older in an alien land, sharing defilement with the dead, reckoned with those who go to Sheol?". And he replies: "Because you have forsaken the fountain of Wisdom. Had you walked in the way of God, you would have lived in peace for ever".

Listen, you who too often complain of being in exile, although you are in our fatherland, since our fatherland is no longer ours, but of our rulers; you complain of that and you do not know that in comparison with what is awaiting you in future, it is like a drop of vinegar mixed with water, compared with the inebriating drink given to condemned men and which, as you know, is more bitter than any other drink. The people of God is suffering because it forsook Wisdom. How can you possess prudence, strength, intelligence, how can you even know where they are, and consequently know minor things, if you no longer drink at the fountains of Wisdom?

His Kingdom is not of this Earth, but God's mercy grants its source. It is in God. It is God Himself. And God opens His bosom that it may descend upon you. Well, does Israel, who has or had and still thinks she has, with the foolish pride of prodigal people who squandered their money and think they are still rich and in such belief exact homage, whereas they receive nothing but pity or derision - does Israel, who has or had riches, conquests, honours, possess the only treasure? No, she does not. And she loses also the others because he who loses Wisdom loses also the capability of being great. And he who does not know Wisdom falls from one error into another. And Israel knows many things, even too many, but she no longer knows Wisdom.

Baruch correctly says: "The young men of this people have seen

the day, they peopled the Earth but they have not known the way of Wisdom or her paths and their children have not received her and she has gone far from them". Far from them! They have not received her! Prophetical words!

I am Wisdom speaking to you. And three quarters of the people in Israel do not receive Me. And Wisdom goes away and will go farther away leaving them alone… And then what will those do, who now consider themselves giants and therefore capable of forcing the Lord to assist them and serve them? Are they giants useful to God in establishing His Kingdom? No, they are not. I with Baruch say so: "To establish the true Kingdom of God, God will not choose those proud giants, and He will let them perish in their own folly" outside the paths of Wisdom. Because to ascend to Heaven with one's spirit and understand the lessons of Wisdom, one must have a humble, obedient and above all an entirely loving spirit, because Wisdom speaks her own language, that is, she speaks the language of love, because she is Love. To become acquainted with her paths it is necessary to have limpid humble eyes, free from the treble concupiscence. To possess Wisdom one must buy her with living money: virtues.

Israel did not possess that and I have come to explain Wisdom, to lead you to her Way, and sow virtues in your hearts. Because I know everything and I am aware of everything and I have come to teach My servant Jacob and My beloved Israel all that. I have come to the Earth to converse with men, I, the Word of the Father, to take the children of men by the hand, I, the Son of God and of man, I, the Way of Life. I have come to show you into the room of eternal treasures, I, to Whom everything was given by My Father. I, eternal Lover, have come to take My Bride, Mankind, that I want to elevate to My throne and to My nuptial room, so that men may be in Heaven with Me, and I may introduce them into the wine-cellar that they may be exhilirated with the true Vine from which the vine-shoots draw Life. But Israel is a sluggish bride and does not get up from her bed to open the door to Him Who has come. And the Bridegroom goes away. He will pass. He is about to pass. And later Israel will look for Him in vain, and will not find the merciful Charity of her Saviour but the war wagons of the rulers, and she will be crushed and pride and life will be squeezed out of her, after she wanted to crush also the merciful Will of God.

Oh! Israel, Israel, who are losing true Life for the sake of keeping a false dream of power! Oh! Israel, who think that you are saving yourself and want to save yourself with different means than those of Wisdom, and you are getting lost by selling yourself to Falsehood and Crime, shipwrecked Israel who will not clutch at the solid rope thrown to rescue you, whereas you cling to the wreckage of your shattered past, and the storm carries you away,

to the open sea, a frightful lightless sea, o Israel, what is the good of saving your life or presuming to save it for one hour, one year, for ten, twenty, thirty years, at the cost of a crime, and then perish for ever? What is life, glory, power? A bubble of dirty water on the surface of a pond used by laundry-men, an iridescent bubble, not because it is made of gems, but because it consists of greasy dirt that with potash swells into empty bubbles destined to burst leaving no trace, except a circle on the water foul with human sweat. One thing only is necessary, o Israel. To possess Wisdom. Even at the cost of one's life. Because life is not the most precious thing. It is better to lose one hundred lives than lose one's soul. » Jesus has finished in an admiring silence. And He tries to push through the crowd and go… But the children claim His kisses, and adults His blessing. Only then, after taking leave of Cleopas and Hermas of Emmaus, He can depart.

512. The Undecided Young Man. Miracles and Admonitions at Beth-Horon.

17th October 1946.

And Jesus is still in the mountains, followed by a crowd of people in addition to the apostles and disciples. Some of the disciples are ex-shepherds, who have perhaps been found when passing through some of the little villages. Jesus is climbing from a valley to a mountain, along a road, the turns of which follow the side of the mountain, and is certainly a Roman road, with its unmistakable paving and well-kept maintenance, to be found only in roads built and maintained by the Romans. People are travelling along it, either going down to the valley, or up to the chain of mountains, the tops of which are crowned with towns or villages. And some of the wayfarers, seeing Jesus and those following Him, ask who He is and join the group, some watch only, some shake their heads and sneer.

A squad of Roman soldiers catches up with them with heavy steps and jingling of arms and armour. They turn round to look at Jesus, Who leaving the Roman road, is about to take a… Jewish one which climbs to the top where there is a village. It is a pebbly muddy road, because it has rained, and one's feet either slip on the stones or sink into the puddles. The soldiers, who are obviously making for the same town, after stopping for a moment, set out again and people are compelled to move to the sides of the narrow road to make way for the squad that passes by in strict formation. Some insults are hissed in the air. But discipline prevents the soldiers in route column from giving sharp answers.

They are once again near Jesus Who has moved aside to let them pass and looks at them with His mild eyes which seem to be blessing

and caressing with their bright sapphire irises. And the stem faces of the soldiers brighten in a remembering smile which is not a sneering one, on the contrary it is as respectful as a greeting.

They pass by. The people resume walking behind the Rabbi Who is in front of them all.

A young man departs from the crowd and catches up with the Master greeting him respectfully. Jesus reciprocates the greeting.

« I would like to ask You something, Master. »

« Tell Me. »

« I listened to You by chance one morning after Passover near a mountain not far from the gorges of the Cherit. And since then I have been thinking that… I also could be among those whom You call. But before coming I wanted to have a very clear idea of what it is necessary to do and what must not be done. And I asked Your disciples every time I met them. And some told me one thing, some a different one. And I was uncertain, almost frightened, because they all agreed on one thing, some more some less strictly, and that was the obligation to be perfect. I… I am a poor man, Lord, and God only is perfect… I listened to You a second time… and You also said: "Be perfect". And I lost heart. The third time, a few days ago, I heard You in the Temple. And although You were very severe, I felt that it was not impossible to become so, because… I do not know myself why, how to explain it to myself and to You. But I felt that if it was something impossible, or it was so dangerous to wish to become so, as if one wanted to become a god, since You want to save us, You would not suggest it to us. Because presumption is a sin. To want to be a god is the sin of Lucifer. But perhaps there is a way to be perfect, to become so without committing sin, and it is by following Your Doctrine, which is certainly a Doctrine of salvation. Am I right? »

« Yes, you are. So? »

« So I continued to ask this one and that one. And when I heard that You were at Ramah I came here. And since then, with my father's permission, I have been following You. And now I am more anxious to come… »

« Come, then! What are you afraid of? »

« I don't know… I don't know myself… I ask and ask… And every time, while it seems easy to me and I make up my mind to come when I hear You, afterwards, thinking it over, and what is even worse, when I ask this one and that one, it seems too difficult to me. »

« I will tell you how that happens: it is a snare of the demon to prevent you from coming. He frightens you with phantasms, he confounds you, he makes you ask those who are in need of Light as you are… Why did you not come to Me direct? »

« Because… I was… not afraid, but… Our priests and rabbis! So

difficult and proud! And You… I did not dare to approach You. But yesterday at Emmaus!… I think that I understood that I must not be afraid. And now I am here, to ask You what I would like to know. One of Your apostles, a short time ago, said to me: "Go and do not be afraid. He is kind also to sinners". And another one said: "Make Him happy by confiding in Him. Those who confide in Him find Him kinder than a mother". And another one said: "I do not know whether I am mistaken, but I tell you that He will say to you that perfection is to love". That is what your apostles said, at least some of them, who are kinder than the disciples. But not all of them, because among Your disciples there are some who sound like the echo of Your voice, but they are too few. And among the apostles there are some who… frighten a poor man like me. One said to me with a smile, which was not a kind one: "You want to become perfect? We, His apostles are not, and you want to be so? It's impossible". If the others had not spoken to me, I would have run away, completely discouraged. But I am trying for the last time… and if You also tell me that it is impossible… »

« Son, and is it possible that I came to propose impossible things to men? Who do you think it was that put in your heart the desire to become perfect? Your own heart? »

« No, Lord. I think it was You with Your words. »

« You are not far from the truth. But tell Me, according to you, My words, what are they? »

« They are just. »

« All right. But I mean: words of a man or of one who is more than a man? »

« Oh! You speak like Wisdom and even more kindly and clearly. So I say that Your words are of one who is more than a man. And I do not think that I am wrong if I correctly understood what You said in the Temple. Because I got the impression that You said that You are the very Word of God, so You speak as God. »

« You understood correctly and what you say is right. So who put the desire of perfection into your heart? »

« God did, through You, His Word. »

« So it was God. Now just think: if God, Who is aware of the capabilities of men, says to them: "Come to Me. Be perfect", it means that He knows that man, if he wishes, can become perfect. It is an old word. It resounded the first time for Abraham as a revelation, a command, an invitation: "I am the Almighty God. Walk in My presence. Be perfect". God revealed Himself so that the Patriarch might not be in doubt about the holiness of the command and the truthfulness of the invitation. He ordered him to walk in His presence, because he who walks in his lifetime, convinced of doing so in the eyes of God, will not accomplish evil deeds. Consequently he puts himself in condition of being able to

become perfect according to God's invitation. »

« That is true! It's really true! If God said so, it means that it can be done. Oh! Master! How clear everything is when You speak! Why, then, do Your disciples, and also that apostle, give such a… frightful idea of holiness? Do they not believe that those words and Yours are true? Or can they not walk in the presence of God? »

« Do not worry about what it is. Do not judge. See, son. At times their very anxiety to be perfect and their humility make them be afraid that they can never become so. »

« So are the desire for perfection and humility obstacles to becoming perfect? »

« No, son. The desire and humility are not obstacles. On the contrary one must strive to have them in a very deep but orderly way. They are orderly when they do not imply heedless haste, unfounded dejection, doubts and lack of confidence such as believing that, because of his imperfection, man cannot become perfect. All virtues are necessary, as well as the desire to achieve justice. »

« Yes. Also those whom I questioned told me that. They told me that is was necessary to be virtuous. But some said that one virtue was necessary, some another, and they all maintained the absolute necessity of having that one, which they said was indispensable to be saints. And that frightened me, because how can one have all the virtues in a perfect form, how can one grow them all together like a bunch of different flowers? It takes time… and life is so short! Master, tell me which is the essential virtue. »

« It is love. If you love you will be holy, because all virtues and all good deeds come from the love for the Most High and for our neighbour. »

« Do they? It is easier thus. So holiness is love. If I have love I have everything… Holiness is made of that. »

« Of that and of the other virtues. Because to be holy is not only to be humble, or only prudent, or only chaste and so forth, but to be virtuous. See, son, when a rich man wishes to offer a dinner, does he order only one dish? Also: when one wants to present somebody with a bunch of flowers, does one take only one flower? One does not. Because even if he put piles of the same dish on the table, his guests would criticise him as an incapable host concerned only with showing his means but not his refinement as a gentleman who is anxious to satisfy the different tastes of his guests and wants each of them not only to satisfy his appetite with this or that dish, but to enjoy them. The same applies to him who offers a bunch of flowers. One flower only, no matter how big it is, does not make a bunch. But many flowers do, and thus the different colours and scents gratify one's eyes and smell and make one praise the Lord. Holiness, which we must consider as a bunch of flowers offered to the Lord, is to comprise all virtues. Humility

will prevail in one spirit, strength in another, continence in another, patience in another, the spirit of sacrifice or penance in another, all virtues born in the shade of the regal most scented tree of love, whose flowers will always prevail in the bunch, but all the virtues make up holiness. »

« And which is to be cultivated more carefully? »

« Love. I told you. »

« Then? »

« There is no method, son. If you love the Lord, He will grant you His gifts, that is, He will communicate with you and then the virtues which you strive to grow in strength, will grow in the sun of Grace. »

« In other words, in a loving soul it is God Who acts mostly? »

« Yes, son. It is God Who acts mostly, letting man put, as his own contribution, his free will to tend to perfection, his efforts to reject temptations in order to remain faithful to his purpose, his struggles against the flesh, the world, the demon, when they assail him. And the reason for that is that He wants His son to have merit in his holiness. »

« Ah! I see! Then it is quite right to say that man is made to be as perfect as God wants. Thank You, Master. It is now clear to me and I will act accordingly. And You, Lord, please pray for me. »

« I will keep you in My heart. Go and be assured that God will not leave you without help. »

The young man parts from Jesus looking satisfied…

They are by now near the village. Bartholomew with Stephen joins Jesus to tell Him that while He was speaking to the young man, a citizen of Beth-horon, a relative of Helkai the Pharisee, came begging them to take Him at once to his dying wife.

« Let us go. I will speak afterwards. Do you know where she is? »

« He left a servant with us. He is in the rear, with the others. »

« Make him come here and let us quicken our paces. »

The servant arrives. A strong old man looking dismayed. He greets and looks stealthily at Jesus Who smiles at him asking: « What is your mistress dying of? »

« Of… She was expecting. But the child died in her womb and her blood became infected. She is raving as if she were mad and is going to die. They opened her vains to make her temperature drop. But her blood is completely poisoned and she will die. They put her in the cistern to abate her fierce heat. It drops while she is in the ice-cold water. Then it becomes stronger than previously, and she coughs and coughs… and she will die. »

« No wonder! With such treatment! » grumbles Matthew between his teeth.

« How long has she been ill? »

The servant is about to reply when the leader of the Roman

squad runs down the hill towards them and stops in front of Jesus.

« Hail! Are You the Nazarene? »

« I am. What do you want of Me? »

Jesus' followers rush there wondering who knows what…

« One day one of our horses struck a Jewish boy and You cured him to prevent the Jews from making a din against us. Now the stones of the Jews have knocked down a soldier, who is now lying with a broken leg. I cannot stop because I am on duty. No one in the village wants to take him in and he cannot walk. I cannot drag him along with a broken leg. I know that You do not despise us as all the Jews do… »

« Do you want Me to cure the soldier? »

« Yes, I do. You cured also the servant of the Centurion and Valeria's little girl. You saved Alexander from the wrath of Your fellow-citizens. These things are known both in high and in low quarters. »

« Let us go to the soldier. »

« And what about my mistress? » asks the discontented servant.

« Later. »

And Jesus follows the non-commissioned officer, who devours the way with his brawny legs free from hampering clothes. But even striding thus ahead of everybody, he manages to speak some words to Him Who is the first to follow him, that is to Jesus, and he says: « Some time ago I was with Alexander. He… used to speak of You. Chance has put You close to me just now. »

« Chance? Why not say God? The true God? »

The soldier is silent for a moment, then in a low voice so that Jesus only can hear he says: « The true God would be the Hebrew one… But He does not make Himself loved, if He is like the Hebrews. They do not take pity even on a wounded man… »

« The true God is the God of the Hebrews, as well as of the Romans, the Greeks, the Arabs, the Parthians, the Scythians, the Iberians, the Gauls, the Celts, the Lybians, the Hyperboreans. There is but one God! But many do not know Him, others have a wrong knowledge of Him. If they knew Him well, they would all be like brothers to one another, and there would be no abuse of power, no hatred, no slander, no revenge, no lust, no thefts, no homicides, no adulteries and no falsehood. I know the true God and I have come to make Him known. »

« They say… We must be all ears in order to report to the centurions who in turn have to report to the Proconsul. They say that You are God. Is that true? » The soldier is very… worried in saying so. He looks at Jesus from under the shade of his helmet, and he almost looks frightened.

« I am. »

« By Jove! So it is true that the gods descend to converse with

men? After travelling all over the world following the banners, I have come here, an old man, to find a god! »

« The God. The Only One. Not a god » says Jesus correcting him.

But the soldier is stupified at the idea of preceding a god… He does not speak any more… He is pensive, until, just at the entrance to the village the find the squad standing round the wounded soldier, who is moaning on the ground.

« Here he is! » says the non-commissioned officer briefly.

Jesus makes His way through the crowd approaching him. His leg, which is badly broken, is lying with the foot turned inside, and it is already swollen and livid. The man must be suffering very much and when he sees Jesus stretch His hand out he implores: « Don't hurt me too much! »

Jesus smiles. With the tips of his fingers He lightly touches where the livid circle of the trauma shows the fracture. He then says: « Stand up! »

« But he has another fracture farther up, at his hip » explains the non-commissioned officer, certainly meaning: « Are You not going to touch that one? »

Just then a citizen from Beth-horon arrives and says: « Master, Master! You are wasting Your time with heathens, and my wife is dying! »

« Go and bring her here. »

« I cannot. She is mad! »

« Go and bring her here to Me, if you have faith in Me. »

« Master, no one can hold her. She is nude and we cannot dress her. She is mad and tears her clothes. She is dying and she cannot stand. »

« Go and bring her here if your faith is not inferior to the faith of these heathens. »

The man goes away discontentedly.

Jesus looks at the Roman lying at His feet: « And can you have faith? »

« Yes, I can. What must I do? »

« Stand up. »

« Be careful, Camillus, because… » the non-commissioned officer is saying. But the soldier is already on his feet, agile, cured.

The Israelites do not shout hosanna. The man who has been cured is not a Hebrew. On the contrary they appear to be dissatisfied or at least their faces seem to be criticising Jesus' action. But the soldiers are not discontented, and they draw their short wide daggers and raise them into the grey air after beating their shields with them to make a joyful noise. Jesus is in the middle of a circle of blades.

The non-commissioned officer looks at Him. He does not know what to say or what to do, he, a man near a god, a heathen near

God… He is pensive and he realises that he must at least do for God what he would for Caesar. And he orders his men to salute the emperor (at least I think it is so because I hear a mighty « Hail! » resound while the blades shine as they are held almost horizontally by the outstretched arms). And not yet satisfied, he says in a low voice: « Go without worrying also at night. The roads… are all watched. Watched against highwaymen. You will be safe, I… » He stops. He does not know what to say.

Jesus smiles at him saying: « Thank you. Go and be good. Be human also to highwaymen. Be faithful to your service without being cruel. They are poor wretches. And they will have to give account of their deeds to God. »

« I will. Hail! I would like to meet You again… »

Jesus stares at him, then says: « We shall meet. On a different mountain. » And He repeats once again: « Be good. Goodbye. »

The soldiers start off again. Jesus enters the village. He walks a few metres and then He sees a large group come towards Him and His followers shouting comments. A man and a woman depart from the group - the man mentioned previously - and they bow before Jesus: the woman on her knees, the man stooping.

« Stand up and praise the Lord. But I must tell you, o man, that your conscience is not clear. You applied to Me out of selfishness, not out of love for Me or out of faith in Me. And you doubted My word. And you know who I am! Then you had an unkind thought because I stopped to cure a Gentile, as all the village acted unkindly by refusing to accept the wounded soldier. By an excess of mercy and in order to try and make your heart kinder I cured your wife without coming to your house. You did not deserve it. I did it to show you that I need not go to do something. It is enough for Me to want it. But I solemnly tell you all that those whom you despise are better than you are and they believe in My power more than you do. Stand up, woman. You are not guilty, because you were without the faculty of reason. Go and from now on believe out of gratitude to the Lord. »

The attitude of the inhabitants becomes cold and proud owing to Jesus' reproach. They follow Him sulkily as far as the square where He stops to speak, as the synagogue leader does not invite Him into the synagogue and no house opens to the Master.

« When God is with men, men can do everything against misfortune, whatever its name may be. When, on the contrary, God is not with men, they can do nothing against misfortune. The chronicles of this town mention such an occurrence more than once. God was with Joshua and he defeated the Canaanites and along this road God helped him to destroy the enemies of Israel "hurling huge hailstones from heaven and more died under the hailstones than at the edge of the sword" we read in Joshua's book. God was with

Judas Maccabee who came upon this hill with his small army to look at the powerful army of Seron, the leader of the Syrian army, and God confirmed the words of the commander of Israel with a striking victory.

But the necessary condition to have God with us is to act for reasons of justice. "For victory in war does not depend on the size of the fighting force, but on the help that comes from Heaven" says the Book of Maccabees. All good things in life do not depend on wealth, or power, or any other cause, but on the help that comes from Heaven. And it comes because we ask for help for good things. For our lives and our laws, says the Book of Maccabees again. But when one has recourse to God for a wicked or impure purpose, it is useless to invoke His help. God will not reply or He will reply with punishments instead of blessings.

This truth is too much forgotten now in Israel. And they want God's help and they implore Him for purposes which are not good. And they do not practise virtues and the commandments are not kept with true spirit of observance, that is, only their part that can be seen and praised by men is done. But what is hidden by appearance is quite different. I have come to say: be sincere in your actions because God sees everything and sacrifices are useless and prayers vain, if they are offered out of mere ostentation of cult, while one's heart is full of sin, hatred and wicked desires.

Beth-horon, do not do of your inhabitants what Obadiah says of Edom. Edom, thinking she was safe, took the liberty of oppressing Jacob and rejoicing at his defeats. Do not behave so, o sacerdotal town. Take and meditate on the roll of Obadiah. Meditate on it and change your ways. Follow justice if you do not wish to see days of horror. You will not be saved then by being on this summit, or by being apparently out of the war routes. I see in you many who do not have God with them and who do not want God. Are you grumbling? I am telling you the truth. I came up here to tell you. That you may still be saved.

Was your name not one only? Was it not all Israel? Why then has it been divided and it has taken two names? Oh! that really reminds Me of the marriage of Hoshea with a prostitute and of the children born of her who had fornicated. But what does the prophet say? "The number of the children of Israel will be like the sand of the seashore… Then, instead of saying to them: 'You are not My people' it will be said to them: 'You are the children of the living God'. And the children of Judah and Israel will come together again and will elect only one chief and will rise from the Earth because great is the day of Jezreel". Oh! why then do you criticise Him Who is to re-unite them all and make one people only, a great people, one, as God is one, why do you criticise Him for loving all the children of man because they are all children of God,

and Who is to make children of the living God also those who at present seem dead? And can you judge My actions and their hearts and yours? From where does light come to you? Light comes from God. But if God sends Me with the task of re-uniting all men under one sceptre, how can you have a light, a truly divine light, that shows you things contrary to how God sees them? And yet you see contrary to how God sees.

Do not grumble. It is the truth. You are outside justice. And those who seduce you into injustice are even more so. And they will receive double punishment. You accuse Me of fornicating with the enemy, with the ruler. I read your hearts. But do you not fornicate with Satan by becoming followers of those who fight the Son of man, the Messenger of God? And now you hate Me. But I know the face of him who instils hatred into you. As it is said in Hosea, I came with My hands laden with gifts and My heart full of love, I tried to attract you with all the kindest manners to make you love Me. I spoke to My people as a bridegroom to his bride offering them eternal love, peace, justice and mercy. There is still one hour left to prevent the people, who reject Me, and the leaders, who stir up the people - I know them - from being left without king, prince, sacrifice and altar. But near the den, where hatred is stronger and punishment will be more severe, they are working to purchase consciences in order to lead them to crime. Oh! It is true that those who lead consciences astray will be judged seven times seven more severely than those who have been misled.

Let us go. I have come and I worked a miracle and I have told you the truth to convince you Who I am. I am now going away. And if among you there is only one man who is just, let him follow Me, because sad is the future of this place, where snakes nestle to seduce and betray. »

And Jesus turns back to take the road by which He came.

« Why, Rabbi, did You speak to them thus? They will hate You » the apostles ask Him.

« I am not trying to conquer love through negotiations or falsehood. »

« But was it not better not to come here? »

« No. It is necessary not to leave the least doubt. »

« And whom did You convince? »

« Nobody, for the time being. But soon someone will say: "We cannot curse anybody because we were warned and we did not take any action". And if they reproach God for striking them, their reproach will be like blasphemy. »

« But to whom were You referring saying… »

« Ask Judas of Kerioth. He knows many people here and he is aware of their cunning. »

All the apostles look at Judas.

« Yes, this place is practically under Helkai's control. But… I don't think that Helkai… » the words die on the lips of Judas who, raising his eyes from his belt which he was putting in order to strike an attitude, meets Jesus' eyes. The Master's glance is so bright and piercing as to appear even magnetic. Judas lowers his head and concludes: « It is certainly a proud hateful village, worthy of him who dominates it. Everyone has what one deserves. They have Helkai. We have Jesus. And the Master did the right thing in letting them know that He knows. Very good. »

« They are certainly bad. Did you notice that? Not even a greeting after the miracle! Not even a mite! Nothing » remarks Philip.

« But I tremble when the Master unmasks them like that » says Andrew with a sigh.

« To do it or not to do it is the same thing. They hate Him just the same. I would like to go back to Galilee! » says John.

« To Galilee! Of course! » says Peter sighing and he lowers his head looking very pensive.

In the rear, those who have followed Jesus and will not leave Him, continue to make their comments with the disciples.

513. Towards Gibeon. The Reasons for Jesus' Sorrow.

18th October 1946.

But Jesus is not allowed to be engrossed in His thoughts for a long time. John and His cousin James, then Peter and Simon Zealot approach Him drawing His attention to the view that they can see from the hilltop. And perhaps in their intent to distract Him, because He is clearly very sad, they recall episodes that took place in the district which their eyes are surveying. The trip towards Ashkelon… the house of the peasants in the Sharon plain where Jesus made the old father of Gamala and Jacob see again… the retreat of Jesus and James on Mount Carmel… Caesarea on Sea and the little girl Aurea Galla… the meeting with Syntyche… the Gentiles at Joppa… the highwaymen near Modin… the miracle of the crops in the house of Joseph of Arimathea… the poor old woman gleaner… Recollections which should cheer one up… but in which, for everybody or for Him alone, there is the remembrance of tears and sorrow. Also the apostles become aware of that and they whisper: « Truly there is sorrow in everything on the Earth. It is a place of expiation… »

But Andrew, who has joined the group with James of Zebedee, remarks quite rightly: « A just law for us sinners. But why so much grief for Him? »

A polite discussion arises and remains such also when all the others, attracted by the voices of the first ones, join the group. The only exception is Judas Iscariot who takes pains in the middle of

the humble people whom he instructs imitating the Master's voice, gestures and expressions; but it is a bombastic theatrical imitation, lacking the warmth of persuasion and his listeners tell him quite openly, which makes Judas irritable and he throws back in their faces that they are dull-minded and thus they understand nothing. And he states that he is going to leave them because « it is not worth the trouble to throw the pearls of wisdom to pigs. » But he remains because the humble people are mortified and they beg him to bear with them admitting that « they are as inferior to him as an animal is to man. »…

Jesus, in order to listen to what Judas is saying, does not pay attention to what the Eleven are saying around Him, and what He hears does not certainly cheer Him up… But He sighs and is silent, until Bartholomew interests Him directly by submitting to Him the different points of view concerning the reason why He, who is innocent and free from sin, must suffer.

Bartholomew says: « I maintain that it happens because man hates him who is good. I am referring to a guilty man, that is, to the majority of men. That majority realise that their guilt and vices show up even more when they are compared with those who are innocent, and out of spite they revenge themselves by making good people suffer. »

« I instead maintain that You suffer because of the contrast between Your perfection and our misery. Even if no one despised You in any way, You would suffer just the same because Your perfection must be sorrowfully disgusted at the sins of men » says Judas Thaddeus.

« On the contrary, I maintain that You, as You are not exempt from humanity, suffer through the effort of having to control, by means of Your supernatural part, the rebellion of Your humanity against Your enemies » says Matthew.

« And I, I am sure I must be wrong because I am silly, I say that You suffer because Your love is rejected. You do not suffer because You cannot punish as Your human side might wish, but You suffer because You cannot do good to people as You would like » says Andrew.

« Finally, I maintain that You suffer because You must suffer all sorrows, in order to redeem all sorrows, as neither of Your Natures prevails in You, but they are both blended in perfect harmony, to form the perfect Victim. So supernatural as to be able to appease the offence given to God, so human as to be able to represent Mankind and lead it back to the immaculacy of the first Adam to cancel the past and generate a new humanity. To re-create a new humanity, according to the thought of God, that is, a humanity in which there is really the image and likeness of God and the destiny of Man: the possession, the ability to aspire to the possession of

God, in His Kingdom. You must suffer supernaturally, and You do suffer, for what You see being done and for what surrounds You, I could say, with perpetual offence to God. You must suffer humanly, and You do suffer, to cut off the lewdness of our flesh poisoned by Satan. With the complete suffering of the two perfect Natures You will completely cancel the Offence to God, the sin of man » says the Zealot.

The others are silent. Jesus asks: « Are you not saying anything? Which according to you is the just definition? »

Some say this, some that. Only James of Alphaeus and John are silent.

« And what about you two? Do you not approve of any of them? » says Jesus teasingly.

« No. We feel there is something true, something very true in each of them. But we also feel that the utter truth is missing. »

« And can you not find it? »

« Perhaps John and I have found it. But it seems almost blasphemy to us to tell You, because… We are good Israelites and we fear God so much that we can hardly mention His Name. And it seems a blasphemous thought to us that while for a man of the chosen people, for a man son of God it is almost impossible to pronounce the blessed Name and he has to create substitutes to mention the name of his God, Satan may dare to harm God. And we feel that sorrow is always active against You, because You are God and Satan hates You. He hates You more than anybody else. You find hatred, Brother, because You are God » says James.

« Yes. You find hatred because You are Love. It is not the Pharisees, or the rabbis, or this man or that one, or for this or that reason, that rise to grieve You. It is Hatred that pervades men and directs them, livid with hatred, against You, because with Your love You snatch too many preys from Hatred » says John.

« There is still one thing missing in the many definitions. Look for the reason which is the really true one. The one by which I am… » says Jesus encouraging them.

But no one finds it. They think and think. They give up saying: « We cannot find it… »

« It is so simple. It is always in front of you. It resounds in our books, in the great figures of our history… Come on, look for it! In all your definitions there is some truth, but the first reason is missing. Do not look for it in the present times, but in the most remote past, beyond the prophets, beyond the patriarchs, beyond the creation of the Universe… »

The apostles are pensive… but they do not find it.

Jesus smiles and then says: « And yet, if you remembered My words, you would find the reason. But you cannot remember everything as yet. But one day you will remember. Listen. Let us

go back up the course of ages together, farther back than the limits of time. You know who spoiled the spirit of man. It was Satan, the Snake, the Antagonist, the Enemy, the Hatred. Call him what you like. But why did he spoil man? Because he was eaten up with envy: he saw man destined to Heaven, from which he had been driven out. He wanted for man the exile that he had received. Why had he been driven out? Because he rebelled against God. You know that. But in what? In obedience. Disobedience is at the origin of sorrow. Then, is it not also necessarily logical that to restore Order, which is always a Joy, there should be a perfect obedience? It is difficult to obey, particularly in grave matters. What is difficult causes sorrow to those who accomplish it. Consider therefore whether I, Who was asked by the Love whether I would take back Joy to the children of God, should not suffer infinitely, to obey the Thought of God. I must, therefore, suffer to win, to cancel not one or a thousand sins, but the very preeminent Sin that, in the angelical spirit of Lucifer or in that animating Adam, was and will always be, until the last man, a sin of disobedience to God. Your obedience, men, is to be limited to the little - it seems so much to you but it is so little - that God asks of you. In His justice He only asks of you what you can give. Of the will of God, you know only what you can understand. But I know all His Thought, concerning great and small events. No limit has been imposed to Me concerning knowledge and execution. The loving Sacrificer, the divine Abraham, does not spare the Victim and His Son. It is the unsatisfied and offended Love that demands reparation and offerings. And if I should live for thousands of years, it would be of no avail, if I did not consume Man to his last fibre, as nothing would have happened if ab aeterno I had not said: "Yes" to My Father, preparing to obey as God Son and as Man, Whom the Father had then found just. Obedience is sorrow and glory. Obedience, like the spirit, never dies. I solemnly tell you that those who are truly obedient will become like gods, after a continuous struggle against themselves, the world, Satan. Obedience is light. The more one is obedient, the more one is luminous and sees. Obedience is patient, and the more one is obedient, the more one bears things and people. Obedience is humble and the more one is obedient, the more one is humble with his neighbour. Obedience is charitable because it is an act of love and the more one is obedient the more numerous and Perfect are the acts. Obedience is heroic. And the hero of the spirit is the saint, the citizen of Heaven, the deified man. If charity is the virtue in which one finds God One and Trine, obedience is the virtue in which one finds Me, your Master. Ensure that the world knows you as My disciples, through absolute obedience to everything that is holy. Call Judas. I have something to tell him as well… »

Judas arrives. Jesus points at the view which becomes narrower as they descend and He says: « A short parable for you, future masters of the spirit. The more you climb the way to perfection, which is hard and painful, the more you will see. Before we could see two plains, the Philistine and the Sharon plains, with many villages, fields and orchards, and even a remote blue expanse, that is, the great sea, and the green Carmel over there at the end. Now we can see only little. The panorama has narrowed and will narrow even more until it will disappear at the bottom of the valley. The same happens to those who descend spiritually instead of ascending. One's virtue and wisdom become more and more limited and one's judgement narrower and narrower until it vanishes completely. A master of the spirit is then dead to his mission. He can no longer discern or guide. He is a corpse and can corrupt as he is corrupt. At times it is alluring to descend, it is almost always tempting, because at the bottom there are sensual satisfactions. We also are going down to the valley to find rest and food. But if that is necessary to our bodies, it is not necessary to satisfy sensual lust and spiritual laziness by descending into the valleys of moral and spiritual sensualism. You are allowed to reach one valley only: the valley of humility. Because God Himself descends into it to abduct humble spirits and raise them to Himself. He who humbles himself will be exalted. Any other valley is lethal, because it removes one from Heaven. »

« Is that why You sent for me, Master? »

« Yes, for that. You had a long conversation with those who were questioning you. »

« Yes, but it is not worth it. They are more dull-minded than mules. »

« And I wanted to leave a thought where everything has vanished. That you may nourish your spirit. »

Judas looks at Him with a perplexed countenance. He does not know whether he is being rewarded or reproached. The others, who are unaware of Judas' conversation with the followers, do not realise that Jesus is reproaching Judas for his pride.

And Judas wisely prefers to change the subject and he asks: « Master, what do You think? Those Romans, and the man from Petra, will they ever be able to accept Your Doctrine, since they have had such a limited contact with You? And that Alexander? He has gone away… We shall never see him again. And these people, too. One might say that they instinctively search for the truth, but they are up to their necks in heathenism. Will they ever succeed in doing anything good? »

« You mean in finding the Truth? »

« Yes, Master. »

« Why should they not succeed? »

« Because they are sinners. »

« Are they the only sinners? Are there none among us? »

« There are many, I agree. That is exactly why I say that if we, who have been nourished for ages with wisdom and truth, are sinners and we are not successful in becoming just and followers of the Truth that You represent, how will they be able to do it, sated with filth as they are? »

« Every man can succeed in reaching and possessing the Truth, that is, God, wherever he may start from to reach it. When there is no mental pride and fleshly perversion, but sincere research for the Truth and Light, purity of intent and yearning for God, a creature is surely on the way to God. »

« Mental pride… fleshly perversion… Master… then… »

« Continue with your thought, which is a good one. »

Judas hesitates, then he says: « Then they cannot reach God because they are perverted. »

« That is not what you wanted to say, Judas. Why have you gagged your thought and your conscience? Oh! how difficult it is for man to rise to God! And the main obstacle is in man himself, as he will not admit and meditate on himself and his faults. Really even Satan is very often slandered, by ascribing every cause of spiritual ruin to him. And God is even more calumniated, as all events are ascribed to Him. God does not infringe man's freedom. Satan cannot prevail over a will firm in Good. I solemnly tell you that seventy times out of one hundred man sins of his own will. And - one does not consider it but it is so - and he does not rise from sin because he avoids examining his own conscience, and even if his conscience, with unexpected motion reacts in him and shouts the truth on which he did not want to meditate, man stifles that cry, he destroys the figure which appears severe and sorrowful to his intellect, he twists with an effort his thought influenced by the accusing voice, and he refuses to say, for instance: "Then we, I, cannot reach the Truth because our minds are proud and our flesh corrupt". Yes, truly, we do not proceed towards the ways of God because among us there is pride of minds and corruption of the flesh. A pride which really vies with the satanic one, so much so that God's actions are judged and hampered, when they are contrary to the interests of men and parties. And because of that sin many Israelites will be damned for ever. »

« But we are not all like that. »

« No. There are still good spirits, in every class of people. They are more numerous among the humble people than among the learned and rich. But they exist. But how many are they? How many with regard to this Palestinian people, whom I have been evangelizing and assisting for almost three years, and for whom I am wasting away? There are more stars shining in a cloudy night

than spirits in Israel willing to come to My Kingdom. »

« And the Gentiles, those Gentiles, will they come? »

« Not all of them, but many. Not even all My disciples will persevere until the end. But do not let us worry about the fruit that fall from the tree because they are rotten! Let us try, as much as possible, through kindness and firmness, through reproaches and forgiveness, through patience and love, to prevent them from becoming rotten. Then, when they say "no" to God and to their brothers who want to save them, and they throw themselves into the arms of Death, of Satan, dying unrepentant, let us lower our heads and offer God our sorrow for not making Him happy with that soul by saving it. Every master meets with such defeats. And they are useful, too. They humble the pride of the master of souls and test his constancy in his ministry. A defeat must not weary the will of the teacher of spirits. On the contrary it must spur him to do more and better in future. »

« Why did You tell the decurion that You will see him on a mountain? How do You know? »

Jesus looks at Judas: a long strange look in which sadness mingles with a smile, and He says: « Because he is one of the people who will be present at My assumption and he will tell the great doctor of Israel a severe word of truth. And from that moment he will begin his safe journey towards the Light. But here we are at Gibeon. Let Peter go with other seven to announce Me. I will speak at once in order to dismiss those who have followed Me from the nearby villages. The others will stay with Me until after the Sabbath. You, Judas, stay with Matthew, Simon and Bartholomew. »

(I did not recognise in the decurion any of the soldiers who were present at the Crucifixion. But I must say that, engaged as I was in watching my Jesus, I did not pay much attention to them. As far as I was concerned, it was a group of soldiers on duty. Nothing else. Further, when I could have watched them more carefully, because everything was accomplished, there was such a faint light that only well-known faces could be recognised. But taking into account Jesus' words, I think that it was the soldier who said some words to Gamaliel, words that I do not remember and that I cannot check, because I am all alone in the house and I cannot get anybody to give me the notebook of the Passion.)

514. At Gibeon. The Wisdom of Love.

22nd October 1946.

In spring, summer and autumn, Gibeon, built on the top of a pleasant low hill isolated in a very fertile plain, must be a kind airy town with a beautiful view. Its white houses are almost hidden among the green foliage of perennial trees of all kinds, mingled

with trees now laid bare by the season, and in the good season they must change the hill into a cloud of light petals, and later into a glorious display of fruit. Now, in the winter greyness, it shows its slopes lined by bare vines and grey olive-trees, or spotted with the dark trees of bare orchards. And yet the town is beautiful and airy and one's eyes rest on the slope of the hill and on the ploughed plain.

Jesus goes towards a large cistern or well, which reminds me somehow of that of the Samaritan woman, or also of En-Rogel and even more of the reservoirs near Hebron. There are many people there, who are hastening to draw much water for the Sabbath now at hand, or are doing their last business of the day, or, having finished their work, have already begun the Sabbath rest. In the middle of the crowd are the eight apostles who are announcing the Master and have already been successful, as I can see sick people being brought and beggars gathering together and many people coming from their houses.

When Jesus sets foot where the basin is, there is a murmur which changes into a unanimous cry: « Hosanna, Hosanna! The Son of David is among us! Blessed be Wisdom that is coming where she was invoked! »

« Blessed be you who know how to welcome her. Peace! Peace and blessings. » And He goes at once towards the sick people, towards those who are crippled either through misfortune or illness, towards the inevitable blind or almost blind people, and He cures them.

Beautiful is the miracle of a little dumb boy, who is handed to Jesus by his weeping mother and is cured by Him with a kiss on his lips. And the child makes use of words given to him by the Word to shout the two most beautiful names: « Jesus! Mummy! », and from the arms of his mother, who was holding him high above the crowd, he throws himself into Jesus' arms, flinging his arms round His neck, until Jesus hands him back to his happy mother, who explains to Jesus that this first-born son of hers, whom the hearts of his parents destined to be a Levite even before he was born, will be able to become one, as he is now without defects: « I had asked the Lord, with my husband Joachim, not for my own sake, but that he might serve the Lord. And I asked You to make him speak not to hear him call me mother or tell me that he loves me, his eyes and his kisses already told me. But I asked for it so that, like a little faultless lamb, he might be completely offered to the Lord to praise His Name. »

To which Jesus replies: « The Lord heard the word of his soul because He, like a mother, changes one's feeling into words and deeds. But your wish was a good one and the Most High has satisfied it. Now have your son educated for perfect praise so that

he may be perfect in serving the Lord. »

« Yes, Rabbi, but tell me what I must do. »

« Let him love the Lord with his whole being and perfect praise will spontaneously flourish in his heart, and he will be perfect in the service of the Lord. »

« What You said is right, Rabbi. Wisdom is on Your lips. Please speak to all of us » says a dignified citizen of Gibeon who had made his way through the crowd as far as Jesus and invites Him to the synagogue. He is certainly the synagogue leader.

Jesus bends His steps towards it followed by everybody, and as it is impossible to let in all the people of the town and those who were already with Him, Jesus takes the advice of the synagogue leader that He should speak from the terrace of the latter's house which is adjacent to the synagogue. A low long house, two sides of which are covered with the tenacious green vegetation of a jasmine espalier. And Jesus' powerful harmonious voice spreads in the calm air of the approaching evening and all over the square and the three streets leading into it, while a multitude of heads look up listening.

« The woman of your town who wanted the faculty of speech for her little boy, not because she wished to hear loving words from his lips, but that he might be fit for the service of God, reminds Me of another remote word that flowed from the lips of a great man in this town. God consented to his word, as He did to that of your woman, because in both He saw a request of justice, a justice that should be in all prayers so that God may hear them and grant His grace. What is necessary to do in your lifetime in order to obtain the eternal reward, the true endless Life in an endless beatitude? It is necessary to love the Lord with your whole being and your neighbour as yourselves. And that is the most necessary condition to have God as a friend and receive graces and blessings from Him. When Solomon who had become king after David's death, was invested with full powers, He came up to this town and he offered a large number of holocausts. And the Most High appeared to him that night saying: "Ask what you would like Me to give you". A great kindness of God. And a great test for man. Because to each gift corresponds a great responsibility for him who receives it, and the greater the gift, the greater the responsibility. And it is a proof of the degree of improvement reached by the spirit. If a spirit blessed by God, instead of becoming more perfect descends towards materialism, it fails the test thus showing its lack of improvement, or its partial improvement. There are two signs of man's spiritual value: the way he behaves in joy and the way he behaves in sorrow. Only he who has progressed in justice knows how to be humble in glory, faithful in joy, grateful and persevering also after he has been satisfied and does not wish for anything

else. And only he who is really a saint knows how to be patient and to continue loving his God, while afflictions persist. »

« Master, can I ask You something? » says a man from Gibeon.

« Yes, do. »

« Everything You say is true. And if I have understood correctly, You mean that Solomon passed the test successfully. But later he sinned. Now tell me: why did God benefit him so much if later he was to sin? The Lord certainly knew the future sin of the king. So why did He say to him: "Ask what you want Me to give you"? Was it a good or a bad thing? »

« Always a good thing, because God does not do wicked things. »

« But You said that a responsibility corresponds to each gift. Now, since Solomon asked for and received wisdom… »

« He had the responsibility of being wise and he was not, that is what you want to say. It is true. And I tell you that his failure in wisdom was punished and with justice. But the action of God granting him the requested wisdom was a good one. And Solomon's request for wisdom and not for material things was a good one. And as God is a Father and He is Justice, He forgave a large part of the error at the time it was made, considering that the sinner had once loved Wisdom more than any other thing and creature. One action must have diminished the other. The good action performed prior to the sin remains, and counts for forgiveness, when the sinner repents after his sin.

That is why I tell you not to miss any opportunity to do good actions, that they may be like money discounting your sins when, through the grace of God, you repent of them. Good actions, even if they seem to have gone by and consequently one may erroneously think that they no longer affect us by creating in us new incentives and strength for good things, are always active, at least with the remembrance which rises again from the depth of a downcast soul and provokes regret for the time when one was good. Regret is often the first step on the way back to Justice. I have said that even a chalice of water given with love to a thirsty person will not remain without reward. A drop of water is nothing, with regard to its material value, but charity makes it great. And it will not remain without reward. At times the reward may be a return to Goodness which is roused by the remembrance of that act, of the words of the thirsty brother, of the feelings of one's heart at that time, of the heart that offered a drink in the name of God and out of love. And so God, through a sequence of recollections, comes back, like the sun that rises after a dark night, and shines on the horizon of a poor heart that had lost Him and that, fascinated by His ineffable presence, humbles itself and cries: "Father, I have sinned! Forgive me. I love You once again".

Love for God is wisdom. It is the Wisdom of wisdoms because he

who loves knows everything and possesses everything. Here, while night is falling and the evening breeze makes your bodies shiver with cold and causes the lamps you have lit to flicker, I am not going to tell you what you already know: the passages of the Wisdom Book describing how Solomon obtained Wisdom and the prayer he said to obtain it. But I exhort you to read those pages with your synagogue leader, so that you may remember Me and proceed on a safe path and have a light to guide you. The Wisdom Book ought to be a code of spiritual life. Like a motherly hand it should guide you and lead you to a perfect knowledge of virtue and of My doctrine. Because Wisdom prepares My ways and makes of men "with little time to live, with little understanding of justice and the laws, servants and sons of God's serving maids" the gods of God's Paradise.

Seek Wisdom in the first place to honour the Lord and hear Him say to you, on the eternal day: "Since you have this at heart above all and you asked not for riches, goods, glory, a long life or victory over your enemies, Wisdom is granted you, that is, God Himself, because the Spirit of Wisdom is the Spirit of God. Seek holy Wisdom first of all and, I tell you, everything else will be given to you and in such a way that none of the mighty ones of the world can achieve so much. Love God. Be only anxious to love Him. Love your neighbour to honour God. Devote yourselves to the service of God, to His triumph in men's hearts. Convert to the Lord those who are not God's friends. Be holy. Store up holy works as a defence against possible failings of the creature. Be faithful to the Lord. Do not criticise either the living or the dead. But strive to imitate good people, and not for your own earthly joy, but to give joy to God ask graces of the Lord and they will be given to you.

Let us go. Tomorrow we shall pray together and God will be with us. »

And Jesus blesses them and dismisses them.

515. Returning to Jerusalem.

24th October 1946.

The damp cold wind is brushing the trees on the hill and blowing cumuli of greyish clouds in the sky. All wrapped up in their heavy mantles, Jesus, the Twelve and Stephen are descending from Gibeon to the road which takes them towards the plain. They are speaking to one another while Jesus, immersed in silence, is absent from what surrounds Him. And He remains thus until they arrive at a cross-road, half-way down the hill, nay almost at the foot of the hill, where He says: « Let us take this road and go to Nob. »

« What? Are You not going back to Jerusalem? » asks the Iscariot.

« Nob and Jerusalem are practically the same thing for one who is accustomed to long walks. But I prefer to be at Nob. Do you mind? »

« Oh! Master! As far as I am concerned, here or there… I am rather sorry that You did not show up very much in a place so favourable to You. You spoke more at Beth-horon, which was certainly not friendly to You. I think You ought to do the opposite. You should try to attract more and more the towns which You feel are propitious to You, and use them as… defences against the towns dominated by Your enemies. Do You know how important it is to have on Your side the towns near Jerusalem? After all Jerusalem is not everything. Other places may be important as well and exert some influence with their importance on the decisions of Jerusalem. Kings are generally proclaimed such in the most loyal towns, and once the proclamation is made, also the others resign themselves… »

« When they do not rebel, in which case there is fratricidal warfare. I do not think that the Messiah wants to begin His Kingdom with a civil war » says Philip.

« I would like one thing only: that it should begin in you with a correct vision of the situation. But your vision is not right yet… So, when will you be able to understand? »

When the Iscariot realises that a reproach may be coming, he asks once again: « So why did You speak so little here at Gibeon? »

« I preferred to listen and rest. Do you not understand that I, too, need rest? »

« We could have stayed and made them happy. If You are so tired, why did You set off again? » asks Bartholomew sadly.

« My limbs are not tired. I need not stop to rest them. It is My heart that is tired and needs rest. And I rest where I find love. Do you perhaps think that I am insensible to so much bitter hatred? That refusals do not grieve Me? Do you think that the conspiracies against Me leave Me indifferent? That the betrayals of him who feigns to be My friend, whereas he is a spy of My enemies, placed beside Me to… »

« Let that never be, Lord! And You must not even suspect that. You offend us by saying that! » says the Iscariot protesting with sad indignation, which is superior to that of all the others, although they all protest saying: « You grieve us with such words, Master, You distrust us! » And James of Zebedee exclaims impulsively: « I say goodbye to You, Master, and I am going back to Capernaum. With a broken heart, but I am going away. And if Capernaum is not far enough, I will join the fishermen of Tyre and Sidon, I will go to Cintium, I will go I don't know where. But so far that it will be impossible for You to think that I betray You. Bless me for viaticum! »

Jesus embraces him saying: « Peace, My apostle. So many say that they are My friends, you are not the only ones. My words grieve you, they grieve you all. But into which hearts shall I pour My worries and where shall I seek comfort if not in the hearts of My beloved apostles and trustworthy disciples? I am seeking in you part of the union that I left to unite men: the union with My Father in Heaven; and a drop of the love that I left out of love for men: the love of My Mother. I seek them as a support. Oh! the bitter wave, the cruel weight overwhelm and press on My heart, on the Son of man!… My Passion, My hour, is becoming fuller and fuller… Help Me to endure it and fulfil it… because it is so grievous! »

The apostles look at one another moved by the deep grief vibrating in the Master's words, and all they can do is to press round Him, caressing and kissing Him… and Judas on the right hand side and John on the left kiss simultaneously the face of Jesus Who closes His eyes while Judas Iscariot and John kiss Him…

They take to the road again, and Jesus can terminate His interrupted thought: « In so much anguish My heart seeks places where it may find love and rest, where, instead of speaking to arid stones, or sly snakes or dreamy butterflies, it can listen to the words of other hearts and find comfort, as it perceives them to be sincere, loving, just. Gibeon is one of these places. I had never come here. But I found a field ploughed and sown by very good workers of God. That synagogue leader! He came towards the Light, but he already was a luminous spirit. How much a good servant of God can do! Gibeon is certainly not free from the intrigues of those who hate Me. Insinuations and corruption will be tried there as well. But it has a synagogue leader who is just, and the poisons of Evil lose venom in it. Do you think it is pleasant to Me having always to correct, criticise and even reproach? It is much more agreeable to be able to say: "You have understood Wisdom. Proceed along your way and be holy", as I said to the synagogue leader of Gibeon. »

« So shall we go back there? »

« When the Father makes Me find a peaceful place I enjoy it and bless My Father for it. But I have not come for that. I have come to convert to the Lord places which are guilty and remote from Him. You know that I could stay at Bethany, but I am not staying there. »

« Also to avoid harming Lazarus. »

« No, Judas of Simon. The very stones know that Lazarus is My friend. So, in that respect, it would be useless for Me to check My desire for consolation. But it is because… »

« Because of Lazarus' sisters, Mary in particular. »

« Not even that, Judas of Simon. Even stones know that the lust of the flesh does not upset Me. Consider that of the many charges made against Me, the first to be dropped was that one, because even My most bitter enemies realised that by sustaining it they would unmask their false practices. No honest person would have believed that I am sensual. Sensuality can allure only those who do not feed on the supernatural and who abhor sacrifices. But what allurement can the pleasure of an hour have for those who have vowed themselves to sacrifice and are victims? The joy of victim souls is entirely in the spirit and, if they are clothed with flesh, it is nothing but a garment. Do you think that the clothes we wear have feelings? The flesh is the same for those who live of the spirit: a garment, nothing else. The spiritual man is the true superman, because he is not a slave of senses, whereas the material man is valueless, with respect to the true dignity of man, because he has too many appetites in common with brutes, and he is also inferior to them as he surpasses them by turning animal instinct into a degraded vice. »

Judas bites his lip perplexedly, then he says: « Yes, in any case, You would not be able to harm Lazarus any longer. Death will soon rescue him from all dangers of revenge… So why do You not go to Bethany more often? »

« Because I have not come to enjoy Myself, but to convert. I have already told you. »

« But… Do You rejoice at having Your brothers with You? »

« Yes. But it is also true that I have no favouritism for them. When we have to part to find room in houses, they generally do not stay with Me, but you do. And that is to show you that in the eyes and minds of those who have vowed themselves to redemption, flesh and blood have no value, but only the improvement of hearts and their redemption are of value. We shall now go to Nob and we shall part once again for the night. And I will keep you with Me again and I will keep also Matthew, Philip and Bartholomew. »

« Are we perhaps the least improved? I in particular, since You always make me stay with You? »

« You are right, Judas of Simon. »

« Thank You, Master. I realised that » says the Iscariot with illrepressed anger.

« If you have understood, why do you not strive to improve yourself? Do you think that I might lie in order not to mortify you? On the other hand, we are among brothers, and the faults of one must not be an object of derision, and if one is admonished in the presence of the others, who are aware of each brother's imperfections, one must not feel dejected. No one is perfect, I tell you. But also reciprocal imperfections, so painful to see and put up with,

must be a reason to improve yourselves so that reciprocal inconvenience may not be increased. And believe Me, Judas, although I see you for what you are, no one, not even your mother, loves you as I do or strives to make you good as your Jesus does. »

« However, You reproach and mortify me, even in the presence of a disciple. »

« Is it the first time that I have recalled you to justice? » Judas is silent. « Answer My question. I tell you! » Jesus says authoritatively.

« No. »

« And how many times did I do that in public? Can you say that I shamed you? Or must you say that I covered you up and defended you? Speak up! »

« You defended me, it's true. But now… »

« But now it is for your own good. A man who caresses his guilty son will have to bandage his wounds later, says the proverb. And another proverb says that a horse badly broken-in turns out stubborn, and an uncontrolled son turns out headstrong. »

« Am I perhaps Your son? » asks Judas changing countenance, as he no longer frowns but looks contrite.

« If I had begotten you, you could not be more so. And I would have My viscera torn out to give you My heart and make you as I would like you to be… »

Judas has one of his fits of repentance… and looking really sincere he throws himself into Jesus' arms shouting: « Ah! I do not deserve You! I am a demon and I do not deserve You! You are too good! Save me, Jesus! » and he weeps, he really weeps with the pain of a heart upset by evil things and by the remorse of grieving the Master Who loves him.

516. Jesus, the Good Shepherd.

25th October 1946.

Jesus, Who has entered the town by Herod's Gate, is now crossing it, going towards the Tyropoeon and the Ophel district.

« Are we going to the Temple? » asks the Iscariot.

« Yes, we are. »

« Watch what You do! » many say warning Him.

« I will only stop for the time of the prayer. »

« They will detain You. »

« No. We will go in through the northern gates and will come out through the southern ones and they will have no time to organise themselves and harm Me. Unless there is always one behind Me who watches and reports. »

No one replies and Jesus goes on His way towards the Temple which appears on the top of its hill, looking almost ghastly in the

green yellowish light of a dull winter morning, as the sun is only a reminiscence, which insists on being present striving to make its way through the thick clouds. A useless effort! The joyful brightness of dawn has turned into a pale reflection of an unreal yellow hue, which is not diffused, but shows spots mixed with leaden hues veined with green. In such light the marbles and gold decorations of the Temple look pale, gloomy, I would say dismal, like ruins emerging from a dead area.

Jesus looks at it intensely while ascending towards the enclosure. And He looks at the faces of the morning wayfarers. Mostly humble people: market-gardeners, shepherds with small animals for slaughter, servants or housewives going to the markets. They all pass by silently, enveloped in their mantles, bending a little to protect themselves from the chilly morning air. Also their faces look paler than is usual with this race. It is the strange light that makes them look so greenish, almost pearly in the contour of the coloured cloths of their mantles, which are green, bright violet, deep yellow and thus not suitable to cast rosy reflections on their faces. Some greet the Master, but do not stop. It is not the right time. There are no beggars as yet, uttering their plaintive cries at crossroads or under the arches built across streets at short intervals. The hour and the season assist Jesus in going freely without any obstacle.

They are now at the enclosure. They go in. They go to the Court of Israel. They pray while the blares of trumpets, I would say silver ones by their timbre, announce something important spreading over the hill, and while the smell of incense spreads pleasantly overwhelming every other less pleasant odour which one can smell at the top of the Moriah, that is, I would say, the perpetual smells of meat slaughtered and consumed by fire, of burnt flour, of burning oil, which are always perceptible up there, more or less strongly, because of the continuous holocausts.

They come away following a different direction and they begin to be noticed by the first people going to the Temple, by those belonging to it, by money-changers and vendors who are assembling their benches and enclosures. But they are too few and their surprise is such that they do not react. They exchange words of astonishment:

« He has come back! »

« He did not go to Galilee, as they said. »

« But where is He hiding if He could not be found anywhere? »

« He really wants to defy them. »

« What a fool! »

« What a holy man! » and so forth according to individual feelings.

Jesus is already outside the Temple and He is going down towards the street that takes one to Ophel, when, at the crossing

with the streets leading up to Zion, He meets with the man born blind, cured recently, who laden with baskets full of sweet-smelling apples is going along cheerfully, joking with other young men, equally laden, going in the opposite direction.

Perhaps the young man would not notice the encounter, as he does not know the face of Jesus or those of the apostles. But Jesus recognises the face of the man He cured miraculously. And He calls him. Sidonia, named Bartholmai, turns round and looks inquisitively at the tall stately man, although modestly dressed, who is calling him by the name, going towards a narrow street.

« Come here » Jesus orders him.

The young man approaches Him, without putting down his load, looks stealthily at Jesus, and thinking that He wants to buy some apples, he says: « My master has already sold them. But he has more if You want them. They are beautiful and good. They arrived yesterday from the Sharon orchards. And if You buy many of them he will give you a good discount, because… »

Jesus smiles raising His right hand to check the talkative young man. And He says: « I did not call you because I want to buy apples, but to congratulate you and bless the Most High Who has been kind to you. »

« Oh! yes! I do that continuously, because of the light that I can see and because of the work that I can do, helping my father and mother, at last. I found a good master. He is not a Hebrew but he is good. The Hebrews did not want me be… because I have been ejected from the synagogue » says the young man laying his baskets on the ground.

« They have ejected you? Why? What have you done? »

« I, nothing. I can assure You. The Lord did it. On a Sabbath He made me find that man who is said to be the Messiah, and He cured me, as You can see. And that is why they drove me out. »

« Then, He Who cured you, did not do you a completely good turn » says Jesus tempting him.

« Don't say that, man! You are blaspheming! First of all He showed me that God loves me, and then He made me see… You do not know what it is "to see" because You have always had Your eyesight. But one who had never seen! Oh!… It is… It is all the things together that one has with his sight. I tell You that when I saw, over there near the Siloam pool, I laughed and wept, for joy, eh? I wept as I had never wept in my misfortune. Because I then understood how great it was and how good was the Most High. And now I can earn my living and by means of a decent work. And then… - this is above all what I hope the miracle I received will grant me - I hope to meet the man who is said to be the Messiah and His disciple who had… »

« What would you do then? »

« I would like to bless Him. Him and His disciple. And I would like to ask the Master, Who must really come from God, to take me as His servant. »

« What? Because of Him you are anathema, you have difficulty in finding a job, you may be punished more severely, and you want to serve Him? Do you not know that all those who follow Him Who cured you are persecuted? »

« Yes, I know! But he is the Son of God, that is what is said among us. Although those up there (and he points at the Temple) do not want us to say that. And is it not worth leaving everything to serve Him? »

« So do you believe in the Son of God and in His presence in Palestine? »

« I do believe it. But I would like to meet Him to believe in Him not only with my intellect, but with my whole self. If You know Who He is and where He is, tell me, that I may go to Him and see Him, and I may believe in Him completely, and serve Him. »

« You have already seen Him, and there is no need for you to go to Him. He, Whom you see just now and Who is speaking to you, is the Son of God. »

I could not assert this with full certainty, but I got the impression that in saying these words Jesus almost underwent a very short transfiguration, becoming most handsome and I would say bright. I think that to reward the humble believer in Him and confirm him in his faith, for the duration of a flash, He revealed His future beauty, I mean the beauty that He will assume after Resurrection and will retain in Heaven, His beauty of a glorified human creature, of a body glorified and blended with the inexpressible beauty of Perfection, which is exclusively His. I say, an instant. A flash. But the semi-dark corner, where they have withdrawn to speak, under the archivolt of the lane, lightens with a strange brightness emanating from Jesus Who, I would repeat, becomes very handsome.

Then everything returns to normal, with the exception of the young man, who is now prostrated on the ground, his face in the dust, and who adores saying: « I believe, Lord, my God! »

« Stand up. I came into the world to bring light and the knowledge of God and to test men and judge them. This time of Mine is the time of choice, election and selection. I have come for the pure in heart and intention, for the humble, the meek, the lovers of justice, of mercy, of peace, for those who weep and for those who know how to give the real value to the various riches and prefer spiritual riches to material ones, that they may find what their spirits long for and those who were blind may see because men have built thick walls to obstruct light, that is the knowledge of God - and those who consider themselves seers,

may become blind… »

« Then You hate a large part of men and You are not as good as You say. If You were, You would like everybody to be able to see, and those who can see not to become blind » interrupt some Pharisees who have arrived from the main road and have cautiously approached the group at the back of the apostles.

Jesus turns round and looks at them. He is certainly no longer transfigured into divine beauty, now! It is a very severe Jesus Who stares at His persecutors with His sapphire eyes, and His voice no longer has the golden note of joy, but it is a bronze voice and it is sharp and severe like the sound of bronze while He replies: « I am not the one who wants those, who at present are fighting the truth, not to be able to see it. They themselves are raising plates in front of their eyes in order not to see. And they become blind of their own free will. And the Father sent Me that the division may take place, and the children of Light and those of Darkness may be really known, those who want to see and those who want to be blind. »

« Are we among these blind people as well? »

« If you were and you tried to see, you would not be guilty. But it is because you say: "We see", and then you do not want to see, that you commit sin. Your sin persists because you do not try to see, although you are blind. »

« And what have we to see? »

« The Way, the Truth, the Life. A man born blind, as this young man was, with the help of his stick can always find the door of his house and move about it, because he knows his house. But if he were taken to a different place he would not be able to go in by the door of the new house, because he would not know where it is and he would bump against the walls.

The time of the new Law has come. Everything is renewed and a new world, a new people, a new kingdom are rising. Now the people of the past do not know all this. They know their times. They are like blind people taken to a new town where the regal house of the Father is, but they do not know its location. I have come to lead them there and take them into it and that they may see. But I am the Door through which one enters the paternal house, in the Kingdom of God, in the Light, in the Way, in the Truth, in the Life. And I am also the One Who has come to gather the flock left without a guide and lead it to one only sheep-fold: the Father's. I know the door of the Fold because I am Door and Shepherd. And I go in and come out as and when I like. And I go in freely, and by the door, because I am the true Shepherd.

When a man comes to give the sheep of God other instructions or tries to mislead them taking them to other abodes and other ways, he is not the good Shepherd, but an idol shepherd. Likewise, he who does not go in by the door of the fold, but tries to enter in a

different way, jumping over the enclosure, is not the shepherd, but a thief and an assassin, who goes in to kill and steal, so that the stolen lambs with their wailing voices may not draw the attention of the watchmen and of the shepherd. False shepherds are trying to insinuate themselves also among the sheep of the flock of Israel to lead them astray from the pastures, far from the true Shepherd. And they go in ready to tear them from the flock even by means of violence, and if necessary, they are also willing to kill them and strike them in many ways, so that they may not speak informing the Shepherd of the tricks of the false shepherds or they may cry to God to protect them from their enemies and the enemies of the Shepherd.

I am the good Shepherd and My sheep know Me, and those who have been for ever the watchmen of the true Fold know Me. They have known Me and My Name and they mentioned it to make it known to Israel, and they described Me and prepared My ways, and when My voice was heard, the last of them opened the door to Me saying to the flock awaiting the true Shepherd, the flock gathered round his crook: "Now! Here is the One Who I said would follow me. One Who precedes me because He was before me and I did not know Him. But for Him, that you may be ready to receive Him, I have come to baptise with water, that He may be revealed to Israel". And the good sheep heard My voice and when I called them by their names they came to Me and I took them with Me, as a good shepherd does when he is known to the sheep that recognise his voice and follow him wherever he goes. And when he has let them all out, he walks in front of them and they follow him because they love the voice of the shepherd. But they do not follow a stranger, on the contrary they run away from him, because they do not know him and they are afraid of him. I also walk ahead of My sheep to point out the road to them and be the first to face dangers and show them to the flock, that I want to lead to safety in My Kingdom. »

« Is Israel no longer the kingdom of God? »

« Israel is the place from which the people of God must rise to the true Jerusalem and to the Kingdom of God. »

« And what about the promised Messiah? That Messiah that You say You are, is He not to make Israel triumphant, glorious, the master of the world, subjecting to His sceptre all the peoples and revenging Himself, oh! revenging Himself cruelly on all those who subjugated it since it was a people? So, nothing of all that is true? Are you denying the prophets? Are You saying that our rabbis are stupid? You… »

« The Kingdom of the Messiah is not of this world. It is the Kingdom of God, based on Love. It is nothing else. And the Messiah is not the king of peoples and armies, but the king of spirits.

The Messiah will come from the chosen people, from the royal stock, and above all from God, Who generated Him and sent Him. The foundation of the Kingdom of God, the promulgation of the Law of love, the announcement of the Good News mentioned by the prophet began from the people of Israel. But the Messiah will be the King of the world, the King of kings, and His Kingdom will have no limit or boundary, neither in time nor in space. Open your eyes and accept the truth. »

« We have understood nothing of Your nonsense. You speak words without any logical connection. Speak and reply to us without parables. Are You or are You not the Messiah? »

« And have you not yet understood? I told you that I am Door and Shepherd for that. So far no one has been able to enter the Kingdom of God, because it was walled up and without exits. But now I have come and the door to enter has been made. »

« Oh! Others have said that they were the Messiah and later they were found out to be highwaymen and rebels and human justice punished their wickedness. Who can assure us that You are not like them? We are tired of suffering and of making the people suffer the severity of Rome, thanks to liars who say that they are kings and they induce the people to rebel! »

« No. What you say is not correct. You do not want to suffer, that is true. But you are not sorry if the people suffer. So much so that you add your rigour to the severity of our rulers, by oppressing the common people with heavy tithes and in other ways. Who can assure you that I am not a rascal? My deeds. I am not one who will make the hand of Rome heavy. On the contrary, if anything, I make it lighter by advising the rulers to be human and the people ruled to be patient. At least that. »

Many people have assembled and they are growing more and more in numbers so much so that the traffic is obstructed on the main road and so they all move into the little lane, under the arches of which voices resound, as they express their approval saying: « He is quite right with regard to tithes! It's true. He advises us to submit and the Romans to be compassionate. »

The Pharisees, as usual, become embittered because of the approval of the crowd and the tone in which they speak to the Christ becomes more biting. « Reply to us without so many words, and prove that You are the Messiah. »

« I solemnly tell you that I am. I alone am the Door of the Fold of Heaven. He who does not pass by Me cannot enter. It is true. There have been other false Messiahs, and there will be still more. But I am the only and true Messiah. Those who have come so far proclaiming themselves such, were not the Messiah, they were only thieves and bandits. And not only those who made the few people of their kind call them Messiah, but also others who without taking

that name demand a worship which is not even given to the true Messiah. Listen, anyone who has ears to hear. But take notice of this. The sheep did not listen to the false Messiahs or to the false shepherds and masters, because their spirits understood the falseness of their voices which wanted to sound kind and were instead cruel. Only some billy-goats followed them to be their companions in wickedness. Wild unyielding billy-goats that do not want to enter the Fold of God, under the sceptre of the true King and Shepherd. Because this is now what happens in Israel. That He Who is the King of kings becomes the Shepherd of the Flock, whereas, once, he who was the shepherd of flocks became king and both the Former and the latter come from the same root, that of Jesse, as it is stated in the promises and prophecies.

The false shepherds did not speak sincere words or perform comforting deeds. They dispersed and tortured the flock or they abandoned it to wolves, or they killed it to make a profit selling it to secure their lives or they deprived it of its pastures to turn them into places of pleasure or thickets for idols. Do you know which are the wolves? They are the evil passions, the vices that the same false shepherds taught the flock, as they were the first to practise them. And do you know which are the thickets for idols? They are one's selfishness before which too much incense is burnt. The other two things need not be explained because the sermon is even too clear. But it is logical that false shepherds should behave thus. They are nothing but thieves who have come to steal, kill and destroy, to take the sheep to treacherous pastures or to false folds which are nothing but slaughter-houses. But those which come to Me are safe and they will be able to go out to My pastures or come back to rest with Me and become strong and fat with holy healthy food. Because I have come for that. That My people, My sheep, so far thin and depressed, may have life and have it abundantly, in peace and joy. And I want that so much that I have come to give My life so that My sheep may have the full abundant Life of the children of God.

I am the good Shepherd. And when a shepherd is good he gives his life to defend his flock from wolves and thieves, whereas a mercenary, who does not love the sheep but the money he gets for leading them to pasture, is only worried about saving himself and the savings that he keeps in his bosom, and when he sees wolves or thieves come, he runs away, save going back later to take some sheep left half dead by the wolves or dispersed by the thieves, killing the former to eat them or selling the latter to make more money and then with false tears he tells his master that not even one sheep was spared. What does the mercenary care if a wolf fangs and disperses the sheep, and a thief plunders them to take them to the butcher? Did he watch over them while they were

growing and did he work to make them strong? But the owner who knows how much sheep cost, how many hours of work, of watch, how many sacrifices, loves them and takes care of them as they are dear to him. But I am more than the owner. I am the Saviour of My flock and I know how much the salvation of even one soul costs Me, and I am therefore willing to do anything to save a soul. It was entrusted to Me by My Father. All the souls have been entrusted to Me with instructions that I should save a very large number of them. The more I will be able to snatch from the death of the spirit, the more will My Father be glorified. I therefore struggle to free them from all their enemies, that is from their egos, from the world, from the flesh, from the demon, and from My enemies who contend for them with Me to grieve Me. I do that because I know the Thought of My Father. And My Father sent Me to do that, because He is aware of My love for Him and for souls. And also the sheep of My flock know Me and My love and they feel that I am ready to give My life to give them happiness.

And I have other sheep. But they do not belong to this Fold. Therefore they do not know Me for what I am, and many do not know what I am and who I am. Sheep that to many of us appear to be worse than wild billy-goats and are considered unworthy of knowing the Truth and of having Life and the Kingdom. And yet it is not so. The Father wants them as well, so I must approach them, too, to make Myself known and to make the Good News known, to lead them to My pastures and gather them. And they also will listen to My voice because they will end up by loving it. And there will be only one Fold under only one Shepherd, and the Kingdom of God will be formed on the Earth ready to be transported to and received in Heaven, under My sceptre and My sign and My true Name.

My true Name! It is known to Me only! But when the number of the chosen ones is complete, and among hymns of jubilation they sit at the great wedding feast of the Bridegroom and the Bride, then My Name will be made known to My chosen ones, who through their loyalty to it have become holy, without however knowing the full extent and the depth of what it means to be marked with My Name and rewarded because of their love for it, or what the reward will be… This is what I want to give to My faithful sheep. And that is My own joy… »

With His eyes bright with ecstatic tears Jesus looks at the faces turned towards Him, and a smile trembles on His lips, such a spiritualised smile in His spiritualised face, that it thrills the crowds who realise that the Christ has been in a beatific rapture and that out of love He wishes to see it accomplished. He collects Himself and for a moment He closes His eyes concealing the mystery that His mind sees and that the eyes might reveal, and He

resumes:

« That is why the Father loves Me, o My people, o My flock! Because for your sake, for your eternal good, I give My life. Later I will retake it. But first I will give it that you may have life and your Saviour as your life. And I will give it in such a way that you may feed on it, as I will change from Shepherd into pasture and fountain, which give food and drink, not for forty years as for the Hebrews in the desert, but for all the time of exile in the deserts of the Earth. No one, actually, takes My life. Neither those who loving Me with their whole beings deserve that I should sacrifice it for them, nor those who take it through immense hatred and foolish fear. No one could take it if I did not agree to give it and if the Father did not allow it, as we are both enraptured by an ecstasy of love for guilty Mankind. I will give it Myself. And I have the power to retake it whenever I wish, as it is not befitting that Death should prevail over Life. That is why the Father gave Me that power, nay the Father ordered Me to do that. And through My life, offered and consumed, the people will become one only People: Mine, the heavenly People of the children of God, and in the people the sheep will be separated from the billy-goats and the sheep will follow their Shepherd to the Kingdom of eternal Life. »

And Jesus, Who so far has spoken in a loud voice, turns towards Sidonia named Bartholmai, who has been all the time in front of Him with his baskets of sweet-smelling apples at his feet, and He says to him in a whisper: « You have forgotten everything because of Me. Now you will certainly be punished and you will lose your job. See that? I am always the cause of sorrow to you. Because of Me you lost the synagogue, and now you will lose your master… »

« And what am I going to do with all that, if I have You? You only are of value to me. And I will leave everything to follow You, if You will allow me. Just let me take this fruit to him who bought it and then I will come with You. »

« Let us go together. Then we will go to see your father. Because you have a father and you must honour him by asking him to bless you. »

« Yes, Lord. Everything You wish. But teach me many things, because I know nothing, just nothing, I cannot even read and write because I was blind. »

« Do not worry about that. Your good will will teach you. »

And He sets out to go to the main street, while the crowds comment, discuss, and even quarrel, divided between the two usual opinions: is Jesus of Nazareth a person possessed or is He a saint? The crowds, with discordant opinions, dispute, while Jesus goes away.

517. Towards Bethany and in Lazarus' House.

28th October 1946.

Jesus dismisses the disciples Levi, Joseph, Matthias and John, whom He met I do not know where and to whom He entrusts the new disciple Sidonia named Bartholmai. This happens at the first houses in Bethany. And the shepherd disciples go away with the newcomer and with seven other men who were with them. Jesus looks at them go away, He then turns round to look at His apostles and He says: « And now let us wait here for Judas of Simon… »

« Ah! You noticed that he has gone? » say the others who are surprised. « We thought that You were not aware of it. There was such a large crowd. And You were speaking all the time, first with the young man and then with the shepherds… »

« I noticed that he had gone from the very first moment. Nothing escapes My notice. That is why I went to some friendly houses, telling them to send Judas to Bethany, if he should look for Me… »

« God forbid! » grumbles the other Judas between his teeth.

Jesus looks at him, but pretends that He has not heard, and He goes on, speaking to everybody, as He sees that they are all of the same opinion as Thaddeus (faces, at times, speak better than words): « This will be a good rest while waiting for his return. It will be of comfort to everybody. Then we will go towards Tekoah. The weather is cold but it is clearing up. I will evangelize that town, then we will come back up passing through Jericho and we will go to the other bank. The shepherds told Me that many sick people are looking for Me and I sent word that they need not set out on the journey, and that they should wait for Me there.- »

« Well, let us go » says Peter with a sigh.

« Are you not glad to go to Lazarus' house? » Thomas asks him.

« I am glad. »

« You don't seem to be, the way you say it. »

« It is not because of Lazarus. It's because of Judas… »

« You are a sinner, Peter » says Jesus admonishing him.

« I am. But… he, Judas of Kerioth, is he not a sinner since he goes away, is insolent and a torture? » bursts out Peter angrily, as he cannot stand the situation any longer.

« He is. But if he is, you must not be. None of us must be. Remember that God will ask us, - I say: will ask us, because God Father entrusted that man to Me before entrusting him to you - to account for what we did to redeem him. »

« And do You hope to succeed, Brother? I cannot believe it. You, I believe this, You know the past, the present and the future. So You cannot be mistaken about that man. And… But it is better if I don't tell You the rest. »

« It is in fact a great virtue to be able to be silent. But you had better know that to foresee more or less exactly the future of a heart

does not exempt anyone from persevering until the end to save a heart from being ruined. Do not fall into the fatalism of Pharisees who maintain that what is destined must take place and nothing can prevent what is destined from being accomplished, and with such reasoning they justify their sins and will justify their final act of hatred against Me. Many a time God awaits the sacrifice of a heart, that overcomes its nausea and indignation, its antipathy, even if justified, to rescue a spirit from the quagmire into which it is sinking. Yes, I tell you. Many times God, the Almighty, the Everything, waits for a creature, a mere nothing, to make or not to make a sacrifice, to say a prayer, in order to condemn or not condemn a spirit. It is never late, never too late, to try and hope to save a soul. And I will give you proof of that. Even on the threshold of death, when both the sinner and the just man who is anxious about him, are about to leave the Earth to appear at the first judgement of God, one can always save or be saved. Between the cup and the lips, says the proverb, there is always room for death. I instead say: between the extremity of agony and death there is always time to obtain forgiveness, for oneself or for those whom we want to be forgiven. »

Not one word is uttered by anybody.

Jesus, who by now has arrived at the heavy gate, calls a servant to have it opened. And He goes in and asks after Lazarus.

« Oh! Lord! See? I have just come back from gathering bay-leaves and the leaves of the camphor tree, and cypress-berries and other leaves and scented fruit to boil them with wine and resins, and prepare baths for our master with them. His flesh is coming off in bits and it is impossible to withstand the stench. You have come, but I do not know whether they will let You pass… » Lest the very air should hear, he lowers his voice to a whisper saying: « Now that it is no longer possible to conceal the sores, the mistresses do not receive anybody… lest… You know… Lazarus is not really loved by many people… But many, and for many reasons, would be glad if… Oh! don't let me think of this as it is the terror of the whole household. »

« And they are right. But do not be afraid. That misfortune will not take place. »

« But… will he be able to recover? A miracle of Yours… »

« He will not recover. But that will serve to glorify the Lord. »

The servant is disappointed… Jesus cures everybody but does nothing here!… But only a sigh expresses his thought. He then says: « I am going to the mistresses to announce You. »

Jesus is surrounded by the apostles who are interested in Lazarus' conditions and are filled with dismay when Jesus informs them. But the two sisters are about to arrive. Their flourishing although different beauty seems dulled with grief and

with the fatigue of protracted watching at Lazarus' bedside. Pale, humble, emaciated, their eyes, once so bright, tired, without rings or bracelets, wearing two dark grey dresses, they look more like maidservants than mistresses. They kneel down at a distance from Jesus, offering Him nothing but tears. Resigned, silent tears flowing from an internal source and unable to stop.

Jesus approaches them. Martha stretches out her hands whispering: « Move away, Lord. We are really afraid by now that we have infringed the law on leprosy. But we cannot, o God, we cannot have such an ordinance against our Lazarus! But please do not come near us, as we are unclean as we touch nothing but sores. We alone. Because we have kept everybody else away, and everything is placed on the threshold for us, and we take it and wash and burn things in the room next to our brother's. See our hands? They are corroded by the caustic lime which we use for the vases we have to hand back to the servants. We think that by doing so we are less guilty » and she weeps.

Mary of Magdala, who has been silent so far, moans in her turn: « We should call the priest. But… I, I am the more guilty one because I oppose that and I say that it is not the dreadful cursed disease in Israel. It is not, it is not! But so many hate us and so much, that they would say it is. Your apostle Simon was declared a leper for much less! »

« You are neither priest nor doctor, Mary » says Martha sobbing.

« I am not. But you know what I have done to be certain of what I am saying. Lord, I went and covered the whole valley of Hinnom, all Siloam, all the sepulchres near En Rogel. I went dressed as a maidservant, veiled, in the first light of dawn, loaded with foodstuffs, medicated waters, bandages and clothes. And I gave, I gave everything. I said that it was a vow I had made for him whom I loved. And it was true. I only asked to see the sores of the lepers. They must have thought that I was mad… Who ever wishes to see those horrors?! But after laying my offering at the edges of the crags, I asked to see. And they were above me, I was farther down; they were amazed, I was disgusted; they wept, and I wept; and I looked and looked! I looked at bodies covered with scales, with crusts, with sores, I looked at corroded faces, at white hair stiffer than bristles, at eyes exuding pus, at cheeks through which I could see teeth, at skulls on living bodies, at hands which had become claws of monsters, at feet resembling knobby branches… stench, horror, rottenness. Oh! if I sinned worshipping flesh, if I took delight in my senses of sight, smell, hearing, touch, in what was beautiful, scented, harmonious, soft and smooth, oh! I can assure you that my senses have been purified in the mortification of such sights! My eyes forgot the enticing handsomeness of man on contemplating those monsters, my ears expiated the past enjoyment

of manly voices on hearing those harsh ones, no longer sounding like human voices, my body shuddered, my smell revolted… and all remainders of the cult of myself died, because I saw what we shall be after death… But I brought back with me this certitude: that Lazarus is not a leper. His voice is not injured, his hair and the hairy parts of his body are intact, and his sores are different. No, he is not a leper! And Martha distresses me because she will not believe, because she does not comfort Lazarus by dissuading him from believing that he is unclean. See? He does not want to see You, now that he knows that You are here, lest he should infect You. The foolish fears of my sister are depriving him also of Your comfort!… »

Her passionate nature makes her angry. But when she sees that her sister bursts into tears weeping desolately, her impetuosity abates at once and she embraces and kisses Martha, saying: « Oh! Martha! Forgive me! Grief is making me unfair! It's my love for you and Lazarus that wants to convince you! My poor sister! What poor women we are! »

« Now, now, do not weep so! You are in need of peace and reciprocal compassion, for your own sake and for his. Lazarus, in any case, is not leprous, I tell you. »

« Oh! come to him, Lord. Who can judge better than You whether he is leprous? » says Martha imploringly.

« Have I not already told you that he is not? »

« Yes. But how can You say so if You do not see him? »

« Oh! Martha! Martha! God forgives you because you are in pain and you are like one whose mind is raving! I feel sorry for you and I will go to Lazarus and uncover his sores and… »

« and You will cure them!!! » shouts Martha standing up.

« I have already told that I cannot do it… But I will put your minds at rest, as you will know that you have not infringed the law concerning lepers. Let us go… » And He is the first to set out towards the house beckoning to His apostles not to follow Him.

Mary runs ahead, she opens a door, runs along a corridor, opens another door which leads into a small internal yard, and after a few steps she enters a semidark room encumbered with basins, small vases, amphorae, bandages… A mixed odour of spices and putrefaction is perceived. There is a door opposite the first one and Mary opens it shouting in a voice that endeavours to be bright and joyful: « Here is the Master. He has come to tell you that I am right, my dear brother. Cheer up and smile because our love and peace is coming in! » and she bends over her brother, lifts him on the pillows, kisses him, heedless of the smell that in spite of palliatives exhales from the ulcerated body, and she is still bent tidying him, when Jesus' kind greeting resounds in the room, which, enveloped in a faint light, seems to brighten up because of

the divine presence.

« Master, You are not afraid… I am… »

« You are ill! Nothing else. Lazarus, the rules have been laid down, so comprehensive and severe, out of an understandable sense of prudence. It is better to be exceedingly prudent than imprudent in certain cases, such as catching diseases. But you are not infectious, My poor dear friend, you are not unclean. And in fact I do not think that I lack prudence towards My brothers if I embrace you and kiss you thus » and He kisses him taking his emaciated body in His arms.

« You really are Peace! But You have not yet seen me. Mary will now uncover the horror. I am already a dead body, Lord. I do not know how my sisters can stand… »

I would not know either, so frightening and disgusting are the sores near the varicose veins of his legs. Mary's beautiful hands massage them lightly while in her wonderful voice she replies: « Your ills are roses for your sisters. Only because you suffer they are thorny roses. Here it is, Master. See? Leprosy is not like that! »

« No, it is not. It is a bad disease and it consumes you, but it is not dangerous. Believe your Master! You may cover him, Mary. I have seen. »

« Are You really not going to touch him? » asks Martha with a sigh, persevering in hope.

« It is not necessary. Not because of disgust, but to avoid irritating the sores. »

Martha, without insisting any more, bends over a basin containing spicy wine or vinegar and dips some linens into it and then hands them to her sister. Silent tears drop into the reddish liquid…

Mary bandages the poor legs and lays the blankets once again on Lazarus' feet, which are as motionless and yellowish as those of a dead man.

« Are You alone? »

« No. They are all with Me, except Judas of Kerioth who stayed in Jerusalem, and will come… Nay, if I have already left, send him to Bethabara. I shall be there. And tell him to wait for Me there. »

« You are going away soon… »

« And I shall be back soon. It will soon be the Feast of the Dedication. I shall be with you those days. »

« I shall not be able to honour You at the Feast of the Lights… »

« I shall be in Bethlehem on that day. I must see My cradle once again… »

« You are sad… I know… Oh! and I can do nothing! »

« I am not sad. I am the Redeemer… But you are tired. Do not strive to keep awake, My dear friend. »

« It was to honour You… »

« Sleep. We shall meet later… » and Jesus withdraws noiselessly.

« Have You seen, Master? » asks Martha, outside, in the yard.

« Yes, I have. My poor disciples… I weep with you… But I truly confide to you that My heart is much more ulcerated than your brother. Grief gnaws at My heart… » and He looks at them with such deep sadness that they forget their sorrow because of His, and as their being women prevents them from embracing Him, they confine themselves to kissing His hands and tunic and to serving Him as loving sisters. And they serve Him in a little room, and overwhelm Him with their love.

The loud voices of the apostles can be heard from beyond the yard… All of them, except the voice of the bad disciple. And Jesus listens and sighs… He sighs awaiting the fugitive patiently.

518. Going to Tekoah. Old Elianna.

29th October 1946.

They are still only eleven when they set out again. Eleven pensive shocked faces around the sad face of Jesus, Who takes leave of the sisters, and Who, after a moment's consideration, says to Simon Zealot and Bartholomew: « You will stay here. You will join Me at Tekoah, at Simon's house, or in the house of Nike near Jericho, or at Bethabara, if he should come. And… serve Charity. Have you understood? »

« Do not worry, Master. We will not be lacking in love for our neighbour in any way » says Bartholomew assuring Him.

« At whatever hour he may arrive, leave at once. »

« We will, Master. And… thanks for trusting us » says the Zealot.

They kiss one another and while a servant closes the gate and Jesus goes away, the two apostles go back to the house with the sisters.

Jesus is ahead, alone; Peter is behind Him between Matthew and James of Alphaeus; behind them there is Philip with Andrew, James and John of Zebedee. Last, as silent as the others, come Thomas and Judas Thaddeus. But I am wrong. Peter also is silent. His two companions exchange a few words, but he, who is between them, does not speak. He proceeds silently, with his head lowered. He seems to be holding a mute conversation with the stones and grass on which he is treading.

Also the last two seem to have the same attitude. The only difference is that, while Thomas seems to be engrossed in the contemplation of a tiny branch of willow, which he strips leaf by leaf, and looks at each leaf after detaching it, as if he were studying its light green shade on one side and the silvery one on the other, or the veins of its design, Judas Thaddeus is staring straight ahead. I do not know whether he is looking at the view which, after they have crossed over the ridge of a mountain, stretches across the rather

indistinct splendour of a plain at dawn, or whether he is only looking at the fair hair of Jesus, Who has thrown His mantle back to enjoy the mild December sunshine on His head.

And Thomas' occupation and Judas Thaddeus' contemplation of the view, or of the Master, end at the same time. The latter lowers his eyes and turns round looking at his companion, while Thomas, who has reduced his little branch to a riding-whip, raises his eyes to look at Thaddeus. A sharp and at the same time kind sad look which meets a similar one.

« It is so, my friend! Just so! » says Thomas as if he were ending a speech.

« Yes, it is so. And deep is my grief… Also my love for a relative is involved… »

« I understand. But… You have a torture of love in your heart. But, what about me? I have a sense of remorse torturing me. And it is even worse. »

« Remorse? You have no reason for remorse. You are good and loyal. Jesus is pleased with you and we have never had from you any reason for scandal. So how can you have this feeling of remorse? »

« From a recollection. The remembrance of the day when I decided to follow the new Rabbi, Who had appeared in the Temple… Judas and I were close to each other and we admired the action and the words of the Master. And we decided to look for Him… And I was more decided than Judas and I almost dragged him. He says the opposite, but it is so. That is my remorse. That I insisted to make him come… I brought an everlasting sorrow to Jesus. But I knew that Judas was loved by… many and I thought that he would be useful. As foolish as all those who can but think of a king of Israel greater than David and Solomon, but still a king… a king as He says that He will never be, I was yearning to have him among the disciples as he might be useful!… I was hoping so. And only now I understand, and I understand so more and more, how right Jesus was in not accepting him at once, on the contrary He told me not to look for him… A cause for remorse, I tell you! Remorse! That man is not good. »

« He is not. But do not create occasions of remorse for yourself. You did not act out of malice, so you are not guilty. I tell you. »

« Are you really sure? Or are you saying so to console me? »

« I am telling you because it is the truth. Do not think of the past any more, Thomas. It does not help to eradicate it… »

« That's easily said! But just think! If because of me some misfortune should befall the Master… I am sick at heart and full of suspicion. I am a sinner because I am judging a companion, and my judgement is not merciful. And I am a sinner because I should believe the words of the Master… He excuses Judas… Do you…

believe your brother? »

« In everything except that. But don't be distressed. We have all the same thought. Also Peter, who is so worried, strives to think well of that man, and Andrew, who is meeker than a little lamb, and Matthew, the only one among us who does not feel disgust for any sinner. And also the so loving and pure John, who is so lucky that he need not fear evil or vice, because he is so full of charity and purity that he has no room for anything else. And my brother has it, too. I mean Jesus. He certainly has other thoughts as well, and thus sees the necessity of keeping Judas… until every attempt to make him good becomes vain. »

« Yes. But… what will happen in the end? He has many… He has no… Briefly, you understand without me telling you. How far will he go? »

« I don't know… Perhaps he will leave us… Perhaps he will stay, waiting to see who is stronger in this struggle: Jesus or the Hebrew world… »

« Nothing else? Do you not think that he is already serving two masters? »

« That is certain. »

« And are you not afraid that he may serve the more numerous group, in order to cause complete damage to the Master? »

« No, I am not. I do not love him. But I cannot believe that he… At least not for the time being… I would certainly be afraid of that if one day the crowds stopped supporting the Master. If, instead, a public acclamation should consecrate Him king and our leader, I am sure that Judas would abandon everybody for Him. He is an exploiter… May God check him, and protect Jesus and us all!… »

The two realise that they have slackened their paces and that they have been left far behind their companions and without speaking any more they begin to walk fast to join them.

« What have you been doing? » asks Matthew. « The Master wanted you… »

Thomas and Thaddeus proceed quickly to go to Jesus.

« Of what were you speaking between yourselves? » asks Jesus staring at them.

The two look at each other. Should they tell Him? Should they not? Sincerity wins. « Of Judas » they say together.

« I knew. But I wanted to put your sincerity to the test. You would have distressed Me if you had lied… But do not speak any more about him, and particularly in that manner. There are so many good things about which you can speak. Why always debase oneself to consider what is very, nay, too material? Isaiah says: "Trust no more in man, he has but a breath in his nostrils". I say to you: stop analysing that man and take care of his spirit. The animal that is in him, his monster, must not attract your attention

and your judgement; but love his spirit with sorrowful active love. Free him from the monster that is detaining him. You do not know. »…

He turns round to call the other seven: « Come here, all of you, because what I am about to say is useful to everybody, as you all have the same thoughts in your hearts… Do you not know that you learn more through Judas of Kerioth than through any other person? You will find many Judases and very few Jesus in your apostolic ministry. The Jesus will be kind, good, pure, faithful, obedient, prudent, free from greed. They will be very few… But how many Judases of Kerioth you, your followers and your successors will find along the ways of the world! And in order to be masters and to know, you must attend this school… With his faults he shows you what man is; I show you what man should be. Two examples equally necessary. By knowing both well, you must try to change the former into the latter… And let My patience be your rule. »

« Lord, I was a big sinner, and I am certainly an example as well. But I would like Judas, who is not such a sinner as I was, to become the convert that I am. Is it pride to say this? »

« No, Matthew, it is not pride. You honour two truths by saying so. The first is that the sentence saying: "The good will of man works divine miracles" is truthful. The second is that God loved you infinitely, since the time you thought nothing about it, and He did so because He was aware of your capability for heroism. You are the fruit of two powers: your will and God's love. And I am putting your will first, because without it God's love would have been vain. Vain, inert… »

« But could God not convert us without our will? » asks James of Alphaeus.

« Certainly. But man's will would still be required to persevere in the conversion obtained miraculously. »

« So such will has not been and is not in Judas, either before knowing You, or now… » says Philip impulsively. Some laugh, some sigh.

Jesus is the only one who defends the absent apostle: « Do not say that! He had it and has it. But the evil law of the flesh overwhelms it at intervals. He is ill. A poor sick brother. In every family there is a week or a sick person, someone who is the pain, the worry, the burden of the family. And yet is a frail child not the one most loved by his mother? Is the unhappy brother not the one best served by his brothers? Is he not the one to whom his father gives the dainty, taking it from his plate, to make him happy, to make him feel that he is not a burden and thus make his illness less boring? »

« That is true. It is just like that. My twin sister was delicate in her childhood. I had taken all the sturdiness. But the love of the

whole family helped so much that now she is a buxom wife and mother » says Thomas.

« Exactly. Do with your spiritual brother what you would do with a weak brother german. I will not utter one word of reproach. Do not be more severe than I am. Your patient love is the sharpest rebuke against which it is not possible to react. I will leave Matthew and Philip at Tekoah to wait for Judas… Let the former remember that he was a sinner and the latter that he is a father… »

« Yes, Master. We will bear that in mind. »

« At Jericho, if Judas has not yet joined us, I will leave Andrew and John, and let them remember that the gratuitous gifts of God have not been granted in the same measure to everybody… But go to that old man who is staggering on the road over there. The town is in sight. With your alms he will be able to buy some bread. »

« Master, we cannot. Judas has gone with the purse… » says Peter. « And the sisters did not give us anything. »

« You are right, Simon. They are stunned with grief and we are as dazed as they are. It does not matter. We have some bread. We are young and strong. Let us give it to the old man, that he may not drop on the road. »

They search in their bags and put together a few morsels of bread, they give them to the old man who looks at them with an amazed countenance.

« Eat, eat! » says Jesus encouraging him. And He lets him drink out of His flask, while asking him where he is going.

« To Tekoah. There is a big market tomorrow. But I have had nothing to eat since yesterday. »

« Are you alone? »

« More than alone… My son drove me out of the house… » The senile voice is heart-rending.

« God will open the gate of His Kingdom to you if you can believe in His mercy. »

« And in that of His Messiah. But my son will have no Messiah, because he who hates Him so much as to hate his father who loves Him, cannot have the Messiah. »

« Is that why he drove you out? »

« Yes, it is. And that he might not lose the friendship of some people who persecute the Messiah. He wanted to show them that his hatred is greater than theirs, as it exceeds the call of kinship. »

« How horrible! » they all exclaim.

« It would be more horrible if I had the same thoughts as my son » says the old man impulsively.

« But who is he? If I have understood correctly, he must be one who has power and authority… » says Thomas.

« Man, it will not be a father to mention the name of his guilty son to have him despised. I must say that I am cold and hungry,

although by working hard I had increased the wealth of the family to make my son happy. But not more than that. Consider than I am from Judaea, and he is from Judaea, and that we are thus of the same race but of different opinions. The rest is of no importance. »

« And since you are a just man, are you not asking anything of God? » Jesus asks kindly.

« That He may touch the heart of my son and induce him to believe what I believe. »

« But for yourself, just for yourself, are you not going to ask anything? »

« To meet Him Who, according to me, is the Son of God. To venerate Him and then die. »

« But if you die, you will not see Him any more. You will be in Limbo… »

« Only for a short time. You are a rabbi, are You not? I cannot see very well… My age… and the many tears, and also hunger… But I can see the tassels of Your belt… If You are a good rabbi, and I think You are, You must realise, too, that the time has come, I mean the time mentioned by Isaiah. And the hour is about to come when the Lamb will take upon Himself all the sins of the world and will bear all our evils and sorrows and will therefore be pierced and sacrificed that we may be restored to health and we may be at peace with the Eternal Father. Then there will be peace also for spirits… I hope so confiding in the mercy of God. »

« Have you ever seen the Master? »

« No. I only heard Him in the Temple at festivals. But I am small and age makes me even more so, and I cannot see very well, as I said. So, if I go to the middle of the crowd I cannot see because there is someone in front of me, if I stay out of the crowd I cannot see because I am too far away. Oh! I would love to see Him! At least once! »

« You will see Him, father. God will satisfy you. And have you where to go at Tekoah? »

« No. I will stay under a porch or some door. I am used to it by now. »

« Come with Me. I know a good Israelite. He will receive you in the name of Jesus, the Galilean Master. »

« But You are a Galilean, too. One can tell by Your accent. »

« Yes… Are you tired? But we are already at the first houses. You will soon be able to rest and you will have some refreshment. »

Jesus bends to say something to Peter and Peter moves aside to tell the others what Jesus said but I do not understand what he says. Then Peter quickens his steps and he enters the town with Alphaeus' sons and John. Jesus follows him with the others, adapting His step to that of the poor old man, who does not speak any more, tired as he is, and so he remains behind with Andrew and

Matthew.

The town seems to be empty. It is midday and many people are at home for their meals. After a few metres they meet Peter who says: « It's done, Lord. Simon will accept him because You are taking him, and he thanks You for thinking of him. »

« Let us bless the Lord! There are still just people in Israel. This old man is one, and Simon is another. There are still some good merciful people, faithful to the Lord. And that compensates so much bitterness. And it allows one to hope that divine justice will be appeased because of these just people. »

« However… That a son should expel his father from his house in order not to lose the friendship of some powerful Pharisee…! »

« Their hatred for You can go to that extent! I am shocked! » says Philip.

« Oh! you will see much more than that! » replies Jesus.

« More? And what can there be more than a father being driven out because he does not hate You? The sin of that man is a tremendous one!… »

« More tremendous will be the sin of a people against their God… But let us wait for the old man… »

« Who will his son be? »

« A Pharisee! »

« A member of the Sanhedrin! »

« A rabbi. » There are different opinions.

« A wretch. Do not investigate. Today he struck his father. Tomorrow he will strike Me. You can see that the sin of Judas, his going away like an undisciplined son, is nothing in comparison. And yet I will pray for this ungrateful son, for this Hebrew who offends his God. That he may mend his ways. Do the same… Come, father. What is your name? »

« Elianna. I have never been happy! My father died before I was born, and my mother in giving birth to me. My mother's mother, who brought me up, named me with the two names of my father and mother joined together. »

« You really are an Eli, man, and your son is like Phinehas » says Philip who cannot set his mind at rest because of such sin.

« God forbid, man. Phinehas died a sinner, and he died when the ark was captured. That would be a misfortune for his soul and for the whole of Israel » replies the old man.

« Listen, this house is a friendly one and whatever I ask I get. It belongs to a certain Simon, a just man in the eyes of God and of men. He will receive you for My sake, if you are willing to stay here » says Jesus before knocking at the door.

« Am. I to make a choice? I will invoke the blessing of Heaven on those who give me bread and the shelter of charity. But I want to work. It is not a shame to be a servant. It is shameful to commit

sin… »

« We shall tell Simon » says Jesus with a smile of compassion, looking at the little old man, destroyed by privations and grief.

The door is opened: « Come in, Master, peace be with You and with those who are with You. Where is this brother whom You have brought me? That I may give him the kiss of peace and welcome » says a man about fifty years old.

« Here he is. And may the Lord reward you. »

« I am rewarded. I have You as my guest. He who has You has God. I was not expecting You, and I cannot honour You as I would like. But I hear that You will be coming back in a few days time and I will be ready to receive You as becomes You. »

They are by now in a room in which steaming basins are ready for ablutions. The old man is standing shily against the door, but the landlord takes him by the hand, and makes him sit down, he wants to take his sandals off and serve him as if he were a king, and then put new sandals on his feet, while the old man says: « Why? Why all this? I have come to serve, and you are serving me! It is not right. »

« It is right, man. I cannot follow the Rabbi because I must help here in the house. But as the least disciple of the holy Master I strive to put His words into practice. »

« You know Him well. Really, you know Him because you are good. There are many who know Him in Israel, but how? With their eyes and their hatred. So they do not know Him. A man knows a woman when he knows everything about her and he possesses her completely. It is the same with Jesus of Nazareth, Whom I do not know with my eyes, but Whom I know better than many people because I believe that Wisdom is in Him. But you really know Him, by sight and by His doctrine. »

The man looks at Jesus but does not say anything.

The old man resumes speaking: « I told this rabbi that I want to work… »

« Yes. We will find a job for you. For the time being come to the table. Master, Your disciples will be coming shortly. Can we sit at the table just the same, or do You prefer to wait for them? »

« I prefer to wait for them. But if you have work to do… »

« Oh! Master. You know that it is a joy for me to obey Your least order. »

From this moment the old man begins to suspect of the identity of the Man Who assisted him on the way and looks at Him over and over again, he then looks at His companions… diligently… walking round them… The sons of Alphaeus come in with John. Jesus calls them by their names.

« Oh! Most High God! So… it was You! » exclaims the old man and he prostrates himself venerating Him.

His amazement is not inferior to that of the others. His way of recognising the Master is so strange! Peter in fact asks him: « What is there so special in these names so common in Israel, to make you think that you are in the presence of the Messiah? »

« Because I know Judas. He always comes to my son, and… » the old man stops, as he feels embarrassed having mentioned his son…

« But I have never seen you, man » says Thaddeus, standing in front of him and bending to be face to face with him.

« Neither do I know you. But one Judas, a disciple of the Christ, often comes to my son, and I heard him speak of a John, of a James, and of a Simon, a friend of Lazarus of Bethany and of so many other things… When I heard three names, known as those of the most intimate disciples of the Master! And He, so good!… I understood, I did! But where is the other Judas? »

« He is not here. But it is true. It is I. The Lord is good, father. You wished to see Me, and you have seen Me. Let us bless the mercy of God… Do not move away, Elianna. You were close to Me when I was a Wayfarer to you and nothing else. But now that I am the Destination? You do not know how much your heart has comforted Me! It is not possible for you to know. I, not you, I am the one who has received most… When three quarters of Israel, and even more, hate Me to the point of being criminals, when the weak ones move away from My way, when the thorns of ingratitude, of hatred, of slander pierce Me on every side, when I can find no relief in the thought that My Sacrifice will be salvation to Israel, to find one like you, father, is to receive compensation for My grief… You do not know… None of you are aware of the deeper and deeper sadness of the Son of man. I thirst for love… and too many hearts are dried springs which I approach in vain… But let us go… »

And holding the old man close to Himself, He goes into the room where the tables are already laid…

519. At Tekoah.

31st October 1946.

The rear of Simon of Tekoah's house is actually a square delimited on two sides by the wings of the U-shaped edifice. I call it a square because on market days, as the one I am observing, they open three sections of the strong gate which separates it from a larger public square, and many vendors invade with their stalls the porches which are situated on three sides of the house. I now understand the financial… use, because Simon, being a clever Jew, passes collecting the hires of the places occupied. And he drags after himself the old man, who is now wearing a decent garment, and he introduces him to everybody saying: « As from today you will pay the amount agreed upon to him. » Then, after completing

the tour of the porches, he says to Elianna: « That is your work. Here, and inside, with the hotel and the stables. It is not difficult or hard but it shows you how highly I esteem you. I dismissed, one after the other, three men who were helping me, because they were not honest. But I like you. And then, He brought you to me. And the Master knows hearts. Let us go to Him and tell Him that if He wishes, this is the right time to speak. » And he goes away followed by the old man…

The square is becoming more and more crowded and the noise is increasing more and more. There are women doing their shopping, cattle dealers, buyers of oxen to be yoked to the plough and of other animals, peasants bent under the weight of baskets of fruit and praising their goods, cutlers with all their sharp utensils well displayed on mats, making a great din by striking axes on stumps to show the hardness of the metal, or hammering scythes placed across trestles to show the perfect hardening of the blade, or lifting ploughshares with both hands and driving them into the ground, which bursts open as if it were wounded, to give proof of the robustness of the share which no ground can resist, and copper smiths with amphorae and buckets, pans and lamps, striking the sonorous metal to the point of deafening people, to show them that it is solid, or shouting at the top of their voices offering oil-lamps with one or more flames for the oncoming festival in Chislev; and above all this uproar, as tedious and piercing as the lament of the nocturnal owl, there are the cries of beggars spread out in the strategic points of the market.

Jesus comes from the house with Peter and James of Zebedee. I do not see the others. But I think they must be going round the town announcing the Master, because I see that the crowds recognise Him at once and many people arrive, while the shouting and noise die down. Jesus has alms given to some beggars and He stops to greet two men who, followed by their servants, were about to leave the market after doing their shopping. But they stop, too, to hear the Master. And Jesus begins to speak, taking what He sees as a starting point:

« Everything at the right time, everything in the right place. You do not hold markets on the Sabbath, neither do you trade in synagogues, nor do you work at night, but only during the day. Sinners only trade on the day of the Lord, or desecrate the places destined for prayer by means of human commerce, or steal at night committing robberies and crimes. Likewise: those who trade honestly, busy themselves to demonstrate the good quality of their victuals or of their implements to their customers and those who buy them are happy with the good purchase made. But if, for instance, a vendor should succeed in deceiving a buyer with shrewd artifice, and the tool or the victuals should turn out to be

bad, inferior in value to the price paid, would the buyer not have recourse to defensive measures, going from a minimum of stopping buying from that vendor to a maximum of applying to a judge to have his money back? That is what would happen and it would be just. And yet do we not see the people disappointed in Israel by those who sell rotten goods as good ones and denigrate Him Who gives good merchandise, being the Just One of the Lord? Yes, we can all see that.

Yesterday evening many of you came to tell of the evil artifices of bad vendors and I said: "Let them carry on. Be firm in your hearts and God will provide". Those who sell things which are not good, whom do they offend? You? Me? No. God Himself. He who is deceived is not as guilty as he who deceives. The sin is not so much against man, as it is against God, by trying to sell things which are not good, so that those who want to make a purchase may not come to good things. I do not say: react, revenge yourselves. Such words cannot come from Me. I only say: listen to the true sound of words, watch the actions of those who speak to you, diligently, in the great light, taste the first draught or morsel offered to you, and if they taste sour, and if the behaviour of other people is sinister, if the savour left in your hearts is upsetting, refuse what you are offered as a thing which is not good. Wisdom, justice, charity are never sour, upsetting or fond of acting in the shadow.

I know that I have been preceded by some of My disciples and I will leave two of My apostles with you; further, yesterday evening with deeds more than words, I testified where I come from and with what mission. No long speech is required to draw you to My way. Meditate and be anxious to remain on it. Imitate the founders of this town at the borders of the arid desert. Consider that outside My doctrine there is the aridity of the desert, whilst in My doctrine there are the sources of Life. And whatever may happen, do not be upset or scandalised. Remember the words of the Lord in Isaiah. My hand will never become too short or too small to do good to those who follow My ways, neither will anything ever-prevent the hand of the Most High from striking those who offend and grieve Me, yet I came and I found very few willing to receive Me, I called and few replied to Me. Because, as he who honours Me honours the Father Who sent Me, so he who despises Me despises Him Who sent Me. And according to the law of retaliation, he who disowns Me will be disowned.

But you, who have received My word, must not fear the abuse of men or tremble because of the outrage committed first against Me, and then against you, because you love Me. Although I appear to be persecuted and will seem to be struck, I will comfort and protect you. Be not afraid, do not fear man, who is mortal, he is today and tomorrow he is but a remembrance and dust. But fear the

Lord, fear Him with holy love, without being frightened, but be afraid of not knowing how to love Him proportionately to His infinite love. I will not say to you: do this or that. You are aware of what is to be done. I say to you: love. Love God and His Christ. Love your neighbour as I taught you. And you will do everything, if you know how to love.

I bless you, citizens of Tekoah, the town at the border of the desert, but an oasis of peace for the persecuted Son of man, and may My blessing be in your hearts and in your homes, now and for ever. »

« Stay, Master! Stay with us. The desert has always been kind to the saints of Israel! »

« I cannot. There are other people awaiting Me. You are in Me, I in you, because we love one another. »

Jesus makes His way with difficulty through the crowd, who follow Him forgetting their trades and everything else. Sick people cured bless Him again, hearts comforted thank Him, beggars greet Him: « Living Manna of God »…

The old man is beside Him and remains with Him as far as the outskirts of the town. And only when Jesus blesses Matthew and Philip who are remaining at Tekoah, he makes up his mind to leave his Saviour and he does so kissing Jesus bare' feet, weeping and uttering words of gratitude.

« Stand up, Elianna, and come here that I may kiss you. The kiss of a son to his father and may that reward you for everything. I apply to you the words of the prophet: "You who are weeping, shall weep no more, because the Merciful One has had mercy on you". The Lord will give you a little bread and a little water. I could not do more. If you have been driven away by one only, I have all the mighty ones of the people driving Me away, and I am fortunate if I find food and shelter for My apostles and Myself. But your eyes have seen Him Whom you desired to see, and your ears have heard My words, just as your heart must feel My love. Go and be at peace because you are a martyr of justice, one of the precursors of all those who will be persecuted because of Me. Do not weep, father! » And He kisses his white-haired head.

The old man kisses His cheek and whispers in His ear: « Do not trust the other Judas, my Lord. I do not want to soil my tongue… but do not trust him. He does not come with good intentions to my son… »

« Yes. But think no more of the past. It will soon be all over and no one will be able to harm Me any more. Goodbye, Elianna. The Lord is with you. »

They part…

« Master, what did the old man say to You in such a low voice? » asks Peter who is walking beside Jesus, and with some difficulty,

because Jesus is striding with His long legs, and Peter cannot, because he is rather short.

« Poor old man! What do you think he could tell Me, that I did not already know? » replies Jesus, evading a precise answer.

« He spoke of his son, did he not? Did he tell You who he is? »

« No, Peter. I can assure you. He kept that name in his heart. »

« But do You know him? »

« I do. But I will not tell you. »

They remain silent for a long time. Then the anxious question of Peter and his confession. « Master, but why, for what purpose does the Iscariot go to the house of a very wicked man, such as the son of Elianna? I am afraid, Master! He has no good friends. He does not go openly. He has no strength to resist evil. I am afraid, Master. Why? Why does Judas go to such people, and secretly? » Peter's face is an expressive mask of a sorrowful query.

Jesus looks at him but does not reply. In fact, what can He reply, in order not to tell a lie and not to hurl faithful Peter against unfaithful Judas? He prefers to let Peter speak.

« Are You not replying? I have had no peace since yesterday, when the old man thought he had recognised Judas among us. It is like the day when You spoke to the wife of the Sadducee. Do You remember? Do You remember my suspicion? »

« Yes, I do. And do you remember what I said to you then? »

« Yes, Master, I remember. »

« There is nothing else to be said, Simon. The actions of men have appearances that are different from reality. But I am glad that I provided for that old man. It is as if Ananias had come back. Actually, if Simon of Tekoah had not accepted him, I would have taken him to Solomon's little house, to have a father there always waiting for us. But for Eli it is better as it is. Simon is good and he has many grandchildren. Eli loves children… And children make one forget many sad things… »

With His usual skill in distracting His interlocutor, and leading him on to a different subject, when He finds that it is not convenient to answer dangerous questions, Jesus has distracted Peter from his thoughts. And He continues to speak to him of children, whom they have met here and there, until they remember Marjiam, who is perhaps hauling the nets just then, after fishing in the beautiful lake of Gennesaret.

And Peter, whose thoughts are now far from Eli and Judas, smiles and asks: « But after Passover, we are going there, are we not? It is so beautiful. Oh! much more than it is here. We Galileans are sinners, according to those of Judaea… But to live here! Oh! Eternal Mercy! If we are going to be punished, there will certainly be no reward here. »

Jesus calls the others who have been left behind and He goes

away with them along the road warmed by the December sunshine.

520. Arrival at Jericho. Zacchaeus' Apostolate.

1st November 1946.

Jesus is anxiously awaited. A large crowd is in the fields near the town waiting for Him, and as soon as a look-out man, who has climbed a tall walnut-tree, shouts: « Here is the Lamb of God! » the people stand up and run towards Jesus, Who is coming forward in the early misty twilight.

« Master! Master! We have been waiting for You for such a long time! Our sick people! Our children! Your blessing! The old people are waiting for You to die in peace! If You bless us, Lord, no misfortune will befall us! » they all speak at the same time, while Jesus raises His hand repeatedly to bless and continues to say: « Peace, peace to all of you! » The apostles who are still with Him are caught in the crowd and carried away from Jesus, Who is almost prevented from walking by the very ones who gently complain of the long wait.

Poor Zacchaeus struggles convulsively to reach Jesus, to make himself heard by Him, or at least to be seen. But so short as he is, and not very agile or strong, he is always pushed back by fresh waves of people, his voice is lost in the clamour, and in the confusion of restless heads, arms and garments, his person disappears. In vain he implores and at times he reproaches to have some compassion. People are always selfish with regard to what gives them pleasure, and are cruel to their weaker neighbour. Poor Zacchaeus, feeling exhausted after all his efforts and convinced of their uselessness, is no longer willing to struggle and utterly disheartened, resigns himself. In fact how can he possibly succeed if more people come rushing from every street, which look like streams flowing into the same river: the street along which Jesus is walking? And each new affluent, with a fresh wave that makes the crowd thicker and thicker, to the extent of making it frightening to be caught in it, pushes back poor Zacchaeus.

Thaddeus sees him and tries to elbow his way through the crowd to tear him away from the corner into which the crowd has pushed and confined him. But Judas Thaddeus in turn is pushed by those pressing in upon him from behind and his attempt fails. Thomas, relying on his strength, elbows his way and shouts in his powerful voice: « Make way! » for the same purpose… Not a hope! The crowd is a wall more solid than rock, and at the same time as pliable as caoutchouc. It bends but will not break. It is no longer an embrace: it is an unbreakable chain. Thomas also resigns himself.

And Zacchaeus loses all hope, because Didimus is the last of the

apostles caught in the stream of people. And at last it passes… It has passed… Strips of cloth, tassels, fringes, hairpins, clothesclasps are lying on the ground witnessing the violence. There is also a little child's sandal, completely crushed, and seems to be sadly awaiting the little foot that lost it… Zacchaeus queues up behind them all looking sad as well, just like the little sandal snatched from its little owner by the crowd.

Jesus cannot be seen any longer. A bend in the street has concealed him from poor Zacchaeus' eyes… When, last in the crowd, he arrives at the square where once he had his bench, he sees the crowds have stopped shouting, praying, imploring. And he sees Jesus, Who has mounted the little step of a house, shake His head and arms. And He says something that cannot be understood because of the roar of the crowd. And finally he sees Jesus, Who has come off His pedestal with difficulty, take to the road again and turn towards that part of the town where his house is. Zacchaeus then grows daring again. The crowd is a large one, but the square is wide, the people therefore are not so compact and… one can go through it, as if it were not too thick a hedge, if one is willing to do so and is not afraid of being injured. And Zacchaeus, who has now become a wedge, a catapult, a battering-ram, butts and bumps against people, insinuates himself, delivering and receiving punches on the nose, thrusts with elbows in the stomach and kicks in the shin, but he pushes his way through and moves forward… He is now at the opposite side… But the square narrows here, and he meets the impenetrable wall again. He is only a few steps from Jesus, Who is already standing near his house. But if deserts and rivers separated him from it, he could have better hopes to succeed in reaching Him. He gets angry, and he shouts in a commanding voice: « I have to go home! Let me pass! Can't you see that He wants to go into my house? »

He should never have said so! That rekindles the wishes of the people to have the Master in other houses. Some people laugh making fun of poor Zacchaeus, some give him rude answers. There is not one person who feels sorry for him. On the contrary they begin to shout and get excited so that the Master may not hear or see Zacchaeus. And some shout: « You have already had even too much from Him, you old sinner! » I think that the memory of old tax collections and vexations influences so much ill-will… Even the man who is more inclined to the supernatural almost always has a little corner in which the love for his hoard is lively and even more lively is the memory of whoever has been detrimental to that hoard…

But the time for Zacchaeus' trial has passed and Jesus rewards his perseverance. Jesus shouts at the top of His voice: « Zacchaeus! Come to Me. Let him pass, because I want to go into his house. »

It is absolutely necessary to obey. The people press against one

another in order to open out and Zacchaeus comes forward, flushed with fatigue and blushing for joy, and he tries to tidy his ruffled hair, his unbuttoned garment, and his belt the tassels of which are around his back instead of being in front of him. He looks for his mantle… Who knows where it is!… It does not matter. He is by now in front of Jesus, stooping to pay his respects to Him. It is impossible for him to do more than that as he has hardly enough room to bend a little.

« Peace to you, Zacchaeus. Come here, that I may give you the kiss of peace. You deserve it » says Jesus smiling a really cheerful juvenile smile that makes Him look rejuvenated.

« Oh! yes, Lord. I did deserve it. How difficult it is to reach You, Lord » says Zacchaeus, raising himself up as much as possible on the tips of his toes to be at the level of Jesus Who bends to kiss him. As he does so, his face appears to be bleeding because of a scratch on his right cheek, and one of his eyes is bruised, probably because of a thrust of an elbow on his eye-socket.

Jesus kisses him and then says:

« But I am not rewarding you for this effort. But for the others you have made, unknown to many people, but known to Me. Yes, it is true. It is difficult to reach Me, and the crowd is not the only obstacle, and it is not even the most difficult obstacle one finds to meet Me.

But, o people who have almost carried Me shoulder-high, the most difficult, the most composed obstacle, and which is always recomposed after one tries to destroy it or overcome it, is one's ego. I did not seem to be seeing, but I saw everything. And I evaluated everything. And what did I see? I saw a converted sinner, one who was hard-hearted, who loved comfort, was proud, vain, lascivious and avaricious. And I saw him divest himself of his old ego also in minor matters, and change in his behaviour and affections, in order to come to his Saviour, as he did by struggling to reach Him, by imploring with humbleness, by accepting gibes and reproaches patiently, suffering in his body to be knocked about by the crowd and in his heart to be pushed to the very end of it, without even one glance from Me. And I saw other things in him. Things which you know as well, but you do not want to take them into account, although they have given you relief.

You may say: "How do You know them, since You do not live among us?". I reply: as I read the hearts of men so I am aware of the actions of men and I know how to be just and reward in proportion to the distance covered to reach Me, to the efforts made to uproot the wild forest which covered the spirit, to improve it eliminating what was not the vital tree, and making it the king of one's ego, surrounding it with plants of virtues so that it may be honoured, and watching that no animal that is unclean because it

creeps, or is eager for corruption, or lascivious, or idle - the various wicked passions - should nestle in the thicket, but this spirit of yours should be inhabited only by what is good and capable of praising the Lord, that is supernatural affections, singing birds and meek lambs willing to be sacrificed, inclined to perfect praise out of love for God.

And as I noticed Zacchaeus' action, thoughts and labour, so I noticed that in this town the love of many people who have acclaimed Me, is more sensitive than spiritual. If you loved Me according to justice, you would have taken pity on your fellow citizen and you would not have mortified him by reminding him of his past. That past that he has cancelled and God does not remember, because He does not go back on forgiveness granted, unless man sins again. And he is judged again only for the new sin, not for the one already forgiven. Now I say to you, and I give this as a subject for meditation at night, that true love for Me does not consist in acclamations, but in doing what I do and teach, in practicing reciprocal love, in being humble and merciful, bearing in mind that your material part was made with one only dust, and that dust always has an attraction for mire, and that consequently, if so far what in you is the strength that has held you up above the mire, the spirit, has never known defeats - and that is impossible because man is a sinner and God only is without sin - in future your spirit might have to admit defeats, and in greater number and gravity than those of the old sinner now reborn to Grace. In fact through Grace he has become juvenile and new, just like a new-born baby, with in his favour the humility deriving from his recollection of having been a sinner and the firm will to do, during the rest of his lifetime, as much good as is necessary to fill a long life entirely consecrated to doing good, and thus make amends, and with full and overflowing measure, for all the wrongs he may have done.

I will speak to you tomorrow. I have said enough for this evening. Go and bear in mind My warning and bless God Who has sent you the Doctor Who amputates your sensuality hidden under a veil of spiritual health, like hidden diseases that corrode life under a veil of seeming health… Come Zacchaeus. »

« Yes, my Lord. I have only one old servant and I will open the door myself, and with it my deeply moved heart, oh! how moved it is, because of Your infinite goodness. »

And after opening the gate he lets Jesus and the apostles go in, and leads Him towards the house, through the garden, now turned into a kitchen garden. The house also has been stripped of all superfluous items. Zacchaeus lights a lamp and calls the servant.

« Here we are. The Master is here. He will be sleeping here with His apostles and will have dinner here. Have you prepared

everything as I told you? »

« Yes, I have. With the exception of the vegetables, which I will boil now, everything is ready. »

« Change your clothes, then, and go and inform those I told you, that He is here and ask them to come. »

« I am going, master. May You be blessed, Master, as You are letting me die a happy death! » He goes away.

« He is the servant of my father and has remained with me. I dismissed all the others. But he is dear to me. He is the voice that was never silent when I sinned. And because of that I used to illtreat him. After You, he is the one I love more than anybody else… Come, my friends. There is a fireplace there and what can give comfort to tired cold limbs. You, Master, to my room… » and he takes Him towards a room at the end of a corridor.

He goes in, closes the door, pours hot water into a pitcher, takes off Jesus' sandals and serves Him. Before putting the sandals on again, he kisses the bare foot and places it on his neck saying: « Thus! That it may crush the residue of the old Zacchaeus! » He stands up. He looks at Jesus, with a smile that trembles on his lips, a humble smile, which looks as if it were moistened with tears. He makes a gesture indicating the whole room and says: « I sinned so much in here! But I have changed everything, so that that savour should no longer be present… Memories… I am weak… I wanted only the memory of my conversion to be alive on these bare walls, in this hard bed… The rest… I made money of it, because I was left without any and I wanted to accomplish good deeds. Sit down, Master… »

Jesus sits on a wooden seat and Zacchaeus places himself on the floor, at Jesus' feet, half sitting, half kneeling. He resumes speaking.

« I do not know whether I have done the right thing, and whether You can approve of my behaviour. Perhaps I began where I should have finished. But they exist, too. And only an old publican can show no repugnance against them in Israel. No, I am wrong. Not only an old publican, but You as well nay it is You Who taught me to love them truly. Previously they were my accomplices in vice, but I did not love them. Now I reproach them but I love them. You and I. The all Holy One, the converted sinner. You because You have never sinned and You want to give us the joy that is Yours, of the Man without sin. And I because I sinned so much and I know how sweet is the peace that comes from being forgiven, redeemed, renewed… I wanted it for them. I looked for them. Oh! it was hard at the beginning! I wanted to make them good and I had myself to improve… What a difficult task! I had to watch over myself because I felt that they were watching over me. A mere nothing would have sufficed to drive them away… And then… Many sinned out of need, urged by their occupation. I sold everything to have

money to keep them until they found other jobs, less profitable, more laborious, but honest. And some of them still come, and they are half curious, half willing to be men, not only animals. And I have to give them hospitality until they become submissive to the new yoke. Many have been circumcised. The first step towards the true God. But I do not compel them. I have wide arms to embrace their miseries, and I cannot be disgusted with them. I also would like to give them what You would like to give everybody: the joy of being without remorse, since we cannot be, like You, without sin. Now, tell me, my Lord, whether I have been too daring. »

« You have acted well, Zacchaeus. You are giving them more than what you hope and think I want to give men. Not only the joy of being forgiven, without remorse, but the joy of being soon citizens of My heavenly Kingdom. I was aware of these deeds of yours. I followed you while you proceeded along the hard but glorious path of charity; because that is charity, and of the purest quality. You have understood the word of the Kingdom. Few people have understood it because the ancient idea survives in them with the firm belief that they are already holy and learned. After removing the past from your heart, you remained empty and you were able to, nay you wanted to put the new words, the future, the eternal into your heart. Continue so, Zacchaeus, and you will be the collector of your Lord Jesus » concludes Jesus smiling and laying His hand on Zacchaeus' head.

« Do You approve of what I did, Lord? Of everything? »

« Of everything, Zacchaeus. I also told Nike, who was speaking to Me about you. Nike understands you. She is open to universal mercy. »

« Nike used to help me a lot. But now I see her only once a month, at the new moon… I would have liked to follow her. But Jericho is favourable to my new work… »

« She will not stay long in Jerusalem… You would move for no time. Afterwards Nike will come back here… »

« After how long, Lord? »

« After My Kingdom has been proclaimed. »

« Your Kingdom… I am afraid of that moment. Will those who now say that they are faithful to you, be able to be so, then? Because there will certainly be risings and struggles between those who love You and those who hate You… Do You know, Lord, that they engage even highwaymen, the scum of the people, to have followers ready to form a large mass and thus impose themselves on others? I was told by one of my poor brothers… Oh! is there much difference between him who steals lawfully, between him who steels somebody's honour and him who robs a wayfarer? I also used to steal lawfully until You saved me, but even then I would not have countenanced those who hate You… It

was a young man. A thief. Yes, a thief. One evening, when I had gone towards mount Adummim awaiting three peers of mine, who were coming from Ephraim with some cattle purchased at a low price, I found him lying in wait in a gorge. I spoke to him… I have never had a family, and yet I think that if I had had children, I would have spoken to them thus to convince them to change life. He explained to me how and why he had become a thief… Eh! how often the true culprits are those who do not seem to be doing anything wrong!… I said to him: "Don't steal any more. If you are hungry, there is some bread for you, too. I will find you an honest job. As you have not yet become a killer stop, save yourself". And I convinced him. He told me that he was by himself, as all the others had been bought over with much money by those who hate You, and now they are ready to foment risings and to say that they are Your followers, in order to scandalise the people, and they hide in the caves of the Kidron, in the sepulchres, towards the Phasael, in the caves to the north of the town, among the tombs of the Kings and Judges, everywhere… What do they want to do, Lord? »

« Joshua was able to stop the sun, but by no means whatsoever will they be able to stop the will of God. »

« They have money, Lord! The Temple is rich, and the gold offered to the Temple is not Corban for them, if it serves them to triumph. »

« They have nothing. The power is Mine. Their building will collapse as if it were built with leaves dried by the autumn winds and shaped into a castle by a little boy. Do not be afraid, Zacchaeus. Your Jesus will be Jesus. » (1)

« God grant it!… They are calling us. Let us go. »…

(1) That is: Saviour. Jesus, in fact, in Hebrew means « Yahweh saves » (Yehoshua). See Mt. 1, 20-21; Ac. 4, 12.

521. At Jericho. Two Parables: That of the Sick and the Healthy, and That of the Pharisee and the Publican.

2nd November 1946.

Jesus comes out of Zacchaeus' house. It is late in the morning. He is with Zacchaeus, Peter and James of Alphaeus. The other apostles are perhaps already out in the country announcing that the Master is in town.

Behind the group of Jesus, Zacchaeus and the apostles, there is another one of people considerably… varying in features, age and garments. One can state without hesitation that the men in the group belong to different races, which are probably even opposed to one another. But the events of life have brought them to this Palestinian town and have gathered them so that from their depth they may rise towards light. They are mostly withered faces of

people who have used and abused life in several ways, most of them with tired eyes; the eyes of others seem to have become greedy or hard owing to the long habit of attending to… fiscal robberies or to giving brutal orders, and now and again their old looks appear again under a humble pensive veil drawn by their new life. And that happens particularly when people from Jericho look at them scornfully or mumble insolent words to them. Their eyes later become tired, humble and they lower their heads disconsolately.

Jesus turns round twice to look at them and seeing them far behind, slackening their paces as they, come closer to the place selected for His speech, and already crowded with people, He slackens His pace as well, to wait for them and He then says to them: « Go on ahead of Me and be not afraid. You defied the world when you were doing evil; you must not be afraid of it now that you have divested yourselves of it. Use also now what you made use of to subdue it in the past: indifference towards the opinion of the world, the only weapon to make it tired of judging, and it will tire of having anything to do with you, and it will absorb you, although slowly, annihilating you in the great anonymous mass, that is, in this miserable world, to which, in actual fact, too much importance is attached. »

The men, fifteen in all, obey and move forward.

« Master, the sick people of the country are over there » says James of Zebedee going towards Jesus and pointing to a corner warmed by the sun.

« I am coming. Where are the others? »

« With the crowd. But they have already seen You and they are coming. Also Solomon, Joseph of Emmaus, John of Ephesus, Philip of Arbela are with them. They are going to the house of Philip and they have come from Joppa, Lydda and Modin. They brought with them men and women from the seaside. In actual fact they were looking for You because they are at a variance on judging a woman. But they will tell You… »

In fact Jesus is soon surrounded and greeted reverently by the other disciples. Behind them are those who have been recently attracted by Jesus' doctrine. But John of Ephesus is absent and Jesus asks why.

« He stopped with a woman and her relatives in a house far from the crowd. They do not know whether the woman is possessed or she is a prophetess. She says wonderful things, according to the people from her village. But some scribes have listened to her and they have judged her to be possessed. Her relatives have called exorcizers several times, but they have not been able to expel the demon that makes her speak and possesses her. But one of them said to the father of the woman (she is a virgin widow who remained

in the family): "The Messiah Jesus is needed for your daughter. He will understand her words and will know where they come from. I tried to order the spirit, that speaks in her, to go away in the name of Jesus called the Christ. The spirits of darkness have always fled when I used that Name. But they didn't this time. From that I infer that: it is either Beelzebub himself who speaks and can resist also that Name mentioned by me, or it is the Spirit of God Himself, and consequently is not afraid being one with the Christ. I am more convinced of the latter case than of the former. But to be certain, only the Christ can judge. He will know the words and their origin". He was maltreated by the scribes who were present and who said that he was possessed as well, like the woman and like You. Forgive us if we have to say this… And some scribes have never left us, and they guard the woman because they want to ascertain whether she may be informed of Your arrival. Because she says that she knows Your face and Your voice, and would be able to recognise You among thousands of people, whereas it is proved that she has never left her village, nay, she has never moved from her house since her bridegroom died fifteen years ago, on the eve of her wedding day; and it is also proved that You have never been to Bethlechi, which is her village. And the scribes are waiting for this last test to say that she is possessed. Will You see her at once? »

« No. I must speak to the people. And it would be too noisy to meet here, among the crowds. Go and tell John of Ephesus, the woman's relatives and also the scribes, that I will wait for them, when the sun begins to set, in the woods along the river, on the path to the ford. Go. »

After dismissing Solomon, who has spoken on behalf of everybody, Jesus goes towards the sick people imploring to be cured and He heals them. Among them there is an elderly woman ankylosed by arthritis, a paralytic, a dull-witted young man, a girl who I think was tubercular, and two people with sore eyes.

The crowds utter thrilling cries of joy.

But the series of sick people has not yet come to an end. A woman disfigured by grief comes forward, supported by two friends or relatives, and she kneels saying: « My son is dying. He cannot be brought here… Have mercy on me! »

« Can you believe without limits? »

« Everything, my Lord! »

« Then, go home. »

« Home?… Without You?… » The woman looks at Him for a moment, full of anxiety, then she understands. Her poor face brightens up. She shouts: « I am going, Lord. And blessed be You and the Most High Who sent You! » And she runs away faster than her companions…

Jesus asks a dignified citizen of Jericho: « Is that woman a Jewess? »

« No, she isn't. At least not by birth. She is from Miletus. But she married one of us and since then she believes in our faith. »

« She believed better than many Hebrews » remarks Jesus.

Then, climbing on the high step of a house, He makes the usual gesture of opening out His arms, before speaking, to impose silence. When silence is created, He gathers the folds of His mantle, opened on His chest by His gesture, and holds it with His left hand while He stretches out His right one in the attitude of one who takes an oath, saying:

« Listen, o citizens of Jericho, to the parables of the Lord, and then meditate on them in your hearts, and draw the conclusions to nourish your spirits. You can do so, because it is not since yesterday, or last month, or last winter that you know the Word of God. Before I became the Master, John, My Precursor, had prepared you for My coming, and when I became the Master, My disciples ploughed this ground seven and seven times to sow the seed that I had given them. So you are able to understand the word and the parable.

With whom shall I compare those, who were converted after being sinners? I will compare them with sick people who have recovered. With whom shall I compare the others who have not sinned in public or those, who are rarer than black pearls, who not even secretly have committed grave sins? I will compare them with healthy people. The world is composed of those two categories, both in the spirit and in the flesh and blood. But if the comparisons are the same, the way the world treats sick people who have recovered from diseases of the body is different from the way it treats converted sinners, that is people whose spirits were diseased and who have become healthy.

We see that even when a leper, who is the most dangerous sick person and the most isolated because of the danger, receives the grace of recovery, he is admitted again into society, after he has been examined by a priest and purified, and the people of his town give him a hearty welcome because he is cured and has come back to life, to his family and his business. There is a big feast in the family and in the town when a leper receives that grace and becomes healthy! His relatives and fellow-citizens vie in taking various things to him, and if he is all alone, without home or furniture, they offer him bed and pieces of furniture, and they all say: "He is held 'dearest by God. His hand has cured him. Let us therefore honour him and we will thus honour Him Who created and re-created him". It is right to do so. And when unfortunately a man shows the first signs of leprosy, with how much love full of anguish his relatives and friends overwhelm him with endearments,

as long as it is possible to do so, as if they wished to give him, all at once, the treasure of love they would have given him in many years, that he may take it with him to the sepulchre of a living being.

But why do they not do so with the other sick people? A man begins to commit sins, his relatives and above all his fellowcitizens notice that. Why then do they not try to tear him away from sin with loving efforts? A mother, a father, a wife, a sister still do that, but brothers are unlikely to do so, never mind the children of the father's or mother's brother. And, finally, the fellow-citizens the more just ones, do nothing but criticise, scoff at, abuse, be scandalised, exaggerate the sins of the sinner, pointing him out, keeping him away as if he were a leper, whereas those who are not just become his accomplices, to enjoy themselves at his expense. But only very rarely there is a mouth, and above all a heart, that goes to the poor wretch with compassion and firmness, with patience and supernatural love, and anxiously strives to stop the descent into sin. What? Is the disease of the spirit not more serious, really grave and mortal? Does it not deprive one, and for ever, of the Kingdom of God? Should the first form of love towards God and our neighbour, not be the anxiety to cure a sinner for the good of his soul and the glory of God?

And when a sinner is converted, why do people persist in judging him, and almost regret that he has come back to spiritual salvation? Is it because you realise that your prediction of the certain damnation of a fellow-citizen of yours is given the lie? But you ought to be happy, because He Who gives you the lie is merciful God, Who gives you a measure of His goodness to comfort you in your more or less grave sins. And why persist in considering soiled, despicable, worthy of remaining isolated, what God and the good will of a heart have made clean, admirable, worthy of the esteem, nay of the admiration of one's brothers? But you do rejoice if an ox of yours or a donkey or camel, or a sheep of your flock or your pet dove recovers from a disease! You do exult if a stranger, whom you can hardly remember by name having heard about him when he was isolated because he suffered from leprosy, is healed! Why then do you not exult at these spiritual recoveries, at these victories of God? Heaven rejoices when a sinner is converted. Heaven: God, the most pure angels, who do not know what it is to commit sin. And do you, you men, want to be more intolerant than God?

Be honest-hearted and recognise the presence of the Lord not only in the clouds of incense and in the songs of the Temple, in the place where only the holiness of the Lord, in the High Priest, must enter and ought to be as holy as indicated by its name, but also in the wonder of these spirits which have risen again, and of these reconsecrated

altars on which the Love of God descends with its fire to consume the sacrifice. »

Jesus is interrupted by the mother seen previously, as with cries and blessings she wants to worship Him. Jesus listens to her, blesses her and sends her back home, resuming His interrupted speech.

« And if the behaviour of a sinner was once the cause of scandal to you, whereas now it is an edifying example, do not mock at it, but imitate it. Because no one is ever so perfect as to make it impossible for another person to edify him. And Good is always a lesson to be accepted, even if it is given by one who was once blameworthy. Imitate and help him, because by doing so you will glorify the Lord and prove that you have understood the Word. Do not be like those whom you criticise in the secret of your hearts because their actions do not correspond to their words. But let each good action of yours be the crowning-piece of each good word of yours. And then you will really be looked at and listened to benevolently by the Eternal Father.

Listen to this other parable to understand which things are of value in the eyes of God. It will teach you to rectify a bad thought often found in many hearts. Most men are their own judges, and considering that one man only in a thousand is humble, it so happens that each man considers himself the only perfect one, whereas he finds hundreds of faults in his neighbour.

One day two men, who had gone to Jerusalem on business, went up to the Temple, as becomes every good Israelite every time he sets foot in the Holy City. One was a Pharisee, the other a publican. The former had come to collect the rents of some shops and to make up accounts with his stewards who lived near the town. The latter had come to pay in the taxes he had collected and to invoke compassion for a widow who could not pay the taxation on a boat and nets, because the amount of fish caught by her oldest son was barely sufficient to feed her many children.

Before going up to the Temple, the Pharisee had called on the tenants of the shops, and after looking round in the shops and seeing that they were full of goods and buyers, he was pleased with himself and he then called the tenant and said to him. "I see that your business is thriving".

"Yes, by the grace of God. I am pleased with my work. I have been able to increase the stock of goods and I hope to increase it further. I made improvements to the place and next year I shall have no expenses for benches and shelves and I will thus have more profit".

"Well! Very well! I am glad! What is your rent for this place?".

"One hundred didrachmae a month. It is dear but the position is a good one…

"You are right. It is good. I therefore double the rent".

"But, sir" exclaimed the shopkeeper. "If you do that, you leave me no profit!".

"What I said is right. Have I to make you rich with my property? Be quick. You either give me two thousand four hundred didrachmae at once, or I will expel you and keep the goods. The place belongs to me and I can do what I like with it".

He did that with the first, the second and the third tenant, doubling the price to each of them, turning a deaf ear to their entreaties. And as the third tenant, who had a large family, wanted to offer resistance, he sent for the police and had the official seals of distraint affixed to the door, and the poor tenant driven out.

Then in his mansion, he examined the registers of his stewards, finding faults whereby he punished them as sluggards and sequestered the goods they had kept for themselves by full right. One of them had a dying son, and because of the heavy expenses he had sold part of his master's oil to buy medicines. So he had nothing to give the greedy master.

"Have mercy on me, sir. My poor son is on the point of death, and later on I will do extra work to pay you what you think is fair. But now, as you can understand, I am not in a position to do so".

"Are you not? I will show you whether you can pay me or not". And he went to the oil-mill with the poor steward and took away also the little oil the man had kept for his family and to feed the lamp that enabled him to watch at night at the bedside of his son.

The publican, instead, went to his superior who, on receiving the taxes he had collected said to him: "Three hundred and seventy ases are missing here. How come?".

"Well, I will explain it to you. In the village there is a widow with seven children. Only the oldest is fit to work. But he cannot go far from the shore in his boat, because his arms are too weak to handle the oars and the sail, and he cannot afford to engage an assistant. As he fishes near the shore he catches very little which is hardly sufficient to feed the eight poor wretches. I had not the heart to collect the tax".

"I see. But the law is law. It would be dreadful if people knew that it is compassionate. Everybody would find some reason not to pay. Let the young man change trade and sell his boat if they cannot pay".

"It is their daily bread, also for the future… and it is a souvenir of their father".

"I understand. But it is not possible to compromise".

"All right. But I cannot think of eight unfortunate people being deprived of their only resource. I will pay the three hundred and seventy ases".

Then the two went up to the Temple and on passing near the

treasury hall the Pharisee took a bulky purse from his bosom ostentatiously and emptied it to the last coin into the treasury. The purse contained the money taken from the shopkeepers and the proceeds of the steward's oil that the Pharisee had immediately sold to a merchant. The publican instead threw in a handful of small coins after taking from it what he needed to go back home. So they both gave what they had. Apparently the Pharisee was the more generous because he gave to the last coin he had. But one must also consider that he had more money in his mansion and he had credits with rich money-changers.

They then went before the Lord. The Pharisee at the very front, near the limit of the Court of the Hebrews, toward the Holy; the publican at the back, almost under the vault opening into the Women's Court, where he remained stooped, crushed by the thought of his misery as compared with divine Perfection. And they both prayed.

The Pharisee, standing up straight, almost insolent, as if he were the landlord of the place and he were the one who condescended to do homage to a visitor, said: "Here I am, I have come to venerate You in the House that is our glory. I have come, although I feel that You are in me, because I am a just man. I know how to behave to be so. However, although I am aware that it is only through my own merit that I am such, I thank You, as prescribed by the law, for what I am. I am not greedy, unjust, adulterous, or a sinner like that publican who threw a handful of small coins into the Treasury at the same time as I did. As for me, as You saw, I gave You all I had with me. That greedy fellow, instead, divided his money into two parts and gave You the smaller one. He will certainly keep the other part for revelries and women. But I am pure. I will not be polluted. I am pure and just, I fast twice a week, I pay the tithes of what I possess. Yes, I am pure, just and blessed, because I am holy. Bear that in mind, o Lord".

The publican, from his remote corner, without daring to raise his eyes towards the precious doors of the Temple, and striking his chest, prayed saying: "Lord, I am not worthy to be here. But You are just and holy, and You still allow me to stay here because You know that man is a sinner and if he does not come to You he becomes a demon. Oh! my Lord! I would like to honour You day and night, but for many hours I am the slave of my work. Am unpleasant work that disheartens me because it is the cause of grief to the poorest of my neighbours. But I must obey my superiors, because it is my daily bread. Grant me, o my God, to be able to mitigate my duty towards my superiors with charity towards my poor brothers, so that I may not be condemned because of my work. Every work is holy if performed with charity. Let Your charity be always present to my heart so that I, miserable

as I am, may bear with my subjects as You bear with me, a big sinner. I would have liked to honour You more, Lord. You know. But I thought that to take some of the money destined to the Temple was better than putting it in the Treasure and causing eight poor innocent people to weep desolately. But if I made a mistake, let me understand that, o Lord, and I will give You up to the last farthing and I will go back to my village on foot begging for a piece of bread. Let me understand Your justice. Have mercy on me, o Lord, because I am a big sinner".

That is the parable. I solemnly tell you that while the Pharisee left the Temple with a fresh sin added to those he had committed before going up to the Moriah, the publican came away justified and the blessing of God followed him to his house and remained in it. Because he was humble and merciful and his actions were even holier than his words. The Pharisee, instead, was good only in words and exteriorly, whilst internally he was and acted as a demon because of the pride and hardness of his heart, and God therefore detested him.

He who exalts himself will, sooner or later, be humbled. If not in this, in future life. And he who humbles himself will be exalted, particularly in Heaven where the actions of men are seen in their true reality.

Come, Zacchaeus. Come, you who are with him and you, My apostles and disciples. I will go on speaking to you privately. »

And enveloping Himself in His mantle, He goes back to Zacchaeus' house.

522. In Zacchaeus' House with the Converts. The Soul and the Error of Reincarnation.

3rd November 1946.

They are all gathered in a large bare room. It was certainly beautiful once. Now it is nothing but a large room. From the dining-room and the bedrooms they have brought chairs and small beds into it and they are all sitting round the Master, Whom they have seated on a kind of armchair, of engraved wood, covered with a long-pile carpet. It is the most luxurious piece of furniture in the house.

Zacchaeus is speaking of a croft bought with the money gathered among them: « After all we had to do something. Idleness is not a good medicine to avoid sin. The ground is not fertile as yet, because it was neglected, just like us, and like us it was full of bramble, stones, barrenness and weeds. Nike sent us her peasants to show us how to clear neglected wells, to clean the fields, to prune the few trees left, and plant new ones. We were aware of so many things… but not of the holy work of man. But in this work so

new to us, we really find a new life. Nothing around us reminds us of our past. Only our consciences remember it. But that is a good thing… We are sinners… Will You come to see it? »

« We shall depart together from here going towards the Jordan, and we shall stop at your croft. You told Me that it is just on the road to the river… »

« Yes, Master. But it is not a pleasant sight. The house is dilapidated. There is no furniture in it. We did not have enough money for everything… after making amends, as far as we could, for the wrongs done to our neighbour. With the exception of Demetis, Valens and Levi, who are too old for certain sacrifices and sleep here, the others must make shift with some hay, Lord. »

« Very often I do not even have that. I will sleep on hay, too, Zacchaeus. I slept My first sleeps on it and they were peaceful because they were watched over by love. I can sleep on it also tonight and it will not be a restless sleep, because I shall be among men whose good will has revived. » And He looks at those first redeemed men from every country so kindly that He seems to be caressing them.

And they look at Him… They are not men ready to weep. On the contrary who knows how many tears they have caused people to shed. Their faces are like books in which their wicked past is written, and if now their new life veils the brutality of those words, they can still be deciphered so clearly as to enable one to realise from which abyss they are rising towards Light. And yet their faces clear up and brighten, their eyes look reassured, a light of supernatural hope, of moral satisfaction shines in them upon hearing the Master say that they are men of good will once again.

Zacchaeus then says: « So You approve of what I have done? See, Master. On that day I said: "I will follow You", and I really wanted to follow You physically. But that very evening Demetis came to me for one of those… for one of his ill-famed affairs… and he was in need of money. He came from Jerusalem… they say that she is holy, but she is covered with shame, and the first to bring such shame on her are the very ones who then want to stone us as if we were lepers… But I must tell my sins, not theirs. I had no money left. I had given it all to You. Also what was left in the house was as good as given, because I had divided it up to give it back to those from whom I had extorted it by practising usury. So I said to him: "I have no money, but I have more than a treasure". And I told him about my conversion, Your words and the peace I had in me… I spoke so much that the light of the new day came in making our faces look pale, and the lamps useless, while I was still speaking. I do not know what I exactly said. I know that with his fist he violently struck the table at which we were sitting and exclaimed: "Mercury has lost a follower and his satyrs a companion.

Take this money as well, it is not enough for the criminal deed, but it will buy some bread for a beggar, and take me with you. I want to become acquainted with a perfume after so many foul smells". And he remained with me. We went to Jerusalem together, I to sell some items, he to free himself from all engagements. And on our way back I said - I had prayed in the Temple, after such a long time, with the pure pacified heart of a boy - I said to myself: "Is this not to follow the Master, and perhaps follow Him in a better way, by remaining in Jericho, where my wretched publican friends like me, gamblers, procurers, usurers, after being superintendents of galley slaves and convicts, of slaves, torturers of all miserable people, lawless and pitiless soldiers, used to carousing to forget remorses in drunkenness, come to see me to invest their cursed money, or to propose affairs, or to invite me to banquets or to other infamous filthiness? The town despises me. The Hebrews will always consider me a sinner. But they will not consider themselves such. But they are like me. They are filthy, but they may have something in them urging them to be good and they do not find who can give them a helping hand. I helped them in evil. Perhaps they sinned also because of my advice, for what at times I asked of them. It is my duty to help them to come towards goodness. As I paid those whom I had injured, as I made amends with regard to my fellow-citizens, so I must try and redress any wrongs done to them". And I remained here. Now one, now another one would come from this or that town, and I spoke to them. They did not all behave like Demetis. Some ran away after mocking at me. Some were hesitant. Some stayed here but after some time they went back to their miserable life. These ones have remained. And now I feel that this is the way I must follow You, that we must follow You thus, struggling against ourselves, putting up with the scorn of the world that cannot forgive us. Our hearts bleed when we see that the world does not forget, when recollections come back… and are so many and so painful… In some they are… »

« The dreadful Nemesis that always throws our crimes in our faces and promises vengeance in the hereafter » says one.

« They are the cries of those whom I struck to make them work, although they were exhausted. »

« They are the curses of those I enslaved after taking all their properties through usurious practices. »

« They are the entreaties of widows and orphans who could not afford to pay and whose last belongings I had sequestered in the name of the law. »

« They are the cruelties accomplished in conquered countries against defenceless people terrorised by their defeat. »

« They are the tears of my mother, of my wife, of my daughter, who died of privations while I was squandering everything in banquets. »

« They are… oh! there is no name for my crime! Lord, my hands are not stained with blood, I did not steal money, I did not impose exorbitant taxes, I did not fleece anybody, I did not strike the defeated enemy, but I exploited all miseries, and I made money at the expense of innocent girls of the beaten enemy, of orphan girls, of women sold like merchandise for a piece of bread. I travelled round the world seizing such opportunities, following armies, where there was famine, where an overflowing river had deprived people of food, where pestilence had left young lives without protection, and I treated them as goods, infamous yet innocent goods. Infamous with regard to me, as I made money out of it, innocent because they were not yet aware of so much horror. Lord, I have in my hands the virginity of young girls seduced, and the honour of young wives taken in conquered towns. My trade centres… and my brothels were famous, Lord… Do not curse me, now that You know!… »

The apostles have unintentionally moved away from the last man who has spoken. Jesus stands up and approaches him. He lays a hand on his shoulder and says: « It is true! Your crime is grave. You have much to redress. But I, the Mercy, tell you that even if you were the demon himself and you were responsible for all the crimes of the Earth, if you want, you can make amends for everything and be forgiven by God, the true, great, paternal God. If you want. Join your will to Mine. I also want you to be forgiven. Join Me. Give Me your poor spirit, so ill-famed, ruined, full of scars and disheartened after you abandoned sin. I will put it on My Heart, where I place the biggest sinners and I will take it with Me to the redeeming Sacrifice. The holiest Blood, that of My Heart, the last Blood of Him Consumed on behalf of men, will be shed on the greatest ruins and will regenerate them. Have hope for the time being. Let your hope be greater than your immense crime, in the mercy of God, because it has no limit, o man, for those who can trust in it. »

The man would like to take and kiss the hand resting on his shoulder, so pale and thin against his brown garment and his strong shoulder. But he dare not. Jesus understands and stretches out His hand saying: « Kiss the palm of it, man. I will find that kiss again and it will cure My torture. A kissed hand, a wounded hand. Kissed out of love. Wounded for love. Oh! I wish all men could kiss the great Victim, and the great Victim could die in its clothes made of sores, knowing that in each are the kisses, the love, of all men redeemed! » and He holds his hand pressed against the clean-shaven lips of the man, who, judging from his overall appearance, I would say is a Roman. He holds it there until the man moves away as if he were sated with it after quenching the parching

thirst of his remorses by drinking the Mercy of the Lord in the hollow of the divine hand.

Jesus goes back to His place and when passing He lays His hand on the curly hair of a very young man. I would say that he is hardly twenty years old, if that. One who has never spoken, and is certainly of Hebrew race. Jesus asks him: « And you, My son, are you not saying anything to your Saviour? »

The young man raises his head and looks at Him… A full speech is in his look. A story of grief, of hatred, of repentance, of love.

Jesus, bending lightly over him, staring at his eyes, reads a mute story and then says: « That is why I call you "son". You are no longer alone. Forgive all those of your own blood and those who are strangers, as God forgives you. And love the Love Who saved you. Come with Me for a moment. I want to say a word to you privately. »

The young man stands up and follows Him. When they are alone, Jesus says: « I want to tell you this, son. The Lord has loved you very much, although it may not appear to be so to a superficial judge. You have been sorely tried by life. Men have harmed you seriously. Both could have ruined you irreparably. Behind them there was Satan, jealous of your soul. But above you there was the eye of God. And that blessed eye stopped your enemies. His love sent Zacchaeus along your path. And, with Zacchaeus, He sent Me, Who am now speaking to you. And now I tell you that in this love you must find what you have not had, you must forget what embittered you, and forgive, forgive your mother, your ill-famed master, and yourself. Do not hate yourself in an evil way, son. Hate your time of sin, but not your spirit that has been successful in leaving that sin. Let your thought be a good friend of your spirit, so that together they may reach perfection. »

« Me, perfect! »

« Did you hear what I said to that man? And yet he was in the depth of the abyss!… And thank you, son! »

« For what, my Lord? I have to thank You… »

« For not going to those who buy men to betray Me. »

« Oh! Lord! How could I do it, if I knew that You do not despise even us highwaymen? I also was among those who brought You the lamb at the Cherit. And one of us, who has now been captured by the Romans - at least so they say, he has certainly not been seen in the refuge of the highwaymen since before the Tabernacles - told me the words You spoke in a valley near Modin… Because at that time I had not yet joined the highwaymen. I went to them at the end of last Adar and I left them at the beginning of Ethanim. But I did not do anything that deserves Your thanks. You were good. I wanted to be good, and to warn a friend of Yours… can I say so of Zacchaeus? »

« Yes, you can. All those who love Me are My friends. You are one, too. »

« Oh!… I wanted to warn him so that You should be on the lookout. But a warning does not deserve thanks… »

« I will repeat it to you again: I thank you for not selling yourself to those who are against Me. That is important. »

« And is the warning not? »

« Son, nothing will be able to prevent Hatred from assailing Me. Have you ever seen a torrent overflow? »

« Yes, I have. I was near Jabesh-Gilead and I saw the damage caused by the river that had overflowed before flowing into the Jordan. »

« And could anything stop the water? »

« No, it flooded and ruined everything. Even some houses were swept away. »

« Hatred is like that. But it will not carry Me away. I shall be submerged but not destroyed. And in the very bitter hour the love of those who would not hate the Innocent One will be My consolation, my light in the dark of that hour of Darkness, My sweetness in the chalice of wine mixed with gall and myrrh. »

« You?… You are speaking of Yourself as if… That chalice is for highwaymen, for those who go to die on the cross. But You are not a thief! You are not guilty! You are… »

« The Redeemer. Give Me a kiss, son. »

He takes the man's head in His hands and kisses his forehead, then He bends to receive his kiss. A timid kiss that hardly touches the emaciated cheek… Then the young man collapses on Jesus' chest weeping.

« Do not weep, son! I am sacrificed by love. And it is always a sweet sacrifice even if it is grievous to human nature. »

He holds him in His arms until he stops weeping and then He goes back, holding him by the hand close to Himself, to the place where Peter was previously.

He resumes speaking: « While we were taking our food, one of you, not from Israel, said that he wanted to ask Me to explain something. Let him do so now, because we shall soon have to go back to the crowd and then part. »

« It is I who said that. But many wish to know. Zacchaeus cannot explain it clearly, neither can any of us who follow Your religion. We asked Your disciples, when they passed through here. But they did not give us a clear explanation. »

« So what do you wish to know? »

« We did not even know that we had a soul. That is… we, at least, should have known, because our ancestors… But we did not read the old books. We were like animals… And we no longer knew what this soul is. We do not know even now. What is the soul? Is it

perhaps our reason? We do not think so, because in that case we would have been without it, and we have been told that without soul one cannot live. So what is the soul, which we have been told is incorporeal and immortal, if it is not our reason? Thought is incorporeal, but it is not immortal because it ends with our life. Even the wisest man thinks no more after his death. »

« A soul is not a thought, man. The soul is the spirit, the immaterial prime cause of life, the impalpable but true principle that animates the whole man and lasts after man. That is why it is said to be immortal. It is so sublime that even the most powerful thought is nothing in comparison with it. A thought comes to an end. The soul, instead, has a beginning, but has no end. Whether blissful or damned it continues to exist. Blessed are those who know how to keep it pure, or to restore it to its purity after making it impure, in order to give it back to the Creator as He gave it to man to enliven his humanity. »

« But is it within us, or above us, like the eye of God? »

« In us. »

« Imprisoned in us until death, then? A slave? »

« No. A queen. In the eternal thought, the soul, the spirit is what reigns in man, in the animal created and named man. The soul was created queen, with the authority and destiny of a queen, as it came from the King and Father of all kings and fathers, His breath and image, His gift and right, and its mission is to make of the creature named man a king of the great eternal kingdom and a god in the hereafter, a "living being" in the Abode of the most sublime only God. Its maidservants are all the virtues and faculties of man, its minister is the good will of man, the thought of man is its servant and disciple. It is from the spirit that thought acquires power and truthfulness, justice and wisdom, and can rise to regal perfection. A thought deprived of the light of the spirit will always be lacunose and obscure, it will never be able to understand the reason for truths that are more incomprehensible than mysteries to those who are separated from God, having lost the royalty of their souls. The thought of man will be obscure and dull, if it lacks the basic point, the lever indispensable to understand, to rise leaving the Earth and dashing upwards, towards the Intelligence, the Power, the Divinity, in one word. I am speaking thus to you Demetis, because you have not always been a money-changer, so you can understand and explain this to the others. »

« You are really a seer, Master. No, I have not been only a moneychanger… Nay, that was the last step of my descent… Tell me, Master. If the soul is a queen, why then does it not reign and subdue the evil thought and evil flesh of man? »

« Subjection would be neither freedom nor merit; it would be oppression. »

« But thought and the flesh overwhelm also the soul, I am speaking of myself, of us, and they enslave it too often. That is why I asked whether it was in us in the form of a slave. How can God allow such a sublime thing - You called it "breath of God and His image" - to be degraded by inferior beings? »

« According to the divine Thought the soul was not to be aware of slavery. But are you forgetting about the enemy of God and of man? The infernal spirits are known to you as well. »

« Yes, and all of them with cruel desires. And remembering my childhood, I can say that I must ascribe only to those infernal spirits the man I became and was, up to the threshold of old age. I have now found the lost child of those days. But shall I be able to become such a child as to go back to the purity of my childhood? Is it possible to go backwards in time? »

« It is not necessary to go backwards. You would not be able to do it. Bygone days will not come back, one cannot make them come back or go back to them. And it is not necessary. Some of you come from places where the theory of Pythagoras' school is known. A wrong theory. Souls, when they end their stay on the Earth, do not come back to it again in any body. Not in the body of an animal, as it would not befit such a supernatural being to dwell in a brute. Not in the body of a man, because how could the body be rewarded when it is reunited to the soul in the Last Judgement, if that soul had been clothed with many bodies? Those who believe in that theory say that it is the last body that rejoices, because the soul through successive purifications, in successive lives, reaches the perfection deserving a reward only in the last reincarnation. An error and an offence! Error and offence against God, as it admits that God was able to create only a limited number of souls. Error and offence against man, as it considers him so corrupt that he deserves a reward only with great difficulty. The reward may not be granted at once, ninety-nine times in a hundred a purification will be required in life to come. But purification is preparation to joy. So he who is being purified is already saved. And once he is saved he will rejoice, after Doomsday, with his body. He will have only one body for his soul, as he had one life here, and with the body that his parents made for him, and with the soul that the Creator created for him to give life to his body, he will take delight in the reward. It is not possible to be reincarnated, as it is not possible to go back in time. But it is possible to be re-created through one's free will, and God blesses and assists such will. Each of you has had that will. And then man, who was sinful, vicious, filthy, delinquent, thieving, corrupt, corrupting, murderous, impious, adulterous, revives spiritually through the purification of repentance, he destroys the corrupt kernel of the old man, he dispels the mental ego which is even more corrupt, as if the will to

be redeemed were an acid that attacks and destroys the unwholesome case concealing a treasure, and after laying bare his spirit, purifying it and restoring it to health, he clothes it with a new mentality, with a new, pure, good juvenile garment. Oh! a garment that can go close to God, that can worthily cover the recreated soul, protect and assist it until its supercreation, that is its complete holiness, that in future - perhaps a remote future if measured with human mind and means; very close if contemplated with the thought of eternity - will be glorious in the Kingdom of God. And every man can, if he so wishes, recreate in himself the boy of his childhood, the loving, humble, sincere, kind boy, whom the mother used to press to her breast and the father looked at glorying, whom the angel of God loved and God admired with love. Your mothers! Perhaps they were women of great virtue… God will not leave their virtue unrewarded. Strive therefore to be equally virtuous, to be united to them when there will be only one thing for all the virtuous people: the Kingdom of God for good people. Perhaps they were not good and they contributed to your ruin. But if they did not love you, if you do not know what love is, if the lack of love made you bad, now that a divine Love has embraced you, be holy so that with heavenly joy you may take delight in the Love that exceeds all love. Have you anything else to ask? »

« No, Lord. We have everything to learn. But for the moment we have nothing else… »

« I will leave John and Andrew with you for a few days. Later I will send you some good wise disciples. I want wild colts to know the ways of the Lord and His pastures, like the people of Israel, because I have come for everybody and I love everybody in the same way. Stand up and let us go. »

And He is the first to go out into the changed garden, closely followed by His apostles who complain gently saying: « Master, You have spoken to them as You have seldom done to Your chosen ones… »

« And do you complain of that? Do you not know that they do so also in the world, when they want to conquer someone they love? But with those who we know love us with their whole beings, there is no need for the art of conquering. It is sufficient to see one another in order to be in one another with joy and peace » says Jesus with a divine smile, really divine, so much being the joy it communicates.

And the apostles no longer complain, on the contrary they look at Him blissfully, lost as they are in the exultation of loving one another.

523. Sabea of Bethlechi.

5th November 1946.

The croft that feeds the heterogeneous group of Zacchaeus' friends is a very poor one indeed, particularly now that the winter season does not certainly cheer up hearts. Yet they are fond of it and they are proud of showing it to Jesus. Three corn fields, ploughed and brown, the orchard with few fruitful trees and others too young for any hope of fruit, a few stunted rows of vines, a vegetable garden… a small stable with a little cow and a donkey for the water-wheel, an enclosure with a few hens and five pairs of doves, six sheep, a hovel with a kitchen and three rooms, a shed used as wood-store, lumber-room and hay-loft, a well with a chipped rim and a cistern with muddy water. Nothing else…

« If the season is favourable… »

« If the animals will litter… »

« If the trees take root… »

Everything is conditional… Very poor hopes…

But one of them remembers what he heard years before - of the wonderful crop Doras had because of a blessing given by the Master, so that Doras might be humane to his peasants - and he says: « And if You blessed this place… Doras also was a sinner… »

« You are right. What I did, although I knew that it would not change his heart, I will do also for you, whose hearts have changed. » And He stretches out His arms to bless saying: « I will do that at once to convince you that I love you. »

Then they proceed on the road towards the river, along ploughed fields with dark fertile land, and orchards stripped by the season.

At a bend some scribes come forward. « Peace to You, Master. We have been waiting for You here to venerate You… »

« No. To be sure that I work no fraud. You have done the right thing. You must be convinced that I have had no opportunity to see the woman or any of the people who are with her. You were on watch at Zacchaeus' house and you saw that none of us came out. You preceded Me on the way and you saw that none of us went ahead of you. You are thinking of imposing terms on Me with regard to the meeting with that woman, and I tell you that I will accept them even before you mention them. »

« But… if You do not know them… »

« Is it not true that you do want to impose them? »

« It is true. »

« As I am aware of your intention, which is known only to you, I am also aware of what you will say to Me. And I tell you that I will accept what you intend to propose, because it will serve to give glory to the Truth. Speak up. »

« Do You know what the situation is? »

« I know that you consider her to be possessed, and that no exorciser

has been able to expel the demon. And I know that she does not speak words worthy of a demon. That is what those who have heard her speak say. »

« Can You swear that You have never seen her? »

« A just man never swears, because he is entitled to have his word accepted. I tell you that I have never seen her and that I have never been to her village, and the whole village can confirm that. »

« And yet she maintains that she knows Your face and Your voice. »

« Her soul in fact knows Me by the will of God. »

« You say by the will of God. But how can You state that? »

« I have been told that she speaks inspired words. »

« The demon also speaks of God. »

« But mixing errors on purpose, to lead men astray with wrong thoughts. »

« Well… we would like You to allow us to put the woman to a test. »

« In what way? »

« Do You really not know her? »

« I have told you that I do not. »

« Well then. We will send somebody ahead shouting: "Here is the Lord" and we shall see whether she greets him as if it were You. »

« A poor test! But I agree. Pick those to be sent ahead, from My followers. I will follow you with the others. But if the woman speaks, you must let her speak, that I may judge her words. »

« That is fair. The agreement is made and we will keep it loyally. »

« Let it be so and may your hearts be touched. »

« Master, we are not all enemies. Some of us are in a position of expectation… sincerely anxious to see the truth and follow You » says a scribe.

« That is true. And they will still be loved by God. »

The scribes examine the apostles and are surprised at the absence of many, of the Iscariot in particular. They then choose Judas Thaddeus and John. They also take the young converted thief who is pale and thin and with hair verging to a reddish hue. In short, they take those who, because of their age and features, look like the Master.

« We will go on with them. You will remain here with Our companions and Yours, and will follow us after some time. »

They do that.

The woods along the river are already in sight. The winter sunshine at sunset gilds the tree-tops and spreads a bright yellow light on the people gathered near the trees.

« Here He is! Here is the Master! Get up! Come and meet Him! » shout the scribes who had gone ahead, deviating towards a path that ends against a huge oak, with mighty roots half uncovered,

forming seats for those who take shelter near its trunk.

The people gathered there, turn round, stand up, open out and part to come and meet those who are arriving. Only three scribes remain near the trunk, with John of Ephesus, and an elderly man and woman, and another woman who is sitting on one of the protruding roots, her back to the trunk, her head bent on her knees which are embraced by her arms with clasped hands, all covered with such a deep violet veil, that it seems to be black. She seems indifferent to everything. She does not stir despite all the shouting.

A scribe touches her shoulder: « The Master is here, Sabea. Stand up and greet Him. »

The woman does not reply and does not move.

The three scribes look at one another and smile ironically, nodding meaningfully to the others who are coming forward. And as those who were waiting had become quiet, because they did not see Jesus, they begin to shout louder than ever with their accomplices, so that the woman may not become aware of the deceit.

« Woman » says a scribe to the old mother who is with her daughter « you, at least, ought to greet the Master, and tell your daughter to greet Him. »

The woman prostrates herself with her husband before Thaddeus and John and the repentant thief, then standing up, she says to her daughter: « Sabea, your Lord is here. Worship Him. »

The young woman does not stir.

The scribes smile more ironically, and one of them, a thin bignosed man, says in a nasal drawling voice: « You were not expecting this test, were you? And your heart is trembling. You realise that your fame of a prophetess is in danger and you are not prepared to tempt fate… I think that that is enough to say that you are a liar… »

The woman raises her head all of a sudden. She throws her veil behind her head and looking with wide-open eyes she says: « I do not lie, scribe. And I am not afraid because I am in the truth. Where is the Lord? »

« What? You say that you know Him and you do not see Him? He is in front of you. »

« None of these is the Lord. That's why I did not move. None of them. »

« None of them? What? Is that fair-haired Galilean not the Lord? I do not know Him, but I know that He is fair-haired and His eyes are sky-blue. »

« He is not the Lord. »

« Well, it is that other one, who is tall and severe looking. Look at His royal features. It's certainly Him. »

« He is not the Lord. The Lord is not amongst them » and she lowers her head on her knees as before.

Some time passes. Then there is Jesus coming forward. The scribes have ordered the few people present to be silent. So His arrival is not given away by any hosanna. Jesus is coming forward between Peter and His cousin James. He is walking slowly… Silently… The thick grass deadens all shuffling of feet. While the old woman wipes her tears with her veil and a scribe offends her saying: « Your daughter is mad and a liar », and her father sighs and reproaches his daughter, Jesus arrives at the end of the path and He stops.

The young woman, who could not hear or see anything, jumps to her feet, throws away her veil, uncovering thus her head, stretches out her arms with a mighty cry: « Here is my Lord coming to me! This is the Messiah, o men, who want to deceive and humiliate me. I can see upon Him the light of God Who points Him out to me and I honour Him! » and she throws herself on the ground, remaining where she was, at about two metres from Jesus. With her face on the ground, on the grass, she shouts: « I greet You, o King of peoples, o Wonder, o Prince of Peace, Father of the century that has no end, Leader of the new people of God! » and she remains prostrated under her wide dark mantle, of a violet almost black shade like her veil.

But the moment she stood up against the black trunk - and after throwing away her veil, she remained with her arms stretched forward like a statue - I noticed that under her mantle she wore a heavy woollen dress of a white-ivory shade, fastened at her neck and waist only by a cord. And above all I was able to admire her beauty of a middle-aged woman. She must be about thirty years old. And generally speaking, thirty years in Palestine are equivalent to at least forty of our years; if Our Lady is an exception to this rule, other women reach maturity early, particularly those of dark complexion and hair and buxom like this one. She is the classical type of a Jewish woman. I think that Rachel, Ruth and Judith, who were famous for their beauty, must have been like her. Tall, buxom yet slender, with smooth skin of a pale brown hue, a small mouth and lips lightly tumid and deeply red, a straight long thin nose, deep dark velvet-like eyes under an arch of long thick eyebrows, a high smooth regal forehead, a rather long oval-shaped face and ebony hair as wonderful as an onyx wreath. Not a jewel, but a statuesque body and the majesty of a queen.

She is now getting up pushing her hands, which are long, brown, beautiful, joined to her arms by thin wrists. She is now on her feet, standing against the dark trunk. She now looks at the Master in silence, and shakes her head because the scribes say to her: « You are wrong, Sabea. He is not the Messiah, but it is the one you saw previously without recognising him. » She shakes her head decidedly and severely, without taking her eyes off the Lord. Then

her face becomes transfigured into an expression that I cannot say whether it is of intense joy or ecstatic drowsiness. It looks like both, because she grows pale like one about to faint, while all her life seems to concentrate on her eyes which become bright with a light of joy, of triumph, of love… I do not know. Are those eyes smiling? No, they are not, as her severe lips are not smiling. And yet a light of joy shines in them and they acquire a greater and greater power of intensity, that is striking.

Jesus looks at her with His meek somewhat sad eyes. « Don't You see that she is mad? » a scribe whispers to Him. Jesus does not reply. With His left hand hanging down His side, His right one holding His mantle on His chest, He looks and is silent.

And the woman opens her mouth and stretches her arms as she did previously. She looks like a huge butterfly with violet wings and a body of ancient ivory. And a new cry is uttered by her lips: « O Adonai, You are great! You alone are great, o Adonai! You are great in Heaven and on the Earth, in time and in ages, and beyond Time, from time immemorial and for ever, o Lord, Son of the Lord. Your enemies are under Your feet and Your throne is supported by the love of those who love You. »

Her voice becomes steadier and steadier and louder and louder while her eyes are taken off Jesus' face and they look at a point in the distance, a little above the heads of those who are paying attention around her and whom she dominates without difficulty, standing straight against the trunk of the oak, which is on a rising of the ground like a low bank.

After a pause she resumes speaking: « The throne of my Lord is adorned with the twelve stones of the twelve tribes of the just. In the great pearl that is the throne, the white precious bright throne of the Most Holy Lamb, there are mounted topazes with amethysts, emeralds with sapphires, rubies with sardonyxes, and agates and chrysolites and beryls, onyxes, jaspers, opals. Those who believe, those who hope, those who love, those who repent, those who live and die in justice, those who suffer, those who leave error for the Truth, those who were hard-hearted and have become meek in His Name, the innocent, the repentant, those who divest themselves of everything to be agile in following the Lord, the virgins whose spirits shine with a light like the dawn of the Heaven of God… Glory to the Lord! Glory to Adonai! Glory to the King sitting on His throne! »

Her voice is a sharp sound. The people quiver with emotion. The woman seems to be really seeing what she says, as if the golden cloud sailing in the clear sky and which she seems to be following with her enraptured eyes, were a lens with which she saw the heavenly glories.

She rests as if she were tired but without changing attitude. Only

her face becomes more transfigured as it grows paler and her eyes shine more brightly. She resumes speaking lowering her eyes on Jesus Who is listening to her attentively among a group of scribes who shake their heads sceptically and scornfully, and among His apostles and followers who are pale with holy emotion. She resumes speaking in a clear but lower voice: « I see! I see in the Man what is concealed in the Man. Holy is the Man, but my knee bends before the Holy of Holies enclosed in the Man. »

Her voice becomes loud again and imperious like a command: « Look at your King, o people of God! Become acquainted with His' Face! The Beauty of God is before you! The Wisdom of God has taken a mouth to teach you. It is no longer the prophets, o people of Israel, who speak to you of the Unnamable One. It is He Himself. He, Who knows the mystery that is God, speaks to you of God. He Who knows the thought of God Who presses you to His bosom, o people who are still a baby after so many centuries, and nourishes you with the milk of God's Wisdom to make you an adult in God. To do that He has become incarnate in a womb. In the womb of an Israelite woman, greater in the eyes of God and of men than any other woman. She stole the heart of God with one only of Her throbs of a dove. The beauty of Her spirit fascinated the Most High and of Her He made His throne. Miriam of Aaron sinned because sin was in her. Deborah decided what was to be done, but she did not act with her own hands. Jael was strong, but she soiled her hands with blood. Judith was just and she feared the Lord, and God was in her words and allowed her the deed that Israel might be saved, but for the love of her country she made use of murderous cunning. But the Woman Who generated Him exceeds those women because She is the perfect Maid of God and serves Him without sinning. Entirely pure, innocent and beautiful, She is the beautiful Star of God, from its rising to its setting. Entirely beautiful, shining and pure to be Star and Moon, Light to men to find God. She does not precede and does not follow the holy Ark as Miriam of Aaron did, because She is the Ark Herself. On the muddy water of the Earth covered with the flood of sins, She sails and saves, because those who enter in Her find the Lord. Spotless dove She goes out and brings the olive-branch, the branch of peace to men, because She is the beautiful Olive-tree. She is silent and in Her silence She speaks and acts more than Deborah, Jael and Judith and She does not advise to fight, She does not urge to slaughter, She sheds no blood but Her own most chosen blood, with which She made Her Son. Unhappy Mother! Sublime Mother!… Judith feared the Lord, but her flower had belonged to a man. This Woman gave Her inviolate flower to the Most High, and the Fire of God descended into the calyx of the sweet lily and the womb of woman contained and carried the Power, the Wisdom and the Love

of God. Glory to the Woman! Sing, o women of Israel, Her praises! »

The woman becomes silent as if her voice were exhausted. In fact I do not know how she can hold such a strong timbre.

The scribes say: « She is mad! She is mad! Make her keep quiet. She is either mad or possessed. Order the spirit possessing her to go away. »

« I cannot. There no spirit in her but God's, and God does not eject Himself. »

« You are not doing it because she praises You and Your Mother and that tickles Your pride. »

« Scribe, meditate on what you know about Me and you will see that I know no pride. »

« And yet only a demon can speak in her to sing the praises of a woman thus!… A woman! And what is woman in Israel and for Israel? What, but sin in the eyes of God? The seduced and seducer! If it were not part of our faith, one could hardly believe that woman has a soul. She is forbidden to go close to the Holy because of her uncleanliness. And this woman says that God descended into Her!… » says another scandalised scribe and his accomplices aid and abet him.

Jesus says, without looking at anybody in the face, He seems to be speaking to Himself: « "The Woman will crush the head of the Serpent… The Virgin will conceive and give birth to a Son Who will be called Immanuel- A shoot will spring from the stock of Jesse, a flower will come up from this root and the Spirit of the Lord will rest on Him". That Woman. My Mother. Scribe, out of respect for your knowledge, remember and understand the words of the Book. »

The scribes do not know what to reply. They have read those words thousands of times and said that they were true. Can they now deny it? They keep quiet.

One gives instructions to light some fires as it is getting cold near the banks of the river where the evening wind is blowing. The order is obeyed and bonfires of sticks blaze in circle around the people who have grouped together.

The dancing light of the fire seems to rouse the woman who had become silent with her eyes closed deeply absorbed in herself. She opens her eyes and stirs herself. She looks at Jesus again and shouts once more: « Adonai! Adonai! You are great! Let us sing a new hymn to the Divine One! Shalom! Shalom! Malchich!!… (I am spelling it thus, but the "h" is aspirated almost like a "c" as pronounced by people in Tuscany). Peace! Peace! O King Whom nothing can resist!… »

The she becomes silent all of a sudden. She looks round, for the first time since she began to speak, at those surrounding Jesus, and she stares at the scribes as if it were the first time she saw them,

and without any apparent reason tears well up in her large eyes and her face becomes sad and dull. She speaks slowly now and in a deep voice like one relating sorrowful things: « No. There is who resists You! O people, listen! After my grief, o people of Bethlechi, you have heard me speak. After years of silence and grief I heard and I said what I had heard. Now I am no longer in the green woods of Bethlechi, a virgin widow who finds her only peace in the Lord. I have not around me only my fellow-citizens to say to them: "Let us fear the Lord because the hour has come when we must be ready for His call. Let us clothe our hearts with beautiful garments in order not to be unworthy of being in His presence. Let us gird ourselves with strength because the hour of the Christ is an hour of trial. Let us purify ourselves like victims for the altar, so that we may be received by Him who sends the Christ. Let those who are good become better. Let those who are proud become humble. Let thus who suffer from lust divest themselves of their flesh to be able to follow the Lamb. Let the miser become a benefactor because God assists us through His Messiah, and let everybody practise justice in order to belong to the people of the Blessed One Who is coming". Now I am speaking before Him and before those who believe in Him, and also before those who do not believe and scoff at the Holy One and at those who speak and believe in His Name and in Him. But I am not afraid. You say that I am mad, you say that a demon speaks in me. I am aware that you could have me stoned as a blasphemer. I know that what I am going to tell you will sound like an insult and blasphemy, and that you will hate me. But I am not afraid. Being perhaps the last of the voices that speak of Him before His Manifestation, I may follow the lot of many more voices, and I am not afraid. The exile in the cold and solitude of the Earth is too long for those who think of the bosom of Abraham, of the Kingdom of God that the Christ opens to us and is holier than the holy bosom of Abraham. Sabea of Carmel of the stock of Aaron is not afraid of death. But she fears the Lord. And she speaks when He makes her speak in order not to disobey His will. And she speaks the truth because she speaks of God with the words given to her by God. I do not fear death, even if you call me a demon and you have me stoned as a blasphemer, even if my father, mother and brothers should die because of such disgrace, I shall not tremble with fear or pain. I know that the demon is not in me, because all wicked incentives are inert in me, and the whole of Bethlechi knows that. I know that the interruption that stones may cause to my song will be shorter than a sigh, and afterwards more breath will be given to my song in the freedom beyond the Earth. I know that the grief of my kinsfolk will be comforted by God, and it will be short, whereas their joy of martyr relatives of a martyr will be eternal. I am not afraid of your death, but of that

which would come to me from God, if I did not obey. And I speak. And I say what I have been told. O people, listen, and you too, o scribes of Israel, listen. »

She raises her sorrowful voice again and says: « A voice, a voice comes from high above and shouts in my heart. It says: "The ancient People of God cannot sing the new hymn, because it does not love its Saviour. The new hymn will be sung by those saved in every country, those of the new People of the Christ Lord, not those who hate My Word"… Horror! (she really utters a cry that makes one shudder). The voice gives light, the light gives sight! Horror! I see! » Her shout is almost a howl. She writhes as if she were held firm before a dreadful sight torturing her heart, and she were trying to put an end to it by running away. Her mantle slips off her shoulders, and she is left in her white dress against the huge dark trunk. In the light fading slowly in the reflected green of the wood and in the reddish dancing reflection of the flames, her face becomes tremendously tragic. Shadows appear under her eyes, around her nostrils, under her lip. It seems a face disfigured by grief. She wrings her hands repeating in a lower voice: « I see! I see! » and she drinks her tears while she continues: « I see the crimes of this people of mine. And I am powerless to stop them. I see the hearts of my fellow-citizens and I am unable to change them. Horror! Horror! Satan has left his place and has come to dwell in these hearts. »

« Make her keep quiet » the scribes order Jesus.

« You promised to let her speak… » replies Jesus.

The woman continues: « Your face on the ground, in the mud, o Israel, who still know how to love the Lord. Cover yourself with ashes, wrap yourself in sackcloth. For yourself! For them! Jerusalem! Jerusalem! Save yourself! I can see a town rioting and requesting a crime. I hear, I can hear the shouts of those who with hatred invoke blood upon themselves. I can see the Victim being raised in the Passover of Blood and I can see that Blood flowing, and I can hear that Blood cry louder than the blood of Abel, while heaven opens and the earth quakes and the sun grows dark. And that Blood does not cry out for vengeance, but it implores mercy on its murderous People and on us! Jerusalem!!! Be converted! That Blood! That Blood! A stream! A stream that washes the world curing all evils, cancelling all sins… But for us, for us of Israel, that Blood is fire, for us it is a chisel that engraves the name of deicides and the curse of God on the sons of Jacob. Jerusalem! Have mercy on yourself and on us!… »

« Tell her to be quiet, it's an order! » shout the scribes while the woman sobs covering her face.

« I cannot order the Truth to be quiet. »

« Truth! Truth! She is mad and she is raving! What kind of a

Master are You, if You accept as true the words of a raving woman? »

« And what Messiah are You if You cannot make a woman be quiet? »

« And what Prophet are You if You cannot drive out a demon? And yet You have done it on other occasions! »

« Yes, He did. But it does not suit Him now. It is nothing but a well planned trick to frighten the crowd! »

« And I would have chosen this moment, this place and this handful of men to do it, when I could have done it in Jericho when I had over five thousand people who followed and surrounded Me several times, when the enclosure of the Temple was too small to contain all those who wanted to hear Me? And can the demon speak words of wisdom? Which of you can honestly say that one error has come out of her lips? Are the dreadful words of the prophets not resounding on her lips, in her womanly voice? Do you not hear the howl of Jeremiah and the weeping of Isaiah and of the other prophets? Do you not hear the voice of God spoken through a creature, the voice that strives to be accepted by you for your own good? You do not listen to Me. You may think that I speak in My own interest. But what profit does this woman, who is unknown to Me, hope to have from these words? What will she gain, except your contempt, your threats and perhaps your revenge? No, I will not order her to be silent! On the contrary, that these few people may hear her, and you also may hear her and mend your ways I say to her: "Speak! Speak up, I tell you, in the name of the Lord!" »

Jesus is now majestic, He is the powerful Christ of the moments of miracles, with His large magnetic eyes shining like blue stars, made even brighter by the flames of a bonfire which is burning between Him and the woman. The woman instead, overwhelmed by grief, is less regal looking, with her head lowered, her face covered with her hands, and with her dark hair, which has become loose, falling over her shoulders and in front of her, like a mourning veil over her white dress.

« Speak up, I tell you. Your sorrowful words are not fruitless. Sabea, of the stock of Aaron, speak up! »

The woman obeys. But she speaks in a low voice, in fact they all press closer to hear her better. She seems to be speaking to herself, looking towards the river that flows babbling on her right hand side, with the last gleams of the water in the fading light of the day. And she seems to be addressing the river: « O Jordan, sacred river of our fathers, your water is sky-blue and wavy like precious byssus, and you reflect the pure stars and the pale moon in it, and you caress the willows on your banks, and you are the river of peace and yet you know so much sorrow; o Jordan, in stormy times with your swollen agitated waves you carry the sand of a thousand torrents and at times you tear away a tender shrub on

which there is a nest and you carry it away vertically towards the deadly abyss of the Salt Sea, and you have no mercy on the pair of birds, which screeching with pain fly following their nest, destroyed by your robbery; thus, o sacred Jordan, you will see the people, that did not want the Messiah, go towards its ruin, struck by divine wrath, torn away from their homes and from the altar, and perish on the greatest death. My people, save yourselves! Believe in your Lord! Follow your Messiah! Recognise Him for what He is. Not the king of peoples and armies. He is the King of souls, of your souls, of all souls. He descended to gather the just souls, He will ascend again to lead them to the eternal Kingdom. O you, who are still able to love, press round the Holy One! O you, who have the destiny of our Fatherland at heart, join the Saviour! Let not all the offspring of Abraham die! Shun the false prophets who with lying mouths and rapacious hearts want to tear you away from Salvation. Come out of the darkness rising around you. Listen to the voice of God! In the decree of God, the mighty ones of whom you are now afraid, are already dust. One only is the Living Being. The places in which they reign and from which they oppress people, are already in ruin. One only is lasting. Jerusalem! Where are the proud sons of Zion of whom you boast? Where the rabbis and the priests with whom you adorn yourself and whom you regard with respect? Look at them! Oppressed, in chains, they are going towards their places of exile, among the ruins of your buildings, among and the dead bodies of those who were slaughtered or died of starvation. The fury of God is upon you, Jerusalem, who reject your Messiah and strike His face and heart. All your beauty has been destroyed. Every hope of yours is dead. The Temple and the altar are desecrated… »

« Make her be silent! She is blaspheming! Make her be quiet, we say. »

«… the ephod is torn. It is no longer of any use… »

« You are guilty if You do not command her to be silent! »

«… because he no longer reigns. There is another, an eternal Pontiff, and He is holy, and has been sent by God: King and Priest for ever, sent by Him Who considers as given to Himself the offences given to the Christ and avenges them. Another Pontiff. The True Holy Pontiff, Anointed by God and by His Sacrifice, in the place of those on whose heads the tiara is a dishonour as it covers horrible thoughts!… »

« Be quiet, you cursed one! Be quiet or we will strike you! » and the scribes maltreat her rudely. But she does not appear to hear them.

The people set up a protest shouting: « Let her speak, since you speak so much. She is telling the truth. It is so. There is no more holiness among you. One only is Holy and you are vexing Him. »

The scribes deem it wise to be quiet, and the woman continues in her tired sorrowful voice: « He had come to bring you light. And you waged war against Him… Health. And you sneered at Him… Love. And you hated Him… Miracles. And you said He was a demon… His hands cured your sick people. And you pierced them. He brought you the Light. And you spat on His face and covered it with filth. He brought you Life. And you killed Him. Israel, grieve over your fault and do not curse the Lord, while you are going into the exile, that will not come to an end as the exiles of the past. You will roam all over the Earth, Israel, as a defeated cursed people, pursued by the voice of God with the same words spoken to Cain. And you will not be able to come back here and build a solid home, unless you acknowledge with the other peoples that this is Jesus, the Christ, the Lord Son of the Lord… » The woman's voice is thin with pain and fatigue, as tired as the voice of one who is dying.

But she does not refrain from speaking, on the contrary, she takes courage again for a list command: « Lie down, people who do not yet know how to love. Roll in ashes, wrap yourself in sackcloth. The fury of God is hanging over us like a cloud laden with hailstones and lightning over a cursed field. »

The woman collapses on her knees, her arms stretched out towards Jesus, and she shouts: « Peace, peace, o King of justice and of peace! Peace, o great and mighty Adonai, Whom not even the Father resists! Implore peace for us, in Your Name, o Jesus, Saviour and Messiah, Redeemer and King, and God, three times holy! » and shaken by sobs, she falls to the ground with her face on the grass.

The scribes surround Jesus taking Him aside and turning away everybody else with threatening looks and words, and one of them says: « The least You can do is to cure her. Because if You insist on saying that she is free from a demon, You must admit that she is ill. Women!… And women sacrificed by fate… Their vitality must find relief somehow… and they digress… and they see unreal things… and above all they see You, Who are young and handsome… and »

« Be quiet, you mouth of a snake! You do not believe yourself what you are saying » bursts out Jesus so authoritatively that He cuts short the words on the lips of the lean big-nosed scribe, who at the beginning of the incident had scoffed at the woman as a false prophetess.

« Let us not offend the Master. We appointed Him judge of a case on which we are unable to pass judgement… » says another scribe, the one who went with the others to meet Jesus on the road and told Him that not all the scribes are against Him, as some watch Him to form an opinion and to follow Him with a sincere will, if they consider Him to be God.

« Be quiet, Joel named Alamoth, son of Abijah! Only an ill-bred man like you can say such words » say the others angrily.

The scribe blushes at the insult. But he controls himself and he replies in a dignified manner: « If nature has been hostile to my person, that has not impaired my intellect. Nay, by precluding many pleasures from me, it made a man of wisdom of me. And if you were holy people you would not humiliate the man, but you would respect the sage. »

« Well! Let us talk of what matters to us. You must cure her, Master, because in her frenzy she frightens people and offends the priesthood, the Pharisees and us. »

« If she had praised you, would you ask Me to cure her? » Jesus asks kindly.

« No. Because it would serve to make people respectful to us, these capricious people who hate us in their hearts and sneer at us whenever they get a chance » replies one of the scribes without realising that he is falling into a trap.

« But would she still not be a sick person? Would I not have to cure her? » Jesus asks kindly again. He sounds like a schoolboy who is asking his teacher what he has to do. And the scribes, blinded by pride, do not realise that they are giving themselves away…

« In that case, no. On the contrary! She ought to be left in her frenzy! And we should do everything in our power to make people believe that she is a prophetess. Honour her! Point her out… »

« But if it were not true?!… »

« Oh! Master! Once we do away with what she says against us, the rest would be of great assistance to raise the pride of Israel against the Romans again, and to humble the pride of the people against us! »

« But we could not say to her: "Speak thus, but do not say that" » says Jesus resolutely.

« Why? »

« Because those who rave do not know what they say. »

« Oh! with money and some threats… we would achieve anything. Even the prophets were under control… »

« Truly, I do not know about that… »

« Eh! because You do not know how to read between the lines and because not everything has been written. »

« But the prophetic spirit is not subject to orders, o scribe. It comes from God, and God cannot be bought over or frightened » says Jesus changing tone. It is the beginning of His counter-attack.

« But this woman is not a prophetess. It is no longer the time for prophets. »

« It is no longer the time for prophets? Why not? »

« Because we do not deserve them. We are too corrupt. »

« Really? And you say so? A short while ago you judged her to be

worthy of punishment because she said the same thing? »

The scribe is disconcerted. Another scribe comes to his rescue saying: « The time of prophets ended with John. They are of no use any more. »

« Why? »

« Because You are here to tell us the Law and to speak to us of God. »

« Also in the days of the prophets there was the Law and Wisdom spoke of God. And yet they were there, too. »

« But what did they prophesy? Your coming. Since You have come, they do not serve any more. »

« Hundreds of times I have heard you, the priests and the Pharisees ask Me whether I was the Christ or not, and because I affirmed it, I was said to be a blasphemer and a madman, and you picked up stones to throw them at Me. Are you not Sadoc, the so called golden scribe? » says Jesus pointing at the big-nosed scribe who had maltreated the woman after trying to deceive her.

« I am. So? »

« Well, you, exactly you, have always been the first, at Giscala and in the Temple, to stir up violence against Me. But I forgive you. I remind you only that you did so saying that I could not be the Christ, whereas now you maintain it. And I remind you also of the challenge I issued to you at Kedesh. You will shortly see part of it being fulfilled. When the moon will come back to the phase in which she is now shining in the sky, I will give you the proof. The first one. You will have the second when the corn, which is now sleeping in the earth, will shake its still green ears in the breeze of Nisan. But to those who say that the prophets are useless, I reply: "And who will put limits to the Most High Lord?". I solemnly tell you that there will always be prophets as long as there are men. They are torches in the darkness of the world. They are the fireplaces among the ice of the world. They are the blares of trumpets that will awake drowsy people. They are the voices that remind men of God and of His truth, forgotten and neglected through time, and they bring the voice of God directly to man, arousing thrills of emotion in the forgetful listless children of man. They will have other names, but the same mission and the same destiny of human sorrow and superhuman enjoyment! Woe to men if there were no such spirits whom the world will hate and God will love dearly! Woe to men if they did not exist to suffer and forgive, to love and work obeying the Lord! The world would perish in darkness, frozen in deadly drowsiness, in idiocy, in wild brutal ignorance. God will therefore give rise to them, and there will always be some of them. And who can order God not to do so? You, Sadoc? or you? or you? I solemnly tell you that not even the spirits of Abraham, Jacob and Moses, of Elijah and Elisha could

impose such a limitation on God, and God only knows how holy they were and what eternal lights they are. »

« So You will neither cure the woman nor condemn her? »

« No, I will not. »

« And do You judge her to be a prophetess? »

« Yes, an inspired prophetess. »

« You are a demon like her. Let us go. It is not right to lose more time with demons » says Sadoc, pushing Jesus rudely to move Him aside.

Many follow him. Some stay. Among the latter, the one whom they called Joel Alamoth.

« And are you not following them? » asks Jesus pointing at those going away.

« No, Master. We shall go away because night has fallen. But we want to tell You that we believe in Your judgement. God can do everything, that is true. And as we fall into many sins, He can give rise to spirits who will call us back to justice » says a very elderly one.

« You are right. And your humility is greater than your knowledge in the eyes of God. »

« Then, remember me when You are in Your Kingdom. »

« Yes, Jacob, I will. »

« How do You know my name? »

Jesus smiles without replying.

« Master, remember us as well » say the other three. And Joel Alamoth, the last one to speak, says: « And let us bless the Lord Who has given us this hour. »

« Let us bless the Lord! » replies Jesus.

They greet one another and part.

Jesus joins His apostles and goes with them towards the woman, who has resumed the position she had at the beginning sitting all curled up on the protruding root.

Her mother and father ask the Master anxiously: « So is our daughter a demon? They said so before going away. »

« She is not. Set your minds at rest. And love her because her destiny is a very sorrowful one. Exactly as all destinies like hers. »

« But they said that that is Your judgement… »

« They have lied. I do not lie. Be at peace. »

John of Ephesus comes forward with Solomon and the other disciples and says: « Master, Sadoc has threatened them. I tell You. »

« Them or her? »

« Them and her. Isn't that right? »

« Yes. They said to us, to my wife and me, that if we cannot convince our daughter to be silent, there will be trouble for us. And they said to Sabea: "If you speak we will denounce you to the

Sanhedrin". We foresee sad days for us!… But our hearts are at peace because of what You told us… and we will put up with the rest. But with regard to her… What shall we do? Tell us, Lord. » Jesus is pensive, then He replies: « Have you no relatives far from Bethlechi? »

« No, Master. »

Jesus is pensive and then He raises His head and looks at Joseph, John of Ephesus and Philip of Arbela. He says to them: « You will set out with these people and then from Bethlechi you will go with her and her trousseau to Aera. You will tell Timoneus' mother to keep her in My name. She knows what it means to have a persecuted son. »

« We will do that, Lord. It's a wise decision. Aera is far and out of the way » say the three men.

Sabea's father and mother kiss the Master's hands and they thank Him and bless Him.

Jesus bends over the woman, He touches her veiled head and calls her gently: « Sabea, listen to Me! »

The woman raises her head, she looks at Him and then falls on her knees.

Holding His hand to her head Jesus says: « Listen, Sabea. You will go where I send you: to a mother. I would have liked to send you to My Mother. But it is not possible. And continue to serve the Lord with justice and obedience. I bless you, woman. Go in peace. »

« Yes, my Lord and my God. But shall I be able to speak when I have to?… »

« The Spirit Who loves you will guide you according to the moment. Be sure of His love. Be humble, chaste, simple and sincere, and He will not abandon you. Go in peace! »

He joins again the apostles and Zacehaeus with his friends, who had stopped a few paces away holding back other curious people.

« Let us go. Night has fallen. I do not know how you who have to go to Jericho will get there. »

« Particularly for the woman and her relatives, I would say. But if You think that it is a good idea, we will stay outside and You and they will be able to sleep in the house until morning » suggests one of Zacchaeus' friends.

« A good idea. Go and tell Sabea to come here with her relatives and the disciples. They will sleep in the house. I will stay with you. It is not a windy night. We will light some fires and we will wait for dawn thus, while I teach you and you listen to Me. »

And He slowly sets off in the early moonlight…

524. At Bethabara, Remembering the Baptist.

7th November 1946.

« Peace to You, Master! » greet the shepherd disciples who had gone ahead some days previously and were waiting beyond the ford with the sick people they had gathered together, and other people anxious to hear the Master.

« Peace to you. Have you been waiting for Me long? »

« For three days. »

« I was held up on the way. Let us go to the sick people. »

« We put up some tents to give shelter to them without going backwards and forwards to and from the nearby villages. We were given milk for them by some of our shepherd friends, who are now over there with their herds waiting for You » say the disciples while leading Jesus into a thicket, which by itself would be a protection for anyone taking shelter in it.

There are about twenty small tents supported by poles, or stretched between two trunks of trees, and under them there is the large sad crowd of sick people who are waiting, and as soon as they realise Who is coming they utter the usual cry: « Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on us. »

Jesus does not want to keep them waiting long and appearing, or rather bending from tent to tent, as His height does not allow Him to go in standing straight, He looks into each smiling, and His smile is already a grace. The sun shining behind Him casts His shadow on the little beds and emaciated faces or on the inert limbs. He only says a few words: « Peace to you who believe » and He then passes to the next tent. And the cry follows Him. A cry repeated each time His sentence is repeated, a cry that is heard in the tent just left, as if it were the echo of the one uttered in the previous tent: « I am cured. Hosanna to the Son of David! »

And the large group of sick people, previously lying under the dark tents, comes out and gathers together behind the Master. They are all full of joy and they throw away their sticks or crutches, they wrap themselves in the blankets of the now useless stretchers, they take off the no longer needed bandages, and above all they exult in the joy of their recovery.

They have all been cured by now. And Jesus turns round and with a most loving smile He says: « The Lord has rewarded your faith. Let us bless His goodness together » and He intones the psalm: « Acclaim the Lord, all the Earth, serve the Lord gladly. Come into His presence with songs of joy. Know that He, the Lord, is God, He made us, etc. »

The people follow Him as best they can. Some, who are probably not Israelites, follow the song with a murmur of their lips. But their hearts do sing, as one can tell from their faces. God will certainly accept that poor murmur better than the perfect but arid

song of some Pharisees.

Matthias says to Jesus: « O Lord, when You speak to those who are awaiting Your word, mention our John. »

« I was thinking of doing that because this place brings back to My heart an even livelier recollection of the figure of the Baptist » and surrounded by the crowd He climbs a rising of the ground, covered with thin grass, and He begins to speak.

« What have you come to seek in this place? The health of your bodies, o sick people, and it was given to you. The word that evangelizes, and you have found it. But the health of your bodies must prepare you to seek the health of your spirits, as the word that evangelizes must prepare your wills to seek justice. How dreadful it would be if the health of the body were confined to the joy of the flesh and blood, being instead inactive with regard to the spirit! I made you praise the Lord Who granted you the gift of health. But your gratitude to the Lord must not come to an end after the moment of exultation. And gratitude reveals itself in the good will to love Him. Every gift of God is nothing, no matter how full of active strength it is, if in man there is no will to recompense it with the gift of his own spirit to God.

This place heard the preaching of John. Many among you certainly heard it. Many people in Israel heard it, but it did not have the same results in everybody, although John spoke the same words to everybody. Why so much difference then? What is the cause of it? The different wills of men who heard those words. Some were really prepared by them to receive Me, and consequently they were prepared for their own holiness. Others instead were prepared against Me, and consequently for their own injustice. They resounded like the cry of a sentinel, and the army of spirits divided, although one only was the cry. Some of them prepared to follow their Leader. Some armed themselves and studied plans to fight Me and My followers. And because of that Israel will be defeated, because a kingdom, which is divided in itself, cannot be strong, and foreign countries take advantage of it to subdue it.

The same applies to individual spirits. In every man there are good and bad powers. Wisdom speaks to the whole man, but only few men want one part only to reign: the good one. In deciding to choose one part only as queen, the children of the world are more skilful. They know how to be completely wicked, when they so wish, and they throw away the good parts, as if they were useless garments, whereas they could oppose resistance in them. The men, instead, who are not of the world and who are stimulated towards the Light, only with difficulty can imitate the children of the world and throw away, like rejected garments, the wicked parts which try to resist in them.

I said that if one eye causes you to sin, it should be torn out, if a

hand causes you to sin, it should be cut off, because it is better to enter the eternal Light crippled, than enter eternal Darkness with both eyes or hands. The Baptist was a man of our days. Many of you have known him. Imitate his heroical example. Out of love for the Lord and for his soul, he gave away much more than an eye and a hand, he gave his very life, to be faithful to Justice. Many among you were perhaps his disciples and still say that they love him. But bear in mind that you prove your love for God and for the teachers who take you to God by doing what they taught you, imitating their works of justice and loving God with your whole selves, to the extent of heroism. Then, by doing so, the gifts of health and wisdom granted by God do not remain idle and do not become condemnation, on the contrary they are a ladder to ascend to the abode of My and your Father, Who awaits everybody in His Kingdom.

For your own good, ensure that the sacrifice of the Baptist - a whole life of sacrifice ended in martyrdom - and My sacrifice - a whole life of sacrifice and ending in a martyrdom hundreds of times greater than My Precursor's - may not be fruitless for you. Be just, have faith, obey the word of Heaven, renew yourselves in the New Law. Let the Gospel be really good news for you, making you good and deserving to enjoy the Bounty, that is the Most High Lord in an eternal Day. Learn to tell true shepherds from false ones, and follow those who will give you the words of Life they learned from Me.

The feast of Lights, the celebration of the Dedication of the Temple is close at hand. Remember that many lights to honour the festivity and the Lord are of no avail, if your hearts are without light. Love is light and its lamp-holder is the will to love the Lord with good deeds. Remember that the Dedication of the Temple is a good thing, but it is much greater, better and more pleasant to the Lord to dedicate one's spirit to God and reconsecrate it through love. Just spirits in just bodies, because the body is like the walls surrounding the altar, and the spirit is the altar upon which the glory of the Lord descends. God cannot descend upon altars desecrated by one's sins, or by contact with flesh bitten by lust and by wicked thoughts.

Be good. The fatigue of being so through the continuous tests in life is rewarded a hundredfold by the future prize, and at present, by the peace comforting the hearts of just people at the end of each day, when they lie down to rest and find their pillows free from remorse, which is instead the nightmare of those who want to enjoy themselves illicitly and they only succeed in being seized with a restless frenzy. Do not envy the rich, do not hate anybody, do not wish to have what you see other people have. Be satisfied with your condition considering that to do the Will of God in everything is

the key that opens the gates of the eternal Jerusalem.

I am leaving you. Many among you will not see Me again, because I am about to go to prepare the places for My disciples… My special blessing to your children, to your women whom I shall not see again. And to you, men… Yes, I want to bless you… My blessing will help those who are stronger not to fall, and the weaker to rise up again. Only for those who will betray Me because they hate Me, My blessing will be of no value. »

He blesses them all together, He then blesses the women, He kisses the children and then He goes back to the ford with the five apostles who are still with Him and with the shepherd disciples.

525. Going Back to Nob. Jesus' Omniscience.

8th November 1946.

They are already on the slopes of the Mount of Olives and the three pairs of apostles left at Jericho, Tekoah and Bethany are once again with the Master. But Judas of Kerioth is still absent and the apostles are speaking in low voices about him…

Jesus is infinitely sad… The apostles have noticed that and they are saying to one another: « It is certainly because of Lazarus. He is a broken man… And his sisters arouse so much pity… The Master cannot even stop in their house, persecuted as He is by so much hatred. It would have been a great consolation to the sick man, his sisters and also for the Master. »

« I cannot understand why He does not cure him! » exclaims Thomas.

« It would be also fair. A friend… He helps so much… A just man… » murmurs Bartholomew.

« Ah! with regard to justice, he is just indeed. I think you have persuaded yourself of that these last days… » says the Zealot to Bartholomew.

« Yes, that's true. And also what you imply is true. I was not quite convinced of his justice… Because of their familiarity with Gentiles, because of the education they received from their father who was very, very… I would say inclined to yield to new forms of life different from ours… »

« Their mother was an angel » says Simon Zealot decidedly.

« Perhaps that is the reason why they are just… Let us overlook Mary's past. She is now redeemed… » says Philip.

« Yes, but all that made me suspicious. Now I am really convinced, and I am surprised that the Master… »

« My Brother knows how to appraise the merits of men. We suffered as well for a long time from a natural human jealousy, because we saw that strangers were more gratified than the members of our family. But now we have understood that the error was in our way of thinking and that He was right. We considered

His behaviour as being indifferent, and as a depreciation and incomprehension of our value. Now we have understood. He prefers to draw to Himself those who are deformed and unformed. He… with His infinite means, entices the souls that are most wretched and remote and thus more exposed to danger. Do you remember the parable of the lost sheep? The truth, the key to His way of behaving is in that parable. When He sees his faithful sheep follow Him or stay where or how He wishes, His spirit is at peace. And He makes use of that peace to pursue the lost sheep. He knows that we love Him, that Lazarus and his sisters love Him, that the women disciples and the shepherds love Him, and so He does not lose His time with us with any special trial of love. He always loves us. He has us in His heart all the time. We ourselves enter it and we do not want to come out of it. But the others… sinners, those who are misled!… He must run after them, He has to draw them to Himself with love, miracles and His power. And He does that. Lazarus, Mary and Martha will continue to love Him even without a miracle… » says James of Alphaeus.

« That is true. But… What did He mean with His last greeting? You heard Him say: "The love of the Lord for you will be revealed in proportion to your love. And remember that love has two wings to be perfect, and the more unbounded they are, the more perfect love is: faith and hope" » says Andrew.

« Of course! What did He mean? » several of them ask.

There is silence. Then Thomas with a deep sigh concludes an interior speech of his own: «… But His good patience does not always win redemptions. I also have suffered at time because of the predilections He shows for Judas of Kerioth… »

« Predilection? I don't think so. He reproaches him as He does with any of us… » says Andrew.

« According to justice, yes. But consider how much more severity that man would deserve… »

« That is true. »

« Well, I suffered many times because of that. But now I realise that He certainly does so because… he is the most imperfect amongst us. »

« The most wretched, you must say, Thomas! The most wretched. You think that His sadness (and he points at Jesus Who is walking ahead of them, all alone, absorbed in His grief) is brought about by Lazarus' disease and by the tears of his sisters. I say that it is brought about by Judas' absence. He was hoping to be met by him on the way when He was going to Bethabara. He was hoping to find him at least at Jericho, Tekoah or when He came back to Bethany. Now He no longer hopes. He is now sure of Judas' evildoing. I have watched Him all the time… and I noticed that His face looked utterly desolate when you, Bartholomew, said: "Judas

has not come" » says Thaddeus.

« But He is aware of events before they take place, I am certain of that! » exclaims John.

« Of many, not of all of them. I think that His Father conceals some of them from Him, out of pity » says the Zealot.

The eleven are divided into two parties, some agree to one version, some to the other, and each states his reasons supporting his own.

John exclaims: « Oh! I do not want to listen to either, not even to myself! We are all poor men, and we cannot see things right. I am going to Jesus and I will ask Him. »

« No. He might be thinking of something else and this question may remind Him of Judas and make Him more grieved » says Andrew.

« No. I will certainly not tell Him that we were speaking of Judas. I will ask Him so… without any reference. »

« Go then. It may help Him to take His mind off sad thoughts. Don't you see how sad He is? » says Peter pushing John.

« I am going. Who is coming with me? »

« Go by yourself. He speaks to you without reserve. And then you will tell us… »

John goes away. « Master! »

« John! What do you want? » and Jesus with a smile that brightens His face embraces His dearest apostle with one arm, holding him close to Himself while walking.

« We were talking among ourselves and we were uncertain about one thing. This: whether You know all the future or is part of it hidden from You. Some of us said one thing, some another. »

« And what did you say? »

« I said that the best thing was to ask You. »

« And so You came. You did the right thing. This gives you and Me the opportunity to enjoy a moment of love… Only so rarely now we can have some peace!… »

« It's true! How beautiful the early days were!… »

« Yes. For the man, which we are, they were more beautiful. But for the spirit which is in us, these days are better. Because the word of God is better known and because we suffer more. The more one suffers, the more one redeems, John… So, although we remember the happy days, we must be more fond of these ones that grieve us, and through grief they give us souls. But I will answer your question. Listen. I know as God. And I know as man. I know future events because I am with the Father since before time and I see beyond time. As a man free from imperfections and limitations connected with the Sin and with sins, I have the gift of introspection of hearts. Such gift is not limited only to the Christ. But in different degrees it is in all those who, having achieved

holiness, are so united to God that one can say that they do not act by themselves, but through the Perfection existing in them. So I can reply to you that as God I am aware of the future of centuries, and as a just man I know the state of hearts. »

John is pensive and silent. Jesus leaves him alone for a moment, then says: « For instance now I see this thought in you: "Then my Master knows the state of Judas of Kerioth exactly!" »

« Oh! Master! »

« Yes. I know. I know and I will continue to be his Master, and I would like you to continue to be his brothers. »

« Holy Master!… But do You really always know everything? See, at times we say that it is not so, because You go to places where You find enemies. Before going, do You know that You will find them, and You go there to fight them with Your love, to gain them to love, or… do you not know and do You see Your enemies only when they are in front of You and You read their hearts? Once You said to me - You were very depressed even then, and always for the same reason - You said that You were like one who cannot see… »

« I experienced also that torture of man: to have to proceed without seeing, relying entirely on Providence. I must be acquainted with everything pertaining to man, with the exception of consumed sin. Not because of a protective barrier placed by My Father against the flesh, the world and the demon, but because of My will of man. I am like you. But I have a stronger will-power than you. So I am subject to temptation but I do not yield to them. And My merit lies in that, as it does for you. »

« You tempted!… It seems almost impossible to me… »

« Because temptations do not affect you very much. You are pure, and you think that I, being purer than you, should not experience temptation. In fact the carnal one is so weak as compared with My chastity, that it is never perceived by My ego. It is as if a petal struck a solid piece of granite. It skims it… The very demon is tired of shooting that arrow at Me. But, John, do you not consider how many other temptations there are around Me? »

« Around You? You do not crave for riches or honours… So which are they?… »

« And do you not take into consideration that I have a life, affections, and duties towards My Mother, and that such things tempt Me to avoid the danger? The Snake calls it "danger". But its true name is "Sacrifice". And do you not think that I have feelings, too? My moral ego is present in Me and suffers offences, derision, double-dealing. Oh! My John! Do you realise how loathsome falsehood and liars are to Me? Do you know how many times the demon tempts Me to react against these things that grieve Me, by relinquishing My meekness and becoming hard-hearted and

intolerant? And lastly, do you not consider how many times he blows his breath burning with pride, and says: "Be proud of this or that. You are great. The world admires You. The elements are at your service!". The temptation to delight in being holy! The most subtle one! How many lose the holiness already acquired, because of such pride! How did Satan corrupt Adam? By tempting his sensuality, his thought, his spirit. Am I not the Man Who must recreate man? The new mankind is to come from Me. And there is Satan trying the same means to destroy, and for good, the race of the children of God. Now go to your companions and repeat My words to them. And do not wonder whether I know or do not know what Judas is doing. Consider that I love you. Is that thought not sufficient to fill a heart? » He kisses him and dismisses him.

And when He is once again all alone, He raises His eyes to the sky that can be seen through the branches of the olive-trees and He says in a plaintive voice: « Father! Grant Me at least this, that I may be able to conceal the Crime until the last hour, to prevent My beloved disciples from staining their hands with blood. Have mercy on them, Father! They are too weak to refrain from reacting against offence! Let there be no hatred in their hearts in the hour of perfect Love! » and He wipes the tears that God only sees…

526. At Nob. Judas of Kerioth's Return.

9th November 1946.

« Yes, Master! Judas of Kerioth has been here for many days. He came one Sabbath evening. He looked tired and exhausted. He said that he had lost You in the streets in Jerusalem and that he had run to the various houses where You usually go, looking for You. He comes here every evening. He will be here shortly. He goes away in the morning, and he says that he goes to the nearby villages to preach You. »

« All right, Eliza… And did you believe him? »

« Master, You know that I am not fond of that man. If my children had to be like him, I would have asked the Most High to take them from this world. No, I did not believe his words. But for Your sake I kept my opinion to myself… And I have been motherly to him. At least I succeeded in getting him to come back here every evening. »

« You did well. » Jesus looks at her intensely and then suddenly asks: « Where is Anastasica? »

Eliza blushes and her elderly face becomes purple red, but she replies frankly: « At Bethzur. »

« You did the right thing there again. And please pity the man. »

« It is because I feel sorry for him that I wanted to put out the fire before it spread causing scandal, or, at the least, frightening the

woman. »

« May God bless you, o just woman… »

« Are You suffering acutely, Master? »

« Yes, I am. It is true. I can tell a mother. »

« You can tell a mother… If You were not Jesus, the Lord, I would like You to rest Your tired head on my shoulder and I would press Your distressed heart on mine. But You are so holy that no woman, but Your Mother, can touch You… »

« Eliza, good friend of My Mother and a good mother, your Lord will soon be touched by much less holy hands than yours, and kissed… oh!… And afterwards, other hands… Eliza, if you were allowed to touch the Holy of Holies, with what spirit would you do so? Would you perhaps abstain, if the voice of God, in a cloud of incense, should ask you for love, to have a loving caress at long last, after being approached by so many people who do not love Him? »

« My Lord! If God should ask me, I would go on my knees to cover the holy place with kisses and would to God He would be satisfied and comforted by my love! »

« Then, Eliza, the good friend of My Mother, the good faithful disciple of your sorrowful Saviour, let Me rest My head on your heart because My heart is tormented to the extent of suffering mortal pains. »

And Jesus, sitting where He is, close to Eliza, who is standing, really rests His forehead on the breast of the old disciple, and silent tears stream down the dark dress of the woman, who cannot refrain from laying a hand on the head reclined on her heart, and then, feeling the tears fall on her bare sandal-shod feet, she bends to kiss Jesus' head, lightly and weeps silently, raising her eyes towards the sky in silent prayer. She looks like an elderly Mother of Sorrows. She does not speak or move. But she is so motherly in her attitude that she could not possibly be more so.

Jesus raises His head and looks at her. He smiles lightly and says: « May God bless you for your pity. Oh! a mother is really necessary when grief overwhelms the strength of man! »

He stands up. He looks once again at His disciple and says: « Every moment of this hour is to be kept to ourselves. I came ahead by Myself just for that. »

« Yes, Master. But You cannot remain all alone. Let Your Mother come. »

« She will be with Me in two months' time… » and He is about to say something else, when the strong voice, always somewhat insolent and ironical, of Judas of Kerioth, resounds downstairs in the kitchen: « Still busy carving, old man? It's cold! And there is no fire in here. I am hungry. And there is no food ready. Is Eliza sleeping perhaps? She wanted to do everything by herself. But old people are slow and their memory is weak. I say! Are you not speaking?

Are you completely deaf this evening? »

« No, but I am letting you speak, because you are an apostle and it ill-becomes me to reproach you » replies the old man.

« Reproach me? Why? »

« Examine yourself and you will find why. »

« My conscience has no voice… »

« Which means that it is deformed or that you have maimed it. »

« Ha! Ha! Ha! » and Judas must have gone out of the kitchen because first a door bangs and then footsteps are heard on the staircase.

« I am going downstairs to prepare, Master. »

« Go, Eliza. »

Eliza leaves the room upstairs and she immediately meets Judas who is about to set foot on the terrace.

« I am cold and hungry. »

« Nothing else? Well, man, you still have very little. »

« What else should I have? »

« Eh! so many things!… » Eliza's voice fades away.

« They are all old fools. Ugh! »

He pushes the door and finds himself facing Jesus. He is so surprised that he takes a step backwards. He collects himself and says: « Master!! Peace to You! »

« Peace to you, Judas. » Jesus receives the kiss of the apostle, but He does not return it.

« Master. You have… Are You not kissing me? »

Jesus looks at him and remains silent.

« It's true. I made a mistake. And to refuse to kiss me is the least You can do. But do not judge me too severely. On that day I was caught in the middle of some people who… do not love You and I argued with them until I talked myself hoarse. Later… I said: "I wonder where He has gone?!" and I came back here waiting for You. Isn't this house Yours by now? »

« While they allow Me. »

« You will not bear me a grudge for that! »

« No. I only want you to consider the example you have set for the others. »

« Eh! I can already hear their words. But I have reasons that will justify me with them. I am not even doing it with You because I know that You have already forgiven me. »

« I have already forgiven you. That is true. »

One would expect Judas to make a gesture of humility, of love for so much kindness. He instead makes one which is the very opposite: a gesture of anger, while he exclaims: « But is there no way to see You lose Your temper?! What kind of man are You? »

Jesus is silent. And Judas, standing, looks at Jesus, Who is sitting with His head lowered, and he shakes his head with an evil

smile on his lips. And the incident is over, as far as he is concerned. He begins to speak about this and that matter, as if he were the best-behaved apostle.

Night is falling. The noise of the road dies out. « Let us go downstairs » says Jesus.

They go into the kitchen where a bright fire is burning and a three-flame lamp is lit. Jesus, tired, sits near the fireside and seems to be dozing in the warmth…

There is a knock at the door. The old man opens it. It is the apostles. Peter, the first to enter, sees Judas and assails him vigorously asking: « Can you tell us where you have been? »

« Here. Just here. It would have been foolish to run here and there after people who had disappeared. I came here as I was sure that you would be coming back here. »

« A fine way to behave! »

« The Master has not reproached me for it. In any case you had better know that I have not wasted my time. I evangelized every day and I also worked miracles, and that is a good thing. »

« And who authorised you to do that? » asks Bartholomew severely.

« Nobody. Neither you nor anybody else. It is enough to be of the… In brief: people are surprised, and grumble and laugh at us, the apostles who do nothing. And since I know, I acted on behalf of everybody. And I did more than that. I went to see Helkai and I proved to him that one does not misbehave when one is holy. There were many there and I convinced them. You will see that they will no longer disturb us. And now I am happy. »

The apostles look at one another. They look at Jesus. His face is impenetrable. It seems to be veiled with so much fatigue, which is the only visible thing.

« But you might have done that with the Master's permission » remarks James of Alphaeus. « We have been worried about you all the time. »

« Oh! well! Now you need not be anxious any longer. He would never have given me permission. He… protects us too much. So much so that people murmur that He is jealous of us, that He is afraid we might do more than He does, and also that we are punished by Him. People have caustic tongues. The truth, instead, is that He loves us more than the apple of His eye. Isn't that right, Master? He is afraid we may be exposed to danger or we may cut… a bad figure. And we, too, in our minds, thought that we were punished and that He was jealous… »

« Definitely not! I never thought that! » says Thomas interrupting him. And the others echo him, with the exception of Thaddeus, who fixes his sincere beautiful eyes on the beautiful but elusive eyes of Judas and says: « And how were you able to work miracles?

In whose name? »

« What? In whose name? But do you not remember that He gave us that power? Has He deprived us of it? Not that I know. So… »

« So I would never take the liberty of doing anything without His consent and order. »

« Well, I wanted to do it. I was afraid I might no longer be able. But I was and I am happy! » and he breaks off the discussion going out into the dark kitchen garden.

Once again the apostles look at one another in dismay. They are shocked by so much audacity. But no one has the heart to say anything that may grieve their Master even more, as He seems to be suffering so much.

They get rid of their bags which John, Andrew and Thomas take upstairs. And Bartholomew, bending to pick up a dry branch fallen out of a faggot, whispers to Peter: « God forbid he was helped by a demon! »

Peter makes a gesture with his hands as if wished to say: « Goodness gracious! » but he does not say one word. He goes to Jesus and laying a hand on His shoulders, he asks Him: « Are You so tired? »

« Yes, Simon, I am. »

« It's ready, Master. Come to the table. Or… No. Remain there, near the fireside. I will bring You some milk and bread » says Eliza. In fact she puts a big bowl of steaming milk and some bread spread with honey on a tray and takes it to Jesus, and she waits while He, standing, offers the food. Then she crouches on the floor, like a good old mother, anxiously wishing to console Him, and she smiles at Him urging Him to eat. And when Jesus lovingly reproaches her for spreading the bread with honey, she replies: « I would give You my blood to invigorate You, my Master! This is the poor honey of my kitchen garden at Bethzur and it can but strengthen Your body. But my heart… »

The others are eating round the table, with the good appetite of people who have walked- a long way. And Judas, peaceful, almost arrogant, eats with them and is the only one to speak…

He is still speaking when Jesus orders: « Let each of you go to the house giving you hospitality. Go. Peace be with you. »

Judas, Bartholomew, Peter and Andrew remain with Him. And Jesus orders them to go and rest at once. He is deadly tired, so tired that He can no longer endure to speak or hear people speak, and I think He is unable to bear the effort of controlling Himself with regard to Judas of Kerioth.

527. At Nob during the Following Days. Hidden Possessions.

12th November 1946.

These winter days are cold but clear. On the top of the little mountain on which Nob is built, the wind blows almost all the time, but it is mitigated by the sun that from dawn until sunset caresses with its rays the kitchen garden verdant with winter vegetables. They are small kitchen gardens close to the houses, with small beds green with vegetables and other beds with the colour of well nourished earth, bare beds ready to be sown with legumes. When looking round, one can see the grey-green foliage of olive-trees, or the serpentine skeleton-like rows of bare vines, or small ploughed fields, already sown with cereals, ready to germinate in the first warmth of the early Palestinian springtime, blessed with warm sunshine. I would almost say that in the clear days, like the one I am admiring, there is already the warmth of spring, a germinating warmth, in fact the buds of the almond-trees close to the houses are swelling on the branches, which only a few days previously were dry. Dark gems hardly noticeable on the little dark branches, but proving that life is rising and the robust trunk is about to awake again.

In John's little orchard, at the rear of the house, there is a thin strip of cultivated land, whereas the strip along the house is shaded by a walnut-tree. In the thin strip there is a huge almond-tree, perhaps older than its master, so close to the house that for a good length of its trunk it has been compelled to branch only on three sides, because the wall of the house prevented it from putting forth branches on the fourth side. But further up its branches are ruffled in such an entanglement, that when they blossom they are bound to form a light cloud above the poor terrace, a precious tent more beautiful than a royal canopy.

In order not to be idle, Jesus and the apostles are working in the cheerful warm sunshine. With their garments tucked up, those who are familiar with joinery and locks are repairing or making new utensils or, casings. Some are hoeing the land, covering up vegetables that have been transplanted, reinforcing a hedge of dry canes and green hawthorn enclosing two sides of the little kitchen garden, or they are pruning the almond and the walnut-tree, and tying the vine branches that the winter wind has unfastened. I have noticed that where Jesus is, one is never idle. He is the first to teach the beauty of manual work, when other evangelical work is interrupted. Also today Jesus, with His cousins, is repairing a door, the lower part of which had rotted and its latch was falling off. Philip and Bartholomew instead are working with pruning shears and sickle on old fruit-trees, while the fishermen are busying themselves with ropes and old blankets, some mending them

with very… masculine stitches, some fixing rings and pulleys, probably with the intent of creating over the terrace a velarium which will be useful in summer.

« You will be very comfortable here, Eliza » says Peter with a promising intention, hanging out of the low terrace wall, to speak to the old disciple who is spinning wool, sitting against the sunny wall.

« Yes. When the vine is stretched out and the almond-tree sorted, it will really be a lovely spot in summer » says Philip between his teeth, as he is holding in his mouth some reeds with which he ties the vine-shoots to their supports.

Jesus raises His head and looks, while Eliza raises hers to look at Jesus and she says: « I wonder whether we shall be here in summer… »

« Why should we not be, woman? » asks Andrew.

« Well… I don't know… I no longer rely on the future since… Since I saw that all my forecasts ended up in a sepulchre. »

« Eh! the Master would have to die to prevent us from being here! The Master has now chosen this place as His residence. Have You not, Master? » asks Thomas.

« That is true. But also what Eliza says is true… » replies Jesus working with a plane on the stile of a door He is repairing.

« But You are young. And above all healthy! »

« People do not die only of diseases » says Jesus again.

« Who is speaking of death? You, Master? For Yourself?… The illwill has really calmed down for some time. See, no one is disturbing us now. They know that we are here. They met us also yesterday when we were coming back from town with the shopping, and they did not bother us » says Bartholomew.

« Yes. It was the same with us, when we went to the nearby villages to inform people that You are here. No one ever troubled us. And yet we met Helkai and Simon, then Sadoc and Samuel, and also Nahum with Doras. They even greeted us. Didn't they, James? » says John addressing his brother.

« Yes! We must admit that Judas has done good work whilst in our hearts we were criticising him. Since we came back here we have had no trouble! His words have been confirmed by facts. We seem to have gone back to the good old days at the Clear Water. To the beginning of those days… Oh! I wish it were true! » says James of Zebedee.

« If it were really true! » says Peter with a sigh.

« It is not always a clear day when there is no rumble of thunder » says Eliza sententiously whirling her spindle.

« What do you mean? » asks Peter.

« I mean that much peace at times, in a stormy place, foreshadows a most dangerous tempest. You ought to know, as you are

a fisherman. »

« Eh! woman, I know. A lake is like a huge tun full of blue oil, at times. But almost every time sails are loose and the water is smooth, a storm of the worst kind is ready. The wind of a dead calm sea is the wind of death for seamen. »

« H'm! Of course. So, if I were you, I would not trust so much peace. It's too peaceful! »

« Well! If when it is wartime one suffers because there is a war, and when it is peace-time one suffers because an even more dreadful war may break out, when can one rejoice? » asks Thomas.

« In the next life. Sorrow is always ready here. »

« Ugh! How dismal you are, woman! My time to rejoice is very remote, then! I am one of the youngest! Cheer up, Bartholomew, you are the nearest to enjoy it. You and the Zealot » says James of Zebedee jokingly.

« Dismal and shrewd, woman! Eh! elderly women! But sometimes they guess right. Also my mother when she says: "Be careful! You are about to do something silly because of this and that" always guesses right » says Thomas who is bent hoeing the ground.

« Women are malignant or more artful than foxes. We are worth nothing, as compared to them, when it is a question of understanding certain things that we would like them not to understand » says Peter sententiously.

« You ought to be quiet. You happened to marry a wife who would believe you even if you said that Lebanon had turned into butter. What you say is the law for her. She listens, believes and is silent » says Andrew to his brother.

« Yes… but her mother makes up for her and for another hundred women. What a serpent! »

They all laugh, including Eliza and the old man who is helping the younger ones to hoe.

The Zealot, Matthew and Judas of Kerioth come back.

« We have done everything, Master. We are tired! What a long tour! But I will take a rest tomorrow. It's your turn tomorrow » says the Iscariot to those who are hoeing the land. And he goes towards them taking a hoe to work with it.

« If you are tired why do you want to work? » Thomas asks him.

« Because I have to plant out some little plants. This place is as bald as the head of an old man, and it's a pity » he says sententiously thrusting the hoe into the ground with strong strokes of his foot.

« It wasn't like this in the good old days! Then… Too many things have died, and it wasn't worth my while to work to remake them. I am old and more than old I was desolate » replies the old man.

« But what size of holes are you digging? They are fit for trees, not for little plants, as you said » remarks Philip who has descended after tying the vine-shoot.

« When a tree is young it is always a little plant. That is what mine are like. This is the right time. I was assured by the man who gave me them. Do You know who, Master? That relative of Helkai who is a farmer. And he is a good farmer. What an orchard! And his olive-trees! He is replanting part of the olive-grove. I said to him: "Give me some of those plants". "For whom?" he asked. "For an old man in Nob who has given us hospitality. They will serve to make him forgive me all the scandals I bore him". »

« No, son. Not with plants, but only through your good behaviour that can happen. And with God. I… I watch, pray and forgive. But my forgiveness… But I am grateful to you for the plants… Although… Do you think that I will live long enough to eat their fruit? »

« Why not? One must always hope. Nay one must want to triumph… And one then triumphs. »

« There is no triumph over old age! And I do not wish for it either. »

« There is no triumph either over many other things. If wishing were enough to have things! I would have my sons » says Eliza sighing.

« Master, Eliza's words remind me of a question some people asked me today along the road. As something had happened in a village, they were asking whether it is true that a miracle is always a proof of holiness. I said it is. But they said that it is not, because in that village, at the border of Samaria, he who had worked wonderful things was certainly not a just man. I silenced them saying that man always judges wrongly and that the man who they said was not just, was perhaps holier than they were. What do You think? » asks Matthew.

« I say that you were both right. Each for his own part. You by saying that a miracle is always the proof of holiness. It is generally so. And also by saying that one must not judge in order not to make mistakes. But they were also right in suspecting other sources for the wonderful things of that man. »

« Which sources? » asks the Iscariot.

« Those of darkness. There are people who are already worshippers of Satan and practise the cult of pride, and in order to impose themselves on other people, they sell themselves to the Dark One to have him as a friend » Jesus replies to him.

« How is it possible? Is it not a legend of heathen countries that man can stipulate contracts with the demon or with infernal spirits? » asks John who is utterly amazed.

« It is possible. Not as the heathen legends say. Not by means of money or material contracts. But by adhering to Evil, by choosing to give oneself up to Evil, so that one might enjoy one hour of triumph, no matter how. I solemnly tell you that those who sell

themselves to the Cursed One in order to gain their end, are more numerous than one may think. »

« Are they successful? Do they achieve what they ask for? » asks Andrew.

« Not always and not everything. But they get something. »

« How can that be? Is the demon so powerful as to simulate God? »

« He is… but he would be a nonentity if man were holy. The fact is that man is often a demon himself. We fight against obvious, noisy, striking possessions. Everybody is aware of them… They are far from being pleasant for relatives and citizens, and above all they take place in material forms. Man is always impressed by what is heavy and strikes his senses. He does not notice what is immaterial and is perceptible only by what is immaterial: his reason and spirit, and even if he does notice it, he takes no care of it, particularly if it is not detrimental to him. So such hidden possessions elude our power of exorcisers! And they are the most harmful because they work in the choicest part, with the choicest part and toward other choice parts: from reason to reason, from spirit to spirit. They are like corrupting, impalpable, unnoticeable miasmata, until the person suffering from it is not warned by the fever of the disease that he is affected with it. »

« And does Satan help him? Really? Why? And why does God allow him? And will He always allow him? Even after You will be reigning? » they all ask.

« Satan helps to complete the enslavement. God allows him to act thus, because the value of the creature emerges from the struggle between High and Low, Good and Evil. Both his value and his will emerge. He will always allow him to act. Also after I have been raised. But Satan then will have to fight against a very great enemy and man will have a very powerful friend. »

« Who? »

« Grace. »

« Oh! well! So for those of our times, who are without grace, it will be easier to be enslaved, but their fall will be less grave » says the Iscariot hoeing all the time.

« No, Judas. The judgement will be the same. »

« That is unfair because, if we are less helped, we should be less condemned. »

« You are not completely wrong » says Thomas.

« He is wrong, Thomas. Because we people of Israel have been gifted with so much faith, hope, charity, and so much light of Wisdom, that we have no excuse for being ignorant. And you, in any case, who already have had Grace as your Master for almost three years, will be judged like those of the new time » says Jesus stressing His words and looking at Judas who has raised his head and is pensive looking into space.

Then Judas of Kerioth shakes his head, as if he were concluding an internal reasoning, and thrusting the hoe into the soil he asks: « And what does he become, who gives himself thus to the demon? »

« A demon. »

« A demon! So if I, for instance, in order to assert that Your contact gives one a supernatural power, should do something… that You censure, would I be a demon?… »

« Yes, you would. »

« However, I do hope that you will not do such things… » says Andrew who is almost frightened.

« Me? Ah! Ah! I am planting the little trees for our old man » and he runs to the other side of the kitchen garden, and comes back with five young plants which are certainly heavy because of the clod of earth wrapping the roots.

« Have you come from Beth-Horon with that load on your shoulders? » asks Peter.

« You should say from Gibeon! That is where some of Daniel's orchards are. Wonderful soil. Look!… » and he crumbles with his fingers the earth around the roots. He then unfastens the lace holding the five little stems which are already the size of an arm. Only two have a few leaves on their tops. And they are olive leaves. « Here we are. This one is for Jesus and this one for Mary. They are the peace of the world. I am transplanting them first, because I am a man of peace. One here… and one there » and he places them at the ends of the strip of land. « And an apple-tree here, as young and good as that one in Eden, to remind you, John, that you also descend from Adam and that you must not be surprised… if I may be a sinner. Beware of the Serpent… And here… No, this is not the right place. This young fig-tree, over there, in the front, near the wall. How can one do without a fig-tree in the garden, when they grow here like weeds? And we will put this young almond-tree in the hole in the centre. It will learn from that age-old one the virtue of yielding fruit. There we are! Your little kitchen garden will be beautiful in future… and looking at it you will remember me. »

« I would remember you just the same, because you have been here with the Master. Everything will speak to me of this time. And looking at things I shall say: "He wanted to set my house in order again, just like a son!". But… But if I could wish for something different from what is probably already written in Heaven, I would like not to have to remember this period of time so beautiful for me, more beautiful than when these trees, now old, were young, and my wife and I were young, and my little daughter used to play here… and it was a pleasure to take care of the apple, the pomegranate and the fig trees, and of the vines, because the little hands of my daughter were eager to have the

fruit, and it was lovely to see my wife, sitting in the shade of the green trees, weave and spin… Later… my daughter went away… so forgetful!… My wife was ill and died… Why and for whom should I take care of what once was beautiful? And everything is dead, except the two old trees that remember my childhood… I would like to die before having to remember, and while there is a woman here as just as Leah. I thank You for the trees, for the work, for everything. I thank everybody. But I beg my Lord to uproot my old tree from this land before this hour of peace for old John sets… »

Jesus approaches him and laying a hand on his shoulder, He says kindly and severely at the same time: « You have been able to do so many things in your long lifetime. You still lack one: to accept the hour of your death from God without asking to have it brought forward or delayed by one minute. You are resigned to so many things. And thus God loves you. Resign yourself to the most difficult one: to live when you would only wish to die. And now let us go inside. The sun is setting behind the mountains and it turns cold at once. The Sabbath is beginning. We will finish our work after it… » and He picks up saw, plane and hammer and goes back into the house, while the others finish making up into bundles the branches they have cut, watering the plants they have transplanted and putting back on its hinges the door they have repaired.

528. Judas of Kerioth Is Lustful.

14th November 1946.

All Nob is asleep. It is daybreak. Dawn, in the smooth winter light is delicately coloured with unreal hues. It is not the silvery green light of summer dawns, the light which appears so rapidly and changes into pale gold and into pink that becomes brighter and brighter. But a jade green dissolving into a very faint greyblue, shows it in the east in a small low semicircle above the horizon: a spot of a veiled almost tired brightness like a pale flame of sulphur burning behind a screen of whitish smoke. And it stretches with difficulty along the still grey sky, although it is clear with its stars still ogling at the world. It has difficulty in driving back the greyness to make room for its precious shade of pale jade and for the pure cobalt-blue of the Palestinian sky. It seems to be halting shyly, as if it were suffering from the cold, at the eastern border. And it delays there further, with its semicircle of sulphur brightness slightly expanded and just fading from pale green to white, veiled with a touch of yellow, when it is outshone by a sudden pink hue that frees the sky from the last night veil and makes it as clear and precious as a canopy of sapphire-coloured satin and a fire is lit in the remote horizon, as if a wall had collapsed and a

blazing furnace were revealed. But is it fire or a ruby lit up by a hidden fire? No. It is the rising sun. There it is. As soon as it rises from behind the curves of the horizon, it is ready to tinge a white woolly cloud with coral pink, and to change the dewdrops on the tops of perennials into diamonds. A tall oak, at the end of the village, has a veil of diamonds on its bronze leaves facing east. They look like stars glittering among the branches of the giant tree, whose top rises towards the blue sky.

Perhaps during the night, some stars have come too low over the village to whisper celestial secrets to the citizens of Nob, or perhaps to comfort with their pure light the sleepless Man Who is walking silently up there, on John's terrace. Because Jesus only, in the whole town of Nob asleep, is awake and is walking slowly up and down the terrace of the little house, with folded arms, tightly enveloped in His large mantle that covers also His head like a hood, to protect Himself from the cold. Every time He arrives at the end of the terrace, He leans out to look at the street that runs through the centre of the town. A street that is still semi-dark, empty and silent. He then resumes going up and down, slowly, silently, most of the time with His head lowered, pensive, sometimes looking at the sky that with the vague hues of dawn is beginning to grow clear. Or with His eyes He follows the whirring flight of the earliest sparrow, roused by daylight, as it leaves the hospitable tile of a nearby roof, descending to peck at the foot of John's old apple-tree, then it flies away again, seeing Jesus, chirping with fear and thus awaking other little birds in their nests here and there.

The bleating of a sheep is heard from a fold and it fades away trembling in the air. And the hurried shuffling of feet is heard coming from the street. Jesus leans out to look. He then runs down the staircase, He enters the dark kitchen closing the door.

The steps are approaching, they can be heard on the strip of the kitchen garden near the house, their noise stops before the kitchen door; a hand gropes for the lock, it feels that there is no key, it lifts the latch that can be moved both from outside and inside, and at the same time a voice says: « Is there someone up already? » A hand opens the door cautiously without letting it squeak. The head of Judas of Kerioth appears through the aperture… He looks… Pitch dark. Cold. Silence.

« They forgot to close the door… And yet… I thought it was closed… In any case, it does not matter!… Thieves do not rob poor people. And there is nobody poorer than we are… Eh!… But let us hope that… it will not be always like this. Where is that cursed tinder-box?… I cannot find it… If I manage to light the fire… because I am late, yes, too late… But where will it be? Too many people use it. On the mantelshelf? No… On the table? No… On the

benches? No. On the shelf? No… That worm-eaten door-squeaks when you open it… Worm-eaten wood… rusty hinges… Everything is old, mouldy, horrible here. Ah! poor Judas! And it isn't here… I shall have to go into the old man's room… »

While speaking, he has been groping all the time in the invisible darkness, as cautious as a thief or a night bird in avoiding obstacles which might make noise… He knocks against a body and utters a faint cry of fear.

« Be not afraid. It is I. And the tinder-box is in My hand. Here it is. Light it » says Jesus calmly.

« You, Master? What were You doing here, all alone, in the dark, in this cold… There will certainly be many sick people today, after a Sabbath and two wet days, but they will not be here so early. They will be hardly moving from the nearby villages now, because only now they can see that it will not rain today. The wind has already dried the roads during the night. »

« I know. But light a lamp. It is not for honest people to speak in darkness, but it is typical of thieves, liars, lewd people and killers. Parties to evil deeds love darkness. I am no party to anybody. »

« Neither am I, Master. I wanted to light a good fire. So I was the first to get up… What did You say, Master? You mumbled between Your lips and I did not understand. »

« So light it. »

« Ah!… I saw that it's a clear day. But it's cold. They will all be pleased to find a good fire… Did You get up because You heard me bustle about or because of the old man who… Is he still in pain?… Here it is! At long last! The tinder and steel seemed to be damp, and they would not give a spark… They have got soaked… »

A little flame rises from the wick of a lamp. One only small trembling little flame… but sufficient to see the two faces: the pale face of Jesus, the swarthy fearless face of Judas.

« I will now light the fire… You are as white as death. You have had no sleep! And because of that old man! You are too good. »

« That is true. I am too good. To everybody. Also to those who do not deserve it. But the old man deserves it. He is an honest man, with a loyal heart. However, I did not keep watch for him, but for somebody else. It is true that the steel and tinder box were damp, but not because of a cup overturned, or of other liquid spread by accident, but because My tears dripped on them. It is true. It is a clear day but it is cold and the wind has dried the roads and at dawn dew fell. Feel My mantle. It is wet with it… Then dawn came to show the clear sky, light came to show an empty place, the sun rose to make dewdrops shine on leaves and tears on eyelashes. It is true. There will be many sick people today, but I was not waiting for them. I was waiting for you. I was awake all night for you. And as I could not stay in here waiting for you, I went up to the terrace,

shouting My call to the wind, showing My grief to the stars, My tears to dawn. Not the old sick man, but the dissolute young one, the disciple who shuns the Master, the apostle of God who prefers a cloaca to Heaven and falsehood to the Truth, made Me stay up all night waiting for you. And when I heard your steps I came down here… waiting for you again. Not for your person, which was now close to Me wandering like a thief around the dark kitchen, but for your feelings… I was expecting a word… And you did not speak it when you felt that I was standing in front of you. Did he, to whom you are selling your spirit, not inform you that I was aware? Of course not! He could not warn you or suggest to you the only word that you could, that you should have said, if you were a just man. But he suggested the lies not requested, the useless lies, that are even more offensive than your night escapade. He suggested them grinning, rejoicing that he had made you descend a further step and that he had caused Me another sorrow. It is true. Many sick people will come. But the one who is most seriously ill will not come to his Doctor. And the Doctor Himself is sick with grief because of that patient who does not want to recover. It is true. Everything is true. Also that I whispered a word that you did not understand. After what I have told you, can you guess it? »

Jesus has spoken in a low voice, but so sharp and sorrowful and at the same time so severe, that Judas, who at the first words was smiling, standing straight, impudently, very close to Jesus, has slowly withdrawn and shrunk into himself, as if each word were a blow, whereas Jesus has stood more and more upright, truly a Judge and truly tragical in His sorrowful image.

Judas, by now confined between a kneading trough and a corner, whispers: « Well… I would not know… »

« No? Well, I will tell you because I am not afraid to say what is true. Liar! That is what I said. And if we can put up with an untruthful child because he does not yet know the import of a lie and we teach him not to tell any more, we cannot bear that in a man; in an apostle, because in a disciple of the very Truth it is disgusting. Absolutely disgusting. That is why I waited for you all night and I wept and My tears damped the table where the tinder box was, and then I wept while keeping watch and calling you with all My soul in the starlight night, that is why I am covered with dew like the bridegroom of the Song of Songs. But My head is covered in vain with dew and My locks with the drops of night, in vain I knock at the door of your soul saying: "Open the door to me for I love you although you are not spotless". Nay, it is just because it is stained that I want to go in and clean it. It is because it is ill that I want to go in and cure it. Be careful, Judas! Watch that the Bridegroom does not go away, and for ever, and that you may not be able to find Him any more… Judas, are you not speaking?… »

« It's late by now to speak! You have said it: I disgust You. Send me away… »

« No. Lepers also disgust Me. But I feel sorry for them. And if they call Me, I make haste to go to them and cleanse them. Do you not want to be cleansed? »

« It is late… and of no avail. I am not able to be holy. I tell You: send me away. »

« I am not one of your Pharisaic friends who state that numberless things are unclean and they shun them or drive them away harshly, whereas they could cleanse them with charity. I am the Saviour and I do not drive anybody away… »

A long silence. Judas is in his corner, Jesus is leaning with His back against the table and seems to be resting on it, so tired and suffering as He looks… Judas raises his head. He looks at Him hesitantly and whispers: « And if I left You, what would You do? »

« Nothing. I would respect your will. Praying for you. But in my turn I say to you that even if you leave Me, it is by now too late. »

« For what, Master? »

« For what? You know as well as I do… Light the fire, now. I can hear footsteps upstairs. Let us stifle the scandal here, between us. With regard to the others we have not slept long… and the wish for warmth brought us together here… Father of Mine!… »

And while Judas sets the flame near the faggots already placed in the fireplace and he blows so that some light shavings may catch fire, Jesus lifts His hands above His head and then presses them against His eyes…

529. Jesus Speaks to Valeria of Matrimony and Divorce. The Miracle of Little Levi.

15th November 1946.

Jesus is in the middle of sick people and pilgrims who have come to Him from many places in Palestine. There is even a seaman from Tyre who has become paralysed through an accident at sea and he is telling his story: the rolling of the ship caused the load to fall and he was caught under some heavy goods and his back was injured. He did not die, but he is as good as dead, because completely paralysed as he is, his relatives are compelled to leave their work and look after him. He says that he went with them to Capernaum and then to Nazareth and that he heard from Mary that He was in Judaea and precisely in Jerusalem. « She gave me the names of friends who might have given You hospitality. And a Galilean from Sephoris told me that You were here. And I came. I know that You do not despise anybody, not even Samaritans. And I hope that You will hear my prayer. I have so much faith. » His wife does not speak. But crouched near the little stretcher on

which the sick man is lying, she looks at Jesus with eyes imploring more than any word.

« Where were you hit? »

« Under my neck. That is where I had the worst blow and I heard a noise in my head, sounding like bronze when it is struck, and it changed into a continuous roar of a stormy sea, and lights, lights of all colours, began to dance in front of me… Then I did not feel anything for many days. We were sailing in the sea near Cintium and I found myself at home without knowing how I got there. And the roar of the sea in my head and the lights in my eyes started all over again and lasted for many days. Then it all stopped… but my arms and my legs are without life. A broken man at the age of forty. And I have seven children, Lord. »

« Woman, lift up your husband and uncover the spot where he was struck. »

The woman obeys without speaking. With skilful motherly movements, with the help of the man who came with her, I do not know whether her brother or brother-in-law, she inserts one hand under the shoulders of her husband and with the other hand she holds his head, and with the tenderness with which she would turn over a new-born baby, she lifts the heavy body from the litter. A scar, still red, marks the spot of the worst wound.

Jesus bends over him. They all stretch their necks to see. Jesus lays the tips of His fingers on the scar saying: « I want it! »

The man gets a shock as if he had been touched by electric power and he shouts: « What a fire! »

Jesus removes His finger from the injured vertebrae and says: « Stand up! »

The man does not wait to be told twice. He pushes his arms, inert for months, against the litter, he shakes off the arms of those holding him, he throws his legs out of the low stretcher and jumps to his feet in much less time than has taken me to write the various phases of the miracle.

His wife and relative utter cries, the cured man raises his arms to the sky, dumb with joy. A moment of dumbfounded joy, he then turns round, as steadily as the most agile man and finds himself face to face with Jesus. He finds his voice again and shouts: « May You and He Who sent You be blessed! I believe in the God of Israel and in You, His Messiah » and he throws himself on the ground to kiss Jesus' feet while the crowds are shouting.

After other miracles mostly on little children, women, old people, Jesus speaks.

« You have seen the miracle of fractured bones being rejoined and of dead limbs becoming alive again. The Lord has granted you to see that to confirm the faith of those who believe and to excite it in those who do not possess it. And miracles have been granted to

people from every place, as they came here seeking health, urged by their faith in My healing power. There are here Judaeans and Galileans, Lebaneses and Syro-Phoenicians, people from remote Batanaea and from the seacoast. And they have all come here heedless of the season and of the long journey and their relatives have come with them, without grumbling, without regretting the work interrupted or the business neglected. Because their sacrifices were nothing as compared with what they were seeking. And as the selfishness and perplexities of man have vanished, so their political or religious ideas have disappeared, whereas they previously formed a kind of wall built to prevent them from considering themselves all brothers, all alike in life and in sorrow, in wishing and hoping for health and comfort. And to those who have joined together in hope, which is already faith, I have granted health and comfort. Because it is fair that it should be so.

I am the universal Shepherd and I must gather together all the sheep that want to join My flock. I make no distinction between healthy and sick, weak and strong sheep, between sheep that know Me, because they already belong to the herd of God, and sheep that up to the present moment did not know Me and did not even know the true God. Because I am the Shepherd of Mankind, and I accept My sheep from wherever they are and come to Me. Are they poor, dirty, downhearted, ignorant sheep, beaten by shepherds who did not love them and rejected them saying that they were unclean? There is no uncleanliness that cannot be cleansed. And there is no uncleanliness that, wanting to be cleansed and asking for help to be so, can be rejected with the excuse that it is such. It is God Who rouses good wishes. If He rouses them, it means that He wants them to become real. It is the very Spirit of God that with ineffable prayers asks all men to be absorbed by the Love, because the Spirit of God wishes to spread about and become rich. To spread about by loving an infinite number of beings, hardly sufficient to give solace to His Infinity of Love, and to become rich with an unlimited number of beings attracted to Him by the sweetness of His perfumes.

No one is allowed to scorn and reject those who want to join the holy flock. I say this for those among you in whose hearts the ideas of many Israelites may be cultivated, ideas of distinction and of judgements not pleasing to God, because they are the opposite of His design to make of all the peoples one People only, bearing the Name of the Messiah sent by Him.

But I will now speak also to those who have come from abroad, to the sheep so far wild and who now wish to enter the only herd of the Only Shepherd. And I say: let nothing discourage them, let nothing humiliate them. There is no heathenism, no idolatry, no life different from what I teach, that cannot be repudiated and rejected,

allowing the spirit to put new vigour and faith into its life, free from all evil plants, in order to be fit to receive the new seeds and to clothe itself with new uniforms. And that should urge people to come to Me, more than their desire to have health for their bodies.

As - and let this apply to the Hebrews of Palestine, to the Hebrews and proselytes of the Diaspora, and to the Gentiles - as you come to Me to have the yoke of diseases removed from your sick bodies, so you should come to have the yoke of sin and heathenism removed from your spirits. You ought all to ask of Me as first thing, and want it with all-your strength, to be freed from what makes your spirits slaves to wicked forces that dominate them. You ought to want that liberation as first thing, and want the Kingdom in you as first miracle. Because, once you have this Kingdom in you, everything else will be given, and in such a way that the gift may not be heavy like a punishment in the future life. You did not mind the inclement weather, fatigue, loss of money, providing you obtained the health of your bodies which, even if they have been cured today, will perish through physical death in the near future. With the same hearts you ought to face everything in order to obtain health for your spirits, and eternal Life, and the possession of the Kingdom of God.

What are mockery or threats of relatives or fellow-citizens, or of mighty people, as compared with what you will all have, from whichever place you may come, if you are able to come to the Truth and Life? Who would prefer to stay for one day at a feast that ends at sunset, instead of going to a place where he knew that a happy life was awaiting him? And yet many do that. And to become satiated, for a short time, with the insipid vain joys of the world, they give up going where they would find true food, true health, true joy for ever, and without any fear of being deprived of it by hostile hatred. In the Kingdom of God, there is no hatred, no war, no abuse of power. Those who succeed in entering it, will no longer experience sorrow, anxiety, abuse, but will possess the joyful peace emanating from My Father.

I will now dismiss you. Go. Go back to your villages. My disciples are now numerous and are spread all over every region in Palestine. Listen to them, if you want to become acquainted with My Doctrine and be ready for the day of decision, on which the eternal life of many will depend. I give you My peace that it may come with you. »

And Jesus, after blessing the crowd, goes back to the house…

The apostles remain outside for some time, they then go in for their meal, because the sun, now high in the sky, tells them that it is midday. Sitting at the rustic table, after the blessing of the food, consisting of cheese and boiled chicory dressed with oil, they speak of the events of the morning, and they congratulate themselves

on the number of evangelizing disciples being now such as to relieve the Master from the fatigue of speaking continuously in His present tired condition. Jesus, in fact, has grown thin recently and His complexion, which is naturally deep ivory-white, with just a shade of pink under His swarthy skin, at the top of His cheeks, is now completely white, like a withered magnolia petal.

As I lived for a long time in Milan, I am familiar with the delicate hue of the Candoglia marble, with which the wonderful Duomo is built, and the face of the Lord during these last sorrowful months of His earthly life, looks just like the colour of that marble, which is neither white, nor pink, nor yellow, but reminds one, with its most delicate tones, of those three shades. His eyes are more deeply set and thus look darker, probably also because a shadow of weariness dims his eyelids and eye-sockets. They are the eyes of one who sleeps little and weeps and suffers much. His hands look longer because they have grown thin and pale, the kind hands of my Lord, and they already show tendons and veins standing out, and hollows brought about by their leanness, and thus their bone-structures appear; the holy, martyr hands, already prepared for the nails that will pierce them, and the executioners will have no difficulty in finding where to place the nails because there is not even a veil of fat on the ascetic hands of my Lord. One hand is now resting, looking tired, on the dark wood of the table, while He shakes His head smiling faintly at His apostles, who notice the infinite tiredness of His body and voice, and above all of His heart, which is too distressed, too fatigued with the effort of keeping so many different hearts united, and of having to put up with and conceal the dishonour of the incorrigible disciple…

Peter says sententiously: « You must definitely rest until the Feast of the Dedication. We will see to the people that come. You will go… Of course! To Thomas' house. You will be near us and You will be at peace. »

Thomas supports Peter's proposal. But Jesus shakes His head. No. He does not want to go.

« Well, in that case, You will not speak during the next days. We can do that. Our words will not be sublime, but we will confine ourselves to what we know. And You will only cure the sick people. »

« We can do that as well » says the Iscariot.

« H'm! As far as I am concerned, I am backing out » says Peter.

« And yet, you have already done that! »

« Certainly. When the Master was not with us and we had to represent Him and make people love Him. But He is here now and He will work the miracles. He is the only worthy one. We… miracles! But it is we who are in need to receive the miracle of our revival, because I can see very well that by ourselves we shall

never do any good!… We are poor wretches, ignorant and sinners. »

« Please speak for yourself. I do not consider myself a poor wretch at all! » remarks Judas of Kerioth.

« The Master is tired. His weariness is more moral than physical. If it is true that we love Him, let us avoid discussions. They wear Him out more than anything else » says the Zealot in a severe voice.

Jesus raises His head to look at the elder apostle, who is always so wise, and He stretches out a hand towards him, across the table, to caress him. The Zealot takes that white hand in his swarthy ones and kisses it.

« You are right. But I am right as well, when I say that He definitely must have a rest. He looks ill!… » says Peter insisting.

They all nod assent, including old John and Eliza, who says: « I have been saying that for such a long time. That is why I would like… »

There is a knock at the door. Andrew, who is closest to the door, goes to open and he goes out closing the door behind himself.

He comes back in: « Master, there is a woman. She insists in seeing You. She has a little girl with her. She must be a woman of rank, although she is modestly dressed. But I would say that neither she nor the girl is ill. But I do not know why she is all covered with a veil. The girl has a bunch of wonderful flowers in her arms. »

« Send her away. We have just said that He must rest and you are not even letting Him finish His meal! » grumbles Peter.

« I told her. She replied that she will not tire the Master, and that He will certainly be pleased to see her. »

« Tell her to come back tomorrow, at the same time as other people come. The Master is now going to have a rest. »

« Andrew, take her to the room upstairs. I will come at once » says Jesus.

« There you are! Just what I thought! That's how He takes care of Himself! Just what we were saying He should do! » Peter is upset.

Jesus gets up and before going out He passes near Peter, He lays a hand on his shoulders, He bends a little to kiss his head saying: « Be good, Simon! Who loves Me relieves Me of My weariness more than a rest in bed. »

« How do You know that she loves You? »

« Oh! Simon! Anxiety makes you speak words that you already regret because you realise that they are silly! Be good! Be good! A woman who comes with an innocent child, and she brings Me her innocent little girl whose arms are full of flowers, can but be one who loves Me and realises My need to find some love and purity after so much hatred and foulness. » And He goes away and climbs the staircase of the terrace, while Andrew, having finished his task, comes back into the kitchen.

The woman is at the door of the upper room. She is tall, slender, wearing a heavy grey mantle, with her face covered with an ivory hued byssus veil hanging from her hood closed round her face. The little girl, a baby because she must be at most three years old, is wearing a white woollen dress and a mantle with hood, which is also white. But her little hood has slipped a good deal back on to her little curls of a delicate light chestnut colour, because the little girl is looking up at her mother raising her head that emerges from the flowers she is holding in her arms. Wonderful flowers, as can be found only in these countries in the cold month of December: flesh-coloured roses mixed with delicate white flowers, which I do not know what they are; I am not skilled in floriculture.

As soon as Jesus sets foot on the terrace, He is greeted by the little voice of the girl, who runs to meet Him, urged by her mother saying: « Ave, Domine Jesu! »

Jesus bends over His tiny devotee and laying a hand on her head He says to her: « Peace be with you », He then straightens Himself and follows the child who with trilling laughter goes back to her mother, who has made a low bow, moving to one side of the door to let the Master pass.

Jesus greets her with a nod and goes into the room, sitting on the first seat He finds, awaiting in silence. He is very kingly looking. Sitting on a poor wooden seat with no back, He seems to be sitting on a throne, such is His austere dignity. With no mantle, wearing a very dark blue tunic, without ornaments or decorations, somewhat faded on the shoulders where rain, sunshine, dust and perspiration have changed its shade, a clean but poor tunic, yet it looks like a purple garment such is the majesty of His bearing. Very stiff, almost hieratic because of the stiffness of His head on His neck, of His hands resting on His knees with open palms, with His bare feet on the bare floor of old bricks, with the bare whitewashed wall in the background, with no drape or canopy hanging behind His head, but only a sieve for flour and a rope from which bunches of garlic and onions are hanging, He is more majestic than if there were a precious floor under His feet, a golden wall behind Him, and purple veil adorned with gems on His head.

He is waiting. And His majesty paralyses the woman with venerable amazement. Also the little girl is silent and motionless near her mother and is perhaps a little frightened. But Jesus smiling says: « I am here for you. Be not afraid. »

And all fear drops. The woman whispers something to the little girl, who moves, followed by her mother, and goes toward Jesus' knees and lays all her flowers in His lap saying: « Faustina's roses to her Saviour ». She says so slowly, like one who is not very familiar with a language that is not one's own. In the meantime

the woman has knelt down behind the little girl throwing her veil behind her back. She is Valeria, the little girl's mother and she greets Jesus with the Roman salutation: « Hail, o Master. »

« May God come to you, woman. How come you are here? And so lonely? » asks Jesus as He caresses the little girl who is no longer afraid and who, not satisfied with placing the flowers in Jesus' lap, searches the scented bundle with her little hands and picks those which according to her are the most beautiful, saying: « Take them! Take them! They are Yours, You know? » and she lifts now a rose, now one of the large white umbrellas with little scented stars, up to the face of Jesus, Who accepts it and then puts it back into the scented bundle.

Valeria begins to speak: « I was at Tiberias, because my daughter was not well and our doctor advised us to go there… » Valeria makes a long pause, she changes colour and then says hurriedly: « and I was so sad at heart and I was anxious to see You. Because only one doctor could find a cure for my pain: You, Master, Who have words of justice for everything… So I would have come just the same. Through the selfishness of being comforted and to find out what I must do to… Yes, to show my gratitude to You and to Your God, Who have granted me to have this child… But we are informed of many things, Master. The reports of the least events of the Colony are laid every day on the office table of Pontius Pilate, who looks into them but before taking the relevant decisions he consults a great deal with Claudia… Many reports deal with You and the Hebrews who stir up the country, making You the symbol of national insurrection and at the same time the cause of civil hatred. Claudia is right when she says to her husband that he must not fear one only man in the whole of Palestine as the possible cause of disgrace for him: You. And Pilate listens to her day after day… So far Claudia is the most powerful one. But if in future another power should control Pilate… So I heard and I felt that my innocent child would be of comfort to You… »

« You have a pitiful and enlightened heart, woman. May God enlighten you fully, and watch over this child of yours, now and for ever. »

« Thank You, Lord. I am in need of God… » Tears drop from Valeria's eyes.

« Yes, you need Him. You will find all comfort in God and you will also find a guide to be just in judging, in forgiving, in loving again, and above all in bringing up this child so that she may have the happy life of those who are children of the true God.

See. The God Whom you did not know, Whom you perhaps derided, both Him and His Law, so different from your gods and your laws and religions; Whom you had certainly offended by a

way of living in which virtue was not respected in many things, not yet grave, if you wish so, but leading to more serious offences against virtue and against the Divinity, Who created you as well; that God has loved you so much that through a sorrow which your humanity of a mother suffered, of a mother unaware of future life and consequently of the temporary separation from the flesh of her flesh, He brought you to Me. He loved you so much as to lead Me to Caesarea, when you were almost in the throes of death over your child's little body that was already becoming cold in its last agony. He has loved you so much that He gave her back to you, that you may always bear in mind the goodness and power of the true God, and have a restraint against all heathen licentiousness, as well as comfort in all the sorrows of your married life. He has loved you so much that through another sorrow He has strengthened your will to come to the Way, the Truth, the Life and to settle there with your daughter, so that she at least, from the very beginning of her childhood, may possess comfort and peace, health and light in the sad days of the Earth, and they may preserve her from what makes you suffer in your better part and in your emotional one. The former, instinctively good and intolerant of the sombre foul ambience in which it is compelled to live. The latter, disorderly in its goodness.

Because in your affections you are pagan, woman. It is not your fault. It is the fault of the times in which you live. And of the Gentilism in which you have been brought up. Only he who is in the true Religion can give the right value, measure and manifestation to affections. You, a mother unaware of eternal life, loved your daughter in a disorderly manner, and when you saw that she was about to die, you rebelled in despair against that loss, driven mad by her impending death. Like a relative who sees the person dearest to him snatched by a madman and sees him held over an abyss, from the bottom of which he would not be able to come out, if he were dropped into it, nay, it would not even be possible to carry him out as a cold corpse, for a last kiss of love, just like that you saw your Faustina hanging over the abyss of the void… A poor mother who no longer would have had her daughter! Neither in her body nor in her spirit. Nothing. The end, the inexorable end which is death for those who do not believe in the spiritual Life.

You, a loving faithful heathen wife, loved in your husband your earthly god with sensual love, your handsome god who made you worship him, degrading your dignity as his equal to the servility of a slave. Let the wife be subject to her husband, and be humble, faithful and chaste. Agreed. He, the man, is the head of the family. But head does not mean despot. Head does not mean capricious master to whom any whim is lawful not only on the body but also on the better part of his wife. You say: "Where you are Caius, there

I am Caia". Poor women from a place where there is licentiousness even in the tales of your gods, those among you who are not unchaste or unrestrained, how can they be where their husbands are? It is inevitable for her who is not licentious and corrupt to part from her husband with disgust and feel a dreadful pain, as of lacerating fibres, and experience dismay and the total collapse of her cult for her husband so far contemplated as a god, when she finds out that he, whom she adored as a god, is a miserable being ruled by brutal animalism, licentious, adulterous, thoughtless, indifferent, a derider of the feelings and dignity of his wife.

Do not weep. I also know everything, even without the reports of centurions. "Do not weep, woman. Learn instead to love your husband in an orderly way. »

« I cannot love him any more. He no longer deserves it. I despise him. I will not lower myself by imitating him, but I cannot love him any more. Everything is finished between us. I let him go away… without trying to keep him… Actually I am grateful to him for the last time, for his going away… I will not look for him. In any case, when was he my companion? Since I have become undeceived about my worship for him, I remember and judge his behaviour. Did he pity my heart when I wept having to follow him, leaving my sick mother and my fatherland, and I was just married and I was about to be delivered of my child? He laughed foolishly with his friends at my tears and when I felt sick he only warned me not to dirty his clothes. Was he beside me when I was homesick in a foreign country? No, he went out with his friends, feasting where I was not allowed to go because of my state… Did he watch with me over the cradle of our new-born baby? He laughed when they took our daughter to him and he said: "I would almost have her laid on the ground. I did not accept the marriage yoke to have daughters". Neither was he present at the purification saying that it was a pantomine. And as the baby was crying, he said going out: "Name her Libitina and may she be sacred to the goddess". And when Fausta was dying, did he share my anguish? Where was he the night before Your arrival? At a banquet in Valerian's house. But I loved him; he was, as You rightly said, my god. I thought that everything was good and fair in him. He allowed me to love him… and I was the most enslaved slave to his wishes. Do You know what repelled me from him? »

« Yes, I know. Because your soul woke up again in your body and you were no longer a female but a woman. »

« Exactly. I wanted to make my house respectable… and he asked to be transferred to Antioch, at the Consul's service, and ordered me not to follow him, and he took his favourite slave girls with him. Oh! I will not follow him! I have my 'daughter. I have everything. »

« No. You have not everything. You have a part, a small part of the Everything, as much as serves you to be virtuous. The Everything is God. Your daughter must not be for you a cause of injustice but of justice towards the Everything. It is your duty to be virtuous for her and with her. »

« I came to comfort You and You are consoling me. But I have also come to ask You how I must bring up this little girl to make her worthy of her Saviour. I was thinking of becoming a proselyte and of making her a proselyte as well… »

« And what about your husband? »

« Oh! It's all over with him. »

« No. Everything is beginning now. You are still his wife. The duty of a good wife is to make her husband good. »

« He says that he wants to divorce me. And he will certainly do that. So… »

« He will do it. But he has not done it yet. And until he does so, you are his wife also according to your law. And as such it is your duty to remain as wife in your place. And your place is second to your husband in the house, with regard to your daughter, the servants and the world. You are thinking: he has set the bad example. That is true. But that does not exempt you from setting virtuous examples. He went away. True. You must take his place with your daughter and the servants.

Not everything is blameworthy in your customs. When Rome was less corrupt, women were chaste, industrious, an d they served the divinity with their lives of virtue and faith. Even if their poor condition of pagans made them serve false gods, the idea was good. They offered their virtue to the Idea of religion, to the need of respect for religion, for a Divinity Whose true name was unknown to them, but Whom they felt existed and was greater than licentious Olympus and the degraded deities that people it according to mythological legends. Your Olympus does not exist, neither do your gods. But your ancient virtues were the fruit of the firm belief that people had to be virtuous if they wanted to be watched over with love by the gods; they were the fruit of the duties you felt you had towards the gods you worshipped. To the eyes of the world, particularly of our Hebrew world, you seemed to be foolish for honouring what did not exist. But to the eternal true Justice, to the Most High God, the Only and Almighty Creator of all creatures and things, those virtues, that respect, those duties were not vain. Good is always good, faith has always the -value of faith, and religion has always the value of religion if he who follows, practises and possesses them is convinced of being in the truth.

I exhort you to imitate your ancient chaste, industrious and faithful women, remaining in your place, the column and light in your house and of your house. Do not think that you will be bereft

of the respect of your servants because you are alone. So far they have served you with fear and at times with a hidden feeling of hatred and rebellion. From now on they will serve you with love. The unhappy love the unhappy. Your slaves know what sorrow is. Your joy was a bitter goad for them. Your grief, by divesting you of the cold light of mistress, in the most hateful sense of the word, will reclothe you with a warm light of pity. You will be loved, Valeria, by God, by your daughter and by your servants. And even if you were no longer a wife, but a divorced woman, remember (and Jesus stands up) that a legal separation does not destroy the duty of a woman to be faithful to her marriage oath.

You would like to embrace our religion. One of the divine precepts of it is that woman is flesh of the flesh of her husband and that no person or thing can separate what God has joined into one flesh only. We also have divorce. It came as the wicked fruit of human lust, of the sin of origin, of the corruption of men. But it did not come spontaneously from God. God does not change His word. And God had said, inspiring Adam, who was still innocent and spoke therefore with intelligence not dimmed by sin, the words: that husband and wife, once united, were to be one flesh only. And the flesh is separated from the flesh only through the calamity of death or disease. The Mosaic divorce, granted to avoid dreadful sins, gives woman only a very poor freedom. A divorcee is always inferior in the opinion of men, whether she remains such or marries for the second time. In God's judgement she is an unhappy woman if she was divorced through the ill-will of her husband and remains a divorcee; but she is a sinner, an adulteress, if she is divorced through disgraceful sins of her own and she marries again. But you want to embrace our religion to follow Me. So I, the Word of God, as the time of the perfect religion has come, say to you what I say to many people. It is against the law to separate what God has united, and he or she is always adulterous by getting married again while the consort is still alive.

Divorce is legal prostitution, as it puts man and woman in a position to commit lustful sins. Only seldom a divorcee remains the widow of a living man, and a faithful widow. A divorced man is never faithful to his first marriage. Both he and she, by passing to other unions, descend from the level of men to that of brutes, which are granted to change female at each appeal of sensuality. Legal fornication, dangerous to families and to the Fatherland, is criminal towards innocent children. The children of a divorced couple must judge their parents. The judgement of children is a severe one! At least one of the parents is condemned by the children. And the children, through the selfishness of the parents, are doomed to a mutilated affective life. Then, if to the family consequences of divorce, that deprives innocent children of their

father or mother, a new marriage is added of the consort to whom the children have been entrusted, to the doom of an affective life mutilated of a member, a further mutilation is added: that of the more or less total loss of the affection of the other member, who is divided or completely absorbed by the new love and by the children of the second marriage.

To speak of marriage, of matrimony in the case of a new union of a divorce or divorcee, is to profane the meaning and the essence of marriage. Only the death of one of the consorts and the consequent widowhood of the other can justify a second marriage. However, I think that it would be better to yield to the always just verdict of Him Who controls the destinies of men, and to remain chaste when death has put an end to the matrimonial state, devoting oneself to the children and loving the dead consort in the children. A holy, true love, deprived of all materialism. Poor children! To experience, after the death or the ruin of a home, the hardness of a second father or of a second mother and the anguish of seeing caresses shared with other children who are not their brothers!

No. There will be no divorce in My religion. And he who divorces by civil law to contract a new marriage will be an adulterer and sinner. Human law shall not change My decree. Matrimony in My religion will no longer be a civil contract, a moral promise, made and ratified in the presence of witnesses appointed for that purpose. But it shall be an indissoluble bond stipulated, confirmed and sanctified by the sanctifying power I will give it, as being a Sacrament. To make you understand: a sacred rite. A power that will help to practise all matrimonial duties in a holy way, but that will also be the sentence of indissolubility of the bond.

So far marriage has been a mutual natural and moral contract between two people of different sexes. When My law comes into force, it will extend to the souls of the consorts. It will therefore become a spiritual contract sanctioned by God through His ministers. Now you know that nothing is superior to God. Therefore what He has united, no authority, law or human whim will be able to separate. Your ritual "where you are Caius, there I am Caia" lasts in life to come in our, in My rite, because death is not the end, but a temporary separation of the husband from his wife, and the obligation to love lasts also after death. That is why I say that I would like widows to be chaste. But man does not know how to be chaste. And also because of that I say that consorts have the reciprocal duty to improve the other consort.

Do not shake your head. That is the duty and it is to be accomplished if one really wants to follow Me. »

« You are severe today, Master. »

« No. I am the Master. And I have in front of Me a creature who

can grow in the life of Grace. If you were not what you are, I would exact less of you. But you have a good temperament and suffering purifies and hardens your character more and more. One day you will remember and bless Me for being what I am. »

« My husband will not draw back… »

« And you will go forward. Holding your innocent child by the hand, you will walk on the way of Justice: without hatred, without revenge; but also without vain expectations and regret for what has been lost. »

« So You know that I have lost him! »

« I do. But not you: he has lost you. He did not deserve you. Now listen… It is hard, I know. You brought Me roses and innocent smiles to console Me… I… I can but prepare you to bear the wreath of thorns of forlorn wives… But consider. If we could go back in time to that morning when Fausta was dying and your heart were put in the condition of choosing between your daughter and your husband, having definitely to lose either one or the other, which would you choose?… »

The woman becomes pensive, pale but strong in her grief after the few tears shed at the beginning of the conversation… Shethen bends over the little girl who is sitting on the floor enjoying herself putting some white little flowers round Jesus' feet, she picks her up, embraces her and shouts: « I would choose her because I can give her my very heart, and I can bring her up as I have learned one should live. My creature! And be united to her in the next life. I… always her mother; she… always my daughter! » and she smothers her with kisses while the little one clings to her neck with loving smiles. « Tell me, oh! tell me, Master, who teach people to live heroically, what must I do to rear this child so that we may be both in Your Kingdom? Which words, what acts shall I teach her?… »

« No special acts or words are required. Be perfect so that she may reflect your perfection. Love God and your neighbour that she may learn to love. Live on the Earth with your affections in God. She will imitate you. That for the time being. Later My Father, Who has loved you in a special way, will see to your spiritual needs, and you will become wise in the faith that bears My Name. That is what is to be done. In the love of God you will find all necessary restraint against Evil. In the love for your neighbour you will have assistance against the depression of solitude. And teach both yourself and your daughter to forgive. Do you understand what I mean? »

« Yes, I do… It is just… Master, I leave You. Bless a poor woman… who is poorer than a beggar who has a faithful companion… »

« Where are you staying now? In Jerusalem? »

« No, at Bether. Johanna, who is so good, sent me to her castle there… I was suffering too much up there… I shall remain there until Johanna comes, which is soon. She is coming down to Judaea with Your Mother and the other women disciples at the first warm days in springtime. I shall be staying with her for some time. Then the others will come and I will go with them. But time will have already healed my wound. »

« Time, and above all God and the smiles of your little girl. Goodbye, Valeria. May the true God, Whom you are seeking with good spirit, comfort and protect you. » Jesus lays His hand on the head of the little one and blesses her. He then approaches the closed door asking: « Have you come by yourself? »

« No, with a freed woman. The wagon is waiting for me in the wood at the entrance to the village. Shall we meet again, Master? »

« I shall be in the Temple in Jerusalem for the Dedication. »

« I will be there, Master. I need Your words for my new life… »

« Go and do not worry. God does not leave without help those who seek it. »

« I believe… Oh! our pagan world is sad indeed! »

« There is sadness wherever there is no true life in God. People weep also in Israel… Because they no longer live according to the Law of God. Goodbye. Peace be with you. »

The woman makes a low bow and suggests something to the little girl. And the child raises her head, stretches out her arms and says with her little voice as sweet as a finch's: « Ave, Domine Jesu! »

Jesus bends to receive from her tiny lips the kiss that is already taking shape there, and He blesses her again… He then goes back into the room and sits down thoughtfully near the flowers spread on the floor.

Some time goes by thus. Then someone knocks at the door.

« Come in. »

The door opens and Peter's honest face appears in the opening.

« It is you? Come in… »

« No, You ought to come to us. It's cold here. What lovely flowers! Worth a lot! » Peter watches his Master while speaking.

« Yes, they are worth a lot. But the gesture and the way it was accomplished are worth more than the flowers. They were brought to Me by the daughter of Valeria, the Roman friend of Claudia. »

« Eh! I know. But why? »

« To comfort Me. They know that I am grieved, and Valeria had that kind thought. She thought that the flowers of an innocent child would be able to console Me… »

« A Roman lady!… And we people of Israel cause nothing but grief to You… Judas' suspicion was right. He said that he had seen a wagon that was stationary and that the woman was certainly Roman… and he was upset, Master… » says Peter who is very inquisitive.

But Jesus only asks: « Where is Judas? »

« Outside. I mean on the road, near the wood. He wants to see who came to You… »

« Let us go downstairs. »

Judas is already in the kitchen, He turns round seeing Jesus come in and says: « Even if You wanted to deny it, You could not deny that that woman came to… complain of something! Have they still something to say? Have they nothing else to do but spy and report and… »

« I am not obliged to reply to you. But I say this to everybody. And Simon already knows who she is and I will now tell everybody why she came. Also people who are apparently very happy may need comfort and advice… Andrew, go upstairs, pick up all the flowers brought by the little girl and take them to little Levi. »

« Why? »

« Because he is dying. »

« He is dying? But I saw him at the third hour and he was all right! » says Bartholomew who is amazed.

« He was all right. He will be dead before it gets dark. »

« If he is so ill he will not enjoy the flowers… »

« No. But in the dismayed house the flowers sent by the Saviour will speak a bright word. »

Jesus sits down while they all speak of the transience of life and Eliza puts on her mantle saying: « I am going with Andrew… That poor mother!… » I can see Andrew and Eliza go away with the flowers in their hands…

Jesus is silent. Judas also is silent. He is hesitant. Jesus is silent but not severe looking… Judas walks round Him, urged by the desire to know, by the tormenting anxiety of a person whose conscience is not at peace. But he ends up by pulling Peter to one side and questioning him. He recovers confidence after speaking with Peter and he goes to tease Matthew who is writing peacefully on a corner of the table.

Andrew comes back running. He says panting: « Master… the boy is really dying… All of a sudden… They seemed to have gone mad… But when Eliza said: "The Lord has sent them" and I… thought they would understand: "for his death bed", the mother and the father shouted… together: "Oh! it's true! Run back and call Him. He will cure him". »

« The word of faith. Let us go » and Jesus almost runs out. Of course they all follow Him, including old John, plodding along in the rear.

The house is at the end of the village. But Jesus arrives there quickly and He elbows His way through the crowd obstructing the

open door. He goes straight to a room at the end of a corridor, because it is a large house with many inhabitants, perhaps brothers.

In the room, bent over the improvised bed, there are the father, the mother and Eliza… They see Jesus only when He says: « Peace to this house. » The unhappy parents then leave the bed and throw themselves at Jesus' feet. Only Eliza remains where she is, intent on rubbing with aromatic essences the limbs that are becoming cold.

The boy is really on the point of death, his body already shows the heaviness and languor of death, his face is waxen with dark nostrils and violet lips. He breathes with difficulty, with spasms of his little chest, and each breath seems the last one, so long it is from the previous one.

His mother is weeping with her face on Jesus' feet. The father, who is also prostrated on the floor, says: « Have mercy! Have mercy! » He cannot say anything else.

Jesus says: « Levi, come to Me » and He stretches out His arms.

The little one, a boy about five years old, has something like a shock, as if someone called him in a loud voice while he was asleep. He sits up without difficulty, rubs his eyes with his little fists, he looks around, obviously surprised, and when he sees Jesus smiling, he throws himself out of the bed and goes resolutely towards the Master in his little tunic.

His parents, bent as they are, do not see anything. But the exclamations of Eliza who shouts: « Eternal goodness! » and of the apostles and of the curious people in the corridor, as they shout an: « Oh! » of wonder, warn them of what is happening. They look up and see their child standing there, as healthy as if he had never been on the point of death…

Joy makes people laugh, weep, shout, be silent, according to the reaction of each individual. Here it is the cause of mute, almost frightened amazement… There is too much difference between the previous condition and the present one, and the two poor parents, already stunned with grief, have difficulty in accepting joy.

They eventually succeed while Jesus takes the boy in His arms, and then silence is followed by a deluge of words mixed with exclamations of joy and blessings, and it is difficult to follow this torrent of words, all uttered confusedly at the same time. I gather from them that at about the sixth hour the boy, who was playing in the kitchen garden, had gone into the house complaining of abdominal pains. When his grandmother took him in her arms near the fireplace, he seemed to get better. Later, about the ninth hour, he began to vomit intestinal matter and he was at once in his last agony. The typical fulminant peritonitis. His father had rushed to Jerusalem at the first symptoms of the disease and had come back

with a doctor, who after seeing the boy, who in the meantime had begun to vomit, had said: « He cannot live » and had gone away… In fact the child was getting worse every moment and his body was getting cold, and in the anguish of the sudden misfortune they were not able to think of the salvation at hand. Only when Andrew and Eliza had gone in with the flowers saying: « Jesus sends them to Levi », they were enlightened as if by an internal light and said: « Jesus will save him. »

« And You have saved him, may You be blessed for ever! Your flowers! Hope! Faith! Oh, yes! faith in Your love for us! But how did You know? Blessed One! Ask whatever You want of us! Give us Your orders as if we were Your slaves! We owe You everything! … »

Jesus listens to them still holding the child in His arms. He lets them speak until they are tired, until their nerves subjected to so much strain, become relaxed by giving vent to their feelings. He then says kindly: « I love children and faithful hearts. You all of Nob have been very good to Me. If I am good to those who hate Me, what shall I give to those who love Me? I knew… and I was also aware that grief was making you forget the Source of Life. I wanted to show you the way… »

« But why did You not come by Yourself, Lord? Were You perhaps afraid that we might not welcome You? »

« No. I knew that you would receive Me with love. But among these people who are around us there were some who needed to be convinced that I know everything of men and of the state of their hearts. And I also wanted other people to understand that God answers those who invoke Him with faith. Now be at peace. And let your faith in the mercy of God grow deeper and deeper. Peace be with you all. Goodbye, Levi. Go to your mother, now. Goodbye, woman. Consecrate to the Lord also the child you are carrying in your womb, in remembrance of the Lord's kindness to you. Goodbye, man. Preserve your spirit in justice. »

He turns round to go away, passing with difficulty through the relatives crowding the corridor: grandparents, uncles, cousins of the boy cured miraculously, as they all want to speak to Jesus, bless. Him, be blessed, kiss His garments, His hands… Then after the large number of relatives, the people of the village want to do the same, but they pour into the street behind Jesus, leaving those of the house blessed by the miracle to their joy. And in the streets by now dark, with the usual noise of the hours of rejoicing, all Nob takes Jesus back to John's little house, and it takes all the authority of the apostles to convince the citizens to go back to their houses, leaving the Master in peace, and to their authority they have to add more energetic means, such as threatening that, unless they allow Him to rest, they will all go away the following morning,

in order to reach their aim.

And at long last the Tired one can rest…

530. Jesus and the Prostitute Sent to Tempt Him.

21st November 1946.

People taken as a mass, men taken individually are always somewhat childish and wild, or at least primitive, and thus very sensitive to anything having the savour of novelty, of extraordinariness, and creating a joyful atmosphere. The approaching of solemnities always has the power of elating men, as if the festivity cancelled what makes them sad and tired. At the first approach of a feast, everybody is affected by a sort of animation, of a light exaltation, as if the approach were like the beat of tom-tom of savages at their idolatrous festivals or in their warlike enterprises:

Also the apostles, in the imminence of the Feast of Lights, are in that state of lightheartedness. Talkative and cheerful as they are, they begin to make plans, to remember past festivities, a touch of melancholy is noticeable in their conversation, then the festal atmosphere cheers them again urging them to be active, so that everything may be beautiful for the festival. Are the lights in John's house only few? Oh! Thomas' house at Ramah is full of them! And Thomas leaves for Ramah to get them. Is the oil not plentiful? Oh! Eliza has plenty oil at Bethzur and she offers it. And Andrew and John go to Bethzur to get it. Is the mild fire of brushwood necessary to bake the cakes? The two Jameses go to the mountains to collect some. Is there not enough flour, barley and honey for the ritual dishes? And Nike, who is almost offended because they never ask her for anything, is she not in Jerusalem just to give them some of her very blond honey, barley and flour from her beautiful estate? So Peter and Simon Zealot go to Nike, while Judas of Alphaeus helps Eliza to adorn the house, and even old Bartholomew partakes of the general mirth and with Philip whitewashes the smoky kitchen to make it look more pleasant. Judas Iscariot reserves for himself the decoration side and he comes back several times laden with branches of sweet-smelling evergreens adorned with berries and he arranges them nicely on shelves and around the fireplace. And on the eve of the Feast the little house seems to be prepared to receive a bride, such is the change in the copper kitchenware now so shiny, in the lamps as bright as the sun, with the green branches decorating the white walls, while the smell of bread and cakes spreads in the air already scented with the fresh branches.

Jesus lets them do as they wish. He seems so remote from everybody, He is very pensive, and sad. He replies to those who ask Him questions with the intent of being praised for what they

have done. And their questions make it possible for me to reconstruct the work done by the disciples. In fact by asking: « Was my idea to go home and get the lamps not a good one? »; or: « Did Philip and I not do a good job by whitewashing everything? It is clean and pleasant and looks larger »; or: « See, Master? Eliza is happy. She seems to be at home and to have gone back to the time when she had her sons. She was singing today when filling the lamps with her oil and when kneading the flour with her honey and mixing it with milk for the barley »; or also: « Helkai can say what he likes. But a little green looks nice. After all!… If the Creator made branches, it means that we have to use them, isn't that right? » they allow me to reconstruct the work done by each of them. But even if Jesus replies to such questions that imply a wish for praise, His mind is absent, as one can easily see.

Night falls. After the last greetings of the citizens who before going home drop in at the kitchen to say good night to the Master, silence reigns in Nob. It is supper time. It is bedtime for children and old people, for those who are weakly through illness or age.

It must be a custom to give presents at the Feast of the Lights, because as soon as old John withdraws to his little room near the kitchen, I see Eliza and the apostles busy themselves, the former finishing a garment, the latter completing useful items carved in wood, and a tent in network, made with little ropes dyed red, green, yellow and indigo, a special work of fishermen. Thomas, Matthew, Bartholomew and the Zealot are looking at them.

« Here it is. I have finished » says Eliza standing up and shaking loose threads off the garment.

« It will keep him warm, poor old man! Eh! we men are really poor wretches without women. I do not know what we would be like without you, after being away from home for months. I can do this, but if I have to sew on a clasp!… » says Peter feeling the cloth.

« You have done it quickly, too. You are like my wife » says Bartholomew.

« I have finished, too. This was good wood. Soft to carve but strong at the same time » says Judas Thaddeus laying a small wooden box to be used for salt or spices on the dark table.

« Mine instead is not yet finished. There is a hard vein here that is difficult to carve. Perhaps I will not be able to finish the job. And I am sorry. The beauty of it was in the dark veins in the light wood. Look, Jesus. Don't they look like mountain crests painted on wood? » says James of Alphaeus showing a kind of vase, I do not know for what use it may be destined, of a really beautiful shape, with a dome-shaped lid and gracefully veined in the belly and lid. It is just the wood of the lid near the knob that is resisting stubbornly.

« Insist, and you will see that it can be done. Make your tool red-hot.

It will bite into its fibre and then you will manage. When the first layer is broken… » replies Jesus Who has been watching.

« But will the fire not spoil it? » asks Matthew.

« Not if it is used skilfully. In any case, either that or it will have to be thrown away. »

James makes a sharp bradawl red-hot and presses its red point against the obstinate part. There is a smell of burning wood…

« That's enough. Carve it now and you will succeed » says Jesus. And He helps His cousin holding the lid tight like a vice.

The blade slips twice and skims Jesus' fingers. « Take Your hand away, Brother. I wouldn't like to hurt You… » says James of Alphaeus. But Jesus goes on holding the vase. The third time the sharp knife makes Jesus' thumb bleed.

« There You are! See? You have hurt Yourself! Let me see! »

« It is nothing. Two drops of blood… » replies Jesus shaking His finger to let the blood drop. « You should rather dry the lid. It is stained » He then adds.

« No. Leave it! It is precious thus. Wipe Your finger here, Master. Here, in my veil. Your blood is blessed blood » says Eliza enveloping the hand in her linen veil.

The lid, the cause of so much trouble, is conquered. The carving is accomplished.

« It wanted to do some harm first » remarks the Zealot.

« Yes! Then it was persuaded. Obstinate wood! » says Thomas.

« With iron, fire and pain. It sounds like one of those sentences so dear to the Romans » states the Zealot.

« It reminds me, I do not know why, of the prophets in certain parts. We are obstinate wood as well… and will it take iron, fire and pain to make us good? » asks Bartholomew.

« It will really take that. And it will not be enough either. I am working with iron and My grief, but not every heart can imitate that piece of wood… Be quiet! There is someone outside… There is the shuffling of feet… »

They listen. No noise is heard.

« It was the wind, perhaps, Master. There are dry leaves in the kitchen garden… »

« No. It was footsteps… »

« A night animal. I cannot hear anything. »

« Neither can I, neither can I… »

Jesus is listening. He seems to hear. He then looks up and gazes at Judas of Kerioth, who is also listening very carefully. More than anybody else. He gazes at him so intently that Judas asks: « Why are You looking at me thus, Master? » But there is no reply because a hand knocks at the door. Of the fourteen faces lit up by the lamp, only Jesus' remains as it was. The others change colour.

« Open, open the door, Judas of Kerioth! »

« No, I am not opening! It may be wicked people who have deliberately come at night. Do not let it be me who may hurt You! »

« Simon of Jonas, open it, please. »

« Less than never! On the contrary, I am going to push the table against the door! » says Peter and he is about to do so.

« Open, John, and be not afraid. »

« Oh! if You really want to let people in, I am going into the old man's room. I don't want to see anything » says the Iscariot covering with four strides the distance between him and the door of the old man's room, into which he disappears.

John, standing near the door, with his hand already on the key, casts a frightened glance at Jesus and murmurs: « Lord!… »

« Open and be not afraid. »

« Of course. After all we are thirteen strong men. It cannot be an army! With four blows and a few screams - Eliza, make sure you scream if necessary - we will put them to flight. We are not in a desert! » says James of Zebedee and he takes off his mantle and rolls up the sleeves of his tunic or vest, ready for action. Peter imitates him.

John, still hesitant, opens the door, he looks out. He does not see anything. He shouts: « Who is disturbing? »

A woman replies in a subdued, suffering voice: « A woman. I want the Master. »

« This is no time to come to people's houses. If you are sick, why are you about at this time? If you are a leper, why do you venture to come into a village? If you are grieved, come back tomorrow. Go away and mind your own business » says Peter who is standing behind John.

« Oh! for pity's sake! I am all alone in the road. I am cold and hungry. I am a poor wretch. Call the Master for me. He is merciful… »

The apostles look at Jesus perplexedly. Jesus is very severe and silent. They close the door.

« What shall we do, Master? Shall we give her at least a little bread. There is no room for her. To go to people's houses with an unknown woman… » asks Philip.

« Wait. I will go and see » says Bartholomew and he gets hold of the lamp to see.

« You need not go. The woman is neither cold nor hungry, and she knows very well where to go. She is not afraid of the night. But she is a poor wretch, although she is neither sick nor a leper. She is a prostitute and has come to tempt Me. I am telling you that, so that you may be aware that I know, that you may be convinced that I know. And I also tell you that she has not come owing to a whim of her own; but she has come because she is paid to come. » Jesus has spoken in a loud voice, so that He could be heard in the adjoining

room, where is Judas.

« And who would do that? And why? » says the Iscariot appearing once again in the kitchen. « Certainly not the Pharisees, or the scribes, or the priests, if she is a prostitute. Neither do I think that the Herodians are so… resentful as to take all the trouble to… I do not know myself why. »

« I will tell you why. To be able to say that I am a sinner, one who has relations with public sinners. And you know as well as I do that it is so. And I also tell you that I do not curse her or those who sent her. I am still and always Mercy. And I am going to her. If you wish to come with Me, come. I am going to her because she really is a poor wretch. When she says that she is, she thinks that she is telling a lie, because she is young, beautiful and well paid, she is healthy and pleased with her ill-famed life. But she is wretched. It is the only truth among all her lies. Go ahead of Me and be present at our conversation. »

« No, I don't want to be present. Why should I? »

« To bear witness to those who will ask you. »

« And who do You think is going to ask me? There is no question to be asked among us, and the others… I cannot see anybody. »

« Be obedient. Go ahead. »

« No. I don't want to obey You, and You cannot compel me to approach a prostitute. »

« Hey! What are you? The High Priest? I will come, Master, and without any fear of getting infected » says Peter.

« No. I will go by Myself. Open the door. »

Jesus goes out into the kitchen garden. In the dark moonless night it is not possible to see anything.

The kitchen door is opened again, and Peter comes out with a lamp. « Take this at least, Master, if You really do not want me » he says in a loud voice. And then in a subdued voice: « Bear in mind that we are behind the door. In case of need, call… »

« Yes. Go. And do not quarrel with one another. »

Jesus takes the lamp and lifts it up to see. Behind the big trunk of the walnut-tree there is a human figure. Jesus takes two steps towards it, saying: « Follow Me. » And He goes and sits down on the stone bench placed against the house, on the eastern side.

The woman comes forward, she is covered with a veil and is stooped. Jesus lays the lamp on the stone, close to Himself. « Speak. » His order is so austere and so severe, and He is so Divine, that the woman instead of coming forward and speaking, steps back and stoops even more, remaining silent.

« Speak up, I tell you. You wanted Me. I have come. Speak » He says with a shade of kindness in His voice.

Silence.

« Then I will speak. I ask you: why do you hate Me so much as to

serve those who want My ruin and wish it in every way, and seek all possible causes for it? Tell Me. What wrong have I done you, o wretched woman? What harm have you received from the Man Who has not even derided you in His heart for the ill-famed life you are leading? What? Have you been corrupted by the Man Who not even in His heart has wished to have you, that you hate Him more than you hate those who prostituted you and despise you every time they come to you? Answer Me! What has Jesus of Nazareth done to you, Jesus the Son of man, Whom you hardly know by sight, having met Him in the street in town, Jesus who does not know your face and takes no heed of your favours and seeks only the foul defaced image of your soul, to become acquainted with it and cure it? So speak up!

Do you not know who I am? Yes, you know Me partly. Nay, you know as much as two parts. You know that I am young and that you like My person. Your unrestrained animalism told you that. And your tongue of a drunken woman told those who received the confession of your sensuality and have turned it into a weapon to injure Me. You know that I am Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ. You have been told who I am by those who exploiting your sensuality paid you to come here to tempt Me. They said to you: "He says that He is the Christ. The crowds say that He is the Holy One, the Messiah. He is nothing but an impostor. We need the proof that He is a miserable man. Give us that proof, and we will cover you with gold". And as you, with a remainder of justice, the last particle of the treasure of justice that God had put into your body with your soul, and that you shattered and scattered, did not want to hurt Me, as you loved Me, your way, they said to you: "We shall do Him no harm. On the contrary! We shall surrender the man to you, giving you the means to let Him live as a king beside you. It is sufficient for us to be able to say to ourselves, to be at peace with our own consciences, that He is simply a man. A proof that we are right not believing Him to be the Messiah". That is what they said to you. And you came. But if I should yield to your allurement, hell would be upon Me. They are ready to cover Me with filth and to capture Me. And you are their instrument to do that.

You can see that I am not asking you questions. I am speaking because I know, without having to ask. But if you know those two things, you do not know the third one. You do not know who I am, in addition to being a man and Jesus. You see the man. Other people say to you: "He is the Nazarene". But I tell you who I am. I am the Redeemer. In order to redeem one must be without sin. Look how I trampled on My possible sensuality as a man. As I am doing with this disgusting caterpillar that in the darkness was moving from one heap of dirt to another for its lascivious sensuality. That is how I always trampled on it. That is how I trample on it even

now. And likewise I am willing to tear your disease away from you and tread on it, freeing you from it to make you holy and healthy. Because I am the Redeemer. Only that. I took the body of man to save you, to destroy sin, not to sin. I took it to remove your sins, not to sin with you. I took it to love you, but with a love that gives its life, its blood, its word, everything, to take you to Heaven, to Justice, not to love you as a brute. And not even as a man, because I am more than a man.

Do you know exactly who I am? You do not know. You did not even know the significance of what you were going to accomplish. And I forgive you for that, without you asking for it. You did not know. But your prostitution? How could you live in that state? You were not like that. You were good. Oh! poor wretch! Do you not remember your childhood? Do you not remember the kisses of your mother? Her words? And the hours of prayer? The words of Wisdom you heard your father explain in the evening and the leader of the synagogue on Sabbaths? Who made you dull-witted and who intoxicated you? Do you not remember? Do you not regret it? Tell Me! Are you really happy? Are you not replying? I will speak in your stead and I say: no, you are not happy. When you wake up you find your shame on your pillow giving you the first daily twist of torture. And the voice of your conscience howls its reproach while you adorn and perfume yourself to look pleasant. And you smell an infamous scent in the finest essences. And a nauseating taste in rare dishes. And your jewels are as heavy as a chain. And they are. And while you laugh and allure, something moans within you. And you get drunk to overcome the boredom and nausea of your life. And you hate those whom you say you love for the sake of gain. And you curse yourself. And your sleep is heavy with nightmares. And the thought of your mother is a sword in your heart. And the curse of your father gives you no peace. And then there are the insults of those who meet you, the cruelty of those who use you, always mercilessly. You are a merchandise. You sold yourself. One makes use of purchased goods as one likes. One tears them, consumes them, treads and spits on them. It is the right of the buyer. You cannot rebel… And does that situation make you happy? No. You are in despair. You are in chains. You are tortured. On the Earth you are a dirty rag on which anybody can tread. If, in some moments of grief, you seek comfort raising your spirit to God, you feel the wrath of God upon you, a prostitute, and that Heaven is more closed to you than it was to Adam. If you are not well, you dread death because you know what your destiny is. The Abyss is for you.

Oh! miserable woman! And was that not enough? To the chain of your sin would you like to add also that of being the ruin of the Son of man? Of Him Who loves you? The Only One Who loves you?

Because He clothed Himself with flesh also for your soul. I could save you, if you wanted. The Abyss of Merciful Holiness is bending over the abyss of your abjection and is waiting for your wish to be saved to draw you up from the abyss of your filth. In your heart you think that it is impossible for God to forgive you. You base this thought of yours on the comparison with the world that does not forgive you for being a prostitute. But God is not the world. God is Goodness. God is forgiveness. God is Love.

You came to Me, being paid to harm Me. I solemnly tell you that the Creator, in order to save one of His creatures, can turn into good even what is evil. And if you want, your coming to Me will be changed into good. Be not ashamed of your Saviour. Be not ashamed of showing Him your bare heart. Even if you wish to conceal it, He sees it and weeps over it. He weeps. He loves. Be not ashamed of repenting. Be as bold in repentance as you were in sin. You are not the first prostitute to weep at My feet and to be led back to justice by Me… I have never rejected any person, no matter how guilty the person was. I have always tried to attract sinners to me and save them. It is My mission. I am not horrified at the state of a heart. I know Satan and his deeds. I know men and their weaknesses. I know the condition of woman who pays, and justly, for the consequences of Eve's sin more severely than man. So I know how to judge and how to pity. And I tell you that I am more severe with those who make women fall than with the women who have fallen. In your case, o unhappy woman, I am more severe with those who sent you than with you who came, not knowing exactly what you were lending yourself to. I would have preferred you to come urged by the desire for redemption, like other sisters of yours. But if you countenance the wish of God, and you turn an evil deed into the headstone of your new life, I will speak to you the word of peace… »

Jesus, Who was severe at the beginning and has become kinder and kinder, still remaining so… divine as to exclude all weakness of senses and also every possible error of evaluation of His goodness, is now silent, looking at the woman, who has been standing all the time, stooping more and more, at about two metres from Him, and who, in the middle of His speech has taken her hands to her face pressing her veil against it, two beautiful hands outstanding against the dark mantle and all adorned with rings. Bracelets are at the wrists of arms bare up to the elbows.

I could not say whether she is weeping or not. If she is, she is doing it so silently because I cannot hear any sobs or see any movement. She is so still in her dark clothes that she looks like a statue. Then all of a sudden she falls on her knees and curls herself up on the ground and then she really weeps without any reluctance to show it. Then, lying on the ground dejectedly, she begins to speak:

« It is true! You really are a prophet… Everything is true… They paid me for this… But they told me that it was a wager… They would have found You in my house… But also close to You… »

« Woman, I will only listen to the story of your sins… » says Jesus interrupting her.

« That is true. I am not entitled to accuse anybody because I am a dung-heap. Everything is true. I am not happy… I do not enjoy riches, banquets, love affairs… I blush when I think of my mother… I am afraid of God and of death… I hate the men who pay me. Everything You said is true. But do not drive me away, Lord. No one, after my mother, has ever spoken to me as You did. Nay, You have spoken to me even more kindly than my mother, who in the last days was hard to me because of my behaviour… I ran away to Jerusalem not to hear her any more… But You… And yet Your kindness is like snow on the fire devouring me. My fire is dying down, it is a different fire. It was scorching, but gave no light or heat. I was as cold as ice and I was in darkness. Oh! how much I suffered through my own will! How much useless cursed grief I have caused myself! Lord, through the half-open door I told you that I was an unhappy woman and to have mercy on me. They were the lies they taught me to tell You to lure You into the trap. They said to me that, afterwards, my beauty would do the rest… My beauty! My clothes!… »

The woman stands up. Now that she is standing I can see that she is tall. She tears off her veil and mantle and appears in her true beauty of a brown-haired woman with a very white complexion. Her eyes, enlarged with bistre, are large and beautiful and they have the look of amazed innocence, which is odd to be found in this type of woman. Perhaps they have already been washed by her tears. The woman tears and treads on the cloth of her mantle, she rends her veil, she pulls off the precious buckles from both and throws them on the ground, takes off her rings and bracelets, she flings away the ornaments on her head, she gets hold of her curly locks full of shiny clasps and tears and ruffles them to destroy their artificial beauty in a fury of sacrifice that is even frightening. Her necklace, stretched violently, becomes unstrung and falls to the ground and her foot shod in ornate sandals treads on the gems crushing them; her precious belt and a clasp fastening her dress on her breast with artistic style, have the same fate. And all that takes place while in a low panting voice she repeats: « Away! Cursed things. Away! You and who gave them to me. Away, my beauty! Away, my hair. Away, my complexion as white as jasmine! »

With a swift movement she gets hold of a sharp stone that she sees on the ground and she strikes her face and mouth till they bleed and she scratches herself with her painted nails. Blood falls

in drops from her wounds, her features are swollen with blows… until her fury dies down and panting, exhausted, disfigured, unkempt, with clothes torn and stained with blood and earth, she throws herself on the ground at Jesus' feet, moaning: « And now You can forgive me, if You see my heart, because there is nothing of my past, nothing of… You have won, Lord, against Your enemies and against my flesh… Forgive my sins… »

« I had already forgiven you when I came to meet you. Stand up and sin no more. »

« Tell me what I must do, so that I may do it. »

« Go away from the places of your sins, from those who know who you are. Your mother… »

« Oh! my Lord! She will not receive me any more. She hates me as my father died because of me, cursing me. »

« If God Who is God receives you, and He receives you because He is a Father, can your mother not receive you, as she gave birth to you and is a woman like you? Go to her with all humility. Weep at her feet as you are weeping at Mine. Make a full confession to her as you did to Me. Tell her your sufferings. Implore her mercy. Your mother has been waiting for this moment for years. She is waiting for it that she may die in peace. Bear her words of loving reproach as you bore Mine. I was a stranger to you, and yet you listened to Me. She is your mother. It is therefore twice as much your duty to listen to her respectfully. »

« You are the Messiah. You are more than my mother. »

« Now you say that. But when you came to tempt Me you did not know that I was the Messiah, and yet you have listened to My words. »

« You were so different from men… so… You are holy, o Jesus of Nazareth! »

« Your mother is holy as a mother and as a creature. Through her prayers you have found mercy with God. A mother is always holy! And God wants her to be honoured. »

« I have dishonoured her. The whole village knows that. »

« That is another reason why you should go to her and say: "Mother, forgive me". And it is another reason for consecrating your life to her to repay her for the pains she suffered because of you. »

« I will do that… But… Lord, do not send me back to Jerusalem. They are waiting for me… and I do not know whether I will be able to resist their threats… Let me stay here until dawn, and then… »

« Wait a moment. »

Jesus stands up, He goes to the kitchen door, He knocks, and has the door opened. He says: « Eliza, come out. »

Eliza obeys. Jesus takes her towards the woman who seeing another woman, who is also elderly, come towards her, makes a

gesture as if she were ashamed, and she tries to cover her face and immodest dress with what remains of her torn mantle and veil.

« Listen, Eliza. I am leaving this house at once. You will tell My disciples to join Me at Herod's Gate at dawn. All of them, except Judas who must come with Me. You will take this woman to sleep with you. You can take My bed because I will not come back to Nob for a long time. Tomorrow, when John gets up, you and he will take this woman where she tells you. You will give her an ordinary dress and one of your mantles. And you will help her in everything. »

« All right, Lord. I will do what You wish. I am sorry for John… »

« I am sorry, too. I wanted to make him happy, but the hatred of men prevents the Son of man from granting an hour of joy to a just man… »

« And afterwards, Lord? »

« Afterwards? You can go back to Bethzur and wait… Goodbye, Eliza. May My blessing and My peace be with you. Goodbye, woman. I am entrusting you to a mother and to a just man. But if you think that you have to come back to get what belongs to you… »

« No. I do not want to have anything of the past. »

« My dear woman, you cannot leave everything abandoned. Have you no servant or relatives? » asks Eliza.

« I have only a maidservant… and… »

« You will have to dismiss her, you will have to… »

« I beg you to do it, when you come back. Help me to recover completely, woman. » There is true anguish in her voice.

« Yes, my daughter, I will. Do not be distressed. We will see to everything tomorrow. Now come upstairs with me » and Eliza takes her by the hand and leads her upstairs, into one of the two little rooms.

"She then comes down quickly, and says: « I think that it would be a good thing if they all saw You without her, Lord. Neither should they know where she is. These jewels… » She stoops to pick up rings and bracelets, buckles and hairpins and belt and as many beads of the broken necklace as she can. « What shall we do with these? » she asks.

« Come with Me. You are right. It is better if they see Me. »

They go into the kitchen. They all look at Jesus inquisitively. Also the old man has got up, awakened perhaps by a dispute.

« Eliza, give those precious items to Thomas. And tomorrow, Thomas, you will sell them to some goldsmith. They will be of use for the poor. Yes, they are jewels of a woman, of that woman. And that is the answer to those who think that human flesh can tempt the Son of man and deviate Him from His mission. And it is also an advice to those who hate Me, that every subterfuge to find faults

with which to charge Me is useless. John, Eliza will tell you what you are to do. I bless you… »

« Are You leaving me, Lord? » The old man is grieved.

« I must. Goodbye. Peace be with you. » He addresses the apostles: « Go and rest. Everybody except Judas, who will come with Me. »

« Where? It's night-time » objects Judas.

« To pray. It will do you no harm. Or are you afraid of the air of the night, if you breathe it with Me? »

Judas lowers his head taking his mantle with a bad grace, while Jesus takes His.

« Tomorrow at dawn at Herod's Gate. We shall go to the Temple and… »

« No! » The "no" is unanimous. Judas' is the loudest.

« We shall go to the Temple. Did you not say that you have convinced them to leave Me in peace? »

« That is true. »

« Then we shall go to the Temple. Come » and He sets off to go out.

« And that is the end of the feast that we had prepared… » says Peter with a sigh.

« You should say that it ended before beginning » replies James of Zebedee.

Jesus is already on the threshold of the open door. He turns round and blesses them, then He disappears into the night.

In the kitchen they have all been struck dumb. Finally Matthew asks Eliza: « But what happened, after all? »

« I do not know. There was a woman who was weeping. And He said to me what He said also to you. Who she was, from where and why she came, I do not know… »

« Well. Let us go… » And they all go away, with the exception of Matthew and Bartholomew who sleep in the house.

531. Jesus and Judas of Kerioth Going towards Jerusalem.

25th November 1946.

The horizon clears at dawn. The olive-grove covering the mountain brightens very slowly emerging from the shadow, and the trunks, still in the shade, seem to be absent whilst their silvery foliage is visible. Fog seems to be spread over the mountain, but it is only the greyness of the leafy branches in the uncertain morning light.

Jesus is alone under the olive-trees. But it is not Gethsemane. Because Gethsemane is parallel, so to say, to the Moriah, whereas the Moriah here is in front of the olive-grove. So we are north of Jerusalem, beyond the graves of the kings. Jesus is still praying

and He does not stop even when the first chirping of birds tells Him that it is daytime. Only when the first rays of the risen sun light up a golden spot on the so far dimmed gold of the domes of the Temple, He stands up, He takes off and shakes His mantle with traces of earth and a few dry leaves sticking to the heavy cloth, with one hand He smoothes His beard and hair, He tidies his tunic and belt, He checks the straps of His sandals, He puts on His mantle and He sets off down the mountain along a tiny path hardly traced out among the trunks. He is perhaps directing His steps towards that little house, half way down the slope, from the chimney of which smoke is rising. No. He makes a detour towards another wider path that descends towards the main road that takes one to town.

Judas of Kerioth rushes down the mountain behind Him. I say he rushes because he is running like a madman to join the Master. And when he is within hearing distance, he calls Him. Jesus stops. Judas reaches Him panting: « Master… fortunately I thought I should come looking for You! Were You going away like that, without me? Yesterday evening You told me to wait for You in the house, because You would certainly come. Instead… »

« Did I not tell everybody that I would wait for you at Herod's Gate at dawn? It is dawn. And I am going to Herod's Gate. »

« Yes, but… that was for the others. You and I were together. »

« Together? » Jesus is very serious.

« Of course, Master. We came away together. You wanted that. Then You preferred to go and pray by Yourself. But I was willing to come with You. »

« At Nob you made it clear that it was not agreeable to you to spend the night praying with your Master. And I spared you a forced act of virtue. It would have been of no avail. Good deeds are to be performed spontaneously so that they may be scented and fertile. Otherwise they are only a pantomime… and at times worse than a pantomime. »

« But I… Why have You been so severe with me recently? Do You no longer love me? »

« Even more so I could ask you: do you not love Me? But I will not ask you. Because also that question would be a useless one and I never do useless things. »

« Of course! Because You know very well that I love You! »

« I wish I knew, Judas of Kerioth. And I wish I could say to you: I know that you love Me. But as I never do useless things, so I never speak false words. So I will not say to you that I know that you love Me. »

« But why, Master! Do I not love You? Do I not work for You? Can You doubt it? That grieves me. Because as soon as I realise that something grieves You, I avoid doing it and I watch that it is not

done! Look: I understood that You did not like… my going out at night. And I did not go out any more. I realised that the disputes of Your enemies fatigued You excessively. So I went - and I was not spared insults - and told them to stop it, and You know that You have not been troubled any more. And I hope that You will not be troubled in the Temple either. You are not fair, Master, with poor Judas! »

« You are the first among all My followers to reproach Me of unfairness… »

« Oh! forgive me! But Your words, Your severity grieves me so much that I can no longer ponder on things. They drive me crazy, believe me. Well, my peace, let us make it up between us. I want to be with You as if I were one thing with You. Always together… »

« Once we were so. But now tell Me, Judas: when are we so now? »

« Still because of that night? Or because I did not come with You to Bethabara? But You know why I did not come. For Your own good… And with regard to that night… I am a young man, Lord! But apart from those moments, when, I admit it, I may have made a mistake, nay I certainly did do wrong, I am always close to You. »

« I am not talking of physical closeness, but of the spiritual one, of the closeness of thoughts and hearts. You are far, Judas, from your Saviour, and you are going farther and farther away. »

« There You are! All reproaches are for me! And yet You can see how humbly I accept them. I said to You: "Send me away". But You kept me… so what do You want of me? »

« What do I want!! I would like not to have become Incarnate in vain for you. That is what I would like! But by now you belong to another father, to another country, you speak a different language… Oh! What shall I do, Father, to cleanse the profaned temple of this son of Yours and My brother? » Jesus, Who is very pale, weeps speaking to His Father.

Judas becomes wan, too, and he moves aside a little, in silence. Jesus overtakes him in a few steps, descending the hill, His head lowered, closed in His grief. Judas then makes a gesture of mockery, of threat, I would say like a cruel oath behind the back of the Innocent One. His face, so far masked by a hypocritical gloss of kindness and humility, becomes bony, hard, ugly, cruel: really demoniac. All the hatred, but not a human hatred, is in the fire of his dark eyes, and that fiery hatred is concentrated on Jesus' tall person. Then shrugging his shoulders and striking his foot angrily, Judas ends his internal reasoning. And he sets out, composedly, like one who has made a decision past recall.

The town walls are now close at hand. People are crowding at the gates: strangers, market-gardeners, people from nearby villages. Among them, near the walls, are the eleven apostles who go to meet the Master as soon as they see Him.

« Master, while we were waiting here, a man came looking for You. He said that Valeria begs You to go to the synagogue of the Roman freedmen; to make sure that You go because she will be there. »

« All right. We shall go. Let us go to Joseph of Sephoris first, because My mantle is not clean. »

« Where did You sleep, Lord? » asks Peter.

« Nowhere, Peter. I prayed on the mountain. The ground was damp and muddy, as you can see. »

« Why pray out in the open air, Lord? It may injure Your health… »

« The elements do not injure the Son of man. The things of God are good… It is men that hate the Man. »

Peter sighs… They go away towards the house of the Galilean, followed by the others…

532. In the Synagogue of the Roman Freedmen.

26th November 1946.

The synagogue of the Romans is exactly on the other side of the Temple, near the Hippicus tower. People are waiting for Jesus. And when He is pointed out at the beginning of the street, some women are the first to meet Him. Jesus is with Peter and Thaddeus.

« Hail, Master. I am grateful to You for hearing me. Have You come into town just now? »

« No, I have been here since the first hour. I went to the Temple. »

« The Temple? Did they not insult You? »

« No. It was early morning and people were not aware of My coming. »

« That is why I sent for You… and also because there are some Gentiles who would like to hear You speak. For days they have been going to the Temple waiting for You. But they were derided and even threatened. I was there as well yesterday and I realised that they are waiting for You to insult You. I sent men to each gate. With gold one achieves everything… »

« I am grateful to you. But it is not possible for Me not to go up to the Temple, as I am the Rabbi of Israel. Who are these women? »

« My freed woman Tusnilde. Twice a barbarian, Lord. She comes from the Teutoburger Wald. A prey of those rash advances that have cost so much blood. My father gave her to my mother, who gave her to me, at my wedding. She passed from her gods to ours, and from ours to You, because she does what I do. She is so good. The other women are the wives of Gentiles waiting for You. They come from every region. Most of them are suffering. They came in the husbands' ships. »

« Let us go into the synagogue… »

The synagogue leader, standing at the door, bows and introduces himself: « Mattathias, a Sicilian, Master. Praise and blessings to You. »

« Peace to you. »

« Come in. I will close the door so that we may be at peace. Such is the hatred that the bricks are eyes and the stones ears to watch You and denounce You, Master. Perhaps these people are better, as providing one does not interfere with their business, they leave us alone » says the old synagogue leader walking beside Jesus, taking Him through a little yard into a large room, which is the synagogue.

« Let us cure the sick people first, Mattathias. Their faith deserves a reward » says Jesus. And He passes from one woman to another imposing His hands. Some are healthy, but the little son they are holding in their arms is ill, and Jesus cures the child.

One is a little girl completely paralysed, and as soon as she is cured, she shouts: « Sitare kisses Your hands, Lord! »

Jesus, Who had already passed on, turns round smiling and asks: « Are you Syrian? »

Her mother explains: « Phoenician, Lord. From beyond Sidon. We live on the banks of the Tamiri. And I have ten more sons and two more daughters, one is Syra, the other Tamira. And Syra, although little more than a girl, is a widow. So much so, that being free, she settled here in town with her brother, and is one of Your believers. She told us that You can do everything. »

« Is she not with you? »

« Yes, Lord, she is. She is over there, behind those women. »

« Come forward » says Jesus.

The woman comes forward timidly.

« You must not be afraid of Me, if you love Me » says Jesus encouraging her.

« I do love You. That is why I left Alexandroscene. Because I thought that I would hear You again… and I would learn to accept my sorrow… » She weeps.

« When did you become a widow? »

« At the end of your month of Adar… If You had been there, Zeno would not have died. He said so… because he had heard You and he believed in You. »

« Then he is not dead, woman. Because he who believes in Me, lives. The true life is not lived by the body in these few days. The true life is achieved believing in and following the Way, the Truth, the Life, and acting according to His word. Even if a person believes and follows for a short time, and acts for a short time, soon interrupted by the death of the body, even if it were for one day only, for one hour only, I solemnly tell you that that person

will not know death any more. Because My Father, Who is also the Father of all men, will not take into account the time spent in My Law and in My Faith, but the will of man to live until death in that Law and Faith. I promise eternal Life to those who believe in Me and act according to what I say, loving the Saviour, propagating that love and practicing My teaching during the time granted to them. The workers of My vineyard are all those who come and say: "Lord, accept me among Your workers", and they persevere in that will until My Father considers that their day has come to an end. I solemnly tell you that there will be workers who have worked for one hour only, their last hour, and will receive their reward more promptly than those who have worked since the first hour, but always with tepidness, urged to work only by the idea of not deserving hell, that is by the fear of punishment. That is not the way to work that My Father rewards with immediate glory. On the contrary such clever selfish people, who are anxious to do good and only so much of it as is sufficient not to deserve eternal punishment, will be given a long expiation by the eternal Judge. They will have to learn at their own expense, through a long expiation, to achieve a spirit active in love, and in true love, entirely directed to the glory of God. And I also tell you that in future there will be many, particularly among the Gentiles, who will be the workers of one hour and even less than one hour, and they will become glorious in My Kingdom, because in that hour of harmony with Grace inviting them to enter the Vineyard of God, they reached heroical perfection of Charity. So be cheerful, woman. Your husband is not dead, he lives. You have not lost him, he is only separated from you for some time. Now, like a bride who has not yet entered the house of her bridegroom, you must prepare yourself for the true immortal wedding with him whom you are mourning. Oh! the happy wedding of two spirits who have become sanctified and are rejoined for ever where there is no separation, no fear of estrangement, no pain, where the spirits will rejoice in the love of God and in their reciprocal fondness! Death is true life for the just, because nothing can threaten the vitality of the spirit, that is its permanency in Justice. Do not weep for or mourn what is transient, o Syra. Raise your spirit, and see with justice and truth. God has loved you by saving your husband from the danger that the deeds of the world might demolish his faith in Me. »

« You have consoled me, Lord. I will live as You say. May You be blessed and may Your Father be blessed with You, for ever. »

The leader of the synagogue, while Jesus is about to move forward, says: « May I make an objection, without meaning any offence? »

« Tell Me. I am here, the Master, to give wisdom to those who ask for it. »

« You said that some will become glorious at once in Heaven. Is Heaven not closed? Are the just not in Limbo awaiting to enter it? »

« It is so. Heaven is closed. And it will be opened only by the Redeemer. But His hour has come. I solemnly tell you that the day of Redemption is already dawning in the east and it will soon be broad daylight. I solemnly tell you that no other feast will come, after this one, before that day. I solemnly tell you that I am already forcing the gates, as I am already on the top of the mountain of My sacrifice… My sacrifice is already pressing against the gates of Heaven because it is already active. Remember, man, that when it is accomplished, the sacred curtains and the celestial gates will be opened. Because Jehovah will no longer be present with His glory in the Holy of Holies, and it will be useless to put a veil between the Incognoscible One and mortals, and Mankind, who preceded us and was just, will go back to where it was destined, with the First-Born heading it, already a complete whole in body and spirit, and His brothers wearing the garment of light that they will have until also their bodies are called to the jubilation. »

Jesus in the singing tone used by synagogue leaders and rabbis repeating biblical words or psalms, says: « And He said to me: "Prophesy over these bones and say to them: 'Dry bones, hear the word of the Lord… I am going to inspire the spirit into you and you will live. I shall put sinews in you, I shall make flesh grow on you, I shall cover you with skin and give your breath and you will live and you will learn that I am the Lord… I am now going to open your graves… I shall raise you from your graves… When I put My spirit in you, you will live and I shall resettle you on your own soil'". »

He resumes His normal way of speaking and lowering His arms that He had stretched out He says: « Two are the resurrections of what is arid and dead to life. Two are outlined in the words of the prophet. The first is resurrection to Life and in Life, that is, in Grace which is Life, of all those who receive the Word of the Lord, the spirit generated by the Father, and is God like the Father, Whose Son He is, and is named Word, the Word Who is Life and gives Life. That Life of which everybody is in need, and of which Israel, like the Gentiles, is devoid. Because if so far it was sufficient for Israel to hope for and await the Life coming from Heaven, in order to have eternal Life, from now on Israel will have to accept the Life in order to live. I solemnly tell you that those of My people who do not accept Me-Life, will not have the Life, and My coming will be for them cause of death, because they will have rejected the Life that was coming to them to be communicated to them. The hour has come when Israel will be divided into those who are alive and those who are dead. It is the hour to choose to live or die. The Word has spoken, He has shown His Origin and

Power, He has cured, taught, raised people from the dead, and He will soon have accomplished His mission. There is no more excuse for those who do not come to the Life. The Lord passes by. Once He has passed, He does not come back. He did not go back into Egypt to give life back to the first-born of those who had scoffed at and oppressed Him in His children. He will not come back this time either, after the sacrifice of the Lamb has decided destinies. Those who do not receive Me before My passing, and who hate and will hate Me, will not have My Blood to sanctify their spirits, they will not live and will not have their God with them for the remainder of their pilgrimage on the Earth. Without Divine Manna, without the protective bright cloud, without the Water coming from Heaven, devoid of God, they will go wandering through the vast desert that is the Earth, all the Earth, entirely a desert, if those who cross it lack union with Heaven, the closeness of the Father and Friend: God. And there is a second resurrection: the universal one, when the bones which have been dry and scattered for ages, will become fresh and covered with sinews, flesh and skin. And it will be the Judgement. And the flesh and blood of the just will rejoice with their spirits in the eternal Kingdom, and the flesh and blood of the damned will suffer with their spirits in the eternal punishment. I love you, o Israel; I love you, o Gentilism; I love you, o Mankind! And because of this love I invite you to Life and to the blissful Resurrection. »

Those who have gathered in the vast hall are fascinated. There is no difference between the amazement of the Hebrews and that of the others, from different places and religions. Nay, I would say that the ones to be most reverently surprised are the foreigners.

A dignified old man, murmurs between his teeth.

« What did you say, man? » asks Jesus turning round.

« I said that… I was repeating to myself the words I heard in my youth from my teacher: "Man has been granted to rise to divine perfection through virtue. In man there is the brightness of the Creator and the more man ennobles himself through virtue, by almost consuming matter in the fire of virtue, the more that brightness is revealed. And man has been granted to know the Being Who, at least once in man's lifetime, with severe or paternal affection, shows Himself to man, so that he may say: 'I must be good. Poor me, if I am not so! Because an immense Power flashed in front of me to make me understand that virtue is an obligation and a sign of the noble nature of man'. You will find that flash of Divinity in the beauty of nature, or in the word of a dying man, or in the glance of an unhappy person who looks at you and judges, or in the silence of a beloved person who, by being quiet, reproaches a shameful action of yours, you will find it in the fright of a child seeing a violent action of yours, or in the silence of night when you

are all alone with yourselves, and in the most closed and solitary room, you will become aware of another I, much more powerful than yours, Who speaks with a soundless sound. And that will be the God, this God Who must exist, this God Whom Creation worships perhaps without being aware of it, this God, Who the Only One, really satisfies the feelings of virtuous men, who are not sated and comforted by our ceremonies and our doctrines, or before the empty altars, quite empty, notwithstanding that a statue dominates them". I know these words well because for many years I have been repeating them as my code and my hope. I have lived, worked, and I have suffered and wept. But I endured everything, and I hope virtuously, hoping to meet, before my death, this God that Hermogenes promised that I would meet. Now I was saying to myself that I have really seen Him. And not as a flash, and I have not heard His word as a soundless sound. But the Divine One has appeared to me in the clear and most beautiful shape of man, and I heard Him and I am replete with sacred astonishment. The soul, this thing that true men admit, my soul receives You, o Perfection, and says to You: "Teach me Your Way and Your Life and Your Truth, so that one day I, a lonely man, may be joined to You, Supreme Beauty". »

« We shall be rejoined. And I tell you that, later, you will be united again to Hermogenes. »

« But he died without knowing You! »

« Material knowledge is not the only necessary one to possess Me. The man who through his virtue succeeds in feeling the unknown God and in living virtuously in homage to that God, can be really said to have known God, because God revealed Himself to him, as a reward for his virtuous life. It would be dreadful if it were necessary to know Me personally. Very soon it would not be possible for anyone to be united to Me. Because, I tell you, the Living One will soon leave the kingdom of the dead to go back to the Kingdom of Life, and men will have no further possibility to know, except through faith and the spirit. But the knowledge of Me will not stop, nay it will spread and in a perfect way, as it will be devoid of everything that makes senses dull. God will speak, God will act, God will live, God will reveal Himself to the souls of His believers by means of His unknowable and perfect Nature. And men will love the God-Man. And the God-Man will love men with the new means, with the ineffable means that His infinite love will leave on the Earth before going back to the Father, after everything has been accomplished by Him. »

« Oh! Lord! Lord! Tell us how we shall be able to find You and to know that it is You Who are speaking to us and where You are, after You have gone away! » many of them exclaim. And some go on: « We are Gentiles, and we do not know Your law. We have not

enough time to stay here and follow You. How shall we acquire that virtue that makes one worthy of knowing God? »

Jesus smiles, brightly handsome in the happiness of His conquests in Gentilism and He kindly explains:

« Do not worry about learning many laws. These will come (and He lays His hands on the shoulders of Peter and Thaddeus) to bring My Law to the world. But until they come, follow as a rule the following few sentences in which all My Law of Salvation is summarised. Love God with all your hearts. Love authorities, relatives, friends, servants, people, and also your enemies, as you love yourselves. And to be sure that you do not commit sin, before every action, whether you have been ordered to do it or it is a spontaneous one, ask yourselves: "Would I like what I am about to do to this fellow, to be done to me?". And if you feel that you would not like it, do not do it. With these simple lines you are able to trace in yourselves the way by which God will come to you and you will go to God. Because no man would be pleased if a son were ungrateful, or if someone killed him, or another robbed him, or took his wife, or seduced his sister or his daughter or usurped his house, his fields, or his faithful servants. With that rule you will be good children and good parents, good husbands, brothers, merchants, friends. So you will be virtuous, and God will come to you.

I have around Me not only Hebrews and proselytes, in whom there is no wickedness, I mean that they do not come to Me to catch Me at fault, as those do who drove you out of the Temple so that you might not come to the Life, but I have also Gentiles from every part of the world. I see Cretans and Phoenicians mingled with people from Pontus and Phrygia and there is one from the shores of the unknown sea, a route to unknown lands where I will also be loved. And I see Greeks with Sicilians and people from Cyrenaica and Asia. Well, I say to you: go! Tell the people in your countries that the Light is in the world, and let them come to the Light. Tell them that Wisdom left Heaven to become bread for men, water for languishing men. Tell them that Life has come to cure and to revive what is sick or dead. And tell them that… time flows as rapidly as lightning in summer. Let those come who wish to have God. Their spirits will know God. Let those come who want to be cured. As long as My hand is free, it will cure those who invoke it with faith.

Say… Yes! Go quickly and say that the Saviour is waiting for those who expect and wish to have divine assistance at Passover in the holy City. Tell those who are in need and also those who are only curious. The spark of faith in Me, of the Faith that saves, may originate from an impure impulse of curiosity. Go! Jesus of Nazareth, the King of Israel, the King of the world assembles the representatives of the world to give them the treasures of His graces

and have them witnesses of His exaltation that will consecrate Him triumpher for ever and ever, King of kings and Lord of lords. Go!

At the dawn of My earthly life the representatives of My People came from different areas to worship the Child in Whom the Immense One was concealed. The will of a man, who considered himself powerful and was a servant of the will of God, had ordered the census of the Empire. As he obeyed an unknown and intransgressible order of the Most High, that pagan was to become the herald of God, Who wanted all the men of Israel, spread all over the world, in the Land of this people, near Bethlehem Ephrathah, to wonder at the signs that had come from Heaven at the first wailing of a new-born Baby. And as if it were not enough, other signs spoke to the Gentiles and their representatives came to worship the little poor King of kings, Who was then far from His earthly coronation, but was already King in the eyes of angels.

The hour has come when I will be King in the sight of peoples, before I return whence I came. At the end of My earthly day, in the evening of My human lifetime, it is fair that men of all peoples should be here to see Him Who is to be worshipped and in Whom all Mercy is concealed. And may all good people enjoy the early fruit of this new harvest, of this Mercy that will burst like a cloud in Nisan to swell rivers with wholesome waters, capable of making fructiferous the trees planted on their banks, as we read in Ezekiel. »

And Jesus resumes curing sick people and listens to their names, as now they all wish to say their own: « I Zilla I Zabdi… I Gail… I Andrew… I Theophanus… I Selina… I Olyntus I Philip I Elissa… I Berenice… My daughter Gaia… I Argenide I… I… I »

He has finished and He would like to go away. But how insistently they beg Him to stay, to speak again!

And a man, probably blind in one eye, that is covered with a bandage, in order to keep Him a little longer, says: « Lord, I was struck by a man, who was jealous of my good trade. I saved myself with difficulty. But I lost an eye, burst by the blow. Now my enemy has become poor and unpopular and he has fled to a village near Corinth. I come from Corinth. What should I do to him who almost killed me? It is fair that I should not do to other people what I would not like to receive. But I have already received from him… harm; much harm… » and his face is so expressive that one can read on it the thought he has not spoken: « so I should take my revenge on him… »

Jesus looks at him with His smiling sapphire eyes, but with the dignified countenance of the Master, and says: « And you, a man from Greece, are asking Me? Did your great men not say that mortals become like God when they respond to the two gifts that God

grants them to make them like Himself, that is: to be able to be in the truth and to assist one's neighbour? »

« Of course, Pythagoras! »

« And did they not say that man approaches God not through science, power or other means, but by doing good? »

« Yes, Demosthenes! But excuse me, Master, if I ask You… You are a Hebrew and Hebrews are not fond of our philosophers… How do You know such things? »

« Man, because I am the Wisdom that inspired the minds that thought those words. I am wherever Good is active. You, a Greek, should listen to the advice of the wise men, through which advice I still speak. Do good to those who have done you wrong, and God will say that you are holy. And now let Me go. I have other people waiting for Me. Goodbye, Valeria. And do not be afraid for Me. It is not yet My hour. And when My hour comes, not even Caesar's armies could stop My enemies. »

« Hail, Master. And pray for me. »

« That peace may possess you. Goodbye. Peace to you, leader of the synagogue. Peace to My believers and to those who seek peace. »

And with a gesture that is a greeting and a blessing, He leaves the hall, He goes across the yard and out into the street…

533. Judas Iscariot and Jesus' Enemies.

2nd December 1946.

I do not see Jesus, or Peter, or Judas of Alphaeus, or Thomas. But I see the other nine walking towards the Ophel suburb.

The people in the streets are nothing like the large crowds at the Feasts of Passover, Pentecost and of the Tabernacles; it is mostly town people. It would appear that the Feast of Lights was not an important one and the Hebrews were not compelled to be present in Jerusalem. Only those who happened to be in town, or those of the villages near Jerusalem, came to town and went up to the Temple. The others, both because of the season and of the peculiarity of the feast, remained at home in their towns.

But there are many disciples in Jerusalem: those, who out of love for the Lord, have left home and relatives, business and work, and have joined the apostles. But I do not see Isaac, or Abel, or Philip, or Nicolaus, who went to take Sabea to Aera. They are speaking to one another in a friendly manner, telling and listening to all the events that have taken place while they were separated. I would think that they have already seen the Master, probably at the Temple, because they are not surprised at His absence. They are walking slowly, stopping now and again, as if they were waiting for someone, looking ahead and behind, at the streets

descending from Sion towards this one, that takes one to the southern gates of the town.

The Iscariot, who is almost in the rear and is speaking to a little group of disciples full of good will but lacking in knowledge, is called twice by name by some Judaeans, who are following the group without mingling with it, I do not know with what intentions or task. And twice the Iscariot shrugs his shoulders without even turning round. But the third time he is forced to do so, because one of the Judaeans departs from his group, elbows his way through the group of the disciples, gets hold of Judas by the sleeve, and compels him to stop saying: « Come away for a moment, we must speak to you. »

« I have no time and I cannot » replies the Iscariot resolutely.

« You may go. We will wait for you. In any case we cannot leave town until Thomas comes » says Andrew, who is the one nearest to him.

« All right, go ahead, I will come at once » says Judas who does not appear to be willing to do what he has to do.

When he is alone, he says to the pestering fellow: « So? What do you want? What do you all want? Have you not yet finished bothering me? »

« Oh! what a high-and-mighty manner you are putting on! But when we sent for you to give you money, you did not think that we were bothering you! You are proud, man! But there is someone who can make you humble… Bear that in mind. »

« I am a free man and… »

« No. You are not free. He is free whom we cannot enslave in any way. And you know His name. You!… You are a slave to everything and to everybody, and first of all to your pride. In short. Bear in mind that if you do not come to Caiaphas' house before the sixth hour, there will be trouble for you! » A real threat of trouble.

« All right! I will come. But you had better leave me alone if you want… »

« What? You swindler… a good-for-nothing… »

Judas frees himself pushing away the man who was holding him, and he runs off saying: « I will tell you when I am there. »

He joins his group. He is pensive and somewhat grim. Andrew asks him kindly: « Bad news? No, eh? Perhaps your mother… »

Judas, who at first had looked askance at him, quite ready to give a sharp reply, becomes more humane, and says: « Yes. Not very good… You know… the season… Now… I have just remembered an order of the Master. If that man had not stopped me, I would have forgotten about it… But he mentioned the place where he lives and that name reminded me of the task I was given. Now when I go for it, I will call also on that man and I shall have

more details… »

Andrew, so simple and honest as he is, is far from suspecting that his companion is lying. And he kindly says: « Well go, go at once. I will tell the others. Go and get rid of your worry… »

« No. I must wait for Thomas, on account of the money. A moment sooner or later… »

The others, who had stopped waiting for them, look at them approaching.

« Judas has received sad news » says Andrew thoughtfully.

« Yes… only vaguely. But I shall have more information when I go to do what I have… »

« What? » asks Bartholomew.

« There is Thomas coming » says simultaneously John. And Judas takes advantage of that not to reply.

« Have I kept you waiting long? The fact is that I wanted to do the job properly… And I did. Look what a beautiful purse. Very good for the poor. The Master will be pleased. »

« We needed it. We did not have a farthing left for beggars » says James of Alphaeus.

« Give me it » says the Iscariot stretching out his hand towards the heavy purse that Thomas is tossing in his hands.

« Actually… Jesus entrusted me with the task of the sale and I must give the proceeds to Him. »

« You will tell Him how much you got. Now give me it, because I am in a hurry to go away. »

« No, I am not going to give it to you! When we were going through the Sixtus market Jesus said to me: "Then you will give Me the money". And that is what I am going to do. »

« What are you afraid of? That I may take part of it or that I may deprive you of the merit of the sale? I sold at Jericho, too, and very well. For years I have been responsible for the money. It is my right. »

« Oh! listen! If you want to quarrel over that, take it. I fulfilled my task and I am not interested in the rest. Here it is, take it. There are many things much nicer than that!… » and Thomas hands the purse to Judas.

« Really, if the Master said… »-says Philip.

« Don't let us quibble! We had better go, now that we are all together. The Master told us to be at Bethany before the sixth hour. We shall hardly be in time » says James of Zebedee.

« I will leave you, then. Go on, because I will go and come back at once. »

« No! He said very clearly: "Remain all together" » says Matthew.

« You are to remain all together. But I must go. Particularly now that I heard of my mother!… »

« His words could be interpreted also like that. If he received instructions

of which we are unaware… » says John conciliatorily.

The others, with the exception of Andrew and Thomas, are not very inclined to let him go. Finally they say: « Well, go. But be quick and prudent… »

And Judas runs away along a narrow street towards the hill of Zion, while the others set out again.

« However, it is not fair. We have not done the right thing. The Master had said: "Be always together and be good". We have disobeyed Him. I am upset » say Simon Zealot after some time.

« I thought that, too… » replies Matthew.

The apostles are all in a group since they had to discuss their business. I noticed that the disciples always stand aside respectfully every time the apostles gather together to discuss something.

Bartholomew says: « Let us do this. Let us dismiss now these who are following us, without waiting to be on the Bethany road. Then we shall divide into two groups and we shall wait for Judas, one group on the lower road, the other on the upper one. Those who walk faster, on the lower road, the others on the upper one. If the Master should precede us, He will see us arrive together, because one group will wait for the other outside Bethany. »

They all agree. They dismiss the disciples. Then they go together as far as the spot where one can divert towards Gethsemane taking the upper road on the Mount of Olives, or go along the Kidron, taking the lower one that also goes to Bethany and Jericho…

Judas in the meantime has been running as if he were chased. He continues for some time to go up the narrow street that takes him towards the top of Zion westwards, he then turns into a narrower street, almost a lane, that instead of going up runs down southwards. He is suspicious. He runs, and now and again he turns round as if he were frightened. He is clearly suspicious of being followed. The narrow street, winding among the corners of houses built without any town planning, end in the open country. Beyond the valley, outside the walls, there is a hill. It is a low hill covered with olive-trees, beyond the arid stony Hinnom valley. Judas is still running fast, passing between the hedges bordering the small kitchen gardens of the last houses near the walls, the poor houses of the poor people in Jerusalem and he does not go out through the Zion gate, although it is close to him, to leave the town, but he runs up towards another gate, which is rather on the western side. He is out of town. He is running like a colt to be quick. He passes like the wind near an aqueduct, and then close to the gloomy caves of the lepers of Hinnom, but he turns a deaf ear to their lamentations. It is obvious that he is seeking places avoided by other people.

He goes straight towards the hill covered with olive-trees, the solitary hill, south of the town. He draws a sigh of relief at the foot

of the hill and slackens his pace, he tidies his headgear, his belt and pulls down his tunic, which had come up, and shading his eyes from the sunshine, he looks eastwards, towards the lower road for Bethany and Jericho. But he does not see anything that may upset him. On the contrary a side of the hill acts as a curtain between him and that road. He smiles. He begins to climb the hill slowly, to take breath after so much panting. And he is pensive, and the more he thinks, the grimmer he becomes. He is certainly talking to himself, but silently. At a certain moment he stops, he takes the purse from his bosom, he watches it carefully, then he puts it back in his bosom after dividing its contents, part of which he puts into his own purse, probably to ensure that what he has concealed in his bosom may not seem too bulky.

Among the olive-trees there is a house. A beautiful house. The most beautiful one on the hill, because the other little houses spread over the slopes, I do not know whether they are part of the estate or they belong to other people, are really modest. He arrives there along a kind of avenue covered with sand among the olivetrees planted orderly. He knocks at the door. He makes himself known. He goes in. He goes resolutely beyond the hall into a square yard on the sides of which there are many doors. He pushes one of them. He enters a large room in which there are many people, among whom I recognise the sly and at the same time resentful face of Caiaphas, the ultra-pharisaic face of Helkai, the stonemarten face of Felix, the member of the Sanhedrin, together with the viper's face of Simon. Farther back there is Doras, the son of Doras, whose features are more and more like his father's, and with him there are Cornelius and Ptolmai. And there are the scribes Sadoc and Hananiah, old and wrinkled with age, but young in malice, and Callascebona the Elder, and Nathanael ben Phaba and then a Doro, a Simon, a Joseph, a Joachim, whom I do not know. Caiaphas mentions the names, I write them. He ends saying: «… gathered here to judge you. »

Judas' face is strange: it shows fear, anger and violence at the same time. But he is silent. He does not display his haughtiness. The others surround him, scoffing at him, each in his own way.

« Well? What have you done with our money? What are you going to tell us, you wise man, who can do everything quickly and well? Where is the fruit of your work? You are a liar, a charlatan, a good-for-nothing. Where is the woman? You have not her either? And so instead of serving us you are serving Him, eh? Is that how you help us? » It is a furious charge of people shouting and bawling threateningly, but many of their words escape me.

Judas lets them howl. When they are tired and breathless, he begins to speak: « I have done what I could. Is it my fault if He is a man whom no one can induce to commit sin? You said that you

wanted to test His virtue. I have given you the proof that He does not sin. So I have served you with regard to what you wanted. Have you, all of you, succeeded in putting Him in a situation whereby He may be prosecuted? No, you have not. From every attempt of yours to make Him appear a sinner, to lure Him into a trap, He has come out greater than previously. So, if you have not been successful with your hatred, was I to succeed, when I do not hate Him, and I am only disappointed of following a poor innocent man, who is too holy to be a king, a king capable of crushing his enemies? What harm has He done to me that I should injure Him? I am saying so because I think that you hate Him to the extent of wanting His death. I can no longer believe that you only want to convince the people that He is mad, and convince us, me, for our own good, and Him as well, out of pity for Him. You are too generous to me, and too furious seeing that He is above evil, for me to believe you. You have asked me what I have done with your money. I used it as you know. I had to spend it extravagantly to convince the woman… And I was not successful with the first one and… »

« Be quiet! That is not true. She was mad on Him and she certainly came at once. In any case you guaranteed it, because you told us that she had admitted it. You are a thief. I wonder for what purpose you have used the money! »

« To ruin my soul, you murderers of souls! To make a sly man of myself, one who has no more peace, and feels he is suspected by Him and by his companions. Because, you had better know that He has found me out… Oh! I wish He had rejected me! But He does not reject me. No. He does not drive me away. He defends me, He protects me, He loves me!… Your money! Why did I ever accept the first farthing? »

« Because you are a wretch. You have enjoyed our money and now you are weeping because you had a good time with it. Liar! In the meantime we have concluded nothing and the crowds around Him are growing in numbers and are more and more enchanted. Our ruin is drawing closer, through your fault! »

« My fault? Why then did you not dare to arrest Him and accuse Him of wanting to be made king? You also told me that you wanted to tempt Him notwithstanding that I had told you that it was quite useless, as He does not crave for power. If you are so clever, why did you not induce Him to commit a sin against His mission? »

« Because He slipped out of our hands. He is a demon and He vanishes like smoke whenever He wishes. He is like a snake: He enchants you, and there is nothing you can do if He looks at you. »

« If He looks at His enemies: at you. Because I see that if He looks at those who do not hate with all their strength, as you do, then

His eyes make them move and be active. Oh! His eyes! Why does He look at me thus and make me good, since I am a monster by myself and you make me ten times more monstruous?! »

« How many words! You assured us that you would help us for the welfare of Israel. Do you not understand, you miserable wretch, that this man is our ruin? »

« Ours? Of whom? »

« Of the whole population! The Romans… »

« No. He is only your ruin. You are afraid of your own ruin. You know that Rome will not be pitiless towards us because of Him. You are aware of that, as well as I am and the people are. But you are trembling because you know, you fear that He may throw you out of the Temple, out of the Kingdom of Israel. And He would do the right thing. He would do a good thing to clean His threshing floor of you, filthy hyenas, dirty asps!… » He is furious.

They get hold of him, they shake him, as they are now furious themselves, they almost knock him down… Caiaphas shouts in his face: « All right. It is so. And if it is so, we are entitled to defend what belongs to us. And since little means are not sufficient any more to convince Him to go away, and not interfere with us, we will arrange the matter by ourselves, leaving you out, you fainthearted servant and chatterbox. And after Him we will deal with you as well, do not doubt it and… »

Helkai keeps Caiaphas quiet and with his ice-cold calmness of a poisonous snake he says: « No. Not so. You are exaggerating, Caiaphas. Judas has done what he could. You must not threaten him. After all has he not the same interests as we have? »

« Don't be silly, Helkai. His interests? I want Him to be crushed! Judas wants Him to triumph, so that he may triumph with Him. And you say… » shouts Simon.

« Peace, peace! You always say that I am severe. But to day I am the only good one. We must understand and pity Judas. He helps us as best he can. He is our good friend, but, of course, he is also the Master's friend. His heart is anguished… He would like to save the Master, himself and Israel… How can he conciliate things so opposed. Let him speak. »

The uproar calms down. Judas can speak at last and he says: « Helkai is right. I… What do you want of me? I do not yet know precisely what you want. I have done what I could. I cannot do more than that. He is by far greater than I am. He reads my heart… and He never treats me as I deserve. I am a sinner and He knows and He absolves me. If I were not such a coward I should… I should kill myself to make it impossible for me to hurt Him. » Judas sits down crushed by the situation. With his face in his hands, his eyes wide open gazing at the void, he is clearly suffering in the struggle between his opposed instincts…

« Nonsense! What do you expect Him to know? You are behaving like that because you are sorry that you pushed yourself forward! » exclaims the one named Cornelius.

« And even if it were so? Oh! I wish it were so! If I were really repentant and capable of remaining in such repentance!… »

« See that! Have you heard him? Our poor money! » says Hananiah moaning.

« We are having to deal with one who does not know what he wants. We have chosen one who is worse than a blockhead! » exclaims Felix aggravating the situation.

« A blockhead? A puppet, you should say! The Galilean pulls him with one string and he goes to the Galilean. We pull him and he comes to us » shouts Sadoc.

« Well, if you are so much cleverer than I am, go on by yourselves. As from today I will take no further interest in the matter. Do not expect any more warnings or words from me. In any case I could not give you any, as He suspects and watches me… »

« Did you not say that He absolves you? »

« Yes. He does. Because He knows everything! Oh! » Judas presses his hands against his face.

« Go away, then, you woman dressed as a man, you disfigured wretch! Go away! We will carry on by ourselves. And make sure you do not speak to Him about this, or you will have to pay for it. »

« I am going! I wish I had never come! But remember what I have already told you. He met your father, Simon, and your brother-inlaw, Helkai. I do not think that Daniel has spoken. I was present and I have never seen them speak standing aside. But your father! He did not speak, so my fellow-disciples told me. He did not even mention your name. He only said that his son had driven him away because he loved the Master and did not approve of your behaviour. But he said that we meet, that I come to your house… And he may tell also the rest. Tekoah is not at the end of the world… Do not say that I have given you away, when we are already too many to be informed of your intentions. »

« My father will never speak again. He died » says Simon slowly.

« He is dead? Did you kill him? How horrible! Why did I tell you where he was!… »

« I did not kill anybody. I have not been out of Jerusalem. There are many ways of dying. Are you surprised that an old man, an old man who goes around collecting money, is killed? In any case… it's his fault. If he had lived quietly, if he did not have eyes to see, ears to hear and a tongue to reproach, he would still be honoured and served in his son's house… » Simon says with exasperating slowness.

« In short… did you get someone to kill him? Parricide! »

« You are mad. The old man was struck, he fell, he hurt his head

and died. An accident. A simple accident. It was his bad luck that he had to collect the toll from a rascal… »

« I know you, Simon. And I cannot believe… You are a murderer… » Judas is dismayed.

Simon laughs in his face saying: « And you are raving. You see a crime where there is only an accident. I was informed only the day before yesterday and I have done the necessary, to take vengeance and to give honour. But if I was able to honour the corpse, I was not able to get hold of the murderer. Certainly a highwayman, who had come down from the Adummim mountains to sell at the markets what he had stolen… Who will ever be able to catch him? »

« I don't believe it… Go away! Let me go!… You are… worse than jackals… Away with you! » and he picks up his mantle that had fallen on the floor and he moves to go out.

But Hananiah gets hold of him with his rapacious hand, saying: « And the woman? Where is the woman? What did she say? What did she do? Do you know? »

« I know nothing… Let me go… »

« You are lying! You are a liar! » shouts Hananiah.

« I do not know. I swear it. She came. That is certain. But no one saw her. I did not, because I had to leave at once with the Rabbi. My companions did not see her either. I questioned them carefully… I saw the broken jewels that Eliza brought into the kitchen… and I know nothing else. I swear it by the Altar and the Tabernacle! »

« And who can believe you? You are a coward. As you betray your Master, you can betray us as well. But be careful! »

« I am not betraying. I swear it by the Temple of God! »

« You are a perjurer. You look it. You are serving Him, not us… »

« No. I swear it by the Name of God. »

« Say it, if you dare confirm your oath! »

« I swear it by Jehovah! » and he turns pale in pronouncing the Name of God thus. He trembles, stammers, he does not succeed in saying it as it is usually pronounced. It sounds as if he says a J, and H and a V, all drawled and with an aspiration at the end. Something like: Jeocveh. In short, his way of pronouncing it is very strange.

An almost frightening silence is reigning in the room. They have even moved away from Judas… Then Doras and another one say: « Repeat the same oath to confirm that you will serve us only… »

« No! May you be cursed! I will not! I swear that I have not betrayed you and that I will not denounce you to the Master. And that is already a sin. But I am not going to have my future bound up with you, because tomorrow, on the strength of my oath you could compel me to do anything, even to commit a crime. No! Denounce me as a impious person to the Sanhedrin, denounce me as a

killer to the Romans. I will not defend myself. I will let them kill me… And it will be a good thing for me. But I am not going to swear any more… » and with violent efforts he frees himself from those holding him, and he runs away shouting: « But you had better know that Rome is watching you, that Rome loves the Master… » A mighty bang of the door resounding all over the house is the clear sign that Judas has left that den of wolves.

They look at one another… Rage, and perhaps fear, makes them deadly pale… And as they cannot give vent to their anger and fear on anybody, they quarrel among themselves. They try to lay on each other the responsibility for the steps taken and of the consequences they may have to suffer. Some reproach for one thing, some for another, some with regard to the past, some to the future. Some shout: « It was you who wanted to seduce Judas »; some say: « It was a mistake to ill-treat him. You have given yourselves away! »; some suggest: « Let us run after him with money, with excuses… »

« Oh! no » screams Helkai who is the most reproached. « Leave it to me and you will have to say that I am wise. Judas, when he has no more money, will become meek. Oh! as meek as a lamb! » and he laughs venomously. « He will not give in today, tomorrow, perhaps for a month… But then… He is too depraved to be able to live in the poverty offered to him by the Rabbi… and he will come to us… Ha! Ha! Let me see to it! I know… »

« Yes. But in the meantime… Did you hear what he said? The Romans are spying upon us! The Romans love Him! And it is true. Also this morning and yesterday, and the day before yesterday there were some waiting for Him in the Court of the Gentiles. The women of the Antonia are always there… They come from as far as Caesarea to hear Him… »

« Whims of females! I would not worry about that. The man is handsome. He is a good speaker. They are mad for loquacious demagogues and philosophers. As far as they are concerned the Galilean is one of them, nothing else. And it helps them to divert their minds in their idle time. It takes patience to succeed! Patience and cunning. And courage, too. But you have none. And you want to do things, but you do not want to show yourselves. I told you what I would do. But you do not want it… »

« I am afraid of the crowds. They are too fond of Him. Love here. Love there. Who would touch Him? If we drive Him out, we will be driven out ourselves… We must… » says Caiaphas.

« We must not miss any more opportunities. How many have we lost! At the first one we get, we must put pressure on those who are hesitant among us, and then take action also with the Romans. »

« Easily said! But when and where have we had the opportunity to act? He does not sin, He does not aim at power, He does not… »

« If there isn't one, we must create it And now let us go. Meanwhile we will keep an eye on Him The Temple is ours. Rome rules outside. Outside there are the crowds defending Him. But inside the Temple »

534. The Seven Lepers Cured. Instructions to the Apostles and Arrival at Bethany.

4th December 1946.

Jesus with Peter and Judas Thaddeus is walking fast in a gloomy stoney place, on one side of the town. As I cannot see the green olive-grove, but I only see the hill, or rather the hills with little or no greenery to the west of Jerusalem, among which is the gloomy Golgotha, I think that I am outside the eastern side of the town.

« We shall be able to give them something with what we purchased. It must be terrible to live in the sepulchres in winter » says Thaddeus who is laden with parcels just like Peter.

« I am glad we went to the freedmen as we received this money for the lepers. Poor wretches! During these feast days no one thinks of them Every one is enjoying himself… they will remember their lost homes… Alas! If they only believed in You! Will they believe, Master? » asks Peter, who is always so simple and so attached to his Jesus.

« Let us hope so, Simon, let us hope so. Let us pray in the meantime… » And they proceed praying.

The gloomy Hinnon valley appears with its sepulchres of living beings.

« Go ahead and supply them » says Jesus.

The two go on speaking in loud voices. The faces of lepers appear at the openings of caves or shelters.

« We are disciples of Rabbi Jesus » says Peter. « He is coming and has sent us to assist you. How many are you? »

« Seven here. Three on the other side, beyond En Rogel » says one on behalf of everybody.

Peter opens his bundle and Thaddeus his. They make ten portions. Bread, cheese, butter, olives. The oil, where can they put the oil that is in a little jar?

« One of you should bring a vessel. Over there, at the rock. You will divide the oil among you, like brothers and in the name of Jesus, Who preaches love for our neighbour » says Peter.

Meanwhile a leper comes down limping towards them near a large rock, and he lays a chipped jug on it. He looks at them while they pour oil into it and as he is greatly surprised he asks: « Are you not afraid to be so close to me? » In fact only the rock is between the two apostles and the leper.

« We are only afraid of offending love. He sent us here telling us to assist you, because those who follow the Christ must love as the Christ loves. May this oil open your hearts, may it give them light as if it were already burning in the lamps of your hearts. The time of Grace has come for those who hope in the Lord Jesus. Have faith in Him. He is the Messiah and He heals bodies and souls. He can do everything because He is the Immanuel » says Thaddeus with his usual imposing dignity.

The leper is standing with the little jug in his hands looking at him as if he were enchanted. He then says: « I know that Israel has her Messiah, because the pilgrims who come to town looking for Him, speak of Him and we hear their conversation… But I have never seen Him as I came here only recently. And do you think that He would cure me? Among us there are some who curse Him and some who bless Him, and I do not know which I should believe. »

« Are those who curse Him good people? »

« No, they are cruel and they maltreat us. They want the best places and the biggest portions. In fact we do not know whether we shall be able to stay here because of that. »

« So you can see that only those who are the guests of hell hate the Messiah. Because hell realises that it is already defeated by Him and consequently it hates Him. But I tell you that He is to be loved, and with faith, if we want to receive Grace from the Most High here and hereafter » says Thaddeus again.

« If I want to have Grace! I have been married two years and I have a little son who does not know me. I became leprous only a few months ago, as you can see. » In fact he has only a few stains.

« Then apply to the Master with faith. Look! He is coming. Tell your companions and come back here. He will pass by and will cure you. »

The man waddles up the slope and calls: « Uriah! Joab! Adina! And also you who do not believe. The Lord is coming to save us. »

One, two, three lepers appear: three wrecks come forward looking more and more dreadful. The woman just shows herself. She is a living horror… Perhaps she is weeping and speaking, but it is not possible to understand anything, because her voice sounds like a yelp coming from what was a mouth and now is nothing but two horrible uncovered jaws devoid of teeth…

« Yes. I tell you that they asked me to come and call you, because He is coming to cure us. »

« No! I am not coming because I did not believe Him the other times He came… and He will not listen to me any more… in any case I cannot walk » the woman says more distinctly, with I wonder how much difficulty. She even helps herself with her fingers to hold the edges of her lips to make herself understood.

« We will take you, Adina… » say the two men and the one with the little jug.

« No… No… I sinned too much… » and she collapses where she was…

Three more come running, as best they can, and say overbearingly: « Give us the oil at once and then you can also go to Beelzebub if you wish so. »

« The oil is for everybody! » says the man with the little jug striving to defend his little treasure. But the three violent cruel men overwhelm him and snatch the jug from his hands.

« There you are! It is always the same… A little oil after such a long time!… But the Master is coming… Let us go to Him. Are you really not coming, Adina? »

« I dare not… »

The three come down towards the rock. They stop waiting for Jesus, as the apostles have gone to meet Him. And when He arrives there, they shout: « Have mercy on us, Jesus of Israel! We hope in You, Lord! »

Jesus raises His head, He looks at them in His incomparable way. He asks: « Why do you want your health again? »

« For the sake of our families, for ourselves… It is dreadful to live here… »

« You are not only bodies, My children. You have also a soul, and it is worth more than your bodies. You must be anxious about it. So do not ask to be cured only for yourselves and your families, but to have time to become acquainted with the Word of God, and to live deserving His Kingdom. Are you just? Become more so. Are you sinners? Ask to live so that you may have time to make amends for the wrong you have done… Where is the woman? Why is she not coming? Dare she not confront the face of the Son of man, when she was not afraid of having to meet the face of God when she was sinning? Go and tell her that she was forgiven much because of her repentance and resignation and that the Eternal Father has sent Me to absolve all the sins of those who have repented their past. »

« Master, Adina is no longer able to walk. »

« Go and help her to come down here. And bring another vessel. We will give you some more oil… »

« Lord, there is just enough for the others » Peter says in a low voice while the lepers are going to get the woman.

« There will be enough for everybody. Have faith. Because it is easier for you to have faith in that, than for those poor wretches to believe that their bodies will become as they were. »

In the meantime, up in the eaves a fight has started among the three bad lepers for the sharing of the food…

The woman is carried down in the arms of her companions… and

she is moaning, as much as it is possible for her, saying: « Forgive me! My past! For not asking to be forgiven in the past!… Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me! »

They lay her at the foot of the rock. And on the rock they put a kind of pot that is all chipped.

Jesus asks: « What do you say? Is it easier to increase the oil in a vase or to make flesh grow where leprosy has destroyed it? »

There is silence… Then the woman says: « The oil. But also the flesh, because You can do everything. And You can also give me the soul of my early years. I believe, Lord. »

Oh! the divine smile! It is like a light that spreads gently., cheerfully, softly! And it is in His eyes, and on His lips, and in His voice as He says: « Because of your faith be cured and forgiven. And you as well. And take this oil and food to nourish yourselves. And show yourselves to the priest, as it is prescribed. Tomorrow, at dawn I will come back with some clothes, and you will be able to go being decently dressed. Cheer up! Praise the Lord. You are no longer lepers! »

Only then the four, who so far have had their eyes fixed on the Lord, look at themselves and shout their amazement. The woman would like to stand up, but she is too naked to do so. Her dress hangs in bits and pieces and what is nude is more than what is covered. Half hidden by the rock, out of a sense of decency not only with regard to Jesus, but also to His companions, her face recomposed in its features, which are only thinned by privations, she is weeping saying without interruption: « Blessed! Blessed! Blessed! » and her blessings mingle with the horrible blasphemies of the three wicked lepers, who are now furious seeing that the others have been cured. And they fling dirt and stones.

« You cannot remain here. Come with Me. No harm will befall you. Look. The road is empty. At the sixth hour all the people are at home. You will stay with the other lepers, until tomorrow. Be not afraid. Follow Me. Take this, woman » and He gives her His mantle to cover herself.

The four, a little frightened and amazed, follow Him like four lambs. They cover the remainder of the Hinnom valley. They cross the road and go towards the Siloam pool, another gloomy place for lepers.

Jesus stops at the foot of the cliff and says: « Go up and tell them that I shall be here at the first hour tomorrow. Go and rejoice with them and preach the Master of the Gospel. » He tells the apostles to give them all the food they have and He blesses them before dismissing them…

« Let us go now. It is already past the sixth hour » says Jesus turning round to go back to the lower Bethany road.

But He is soon called back by a cry: « Jesus, Son of David, have

mercy also on us. »

« These ones have not waited for dawn… » remarks Peter.

« Let us go to them. So few are the hours in which I can do some good, without the peace of the people I help being disturbed by those who hate Me! » replies Jesus and He retraces His steps looking at the three lepers of Siloam, who are looking out from the terrace of the little hill and are repeating their cry, helped by those who have already been cured and who are behind them.

Jesus does nothing but stretch out His hands and say: « Let it be done to you as you ask. Go and live in the ways of the Lord. » He blesses them while leprosy vanishes from their bodies as a thin layer of snow melts in the sun. And Jesus runs away followed by the blessings of those who have been cured and who from their terrace are stretching out their arms in an embrace more real than if they had physically done so.

They go back to the Bethany road, that follows the course of the Kidron and forms a hairpin bend after a few hundred steps from Siloam. But when they have passed the bend and they can see the other part of the road to Bethany, there is, all alone, Judas of Kerioth, walking fast.

« It's Judas! » exclaims Thaddeus who is the first to see him.

« Why are you here? Alone? Hey! Judas! » shouts Peter.

Judas turns round suddenly. He is wan, even greenish. Peter says to him: « Have you seen the devil, that you are the same colour as lettuce? »

« What are you doing here, Judas'? Why did you leave your companions?. » Jesus asks at the same time.

Judas has recovered his self-control. He says: « I was with them. I met a man who had news of my mother. Look… » He searches his belt. He strikes his forehead with his hand saying: « I left it at that man's house! I wanted You to read the letter Or I lost it on the way… She is not very well. Or rather she is ill But there are our companions over there They have stopped. They have seen You… Master, I am upset »

« I can see that. »

« Master here are the purses. I made two… to avoid attracting attention I was alone… »

The apostles Bartholomew, Philip, Matthew, Simon and James of Zebedee are somewhat embarrassed. They approach Jesus affectionately, but they are aware of having made a mistake.

Jesus looks at them and says: « Do not do it again. It is not right for you to part from one another. If I tell you not to do it, it is because I know that you need to support one another. You are not strong enough to be able to do things by yourselves. When united, one checks or supports the other. If you are divided… »

« It was I, Master, who gave the wrong advice, because later we

remembered that You had told us not to divide, but to go all together to Bethany, and Judas had gone away with a just reason, and we did not think of going with him. Forgive me, Lord » says Bartholomew humbly and frankly.

« Yes, I forgive you. But I repeat: do not do it again. Consider that obedience always saves one from at least one sin: that of presuming of being able to do by oneself. You do not know how much the demon moves around you seeking all pretexts to make you sin and make you harm your Master, Who is already so fiercely persecuted. These days are becoming more and more difficult for Me and for the organism that I have come to form-So, much care is required, so that I shall not say it may not be wounded and killed - because that will never happen until the end of time - but it may not be stained with dirt. Its enemies are watching you carefully, they never lose sight of you, and likewise they weigh every action and word of Mine. And they do that to have valid reasons for disparagement. If they see that you are quarrelsome, divided, somehow imperfect, even in trifling matters, they pick up and adulterate what you have done and they will make use of it like dirt and a charge against Me and My Church that is now forming. See! I am not reproaching you, but I am advising you. For your own good. Oh! My friends, do you not know that they will adulterate even the best things and will exhibit them in order to be able to accuse Me with an appearance of justice. So, in future be more obedient and prudent. »

The apostles are all moved by Jesus' kindness.

Judas changes colour continuously. He is dejected, a little behind them all, until Peter says to him: « What are you doing there? You are not to be blamed more than the others. So come forward and stay with the others » and he is obliged to obey.

They are walking fast because, although there is sunshine, a cold breeze is blowing making them walk fast to warm themselves. And they have already walked a good distance when Nathanael, who is cold and it is obvious as he wraps himself up in his mantle more than ever, notices that Jesus has, on only His tunic: « Master, but what have You done with Your mantle? »

« I gave it to a leprous woman. We cured and consoled seven lepers. »

« But You must be cold. Take mine » says the Zealot and he adds: « I became accustomed to the winter winds in the ice-cold sepulchres. »

« No, Simon. Look. There is Bethany. We shall soon be in the house. And I am not cold at all. I have had much spiritual joy today and it is more comfortable than a warm mantle. »

« Brother, You reward us for what we have not done. You cured and consoled, not us… » says Thaddeus.

« You prepared their hearts to have faith in the miracle. So with Me and like Me you helped to cure and comfort. If you knew how I rejoice in associating you with Me in every deed! Do you not remember the words of My cousin John of Zacharias: "He must grow greater, I must grow smaller"? He rightly said so, because every man, no matter how great he may be, even if he were Moses or Elijah, becomes obscured like a star assailed by sunbeams, at the appearance of Him Who comes from Heaven and is greater than any man, because He comes from the Most Holy Father. But I also, the Founder of an Organism that will last throughout centuries and will be as holy as its Founder and Head, of an Organism that will last to represent Me, and will be one thing with Me, just as the limbs and body of man are one thing with the head dominating them, I must say: "That body must brighten and I must grow dim". You will have to continue My work. Soon I shall no longer be here among you, here on the Earth, here materially, to guide My apostles, disciples and followers. However, I shall always be with you spiritually, and your spirits will perceive My Spirit and receive My Light. But you will have to appear, in the first line, while I have gone back whence I came. That is why I am preparing you by degrees to appear as the first. At times you object saying: "In the early days You sent us out more". You had to be known. Now that you are known, now that for this little spot of the Earth you already are "the Apostles", I always keep you near Me, taking part in every action of Mine, so that the world may say: "He makes them His partners in the work He accomplishes, because they will remain after Him to continue His work". Yes, My friends. You will have to proceed more and more, and become enlightened, continuing Me, being Me, whereas I, like a mother who little by little stops supporting her little son who has learned to walk, will withdraw… The handing over from Me to you must not take place violently. The little ones of the flock and the humble believers would be frightened. I will hand them over to you gently so that they may not feel to be alone even for one moment. And love them so much, as I love them. Love them in memory of Me as I have loved them… »

Jesus becomes silent engrossed in thought. And He comes back to reality only when, a little outside Bethany, He meets the other apostles who have come along the other road. They proceed all together towards Lazarus' house. John says that they are already expected, because the servants have seen them. He also says that Lazarus is dangerously ill.

« I know. That is why I told you that we shall be staying in Simon's house. But I did not want to go away without greeting him again. »

« But why do You not cure him? It would also be fair. You let all

Your best servants die. I do not understand… » says the Iscariot, who is always bold, even at his best moments.

« There is no need for you to understand in advance. »

« Yes. There is no need. But do You know what Your enemies are saying? That You cure when You can, not when You want, that You protect when You can… Do You not know that that old man from Tekoah is already dead? And that he was killed? »

« Dead? Who? Elianna? How? » they all ask excitedly. Peter only asks: « And how do you know? »

« I heard of it by chance a short while ago in the house where I was, and God knows whether I am lying. Apparently it was a highwayman, who came down in the guise of a merchant, and instead of paying the toll, killed him… »

« Poor old soul! What an unhappy life! What a sad death! Are You not saying anything, Master? » many say.

« I have nothing to say except that the old man served the Christ until his death. I wish they were all like him! »

« Tell me, son of Alphaeus, is it not as you said, by any chance, eh? » Peter asks Thaddeus.

« It may well be. A son who expels his father out of hatred, and of this kind of hatred, may be capable of anything. Brother, Your words are quite true: "And a brother will be against his brother, and a father against his children". »

« Yes, and those who do that will think that they are serving God. Their eyes are blind, their hearts hard, their spirits without light. And yet you will have to love them » says Jesus.

« But how shall we be able to love those who treat us thus? It will be a great effort if we do not react and we put up with their behaviour with resignation… » exclaims Philip.

« I will set an example for you and it will teach you. In due time. And if you love Me, you will do what I do. »

« Here are Maximinus and Sarah. Lazarus must be very ill, if his sisters do not come to meet You! » remarks the Zealot.

The two rush towards them and prostrate themselves. Also in their faces and garments there is the modest appearance impressed by sorrow and fatigue on the members of families struggling with death. They only say: « Master, come… » but so sorrowfully that those two words are more expressive than a long speech. And they lead Jesus at once to the door of Lazarus' little flat, while other servants take care of the apostles.

At their light knocking Martha comes to the door and half-opens it, showing her thinned wan face through the opening: « Master! Come. May You be blessed! »

Jesus goes in, and He enters Lazarus' room after going through the one preceding it. Lazarus is sleeping. Lazarus? A skeleton, a yellowish mummy that is breathing… His face is already a skull,

and in his sleep its destruction, that has already turned it into a head unfleshed by death, is even more visible. His waxen drawn skin shines on the sharp angles of his cheek-bones and jaws, on his forehead, on his eye-sockets that are so deeply sunken as to seem devoid of eyes, on his sharp nose that seems to have grown excessively so much the contour of the cheeks has vanished. His lips are so pale that they are hardly visible, and seem unable to close on the two rows of his half-covered open teeth… already the face of a dead man.

Jesus bends to look at him. He draws Himself up. He looks at the two sisters who look at Him with their souls concentrated on their eyes, two sorrowful hopeful souls. He nods to them and goes out noiselessly, into the little yard outside the two rooms. Martha and Mary follow Him. They close the door after them.

All alone, the three of them, inside the four walls, with the blue sky above them, look at one another. The sisters are not even able to ask, or to speak. But Jesus speaks: « You know Who I am. I know who you are. You know that I love you. I know that you love Me. You are aware of My power. I am aware of your faith in Me. You also know, and you in particular, Mary, that the more one loves the more one achieves. To be able to hope and to believe above all limits and above all realities that disprove faith and hope is to love. Well, for the sake of that, I tell you to hope and believe against all contrary realities. Do you understand Me? I say: hope and believe against every contrary reality. I can only stop for a few hours. As the Man, the Most High knows how much I would like to stop here with you, to assist and comfort him, to assist and comfort you. But as the Son of God I know that I must go, that I must depart… That I must not be here when… you will be wanting Me more than the air you breathe. One day, very soon, you will understand these reasons that now may seem cruel to you. They are divine reasons. Sorrowful to Me Man, as they are to you. Sorrowful now. Because now you cannot embrace and contemplate their beauty and wisdom. Neither can I reveal them to you. When everything is accomplished, then you will understand and rejoice… Listen. When Lazarus is… dead. Do not weep thus! Then send for Me at once. And in the meantime make the arrangements for the funeral inviting a large number of people, as becomes Lazarus and your household. He is a great Hebrew. Few people appreciate him for what he is. But he exceeds many in the eyes of God… I will let you know where I am, so that you can always find Me. »

« But why not be here at least at that moment? We are resigning ourselves to his death, yes… But You… But You… But You… » Martha sobs not being able to say anything else, stifling her tears in her dress…

Mary instead gazes at Jesus, as if she were hypnotised and does not weep.

« Obey, believe, hope always say yes to God Lazarus is calling you Go. I will come in a moment And if I should not have the opportunity to speak to you aside, remember what I told you. »

And while they go in hastily, Jesus sits down on a stone bench and prays.

535. At the Feast of the Dedication of the Temple.

9th December 1946.

It is impossible to stand still in the cold windy morning. A biting wind blowing on the top of the Moriah from north-east is causing garments to flutter and eyes and faces to redden. And yet there are people who have come up to the Temple to pray. But there are no rabbis with their respective groups of disciples. And the Court looks larger and above all more dignified, deprived of the bawling pompous gang that usually dwells there.

And it must be very odd to see it so empty, because everybody is surprised, as if it were something new. And Peter becomes suspicious as well. But Thomas, who looks even more robust, enveloped as he is in a wide heavy mantle, says: « They must have locked themselves in some room, lest they should lose their voices. Are you missing them? » and he laughs.

« Not V I wish I never saw them again! But I would not like it to be… » and he looks at the Iscariot who is silent, but when he is aware of Peter's glance at him, he says: « Actually they promised not to trouble us any more, unless the Master… should scandalise them. They will certainly be watching us, but as no one here sins or offends, they are not showing themselves. »

« So much the better. And may the Lord bless you, boy, if you succeeded in making them reason. »

It is still early. There are only few people in the Temple. I say « few », and that is what they seem to be, because of its vastness, considering that it takes crowds of people to make it look full. Two or three hundred people are hardly noticed in that complex of courts, porches, halls, corridors…

Jesus, the only Master in the vast Court of the Gentiles, is walking up and down speaking to His disciples and to the other ones He already found in the enclosure of the Temple. He replies to their objections or questions, He clarifies points that they were not able to clarify to themselves and to other people.

Two Gentiles come, they look at Him and go away without saying anything. Two employees of the Temple pass by, they look at Him, but they do not say anything either. Some believers approach Him, they greet Him and listen to Him. But they are still

few.

« Are we staying here any longer? » asks Bartholomew.

« It is cold and there is nobody. But it is pleasant to be here so peacefully. Master, today You really are in the House of Your Father. And as the landlord » says James of Alphaeus smiling. And he adds: « This is what the Temple must have looked like in the days of Nehemiah and of the wise pious kings. »

« I think we should go. They are spying upon us from over there… » says Peter.

« Who? Pharisees? »

« No. Those who passed by previously, and others. Let us go away, Master… »

« I am waiting for some sick people. They saw Me come into town, and the news must have already spread. They will come when it is warmer. Let us stay at least until one third of the sixth hour » replies Jesus. And He resumes walking backwards and forwards to avoid standing still in the biting air.

In fact, shortly afterwards, when the sun tries to mitigate the effects of the north wind, a woman comes with a sick girl and asks Jesus to cure her. Jesus contents her. The woman lays her offering at Jesus' feet saying: « This is for other children who are suffering. » The Iscariot picks up the money.

Later, they bring on a litter an elderly man, whose legs are diseased. And Jesus cures him.

The third to come is a group of people who ask Jesus to go outside the walls of the Temple to drive a demon out of a girl, whose rending cries can be heard even in there. And Jesus sets out behind them, going out into the street that takes one to town. Some people, among whom there are foreigners, have gathered round those who are holding the young girl, who is frothing at the mouth, writhing and rolling her eyes. She is uttering all sorts of coarse words and the more Jesus approaches her, the more she utters them and the more she struggles. Four young sturdy men are holding her with difficulty. And with insults she utters cries recognising the Christ and anxious entreaties of the spirit possessing her not to be driven out. And she monotonously repeats also some truths: « Away! Don't let me see that cursed one! Go away! The cause of our ruin. I know who You are. You are… You are the Christ. You are… No other oil anointed You but that from up there. The power of Heaven covers and protects You. I hate You! Cursed one! Don't expel me. Why do You drive us out and You do not want us, whilst You are keeping close to Yourself a legion of demons in one man only? Don't You know that the whole of hell is in one man only? Of course You know… Let me stay here, at least until the hour of… » His words stop at times, as if they were choked, at times they change, or they stop first and then they are drawled

amid cruel howls, as when she shouts: « At least allow me to go into him. Don't send me down into the Abyss! Why do You hate us, o Jesus, Son of God? Are You not satisfied with what You are? Why do You want to rule also over us? We do not want orders! Why have You come to persecute us, since we denied You? Go away! Don't pour the fire of Heaven on us! Your eyes! When they become extinguished, we will laugh… Ha! No! Not even then… You defeat us! You defeat us! May You be cursed and Your Father Who sent You, and He Who proceeds from You and is You… Ha! »

The last shout is really dreadful, the howl of a creature being slaughtered with a murderous sword piercing it slowly, and it is brought about by the fact that Jesus, after interrupting the words of the possessed girl several times, by means of a mental order, puts an end to them touching the forehead of the girl with His finger. And the shout ends in a frightful convulsion until with a loud noise resembling a guffaw and the howl of a wild beast in a nightmare, the demon leaves her shouting: « But I am not going far… Ha! Ha! Ha! » immediately followed by a sharp crash like that of a thunderbolt, although the sky is perfectly clear.

Many people run away in terror. Many crowd even closer to watch the girl who has calmed down all of a sudden, collapsing into the arms of those supporting her. She remains thus for a few moments, then she opens her eyes, she smiles, she realises that she is among people with no veil on her head and face, she lowers her head, to conceal it by raising her arm against her face.

Those who are with her would like her to thank the Master. But He says: « Do not disturb her modesty. Her soul is already thanking Me. Take her home, to her mother. It is the right place for a girl… » and leaving the people behind Him He goes back to the Temple, to the same place as before.

« Lord, did You notice that many Judaeans followed us? I recognised some of them… There they are over there! They are the ones who were spying upon us previously. Look how they are discussing among themselves… » says Peter.

« They must be discussing into which of them the demon has gone. There is also Nahum, Annas' trustee. He is the right type… » says Thomas.

« Yes. But you did not see because you had your back turned on him. But the fire burst out just over his head » says Andrew while his teeth are almost chattering. « I was close to him and I got a fright!… »

« Actually, they were all gathered together. But I saw the fire burst over us and I thought I was going to die… And more than that, I trembled for the Master. It seemed to be suspended over His head » says Matthew.

« Not at all. I saw it come out of the girl and burst over the wall of

the Temple » states Levi, the shepherd disciple.

« Do not argue with one another. The fire did not point out at anybody. It was only the sign that the demon had fled » says Jesus.

« But he said that he was not going far!… » objects Andrew.

« Words of a demon… They are not to be listened to. Let us instead praise the Most High for these three children of Abraham whose bodies and souls have been cured. »

In the meantime many Judaeans, who have come out from here and there - but there is neither a Pharisee, nor a scribe, nor a priest in their group - approach Jesus and surround Him, and one of them comes forward saying: « You have done great things today! The real work of a prophet, of a great prophet. And the spirits of the abyss have said great things of You. But their words cannot be accepted unless Your word confirms them. We are dismayed at those words. But we are seriously afraid of being deceived because Beelzebub is known to be the spirit of falsehood. We would not like to be mistaken or to be deceived. So tell us who You are, speaking the truth and justice. »

« Have I not told you many times who I am? I have been telling you for almost three years, and before Me, John told you at the Jordan and the Voice of God from Heaven. »

« That is true. But we were not there then. We… Since You are just, You must understand our worry. We would like to believe that You are the Messiah. But too often the people of God has been deceived by false Christs. With an unerring word comfort our hearts that are hoping and waiting, and we will worship You. »

Jesus looks at them severely. His eyes seem to be piercing their flesh and laying their hearts bare. He then says: « Very often men can really tell lies better than Satan. No, you will not worship Me. You never will, no matter what I tell you. And even if you did, whom would you worship? »

« Whom? Our Messiah! »

« Would you be worth so much? Who is the Messiah according to you? Tell Me, that I may know what you are worth. »

« The Messiah? The Messiah is he who by God's order will gather together the scattered people of Israel making it the triumphant people under whose power the whole world will be subject. What? Do You not know what the Messiah is? »

« I know, but not as you know. So according to you is He a man Who excelling David and Solomon and Judas Maccabee will make Israel the Nation that will rule over the world? »

« That is what He is. God promised it. All vengeance, all glory, all vindication will come from the promised Messiah. »

« It is written: "You shall worship no one but the Lord your God". Why then should you worship Me if in Me you can only see the Man-Messiah? »

« What else should we see in You? »

« What? And have you come to question Me with such feelings? Race of sly and venomous vipers! And sacrilegious as well. Because if you could see in Me only the human Messiah and you worshipped Me, you would be idolaters. God only is to be adored. And I solemnly tell you once again that He Who is speaking to you is greater than the Messiah, who you pretend has the missions and duties and powers that you, devoid of spirit and wisdom, imagine. The Messiah is not coming to give His people a kingdom such as you believe, He is not coming to take vengeance upon other powerful people. His Kingdom is not of this world and His power exceeds all the limited power of the world. »

« You are humiliating us, Master. If You are a Master and we are ignorant, why do You not want to teach us? »

« I have been doing that for three years, and you are more and more in darkness because you reject the Light. »

« It is true. Perhaps it is true. But what happened in the past, may not take place in the future. What? You Who pity publicans and prostitutes and You absolve sinners, are You going to be merciless towards us, only because we are stubborn people and we find it difficult to understand who You are? »

« It is not that you find it difficult. The trouble is that you do not want to understand. To be dull-witted would not be a fault. God has so much light that He could enlighten the dullest intellect providing it were full of good will. You lack that will. Nay you have the very opposite will. That is why you do not understand who I am. »

« It may be as You say. You can see how humble we are. But we beg You in the name of God. Answer our questions. Do not keep us in doubt any longer. How long must our minds be uncertain? If You are the Christ, tell us openly. »

« I have told you. I told you in your houses, in your squares, in the streets, in villages, upon the mountains, along rivers, in front of the sea and the deserts, in the Temple, in your synagogues, in your markets, and you do not believe Me. There is no place in Israel where My voice has not been heard. Even the places that abusively have borne the name of Israel for ages, but are separated from the Temple, even the places that gave the name to this Land of ours, but from rulers have become subjects, and never got completely rid of their errors to come to the Truth, even Syro-Phoenicia, shunned by rabbis as the land of sin, have heard My voice and known who I am. I told you, and you do not believe My words. I acted, and you have not paid attention to My action with good spirit. If you had done that, with the right intention of making sure about Me, you would have ended by having faith in Me, because the deeds I accomplish in the name of My Father bear witness to Me. Those of

good will who have followed Me because they recognised Me as the Shepherd, have believed in Me and in the witness that My deeds bear. What? Do you perhaps think that what I do has no beneficial purpose for you? No beneficial purpose for all creatures? Do not believe it. And do not think that the benefit consists in the health of the individual, recovered through My power, or in being freed from being possessed or from the sin of this one or that one. That is a benefit limited to individuals. Too little compared with the power emanated from the supernatural source, from the source which is divine, rather than supernatural, to be considered as the only benefit. There is the collective benefit of the deeds I perform. The benefit of removing all doubts in uncertain people, of convincing opponents in addition to reinforcing the faith in believers. My Father gives Me the power to do what I do for that collective benefit, in favour of all men, present and future, because my works will bear witness to Me with all future generations and will convince them of Me. Nothing is done in the works of God without a good purpose. Always bear that in mind. Meditate on the truth. »

Jesus stops for a moment. He gazes at a Judaean who is standing with his head lowered and then He says:

« You who are so pensive over there, you with the tunic the shade of ripe olives, you are wondering whether even Satan has good purposes. Do not be foolish in order to oppose Me and find errors in My words. My reply to you is that Satan is not the work of God, but of the free will of the rebellious angel. God had made him His glorious minister and thus had created him for a good purpose. Now, speaking to your own ego, you are saying: "Then God is foolish because He gave glory to a future rebel and entrusted His Will to a disobedient angel". I reply to you: "God is not foolish but He is perfect in His thoughts and deeds. He is the Most Perfect One. Creatures are imperfect, even the most perfect ones. There is always a point of inferiority in them, as compared with God. But God, Who loves them, has granted them free will so that through it the creature may be perfected in virtue and thus become more like God Father". And I also tell you, o mocker and shrewed seeker of sin in My words, that God draws a good purpose also from Evil brought about voluntarily: that of making men possess a glory they deserved. The victories over Evil are the crowns of the chosen ones. If Evil could not give rise to good consequences for people full of good will, God would have destroyed it. Because nothing in Creation must be completely devoid of incentives or good consequences.

Are you not replying to Me? Is it hard for you to have to admit that I read your heart and I defeated the unfair illations of your twisted thought? I will not compel you to do so. In the presence of so many people I will leave you to your own pride. I do not claim to

be declared winner by you. But when you are alone with these people, who are like you, and with those who sent you, then do admit that Jesus of Nazareth read the thoughts of your mind and choked your objections in your throat with the only weapon of His word of truth. But let us leave this personal interruption and revert to the many people who are listening to Me. If one person only among many should convert his spirit to the Light after hearing My words, My fatigue of speaking to stones, nay, to sepulchres full of vipers, would be recompensed.

I was saying that those who love Me have recognised Me as the Shepherd because of My words and My deeds. But you do not believe, you cannot believe, because you are not My sheep.

What are you? I am asking you. Ask yourselves in the depth of your hearts. Do not be foolish. You can know yourselves for what you are. It is enough to listen to the voices of your souls that are not happy to continue offending the Son of Him Who created them. Even if you know what you are, you will not admit it. You are neither humble, nor sincere. But I will tell you what you are. You are partly wolves and partly wild goats. But none of you, notwithstanding that you wear the skins of lambs pretending to be lambs, are true lambs. Under the soft white fleece you have all the cruel colours, the pointed horns and the fangs and claws of billygoats or wild beasts, and you want to remain such, because you delight in being such, and you dream of ferocity and rebellion. That is why you cannot love Me and you cannot follow and understand Me.

If you come into the flock, you do so to harm, to cause sorrow and to create disorder. My sheep are afraid of you. If they were like you, they should hate you. But they are not capable of hating. They are the lambs of the Prince of peace, of the Master of love, of the merciful Shepherd. And they cannot hate. They will never hate you as I will never hate you. I leave hatred to you, as it is the wicked fruit of the treble concupiscence with the unrestrained ego in the animal man, who lives forgetting that he is also a spirit, besides being flesh. I keep for Myself what is Mine: love. And I transmit it to my lambs and I offer it also to you, to make you good. If you became good, you would understand Me and you would belong to My flock, like the others who are already in it. We would love one another. I and My sheep love one another. They listen to Me, they recognise My voice.

You do not understand what it really means to know My voice. It means that one has no doubts about its origin and one can distinguish it among a thousand other voices of false prophets as the true voice that came from Heaven. Now and always, also among those who consider themselves followers of the Wisdom, and they partly are, there will be many who will not be able to tell

My voice from other voices speaking of God, more or less with justice, but which will be voices inferior to Mine… »

« You always say that You will be going away soon, then You say that You will always speak? If You go away, You will not be able to speak any more » objects a Judaean in the scornful tone in which one would speak to a person of unsound mind.

Jesus replies again in His patient sorrowful tone that sounded severe only when He began to speak to the Judaeans and later, when He replied to the internal objections of a Judaean:

« I will always speak, that the world may not become completely idolatrous. And I will speak to My disciples, who have been chosen to repeat My words to you. The Spirit of God will speak, and they will understand what even wise men will not be able to understand. Because scholars will study the word, the sentence, the manner, the place, the how, the instrument through which the Word speaks, whereas My chosen ones will not get lost in such useless studies, but, lost in love, they will listen and they will understand because the Love will speak to them. They will distinguish the ornate pages of learned people or the false pages of false prophets, of the rabbis of hypocrisy, who teach polluted doctrines or teach what they do not practise, from the simple, true deep words coming from Me. But the world will hate them because of that, because the world hates Me-Light and it hates the children of the Light, the dark world that loves darkness propitious for its sins. My sheep know and will know Me and will always follow Me, also on the ways of blood and sorrow, along which I will be the first one to go, and they will come along them after Me. The ways that lead souls to Wisdom. The ways that the blood and tears of those, who are persecuted because they teach justice, will illuminate so that they may stand out in the dark fumes of the world and of Satan, and they may be like trails of stars leading those who seek the Way, the Truth, the Life, but do not find who can take them there. Because that is what souls are in need of: of a guide who may lead them to the Life, to the Truth, to the right Way. God is merciful towards the souls that seek and do not find, not through their fault, but because of the laziness of shepherds who are like idols. God is merciful towards the souls that get lost when they are abandoned to themselves and are received by Lucifer's ministers, who are always ready to welcome those who have lost their way, to make them proselytes of their doctrines. God is merciful towards those who have been deceived only because the rabbis of God, the so-called rabbis of God, have taken no interest in them. God is merciful towards all those who come up against depression, darkness, death, through the fault of false teachers who have only the appearance of teachers and the pride of being called such. And for those poor souls, as He sent the prophets

for His people, as He sent Me for the whole world, so later, after Me, He will send the servants of the Word, of Truth and Love to repeat My words. Because My words give the Life. Therefore My sheep of the present times and of the future will have the Life that I give them through My Word, and it is eternal Life for those who accept it, and they shall never perish and no one will ever be able to snatch them from My hands. »

« We have never rejected the words of the true prophets. We have always respected John, who was the last prophet » replies a Judaean angrily, and his companions echo him.

« He died in time not to be hated and persecuted also by you. If he were still alive, his "it is against the Law" uttered for an incest, would be repeated also to you as you commit spiritual adultery by fornicating with Satan against God. And you would kill him as you intend to kill Me. »

The Judaeans become angrily uproarious and are ready to strike, as they are tired feigning to be meek.

But Jesus is not worried. He raises His voice to dominate the tumult and He shouts: « And you have asked Me who I am, hypocrites? You said that you wanted to know to be certain? And now you say that John was the last prophet? And twice you condemn yourselves for lying. Once because you say that you have never rejected the words of the true prophets, and then because, by saying that John is the last prophet and that you believe the true prophets, you deny that I also am a prophet, at least a prophet, and a true one. Lying lips! Deceitful hearts! Yes, I solemnly tell you, here in the house of My Father, that I am more than a Prophet. I have what My Father gave Me. What My Father gave Me is more precious than everything and everybody, because it is something on which the will and power of men cannot lay their rapacious hands. I have what God gave Me and although it is in Me, it is still God, and no one can snatch it from the hands of My Father or from Me, because it is the same Divine Nature. My Father and I are One. »

« Ah! How horrible! Blasphemy! Anathema!! » The howling of the Judaeans resounds in the Temple, and once again the stones used by the money-changers and vendors of animals to hold their enclosures fast, supply those who are looking for suitable weapons to strike.

But Jesus rises with His arms folded on His chest. He has climbed on a stone bench to be taller and more visible and He thus dominates the crowds with His sapphire eyes. He dominates and darts piercing glances at them. He is so solemn that He paralyses them. Instead of throwing the stones, they drop them or hold them in their hands, no longer daring to throw them at Him. Also their shouting subsides in a strange bewilderment. It is really God flashing in His Christ. And when God flashes thus, even the most

arrogant man becomes mean and frightened. I wonder what mystery is concealed in the fact that the Judaeans could be so cruel on Good Friday. What mystery there was in the fact that the Christ lacked that power of domination on that day. It was really the hour of Darkness, the hour of Satan, and they were the only ones who reigned… The Divinity, the Paternity of God had abandoned the Christ, Who was nothing but the Victim…

"Jesus remains thus for a few moments. He then resumes speaking to that corrupt and pusillanimous rabble that has lost all arrogance seeing only a divine flash. « Well? What do you want to do? You asked Me who I was. I told you. You became furious. I reminded you of what I have done, I have shown you and reminded you of many good deeds coming from My Father and accomplished with the power given to Me by My Father. For which of those deeds are you going to stone Me? Because I taught justice? Because I brought the Gospel to men? Because I came to invite you to the Kingdom of God? Because I cured your sick people, making the blind see, the paralytic walk, the dumb speak, because I freed those who were possessed, I raised the dead, I assisted the poor, I forgave sinners, I loved everybody, also those who hate Me, you and those who sent you? So, for which of these deeds do you want to stone Me? »

« It is not because of the good actions You have done, that we want to stone You, but because of Your blasphemy, because You, Who are a man, are making Yourself God. »

« Is it not written in your Law: "I said: you are gods, and children of the Most High"? Now if God called "gods" those to whom He spoke, giving an order: to live so that the likeness and image of God existing in man may appear clearly, and man may not be a demon or a brute; if men are called "gods" in the Scriptures, all inspired by God, whereby they cannot be modified or cancelled according to the will and interest of man; why do you say to Me that I blaspheme, I Whom the Father consecrated and sent to the world, because I say: "I am the Son of God"? If I did not work the deeds of My Father, you would be right in not believing Me. But I do them. And you do not want to believe Me. Believe at least those deeds, so that you may know and acknowledge that the Father is in Me and that I am in the Father. »

The storm of shouts and violence begins all over again and is louder than previously. From one of the terraces of the Temple, on which priests, scribes and Pharisees were certainly concealed to listen, many voices shout: « Get hold of that blasphemer. His sin is now a public one. We have all heard Him. Death to the blasphemer who proclaims Himself God! Punish Him as you punished the son of Shelomith of Dibri. Take Him out of town and stone Him! It is our right! It is written: "He who blasphemes must die". » The incitements of the leaders stimulate the wrath of the Judaeans,

who try to seize Jesus, tie Him up and hand Him over to the magistrates of the Temple, as they are already rushing there followed by the Temple guards.

But once again the legionaries are faster than they are, as watching from the Antonia they have seen the tumult and they come out of the barracks towards the spot where they are shouting. And they respect no one. The shafts of the lances fall heavily on heads and backs. And they stimulate one another with jeers and insults, to deal with the Judaeans: « Lie down, you dogs! Make way! Strike that stingy fellow hard, Licinus. Go away! Fear makes you stink more than ever! What do you eat, you dirty ravens, to be so fetid? You are right, Basso. They purify themselves, but they still stink. Look at that big-nosed fellow over there! Put them against the wall and we will take their names! And you, owls, come down from there. In any case we know you. The Centurion will have to write a good report for the garrison-commander. No! Leave that one. He is an apostle of the Rabbi. Don't you see that he looks like a man and not like a jackal? Look! Look how they are running away over there! Let them go! To have them all convinced we should have them all transfixed on our shafts! Only then they would be tamed. I wish it happened tomorrow! Ah! I caught you and you are not getting away. I saw you, you know? The first stone was yours. And you will have to answer for striking a soldier of Rome… And this one, too. He cursed us insulting our insignia. Ah? Did he? Really? Come here, we will make you love them in our prison… » And so, charging and sneering, catching some and putting some to flight, the legionaries clear the vast court.

But only when the Judaeans see two of them being arrested, they reveal themselves for what they are: real cowards! They either run away making a din like hens that see a hawk fly down towards them, or they throw themselves at the feet of the soldiers imploring mercy with revolting servility and flattery. A noncommissioned officer, to whose calf an old wrinkled man clings, one of the fiercest against Jesus, calling him « noble and just », gets rid of him with a vigorous jerk that makes the Judaean tumble three steps backwards and he shouts: « Go away, you old stingy fox. » And addressing one of his companions, showing his calf, he says: « They have nails like foxes, and slaver like snakes. Look here. By Jove Maximus! I am going to the thermae at once to get rid of the marks of that slobbery old man! » and he goes away angrily with his calf marked with scratches.

I have lost sight of Jesus completely. I could not say where He has gone or by which gate He has gone out. I only saw for some time the faces of the two sons of Alphaeus and of Thomas appear and disappear in the confusion, struggling to make their way, and the faces of some shepherd disciples intent on the same work. Then

they also disappeared and I was left with the last din of the wicked Judaeans intent on running here and there to avoid being captured and identified by the legionaries, who I got the impression enjoyed themselves being able to hit the Jews hard, making up for all the hatred with which they had been gratified.

536. Jesus Goes to the Grotto of the Nativity to be Alone.

11th December 1946.

Jesus is behind the Temple, near the Gate of the Sheep, outside the town. Around Him there are the apostles and the shepherd disciples, with the exception of Levi, and they are dismayed and very angry. I do not see any of the other disciples who were previously at the Temple with Him.

They are discussing among themselves. I should say that they are discussing among themselves and with Jesus, and in particular with Judas of Kerioth. They are reproaching the latter for the fury of the Judaeans, and they do so with rather biting irony. Judas lets them speak repeating: « I spoke to Pharisees, scribes and priests, and not one of them was among the crowd. » They reproach Jesus for not breaking off the discussion after making it subside the first time. And Jesus replies: « I had to complete My manifestation. »

And they are also at variance on where they should go, as the Sabbath is close at hand and the oncoming days are feast days. Simon Peter suggests Joseph of Arimathea, Bethany being out of the question as they do not want to disturb the people there, particularly because Jesus has stated that they must not go to Bethany any more.

Thomas replies: « Neither Joseph nor Nicodemus is there. They have gone away, for the feast. I greeted them yesterday when we were waiting for Judas and they told me. »

« Let us go to Nike, then » suggests Matthew.

« She is at Jericho for the feast » replies Philip.

« To Joseph of Sephoris » says James of Alphaeus.

« H'm! Joseph… We would not be giving him a present! He has had trouble and… Well, I may as well tell you! He venerates the Master, but he wants to be at peace. He seems to be a boat caught between two opposed currents… and to keep afloat… he takes into account all the ballast, including little Martial… so much so that he could not believe that Joseph of Arimathea would take him » says Peter.

« Ah! is that why he was with him yesterday?! » exclaims Andrew.

« Of course! So it is better to let him calm down in a little safe harbour… Eh! we are not very brave! Everybody is frightened of the Sanhedrin! » says Peter.

« Please speak for yourself. I am not afraid of anybody » says the

Iscariot.

« Neither am I. I would defy all the legions to defend the Master. But we are in a different position… The others… Eh! They have their business, their homes, wives, daughters… They bear that in mind. »

« Well, we have them, too » remarks Bartholomew.

« But we are apostles, and… »

« And you are like the others. Do not criticise anybody, because the trial has not yet come » says Jesus.

« It has not come? And what would You expect more than what we have suffered? And yet You saw how I defended You today! We have all defended You, and I more than anybody else! I elbowed our way through the crowd pushing with such strength that it was enough to launch a boat!… An idea! Let's go to Nob. The old man will be happy! »

« Yes. To Nob » they all say approving.

« John is not there. You would be walking all the road for nothing. You can go to Nob, but not to John's. »

« We can! And can You not? »

« I do not want to go, Simon of Jonas. I already have somewhere to go these evenings of the Feast of the Dedication. But once I have gone away, you can remain peacefully anywhere. So I say to you: go wherever you wish. I bless you. I remind you to be united physically and spiritually, subject to Peter, who is your head, not as a master, but as an elder brother. As soon as Levi comes back with My bag, we shall part. »

« No, my Lord! Never let it be said that I let you go alone! » exclaims Peter.

« Let it always be said, if I want it, Simon of Jonas. But be not afraid. I shall not be in town. No one, but an angel or a demon, will find out my refuge. »

« And that is good. Because too many demons hate You. I am telling You that You will not go by Yourself! »

« There are also angels, Simon. And I will go. »

« But where? To which house, if You refused the best ones by Your own will or because of circumstances?! You are not going to stay in a cave on the mountains in this season? »

« And if I were? It would be less icy than the hearts of men who do not love Me » Jesus says almost to Himself, lowering His head to conceal tears shining in His eyes.

« Here is Levi. He is coming in haste » says Andrew who is looking from the roadside.

« Then let us exchange greetings of peace and part. If you want to go to Nob you will be just in time before sunset. »

Levi arrives panting: « They are looking for You everywhere, Master… Those who love You told me… They have been to many

houses, particularly to those of poor people… »

« Have they seen you? » asks James of Zebedee.

« Certainly. They even stopped me. But as I was already aware, I said: "I am going to Gibeon" and I came out by the Damascus Gate and I ran behind the walls… I did not lie, Lord, because I and these people are going to Gibeon after the Sabbath. We shall spend the night in the country of the town of David… These are days of memories for us… » and he looks at Jesus with an angelical smile on his virile bearded face, a smile that revives in his features the boy of the remote night.

« All right. You may go. And you, too. I am going as well. Each his own way. You will precede Me in Solomon's village, where I shall be in a few days' time. And before leaving you, I will repeat to you the words which I spoke before sending you by twos around the towns: "Go, preach, announce that the Kingdom of Heaven is very near at hand. Cure sick people, cleanse lepers, raise the dead of the spirit and of the body, ordering the resurrection of the spirit in My Name, the pursuit of Me Who am life, or the resurrection from death. And do not pride yourselves on what you do. Avoid disputes with one another and with those who do not love us. Do not exact anything for what you do. Prefer to go among the lost sheep of Israel than among Gentiles and Samaritans, not out of disgust, but because you are not yet able to convert them. Give what you have without worrying about the morrow. Do what you have seen Me do, and with the same spirit as Mine. Now, I give you the power to do what I do and what I want you to do, so that God may be glorified". » He breathes on them, He kisses them one by one and dismisses them.

They all depart reluctantly and turn round several times. He waves His hand to them, until they have all gone, and then He goes down to the river-bed of the Kidron, among bushes, and sits on a rock near the babbling water. He drinks of the water, which is clear and certainly ice-cold. He washes His face, hands and feet. He puts His clothes on and sits down again. He is pensive… And He does not notice what is happening around Him, that John, the apostle, who was already far away with his companions, has come back all alone and is imitating Him hiding in a thick bush…

Jesus remains there for some time, then He gets up, He puts His bag across His back, and following the Kidron, among bushes, he arrives at the well of En-Rogel, He then turns south-west until He takes the Bethlehem road. And John, about a hundred steps behind Him, follows Him, all enveloped in his mantle not to be recognised.

And He goes on and on, along the roads stripped by winter. Jesus, striding, devours the road. John follows Him with difficulty, also because he has to be careful not to be seen. Twice Jesus

stops and turns round. The first time when passing near the little hill where Judas went to speak to Caiaphas, the second time near a well, where He sits down and nibbles at a piece of bread and then drinks from the amphora of a man. He then resumes walking while the sun descends… and it is twilight. He arrives at Rachel's tomb when the last red sunbeams at sunset fade into violet. The sky to the west looks like a pergola of wistaria in bloom, whereas to the east it is already the pure cobalt-blue of a cold eastern winter sky and the first stars are already appearing on the farthest end of the firmament.

Jesus quickens His pace in order to arrive before it is dark. But when He is on a high spot from which He can see all the town of Bethlehem, He stops, looks and sighs… He then goes down quickly. He does not enter the town. He goes round the last houses. He goes straight to the ruins of the house or tower of David, where He was born. He crosses the stream flowing near the grotto, He goes on to the little open space covered with dry leaves… He scans the ruins. There is no one. He goes in… John stops a little farther on, he is cautious not to be heard or seen. He searches, he looks. He finds another dilapidated stable groping rather than by sight. He goes in as well and strikes a light in a corner. In it there is some straw, some dirty litter, a few dry branches and some hay in the manger.

John is content. He talks to himself: « At least… I shall hear… and… We either die together or I will save Him. » He then sighs and says: « And He was born here! And He comes here to weep tears of grief… And… Ah! Eternal God! Save Your Christ! My heart is trembling, o Most High God, because He always wants to be alone before great deeds… And what great deed can He accomplish, but manifest Himself as the King Messiah? Oh! all His words are here within me… I am a silly boy and I understand very little. We all understand very little, o Eternal Father! But I am afraid. I really am afraid! Because He speaks of death. Of a painful death, of betrayal and of horrible things… I am afraid, my God! Fortify my heart, o Eternal Lord. Fortify my heart of a poor boy, as You certainly fortify the heart of Your Son for future events… Oh! I can feel it! That is why He came here. To be close to You more than ever and fortify Himself in Your love. I want to imitate Him, o Most Holy Father! Love me and let me love You to have the strength to suffer everything without cowardice, to console Your Son. »

John prays for a long time, standing with his arms raised, in the trembling light of a fire he has lit in the rustic fireplace. He prays until he sees the fire about to go out. He then climbs into the large manger and crouches in the hay. He is a shadow in the shadow, enveloped as he is in a dark mantle and as the cave is enveloped in darkness, until the first moonlight penetrates from the east

through an opening in the roof, announcing that it is the dead of night. But John, who is tired, falls asleep. His breathing and the light babbling of the stream are the only noises to be heard in the December night.

High above, groups of angels seem to be flying all over the sky, where clouds as light as veils are illuminated by the moonlight… But there is no singing of angels. At intervals, night birds call one another plaintively, and at times they end up with the witchlaughter typical of owls, and from afar, a lamentation like a howl is heard. Perhaps a dog closed in a fold and yelping at the moon or a wolf scenting prey in the wind, striking its sides with its tail, and howling with eagerness without daring to approach the well watched pens? I do not know.

Then voices and steps are heard and a reddish quivering light appears among the ruins. And then, one after the other, the shepherd disciples come: Matthias, John, Levi, Joseph, Daniel, Benjamin, Elias, Simeon. Matthias is holding a lighted branch to see the way. But the one who runs ahead is Levi and he is the first to look into Jesus' grotto. And he soon turns round and beckons to the others to stop and be silent and he looks again… and then, with his right arm stretched backwards, he beckons to the others to come and he moves aside to make room for them, holding his finger on his lip to tell them to be silent, as one after the other they look in and then withdraw as deeply moved as Levi.

« What shall we do? » asks Elias in a whisper.

« Let us stay here and contemplate Him » says Joseph.

« No, it is not right to violate the spiritual secrets of souls. Let us withdraw over there » says Matthias.

« You are right. Let us go into the next stable. We shall still be here and close to Him » says Levi.

« Let us go » they say. But before going away they look hastily once again into the grotto of the Nativity and then withdraw, deeply affected, trying not to make any noise.

But when they are at the entrance of the adjoining stable, they hear John snore. « There is someone here » says Matthias stopping.

« What does it matter? Let us go in as well. As a beggar, for it must be a beggar, took shelter in here, we can take shelter as well » replies Benjamin.

They go in holding up the branch ablaze. John, all curled up in his improvised uncomfortable bed, his face half veiled by his hair and mantle, continues to sleep. They approach him slowly with the intention of sitting on the straw spread near the manger. In doing so Daniel looks more carefully at the man asleep and recognises him. He says: « It's the apostle of the Lord, John of Zebedee. They have taken shelter here to pray… and sleep has overcome the apostle… Let us withdraw. He might feel mortified knowing that he

has been found asleep instead of praying… »

They go out again and reluctantly enter the other grotto beyond this one. Simeon complains about it saying: « Why not stay at the entrance of His grotto, and see Him now and again? For years we have got wet with heavy due under an open sky to watch over our lambs! And can we not do the same for the Lamb of God? We are entitled to do it, because we worshipped Him in His first sleep! »

« You are right as a man and as a worshipper of the Man-God. But what did you see, when you looked in there? A man, perhaps? No. Without knowing it, we have crossed the impassable threshold after removing the treble veil laid to protect the mystery and we have seen what not even the High Priest sees, when he enters the Holy of Holies. We have seen the ineffable love of God for God. It is not right to spy on it again. The power of God might punish our bold eyes that have seen the ecstasy of the Son of God. Oh! let us be happy with what we have had! We had come here to spend the night in prayer before going away on our mission. We came to pray and to remember the night of long ago… We have instead contemplated the love of God! Oh! The Eternal Father has really loved us very much, by giving us the joy of contemplating the Child and suffering for Him, and the joy of announcing Him to the world as disciples of the Child God and of the Man-God! He has now granted us this mystery as well… Let us bless the Most High and do not let us wish for anything else! » says Matthias, who I think is the most authoritative in wisdom and justice among the shepherds.

« You are right. God has loved us very much. We must not pretend more. Samuel, Joseph and Matthias had but the joy of worshipping the Child and suffering for Him. Jonas died without being able to follow Him. Isaac is not here either to see what we have seen. And if there is one who deserves it, it is Isaac, who is wearing himself out to announce Him » says John.

« That is true! Very true! How happy Isaac would have been to see all this! But we shall tell him » says Daniel.

« Yes. Let us remember everything in our hearts to tell him » says Elias.

« And the other disciples and believers! » exclaims Benjamin.

« No. Not the others. Not out of selfishness, but out of prudence and respect for the mystery. If God wants, the hour will come when we are able to speak. For the time being we must be quiet » says Matthias again, and addressing Simeon he goes on: « You and I were disciples of John. Remember how he taught us prudence concerning holy things: "If God, who has already blessed you, will grant you extraordinary gifts one day, do not let that make intoxicated chatterboxes of you. Remember that God reveals Himself to the spirits, which are enclosed in the flesh, because they are celestial gems not to be exposed to the filth of the world. Be holy in

your bodies and in your senses in order to be able to control every carnal instinct, in your eyes and your ears, in your tongues and in your hands. And be holy in your thoughts checking the pride of letting other people know what you have. Because your senses, organs and intellects must serve and not reign. They must serve the spirit, not rule over the spirit. They must protect, not upset the spirit. So put the seal of your prudence on the mysteries of God in you, unless He gives you an explicit order otherwise, as the spirit has the seal of temporary imprisonment in the body. Our bodies and intellects would be completely useless, harmful and dangerous, if they did not serve to give us merit through the afflictions we compel them to suffer in reply to the wicked incentives by which they urge us, and if they did not serve as temple for the altar over which hovers the glory of God: our spirits". Do you remember, John, and you, Simeon? I hope you do, because if you do not remember the words of our first master, he would be really dead as far as you are concerned. A master lives as long as his doctrine lives in his disciples. And even if he is replaced by a greater master - and in the case of Jesus' disciples, by the Master of masters - it is never right to forget the words of the previous one, who prepared us to understand and love the Lamb of God with wisdom. »

« That is true. You speak wisely and we will obey you. »

« But how painful and fatiguing it is to resist looking at Him again, when we are so close to Him! Will He still be as He was? » asks Simeon.

« Who knows?! How His face shone! »

« More than the moon in a clear night! »

« His lips had a divine smile… »

« And His eyes shed divine tears… »

« He did not utter one word. But everything was prayer in Him. »

« What will He have seen? »

« His Eternal Father. Do you doubt it? Only that sight can give such an aspect. Nay, what am I saying? Rather than see Him, He was with Him, in Him! The Word with the Thought! And they loved each other!… Ah!… » says Levi, who seems to be in an ecstasy as well.

« That is exactly why I said that it was not right for us to stay there. Consider that He did not even want His apostle with Him… »

« Of course. That's true! Holy Master! He needs to be overflown with the love of God, more than dry land needs water! There is so much hatred around Him!… »

« But also so much love. I would like… Yes, I will do it! The Most High is present here. I offer myself and I say: "Most High God, God and Father of Your people, Who accept and consecrate hearts and altars and sacrifice the victims pleasing to You, let Your will

descend like fire and consume me as a victim with Christ, like Christ, and for Christ, Your Son and Your Messiah, my God and Master. I implore You. Hear my prayer". » And Matthias, who had prayed standing up with raised arms, sits down again on the bundle of sticks, where they were sitting.

The moon stops illuminating the cave because it moves westwards. It still shines brightly on the country, but no longer in here, and faces and things disappear in the darkness. Words also become rarer and voices lower, until sleepiness overcomes their good will, and words are intermittent, and at times without reply… The cold, which is biting at dawn, is a stimulant against sleep, and they get up, they light some twigs and warm their limbs numb with cold…

« What will He do, as He certainly will not think of a fire? » says Levi whose teeth are almost chattering with cold.

« Will He have at least some food? » asks Elias and he adds: « Now we have but our love and some poor food… and today is a Sabbath… »

« Do you know what? Let us put all our food at the entrance to the grotto and then we shall go away. We can always find some bread before evening, either at Rachel's or at Elishah's. And we shall be the providence of the Providence, of the Son of Him Who provides for us all » suggests Joseph.

« Yes. Let us light a good fire so that we can see and warm ourselves properly, then we shall take everything there, and go away before He or the apostle may come out at dawn and see us. »

They open their sacks near the blazing fire and take out bread, cheese and some apples. They then load themselves with firewood and go out cautiously while Matthias shows the way with a branch taken from the fire. They put everything at the entrance to the grotto, the faggots on the ground, the bread and the other foodstuffs on top of them. They then withdraw, they cross the river, one after the other, and they go away in the silent first faint light of dawn, broken by the sudden crowing of a cock.

537. Jesus and John of Zebedee.

14th December 1946.

It is a clear but severe winter morning. Frost has covered with its white floury crystals the ground and grass and has turned some dry twigs lying on the ground into precious jewels sprinkled with little pearls.

John is coming out of his grotto. He looks very pale in his dark hazel-brown garment. He must be also very cold or he is not feeling well. I do not know. He is really ghastly pale and he walks like one who is not well. He goes towards the stream and is undecided

whether he should dip his hands into it or not. He then makes up his mind and cupping his hands he drinks a drop of the water, which is clear but certainly very cold. He shakes his hands and finishes drying them with the edge of his tunic. He then becomes uncertain… He looks towards the ruins where Jesus is and towards his own cave, and goes back to it slowly. But when he arrives at the opening through which one enters, he has a kind of fit of dizziness and he staggers. He would fall if he did not hold on to the semi-ruined wall. He rests his head on his folded arm, holding tight to the wall for a short while, then he raises his head and looks around… He does not go into his cave. Grazing the wall and supporting himself on the protruding rugged stones devoid of plaster, he walks the few steps separating him from Jesus' stable, and when he is almost at its entrance, he throws himself on his knees and moans: « Jesus, my Lord, have mercy on me! »

Jesus appears at once: « John? What are you doing? What is the matter with you? »

« Oh! my Lord! I am hungry! I have not had any food for almost two days. I am hungry and cold… » he looks very wan and his teeth are chattering.

« Come! Come inside! » says Jesus helping him to stand up.

And John, supported by Jesus' arm, begins to weep, with his head resting on Jesus' shoulder, and he says with a sigh: « Do not punish me, Lord, if I disobeyed You… »

Jesus smiles replying: « You are already punished. You are like one who is breathing his last… Sit down here, on this stone. I will now light the fire and give you something to eat… » and with the tinder Jesus lights some dry branches and makes a good fire in the rustic fireplace near the door.

The smell of burning branches spreads in the poor cave with the cheerful bright flames, near which Jesus holds two slices of bread after forking them with a stick. When He feels that they are warm He spreads them with the cheese left by the shepherds and when the cheese softens and melts on the bread, Jesus holds the slices flat over the flame, just like a plate.

« Eat now and do not weep » He says smiling all the time and handing the bread to John, who is weeping silently like an exhausted boy, and he does not even stop weeping while eating the comforting food avidly.

Jesus goes to the manger and comes back with some apples, He places them among the ashes already warmed by the wood burning between two stones used as andirons.

« Are you feeling better now? » He asks sitting near His apostle, who still weeping nods assent.

Jesus embraces his shoulders with one arm and draws him to Himself, which increases John's tears, as he is too exhausted and

too upset, probably, by the fear of being reproached and by the emotion of being treated thus, to be able to do anything but weep.

Jesus holds him close to Himself, without saying anything while he is eating. He then says: « That is enough now. You will have the apples later. I would like to give you some wine, but I have none. The morning of the day before yesterday I found the faggots and food outside the stable. But there was no wine. So I cannot give you any. If it were later I could try to get some milk from the shepherds, who I saw pasturing their flock beyond the stream. But they will not bring their flocks out until the frost melts… »

« I am already better, Lord… Do not worry about me. »

« And what are you worried about, as you look just like a tree whose frost is melting in the sun? » says Jesus smiling even more brightly and kissing John's forehead.

« Because I am full of remorse, Lord… and… Yes! Let me go! I must speak to You on my knees and ask You to forgive me… »

« Poor John! The effort, greater than your capability, has really weakened also your intellect. And do you think that I need your words to judge and absolve you? »

« Yes, You know everything, I know. But I shall have no peace until I confess my sin, nay, my sins to You. Let me go. Let me accuse my sins. »

« All right, speak, if that will give you peace. »

John falls on his knees and raising his tearful face he says: « I have committed a sin of disobedience, of presumption, and of… I do not know whether I am right in saying it: humanity… But that is certainly my most recent and gravest sin, that grieves me most and makes me understand what a useless servant I am, and even more than that: how selfish and vile I am. »

Tears are really washing his face, while Jesus' smile make His face brighter and brighter. Jesus bends a little over His weeping apostle and His divine smile is a caress for John's sorrow. But John is so dejected that he is not consoled even by that smile and he continues: « I disobeyed You. You told us not to separate, whereas I parted at once from my companions and I scandalised them. I answered back to Judas of Kerioth, who pointed out to me that I was committing a sin. I said: "You did it yesterday, I am doing it today. You did it to get news of your mother, I am doing it to be with the Master and watch over Him and defend Him"… I relied too much on myself because I wanted to do that… I, a poor fool, wanted to defend You! I presumed also because I wanted to imitate You. I said: "He will certainly pray and fast. I will do what He does and for the same intention as His". Instead… » His weeping changes into sobbing while the confession of the misery of man, of matter overwhelming the will of the spirit is uttered by John's lips: « Instead… I slept. I fell asleep at once! And I woke up

in broad daylight and I saw You go to the stream, wash Yourself, and come back here, and I realised that they could have captured You without me being ready to defend You. And I wanted to do penance and fast, but I have not been able to do so. Little by little, for fear I should finish it, I ate the little bread I had on the first day. You know that I had nothing else. I was not yet full, and I had finished everything. And the following day I was even more hungry, and last night… Oh! the night before last I slept very little because I was hungry and cold, and last night I did not sleep at all… and this morning I could not resist any longer… and I came because I was afraid of dying of starvation… and that is what hurts me more: that I was not able to keep awake to pray and watch over You, whereas I kept awake because of the pangs of hunger… I am a vile foolish servant. Punish me, Jesus! »

« Poor boy! I wish all the world had to shout such sins! But listen, stand up and listen to Me and your heart will be at peace. Did you disobey also Simon of Jonas? »

« No, Master, I did not. I would never have done that because You said that we were to be subject to him as if he were our elder brother. But when I said to him: "My heart is not happy to see Him go away all alone", he replied: "You are right. But I cannot go because I have been ordered to guide you all. You can go, and may God be with you". The others raised their voices and Judas did so more than the rest. They mentioned obedience and they also reproached Simon Peter. »

« Did they? Be sincere, John. »

« It is true, Master. It was Judas who reproached Simon and maltreated me. The others only said: "The Master ordered us to stay together". And they were saying that to me, not to our head. But Simon replied: "God is aware of the purpose of the action, and He will forgive. And the Master will also forgive it, because it is done out of love" and he blessed and kissed me and sent me after You, like that day when You went beyond the lake with Chuza. »

« So I do not have to absolve you of that sin… »

« Because it is too grave? »

« No. Because it does not exist. Come back here, John, beside your Master and listen to the lesson. One must know how to carry out orders with justice and discernment, understanding the spirit of the order, not only the words expressing it. I said: "Do not separate". You parted from them, so you would have sinned. But previously I had said: "Be united physically and spiritually, subject to Peter". With those words I elected My legitimate representative among you, with full faculty to judge and command you. Therefore whatever Peter has done or will do during My absence, is well done. Because as I invested him with the power of guiding you, the Spirit of the Lord, that is in Me, will be also in him and

will advise him in giving those orders required by circumstances and suggested by the Wisdom to the chief Apostle for the welfare of everybody. If Peter had said to you: "Do not go" and you had come just the same, not even the good reason for your action your wish to follow Me out of love to defend Me and be with Me at the moment of danger - would have been sufficient to cancel your sin. Then My forgiveness would have been really necessary. But Peter, your Head, said to you: "Go". Your dutifulness to him justifies you completely. Are you convinced? »

« Yes, Master. »

« Have I to absolve you of the sin of presumption? Tell Me, without considering that I see your heart. Did you presume to imitate Me out of pride, to be able to say: "Through my own will I overcame the needs of my body because I can do what I want"? Think about it carefully… »

John ponders. He then says: « No, Lord. If I examine myself carefully, I did not do it for that. I was hoping to be able to do it, because I have understood that penance is painful for the body, but is light for the spirit. I have realised that it is a means of fortifying our weakness and of obtaining so much from God. That is why You do it. That is why I wanted to do it. And I do not think that I am wrong in saying that if You, Who are so powerful and so holy, do so, I, we all, should always do so, if it were always possible, to be less weak and less material. But I was not successful. I am always hungry and so sleepy… » and tears begin to stream down his face again, slowly, humbly, a true confession of the limitation of human capability.

« Well, do you think that also this little misery of the body has been useless? Oh! how you will remember it in future, when you are tempted to be severe and exacting with your disciples and believers! It will appear again in your mind saying to you: "Remember that you also yielded to fatigue and hunger. Do not expect the others to be stronger than you. Be a father to your believers as the Master that morning was a father to you". You could have kept awake quite well and might not have felt hungry after all. But the Lord allowed you to be subject to such needs of the flesh, to make you humble, more and more humble and compassionate towards your fellow-creatures. Many cannot tell the difference between temptation and accomplished sin. The former is a trial that gives merit and does not deprive one of grace, the latter is a fall that deprives one of merit and grace. Others cannot tell the difference between natural events and sins, and they have scruples about having sinned, whereas, and it is your case, they have only obeyed good natural laws. By saying "good", I distinguish natural laws from unrestrained instincts. So not everything that we now call "law of nature" is really such and

good. All the laws connected with the human nature that God had given the first parents were good: the need for food, rest, for beverage. Then animal instincts, intemperance, all kinds of sensuality replaced through sin the natural laws and mingled with them polluting with their immoderateness what was good. And Satan has kept the fire burning, fostering vices with his temptations. You can now see that it is not a sin to yield to the need for rest and food, whereas debauch, drunkenness and prolonged idleness are sinful. Neither is the need to get married and procreate sinful, on the contrary God gave orders to do so to populate the Earth with men. But the act of copulating only to satisfy one's senses is no longer good. Are you convinced also of that? »

« Yes, Master. But tell me one thing. Those who do not want to procreate… do they sin against God's order? You once said that the condition of virginity is good. »

« It is the most perfect one. As is most perfect the condition of those who, not satisfied with making good use of their wealth, divest themselves completely of it. They are the perfections attainable by a creature. And they will be highly rewarded. Three are the most perfect things: voluntary poverty, perpetual chastity, absolute obedience in what is not sinful. These three things make man like angels. And one is by far the most perfect of them all: to give one's life out of love for God and for one's brothers. That makes the creature like Me, because it raises him to absolute love. And he who loves perfectly is like God, is absorbed in and united with God. So be at peace, My beloved John. There is no sin in you. I am telling you. So why are you weeping even more? »

« Because there is a fault: that I did not come to You when in need, and that I was able to keep awake out of hunger but not out of love. I will never forgive myself. It will never happen to me again. I will not sleep any more when You are suffering. I will not forget You by falling asleep when You are weeping. »

« Do not pledge the future, John. Your spirit is willing, but it could still be overwhelmed by the flesh. And you would be deeply and vainly disheartened if you remembered this promise you made, but you could not keep because of the weakness of the flesh. Look. I will now tell you what you ought to say to be at peace, whatever may happen to you. Say with Me: "I, with the help of God, propose, as far as it will be possible for me, not to yield any more to the heaviness of the flesh". And remain firmly in that decision. And if one day, even against your will, the tired and dejected flesh should defeat your will, then you will say as you say now: "I acknowledge that I am a poor man like all my brothers and may this help me to mortify my pride". Oh! John! It is not your innocent sleep that can grieve Me! Take these. They will help you to recover completely. We shall share them together, blessing him

who offered them to Me » and He takes the apples that are now cooked and very hot, and He gives three to John keeping three for Himself.

« Who gave You them, Lord? Who came to You? Who knew that You were here? I did not hear voices or steps. And yet, after the first night, I was awake all the time… »

« I went out at daybreak. There were faggots of firewood near the entrance and some bread, cheese and apples on top of them. I did not see anybody. But only certain people could have wished to repeat a pilgrimage and a gesture of love… » says Jesus slowly.

« That's true! The shepherds! They did say: "We shall be going to the land of David… These are days of remembrance… But why did they not stop? »

« Why! They worshipped and… »

« They pitied. They worshipped You and pitied me… They are better than we are. »

« Yes. They have kept their good will, and their will has become better and better. The gift that God gave them, did not become harmful to them… »

Jesus no longer smiles. He ponders and becomes sad. Then He rouses Himself. He looks at John who is looking at Him, and He says: « Well? Shall we go? Are you no longer exhausted? »

« No, Master. I may not be very strong, I think, because my limbs are benumbed. But I think I shall be able to walk. »

« Let us go, then. Go and get your sack, while I put what is left into Mine and let us go. We will take the road that leads us towards the Jordan in order to avoid Jerusalem. »

And when John comes back they set out, retracing the way by which they came and moving away through the country that the mild December sun is warming up.

538. Jesus with John and Manaen. End of the Third Year.

16th December 1946.

They are already in the land influenced by the proximity of the Dead Sea, far from tracks for caravans and they are going straight north-eastwards. Apart from the ruggedness of the ground, spread with sharp stones, salt crystals, low thorny grass, they proceed quite well and above all peacefully, because there is not a single soul as far as the eye can see, the temperature is mild and the ground dry.

They are chattering to each other. During the previous days they must have met some shepherds and stayed with them, because they are speaking of them. They are also talking of a boy who has been cured. They proceed thus, peacefully, talking pleasantly to each other. Even when they are silent, they speak to each other

with their hearts as they look at each other with the kind glances of those who are happy to be with a dear friend. They sit down to rest and take some food, they set off again, always with the peaceful appearance that gives peace to my heart only by seeing them.

« Gilgal is over there » says Jesus, pointing forward, to a group of white houses in the sunshine on a little hill to north-east. « We are now close to the river. »

« Are we going to Gilgal for the night? »

« No, John. I have deliberately avoided all towns, and I am going to avoid this one as well. If we meet a shepherd, we shall stay with him. We shall soon reach the road and if we see caravans that are going to stop for the night, we shall ask them to receive us under their tents. The nomads of the desert are always hospitable. And we are likely to meet them at this time. If no one gives us hospitality, we shall sleep under the open sky, covered with our mantles and the angels will watch over us. »

« Oh! It will always be better than that gloomy night, the last night I had at Bethlehem! »

« But why did you not come to Me at once? »

« Because I felt that I was guilty. And I also said: Jesus is so kind that He will not scold me, on the contrary He will comfort me, as You actually did. So what would have happened to the penance I wanted to do? »

« We would have done it together, John. I was without food and fire as well, in spite of the foodstuffs and wood I found in the morning. »

« Yes, but when one is with You, nothing matters. When I am with You, I do not suffer for anything. I look at You. I listen to You. And I am happy. »

« I know. And I also know that in no one My thought is so deeply impressed as in My John. And I also know that you can understand and be quiet when it is necessary to be quiet. You understand Me, because you love Me. John, listen to Me. Before long… »

« What, Lord? » asks John at once interrupting Him, getting hold of His arm, stopping Him to look at Him in the face, with frightened inquisitive eyes and looking very pale.

« Before long I shall have evangelized for three years. I have told the crowds what they were to be told. By now, whoever wants to love and follow Me has the necessary elements to do so with certainty. The others… Some will be convinced by facts. The majority will turn a deaf ear even to facts. And I still have a few things to say to them. And I will tell them. Because justice also is to be served, not only mercy. So far mercy has been silent many times and has not said anything about many things. But before becoming silent for ever the Master will speak also with the severity of a

judge. But I do not want to speak to you about that. I want to tell you that before long, after I have told the flock what I had to say to make it Mine, I will very often withdraw collecting My thought in prayer and preparation. And when I do not pray, I will devote Myself to you all. I will do at the end what I did at the beginning. The women disciples will come. My Mother will come. We shall all prepare for Passover. John, as from this moment I ask you to devote yourself very much to the women disciples. And in particular to My Mother… »

« My Lord! But what can I give Your Mother that She does not already possess plentifully, and so plentifully as to have what She can give us all? »

« Your love. Imagine to be a second son for Her. She loves you and you love Her. You have one only love uniting you: your love for Me. I, the Son of Her body and of Her heart, shall always be more and more… absent, engrossed in My… occupations. And She will suffer because She knows… She knows what is about to happen. You must comfort Her also on My behalf, you must become so friendly with Her, that She may be able to weep on your heart and be consoled. You know My Mother. You have lived with Her. But there is a difference between doing so as a disciple who loves his Master's Mother with reverential love, and doing it as a son. I want you to do so as a son, that She may suffer a little less when She no longer has Me. »

« Lord, are You going to die? You are speaking like one who is about to die! You are grieving me… »

« I have told you all several times that I must die. It is just as if I had talked to absent-minded children or to slow-witted people. Yes, I am going to die. I will tell the others as well. But later. I am telling you now. Remember that, John. »

« I strive to remember Your words, always… But this one is so grievous… »

« That you do everything to forget it, is that what you mean? Poor boy! It is not you who forget, it is not you who remember. You with your will. It is your very humanity that cannot remember this thing that is so much greater than its capability of endurance, the thing that is too great, and you do not even know exactly how great it will be and how monstrous, so great that it stuns you like a weight falling on your head from a height. And yet it is so. I shall die soon, and My Mother will be left alone. I shall die with a drop of sweetness in My ocean of sorrow, if I see you as a "son" for My Mother… »

« Oh! My Lord! If I am able… and if it does not happen to me as in Bethlehem. I will do so. I will watch with the heart of a son. What can I give Her to comfort Her if She loses You? What shall I be able to give Her, if I also am like one who has lost everything and has

become insane with sorrow? How shall I be able, if I could not keep awake and suffer now, in the present calm, for one night and because of a little hunger? How shall I manage? »

« Do not get excited. You must pray very much during this period. I will keep you a good deal with Me and with My Mother. John, you are our peace. And you will be so even then. Be not afraid, John. Your love will do everything. »

« Oh! Lord! Keep me with You as much as possible. You know that I am not anxious to appear or to work miracles, I want, and I can only love… »

Jesus kisses his forehead again, towards his temple, as He did in the grotto…

They are in sight of the road that runs towards the river. There are some pilgrims who goad their mounts or quicken their paces to be in their resting places before night. But they are all muffled up because, as the sun has set, the air has become very cold and no one notices the two wayfarers who are striding towards the river.

A horseman, at a steady trot, almost at a gallop, overtakes them and stops after a few metres where some little donkeys have obstructed the road near a little bridge across a large stream, that gives itself the airs of a torrent and flows foaming towards the Jordan or the Dead Sea. While awaiting his turn to cross it, the horseman turns round and makes a gesture of surprise. He dismounts and holding the horse by the reins he goes back towards Jesus and John, who have not noticed him.

« Master! How come You are here? And all alone with John? » asks the horseman throwing back the edge of his headgear that he had pulled over his face like a hood, and I would say also as a mask to protect himself from the wind and the dust. The swarthy virile face of Manaen appears.

« Peace to you, Manaen. I am going towards the river to cross it. But I doubt whether I shall be able to do so before night falls. And where were you going? »

« To Machaerus. To the filthy den. Have You some place where to sleep? Come with me. I was hastening towards a hotel on the track of the caravans. Or, if You prefer, I will put up the tent under the trees on the river bank. I have everything on the saddle. »

« I prefer the tent. But you certainly prefer the hotel. »

« I prefer You, my Lord. I consider this meeting You a grace. Let us go. I know the banks of the river like the corridors of my house. At the foot of the Gilgal hill there is a wood sheltered from the winds, rich in grass for the horse and in wood for fires for men. We shall be comfortable. »

They walk away fast turning decidedly eastwards, departing from the road to the ford or to Jericho. They soon reach the edge of a thick wood that spreads from the slopes of the hill along the

plain towards the embankment.

« I am going to that house. They know me. I will ask for some milk and straw for all of us » says Manaen, going away on his horse, and he soon comes back with two men carrying bundles of straw on their shoulders and a little copper pail of milk.

They go into the wood without speaking. Manaen orders the two men to spread the straw on the ground and then dismisses them. He takes a tinder box out of the saddle pockets and lights a fire with the many dry branches lying on the ground. The fire cheers them and warms them. The pot, placed on two stones carried there by John, warms up while Manaen, after unsaddling the horse, puts up the tent of soft camel-hair, tying it to two poles driven into the ground and fixing it to the robust trunk of an age-old tree. He lays on the grass a sheepskin that was also tied to the saddle, he places the saddle on it and says: « Come, Master. It is a shelter for horsemen of the desert. But it protects from the dew and from the dampness of the ground. Straw is quite enough for us. And I can assure You, Master, that the precious carpets and canopies, the chairs of the royal palace are less, much less beautiful than this throne of Yours, than this tent and this straw, and the rich food that I have several times tasted, never had the flavour of the bread and milk that we shall relish under this tent. I am happy, Master! »

« I am happy, too, Manaen, and the same certainly applies to John. Providence has gathered us together this evening for our reciprocal joy. »

« This evening, Master, and tomorrow, and the day after tomorrow, until I know that You are safe among Your apostles. I imagine that You are going to join them… »

« Yes. I am going to them. They are waiting for Me at Solomon's house. »

Manaen looks at Him. Then he says: « I came through Jerusalem… And I heard. From Bethany. And I understood why You did not stop there. You are quite right in withdrawing. Jerusalem is a body full of poison and putrefaction. More so than poor Lazarus… »

« Did you see him? »

« Yes, I did. He is afflicted with the tortures of his body and those of his heart, because of You. He is dying a very sad death… But I would rather die myself than see the sin of our fellow countrymen. »

« Was the town in a state of ferment? » asks John who is watching the fire.

« Very much so. Divided into two parties. And, what is strange, the Romans have been merciful towards some people arrested for sedition on the previous day. It is secretly whispered that it was done to avoid increasing the ferment. They also say that the Proconsul

will soon be coming to Jerusalem. Before the usual time. I do not know whether it is a good thing or not. I know that Herod will certainly imitate him. And that will certainly be a good thing as far as I am concerned, because I shall be able to be close to You. With a good horse - and Antipas' stables have some very fast Arab horses - it will take no time to go from town to the river. If You are going to stop there… »

« Yes, I am. At least for the time being… »

John brings the warm milk into which each dips his bread after Jesus has offered and blessed it. Manaen offers some dates as golden as honey.

« Where did you have all these things? » asks John in amazement.

« The saddle of a horseman is a little market, John. There is everything for the rider and for the horse » replies Manaen with a frank smile on his swarthy face. He thinks for a moment and then he asks: « Master, is it lawful to love the animals that serve us and very often do so more loyally than man? »

« Why that question? »

« Because I was recently derided and reproached by some people who saw me cover, with the blanket that is now turned into our tent, my horse wet with perspiration after a race. »

« And did they not say anything else? »

Manaen looks at Jesus disconcertedly… and is silent.

« Speak frankly. You do not backbite anybody or offend Me by telling Me what they said to throw more filth at Me. »

« Master. You know everything. You really know everything and it is useless to conceal our thought and those of other people from You. Yes, they said to Me: "One can see that you are a disciple of that Samaritan. You are a heathen like Him Who infringes the Sabbaths to become unclean by touching unclean animals". »

« Ah! That was certainly Ishmael! » exclaims John.

« Yes. And those who were with him. And I replied: "I would understand you if you said that I am unclean because I live at Antipas' Court, not because I take care of an animal created by God". As in their group there were also some Herodians - which has become obvious for some time and it is very amazing, because previously they were in utter disagreement - they replied to me: "We are not judging Antipas' actions, but yours. Also John the Baptist was at Machaerus and was in touch with the king. But he remained just. You instead are an idolater… As people were gathering around us, I controlled myself, as I did not want to excite the people of the city. In fact for some time they have been roused by some false followers of Yours, who incite the people to rebel against those who oppose You, and also by others who commit abuse of power saying that they are Your disciples and are sent by You… »

« That's too much! Master? What will they come to? » John asks excitedly.

« They will not be able to go beyond the limit. I alone will proceed beyond that limit, the Light will shine and no one will be able to doubt any more that I was the Son of God. Come here near Me and listen. But add some wood to the fire first. »

The two are very happy to throw themselves on the thick sheepskin spread on the ground under the feet of Jesus, Who is sitting on the scarlet saddle against the tent fastened to the trunk of the tree. Manaen is almost lying down, one elbow pressed against the ground, his head resting on his hand, looking at Jesus. John sits on his heels, leaning his head on Jesus' chest, embracing Him with one arm, in his usual posture.

« When God created the world, and man, created in His image and likeness, was made its king, He showed all the creatures to man and wanted him to give a name to each of them, in order to be able to tell one from the other. And we read in Genesis "that each name given by Adam was good and was its true name". And also in Genesis we read that God, after creating Man and Woman, said: "Let us make Man in our image and likeness, that he may be the master of the fish of the sea, of the birds of heaven, of the cattle, of all the Earth and of the reptiles that crawl on the Earth". And when God created woman, Adam's helpmate, like him made in the image and likeness of God, as it was not convenient that Temptation, lying in wait, should tempt the male created in the image of God and corrupt him even more obscenely, God said to man and woman: "Be fruitful, multiply, fill the Earth and conquer it, and be masters of the fish of the sea, of the birds of heaven and of all living animals on the Earth", and He also said: "See, I give you all the seed-bearing plants that are on the Earth, and all the trees with seed-bearing fruit, that they may serve as food for you and for all the animals of the Earth and for the birds of heaven and for everything that moves on the Earth and has in itself a living soul, that they may live".

The animals and plants, and everything the Creator made to be useful to man, are a gift of love and a patrimony committed to the care of His children by the Father, so that they may use it with profit and gratitude to the Giver of all providence. Therefore they are to be loved and treated with proper care. What would you say of a son, to whom the father gave clothes, furniture, money, fields, houses, saying: "I give you all this for yourself and your successors, that you may have what will make you happy. Use it with love, in memory of my love that gives it to you", if they allowed everything to be destroyed or they squandered all their wealth? You would say that they did not honour their father, that they did not love him or his gift. Likewise man must take care of what God

with providential love has placed at his disposal. Care does not mean idolatry or immoderate affection for animals or plants, or anything else. Care means feeling of compassion and gratitude for the minor things that serve us and have a life of their own, that is their sensitivity.

The living soul of inferior creatures mentioned by Genesis, is not the same as the soul of man. It is life, simply life, that is, being sensitive to real things, both material and emotional. When an animal dies it becomes insensitive because death is its real end. There is no future for it. But while it lives it suffers cold, hunger, fatigue, it is subject to injuries, to pain, to joy, to love, to hatred, to diseases and to death. And man, in remembrance of God, Who gave him such means to make his exile on the Earth less difficult, must be humane towards animals, his inferior servants. In the Mosaic Book is it not prescribed to have feelings of humanity towards animals, whether they are birds or quadrupeds?

I solemnly tell you that the works of the Creator are to be contemplated with justice. If one looks at them with justice, one sees that they are "good". And good things are to be always loved. We see that they are given for a good purpose and out of an impulse of love, and as such we can and must love them, seeing beyond the finite being, the Infinite Being, Who created them for us. One sees that they are useful, and are to be loved as such. Nothing, bear this in mind, was made without a purpose in the Universe. God does not waste His perfect Power in useless things. This blade of grass is not less useful than the mighty trunk to which our temporary shelter is fastened. The drop of dew, the little pearl of frost are just as useful as the immense sea. A midge is as useful as the elephant and the worm that lives in the mud is not less useful than a whale. There is nothing useless in Creation. God made everything with a good aim and with love for man. Man must use everything with upright purpose and with love for God, Who gave him everything on the Earth, that it may be subject to the king of Creation.

You said, Manaen, that animals often serve man better than men do. I say that animals, plants, minerals, elements exceed man in obeying, by passively following the laws of creation, or actively following the instinct instilled by the Creator, or surrendering to become tamed for the purpose for which they were created. Man, who should be the pearl of Creation, is too often the ugly thing in Creation. He should be the note most in harmony with the heavenly chorus in praising God, whereas he is too often the dissonant note that curses or blasphemes or rebels or dedicates his song to praise creatures instead of the Creator. It is therefore idolatry, offence, filth. And that is a sin.

So be at peace, Manaen. To have compassion for a horse, that has become wet with perspiration serving you, is not a sin. The

tears one makes one's fellow-creatures shed and the uncontrolled love that offends God, Who is worthy of all the love of man, are sins. »

« But do I commit sin by staying with Antipas? »

« Why do you stay there? To have a good time? »

« No, Master. To watch over You. You know: that is why I was going there just now. Because I know that they sent messengers to Herod to incite him against You. »

« Then there is no sin. Would you not prefer to be with Me, sharing My poverty of life? »

« Are You asking me? I said so at the beginning. This night under the tent, the poor food we have relished has no comparison as far as I am concerned. Oh! if it were not necessary to be close to their den to listen to the hisses of snakes, I would stay with You! I have understood the truth of Your mission. I made a mistake one day. It served to make me understand and I will no longer leave justice. »

« See! Nothing is useless. Error also, for those tending to the Good, is a means of achieving the Good. An error falls off like the case of a chrysalis, and out comes a butterfly that is not misshapen, does not stink, does not crawl, but flies seeking calyces of flowers and sunbeams. Good souls are also like that. They may allow themselves to be enveloped by miseries and difficulties for a moment. Then they free themselves and fly from flower to flower, from virtue to virtue, towards Perfection. Let us praise the Lord for His works of continuous mercy, that are active, also unknown to man, in the heart of man and around him. »

And Jesus prays, on His knees, because the low limited tent does not allow any other posture. Then, after kindling the fire in front of the tent and hobbling the horse, they prepare for the night, and make arrangements to watch by turns the fire and the animal, on which Manaen throws the heavy fleece as a mantle to protect it from the night chill.

Jesus and Manaen lie down on the straw and cover themselves with their mantles to go to sleep. John, who is afraid of falling asleep, walks up and down outside the tent adding wood to the fire and watching the horse, which regards him with its intelligent dark eyes and stamps its hooves rhythmically, shaking its head, making the silver chains of the trappings jingly, and crushing aromatic stems of wild fennel growing at the foot of the tree to which it is tied. And as John offers it some which are more beautiful and have come up a little farther away, it neighs with satisfaction and tries to rub its soft pinkish nostrils on the apostle's neck. From afar, in the dead silence of the night, the calm rustling noise of the river is heard.

Jesus says:

« And also the third year of My public life has come to its end. Now comes the preparatory period for My Passion. That is, the period in which everything seems confined to few actions and few people. It almost decries My figure and My mission. In actual fact He, Who seemed defeated and rejected, was the hero getting ready for His apotheosis, and around Him were concentrated and elevated to this highest peak not people, but the passions of people.

Everything that preceded and that in certain episodes perhaps seemed aimless to ill-disposed or superficial readers, is now illuminated by its gloomy or bright light. Particularly the most important figures. Those that many will not admit are useful to know, just because they contain the lesson for the present masters, who more than ever are to be instructed to become true masters of the spirit. As I said to John and Manaen, nothing of what God does is useless, not even a thin blade of grass. Thus nothing is superfluous in this work. Neither the magnificent figures nor the weak and gloomy ones. On the contrary, the weak and gloomy figures are more useful to the masters of the spirit than the perfected and heroic ones.

As from the height of a mountain, near its summit, it is possible to take in the whole structure of the mountain and the reasons for the existence of woods, torrents, meadow and slopes, to reach the peak from the plain, and one can see all the beauty of the sight, and is more deeply convinced that the works of God are all useful and wonderful, and that one serves and completes another, and they are all present to form the beauty of Creation; thus, always with regard to those whose spirits are righteous, all the different figures, episodes, lessons of these three years of My life spent in evangelizing, contemplated from the height of the summit of My work as a Master, serve to give the right view of that complex, which is political, religious, social, collective, spiritual, selfish to the extent of being criminal, or unselfish to the point of sacrifice, in which complex I was a Master and in which I became the Redeemer. The grandiosity of a drama is not seen in one scene, but in all its parts. The figure of the protagonist emerges from the different lights by which secondary parts illuminate it.

We are now close to the summit, and the summit was the Sacrifice for which I became incarnate, and as all the most secret feelings of hearts and all the intrigues of sects have been disclosed, we can only do what the wayfarer does when he reaches the summit, that is, to look at everything and everybody; to become acquainted with the Jewish world; to know what I was: the Man above senses, selfishness, hatred, the Man Who had to be tempted by all sorts of people to take vengeance, to seek power, to wish for the honest delights of marriage and family life, the Man Who had

to put up with everything living in the world and suffer by it, because infinite was the distance between the imperfection and sin of the world and My Perfection, the Man Who replied "No" to all the voices, to all the allurements, to all the reactions of the world, of Satan and of My human ego. And I remained pure, loyal, merciful, humble, obedient even to death on a Cross.

Will all this be understood by modern society, to which I grant this knowledge of Myself to strengthen it against the more and more powerful attacks of Satan and the world? Also nowadays, as twenty centuries ago, those to whom I reveal Myself will contradict one another. Once again I am the sign that is rejected. But not with regard to Myself, but with regard to what I stir up in them. Good people, those of good will, will have the good reactions of the shepherds and of humble people. The others will react in a wicked manner, like the scribes, the Pharisees, the Sadducees and priests of those days. One gives what one has. A good person who comes in touch with wicked people provokes a surge of greater wickedness in them. And judgement will be passed on men as it was done on Good Friday, according to how they have judged, accepted and followed the Master, Who with a fresh attempt of infinite mercy has made Himself known once again.

How many people's eyes will open and how many will acknowledge Me saying: "It is He. That is why our hearts burnt within us as He talked and explained the Scriptures to us"? My peace to them and to you, My little, faithful, loving John. »

PREPARATION FOR THE PASSION

539. The Judaeans in Lazarus' House.

18th December 1946.

A large imposing group of Judaeans enter Bethany on magnificent mounts. They are scribes and Pharisees, some Sadducees and Herodians, whom I have seen previously, if I am not mistaken, at the banquet in Chuza's house to induce Jesus to proclaim Himself king. They are followed by servants on foot.

The riding-party go slowly through the little town, and the hoofs resounding on the hard ground, the jingling of the trappings and the voices of the men draw out of their houses the inhabitants, who look and with evident astonishment bow humbly, then they rise again and gather in groups whispering.

« Have you seen that? »

« All the members of the Sanhedrin from Jerusalem. »

« No. Joseph the Elder, Nicodemus and others were not there. »

« Nor the most famous Pharisees. »

« Nor the scribes. »

« And who was the one on horseback? »

« They are certainly going to Lazarus' house. »

« He must be on the point of dying. »

« I don't understand why the Rabbi is not here. »

« How can you expect Him to be here, if those in Jerusalem want to kill Him? »

« You are right. Nay, I am sure that those snakes who have just gone by, have come to see whether the Rabbi is here. »

« Praised be the Lord that He isn't! »

« Do you know what they said to my husband, at the market in Jerusalem? To be ready, because He will soon proclaim Himself king, and we shall all have to help Him to… What did they say? Well! A word that meant something like… if I said that I will send everybody away from the house, and make myself the landlady. »

« A plot?… A conspiracy?… A rebellion?… » they ask, making suggestions at the same time.

A man says: « Yes. They told me as well. But I don't believe it. »

« But those who say that, are disciples of the Rabbi!… »

« H'm! I am not prepared to believe that the Rabbi will make use of violence and remove the Tetrarchs, usurping a throne that, rightly or wrongly, belongs to the Herodians. You ought to tell Joachim not to believe all the rumours… »

« But do you know that those who help Him will be rewarded on the Earth and in Heaven? I would be very happy if my husband were one of them. I have a large family and life is difficult. If he could have a job among the servants of the King of Israel! »

« Listen, Rachel, I think it is better for me to look after my kitchen garden and my dates. Oh! if He should tell me, then I would leave everything to follow Him. But if other people tell me!… »

« But they are His disciples. »

« I have never seen them with Him and then… No. They pretend to be lambs, but their scoundrelly faces do not convince me. »

« That is true. Strange things have happened for some time and they always say that the Rabbi's disciples are the cause of them. The day before the Sabbath, some of them manhandled a woman who was taking eggs to the market, and they said: "We want them in the name of the Galilean Rabbi". »

« Do you think it can be Him Who wants such things, as He always gives and never takes? And just Him Who could live among rich people and prefers to be with the poor, and He gave away His mantle, as that leprous woman, who was cured and whom Jacob met, told everybody? »

Another man who approached the group and has been listening says: « You are right. And what about the other thing they say? That the Rabbi will bring about great trouble, because the Romans will punish us all owing to His urging the crowds? Do you believe it? I say - and I don't think I am wrong because I am old and wise - I say that those who tell us poor people that the Rabbi wants to usurp the throne and drive away the Romans - I wish He did! if it were possible to do so! - and those who do violence in His name, and those who incite us to rebel promising future profit, and those who would like us to hate the Rabbi as a dangerous person who will lead us into trouble, are all enemies of the Rabbi and they are anxious to ruin Him so that they may triumph. Don't believe them! Don't believe the false friends of the poor people! Did you notice how arrogantly they passed by? They almost gave me a blow with a cudgel, because I had difficulty in moving the sheep aside and I was preventing them from proceeding… And you say they are our friends? Never. They are our vampires, and, God forbid it, they are also His vampires. »

« As you live near Lazarus' fields, do you know whether he is dead? »

« No. He is not dead. He is between life and death… I asked Sarah who was picking aromatic leaves to wash him. »

« Well, why did they come? »

« Who knows! They went right round the house, then round the leper's house, then they went away towards Bethlehem. »

« I told you! They came to see whether the Rabbi is here! To do Him wrong. Do you realise what it meant to them to be able to harm Him? And just in Lazarus' house? Tell me, Nathan. That Herodian… was he not the lover of Mary of Teophilus some time ago? »

« He was. Perhaps that is how he wanted to revenge himself on

Mary… »

A little boy runs towards them. He shouts: « How many people there are in Lazarus' house! I was coming from the stream with Levi, Marcus and Isaiah, and we saw them. The servants opened the gate and took the mounts. And Maximinus ran to meet the Judaeans and other servants came making low bows. And Martha and Mary came out of the house to greet them with their maidservants. We wanted to go on watching, but they closed the gate and they all went into the house. » The boy is very excited because of the news he has brought and of what he has seen…

The adults are commenting.

540. The Judaeans with Martha and Mary.

19th December 1946.

Martha, although broken-hearted and exhausted, is always a lady who knows how to welcome guests, honouring them with the perfect urbanity of a true-born lady. Thus, after leading the group into one of the halls, she gives instructions to bring the refreshments that are customary, so that the guests may have what can restore them.

The servants move around pouring hot drinks or vintage wines and offering beautiful fruit, dates as fair as topazes, raisins, something like our sweet grapes, in bunches fantastically perfect, liquid honey, all served from precious amphorae, cups, plates and trays. And Martha watches carefully that no one is neglected, nay, she instructs her domestics to serve the guests according to their ages and to each individual, whose tempers are well known to her. She stops a servant, who is going towards Helkai with an amphora full of wine and a chalice and she says to him: « Tobias, don't offer him wine, but honied water and the juice of dates. » And she says to another one: « I am sure John will prefer wine. Offer him some of our white raisin wine. » And she personally offers old Hananiah, the scribe, warm milk, which she sweetens with plenty golden honey, saying: « It will do your cough good. You sacrificed yourself by coming here, particularly as you are poorly, and it is a cold day. It affects me to see you all so thoughtful. »

« It is our duty, Martha. Eucheria belonged to our race. A true Jewess who honoured us all. »

« The homage paid to the venerated memory of my mother touches my heart. I will repeat your words to Lazarus. »

« But we want to greet him. He is such a good friend! » says Helkai with his habitual falseness, approaching her.

« Greet him? It is not possible. He is too exhausted. »

« Oh! We shall not disturb him. Shall we, my friends? It is enough for us to say goodbye to him, from the threshold of his room » says

Felix.

« I cannot, I really cannot. Nicomedes has forbidden fatigue and emotions. »

« A glance at our dying friend will not kill him, Martha » says Callascebona. « It would grieve us too much not having greeted him! »

Martha is upset and hesitant. She looks towards the door, perhaps to see whether Mary is coming to help her. But Mary is absent.

The Judaeans notice her excitement, and Sadoc, the scribe, points it out to Martha: « It looks as if our visit is upsetting you, woman. »

« No. Not at all. Have sympathy for my grief. I have been living for months near my dying brother and… I am no longer able… and I no longer know how to behave at parties, as I did in the past… »

« Oh! it is not a party! We did not even expect you to honour us thus! Perhaps… Perhaps you want to hide something from us and that is why you are not letting us see Lazarus and you forbid us to go to his room. Eh! It is obvious! But be not afraid! The room of a sick person is a sanctuary for everybody, believe me… » says Helkai.

« There is nothing to be concealed in our brother' s room. There is nothing hidden in it. There is only a dying man, who for pity's sake ought to be spared all painful memories. And you, Helkai, and you all, are painful memories for Lazarus » says Mary in her beautiful harmonious voice, appearing at the door and holding the curtain to one side with her hand.

« Mary! » says Martha moaning imploringly, to check her.

« Nothing, sister. Let me speak… » She then addresses the others: « And to remove every possible doubt of yours, one of you - it will thus be only one memory of the past renewing grief - may come with me, if the sight of a dying man does not disgust him and the stench of a dying body does not make him sick. »

« And are you not a grieving memory? » asks ironically the Herodian, whom I have already seen, but I do not remember where, coming away from his comer and standing in front of Mary.

Martha utters a groan, Mary looks like an angry eagle. Her eyes are flashing. She draws herself up proudly, forgetting the fatigue and grief that bent her body, and with the countenance of an offended queen she says: « Yes. I am a memory as well. But not of sorrow, as you say. I am the memory of God's Mercy. And Lazarus is dying in peace seeing me, because he knows that he is giving up his spirit into the hands of Infinite Mercy. »

« Ha! Ha! Those are not the words of days gone by! Your virtue! You may display it to those who do not know you… »

« But not to you, is that right? But I am going to place it right under your eyes, to tell you that birds of a feather, flock together. In those days, unfortunately, I was near you, and I was like you. Now I am near the Holy One, and I am becoming honest. »

« What has been destroyed cannot be rebuilt, Mary. »

« In fact, you, all of you, can no longer rebuild your past. You cannot rebuild what you have destroyed. You cannot, personally, as you horrify me. And none of the rest can, who offended my brother, when he was grieved, and now you pretend to be his friends, for a wicked purpose. »

« Oh! You are bold, woman. The Rabbi may have driven many demons out of you, but He did not make you become mild! » says one who is about forty years old.

« No, Jonathan ben Annas. He did not make me weak. He made me stronger with the boldness of one who is honest, of one who wants to become honest once again and has broken all ties with the past to start a new life. Come on! Who is coming to see Lazarus? » She is as authoritative as a queen. She dominates them all with her frankness, with no mercy even towards herself. Martha, instead, is dejected, with tears in her eyes looking imploringly at Mary that she may keep quiet.

« I will come! » says Helkai, sighing like a victim, and he is as false as a serpent. They go out together.

The others address Martha: « Your sister!… Still the same character. But she should not behave like that. She has so much to be forgiven for » says Uriel, the rabbi seen at Giscala, the one who struck Jesus with stones.

Under the lash of such words, Martha recovers her strength and she says: « God has forgiven her. No other forgiveness is thus required. And her present life is an example for the world. » But her daring soon abates and turns into tears. She moans weeping: « You are cruel! Towards her… and towards me… You have no pity for our past or our present sorrow. Why did you come? To offend and grieve us? »

« No, woman. No. Only to greet the great Judaean who is dying. For no other reason! You must not take our good intentions amiss. We heard from Joseph and Nicodemus that he was growing worse, and we came… as they did, the two great friends of the Rabbi and of Lazarus. Why do you want to treat us differently, since we love the Rabbi and Lazarus, as they do? You are not fair. Can you deny that they have come with John, Eleazar, Philip, Joshua and Joachim, to hear how Lazarus was, and that also Manaen has come?… »

« I am not denying anything. But I am surprised that you are so well informed. I did not think that also the interior of houses is pried into by you. I did not know that there is a new precept in addition to the sixhundred and thirteen: that is, to inquire into and spy upon the intimate affairs of families… Oh! Excuse me! I am offending you! Sorrow is depriving me of my senses and you are aggravating it. »

« Oh! we understand you, woman! And because we thought you

would be both deprived of your senses, we have come to give you some good advice. Send for the Master. Also yesterday seven lepers have come to praise the Lord because the Rabbi had cured them. Send for Him also on behalf of Lazarus. »

« My brother is not a leper » shouts Martha convulsively. « Is that why you wanted to see him? Is that why you have come? No, he is not a leper! Look at my hands. I have cured him for years and there is no leprosy on me. My hands are reddened by spices, but I am not a leper. I have no… »

« Peace! Peace, woman. And who said that Lazarus is a leper? And who suspects such a dreadful sin in you, as that of hiding a leper? And do you think that, for all your power, we would not have struck you, if you had sinned? In order to have the precepts obeyed we are quite prepared to pass over our fathers and mothers, our wives and children. I, Jonathan of Uziel, am telling you. »

« Certainly! That's right! And now we tell you, out of the love we have for you and we had for your mother and for Lazarus' sake, send for the Master. Are you shaking your head? Do you mean that it is too late by now? What? You, Martha, the faithful disciple, have no faith in Him? That's bad! Are you beginning to doubt as well? » says Archelaus.

« You are blaspheming, scribe. I believe in the Master as I believe in the true God. »

« Why do you not want to try, then? He has raised the dead… At least so they say… Perhaps you do not know where He is? If you wish, we will look for Him, we will help you » says Felix in an insinuating way.

« No! In Lazarus' house they certainly know where the Rabbi is. Tell us frankly, woman, and we will depart and look for Him and we will bring Him to you, and we shall be present at the miracle to rejoice with you, with all of you » says Sadoc tempting her.

Martha is hesitant, she is almost tempted to yield. The others insist while she says: « I do not know where He is… I really do not know… He went away some days ago and He said goodbye to us like one who goes away for a long time I would be relieved if I knew where He is… If at least I knew But I do not know, that is the truth… »

« Poor woman! But we will help you We will bring Him to you » says Cornelius.

« No! It is not necessary. The Master You are speaking of Him, are you not? The Master said that we must hope beyond hope, and in God only. And we will do that » says Mary in a thundering voice, as she comes back with Helkai, who departs from her at once and goes towards three Pharisees bending down to speak to them.

« But he is dying, according to what I hear! » says Doras, who is one of the three.

« So what? Let him die! I will not obstruct God's decree and I will not disobey the Rabbi. »

« And what do you expect after his death, foolish woman? » says the Herodian mockingly.

« What? Life! » Her voice is a cry of absolute faith.

« Life? Ha! Ha! Be sincere. You know that He has no power against real death, and in your foolish love for Him you do not want that to become known. »

« Go out, all of you! It would be for Martha to tell you. But she is afraid of you. I am only afraid of offending God, Who has forgiven me. And I am telling you in Martha's stead. Go out, all of you. There is no room in this house for those who hate Jesus Christ. Out! Go to your gloomy dens! All out! Or I will get the servants to drive you out like a herd of unclean beggars. »

She is imposing in her wrath. The Judaeans slink away in the most cowardly way, in front of the woman. It is true that that woman looks like an enraged archangel…

As they leave the hall and cross the threshold passing in front of Mary, she glares at them, creating for each an immaterial Caudine Fork under which the pride of the defeated Judaeans is compelled to stoop. The hall is at last cleared out.

Martha collapses on the carpet bursting into tears.

« Why are you weeping, sister? I do not see why you should… »

« Oh! you offended them… and they offended you, they offended us… and now they will avenge themselves… and… »

« Be silent, silly woman! On whom do you expect them to avenge themselves? On Lazarus? They must decide first, and before they do that… No one revenges oneself on a man who is done for! On us? Are we in need of their bread to live? They will not touch our property. The shadow of Rome is cast over it. On what then? And even if they were able to do that, are we not both young and strong? Shall we not be able to work? Is Jesus not poor? Was our Jesus not a workman? Shall we not be more like Him, if we are poor and workers? You ought to be proud in becoming so! Hope for it! Ask God to grant it! »

« But what they said to you… »

« Ah! What they said to me! It's the truth. And I repeat it to myself. I was unclean. I am now the ewe-lamb of the Shepherd! And the past is dead. Come on, come to see Lazarus. »

541. Martha Sends a Servant to Inform the Master.

20th December 1946.

I am still in Lazarus' house and I see Martha and Mary go out into the garden in the company of a rather elderly man, who looks very dignified and I would say that he is not a Hebrew because his

face is clean-shaven, as is customary with Romans. As soon as they are at a little distance from the house, Mary 'asks him: « Well, Nicomedes? What do you think of our brother? We see that he is seriously… ill… Tell us. »

The man opens his arms in a gesture of commiseration and acknowledgement of the ineluctable situation, and he stops and says: « He is very ill… I have never deceived you since I began to attend him. I have tried everything, as you know. But to no avail. I also… hoped, yes, I hoped that he might at least live reacting against the exhaustion of the disease with the good nourishment and the cordials I prepared for him. I tried also with poisons that preserve the blood from corruption and support one's strength, according to the old schools of the great masters in medicine. But the disease is stronger than the means we use to cure it. Such diseases are like corrosions, they destroy one. And when they appear exteriorly, the inside of the bones has already been affected, and like the lymph that in a tree ascends from the roots to its top, also in this case, the disease has spread from his feet to his whole body… »

« But only his legs are diseased… » says Martha plaintively.

« Yes, but a high temperature causes damage to parts of the body that instead you think are healthy. Look at this little branch that has fallen off that tree. It seems to be warm-eaten only here, where it is broken. But, look… (he crumbles it with his fingers). See? Under the bark, which is still smooth, it is rotten right to the top, where there still seems to be life, because there are still some little leaves. Lazarus is now… dying, poor sisters! The God of your fathers, and the gods and demigods of our medicine have not been able to do anything… or they did not want to do it. I am speaking of your God… Therefore… I do foresee that his death is close at hand, also because his temperature has risen, a symptom of the deterioration of his blood brought about by his disorderly heart-beats, and by the lack of stimuli and reactions in the invalid and in all his organs. As you can see, he gets no nourishment any more, he cannot hold the little food he takes and he does not assimilate the little he can hold. It's the end… And - believe a doctor who is grateful to you because he remembers Theophilus - the thing to be most desired now is death… Such diseases are dreadful. For thousands of years they have destroyed man and man cannot destroy them. Only the gods could if… » He stops, he looks at them rubbing his clean-shaven chin. He is pensive. He then says: « Why do you not call the Galilean? He is a friend of yours. He can cure him because He can do everything. I have examined people who were doomed and who have been cured. A strange power emanates from Him. It is a mysterious fluid that revives and gathers together the scattered reactions and makes them wish to recover… I don't know. I know that I have followed Him, being also mingled with the crowd, and I have seen wonderful

things… Send for Him. I am a Gentile. But I pay homage to the mysterious Thaumaturge of your people. And I would be happy if He could do what I could not do. »

« He is God, Nicomedes. That is why He can. The power that you call fluid is His will of God » says Mary.

« I do not ridicule your faith. On the contrary I spur it to reach impossible limits. In any case… We read that at times the gods have descended upon the Earth. I… had never believed it… But, with the science and conscience of a man and a doctor, I must admit that it is so, because the Galilean works such cures that only a god can work. »

« Not a god, Nicomedes. The true God. » insists Mary.

« All right. As you wish. And I will believe in Him and become one of His followers if I see Lazarus… rise from the dead. Because we must speak of resurrection now, rather than recovery. So send for Him urgently… because, if I have not become a fool, he will die within the next three days, at most. I said "at most". But it could be sooner, now. »

« Oh! I wish we could! But we do not know where He is… » says Martha.

« I know where He is. I was told by one of His disciples who was going to meet Him taking some sick people, two of whom were my patients. He is beyond the Jordan, near the ford. So he said. Perhaps you know the place better than I do. »

« Ah! He is certainly in Solomon's house! » says Mary.

« Is it very far? »

« No, Nicomedes. »

« Then send a servant at once to tell Him to come. I will come back later and I will stay here to see His action on Lazarus. Hail, ladies. And… give courage to each other. » He bows to them and goes away towards the exit, where a servant is waiting for him to hold his horse and open the gate to him.

« What shall we do, Mary? » asks Martha after she sees the doctor depart.

« We will obey the Master. He told us to send for Him after Lazarus' death. And we will do that. »

« But when he is dead… what is the use of having the Master here? It will only help our hearts, I agree. But with regard to Lazarus!… I am going to send a servant to call Him. »

« No. You would destroy the miracle. He said that we must be able to hope and believe against every adverse reality. And if we do so, we shall have the miracle, I am sure of it. If we do not do so, God will leave us with the presumption that we can act better than He can, and He will grant us nothing. »

« But don't you see how much Lazarus is suffering? Have you not heard, when he recovers consciousness, how he longs to see the

Master? You are hard-hearted if you want to deny our poor brother this last joy!… Our poor brother! We shall soon have no brother! No father, no mother, no brother! The family is destroyed, and we are all alone, like two palm-trees in a desert. » She is overwhelmed by grief and I would say that she falls into hysterics, in typically eastern style, and she tosses herself, striking her face and ruffling her hair.

Mary grasps her. She commands her to be silent saying: « Be quiet! Be quiet, I tell you! He may hear you. I love him more and better than you do, and I can control myself. You look like a sickly woman. Be silent, I tell you! It is not with such frenzies that one can change situations or move hearts. If you behave thus to move mine, you are making a mistake. Think about it. My heart breaks, but it obeys: it persists in obedience. »

Martha, overwhelmed by the strength of her sister and by her words, calms down a little but in her grief, which is more composed, she moans invoking her mother: « Mother! oh! mother, console me. I have had no peace since you died. If you were here, mother! If sorrows had not killed you! If you were here, you would guide us and we would obey you, for the welfare of us all… Oh! »

Mary changes colour and she weeps noiselessly, she looks dejected and wrings her hands without speaking.

Martha looks at her and says: « When our mother was about to die, she made me promise that I would look after Lazarus like a mother. If she were here… »

« She would obey the Master, because she was a just woman. You are trying to move me in vain. You can say to me that I murdered my mother through the pains I gave her. I will say to you. "You are right". But if you want to make me say that you are right in wanting the Master, I say to you: "No". And I will always say: "No". And I am sure that from Abraham's bosom she approves of me and blesses me. Let us go into the house. »

« We have nothing left! Nothing left! »

« Everything! You must say everything! You do listen to the Master and you seem to pay attention while He speaks, but later you do not remember what He says. Has He not always said that to love and obey makes us the children of God and the heirs to His Kingdom? So how can you say that we will be left without anything, if we have God and we possess the Kingdom through our loyalty? Oh! it is true that one must be firmly determined in evil, as I was, in order to be, to know how to be, and to want to be firmly determined in good, in obedience, in hope, in faith, in love!… »

« You allow the Judaeans to laugh at and throw out innuendoes against the Master. You heard them the day before yesterday… »

« Are you still thinking of the chattering of those crows, of the cheeping of those vultures? Let them spit out what they have inside!

What does the world matter to you? What is the world as compared with God? Look: it is less than this filthy bluebottle, which is benumbed or poisoned with the filth it has sucked and which I trample on thus » and with a vigorous blow of her heel she crushes a horse-fly that is creeping slowly on the gravel of the avenue. She then takes Martha by the arm saying: « Come into the house and… »

« At least let us inform the Master. Let us send someone to tell Him that Lazarus is dying, without saying anything else… »

« As if He needed to be told by us! No! It is useless. He said: "Let Me know when he is dead". And that is what we will do. But not before his death. »

« No one takes pity on my grief! Least of all you… »

« Stop weeping like that. I cannot bear it… » In her own sorrow she bites her lip to encourage her sister and restrain her tears.

Marcella runs out of the house followed by Maximinus: « Martha! Mary! Quick! Lazarus is not well. He does not reply any more… »

The two sisters rush back into the house… and shortly afterwards one can hear Mary's loud voice giving orders for the circumstance, and see servants run with cordials and basins steaming with boiling water, whispering and making gestures of sorrow…

Calm slowly takes over after so much excitement. I see the servants talking to one another in low voices, less excitedly, but with gestures of deep depression to give emphasis to their words. Some shake their heads, some raise them looking at the sky and stretching out their arms as if to say: « It is so », some weep, and some still hope for a miracle.

Martha appears again. She is as white as death. She turns round to see whether she is being followed. She looks at the servants who press round her anxiously. She turns round again to see whether anyone has come out of the house to follow her. She then says to a servant: « Come with me. »

The servant leaves the group and follows her towards the jasmine pergola and goes into it. Martha speaks, still keeping an eye on the house, which can be seen through the thickly entangled branches, and she says: « Listen to me carefully. When all the servants have gone back into the house, and I have given them orders to keep them busy inside, you shall go to the stables, you shall take one of the fastest horses and saddle it… If anyone should by chance see you, say that you are going to call the doctor… You will not be telling a lie and I am not teaching you to lie, because I am really sending you to the blessed Doctor… Take some fodder for the horse and some food for yourself and this purse for what you may need. Go out through the small gate and through the ploughed fields, where the hoofs make no noise, when you go away from the house. Then take the Jericho road and gallop without ever stopping, not even at night. Have you understood? You must never stop. The new moon will illuminate

the road for you if it gets dark while you are still galloping. Bear in mind that the life of your master is in your hands and depends on your speed. I rely on you. »

« Mistress, I will serve you as a faithful slave. »

« Go to the Bethabara ford. Cross the river and go to the village after Bethany beyond the Jordan. You know… where John used to baptise at the beginning. »

« I know. I went there as well to be purified. »

« The Master is in that village. Anybody will tell you the house where He is a guest. But it is better if you follow the banks of the river, instead of taking the main road. You will not be noticed so much and you will find the house by yourself. It is the first one on the only road of the village and it takes one from the country to the river. You cannot go wrong. It's a low house, with no terrace or upper room, with a kitchen garden, when coming from the river, before the house, and the kitchen garden is enclosed by a small wooden gate and a hawthorn hedge, I think, a hedge, in any case. Is that clear? Repeat those details. »

The servant repeats them patiently.

« All right. Ask to speak to Him, to Him alone, and tell Him that your mistresses have sent you to inform Him that Lazarus is very ill, that he is dying, that we cannot resist any longer, that Lazarus wants Him and ask Him to come at once, at once, for pity's sake. Have you understood? »

« Yes, I have, mistress. »

« Then come back here immediately, so that no one may notice your absence. Take a lamp with you, you will need it when it gets dark. Go, be quick, gallop, run the horse off its legs, but come back quickly with the Master's reply. »

« I will do so, mistress. »

« Go now! See? They have all gone back into the house. Go at once. No one will see you making preparations. I will bring you some food myself. Go! I will leave it on the threshold of the small gate. Go! And may God be with you. Go!… »

She pushes him anxiously and then she runs into the house cautiously, and shortly afterwards she steals out from a back door on the southern side of the house, with a little bag in her hands, she walks along a hedge as far as the first opening, she turns and disappears…

542. Lazarus' Death.

21st December 1946.

They have opened all the doors and windows in Lazarus' room, to make it easier for him to breathe. And around him, who is unconscious, in a coma - a deep coma like death, from which it differs

only because of his breathing movement - there are his two sisters, Maximinus, Marcella and Naomi, intent on the least act of the dying man.

Every time the pangs of death contract his mouth and it seems to assume the expression of one about to speak, or his eyes can be partly seen when he half-opens his eyelids, the two sisters bend over him to catch a word, a glance… But in vain. They are nothing but movements lacking coordination, independent of his will and intelligence, which are by now both inert and lost. They are acts brought about by the suffering flesh, just like the perspiration that makes the face of the dying man shiny, and the tremor that at intervals shakes his skeletal fingers, making them look like contracted claws. The two sisters also call him, with all their love in their voices. But his name and their love collide with the barrier of intellective insensibility, and the silence of death is the reply to their calling.

Naomi, weeping, continues to place warm bricks, enveloped in strips of woollen cloth, near his feet, which must be very cold. Marcella is holding in her hands a cup into which she dips a piece of thin linen, which Martha uses to moisten her brother's dry lips. Mary with another piece of linen wipes the plentiful perspiration which streams down the skeletal face and wets the hands of the dying man. Maximinus, leaning against a tall dark cabinet near Lazarus' bed, watches standing behind Mary, who is bent over her brother.

There is no one else. There is dead silence, as if they were in an empty house, in a desert place. The maidservants who bring the warm bricks are barefooted and make no noise walking on the marble floor. They look like apparitions.

At a certain moment Mary says: « His hands seem to become warm. Look, Martha, his lips are not so pale. »

« Yes. And he is breathing more freely. I have noticed that for some time » remarks Maximinus.

Martha bends over him and calls him in a low voice, in a very warm tone: « Lazarus! Lazarus! Oh! Look, Mary! He seemed to smile and to bat his eyelids. He is improving, Mary! He is getting better! What time is it? »

« It's one hour past sunset. »

« Ah! » and Martha stands up, pressing her hands against her breast, raising her eyes in a visible gesture of mute but confident prayer. A smile brightens her face.

The others look at her in amazement and Mary says to her: « I fail to see why the fact that it is evening should make you happy… » and she scans her face suspiciously and anxiously.

Martha does not reply, but she resumes the same posture she had previously.

A maid comes in with some bricks, which she hands to Naomi. Mary says to her: « Bring two lamps. It is getting dark and I want to see him. » The maid goes out noiselessly and soon comes back with two lighted oil-lamps, and she lays one on the cabinet near Maximinus, and the other on a table encumbered with bandages and tiny amphorae, on the other side of the bed.

« Oh! Mary! Mary! He is really less pale. »

« And not so exhausted looking. He is reviving! » says Marcella.

« Give him a few more drops of that spicy wine that Sarah prepared. It did him good » suggests Maximinus.

From the top of the cabinet Mary takes a tiny slender-necked amphora, shaped like the beak of a bird, and she carefully pours a few drops of wine between Lazarus' half-closed lips.

« Slowly, Mary. That he may not choke! » advises Naomi.

« Oh! he swallows it! He wants it! Look, Martha! Look! He is sticking his tongue out, seeking it… »

They all bend to look, and Naomi calls him:« Darling! Look at your wet-nurse, o blessed soul! » and she moves forward to kiss him.

« Look! Look, Naomi, he is drinking your tears! One fell near his lips, he felt it, he sought it and he absorbed it. »

« Oh! my darling! If I had the milk of days gone by, I would squeeze it out for you drop by drop, my little lamb, even if I had to squeeze my heart and then die! » I gather that Naomi, Mary's wet nurse, nursed also Lazarus.

« Mistresses, Nicomedes has come back » says a servant appearing at the door.

« Let him come in! He will help us to make him recover. »

« Look! Look! He is opening his eyes and moving his lips » says Maximinus.

« He is pressing my fingers with his own! » shouts Mary. And she bends saying: « Lazarus! Can you hear me? Who am I? »

Lazarus really opens his eyes and looks, an uncertain veiled look, but still a look. He moves his lips with difficulty and says:« Mother! »

« I am Mary. Mary! Your sister! »

« Mother! »

« He does not recognise you and he is calling his mother. Dying people always do that » says Naomi, whose face is wet with tears.

« But he speaks. After such a long time he speaks. It is already a good deal… He will feel better later. Oh! my Lord, reward your maidservant! » says Martha once again with the gesture of fervent confident prayer.

« But what happened to you? Have you seen the Master? Did He appear to you? Tell me, Martha. Relieve my anguish! » says Mary.

Nicomedes' coming in prevents a reply. They all address him telling him how after his departure Lazarus had grown worse, so much so that he was on the point of dying, and in fact they believed

that he was dead, then, with some aids they had made him come to himself, but only as far as to make him breathe. And how, a short time ago, with a spicy wine prepared by one of the women, he had begun to warm up again, he had swallowed some and tried to drink, and he had also opened his eyes and had spoken… They are all speaking together, with revived hope, contrasting with the somewhat sceptical calmness of the doctor who lets them speak without uttering one word.

At last, when they have finished, he says: « All right. Let me see. » He pushes them aside as he approaches the bed and asks them to bring some lights and to close the window, as he wants to uncover the patient. He bends over him, he calls him, he questions him, he moves an oil-lamp to and fro in front of the face of Lazarus, who has now opened his eyes and seems amazed at everything; he then uncovers him, studies his breathing, his heartbeats, the temperature and stiffness of his limbs… They are all anxiously awaiting his word. Nicomedes covers the patient again, looks at him and is pensive. He then turns round looking at the people present and says: « It is undeniable that he has recovered strength. He has improved since the last time I saw him. But do not delude yourselves. It is nothing but the fictitious improvement of death. I am so certain, as I was certain that it is the end, that, as you can see, I have come back, after freeing myself of my commitments, to make his death less painful, as far as I can do so… or to see the miracle if… Have you taken action? »

« Yes, Nicomedes, we have » says Martha interrupting him. And to prevent him from asking further questions, she says: « But did you not say that… within three days… I… » She weeps.

« I said. I am a doctor. I live amidst agonies and tears. But the habitual sight of grief has not yet turned me into a heartless man. And today… I prepared you… with a rather long… and vague date… But my medical knowledge warned me that the end would come sooner, and my heart misrepresented the truth as a pitiful deception… Now! Be brave… Go out… We never know how much dying people understand… » He pushes them out, while they weep, repeating: « Be brave! Be brave! »

Maximinus remains with the dying man… The doctor also goes away to prepare some medicines capable of making the agony less distressing, as he says: « I foresee that it will be very painful. » « Make him live!

Make him live till tomorrow. It is almost night, as you can see, Nicomedes. It is no problem for your science to keep a man alive for less than one day! Make him live! »

« Madam, I do what I can. But when the wick ends, nothing can keep the flame alive! » replies the doctor, and he goes away.

The two sisters embrace each other, weeping disconsolately, and Mary is the one who is weeping more. Her sister has a hopeful

heart…

They hear Lazarus' voice coming from his room. A loud authoritative voice that startles them because it is unexpected from such a weak person. He calls them: « Martha! Mary! Where are you? I want to get up. I want to get dressed! I want to tell the Master that I am cured! I must go to the Master. A wagon! At once. And a fast horse. It was certainly He Who cured me… »

He speaks fast, syllabising the words, sitting on his bed, flushed with a high temperature, trying to get out of the bed, prevented from doing so by Maximinus, who says to the women rushing into the room: « He is raving! »

« No! Let him go. The miracle! The miracle! Oh! I am so happy that I provoked it! As soon as Jesus was told! God of our fathers, may You be blessed and praised for Your power and because of Your Messiah… » Martha, who has dropped on her knees, is beside herself with joy.

In the meantime Lazarus continues to speak, excited more and more by his temperature, which Martha does not understand is the cause of everything, and he says:« He came so often to see me, when I was ill. It is fair that I should go to Him and say: "I am cured". I am cured! I feel no more pains! I am strong. I want to get up. I want to go. God wanted to test my resignation. I shall be called the new Job… » He assumes a hieratic attitude and making wide gestures he says: « "The Lord was moved by Job's penance… and gave him double what he had before. And the Lord blessed the last years of Job more than the first ones… and he lived until… No, I am not Job! I was among the flames and He pulled me out, I was in the belly of the monster and I have come back to light. So I am Jonah, and I am the three children of Daniel… »

The doctor, called by someone, comes in. He looks at him: « It's delirium. I was expecting it. The corruption of the blood affects the brains. » He strives to lay him down and exhorts the others to hold him carefully, and he goes out again to attend to his decoctions.

Lazarus at times becomes rather impatient of being held, at times he weeps like a child.

« He is really delirious » moans Mary.

« No. None of you understand anything. You cannot believe. Of course! You do not know… By now the Master is aware that Lazarus is dying. Yes, I informed Him, Mary! I did it without saying anything to you… »

« Ah! wretch! You have destroyed the miracle! » shouts Mary.

« No! As you can see, he began to feel better when Jonah reached the Master. He is raving… Certainly… He is weak, and his brain is still dulled with death that had already grasped at him. But he is not raving as the doctor thinks. Listen to him! Are those the words of a delirious person? »

Lazarus in fact is saying: « I bent my head to the decree of death and I tasted how bitter it is to die, and God has now said that He is satisfied with my resignation and He is restoring me to life and giving me back to my sisters. I shall still be able to serve the Lord and sanctify myself with Martha and Mary… With Mary! What is Mary? Mary is Jesus' gift to poor Lazarus. He had told me… What a long time since then! "Your forgiveness will do more than anything else. It will help Me". He promised me: "She will be your joy". And on that day that I was upset because she had brought her shame here, near the Holy One, what words He spoke inviting her to come back! Wisdom and Charity had joined together to touch her heart… And the other day, when He found me offering myself for her redemption?… I want to live to rejoice with my redeemed sister! I want to praise the Lord with her! Streams of tears, insults, shame, bitterness… everything has pierced me and killed my life because of her… Here is the fire, the fire of the furnace! It is coming back, with its memory… Mary of Theophilus and Eucheria, my sister, the prostitute. She could have been a queen and she became the filth that even a pig tramples on. And my mother who dies. And not being able to go among people any longer without having to put up with their mockery. Because of her! Where are you, you wretch? Were you lacking bread, perhaps, that you should sell yourself? What did you suck from the nipple of your wet-nurse? What did your mother teach you? Lust the former? Sin the latter? Go away! Disgrace of our family! »

His voice is a shout. He seems to be mad. Marcella and Naomi hasten to close the doors and to draw the heavy curtains to deaden the sound, whilst the doctor, who has come into the room, strives in vain to calm the delirium that is becoming more and more violent . Mary, prostrated dejectedly on the floor, is sobbing under the implacable charge of the dying man who goes on:

« One, two, ten lovers. The shame of Israel passed from one embrace to another one… Her mother was dying, she was rejoicing in her obscene love affairs. Beast! Vampire! You sucked your mother's life. You destroyed our joy. Martha was sacrificed because of you. No one marries the sister of a prostitute. I… Ah! I! Lazarus, a knight, the son of Theophilus… The urchins in Ophel used to spit at me!! "Here is the accomplice of an adulteress and of a prostitute" the scribes and Pharisees used to say shaking their garments meaning that they rejected the sin of which I was foul through her contact! "Here is the sinner! He who is not capable of striking the culprit is guilty himself" the rabbis used to shout when I went up to the Temple, and I was bathed in perspiration under the fiery eyes of the priests… The fire. You! You vomited the fire that was within you. Because you are a demon, Mary. You are filthy. You are anathema. Your fire clung to everybody, because your fire comprised many

fires, and there was some for lustful people who looked like fish caught in a drag-net whenever you passed by… Why did I not kill you? I shall burn in Gehenna for allowing you to live ruining so many families, scandalising thousands of people… Who said: "Alas for the man who provides scandal"? Who said so? Ah! the Master! I want the Master! I want Him! That He may forgive me. I want to tell Him that I could not kill her because I loved her… Mary was sunshine in our house… I want the Master! Why is He not here? I don't want to live! But I want to be forgiven for the scandal that I stirred up by allowing the cause of scandal to live. I am already enveloped in flames. It's the fire of Mary. It is burning me. It burnt everybody. To give lust to her, to bring hatred against us, to bum my flesh. Take these blankets away, take everything away! I am on fire. It is burning my flesh and my spirit. I am lost because of her. Master! Master! Forgive me! He is not coming. He cannot come to Lazarus' house. It's a dunghill because of her. So… I want to forget. Everything. I am no longer Lazarus. Give me some wine. Solomon says: "Give wine to those who are broken-hearted, let them drink and forget their misery, so that they may remember their grief no more". I don't want to remember any more. Everybody says: "Lazarus is rich, the richest man in Judaea". It's not true! It is all straw. It is not gold. And the houses? They are clouds. His vineyards, oases, gardens, olive-groves? Nothing. Deceit. I am Job. I have nothing. I had a pearl. Beautiful! Of infinite value. She was my pride. Her name was Mary. I no longer have her. I am poor. The poorest of them all. The most deceived… Jesus also deceived me. Because He told me that He would give her back to me, instead she… Where is she? There she is. The woman of Israel, the daughter of a holy mother, looks like a heathen hetaera! Half-naked, drunk, mad… And around her, with their eyes fixed on the naked body of my sister, the pack of her lovers… And she enjoys being admired and craved for thus. I want to make amends for my crime. I want to go through Israel saying: "Don't go near the house of my sister. Her house is the path to hell and it descends into the abyss of death". Then I want to go to her and tread on her, because it is written: "Every unchaste woman will be trampled on like dung on the road". Oh! Have you the nerve to show yourself to me who am dying like a dishonoured man, destroyed by you? After I offered my life to redeem your soul, and to no avail? Are you asking me how I wanted you? How I wanted you in order not to die thus? This is how I wanted you: like the chaste Susanna. Are you saying that they tempted you? And did you not have a brother to defend you? Susanna, who was all alone, replied: "I prefer to fall innocent into your power, than to sin in the eyes of the Lord", and God made her innocence shine. I would have spoken the necessary words to those who tempted you and I would have defended you. Instead, you went

away. Judith was a widow and she lived in seclusion, wearing sackcloth and fasting and she was held in high esteem by everybody, because she feared the Lord and people sing of her: "You are the glory of Jerusalem, the joy of Israel, the honour of our race, because you acted in a manly manner and bravely, because you loved chastity and after your marriage you have known no other man. That is why the hand of the Lord made you strong and you will be blessed for ever". If Mary had been like Judith, the Lord would have cured me. But He could not cure me because of her. That is why I did not ask to be cured. There can be no miracle where she is. But it is nothing to die, to suffer. I would suffer ten times as much and die several times, provided she were saved. Oh! Most High Lord! I am prepared to suffer all deaths and all sorrows, but let Mary be saved! To enjoy her company for one hour, for one hour only, when she has become holy and as pure as she was in her childhood! One hour of that joy! To be proud of her, the golden flower of my house, the kind gazelle with meek eyes, the evening nightingale, the loving dove… I want the Master to tell Him that that is what I want: Mary! Mary! Come! Mary! How grieved is your brother, Mary! But if you come, if you redeem yourself, my sorrow will turn into delight. Look for Mary! I am at the end! I am dying! Mary! Light! Air… I… I'm suffocating… Oh! what I feel!… »

The doctor makes a gesture and says: « It is the end. After delirium, sopor then death. But he may have a revival of intelligence. Come close to him. You in particular. It will make him happy » and after laying Lazarus down with care, exhausted as he is with so much excitement, he goes towards Mary, who has been weeping all the time moaning on the floor: « Make him keep quiet! ». He lifts her up and takes her to the bed.

Lazarus has closed his eyes. But he must be suffering dreadfully. His whole body trembles spasmodically. The doctor tries to help him with potions… Some time goes by thus.

Lazarus opens his eyes. He does not seem to remember what happened before, but he is conscious. He smiles at his sisters and tries to take their hands and to reply to their kisses. He turns deadly pale. He moans: « I am cold… » and his teeth chatter as he tries to cover his face with the bedclothes. He groans: « Nicomedes, I cannot resist the pain any longer. Wolves are eating the flesh of my legs and devouring my heart. How painful it is! And if this is agony, what will death be like? What shall I do? Oh! if I had the Master here! Why did you not bring Him to me? I would have died a happy death on His lap… » he says weeping.

Martha casts a severe glance at Mary. Mary understands the meaning of that glance, and still crushed by her brother's frenzy, she is conscience-stricken and kneeling against the bed, she bends to kiss Lazarus' hand saying plaintively: « I am the guilty one. Martha

wanted to do so two days ago. I did not let her. Because He told us that we had to inform Him only after your death. Forgive me! I have been the cause of all the grief of your lifetime… And yet I loved you and I love you, brother. After the Master, I love you more than anybody and God knows that I am not lying. Tell me that you absolve me of my past, that I may have peace… »

« Madam! » says the doctor reproachingly. « The patient is in no need of emotions. »

« That is true… Tell me that you forgive me for not calling Jesus »

« Mary! Jesus came here for you… and He comes because of you because you know how to love… more than all the rest… You have loved me more than the rest… A life… of delights would not have given me… not have given me… the joy that I experienced because of you… I bless you… I say to you that you did the right thing in obeying Jesus… I did not know I know… I say… it is right Help me to die! Naomi… you knew once… how to… make me fall asleep… Martha blessed my peace Maximinus… with Jesus. Also… for me My share to the poor to Jesus… for the poor And forgive everybody Ah! what atrocious pangs!… Air! Light!… Everything is trembling… There a kind of light around you and it dazzles me if… I look at you… Speak… loud… » He has laid his left hand on Mary's head and has abandoned his right one into Martha's hands. He is panting…

They lift him carefully adding pillows, and Nicomedes makes him sip some more drops of potions. His poor head hangs and dangles in deadly languor. The only sign of life is his breathing. And yet he opens his eyes and looks at Mary who is holding his head and he smiles at her saying: « Mother! She has come back Mother! Speak! Your voice You know… the secret… of God Have I served… the Lord? »

Mary in a low voice, which grief has made as thin as a girl's, whispers: « The Lord is saying to you: " Come with Me, My good and faithful servant, because you have listened to every word of Mine and you have loved the Word Whom I sent". »

« I can't hear. Speak louder! »

Mary repeats in a louder voice…

« It is really mother!… » says Lazarus contentedly relaxing his head on his sister's shoulder…

He does not speak any more. Only wails and spasmodic tremor, only perspiration and heavy breathing. Insensible by now to the Earth, to affections, he sinks into the more and more absolute darkness of death. His eyelids close on his glassy eyes in which his last tears shine.

« Nicomedes! He is getting heavier! He is becoming cold!… » says Mary.

« Madam, death is a relief for him. »

« Keep him alive! Jesus will be certainly here tomorrow. He will have left at once. Perhaps He has taken the servant's horse or another mount » says Martha. And addressing her sister she says: « Oh! If you had let me send him earlier! » She then orders the doctor convulsively: « Make him live! »

The doctor stretches out his arms. He tries with some cordials. But Lazarus does not swallow any more.

His death-rattle increases… It is heart-rending…

« Oh! we cannot bear this any more! » says Naomi moaning.

« Yes. It's a long agony… » says the doctor assenting.

But he has hardly finished speaking when with a convulsion of his whole body, that arches and then collapses, Lazarus breathes his last.

His sisters shout… seeing his spasm, they shout seeing him collapse. Mary calls her brother, kissing him. Martha clings to the doctor as he bends over the dead body and says: « He is dead. It is now too late to wait for the miracle. There is nothing to wait for. Too late! … I am going, dominae. There is no reason why I should remain. Make haste for the funeral, because the body is already decomposed. » He closes the eyelids of the dead man and looking at him he says: « What a misfortune! He was a virtuous and intelligent man. He shouldn't have died! » He turns towards the sisters, he bows and greets them: « Ave! Dominae! » and he goes away.

Mournful laments fill the room. Mary has no more self-control and she throws herself on her brother's body shouting her remorse and invoking his forgiveness. Martha is weeping in Naomi's arms.

Then Mary shouts: « You did not have faith or obedience! I killed him first, you have killed him now; I, with my sins, you, with your disobedience. » She seems to have gone mad. Martha lifts her up, embraces her and apologises.

Maximinus, Naomi, Marcella try to bring both to reason and to resignation. And they succeed by remembering Jesus… Their grief quietens down, and while the room becomes crowded with weeping servants, and those responsible for the preparation of the corpse come in, the two sisters are led into another room to give vent to their grief.

Maximinus who is leading them says: « He passed away at the end of the second watch of the night. »

And Naomi says: « He will have to be buried early tomorrow, before sunset, when the Sabbath begins. You said that the Master wants solemn funeral ceremonies… »

« Yes. I leave that to you, Maximinus. I am not in the right frame of mind » says Martha.

« I am going and I will send servants to all the people concerned, both close at hand and far away, and I will give all the necessary instructions » says Maximinus and he withdraws.

The two sisters are weeping in each other's arms. They no longer reproach each other. They weep and try to console each other…

Some hours go by. The dead body is prepared in the room: a long figure enveloped in bandages under the sudarium.

« Why is he already covered like that! » exclaims Martha reproachingly.

« Mistress… A bad smell came from his nose and he threw up tainted blood when we moved him » says a servant apologising.

The sisters weep more loudly. Lazarus is already more remote under those bandages… A further step, towards the remoteness of death.

They keep vigil by his bedside weeping, until dawn, when the servant comes back from beyond the Jordan. The servant is dismayed, but he informs them of his fast journey to bring them the news that Jesus is coming.

« Did He say that He is coming? Did He not reproach us? » asks Martha.

« No, mistress. He said: "I will come. Tell them that I will come and to have faith". And before that He said: "Tell them not to worry. It is not a deadly disease. But it is for the glory of God, that His power may be glorified in His Son-. »

« Did He say exactly that? Are you sure? » asks Mary.

« Mistress, I have been repeating His words all the way back! »

« Go, then. You are tired. You have done everything well. But it is too late, now!… » says Martha with a sigh. And she bursts into tears as soon as she is left with her sister.

« Martha, why?… »

« Oh! in addition to his death, there is disappointment! Mary! Mary! Are you not considering that the Master is wrong this time? Look at Lazarus. He is really dead! We have hoped against hope, but to no avail. When I sent for Him, I certainly made a mistake, for he was more dead than alive. And our faith had no result or reward. And the Master has sent word that it is not a deadly disease! So is the Master no longer the Truth? He is no longer… Oh! That's the end of everything! »

Mary is wringing her hands. She does not know what to say. Facts are facts… But she does not speak. She does not say one word against her Jesus. She weeps. She is really exhausted.

Martha has a fixed idea in her heart: that she delayed too long. « It's your fault » she says reproachingly. « He wanted to test our faith thus. By obeying, I agree, but also by disobeying out of faith, to show to Him that we believed that He alone could and had to work the miracle. My poor brother! And he longed for Him so much! At least that: to see Him! Poor Lazarus! Poor brother! » And her weeping changes into howling, which is echoed in the adjoining rooms by the howls of the maids and servants, according to the eastern custom…

543. The Servant, of Bethany Informs Jesus of Martha's Message.

22nd December 1946.

It is already nightfall when the servant, who is proceeding through the brushwood near the river, spurs his horse, steaming with perspiration, to overcome the difference in level between the river and the road leading to the village. The poor animal's sides are heaving because of the long fast run. Its dark coat is all veined with perspiration and its breast is spread with the white foam of the bit. It puffs arching its neck and shaking its head.

They are now on the narrow road and they soon reach the house. The servant jumps to the ground, ties the horse to a hedge and gives a shout.

From the rear of the house the head of Peter appears and in his harsh voice he asks: « Who is calling? The Master is tired. He has not had any peace for many hours. It is almost dark. Come back tomorrow. »

« I do not want anything of the Master. I am healthy and I have only to speak a few words to Him. »

Peter comes forward saying: « From whom, if you do not mind me asking you? I will not let anybody pass without safe identification, particularly those who stink of Jerusalem, as you do. » He has come slowly forward as his suspicion has been aroused more by the beauty of the richly harnessed dark horse than by the man. But when he is in front of him, he is amazed: « You? Are you not one of Lazarus' servant? »

The servant does not know what to say. His mistress told him to speak only to Jesus. But the apostle seems to be quite determined not to let him pass. As he knows that Lazarus' name has great influence over the apostles, he makes up his mind and says: « Yes, I am Jonah, Lazarus' servant. I must speak to the Master. »

« Is Lazarus not well? Has he sent you? »

« No, he is not well. But don't make me waste time. I must go back as soon as possible. » And to convince Peter he says: « The members of the Sanhedrin came to Bethany… »

« The members of the Sanhedrin!!! Come in! Come in! » and he opens the gate saying: « Bring the horse in. We will water it and give it some grass, if you wish so. »

« I have some fodder, but some grass will not do it any harm. We will give it some water later, it may be harmful now. »

They go into the large room where the beds are and they tie the horse in a corner to protect it from draughts; the servant covers it with a blanket that was tied to the saddle, he gives it some fodder and the grass that Peter has brought from I do not know where. They go out again and Peter takes the servant into the kitchen and gives him a cup of warm milk that he takes from a pot near the fire,

instead of the water that the servant had asked for. While the servant drinks it and warms himself near the fire, Peter, who is heroic in not asking curious questions, says: « Milk is better than the water you wanted. And since we have it! Did you come all the way without a stop? »

« Without a stop. And I'll do the same going back. »

« You must be tired. And can the horse stand it? »

« I hope so. In any case, on my way back, I shall not gallop as I did coming. »

« It will soon be dark. The moon is already rising… How will you manage at the river? »

« I hope to arrive there before the moon sets. Otherwise I shall stop in the wood until dawn. But I shall get there before. »

« And then? It's a long way from the river to Bethany. And the moon sets early. She is in her first days. »

« I have a good lamp. I will light it and go slow. No matter how slow I may go, I shall be approaching home. »

« Would you like some bread and cheese? We have some. We have also some fish, I caught it. Because I remained here with Thomas. But Thomas has now gone to get some bread from a woman who helps us. »

« No, don't deprive yourself of anything. I had some food on the way, but I was thirsty and I needed something warm. I am all right now. But will you go to the Master? Is He in? »

« Yes, He is. If He had not been here, I would have told you at once. He is in that room, resting. Because so many people come here… I am even afraid that the news may spread and that the Pharisees may come and disturb. Take some more milk. You have to let the horse eat… and rest. Its sides were beating like a badly secured sail… »

« No, you need the milk. You are so many. »

« Yes. But with the exception of the Master, Who speaks so much that His chest aches, and of the older ones, we, who are sturdy, prefer food that keeps our teeth busy. Take some. It's the milk of the sheep left by the old man. When we are here, the woman brings it to us. But, if we want more, everybody is willing to give it to us. They like us, here, and they help us. And… tell me: were there many members of the Sanhedrin? »

« Oh! they were almost all there and other people with them: Sadducees, scribes, Pharisees, wealthy Judaeans, some Herodians… »

« And why did all those people come to Bethany? Was Joseph with them? And Nicodemus? »

« No. They had come previously. Manaen also had come. The others were not friends of the Lord. »

« Eh! I believe that! They are so few the members of the Sanhedrin who love Him! But what did they want exactly? »

« To greet Lazarus, so they said coming in… »

« H'm! How strange their love is! They have always shunned Him for so many reasons!… Well!… Let us believe it… Did they stay long? »

« Quite a long time. And they were upset when they left. I do not work in the house, so I was not serving at the tables. But the other servants who were serving in the house say that they spoke with the mistresses and they wanted to see Lazarus. Helkai went into Lazarus' room and… »

« A fine crook!… » whispers Peter between his teeth.

« What did you say? »

« Oh! nothing! Go on. And did he speak to Lazarus? »

« I think so. He went with Mary. But later, I do not know why… Mary became irritated and the servants, who rushed there from the nearby rooms, say that she turned them out ruthlessly… »

« Well done! Just what is needed! And have they sent you to tell us? »

« Don't make me waste more time, Simon of Jonah. »

« You are right. Come. »

He takes him towards a door and knocks saying: « Master, there is one of Lazarus' servants who wants to speak to You. »

« Let him come in » says Jesus.

Peter opens the door, lets the servant enter, closes the door and withdraws, meritoriously, to the fireplace, to mortify his curiosity.

Jesus, sitting on the edge of His little bed in the small room where there is hardly space for the bed and the person who lives in it, and which previously was certainly a store-room as there are still hooks on the walls and shelves, looks smiling at the servant who has knelt down and He greets him: « Peace be with you. » And He then adds: « What news do you bring Me? Stand up and speak. »

« My mistresses have sent me to tell You to go to them at once, because Lazarus is very ill and the doctor says that he will die. Martha and Mary implore You and they have sent me to say to You: "Come, because You alone can cure him. »

« Tell them not to worry. This is not a disease that will cause his death, but it is for the glory of God, that His power may be glorified in His Son. »

« But his condition is very serious, Master! His body is affected with gangrene and he no longer takes any food. I have worn out my horse to arrive here in the shortest possible time… »

« It does not matter. It is as I say. »

« But will You come? »

« I will come. Tell them that I will come and to have faith. Tell them to have faith. Absolute faith. Have you understood? Go. Peace to you and to those who sent you. I tell you once again: "They must have faith. Absolute faith". Go. »

The servant greets Him and withdraws.

Peter rushes towards him saying: « You were quick in telling Him. I thought that it was a long speech… » He looks at him intently… His face is shot through with the anxiety to be informed. But he checks himself…

« I am going. Will you give me some water for the horse? Then I will leave. »

« Come. Some water!… We have a whole river to give you some, in addition to our well » and Peter, holding a lamp, walks before him and gives him the water he asked for.

They water the horse. The servant removes the blanket, he checks its shoes, the belly-band, the reins, the stirrups. He explains: « It has run so much and so fast! But everything is in order. Goodbye, Simon Peter, and pray for us. »

He leads the horse out. Holding it by the bridle he goes out on to the road, puts one foot in the stirrup and is about to mount.

Peter holds him back putting one hand on his arms saying: « There is only one thing I wish to know: is there any danger for Him to stay here? Have they made threats? Did they want to learn from the sisters where we were? Tell me, in the name of God! »

« No, Simon. No. They never said that. They came for Lazarus… We suspect that they came to see whether the Master was there and whether Lazarus was leprous, because Martha was shouting out loud that he is not leprous and she was weeping… Goodbye, Simon. Peace be with you. »

« And with you and your mistresses. May God accompany you back home… » He watches him depart… and soon disappear at the end of the street, because the servant prefers to take the main road, clear in the moonlight, rather than the dark path in the wood along the river. He remains thoughtful. Then he closes the gate and goes back into the house.

He goes to Jesus, Who is still sitting on the little bed, leaning His hands on its edge, engrossed in thought. But He rouses Himself when He hears Peter come close to Him and look at Him inquisitively. He smiles at the apostle.

« Are You smiling, Master? »

« I am smiling at you, Simon of Jonah. Sit down here, near Me. Have the others come back? »

« No, Master. Not even Thomas. He must have found someone to speak to. »

« That is all right. »

« All right that he should speak? All right that the others should be late? He speaks even too much. He is always cheerful! And the others? I am always worried until they come back. I am always afraid. »

« Of what, My dear Simon? No harm will befall us for the time

being, believe Me. Set your mind at rest and imitate Thomas who is always cheerful. You, on the contrary, have been very sad for some time. »

« I defy anyone who loves You not to be so! I am old now and I ponder more than the younger ones. Because they also love you, but they are young and less thoughtful… But if You like me more when I am happy, I will be so, I will strive to be so. But in order to be able to be so, give me a reason for it. Tell me the truth, my Lord. I am asking You on my knees (he in fact kneels down). What did Lazarus' servant tell You? That they are looking for You? That they want to harm You? That… »

Jesus lays His hand on Peter's head saying: « No, Simon! Nothing of the kind. He came to tell Me that Lazarus has got worse, and we spoke only of Lazarus. »

« Really? »

« Really, Simon. And I told them to have faith. »

« But do You know that those of the Sanhedrin have been to Bethany? »

« Which is natural! Lazarus' household is a great one. And according to our custom such honours are to be given to a powerful man who is dying. Do not distress yourself, Simon. »

« But do You really think that they did not use that as an excuse to… »

« To see whether I was there. Well, they did not find Me. Cheer up, do not be so frightened as if they had already captured Me. Come here, beside Me, poor Simon, who on no account will be convinced that no harm can befall Me until the moment decreed by God, and that then… nothing will be able to defend Me from Evil… »

Peter throws his arms round Jesus' neck and keeps Him quiet by kissing His lips and saying: « Be quiet! Be quiet! Don't tell me such things! I don't want to hear them! »

Jesus succeeds in releasing Himself so that He can speak and He whispers: « You do not want to hear them! That is the error! But I pity you… Listen, Simon. Since you were the only one to be here, only you and I are to know what happened. Do you understand Me? »

« Yes, Master. I will not mention it to any of my companions. »

« How many sacrifices, is that right, Simon? »

« Sacrifices Which? It is pleasant to be here. We have what is necessary. »

« The sacrifice of not asking questions, of not speaking, of putting up with Judas… of being away from your lake… But God will reward you for everything. »

« Oh! if that is what You mean!… In place of the lake I have the river and… I make it suffice. With regard to Judas… I have You Who make up for him fully… And with regard to the other things!… Trifles! And they help me to become less coarse and more like You.

How happy I am to be here with You! In Your arms! Caesar's palace would not seem more beautiful than this house, if I could always be in it thus, in Your arms. »

« What do you know of Caesar's palace? Have you seen it? »

« No, and I shall never see it. And I do not care. But I imagine it large, beautiful, full of lovely things… and of filth. Like the whole of Rome, I suppose. I would not stay there even if they covered me with gold! »

« Where? In Caesar's palace or in Rome? »

« In neither. Anathema! »

« But because they are like that, they are to be evangelized. »

« And what do You expect to do in Rome?! It is a brothel! There is nothing to be done there, unless You come. Then!… »

« I will come. Rome is the capital of the world. Once Rome is conquered, the world is conquered. »

« Are we going to Rome? You are proclaiming Yourself king, there! Mercy and power of God! That is a miracle! »

Peter has stood up and with raised arms he is standing before Jesus Who smiles and replies to him: « I will go there in My apostles. You will conquer it for Me. And I shall be with you. But there is someone out there. Let us go, Peter. »

544. At Lazarus' Funeral.

23rd December 1946.

The news of Lazarus' death must have had the same effect as a stick stirred inside a beehive. Everybody in Jerusalem talks about it. Notables, merchants, common people, poor people, the townspeople, people from the nearby country, foreigners passing through but familiar with the place, strangers who are there for the first time and ask who is the man whose death is the cause of so much commotion, Romans, legionaries, members of the staff, and Levites and priests who continually gather together and then part, running here and there… Small knots of people discussing the event with different words and expressions. Some utter words of praise, some weep, some feel they are more pauper than usual now that their benefactor is dead, some moan: « I shall never have such a master again », some mention his merits, some describe his wealth and kindred, his father's services and offices and his mother's beauty and riches and her « regal » birth; some, on the contrary, recall family events over which one should draw a veil of kindness, particularly when a dead man is involved who has suffered through them…

The small groups of people come up with the most desperate news on the cause of Lazarus' death, on the place of his burial, on the absence of Christ from the house of His great friend and protector just in that circumstance. The prevailing opinions are two: one is that

all this happened, nay, was brought about by the bad behaviour of Judaeans, members of the Sanhedrin, Pharisees and the like towards the Master; the other, that the Master, being faced with a real deadly disease, sneaked away because His deceit would not be successful in this case. Also without being astute one can understand the source of the latter opinion, which embitters many who retort: « Are you a Pharisee as well? If you are, take care of yourself because the Holy One is not to be cursed in our presence! You abominable vipers born of hyenas coupled with Leviathan! Who pays you to curse the Messiah? » Squabbles, insults, also some blows, pungent rude remarks addressed to the richly dressed Pharisees and scribes, who pass by giving themselves the airs of gods, without condescending to look at the common people shouting in favour or against them, in favour or against the Messiah, resound in the streets. And how many accusations!

« This man is saying that Jesus is a false Master! He is certainly one who has put on weight with the money he received from those snakes who have just gone by! »

« With their money? With ours, you should say! They fleece us for such noble purposes! But where is he? I want to see whether he is one of those who came yesterday to tell me… »

« He has run away. But, blessed be the Lord, we must join together and take action. They are too insolent. »

Another conversation: « I have heard you and I know you. I will tell the people concerned what you said of the Supreme Court! »

« I belong to Christ, and the slaver of a demon does me no harm. If you wish, you can tell Annas and Caiaphas, and may it help them to become more honest. »

And farther away: « Me? You say that I am a perjurer and a blasphemer because I follow the living God? You are a perjurer and a blasphemer since you offend and persecute Him. I know who you are. I have seen you and heard you. You corrupt informer! Come! Take this!… » and in the meantime he begins to cuff the ears of a Judaean whose bony greenish face reddens.

« Cornelius, Simon, look! They are bullying me » says another one farther away, addressing a group of members of the Sanhedrin.

« Endure it with faith and do not soil your hands and lips on a Sabbath's eve » replies one of the men, who had been called, without even turning to look at the unlucky person to whom a group of common people are dispensing rough justice…

Women are shouting calling their husbands whom they entreat not to compromise themselves.

Legionaries on patrol go around dispersing the crowds with their lances and threatening arrests and punishments.

Lazarus' death, the main fact, is the starting point to go on to secondary facts, to give vent to the long lasting tension in hearts…

The members of the Sanhedrin, the elders, scribes, Sadducees, the mighty Judaeans go by slyly, with indifference, as if all the outbursts of petty anger, of personal revenge, of nervousness were not rooted in them. And as the time goes by the agitation and the excitement increase more and more.

« Listen to this, these people here say that the Christ cannot cure sick people. I was a leper and now I am healthy. Do you know who they are? I do not come from Jerusalem, but I have never seen them among the disciples of the Christ these last two years. »

« Those men? Let me see the one in the middle! Ah! you rascal and thief! You are the one who last month came to me to offer me money in the name of the Christ, saying that He hires men to seize Palestine. And you now say… But why did you let him escape? »

« Have you seen that? How mischievous they are! And they almost caught me! My father-in-law was right! There is Joseph the Elder with John and Joshua. Let us go and ask them whether it is true that the Master wants to assemble an army. They are just and they know. » They all rush towards the three members of the Sanhedrin and ask their question.

« Go home, men. One sins and does harmful things in the streets. Do not argue. Don't take fright. Mind your own business and take care of your families. Don't listen to agitators or dreamers and don't allow yourselves to be beguiled. The Master is a master, not a warrior. You know Him. And He speaks His mind. He would not have sent other people to ask you to follow Him as warriors, if He wanted you to be such. Don't do any harm to Him, to yourselves and to our Fatherland. Home, men! Home! Do not allow what is already a misfortune - the death of a just man - to become a series of misfortunes. Go back to your houses and pray for Lazarus, who was charitable to everybody » says Joseph of Arimathea, who must be loved and listened to by the people who know him to be a just man.

Also John (the man who was jealous) says: « He is a peaceful not a warlike man. Don't listen to false disciples. Remember how different the others were, who said they were the Messiah. Remember and ponder, and your justice will tell you that those instigations to violence could not come from Him! Go home! Go back to your women who are weeping and to your children who are frightened. It is said: "Woe to those who are violent and to those who encourage brawls". »

A group of weeping women approach the three members of the Sanhedrin and one of them says: « The scribes have threatened my man. I am afraid! Joseph, please speak to them. »

« Yes, I will. But let your husband be quiet. Do you think that you are assisting the Master by means of these agitations and that you are honouring the dead man? You are wrong. You are harmful to both of them » replies Joseph and he leaves them to go towards

Nicodemus, who is coming from one of the streets, followed by servants, and he says to him:« I was not hoping to meet you, Nicodemus. I do not know myself how I managed. Lazarus' servant came to me at the end of the fourth watch to inform me of the sad event. »

« And he came to me later. I left at once. Do you know whether the Master is at Bethany? »

« No, He is not there. My steward in Bezetha was there at the third hour and he told me that the Master is not there. »

« I do not know how… miracles for everybody but not for him! » exclaims John.

« Probably because He gave the household more than a miraculous cure: He redeemed Mary and granted peace and honour… » says Joseph.

« Peace and honour! Of good people to good people. Because many… have not paid and do not pay honour even now that Mary… You do not know… Three days ago Helkai and many others were there… and they did not pay honour. And Mary drove them away. They were furious when they told me, and I just let them say what they liked, as I did not want to disclose my heart to them… » says Joshua.

« And are they going to the funeral now? » asks Nicodemus.

« They have been informed and they have met at the Temple to decide. Oh! their servants have been very busy running about at dawn this morning! »

« Why such hurry for the funeral? Immediately after the sixth hour!… »

« Because Lazarus was already rotten when he died. My steward told me that although resins are burning in the rooms and perfumes have been spread profusely on the dead body, the stench of the corpse is smelt even at the porch of the house. In any case the Sabbath begins at sunset. It was not possible to do otherwise. »

« And you say that they held a meeting at the Temple? Why? »

« Well… in actual fact the meeting had already been called to discuss Lazarus' case. They wanted to state that he was leprous… » says Joshua.

« Surely not. He would have been the first to live in isolation according to the Law » says Joseph defending him. And he adds: « I spoke to their doctor. He excluded it without any possibility of doubt. He was affected by putrid consumption. »

« So what did they discuss, since Lazarus was already dead? » asks Nicodemus.

« Whether they should go to the funeral, after Mary has driven them away. Some wanted to go, some were against it. Those who wanted to go were the majority and for three reasons. To see whether the Master was there, the first reason agreed to by everybody. To see whether He will work a miracle, the second reason.

The third reason: the remembrance of words spoken recently by the Master to some scribes at the Jordan near Jericho » explains Joshua once again.

« The miracle! Which, if he is already dead? » asks John shrugging his shoulders, and he concludes: « The usual… seekers of what is impossible! »

« The Master has raised other people from the dead » remarks Joseph.

« That is true. But if He had wanted him to be alive, He would not have let him die. The reason mentioned by you previously is correct. They have already been granted much. »

« Yes. But Uziel and Sadoc have recalled a challenge of many months ago. The Christ said that He will give proof that He can recompose also a decomposed body. And Lazarus is such. And Sadoc, the scribe, also says that, near the Jordan, the Rabbi spontaneously told him that at the new moon he would see half of the challenge being accomplished. That is: a decomposed person that revives, without further decomposition or disease. And their opinion prevailed. If that happens, it is because the Master is there. And if that happens, there will be no more doubts about Him. »

« Providing that is not detrimental… » whispers Joseph.

« Detrimental? Why? The scribes and Pharisees will be convinced… »

« Oh! John! Are you a stranger that you should say that? Do you not know your fellow-citizens? When has the truth ever made them holy? Does it mean nothing to you that no invitation to the meeting was brought to my house? »

« It was not brought to mine either. They suspect us and they often leave us out » says Nicodemus. Then he asks: « Was Gamaliel there? »

« His son was there. And he will come also in place of his father, who is unwell at Gamala in Judaea. »

« And what did Simeon say? »

« Nothing. Nothing at all. He listened. Then he went away. Not long ago he passed with some of his father's disciples, going towards Bethany. »

They are almost at the gate leading onto the road to Bethany. And John exclaims: « Look! It is garrisoned. Why? And they are stopping those coming out. »

« There is agitation in town… »

« Oh! But it is not a very fierce one… »

They arrive at the gate and they are stopped like everybody else.

« What is the reason for this, soldier? I am well known to everybody in the Antonia, and you cannot speak ill of me. I respect you and your laws » says Joseph of Arimathea.

« It is the order of the Centurion. The Commander is about to enter the town and we want to know who comes out of the gates, particularly

of this one that opens onto the Jericho road. We know you. But we also know the feelings of the Judaeans towards us. You and those who are with you may go on. And if you have influence on the people tell them that it is better for them to be calm. Pontius does not like to change his habits because of subjects who cause him trouble… and he might be too severe. A piece of sincere advice to you who are sincere. » They go on.

« Did you hear that? I foresee troublesome days… It will be necessary to advise the others, rather than the people… » says Joseph.

The Bethany road is crowded with people all going in the same direction: to Bethany. They are all going to the funeral. One can see members of the Sanhedrin and Pharisees mingled with Sadducees and scribes, with peasants, servants, with the stewards of the various houses and estates that Lazarus owned in town and in the country, and the more one approaches Bethany, the more people pour into the main road from paths and other side roads.

There is Bethany. Bethany mourning for its greatest citizen. All the inhabitants, wearing their best clothes, have already left their houses, which are locked as if no one lived in them. But they are not yet in the house of the dead man. Curiosity holds them back near the gate and along the road. They watch the people who have been invited, as they pass by, they mention their names and exchange impressions.

« There is Nathanael ben Faba. Oh! Old Mattathias, Jacob's relative! Annas' son! He is over there with Doras, Callascebona and Archelaus. Oh! How did those of Galilee manage to come? They are all there. Look: Eli, Johanan, Ishmael, Uriah, Joachim, Elias, Joseph… Old Hananiah with Sadoc, Zacharias and Johanan, the Sadducees. There is also Simeon of Gamaliel. He is all alone. The rabbi is not there. There is Helkai with Nahum, Felix, Annas the scribe, Zacharias, Jonathan ben Uriel! Saul with Eleazar, Triphon and Joazar. Fine rascals these last ones! Another son of Annas. The youngest. He is talking to Simon Camit. Philip with John Antipatrides. Alexander, Isaac and Jonah of Babaon. Sadoc. Judas, a descendant of the Asideans, the last one, I think, of that class. There are the stewards of the various buildings. I do not see any of the faithful friends. How many people! »

Really! How many people. They are all supercilious, some with an expression for the occasion, some with the signs of true grief on their faces. They are all swallowed up by the wide open gate, and I see pass by all those who in successive stages appeared to be friendly or hostile to the Master. Everybody, with the exception of Gamaliel and of Simon, the member of the Sanhedrin. And I see also other people, whom I have never seen before, or whom I may have seen without knowing their names, disputing round Jesus… Rabbis pass by with their disciples, and scribes in close groups. And

Judaeans go along while I hear their riches being listed… The garden is full of people who, after going to express their sympathy with the sisters - who, probably according to the local custom, are sitting under the porch, and are therefore outside the house - come back and spread out in the garden in continuous blending of colours and bowing in salutation.

Martha and Mary are worn out. They are holding each other's hand like two little girls, frightened of the sad gap in their family, of the emptiness of their days now that they no longer have to take care of Lazarus. They listen to the words of visitors, they weep with true friends, with loyal subordinates, they bow to the icy imposing stiff members of the Sanhedrin who have come more to attract attention to themselves than to honour the dead man, and although they are tired of repeating the same things hundreds of times, they reply to those asking them about Lazarus' last moments.

Joseph, Nicodemus, the most devoted friends are near them speaking only few words, but their friendship comforts them more than any word.

Helkai comes back with the more intransigent members of the Sanhedrin, to whom he has been speaking for a long time and he asks: « Could we see the dead body? »

Martha grievously wipes her forehead with her hand and asks: « When is that ever done in Israel? It is already prepared… » and tears stream slowly from her eyes.

« It is not the custom, that is true. But that is what we wish. The more loyal friends are certainly entitled to see their friends for the last time. »

« We also, as his sisters, should have been entitled to see him. But it was necessary to embalm him at once… And when we went back into Lazarus' room we only saw the form of his body wrapped in linen cloths… »

« You should have given clear instructions. Could you not have had the sudarium removed from his face? Can you not remove it now? »

« Oh! it is already decomposed… And it is time for the funeral… »

Joseph joins in the conversation: « Helkai, I think that we… out of excess of love, are the cause of grief. Let us leave the sisters in peace… »

Simeon, Gamaliel's son, moves forward to prevent Helkai from replying: « My father will come as soon as he is able. I represent him. He held Lazarus in high esteem. So do I. »

Martha replies bowing: « May the honour of the rabbi for our brother be rewarded by God. »

As Gamaliel's son is there, Helkai stands aside without insisting further, and he talks the matter over with the others who point out to him: « Can you not smell the stench? Do you wish to doubt it? In

any case we shall see whether they wall up the sepulchre. One cannot live without air.»

Another group of Pharisees approach the sisters. They are almost all from Galilee. After receiving their homage Martha cannot restrain herself from expressing her surprise at their presence.

« Woman, the Sanhedrin is in session to resolve upon matters of great importance and we are in town for that purpose » explains Simon of Capernaum, and he looks at Mary whose conversion he certainly remembers. But he just looks at her.

Then Johanan comes forward with Doras, the son of Doras, and with Ishmael, Hananiah, Sadoc and others whom I do not know. Their viperous faces express their intentions before their words do. But in order to strike they wait till Joseph goes away with Nicodemus to speak to three Judaeans. It is old Hananiah who with his clucking voice of a decrepit old man delivers the blow: « What do you think, Mary? Your Master is the only one to be absent among the many friends of your brother. Peculiar friendship! So much love while Lazarus was well! And so much indifference when it was time to love him! Everybody receives miracles from Him. But there is no miracle here. What do you say, woman, of such a situation? He has deceived you bitterly, the handsome Galilean Rabbi, hey! Did you not say that He told you to hope beyond what can be hoped for? So did you not hope, or is it of no avail to hope in Him? You were hoping in the Life, you said. Of course! He says that He is the "Life", hey! But in there there is your dead brother. And over there the entrance of the sepulchre is already open. But the Rabbi is not here. Hey! Hey! »

« He can give death, not life » says Doras with a sneer.

Martha lowers her head covering her face with her hands and weeps. That is the real situation. Her hope has been bitterly disappointed. The Rabbi is not there. He did not even come to console them. And by now He could be there. Martha is weeping. She can but weep.

Mary is weeping, too. She also has to face facts. She believed, she hoped beyond what is credible… but nothing happened and the servants have already removed the stone from the entrance to the sepulchre because the sun is beginning to set and it sets early in winter, and it is Friday and everything must be done in time so that the guests may not have to infringe the law of the Sabbath that is about to begin. She has hoped so much, always, she hoped too much. She has consumed her energies in that hope. And she is disappointed.

Hananiah insists: « Are you not replying to me? Are you now persuaded that He is an impostor who has taken advantage of you and scoffed at you? Poor women! » and he shakes his head among his friends who imitate him saying also: « Poor women! »

Maximinus approaches them saying: « It is time. Give the order. It's for you to give it. »

Martha collapses on the floor, she is assisted and carried away among the cries of the servants, who realise that the time to lay their master in the sepulchre has come and they intone their lamentations.

Mary wrings her hands convulsively. She implores: « A little longer! A little longer! And send servants on the road to En-shemesh and to the fountain, on every road. Servants on horseback. To see whether He is coming… »

« Are you still hopeful, poor wretch? How can one convince you that He has betrayed and disappointed you? He has hated you and sneered at you… »

It is too much! With her face wet with tears, tortured but still faithful, in the semicircle formed by the guests who have gathered together to see the corpse go out, Mary proclaims: « If Jesus of Nazareth has done that, it is well done, and great is His love for us all in Bethany. Everything for God's glory and His own! He said that this will bring about glory to the Lord because the power of His Word will shine completely. Execute the order, Maximinus. The sepulchre is no obstacle to the power of God… »

She moves away, supported by Naomi who has approached her, and she makes a gesture… The corpse, enveloped in linen cloths, departs from the house, crosses the garden between the crowds forming a double hedge and shouting their grief. Mary would like to follow the corpse, but she staggers. She follows the crowds when they are all near the sepulchre. And she arrives in time to see the long motionless body disappear in the darkness of the sepulchre, where the reddish light of the torches held high by the servants illuminates the steps for those who are descending with the corpse. Lazarus' sepulchre in fact is rather deep in the ground, probably to take advantage of strata of underground rock.

Mary utters a cry… It is a torture… She shouts… And with the name of her brother she utters also Jesus'. She looks as if they were tearing her heart. And she only mentions those two names, and she repeats them until the heavy thud of the stone placed against the entrance of the sepulchre tells her that Lazarus is no longer on the Earth, not even with his body. She is then overwhelmed and loses consciousness. She collapses into the arms of those supporting her and while sinking into a deep swoon she whispers again: « Jesus! Jesus! ». They carry her away.

Maximinus remains to dismiss the guests and thank them on behalf of all the relatives. He remains to hear them all say that they will come back to condole every day…

They disperse slowly. The last to depart are Joseph, Nicodemus, Eleazar, John, Joachim, Joshua. And at the gate they find Sadoc

with Uriel, who laugh maliciously saying: « His challenge! And we were afraid of it! »

« Oh! He is really dead. How he stank notwithstanding the aromatic essences! There is no doubt about it! It was not necessary to remove the sudarium. I think that he is already decadent. » They are happy.

Joseph looks at them. His glance is so severe that it cuts short words and laughter. They all make haste to go back to be in town before sunset is over.

545. Jesus Decides to Go to Lazarus.

24th December 1946.

It is getting dark in the little kitchen garden of Solomon's house, and the trees, the outlines of the houses beyond the road, and the very end of the road itself, where it disappears in the woodland near the river, are becoming more and more vague, blending into one only line of shadows, which are more or less clear, more or less dark, in the deepening twilight. Rather than shades, the things spread on the Earth are by now sounds. Voices of children from houses, calls of mothers, cries of men urging sheep or donkeys, the late squeaking of well-pulleys, the rustling noise of leaves in the evening breeze, sharp cracks as of clashing branches or sticks spread in the woodland. High above the first twinkling of stars, still feeble as there is still a reflection of daylight and because the early phosphorescent moonlight is beginning to spread in the sky.

« You will tell the rest tomorrow. That's enough now. It is getting dark. Let everybody go home. Peace to you. Peace to you. Yes… Of course… Tomorrow. Eh? What did you say? You have a scruple? Sleep on it till tomorrow and then, if you still have it, come back. That would be the last straw! Also scruples to make Him more weary! And men craving for wealth! And mothers-in-law who want young wives to recover their wits, and young wives who want their mothers-in-law to be less sharp, while both would deserve to have their tongues cut off. And what else is there? Ehi! you? What are you saying? Oh! this one, yes, poor little thing! John, take this little boy to the Master. His mother is ill and she has sent him to tell Jesus to pray for her. Poor child! He has been left at the rear because he is so small. And he comes from so far. How will he be able to go back home? Ehi! all you over there! Instead of standing there to enjoy His company, could you not put into practice what the Master told you: to help one another and that the stronger ones should help the weaker ones? Come on! Who is taking this boy home? God forbid it, he might find his mother dead… Let him at least see her… You have got some donkeys… It is night-time? And what is there more beautiful than night-time? I worked for years and years

by starlight, and I am healthy and strong. Are you taking him home? May God bless you, Ruben. Here is the boy. Has the Master comforted you? He has? Go then, and be happy. But we must give him some food. Perhaps he has had none since this morning. »

« The Master has given him some warm milk and bread, and some fruit; he has them in his little tunic » says John.

« Then go with this man. He will take you home on his donkey. » At last all the people have gone, and Peter can rest with James, Judas, the other James and Thomas, who have helped him to send to more obstinate ones home.

« Let us close the door, lest someone may change his mind and come back, like those two over there. Ugh! The day after the Sabbath is really toilsome! » says Peter going into the kitchen and closing the door. And he adds: « We shall be in peace now. »

He looks at Jesus Who is sitting near the table, engrossed in thought, with one elbow on the table and His head resting on His hand. Peter approaches Him and laying his hand on His shoulder he says: « You are tired, eh! So many people! They come from all parts of the country notwithstanding the season. »

« They seem to be afraid of losing us soon » remarks Andrew who is gutting some fish. Also the others are busy preparing the fire to roast them, or stirring some chicory in a boiling pot. Their shadows are projected on the dark walls, which are illuminated more by the fire than by the lamp.

Peter looks for a cup to give some milk to Jesus Who looks very tired. But he does not find the milk and he asks the others about it. « The boy drank the last drop of milk we had. The rest was given to the old beggar and to the woman whose husband was ill » explains Bartholomew.

« And the Master has been left without! You should not have given it all away. »

« He wanted that… »

« Oh! He would always like that. But we must not let Him do so. He gives away His garments, He gives away His milk, He gives Himself away and He wastes away… » Peter is dissatisfied.

« Be good, Peter! It is better to give than to receive » says Jesus quietly, coming out of His engrossment.

« Of course! And You give and keep giving and You are worn out. And the more You show people that You are willing to be generous, the more men take advantage of You. » And in the meantime he rubs the table with some coarse leaves exhaling a scent that is a mixture of bitter almond and chrysanthemum, he cleans it thoroughly to lay bread and water on it, and he puts a cup in front of Jesus.

Jesus pours Himself some water as if He were very thirsty. Peter puts another cup on the opposite side of the table near a plate containing

some olives and stalks of wild fennel. He adds the tray of chicory already dressed by Philip, and together with his companions he draws some very rustic stools near the table adding them to the four chairs available in the kitchen, but quite insufficient for thirteen people. Andrew, who has been grilling the fish, puts it on another plate and with more bread he goes towards the table. John takes the oil-lamp and puts it in the middle of the table.

Jesus stands up while they all approach the table for supper and He prays in a loud voice, offering the bread and blessing the table. He sits down imitated by the others and He hands out the bread and the fish, that is, He lays the fish on the thick large slices of bread, part new part stale, that each apostle has placed in front of himself. They then help themselves to the chicory using the large wooden fork served with the chicory. Also for the vegetables the slice of bread serves as plate. Jesus alone has in front of Himself a large metal plate, which is rather in bad condition, and He makes use of it to divide the fish giving a dainty now to this one now to that one. He looks like a father among his children, even if Nathanael, Simon Zealot and Philip are old enough to be His fathers, and Matthew and Peter look like His older brothers.

They eat and speak of the events of the day and John laughs heartily at Peter's disdain of the shepherd of the Gilead mountains, who expected Jesus to go up there, where his herd was, to bless it and thus make him earn much money for his daughter's dowry.

« There is nothing to laugh at. While he said: "My sheep are suffering from a disease and if they die I am ruined" I felt pity for him. We fishermen would feel the same if our boat became worm-eaten. One would no longer be able to work and earn one's daily bread. And we are all entitled to live. But when he said: "And I want my sheep to be healthy because I want to become rich and dumbfound the village on account of the dowry I will give Esther and of the house I will build for myself", then I got angry. I said to him: "And you have come from so far just for that? Have you nothing at heart but the dowry and your wealth and sheep? Have you no soul?". He replied to me: "There is time for that. My sheep and the marriage interest me more at present because it is a good match and Esther is becoming old". Then, if I had not remembered that Jesus says that we must be merciful towards everybody, he would have been for it! I really almost lost my temper when speaking to him… »

« And we thought that you were never going to stop. You never took breath. The veins in your neck were bulging and protruding like sticks » says James of Zebedee.

« The shepherd had already gone for some time and you were continuing to preach. It's a good job that you say that you are not able to speak to people! » adds Thomas. And he embraces him saying: « Poor Simon! He was beside himself with fury! »

« But was I not right? What is the Master? The fortune maker of all the fools in Israel? The procurer of other people' weddings? »

« Don't get angry, Simon. The fish will give you indigestion if you eat it with so much poison » says good-natured Matthew teasingly.

« You are right. I taste all the flavour of the banquets in the houses of Pharisees, when I eat bread with fear and meat with anger. »

They all laugh. Jesus smiles and is silent.

They are at the end of the meal. They remain round the table, somewhat lazily satisfied with food and heat. They are not so talkative and some are dozing. Thomas enjoys himself drawing with a knife a little branch with flowers on the wood of the table.

They are roused by the voice of Jesus Who, opening His arms, which were folded, leaning on the edge of the table, and stretching out His hands as the priest does when he says: "The Lord be with you", says: « And yet we must go! »

« Where, Master? To the shepherd? » asks Peter.

« No, Simon. To Lazarus. We are going back to Judaea. »

« Master, remember that the Judaeans hate You! » exclaims Peter.

« They wanted to stone You not long ago » says James of Alphaeus.

« No, Master, it is not prudent! » exclaims Matthew.

« Do You not care for us? » asks the Iscariot.

« Oh! My Master and brother, I beseech You in the name of Your Mother, and also in the name of the Divinity that is in You: do not allow satans to lay their hands on Your person, to stifle Your word. You are alone, all alone against the world that hates You and is powerful on the Earth » says Thaddeus.

« Master, protect Your life! What would happen to me, to all of us, if we no longer had You? » says John who is upset and looks at Him with the wide open eyes of a frightened grieved child.

After his first exclamation, Peter has turned round to speak excitedly to the older apostles and to Thomas and James of Zebedee. They are all of the opinion that Jesus must not go near Jerusalem, at least until Passover time may make His stay there safer because, they say, the presence of a very large number of followers of the Master, who come from everywhere in Palestine for the Passover festival, will defend the Master. None of those who hate Him will dare touch Him when all the people crowd round Him with love… And they tell Him anxiously, almost overbearingly… Love makes them speak.

« Peace! Peace! Are there not twelve hours in the day? A man who walks in the daytime does not stumble because he has the light of this world to see by, but if he walks at night he stumbles because he cannot see. I know what I am doing because the Light is in Me. Allow yourselves to be guided by Him Who can see. And bear in mind that until the hour of darkness comes, nothing sinister will take place. But when that hour comes, no distance or power, not

even Caesar's armies, will be able to save Me from the Judaeans. Because what is written must take place and the powers of evil are already working secretly to accomplish their deed. Do let Me do as I wish and do good while I am free to do so. The hour will come when I shall no longer be able to move a finger or utter one word to work the miracle. The world will be devoid of all My power. A dreadful hour of punishment for man. Not for Me. For man who will have refused to love Me. An hour that will repeat itself, through the will of man who will have rejected Divinity to the extent of making himself godless, a follower of Satan and of his cursed son. An hour that will take place when the end of this world is close at hand. The prevailing lack of faith will make My power of miracle of no use, not because I can lose it, but because no miracle can be granted where there is no faith and no will to have it, where a miracle would be made a butt of and an instrument of evil, by using the good received to turn it into greater evil. Now I can still work miracles, and work them to give glory to God. So let us go to our friend Lazarus who is sleeping. Let us go and wake him from his sleep, that he may be fresh and ready to serve his Master. »

« But if he is sleeping, it is a good thing. He is sure to get better. Sleep itself is a cure. Why wake him? » they point out to Him.

« Lazarus is dead. I waited until he died, before going there, not for his sisters and for him. But for you. That you may believe. That you may grow in faith. Let us go to Lazarus. »

« All right! Let us go! We shall all die as he died and You want to die » says Thomas, a resigned fatalist.

« Thomas, Thomas, and you all who are criticising and grumbling in your hearts, you ought to know that he who wants to follow Me must have for his life the same care that a bird has for a passing cloud. That is, to let it pass and go wherever the wind blows it. The wind is the will of God Who can give you life or take it away as He wishes, neither you must regret it, as the bird does not regret the passing cloud, but it sings just the same as it is sure that the sky will clear up again. Because the cloud is the incident, the sky is reality. The sky is always blue even if clouds seem to make it grey. It is and remains blue above the clouds. The same applies to true Life. It is and remains, even if human life ends. He who wants to follow Me must not be anxious about his life or afraid for it. I will show you how one conquers Heaven. But how can you imitate Me if you are afraid to come to Judaea, whereas no harm will be done to you now? Are you hesitating about showing yourselves with Me? You are free to leave Me. But if you want to stay you must learn to defy the world, with its criticism, its snares, its mockery, its torments, in order to conquer My Kingdom. So let us go and bring back from the dead Lazarus, who has been sleeping in his sepulchre for two days, as he died on the evening that his servant came here from

Bethany. Tomorrow at the sixth hour, after dismissing those who have been waiting for the morrow to be comforted by Me and receive the reward for their faith, we shall depart from here and cross the river, stopping for the night in Nike's house. Then at dawn we shall set out towards Bethany, via En-shemesh. We shall be in Bethany before the sixth hour. And there will be many people and their hearts will be roused. I promised it and I will keep My promise… »

« To whom did You promise it, Lord? » asks James of Alphaeus almost fearfully.

« To those who hate Me and those who love Me, to both in the most clear manner. Do you not remember the dispute with the scribes at Kedesh? It was still possible for them to say that I was mendacious, as I had raised from the dead a girl who had just died and a man who had been dead for one day. They said: "You have not yet recomposed a decomposed body". In fact God only can make a man from dust and remake a healthy living body from rot. Well, I will do that. At the moon of Chislev, on the banks of the Jordan, I Myself reminded the scribes of this challenge and I said: "At the new moon it shall be accomplished". That with regard to those who hate Me. I promised the sisters, who love Me in a perfect manner, to reward their faith if they continued to hope against credibility. I have tried them severely and grieved them deeply and I alone am aware of how much their hearts suffered in the past days and I only know how perfect is their love. I solemnly tell you that they deserve a great reward because they grieve more at the possibility that I may be derided than over the fact that they cannot see their brother raised from the dead. I looked absorbed, tired and sad. I was close to them with My spirit and I could hear their wailing and I counted their tears. Poor sisters! I am now eager to bring a just man back to the Earth, a brother to the embrace of his sisters, a disciple back to My disciples. Are you weeping, Simon? Yes, you and I are Lazarus' greatest friends, and in your tears there is your sorrow for Martha's and Mary's grief and there is also the agony of a friend, but there is also the joy of knowing that he will soon be brought back to our love. Let us move and prepare our bags and go to rest in order to get up at dawn and tidy up here where… our return is not certain. We shall have to hand out to the poor everything we have and tell the most active ones to keep pilgrims from looking for Me until I am in a safe place. We shall also have to tell them to warn the disciples to look for Me at Lazarus' house. There are so many things to be done. They shall be done before the pilgrims arrive… Let us go. Put the fire out and light the lamps and let everyone do what is to be done and go to rest. Peace to you all. » He stands up, blesses them and withdraws to His little room…

« He has been dead for some days! » says the Zealot.

« That is a miracle! » exclaims Thomas.

« I want to see what excuse they will find then to be in doubt! » says Andrew.

« But when did the servant come? » asks Judas Iscariot.

« The evening before Friday » replies Peter.

« Did he? Why did you not tell us? » asks the Iscariot again.

« Because the Master told me not to mention it » replies Peter.

« So… when we arrive there… he will have been in the sepulchre four days? »

« Certainly! Friday evening one day, the Sabbath evening two days, this evening three days, tomorrow four… So four days and a half… Eternal power! But he will be decomposing! » says Matthew.

« He will be decomposing… I want to see also that and then… »

« What, Simon Peter? » asks James of Alphaeus.

« Then if Israel does not become converted, not even Jahweh among lightning will be able to convert her. »

And they go away speaking thus.

546. Resurrection of Lazarus.

26th December 1946.

Jesus is coming towards Bethany from En-shemesh. They must have marched really hard up the difficult paths on the Adummim, mountains. The apostles, who are out of breath, find it difficult to follow Jesus Who walks rapidly, as if love carried Him on its ardent wings. A smile brightens Jesus' face as He proceeds ahead of them all, with His head raised, in the mild midday sunshine.

Before they arrive at the first houses of Bethany, a barefooted boy, who is going to the fountain near the village with an empty copper pitcher, sees Him and gives a shout. He lays the pitcher on the ground and runs away, with all the speed of his little legs, towards the centre of the village.

« He is certainly going to inform them that You are arriving remarks Judas Thaddeus after smiling, like everybody else, upon the quick… decision of the little boy, who also left his pitcher at the mercy of the first passer-by.

The little town, as seen from the fountain, which is a little higher up, seems quiet as if it were deserted. Only the grey smoke rising from chimneys indicates that in the houses women are busy preparing the midday meal, and the thick voices of men in the vast silent olive-groves and orchards inform one that men are working. Even so Jesus prefers to take a path that runs round the rear of the village, so that He may arrive at Lazarus' house without drawing the attention of the citizens.

They have gone almost half way when they hear the boy mentioned previously come after them; he runs past them and then stops thoughtfully in the middle of the path looking at Jesus… »

« Peace to you, little Mark. Were you afraid of Me that you ran away? » asks Jesus caressing him.

« No, Lord, I was not afraid. But as for many days Martha and Mary have been sending servants on the roads leading here to see whether You were coming, when I saw You I ran to tell them that You were coming… »

« You did the right thing. The sisters will be preparing their hearts to see Me. »

« No, Lord. The sisters are not preparing anything, because they do not know. They would not let me tell them. They got hold of me when I entered the garden saying: " The Rabbi is here" and they drove me out saying: "You are a liar or a fool. He is not coming any more because He knows by now that He cannot work the miracle any more". And as I said that it was really You, they gave me two mighty slaps as I never had before… Look how red my cheeks are. They are smarting! And they pushed me away saying: "That will purify you for looking at a demon". And I was looking at You to see whether You had become a demon. But I can't see any… You are always my Jesus, as beautiful as an angel, as my mother tells me. »

Jesus bends to kiss his cheeks, which have been slapped, saying: « They will no longer smart. I am sorry that you had to suffer because of Me… »

« I am not sorry, Lord, because those two slaps made You give me two kisses » and he clings to His legs hoping to receive more.

« Tell me, Mark. Who was it that drove you away? Those of Lazarus' household? » asks Thaddeus.

« No. The Judaeans. They come to condole every day. They are so many! They stay in the house and in the garden. They come early and go away late. They behave as if they were the masters. They ill-treat everybody. Can't you see that there is nobody in the streets? The first days people remained to watch… then… Now only children wander about to… Oh! my pitcher! My mother is waiting for water… She will give me a beating as well!… »

They all laugh at his distress over the prospect of further smacks, and Jesus says: « Hurry up then… »

« The fact is… that I wanted to go in with You and see You work the miracle… » and he concludes: « … and see their faces… to avenge myself for the slaps… »

« No, that's wrong. You must not wish for revenge. You must be good and forgive… But your mother is waiting for the water… »

« I will go, Master. I know where Mark lives. I will tell the woman and then join You… » says James of Zebedee running away.

They set out again slowly and Jesus holds the delighted boy by the hand…

They are now at the garden railing. They walk along it. Many

mounts are tied to it, watched by the owners' servants. Their whispering draws the attention of some Judaeans who turn towards the open gate just when Jesus sets foot on the border of the garden.

« The Master! » exclaim the first to see Him, and the word flies from group to group like the rustling of the wind; it spreads, like a wave that comes from afar and breaks on the shore as far as the walls of the house and enters it, certainly carried by the many Judaeans present, or by some Pharisees, rabbis or scribes or Sadducees, scattered here and there.

Jesus advances very slowly while people, although rushing from every directions, move away from the alley along which He is walking. As no one greets Him, He does not greet anybody, as if He did not know any of the many people gathered there looking at Him with eyes full of anger and hatred, with the exception of a few who, being secret disciples or at least righteous-hearted, even if they do not love Him as Messiah, respect Him as a just man. And those are Joseph, Nicodemus, John, Eleazar, the other John the scribe, whom I saw at the multiplication of the loaves, and another John, the one who fed the people that had come down from the mountain of the beatitudes, Gamaliel with his son, Joshua, Joachim, Manaen, the scribe Joel of Abijah, seen at the Jordan in the episode of Sabea, Joseph Barnabas the disciple of Gamaliel, Chuza who looks at Jesus from afar, somewhat shy seeing Him again after the mistake he had made, or perhaps fear of what people may think prevents him from approaching Him as a friend. It is a fact that neither friends nor those who look at Him without hatred nor enemies greet Him. And Jesus does not greet anyone either. He just bowed lightly when setting foot in the alley. He has then moved straight on as if He were a stranger to the large crowd around Him. The little boy is walking beside Him all the time, in his garments of a poor little peasant and barefooted, but with the bright countenance of one who is really enjoying himself, his lively dark eyes wide open to see everything… and to defy everybody…

Martha comes out of the house with a group of Judaean visitors among whom there are Helkai and Sadoc. With her hand she shades her eyes tired of weeping from the sun, as the light hurts them, so that she may see where is Jesus. She sees Him. She departs from those accompanying her and she runs towards Jesus Who is at a few steps from the fountain shining in the sunshine. She throws herself at Jesus' feet after bowing to Him and kisses them, while bursting into tears she says: « Peace to You, Master! »

Jesus also, as soon as she is close to Him, says to her: « Peace to you! » and He raises His hand to bless her, releasing the hand of the boy, who is taken by Bartholomew and held a little back.

Martha goes on: « But there is no more peace for Your servant. » Still on her knees she looks up at Jesus and with a cry of grief that

is clearly heard in the prevailing silence she exclaims: « Lazarus is dead! If You had been here, he would not have died. Why did You not come sooner, Master? » There is an unintentional tone of reproach in her question. She then reverts to the depressed tone of one who no longer has the strength to reproach and whose only comfort is to recollect the last acts and wishes of a relative to whom one has tried to give what he wanted, and there is therefore no remorse in one's heart, and she says: « Lazarus, our brother, has called You so much!… Now, see! I am grieved and Mary is weeping and she cannot set her mind at rest. And he is no longer here! You know how much we loved him! We were hoping everything from You!… »

A murmur of pity for the woman and of reproach for Jesus is heard, approving the understood thought: « … and You could have satisfied our request because we deserve it for the love we have for You, whereas You have disappointed us » and the murmur passes from one group to the next one as people shake their heads or cast derisory glances. Only the few secret disciples mingled with the crowd look compassionately at Jesus, Who, pale and sad, listens to the grieved woman speaking to Him. Gamaliel, his arms folded across his chest in his wide rich robe of very fine wool adorned with blue tassels, a little apart in a group of young men among whom is his son and Joseph Barnabas, stares at Jesus, without hatred and without love.

Martha, after wiping her face, resumes: « But even now I hope because I know that whatever You ask of God, He will grant You. » A sorrowful heroic profession of faith uttered in a trembling weeping voice, with her eyes full of anxiety and her heart throbbing with the last hope.

« Your brother will rise again. Stand up, Martha. »

Martha stands up, stooping out of respect before Jesus to Whom she replies: « I know, Master. He will rise again at the resurrection on the last day. »

« I am the Resurrection and Life. Whoever believes in Me, even if he dies, will live. And whoever believes and lives in Me will never die. Do you believe all that? » Jesus, Who had previously spoken in a rather low voice, addressing Martha only, raises His voice when saying these sentences in which He proclaims His power of God, and its perfect timbre resounds like a golden blare in the vast garden. The people present quiver with an emotion resembling fear. Then some sneer shaking their heads.

Martha, into whom Jesus seems to wish to instill a stronger and stronger hope by holding His hand on her shoulder, raises her lowered head. She raises it towards Jesus staring with her sad eyes at the Christ's bright ones and pressing her hands against her breast with a different anxiety she replies: « Yes, I do, my Lord. I believe all that. I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God,

that You have come to the world and that You can do everything You want. I believe. I am now going to tell Mary » and she disappears quickly into the house.

Jesus remains where He was. That is, He takes a few steps forward and approaches the flower-bed that surrounds the basin of the fountain. The flower-bed is strewn on one side with the diamond drops of the very fine droplets of water of the jet, blown to that side by a light breeze, like silver down, and Jesus seems to be lost in contemplating the fish wriggle in the limpid water and play describing silver commas and golden reflections in the crystalline water shining in the sunshine.

The Judaeans are watching Him. They have involuntarily divided into clearly distinct groups. On one side, in front of Jesus, all those who are hostile to Him, usually separated from one another by sectarian spirit, but now concordant in opposing Jesus. Beside Him, behind the apostles who have been joined by James of Zebedee, there are Joseph, Nicodemus and others who are well-disposed to Him. Farther away there is Gamaliel, still in the same place and attitude, and all alone, because his son and disciples have parted from him and joined the two main groups to be closer to Jesus.

With her usual cry: « Rabboni! » Mary runs out of the house with her arms stretched out towards Jesus and throws herself at His feet, which she kisses sobbing deeply. Several Judaeans who were in the house with her and who have followed her, weep with her with doubtful sincerity. Also Maximinus, Marcella, Sara, Naomi have followed Mary, as well as all the servants and their wailing is loud and high-pitched. I think that there is no one left in the house. When Martha sees Mary cry thus, she cries copiously, too.

« Peace to you, Mary. Stand up! Look at Me! Why weep thus, like one who has no hope? » Jesus stoops to say these words in a low voice, His eyes staring at Mary's, who on her knees, relaxing on her heels, stretches her hands towards Him imploringly and is unable to speak, so deep is her sobbing: « Did I not tell you to hope beyond what is credible in order to see the glory of God? Has your Master perhaps changed, that you are so depressed? »

But Mary does not listen to the words that aim at preparing her for too great a joy after so much anguish, and being able to speak at last, she shouts: « Oh! Lord! Why did You not come sooner? Why did You go away from us? You knew that Lazarus was ill! If You had been here my brother would not have died. Why did You not come? I still had to prove to him that I loved him. He should have lived. I had to show him that I persevered in honesty. I afflicted my brother so much! And now! And now that I could have made him happy, he has been taken away from me! You could have left him with me. You could have given poor Mary the joy of comforting him after grieving him so deeply. Oh! Jesus! Jesus! My Master! My

Saviour! My hope! » and she collapses again, her forehead on Jesus' feet, which are washed once again by her tears, and she moans: « Why have you done that, Lord?! Also on account of those who hate You and are now rejoicing at what has happened… Why have You done that, Jesus?! » But there is no reproach in Mary's tone as there was in Martha's, there is only the anguish of a woman, who is grieved not only as a sister but also as a disciple who feels that the opinion of her Master is diminished in the hearts of many people.

Jesus, Who has bent very low to hear those words whispered with her face near the ground, stands up and says in a loud voice: « Mary, do not weep! Also your Master is suffering for the death of His faithful friend… for having had to let him die… »

Oh! How sneering and radiant with hateful joy are the faces of the enemies of Christ! They feel that He is defeated and rejoice, whilst His friends are becoming sadder and sadder.

Jesus says in an even louder voice: « But I tell you: do not weep. Stand up! Look at Me! Do you think that I, Who loved you so much, have done this without a reason? Can you believe that I have grieved you thus in vain? Come. Let us go to Lazarus. Where have you put him? »

Jesus' question, rather than to Mary and Martha, who cannot speak as they are crying even louder, is addressed to all the others and particularly to those who have come out of the house with Mary and look more upset. Perhaps they are older relatives, I do not know.

And they reply to Jesus, Who is clearly distressed: « Come and see. » and they set out towards the place of the sepulchre, which is at the end of the orchard, where the ground is undulated and veins of calcareous rock appear on its surface.

Martha, beside Jesus Who has forced Mary to stand up and is now guiding her, as she is blinded by her copious tears, points out to Jesus where Lazarus is, and when they are near the place she also says: « It is there, Master, that Your friend is buried » and she points at the stone placed across the entrance of the sepulchre.

Jesus, followed by everybody, has to pass in front of Gamaliel, in order to go there. But neither He nor Gamaliel greet each other. Gamaliel then joins the others stopping with all the more rigid Pharisees a few metres from the sepulchre, while Jesus goes on, very close to it, with the two sisters, Maximinus and those who are perhaps relatives. Jesus looks at the heavy stone placed as a door against the sepulchre, a heavy obstacle between Him and His dead friend, and He weeps. The wailing of the sisters grows louder, as well as that of intimate friends and relatives.

« Remove that stone » shouts Jesus all of a sudden, after wiping His tears.

Everybody is surprised and a murmur runs through the crowd

that has become larger as some people of Bethany have entered the garden and have followed the guests. I can see some Pharisees touch their foreheads and shake their heads meaning: « He is mad! ». No one carries out the order. Even the most faithful ones are hesitant and feel repugnance to do it.

Jesus repeats His order in a louder voice astonishing even more the people, who urged by opposed feelings react at first as if they wanted to run away, but immediately afterwards they wish to draw closer, to see, defying the stench of the sepulchre that Jesus wants opened.

« Master, it is not possible » says Martha striving to restrain her tears to be able to speak. « He has been down there for four days. And You know of what disease he died! Only our love made it possible for us to cure him… By now he will certainly smell notwithstanding the ointments… What do You want to see? His rottenness?… It is not possible… also because of the uncleanness of putrefaction and… »

« Did I not tell you that if you believe you will see the glory of God? Remove that stone. I want it! » It is the cry of divine will…

A subdued « oh! » is uttered by every mouth. Faces grow pale. Some people shiver as if an icy wind of death had blown over everybody.

Martha nods to Maximinus who orders the servants to get the necessary tools to remove the heavy stone.

The servants run away and come back with picks and sturdy levers. And they work inserting the points of the shining picks between the rock and the stone, and then replacing the picks with the sturdy levers and finally lifting the stone carefully, letting it slide to one side and dragging it cautiously against the rocky wall. An infected stench comes out of the dark hole making everyone withdraw.

Martha asks in a low voice: « Master, do You want to go down there? If You do, torches will be required… » But she is wan at the thought of having to go down.

Jesus does not reply to her. He raises His eyes to the sky, He stretches out His arms crosswise and prays in a very loud voice syllabising the words: « Father! I thank You for hearing Me. I knew that You always hear Me. But I said so for those who are present here, for the people surrounding Me, that they may believe in You, in Me, and that You have sent Me! »

He remains thus for a moment and He becomes so transfigured that He seems to be enraptured, while without uttering any sound He says more secret words of prayer or adoration. I do not know. What I know is that He is so transhumanised that it is not possible to look at Him without feeling one's heart quiver. His body seems to become light, spiritualised, rising in height and also from the earth. Although the shades of His hair, eyes, complexion, garments

remain unchanged - contrary to what happened during the transfiguration on mount Tabor when everything became light and dazzling brightness - He seems to shed light and that His whole body becomes light. Light seems to form a halo around Him, particularly round His face raised to the sky, certainly enraptured in the contemplation of His Father.

He remains thus for some time, then He becomes Himself, the Man, but powerfully majestic. He proceeds as far as the threshold of the sepulchre. He moves His arms forward - so far He had held them crosswise, the palms turned upwards - now with palms turned downwards, so that His hands are already inside the hole of the sepulchre and their whiteness is outstanding in the darkness of the hole. His blue eyes are blazing and their flash forecasting a miracle is today unsustainable, in the silent darkness, and in a powerful voice and with a cry louder than the one He uttered on the lake when He ordered the wind to abate, in a voice that I never heard in any other miracle, He shouts: « Lazarus! Come out! » His voice is echoed by the sepulchral cave and coming out of it, it spreads all over the garden, it is repeated by the undulations of the ground of Bethany, I think it travels as far as the first hills beyond the fields and then comes back, repeated and subdued, like an order that cannot fail. It is certain that from numberless directions one can hear again: « out! out! out! »

Everybody is thrilled with emotion and if curiosity rivets everyone in his place, faces grow pale and eyes are opened wide while mouths are closed involuntarily with cries of surprise already on their lips.

Martha, a little behind and to one side, seems fascinated looking at Jesus. Mary, who has never moved away from the Master, falls on her knees at the entrance of the sepulchre, one hand on her breast to check her throbbing heart, the other holding the edge of Jesus' mantle unconsciously and convulsively, and one realises that she is trembling because the mantle is shaken lightly by the hand holding it.

Something white seems to emerge from the deep end of the sepulchre. At first it is just a short convex line, then it becomes ovalshaped, then wider and longer lines appear. And the dead body, enveloped in its bandages, comes slowly forward, becoming more visible, more mysterious and more awful.

Jesus draws back, imperceptibly, but continuously, as the other moves forward. Thus the distance between the two is always the same.

Mary is compelled to drop the edge of the mantle, but she does not move from where she is. Joy, emotion, everything, nail her to the place where she is.

An « oh! » is uttered more and more clearly by the lips previously

closed by the anxiety of suspense: from a whisper hardly distinguishable it changes into a voice, from a voice into a powerful cry.

Lazarus is by now on the threshold of the sepulchre and he remains there rigid and silent, like a plaster statue just rough-hewed, thus shapeless, a long thing, thin at the head and legs, thicker at the trunk, as macabre as death itself, ghost-like in the white bandages against the dark background of the sepulchre. As the sun shines on him, putrid matter can be seen dripping already here and there from the bandages.

Jesus shouts out in a loud voice: « Unbind him and let him go. Give him clothes and food. »

« Master!… » says Martha, and perhaps she would like to say more, but Jesus stares at her subduing her with His bright eyes and He says: « Here! At once! Bring a garment. Dress him in the presence of all the people and give him something to eat. » He orders and never turns round to look at those who are behind and around Him. He looks only at Lazarus, at Mary who is near her resurrected brother, heedless of the disgust caused to everybody by the putrid bandages, and at Martha who is panting as if she felt her heart break and does not know whether she should shout for joy or weep…

The servants rush to carry out the instructions. Naomi is the first to run away and to come back with garments folded on her arm. Some untie the bandages after rolling up their sleeves and tucking up their garments so that they may not touch the dripping rot. Marcella and Sarah come back with amphoras of perfumes followed by servants carrying basins and jugs of water steaming hot or trays with cups of milk, wine, fruit, honey-cakes.

The very long narrow bandages, which I think are of linen, with selvedge on each side, obviously woven for that purpose, unroll like rolls of tape from a reel and pile up on the ground, heavy with spices and pus. The servants move them to one side by means of sticks. They have started from the head, but even there there is matter that has certainly dripped from the nose, ears and mouth. The sudarium placed on the face is soaked with putrid matter and Lazarus' face, which is very pale and emaciated, with his eyes closed with the pomade placed in the eye-sockets, with his hair and thin short beard sticking together, is soiled with it. The shroud placed round his body falls off slowly as the bandages are removed, freeing the trunk that they had enveloped for days, restoring a human figure to what they had previously transformed into something like a huge chrysalid. The bony shoulders, the emaciated arms, the ribs just covered with skin, the sunken stomach begin to appear slowly. And as the bandages fall off, the sisters, Maximinus, the servants busy themselves removing the first layer of dirt and balms and they insist continuously changing the water made detergent with spices, until the skin appears clean.

When they uncover Lazarus' face and he can look, he directs his gaze towards Jesus before looking at his sisters, and he seems absent-minded and does not pay attention to what is happening while he looks at his Jesus with a loving smile on his lips and tears shining in his deep-sunken eyes. Jesus also smiles at him, His eyes shining with tears, and without speaking He directs Lazarus' gaze towards the sky; Lazarus understands and moves his lips in silent prayer.

Martha thinks that he wishes to say something but has no voice yet and she asks: « What are you saying to me, my Lazarus? »

« Nothing, Martha. I was thanking the Most High. » His pronunciation is steady, his voice loud.

The crowds utter an « oh! » of amazement once again.

He has now been freed and cleaned down to his sides. And they can put on him his short tunic, a kind of a short shirt that reaches below his inguen falling on his thighs.

They make him sit down to untie his legs and wash them. As soon as they appear Martha and Mary utter a loud cry pointing to the legs and bandages. And whilst on the bandages tied round the legs and on the shroud placed under the bandages the putrid matter is so copious as to stream down the cloth, the legs are completely healed. Only red cyanotic scars indicate the parts affected by gangrene.

All the people shout their amazement more loudly; Jesus smiles and Lazarus smiles, too, looking for a moment at his healed legs, then he becomes engrossed again in looking at Jesus. He never seems to gratify his desire to see Him. The Judaeans, Pharisees, Sadducees, scribes, rabbis come forward cautiously in order not to contaminate their garments. They examine Lazarus closely. They examine Jesus closely. But neither Lazarus nor Jesus minds them. They look at each other and all the rest means nothing to them.

They now put sandals on Lazarus' feet and he stands up, agile and steady. He takes the tunic that Martha hands him, he puts it on by himself, he fastens his belt and adjusts the fold of the garment. And there he is, lean and pale, but like everybody else. He washes again his hands and arms as far as his elbows, after tucking up his sleeves. And with clean water he washes his face and head again, until he feels that he is thoroughly clean. He dries his hair and face, hands the towel to the servant and goes straight towards Jesus. He prostrates himself. He kisses His feet.

Jesus bends, lifts him up, presses him to His heart saying: « Welcome back home, My dear friend. May peace and joy be with you. Live to accomplish your happy destiny. Raise your face that I may greet you with a kiss. » And He kisses Lazarus' cheeks and is kissed by him.

Only after worshipping and kissing the Master, Lazarus speaks

to his sisters and kisses them; he then kisses Maximinus and Naomi, who are weeping for joy, and some of those who I think are related to the family or are very close friends. He then kisses Joseph, Nicodemus, Simon Zealot and a few more.

Jesus goes personally towards a servant who is carrying a tray on which there is some food and He takes a honey-cake, an apple, a goblet of wine, and He offers them to Lazarus, after offering and blessing them, so that he may nourish himself. And Lazarus eats with the healthy appetite of one who is well. A further « Oh! » of amazement is uttered by the crowd.

Jesus seems to see no one but Lazarus, but in actual fact He observes everything and everybody and when He sees with what furious gestures Sadoc, Helkai, Hananiah, Felix, Doras and Cornelius and others are about to go away, He says in a loud voice: « Wait a moment, Sadoc. I want to have a word with you, with you and your friends. »

They stop with the sinister look of criminals.

Joseph of Arimathea makes a gesture as if he were frightened and beckons to the Zealot to restrain Jesus. But He is already going towards the rancorous group and is already saying loud: « Sadoc, is what you have seen enough for you? One day you told Me that in order to believe, you and your peers needed to see a decomposed dead body be recomposed and in good health. Are you satisfied with the rottenness you have seen? Can you admit that Lazarus was dead and that now he is alive and healthy, as he has never been for many years? I know. You came here to tempt these people, to increase their grief and their doubt. You came here looking for Me, hoping to find Me hiding in the room of the dying man. You did not come with feelings of love and with the desire to honour the deceased man, but to ensure that Lazarus was really dead, and you have continued to come rejoicing all the more as time went by. If the situation had evolved as you were hoping, as you believed it would evolve, you would have been right in exulting. The Friend Who cures everybody, but does not cure His friend. The Master Who rewards everybody's faith, but not the faith of His friends in Bethany. The Messiah powerless against the reality of death. That is what was making you exult. Then God gave you His reply. No prophet had ever been able to put together what was decomposed, in addition to being dead. God did it. That is the living witness of what I am. One day it was God Who took some dust and made it into a form and He breathed the vital spirit into it and man was. I was there to say: "Let man be made in our own image and likeness". Because I am the Word of the Father. Today, I, the Word, said to what is even less than dust, I said to rottenness: "Live", and decomposition was recomposed into flesh, into wholesome, living, breathing flesh. There it is looking at you. And to the flesh I joined the

spirit that had been lying for days in Abraham's bosom. I called him with My will, because I can do everything, as I am the Living Being, the King of kings to Whom all creatures and things are subject. What are you going to reply to Me now? »

He is in front of them, tall, ablaze with majesty, really Judge and God. They do not reply.

He insists: « Is it not yet enough for you to believe, to accept what is ineluctable? »

« You have kept but one part of Your promise. This is not the sign of Jonah… » says Sadoc harshly.

« You shall have that one as well. I promised it and I will keep My promise » says the Lord. « And another person, who is present here, and is waiting for another sign, shall have it. And as he is a just man, he will accept it. You will not. You will remain what you are. »

He turns round and sees Simon, the member of the Sanhedrin, the son of Elianna. He gazes at him. He leaves the previous group and when He is face to face with him, He says in a low but incisive voice: « You are fortunate that Lazarus does not remember his stay among the dead! What have you done with your father, o Cain? »

Simon runs away with a cry of fear that he changes into a howl of malediction: « May You be cursed, Nazarene! » to which Jesus replies: « Your curse is rising to Heaven and from Heaven the Most High throws it back at you. You are marked with the sign, you wretch! »

He goes back to the groups that are astonished, almost frightened. He meets Gamaliel who is going towards the road. He looks at Gamaliel, who looks at Him. Jesus says to him without stopping: « Be ready, rabbi. The sign will come soon. I never lie. »

The garden slowly becomes empty. The Judaeans are dumbfounded, but most of them are bursting with wrath. If glances could reduce one to ashes, Jesus would have been pulverised a long time ago. They speak and discuss among themselves while going away, and they are so upset by their defeat that they are unable to conceal the purpose of their presence here under the hypocritical appearance of friendship. They go away without saying goodbye to Lazarus or to the sisters.

Some remain behind as they have been conquered to the Lord by the miracle. Among them there is Joseph Barnabas, who throws himself on his knees before Jesus worshipping Him. Another one is Joel of Abijah, the scribe, who does the same thing before departing. And there are others as well, whom I do not know, but they must be influential people.

In the meantime Lazarus, surrounded by his more intimates, has withdrawn into the house. Joseph, Nicodemus and other good people greet Jesus and go away. The Judaeans who were staying with

Martha and Mary depart giving low bows. The servants close the gate. The house becomes peaceful again.

Jesus looks about Himself. He sees smoke and flames at the end of the garden, towards the sepulchre. All alone, standing in the middle of a path Jesus says: « Rottenness that is being destroyed by fire… The rottenness of death… But no fire will ever destroy the corruption of hearts… of those hearts… Not even the fire of Hell. It will last for ever… How horrible!… Worse than death… Worse than putrefaction… And… But who will save you, o Mankind, if you love so much to be corrupt? You want to be corrupt. And I… I have torn a man from his sepulchre with one word… And with a multitude of words… and a multitude of sorrows I shall not be able to tear away from sin man, men, milions of men. » He sits down and with His hands He covers His face dejectedly…

A servant, who is passing by, sees Him. He goes into the house. Shortly afterwards Mary comes out. She goes towards Jesus walking so lightly that she does not seem to be touching the ground. She approaches Him and says in a low voice: « Rabboni, You are tired… Come, my Lord. Your tired apostles have gone to the other house, except Simon the Zealot… Are You weeping, Master? Why?… »

She kneels at Jesus' feet… she watches Him…

Jesus looks at her. He does not reply. He stands up and directs His steps towards the house followed by Mary.

They go into one of the halls. Lazarus is not there, neither is the Zealot. But Martha is there, she is happy, transfigured by joy. She turns towards Jesus explaining: « Lazarus has gone to the bathroom. To purify himself further. Oh! Master! Master! What shall I tell You? » She adores Him with her whole being. She becomes aware of Jesus' sadness and says: « Are You sad, Lord? Are You not happy that Lazarus… » She becomes suspicious: « Oh! You are grave with me. I have sinned. It is true. »

« We have sinned, sister » says Mary.

« No. You did not. Oh! Master, Mary did not sin. Mary obeyed. I only disobeyed. I sent for You… because I could no longer bear their insinuations that You were not the Messiah, the Lord… and I could no longer put up with all that suffering… Lazarus was so anxious to have You. He called You so much… Forgive me, Jesus. »

« Are you not saying anything, Mary? » asks Jesus.

« Master… I… I suffered then only as a woman. I suffered because… Martha, swear, swear here, before the Master that you will never tell Lazarus of his frenzy… my Master… I have known You completely, o Divine Mercy, during Lazarus' last hours. Oh! my God! How much You have loved me, as You have forgiven me. You, God, You, Pure, You… if my brother, who does love me, but is a man, only a man, has not forgiven me everything from the bottom of his heart?! No. I am wrong. He has not forgiven my past and when his

weakness on the point of death blunted his goodness, which I thought was oblivion of the past, he shouted his grief and his indignation against me… Oh!… » Mary weeps…

« Do not weep, Mary. God has forgiven you and has forgotten. Lazarus' soul has also forgiven and forgotten, it wanted to forget. The man has not been able to forget everything. And when the flesh overwhelmed the weakened will with its last pangs, the man spoke. »

« I am not indignant at it, Lord. It helped me to love You more and to love Lazarus more. But it was from that moment that I also wished to have You here… because it was too distressing to think that Lazarus should die without peace through my fault… and later, when I heard the Judaeans deride You… when I saw that You were not coming even after his death, not even after I had obeyed You hoping beyond what is credible, hoping till the moment when the sepulchre was opened to receive him, then my spirit suffered. Lord, if I had anything to expiate, and I certainly had it, I did expiate… »

« Poor Mary! I know your heart. You deserved the miracle and let that confirm you in hoping and believing. »

« My Master, I will always hope and believe now. I will never doubt again, Lord. I will live on faith. You have enabled me to believe what is unbelievable. »

« And what about you, Martha? Have you learned? No. Not yet. You are My Martha. But you are not yet My perfect worshipper. Why do you act and you do not contemplate? It is holier. See? Your strength, as it is too inclined towards earthly things, yielded to the ascertainment of earthly matters that at time seem without remedy. In actual fact earthly matters are without remedy, unless God intervenes. That is why human creatures must be able to believe and contemplate, and love to the utmost power of their whole being, with thought, soul, flesh, blood; I repeat: with all the strength of man. I want you to be strong, Martha. I want you to be perfect. You did not obey because you did not believe and hope completely, and you did not believe and hope because you did not love absolutely. But I absolve you. I forgive you, Martha. I raised Lazarus today. I will now give you a stronger heart. I gave him life. I will instil into you the strength to love, believe and hope perfectly. Be happy now and in peace. Forgive those who offended you in the past days… »

« Lord, I have sinned against that. Not long ago I said to old Hananiah, who had sneered at You in previous days: "Who has triumphed? You or God? Your mockery or my faith? Christ is the Living Being and the Truth. I knew that His glory would shine more brightly. And you, old man, make yourself a new soul, if you do not want to know what death is. »

« You spoke the truth, but do not contend with the wicked, Mary.

And forgive. Forgive if you want to imitate Me… Here is Lazarus. I can hear his voice. »

Lazarus in fact comes in, wearing fresh clothes and clean-shaven, his hair dressed and scented. Maximinus and the Zealot are with him. « Master! » Lazarus kneels down once again worshipping.

Jesus lays a hand on his head and smiles saying: « The test is over, My friend. For you and for your sisters. Be happy and strong now in serving the Lord. What do you remember, Me friend, of the past? I mean of your last hours? »

« A great desire to see You and a great peace in the love of my sisters. »

« What did you regret most to leave dying? »

« You, Lord, and my sisters. You, because I would not have been able to serve You, them… because they have given my every joy… »

« Oh! me, brother! » says Mary with a sigh.

« You more than Martha. You have given me Jesus and the measure of what is Jesus. And Jesus has given you to me. You are the gift of God, Mary. »

« You said so also when you were dying… » says Mary and she scrutinises her brother's face.

« Because it is my constant thought. »

« But I have grieved you so deeply… »

« Also my disease was painful. But through it I hope I have expiated the faults of old Lazarus and that I have risen purified to be worthy of God. You and I, the two who have risen again to serve the Lord, and Martha between us, as she has always been the peace of the house. »

« Do you hear that, Mary? Lazarus is speaking words of wisdom and truth. I will now withdraw and leave you to your joy… »

« No, Lord. Stay here with us. Stay in Bethany and in my house. It will be lovely… »

« I will stay. I want to make up for what you have suffered. Martha, do not be sad. Martha thinks that she has grieved Me. But My grief is not brought about by you, but by those who do not want to be redeemed. They hate more and more. Their hearts are poisoned… Well… let us forgive… »

« Let us forgive, Lord » says Lazarus with his mild smile… and it all ends on that word.

Jesus says: « The dictation dated 23rd March 1944 on Lazarus' Resurrection can be put here. »

23rd March 1944.

Jesus says:

« I could have intervened in time to prevent Lazarus' death. But I did not want to do that. I knew that his resurrection would be a

double-edged weapon, because it would convert the righteous-minded Judaeans and would make the non-righteous-minded ones even more rancorous. The latter, because of this final blow of My power, would sentence Me to death. But I had come for that and it was now time that that should be accomplished. I could have gone at once, but I needed to convince the most stubborn incredulous people by means of a resurrection from advanced rottenness. And also My apostles, destined to spread My Faith in the world, needed a faith supported by miracles of the first magnitude.

There was so much humanity in the apostles. I have already said so. It was not an insurmountable obstacle, on the contrary it was a logical consequence of their condition of men called to be My apostles when they were already grown-up. The mentality, the frame of mind of a person cannot be changed between one day and the next one. And, in My wisdom, I did not want to choose and educate children bringing them up according to My thought to make them My apostles. I could have done that, but I did not want to, lest souls should reproach Me for despising those who are not innocent and should justify themselves with the excuse that I also had made it clear that those whose characters are already formed cannot change. No. Everything can be changed if one is willing. In fact I turned cowardly, quarrelsome, usurious, sensual, incredulous people into martyrs, saints and evangelizers of the world. Only those who did not want, did not change.

I loved and still love little and weak people - you are an example - providing they are willing to love and follow Me, and I turn such "nonentities" into My favourities, My friends, My ministers. I still make use of them, and they are a continuous miracle that I work to lead others to believe in Me, and not to kill the possibility of miracles. How languishing that possibility is at present! Like a lamp lacking oil it is in the throes of death and it dies, killed by the scanty or lacking faith in the God of miracles.

There are two forms of insistence in requesting a miracle. God yields to one with love. He turns His back disdainfully to the other. The former asks, as I taught to ask, without lack of confidence and without tiredness, and does not admit that God may not grant the request, because God is good and who is good grants, because God is powerful and can do everything. That is love and God hears those who love. The latter is the overbearingness of rebels who want God to be their servant and to lower Himself to their wickedness and to give them what they do not give Him: love and obedience. This form is an offence that God punishes by denying His graces.

You complain that I no longer work collective miracles. How could I work them? Where are the communities that believe in Me? Where are the true believers? How many true believers are there in a community? Like surviving flowers in a wood burnt by a fire

I can see a believing spirit now and again. Satan has burnt the rest with his doctrines. And he will burn them more and more.

I beg you to bear in mind My reply to Thomas, as a supernatural rule for yourselves. It is not possible to be My true disciples if one cannot give human life the importance it deserves: a means to conquer the true Life, not an aim. He who wants to save his life in this world will lose eternal Life. I have told you and I repeat it. What are trials? Passing clouds. Heaven remains and is waiting for you after the trial.

I conquered Heaven for you through My heroism. You must imitate Me. Heroism is not laid aside exclusively for those who are to suffer martyrdom. Christian life is perpetual heroism because it is a perpetual struggle against the world, the demon and the flesh. I do not compel you to follow Me. I leave you free. But I do not want you to be hypocrites. Either with Me and like Me, or against Me. You cannot deceive Me. No, I cannot be deceived, and I do not form alliances with the Enemy. If you prefer him to Me, you cannot think that you can have Me as your Friend at the same time. Either him or Me. Make your choice.

Martha's grief is different from Mary's because of the different psyche of the two sisters and because of their different behaviour. Happy are those who behave in such a way as to have no remorse for grieving one who is now dead and can no longer be comforted for the sorrow caused to him. But how much happier is he who has no remorse for grieving his God, Me, Jesus, and is not afraid of the day he will have to meet Me, on the contrary he pines for it, as for a joy anxiously dreamt of for a whole lifetime and at long last achieved.

I am your Father, Brother and Friend. So why do you offend Me so often? Do you know how long you still have to live? To live in order to make amends? No, you do not know that. So act righteously hour by hour, day by day. Always righteously. You will always make Me happy. And even if sorrow comes to you, because sorrow is sanctification, it is the myrrh that preserves you from the putridity of sensuality, you will always be certain that I love you - and that I love you also in that grief - and you will always have the Peace that comes from My love. You, My little John, know whether I can comfort one also in grief.

In My prayer to the Father there is repeated what I said at the beginning: it was necessary to rouse the opacity of the Judaeans and of the world in general by means of a main miracle. And the resurrection of a man who had been buried four days and had gone down into the tomb after a long, chronic, disgusting well-known disease is not an event that can leave people indifferent or doubtful. If I had cured him while he was alive, or if I had infused the spirit into him as soon as he had breathed his last, the acridity of

enemies might have raised doubts on the entity of the miracle. But the stench of the corpse, the putrefaction of the bandages, the long period in the sepulchre left no doubts. And, a miracle in the miracle, I wanted Lazarus to be freed and cleaned in the presence of everybody so that they could see that not only life but also the wholesomeness of the limbs had been restored where previously the ulcerated flesh had spread the germs of death in the blood. When I grant a grace I always give more than what you ask for.

I wept before Lazarus' tomb. And many names have been given to My tears. In the meantime you must bear in mind that graces are obtained through grief mixed with unfaltering faith in the Eternal Father. I wept not so much because of the loss of My friend and because of the sorrow of the sisters, as because three thoughts that had always pierced My heart like three sharp nails surfaced then, more lively than ever, like depths stirred up.

The ascertainment of the ruin that Satan had brought to man by seducing him to Evil. A ruin the human punishment of which was sorrow and death. Physical death, the symbol and living metaphor of spiritual death that sin causes to the soul, hurling it into infernal darkness, whereas it was destined, like a queen, to live in the kingdom of Light.

The persuasion that not even this miracle, worked almost as a sublime corollary to three years of evangelization, would convince the Judaic world of the Truth of which I was the Bearer. And that no miracle would in future convert the world to Christ. Oh! How grievous it was to be so close to death for so few!

The mental vision of My imminent death. I was God. But I was also Man. And to be the Redeemer I was to feel the weight of expiation. Therefore the horror of death and of such a death. I was a living healthy being who was saying to himself: "I shall soon be dead, I shall be in a sepulchre like Lazarus. Soon the most dreadful agony will be my companion. I must die". God's kindness spares you the knowledge of the future. But I was not spared it.

Oh! believe Me, you who complain of your destiny. None was more sad than Mine, because I always clearly foresaw everything that was to happen to Me, joined to the poverty, the hardships, the bitterness that accompanied Me from My birth to My death. So, do not complain. And hope in Me. I give you My peace. »

[undated]

Marginal notes on Lazarus' resurrection and in connection with a sentence of St. John. Jesus says:

« In the Gospel of John, as it has now been read for ages, there is written: "Jesus had not yet come into the village of Bethany" (John 9, 30). To avoid possible objections I wish to point out that, with regard to this sentence and the one of the Work which states

that I met Martha a few steps away from the fountain in Lazarus' garden, there is no contradiction of events, but only a discrepancy of translation and description. Three quarters of the village of Bethany belonged to Lazarus. Likewise a large part of Jerusalem belonged to him. But let us speak of Bethany. As three quarters of it belonged to Lazarus, one could say: Bethany of Lazarus. So the text would not be wrong even if I had met Martha in the village or at the fountain, as some people wish to say. In actual fact I had not gone into the village, to prevent the people of Bethany, who were all hostile to the members of the Sanhedrin, from rushing towards Me. I had gone round the back of Bethany to reach Lazarus' house, which was at the opposite end with respect to one who entered Bethany coming from En-shemes. So John rightly says that I had not yet entered the village. And equally right is little John who says that I had stopped near the basin (fountain for the Jews) already in Lazarus' garden, but still very far from the house. One should also consider that during the period of mourning and uncleanness (it was not yet the seventh day after Lazarus' death) his sisters did not leave the house. So the meeting took place within the enclosure of their property. Note that little John states that the people of Bethany came into the garden only when I had ordered the stone to be removed. Previously the people of Bethany did not know that I was in Bethany, and only when the news was spread they rushed to Lazarus' house. »

547. In Jerusalem and in the Temple after the Resurrection of Lazarus.

27th December 1946.

If the news of the death of Lazarus had shaken and agitated Jerusalem and a large part of Judaea, the news of his resurrection ended by shaking and penetrating also where the news of the death had not caused any excitement.

Perhaps the few Pharisees and scribes, that is the members of the Sanhedrin present at the resurrection, did not mention it to the people. But the Judaeans certainly have spoken about it, and the news has spread in a flash, and the voices of women repeat it from house to house, from terrace to terrace, while the common people propagate it in the streets with great jubilation for Jesus' triumph and for Lazarus. People fill the streets running here and there, thinking they are the first to give the news, but they are disappointed because it is already known in Ophel as well as in Bezetha, in Zion as at the Sixtus market. It is known in synagogues, in warehouses, in the Temple and in Herod's palace. It is known at the Antonia and from there, or vice versa, it spreads to the guard-rooms at the gates. It fills mansions and hovels: « The Rabbi of Nazareth

has raised from the dead Lazarus of Bethany, who died the day before Friday and was buried before the beginning of the Sabbath and he rose again today at the sixth hour. » The Jewish acclamations to the Christ and to the Most High mingle with the various « By Jove! By Pollux! By Libitina! » etc. of the Romans.

The only ones I do not see among the crowds talking in the streets are the members of the Sanhedrin. I do not see even one of them, whereas I see Chuza and Manaen come out from a stately mansion and I hear Chuza say: « Wonderful Wonderful! I sent word to Johanna at once. He is really God! »; and Manaen replies to him: « Herod, who came from Jericho to pay his respects to… the chief, Pontius Pilate, seems to have gone mad in his palace, while Herodias is frantic and she presses him to have the Christ arrested. She trembles dreading His power; he is torn with remorse. With chattering teeth he tells his devoted followers to defend him from… ghosts. He got drunk to muster up courage and the wine eddying in his head makes him see phantasms. He shouts saying that the Christ has raised also John who is now yelling God's maledictions close to him. I ran away from that Gehenna. I was content with saying to him: "Lazarus has been raised from the dead by Jesus the Nazarene. Mind you do not touch Him, because He is God". I stimulate his fear so that he may not yield to her murderous intents. »

« On the contrary, I shall have to go there… I must go. But I wanted to call on Eliel and Elkanah first. They live in seclusion, but their opinions are always highly thought of in Israel! And Johanna is pleased that I honour them. And I… »

« A good protection for you. That is true. But not so good as the Master's love. That is the only protection that matters… » Chuza does not reply. He is pensive… I lose sight of them.

Joseph of Arimathea comes forward hurriedly from Bezetha. He is stopped by a group of citizens who are still uncertain whether they should believe the news. They ask him.

« It's true. Very true. Lazarus has risen and he has also been cured. I saw him with my own eyes. »

« So… He is really the Messiah! »

« His deeds are such. His life is perfect. This is the right time. Satan fights Him. Let each man conclude in his own heart who is the Nazarene » says Joseph wisely and fairly at the same time. He greets them and goes away.

They continue to discuss and end up by saying: « He is really the Messiah. »

There is a group of legionaries and one of them says: « I will go to Bethany tomorrow if I can. By Venus and Mars, the gods I prefer! I may travel all over the world, from the hot deserts to the icy German lands, but never again shall I find a man who comes to life again after being dead for days. I want to see what a man, who

comes back from death, is like. He will be black with the water of the rivers of the beyond… »

« If he was a virtuous man, he will be bluish after drinking the sky-blue water of the Elysian Fields. There is not only the Styx there… »

« He will tell us what the meadows of asphodels in Hades are like… I will come as well… »

« If Pontius will allow us… »

« Of course he will! He sent a messenger to Claudia at once telling her to come. Claudia loves these things. I have heard her more than once converse, with the other women and her Greek freedmen, about souls and immortality. »

« Claudia believes in the Nazarene. According to her He is greater than any other man. »

« Yes, but according to Valeria He is more than a man. He is God. A kind of Jupiter and Apollo with regard to power and handsomeness, they say, and wiser than Minerva. Have you seen Him? I came here with Pontius and it is the first time that I have been here, so I do not know… »

« I think that you have arrived in time to see many things. Not long ago Pontius was shouting as loud as Stentor saying: "Everything is to be changed here. They must understand that Rome is the ruler and that they, all of them, are servants. And the greater they are, the more servile they are, because they are more dangerous". I think it was because of that tablet that Annas' servant took to him… »

« Of course. He will not listen to them… And he keeps shifting us… because he does not want us to be friendly with them. »

« Friendly with them? Ah! Ah! With those big-nosed types stinking like billy-goats? Pontius suffers from indigestion because he eats too much pork. If anything… we are friendly with some of the women who do not disdain the kisses of clean-shaven lips… » says a mischievous one laughing.

« It is a fact that after the unruliness at the feast of the Tabernacles he insisted in having all the troops changed with the result that we have to go away… »

« That is true. The arrival of the galley bringing Longinus and his century was already notified at Caesarea. New officers and new troops… and all because of those crocodiles of the Temple. I liked this place. »

« I preferred Brindisi… But I shall get accustomed to this place » says the one who arrived in Palestine recently.

They also move away.

Some guards of the Temple pass by with wax-tablets. People watch them and say: « The Sanhedrin is meeting with urgency. What are they going to do? »

A man replies: « Let us go up to the Temple and see… » They set out towards the street leading to the Moriah.

The sun disappears behind the houses in Zion and the western mountains. Night falls and the streets are soon cleared of curious people. Those who went up to the Temple come down looking upset because they have been driven away from the gates, where they had lingered to see the members of the Sanhedrin pass by.

The inside of the Temple, now empty, desert, enveloped in moonlight, seems immense. The members of the Sanhedrin slowly gather in their meeting hall. They are all there, exactly as they were for Jesus' death sentence, but those who were then acting as clerks are not present (1). Only the members of the Sanhedrin are there, some sitting in their places, some in groups near the doors.

Caiaphas comes in with his face and body resembling those of an excessively fat and wicked frog, and he goes to his seat.

They begin to discuss the events at once and they become so impassioned of the matter that the session is soon animated. They leave their seats, they go down into the empty space gesticulating and speaking in loud voices.

Some counsel calm and circumspection before taking a decision. Others answer back: « But have you not heard those who came here after the ninth hour? If we lose the most important Judaeans, what is the use of accumulating charges? The longer He lives, the less we shall be believed if we accuse Him. »

« And this fact cannot be denied. We cannot say to the many people who were there: "What you have seen is not true. It is a make-believe. You were drunk". The man was dead. Putrid. Decomposed. The corpse was placed in a closed sepulchre and the sepulchre was properly walled up. The corpse had been enveloped in bandages and covered with balms for several days. And it was tied. And yet it came out of its place, it came as far as the entrance by itself without walking. And when it was freed, the body was no longer dead. It breathed. There was no putrefaction. Whereas before, when it was alive, it was covered in sores, and when it died it was rotten. »

« Have you heard the most influential Judaeans, whom we urged to go there to have them completely on our side? They came and said to us: "As far as we are concerned He is the Messiah". Almost every one of them has come! Not to mention the people!… »

« And those cursed Romans full of nonsense! What about them? They say that He is Jupiter Maximus. And if they get that idea into their heads! They made us acquainted with their stories, and it was a curse. Cursed be those who wanted Hellenism among us and out of flattery desecrated us with foreign usages! But it helps us to know

(1) The present chapter was written after the one describing Jesus being sentenced to death and which is part of volume 5.

people. And we know that the Romans are quick in demolishing and elevating by means of plots and coups d'etat. Now if anyone of these mad people goes into raptures over the Nazarene and proclaims Him Caesar, and therefore, divine, who will ever dare touch Him? »

« Certainly not! Who do you think would dream of doing that? They do not give a fig for Him or for us. No matter how great is what He does, He is always "a Jew" as far as they are concerned. So nothing but a miserable wretch. Fear has turned your brain, dear son of Annas! »

« Fear? Did you hear how Pontius replied to my father's invitation? He is upset, I tell you. He is upset by this last event, and he is afraid of the Nazarene. How wretched we are! That man has come to ruin us! »

« I wish we had not gone there and we had not almost ordered the most mighty Judaeans to go as well! If Lazarus had risen without witnesses… »

« So? What would have changed? We certainly could not have made him disappear for good to make people believe that he was always dead! »

« Certainly not. But we could have said that it was apparent death. You can always find witnesses bribed to commit perjury. »

« But why so much excitement? I can see no reason for it! Has He perhaps provoked the Sanhedrin and the Pontificate? No, He has not. He just worked a miracle. »

« Just?! But are you mad or has He bribed you, Eleazar? Did He not provoke the Sanhedrin and the Pontificate? What else do you want? The people… »

« People can say what they like, but the situation is exactly as Eleazar said. The Nazarene has only worked a miracle. »

« That's another one defending Him! You are no longer fair, Nicodemus! You are no longer just! That is an action against us. Against us, do you realise it? Nothing will convince the crowds any longer. Ah! How miserable we are! Today some Judaeans scoffed at me! At me they scoffed! »

« Be quiet, Doras! You are only a man. It's the principle that is attacked! Our laws! Our prerogatives! »

« You are right, Simon, and we must defend them. »

« How? »

« By offending and destroying His! »

« That is easily said, Sadoc. But how can you destroy them if with your own power you cannot even make a midge come to life again? What is required here is a miracle greater than His. But none of us can work it because… » The speaker cannot explain why.

Joseph of Arimathea completes the sentence: « Because we are just men, only men. »

They rush upon him asking: « And what is He, then? »

Joseph of Arimathea replies without hesitation: « He is God. If I still had had any doubt… »

« But you had no doubt. We know, Joseph. We are well aware. You may state clearly that you love Him! »

« There is nothing wrong if Joseph loves Him. I also admit that He is the greatest Rabbi in Israel. »

« Are you, Gamaliel, saying that? »

« Yes, I maintain that. And it is an honour to me to be… dethroned by Him, because so far I had kept the tradition of the great rabbis, the last one of whom was Hillel, but after me I do not know who was able to receive the wisdom of centuries. Now I shall go away happily, because I know that it will not be lost, on the contrary it will grow greater, as it will be increased by His own wisdom, in which the Spirit of God is certainly present. »

« But what are you saying, Gamaliel? »

« I am speaking the truth. It is not by closing our eyes that we can ignore what we are. We are no longer wise, because the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom, and we are sinners without the fear of God. If we had such fear we would not trample on the just, neither would we be foolishly greedy for the wealth of the world. God gives and God takes away, according to merits and demerits. And if God deprives us of what He had given us, in order to give it to other people, may He be blessed because holy is the Lord and holy are all His deeds. »

« But we were talking of miracles and we meant that none of us can work them because Satan is not with us. »

« No. Because God is not with us. Moses parted the waters and he struck the rock, Joshua stopped the sun, Elijah raised the boy from death and made the sky give rain, but God was with them. I remind you that there are six things that God hates and the seventh He abhors: a haughty look, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that weaves wicked plots, feet that hurry to do evil, a false witness who lies and he who sows dissension among brothers. We do all these things. I say: we. But you only do them. Because I refrain from shouting "Hosanna" and from crying "Anathema". I am waiting. »

« For the sign! Of course! You are waiting for the sign! But what sign can you expect from a poor madman, even if we want to forgive Him all the rest? »

Gamaliel stretches his hands and arms forward, and with closed eyes and lightly lowered head, looking most grave, he says in a slow distant voice: « I have anxiously asked the Lord to show me the truth, and He enlightened for me the words of Jesus the son of Sirach. These ones: "The Creator of all things spoke to me and gave me His instructions, and He Who created me rested in my Tabernacle

and said to me: 'Dwell in Jacob, make Israel your inheritance, take root among My chosen people… And He enlightened also the following words and I have acknowledged them: "Approach Me, you who desire Me, and take your fill of My fruits because My spirit is sweeter than honey and My inheritance is sweeter than the honeycomb. The memories of Me will last for ever. They who eat Me will hunger for more, they who drink me will thirst for more; whoever listens to Me will never have to blush, whoever works for Me will never sin, whoever explains Me will have eternal life". And the light of God became brighter in my spirit while my eyes were reading these words: "All these things are contained in the book of Life, the will of the Most High, the doctrine of Truth… God promised David that from him would descend the most powerful King Who is to sit on the throne of glory for ever. His wisdom brims like the Pishon and the Tigris in the season of fruit, like the Euphrates He brims with intelligence, He rises like the Jordan at harvest time. He diffuses wisdom like light… He was the first to become perfectly aware of it". That is what God had enlightened for me! Alas! I say that the Wisdom among us is too great to be understood by us, neither can we contain a thought vaster than oceans nor an advice deeper than the great abyss. And we hear Him shout: "Like an immense watercourse I gushed out of Paradise and I said: 'I am going to water My garden', and then my watercourse became a river, and the river a sea. Like dawn I shed My doctrine on everybody, and I shall make it known to the remotest peoples. I shall descend into the lowest parts, I shall cast glances on those who are sleeping, I shall enlighten those who hope in the Lord. I shall pour out teaching like prophecy and I shall leave it to those who seek wisdom, I shall not stop announcing it until the holy century. I have not toiled for Myself alone, but for all who are seeking the truth". This is what God, the Most High God, made me read » and he lowers his arms and raises his head.

« So, according to you He is the Messiah?! Tell us! »

« He is not the Messiah. »

« He is not? Then what is He according to you? Not a demon. Not an angel. Not the Messiah… »

« He is He Who is. »

« You are raving! Is He God? Is that madman God according to you? »

« He is He Who is. God knows what He is. We see His works. God sees also His thoughts. But He is not the Messiah because Messiah to us means King. He is not and never will be king. But He is holy. And His works are those of a holy man. And we cannot threaten the Innocent without committing sin. I will not assent to sin. »

« But with your words you have almost said that He is the Expected One! »

« I have said so. While the light of the Most High lasted I saw Him as such. Then… as the hand of the Lord no longer held me uplifted in His light, I became man again, the man of Israel, and the words were only those to which the man of Israel, I, you, those before us, and, God forbid it, those after us, attach the meaning of their, of our thoughts, not the meaning they have in the eternal Thought that dictated them to His servant. »

« We are talking, digressing, wasting time. And the crowds in the meantime are excited » says Hananiah in a croaking voice.

« You are right! It is necessary to take a decision and act, to save ourselves and to triumph. »

« You say that Pilate would not listen to us when we asked his help against the Nazarene. But if we informed him… You said previously that if the troops become excited they may proclaim Him Caesar… Eh! A good idea! Let us go and point this danger out to the Proconsul. We shall be honoured as faithful servants of Rome and… and if he takes action we shall get rid of the Rabbi. Let us go! Since you, o Eleazar of Annas, are more friendly with him than we are, be our guide » says Helkai laughing malingnantly.

There is some hesitancy, then a group of the most fanatics leaves to go to the Antonia. Caiaphas remains with the others.

« At this time! He will not receive them » remarks one.

« On the contrary! It's the best time. Pontius is always in high spirits after eating and drinking as a pagan does… »

I leave them there discussing, and I see the scene at the Antonia.

They cover the short distance quickly and without difficulty, so bright is the moonlight that is so different from the red light of the lamps lit in the entrance-hall of the praetorium building.

Eleazar is successful in sending in his name to Pilate, and they are led into a large empty hall. It is completely empty. There is only a heavy chair with low back covered with a purple cloth that stands out strongly against the complete whiteness of the hall. They remain in a group, somewhat timid and cold, standing on the white marble floor. No one comes in. There is dead silence, broken at intervals by remote music.

« Pilate is at table. He is certainly with friends. The music is played in the triclinium. There will be dances in honour of the guests » says Eleazar of Annas.

« They are corrupt. I will purify myself tomorrow. Lust oozes from these walls » says Helkai with disgust.

« Why did you come, then? It was your idea » replies Eleazar.

« For the honour of God and the welfare of our fatherland I can make any sacrifice. And this is a great one! I had purified myself after approaching Lazarus… and now!… A dreadful day, this one!… »

There is no sign of Pilate. Eleazar, being familiar with the place,

tries the doors. They are all closed. The Judaeans in the hall are seized with fear. Frightening stories come to light again. They regret having come. They feel that they are already lost.

At long last, on the side opposite to them, who are near the door through which they came in and thus close to the only chair available in the hall, a door is opened and Pilate comes in, wearing a tunic as white as the hall. He comes in speaking to some guests. He is laughing. He turns round to instruct a slave, who is holding up the curtain beyond the door, to throw essences into a brazier and to bring scents and water for their hands and a slave to come with mirror and combs. He pays no attention to the Hebrews, as if they were not there. They get enraged but they dare not react…

Over there, in the meantime, they bring braziers, they spread resins on the fire and pour scented water on the hands of the Romans. And a slave, with skilful movements, tidies their hair according to the fashion of rich Romans of those days. And the Hebrews get enraged.

The Romans laugh and jest among themselves looking now and again at the group waiting at the other end, and one of them speaks to Pilate who has never turned round to look; but Pilate shrugs his shoulders making gesture of boredom and he claps his hands to call a slave whom he orders in a loud voice to bring sweets and to let in the dancers. The Hebrews tremble with rage and are scandalised. Just imagine Helkai compelled to watch girls dancing! His countenance is a poem of suffering and hatred.

The slaves come back with sweets in precious cups, and they are followed by the dancers wearing garlands of flowers and hardly covered with fabrics that are so light as to seem veils. Their very white bodies appear through their light garments dyed pink and blue, when they pass before the burning braziers and the many lights placed at the other end. The Romans admire the gracefulness of bodies and movements and Pilate asks them to repeat a dance that he particularly liked. Helkai, imitated by his companions, turns indignantly towards the wall not to see the dancers move as lightly as butterflies with their dresses fluttering indecorously.

When the short dance is over Pilate dismisses them putting in the hand of each a cup full of sweets and he throws a bracelet into each cup nonchalantly. And at last he condescends to turn round and look at the Hebrews saying to his friends in a weary voice: « And now… I must pass from dreams to reality… from poetry… to hypocrisy… from gracefulness to the filthy things of life. The miseries of being a Proconsul!… Hail, friends, and have pity on me. »

He is left alone and he slowly approaches the Hebrews. He sits down, he examines his well-cared for hands and he discovers something wrong under one nail. He attends to it anxiously taking from under his tunic a tiny thin golden stick with which he remedies the

great damage of an imperfect nail…

He is then so kind as to turn his head round slowly. He sneers seeing the Hebrews still bowing servilely and he says: « You! Here! And be quick. I have no time to waste on trifles. »

The Hebrews approach Pilate in an attitude that is always servile until he shouts: « That's enough. Don't come too close » and his words seem to nail them to the floor. « Speak! And stand up straight because animals only stoop towards the ground » and he laughs.

The Hebrews straighten themselves at the sneering words and remain stiff.

« So? Speak! You insisted on coming. Speak, now that you are here. »

« We wanted to tell you… We are told… We are faithful servants of Rome… »

« Ah! Ah! Faithful servants of Rome! I will let divine Caesar know and he will be happy! He will certainly be happy! Speak up, you clowns! And be quick! »

The members of the Sanhedrin quiver with indignation, but they do not react. Helkai speaks on behalf of everybody: « We must inform you, o Pontius, that a man was raised from the dead today at Bethany.. »

« I know. Is that why you have come? I was informed several hours ago. He is a lucky man as he already knows what it is to die and what the next world is like! What can I do if Lazarus of Theophilus has been raised from the dead? Has he perhaps brought me a message from Hades? » He is ironic.

« No. But His resurrection is a danger… »

« For him? Of course! The danger of having to die again. Not a very pleasant event. So? What can I do? Am I perhaps Jupiter? »

« A danger not for Lazarus. But for Caesar. »

« For?… Domine! Am I perhaps drunk? Did you say: for Caesar? And how can Lazarus be harmful to Caesar? Are you afraid that the stench of the sepulchre may infect the air that the Emperor breathes? Do not worry! He is too far away! »

« No, not that. The fact is that Lazarus by rising from the dead may have the Emperor dethroned. »

« Dethroned? Ah! Ah! That's a bigger fib than the whole world! So you are drunk, not I. Perhaps the fright has deranged your minds. To see a man rise… I think it may upset one. Go, go to bed. And have a good rest. And a warm bath. A very warm one. It is very good against deliriums. »

« We are not delirious, Pontius. We are telling you that unless you take a decision you will go through a sad time. You will certainly be punished, if not killed, by the usurper. The Nazarene will soon be proclaimed king, king of the world, do you understand? Your very legionaries will proclaim Him. They have been enticed by the

Nazarene and today's event has elated them. What servant of Rome are you, if you do not take care of her peace? So, do you want to see the Empire upset and divided because of your inertness? Do you want to see Rome defeated, the ensigns pulled down, the Emperor killed, everything destroyed… »

« Be silent! I will now speak. And I say to you: you are mad! You are even worse. You are liars. You are criminals. You deserve death. Get out of here, you filthy servants of your own interests, of your hatred, of your meanness. You are servants, not I. I am a Roman citizen and Roman citizens are not subject to anybody. I am an imperial official and I work for the welfare of our fatherland. You… are our subjects. You… are under our rule. You… you are the galleyslaves tied to the benches and you fret in vain. The lash of the chief is over you. The Nazarene!… Would you like me to kill the Nazarene? Would you like me to put Him in prison? By Jove! If for the safety of Rome and of the divine Emperor I should imprison dangerous subjects or kill them here where I am the governor, I should leave free and alive the Nazarene and His followers, and them alone. Go away. Clear off and never come back here again. You riotous fellows, instigators, thieves and accomplices of thieves! I am well aware of all your manoeuvres. You had better know that. And bear in mind that new weapons and fresh legionaries have served to discover your snares and your instruments. You complain of Roman taxes. But how much have you paid for Melkiah of Gilead, and Jonah of Scythopolis, and Philip of Shochoh, and John of Beth-aven and Joseph of Ramoth, and for all the others who will soon be caught? And do not go towards the caves in the valley because there are more legionaries there than stones, and the law and galley are the same for everybody. For everybody! Do you understand? For everybody. And I hope to live long enough to see you all in chains, slaves among slaves under the heel of Rome. Get out! Go and report - you as well, Eleazar of Annas whom I do not wish to see any more in my house - that the time of clemency is over, and that I am the Proconsul and you the subjects. The subjects. And I give orders. In the name of Rome. Go out! You night snakes and vampires! And the Nazarene wants to redeem you? If He were God, He ought to strike you by lightning! Thus the most revolting stain would disappear from the world. Out! And dare not conspire, or you will become acquainted with sword and whip. »

He stands up and goes away slamming the door before the dismayed members of the Sanhedrin, who have no time to come to themselves because an armed squad comes in and drives them out of the hall and of the building as if they were dogs.

They go back to the hall in the Sanhedrin. They make their report. The excitement is great. The news of the arrest of many highwaymen and of raids into caves to catch more upsets very much all

the members who have remained. Many, in fact, tired of waiting, have gone away.

« And yet we cannot let Him live » shout some of the priests.

« We cannot leave Him alone. He is active. We are doing nothing. And we are losing ground day by day. If we leave Him free, He will continue to work miracles and everybody will believe in Him. And the Romans will end up by opposing us and destroying us all together. Pontius says so. But if the crowds should proclaim Him king, oh! Pontius will have to punish all of us. We must not allow that » shouts Sadoc.

« All right. But how? The attempt… by Roman law has failed. Pontius is sure of the Nazarene. The attempt… through our law is impossible. He does not commit sin… » points out one of the members.

« If no sin exists, one can be invented » insinuates Caiaphas.

« It's a sin to do that! To swear what is false! To have an innocent condemned! It's… too much!… » say most of them in horror. « It's a crime, because it would be His death. »

« So? Does that frighten you? You are foolish and you understand nothing. After what happened Jesus must die. Do you not consider that it is better for us if one man dies instead of many? So let Him die to save His people so that all our country may not perish. In any case… He says that He is the Saviour. So let Him sacrifice Himself to save everybody » says Caiaphas with disgusting cold sly hatred.

« But… Caiaphas! Consider! He… »

« I have spoken. The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, the High Priest. Woe to those who do not respect the Pontiff of Israel. The thunderbolts of the Lord upon them! We have waited enough! We have had enough flurry! I order and decree that whoever knows where the Nazarene is must come and inform us of the place, and anathema on those who will not obey my word. »

« But Annas… » say some objecting.

« Annas said to me: "Whatever you do will be holy". Let us close the meeting. We shall all be here on Friday between the third and the sixth hour to decide what to do. All of us, I said. Inform those who are absent. And ensure that all the heads of families and classes, all the cream of Israel are summoned. The Sanhedrin has spoken. Go. »

And he is the first to withdraw to the place from which he came, whilst the others go in different directions and they leave the Temple speaking in low voices while going home.

548. At Bethany after the Resurrection of Lazarus.

30th December 1946.

It is pleasant to rest among loving friends and near the Master in sunny days that show the early charms of springtime, contemplating the fields growing verdant with the tender sprouts of corn, admiring the meadows that break the even green winter shade with the first little many-coloured flowers, gazing at the hedges displaying gems that begin to open smiling in the more sunny spots, looking at almond-trees the tops of which are covered with early foamlike flowers. And Jesus rejoices at the sight, as well as the apostles and the three friends at Bethany. And everything seems far and remote: malevolence, sorrow, sadness, illness, death, hatred, envy, all the painful, tormenting, worrying things on the Earth.

All the apostles are overjoyed and they say so. They express their conviction - that is so certain, so triumphant - that Jesus has now defeated all His enemies, that His mission will now proceed without any obstacle, that He will be acknowledged as the Messiah also by those who have been most tenacious in opposing Him. And they speak, somewhat elated, rejuvenated, happy as they are, making plans for the future, dreaming… dreaming so much… and so humanly.

The most elated, also because of his psyche that carries him to extremes, is Judas of Kerioth. He congratulates himself on having waited, on his ability in acting, on his lasting faith in the Master's triumph, on defying the threats of the Sanhedrin… He is so elated that he ends up by telling what he has concealed so far, amid the utter astonishment of his companions: « Yes, they wanted to bribe me, they wanted to entice me with blandishments, and when they saw that they were of no avail, with threats. If you only knew! But I paid them back in their own coin. I pretended to love them as they feigned to love me. I allured them as they allured me, I betrayed them as they wanted to betray me… Because that is what they wanted to do. They wanted to make me believe that they were testing the Master to be able to proclaim Him the Holy Man of God solemnly. But I know them, I know them very well. And in all their plans of which they informed me, I contrived to make Jesus' holiness shine more brightly than the sun at midday in a cloudless sky… It was a dangerous game! If they had realised that! But I was prepared for every eventuality, even to die, to serve God in my Master. And thus I was informed of everything… Eh! at times I must have seemed to be mad, wicked, bad-tempered. If you had known what the situation was like! I alone know what I suffered at night, the precautions I had to take to do a good turn without attracting anybody's attention! You were somewhat suspicious of me. I know. But I bear you no grudge. My behaviour could have roused suspicion. But my purpose was good and that was all I worried about. Jesus

is not aware of anything. That is, I think that He also suspects me. But I will keep quiet without wishing to be praised by Him. And I ask you not to say anything either. One day, one of the first times I was with Him - and you, Simon Zealot, and you, John of Zebedee, were with me - He reproached me because I boasted of having a practical sense. Since then… I never enhanced this quality of mine in His presence, but I continued to make use of it, for His own good. I did what a mother does for her inexpert child. She removes obstacles from his way, she bends a thornless branch towards him, she pushes aside one that may hurt him, or with shrewd acts she gets him to do what he must learn to do and to avoid what is bad, without the child being aware of it. On the contrary, the son believes that he succeeded by himself in walking without stumbling, in picking a lovely flower for his mother, in doing this and that thing spontaneously. I did the same with the Master. Because holiness is not sufficient in a world of men and demons. It is necessary to fight with equal weapons, at least as men… and at times… it is not a bad thing to add a pinch of infernal cunning to the other weapons. That is my idea. But He will not listen to me… He is too good… Well. I understand everything and everybody, and I excuse everybody for the evil thoughts you might have had about me. You now know. And now we love one another as good companions, and we do everything for His love and His glory » and he points at Jesus Who is walking farther away in a sunny alley speaking to Lazarus, who listens to Him smiling ecstatically.

The apostles go away towards Simon's house. Jesus instead comes closer with His friend. I listen to them.

Lazarus says: « Yes. I had understood that there was some great purpose, certainly a good one, in letting me die. I thought it was to spare me the sight of their persecution against You. And, You know whether I am telling the truth, I was glad to die so that I would not see it. It embitters me. It upsets me. See, Master. I have forgiven those who are the chiefs of our people many things. I had to forgive up to my last days… Helkai… But death and resurrection have cancelled all previous things. Why remember their last efforts to grieve me? I have forgiven Mary everything. She seems to doubt it. And more than that, I do not know why, since I came to life again she has taken an attitude that is so… I do not know how to define it. She is so mild and submissive, which is so strange with my Mary… Not even during the first days when she came here, after being redeemed by You, was she like that… Perhaps You know something and You can tell me, because Mary tells You everything… Do You know whether those who came here have reproached her too severely? I have always tried to weaken the memory of her fault when I saw her engrossed in the thought of her past, in order to alleviate her suffering. She cannot set her mind at rest over it. She

seems so… above what might be dejection. Some people may even think that she does not show much regret… But I understand… I know. Everything makes one expiate. I think she does a great deal of penance, of all kinds. I would not be surprised if she wore a cilice under her dresses and if her flesh were familiar to the blows of the scourge… But the brotherly love I have for her and that aims at supporting her by laying a veil between past and present, is not shared by anybody else… Do you know, by any chance, whether she was ill-treated by someone who is not capable of forgiving… and who needs to be forgiven? »

« I do not know, Lazarus. Mary has not mentioned it to Me. She only told Me that she suffered very much on hearing the Pharisees insinuate that I was not the Messiah because I was not curing you or raising you from the dead. »

« And… has she not said anything to You about me? You know… I was suffering so much… I remember that my mother in her last hours revealed things that had escaped Martha's notice and mine. It was as if the depths of her soul and of her past surfaced again with the last agitations of her heart. I hope that… My heart has suffered so much because of Mary… and it has striven in every way not to give her the sensation of what I suffered because of her… I would not like to have struck her now that she is good, whilst out of brotherly love first, and then for Your sake, I never struck her in infamous days when she was a disgrace. What did she say to You about me, Master? »

« Her grief for having had too short a time to give you her holy love as your sister and fellow-disciple. Your loss made her measure the extent of the treasures of love that she had crushed under her feet once… and now she is happy to be able to give all the love that she wishes to give you, to tell you that you are her holy beloved brother. »

« Ah! that is it! I realised that! I am glad of that. But I was afraid I might have offended her… Since yesterday I have been thinking over and over again… I have been trying to remember… but I cannot… »

« But why do you want to remember? There is your future in front of you. Your past was left in the sepulchre. Nay, it was not even left there. It was burnt with the funeral bandages. But if it serves to give you peace, I will tell you your last words to your sisters. To Mary in particular. You said that it was because of Mary that I came and I come here, because Mary knows how to love more than anybody else. That is true. You said that she has loved you more than all the others who have loved you. That is also true, because she has loved you renovating herself for God's sake and for yours. You said to her, and quite rightly, that a whole life of delights would not have given you the joy that you received through her. And you

blessed your sisters as a patriarch used to bless his dearest creatures. You equally blessed Martha, whom you called your peace; and Mary, whom you called your joy. Are you happy now? »

« Yes, Master, my mind is at peace now. »

« Then, as peace gives mercy, forgive also the chiefs of the people who are persecuting Me. Because that is what you wanted to say: that you can forgive everything, except the evil they do Me. »

« It is so, Master. »

« No, Lazarus, I forgive them. You must forgive them if you want to be like Me. »

« Oh! Like You! I cannot! I am only a man! »

« The man was left down there. The man! Your spirit… You know what happens at the death of a man… »

« No, Lord. I remember nothing of what happened to me » interrupts Lazarus vehemently.

Jesus smiles and replies: « I was not referring to your personal knowledge, to your particular experience. I was speaking of what every believer knows will happen to him when he dies. »

« Ah! The particular Judgement. I know. I believe. The soul presents itself to God, and God judges it. »

« It is so. And the judgement of God is just and inviolable. And it has infinite value. If the soul is judged mortally guilty it becomes a damned soul. If it is lightly guilty it is sent to Purgatory. If it is just it goes to the peace of Limbo awaiting Me to open the gates of Heaven. So I called your soul back after it had been judged by God. If you had been damned I could not have called you back to life, because by doing so I would have cancelled My Father's judgement. For damned souls no further changes are possible. They are judged for ever. So you belonged to the number of those who were not damned. So you either belonged to the class of the blessed souls, or to the class of those who will be blessed after being purified. But consider this, My dear friend. If the sincere will of repentance that man can have while being still a man, that is, body and soul, is valid as purification; if the symbolical rite of baptism in water, that one wants out of spirit of contrition to be cleansed of the foulness contracted in the world and because of one's flesh, has the value of purification for us Hebrews; what value will repentance have, a more real and perfect repentance, a much more perfect repentance of a soul freed from the body, aware of what God is, enlightened on the gravity of its errors, enlightened on the extent of the joy that had moved away for hours, for years, for ages: the joy of the peace of Limbo that will soon be the joy of the achieved possession of God: the double, treble purification of perfect repentance, of perfect love, of the bath in the ardour of the flames lit by the love of God and by the love of spirits, in which and by which the spirits are stripped of all impurity and emerge as beautiful as seraphim, crowned with

what does not even crown seraphim: their earthly and ultra-earthly martyrdom against vices and for the sake of love? What will it be? Tell Me, My dear friend. »

« Well… I do not know… perfection. Better still… a new creation. »

« There you are: you have said the right word. The soul becomes as if it were created again. It becomes like the soul of an infant. It is new. The past no longer exists. Its past of man. When the original Sin falls, the soul without stain and the shadow of stain, will be super-created and worthy of Paradise. I called back your soul that had been re-created through your willing attachment to Good, through the expiation of pain and death, and through your perfect repentance and your perfect love, achieved beyond death. So your soul is as innocent as the soul of a baby a few hours old. And if you are a new-born baby, why do you want to put on your spiritual childhood the heavy cumbersome clothes of an adult? The cheerful spirit of a child has wings, not chains. They imitate Me quite easily as they have not yet assumed any personality. They become like Me, because My figure and My doctrine can be impressed on their souls devoid of all traces without any confusion of lines. Their souls are free from human memories, from resentment, from prejudice. There is nothing in them, so I can be there, perfect and absolute as I am in Heaven. You, who are born again, a new-born, because in your old flesh the driving power is new, clean, without past and without traces of what it was, you, who have come back to serve Me, and only for that purpose, you must be as I am, more than anybody else. Look at Me. Look at Me carefully. Look at yourself in Me, and mirror Me in yourself. Two mirrors that look at each other to reflect in each other the figure of what they love. You are a man and a child. A man by age, a child by the purity of your heart. You have the advantage over children of being already acquainted with Good and Evil, and of choosing Good even before your Baptism in the fire of love. Well, I say to you, to the man whose spirit has been cleansed by the purification received: "Be as perfect as our Father in Heaven is perfect and as I am. Be perfect, that is, be like Me Who have loved you so much as to go against all the laws of life and death, of heaven and the earth, in order to have once again on the Earth a servant of God and a true friend of Mine, and a blessed soul, a great blessed soul in Heaven". I say that to everybody: "Be perfect". And they, the majority, do not have the heart that you had, worthy of the miracle, worthy of being used as an instrument to glorify God in His Son. And they do not have your debt of love with God… I can say that, I can exact it from you. And first of all I exact it by asking you to bear no grudge on those who offended you and now offend Me. Forgive, Lazarus, forgive. You have been immersed in the burning flames of love. You must be "love", so that you may no longer know anything but the embrace of God. »

« And by doing so shall I fulfil the mission for which You have raised me from the dead? »

« By doing so you will fulfil it. »

« That is enough, Lord. I need not ask or know more. It was my dream to serve You. If I served You by doing nothing, as a sick man and a dead body, and if I shall be able to serve You by doing much, as a man who has recovered, my dream has come true and I do not ask for anything else. May You be blessed, my Jesus, Lord and Master! And may He Who sent You be blessed with You. »

« May the Almighty Lord God be always blessed. »

They go towards the house stopping now and again to watch the reawakening of trees and Jesus, tall as He is, lifts one arm and picks a little bunch of flowers from an almond-tree that is getting warm in the sun, against the southern wall of the house.

Mary comes out and sees them and she approaches them to hear what Jesus is saying: « See, Lazarus? Also to these flowers the Lord said: "Come out". And they obeyed to serve the Lord. »

« What a mystery germination is! It seems impossible for such fragile petals and such tender stems to sprout from a hard trunk or hard seeds and to change into fruit or plants. Is it wrong, Master, to say that the lymph or the germ is like the soul of the plant or of the seed? »

« It is not wrong because it is the vital part. It is not eternal in them, but was created for each species on the first day that plants and cereals existed. In man it is eternal, like its Creator, created each time a new man is conceived. But matter is alive through it. That is why I say that only through his soul man is alive. And he does not live only here. But also in the beyond. He lives because of his soul. We Hebrews do not draw designs on sepulchres as the Gentiles do. But if we did, we should not design an extinguished torch, an empty sand-glass or any other item symbolising the end, but the seed that is thrown into the furrow and grows into an ear. Because it is the death of the body that frees the soul from the bark and makes it fructify in the flower-beds of God. The seed. The vital spark that God put into our dust and becomes an ear if through our good will and also through sorrow we can fertilise the clod that encloses it. The seed. The symbol of life that lasts for ever… But Maximinus is calling you… »

« I will go, Master. Some of the stewards have probably come. Everything came to a standstill these last months. They are now making haste to show me their accounts… »

« That you approve in advance because you are a good master. »

« And because they are good servants. »

« A good master makes servants good. »

« So I shall certainly become a good servant because I have You as a perfect Master » and he goes away smiling, walking nimbly, so

different from the poor Lazarus as he had been for years.

Mary remains with Jesus.

« And what about you, Mary, will you become a good servant of your Lord? »

« You only know, Rabboni. I… only know that I was a big sinner. »

Jesus smiles: « Have you seen Lazarus? He, too, was seriously ill, and yet do you not think that he is quite well? »

« It is so, Rabboni. You have cured him. What You do is always complete. Lazarus has never been so strong and cheerful as he has been since he came out of the sepulchre. »

« You are right, Mary. What I do is always complete. Thus also your redemption is complete because I worked it. »

« That is true, my beloved Saviour and Redeemer, my King and God. It is true. And, if You want it, I also shall be a good servant of my Lord. As for me, I want it, Lord. I do not know whether you do. »

« I want it, Mary. A good servant of Mine. Today more than yesterday. Tomorrow more than today. Until I will say to you: "Enough, Mary. It is time for you to rest". »

« Agreed, Lord. I would like You to call me, then. As You called my brother out of the sepulchre. Oh! call me out of this life! »

« No, not out of this life. I will call you to the Life, to the true Life I will call you out of the sepulchre that is the flesh and the Earth. I will call you to the wedding of your soul with your Lord. »

« My wedding! You love virgins, Lord… »

« I love those who love Me, Mary. »

« You are divinely good, Rabboni! That is why I could not set my mind at rest when I heard people say that You were bad because You were not coming. Everything seemed to be collapsing around me. How hard it was to say to myself: "No. You must not accept this evidence. What seems to you to be obvious is only a dream. The real fact is the power, the goodness, the divinity of your Lord". Ah! How much I suffered! So much grief for Lazarus' death and for his words… Did he say anything to You? Does he not remember? Tell me the truth… »

« I never lie, Mary. He is afraid that he may have spoken and said what had grieved his life. But I reassured him, without lying, and he is now tranquil. »

« Thank You, Lord. Those words… have done me good. Yes. Just like the cure of a doctor who lays bare the roots of a disease and burns them. They finished destroying the old Mary. I still had too high an opinion of myself. Now… I measure the bottom of my abjection and I know that I must go a long way to climb out of it. But I will do it, if You help me. »

« I will help you, Mary. I will help you also when I have gone away. »

« How, my Lord? »

« By increasing Your love in an immeasurable way. There is not other way for you. »

« Too mild when compared with what I have to expiate! Everybody is saved through love. Everybody obtains Heaven. But what is sufficient for the pure, the just, is not sufficient for the great sinner. »

« There is no other way for you, Mary. Because, whatever way you may take, it will still be love. Love if you help people in My name. Love if you evangelize. Love if you live in isolation. Love if you martyrise yourself. Love if you will make people martyrise you. You can but love, Mary. It is your nature. Flames can but burn whether they creep on the ground, burning straw, or they arise like a bright embrace around a trunk, a house or an altar to ascend towards the sky. Everyone has his nature. The wisdom of the masters of the spirit rests in the ability to exploit the inclinations of men directing them along the way where they can develop profitably. Such a law exists also among plants and animals and it would be silly to pretend that a fruit-tree should yield flowers only, or should bear other fruit than its natural ones, or that an animal should fulfil the functions typical of another species. Could you pretend that a bee, destined to make honey, should become a little bird that sings among the leafy branches of a hedge? Or that this little branch of an almond-tree that I am holding in My hands, with all the tree from which I picked it, instead of yielding almonds should exude sweet-smelling resins from its bark? A bee works, a bird sings, an almond-tree bears fruit, a resiniferous plant secretes resins. And each fulfils its task. Souls do the same. Your task is to love. »

« Then inflame me, Lord. Grant me it as a grace. »

« Is the power of love that you possess not sufficient for you? »

« It's too little, Lord. It could have served to love men. Not to love You Who are the infinite Lord. »

« And just because I am such, a limitless love would be required… »

« Yes, my Lord. That is what I want: that You give me a limitless love. »

« Mary, the Most High Who knows what love is, said to man: "You shall love Me with all your strength". He does not exact more than that. Because He is aware that it is already a martyrdom to love with all one's strength… »

« It does not matter, my Lord. Give me an infinite love that I may love You as You deserve to be loved, that I may love You as I have not loved anybody else. »

« You are asking Me for a suffering that is like a fire that burns and consumes, Mary. It burns and consumes slowly… Think about it. »

« I have been thinking about it for such a long time, my Lord. But I dared not ask You. Now I know how much You love me. Just now I am aware of how much You love me and I dare to ask You. Give me that infinite love, Lord. »

Jesus looks at her. She is in front of Him, still thin after so many long hours of watch and so much grief, wearing a modest dress and with her hair arranged in a simple way, like a girl without malice, her pale face full of eagerness, her imploring eyes already shining with love, looking more like a seraph than a woman. She is really the contemplator asking for the martyrdom of absolute contemplation.

Jesus says one word only after looking at her carefully, as if He wanted to weigh her will: « Yes. »

« Ah! my Lord! What a grace to die out of love for You! » she says falling on her knees and kissing Jesus' feet.

« Stand up, Mary. Take these flowers. They are those of your spiritual wedding. Be as sweet as the fruit of the almond-tree, as pure as its flower and as bright as the oil that is extracted from its fruit, when it is lit, and as sweet smelling as this oil when sated with essences it is spread in banquets or on the heads of kings, scented with your virtues. Then you will really spread on your Lord the balm that He will appreciate infinitely. »

Mary takes the flowers but she does not stand up and in advance of her balms of love she kisses and sheds tears on the feet of her Master.

Lazarus joins them and says: « Master, there is a little boy who wants You. He had gone to Simon's house looking for You and found only John who brought him here. But he does not want to speak to anybody but You. »

« All right. Bring him here. I shall go under the jasmine pergola. »

Mary goes back into the house with Lazarus. Jesus goes under the pergola. Lazarus comes back holding by the hand the boy whom I saw in the house of Joseph of Sephoris. Jesus recognises him at once and greets him: « You, Martial! Peace be with you. How come you are here? »

« They have sent me to tell You something… » and he looks at Lazarus who understands and is about to go away.

« Stay, Lazarus. This is Lazarus, a friend of Mine. You can speak before him, My boy, because I have no other friend more faithful than he is. »

The boy is reassured. He says: « Joseph the Elder has sent me, because I live with him now, to tell You to go at once to Bethphage, to the house of Cleanthes. He must speak to You at once. But it must be at once. And he said that You are to come by Yourself. Because he must speak to You in all secrecy. »

« Master! What is happening? » asks Lazarus worriedly.

« I do not know, Lazarus. There is only one thing to do: to go there. Come with Me. »

« At once, Lord. We can go with the boy. »

« No, Lord. I am going alone. Joseph insisted on that. He said: "If you can do it properly and by yourself, I will love you as if I were your father", and I want to be loved as a son by Joseph. I am going away at once, and I will run. Come after I have gone. Hail, Lord. Hail, sir. »

« Peace to you, Martial. »

The boy runs away as swift as a swallow.

« Let us go, Lazarus. Bring Me My mantle. I will proceed because, as you can see, the little boy cannot open the gate, and he certainly does not wish to call anybody. »

Jesus walks fast towards the gate, Lazarus hastens towards the house. The former releases the iron lock of the gate for the boy, who runs away. The latter brings Jesus' mantle to Him and walks beside Him on the road towards Bethphage.

« I wonder what Joseph wants? If he sent a boy with so much secrecy… »

« A boy escapes the notice of anyone who may be watching » replies Jesus.

« Do You think that… do You suspect… Do You feel that You are in danger, Lord? »

« I am certain, My dear friend. »

« What? Even now? But You could not have given a greater proof!… »

« Hatred becomes more furious when urged by facts. »

« Oh! it's because of me, then! I have harmed You!… My grief is incomparable! » exclaims Lazarus who is deeply grieved.

« Not because of you. Do not be distressed without reason. You have been the means, but you must understand that the cause was the necessity to give the world the proof of My divine nature. If it had not been you, it would have been somebody else, because I had to prove to the world that I, being God, can do anything I want. And to bring back to life a body that has been dead for days and is already decomposed, can only be the work of God. »

« Ah! You want to comfort me. But my joy, all my joy has vanished… I am distressed, Lord. »

Jesus makes a gesture as if He wanted to say « Who knows! » and then they both become silent.

They walk fast. The distance between Bethany and Bethphage is a short one, and they soon arrive there.

Joseph is walking up and down the street at the beginning of the village. He has his back turned when Jesus and Lazarus come out of a path concealed by a hedge. Lazarus calls him.

« Oh! Peace to you. Come, Master. I waited for You here so that

I might see You at once, but let us go into the olive-grove. I do not want anybody to see us… »

He takes them behind the houses into a thick olive-grove that is a comfortable shelter where they can speak without being noticed, as the ruffled leafy branches of the trees conceal the slopes.

« Master, I sent the boy who is smart and obedient and very fond of me, because I had to speak to You but I was not to be seen. I came along the Kidron to get here… Master, You must go away, at once. The Sanhedrin has ordained Your arrest and the announcement will be read in the synagogues tomorrow. Whoever knows where You are, must denounce You. I need not tell you, Lazarus, that your house will be the first one to be watched. I came out of the Temple at the sixth hour and I acted at once, because while they were discussing I had already planned what to do. I went home and I took the boy. I came out through Herod's Gate on horseback, as if I were leaving the town. Then I crossed the Kidron and followed it. I left my mount at Gethsemane and I sent the boy who knew the way as he had already been to Bethany with me. Go away at once, Master. To a safe place. Do You know where to go? Have You got a place where to go? »

« But is it not enough for Him to go away from here? At most from Judaea? »

« It is not enough, Lazarus. They are furious. He must go where they do not go… »

« But they go everywhere, they do! You surely do not want the Master to leave Palestine!… » says Lazarus excitedly.

« Well! What can I tell you?! That's what the Sanhedrin wants… » « Because of me, is that right? Tell me! »

« H'm! Well… yes. Because of you that is, because everybody is being converted to Him, and they… they do not want that. »

« But it is a crime! It's a sacrilege It's… »

Jesus, pale but calm, lifts His hand imposing silence and He says: « Be silent, Lazarus. Everybody is doing his work. Everything is written. I thank you, Joseph, and I assure you that I will go away. Go, you may go, Joseph. So that your absence may not be noticed… May God bless you. I will get Lazarus to let you know where I am. Go. I bless you, Nicodemus and all righteous-hearted people. » He kisses him and they part. Through the olive-grove Jesus goes towards Bethany with Lazarus, while Joseph goes towards the town.

« What will You do, Master? » asks Lazarus who is anguished.

« I do not know. In a few days' time the women disciples will be coming with My Mother. I would have liked to wait for them… »

« With regard to that… I could receive them in Your name and then I would bring them to You. But, in the meantime, where are You going? I don't think You can go to Solomon's house… nor to any

of the well-known disciples. Tomorrow!… You must go away at once! »

« I have a place. But I would like to wait for My Mother. Her anguish would begin too early if She did not find Me… »

« Where would You go, Master? »

« To Ephraim. »

« To Samaria? »

« To Samaria. The Samaritans are less Samaritans than many people and they love Me. Ephraim is at the border… »

« Oh! and to spite the Judaeans they honour and defend You! But… wait! Your Mother will either come via Samaria or along the Jordan. I will go with some servants along one route, Maximinus with other servants along the other, and either one or the other will find Her. We will come back only when we meet them. You know that no one in Lazarus' house will betray You. In the meantime You will go to Ephraim. At once. Ah! it was my destiny that I should not enjoy Your company! But I will come. Across the Adummim mountains. I am sound now. I can do what I like. Nay! Yes. I will make them believe that I am going to Ptolemais via Samaria to sail to Antioch. Everybody knows that I own land there… My sisters will remain at Bethany… You… Yes. I will now have two carts equipped for You and you can all go to Jericho in them. Then tomorrow at dawn you will resume the journey on foot. Oh! Master! My Master! Take care of Yourself! » After the excitement of the first moment Lazarus becomes sad and weeps.

Jesus sighs, but does not say anything. What can He say?…

They are now in Simon's house. They part. Jesus goes into the house. The apostles, who are surprised that the Master had gone away without saying anything, press round Him as He says: « Take your garments. Prepare your bags. We must depart from here at once. Be quick. And join Me in Lazarus' house. »

« Also the clothes that are damp? Can we not get them when we come back? » asks Thomas.

« We shall not come back. Take everything. »

The apostles go away casting meaningful glances at one another.

Jesus goes to get His belongings in Lazarus' house and He says goodbye to the dismayed sisters…

The two carts are soon ready. Two heavy carts with tilts, drawn by strong horses. Jesus says goodbye to Lazarus, to Maximinus and to the servants who have rushed there. They get on the carts that are waiting at one of the gates at the rear of the house. The drivers urge on the horses and the journey begins along the same road by which Jesus had come a few days previously to raise Lazarus.

549. Going to Ephraim.

2nd January 1947.

In the fresh clear early dawn the fields around Nike's house are all green with new shoots of corn only a few centimetres high, as delicate in shade as very clear emeralds. The orchard, which is closer to the house and is still bare, looks even darker and more massive, compared with the delicate stems and with the paradisiac serenity of the airy sky. The white house is crowned in the early sunshine with the flights of doves.

Nike is already up and she is diligently ensuring that the departing persons have what may comfort them during their journey. First of all she dismisses Lazarus' two servants who were kept by her for that night and who, after taking some refreshment, go away trotting their horses. She then goes back into the kitchen where the maidservants are preparing milk and food on big fires. And from a large earthen pot she pours some oil into two smaller ones, and then some wine into two small wineskins. She urges a servant who is preparing loaves of bread as thin as buns to take them to the stone-oven that is ready. From large boards, on which cheese is desiccated in the warmth of the kitchen, she picks the best whole ones. She takes some honey and pours it slowly into some small vessels fitted with firm taps. She then makes up several bundles containing the foodstuffs, and one of them contains a whole kid or lamb that a servant takes off the spit on which it was roasted. Another contains apples as red as corals. In another there are edible olives. In a third one there are dried currants. There is one of peeled barley.

She is closing this last package when Jesus enters the kitchen and greets all the people present.

« Master, peace to You. Are You up already? »

« I should have been up earlier. But My disciples were so tired that I let them sleep on. What are you doing, Nike? »

« I am preparing… They will not be heavy, see? Twelve parcels. And I have taken into consideration the strength of the bearers. »

« And what about me? »

« Oh! Master! You already have Your burden… » and tears begin to shine in Nike's eyes.

« Let us go outside, Nike. We shall be able to speak in peace. »

They go out and they move away from the house.

« My heart is aching, Master… »

« I know. But it is necessary to be strong considering that you have not grieved Me… »

« Oh! Let that never happen! But I thought that I would be able to stay near You and that is why I came to Jerusalem. Otherwise I would have stayed here, where I own these fields… »

« Also Lazarus, Mary and Martha thought they would be able to

be with Me. And you can see!… »

« Yes, I can see. I am not going back to Jerusalem any more as You are not there. I shall be closer to You if I remain here and I shall be able to help You. »

« You have already given so much… »

« I have not given anything. I would like to be able to take my house wherever You go. But I will come, I will certainly come to see what You need. What You told me to do now is right. I shall stay here until they are convinced that You are not here. But later… »

« It is a long and difficult road for a woman, and it is not safe either. »

« Oh! I am not afraid. I am too old to be pleasant and attractive as a woman, and I do not carry treasures to be sought as a prey. Highwaymen are better than many people who consider themselves holy and instead are thieves and want to rob you of your peace and freedom… »

« Do not hate them, Nike. »

« That is more difficult for me than anything else. But I will try not to hate them for Your sake… I wept all night, Lord! »

« I heard you go to and fro in the house as indefatigable as a bee. And you seemed a mother anxious about her persecuted son… Do not weep. Guilty people must weep. Not you. God is good to His Messiah. In the most grievous hours He always makes Me find a motherly heart close to Me… »

« And what are You going to do about Your Mother? You told me that She was coming soon… »

« She will come to Ephraim… Lazarus is going to inform Her. Here is Simon of Jonah with My brothers… »

« Do they know? »

« Not yet, Nike. I will tell them when we are far away… »

« And when I come, I will tell You what happens here and in Jerusalem. »

They join the apostles who are coming out of the house one after the other looking for Jesus.

« Come, brothers. Take some food before departing. Everything is ready. »

« Nike did not sleep last night to provide for us. Thank the good disciple » says Jesus entering the large kitchen where on a refectory table - it is so long - there are cups full of milk steaming hot and sweet smelling buns just out of the oven. And Nike spreads butter and honey generously on them, saying that they are invigorating food for people who have to go on a long journey when the weather is still cold.

The meal is soon over. Nike in the meantime has made up the last parcels with the crisp fragrant bread just taken out of the oven. Each apostle takes his bundle that has been tied in such a way as to be

carried without much trouble.

It is time to go. Jesus greets and blesses. The apostles say goodbye. But Nike wants to go with them as far as the border of her fields and she then goes back slowly weeping in her veil, while Jesus with His apostles goes away along a secondary road pointed out to Him by Nike.

The country is still desert. The path runs through fields of new corn and bare vineyards. Thus there are no shepherds either, as they do not take their flocks into cultivated fields. The morning air is warmed a little by the sun. The first little flowers on the edges of the fields are shining like gems under the veil of dew brightened by sunshine. The birds are singing the first love songs. The good season is coming. Everything is beautiful and fresh. Everything is love… And Jesus is going into the exile that precedes His death brought about by hatred.

They apostles are silent. They are pensive. The sudden departure has disconcerted them. They were so certain that everything was settled by now! They are proceeding with their backs more curved than the weight of their bags and of Nike's provisions can bend them. They are bent by disappointment and by the ascertainment of what the world and men are.

Jesus instead, although He is not smiling, is neither sad nor dejected. He is walking with His head erect, ahead of everybody, without arrogance, but also without fear. He is proceeding like one who knows where to go and what to do. He walks courageously, like a hero, whom nothing shakes or frightens.

The secondary road joins with a main one, which Jesus takes going northwards. And the apostles follow Him, without speaking. As the road comes from Galilee and through the Decapolis and Samaria goes to Judaea, there are wayfarers on it, mostly caravans of merchants.

As time goes by the sun becomes pleasantly warmer and warmer, when Jesus leaves the main road to take another path that across corn fields goes towards the first hills.

The apostles cast glances at one another. Perhaps they begin to understand that they are not going towards Galilee along the road in the Jordan valley, but are instead going towards Samaria. But they remain silent.

When they arrive at the first woods on the hills, Jesus says: « Let us stop and rest while we take some food. The sun indicates that it is midday. »

They are near a torrent with little water in it as it has not rained for some time. But its little water is clear in the gravel-bed and its banks are spread with large stones that can be used as tables and seats. They sit down after, Jesus has blessed and offered the food and they eat in silence and as if they were lost in thought.

Jesus rouses them saying: « Are you not asking Me where we are going? Do your worries of the future make you dumb or do I no longer seem to you to be your Master? »

The Twelve raise their heads: twelve distressed or at least bewildered faces that turn towards the tranquil face of Jesus and one only « Oh! » is exclaimed by twelve mouths. And the exclamation is followed by the reply of Peter who speaks on behalf of everybody: « Master, You know that we always consider You our Master. But since yesterday we are like people who have received hard blows on their heads. And everything seems a dream to us. And although we see and know that it is You, You seem to be already… far away. We somehow have had this impression since You spoke to Your Father before calling Lazarus, and since You brought him out of his sepulchre, tied as he was, only by means of Your will, and You made him live only by the strength of Your power. You almost frighten us. I am speaking of myself… but I think it is the same for everybody… And now… We… This departure… so sudden and so mysterious! »

« Have you a double fear? Do you feel that the danger is more impending? Do you not have, do you feel that you do not have the strength to face and overcome the last trials? Speak without restraint. We are still in Judaea. We are near the low roads that take one to Galilee. Everyone may go if he wishes, and you can go in time to avoid being hated by the Sanhedrin… »

The apostles are roused by these words. Those who were almost lying on the grass warmed by the sun, sit up. Those who were sitting, stand up.

Jesus goes on: « Because as from today I am the legally Persecuted One. Bear that in mind. Just now they are about to proclaim in the five hundred and more synagogues in Jerusalem and in those of the towns that have received the ban issued yesterday at the sixth hour, that I am the great sinner, and that whoever knows where I am must denounce Me to the Sanhedrin so that I may be captured… »

The apostles shout as if they already saw Him captured. John clings to His neck moaning: « Ah! I have always foreseen that! » and he sobs loud. Some curse the Sanhedrin, some invoke divine justice, some weep, some become petrified.

« Be silent and listen. I have never deceived you. I have always told you the truth. When possible I defended and protected you. Your presence near Me has been as pleasant as that of sons. I did not even hide My last hour… My dangers… My passion from you. But those were problems that concerned Me exclusively. Now your dangers, your safety, and that of your families are to be taken into consideration. I ask you to do that. With absolute freedom. Do not consider them in the light of your love for Me, or of your election made by Me. As I am releasing you from every obligation towards

God and His Christ, just imagine that we have met here, now, for this first time and that, after listening to Me, you decide whether it is convenient for you or not to follow the Unknown man whose words have moved you. Imagine that you hear and see Me for the first time and that I say to you: "Bear in mind that I am persecuted and hated and that whoever loves Me is persecuted and hated as I am, in his person, his interests, his affections. Remember that persecution may end up with death and the confiscation of the family property". Think it over and decide. I will love you just the same if you say to me: "Master, I cannot come with You any more". Are you becoming sad? No, you must not. We are good friends who decide with peace and love what is to be done, with reciprocal compassion. I cannot let you face the future without making you ponder over it. I do not disesteem you. I love you all. I am the Master. It is obvious that the Master should know His disciples. I am the Shepherd and it is obvious that a shepherd should know his lambs. I know that My disciples, if they had to face a test without being sufficiently prepared not only in the wisdom coming from their Master, and which is therefore good and perfect, but also in their own ponderation of the situation, might fail, or at least they would not triumph like athletes in a stadium. To measure oneself and to evaluate circumstances is always a wise rule. In little and great things. I, the Shepherd, must say to My lambs: "Here, I am now going to enter a place of wolves and butchers. Have you enough strength to go among them?". I could also tell you now which of you will not have the strength to withstand the trial, although I can assure and reassure you that none of you will fall at the hands of the executioners who will sacrifice the Lamb of God. My capture is of such weight that it will suffice them… So I say to you: "Think it over". Once I said to you: "Be not afraid of those who kill". I said: "He who, having laid his hand on the plough, looks back to consider the past and what he may lose or acquire, is not fit for My mission". But they were rules to give you the measure of what it meant to be disciples, and rules for the future that will take place when I am no longer the Master, but My believers are the masters. They served to strengthen your souls. But even such strength, which is undeniable you have acquired, as compared with the nonentities you were - I am referring to your spirits - is still too little with respect to the greatness of the trial. Oh! do not think in the secrecy of your hearts: "The Master is scandalised at us!". I am not scandalised. On the contrary I tell you that you must not be scandalised, neither now nor in the future, at your own weakness. In all future times there will always be people among the members of My Church, both lambs and-shepherds, who will be inferior to the greatness of their mission. There will be periods when the idol shepherds and the idol believers are more numerous than the true shepherds

and the true believers. Periods of eclipse of the spirit of faith of the world. But an eclipse is not the death of a star. It is only a temporary more or less partial obscuring of a star. Afterwards its beauty reappears and it looks brighter. The same will happen to My Fold. I say to you: "Ponder over it". I say so to you as your Master, Shepherd and Friend. I leave you completely free to discuss the matter among yourselves. I am going over there, to that thicket, to pray. One by one will come and tell Me what you have decided. And I will bless your sincere honesty, whatever it may be. And I will love you for what you have given Me so far. Goodbye. » He stands up and goes away.

The apostles are terrified, puzzled, moved. At first they cannot even speak. Then Peter is the first to say: « May hell swallow me if I want to leave Him! I am sure of myself. Even if all the demons in Gehenna led by Leviathan should come against me, I would not move away from Him out of fear! »

« Neither would I. Am I to be inferior to my daughters? » says Philip.

« I am sure that they will do Him no harm. The members of the Sanhedrin threaten but they do so to convince themselves that the Sanhedrin still exists. They know very well that they have no power if Rome is not agreeable. Their sentences! It's Rome that judges! » says the Iscariot boldly.

« But the Sanhedrin is still concerned with religious matters » remarks Andrew.

« Are you afraid perhaps, brother? Bear in mind that there have never been cowards in our family » says Peter threateningly, as he feels that his heart is overflowing with warlike spirit.

« I am not afraid and I hope I shall be able to prove it. I am only telling Judas what I think. »

« You are right. But the mistake of the Sanhedrin consists in wishing to make use of a political weapon, as they do not wish to say or to be told that they have lifted their hands against the Christ. I know that for certain. They would like, that is, they would have liked to make Jesus commit sin and thus make Him contemptible to the crowds. But with regard to killing Him! Ehi! No. They are afraid! Their fright has no human comparison, because their souls are frightened. They do know that He is the Messiah! They know that very well. So much so that they realise that they are done for, because the new time is coming. And they want to overthrow Him. But will they overthrow Him!? No. That is why they are seeking a political reason so that the Proconsul, that is Rome, should overthrow Him. But the Christ does no harm to Rome, and Rome will do no harm to Him, and the members of the Sanhedrin are howling in vain. »

« So are you staying with Him? »

« Of course. More than anybody else! »

« I have nothing to lose or to gain by staying or going away. I have only to love Him. And I will do that » says the Zealot.

« I recognise Him as the Messiah and consequently I will follow Him » says Nathanael.

« So will I. I have believed Him to be the Messiah since John the Baptist pointed Him out to me as such » says James of Zebedee.

« We are His brothers. To our faith we add the love of kinship. Is that right, James? » says Thaddeus.

« He has been my sun for years and I follow His course. If He falls into the abyss dug by His enemies, I will follow Him » replies James of Alphaeus.

« And what about me? Can I forget that He has redeemed me? » asks Matthew.

« My father would curse me seven times seven if I should leave Him. In any case, even if it were only for Mary's sake, I would never part from Jesus » says Thomas.

John does not speak. His head is lowered, he looks dejected. The others mistake his attitude for weakness and many ask him.

« And what about you? Are you the only one who wants to go away? »

John looks up, so pure also in his attitude and eyes, and fixing his limpid blue eyes on those who are questioning him he says: « I was praying for all of us. Because we want to say and do things and we rely on ourselves, and by doing so we do not realise that we challenge the words of the Master. If He says that we are not prepared, it means that we are not. If we have not become prepared in three years, we shall not become so in few months… »

« What are you saying? In few months? What do you know? Are you a prophet, perhaps? » They assail him with questions, almost reproaching him.

« I know nothing. »

« So? What do you know? Has He perhaps told you? You always know His secrets… » says Judas of Kerioth with envy.

« Do not hate me, my friend, if I understand that the fine weather is over. When will it be? I do not know. I know that it will happen. He says so. How many times has He said so! We do not want to believe it. But the hatred of the others confirms His words… So I pray. Because there is nothing else to be done. I pray God to make us strong. Do you not remember, Judas, when He told us that He had prayed His Father to have strength against temptations? All strength comes from God. I imitate my Master, as is right to do… »

« Well, are you staying or not? » asks Peter.

« And where do you want me to go if I do not stay with Him Who is my life and welfare? But as I am a poor boy, the most miserable of all, I ask everything of God, the Father -of Jesus and ours. »

« That is settled. So we are all staying! Let us go to Him. As He is certainly sad, our loyalty will make Him happy » says Peter.

Jesus is prostrated in prayer. With His face on the ground, in the grass, He is certainly imploring His Father, but at the shuffling of feet He stands up and looks at His apostles. He looks at them with a rather sad gravity.

« Be happy, Master. None of us are going to leave You » says Peter.

« You have decided too soon and… »

« Hours or ages will not change our minds » says Peter.

« Neither will threats change our love » proclaims the Iscariot.

Jesus stops looking at them as a group and He gazes at them one by one. A long look which everyone withstands fearlessly. His eyes delay in particular on the Iscariot, who looks at Him more resolutely than the others. He opens His arms in a gesture of resignation and He says: « Let us go. You, all of you, have signed your destiny. » He goes back to the place where He was, He picks up His bag and says: « Let us take the road to Ephraim, the one they pointed out to us. »

« To Samaria?! » They are utterly astonished.

« To Samaria. Or, at least, to its borders. John also went to live there until the hour fixed for his preaching the Christ. »

« But that did not save him! » objects James of Zebedee.

« I am not trying to save Myself, but to save. And I will save at the appointed hour. The persecuted Shepherd is going to the most unfortunate sheep. So that, forlorn as they are, they may have their share of wisdom to prepare them for the new time. »

He strides away, after the stop that has served both to rest and to respect the Sabbath, as He wishes to arrive before the paths become impassable at night.

When they arrive at the little torrent that flows from Ephraim towards the Jordan, Jesus calls Peter and Nathanael and gives them a bag saying: « Go ahead and look for Mary of Jacob. I remember that Malachi told Me that she is the poorest woman in the village, in spite of her large house, now that she has no sons and daughters in it. We shall stay with her. Give her plenty money so that she may give us hospitality without applying to many people. You know where the house is. It is the large one, shaded by four pomegranade trees, near the bridge across the torrent. »

« We know, Master. We will do as You say. » They go away quickly and Jesus follows them slowly with the others.

From the dell, in the middle of which the torrent flows, one can see the white houses of the village in the late daylight and in the early moonlight. There is not a soul about when they arrive at the house that is all white in the moonlight. Only the torrent can be heard in the silence of the night. Turning round and looking at the horizon, one can see a large stretch of the starry sky bend over a

large expanse of ground that slopes downwards towards the desert plain that stretches as far as the Jordan. A solemn peace reigns over the Earth.

They knock at the door. Peter opens it. « Everything is settled, Lord. The old woman wept when we gave her the money. She had not a coin left. I said to her: "Do not weep, woman. There is no more pain where Jesus of Nazareth is". She replied to me: "I know. I have suffered all my life and just now I was at the very limit of endurance. But Heaven opened on the evening of my life and brought me the Star of Jacob to give me peace". She is now preparing the rooms that have been closed for such a long time. H'm! There isn't very much. But the woman appears to be very good. Here she is! Woman! The Rabbi is here! »

A very thin old woman comes forward, her meek eyes full of melancholy. She stops perplexed a few steps from Jesus. She feels uneasy.

« Peace to you, woman. I shall not give you much trouble. »

« I wish You could walk on my heart, to make it more pleasant for You to enter my poor house. Come in, Lord, and may God enter with You. » She has recovered her breath and taken heart in the light of Jesus' glance.

They all go in and close the door. The house is as large as a hotel and as empty as a desert. Only the kitchen looks cheerful because of a bright fire in the fireplace in the middle of the room.

Bartholomew, who was tending the fire, turns round and says smiling: « Console the woman, Master. She is sad because she cannot honour You. »

« Your heart is enough for Me, woman. Do not worry about anything. We will provide tomorrow. I am poor as well. Bring her our provisions. Poor people share their bread and salt without shame, but with brotherly love. Filial love in your case, woman. Because you could be My mother. And I honour you as such… »

The woman weeps the silent tears of an old distressed soul, wiping her tears with her veil and she whispers: « I had three sons and seven daughters. One of the sons was carried away by the torrent and another one by a disease. The third one has left me. Five of the girls caught the same disease as their father had and died, the sixth died of childbirth and the seventh… What death did not do, sin did. In my old age I am not honoured by my children and it makes me so… In the village they are good to me… that is, to the poor woman. You are kind to the mother… »

« I have a mother, too. And in every woman who is a mother I honour Her. But do not weep. God is good. Have faith, and the children who are still left may come back to you again. The others are in peace… »

« I think it is a punishment, because I come from this place… »

« Have faith. God is more just than men »

The apostles who had gone to their rooms with Peter come back. They bring provisions. They warm up on the fire the little lamb that Nike had roasted. They put it on the table. Jesus offers and blesses them and He wants the little old woman to sit at the table with them, instead of sitting in her little corner, eating the poor chicory of her supper.

The exile at the border of Judaea has begun

550. The First Day at Ephraim.

8th January 1947.

« Peace to You, Master » say Peter and James of Zebedee coming back home laden with pitchers full of water.

« Peace to you. Where are you coming from? »

« From the stream. We went to get some water, and we shall go for more, to keep the house clean. Considering that we are stopping… And it is not fair that the old woman should work for us. She is in the other room where she lit a fire to warm the water. My brother went to the wood to get some firewood. It has not rained for some time and it burns like heath » explains James of Zebedee.

« Of course. But the trouble is that, although it was hardly daybreak, they saw us both at the stream and in the wood. And I went to the stream to avoid going to the fountain… » says Peter.

« Why, Simon of Jonah? »

« Because there are always people at the fountain, and they might have recognised us and come here… »

While they are speaking, Alphaeus' two sons, Judas of Kerioth and Thomas have come into the long corridor that divides the house, and thus they can hear Peter's last words and Jesus' reply: « What might not have happened at daybreak today, would certainly have happened later, tomorrow at the latest, because we are staying here… »

« Here? But… I thought we were stopping only to rest… » many of them say.

« We are not stopping to rest. But to stay. We shall depart from here only to go back to Jerusalem for Passover. »

« Oh! I thought that when You referred to the place of wolves and butchers, You meant this region through which You wanted to pass, as You did in the past, to go to other places without taking the roads frequented by Judaeans and Pharisees… » says Philip who has just arrived, and others say: « I also thought that. »

« You have misunderstood. This is not the place of wolves and butchers, although real wolves hide in its mountains. But I am not referring to animals… »

« Oh! that was quite clear! » exclaims Judas of Kerioth somewhat

ironically. « As You refer to Yourself as the Lamb, one understands that the wolves are men. We are not completely stupid. »

« No. You are not stupid but in what you do not want to understand. That is, in what concerns My nature and mission, and the grief you give Me by not working assiduously at preparing your future. It is for your own good that I speak and teach you by means of deeds and words. But you reject what upsets your human nature through presage of sorrows or what exacts efforts against your egos. Listen to Me before strangers come here. I will now divide you into two groups of five apostles and guided by the head of each group you will go across the nearby countryside, as you did when I sent you in the early days. Remember what I told you then and put it into practice. The only exception is that now you will pass through villages announcing also to Samaritans that the day of the Lord is close at hand, so that they may be ready when it comes, and it may be easier for you to convert them to the Only God. Be full of charity and wisdom and devoid of prejudice. You can see, and you will realise this even more, that we are granted here what we are denied in other places. So be kind to these people who, although innocent, are expiating the sins of their ancestors. Peter will be at the head of Judas of Alphaeus, Thomas, Philip and Matthew. James of Alphaeus will be the guide of Andrew, Bartholomew, Simon Zealot and James of Zebedee. Judas of Kerioth and John will stay with Me. That will apply as from tomorrow. Today we shall rest making the necessary preparations for future days. We shall spend the Sabbath together. So you must be here before the Sabbath, in order to leave the day after it. It will be a day of love for us, after loving our neighbour in the flock that has left the fold of the Father. Go now and attend to your tasks. »

He remains alone and withdraws to a room at the end of the corridor.

The house resounds with steps and voices, although they are all in their rooms and no one can be seen but the old woman who goes up and down the corridor several times, attending to her household duties, one of which is certainly baking bread because her hair is spread with flour and her hands are covered with dough.

After some time Jesus comes out and goes up to the terrace of the house. He walks up and down meditating up there and now and again He looks at the view around Him.

He is joined by Peter and Judas of Kerioth who do not look very cheerful. Perhaps it is painful for Peter to part from Jesus. And perhaps it is painful for the Iscariot not to be able to do so and show off in the villages. They certainly look very thoughtful when they go up to the terrace.

« Come here. Look what a beautiful view you can see from here. » And He points at the varied landscape. To north-west high woody

mountains stretching like a spine from north to south. One of them behind Ephraim is a real giant overlooking the others. To northeast and south-east there are mild undulating hills. The village is in a green valley with distant flat backgrounds between the two higher and lower chains, that from the central part of the region slope down to the Jordan plain. Through a fissure in the lower mountains it is possible to see the green plain beyond which flows the blue Jordan. At the height of springtime this must be a beautiful place, all green and fertile. At present the dark shades of vineyards and orchards interrupt the green of fields of cereals, the tender stems of which sprout from the clods of earth, and the verdant pastures nourished by the rich soil.

If what lies beyond Ephraim is called a desert by John, it means that the desert of Judaea was a very mild one, at least in this area, or at least it was a desert only because it was devoid of villages, all covered with woods and pastures among cheerfully gurgling streams, quite different from the land near the Dead Sea, an arid land that can rightly be called a « desert », as it is devoid of vegetation, with the exception of the low thorny twisted shrubs that grow in deserts among scattered stones and the sand rich in salt. But this pleasant desert, which lies beyond Ephraim, is widely adorned with vineyards, olive-groves and orchards, and the almond-trees are now smiling at the sun, scattered here and there like white-pink tufts, on the slopes that will soon be covered with the festoons of the new vine-shoots.

« I almost seem to be in my own town » says Judas.

« It looks also like Juttah. The only difference it that there the torrent is down in the plain and the town up on the hill. Here instead the town seems to be in a wide valley with the river in the middle. A country rich in vines! It must be lovely and very profitable, for owners, to own such land » remarks Peter.

« It is written: "May his land be blessed by Yahweh with the fruit of the sky and with dews, with the springs gushing from the abyss, with the fruit blessed by the sun and the moon, with the fruit from the tops of the ancient mountains, with the fruit of the eternal hills and with plentiful crops of the land". And on those words of the Pentateuch they base their proud obstinacy in considering themselves superior. It is so. Even the word of God and the gifts of God, if they descend into hearts full of pride, become the cause of ruin. Not through their own fault, but because of the pride that adulterates their good juice » says Jesus.

« Of course. And of just Joseph they have kept only the fury of a bull and the neck of a rhinoceros. I do not like to stay here. Why do You not let me go with the others? » says the Iscariot.

« Do you not like to stay with Me? » asks Jesus, Who stops looking at the landscape and turns round to look at Judas.

« I do love to be with You, but not with the people of Ephraim. »

« What a very fine excuse! And what about us then? As we shall be going through Samaria and the Decapolis - because we shall be able to go only to these places in the time prescribed between one Sabbath and the next one - are we perhaps going among saints? » says Peter, reproaching Judas who does not reply.

« What does it matter to you who is near you, if you can love everything through Me? Love Me in your neighbour, and all places will be alike as far as you are concerned » says Jesus calmly.

Judas does not reply to Him either.

« Just think of it! I have to go away… whereas I would stay here so willingly. After all… considering what I can do. At least appoint Philip or Your brother head of the group, Master. I… as long as I have to say: let us do this, let us go to that place, I can still manage. But if I have to speak!… I spoil everything. »

« Obedience will make you do everything well. What you do will please Me. »

« In that case… if it pleases You, it will please me. It is enough for me to make You happy. But there they are! I told You! Half of the town is coming… Look! The head of the synagogue… the notables… their women… the children and the people!… »

« Let us go down and meet them » says Jesus and He hastens down the staircase calling the apostles so that they may leave the house with Him.

The inhabitants of Ephraim are coming forward with signs of the deepest respect, and after the customary salutations, one of them, perhaps the head of the synagogue, speaks on behalf of everybody: « May the Most High be blessed for this day, and blessed be His Prophet Who has come to us because He loves all men in the name of the Most High God. May You be blessed, Master and Lord, as You have remembered our hearts and our words, and You have come to rest among us. We will open our hearts and homes to You, asking You to speak to us for our health. May this day be blessed, because through it he who receives Him with upright spirit will see the desert bear fruit. »

« What you said is correct, Malachi. He who knows how to receive with an upright spirit Him Who has come in the name of God, will see his desert bear fruit and the sturdy but wild plants in it become cultivated. I shall stay with you. And you will come to Me. As good friends. And My apostles will take My word to those who can accept it. »

« Will You not teach us, Master? » asks Malachi somewhat disappointed.

« I have come to collect My thoughts and pray, to prepare Myself for the great events of the future. Are you sorry that I have chosen your town for My tranquillity? »

« Oh! no. The very fact of seeing You pray will make us wise. Thank for choosing us for that purpose. We shall not disturb Your prayers and we will not allow Your enemies to disturb them. Because it is already known what happened and happens in Judaea. We shall keep good watch. And we shall be satisfied with Your word when it is not troublesome for You to give it to us. Accept in the meantime our gifts of hospitality. »

« I am Jesus and I do not reject anybody. So I will accept what you are offering Me to prove to you that I do not reject you. But if you want to love Me, from now on give to the poor people of the village or to those passing by what you would give Me. I need only peace and love. »

« We know that. We know everything. And we feel sure that we shall give You what You need, so as to make You exclaim: "The land that was to be for Me like Egypt, that is sorrow, was for Me, as for Joseph of Jacob, the land of peace and glory". »

« If you love Me by accepting My word, I will say so. »

The citizens hand their gifts to the apostles and then withdraw, with the exception of Malachi and two more men who speak to Jesus in low voices. The children also stay, captured by the usual charm emanating from Jesus; they remain, turning deaf ears to their mothers who call them, and they only go away after Jesus has caressed and blessed them. Then, as garrulous as swallows, they run away, followed by the three men.

551. Jesus Respects the Precept of Love More Than the Sabbatic Law.

11th January 1947.

The ten apostles, tired and covered in dust, have come back to the house. When the woman greets them opening the door, they ask her at once: « Where is the Master? »

« I think He is in the wood, praying as usual. He went out very early this morning and has not come back yet. »

« And has no one gone to look for Him? What are those two doing?! » shouts Peter excitedly.

« Don't become impatient, man. He is as safe among us, as He would be in His Mother's house. »

« Safe! Of course! Do you remember the Baptist? Was he safe? »

« He was not because he could not read the hearts of those who spoke to him. But if the Most High allowed that for the Baptist, He will certainly not allow it for His Messiah. You must believe that more than I do, as I am a woman and a Samaritan. »

« Mary is right. But where did He go exactly? »

« I don't know. At times He goes one way, at times He goes another. At times He is all alone, at times with children who are

so fond of Him. He teaches them how to pray by seeing God in everything. He is probably alone today because He did not come back at midday. When the children are with Him, He always comes back because they are little birds who want to be fed at the right time… » says the old woman smiling, as she perhaps remembers her ten children, and then she sighs… because joys and sorrows are in all the memories of one's life.

« And Judas and John, where are they? »

« Judas has gone to the fountain, John to get firewood. I have none left as I finished it all washing all your clothes to let you have them clean when you depart. »

« May God reward you, mother. We are making you work hard… » says Thomas laying his hand on her thin bent shoulder, as if he wished to caress her.

« Oh!… It is not hard work. I feel as if I had my children again… » she says smiling again as tears begin to shine in her hollow eyes.

John comes in bent under a huge bundle of sticks, and the rather dark corridor seems to brighten up as he enters it. I have always noticed the brilliance that seems to light up wherever John is. His childish smile that is so sweet and candid, his limpid eyes that smile like a beautiful April sky, his joyful voice that is so affectionate in greeting his companions, are like sunbeams or a rainbow of peace. Everybody loves him except Judas of Kerioth; I do not know whether he loves him or hates him, he certainly envies him, he often makes a fool of him and at times offends him. But Judas for the time being is not here.

They help him to lay down his load and they ask him where Jesus may be. John also becomes somewhat frightened at the delay. But, confiding in God more than the others he says: « His Father will deliver Him from evil. We must believe in the Lord. » And he adds: « But… come. You are tired and covered in dust. We have prepared food and hot water for you. Come… »

Judas of Kerioth also comes back with his dripping pitchers. « Peace to you. Have you had a good trip? » he asks, but there is no kindness in his voice. It is mingled with mockery and discontent.

« Yes. We began from the Decapolis. »

« Because you were afraid of being pelted with stones or of being contaminated? » asks the Iscariot ironically.

« We were afraid of neither. We did it our of prudence as beginners. And the proposal was made by me, who - I do not wish to reproach you for anything - have grown hoary over parchments » says Bartholomew.

Judas does not reply. He leaves the kitchen where the apostles who have just come back refresh themselves with what has been Prepared.

Peter looks at the Iscariot depart and shakes his head. But he does

not say anything. Thaddeus instead plucks at John's sleeves and asks: « How did he behave these past days? Always so cross? Be frank… »

« I'm always sincere, Judas. But I can assure you that he caused no trouble. The Master is almost always isolated. I stay with the old mother who is so kind, and I listen to those who come to speak to the Master, and then I tell Him. Judas instead goes about the village. He has made some friends… What can we do! He is just like that… He cannot live tranquilly, as we would do… »

« As far as I am concerned he can do what he likes. I am happy providing he does not cause grief. »

« No. He does not do that. He certainly grows weary. But… Here is the Master! I can hear His voice. He is speaking to somebody… »

They rush out and see Jesus coming forward, in the deepening twilight, carrying two children in His arms and one clinging to His mantle, and He is comforting them as they are weeping.

« May God bless You, Master! But where are You coming from at this late hour? »

Jesus on entering the house replies: « I am coming from the highwaymen. I got My prey as well. I walked after sunset, but My Father will absolve Me because I accomplished a deed of mercy… John, and you, Simon, take them… My arms are aching with tiredness… I am really tired. » He sits on a stool near the fireplace. He smiles: He is tired but happy.

« From the highwaymen? But where have You been? Who are these children? Have You had anything to eat? But where were You? It is not wise to be out when it is dark and to be so far away!… We were worried. Were You not in the wood? » they all ask at the same time.

« I was not in the wood. I went towards Jericho… »

« How imprudent of You! On those roads You may find someone who hates You! » says Thaddeus reproaching Him.

« I took the path that they told us. I had been wanting to go there for days… There are poor wretches to be redeemed. They could do Me no harm. And I went just in time for these children. Give them something to eat. I do not think they have had any food, because they were afraid of the highwaymen. And I had no food with Me. If at least I had found a shepherd!… But because of the oncoming Sabbath all the pastures had been deserted… »

« Of course! We are the only ones who for some time have not kept the Sabbath… » remarks Judas of Kerioth who is always sharp.

« What are you saying? What are you insinuating? » they ask him.

« I am saying that for two Sabbaths we have worked after sunset. »

« Judas, you know why we had to walk on last Sabbath. It is not always the sin of the person who commits it, but also of those who force one to commit it. And today… I know. You want to tell Me

that also today I have infringed the Sabbath. My reply is that if the law of the Sabbatic rest is great, the precept of love is very great. I am not obliged to justify Myself with you. But I am doing it to teach you meekness, humility and the great truth that in the case of a holy necessity one must apply the law with resilience of spirit. Our history has many instances of such necessity. At dawn I went towards the Adummim mountains, because I know that there are some wretches there, whose souls are affected with the leprosy of crime. I was hoping to meet them, speak to them and come back before sunset. I found them. But I was not able to deliver them the intended speech, because there were other things to be said… They had found these three children weeping at the entrance of a poor fold in the plain. They had gone down during the night to steal lambs and also kill, if the shepherd had opposed resistance. Hunger pains are dreadful in the mountains in winter… And when cruel hearts suffer them, they make men more ferocious than wolves. These children were there with a little shepherd not much older than they are, but just as frightened as they were. The father of the children, I do not know why, had died during the night. Perhaps he had been bitten by some beast, or because of heart failure… His cold body was lying on the straw near the sheep. The oldest son, who was sleeping beside him, became aware of it. So the highwaymen, instead of making a massacre, found a dead man and four weeping children. They left the dead man and drove away the sheep and the little shepherd, and as even in the most wicked people there can be a piety hard to be beaten, they took also the children… I found them while they were consulting one another on what to do. The more ferocious ones wanted to kill the ten-year-old boy, who was a dangerous witness of their theft and refuge; the less fierce ones wanted to send him away after threatening him and they intended to keep the flock. They all wanted to keep the little ones. »

« To do what? Have they no family? »

« Their mother is dead. That is why the father had taken them with him to the winter pastures, and he was now going back to his lonely home crossing these mountains. Could I have left the little ones to the highwaymen to bring them up like themselves? I spoke to them… In all truth I tell you that they understood Me more than many other people. So much so that they left the little ones with Me and tomorrow they will take the little shepherd to the road to Shechem. Because the brothers of the children's mother live in that part of the country. In the meantime I accepted the children. I shall keep them until their relatives arrive. »

« And You flatter Yourself that the highwaymen… » says the Iscariot and he laughs…

« I am sure that they will not hurt the little shepherd in the least. They are wretches. We must not judge why they are such, but we

must try to save them. A good deed may be the beginning of their salvation… » Jesus bends His head, absorbed in I wonder what thought.

The apostles and the old woman speak to one another pitying the frightened children whom they do their best to comfort…

Jesus raises His head when the youngest one, a brunet hardly three years old, begins to weep, and He says to James, who in vain busies himself to give the child some milk: « Give Me the boy and go and get My bag… » and He smiles as the little one calms down on His knees and greedily drinks the milk that he had previously refused. The others, who are a little older, eat the soup placed before them, but tears stream from their eyes.

« Dear me! How much misery! Now! It is fair that we should suffer, but innocent children!… » says Peter who cannot bear to see children suffer.

« You are a sinner, Simon. You are reproaching God » points out the Iscariot.

« I may be a sinner. But I am not reproaching God. I am only saying… Master, why must children suffer? They have not committed any sin. »

« Everybody has sins, at least the original one » says the Iscariot.

Peter does not reply to him. He awaits Jesus' reply. And Jesus, Who is lulling to sleep the child now sated and drowsy, replies: « Simon, sorrow is the consequence of sin. »

« All right. So… after You have removed sin, children will no longer suffer. »

« They will still suffer. Do not be scandalised, Simon. Sorrow and death will always be on the Earth. Also the purest people suffer and will suffer. Nay, they are the ones who will suffer on behalf of everybody. The victims propitiatory to the Lord. »

« But why? I don't understand… »

« There are many things that you do not understand on the Earth. You must at least believe that they are wanted by the perfect Love. And when Grace restored to men makes the holiest men know the hidden truths, then one will see the holiest people wish to be victims, because they will have understood the power of sorrow… The child has fallen asleep. Mary, will you take him with you? »

« Certainly, Master. We say: a frightened child sleeps little and weeps much, and a bird without nest needs a motherly wing. My bed is a very large one now that I am its only occupant. I will put the children in it and watch over them. These other ones are also about to fall asleep and forget their sorrow. Come, let us put them to bed. »

She picks up the little one from Jesus' lap and she goes out followed by Peter and Philip as James of Zebedee comes back with Jesus' bag.

Jesus opens it and rummages in it. He pulls out a heavy tunic, he unfolds it and examines its width. He is not satisfied. He looks for the mantle of the same dark shade as the tunic. He puts them aside, closes the bag and hands it back to James.

Peter comes back with Philip. The old woman has remained with the three children and Peter sees at once the garments unfolded and laid aside and he asks: « Are You going to change your clothes, Master? Tired as You are, a hot bath should refresh You. There is hot water and we will warm Your clothes, then we shall have supper and go to bed. This story of the poor children has moved me deeply… »

Jesus smiles but He does not make any remark on the matter. He only says: « Let us praise the Lord Who has led Me here in time to save the innocent children. » He then becomes silent, as He is obviously tired…

The old woman comes back with the children's garments. « They should be changed… They are torn and dirty… But I no longer have my children's garments to replace them. I will wash them tomorrow… »

« No, mother. When the Sabbath is over you will make three small garments out of Mine… »

« But, Lord, do You realise that You have only three tunics left? If You give one away, what will You be left with? Lazarus is not here, as when You gave Your mantle to the leprous woman! » says Peter.

« Never mind! There will be two left, and they are too many for the Son of man. Take this, Mary. Tomorrow at sunset you will begin your work, and the Persecuted One will rejoice in helping the poor whose worries He understands. »

552. The Following Day at Ephraim. Parable on the Remembrance of Man's Eternal Destiny.

12th January 1947.

« Get up and let us go along the stream. Like the Jews who live abroad and where there are no synagogues, we shall celebrate the Sabbath among ourselves. Come children… » says Jesus to the apostles idling in the kitchen garden, and He stretches out His hand to the three poor children who are in a group in a corner.

They go towards Him with an expression of timid joy on their faces prematurely pensive of children who have seen things far greater than themselves, and the two older ones put their hands in those of Jesus, but the little one wants to be taken in His arms, and Jesus satisfies him saying to the oldest one: « You will stay beside Me just the same and you will hold on to My tunic as you did yesterday. Isaac is too tired and too young to walk by himself… »The boy

is delighted with Jesus' smile and he agrees, being satisfied with walking like a little man beside Jesus.

« Give me the child, Master. You must be tired after yesterday's fatigue, and Ruben is not happy because You are not taking him by the hand… » says Bartholomew and he stretches his arms to take the child who clings to Jesus' neck.

« He is as stubborn as all his race! » exclaims the Iscariot.

« No. He is frightened. You have no experience of children. Babies are like that. When they are distressed or scared they seek shelter in the first person who has smiled at them and comforted them » replies Bartholomew, and as he cannot take the youngest one in his arms, he takes the oldest one by the hand after caressing his head and smiling at him in a fatherly way.

They leave the house where only the old woman remains and they follow the stream beyond the village. Its banks are beautiful, covered as they are with fresh grass and studded with wild flowers. The clear water gurgles among stones and, although meagre, it sounds as sweet as a harp and rustles breaking against the larger stones scattered in its bed or insinuating itself into the recesses of some tiny island covered with reeds. Birds fly away from the trees near the banks trilling merrily, or they perch on boughs in the sunshine singing the first songs of springtime, or they fly down to the ground gracefully and lively, seeking insects and worms or drinking near the banks. Two wild turtledoves are bathing at a bend of the stream pecking at each other and cooing; they then fly away carrying in their beaks strands of wool left by some sheep on a plant of hawthorn, the top branches of which are beginning to bloom.

« They do that to build their nest » says the oldest boy. « They certainly have young ones… » He lowers his head and, after smiling faintly when uttering the first words, he weeps silently wiping his eyes with his hand.

Bartholomew takes him in his arms, as he realises what anguish the two turtle-doves have brought about with their care for their nest. And Bartholomew, who has the kind heart of a good father of a family, sighs deeply. The boy weeps on his shoulder and the other one, the second one, seeing him weep, begins to cry as well, imitated by the third one who calls his father in the thin voice of a little child who has just begun to speak.

« This is going to be our Sabbatic prayer today! You could have left them at home! Women are better suited to such cases and… » remarks the Iscariot.

« But she does nothing but weep herself! As I feel like doing myself… Because such situations… do make one weep… » replies Peter taking the second boy in his arms.

« Yes, they do make one weep. That is true. And Mary of Jacob, a poor old distressed soul, is not very good at consoling… » confirms

the Zealot.

« We do not think that she is very successful either. The only one capable of consoling was the Master. And He did not do it. »

« He did not do it? And what else should He have done? He convinced the highwaymen, He walked for miles with the children in His arms, He had their relatives informed… »

« All trifling matters. Since He has power also over death He could, nay He should have gone down to the fold and raised the dead shepherd. He did it for Lazarus, who was of no use to anybody! In this case there was a father, and a widower into the bargain, and there are children who are left all alone… That resurrection should have been worked. I do not understand You, Master… »

« And we do not understand you, as you are so disrespectful… »

« Peace, peace! Judas does not understand. He is not the only one who does not understand the reasons of God and the consequences of sin. You also, Simon of Jonah, do not understand why children should suffer. So do not judge Judas of Simon, who does not understand why the man has not been raised from the dead. If Judas ponders on the matter, since he always reproaches Me for going far away all alone, he will realise that I was not able to go so far… Because the fold was in the Jericho plain, but beyond the town, near the ford. What would you have said if I had been away for at least three days? »

« You could have ordered the man to rise again with Your spirit. »

« Are you more exacting than the Pharisees and scribes, who wanted the proof of a decomposed body, so that you may say that I really do raise the dead? »

« They wanted that because they hate You. I would like it because I love You and I would like to see You crush all Your enemies. »

« Your old feelings and your disorderly love. You have not been able to extirpate the old plants from your heart and replace them with new ones; and the old ones, fertilised by the Light that you approached, have become even sturdier. Many people make your error at present and many will make it in future. It is the error of those who, notwithstanding the assistance from God, do not improve themselves because they do not correspond to God's help with heroic wills. »

« Have these men, who, like me, are Your disciples, destroyed the old plants? »

« They have at least pruned them down and engrafted them considerably. You did not. You did not even examine them carefully to see whether they deserved to be engrafted, pruned or removed. You are an improvident gardener, Judas. »

« But only with regard to my soul. Because I know what to do with gardens. »

« You know what to do. You are an expert with all earthly matters.

I would like to see you equally capable in matters concerning Heaven. »

« But Your light should work wonders in us by itself! Is it really good? If it fertilises evil and invigorates it, it cannot be good, and it is its fault if we do not become good. »

« Speak for yourself, my friend. As far as I know, the Master has not made my bad tendencies any stronger » says Thomas.

« I agree. » « I agree, too » say Andrew and James of Zebedee.

« With regard to me, His power has freed me from evil and has made a new man of me. Why do you say that? Do you not consider what you say? » asks Matthew.

Peter is about to say something, but he prefers to go away, and he begins to walk fast with the child astride his shoulders imitating the rolling of a boat to make him laugh, and when he passes near Thaddeus he takes him by the arm and shouts: « Come on, let's go to that island! It's full of flowers like a basket. Come, Nathanael, Philip, Simon, John… In one bound we are there. The torrent, divided as it is, is only two brooks, one on each side of the island… » And he is the first to jump resting his foot on a sandy protrusion a few metres wide, covered with grass like a meadow and so full of early flowers that it looks like a carpet, with in its middle only one tall thin poplar, the top of which is swaying in a light breeze. He is slowly joined by those he called and then by the others who were closer to Jesus, Who is left behind speaking to the Iscariot.

« But has he not finished yet? » Peter asks his brother.

« The Master is working at his heart » replies Andrew.

« Eh! it is easier for me to make figs grow on this tree than it is for justice to enter Judas' heart. »

« And his mind » adds Matthew.

« He is a fool because he wants to be so, and when he likes » says Thaddeus.

« He is upset because he has not been selected to evangelize. I know » says John.

« As far as I am concerned… If he wants to go in my place… I am not at all anxious to wander about! » exclaims Peter.

« None of us are anxious. But he is. And my Brother does not want to send him. I spoke to Him this morning because I was aware of Judas' mood and of its causes. But Jesus said: "Just because his heart is so unsound I am keeping him with Me. Those who suffer and are weak need a doctor and someone to support them". »

« Of course!… Well!… Come, children. We shall now take these lovely reeds and make little boats with them. See how beautiful they are! And we shall put these little flowers in them to act as fishermen. Look: do they not seem heads with white and red caps?… We shall make the harbour here, and here… the fishermen's little houses… Now let us tie the boats to these lovely slender grass-blades,

and you will put them in the water, like that… then you will beach them when you finish fishing… You can also make the tour of the island… and watch the rocks, eh!… » Peter's patience is wonderful. He cuts the reed into pieces with a knife, from knot to knot, removing one side to make little boats, he puts daisies still in bud in them as fishermen, he dugs a Lilliputian harbour in the sand and makes some little houses with the damp sand, and when he is successful in pleasing the children he sits down satisfied whispering: « Poor children!… »

Jesus sets foot on the island just when the two children are beginning to play and He caresses them putting down the little one who joins in the game of his brothers.

« Here I am with you. Let us speak of God now. Because to speak of God and to God is a preparation for one's mission. And after praying, that is, after speaking to God, we shall speak of God, Who is present in everything to teach men good things. Stand up and let us pray » and He intones some psalms in Hebrew and the apostles join Him singing in chorus.

The children, who had moved aside with their little boats, on hearing the men sing, stop playing and prattling in their shrill voices, and approach the group. They listen attentively, their eyes fixed on Jesus Who is everything to them, then, with the spirit of imitation of children, they take the same posture of the praying apostles humming the tune as they do not know the words of the psalms. Jesus looks at them with a smile that encourages the humming of their innocent voices. They feel as if He approved of them and they are encouraged…

The singing of the psalms comes to an end. Jesus sits down on the grass and begins to speak: « When the kings of Israel, of Edom and of Judah united to fight the king of Moab and they applied to the prophet Elisha for advice, he replied to the kings' messenger: "If I did not respect Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah, I should not even look at you. Now bring me someone who can play the lyre". And as the harpist played, God spoke to His prophet ordering ditch on ditch to be dug in the wadi so that it might be filled with water for men and animals. And the following morning at the hour of the oblation, although there was neither wind nor rain, the torrent was filled as the Lord had said. According to you, what is the teaching of that episode? Speak up! »

The apostles consult with one another. Some say: « God does not speak to an agitated heart. Elisha wants to appease his anger, brought about by seeing the king of Israel appear in his presence, so that he may hear God. » Some instead say: « It is a lesson of justice. Elisha, in order not to punish the innocent king of Judah, saves also the guilty one. » Others say: « It is a lesson of faith and obedience. They dug the ditches obeying an apparently silly order, and they

waited for the water although it was a clear windless day. »

« Your replies are correct but not complete. God does not speak to an agitated heart. That is true. But lyres are not required to calm a heart. It is sufficient to have charity, which is the spiritual lyre with paradisiac notes. When a soul lives in charity, its heart is calm and it can hear and understand the voice of God. »

« So Elisha did not have charity because he was upset. »

« Elisha lived at the time of Justice. We must learn to transfer ancient episodes to the time of Charity and see them not in the light of thunder and lightning but in the light of stars. (1) You belong to the new times. So why are you so often more irascible and agitated than people of the ancient times? Divest yourselves of the past. I repeat that to you, although Judas does not like to hear it being repeated. Extirpate, prune, engraft, plant new trees. Renovate yourselves, dig the ditches of humility, obedience and faith. Those kings were able to do so although two of them did not come from Judah, and they did not hear God but the prophet of God repeat the orders of the Most High. Had they not obeyed they would have died of thirst in the arid land. They obeyed and the water filled the ditches they had dug, and they were not only saved from dying of thirst but they also defeated their enemies. I am the Water of Life. Dig ditches in your hearts in order to be able to receive Me. And now listen. I am not going to make long speeches. I will just give you some simple thoughts on which you can meditate. You will always be like these children and even inferior to them, because they are innocent and you are not, and thus the spiritual light will be dimmer in you, if you do not get accustomed to meditation. You always listen but you never remember, because your intelligence is asleep instead of being awake. So listen. When the son of the woman of Shunem died, she wanted to go to the prophet although her husband told her that it was not the first day of the month or the Sabbath. But she knew that she had to go, because for certain matters no delay is allowed. And as she was able to understand the matter from a spiritual point of view, she had her son restored to life. What do you say about that? »

« That it is a reproach to me because of the Sabbath » says the Iscariot.

« So, Judas, do you realise that you understand things when you want to? So open your heart to justice. »

« Yes… but You did not infringe the Sabbath to raise the man from the dead. »

« I did more than that. I prevented their ruin and death, their true

(1) Allusion to the lightning that accompanied the manifestations of the ancient Law (Exodus 19, 1 - 20,21) and to the star that indicated the coming and manifestation of Jesus in the world (Matthew 2, 1 - 12).

death. And I reminded the thieves that… »

« Wait before consoling Yourself with the idea of having done some good! I don't believe they obeyed You… »

« If the Master says so… »

« Also Elisha, in the story of the woman of Shunem, says: "The Lord has hidden it from me". So not even the prophets always know everything » replies the Iscariot.

« Our Brother is greater than a prophet » remarks Thaddeus.

« I know. He is the Son of God. But He is also the Man. And as such He may be subject to being unaware of secondary matters like this one concerning a conversion and a return… Master, do You always, really always, know everything? I often wonder… » says the Iscariot with stubborn insistence.

« And with what mind do you wish to know? For the sake of peace, of advice, or to be upset? » asks Jesus.

« Well… I do not know. I wonder and… »

« And you seem to be upset even in wondering » says Thomas.

« Me? Of course perplexity always upsets one… »

« How many quibbles! I do not worry about so many problems. I believe without inquiring, and I am not perplexed or upset about anything. But let us allow the Master to speak. I do not like this lesson. Tell us a beautiful parable, Master. The children also will like it » says Peter.

« I have still one question to ask you. This one. According to you, what is the meaning of the flour that removed the bitterness from the soup of the prophet's children? »

Dead silence is the reply to the question.

« What? Can you not reply? »

« Probably because the flour absorbed the bitterness… » says Matthew with no certainty.

« Everything would have been bitter, also the flour. »

« Because of a miracle of the prophet who did not want to mortify his servant » suggests Philip.

« Yes. But not only for that. »

« The Lord wanted the power of the prophet to shine also on common matters » says the Zealot.

« Yes. But it is not yet the right meaning. The lives of prophets anticipate what will take place in the fullness of time: Mine, they reflect My earthly days by means of symbols and figures. So… »

There is silence. They look at one another. Then John lowers his head blushing and he smiles.

« Why do you not express your thought, John? » asks Jesus. « There is no lack of love in speaking, because you do not intend to mortify anybody. »

« I think it means this. That in the time of hunger for Truth and of famine of Wisdom, that is, this time when You came, every tree

has become wild and has yielded bitter fruits as inedible as poison for the sons of men, who thus in vain pick them and prepare them to nourish themselves. But the Eternal Father's Bounty sends You, the flour of selected corn, and with Your perfection You remove the poison from all food, restoring both the trees of the Scriptures again, perverted throughout ages, and the palates of men, corrupted by concupiscence. In this case it is the Father Who orders the flour to be brought and He pours it into the bitter soup, and You are the flour that sacrifices itself to become food for men. And after Your consummation no bitterness will be left in the world, because You will have re-established our friendship with God. I may be wrong. »

« You are not wrong. That is the symbol. »

« Oh! and what made you think that? » asks Peter, who is astonished.

Jesus replies to him: « I will tell you with the very words you spoke a few minutes ago. One bound and you are in the peaceful flowery island of spirituality. But one must have the courage to make a leap leaving the shore, the world. It is necessary to jump without worrying whether there is someone who may laugh at our clumsy jump or may deride us for our simplicity in preferring a lonely islet to the world. One must jump without being afraid of getting hurt or wet or being disappointed. You must leave everything to take refuge in God. One must remain on the island separated from the world and leave it only to distribute the flowers and pure water picked up on the island of the spirit, where there is only one tree, the tree of Wisdom, to those who are left on the shores. By being close to that tree, away from the noise of the world, one catches all its words and becomes a master, being aware of being a disciple. Also that is a symbol. But we shall now tell the children a lovely parable. Come here close to Me. »

The three children go so close to Him as to sit on His knees. Jesus embraces them and begins to speak.

« One day the Lord God said: "I will make man, and man will live in the Earthly Paradise where the great river is that then divides into four water-courses, which are the Pishon, the Gihon, the Euphrates and the Tigris, that flow on the Earth. And man will be happy as he will have all the beautiful and good things of Creation and My love for the joy of his spirit". And He did so. It was as if man were in a large island, more flowery than this one, with all kinds of trees and animals, and upon him there were the love of God shining like a sun on his soul, and the voice of God were heard in the winds, more sweet-sounding than the songs of birds.

But suddenly a serpent crept into that beautiful flowery garden, among all the animals and plants, and that serpent was different from all those that had been created by God and were good, without poisonous teeth and without fierceness in the spires of their flexuous

bodies. Also that serpent had dressed itself with a skin having the shades of gems as the other snakes had, nay, it was even more beautiful than they were, so much so that it looked like a huge jewel of a king wriggling among the wonderful trees in the Garden. It went and coiled round a tree growing in the middle of the garden, a beautiful solitary tree that was much taller than this one and it was covered with marvellous leaves and fruits. And the serpent looked like a beautiful jewel around the lovely tree, and it shone in the sun, and all the animals were looking at it because none of them remembered seeing it being created, or seeing it before. But none of them approached it, nay, they all moved away from the tree, now that the snake was round its trunk.

Only the man and woman went near it, and the woman before the man, because she liked that bright thing shining in the sun and moving its head like a flower still half-closed, and she listened to what the serpent was saying, and she disobeyed the Lord and she made Adam disobey. Only after their disobedience they saw the snake for what it was and they understood sin, as by now they had lost the innocence of their hearts. And they hid themselves from God Who was looking for them and then they lied to God Who was questioning them.

God then put some angels at the borders of the Garden and drove the men out. And they felt as if they had been thrown from the safe shore of Eden into the rivers on the earth full of water, as when they are flooded in springtime. But in the hearts of the men who had been driven out God left the remembrance of their eternal destiny, that is, of the passage from the beautiful Garden, where they heard the voice of God and felt His love, to Paradise where they would enjoy God completely. And with that remembrance He left the holy incentive to ascend to the place they had lost, by means of a life of justice.

But, My dear children, you have just now experienced that as long as the boat sails with the stream its voyage is easy, whereas while it sails against the stream it finds it difficult to keep afloat, without being swept away by waves or being wrecked among the vegetation, sand or stones of the river. If Simon had not tied your little boats with the thin withes of the shores, you would have lost them all, as it happened to Isaac who did not hold his withe.

The same happens to men thrown into the streams of the Earth. They must always remain in the hands of God, trusting their will, which is like a withe, to the hands of the good Father Who is in Heaven and Who is the Father of all men, and in particular of innocent people, and they must be on the look-out to avoid herbs and bog grass, stones, whirpools and mud that might hold back, shatter or swallow up the boat of their souls by tearing away the thread of the will that keeps them joined to God. Because the Serpent,

which is no longer in the Garden, is now on the Earth, and it really tries to wreck souls, preventing them from going up the Euphrates, the Tigris, the Gihon and the Pishon to the Great River that flows in the eternal Paradise and nourishes the trees of Life and Health, that yield perpetual fruits, that will be the delight of all those who have been able to go upstream to be united to God and to His angels, without having to suffer any further for ever. »

« My mother also used to say that » says the oldest boy.

« Yes, she did » lisps the youngest one.

« You don't know. I do, because I am big. But if you say things that are not true you will certainly not go to Paradise. »

« But our father used to say that it was not true » says the second-born son.

« Because he did not believe in the Lord of our mother. »

« Was your father not a Samaritan? » asks James of Alphaeus.

« No. He came from another place. But mother was, and we are as well, because she wanted us to be like her. And she told us of Paradise and of the Garden, but not so well as You did. I was afraid of the serpent and of death, because mother used to say that one was the devil and our father said that death puts an end to everything. That is why I was so unhappy to be alone and I also said that it was quite useless to be good now, because as long as father and mother lived, we made them happy by being good, but now there was nobody to make happy if we were good. But now I know… And I will be good. I will never take my thread away from the hands of God so that I will not be carried away by the waters of the Earth. »

« Did mother go upstream or downstream? » asks the second son perplexedly.

« What do you mean, child? » asks Matthew.

« I mean: where is she? Did she go to the river of the eternal Paradise? »

« Let us hope so, my child. If she was good… »

« She was a Samaritan… » says the Iscariot contemptuously.

« Then is there no Paradise for us, because we are Samaritans? Then shall we not have God? He called Him the "Father of all men". As an orphan I liked to think that I still have a Father… But if there is not one for us… » he says lowering his head sadly.

« God is the Father of everybody, My child. Have I loved you less because you are a Samaritan? I contended with the highwaymen for you, and I will contend with the demon for you, in the same way as I would contend for the little son of the High Priest of the Temple in Jerusalem, if he did not consider it disgraceful that the Saviour should save his son. Nay: I would contend for you more firmly because you are alone and unhappy. There is no difference for Me between the soul of a Judaean and that of a Samaritan. And before long there will be no division between Samaria and Judaea,

because the Messiah will have one people only that will bear His Name and will comprise all those who love Him. »

« I love You, Lord. But will You take me to my mother? » asks the oldest of the three boys.

« You do not know where she is. That man over there said that we can only hope… » says the second-born son.

« I do not know, but the Lord knows. He knew even where we were, whereas we do not even know where we were. »

« With the highwaymen… They wanted to kill us… » Terror appears again on the little face of the second son.

« The highwaymen were like demons. But He saved us because our angels called Him. »

« The angels saved also my mother. I know because I always dream of her. »

« You are a liar, Isaac. You cannot dream of her because you do not remember her. »

The little one weeps saying: « No. No. I dream of her. I do… »

« Don't call your brother a liar, Ruben. His soul can really see his mother, because the good Father Who is in Heaven can grant that the little orphan may dream of her and may know her partly, as He allows us to know Him, so that from such limited knowledge we may be willing to know Him perfectly, which is achieved by being always good. "And now let us go. We have spoken of God, and the Sabbath has been sanctified. » He stands up and intones more psalms.

Upon hearing the chorus some people from Ephraim go towards them and they respectfully wait until the psalm is ended in order to greet Jesus and say to Him: « Did You prefer to come here instead of coming to us? Do You not love us? »

« None of you invited Me. So I came here with My apostles and these children. »

« That is true. But we thought that Your disciple had informed You of our wish. »

Jesus looks at John and Judas. And Judas replies: « I forgot to tell You yesterday; and today, with these children, I never thought of it. »

Jesus in the meantime leaves the islet and He crosses the tiny stream of water and goes towards the people of Ephraim. The apostles follow Him while the children delay unfasting the two remaining little boats, and as Peter urges them, they reply: « We want to keep them to remember the lesson. »

« And what about me? I lost mine. And I will not remember. And I will not go to Paradise » says the youngest one weeping.

« Wait! Don't weep. I'll make a little boat for you at once. Of course, you must remember the lesson as well. Eh! We ought all to have a little boat with a withe tied to its prow in order to remember.

And we men more than you children! Well! » and Peter makes another little boat with its withe. He then takes the three children in his arms, in one armful, and jumps the stream going towards Jesus.

« Are these the ones? » asks Malachi of Ephraim.

« Yes, they are. »

« And are they from Shechem? »

« That is what the young shepherd said. He said that their relatives lived in the country. »

« Poor children! But if their relatives should not come, what would You do? »

« I would keep them with Me. But they will come. »

« Those highwaymen… Will they not come, too? »

« They will not come. Do not be afraid of them. Even if they came… I would be their plunderer, and they would not be your pillagers. I have already snatched four preys from them and I hope I have also snatched part of their souls from sin, at least in some of them. »

« We shall help You with these children. You will let us do that. »

« Yes, I will. But not because they come from your region, but because they are innocent, and love for innocent people leads one quickly to God. »

« But You are the only one who makes no distinction between innocents and innocents. Neither a Judaean nor a Galilean would have picked up these little Samaritans. People do not love us. And they dislike not only us but also those who do not even yet know what a Samaritan or a Judaean is. And that is cruel. »

« Yes, it is. But it will no longer be so when people follow My Law. See, Malachi? They are in the arms of Simon Peter, of My brother and of Simon Zealot. None of them are Samaritans or fathers. And yet not even you would press your own children to your heart as these disciples of Mine are pressing the orphans of Samaria. The Messianic idea is this: to re-unite everybody in love. This is the truth of the Messianic idea. One people only on the Earth under the sceptre of the Messiah. One people only in Heaven under the glance of one God only. »

They go away… speaking, towards the house of Mary of Jacob.

553. Jesus Explains to Peter the Mandate for Remitting Sins and Why Saints and Innocents Suffer.

15th January 1947.

Jesus is alone in a little room. He is thinking or praying sitting on a little bed. The tiny yellowish flame of a small oil lamp is quivering on a shelf. It must be night-time because there is no noise in the house or in the street. Only the rustling of the stream outside the house seems to sound louder in the silence of the night.

Jesus raises His head and looks at the door. He listens. He stands up and goes to open it. He sees Peter outside. « Is it you? Come in. What do you want, Simon? Are you still up and you have to walk such a long way? » He has taken him by the hand and pulled him inside, closing the door noiselessly. He makes him sit on the bed beside Himself.

« I wanted to tell You, Master… Yes, I wanted to tell You that even today You have seen what I am worth. I am only capable of making poor children enjoy themselves, of comforting an old woman, of reconciling two shepherds who are quarelling over a ewe-lamb that has lost its milk. I am a poor man, so dull that I do not even understand what You explain to me. But that is another matter. Now I wanted to tell You that just because of that, You should keep me here. I am not anxious to go around when You do not come with us. And I am not good at anything… Content me, Lord. » Peter is speaking eagerly with his eyes fixed on the coarse chipped bricks of the floor.

« Look at Me, Simon » Jesus orders him. And, as Peter obeys, Jesus stares at him intensely asking: « Is that all? Is that the only reason for your being awake? The only reason why you are begging Me to keep you here? Be sincere, Simon. You are not grumbling if you tell your Master the other part of your thought. You must be able to tell the difference between an idle word and a useful one. A word is idle, and sin generally flourishes in idleness, when one speaks of other people's faults with someone who can do nothing about them. Then it is plainly lack of charity, even if what one says is true. As it is lack of charity to reproach someone more or less sharply without giving advice at the same time. And I am referring to just reproaches. The others are unfair and they are a sin against our neighbour. But when one sees one's neighbour commit sin, and one suffers because that person offends God and injures his soul, and one realises that one cannot estimate the gravity of someone else's sin, neither does one feel wise enough to speak words that may work a conversion, and then one applies to a just and wise person confiding one's anxiety, then one does not commit sin, because one's disclosure aims at putting an end to a scandal and at saving a soul. It is the same as if one had a relative suffering from a shameful disease. One will certainly try to conceal it from people, but one will go secretly to a doctor and say: "My relative is suffering from so and so and I do not know how to advise and cure him. Please come or tell me what I must do". Does one in that case lack love for one's relative? No. On the contrary one would lack love if one feigned not to notice the disease and allowed it to progress and bring about death, through a mistaken feeling of prudence and love. One day, and that day is not remote, you and your companions will have to listen to the secrets of hearts. Not as you listen to them now as men,

but as priests, that is doctors, masters, and pastors of souls, as I am Doctor, Master and Pastor. You will have to listen, decide and give advice. Your judgement will have the same value as if God Himself had passed it… »

Peter frees himself from Jesus Who was holding him close to Himself and standing up he says: « That is not possible Lord. Never impose that on us. How can You expect us to judge like God, if we are not even able to judge like men? »

« Then you will be able, because the Spirit of God will hover over you and will penetrate you with its light. You will know how to judge taking into consideration the seven conditions of the facts proposed to you in order to have your advice or to be forgiven. Listen to Me carefully and try to remember. In due time the Spirit of God will remind you of My words. But at the same time try to remember with your own intelligence, as God give it to you so that you may use it without laziness and spiritual presumptions that lead one to expect and pretend everything from God. When you are Master, Doctor and Pastor in My place and My stead, and when a believer comes to weep at your feet over his perturbation brought about by his own or other people's deeds, you must always bear in mind the following seven questions:

Who: Who sinned?

What: What is the matter of the sin?

Where: In which place?

How: In which circumstances?

With what or with whom: The instrument or person that was the material for the sin?

Why: Which incentives brought about the environment favourable to the sin?

When: In which conditions and reactions, and whether by accident or by unwholesome habit?

Because see, Simon, the same sin may have infinite nuances and grades according to all the circumstances that caused it and to the people who committed it. For instance… Let us take into consideration two of the most common sins: lust of the flesh and lust for riches.

A man has committed a sin of lewdness, or he thinks that he has committed such a sin. Because at times man mistakes temptation for sin, or he considers of the same degree the incentives brought about artificially by an unwholesome appetite, and considers also to be equal those thoughts that are the consequence of a painful disease or come to one's mind because the flesh and blood at times have sudden voices resounding inwardly before the mind has time to be wary of them and suffocate them. He comes to you and says: "I committed a sin of lewdness". An imperfect priest would say: "Anathema on you". But you, My Peter, must not say so. Because you are

Jesus' Peter, you are the successor of the Mercy. So before condemning you must consider and touch the heart weeping before you, kindly and prudently, in order to ascertain all the aspects of the sin or supposed sin, and of the scruple.

I said: kindly and prudently. You must remember that besides being a Master and Pastor, you are a Doctor. A doctor does not irritate wounds. If there is gangrene he will cut it off, but he knows also how to uncover and treat a wound with a light hand when lacerated tissues are to be re-united, not removed. And you are to remember that in addition to being a Doctor and Pastor, you are a Master. A master adapts his words to the age of his pupils. And scandalous would be that teacher who should disclose animal laws to innocent children who were unacquainted with them and would thus acquire mischievous knowledge precociously. And in dealing with souls one must be prudent in asking questions. You must respect yourself and other people. It will be easy for you if in every soul you see a son of yours. A father is by nature the master, doctor and guide of his children. So love with fatherly love every person who comes to you upset by sin, or by fear of sin, and you will be able to judge without hurting or scandalising anybody. Do you follow Me? »

« Yes, I do, Master. I have understood You very well. I must be cautious and patient, I will have to convince people to disclose their wounds, but I shall have to examine them by myself, without attracting the attention of other people to them, and only when I should see that there is a real wound, I ought to say: "See? You have hurt yourself here by doing so and so". But if I see that a person is only afraid of being hurt, having seen ghosts, then… I should blow away the fog without giving, through useless zeal, explanations capable of throwing light on real sources of sin. Is that right? »

« Yes, quite right. So. If one says to you: "I have committed a sin of carnal lust", you must consider the person who is in front of you. It is true that sin can be committed at every age. But it is easier to find it in adults than in children, so the questions to ask or the answers to give a man or a boy will be different. Consequently, after the first question, comes the second one on the matter of the sin, then the third one on the place of the sin, then the fourth on the circumstances, then the fifth on the accomplice to the sin, then the sixth on the causes of the sin, and the seventh on the time and number of the sin.

In general you will find that in the case of adults living in the world a circumstance of true sin will appear to correspond to each question, whereas in the case of children by age or by spirit, for many questions you will have to say: "There is only the fear of sin here, but no real sin". Nay, at times you will see that instead of filth there is a lily that quivers with fear of being splashed with

mud, and mistakes the drop of dew that descended on its calyx for • splash of mud. They are souls so eager for Heaven that fear, as • stain, also the shadow of a cloud that overshadows them for a moment, interposing between them and the sun, and then passes leaving no trace on the spotless corolla. They are souls so innocent and so anxious to remain such, that Satan frightens them with fanciful temptations or instigating the incentives of the flesh or the flesh itself, taking advantage of true diseases of the flesh. Those souls are to be comforted and supported, because they are not sinners, but martyrs. Always bear that in mind.

And always remember to judge with the same method also those who commit the sin of greed for other people's riches or property. Because if it is a cursed sin to be greedy without need and without pity, robbing the poor, and acting against justice by harassing citizens, servants, or peoples, the sin of him who steals some bread to appease the hunger of his children and his own, after his neighbours refused to give him some, is by far less grave. Remember that if for a lustful man and a thief, the number, circumstances and gravity of the sin are to be taken into account when judging them, one must also consider what knowledge the sinner had of the sin when he was committing it. Because he who acts with full knowledge, sins more than he who acts out of ignorance. And he who acts with the free consent of his will sins more than he who was forced to sin. I solemnly tell you that there will be deeds that are apparently sinful, but are really martyrdom and they will be given the reward that is granted to those who suffered martyrdom. And above all remember that in each case, before condemning, you must bear in mind that you have been a man as well and that your Master, in Whom no one was ever able to find sin, never condemned anyone who had repented of having sinned.

Forgive seventy times seven, and even seventy times seventy, the sins of your brothers and children. Because to shut the doors of Salvation upon a sick man, only because he had a relapse, is to want to let him die. Have you understood? »

« Yes, I have. I have understood that very clearly… »

« Well, then, tell Me what you have in mind. »

« Yes! I will tell You, because I can see that You know everything, and I realise that I am not grumbling if I tell You to send Judas around in my place, because he suffers if he does not go. I am not telling You meaning that he is jealous or because I am scandalised, but to give peace to him and… to You. Because it must be really troublesome for You to have such a stormy wind near You all the time… »

« Has Judas complained again? »

« Well! He has! He said that every word of Yours hurts him. Also what You said to the children. He says that it is true that You were

referring to him when You said that Eve went to the tree because she liked that thing that shone like a king's crown. Truly, I did not think of any comparison. But I am ignorant. Bartholomew and the Zealot, instead, said that Judas has been "touched on the rawest raw", because he is bewitched by everything that shines and allures one's vainglory. And they must be right because they are wise. Be good to Your poor apostles, Master! Make Judas happy and me as well. In any case! See? I am good only at amusing children… and at being a child in Your arms » and he presses against His Jesus, Whom he really loves with all his strength.

« No. I cannot please you. Do not insist. You, because you are what you are, will go to evangelize. He, because he is what he is, will stay here. My brother also mentioned it to Me, and although I love him so much, I replied "no" also to him. I would not yield even if My Mother should ask Me. It is not a punishment, but a medicine. And Judas must take it. If it does not help his spirit, it will help Mine, because I will not have to reproach Myself for omitting anything that might sanctify him. » Jesus is severe and authoritative in saying so.

Peter lets his arms droop and lowers his head with a sigh.

« Do not worry about it, Simon. We shall have an eternity to be together and love each other. But you had something else to tell Me… »

« It's late, Master, and You must sleep. »

« And you more than I, Simon, as you have to set out at dawn. »

« Oh! as far as I am concerned! I rest more staying here with You than I would in bed. »

« Speak up, then. You know that I sleep very little… »

« Well! I am a blockhead, I know and I say so without being ashamed. And if it depended on me, I would not care to be very learned, because I think that the greatest wisdom consists in loving, following and serving You wholeheartedly. But You send me here and there. And people ask me questions and I must reply to them. I think that what I ask You, other people may ask me. Because the thoughts of men are alike. Yesterday You said that innocent and holy people will always suffer, nay they will be the ones who will suffer on behalf of everybody. I find it difficult to understand that, even if You say that they will wish that themselves. And I think that as it is difficult for me, it may be so also for other people. If they ask me, what shall I tell them? In this first journey a mother said to me: "It was not fair that my little girl should die with so much pain, because she was good and innocent". And as I did not know what to say, I repeated Job's words: "The Lord has given. The Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord". But I was not convinced myself. And I did not convince her. The next time I would like to know what to say… »

« It is just. Listen. It seems an injustice, but it is a great justice that the best should suffer on behalf of everybody. Now tell Me, Simon. What is the Earth? All the Earth? »

« The Earth? A great, a very great expanse, made of dust and water, of rocks, with trees, animals and human beings. »

« And then? »

« Then, nothing else… Unless You want me to say that it is the place of punishment and exile for man. »

« The Earth is an altar, Simon. A huge altar. It was to be the altar of everlasting praise to its Creator. But the Earth is full of sin. Therefore it must be the altar of endless expiation and sacrifice, on which the victims are consumed. The Earth, like the other worlds with which Creation is strewn, ought to sing psalms to God Who created it. Look! »

Jesus opens the wooden shutters, and through the wide open window comes in the cool of the night, the noise of the torrent, a moonbeam, and one can see the sky studded with stars.

« Look at those stars! They are singing the praises of God with their voices that are light and motion in the infinite spaces of the firmament. Their song, which rises from the blue fields of the sky to the Heaven of God, has lasted for thousands and thousands of years. We can imagine stars, planets and comets as sidereal creatures that like sidereal priests, levites, virgins and believers are to sing the praises of the Creator in an unlimited temple. Listen, Simon. Listen to the breeze rustling among the leaves and to the noise of the stream in the night. Also the Earth, like the sky, sings with the winds, with the water, with the voices of birds and animals. But if the luminous praise of the stars that people the sky is sufficient for the vault of heaven, the song of winds, waters and animals is not sufficient for the temple that is the Earth. Because on it there are not only winds, waters and animals unconsciously singing the praises of God, but there is also man, the perfect creature, superior to all beings living in time and in the world, gifted with matter, like the animals, minerals and plants, and with spirit, like the angels of Heaven, and like them destined, if faithful in the trial, to know and possess God, through grace at first, and in Paradise later. Man, the synthesis comprising all natures, has a mission that no other creature has and that should be for him a joy, besides being his duty: to love God. To give God a cult of love intelligently and voluntarily, repaying God for the love that He gave man by granting him life and Heaven in addition to life. To give an intelligent cult.

Consider this, Simon. What benefit does God get from Creation? What profit? None. Creation does not make God greater, it does not sanctify Him, it does not make Him rich. He is infinite. He would have been such even if Creation had never existed. But God-Love

wanted to have love. And He created to have love. God can get only love from Creation, and that love, which is intelligent and free only in angels and in men, is the glory of God, the joy of angels, the religion for men. The day that the great altar of the Earth should omit the praises and entreaties of love, the Earth would cease existing. Because once love is extinguished also expiation would cease, and the wrath of God would destroy the Earth that had become an earthly hell. So the Earth must love in order to exist. And also: the Earth must be the Temple that loves and prays with the intelligence of men. But which victims are always offered in the Temple? The pure, spotless, faultless victims. Those are the only victims agreeable to the Lord. They are the early fruits. Because the best things are to be given to the Father of the family, and the first fruits of everything and choice things are to be given to God, the Father of the human family.

But I said that the Earth has a double duty of sacrifice: that of praise and that of expiation. Because Mankind that has spread over the Earth sinned in the First men, and continuously sins by adding to the sin of estrangement from God the other countless sins of its consent to the voices of the world, of the flesh and of Satan. A guilty, very guilty Mankind that, although it has likeness to God, having its own intelligence and divine help, is more and more sinful. Stars obey, plants obey, elements obey, animals obey and they praise the Lord as best they can. Men do not obey and do not praise the Lord enough. Hence the necessity of victim-souls that may love and expiate on behalf of everybody. They are the children who, innocent and unaware, pay the bitter punishment of sorrow for those who can do nothing but sin. They are the saints who willingly sacrifice themselves for everybody.

Before long - a year or a century is always a short time as compared to eternity - no more sacrifices will be celebrated on the altar of the great Temple of the Earth, that is, of victim-men, consumed with the perpetual sacrifice: victims with the perfect Victim. Do not be upset, Simon. I am not saying that I will establish a cult like those of Molech, Baal and Ashtoreth. Men themselves will immolate us. Do you understand? They will immolate us. And we shall face death happily to expiate and love on behalf of everybody. And then the days will come when men will no longer immolate men. But there will always be pure victims that love consumes with the Great Victim in the perpetual Sacrifice. I mean the love of God and the love for God. Truly they will be the victims of the future days and of the future Temple. No longer lambs and kids, calves and doves, but the sacrifice of one's heart is what pleases God. David realised that. And in the new times, the times of the spirit and of love, only that sacrifice will be pleasant.

Consider, Simon, that if a God had to become incarnate to appease

divine Justice for the great Sin, for the many sins of men, in the times of the truth, only the sacrifices of the spirits of men can appease the Lord. You are thinking: "Why then did He, the Most High, order men to immolate the offspring of animals and the fruits of plants to Him"? I will tell you: because, before I came, man was a stained holocaust and Love was not known. Now it will be known. And man, who will know Love, because I will give Grace back to him, and through it man will know Love, man will come out of his lethargy, he will remember, understand, live and he will replace kids and lambs, as a victim of love and expiation, on the model of the Lamb of God, his Master and Redeemer. Sorrow, so far a punishment, will turn into perfect love, and blessed are those who will embrace it out of perfect love. »

« But children… »

« You mean those who cannot yet offer themselves… And do you know when God speaks in them? The language of God is spiritual. A soul understands it and a soul has no age. Nay, I tell you that a child's soul, as it is without malice, with regard to its capacity of understanding God, is more adult than the soul of an old sinner. I tell you, Simon, that you will live so long as to see many children teach adults, and even yourself, the wisdom of heroic love. But in those little ones who die for natural reasons, God acts directly for motives of so high a love that I cannot explain to you, as they are part of the wisdom written in the books of Life, and that only in Heaven will be read by the blessed souls. I said read, but in actual fact it will suffice to look at God to know not only God, but also His infinite wisdom… We have let the moon set, Simon… It will soon be dawn and you have had no sleep… »

« It does not matter, Master. I have lost a few hours of sleep and I have gained so much wisdom. And I have been with You. But if You allow me, I will now go. Not to sleep. But to think of Your words again. »

He is already at the door and is about to go out, when he stops pensively and then says: « One more question, Master. Is it right for me to say to someone who suffers, that sorrow is not a punishment but a… grace, something like… like our vocation, beautiful even if toilsome, beautiful even if it may seem an unpleasant and sad thing to people who do not know? »

« Yes, you can say that, Simon. It is the truth. Sorrow is not a punishment, when one knows how to accept it and use it rightly. Sorrow is like a priesthood, Simon. A priesthood open to everybody. A priesthood that confers great power on the heart of God. It is a great merit. Sorrow that was born at the same time as sin can appease the Justice. Because God can use for good purposes also what Hatred created to give sorrow. I did not chose any other means to cancel the Sin. Because there is no means greater than this one. »

554. On a Sabbath at Ephraim Jesus Speaks in the Synagogue.

17th January 1947.

It must be another Sabbath because the apostles are once again all together in the house of Mary of Jacob.

The children are still with them, near Jesus, by the fireside. And just because of that Judas Iscariot says: « So a week has gone by and their relatives have not come » and he laughs shaking his head.

Jesus does not reply to him. He caresses the second-born son.

Judas asks Peter and James of Alphaeus: « And you say that you went along the two roads that take one to Shechem? »

« Yes, we did. But thinking it over, it was quite useless. Highwaymen certainly do not take busy roads, particularly now that Roman squads patrol them continuously » replies James of Alphaeus.

« Why did you go along them, then? » insists the Iscariot.

« Well!… It's the same to us to go here or there. So we took those. »

« And was nobody able to tell you anything? »

« We did not ask anybody. »

« And how were you expecting to know whether they had passed or not? Do people carry banners or leave traces when they go along a road? I don't think so. Because otherwise we would have been found at least by our friends. Instead not one of them has been here since we came » and he laughs sarcastically.

« We do not know why no one has come here. The Master knows. We don't. When people withdraw to a place unknown to everybody, as we did, without leaving any trace of their passage, no one can go to them unless one is informed of the place of their refuge. Now we do not know whether our Brother has told our friends » says James of Alphaeus patiently.

« Oh! Would you believe or make us believe that He did not tell at least Lazarus and Nike? »

Jesus does not say anything. He takes one of the children by the hand and goes out…

« I do not want to believe anything. But even if it is as you say, you and none of us can yet pass judgement on the reasons for our friends' absence… »

« Those reasons are easily understood! No one wishes to have trouble with the Sanhedrin, least of all who is rich and powerful. That's all! We are the only ones who are good at endangering our lives. »

« Be fair, Judas! The Master did not force any of us to stay with Him. Why did you stay, if the Sanhedrin frightens you? » remarks James of Alphaeus.

« And you can go away whenever you wish. You are not in chains… » says the other James, the son of Zebedee.

« No! Never! We are here, and we are staying here. All of us. Who wanted to go away, should have gone away before. Not now. I oppose

that, if the Master does not » says Peter slowly but decidedly, striking the table with his fist.

« Why? Who are you that you want to give orders instead of the Master? » Judas asks him violently.

« A man who reasons not like God, as He does, but as a man. »

« Are you suspecting me? Do you think I am a traitor? » asks Judas excitedly.

« You have said it. Not because I think that you would do it deliberately; but you are so… thoughtless, Judas, so fickle! And you have too many friends. And you are too keen on standing out, in everything. Oh! you would not be able to keep quiet! You would speak, either to confute some wicked enemy, or to show that you are the Apostle. So you are here and you are staying here. This way you will do no harm and you will not feel any remorse. »

« God does not force the freedom of man, but you wish to do so? »

« Yes, I do. But after all, tell me. Is it raining on you? Have you not enough bread? Is the air harmful to you? Do the people offend you? None of all that. The house is solid, even if it is not a rich one, the air is good, we have never been short of food, the people honour you. So why are you so restless here, as if you were in jail? »

« "There are two nations that my soul detests, and the third one hated by me is not even a nation: the inhabitants of Mount Seir, the Philistines and the stupid people living at Shechem". I have replied to you with the words of the Wise Man. And I am right in thinking so. Consider whether these people love us! »

« H'm! To tell you the truth I don't think that the other peoples, yours and mine, are much better. We were pelted with stones in Judaea and in Galilee, in Judaea even more than in Galilee, and in the Temple in Judaea more than in any other place. I cannot say that we have been ill-treated in the territory of the Philistines, or here, or anywhere else… »

« Anywhere else? We have not been anywhere else, fortunately. But even if we had had to go somewhere else I would not have come with you, neither will I come in future. I do not want to get more contaminated. »

« Contaminated? That is not what worries you, Judas of Simon. You do not want to alienate those of the Temple. That is what troubles you » says calmly Simon Zealot, who has remained in the kitchen with Peter, James of Alphaeus and Philip. The others have gone out, one after the other together with the two boys and have joined the Master. A meritorious flight as it was made to avoid being uncharitable.

« No. Not because of that. But because I do not like to waste my time and give wisdom to fools. Look! What good has it served to take Ermasteus with us? He went away and has never come back. Joseph told us that he parted from him saying that he would come

back for the feast of the Tabernacles. Have you seen him? A renegade… »

« I do not know why he has not come back and I cannot judge him. But I ask you: is he the only one who left the Master and has become His enemy? Are there no renegades among us Judaeans and among the Galileans? Can you prove that? »

« No. It's true. But I am ill at ease here. If they only knew that we are here! If they knew that we familiarise with the Samaritans to the extent of going to their synagogues on Sabbaths! He wants that… Woe to us if we were found out! The charge would be justified… »

« And you mean that the Master would be condemned. But He is already condemned. He has been condemned before people know. Nay He was condemned after He raised a Judaean from the dead in Judaea. He is hated and accused of being a Samaritan and the friend of publicans and prostitutes. He has been… all the time. And you know better than anybody else whether He has been hated. »

« What do you mean, Nathanael? What do you mean? What have I got to do with that? What do I know more than you do? » He is very excited.

« You look like a mouse surrounded by enemies, my boy! But you are not a mouse, neither are we provided with clubs to capture and kill you. Why are you so frightened? If you are at peace with your conscience, why do you become upset over innocent words? What did Bartholmai say to make you so excited? Is it not true that no one more than we, His apostles, who sleep and live near Him, can be aware and witness that He does not love the Samaritan, the publican, the sinner, the prostitute, but He loves their souls, and He takes care of them alone, and only because of them He goes with Samaritans, publicans and prostitutes, and only the Most High knows what effort His Most Pure Son must make to approach what we men and sinners call "filth"? You do not understand and you do not know Jesus yet, my boy! You know Him less than the very Samaritans, Philistines, Phoenicians and any other peoples you may wish… » says Peter and he utters the last words sadly.

Judas does not speak any more and also the others become silent.

The old woman comes back in saying: « In the street there are some people from the town. They say that it is the Sabbath prayer time and that the Master has promised to speak… »

« I will go and tell Him, woman. You can tell those from Ephraim that we are coming » replies Peter and he goes out into the kitchen garden to inform Jesus.

« What are you going to do? Are you coming? If you do not want to come, go away, go out before He is grieved by your refusal » says the Zealot to Judas.

« I am coming with you. One cannot speak here! I seem to be the

greatest sinner. Every word of mine is misunderstood. »

As Jesus enters the kitchen, they stop speaking.

They go out into the street and join the people from Ephraim and they go into town with them. They stop only when they are before the synagogue, at the door of which there is Malachi, who greets them and invites them to go in.

I do not notice any difference between the Samaritan place of prayer and those I have seen in other regions. There are always the usual lights, the usual lecterns or shelves with rolls, the seat of the head of the synagogue or of the person who teaches in his stead. If anything, the rolls are much fewer here than in the other synagogues.

« We have already said our prayers while waiting for You. If You wish to speak… Which roll do You want, Master? »

« I do not need any. In any case you would not have what I wish to explain » (1) replies Jesus, and He then turns towards the people and begins to speak:

« When the Hebrews were sent back to their country by Cyrus, the king of the Persians, so that they might rebuild Solomon's Temple that had been destroyed fifty years previously, the altar was rebuilt on its base, and the daily holocaust was offered on it morning and evening, as well as the extraordinary one on the first day of each month and those of the solemnities sacred to the Lord and the holocausts of voluntary offerings made by individuals. Later, after accomplishing what is essential and indispensable for the cult, in the second year after their return, they began to deal with what can be called the frame of the cult, its outward appearance, which is not guilty because it is done to honour the Eternal Father, but it is not indispensable. Because the cult of God is love for God, and love is perceived and consumed in one's heart, not by means of dressed stones, precious woods, gold and perfumes. All that is outward appearance that aims more at satisfying one's national or civic pride than at honouring the Lord.

God wants the Temple of the spirit. He is not satisfied with a Temple of walls and marbles that is devoid of spirits full of love. I solemnly tell you that the temple of a pure loving heart is the only one that God loves and in which He dwells with His light, and that foolish are the contests that divide regions and towns with regard to the beauty of their places of prayer. Why vie in the riches and ornaments of the houses in which God is invoked? Can the finite satisfy the Infinite, even if it were a finite ten times more beautiful than Solomon's Temple and all the royal palaces put together? God, the Infinite Who cannot be contained and honoured by any

(1) Of all the Books of the Bible the Samaritans accepted only the five Books of the Pentateuch.

space or by any material magnificence, finds one place only worthy of honouring Him as befits Him, and He can be, nay He wants to be contained in the heart of man, because the spirit of a just man is a temple over which the Spirit of God hovers, among the perfumes of love; and it will soon be a temple in which the Spirit will really dwell, One and Trine, as It is in Heaven.

And it is written that as soon as the masons had laid the foundations of the Temple, the priests went with their ornaments and trumpets and the Levites with cymbals, according to David's orders. And they sang that "God is to be praised because He is good and His mercy is everlasting". And the people rejoiced. But many priests, heads of families, Levites, elderly people were shedding torrents of tears thinking of the previous Temple, and thus the sound of the people's weeping could not be distinguished from the shouts of joy, as they were so confused. And we also read that the peoples of nearby districts disturbed those who were building the Temple to avenge themselves on the builders who had rejected them when they had offered to build with them, as they also sought the God of Israel, the Only True God. And those disturbances interrupted the work until God was pleased to let them continue. That is what we read in the book of Ezra.

How many and what lessons does the passage that I mentioned give us? First of all the one already mentioned on the necessity that the cult is perceived by one's heart and not professed by stones or wood or also by clothes or cymbals and songs, which are devoid of the spirit. Then that the lack of reciprocal love is always the cause of delays and trouble, even when a good purpose is involved. Where there is no charity, God is not there either. It is useless to seek God unless we put ourselves in a suitable condition to find Him. God is found in charity. He or those who settle in charity find God also without having to make any painful search. And he who has God with him is successful in all his enterprises.

In the psalm that sprang from the heart of a wise man after meditating on the painful events that accompanied the reconstruction of the Temple and of the walls it is said: "If the Lord does not build the house, in vain the masons toil at it. If the Lord does not guard the city and protect it, in vain the sentries watch".

Now how can God build the house, if He knows that its inhabitants do not have Him in their hearts, since they do not love their neighbours? And how will He protect the city and give strength to its defenders, if He cannot be in them as they are devoid of Him through their hatred for their neighbours? Has it helped you, peoples, to be divided by barriers of hatred? Has it made you greater? Richer? Happier? Neither hatred nor rancour is ever of any avail, he who is alone is never strong, he who does not love is never loved. And it is of no use, as the psalm says, to get up before daybreak

to become great, rich and happy. Let every man rest to console himself in the sorrows of life, because sleep is a gift of God as is light and all the other things that man enjoys; let every man rest but let him have charity as his companion in his sleep and in his watch, and his work, his family and his business will thrive, and above all his spirit will prosper and conquer the royal crown of the children of the Most High and heirs to His Kingdom.

It is written that while the crowd was singing hosannas, some people were shedding torrents of tears because they were thinking of and regretting the past. But it was not possible to distinguish the different voices in the clamour of shouts.

Children of Samaria! And you, My apostles, children of Judaea and of Galilee! Also nowadays there are people who sing hosannas and people who weep while the new Temple of God is rising on eternal foundations. Also nowadays there are people who hinder the work and people who seek God where He cannot be found. Also nowadays some people want to build according to Cyrus' order and not according to God's, that is according to the order of the world and not according to the voices of the spirit. And also nowadays there are people who weep with foolish human regret over an inferior past, a past that was neither good nor wise, so much so that it roused the anger of God. Also nowadays we have all those situations, as if we were still in the obscurity of remote days and not in the days of Light.

Open your hearts to the Light, fill yourselves with the Light, so that at least you, to whom I-Light am speaking, may see. This is the new time in which everything is rebuilt. But woe to those who will refuse to enter it and will hinder those who are building the Temple of the new faith, of which I am the corner Stone and to which I will give My whole self to make mortar for the stones, so that the building may rise holy and strong, admirable for ages, as wide as the Earth that will be completely covered by its light. I say light, not shadow, because My Temple will be made of spirits, not of opaque matters. I shall be its stone with My Eternal Spirit, and all those who follow My word and the new faith will be incorporeal bright holy stones for it. And the light will spread over the Earth, the light of the new Temple, and will cover it with wisdom and holiness. And only those will be left out of it who with impure tears weep and regret the past, because it was for them the source of completely human profits and honours.

Open to the new time and to the new Temple, o men of Samaria! Everything is new in it, and the ancient separations and borders, of thought and spirit, no longer exist. Sing, because the exile out of the city of God is about to come to an end. Are you happy to be considered as exiles and lepers by the other peoples of Israel? Do you rejoice feeling that you are like people rejected by the bosom

of God? Because that is what you feel, what your souls feel, your poor souls, which are closed in your bodies and are under the control of your arrogant thought that refuses to say to other men: "We erred, but like lost sheep we are now going back to the Fold". You do not want to say that to other men: and that is wrong. But at least say so to God. Even if you stifle the cries of your souls, God hears their groaning, as they are unhappy to be exiled from the house of the universal and most holy Father.

Listen to the words of the gradual psalm. You really are pilgrims who for ages have been going towards the high city, towards the true Jerusalem, the celestial one. From there, from Heaven, your souls descended to vivify a body, and they sigh to go back there. Why do you want to sacrifice your souls and disinherit them of the Kingdom? Which fault is theirs if they descended into bodies conceived in Samaria? They come from Only One Father. They have the same Creator as the souls of Judaea and Galilee, of Phoenicia and of the Decapolis. God is the aim of every spirit. Every soul tends to that God, even if all kinds of idolatry, or baleful heresies, schisms, or lack of faith, keep it in the ignorance of the true God, an ignorance that would be absolute if the soul did not have an indelible embryonal remembrance of the Truth and did not yearn for it. Oh! make that remembrance and yearning grow greater. Open the doors to your souls. Let the Light enter! Let the Life enter! Let the Truth enter! Let the Way be open! Let everything gush in brightly and vitally, like the rays of sunlight and the waves and the winds of equinoxes, so that the plant may grow from its embryo and rise upwards, closer and closer to its Lord.

Come out from your exile! Sing with Me: "When the Lord brings captives home, their souls seem to dream with joy. Our mouths are filled with smiles and our lips with songs. We shall now say: 'The Lord has worked marvels for us' ". Yes, the Lord has done great things for you and you will be overflowing with delight.

Oh! My Father! I pray to You for them as I pray for everybody. O Lord, let these prisoners of ours come back home, because, for You and for Me, they are prisoners in the chains of obstinate error. Lead them back, of Father, like a torrent that flows into the great river, lead them to the great sea of Your mercy and peace. My servants and I, shedding tears, are sowing Your truth in them. Father, grant that at the time of the great harvest, we, Your servants in teaching Your Truth, may reap the chosen corn of Your granaries with joy in these furrows, which now seem spread only with bramble and poison. Father! Father! Through our fatigue, and tears, and grief, and labours, and dead companions, who were and will be our companions in sowing, grant that we may come to You carrying, as sheaves, the choice part of this people, the souls reborn to Justice and Truth for Your glory. Amen. »

The silence, which was really impressive, so absolute as it was in such a large crowd that filled the synagogue and the square in front of it, is broken by a whispering that grows louder and louder and becomes a murmur… a cry… a hosanna. The crowds gesticulate, comment and applaud…

What a difference from the conclusion of the speeches in the Temple! Malachi says on behalf of everybody: « You only can tell the truth thus, without offending and mortifying anybody! You are really the Holy One of God! Pray for our peace. We have been hardened by ages of… beliefs and by ages of insults. And we must break this hard crust of ours. Bear with us. »

« Even more than that: I love you. Be of good will, and the crust will break by itself. May the Light come to you. »

He makes His way through the crowd and goes out followed by the apostles.

555. The Arrival of the Relatives of the Children with Many People of Shechem.

18th January 1947.

Jesus is all alone in the little island in the middle of the stream. The three children are playing on the bank on the other side of the stream and they are whispering in low voices in order not to disturb Jesus' meditation. Now and again the youngest one utters a cry of joy when he finds a beautifully coloured pebble or a fresh little flower, and the others tell him to be quiet saying: « Be quiet! Jesus is praying… » and their whispering is resumed when their little swarthy hands build sand blocks and cones that in their childish imagination are supposed to be houses and mountains.

The sun is shining high in the sky causing gems to swell on trees and buds to open in meadows. The green-grey leaves of the poplar tree are quivering in the breeze, and the birds up there, on the top, are engaged in love or rivalry skirmishes that at times end in a song, at times in a screech of pain.

Jesus is praying. Sitting on the grass, with a tuft of bog grass separating Him from the path along the bank, He is absorbed in His mental meditation. At times He looks up to watch the little ones playing over there on the grass. He then lowers His eyes again and becomes engrossed in His thoughts.

The shuffling of feet among the plants on the bank and the sudden arrival of John on the little island put to flight the birds that fly away from the top of the poplar putting an end to their carousel with screeches of fear.

John does not see Jesus at once, as He is concealed by the bog grass and he shouts rather perplexedly: « Where are You, Master? » Jesus stands up while the three children shout from the other

bank: « He is there! Behind the tall grass. »

But John has already seen Jesus and goes to Him saying: « Master, the relatives have come. The children's relatives. And many people from Shechem are with them. They went to Malachi, and Malachi brought them to our house. I have come looking for You. »

« And where is Judas? »

« I do not know. He went out immediately after You came here, and he has not come back yet. He must be in town. Shall I look for him? »

« No, it is not necessary. Stay here with the children. I want to speak to the relatives first. »

« As You wish, Master. »

Jesus goes away, and John joins the children and begins to help them in the enterprise of building a bridge across an imaginary river made of long reed leaves placed on the sand to simulate water…

Jesus enters the house of Mary of Jacob, who is at the door waiting for Him and says to Him: « They have gone up to the terrace. I took them there to let them rest. But here is Judas coming from the village. I will wait for him and then I will prepare some food for the pilgrims who are very tired. »

Jesus also waits for Judas in the vestibule, which is rather dark compared to the light outside. Judas does not see Jesus at once and while going in he says to the woman arrogantly: « Where are those from Shechem? Have they already left? And the Master? Is no one calling Him? John… » He sees Jesus and changes tone saying: « Master! I ran here when I was told, just by sheer chance… Were You already at home? »

« John was here and he came looking for Me. »

« I… I should have been here as well. But at the fountain they asked me to explain certain things to them… »

Jesus does not reply. He speaks only to greet those who are waiting for Him, sitting some on the low walls of the terrace, some in the room that opens on to it, and they all stand up to pay their respects to Him as soon as they see Him.

After greeting the group collectively, Jesus greets some of them calling them by their names, and they are so pleasantly surprised that they say: « Do You still remember our names? » They must be the people from Shechem.

And Jesus replies: « Your names, your faces and your souls. Did you come with the children's relatives? Are they the ones? »

« Yes, they are. They have come to take them and we joined them to thank You for Your pity for the little children of a woman from Samaria. You alone can do such things!… You are always the Holy One Who does nothing but holy things. We have always remembered You, too. And we came, because we heard that You were here. To see You and tell You that we are grateful to You for choosing us

as Your shelter place and for loving us in the children of our blood. But listen to the relatives. »

Jesus, followed by Judas, turns His steps towards them greeting them once again and inviting them to speak.

« We, I do not know whether You know, are the brothers of the children's mother. And we were very angry at her, because she foolishly and against our advice wanted this unhappy marriage. Our father was weak with the only daughter of his numerous offspring, so much so that we got angry with him as well, and for several years we did not speak to him or see him. Later, knowing that the hand of God lay heavy on the woman and there was poverty in her house, because an impure marriage is not defended by divine blessings, we took our old father in our house again, so that his only grief might be the poverty in which the woman languished. Then she died and we were told. You had passed by recently and people spoke of You… And overcoming our indignation, we suggested to her husband, through these two men from Shechem, that we would take the children. They were, by half, of our blood. He said that he would rather see them all die a bad death than live on our bread. He would not give us the children and not even the corpse of our sister, that it might be buried according to our rites! So we swore hatred to him and to his seed. And hatred struck him like a curse, so that from a free man it made him a servant and from a servant… a dead body like a jackal in a stinking den. We would never had known, because for a long time everything had come to an end between us. And we had a terrible fright, only that, when a week ago we saw those highwaymen appear on our threshing-floor. Then, when we heard why they had come, disdain, not grief, tormented us like poison, and we sent them away hurriedly offering them a good reward to make them friendly, and we were surprised to hear them say that they had already made their profit and did not want anything else. »

Judas suddenly breaks the dead silence of everybody with an ironical laugh and he shouts: « Their conversion! Complete! Really! »

Jesus looks at him severely, the others look at him seized with astonishment, and the man who was speaking, continues: « And what else could you expect from them? Is it not quite a lot that they came leading the young shepherd and daring danger, without accepting any reward? A miserable custom befits a miserable life. The prey taken from the foolish man who died like a tramp, was not a rich one! It wasn't rich at all! Hardly sufficient for those who had to stop plundering for at least ten days. And we were so astonished at their honesty, that we asked them which voice had spoken to them instilling so much pity into their hearts. So we learned that a rabbi had spoken to them… A rabbi! You only. Because no other rabbi in Israel could do what You did. And after they left we questioned the frightened shepherd boy in detail and we obtained a more

accurate account of the events. At first we only knew that our sister's husband was dead and that the children were at Ephraim with a just man, and then that the just man, who was a rabbi, had spoken to them and we at once thought that it was You. And when we arrived at Shechem at dawn, we consulted with these people, because we had not yet made up our minds whether we should accept the children. But these people said to us: "What? Has the Rabbi of Nazareth loved the children in vain? Is that what you want? Because it is certainly Him, have no doubt. Nay, let us all go to Him, because the kindness of His heart towards the children of Samaria is great". And after settling our business, we came here. Where are the children? »

« Near the stream. Judas, go and tell them to come. »

Judas goes away.

« Master, it is a difficult meeting for us. They remind us of all our troubles, and we are still undecided whether we should accept them. They are the sons of the worst enemy we ever had… »

« They are the children of God. They are innocent. Death cancels the past and expiation obtains forgiveness, also from God. Do you want to be more severe than God? And more cruel than the highwaymen? And more obstinate than they? The highwaymen wanted to kill the young shepherd and keep the children: the former as a prudent measure of defence, the latter out of human pity for defenceless children. The Rabbi spoke to them, and they did not kill and they have agreed, to the extent of bringing the young shepherd to you. Shall I have to admit defeat in righteous hearts, when I defeated crime?… »

« The matter is… We are four brothers, and there are already thirty-seven children in our house… »

« And where thirty-seven little sparrows find food, because the Father in Heaven makes them find grains, will forty not find any? Will the power of the Father not be able to provide food for three, nay, four more children of His? Is there a limit to His divine Providence? Will the Infinite God be frightened to fecundate your seeds, your plants and your sheep more than at present, so that bread and oil and wine and wool and meat be sufficient for your children and for four more poor boys who are now all alone? »

« They are three, Master! »

« They are four. The young shepherd is an orphan as well. If God should appear to you here, would you be able to maintain that your bread is so measured that you cannot feed and orphan? Pity for an orphan is prescribed by the Pentateuch… »

« No, we would not, Lord. That is true. We shall not be inferior to the highwaymen. We will give bread, clothes and lodging also to the young shepherd. And out of love for You. » « Out of love.

Out of all the love. For God, for His Messiah, for

your sister, for your neighbour. That is the homage and the forgiveness to be paid to your blood! Not a cold sepulchre for her dust. Forgiveness is peace. Peace for the spirit of man, who sinned. But it would only be false and entirely exterior forgiveness, and no peace for the spirit of the dead woman, who is your sister and the children's mother, if to the just expiation of God you add to torment her, the knowledge that her sons, although innocent, are expiating her sin. God's mercy is infinite. But add your own to give peace to the dead woman. »

« Oh! We will do that! We will! Our hearts would not have submitted to anybody, but they yield to You, o Rabbi, as You passed one day among us, sowing a seed that did not and will not die. »

« Amen! Here are the children… » and Jesus points at them on the bank of the stream, coming towards the house, and He calls them.

And they leave the hands of the apostles and run shouting: « Jesus! Jesus! » They go in, they climb the steps, they are on the terrace and they stop frightened by the presence of so many strangers looking at them.

« Come, Ruben, and you, Elisha, and you, Isaac. These men are the brothers of your mother and they have come to get you and join you to their sons. See how good the Lord is? Just like Mary of Jacob's pigeon, that we saw the day before yesterday feed a young one that was not its own, but of its dead brother. He has gathered you and gives you to these people so that they may take care of you and you will thus be no longer orphans. Come on! Greet your relatives. »

« The Lord be with you » gentlemen says the oldest one shyly, looking at the ground, and the two younger ones repeat his words.

« This one is very much like his mother, and this one also, but this other one (the oldest) is his father's double » remarks one of the relatives.

« My friend, I do not think that you are so unfair as to love differently because of a resemblance of faces » says Jesus.

« Oh! no. Certainly not. I was watching him… and thinking… I would not like him to have the same heart as his father. »

« He is still a tender child, and his simple words disclose that his love for his mother is by far deeper than any other love. »

« She kept them much better than we expected. Their clothes and shoes are decent. Perhaps she made her fortune… »

« My brothers and I have new garments because Jesus clothed us. We had neither shoes nor mantle, we were exactly like the shepherd » says the second-born who is not so timid as the first-born.

« We will compensate You for everything, Master » replies one of the relatives and he adds: « Joachim of Shechem had the offerings of the town, but we will add some more money… »

« No, I do not want any money. I want a promise: that you will love these children whom I snatched from the highwaymen. The

offerings… Malachi, take them for the poor who are known to you and give some to Mary of Jacob, because her house is really poor. »

« As you wish. If they are good we will love them. »

« We will be good, lord. We know that we must be so to find our mother and go up the river, as far as the bosom of Abraham, and that we must not take away the ropes of our boats from the hands of God in order not to be carried away by the current of the demon » says Ruben all in one breath.

« But what is the boy saying? »

« A parable I told them. I told it to comfort their hearts and to guide their spirits. And the children have understood it and they apply it to each of their actions. Familiarise with them while I speak to these people from Shechem… »

« Master, one more word. What amazed us in the highwaymen was their request to tell the Rabbi, Who had the children, to forgive them, if it had taken them a long time to come, considering that not every road is open to them and that the presence of a boy among them prevented them from marching long distances through wild gorges. »

« Did you hear that, Judas? » says Jesus to Judas who does not reply.

Then Jesus moves to one side with the people from Shechem, who wring the promise from Him of a visit, even a short one, before the summer heat. And in the meantime they inform Jesus of events of the town, and they tell Him that those who were cured by Him, in their bodies or souls, do remember Him.

Judas and John in the meantime are busy getting the children to fraternise with their relatives…

556. The Parable of the Drop That Excavates the Rock.

21st January 1947.

Jesus is walking along a solitary road. The children's relatives are ahead of Him, the people from Shechem are beside Him. They are in a wild area. No town is in sight. The children have been put on the backs of some donkeys and their relatives are holding the reins and watching them. The donkeys without any rider, as the people of Shechem have preferred to go on foot to be near Jesus, are going ahead of the men, in a herd and are braying, now and again, for joy of going back to their stables, without any load, on a wonderful day, between banks covered with fresh grass into which they dip their nostrils now and again to enjoy a mouthful of it, and then they caracole with joyful amble and join their companions laden with riders. Which makes the children laugh.

Jesus is speaking to the people of Shechem or is listening to what they say. The Samaritans are obviously proud to have the Master

with them and they are dreaming more than is convenient. So that they say to Jesus, pointing at the high mountains on the left of people going northwards: « See? Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim have a bad reputation. But, at least as far as You are concerned, they are much better than Zion. And they would be completely so, if You wanted that, by choosing them as Your dwelling place. Zion is always the den of the Jebusites. And the present ones are more hostile to You than the ancient ones were to David. By making use of violence David captured the citadel; but as You do not make use of violence, You will never reign there. Never. Stay with us, Lord, and we will honour You. »

Jesus replies: « Tell Me: would you have loved Me if I had tried to conquer you through violence? »

« Not… really. We love You because You are all love. »

« So it is through love that I reign in your hearts? »

« Yes, it is, Master. But it is so because we have accepted Your love. But those in Jerusalem do not love You. »

« That is true. They do not love Me . But since you are all expert in trading, tell Me: when you want to sell, buy and make a profit, do you lose heart because in certain places people do not love you, or do you do your business just the same, as you are only anxious to make good purchases and good sales, without worrying whether the money you have earned is devoid of the love of those who sold to you or bought of you? »

« We are only anxious to do good business. It does not matter if it lacks the love of those who deal with us. Once the business is done, there is no more connection. Only the profit remains, the rest… is of no importance. »

« Well, I do the same. Since I came to look after the interests of My Father, I must take care of them only. Then if I find love or derision or harshness where I look after them, it does not worry Me. In a trading town one does not make a profit, purchases or sales with everybody. But even if you deal with one person only and you make a good profit you say that your journey was not a useless one and you go back again and again. Because what you achieve with one person only the first time, you achieve with three people the second time, with seven the fourth time, with ten and ten thereafter. Is it not so? I act for the conquests for Heaven, as you do for your business. I insist, I persevere, I find that the little, in number, or the great are sufficient, because even only one soul saved is a great thing, the great reward obtained through My work. Every time that I go somewhere and I overcome what may be the reaction of the Man, so that as King of the spirit I may conquer only one subject, I do not say that My going there was useless or that I suffered or worked in vain. But I say that mockery, insults, accusations were holy, loving and desirable. I would not be a good conqueror if I

stopped before the obstacles of granitic fortresses. »

« But it would take You ages to defeat them. You… are a man. You will not live for ages. Why waste Your time where You are not wanted? »

« I shall live much less. Nay, I shall soon be no longer among you, I shall no longer see dawns and sunsets like milestones of days that rise and of days that end, but I shall only contemplate them as the beauties of creation and for them I will praise the Creator Who made them and Who is My Father; I shall no longer see trees blossom and corn ripen, neither shall I need the fruits of the earth to keep alive, because when I go back to My Kingdom, I will feed on love. And yet I will demolish the many fortresses closed in the hearts of men. Look at that stone up there, under that spring, on the slope of the mountain. The spring is a very scanty one, I would say that the water does not flow, but it drips: a drop that has been falling for ages on that rock protruding from the side of the mountain. And the stone is a very hard one. It is not crumbly limestone or soft alabaster, it is very hard basalt. And yet see how at the centre of the convex rock, and despite its shape, a tiny sheet of water has formed, not any larger than the calyx of a water-lily, but sufficient to reflect the blue sky and quench the thirst of birds. Did man perhaps make that cavity on the convex rock to place a blue gem on the dark rock and a refreshing cup for birds? No. Man took no part in it. In the many centuries during which men have passed before this rock that a drop of water has been hollowing out for ages with unrelenting rhythmical erosive action, we are perhaps the first to notice this dark basalt with its liquid turquoise in its centre, we admire its beauty and we praise the Eternal Father Who wanted it to delight our eyes and to refresh the birds that nest in the vicinity. But tell Me. Was it perhaps the first drop that leaked under the basaltic ledge above the rock and fell from that height on this block, was it that drop that excavated the cup which reflects the sky, the sun, clouds and stars? No. Millions and millions of drops have followed one another, leaking through like tears up there, sparkling as they descended to strike the rock and dying on it with the note of a harp, and excavated the hard material for so tiny a depth that is immeasurable, And thus for ages, marking the time like a sandglass, so many drops an hour, so many during a watch, so many between dawn and sunset, and between night and daybreak, so many a day, so many from Sabbath to Sabbath, so many from new moon to new moon, so many from Nisan to Nisan, and from one century to the next one. The rock resisted, the drop persisted. Man, who is proud and thus impatient and lazy, would have thrown away mallet and gouge after the first strokes saying: "It cannot be scooped out". The drop excavated it. It was what it had to do. What it was created for. And it groaned, one drop after the other, for ages, until it

hollowed out the rock. And afterwards it did not stop, saying: "Now the sky will see to nourishing the cup, which I excavated, with dews and rain, with frost and snow". But it continued to drop and by itself it fills the tiny cup during the warm summer months, during the rigours of winter, while pelting or drizzling rains wrinkle the sheet of water but cannot embellish or widen or deepen it, because it is already full, useful and beautiful. The spring knows that its daughters, the drops, go to die in the little basin, but does not hold them back. On the contrary it urges them towards their sacrifice, and to avoid them being left alone and becoming sad, it sends new sisters after them, so that the dying ones are not lonely and they see themselves perpetuated in the others . Likewise, being the first to strike the solid fortresses of hardened hearts thousands of times and being perpetuated in My successors, whom I will send until the end of time, I will open a way into them and My Law will enter like a sun wherever there are human creatures. If they refuse the Light and close the ways opened with unexhausted work, My successors and I will not be guilty in the eyes of our Father. If that spring of water had followed a different course, seeing the hardness of the rock, and had fallen in drops farther away, where the soil is covered with grass, tell Me, would we have that shining gem, and would the birds have that clear refreshment? »

« No, it would not have even been seen, Master »; « At most… some grass, thicker also in summer, would have indicated the spot where the spring dripped » « Or also… less grass than elsewhere, as its roots rotted in the perpetual dampness »; « And slush. Nothing else. Thus a useless trickle. »

« You are right. Useless, or at least worthless. I also would accomplish an imperfect task, if I were to prefer only those places where hearts are willing to accept Me out of justice or fondness. Because I would work but without any fatigue, nay, with great satisfaction of My ego, with a complaisant compromise between duty and pleasure. It is not toilsome to work where one is surrounded by love and where love makes souls ductile to work on. But if there is no fatigue there is no merit, neither is there much profit because few conquests are made if one limits oneself to those who are already in justice. I would not be Myself if I did not try to redeem all men first to the Truth and then to Grace. »

« And do You think that You will succeed? What else can You do in addition to what You have already done to persuade Your enemies to accept Your word? What, if not even the resurrection of the man in Bethany has served to make the Jews say that You are the Messiah of God? »

« I have still something greater to do, something much greater than that. »

« When, Lord? »

« When the moon of Nisan will be full. Pay attention then. »

« Will there be a sign in the sky? They say that when You were born the sky made it known by means of lights, songs and unusual stars. »

« It is true. To tell men that the Light had come to the world. Then, in Nisan, there will be signs in the sky and on the earth, and it will seem to be the end of the world, because of the darkness and the shaking and the roaring of thunder in the firmament and of the earthquakes in the opened bowels of the Earth. But it will not be the end. On the contrary, it will be the beginning. Previously, when I came, Heaven gave birth to the Saviour for men, and as it was a deed of God, peace was the companion of the event. At Nisan the Earth, of its own free-will, will give birth to the Redeemer for itself, and as it will be a deed of men, peace will not be its companion. But there will be a dreadful convulsion. And in the horror of the hour of the century and of hell, the Earth will tear its bosom under the burning arrows of divine wrath, and will shout its will, too inebriated to understand its purport, too strongly possessed by Satan to stop it. Like a mad woman in labour, it will think it is destroying the fruit believed to be cursed, and will not understand that it is instead rising it thus to places where neither sorrow nor snares will reach it. The tree, the new tree, will then spread out its branches all over the Earth, for ever and ever, and He Who is speaking to you will be acknowledged, either with love or with hatred, as the true Son of God and the Messiah of the Lord. And woe to those who will recognise Him without admitting it and without being converted to Me. »

« Where will that happen, Lord? »

« In Jerusalem. It is the city of the Lord. »

« So we shall not be there because in the month of Nisan we have to stay here for Passover. We are faithful to our Temple. » « It would be better if you were faithful to the living Temple that is neither on the Moria nor on the Gerizim, but being divine, is universal. But I can wait for your hour, when you will love God and His Messiah in spirit and truth. »

« We believe that You are the Christ. That is why we love You. »

« To love is to leave the past and enter My present time. You do not love me perfectly yet. »

The Samaritans look at one another stealthily without speaking. Then one of them says: « For Your sake, to come to You, we would do it. But even if we wanted, we cannot enter where there are Judaeans. You know that. They do not want us… »

« And you do not want them. But be at peace. Before long there will no longer be two regions, two Temples, two opposed opinions, but one people only, one Temple only, one faith only for all those eager for the Truth. But I will leave you now. The children by now

have been comforted and their attention has been distracted, and long is My way back to Ephraim to arrive there before it gets dark. Do not become excited. Your behaviour might attract the attention of the little ones, and it is better if they do not notice My departure. Go on, I am stopping here. May the Lord guide you along the paths of the Earth and on those of His Way. Go. »

Jesus draws close to the mountain and lets them go away. The last thing that is noticed, of the caravan going back to Shechem, is a child's joyful laughter that spreads along the silent mountain way.

557. Pilgrims Arrive in Ephraim from the Decapolis. Manaen's Secret Mission.

22nd January 1947.

The news that Jesus is in Ephraim, either because the citizens themselves have boasted about it, or for some other reason unknown to me, must have spread because many people come now looking for Jesus: mostly sick people, some distressed people and also some who wish to see Him. I realise that because I hear the Iscariot say to a group of pilgrims who have come from the Decapolis: « The Master is not here. But John and I are here and it is the same thing. So tell us what you want and we will please you. »

« But you will never be able to teach what He teaches » says one protesting.

« We are His representatives and are just like Him, man. Always bear that in mind. But if you really want to hear the Master come back before the Sabbath and go away after it. The Master now is a true Master. He no longer speaks in all the streets, in woods or rocky mountains like a stray, and at all hours like a servant. He speaks on the Sabbath here, as befits Him. And He is right, considering what He gained by wearing Himself out with fatigue and love! »

« But it is not our fault if the Judaeans… »

« Everybody! Everybody! Both Judaeans and non Judaeans! You are all alike and will always be so. He has given you everything. You have given Him nothing. He gives. You do not give; not even the mite that one, gives a beggar. »

« But we have an offering for Him. Here it is, if you do not believe us. »

John who has been silent all the time, but with evident embarrassment, looking at Judas with eyes that implore and reproach, or rather admonish him, can no longer be silent. And when Judas is already stretching out his hand to take the offering, he lays his hand on his companion's arm to hold him back and says to him: « No, Judas. Don't. You know the Master's order » and he addresses the

pilgrims saying: « Judas has explained himself badly and you have misunderstood him. That is not what my companion meant. It is only an offering of sincere faith, of loyal love that we, I, my companions, you, everybody must give for what the Master gives us. When we travelled around Palestine, He accepted your offerings because they were necessary for our journeys and because we met with many beggars, or we became acquainted with concealed miseries. Now, here, we need nothing - may Providence be praised for that - and we do not meet with beggars. Keep your offering and give it to distressed people in Jesus' name. That is the desire of our Lord and Master, and the order He gives to those among us who go evangelizing through the various towns. If you have sick people with you or anyone really needs to speak to the Master, tell us. And I will look for Him where He withdraws to pray, as His spirit is eager to collect its thoughts in the Lord. »

Judas grumbles something between his teeth but he does not contradict openly. He sits beside the fireplace in which the fire has been lit, as if he wished to take no further interest in the matter.

« Actually… we are not in need of anything special. But we heard that He was here and we crossed the river to come and see Him. But if we have done wrong… »

« No, brothers. It is not wrong to love Him and look for Him also by going to a lot of trouble and fatigue. And your good will will be rewarded. I will go and tell the Lord that you are here and He will certainly come. And if He should not come I will bring you His blessing. » And John goes out into the kitchen garden to go and look for the Master.

« Never mind! I will go » says Judas imperiously and he stands up and runs out.

John looks at him go away and does not make any objection. He goes back into the kitchen where the pilgrims are thronged. But almost at once he suggests: « Shall we go and meet the Master? »

« But if He did not want… »

« Oh! Please do not attach importance to a misunderstanding. You are certainly aware of the reasons why we are here. It is other people who compel the Master to take these measures of restraint, it is not according to His will or His heart. He is always as fond of you all as ever. »

« We know that. On the first days after the ban was announced publicly everybody was looking for Him beyond the Jordan and wherever they thought He might be. At Bethabara, at Bethany, at Pella and at Ramoth-Gilead and also farther away. And we know that the same happened in Judaea and in Galilee. The houses of His friends were closely watched because… if many are His friends and disciples, many are also those who are not such, and who think they serve the Most High by persecuting the Master. Then searches suddenly

stopped and the rumor spread that He was here. »

« But who told you? »

« His disciples. »

« My companions? Where? »

« No. None of them. They were different, new ones, because we never saw them with the Master or with the old disciples. In fact we were surprised that He should send people unknown to us to tell us where He was, then we thought that He might have done it because the new people were not known to the Judaeans as His disciples. »

« I do not know what the Master will say to you. But I think that as from now on you should listen only to the familiar disciples. Be prudent. Everybody in this country knows what happened to the Baptist… »

« Do you think that… »

« If John, who was hated only by one woman, was captured and killed, what will happen to Jesus, Who is hated both by the Royal Palace and the Temple, as well as by Pharisees, scribes, priests and Herodians? So be on the alert, so that later you may not have to repent… But here He comes. Let us go and meet Him… »

It is the dead of night. A moonless but starry night. I could not say what time it is as I cannot see the position or the phase of the moon. I can only see that it is a clear night. The whole of Ephraim has disappeared in the black veil of the night. The torrent also is only a noise, nothing else. Its foaming and sparkling have completely disappeared under the green vault of the trees on its banks as they hinder the faint light of the stars.

A night bird is moaning somewhere. Then it becomes silent because of the rustling noise of broken branches and reeds, a noise that comes nearer and nearer the house following the torrent and coming from the mountain side. Then a tall strong figure comes up from the bank on to the path that climbs towards the house. It stops for a moment as if it wanted to find its bearings. It grazes the wall groping with its hands. It finds the door. It touches it lightly and goes on. Still groping it turns the comer of the house, and proceeds as far as the little gate of the kitchen garden. It feels it, opens it, pushes it and goes in. It now skims the walls along the kitchen garden. It is perplexed at the kitchen door. It then proceeds as far as the outside staircase, it climbs it gropingly and sits on the last step, a dark shade in the shadow. But over there, to the east, the colour of the night sky - a dark velarium that is recognised for what it is only through the stars studding it - is beginning to change its shade, that is, it takes a hue that the eye can perceive as such: a slate-grey that looks like thick smoky fog and is nothing but the first light of dawn coming forth. And it is the new daily miracle

of light slowly coming back.

The person that was crouched on the step, a heap covered with a dark mantle, moves, stretches its arms, raises its head drawing its mantle behind it. It is Manaen. Dressed like an ordinary man in a heavy brown tunic and mantle of the same colour. A rough cloth, as workers or pilgrims wear, without ornaments, buckles or belts. An interlaced woollen cord tightens the garment at his waist. He stands up and stretches himself. He looks at the sky, where the advancing light enables the surroundings to be seen.

A door downstairs opens squeaking. Manaen leans out without making any noise to see who is coming out of the house. It is Jesus, Who cautiously closes the door again and moves towards the staircase. Manaen withdraws a little and clears his throat to attract the attention of Jesus, Who looks up, stopping half-way up the staircase.

« It is I, Master, Manaen. Come quickly because I must speak to You. I have been waiting for You… » whispers Manaen and he bows to greet Jesus.

Jesus climbs the last steps: « Peace to you. When did you come? How? Why? » He asks.

« I think I set foot here immediately after the cock's crowing. But I was in the bushes, down there at the bottom, at the second watch. »

« All night in the open air! »

« It could not be done any other way. I had to speak to You by myself. I had to know which way to come, which was the house, without being seen. So I came by day and I hid in the wood up there. I saw life calm down in town. I saw Judas and John go into the house. Nay, John passed very close to me with his load of firewood, but he did not see me because I was well concealed in the thick of the wood. While there was sufficient light to see, I saw an old woman go in and come out of the house, and the fire blaze in the kitchen, and I saw You descend from here in the deepening twilight. Then the house was closed. Then I came here in the light of the new moon and I studied the road. I also entered the kitchen garden. The little gate is more useless than no gate at all. I heard your voices. But I had to speak to You alone. I went away to come back here at the third watch and be here. I know that You usually get up before daybreak to pray. And I was hoping that You would do the same today. I praise the Most High that it is so. »

« But why had you to see Me with so much trouble? »

« Master, Joseph and Nicodemus want to speak to You and they are thinking of doing it in such a way as to elude everybody's surveillance. They made other attempts, but Beelzebub must be helping Your enemies very much. In each occasion they had to give up coming, because their houses and that of Nike were continuously watched. Actually the woman was to come before me. She is a strong woman and she had set out by herself towards mount Adummim.

But they followed her and stopped her at the Bloody slope (1), and in order not to reveal Your abode and to justify the foodstuffs she had on her mount, she said: "I am going up to one of my brothers who is in a grotto in the mountains. If you wish to come, as you teach the doctrine of God, you will accomplish a holy deed, because he is ill and in need of God". And with her daring she convinced them to go away. But she did not dare to come here any more and she really went to see one who she says lives in a grotto and was entrusted to her by You. »

« That is true. But then, how was Nike able to let the others know? »

« By going to Bethany. Lazarus is not there. But his sisters are. Mary is there. And is Mary a woman to be frightened of anything? She dressed herself perhaps more sumptuously than Judith did to go to the king, and she went to the Temple publicly with Sarah and Naomi and then to her mansion in Zion. And from there she sent Naomi to Joseph with the necessary information. And while… the Jews cunningly went or sent people to her house to… honour her, and everybody could see her, the mistress of the house, old Naomi wearing modest clothes went to Bezetha to inform the Elder. It was then agreed that I should come, as I am the nomad who does not rouse suspicion if I am seen riding at full gallop from one of Herod's dwelling places to another, to tell You that on Friday night Joseph and Nicodemus, the former coming from Arimathea, the latter from Ramah, will meet before sunset at Gofena and will wait for You there. I know the place and the road and I will come here in the evening to take You there. You can trust me. But trust me only, Master. Joseph begs You not to let anybody know that we are meeting. In everybody's interest. »

« Yours also, Manaen? »

« Lord… I am I. But I have no wealth or family interests to protect as Joseph has. »

« And that confirms My statement that material riches are always a burden… But you can tell Joseph that no one will be informed of our meeting. »

« I can go, then, Master. The sun has risen and Your disciples may get up. »

« You may go, and God be with you. I will come with you to show you the spot where we shall meet on Friday night… »

They go downstairs without making any noise and they go out of the kitchen garden and descend at once to the banks of the torrent.

(1) A spot on Mount Adummim was called -Bloody slope- because of the crimes committed there by highwaymen.

558. The Secret Meeting with Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus.

23rd January 1947.

The road taken by Manaen to lead Jesus to the place where He is expected is really a difficult one. A mountain road, narrow, covered with stones, running through maquis and woods. A very bright moonlight, in the first phase of the moon, can hardly penetrate the tangle of branches and at times it disappears completely, and Manaen makes up for the lack of light with torches that he has prepared and brought with him carrying them baldricwise like weapons under his mantle. He leads the way, Jesus follows him and they proceed in silence in the dead of the night. Two or three times a wild animal running in the wood simulates the noise of steps, which makes Manaen stop suspiciously. But apart from that nothing else disturbs their journey, which is toilsome by itself.

« Look, Master. That is Gofena over there. Now let us go round here. I shall count three hundred steps and we shall be at the grottoes where they have been waiting for us since sunset. Did You find the journey a long one? And yet we have taken short cuts that I think have complied with the legal distance. »

Jesus makes a gesture meaning: « We could not do it any other way. »

Manaen does not speak any more, intent as he is on counting his steps. They are now in a barren rocky corridor, like an ascending cavern, between the two mountain faces that almost touch each other. One would say that it is a fracture brought about by a cataclysm, so strange it looks. A huge knife-wound in the mountain rock, splitting one third of it from its summit. High above, beyond the sheer mountain faces, beyond the tossing branches of the trees that have grown on the edge of the huge cut, the stars are shining, but the moon gives no light down here, in this abyss. The smoky light of the torch awakes birds of prey, that cheep flapping their wings on the edges of their nests among the fissures.

Manaen says: « Here we are! » and he utters a cry similar to the wailing of a big owl, towards a cleft in the rocky slope.

Moving from the other end a reddish light comes forth along another rocky corridor, the upper part of which is closed like a lobby. Joseph appears: « The Master? » he asks not seeing Jesus Who is a little behind.

« I am here, Joseph. Peace to you. »

« Peace to You. Come! Come. We lit a fire to see snakes and scorpions and to warm the place. I will show You the way. »

He turns round and along the undulations of the path in the bowels of the mountain he leads them towards a place lit up by flames. Near a fire there is Nicodemus who is throwing branches and junipers on it.

« Peace to you, too, Nicodemus. Here I am with you. Speak. »

« Master, has anybody noticed Your coming? »

« Who on earth could, Nicodemus? »

« Are Your disciples not with You? »

« John and Judas of Simon are with Me. The others are evangelizing from the day after the Sabbath to sunset on Fridays. But I left the house before midday telling them not to wait for Me before dawn on the day after the Sabbath. I am too accustomed by now to being absent for several hours to rouse suspicion in anybody. So you need not worry. We have plenty time to talk without worrying about being caught. The place here… is propitious. »

« Yes. Nests of snakes and vultures… and of highwaymen in the good season, when these mountains are full of herds. But nowadays highwaymen prefer other places from which to descend suddenly on folds and caravan tracks. We are sorry that we dragged You so far. But we shall be able to depart from here taking different roads, without attracting anybody's attention. Because, Master, the attention of the Sanhedrin is directed wherever they suspect that You are loved. »

« Well, I disagree with Joseph with regard to that. I think that we now see ghosts where there are none. I also think that the situation has calmed very much these last days… » says Nicodemus.

« You are wrong, my friend. I tell you. It has calmed down because there is no spur to look for the Master, because now they know where He is. That is why He is being watched, and we are not. And that is why I begged Him not to tell anybody that we were going to meet. So that no one might be ready… for anything » says Joseph.

« I don't think that the people of Ephraim… » remarks Manaen.

« Neither the people of Ephraim or anybody else from Samaria. For the only purpose of doing the opposite of what we do on the other side… »

« No, Joseph, not for that. But because they do not have in their hearts the evil serpent that you have. They are not afraid of being despoiled of any prerogative. They have no sectarian or caste interests to defend. They have nothing but an instinctive need to feel that they are loved and forgiven by Him Whom their ancestors offended and Whom they continue to offend by remaining outside the perfect Religion. Outside because, as they are as proud as you are, neither part can lay aside the hatred dividing them and stretch their hands in the name of the Only Father. Even if they had so much good will, you would demolish it. Because you cannot forgive. You cannot say, trampling on all foolishness: "The past is dead because the Prince of the future Century has risen and He gathers us all under His Sign". I have in fact come and I gather. But you! Oh! for you, also what I considered worthy of being gathered is always anathema! »

« You are severe with us, Master. »

« I am just. Can you perhaps say that you do not reproach Me, in your hearts, for some of My deeds? Can you say that you approve of My mercy being the same for Judaeans and Galileans as for Samaritans and Gentiles, nay, even greater for the latter and for big sinners, just because they are in greater need of it? Can you say that you would not expect gestures of violent majesty from Me in order to manifest My supernatural origin, and above all, mind you, and above all, to manifest My mission of Messiah according to your idea of the Messiah? Speak the real truth: apart from the joy of your hearts for the resurrection of your friend, would you not have preferred to such joy that I should have arrived in Bethany as a handsome cruel warrior, as our ancestors were with the Amorites and the Bashanites, and as Joshua was with the people of Ai and of Jericho, or better still: making stones and walls collapse on My enemies with My voice, as Joshua's trumpets did with the walls of Jericho, or drawing huge stones on My enemies from Heaven as it happened on the descent of Beth-horon still in the days of Joshua or, as in more recent times, calling celestial knights galloping through the air, in cloth of gold, troops of lancers fully armed, squadrons of cavalry in order of battle, attacks and charges this way and that, a flourish of shields and armies with helmets brandishing swords and hurling missiles to terrorise My enemies? Yes, that is what you would have preferred because, although you love Me very much, your love is still impure, and it is kindled, in wishing what is not holy, by your thoughts of Israelites, by your old thoughts. What is in Gamaliel as well as in the last man in Israel, what is in the High Priest, in the Tetrarch, in the peasant, in the shepherd, in the nomad, in the man of the Diaspora. The fixed idea of the Messiah conqueror. The nightmare of those who are afraid of being crushed by Him. The hope of those who love the Fatherland with the violence of human love. The eagerness of those who are oppressed under foreign powers, in foreign countries. It is not your fault. The pure concept, as had been given by God with regard to what I am, has been covered, throughout centuries, with layers of useless scum. And only few know how to take the Messianic idea back to its initial purity, and they do so through their own sufferings. And now, as the time is close when the sign, which Gamaliel is expecting, and the whole of Israel with him, is to be given, and now that the time of My perfect manifestation is drawing closer, Satan is working to deteriorate your love and to adulterate your thoughts. His hour is now coming. I tell you. And, in that hour of darkness, also those who at present can see or are only a little blind, will be completely blind. Only few, very few people will recognise the Messiah in the demolished Man. Only few will recognise Him as the true Messiah, exactly because He will be demolished as the

prophets saw Him. For the sake of My friends, I would like them to be able to see Me and know Me, while it is still daytime, so that they may recognise Me and see Me also when I am disfigured and in the darkness of the hour of the world… But tell Me now what you wanted to tell Me. Time passes quickly and it will soon be dawn. I am saying this for your sake, because I am not afraid of any dangerous encounter. »

« Well. We wanted to tell You that someone must have said where You are and that someone is certainly not I or Nicodemus, or Manaen, or Lazarus, or his sisters, or Nike. To whom else have You spoken of the place You chose for Your shelter? »

« To nobody, Joseph. »

« Are You sure? »

« Most definitely. »

« And did You tell Your disciples not to mention it? »

« Before departing I did not speak to them of the place. When we arrived in Ephraim I told them to go and evangelize and to act in My stead. And I am sure of their obedience. »

« And… Are You alone in Ephraim? »

« No. I am with John and Judas of Simon. I have already told you. He, Judas, as I can read his thoughts, cannot have done any harm to Me, through his heedlessness, because he never left the town, and in these days no pilgrims from other places pass through it. »

« Then… it is really Beelzebub that has spoken. Because at the Sanhedrin they know that You are there. »

« So? What are their reactions to My behaviour? »

« Several, Master. And very different. Some say that it is logical. Since they banned You from the holy places, You had no option but to take shelter in Samaria. Others instead maintain that this proves what You are: a Samaritan in Your soul, even more than by race, and that that is enough to condemn You. And they all exult at having been successful in reducing You to silence and at being able to point You out to the crowds as a friend of the Samaritans. They are saying: "We have already won the battle. The rest will be child's play". But we beg You, do not allow that to happen. »

« It will not happen. Let them speak. Those who love Me will not be upset by appearances. Allow the wind to drop completely. It is a wind of the earth. Then the wind of Heaven will blow, the velarium will open and the glory of God will appear. Have you anything else to tell Me? »

« No, nothing concerning You. Be on the alert, be careful, do not leave the place where You are now. And we will keep You informed… »

« No. It is not necessary. Stay where you are. I shall soon have the women disciples with Me and, yes, tell Eliza and Nike to join the other women disciples, if they so wish. Tell the two sisters as well.

As My place is now known, those who are not afraid of the Sanhedrin can now come for our reciprocal comfort. »

« The two sisters cannot come until Lazarus comes back. He left with much pomp, and everybody in Jerusalem knew that he was going to his remote estates, but it is not known when he will come back. But his servant has already come back from Nazareth and he said - and we must tell You also this - he said that Your Mother will be here with the other women disciples before the end of this moon. She is well and so is Mary of Alphaeus. The servant saw them. But they are delaying a little because Johanna wants to come with them, but she cannot until the end of this moon. And then… well, if You will allow us, we would like to help You… as faithful friends even if… imperfect as You say. »

« No. The disciples who go around evangelizing, every Friday evening bring what is necessary for them and for us who remain in Ephraim. Nothing else is required. A workman lives on his wages. That is fair. The rest would be superfluous. Give it to some poor wretch. That is what I told also those in Ephraim and My apostles. My instructions are that when they come back they must not have one farthing left over and that on their way they must give away all the offerings, keeping for us only what is necessary for our very frugal food for one week. »

« Why, Master? »

« To teach them detachment from riches and the superiority of the spirit over the worries of the morrow. And for that and for other good reasons of Mine as a Master, I ask you not to insist. »

« As You wish. But we are sorry that we cannot help You. »

« The day will come when you will do that… Is that not the first light of dawn? » He says looking eastwards, that is to the side opposite to the one He came, and pointing at a timid gleam that becomes visible on remote backgrounds.

« It is. We must part. I am going back to Gofena where I left my horse, and Nicodemus will go down on this other side towards Beeroth, and from there to Ramah, when the Sabbath is over. »

« And what about you, Manaen? »

« Oh! Without hiding myself I will go along the main roads towards Jericho, where Herod is now. My horse is in the house of some poor people who for a mite do not loathe anything, not even a Samaritan, as they believe me to be. But I am staying with You just now. In my bag I have food for two. »

« Well, let us say goodbye. We shall meet again at Passover. »

« No! You are not going to put Yourself to that test! » say Joseph and Nicodemus. « Don't do that, Master! »

« You are really bad friends, because you are advising Me to commit sin and to be cowardly. Would you then be able to love Me, considering what I had done? Tell Me. Be sincere. Where should I go

and worship the Lord at the Passover of the Unleavened Bread? Perhaps on Mount Gerizim? Or should I not appear before the Lord in the Temple in Jerusalem, as every male must do at the three great yearly festivities? Do you not remember that they are already accusing Me of not respecting the Sabbath, although - and Manaen can witness this - even today, to satisfy your request, I departed in the evening from a place that conciliated your desire with the sabbatic law? »

« We also stopped at Gofena for that reason… We will offer a sacrifice to expiate an involuntary transgression brought about by a motive that could not be derogated from. But You, Master!… They will see You at once… »

« Even if they should not see Me, I will try to make them see Me. »

« You want to ruin Yourself! It is the same as if You committed suicide… »

« No. Your minds are enveloped in darkness. It is not the same as if I wanted to kill Myself, it is only obedience to the voice of My Father Who says to Me: "Go. It is Your hour". I have always endeavoured to reconcile the Law with necessities, also on the day that I had to flee from Bethany and take refuge at Ephraim because it was not My hour to be caught. The Lamb of Salvation can only be sacrificed at the Passover of the Unleavened Bread. And if I behaved thus for the Law, do you want Me to do otherwise with regard to the order of My Father? Go, you may go! Do not grieve thus. And why did I come, if it was not that I should be proclaimed the King of all peoples? Because that is the meaning of "Messiah", is it not? Yes, that is what it means. And "Redeemer" also means that. The only trouble is that the meaning of these two words does not correspond to what you fancy. But I bless you, imploring a celestial ray to descend upon you with My blessing. Because I love you and you love Me. Because I would like your justice to be entirely bright. Because you are not wicked, but you, too, are "Old Israel", and you do not have the heroic will to despoil yourselves of the past and become new. Goodbye, Joseph. Be just. Just like him who was My guardian for so many years and who was capable of every renovation to serve the Lord his God. If he were here, among us, oh! how he would teach you to serve the Lord perfectly, to be just, just, just. But it is right that he should already be in Abraham's bosom!… In order not to see the injustice of Israel. Holy servant of God!… A new Abraham, with a broken heart, but with perfect will, he would not have advised Me to be cowardly, but he would have spoken the words that he used to utter when anything painful weighed heavily on us: "Let us raise our spirits. We shall meet the yes of God and we shall forget that it is men who grieve us. And let us do whatever is burdensome, as if the Most High presented it to us. In this way we shall sanctify also the least things,

and God will love us". Oh! He would have said so also to comfort Me to suffer the deepest sorrows… He would have comforted us… Oh! My Mother!… »

Jesus releases Joseph whom He had clasped in His arms and He lowers His head remaining silent, undoubtedly contemplating His imminent martyrdom and that of His poor Mother… He then raises His head and embraces Nicodemus saying: « The first time you came to Me as a secret disciple, I told you that to enter the Kingdom of God and to have the Kingdom of God in you it is necessary for your spirits to be born again and for you to love the Light more than the world loves it. Today, and this is perhaps the last time we shall meet secretly, I repeat the same words to you. Be born again in your spirit, Nicodemus, to be able to love the Light, which I am, and I may dwell in you as King and Saviour. Go now. And God be with you. »

The two members of the Sanhedrin go away in the opposite direction to the one in which Jesus came. When the noise of their steps has faded away, Manaean, who had gone to the entrance of the grotto to see them go away, comes back and with an expressive countenance he says: « And for once they will be the ones who infringe the Sabbatic law! And they will have no peace until they settle their debt with the Eternal Father by sacrificing an animal! Would it not be better for them to sacrifice their tranquillity by declaring themselves "Your disciples" openly? Would that not be more pleasing to the Most High? »

« It would certainly be. But do not judge them. They are doughs that rise slowly. But at the right moment, when many, who think they are better than they are, collapse, they will rise against the whole world. »

« Are You referring to me, Lord? Please take my life, but do not let me deny You. »

« You will not deny Me. But there are constituents in you, different from theirs, and they will help you to be faithful. »

« Yes, I am… the Herodian. That is: I was the Herodian. Because as I turned my back on the Council, so I turned my back on the party, when I saw it was vile and unfair towards You just like the others. To be a Herodian!… To the other castes it means being little less than a heathen. I do not mean that we are saints. That is true. For an impure purpose we committed impurity. I am speaking as if I were still the Herodian I was before being Your disciple. According to human opinion, therefore, we are twice impure, because we are the allies of the Romans, and because we did it for our own profit. But tell me, Master, as You always speak the truth and never refrain from it for fear of losing a friend. Between us who have entered into an alliance with Rome to… have fleeting personal triumphs and the Pharisees, the Chief Priests, the scribes, the Sadducees,

who enter into an alliance with Satan to crush You, which are more impure? I, see? Now that I have realised that the party of the Herodians is siding with Your enemies, I left it. I am not telling You to be praised by You, but to tell You what I think. And they, I mean the Pharisees and priests, the scribes and Sadducees, are convinced of getting a profit out of this sudden alliance of the Herodians with them! The wretches! They do not know that the Herodians do it to gain more merits, and thus greater protection from the Romans, and later… once the cause and the reason joining them are defined and finished, they will demolish those with whom they now form an alliance. And they trifle with each other like that. Everything is based on deceit. And that disgusts me so much that I have made myself completely independent. You… You are a great frightening ghost. For everybody! And You are also the pretence for the foul game of the various parties' interests. The religious motive? The sacred indignation for the "blasphemer", as they call You? It's nothing but lies! The only motive is neither the defence of Religion, nor the sacred zeal for the Most High, but their greedy, insatiable interests. They make me sick like filthy things. And I would like… Yes, I would like the few who are not corrupt to be more daring. Ah! A double life is troublesome to me now! I would like to follow You alone. But I can serve You better thus than if I followed You. It's a burden to me… But You say that it will soon be… What… But will You really be sacrificed as the Lamb? But is it not figurative language? The life of Israel is woven with symbols and figures… »

« And you would like it to be so for Me… But Mine is not a figure. »

« Is it not? Are You really sure? I could… Many of us could repeat ancient gestures and have You anointed Messiah, and defend You. One word would suffice and the defenders of the holy wise Pontiff would rise in thousands and thousands. I do not mean an earthly king, as I now know that Your Kingdom is entirely spiritual. But as we shall never again be humanly free and strong, let at least Your holiness support and heal corrupt Israel. No one, as You are aware, loves the present priesthood and those supporting it. Do You want that, Lord? Tell me, and I will do it. »

« You have already gone a long way with your thought, Manaen. But you are still as far from your goal as the Earth is from the sun. I will be Priest, and for ever, immortal Pontiff in an organism that I will enliven to the end of time. But I shall not be anointed with the oil of delight, neither shall I be proclaimed and defended by the gestures of violence brought about by a handful of believers to throw our Fatherland into a wild schism and make it more enslaved than it ever was. And do you think that the hand of a man can anoint the Christ? I solemnly tell you that it cannot. The true Authority that will anoint Me Pontiff and Messiah is that of Him Who sent

Me. No other person, who is not God, could anoint God as King of kings and Lord of lords, for ever. »

« So, nothing!? There is nothing we can do!? How grieved I am! »

Everything, by loving Me. It is everything. By loving not the person whose name is Jesus, but what Jesus is. By loving Me with your humanity and your spirit, as I love you with Spirit and Humanity, in order to be with Me beyond Humanity. Look how beautiful is dawn. The quiet light of the stars did not shine in here. But the triumphant light of the sun does. The same will happen in the hearts of those who succeed in loving Me with justice. Come outside, in the silence of the mountain, clear of the hoarse human voices of interests. Look over there at those eagles, how with wide flights they soar away in search of prey. Can we see that prey? No, we cannot, but they can. Because the eyes of an eagle are more powerful than ours and from above where they rove, they can see a wide horizon and can choose. I do the same. I see what you cannot see, and from above where it hovers, My spirit can choose My sweet preys. Not to tear them to pieces as vultures and eagles do, but to take them with Me. We shall be so happy there, in the Kingdom of My Father, we who loved each other!…

And Jesus, Who while speaking has gone outside to sit in the sun at the entrance of the grotto, embraces Manaen, who was beside Him, and He smiles silently at I do not know which vision…

559. The Saphorim Samuel.

5th February 1947.

Jesus is alone. He is still in the grotto. A fire is lit to give light and warmth, and a strong smell of resins and leafy branches spreads in the cavern amid crackling and sparks. Jesus has withdrawn to the end, in a recess where dry branches have been thrown and He is meditating. The flames waver now and again, they abate and brighten up successively because of gusts of wind blowing through the woods and howling upon entering the cavern that resounds like a bugle-horn. It is not a steady wind. It drops, then it rises like long sea waves. When it whistles louder, ashes and dry leaves are blown towards the narrow rocky corridor through which Jesus has come into the larger part of the grotto, and the flames bend lapping the floor on that side, then, when the gush of the wind drops, they rise again, still sparkling, and they resume shining straight upwards. Jesus pays no attention to them. He is meditating. The sound of the wind is joined by the fall of rain that patters, at first lightly then heavily, on the leafy boughs of the underwood. A real downpour soon changes the paths on the slopes into little roaring torrents. The noise of the water is now the prevailing one as the wind has slowly dropped. The very faint light of the stormy twilight, and that of

the fire, which is reddish but does no longer blaze, for want of fuel, scarcely light up the cavern and the comers are in darkness. Jesus, dressed in dark robes as He is, can no longer be seen; only when He lifts His head, which is bent on His raised knees, it is possible to see a faint gleam against the dark wall.

Outside the grotto, on the path there is the noise of steps and of anxious words, as if they were uttered by someone who is tired and weary. Then in the empty space at the entrance, a dark shadow is outlined dripping water on all sides. The man, because it is a man with a heavy dark beard, utters an « oh! » of relief and throws his drenched headgear on the floor, he shakes his mantle and says to himself: « H'm! Samuel, you can give it a good shaking! It seems to have dropped into a fulling-mill! And my sandals? Boats! Boats sunk in a river! I am drenched to the skin! Look how my hair is dripping! I look like a broken roof gutter leaking through a thousand holes. It's a good start! Is perhaps Beelzebub on His side defending Him? H'm! It's a beautiful stake… but… » He sits on a stone near the fire, in which, as the flame is dead, there are reddish embers forming the strange designs that are the last life of burnt out wood, and he tries to rekindle it by blowing on it. He takes off his sandals and tries to dry his muddy feet with the drier parts of the edge of his mantle. But it is the same as if he were drying himself with water. His effort serves only to remove the mud from his feet and put it on the mantle. He continues to speak to himself: « Cursed be they, He and everybody! And I lost also my bag. Of course! It's a good job I have not lost my life… "It's the safest road" they said. Certainly! But they don't take it! If I had not seen this fire! Who will have lit it? Some poor wretch like me. But where will he be now? There is a hole over there… Perhaps another grotto… They won't be highwaymen, will they? But… what a fool I am! What can they take off me if I have not got even a farthing? But it does not matter. This fire is worth more than a treasure. I wish I had some more branches to rekindle it! I would take my clothes off and dry them. Ho! I say! This is all I have until I go back!… »

« If you want more branches, My friend, there are some here » says Jesus without moving from His place.

The man, whose back was turned towards Jesus, starts at the sudden voice and jumps to his feet turning round. He looks frightened. « Who are you? » he asks, opening his eyes wide trying to see.

« A wayfarer like you. I lit the fire and I am glad it served to guide you. » Jesus approaches him with a bundle of sticks in His arms and He throws them near the fire saying: « Rekindle the flame before everything is covered with ash. I have neither flint nor tinder-box because the man from whom I borrowed them went away after sunset. » Jesus speaks in a friendly way, but He does not come forward so that the fire may illuminate Him. On the contrary, He goes back

to His corner and remains well enveloped in His mantle.

The man, in the meantime, bends to blow hard on some leaves he has thrown on the fire and he remains thus, busy, until they flame rises. He laughs throwing thicker and thicker branches that rekindle the fire. Jesus, sitting in His place, watches Him. « I should now take my clothes off and let them dry. I prefer to be nude rather than be wet. But I cannot even do that. A slope slid down and I found myself under a fall of earth and water. Ah! I am settled now! Look! I have torn my tunic. Cursed journey! I wish I had infringed the Sabbath! I didn't! I stopped until sunset. Later… And what shall I do now? To save myself I let my bag go and now it will be down at the bottom of the valley or it will be entangled in some bush I wonder where… »

« Here is My tunic. It is dry and warm. My mantle is enough for Me. Take it. I am in good health. Be not afraid. »

« And You are good. A good friend. How can I thank You? »

« By loving Me as if I were your brother. »

« By loving You as is You were my brother! But You do not know who I am. And if I were wicked, would you wish to have my love? »

« I would, to make you good. »

The man, who is young, about the same age as Jesus, lowers his head, meditating. He is holding Jesus' garment in his hands, but he cannot see it. He is pensive. And he automatically slips it on over his bare skin because he has stripped himself completely, also of his vest.

Jesus, Who had gone back to His corner asks him: « When did you have some food? »

« At the sixth hour. I was to have a meal when I arrived in the village, down in the valley. But I lost my way, my bag and my money. »

« I have still some remnants of food here. I was to eat them tomorrow. Take them. Fasting is no burden to Me. »

« But… if You have to walk, You will need some strength… »

« Oh! I am not going far. Only as far as Ephraim… »

« Ephraim?! Are You a Samaritan? »

« Does that irritate you? I am not a Samaritan. »

« In fact… Your accent is Galilean. Who are You? Why do You not uncover Your face? Have You to hide Yourself because You are guilty? I will not denounce You. »

« I am a wayfarer. I have already told you. My Name would mean nothing to you, or it would mean too much. In any case, what is a name? When I give you a garment for your frozen body, some food to appease your hunger, and above all My pity for your heart, do you need to know My Name to feel the comfort of dry clothes, of food and love? But if you wish to give Me a name, call Me "Pity". There is nothing disgraceful compelling Me to hide Myself. But not

because of that you would give up denouncing Me. Because in your heart there is a bad thought. And bad thoughts yield fruits of evil deeds. »

The man starts and approaches Jesus. But only Jesus' eyes can be seen and they are almost veiled by His lowered eyelids.

« Take the food, My friend. There is nothing else to be done. »

The man goes back to the fire and begins to eat slowly, without speaking. He is pensive. Jesus is all curled up in His little comer. The man refreshes himself slowly. The warmth of the flames, the bread and roasted meat given to him by Jesus, make him happy. He stands up, he stretches himself, he lays the cord, which he used as a belt, from a rock splinter to a rusty hook, goodness knows who fixed it there and how long ago, and hangs his tunic, mantle, headgear to dry on it, he shakes his sandals and puts them near the fire, which he tends generously.

Jesus seems to be dozing. The man also sits down and is pensive. He then turns round to look at the Unknown Man. He asks: « Are You sleeping? »

Jesus replies: « No. I am thinking and praying. »

« For whom? »

« For all the unhappy people. Of every kind. And they are so many! »

« Are You a penitent? »

« I am a penitent. The Earth is in great need of repentance so that the weak living on it may be given strength to reject Satan. »

« You are right. You speak like a rabbi. I am a good judge because I am a saphorim. I am a disciple of rabbi Jonathan ben Uziel. His dearest disciple. And now, if the Most High helps me, I shall become even dearer to him. My name will be exalted all over Israel. »

Jesus does not reply.

The other man, after a few moments, stands up and sits near Jesus. With one hand he smoothes his hair that is almost dry and tidies his beard saying: « Listen. You said that You are going to Ephraim. Are You going there just by chance, or do You live there? »

« I live in Ephraim. »

« But You are not a Samaritan, so You said! »

« I repeat it. I am not a Samaritan. »

« And who can live there if not… Listen: they say that the cursed outlawed Rabbi of Nazareth has taken shelter at Ephraim. Is it true? »

« It is true. Jesus, the Christ of the Lord, is there. »

« He is not the Christ of the Lord! He is a liar! He is a blasphemer! He is a demon! He is the cause of all our troubles. And no avenger of all the people rises to overthrow Him! » he exclaims with fanatic hatred.

« Has He perhaps done any harm to you, since you speak of Him

with so much hatred in your voice? »

« Not to me. I saw Him just once at the feast of the Tabernacles, and in such a tumult, that I would find it difficult to recognise Him. Because, while it is true that I am a disciple of the great rabbi Jonathan ben Uziel, I have been at the Temple definitively only for a short time. Previously… I was not able for many reasons, and only when the rabbi was at home I used to sit at his feet to drink in justice and doctrine. But You… You asked me whether I hate Him, and I perceived a hidden reproach in Your words. Are You perhaps a follower of the Nazarene? »

« No, I am not. But hatred is condemned by anybody who is just. »

« Hatred is holy when it is against an enemy of God and of the Fatherland. The Nazarene Rabbi is such. And it is holy to fight Him and hate Him. »

« To fight the man or the idea that He represents and the doctrine that He proclaims? »

« Everything! Everything! You cannot fight one thing if you spare the other. In man there is his doctrine and his idea. You either overthrow everything, or it serves no purpose. When you embrace an idea, you embrace the man who represents it and his doctrine at the same time. I know because I experience that with my master. His ideas are mine. His wishes are my law. »

« In fact a good disciples behaves thus. But one must be able to tell whether the master is good, and follow only a good master. Because it is not lawful to lose one's soul for the love of a man. »

« Jonathan ben Uziel is good. »

« No. He is not. »

« What are You saying? And are You telling me? While we are here all alone and I could kill You to avenge my master? I am strong, You know? »

« I am not afraid. I am not afraid of violence. And I am not afraid as I know also that if you strike Me, I will not react. »

« Ah! I see! You are a disciple of the Rabbi, an "apostle". That is how He calls His most faithful disciples. And You are going to join Him. Perhaps the man who was with You was another one like You. And You are waiting for someone like You. »

« Yes, I am waiting for someone. »

« For the Rabbi, perhaps? »

« There is no need for Me to wait for Him. He does not need My word to be cured of His disease. His soul is not diseased, neither is His body. I am waiting for a poor soul that is poisoned and raving. To cure it. »

« You are an apostle! We know in fact that He sends them to evangelize as He is afraid to go Himself, since He was condemned by the Sanhedrin. That is why You follow His doctrine! It is His doctrine not to react against those who offend. »

« It is His doctrine because He teaches love, forgiveness, justice, meekness. He loves both enemies and friends. Because He sees everything in God. »

« Oh! If He should meet me, if, as I hope, I will meet Him, I don't think He will love me! It would be foolish of Him! But I cannot tell You, as You are His apostle. And I regret what I have already told You. You will inform Him. »

« There is no need. But I solemnly tell you that He will love you, nay, He loves you, notwithstanding that you are going to Ephraim to ensnare Him and hand Him over to the Sanhedrin, who have promised a large reward to whoever will do that. »

« Are You… a prophet or have You the python spirit? Has He transmitted His power to You? So You are cursed as well? And I accepted Your bread, your garment, You have been friendly to me! It is written: "You shall not raise your hand against your benefactor". You have done that! Because, if You knew that I… Perhaps to prevent me from acting? But if I spare You, because You have given me bread and salt, fire and clothes, and I would sin against justice by harming You, I will not spare Your Rabbi. Because I do not know Him, and He has not done me any good, but He has done me evil. »

« Oh! poor wretch! Do you not realise that you are raving? How can one whom you do not know have done evil to you? How can you respect the Sabbath, if you do not respect the precept not to kill?… »

« I do not kill. »

« Materially, you do not. But there is no difference between him who kills and him who hands the victim over to the killer. You respect the word of a man who says that you must not harm your benefactor, but you do not respect the word of God, and with a snare, for a handful of money, for a little honour, the filthy honour of being able to betray an innocent person, you are getting ready to commit a crime!… »

« I am not doing it just for the sake of money and honour. But to do something pleasing to Jehovah and beneficial to our Fatherland. I am repeating the gestures of Jael and Judith. » He is more fanatic than ever.

« Sisara and Holofernes were enemies of our Fatherland. They were invaders. They were cruel. But what is the Rabbi of Nazareth? What does He invade? What does he usurp? He is poor and He does not seek riches. He is humble and does not want honours. He is good. To everybody. Thousands of people have been assisted by Him. Why do you all hate Him? Why do you hate Him? It is not lawful to injure your neighbour. You serve the Sanhedrin. But will the Sanhedrin judge you in future life, or will God judge you? And how will He judge you? I do not mean: how will He judge you as killer of the Christ, but I mean: how will He judge you as killer of an innocent

You do not believe that the Rabbi of Nazareth is the Christ, and consequently, because of your belief that He is not, you will not be charged with that crime. God is just and He does not consider guilty an action accomplished without full knowledge. So He will not judge you for killing the Christ, because, as far as you are concerned, Jesus of Nazareth is not the Christ. But He will accuse you of killing an innocent. Because you know that He is innocent. They have poisoned you and by means of words of hatred they have intoxicated you, but not to the extent that you do not understand that He is innocent. His works speak in His favour. Your fear, and your masters are more frightened that their disciples, dreads and sees what does not exist. You are afraid that He may supplant you. Be not afraid. He stretches out His arms towards you saying: "Brothers"! He does not send soldiers against you. He does not curse you. He would only like to save you, both the great ones and their disciples, as He wishes to save the last person in Israel. And He wishes to save you, more than the least person in Israel, more than the child who does not yet know what are hatred and love. Because you are in greater need than ignorant people and children, because you know, and you knowingly sin. Can your conscience of a man, if you clear it of the ideas they have instilled into it, if you cleanse it of the poison that makes you rave, can it tell you that He is guilty? Tell Me. Be sincere. Have you ever seen Him infringe the Law, or advise people to infringe it? Have you ever seen Him being quarrelsome, greedy, lustful, hard-hearted, have you heard Him utter slander? Speak up! Have you seen Him being disrespectful towards the Sanhedrin? He is living like an outlaw, in order to obey the verdict of the Sanhedrin. He could utter a cry and the whole of Palestine would follow Him to march against the few who hate Him. He, instead, advises peace and forgiveness to His disciples. As He gives back life to dead people, sight to the blind, motion to the paralysed, hearing to the deaf, freedom to demoniacs, as neither Heaven nor Hell are insensible to His will, He could strike you by His divine lightning and thus get rid of His enemies. He, instead, prays for you and cures your relatives, He cures your hearts, He gives you bread, clothes, fire. Because I am Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ, Whom you are looking for to have the price promised to who hands Him over to the Sanhedrin, and the honour of being the liberator of Israel. I am Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ. Here I am. Take Me. As Master and as Son of God I free you from the obligation of not raising your hand and I absolve you of the sin of raising it against your benefactor. »

Jesus has stood up removing His mantle from His head, and He stretches out His hands as if they were to be caught and tied. But tall as He is - and He seems even more slender as He is left with 'only His short close-fitting vest on, with His dark mantle hanging

from His shoulders, holding Himself upright, His eyes, fixed at the face of His persecutor, in the mobile reflection of the flames that illuminate highlights in His flowing hair and make the large pupils of His eyes shine within the sapphire circles of the irises - so majestic, so frank and fearless, He commands more respect than if He were surrounded by an army of defenders.

The man is fascinated… paralysed with astonishment. Only after some time he is able to whisper: « You! You! You! » He does not seem to be able to say anything else.

Jesus insists: « So, take Me! Take that useless cord that you put up to hold a dirty torn tunic, and tie My hands. I will follow you as a lamb follows a butcher. And I will not hate you for taking Me to die. I told you. It is the purpose that justifies an action and changes its nature. As far as you are concerned, I am the ruin of Israel and you think that by killing Me you will save Israel. You believe that I am guilty of all crimes and therefore you are serving justice by suppressing a criminal. So you are not more guilty than the executioner who carries out the order he received. Do you wish to sacrifice Me here, on the spot? Over there, at My feet, there is the knife with which I sliced your bread. Take it. From a blade that served for the love for My neighbour, it can be changed into the knife of the sacrificer. My flesh is not harder than the roasted lamb that My friend had left Me to appease My hunger and that I gave you, to satisfy the hunger of My enemy. But you are afraid of the Roman patrols. They arrest the murderers of an innocent. And they do not allow justice to be administered by us. Because we are the subjects and they are the rulers. That is why you dare not kill Me and then go to those who sent you, with the slaughtered Lamb on your shoulders, like goods that make one earn money. Well: leave My corpse here and go and inform your masters. Because you are not a disciple, you are a slave, so much have you renounced the sovereign freedom of thought and will that God Himself leaves to men. And you serve your masters servilely, to the extent of committing a crime. But you are not guilty. You are "poisoned". You are the poisoned soul that I was waiting for. Come on, then! The night and the place are propitious to crime. I am wrong: to the redemption of Israel! Oh! poor boy! You are speaking prophetic words without being aware of it! My death will really be redemption, and not of Israel only, but of all Mankind. And I have come to be sacrificed. And I am longing to be sacrificed, so that I may be the Saviour. Of everybody. You, the saphorim of learned Jonathan ben Uziel, certainly know Isaiah. Here is the Man of sorrows in front of you. And if I do not seem to be such, if I do not seem to be the man whom also David saw, with My bones laid bare and disjointed, if I am not like the leper seen by Isaiah, it is because you do not see My heart. I am one big sore. Your indifference, your

hatred, your hardness and injustice have wounded and broken Me completely. And did I not hide My face, while you were despising Me for what I really am: the Word of God, the Christ? But I am the man accustomed to suffering! And do you not consider Me as a man struck by God? And do I not sacrifice Myself because I want to do so to cure you through My sacrifice? So! Strike Me! Look: I am not afraid and you must not be afraid. I, because I am the Innocent and I do not fear the judgement of God, and also because by offering My neck to your knife, I have God's will fulfilled, anticipating My hour a little for your welfare. Also when I was born I anticipated the time for your sake, to give you peace before the time. But you have turned My anxiety of love into a weapon of denial… Be not afraid! I do not invoke the punishment of Cain on you or the lightning of God. I pray for you. I love you. Nothing else. Am I too tall for your hand of a man? Well, it is true! Man in fact could not strike God if God of His own will did not put Himself into the hands of man. Well, I kneel down before you. The Son of man is before you, at your feet. So, strike Me! »

Jesus in fact kneels down, and offers the knife, holding it by the blade, to His persecutor, who withdraws whispering: « No! No! »

« Come on! A moment of courage… and you will be more famous than Jael and Judith! Look! I am praying for you. Isaiah says so: "… and He prayed for sinners". Are you not coming yet? Why are you going away? Ah! perhaps you are afraid you may not see how a God dies. Well, I will come there, near the fire. There is always a fire at sacrifices. It is part of them. Here you are. Now you can see Me well. » He has knelt down near the fire.

« Don't look at me! Don't look at me! Oh! where shall I run not to see Your eyes staring at me? » shouts the man.

« Whom? Whom do you not wish to see? »

« You… and my crime. Really, it is my crime that is in front of me! Where shall I run, where? » The man is terrorised…

« On My heart, son! Here, in My arms nightmares and fears disappear. There is peace here. Come! Do come! Make Me happy! » Jesus has stood up and is stretching out His arms. The fire is between them. Jesus shines in the reflection of the flames.

The man falls on his knees, covering his face and shouting: « Have mercy on me, God! Have mercy on me! Cancel my sin! I wanted to strike Your Christ! Mercy! Ah! there can be no mercy for such a crime! I am damned! » He weeps with his face on the ground, sobbing, and he moans: « Mercy » and he swears: « The cursed ones! »…

Jesus walks round the fire and goes towards him, He bends, He touches his head saying: « Do not curse those who led you astray. They obtained the greatest gift for you: that I should speak to you. Thus. And that I should hold you thus in My arms. »

He has taken him by his shoulders and has lifted him up, and sitting

on the ground He draws him to His heart, and the man leans on His knees shedding tears that are less phrenetic, but so purifying! Jesus caresses his dark hair to calm him.

The man at last raises his head and with changed countenance he moans: « Your forgiveness! »

Jesus bends and kisses his forehead. "The man throws his arms round His neck and with his head resting on Jesus' shoulders he weeps and begins to speak; he would like to tell Him how they had worked on him to make him commit the crime. But Jesus stops him saying: « Be quiet! Be quiet! I am aware of everything. When you came in I knew you, both for what you were and for what you wanted to do. I could have gone away from there and eluded you. I remained to save you. And you are saved. The past is dead. Do not recall it. »

« But… are You so confident? And if I should sin again? »

« No, you will not sin again. I know. You are cured. »

« Yes, I am. But they are so astute. Don't send me back to them. »

« And where can you go and not find them? »

« With You. To Ephraim. If You can read my heart, You will see that I am not laying a snare for You, but I am only begging You to protect me. »

« I know. Come. But I warn you that Judas of Kerioth, who sold himself to the Sanhedrin and is the betrayer of the Christ, is there. »

« Divine Mercy! You know also that?! » He is utterly amazed.

« I know everything. He thinks that I do not know. But I know everything. And I know also that you are so converted that you will not speak to Judas or to anybody else about this. But bear in mind this: if Judas can betray his Master, what will he be able to do to harm you? »

The man is pensive, for a long time. He then says: « It does not matter! If You do not reject me, I am staying with You. At least for some time. Until Passover. Until You join Your disciples. I will join them. Oh! if it is true that You have forgiven me, do not drive me away! »

« I will not drive you away. We shall now go over there, on those leaves and wait for daybreak, and at dawn we shall go to Ephraim. We shall say that we met by chance and that you have come to stay with us. It is the truth. »

« Yes. It is the truth. At dawn my clothes will be dry and I will give Your garment back to You… »

« No. Leave those clothes there. A symbol. The man who divests himself of his past and puts on a new uniform. The mother of Samuel, the ancient one, sang in her joy: "The Lord gives death and life, He brings down to Sheol and draws up". You died and are reborn. You are coming from the place of the dead to true Life. Leave the clothes that have been affected by the contact with the

sepulchres full of filth. And live! Live for your true glory: to serve God with justice and possess Him for ever. »

They sit in the recess where the leaves are piled up and they soon fall silent, because the man, tired as he is, falls asleep with his head resting on the shoulder of Jesus, Who is still praying.

… It is a beautiful morning in spring, when they arrive at the house of Mary of Jacob, following the path along the torrent, which is becoming clear after the downpour and is singing more loudly with its increased waters, and is shining in the sun between its banks polished by the rain.

Peter, who is at the entrance, utters a cry and runs to meet them, hurrying to embrace Jesus, Who is all enveloped in His mantle, and he says: « Oh! my blessed Master! What a sad Sabbath You made me spend! I could not make up my mind to go away without seeing You. I would have been upset the whole week if I had to leave with uncertainty in my heart and without Your farewell! »

Jesus kisses him without removing His mantle. Peter is so engaged in contemplating his Master that he does not notice the stranger who is with Him. In the meantime the others have come and Judas of Kerioth utters a cry: « You, Samuel! »

« It is I. The Kingdom of God is open to everybody in Israel. I have come to it » the man replies without hesitation.

Judas has a strange sly laugh, but he does not say anything.

Everybody's attention is focused on the newcomer, and Peter asks: « Who is he? »

« A new disciple. We met by chance. That is: God made us meet, and as I accepted him as one sent to Me by My Father, so I tell you to do the same. And as it is a great feast when one comes to take part in the Kingdom of Heaven, lay down your bags and mantles, you who were about to leave, and let us be all together until tomorrow. And now let Me go, Simon, because I gave My tunic to him and the morning air is nipping Me while I am standing here. »

« Ah! I thought it was! But You will be taken ill, if You do that! »

« I did not want… But He insisted » says the man apologetically.

« Yes. He was swept away by an overflowing large stream and only his will saved him. So to ensure that nothing should remind him of that painful moment, and to enable him to come to us in a clean state, I made him leave his dirty torn tunic where we met, and I made him put on Mine » says Jesus and He looks at Judas of Kerioth who repeats his strange sly laugh, as he did at the beginning and when Jesus said that a great feast is made when one comes to take part in the Kingdom of Heaven. He then goes quickly into the house to dress Himself.

The others approach the 'newcomer expressing their greetings of peace.

560. What People Say at Nazareth.

6th February 1947.

« And I tell you that you are all foolish if you believe such things. More foolish and ignorant than wethers that do not even know the rules of instinct, mutilated as they are. Some men are going around towns saying anathema of the Master, while others bring orders that, by the living God, cannot be given by Him! You do not know Him. I do. And I cannot believe that He has changed so much! Let them go about! Are you saying that they are His disciples? And who has ever seen them with Him? Are you saying that some rabbis and Pharisees have mentioned His sins? And who has seen His sins? Have you ever heard Him speak about anything obscene? Have you ever seen Him commit sin? So? And can you believe that God would let Him work such great deeds, if He were a sinner? You are foolish, I tell you, foolish slow-witted and ignorant like country bumpkins who for the first time see a mountbank at a market and believe what he says. That's what you are like. Consider whether those who are wise and open-minded allow themselves to be seduced by the words of false disciples, who are the true enemies of the Innocent, of our Jesus, Whom you do not deserve to have as a son of our town! Consider whether Johanna of Chuza, I mean the wife of Herod's superintendent, Johanna, the princess, leaves Mary! Consider whether… Am I doing the right thing in telling you? Of course! I am doing the right thing because I am not speaking just for the sake of speaking, but to convince you all. Last month, did you see that beautiful wagon that came to our village and stopped outside Mary's house? Do you remember? The one whose tilt was as beautiful as a house? Well, do you know who was in it and who came out of it to prostrate himself at Mary's feet? Lazarus of Theophilus, Lazarus of Bethany, do you understand that? The son of the chief magistrate of Syria, of the noble Theophilus, the husband of Eucheria of the tribe of Judah and of the family of David! Jesus' great friend. The richest and most learned man in Israel, both with regard to our history and to that of the whole world. The friend of the Romans. The benefactor of the poor. And above all the man who was raised from the dead after being in his sepulchre for four days. Did he leave Jesus to believe the Sanhedrin? You say that he did so because Jesus raised him from the dead? No. No, because he knows who is the Christ, Who is Jesus. And do you know what he came to tell Mary? To tell Her to be ready because he will take Her back to Judaea. See? As if he, Lazarus, were Mary's servant! I know because I was there when he came in and greeted Her prostrating himself on the floor, on the poor bricks in the little room, dressed as he was like Solomon, a man accustomed to carpets, he was there, on the floor, kissing the hem of Our Lady's dress saying: "Hail, Mary, Mother of my Lord. I, Your servant, the last of Your servants,

have come to speak to You of Him and to place myself at Your disposal". See? I was so moved… that when he greeted me as well calling me: "brother in the Lord", I was not able to speak one word. But Lazarus understood, because he is intelligent. And he slept in Joseph's bed and sent his servants ahead to Sephoris to wait for him. Because he was going to his estates at Antioch. And he told the women to be ready, because at the end of this month he will come and pick them up to spare them the fatigue of the journey. And Johanna will join the caravan with her wagon to take the women disciples of Capernaum and Bethsaida. And does all that mean nothing to you? »

At last good Alphaeus of Sarah can take breath amid the group standing in the middle of the square. And Aser and Ishmael and also Jesus' two cousins, Simon and Joseph - Simon more openly, Joseph more reticently - help him by approving what he said.

Joseph says: « Jesus is not an illegitimate son. If He needs to notify anything, He has relatives here who are willing to become His ambassadors. And He has faithful and powerful disciples, like Lazarus. Lazarus has not mentioned what the others say. »

« And we are His disciples as well. Before we were ass-drivers and as stupid as our asses. But now we are His disciples and we also are capable of saying: "Do this or do that" » says Ishmael.

« But the sentence hanging at the door of the synagogue was brought by a messenger of the Sanhedrin and it bears the stamp of the Temple » some say objecting.

« That is true. So? Since all over Israel we have the reputation of being able to judge the Sanhedrin for what it really is, and we are consequently despised as rogues, are we going to believe that the Temple is wise only with regard to this? So do we no longer know what scribes, Pharisees and chiefs of Priests are? » replies Alphaeus.

« That is true. Aphaeus is right. I have decided to go down to Jerusalem and hear from true friends what is the situation. And I am going tomorrow » says Joseph of Alphaeus.

« And will you stay there? »

« No, I will come back. And I will go back again for Passover. I cannot be away from home for a long time. It is a difficult task I am undertaking, but it is my duty to do so. I am the head of the family and I am responsible for Jesus being in Judaea. I insisted that He should go there… Man errs in judging. I thought that it was a good thing for Him. Instead… May God forgive me! But I must at least follow the consequences of my advice at close quarters, in order to comfort my Brother » says Joseph of Alphaeus in his slow haughty way of speaking.

« That is not what you used to say. But you have been allured as well by the friendship of the mighty ones. Your eyes are clouded by vanity » says a Nazarene.

« The friendship of might people does not allure me, Eliakim. But my Brother's behaviour convinces me. If I made a mistake and I now mend my ways, I prove to be a just man. Because to err is human, but to be stubborn is beastlike. »

« And do you think that Lazarus will really come? Oh! we want to see him! A man that comes back from death, what is he like? He must be dazed, somehow… frightened. What does he say of his stay among the dead? » many ask Alphaeus of Sarah.

« He is just like you and me. Cheerful, lively, tranquil. He does not speak of the other world, as if he did not remember. But he remembers his agony. »

« Why did you not tell us that he was here? »

« Of course! To let you invade the house! I withdrew myself. Some delicacy is necessary, isn't it? »

« But when he comes back will it not be possible for us to see him? Let us know. You will certainly be the caretaker of Mary's house, as usual. »

« Certainly! It's a grace to be near Her. But I will not inform anybody. You will have to do it yourselves. A wagon is easily seen, and Nazareth is not Antioch or Jerusalem so that such a large wagon may pass by unnoticed. Mount guard… and help yourselves. But that is something vain. Ensure at least that His town may not have the reputation of being foolish by believing the words of our Jesus' enemies. Don't believe them! Don't believe those who say that He is Satan or those who provoke you to rise in His name. You would repent one day. Then if the rest of Galilee fall into the trap and believe what is not true, so much the worse for them. Goodbye. I am going because it is getting dark… » And he goes away happily, having defended Jesus.

The others remain to discuss. But although they are divided into two fields and the more numerous is unfortunately the one of those who swallow everything, the proposal of Jesus' few friends prevails in the end, and they decide not to become excited and accept false charges or invitations to rise until the other towns in Galilee do so, as « at present they are more cunning than Nazareth and laugh in the false ambassadors' faces » says Aser, the disciple.

561. False Disciples Arrive in Shechem. At Ephraim Jesus Restores the Tongue to the Dumb Slave of Claudia Procula.

7th February 1947.

The main square in Shechem. A characteristic trait of springtime is given to it by the new foliage of the trees that surround it in a double row along the square-shaped walls of the houses, forming a kind of gallery. The sun plays among the tender leaves of plane-trees projecting an embroidery of light and shadows on the

ground. The basin in the centre of the square is a silver plate in the sunshine. People in groups are discussing their business here and there.

Some people, who are apparently strangers, as everybody is asking who they are, come into the square, they look round and approach the first group they meet. They exchange greetings to everybody's amazement. But when they say: « We are disciples of the Master of Nazareth » all mistrust ends and some go to inform the other groups, while those who remain say: « Did He send you? »

« He did, on a very secret mission. The Rabbi is in great danger. No one loves Him any more in Israel and He, Who is so kind, asks you at least to remain faithful to Him. »

« But that is what we want! What are we to do? What does He want of us? »

« Oh! He wants nothing but love. Because He relies too much in the protection of God. And with what is said in Israel! But you are not aware that He is being accused of satanism and insurrection. Do you know what that means? Reprisals of the Romans against everybody. And we who are already so miserable will be struck even harder! And we shall be condemned by the holy ones of our Temple. It is certain that the Romans… Also for your own sake you ought to take action, and persuade Him to defend Himself and defend Him, and make it almost, nay, make it definitely impossible for Him to be caught and thus be harmful, having no intention of being so. Persuade Him to withdraw to the Gerizim. Where He is now, He is still too exposed and He does not appease the anger of the Sanhedrin or the suspicions of the Romans. The Gerizim is certainly entitled to the right of sanctuary! There is no sense in telling Him. If we told Him He would say that we are anathema because we advise Him to be cowardly. But it is not so. It is love. It is prudence on our part. We are not allowed to speak. But you can! He loves you. He has already preferred your region to the others. So organise yourselves to accept Him. Because you will at least find out for certain whether He loves you or not. If He should refuse your assistance, it would mean that He does not love you, and then it would be better if He went elsewhere. Because, believe us - we are telling you this with sorrow - His presence is a danger for those who give Him hospitality. But you are, of course, the best of His admirers and you do not worry about dangers. However, if you risk reprisals of the Romans, it is fair that you should do so for an exchange of love. We advise you for everybody' sake. »

« You are right. And we will do as you say. We shall go to Him… »

« Oh! be careful! He must not become aware that it was our suggestion! »

« Don't worry! Don't be afraid! We know what to do. Of course! We will let people see that the despised Samaritans are worth a

hundred, a thousand Judaeans and Galileans to defend the Christ. Come. Come to our houses, you messengers of the Lord. It will be the same as if He came to us! Samaria has been waiting for such a long time to be loved by God's servants! »

They go away keeping in the middle of their group those whom I do not think I am mistaken in calling emissaries of the Sanhedrin, and they say: « We realise that He loves us because this is the second group of disciples that He has sent to us in a few days. And we did the right thing in being kind to the first one. It is right to be so kind to Him because of the little children of that dead woman of our town! He knows us by now… »

And they go away looking happy.

All the people of Ephraim pour into the streets to see the unusual event of a procession of Roman wagons passing through the town. There are many wagons and covered litters, flanked with slaves and preceded and followed by legionaries. The people make gestures of mutual understanding and whisper. When the procession arrives at the crossroad for Bethel and Ramah it separates into two parts. A wagon and a litter stop with an escort of armed men, while the rest go on.

The curtains of the litter are drawn for a moment and a lady's white hand studded with gems beckons the head of the slaves to go near it. The man obeys without speaking. He listens. He approaches a group of curious women and asks: « Where is the Rabbi of Nazareth? »

« He lives in that house. But at this time of the day He is usually at the stream. There is a little island there, near those willow-trees, over there, where that poplar is. He stays there praying all day long. »

The man goes back and reports. The litter sets out again. The wagon remains where it was. The soldiers follow the litter as far as the banks of the stream and bar the way. Only the litter proceeds along the stream as far as the islet, which in the process of the season has become well-wooded: a huge impenetrable tuft of greenery surmounted by the trunk and the silvery foliage of the poplar. At an order the bearers with tucked up garments enter the water and the litter crosses to the other side of the little water course. Claudia Procula comes out of it with a freedwoman, and Claudia beckons a dark slave escorting the litter to follow her. The others go back to the bank of the stream.

Claudia, followed by the two people, proceeds into the islet, towards the poplar standing out in the centre. The tall grass stifles the noise of steps. She thus arrives where Jesus is absorbed in thought, sitting at the foot of the tree. She calls Him advancing by herself while with an authoritative gesture she makes her two faithful

attendants stop where they are.

Jesus looks up and He stands up at once as soon as He sees the woman. He greets her holding Himself upright against the trunk of the poplar. He does not appear to be astonished, or annoyed or irritated at the intrusion.

After greeting Him, Claudia enters into the subject promptly: « Master. Some people have come to me, or rather to Pontius… I do not make long speeches. But as I admire You, I say to You what I would have said to Socrates, if I had lived in his days, or to any other virtuous man unjustly persecuted: "I cannot do very much, but I will do what I can". And in the meantime I will write where it is possible for me to do so, to have You protected… and to make You powerful. So many undeserving people live on thrones or in high positions… »

« Domina, I have not asked honours and protection of you. May the true God reward you for your thought. But give your honours and protection to those who long for them. I do not crave after them. »

« Ah! There You are! That is what I wanted! So You really are the Just Man I foresaw! And the others, Your worthless slanderers! They came to us and… »

« You need not tell Me, domina. I know. »

« Do You also know that they say that because of Your sins You have lost all power and consequently You live here as an outcast? »

« I know that, too. And I know that it was easier for you to believe the latter rumour than the former. Because your heathen mind can descry the human power or the human meanness of a man, but it cannot yet understand what is the power of the spirit. You are… disappointed by your gods who in your religion appear to be quarrelling continuously and to have such a failing power, subject to easy interdictions because of their reciprocal contrasts. And you think that the true God is the same. But it is not so. As I was the first time you saw Me cure a leper, such I am now. And such I shall be when I appear to be completely destroyed. That is your dumb slave, is it not? »

« Yes, Master. »

« Tell him to come forward. »

Claudia utters a cry and the man moves forward and prostrates himself on the ground between Jesus and his mistress. His poor heart of a savage does not know whom he should venerate more. He is afraid that to venerate the Christ more than his mistress may cause him to be punished. But even so, after casting a suppliant glance at Claudia, he repeats the gesture he made at Caesarea: he takes Jesus' bare foot in his big dark hands and stooping with his face on the ground he lays the foot on his head.

« Domina, listen. According to you, is it easier for a man to conquer

a kingdom by himself, or to make grow again a part that no longer exists of a human body? »

« To conquer a kingdom, Master. Fortune favours the brave. But no one, that is, only You can make a dead man revive and give eyes to the blind. »

« Why? »

« Because… Because God can do everything. »

« So according to you I am God? »

« Yes… or, at least God is with You. »

« Can God be with a wicked person? I am talking of the true God, not of your idols that are the frenzy of those who seek what they perceive to exist without knowing what it is, and they imagine phantoms to satisfy their souls. »

« No… I would not say so. Even our priests lose their power as soon as they fall into sin. »

« Which power? »

« Well… the power to read the signs of the sky and the responses of victims, the flights and singing of birds. You know… Augurs, haruspices… »

« I know. So? Look. Raise your head and open your mouth, man, whom a cruel human power deprived of a gift of God. And by the will of the true, only God, the Creator of perfect bodies, have what man took away from you. »

He has put His white finger into the open mouth of the dumb man. The freedwoman, who is very curious, cannot remain where she is, and she comes forward to see. Claudia has bowed to watch. Jesus removes His finger shouting: « Speak, and make use of the reborn part to praise the true God. »

And, all of a sudden, like the blast of a trumpet, of an instrument so far mute, a guttural but clear cry replies: « Jesus! » and the negro falls to the ground weeping for joy and he licks, he really licks Jesus bare feet, just as a grateful dog would do.

« Have I lost My power, domina? Give this reply to those who throw out such innuendos. And you… stand up and be good thinking how much I have loved you. I have had you in My heart since that day at Caesarea. And with you all those like you, who are regarded as goods, considered inferior even to brutes, whereas you are men, equal to Caesar, by conception and probably better because of the good will of your hearts… You may withdraw, domina… There is nothing else to be said. »

« Yes. There is something. There is the fact that I doubted… that I, with grief, almost believed what they said about You. And I was not the only one. Forgive us all, except Valeria, who has never changed her mind, nay, nay her mind is more determined than ever. And there is my gift to be accepted: this man. He could no longer serve me now that he can speak, and my money. »

« No, neither. »

« So, are You not forgiving me? »

« I forgive also those of My people, who are twice guilty of not knowing Me for what I am. And should I not forgive all of you, deprived as you are of all divine knowledge? Here. I said that I would not accept your money or the man. I will now accept both and with the money I will free the man. I give your money back to you because I am buying the man. And I am buying him to make him free, so that he may go back to his country to say that on the Earth there is the Man Who loves all men, and the more He sees their unhappiness the more He loves them. Keep your purse. »

« No, Master, it is Yours. The man is free just the same. He is mine. I have given him to You. You are freeing him. No money is needed for that. »

« Well… Have you a name? » He asks the man.

« We used to call him Callisto scoffingly. But when he was caught… »

« It does not matter. Keep that name, and make it real by becoming very handsome in your spirit (1). Go. Be happy because God has saved you. »

Go! The negro does not tire of kissing and saying: « Jesus! Jesus! » and he lays Jesus' foot once again on his head saying: « You. My only Master. »

« I. Your true Father. Domina, you will take upon yourself to let him go back to his country. Use the money for that and give him the rest. Goodbye, domina. And never listen to the voices of darkness. Be just. And strive to know Me. Goodbye, Callisto. Goodbye, woman. »

And Jesus puts an end to the conversation by jumping across the stream to the side opposite to the one where the litter is and He disappears among the bushes, the willows and the reed thickets.

Claudia calls the litter bearers and enters the litter again with a pensive countenance. But if she is silent, the freedwoman and the free slave talk as much as ten people and even the legionaries forget their rigid discipline in the presence of the wonder of a reborn tongue. Claudia is too absorbed in thought to order them to be silent. Reclined in the litter, one elbow resting on pillows, her head supported by her hand, she does not hear anything. She is engrossed in thought. She does not even notice that the freedwoman is not with her but is chattering like a magpie, with the litter bearers while Callisto is speaking to the legionaries who, if they keep lined up, do not keep silent. They are too excited to do so!

Going back the same way, they arrive at the Bethel and Ramah crossroads; the litter leaves Ephraim to join the rest of the procession.

(1) Callisto is in fact a Greek word meaning every beautiful, very handsome.

562. The Man of Jabneel.

7th February 1947.

Several days must have gone by. I am saying so because I see that the corn, which in the last visions was hardly a span high, after the last downpour and the lovely sunshine that followed it, is already tall and is about to give ear. Cereals, still tender in their calami, are waved by a light breeze, that plays with the new leaves of the early fruit trees, which after blossoming or while the petals flutter about and fall, have already opened their light-emerald tender shiny little leaves, as beautiful as everything that is pure and new. The vines, still bare and knotty, blossom later, but on the twisted vine-shoots, which interlace with one another from trunk to trunk, the buds have already burst the dark bark that contained them, and, although still closed in it, they display the silver-grey down that is the nest for future new vine-leaves and tendrils, and the woody twisted festoon-like branches seem to be softened by a fresh gracefulness. The sun, which is already warm, has begun its action by colouring everything and distilling vegetable essences, and while with brighter hues it paints what only a few days ago looked paler, it warms and thus extracts various types of scents from clods of earth, from flowery meadows, from fields of cereals, from vegetable gardens and orchards, from woods, from walls, from the very clothes hanging to dry, blending them harmoniously into a smell that will last throughout summer until it changes into the strong reek of must in the vats where the squashed grapes become wine. There is a loud chorus of birds singing among trees, and an eager bleating of rams among herds. And the singing of men along slopes. And the cheerful voices of children. And the smiles of women. It is springtime. Nature is in love. And man gets pleasure from the love of nature, which will make him wealthier shortly, and he takes delight in his own love, which becomes livelier in such serene revival, and his wife seems more loving to him, while he appears to be a greater protector to his wife, and their children dear to both of them, as at present they are their joy and their care, and in future, when they are old, they will be the joy and protection of their declining age.

Jesus passes along the fields that rise or slope downwards following the inclination of the mountain. He is alone. He is wearing a linen garment, as He gave His last woollen one to Samuel, and a rather bright-blue mantle thrown over one shoulder, softly enveloped round His body and held by His arm across His chest. The strip covering His arm flutters gently in the light breeze and as He is bare-headed, His hair shines in the sunshine. He goes by and where there are children He bends to caress their little innocent heads and to listen to their little secrets, admiring what they hasten to show Him as if they were treasures.

A little girl, who is so small that she still stumbles when running and gets entangled in the little skirt that is too long for her as she probably inherited it from a brother born before her, arrives near Jesus with a smile that makes her eyes shine and displays her tiny incisors between her pink lips. She is carrying a bunch of daisies, a big bunch held with both hands, as many as her tender tiny hands can hold, and she holds up her trophy saying: « Take it! It's Yours. To mummy later. A kiss, here! » and with her little hands, now free, as Jesus has taken the little bunch thanking her with words of admiration, she touches her lips and she stands on her bare feet, with her head bent backwards, almost losing her balance, in the vain effort to stretch her tiny person up to the face of Jesus, Who laughs picking her up in His arms and taking her, nestled up there like a little bird on a tall tree, towards a group of women who are steeping new pieces of cloth in the clear water of a stream, to lay them out in the sunshine later, to bleach them.

The women, bent over the water, stand up greeting and one of them says smiling: « Tamar has been giving trouble to You… But she has been picking flowers here since dawn in the secret hope of seeing You pass by. She would not give me one as she wanted to give them to You first. »

« They are dearer to Me than the treasures of kings. Because they are as innocent as children and have been given to Me by one who is as innocent as a flower. » He kisses the little girl putting her down, and He greets her saying: « May the grace of the Lord come to you. » He greets the women and goes on His way greeting the peasants or shepherds who wave to Him from fields or meadows.

He seems to be going down to the lower part of the country, towards Jericho. But He comes back and takes another path that climbs once again towards the mountains to the north of Ephraim. The crops here are even more beautiful, as the soil is in a more favourable position and sheltered from northern winds. The path runs between two fields and in one of them there are fruit trees planted almost at regular intervals, and the buds of the early fruits are already like pearls on the branches.

A road descending from north to south crosses the path. It must be a rather important road because at the crossroads there is one of the milestones used by the Romans, with: « Neapolis » engraved on its northern side, in the large lapidary letters of the Latins, and strong like them, and under it, in much smaller letters just scratched on the stone: « Shechem »; on the western side: « Shiloh-Jerusalem »; and on the southern one: « Jericho ». There is no name on the eastern side.

But one could say that if there is no name of any town, there is the name of a human misfortune. Because on the ground, between the milestone and the ditch along the road, dug to drain rain-water,

as in all the roads looked after by the Romans, there is a man, benumbed, a bundle of rags and bones, probably dead.

Jesus bends over him when He sees him among the weeds that springtime downpours have made luxuriant in the ditch and He touches him asking: « Man? What is the matter with you? »

A moan is the answer. But the tangle moves, unrolls and an emaciated face, as white as death, appears and two tired, suffering languid eyes look full of astonishment at Him Who is bent over his misery. He tries to sit up pressing his emaciated hands against the ground, but he is so weak that he would not succeed without Jesus' help.

Jesus helps him and props him with his back against the milestone. And He asks him: « What is the matter with you? Are you ill? »

« Yes. » A very faint « yes ».

« But why did you set out all alone, in this state? Have you not got anybody? »

The man nods assent, but he is too weak to reply.

Jesus looks around. There is nobody in the fields. The place is really deserted. To the north, almost at the top of a hill, there is a small group of houses; to the west, among the green vegetation of the slope that rises with more hillocks where fields are replaced by meadows and woods, there are some herdsmen among a flock of restless goats. Jesus looks at the man again and asks him: « If I supported you, do you think you would be able to come to that village? »

The man shakes his head and two tears stream down his cheeks that are so withered that they seem wrinkled by age, whereas his raven beard proves that he is still young. He gathers his strength to say: « They drove me away… Fear of leprosy… I am not… And I am dying… of hunger. » He pants out of weakness. He puts a finger into his mouth and pulls out a greenish pulp, saying: « Look… I have been chewing corn… but it is still green grass. »

« I am going to that shepherd. I will bring you some warm milk. I shall not be long. » And He almost runs where the flock is, about two hundred metres above the road.

He arrives at the shepherd, He speaks to him and shows him where the man is. The shepherd turns round to look, he seems undecided whether he should comply with Jesus' request. He then makes up his mind. He detaches from his belt the wooden bowl that he carries like all shepherds, he milks a goat and gives the full bowl to Jesus, Who goes down the slope cautiously, followed by a boy who was with the shepherd.

He is now once again near the starving man. He kneels beside him, He passes one arm round his back to support him and takes the bowl, in which the milk is still covered with foam, close to his lips. He makes him take small sips. He then lays the bowl on the ground

saying: « That is enough now. If you take it all at once, it will hurt you. Let your stomach recover some strength with the milk I gave you. »

The man does not protest. He closes his eyes and is silent, while the boy looks at him with much surprise.

After some time Jesus offers him the cup again for a longer drink and He goes on thus, at shorter and shorter intervals, until there is no milk left. He hands the bowl back to the boy and dismisses him.

The man recovers slowly. With gestures that are still shaky he tries to tidy himself somehow. He smiles with gratitude looking at Jesus Who has sat down on the grass beside him. He apologises saying: « I make You lose Your time. »

« Do not worry'! The time spent in loving one's brothers is never lost. When you feel better we shall speak. »

« I am feeling better. My body is warming up and my eyes… I thought I was going to die here… My poor children! I had lost all hope… And up to that moment I had hoped so much!… If You had not come, I would have died… just like that… along the road… »

« It would have been very sad. That is true. But the Most High looked at His son and assisted him. Have a little rest now. »

The man obeys for some time. Then he opens his eyes again and he says: « I feel a new man. Oh! I wish I could go to Ephraim! »

« Why? Have you got anyone there waiting for you? Do you come from Ephraim? »

« No, I come from the country of Jabneel, near the Great Sea. But I went to Galilee, along the shores, as far as Caesarea. Then I went to Nazareth. Because I have a disease here (he touches his stomach). A disease that no one can cure and it does not let me work the land. And I am a widower. With five children… A man from our place, because I was born at Gaza, of a Philistine father and of a Syro-Phoenician mother, a man of our place was a follower of the Galilean Rabbi and he came to us with another man, and spoke to us of the Rabbi. I heard him, too. And when I was taken ill I said: "I am a Syrian and a Philistine, loathsome to Israel. But Ermasteus used to say that the Rabbi of Galilee is as good as He is powerful. And I believe it. And I am going to Him". And as soon as the weather improved I left the children to the mother of my wife, I took my few savings, because many had been spent for my disease, and I came looking for the Rabbi. But money does not last long when one travels. Particularly when one cannot eat all kinds of food… and one has to stop at inns when pains prevent one from travelling. At Sephoris I sold my donkey because I had no more money left for myself and to give what was due to the Rabbi. I thought that once I was cured, I would be able to eat everything on the road and thus go back home quickly. And working there in my fields and

in those of other people I hoped I would make up for what I had lost… But the Rabbi is neither at Nazareth nor at Capernaum. His Mother told me. She said: "He is in Judaea. Look for Him at the house of Joseph of Sephoris at Bezetha or at Gethsemane. They will be able to tell you where He is". I came back, on foot. I was getting worse and worse… and my money was diminishing. At Jerusalem, where I had been told to go, I found the people but not the Rabbi. They said to me: "Oh! They drove Him away a long time ago. He is cursed by the Sanhedrin. He ran away but we do not know where". I… felt as if I were dying… just like today. Nay, more than today. I inquired of hundreds and hundreds of people in town and in the country. No one knew. Some wept with me. Many struck me. Then one day, when I began to beg outside the enclosure of the Temple, I heard two Pharisees say: "Now that we know that Jesus of Nazareth is at Ephraim… I lost no time, and weak as I was I came here, begging for some bread, and I was more and more in rags and sick looking. And as I was not familiar with the road, I took the wrong one… Today I came from there, from that village. For two days I had sucked nothing but wild fennels, and I had chewed chicory and green corn. They thought I was a leper because of my pallor and they drove me away pelting me with stones. I was only asking for a piece of bread and to show me the road to Ephraim… I fell here… But I would like to go to Ephraim. I am so close to my goal! Is it possible that I should not reach it? I believe in the Rabbi. I am not an Israelite. But neither was Ermasteus, and He loved him just the same. Is it possible that the God of Israel may treat me with a heavy hand to revenge Himself for the sins of those who procreated me? »

« The true God is the Father of men. He is just, but good. He rewards those who have faith and does not make innocents pay for sins not committed by them. But why did you say that when you heard that the residence of the Rabbi was unknown, you felt as if you were dying more than you were today? »

« Eh! because I said: "I have lost Him even before finding Him". »

« Ah! because of your health! »

« No. Not only for that. But because Ermasteus said certain things about Him that I thought that if I became acquainted with Him, I would no longer be corrupt. »

« So, do you believe that He is the Messiah? »

« I do believe it. I do not know exactly what the Messiah is, but I believe that the Rabbi of Nazareth is the Son of God. »

Jesus' smile is bright when He asks: « And are you sure that if He is such, He will hear you, although you are not circumcised? »

« I am certain because Ermasteus said so. He said: "He is the Saviour of all men. As far as He is concerned there are no Hebrews or idolaters. But only creatures to be saved because the Lord God

has sent Him for that". Many laughed. I believed. If I can say to Him: "Jesus, have mercy on me", He will hear me. Oh! if You come from Ephraim, take me to Him. Perhaps You are one of His disciples… »

Jesus smiles more and more and He suggests: « Try and ask Me to cure you… »

« You are good, man. There is so much peace near You. Yes, You are as good as… the Rabbi Himself, and He has certainly granted You the power to work miracles, because to be as good as You are, You can but be one of His disciples. I have found all those, who told me they were such, to be good. But do not be offended if I say to You that You may be able to cure bodies, but not souls. And I would like also my soul to be cured, as it happened to Ermasteus. To become a just man… And only the Rabbi can do that. I am a sinner besides being diseased. I do not want to be cured in my body and then die one day also with my soul. I want to live. Ermasteus said that the Rabbi is the Life of the soul and that the soul that believes in Him lives for good in the Kingdom of God. Take me to the Rabbi. Be good! Why are You smiling? Probably because You think that I am bold in wanting to be cured without being able to give an offering? But once I am cured I shall be able to cultivate the land once again. I have beautiful fruit. Let the Rabbi come when the fruit ripens and I will pay Him with hospitality as long as He wishes. »

« Who told you that the Rabbi wants money? Ermasteus? »

« No. On the contrary he used to say that the Rabbi takes pity on the poor and He assists them first. But that is the custom with all doctors and… and with everybody, in short. »

« But not with Him. I can assure you. And I tell you that if you can urge your faith to ask for the miracle here, and to believe it possible, you will have it. »

« Is what You say true?… Are You sure? Of course, if You are one of His disciples you cannot lie or be wrong. And although I am sorry not to see the Rabbi… I want to obey You… Perhaps, persecuted as He is… He does not want to be seen… He trusts no one any longer. You are right. But we shall not be the ones who will ruin Him. It will be the true Hebrews… But, well. I say here (he kneels down with difficulty): "Jesus, Son of God, have mercy on me!" »

« And let it be done to you as your faith deserves » says Jesus making His gesture of authority over diseases.

The man seems to be dazzled as if he were struck by a sudden light. The man realises - I do not know whether through a flash of his intellect or through a physical sensation or through both at the same time - who is the Man Who is before him, and he utters such a shrill cry that the herdsman, who had come down towards the road probably to see, quickens his pace.

The man is on the ground with his face in the grass. And the herdsman

pointing at him with his crook asks: « Is he dead? More than milk is required when a man is done for! » and he shakes his head.

The man hears and stands up, strong and healthy. He shouts: « Dead? I am cured! I am a new man. He has done this to me. I am no longer languishing with hunger or suffering from any disease. I feel as I did the day I got married! Oh! blessed Jesus! How did I not recognise You before?! Your pity should have told me Your name! The peace I experienced near You! It was silly of me. Forgive Your poor servant! » And he throws himself on the ground once again, worshipping.

The herdsman leaves his goats and goes towards the little village running and jumping.

Jesus sits down near the cured man and says: « You were speaking to Me of Ermasteus, as if he were dead. So you know how he died. I want only one thing of you. That you come to Ephraim with Me and mention how he died to a man who is with Me. Then I will send you to Jericho, to a woman disciple of Mine, so that she may help you on your return trip. »

« If You wish so, I will go. But, now that I am healthy, I am no longer afraid of dying on the road. Even grass can nourish me and it is not shameful to beg because I did not spend everything I had on orgies, but for an honest purpose. »

« That is what I want. You will tell her that you have seen Me and that I am waiting for her here. She can come now. No one will annoy her. Will you be able to tell her that? »

« Yes, I will. Ah! Why do they hate You, when You are so good? »

« Because many men are possessed by demons. Let us go. » Jesus sets out towards Ephraim and the man follows Him without faltering. Only his remarkable leanness is the sign of his past disease and privations.

In the meantime many people are coming down from the little village shouting and gesticulating. They call Jesus. They tell Him to stop. Jesus does not listen to them, on the contrary He quickens His pace. And they follow Him…

There He is once again near Ephraim. The peasants who are getting ready to go home, as the sun is beginning to set, greet Him and look at the man who is with Him.

Judas of Kerioth appears suddenly from a lane. He starts with surprise seeing the Master.

But Jesus does not show any surprise. He only addresses the man saying: « This is one of My disciples. Tell him about Ermasteus. »

« Eh! it is soon said. He was untiring in preaching the Christ, also after he decided to part from his companion to stay with us. He said that we are in greater need than anybody else to know You, Rabbi, and that he wanted to make You known to his fatherland, and that he would go back to You after he had announced Your name publicly

in all the smallest villages. He lived like a penitent. If some pitiful people gave him some bread he blessed them in Your name. If they threw stones at him, he would withdraw blessing them just the same, and he fed on wild fruit or on sea mollusks that he picked off reefs or he dug in the sand. Many said that he was "mad". But nobody really hated him. At most they drove him away as is he were a man of ill omen. One day they found him dead along a road, not far from my place, on the road that takes one into Judaea, almost at the border. It has never been found out of what he died. But the rumour is that he was killed by somebody who did not want the Messiah to be preached. He had a large wound on his head. They said that he had been trampled by a horse. But I do not believe that. He still smiled stretched out on the dust of the road. Yes. He really seemed to be smiling at the last stars of the clearest night in the month of Elul and at the rising sun in the morning. Some marketgardeners found him at daybreak, while they were going to town with their vegetables, and they told me when they came to collect my cucumbers. I rushed there to see him. He was resting in great peace. »

« Have you heard? » Jesus asks Judas.

« Yes, I have. But did You not tell him that he would serve You and have a long life? »

« I did not say exactly that. The time that has gone by has obscured your mind. Has he not served Me evangelizing in places of mission, and has he not got a long life? Which life is longer than that conquered by those who die in the service of God? Long and glorious. »

Judas has that sly laugh that annoys me so much, but he does not reply.

In the meantime those from the little village have joined many people from Ephraim and they are speaking to them pointing at Jesus.

Jesus says to Judas: « Take the man home and finish restoring him. He will leave after the Sabbath that is just beginning. »

Judas obeys and Jesus remains all alone and He walks slowly bending to watch some stalks of corn, on which slight indications of ears are beginning to appear.

Some men from Ephraim ask Him: « This corn is beautiful, isn't it? »

« Beautiful. But the same as that of other regions. »

« Of course, Master. It's all corn! It must be the same. »

« Do you think so? Then corn is better than men. Because if it is skilfully sown it yields the same fruit here as in Judaea or Galilee or, we can say, in the plains along the Great Sea. Men, instead, do not yield the same fruit. And also the soil is better than men. Because when a seed is entrusted to it, it is good to the seed without making any difference whether the seed is from Samaria or

Judaea. »

« It is so. But why do You say that corn and soil are better than men? »

« Why?… Not long ago a man begged for a piece of bread, out of pity, at the gate of a village. And he was driven away because the people of that place thought he was a Judaean. He was expelled as people threw stones at him and crying him a "leper", which he thought referred to his thinness, but was intended for his origin. And that man almost died of starvation along the road. Thus the people of that village, the people that sent you to question Me and would like to come to the house where I live, to see the man who was cured miraculously, are worse than corn and clods of earth. Because they were not able, although they had been well taught by Me for a long time, to bear the same fruit as was yielded by that man, who is neither a Judaean nor a Samaritan and had never seen or heard Me, but had accepted the words of one of My disciples and believed in Me without knowing Me. And because they are worse than the clods of earth, as they rejected the man because he was of a different seed. They would now like to come to satisfy their hunger for curiosity, whilst they were not able to satisfy the hunger of a languishing man. Tell them that the Master will not satisfy such vain curiosity. And you all had better learn the great law of love, .without which you will never be able to be My followers. It is not your love for Me that by itself will save your souls. But it is the love for My doctrine. And My doctrine teaches brotherly love without distinction of race and census. So let those hard-hearted people who have grieved My Heart go away, and let them repent if they want Me to love them. Because, bear this in your minds, if I am good, I am also just; if I make no distinctions and I love you as I love those of Galilee and Judaea, that must not make you so stupidly proud as to think that you are the favourite people or authorise you to do wrong without being afraid of being reproached by Me. I praise and reproach, according to justice, My relatives and apostles as well as any other person, and there is love in My reproach. And I do so because I want justice in the hearts of people so that one day I may reward those who have practised it. You may go and inform the others so that the lesson may bear fruit in everybody. »

Jesus envelops himself in His mantle and strides towards Ephraim, leaving His interlocutors who go away rather dejectedly to repeat the Master's words to the people of the unmerciful village.

563. Samuel, Judas of Kerioth and John. Parable of the Bees.

10th February 1947.

Jesus is still all alone, engrossed in thought, while walking slowly towards the thick wood to the west of Ephraim. The rustling noise of water rises from the torrent and the songs of birds come from trees. The bright springtime sunshine is pleasant under the tangle of branches, and silent is the tread on the luxuriant grassy carpet. The sunbeams form a mobile carpet of circles or golden strips on the green grass and some flowers still covered with dew shine as if their petals were precious scales, when a disc of light centres on them while all around there is shadow.

Jesus climbs towards a ledge protruding like a balcony over the empty space underneath. A balcony on which a huge oak-tree grows, and from which the flexible twigs of wild blackberries, or dogroses, or ivy and clematis hang down, as they do not find room or supports in their native place, too narrow for their exuberant vitality, and they hang in the empty space like loose dishevelled hair and they stretch out hoping to find something to which they may cling.

Jesus is now at the level of the ledge. He moves towards the most projecting spot, shifting aside the tangle of bushes. A flock of small birds fly away whirring and chirping for fear. Jesus stops watching the man who has preceded Him up there and who, lying on the grass with his face downwards, almost on the edge of the ledge, his elbows pressed on the ground, his face resting in his hands, is looking at the empty space, towards Jerusalem. The man is Samuel, the ex-pupil of Jonathan ben Uziel. He is pensive. He sighs. He shakes his head…

Jesus shakes some branches to attract his attention and, seeing that His attempt has been vain, He picks up a stone from the grass and rolls it down the path. The noise of the stone bouncing down the slope rouses the young man, who turns round surprised saying: « Who is there? »

« It is I, Samuel. You have preceded Me in one of the places where I prefer to pray » says Jesus showing Himself from behind the massive trunk of the oak-tree growing at the edge of the little path and He does so as if He had just arrived there.

« Oh! Master! I am sorry… But I will leave Your place free at once » he says standing up hurriedly and picking up his mantle that he had taken off and he had spread on the ground to lie on it.

« No. Why? There is room for two. The place is so beautiful! So isolated, solitary, suspended over the empty space, with so much light and such a wide view! Why do you want to leave it? »

« Well… to leave You free to pray… »

« And can we not do so together, or meditate, speaking to each other, elevating our spirits to God… forgetting men and their faults,

thinking of God, our Father and the good Father of all those who seek and love Him with good will? »

Samuel shows surprise when Jesus says « forgetting men and their faults… » But he does not say anything. He sits down again.

Jesus sits beside him on the grass and says to him: « Sit here. And let us be together. See how clear the view is today. If we had the eyes of an eagle we should be able to see the white villages on the tops of the mountains around Jerusalem. And, perhaps, we could see a spot shining like a gem in the air and that would make our hearts throb: the golden domes of the House of God… Look. There is Bethel. You can see its white houses and there, beyond Bethel, there is Beeroth. How subtly crafty were the inhabitants of that place and of the neighbourhood! But it turned out well, although deceit is never a good weapon. It turned out well because it placed them at the service of the true God. It is always better to lose human honours in order to gain closeness to divinity. Even if human honours were many and valuable, and the closeness to divinity is humble and unknown. Is that right? »

« Yes, Master. What You say is right. That is what happened to me. »

« But you are sad, although the change should make you happy. You are sad. You are suffering. You live in isolation. You look at the places you left. You look like an imprisoned bird that, pressed against the bars of its prison, looks with so much regret at the place it loved. I am not asking you not to do that. You are free. You may go and… »

« Lord, has Judas perhaps spoken ill of me that You are saying so? »

« No, Judas has not spoken to Me. He has not spoken to Me, but he spoke to you. That is why you are sad. And you live in isolation as you are down-hearted because of that. »

« Lord, if You know all that, although no one has mentioned that to You, You must also know that I am sad not because I want to leave You, because I regret I was converted, or because I have a longing for the past… or because I am afraid of men, as they would like to instil the fear of their punishments into me. I was looking over there. That is true. I was looking towards Jerusalem. But not because I am anxious to go back there. I mean: to go back there as I was previously. Because I am certainly eager, like everybody else, to go back as an Israelite who loves to go into the House of God and worship the Most High, and I do not think that You can reproach me for that. »

« I am the first, in My double Nature, to long for that altar and I would like to see it surrounded by holiness, as befits it. As the Son of God, everything that honours Him is a sweet voice to Me, and as the Son of man, as an Israelite, and therefore a Son of the Law, I see the Temple and the altar as the most sacred place in Israel,

in which our humanity can approach Divinity and become scented with the air surrounding the throne of God. I do not abolish the Law, Samuel. It is sacred to Me because it was given by My Father. I perfect it and complete it with new parts. As the Son of God I can do that. My Father sent Me for that. I have come to establish the spiritual Temple of My Church, against which Temple neither men nor demons shall prevail. And the tables of the Law will have a place of honour in it, because they are eternal, perfect, untouchable. The commandment "do not commit this or that sin" contained in those tables, which in their lapidary conciseness comprise what is necessary to be just in the eyes of God, is not cancelled by My word. On the contrary! I also give those ten commandments to you. I only tell you to keep them with perfection, that is, not for fear of the wrath of God on you, but out of love for your God Who is your Father. I have come to put your hands of sons into the hands of your Father. For how many ages those hands have been divided! Punishment divided them. Sin divided them. Now that the Redeemer has come, sin is about to be cancelled. Barriers are falling. You are once again the sons of God. »

« That is true. You are good and you comfort. Always. And You know. So I shall not tell You my worry. But I ask You: why are men so wicked, insane and foolish? How and with which expedients can they diabolically influence us to do evil things? And why are we so blind as not to see real facts and to believe false ones? And how can we become such demons? And persist when one is close to You? I was looking there and I was thinking… Yes. I was thinking of how many streams of poison come out from there to upset the children of Israel. I was considering how the wisdom of the rabbis can be joined to so much iniquity that misrepresents things in order to deceive people. I was thinking above all of that, because… » Samuel, who had spoken passionately, stops and lowers his head.

Jesus ends the sentence: « … because Judas, My disciple, is what he is, and he grieves Me and those who are around Me or come to Me, as you did. I know. Judas is trying to send you away from here and he makes insinuations and sneers at you… »

« Not only at me. Yes. He poisons my joy of coming to justice. He poisons it so skilfully that I think I am like a traitor here, betraying You and myself. Myself, because I flatter myself that I am better, whereas I shall be the cause of Your ruin. In fact I do not know myself as yet… and if I meet those of the Temple I may fail in my purpose and be… Oh! if I had done it then, I would have had the excuse of not knowing You for what You are, because I knew of You what I was fold to make a cursed man of me. But if I did it now! What curse will be that of the traitor of the Son of God! I was here… Pensive, yes. I was wondering where I might flee to save myself from myself and from them. I was thinking of fleeing to some

remote place, to join those of the Diaspora… Away, far away, to prevent the demon from making me commit sin… Your apostle is right in not trusting me. He knows me, because he knows us all knowing our Leaders… And he is right in doubting me. When he says: "Don't you know that He tells us that we shall be weak? Just imagine: we are His apostles and have been with Him for such a long time. And you, infected as you are with old Israel, have just come, and you have come when circumstances make us shudder, do you think you have enough strength to remain just?" when he says so he is right. » The man is down-hearted and lowers his head.

« How much grief the sons of men can give themselves! Satan really knows how to make use of that disposition of theirs to terrorise them completely and separate them from the Joy that comes towards them to save them. Because the sadness of the spirit, the fear of the morrow and worries are always weapons that man puts in the hands of his enemy, who frightens him by means of the same phantasms that man himself imagines. And there are other men who really form an alliance with Satan to help him frighten his brothers. But, My dear son, is there not a Father in Heaven? A Father Who, as this fissure in the rock provides for this blade of grass - this fissure full of earth situated in such a way that the moisture of dews flowing on the smooth stone gathers in that thin furrow, so that the blade of grass may live and yield this tiny little flower, which is not less admirable for its beauty than the great sun shining up there: both the perfect work of the Creator - a Father Who takes care of the blade of grass grown on a rock, will He not take care of one of His sons who firmly wants to serve Him? Oh! God really does not disappoint the "good" wishes of man. Because it is He Who kindles them in your hearts. He providently and wisely creates the circumstances to encourage the wishes of His children, not only, but in the event that a desire to honour Him should follow an imperfect path, He straightens and perfects it so that it may follow the right path. You were among the latter. You believed, you wanted and were convinced that you were honouring God by persecuting Me. The Father saw that your heart did not hate God, but it longed to give glory to God by removing from the world Him Who you were told was the enemy of God and the corrupter of souls. So He created the circumstances to comply with your desire to give glory to your Lord. And here you are now among us. And can you believe that God will abandon you, now that He brought you here? Only if you abandon Him, the power of evil will be able to overwhelm you. »

« I do not want that. My will is sincere! » states the man.

« So what are you worried about? About the word of a man? Let him say. He thinks with his own thought. And man's thought is always imperfect. But I will see to that. »

« I do not want You to reproach him. Your assurance that I will not sin is enough for me. »

« I assure you. It will not happen to you because you do not want it to happen. Because see, son, it would not help you to go to the Diaspora or even to the end of the world to preserve your soul from hating the Christ and from being punished for such hatred. Many in Israel will not sully themselves with the Crime materially, but they will not be less guilty than those who condemn Me and execute the sentence. I can speak to you of these matters. Because you are already aware that everything has been arranged for them. You know the names and the thoughts of My most pitiless enemies. You said: "Judas knows us all because he knows all the Leaders". But if he knows you, you also, the minor ones, because you are like lesser stars near the major planets, you also know what is being done, how it is done and who does it, and what plots are made and which means are studied… So I can speak with you. I could not do so with the others… What I can suffer and bear with, others cannot… »

« Master, but how can You, knowing that, be so… Who is coming up the path? » Samuel stands up to look. He exclaims: « Judas! »

« Yes. It is I. I was told that the Master had passed through here, instead I find you. So I will go back, leaving you to your thoughts » and he laughs with his sly laugh that is more mournful than the cry of an owl, so insincere it is.

« I am here as well. Do they want Me at the village? » says Jesus appearing behind Samuel's shoulders.

« Oh! You! So you were in good company, Samuel! And You, too, Master… »

« Yes. The company of one who embraces justice is always good. So you wanted Me, to be with Me. Come, then. There is room for you and also for John, if he were with you. »

« He is down in the village, at grips with other pilgrims. »

« If there are some pilgrims, I must go. »

« No. They will be staying all day tomorrow. John is settling them in our beds for their stay. He is happy to do so. Of course, everything makes him happy. You are really like each other. I do not know how you manage to be always happy even when things are most… worrying. »

« The same question I was going to ask when you came! » exclaims Samuel.

« Ah! Were you? So you are not happy, and you are surprised that other people, in conditions even more… difficult than ours, can be so. »

« I am not unhappy. I am not speaking for myself. But I am thinking from which sources the serenity of the Master may come, as He is aware of His future and yet He is not upset by anything. »

« From heavenly sources, of course! It is natural! He is God! Do

you doubt it? Can a God suffer? He is above sorrow. His Father's love is for Him like… like an exhilarating wine. And the firm belief that His actions… are the salvation of the world is an exhilarating wine for Him. And then… Can He have the physical reactions that we, humble men, have? That is contrary to common sense. If Adam, when innocent, was not aware of any kind of sorrow, neither would he have ever become aware of it if he had remained innocent, Jesus… the Superinnocent, the creature… I do not know whether I should say so: uncreated being God, or created because He has relatives… oh! how many insoluble "whys" for future generations, my Master! If Adam was free from sorrow because of his innocence, can one think that Jesus must suffer? »

Jesus' head is bent. He has sat down once again on the grass. His face is veiled by His hair. So I cannot see His countenance.

Samuel standing in front of Judas, who is also standing, replies: « But if He is to be the Redeemer, He must really suffer. Do you not remember David and Isaiah? »

« I do remember them! But although they saw the figure of the Redeemer, they did not see the immaterial help He would receive to be… shall we say: tortured, without feeling any pain. »

« Which help? A man may love sorrow or suffer it with resignation, according to his perfection of justice. But he will always feel it. Otherwise… if he did not feel it… it would not be sorrow. »

« Jesus is the Son of God. »

« But He is not a ghost! He is true Flesh! And flesh suffers if it is tortured. He is a true Man! And the thought of man suffers if it is offended and despised. »

« His union with God eliminates such human things in Him. »

Jesus raises His head and says: « I solemnly tell you, Judas, that I suffer and shall suffer like every man, and more than every man. But I can be equally happy, enjoying the holy spiritual happiness of those who have achieved freedom from the sadness of the Earth, because they have embraced the will 'of God as their only bride. I am able to do so because I have overcome the human concept of happiness, the uneasiness of happiness, as men imagine it. I do not pursue what, according to men, happiness consists of, but I place My joy in exactly the opposite of what man pursues as such. The things that are avoided and despised by man, because they are considered burdensome and grievous, are the sweetest thing for Me. I am not interested in one hour. I consider the consequences that one hour may bring about in eternal life. My episode will come to an end, but its fruit will last. My sorrow will end, but the value of My sorrow will not end. And what could I do with one hour of the so called "happy state" on the Earth, an hour achieved after pursuing it for years and years, when that hour could not come with Me as delight in eternal life and I had to enjoy it all by myself, without sharing

it with those whom I love? »

« But if You should triumph, we, Your followers, would take part in Your happiness! » exclaims Judas.

« You? And who are you, compared with the past, present and future multitudes to whom My grief will bring joy? I see far beyond earthly happiness. I look at the supernatural beyond it. I can see My sorrow change into eternal delight for a multitude of people. And I embrace sorrow as the greatest power to reach the perfect happiness, which is to love one's neighbour to the extent of suffering to give him joy, to the extent of dying for him. »

« I do not understand that happiness » states Judas.

« You are not wise yet. Otherwise you would understand it. »

« And is John wise? He is more ignorant than I am! »

« From a human point of view he is. But he possesses the science of love. »

« All right. But I do not think that love can prevent clubs from being clubs and stones from being stones and both from causing pain to the bodies they strike. You always say that sorrow is dear to You because it is love for You. But when You are really caught and tortured, if that is possible, I do not know whether You will still be of the same mind. You had better think about it while You can shun pain. It will be dreadful, You know? If men will be able to get hold of You… oh! they will have no respect for You! »

Jesus looks at him. He is very pale. His wide open eyes seem to be seeing, beyond Judas' face, all the tortures awaiting Him, and yet, although sad, they remain meek and kind, and above all, serene: two limpid eyes of an innocent at peace. He replies: « I know. I know also what you do not know. But I hope in God's mercy. He, Who is merciful with sinners, will have mercy also on Me. I will not ask Him not to suffer, but to be able to suffer. And now let us go. Samuel, go a little ahead of us and tell John that I shall soon be in the village. »

Samuel bows and goes away quickly. Jesus begins to descend.

The path is so narrow that they have to proceed one behind the other. But that does not prevent Judas from saying: « You trust that man too much, Master. I told You who he is. He is Jonathan's most hot-headed and excitable disciple. Of course, it is late now. You have Put Yourself into his hands. He is a spy close to You. And You more than once thought that I was a spy and the others thought so more than You did! I am not a spy. »

Jesus stops and turns round. Grief and majesty mingle on His face and in His eyes fixed on His apostle. He says: « No. You are not a spy. You are a demon. You have stolen the Serpent's prerogative to seduce and deceive in order to take people away from God. Your behaviour is neither a stone nor a club, but it hurts Me more than a blow with a stone or a club. Oh! in My atrocious suffering there

will be nothing greater than your behaviour capable of torturing the Martyr. » Jesus covers His face with His hands, as if He wished to conceal so much horror, and then He begins to run down the path.

Judas shouts after Him: « Master! Master! Why are You grieving me? That liar has certainly made a slanderous report to You… Listen to me, Master! »

Jesus does not listen. He runs, He flies down the slopes. He does not stop when He passes by the woodcutters and shepherds who greet Him. He passes, He waves to them but does not stop. Judas resigns himself to being silent…

They are almost down when they meet John who, with his pellucid face brightened by a serene smile, is climbing towards them. He is holding by the hand a little boy who is prattling while sucking a honeycomb.

« Master, here I am! There are people from Caesarea Philippi. They heard that You are here and they came. How strange it is! No one has spoken and everybody knows where You are! They are resting now. They are very tired. I went and asked Dinah to give me some milk and honey because there is a sick person. I put him in my bed. I am not afraid. And little Annas wanted to come with me. Don't touch him, Master; he is all sticky with honey » and kind John, who has many drops and finger-marks of honey on his tunic, laughs. He laughs trying to hold back the boy who would like to go and offer Jesus his half-sucked honeycomb and shouts: « Come. There are so many of them for You! »

« Yes. They are removing the honeycombs at Dinah's. I knew. Her bees swarmed not long ago » says John.

They set out again and arrive at the first house where the beemasters are still making the usual deafening noise near the beehives, I do not know exactly why. Swarms of bees - they look like big bunches of strange grapes - are hanging from some branches and some men are taking them to put them into the new beehives. Farther away, untiring buzzing bees are going in and coming out of beehives already settled.

The men greet Jesus and a woman approaches Him with some lovely honeycombs which she offers Him.

« Why are you depriving yourself of them? You have already given John some… »

« Oh! My bees have made much honey. It's a pleasure for me to offer it. But please bless the new swarms. Look, they are taking the last one. This year we had to double the beehives. »

Jesus goes towards the tiny towns of the bees and He blesses them one by one raising His hand amidst the humming of the workerbees that do not stop working.

« They are all merry and they are also all excited. A new house… » says a man.

« And a new wedding. They really look like women preparing a wedding feast » says another one.

« Yes, but the women do more talking than work. The bees, instead, work in silence and they work also on the days of wedding feasts. They work all the time to build their kingdom and their wealth » replies a third man.

« To be always working in virtue is lawful, nay, it is dutiful. To work always for the sake of gain, no, it is not. Only those can do it who do not know that they have a God Who is to be honoured on His day. To work in silence is a merit that everybody should learn of the bees. Because holy things are done holily in silence. Be like your bees in justice. Untiring and silent. God sees. God rewards. Peace be with you » says Jesus.

And when He is alone with His two apostles He says: « To the workers of God in particular I propose the bees as their model. They deposit in the secrecy of the beehive the honey formed in their interiors through their unremitting work on wholesome corollas. Their fatigue does not even appear to be such, as they do it with so much good will, flying, like golden dots, from flower to flower, and then, laden with juice, going in to elaborate their honey in the privacy of their little cells. People ought to imitate them, choosing lessons, sound doctrines and friendships, capable of producing juices of true virtue, then living in isolation to elaborate, using what has been actively gathered, virtue, justice, which are like the honey extracted from many wholesome elements, of which one of the most important ones is good will, without which the juices collected here and there would be of no use. It is also necessary to meditate humbly, in the secrecy of one's heart, on the good we have seen and heard, without being envious if queen bees are near working bees, that is, if there is someone who is more just than he who meditates. Both queens and workers are necessary in the beehive. It would be a disaster if they were all queens or all workers. Both the former and the latter would die. Because the queens would have no food to procreate if there were no workers, and the workers would no longer exist if the queens did not procreate. And the queens are not to be envied. They have their work and their penitence. They see the sun but once, in their only one nuptial flight. Before it and after it, they are in perpetual seclusion within the amber-coloured walls of the beehive. Each one has its task, and each task is an appointment, and each appointment is an onus besides being an honour. And the working bees waste no time in vain or dangerous flights around diseased or poisonous flowers. They make no adventurous attempts. They do not fail to carry out their mission, they do not rebel against the purpose for which they were created. Oh! Admirable little beings! How much you teach men!… » Jesus becomes silent, lost in His meditation.

Judas suddenly remembers that he has to go I do not know where, and he almost runs away. Jesus and John remain. And John looks at Jesus without letting Him notice. A keen look of anxious love. Jesus raises His head, turns round a little, meeting the eyes of His Favourite apostle who is watching Him. His face brightens when He draws John to Himself.

John, while walking embraced thus, asks: « Judas has grieved You again, has he not? And he must have upset Samuel as well. »

« Why? Has he said anything to you? »

« No. But I have understood. He only said: "Generally speaking when one lives near someone who is really good, one becomes good. But Judas is not, although he has lived with the Master for three years. He is corrupt in the depth of his heart, and the goodness of the Christ does not penetrate him, so full he is of wickedness". I did not know what to say, because it is true… But why is Judas like that? Is it possible that he will never change? And yet… we are all getting the same lessons… and when he came among us, he was not any worse than we were… »

« My John! My meek child! » Jesus kisses his forehead, so open and pure, and He whispers through his fair hair that undulates lightly: « There are people who seem to live to destroy the good that is in them. You are a fisherman and you know what a sail does when a hurricane strikes it. It bends so low near the water that is almost overturns the boat and becomes a danger for it, so that at times it is necessary to lower it, and one is thus left without wings with which to fly towards one's nest, because a sail, struck by a hurricane is no longer a wing, but it becomes ballast that takes one to the bottom, to death and not to salvation. But if the violent blast of the hurricane abates, even for a few moments, then the sail becomes wing at once and the boat sails fast towards the harbour taking the people in it to salvation. The same happens to many souls. It is enough that the hurricane of passions subsides, and the soul that was bent and almost submerged by… by what was not good, begins to yearn for Goodness. »

« Yes, Master. But… so… tell me… will Judas ever reach Your harbour? »

« Oh! Do not make Me look at the future of one of My dearest apostles! I have in front of me the future of millions of souls for whom My sufferings will be useless!… I have in front of Me all the base actions of the world… The nausea upsets Me. The nausea of the seething of filthy things that like a river cover and will cover the Earth, in different ways, but always dreadful for the Perfection, until the end of time. Do not make Me look! Let Me quench My thirst and find comfort at a spring that does not taste of corruption, and let Me forget the verminous rottenness of too many people, by looking at you alone, My peace! » and He kisses him again between his

eyebrows looking deeply into the limpid eyes of the pure loving apostle…

They go into the house. Samuel is in the kitchen chopping the wood to spare the old woman work when lighting the fire.

Jesus asks the woman: « Are the pilgrims sleeping? »

« I think so. I do not hear any noise. I am going to take this water to the mounts. They are in the wood-store. »

« I will do that, mother. You had better go to Rachel's house. She promised me some fresh cheese. Tell her that I will pay her on the Sabbath » says John picking up two tubs full of water.

Only Jesus and Samuel remain. Jesus approaches the man who bending over the fire is blowing to light the flame and He lays His hand on his shoulder saying: « Judas interrupted us up there… I want to tell you that I will send you with My apostles the day after the Sabbath. Perhaps you prefer that… »

« Thank You, Master. I am sorry not to be near You. But in Your apostles I shall find You once again. Yes, I prefer to be far away from Judas. I did not dare to ask You… »

« All right. That is settled. And take pity on him. As I do. And do not tell Peter or anybody else… »

« I can hold my tongue, Master. »

« The disciples will come later. There is Hermas and Stephen, and there is Isaac, two wise men and a just one, and many more. You will like it, among true brothers. »

« Yes, Master. You understand and help us. You really are the good Master » and he bends to kiss Jesus' hand.

564. At Ephraim, before and after the Arrival of Jesus' Mother and of the Women Disciples with Lazarus.

12th February 1947.

In Mary of Jacob's house they are already up although it is hardly daybreak. I would say that it must be a Sabbath, because I see that the apostles also are present, whereas they are usually away evangelizing. They are busy lighting fires and boiling water, and Mary is helped in sieving flour and kneading it to bake bread.

The old woman is very excited, as excited as a little girl, and while working actively she asks this one and that one: « Will it really be today? And are the other places ready? Are you sure that they are not more than seven? »

Peter, who is skinning a lamb preparing it to be cooked, replies on behalf of everybody: « They were to be here before the Sabbath, but the women were probably not yet ready and so they have delayed. But they will certainly come today. Ah! I am happy! Has the Master gone out? Perhaps He has gone to meet them… »

« Yes. He went out with John and Samuel towards the road to central

Samaria » replies Bartholomew coming out with a pitcher of boiling water.

« Then we can be certain that they are arriving. He always knows everything » states Andrew.

« I would like to know why you are laughing like that. What is there to laugh at when my brother speaks? » asks Peter who has noticed the sly laugh of Judas, who is idle in a comer.

« I am not laughing because of your brother. You are all happy and I can be happy as well and laugh without any reason. »

Peter looks at him meaningly, but he resumes his work.

« Here it is! I managed to find a flowery branch. It is not the branch of an almond-tree, as I wanted. But after the almond-tree has bloomed, She has other branches and She will be pleased with mine » says Thaddeus who comes in dripping dew, as if he had been walking in woods, and carrying a bunch of flowery branches. A miracle' of dewy whiteness that seems to brighten and decorate the kitchen.

« Oh! How beautiful! Where did you find them? »

« At Naomi's. I knew that her orchard is late because of its northern position. And I went up there. »

« That's why you look like a forest tree yourself! The dew-drops shine in your hair and have wet your garment. »

« The path was as damp as if it had rained. It is already the plentiful dew of the most beautiful months. » Thaddeus goes away with his flowers, and shortly afterwards he calls his brother to help him arrange them.

« I will come. I am an expert. Woman, have you an amphora with a thin neck, if possible of red clay? » says Thomas.

« I have what you want and other vases as well… The ones I used on feast days… for the weddings of my sons or some other important occasion. If you wait for me to put these cakes in the oven, only a moment, I will come and open the chest where the beautiful things are kept… Ah! they are only few now, after so much misfortune! But I have kept some to… remember… and to suffer, because even if they are memories of happy days, they now make one shed tears because they remind one of what is finished. »

« In that case it would have been better if no one had asked them of you. I would not like what happened to us at Nob to occur again here. So many preparations for nothing… » says the Iscariot.

« I tell you that a group of disciples informed us! Do you think they had dreamt of it? They spoke to Lazarus. He sent them ahead on purpose. They came to tell us that His Mother would be here before the Sabbath in Lazarus' wagon, with Lazarus and the women disciples… »

« But they have not come… »

« Since you have seen that man, tell me: does he not give you a fright? » asks the old woman drying her hands in her apron after

entrusting her cakes to James of Zebedee and Andrew who take them to the stone oven.

« A fright? Why? »

« H'm! a man who comes back from the dead! » She is utterly moved.

« Don't worry, mother. He is exactly like us » says James of Alphaeus comforting her.

« Rather than be afraid you had better make sure that you do not chatter with other women about it, otherwise we shall have the whole of Ephraim here bothering us » says the Iscariot peremptorily.

« I have never spoken imprudently since you came here, either with the people of the town or with pilgrims. I have preferred to be considered foolish rather than appear wise, in order not to disturb the Master and harm Him. And I will be quiet today as well. Come, Thomas… » and she goes out to show him her hidden treasures.

« The woman is frightened thinking that she will be seeing a man who has been raised from the dead » says the Iscariot laughing ironically.

« She is not the only one. The disciples told me that they were all excited at Nazareth and also at Cana and Tiberias. One that comes back from the dead after being four days in a sepulchre is not as easily found as daisies in springtime. We were also very pale when he came out of the sepulchre! But instead of standing there making idle comments, could you not do some work? Everybody is working and there is still so much to be done… Go to the market, since you can do that today, and buy what is needed. What we bought is no longer sufficient, now that they are coming, and we had no time to go back to town and do some shopping. We would have been held up, where we were, by sunset. »

Judas calls Matthew, who comes into the kitchen dressed up, and they go out together.

The Zealot also comes into the kitchen, he is well dressed as well, and he says: « Our Thomas! He is really an artist. With very little he has decorated the room as if it were for a wedding dinner. Go and see it. »

They all rush to see it, with the exception of Peter, who is finishing his work. Peter says: « I am dying to see them here. Perhaps Marjiam is with them. In a month's time it will be Passover. He must have already left Capernaum or Bethsaida. »

« I am happy, for the Master's sake, that Mary is coming. She will comfort Him more than anybody else. And He needs it » the Zealot replies to him.

« So much. And have you noticed how sad is John also? I have asked him. But in vain. In his kindness he is more firm than all of us, and if he does not want to speak, nothing can make him do so.

But I am sure that he is aware of something. And he seems to be the Master's shadow. He follows Him all the time. And he is always looking at Him. And when he knows that he is not being watched - because, if he knows, he looks at you with such a smile that would make even a tiger mild - when he knows that nobody is watching him, I say, his countenance is very sad. You should try and ask him. He is very fond of you. And he knows that you are more prudent than I am… »

« Oh! certainly not. You have become an example of prudence for all of us. No one would recognise the old Simon in you. You are really the stone that by its hard sound compactness supports us all. »

« Not at all! Don't say that! I am a poor man. Certainly… by staying with Him for so many years, one becomes a little like Him. A little… very little, but quite different from what one was previously. We have all… no, not all of us, unfortunately. Judas is always the same. Here as he was at the Clear Water… »

« And may God grant that he may always be the same! »

« What? What do you mean? »

« Nothing and everything, Simon of Jonah. If the Master heard me He would say: "Do not judge". But I am not judging. I am afraid. I am afraid that Judas is worse than he was at the Clear Water. »

« He certainly is, even if he is as he was then. Because he should have changed very much, he should have grown in justice, instead he is always the same. So in his heart there is the sin of spiritual indolence, which was not there previously. Because at the beginning… yes, he was mad, but he was full of good will… Tell me, the fact that the Master has decided to send Samuel with us and to gather together all the disciples, all those that can be gathered at Jericho for the new moon of Nisan, what does it make you think? Previously He had said that the man was to stay here… and He had also forbidden us to say where He was. It makes me suspicious… »

« No. In my opinion the situation is clear and logical. By now, we do not know by whom and how the news has been spread that the Master is here and it is known all over Palestine. You know that pilgrims and disciples have come here from Kedesh to Engedi, from Joppa to Bozrah. So there is no sense in keeping it secret any longer. Further, Passover is approaching and the Master certainly wants to have His disciples with Him for His return to Jerusalem. You heard that the Sanhedrin says that He has been defeated and has lost all His disciples. And He will reply to it by entering the town at the head of them… »

« I am afraid, Simon. Very much afraid… You have heard that everybody, also the Herodians, have joined together against Him… »

« Yes! It's true. May God help us!… »

« And why is He sending Samuel with us? »

« Certainly to prepare him for his mission. I see no reason why

we should worry… 'They are knocking! It's certainly the women disciples!… »

Peter throws away his bloodstained apron and runs following the Zealot, who has rushed to the door of the house. All the others who are in the house appear from the various doors and shout: « Here they are! Here they are! »

But when they open the door they are so obviously disappointed in seeing Eliza and Nike, that the two women disciples ask: « Is there anything wrong? »

« No! No! The fact is that… we thought it was the Mother and the women disciples from Galilee… » says Peter.

« Ah! you have taken it badly. But we are very happy to see you and to hear that Mary is about to arrive » says Eliza.

« No, we have not taken it badly… We are disappointed! But come! Come in! Peace be with our good sisters » says Thaddeus greeting them on behalf of everybody.

« And to you. Is the Master not in? »

« He has gone with John to meet Mary. We know that She is coming along the Shechem road in Lazarus' wagon » explains the Zealot.

They go into the house while Andrew takes care of Eliza's donkey. Nike has come on foot. They speak of what is happening in Jerusalem, they inquire after friends and disciples… after Annaleah, Mary and Martha, old John of Nob, Joseph, Nicodemus and many more. The absence of Judas Iscariot allows them to speak peacefully and openly.

Eliza, an elderly experienced woman, who at the time they were at Nob, has been in touch with the Iscariot and by now knows him very well and also « she only loves him out of love for God » as she says openly, asks whether he is in the house and does not want to join the others for some whim of his, and only after she learns that he is out, shopping, she speaks of what she knows: « that everything seems to have calmed down at Jerusalem, that not even the well known disciples are questioned any more, that it is rumoured that it happened because Pilate had spoken in a threatening voice to those of the Sanhedrin, reminding them that he is the only one who administers justice in Palestine and therefore they should put an end to their nonsense. »

« But they also say » remarks Nike « - and it is Manaen who says this and other men with him, nay other women, because Valeria is the other voice - that Pilate is really so tired of all the risings that continuously excite the country and that may cause him trouble, and that he is also so struck by the insistence of the Jews in insinuating that Jesus is aiming at proclaiming Himself king, that if he did not have the concordant favourable reports of the centurions and above all, if he were not pressed by his wife, he would end up by punishing the Christ, if only by banishing Him, in order not

to be troubled any more. »

« That would be the last straw. And he is capable of doing it! Quite capable! It is the lightest Roman punishment, and the most used after scourging. But can you imagine that! Jesus all alone, goodness knows where, and we scattered here and there… » says the Zealot.

« Of course! Scattered! That's what you say. But they will not scatter me. I will follow Him… » says Peter.

« Oh! Simon! Can you flatter yourself that they would allow you to do that? They tie you up like a galley slave, and they take you wherever they want, even on a galley or to one of their prisons, and you would no longer be able to follow your Master » says Bartholomew. Peter ruffles his hair looking perplexed and downhearted.

« We shall tell Lazarus. Lazarus will go to Pilate frankly. Pilate will certainly see him with pleasure because the Gentiles love to see extraordinary beings… » says the Zealot.

« He has probably been there before he left, and Pilate may no longer be anxious to see him! » says Peter dejectedly.

« He will then go as Theophilus' son. Or he will take his sister Mary to visit the ladies of rank. They were friends when… well, when Mary was a sinner… »

« Do you know that Valeria, after her husband divorced her, has become a proselyte? She has been in earnest. She lives an honest life and is an example to many of us. She freed all her slaves and she instructs them in the true God. She had gone to live in Zion. But now that Claudia has come, she has gone back to her… »

« Then!… »

« No. She said to me: "As soon as Johanna comes I am going to stay with her. But now I want to convince Claudia"… Claudia does not seem to be able to get over the limit of her opinion on Christ. According to her He is a wise man. Nothing else… Nay before she came to town, she seems to have been somewhat upset by the rumours that were spread and to have said sceptically: "He is a man like our philosophers, and not of the best, because His word does not correspond to His life", and she had some… in short she allowed herself certain things that she had previously given up » says Nike.

« That was to be expected. Heathen souls! H'm! There may be a good one… But the others!… Corrupt! Corrupt! » Bartholomew says sententiously.

« And what about Joseph? » asks Thaddeus.

« Who? The man from Sephoris? He is terrified! Your brother Joseph came. He came and left at once, but he passed by Bethany to tell the sisters that at all costs they should keep the Master from going to town and from remaining there. I was there and I heard him. Likewise I heard that Joseph of Sephoris had a lot of trouble and now he is much afraid. Your brother asked him to keep well informed of what is plotted in the Temple. The man from Sephoris

can find out through that relative who is the husband either of the sister or of the daughter of his wife's sister, I do not know, and who is employed at the Temple » says Eliza.

« How much fear! Now, when we go to Jerusalem, I want to send my brother to Annas. I could go myself, because I also know the sly fox well. But John is more capable. And Annas was very fond of him, when we listened to the words of the old fox believing that he was a lamb! I will send John. He will be able to put up even with abuse without reacting. I… if he said anathema of the Master to me, or even if he only said that I am anathema because I follow Him, I would jump to his neck, I would seize him and squeeze his old stout body as if it were a net out of which water is to be squeezed. I would make him give back the wicked soul he has! Even if all the soldiers and priests of the Temple were around him! »

« Oh! if the Master heard you speak thus! » exclaims Andrew, who is utterly scandalised.

« I am saying so exactly because He is not here! »

« You are right! You are not the only one to have certain wishes. I have them, too! » says Peter.

« And I, too, and not only with regard to Annas » says Thaddeus.

« Oh! in that case I… would serve several of them. I have a long list… Those three old crocks of Capernaum - I leave out Simon, the Pharisee, because he seems to be tolerably good - those two wolves of Esdraelon, and that old heap of bones of Hananiah, and then… a slaughter, a real slaughter, I tell you, at Jerusalem, with Helkai at the head of them all. I cannot bear those snakes lying in wait any longer! » Peter is furious.

Thaddeus, calm in speaking, but even more impressive in his glacial calm than if he were as furious as Peter, says: « And I would give you a hand. But… perhaps I would begin by removing the snakes close at hand. »

« Who? Samuel? »

« No. Not at all! Not only Samuel is close at hand. There are many who show a face but their souls are different from the face they show! I never lose sight of them. Never. I want to be sure before acting. But when I am sure! David's blood is hot, and hot is the blood of Galilee. They are both in me through my paternal and maternal lines. »

« Oh! In the event… tell me! I will help you… » says Peter.

« No. Blood revenge is the concern of relatives. It's for me to take it. »

« But, my dear children! Do not speak thus. That is not what the Master teaches! You look like little furious lions instead of being the lambs of the Lamb! Restrain so much spirit of revenge. The days of David went by long ago! The law of blood and retaliation has been cancelled by the Christ. He confirms the ten unchangeable cornmandments,

but He cancels the other hard Mosaic laws. The commandments of Moses concerning pity, humanity and justice remain and are condensed and perfected in His greater commandment: "To love God with our whole selves, to love our neighbour as we love ourselves, to forgive those who offend us, to love those who hate us". Oh! forgive me, if I, a woman, have dared to teach my brothers, who are greater than I am! But I am an old mother. And a mother can always speak. Believe me, my children! If you yourselves call Satan by hating enemies, by wishing for revenge, he will come into you and corrupt you. Satan is not strength. Believe me. God is strength. Satan is weakness, a burden, he us sluggishness. You would not be able to move a finger any more, not only against your enemies, but not even to caress our distressed Jesus, if hatred and revenge should enchain you. Cheer up, my dear children, all of you! Also those who are as old as I am, perhaps older. You are all sons for a woman who loves you, for a mother who has found once again the joy of being a mother by loving you as her children. Do not make me feel distressed once again, having lost my dear children again and for good; because if you die cherishing hatred or crime, you die for ever, and we shall not longer be able to gather all together up there, in joy, around our common love: Jesus. Promise me here, at once, as I implore you, promise me, a poor woman, a poor mother, that you will never have such thoughts again. Oh! they even disfigure your faces. You seem strangers to me, you are different! How ugly hatred makes you! You were so meek! But what is happening? Listen to me! Mary would say the same words as mine to you, with greater power, because She is Mary; but it is better if She is not aware of all the grief… Oh! poor Mother! But what is happening? So have I to really believe that the hour of darkness has already come, the hour that will swallow everybody, the hour in which Satan will be king in everybody, with the exception of the Holy One, and he will lead astray also saints, you also, making you cowards, perjurers, as cruel as he is? Oh! so far I have always hoped! I have always said: "Men will not prevail against the Christ". But now! But now I am afraid and I tremble for the first time! I see the great Darkness, whose name is Lucifer, stretch out and invade this serene sky of Adar and darken all of you, and pour poisons that make you sick. Oh! I am afraid! » Eliza, who for some time had been weeping silently, drops with her head on the table at which she was sitting and sobs sorrowfully.

The apostles look at one another. Then, although distressed, they begin to console her. But she does not want consolations and she says so: « One, only one is good for me: your promise. For your own good! So that Jesus may not have the greatest of His sorrows: to see you, His beloved disciples, damned. »

« Of course, Eliza. If that is what you want! Do not weep, woman!

We promise you. Listen. We will not lift a finger against anybody, We shall not even look, so that we may not see. Don't weep! Don't weep! We will forgive those who offend us. We will love those who hate us! Don't weep. »

Eliza raises her face shining with tears and says: « Remember. You have promised it! Repeat your promise! »

« We promise you it, woman. »

« How dear you are, my children! Now I do like you! I see that you are good again. Now that my worry is appeased and that you are once again free from that bitter ferment, let us get ready to receive Mary. What is there to be done? » she asks and she finishes wiping her tears.

« Actually… we have prepared, as men can do. But Mary of Jacob helped us. She is a Samaritan, but she is very good. You will soon see her. She is out at the stone oven watching the bread. She is alone: her children are either dead or have forgotten her, her riches have vanished, and yet she bears no one ill-will… »

« Ah! see! Can you see that there is who knows how to forgive also among heathens and Samaritans? And it must be dreadful, you know, to have to forgive a son!… Better dead than a sinner! Ah! Are you sure that Judas is not here? »

« If he has not become a bird, he cannot be here, because the windows are open, but all the doors are closed, except this one. »

« Then… Mary of Simon has been to Jerusalem with her relative. She came to offer sacrifices at the Temple. Then she came to us. She seems a martyr. How depressed she is! She asked me and everybody whether we had any news of her son. Whether he was with the Master. Whether he had always been with Him. »

« What is the matter with that woman? » asks Andrew quite astonished.

« Her son. Do you not think that it is enough? » asks Thaddeus.

« I comforted her. She wanted to go back to the Temple with us. We all went there together to pray… Then she left, always with her worry. I said to her: "If you stay with us, we shall be going to the Master shortly. Your son is there". She already knew that Jesus is here. It has been known as far as the borders of Palestine. But she said: "No, no! The Master told me not to be in Jerusalem in spring. I am obeying Him. But I wanted to go up to the Temple before He returned. I am in such need of God". And she said a strange word… She said: "I am blameless. But I am so tortured that hell is in me and I am in it"… We repeatedly asked her why. But she would not say anything else, with regard to her torture or to the reasons for Jesus' prohibition. She asked us not to say anything to Jesus or to Judas. »

« Poor woman! So will she not be there at Passover? » asks Thomas.

« No, she will not. »

« Well! If Jesus told her that, He must have a reason… Did you hear what she said, eh? It is really known everywhere that Jesus is here! » says Peter.

« Yes. And some people said that those who were spreading the news were doing so to gather men in His name, to rise "against the tyrants". Others said that He is here because He realises that He has been unmasked… »

« Always the same reasons! They must have spent all the gold of the Temple to send those… servants of theirs everywhere! » remarks Andrew.

There are some knocks at the door. « They are here! » they say and they rush to open.

It is instead Judas with his shopping. Matthew follows him. Judas sees Eliza and Nike and he greets them asking: « Are you alone? »

« All alone. Mary has not come yet. »

« Mary is not coming from the southern regions and thus she cannot be with you. I was asking whether Anastasica is here. »

« No. She remained at Bethzur. »

« Why? She is a disciple, too. Do you not know that from here we shall be going to Jerusalem for Passover? She should be here. If the women disciples and the believers are not perfect, who will be so? Who will form the train of the Master, to discredit the legend that everybody had abandoned Him? »

« Oh! with regard to that, it will not be a poor woman to fill the gaps! Roses are all right among thorns and in enclosed gardens. I act as her mother and I ordered that. »

« So will she not be there at Passover? »

« No, she will not. »

« And that makes two! » exclaims Peter.

« What are you saying? Which two? » asks Judas suspiciously.

« Nothing, nothing! A calculation of mine. Many things can be counted, can they not? Also… flies, for instance, that alight on my skinned lamb. »

Mary of Jacob comes in followed by Samuel and John who are carrying loaves just taken out of the oven. Eliza greets the woman, and so does Nike. And Eliza has a kind word to make her feel at ease: « You are among sisters, in sorrow, Mary. I am alone as I lost husband and children, and she is a widow. So we will love one another, because only who has wept can understand. »

In the meantime Peter says to John: « How come you are here? And the Master? »

« On the wagon. With His Mother. »

« And are you not saying anything? »

« You have not given me time. All the women are there. But you will see how worn out Mary of Nazareth is! She seems to have aged years and years. Lazarus says that She was very upset when he told

Her that Jesus had taken shelter here. »

« Why did that fool tell Her? Before dying he was intelligent. Perhaps His brain became mushy in the sepulchre and it has never recovered. One does not lie dead with impunity!… » says Judas of Kerioth ironically and scornfully.

« Nothing of the kind. You had better wait and listen, before speaking. Lazarus of Bethany told Mary when they were already on the way, as She was surprised at the road that Lazarus was taking » says Samuel sternly.

« Yes. The first time he passed through Nazareth he only said: "I will take You to Your Son in a month's time". He did not even say to Her: "We are going to Ephraim" when they were about to leave, but… » says John.

« Everybody knows that Jesus is here. Was She the only one who did not know? » asks always rudely Judas, interrupting his companion.

« Mary knew. She had heard it being said. But since a muddy stream of several lies flows through Palestine, She did not accept any news as true. She was wasting away with grief, in silence, praying. But once they were on the road, as Lazarus had taken the road along the river, in order to bewilder the Nazarenes, and all those at Cana, Sephoris, Bethlehem of Galilee… »

« Ah! Is Naomi also there with Myrtha and Aurea? » asks Thomas.

« No. They were ordered by Jesus not to come. When Isaac came back to Galilee he brought His order. »

« So… also these women will not be with us as last year. »

« No, they will not be with us. »

« And that's three! »

« Neither our wives and daughters. The Master told them before leaving Galilee. Nay, He repeated His order. Because my daughter Marian told me that Jesus had informed them since last Passover. »

« But… very well! Is at least Johanna there? Salome? Mary of Alphaeus? »

« Yes. And Susanna. »

« And Marjiam certainly… "But what is that noise? »

« The wagons! The wagons! And all the Nazarenes who have not surrendered and have followed Lazarus… and those from Cana… » replies John running away with the others.

Once the door is opened, a tumultuous sight can be seen. Besides Mary sitting near Her Son and the women disciples, besides Lazarus, besides Johanna, in her wagon with Mary and Matthias, Esther and other maidservants and faithful Jonathan, there is a crowd of people: known faces and unknown ones. From Nazareth, Cana, Tiberias, Nain, Endor. And Samaritans from all the villages they passed through on their journey and from other nearby ones. And they rush to the front of the wagons, obstructing the passage to those who

want to come out or go in.

« But what do these people want? Why have they come? How did they know? »

« Eh! those of Nazareth were on the look-out, and when Lazarus came in the evening to leave the following morning, during the night they ran to the nearby towns, and those from Cana did the same, because Lazarus had passed there to get Susanna and to meet Johanna. And they followed and preceded him, to see Jesus and to see Lazarus. And also those of Samaria heard about it and they joined the rest. And here they are, all of them!… » explains John.

« Listen! You who were afraid that the Master would have no train, do you think this one is sufficient? » Philip says to the Iscariot.

« They came for Lazarus… »

« Once they had seen him, they could have gone away. Instead they remained and have come here. Which means that there are also some who came for the Master. »

« Well. Let us have no idle talk. Instead let us make way to let them go in. Come on, boys! In order to get into practice again! We have not elbowed a way through the crowd for the Master for a long time! » and Peter is the first to begin to open a passage through the crowd that sings hosannas, is curious, devout, talkative according to the various moods. And when he succeeds with the help of other people and of many disciples who, spread out among the crowds, are trying to join the apostles, he keeps the space empty so that the women may take shelter in the house with Jesus and Lazarus. He then closes the door, being the last one to go in, and he bars it and bolts it and sends the others to close the door on the side of the kitchen garden.

« Oh! at long last! Peace be with You, blessed Mary! At last I see You! Now everything is beautiful because You are with us! » says Peter greeting Her and he stoops before Mary. A Mary with a sad pale tired face, it is already the face of Our Lady of Sorrows.

« Yes, everything is now less sorrowful because I am here near Him. »

« I had assured You that I was telling nothing but the truth! » says Lazarus.

« You are right… But the sun became obscured for Me and I had no peace when I heard that My Son was here… I understood… Oh! » More tears stream down Her wan cheeks.

« Do not weep, Mother! Do not weep! I was here among these good people, near another Mary who is a mother… » Jesus leads Her towards a room that opens onto the peaceful kitchen garden. They all follow Him.

Lazarus says apologising: « I had to tell Her, because She knew the road, and She could not understand why I was taking that one. She thought that He was with me at Bethany… And at Shechem

also a man shouted: "We are going to Ephraim, too, to the Master". It was impossible for me to find an excuse… I was also hoping to outdistance those people by setting off at night along strange routes. Nothing doing! They were on the alert everywhere, and while one group followed me, another went around spreading the news. »

Mary of Jacob brings some milk, butter and new bread and offers them to Mary first. She looks Lazarus up and down stealthily, half curious, half frightened, and her hand jerks when, offering Lazarus some milk, she touches his hand lightly and she cannot help exclaiming « oh! » when she sees Him eat his cake like everybody else.

Lazarus is the first to laugh and he says in an affable gentlemanly manner, with the confidence of all men of high birth: « Yes, woman. I eat just like you, and I like your bread and your milk. And I am sure I shall like your bed, because I feel tired exactly as I feel hungry. » He turns round saying: « There are many who touch me with some excuse to feel whether I am flesh and bones, whether I am warm and I breathe. It is a bit of a nuisance. And when my mission is over, I will retire to Bethany. If I were near You, Master, I would stir up too many distractions. I have shone, I have borne witness to Your power as far as Syria. I shall now disappear. You alone must shine in the sky of miracles, in the sky of God and in the eyes of men. »

Mary in the meantime says to the old woman: « You have been good to My Son. He told Me how good you have been. Let Me kiss you to tell you how grateful I am to you. I have nothing to give you as a reward, except My love. I am poor, too… and I also can say that I no longer have a son, because He belongs to God and to His mission… And may it always be so, because holy and just is what God wants. »

Mary is kind, but she is already heart-broken… All the apostles look at Her compassionately to the extent of forgetting those who are rioting outside, and of inquiring after their far away relatives.

But Jesus says: « I will go up to the terrace to dismiss and bless the people », and Peter then rouses himself and asks: « But where is Marjiam? I have seen all the disciples but not him. »

« Marjiam is not here » replies Salome, the mother of James and John.

« Marjiam is not here? Why? Is he ill? »

« No. He is well. And your wife is well. But Marjiam is not here. Porphirea did not let him come. »

« Silly woman! In a month's time it will be Passover and he has to come for Passover! She could have let him come with you now and make the boy and me happy. But she is more backward than a sheep in understanding certain things… »

« John and Simon of Jonah, and you, Lazarus with Simon Zealot, come with Me. You, all of you, stay here where you are, until I dismiss

the crowd, separating the disciples from it » orders Jesus, and He goes out with the four closing the door.

Through the corridor and the kitchen He goes out into the kitchen garden followed by Peter, who is grumbling, and by the others. But before setting foot on the terrace, He stops on the little staircase, He turns round laying a hand on the shoulder of Peter who raises his unhappy face. « Listen to Me carefully, Simon Peter, and stop accusing and reproaching Porphirea. She is innocent. She obeyed an order of Mine. Before the feast of the Tabernacles I ordered her not to let Marjiam come to Judaea… »

« But Passover, Lord! »

« I am the Lord. You say that. And as the Lord I can order anything, because every order of Mine is just. So do not be upset by scruples. Do you remember what is stated in Numbers? "If anyone of your country becomes unclean by touching a dead body or is on a journey abroad, such person shall keep Passover for the Lord on the fourteenth day of the second month, in the evening". »

« But Marjiam is not unclean, I hope that Porphirea does not want to die just now, and he is not on a journey… » says Peter objecting.

« It does not matter. That is what I want. There are things that make one unclean more than a dead body. Marjiam… I do not want him to be contaminated. Let Me do as I wish, Peter. I know. Be obedient as your wife is and Marjiam, too. We shall keep the second Passover with him, on the fourteenth day of the second month. And we shall be so happy then. It's a promise. »

Peter makes a gesture as if to say: « Let us resign ourselves », but he makes no objection.

The Zealot remarks: « It is a lot if you do not continue your calculation of how many will not be in town at Passover! »

« I do not feel like counting any more. All this gives me a strange sensation… An icy feeling… Can the others be told? »

« No. I took you aside deliberately. »

« Then… I also have something to tell Lazarus in particular. »

« Tell me. If I can, I will reply to you » says Lazarus.

« Oh! even if you do not reply it does not matter. It is enough for me if you go to Pilate - the idea is of your friend Simon - and talking of various matters, you worm out of him what he is thinking of doing for Jesus, in good or in evil… You know… craftily… Because there are so many rumours!… »

« I will. As soon as I arrive in Jerusalem. I will go to Bethany via Bethel and Ramah instead of Jericho, and I will stop in my mansion in Zion, and I will go to Pilate. Don't worry, Peter, because I shall be skilful and sincere. »

« And you will waste your time for nothing, My dear friend. Because Pilate - you are aware of it as a man, I as God - is but a reed that bends to the side opposite the hurricane, endeavouring

to avoid it. He is never insincere. Because he is always convinced that he wants to take action, and he does what he says in that moment. But a moment later, because of the howling of a storm from another direction, he forgets - oh! he does not break his promise or his will - he forgets, just that, what he wanted previously. He forgets because the cry of a will stronger than his makes him lose his memory, it blows away all the thoughts that another cry had placed in it, and replaces them with new ones. And then, above all the storms that with numberless voices, from that of his wife who threatens to separate if he does not do what she wants - and once he is separated from her, that is the end of all his strength, of his protection with "divine" Caesar, as they say, although they are convinced that this Caesar is more abject than they are… But they can see the Idea in the man, nay the Idea annihilates the man representing it, and one cannot say that the Idea is unclean: every citizen loves, and it is fair that he should love his Fatherland, and should want it to triumph… Caesar is the Fatherland… so… also a miserable man is… great because of what he represents… But I did not want to speak of Caesar, but of Pilate! - So I was saying that above all the voices, from that of his wife to those of the crowds, there is the voice, oh! what a voice! of his ego. Of the small ego of the small man, of the greedy ego of the greedy man, of the proud ego of the proud man; that smallness, that greed, that pride want to reign to be great, they want to reign to have superabundance of money, they want to reign to be able to rule over a multitude of subjects stooping to pay homage to them. Hatred is smouldering underneath, but the little Caesar named Pilate, our little Caesar does not see it… He can only see the backs bent feigning homage and fear before him or really feeling both. And because of the stormy voice of his ego he is prepared to do anything. I say: anything. Provided he may continue to be Pontius Pilate, the Proconsul, the servant of Caesar, the Ruler of one of the many regions of the empire. And because of all that, even if now he is My defender, tomorrow he will be My judge, and inexorable. The thought of man is always uncertain. Most uncertain when that man's name is Pontius Pilate. But, Lazarus, you may satisfy Peter… If that is to console him… »

« Not to console me, but… to calm me a little… »

« Then please our good Peter and go to Pilate. »

« I will go, Master. But You have described the Proconsul as no historian or philosopher could have done. A perfect portrait! »

« I could likewise depict every man in his real image: his character. But let us go to these people who are rioting. »

He climbs the last steps and shows Himself. He raises His arms and says in a loud voice: « Men of Galilee and of Samaria, disciples and followers. Your love, your wishes to honour Me and My Mother and My friend by escorting their wagon, tell Me what your thoughts

are. I can but bless you for such thoughts. But go back to your homes, to your business, now. You from Galilee, go and tell those who remained there that Jesus of Nazareth blesses them. Men of Galilee, we shall meet again in Jerusalem at Passover, and I will enter the town the day after the Sabbath before Passover. Men of Samaria, you may go, too, and do not confine your love for Me to following and looking for Me on the routes of the Earth, but on those of the spirit. Go and may the Light shine in you. Disciples of the Master, part from the believers and remain in Ephraim to receive My instructions. Go. Be obedient. »

« He is right. We are disturbing Him. He wants to be with His Mother! » shout the disciples and the Nazarenes.

« We are going away. But we want His promise first: that He will come to Shechem before Passover. To Shechem! To Shechem! »

« I will come. Go. I will come before going to Jerusalem for Passover. »

« Don't go! Don't go! Stay with us! With us! We will defend You! We will make You King and Pontiff! They hate You! We love You! Down with the Jews! Long live Jesus! »

« Silence. Stop rioting! My Mother suffers because of this shouting that can harm Me more than a voice cursing Me. My hour has not yet come. Go. I will come to Shechem. But remove from your hearts the thought that I, for base human cowardice and a sacrilegious rebellion against the will of My Father, may not fulfil My duty as an Israelite, worshipping the true God in the only Temple in which He can be worshipped, and as Messiah, by being crowned anywhere but in Jerusalem, where I shall be anointed universal King according to the words and the truth foreseen by the great prophets. »

« Down! There is no other prophet but Moses! You are a daydreamer. »

« And you, too. Are you perhaps free? No, you are not. What is the name of Shechem? Its new name? And what happened to Shechem, happened also to many other towns in Samaria, Judaea and Galilee. Because the Roman mangonel has levelled us all alike. Is its name Shechem? No. Its name is Neapolis. As Beth-Shean is named Scythopolis, and many other towns that either by will of the Romans or by the will of adulating vassals have taken the names imposed by domination or by adulation. And you, as individuals, are you going to be worth more than a town, more than our rulers, more than God? No. Nothing can change what is destined for the salvation of everybody. I follow the straight road. Follow Me, if you want to enter the eternal Kingdom with Me. »

He is about to withdraw. But the Samaritan people are uproarious so much so that the Galileans react and those who were in the house rush out at the same time into the kitchen garden, and then

up the staircase and on to the terrace. The sad pale distressed face of Mary is the first to appear behind Jesus' shoulders, and She embraces and clasps Him as if She wished to defend Him from the insults rising from below: « You have betrayed us! You took refuge among us making us believe that You loved us whereas now You despise us! And we shall be more despised through Your fault! » and so forth.

Jesus is approached also by the women disciples, by the apostles, and last by Mary of Jacob, who is frightened. The shouts from below explain the origin of the uproar, a remote but certain origin: « So why did You send Your disciples to us to tell us that You are persecuted? »

« I did not send anybody. Those from Shechem are over there. Let them come forward. What did I say to them one day on the mountain? »

« That is true. He said to us that He can only be a worshipper in the Temple, until the new time comes for everybody. Master, we are not to be blamed, believe us. But they have been deceived by false messengers of Yours. »

« I know. But go now. I will come to Shechem just the same. I am not afraid of anybody. But go now so that you may not harm yourselves and those of your blood. Can you see over there the cuirasses of the legionaries shine in the sun as they go down the road? They have certainly followed you at a distance, seeing such a procession and they have remained waiting in the wood. Your shouting is now attracting them here. Go, for your own sake. »

In fact, far away on the main road that can be seen rising towards the mountains, the one on which Jesus found the starving man, it is possible to see lights gleam and move forward. The people disperse slowly. Those from Ephraim, the Galileans and the disciples remain.

« You may go to your homes as well, you people from Ephraim. And you, too, Galileans, please go away. Obey Him Who loves you. »

They also go away. Only the disciples remain and Jesus orders the apostles to let them go into the house and the kitchen garden. Peter goes downstairs with the others to open.

Judas of Kerioth does not go down. He laughs! He laughs saying: « You will now see how "the good Samaritans" hate You! To build the Kingdom You are scattering the stones. And stones dispelled from a building become weapons to strike. You have despised them! And they will not forget. »

« Let them hate Me. I will not avoid doing My duty for fear of their hatred. Come, Mother. Let us go and tell the disciples what they are to do before I dismiss them » and between Mary and Lazarus He goes downstairs into the house where the disciples who gathered at Ephraim are crowded, and He orders them to spread everywhere

informing all their companions to be at Jericho for the new moon of Nisan and wait for Him until He arrives, and to let the people of the villages through which they pass know that He will leave Ephraim and that they should look for Him in Jerusalem at Passover.

He then divides them into three groups entrusting the new disciple Samuel to Isaac, Hermas and Stephen. Stephen greets Samuel saying: « The joy in seeing you relieves my pain to see that everything becomes an obstacle for the Master. » Hermas instead greets him thus: « You left a man for a God. And God is now really with you. » Isaac, humble and bashful, only says: « Peace be with you, brother. »

After handing out bread and milk that the people from Ephraim kindly think of offering, also the disciples depart and at last there is peace…

But while the lamb is being prepared, Jesus has still something to do. He approaches Lazarus and says to him: « Come with Me along the torrent. » Lazarus obeys promptly as usual.

They move away from the house about two hundred metres. Lazarus is silent waiting for Jesus to speak. And Jesus says: « I wanted to tell you this. My Mother is very depressed, as you can see. Send your sisters here. I will really go towards Shechem with all the apostles and women disciples. But then I will send them on, to Bethany, while I will stay for some time in Jericho. I can still dare to keep some women here in Samaria, but not anywhere else… »

« Master! You really fear… Oh! if so why did You raise me from the dead? »

« To have a friend. »

« Oh!!! If that is the case, well, here I am. All sorrows, if I can comfort You with my friendship, are nothing to me. » « I know. That is why I use and will use you as the most perfect friend. »

« Must I really go to Pilate? »

« If you think so. But for Peter. Not for Me. »

« Master, I will let You know… When are You leaving this place? »

« In eight days' time. There is just enough time to go where I want and then be with you before Passover. I want to acquire new strength at Bethany, the oasis of peace, before plunging into the turmoil of Jerusalem. »

« Are You aware, Master, that the Sanhedrin is quite determined to create charges, since there are none, to compel You to flee for good? I learned that from John, the member of the Sanhedrin, when I met him by chance at Ptolemais, and he was very happy because of the son about to be born to him. He said to me: "I am sorry that the Sanhedrin is so determined. Because I would have liked the Master to be present at the circumcision of my child, as I hope it

will be a boy. He is to be born early in the month of Tammuz. But will the Master still be among us by that time? And I would like… Because I would like little Immanuel, and that name will tell you what I think, to be blessed by Him at his first appearance in the world. Because my son, lucky fellow, will not have to struggle to believe, as we had to. He will be brought up in the Messianic times and it will be easy for him to accept the idea". John has arrived at believing that You are the Promised One. »

« And that one out of many compensates Me for what the others do not do. Lazarus, let us say goodbye here, in peace. And thank you for everything, My dear friend. You are a true friend. With ten friends like you it would have been pleasant to live among so much hatred… »

« Now You have Your Mother, my Lord. She is worth ten… one hundred Lazarus. But remember that whatever You may need, if it is at all possible, I will get it for You. Give me Your orders, and I will be Your servant, in everything. I may not be wise or holy, like other people who love You, but if You exclude John, You will not be able to find another one more faithful than I am. I do not think that I am being proud saying this. "And now that we have spoken of You, I will tell You about Syntyche. I saw her. She is as active and wise as only a Greek woman, who has been able to become Your follower, can be. She suffers to be so far away. But she says that she enjoys preparing Your way. She hopes to see You before she dies. »

« She will certainly see Me. I do not disappoint the hopes of the just. »

« She has a little school attended by many girls of all places. But in the evening she keeps some poor little girls of mixed race, and thus of no religion. And she instructs them in Your doctrine. I asked her: "Why do you not become a proselyte? It would be of great help to you". She replied: "Because I do not want to devote myself to those of Israel, but to the empty altars awaiting a God. I prepare them to receive my Lord. Then, once His Kingdom is established, I will return to my Fatherland, and under the sky of Hellas I will spend my life preparing hearts for the masters. That is my dream. But if I should die before, of a disease or in a persecution, I shall go away equally happy, because it means that I have fulfilled my work and that He calls to Himself the servant who has loved Him since the first time she met Him". »

« It is true. Syntyche has really loved Me since our first meeting. »

« I did not want to tell her how distressed You are. But Antioch resounds like a shell with all the voices of the vast Roman empire, and consequently also with what happens here. And Syntyche is aware of Your grief. And she suffers even more to be far away. She wanted to give me some money, which I refused, and I told her to

use it for her girls. But I took a headgear woven by her with two types of byssus of different thickness. Your Mother has it. With the yarn Syntyche has described Your story, her own and that of John of Endor. And do You know how? By weaving a hem all around the square and representing on it a lamb that defends two doves from a pack of hyenas, one of the doves has both wings broken, and the other has a broken chain that held it fastened. And the story proceeds, alternately, to the flight towards the sky of the dove with the broken wings and the voluntary captivity of the other at the feet of the lamb. It looks like one of those stories that Greek sculptors carve on the marble festoons of temples and on the stelae of their dead relatives, or painters paint on vases. She wanted to send it to You by my servants. I brought it. »

« I shall wear it because it comes from a good disciple. Let us go towards the house. When are you thinking of leaving? »

« Tomorrow at dawn. To let the horses rest. Then I will not stop until I arrive in Jerusalem and I will go to Pilate. If I succeed in speaking to him, I will send You his replies by Mary. »

They go slowly back into the house, talking of minor topics.

565. Parable of the Torn Cloth and Miracle of the Woman in Childbed. Judas of Kerioth Is Caught Stealing.

15th February 1947.

Jesus is with the women disciples and the two apostles on one of the first undulations on the mountain behind Ephraim. Neither the children nor Esther are with Johanna. I think that they have been sent to Jerusalem with Jonathan. So, besides Jesus' Mother, there are only Mary Clopas, Mary Salome, Johanna, Eliza, Nike and Susanna. Lazarus' two sisters are not yet present.

Eliza and Nike are folding garments, which have certainly been washed in a stream that shines down in the valley, or have been brought here from the stream and then laid out on this sunny tableland. And Nike, after examining one of them, takes it to Mary Clopas saying: « Your son has unstitched also the hem of this one. » Mary of Alphaeus takes the garment and puts it near the others that are spread close to her on the grass.

All the women disciples are busy sewing and mending the damages done in the many months when the apostles were alone.

Eliza, who comes close to them with other dry garments, says: « One can see that for three months you have not had an experienced woman with you! There is not one garment in good order, with the exception of that one of the Master, Who on the other hand, has only got two, the one He is wearing and the one washed today. »

« He has given them all away. He seemed to be seized with the mania for not possessing anything. He has been wearing linen clothes

for many days » says Judas.

« Fortunately Your Mother thought She should bring You some new ones. The one dyed purple is really beautiful. You needed it, Jesus, although You look so handsome dressed in linen. You really look like a lily! » says Mary of Alphaeus.

« A very tall lily, Mary! » says Judas satirically.

« But He is so pure as you are certainly not and neither is John. You are wearing a linen garment as well, but believe me, you do not look like a lily! » replies frankly Mary of Alphaeus.

« My hair is dark and so is my complexion. That is why I am different »

« No. It does not depend on that. The fact is that your candour is on your outward appearance, His is instead within Him and it transpires through His eyes, His smile, His word. That is the situation! Ah! How lovely it is to be with my Jesus. » And the good Mary lays her toilworn honest hand of an elderly hard working woman on the knee of Jesus, Who caresses it.

Mary Salome, who is inspecting a tunic, exclaims: « This is worse than a tear! Oh! son! Who closed this hole like that for you? » and scandalised as she is, she shows her companions a kind of… very wrinkled navel, forming a raised ring on the cloth, held together by some very coarse stitches, enough to horrify a woman. The strange repair is the epicentre of a series of puckers that widen out radially on the shoulder of the tunic.

They all laugh. And John is the first - he did the mending - and he explains: « I could not go about with the hole, so… I closed it! »

« I can see that, poor me! I see that! But could you not get Mary of Jacob to mend it for you? »

« She is almost blind, poor woman! And then… the trouble was that it was not a tear! It was a real hole. The garment got stuck to the faggot I was carrying on my shoulder, and when I dropped the faggot from my shoulder, also a piece of the cloth came off. So I just repaired like that! »

« You spoiled it like that, son. I would need… » She inspects the tunic but shakes her head. She says: « I was hoping I could use the hem. But it is no longer there… »

« I took it off at Nob, because it was cut at the fold. But I gave your son the bit I removed… » explains Eliza.

« Yes. But I used it to make cords for my bag… »

« Poor sons! How badly you need us near you! » says the Blessed Virgin mending a garment belonging to whom I do not know.

« And yet some cloth is needed here. Look. The stitches have ended up by tearing the cloth all around, and a great damage has become and irreparable one; unless… I can find something to replace the missing cloth. Then… one will still see it… but it will be passable. »

« You have given Me the starting point for a parable… » says Jesus,

and Judas at the same time says: « I think I have a piece of cloth of that shade at the bottom of my bag, the scrap of a tunic that was too discoloured to be worn; so I gave it to a little man who was so much smaller than I am, that we had to cut almost two palms off it. If you wait, I will go and get it for you. But I should like to hear the parable first. »

« May God bless you. Listen to the parable first. In the meantime I will fit the cords on to this tunic of James'. These ones are all worn out. »

« Speak, Master. Then I will make Mary Salome happy. » « Yes. I compare the soul to a cloth. When it is infused, it is new, without tears. It has only the original stain, but it has no injuries in its structure, or stains or waste. Then with time and the acquisition of vices, it wears out at times to the extent of tearing, it becomes stained through imprudence, it breaks through disorder. Now, when it is torn one must not mend it clumsily, which would be the cause of many more tears, but it is necessary to mend it patiently and perfectly and for a long time to remove the damage already caused as much as possible. And if the cloth is too badly torn, nay if it has been so rent as to be deprived of a bit of it, one must not be so proud as to pretend to repair the damage by oneself, but one must go to Him, Who is known to be able to make the soul strictly honest once again, as He is allowed to do everything and He can do everything. I am referring to God, My Father, and to the Saviour, Who I am. But the pride of man is such that the greater is the ruin of his soul, the more he tries to patch it up with unsuitable means that make the damage more and more serious. You may object that a tear can always be seen. Salome also said so. Yes, one will always see the damage a soul has suffered. But a soul fights its battle, it is therefore obvious that it may be struck. There are so many enemies around it. But no one, seeing a man covered with scars, the signs of as many wounds received in battle to gain victory, can say: "This man is unclean". On the contrary one will say: "This man is a hero. There are the purple marks of his worth". Neither will anyone ever see a soldier avoid being cured, because he is ashamed of a glorious wound, on the contrary he will go to the doctor and say to him with holy pride: "Here I am, I fought and I won. I did not spare myself, as you can see. Now heal my wounds that I may be ready for more battles and victories". He instead who is suffering from foul diseases, brought about by shameful vices, is ashamed of his sores before relatives and friends, and also before doctors, and at times he is so silly that he conceals them until their stench reveals them. Then it is too late to remedy. The humble are always sincere, and they are also valiant fighters who have not to be ashamed of the wounds received in the struggle. The proud are always false and base, through their pride they end up by dying, as

they do not want to go to Him Who can cure, and say to Him: "Father, I have sinned. But, if You want, You can cure me". Many are the souls that because of their pride in not wanting to confess an initial sin end up by dying. Then, also for them, it is too late. They do not consider that divine mercy is more powerful and more extensive than any plague, however powerful and extensive the latter may be, and that it can heal everything. But they, the souls of the proud, when they realise that they have despised all means of salvation, fall into despondency, because they are without God, and when they say: "It is too late ", they condemn themselves to the last death: to damnation. And now, Judas, you may go and get the cloth… »

« I am going. But I did not like Your parable. I did not understand it. »

« But if it is so clear! I have understood it, and I am a poor woman! » says Mary Salome.

« And I have not. Once Your parables were more beautiful… Now… bees… cloth… towns changing names… souls that are boats… Such mean things, and so confused, which I do not like any more and I do not understand… But now I will go and get the cloth, because I say that it is in fact needed, but the garment will always be a spoilt one » and Judas stands up and goes away.

Mary lowered Her head more and more over Her work, while Judas was speaking. Johanna instead raised hers, fixing her eyes on the imprudent apostle with indignant authority. Eliza also raised her head, but then she imitated Mary and Nike did the same. Susanna opened her big eyes wide, being astonished, and looked at Jesus and not at the apostle, wondering why He does not react. But no one has spoken or made any gesture. Mary Salome and Mary of Alphaeus, two women with common manners, looked at each other shaking their heads, and as soon as Judas goes away, Salome says: « It's his head that is spoilt! »

« Yes. That is why he understands nothing, and I do not think that even You will be able to mend it. If my son were like that, I would break his head. Yes, as I made it for him that it might be the head of a just man, so I would break it. It is better to have a disfigured face than a disgraced heart! » says Mary of Alphaeus.

« Be indulgent, Mary. You cannot compare your sons, who were brought up in an honest family, in a town like Nazareth, to this man » says Jesus.

« His mother is good. His father was not a wicked man, so I heard » replies Mary of Alphaeus.

« Yes. But his heart was not lacking in pride. That is why he took his son away from his mother too early, and he also helped in developing the moral heritage, that he had given his son, by sending him to Jerusalem. It is painful to say, but the Temple is certainly

not the place where hereditary pride may diminish… » says Jesus.

« No place in Jerusalem, even if it is a place of honour, is suitable for diminishing pride or any other fault » says Johanna with a sigh. And she adds: « And not even any other place of honour, whether at Jericho or Caesarea Philippi, at Tiberias or at the other Caesarea… » and she sews quickly bending her face over her work more than is necessary.

« Mary of Lazarus is imperious, but not proud » remarks Nike.

« Now. But previously she was very proud, just the opposite of her relatives, who were never such » replies Johanna.

« When are they coming? » asks Salome.

« Soon, if we are to leave in three days' time. »

« Let us work quickly, then. We shall just manage to finish everything in time » says Mary of Alphaeus urging them.

« We were late in coming because of Lazarus. But it was better so, because Mary was spared much work » says Susanna.

« But do You feel You can do so much walking? You are so pale and tired, Mary! » asks Mary of Alphaeus laying her hand on Mary's lap and looking at Her anxiously.

« I am not ill, Mary, and I can certainly walk. »

« No, You are not ill, but You are so distressed, Mother. I would give ten and ten years of my life, and I would embrace all sorrows, to see You once again as I saw You the first time » says John, who looks at Her compassionately.

« Your love is already a medicine, John. I can feel My heart calm down when I see how you all love My Child. Because there is no other cause for My suffering. None, except seeing that He is not loved. I am already recovering here, close to Him, and among you, who are so faithful. Of course… those months… all alone at Nazareth… after seeing Him depart so distressed, already so persecuted… and hearing all those rumours… oh! How much! How much grief! Now, being near Him, I see, I say: "At least My Jesus has His Mother to comfort Him and say words that drown other words", and I see also that love is not completely dead in Israel. And I have peace. A little peace. Not much… because… » Mary does not say anything else. She lowers Her face that She had raised to speak to John, and it is only possible to see the top of Her forehead, that blushes through a mute emotion… and then two tears shine on the dark garment She is mending.

Jesus sighs and stands up, He goes and sits down at Her feet, in front of Her, and He rests His head on Her knees, kissing Her hand that is holding the cloth and remaining thus like a child who is resting. Mary removes the needle from the cloth, in order not to hurt Her Son, and then She lays Her right hand on His head bent on Her knees and She looks up towards the sky, and She certainly prays although She does not move Her lips; from Her whole attitude it

is clear that She is praying. She then bends to kiss Her Son's hair near His bare temple.

The other women do not speak until Salome says: « But how long is it taking Judas? The sun will be setting and I shall not be able to see! »

« Someone has probably detained him » replies John and he asks his mother: « Shall I go and tell him to hurry? »

« You had better go. Because if he has not found the cloth, I will shorten your sleeves, as it will soon be summer, and I will make another garment for you for autumn, because you cannot wear this one any longer, and with the piece I take off, I will mend this one here. It will be all right to go fishing. Because after Pentecost you will certainly come back to Galilee… »

« I will go, then » says John and being always kind he asks the other women: « Have you any garments already mended that I can take to our lodgings? If you have, give them to me. You will have less to carry on your way back. »

The women gather together what they have already mended and give it to John, who turns round to go away but he stops at once seeing Mary of Jacob running towards them.

The old woman is plodding along as fast as her old age allows her, and she shouts to John: « Is the Master there? »

« Yes, mother. What do you want? »

The woman replies while continuing to run: « Adah is ill, very ill… And her husband would like to call Jesus to comfort her… But as those Samaritans have been… so wicked, he does not dare… I said: "You do not know Him yet. I will go and… He will not say no to me". » The old woman is panting after hurrying uphill.

« Don't rush any farther. I will come with you. Nay, I will go ahead. Follow us slowly. You are old, mother, to hurry thus » Jesus says to her. Then He says to His Mother and the women disciples: « I am staying in the village. Peace to you. »

He takes John by the arm and runs down fast with him. The old woman, takes breath and would like to follow Him after replying to the women who ask her questions: « H'm! Only the Rabbi can save her. Otherwise she will die like Rachel. She is becoming cold and is losing her strength and she is writhing in the spasms of pain. »

But the women detain her saying: « But have you tried with hot bricks under her kidneys? »

« No! It is better to envelop her in woollen cloth soaked in wine with spices, as warm as possible. »

« I was helped, for James, by unctions with oil and then by hot bricks. »

« Make her drink a lot. »

« If she could stand straight and take a few steps while a woman rubbed her kidneys hard. »

The women mothers, that is all of them, except Nike and Susanna, and Mary, Who did not suffer the labour pains of every woman when She gave birth to Her Son, advise this or that remedy.

« Everything They have tried everything. But her kidneys are too tired. It's the eleventh child! But I am going now. I have taken breath. Pray for that mother! That the Most High may keep her alive until the Rabbi arrives there. » And she toddles away, the poor good lonely old woman.

Jesus in the meantime is going down fast towards the town that is warmed by the sun. He enters the town at the side opposite the one where their house is, that is at north-west of Ephraim, whereas Mary of Jacob's house is south-east of it. He walks fast, without stopping to speak to those who would like to detain Him. He greets them and goes on.

A man remarks: « He is angry with us. Those from other villages behaved badly. He is right. »

« No. He is going to Janoe. His wife is dying at her eleventh delivery. »

« Poor children! And is the Rabbi going there? How good He is. Although offended, He helps. »

« Janoe did not offend Him. None of us offended Him! »

« But they were men of Samaria. »

« The Rabbi is just and He can tell one from another. Let us go and see the miracle, »

« We shall not be able to go in. It's a woman and she is giving birth. »

« But we shall hear the new-born baby cry and it will be the voice of a miracle. »

They run to join Jesus. Other people also gather together to see.

Jesus arrives at the house, which is disconsolate because of the impending misfortune. The ten children - the oldest is a young girl in tears pressed by younger brothers who are weeping - are in a comer in the vestibule near the wide open door. Old wives are going and coming, whispers are heard and the shuffling of bare feet moving on the brick floor.

A woman sees Jesus and shouts: « Janoe! You can hope! He has come! » and she runs away with a steaming pitcher.

A man rushes and prostrates himself. He makes only a gesture and says: « I believe. Mercy! For them » and he points at his children.

« Stand up and take heart. The Most High helps those who have faith and He has mercy on His distressed children. »

« Oh! come, Master! Come! She is already black. Choked by convulsions. She can hardly breathe. Come! » The man, who has lost his head, and ends up by losing it completely upon hearing the cry of an old woman who shouts: « Janoe, run! Adah is dying! », pushes and pulls Jesus to make Him go quick towards the room of the dying

woman, deaf to Jesus' words: « Go, and have faith! »

The poor man has faith, but what he lacks is the capability to understand the meaning of those words, the secret meaning of the certainty of a miracle. And Jesus, pushed and pulled, climbs the steps to go into the room upstairs, where the woman is. But He stops on the landing of the staircase, at about three metres from the open door, through which it is possible to see the deadly pale face that is already livid and contracted in the mask of agony. The old wives make no further efforts. They have already covered the woman up to her chin and are looking at her. They are petrified awaiting her death.

Jesus stretches out His arms and shouts: « I want it! » and He turns round to go away.

The husband, the old women, the curious people who have gathered together are disappointed, because they probably expected Jesus to do something more astonishing and to see the baby be born at once. But Jesus, elbowing His way and fixing His eyes on their faces while passing before them, says: « Do not be in doubt. Have faith for a little longer. For a moment. The woman has to pay the bitter tribute of childbirth. But she is out of danger. » And He goes downstairs leaving them disconcerted.

But when He is about to go out onto the road, saying to the ten frightened children when passing near them: « Be not afraid! Your mummy is all right » - and in saying so He touches their scared faces with His hand - a loud cry resounds in the house and spreads as far as the road where Mary of Jacob is just arriving and who shouts: « Good gracious! » thinking that that cry meant death.

« Be not afraid, Mary! And go quickly! You will see the baby being born. She has recovered strength and she is in labour again. But there will soon be great joy. »

He goes away with John. No one follows Him because everybody wants to see whether the miracle will take place, nay, more people rush towards the house, because the news has spread that the Master had gone to save Adah. And so, slipping into a secondary little street, Jesus can go without any hindrance to a house which He enters calling: « Judas! Judas! » Nobody replies.

« He went up there, Master. We can go home as well. I will put here the garments of Judas, of Simon and of Your brother James, and then I will put those of Simon Peter, Andrew, Thomas and Philip in Anna's house. »

They do so and I realise that in order to make room for the women disciples, the apostles, if not all of them, at least part of them, have spread out in other houses.

As they have now got rid of all the garments, they go towards the house of Mary of Jacob, talking to each other, and they go in through the kitchen garden little gate, which is always left ajar.

The house is silent and empty. John sees a pitcher full of water laid on the floor, and probably thinking that the old lady had put it there before being called to assist the woman in childbed, he picks it up and goes towards a room that is closed. Jesus loiters in the corridor taking off His mantle and folding it with His customary care before putting it on the chest in the vestibule.

John opens the door and utters « ah! » almost in terror. He drops the pitcher and covers his eyes with his hands, bending as if to grow smaller, to disappear, not to see. From the room comes the noise of coins falling on the floor tinkling.

Jesus is already at the door. It took me longer to describe the scene than it took Him to arrive. He vehemently pushes aside John who moans: « Away! Go away! ». He opens the door that was ajar and goes in.

It is the room where they take their meals, now that the women are there. In it there are two old coffers reinforced with iron fittings and in front of one of them, opposite the door, there is Judas, livid, his eyes full of anger and dismay at the same time, with a bag in his hands… The coffer is open… there are coins on the floor and more fall on it from an open bag, half inclined on the edge of the coffer. Everything testifies, in a manner that leaves no doubt, to what was happening. Judas entered the house, he opened the coffer and stole. He was stealing.

No one speaks. No one moves. But it is worse than if they all shouted and rushed at one another. Three statues. Judas the demon, Jesus the Judge, John terrorised by the revelation of his companion's baseness.

The hand of Judas holding the bag trembles, and the coins in it tinkle with a dull sound.

John is trembling from head to foot, and although he still has his hands pressed against his mouth, his teeth are chattering, while his frightened eyes look more at Jesus than at Judas.

Jesus does not quiver. He is straight and glacial, so stiff as to be glacial. At last He takes a step, He makes a gesture, and utters one word. A step towards Judas; a gesture: to make a sign to John to withdraw; a word: « Go! »

But John is afraid and moans: « No! No! Don't send me away. Let me stay here. I will not say anything… but leave me here, with You. »

« Go away! Be not afraid! Close all the doors… and if anybody comes… whoever it may be… even My Mother… do not let them come here. Go! Obey! »

« Lord!… » John is so entreating and broken-hearted that he seems to be the guilty one.

« Go, I tell you. Nothing will happen. Go » and Jesus moderates His order by laying His hand on the head of His Favourite and caressing it. And I now see that His hand is trembling. And John

feels that it is trembling and takes it and kisses it with a sob that says so many things. He goes out.

Jesus bolts the door. He turns round to look at Judas who must be really crushed if he, who is so daring, dare not say one word or make one gesture. Jesus goes straight in front of him, going round the table, which is in the middle of the room. I cannot say whether He moves fast or slow. I am too frightened by His face to be able to measure time. I can see His eyes and I am afraid like John. Judas himself is afraid, he draws back between the coffer and a wide open window, the red light of which, as it is sunset, is projected on Jesus.

What eyes has Jesus! He does not say one word. But when He sees a kind of picklock stick out from the belt of Judas' tunic, He has a fearful outburst of rage. He raises His arm with its clenched fist as if He wanted to strike the thief, and His lips begin to utter the word: « Cursed! » or « Curse! ». But He controls Himself. He stops His arm that was about to strike, and He breaks the word at the first three letters. And with an effort of self-control that makes His whole body tremble, He just unclenches His fist and lowers His raised arm to the level of the bag that Judas has in his hand and He snatches it and throws it on the floor, saying in a dull voice, while He tramples on bag and coins and scatters them with controlled but dreadful fury: « Away! Filth of Satan! Cursed gold! Spittle of hell! Snake's poison! Away! »

Judas, who uttered a stifled cry when he saw Jesus on the point of cursing him, does not react any further. But another cry is heard from beyond the closed door when Jesus throws the bag on the floor. And John's cry irritates the thief. It gives him back his demoniac daring. It makes him furious. He almost flings himself on Jesus shouting: « You had me spied upon to bring dishonour on me. Spied by a foolish boy who cannot even keep quiet. Who will shame me in front of everybody! That's what You wanted. In any case… Yes! That's what I want, too. I want that! To force You to drive me away! To force You to curse me! To curse me! To curse me! I have tried everything to make You reject me. » He is hoarse with rage and as ugly as a demon. He is panting as if something were choking him.

In a low but dreadful voice Jesus repeats to him: « Thief! Thief! Thief! » and He ends saying: « A thief today. A murderer tomorrow. Like Barabbas. Worse than him. » He breathes that word on his face, as they are now very close to each other, at each sentence of the other.

Judas takes breath and replies: « Yes. A thief. Through Your fault. All the evil I do is attributable to You, and You never get tired of ruining me. You save everybody. You give love and honours to everybody. You accept sinners, prostitutes do not disgust You, You treat thieves, usurers and Zacchaeus' procurers in a friendly

way, You welcome the spy of the Temple as if he were the Messiah, You fool! And You have appointed an ignorant man as our chief, an excise-man as Your treasurer, a fool as Your confidant. But with me, You ration even farthings, You do not leave me a coin, You keep me close to You as a galley-slave is tied to the rowing bench, You do not even want us, I say us, but it is I, only I who must not accept the offerings of pilgrims. Because You do not want me to touch money, You ordered everyone not to take money from anybody. Because You hate me. Well: I hate You, too! You were not able to strike and curse me a little while ago. Your curse would have reduced me to ashes. Why did You not lay Your curse upon me? I would have preferred that, rather than see You so inept, so enfeebled, such a finished defeated man… »

« Be quiet! »

« No! Are You afraid that John may hear? Are You afraid that at long last he may realise who You are and he may leave You? Ah! So You are afraid, although You play the hero! Yes, You are afraid! And You are afraid of me. You are frightened! That's why You could not curse me. That's why You pretend to love me whereas You hate me! To blandish me! To keep me quiet. You know that I am powerful. You know that I am the power. The power that hates You and will defeat You! I promised You that I will follow You until death offering You everything, and I have offered You everything, and I will be near You until Your hour and mine. What a magnificent king who cannot curse and drive people away! King of clouds! Idol king! Foolish king! Liar! Betrayer of Your own destiny. You have always despised me, since the first time we met. You have not corresponded to me. You thought You were wise. You are an idiot. I taught You the good road. But You… Oh! You are the pure one! You are the creature that is man but is God, and you despise the advice of the Intelligent One. You have been mistaken since the first moment and You are mistaken. You… You are… Ah! »

The torrent of words stops suddenly and a lugubrious silence replaces so much clamour and a lugubrious stillness after so many gestures. Because, while I was writing without being able to say what was happening, Judas, bending just like a wild dog that points a prey and approaches it ready to dash on it, has come closer and closer to Jesus, with a face that it was impossible to look at, his fingers hooked like claws, his elbows pressed against his sides, as if he were on the point of assailing Jesus, Who does not show the least sign of fear and moves turning round to open the door with His back to the other, who could attack Him seizing Him by His neck. But he does not do that and Jesus opens the door and looks to see whether John has really gone away. The corridor is empty and almost dark, as John has closed the door opening onto the kitchen garden after going out. Jesus then bolts the door and leans

against it, waiting, without a gesture or word, for the fury to abate.

I am not competent, but I do not think that I am wrong if I say that Satan himself spoke through Judas' lips and that this is a moment of obvious possession by Satan of the perverted apostle, who is already on the threshold of the Crime and is damned through his own will. The very manner how the torrent of words stopped, leaving the apostle dumbfounded, reminds me of other scenes of possession seen in the three years of Jesus' public life.

Jesus, leaning against the door, all white against the dark wood, does not make the least gesture, Only His eyes, powerful in grief and fervour, look at the apostle. If one could say that eyes pray, I should say that Jesus' eyes are praying while He looks at the wretch. Because not only authority transpires from those eyes, which are so distressed, but also the fervour of prayer. Then, towards the end of Judas' words, Jesus opens His arms, so far held pressed against His body, but He does not open them to touch Judas, or to make any gesture towards him, or to raise them towards the sky. He opens them horizontally, taking the posture of the Crucified, there, against the dark wood and the reddish wall. It was then that the last words from Judas' lips slow down and he utters that « Ah! » that interrupts his speech.

Jesus remains still, with His arms stretched out, with His eyes always fixed on the apostle, with a look of sorrow and prayer. And Judas, like one coming out of delirium, rubs his forehead and sweaty face with his hand… he thinks, he recollects, and remembering everything he collapses on the floor, whether weeping or not, I do not know. He certainly falls on the floor, as if his strength failed him.

Jesus lowers His eyes and arms, and in a low but clear voice He says:

« Well? Do I hate you? I could strike you with My foot, I could tread on you calling you "worm", I could curse you, as I freed you from the power that makes you rave. You thought that My impossibility to curse you was weakness. Oh! it is not weakness! It is because I am the Saviour. And the Saviour cannot curse. He can save. He wants to save… You said: "I am the strength. The strength that hates You and will defeat You". I also am the Strength, nay, I am the only Strength. But My strength is not hatred. It is love. And love does not hate and does not curse, never.

The Strength could also win single battles, like this one between You and Me, between Satan who is in you, and Me, and remove your master from you, for good, as I did now by transforming Myself into the sign that saves, the Tau that Lucifer abhors. It could win also these single battles as it will win the oncoming one against incredulous murderous Israel, against the world and against Satan defeated by Redemption. It could win also these single battles as

it will win the last one, remote for those who count by centuries, close at hand for those who measure time with the measure of eternity. But of what avail would it be to infringe the perfect rules of My Father? Would it be justice? Would it be merit? No. It would be neither justice nor merit. It would not be justice with regard to guilty men, who have not been deprived of the freedom of being so, and who on the last day could ask Me the reason for their damnation and reproach Me for My partiality for you alone. Ten thousand and one hundred thousand people, seventy times ten thousand and one hundred thousand people will commit the same sins as yours and will become demons through their own wills, and they will be the offenders of God, the torturers of their fathers and mothers, killers, thieves, liars, adulterers, lewd and sacrilegious people, and in the end deicides, killing the Christ materially on a day close at hand, killing Him spiritually in future times. And each of them could say to Me, when I will come to separate lambs from billy-goats, to bless the former and curse, then, yes, to curse the latter, to curse them because there will be no further redemption then, but glory or damnation, to curse them once again after cursing them individually at their death, first, and at their individual judgement. Because man, and you know this because you have heard Me say so a hundred, a thousand times, because man can save himself while he is alive, up to his last breath. Am instant, a thousandth of a minute is sufficient for a soul to say everything to God, to ask to be forgiven and obtain absolution… Each of them, I was saying, each of these damned souls could say to Me: "Why did You not tie us to Good, as You did with Judas?". And they would be right.

Because every man is born with the same natural and supernatural things: a body, a soul. And while the body, being generated by men, may be more or less robust and healthy at birth, the soul, created by God, is the same for everybody, endowed by God with the same properties and gifts. Between the soul of John, I mean the Baptist, and yours, there was no difference, when they were infused into your bodies. And yet I tell you that, even if Grace had not presanctified him, so that the Herald of the Christ might be without stain, as all those who announce Me ought to be, at least with regard to actual sins, his soul would have been, would have become, quite different from yours. Nay, yours would have become quite different from his. Because he would have preserved his soul in the freshness of innocence, nay, he would have adorned it more and more with justice complying with the will of God, Who wishes you to be just, developing the gratuitous gifts received with greater and greater heroic perfection. You instead… You have ruined and dissipated your soul and the gifts God had given it. What have you done with your free will? What with your intellect? Have you kept for your spirit the freedom that belonged to it? Have you used the intelligence

of your mind intelligently? No, you have not. You who do not want to obey Me, I do not say Me-Man, but not even Me-God, you have obeyed Satan. You have used the intelligence of your mind and the freedom of your spirit to understand Darkness. Voluntarily. Good and Evil were placed before you. You chose Evil. Nay, only Good was placed before you: I. Your eternal Creator, Who followed the evolution of your soul, Who was aware of such evolution because the Eternal Thought is aware of everything that happens since Time began to exist, placed Good before you, Good only, because He knows that you are weaker than an alga growing in a ditch.

You shouted to Me that I hate you. Now, as I am One with the Father and with the Love, One here as One in Heaven - because if there are two Natures in Me, and the Christ, because of His human nature and until victory will free Him from human limitations, is at Ephraim and cannot be elsewhere at the same moment; as God, the Word of God, I am in Heaven as on the Earth as My Divinity is always omnipresent and omnipotent - now, as I am One with the Father and the Holy Spirit, the charge you made against Me, you made it against God One and Trine. Against that God Father Who created you out of love, against that God Son Who became incarnate to save you out of love, against that God Spirit Who has spoken to you so many times to instil good wishes into you, out of love. Against that God One and Trine Who has loved you so much, Who brought you on My way, making you blind to the world to give you time to see Me, deaf to the world, to enable you to hear Me. And you!… And you!… After seeing and hearing Me, after coming freely to the Good, realising with your intellect that that was the only path of true glory, you rejected the Good and you have freely given yourself to Evil. But if through your free will you wanted that, if you have always more and more rudely rejected My hand that was offered to you to pull you out of the vortex, if you have always moved farther and farther away from the harbour to plunge into the raging sea of passions, of Evil, can you say to Me, to Him from Whom I come, to Him Who formed Me as Man to try to save you, can you say that We have hated you?

You reproached Me for wanting what is evil for you… Also a sick child reproaches the doctor and his mother for the bitter medicines they make him drink and for the things he wishes to have and they deny him for his own good. Has Satan made you so blind and mad that you do not understand the true nature of the action I took on Your behalf, and that you can call malevolence and wish to ruin you what is a provident cure of your Master, of your Saviour, of your Friend to restore you to health? I kept you close to Me… I took money away from your hands. I prevented you from touching that cursed metal that drives you crazy… But do you not know, do you not feel that it is like one of those magic potions that bring about

an unquenchable thirst, and produce in the blood a fierce heat, a fury that leads one to death? You - I can read your thought reproach Me thinking: "Why, then, for such a long time You allowed me to be the administrator of the money?". Why? Because if I had prevented you from touching money earlier, you would have sold yourself and you would have stolen earlier. You sold yourself just the same because there was little you could steal… But I had to try to avoid that without doing violence to your freedom. Gold is your ruin. Because of gold you have become lustful and treacherous… »

« There You are! You believed Samuel's words! I am not… »

Jesus, Who had become more and more animated in speaking, without ever assuming a violent tone or threatening punishment, suddenly utters a cry of authority, I would say a cry of anger. He darts a furious look at Judas who has raised his face to speak those words and imposes « Be quiet! » in a voice that sounds like the roar of thunder.

Judas falls back on his heels again and speaks no more.

There is silence and Jesus with visible effort recomposes His humanity in such a composure and with such powerful control that testifies by itself the divinity that is in Him. He resumes speaking in His usual voice that is warm and kind also when it is severe, persuasive, conquering… Demons only can resist that voice.

« I am not in need of information from Samuel or anybody else to know what you do. But, you wretch! Do you know in front of Whom you are? It is true! You say that you do not understand My parables any longer. You no longer understand My words. Poor wretch! You do not even understand yourself any more. You do not even understand good and evil any more. Satan, to whom you have given yourself in many ways, Satan whom you have followed in all the temptations he presented to you, has made you stupid. And yet once you understood Me. You believed that I am He Who I am'. And you still retain a clear memory of that. And can you believe that the Son of God, that God needs the words of a man to know the thought and the actions of another man? You are not yet perverted to such an extent as not to believe that I am God, and that is where your greatest fault lies. The proof that you believe Me to be such is that you are afraid of My wrath. You realise that you are not struggling against a man, but against God Himself, and you shiver. You shiver, Cain, because you can but see and think of God as the Avenger of Himself and of innocents. You are afraid that it may happen to you as it happened to Korah, Dathan and Abiram and their followers. And yet, as you know Who I am, you struggle against Me. I should say to you: "Cursed!". But I would no longer be the Saviour…

You would like Me to reject you. You do everything, you say, to achieve that. Such reason does not justify your actions. Because

it is not necessary to commit sin in order to part from Me. You can do that, I tell you. I have been telling you since Nob, when you came back to Me, one pure morning, filthy with lies and lust, as if you had come out of hell to fall into the mud of a pigsty, or on the litter of libidinous monkeys, and I had to struggle against Myself not to repel you with the point of My sandal like a revolting rag and to check the nausea that was upsetting not only My spirit but also My bowels. I have always told you. Even before accepting you. Even before coming here. Then, I made that speech just for you, only for you. But you always wanted to stay. For your own ruin. You! My greatest grief! But you, o heretical founder of a large family that will come after you, you think and say that I am above sorrow. No. I am only above sin. I am only above ignorance. Above the former, because I am God. Above the latter, because there can be no ignorance in the soul unspoiled by the Original Sin. But I am speaking to you as a Man, as the Man, as Adam Redeemer Who has come to make amends for the Sin of Adam sinner, and to show what man would have been if he had remained as he was created: innocent. Among the gifts given by God to that Adam was there not an intelligence without impairment and a very great science, as the union with God instilled the light of the Almighty Father into His blessed son? I, the new Adam, am above sin through My own will…

One day, a long time ago, you were surprised that I had been tempted, and you asked Me whether I had ever yielded to temptation. Do you remember? And I replied to you. Yes, as I could reply to you… Because since then you were such… an impoverished man that it was useless to open the most precious pearls of Christ's virtues under your eyes. You would not have understood their value and… you would have mistaken them for… stones, as they were of such an exceptional size. Also in the desert I replied to you repeating the words, the meaning of the words I had spoken to you that evening while going towards Gethsemane. If John or also Simon Zealot had repeated that question to Me, I would have replied in a different manner, because John is pure and he would not have asked with the malice with which you asked, as you were full of malice… and because Simon is an old wise man, and although he is not unacquainted with life, as John is, he has achieved that wisdom that can contemplate every episode without being upset in his ego. But they did not ask Me whether I had yielded to temptations, to the most common temptation, to that temptation. Because in the irreproachable purity of the former there are no memories of lust, and in the contemplative mind of the latter there is so much light to see purity shine in Me. You asked… and I replied to you. As I could. With that prudence that must never be separated from sincerity, both being holy in the eyes of God. That prudence that is like the treble veil, stretched between the Holy and the people, to

conceal the secret of the King. That prudence that adapts words to the person listening to them, to his intellectual power of understanding, to his spiritual purity and to his justice. Because certain truths mentioned to corrupt people become for them the object of laughter, not of veneration…

I do not know whether you remember all those words. I do. And I am repeating them here, just now that we are both on the brink of the Abyss. Because… But it is not necessary to say that. I said in the desert, in reply to the question that My first explanation had not satisfied: "The Master never felt that He was superior to man to be the 'Messiah', on the contrary knowing that He was the Man, He wanted to be so in everything except sin. To be masters it is necessary to have been pupils. I knew everything as God. My divine intelligence was able to make Me understand also the struggles of man through intellectual power and intellectually. But one day some poor friend of Mine could have said: 'You do not know what it means to be a man and to have senses and passions'. It would have been a just reproach. I came here to get ready not only for My mission, but also for temptation. A satanic temptation. Because man could not have had power over Me. Satan came when My solitary union with God ceased and I perceived that I was the Man with real flesh subject to the weaknesses of the flesh: hunger, tiredness, thirst, cold. I felt matter with its needs, morale with its passions. And if through My will I subdued evil passions at birth, I allowed the holy ones to grow". Do you remember those words? And I also said, the first time, to you, to you alone: "Life is a holy gift and is to be loved holily. Life is a means serving a purpose, which is eternity". I said: "Then let us give life what it needs to last and to serve the spirit in its conquest: continence of the flesh in its lusts, continence of the mind in its wishes, continence of the heart in all the passions belonging to humanity, infinite ardour for Heavenly passions, love for God and our neighbour, good will to serve God and our neighbour, obedience to the voice of God, heroism in good and in virtue".

Then you told Me that I was able to do that because I was holy, but you could not do it because you were a young man, full of life. As if to be young and strong were an excuse to be vicious, and only old and sick people, being impotent, because of their age or weakness to do what you were thinking, burning as you are with lewdness, were free from sensual temptations! I could have replied to you with many arguments, then. But you were not able to understand them. You are not able even now, but at least now you cannot smile with your incredulous smile, if I tell you that a healthy man can be chaste, if he does not accept the allurements of the demon and of senses, of his own free will. Chastity is spiritual love, it is an impulse that influences the body and pervades it all, elevating, scenting and preserving it. He who is imbued with chastity has

no room for any other evil incentives. Corruption does not affect him. There is no room for it. And then! Corruption does not enter one from outside. It is not an impulse penetrating inside from outside. It is an impulse that from inside, from the heart, from thoughts comes out and penetrates and pervades the envelope: the flesh. That is why I said that corruption comes from the heart. Every adultery, every lust, every sensual sin does not originate outside. But it comes from the intense activity of the mind, which being corrupt, clothes everything it sees with alluring appearance. All men have eyes to see. How come then that a woman who leaves ten men impassive, as they look at her as a creature like themselves and they also consider her a beautiful work of Creation without feeling obscene incentives and phantasms rise in them, upsets the eleventh man and leads him to shameful concupiscence? Because the heart and thought of the eleventh man are corrupt and where ten see a sister, he sees a female.

Although I did not say that to you then, I told you that I had come just for men, not for the angels. I have come to give back to men their royalty of children of God teaching them to live as gods. God is without lewdness, Judas. But I want to show to all of you that man also can be without lewdness. I wanted to show you that one can live as I teach you. To show you that I had to take a real body and thus be able to suffer the temptations of man and say to man, after instructing him: "Do as I do". And you asked Me whether I had sinned when I was tempted. Do you remember? As I saw that you could not understand that I had been tempted without sinning, because you thought that temptation was unbecoming for the Word and that it was impossible for the Man not to sin, I replied to you that everybody can be tempted, but only those are sinners who want to become so. Great was your surprise and you were incredulous, so much so that you insisted saying: "Have You ever sinned?". It was then possible for you to be incredulous. We had known each other only for a short time. Palestine is full of rabbis whose lives are the antitheses of their doctrine. But now you know that I have not sinned, that I do not sin. You know that even the fiercest temptation provoking a healthy virile man, who lives among men and is circumvented by them and by Satan, does not disturb Me to the extent of making Me commit sin. On the contrary, every temptation, although its virulence increased when it was rejected, because the demon made it fiercer to overcome Me, was a greater victory. And not only with regard to lewdness, a whirl that revolved around Me without succeeding in shaking or scratching My will. There is no sin where there is no consent to temptation, Judas. There is instead sin, even without consummating the act, when one accepts the temptation and contemplates it. It may be a venial sin, but it prepares the way to mortal sin in you. Because when one accepts

the temptation and allows one's thought to linger over it, following the phases of a sin mentally, one grows weaker. Satan is aware of that, and that is why he repeatedly hurls blazing thrusts, always hoping that one may penetrate and work inside… Afterwards… it would be easy to change the person who is tempted into a sinner.

You did not understand that then. You could not understand it. You can now. Now you are less deserving to understand than you were then, yet, I repeat those words that I spoke to you, for you, because it is in you, not in Me, that the repelled temptation does not subside… It does not calm down because you do not repel it completely. You do not consummate the act, but you brood over the thought of it. That is what happens today, and tomorrow… Tomorrow you will fall into real sin. That is why I taught you, then, to ask the help of the Father against temptation, I taught you to ask the Father not to lead you into temptation. I, the Son of God, I, Who had already defeated Satan, asked the Father for help, because I am humble. You did not. You did not ask salvation and preservation of God. You are proud. That is why you collapse…

Do you remember all that? And can you now understand what it means to Me, true Man, with all the reactions of man, and true God, with all the reactions of God, to see you thus: lustful, liar, thief, betrayer, homicide? Do you realise what a stress you impose on Me, having to put up with your being near Me? Do you know how laborious it is for Me to control Myself, as I am doing now, to fulfil My mission for you till the very end? Any other man would have seized you by your throat, seeing you, a thief, intent on picking the lock of a coffer and stealing money, and learning that you are a traitor, and worse than a traitor… I have spoken to you, still with pity. Look. It is not yet summer and the cool breeze of the evening is coming in through the window, and yet I am perspiring as if I had been working at a very hard task. But do you not realise how much you cost Me? Or what you are? Do you want Me to drive you away? No, never. When a man is drowning, he who lets him go is a murderer. You are between two forces attracting you, Satan and Me. But if I leave you, you will have him only. And how will you save yourself? And yet you will leave Me… You have already left Me with your spirit… Well, I will still keep Judas' chrysalis near Me. Your body deprived of the will to love Me, your body inert towards Good. I will keep it until you exact also this nonentity, that is, your mortal remains, to join them to your spirit and sin with your whole self…

Judas!… Will you not speak to Me? Have you not one word for your Master? Not even a prayer? I do not expect you to say: "Forgive me!". I have forgiven you too many times in vain. I know that that word is a mere sound on your lips. It is not an impulse of your contrite spirit. I would like an impulse of your heart. Are you so

dead as to have no further wishes? Speak! Are you afraid of Me? Oh! if you were afraid! At least that! But you are not afraid of Me. If you were afraid of Me, I would repeat the words that I spoke to you on that remote day when we spoke of temptations and sins: "I tell you that also after the Crime of crimes, if its culprit should rush to the feet of God with true repentance, and implored Him with tears to be forgiven, offering himself to expiation with confidence, without despairing, God would forgive him, and through expiation, the culprit would still save his Soul". Judas! If you are not afraid of Me, I still love you. Have you nothing to ask My infinite love in this hour? »

« No. Or at most one thing only: that You order John not to speak. How do You expect me to make amends if I am a disgrace among you? ». He says so with arrogance.

And Jesus replies to him: « And you say so like that? John will not speak. But at least you, and I ask you this, must behave in such a way that nothing may leak out about your ruin. Pick up those coins and put them back into Johanna's bag… I will try to close the coffer… with the tool you used to open it… »

And while Judas with a bad grace picks up the coins that had rolled everywhere, Jesus leans on the open coffer, as if He were tired. The light is fading in the room, but not so much as to prevent one from seeing Jesus weep silently, looking at His apostle stoop to pick up the scattered coins.

Judas has finished. He goes towards the coffer. He takes Johanna's large heavy bag, puts the coins in it and closes it saying: « There it is! » He moves aside.

Jesus stretches out His hand to take the coarse picklock made by Judas, and with a trembling hand He gets the spring-lock to work closing the coffer. He then rests the iron bar on His knee and bends it in V shape, pressing it down completely with His foot, making it unserviceable. He then picks it up and hides it in His chest. In doing so some tears fall on His linen tunic.

Judas at long last has a gesture of resipiscence. He covers his face with his hands and bursts into tears saying: « I am cursed! I am the opprobrium of the Earth! »

« You are the eternal wretch! And to think that, if you wanted, You could still be happy! »

« Swear it to me! Swear that no one will be told… and I swear to You that I will redeem myself » shouts Judas.

« Do not say: "and I will redeem myself". You cannot. I alone can redeem you. He who was speaking through your lips a short while ago, can be defeated only by Me. Tell Me the words of humility: "Lord, save me!", and I will free you from your ruler. Do you not understand that I am waiting more for that word of yours, than for a kiss of My Mother? »

Judas is weeping, but he does not say that word.

« Go. Go out of here. Go up to the terrace. Go wherever you wish, but make no noisy scene. Go. Go. No one will find you out, because I shall be watching. As from tomorrow you will keep the money. Everything is quite useless now. »

Judas goes out without replying. Jesus, now all alone, drops on a seat near the table and with His head resting on His arms folded on the table He weeps distressingly.

After some minutes John enters quietly and stops for an instant at the door. He is as white as death. He then runs towards Jesus and embraces Him imploring: « Do not weep, Master! Do not weep! I love You also for that wretch… » He lifts Him, kisses Him, drinks the tears of his God and weeps, too.

Jesus embraces him and the two fair-haired heads, close to each other, exchange tears and kisses. But Jesus soon controls Himself and says: « John, for My sake forget what happened. I want that. »

« Yes, my Lord. I will try to do that. But do not suffer any more… Ah! How sorrowful! And he made me sin, my Lord. I lied. I had to lie because the women disciples came back. No. The relatives of the woman came first. They wanted You to bless You. A baby boy was born without complications. I said that You had gone back to the mountain… Then the women disciples came and I lied again saying that You were out and that You had probably gone to the house where the baby was born… I could not find any other excuse. I was so dumbfounded! Your Mother saw that I had wept and She asked me: "What is the matter with you, John?". She was excited… She seemed to know. I lied for the third time saying: "I am moved because of that woman… Being close to a sinner can lead to such an extent! To falsehood… Absolve me, my Jesus. »

« Be at peace. Forget all about this hour. Nothing. It was nothing… A dream… »

« But it is Your sorrow! Oh! how changed You are, Master! Tell me this, only this: has Judas at least repented? »

« And who can understand Judas, son? »

« None of us. But You can. »

Jesus replies only with fresh silent tears streaming down His tired face.

« Ah! He has not repented!… » John is terrified.

« Where is he now? Have you seen him? »

« Yes. He looked out of the terrace. He looked to see whether there was anybody, and when he saw me all alone, as I was sitting under the fig-tree, utterly anguished, he ran downstairs and went out through the little gate of the kitchen garden. Then I came in… »

« You have done the right thing. Let us tidy up in here, putting the chairs back in their places, and pick up the amphora, so that there are no traces… »

« Did he scuffle with You? »

« No, John. He did not. »

« You are too upset, Master, to remain here. Your Mother would understand… and She would be grieved. »

« That is true. Let us go out… Give the key to our next-door neighbour. I will go ahead, along the banks of the stream, towards the mountain… »

Jesus goes out and John remains to tidy up the place. Then he goes out as well. He gives the key to a woman who lives in a house nearby and he runs away, hiding among the bushes on the bank, not to be seen.

At about one hundred metres from the house there is Jesus sitting on a rock. Upon hearing the steps of the apostle He turns round. His face is pale in the evening light. John sits on the ground close to Him and rests his head on His lap, raising his face to look at Him. He sees that there are still tears on Jesus' cheeks.

« Oh! do not suffer any more! Do not suffer any more, Master! I cannot bear to see You suffer! »

« And am I not to suffer because of that? My deepest grief! Remember that, John: this will be for ever My deepest grief! You cannot understand everything yet… My deepest grief… » Jesus is depressed. John is holding Him close to himself, with his arms round His waist, anguished at not being able to console Him.

Jesus raises His head, opens His eyes that He had closed to refrain His tears and says: « Remember that we are in three to know: the culprit, you and I. And no one else must know. »

« No one will learn it from me. But how could he do that? While he took the money of the community… But that!… I thought I had become mad when I saw… Horrible! »

« I told you to forget… »

« I am trying hard, Master. But it is too horrible… »

« It is horrible. Yes, John, it is! Oh! John! » And Jesus, embracing His Favourite, rests His head on his shoulder and weeps desolately.

The shadows, which become rapidly deep in the thicket, hide in their darkness the two who are embracing each other.

566. Farewell to Ephraim. Going towards Shilo.

24th February 1947.

« Let us follow You, Master. We shall not trouble You » implore many people of Ephraim who have gathered in front of the house of Mary of Jacob, who is weeping all her tears leaning against the Post of the wide-open door.

Jesus is in the middle of His twelve apostles; farther away, in a group around His Mother there are Johanna, Nike, Susanna, Eliza, Martha and Mary, Salome and Mary of Alphaeus. The men and the

women are in travelling clothes, with tunics tucked up and girded to leave their feet free, with new sandals fastened not only at their ankles but also at the lower part of their legs by means of small strips of interlaced leather, as is customary when one has to take impassable roads. The men have burdened themselves also with the bags of the women disciples.

The people implore Jesus to let them follow Him, while the little ones scream, with their little faces and arms raised: « A kiss! Take me in Your arms! Come back, Jesus! Come back soon to tell us many beautiful parables! I will keep the roses of my garden for You! I will not eat any fruit to keep it for You! Come back, Jesus! My little sheep is about to lamb and I want to give You the lambkin, with its wool You can have a tunic made like mine… If You come soon I will give You the cakes my mother makes with the early corn… » They chirrup like many little birds around their great Friend, they pull His tunic, hang on to His belt trying to climb up to His arms, lovingly despotic, so much so that Jesus is prevented from replying to the adults, because there is always a fresh face to kiss.

« Away! That's enough! Leave the Master alone! Women! Take your children! » shout the apostles who are anxious to set off in the early morning hours. And stretching out their hands they give gentle slaps to the most intrusive ones.

« No. Leave them. Their kindness is fresher to Me than this dawn. Leave them and Me alone. Allow Me to be comforted by their love, which is pure and free from interests and trouble » says Jesus defending His little friends and as he stretches out His arms, His wide mantle hangs down and receives them under its blue protecting wings. And the little ones press against one another in the warm blue dim light and become happily silent, like chicks under motherly wings.

Jesus at last can say to the adults: « You may come, if you think you can do so. »

« And who will stop us, Master? We are in our region! »

« The corn, the vines and orchards need all your work, and the sheep are to be shorn and this is their mating time, and those that mated in the past season are about to lamb, and it is time to make hay… »

« It does not matter, Master. The elderly people can see to the shearing and mating of the sheep, and the children, and women to their lambing, and also to the hay. The orchards and fields can wait. Because if the corn is already hardening in the ears, it is still early to cut it, and vineyards, olive-groves and orchards have only to let their abundant fruit ripen in the sunshine. There is nothing we can do for them until harvest-time, just like the mother of a family who can do nothing to bake the bread until the dough rises. The sun is the yeast of fruits. It's for him to act now, as the wind did previously fecundating the blossoms along the branches. In any case!…

if we should lose some bunches of grapes, or some fruits, or if bearbines or darnels should suffocate some ears of corn, it would be a very small damage as compared with losing one of Your words! » says an old man whom I have always seen highly honoured in the village.

« You are right. So let us go. Mary of Jacob, I thank you and I bless you, because you have been a good mother to Me. Do not weep! Those who have accomplished a good deed must not weep. »

« Ah! I am losing You and I shall not see You again! »

« We shall certainly meet again. »

« Are You coming back here, Lord? » asks the woman smiling through her tears. « When? »

« I shall not come back, as now… »

« Then, where shall we meet again, if I, a poor old woman, cannot come along the roads of the world looking for You? »

« In Heaven, Mary. In the House of our Father. Where there is room for Judaeans and for Samaritans, where there is a place for those who will love Me in spirit and truth. You are already doing so, because you believe that I am the Son of the true God… »

« Oh! I do believe that! But there is no hope for us because You alone love us without discrimination. »

« When I have gone, these (and He points at the apostles) will come in my stead. And in memory of Me they will not ask who it is who requests to join the flock of the true and only Shepherd. »

« I am old, Lord. I shall not live so long as to see that. You are young and strong, and Your Mother will have You for a long time, and those who love You and belong to Your people will have You… Why are You weeping, o Mother of the Blessed Lord? » she asks, amazed at seeing tears drop from the Blessed Virgin's eyes.

« I have nothing but My grief… Goodbye, Mary. May God bless you for what you have done to My Son. And remember that if your sorrow is great, there is no sorrow greater than Mine, and there never will be on the Earth. Never! Remember the sorrowful Mary of Nazareth… Goodbye! » And Mary parts from the old woman weeping after kissing her on the doorstep and She sets off among the women, with John beside Her.

And John, with his usual lightly bent posture and his face raised looking at Her, says: « Do not weep thus, Mary. If many hate Your Jesus, many love Him. Comfort Your spirit, Mother, looking at these who now and in the course of ages will love Your Son with their whole selves » and he concludes in a low voice, almost whispering the words to Mary alone, Whom he guides and supports holding Her elbow so that She may not stumble against the stones of the path, blinded as She is by Her tears: « Not every mother will be able to see her child loved… There are some who will shout distressingly: "Why did I conceive him?" »

Jesus joins them, as Mary and John have remained alone, a little behind the women disciples. James of Alphaeus is with Jesus. The others are behind in a group, as pensive and sad as the women disciples, who are ahead of them all. Last, in a group, many men from Ephraim, talking in low voices to one another.

« Goodbyes are always sad, Mother. Particularly when one does not know that an end is the beginning of something more perfect. It is the sad consequence of sin. And it will remain even after forgiveness. But men will bear it with greater courage as they will have God as their friend. »

« You are right, Jesus. But there is a sorrow that God lets us relish although He is the most fatherly Friend there can be. He is such to Me. Oh! God is good! So good. I should not like James and John, or anybody else to be scandalised by My tears. God is good. He was always good to poor Mary. I have repeated that to Myself every day since I was able to think. And now… now I say so every hour… every moment. The more grief is impending the more I say so to Myself… God is good. He gave You to Me: a loving holy Son and such, even only as a creature, as to compensate every sorrow of a woman… He gave You to Me, a poor girl elevated to Mother of His incarnate Word… And the joy of being able to call You "Son", My adored Lord, is so great that no tear should drop from My eyes, whatever the torture may be, if I were as perfect as You teach us. But I am a poor woman, Son! And You are My Creature… And… which mother can refrain from weeping when she knows that her creature is hated, and she knows?… Son, succour Your maidservant Certainly there was still pride in Me when I thought I was strong But then… the time was still remote… Now it is here… I perceive it… Succour Me, Jesus, My God! If God allows Me to suffer thus, it is certainly for a good purpose for Me. Because if He wanted, He could let Me suffer only for what happens… It was He Who formed You in My womb thus!… How… There is no comparison to explain how You made Yourself… But He wants Me to suffer… and may He be blessed for that… always. But help Me, Jesus. Help Me all of you… all of you because it is so bitter the sea in which I have to quench My thirst »

« Let us say the prayer. The four of us, who love You with all our hearts, Mother. Here, I Your Son, and John and James who love You as if You were their mother… Our Father, Who art in Heaven… » and Jesus, guiding the little chorus of the three voices that follow Him in a low tone, says all the Lord's Prayer, stressing certain sentences such as: « thy will be done »… « lead us not into temptation. » He then says: « Well. The Father will help us to do His will, even if our weakness of human beings is such that we think we are not able to do it, and He will not lead us into the temptation of thinking that He is not so good, because while we drink of the very bitter

chalice, He will send His angel to wipe our embittered lips with heavenly comfort. » Jesus is holding by the hand His Mother Who has bravely struggled with Her tears restraining them in the bottom of Her heart. The two apostles are beside them: John is near Mary and James of Alphaeus is near Jesus, and they look at them deeply moved.

The women disciples have looked back now and again hearing Mary weep and the prayer of the four. But they have refrained from joining them.

In the rear, the apostles have asked one another: « But why is Mary weeping thus?. » I said the apostles, but I mean all of them with the exception of Judas of Kerioth, who is proceeding all alone, and looks very pensive, almost gloomy, so much so that Thomas notices it and says to the others: « But what is the matter with Judas that he looks like that? He looks like one sentenced to death! »

« Who knows?! He may be afraid to go back to Judaea » replies Matthew.

« I… What did the Master tell you about the money? » asks the Zealot.

« Nothing in particular. He said to me: "We are now going back to the previous situation. Judas will be the treasurer and you the bestowers of alms. The women disciples want to help us with regard to expenses". I could not believe that it was true! I have handled so much money that I hate it. »

« And the women disciples are helping very well. These sandals are so safe… One does not feel as if one were walking on a mountain. I wonder how much they cost! » says Peter looking at his feet shod with the new sandals that protect both heels and toes and support ankles with the thin leather strips.

« Martha got them. One can see her rich provident hand. In the past we used to tie them like this as well, but the strings were a torture. We did not lose the soles, but we lost the skin of our legs… » says Andrew.

« And they hurt heels and toes… That's why he who is behind us always wore them like these! » says Peter pointing at Judas of Kerioth.

The road climbs towards the crest of the mountain. Looking back one can see Ephraim all white in the sun, and the village seems already so far below them…

Then the apostles mingle with the women disciples to help them climb up the path that is very steep on that spot, and Bartholomew, who has been left behind, says to the people from Ephraim: « You have shown us a very difficult path, my friends. »

« Yes, but beyond that wood there is a good road that will take You to Shilo in a short time. So you will be able to rest there longer than if you arrived by night along a different road » replies one.

« You are right. The harder the road, the quicker it takes you to your destination. »

« Your Master is aware of that. That is why He does not spare Himself! Ah! we shall never forget!… Above all that He has helped us these last days, although He had heard some people of our region insult Him so unfairly. He alone is good and so He helps also those who hate Him. »

« You did not hate Him. »

« No, we did not. But there are many more whom we do not hate, and yet we are hated without any reason. »

« Do what He does, without any fear, and you will see that… »

« Then, why do you not do so? It's the same thing. We are here, you are there, and a mountain between us: the one raised by common errors. Above: the common God. Then, why do neither we nor you climb the slope to meet up there, at the feet of God, close to one another? »

Bartholomew understands the just reproach, because in his undeniable virtue, he has the fixed idea of being an Israelite, and is inflexible with regard to what is not Israel. He changes the subject without giving a direct reply and says: « It is not necessary to climb. God has come down among us. It is sufficient to follow Him. »

« To follow Him, we agree. We should like to do that. But if we went to Judaea with Him, would we not damage Him? You, too, are aware of what He is accused and of what we are accused: of being Samaritans, that is, demons. »

Bartholomew sighs and parts from them saying: « They are beckoning to me to go… » and he quickens his step.

Those from Ephraim look at him go away and one whispers: « Ah! He is not like Him! How much we lose by losing Him! » and he makes a gesture of discouragement.

« Do you know, Elias, that yesterday evening He took a large sum of money to the head of the synagogue, who is to hand it to Mary of Jacob, so that she may not suffer the pangs of hunger any more? »

« No, I don't. Why did He not give it to her? »

« He did not want to be thanked by the old woman. She does not know yet. I know because the head of the synagogue told me, to ask my advice whether he ought to buy her John's property, that his brother wants to sell, or he should give her the money a little at a time. I advised him to buy John's property. It will give her enough corn, oil and wine to live without starving. Whereas the money… That… »

« So it is really a large sum?! » says a third man.

« Yes. Our head of the synagogue received quite a lot, also for other poor people in town and in the country. That "they also may keep the Feast of the Unleavened Bread, to greet the new time" the

Master said. »

« He must have said the new year. »

« No. He said: "the new time". In fact the head of the synagogue is not going to use that money before the Feast of the Unleavened Bread. »

« Oh! and what did He mean? » ask many.

« What does it mean? I don't know. Nobody knows. Not even John, His beloved apostle, nor Simon of Jonah, who is the head of the disciples. I asked them and the former became pale, the latter became engrossed in thought like one who is trying to guess. »

« And what about Judas of Kerioth? He is important among them. Perhaps more than the other two, He knows everything, so he says. He may know also that. Let us go and ask him. He likes to say what he knows. »

They hurry to join Judas who is lonely as at the beginning, all alone, by now, on the path, because the others have gone round a bend and they seem to have been swallowed up by the green thicket on the slope.

« Judas, listen to us. The Master says that He wants a great celebration for the Feast of the Unleavened Bread, to greet the new time. What does He mean? »

« I don't know. Am I perhaps in the mind of the Master? Ask Him since He loves you so much » and he quickens his step leaving them disappointed.

« He is not the Master either. There is not one who has His pity… » they say shaking their heads.

« Well, are we following them? We are following Him! And we are doing the right thing. Let us go. Perhaps, we may learn from His lips, before He goes to Judaea, what He meant to say. »

And they quicken their paces joining the others, who are resting in a wood of age-long oak-trees, facing one of the most beautiful views in Palestine.

567. At Shiloh. First Parable on Advice.

27th February 1947.

Jesus is speaking in the middle of a square planted with trees. The sun, which is just beginning to set, brightens it with a yellowgreen light, glimmering through the new leaves of gigantic plane-trees. A thin precious velarium seems to be spread over the large square filtering the sun-light without obstructing it.

Jesus says:

« Listen. Once a great king sent his beloved son to a part of his kingdom, whose justice he wanted to test and he said to him: "Go everywhere, do good to the people in my name, inform them of me, make me known and loved. I grant you full powers, and everything

you do will be well done". The king's son, after being blessed by his father, went where he had been sent and with some squires and friends he began, working untiringly, to cover that part of his father's kingdom.

Now, through a series of unhappy events, that region was morally broken up into parts opposed to one another. Each part was making a great fuss on its own account, and was sending urgent entreaties to the king to tell him that each was the best and the most loyal, and that the neighbouring ones were perfidious and deserved to be punished. So the king's son found himself in front of citizens whose humours varied according to the town to which they belonged, but were alike in two things; first: each town believed it was better than the others; secondly: each town wanted to ruin the neighbouring enemy one, making it disreputable in the opinion of the king. As the son of the king was just and wise, with much clemency he tried to instruct each part of the region in justice, to make them all friendly with his father and beloved by him. And as he was good, he was succeeding, although slowly, because, as it always happens, only the upright-hearted people of each province of the region followed his advice. Nay, it is right to say that he found more good will to listen to him and become wise in the truth, exactly where they scornfully said that there was less good will and wisdom.

Then those of the neighbouring provinces said: "Unless we take pains, the grace of the king will go entirely to those whom we despise. Let us go and overthrow those whom we hate and let us go feigning that we are converted and willing to forget our hatred in order to honour the king's son". And they went. In the guise of friends they spread among the towns of the rival province and with deceitful kindness they advised what to do to pay greater and greater honour to the son of the king and consequently to his father, the king. Because the honour paid to the son, the messenger of his father, is also honour paid to him who sent him. But they did not honour the king's son, on the contrary they hated him cordially, to the extent of wishing to make him loathsome to his subjects and to the king himself. They were so astute in their false geniality, they succeeded so well in presenting their advice as the best policy, that many people of the neighbouring region accepted as good what was wicked, and they left the right path that they had followed, and took an unjust one, and the king's son realised that his mission was a failure with regard to many.

Now tell Me: who was the greatest sinner in the eyes of the king? What was the sin of those who advised, and of those who took their advice? And I ask you another question: with whom will the good king be more severe? Do you not know the answers? I will tell you.

The greatest sinner in the eyes of the king was he who incited his neighbour to do evil out of hatred for him, as he wanted to thrust him into deeper darkness of ignorance, out of hatred for the king's son, whom he wanted to defeat in his mission by making him appear incapable in the eyes of the king and of his subjects, out of hatred for the king himself, because if the love given to the son is also love given to the father, likewise the hatred for the son is hatred also for the father. So the sin of those who gave evil advice, knowing fully well that they were giving evil advice, was a sin of hatred in addition to a sin of falsehood, a sin of premeditated hatred, and the sin of those who took the advice thinking that it was good, was only a sin of stupidity.

But you know very well that only he who is intelligent is responsible for his actions, whereas he who through disease or other reasons is foolish, is not responsible personally, but his relatives are responsible in his stead. That is why while a boy is not of age, he is considered irresponsible, and it is his father who answers for the actions of his son. So the king, who was good, was severe with the intelligent ill advisers, but he was benign with those who had been deceived by them, and he only reproached them for believing this or that subject before asking the king's son himself, in order to learn from him what was really to be done. Because only the son of the father really knows the will of his father.

That is the parable, o people of Shiloh, of Shiloh where several times in the course of ages advice of different nature was given by God, by men or by Satan, and that advice bore good fruit when it was taken as advice for good purposes or when it was rejected by people who recognised it as leading to evil, and it bore bad fruit if it was not accepted when it was holy or it was taken when it was wicked.

Because man has his wonderful free will and he can freely choose ;between good and evil, and he has the other magnificent gift of an intellect capable of distinguishing between right and wrong, so reward or punishment may be brought about not so much by the piece of advice itself, as by the way in which it may be taken. Because 'if no one can forbid wicked people to tempt their neighbour to ruin - him, nothing can interdict good people from rejecting the temptation and remaining faithful to good. The same piece of advice may harm ten people, and avail other ten. Because if he who follows it does harm to himself, he who does not follow it does his soul good.

So no one may say: "We were told to do so". But everybody must sincerely say: "I wanted to do it". Then you will at least receive the forgiveness that is given to sincere people. And if you are doubtful about the goodness of the advice given to you, meditate before taking it and putting it into practice. Meditate imploring the Most High Who never denies the spirits of good will His light. And if your.

conscience, enlightened by God, sees only one tiny imperceptible spot, but such that cannot exist in a deed of justice, then say: "I will not do that because it is an impure justice".

Oh! I solemnly tell you that he who makes good use of his intellect and of his free will and invokes the Lord to see the truth in things, will not be ruined by temptation, because the Father Who is in Heaven will help him to do what is good in spite of all the snares of the world and of Satan.

Remember Anna of Elkanah and Eli's sons. The bright angel of the former had advised Anna to make a vow to the Lord if He made her fecund. Eli, the priest, advised his sons to go back to a life of justice, and not to sin any further against the Lord. And yet, although it is easier for man, because of his heaviness, to understand the voice of another man than the spiritual - but imperceptible by physical senses - speech of the Lord's angel speaking to the spirit, Anna of Elkanah took the advice, because she was good and upright in the eyes of God, and she gave birth to a prophet, whereas Eli's sons, as they were wicked and far from God, did not take their father's advice and were punished by God with a violent death.

Advice has two values: that of the source from which it comes, and it is already great because it may have incalculable consequences, and that of the heart to which it is given. The value given to it by the heart to which it is proposed is not only incalculable, but also immutable. Because if the heart is good and follows a good piece of advice, it gives that advice the value of a just deed, and if it does not follow it, it deprives it of the second part of its value, as it remains just a piece of advice, but not a deed, that is, it is a merit only for the adviser. And if it is a wicked piece of advice and is rejected by a good heart, which has been tempted in vain through blandishments or terrors to put it into practice, it achieves the value of victory over Evil and of martyrdom for loyalty to Good, and thus it prepares a great treasure in the Kingdom of Heaven.

So when your hearts are tempted by other people, meditate, guided by the light of God, whether it is a good word, and if with the help of God, Who allows temptations but does not want your ruin, you see that it is not a good thing, have the courage to say to yourselves and to those tempting you: "No. I will remain loyal to my Lord and may my loyalty absolve me of my past sins and allow me to enter the gates of the Kingdom and not be left outside, near them, because the Most High sent His Son for me also, to lead me to eternal salvation".

Go. If anybody needs Me, you know where I rest during the night. May the Lord enlighten you. »

568. At Lebonah. Second Parable on Advice.

28th February 1947.

They are about to enter Lebonah, a town which I do not think is very important or beautiful, but on the other hand is very busy as there are many caravans going to Jerusalem for Passover from Galilee, Ituraea, Gaulanitis, Trachonitis, Hauran and the Decapolis. I would say that Lebonah was a track for caravans, or rather a junction of such tracks coming from those regions, from the Mediterranean to the mountains on the eastern side of Palestine, and from the north of it, and that they join here on the main road that takes pilgrims to Jerusalem. People probably prefer this road because it is garrisoned by the Romans and consequently they feel safer from the danger of unpleasant meetings with highwaymen. That is what I think. But it may be preferred for other reasons, because of historical or religious memories, I do not know.

As it is the right time - judging by the sun I would say that it is about eight o'clock in the morning - the caravans are about to set off amid a great uproar of voices, shouts, brayings, harness-bells, wheels. Women call their children, men spur their animals, vendors offer their goods, Samaritans haggle over prices with those… less rigid Jews, that is, those from the Decapolis and from other regions, as they are not so intolerant, being more mingled with the heathen element, and if a wretched vendor from Samaria approaches a champion of Judaism offering his goods, he is repulsed scornfully and almost abused. They shout so much at the anathema that they seem to have been approached by the devil himself… stirring up fierce reactions from the offended Samaritans. And there would be an odd scuffle if the Roman soldiers did not keep a good watch.

Jesus proceeds through so much confusion. The apostles are around Him, the women disciples follow them, and behind, in the rear, the train of the people from Ephraim, whose number has been increased by many people from Shiloh.

A murmur precedes the Master. It spreads from those who see Him to those who are farther away and cannot as yet see Him. Another murmur, a louder one, follows Him. And many put off their departure to see what is happening.

They ask one another: « What? Is He going farther and farther away from Judaea? What? Is He preaching in Samaria now? »

A voice says in the typical singing tone of Galileans: « The holy ones have rejected Him, and He is going to those who are not holy, to sanctify them, to shame the Judaeans. »

A reply more sour than acid poison is heard: « He has found His nest and who understands His word of a demon. »

Another voice shouts: « Be quiet, you murderers of the Just One! This persecution of yours will mark you with the most ill-famed name for ages. You are three times more corrupt than us from the

Decapolis. »

Another sharp voice of an old man exclaims: « He is so just that He is running away from the Temple for the Feast of Feasts. Ha! Ha! Ha! »

A man from Ephraim, red with anger, says: « It is not true. You are lying, you old snake! He is now going to His Passover. »

A bearded scribe remarks disdainfully: « Via Gerizim. »

« No. Via the Moriah. He is coming to bless us, because He is love, then He will ascend to your hatred, you cursed people! »

« Be quiet, Samaritan! »

« You be quiet, demon! »

« Those who stir up a rebellion will be imprisoned. That is Pontius Pilate's order. Bear than in mind. Disperse now » orders a Roman non-commissioned officer getting his men to separate those who are about to come to blows in one of the many regional and religious quarrels, always ready to rise in Palestine in the days of Christ.

The crowd disperses. But no one departs any more. Donkeys are taken back to stables or to the place where Jesus is going. Women and children dismount and follow husbands or fathers, or they remain in chattering groups, if their husbands' or fathers' humour so orders « that they may not hear the demon speak. » But friendly or enemy or simply curious men rush towards the place where Jesus has gone. And while running they cast evil glances at one another or they take courage from such unexpected joy, or they ask questions, according to whether they are friends with enemies, or friends with friends or with curious people.

Jesus has stopped in a square near the inevitable fountain in the shade of trees. He is there, leaning against the damp wall of the fountain that here is covered by a small porch open only on one side. Perhaps it is more a well than a fountain. It is like the well at En Rogel.

He is speaking to a woman who is showing Him the little child she is holding in her arms. I see Jesus nod assent and lay His hand on the child's head. And immediately afterwards I see the mother raise the child and shout: « Malachi, Malachi, where are you? Our boy is no longer deformed » and the woman trills her hosanna which is joined by the shouts of the crowd, while a man makes his way to prostrate himself before the Lord.

The people make their comments. The women, mostly mothers, congratulate the woman who received the grace. Those who are farther away stretch their necks and ask: « What happened? », after shouting hosanna, to join those who are aware of what took place.

« A hunchbacked boy, so hump-backed that he could stand on his legs only with difficulty. He was that size, I tell you, just that, so bent he was. He looked like a boy three years old, but he was seven. Look at him now! He is as tall as everybody, as straight as a palmtree

and lively. See him over there how he climbs on the little wall of the fountain to be seen and to see. And how happily he laughs! »

A Galilean turns towards a man, who, judging by the large tassels on his belt I think I am right in saying is a rabbi, and asks him: « Ehi? What do you say? Is that work of the demon, too? Really, if the demon does that, removing misfortunes to make men happy and have God praised, shall we not have to say that he is God's best servant! »

« Blasphemer, be silent! »

« I am not blaspheming, rabbi. I am commenting on what I see. Why does your holiness bring us nothing but burdens, misfortunes, making us speak abuse, and mistrust the Most High, whereas the works of the Rabbi of Nazareth give us peace and the certainty that God is good? »

The rabbi does not reply, he moves aside and goes to speak in a low voice to other friends of his. And one of them leaves the group, elbows his way going in front of Jesus, Whom he asks, without greeting Him first: « What do You intend doing? »

« I intend to speak to those who ask for My word » replies Jesus staring at his eyes, without disdain, but also without fear.

« You are not allowed. The Sanhedrin forbids You. »

« That is the will of the Most High, Whose servant the Sanhedrin ought to be. »

« You have been condemned, You know. Be silent or… »

« The Word is My name. And the Word speaks. »

« To the Samaritans. If it were true that You are Who You say You are, You would not give Your word to the Samaritans. »

« I have given it and will give it to Galileans, to Judaeans, to Samaritans, because there is no difference in the eyes of Jesus. »

« Try to give it in Judaea, if You dare!… »

« I solemnly tell you that I will. Wait for Me. Are you not Eleazar ben Parta? Are you? Then you will certainly see Gamaliel before I see him. Tell him, in My name, that I will give him also, after twenty one years, the reply for which he is waiting. Have you understood? Remember this carefully: after twenty one years I will give him also the reply that he awaits. Goodbye. »

« Where? Where do You want to speak, where do You want to reply to the great Gamaliel? He has certainly already left Gamala in Judaea to go to Jerusalem. But even if he were still in Gamala You could not speak to him. »

« Where? And where do the scribes and rabbis of Israel meet? »

« In the Temple? You, in the Temple? And would You dare? But do You not know… »

« That you hate Me? I do know. It is sufficient for Me not to be hated by My Father. Before long the Temple will tremble because of My words. » And without minding His interlocutor any longer

He opens His arms to impose silence on the people who are excited and divided into opposite tendencies and are shouting at disturbers.

There is soon silence and in the silence Jesus speaks:

« At Shiloh I spoke of ill advisers and of how much good or evil a piece of advice can do. I now propose this parable not only to you, people of Lebonah, but to the people of all Palestine. We shall call it: "The parable of the ill-advised".

Listen. Once there was a very large family, so large as to form a tribe. Numerous sons had got married forming, around the first family, many more families rich in offspring, who in their turn got married and had formed more families. So that the old father had found himself, so to say, at the head of a small kingdom, of which he was the king. As it always happens in families, among the many children and children's children, there were different characters: some were good and just, some were overbearing and unjust. Some were content with their situation and some were envious, as they thought that their shares were inferior to those of brothers or relatives. And near the most wicked one there was the best one. And it was natural that this very good one should be the most tenderly loved by the father of all the large family. And, as it always happens, the wicked one and those more like him, hated the good one because he was the most loved, not considering that they could have been loved as well, if they had been as good as he was. And the good son, to whom his father confided his thoughts that he might repeat them to everybody, was followed by other good ones. So that after years and years, the large family was divided into three parts. The part of the good members of the family and that of the bad ones. And between the two there was the third part, formed by the uncertain members, who were attracted towards the good son, but were afraid of the wicked one and of those of his party. This third part was keeping in with both sides and was not able to make up its mind resolutely in favour of one or the other.

Then the old father, seeing such uncertainty, said to his beloved son: "So far you have spent your word particularly for those who love it and for those who do not love it, because the former ask you for it, so that they may love me more and more according to justice, and the latter are fools who need to be taken back to justice. But you can see that those fools not only do not accept your word, and they remain what they were, but to their first unjust attitude towards you, the messenger of my wishes, they add the unfairness of corrupting, by means of evil advice, those who are not yet firmly willing to follow the better road. So go to them and explain to them what I am, what you are, and what they must do to be with you and with me".

The son, who was always obedient, went as his father wished, and he conquered some hearts every day. So the father was able to clearly

see who were his rebellious children, and he looked at them severely but without reproaching them, because he was their father and he wanted to attract them to himself with patience, love and the example of the good sons.

But when the wicked ones realised that they were all alone they said: "It is now too obvious that we are the rebels. Previously they mistook us for those who were neither good nor bad. Look at them now over there! They are all following the beloved son. We must take action and destroy his work. Let us go, feigning that we want to mend our ways, to those who have just been converted and also to those who are the most simple souls among the best ones and let us spread the rumour that the beloved son pretends that he wants to serve his father, but in actual fact he is gathering supporters to rebel against him; or we can also say that the father wants to eliminate his son and those who follow him, because they are becoming too powerful and are outshining the glory of the father-king, and that consequently, in order to defend the beloved betrayed son, it is necessary to keep him among us, far from the paternal house where betrayal is awaiting him".

And they went and were so shrewdly subtle in suggesting advice and spreading rumours, that many were caught in the snare, particularly the recent converts, to whom the evil advisers gave the following bad piece of advice: "Do you realise how much he loved you? He preferred to be among you rather than stay with his father, or at least with his good brothers. He has been so clever that in the sight of all the world he has raised you from your abjection of persons who did not know what they wanted and were thus ridiculed by everybody. Because of his partiality for you, it is your duty to defend him, and to keep him in your fields, even by force, if your words are not sufficient to convince him. Or rise, proclaiming him your leader and king, and march against the iniquitous father and his sons who are as iniquitous as he". And when anyone hesitated and remarked: "But he wants, he wanted us to go with him to honour our father and he has obtained blessing and forgiveness for us", they replied to them: "Don't believe that! Not everything he told you is true, neither did the father show you all the truth. He has behaved like that because he realises that his father is about to betray him and he wanted to test you hearts to find out where he can find protection and shelter. But may be… he is so good! perhaps he will repent of doubting his father and may want to go back to him. Do not allow him to do that". And many promised: "We will not allow him" and they were filled with enthusiasm planning what to do to detain the beloved son, without noticing that while the evil advisers were saying: "We will help you to save the blessed man", their eyes were shining with falsehood and cruelty, and that they were winking at one another rubbing their hands and

whispering: "They are being caught in the snare! We shall win!" every time somebody gave assent to their sly words.

Then the evil advisers went away. They went away spreading the rumour in other places that the betrayal of the beloved son would soon become known, as he had left the land of his father to establish a kingdom against his father, with the help of those who hated the father or whose love was at least uncertain. In the meantime those influenced by the evil advice were conspiring to induce the beloved son to rebel against his father, a sin that would scandalise the world. Only the wisest among them, those into whom the word of the just son had penetrated more deeply and had taken root because it had fallen on soil anxious to receive it, after pondering said: "No. It is not right to do so. It is a wicked action against the father, against the son and us. We are aware of the justice and wisdom of both of them. We are aware of it although unfortunately we have not always followed it. And we must not think that the advice of those who have always been openly against the father and justice, and also against the beloved son of the father, may be more just than the advice given to us by the blessed son". And they did not follow them. On the contrary, with love and sorrow, they let the son go where he had to go, and they only accompanied him with gestures of affection as far as the boundaries of their fields, and on taking leave of him they said to him as a promise: "Go. We shall stay. But your words are in our hearts and from now on we will do what the father wants. Go and do not worry. You have raised us for good from the state in which you found us. Now that we are on the good path we will advance on it until we arrive at the house of our father so that we may be blessed by him". On the contrary some gave assent to the bad advice and they sinned tempting the beloved son to commit sin and gibing at him as being foolish because he was obstinate in fulfilling his duty.

I now ask you: "Why did the same piece of advice have different effects?". Are you not replying? I will tell you as I told those of Shiloh. Because advice achieves value or becomes void according to whether it is taken or not. Man is tempted in vain by evil advice. If he does not want to sin, he will not sin. And he will not be punished for having to hear the insinuations of wicked people. He will not be punished because God is just and He does not punish anyone for sins not committed. He will only be punished if, after having to hear the Evil tempting him, he puts it into practice, without using his intellect to meditate on the nature and source of the advice. Neither can he say as an excuse: "I thought it was a good piece of advice". What is pleasant to God is good. Can God approve of and be delighted with disobedience or with what induces to disobedience? Can God bless what is in contrast with His Law, that is, with His Word? I solemnly tell you that He cannot. And I also

solemnly tell you that one must prefer to die rather than infringe the divine Law.

At Shechem I will speak to you again to make you wise in wanting or not wanting to take the advice given to you. You may go now. »

The people go away making their comments.

« Did you hear that? He knows what they told us! And He exhorted us to want what is just » says a Samaritan.

« Yes. And did you notice how upset were the Judaeans and the scribes who were present? »

« Yes. They did not even wait until the end to go away. »

« Poisonous vipers! But… He says what He wants to do. He is wrong. He may cause Himself trouble. Those from Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim are really elated!… »

« I… I have never flattered myself. The Rabbi is the Rabbi. And that means everything. Is it possible for the Rabbi to sin by not going up to the Temple in Jerusalem? »

« He will be put to death. You will see!… And that will be the end!… »

« For whom? For Him? For us? Or… for the Judaeans? »

« For Him. If He dies! »

« You are foolish, man. I come from Ephraim. I know Him well. I have lived near Him for two full months, even longer. He always spoke to us. It will be sorrowful… But not the end. Neither for Him, nor for us. The Saint of all the saints cannot die, cannot end. Neither can that be the end for us. I… am ignorant, but I feel that the Kingdom will come when the Judaeans think it is all over… And it will be all over for them… »

« Do you think that the disciples will avenge the Master? A rebellion? A massacre? And the Romans?… »

« Oh! There is no need of disciples, of revenge of men, of massacres. It will be the Most High Who will defeat them. He has punished us, for ages, and for much less! Do you think that He will not punish them for their sin of tormenting His Christ? »

« To see them beaten! Ah! »

« Your heart is not as the Master would like it. He prays for His enemies… »

« I… am going to follow Him tomorrow. I want to hear what He will say at Shechem. »

« I also. »

« And I, too… »

Many people of Lebonah are of the same mind and fraternising with those from Ephraim and Shiloh they go to make preparations for their departure on the following morning.

569. Arrival at Shechem.

1st March 1947.

Here is Shechem, beautiful and ornate, crowded with people of Samaria going to the Samaritan temple, and with pilgrims from all regions going to the Temple in Jerusalem. The town is all flooded with sunshine, stretched as it is on the eastern slopes of Mount Gerizim, that dominates it from its western side and is all green as the town is all white. To north-east Mount Ebal, the appearance of which is even wilder, seems to protect it against northern winds. The fertility of the land, rich in the waters that come down from the mountain watershed and form two charming little rivers, nourished by many brooks, flow towards the Jordan, is wonderful and brims over the walls of gardens and the hedges of kitchen gardens. Every house is decked with greenery, with flowers, with branches on which tiny fruits are swelling. Looking around at the environs, which are clearly visible owing to the configuration of the ground, one sees nothing but the green of olive-groves, of vineyards, or orchards and the golden hue of fields in which every day the glaucous shade of the unripe corn changes more and more into the delicate yellowness of straw, of ripe ears, that the sun and winds bend and blow, making them look almost like white gold.

The corn is really « yellowing », as Jesus says, and is really golden, after being « white » when springing up, then the green of a precious jewel, while it grew and formed ears. The sun is now preparing it to die, after preparing it to live. And it is difficult to say when it should be blessed more, whether now that is leads it to the sacrifice, or when it paternally warmed the earth to make it germinate and it painted its pale stem, which had just sprung up, with a beautiful green shade, full of vigour and promises.

Jesus, Who has spoken of that while entering the town and pointing at the place where they met the Samaritan woman and remembering that remote speech, says to His apostles, to all of them except John, who is already near Mary to comfort Her, as She is so sorrowful: « And is what I said then not being fulfilled now? We were unknown and lonely when we came in here. We sowed. Now, look! That seed has given a rich crop. And it will grow greater and you will reap it. And others will reap more than you… »

« And will you not, Lord? » asks Philip.

« I have reaped where My Precursor sowed. Then I sowed that you might reap and sow with the seed I had given you. But as John did not reap what he sowed, so I shall not harvest this crop. We are… »

« What, Lord? » asks Judas of Alphaeus worriedly.

« The victims, My brother. The sweat of one's brow is required to fertilise fields. But sacrifice is necessary to fertilise hearts. We rise, we work, we die. One, after us, replaces us, rises, works, dies… And there is who reaps what we watered with our death. »

« Oh! no! Don't say that, my Lord! » exclaims James of Zebedee.

« Are you, the disciple of John before being Mine, saying that? Do you not remember the words of your first master? "He must grow greater, I must grow smaller". He understood the beauty and justice of dying to give justice to other people. I shall not be inferior to him. »

« But, Master, You are You: God! He was a man. »

« I am the Saviour. As God I must be more perfect than man. If John, a man, was able to grow smaller to make the true Sun rise, I must not dim the light of My sun with clouds of cowardice. I must leave you a clear memory of Me, so that you may be able to proceed, and the world may grow in the Christian Idea. The Christ will go away, He will go back to the place whence He came, and He will love you from there following you in your work, preparing the place that will be your reward. But Christianity will remain. Christianity will grow through My going away… and through that of all those who, without attachment to the world and earthly life, will be able to go away, as John and Jesus, did… and die to make other people live. »

« So do You think that it is right that You should be put to death?… » asks the Iscariot almost panting.

« I do not think that it is right that they should put Me to death. I think that it is just to die because of what My sacrifice will yield. A homicide will always be a homicide with regard to him who commits it, even if it has a different value and appearance for him who is murdered. »

« What do You mean? »

« I mean that if he who is a homicide, because he has been ordered or forced, such as a soldier in battle or an executioner who must obey a magistrate, or he who defends himself against a highwayman, has not a guilty conscience, or is relatively guilty of killing a fellow man, he who without order or necessity kills an innocent or cooperates in his murder, will appear before God with the dreadful face of Cain. »

« But could we not speak of something else? The Master suffers because of all this, your eyes are like those of one who is tortured, we feel as if we were in agony, if His Mother hears, She will weep. She is already shedding so many tears under Her veil! There is so much to talk about!… Oh! Look! The notables are coming. That will make you keep quiet. Peace to you! Peace to you! » Peter, who was a little ahead and had turned round to speak, bows greeting a large group of pompous people from Shechem, who are coming towards Jesus.

« Peace to You, Master. The houses that gave You hospitality the last time are ready to receive You, and there are many more for the women disciples and those who are with You. Those whom You

helped recently and the first time, will come to see You. One woman only will be missing because she departed from here to lead a life of expiation. So she said, and I believe her, because when a woman divests herself of everything she loved and rejects sin and gives all her property to the poor, it means that she wants to follow a new life. But I could not tell You where she is. No one has seen her any more since she left Shechem. One of our people thought he had seen her dressed as a servant in a village near the Phiale. Another one swears that he recognised her, although she was dressed poorly, at Bersabea. But what they say is not certain. When she was called by her name she did not answer and they heard her being called Johanna in the former place, and Agar in the latter. »

« It is not necessary to know more except that she has been redeemed. All other knowledge is vain and every research is intrusive curiosity. Leave your fellow-citizen in her secret peace, and be pleased that she no longer causes scandal. The angels of the Lord know where she is to give her the only help she needs, the only one that cannot hurt her soul… Be so charitable as to take the women to the houses, as they are tired. I will speak to you tomorrow. I will listen to everybody today and I will receive your sick people. »

« Are You not staying with us for a long time? Are You not spending the Sabbath here? »

« No. I am spending the Sabbath elsewhere, in prayer. »

« We were hoping to have You for a long time… »

« I have just time to go back to Judaea for the feasts. I will leave the apostles and women with you, if they want to remain, until the Sabbath evening. Do not look at one another thus. You know that I must honour the Lord our God more than anybody else, because to be what I am does not exempt Me from being faithful to the Law of the Most High. »

They go towards the houses into each of which go two women disciples and one apostle: Mary of Alphaeus and Susanna with James of Alphaeus, Martha and Mary with the Zealot, Eliza and Nike with Bartholomew, Salome and Johanna with James of Zebedee. Then Thomas, Philip, Judas of Kerioth and Matthew go all together in a group into one house; Peter and Andrew into another one; and Jesus with Judas of Alphaeus and John, and Mary, His Mother, goes into the house of the man who has always spoken on behalf of the citizens. The followers and the people from Ephraim, Shiloh and Lebonah and other pilgrims who were going to Jerusalem and broke their journey to follow Jesus, scatter through the village looking for lodgings.

570. At Shechern. Third Parable on Advice.

2nd March 1947.

The main square in Shechem is incredibly crowded. I think that the whole town is there and that also the people from the country and nearby villages have gathered, too. The inhabitants of Shechem, in the afternoon of the first day, must have spread everywhere informing people and everybody has come: healthy and sick people, sinners and innocents. As the square and roof-terraces are filled up, many people have even perched on the trees shading the square.

In the first row, near the place kept clear for Jesus, facing a house built up on four steps, are the three children whom Jesus saved from the highwaymen, and their relatives. How anxious are the little ones to see their Saviour! Every shout makes them turn round looking for Him. And when the door is opened and Jesus appears at it, the three children rush forward shouting: « Jesus! Jesus! Jesus! » and they climb the steps without waiting till He comes down to embrace them. And Jesus bends and embraces them and then lifts them up - a living bunch of innocent flowers - and He kisses their little faces and is kissed by them.

A compassionate whisper runs through the crowd and some voices say: « He is the only one who knows how to kiss our innocent children. » And other people say: « See how He loves them? He saved them from the highwaymen, He gave them a home after feeding and clothing them, and He is now kissing them as if they were His own sons. »

Jesus, Who has put the children down, on the top step, close to Himself, replies to everybody by answering the last anonymous words:

« Really they are more than My own children to Me. Because I am their father with regard to their souls, which are Mine, not for the time that passes, but for the eternity that remains. I wish I could say that of every man who from Me, the Life, did draw life to come out of death!

I invited you to do that the first time I came here, and you thought that you had plenty time to make up your minds to do so. Only one woman was prompt to follow My call and go on the path of Life: the biggest sinner among you. Perhaps just because she felt that she was dead and, she saw herself dead, rotten in her sin, she was in a hurry to come out of death. You do not feel and see yourselves dead, and you are not in that hurry. But which sick man waits to die before taking the medicines of life? A dead body needs only a shroud, aromas and a sepulchre in which to lie to become dust after being putrefaction. If the putridity of Lazarus, whom you look at with eyes opened wide by fear and amazement, was restored to life by the Eternal Father for His wise purposes, that must not tempt anyone to arrive at the death of the spirit saying: "The Most

High will restore me to the life of the soul". Do not put the Lord your God to the test. You are to come to the Life. There is no more time to wait.

The grapes of the Vine are about to be gathered and pressed. Prepare your spirits for the Wine of Grace that is about to be given to you. Do you not do that when you are to take part in a great banquet? Do you not prepare your stomachs to receive the choice food and wines by wisely fasting before the banquet, as that refines your taste and invigorates your stomachs making you enjoy and relish food and drinks? And does the vine-dresser not do the same to taste the wine that has just matured? He does not spoil his palate, the day that he wants to taste the new wine. He does not do that, because he wants to taste the good qualities and faults accurately, to boast of the former and correct the latter, and sell his goods at a good price. But if a person invited to a banquet can do that to enjoy food and wines with greater pleasure, and if the vine-dresser does that to sell his wine at a good price, or to make saleable what being faulty would be refused by buyers, should man not be able to do so for his spirit, to enjoy Heaven, to gain the treasure to be able to enter Heaven?

Take My advice. Yes, take it. It is a good piece of advice. It is the just advice of the Just One Who is ill-advised in vain, and wants to save you from the consequences of evil advice given to you. Be as just as I am. And give the just value to the advice given to you. If you become just, you will give it its just value.

Listen to a parable. It closes the cycle of those I said at Shiloh and Lebonah, and deals once again with advice given and taken.

A king sent his beloved son to visit his kingdom. The kingdom of that king was divided into many provinces, as it was a very large one. Those provinces had a different knowledge of their king. Some knew him so well as to consider themselves the favourite ones and to be proud of it. According to them, they were the only perfect ones and they alone knew the king and what the monarch wanted. Some knew him but, without considering themselves wise because of that, they did their best to know him better and better. Some knew the king, but they loved him their own way, as they had adopted a special code of laws, which was not the true code of the kingdom. Of the true code they had taken what they liked and as far as they liked it, then they had adulterated also that little by means of other laws copied from other kingdoms, or which they had made themselves, and were not good. No. They were not good. Some were even less acquainted with their king, and some only knew that there was a king. Nothing else. And they thought that was only an idle story.

The king's son came to visit his father's kingdom to give all the various regions an exact knowledge of the monarch, correcting arrogance here, encouraging dejected people there, redressing wrong

ideas elsewhere, convincing people to remove the impure elements from the pure law in another region, teaching other subjects how to fill gaps, instructing people of other regions in order to give them the minimum knowledge and faith in the real king, as every man was his subject. But the king's son was of the opinion that the first lesson for everybody was the example of justice, in conformity with the code of laws, both in grave matters and in minor ones. And he was perfect. So much so that the people of good will were improving themselves by following both the deeds and the words of the king's son, as his actions corresponded to his words without the least difference.

But the people of the provinces that considered themselves perfect only because they knew the code word by word, but did not possess its spirit, realised that from the observance of what the king's son did and what he exhorted to do, it appeared too clearly that they knew the letter of the code but did not possess the spirit of the king's law, and thus their hypocrisy was unmasked. They then decided to remove what made them appear what they really were. And to do that they chose two different ways: one against the king's son, the other against his followers. For the former: evil advice and persecutions. For the latter: evil advice and threat. Many things are evil advice. It is a bad piece of advice to say: "Do not do that, as it may damage you", pretending to be favourably interested, and it is a bad piece of advice to persecute in order to convince him, whom one wants to lead astray, to fail in the fulfilment of his mission. It is a bad piece of advice to say to followers: "Defend at all costs and by any means the just man who is persecuted", or to say to followers: "If you defend him, you will provoke our anger". But I am not referring now to advice given to followers. I am referring to the advice that people gave or had it given to the king's son, with false simple-heartedness, with livid hatred, or through the words of innocent people used as instruments to do harm, while they thought they were being used to do good.

The king's son listened to that advice. He had ears, eyes, intellect and a heart. Therefore he could but hear them, see them, understand them and weigh them. But above all he had the upright spirit of a true just man, so to each piece of advice, given to him consciously or unconsciously to make him sin, setting a bad example to his father's subjects and causing infinite sorrow to his father himself, he replied: "No. I will do what my father wants. I will follow his code of laws. The fact that I am his son does not exempt me from being the most faithful of his subjects in the observance of the Law. You, who hate me and want to frighten me, should bear in mind that nothing will make me infringe the Law. You, who love me and wish to save me, should know that I bless you for your thoughts, but bear also in mind that your love for me and my love for you,

as you are more loyal to me than those who say that they are 'wise', must not make me unfair in my duty towards the greatest love, which is the love to be given to my father".

That is the parable, My children. And it is so clear that each of you can understand it. And righteous spirits can only exclaim: "He is really just because no human advice can lead Him astray" - Yes, children of Shechem. Nothing can lead Me into error. Woe to Me if I should fall into error! Woe to Me and to you. Instead of being your Saviour, I should be your traitor, and you would be right in hating Me. But I will not do that.

I do not reproach you for accepting suggestions or for thinking of measures against justice. You are not guilty since you did it out of a spirit of love. But I say to you what I said at the beginning and at the end: you are dearer to Me than if you were My own children, because you are the children of My spirit. I have led your spirits to the Life and I will do so even more. Bear in mind, in memory of Me, bear in mind that I bless you for the thoughts you had in your hearts. But grow in justice, by wanting only what gives honour to the true God for Whom you must have absolute love, such as is given to no other creature. Come to this perfect justice that I am setting as an example to you, the justice that tramples on the selfishness of one's own welfare, on the fear of enemies and of death, on everything, to do the will of God. Prepare your spirits. The dawn of Grace is rising. The banquet of Grace is being prepared. Your souls, the souls of those who want to come to the Truth, are at the eve of their wedding, of their liberation, of their redemption. Prepare yourselves in justice for the feast of Justice. »

Jesus beckons to the children's relatives, who are near them, to go into the house with Him, and He withdraws after taking the three children in His arms as He did at the beginning.

Comments are exchanged in the square. And they differ considerably.

The best people say: « He is right. We were betrayed by those false messengers. »

Those who are not so good say: « Then He should not have flattered us. He makes us more hateful. He mocked at us. He is a true Judaean. »

« You cannot say that. Our poor people are aware of His assistance, and our sick people of His power. Our orphans experienced His goodness. We cannot expect Him to commit sin to please us. »

« He has already sinned, because He hated us by making us hated… »

« By whom? »

« By everybody. And He mocked at us. Yes, He mocked at us. » The square is full of the different opinions, which, however, do not upset the house in which Jesus is with the notables, the children

and their relatives. Once again the prophetic word is confirmed: « He will be a stone of contradiction. »

571. Leaving for Enon.

3rd March 1947.

Jesus is meditating, sitting all alone under a gigantic holm-oak, which has grown on a slope of the mountain dominating Shechem. The city, of a rosy-white shade in the early sunshine, is below, spread out on the lower slopes of the mountain. From above it looks like a handful of huge white cubes thrown by a big boy on a green sloping meadow. The two water courses near which it rises form a silvery blue semicircle round the city; then one of them enters it gurgling and glittering among the white houses, it then comes out and flows through the greenery towards the river Jordan, appearing and disappearing under olive-groves and luxuriant orchards. The other river, smaller in size, remains outside the walls, almost lapping on them, and irrigates fertile vegetable gardens; it then flows away watering flocks of white sheep grazing on meadows reddened by the capitula of clover flowers.

The view in front of Jesus is a wide one. After lower and lower undulating hills one can see the green Jordan valley foreshortened, and beyond it, the mountains of the region beyond the Jordan, ending to north-east in the typical summits of Hauran. The sun rising behind them has lit up three strange clouds resembling three light gauze ribbons placed horizontally on the turquoise veil of the firmament, and the light gauze of the three long narrow clouds has become the orange-pink hue of certain precious corals. The sky seems to be barred by this airy railing and is beautiful. Jesus stares at it, that is, He looks in that direction engrossed in thought. I wonder whether He even sees it. With His elbow pressed on His knee, His hand supporting His chin resting in the hollow of the palm of His hand, He looks, thinks, meditates. Above Him birds are making a hullabaloo chirping and flying around joyfully.

Jesus lowers His eyes looking at Shechem that is awakening more and more in the morning sunshine. The shepherds and flocks, so far the only ones animating the view, are now joined by groups of pilgrims, and the jingling of herd-bells mingles with the tinkling of the harness bells of donkeys and with the noise of voices, the shuffling of feet and the babble of words. The noise of the awakening city and of the people ending their night's rest is carried in waves as far as Jesus.

Jesus stands up. With a sigh He leaves His quiet place and goes down quickly towards the town, along a short cut. He goes in among caravans of market-gardeners and pilgrims, while the former are hurrying to unload their goods, and the latter to buy them before

setting off.

Waiting in a group in a comer of the square there are already the apostles and the women disciples, and around them there are the people from Ephraim, Shilo, Lebonah and many from Shechem.

Jesus goes towards them and greets them. He then says to those of Samaria: « And now let us part. Go back to your homes. Remember My words. Grow in justice. » He then says to Judas of Kerioth: « Have you given alms for the poor of every place, as I told you? »

« Yes, I have. With the exception of those of Ephraim, as they have already had them. »

« Go, then. Ensure that every poor person may be comforted. » « We bless You on their behalf. »

« Bless the women disciples. They gave Me the money. Go. Peace be with you. »

They go away unwillingly, sorrowfully. But they obey.

Jesus stays with the apostles and the women disciples. He says to them: « I am going to Enon. I want to visit the place of the Baptist. I shall then go down to the road in the valley. It is more comfortable for the women. »

« Would it not be better to take the road through Samaria? » asks the Iscariot.

« There is no reason why we should be afraid of highwaymen, even if our road is close to their dens. Who wants to come with Me can do so. Who does not feel like coming as far as Enon, can remain here until the day after the Sabbath. On that day I shall go to Tirzah, and whoever remains here can join Me there. »

« Actually I… should prefer to stay here. I am not very well… I am tired… » says the Iscariot.

« One can see that. You look like one who is not well. You look gloomy indeed, also with regard to your humour and complexion. I have been watching you for some time… » says Peter.

« But no one asks me whether I am unwell, however… »

« Would that have pleased you? I never know what you like. But if it pleases you, I shall ask you now, and I am willing to stay with you to look after you… » Peter replies to him patiently.

« No, no! I am only tired. You may go. I shall stay where I am. »

« I shall stay as well. I am old. I shall rest assisting you as a mother » says Eliza all of a sudden.

« Are you staying? You had said… » interrupts Salome.

« If everybody went, I would have come as well, in order not to be left here all alone. But since Judas is going to stay… »

« Then I will come, too. I do not wish to sacrifice you, woman. You will certainly go willingly to see the refuge of the Baptist… »

« I come from Bethzur and I never felt the need to go to Bethlehem to see the grotto where the Master was born' That is something I shall do when I shall no longer have the Master. So you can imagine

whether I am aflame with the desire to see where was John… I prefer to practice charity, as I am sure that it has more value than a pilgrimage. »

« You are reproaching the Master. Do you not realise that? »

« I am speaking for myself. He is going there and is doing the right thing. He is the Master. I am an old woman in whom grief has removed all curiosity and the love for the Christ has removed all desires except that of serving Him. »

« So, according to you, it is a service to spy upon me. »

« Are you doing anything blameworthy? Only those who do harmful things are watched. But I have never spied upon anybody, man. I do not belong to the snake family. Neither do I betray. »

« Neither do I. »

« God grant it for your own good. But I fail to understand why you are so against my staying here to rest… »

Jesus, Who so far has been listening in silence, in the middle of the others, amazed at the petty quarrel, raises His head that was somewhat lowered, and says: « That is enough. A woman, who is older than you, can with more reason have the same desire as you have. You will stay here until the dawn of the day after the Sabbath. You will then join Me. In the meantime, Judas, go and buy what we will need during the next days. Go and be quick. »

Judas goes away against his will to buy foodstuff.

Andrew is about to follow him, but Jesus holds him back by the arm saying: « Stay here. He can manage by himself. » Jesus is very severe.

Eliza looks at Him and then approaches Him saying: « Forgive me, Master, if I displeased You. »

« I have nothing to forgive you, woman. You, rather, should forgive that man, as if he were your son. »

« I will stay with him with that feeling… even if he thinks the very opposite… You understand me… »

« Yes, and I bless you. And I tell you that you were right in saying that pilgrimages to My places will be a necessity when I am no longer amongst you… a necessity to comfort your spirits. For the time being they only serve the desires of your Jesus. And you have understood one of My wishes, because you are sacrificing yourself to protect an imprudent spirit… »

The apostles look at one another… and also the women disciples do likewise. Mary only is completely covered with Her veil and does not raise Her head to look at anybody. And Mary of Magdala, standing upright like a queen who is judging, has never lost sight of Judas, who is going round the vendors, and her eyes blaze with anger while her closed lips express contempt. Her countenance says more than words…

Judas comes back. He gives his companions what he bought. He

tidies up his mantle that he had used to carry the goods he purchased, and makes the gesture of handing the purse to Jesus.

Jesus rejects it with His hand: « It is not necessary. Mary is still with us for alms. You are to do the necessary to be charitable here. There are many beggars who come down from all places these days and go towards Jerusalem. Give them alms without prejudice, with charity, bearing in mind that, with regard to God, we are all beggars of His mercy and of His bread… Goodbye. Goodbye, Eliza. Peace be with you. » And He turns round quickly and begins to walk fast along the road that was near Him without giving Judas time to say goodbye to Him…

They all follow Him in silence. They come out of the town turning their steps north-eastwards through the beautiful country…

572. At Enon. The Young Shepherd Benjamin.

4th March 1947.

Enon, a handful of houses, is farther to the north. The place where the Baptist stayed is here: a grotto among the luxuriant vegetation. Not far away some spring-waters gurgle forming a stream rich in waters that flow towards the Jordan. Jesus is sitting outside the grotto, where He was when He said goodbye to His cousin. He is alone. Dawn is tinging the east with a rosy hue and the woods are reawakening again with the twittering of birds. Bleatings are heard coming from the folds in Enon. A bray rends the quiet air.

Then the trampling of feet is heard on the path and a herd of goats passes by led by an adolescent who stops for a moment, doubtfully, to look at Jesus. He then goes away. But shortly afterwards he comes back because a kid has stopped there, to look at the Man Whom she was not used to seeing there and Who stretches out His long hand to offer her a stalk of marjoram and caresses her intelligent head. The young shepherd remains disconcerted. He is undecided whether he should take the animal away or let Jesus caress her smiling, as if He were pleased that she came fearlessly to squat at His feet, resting her head on His knees. The other goats also come back grazing the grass spread with little flowers.

The young shepherd asks: « Do You want some milk? I have not yet milked two reluctant goats which butt whoever presses their udders if they are not satiated. Just like their owner who beats us if he is not sated with profit. »

« Are you a servant shepherd? »

« I am an orphan. I am alone. And I am a servant. He is a relative of mine because he is the husband of my grandmother's sister. And while Rachel was alive… But she died many months ago… And I am very unhappy… Take me with You! I am accustomed to living on nothing… I will serve You… a little bread is sufficient pay for

me. Even here I do not get anything… If he paid me, I would go away. But he says: "Is this your money? But I am keeping it because I clothe and feed you". He clothes me!… See? He feeds me!… Look at me… And these are blows… This is the bread I got yesterday… » And he shows bruises on his very thin arms and shoulders.

« What had you done? »

« Nothing. Your companions, I mean the disciples, were speaking of the Kingdom of Heaven, and I was listening to them… It was the Sabbath. Even If I was not working, I was not idle because it was the Sabbath… He gave me a good thrashing, so much so… that I do not want to stay with him any longer. Take me. Or I will run away… I came here on purpose this morning. I was afraid to speak. But You are good and I am speaking. »

« And what about the herd? You are certainly not going to run away with it… »

« … I will take it back to the fold… Before long that man will be going to the forest to cut wood… I will take the herd back and then I will run away. Oh! take me! »

« But do you know who I am? »

« You are the Christ! The King of the Kingdom of Heaven. He who follows You will be blessed in the other life. I have never had any joy here… but, do not reject me… that I may have it there… » he says weeping at Jesus' feet near the kid.

« How come you know Me so well? Have you ever heard Me speak? »

« No. As from yesterday I know that You are here, where the Baptist was. But Your disciples used to pass here now and again coming from Enon. I heard them. Their names are Matthias, John, Simeon, and they were often here because the Baptist was their master before You. And then Isaac… In Isaac I found my father and mother. Isaac wanted to take me away from my master and he gave him some money. But he!… He took the money, but did not let me go and he sneered at Your disciple. »

« You know many things. But do you know where I am going? »

« To Jerusalem. But it is not written on my face that I come from Enon. »

« I am going farther away. I shall soon be going. I cannot take you with Me. »

« Take me for the little time You can. »

« And then? »

« And then… I shall weep, but I will go with John's disciples who were the first to tell a poor boy that the joy that men do not give on the Earth, God gives it in Heaven to those who had good will. I, in order to have it, have received so many blows and suffered so much hunger asking God to give me that peace. You can see that I have had good will… But if You reject me now… I shall not be

able to hope any longer… » He weeps silently imploring Jesus more with the tears of his eyes than with his lips.

« I have no money for your ransom. Neither do I know whether your master would agree to it. »

« But my ransom has already been paid. I have witnesses. Eli, Levi and Jonah saw and reproached the man. And they are the most important people in Enon, You know? »

« If that is the case… Let us go. Stand up and come with Me. »

« Where? »

« To your master. »

« I am afraid! You go, by Yourself. He is up there, on that mountain among the trees that he is cutting. I shall wait here. »

« Be not afraid. Look, My disciples are coming here. We shall be so many against him. He will do you no harm. Stand up. We shall go to Enon to look for the three witnesses and then we shall go to your master. Give Me your hand. Afterwards I will hand you over to the disciples you know. What is your name? »

« Benjamin. »

« I have two more little friends with that name. You will be the third one. »

« Friend? Too much! I am a servant. »

« Of the Most High Lord. Of Jesus of Nazareth, you are a friend. Come. Gather the herd and let us go. »

Jesus stands up and, while the young shepherd gathers and urges the reluctant goats on the way back, Jesus beckons to the apostles, who are coming forward on the path looking towards Him, to come at once. They quicken their paces. But the herd by now is on its way, and Jesus holding the young shepherd by the hand goes towards them…

« Lord! Have You become the shepherd of kids? Samaria can really be called the goat… But You… »

« But I am the Good Shepherd and I change also kids into lambs. And boys are all lambs, and this fellow is little more than a boy. »

« Is he not by any chance the boy that that man took away yesterday in such a coarse manner? » asks Matthew looking at him.

« I think that it's him. Are you? »

« Yes, I am. »

« Oh! poor boy! Your father is certainly not fond of you! » says Peter.

« My master. I have no other father but God. »

« Yes. John's disciples taught him some doctrine and consoled his heart, and at the right moment the Father of all men made us meet. We are going to Enon to take three witnesses with us, then we are going to his master… » says Jesus.

« To ransom the boy? And where is the money? Mary has handed out the last she had… » remarks Peter.

« There is no need of money. He is not a slave and money has already been given to take him away from his master. Isaac gave it as he felt sorry for the boy. »

« And why did he not get him? »

« Because many are the mockers of God and of their neighbour. There is My Mother with the women. Go and tell them not to come any farther. »

James of Zebedee and Andrew run away as fast as gazelles. Jesus hastens towards His Mother and the women disciples, and He reaches them when they have already been informed and are watching the youth pitifully.

They go back quickly towards Enon and enter the village. Led by the boy they go to the house of Eli, who is an old man with eyes dimmed by age but still strong. When young he must have been as robust as an oak-tree of this place.

« Eli, the Rabbi of Nazareth will take me if… »

« Will take you? There is nothing better He could do. You would end up by becoming wicked if you stayed here. A heart hardens when injustice is too hard. And it is too hard. Did you find Him? So the Most High has seen your tears, even if they are of a Samaritan boy. You are happy then, as, because of your age, you are free from all chains and you can follow the Truth, without anything preventing you from doing so, not even the will of a father or a mother. So what for many years seemed to be a punishment now appears to be providential. God is good. But what do you want of me now that you have come here? My blessing? I give it to you as the Elder of the place. »

« I want your blessing, because you are good. Then I came also because you with Levi and Jonah should go, with the Rabbi, to my master, so that he may not ask for more money. »

« But where is the Rabbi? I am old and I can hardly see, and I can recognise only those I know very well. But I do not know the Rabbi. »

« He is here. In front of you. »

« Here? Eternal power! » The old man stands up and bows to Jesus saying: « Forgive the old man whose sight is darkened. I greet You because only One is just in Israel. And You are that One. Let us go. Levi is in his kitchen garden working at a tub, and Jonah is attending to his cheese. » The old man stands up once again - he is as tall as Jesus although bent with age - and he sets out, walking along the wall, avoiding the obstacles on the road with the help of his stick.

Jesus, Who has greeted him with His peace, helps him when three coarse steps make it dangerous for a half blind man to proceed. Before setting off Jesus had told the women disciples to wait for Him at that place. Benjamin in the meantime goes to his fold.

The old man says: « You are good. But Alexander is a beast. He is a wolf. I do not know whether… But I am rich enough to give You money for Benjamin, should Alexander want more. My sons do not need my money. I am almost one hundred years old and money does not serve for the other life. A kind action of humanity, yes, is of value… »

« Why did you not do it before? »

« Do not reproach me, Rabbi. I satisfied the boy's hunger and I consoled him, so that he might not become an evil-doer. Alexander is such that he could make a little dove become wild. But I could not take the boy from him, and nobody else could do it. You… You will be going far away. But we… we remain here and we are afraid of his revenge. One day a man of Enon intervened, because being drunk he was beating the boy to death, and I do not know how he did it, he succeeded in poisoning the man's flock. »

« Is that not just an evil suspicion? »

« No. He waited for months, until winter, when the sheep are in the fold, and he poisoned the water in the vat. They drank it. They swelled. They died. All of them. We are all shepherds here, and we understood… To be certain, they made a dog eat some of that meat and the dog died. And there is someone who saw Alexander steal into the fold… Oh! he is an evil-doer! We are afraid of him… He is cruel, always drunk in the evening. He was merciless towards all his relatives. Now that they are all dead, he tortures the boy. »

« Then do not come, if… »

« Oh! no. I am coming. The truth is to be told. Here we are. I can hear the hammer. That's Levi. » And he calls in a loud voice near a hedge: « Levi! Levi! »

An old man comes out, but not so old as Eli, with his tunic tucked up, with a mallet in his hand. He greets Eli and asks him: « What do you want, my friend? »

« The Rabbi of Galilee is beside me. He has come to take Benjamin. Come, because Alexander is in the wood, to witness that he has already had the money for the boy from that disciple. »

« I am coming. They always told me that the Rabbi was good. Now I believe it. Peace to You! » He puts the mallet down, he shouts to I do not whom to wait for him, and he goes away with Eli and Jesus.

They soon arrive at Jonah's fold. They call him and explain…

« I am coming. You » he says to an apprentice « carry on with the work. » He dries his hands with a piece of cloth that he then throws on a peg, and follows Jesus, after greeting Him, with Levi and Eli.

In the meantime Jesus speaks to the old man and says to him: « You are a just man. God will give you peace. »

« I hope so. Just is the Lord! It is not my fault if I was born in Samaria… »

« It is not your fault. In the other life there are no boundaries for

the just. Sin only lays a barrier between Heaven and the Abyss. »

« That is true. How I would love to see You. Your voice is gentle, and soft is Your hand in leading an old blind man. Soft and strong. It feels like that of my beloved son: Eli, like me, the son of my son Joseph. If Your aspect is like Your hand, blessed are those who can see You. »

« It is better to hear Me than see Me. It makes the spirit holier. » « That is true. I listen to those who speak of You. But they pass through only seldom… But is that not the noise of an axe striking trunks? »

« Yes, it is. »

« Then… Alexander is close at hand… Call him. »

« Yes. You stay here. If I can manage by Myself, I will not call you. Do not show yourselves, unless I call you. » He goes on and calls in a loud voice.

« Who wants me? Who are you? » says a very strong elderly man, with a very hard profile and the thorax and limbs of a wrestler. A blow from those hands must be like a stroke of a club: brutal.

« It is I. An unknown Person Who knows you. I have come to take what is Mine. »

« Yours? Ha! Ha! What is Yours in this wood of mine? »

« Nothing in the wood. In your house Benjamin is Mine. »

« You are mad! Benjamin is my servant. »

« And your relative. And you are his galley-sergeant. And one of My messengers gave you the money you asked for, to have the boy. And you took the money and refused to give the boy. My messenger, a peaceful man, did not react. But I have come in the name of justice. »

« Your messenger must have drunk the money. I did not get any. And I am keeping Benjamin. I am fond of him. »

« No. You hate him. You are fond of the pay that you do not give him. Do not lie. God punishes liars. »

« I did not receive any money. If You have spoken to my servant, You had better know that he is an astute liar. And I will give him a good thrashing for slandering me. Goodbye! » and he turns his back on Jesus and is about to go away.

« Be careful, Alexander, because God is present. Do not defy His goodness. »

« God! Has God to defend my interests? I only have to defend them and I do so. »

« Mind you! »

« But Who are You, You miserable Galilean? How dare You reproach me? I don't know You. »

« You do know Me. I am the Rabbi of Galilee and… »

« Ah! yes! And You think You can frighten me? I fear neither God nor Beelzebub. And You expect me to be afraid of You? Of a madman?

Go, away You go! Let me work. Go, I say. Don't look at me. Do You think that Your eyes can frighten me? What is it that You want to see? »

« Not your crimes, because I know them all. All of them. Also those that no one knows. But I want to see whether you do not even understand that this is the last hour of mercy that God grants you to repent. I want to see whether remorse does not rise to split your stone heart, whether… »

The man, who has an axe in his hands, hurls it towards Jesus, Who bends quickly. The axe flies over His head and strikes a young holm-oak that is cut clean and falls with a loud rustling noise of branches and whir of frightened birds.

The three men, who were hiding not far away, jump out shouting, fearing that Jesus might have been hit, and the one who cannot see cries: « Oh! to see! If I could only see whether He has been wounded! O Eternal God, my eyesight just for that! » And turning a deaf ear to the assurances of the others he moves forward groping, because he has lost his stick and he wants to touch Jesus to feel whether any part of His body is bleeding, and he moans: « A beam of bright light, and then darkness. But to see, to see without this veil that hardly allows me to guess where obstacles are… »

« I am all right, father, touch Me » says Jesus touching him and having Himself touched.

In the meantime the other two utter harsh words against the violent man and they throw sins and lies in his face, while he, deprived of his axe, pulls out a knife and hurls himself at them to strike them, cursing God, scoffing at the blind man, threatening the others, just like a raging wild beast. But he staggers, he stops, he drops the knife, he rubs his eyes, opens them, closes them, then utters a frightful cry: « I can't see any more! Help! My eyes… Darkness… Who will save me? »

Also the others shout, out of amazement. And they deride him saying: « God has listened to you. » In fact among other curses he also said: « May God blind me if I am lying and if I have sinned. And may I blind myself rather than worship a mad Nazarene! And with regard to you I will revenge myself and I will break Benjamin in two like that tree… » And they laugh at him saying also: « You can now revenge yourself… »

« Do not be like him. Do not hate » advises Jesus and He caresses the very old man who is worried only about the safety of Jesus, Who to reassure him says: « Raise your face! Look! »

And the miracle is accomplished. As over there, for the brutal man, darkness; so here, for the just man, light. And a different cry, a blissful one rises under the robust trees: « I can see! My eyes! The light! May You be blessed! » And the old man stares at Jesus with his eyes bright with a new life and he then prostrates himself to

kiss His feet.

« We two will go together. You will take that wretched man back to Enon. And be merciful because God has already punished him. And God is enough. Let man be kind with every misfortune. »

« Take the boy, the sheep, the wood, the house, the money. But give me back my eyesight. I cannot remain like this. »

« I cannot. I leave you every thing through which you became a sinner. I am taking the innocent boy because he has already suffered his martyrdom. In the darkness may your soul open to the Light. »

Jesus says goodbye to Levi and Jonah and goes down quickly with the old man who seems rejuvenated and who shouts his joy as soon as he arrives at the first houses… The whole of Enon is stirred up.

Jesus makes his way through the crowd, He goes to the young shepherd who is with the apostles and says: « Come! Let us go, because they are waiting for us at Tirzah. »

« Free? Free? With You? Oh! I could not believe it! I will say goodbye to Eli. And the others? » The boy is excited…

Eli kisses and blesses him and says to him: « And forgive the poor wretch. »

« Why? I will forgive him, yes. But why poor wretch? »

« Because he cursed the Lord and light died out in his eyes. None of us will have to fear him any more. He is blind and ill. How dreadful the power of God!… » The old man seems an inspired prophet, with his arms raised, looking at the sky, meditating on what he has seen.

Jesus says goodbye to him and elbows His way through the excited little crowd; He goes away followed by the apostles and women disciples; and Benjamin goes away greeted by the women who want to give tokens to the favourite of the Lord: a fruit, a bag, some bread, a garment, what they can find there and then. And happy as he is, he greets them, thanks them and says: « You are always good to me! I will remember you. I will pray for you. Send your children to the Lord. It is lovely to be with Him. He is the Life. Goodbye! Goodbye!… »

Enon is left behind. They go down towards the Jordan, towards the plain in the Jordan valley, towards new events still unknown…

But the youth does not turn round to look back. He makes no comment. He does not think. He does not sigh. He smiles. He looks at Jesus, there, ahead of them all, the true Shepherd followed by His flock, of which he also, the poor boy, is part… and all of a sudden he begins to sing, in a loud voice…

The apostles smile saying: « The boy is happy. »

The women smile saying: « The imprisoned bird has found freedom and a nest once again. »

Jesus smiles, turning round to look at him, and His smile, as usual, seems to brighten everything and He calls the boy saying:

« Come here, little lamb of God. I want to teach you a beautiful song. » And He intones, followed by the others, the psalm: « The Lord is my Shepherd. I shall lack nothing. He placed me where there are abundant pastures » and so forth. Jesus' beautiful voice spreads through the fertile country, it excels all the others, even the best ones, so powerful it is in His joy.

« Your Son is happy, Mary » says Mary of Alphaeus.

« Yes, He is happy. He still has something joyful… »

« No journey is without its fruit. He passes spreading graces and there is always someone who really meets the Saviour. Do you remember that evening at Bethlehem of Galilee? » asks Mary of Magdala.

« Yes, but I would not like to remember those lepers and this blind man… is »

« You would always forgive. You are so good! But justice also is necessary » remarks Mary Salome.

« It is necessary. But luckily for us mercy is greater » says Mary Magdalene once again.

« You can say that. But Mary… » replies Johanna.

« Mary wants nothing but forgiveness, even if She is in no need of forgiveness. Is that right, Mary? » asks Susanna.

« I should like nothing but forgiveness. Yes. Only that. To be bad must be a dreadful suffering by itself… » She sighs in saying so.

« Would You forgive everybody, really everybody? But would it be fair to do so? There are people who are obstinate in wickedness and spoil all forgiveness by deriding it as weakness » says Martha.

« I should forgive. As far as I am concerned I should forgive. Not out of stupidity. But because I see every soul as a more or less good baby. As a son… A mother always forgives… even if she says: "Justice exacts a just punishment". Oh! if a mother could die to generate a new good heart for her wicked son, do you think that she would not do that? But it is not possible. There are hearts that reject all help… And I think that pity has to forgive them as well. Because the burden on their hearts is already a very heavy one: their sins, God's severity… Oh! let us forgive guilty people… And would to God that our absolute forgiveness could be accepted to diminish their debit… »

« But why do You always weep, Mary? Even now that Your Son had an hour of, joy! » says Mary of Alphaeus moaning.

« His joy was not complete because the culprit did not repent. Jesus is completely happy when He can redeem… »

I wonder why Nike, who has never spoken, suddenly says: « We shall be with Judas of Kerioth once again before long. »

The women look at one another as if the simple sentence meant something exceptional, as if the words concealed I do not know what important matter. But no one replies.

Jesus has stopped in a beautiful olive-grove. They all stop. Jesus blesses the food, divides it and hands it out.

Benjamin looks and puts in order what they gave him: garments too long or too wide, sandals not fitting his feet, almonds still in the husks, the last walnuts, some cheese, an odd wrinkled apple, a little knife. He is happy with his treasures. He wants to offer the victuals. He folds the garments saying: « I will put on the most beautiful one at Passover. »

Mary of Alphaeus promises: « At Bethany I will sort them all for you. In the meantime leave this one out. At Tirzah there will be water to wash it and farther away there will be thread to mend it. With regard to the sandals… I do not know what to do. »

« We shall give these to the first poor person we meet and whose foot will be the right size, and we will buy a new pair at Tirzah » says Mary of Magdala calmly.

« With what money, sister? » Martha asks her.

« Ah! that is true! We have not a farthing left… But Judas has some money… Benjamin cannot go far like that. And then, poor boy! His soul has had a great joy, but also his human nature must have a smile… certain things make people happy. »

Susanna, who is young and merry, laughs saying: « You are speaking as if you knew from experience that a new pair of sandals are the joy of those who never possessed such a pair! »

« That is true. But it is because I know how pleasant is a dry garment when you are wet, and a fresh one when you have but one. I remember… » And she bends her head on the Blessed Virgin's shoulder saying: « Do You remember, Mother? » and kisses Her fondly.

Jesus gives the order to set off, to be at Tirzah before night: « Those two, who are not aware of the events, will be worrying… »

« Shall we go ahead to tell them that You are about to arrive? » asks James of Alphaeus.

« Yes. All of you, except John and James and My brother Judas. Tirzah is not far now… So you may go. Look for Judas and Eliza and prepare lodgings for us in the meantime, because it is better to stop for the night since we are so late and we have the women with us… We will follow you. Wait for us at the first houses… »

The eight apostles go away quickly, and Jesus follows them slowly.

573. Jesus Is Rejected by the Samaritans. With Judas of Kerioth.

5th March 1947.

Tirzah is so surrounded by luxuriant olive-groves, that it is necessary to be very close to the town to realise that it is there. A

belt of wonderful fertile vegetable gardens is the last screen of the houses. In the kitchen gardens chicory, salads, legumes, young plants of gourds, fruit-trees and bowers, blend and interlace their different green shades and their blossoms promising fruit or the little fruits promising delights. Vines and early olive-trees, blown by a rather strong breeze, shed their little blossoms spraying the ground with greenish-white snow.

From behind the screen of reeds and willows, which have grown near a dry canal, the bottom of which, however is still damp, appear the eight apostles who had been sent ahead, upon hearing the shuffling of the new-comers. They are openly upset and grieved and they beckon to the arrivals to stop. At the same time they rush forward. When they are sufficiently close to be heard without having to shout, they say:« Come away! Away! Let's go back, into the country. It is not possible to enter the town. They almost stoned us. Come away, to that thicket, and we shall speak… » And anxious as they are to go away without being seen, they push back Jesus, the three apostles, the boy and the women along the dry canal and they say: « We do not want to be seen here. Let's go! Let's go! »

In vain Jesus, Judas and Zebedee's two sons try to find out what has happened. In vain they ask: « But what about Judas of Simon? What about Eliza? » The eight do not listen to them. Walking in the tangle of stalks and water-plants, their feet cut by bog grass, their faces hurt by willows and reeds, slipping on the mud in the bottom, getting hold of weeds, seeking support on the edges and getting bespattered with mud, they move away, pressed from behind by the eight who proceed with their heads almost turned round to see whether anyone from Tirzah is following them. But there is no one on the road but the sun, which is beginning to set, and a lean stray dog.

At long last they are near a large clump of bushes that delimit a property. Behind the shrubs there is a field of flax the long stems of which, undulating in the wind, are beginning to show their sky-blue flowers.

« Here, in here. If we sit down, no one will see us and when it gets dark we shall go away… » says Peter wiping his perspiration…

« Where? » asks Judas of Alphaeus. « The women are with us. »

« We shall go somewhere. In any case the meadows are full on hay cut recently. It will do as a bed. We will make tents with our mantles for the women and we will keep watch. »

« Yes. It is sufficient not to be seen and then to go down to the Jordan at dawn. You were right, Master, in not wanting to take the road through Samaria. For poor people like us, highwaymen are better than Samaritans… » says Bartholomew, who is still panting.

« But what happened, in a word? Has Judas done some… » says Thaddeus.

Thomas interrupts him saying: « Judas has certainly been beaten. I am sorry for Eliza… »

« Have you seen Judas? »

« I have not. But it is easy to prophesy right. If he said that he is your apostle, he certainly got a thrashing. Master, they do not want You. »

« Yes. They have all revolted against You. »

« They are true Samaritans. »

They are all speaking at the same time.

Jesus imposes silence and says: « Let one only speak. You, Simon Zealot, as you are the calmest. »

« Lord, it is soon said. We entered the town and no one troubled us until they learned who we are, as long as they thought that we were pilgrims passing by. But when we asked - and we had to ask! - whether a young, tall, swarthy man, wearing a red mantel and a talith with white and red stripes, and an elderly thin woman, with almost white hair and dark grey clothes had entered the town and had looked for the Galilean Master and His companions, then they got angry at once… Perhaps we should not have spoken of You. We certainly made a mistake… But in the other places we had been received so well that… We do not understand what has happened! … Those who only three days ago were so respectful to You, are now like vipers!… »

Thaddeus interrupts him: « The work of Judaeans… »

« I do not think so. I do not think so because of what they said when they reproached and threatened us. I think… Nay, I am, we are sure that the fact that Jesus refused their offer of protection is the cause of the Samaritan fury. They were shouting: "Away! Go away, you and your Master! He wants to go and worship on the Moria. Well, let Him go and may He and all His followers die. There is no room among us for those who do not consider us as friends, but only as servants. We do not want further trouble unless there is profit as compensation. Stones, not bread for the Galilean. Our dogs should attack Him, instead of our homes receiving Him". That, and even more than that, they were saying. And as we insisted on learning at least what had happened to Judas, they picked up stones to hit us and they really set their dogs on us. And they were shouting to one another: "Let us station ourselves at all the entrances. If He comes we will avenge ourselves". We ran away. A woman - there is always a good soul among wicked people - pushed us into her kitchen garden and then she led us along a path through vegetable gardens to the canal, in which there was no water as they had irrigated before the Sabbath. And she hid us there. Then she promised to let us have news of Judas. But she has not come any more. But we are to wait for her here, because she said that if she does not find us in the canal, she will come here. »

There are many comments. Some continue to accuse the Judaeans. Some reproach Jesus lightly, a reproach concealed in their remarks: « You spoke too clearly at Shechem and then You went away. During the last three days they decided that there is no sense in deceiving oneself and causing damage to oneself for one who does not satisfy them… and they drive You away… » Jesus replies: « I do not regret speaking the truth and doing My duty. They do not understand at present. They will shortly understand My justice and will worship Me more than if I had had no justice or if it had been greater than My love for them. »

« There! There is the woman on the road. She is so bold as to show herself… » says Andrew.

« She will not betray us, will she? » says Bartholomew suspiciously.

« She is alone! »

« But she may be followed by people hiding in the canal… » But the woman, who is coming forward carrying a basket on her head, goes on passing the fields of flax where Jesus and the apostles are waiting, then she takes a narrow path and disappears… reappearing suddenly behind those who were waiting and who turn round almost frightened when they hear the rustling of the vegetation.

The woman speaks to the eight men she knows: « Here I am! Forgive me for keeping you waiting so long… I did not want anybody to follow me. I said that I was going to my mother's… I know… And I brought some food for you. The Master… Which is the Master? I would like to venerable Him. »

« That is the Master. »

The woman, who has laid down her basket, prostrates herself saying: « Forgive the sin of my fellow-citizens. If no one had instigated them… But many have taken advantage of Your refusal… »

« I have no grudge, woman. Stand up and speak. Have you any news of My apostle and of the woman who was with him? »

« Yes, I have. Driven out like dogs, they are out of town, on the other side, waiting for night-time. They wanted to go back, towards Enon, looking for You. They wanted to come here, as they knew that their companions were here. I told them not to do that, and to remain quiet as I will take you to them. And I will do so as soon as it gets dark. Fortunately my husband is away, so I am free to leave the house. I will take you to one of my sisters who is married down in the plain. You will sleep there, without saying who you are, not because of Merod, but because of the men who are with her. They are not Samaritans, they come from the Decapolis and are settled here. But it is always wise… »

« May God reward you. Have the two disciples been injured? »

« The man, a little. The woman, nothing. And the Most High certainly protected her because she is bold and she protected her son

with her own body when the citizens began to pick up stones. Oh! what a strong woman! She shouted: "Is that how you strike a man who has not offended you? And will you not respect me, who am defending him and am a mother? Have you no mothers, since you do not respect a mother? Were you born of wolves or are you made of mud and manure?" and she looked at the assailers holding her mantle wide open to defend the man, and at the same time she was withdrawing pushing him out of town… And even now she comforts him saying: "May the Most High grant, o my Judas, that the blood you have shed for the Master may become the balm for your heart". But it is a small wound. Perhaps the man is more frightened than hurt. But take some food now. Here is some fresh milk, for the women, and bread, cheese and fruit. I could not cook any meat. I should have been too late. And here is some wine for the men. Eat while it is getting dark. Then along safe roads we shall go to the two disciples and then to Merod's house. »

« May God reward you again » says Jesus, and He offers and divides the food, putting some aside for the two who are not present.

« No. I have seen to them, as I took them eggs and bread, which I concealed under my clothes, and some wine and oil for the wounds. This is for you. Eat now, as I will watch the road… »

They eat, but the men are devoured by indignation and the women feel listless through depression. All of them, with the exception of Mary of Magdala, as what for the others is fear or dejection affects her like a liqueur that stimulates nerves and courage. Her eyes flash with anger as she looks at the hostile town. Only the presence of Jesus, Who has already said that He has no grudge, keeps her from uttering violent words. And as she cannot speak or act, she gives vent to her anger by snapping at her innocent piece of bread in such a meaningful way that the Zealot cannot help saying to her smiling: « Luckily for those of Tirzah they cannot fall into your hands! You look like a wild beast in chains, Mary! »

« I am. You are right. And in the eyes of God, this restraining myself from going in there, as they deserve, has more value than what I have done so far to expiate. »

« Be good, Mary! God has forgiven you sins graver than theirs. » « That is true. They have offended You once, my God, and through the instigation of other people. I many times… and by my own will… and I cannot be intolerant and proud… » She lowers her eyes on her bread and two tears fall on it.

Martha lays her hand on her sister's lap saying to her in a low voice: « God has forgiven you. Don't lose heart any more… Remember what you have had: our Lazarus… »

« It is not dejection. It is gratitude. It is emotion… And it is also the ascertainment that I am still devoid of that mercy which I received so plentifully… Forgive me, Rabboni! » she says raising her

wonderful eyes to which humility has restored kindness.

« Forgiveness is never denied to humble-hearted people, Mary. »

Night is falling tinging the air with a delicate fading violet hue. Also things not far away become confused. The stalks of flax, previously visible in their beauty, have blended into a uniform dark mass. The birds among leafy branches become silent. The first star begins to shine. The first cricket chirps in the grass. It is night-time.

« We can go. Here, in the fields, we shall not be seen. Come without being afraid. I am not betraying you. And I am not doing this for retribution. I only ask Heaven to have mercy on me, for we are all in need of mercy » says the woman with a sigh.

They stand up and set out after her. They pass round Tirzah at a distance, through fields and half-dark vegetable gardens, but not so far as not to be able to see men around fires at the entrances of roads…

« They are lying in wait for us… » says Matthew.

« Cursed! » whistles Philip between his teeth.

Peter does not speak but he shakes his arms towards the sky in a silent invocation or protest.

But James and John of Zebedee, who have been speaking to each other animatedly, a little ahead of the others, come back and say: « Master, if You do not want to have recourse to punishment because of Your perfect love, shall we have it? Shall we say to the fire of heaven to descend on these sinners and devour them? You told us that we can do everything that we ask with faith and… »

Jesus, Who was walking with His head bowed, as if He were tired, suddenly straightens Himself and casts withering glances at them as His eyes flash in the moonlight. The two withdraw and become silent, frightened as they are by His glances. Jesus, His eyes fixed on them all the time, says: « You do not know what spirits are within you. The Son of man has not come to lose souls, but to save them. Do you not remember what I told you? In the parable of the wheat and the darnel I said: "For the time being let the wheat and the darnel grow together. Because if you tried to separate them now you might pull up also the wheat with the darnel. So leave them till the harvest. At harvest time I shall say to the reapers: collect the darnel now and tie it in bundles to be burnt, then gather the good wheat into my barn". »

Jesus has already moderated His anger towards the two who, out of wrath excited by their love for Him, were asking to punish those from Tirzah and who are now standing with their heads lowered in front of Him. He takes them by their elbows, one on His right, the other on His left side and He resumes walking, leading them thus and speaking to everybody, as they have all gathered round Him when He stopped. « I solemnly tell you that harvest time is close at hand. My first harvest. And for many there will not be

a second one. But - and let us praise the Most High for this - some people who were not able to become ears of good wheat in My time, after the purification of the Passover Sacrifice, will be born again with new souls. Until that day I shall not be pitiless towards anybody… Afterwards there will be justice… »

« After Passover? » asks Peter.

« No. After the time. I am not speaking of these men of the present. I am looking at future ages. Man is renewed continuously like crops in fields. And harvests follow one another. And I will leave what is necessary for future generations to become good wheat. If they do not want to do that, at the end of the world My angels will separate the darnel from the good wheat. Then it will be the eternal Day of God alone. At present in the world it is the day of God and of Satan. The Former sows Goodness, the latter throws his damned darnel, his scandals, his wickedness, his seeds that stir up wickedness and scandals, among the seeds of God. Because there will always be those who rouse people against God, as here, with these people, who are really less guilty than those who incite them to do wrong. »

« Master, every year we purify ourselves at the Passover of the Unleavened Bread, but we always remain what we were. Will it be different this year? » asks Matthew.

« Very different. »

« Why? Explain it to us. »

« Tomorrow… Tomorrow, or when we are on the way, and Judas of Simon is with us, I shall tell you. »

« Oh! yes. You will tell us and we shall become better… In the meantime forgive us, Jesus » says John.

« I really called you with the right name. But thunder does no harm. A thunderbolt, yes, can kill. But thunder often is a forewarning of thunderbolts. The same happens to those who do not remove from their spirits every disorder that is against love. Today they ask to be allowed to punish. Tomorrow they punish without asking. The day after tomorrow they punish even without any reason. It is easy to descend… That is why I tell you to divest yourselves of all harshness against your neighbour. Do as I do and you will be certain of never doing wrong. Have you ever seen Me revenge Myself on those who grieve Me? »

« No, Master. You… »

« Master! Master! We are here. Eliza and I. Oh! Master, how worried we were about You! And how afraid I was of dying… » says Judas of Kerioth coming out from behind rows of vines and running towards Jesus. His forehead is bandaged. Eliza follows him more calmly.

« Have you suffered? Were you afraid to die? Is life so dear to you? » asks Jesus freeing Himself from Judas who embraces Him weeping.

« Not life. I was afraid of God, to die without being forgiven by You… I always offend You. I offend everybody. Also this woman… And she reacted acting as a mother to me. I felt I was guilty and I was afraid of death… »

« Oh! a beneficial fear, if it can make a saint of you! But I always forgive you, you know that, provided you are willing to repent. And what about you, Eliza? Have you forgiven him? »

« He is a big unruly boy. And I can be indulgent. »

« You have been brave, Eliza. I know. »

« If she had not been there, I do not know whether I would have seen You again, Master! »

« So you can see that she remained with you out of love, not out of hatred… Have you been injured, Eliza? »

« No, Master. The stones fell around me without hurting me. But my heart was in agony thinking of You… »

« It is all over now. Let us follow the woman who wants to take us to a safe house. »

They set forth again along a lane that is white in the moonlight and takes them eastwards.

Jesus has taken the Iscariot by the arm and has gone ahead with him. He speaks to him kindly. He tries to work upon his heart upset by his recent fear of God's judgements: « You can see, Judas, how easily one can die. Death is always on the look-out around us. You can see how what seems negligible when we are full of life becomes important, fearfully important when death skims us. But why should one wish to have such frights, why should one create them to have them present at the moment of death, when with a holy life one can ignore the terror of the impending divine judgement? Do you not think that it is worth living a just life in order to have a peaceful death? Judas, My friend. The divine paternal mercy has allowed that to happen, so that it might be an appeal to your heart. You are still in time, Judas… Why do you not want to give your Master, Who is about to die, the great, the very great joy of knowing that you have come back to Good? »

« But can You still forgive me, Jesus? »

« And would I speak to you like this if I could not? How little you still know Me! I know you. I know that you are like one who is seized by a giant octopus. But if you wanted, you could still free yourself. Oh! you would certainly suffer. It would be painful to tear off those chains that torture and poison you. But later, how much joy, Judas! Are you afraid that you may not have enough strength to react against those who influence you? I can absolve you in advance of the sin of infringing the Passover rite… You are ill. Passover is not compulsory for sick people. No one is more sick than you are. You are like a leper. Lepers do not go up to Jerusalem, while they are such. You must realise, Judas, that to appear before the Lord with

an unclean spirit, such as you have, does not honour Him, but it offends Him. First it is necessary… »

« Why do You not purify and cure me, then? » asks Judas, and he already sounds hard and indocile.

« I will not cure you! When a man is ill he seeks cure by himself, unless it is a child or a fool who are devoid of will-power… »

« Treat me as such. Treat me as a fool and see to it, without my being aware of it. »

« It would not be just because you can use your will-power. You know what is good and what is evil for you. And My curing you would be of no avail without your will to remain cured. »

« Give me such will as well. »

« Give you it? So should I impose a good will on you? And your free will? What would it become? What would your ego of a man, of a free creature be? Dominated? »

« As I am dominated by Satan, I may also be dominated by God! »

« How you hurt Me, Judas! You pierce My heart! But I forgive you what you do to Me… Dominated by Satan, you said. I did not mean such a dreadful thing… »

« But You were thinking of it because You know that it is true, and because You are aware of it, if it is true that You can read the hearts of men. If it is so, You know that I am no longer free to do what I like… He has seized me and… »

« No. He approached you, tempting you, testing you, and you received him. There is no possession if at the beginning there is no assent to some satanic temptation. The snake introduces his head between the bars closely placed to defend hearts, but he would not be able to enter if man did not widen a passage to admire his alluring aspect and listen to and follow him… Only then man becomes dominated, possessed, because he wants it. God also darts the very kind lights of His paternal love from the heavens, and His lights penetrate us. Or rather: God, to Whom everything is possible, descends into the hearts of men. It is His right. Since man knows how to become a slave dominated by the Dreadful one, why does he not know how to become a servant of God, nay a son of God, and he drives away his Most Holy Father? Are you not replying to Me? Are you not telling Me why you wanted Satan and preferred him to God? And yet, you would still be in time to save yourself! You know that I am going to die. No one knows as well as you do… I do not refuse to die… I am going. I am going towards death because My death will be the Life for so many. Why do you not want to be one of them? Only for you, My friend, My poor sick friend, shall I die in vain? »

« Your death will be of no use for so many, do not delude Yourself. You had better run away and live far from here, enjoying life and teaching Your doctrine, because it is a good one, but without

sacrificing Yourself. »

« Teach My doctrine! What truth could I teach, if I did the opposite of what I teach? What Master should I be if I preached obedience to the will of God and I did not obey it, and love for men and I did not love them, to renounce flesh and the world and I loved both flesh and the honours of the world, not to give rise to scandals and I scandalised not only men, but also the angels, and so forth? Satan is speaking through you just now. As he spoke at Ephraim. As he spoke and acted many times through you, to upset Me. I have recognised all such actions of Satan, accomplished through you, and I did not hate you, I did not get tired of you, but I only felt sorry, infinitely sorry. Like a mother who watches the progress of an illness that will be the cause of her son's death, I have watched the progress of evil in you. Like a father who does not regret anything provided he can find the medicines for his sick son, I regretted nothing in order to save you, I overcame disgust, anger, bitterness, dejection… Like a desolate father and mother, disappointed in all earthly power, turn to Heaven to obtain the life of their son, so I have moaned and I still moan imploring a miracle that may save you, may save you, may save you on the brink of the abyss that is already collapsing under your feet. Judas, look at Me! Before long My Blood will be shed for the sins of men. Not one drop will be left in My veins. The clods of earth, the grass, the garments of My persecutors and Mine… the wood, the iron, the ropes, the thorns of the nabaca… and the spirits awaiting salvation will drink of it… You alone do not want to drink it? I would give all this Blood of Mine for you only. You are My friend. How willingly one dies for one's friend! To save him! One says: "I shall die. But I shall continue to live in the friend to whom I gave life". Like a father, like a mother, who continue to live in their offspring after they have passed away. Judas, I implore you! I am not asking for anything else in this eve of My death. A convict is granted a last grace by his judges and also by his enemies, and his last wish is satisfied. I ask you not to be damned. I do not ask so much Heaven as I ask you and your will… Think of your mother, Judas. What will your mother be afterwards? And the name of your family? I appeal to your pride, which is as bold as ever, to defend you from dishonour. Do not disgrace yourself, Judas. Consider: years and ages will go by, kingdoms and empires will fall, the stars will lose their brightness, the configuration of the Earth will change, and you will always be Judas, as Cain is always Cain, if you persist in your sin. Time will come to an end, and only Paradise and Hell will remain. And in Paradise and in Hell, for the men raised from the dead and received for ever with their souls and bodies where it is right for them to be, you will always be Judas, the cursed greatest culprit, if you do not mend your ways. I will descend to free the spirits from

Limbo, I will lead multitudes of them out of Purgatory, and you… I shall not be able to take you where I am… Judas, I am going to die, I am going happily, because the hour I have been awaiting for millennia has come: the hour to reconcile men to their Father. I shall not reconcile many of them. But the number of those saved, whom I shall contemplate when dying, will console Me for the torture of dying in vain for so many. But, I tell you, it will be dreadful to see you, My apostle and friend, among the latter. Do not give Me such a cruel pain!… I want to save you, Judas. Look. We are going down to the river. Tomorrow at dawn, when everybody is still sleeping, we will cross it, the two of us, and you will go to Bozrah, to Arbela, to Aera, wherever you wish. You know the houses of the disciples. At Bozrah look for Joachim and Mary, the woman I cured of leprosy. I will give you a note for them. I will say that a quiet rest in different air is necessary for your health. It is the truth, unfortunately, because your spirit is diseased and the air of Jerusalem would be lethal to you. But they will think that your body is ill. You will remain there until I come to take you away. I will see to your companions… But do not come to Jerusalem. See? I did not want the women to come, except the strongest ones among them, and those who being mothers are entitled to be near their sons. »

« Also mine? »

« No. Mary will not be in Jerusalem… »

« She is the mother of an apostle as well, and she has always honoured You. »

« Yes. And she would be entitled like the others to be near Me, Whom she loves with perfect justice. But just because of that she will not be there. Because I told her not to come, and she knows how to obey. »

« Why is she not to be there? In what is she different from the mother of Your brothers and from the mother of Zebedee's sons? »

« You. And you know why I am saying this. But if you listen to Me, if you go to Bozrah, I will send word to your mother and will have her brought to you, as being so good, she may help you to recover. Believe Me, we are the only ones to love you thus, without limit. There are three who love you in Heaven: the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit, Who have contemplated You and Who are awaiting your decision to make you the jewel of Redemption, the greatest prey snatched from the Abyss; and three on the Earth: your mother, My Mother and I. Make us happy, Judas! Both us in Heaven and us on the Earth, who love you with true love. »

« You have said it: only three love me; the others do not… »

« Not as we do. But they love you so much. Eliza defended you. The others were worried about you. When you are away from us, You are in everybody's heart and your name is on everybody's lips. You are not aware of all the love that surrounds you. Your oppressor

conceals it from you. Believe My word. »

« I believe You. And I will try to please You. But I want to do it by myself. I went wrong by myself, by myself I must recover from evil. »

« God only can do by Himself. Your thought is a thought of pride. In pride there is still Satan. Be humble, Judas. Grasp this hand that is offered to you in a friendly way. Take shelter in this heart that opens to protect you. Here, with Me, Satan could do you no harm. »

« I have tried to be with You… I have descended lower and lower… It is useless! »

« Do not say that! Do not say that! React against discouragement. God can do everything. Cling to God. Judas! Judas! »

« Be quiet! Lest the others should hear… »

« And you are worried about the others, but not about your spirit? Poor Judas!… »

Jesus speaks no more. But He remains beside the apostle until the woman, who was a few metres ahead of them, goes into a house that appears in a thick olive-grove. Jesus then says to His disciple: « I will not sleep tonight. I will pray and wait for you… May God speak to your heart. Listen to Him… I will remain here, where I am now, to pray. Until dawn… Remember that. »

Judas does not reply to Him. The other apostles and the women have arrived and they all stop together waiting for the Samaritan woman to come back. She comes back soon. She is with another woman, who is like her, and who greets them saying: « I have not got many rooms because the pruners are already here working at the olive-trees. But I have a large barn with plenty straw in it. I have room for the women. Come. »

« Go! I am staying here to pray. Peace to all of you » says Jesus. And while the others go away, He holds back His Mother saying to Her: « I am staying to pray for Judas, Mother. Will You help Me, too? »

« Yes, I will, Son. Is his good will reviving? »

« No, Mother. But we must act as if… Heaven can do everything, Mother! »

« Yes. And I can still delude Myself. But You cannot, Son. You know. My Holy Son! But I will always imitate You. Go peacefully, My darling! Even when You are no longer able to speak to him, because he shuns You, I will try to bring him back to You. And if the Most Holy Father will only listen to My grief… Will You let me stay with You, Jesus? We will pray together… and I shall have You for Me alone all those hours… »

« Yes, stay with Me, Mother. I will wait for You here. »

Mary goes away quickly, and She is soon back. They sit on their sacks, under the olive-trees. In the blank silence one can hear the gurgling of the river not far away and the chirping of crickets

sounds louder in the silence of the night. Then nightingales begin to sing. An owl hoots and a homed owl screeches. And the stars move slowly in the firmament, as bright as queens, now that the moon has set and no longer outshines them. Then a cock breaks the calm air with its sharp crowing. Much farther away a cock replies, hardly audible. Then the silence is broken again by the arpeggio of dew drops falling from the tiles of the next-door neighbour's house on the pavement surrounding it. Then a fresh rustling of leafy branches shaking off the dampness of the night, and the isolated cry of a bird that awakes, and at the same time a change in the sky and the awakening of light. It is dawn. But Judas has not come…

Jesus looks at His Mother, as white as a lily against the dark olivetree and He says to Her: « We have prayed, Mother. God will make use of our prayer… »

« Yes, Son. You are as white as death. Your vitality has exhaled completely during the night, pressing the gates of Heaven and the decrees of God! »

« You are pale, too, Mother. Great is Your fatigue. »

« Great is My sorrow because of Your sorrow. »

The door of the house is opened cautiously… Jesus startles. But it is the woman who led them there, who comes out noiselessly. Jesus says with a sigh: « I was hoping I might have been wrong! »

The woman comes forward with her empty basket. She sees Jesus. She greets Him and is about to go on. But He calls her. He says to her: « May the Lord reward you for everything. I should like to reward you as well, but I have nothing with Me. »

« I do not want anything, Rabbi. I do not want any reward, but although I do not want money, there is one thing I should like. And You can give me it! »

« What, woman? »

« That the heart of my husband should change. And You can do that, because You really are the Holy Man of God. »

« Go in peace. It will be done to you as you wish. Goodbye. »

The woman goes away quickly towards her house that must really be a sad one.

Mary remarks: « Another unhappy woman. That is why she is good!… »

Peter's ruffled head appears from the granary, followed by John's bright one, and then by the severe profile of Thaddeus, the brownish face of the Zealot, and the thin one of young Benjamin… They are all awake. Mary of Magdala is the first woman to come out of the house, and is followed by Nike and then by the others.

When they are all together and the woman who gave them hospitality has brought a pail of milk still frothy, the Iscariot appears. His head is no longer bandaged, but the bruise of the blow tinges half of his forehead and his eye looks even more gloomy in the violaceous

ring. Jesus looks at him. Judas looks at Jesus, then he turns his head round looking elsewhere.

Jesus says to him: « Buy of the woman whatever she can give us. We are going ahead. Join us. »

And Jesus, after greeting the woman, sets out. They all follow Him.

574. The Rich Young Man.

7th March 1947.

It is another beautiful April morning. The earth and the sky display all their springtime beauties. One breathes light, songs, scents, so sated is the air with brilliance, with voices of joy and love, with fragrance. Rain must have drizzled during the night as the roads are dark and without dust, but they are not muddy, and the stems and leaves washed by the rain are now quivering, all bright and clean, in a mild breeze blowing down from the mountains towards this fertile plain that foreshows Jericho.

People are coming up continuously from the banks of the Jordan; they have ferried from the other bank or they have followed the road that runs along the river, and have come on this one that heads straight for Jericho and Doco, as indicated on road signs. And with the many Jews who from all over are going to Jerusalem for the rite, there are mingled merchants from other places and shepherds with bleating lambs, destined for sacrifices, but unaware of their fate.

Many recognise Jesus and greet Him. They are Jews from Perea and the Decapolis and even from places farther away. There is a group from Caesarea Paneas. They are shepherds, who leading a rather nomadic life with their flocks, have knowledge of the Master, having met Him or heard of Him from disciples.

A shepherd prostrates himself and says to Him: « May I offer You a lamb? »

« Do not deprive yourself of it, man. It is your earnings. »

« Oh! it is my gratitude. You do not remember me, but I remember You. I am one who was cured by You when You cured so many. You cured the bone of my thigh that no one knew how to cure and made an invalid of me. I will give You a lamb willingly. The best one. This one. For the banquet of joy. I know that for the sacrifice You are to buy one. But for the joy! You gave me so much of it. Take it, Master. »

« Yes, take it. It is money that we shall save. Or rather, it will enable us to have a meal because with all our lavishness I have no money left » says the Iscariot.

« Lavishness? Since we left Shechem we have not spent a farthing! » says Matthew.

« Well, I have no more money. I gave the last to Merod. »

« Listen, man » says Jesus to the shepherd to put an end to the Iscariot's words. « I am not going to Jerusalem just now and I cannot take the lamb with Me. Otherwise I would accept it to show you that I welcome your gift. »

« But later You will go to the city. You will stop there for the feasts. You will certainly have a place in which to stay. Tell me where it is, and I shall hand it over to Your friends… »

« I have nothing of the kind… But I have a poor old friend at Nob. Listen to Me carefully: on the day after the Passover Sabbath you will go to Nob at dawn and you will say to John, the Elder of Nob (anyone will tell you where he lives): "Jesus of Nazareth, your friend, sends you this lamb, so that you may celebrate this day with a banquet of joy, because for the true friends of the Christ there is not a greater joy than today's". Will you do that? »

« If that is what You want, I will do it. »

« And you will make Me happy. Not before the day after the Sabbath. Make sure you remember that. And remember the words I told you. Go, now, and peace be with you. And keep your heart firm in that peace in future days. Remember that as well, and go on believing in My Truth. Goodbye. »

Some people have approached them to listen to their conversation and they disperse only when the shepherd, proceeding with his flock, compels them to scatter. Jesus follows the herd taking advantage of the open space left by it.

The people whisper: « So is He really going to Jerusalem? Does He not know that He is banned? »

« Hey! No one can prohibit a son of the Law from presenting himself to the Lord at Passover. Is He guilty of a public crime? No, He is not. Because if He were, the Proconsul would have had Him arrested, as he did with Barabbas. »

And others say: « Have you heard? He has nowhere to go nor friends in Jerusalem. Have they all abandoned Him? Even the man He raised from the dead? How grateful of him! »

« Be quiet. Those two women over there are Lazarus' sisters. I come from the countryside of Magdala and I know them well. If the sisters are with Him it means that Lazarus' family is loyal to Him. »

« Perhaps He dare not enter the town. »

« He is right. »

« God will forgive Him if He remains outside. »

« It is not His fault if He cannot go up to the Temple. »

« He is wisely prudent. If He were caught it would all come to an end before His time. »

« He is certainly not yet ready to be proclaimed our king, and He does not want to be caught. »

« They say that when it was known that He was at Ephraim, He

went everywhere, even to nomadic tribes, to prepare followers and soldiers and to seek protection. »

« Who told you? »

« The usual lies. He is the holy King and not the king of soldiers. »

« Perhaps He will celebrate the supplementary Passover, when it is easier not to be noticed. The Sanhedrin breaks up after the feasts and all the members go home for harvest time. They do not meet again until Pentecost. »

« And once the members of the Sanhedrin have gone away, who do you think will do Him any harm? They are the jackals! »

« H'm! Is it possible for Him to be so prudent? That is too human! He is more than a man and He will not be cowardly prudent. »

« Coward? Why? No one can say that he who spares himself for his mission is a coward. »

« He would always be cowardly, because every mission is inferior to God. So the cult for God must have priority over everything else. »

Those are the words going from mouth to mouth. Jesus pretends He does not hear them.

Judas of Alphaeus stops to wait for the women and when they arrive - they were with the boy, about thirty steps behind - he says to Eliza: « You have given out a lot of money at Shechem after we left! »

« Why? »

« Because Judas has not a far-thing left. Your sandals, Benjamin, are not likely to come. It was destined to be so. It was not possible to enter Tirzah, and even if we had been able to go in, as we had no money, we could not have bought anything… You will have to enter Jerusalem as you are… »

« There is Bethany before Jerusalem » says Martha with a smile.

« And before, there is Jericho and my house » says Nike, also with a smile.

« And I am before everything. I promised and I will do it. We have had interesting experiences during this journey! I have experienced what it means not to have a drachma. And now I will experience what one feels like when one has to sell something at need » says Mary of Magdala.

« And what do you want to sell, if you do not wear jewels any longer? » Martha asks her sister.

« My big silver hairpins. I have so many of them. But to keep this useless weight tidy, iron ones will be sufficient. I will sell them. Jericho is full of people who buy such things. And this is market day as well as tomorrow, and every day because of the festivities. »

« But, sister! »

« What? Are you scandalised at the thought that I may be considered so poor as to have to sell my silver hairpins? Oh! I wish I had

always given rise to such scandals in you! It was much worse when, without being in need, I sold myself to the vice of other people and mine. »

« Be quiet! There is the boy, who does not know! »

« He does not know as yet. Perhaps he does not know that I was the sinner. Tomorrow he would be told by someone who hates me because I am no longer such, and with details not pertaining to my sin, which, however, was so grave. So he had better be told by me, so that he may realise what the Lord, Who accepted him, can do: turn a sinner into a repentant soul; turn a dead person into a resurrected one; of me, dead in my spirit, of Lazarus, dead in his body, He made two living beings. Because that is what the Rabbi has done to us, Benjamin. Always bear that in mind and love Him with all your heart, because He really is the Son of God. »

An obstacle along the road has stopped Jesus and the apostles, and the women join them. Jesus says to the women: « Go ahead, towards Jericho, and enter the town, if you wish so. I am going to Doco with the apostles. At sunset I shall be with you. »

« Oh! Why are You sending us away? We are not tired » say all the women protesting.

« Because I should like you, or at least some of you, to inform the disciples that I shall be at Nike's tomorrow. »

« If that is the case, Lord, we shall go. Come Eliza, and you Johanna, and you Susanna and Martha. We shall prepare everything » says Nike.

« And the boy and I. We shall do our shopping. Bless us, Master. And come soon. Are You staying, Mother? »

« Yes, with My Son. »

They part. Only the three Maries remain with Jesus: His Mother, Her sister-in-law Mary Clopas, and Mary Salome. And Jesus leaves the Jericho road and takes a secondary one that goes to Doco.

And He has not been long on it when from a caravan coming from I do not know where - a rich caravan that certainly-comes from afar, because the women are mounted on camels, closed in swaying palanquins fastened to the humped backs, and the men are riding fiery horses or other camels - a young man departs and, making his camel kneel down, he slides from his saddle and goes towards Jesus. A servant, who has approached him, holds the animal by the reins.

The young man prostrates himself before Jesus, and after his deep salutation, he says to Him: « I am Philip of Canata, the son of true Israelites who have remained such. I was a disciple of Gamaliel until my father's death put me at the head of his business. I have heard You speak more than once. I am aware of Your deeds. I aspire to a better life to have the eternal one that You assure will be possessed by those who create Your Kingdom in themselves. So tell

me, good Master, what shall I have to do to have eternal life? »

« Why do you call Me good? God alone is good. » « You are the Son of God, as good as Your Father. Oh! tell me what I must do. »

« To enter eternal life observe the commandments. »

« Which, my Lord? The ancient ones or Yours? »

« The ancient ones already contain Mine, Mine do not alter the ancient ones. They are always the same: worship the Only true God and respect the laws of cult, do not kill, do not steal, do not commit adultery, do not bring false witness, honour your father and mother, do not injure your neighbour but love him as you love yourself. By doing so you will have eternal life. »

« Master, I have observed all those commandments since my childhood »

Jesus casts a loving glance at him and kindly asks: « And do you think they are not yet sufficient? »

« No, Master. The Kingdom of God is a great thing in us and in the other life. God Who gives Himself to us is an infinite gift. I feel that what is our duty is very little compared with the All Infinite Perfect Being Who gives Himself to us, and I think that we should obtain Him by means of things that are greater than those commanded, in order not to be damned and be agreeable to Him. »

« You are right. To be perfect you still lack one thing. If you want to be as perfect as our Father in Heaven wants, go, sell everything you have and give it to the poor, and in Heaven you will have a treasure that will make you loved by the Father Who has given His Treasure to the poor of the Earth. Then come and follow Me. »

The young man becomes sad and pensive. He then stands up and says: « I will remember Your advice… » and he goes away sadly.

Judas smiles ironically and whispers: « I am not the only one who loves money! »

Jesus turns round and looks at him… then He looks at the other eleven faces around Him and says with a sigh: « How difficult it is for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of Heaven, the gate of which is narrow, and the way is steep, and those who are laden with the bulky weights of riches cannot go along it and enter! To enter up there only the immaterial treasures of virtue are required and one must be able to part with everything that is attachment to the things of the world and to vanity. » Jesus is very sad…

The apostles look stealthily at one another…

Jesus, looking at the caravan of the young rich man move away, says: « I solemnly tell you that it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God. »

« Who can be saved, then? Poverty often makes one sin, through envy and lack of respect for other people's property, and through lack of confidence in Providence… Riches are an obstacle to perfection…

So? Who can be saved? »

Jesus looks at them and says: « What is impossible for men, is possible for God, because everything is possible for God. It is sufficient for man to help his Lord with his good will. And it is good will to take the advice given and strive to achieve freedom from riches. To achieve complete freedom, in order to follow God. Because this is the true freedom of man: to follow the voices that God whispers to his heart, and His commandments, not to be the slave of himself, or of the world, or of respect of public opinion, and consequently not to be the slave of Satan. To make use of the wonderful free will that God gave man to wish Good only and freely, and thus attain the very bright, free and blissful eternal life. Man must not be slave even of his own life, if to gratify it he must resist God. I said to you: "He who loses his life for My sake and to serve God will save it for ever". »

« Well! We have left everything to follow You, even what was lawful. So what about us? Shall we enter Your Kingdom? » asks Peter.

« I tell you solemnly that those who have followed Me thus and those who follow Me - because there is always time to make amends for laziness and sins committed so far, there is always time while man is on the Earth and has days in front of him during which he can redress wrongs done - those will be with Me in My Kingdom. I tell you solemnly that you, who have followed Me in the regeneration, will sit on thrones to judge the tribes of the Earth with the Son of man Who will be sitting on the throne of His glory. And once again I tell you solemnly that there is no one who in My Name has left house, fields, father, mother, brothers, wife, sons and sisters to propagate the Gospel and continue My work, who will not receive one hundredfold in this present time and eternal life in the world to come. »

« But if we lose everything how can we centuplicate what we have? » asks Judas of Kerioth.

« I repeat: what is impossible for men is possible for God. And God will give one hundredfold of spiritual joy to those who from men of the world became sons of God, that is spiritual men. They will enjoy real happiness, both here and beyond the Earth. And I also say to you that not all those who seem to be the first, and ought to be the first having received more than everybody, will be such. And not all those who seem to be the last, and even less than the last, as they do not appear to be My disciples or to belong to the chosen People, will be the last. Truly, many who were first will become last, and many who were last, least, will become first… But there is Doco over there. Go ahead all of you, except Judas of Kerioth and Simon Zealot. Go and announce Me to those who may need Me. »

And Jesus with the two apostles He held back waits for the three Maries, who are following them at a few metres' distance.

575. The Third Prophecy of the Passion. The Request of Zebedee's sons.

8th March 1947.

Day is hardly breaking at dawn and it is still difficult to travel when Jesus departs from Doco, still asleep. The shuffling of feet is certainly not heard by anybody because they walk cautiously and because people are still sleeping in their houses. No one speaks until they are out of town, in the country that is awaking slowly in the dim light and is pleasantly fresh after the dew.

The Iscariot then says: « A useless journey with no rest. It was better not to have come so far. »

« The few people we met did not use us badly! They lost their night's sleep to listen to us and to bring us their sick people from the country. On the contrary, it has really been a good thing that we came here. Because those who, either through illness or for some other reason, could not hope to see the Lord in Jerusalem, have seen Him here and have been comforted recovering their health or with other graces. We know that the rest have already gone to Jerusalem… When possible, it is our custom to go there a few days before the festivity » says James of Alphaeus kindly, because he is always gentle, the very opposite of Judas of Kerioth who, even in his good moments, is always violent and overbearing.

« Just because we are going to Jerusalem as well, it was useless to come here. They would have heard and seen us there… »

« But not the women and the sick people » replies Bartholomew supporting James of Alphaeus.

Judas pretends he does not hear them and resuming the thread of his discourse he says: « At least I think that we are going to Jerusalem, although I am no longer certain after the conversation with that shepherd… »

« And where do you expect us to go if we do not go there? » asks Peter.

« Who knows! I don't. Everything we have been doing these last months is so unreal, so unforeseeable, so contrary to common sense and also to justice, that… »

« Hey! I saw you drink milk at Doco, and yet you are speaking like a drunken man! Where do you see things contrary to justice? » asks James of Zebedee with eyes promising trouble. And to make himself clearly understood he adds: « Enough of reproaches to the Just One! Have you understood that that is enough? You are not entitled to reproach Him. No one is entitled to do so, because He is perfect, and we… None of us are entitled, and you are less entitled than

anybody. »

« Yes! If you are not well, take care of yourself, but do not annoy us with your complaints. If you are moody, the Master is over there. Ask Him to cure you and stop it! » says Thomas who has lost his patience.

Jesus is in fact behind, with Judas of Alphaeus and John, and they are helping the women, who not being accustomed to walking in half-light, are proceeding with difficulty along a rough path, which is even darker than the fields, as it runs through a thick olivegrove. And Jesus is speaking animatedly to the women, estranged from what is happening ahead of Him and can also be heard by those who are with Him, because if the words arrive confusedly, their tone gives to understand that they are not kind ones, but they sound rather quarrelsome.

The two apostles, Thaddeus and John, look at each other… but they do not say anything. They look at Jesus and Mary. But Mary is so enveloped in Her mantle that Her face can hardly be seen, and Jesus does not appear to have heard. But when He finishes talking - they were speaking of Benjamin and his future, and they are speaking of Sarah, the widow of Aphek, who has settled at Capernaum and is a loving mother not only to the child of Giscala but also to the children of the woman from Capernaum who, after she married for the second time, no longer loved the children of her first marriage, and then she came to « such a bad end that people considered her death a divine punishment » says Salome - Jesus goes ahead with Judas Thaddeus to join the apostles and when leaving the group He says: « You may stay, John, if you wish so. I am going to reply to the restless one and bring about peace. »

But John, after walking a few steps with the women, seeing that the path is now wider and clearer, runs and joins Jesus Who is saying: « So, be reassured, Judas. We will do nothing, as we have done nothing, unreal. Even now we are not doing anything unforeseeable. This is the time when it is foreseeable that every true Israelite, who is not prevented by diseases or very grave reasons, will go up to the Temple. And we are going up to the Temple. »

« But not all of us. I heard that Marjiam will not be there. Is he perhaps ill? Why is he not coming? Do You think You can replace him with the Samaritan? » Judas' tone is unbearable…

Peter whispers: « O Prudence, hold my tongue fast, for I am a man! » and he presses his lips together firmly in order not to say anything else. His eyes, which are rather deep set, are deeply touching, so clear is the effort of the man to repress his indignation and distress hearing Judas speak thus.

Jesus' presence holds all tongues. He is the only one who speaks and with a really divine calm He says: « Come ahead a little, so that the women may not hear us. For a

few days I have had something to tell you. Something I promised you in the country of Tirzah. But I wanted all of you to be present to hear Me. But not the women. Let us leave them in their humble peace… What I am going to tell you will explain why Marjiam will not be with us, and the same applies to your mother, Judas of Kerioth, and to your daughters, Philip, and to the women disciples of Bethlehem in Galilee with the girl. It is not for everybody to bear certain things. I, the Master, know what is good for My disciples and what they can or cannot stand. Not even you are strong enough to endure the trial. And it would be a grace for you to be excluded. But you will have to continue Me, and you must be aware of how weak you are, so that in future you may be merciful towards the weak. So you cannot be excluded from this dreadful test that will give you the measure of what you are, of what you have remained after being with Me for three years, and of what you have become after the three years you have been with Me. You are twelve. You have all come to Me almost at the same time. It is not the few days between My meeting with James, John and Andrew and the day on which you were received among us, Judas of Kerioth, or the day on which you, My brother James and you, Matthew, came to Me, that can justify so much difference in your perfecting. You were, all of you, even you, My learned Bartholomew, and you, My brothers, very imperfect, absolutely imperfect with regard to what is perfection in My doctrine. Nay, your education, better than that of others among you in the doctrine of old Israel, was an obstacle to your perfecting in Me. And yet none of you have made so much progress as would have been sufficient to bring you all to the same point. One has reached it, others are close to it, others are farther away, others much farther behind, others… yes, I must say also this, instead of coming forwards, have gone backwards. Do not look at one another! Do not try to find out which of you is the first and which the last. He who, perhaps, thinks he is the first and is considered to be the first, has still to undergo probation. He who thinks he is the last, is about to shine in his perfection like a star in the sky. So, once again I say to you: do not judge. Facts will judge with their evidence. For the time being you cannot understand. But soon, very soon, you will remember these words of Mine and you will understand them. »

« When? You have promised to tell us, to explain to us why the Passover purification will be different this year, but You never do tell us » says Andrew complaining.

« It is just about that that I wanted to speak to you. Because both those words and these are the same, as they are rooted in one only principle. We are now going up to Jerusalem for Passover. And all the things foretold by the prophets concerning the Son of man will be fulfilled there. Truly, as the prophets foresaw, as it was already

stated in the order given to the Hebrews in Egypt, as Moses was ordered in the desert, the Lamb of God is about to be sacrificed and His Blood is about to mark the doorposts of hearts, and the angel of the Lord will pass without striking those who have upon themselves, and with love, the Blood of the sacrificed Lamb, that is about to be raised on the cross bar, like the precious metal snake, to be the sign for those wounded by the infernal snake, to be salvation for those who look at it with love. The Son of man, your Master Jesus, is about to be handed over to the chief priests, to the scribes and the elders, who will sentence Him to death and will deliver Him to the Gentiles to be sneered at. And He will be smacked, beaten, spat at, dragged along the streets like a dirty rag, and then the Gentiles, after scourging Him and crowning Him with thorns, will condemn Him to die on the cross reserved for criminals, as the Jewish people, gathered in Jerusalem wanted His death in place of that of a robber, and He will be put to death thus. But, as it is mentioned in the signs of the prophecies, after three days He will rise again. That is the trial awaiting you. The one that will show you your spiritual advancement. I solemnly tell you, who think that you are so perfect as to despise those who do not belong to Israel, and to despise even many of our own people, I tell you solemnly that you, the chosen part of My flock, once the Shepherd has been captured, will be seized with fright and you will disperse fleeing as if the wolves, which will fang Me all over, were set on you. But, I tell you, be not afraid. You will not be hurt in the least. I shall suffice to glut the wild wolves… »

The apostles, while Jesus is speaking, look like people under a shower of stones. They even bend more and more as Jesus goes on speaking. And when He ends saying: « And what I am telling you is impending. It is not like the other times, when there was time before the hour. The hour has now come. I am going, to be handed over to My enemies and sacrificed for the salvation of everybody. And the bud of this flower will have not yet lost its petals, after flowering, when I shall be already dead », some hide their faces in their hands and some moan as if they had been wounded. The Iscariot is livid, absolutely livid…

The first to collect himself is Thomas who proclaims: « That will not happen to You because we will defend you or we will die with You, and we will thus show that we had reached You in Your perfection and that we were perfect in loving You. »

Jesus looks at him without speaking.

Bartholomew after a long pensive silence says: « You said that You will be handed over… But who can hand You over to Your enemies? That is not mentioned in the prophecies. No, it is not mentioned. It would be too dreadful if one of Your friends, one of Your disciples, one of Your followers, even the last one, should hand You over

to those who hate You. No! No one who has heard You with love, even if only once, can commit that crime. They are men, not wild beasts, not demons… No, my Lord. And not even those who hate You will be able… They are afraid of the people, and all the people will be around You! »

Jesus looks also at Nathanael but does not say anything.

Peter and the Zealot are talking animatedly to each other. James of Zebedee reproaches his brother because he sees that he is not upset and John replies: « It's because I have known all that these last three months » and two tears stream down his face. The sons of Alphaeus speak to Matthew who shakes his head downheartedly.

Andrew says to the Iscariot: ‚Since you have so many friends in the Temple…

« John knows Annas himself » replies Judas and he concludes: « What can we do? What can the word of a man do if that is destined? »

« Do you really think so? » ask Thomas and Andrew together.

« No. I don't think anything. They are useless apprehensions. Bartholomew is right. All the people will be around Jesus. You can already see that by the behaviour of those we meet. And it will be a triumph. You will see that that is what will happen » says Judas of Kerioth.

« In that case why does He… » says Andrew pointing at Jesus Who has stopped waiting for the women.

« Why does He say that? Because He is impressed… and because He wants to test us. But nothing will happen. In any case I will go… »

« Oh! yes. Go and find out! » says Andrew imploring.

They become silent because Jesus is following them once again, walking between His Mother and Mary of Alphaeus.

Mary smiles lightly because Her sister-in-law shows Her some seeds, got I do not know where, and says to Her that she wants to sow them at Nazareth, after Passover, just at the little grotto so dear to Mary: « When You were a little girl, I always remember You with these flowers in Your little hands. You called them the flowers of Your coming. In fact when You were born Your garden was full of them, and that evening when the whole of Nazareth came to see Joachim's daughter, the clusters of these little stars looked like diamonds because of the water from the sky and of the last ray of the sun that lit them up while setting, and since Your name was "Star", everybody said looking at those tiny shining stars: "The flowers have adorned themselves to give a hearty welcome to Joachim's flower, and the stars have left the sky to come to the Star", and they all smiled, happy with the omen and with Your father's joy. And Joseph, my husband's brother, said: "Stars and drops. She is really Mary!". Who could have told him then that You were to become his star? When he came back from Jerusalem, after being chosen as Your spouse? The whole of Nazareth wanted to

celebrate the event with him, because great was the honour that had come to him from Heaven and because of his nuptials with You, the daughter of Joachim and Anne, and everybody wanted to feast with him. He kindly but firmly refused all celebrations, amazing everybody. Because which man, destined to such an honourable wedding and by such a decree of the Most High, would not celebrate the happiness of his soul, flesh and blood? But he used to say: "A severe preparation is required for a great appointment". And with sparing use of words and food, because he had always practised all other continence, he spent that time working and praying, because I believe that every hammer-stroke, every chisel-mark became a prayer, if it is possible to pray working. His face was enraptured. I used to go to tidy up the house, to bleach sheets and all other things left by Your mother and which had yellowed with age, and I used to watch him working in the kitchen garden and in the house, making them as beautiful as if they had never been neglected, and I used to speak to him, too… but he was engrossed in thought. He used to smile. Not at me or at anybody else, but at a thought of his, that was not the thought of every man about to get married. That is a smile of mischievous sensual pleasure… He… seemed to smile at the invisible angels of God, and to speak to them and to consult with them… Oh! I am sure they told him how to treat You! Because later - and this amazed everybody in Nazareth and almost irritated my Alphaeus - he put off the wedding as long as possible, and we never understood why he suddenly made up his mind before the fixed time. And also when we heard You were a mother, how surprised was Nazareth at his contained joy!… Also my James is somewhat like that. And he is becoming so more and more. Now that I watch him carefully - I don't know why, but since we came from Ephraim he seems to have changed completely - I see him thus… just like Joseph. Look at him even now, Mary, now that he turns round again to look at us. Does he not have the pensive attitude so habitual to Your spouse Joseph? He smiles, but I do not know whether his smile is a sad or vague one. He looks, but he seems to be looking far away, beyond us, as Joseph did so often. Do You remember how Alphaeus used to tease him? He used to say: "Brother, are you still looking at the pyramids?". He would shake his head without speaking, patient and engrossed in thought. He was never talkative. But when You came back from Hebron! He did not even come to the fountain by himself any longer, as he used to do and as everybody does. He was either with You or at his work. And with the exception of the Sabbaths, when he went to the synagogue, or when he went somewhere on business, no one can say that they saw Joseph loitering about during those months. Then you went away… How distressing it was to have no news of you after the slaughter! Alphaeus went as far as Bethlehem… "They went away" they said. But how could

we believe them, if they had a mortal hatred of you in town, where the innocent blood was still red and the ruins were still smoking and they blamed you for the blood that had been shed? He went to Hebron and then to the Temple, because it was Zacharias' turn. Elizabeth gave him nothing but her tears, Zacharias only words of comfort. They were both worried about John and fearing fresh cruelties, they had hidden him and trembled for him. They had no news of you and Zacharias said to Alphaeus: "If they are dead, their blood is on me, because I convinced them to remain in Bethlehem". My Mary! My Jesus so beautiful at the Passover after His birth! And to have no news of You for such a long time! But why never any news?… »

« Because it was better to be silent. Where we were, there were many Maries and Josephs, and it was wise to be considered as a normal married couple » Mary replies quietly, then with a sigh She says: « And even in their sadness they were happy days. Evil was still so far away! If as human beings we lacked so many things, our spirits were sated with the joy of having You, My Son! »

« You have Your Son even now, Mary. Joseph is no longer with You, that is true! But Jesus is here and with His full love of an adult » remarks Mary of Alphaeus.

Mary raises Her head to look at Jesus. Although Her lips smile faintly, Her eyes reveal Her torture. But She does not utter another word.

The apostles have stopped waiting for them and they all gather together, including James and John who were behind with their mother. And while they rest after their long walk and some eat a little bread, the mother of James and John approaches Jesus Who has not sat down, anxious as He is to set out again, and she prostrates herself before Him.

As her desire to ask for something is obvious, Jesus asks her: « What do you want, woman? Tell Me. »

« Grant me a grace before You go away, as You say. »

« Which? »

« Arrange for these two sons of mine, who have left everything for Your sake, to sit one at Your right hand and the other at Your left, when You will be sitting in Your glory, in Your Kingdom. »

Jesus looks at the woman and then at the two apostles and He says: « You have suggested this request to your mother, misinterpreting the promises I made yesterday. You will not receive in a kingdom on the Earth the one hundredfold of what you have left. So are you becoming greedy and foolish, too? But it is not your fault. The mephitic twilight of darkness is already advancing and the polluted air of Jerusalem is approaching and is corrupting and blinding you… I tell you that you do not know what you are asking! Carl you drink of the cup that I am going to drink? »

« We can, Lord. »

« How can you say so if you have not understood the bitterness of My cup? It will not be only the bitterness that I described to you yesterday, the bitterness of the Man of all sorrows. There will be tortures that you would not be in a position to understand even if I should describe them to you… And yet, yes, although you are still like two boys who do not know the value of what they ask, as you are two just spirits who love Me, you will certainly drink of My cup. But it is not for Me to grant you to sit at My right or at My left. It is granted to those for whom it was prepared by My Father. »

The other apostles, while Jesus is still speaking, are very sharp in criticising the request of the sons of Zebedee and of their mother.

Peter says to John: « How could you?! I no longer recognise you for what you were! »

And the Iscariot with his demoniac smile says: « Truly the first are the last! Surprises and discoveries nowadays… » and he laughs on the wrong side of his mouth.

« Have we perhaps followed our Master to be honoured? » asks Philip reproachingly.

Instead of replying to the two apostles, Thomas addresses Salome saying: « Why did you have your sons mortified? You should have pondered on the matter and prevented all that, if they did not. »

« That is true. Our mother would not have done that » says Thaddeus.

Bartholomew does not speak, but his countenance evidences his disapproval.

In order to calm everybody's indignation, Simon Zealot says: « We can all make mistakes… »

Matthew, Andrew and James of Alphaeus do not say anything, but they are clearly suffering because of the incident that injures John's beautiful perfection.

Jesus makes a gesture to impose silence and says: « What? Is one error going to bring about many? You, who are reproaching with indignation, do you not realise that you are committing a sin as well? Leave these brothers of yours alone. My rebuke is sufficient. Their humiliation is evident, and their repentance is humble and sincere. You must love one another, supporting one another. Because none of you are yet perfect. You must not imitate the world and the men of the world. In the world, as you are aware, princes lord over their nations and their great men exert their power in the names of the princes. But that must not happen among you. You must not be eager to lord over men and your companions. On the contrary, anyone who wants to be great among you, must be your servant, and anyone who wants to be first among you, must be everybody's servant. Exactly as your Master did. Did I come to lord over People and oppress them? Or to be served? Certainly not. I

came to serve. Thus, as the Son of man did not come to be served, but to serve and give His life as a ransom for many, you must do likewise, if you want to be as I am and where I am. Go now. And be at peace with one another as I am at peace with you. »

Jesus says to me:

« Make the following sentence very clear: "… you will certainly drink of My chalice". In translations you read: "My chalice". I said: "of My chalice", not "My chalice". No man could have drunk My chalice. I alone, the Redeemer, had to drink all My chalice. My disciples, My imitators and lovers, are certainly allowed to drink of that chalice from which I drank, with regard to that drop, sip or sips, that God's predilection grants them to drink. But no one will ever drink all the chalice as I did. So it is right to say "of My chalice" and not "My chalice". »

576. Meeting with the Disciples Led by Manaen and Arrival at Jericho.

11th March 1947.

The white walls of the houses of Jericho and its palm-trees are already standing out against the ceramic or enamel deep blue of the sky, when, near a thicket of ruffled tamarisks, of sensitive mimosas, of hawthorn with very long thorns, of other plants mostly thorny, which seem to have been thrown there from the rough mountain behind Jericho, Jesus meets with a large group of disciples led by Manaen. They seem to be waiting. They are, in fact, and they say so after greeting the Master, stating that some more have gone along other routes to get information, as the delay of a whole night in arriving at Jericho had worried them.

« I came here with these. And I will not leave You any more until I see You safe with Lazarus » says Manaen.

« Why? Is there any danger?… » asks Judas Thaddeus.

« You are in Judaea… You are aware of the decree. And of their hatred. So we must fear everything » replies Manaen and turning towards Jesus he says: « I brought the strongest men with me because, if they had not caught You, we presumed that You would come this way. And taking into account our worth as disciples and men, we confide in impressing the wicked and having You respected. »

In fact there are with him the ex-disciples of Gamaliel, John the priest, Nicolaus of Antioch, John of Ephesus, and other strong men in the prime of life, more gentlemanly looking than common people, whom I do not know. Manaen introduces some of them quickly, while he does not introduce others. They are men from all the regions in Palestine, and among them there are two from the court

of Herod Philip. Thus the names of the most ancient families in Israel resound on the road near the ruffled thicket, where the leaves of mimosas quiver in the wind and the hawthorns bend their new shoots.

« Let us go. Is there no one with the women, at Nike's? » asks Jesus.

« The shepherds. All of them, except Jonathan who is waiting for Johanna in the mansion in Jerusalem. But Your disciples have grown exceedingly. They were about five hundred waiting for You yesterday at Jericho. So much so that Herod's servants became upset and informed him. And he did not know whether he should tremble or be pitiless. But he is haunted by the memory of John and he dare no longer lift his hand against any prophet… »

« Good! That will do You no harm! » exclaims Peter and he rubs his hands gladly.

« But he is the one who is worth less. He is an idol that anyone can move as one likes, and those who have him in their hands know how to move him. »

« And who has him in his hands? Pilate perhaps? » asks Bartholomew.

« Pilate does not need Herod to take action. Herod is a servant. The mighty ones do not apply to servants » replies Manaen.

« Who, then? » asks Bartholomew.

« The Temple » replies resolutely one who is with Manaen.

« But Herod is anathema to the Temple. His sin… »

« Notwithstanding your learning and your age, you are very naive, Bartholomew! So do you not know that the Temple can overcome many, too many things to attain its objects? That is why it does not deserve to exist any longer » says Manaen with a gesture of utter contempt.

« You are an Israelite. You must not speak thus. The Temple is always the Temple for us » says Bartholomew in an admonishing tone.

« No. It is the corpse of what it was. And a corpse turns into an unclean carrion when it has been dead for a long time. That is why God sent the living Temple. That we may prostrate ourselves before the Lord without performing an unclean pantomime. »

« Be quiet! » whispers to Manaen another man who is with him, as he speaks too clearly. He is one of those who were not introduced and he is completely enveloped in his mantle.

« Why should I be silent, if my heart speaks thus? Do you think that my words may harm the Master? If so, I will be quiet. But for no other reason. Even if they should condemn me I will say: "That is what I think and punish no one but me. »

« Manaen is right. Enough of being silent for fear. It is time for every man to declare his opinion for or against the Master and to reveal what he has in his heart. I am of your opinion, brother in

Jesus. And if that should bring about our death, we shall die together still professing the truth » says Stephen with transport.

« Be wise! Be very wise! » says Bartholomew admonishing them. « The Temple is always the Temple. It may make mistakes, it is certainly not perfect, but it is… it is… But after God there is no greater person, no greater power than the High Priest and the Sanhedrin… They represent God; and we must see what they represent, not what they are. Am I wrong, Master? »

« You are not wrong. In every establishment one must see its origin, in this case the Eternal Father, Who constituted the Temple and the hierarchies, the rites and the authority of the men appointed to represent it. We must refer judgement to the Father. He knows when and how to intervene, and what action to take so that corruption, by spreading, may not contaminate all men and make them doubt God… And Manaen is right with regard to that, as he has seen the reason for My coming at the present hour. It is also necessary for you, Bartholomew, to moderate your ultra-conservatism by means of the innovating spirit of Manaen, so that the measure may be just and feelings perfect. Every excess is always harmful: to him who accomplices it, to him who suffers it, or to him who notices it being scandalised and, if he is not an honest soul, making use of it to inform against his brothers. But that is an action of Cain, and will not be accomplished by the children of the Light, as it is the work of Darkness. »

The man who is all so covered, that only his dark very lively eyes can be seen and who warned Manaen not to speak too much, kneels down and takes Jesus' hand saying: « You are good, Master. I have become acquainted with You too late, o Word of God! But still in time to love You as You deserve, if not to serve You as long as I would have liked, as I would like now. »

« It is never too late for the hour of God. It comes at the right moment. And it grants as much time to serve the Truth as one's will desires. »

« But who is he? » whisper the apostles to one another, and they ask the disciples, but in vain. No one knows who he is or, if they do, they do not wish to tell.

« Who is he, Master? » asks Peter when he succeeds in approaching Jesus Who is walking in the middle of the group, with the women behind Him, the disciples ahead of Him, His cousins beside Him and the apostles around Him.

« A soul, Simon. Nothing more than that. »

« But… can You trust him, if You do not know who he is? »

« I know who he is. And I know his heart. »

« Ah! I see! Just like the Veiled woman at the Clear Water… I will not ask further questions… » and Peter is happy because Jesus, moving away from James, draws him close to Himself.

They are now at Jericho. A crowd of people singing hosannas rush out of the gate and Jesus can proceed with difficulty to cross the town going to Nike's house, which is out of Jericho on the other side. People implore Him to speak. Children are lifted up as if to form a living impassable barrier, relying on Jesus' love for little ones. People shout: « You can speak. He has already fled to Jerusalem » and with those words gestures are made towards Herod's beautiful palace, which is now closed.

Manaen confirms: « It is true. He went away during the night, noiselessly. He is afraid. »

But nothing stops Jesus. He proceeds saying: « Peace! Peace! Let those who are suffering or grieved come to Nike's house. Let those who wish to hear Me come to Jerusalem. I am the Pilgrim here. Just like all of you. I will speak in the house of the Father. Peace! Peace and blessings! Peace! »

It is already a little triumph, a prelude to the entrance into Jerusalem, now so close at hand.

I am astonished at Zacchaeus' absence until I see him standing at the entrance of Nike's property among his friends with the shepherds and the women disciples. They all run towards Jesus and prostrate themselves, then they escort Him while He, blessing them, proceeds through the orchard towards the hospitable house.

577. With Some Unknown Disciples.

15th March 1947.

A large number of people have crowded on Nike's meadows, where the hay is drying in the sun. And two heavy tilted wagons are waiting near the meadows. And I realise why they are waiting when I see all the women disciples being led towards them and get on them after the Master has blessed and dismissed them. Also the Blessed Virgin goes away with the other women disciples, and also the young man from Enon joins them, while many disciples place themselves at the sides of the wagons and, when the latter move off at the slow pace of the oxen, also the disciples set out. The apostles, Zacchaeus and his friends remain on the meadows with a small group of personages, all enveloped in their mantles, as if they did not want to be recognised.

Jesus slowly retraces His steps towards the middle of the meadow and sits on a heap of half-dry hay, which will soon be taken to the hay-loft. He is engrossed in thought, and everybody respects His concentration, remaining in three different groups, a little aside from Him and from one another.

The meditation is prolonged and so is the wait. The sun becomes stronger and stronger and blazes down on the meadow that smells strongly of drying stems. Those who are waiting take shelter at the

edges of the meadow, where the last trees of the orchard cast a refreshing shade.

Jesus remains alone. Alone in the sun that is already strong, all white in His linen tunic and in the headgear of light byssus that blows lightly in the breeze. Perhaps it is the one woven by Syntyche. The slow plaintive bellowing of cows can be heard from a nearby stable, and the chirruping of nestlings from the branches of the trees in the orchard and from the threshing-floors: the chirping of fledglings and the peeping of cheeky chicks. The life that continues being renewed at each springtime. Doves are wheeling high above, before going back to their nest with steadfast flights. I do not know whether in Nike's nearby house, or in some field, a woman is singing a lullaby, and the thin voice of the child, at first shrill and trembling, like the bleating of a lamb, grows faint and then is silent…

Jesus is pensive. He is still meditating. Always. Insensible to the sun. I have often noted the exceptional resistance of our blessed Jesus to the rigours of the seasons. I have never understood whether He felt heat and cold severely and endured them without complaining, out of spirit of mortification, or whether, as He dominated unchecked elements, He also dominated excessive heat and cold. I do not know. I know that, although I have seen Him wet to the skin in downpours and wet with perspiration in dog-days, I have never noticed any gesture of discomfort in Him owing to heat or cold, neither have I seen Him take those precautionary measures that men usually take against the excesses of sun or frost.

It was pointed out to me one day that in Palestine it is not customary to go about bare-headed and that consequently I am wrong in saying that Jesus' bare fair-haired head shines in the sunshine. It may be very true that in Palestine it is not possible to go about bare-headed. I have never been there and I do not know. What I know is that Jesus usually does not wear any headgear. And if at the beginning of a journey He has any on, He soon takes it off, as if He were impatient of encumbrances, and He carries it in His hand, using it, more than anything else, to wipe the dust and perspiration from His face. When it rains, He covers His head with the edge of His mantle. In strong sunshine, particularly when He is on the way to some place, He looks for the shade of rows of trees, even if they are not close to one another, to protect Himself from sunbeams. But He hardly ever wears a light veil on His head as He is doing today. This comment may seem useless to some people, but it is also part of what I see and I mention it while Jesus is thinking…

« It will hurt Him to stay there so long! » exclaims one who belongs to a group that is neither the apostolic one nor Zacchaeus'.

« Let us go and tell His disciples… Further… I would like… I would not like to be delayed too long » replies another man.

« Eh! Yes. The Adummim mountains are not very safe by night… »

They go towards the apostles and speak to them.

« All right. I will go and tell them that you want to go away » says the Iscariot.

« No. Not thus. We would like to be at least at En-Shemesh before dark. »

Judas goes away smiling ironically. He bends over the Master and says to Him: « They say that it is because the sun may hurt You but the truth is that they may be hurt by being noticed too much - but the Jews want to be dismissed. »

« I am coming… I was thinking… They are right » and Jesus stands up.

« Everybody, except me… » grumbles the Iscariot.

Jesus looks at him and is silent. They go together towards those men whom Judas has called Jews.

« I had already dismissed all of you. I told you yesterday. I will speak only in Jerusalem… »

« That is true. But the fact is that we should like to speak to You, we who… We can speak to you privately. »

« Satisfy them. They are afraid of us, or, more exactly, of me » says Judas of Kerioth again, with his venomous smile.

« We are not afraid of anybody. If we wanted we knew how to protect our tranquillity. But they are not all cowards yet in Palestine. We are descendants of David's valiant men, and if you are not yet despised and a slave, you must pay homage to our stock, the first by the holy king's side, the first by the Maccabees' side. And the first even now, when honour and advice are to be given to the Son of David. Because He is great. But every creature, no matter how great one may be, may need a friend in the crucial hours of life » replies passionately one who is all clothed with linen garments, including his mantle and headgear, which covers almost all his severe face.

« He has us as friends. We have been such for three years, since You… »

« We did not know Him. Too often we were deceived by false Messiahs to believe every assertion readily. But the latest events have enlightened us. His deeds are the deeds of God, and we say that He is the Son of God. »

« And do you think that He is in need of you? »

« As the Son of God, no. But as the Man, yes. He has come to be the Man. And the Man always needs men, His brothers. In any case, why are you afraid? Why do you not want us to speak? Tell us. »

« Me? Speak! You may speak! People listen more to sinners than to just men. »

« Judas! I thought that such words should feel like fire on your lips! How dare you judge when your Master does not judge? It is written: "If your sins were like scarlet, they shall become as white

as snow, and if they were as red as crimson, they shall be as white as wool". »

« But You are not aware that among these… »

« Be silent! Let them speak.. »

« Lord, we know. The charge against You is ready. They accuse You of violating the Law and the Sabbaths, of loving the people of Samaria more than us, of defending publicans and prostitutes, of having recourse to Beelzebub and to other evil powers, of black magic, of hating the Temple and wanting to destroy it, of… »

« That is enough. Anybody can make charges, but it is more difficult to prove the charge. »

« But among them there are those who support it. Do You think that they are just in there? »

« I shall reply to you with the words of Job, who is a figure of the Patient Man who I am: "Far from me the thought of considering all of you just. But I will maintain my innocence until the end, I will not give up my justification which I have begun, because my conscience does not reproach me for anything in all my life". Now, all Israel can testify, because I will not justify Myself with words that also a liar can speak, all Israel can testify that I have always taught people to respect the Law, nay, even more: that I perfected obedience to the Law, and the Sabbaths have not been profaned by Me… What do you want to say? Speak up! You made a gesture and then you stopped. Speak up! »

One of the… mysterious little group says: « Lord, at the last session of the Sanhedrin they read a denunciation against You. It came from Samaria, from Ephraim, where You were, and it stated that it had been proved that You had violated the Sabbath several times and… »

« And I reply to you once again with Job: "And what is the hope of the hypocrite if he steals our of avarice, and God does not free his soul?". This wretch, who shows one face and has a different heart and wants to commit the great robbery out of envy of My welfare, is already on the road to Hell, and it will be of no use for him to have money, and hope for honours, and dream to ascend where I did not want to go, in order not to betray the holy Decree. Shall we busy ourselves with him, but to pray for him? »

« But the Sanhedrin has derided You saying: "Here is the Samaritans' love for Him! They accuse Him to ingratiate themselves with us". »

« Are you sure that it was a Samaritan hand that wrote those words? »

« No. But Samaria was severe with You during the past days… »

« Because the messengers of the Sanhedrin subverted and roused the people with false advice, exciting foolish hopes that I had to demolish. In any case it is said of Ephraim and of Judah, and it can

be said of every place, because inconstant is the heart of man who forgets favours and yields to threats: "Your goodness is like morning mist, like dew that disappears in the morning". But that does not prove that they, the Samaritans, are the accusers of the Innocent. A wrong love made them furious against Me, but it is love that is delirious. Which other proof proves the charge of preference for the Samaritans? »

« You are accused of loving them so much that You always say: "Listen, Israel", instead of saying: "Listen, Judah". And that You cannot reproach Judah… »

« Really? Is it there that the wisdom of the rabbis gets lost? Am I not the Branch of justice sprouted from David and through which, as Jeremiah says, Judah will be saved? The Prophet foresees that Judah, above all Judah, will then need salvation. And this Branch, says the Prophet again, will be called the Lord, our Just One "because, says the Lord, David shall never lack a male descendant to sit on the throne of the house of Israel". So what? Has the Prophet made a mistake? Was he drunk? With what? Certainly with penance and nothing else. Because no one can maintain that Jeremiah was a guzzler, in order to accuse Me. And yet he says that the Branch of David will save Judah and sit on the throne of Israel. So one should say that the enlightened Prophet sees that Israel rather than Judah will be elected, that the King will go to Israel, and that it will be a grace if Judah receives only salvation. So will it be called the Kingdom of Israel? No. It will be called the Kingdom of Christ. Of Him Who joins the scattered parts and rebuilds in the Lord, after having, according to the other Prophet, in a month - what am I saying in a month? - in less than one day, judged and condemned the three false shepherds and closed My soul to them because their souls remained closed to Me, and although they desired Me in figure they did not love Me in Nature. Now He Who sent Me and gave Me the two staves will break both, so that Grace may be lost for cruel people, and the Scourge may come from the world, not from Heaven. And nothing is more painful than the scourges that men use for men. It will be so. Oh! so! I shall be struck and two thirds of the sheep will be scattered. Only one third, always one third only, will be saved and will persevere until the end. And this third part will pass through the fire through which I shall be the first to pass, and it will be purified and tested like silver and gold, and it will be said to it: "You are My people" and it will say to Me: "You are my Lord". And there will be who weighs the thirty shekels, the price of the dreadful deed, the foul wages. And they will no longer be able to go back in from where they came out, because also the stones would cry with horror seeing those shekels, stained with the blood of the Innocent and with the perspiration of Him Who will be persecuted by the most violent desperation, and they will serve, as it was said,

to buy the field for foreigners from the slaves of Babylon. Oh! the field for foreigners! Do you know who they are? Those of Judah and Israel, those who soon, for ages, will have no fatherland any more. Not even the earth of their ancient soil will receive them. It will vomit them out even when they are dead, because they wanted to repel the Life. How horrible!… »

Jesus becomes silent, as if He were oppressed, with His head lowered. He then raises it, looks round, He sees those who are present: the apostles, the secret disciples, Zacchaeus and his friends. He sighs like one who awakes from a nightmare. He says: « What else were you saying? Ah! that I am accused of loving publicans and prostitutes. That is true. They are sick, they are dying. I, the Life, give Myself to them as life. Come, My redeemed flock » He says to Zacchaeus and his friends. « Come and listen to My order. To many, who were whiter than you are, I said: "Do not come to Jerusalem". To you I say: "Come". This may seem to be unfair… »

« It is in fact » says the Iscariot interrupting Him.

Jesus feigns He has not heard him. He continues to speak to Zacchaeus and his companions saying to those enveloped in their mantles: « But I say to you: come, because you are plants that need dew more than others, so that your good will may be assisted by the Mighty Father and you may now grow freely in Grace. With regard to other matters… Heaven itself will reply by means of unmistakable signs. The living Temple may really be destroyed, and rebuilt in three days, and for ever. But the dead Temple, which will only be shaken and will think that is has won, will perish never to rise again. Go! And be not afraid. Wait for My day, doing penance, and its dawn will bring you to the Light definitely. » He then says to Zacchaeus: « You may all go as well. But not now. Be in Jerusalem at the dawn of the day after the Sabbath. Beside the just I want those who have been raised again, because in the Kingdom of the Christ there are innumerable seats. As many as the men of good will. » And He sets out towards Nike's house through a thick shady orchard.

A little path is like a yellowish ribbon on the green ground and a clucking hen crosses it with her golden-hued chickens and the timorous mother, in the presence of so many strangers, crouches and spreads out her wings to defend them clucking louder, fearing danger for her little ones. And they rush and hide under the maternal feathers peeping until they feel safe, and do not seem to exist any more…

Jesus stops to contemplate her… and tears stream from His eyes.

« He is weeping! Why is He weeping? He is weeping! » they all whisper: the apostles, disciples and redeemed sinners. And Peter says to John: « Ask Him why He is weeping… » And John, in his usual attitude, lightly bent out of respect, looking up at Him, asks: « Why

are You weeping, my Lord? Perhaps because of what You were told and what You said previously? »

Jesus rouses Himself, He smiles sadly and pointing at the hen, which is still protecting her offspring with love, He says: « I also, one with My Father, saw Jerusalem, as Ezekiel said, naked and shameful. I saw her and passed close to her, and when the time came, the time of My love, I spread My mantle on her and I covered her nakedness. I wanted to make her queen after being her father, and to protect her, as that hen is protecting her little ones… But, whilst the brood are grateful for the attention of their mother and take shelter under her wings, Jerusalem refuses My mantle… But I will persevere in My plan of love… I… My Father, later, will act according to His will. » And Jesus goes on to the grass in order not to disturb the brooding-hen and He passes by, and tears stream down His pale sorrowful face once again.

They all imitate Him, following His steps and whispering until they arrive at the threshold of Nike's house. Only Jesus goes in with the apostles and the others proceed to their destinations…

578. Prophecy on Israel. Miracles Worked During the Journey from Jericho to Bethany.

17th March 1947.

It is daybreak and its whiteness is shading into the early pink hue of dawn. The fresh silence of the country is broken more and more and is adorned with the trills of the awakened birds.

Jesus is the first to come out of Nike's house, He silently sets the door ajar and turns His steps towards the green orchard resounding with the limpid notes of blackcaps and the flute-like song of blackbirds.

But before He arrives there four people come from it towards Him. Four of those who were in the unknown group yesterday and who had never uncovered their faces. They prostrate themselves to the ground, and at Jesus' order and at the question He asks them, after greeting them with His salutation of peace: « Stand up! What do you want of Me? » they stand up, throw their mantles behind their backs and push back their linen headgears, with which they had hidden their faces, as do Bedouins.

I recognise the thin pale face of Joel of Abijah, the scribe seen in the vision of Sabea. I do not know the others until they mention their names: « I, Judas of Beth-Horon, the last of the true Hasidaeans, the friends of Mattathias the Asmonaean »; « I, Eliel, and my brother Elkanah from Bethlehem in Judah, the brothers of Johanna, Your disciple, and we have no greater title than that. We were absent when You were strong, we are present now that You are persecuted »; « I, Joel of Abijah, whose eyes have been blind

for so long, but are now open to the Light. »

« I had already dismissed you. What do you want of Me? »

« To tell You that… if we are covered up, it is not because of You, but… » says Eliel.

« Come on! Speak up! »

« But Joel, you had better speak, because you are the most informed »

« Lord What I know is so… horrible… I would not like even the clods of earth to hear, to know what I am about to say… »

« The clods will really be startled, but I shall not. Because I know what you want to say. But speak just the same… »

« If You know… do not let my lips tremble saying such a dreadful thing. It is not the case that I think that You are lying saying that You know and that You want me to speak to inform You, but just because… »

« Yes. Because it is a thing that cries to the Lord. But I will mention it to persuade everybody that I know the hearts of men. You, a member of the Sanhedrin and won over to the Truth, have found out something that you cannot bear by yourself, because it is too great. And you went to these true Judaeans whose spirits are only good, to consult with them. You did the right thing, although it will be to no avail. The last of the Hasidaeans would be ready to repeat the gesture of his ancestors in order to serve the true Liberator. And he is not the only one. Also his relative Barzillai would do so and many more with him. And Johanna's brothers for My sake and for the sake of their sister, and also of their Fatherland, would join him. But I shall not triumph by means of lances and swords. Enter the Truth completely. My triumph will be a celestial one. You - and this makes you even more pale and emaciated than usual - you know who presented the witnesses for the persecution against Me, the witnesses who, while they are false in their spirits, are truthful with regard to the material meaning of their words, because I did infringe the Sabbath when I had to flee, as My hour had not yet come, and when I saved two innocents from the highwaymen, and I could say that necessity justified the actions as necessity justified David for eating the consecrated bread. It is true that I took shelter in Samaria, although, when My hour came and the Samaritans suggested that I should remain with them as their Pontiff, I refused honours and safety to remain faithful to the Law, even if that means handing Myself to My enemies. It is true that I love sinners and prostitutes to the extent of tearing them away from sin. It is true that I preach the ruin of the Temple, even if these words of Mine are nothing but the Messiah's confirmation of the words of His prophets. He who makes these and other charges and turns also miracles into indictments, and has made use of everything on the Earth to try to induce Me to sin and be able to add further

charges to the previous ones, is one of My friends. That also was said by the king prophet, from whom I descend through My Mother: "He who shared my bread raised his heel against me". I know. I would die twice if I could, not to prevent him from committing the crime - by now… his will has surrendered to Death, and God does not do violence to man's freedom - but if at least… oh! if at least the torture of the horrible deed accomplished would make him repent at God's feet… That is why you, Judas of Beth-Horon, yesterday admonished Manaen to be quiet. Because the snake was present and he might have damaged the disciple, besides the Master. No. Only the Master will be struck. Be not afraid. It will not be because of Me that you will have sufferings and misfortunes, but because of the crime of a whole population you will all have what the prophets said. Oh! My miserable Fatherland! Miserable land that will experience the punishment of God! Miserable inhabitants and children whom I now bless and I would like to be saved, and who, although innocent, when adults, will suffer the torture of the greatest misfortune. Look at this land of yours: flourishing, beautiful, green and flowery like a wonderful carpet, as fertile as Eden… Impress its beauty on your hearts, and then… when I shall have gone back whence I came… run away. Run away while you can, before the desolation of ruin, like a hellish fury, spreads here demolishing and destroying, making everything sterile and burning more than happened at Gomorrah, more than happened at Sodom… Yes, more than there, where it was nothing but quick death. Here… Joel, do you remember Sabea? For the last time she prophesied the future of God's people who did not want the Son of God. »

The four men are dumbfounded. The fear of the future makes them dumb. Eliel at last says: « What do You advise us to do?… »

« Yes. Go. There will be nothing left here worthy of detaining the children of Abraham's people. On the other hand, you notables of the people in particular, would not be left here… The mighty ones made prisoners embellish the triumph of the victor. The new and immortal Temple will fill the Earth with itself and every man seeking Me will have Me, because I shall be wherever a heart loves Me. Go. Take your women, sons and the old ones away… You are offering Me salvation and help. I advise you to save yourselves, and I help you by means of this advice… Do not disregard it. »

« But now… what greater harm can Rome do us? We are dominated. And if her law is a hard one, it is also true that Rome has rebuilt houses and towns and… »

« Really, you had better know that not one stone will be left intact in Jerusalem. Fire, battering-rams, catapults, spears will knock down, demolish, destroy every house and the holy City will become a cavern, and will not be the only one… Our Fatherland will become a cavern. The grazing ground of onagers and jackals, as the

prophets say. And not for one or more years, or for ages, but for ever. The desert, aridity, sterility… That is the destiny of this land! The field of contentions, the place of torture, the dream of reconstruction always destroyed by an inflexible sentence, attempts at resurrection stifled at birth. The destiny of the Land that rejected the Saviour and wanted a dew that is fire on culprits. »

« So… will there never again be a Kingdom of Israel? Shall we never again be what we dreamed? » ask the three Jewish notables in panting voices. Joel, the scribe, is weeping…

« Have you ever watched an old tree whose medulla has been destroyed by disease? For years it vegetates with difficulty, with so much difficulty that it neither blossoms nor yields fruit. Only rare leaves on the worn out branches reveal that there is still a little lymph rising… Then in April it blossoms miraculously, it becomes covered with dense foliage and the owner, who for many years took care of it without receiving any fruit, rejoices thinking that it has recovered and has become luxuriant after so much decay… Oh! deception! Sudden death follows such an exuberant outburst of life. The blossoms, leaves and little fruit fall off, while they seemed to have already set on the branches promising a rich harvest, and with a sudden crash the tree, rotten at its base, falls to the ground. That is what Israel will do. After ages of sterile scattered vegetation, it will gather on its old trunk and will have an appearance of reconstruction. The dispersed People gathered together at last. Gathered and forgiven. Yes. God will wait for that hour to end the course of ages. Then time will not longer exist, but only eternity. Blessed are those who, being forgiven, will form the fleeting blossoming of the last Israel that, after so many ages, will have become of the Christ, and will die redeemed, with all the peoples of the Earth, blessed with those who, among them, have not only become acquainted with My existence, but have embraced My Law as the law of salvation and life. I can hear the voices of My disciples. Go before they come… »

« It is not out of cowardice, Lord, that we are trying to remain unknown, but to serve You, to be able to serve You. If they knew that we, I in particular, have come to You, we should be excluded from future resolutions… » says Joel.

« I understand. But bear in mind that the snake is wily. You in particular, Joel, be cautious… »

« Oh! let them kill me! I would prefer my death to Yours! So that I should not see the days You mentioned! Bless me, Lord to fortify me… »

« I bless you all in the name of God One and Trine and in the name of the Word Incarnate to be salvation for the men of good will. » He blesses them collectively with a wide gesture and then He lays His hand on each of the four heads bent at His feet.

They then stand up, they cover their faces again and they disappear among the trees of the orchard and the hedges of blackberries, that separate pear-trees from apple-trees and the latter from other trees. Just in time, because the twelve apostles come out of the house in a group looking for the Master, in order to set forth.

And Peter says: « In front of the house, towards the town, there is a large crowd of people, whom we held back with difficulty, to let You pray. They want to follow You. None of those You dismissed have left. On the contrary, many have come back and many have just arrived. We reproached them… »

« Why? Let them follow Me! I wish everybody did so! Let us go! » And Jesus, after putting on the mantle that John hands Him, places Himself at the head of His apostles, He arrives at the house, He passes by it, He takes the Bethany road and intones a psalm in a loud voice.

The people, a real crowd, the men first, then the women and children, follow Him, singing with Him… The town is left behind in its enclosure of greenery.

The road is busy with pilgrims. And on the roadside many beggars raise their plaintive voices to move the crowd to pity and thus receive abundant alms. Cripples, maimed and blind people… The usual miserable people who, in every age and in every region, are in the habit of gathering wherever a festivity assembles crowds. And if the blind people cannot see those who are passing by, the others can see them and as they know how kind the Master is to the poor, they utter their cries louder than usually, to draw Jesus' attention. But they do not ask for miracles. They only ask for alms, and Judas gives them alms.

A well-to-do looking woman stops the donkey, which she is riding, near a robust tree that shades a crossroad and she waits for Jesus. When He is close at hand, she slides down from her mount and prostrates herself, with some difficulty, because she is holding in her arms a little child, who is completely inert, She lifts it without saying a word. Her eyes and distressed face are praying. But Jesus is surrounded by people forming a hedge and He cannot see the poor mother kneeling on the roadside.

A man and a woman, who appear to be with the sorrowful mother, are speaking to her and the man shaking his head says: « There is nothing for us. » And the woman says: « Mistress, He has not seen you. Call Him with faith and He will hear your prayer. »

The mother listens to her and she shouts, in a loud voice, to overcome the noise of songs and steps: « Lord! Have mercy on me! »

Jesus, Who is a few metres ahead, stops and turns round looking for the person who has shouted, and the servant says: « Mistress, He is looking for you. So stand up and go to Him and Fabia will be cured » and she helps her to stand up and leads her towards the

Lord Who says: « Who invoked Me, should come to Me. It is the time of mercy for those who can hope in mercy.. »

The two women elbow their way through the crowd, the servant in front preparing the way for the mother who follows her, and they are about to arrive near Jesus, when a voice shouts: « My dead arm! Look! Blessed be the Son of David. Our always mighty and holy true Messiah! »

There is some excitement because many people turn round and bustle about confusedly, moving like opposite waves around Jesus. Everybody wants to know, to see… They question an old man who is waving his right arm as if it were a flag and who replies: « He stopped, I succeeded in getting hold of the hem of His mantle and in covering myself with it, and something like fire and life ran along my arm, and here it is: my right arm is like my left one, only because it was touched by His garment. »

In the meantime Jesus asks the woman: « What do you want? » The woman raises her child and says: « She also is entitled to life. She is innocent. She did not ask to be of one place or of another one, of one blood or of a different one. I am guilty. I am to be punished. Not her. »

« Do you hope that God's mercy is greater than men's? »

« I do, Lord. I believe. On my behalf and on my child's to whom I hope You will give lucidity of mind and motion. You are said to be the Life… » and she weeps.

« I am the Life and those who believe in Me will have the life of the spirit and of their bodies. I want it! »

Jesus has shouted those words in a loud voice, and He now lays His hand on the inert child who thrills, smiles and says one word: « Mummy! »

« She moves! She smiles! She has spoken! Fabius! Mistress! » The two women have followed the phases of the miracle and have proclaimed them loud. And they have called the father who pushes through the crowd and arrives near the women when they are already at Jesus' feet weeping, and when the servant says: « I told you that He has mercy on everybody! », and the mother says: « And now forgive me also my sin. »

« Does Heaven not show you, through the grace granted to you, that your error has been forgiven? Rise and walk. On the new way, with your daughter and the man you have chosen. Go. Peace be with you. And with you, little girl. And with you, faithful Israelite. Great peace to you, for your loyalty to God and to the daughter of the family you served and you kept close to the Law with your heart. And peace also to you, man, who have been more respectful to the Son of man, than many in Israel. »

He takes His leave of them while the crowd, after leaving the old man, takes an interest in the new miracle for the paralysed dullwitted

girl, perhaps the consequence of meningitis, and who is now skipping happily, saying the only words she knows, probably the ones she knew when she was taken ill and which now she finds intact again in her revived mind: « Father, mummy, Eliza. The beautiful sun! The flowers!… »

Jesus is about to go away, but from the cross-road that has now been overtaken, two more plaintive cries are heard in the typical Jewish accent, coming from the place where the donkeys have been left by the people who received the miracle: « Jesus, Lord! Son of David, have mercy on me! » And once again, in a louder voice, to overcome the shouts of the crowd who say: « Be quiet. Let the Master go on. The way is a long one, and the sun is becoming stronger and stronger. Let Him reach the hills before it gets hot », they shout: « Jesus, Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me. »

Jesus stops again saying: « Go and get those who are shouting and bring them here to Me. »

Some volunteers go. They reach the two blind men and say: « Come. He has mercy on you. Stand up because He wants to satisfy you. He sent us to call you in His name » and they try to guide the two blind men through the crowd.

But if one lets them guide him, the other, who is younger and probably has more faith, precedes the intentions of the volunteers and moves forward by himself, with his stick pointed forward and the typical smile and attitude of blind people in raising their faces seeking light… and he proceeds so fast and sure of himself that he seems to be led by his angel. If his eyes were not white, he would not seem to be blind.

He is the first to arrive before Jesus Who stops him asking: « What do you want Me to do for you? »

« That I may see, Master. O Lord, let my eyes and those of my companion open. » The other blind man has arrived and they make him kneel near his companion.

Jesus lays His hands on their raised faces and says: « Let it be done as you wish. Go! Your faith has saved you! »

He removes His hands and two cries come from their lips: « I can see, Uriel! »; « I can see, Bartimaeus! » and then together: « Blessed He Who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed He Who sent Him! Glory be to God! Hosanna to the Son of David » and prostrating themselves with their faces on the ground they kiss Jesus' feet. They then stand up and the one named Uriel says: « Lord, I am going to let my relatives see me, then I will come back and follow You. » Bartimaeus instead says:« I am not going to leave You. I will send word to them. It will always be a great joy. But I am not going to part from You. You have given me my eyesight. I consecrate my life to You. Have Pity on the wish of the least of Your servants. »

« Come and follow Me. Good will makes all statuses equal, and

he only is great who knows how to serve the Lord in a better way. »

And Jesus takes to the road again amid the hosannas of the crowd, and Bartimaeus mingles with the people and while going he sings hosannas saying: « I came for a piece of bread and I found the Lord. I was poor, now I am a minister of the holy King. Glory to the Lord and to His Messiah »…

579. Arrival at Bethany.

18th March 1947.

They must have stopped half-way between Jericho and Bethany because, when they arrive at the first houses in Bethany, the last drops of dew are evaporating on leaves and stems in meadows and the sun is still rising in the vault of heaven.

The farmers of the area drop their tools and rush round Jesus, Who is passing blessing men and plants, as insistently requested by the peasants. And some women and children come towards Him with the first almonds still enveloped in the light silver-green plush of the husks, and with the last blossoms of the late fruit-trees. I notice, however, that here, in the area of Jerusalem, probably because of the altitude, or because of the winds blowing from the highest mountain tops in Judaea, or I do not know for which other reason, perhaps also because the trees are different, there are many trees still blossoming and they look like light white-rosy clouds hanging over the green meadows. The tender vine leaves quiver under the high tree-trunks like large butterflies of a precious emerald hue, tied to the rough vine-shoots.

While Jesus stops at the fountain, which is situated where the country ends and the village begins, and He is respectfully greeted by almost the whole population of Bethany, Lazarus arrives with his sisters and they prostrate themselves before their Lord. Although little more than two days have gone by since Mary left her Master, she seems not to have seen Him for ages, so untiring she is in kissing His dusty feet in His sandals.

« Come, my Lord. Our home is awaiting You to rejoice at Your presence » says Lazarus standing beside Jesus, while they proceed slowly, as the crowds allow them to do. The people in fact throng round Him and the children cling to Jesus' garments and walk in front of Him, with their heads raised looking at Him, so that they stumble and make Him stumble, so much so that Jesus first and then Lazarus and the apostles pick up the smaller ones in their arms, to be able to walk faster.

At a junction with a lane leading to Simon Zealot's house, there is Mary with Her sister-in-law, Salome and Susanna. Jesus stops to greet His Mother, and then He goes on as far as the large wide open gate where Maximinus, Sarah and Marcella are, and behind

them all the many servants of the house, beginning with those employed in the house and ending with those working in the fields. They are all in order, very happy and excited in their joy that bursts into hosannas, while they wave their headgears and veils and they throw flowers and leaves of myrtle and laurel, of roses and jasmins, which shine in the sun with their splendid corollas or spread like white stars on the dark ground. The scent of plucked flowers and trodden aromatic leaves rises from the ground warmed by the sun. Jesus passes on the sweet-smelling carpet.

Mary of Magdala, who follows Him looking at the ground, stoops, step by step, looking like a gleaner who follows the man tying the sheaves, to pick up the leaves and corollas and also the plucked petals that have been pressed by Jesus' feet.

Maximinus, in order to be able to close the gate and give peace to the guests, orders the servants to give cakes, that have already been prepared, to the children. A practical way to distract the children's attention from the Lord and thus send them away without rousing a chorus of complaints. And the servants carry out the order taking out into the street baskets full of small cakes decorated with white-brown almonds.

And while the little ones crowd there, other servants push back the adults, among whom there is still Zacchaeus and his four friends - Joel, Judas, Eliel and Elkanah - and others whom I do not know, because they are all covered with veils, to protect themselves from the dust raised by a rather heavy wind and from the sun, which is already strong.

But Jesus, Who is already far ahead, turns round and says: « Wait! I have something to tell some of you. »

And He goes towards Johanna's brothers and He takes them aside saying: « Please go to Johanna and tell her to come to Me with all the women who are with her and with Annaleah, the disciple from Ophel. Tell her to come tomorrow, because the Sabbath begins at sunset tomorrow and I want to spend it with My friends of Bethany. In peace. »

« We will tell her, Lord. And she will come. »

Jesus dismisses them and He goes to Joel: « You will tell Joseph and Nicodemus that I have come and that on the day after the Sabbath I will enter the town. »

« Oh! Be careful, Lord! » says the good scribe anxiously.

« Go. And be strong. He who follows justice and believes in My truth must not be afraid. But he must rejoice because the accomplishment of the ancient Promise is about to take place. »

« Ah! I will run away from Jerusalem, Lord. I am a man of a delicate constitution, as You can see and You know, and I am laughed at because of that. I could not stand any… »

« Your angel will guide you. Go in peace. »

« Shall I… see You again, Lord? »

« Of course you will see Me again. But until you see Me again consider that your love has given Me so much joy in the hours of sorrow. »

Joel takes the hand that Jesus had laid on his shoulder and presses it against his lips; through the thin veil of his headgear kisses and tears descend upon Jesus' hand.

He then goes away and Jesus goes to Zacchaeus: « Where are your friends? »

« They remained at the fountain, Lord. I told them to stay there. »

« Join them and go with them to Bethphage where My earliest and most faithful disciples are. Tell Isaac, their chief, to spread through the town and inform all the groups of disciples that the morning after the Sabbath, about the third hour, I will pass through Bethphage and enter Jerusalem and I will go up to the Temple in a solemn way. Tell Isaac that this information is for the disciples only. He will understand what I mean. »

« I understand as well, Master. You want to surprise the Judaeans so that they may not be able to hinder Your entrance. »

« Exactly. So do as I told you. Remember that I am entrusting you with a confidential task. I am making use of you and not of Lazarus. »

« And that tells me how Your kindness to me is incommensurable. I thank You, Lord. » He kisses the Master's hand and goes away.

Jesus is about to go back to His hosts. But from the gate from which the last people are coming out, pushed by the servants, a young man departs and runs towards Jesus, throwing himself at His feet and shouting: « A blessing, Master! Do You recognise me? » raising his head, which is not veiled.

« Yes. You are Joseph named Barnabas, the disciple of Gamaliel, and you came to meet Me near Giscala. »

« And I have been following You for many days. I was at Shiloh, on my way from Giscala where I had gone with the rabbi while You were absent, and where I remained studying the rolls until the month of Nisan. I was at Shiloh when You spoke, and I followed You to Lebonah and to Shechem, and I waited for You at Jericho, because I had heard that You… » He suddenly stops as if he realised that he was about to say what he was not to mention.

Jesus smiles kindly and says: « The truth bursts out impetuously from sincere lips, and it often flows over the dams that prudence places before people's mouths. But I will complete your thought… "because you had heard from Judas of Kerioth, who remained at Shechem, that I was going to Jericho to join My disciples and give them My instructions". And you went there to wait for Me without worrying about being seen, about wasting your time and being away from your master Gamaliel. »

« He will not reproach me when he learns that I delayed in order to follow You. I will take him Your words as a gift… »

« Oh! Rabbi Gamaliel does not need words. He is the wise rabbi of Israel! »

« Yes. No other rabbi can teach him anything of what is ancient, nothing, because he knows everything that is ancient. But You can. You have new words, full of the fresh life of what is new. Your word is like the sap of springtime. That is what rabbi Gamaliel says, and he adds that the wisdom by now covered with the dust of ages, and thus dry and dull, becomes lively and bright when Your word explains it. Oh! I will take him Your words. »

« And My greetings. Tell him to open his heart, his intellect, his sight, his hearing; and his more than twenty-year-old question will be answered. Go. God be with you. »

The youth stoops again to kiss the Master's feet and goes away.

The servants can at last close the gate and Jesus can join His friends.

« I took the liberty of inviting the women disciples here for tomorrow » says Jesus standing beside Lazarus on whose shoulder He lays His arm.

« You did the right thing, Lord. My house is Yours, as You know. Your Mother preferred to stay in Simon's house. And I respected Her desire. But I hope that You will stay under my roof. »

« Yes, I will. Although… also the other house is your roof. One of your first generous actions on My friends' behalf and Mine. How many of them you have done, My dear friend! »

« And I hope I shall be able to go on doing them for a long time. Although that is the wrong word, wise Master. I am not being generous to You. You are being generous to me. I am the debtor. And if before the treasures You have given me, I lay a farthing for You, what is my miserable gift as compared with Your treasures? "Give and it will be given to you" You said. "A shaken and pressed measure will be poured on your lap and you will receive one hundredfold of what you have given" You say. I received one hundredfold of a hundredfold even when I had not given You anything. Oh! I remember our first meeting! You, the Lord and God, Whom seraphim are not worthy to approach, came to me, when I was all alone and distressed… closed in here, in my sadness, You came to Lazarus, the man shunned by everybody, except Joseph and Nicodemus and my faithful friend Simon, who from his sepulchre of a living being did not cease to love me… You did not want my joy in seeing You to be perturbed by the corrosive splashes of the world's contempt… Our first meeting! I could repeat all the words You spoke then… What had I given You then, if I had ever seen You, that I should receive from You, at once, one hundredfold of one hundredfold? »

« Your prayers to our Most High Father. Ours, Lazarus. Mine.

Yours. Mine as the Word and as Man. Yours as man. When you prayed then with so much faith, were you not already giving Me your whole self? So you can see that, as it is fair, I gave you one hundredfold of what you were giving Me. »

« Your goodness is infinite, Master and Lord. You reward in advance, and with divine generosity, those whom Your thought acknowledges as Your servants even before they realise to be such. »

« My friends, not My servants. Because, really, those who do the will of My Father and follow the Truth that He has sent, are My friends, not My servants. Even more: My brothers, as I am the first to do the will of the Father. So whoever does what I do is My friend, because only a friend does spontaneously what his friend does. »

« May it be so for ever between You and me, Lord. When are You going to town? »

« The morning after the Sabbath. »

« I will come as well. »

« No. You will not come with Me. I will tell you why. I have other things to ask of you… »

« As You wish, Master. I have to speak to You as well… »

« We shall speak. »

« Do You prefer to spend the Sabbath among ourselves, or can I invite our mutual friends? »

« Please do not invite anybody. I am anxious to spend these hours in prudent peaceful friendship with you alone, without any constraint of thought or formality, in the kind freedom of one who is among such dear friends as to feel at home. »

« As You wish, Lord. In actual fact… that is what I wanted. But I thought I was being selfish towards my friends. They are all inferior in friendship to You, my only Friend, but still so dear. But if that is what You wish… Perhaps You are tired, Lord. Or pensive… » Lazarus questions his Friend and Master more with his eyes than with his words, and Jesus replies to him only with His rather sad and somewhat absorbed eyes and with a faint smile of His lips.

They are now alone near the fountain, whose jet of water sounds like a song… All the others have gone into the house and one can hear voices and the noise of kitchenware…

Mary of Magdala twice or three times puts her fair-haired head out of the door protected by a heavy curtain waving lightly in the wind that is getting stronger, while the sky is overcast with clouds that are becoming more and more ruffled and dark.

Lazarus raises his head scanning the sky. « I think we are going to have a storm » he says. And he adds: « It will help the obstinate buds to open, as they have much difficulty in doing so this year… Perhaps the late severity of the weather has delayed the shoots. Also my almond-trees have suffered and much fruit has been lost. Joseph was telling me that one of his kitchen gardens outside the Judicial

Gate appears to be completely unfruitful this year. The trees are restraining the buds, as if they had been laid under a spell. So much so that he is undecided whether he should leave them or sell them as firewood. Nothing. Not one blossom. They are now exactly as they were in the month of Tebeth. Tiny heads of buds, so hard and closed that never swell. It is true that the northern wind is very strong there and it blew continuously during winter. Also the fruits of my kitchen garden beyond the Kidron were damaged. But what is happening in Joseph's kitchen garden is so strange that many people go to see that place that refuses to awake in springtime. »

Jesus smiles…

« Are You smiling? Why? »

« Because of the childishness of men, the eternal children. They are charmed by everything that appears to be strange… But the orchard will blossom. At the right time. »

« The right time is already past, Lord. When have many trees in one place not blossomed in the month of Nisan? How long has that place still to wait for the right moment? »

« When it is time to give glory to God with their blossoming. »

« Ah! I see! You will go there to bless that place, for Joseph's sake, and it will blossom giving new glory to God and to His Messiah by means of a new miracle! It is so! You are going there. Can I tell Joseph if I see him? »

« If you think that you should tell him… Yes. I shall be going there… »

« When, Lord? I should like to be there as well. »

« Are you an eternal child, too? » Jesus smiles more heartily shaking His head good-naturedly at the curiosity of His friend who exclaims: « Oh! I am happy that I have cheered You up, Lord. I once again see Your face bright with a smile, as I had not seen for a long time! So… shall I come? »

« No, Lazarus. I shall need you here on Preparation Day. »

« Oh! But on Preparation Day we attend only to Passover! You… Master, why do You want to do something for which You will be rebuked? Go there some other day… »

« I shall be compelled to go in there just on Preparation Day. But I shall not be the only one to do something which is not in preparation for the old Passover. Also the most severe people in Israel, such as Helkai, Doras, Simon, Sadoc, Ishmael and even Caiaphas and Annas will do entirely new things… »

« So is Israel going mad?! »

« You have said it. »

« But You… Oh! here is the rain. Let us go into the house, Master… » I… am worried… Will You not explain to me…

« Yes. Before leaving you I will tell you… There is your sister coming with a heavy cloth, as she is afraid we might get wet… Oh!

Martha! You are always provident and active. But it is not a heavy rain. »

« My dear sister! Nay, my sisters. They are now both like two tender girls unaware of malice, both Mary and this one. And when Mary came from Jericho the day before yesterday, she really looked like a young girl, with her plaits hanging down her body, as she had sold her hairpins to buy sandals for a boy, and the thin iron hairpins were not strong enough to support her hair. She laughed and coming off the wagon she said to me: "My dear brother, I have experienced what it means having to sell in order to buy, and I have learned how even the most simple things are difficult for the poor, such as having to keep your hair tidy by means of hairpins, twenty of which are worth a didrachma. I shall remember that to be even more merciful to poor people in future". How much You have changed her, Lord! »

The woman of whom they are speaking while setting foot in the house is already there with amphorae and basins to serve her Lord. She will not surrender the honour of serving Him to anybody, and she is not satisfied until she has restored the limbs and appetite of her Master and she sees Him go, wearing fresh sandals, towards the room allotted to Him and where His Mother is waiting for Him with a fresh linen garment still smelling of sunshine…

580. The Friday before the Entry into Jerusalem. Judas of Kerioth Impenitent.

19th March 1947.

« If you wish so, you may go, wherever you like. I am staying here today with Judas and James. The women disciples are to come » says Jesus to the apostles who are gathered around Him under the porch of the house. And He adds: « But make sure that you are all back here before sunset. And be prudent. Try to be unnoticed to avoid retaliations against you. »

« Oh! I am going to stay here. What have I to do in Jerusalem? » says Peter.

« Instead I will go. My father is certainly expecting me. He wants to offer the wine. And old promise, but always kept,, because my father is an honest man. What a wonderful wine you will taste at the Passover banquet! My father's vineyards at Ramah! They are famous in the area » says Thomas.

« Also these wines of Lazarus are very good. I will never forget the banquet for the feast of the Dedication… » says Matthew, in an unintentional tone of gluttony.

« In that case your memory will be refreshed more than ever, because I think that Lazarus is giving a great banquet tomorrow. I have seen such preparations… » says James of Zebedee.

« Is that so? Are other people coming? » asks Andrew.

« No. I asked Maximinus. He said no. »

« Ah! Otherwise I would have put on the new tunic that my wife sent me » says Philip.

« That is what I am going to do. I wanted to put it on at Passover. But I will wear it tomorrow. We are going to have more peace here tomorrow, than in a few days' time… » says Bartholomew and he stops pensively.

« I am going to adorn myself with new clothes to go to town. And what about You, Master? » asks John.

« So am I. I will put on purple robes. »

« You will look like a king! » exclaims the favourite apostle full of admiration, as he already imagines Him in the splendid robes…

« But if I had not seen to it! I have had that purple for years… » says the Iscariot boastfully.

« Really? Oh! no one had thought about it… The Master is always so humble… »

« Too humble. The time has now come when He must be King. We have waited long enough! If He is not a king on a throne, at least, to safeguard His dignity, He must have clothes suiting His rank. I see to everything. »

« You are right, Judas. You are aware of the ways of the world. We… are poor fishermen… » say humbly the men who have come from the lake… And as it always happens in the light of the world in the false twilight of the world - Judas' base metal alloy seems nobler than the unrefined, but pure, sincere, honest gold of the Galilean hearts…

Jesus, Who was speaking to the Zealot and to Alphaeus' sons, turns round and looks at the Iscariot and at those honest men, so humble and mortified at being so… deficient as compared with Judas… and He shakes His head without saying anything. But when He sees the Iscariot tie the laces of his sandals and sort his mantle as if he were on the point of setting off, He asks him: « Where are you going? »

« To town. »

« I told you that I am keeping you here with James… »

« Ah! I thought that You were referring to Your brother Judas… So… I… am like a prisoner… Ah! Ah! » He sneers.

« I don't think that Bethany has chains or bars. It has only the desire of your Master. And I would love to be the prisoner of it » remarks the Zealot.

« Oh! of course! I was joking… The fact is… I would like to have news of my mother. Pilgrims from Kerioth have certainly arrived in Jerusalem and… »

« No. In two days' time we shall all be in Jerusalem. You are staying here now » says Jesus authoritatively.

Judas does not insist. He takes off his mantle saying: « So? Who is going to town? We ought to know what the humours are… What the disciples are doing… I wanted to go to hear also from friends… I had promised Peter… »

« It does not matter. You are staying. Nothing of what you said is necessary. It is not strictly necessary… »

« But if Thomas is going… »

« Master, I should like to go as well. I also promised it. I have friends in Annas' house and… »

« And would you go there, son? And if they catch you? » asks Salome who has approached them.

« If they catch me? What wrong have I done? None. So I must not fear the Lord. And even if they catch me, I will not tremble. »

« Oh! the bold young lion! Will you not tremble? Are you not aware of how much they hate us? It's death, you know, if they catch us » says the Iscariot to frighten him.

« Then why do you want to go? Are you perhaps privileged with immunity? What have you done to be so? Tell me, and I will do it. »

Judas suddenly looks as if he were frightened and angry, but John's face is so clear that the traitor is reassured. He realises that there is no snare, no suspicion in those words, and he says: « I have not done anything. But I have some good friends near the Proconsul, so… »

« Well! Who wants to come, let him come, as it is not raining any longer. We are wasting time here and by midday it may rain again. Whoever wants to come should hurry up » says Thomas urging them.

« Shall I go, Master? » asks John.

« Yes, go. »

« There you are! It is always the same! He can, the others can. I cannot. It's always "no" for me! »

« I will try to find out about your mother » says John to calm him.

« And I will try as well. I am coming with you and Thomas » says the Zealot and he adds: « My old age will check the young ones, Master. And I know those of Kerioth very well. If I see any, I will approach them. I will bring you news of your mother, Judas. Be good! Be quiet! It is Passover, Judas. We all feel the peace of this festivity, the joy of this solemnity. Why do you alone want to be so upset, so sullen, so discontented, enjoying no peace? Passover is the passage of God… Passover, for us Hebrews, is the feast of our liberation from a hard yoke. The Most High God delivered us. Now, as the ancient event cannot be repeated, its symbol remains, individual… Passover: liberation of hearts, purification, baptism, if you wish, with the blood of the lamb, so that enemy powers may no longer injure those who are marked with it. It is so beautiful to begin the new year with this feast of purification, of liberation, of adoration of God our Saviour… Oh! excuse me, Master! I have

spoken when I should have kept quiet, because You are here to correct our hearts… »

« Just what I was thinking, too, Simon. The very same thing: that I have two masters now instead of one, and they seemed too many » says the Iscariot angrily.

Peter… oh! Peter this time cannot control himself and he flies into a rage saying: « And if you don't stop this at once you will have a third one and that will be me. And I swear to you that my arguments will be more persuasive than words. »

« Would you beat a companion? After so many efforts to keep the old Galilean to the bottom, your true nature is surfacing again, is that so? »

« It is not surfacing. It has always been on the surface, and very clearly I use no duplicity. The trouble is that with wild jackasses such as you are, there is only one argument to break them in: a good flogging. You ought to be ashamed of trespassing on His kindness and our patience! Come, Simon! Come, John! Come, Thomas! Goodbye, Master. I am going away as well, because if I stay… no, thank God, I will no longer be able to check myself » and Peter grasps his mantle, that was on a seat, and puts it on in a hurry, and he is so angry that he does not realise he has put it on upside-down, so that John has to tell him of his mistake and help him to put it on right. And he goes away headlong, stamping his feet on the ground, to discharge some of his wrath thus. He looks like a furious young bull.

The others… oh! the others are like open books in which one can read what is written. Bartholomew raises his thin face of an old man towards the sky still cloudy, and he seems to be studying the winds, in order not to have to study faces: Jesus' is in fact too sorrowful, the Iscariot's too perfidious. Matthew and Philip look at Thaddeus whose eyes, so similar to Jesus', are flashing with wrath, and both have the same thought: they take him between them and push him away, towards the inner lane leading to Simon's house, saying: « Your mother wanted us to do that job. You had better come, too, James of Zebedee » and they drag away also Salome's son. Andrew looks at James of Alphaeus and James looks at him: two faces reflecting the same contained sufferings, and as they do not know what to say, they take each other's hand like two boys and move away sadly. Salome is the only woman disciple there and she dare not move or speak, neither can she make up her mind to go away, as if she wished to check other words of the worthless apostle with her presence. Fortunately none of Lazarus' family are Present. The Blessed Virgin is also absent.

Judas sees that he is alone with Jesus and Salome. As he does 'lot want to be with them, he turns his back on them and goes away towards the jasmin bower.

Jesus looks at him go away. He watches him. He notices that, after

pretending to sit down in the bower, Judas slips away on the quiet from the rear side and disappears among the hedges of roses, laurels and boxes, that separate the true garden from the beds of spices, where the beehives are. It is possible to go out there through one of the secondary gates open in the walls of the large garden, a real park, two sides of which border on very tall hedges, as wide as an avenue, with openings facing gates here and there to give access to the meadows, fields, orchards and olive-groves, as well as Simon's house, that link the garden to the farms, uniting and separating them at the same time, while on the other two sides there are powerful massive walls opening on to two roads, a secondary one and a main one, that form a crossroad and the former, cutting through Bethany, runs towards Bethlehem.

Jesus straightens Himself up as much as possible and changes position as much as is necessary, to see what the Iscariot is doing, and His eyes are blazing.

Mary Salome sees them and she understands, although she cannot see, not being very tall, she realises what is happening towards the end of the park and she whispers: « Lord, have mercy on us! »

Jesus hears her whisper and He turns round for a moment to look at His good simple disciple. She may have had a thought of motherly pride when she asked for a place of honour for her sons, but at least she was in a position to do so as they are good apostles and she humbly accepted the reproof of the Master and she did not feel offended by it, neither did she go away from Him, on the contrary she became more humble and more obliging towards the Master, Whom she follows like His shadow, whenever she can, and Whose least expressions she studies in order to be able, whenever possible, to forestall His wishes and give Him joy. And even now the good and humble Salome tries to comfort the Master and to appease the suspicion that makes Him suffer, saying: « See? He is not going far. He left his mantle there and he has not picked it up. He may go for a walk in the meadows to give vent to his humour… Judas would never go to town unless he were properly dressed… »

« He would go there even if he were naked, if he wanted. In fact… » « Look! Come here! »

« Oh!! He is trying to open the gate! But it is locked! He is calling one of the servants of the beehives! » Jesus shouts in a loud voice: « Judas! Wait for Me! I must speak to you » and He is about to set out.

« For pity's sake, Lord!! I am going to call Lazarus… Your Mother… » « Don't go by Yourself! »

Although Jesus is walking fast, He turns round a little and says: « I order you not to do so. On the contrary, be quiet. With every body. If they ask you about Me: I have gone out with Judas for a short walk. If the women disciples come, let them wait. I shall soon be

back. »

Salome does not react, neither does the Iscariot. The former near the house, the latter near the wall, they both remain where Jesus has stopped them and they look at Him: Salome sees Him move away, Judas sees Him come towards him.

« Open the door, Jonah. I am going out for a moment with My disciple. And if you are going to stay here, you need not close it behind us. I shall soon be back » He kindly says to the peasant servant who had remained dumbfounded with the big key in his hand.

The heavy iron door squeaks in being opened, as the key screeches in working the lock.

« A door that is seldom opened » says the servant smiling. « Eh! You have got rusty! When one is idle one gets spoiled… Rust, dust… urchins… The same happens to us… if we do not always work on our souls! »

« Well said, Jonah! Your thought is a wise one. Many rabbis would envy you it. »

« Oh! it's my bees that suggest them to me… and Your words. It is really Your words. Then the bees also make me understand them. Because everything has a voice, if one can understand it. And I say: if the bees obey the order of Him Who created them, and they are little insects which I do not know where they may have brains and hearts, and I, who have heart, brains and soul, and I hear the Master, shall I not be able to do what they do, working all the time to do what the Master says we must do, and thus make my soul beautiful and bright, without any rust, dust, mud and straw, and stones and other snares placed in the device by hellish enemies? »

« You are quite right. Imitate your bees, and your soul will become a rich beehive full of precious virtues, and God will come to enjoy it. Goodbye, Jonah. Peace be with you. »

He lays His hand on the grey-haired head of the servant, who has stooped in front of Him, and He goes out on the road towards meadows of red clover as beautiful as thick deep-red and crimson carpets. Bees are flying on them from flower to flower sparkling and humming.

When they are far enough from the wall so that no one in Lazarus' garden might hear them, Jesus says: « Did you hear that servant? He is a peasant. It is already a great thing if he can read a few words… And yet… His words could have been uttered by My lips and My speech would not have seemed to be foolish. He feels that one must watch to ensure that the enemies of the spirit do not spoil the spirit… I… am keeping you near Me because of such enemies, and that is why you hate Me! I want to defend you from yourself and from them, and you hate Me. I am handing you the means to save yourself, and you can still do it, and you hate Me. I will tell You once again: go away, Judas. Go far away. Do not go to Jerusalem.

You are not well. It is not a lie to say that you are so ill that you cannot take part in the celebration of Passover. You will keep the supplementary one. The Law allows people to keep the supplementary Passover, when diseases or other grave reasons prevent them from keeping the solemn one. I will ask Lazarus - he is a prudent friend and will not ask any questions - to take you beyond the Jordan today. »

« No. I told You many times to reject me. You did not want to. Now I do not want it. »

« You do not want? You do not want to be saved? You take no pity on yourself? On your mother? »

« You should say to me: "Have you no mercy on Me?". You would be more sincere. »

« Judas, My unhappy friend, I am not begging you on My behalf. I am begging you for your own sake. Look! We are alone. You and I alone. You know who I am, I know who you are. It is the last moment of grace still granted to us to prevent your ruin… Oh! do not sneer so satanically, My friend. Do not laugh at Me as if I were mad because I say: "your ruin" and not Mine. Mine is not a ruin. Yours is… We are alone, you and I, and above us there is God… God Who does not hate you yet, God Who is witness to this supreme struggle between Good and Evil competing for your soul. Above us there is the Empyrean watching us. The Empyrean that will soon be filled with saints. They are already exulting, in their place of expectation, because they feel that joy is coming… Judas, your father is among them… »

« He was a sinner. He is not there. »

« He was a sinner, but not a damned soul. So joy is approaching him as well. Why do you want to grieve him in his joy? »

« He is past grief. He is dead. »

« No. He is not past the grief of seeing you guilty, you… oh! do not make Me say that word!… »

« Yes, say it! I have been saying it to myself for months! I am damned. I know. Nothing can be changed. »

« Everything Judas, I am weeping. The last tears of the Man… do you want to have them shed?… Judas, I beg you. Consider, My friend: Heaven is assenting to My prayers, and you, and you… Will you let Me pray in vain? Consider who is praying in front of you: the Messiah of Israel, the Son of the Father… Judas, listen to Me… Stop, while you can!… »

« No! »

Jesus covers His face with His hands and drops to the ground at the border of the meadow. He weeps noiselessly, but bitterly. His shoulders are shaken by His deep sobbing…

Judas looks at Him, there, at his feet, heart-broken, weeping, and out of the desire to save him… and he is moved for a moment. Laying

aside the hard tone of a real demon he had previously, he says: « I cannot go away… I have given my word… »

Jesus raises His distressed face and interrupts him saying: « To whom? To whom? To some poor men! And you are worried about them, about being considered dishonourable by them? And had you not given yourself to Me for three years? And you are concerned about the comments of a handful of evil-doers and not about God's judgement? Oh! But what must I do, Father, to revive in him the will not to sin? » And He lowers His head again, oppressed with sorrow, distressed… He already looks like the Jesus suffering in the agony of Gethsemane.

Judas feels sorry for Him and says: « I will stay. Do not suffer thus! I will stay… Help me to stay! Defend me! »

« Always! Always, if you only wish so. Come. There is no sin that I do not excuse and forgive. Say: "I want". And I shall have redeemed you… » Jesus, standing up, has taken him in His arms.

But if the tears of Jesus-God fall on Judas' head, Judas' lips remain closed. He does not say the requested word. He does not even say « forgive me » when Jesus whispers through his hair: « You can perceive whether I love you! I should have reproached you! I kiss you. I should be entitled to say to you: "Ask your God to forgive you" and I only ask you to have the will to be forgiven. You are so ill! You cannot ask much of a person who is very ill. Of all the sinners who came to Me I asked absolute repentance in order to be able to forgive them. I am asking you, My friend, only the will to repent and then… I will act. »

Judas is silent…

Jesus lets him go saying: « Stay here at least until the day after the Sabbath. »

« I will stay… Let us go back to the house. They will notice our absence. The women are perhaps waiting for You. They are better than I am and You must not neglect them because of me. »

« Do you not remember the parable of the lost sheep? You are the lost sheep… They, the women disciples, are the good sheep closed in the fold. They are in no danger, even if I should have to search all day for your soul to take it back to the fold… »

« Of course! Of course! All right! I will go back to the fold! I will shut myself up in Lazarus library and read there. I don't want to be disturbed. I don't want to see anybody or hear anything. So… You will not suspect me all the time. And if the Sanhedrin is informed of anything that takes place, You will have to look for the snakes among Your favourite ones. Goodbye! I am going in through the main gate. Don't be afraid. I will not run away. You can come and check whenever You wish » and turning his back on Him he strides away.

Jesus, a tall white figure in His linen tunic at the edge of the

green-red meadow, lifts up His arms towards the clear sky and raises His very sad face and soul to His Father moaning: « Oh! Father! Will You accuse Me of omitting anything that may save him? You know that I am struggling to prevent his crime for the sake of his soul, not for My life… Father! Oh! Father! I beg You! Hasten the hour of darkness, the hour of the Sacrifice, because it is too cruel for Me to live near the friend who does not want to be redeemed… The greatest grief! » and Jesus sits down on the thick, tall, beautiful clover. He bends His head on His raised knees clasped in His arms and He weeps…

Oh! I cannot look at those tears! In distress, in solitude, in… the conviction that Heaven will do nothing to comfort Him, and that He must suffer that grief, they are already too similar to those of Gethsemane. And that grieves me too much…

Jesus weeps for a long time in the solitary silent place. Witnesses of His tears the golden-hued bees, the scented clover that waves slowly in a stormy wind, and the clouds that early in the morning were like a thin net in the blue sky and are now thick, dark, piled up threatening more rain.

Jesus stops weeping. He raises His head listening… The noise of wheels and harness-bells comes from the main road. Then the noise of the wheels stops, whilst that of the harness-bells continues.

Jesus says: « Let us go! The women disciples… They are faithful… Father, let it be done as You wish! I offer You the sacrifice of this desire of Mine as Saviour and Friend. It is written! He wanted it. That is true. However, Father, let Me continue My work on his behalf until it is all over. And even from this moment I say to You: Father, when I pray for sinners, a victim having no power to take direct action, Father, take My sufferings and force Judas' soul with them. I am aware that I am asking what Justice cannot grant. But Mercy and Love have come from You, and You love what comes from You and is One Thing only with You, God One and Trine, Holy and Blessed. I will give Myself to My beloved ones as food and drink. So, Father, are My Blood and My Flesh to become condemnation for one of them? Father, help Me! A germ of repentance in that heart!… Father, why are You going away? Are You already moving away from Your Word Who is praying? Father, the hour has come. I know. May Your blessed will be done! But leave Your Son, Your Christ, in Whom, by Your inscrutable decree the certain clairvoyance of the future is diminishing in this hour - and I do not say to You that this is cruelty, but it is Your compassion for Me - leave Me the hope that I may still save him. Oh! Father! I know. I have known since I am. I have known since, not only as Word, but as Man, I came here to the Earth. I have known since I met the man in the Temple… I have always been aware of it… But now… Oh! it seems to Me - through Your great pity, Most Holy

Father! - it seems to Me but a dreadful dream, brought about by his behaviour, but not something ineluctable… and that I may still hope, always, because infinite is My suffering and infinite will be the Sacrifice, and may it be of some benefit also for him… Ah! I am raving! It is the Man Who wants to hope so! The God Who is in the Man, the God made Man cannot delude Himself! The mist that for a moment was concealing the abyss from Me is dissipating… the abyss already open to swallow the man who preferred Darkness to the Light… It was Your pity that concealed it! It is Your pity that shows Me it now that You have recomforted Me. Yes, Father, also that! Everything! And I will be Mercy until the end, because such is My Essence. »

He is still praying, silently, His arms stretched out crosswise, and His distressed face calms down more and more assuming the appearance of solemn peace. It becomes almost bright with the light of interior joy, although there is no smile on His closed lips. It is the joy of His spirit, in communion with His Father, a joy that leaks out from the veils of the flesh and cancels the marks that grief had impressed and painted on the Master's face, which had become the more emaciated and spiritualised, the more He advanced towards sorrow and sacrifice. In these last mortal days the face of Christ is no longer a face of the Earth, and no artist will ever be able to give us that face of Man God carved into supernatural beauty by perfect total love and sorrow, even if the Redeemer should show Himself to the artist.

Jesus is once again at the gate of the enclosure, He locks it and proceeds towards the house. The servant met previously sees Him and runs to take the big key that Jesus is holding in His hand.

He goes on. He meets Lazarus who says: « Master, the women have come. I took them into the white hall because in the library there is Judas, who is reading and is not well. »

« I know. Thank you for the women. Are there many? »

« Johanna, Nike, Eliza and Valeria with Plautina and another friend or freedwoman, I do not know, whose name is Marcella, and an old woman who says she knows You: Anne of Meron, then Annaleah and there is another young girl with her, named Sarah. They are with the women disciples, Your Mother and my sisters. »

« And these voices of children? »

« Anne has brought her grandchildren, Johanna has her children and Valeria her daughter. I took them into the inner court-yard… »

581. The Friday before the Entry into Jerusalem. Farewell to the Women Disciples and the Encounter with an Unhappy Child.

22nd March 1947.

The beautiful hall - one of those used for banquets, with its white walls and ceiling, its heavy white curtains, the white tapestry covering seats and the sheets of mica or alabaster as window panes and skylights - is full of the chatter of the women. Some fifteen women talking to one another is no bagatelle. But as soon as Jesus appears at the door, moving the heavy curtain aside, there is dead silence while they all stand up and bow with the utmost respect.

« Peace to all of you » says Jesus with a kind smile… Of the storm of grief that has just subsided there is no trace on His face, which is clear, bright, peaceful, as if nothing grievous had happened or were about to happen with His full knowledge.

« Peace to You, Master. We have come. You sent word: "with as many women as there are with Johanna-, and I obeyed You. Eliza was staying with me. I have kept her with me these days. And also this woman, who says is Your follower, was with me. She had come looking for You, because it is well known that I am Your happy disciple. And Valeria also is with me in my house since I came to my mansion. With Valeria there was Plautina, who had come to visit her. And this woman was with them. Valeria will speak to You about her. Annaleah came later, when she heard of Your wish, with this young girl, who I think is a relative of hers. We arranged to come and we did not forget Nike. It is so beautiful to feel that we are all sisters in one faith only in You… And to hope that also those who are still only at a natural love for the Master may rise higher, as Valeria did » says Johanna looking stealthily at Plautina who… has remained at the natural love…

« Diamonds form slowly, Johanna. Ages of hidden fire are required… One must not be in a hurry, never… And one must never lose heart, Johanna… »

« And when a diamond becomes… ashes again? »

« It is an indication that it was not yet a perfect diamond. Patience and fire are still required. One has to start all over again, hoping in the Lord. What appears to be a failure the first time often becomes a triumph the second time. »

« Or the third or the fourth time, and even more. I was a failure many times, but at last You triumphed, Rabboni! » says Mary of Magdala in her harmonious voice from the end of the hall.

« Mary is happy every time she can humble herself by remembering her past… » says with a sigh Martha, who would like that remembrance cancelled in every heart.

« Truly, sister, it is so! I am happy remembering my past. But not

to humble myself, as you say, but to rise higher, urged by the memory of the evil done and by gratitude to Him Who saved me. And also so that whoever hesitates for himself or for some person dear to him may pluck up courage and arrive at that faith that my Master says would be able to shift mountains. »

« And you have it! You blessed woman! You do not know what fear is… » says with a sigh Johanna who is so meek and timid, and she appears to be even more so if one compares her with the Magdalene.

« No, I do not know what fear is. It has never been in my human nature. Now that I belong to my Saviour, I am not even aware of it in my spiritual nature. Everything has served to increase my faith. Can one who was revived as I was and who saw one's brother rise from the dead, be in doubt about anything? Nothing will ever make me doubt again. »

« As long as God is with you, that is, the Rabbi is with you… But He says that He will soon leave us. What will our faith then be? That is, your faith, because I have not yet gone beyond human frontiers… » says Plautina.

« His material presence or absence will not impair my faith. I will not be afraid. I am not being proud. I know myself. If the threats of the Sanhedrin should come true… I will not be afraid… »

« You will not be afraid of what? That the Just One is just? I shall not be afraid of that either. We believe that of many wise people whose wisdom we enjoy, I should say that we nourish ourselves with the life of their thought, ages after their death. But if you… » says Plautina insistently.

« I will not even fear for His death. Life cannot die. Lazarus, who was a poor man, rose from the dead… »

« He did not rise by himself, but because the Master evoked his spirit from the beyond. A deed that only the Master can accomplish. But who will evoke the Master's spirit, if the Master is killed? »

« Who? He. That is, God. God made Himself by Himself, God can raise Himself by Himself. »

« God… yes… according to your faith God made Himself by Himself. It is already difficult for us to admit that, as we know that one god descends from another through divine love. »

« Through obscene unreal love affairs, you should say » says Mary of Magdala rashly" interrupting her.

« As you wish… » says Plautina in a conciliatory tone, and is about to end her sentence, but Mary of Magdala precedes her once again and says: « But the Man, you mean, cannot raise Himself by Himself. But as He made himself Man by Himself, because nothing is impossible to the Saint of Saints, so He will by Himself order Himself to rise from the dead. You cannot understand. You do not know the figures of our history of Israel. He and His wonders are in them.

And everything will take place as it was stated. I believe in advance, Lord. I believe everything. That You are the Son of God and the Son of the Virgin, that You are the Lamb of salvation, that You are the Most Holy Messiah, that You are the universal Redeemer and King, that Your Kingdom will have no end or boundary, and finally that death will not prevail over You, because life and death were created by God and are subject to Him like all other things. I believe. And if deep will be my sorrow at seeing You disregarded and despised, greater will be my faith in Your eternal Being. I believe. I believe in everything that has been said about You. I believe in everything You say. I believed also with regard to Lazarus, I was the only one who obeyed and believed, the only one who reacted against those men and those situations that wanted to persuade me not to believe. Only at the end, towards the end of the trial, I became confused… But the trial had lasted so long… and I thought that not even You, blessed Master, could approach the golal after so many days from his death… Now… I would not doubt any more even if, instead of days, a sepulchre were to be opened to give back its prey after it had been in its belly for months. Oh! my Lord! I know who You are! Filth has recognised the Star! » Mary has squatted at His feet, on the marble floor, no longer vehement, but meek, with an expression of adoration on her face raised towards Jesus.

« Who am I? »

« He Who is. That is what You are. The other part, the human person, is the garment, the necessary garment that has been put on Your brightness and Your holiness, so that it might come among us to save us. But You are God, my God. » And she throws herself on the floor kissing Jesus' feet, and she seems to be unable to remove her lips from the toes protruding from the long linen tunic.

« Stand up, Mary. Always hold on fast to your faith. And raise it like a star in stormy hours so that hearts may stare at it and may hope, at least that… ».

He then turns round to all the women disciples and says:

« I sent for you because during the next days we shall not be able to be together very often and in peace. The world will be around us. And the secrets of hearts are more modest than the secrets of bodies. Today I am not the Master. I am the Friend. Not all of you have hopes or fears to tell Me. But you all liked to see Me once again in peace. And I sent for you, you cream of Israel and of the new Kingdom, and you, cream of the Gentiles, who are leaving the place of darkness to enter Life. Keep this in your hearts for the following days: that the honour given by you to the persecuted King of Israel, to the accused Innocent, to the Master Who is not listened to, mitigates My sorrow.

I ask you to be closely united, you of Israel, you who have come to Israel, you who are coming towards Israel. Assist one another.

Let those whose spirits are stronger help the weaker ones. And let the wiser ones succour those who know little or nothing at all, and are only craving for fresh wisdom, so that their human desire may evolve into a supernatural desire of Truth, through the care of their more advanced sisters. Be merciful to one another. Let those, whom ages of divine law have formed in justice, be indulgent to those whom Gentilism has brought up… differently. Moral habits cannot be changed between today and tomorrow but in exceptional cases, when a divine power intervenes to work the change in order to favour a very good will. Do not be surprised if in the disciples coming from other religions you notice stoppages in progressing and returns to the old ways. Bear in mind Israel herself in her behaviour towards Me, and do not expect from the Gentile ladies the docility and virtue that Israel was not able to have and did not want to have towards the Master. Consider yourselves sisters, sisters that destiny has gathered round Me, in this last period of My mortal life… Do not weep! And it has gathered you taking you from different places, thus with different languages and habits, which make it rather difficult to understand one another from a human point of view. But, really, love has one language only, which is this: to do what the beloved one teaches and do it to give him honour and joy. Thus you can all understand one another and let those who understand more help the others to understand.

Then… in future, in a more or less remote future and under different circumstances, you will be separated again through the regions of the Earth, and some will go back to their native countries, and some will go into an exile that will not be hard to bear, because those who will undergo the trial will already have reached that perfection of truth, that will make them understand that the exile from the true Fatherland does not consist in being led here or there. Because Heaven is the true Fatherland. Because those who are in the truth are in God and have God within themselves. They are already in the Kingdom of God, and the Kingdom of God knows no frontiers and those who from Jerusalem are taken, for instance, to Iberia, or to Pannonia, or to Gaul, or to Illyria, do not leave that Kingdom. You will always be in the Kingdom if you always remain in Jesus, or if you come to Jesus. I have come to gather all the sheep. Those of the paternal flock, those belonging to other people, and also those without any shepherd, the wild ones, the ones that are more lost than wild, sunken into such obscure darkness as not to allow them to see not even a jota, not only of divine law but also of moral law. Unknown people who are expecting to become known in the hour destined by God for that, and who will then be part of the flock of Christ. When? Oh! years and ages are alike when compared with the Eternal!

But you will anticipate those who will go with future Shepherds

to gather wild sheep and lambs in Christian love in order to lead them to divine pastures. And let these places be your first proving ground. The young swallow that raises its wings to fly does not throw itself into great adventures all at once. It tries to fly first from the eaves gutter to the vine shading the terrace. Then it goes back to its nest and it dashes once again to the terrace beyond its own, and goes back. And then again farther away… until it feels the nerves of its wings become strong and its bearings safe, then it plays with wind and space and it goes and comes twittering, chasing insects, skimming waters, rising towards the sun, until at the right time it safely opens its wings for the long flight towards warmer zones rich in new food. And although it is so small, it is not afraid to fly across seas, a spot of burnished steel lost between the two blue immensities of sea and sky, a spot moving on fearlessly, whereas previously it was afraid of the short flight from the eaves gutter to the leafy vine-shoot, a nervous perfect body that cleaves the air like an arrow and it is not known whether it is the air that lovingly carries this little king of the air, or it is the little king of the air that lovingly furrows its domains. Seeing its safe flying that exploits winds and atmospheric density to go faster, who would think of its first clumsy fluttering frightened flight? The same will become of you. Let it become so of you. Of you and of all the souls that will imitate you. One does not become skilful all of a sudden. One must not feel disheartened because of the first defeats, or proud because of the first victories. The first defeats serve to do better the next time. The first victories serve as spur to do even better in future and to convince one that God helps good wills.

Be always subject to the Shepherds with regard to what is obedience to their advice and orders. Be always like sisters to them with regard to what is help in their mission and support in their work. Tell also those who are not here today. Tell those who will come in future.

And now and always be like daughters to My Mother. She will guide you in everything. She can guide girls as well as widows, wives as well as mothers, as She has become aware of all the consequences of every condition through Her own experience as well as through supernatural wisdom. Love one another and love Me in Mary. You will never fail because She is the Tree of Life, the living Ark of God, the form of God in Whom Wisdom made Its Seat and Grace became Flesh.

And now that I have spoken to you in general, now that I have seen you all, I wish to listen to My women disciples and to those who are the hope of future women disciples. Go. I am staying here. Let those who wish to speak to Me come to Me. Because never again shall we have a moment of inner peace as the present one. »

The women consult with one another. Eliza goes out with Mary

and Mary Clopas. Mary of Lazarus listens to Plautina who wishes to convince her of something, but Mary does not seem to agree, as she shakes her head resolutely in denial and then goes away leaving her interlocutress, and when passing by she takes her sister and Susanna with her saying: « We shall have time to speak to Him. Let us leave these disciples with Him, as they have to go away. »

« Come, Sarah. We shall come last » says Annaleah.

They all go out slowly with the exception of Mary Salome who remains undecided at the door.

« Come here, Mary. Close the door and come here. What are you afraid of? » Jesus says to her.

« The fact is… that I am always with You. Did You hear Mary of Lazarus? »

« I did. But come here. You are the mother of My first disciples. What do you want to tell Me? »

The woman approaches Him with the slowness of a person that has something great to ask and does not know whether he can do it.

Jesus encourages her with a smile and saying: « What? Are you going to ask Me for a third place for Zebedee? But he is wise. He certainly did not send you to tell me that! So speak up… »

« Ah! Lord! It is just of that place that I wanted to speak to You. You… speak in a way… As if You were about to leave us. And before doing that I would like You to tell me that You have really forgiven me. I have no peace thinking that I disgusted You. »

« Are you still thinking of that? Do you not think that I love you as much as before and more than before. »

« Oh! yes, Lord. But do tell me the word of forgiveness, that I may tell my husband how good You have been to me. »

« But there is no need for you, woman, to tell a fault that has been forgiven. »

« Of course I will tell him! Because, see? Zebedee, seeing how much You love his sons, may fall into the same sin as mine and… if You leave us, who would absolve him? I would like all of us to enter Your Kingdom. Also my man. And I do not think that I am being unjust by wishing this. I am a poor woman and I know nothing about books. But when Your Mother reads or tells us women passages of the Scriptures, She often speaks of the chosen women of Israel or of passages that refer to us. And in the Proverbs, that I like so much, it is stated that the heart of the husband has confidence in his strong wife. I think that it is right that a woman should give such confidence to her husband, also with regard to celestial matters. If I procure a safe place for him in Heaven, preventing him from sinning, I think I do a good thing. »

« Of course, Salome. You have really opened your mouth to words Of wisdom and there is the law of goodness on your tongue. Go in Peace. You have more than My forgiveness. Your sons, according

to the book that you like so much, will proclaim you blessed, and your husband will sing your praises in the Fatherland of the just. Go tranquilly. Go in peace. Be happy. » He blesses and dismisses her.

Salome goes away joyfully.

Old Anne of the house near Merom goes in holding by the hands two little boys and with a shy pale little girl following her with lowered head, and already acting as a little mother guiding a little boy who can hardly walk.

« Oh! Anne! So you also wish to speak to Me? And your husband? »

« He is ill, Lord. Ill. Very ill. I am afraid I shall not see him alive again… » Tears stream down her senile wrinkled face.

« And you are here? »

« Yes, I am here. He said: "I cannot go. You may go for Passover and see our sons… » Her weeping increases and prevents her from speaking.

« Why are you weeping thus, woman? Your husband was right in saying: "Ensure that our sons are not against the Christ for their eternal peace". Judas is a just man. He worries more about the welfare of his sons than about his own life and the comfort it would receive from your care. In the hours preceding the death of the just, the veils are lifted and the eyes of the spirit see the Truth. But your sons do not listen to you, woman. And what can I do if they reject Me? »

« Do not hate them, Lord! »

« Why should I? I will pray for them. And I will impose My hands on these children, who are innocent, to keep away from them the hatred that kills. Come to Me. What is your name? »

« Judas, like my father's father » says the biggest boy, and the smallest one, who is held by the hand by his sister, hops and shouts: « I, I, Judas! »

« Yes, they have honoured their father when giving names to their children. But not in other matters… » says the old woman.

« His virtues will revive in these children. Little girl, come here as well. Be as good and wise as the woman who brought you here. »

« Oh! Mary is good. As I do not want to be alone, I will take her to Galilee with me. »

Jesus blesses the children resting His hand for some time on the head of the little girl who is good. He then asks: « Are you not asking anything for yourself, Anne? »

« That I may find my Judas alive and that I may have the strength to tell a lie saying that his sons… »

« No. Do not lie. Never. Not even to let a dying man die in peace. You will say to Judas: "The Master says that He blesses you and with you He blesses your blood". Also these innocent children are his blood and I have blessed them. »

« But if he asks whether our sons… »

« You will say: "The Master has prayed for them". Judas will rest in the certainty that My prayer is powerful, and the truth will be spoken without disheartening who is dying. Because I will pray also for your sons. You may go in peace, too, Anne. When are you leaving the town? »

« The day after the Sabbath, so as not to be stopped on the road because of the Sabbath. »

« All right. I am glad that you will be here after the Sabbath. Remain closely united to Eliza and Nike. Go. And be strong and faithful. »

The woman is almost at the door when Jesus calls her again saying: « Listen. Your little ones are with you for a long time, are they not? »

« They are always with me, while I am in town. »

« During these days… leave them at home, if you go out to follow Me. »

« Why, Lord? Are You afraid of a persecution? »

« Yes. And it is better if innocents do not hear and see… »

« But… what do You think will happen? »

« Go, Anne. Go. »

« Lord if… if they should do to You what is rumoured, my sons certainly… and then the house will be worse than the street… »

« Do not weep. God will provide. Peace be with you. »

The old woman goes away weeping.

For a short time no one goes in; then Johanna and Valeria go in together. They are panting. Johanna in particular. The other woman is pale and she sighs, but she is stronger.

« Master, Anne has frightened us. You told her… Oh! but it is not true! Chuza may be undecided, he may be… shrewd. But he is not a liar! He assured me that Herod has no intention of harming You… I do not know about Pontius… » and she looks at Valeria who is silent. She then resumes: « I was hoping to understand something from Plautina, but I did not understand much… »

« Nothing, you should say, except that she has not advanced by one step from the limit where she was. She did not speak to me either. But, if I am not wrong, the Roman indifference, which is always so strong when an event can have no repercussion on their Fatherland or on their egos, has badly benumbed those who once seemed so willing to rouse themselves. Their indifference, the indolence of their spirits, so… different by now from mine, separates us, as a cleft separates two clods previously united, more than the fact that I have approached the synagogue. They are happy. They are happy their way… And human happiness does not help to keep one's mind sharp. »

« And to awake the spirit, Valeria » says Jesus.

« It is so, Master. I… there is another matter… Did You see that

woman who was with us? She belongs to my family. She is a widow and lonely, and she was sent by my relatives to convince me to go back to Italy. Oh! with many promises of future joys! They are joys that I no longer appreciate and thus they no longer seem to me to be such, and I despise them. I will not go to Italy. Here I have You, I have my little daughter whom You saved for me, and whom You taught me to love for her soul. I will not leave these places… Marcella… I brought her with me so that she would see You and understand that I am not staying here for a dishonourable love for a Hebrew - it is dishonourable for us - but because in You I found comfort in my grief of a repudiated wife. Marcella is not ill-natured. She has suffered and she understands. But she is still unable to understand my new religion. And she reproaches me a little, because she thinks that my religion is a chimera… It does not matter. If she wants, she will come where I already am. If not, I will stay here with Tusnilde. I am free. I am rich. I can do what I like. And not doing wrong, I will do what I want. »

« And when the Master will not be here? »

« His disciples will remain. Plautina, Lydia and even Claudia, who, after me, is the one who follows Your doctrine and honours You more, have not yet understood that I am no longer the woman that they knew and they still think they know. But I am sure that I know myself by now. So much so that I say that, if I lose much by losing the Master, I shall not lose everything, because faith will remain. And I shall remain where it was born. I do not want to take Fausta where nothing speaks of You. Here… Everything speaks of You, and You will certainly not leave us without a guide, as we have decided to follow You. Why should I, the Gentile, have such thoughts, while many of you, and you, too, look as if you were dismayed thinking of the day when the Master will not be among us? »

« Because, Valeria, they have become accustomed to ages of immobilism. They think that the Most High is there, in His House, above the invisible altar, that only the High Priest can see in solemn occasions. That has helped them to come to Me. They also could at last approach the Lord. But now they tremble at the thought of no longer having either the Most High in His glory, or the Word of the Father among them. It is necessary to be indulgent… And to raise one's spirit, Johanna. And I shall be in you. Remember that. I shall go away. But I will not leave you orphans. I will leave you a house of Mine: My Church. My word: the Gospel. My love will dwell in your hearts. And finally I will leave you a greater gift that will nourish you through Me and will make Me be among you and in you, not only spiritually. I will do that to give you comfort and strength. But now… Anne is very depressed because of the children… »

« She spoke to us about them distressingly… »

« Yes. I told her to keep them away from crowds. I say the same to you, Johanna, and to you, Valeria. »

« I will send Fausta with Tusnilde to Bether before the fixed time. They were to go after the Feast. »

« I will not part from the children. I will keep them at home. But I will tell Anne to let her children go there. That woman has wicked sons, but they will be honoured by my invitation and they will not contradict their mother. And I… »

« I would like… »

« What, Master? »

« I would like you to be much united these days. I will keep My Mother's sister with Me, Salome and Susanna and Lazarus' sisters. But I would like you to be united, much united. »

« But can we not come where You are? »

« During these days I shall be like lightning that flashes brightly and disappears. I will go up to the Temple in the morning and then I will go out of town. You could meet Me only every morning at the Temple. »

« Last year You stayed with me… »

« This year I will not stay in any house. I shall be like lightning that passes… »

« But Passover… »

« I wish to consume it with My apostles, Johanna. If your Master wants that, He certainly wants it for a just reason. »

« That is true… So I shall be alone… Because my brothers told me that they want to be free during these days, and Chuza… »

« Master, I am going away. It is pouring. I am going to the children as I hear them gathered under the porch » says Valeria and she prudently withdraws.

« There is a heavy rainfall also in your heart, Johanna. »

« That is true, Master. Chuza is so… strange. I no longer understand him. A continual contradiction. Perhaps he has friends who are influencing his mind… or he has been threatened… or he is afraid for his future. »

« He is not the only one. Nay, I can say that few, lonely and scattered here and there are those who, like Me, are not afraid for their future and they will be fewer and fewer. Be very kind and patient with him. He is only a man… »

« But he has received so much from God, from You, that he ought to… »

« He ought to! Yes. But who has not received from Me in Israel? I have helped friends and enemies, I have forgiven, cured, comforted, taught… You can see, and you will see more clearly how God only is immutable, how different are the reactions of men, and how often he who has received more is most willing to strike his benefactor. One will truly be able to say that he who shared My bread with

Me raised his foot against Me. »

« I will not do that, Master. »

« You will not. But many will. »

« Is my husband perhaps one of them? If it were so, I would not go back to my house this evening. »

« No. He is not among them, this evening. But even if he were, your place is there. Because if he sins, you must not sin. If he wavers, you must support him. If he tramples on you, you must forgive him. »

« Oh! Trample on me, no! He loves me. But I would like him to be more resolute. He can influence Herod so much. I would like him to wring a promise from the Tetrarch in Your favour. As Claudia is trying to wring it from Pilate. But Chuza has only been able to bring me vague words of Herod… and to assure me that Herod only wishes to see You work some miracles and that he will not persecute You… He thus hopes to silence his remorse for John. Chuza says: "My king always says: 'Even if Heaven ordered me, I would not lift my hand. I am too frightened'!" »

« He speaks the truth. He will not lift his hand against Me. Many in Israel will not do that, because many are afraid to condemn Me materially. But they will ask other people to do so. As if in the eyes of God there were a difference between him who strikes, urged by the will of the people, and him who makes one strike. »

« Oh! but the people love You! Great celebrations are being prepared for You. And Pilate does not want tumults. He has reinforced the troops these days. I hope so much that… I do not know what I hope, Lord. I hope and I despair. My thoughts are inconstant like the weather these days, with alternating sunshine and showers… »

« Pray, Johanna, and be at peace. Always bear in mind that you have never grieved your Master and that He remembers that. Go. »

Johanna, who has become pale and thin these last few days, goes out pensively.

And Annaleah's gentle face appears.

« Come in. Where is your companion? »

« In there, Lord. She wishes to go away, they are about to leave. Martha has understood my wish and she will keep me here until sunset tomorrow evening. Sarah is going home, to say that I am staying here. She would like Your blessing because… But I will tell You later. »

« Let her come. I will bless her. »

The young woman goes out and comes back with her companion, who prostrates herself before Jesus.

« Peace be with you and may the grace of the Lord lead you onto the road where He has led this girl who preceded you. Be affectionate to her mother and bless Heaven that spared you ties and sorrows in order to have you completely for Itself. One day, more than now, you will bless the Lord for being sterile through your own will.

Go. »

The young woman goes away deeply moved.

« You have told her what she hoped to hear. Those words were her dream. Sarah always said: "I like your destiny, although it is so unknown in Israel. I want it, too. As I no longer have my father, and as my mother is as sweet as a dove, I am not afraid of not being able to follow it. But in order to be able to accomplish it and that it may be holy for me, as it is for you, I would like to hear it from His lips". Now You have told her. And I have peace, too. Because at times I was afraid that I might have elated a heart… »

« Since when has she been with you? »

« Since… When the order of the Sanhedrin came I said to myself: "The Master's hour has come, and I must prepare myself to die". Because I asked You, Lord… Today I am reminding You… If You are going to the Sacrifice, I, victim, with You. »

« Are you still firmly wanting the same thing? »

« Yes, Master. I could not live in a world where You were not… and I could not survive Your torture. I am so afraid for You! Many among us delude themselves… I don't! I feel that the hour has come. The hatred is too strong… And I hope that You will accept my offer. I have but my life to give You, because I am poor, as You know. My life and my purity. That is why I convinced my mother to send for her sister. That she may not remain alone… Sarah will be a daughter to her in my stead, and Sarah's mother will comfort her. Do not disappoint my heart, Lord! The world has no attraction for me. It is like a jail, in which many things disgust me terribly. It is perhaps because one who has been on the threshold of death has understood that what represents joy for many people is nothing but emptiness that does not satisfy. It is certain that I wish nothing but sacrifice… and to precede You… that I may not see the hatred of the world cast on my Lord like a weapon of torture, and to resemble You in sorrow… »

« Then we will lay the cut lily on the Altar where the Lamb is sacrificed. And it will become red with the Blood of redemption. And only the angels will be aware that Love was the sacrificer of a completely white ewe-lamb, and they will mark the name of the first victim of Love, of the first continuator of the Christ. »

« When, Lord? »

« Keep your lamp ready and put on your wedding dress. The Bridegroom is at the door. You will see His triumph, but not his death, but you will triumph with Him entering His Kingdom. »

« Ah! I am the happiest woman in Israel! I am a queen crowned with Your garland! May I, as such, ask a grace of You? »

« Which? »

« I loved a man, as You know. I no longer loved him as my spouse, because a greater love took possession of me, and he no longer loved

me because… But I do not want to remember his past. I ask You to redeem that heart. May I? It is not a sin to remember, while I am on the threshold of Life, him whom I loved, to give him eternal Life, is it? »

« It is not a sin. It is to take love to the holy end of the sacrifice for the welfare of the beloved. »

« Bless me, then, Master. Absolve me of all my sins. Make me ready for the wedding and for Your coming. Because it is You Who is coming, my God, to take Your poor servant and make her Your bride. »

The girl, beaming with joy and health, stoops to kiss the Master's feet while He blesses her, praying over her. And the hall, as white as if it were all decorated with lilies, is really the worthy surroundings for this rite, and harmonises beautifully with its protagonists, who are young, lovely, clad in white, shining with angelical and divine love.

Jesus leaves the girl there, absorbed in her joy, and goes out quietly to go and bless the children, who with shouts of joy are rushing towards the wagon and they get into it happily, with the women who are going away. Eliza and Nike remain to take Annaleah back to town the following day. It has stopped raining and the sky, once the clouds are scattered, shows its clear blue, and the sunbeams descend to make the raindrops glitter. A splendid rainbow bends from Bethany over Jerusalem. The wagon goes away squeaking and goes out through the gate. It disappears.

Lazarus, who is near Jesus, at the end of the porch, asks: « Have the women disciples given You joy? » and he looks at the Master.

« No, Lazarus, they have not. All of them, with the exception of one, have given Me their sorrows and also some disappointments, if I could delude Myself. »

« The Roman ladies, You mean, have disappointed You? Have they spoken to You of Pilate? »

« No, they have not. »

« Then I must do so. I was hoping that they would speak to You about him. That is why I waited. Let us go into this solitary room. The women have gone with Martha to do their work. Mary, instead, is with Your Mother, in the other house. Your Mother has been so long with Judas, and now She has taken him with Her… Sit down, Master… I have been to see the Proconsul… I had promised and I did so. But Simon of Jonas would not be very satisfied with my mission!… Fortunately, Simon thinks no more about it. The Proconsul listened to me and he replied saying: -I? I should attend to Him? I have not even the most remote and slightest intention of doing that! I only say this: that not because of the Man - You, Master but because of all the trouble that I get through Him, I have firmly decided not to have anything further to do with Him, for good or

for evil. I wash my hands of it. I will reinforce the guard because I do not want disturbances. I will thus satisfy Caesar, my wife and myself. That is, the only ones of whom I take sacred care. And with regard to the rest I will not lift a finger. The quarrels of these people who are eternally dissatisfied. They create them, they enjoy them. With regard to the Man, I ignore Him as an evil-doer, I ignore Him as a virtuous man, and I ignore Him as a wise man. And I want to ignore Him. And to continue to ignore Him. Unfortunately, although I want to ignore Him, I find it difficult to do so, because the leaders of Israel speak to Me about Him with their complaints, Claudia with her praises, the followers of the Galilean with their accusations against the Sanhedrin. If it were not for Claudia, I would have Him arrested and I would hand Him over to them so that they might settle the matter and we should not hear any more of it. The Man is the most peaceful subject in the whole Empire. But in spite of all that, He has given me so much trouble that I would like a solution… With such humour, Master… »

« You mean that we cannot be safe. With men one is never safe… »

« But I am told that the Sanhedrin is calmer. They have not recalled the band, the disciples have not been annoyed. Those who went to town will soon be back and we shall hear… They will always contradict You. Will they take action?… The crowds love You too much to challenge them imprudently. »

« Shall we go along the road, towards those who are coming back? » suggests Jesus.

« Let us go. »

They go out into the garden and they are half way when Lazarus asks: « But when have You had something to eat? And where? »

« At the first hour. »

« But it is almost sunset. Let us go back. »

« No. I do not feel it is necessary. I prefer to go. I can see a poor child over there, clinging to the gate. Perhaps he is hungry. His clothes are worn-out and he is wan. I have been watching him for some time. He was already there when the wagon left, and he ran away not to be seen and probably driven away. Then he came back and has been looking insistently towards us and the house. »

« If he is hungry I had better go and get some food. Go on, Master. I will join You at once » and Lazarus runs back while Jesus quickens His pace towards the gate.

The boy, a sickly-looking irregular face, in which only the eyes shine beautiful and lively, looks at Him.

Jesus smiles at him and while opening the lock of the gate He says to him kindly: « Whom are you looking for, child? »

« Are You the Lord Jesus? »

« I am. »

« I am looking for You. »

« Who has sent you? »

« No one. But I want to speak to You. So many people come to speak to You. I have come, too. You satisfy so many people. Me, too. »

Jesus has lifted the latch and He asks the boy to remove his thin hands from the bars, so that He may open the gate. The boy steps aside and in doing so, as his discoloured garment moves on his distorted body, one can see that he is a poor rickety child, with his head sunken into his shoulders owing to the commencement of a hump, and his unsteady legs wide apart. A true little poor wretch. He is perhaps older than one might think considering his height, which is of a boy about six years old, whilst his face is already that of a man, somewhat flabby, with a protruding chin, almost the face of an old man.

Jesus bends to caress him and says: « So tell Me what you want. I am your friend. I am the friend of all children. » With how much loving kindness Jesus takes the emaciated face in His hands and kisses his forehead!

« I know. That is why I came. See how I am? I would like to die not to suffer any more. And not to belong any more to anybody… Since You cure so many people and raise the dead, let me die, as no one loves me and I shall never be able to work. »

« Have you no relatives? Are you an orphan? »

« I have a father. But he does not love me, because I am like this. He rejected my mother, he gave her the libel of divorce, and he drove me out with her, and my mother died. It was my fault, because I am so deformed. »

« But who are you living with? »

« When my mother died the servants took me back to my father. But he got married again and has lovely children, and he expelled me. He handed me over to some of his peasants. But they do what their master does, to find favour in his eyes… and they make me suffer. »

« Do they beat you? »

« No. But they take more care of animals than of me, and they sneer at me, and as I am often ill, they get bored with me. I am becoming more and more deformed, and their sons gibe at me and they make me fall. No one loves me. And last winter, when I had a bad cough and I needed medicines, my father would not spend any money and said that the only good thing I could do was to die. Since then I have been waiting for You to say to You: "Let me die". »

Jesus takes him in His arms, turning a deaf ear to the words of the boy who says: « My feet are muddy and so is my tunic, because I sat on the road. I will dirty Your clothes. »

« Have you come from far? »

« From near the town, because the person who keeps me lives

there. I saw Your apostles pass by. I know it was them, because the peasants said: "Here are the disciples of the Galilean Rabbi. But He is not with them". And I came. »

« You are wet, My child. Poor boy! You will be taken ill again. »

« If You do not listen to me, I hope the disease at least will make me die! Where are You taking me? »

« Into the house. You cannot remain thus. »

Jesus goes back into the garden with the deformed boy in His arms and He shouts to Lazarus, who is coming: « Close the gate, please. I am carrying this little fellow, who is wet through, in My arms. »

« But who is he, Master? »

« I do not know. I do not even know his name. »

« Neither will I tell You. I don't want to be known. I want what I told You. My mother used to say to me: "Son, my poor son, I am dying, but I wish you died with me, because in the next world you would no longer be so deformed as to suffer in your bones and in your heart. Those who are born poor wretches have no sneering names there. Because God is good to innocent and unhappy people". Will You send me to God? »

« The boy wants to die. It is a sad story… »

Lazarus, who is staring at the little boy, suddenly says: « But are you not the son of Nahum's son? Are you not the boy who always sits in the sun near the sycamore that is at the end of Nahum's olivetrees, and whom your father entrusted to his peasant Josiah? »

« Yes, I am. But why did you tell? »

« Poor boy! Not to scoff at you. Believe me, Master, the fate of a dog in Israel is not so sad as the fate of this boy. If he did not go back to the house from which he came, no one would look for him. The servants are like their masters. Heartless men. Joseph knows the story well. It caused a stir. But at the time I was so worried about Mary… But when the unhappy wife died and this boy came to Josiah's, I used to see him when I passed by… He was forsaken on the threshing-floor in the sun or the wind, because he began to walk very late… and always very little. I do not know how he was able to come so far today. I wonder how long he has been on the way! »

« Since Peter passed there. »

« And now? What shall we do? »

« I am not going back home. I want to die, to go away. Grace and mercy on me, Lord! »

They have gone into the house and Lazarus calls a servant and tells him to bring a blanket and to send Naomi to take care of the boy, who is blue with cold in his wet clothes.

« The son of one of Your fiercest enemies! One of the most wicked in Israel. How old are you, child? »

« Ten years. »

« Ten! Ten years of sorrow! »

« And they are enough! » says Jesus in a loud voice putting down the boy.

He is really misshapen! His right shoulder is higher than his left one, his chest protrudes excessively, his thin neck is sunken between his raised collar-bones, his bow-legs!…

Jesus looks at him pitifully while Naomi undresses him and dries him before enveloping him in a warm blanket. Lazarus also looks at him piteously.

« I will put him in my bed, Lord, after I have given him some warm milk » says Naomi.

« But are You not going to let me die? Have mercy on me! Why let me live to be like this and suffer so much? » and he concludes: « I was hoping in You, Lord. » There is reproach and disappointment in his voice.

« Be good. Be obedient, and Heaven will comfort you » says Jesus and He bends to caress him once again, gently rubbing his poor deformed body with His hand.

« Take him to bed and watch over him. Then… we will see. »

The boy is taken away while he weeps.

« And they are the ones who think they are holy! » exclaims Lazarus thinking of Nahum…

Peter is heard calling his Master…

« Oh! Master! Are You here? All is well. No trouble. Oh! on the contrary much calm. No one disturbed us at the Temple. John received good news. The disciples have been left in peace. People are waiting for You joyfully. I am glad. And what have You done, Master? »

They go away together speaking, while Lazarus goes where Maximinus calls him.

582. The Sabbath before the Entry into Jerusalem. Parable of the Two Lamps and the Parable Applied to the Miracle on Shalem.

26th March 1947.

The weather has cleared up after the past wet days and a bright sun is shining in a very clear sky. The earth, cleaned by the rains, is as clear as the atmosphere. It is so fresh and clean that it seems to have been created only a few hours ago. Everything is bright and everything sings in the clear morning.

Jesus is walking slowly along the farthest paths in the garden. Only an odd gardener watches the solitary walk in the early morning hours. But no one disturbs the Master. On the contrary they withdraw silently to leave Him alone. Moreover it is the Sabbath, the day of rest, and the gardeners are not at work. But through a

habit as long as their lives, they are out watching plants, beehives, flowers, for which there is no Sabbath, and which smell, rustle and buzz in the sunshine and in the April breeze.

Then the garden slowly becomes busy. The first to appear are the servants employed in the house, then the maidservants, then the apostles and the women disciples, and Lazarus is the last one. Jesus joins them greeting them with His usual salutation.

« How long have You been here, Master? » asks Lazarus, shaking some dew-drops off Jesus' hair.

« Since dawn. Your birds called Me to praise God. And I came out here. To contemplate God in the beauty of Creation is to honour Him and to pray with a moved spirit. And the Earth is beautiful. And in these early hours of the day, on a day like this one, it appears to us as fresh as it was in the first days of its existence. »

« Real Passover weather. And it has improved. It will last because it cleared up during the first phase of the moon with a favourable wind » states Peter.

« I am glad to hear that. Passover with rain is sad. »

« Even worse, it is detrimental to crops. The corn needs sunshine, now that harvest time is approaching » says Bartholomew.

« I am happy to be here at peace. This is the Sabbath and nobody will come. There will be no strangers among us » says Andrew.

« You are wrong. There is a guest, a young guest. He is still sleeping, Master. A soft bed and a full stomach are letting him have a long sleep. I went in to see him. Naomi is watching over him » says Lazarus.

« But who is he? When did he come? Who brought him? Because you are speaking as if it were a boy » ask both men and women.

« It is a boy. A poor boy. His grief brought him here. He was over there, clinging to the bars of the gate and looking at the house. And the Master brought him in. »

« We knew nothing about it… Why? »

« Because the child was in need of peace » replies Jesus, and His countenance is absorbed in deep thought as He concludes: « And in Lazarus' house they know how to be silent. »

A servant comes to tell Martha something and then withdraws, but comes back soon with other servants carrying trays with jugs of milk, cups, and bread with butter and honey. They all help themselves sitting on the seats scattered here and there.

Then they wish to gather once again round the Master and they ask Him to tell them a parable, « a beautiful parable » they say « as serene as this day of Nisan. »

« I will not tell you one, but two. Listen.

A man one day decided to light two lamps to honour the Lord on a feast day. So he took two vases of the same size, he put in each the same quantity and quality of oil, identical wicks, and he lit them

at the same hour, so that they might pray while he worked, as he was allowed. After some time he went back and he saw that one lamp was burning brightly, whereas the other had only a very tiny flame, that hardly gave any light in the comer where the two lamps were burning. The man thought that the wick was perhaps faulty. He examined it. No, it was all right. But it would not burn so merrily as the other lamp, the flame of which fluttered like a tongue and seemed to whisper words, so merry it was, and it blazed so excitedly that it even had a light murmur. "This lamp is really singing the praises of the Most High Lord!" he said to himself. "Whereas this one! Look at it, soul of mine! It seems to find it burdensome to have to honour the Lord, as it does it with so little zeal!" and he went back to his work.

He went back again after some time. One flame had grown even taller, and the other had become even smaller and was burning the more quietly and still, the more the other vibrated shining. He went back a second time. The same situation. A third time, the same thing. But when he came the fourth time, he saw the room full of black evil-smelling smoke, and only one little flame shining through the veils of thick smoke. He went to the shelf where the lamps were, and he noticed that the one that was blazing so brightly previously was completely burnt out and black, and it had also soiled the white wall with its flame. The other one, instead, continued to honour the Lord with its constant light. He was about to remedy the defect when a voice sounded close to him: "Leave things as they are. But meditate on them, for they are a symbol. I am the Lord". The man prostrated himself on the floor adoring and with great fear he dared to say: "I am foolish. Explain to me, o Wisdom, the symbol of the lamps, of which the one that seemed more active in honouring You has caused damage, whilst the other is persevering in giving light".

"Yes, I will. The hearts of men are like those two lamps. There are those who at the beginning blaze, are bright and are admired by men, because their flames seem so perfect and constant. And there are those whose light is mild, does not attract anybody's attention and they seem to be tepid in honouring the Lord. But after the first or the second blaze, or the third one, between the third and the fourth one they cause damage and then they go out, still with injury, because their light was not reliable. They wanted to shine more for the sake of men than for the Lord's, and their pride consumed them in a very short time, amid a dark thick smoke that obscured also the air. The others had only one constant will: to honour God only; and without minding whether men praised them, they consumed themselves through a long clear flame, devoid of smoke and stench. Do imitate the constant light, for it is the only one pleasing to the Lord".

The man raised his head… The air had been purified of the smoke

and the star of the faithful lamp was now shining all alone, pure, steady, to honour God, making the metal of the lamp gleam as if it were pure gold. And he watched it shine, always unvaryingly, for hours and hours, until gently, without smoke or stench, without soiling itself, the flame went out in a flash and it seemed to ascend towards the sky to settle among the stars, having worthily honoured the Lord to the very last moment of its life.

I solemnly tell you that many are those who blaze at the beginning and attract the admiration of the world that can only see the surface of human actions, and then they perish being carbonised and staining with their pungent smoke. And I solemnly tell you that their blazing is not watched by God, because He sees it bum proudly for human purposes. Blessed are those who know how to imitate the second lamp and not to get carbonised, but to ascend to Heaven with the last throb of their constant love. »

« What a strange parable! But true! Lovely! I like it! I should like to know whether we are the lamps that rise to Heaven. » The apostles exchange their feelings.

Judas finds the opportunity to bite. And his biting words are addressed to Mary of Magdala and John of Zebedee: « Be careful, Mary, and you, John. You are the blazing lamps among us… Let no evil befall you! »

Mary of Magdala is about to reply to him but she bites her lips not to utter the words that had come up from her heart. She looks at Judas. She only looks at him. But her glare is such that Judas stops laughing and staring at her.

John, whose heart is meek but burning with love, kindly replies: « And that might happen, considering how incapable I am. But I confide in the help of the Lord, and I hope I shall be able to bum till the last drop and till the last moment to honour the Lord our God. »

« And the other parable? You promised two » says James of Alphaeus.

« Here is My second parable. It is about to come… » and He points at the door of the house, where the curtain covering it is swaying slowly in the breeze, and then is drawn by the hand of a servant to let old Naomi enter. She rushes to Jesus' feet saying: « But the boy is cured! He is no longer deformed! You cured him during the night. He had waked up and I was preparing the bath to wash him before putting on him the tunic and the garment I had sewn during the night using a tunic cast off by Lazarus. But when I said to him: "Come, child" and I removed the blankets, I saw that his little body, so misshapen yesterday, was no longer so. And I shouted. Sarah and Marcella rushed in, but they did not even know that the boy was sleeping in my bed and I left them there, and I ran here to tell You… »

Everybody's curiosity is roused. Questions, anxiety to see. Jesus calms the whispering with a gesture. He says to Naomi: « Go back

to the boy. Wash him, dress him and bring him here to Me. »

He then addresses His disciples:

« Here is the second parable, and it could be entitled: "True justice takes no vengeance and makes no distinction". A man, nay, the Man, the Son of man, has friends and enemies. Few friends, many enemies. And He is aware of the hatred of His enemies, and knows their thoughts and wills, that will not hesitate in front of any action, no matter how horrible it may be. And in that respect they are stronger than His friends, in whom dismay or disappointment, or excess of confidence, act as battering-rams that shatter their fortress to pieces. This Son of man with many enemies and Who is reproached for many things that are not true, yesterday met a poor boy, the most desolate of all children, the son of one of His enemies. And the boy was deformed and crippled and asked for a strange grace: to die. Everybody asks honours and joy, health and life, of the Son of man. This poor boy asked to die in order not to suffer any longer. He has already experienced all the sorrows of the flesh and of the heart, because the man who procreated him, and who hates Me without any reason, also hates the unhappy innocent wretch whom he generated. And I cured him so that he may no longer suffer, and in addition to physical health he may achieve spiritual salvation. Also his young soul is diseased. The hatred of his father and the mockery of men have injured it and deprived it of love. He is left with faith only in Heaven and in the Son of man and he asks them to let him die. Here he is. Now you will hear him speak. »

The boy, tidy and clean in the new white woollen tunic that Naomi made for him quickly during the night, comes forward held by the hand by the old nurse. He is small, although, not being any longer bent and lame, he looks taller than he did yesterday. His face is irregular and somewhat flabby, typical of a child whom sorrow has made prematurely adult. But he is no longer deformed. His bare feet walk steadily on the floor with a step that no longer has the halting of lame people, and his shoulders, although very thin, are straight. His slender neck overhangs them and looks long as compared with yesterday, when it was sunken between his asymmetric clavicles.

« But… but this is the son of Annas of Nahum! What a wasted miracle! Do You think that by doing so You will make friends with his father and Nahum? You will make them more resentful! Because they were only looking forward to the death of this boy, the offspring of an unfortunate marriage » exclaims Judas of Kerioth.

« I do not work miracles to make friends, but out of pity for people and to honour My Father. I never make differences or calculations when I bend pitifully over human miseries. I do not revenge Myself on those who persecute Me… »

« Nahum will consider Your action a revenge. »

« I knew nothing about this boy. I do not even know his name. »

« They call him Mathusala or Mathusalem out of contempt. »

« My mother called me Shalem. She loved me. She was not bad I like you and like those who hate me » says the boy, his eyes shining with the light of impotent wrath that men and animals have when they have been tormented too long.

« Come here, Shalem. Here with Me. Are you happy that you are cured? »

« Yes… but I preferred to die. I shall not be loved just the same. It would have been beautiful if my mother still lived. But thus!… I shall always be unhappy. »

« He is right. We met this boy yesterday. He asked us whether You were at Bethany, at Lazarus'. We wanted to give him some alms, because we thought that he was a beggar. But he did not want any. He was at the edge of a field… » says the Zealot.

« Did you not know him either? That is strange » says Judas of Kerioth.

« It is even more strange that you know such things so well. Are you forgetting that I was among persecuted people and then among lepers, until I came with the Master? »

« And are you forgetting that I am a friend of Nahum's, who is Annas's trustee? I never hid that from you. »

« Well! Well! That does not matter. What matters is to know what we are now going to do with this child. His father does not love him, that is true. But he always has rights over him. We cannot take his son away from him, thus, without telling him. We must be careful and not upset them, since they seem to be more favourably disposed towards us » says Nathanael.

Judas breaks into a sarcastic laugh, but gives no explanation of his laughing.

Jesus, Who has taken the boy between His knees, says slowly: « I will face Nahum… I shall not be hated more because of this. His hatred cannot increase. It is not possible. It is already complete. »

Annaleah, who has never spoken, all engrossed in thoughts that make her happy, says: « If I had stayed here, I would have liked to have him with me. I am young, but I have the heart of a mother… »

« Are you going away? When? » ask the women.

« Soon. »

« For good? And where are you going? Out of Judaea? »

« Yes. Far. Very far. For good. And I am so happy. »

« Other women will be able to do what You cannot do, if his father hands him over to us. »

« I will tell Nahum, if you wish so. He is the one who matters. More than the boy's father. I will tell him tomorrow » promises Judas of Kerioth.

« If it were not the Sabbath… I would have gone to that Josiah to whom the boy was entrusted » says Andrew.

« To see whether they are distressed having lost him? » asks Matthew.

« I think they would be more upset if one of their bees got lost… » mumbles between his teeth Maximinus, who has approached them for some time.

The boy does not speak. He clings to Jesus, studying the faces around him with the sharp eyes often noticeable in sickly people and in those who have lived a miserable life. He seems to be scanning souls rather than faces, and when Peter asks him: « What do you think of us? » the boy replies by putting his hand into Peter's saying: « You are good », he then rectifies: « You are all good. But… I wish I had not been recognised. I am afraid… » and he looks at Judas of Kerioth.

« You are afraid of me, are you not? That I may speak to your father? I will certainly have to do so, if I have to ask him to leave you with us. But he will not take you away! »

« I know. But it is a different matter… I would like to be far, very far, where that woman is going… In my mother's country. There is a blue sea surrounded by completely green mountains. One can see it down at the bottom, with so many white sails flying on it and beautiful towns around it. And in the mountains there are so many grottoes where wild bees make very sweet honey. I have not had any honey since my mother died and I was entrusted to Josiah. Philip, Joseph, Eliza and the other children did get it. But I did not. If they had kept the vase of honey within reach I would have stolen it, as I was dying for some. But they kept it on the upper shelves, and I could not climb on the tables, as Philip did. I am longing so much for some honey! »

« Oh! poor child! I will go and bring you as much as you want! » says Martha, deeply moved, and she runs away.

« But where did his mother come from? » asks Peter.

« She had houses and land near Saphet. The only daughter, orphan and heiress, already old, ugly and somewhat lame. But very rich. Through the assistance of old Sadoc, who acted as go-between, the son of beloved Annas obtained her in marriage… A contract that was a truly base bargain, all calculation, no love. After selling the property of his wife, saying that it was too far from here, with the exception of a little house that previously belonged to the bailiff, who had received it as a gift from the old owner for himself and his heirs down to the fourth generation, he squandered all the money in unlucky speculations. But… I do not believe that. Because I know that he owns beautiful lands near the shore… and previously he did not have them… Then, after some years of married life, when the woman was already on the threshold of her decline, this son was

born… and it was the pretence to expel the woman and take another one from the plain of Sharon, young, beautiful and rich… The divorced woman took refuge at the old bailiff's house and died there. I do not know why they did not keep this child. His father reckoned that he was dead » explains the Iscariot.

« Because John and Mary were dead, and their children went to work elsewhere as servants. And who was to keep me, if I was not their son and I was not fit to work? But Michael and Isaac were good, and also Esther and Judith were good. And they are good. When they come for feasts, they bring me gifts, but Josiah takes them off me to give them to his sons. »

« But they do not want you » replies Judas.

« Now that I am straight and strong they will want me. They are servants! As I said, they could not say to their master: "Take on this diseased cripple". But now they can. »

« But if you have run away from Josiah, how can they find you? » says Bartholomew to make him ponder.

The boy is struck by the just remark and becomes pensive, because his illness has made his mind prematurely thoughtful, just as his face is precociously adult, and he says downheartedly: « That is true! I had not thought of that. »

« Go back there. They will be coming during the next days… »

« There? No. I am not going back there. I don't want to go back there. I would rather kill myself! » He is shaken by a wild fury, then he throws himself on Jesus' knees weeping and says: « Why did You not let me die? »

Martha, who is just coming back with a vase of honey, is surprised at so much desolation, and Bartholomew is distressed at having brought it about and he apologises: « I thought I was giving a good piece of advice. Good for everybody. For the boy, for You, Master, for Lazarus… None of you, and none of us, are in need of fresh hatred… »

« That is true! A real problem! » exclaims Peter, and meditating on the case, he draws his personal conclusions, ending them with his characteristic soft whistling, which expresses his frame of mind in face of difficult grave problems to be solved.

Some make this, some that proposal. To go to Nahum. To go to Josiah and tell him to send Michael and Isaac to Lazarus, or elsewhere, wherever the boy will be, because it is wise not to have Lazarus hated, more than he already is hated because of his friendship with Jesus. Not to mention anything to anybody and make the boy disappear by entrusting him to some reliable disciple.

Judas of Kerioth does not speak. Nay, he does not seem to be interested in the discussion. He toys with the tassels of his tunic, combing and ruffling them with his fingers.

Jesus does not speak either. He calms and caresses the boy and

He raises his head putting the vase of honey in his hands.

Shalem is a boy, a poor ten-year old boy who has always suffered, but he is always a boy, even if sorrow has matured him, and upon seeing such a treasure of honey, his last tears change into ecstatic astonishment. Raising his eyes, his only beauty, so brown, large and intelligent as they are, and looking alternately at Jesus and Martha, he asks: « How much may I take? One of these spoons or two? » and he points at the round silver spoon that he slowly dips into the blond honey.

« As much as you want, my boy. As much as you like. You will take the rest later, tomorrow. It's all yours! » says Martha caressing him.

« All mine!!! Oh! I have never had so much honey! All mine! Oh! » And he gratefully presses the vase to his chest, as if it were a treasure.

But he then realises that rather than the vase, it is the love with which it is offered that is precious, and he lays the little vase on Jesus' knees and he lifts his arms as he wants to embrace the neck of Martha, who is bent over him, and kiss her. It is all that his gratitude, all that he can give, a helpless wretch, who has nothing to give.

The others stop making plans to watch the scene. And Peter says: « This child is even more unhappy than Marjiam, who at least had the love of his grandfather and of the other peasants! It is true that there are always sorrows greater than the ones we have considered very great! »

« Yes. The abyss of human sorrow has not yet been fathomed. I wonder how many secrets it still conceals… And how many will it still conceal in future ages? » says Bartholomew pensively.

« Then you have no faith in the Gospel! Do you not think that it will change the world? It is stated by the prophets. And the Master repeats it. You are sceptical, Bartholomew » says the Iscariot with a slight touch of irony.

The Zealot replies to him: « I do not see in what Bartholomew's incredulity consists. The Master's doctrine will give solace to all misfortunes, it will even modify the cruelty of customs and habits, but it will not eliminate sorrow. It will make it bearable through the divine promises of future joys. In order to abolish sorrow, or at least great part of sorrow, because diseases, deaths and natural cataclysms would still remain, it would be necessary for all men to have the heart that the Christs has, but… »

The Iscariot interrupts him saying: « That in fact must happen. Otherwise to what avail would the Messiah have come to the Earth? »

« Let us say that that should happen. But, tell me, Judas, has that happened among us? We are twelve, and for three years we have lived with Him, we have taken in His doctrine like the air we

breathe. So? Are we twelve all saints? What do we do that is different from what Lazarus does, from what Stephen, Nicolaus, Isaac, Manaen, Joseph and Nicodemus, the women and children do? I am speaking of the just people of our Fatherland. All of them, whether they are wise and rich, or poor and ignorant, do what we do: a little good, a little bad, but without renewing themselves completely. Nay, I tell you that many surpass us. Yes. Many followers surpass us, the apostles… And would you expect the whole world to assume hearts like the Christ's, if we, His apostles, have not done so? We have more or less improved ourselves… at least let us hope so, because it is only with difficulty that man knows himself or the brother who lives beside him. The veil of the flesh is too opaque and thick, and the thought of man too carefully avoids being penetrated, for man to understand man. Whether we examine ourselves or other people, we always remain at the surface, both when we examine ourselves, because we do not want to hurt our pride or suffer feeling that we must change, and when we examine other people, because our pride of examiners makes us unjust judges and the pride of the person we scrutinise closes him, as an oyster closes its valves, with regard to what is inside him » says the Zealot.

« You are quite right! Simon, you have really spoken words of wisdom! » says Judas Thaddeus approving. And the others in chorus agree.

« Then why did He come, if nothing is to be changed? » replies the Iscariot.

Jesus begins to speak: « Much will be changed. Not everything. Because also in future there will be against My doctrine what is already active: the hatred of those who do not love the Light. Because against the strength of My followers there will be the power of Satan's followers. How many! In how many appearances! How many new heretical doctrines will always be opposed to My doctrine, which is immutable, because it is perfect! How much sorrow will germinate from them! You do not know the future. You consider great the sorrow now existing in the world… But He Who knows, sees horrors that would not be understood even if I explained them to you… What a tragedy if I had not come! If I had not come to give future generations a code that checks instincts in the better people and contains a promise of future peace! How dreadful it would be if man did not have, through My coming, spiritual elements capable of keeping him "alive" in the life of the spirit and assuring him of a reward!… If I had not come, in the long run, the Earth would have become a huge earthly hell, and the human race would have torn itself to pieces and would have perished cursing the Creator… »

« The Most High has promised never to send universal punishments again, like the Deluge. A promise of God never fails » says Judas.

« Yes, Judas of Simon. That is true. And never again will the Most High send universal calamities like the Deluge. But men themselves will create scourges that will be more and more dreadful, in comparison with which the deluge and the rain of fire that destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah are still merciful punishments. Oh!… »

Jesus stands up with a gesture full of anguish and pity for future peoples.

« All right! You know… But in the meantime what are we going to do for him? » asks the Iscariot pointing at the boy who is enjoying his honey in small quantities and is happy.

« Each day has enough trouble of its own. Tomorrow will tell, It is vain to worry about tomorrow, if we do not even know who will be alive tomorrow. »

« I am not of Your opinion. And I say that we ought to know where we shall go to stay, where we shall consume the Supper. So many things. If we go on waiting, the town will be full up. And where shall we go? Not to Gethsemane. Not to Joseph of Sephoris. Not to Johanna's. Not to Nike's. Not to Lazarus'. Where then? »

« Where the Father will prepare a shelter for His Word. »

« Do You think that I want to know in order to report it? »

« You say so. I have not said anything. Come, Shalem. My Mother knows about you, but She has not yet seen you. Come, and I will take you to Her. »

« But is Your Mother not well? » asks Thomas.

« No. She is praying. She is in great need of prayer. »

« Yes. She is suffering bitterly. She weeps very much. And Mary has nothing but prayer to console Her. I have always seen Her pray very much. In the moments of -deepest grief She lives on prayer, I could say… » explains Mary of Alphaeus, while Jesus goes away holding the boy by the hand and having on the other side Annaleah, whom He has invited to go with Him to Mary.

583. The Sabbath before the Entry into Jerusalem. Pilgrims and Judaeans at Bethany.

27th March 1947.

Love and hatred urge many pilgrims who have gathered in Jerusalem, as well as many inhabitants of Jerusalem, to come to Bethany without awaiting that sunset is over. On the contrary, the sun has just begun to set when the first visitors arrive at Lazarus' house. And as Lazarus, when called by the servants, is surprised at such transgression of the Sabbath, because the first to arrive are the best-known among the strictest Judaeans, they give him this truly pharisaic answer: « From the Sheep Gate we could no longer see the sun's disc, so we set off, thinking that we would certainly not exceed the prescribed distance before the sun had set behind

the Temple domes. »

An ironical smile appears on Lazarus' thin face, because he is healthy and handsome, but he is certainly not fat. And he replies to them kindly, but lightly sarcastically: « And what do you want to see? The Master respects His Sabbath. And He is resting. And in order to consider that the rest has ended, He is not satisfied with just not seeing the sun's disc, but He waits until the last sunbeam disappears to say: "The Sabbath is over". »

« We know that He is perfect! We know! But if we have made a mistake, that is another reason for seeing Him. Only for a moment, so that He may absolve us. »

« I am sorry, but I cannot. The Master is tired and is resting. I will not disturb Him. »

But more people come, they are pilgrims from everywhere, who beg and insist on seeing Jesus'. Hebrews are mingled with Gentiles, and proselytes with the latter. They watch and scan Lazarus, as if he were something unreal. And Lazarus puts up with the annoyance of such unsought celebrity replying patiently to those who ask him questions. But he does not order the servants to open the gate.

« Are you the man raised from the dead? » asks one who, by his appearance, is certainly of mixed race because he has only the typical rather big hooked nose of the Jews, whereas his accent and the style of his garments indicate that he is a foreigner.

« I am, to give glory to God Who raised me from the dead to make me a servant of His Messiah. »

« But was it true death? » ask other people.

« Ask those Jewish notables. They came to my funeral and many were present at my resurrection. »

« But what did you feel? Where were you? What do you remember? When you became alive again, what happened to you? How did He raise you?… Is it not possible to see the sepulchre where you were? What did you die of? Are you really well now? Have you no longer the marks of the sores? »

Lazarus tries to reply to everybody patiently. But if it is easy for him to say that he is really well and that also the marks of the sores have disappeared by now, in the months that have elapsed since he was raised from the dead, he cannot say what he felt and how he was raised. And he replies: « I do not know. I found myself alive in my garden, among my servants and sisters. When I was freed of the shroud I saw the sun, the light, I was hungry, I had some food, I enjoyed life and the great love the Rabbi had for me. Those who were present know the rest better than I do. There are three over there who are talking. And two there who are just arriving. » (The latter are John and Eleazar, the members of the Sanhedrin, whereas the three talking to one another are two scribes and a Pharisee whom I have in fact seen at Lazarus' resurrection, but whose names

I do not remember.)

« They will not speak to us, because we are Gentiles! As you are Judaeans, you can go and ask them… And you… show us the sepulchre where you were. » They could not be more insistent.

Lazarus makes up his mind. He says something to the servants, then he addresses the crowd: « Go along that road that runs between this house and that other one of mine. I will come and meet you to take you to the sepulchre, although there is nothing to be seen except an opening in the layer of rock. »

« It does not matter! Let us go! »

« Lazarus! Stop! Can we come as well? Or are we forbidden what strangers are allowed? » asks a scribe.

« No. Archelaus. You may come, if you do not think that you will be contaminated by approaching a sepulchre. »

« It will not contaminate us because there is no dead body in it. »

« But there was one for four days. One is considered unclean for much less in Israel! You say that one is unclean when one's garment just grazes someone who has touched a corpse. And my sepulchre still puffs whiffs of death, although it has been open for such a long time. »

« It does not matter. We will purify ourselves. »

Lazarus looks at John and Eleazar, the two Pharisees, and says to them: « Are you coming as well? »

« Yes, we are. »

Lazarus goes quickly towards the side delimited by hedges as tall and thick as walls, and he opens a gate enclosed in one of them, and he looks along the road leading to Simon's house, beckoning those who are waiting to come forward. He leads them towards the sepulchre. Rose-bushes in bloom are arched over the entrance, but are not sufficient to suppress the horror emanating from an open tomb. On the slanting rock under the flowery arch one can read the words: « Lazarus, come out! »

The evil-minded visitors see them at once and ask immediately: « Why did you have those words carved there? You should not have done that! »

« Why? In my house I do what I like, and no one can accuse me of sin if I decided to have fixed on the rock, so that they are indelible, the words of the divine cry that gave life back to me. When I shall be in there, and I shall no longer be able to celebrate the merciful power of the Rabbi, I want the sun to read them still there on the rock, and the plants to learn them from the winds, birds and flowers to caress them, continuing thus on my behalf to bless the cry of the Christ Who raised me from the dead. »

« You are a heathen! You are an impious person! You are cursing our God. You are singing the praises of the witchcraft of Beelzebub's son. Be careful, Lazarus! »

« I remind you that I am in my house and that you are in my house, and that you have come, without being invited, and for worthless purposes. You are worse than these people, who are heathens, but they recognise a God in the reviver. »

« Anathema! Like Master, like disciple. How horrible! Let us go away from this impure cloaca. Corrupter of Israel, the Sanhedrin will remember your words. »

« And Rome your conspiracies. Get out! » Lazarus, who is always mild, remembers that he is the son of Theophilus, and he drives them away like a pack of dogs.

The pilgrims who have come from every country remain and they ask, and look, and implore to see the Christ.

« You will see Him in town. Not now. I cannot. »

« Ah! but is He coming to town? Really? Are you not lying? Is He coming even if they hate Him so much? »

« He is coming. Go now and do not worry. See how peaceful is the house? Not a person to be seen, not a voice to be heard. You have seen what you wanted to see: the man risen again and the place of his burial. Go now. But do not allow your curiosity to be unfruitful. May the fact that you have seen me, the living evidence of the power of Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God and Most Holy Messiah, lead you all on His way. Because of this hope I am glad that I was raised from the dead, because I hope that the miracle may rouse the doubtful and convert the heathen, convincing them all that one only is the true God and one only is the true Messiah: Jesus of Nazareth, the holy Master. »

The crowds disperse reluctantly, and if one goes away, ten more come, because new people arrive continuously. But with the help of some servants Lazarus succeeds in pushing everybody out and closing the gates.

He is about to withdraw saying: « Make sure they do not force the gates or climb over them. It will soon be dark and they will go to their sojourns », when he sees Eleazar and John come out from behind a mirtle-bush. « What? I had not seen you and I thought… »

« Do not send us away. We hid behind thick bushes not to be seen. We must speak to the Master. We came as we are not so suspected as Joseph and Nicodemus are. But we would not like to be seen by anybody, except you and the Master… Are your servants trustworthy? »

« In Lazarus' house the custom is too see and hear only what is pleasing to the landlord, and to know nothing for strangers. But Come along this path between two hedges of vegetation darker than a wall. » And he leads them along the path running between the double impenetrable barrier of boxes and laurels. « Wait here. I will bring Jesus. »

« Let no one know!… »

« Be not afraid. »

The wait is a short one. Jesus, all white in His linen tunic, soon appears on the path darkened by the intertwined branches, and Lazarus stops at the end of the path, as if he were on guard, or out of prudence. But Eleazar says to him, or rather beckons to him: « Come here. » Lazarus approaches them while Jesus greets the two who pay their deep respect to Him.

« Master, and you, Lazarus, listen. As soon as the news spread that You had come and were here, the Sanhedrin met in Caiaphas' house. Everything they do is abusive… And they have decided… Do not entertain illusions, Master! Be wary, Lazarus! Do not let the feigned peace or the apparent somnolence of the Sanhedrin deceive you. It is all pretence, Master. A simulation to attract You and capture You without the crowds getting excited and preparing to defend You. Your fate has been decided and the decree will not be changed. Whether tomorrow or in a year's time it will be accomplished. The Sanhedrin never forgets its revenges. They wait, they know how to wait for the favourable opportunity, then!… And you, too, Lazarus. They want to get rid of you, capture you and suppress you, because through your fault too many are leaving them to follow the Master. As you said with the right word, you are the evidence of His power. And they want to destroy it. The crowds soon forget, and they are aware of that. Once you and the Rabbi disappear, many passions will die down. »

« No, Eleazar! They will blaze up! » says Jesus.

« Oh! Master! But what will happen if You are dead? To what avail will faith in You blaze up, even if that were to happen, if You are dead? I was hoping to be able to tell You only one happy thing and invite You: my wife will soon give birth to the son who is thriving through Your justice, as You brought peace again to two stormy hearts. He will be born by Pentecost. I would like to ask You to come and bless him. If You enter under my roof, no misfortune will ever be in it » says John the Pharisee.

« I give you My blessing now… »

« Ah! You do not want to come to me! You do not believe that I am loyal! I am, Master! God sees me! »

« I know. The fact is… that I shall no longer be with you at Pentecost. »

« But the boy will be born in the country-house… »

« I know. But I shall not be there. And yet you, your wife, the unborn child, the children you already have, are blessed by Me. Thank you for coming. Go now. Take them along the path beyond Simon's house. So that they may not be seen… I am going back to the house. Peace to you… »

584. The Sabbath before the Entry into Jerusalem. The Supper at Bethany.

28th March 1947.

Supper has been prepared in the completely white hall where Jesus spoke to the women disciples. The whole white hall is bright and silvery with a nuance not so snow-white and cold, cast by bundles of branches of apple or pear-trees, or other fruit-trees, as white as snow, but with such a light shade of pink that makes one think of snow lightly touched by the kiss of a remote dawn. They protrude from pot-bellied vases or from slender silver amphorae, on the shelves, chests and dressers placed along the walls of the hall. The flowers shed the typical scent of blossoms of fruit-trees through the hall, the fresh bitterish scent of pure springtime…

Lazarus enters the hall walking beside Jesus. Behind them, in twos or larger groups, the apostles. Last are Lazarus' two sisters with Maximinus. I do not see the women disciples. Not even Mary. Perhaps they preferred to remain in Simon's house with the distressed Mother.

The day is turning to twilight. But the last sunbeams are still shining on the rustling leaves of some palm-trees in a group a few metres away from the hall, and on the top of a gigantic laurel on which sparrows are squabbling before going to rest. Beyond the palm-trees and the laurel, beyond the hedges of roses and jasmines and the beds of lilies of the valley, of other flowers and sweet-smelling plants, there is a white spot sprayed with the light green of the early leaves of a group of late pear or apple-trees in the orchard. It looks like a cloud entangled among the branches.

Jesus passing near an amphora full of branches remarks: « They already had the first little fruits. Look! On the tops there are blossoms, whereas farther down the blossoms have fallen off and the ovaries are swelling. »

« Mary wanted to pick them. She took bundles of them also to Your Mother. She got up at dawn, I think, lest another day of sunshine might spoil the delicate corollas. I heard of this destruction only a short while ago. But I was not so angry about it as the peasant servants. Nay, I thought that it was just to offer all the beauties of creation to You, the King of all things. »

Jesus sits down smiling in His place and looks at Mary, who with her sister is getting ready to serve as if she were a maid, bringing the cups of purification and the towels, then pouring wine into chalices and laying the trays of food on the table, as the servants bring them from the kitchen or hand them over after carving them on the sideboards.

Naturally, if the sisters serve all guests courteously, their attention is particularly directed to the two who are dearest to them: Jesus and Lazarus.

At a certain moment Peter, who is eating with relish, says: « Look! I am just noticing this! All the dishes are like the ones served in Galilee. I think… Of course! I seem to be at a wedding breakfast. But there is no shortage of wine here as there was at Cana. »

Mary smiles filling the apostle's chalice again with clear ambercoloured wine. But she does not speak.

And Lazarus explains: « And that is in fact what the sisters, and Mary in particular, wanted: to serve a supper that gave the Master the impression of being in His Galilee, a supper that, although imperfect, was to be better, much better than what is customary here… »

« But to make Him feel that, Mary should have been at this table. She was at Cana. The miracle took place through Her » remarks James of Alphaeus.

« That must have been a grand wine! »

« Wine is the symbol of mirth and ought to be the symbol also of fertility, as wine is the juice of the fertile vine. But I do not think that it fecundated very much. Susanna has no son » says the Iscariot.

« Oh! what a wine it was! It fecundated our spirits… » says John, somewhat dreamy, as he always is when he innerly contemplates the miracles worked by God. And he concludes: « It was worked on behalf of a virgin… and the influence of purity descended upon those who relished it. »

« But do you think that Susanna is a virgin? » asks the Iscariot laughing.

« I did not say that. Virgin is the Mother of the Lord. Virginity emanates from everything accomplished on Her behalf. I always consider how virginal everything is when performed for Mary… » and he dreams again smiling at I wonder which vision.

« Blessed boy! I think that he does not even remember the world any more, now. Look at him » says Peter pointing at John who, lying on his little bed, and lost in thought, is toying with little bits of bread forgetting to eat.

Jesus also bends a little to look at John who is at one of the comers of the U-shaped table, thus a little behind the back of the Lord, Who is at the middle of the central side, with His cousin James on His left and Lazarus on His right; after Lazarus there is the Zealot and Maximinus, and after James there is the other James and then Peter. John, instead, is between Andrew and Bartholomew, then there is Thomas, with in front of him Judas, Philip, Matthew and Thaddeus, who is at the corner, at the beginning of the long central table.

Mary of Lazarus leaves the hall while Martha is putting on the table trays full of early green figs, green fennel stalks, fresh shelled almonds, strawberries or raspberries, I do not know, that look even redder among the pale emerald green of the fennels and of the figs

and the white of the almonds, of the little melons or other fruit of the kind… I think they look like the green melons of southern Italy, and golden oranges.

« These fruits already? I have not seen any ripe ones anywhere » says Peter opening his eyes wide and pointing at the strawberries and the melons.

« Some of them came from the shores beyond Gaza where I have a market garden of these products, and some from the sunny terraces on the house, the nursery for the more delicate plants that need to be protected from frost. A Roman friend taught me how to grow them… The only good thing he taught me… » Lazarus becomes gloomy. Martha sighs… But Lazarus becomes at once the perfect host who does not sadden his guests. « It is a wide spread custom in the villas at Baia and Syracuse and along the Sybaris gulf to cultivate such delights with that method to have them prematurely. Eat them: the last fruits are the oranges from Libya, the earliest the melons of Egypt grown in the solaria and these Latin fruits and the white almonds of our fatherland, the tender broad beans, the digestive stalks tasting of anise… Martha, have you seen to the boy? »

« Yes, I have seen to everybody. Mary was deeply moved remembering Egypt… »

« We had some plants in our poor kitchen garden. In dog days it was a great joy to dip the melons into the well of our neighbour, as it was deep and cool, and eat them in the evening… I remember… I had a little greedy goat and we had to watch her because she was fond of tender plants and fruits… » Jesus, Who was speaking with His head somewhat lowered, raises it and looks at the palm-trees rustling in the breeze of the evening that is falling and says: « When I see those palm-trees… Every time I see palm-trees I see Egypt again, its yellow sandy soil blown so easily by the wind, and far away the pyramids trembled in the rarefied air… and the tall trunks of the palm-trees… and the house where… But it is no use speaking of them. Each period has its anxiety… And its joy with its anxiety… Lazarus, would you give me some of those fruits? I should like to take them to Mary and Matthias. I do not think that Johanna has any. »

« She has not. She said so yesterday and she intends to plant some at Bether and have solaria built. But I shall not give them to You now. I picked as many as I had and for some days there will be no ripe ones. I will send them to You or send for them by Thursday. We will prepare a lovely basket of them for those children. Is that right, Martha? »

« Yes, brother. And we will add some little lilies of the valley that Johanna likes so much. »

Mary Magdalene comes back in. She is holding in her hands a thin-necked amphora, ending in a little bill, as pretty as the neck

of a bird. The alabaster is of a precious rosy yellow hue, like the complexion of some blondes. The apostles look at her thinking, perhaps, that she is bringing some rare delicacy. But Mary does not go to the centre, inside the U of the table, where her sister is. She goes behind the seat-beds and stops between that of Jesus and Lazarus and that of the two Jameses.

She uncorks the alabaster vase and places her hand under the little bill to receive a few drops of a viscous liquid that flows slowly from the open amphora. A strong smell of tuberoses and other essences, a very intense pleasant scent spreads in the hall. But Mary is not satisfied with the little quantity of perfume that flows. She stoops and with a sharp blow she breaks the neck of the amphora against the comer of Jesus' little bed. The thin neck falls on the floor shedding scented drops on the marble pavement. The amphora now has a wide aperture through which plenty unguent flows in thick gushes.

Mary places herself behind Jesus and spreads the thick oil on her Jesus' hair, she sprinkles all His locks with it, she stretches them and then puts them in order with the comb taken from her own hair, tidying them on the adored head. Jesus' fair-red hair shines now like dark gold and is very bright after the unction. The light of the chandelier, lit by the servants, is reflected on Jesus fair hair like a beautiful copper-coloured bronze helmet. The scent is exhilarating. Through the nostrils it rises to the head and, spread as it is without restraint, it is so intense that it is almost as exciting as sternutatory powder.

Lazarus, with his head turned round, smiles watching how carefully Mary anoints and arranges Jesus' locks so that His hair may look tidy after the scented massage, while she does not worry about her plaits, which, no longer supported by the wide comb that helps the hairpins to hold them in place, are falling lower and lower on her neck, and are about to loosen completely on her shoulders. Martha also looks at her smiling. The others are talking to one another in low voices with different expressions on their faces.

But Mary is not yet satisfied. There is still plenty ointment in the broken vase, and Jesus' hair, although thick, is already saturated with it. Mary then repeats the loving gesture of an evening of longago. She kneels down at the foot of the bed, she unties the buckles of Jesus' sandals and takes them off, and dipping the long fingers of her beautiful hand into the vase, she takes as much ointment as she can and spreads it on His bare feet, toe by toe, then on the soles and heels, then up, on the malleoli, which she uncovers by throwing back His linen tunic, and lastly on the insteps, she delays on the metatarsi, which will be pierced by the dreadful nails, she insists until she finds no more balm in the hollow vase. Then she shatters it on the floor and with her hands now free she removes her

big hairpins, she quickly looses her heavy plaits and with that golden, bright, soft, flowing bundle of hair she removes the excess of ointment from Jesus' feet that are dripping balm.

Judas, who so far has been silent watching with lewd envious eyes the beautiful woman and the Master Whose head and feet she was anointing, raises his voice, the only voice of open reproach; some of the others, not all of them, had murmured something or had made gestures of surprised but also calm disapproval. But Judas, who has stood up to have a better view of the ointment spread on Jesus' feet, says with ill grace: « What a useless heathen waste! Why do that? And then we expect the Chiefs of the Sanhedrin not to speak of sin! Those are deeds of a lustful courtesan and they do not become the new life you are leading, woman. They are too strong a recollection of your past! »

The insult is such that everybody is dumbfounded. It is such that everybody stirs, some sit up on the beds, some jump to their feet, everyone looks at Judas, as if he had suddenly become insane.

Martha flares up. Lazarus springs to his feet striking the table with his fist and says: « In my house… », then he looks at Jesus and controls himself.

« Yes. Are you all looking at me? You have all murmured in your hearts. But now that I echoed your words and I openly said what you thought, you are all ready to say that I am wrong. I will repeat what I said. I do not mean that Mary is the Master's lover. But I say that certain actions do not become Him or her. It is an imprudent action. And an unjust one. Yes. Why such waste? If she wanted to destroy the memories of her past, she could have given that vase and ointment to me. It was at least a pound of pure nard! And of high value. I could have sold it for at least three hundred denarii, as that is the price for nard of that quality. And I could have sold the vase, which was beautiful and precious. I would have given the money to the poor who crowd round us. We never have enough. And those asking for alms tomorrow in Jerusalem will be numberless. »

« That is true » say the others assenting. « You could have used a little for the Master and the rest… »

Mary of Magdala seems to be deaf. She continues wiping Jesus' feet with her loose hair that now, at its end, is also heavy with the ointment and darker than on the top of her head. Jesus' feet are smooth and soft in their shade of old ivory, as if they were covered with fresh skin. And Mary puts the sandals on the Christ's feet again, kissing each foot before and after putting the sandal on, deaf to everything that is not her love for Jesus.

Jesus defends her laying His hand on her head bent in the last kiss and saying: « Leave her alone. Why are you annoying and upsetting her? You do not realise what she has done. Mary has accomplished and action that is rightful and good with regard to Me. The

poor will always be among you. I am about to go away. You will always have them, but you will soon not have Me any longer. You will always be able to give alms to the poor. Shortly to Me, to the Son of man among men, it will no longer be possible to give any honour, through the will of men, and because the hour has come. Love is light to her. She feels that I am about to die and she wanted to anticipate the burial anointing for My body. I tell you solemnly that wherever the Good News is proclaimed, this prophetic action of love of hers will be remembered. All over the world. Throughout ages. I wish God would turn every human being into another Mary who does not value things, who entertains no attachment for anything, who does not cherish the least memory of the past, but destroys and treads on everything that is flesh and world, and breaks and spreads herself, as she did with the nard and the alabaster, on her Lord and out of love for Him. Do not weep, Mary. In this hour I repeat to you the words I spoke to Simon the Pharisee and to your sister Martha: "You are forgiven everything, because you have loved completely". You have chosen the better part. And it will not be taken away from you. Go in peace, My kind little sheep found again. Go in peace. The pastures of love shall be your food for ever. Stand up. Kiss also My hands that have absolved and blessed you… How many people these hands of Mine have absolved, blessed, cured, assisted! And yet I tell you that the people whom I have assisted are preparing torture for these hands… »

There is deathlike silence in the air sultry with the intense scent. Mary, her loose hair clothing her shoulders and veiling her face, kisses the right hand that Jesus offers her and cannot detach her lips from it…

Martha, deeply moved, approaches her and gathers her loose hair, which she braids caressing her, and then she wipes the tears on her cheeks endeavouring to dry them…

No one feels like eating any more… Christ's words make them pensive.

Judas of Alphaeus is the first to get up. He asks leave to withdraw. His brother James imitates him and Andrew and John follow suit. The others remain, but they are already standing, intent on purifying their hands in silver basins handed to them by the servants. Mary and Martha do the same with the Master and Lazarus.

A servant comes in and he bends to speak to Maximinus, who, after listening to him, says: « Master, there are some people who would like to see You. They say that they come from afar. What shall we do? »

Jesus calls Philip, James of Zebedee and Thomas and says to them: « Go, evangelize, cure, act in My name. Tell them that I shall be going up to the Temple tomorrow. »

« Is it wise to tell them that, Lord? » asks Simon Zealot.

« There is no sense in being silent about it, because it is already mentioned in the Holy City, more by enemies than by friends. Go! »

« H'm! As long as friends know… we know. But they do not betray. I do not know how the others can be informed. »

« Among the many friends there are always some enemies, Simon of Jonas. Now the friends are… too many and they are accepted as such too easily. When I think how long I had to wait and pray!… But those were the early days and one was cautious. Then the triumphs dazzled us and we were not longer wary. And that was wrong. But it happens to all winners. Victories prevent one from seeing clearly and enfeeble one's prudence in acting. I am speaking of us disciples, of course, not of the Master. He is perfect. If we had remained only twelve, we should not have to tremble for fear of betrayals! » says Judas of Kerioth lying shamelessly.

It is impossible to describe the glance Christ casts at the perfidious apostle. A glance of warning and infinite sorrow. But Judas pays no attention to it. He passes by the table to go out… Jesus follows him with His eyes and when He sees him go out, He asks him: « Where are you going? »

« Out… » replies Judas evasively.

« Out of this room, or out of the house? »

« Out… So… For a little walk. »

« Do not go, Judas. Stay with Me, with us… »

« Your brothers have gone away with John and Andrew. Why must I not go? »

« You are not going to have a rest as they did… »

Judas does not reply, but he goes out obstinately. Not a word is uttered in the hall. Lazarus and his sisters and the four apostles who have stayed: Peter, Simon, Matthew and Bartholomew, look at one another.

Jesus looks outside. He has got up and has gone to a window to follow Judas' movements and when He sees him go out of the house wearing his mantle and set out towards the gate, which cannot be seen from here, He calls him in a loud voice: « Judas! Wait for Me. I have something to tell you » and He gently frees Himself from Lazarus who, realising that the Master was grieved, had passed his arm round His waist embracing Him, and He leaves the hall, joining Judas, who had continued walking although more slowly.

He reaches him at about one third of the distance between the house and the garden wall, near a thicket of plants with thick leaves that look like green baked clay sprayed with clusters of little flowers, and each flower is a small cross with heavy petals as if they were made of light yellow wax, with a strong scent. I do not know their name. He draws him behind the thicket and holding his forearm tight with His hand, He asks him again: « Where are you going, Judas? Please, stay here! »

« Since You know everything, why do You ask me? What need is there for You to ask, since You can read the hearts of men? You know that I am going to my friends. You do not allow me to go there. They press me to go. And I am going. »

« Your friends! You should say your ruin! That is where you are going. You are going to your true murderers. Don't go, Judas! Don't go! You are going to commit a crime… You… »

« Ah! You are afraid?! Are You afraid at last?! You realise at last that You are a man! You are a man! Nothing more than a man! Because man only is afraid of death. God knows that He cannot die. If You felt that You were God, You would know that You could not die and You would not be afraid. Because now that You feel death close at hand, You are afraid like all men and You are trying with every possible means to avert it and You see danger everywhere and in everything. Where is Your lovely boldness? Where are Your confident protestations that You were happy and thirsting for accomplishing the Sacrifice? There is not even an echo of them left in Your heart! You thought that this hour would never come, so You feigned power, generosity and You spoke solemn sentences. Go away! You are as bad as those whom You reproach as being hypocrites! You have enticed us and betrayed us. And we had left everything for Your sake! And because of You we are hated! You have brought about our ruin… »

« That is enough. Go! Go away! Not many hours have gone by since you said to Me: "Help me to stay. Defend me!". I have done that. To what avail? Tell Me one thing more, and think about it before telling Me. Is this your sincere will? To go to your friends, to prefer them to Me? »

« Yes. It is. I do not have to think about it, because for a long time I have wanted nothing but that. »

« Then go. God does not do violence to man's will » and Jesus turns His back on him and goes slowly back to the house.

When He is close to it He raises His head, attracted by the eyes of Lazarus, who standing where he was before, is looking fixedly at Him. It is a very pale face that endeavours to smile at the faithful friend.

He goes back into the hall where the four apostles are speaking to Maximinus, while Martha and Mary are directing the work of the servants, who are tidying up the hall removing the dishes and table-linen used at the banquet.

Lazarus has gone to the door and once again he has embraced Jesus' waist with his arm, and passing near a servant he says to him: « Bring me the roll that is on the table in my workroom. »

He takes Jesus to one of the wide seats placed in the cavities of the windows, so that He may sit down. But Jesus remains standing, striving to pay attention to what Lazarus is saying to Him…

but it is evident that His mind is elsewhere and His heart is grieved, although when He realises that the apostles are watching Him, He smiles to dispel the suspicions of those who have approached Him surrounding Him and are whispering to one another, winking and pointing at the Master.

The servant comes back with the roll and Peter, seeing that the parchments contain things that are higher than what his head can understand, withdraws saying: « Fish do not bite certain baits. It is better to speak with Maximinus of plants and cultivations. »

Martha continues with her work. "Maria, although silent, takes part in the conversation of Lazarus, who points out certain passages of the parchments to the Master, saying: « Has this heathen not got a rare foresight? More than many of us. Perhaps… if he had been here, while You are our Master, he would have been one of Your disciples, and one of the best. And he would have understood You as many of us have not been able to understand You. And what a poem would have been inspired to his genius by his admiration for You! Your words gathered and preserved by a spirit that is bright although it belongs to a heathen! Your life described by this open and limpid intellect! We no longer have writers and poets. You were born late. When the selfishness of life and religious-social corruption have extinguished poetry and genius among us. What our wise men and prophets have written about You, without knowing You, has not found an echo in the living voice of one of Your followers. Your favourites, Your faithful followers are mostly people without education. And the others… No. We no longer have any Qohelet to hand down to the crowds Your wisdom and Your figure. We no longer have them because the spirit and will are lacking more than the ability to do so. The humanly more chosen part of Israel is as deaf as a broken trumpet, and it can no longer sing the glories and wonders of God. My worry is that everything may be lost or adulterated, partly through inability, partly through ill-will… »

« That will not happen. When the Spirit of the Lord is settled in hearts, it will repeat My words and explain their meaning. It is the Spirit of God Who speaks through the lips of the Christ. Then… Then It will speak to the spirits directly and will recall My words. »

« Oh! I wish that would happen soon! Soon, because they listen so little to Your words and understand them even less. I think that the roaring of the Spirit of God will be as violent as blazing fire to engrave with violence in the minds of men what they would not accept because it was kind and mild. I think that the flaming Spirit will burn the tepid or torpid consciences with Its fire, writing Your words on them. The world will have to love You! It is the will of the Most High! But when will it happen? »

« When I shall be consumed in the Sacrifice of love. Then Love will come. It will be like the beautiful flame rising from the sacrificed

Victim. And that flame will never go out, because the Sacrifice will never end. Once it is accomplished, it will last throughout the time of the Earth. »

« But then… You would really have to be sacrificed so that that may happen? »

« It is so » Jesus makes His usual gesture of adherence to His own destiny. He stretches out His arms with His hands pointed outwards and lowers His head. He then raises it to smile at distressed Lazarus and says: « But the immaterial voice of the Spirit of love will not be so violent as a roar, but it will be as sweet as love, which is as mild as a Nisan breeze and yet is as strong as death. The ineffable ministry of Love! The complement, the completion of My ministry. The perfection of My ministry as Master… I am not afraid, as you are, that anything of what I have given may be lost. On the contrary, I solemnly tell you that beams of light will be cast on My words and you will see their spirit. I am going away serenely because I am entrusting My doctrine to the Holy Spirit and My spirit to My Father. »

He lowers His head pensively, then, after laying the roll, which gave rise to the conversation, on a kind of tall dresser or chest of ebony, or other dark wood, all inlaid with yellowish ivory, that has been brought by four servants from the next room, and in which Martha is arranging the more valuable tableware, He says: « Lazarus, come outside. I want to speak to you! »

« At once, Lord » and Lazarus gets up from the seat on which he was sitting and follows Jesus into the garden, where it is beginning to get dark, as the last daylight is fading away in the sky, and the early moonlight, which is just beginning to appear, is still too faint.

Jesus says: « You will put here the vision dated 2nd March 1945: "Farewell to Lazarus", starting from the point: "Jesus walks turning His steps beyond the garden where is the sepulchre in which Lazarus was buried". »

585. Farewell to Lazarus.

2nd March 1945.

Jesus is at Bethany, It is evening. A peaceful April evening. From the wide windows of the dining room one can see Lazarus' garden all in bloom, and beyond it, the orchard that looks like a cloud of light petals. The scent of fresh vegetation, the sweet-sour smell of fruit-tree blossoms, of roses and other flowers, carried into the house by the light evening breeze that makes the door curtains flutter and the lights of the central chandelier flicker, mingles with a strong scent of tuberoses, lilies of the valley and jasmines, mixed in a rare essence, left over from the balm with which Mary of Magdala

scented her Jesus, Whose hair still looks dark after the unction. Simon, Peter, Matthew and Benjamin are still in the room. The others are absent and have probably gone out on errands.

Jesus has left the table and is looking at a roll of parchment that Lazarus has shown Him. Mary of Magdala is going round the room… she looks like a butterfly attracted by light. She can do nothing but move round her Jesus. Martha is watching the servants who are removing the wonderful precious dishes lying on the table.

Jesus lays the roll on a tall sideboard of polished black wood inlaid with ivory, and says: « Lazarus, come outside. I must speak to you. »

« At once, Lord » and Lazarus gets up from his chair near the window and follows Jesus into the garden, where the last light of the day is mixing with the first very clear moonlight.

Jesus walks turning His steps beyond the garden, where is the sepulchre in which Lazarus was buried and which now displays a large frame of roses, all in bloom, at its empty mouth. Above it, on the slightly inclined rock, is carved: « Lazarus, come out! » Jesus stops there. The house can no longer be seen, concealed as it is by trees and hedges. There is dead silence and absolute solitude.

« Lazarus, My friend » asks Jesus standing facing His friend and looking at him with a faint smile on His face, which is very thin and paler than usual. « Lazarus, My friend, do you know who I am? »

« You? You are Jesus of Nazareth, my gentle Jesus, my holy Jesus, my powerful Jesus! »

« That with regard to you. But with regard to the world, who am I? »

« You are the Messiah of Israel. »

« And then? »

« You are the Promised One, the Expected One… But why are You asking me that? Do You doubt my faith? »

« No, Lazarus. But I want to confide a truth to you. Nobody, except My Mother and one of My apostles, is aware of it. My Mother, because She knows everything. An apostle, because he participates in this matter. During these three years I told the others, who are with Me, many times. But their love acted as nepenthes and thwarted the truth I had announced. They could not understand… And it is a good thing that they did not understand, otherwise, to prevent a crime, they would have committed another one. A useless one, because what is to happen would take place just the same, notwithstanding any killing. But I want to tell you. »

« Do You doubt that I do not love You as much as they do? Of what crime are You speaking? What crime is to take place? In the name of God, speak! » Lazarus is excited.

« Yes, I will speak. I do not doubt your love. So much so that I entrust and confide My will to you… »

« Oh! my Jesus! Who is about to die does that! I did it when I realised that You were not coming and that I had to die. »

« And I must die. »

« No! » Lazarus utters another deep groan.

« Do not shout. Let no one hear us. I must speak to you alone. Lazarus, My friend, do you know what is happening this very moment that you are with Me, in the loyal friendship you granted Me from the first moment, and was never upset for any reason? A man, with other men' is negotiating the price of the Lamb. Do you know the name of that Lamb? Its name is Jesus of Nazareth. »

« No! There are enemies, that is true. But no one can sell You! Who? Who is it? »

« One of My apostles. It could but be one of those whom I have disappointed more bitterly and who, tired of waiting, wants to get rid of Him Who by now is nothing but a personal danger. In his way of thinking, he feels that he can gain a good reputation again with the great ones of the world. He will instead be despised both by all good people and by all criminals. He has become tired of Me, of awaiting what he has tried to achieve by every means: human grandeur, which he pursued first in the Temple, then he believed he would attain with the King of Israel, and he is now seeking once again in the Temple and by approaching the Romans… He hopes… But Rome, if she knows how to reward her loyal servants… knows also how to crush informers with contempt. He is tired of Me, of waiting, of the burden of being good.. For those who are wicked, to be, to have to feign to be good, is an overwhelming burden. It can be borne for some time… then… it can no longer be endured… and one gets rid of it to become free. Free? That is what the wicked ones think. That is what he thinks. But it is not freedom. To belong to God is freedom. To be against God is to be in prison with fetters and chains, with loads and lashes, as no galley-slave, as no slave working at constructions ever suffered under the whip of the torturer. »

« Who is it? Tell me. Who is it? »

« It is of no use. »

« Yes, it is… Ah!… It can be but he: the man who has always been a stain in Your group, the man who also a short time ago offended my sister. It is Judas of Kerioth! »

« No. It is Satan. God took flesh in Me: Jesus. Satan has taken flesh in him: Judas of Kerioth. One day… a very remote day… here, in this garden of yours, I comforted the tears and I excused a spirit that had fallen very low. I said that possession is the contagion of Satan who inoculates the human being with his juices and perverts its nature. I said that it is the marriage of a spirit with Satan and animality. But possession is still a trifle as compared with incarnation. I shall be possessed by My saints and they will be possessed

by Me. But only in Jesus Christ is God as He is in Heaven, because I am the God Who became Flesh. One only is the divine Incarnation. Likewise Satan, Lucifer, will be in one only, as he is in his kingdom, because Satan is incarnate only in the killer of the Son of God. While I am speaking to you here, he is before the Sanhedrin and is negotiating and is pledging himself to have Me killed. But it is not he, it is Satan. Listen now, Lazarus, My loyal friend. I am going to ask you for some favours. You have never denied Me anything. Your love has been so great that, without going beyond respect, it has always been active beside Me, with countless aids, with so much provident assistance and wise advice that I have always accepted, because I could see in your heart a true desire for My welfare. »

« Oh! My Lord! But it was my joy to devote myself to You! What shall I do now, if I do not have to devote myself to my Master and Lord? You have allowed me to do too little, far too little! My debt to You, Who have restored Mary to my love and honour, and me to life, is such that… Oh! why did You call me back from death to make me live this hour? By now I had overcome all the horror of death and all the anguish of the spirit, frightened by Satan with temptation at the moment of presenting itself to the Eternal Judge, and there was darkness!… What is the matter with You, Jesus? Why are You trembling and growing wanner than You are usually? Your face is paler than this white rose which is languishing in the moonlight. Oh! Master! Your blood and life seem to be forsaking You… »

« I, in fact, look like a man who is dying with his veins cut. The whole of Jerusalem, and I mean "all My enemies among the mighty ones in Israel" have laid their greedy mouths on Me and are sucking My life and My blood. They want to silence the Voice that for three years, while loving them, has tortured them;… because every word of Mine, even if it were a word of love, was a shock inviting their souls to wake up, and they did not want to hear their souls, as they had tied them with their treble sensuality. And not only the great ones… But the whole of Jerusalem is about to rage at the Innocent and ask for His death… and with Jerusalem also Judaea… and with Judaea also Perea, Idumaea, the Decapolis, Galilee, Syrophaenicia… the whole of Israel gathered in Zion for the "Passing" of the Christ from life to death… Lazarus, since you died and rose again, tell Me: what is dying? What did you feel? What do you remember? »

« Dying?… I do not remember exactly what it was. My bitter suffering was followed by a great languor… I did not seem to suffer any more and I was only very sleepy… Light and noises were becoming dimmer and dimmer and fainter and fainter and more and more remote… My sisters and Maximinus say that I was showing signs of sharp suffering… But I do not remember… »

« Of course. The pity of the Father numbs the intellectual senses of dying people, so that only their flesh suffers, as it is to be purified by the pre-purgatory that is agony. But I… And what do you remember of death? »

« Nothing, Master. It is a dark space in my spirit. An empty area. There is an interruption in the course of my life and I do not know how to fill it. I remember nothing. If I looked at the bottom of that black hole that kept me for four days, although it were night and I were a shadow in it, if I could not see, I would feel the humid chill rise from its bowels and blow on my face. It is, after all, a sensation. But if I think of those four days, I have nothing. Nothing. That is the word. »

« Of course. Those who come back cannot tell… The mystery is revealed every time to him who goes in. But I, Lazarus, I know what I shall suffer. I know that I shall suffer in full consciousness. There will be no soothing drink or languor to make My agony less dreadful. I shall feel that I am dying. I already feel it… I am already dying, Lazarus. Like one suffering from an incurable disease, I have continued to die during these thirty-three years. And death has quickened its pace more and more as time brought Me closer to this hour. At first it was only the death of knowing that I was born to be the Redeemer. Later it was the death of him who sees himself opposed, accused, derided, persecuted, hindered… How tiring! Then… the death of having beside Me, closer and closer, till he was grasping Me as a giant octopus grasps a shipwrecked person, him who is My Traitor. How nauseating! And now I am dying in the torture of having to say "goodbye" to My dearest friends and to My Mother… »

« Oh! Master! You are weeping?! I know that You wept also in front of my sepulchre, because You loved me. But now… You are weeping again. You are frozen. Your hands are already as cold as those of a corpse. You are suffering… You are suffering too much! … »

« I am the Man, Lazarus. I am not only the God. I have the sensitiveness and affections of men. And My soul is distressed thinking of My Mother… And yet, I tell you, My torture of enduring to have My Traitor close to Me has become so monstrous, as well as having to bear the satanic hatred of a whole world, and the deafness of those who, if they do not hate, cannot love actively either, because to love actively is to succeed in being what the loved person wants and teaches, whereas here!… Yes, many love Me. But they have remained "what they were". They did not assume another ego for My sake. Do you know who was able, among My most intimate ones, to change nature in order to become of Christ, as Christ wants? One only: your sister Mary. She started from complete perverted animality to arrive at an angelical spirituality. And she achieved that only through the power of love. »

« You redeemed her. »

« I redeemed them all with My word. But she alone changed completely through active love. But I was saying: and My suffering all these things is so monstrous, that I long for nothing but to see everything accomplished. My strength is failing Me… The cross will not be so heavy as this torture of the spirit and of feelings… »

« The cross?! No! Oh! no! It is too atrocious! It is too disgraceful! No! » Lazarus, who for some time has been holding Jesus' cold hands in his own, standing in front of his Master, releases them and collapses on the nearby stone seat and he covers his face with his hands weeping desolately.

Jesus approaches him, lays a hand on the shoulders shaken by sobs, and says: « What? Am I, Who am about to die, to comfort you, who are alive? My friend, I am in need of strength and help. And I am asking them of you. I have but you who can give Me them. It is better if the others do riot know. Because if they knew… Blood would be shed. And I do not want lambs to become wolves, not even for the sake of the Innocent. My Mother… oh! how heart-rending it is to speak of Her!… Mother is already so distressed! She also is dying exhausted… She also has been dying for thirty-three years, and She is now one big sore, like the victim of an atrocious torture. I swear to you that there has been a struggle between My mind and My heart, between love and reason, to decide whether it was just to send Her away, to send Her back to Her house, where She always dreams of the Love that made Her Mother, where She enjoys the savour of Love's kiss of fire, She starts in the ecstasy of that remembrance, and with the eyes of Her soul She always sees the air breathe gently, stirred by an angelical flash. The news of My Death will reach Galilee almost at the moment in which I will be able to say to Her: "Mother, I am the Conqueror!". But I cannot, no, I cannot do that. Poor Jesus, laden with the sins of the world, needs consolation. And Mother will give Me it. And the even poorer world needs two Victims. Because man sinned with woman; and the Woman must redeem, as the Man redeems. But until the hour is struck, I will smile at My Mother reassuringly… She trembles… I know. She perceives that the Torture is approaching. I know. And She repels it through natural disgust and holy love, as I repel Death because I am a "living being" who must die. But it would be dreadful if She knew that in five days' time… She would die before that hour, and I want Her to be alive to get strength from Her lips, as I received life from Her womb. And God wants Her to be on My Calvary to mix the water of Her virginal tears with the wine of My divine Blood and celebrate the first Mass. Do you know what Mass will be? You do not know. You cannot know. It will be My death applied for ever to the living or suffering mankind. Do not weep, Lazarus. She is strong. She does not weep. She has wept throughout

Her life of a Mother. She no longer weeps now. She has crucified Her smile on Her face… Have you noticed what Her face has become like these last days? She crucified Her smile on Her face to comfort Me. I ask you to imitate My Mother. I could no longer keep My secret all to Myself. I looked around seeking a sincere reliable friend. I met your loyal eyes. I said: "I will confide it to Lazarus". When you had a heavy burden in your heart, I respected your secret and I defended it even against the natural curiosity of hearts. I ask you to have the same respect for Mine. Later… after My death, you will make it known. You will mention this conversation. That people may know that Jesus went to His death fully aware of the situation, and to His known tortures He added also this one, that He knew everything, both with regard to people and to His destiny. That it may be known that while He could still have saved Himself, He did not want to, because His infinite love for men desired nothing but to consume the sacrifice for them. »

« Oh! save Yourself, Master! Save Yourself! I can let You escape. This very night. Once You did fly to Egypt! Run away now as well. Come, let us go. Let us take Mary and my sisters with us, and let us go. None of my riches attract me, as You know. You are my wealth and Mary's and Martha's. Let us go. »

« Lazarus, I ran away then, because it was not My hour. Now it is the hour. And I am staying. »

« In that case I am coming with You. I will not leave You. »

« No. You will stay here. Since he who is within the distance of a Sabbath walk is allowed to consume the lamb in his house, you will consume your lamb here, as you have always done. But let your sisters come… For My Mother… Oh! what the roses of divine love concealed from You, o Martyr! The abyss! The abyss! And from it are now rising the flames of Hatred and rushing to gnaw at You, heart! The sisters, yes. They are strong and active… and Mother will be agonizing, bent over My dead body. John is not sufficient. John is love. But he is still immature. Oh! He will mature and become a man in the torture of the oncoming days. But the Woman need, women for Her dreadful wounds. Will you let Me have them? »

« I will give You everything, I have always given You everything with joy, and I only regretted that You wanted so little!… »

« As you can see, I have not accepted from anybody else what I consented to have from My friends in Bethany. That is one of the charges made against Me by the unjust man more than once. But here, among you, I found enough to comfort the Man of all His bitterness as a man. At Nazareth it was the God Who found solace near the Unique Delight of God. Here it was the Man. And before going up to My death I thank you, My faithful, loving, kind, thoughtful, reserved, learned, discreet, generous friend. I thank you for everything. And My Father, later, will reward you… »

« I have already had everything through Your love and Mary's redemption. »

« Oh! no. You are to receive much more. And you will have it. Listen. Do not be so dejected. Pay attention to Me that I may tell you what I want to ask you to do. You will remain here waiting… »

« No, not that. Why Mary and Martha, and not I? »

« Because I do not want you to be corrupted as all men will be corrupted. Jerusalem in the next days will be as corrupt as the air around a putrid carrion that has suddenly been burst by the foot of a heedless passer-by. Infected and infecting. Even people who are not so cruel, even My disciples will be driven mad by its miasmata. They will run away. And where will they go in their bewilderment? They will come to Lazarus. How many times, in these three years, have they come looking for bread, a bed, protection, shelter, and for their Master!… They will come back now. Like sheep dispersed by a wolf that has abducted the shepherd, they will rush to a fold. Gather them. Encourage them. Tell them that I forgive them. I entrust you with the task of forgiving them on My behalf. They will not be able to set their minds at rest for running away. Tell them not to fall into a greater sin by despairing of My forgiveness. »

« Will they all run away? »

« All of them except John. »

« Master. You will not ask me to receive Judas? Let me die tortured, but do not ask me that. Several times my hand, anxious as it was to kill the shame of the family, trembled touching my sword. But I never did it, because I am not a violent man. I was only tempted to do it. But I swear to You that if I see Judas again, I will cut his throat, like a scapegoat. »

« You will never see him again. I swear it to you ».

« Will he run away? It does not matter. I said: "If I see him again". Now I say: "I will get him, even if he were at the world's end, and I will kill him". »

« You must not wish that. »

« I will do it. »

« You will not do it, because you will not be able to go where he is. »

« In the bosom of the Sanhedrin? In the Holy of Holies? I will get him even there and I will kill him. »

« He will not be there. »

« At Herod's? They will kill me, but I will kill him first. »

« He will be with Satan. And you will never be with Satan. Give up that murderous intent at once, otherwise I will leave you. »

« Oh! oh!… But… Yes, for You… Oh! Master! Master! Master! »

« Yes. Your Master… You will receive the disciples, you will comfort them. You will lead them once again towards peace. I am the Peace. And also later… Later you will help them. Bethany will always

be Bethany, until Hatred rummages in this home of love, thinking that it will put out its flames, whereas it will spread them throughout the world to set it all ablaze. I bless you, Lazarus, for everything you have done and for what you will do… »

« Nothing, nothing. You brought me back from death, and You do not allow me to defend You. So what have I done? »

« You gave Me your houses. See? It was our destiny. The first flat in Zion in a ground belonging to you. And the last one also in one of them. It was My destiny that I should be your Guest. But you could not defend me from death. At the beginning of this conversation I asked you: "Do you know who I am?" Now I reply: "I am the Redeemer". The Redeemer must consume the sacrifice to the final immolation. In any case, believe Me. He Who will be raised on the cross and will be exposed to the eyes and the mockery of the world will not be alive, but dead. I am already dead, killed before and more by lack of love than by torture. And one more thing, My friend. Tomorrow at dawn I am going to Jerusalem. And you will hear people say that Zion applauded her meek King as a triumpher, as He entered the town riding a little donkey. Do not let that triumph deceive you and do not let it make you think that the Wisdom now speaking to you was not wise this peaceful evening. Popular favour will vanish faster than a star that furrows the sky and disappears into unknown spaces, and in five days' time, in the evening at this time, My torture will begin with a deceitful kiss that will open the mouths, singing hosannas tomorrow, into a chorus of dreadful curses and cruel condemning voices.

Yes, at last, o town of Zion, o people of Israel, you will have the Passover Lamb! You will have it in the rite now close-at-hand. Here it is. It is the Victim that has been prepared for ages. Love procreated it, having prepared an immaculate womb as its nuptial room. And Love consumes it. Here it is. It is the conscious Victim. Not like the lamb that being unaware goes on grazing in the meadow or with its pink snout presses its mother's round dug, while the butcher is sharpening a knife to slaughter it. But I am the Lamb that consciously says: "Goodbye!" to life, to His Mother, to His friends, and goes to the sacrificer and says: "Here I am!". I am the Food of man. Satan has made men starve and their hunger has never been satisfied. And it cannot be satisfied. One food only can sate it, because it removes their hunger. And here is that food. Here is your bread, man. Here is your wine. Consume your Passover, o Mankind! Cross your sea, reddened by satanic flames. Tinged with My Blood you will cross it, o race of man, preserved from the fire of hell. You can cross it. Heaven, pressed by My desire, is already half-opening the eternal gates. Look, o souls of the dead! Look, of living men! Look, o souls, that will be incorporated in future bodies! Look, o angels of Paradise! Look, o demons of Hell! Look, o Father;

look, o Paraclete! The Victim smiles. It no longer weeps…

Everything has been said. Goodbye, My friend. I shall not see you either, before I die. Let us kiss each other goodbye. And do not be doubtful. People will say to you: "He was a madman! He was a demon! A liar! He died while He was saying that He was the Life". Reply to them and particularly to yourself: "He was and is the Truth and the Life. He is the Vanquisher of death. I know. And He cannot be the eternal Dead One. I am waiting for Him. And all the oil in the lamp, that his friend is keeping ready to make light for the world, invited to the wedding of the Triumpher, will not be burnt, before He, the Bridegroom, comes back. And this time it will never be possible to put the light out". Believe that, Lazarus. Obey My wish. Can you hear how this nightingale is singing after being silent because of the outburst of your tears? Do the same. After the inevitable tears shed on the Victim, let your soul sing the unerring song of your faith. May you be blessed by the Father, by the Son, by the Holy Spirit. »

How much I suffered! The whole night, from 11 o'clock p.m. on Thursday 1st March to 5 o'clock Friday morning. I saw Jesus in a state of anguish only a little inferior to that at Gethsemane, particularly when He speaks of His Mother, of the traitor, and shows His repugnance to death. I obeyed Jesus' order to write this on a separate notebook to have a more detailed Passion. You saw my face this morning… a weak image of what I suffered… and I am not saying anything else, because there are insurmountable aspects of modesty.

586. Judas Goes to the Leaders of the Sanhedrin.

29th March 1947.

Judas arrives at Caiaphas' country house at night. But the moon acts as an accomplice of the murderer, illuminating the road for him. He must be certain that he will find there, in that house outside the walls, those he is looking for, otherwise I think he would have tried to enter the town and he would have gone to the Temple. Instead he is climbing among the olive-trees of the little hill without a moment's hesitation. This time he is more certain than the previous time, because it is night-time and the darkness and the late hour protect from every possible surprise. The country roads are now deserted, after being busy all day with the crowds of pilgrims going to Jerusalem for Passover. Even poor lepers are now in their eaves and are sleeping the sleep of unhappy people, forgetting their fate for a few hours.

Judas is now at the door of the house, which is all white in the moonlight. He knocks: three times, once, three times again, twice…

Even the conventional signal is familiar to him! And it must be a sure signal, because the door is half-opened without any check by the door-keeper through the peep-hole in the door.

Judas steals in and he asks the servant porter, who greets him: « Have the members assembled? »

« Yes, Judas of Kerioth, they have. A full assembly, I might say. »

« Take me there. I have to speak of an important matter. Quick! »

The man locks the door with all the bolts and precedes him along a semi-dark vestibule, stopping in front of a heavy door, at which he knocks. The murmur of the voices in the closed room stops and is replaced by the noise of the lock and the squeaking of the door, which is opened and a cone of bright light is projected on the dark corridor.

« It's you? Come in! » says the person who opened the door and who is unknown to me. And Judas goes into the hall, while the man who opened the door locks it again.

There are signs of surprise or at least of excitement, when they see Judas enter the room. But they greet him all together: « Peace to you, Judas of Simon. »

« Peace to you, members of the holy Sanhedrin » greets Judas.

« Come forward. What do you want? » they ask him.

« I want to speak to you… of the Christ. It is not possible to go on like this. I can no longer be of any assistance to you, unless you make up your minds to take drastic measures. The man is suspicious by now. »

« Have you given yourself away, you fool? » they exclaim interrupting him.

« No. But you are the fools, as you have made the wrong move by hurrying things in a stupid way. You knew very well that I would serve you! But you did not trust me. »

« You have a weak memory, Judas of Simon! Don't you remember how you parted from us the last time? Who could think that you were loyal to us, when you proclaimed in that way that you could not betray Him? » says Helkai ironically, and he sounds more venomous than ever.

« And do you think that it is easy to get to deceive a friend, the Only One Who really loves me, the Innocent? Do you think it is easy to go so far as to commit a crime? » Judas is excited.

They try to calm him down. And they coax him. And they allure him, or at least they try to do so, pointing out that he will not commit a crime « but a holy deed for his Fatherland, whom he will spare reprisals from the rulers, who are already giving signs of intolerance because of the continual public commotions and divisions of parties and crowds in a Roman province, and for Mankind, if He is really convinced of the divine nature of the Messiah and of His spiritual mission. »

« If what He says is true - far be it from us to believe it - are you not the collaborator of Redemption? Your name will be associated to His for ever, and your Fatherland will number you with her valiant men and will honour you with the highest dignities. A seat among us is ready for you. You will rise, Judas. You will lay down laws for Israel. Oh! We shall not forget what you have done for the welfare of the holy Temple, of the holy Priesthood, for the protection of the most holy Law, for the welfare of the whole Nation! All you have to do is to help us, then we swear to you, I swear to you in the name of my powerful father and of Caiaphas, who is now wearing the ephod, you will be the greatest man in Israel. Greater than the tetrarchs, greater than my father, now a High Priest put out of office. Like a king, like a prophet you will be served and listened to. And if Jesus of Nazareth should be but a false Messiah, even if He really should not be liable to death because His deeds are not those of a robber, but of a madman, we remind you of the inspired words of the pontiff Caiaphas - you know that he who wears the ephod and the rational speaks through divine suggestion and prophesies what is good and what is to be done for it - Caiaphas, do you remember? Caiaphas said: "It is better for one man to die for the people, than for the whole Nation to be destroyed". It was a prophetic word. »

« It was really a prophecy. The Most High spoke through the lips of the High Priest. Let him be obeyed! » say all together those dirty puppets, the members of the great council of the Sanhedrin, who already sound theatrical and look like automata who are to make certain gestures.

Judas is influenced, allured… but there is still a little common sense, if not goodness, in him, and this restrains him from uttering the fatal words.

Surrounding him with respect and feigned affection, they urge him saying: « Don't you believe us? Look: we are the heads of the twenty-four priestly families, the Elders of the people, the scribes, the greatest Pharisees in Israel, the wise rabbis, the magistrates of the Temple. The cream of Israel is here, around you, ready to acclaim you, and by one consent we say to you: "Do it, because it is a holy deed". »

« And where is Gamaliel? And Joseph and Nicodemus, where are they? And where is Eleazar, Joseph's friend, and where is John of Gaash? I don't see them. »

« Gamaliel has secluded himself to do severe penance, John is with his pregnant wife who is poorly this evening, Eleazar… we do not know why he has not come. But anybody can be seized by a sudden illness, don't you think so? With regard to Joseph and Nicodemus, we have not informed them of this secret meeting for your sake and for the sake of your honour… so that, if our plan should unluckily

fail, your name would not be reported to the Master… We are protecting your name. We love you, Judas, the new Maccabee saviour of our Fatherland. »

« The Maccabee fought a good battle. I… am betraying. »

« Do not consider the details of the action, but the justice of the purpose. Will you please speak, Sadoc, the golden scribe. Precious words flow from your lips. If Gamaliel is learned, you are wise, because the wisdom of God is on your lips. Speak to this man who still hesitates. »

That crook Sadoc comes forward followed by a decrepit Hananiah, an emaciated dying fox beside a shrewd strong cruel jackal.

« Listen, o man of God! » begins Sadoc pompously assuming an inspired oratorial attitude, his right arm stretched forward in Ciceronian style, his left one engaged in holding up the heap of folds forming his scribe garment. He then raises also his left arm, allowing his monumental garment to spread out untidily, and thus, his face and arms raised towards the ceiling of the room, he says in a thundering voice: « I say unto you! I say unto you in the Most High Presence of God! »

« Maran Atha! » they all exclaim, stooping as if a supreme inspiration bent them, then rising with their arms crossed on their chests.

« I say unto you. It is written in the pages of our history and of our fate! It is written in the signs and figures left by ages! It is written in the rite celebrated uninterruptedly since the night fatal to the Egyptians! It is written in the figure of Isaac! It is written in the figure of Abel! And let what is written come true. »

« Maran Atha! » say the others in a low mournful striking chorus, repeating the previous gestures, their faces oddly illuminated by the light of two chandeliers of pale-violet mica, shedding a phantasmagoric light at the ends of the hall. The assembly of men, almost all dressed in white, with the pale or olive complexions of their race, made even more pale and olive by the diffused light really looks like a gathering of ghosts.

« The word of God has descended upon the lips of the prophets to approve this decree. He must die! It is stated! »

« It is stated! Maran Atha! »

« He must die, His destiny is marked! »

« He must die. Maran Atha! »

« His fatal destiny is described to the last detail, and fatality cannot be infringed! »

« Maran Atha! »

« Even the symbolic price to be paid to him who becomes the instrument of God for the fulfilment of the promise is indicated! »

« It is indicated! Maran Atha! »

« As Redeemer, or as false prophet, He must die! »

« He must die! Maran Atha! »

« The hour has come! Jehovah wants it! I can hear His voice! It is shouting: "Let it be accomplished"! »

« The Most High has spoken! Let it be accomplished! Let it be accomplished! Maran Atha! »

« Let Heaven fortify you as it fortified Jael and Judith, who were women and behaved like heroes; as it fortified Jephthah, who, a father, sacrificed his daughter to his Fatherland; as it fortified David against Goliath, and do the deed that will make peoples remember Israel for ever! »

« May Heaven fortify you. Maran Atha! »

« Be the winner! »

« Be the winner! Maran Atha! »

The clucking senile voice of Hananiah is heard:« He who hesitates over a sacred order is condemned to dishonour and death! »

« Is condemned. Maran Atha! »

« If you do not listen to the voice of the Lord your God, and you do not carry out His order and what He orders you through our words, may all maledictions fall upon you! »

« All the maledictions! Maran Atha! »

« May the Lord strike you with all the Mosaic curses and may He scatter you among the nations. »

« May He strike and scatter you! Maran Atha! »

Dead silence follows this impressive scene… Everything becomes motionless in frightening stillness.

At last Judas' voice is heard and it is so changed that I recognise it with difficulty: « Yes. I will do it. I must do it. And I will do it. The last part of the Mosaic curses is already my share, and I must get rid of it because I have already delayed too long. And I am becoming mad because I have no peace or respite, my heart is frightened, I look bewildered and my soul is consumed by sadness. I tremble at the idea of being found out and crushed by Him for my double-crossing - because I do not know how much He is aware of my thoughts - I see my life hanging by a thread, and morning and evening I implore to get over with this hour because of the terror that frightens my heart. Because of the horrible task I must perform. Oh! bring this hour forward! Release me from my anguish! Let everything be done. At once! Now! That I may be freed! Let us go! »

Judas' voice has become firmer and stronger as he speaks. His gestures, previously automatic and insecure, like those of a sleepwalker, have become free and voluntary. He stands up in all his height, diabolically handsome, and shouts: « Let the ties of a foolish error fall! I am free from fearful subjection, Christ! I am no longer afraid of You and I am handing You to Your enemies! Let us go! »-A cry of a victorious demon, and he boldly goes towards the

door.

But they stop him: « Wait! Tell us: where is Jesus of Nazareth? »

« In Lazarus' house. At Bethany. »

« We cannot enter that house, as it is well provided with faithful servants. It's the house of a favourite of Rome. We should certainly come up against much trouble. »

« We are coming to town at dawn. Place guards on the Bethphage road, stir up a turmoil and capture Him. »

« How do you know that He will come along that road? He may take the other one… »

« No. He told His followers that He will go into town that way, by the Ephraim gate, and to wait for Him near En Rogel. If you capture Him before… »

« We cannot. We would have to go into town with Him among the guards, and all the roads leading to the gates, and all the streets in town are crowded with people from dawn till night. There would be a riot. And that must not happen. »

« He will go up to the Temple. Ask Him to come into one of the halls to question Him. Tell Him to come in the name of the High Priest. He will come, because He has more respect for you than for His own life. Once He is alone with you… you will have the opportunity to take Him to a safe place and to condemn Him at the right moment. »

« There would be a riot just the same. You must have noticed that the crowds are completely won over by Him. And not only the crowds, but also the great ones and the hopes of Israel. Gamaliel is losing his disciples, and so is Jonathan ben Uziel and others among us, and they are all leaving us, seduced by Him. Even the Gentiles venerate Him, or they fear Him, which is also veneration, and they are ready to rebel against us if we ill-treat Him. Among other things, some of the brigands we had hired to act as false disciples and stir up brawls, have been arrested and they have spoken hoping for mercifulness in return for their information, and the Praetor knows… The whole world follows Him, whilst we are concluding nothing. But it is necessary to act subtly, so that the crowds may not become aware of anything. »

« Yes. That is how it must be done. Even Annas recommends that. He says: "It must not happen during the festivities and there must be no disturbance among the fanatic people". That is what he ordered, and he gave orders that He should be treated with respect in the Temple and elsewhere and that He should not be disturbed, in order to deceive Him. »

« So, what do you want to do? I was quite willing tonight, but you are hesitating… » says Judas.

« Well, you should take us to Him when He is all alone. You are aware of His habits. You wrote to us that He wants you to be closer

to Him than anybody else. So you must know what He wants to do. We shall always be ready. When you think that it is the right place and the right moment, come, and we will follow you. »

« Agreed. And what retribution shall I receive? » Judas is now speaking coldly, as if he were dealing with common business.

« What is mentioned by the prophets, so that we may be faithful to the inspired word: thirty silver pieces… »

« Thirty silver pieces to kill a man, and that Man? The price of a common lamb during these festivities?! You are mad! It is not that I need money. I have plenty. So do not think that you can convince me for greed of money. But it is too little to compensate for my grief in betraying Him Who has always loved me. »

« But we have told you what we will do for you. Glory, honours! What you were hoping to have from Him and you did not get. We will cure your disappointment. But the price has been fixed by the prophets! Oh! it is a formality! A symbol and nothing else. The rest will follow later… »

« And the money when? »

« The moment you say to us: "Come". Not before. Non one pays before taking possession of the goods. Don't you think it is fair? »

« It is fair. But at least treble the amount… »

« No. That is what the prophets said. And that is what has to be done. Oh! we will obey the prophets! We will not omit an iota of what they wrote of Him. Ha! Ha! Ha! We are loyal to the inspired word! Ha! Ha! Ha! » laughs that revolting skeleton of Hananiah. And many join him with mournful, vulgar, false laughter, a true cachinnation of demons who can but sneer. Because laughter is typical of serene loving spirits, and sneer is peculiar to upset hearts sated with wrath.

« Everything has been said. You may go. We will await dawn to go back to town by different roads. Goodbye. Peace be with you, lost sheep, who are returning to Abraham's flock. Peace to you! Peace to you! And the gratitude of the whole of Israel! Rely on us! A desire of yours is a law to us. May God be with you, as He was with all His more faithful servants! All the blessings on you! »

They take him to the door with embraces and protestations of love… they watch him go away along the half-dark corridor… they listen to the noise of the locks of the door that is opened and closed…

They go back to the hall exulting.

Only two or three voices can be heard, those of the less demoniac ones: « And now? How shall we behave with Judas of Simon? We know very well that we cannot give him what we promised, except those miserable thirty silver pieces!… What will he say when he realises that he has been betrayed by us? Shall we not have caused a greater damage? Will he not go around telling the people what we have done? We know that he is a man who changes his mind. »

« You are quite simple and foolish having such thoughts and worrying thus! It has already been decided what we will do to Judas. It was decided the last time. Don't you remember? And we will not change our minds. After everything is finished with the Christ, Judas shall die. That is settled. »

« But if he should speak before? »

« To whom? To the disciples and to the people, to be stoned? He will not speak. The horror of his deed will gag him… »

« But he may repent in future, he may feel remorse, he may even become mad… Because his remorse, if it should awaken, could but drive him mad… »

« He will not have time. We will see to that before. Everything at the right moment. The Nazarene first, then the man who betrayed Him » says Helkai slowly, in a dreadful tone.

« Yes. And mind! Not a word to those who are absent. They already know too much of our thoughts. I don't trust Joseph and Nicodemus. And I don't rely much on the others. »

« Do you doubt Gamaliel? »

« He has stood aloof from us for many months. He will not take part in our meetings without a personal order from the pontiff. He says that he is writing his work with the assistance of his son. But I am speaking of Eleazar and John. »

« Oh! They have never contradicted us » says at once a member of the Sanhedrin, whom I have seen sometimes with Joseph of Arimathea, but whose name I do not remember.

« Nay! They have not contradicted us enough. Ha! Ha! Ha! And we shall have to watch them! Many snakes have built their nests in the Sanhedrin, I think… Ha! Ha! Ha! But they will be dislodged… Ha! Ha! Ha! » says Hananiah, as he goes, shaking and trembling, leaning on his stick, looking for a comfortable place on one of the low wide seats covered with thick carpets, placed against the walls of the hall, and he lies down happily, and soon falls asleep, with his mouth open, looking ugly in his wicked old age.

They watch him. And Doras, the son of Doras, says: « He has the satisfaction of seeing this day. My father dreamt of it but did not have it. I will carry his spirit in my heart, so that he may be present on the day of the revenge upon the Nazarene, and he may rejoice… »

« Remember that we must be constantly in the Temple, in turns, and many of us in each turn. »

« We will do that. »

« We will have to give instructions to take Judas of Simon to the High Priest at any time. »

« We will arrange that. »

« And now let us prepare our hearts for the final task. »

« They are already prepared! They are ready! »

« Cunningly. »

« Cunningly. »

« Subtly. »

« Subtly. »

« To avoid all suspicion. »

« To allure every heart. »

« Whatever He may say or do, we shall not react. We will revenge ourselves for everything at one go. »

« We will do that. And it will be a cruel vengeance. »

« A thorough one! »

« And dreadful! »

And they sit down trying to rest while waiting for dawn.

587. From Bethany to Jerusalem.

3rd March 1945.

Jesus is walking through orchards and olive-groves all in blossom. Even the silvery leaves of the olive-trees look like flowers, pearled as they are with dew, which shimmers in the first light of dawn as the leaves quiver in a gentle scented breeze. Each leafy branch seems the work of a goldsmith and one looks at them admiring their beauty. The almond-trees, which are all already covered with their green foliage, stand out from the white-rosy masses of the other fruit-trees, and under them the vines show their first tender indented leaves, so shiny and silky that they look like very thin scales of emerald or bits of precious silk. High above, the sky is like deep turquoise, clear, placid, solemn. Songs of birds and scents of flowers everywhere. The fresh air restores and makes people happy. The delight of April is really smiling everywhere.

Jesus is in the middle of His twelve apostles. And He speaks.

« I sent the women ahead because I want to speak to you alone. During the first days that I was with you I said to you, to those who were with Me: "Do not upset My Mother informing Her of the evil deeds against Her Son". Those deeds seemed so grave… Now, you three witnesses of those deeds that were the beginning of the chain by which the Son of man was to be lead to death - you, John, you, Simon, and you, Judas of Kerioth - can clearly see that they were comparable with a grain of sand that falls from above, in comparison with the boulder, the boulders, as such are the present deeds. But then, you, My Mother and I were unprepared for human wickedness. In Good as in Evil man does not become supreme all of a sudden. But he rises or sinks by degrees. The same happens in sorrow. Now, you who are good, have risen in Good and you can realise, without being scandalised as you would have been then, to what point of perversion man can lower himself, when he becomes a demon, just as My Mother and I can bear all the grief coming from man, without dying because of it. We have strengthened our souls.

All of us. In Good, in Evil or in Sorrow. And we have not yet reached the summit. We have not yet reached the summit… Oh! if you knew what and how high is the summit of Good, of Evil, of Sorrow! But I repeat to you the words that I spoke then. Do not repeat to My Mother what the Son of man is about to tell you. She would be grieved too deeply. He who is about to be killed drinks the pitiful mixture that stuns him, enabling him to await the hour of torture, without having to tremble every moment. Your silence will be like the pitiful drink for Her, the Mother of the Redeemer! Now I want to explain the meaning of the prophecies to you, so that nothing may still be obscure to you. And I ask you to be very, very close to Me. During the day I shall belong to everybody. I beg you to be with Me at night, because I want to be with you. I need to feel that I am not alone… »

Jesus is very sad. The apostles notice it and are worried. They gather round Him. Judas also presses against the Master, as if he were the most affectionate of the disciples.

Jesus caresses them and continues: « In this hour that is still granted to Me, I want to complete the knowledge of the Christ in you. At the beginning I made John, Simon and Judas acquainted with the truth of the prophecies concerning My birth. The prophecies have depicted Me better than the greatest painter could possibly do, from the dawn of My life to its end. Nay, that dawn and end are just the two periods most clearly elucidated by the prophets. Now the Christ Who descended from Heaven, the Just One Whom the clouds rained on the Earth, the sublime Shoot, is about to be killed. Crushed like a citron-tree struck by a thunderbolt. So let us speak of His death. Do not sigh, do not shake your heads. Do not grumble in your hearts, do not curse men. It would serve no purpose.

We are going up to Jerusalem. Passover is now close at hand. "This month will be for you the first month of the year". This month will be for the world the beginning of a new era. It will never end. In vain now and again man will try to fix new ones. Those who want to establish a new era bearing their idolatrous names, will be struck by lightning. There is but one God in Heaven and one Messiah on the Earth: the Son of God, Jesus of Nazareth. As He gives His whole Self, He can desire everything, and He puts His royal seal not on what is flesh and filth, but on what is time and spirit.

"On the tenth day of this month each man must take a lamb, one for each family, one for each household. And if the number of people in the household is not sufficient to consume the whole lamb, a man must join his neighbour's family, so that they may be able to consume the whole lamb". Because the sacrifice and the victim must be complete and consumed. Not even a tiny bit of it must be left over. None will be left. Too many are those who are about to feed on the lamb. A countless number, for a banquet with no time limit,

and no more fire is required to consume the remains, because there are no remains. Those parts that are offered and rejected by hatred will be consumed by the very fire of the Victim, by His love. I love you, men. You, My twelve friends, whom I chose personally, you in whom are the twelve tribes of Israel and the thirteen veins of Mankind. I have gathered everything in you and I see everything gathered in you… Everything. »

« But in the veins of Adam's body there is also the vein of Cain. None of us has lifted his hand against his companion. So where is Abel? » asks the Iscariot.

« What you said is true. In the veins of Adam's body there is also the vein of Cain. And I am the Abel, the meek Abel, the shepherd of flocks, pleasant to the Lord because he offered his early fruits and what was faultless, and himself before all his offerings. I love you, men. Even if you do not love Me, I love you. Love hastens and completes the work of the sacrificers.

"It must be a lamb without blemish, a male one year old". There is no time for the Lamb of God. He is. The same on the last day as He was on the first day of this Earth. He Who is like His Father does not know ageing in His divine nature. And His person knows only one old age and only one tiredness: the disappointment of having come in vain for too many. When you learn how I was killed - and the eyes that will see their Lord changed into a leper covered with sores are now shining with tears beside Me, and they can no longer see this pleasant hill because tears blind them with their liquid veil - you may say: "He did not die of that. He died because He had been unknown to His dearest ones and He had been rejected by too many men". But if the Son of God has no time-limit, and thus differs from the lamb of the rite, He is equal to it because He is without blemish and a male sacred to the Lord. Yes. In vain the executioners, those who will kill Me with weapons, or with their will or their betrayal, will endeavour to excuse themselves saying:

"He was guilty". No one who is sincere can accuse Me of sin. Can you do so?

We are facing death. I am. Others also are. Who? Do you want to !low who, Peter? Everybody. Death advances hour by hour and snatches those who less expect it. But also those who still have a long life to live, are in front of death every moment, because time is a flash compared with eternity, and because at the hour of death even the longest life is reduced to nothing, and actions dozens and dozens of years old, even those of one's early childhood, come back in crowds saying: "Well, you were doing this yesterday". Yesterday! It is always yesterday when one is dying! And honours and gold for which men long so much are always dust! And the fruit after which one was mad loses all flavour! Women? Money? Power? Science? What is left? Nothing! Only one's conscience and the judgement

of God, before Whom goes the conscience, poor and stripped of human protection and wealth, and laden only with its actions.

Some of the blood must be taken and put on the doorposts and lintel, and the Angel passing over will not strike the houses marked with the blood". Take My blood. Do not put it on dead stones, but on dead hearts. It is the new circumcision. And I circumcise Myself on behalf of the whole world. I do not sacrifice the useless part, but I break off My magnificent, wholesome, pure virility, I sacrifice it completely, and I take My blood from My mutilated limbs and from the opened veins and I draw rings of salvation on Mankind, rings of eternal nuptials with God Who is in Heaven, with the Father Who is waiting, and I say: "See. Now You can no longer reject them, because You would reject Your blood".

"And Moses said: '… and then dip a spray of hyssop in the blood and sprinkle the doorposts' ". So is the blood not sufficient? It is not. Your repentance is to be joined to My blood. Without bitter beneficial repentance, I shall have died for you in vain.

That is the first word in the Book about the Redeeming Lamb. But the Book is strewn with it. As at each new sunrise the blossoms become thicker and thicker on these branches, so, as a new year follows an old one and the time of Redemption draws near, then blossoming becomes more and more luxuriant.

And now with Zechariah I say to you, to you in Jerusalem: "Here is the King Who comes full of meekness riding on a donkey and colt. He is poor". But He will disperse the mighty ones who oppress men. He is meek, and yet His arm raised to bless will defeat the demon and death. "He will announce peace, because He is the King of peace". Although crucified, He will stretch His domination from sea to sea. "He Who does not shout, Who does not break, Who does not put out those who are not light but smoke, those who are not strength but weakness, those who deserve all reproach, He will do justice according to truth". Your Messiah, o city of Zion, your Messiah, o people of the Lord, your Messiah, o people of the Earth.

"Without being sad or turbulent", and you can see how there is not in Me the resentful sadness of the defeated, or the rancorous sorrow of the perverted, but only the seriousness of one who sees to what extent the possession of Satan in men can go, and you see how for three years I have incessantly stretched out My hands inviting everybody to love, and My hands will be stretched out again and they will be wounded, although I could reduce My enemies to ashes and disperse them with a simple act of My will! "Without being sad or turbulent I will be successful in establishing My Kingdom". That Kingdom of Christ in which is the salvation of the world.

The Eternal Lord My Father says to Me: "I have called You, I have taken You by the hand, I have appointed You alliance between peoples

and God, I have made You the light of the nations". And I have been light. Light to open the eyes of the blind, word to give speech to the deaf, key to open the underground prisons of those who were in the darkness of error.

And now, I Who am all that, am going to My death. I will enter the darkness of death. Death, do you understand?… The first things announced, are now being fulfilled, I also say with the prophet. I will tell you the rest before the Demon separates us.

There is Zion over there. Go and get the donkey and the colt. Say to the man: "Rabbi Jesus needs them". And tell My Mother that I am about to arrive. She is up there, on that slope, with the Maries. She is waiting for Me. It is My human triumph… Let it be Her triumph. Always joined together. Oh! joined!… »

And who is the heart of a hyena that with his claw tears the heart of a mother's heart: Me, Her Son? A man? No. Every man is born of a woman. And by instinct and moral consideration he cannot be pitiless towards a mother, because he thinks of "his own". So it is not a man. Who, then? A demon. But can a demon offend the Victress? He must touch Her to offend Her. And Satan cannot bear the virginal light of the Rose of God. So? Whom do you say it is? Are you not speaking? Then I will tell you. The most cunning demon has blended with the most corrupt man, and like the poison enclosed in the teeth of an asp, the demon is closed in him who can approach the Woman and thus bite Her treacherously. Cursed be the hybrid monster that is Satan and is man! Shall I curse it? No. It is not the word of a Redeemer. Then I say to the soul of this hybrid monster what I said to Jerusalem, the monstrous city of God and of Satan: "Oh, if in this hour still granted to you, you could come to the Saviour!"

There is no love greater than Mine! Neither is there a greater power. Also My Father agrees if I say: "I want", and I can speak but compassionate words for those who have fallen and stretch their arms towards Me from their abyss. O soul of the greatest sinner, your Saviour on the threshold of death bends over your abyss and invites you to take His hand. My death will not be avoided… But you… but you… would be saved, you whom I still love, and the soul of your Friend would not be horrified at the thought that He is aware of the horror of death and of such death through the deed of his friend…

Jesus is silent… exhausted…

The apostles whisper to one another and they ask: « But who is He speaking of? Who is it? »

And Judas, lying shamelessly, says: « It is certainly one of the false Pharisees… I think it must be Joseph or Nicodemus, or Chuza and Manaen… Every man is anxious to save his life and his property… I know that Herod… And I know that the Sanhedrin. He trusted

them too much! You know that even yesterday they were not present?! They haven't the courage to face Him… »

Jesus does not hear him. He has gone ahead and has joined His Mother, Who is with the Maries and with Martha and Susanna. Only Johanna of Chuza is absent from the group of the pious women.

588. Jesus Enters into Jerusalem.

30th March 1947 (Palm Sunday).

Jesus says: « You will put here the vision: "From Bethany to Jerusalem" (dated 3rd March 1945). And now: look! »

Jesus embraces with His arm the shoulders of His Mother, Who has stood up when John and James of Alphaeus have reached Her to say to Her: « Your Son is coming », and then they have come back to join their companions who are proceeding slowly, talking, while Thomas and Andrew have rushed towards Bethphage to look for the donkey and the colt and take them to Jesus.

In the meantime Jesus is speaking to the women. « Here we are near the city. I advise you to go. And go without being afraid. Enter the town before I do. All the shepherds and the most faithful disciples are near En Rogel. They have been told to escort and protect you. »

« The fact is that… We have spoken to Aser of Nazareth and Abel of Bethlehem in Galilee and also to Solomon. They had come as far as here to watch for Your arrival. The crowd is preparing a great celebration. And we wanted to see… See how the tops of the olivetrees are shaken? It is not the wind that is shaking them thus. But it is the people who are gathering branches to spread them on the road and to protect You from the sun. And over there?! Look over there, they are stripping the palm-trees of their fan-shaped leaves. They look like clusters and they are men who have climbed up the trunks to gather more and more… And, on the slopes, You can see children bending to pick flowers. And the women certainly strip gardens of corollas and scented herbs to strew Your way with flowers. We wanted to see… and imitate the gesture of Mary of Lazarus, who picked up all the flowers pressed by Your feet when You went into Lazarus' gardens » says imploringly Mary of Clopas on behalf of them all.

Jesus caresses the cheek of His old relative, who looks like a little girl anxious to see a show, and He says to her: « You would not be able to see anything among the large crowd. Go on, to Lazarus I house, the one whose keeper is Matthias. I shall be passing there and you will see Me from on high. »

« Son… and are You going all alone? Can I not be near You? » asks Mary, raising Her very sad face and staring with Her sky-blue eyes

at Her meek Son.

« I would beg You to remain hidden. Like a dove in the cleft of a rock. Rather than Your presence, My beloved Mother, I need Your prayer! »

« If so, Son, we will all pray for You. »

« Yes. And after you have seen Him pass by, you will come with me to my mansion in Zion. And I will send servants to the Temple, with instructions to follow the Master all the time, so that they may bring us His orders and His news », says Mary of Lazarus resolutely, always quick in realising what is the best thing to do and to do it without delay.

« You are right, sister. Although it grieves me not to follow Him, I understand that it is a just order. In any case Lazarus told us not to contradict the Master in anything, and to obey Him even in the least matters. And we will do that. »

« Go, then. See? The roads are getting busy. The apostles are about to join Me. Go. Peace be with you. I will make you come when I think it is a suitable moment. Goodbye, Mother. Peace to you. God is with us. » He kisses Her and dismisses Her. And the obedient women disciples go away quickly.

The ten apostles join Jesus. « Have You sent them ahead? »

« Yes, I have. They will see My entry from a house. »

« From which house? » asks Judas of Kerioth.

« Eh! the friendly houses are so many now! » says Philip.

« Not from Annaleah's? » says the Iscariot insisting.

Jesus replies in the negative and He sets out towards Bethphage, which is not far.

He is near the village when the two apostles, who had been sent to get the donkey and the colt, come back. They shout: « We found what You told us and we would have brought the animals. But the owner wanted to curry them and adorn them with the best trappings to honour You. And the disciples, with those who have spent the night in the streets of Bethany to honour You, wish to have the honour of bringing them to You, and we agreed. We thought that their love deserved a reward. »

« You did the right thing. Let us go on in the meantime. »

« Are there many disciples? » asks Bartholomew.

« Oh! a great crowd. It is impossible to pass along the streets in Bethphage. That is why I told Isaac to take the donkey to Cleanthes, the cheese-monger » replies Thomas.

« You acted rightly. Let us go as far as that rising of the hill, and we shall wait a little in the shade of those trees. »

They go to the place pointed out by Jesus.

« But we are going farther away! You are going beyond Bethphage passing round the back! » exclaims the Iscariot.

« And if I want to do so, who can forbid Me? Am I perhaps already

a prisoner and not allowed to go where I want? Or is it urgent that I should be so, and is anybody afraid that I may avoid being captured? And if I should decide to go away along safer routes, is there anybody who could prevent Me from doing so? » Jesus darts a glance at the Traitor, who dare no longer open his mouth and shrugs his shoulders, as if to say: « Do as You like. »

They go, in fact, round the back of the little village, I should say a suburb of the town, as its western side is really not far from the town, being part of the slopes of the Mount of Olives, which surrounds the eastern side of Jerusalem. Farther down, between the slopes and the town, the Kidron is shining in the April sunshine.

Jesus sits down in the green silent place and concentrates on His thoughts. He then stands up and goes towards the rising, stopping just at its edge.

Jesus says: « You will put here the vision of 31st July 1944: "Jesus weeps over Jerusalem", from the sentence that I gave you as the beginning of the vision. » He then resumes showing me the phases of His triumphal entry.

30th July 1944.

I do not know how I shall manage to write because I am suffering so much from heart trouble that I can hardly sit up. But it cannot be helped. I must write what I see.

The Gospel of today, the ninth Sunday after Pentecost, is illustrated to me.

From a hill near Jerusalem Jesus looks at the town stretched at His feet. It is not a very high hill. At most it is like the large square of S. Miniato on the mountain, at Florence; but it is sufficient for the eye to dominate the extent of houses and streets, that go up and down the small ground elevations forming Jerusalem. If one refers to the lowest level of the town, this hill is certainly much higher than Calvary, but it is closer to the walls than the latter. It really begins just outside the walls and rises steeply on their side, whereas on the other side it descends gently towards a very green country that stretches eastwards. At least I think it is eastwards, if I am judging rightly according to sunlight.

Jesus and His apostles are sitting under a group of trees, in the shade. They are resting after a long walk. Then Jesus stands up, He leaves the clearing where they were sitting and He goes towards the hillock and stops just at its edge. His tall person stands out clearly in the empty space around Him. He looks even taller as He stands upright, all alone. His arms are folded across His chest, on His blue mantle, and He looks around very seriously.

The apostles watch Him. But they leave Him alone, they neither move nor speak. They must think that He has moved aside to pray.

But Jesus is not praying. After looking for a long time at the town, at each district, at each hillock, at each detail, at times letting His eyes dwell upon this or that point, at times watching less insistently, Jesus begins to weep without sobbing or making any noise. Tears fill His eyes, then gush forth and stream down His cheeks and fall… Silent very sad tears. The tears of a man who knows that he must weep, all alone, without hoping to be consoled or understood by anybody. Tears brought about by grief that cannot be cancelled and must be suffered absolutely.

Because of his position John's brother is the first to notice those tears and he tells the others, who look at one another and are seized with astonishment.

« None of us has done anything wrong » says one, and another: « The crowds did not insult us either. Among them nobody was hostile to Him ». « Why is He weeping, then? » asks the oldest of them all.

Peter and John stand up together and they approach the Master. They think that the only thing to be done is to make Him feel that they love Him and ask Him what the matter is with Him. « Master, are You weeping? » asks John laying his fair-haired head on the shoulder of Jesus, Who is taller than he is by a neck and a head. And Peter, laying his hand round Jesus' waist, almost embracing Him to draw Him to himself, says to Him: « What is grieving You, Jesus? Tell us who love You. »

Jesus rests His cheek on John's fair-haired head and opening out His arms, He passes His arm round Peter's shoulder. The three of them are thus embraced to one another in such a loving posture. But tears continue to drop.

John feels them run down through his hair and he asks once again: « Why are You weeping, Master? Are we perhaps the cause of Your sorrow? »

The other apostles have gathered round the loving group and are anxiously awaiting a reply.

« No » says Jesus. « Your are not. You are My friends and friendship, when it is sincere, is a balm and a smile, never tears. I would like you to remain My friends for ever. Even now that we shall enter into the corruption, that ferments and contaminates those who are not resolutely willing to remain honest. »

« Where are we going, Master? Are we not going to Jerusalem? The crowds have already greeted You joyfully. Do You want to disappoint them? Are we going to Samaria to work some miracle? Just now that Passover is close at hand? » The questions are asked by several of the apostles at the same time.

Jesus raises His hands imposing silence and then with His right one He points to the town. A wide gesture like that of a man sowing seeds ahead of himself. And He says: « That is the Corruption. We are going into Jerusalem. We are going there. And only the Most

High knows how I would like to sanctify the town taking there the Holiness that comes from Heaven. I would like to resanctify it, as it should be the Holy City. But I shall not be able to do anything for it. It is corrupt, and will remain corrupt. And the streams of holiness that gush from the living Temple, and will gush even more in the next few days to the extent of leaving it lifeless, will not be sufficient to redeem it. Samaria and the heathen world will come to the Holy One. The temples of the true God will be erected on the false temples. The hearts of the Gentiles will worship the Christ. But this people, this town will always be hostile to Him, and their hatred will lead them to the greatest sin. That must happen. But woe to those who will be the instruments of that crime. Woe!… » Jesus stares at Judas, who is almost in front of Him.

« That will never happen to us. We are Your apostles and we believe in You, and we are ready to die for You. » Judas lies shamelessly and meets Jesus' eye without embarrassment. The others join in protesting.

Jesus replies to all of them, avoiding to reply to Judas directly.

« Would to Heaven that you may be so. But you are still very weak, and temptation may make you like those who hate Me. Pray fervently and watch diligently over yourselves. Satan is aware that he is about to be defeated and he wants to avenge himself by tearing you away from Me. Satan is around us all. He is around Me to prevent Me from doing the will of My Father and from fulfilling My mission. And he is around you to make you his servants. Be vigilant. Within those walls Satan will take those who are not strong. He will take him whose curse will be the fact that he was elected, because he made use of his election for a human purpose. I chose you for the Kingdom of Heaven, not for that of the world. Bear that in mind. And you, o city, that want your ruin and over which I am shedding tears, be aware that your Christ is praying for your redemption. Oh! if at least in this hour still left to you, you came to Him Who would be your peace! If in this hour you understood the Love passing through you and you divested yourself of the hatred that makes you blind and insane, and cruel against yourself and your welfare! But the day will come when you will remember this hour! But it will be too late to weep and repent! The Love will have passed and disappeared from your streets, and the Hatred that you preferred will remain. And Hatred will be on you and on your children. Because one has what one wanted, and hatred is paid with hatred. And then it will not be the hatred of the strong against the defenceless, but it will be hatred against hatred, thus war and death. Surrounded by trenches and armed men, you will languish before being destroyed, and you will see your children killed by weapons and famine, and the survivors taken prisoners and derided, and you will ask for mercy, but will never find it, because

you refused to acknowledge your Salvation. I am weeping, My friends, because I have the heart of a man, and the ruin of My fatherland makes Me shed tears. But it is just that this takes place because within those walls corruption exceeds all limits and draws the punishment of God. Woe betide the citizens who bring about the ruin of their fatherland! Woe betide the leaders who are the main cause of it! Woe betide those who should be saints to guide the others to be honest and instead they desecrate the House of their ministry and themselves! Come. My action will be of no avail. But let us make the Light shine once again in the Darkness! »

And Jesus goes down followed by His apostles. He walks fast along the road with a serious countenance, I would say, almost looking sullen. He speaks no more. He goes into a little house at the foot of the hill, and I see nothing else.

[30th March 1947]

Jesus has hardly had time to enter into the house blessing its inhabitants, when the joyful sound of harness-bells and jubilant voices are heard. And immediately afterwards the lean wan face of Isaac appears in the opening of the door, and the faithful shepherd enters and prostrates himself before his Lord Jesus.

Many faces are crowding in the frame of the wide-open door, and many more can be seen behind them… They push and throng, wishing to come forward… Some women shout, some of the children cry, caught as they are in the crowd, while the others shout greetings and joyful exclamations: « This is a happy day which brings You back to us! Peace to You, Lord! We welcome You, Master, as You have come back to reward our loyalty. »

Jesus stands up and makes a gesture meaning that He is going to speak. Everybody becomes silent and Jesus' voice is heard clearly. « Peace to you! Do not press together. We shall now go up to the Temple. I have come to stay with you. Peace! Peace! Do not hurt yourselves. Make way, My beloved friends! Let Me come out and follow Me, because we shall enter into the Holy City together. »

Willy-nilly the people obey, and they open out a little so that Jesus can come out and mount the little donkey. In fact Jesus points to the little colt, which had never been ridden before, as His mount, and then some rich pilgrims, who elbow their way through the crowd, lay their sumptuous mantles on its back, and one man kneels down with one knee on the ground and the other placed as a step for the Lord, Who sits on the back of the colt. And the journey begins with Peter walking on one side of the Master and Isaac on the other, holding the reins of the unbroken animal, which proceeds calmly, as if it were accustomed to that task, without becoming restive or being frightened by the flowers that, thrown as they are towards Jesus, often strike the eyes or the soft muzzle of the little

colt, that is not even scared by the branches of olive-trees and palm leaves shaken in front of and around it, or are thrown on the ground to form a carpet with the flowers. It is not even frightened by the shouts of « Hosanna, Son of David! », that are becoming louder and louder as the crowd becomes larger and larger with the arrival of newcomers.

It is not easy to pass through Bethphage, along its narrow twisted streets, and mothers are compelled to take their children in their arms, and men have to protect their women from being pushed too violently, and some fathers carry their little sons astride their shoulders, so that they are above the crowd, while the shrill voices of the children sound like the bleatings of lambs or the screeching of swallows, while with their little hands they throw the flowers and leaves of olive-trees, offered to them by their mothers, as well as kisses, to mild Jesus…

After leaving the narrow passage of the little suburb, the procession stretches out in an orderly manner, and many volunteers go ahead leading the way and keeping it clear, and others follow them strewing the ground with branches. And when a man throws his mantle on the road as a carpet, hundreds of people imitate him. Thus the central part of the road is a multicoloured strip of garments spread on the ground and once Jesus passes by, they are picked up and carried ahead with many more, while flowers, branches and palm-leaves are waved and thrown, and louder cries are uttered around and in honour of the King of Israel, of the Son of David and His Kingdom!

The soldiers on duty at the gate come out to see what is happening. But it is not a sedition and they move to one side, leaning on their lances, and looking amazed or ironical they watch the strange procession of this King Who is riding the colt of a donkey, and is as handsome as a god, as humble as the poorest of men, meek, blessing… surrounded by women and children and by disarmed men shouting: « Peace! Peace! », of this King Who, before entering the town, stops for a moment near the sepulchres of the lepers at Hinnom and Siloam (I think I am mentioning the correct names of these places, where I have seen lepers being cured miraculously on other occasions) and pressing on the only stirrup in which His foot is resting, as He is sitting side-saddle on the donkey, but not astride it, He stands up, stretches out His arms, shouting in the direction of those dreadful slopes (where frightened faces and bodies appear, looking towards Jesus, and they utter the plaintive cry of lepers: « We are infected! » to send away some imprudent people who, in order to see Jesus better, would climb even the contaminated and infected terraces): « Let those who have faith in Me invoke My Name and receive health from it! » and setting out again He blesses them and He says to Judas: « You will buy food for the lepers and take

it to them with Simon before it gets dark. »

When the procession enters under the vault of the Siloam Gate and then, like a torrent, pours into the town through the Ophel suburb - where every terrace has become a little airy square crowded with people singing hosannas, throwing flowers and pouring perfumes in the street, trying to throw them on the Master, and the air is filled with the scent of flowers crushed under the feet of the crowds and with essences that spread in the air before falling among the dust of the street - the cheers of the crowd seem -to increase and become louder, as if each person shouted in a bugle-horn, because the many archivolts, of which Jerusalem is full, amplify them with continuous echoes.

I can hear them shout, and I think they mean what the Evangelists say: « Shalem, Shalem melchil! » (or malchit: I am trying to give the sound of the words, but it is difficult, because they have aspirations which we do not have). A continuous howl, like the roar of a stormy sea, in which the loud noise of a billow pounding on beaches and cliffs has not yet dropped, when another breaker collects it and raises it with a fresh roar, without ever stopping. I am deafened by it!

Perfumes, scents, shouts, waving of branches and garments, colours, cries… It is a bewildering scene.

I see the people in the crowd getting mixed up continuously, and known faces appear and disappear: all the disciples from all the places in Palestine, all the followers… I see Jairus for a moment, and Jaia, the youth from Pella (I think), who was blind like his mother and was cured by Jesus, I see Joachim from Bozrah and the peasant from the plain of Sharon with his brothers, I see lonely old Matthias from a place near the Jordan, on the eastern bank, where Jesus took shelter when the place was all flooded, I see Zacchaeus with his converted friends, I see old John from Nob with almost all the citizens, I see the husband of Sarah from Juttah… But who can cope with faces and names, if it is a kaleidoscope of known and unknown faces, seen several times or only once?… Now there is the face of the little shepherd brought from Enon. And, near him, is the disciple from Korazim who did not bury his father to follow Jesus; and close to him, for a moment, the father and mother of Benjamin from Capernaum with their son, who almost falls under the hooves of the little donkey when he throws himself forward to receive a caress from Jesus.

And - unfortunately - there are faces of Pharisees and scribes, livid with rage because of this triumph, and they overbearingly elbow their way through the circle of love that is pressing round Jesus and they shout to Him: « Make these mad people keep quiet! Make them reason! Hosannas are to be sung to God only. Tell them to be quiet! »

And Jesus replies to them kindly: « Even if I told them to be silent and they obeyed Me, the stones would extol the wonders of the Word of God. »

In fact the people - in addition to shouting: « Hosanna, hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He Who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna to Him and to His Kingdom! God is with us! The Immanuel has come. The Kingdom of the Christ of the Lord has come! Hosanna! Hosanna from the Earth to the highest Heaven! Peace! Peace, my King! Peace and blessings to You, holy King! Peace and glory in Heaven and on the Earth! Glory to God for His Christ! Peace to the men who know how to welcome Him. Peace on Earth to men of good will and glory in the highest Heaven, because the hour of the Lord has come » (and this last cry is uttered by the whole group of the shepherds who are repeating the Christmas song) - in addition to these uninterrupted cries, the people of Palestine inform the pilgrims from the Diaspora of the miracles they have seen, and to those who do not know what is happening, because they are strangers passing by chance through the town and ask: « But who is He? What is happening? » they reply: « He is Jesus! Jesus, the Master from Nazareth in Galilee! The Prophet! The Messiah of the Lord! The Promised, the Holy Messiah! »

From a house, which has just been left behind as in so much confusion the procession is moving very slowly, comes out a group of strong young men carrying above their heads copper braziers full of charcoal and incense, which burn spreading clouds of scented smoke. Their gesture is well liked, and many run ahead or return to their houses, to get fire and scented resins to bum and thus pay homage to the Christ.

Annaleah's house appears. The terrace is decked with vines the new leaves of which are quivering in the mild April wind, and along the street side there is a full row of girls dressed in white and wearing white veils, in the middle of them there is Annaleah, with baskets of plucked petals of roses and lilies of the valley, that are already flying about in the air.

« The virgins of Israel are greeting You, Lord! » says John, who has pushed through the crowd and is now beside Jesus, drawing His attention to the garland of purity, which is leaning out of the parapet smiling and strewing the street with petals as red as blood and with lilies of the valley as white as pearls.

Jesus draws rein for a moment and stops the colt. He looks up and raises His hand to bless that virginity in love with Him to the extent of forgoing all other earthly love.

And Annaleah leaning forward shouts: « I have seen Your triumph, my Lord! Take my life for Your universal glorification! » and with a very loud cry, as Jesus passes close to her house and proceeds, she greets Him: « Jesus! »

And another but different cry exceeds the clamour of the crowds. But although the people hear it, they do not stop. It is a torrent of enthusiasm, a torrent of delirious people that cannot stop. And while the last waves of this torrent are still outside the gate, the first ones are already beginning to climb the slopes leading to the Temple.

« Your Mother! » shouts Peter, pointing at a house almost at the corner of a street that leads up to the Moriah and along which the procession begins to pass. And Jesus looks up to smile at His Mother, Who is up there among the faithful women.

The obstacle of a large caravan stops the procession a few metres after it has passed the house. And while Jesus stops with the others, caressing the children that mothers hold up to Him, a man rushes towards Him, elbowing his way through the crowd and shouting: « Let me pass! A woman has just died. A young girl. All of a sudden. Her mother is invoking the Master. Let me pass! He already saved her once! »

The people make room and the man runs towards Jesus and says: « Master, Eliza's daughter is dead. She greeted You with that cry, then she bent backwards saying: "I am happy" and she breathed her last. Her heart was overwhelmed by the great joy in seeing Your triumph. Her mother saw me on the terrace of the house next to hers and she sent for me. Come, Master! »

« Dead! Annaleah dead! Was she not healthy, blooming and happy up to yesterday? » The apostles and the shepherds throng together excitedly. Everybody saw her yesterday in perfect good health. Only a little while ago they saw her rosy and smiling… They cannot understand such a misfortune… They ask questions, they inquire about details…

« I don't know. You have all heard her words. She spoke in a loud voice, sure of herself. Then I saw her lean backwards, and she was whiter then her dress and I heard her mother shout… I know nothing else. »

« Do not be excited. She is not dead. A flower fell and the angels of God picked it up to take it to Abraham's bosom. The lily of the Earth will soon open happily in Paradise, ignoring the horror of the world for ever. Man, tell Eliza not to weep over the lot of her daughter. Tell her that she was granted a great grace by God, and that in six days' time she will understand what grace God granted her daughter. Do not weep. Let no one weep. Her triumph is even greater than Mine, because the angels are escorting the virgin to lead her to the peace of the just. And it is an eternal triumph that will increase in degree without ever knowing failure. I solemnly tell you that you have reason to weep over yourselves, not over Annaleah. Let us go. » And He repeats to the apostles and to those around Him: « A flower has fallen. It lay down in peace and the angels

picked it up. Blessed is the girl pure in flesh and heart, because she will soon see God. »

« But how did it happen, what did she die of, Lord? » asks Peter who cannot believe it.

« Of love. Of ecstasy. Of infinite joy. A happy death! »

Those who are far ahead are unaware, those who are far behind are also unaware. So the hosannas continue even if here, around Jesus, people have become pensively silent.

It is John who breaks the silence saying: « Oh! I should like to have the same lot before the future hours! »

« I, too » says Isaac. « I should like to see the face of the girl who died of love for You… »

« I beg you to sacrifice your wishes to Me. I need you near Me… »

« We will not leave You, Lord. But is there no consolation for that mother? » asks Nathanael.

« I will see to that… »

They are at the gates of the enclosure of the Temple. Jesus dismounts from the little donkey that is taken into custody by a man from Bethphage.

It is necessary to bear in mind that Jesus did not stop at the first gate of the Temple, but He went round the enclosure, and He stopped only at the northern side, near the Antonia. That is where He dismounted and went into the Temple, as if He wished to let people see that He was not hiding from the ruling powers, feeling that He had always behaved in an innocent way.

The first court of the Temple shows the usual uproar of moneychangers and vendors of doves, sparrows and lambs, with the only difference that the vendors have been left alone, because everybody has gone to see Jesus. And Jesus enters, solemn in His purple garment, and He looks around at the market and at a group of Pharisees and scribes, who are watching Him from a porch.

His eyes are flashing with anger. He rushes to the centre of the court. An unexpected leap that looks like a flight. The flight of a flame, because His garment is as bright as a flame in the sunshine flooding the court. And in His voice as powerful as thunder He says: « Away from the house of My Father! This is no place for usury or markets. It is written: "My house will be called the house of prayer". So why have you turned into a robbers' den this house, in which the Name of the Lord is invoked? Go away! Leave My House clean. That it may not happen to you, that instead of using ropes, I may strike you with the thunderbolts of heavenly wrath. Go away! Get out, you thieves, swindlers, lewd people, murderers, impious persons, idolaters of the worst idolatry, that of one's proud ego, corrupters and liars. Out! Get out! Or the Most High God, I warn you, will sweep away this place for good and will take vengeance upon all the people. » He does not repeat the lashing of the last time, but

seeing that the merchants and money-changers are slow in obeying, He goes to the nearest bench and turns it over spreading scales and money on the ground.

The vendors and money-changers make haste and carry out Jesus' order, after witnessing the first example. And Jesus shouts after them: « And how many times shall I have to say that this must not be a place of filth, but a place of prayer? » And He looks at those of the Temple who, obeying the orders of the Pontiff, do not make any gesture of reprisal.

After cleansing the court, Jesus goes towards the porches where blind, paralytic, mute, crippled and other sick people are gathered and are invoking Him at the top of their voices.

« What do you want Me to do for you? »

« My sight, Lord! My limbs! That my son may speak! That my wife may recover her health. We believe in You, Son of God! »

« May God hear you. Rise and sing hosannas to the Lord! »

He does not cure the many sick people one by one. But He makes a wide gesture with His hand, and grace and health descend from it upon the poor wretches, who stand up completely cured with cries of joy that mingle with those of the many children, who are pressing against Him repeating: « Glory, glory to the Son of David! Hosanna to Jesus of Nazareth, the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords! »

Some Pharisees, with feigned deference, shout to Him: « Master, do You hear them? These children are saying what is not to be said. Reproach them! That they may keep quiet! »

« Why? The king prophet, the king of My stock, did he not say: "You made the perfect praise flow from the mouths of children and sucklings to confuse Your enemies"? Have you not read these words of the psalmist? Let children sing My praises. They are prompted to sing them by their angels, who see My Father incessantly and are aware of His secrets, which they suggest to these innocents. And now let Me go and pray the Lord » and, passing in front of the people, He goes into the court of Israel to pray…

Later, coming out through another gate, going along the Sheep Pool, He leaves the town and goes back to the hills of the Mount of Olives.

The apostles are full of enthusiasm… The triumph has given them confidence, they have completely forgotten all the terror that the words of the Master had aroused in them… They are speaking of everything… They are dying to have news of Annaleah. With difficulty Jesus prevents them from going, assuring them that He will provide and He knows how to do so… They turn a deaf ear to every divine advice… They are truly men, and a cry of hosanna makes them forget everything…

Jesus speaks to Mary of Magdala's servants, who had joined Him at the Temple, and then He dismisses them…

« And where are we going now? » asks Philip.

« To Mark of Jonas' house? » says John.

« No. To the field of the Galileans. Perhaps My brothers have come and I should like to greet them » says Jesus.

« You will be able to do that tomorrow » Thaddeus points out to Him.

« It is better to do things while they can be done. Let us go to the Galileans. They will be pleased to see us. You will have news of your families. I shall see the children… »

« And what about this evening? Where shall we sleep? In town? Where? Where Your Mother is? Or at Johanna's? » asks Judas Iscariot.

« I do not know. Certainly not in town. Perhaps under some Galilean tent again… »

« But why? »

« Because I am the Galilean and I love My Fatherland. Let us go. »

They set out again, going up towards the field of the Galileans, which is on the Mount of Olives towards Bethany, and is all covered with white tents shining in the pleasant April sun.

[30th July 1944]

Jesus says:

« The scene described by Luke seems incoherent, almost illogical. I feel sorry for the misfortunes of a guilty town, but I do not feel sorry for the habits of that town. No. I am not able, I cannot feel sorry for them, because it is just those habits that bring about their misfortunes; and seeing them makes My sorrow deeper. My anger with the desecrators of the Temple is the logical consequence of My meditation on the forthcoming misfortunes of Jerusalem.

It is always the profanation of the cult of God, of the Law of God that provokes the punishments of Heaven. By turning the House of God into a robbers' den, those worthless priests and those worthless believers (only such by name) were drawing malediction and death on all the people. It is useless to give this or that name to the misfortunes that make a people suffer. Look for the right name in this: "Punishment for living like brutes". God withdraws and Evil advances. That is the result of a national way of living undeserving to be named Christian.

As in the past, also now, in the short period of this century, I have not ceased shaking and warning people by means of prodigies. But as in the past, I did nothing but draw mockery, indifference and hatred upon Myself and My means. But individuals and nations ought to bear in mind that they weep in vain, when beforehand they did not want to acknowledge their salvation. In vain they invoke Me when, while I was with them, they drove Me away with a sacrilegious war that starting from individual consciences, devoted to

Evil, spread throughout the Nation. Fatherlands are not so much saved with weapons as they are by means of a form of life that may attract protection from Heaven.

Rest, little John. And make sure you are always faithful to your election. Go in peace. »

How tired I am! I am really exhausted…

[30th March 1947]

Jesus says: « My patient secretary, put here the vision: "The evening of Palm Sunday" (4th March 1945), and may My peace be with you. »

589. The Evening of Palm Sunday.

4th March 1945.

Jesus is with His apostles in the peace of the Garden of the Mount of Olives. It is evening. A tepid evening with a full moon. They are sitting on the natural seats that are the terraces of the olive-grove, on the first ones, which face the glade situated at the beginning of Gethsemane. The Kidron is gurgling among its stones and seems to be talking to itself. One can hear only the song of an odd nightingale or feel the breath of the breeze. Nothing else.

Jesus is speaking.

« After the triumph of this morning your spirits are quite different. What shall I say? That your minds are relieved? Oh! yes! From a human point of view they are relieved. You entered the town trembling because of My words. Each of you seemed to fear that hired ruffians on the other side of the walls were ready to attack him and take him prisoner.

In every man there is another man who reveals himself in the most dangerous hours. There is the hero, who in the hours of greater danger emerges from the meek type of man that the world had always known him to be and had considered unimportant, the hero who faces a struggle saying: "Here I am", who says to the enemy, to an overbearing opponent: "Compete with me". And there is the saint who, while the others run away, struck with terror before wild people looking for victims, says: "Take me as a hostage and for your sacrifice. I will pay on behalf of everybody". And there is the cynic who avails himself of the general misfortune and laughs over the bodies of the victims. There is the traitor, who has a courage of his own, that of evil. The traitor who is the amalgamation of the cynic with the coward, and that is also a category that reveals itself in dangerous hours. Because they cynically take advantage of a misfortune and in a cowardly way they join the stronger party, daring to face the scorn of enemies and the curses of the forlorn, provided they make a profit. Lastly there is the most widespread type, the

coward who in the dangerous hour can but repent of having made known that he belonged to a party and to a man, now struck with anathema, and runs away… Such a coward is not so criminal as the cynic or so revolting as the traitor. But he always shows the imperfection of his spiritual structure. You… are such. Do not say that you are not. I can read consciences.

This morning you were thinking among yourselves: "What will happen to us? Are we going to our death as well?" And your lower part was moaning: "When ever!… " Yes. But have I ever deceived you? With My first words I spoke to you of persecutions and death. And when one of you, through excess of admiration, wanted to see Me and introduce Me as a king, as one of the poor kings of the Earth, always a poor king even if the king and restorer of the kingdom of Israel, I immediately corrected the error and I said: "I am king of the spirit. I offer hardships, sacrifices, sorrows. I have nothing else. I have nothing else here on the Earth. But after My death and your death in My faith, I will give you an eternal Kingdom, the Kingdom of Heaven". Did I perhaps say something different to you? No. You say I did not.

And then you also said: "This is all we want: we want to be with You, and to be treated, to suffer like You, for You". Yes. That is what you said. And you were sincere. Because you were reasoning like children, like thoughtless children. You thought that it was easy for you to follow Me, and you were so full of the treble sensuality that you could not admit that what I was mentioning to you was true. You thought: "He is the Son of God. He is saying that to test our love. No man will be able to strike Him. Since He works miracles, He will be able to work a great one for Himself!" And each of you would add: "I cannot believe that He may be betrayed, captured, killed". Your human faith in My power was so strong that you went to the extent of not having faith in My words, the true, spiritual, holy and sanctifying Faith.

"He Who works miracles will certainly work one in His own favour!" you were saying. I will work not one, but many more. And two of them will be such as no mind of man can possibly imagine. They will be such as only the believers in the Lord can acknowledge. All other people, to the end of time, will say: "Impossible!" And even after My death I shall be the object of contradiction for many.

On a mild spring morning from a mountain I announced the various beatitudes. There is still another one: "Blessed are those who can believe without seeing". Going through Palestine I have already said: "Blessed are those who listen to the word of God and keep it", and also: "Blessed are those who do the will of God" and I said many more, because in the house of My Father many are the joys awaiting saints. But there is also this one. Oh! Blessed are those who will believe without seeing with the eyes of their bodies! They

will be so holy that, although on the Earth, they already see God, the God hidden in the Mystery of love.

But after being with Me for three years, you have not yet arrived at that faith. And you believe only what you see. So, as from this morning, after the triumph, you are saying: "It is just what we said. He is triumphing. And we with Him". And, like birds that are fledging again after their feathers have been torn off by some cruel person, you are flying off, beside yourselves with joy, sure of yourselves, free from the constraints that My words had put in your hearts. Are you more relieved also in your spirits? No, your spirits are even less relieved. Because you are even less prepared for the impending hour. You have drunk the hosannas like a strong agreeable wine. And you are inebriated with it. Is an inebriated man ever strong? The little hand of a child is sufficient to make him stagger and fall. That is what you are like. And the sight of hired ruffians will be enough to make you run away like timid gazelles, which see the sharp muzzle of a jackal appear near the rock of a mountain and, as fast as the wind, they scatter through the solitude of the desert.

Oh! make sure you do not die of dreadful thirst in that burning arena, which is the world without God! My dear friends, do not say what Isaiah says referring to this false and dangerous state of your spirits. Do not say: "He speaks of nothing but conspiracies. But there is nothing to fear, nothing to be afraid of. We must not be afraid of what He prophesies to us. Israel loves Him. And we have seen that". How often the delicate bare foot of a little boy treads on the grass of a flowery meadow, picking flowers to take them to his mother, and he thinks that he will find only stems and flowers, and instead he lays his heel on the head of a snake, and is bitten by it and dies! The flowers were concealing the snake. Also this morning… that happened also this morning! I am the Condemned man crowned with roses. Roses!… How long do roses last? What is left of them once their corollas shed their snow-white scented petals? Thorns.

I - Isaiah said so - shall be for you, and with you I say that I shall be the sanctuary for the world, but also the stumbling-stone, the chief culprit, the snare and ruin for Israel and the Earth. I will sanctify those who have good will and I will overthrow and crush those who have an evil will. The angels do not speak false words or words that last a short time. They come from God, Who is Truth and is Eternal, and what they say is the truth and their words are immutable. They said: "Peace to men of good will". Then, o Earth, Your Saviour was born. Now your Redeemer is going to His death. But to have peace from God, that is, sanctification and glory, it is necessary to have "good will". Useless is My birth, useless My death for those who do not have that good will. My crying and My deathrattle,

My first step and the last one, the wound of My circumcision and that of My consummation, will have been of no avail if in you, if in men, there is not the good will to redeem and sanctify yourselves. And I say to you: "A very large number of people will stumble against Me, whilst I am placed as a supporting pillar, and not as a snare for man, and they will fall because, being inebriated with pride, lust and avarice, they will be entrapped in the net of their own sins, caught and handed over to Satan. Keep these words in your hearts and seal them for future disciples.

Let us go. The Stone is rising. Another step forward. Upon the mountain. It must shine on the summit because He is the Sun, the Light, the East. And the Sun shines on summits. It must be on the mountain, because the true Temple is to be seen from all over the world. And I am building it by Myself with the living Stone of My sacrificed Body. I will cement its parts with the lime made with sweat and blood. And I shall be on My throne clothed in bright purple, wearing a new crown, and those who are far away will come to Me, they will work in My Temple, around it. I am the base and the summit. But all around, the abode will expand wider and wider. And I will shape My stones and form My handicraftsman Myself, As I was worked on with a chisel by My Father, by Love, by man and by Hatred, so I will work on them. After the wickedness of the Earth has been removed in only one day, the seven eyes will come to the stone of the eternal Priest to see God, and the seven fountains will flow to defeat Satan's fire.

Satan… Judas, let us go. And remember that time is running short and the Lamb is to be handed over by Thursday evening. »

590. The Monday before Passover. The Cursed Fig-Tree and the Parable of the Wicked Husbandmen.

31st March 1947.

Jesus comes out early from the tent of a Galilean, on the tableland on the Mount of Olives, where many Galileans gather on the occasion of solemn festivities. The Field is all asleep, lit up by the moon that is setting slowly, enveloping tents, trees and slopes, and the town asleep down there at the bottom, in a white-silvery light…

Jesus passes resolutely and noiselessly among the tents, and once He is out of the Field, He goes down fast along the steep slopes towards Gethsemane, He passes through it, comes out of it, He crosses the little bridge over the Kidron, a silver ribbon singing to the moon, He arrives at the Gate watched over by legionaries. This night watch at the closed Gates is probably a precautionary measure of the Proconsul. The soldiers, four in all, are speaking sitting on large stones placed as seats against the massive wall, and they

are warming themselves at a little fire of dry twigs that casts a reddish light on the shining loricas and stern helmets, under which appear faces so different, in their Italic features, from those of the Hebrews.

« Who is there! » asks the first one who sees Jesus' tall figure appear from behind the comer of a little house near the Gate, and he grasps a sharp-pointed spear that was leaning against the nearby wall, and he stands in the prescribed attitude, imitated by the others. And without giving Jesus time to reply he says: « No one is allowed to come in. Don't You know that this is the end of the second watch? »

« I am Jesus of Nazareth. My Mother is in town. I am going to Her. »

« Oh! the Man Who brought back from the dead the man of Bethany! By Jove! I shall see Him at last! » And he approaches Him looking at Him curiously, walking around Him, as if he wished to make sure that it is not something unreal, something strange, but a man like everybody else. And he says so: « Oh! my goodness! He is as handsome as Apollo, but He is made exactly like us! And He has neither baton, nor cap, nor any sign of His power! » He is perplexed. Jesus looks at him patiently, smiling gently.

The others, who are not so curious - they have probably already seen Jesus on other occasions - say: « It would have been a good thing if He had been here half way through the first watch, when the beautiful girl, who died this morning, was taken to her sepulchre. We would have seen her rise… »

Jesus kindly repeats: « May I go to My Mother? »

The four soldiers rouse up. The senior says: « Actually, according to instructions, we should not let anybody pass. But You would pass just the same. He Who forces the doors of Hades, can easily force the gates of a closed town. And You are not a man who will provoke rebellions. So the prohibition does not apply to You. Try not to be seen by the patrol in the town. Open the gate, Marcus Gratus. And You, go in noiselessly. We are soldiers and we must obey… »

« Be not afraid. Your kindness will not become a punishment for you. »

One of the legionaries cautiously opens the wicket-door within the huge main door and says: « Be quick. The second watch ends shortly and we shall be replaced by other guards. »

« Peace be with you. »

« We are warriors… »

« The peace I give lasts also in wartime, because it is the peace of the soul. »

And Jesus enters the dark arch opened in the thick wall. He passes silently before the guard-room, through the door of which comes the flickering light of an oil lamp, a common lamp, hanging from a hook of the low ceiling, and which allows one to see the bodies

of soldiers sleeping on mats laid on the floor, all wrapped in their mantles, with their weapons beside them.

Jesus is in town by now… and I lose sight of Him, while I watch two of the previous soldiers go back in, after watching to see whether Jesus had gone away, before waking the sleeping soldiers for the change.

« He can no longer be seen… I wonder what He meant by those words. I should have liked to know » says the younger one.

« You should have asked Him. He does not despise us. He is the only Jew Who does not look down on us and does not annoy us in any way » replies the other one, who is in full manhood.

« I did not dare. How could I, a peasant from Benevento, speak to a man Who is said to be God? »

« A god riding a donkey? Ha! Ha! If He were as drunk as Bacchus, He might do that. But He is not drunk. I don't think He even drinks honeyed wine. Don't you see how wan and lean He is? »

« And yet the Hebrews… »

« They do drink, although they pretend they don't! And inebriated with the strong wines of this land and with their strong drinks, they have seen god in a man. Believe me. The gods are idle stories. Olympus is empty and the Earth has none. »

« If they heard you!… »

« Are you still childish to the extent of not being a candidate and not knowing that Caesar himself does not believe in the gods, neither do the pontifices, the augurs, the haruspices, the Arval brethren, the vestal virgins, or anybody else? »

« Why then… »

« Why the rites? Because people like them, they are useful to the priests and Caesar avails himself of them to be obeyed, as if he were an earthly god held by the hand by the Olympian gods. But the first not to believe are those whom we venerate as ministers of the gods. I am a Pyrrhonian. I have travelled round the world. I have had many experiences. My hair has become grey at my temples and my way of thinking has matured. My personal code consists of three sentences. To love Rome, the only goddess and the only certainty, to the extent of sacrificing my life for her. To believe nothing, because everything around us is an illusion, with the exception of our sacred immortal Fatherland. We must doubt even ourselves, because it is not certain whether we live. Senses and reason are not sufficient to make us know for certain that we have succeeded in knowing the Truth and to live and to die are of the same value, because we do not know what is to live and what is to die » he says, affecting the philosophic scepticism of a superior mind…

The other one looks at him doubtfully. He then says: « I, instead, believe. And I should like to know… To learn from that man who has just gone by. He certainly knows the Truth. Something strange

emanates from Him. It is like a light that penetrates you! »

« May Aesculapius save you! You are ill! You came up to town from the valley only a short time ago, and those who make that journey and are not acclimatised to these surroundings become easily feverish. Your mind is wandering. Come. Only warm wine with spices can make you sweat the poison of Jordan fever… » and he pushes him towards the guard-room.

But the other one frees himself saying: « I am not ill. I don't want any warm spiced wine. I want to watch over there, beyond the walls (he points at the inner side of the walls) and wait for the man who said He is Jesus. »

« If you don't mind waiting… I am going to wake up the men for the change. Goodbye… »

And he goes into the guard-room noisily, awaking his companions and shouting: « Your time is up. Come on, you lazy idlers! I am tired!… » He yawns noisily and curses, because they have let the fire go out and they have drunk all the warm wine « so necessary to dry the Palestinian dew… »

The other one, the young legionary, leaning against the wall, illuminated lightly by the moon from the west, is waiting for Jesus to retrace His steps. The stars are watching over his hope…

In the meantime Jesus has arrived at Lazarus' house on the hill of Zion and knocks at the door. Levi opens it to Him.

« You, Master?! The ladies are sleeping. Why did You not send a servant, if You needed something? »

« They would not have let him pass. »

« Ah! that is true! But how did You pass? »

« I am Jesus of Nazareth. And the legionaries let Me pass. But it is not to be divulged, Levi. »

« I will not mention it… They are better than many of us! »

« Take Me where My Mother is sleeping and do not wake anybody else in the house. »

« As You wish, Lord. Lazarus has ordered all the managers of his houses to obey You in everything without any discussion or delay. It was just after dawn when a servant, many servants took his order to all the houses. Obey and be quiet. We will do that. You gave our master back to us… »

The man trots ahead of Jesus along the corridors, as wide as galleries, of Lazarus' wonderful mansion on the hill of Zion, and the light he is carrying in his hands illuminates in a fantastic manner the furniture and tapestry adorning the wide corridors. The man stops at a closed door saying: « Your Mother is in there. »

« You may go. »

« And what about the light? Do You not want it? I can go back without it. I know the house very well. I was born here. »

« Leave it. And do not take the key out of the door. I am going

out at once. »

« You know where to find me. I will lock it as a precaution. But I shall be ready to open the door for You as soon as You come. »

Jesus remains alone. He knocks lightly, such a light knock that only one wide awake can hear it.

There is a noise in the room, as of a chair being moved, and a light shuffling of feet, and a low subdued voice asks: « Who is knocking? »

« It is I, Mother. Open the door. »

The door is opened at once. Only the moonlight illuminates the quiet room and spreads its rays on an untouched bed. A chair is near the window wide open on the mystery of the night.

« Were You not sleeping yet? It is late! »

« I was praying… Come, Son. Sit here where I was » and She points at the chair near the window.

« I cannot stop. I have come to get You and go to Eliza at Ophel. Annaleah is dead. Did You not know? »

« No. Nobody… When, Jesus? »

« After I passed. »

« After You passed! So You were the liberating Angel for her?! The Earth was such a prison for her! Happy girl! I wish I were in her place! Did she die… of a natural death? I mean: not by a misfortune? »

« She died of the joy of loving. I was told when I was already on the slope of the Temple. Come with Me, Mother. We are not afraid of profaning ourselves to comfort a mother who held in her arms her daughter who died of supernatural joy… Our first virgin! The one who came to You at Nazareth, to see Me and ask Me to give her this joy… Remote peaceful days. »

« The other day she was singing like a blackcap in love and she kissed Me saying: "I am happy!", and she was eager to hear everything about You. How God formed You. How He chose Me. And My first throbs of a consecrated virgin… Now I understand… I am ready, Son. »

Mary, while speaking, has put up Her plaits that were hanging down Her shoulders, making Her look like a young girl, and She has put on Her veil and mantle.

They go out making the least possible noise. Levi is already near the main door. He explains why saying: « I preferred so… Because of my wife… Women are curious. She would have asked me dozens of questions. Instead she does not know… »

He opens the door and is about to close it. Jesus says: « I will bring My Mother back during this watch. »

« I shall be watching here. Do not be afraid. »

« Peace to you. »

They go along the silent empty streets, from which the moonlight is slowly withdrawing, while it still shines on the tops of the tall houses on the hill of Zion. It is brighter in the suburb of Ophel

where the modest houses are lower.

Here is Annaleah's house. Closed, dark, silent. Some withered flowers are still lying on the two steps of the house. Perhaps they were thrown by the virgin before she died, or they fell off her coffin… Jesus knocks at the door. He knocks again…

The noise of a window opened on the upper part of the building. A dejected voice asks: « Who is knocking? »

« Mary and Jesus of Nazareth » replies Mary.

« Oh! I am coming!… »

A short wait, then the noise of the sliding bars. The door is opened showing the worn-out face of Eliza, who is holding on with difficulty to the door-post, and when Mary going in stretches Her arms towards her, she collapses on Her breast, sobbing faintly like one who has wept so much as to have no tears or voice left.

Jesus closes the door patiently waiting for His Mother to soothe so much grief. There is a room close to the door. They go into it and Jesus takes the lamp that Eliza had laid on the floor of the entrance before opening the door. The tears of the mother seem to be endless. She speaks to Mary sobbing hoarsely. A mother is speaking to the Mother… Jesus, standing against a wall, is silent…

Eliza cannot resign herself to that death, that happened so… And in her grief she blames Samuel, the perjurious fiance, for it: « That cursed man broke her heart! She never said anything. But I wonder for how long she had been suffering! And in her joy, in shouting, her heart broke. May he be cursed for ever. »

« No, My dear. No. Do not curse. It is not so. God loved her so much that He wanted her in His peace. But even if she had died because of Samuel - it is not so, but let us suppose so for a moment - consider what a joyful death she had, and say that the wicked deed brought about a happy death for her. »

« I no longer have her! She is dead! She is dead! You do not know what it is to lose a daughter! Twice I have tasted that sorrow. Because I was already weeping over her, as she was as good as dead, when Your Son cured her. But now… But now… He did not come back! He did not have mercy… I have lost her! Lost! My child is already in her grave! Do You know what it means to see a son in the throes of death? To know that he must die? To see him dead, when one thought he had recovered and was strong? You do not know. You cannot say anything… She was as beautiful as a rose that had just opened in the early sunshine, when she was adorning herself this morning. She had wanted to adorn herself with the dress I had made for her wedding. She was also intending to crown herself as a bride. Then she preferred to undo the garland, that was ready, and pluck the flowers to throw them to Your Son, and she sang! She sang! Her voice filled the house. She was as graceful as springtime. Joy made her eyes shine like stars, and her parted lips showing her

white teeth were a delicate pomegranate red, and her cheeks were as rosy and fresh as spring roses adorned with dew. And she became as white as a lily that had just opened. And she bent on my breast like a broken stem… Not another word! Not a sigh! No longer colourful. Not a glance. As placid and beautiful as an angel of God, but lifeless. As You are rejoicing in the triumph of Your Son, and He is healthy and strong, You do not know what my grief is like! Why did He not come back? In what had she displeased Him, and I with her, that He did not hear my prayer? »

« Eliza! Eliza! Do not say… Grief is making you blind and deaf… Eliza, you are not aware of My suffering. And you do not know what a deep sea My suffering will become. You saw she was placid and beautiful when she relaxed in peace. In your arms. I… I have been contemplating My Child for over thirty years and, beyond the smooth clean body that I contemplate and caress, I see the wounds of the Man of sorrows that My Son will be. You who say that I do not know what it is to see a son go to his death twice, and to die once and remain thus in peace, do you know what it means to a mother to see such a vision for so many years? My Son! Here He is. He is already dressed in red, as if He were coming out of a bath of blood. And soon, before long, the face of your daughter will not yet have become dark in her grave, and I shall see Him dressed in the purple of His innocent Blood. Of the Blood that I gave Him. And while you received your daughter on your heart, do you know what My sorrow will be like, seeing My Son die like a criminal on a cross of wood? Look at Him, the Saviour of everybody! In their spirits and in their flesh. Because the flesh of those saved by Him will be incorrupt and blessed in His Kingdom. And look at Me! Look at this Mother Who continually accompanies and takes Her Son to the Sacrifice! Oh! I would not hold Him back one step! I can understand you, poor mother. But try and understand My heart! Do not hate My Son. Annaleah would not have been able to put up with the agony of her Lord. And her Lord made her blessed in an hour of jubilation. »

Eliza has stopped weeping upon hearing this revelation. She stares at Mary, Whose pale face of a martyr is wet with silent tears, she looks at Jesus, Who is looking at her pitifully… and she kneels at Jesus' feet moaning: « But she is dead! She is dead, Lord! Like a lily, a broken lily. The poets say that You take delight in lilies! Oh! really, You, born of the lily-Mary, often come down among flowery flower-beds, and You turn purple roses into snow-white lilies, and You pick them removing them from the world. Why? Why, Lord? Is it not fair that a mother should enjoy the rose born of her? Why extinguish its purple in the cold whiteness of death of a lily? »

« Lilies! They will be the symbol of those women who love Me as My Mother loved God. The snow-white flower-bed of the Divine

King. »

« But we mothers shall weep. We mothers have a right to our children. Why deprive them of life? »

« I do not mean that, woman. The daughters will remain, but consecrated to the King, like the virgins in the palaces of Solomon. Remember the Song… And they will be spouses, the beloved, on the Earth and in Heaven. »

« But my daughter is dead! She is dead! » And she resumes weeping in a heart-rending manner.

« I am the Resurrection and Life. Who believes in Me, even if he dies, will live, and I solemnly tell you that he will never die. Your daughter is living. She will live for ever because she believed in Life. My Death will be complete Life for her. She was aware of the joy of living in Me before being aware of the grief of seeing Me torn away from life. Your sorrow makes you blind and deaf, as My Mother rightly says. You will soon be repeating the word I sent you this morning: "Her death was really a grace of God". Believe Me, woman. Horror is hanging over this place. And the day will come when mothers who have been struck like you, will say: "Praised be God Who spared our children these days". And the mothers who have not been struck will cry to Heaven: "Why, o God, did You not kill our children before this hour?" Believe Me, woman. Believe My words. Do not raise between Annaleah and yourself the real barrier that separates people, that of the difference of faith. See? I could have refrained from coming. You know how much I am hated. Do not let the triumph of one hour deceive you!… Every comer may conceal a trap for Me. And I have come alone, at night, to console you and speak these words to you. I pity the sorrow of a mother. But I have come to say these words to you for the peace of your soul. Peace be with you! Peace! »

« Give me it, Lord! I cannot! In my grief I cannot set my mind at rest. But You, Who give life back to the dead and health to the dying, give peace to the heart of a mother torn by grief. »

« Let it be so, woman. Peace to you. » He imposes His hands on her, blessing her and praying silently over her. Mary has also knelt down beside Eliza, embracing her with Her arm.

« Goodbye, Eliza, I am going… »

« Shall we not meet again, Lord? I shall not leave my house for many days, and You will be going away after the Passover festivities. You are still part of my daughter somehow… because Annaleah… because Annaleah lived in You and for You. » She weeps. More calmly, but how much she weeps!

Jesus looks at her… He caresses her grey-haired head and He says to her: « You will see Me again. »

« When? »

« In eight nights' time as from tonight. »

« And will You comfort me again? Will You bless me to give me strength? »

« My heart will bless you with all the fullness of My love for those who love Me. Come, Mother. »

« Son, if You will allow Me, I should like to remain a little longer with this mother. Sorrow is a billow that comes back again, after He Who gives peace has gone away… I will come back at the first hour. I am not afraid to come by Myself. You know that. And You know that I would pass through a whole enemy army to console a brother of Mine in God. »

« As You wish. I am going. God be with you. »

He goes out noiselessly, closing the door of the room and that of the house.

He goes back to the walls, to the Gate of Ephraim, or the Stercoral or Dung Gate, because I have heard several times these two Gates, which are close to each other, mentioned with these three names, perhaps because one opens on the Jericho road, which is at the bottom, a road that takes one to Ephraim, and the other is close to the Hinnom valley, where the rubbish of the town is burnt, and they are so alike that I confuse them.

It is just beginning to dawn on the eastern side of the sky, which, however, is still crowded with stars. The streets are enveloped in a dim light that is more tedious than the darkness of the night, that was moderated by the white light of the moon. But the Roman soldier has good sight, and as soon as he sees Jesus advancing towards the Gate, he goes to meet Him.

« Hail. I have been waiting for You… » He stops hesitating.

« Speak up without any fear. What do you want of Me? »

« To know. You said: "The peace that I give lasts also in wartime, because it is the peace of the soul". I should like to know what peace it is, and what is the soul. How can a man, who is at war, be at peace? The temple of Peace is closed when Janus' is opened. The two things cannot be together in the world. » He is speaking leaning against the low greenish wall of a kitchen garden, in a lane as narrow as a path running through fields, among poor houses, a damp, gloomy, dark lane. Apart from a glimmer showing the burnished helmet, nothing else can be noticed of the two who are speaking. The shadow envelopes their faces and bodies in complete darkness.

Jesus' voice sounds mild and bright because of His joy in throwing a seed of light into the heathen. « It is true, peace and war cannot be together in the world. One excludes the other. But in a warrior there can be peace even if he is ordered to fight in a war. My peace can be in him. Because My peace comes from Heaven and it is not upset by the rumble of war or the ferocity of massacres. A divine thing, it invades the divine thing that man has within himself, and is named soul. »

« Divine? In me? Caesar is divine. I am the son of peasants. Now I am a private soldier. If I am valiant, I may become a centurion. But not divine. »

« There is a divine part in you. It is the soul. It comes from God. From the true God. So it is divine, a living gem in man, and it nourishes itself and lives with divine things: faith, peace, truth. War does not upset it. Persecutions do not injure it. Death does not kill it. Evil only, doing what is ugly, wounds or kills it, and also deprives it of the peace that I grant. Because evil separates man from God. »

« And what is evil? »

« To be in heathenism and worship idols when the goodness of the true God has made one know that there is the true God. Not to love one's father, mother, brothers and one's neighbour. To steal, to kill, to be rebellious, to be lustful, to be false. That is evil. »

« Ah! then I cannot have Your peace! I am a soldier and I am ordered to kill. So there is no salvation for us?! »

« Be as just in wartime as you are in peace-time. Do your duty without cruelty and without avidity. While fighting and conquering, consider that your enemy is like you, and that every town has mothers and girls like your mother and your sisters, and be brave without being a brute. You will not move away from justice and peace, and My peace will remain in you. »

« And then? »

« And then? What do you mean? »

« After my death? What will happen to the good I have done and to the soul, that You say does not die if one does not do evil things? »

« It lives. It lives adorned with the good it has done, in a joyful peace, greater than the one any man enjoys on the Earth. »

« So in Palestine only one person had done good! I see. »

« Who? »

« Lazarus of Bethany. His soul did not die! »

« Truly, he is a just man. But many are like him, and they die without being raised from the dead, but their souls live in the true God. Because the soul has another abode, in the Kingdom of God. And those who believe in Me will enter into that Kingdom. »

« Even I, a Roman? »

« You as well, if you believe in the Truth. »

« What is the Truth? »

« I am the Truth and the Way to go to the Truth, and I am the Life and I give the Life, because those who accept the Truth accept the Life. »

The young soldier is pensive… silent… Then he raises his face. The still pure face of a young man, and he smiles, a limpid, serene smile. He says: « I will try to remember all this and to learn even more. I like it… »

« What is your name? »

« Vital. From Benevento. From the countryside of that town. »

« I will remember your name. Make your spirit really vital by nourishing it with the Truth. Goodbye. The Gate is being opened. I am leaving the town. »

« Hail! »

Jesus goes quickly to the Gate and hastens along the road leading to the Kidron and to Gethsemane and thence to the Field of the Galileans.

Among the olive-trees of the mountain He meets with Judas of Kerioth, who is also going up fast towards the Field, which is awaking. Judas makes a gesture as if he were frightened finding himself in front of Jesus. Jesus looks at him fixedly, without speaking.

« I went to take food to the lepers. But… I found two at Hinnom, five at Siloam. The others, cured. They are still there, but they are cured so well that they asked me to inform the priest. I had gone down at daybreak, to be free later. It will cause a stir. Such a large number of lepers cured at the same time after You blessed them in the presence of so many people! »

Jesus does not speak. He lets him speak… He does not say: « You did the right thing », or anything else concerning Judas' action and the miracle, but stopping suddenly and staring at the apostle He asks him: « Well? The fact that I left you freedom and money, what change has it made? »

« What do You mean? »

« This: I am asking you whether you have sanctified yourself since I gave you back freedom and money. And you understand Me… Ah! Judas! Bear it in mind! Always bear it in mind: you are the one whom I loved more than anybody else, receiving from you less love than all the others have given Me. Nay, I received hatred greater, because it is the hatred of one whom I treated as a friend, than the fiercest hatred of the fiercest Pharisee. And remember also this: that not even now I hate you, but as far as the Son of man is concerned, I forgive you. Go, now. Nothing more is to be said between you and Me. Everything has already been done… »

Judas would like to say something, but Jesus with an authoritative gesture beckons to him to go on… And Judas, his head lowered like a defeated man, goes on…

At the boundary of the Field of the Galileans, the apostles and Lazarus' two servants are ready.

« Where have You been, Master? And you, Judas? Were you together? »

Jesus prevents Judas' reply saying: « I had something to say to some hearts. Judas went to the lepers… But they are all cured, except seven. »

« Oh! why did you go? I wanted to come, too! » says the Zealot.

« To be free now to come with us. Let us go. We shall enter into

town by the Sheep Gate. Let us make haste » says Jesus again.

He is the first to set out, passing through the olive-groves that take one from the Field, situated almost half-way between Bethany and Jerusalem, to the other little bridge that spans the Kidron near the Sheep Gate.

Some houses of peasants are scattered along the slopes, and almost at the bottom, near the water of the torrent, a ruffled figtree dangles over the stream. Jesus turns His steps towards it and He searches among the large thick leaves to see whether there are any ripe figs. But the fig-tree is nothing but leaves, many useless leaves, but there is not one fruit on its branches.

« You are like many hearts in Israel. You are neither kind nor pitiful to the Son of man. May you never bear fruit again and may no one ever eat of your fruit in future » says Jesus.

The apostles look at one another. They are surprised at Jesus' anger at the barren tree, which is probably a wild one. But they do not say anything. Only later, after crossing the Kidron, Peter asks Him: « Where did You eat? »

« Nowhere. »

« Oh! Then You are hungry! There is a shepherd over there pasturing some goats. I will go and ask for some milk for You. I will not be long » and he strides away and comes back cautiously with an old bowl full of milk.

Jesus drinks it and with a caress He hands the bowl back to the young shepherd who had come with Peter…

They enter into the town and go up to the Temple and, after worshipping the Lord, Jesus goes back to the court where the rabbis teach.

People crowd round Him, and a mother, who has come from Cintium, shows Him her little boy whom a disease, I think, has made blind. His eyes are white, as if he had a large cataract over his pupil or a leucoma. Jesus cures him touching his eyes lightly with His fingers. And He immediately begins to speak:

« A man bought a piece of ground and planted a vineyard in it, he built a house for the husbandman, a tower for the caretakers, wine-cellars and places where to press the grapes, and he leased it to tenants whom he trusted. Then he went abroad. When the time came that the vineyard could bear fruit, as the vines had grown to the extent of being fruit-bearing, the owner of the vineyard sent his servants to the tenants to collect the profit of the harvest. But the tenants surrounded the servants and they beat some, they stoned some with heavy stones wounding them seriously, and they killed some of them. Those who had survived and had gone back to the landowner, told him what had happened to them. The owner cured and comforted them and sent more servants, this time a larger number. And the tenants dealt with them as they had done with the

previous ones. Then the owner of the vineyard said: "I will send my son to them. They will certainly respect my heir". But the tenants, when they saw him come and they realised that he was the heir, said to one another: "Come. Let us gather together in a large number. Let us take him out, to a remote place, and kill him. His inheritance will be left to us". And, receiving him with hypocritical honours, they gathered round him as if they wished to give him a hearty welcome, then, after kissing him, they tied him, they gave him a good thrashing, and with endless mocking words they took him to the place of torture and killed him. Now tell Me. That father and owner, who one day will realise that his son and heir to his property is not coming back, and he finds out that his servant tenants, to whom he had given his land to cultivate in his name, enjoying a fair share of it and giving what was fair to their master, are the murderers of his son, what will he do? » and Jesus' sapphire eyes, as bright as if they were lit by the sun, flash on the people present, and particularly on the groups of the more influential Judaeans, Pharisees and scribes, scattered among the crowd.

No one speaks.

« So, speak up! At least you, rabbis of Israel. Speak the word of justice to convince the people to be just. I might speak a word that is not good, according to your minds. So I ask you to speak, so that the people may not be led into error. »

The scribes are compelled to reply and they say: « He will punish the wicked men with a cruel death and will give the vineyard to other tenants, so that they may cultivate it in an honest manner giving him the fruit of the land entrusted to them. »

« What you said is correct. In the Scriptures it is written: "The stone rejected by the builders has become the keystone. This is the work of the Lord and it is wonderful to see". Therefore, as it is writ ten thus, and you know, and you rightly judge that those tenants who killed the son and heir of the owner of the vineyard should be punished in a cruel manner and the vineyard should be given to other tenants to be cultivated in an honest way, well, that is why I say to you: "The Kingdom of God will be taken away from you and will be given to people to make it yield fruit. And he who falls against this stone will break in pieces, and he upon whom the stone falls, will be crushed". »

The chief priests, the Pharisees and scribes, with a really… heroic attitude, do not react. So powerful is the eagerness to reach one's aim! On past occasions they at least opposed Him, whereas today, when the Lord Jesus openly tells them that their power will be taken away from them, they do not abuse Him, they do not react violently against Him, they do not threaten Him, behaving like false patient lambs, that under the hypocritical appearance of meekness conceal the unchangeable hearts of wolves.

They just approach Him, as He has resumes walking backwards and forwards, listening to this one and that one of the many pilgrims who have gathered in the wide court, many of whom ask Him for advice for cases concerning their souls or family or social situations, and they wait to be able to say something to Him after hearing Him give His opinion to a man on a complicated matter of inheritance, which has brought about discord and ill-feeling among several heirs, because of a son their father had to a maidservant of the household and whom he adopted. The legitimate sons do not want the illegitimate one to stay with them, neither do they wish to have him joint heir in the sharing of houses and fields, as they do not want to have anything further to do with him. But they do not know how to settle the matter, because their father before dying made them swear that, as he had always divided the bread among the illegitimate son and the legitimate ones in equal parts, so they had to share out the inheritance in equal measure with him.

Jesus says to the man who is consulting Him on behalf of his three brothers: « Each of you should give up a piece of ground and sell it, in order to put together the money equivalent to one fifth of the total patrimony, and give it to the illegitimate son saying: "Here is your share. You are not being cheated out of what belongs to you, neither have we wronged our father's will. Go and God be with you". And give plentifully, even more than the exact value of his share. Do so in the presence of just witnesses, and no one on the Earth or beyond the Earth will be able to utter a word of reproach or give rise to a scandal. And there will be peace among you and in you, as you will not feel remorse for disobeying your father, and you will not have with you him who, although really innocent, upsets you more than if he were a highwayman placed among you. »

The man says: « The illegitimate son really upset the peace of our family, he ruined the health of my mother who died of grief, and he usurped a place that did not belong to him. »

« Man, he is not guilty, but he who procreated him is to be blamed. He did not ask to be born and bear the mark of illegitimacy. It was the covetousness of your father who begot him to hand him over to sorrow and to grieve you. Be therefore just towards the innocent man who is already painfully expiating a sin that is not his. Do not let the spirit of your father be anathema to you. God has judged him. Your curses are not required. Always honour your father, even if he is guilty, not for himself, but because he represented your God on the Earth, as he created you by God's decree and because he is the lord of your house. Parents come immediately after God. Remember the Decalogue. And do not sin. Go in peace. »

The priests and scribes approach Him then to question Him: « We heard You. What You said is right. Not even Solomon could have given a wiser piece of advice. But since You work wonders

and You give advice such as only the wise king could give, tell us, what authority have You to do such things? Whence does such Power come to You? »

Jesus stares at them. He is neither aggressive nor contemptuous, but He is very imposing. He says: « I also have a question to ask you, and if you reply to Me, I will tell you by which authority I, a Poor man without authority of offices - because that is what you mean - do these things. Tell Me: where did John's baptism come from? From Heaven or from the man who administered it? Reply to Me. By which authority did John administer it as a purifying rite to prepare you for the coming of the Messiah, if John was even poorer and less learned than I am, and he had no office whatsoever, as he lived in the desert since his childhood? »

The scribes and priests consult with one another. The people press round them, with wide-open eyes and pricked up ears, ready to protest if the scribes disqualify the Baptist and offend the Master, and to acclaim if they are defeated by the question of the divinely wise Rabbi of Nazareth. The dead silence of this crowd awaiting the reply is striking. It is so profound that the breathing and whispering of the priests and scribes can be heard, as they speak to one another almost without uttering words, and in the meantime they cast glances at the people, whose feelings they realise are ready to explode. At last they make up their minds and they reply. They turn towards the Christ Who, leaning against a column, His arms folded across His chest, scans their faces without ever losing sight of them, and they say: « Master, we do not know by which authority John did that or where his baptism came from. No one ever thought of asking the Baptist while he was alive, and he never mentioned it of his own accord. »

« And neither will I tell you by which authority I do such things. » And He turns His back to them calling the Twelve, and pushing His way through the cheering crowd, He leaves the Temple.

When they are already out, beyond the Probatica, as they came out on that side, Bartholomew says to Him: « Your enemies have become very prudent. Perhaps they are converting to the Lord Who sent You and will recognise You as the holy Messiah. »

« That is true. They did not discuss Your question or Your reply… » says Matthew.

« Let it be so. It is beautiful that Jerusalem should turn to the Lord her God » says Bartholomew again.

« Do not delude yourselves! That part of Jerusalem will never be converted. They did not reply in a different manner because they were afraid of the crowd. I read their thoughts even if I could not hear their subdued words. »

« And what were they saying? » asks Peter.

« They were saying this. I want you to be acquainted with what

they said, that you may know them thoroughly and you may give future disciples and exact description of the hearts of men in My days. They did not reply because they are turning to the Lord. But because they said to one another: "If we reply: 'The baptism of John came from Heaven', the Rabbi will say to us: 'Then why did you not believe what came from Heaven and was meant as a preparation for the Messianic time?'; and if we say: 'From man', then the crowds will turn against us saying: 'Then why do you not believe what our prophet John said of Jesus of Nazareth?'. So it is better to say: 'We do not know'". That is what they were saying. Not because they were being converted to God, but out of mean calculation and because they did not want to have to admit with their own lips that I am the Christ and I do what I do because I am the Lamb of God of Whom the Precursor spoke. And neither did I wish to say by what authority I do the things I do. I have already said it many times within those walls and all over Palestine and My miracles speak even more than My words. Now I will no longer say it with My words. I will let the prophets and My Father and the signs of Heaven speak. Because the time has come when all the signs will be given. Those mentioned by the prophets and indicated by the symbols of our history, and those which I announced: the sign of Jonah; do you remember that day at Kedesh? It is the sign that Gamaliel is awaiting. You, Stephen, and you, Hermas, and you, Barnabas, who have left your companions to follow Me today, have certainly heard the rabbi speak of that sign several times. Well, the sign will soon be given. »

He goes away up through the olive-groves on the mountain, followed by His apostles and by many of His seventy-two disciples, beside others who, like Joseph Barnabas, follow Him to hear Him speak again.

Jesus says: « You will put here the second part of the Monday, that is, the speeches delivered to My apostles during the night (vision of 6th March 1945. »

591. Monday Night before Passover. Teachings to the Apostles at Gethsemane.

6th March 1945.

In the evening, Jesus is still in the olive-grove. And He is with His apostles. And He speaks again.

« And another day has gone by. Now it is night-time and then tomorrow, and then the day after tomorrow, and then the Passover supper. »

« Where are we having it, my Lord? The women also will be there this year » asks Philip.

« And we have not made any arrangement yet, and the town is full beyond measure. The whole of Israel, including even the remotest proselyte, seems to have come to the rite » says Bartholomew.

Jesus looks at him and, as if He were reciting a psalm, He says: « Gather together, make haste, come from everywhere to my victim whom I am immolating for you, to the great Victim immolated on the mountains of Israel, to eat its Flesh, to drink its Blood. »

« But which victim? Which? You look like one suffering from a fixed mad idea. You speak of nothing but death… and You grieve us » says Bartholomew passionately.

Jesus looks at him again, diverting His attention from Simon, who bends over James of Alphaeus and Peter chatting with them, and He says:

« What? Are you asking Me? You are not one of these little ones, who to be learned must receive the septiform light. You were already expert in the Scriptures before I called you by means of Philip, that mild spring morning. My springtime. And yet, you ask Me which is the victim immolated on the mountains, the one to which everybody will come to feed on? And you say that I am mad with a fixed idea because I speak of death? Oh! Bart! Like the cry of the watchmen, in your darkness that never opened to light, I uttered the announcing cry once, twice, three times. But you never wanted to understand. You suffered at the moment because of it, then… like children you soon forgot the words of death and you joyfully went back to your work, sure of yourselves and full of hope that your words and Mine would convince the world more and more to follow and love its Redeemer.

No . Only after the Earth has sinned against Me - and bear in mind that these are words of the Lord to His prophet - only afterwards, the people, and not only this one in particular, but the great people of Adam, will begin to moan saying: "Let us go to the Lord. He Who hurt us, will cure us". And the world of the Redeemed will say: "After two days, that is, two periods of eternity, during which he will have left us at the mercy of the Enemy, who will have struck and killed us with all kinds of weapons, as we struck the Holy One and killed Him - and we strike and kill Him, because there will always be the race of Cains who with blasphemy and evil deeds will kill the Son of God, the Redeemer, shooting mortal arrows not at His eternal glorified Person, but at their souls ransomed by Him, killing them, and therefore killing Him through their souls - only after these two periods the third day will come, and we shall rise from the dead in His presence in the Kingdom of Christ on the Earth and we shall live before Him in the triumph of the spirit. We shall know Him, we shall learn to know the Lord to be ready, by means of this true knowledge of God, to fight the last battle that Lucifer will join with man before the blast of the angel of the seventh trumpet,

that will open the blissful chorus of the saints of God, with the number perfected for ever - it will never be possible to add either the youngest baby or the oldest man to the number - the chorus that will sing: 'The poor kingdom of the Earth is over. The world with all its inhabitants has been passed in review before the conquering Judge. And the elect are now in the hands of our Lord and of His Christ, and He is our King for ever. Praised be the Almighty Lord God Who is, Who was and Who will be, because He has taken His great power and has entered into possession of His Kingdom'".

Oh! who among you will be able to remember the words of this prophecy, already resounding in the words of Daniel, in a muted tone, and now roared by the voice of the Wise One before the astounded world and before you, who are more astounded than the world?! "The coming of the King - the world will continue, moaning in its wounds and enclosed in its sepulchre, evil in life and wicked in death, closed by its sevenfold vice and by its infinite heresies, the agonising spirit of the world closed with its last efforts within the organism, having died of leprosy because of all its errors - the coming of the King is prepared like that of dawn and will come to us like the rain in springtime and in autumn". Dawn is preceded and prepared by night. This is the night. The present one.

And what must I do for you, Ephraim? What must I do for you, Judah?… Simon, Bart, Judas, and you, My cousins, you who are more experienced in the Book, do you recognise these words? They do not come from a mad spirit, but from one who possesses Wisdom and Science. Like a king who calmly opens his coffers, because he knows where a certain gem is, which he is looking for, as he put it in there himself, I quote the prophets. I am the Word. For ages I spoke through human lips. And for ages I will speak through human lips. But all the supernatural that has been spoken is My word. Even the most learned and holy man would not be able to rise, with the soul of an eagle, beyond the limits of the blind world, to snatch and utter the eternal mysteries.

The future is "present" only in the Divine Mind. Foolish are those who claim to make prophecies and revelations, without being supported by Our Will. And God soon gives them the lie and strikes them, because only One can say: "I am", and say: "I see", and say: "I know". But when a Will that is not to be measured, that is not to be judged, that is to be accepted with bowed head, without discussion, saying: "Here I am", when such Will says: "Come, rise, hear, see, repeat", then the soul, immersed in the eternal present of its God, called by the Lord to be "voice", sees and trembles, sees and weeps, sees and rejoices; then the soul, called by the Lord to be "word", hears and, thrown into ecstasy or into the perspiration Of agony, says the tremendous words of the Eternal God. Because every word of God is tremendous, as it comes from Him Whose verdict

is immutable and Whose Justice is inexorable and is addressed to men, too few of whom deserve love and blessings instead of anathema and conviction. Now this word, that is spoken and despised, is it not the cause of dreadful sin and punishment for those who reject it, after hearing it? It is.

And what else must I do for you, o Ephraim, o Judah, o world, that I have not done for you? I came loving you, o My Earth, and My word became a sword for you and it kills you because you loathed it. Oh! World, who kill your Saviour thinking that You are doing a just thing, you are so possessed by Satan that you do not understand any more which is the sacrifice that God exacts, the sacrifice of one's sin and not of an animal immolated and consumed with a foul soul! But what have I told you these last three years' What did I preach? I said: "Know God in His laws and in His nature". And I dried out, like a vase of porous clay exposed to the sun, spreading the vital knowledge of the Law and of God among you. And you have continued to offer holocausts, without ever offering the only necessary one: the immolation of your evil will to the true God!

Now the eternal God says to you, city of sin, faithless people and in the hour of the Judgement you will be lashed with a whip that will not be used for Rome and Athens, dull-witted towns that know neither language nor science, but which, when from eternal infants badly looked after by their nurses and being beastlike in their capabilities, will pass into the holy arms of My Church, My only sublime Spouse, by whom numberless children will be borne to Me worthy of the Christ, they will become adult and capable, and will give Me palaces and armies, temples and saints to people Heaven as if they were stars - now the eternal God says to you: "I no longer like you and I will not accept any gift from your hands. It is like dung to Me and I will throw it back on your faces and it will stick to them. I loathe your solemnities which are nothing but outward appearances. I will abolish My covenant with the stock of Aaron and I will give it to the sons of Levi because, here, this is My Levi, and with him I made a covenant of life and peace to last for ever, and He was faithful to Me to the end of time, to the point of sacrifice. He had the holy fear of the Father and He trembled with wrath, feeling offended at the mere sound of My offended Name. He spoke the law of truth, and there was no iniquity on His lips, He walked with Me in peace and equity and He deterred many from sin. The time has come when the pure immaculate Host, pleasing to the Lord, will be sacrificed and offered to My Name everywhere, and no longer on the sole altar of Zion, because you do not deserve to offer it".

Do you recognise the eternal words? »

« We recognise them, o Lord. And, believe us, we are depressed

as if we had been struck. Is it not possible to deviate from our destiny? »

« Do you call it destiny, Bart? »

« I do not know what other name… »

« Atonement. That is the name. You do not offend the Lord, without making amends for the offence. And God the Creator was offended by the First man created. Since then the offence has increased more and more. And neither the water of the Deluge, nor the fire that rained on Sodom and Gomorrah helped to make man holy. Neither the water nor the fire. The Earth is a boundless Sodom in which Lucifer walks freely and as a king. So let a trinity come to wash it: the fire of love, the water of sorrow, the blood of the Victim. That is, o Earth, My gift. I have come to give you it. And, should I now evade its accomplishment? It is Passover. It is not possible to evade it. »

« Why do You not go to Lazarus'? You would not be fleeing. But You would not be touched there. »

« Simon is right. I beg You, Lord, do that! » shouts Judas Iscariot, throwing himself at Jesus' feet.

At his gesture John begins to shed bitter tears and also His cousins and James and Andrew weep, although they are more composed in their grief.

« Do you believe that I am the "Lord"? Look at Me! » and Jesus pierces with His eyes the Iscariot's anguished face. Because he is really distressed, he is not feigning. Perhaps it is the last struggle of his soul with Satan, and he does not succeed in winning. Jesus studies him and follows his struggle as a man of science might study the crisis of a sick person. Then He springs to His feet and so vehemently that Judas, who was leaning on His knees, is pushed back and falls sitting on the ground. Jesus even draws back, looking upset, and He says: « To have Lazarus arrested as well? So, a double prey and double joy. No. Lazarus is kept for the future Christ, for the triumphant Christ. Only one will be cast beyond life and will 'lot come back. I will come back. But he will not. But Lazarus is staying. You, who know so many things, know also that. But those ho hope to have double profit capturing the eagle and the eaglet, their nest and without difficulty, can be sure that the eagle has eyes for everybody, and that out of love for her little one she will go far from the nest, to be captured alone, thus saving it. I am killed by hatred and yet I continue to love. Go. I am staying here to Pray. Never, as in this hour that I am living, have I felt the need to raise My soul to Heaven. »

« Let me stay with You, Lord » implores John.

« No. You all need a rest. Go. »

« Are You remaining all alone? And if they should harm You? You seem to be suffering, too… I am staying » says Peter.

« You will go with the others. Allow Me to forget men for one hour! Let Me be in touch with the angels of My Father! They will replace My Mother, Who is wasting away with tears and prayer and Whom I cannot overburden with My desolate grief. Go. »

« Are You not going to wish us peace? » asks His cousin Judas.

« You are right. May the peace of the Lord rest upon those who are not disgraceful in His eyes. Goodbye » and climbing a terrace He enters among the densely growing olive-trees.

« And yet… what He says is really in the Scripture! And when one hears it from Him, one understands why and for whom it is said » whispers Bartholomew.

« I told Peter in the autumn of the first year… » says Simon.

« That is true… But… No! While I live, I will not let Him be captured. Tomorrow… » says Peter.

« What are you going to do tomorrow? » asks the Iscariot.

« What am I going to do? I am speaking to myself. These are days of conspiracies. Not even to the air will I confide my thoughts. And you, who are powerful, you have said so many times, why do you not seek protection for Jesus? »

« I will, Peter. I will. But do not be surprised if now and again I am absent. I am working for Him. But don't tell Him. »

« Be sure of that. And may you be blessed. At times I have distrusted you, but I apologise to you. I see that at the right moment you are better than we are. You act… I can only speak empty words » says Peter humbly and sincerely. And Judas laughs, being pleased with the praise.

They depart from Gethsemane going towards the road that leads to Jerusalem.

592. The Tuesday Morning before Passover. The Questions of the Tribute to Caesar and of the Resurrection of the Dead.

1st April 1947.

They are about to go back into town, always along the same remote path taken the previous morning, as if Jesus did not want to be surrounded by people waiting for Him, before arriving at the Temple, which is soon reached entering the town by the Sheep Gate, which is near the Probatica. But today many of the seventy-two disciples are already waiting for Him beyond the Kidron, before the bridge, and as soon as they see Him appear among the grey-green olive-trees, in His purple garment, they go to meet Him. They gather together and proceed towards the town.

Peter, who is looking ahead, down the slope, always suspecting to see some evil-minded person appear, among the fresh vegetation of the last slopes sees a mass of withered hanging leaves dangling over the water of the Kidron. The wrinkled dying leaves, already

rust-stained here and there, are like those of a plant parched by fire. The breeze blows one off now and again and buries it in the water of the torrent.

« That is the fig-tree of yesterday! The fig-tree that You cursed! » shouts Peter, one hand stretched forward pointing at the withered tree, his head turned back to speak to the Master.

They all rush there, except Jesus, Who comes forward at His usual pace. The apostles inform the disciples of the precedent of what they are looking at, and they all make comments looking at Jesus utterly amazed. They have seen thousands of miracles on men and elements, but this one strikes them more than many others.

Jesus, Who has arrived, smiles watching those amazed timid faces, and He says: « What? Are you so surprised that My word withered a fig-tree? Have you not seen Me raise people from the dead, cure lepers, give sight to blind people, multiply loaves, calm storms, put out fires? And you are surprised that a fig-tree withers? »

« It is not because of the fig-tree. The fact is that yesterday when You cursed it, it was thriving, and now it is withered. Look! As crumbly as dry clay. There is no more sap in its branches. Look. They crumble into dust » and Bartholomew pulverises with his fingers some branches that he has broken off without any effort.

« They have no more sap. You are right. And it is death when there is no more sap, both in a plant and in a nation as well as in a religion, but there is only hard bark and useless foliage: ferocity and hypocritical outward appearance. The white internal sap, full of lymph, corresponds to holiness, to spirituality. The hard bark and useless foliage correspond to mankind devoid of just spiritual life. Woe to those religions that become human because their priests and believers no longer have a vital spirit. Woe to those nations whose leaders are nothing but fierceness and resounding clamour devoid of fruit-bearing ideas! Woe to men who lack the life of the spirit! »

« But, if You said that to the great ones in Israel, although what You say is right, You would not be wise. Do not entertain illusions because they have allowed You to speak so far. You said Yourself that it is not because they are being converted, but that it is done out of calculation. So You had better estimate the value and consequences of Your words as well. Because there is also the wisdom of the world, beside the wisdom of the spirit. And it is necessary to know how to make use of it to our advantage. Because, after all, for the time being we are still in the world, and not in the Kingdom of God » says the Iscariot, without acrimony but in a doctorial tone.

« He is truly wise who can see things without them being altered by his sensuality and by selfish considerations. I will always speak the truth of what I see. »

« In conclusion did this fig-tree die because You cursed it, or it

happened… by chance… or is it a sign… I don't know? » asks Philip.

« It is everything you said. But what I did, you can do as well, if you succeed in having perfect faith. Have it in the Most High Lord. And when you have it, I solemnly tell you that you will be able to do that and even more. I solemnly tell you that, if one is successful in having perfect trust in the power of prayer and in the goodness of the Lord, one will be able to say to this mountain: "Move away from here and throw yourself into the sea" and if saying so one will not hesitate in one's heart, but will believe that what one orders can take place, what one has said will take place. »

« And we shall look like magicians and we shall be stoned, as is prescribed for those who practise magic. It would be a really foolish miracle, and to our detriment! » says the Iscariot, shaking his head.

« You are foolish, as you do not understand the parable! » retorts the other Judas.

Jesus does not speak to Judas. He speaks to everybody: « And I say to you, and it is an old lesson that I am repeating in this hour: whatever you ask for in your prayer, have faith to obtain it and you will. But if before praying you have a resentment against anybody, first forgive and make peace to have as a friend your Father Who is in Heaven, and Who forgives and assists you so much, from morning till evening and from sunset to dawn. »

They go into the Temple. The soldiers of the Antonia watch them pass by. They go to worship the Lord, then they go back to the court where the rabbis teach.

Before people gather and crowd round Jesus, some saphorim, doctors of Israel and Herodians approach Him, and with false homage, after greeting Him, they say: « Master, we know that You are wise and truthful, and You teach the ways of God without taking into consideration any person or thing, except truth and justice, and You do not mind what people think of You, and You only take care to lead men to Goodness. So tell us: is it lawful to pay the tribute to Caesar, or is it not lawful to do so? What do You think? »

Jesus casts one of His glances of piercing and solemn shrewdness at them, and replies: « Why are you tempting Me hypocritically? And yet some of you know that I am not deceived by hypocritical honours! But show Me a coin, one of those used for the tribute. »

They show Him a coin. He looks at the obverse and reverse of it and, holding it in the palm of His left hand, He strikes it with the forefinger of His right hand saying: « Whose image is this, and what does this inscription say? »

« The image is Caesar's, and the inscription bears his name. The name of Caius Tiberius Caesar, who is now the emperor of Rome. »

« Then give back to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and give to God what belongs to God » and He turns His back on them after returning

the coin to him who had given Him it.

He listens to this one and that one of the many pilgrims who ask Him questions, He comforts, absolves and cures them. Hours go by.

He comes out of the Temple to go perhaps out of town, to get the food that Lazarus' servants, entrusted with this task, bring Him.

He goes back to the Temple in the afternoon. He is indefatigable. Grace and wisdom flow from His hands laid on sick people, and from His lips as He gives personal advice to the many people who approach Him. He seems to be anxious to comfort and cure everybody, before it is no longer possible for Him to do so.

It is almost sunset and the tired apostles are sitting on the floor under the porch, astonished at the continuous movement of crowds in the courts when Passover is close at hand. Then some rich people approach the untiring Master, they are certainly rich, judging by their pompous garments.

Matthew, who is dozing with one eye open, stands up, rousing the others. He says: « Some Sadducees are going towards the Master. Let us not leave Him all alone, that they may not offend Him or try to harm Him and sneer at Him again. »

They all get up and join the Master gathering round Him. I seem to realise that there have been reprisals when they went to the Temple or when they returned there at the sixth hour.

The Sadducees, who pay their respects to Jesus bowing even exaggeratedly, say to Him: « Master, You replied so wisely to the Herodians, that we also wish to have a ray of Your light. Listen: Moses said: "If a man dies childless, his brother must marry the widow, giving offspring to his brother". Now there were seven brothers among us. The first one married a virgin, he died without issue, so he left his wife to his brother. Also the second one died without issue, and also the third one who married the widow of the two who had preceded him, and so on down to the seventh. Finally, after being married to all the seven brothers, the woman died. Tell us: at the resurrection of bodies, if it is really true that men resurrect and that our souls outlive us and join our bodies on the last day, forming the living again, which of the seven brothers will have the woman, since all seven of them had her on the Earth? »

« You are wrong. You understand neither the Scriptures nor the power of God. The other life will be quite different from this one, and in the eternal Kingdom there will be no necessities of the flesh as there are here. Because, truly, after the last Judgement bodies will rise-from the dead and will be joined to their immortal souls, forming whole beings, as alive, nay, more alive than your person and Mine are now, but no longer subject to the laws and above all to the incentives and abuses that exist now. At the resurrection, men and women will not get married, but will be like the angels of God in Heaven, who do not get married, and yet they live in perfect love,

which is divine and spiritual. And with regard to the resurrection of the dead, have you not read how God spoke to Moses from the bush? What did the Most High say then? "I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob". He did not say: "I was", making him understand that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob had been, but no longer were. He said: "I am". Because Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are. Immortal. Like all men in their immortal part, while ages last, and later, also in their bodies raised for eternity. They exist, as Moses, the prophets, the just exist, as, unfortunately, Cain exists, and those of the Deluge, and the sodomites, and all those who died in mortal sin. God is not the God of the dead, but of the living. »

« Will You also die and then will you live? » they ask tempting Him. They are already tired of being meek. Their hatred is such that they cannot control themselves.

« I am the Living Being, and My Flesh will not know corruption. The ark was taken away from us, and the present one will also be taken away as a symbol. The Tabernacle was taken away from us, and it will be destroyed. But it will not be possible to take away the true Temple of God and destroy it. When its adversaries think that they have done so, that is the hour when it will be established in the true Jerusalem, in all its glory. Goodbye. »

And He hastens towards the Court of Israel, because the silver tubae are calling to the evening sacrifice.

Jesus says to me:

« As I made you write the words "of My chalice" in the vision of John and James' mother who asked for a place for her sons, so I tell you to point out the passage of yesterday's vision: "he who falls against this stone will break in pieces". In translations they always use "on". I said against and not on. And it is a prophecy against the enemies of My Church. Those who oppose It, hurling themselves against It, because It is the Headstone, are crushed. For the last twenty centuries the history of the Earth has confirmed what I said. The persecutors of the Church are crushed as they hurl themselves against the Headstone. But it is also true, and those who think that they are secure from divine punishments, because they belong to the Church, should bear this in mind, he on whom falls the weight of the condemnation of the Head and Bridegroom of this Bride of Mine, of My mystical Body, will be crushed.

And forestalling an objection of the ever alive scribes and Sadducees, ill disposed to My servants, I say: if in these last visions there are sentences that are not in the Gospels, such as those at the end of today's vision, and of the passage in which I speak of the barren fig-tree, and others as well, those critics ought to remember that the evangelists always belonged to that race and they lived in times when every exaggerated clash might have had violent and

harmful repercussions for neophytes.

Let them read the acts of the apostles again and they will see that the fusion of so many different thoughts was not peaceful, and that while they admired one another, acknowledging one another's merits, they did not lack differences of opinion, because the thoughts of men are various and always imperfect. And to avoid deeper ruptures between one thought and another, the evangelists, enlightened by the Holy Spirit, in their writings deliberately omitted some sentences that might have hurt the excessive susceptibility of the Hebrews and scandalised the Gentiles, who needed to believe that the Hebrews were perfect, as they were the nucleus from which the Church came, in order not to go away saying: "They are like us". It was just to make known the persecutions of Christ, but not the spiritual diseases of the people of Israel, by now corrupt, particularly in the higher classes. And they veiled them as much as possible.

They should observe how the Gospels become the more and more explicit, up to the limpid Gospel of My John, the later they were written after My Ascension to My Father. Only John fully relates even the most painful flaws of the very apostolic group, openly calling Judas a "thief", and he integrally reports the base actions of the Jews (Chapter 6 - feigned will to make Me king, the debates at the Temple, the abandonment by many after the sermon on the Bread of Heaven, Thomas' incredulity). The last survivor, who lived long enough to see the Church already strong, he lifts the veils that the others had not dared to lift.

But now the Spirit of God wants also these words to be known. And the Lord should be blessed for that, because they are so many lights and guides for people with righteous hearts. »

« You will put here the second part of Tuesday, that is, the teachings to the Twelve at night at Gethsemane. »

593. The Tuesday Night before Passover. Other Teachings to the Apostles.

7th March 1945.

« Today you have heard Gentiles and Judaeans speak. And you have seen how the former bowed to Me and the latter nearly hit Me. You, Peter, almost came to blows, when you saw lambs, rams and bull-calves driven on purpose against Me to make Me fall on the ground among excrement. You, Simon, although you are so wise, opened your mouth to insult the most rancorous members of the Sanhedrin, who rudely bumped into Me saying: "Move aside, You demon, while the messengers of God pass". You, Judas, My cousin, and you, John, My favourite, shouted and protected Me quickly,

one from being run over by getting hold of the bridle of the horse, the other by standing in front of Me and receiving the impact of the shaft directed at Me when, with a sneer, Sadoc drove his heavy cart against Me, deliberately, at great speed. I thank you for your love that makes you rise against the offenders of the Defenceless One. But you will see much worse offences and more cruel actions. When this moon is once more smiling in the sky for the second time after this evening, offences, at present verbal, or just outlined if material, will become concrete, thicker than the blossoms which are now on fruit-trees and which are becoming more and more numerous in their haste to blossom. You have seen - and you were surprised - a barren fig-tree and a whole apple-orchard without blossoms. The fig-tree, like Israel, refused to restore the Son of man and it died in its sin. The apple-orchard, like the Gentiles, is awaiting the hour I mentioned today, to blossom and cancel the last remembrance of human ferocity with the kindness of flowers scattered on the head and under the feet of the Conqueror. »

« Which hour, Master? » asks Matthew. « You have spoken so much and of so many things today! I cannot remember exactly. And I should like to remember everything. Perhaps the hour of Christ's return? Here as well You spoke of branches that become tender and put forth leaves. »

« No! » exclaims Thomas. « The Master is speaking as if this conspiracy awaiting Him is imminent. So, how can everything, that He says will precede His return, happen in a short time? Wars, destructions, slavery, persecutions, the Gospel preached all over the world, desolation of abomination in the house of God, and then earthquakes, plagues, false prophets, signs in the sun and stars… Eh! It will take ages to do all that! The owner of that apple-orchard would be in a nice mess, if his orchard had to wait all that time to blossom! »

« Then he would not eat his apples any more, because I say that it would be the end of the world » comments Bartholomew.

« To bring about the end of the world, only, one thought of God would be necessary, and everything would turn into nothingness. So even that apple-orchard might not have to wait long. But, as I said, it will happen. And therefore there will be ages between this one and that one. That is the final triumph and the return of the Christ » explains Jesus.

« So? Which hour? »

« Oh! I know which hour! » says John weeping. « I know the hour. And it will be after Your death and resurrection!… » and John embraces Jesus tightly in his arms.

« And are you weeping, if He is going to rise again? » says Judas Iscariot mockingly.

« I am weeping because He must die first. Don't mock at me, you

demon. I know. And I cannot think of that hour. »

« Master, he called me a demon. He has sinned against his companion. »

« Judas, are you sure you do not deserve it? Then do not take offence at his fault. I also have been called a "demon" and I shall be called so again. »

« But You said that he who insults his brother is guil… »

« Silence. In the presence of death let these hateful accusations, discussions and lies finish at long last. Do not upset who is dying. »

« Forgive me, Jesus » whispers John. « I felt something turn in me at the sound of his laughter… and I could not refrain myself. » Jesus and John are embraced, chest to chest, and John weeps on His heart.

« Do not weep. I understand you. Let Me speak. »

But John does not detach himself from Jesus, not even when He sits down on a large protruding root. He remains with one arm behind His back and one round His chest and his head on His shoulder, and he weeps noiselessly. Only his tears shine in the moon-beam as they fall on Jesus' purple garment and they look like rubies, drops of pale blood struck by light.

« Today you have heard Judaeans and Gentiles speak. So you must not be surprised if I say: "Word of justice has always come from My mouth. And it shall not be revoked". If I say, always with Isaiah, speaking of the Gentiles who will come to Me after I have been raised from the ground: "Before Me every knee shall bend, by Me and in Me every tongue shall swear". And you will not doubt either, after seeing the ways of the Hebrews, that it is easy to say, without fear of being wrong, that all those who rage against Me shall be led to Me, ashamed.

My Father did not make Me His servant only to revive the tribes of Jacob, to convert what is left of Israel: the remnants, but He gave Me as light of the Nations, that I may be the "Saviour" for all the Earth. That is why, in these thirty-three years of exile from Heaven and from My Father's bosom, I have continued to grow in Grace and Wisdom with God and with men, reaching the perfect age, and in these last three years, after burning My soul and My mind with the fire of love and tempering them with the ice of penance, I made "My mouth a sharp sword".

The Holy Father, Who is yours and Mine, has so far protected Me in the shade of His hand, because it was not yet the hour of the Expiation, Now He will let Me go. The chosen arrow, the arrow of His divine quiver, after wounding in order to cure, after wounding men to open a breach in their hearts for the Word and the Light of God, is now going fast and unfailingly to wound the Second Person, the Expiator, the Obedient One for all the disobedient Adam… And like a warrior who has been hit, I shall fall, saying with regard to too many people: "In vain have I fatigued for no reason, without

achieving anything. I have worn out My strength for nothing".

No! No, for the Eternal Lord Who never does anything without a purpose! Be off, Satan, who want Me to give way to dejection and try to make Me disobedient! You came at the beginning of My ministry and you have come at its end. Well, here, I am rising (and He really stands up) ready to fight. I will compete with you. And, I swear it to Myself, I will defeat you. It is not pride to say so. It is the truth. The Son of man will be defeated in His flesh by man, the miserable worm that bites and poisons from his putrid filth. But the Son of God, the Second Person of the inexpressible Trinity will not be defeated by Satan. You are Hatred. And you are powerful in your hating and in your tempting. But there will be with Me a strength that escapes you, because you cannot reach it, neither can you block it. The Love is with Me!

I am aware of the unknown torture awaiting Me. Not the one that I will mention to you tomorrow, so that you may know that nothing of what was done or stirred up for Me or around Me, nothing of what was forming in your hearts, was unknown to Me. But the other torture… The one that is given to the Son of Man not by means of lances and clubs, or by means of derision and blows, but by God Himself, and only few people will know how cruel it will be, and even fewer will accept it as possible. But in that torture, in which two will be the main torturers: God with His absence and you, demon, with your presence, the Victim will have the Love with Him. The Love living in the Victim, the main strength of His resistance to the trial, and the Love in the spiritual consoler, who is already flapping his golden wings, full of anxiety to descend and wipe My perspiration, and gathers all the tears of the angels in the heavenly chalice and melts in it the honey of the names of My redeemed and of those who love Me, to mitigate with that potion the great thirst of the Tortured One and His immeasurable bitterness.

And you, demon, shall be defeated. One day, coming out of a possessed man, you said to Me: "I will wait to defeat You when You are a rag of bleeding flesh". But I reply to you: "You shall not have Me. I will win. My fatigue was a holy one, My case is in the hands of My Father. He defends the work of His Son and will not allow My spirit to deflect".

Father, I say to You, I say to You now, for that dreadful hour: "Into Your hands I commit My spirit".

John, do not leave Me… You, all of you, go. May the peace of the Lord be where Satan is not a guest. Goodbye. »

It all ends.

594. The Wednesday before Passover. From the Discussions with Scribes and Pharisees to the Eschatological Discourse. The Widow's Mite.

2nd April 1947.

Jesus enters into the Temple that is more crowded than on the previous days. He is all dressed in white in His linen garments. It is a sultry day.

He goes to the Court of Israel to worship, followed by a train of people, while other people have already taken the best places under the porches, and the majority are Gentiles who, not being allowed to go beyond the first court, that is the Court of the Gentiles, have taken advantage of the fact that the Hebrews have followed the Christ, to take favourable positions.

But a large group of Pharisees upsets them: they are always arrogant in their behaviour, and they push through the crowd overbearingly to approach Jesus, Who is bent over a sick man. They wait until He has cured him, then they send a scribe to question Him.

Actually they had a short discussion first, because Joel named Alamoth wanted to go to question the Master. But a Pharisee objected and the others supported him saying: « No, we know that you side with the Rabbi, although you do so secretly. Let Uriah go… »

« Not Uriah » says another young scribe, whom I do not know. « Uriah is too harsh in speaking. He would provoke the crowd. I will go. »

And without listening any more to the protests of the others, he approaches the Master, just when Jesus is dismissing the sick man saying to him: « Have faith. You are cured. Your fever and pain will not come back any more. »

« Master, which is the greatest commandment of the Law? »

Jesus, behind Whose back the scribe is standing, turns round and looks at him. A faint luminous smile brightens His face, He then raises His head, as He had bent it because the scribe is short of stature, and further he had bowed to pay his respects to Him. Jesus looks round at the crowd, He stares at the group of Pharisees and doctors and He notices the pale face of Joel, who is half hidden behind a big sumptuously dressed Pharisee. His smile brightens. It is like a light that caresses the honest scribe. He then lowers His head looking at his interlocutor and replies to him: « The first of all the commandments is: "Listen, Israel: the Lord our God is the only Lord. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength". That is the first and greatest commandment. The second resembles it: "You shall love your neighbour as yourself". There are no greater commandments than these two. They comprise all the Law and the prophets. »

« Master, You have replied wisely and truthfully. It is so. There is only one God and there is no other god except Him. To love Him

with all our hearts, with all our intelligence, with all our souls and all our strength, and to love our neighbour as ourselves is worth much more than any holocaust and sacrifice. I seriously think so when I meditate on David's words: "Holocausts give You no pleasure; a contrite heart is the sacrifice pleasing to God". »

« You are not far from the Kingdom of God, because you have understood which holocaust is pleasing to God. »

« But which is the most perfect holocaust? » asks the scribe in a low voice, as if he were speaking of a secret.

Jesus beams with love letting this pearl drop into the heart of this man who is opening to His doctrine, to the doctrine of the Kingdom of God, and bending over him He says: « The perfect holocaust is to love, as ourselves, those who persecute us and not bear any grudge. Who does that will possess peace. It is said: the lowly shall possess the Earth and shall enjoy the abundance of peace. I solemnly tell you that he who can love his enemies reaches perfection and possesses God. »

The scribe greets Him respectfully and goes back to his group, who reproach him in low voices for praising the Master, and they angrily say to him: « What did you ask Him secretly? Have you been seduced by Him as well? »

« I heard the Spirit of God speak from His lips. »

« You are silly. Do you perhaps think that He is the Christ? »

« Yes, I do. »

« Truly, before long we shall see the schools of our scribes empty, while they go roving after that Man! But how can you see the Christ in Him? »

« I do not know how. I know that I feel that it is He. »

« You're mad! » And they turn their backs on him worriedly.

Jesus has heard their conversation, and when He sees the Pharisees pass in front of Him in a close group and go away worriedly, He calls them saying: « Listen to Me. I want to ask you something. According to you, what do you think of the Christ? Whose son is He? »

« He will be the son of David » they reply, stressing the words "will be", because they want to make Him understand that, as far as they are concerned, He is not the Christ.

« How, then, does David, inspired by God, call Him "Lord" saying: "The Lord said to my Lord: 'Sit at my right hand until I make Your enemies a footstool for You… ? So if David calls the Christ "Lord", how can the Christ be his son? »

As they do not know what to reply to Him, they go away ruminating their poison.

Jesus moves away from the place where He was and which is now flooded with sunshine, to go farther on, where the mouths of the Treasury are, near the hall of the Treasury. This side, still in

the shade, is occupied by rabbis, who are haranguing with wide gestures addressing their Hebrew audience, which is increasing more and more, as the people pouring in the Temple are increasing continuously, as time passes.

The rabbis are striving to demolish with their speeches the teachings imparted by the Christ during the previous days or that same morning. And the more they see the crowd of believers grow bigger, the more they raise their voices. In fact the place, although very large, is crowded with people coming and going in all directions…

Jesus says to me: « Insert here the vision of the widow's mite (19th June 1944) corrected as I will point out to you » (as I have already corrected it in the typewritten sheets that I have sent back). Then the vision continues.

19th June 1944.

Only today, and insistently, I see the following vision appear.

At the beginning I see nothing but courts and porches, which I recognise belong to the Temple, and Jesus, Who looks like an Emperor, so solemn He is in His bright red tunic and darker red mantle, leaning on a huge square pillar supporting an arch of the porch. He looks fixedly at me. I am fully absorbed in looking at Him, delighting in contemplating Him Whom I had not seen and heard for two days.

The vision thus lasts for a long time. And while it lasts so, I am not writing it, because it is my joy. But now that I see the scene become animated, I understand that there is something else and I write.

The place is getting full of people coming and going in all directions. There are priests and believers, men, women and children. Some are walking, some are standing listening to the doctors, some are dragging little lambs or carrying doves going to other places, perhaps to sacrifice them.

Jesus is leaning on His column and is watching. He does not speak. Twice His apostles ask Him questions, but He shakes His head in denial and does not speak. He is watching very carefully. And according to His countenance, He seems to be judging those He is looking at. His eyes and face remind me of His looks when I saw Him in the vision of Paradise, judging souls in the particular judgement. Now, of course, He is Jesus, Man; up there He was Jesus Triumphant, so even more imposing. But the changeability of His countenance, that watches fixedly, is the same. He is serious, inquisitive, but if at times He is so severe as to make also the most insolent people tremble, at times He is so kind, and His smiling sadness is such that He seems to be caressing one with His eyes.

He does not seem to be hearing anything. But He must be listening

to everything because, when from a group several metres away, gathered round a doctor, a nasal voice is heard proclaiming: « More than any other commandment this one is valid: what is for the Temple must go to the Temple. The Temple is above one's father and mother and if one wants to give what is superfluous to the glory of the Lord, one can do so and will be blessed for it, because there is no blood or love superior to the Temple » Jesus slowly turns His head round in that direction and looks in a way… that I would not like it to be meant for me.

He seems to be looking at everything in general. But when an old trembling man is on the point of climbing the five steps of a kind of terrace, which is close to Jesus, and which seems to lead to another inner court, and he presses his stick on the floor and almost falls when his foot is caught in his tunic, Jesus stretches out His long arm, grasps him and supports him, and does not leave him until He sees that he is safe. The old man raises his wrinkled face, looks at his tall saviour and whispers a word of blessing, while Jesus smiles at him and caresses his bald head. He then goes back to His column, and departs from it once again to lift a little boy who slips from his mother's hand and falls, weeping, against the first step, just at His feet. He lifts him up, caresses him and comforts him. The boy's embarrassed mother thanks Him. Jesus smiles at her as well, handing the child back to her.

But He does not smile when a conceited Pharisee passes by, or when a group of scribes and others whom I do not know pass near Him. The latter group greet Him gesticulating and bowing. Jesus looks at them so fixedly that He seems to pierce them, He replies to their greetings but without effusion. He is severe. He looks at some length also at a priest who passes by and must be an important person, because the crowd makes room for him and greets him as he struts along. Jesus looks at him in such a way that he, although very proud, lowers his head. He does not greet, but he cannot withstand Jesus' glance.

Jesus stops looking at him to watch a poor woman, dressed in dark brown, who is bashfully climbing the steps and goes towards a wall, where there is something like heads of lions or similar animals with open mouths. Many people are going there. But Jesus does not seem to pay attention to them. Now instead He looks where the woman is going. His eyes look at her compassionately and they shine with kindness when He sees her stretch out a hand and throw something into the stone mouth of one of those lions. And when the woman withdraws passing near Him, He is the first to say: « Peace to you, woman. »

She raises her head, utterly astonished, and remains dumbfounded. « Peace to you » repeats Jesus. « Go, because the Most High blesses you. » The poor soul is enraptured, then she whispers a greeting

and goes away.

« She is happy in her unhappiness » says Jesus breaking His silence. « She is now happy because God's blessing is with her. Listen, My friends, and those who are around Me. Do you see that woman? She only gave two small coins, not enough to by food for one meal for a sparrow kept in a cage, and yet she has given more than all those who have given their offerings to the Treasury of the Temple, since it was opened this morning at dawn. Listen. I have seen large numbers of rich people put in those mouths sums which would feed that woman for a year and clothe her poverty, which, is decent only because it is clean. I have seen rich people, who with evident satisfaction have put in there sums that could have fed the poor people of the Holy City for one or more days, and thus make them bless the Lord. But I solemnly tell you that nobody has given more than she did. Her offering is charity. The others are not. Hers is generosity. The others are not. Hers is sacrifice. The others are not. Today that woman will not eat anything, because she has nothing left. She will have to work first to earn some money, to be able to get some bread to appease her hunger. She has no money laid aside, neither has she relatives who can earn money on her behalf. She is all alone. God has taken her relatives, her husband and children, He has taken the little wealth they had left her, and rather than God, men have taken it, those men who with large gestures, see?, are continuing to throw in there their surplus, much of which is extorted through usury from the poor hands of poor and hungry people. They say that there is no blood or love superior to the Temple, and they thus teach people not to love their neighbour. I tell you that above the Temple there is love. The law of God is love and he, who does not take pity on his neighbour, does not love. Superfluous money, money soiled with usury, with hatred, with hardness, with hypocrisy, sings no praise to God and does not attract heavenly blessings on the donor. God rejects it. It enriches these coffers. But it is not gold for the incense: it is filth that overwhelms you, o ministers, who do not serve God, but your interests; it is a string that strangles you, o doctors, who teach a doctrine that is yours; it is poison that corrodes the remains you still have of your souls, o Pharisees. God does not want remains. Be not Cains. God does not want what is the fruit of hardness. God does not want what, raising a weeping voice, says: "I had to appease the hunger of a starving man. But I was prevented from doing so because I had to display my pomp in here. I was to help an old father and a decrepit mother, but I was forbidden, because such help would not have been known to the world, and I must blow my trumpet so that the world may see the donor". No, rabbi, who teach that what is superfluous is to be given to God and that it is lawful to refuse assistance to fathers and mothers to give it to God. The first commandment is: "Love God

with all your heart, with your soul, with your intelligence, with your strength". So not what is superfluous, but what is our blood is to be given to Him, by loving to suffer for Him. To suffer. Not to make people suffer. And if it costs to give a lot, because it is unpleasant to deprive oneself of one's riches and the treasure is the heart of man, who is vicious by nature, it is just because it costs, that one must give. Out of justice: because everything one has, one has it through God's goodness. Out of love: because it is a proof of love to love sacrifice in order to give joy to those whom one loves. To suffer for the sake of suffering. But to suffer. I repeat: not to make others suffer. Because the second commandment says: "Love your neighbour as yourself". And the law specifies that, after God, one's parents are the neighbour to whom one is bound to give honour and assistance. So I solemnly tell you that that poor woman has understood the law better than wise men and she is justified more than anybody else and blessed, because in her poverty she gave God everything, whereas you give what is superfluous and you give it to grow in the esteem of men. I know that you hate Me because I speak so. But as long as these lips can speak, they will speak so. You join your hatred for Me to the contempt for the poor woman I am praising. But do not think that with these two stones you will make a double pedestal for your pride. They will be the millstone that will crush you. Let us go. Let the vipers bite one another increasing their poison. Let those who are pure, good, humble, contrite, and who wish to know the true face of God, follow Me. »

Jesus says:

« And you who are left with nothing, as you have given Me everything, give Me these last two small coins. As compared with the much that you have given, they seem nothing to strangers. But to you, who have but these, they are everything. Put them in the hand of your Lord. And do not weep. Or, at least, do not weep alone. Weep with Me, Who am the only One who can understand you and I understand you without any human fog, which is always an interested veil for the truth. »

2nd April 1947.

The apostles, disciples and crowd follow Him in a compact group, while He goes back again to the place at the first town walls, a spot almost sheltered by the wall of the Temple enclosure, where it is not so warm, in this very sultry day. As the ground has been roughened by the hooves of animals and is strewn with the stones used by merchants and money-changers to fasten their enclosures and tents, there are no rabbis of Israel there, who did not mind allowing a market to be held in the Temple, but are disgusted at walking in their sandals where the footprints of quadrupeds, which were

cleared out from there a few days previously, have been badly cancelled…

Jesus is not disgusted and He takes shelter there, surrounded by a large crowd of listeners. But before speaking, He calls the apostles to come close to Him and says to them:

« Come and listen carefully. Yesterday you wanted to know many of the things that I will tell you today and that I mentioned vaguely yesterday, when we were resting in Joseph's kitchen garden. So pay attention, because they are important lessons for everybody, and for you in particular, as you are My ministers and continuators.

Listen. Scribes and Pharisees sat on Moses' chair at the right moment. They were sad days for our Fatherland. Once the exile in Babylonia was over and the nation had been restored through Cyrus' magnanimity, the leaders of the people felt it necessary to restore also the cult and the knowledge of the Law. Because woe to that people that does not possess them for its defence, guide and support, against the most powerful enemies of a nation, which are the immorality of the citizens, rebellion against leaders, disunion among classes and parties, the sins against God and one's neighbours, irreligiousness, which are all disgregating elements in themselves and because of the punishments they provoke from Heaven!

So scribes or doctors of the Law arose to teach the people who spoke the Chaldean language, the heritage of the sore and weary exile, and thus could no longer understand the Scriptures written in pure Hebrew. They arose to help the priests, insufficient in number to fulfil the task of teaching the crowds. Such laity, learned and devoted to honouring the Lord, by taking the knowledge of God to men and leading men to God, had its reason for existence and it did also some good. Because, all of you must bear this in mind, also those things that, through human weakness, later degenerate, as it happened to this one that became corrupt in the course of time, always have something good and at least an initial reason for existence, whereby the Most High allows them to arise and last until, the measure of degeneration being full, the Most High disperses them.

Then the other sect of the Pharisees arose from the transformation of that of the Hasidaeans, formed to support the Law of Moses and the spirit of independence of our people by means of the most rigid morals and the strictest obedience, when the Hellenistic party - that had risen because of the pressure and seductions that had begun in the days of Aniiochus Epiphanes and that soon changed into persecutions against those who did not yield to the pressure of the shrewd king, who more than on his arms relied on the breaking up of the faith in hearts, in order to rule over our Fatherland - was trying to make us slaves.

Remember also this: be more afraid of easy alliances and of the

blandishments of a foreigner than of his legions. Because, while if you are faithful to the laws of God and of your Fatherland you will win, even if you are surrounded by mighty armies, if instead you are corrupted by the subtle poison, given as an inebriating honey by the stranger who has made his plans concerning you, God will abandon you because of your sins, and you will be defeated and subjected, even if your false ally does not wage a bloody battle with you. Woe to him who is not as vigilant as a sentry and does not repel the subtle snare of a false shrewd neighbour, or ally, or conqueror, who begins his domination over individuals, weakening their hearts and corrupting them with usages and habits that are not ours and are not holy, and consequently make us unpleasant to the Lord! Woe! You must remember the consequences brought about to our Fatherland by the fact that some of her children adopted usages and habits of a foreigner to ingratiate themselves with him and enjoy favours. It is a good thing to be charitable with everybody, also with peoples who are not of our faith, who have not our usages and who have harmed us throughout ages. But our love for these people, who are always our neighbour, must never make us disown the Law of God and of our Fatherland, for some premeditated benefit extorted from our neighbours. No. Foreigners despise those who are so servile as to disown the holiest things of their Fatherland. It is not by denying one's Father and Mother - God and the Fatherland - that one achieves respect and freedom.

So it was a good thing that at the right moment the Pharisees should arise to erect a barrier against the filthy overflowing of foreign usages and customs. I repeat: everything that begins and lasts has its reason for existence. And it is to be respected for what it did, if not for what it does. Because, if it is guilty by now, it is not for men to insult it, and even less to strike it. There is who knows how to do it: God and He Whom He sent, and Whose right and duty is to open His mouth and to open your eyes, so that you and they may know the thought of the Most High, and you may act according to justice. I and no one else. I, because I speak by divine mandate. I, because I can speak as I have none of the sins that shock you when you see them committed by scribes and Pharisees, but which you also commit, if you can. »

Jesus, Who had begun His speech in a low voice, has gradually raised it, and when uttering these last words, it is as powerful as the blare of a trumpet. Hebrews and Gentiles are fully engrossed in listening to Him. And if the former applaud when Jesus mentions their Fatherland and clearly calls by name those foreigners who subjected them and made them suffer, the latter admire the oratorical form of His speech and they are happy to be present at this oration really worthy of a great orator, as they say to one another. Jesus lowers His voice again when He resumes speaking:

« What I told you is to remind you of the reasons why scribes and Pharisees exist, and how and why they have sat on Moses' chair, and how and why they speak and their words are not vain ones. So do what they say. But do not imitate their actions. Because they say that things are to be done in a certain manner, but they do not do what is to be done. In fact they teach the humane laws of the Pentateuch, then they burden other people with huge, unbearable, inhuman weights, whereas they themselves do not stir a finger even to touch those weights, let alone carry them.

The rule of their life is to be seen, noticed and applauded for their deeds, which they perform in a manner suitable to be seen and thus praised. And they infringe the law of love, because they like to define themselves the distinguished ones and they despise those who do not belong to their sect, and they demand the title of teachers and from their disciples they exact such a cult as they do not give to God. They consider themselves gods because of their wisdom and power, and in the hearts of their disciples they want to be superior to fathers and mothers, and they claim that their doctrine is superior to God's and they insist on its being practised literally, even if it is a manipulation of the true Law, inferior to the same even more than this mountain is to the Great Hermon that dominates the whole of Palestine; and they are heretics, since some believe, as heathens do, in metempsychosis and fatality, while others deny what the previous ones admit and, in actual fact if not in effect, what God Himself has given as a principle of faith, when He defined Himself the only God to Whom cult is to be given, and when He said that fathers and mothers are second only to God, and as such they are entitled to be obeyed more than a teacher who is not divine. Because if now I say to you: "Those who love their fathers and mothers more than they love Me are not suitable for the Kingdom of God", I do not say so to instil indifference towards your relatives into your minds, as you must respect and help them, neither is it lawful to deprive them of assistance saying: "It is money for the Temple", or deny them hospitality saying: "My office forbids me", or to take their lives saying: "I kill you because you love the Master", but I say so that you may love your relatives with just love, that is with love that is patient and strong in its meekness - without hating a relative who sins and gives sorrow, because he does not follow you on the way of Life, that is, on My way - with love that knows how to choose between My law and family selfishness and violence. Love your relatives, obey them in everything that is holy. But be ready to die, not to kill, but I say to die, if they want to persuade you to betray the vocation given you by God, to be citizens of the Kingdom of God, that I have come to establish.

Do not imitate scribes and Pharisees, who are divided among themselves, although they feign to be united. You, disciples of the

Christ, be really united, each one for all the others, the leaders being kind to the subjects, the subjects being kind to their leaders, all one in love and in the purpose of your union: to conquer My Kingdom and be at My right hand at the eternal Judgement. Remember that a kingdom that is divided is no longer a kingdom and cannot exist. Be therefore united to one another in your love for Me and for My doctrine. Let love and union, equality in garments worn, community of property, brotherliness of hearts be the uniform of the Christian, because that will be the name of My subjects. Everybody for one, one for everybody. Let those who own wealth give humbly. Let those who do not own accept humbly, and let them humbly set forth their needs to their brothers, knowing that they are such; and let brothers kindly listen to the needs of their brothers, feeling that they are such to them. Remember that your Master was often hungry and cold and He had other numberless necessities and troubles and He, the Word of God, humbly set them forth to men. Remember that a reward is given to those who are merciful by giving even just a sip of water. Remember that it is better to give than to receive. In these three recollections let the poor find strength to ask without feeling humiliated, remembering that I did so before them, and let them forgive, if they are refused, remembering that many a time the Son of man was denied the place and the food that are given to sheep-dogs. And let the rich be generous in giving their riches, considering that the base money, that Satan instigates men to crave for, and is nine tenths of the disasters of the world, if it is given out of love, changes into a heavenly immortal gem.

Be clothed in your virtues. Let them be manifold but known only to God. Do not behave as the Pharisees who wear the broadest phylacteries and the longest fringes and want the front seats in synagogues and love to be greeted obsequiously in market squares, and want to be called "Rabbis" by the people. One alone is your Master: the Christ. You who in future will be the new doctors, I am referring to you, My apostles and disciples, remember that I alone am your Teacher. And I will be your only Teacher also when I am no longer among you. Because Wisdom alone teaches. So do not allow yourselves to be called teachers, because you are disciples yourselves. Do not pretend to be called fathers and do not call father anyone on the Earth, because only one is the Father of all men: your Father Who is in Heaven. May this truth make you wise by really feeling all like brothers to one another, both those who guide and those who are guided, and so love one another like good brothers. And none of those who guide must allow themselves to be called guides, because only one is your guide: the Christ.

Let the greatest among you be your servant. He who is the servant of the servants of God does not humiliate himself, but he imitates Me, as I was kind and humble, always willing to love those

who were My brothers in the flesh of Adam, and to assist them by means of the power that I have as God. Neither by serving men did I humiliate what is divine in Me. Because he is a true king who knows how to dominate not so much men, as the passions of men, first of all foolish pride. Remember: he who humbles himself will be exalted, and he who exalts himself will be humbled.

The Woman of Whom the Lord has spoken in the second chapter of Genesis, the Virgin mentioned by Isaiah, the Virgin Mother of the Immanuel, prophesied this truth of the new times, when She sang: "He has pulled down princes from their thrones and exalted the lowly". The Wisdom of God spoke through the lips of Her Who was the Mother of Grace and the Throne of Wisdom. And I repeat the inspired words that praised Me joined to the Father and to the Holy Spirit, in Our wonderful works, when, without offence to the Virgin, I, the Man, was being formed in Her womb without ceasing being God. Let them be a guide for those who want to bear the Christ in their hearts and come to the Kingdom of Christ. There will be no Jesus: the Saviour; no Christ: the Lord; and there will be no Kingdom of Heaven for those who are proud, fornicators, idolaters, who worship themselves and their will.

Therefore woe to you, hypocritical scribes and Pharisees, who think you can close by means of your unfeasible maxims - if they were confirmed by God, they would really be an unbreakable bolt for most men - who think you can close the Kingdom of Heaven in the face of those men who raise their spirits towards it to find strength in their painful earthly day! Woe to you who do not enter it, who do not want to enter it, because you do not accept the Law of the heavenly Kingdom, and you do not allow other people to enter, while they are in front of that door, which you, intolerant as you are, reinforce with bolts that God did not put there.

Woe to you, hypocritical scribes and Pharisees, who swallow the property of widows under the pretext of saying long prayers. Because of that you will receive a severe sentence!

Woe to you, hypocritical scribes and Pharisees, who travel over sea and land, using up riches that do not belong to you, to make a single proselyte, and when you have him, you make him twice as fit for hell as you are!

Woe to you, blind guides, who say: "If a man swears by the Temple, it has no force, but if he swears by the gold of the Temple, then he is bound by his oath". You are foolish and blind! Which is of greater worth? The gold or the Temple that makes the gold sacred? And you say: "If a man swears by the altar, it has no force, but if he swears by the offering on the altar, then his oath is valid and he is bound by it". You blind men! What is greater? The offering, or the altar that makes the offering sacred? Therefore, he who swears by the altar, is swearing by it and by everything on it, and

he who swears by the Temple, is swearing by it and by Him Who dwells in it, and he who swears by Heaven, is swearing by the Throne of God and by Him Who is seated on it.

Woe to you, hypocritical scribes and Pharisees, who pay the tithes of mint and rue, of anise and cummin, and then you neglect the weightier matters of the Law: justice, mercy and faith. These are the virtues you should have practised, without neglecting the other minor matters!

You blind guides, you filter your drinks, lest you may become contaminated by swallowing a drowned gnat, but you swallow a camel, without feeling unclean by doing so. Woe to you, hypocritical scribes and Pharisees, who wash the outside of cups and dishes, but interiorly you are full of extortion and filth. O blind Pharisee, wash the inside of your cup and dish first, so that also the outside may be clean.

Woe to you, hypocritical scribes and Pharisees, who fly in darkness like noctules for your sinful deeds, and at night reach agreements with heathens, robbers and traitors, and then, in the morning, after deleting the signs of your concealed dealings, you go up to the Temple in fine garments.

Woe to you, who teach the laws of charity and justice contained in Leviticus, while you are greedy, thieves, false, slanderers, oppressors, unjust, avengers, haters, and you even overthrow those who annoy you, even if they are of your own blood, and you repudiate the virgin who has become your wife, and you disown the children that you begot of her, because they are invalids, and because you do not like your wife any more, you accuse her of adultery or of an unclean disease, to get rid of her, while you are unclean in your lustful hearts, even if you do not appear to be such in the eyes of the people, 'who are not aware of your deeds. You are like whitewashed sepulchres that look handsome on the outside, but inside are full of dead men's bones and corruption. The same applies to you. Yes. The same! From the outside you look like honest men, but inside your are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.

Woe to you, hypocritical scribes and Pharisees, who build magnificent sepulchres for the prophets and decorate the tombs of holy men saying: "Had we lived in our fathers' days, we would never had joined those who shed the blood of the prophets". And so you give evidence against yourselves that you are the sons of those who murdered your prophets. And you, moreover, are finishing the work of your fathers… Serpents, brood of vipers, how can you escape being condemned to Gehenna?

So I, the Word of God, say to you: I, God, will send you new prophets and wise men and scribes. Some you will slaughter, some you will crucify, some you will scourge in your law-courts, in your synagogues, outside the walls of your towns, and some you will hunt

from town to town, until you draw on yourselves the blood of the just men, that has been shed on the Earth, from the blood of the just Abel to the blood of Zechariah son of Barachian, whom you murdered between the sanctuary and the altar, because for your own sake he had reminded you of your sin, that you might repent and go back to the Lord. It is so. You hate those who want your welfare and lovingly call you back to the paths of God.

I solemnly tell you that all that is about to happen, both the crime and its consequences. I solemnly tell you that all this will be accomplished on this generation.

Oh! Jerusalem! Jerusalem! Jerusalem, you that stone those who have been sent to you and kill your prophets! How often have I longed to gather your children, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you refused! Now listen, Jerusalem! Now listen, you who hate Me and hate everything that comes from God. Now listen, you who love Me and who will be carried away by the punishment laid aside for the persecutors of the Messengers of God. And you also listen to Me, you who do not belong to this people, but who listen to Me just the same, listen and learn Who He is Who is speaking to you and foretells without having to study the flight, the warbling of birds, or celestial phenomena, or the viscera of sacrificed animals, or the fire and smoke of holocausts, because all the future is the present for Him Who is speaking to you. "This House of yours will be left desolate to you. And I say to you, says the Lord, that you shall not see Me any more until you also say: 'Blessings on Him Who comes in the name of the Lord"'. »

Jesus is clearly tired and hot, both because of the long thundering speech, and of the sultriness of the windless day. Pressed against the wall by a multitude of people, avidly gazed upon by thousands of people, feeling all the hatred of those who are listening to Him under the porches of the court of the Gentiles, and all the love or at least the admiration surrounding Him, indifferent to the sun blazing down on backs and reddened perspiring faces, He really looks exhausted. He needs solace and He seeks it saying to His apostles and to the seventy-two disciples, who like wedges have opened a passage through the crowd and who are now in the front line, forming a faithful loving barrier around Him: « Let us leave the Temple and go out into the open, among trees. I am in need of shade, silence and fresh air. This place really seems to be already burning with the fire of celestial wrath. »

They elbow their way with difficulty and are thus able to go out through the nearest gate, where Jesus in vain strives to dismiss many people. They want to follow Him at all costs.

In the meantime the disciples are watching the cube of the Temple shining in the sun, as it is almost midday, and John of Ephesus Points out the powerful construction to the Master saying: « Look

at the size of the stones and of the construction! »

« And yet not a single stone here will be left on another » replies Jesus.

« No? When? How? » ask many.

But Jesus does not say anything. He goes down the Moriah and quickly leaves the town, passing through Ophel and the Gate of Ephraim or Dung Gate and taking shelter at first in the thick of the King's Gardens, that is until those who, apart from apostles and disciples, have insisted in following Him, go away slowly when Manaen, who has had the heavy gates opened, comes forward imposingly and says to everybody: « Go away. No one can come in here except those whom I allow. »

Shade, silence, scents of flowers, the smell of camphor and cloves, cinnamon, lavender and countless other scented herbs, the gurgling of streams nourished by nearby fountains and cisterns, under galleries of leaves, the warbling of birds make the spot a place of paradisiac rest. The town seems to be miles and miles away, with its narrow streets, dark because of the many archivolts or sunny to the point of dazzling, with its smells and stenches of sewers, which are not always clean, and of streets along which too many quadrupeds pass to be clean, particularly the less important ones.

The guardian of the Gardens must know Jesus very well, because he greets Him with respect and familiarity at the same time, and Jesus asks after his wife and children.

The man would like to give Jesus hospitality in his house, but the Master prefers the fresh restful peace of the large King's Garden, a real park of delight. And before the two untiring and very loyal servants of Lazarus go away to get the basket of foodstuffs, Jesus says to them: « Tell your mistresses to come. We shall stay here for a few hours with My Mother and the faithful women disciples. And it will be so pleasant… »

« You are very tired, Master! One can tell from Your face » remarks Manaen.

« Yes. So much so that I did not have enough strength to go farther. »

« But I offered You these gardens several times during the past days. You know how pleased I am to be able to offer You peace and solace! »

« I know, Manaen. »

« And yesterday You wanted to go to that sad place! Its neighbourhood is so arid and it is so strangely bare of vegetation this year! And it is so close to that sad gate! »

« I wanted to satisfy My apostles. They are like little boys, after all. Grown up boys. See how happily they are refreshing themselves! … They have immediately forgotten what is being plotted against Me beyond those walls… »

« And they have forgotten that You are so depressed… But I do not think there is any sound reason to be frightened. The place seemed more dangerous on other occasions. »

Jesus looks at him and is silent. How often in these last days have I seen Jesus look and be silent thus!

Then Jesus becomes intent in watching the apostles and disciples, who have taken off their headgear, mantles and sandals, cooling their faces and limbs in the fresh rivulets, imitated by many of the seventy-two disciples, who, actually, I think are now many more, and who, all united in the fraternity of ideals, are lying down, resting here and there, a little aside, to let Jesus rest peacefully.

Manaen also withdraws leaving Him alone. Everybody respects the rest of the Master, Who is very tired and has taken shelter under a very thick pergola of a jasmine in bloom, shaped like a bower and isolated by a ring of water that flows gurgling in a little canal over which grass and flowers hang. A real peaceful refuge that is reached by means of a little bridge two palms wide and four long, the railings of which are all covered with a garland of jasmine corollas.

The servants come back and they have increased in number, because Martha wanted to provide for all the servants of the Lord, and they say that the women will be coming shortly.

Jesus sends for Peter and says to him: « With My brother James bless, offer and hand out the food as I do. »

« I will hand it out, but I will not bless it. It is for You to offer and bless it, not for me. »

« When you were the head of your companions and were far away from Me, did you not do it? »

« Yes, I did. But then I was compelled to do it. Now You are with us, and it is for You to bless it. I think that everything tastes better when You offer it for us and hand it out… » and the faithful Simon embraces his Jesus, Who is sitting looking very tired in the shade, and he bends his head over His shoulder, happy to be able to clasp and kiss Him thus…

Jesus stands up and pleases him. He goes towards the disciples, He offers, blesses, hands out the food, He watches them eat gladly and says to them: « Afterwards you may sleep, rest while there is time, so that later you may keep awake and pray when you need to do so, and fatigue and tiredness may not overburden your eyes and spirit with sleepiness, when it will be necessary for you to be ready and wide-awake. »

« Are You not staying with us? Are You not eating? »

« Let Me rest. That is all I need. Eat, eat! » He caresses the ones whom He finds on His way and goes back to His place…

Kind and gentle is the arrival of the Mother near Her Son. Mary comes forward without hesitating, because Manaen, who being

less tired than the others, has been watching at the gate, points out to Her the place where is Jesus. The other women disciples, all the Hebrew ones are there, and of the Romans only Valeria is present, stop for a little while and are silent in order not to awake the disciples who are sleeping in the shade of the leafy trees, like sheep lying on the grass at midday.

Mary goes under the jasmine pergola without making the little wooden bridge or the gravel on the ground creak, and even more cautiously She approaches Her Son, Who, overcome by weariness, has fallen asleep with His head on the stone table placed there, His left arm used as a cushion under His face covered by His hair. Mary sits patiently near Her exhausted Son. And She contemplates Him… so intently… and a sorrowful loving smile appears on Her lips, while tears noiselessly fall on Her lap; but if Her lips are closed and silent, Her heart is praying with all the strength She possesses, and the power of that prayer and of its inspiration are revealed by the attitude of Her hands joined on Her lap, held tight with fingers interlaced in order not to tremble, and yet are shaken by a light tremor. Hands that are disjoined only to drive away a fly that insistently wants to alight on Her sleeping Son and might awake Him.

It is the Mother Who is watching Her Son. The last sleep of Her Son She can watch. And if the face of the Mother, on this Wednesday before Passover, is different from that of the Mother at the Birth of the Lord, because grief makes it pale and disfigures its features, the mild loving purity of Her glance, the anxious care is the same as She had when, bending over the manger in Bethlehem, with Her love She protected the first uncomfortable sleep of Her Child.

Jesus moves, and Mary quickly wipes Her eyes, so that Her Son may not see Her tears. But Jesus has not wakened. He has only changed the position of His face, turning it round to the other side, and Mary resumes Her immobility and Her watching.

But something breaks Mary's heart: She hears Her Jesus weep in His sleep and whisper the name of Judas, with an indistinct murmur, as He speaks with His mouth pressed against His arm and garment…

Mary stands up, She approaches Her Son and bends over Him, She follows His vague whispering, with Her hands pressed against Her heart. Jesus' speech, although broken but not to the extent that one cannot follow it, makes Her understand that He is dreaming, and is dreaming once again the present, the past and then also the future, until He awakes with a jerk, as if He wanted to escape something horrible. But He finds the breast of His Mother, the arms of His Mother, the smile of His Mother, the gentle voice of his Mother, Her kiss, Her caress, the light touch of Her veil, with which She had wiped Her face to dry tears and perspiration, while She says to Him: « You were in an uncomfortable position, and You were

dreaming… You are wet with perspiration and tired, Son. » And She tidies His ruffled hair, She dries His face and kisses Him, embracing Him with Her arm, holding Him to Her heart as She can no longer take Him in Her lap, as when He was a baby.

Jesus smiles at Her saying: « You are always the Mother. The one who comforts. The one who rewards for everything. My Mother! »

He makes Her sit close to Him laying His hand on Her knees, and Mary takes His long hand, so gentle and yet so strong, the hand of a handicraftsman, in Her small ones, She caresses its fingers and the back of it, smoothing the veins which had swollen while hanging His sleep. And She tries to distract His attention…

« We have come. We are all here. Also Valeria. The others are at the Antonia. Claudia wanted them, "as she is very sad" said her freedwoman. She says, I do not know why, that she has a presentiment of much weeping. Superstitions!… God only knows what will happen… »

« Where are the women disciples? »

« Over there, at the entrance of the Gardens. Martha wanted to prepare refreshing and nourishing food and drinks, considering how exhausted You are. But I, look, You always liked this, and I brought it to You. My share. It has a nicer taste because it was made by Your Mother. » She shows Him some honey and a bun on which She spreads it handing it to Her Son and saying: « As we used to do at Nazareth, when You rested during the hottest hours, and then You awoke feeling hot, and I used to come from the cool grotto with this refreshment… » She stops because Her voice trembles.

Her Son looks at Her and then says: « And when there was Joseph, You brought refreshments for two and the cool water of the porous jar that You kept in running water to make it cooler and it was made even more so by the stems of wild mint that You put in it. How much mint there was there, under the olive-trees! And how many bees on the mint flowers! Our honey always tasted a little of that scent… » He is pensive… He remembers…

« We have seen Alphaeus, You know? Joseph was delayed because one of his sons was not too well. But he will certainly be here tomorrow with Simon. Salome of Simon is looking after our house and Mary's. »

« Mother, when You are all alone, who will You stay with? »

« With whomsoever You will tell Me, Son. I obeyed You, Son, before having You. I will continue doing so after You have left Me. » Her voice trembles, but a heroic smile is on Her lips.

« You know how to obey. How restful it is to be with You! Because, see, Mother? The world cannot understand, but I find complete rest with obedient people… Yes. God rests with the obedient. God would not have had to suffer, to toil, if disobedience had not come to the world. Everything happened because man did not obey. That is why

there is sorrow in the world… That is the reason for Our grief. »

« And also for Our peace, Jesus. Because we know that our obedience comforts the Eternal Father. Oh! for Me in particular, what that thought is! I, a creature, have been granted to console My Creator! »

« Oh! Joy of God! You do not know, o joy of Ours, what Your word means to us! It exceeds the harmony of the Celestial Choruses!… Blessed! Blessed You are, as You teach Me the last obedience, and by this thought of Yours You make it pleasant for Me to accomplish it! »

« You do not need to be taught by Me, My Jesus. I have learned everything from You. »

« Jesus of Mary of Nazareth, the Man, has learned everything from You. »

« It was Your light that emanated from Me. The Light that You are and that came from the Eternal Light, annihilated in human appearance… Johanna's brothers informed Me of the speech You delivered. They were enraptured with admiration. You uttered bitter words against the Pharisees… »

« It is the hour of supreme truths, Mother. They remain dead truths to them. But they will be living truths for the others. And with love and severity I must fight the last battle to snatch them from Evil. »

« That is true. They told Me that Gamaliel, who was with other people in one of the halls in the porches, said at the end, while many were upset: "When one does not want to be reproached, one acts righteously" and he went away after that remark. »

« I am glad that the rabbi heard Me. Who told You? »

« Lazarus did. And he was told by Eleazar, who was in the hall with other people. Lazarus came at midday. He greeted us and went away again without listening to his sisters who wanted to keep him until sunset. He told them to send John, or somebody else, to get those fruits and flowers, which are just perfect. »

« I will send John tomorrow. »

« Lazarus comes every day. But Mary gets angry because she says that he seems an apparition. He goes up to the Temple, he comes, gives orders and leaves again. »

« Lazarus also knows how to obey. I told him to behave so, because they are lying in wait for him as well. But don't tell his sisters. Nothing will happen to him. And now let us go to the women disciples. »

« Do not move. I will call them. The disciples are all asleep… »

« And we will let them sleep. They do not sleep much at night, because I teach them in the peace of Gethsemane. »

Mary goes out and comes back with the women, who seem to have got rid of their weight, so light are their steps. They greet Him with deep respect. Only Mary of Clopas is well known.

And from a large bag Martha takes out a small porous amphora,

while from another vase, which is also porous, Mary takes fresh fruit that came from Bethany, and lays it on the table beside what her sister has prepared, that is a crisp appetising grilled dove, and she begs Jesus to accept it saying: « Eat it. It is nourishing. I prepared it myself. »

Johanna instead has brought some rose-vinegar. She explains: « It is so refreshing in these first warm days. My husband also makes use of it when he is tired after long rides. »

« We have nothing » say Mary Salome, Mary Clopas, Susanna and Eliza apologising. And Nike and Valeria in turn say: « Neither have we. We did not know that we had to come. »

« You have given Me all your hearts. That is enough for Me. And you will still give Me… »

He takes some food, but above all He drinks the cool honied water that Martha pours out for Him from the porous amphora and He eats the fresh fruit, a real refreshment for the Tired One.

The women disciples do not speak much. They look at Him while He takes some refreshments. In their eyes there is love and anxiety. And all of a sudden Eliza begins to weep, and she apologises saying: « I do not know. My heart is burdened with sadness… »

« All our hearts are. Even Claudia in her palace… » says Valeria.

« I wish it were already Pentecost » whispers Salome.

« I, instead, would like to stop the time at this hour » says Mary of Magdala.

« You would be selfish, Mary » replies Jesus.

« Why, Rabboni? »

« Because you would like the joy of your redemption exclusively for yourself. There are millions of people who are awaiting this hour, or who will be redeemed because of this hour. »

« That is true. I was not thinking of that… » she lowers her head, biting her lips to conceal the tears in her eyes and the trembling of her lips. But she is always the brave struggler, and she says: « If You come tomorrow, You will be able to put on the tunic You sent me. It is fresh and clean, worthy of the Passover supper. »

« I will come… Have you nothing to tell Me? You are silent and distressed. Am I no longer Jesus?… » He smiles at the women encouragingly.

« Oh! You are! But You are so great these days that I can no longer see You as the little boy I used to carry in my arms! » exclaims Mary of Alphaeus.

« Neither can I see You as the simple rabbi who used to come into my kitchen looking for John and James » says Salome.

« And I have always known You so: the King of my soul! » Proclaims Mary of Magdala.

And Johanna meekly and gently says: « And I, too: divine, since the dream in which You appeared to me, when I was dying, to call

me to the Life. »

« Lord, You have given us everything. Everything! » says with a sigh Eliza, who has collected herself.

« And you have given Me everything. » « Too little! » they all reply.

« The possibility of giving will not come to an end after this hour. It will cease only when you are with Me in My Kingdom. My faithful women disciples. You will not sit at My side, on twelve thrones to judge the twelve tribes of Israel, but you will sing hosannas with the angels, forming a chorus of honour for My Mother, and then, as now, the heart of the Christ will find its joy in contemplating you. »

« I am young! Long will be the time to ascend to Your Kingdom. Happy Annaleah! » says Susanna.

« I am old, and happy to be so. I hope my death is near » says Eliza.

« I have my sons… I would like to serve these servants of God! » says Mary of Clopas with a sigh.

« Do not forget us, Lord! » says the Magdalene with restrained anxiety, I would say with a cry of her soul, so much does her voice quiver, even more than a cry, although it is kept low in order not to awake those who are sleeping.

« I will not forget you. I will come. You, Johanna, know that I can come even if I am far away… The others must believe that. And I will leave something to you… a mystery that will keep Me in you and you in Me, until we are united again, you and I, in the Kingdom of God. Go now. You may say that I have not told you much, that it was almost useless to make you come for so little. But I wanted to have around Me hearts that have loved Me without selfishness. For My sake: for Jesus. Not for the future King of Israel people have dreamt of. Go. And may you be blessed once more. Also the other women disciples, who are not here, but think of Me with love: Anne, Myrtha, Anastasica, Naomi, and the far away Syntyche, and Photinai, and Aglae and Sarah, Marcella, Philip's daughters, Mirjiam of Jairus, the virgins, the redeemed women, the wives, the mothers who have come to Me, who have been sisters and mothers to Me, better, oh! much better than the best men!… All of them! I bless them all. Grace begins already to descend, grace and forgiveness, on woman, through this blessing of Mine. Go… »

He dismisses them holding back His Mother, to whom He says: « Before evening I shall be at Lazarus' mansion. I need to see You again. John will be with Me. But I only want You, Mother, and the other Maries, Martha and Susanna. I am so tired… »

« We shall be the only ones. Goodbye, Son… »

They kiss each other and part… Mary goes away slowly. She turns round before going out. She turns round before leaving the little bridge. She turns again, as long as She can see Jesus… She seems

unable to depart from Him…

Jesus is alone once again. He gets up and goes out. He goes and calls John, who is sleeping lying on his face among the flowers, like a little boy, and He hands him the small amphora with the rosevinegar that Johanna brought Him, saying to him: « We shall go to My Mother this evening. But only the two of us. » « I understand. Did they come? »

« Yes, they did. I preferred not to awake you… »

« You did the right thing. Your joy must have been greater. They know how to love you better than we do… » says John disconsolately.

« Come with Me. » John follows Him. « What is the matter with you? » Jesus asks him, when they are once again in the green dim light of the pergola, where there are still some remains of food.

« Master, we are very bad. All of us. There is no obedience in us… and no desire to be with You. Also Peter and Simon have gone away. I don't know where. And so Judas found the opportunity to be quarrelsome. »

« Has Judas also gone away? »

« No, Lord. He has not. He says he has no need to go away, that he has no accomplices in our intrigues to try and get protection for You. But if I went to Annas, if others have gone to the Galileans residing here, it was not for an evil purpose!… And I do not think that Simon of Jonas and Simon Zealot are men capable of underhand intrigues… »

« Never mind. In fact Judas does not need to go while you are resting. He knows when and where to go to accomplish what he has to do. »

« Then why does he speak so? It is not nice, in the presence of the disciples! »

« It is not nice. But it is so. Cheer up, My lamb. »

« I, Your lamb? There is no other Lamb but You! »

« Yes. You. I, the Lamb of God, and you, the lamb of the Lamb of God. »

« Oh!!! You already told me this word on another occasion, it was the first days I was with you. There were only the two of us, as now, among the green vegetation, as now, and in the fine season. » John rejoices at the recollection. And he whispers: « I am always, I am still the lamb of the Lamb of God… »

Jesus caresses him. And He offers him some of the grilled dove, left on the table on a sheet of parchment that had enveloped it. He then opens some juicy figs for him and offers them to him, happy to see him eat them. Jesus has sat sideways on the edge of the table and looks at John so intensely that the latter asks: « Why are You looking at me thus? Because I am eating like a glutton? »

« No. Because you are like a child… Oh! My beloved! How much

I love you because of your heart! » and Jesus bends to kiss the fairhaired head of the apostle and says to him: « Remain thus, always thus, with your heart without pride and malice. Thus, also in the hours of unchecked ferocity. Do not imitate those who sin, My child. »

John is seized with his worry again and he says: « But I cannot believe that Simon and Peter… »

« You would really make a mistake if you thought they were sinners. Drink this. It is a good fresh drink. Martha prepared it… Now you are feeling better. I am sure that you had not finished your meal… »

« That is true. I had begun to weep. Because, as long as the world hates us, one can understand. But that one of us should insinuate… »

« Forget about it. You and I know that Simon and the Zealot are two honest men. And that is enough. And, unfortunately, you know that Judas is a sinner. But keep silent about it. But when many lustra have gone by and it is just to reveal how deep My grief was, then you will tell also what I suffered because of the deeds of that man, in addition to those of that apostle. Let us go. It is time to leave this place and go towards the Field of the Galileans and… »

« Are we staying there also tonight? And are we going to Gethsemane first? Judas wanted to know. He says he is tired of being out in the dew, with little and uncomfortable rest. »

« It will soon be over. But I will not tell Judas what I intend doing… »

« You are not obliged. It is You Who have to guide us, and not we who have to guide You. » John is so far from betraying that he does not even understand the reason of prudence why Jesus for some days has never mentioned what He intends doing.

They are now among the sleeping disciples. They call them. They awake. Manaen, who has accomplished his task, apologises to the Master for not being able to stay, and not being able to be with Him at the Temple the following day, as he has to remain at the palace. And in saying so he stares at Peter and Simon, who have in the meantime come back, and Peter nods quickly, as if to say: « I have understood. »

They come out of the Gardens. It is still warm and the sun is still shining. But the evening breeze already mitigates the heat and blows some little clouds in the clear sky.

They go up towards Siloam, avoiding the places of the lepers, but Simon goes to them to take the remains of their meal to the few who are still left there and who did not believe in Jesus.

Matthias, the former shepherd, approaches Jesus and asks: « My Lord and Master, my companions and I have pondered a lot on Your words, until we were overcome by tiredness, and we fell asleep before solving the problem we had set to ourselves. And now we are

more stupid than before. If we have correctly understood Your speeches of these last days, You have foretold that many things will be changed although the Law remains unchanged, and that a New Temple will have to be erected, with new prophets, wise men and scribes, that they will give battle to it, and that it will not die, whereas this one, always if we have understood correctly, is destined to perish. »

« It is destined to perish. Remember Daniel's prophecy… »

« But how shall we, poor and few as we are, be able to rebuild it, if the kings found it difficult to build this one? Where shall we erect it? Not here, because You say that this place will remain deserted until they bless You as the messenger sent by God. »

« It is so. »

« Not in Your Kingdom. We are convinced that Your Kingdom is spiritual. So, how and where shall we establish it? Yesterday You said that the true Temple - and is that one not the true Temple? - that the true Temple, when they think that they have destroyed it, will then ascend triumphantly to the true Jerusalem. Where is it? We are very confused. »

« It is so. Let the enemies destroy the true Temple. In three days I will raise it up and it will experience no more ambushes as it will ascend where man can no longer harm.

With regard to the Kingdom of God, it is in you and wherever there are men who believe in Me. Scattered at present, it will spread all over the Earth in the course of ages. Then eternal, united, perfect in Heaven. The new Temple will be built there, in the Kingdom of God, that is, where there are spirits who accept My doctrine, the doctrine of the Kingdom of God, and put its precepts into practice.

How will it be erected if you are poor and few? Oh! No money or power is really required to erect the building of the new abode of God. Neither for the individual nor for the collective one. The Kingdom of God is in you. And the union of all those who have the Kingdom of God in themselves, of all those who have God in themselves - God: Grace; God: Life; God: Light; God: Charity - will form the great Kingdom of God on the Earth, the new Jerusalem that will spread all over the world and, complete and perfect, without faults, without shadows, will live for ever in Heaven.

How will you manage to build Temple and town? Oh! not you, but God will build these new places. You have only to give Him your good will. Good will is to remain in Me. Good will is to live My doctrine. Good will is to be united. So united to Me as to form only one body that is nourished by only one humour in all its parts, even in the smallest ones. Only one edifice that rests only on one base and is held together by a mystic cohesion. But as without the help of the Father, Whom I taught you to pray and Whom I will pray

for you before I die, you would not be able to be in Charity, in Truth, in Life, that is still in Me and with Me in God the Father and in God Love, because we are only one Divinity, because of that I tell you to have God in you in order to be able to be the Temple that will know no end. You would not be able to do it by yourselves. If God does not build, and He cannot build where He cannot dwell, in vain men busy themselves in building and rebuilding.

The new Temple, My Church, will rise only when your hearts give hospitality to God, and He with you, living stones, will build His Church. »

« But did You not say that Simon of Jonas is its Head, the Stone on which Your Church will be built? And have You not made us also understand that You are its corner-stone? So who is its head? Does this Church exist or not? » says the Iscariot interrupting.

« I am the mystical Head. Peter is the visible head. Because I am going back to the Father leaving you Life, Light, Grace by means of My Word, of My suffering, of the Paraclete, Who will be the friend of those who are faithful to Me.

I am one thing with My Church, My spiritual body, of which I am the head. The head contains the brain or mind. The mind is the seat of knowledge, the brain directs the movements of the limbs with its immaterial orders, which are more efficient than any other incentive in making the limbs move. Look at a dead man, whose brain is dead. Is there any movement in his limbs? Look at one who is completely stupid. Is he not perhaps so inert that he is not capable of having those rudimentary instinctive emotions that the lowest animal, the worm we tread on when walking, has? Observe a man whose limbs, one or more of them, have lost contact with the brain by paralysis. Can he move the part that no longer has any vital link with his head? But if the mind directs with its immaterial orders, it is the other organs - eyes, ears, tongue, nose, skin - that transmit sensations to the mind, and it is the other parts of the body that perform and have performed what the mind, informed by the organs, which are as material and visible as the intellect is invisible, orders. Could I get you to sit on the slope of this mountain without saying to you: "Sit down"? Even if I think that I want you to sit down, you do not know until I express My thought in words and I utter them using My tongue and lips. I could sit down Myself, if I only thought of it because I feel that My legs are tired, but if they refused to bend and sit Me down?

The mind needs organs and limbs to accomplish and have accomplished the operations that the thought thinks of. So in the spiritual body that is My Church, I shall be the Intellect, that is, the head, the seat of the intellect; Peter and his collaborators will be those who watch the reactions and perceive the sensations and transmit them to the mind, so that I may illuminate and direct what is to

be done for the welfare of the whole body and then, as they are enlightened and guided by My order, they may speak and guide the other parts of the body. The hand that wards off on object that can damage the body and drives away what, being corrupt, may corrupt; the foot that steps over an obstacle, without knocking against it and falling and being hurt, have received an order to do so from the part that directs. The, boy, or also the man, who is saved from a danger, or makes any kind of gain - education, good business, marriage, good alliance through a good piece of advice he received, for a word spoken - it is through that piece of advice and that word that he is not hurt or he makes a profit. It will be the same in the Church. The head, and the heads, led by the Divine Thought and enlightened by the Divine Light and instructed by the Eternal Word, give orders and advice, and the members will act, receiving spiritual health and gain.

My Church already exists, because it has its supernatural Head and its divine Head and it has its members: the disciples. Still small a germ being formed - perfect only in the Head directing it, imperfect in the rest, which needs the touch of God to be perfect and some time to grow. But I solemnly tell you that it already exists, and that it is holy on account of Him Who is its Head and of the good will of the just members composing it. It is holy and invincible. Hell, consisting of demons and men-demons, will hurl itself against it thousands of times and will fight it in thousands of ways, but it will not prevail. The edifice will be unshakeable.

But the building is not made with only one stone. Look at the Temple, over there, large, beautiful in the setting sun. Is it made with only one stone? It is a complex of stones forming a harmonious whole. We say: the Temple. That is, one unit. But this unit is made with the many stones that have composed and formed it. It would have been useless to lay the foundations, if they were not to support the walls and the roof, if no walls were to be raised on them. And it would have been impossible to raise walls and support the roof, if first they had not laid solid foundations, proportioned to such a huge mass. So with this interdependence of parts, also the new Temple will rise. In the course of ages, you will build it, laying it on the foundations that I have given it, and which are perfect, for its massive size. You will build it under the direction of God, with the good things used to raise it: the spirits in which God dwells.

With God in your hearts, to make them polished flawless stones for the new Temple. With His Kingdom established with its laws in your spirits. Otherwise you would be badly-baked bricks, worm-eaten wood, chipped cracked stones that do not last, and are rejected by the builder, if he is wary, or they do not hold out, they cave in, making a part collapse if the builder, the builders appointed by the

Father to the construction of the Temple, are idolatrous builders, who are proud in their hearts but do not watch over or work hard on the building that is rising, and neglect the materials used to make it. Idolatrous builders, idolatrous guardians, idolatrous keepers, thieves! Robbers of the trust in God, of the esteem of men, robbers full of pride, who are pleased to have the possibility of making a profit and of having large stocks of materials, but they do not watch whether they are good or of inferior quality, the cause of ruin.

You, new priests and scribes of the new Temple, listen. Woe to you and to those who after you will become idolatrous and will not watch and look after themselves and the other believers, to examine and test the good quality of the stones and timber, without trusting appearances, and will bring about ruin by allowing inferior quality, or even harmful materials to be used for the Temple, scandalising and causing disaster. Woe to you if you will allow unsafe, curved walls to be erected, full of large fissures and that will collapse easily, as they are not balanced on solid perfect foundations. The disaster would not come from God, the Founder of the Church, but from you, and you would be responsible for it before God and men. Care, attention, insight, prudence! The stone, the brick, the weak beam, which would be ruinous in a main wall, can serve for parts of minor importance, and serve well. That is how you must be able to choose. With charity in order not to disgust the weak parts, with firmness not to disgust God and ruin His Edifice. And if you become aware that a stone, already laid to support a main corner, is not good or is not balanced, be brave, bold, and remove it from that place, mortify it by squaring it with the chisel of holy zeal. If it howls with pain, it does not matter. It will bless you later, in the course of ages, because you saved it. Move it, appoint it to another office. Do not be afraid to send it away altogether, if you see that it is the cause of scandal and ruin and rebels against your work. Few stones are better than much rubbish. Do not be in a hurry. God is never in a hurry, but what He creates is eternal, because well thought over before being carried out. If it is not eternal, it will last to the end of time. Look at the Universe. For ages, for thousands of centuries it is as God made it through subsequent operations. Imitate the Lord. Be as perfect as your Father. Keep His Law and His Kingdom in you and you will not be unsuccessful.

But if you were not so, the building would collapse, you would have toiled in vain to erect it. It would collapse and only the cornerstone and the foundations would be left… That is what will happen to that one!… I solemnly tell you that that is what will happen to it. And that will be the fate of yours, if you put in it what is in this one: parts diseased with pride, avidity, sin, lust. As that pavilion of clouds, so gracefully beautiful, was blown away and dispersed by a breath of wind, while it seemed to be settling on the

top of that mountain, likewise, at a gust of a wind of supernatural and human punishment, will tumble the buildings that are holy by name… »

Jesus is silent and pensive. He resumes speaking only to say: « Let us sit down here and rest a little. »

They sit down on a slope of the Mount of Olives, in front of the Temple kissed by the setting sun. Jesus looks fixedly at that place and sorrowfully. The others are proud of its beauty, but a veil of worry, left by the words of the Master, is spread on their pride. And if that beauty should really perish?…

Peter and John speak to each other and then they whisper something to James of Alphaeus and Andrew, who nod assent. Then Peter addresses the Master saying: « Let us go aside and explain to us when Your prophecy on the destruction of the Temple will take place. Daniel mentions it, but if things were as he says and as You say, the Temple would have but a few more hours. But we do not see any armies or preparations for war. So when will it happen? Which will be the sign of it? You have come. You say that You are about to go away. And yet it is known that it will only happen when You are among men. So, will You come back? When will You come back? Tell us, so that we way know… »

« It is not necessary to go aside. See? The most faithful disciples have remained, those who will be of great help to you twelve. They may hear the words that I will speak to you. Come near Me, all of you. » He shouts the last words to gather them all.

The disciples scattered on the slope come near the others, they form a compact group around the main one of Jesus and the apostles and they listen.

« Take care that no one deceives you in future. I am the Christ and there will be no other Christs. So, when many will come and say to you: "I am the Christ" and they will deceive many, do not believe those words, even if they are accompanied by wonders. Satan, the father of falsehood and the protector of liars, assists his servants and followers with false wonders, which, however, can be recognised as not being good ones, because they are always joined to fear, perturbation and falsehood. You know the wonders of God: they give holy peace, joy, health, faith, and they lead to holy desires and deeds. The others do not. So ponder on the forms and consequences of the wonders you may see in future, performed by the false Christs and by all those who will clothe themselves in the garments of saviours of peoples, whereas they are wild beasts who ruin them.

You will hear also, and you will see people speak of wars and rumours of wars and they will say to you: "These are the signs of the end". Do not be upset. It will not be the end. All this must happen before the end, but it is not the end yet. People will rise against

people, kingdom against kingdom, nation against nation, continent against continent, and plagues, famines and earthquakes will follow in many places. But this is only the beginning of the birthpangs. Then they will bring affliction upon you and will kill you, accusing you of being guilty of their suffering, and hoping to get out of it by persecuting and destroying My servants. Men will always accuse the innocent of being the cause of the evil that they, sinners, procure for themselves. They accuse God Himself, Perfect Innocence and Supreme Goodness, of being the cause of their suffering, and they will do the same with you, and you will be hated on account of My Name. It is Satan who instigates them. And many will be scandalised and they will betray and hate one another. It is still Satan who instigates them. And many false prophets will arise, who will deceive many. And Satan is still the true author of so much evil. And with the increase of lawlessness, love in many men will grow cold. But those who stand firm to the end will be saved. And first this Good News of the Kingdom of God is to be preached all over the world, as a witness to all the nations. Then the end will come. The return to the Christ of Israel who will accept Him and the preaching of My Doctrine to all the world.

And then another sign. A sign for the end of the Temple and for the end of the World. When you see the abomination of the desolation prophesied by Daniel - let those who are listening to Me understand properly and let those who read the Prophet read between the lines - then those who are in Judaea must escape to the mountains, those who are on the terrace must not come down to collect what is in their houses, and those who are in the fields must not come back home to fetch their cloaks, but they must flee without turning back, otherwise it may happen that they will no longer be able to do so, and while running away they must not even turn round to look, in order not to keep the horrible sight in their hearts, and thus go mad. Woe to those with child and to those giving suck in those days! And woe if you have to escape on a Sabbath! The flight would not be sufficient to save you without sinning. So pray that it may not happen in winter or on a Sabbath, because then the tribulation will be so great as it has never been from the beginning of the world until now, nor will ever be alike again, because it will be the end. And if those days were not shortened for the sake of those who are chosen, no one would be saved, because the satan-men will enter into an alliance with hell to torture men.

And even then, in order to corrupt and mislead those who have remained faithful to the Lord, some people will arise and say: "The Christ is there, the Christ is here. He is in that place. There He is" Do not believe them. Let no one believe them, for false Christs and false prophets will arise and produce great signs and portents, enough to deceive even the chosen, if it were possible, and they will

-speak doctrines that are apparently so comforting and good as to deceive even the best ones, if the Spirit of God were not with them enlightening them on the truth and the satanic origin of such portents and doctrines. I am telling you. I am foretelling it, so that you may know how to behave. But do not be afraid of falling. If you remain in the Lord, you will not be led into temptation and ruin. Remember what I told you: "I have given you the power to walk on snakes and scorpions, and of all the power of the Enemy nothing will harm you, because everything will be subjected to you". But I also remind you that, in order to achieve this, you must have God within you, and you must rejoice, not because you control the powers of Evil and poisonous things, but because your names are written in Heaven.

Remain in God and in His truth. I am the Truth and I teach the truth. So I repeat to you once again: whatever they may say about Me, do not believe it. I alone have spoken the truth. I alone tell you that the Christ will come, but when it is the end. So, if they say to you: "He is in the desert", do not go. If they say to you: "He is in that house", do not listen to them. Because in His second coming the Son of man will be like lightning striking in the east and flashing as far as the west, in a shorter time than a blink. And He will glide over the great Body, suddenly turned into a Corpse, followed by His shining angels, and He will judge. Wherever the corpse is, there will the eagles gather. And immediately after the distress of those last days, as you have been told - I am speaking of the end of time and of the world and of the resurrection of the bones, of which the prophets speak - the sun will be darkened, and the moon will shed no more light, and the stars will fall from the sky like grapes from a bunch that is too ripe and is shaken by a gale, and the powers of Heaven will be shaken. And then in the darkened vault of heaven the dazzling sign of the Son of Man will appear, and all the nations of the Earth will weep, and men will see the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven with great power and glory. And He will order His angels to reap the corn and gather the grapes, and to separate the darnel from the corn, and to throw the grapes into the vat, because the time of the great harvest of Adam's seed has come, and there will be no more need to keep small bunches or seeds, because the human race will never be perpetuated again on the dead Earth. And He will order His angels to gather the chosen with loud trumpets from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to another, so that they may be beside the Divine Judge to judge with Him the last living men and those who have been raised from the dead.

Learn the similitude from the fig-tree: when you see its twigs grow supple and put forth leaves, you know that summer is near. So, when you see all these things, know that the Christ is about to

come. I solemnly tell you: this generation that did not want Me will not pass away, before all this takes place. My word does not pass. What I have said will take place. The hearts and minds of men may change, but My word does not change. Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away.

But as for the day and the exact hour, nobody knows them, not even the angels of the Lord, only the Father knows them. As it was in the, days of Noah, so it will be when the Son of man comes. In the days before the Flood, men were eating, drinking, taking wives, taking husbands, without worrying about the sign, right up to the day Noah went into the ark and the cataracts of heaven were opened and the Flood swept all living beings and things away. It will be like this also for the coming of the Son of man. Then two men will be close to each other in the field, and one will be taken and the other will be left, and two women will be at the millstone grinding, and one will be taken and one left by the enemies in the Fatherland, and even more by the angels who will be separating the good seed from the darnel, and they will have no time to prepare for the judgement of the Christ.

So be awake because you do not know at what time your Lord will come. Consider this: if the head of a family knew at what time a burglar would come, he would stay awake and would not let his house be robbed. So be vigilant and pray, being always prepared for the coming, without letting your hearts become sluggish through all kinds of abuse and intemperance, and your spirits be dull and distracted from the things of Heaven by excessive care for the things of the Earth, so that death may not take you all of a sudden, when you are not prepared. Because, bear this in mind, each one of you must die. All men, once they are born, must die, and this death and subsequent judgement is a particular coming of the Christ and its universal repetition will take place at the solemn coming of the Son of man.

What will happen to that faithful and prudent servant, appointed by his master to give food to the servants in his absence? His lot will be a happy one if his master comes back suddenly and finds him doing his duty with diligence, justice and love. I tell you solemnly that he will say to him: "Come, good faithful servant. You have deserved my reward. Here, administer all my property". But if he seemed good and faithful, but was not, and if interiorly he was as bad as he was hypocritical exteriorly, and once the master has left, he says to himself: "The master will come back late! Let us have a good time", and he begins to beat and ill-treat his fellow servants, cutting down their food and everything else to have more money to spend with revellers and drunkards, what will happen? The master will come back all of a sudden, when the servant does not expect him, and his wrong-doing will be found out, his position and

money will taken off him, and he will be led where justice wants. And there will he remain.

And the same will happen to the unrepentant sinner, who does not think that death can be close at hand, as his judgement can be near, and he enjoys himself and abuses saying: "Later I will repent". I tell you solemnly that he will not have time to do so, and he will be condemned to be for ever where there is dreadful horror, where there is only blasphemy and weeping and torture, and he will come out only for the final Judgement, when he will be reclothed with the flesh raised from the dead, to present himself entire at the final Judgement, as he was entire when he sinned in the time of his earthly life, and in body and soul he will present himself to Jesus Judge, Whom he did not want as his Saviour.

They will all be gathered there before the Son of man. An infinite multitude of bodies, given back by the land and by the sea and recomposed after being ashes for such a long time. And the souls in their bodies. To each flesh returned to the skeletons will correspond its own soul that once animated it. And they will stand before the Son of man, splendid in His divine Majesty, sitting on His throne of glory supported by His angels.

And He will separate men from men, placing the good on one side and the bad on the other, as a shepherd separates the sheep from the kids, and He will place the sheep on His right, and the goats on His left. And in a gentle voice and with a benign appearance he will say to those who look at Him with all the love of their hearts, and are peaceful and beautiful, shining with the glorious beauty of their holy bodies: "Come, you who have been blessed by My Father, take possession of the Kingdom prepared for you since the origin of the world. For I was hungry and you gave Me food, I was thirsty and you gave Me drink, I was a pilgrim and you gave Me hospitality, I was naked and you clothed Me, sick and you visited Me, in prison and you came to comfort Me". And the just will ask Him: "Lord, when did we see You hungry and we fed You, thirsty and we gave You drink? When did we see You a pilgrim and we welcomed You, naked and we clothed You? When did we see You sick and in prison and we came to visit You?" And the King of kings will say to them: "I tell you solemnly: when you did one of these things to one of the least of My brothers, you did it to Me".

He will then address those who are on His left hand and will say to them, looking very severe, and His eyes will be like flashes of lightning striking the reprobates, and in His voice the wrath of God will thunder: "Go away from here! Away from Me, with your curse upon you! Go to the eternal fire prepared by the fury of God for the devil and the angels of darkness and for those who have listened to their voices of treble obscene lechery. I was hungry and you did not give Me any food, I was thirsty and you did not quench My

thirst, I was naked and you did not clothe Me, I was a pilgrim and you rejected Me, I was sick and in prison and you did not visit Me. Because you had but one law: the pleasure of your own egos". And they will say to Him: "When did we see You hungry, thirsty, naked, pilgrim, sick, in prison? Really, we never met You. We did not exist, when You were on the Earth". And He will reply to them: "That is true. You never met Me. Because you did not exist when I was on the Earth. But you were acquainted with My word and you had among you people who were hungry, thirsty, naked, ill, in prison. Why did you not do to them what you would have perhaps done to Me? Because no one says that those, who had Me among them, were merciful to the Son of man. Do you not know that I am in My brothers, and that where one of them suffers, I am there, and that what you have not done to one of the least of My brothers, you have refused it to Me, the First-Born of men? Go and bum in your own selfishness. Go and be enveloped in darkness and ice, because you were darkness and ice yourselves, though you knew where the Light and the Fire of Love were". And they will go to the eternal torture, whereas the just will enter eternal life.

Those are the future things… Go now. And do not part from one another. I am going with John, and I shall be with you half through the first watch, for supper, and then we shall go to our teaching. »

« Also this evening? Shall we be doing that every evening? I am aching all over because of the dew. Would it not be better to go to some hospitable house now? Always under tents! Always watching at night, when it is cold and damp… » says Judas complaining.

« It is the last night. Tomorrow… it will be different. »

« Ah! I thought You wanted to go to Gethsemane every night. But if it is the last one… »

« I did not say that, Judas. I said that it will be the last night to spend all together at the Field of the Galileans. Tomorrow we will prepare for Passover and will consume the lamb, then I will go by Myself to Gethsemane to pray. And you can do what you like. »

« But shall we not come with You, Lord! When have we ever wanted to leave You? » asks Peter.

« You should be quiet, because you are culpable. You and the Zealot do nothing but flutter here and there as soon as the Master does not see you. I have been keeping an eye on you. At the Temple… on the day… in the tents up there… » says the Iscariot, happy to denounce them.

« That is enough! If they do that, they are doing the right thing. But do not leave Me alone… I beg you… »

« Lord, we are not doing anything wrong. Believe me. Our deeds are known to God, and His eyes do not turn away from them in disgust » says the Zealot.

« I know. But it is useless. And what is useless may always become

harmful. Be together as much as possible. » He then says to Matthew: « My good reporter, you will repeat to them the parable of the ten wise virgins and the ten foolish ones, and that of the master who gives some talents to his three servants to make them bear interests, and two earn twice as much and the sluggard hides it in the ground. Do you remember? »

« Yes, my Lord, very well. »

« Repeat them, then, because not everybody knows them. And also those who know them will be pleased to hear them again. You can while away the time so, in wise conversation, until I come back. Stay awake! Be vigilant! Keep your spirits awake. Those parables are also appropriate to what I have said. Goodbye. Peace be with you. »

He takes John by the hand and goes away with him towards the town… The others set out towards the Fields of the Galileans.

Jesus says: « You will put here the second part of the very toilsome Wednesday before Passover. Night (1945). Remember to mark in red the passages that I told you. Those little words throw light. A lot of light for those who can see it. »

595. The Night of the Wednesday before Passover. Last Teachings to the Apostles.

8th March 1945.

« I said to you: "Be careful, be awake and pray that your eyes may not become heavy with sleep". But I see that your tired eyes are trying to close and your bodies, even against your will, are anxious to find positions to rest. You are right, My poor friends! Your Master has exacted quite a lot of you these last few days, and you are so tired. But in a few hours, by now only few, you will be happy that you have not lost even one moment of My attention for you. You will be glad that you have not refused anything to your Jesus. In any case, this is the last time that I speak to you of sad things. Tomorrow I will speak to you of love and I will work a miracle of total love for you. Prepare yourselves through a great purification to receive it. Oh! how much more it agrees with My Ego to speak of love than to speak of punishment! How pleasant it is for Me to say: "I love you. Do come. Throughout My life I have dreamt of this hour!" But it is love to speak also of death. It is love because death, for those who love you, is the supreme proof of love. It is love, because preparing dear friends for a misfortune is providence of affection that wants them ready and not dismayed at that hour. It is love, because confiding a secret is proof of holding in high esteem those to whom it is confided. I know that you have harassed John with questions to learn what I said to him when I remained alone

with him. And you did not believe that no word was spoken. But it is so. It was enough for Me to have someone near Me… »

« Then, why he and not somebody else? » asks the Iscariot, and he does so in an arrogant indignant tone. Also Peter, and with him Thomas and Philip say: « Yes. Why he and not the others? »

Jesus replies to the Iscariot:

« Would you have liked to be the one? Can you pretend it?

It was a fresh clear morning in the month of Adar… I was an unknown wayfarer on the road near the river… Tired, covered with dust, pale with fasting, with an unkempt beard and broken sandals, I looked like a beggar on the roads of the world… He saw Me… and he recognised Me as the one on whom the Dove of the eternal fire had alighted. In that first transfiguration of Mine, an atom of My divine brightness must have revealed itself. The eyes of the Baptist, opened by Penance, and those preserved angelic by Purity, saw what the others did not see. And the pure eyes took that vision into the tabernacle of the heart, and closed it in there, like a pearl in a coffer… When almost after two months those eyes looked up at the worn-out wayfarer, his soul recognised Me… I was his love. His first and only love. The first and only love is never forgotten. The soul feels it coming, even if it had gone away, it feels it coming from remote distances, and leaps for joy, and awakes the mind, which arouses the flesh, so that they all may take part in the banquet of joy in meeting again and loving each other. And his trembling lips said to Me: "I greet You, Lamb of God". Oh! faith of the pure, how great you are! How you overcome all obstacles! He did not know My Name. Who was I? Where was I coming from? What was I doing? Was I rich? Was I poor? Was I wise? Was I ignorant? Of what avail to faith is it to know all that? Does it increase or diminish through knowledge? He believed what the Precursor had told him. Like a star that by order of the Creator transmigrates from one sky to another, he had parted from his sky, the Baptist, from his constellation, and had come towards his new sky, the Christ, in the constellation of the Lamb. And he is not the biggest star but he is the purest and the most beautiful one in the constellation of love. Three years have gone by since then. Large and small stars joined My constellation and then they departed from it. Some fell and died. Others have become smoky because of heavy vapours. But he has remained fixed with his pure light near the Pole-star.

Let Me look at his light. Two will be the lights in the darkness of the Christ: Mary and John. But it will be almost impossible for Me to see them, so deep will be My sorrow. Let Me impress in My eyes these four irises that are strips of sky between fair eyelashes, to take with Me, where no one will be able to come, a remembrance of purity. All the sins! Everything on the shoulders of the Man! Oh! Oh! this drop of purity!… My Mother! John! And I!… The three shipwrecked

persons emerging from the shipwreck of mankind in the sea of Sin!

It will be the hour in which I, the offspring of David's stock, will say, moaning with David's ancient sigh: "My God, turn to look at Me. Why have You deserted Me? The shouts of the crimes that I have taken upon Myself on behalf of everybody are driving Me away from You… I am a worm, no longer a man, the dishonour of mankind, the refuse of the populace". And listen to Isaiah: "I abandoned My body to those who struck Me, My cheeks to those who tore at My beard, I did not remove My face from those who insulted Me and covered Me with spittle". Listen to David again: "Many bullcalves have surrounded Me, many bulls have assailed Me. Their jaws are agape to tear Me to pieces, like lions tearing and roaring. I am like water that is draining away". And Isaiah completes: "I dyed My garments Myself". Oh! I am dyeing My garments Myself, not with My anger, but with My sorrow and My love for you. Like the two flat stones of the press, they squeeze Me and My Blood. I am like the pressed bunch of grapes, that was beautiful when it entered the press, and afterwards it is pulp squashed without juice and beauty. And I say with David, My heart "is like wax and melts within My chest". Oh! perfect Heart of the Son of man, what are you becoming now? You are like the heart that a long life of revelry has exhausted and enervated. All My vigour has withered. My tongue is sticking to My palate because of fever, heat and agony. And death is advancing in its suffocating blinding ashes. And there is no mercy either! "A pack of hounds surrounds Me and bites Me. They bite Me where I am wounded and blows strike Me where I have been bitten. No part of My body is without pain. My bones creak as they are dislocated through beastly stretching. I do not know where to lay My body. The dreadful crown is a ring of iron that penetrates My head. I am hanging from My pierced hands and feet. Raised up as I am, I show My body to the world and everybody can count My bones"… »

« Be quiet! Be quiet! » says John sobbing.

« Say no more! You make us suffer the throes of death! » say His cousins imploringly.

Andrew does not speak, but with his head between his knees he is weeping noiselessly. Simon is livid. Peter and James of Zebedee seem to be tortured. Philip, Thomas and Bartholomew look like three stone statues representing anguish.

Judas Iscariot is a gruesome demoniac masque. He looks like a damned person who at last realises what he has done. With his mouth open to utter a cry that howls inside him but is stifled in his throat, his eyes wide open and frightened like those of a madman, his cheeks sallow under the brownish veil of his shaven beard, his hair unkempt as he ruffles it now and again with his hand, wet

with perspiration and cold, he seems to be on the point of fainting.

Matthew, raising his eyes, so far lowered, to seek some assistance in his torture, sees him and says: « Judas! Are you not well?… Master, Judas is suffering! »

« And I, too » says Christ. « But I am suffering with peace. Become spirits to be able to bear this hour. Anyone who is "flesh" cannot live it without becoming mad… »

Once again speaks David, who sees the tortures of his Christ: "They are not yet satisfied and they look at Me, they laugh Scornfully at Me and they divide My garments among them and cast lots for My tunic. I am the Evil-doer. It is their right".

Oh! Earth, look at your Christ! Recognise Him, although He is so consumed. Listen, remember the words of Isaiah and understand why, the great why, He became so, and man was able to kill the Word of the Father, reducing Him to such a state. "He is without beauty and splendour. We saw Him. He was not handsome. And we did not love Him. Despised like the last of men, He, the Man of sorrows and accustomed to suffering, had His face concealed. He was despised and we took no account of Him". This masque of one who is tortured was His beauty as Redeemer. But you, foolish Earth, preferred His serene face! "He really took our sufferings upon Himself, He bore our sorrows. And we looked at Him as if He were a leper, as one cursed by God and despised. He, instead, was injured because of our wickedness. The punishment reserved for us, the punishment that gives us back peace with God, has fallen upon Him. Through His wounds we are healed. We had all gone astray like sheep. Each had deviated from the straight path and the Lord burdened Him with the sins of all of us".

Those who think that they have done good to themselves and to Israel should undeceive themselves. And likewise those who think they have been stronger than God. And also those who think that they do not have to expiate this sin, only because I voluntarily allow them to kill Me. I am fulfilling My holy task, My perfect obedience to the Father. But that does not exclude their obedience to Satan and their wicked task. Yes, o Earth, your Redeemer has been sacrificed because He wanted it. "He never opened His mouth to utter a word of prayer and thus be spared or a word to curse His murderers. Like a sheep He let Himself be led to the slaughter-house to be killed, like a lamb that is dumb before its shearers". "After being captured and condemned He was raised. He will have no offspring. Like a tree He was cut off from the land of the living. God has struck Him for the sins of His people. Will no one of His generation on His Earth pity Him? Will the man cut off from the Earth have no children?"

Oh! I am replying to you, o prophet of your Christ. If my people will have no pity on the innocent Man killed, the angels of the

heavenly people will pity Him. If His virility will have no children in a human way, because His Nature could not find union with a mortal body, He will indeed have children, and many of them, according to a procreation that will bring life not from animal flesh and blood, but from divine love and Blood, a procreation of the spirit whereby eternal will be its offspring. And I will also explain to you, o world, that do not understand the prophet, who are the wicked placed at His grave, and the rich man at His death. Consider, o world, whether even one of His murderers had peace and a long life! He, the Living One, will soon leave death. But, like leaves that the autumn wind lays one by one in the hollow of a furrow after detaching them with repeated gusts, they will soon be laid one by one in the ignoble tomb that had been decreed for Him; and one who lived for gold, if it were lawful to put and unclean man where the Holy One was, could be laid where there will still be the dampness brought about by the numberless wounds of the Victim sacrificed on the mountain.

As He was accused although He was innocent, God avenges Him, because there was never perjury in His mouth, or iniquity in His heart. He was consumed by pain. But once consumption has taken place and His life has been taken for the sacrifice of expiation, His glory will begin with future generations. All the desires and the Holy wills of God on His behalf will be accomplished. Because of all the anxiety of His soul, He will see the glory of the true people of God and will be happy. His heavenly doctrine, which He will seal with His Blood, will be the justification of many of the best ones, and He will take upon Himself the wickedness of sinners. And that is why this unknown King, Whom the wicked mocked at and the best ones did not understand, will have a large multitude, o Earth. And with His followers He will divide the spoils o I the defeated. He will divide the spoils of strong men, the only Judge of the three kingdoms and of the Kingdom. He has deserved everything, because He gave everything. Everything will be delivered to Him, because He delivered Himself to death and was numbered with criminals, He Who was without sin. Without any other sin except perfect love and infinite goodness. Two sins that the world does not forgive, such a love and goodness that urged Him to take upon Himself the sins of many, of the whole world, and to pray for sinners. For all sinners. Also for those through whom He was put to death.

I have finished. I have nothing else to say. Everything has been said of what I wanted to tell you of the Messianic prophecies. I have explained them all to you, from My birth to My death, so that you may know Me and have no doubts, and may have no excuses for Your sin.

And now let us pray together. This is the last evening we can pray

thus, all united like grapes to the bunch supporting them. Come. Let us pray. "Our Father, Who art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy Name. Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done on Earth as it is done in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen".

"Hallowed be Thy Name". Father, I have hallowed it. Have mercy on Your Son.

"Thy Kingdom come". I am dying in order to establish it. Have mercy on Me.

"Thy will be done". Support My weakness, You Who created the flesh of man and clothed Your Word with it, that I may obey You down here as I have always obeyed You in Heaven. Have mercy on the Son of man.

"Give us our Bread"… A bread for the soul. A bread not of this Earth. I do not ask it for Myself. I need only Your spiritual comfort. But I, the Beggar, stretch out My hand for them. Before long it will be pierced and nailed, and it will no longer be able to make a gesture of love. But it can still do it now. Father, grant Me to give them the Bread that daily fortifies the weakness of the poor children of Adam. They are weak, Father, they are inferior, because they do not have the Bread that is strength, the angelical Bread that spiritualises man and leads him to be deified in Us.

« Forgive us our trespasses"… »

Jesus Who has spoken standing and has prayed with His arms stretched out, now kneels down and raises His arms and face to Heaven. A face made wan by the effort of the supplication and by the kiss of the moon, furrowed by silent tears.

« Forgive Your Son, o Father, if I wronged You in any way. I may also seem imperfect to Your Perfection, I, Your Christ, burdened by flesh. To men… no. My conscious intellect assures Me that I have done everything for them. But forgive Your Jesus… I also forgive. I forgive, that You may forgive Me. How much I have to forgive! How much!… And yet I forgive. Those who are present here, the disciples who are absent, those whose hearts are deaf, My enemies, mockers, traitors, killers, deicides… Here. I have forgiven the whole of Mankind. With regard to Me, o Father, consider remitted all debts of man to the Man. I am dying in order to give Your Kingdom to everybody, and I do not want the sin against the Love incarnate to be imputed to them as condemnation. No? Are You saying no?It is My grief. This "no" is pouring the first sip of the bitter chalice into My heart. But Father, Whom I have always obeyed, I say to You: "Thy will be done".

"Lead us not into temptation". Oh! if You want, You can drive the demon away from us! He is the temptation that incites flesh, minds, hearts. He is the Seducer. Turn him away, Father! Your archangel

in our favour! To put to flight him who lays snares for us from our birth to our death!… Oh! Holy Father, have mercy on Your children!

"Deliver us, deliver us from evil!" You can. We are weeping here… Heaven is so beautiful and we are afraid of losing it. You say: "My Blood cannot lose it". But I want You to see the Man in Me, the Firstborn of men. I am their brother. I pray for them and with them. Father, mercy! Oh! mercy!… »

Jesus bends with His face on the ground. He then stands up. « Let us go. Let us say goodbye to one another this evening. It will no longer be possible tomorrow evening. We shall be too upset. And there is no love where there is perturbation. Let us kiss one another with the kiss of peace. Tomorrow… tomorrow each of you will belong to himself… This evening we can still be one for all and all for one. »

And He kisses them, one by one, beginning from Peter, then Matthew, Simon, Thomas, Philip, Bartholomew, the Iscariot, His two cousins, James of Zebedee, Andrew and last John, on whom He leans while leaving Gethsemane.

596. The Thursday before Passover. Preparation for the Supper and Announcement of the Glorification through Death.

3rd April 1947.

It is morning again. So serene! So joyful! Even the rare clouds that yesterday were wandering slowly in the cobalt-blue sky are no longer there. Neither is there the heavy sultriness that was so oppressive yesterday. A light breeze blows gently on people's faces. And it carries the scent of flowers, of hay, of pure air. And it gently moves the leaves of the olive-trees. It seems anxious to let people admire the silver shade of the small lanceolate leaves, to shed tiny white scented flowers on the steps of Christ, on His fair-haired head, to kiss Him, to refresh Him - because each tiny calyx has its very small dew-drop - to kiss Him, to refresh Him, then die before seeing the impending horror. And the grass on the hillocks bows shaking the bell-flowers, the corollas, the little palms of thousands of flowers. The large wild ox-eye daisies, stars with golden hearts, are standing high up on their stems as if to kiss the hand that will soon be pierced, and the small daisies and the wild camomile kiss His generous feet, which will stop walking for the good of men only when they are nailed to give an even greater good, and the brierroses smell sweetly, and the hawthorn, which no longer has any flowers, moves its indented leaves. It seems to be saying: « No, no » to those who will use it to torture the Redeemer. And « no » say the reeds of the Kidron. They do not want to strike either, and their

will of little things does not want to harm the Lord. And perhaps also the stones on the slopes are happy to be out of town, in the olivegrove, because being there, they will not hurt the Martyr. And the thin rosy convolvuli, which Jesus loved so much, are weeping, as well as the corymbs of the snow-white acacias, similar to clusters of butterflies pressing against one stem, perhaps they are thinking: « We shall never see Him again. » And the myosotes, so slender and pure, drop their corollas when touched by the purple mantle that Jesus is wearing again. It must be beautiful to die being struck by something that belongs to Jesus. All the flowers, also a lost lily of the valley, which perhaps fell there by accident and came up among the protruding roots of an olive-tree, is happy to be seen and picked by Thomas and offered to the Lord… And happy are the thousand birds among the branches to greet Him with joyful songs. Oh! the birds that He always loved do not curse Him! Even a small herd of sheep seem to be wishing to greet Him, although they are sad, having been deprived of their little ones that have been sold for the Passover sacrifice. It is the lament of mothers resounding in the air, as they bleat calling their little ones that will never come back, and they come to rub against Jesus, looking at Him with their meek eyes.

The sight of the sheep reminds the apostles of the rite and when they are almost at Gethsemane, they ask Jesus: « Where shall we go to consume the Passover? Which place are You choosing? Tell us and we will go and prepare everything. »

And Judas of Kerioth says: « Give me Your orders and I will go. »

« Peter. John. Listen to Me. »

The two, who were a little ahead, approach Jesus Who has called them.

« Go ahead and enter the town by the Dung Gate. As soon as you go in, you will meet a man who is coming back from En Rogel with a pitcher of that good water. Follow him until he goes into a house. You will say to him who is in it: "The Master says: 'Where is the room where I may eat the Passover with My disciples?'". He will show you a large supper-room, which is ready. Prepare everything there. Go quickly and then join us at the Temple. »

The two go away in a hurry. Jesus instead proceeds slowly. The morning is still cool, and only the first pilgrims appear on the roads leading into town. They cross the little Kidron bridge that is before Gethsemane and enter the town. The gates are no longer watched by legionaries, probably because of a counter-order by Pilate, who has been reassured by the lack of disputes concerning Jesus. There is in fact absolute tranquillity everywhere.

Oh! no one can deny that the Judaeans have been able to control themselves! No one has molested the Master or His disciples. Behaving respectfully if not affectionately, and as well-mannered people,

they have always greeted Him, even the most rancorous members of the Sanhedrin. Also yesterday's reproof was borne with incomparable patience. And as Caiaphas' country house is close to that gate, just now a large group of Pharisees and scribes passes by coming from it, and among them there is the son of Annas with Helkai, Doras and Sadoc. And bending their backs covered with wide mantles they pay their respects among the fluttering of garments, fringes and bulky headgear. Jesus greets them and passes by, regal in His red woollen tunic and His mantle of a darker shade, the headgear of Syntyche in His hand, while the sun turns His copperred hair into a golden wreath and a shining veil reaching down to His shoulders. After He has passed the backs straighten up and the faces appear: those of furious hyenas.

Judas of Kerioth, who was always looking around with his treacherous face, moves to the roadside under the pretext of tying his sandal and, I can see him very well, beckons to those men to wait for him… He lets the group of Jesus and His disciples go ahead, always busy at the buckle of his sandal to strike an attitude; he then passes quickly close to the scribes and Pharisees and whispers: « At the Beautiful Gate. About the sixth hour. One of you » and he darts away quickly, joining his companions. Frank, impudently frank!…

They go up to the Temple. Only few Jews as yet. But many Gentiles. Jesus goes to worship the Lord. He then comes back and He tells Simon and Bartholomew to buy the lamb getting the money from Judas of Kerioth.

« I could have done it! » says Judas.

« You will have other things to do. You know that. There is that widow to whom the offering of Mary of Lazarus is to be taken, informing her that after the festivities she should go to Bethany, to Lazarus. Do you know where she lives? Have you understood? »

« Yes, I know! Zacharias, who knows her well, showed me the place. » And he adds: « I am very glad to go. Not so much because of the journey, as because of the lamb. When have I to go? »

« Later. I shall not stop long here. I will rest today, as I want to be fit for this evening and for My night prayer. »

« All right. »

Well, I wonder: Jesus, Who in the past days has said nothing about His intentions in order not to let Judas have any details, why does He now say, why does He repeat what He will do during the night? Has His Passion already begun with the blindness of foresight, or has this foresight increased so much that He can read in the books of Heaven that that is « the night » and that therefore it is necessary to make it known to him who is waiting to know, so that he may hand Him over to His enemies, or has He always known that His immolation is to begin that night? I cannot give any answer. Jesus does not give me any reply. And I remain with my queries, while

I watch Jesus Who is curing the last sick people. The last ones… Tomorrow, in a few hours, He will no longer be able… The Earth will be bereft of its powerful Healer of bodies. But the Victim, from His scaffold, will begin the series, uninterrupted for twenty centuries, of His spiritual healings.

Today I am contemplating rather than describing. My Lord makes me project my spiritual sight from what I see happening in the last day of Christ's freedom, to what it will be throughout ages… Today I am contemplating the feelings, the thoughts of the Master rather than what is happening around Him. I am already in the distressing understanding of His torture at Gethsemane…

As usual Jesus is overwhelmed by the crowd that has increased and consists now mainly of Hebrews, who forget to hasten to the place where lambs are sacrificed, anxious as they are to approach Jesus, the Lamb of God, Who is about to be immolated. And the people go on asking questions and they want further explanations.

Many are Hebrews who have come from the Diaspora, and having heard people speak of the reputation of the Christ, of the Galilean Prophet, of the Rabbi of Nazareth, they are curious to hear Him speak and are anxious to get rid of every possible doubt. And they push through the crowd and they implore those from Palestine saying: « You always have Him with you. You know who He is. You can hear His words whenever you wish. We have come from afar and we shall be departing immediately after satisfying the precept. Let us go to Him! » The crowd gives way with difficulty to make room for them. And they approach Jesus and watch Him with curiosity. They talk in low voices to one another, group by group.

Jesus observes them, even if at the same time He listens to a group of people who have come from Perea. Then, after dismissing the latter group of people, who have given him money for the poor, as many people do, and He has handed it to Judas as usual, He begins to speak.

« You are all of the same religion, but of different places of origin, and many of those who are present here are wondering: "Who is this man who is called the Nazarene?", and their hopes clash with their doubts. Listen:

It is said of Me: "A shoot will spring from the stock of Jesse, a flower will come from this root and the Spirit of the Lord will rest upon Him. He will not judge by what appears to the eyes, He will give no verdict on hearsay, but He will judge the wretched with integrity, He will take up the cudgels for the lowly. The shoot of the root of Jesse, placed as a signal among nations, will be implored by peoples and His sepulchre will be glorious. After hoisting a flag for the nations, He will gather together the refugees of Israel, He will assemble the scattered people of Judah from the four corners of the Earth".

It is said of Me: "Here is the Lord God coming with power, His arm will triumph. He carries with Him His prize, His work is before His eyes. Like a shepherd he will pasture his flock".

It is said of Me: "Here is My Servant with Whom I will stay, in Whom My soul delights. I have endowed Him with My spirit. He will bring justice to the nations. He will not shout, He will not break the crushed reed, He will not put out the smoky wick, He will do justice according to truth. Without being sad or turbulent, He will succeed in establishing justice on the Earth, and the islands will await His law".

It is said of Me: "I, the Lord, have called You in justice, I have taken You by the hand, I have preserved You, I have appointed You as covenant of the people and light of the nations, to open the eyes of the blind, to free captives from prison and those who lie in darkness from the dungeon".

It is said of Me: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because the Lord has anointed Me to announce the Good News to the meek, to cure those whose hearts are broken, to preach liberty to slaves, freedom to prisoners, to preach the year of grace of the Lord".

It is said of Me: "He is the Strong one, He will feed His flock with the power of the Lord, with the majesty of the name of the Lord His God. They will be converted to Him, because as from now He will be glorified to the utmost limits of the world".

It is said of Me: "I will go and look for My sheep Myself. I will look for the lost ones, I will bring back those that have been driven away, I will bind those with fractures, I will nourish the weak ones, I will watch over the ones that are fat and strong, I will pasture them with justice".

It is said: "He is the Prince of peace and will be the peace".

It is said: "Here comes your King, the Just One, the Saviour. He is poor, He is riding a little donkey. He will announce peace to the nations. His dominion will be from sea to sea, to the utmost limits of the Earth".

It is said: "Seventy weeks have been decreed for your people, for your holy city, so that prevarication may be removed, sin may come to an end, wickedness may be cancelled, eternal justice may come, visions and prophecies may be fulfilled, and the Holy of Holies may be anointed. After seven plus sixty-two the Christ will come. After sixty-two He will be killed. After one week He will confirm the will, but in the middle of the week victims and sacrifices will stop, and the abomination of desolation will be in the Temple, and it will last until the end of time".

So will there be a shortage of victims in these days? Will the altar have no victim? It will have the great Victim. Here, the prophet sees it: "Who is this coming with garments stained with crimson? He is handsome in His garment and He marches in the fullness of

His strength".

And He Who is poor, how did He dye His garment with purple? Here, the prophet explains it: "I abandoned My body to those who struck Me, My cheeks to those who tore at My beard, I did not turn My face away from those who insulted Me. My handsomeness and My splendour were lost, and men no longer loved Me. Men have despised Me and considered Me the last one! The man of sorrows, My face will be veiled and scorned and they will regard Me as a leper, whereas on behalf of everybody I shall be covered with sores and put to death. Here is the Victim. Be not afraid, Israel! Be not afraid. The Passover Lamb is not unavailable! Be not afraid, o Earth! Be not afraid. Here is the Saviour. Like a sheep He will be led to the slaughter-house, because He wanted that, and He did not open His mouth to curse those who are killing Him. After being condemned He will be raised and consumed in pain, with His limbs dislocated, His bones uncovered, His feet and hands pierced. But after the anguish through which He will justify many, He will possess multitudes because, after delivering His life to death for the salvation of the world, He will rise from the dead and will rule the Earth, He will nourish peoples with the waters seen by Ezekiel, flowing out of the true Temple that, even if it is knocked down, will rise again through its own strength, and with the wine by which also the snow-white garment of the spotless Lamb has been dyed purple, and with the Bread descended from Heaven".

You who are thirsty, come to the waters! You who are hungry, take your nourishment! You who are worn out and you, sick people, drink My wine! Come, you who have no money, you who are in bad health, come! And you who are in Darkness! And you who are dead, come! I am Riches and Health. I am Light and Life. Come, you who are looking for the Way! Come, you who are seeking the Truth! I am Way and Truth! Do not be afraid of not being able to consume the Lamb because there are no really holy victims in this desecrated Temple. You will all be able to eat of the Lamb of God, Who has come to take away the sins of the world, as the last of the prophets of My people said of Me. Of that people whom I ask: My people, what have I done to you? In what have I grieved you? What else could I have given you more than what I gave you? I taught your minds, I cured your sick people, I helped your poor people, I satisfied the hunger of your crowds, I loved you in your children, I forgave and prayed for you. I loved you to the extent of Sacrifice. And what are you preparing for your Lord? One hour, the last one, is given to you, My people, My regal and holy town. Come back in this hour to the Lord your God! »

« He has spoken true words! »

« That is what is said! And He really does what is said! »

« Like a shepherd He has taken care of everybody! »

« As if we were stray sheep, sick, in darkness, He has come to lead us to the right way, to cure our souls and bodies, to enlighten us. »

« All the peoples really go to Him. Look over there, at those Gentiles, how admired they are! »

« He has preached peace. »

« He has given love. »

« I do not understand what He says about the sacrifice. He speaks as if He had to be killed. »

« It is so, if He is the Man seen by the prophets, the Saviour. »

« And He speaks as if all the people had to ill-treat Him. That will never happen. The people, we, love Him. »

« He is our friend. We will defend Him. »

« He is a Galilean, and we Galileans will give our lives for Him. »

« He is of David's stock, and we men of Judaea will raise our hands to defend Him. »

« And we, whom He loved as He loved you, we from Hauran, from Perea, from the Decapolis, shall we ever forget Him? We will all defend Him. »

These are the voices of the crowd, which by now is very numerous. How transient are human intentions! Judging by the position of the sun I think it must be about nine o'clock a.m. our time. Twenty-four hours later these people will have been round the Martyr for-many hours, to torture Him with their hatred and blows, and shouting they will request His death. Few, very few, too few among the thousands of people who are crowding from every part of Palestine and farther away, and who have received light, health, wisdom, forgiveness from Christ, will be those who not only will not try to tear Him away from His enemies, because their small number compared with the multitude of the strikers prevents them, but will not even be able to comfort Him giving Him a proof of their love by following Him with a friendly attitude. The praises, assents and admired comments spread through the large court, like waves that from the open sea go far to die on the beach.

Some scribes, Judaeans and Pharisees try to counteract the enthusiasm of the people as well as the ferment of the people against the enemies of the Christ saying: « He is raving. His tiredness is so great and makes Him delirious. He mistakes honours for persecutions. His words have torrents of His usual wisdom, but mixed with delirious sentences. No one wants to hurt Him. We have understood. We have understood who He is… »

But the people are doubtful about such a great change of humour and some rebel against them saying: « He cured my insane son. I know what madness is. One who is mad does not speak like that! »

And another one says: « Let them say. They are vipers who are afraid that the club of the people may break their backs. They sing the sweet song of the nightingale in order to deceive us, but, if you

listen carefully, there is the hiss of the snake in it. »

And also another one:« Sentries of the people of Christ, look out! When the enemy caresses, he has a dagger concealed in his sleeve, and he stretches out his hand to strike. Keep your eyes open and your hearts ready! Jackals cannot become meek lambs. »

« You are right: the owl lures and enchants simple little birds with the immobility of its body and with the false joy of its greeting. It laughs and invites with its cry, but it is ready to devour. »

And so forth, from group to group.

But there are also some Gentiles, who have been constant and more and more numerous in listening to the Master during the days of the festivity. They are always at the edge of the crowd, because the Hebrew-Palestinian exclusivism is strong and repels them pretending the places closest to the Master, so they wish to approach Him and speak to Him.

A large group of them casts glances at Philip, who has been pushed into a corner by the crowd. They approach him saying: « Sir, we wish to see Jesus, your Master, at close quarters, and speak to Him at least once. »

Philip stands on the tips of his toes to see whether there is any apostle closer to the Lord. He sees Andrew and after calling him, he shouts: « There are some Gentiles here who would like to greet the Master. Ask Him whether He will receive them. »

Andrew, a few metres away from Jesus, squeezed in the crowd, pushes his way through the crowd, working generously with his elbows without regard and shouting: « Make way! Make way, I say. I must go to the Master. » He reaches Him and informs Him of the wish of the Gentiles.

« Take them to that comer. I will come to them. »

And while Jesus tries to pass through the crowd, John, who has just come back with Peter, struggles to make way for Him and is assisted in doing so by Peter, Judas Thaddeus, James of Zebedee and Thomas, who leaves the group of his relatives that he met in the crowd in order to help his companions.

Jesus is where the Gentiles already are and they greet Him. « Peace be with you. What do you want of Me? »

« To see You and speak to You. Your words have upset us. We have always been wanting to speak to You to tell You that Your word affects us. But we were waiting for a suitable moment to do so. Today… You are speaking of death… We are afraid that we shall not be able to speak to You any more, if we do not take advantage of this hour. But is it possible that the Hebrews may kill their best son? We are Gentiles, and we have received no favour from Your hand. Your word was unknown to us. We have heard people speak of You vaguely. But we had never seen You or approached You. And yet, as You can see, we pay homage to You. It is the whole

world that honours You with us. »

« Yes, the hour has come when the Son of man is to be glorified by men and by spirits. »

Now the crowd is round Jesus once again but with the difference that the Gentiles are in the first row and the others behind.

« But if it is the hour of Your glorification, You will not die, as You say, or as we have understood. Because it is not a glorification to die in that way. How will You be able to gather the world under Your sceptre, if You die before doing so? If Your arm is immobilised by death, how will it be able to triumph and gather peoples together? »

« By dying, I give life. By dying, I build. By dying, I create the new People. It is through sacrifice that one gains victory. I solemnly tell you that if the wheat grain that has fallen on the ground does not die, it remains unfruitful. If instead it dies, then it yields a rich harvest. He who loves his life will lose it. He who hates his life in this world, will save it for the eternal life. It is My duty to die to give this eternal life to all those who follow Me to serve the Truth. Let those who want to serve Me come: the places in My kingdom are not limited to this or that people. Let whoever wants to serve Me come and follow Me, and where I am, My servant will be there as well. And he who serves Me will be honoured by My Father, the Only, True God, the Lord of Heaven and Earth, the Creator of everything that exists, the Thought, Word, Love, Life, Way, Truth; Father, Son, Holy Spirit, One being Trine, Trine being One, Only, True God. But now My soul is upset. And what shall I say? Shall I perhaps say: "Father save Me from this hour"? No. Because I have come for this: to arrive at this hour. So I will say: "Father, glorify Your Name!" »

Jesus stretches out His arms crosswise, a purple cross against the white marbles of the porch and He raises His head, offering Himself, praying, ascending with His soul to the Father.

And a voice, louder than thunder, immaterial inasmuch it is not like any human voice, but very sensible to all ears, fills the clear sky of the beautiful April day and vibrates, more powerful than the chord of a gigantic organ, in a very beautiful tonality, and proclaims: « I have glorified Him and I will glorify Him again. »

The people have been frightened. That voice, so powerful that the soil and what is on it vibrated because of it, that mysterious voice, different from any other, coming from an unknown source, that voice that fills everything, from north to south, from east to west, terrorises the Hebrews and amazes the heathens. The former, when possible, throw themselves on the ground, murmuring in their fear: « We shall die now! We have heard the voice of Heaven. An angel has spoken to Him! » and they beat their breasts awaiting death. The latter shout:« A peal of thunder! A rumbling roar! Let us run away!

The Earth has roared! It has quaked! » But it is impossible to run away in the throng that increases with those who from outside the walls of the Temple rush inside shouting: « Have mercy on us! Let us run! This is a holy place. The mountain where the altar of God rises will not split! » So they all remain where they were, where the crowd and fear block them.

Priests, scribes, Pharisees, Levites, magistrates, who were scattered in the meanders of the Temple, rush to its terraces. They are excited and dumbfounded. But of all of them only Gamaliel with his son comes down among the people in the courts. Jesus sees him passing by, all white in his linen garment, which is so white that it gleams even in the strong sun shining on it.

Jesus, looking at Gamaliel, but as if He were speaking to everybody, raises His voice saying: « Not for Me, but for you, has this voice come from Heaven. »

Gamaliel stops, turns round, and with the glances of his very deep dark eyes - which the habit of being a master worshipped like a demigod has involuntarily made as hard as those of predators he pierces through the sapphire, limpid, majestically mild eyes of Jesus…

And Jesus resumes: « The judgement of this world takes place now. Now the Prince of Darkness is about to be driven out. And when I have been lifted up, I will draw everybody to Myself, because that is how the Son of man will save. »

« We have learnt from the books of the Law that the Christ lives for ever. And You say that You are the Christ and You say that You must die. And You also say that You are the Son of man and that You will save, being lifted up. So who are You? The Son of man or the Christ? And who is the Son of man? » ask the crowds, who are taking heart again.

« They are only one person. Open your eyes to the Light. Only for a short time the Light will still be with you. Walk towards the Truth while you have the Light among you, that you may not be overtaken by darkness. Those who walk in darkness do not know where they will end up. While you have the Light among you, believe in It, to be the children of the Light. » He becomes silent.

The crowd is perplexed and divided. Some go away shaking their heads. Some watch the attitude of the main dignitaries: Pharisees, chiefs of the priests, scribes… and particularly of Gamaliel, and they regulate their conduct on that attitude. And others nod assent and bow to Jesus clearly meaning: « We believe! We honour You for what You are. » But they dare not side openly with Him. They are afraid of the vigilant eyes of Christ's enemies, of the mighty ones, who are watching them from the high terraces dominating the splendid porches surrounding the courts of the Temple.

Also Gamaliel, after remaining pensive for some minutes, and

he seems to be questioning the marbles of the pavement for answers to his inward questions, sets out again towards the exit, after shaking his head and shoulders, as if to express disappointment or scorn… and he passes straight in front of Jesus, without looking at Him any more.

Jesus, instead, looks at him compassionately… and he raises His voice again, very loudly - it sounds like the blare of a trumpet to overcome every noise and be heard by the great scribe who is going away disappointed. He seems to be speaking to everybody, but it is clear that He is speaking for him alone. He says in a very loud voice:

« He who believes in Me, does not really believe in Me, but in Him Who sent Me, and he who sees Me, sees Him Who sent Me. And He is indeed the God of Israel! Because there is no other God but He. That is why I say: if you cannot believe in Me as the man who is said to be the son of Joseph of David and the son of Mary, of the stock of David, of the Virgin seen by the Prophet, born at Bethlehem, as is announced by the prophecies, preceded by the Baptist, as also has been said for ages, believe at least the voice of your God Who has spoken to you from Heaven. Believe in Me as the Son of this God of Israel. Because if you do not believe in Him Who has spoken to you from Heaven, you do not offend Me, but your God Whose Son I am.

Do not remain in darkness! I have come as Light to the world, so that he who believes in Me may not remain in darkness. Do not create remorses for yourselves, as you might not be able to appease your minds when I have gone back whence I came, and they would be a severe punishment of God for your stubbornness. I am willing to forgive, while I am among you, until judgement is passed, and as far as I am concerned, I wish to forgive. But the mind of the Father is different from Mine. Because I am Mercy and He is Justice.

I solemnly tell you that if a man listens to My words and does not comply with them. I will not judge him. I did not come to the world to judge it, but to save it. But if I do not judge, I solemnly tell you that there is who will judge you by your actions. My Father, Who sent Me, will judge those who reject His Word. Yes, he who despises Me and does not acknowledge the Word of God, and does not receive the words of the Word, well, he has who will judge him: the very word that I have announced will judge him on the last day. It is said: God is not to be scoffed at. And the God scoffed at will be terrible with those who considered Him mad and mendacious.

Bear in mind, all of you, that the words you heard Me utter, come from God. Because I have not spoken on My own account, but the Father Who sent Me, prescribed what I must say and of what I have to speak. And I obey His order, because I know that His commandment is just. Each command of God is eternal life. And I, your

Master, set for you the example of obedience to all commands of God. You may rest assured that the things I told you and I am telling you, I said them and I am saying them as My Father told Me to say them to you. And My Father is the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob; the God of Moses, of the patriarchs and of the prophets, the God of Israel, your God. »

Words of light that fall into the darkness that is already growing darker in hearts!

Gamaliel, who had stopped once again, his head bowed, resumes walking… Others follow him shaking their heads or sneering…

Jesus also goes away… But first He says to Judas: « Go where you have to go », and to the others: « Each of you is free to go where you have or you wish to go. Let the shepherd disciples remain with Me. »

« Oh! take me also with You, Lord! » says Stephen.

« Come… » They part.

I do not know where Jesus goes. But I know where Judas of Kerioth goes. He goes to the Beautiful Gate climbing the several steps that from the Court of the Gentiles lead to that of the women, and after going across it, climbing more steps at the end of it, he casts a glance at the Court of the Hebrews, and stamps his feet angrily, as he does not find the person he is looking for.

He goes back. He sees one of the Temple guards. He calls him. With his usual haughtiness he says to him: « Go to Eleazar ben Annas. Tell him to come to the Beautiful Gate immediately. Judas of Simon is waiting for him for grave matters. »

He leans against a column and waits. Shortly afterwards Eleazar, the son of Annas, Helkai, Simon, Doras, Cornelius, Sadoc, Nahum and others arrive with much fluttering of garments.

Judas speaks in a low but excited voice: « This evening! After supper. At Gethsemane. Come there and get Him. Give me the money. »

« No. We will give you it when you call for us this evening. We do not trust you! We want you to stay with us. You never know! » says Elkai with a sneer. The others nod assent in chorus.

Judas flares up in a temper at the insinuation. He swears: « I swear by Jehovah that I am telling the truth! »

Sadoc replies to him: « All right. But it is better to do it this way. Come when it is time, take those who are charged to capture Him and go with them, lest the stupid guards may arrest Lazarus by chance and may bring about a lot of trouble. By means of a signal you will point out the man to them You must understand! By night there will not be much light the guards will be tired, sleepy But if you guide them!… Well! What do you say? » The perfidious Sadoc addresses his companions saying: « As a signal I would suggest a kiss. A kiss! The best signal to point out the betrayed friend. Ha! Ha! » They all laugh. A chorus of sneering demons.

Judas is furious. But he does not withdraw. He will not withdraw any more. He suffers because they sneer at him, not because of what he is about to do. So much so that he says: « But remember that I want the money counted in the purse before going out from here with the guards. »

« You will have it! You will have it! We will give you also the purse, so that you may keep those coins as a relic of your love. Ha! Ha! Ha! Goodbye, snake! »

Judas is livid. He is already livid. Never again will he lose that colour and that expression of desperate terror. On the contrary, it will grow more and more hourly, until it becomes unsustainable when he is hanging from the tree… He runs away…

Jesus has taken shelter in the garden of a friendly house. A quiet garden of the first houses in Zion. It is surrounded by high ancient walls. It is noiseless and cool, covered as it is with the quivering leaves of old trees. Not far away the voice of a woman is singing a sweet lullaby.

Some hours must have gone by, because Lazarus' servants, who have come back after going I do not know where, say: « Your disciples are already in the house where the supper is being prepared, and John, after coming with us to take the fruit to Johanna of Chuza's children, has gone to get the women and take them to Joseph of Alphaeus, who arrived only today, when his mother no longer hoped to see him, and then, from there to the house of the supper, because night is falling. »

« We shall go as well. It is supper time… » Jesus stands up and puts on His mantle.

« Master, there are some people out there. Wealthy people. They would like to speak to You without being seen by the Pharisees » says a servant.

« Let them come in. Esther will not object. Is that right, woman? » says Jesus, addressing a woman of ripe age who is coming to greet Him.

« No, Master. My house is Yours, as You know. You have made use of it for too short a time! »

« Sufficiently long as to say to My heart: it was a friendly house. » He says to the servant: « Bring in those who are waiting. »

About thirty dignified looking people come in. They greet Him. One of them speaks on behalf of everybody: « Master, Your words have shaken us. We have heard the voice of God in You. But they say that we are foolish, because we believe in You. So what shall we do? »

« He who believes Me does not believe in Me, but believes in Him Who sent Me, and Whose most holy voice you have heard today. He who sees Me does not see Me, but sees Him Who sent Me, because

I am one thing with My Father. That is why I say to you that you must believe in order not to offend God, Who is your Father and Mine, and loves you to the extent of sacrificing His Only-Begotten for you. Because, if hearts doubt whether I am the Christ, there is no doubt that God is in Heaven. And the voice of God, Whom I called Father today in the Temple, asking Him to glorify His Name, has replied to Him Who was calling Him Father, without saying that He is a "liar or blasphemer" as many say. God has confirmed who I am. I am His Light. I am the Light that has come to the world. I have come as Light to the world, so that he who believes in Me may not remain in Darkness. If a man listens to My words, and then does not comply with them, I will not judge him. I have not come to judge the world, but to save the world. He who despises Me and does not accept My words, has who will judge him. It is the word announced by Me that will judge him on the last day. Because it was wise, perfect, kind, simple, as God is. Because that Word is God. It is not I, Jesus of Nazareth, called the son of Joseph, a carpenter of the stock of David, and the son of Mary, a Hebrew girl, a virgin of the stock of David, married to Joseph, it is not I Who has spoken. No, I have not spoken on My own account. But it is My Father, He Who is in Heaven and His name is Jehovah, Who spoke today, He Who sent Me, and He told Me what I must say and of what I must speak. And I know that in His commandment there is eternal life. So the things I say, I say them as the Father said them to Me, and there is Life in them. That is why I say to you: listen to them. Put them into practice and you will have Life. Because My word is Life. And he who accepts it, accepts at the same time with Me, also the Father of Heaven Who sent Me to give you the Life. And he who has God in himself, has the Life in himself. Go. May peace come to you and remain with you. »

He blesses and dismisses them. He blesses also the disciples. He keeps only Isaac and Stephen. He kisses and dismisses the others. And when they have gone, He is the last to go out, with the two and He goes with them, along the most solitary and already dark lanes, to the house of the Last Supper. And when He arrives there, He embraces and blesses Isaac and Stephen with particular fondness, He kisses them, He blesses them once again, He watches them go away, then He knocks at the door and goes in…

Jesus says: « You will put here the visions of the farewell to My Mother, of the Supper-room and of the Supper. And now let the two of us, you and I, make the true Passover commemoration. Come… »

597. The Thursday Evening before Passover. Arrival at the Supper-Room and Farewell to the Mother.

17th February 1944.

I see the supper-room where the Passover is to be consumed, I can see it distinctly. I could enumerate all the rough spots on the walls and the cracks in the floor.

It is a large room that is not perfectly square, but it is somewhat rectangular. The difference between the longer side and the shorter one is, at most, a metre or a little more. The ceiling is low. Perhaps it appears to be so, because the height of the room does not correspond to its size. It is slightly vaulted, that is, the two shorter walls do not form a right angle with the ceiling, but it is roundish.

In the two shorter walls there are two large low windows, facing each other. I cannot see what they look onto, a court-yard or a street, because the shutters are closed. I said: shutters. I do not know Whether it is the right word. They are window coverings made of boards and they are firmly closed by iron bars across them.

The floor is made of large square bricks of baked clay discoloured by age. From the centre of the ceiling hangs a multi-arm oil lamp.

In one of the two longer walls there is no opening, in the other, instead, there is a small door in one corner and it is reached by means of a small staircase of six steps with no bannisters, ending on a landing of one square metre. On the landing and against the wall there is another step, at whose level the door opens. I do not know whether I have made myself clear.

The walls are just whitewashed without decorations or borders. In the centre of the room there is a long rectangular table, very long as compared to its width, it is placed parallel to the long walls and is made of very plain wood. Along the long walls there are some seats. Against the short walls, under the window, on one side there is a kind of chest with some basins and amphorae on it, and under the other window there is a long low sideboard, on top of which there is nothing at present.

And that is the description of the room in which Passover will be consumed. I have seen it distinctly all day long, in fact I have been able to count the steps and observe all the details. And now that it is getting dark, my Jesus is taking me to the rest of the contemplation.

I see that the large room leads, by means of the six-step staircase, to a dark vestibule on the left side of which, with respect to me, there is a door that opens onto the street; the door is wide, low and very solid, reinforced with metal studs and bars. Facing the little door that leads from the supper-room into the vestibule, there is another door that opens onto another room, which is not so large. I would say that the supper-room has been obtained from the difference in level between the ground and the rest of the house and the

street, it is like a basement, a sort of cellar that has been cleaned up or adapted, but is still sunken for a good metre in the ground, probably to heighten it and proportion it to its vastness.

In the room that I see now, there is Mary with other women, I recognise the Magdalene and Mary the mother of James, Judas and Simon. They seem to have just arrived, led by John, as they take off their mantles and lay them folded on the stools scattered about the room, while they greet the apostle, who goes away, and a woman and a man, who have rushed there upon their arrival, and I am under the impression that they are the owners of the house and disciples or sympathisers of the Nazarene, because they are full of attention for and of respectful familiarity with Mary. She is wearing a deep blue dress, a deep indigo blue. On Her head She has a white veil that appears when She takes Her mantle off, as it covers also Her head. She looks worn out and aged. She is very sad, although She smiles kindly. She is very pale. Also Her movements are tired and hesitating, like those of a person engrossed in thought.

Through the door left ajar I can see the landlord coming and going in the vestibule and in the upper-room, which he illuminates completely lighting the remaining flames of the large oil lamp. He then goes to the main door and opens it and Jesus comes in with the apostles. I can see that it is getting dark, because the shadows of the night are already descending in the street closed between high houses.

He is with all the apostles. He greets the landlord with His usual salutation: « Peace to this house », and then, while the apostles go down into the supper-room, He enters the room where Mary is. The pious women greet Him with deep respect and then go away, closing the door and leaving Mother and Son free.

Jesus embraces His Mother and kisses Her forehead. Mary first kisses the hand of Her Son and then His right cheek. Jesus makes Mary sit down and sits beside Her, they are sitting on two stools close to each other. He makes Her sit down, taking Her to the stools, holding Her by the hand, and He continues to hold Her hand also when She has sat down.

Jesus also is engrossed in thought and sad, notwithstanding that He strives to smile. Mary studies His expression anxiously, Poor Mother, Who through grace and love realises what this hour means! Painful spasms appear across Mary's face and Her eyes dilate at an interior vision of deep grief. But She does not make a scene. She is as solemn as Her Son.

He speaks to Her. He greets Her and implores Her to pray for Him.

« Mother, I have come to get strength and comfort from You. I am like a little baby, Mother, who needs the heart of his mother for his grief, and his mother's breast for his strength. In this hour I have

become Your little Jesus of a long time ago. I am not the Master, Mother. I am only Your Son, as in Nazareth when I was a little boy, as in Nazareth before departing from My private life. I have but You. Men, at the present moment, are not friendly with and loyal to Your Jesus. They are not even brave in doing good. Only the wicked are constant and strong in doing evil. But You are faithful to Me and You are My strength, Mother, in this hour. Support Me with Your love and Your prayers. Among those who more or less love Me, You are the only one who knows how to pray in this hour. You know how to pray and to understand. The others are concerned with the festivity, they are engrossed in joyful thoughts, or in criminal thoughts, while I am suffering from so many things. Many things will die after this hour, and among them their humanity, and they will be able to be worthy of Me, all of them, except him who got lost and whom no power can bring back at least to repentance. But for the time being they are unconscious men who do not perceive that I am dying, while they are rejoicing thinking that My triumph is more than ever close at hand. The hosannas of a few days ago have intoxicated them. Mother, I have come for this hour and from a supernatural point of view it is a joy to see it arrive. But My Ego is also afraid of it, because this chalice bears the name of betrayal, abjuration, ferocity, blasphemy, abandonment. Support Me, Mother. As when with Your prayers You drew the Spirit of God upon Yourself, and through it You gave the world the One Expected by peoples, draw now upon Your Son the strength that may help Me to accomplish the deed for which I came. Mother, goodbye. Bless Me, Mother; also on behalf of the Father. And forgive everybody. Let us forgive together, as from this moment, let us forgive those who torture us. »

While speaking, Jesus has slid down on His knees at the feet of His Mother and He looks at Her embracing Her by the waist.

Mary weeps silently, Her face slightly raised for an internal prayer to God. Tears stream down Her pale cheeks and fall on Her lap and on the head of Jesus, Who then rests it on Her heart. Then Mary lays Her hand on Jesus' head, as if She wished to bless Him, She then bends, kisses His hair and caresses it, She caresses His shoulders and arms, She takes His face in Her hands and turns it towards Herself, She presses it to Her heart. She kisses Him again, shedding tears, on His forehead, His cheeks, His sorrowful eyes, She cuddles that poor tired head, as if He were a baby, as I saw Her lull the divine New-born in the Grotto. But She does not sing, now. She only says: « Son! Jesus! My Jesus! » but in such a voice that breaks my heart.

Then Jesus stands up. He adjusts His mantle, remains standing in front of His Mother, Who is still weeping, and He blesses Her in His turn. Then He turns His steps towards the door. Before going

out He says to Her: « Mother, I will come again before consuming My Passover. Pray while waiting for Me. » And He goes out.

598. The Passover Supper.

9th March 1945.

The suffering of Maundy Thursday is beginning.

The apostles, there are ten of them, are bustling about preparing the Supper-room.

Judas, who has climbed on the table, is watching whether there is oil in all the lamps of the big chandelier that looks like the corolla of a double fuchsia, because its stem is surrounded by five lamps in small vessels similar to petals, and under them, there is another circle or crown of small flames, and finally, there are three thin lamps hanging from tiny chains resembling the pistils of the bright flower. He then jumps down on the floor and helps Andrew to lay the tableware in an artistic style on the table, on which a very fine table-cloth has been spread.

I hear Andrew say: « What a wonderful linen tablecloth! » And the Iscariot says: « One of Lazarus' best ones. Martha insisted in bringing it. »

« And what about these chalices and these amphorae? » remarks Thomas, who has poured some wine into the precious amphorae and is admiring them, looking at himself in their slim bellies, and he caresses the chiselled handles with the eye of a connoisseur.

« Phew! I wonder how much they are worth! » exclaims Judas Iscariot.

« It is worked by hammer. My father would go mad for it. Silver and gold-foils are shaped easily when heated. But done with such craft… Everything can be spoiled in a moment. One wrong blow is enough. It takes strength and a light hand at the same time. See the handles? They have been shaped out of the block. They are not soldered. Things for rich people… Just consider that all the filings and cast-off parts are lost. I don't know whether you understand me. »

« Phew! I understand you very well. In short, it is like sculpture. »

« Exactly. »

They all admire and then go back to their work. Some arrange the seats, some prepare the sideboards.

Peter and Simon come in together.

« Oh! You have come at last! Where have you been again? After you came with the Master and us, you ran away again » says the Iscariot.

« We had another errand before supper-time » replies Simon briefly.

« Are you suffering from depression? »

« I think there is every reason to be so, considering what we have heard these past days, and from those lips that we have never found to be false. »

« And with that stench of… Well, be quiet, Peter » grumbles Peter between his teeth.

« And you as well!… You seem to have gone mad for some time. Your face is like that of a wild rabbit that realises it is being chased by a jackal » replies Judas Iscariot.

« And your face is like the snout of a weasel. You have not been very handsome either, these last few days. You look in such a way… You are even cross-eyed… What do you expect or do you hope to see? You seem to be self-confident, you want to appear so, but you look like one who is afraid » retorts Peter.

« Oh! With regard to being afraid!… You are not a hero either! »

« None of us is, Judas. You have the name of the Maccabee, but you are not such. I, with my name, say "God grants graces", but I swear to you that I tremble like a man who knows that he brings mischance and above all that he has lost God's favour. Simon of Jonah, renamed "the stone", is now as soft as wax near a fire. He no longer gets the weather-gauge of his own free-will. And yet I have never seen him frightened in the most violent storms! Matthew, Bart and Philip look like sleep-walkers. My brother and Andrew do nothing but sigh. The two cousins, who are grieved because of their family ties and of their love for the Master, look at them. They already look like old men. Thomas has lost his cheerfulness. And Simon seems to have become again the exhausted leper of three years ago, so much is he worn out by grief, I would say that he is worn away, deathly pale, dejected » John replies to him.

« Yes. He has influenced us all with His melancholy » remarks the Iscariot.

« My cousin Jesus, my Master and Lord and yours, is and is not melancholy. If you mean, by that word, that He is sad because He is being excessively grieved by the whole of Israel, as we are aware, and because of the other hidden sorrow that He alone sees, I say to you: "You are right". But if you use that word to say that He is mad, I forbid you to do so » says James of Alphaeus.

« And is a fixed melancholy idea not madness? I have studied also profane matters and I know. He has given too much of Himself. Now He is mentally tired. »

« Which means insane. Is that right? » asks the other cousin Judas, who is apparently calm.

« Exactly! How right was your father, a man of blessed memory, whom you resemble so much in justice and wisdom! Jesus, the sad destiny of an illustrious family now too old and struck by psychic senility, has always had a disposition to this illness. Mild at first, then more and more aggressive. You have seen how He attacked

Pharisees and scribes, Sadducees and Herodians. He has made His life impossible, like a road strewn with quartz splinters. And He spread them Himself. We… we have loved Him so much that our love veiled our eyes. But those who did not love Him in an idolatrous manner - your father, your brother Joseph and at first also Simon - saw right… When we heard their words we should have opened our eyes. Instead we were all enticed by His meek charm of a sick person. And now… Who knows! »

Judas Thaddeus, who is as tall as the Iscariot, and is standing just in front of him and seems to be listening to him peacefully, has an outburst of rage and, with a mighty backhanded blow, knocks Judas down with his back on one of the seats, and with anger repressed in his voice, bending over the face of the coward who does not react, as he is probably afraid that Thaddeus may be aware of his crime, he whispers: « This is for His insanity, you reptile! And only because He is in the other room, and this is Passover evening, I will not strangle you. But remember this, and remember it carefully! If any evil befalls Him, and He is not there to check my strength, no one will save you. The halter is as good as round your neck, and these strong honest hands of mine, the hands of a Galilean artisan and of a descendant of Goliath's slinger, will do the job for you. Get up, you spineless debauchee! And watch how you behave. »

Judas stands up, he is livid, but does not react in the least. And, what amazes me, no one reacts to the new gesture of Thaddeus. On the contrary!… It is obvious that they all approve of it.

The room has just become calm again when Jesus come in. He appears on the threshold of the little door, through which His tall person can just pass, He sets foot on the small landing, and with His meek sad smile He says, opening His arms: « Peace be with You. » His voice is tired, like that of one who is languishing physically and morally.

He comes down. He caresses the fair-haired head of John, who has rushed towards Him. He smiles at His cousin Judas, as if He did not know anything, and He says to His other cousin: « Your mother asks you to be kind to Joseph. He asked the women after you and Me a little while ago. I am sorry I have not greeted him. »

« You will do it tomorrow. »

« Tomorrow?… I shall always have time to see him… Oh! Peter! We shall be together for a little while at last! Since yesterday you seem a will-o'-the-wisp. I see you, then I no longer see you. Today I can almost say that I lost you. And you, too, Simon. »

« Our hair, which is more white than dark, can assure You that we were not absent craving for flesh » says Simon gravely.

« Although… at all ages it is possible to suffer from that hunger… The old! Worse than the young… » says the Iscariot offensively.

Simon looks at him and is about to reply. But Jesus also looks

at him and says: « Have you a toothache? Your right cheek is swollen and red. »

« Yes, it is aching. But it is not worth worrying about. »

The others do not say anything, and the matter dies away.

« Have you done everything that was to be done? You, Matthew? And you, Andrew? And you, Judas, have you seen to the offer for the Temple? »

Both the first two and the Iscariot say: « Everything You said was to be done today, has been done. Do not worry. »

« I took the early fruits of Lazarus to Johanna of Chuza. For the children. They said to me: "Those apples were better!" They had the savour of hunger, those ones! And they were Your apples » says John smiling and dreaming.

Jesus also smiles at the recollection…

« I have seen Nicodemus and Joseph » says Thomas.

« You have seen them? Did you speak to them? » asks the Iscariot with excessive interest.

« Yes, I did. What's strange about it? Joseph is a good customer of my father. »

« You never mentioned it before… That is why I was amazed!… » Judas tries to make up for the impression, he had given previously, of his worry about Thomas' meeting with Joseph and Nicodemus.

« It seems strange to me that they have not come to venerate You. They did not, neither did Chuza, nor Manaen… None of… »

But the Iscariot laughs sneeringly, interrupting Bartholomew, and he says: « The crocodile hides itself at the right moment. »

« What do you mean? What are you insinuating? » asks Simon aggressively as never before.

« Peace, peace! What is the matter with you? It is Passover evening! We have never had such a worthy display for the consumption of the lamb. So let us consume the supper in the spirit of peace. I see that I have upset you considerably with My instructions of these last evenings. But, see? I have finished! Now I will not upset you any more. Not everything has been said of what refers to Me, but only the essential part. The rest… you will understand later. You will be told… Yes. There will come Who will tell you! John, go with Judas and somebody else to get the basins for the purification. And then let us sit at the table. » Jesus is heart-rendingly kind.

John with Andrew, Judas Thaddeus with James, bring the large basin, they pour water into it and offer the towel to Jesus and to their companions, who do the same for them. The basin (which is a metal wash-hand-basin) is placed in a corner.

« And now to your seats. I here, and here (at His right side) John, and on the other side My faithful James. The first two disciples. After John My strong Stone, and after James he who is like the air. He is never noticed, but is always present and comforting: Andrew.

Beside him, My cousin James. You are not sorry, My kind brother, if I give the first place to the first ones? You are the nephew of the Just One, whose spirit palpitates and quivers over Me this evening, more than ever. Have peace, father of My childish weakness, oak-tree in whose shadow the Mother and Son had solace! Have peace!… Beside Peter, Simon… Simon, come here a moment. I want to fix My eyes on your loyal face. Later I shall not see you well, because others will cover your honest face. Thank you Simon, for everything » and He kisses him.

Simon, when he is left free, goes to his seat, covering his face with his hands for a moment, with a gesture of distress.

« Facing Simon, My Bart. Two honest wise men reflecting each other. They match very well. And beside him, you, Judas, My brother. So I can see you… and I seem to be at Nazareth… when some festivity gathered us all together round one table… Also at Cana… Do you remember? We were together. A party… a wedding party… the first miracle… water changed into wine… Also today a festivity… and also today there will be a miracle… the wine will change its nature and will be… »

Jesus becomes engrossed in His thoughts, His head lowered and isolated in His secret world. The others look at Him and do not speak.

He raises His head again and stares at Judas Iscariot, to whom He says: « You will sit in front of Me. »

« So much You love me? More than Simon, since You always want me in front of You? »

« So much. As you said. »

« Why, Master? »

« Because you are the one who has done more than everybody for this hour. »

Judas casts and ever-changing glance at the Master and at his companions. At Jesus with ironical commiseration, at the others with an air of triumph.

« And near you, on one side Matthew, on the other Thomas. »

« So, Matthew on My left and Thomas on My right side. »

« As you wish, as you like » says Matthew. « It is enough for me to have my Saviour in front of me. »

« Last, Philip. Now, see? Who is not beside Me in the place of honour, has the honour of being in front of Me. »

Jesus, standing in His place, pours wine into the large chalice placed in front of Him (they all have tall chalices, but He has a much larger one, in addition to one like those of the others. It must be the ritual chalice). He pours wine into it, He raises it, He offers it and lays it on the table.

Then all together they ask in the tone of a psalm: « Why this ceremony? » A formal question, obviously, a ritual one.

To which Jesus, as head of the family, replies: « This day reminds us of our liberation from Egypt. Blessed be Jehovah Who created the fruit of the vineyard. »

He takes a sip of the wine He has offered and passes the chalice to the others. He then offers the bread, He breaks it into morsels and hands it round with the herbs dipped in the reddish sauce contained in four sauce-boats.

When this part of the meal is over, they sing some psalms, all together.

The large tray with the roasted lamb is brought from the sideboard to the table and placed in front of Jesus.

Peter, who acts as… first voice of the chorus, if you wish so, asks: « Why this lamb, as it is? »

« In remembrance of the time when Israel was saved through the sacrificial lamb. No first-born died where the blood shone on doorposts and lintels. And afterwards, while the whole of Egypt, from the royal palace to hovels, was mourning the dead first-born males, the Hebrews, led by Moses, moved towards the land of liberation and of the promise. With their sides girded, their feet shod, the pilgrim's staffs in their hands, the people of Abraham started off promptly, singing hymns of joy. »

They all stand up and intone: « When Israel came out of Egypt and the house of Jacob from a barbarous people, Judah became his sanctuary » etc. (if I have found the right one, it is psalm 113).

Jesus now cuts the lamb, He pours wine into the chalice again, and He passes it round after drinking of it. Then they sing also: « Children, praise the Lord, blessed be the Name of the Eternal now and for ever throughout ages. From east to west it is to be praised » etc. (but I cannot find it).

Jesus hands out the portions, ensuring that everybody is well served, just like a father of a family among his children who are all dear to him. He is solemn, somewhat sad, when He says: « I have longed to eat this Passover with you. It has been the desire of My desires since, from eternity, I was "the Saviour". I knew that this hour precedes that one. And the joy of giving Myself, brought this relief, in advance, to My suffering… I have longed to eat this Passover with you, because never again shall I taste the fruit of the vine until the Kingdom of God has come. Then I will sit again with the elect at the Banquet of the Lamb, for the wedding of the Living Ones with the Living One. But only those who have been lowly and pure in heart, as I am, will come to it. »

« Master, a short while ago You said that he who has not the honour of the seat, has that of being in front of You. So, how can we know who is the first among us? » asks Bartholomew.

(1) These words are addressed to Maria Valtorta's spiritual father.

« Everybody and nobody. Once… we were coming back and we were tired and… nauseated at the bitter hatred of the Pharisees. But you were not so tired as to be prevented from discussing among yourselves who was the greatest… A little boy ran up to Me… a little friend of Mine… And his innocence mitigated My disgust for so many things. Your obstinate humanity not being the last. Where are you now, little Benjamin gifted with the wise reply, that came to you from Heaven because, as you were an angel, the Spirit spoke to you? Then I said to you: "If anyone wants to be the first, he must be the last and the servant of everybody". And I gave you the wise boy as an example. Now I say to you: "The kings of nations dominate them. And although the peoples oppressed hate them, they acclaim them and kings are called 'Benefactors', 'Fathers of the Fatherland'. But hatred smoulders under the false homage". But do not let it be so with you. The greatest must be like the smallest, the head like him who serves. Who is in fact greater? He who sits at the table, or he who serves? It is he who sits at the table. And yet I serve you. And before long I will serve you even more. You are the ones who have been with Me in My trials. And I will arrange a place for you in My kingdom, in the same manner as I shall be King in it according to the will of the Father, that you may eat and drink at My eternal table and you may sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. You have remained with Me in My trials… This is the only thing that makes you great in the eyes of the Father. »

« And what about those who will come? Will they have no place in the Kingdom? We alone? »

« Oh! How many princes in My House! All those who have been faithful to the Christ in the trials of life, will be princes in My Kingdom. Because those who have persevered to the end in the martyrdom of life will be like you, who have remained with Me in My trials. I identify Myself with those who believe in Me. The Sorrow that I embrace for you and for all men, I give it as insignia to those who are particularly chosen. He who is faithful to Me in Sorrow will be one of My souls in bliss, My beloved. »

« We have persevered until the end. »

« Do you think so, Peter? And I tell you that the hour of trial is still to come. Simon, Simon of Jonas, Satan has asked to sift you all like wheat. I have prayed for you, that your faith may not vacillate. When you have recovered, strengthen your brothers. »

« I know that I am a sinner. But I will be faithful to You until death. I do not have that sin and I will never have it. »

« Do not be proud, My Peter. This hour will change an infinite number of things, which previously were so and will now be different. How many!… They bring and impose new necessities. You are aware of that. I have always said to you, even when we were going

along remote places infested by highwaymen: "Be not afraid. No evil will befall us, because the angels of the Lord are with us. Do not worry about anything". Do you remember when I used to say to you: "Do not worry about what you must eat and about your clothes. The Father knows what we need"? I also used to say to you: "Man is much more than a sparrow and a flower that today is grass and tomorrow is hay. And yet the Father takes care both of the flower and of the little bird. So can you doubt that He will not take care of you?" I also used to say: "Give to anyone who asks, and if anyone offends you, offer him the other cheek as well". I also used to say: "Take no bag or stick". Because I taught love and trust. But now… Now the times have changed. Now I say to you: "Have you ever been short of anything so far? Have you ever been offended?". »

« Nothing, Master. You alone were offended. »

« So you can see that My word was true. But now the angels have all been recalled by their Lord. It is the hour of demons… With their golden wings the angels of the Lord are covering their eyes and enveloping themselves and they regret that the colour of their wings is not a gloomy one, because it is time of mourning, of cruel sacrilegious mourning… There are no angels on the Earth this evening. They are near the throne of God, to drown the blasphemies of the deicide world and the weeping of the Innocent. And we are alone… You and I: alone. And the demons are the masters of the hour. So we shall now take the appearances and the measures of poor men who do not trust and do not love. Now, he who has a purse should take also a haversack, he who has no sword should sell his cloak and buy one. Because this also is said of Me in the Scriptures and must be fulfilled: "He has been counted among the wicked". Truly everything that concerns Me has its purpose. »

Simon, who has got up and gone to the chest where he put his rich mantle - because this evening they are all wearing their best clothes, and so on their sumptuous belts they are carrying daggers, damaskened but very short ones, more like knives than daggers - takes two swords, two real, long, slightly bent swords and returning to Jesus with them he says: « Peter and I have armed ourselves this evening. We have these, but the others have only short daggers. »

Jesus takes the swords, examines them, He unsheathes one of them and tests its edge on His nail. It is a strange sight, and even more strangely impressive to see that cruel weapon in Jesus' hands.

« Who gave them to you? » asks the Iscariot, while Jesus is examining them and is silent. And Judas seem to be on tenter-hooks…

« Who? I remind you that my father was a nobel and mighty man. »

« But Peter… »

« So? Since when have I to give an account of the presents that I want to give my friends? »

Jesus raises His head after sheathing the sword again. He hands

it back to the Zealot.

« All right. They are enough. You did well in taking them. "But now, before drinking the third chalice, wait a moment. I told you that the greatest is the same as the smallest and that I am acting as a servant at this table, and I will serve you even more. So far I have given you food. A service for your bodies. Now I want to give you food for your spirits. It is not a dish of the ancient rite. It belongs to the new rite. I wanted to be baptised before being the "Master". That baptism was sufficient to spread the Word. Now His Blood will be shed. Another ablution is required for you, although you have been purified by the Baptist, in his days, and also today in the Temple. But it is not yet sufficient. Come, that I may purify you. Interrupt your meal. There is something more elevated and necessary than the food given to the stomach to fill it, even if it is holy food as the present one of the Passover rite. And it is a pure spirit, ready to receive the gift of Heaven, which is already descending to make its throne in you and give you the Life. To give the Life to those who are pure. »

Jesus stands up, He makes John stand up to come out of His place more easily, He goes to the chest and takes off His red tunic and folds it placing it on His mantle, which is there already folded, He girds Himself with a large towel and He goes towards another basin, which is empty and clean. He pours some water into it, He takes it to the middle of the room, near the table, and puts it on a stool. The apostles look at Him dumbfounded.

« Are you not asking Me what I am doing? »

« We do not know. I tell You that we are already purified » replies Peter.

« And I repeat to you that it does not matter. My purification will serve him, who is already pure, to become purer. »

He kneels down. He unties the Iscariot's sandals and washes his feet, one at a time. It is easy to do so, because the couches are made in such a way that the feet are in the outer side. Judas is astonished and does not say anything. Only when Jesus, before putting the sandal on the left foot and getting up, makes the gesture of kissing his right foot, that has already been shod, Judas withdraws his foot violently and with the sole strikes the divine mouth. He does so unintentionally. It is not a strong blow. But it grieves me so much. Jesus smiles, and to the apostle who asks Him: « Did I hurt You? I did not intend to… Forgive me », He says: « No, My friend. You did it without malice and it does not hurt. » Judas looks at Him… A worried elusive look…

Jesus passes on to Thomas, then to Philip… He goes round the narrow side of the table and arrives at His cousin James. He washes his feet and when getting up He kisses him on his forehead. He passes on to Andrew, who blushes with shame and makes efforts

not to weep, He washes his feet and kisses him like a baby. Then there is James of Zebedee, who goes on grumbling: « Oh! Master! Master! Master! You are lowering Yourself, my sublime Master! » John has already untied his sandals and while Jesus is bent drying his feet, he kisses His head.

But Peter!… It is not easy to convince him to submit to the rite! « You want to wash my feet? Do not even think about it! As long as I live, I will never allow You to do that. I am a worm, You are God. Each to his own place. »

« You cannot understand now what I am doing. Later you will understand. Let Me do it. »

« You can do anything You like, Master. Do You want to cut my neck? Do so. But You will never wash my feet. »

« Oh! My Simon! Do you not know that if I do not wash you, you will take no part in My Kingdom? Simon, Simon! You are in need of this water for your soul and for the long journey you have to take. Do you not want to come with Me? If I do not wash you, you will not come to My Kingdom. »

« Oh! my blessed Lord! Then, wash all my body! Feet, hands and head! »

« Anyone who, like you, has had a bath, needs only to have his feet washed, as he is completely pure. The feet… Man walks with his feet on filth. And it would not be much either, because, as I told you, it is not what enters and comes out with food that dirties, and it is not what settles on his feet on the roads that contaminates man. But it is what smoulders and matures in his heart and comes out from it, which contaminates his actions and limbs. And the feet of a man with an impure spirit go to orgies, to lust, to illicit business, to crimes… Therefore, among the various parts of the body they are the ones that have much to be purified… with the eyes and mouth… Oh! man! man! A perfect being for one day: the first one! And then so corrupted by the Seducer! And there was no malice in you, man, no sin!… And now? You are all malice and sin, and there is no part in you that does not sin! »

Jesus has washed Peter's feet, He kisses them, and Peter weeps and takes Jesus' two hands in his own big ones and he rubs them against his eyes and then kisses them.

Simon also has taken off his sandals, and without one word he lets Jesus wash his feet. Then, when Jesus is about to pass on to Bartholomew, Simon kneels down and kisses His feet saying: « Cleanse me from the leprosy of sin, as You cleansed me from the leprosy of my body, that I may not be confused in the hour of judgement, my Saviour! »

« Be not afraid, Simon. You will come to the heavenly City as white as mountain snow. »

« And what about me, Lord? What are You going to say to Your

old Bart? You saw me in the shade of the fig-tree and You read my heart. And now what do You see, and where do You see me? Reassure a poor old man, who is afraid he may not have strength arid time to become what You want him to be. » Bartholomew is deeply moved.

« You must not be afraid either. I then said: "Here is a true Israelite in whom there is no deceit". Now I say: "Here is a true Christian worthy of the Christ". Where do I see you? On an eternal throne, dressed in purple. I shall always be with you. »

It is Judas Thaddeus' turn. When he sees Jesus at his feet, he cannot control himself, he rests his head on his arm laid on the table and weeps.

« Do not weep, My sweet brother. You are now like one who must endure the extirpation of a nerve and you think that you will not be able to stand it. But it will be a short pain. Then… oh! you will be happy, because you love Me. Your name is Judas. And you are like our great Judas: like a giant. You are the one who protects. Your actions are those of a lion and of a young roaring lion. You will rouse the impious who will withdraw when you face them, and the wicked will be terrified. I know. Be brave. An eternal union will strengthen and make perfect our kinship in Heaven. » He kisses his forehead as well, as He did for His other cousin.

« I am a sinner, Master. Not me… »

« You were a sinner, Matthew. You are now the Apostle. You are one of My "voices". I bless you. How far have these feet walked to come more and more forward, towards God… Your soul urged them and they left every way that was not My way. Proceed. Do you know where the path ends? On the bosom of your Father and Mine. »

Jesus has finished. He takes the towel off and washes His hands in clean water, He puts His clothes on, goes back to His seat, and while sitting down He says: « You are now pure, but not all of you. Only those who wanted to be so. »

He stares at Judas of Kerioth, who feigns he does not hear Him, intent as he is on explaining to his companion Matthew how his father decided to send him to Jerusalem. A useless conversation, the only purpose of which is to give an attitude to Judas, who, however bold, must feel ill at ease.

Jesus pours wine into the common chalice for the third time. He drinks and makes the others drink. He then intones, and the others sing in chorus: « I love because the Lord hears the voice of my prayer, because He turns His ear towards me. I will invoke Him throughout my life. The throes of death had surrounded me » etc. (Psalm 114, I think).

A moment's pause. He then resumes singing: « I had faith, that is why I spoke. But I was deeply humiliated. And in my dismay

I said: "Every man is untruthful". » He looks fixedly at Judas.

My Jesus' voice, which is tired this evening, regains vigour when He exclaims: « The death of holy people is precious in the eyes of God » and « You have broken my chains. I will sacrifice a victim of praise to You invoking the name of the Lord » etc. (Psalm 115).

Another short pause and He then resumes: « Praise the Lord, all nations, praise Him, all peoples. Because His mercy has been asserted upon us and the truth of the Lord lasts for ever. »

Another short pause and then a long hymn: « Sing praises to the Lord because He is good, because His mercy lasts for ever… »

Judas of Kerioth sings so much out of tune, that twice Thomas brings him back into tune with his powerful loud baritone voice and stares at him. The others also look at him, because he is generally in tune, and I have had the impression that he is proud of his ()ice as he is of everything else. But this evening! Certain sentences upset him so much that he sings false notes, and certain glances of Jesus underlining those sentences have the same effect. One of them is: « It is better to confide in the Lord than to confide in man. » Another one is: « When I was pushed, I staggered and was about to fall. But the Lord supported me. » Another is: « I shall not die, I shall live and narrate the deeds of the Lord. » And finally, these two, that I am going to relate now, strangle the Traitor's voice in his throat: The stone rejected by the builders has become the cornerstone and « Blessed is He Who comes in the name of the Lord! »

When the psalm is over, while Jesus is cutting and handing the lamb round again, Matthew asks Judas of Kerioth: « Are you not feeling well? »

« No. Leave me alone. Don't worry about me. »

Matthew shrugs his shoulders.

John, who has heard, says: « The Master is not well either. What is the matter with You, my Jesus? Your voice is weak, like the voice of a sick person or of one who has wept much » and he embraces Him, resting his head on Jesus' chest.

« He has only spoken a lot, as I have only walked a lot and got cold » says Judas nervously.

And Jesus, without replying to him, says to John: « You know Me by now… and you know what makes Me tired… »

The lamb is almost consumed. Jesus, Who has eaten very little, and has only had a sip of wine at each chalice, but to compensate for that, has drunk a lot of water, as if He were feverish, resumes speaking: « I want you to understand My gesture of a short while ago. I told you that the first is like the last, and that I am going to give you a food that is not corporeal. I have given you a nourishment of humility, for your spirits. You call Me: Master and Lord. You are right, because so I am. So if I have washed your feet you should wash each other's feet. I have given you an example, so that

you may do what I have done. I tell you solemnly: no servant is greater than his master, no apostle is greater than He Who appointed him. Try to understand these things. Then, if you understand them and put them into practice, you will be blessed. But not all of you will be blessed. I know you. I know whom I chose. I am not speaking of everybody in the same way. But I say what is true. On the other hand, what has been written concerning Me, is to be fulfilled: "He who eats the bread with Me, rebels against Me". I am telling you everything before it happens, that you may have no doubts about Me. When everything has been accomplished, you will believe even more that I am I. He who receives Me, receives Him Who sent Me: the Holy Father Who is in Heaven; and he who receives those whom I send, will receive Me. Because I am with the Father and you are with Me… But now let us finish the rite. »

He pours more wine into the common chalice and before drinking of it and letting the others drink, He stands up, and everybody stands up with Him, and He sings one of the previous psalms again: « I had faith and that is why I spoke… » and then He sings a psalm that never comes to an end. Beautiful… but eternal! I think I have found it, by its beginning and its length, as psalm 118. They sing it as follows. They sing one part in chorus. Then, in turns, one recites a couplet, and the others in chorus sing another part, and so forth till the end. No wonder they are thirsty at the end!

Jesus sits down. He does not lie down. He sits as we do. And He says: « Now that the old rite has been accomplished, I will celebrate the new one. I have promised you a miracle of love. It is time to work it. That is why I have longed for this Passover. From now on this is the Victim that will be consumed in a perpetual rite of love. My beloved friends, I have loved you throughout the whole life of the Earth. I have loved you for the whole eternity, My children. And I want to love you till the end. There is nothing greater than this. Bear that in mind. I am going away. But we shall remain for ever united through the miracle that I will now work. »

Jesus takes a loaf still entire and places it on the chalice that has been filled. He blesses and offers both, He then breaks the bread and takes thirteen morsels of it, and gives one to each apostle saying:« Take this and eat it. This is My Body. Do this in remembrance of Me, Who am going away. » He gives the chalice and says: « Take this and drink it. This is My Blood. This is the chalice of the new alliance in My Blood and through My Blood, that will be shed for you, to remit your sins and give you the Life. Do this in remembrance of Me. »

Jesus is very sad. There is no smile, no trace of light, no colour on His face. It is already an agonizing face. The apostles look at Him utterly anguished.

Jesus stands up saying: « Do not move. I shall be back at once. »

lie takes the thirteenth morsel of bread and the chalice, and He goes out of the Supper-room.

« He is going to His Mother » whispers John.

And Judas Thaddeus says with a sigh: « Poor woman! »

Peter asks in a very low voice: « Do you think She knows? »

« She knows everything. She has always been aware of everything. »

They all speak in very low voices, as if they were in front of a corpse.

« But do you think that really… » asks Thomas, who does not want to believe yet.

« And do you doubt it? It is His hour » replies James of Zebedee.

« May God grant us strength to be faithful » says the Zealot.

« Oh! I… » says Peter who is about to speak. But John, who is on the look-out, says: « Silence! He is here. »

Jesus comes back in. He has the empty chalice in His hands. Only at its bottom there is a trace of wine, and in the light of the chandelier it looks just like blood.

Judas Iscariot, in front of whom is the chalice, looks at it as if he were enchanted, then he averts his eyes. Jesus watches him and shudders, and John, leaning as he is on His chest, feels it. « Why not say so! You are shivering… » he exclaims.

« No. I am not shivering because I am feverish… I have told you everything, and I have given you everything. I could not have given you anything else. I have given you Myself. »

He makes His usual kind gesture with His hands, which, previously joined, now separate and stretch out, while He bows His head as if He wished to say: « Excuse Me if I cannot give you more. It is so. »

« I have told you everything and I have given you everything. And I repeat. The new rite has been accomplished. Do this in remembrance of Me. I have washed your feet to teach you to be humble and pure like your Master. Because I solemnly tell you that disciples must be like their Master. Remember that, bear it in mind. Also when you are in high offices, remember that. There is no disciple greater than his Master. As I washed you, do the same to one another. That is, love one another like brothers, helping and respecting one another, setting an example to one another. And be pure, to be worthy of eating the living Bread that descended from Heaven, and have the strength, in yourselves and through It, to be My disciples in the hostile world that will hate you because of My Name. But one of you is not pure. One of you will betray Me. My Spirit is deeply perturbed by that… The hand of him who will betray Me is here with Me on this table, and neither My love, nor My Body and Blood, nor My word make him mend his ways and repent. I would forgive him going to My death also on his behalf. »

The disciples cast terrified glances at one another. They scrutinise one another suspiciously. Peter stares at the Iscariot in a revival of all his doubts. Judas Thaddeus in his turn jumps to his feet to look at the Iscariot above Matthew's body.

But the Iscariot is so sure of himself! In his turn he looks at Matthew, as if he suspected him. He then looks fixedly at Jesus and smiling he asks: « Is it I perhaps? » He seems to be the one who is most certain of his honesty and to say so, not to let the conversation drop.

Jesus repeats His gesture saying: « You are saying so, Judas of Simon, not I. You are saying so. I have not mentioned your name. Why are you accusing yourself?-Ask your internal warner, your conscience of a man, the conscience that God the Father gave you that you might behave as a man, and listen whether it accuses you. You will be the first to know. But if it reassures you, why do you utter a word and speak of a deed that is anathema even to mention or to think of as a joke? »

Jesus is speaking calmly. He seems to be supporting a proposed thesis as a learned man may do with his pupils. The confusion is great, but Jesus' calm appeases it.

But Peter, who is the most suspicious of Judas - perhaps Thaddeus also is so, but he does not look so, disarmed as he is by the Iscariot's easy manners - plucks John's sleeve, and when John, who has pressed against Jesus upon hearing Him speak of betrayal, turns round, he whispers to him: « Ask Him who it is. »

John takes his previous position again, he only raises his head slightly, as if he wanted to kiss Jesus, and in the meantime he whispers in His ear: « Master, who is it? »

And Jesus in a very low voice, kissing him, in His turn, on his head, says: « It is he to whom I shall give a piece of bread dipped in the dish. »

And taking another entire loaf, not the remains of the one used for the Eucharist, He detaches a large morsel, He dips it into the lamb's sauce left in the tray, and says: « Take it, Judas. You like this. »

« Thank You, Master. I do like it » and unaware of what that morsel is, he eats it, while John, horrified, closes even his eyes not to see the horrid smile of the Iscariot, as he bites the accusing bread with his strong teeth.

« Well. Now that I have made you happy, go » says Jesus to Judas. « Everything has been accomplished, here (He lays much stress on the word). What is still left to be done elsewhere, do it quickly, Judas of Simon. »

« I will obey You at once, Master. Then I will join You at Gethsemane. You are going there, are You not? As usual? »

« Yes… I am going there… as usual. »

« What has he got to do? » asks Peter. « Is he going by himself? »

« I am not a baby » says Judas scoffingly, as he puts on his mantle.

« Let him go. He and I know what must be done » says Jesus.

« Yes, Master. » Peter is silent. Perhaps he thinks he has committed a sin suspecting his companion. Resting his forehead on the palm of his hand, he becomes pensive.

Jesus presses John to His heart and whispers again through his hair: « Say nothing to Peter for the time being. It would be a useless scandal. »

« Goodbye, Master. Goodbye, friends » says Judas greeting them.

« Goodbye » replies Jesus.

And Peter says: « Goodbye, boy. »

John, his head almost on Jesus' lap, whispers: « Satan! » Jesus alone hears him and sighs.

Everything comes to an end here, but Jesus says: « I am interrupting the vision out of pity for you. I will give you the end of the Supper later. »

(the Supper continues)

There are a few moments of dead silence. Jesus has lowered His head, caressing John's fair hair mechanically.

Then He rouses Himself. He raises His head, He looks around, and He smiles in such a way that encourages the disciples. He says: « Let us leave the table and sit all close to one another, like many children round their father. »

They take the couches that were behind the table (those of Jesus, John, James, Peter, Simon, Andrew and His cousin James) and they put them on the other side.

Jesus sits on His own, still between James and John. But when He sees that Andrew is about to sit in the place left by the Iscariot, He shouts: « No, not there. » An impulsive shout, that His great prudence does not succeed in preventing. He then modifies His expression saying: « We do not need so much room. If we sit down, we can stay only on these. They are enough. I want you to be very close to Me. »

Now, with respect to the table, they are placed in a U shaped disposition, with Jesus in the centre and the table, on which there are no victuals now, and Judas' place in front of Him.

James of Zebedee calls Peter saying: « Sit here. I will sit on this little stool, at Jesus' feet. »

« May God bless you, James! I wanted it so much! » says Peter and he presses against his Master, Who is now squeezed by John and Peter, with James at His feet.

Jesus smiles and says: « I see that the word spoken earlier is beginning to work. Good brothers love one another. James, I also say to you: "May God bless you". Also this action of yours will not be

forgotten by the Eternal, and you will find it up there.

I can obtain everything I ask for. You have seen that. A desire of Mine was sufficient for the Father to allow His Son to give Himself in Food to man. The Son of man has been glorified by what has happened now, because the miracle that is possible only to God's friends is a witness of power. The greater the miracle, the surer and deeper is this divine friendship. This is a miracle that, because of its form, duration and nature, and of the extremes and limits it attains, is so great that a greater one cannot possibly exist. I tell you: it is so powerful, supernatural, inconceivable by proud men, that only very few will understand it as it is to be understood, and many will deny it. So what shall I say? Condemn them? No. I will say: have mercy on them!

But the greater the miracle, the greater the glory of its author. It is God Himself Who says: "See, My beloved wanted it, had it, and I granted it, because great is His grace in My eyes". And here He says: "His grace has no limits, as infinite is the miracle performed by Him". The glory that from God comes to the author of the miracle is the same as the glory that from the author returns to the Father. Because every supernatural glory, as it comes from God, returns to its source. And the glory of God, although it is already infinite, increases and shines more and more through the glory of His saints. So I say: as the Son of man has been glorified by God, so God has been glorified by the Son of man. I have glorified God in Myself. In His turn, God will glorify His Son in Himself. He will glorify Him shortly.

Exult, o spiritual Essence of the Second Person, Who are going back to Your See! Exult, o Body Who are going to ascend again after such a long exile in degradation. And not Adam's Paradise, but the sublime Paradise of the Father is about to be given to You as Your abode. If it has been said that the amazing order of God, given through the lips of a man, stopped the sun, what will happen among the stars when they see the wonder of the Body of the Man ascend and sit at the right hand of the Father in the Perfection of His glorified being?

My little children, I will remain with you for a short time. And afterwards you will be looking for Me as orphans look for their dead parent. And weeping, you will go about speaking of Him and in vain you will knock at His silent tomb, and you will also knock at the blue gates of Heaven, with your souls elevated in suppliant search for love, saying: "Where is our Jesus? We want Him. Without Him there is no more light in the world, no joy, no love. Either give Him back to us, or let us come in. We want to be where He is". But for the time being you cannot come where I am going. To the Judaeans also I said: "Later you will look for Me, but you cannot come where I am going". I say the same to you.

Think of My Mother… Neither can She come where I am going. And yet, I left the Father to come to Her and become Jesus in Her immaculate womb. And yet, I came from the Inviolate Woman in the bright ecstasy of My Birthday. And I was nourished with Her love, that became milk. I am made of purity and love, because Mary nourished Me with Her virginity fecundated by the perfect Love Who lives in Heaven. And yet, I have grown up through Her, costing Her fatigue and tears… And yet, I ask of Her such heroism as no one has ever accomplished, and in comparison with which the heroism of Judith and that of Jael are the heroisms of poor women quarrelling with the rival at the village fountain. And yet, no one loves Me as She does. And, notwithstanding all that, I will leave Her and go where She will come only after a long time. The commandment I give you: "Sanctify yourselves year by year, month by month, day by day, hour by hour, to be able to come to Me when it is your hour" does not apply to Her. She is full of grace and holiness. She is the creature who has had everything and has given everything. There is nothing to be added or to be taken away. She is the most holy witness of what God can do.

But in order to be sure that you are able to join Me and to forget the grief in mourning the separation from your Jesus, I give you a new commandment. And it is: love one another. As I have loved you, you must love one another. By this love it will be known that you are My disciples. When a father has many sons, how does one know that they are such? Not so much by their physical appearance - because there are men who are in everything like another man, with whom there is no blood-tie and they are not even of the same country - as by their common love for the family, for their father and for one another. And even when the father dies, a good family does not break up, because one is their blood and it is the same they had from the seed of their father, and it ties in knots that not even death loosens, because love is stronger than death. Now, if you love one another after I have left you, everybody will acknowledge you as My children, and therefore as My disciples, and as brothers to one another, having had only one father. »

« Lord, but where are You going? » asks Peter.

« I am going where at present you cannot follow Me. But you will follow Me later. »

« And why not now? I have always followed You since You said to me: "Follow Me". I left everything without regret… Now, to go away without Your poor Simon, leaving me without You, Who are everything to me, after that for Your sake I left the little property I had previously, is not fair or nice of You. Are You going to Your death? All right. I will come as well. We shall go to the next world together. But I will have defended You before that. I am ready to give my life for You. »

« You will give your life for Me? Now? Not now. I solemnly - oh! I do solemnly tell you - before the cock crows, you will have disowned Me three times. This is the first watch. Then the second will come… and then the third. Before the cock crows loudly, you will have disowned your Lord three times. »

« Impossible, Master! I believe everything You say, but not that. I am sure of myself. »

« Now, at present you are sure. Because you still have Me. You have God with you. Before long, the Incarnate God will be caught, and you will no longer have Him. And Satan, after making you heavy - your very certainty is a trick of Satan, ballast to weigh you down - will frighten you. He will insinuate to you: "God does not exist. I do". And as you will still be able to reason, although made dull by fear, you will understand that, when Satan is the master of the hour, Good is dead and Evil is active, the spirit is dejected and the human is triumphant. You will then be like warriors without a leader, chased by the enemy, and in the dismay of being defeated you will bow your necks to the conqueror, and in order not to be killed you will disown the fallen hero. But, please do not let your hearts be upset. Believe in God. And believe also in Me. Believe in Me, against all appearances. Let him who remains and him who runs away believe in My mercy and in the Father's. Both he who is silent and he who moves his lips to say: "I do not know Him". And likewise believe in My forgiveness. And believe that, whatever your actions may be in future, in Good and in My Doctrine, consequently in My Church, they will give you equal places in Heaven. In the house of My Father there are many abodes. If it were not so, I would have told you. Because I am going ahead, to prepare a place for you. Do good fathers not do likewise when they have to take their little children elsewhere? They go ahead, they prepare the house, the furnishings, the provisions. They then go back to get their dearest ones. They do so out of love, so that the little ones may lack nothing and may not be uncomfortable in the new place. I do the same and for the same reason. I am going now. And when I have prepared a place for each of you in the celestial Jerusalem, I will come again and take you with Me so that you may be where I am, where there is no death or mourning, no tears, no shouting, no hunger, no pain, no darkness, no parching thirst, but only light, peace, happiness and singing. Oh! song of the Highest Heavens when the twelve chosen ones will sit on thrones with the twelve patriarchs of the tribes of Israel and in the ardour of the fire of spiritual love, standing upright over the sea of beatitude, they will sing the eternal song accompanied by the arpeggio of the eternal alleluia of the angelical host… I want you to be where I shall be. And you know where I am going and you know the way. »

« But, Lord! We know nothing. You are not telling us where You

are going. How can we know the way to be taken to come towards you and curtail the wait? » asks Thomas.

« I am the Way, the Truth, the Life. You have heard Me say so and explain it several times, and really some people, who did not even know that there is a God, have walked ahead, along My way, and they are already ahead of you. Oh! where are you, lost sheep of God, brought back to the fold by Me? And where are you, whose soul has been raised? »

« Who? Of whom are you speaking? Of Mary of Lazarus? She is in the other room, with Your Mother. Do You want her? Or do You want Johanna? She is certainly in her mansion, but if You wish so, we will go and call her for You… »

« No. Not them… I am thinking of the one who will be revealed only in Heaven… and of Photinai… They found Me. And they have never left My way again. To one I pointed out the Father as the true God and the Spirit as a Levite in this individual adoration. To the other, who did not even know she had a soul, I said: "My name is Saviour, I save whoever has the good will to be saved. I am the One Who looks for those who are lost, I give Life, Truth and Purity. Those who look for Me, will find Me". And they both found God… I bless you, weak Eves who have become stronger than Judith… I am coming, I am coming where you are… You comfort Me… May you be blessed!… »

« Show us the Father, Lord, and we shall be equal to them » says Philip.

« I have been with all of you for such a long time, and you, Philip, still do not know Me? He who sees Me, sees the Father. So, how can you say: "Let us see the Father"? Can you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me? The words that I say to you, I do not say them by Myself. It is the Father, living in Me, Who accomplishes all My work. And do you, all of you, not believe that I am in the Father and He is in Me? What must I say to make you believe? If you do not believe My words, believe at least in My deeds. And I say to you and I truly say to you: he who believes in Me will perform the deeds that I do, and will perform even greater ones, because I am going to the Father. Whatever you ask of the Father in My name, I will do it, so that the Father may be glorified in His Son. And I will do anything you ask in behalf of My Name. My Name is known for what it really is, only to Me and to the Father Who generated Me and to the Spirit Who proceeds from our love. And everything is possible to that Name. He who thinks of My Name with love, loves Me and obtains. But it is not sufficient to love Me. It is necessary to keep My commandments in order to have true love. Feelings are testified by deeds. And because of your love I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Comforter, so that He may remain with you for ever, One against Whom Satan

and the World cannot act cruelly, the Spirit of Truth, Whom the world cannot receive or strike, because it cannot see Him and does not know Him. The world will deride Him, but He is so sublime that derision will not be able to offend Him, while being so merciful as to exceed all limits, He will always be with those who love Him, even if they are poor and weak. You will know Him, because He already dwells with you and will soon be in you. I will not leave you orphans. I have already told you that I will come back to you. But I will come before it is time to come to take You and go to My Kingdom. I will come to you. Before long the world will no longer see Me. But you see Me and will see Me. Because I live and you live. Because I will live and you will live. On that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you are in Me and I in you. Because he, who accepts My precepts and observes them, loves Me, and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father and will possess God, because God is love, and he who loves has God in himself. And I will love Him, because I shall see God in him, and I will show Myself to him, making him acquainted with the secrets of My love, of My wisdom, of My Incarnate Divinity. They will be My returns among the children of man, whom I love notwithstanding that they are weak and even hostile. But these will be only weak. And I will fortify them; I will say to them: "Rise!", I will say: "Come out!", I will say: "Follow Me", I will say: "Listen", I will say: "Write"… and you are among them. »

« Why, Lord, are You showing Yourself to us and not to the world? » asks Judas Thaddeus.

« Because you love Me and you keep My words. He who does that will be loved by My Father, and we shall come to him and make our home with him, in him. Whereas he who does not love Me, does not keep My words and acts according to the flesh and the world. Now remember that what I said to you is not the word of Jesus of Nazareth, but it is the word of the Father, because I am the Word of the Father Who sent Me. I told you these things, speaking to you thus, because I want to prepare you Myself for the complete possession of the Truth and Wisdom. But you cannot yet understand or remember. But when the Comforter, the Holy Spirit Whom the Father will send to you in My name, comes to you, then you will be able to understand, and He will teach you everything, and He will remind you of what I told you.

I leave you My peace. I give you My peace. I give it to you not as the world gives it. And not even as I have given it to you so far: the blessed greeting of the Blessed One to the blessed ones. The peace I am giving you now is more profound. In this farewell I communicate Myself, My Spirit of peace to you, as I communicated My Body and My Blood to you, so that you may have strength for the imminent battle. Satan and the world are stirring up a war against

your Jesus. It is their hour. Have Peace within you, My Spirit, which is spirit of peace, because I am the King of peace. Have it so that you may not be too forlorn. He who suffers with the peace of God within himself, suffers, but does not blaspheme and does not despair.

Do not weep. You have also heard Me say: "I am going to the Father and then I will come back". If you loved Me beyond the flesh, you would rejoice, because I am going to the Father after such a long exile… I am going to Him Who is greater than I am and Who loves Me. I have told you now, before it takes place, as I informed you of all the sufferings of the Redeemer, before going to them, so that, when everything is fulfilled, you may believe more and more in Me. Do not be so upset! Do not be frightened. You hearts are in need of balance…

I have not much more time to speak to you… but I have so much to say! Now that I have come to the end of My evangelization, I feel that I have not said anything yet, and that there is still so much to be done. Your mood increases My feeling. So, what shall I say? That I failed in My task? Or that you are so hard-hearted that My work has been of no avail? Shall I be in doubt about you? No. I rely on God and I entrust you, My beloved ones, to Him. He will complete the work of His Word. I am not like a father who dies without having any other light but the human one. I hope in God. And, although within Myself I feel the urgency of all the advice, of which I see you are in need, and I realise that time flies, I am going towards My destiny with a quiet mind. I know that the dew is about to descend on the seeds sown in you and it will make all of them spring up, then the sun of the Paraclete will come and they will become mighty trees. The prince of this world, with whom I have nothing to do, is about to come. And if it were not for the purpose of redemption, he would not have had any power over Me. But that is happening so that the world may know that I love My Father and I love Him so much that I will obey Him even to death, and I will, therefore, do what He ordered Me to do.

It is time to go. Stand up. And listen to My last words. I am the true Vine. The Father is the Vinedresser. Every branch that bears no fruit He cuts, and the one that does bear fruit He prunes, to make it bear even more. You are already purified by My word. Remain in Me and I will remain in you to continue to be so. The branch cut off from the vine cannot bear fruit. The same applies to you, if you do not remain in Me. I am the Vine and you are the branches. Whoever remains united to Me bears fruit in plenty. But if one is cut off, one becomes a dry branch and is thrown on the fire and burns there. Because, if you are not united to Me, you can do nothing. So remain in Me and let My words remain in you, then ask for whatever you want, and it will be done to you. My Father will always be the more glorified, the more you bear fruit and are My disciples.

As the Father has loved Me, so I have loved you. Remain in My love that saves. By loving Me you will be obedient, and obedience increases mutual love. Do not say that I am repeating Myself. I am aware of your weakness. And I want you to be saved. I have told you this so that the joy I wanted to give you may be in you and may be complete. Love one another, love one another! This is My new commandment. Love one another more than each of you loves himself. There is no greater love than that of a man who lays down his life for his friends. You are My friends and I will lay down my life for you. Do what I teach and order you to do. I will no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know what his master does, whereas you know what I do. You know everything about Me. I have made known to you not only Myself, but also the Father and the Paraclete, and everything I heard from God. You did not choose yourselves. But I chose you and I elected you, so that you may go among peoples and you may bear fruit in yourselves and in the hearts of those who are evangelized, and your fruit may remain, and the Father may give you everything you will ask of Him in My name.

Do not say: "So, if You chose us, why did You choose a betrayer. If You know everything, why did You do that?" Do not even ask who he is. He is not a man. He is Satan. I said so to My faithful friend and I let My beloved son say so. He is Satan. If Satan, the eternal mimic of God, had not become incarnate in human flesh, this possessed man could not have escaped My power of Jesus. I said: "possessed". No. He is much more: he is annihilated in Satan. »

« Since You have driven demons away, why did you not free him? » asks James of Alphaeus.

« Are you asking that for your own sake, fearing that you are the one? Be not afraid of that. »

« I, then? »

« I? »

« I? »

« Be quiet. I am not mentioning that name. I am being merciful, do likewise. »

« But why did You not defeat him? Could You not do that? »

« I could. But in order to prevent Satan from taking bodily form to kill Me, I should have had to exterminate the human race before Redemption. So what would I have redeemed? »

« Tell me, Lord, tell me! » Peter has fallen on his knees and he shakes Jesus phrenetically as if he were a prey to frenzy. « Is it I? Is it I? Shall I examine my own conscience? I do not think so. But You… You said that I will disown You… And I am quivering… Oh' how horrible if it is I!… »

« No, Simon of Jonah. It is not you. »

« Why are You depriving me of my name "Peter"? So am I Simon again? See? You are saying so!… It is I! But how could I? Tell me tell me, all of you When was it that I became a traitor?… Simon?… John"… Tell me! »

« Peter, Peter, Peter! I am calling you Simon because I am thinking of our first meeting, when you were Simon. And I am thinking how you have always been loyal since the first moment. It is not you. I, the Truth, am telling you. »

« Who, then? »

« It is Judas of Kerioth! Have you not yet understood that? » shouts Thaddeus, who can no longer restrain himself.

« Why did you not tell me before? Why? » shouts Peter as well.

« Silence. It is Satan. He has no other name. Where are you going, Peter? »

« To look for him. »

« Leave that mantle and that weapon at once. Or shall I drive you away and curse you? »

« No, no! Oh! my Lord! But I… but I… Have I become delirious, have I? Oh! Oh! » Peter has thrown himself on the ground and is weeping at Jesus' feet.

« I give you My commandment: love and forgive one another. Have you understood? Even if in the world there is hatred, let only love be in you. For everybody. How many traitors you will find on your way! But you must not hate them and return evil for evil. Otherwise the Father will hate you. I have been hated and betrayed, long before you. And yet, as you can see, I do not hate. The world cannot love what is different from it. Therefore it will not love you. If you belonged to it, it would love you; but you are not of the world, as I took you away from the world. And that is why you are hated.

I said to you: a servant is not greater than his master. If they have persecuted Me, they will persecute you as well. If they have listened to Me, they will listen to you, too. But they will do everything because of My Name, since they do not know, they do not want to know Him Who sent Me. If I had not come and I had not spoken, they would not be guilty. But now their sin has no excuse. They have seen My deeds, they have heard My words, and yet they have hated Me, and the Father with Me. Because the Father and I are one Unit only with the Love. But it was written: "You hated me for no reason". But when the Comforter comes, the Spirit of truth Who proceeds from the Father, He will bear witness of Me, and you also will witness for Me, because you have been with Me since the beginning.

I am telling you this so that, when the hour comes, you may not be depressed and scandalised. The time is about to come when they will expel you from synagogues, and those who kill you will think that they are doing a holy duty for God. They have not known either the Father or Me. That is their excuse. I have not told you these

things so extensively, before this hour, because you were just like new-born babies. But the mother is now leaving you. I am going away. You must become accustomed to other food. I want you to know.

Not one of you has asked Me again: "Where are You going?". Sadness is making you dumb. And yet My going away is a good thing also for you. Otherwise the Comforter will not come. I will send Him to you. And when He has come, through the wisdom and the words, the deeds and the heroism that He will infuse into You, He will convince the world of its deicide sin, and of justice with regard to My holiness. And a clear cut will divide the world into reprobates, enemies of God, and believers. The latter will be more or less holy, according to their will. But judgement will be passed on the prince of the world and his servants. I cannot tell you more, because you are not yet able to understand. But He, the Paraclete, will give you the whole Truth, because He will not speak as from Himself. But He will tell you everything He heard from the Mind of God and will announce the future to you. He will take what comes from Me, that is, what is still of the Father, and will tell you.

There is still a short time to see one another. Then you will no longer see Me. And then a short time later you will see Me.

You are grumbling among yourselves and in your hearts. Listen to a parable. The last one of your Master.

When a woman has conceived and the hour of delivery comes, she is in great distress, because she suffers and groans. But when her little child is born and she presses it to her heart, all her pain comes to an end and her sorrow changes into joy, because a man has come into the world.

The same applies to you. You will weep and the world will laugh at you. But later your sorrow will change into joy. A joy that the world will never know. You are sad now. But when you see Me again, your hearts will be filled with a joy of which no one will ever be able to deprive you. Such a full joy, that it will obliterate every need of yours to ask for anything for your minds, hearts and bodies. You will feed on seeing Me again, and you will forget everything else. And just from that moment you will be able to ask for anything in My name, and it will be given to you by the Father, so that your joy may be greater and greater. Ask, do ask. And you will receive.

The time is coming when I shall be able to speak to you of the Father in plain words. That will happen because you will have been faithful in the trial and everything will have been overcome. So your love will be perfect, as it will have given you strength in the trial. And what you are short of, I will add it for you, taking it from My immense treasure and saying: "Father, as You can see, they have loved Me believing that I came from You". Having descended into

the world, now I leave it and I am going to the Father, and I will pray for you. »

« Oh! now You are explaining things clearly. Now we know what You mean and that You know everything and that You give answers without being questioned by anybody. You really come from God! »

« Do you believe now? At the last hour? I have spoken to You for three years! But the Bread that is God and the Wine that is Blood that did not come from man is already working in you, and is giving you the first thrill of deification. You will become gods if you persevere in My love and in My possession. Not as Satan said to Adam and Eve, but as I say to you. It is the true fruit of the tree of Good and of Life. Evil is defeated in him who feeds on it, and Death is dead. He who eats of it will live for ever and will become "god" in the Kingdom of God. You will be gods if you remain in Me. And yet now… although you have this Bread and this Blood in yourselves, as the hour is coming in which you will be scattered, you will go away on your own account and will leave Me all alone… But I am not alone. I have the Father with Me. Father, Father! Do not abandon Me! I have told you everything… To give you peace. My peace. You will still have trouble. But have faith. I have conquered the world. »

Jesus stands up, He opens His arms out crosswise and with His face shining brightly He says the sublime prayer to the Father. John quotes it integrally.

The apostles are shedding tears more or less openly and noisily. As a last thing, they sing a hymn.

Jesus blesses them. He then says to them: « Let us put on our mans now. And let us go. Andrew, tell the owner of the house to leave everything as it is, as I want that. Tomorrow… you will be pleased see this place again. » Jesus looks at it. He seems to be blessing walls, furniture, everything. He then puts on His mantle and Ls out, followed by the disciples. Beside Him there is John on whom He leans.

« Are you not saying goodbye to Your Mother? » Zebedee's son asks Him.

« No. Everything has already been done. Furthermore, make no noise. »

Simon, who has lit a torch at the chandelier, illuminates the wide corridor that leads to the door. Peter opens the main door cautiously and they all go out into the street, and then, working a gadget, they close the door from outside. And they start off.

17th February 1944.

Jesus says:

« In addition to the consideration on the love of a God Who becomes

Food for men, four main teachings stand out from the episode of the Supper.

The First: the necessity for all the children of God to obey the Law.

The Law prescribed that a lamb was to be consumed at Passover according to the ritual given to Moses by the Most High, and I, the true Son of the true God, did not consider Myself exempted, because of My divine quality, from the Law. I was on the Earth: Man among men and the Master of men. I had, therefore, to do My duty towards God as and better than anybody else. Divine favours do not dispense from being obedient and from making an effort towards a greater and greater holiness. If you compare the most sublime holiness with divine perfection, you will always find it full of defects, and consequently it is obliged to strive to eliminate them and achieve a degree of perfection as similar as possible to God's.

The second: the power of Mary's prayer.

I was God Who had become Flesh. A Flesh, that being without stain, had the spiritual strength of dominating the flesh. And I do not refuse, on the contrary I implore the help of the Full of Grace, Who in that hour of expiation would have also found Heaven closed over Her head, that is true, but not to the extent that She should not succeed in detaching and angel from it, since She is the Queen of angels, to console Her Son. Oh! Not for Herself, poor Mother! She also has tasted the bitter abandonment by the Father, but by means of that suffering offered for Redemption, She obtained and made it possible for Me to overcome the anguish of the Garden of Olives and to bring the Passion to completion in all its multiform bitterness, each of which aimed at cleansing a form and a means of sin.

The third: self-control and endurance of offences, the sublime charitable attitude towards all offences, as can be possessed only by those who make the Law of Charity the life of their lives, as I had proclaimed. And I had not only proclaimed it, but I had really practised it.

You cannot imagine what it was for Me to have the Traitor at My table, to have to give Myself to him, and humiliate Myself before him, to have to share with him the ritual chalice, and put My lips where he had put his, and make My Mother do the same. Your doctors have discussed and still discuss the rapidity of My end and they say it originated in a heart lesion brought about by the blows of the scourging. Yes, My heart was injured also by those blows. But it had already been damaged at the Supper. I was heart-broken by the effort of having to endure the Traitor at My side. It was at the Supper that I began to die physically. What followed was only au increase of an already existing agony. What I was able to do, I did it because I was all one with the Love. Also when the God-Love withdrew from Me, I was able to be love, because I had lived of love during my thirty-three years. It is not possible to reach perfection,

as is required to forgive and put up with our offender, if one has ,lot acquired the habit of love. I had acquired it, and I was able to forgive and bear that masterpiece of an Offender, which was Judas.

The fourth: the more one is worthy of receiving a Sacrament, the greater is its effect. That is: if one has become worthy of it through persevering good will, that subdues the flesh and makes the spirit sovereign, mastering concupiscences, directing one's being towards virtues, bending it like a bow towards the perfection and above all of Love.

Because, when you love, you are inclined to make the person you love happy. John, who loved Me as nobody else did, and who was pure, received the utmost transformation from the Sacrament. He began as from that moment to be the eagle, that is accustomed to soaring easily in the High Heaven of God and staring at the eternal Sun. But woe to him who receives the Sacrament without being worthy of it, and who, on the contrary, has increased his human unworthiness with mortal sins. Then instead of being the germ preservation and life, it becomes the germ of corruption and death. Death of the spirit and decomposition of the flesh, whereby it "bursts", as Peter says with regard to Judas. It does not shed blood, the vital liquid always beautiful in its purple hue, but its entrails burst out, blackened by lechery, rottenness pouring out of the decomposed body, as out of the carrion of an unclean animal, a disgusting sight for passersby.

The death of the profaner of the Sacrament is always the death of a desperate person who, therefore, does not know the placid passing away peculiar to those who are in grace, or the heroic death of the victim who suffers intensely but looks fixedly at Heaven and feels certain peace in the soul. The death of one in despair is marked dreadful contortions and terror, it is a horrible convulsion of the soul already gripped by the hand of Satan, who chokes it to detach From the body and suffocates it with his nauseating breath. That "he difference between those who pass away after being nourished with love, faith, hope and every other virtue and heavenly doctrine and with the angelical Bread that accompanies them with its fruit better still if with its real presence - in the last journey, and those who pass away, after the life of a brute, with the death of a brute that Grace and the Sacrament cannot comfort. The former is the serene end of a saint, to whom death opens the eternal Kingdom. The latter is the frightful fall of a damned soul, that feels it is falling into eternal death and in a moment knows what it wanted to lose and for which it can no longer find any remedy. Acquisition and joy for the former; despoilment and terror for the latter.

This is what you give yourselves, according to whether you believe and love, or you do not believe and you deride My gift. And it is the lesson of this contemplation. »

THE PASSION

599. The Agony and the Arrest at Gethsemane.

10th February 1944.

Jesus says:

« And now come. Although this evening you are like one who is about to breathe his last, come, so that I may lead you towards My sufferings. Long is the way that we shall have to cover together, because I was not spared any sorrow: neither the pain of the flesh, nor the grief of the mind, of the heart, of the spirit. I tasted all of them, I fed on all of them, I quenched My thirst with all of them, to the extent that I died of them.

If you laid your lips on Mine, you would taste the bitterness that they still retain of so much sorrow. If you could see My Human nature in its appearance, which is now refulgent, you would see that that refulgence emanates from the countless wounds that like a garment of living purple covered My limbs, lacerated, exsanguinated, beaten, pierced for your sake. My Human nature is now refulgent. But one day it was like that of a leper, so fiercely it had been struck and humiliated. The Man-God, Who had in Himself the perfection of physical handsomeness, being the Son of God and of the immaculate Woman, to those who cast loving, curious, or scornful, or evil glances at Him, seemed a "worn", as David says, the scorn of mankind, the jest of people.

My love for My Father and for My Father's children led Me to abandon My body to those who struck Me, to offer My face to those who slapped Me and spat at Me, to those who thought they were doing a meritorious deed by tearing My hair and My beard, piercing My head with thorns, making the earth and its fruits accomplices of the tortures inflicted on their Saviour, dislocating My limbs, laying bare My bones, tearing off My garments, thus offending My purity in the most cruel manner, nailing Me to a piece of wood and lifting Me up like a slaughtered lamb on to the hooks of a butcher, and barking around Me, while I was in agony, like a pack of ravenous wolves made even wilder by the smell of blood.

I was accused, condemned, killed, betrayed, disowned, sold. I was abandoned even by God, because I was burdened with the crimes I had taken upon Myself. They made Me poorer than a beggar spoiled by highwaymen, because they did not even leave Me My tunic to cover My livid nakedness of a martyr. Even after My death I was not spared the insult of a wound and the slander of enemies. I was overwhelmed by all the dirt of your sins, I was hurled down as far as the bottom of the darkness of sorrow, deprived of the light of Heaven that might reply to My dying eyes, and of the divine voice that might answer My last invocation.

Isaiah explains the reason for so much grief: "He has really taken our evils upon Himself and ours are the sorrows He has carried".

Our sorrows! Yes, I carried them on your behalf! To relieve yours, to mitigate them, to cancel them, had you been faithful to Me. But you did not want to be so. And what did I gain by it? You "looked at Me as if I were a leper, one struck by God". Yes, the leprosy of your infinite sins was upon Me, it was on Me like a garment of penance, like a cilice; but how did you not see God shine forth, in His infinite love, from that garment worn on His holiness on your behalf?

"He was wounded through our wickedness, and pierced through our crimes" says Isaiah, who with his prophetic eyes saw that the Son of man had become one huge sore to heal those of men. If they had only bruised My body!

But what you most wounded, was My feelings and spirit. You made a laughing stock and butt of both; and you struck Me in the friendship that I had given you, through Judas; in the loyalty that I hoped to receive from you, through Peter who disowned Me; in the gratitude for My favours, through those who shouted at Me: "death to Him!", after I had cured them from so many diseases; through love, because of the torture inflicted on My Mother; through religion, calling Me a blasphemer of God, whereas out of zeal for the cause of God I had put Myself in the hands of man by becoming incarnate, suffering throughout My life and surrendering to human ferocity without uttering a word or complaining.

A glance would have been sufficient to incinerate accusers, judges and executioners. But I had come spontaneously to accomplish the sacrifice, and like a lamb, because I was the Lamb of God and I shall be so for ever, I allowed men to take Me to be stripped and killed, so that I might make a Life for you of My Flesh.

When I was lifted up, I was already consumed by sufferings with no name, with all the names. I began to die at Bethlehem, seeing the light of the Earth, so distressingly different for Me Who was the Living Being in Heaven. I continued to die in poverty, in exile, in flight, in work, in incomprehension, in fatigue, in betrayal, in torn affections, in torture, in falsehood, in blasphemy. I had come to re-unite man to God, and that is what man gave Me!

Mary, look at your Saviour. He is not dressed in white, and His hair is not fair. His eyes are not the sapphire hue that you know. His garment is stained with blood, it is worn out and covered with dirt and spittle. His face is tumefied and twisted, His eyes are veiled with blood and tears, and He looks at you through the crust formed by them and by the dust that makes His eyelids heavy. My hands - can you see them? - are one big sore and are awaiting the last Wounds.

Look at Me, little John, as your brother John looked at Me. My footprints are stained with blood. Perspiration washes away the blood that drops from the wounds made by the scourges, and that is still left after the agony in the Garden. Words come out of My parched bruised lips in the painful panting of My heart that is already dying through all kinds of torture.

From now on you will often see Me like this. I am the King of sorrows and I will come in My regal dress to speak to you of My sorrow. Although you are in agony, follow Me. As I am the Merciful One, I shall be able to put also the scented honey of more serene contemplations before your lips, poisoned by My sorrow. But you must still prefer these ones, smeared with blood, because it is through them that you have the Life, and you will be able to take the Life to other people. Kiss My bleeding hand and be vigilant when meditating on Me, the Redeemer. »

I see Jesus as He describes Himself. This evening I have really been in agony as from 1900 hours (it is 1. 15 a.m. of the 11th, by now).

Jesus says to me this morning, the 11th February, at 7.30:

« Yesterday evening I wanted to speak to you only of Myself, a prey to suffering, because I have begun the description and visions of My sorrows. Yesterday evening it was the introduction. And you were so exhausted, My friend! But before the agony comes back again, I must reproach you gently.

Yesterday morning you were selfish. You said to your spiritual Father: "Let us hope that I shall be able to hold out, because my fatigue is greater". No. His is greater, because it is hard and is not compensated by the bliss of seeing visions and of having Jesus present, as you have Him, also in His holy Human nature. Never be selfish, not even in the least things. A woman disciple, a little John, must be very humble and charitable, like her Jesus.

And now come and stay with Me. "The flowers have appeared… the pruning time has come… the voice of the little turtle-dove has been heard in the country… " And they are the flowers that have come up in the pools of Blood of your Christ. And He Who will be cut off like a pruned branch is the Redeemer. And the voice of the turtle-dove, calling the bride to a sorrowful holy wedding banquet, is Mine, for I love you.

Rise and come, as today's Mass says. Come to contemplate and suffer. It is the gift that I grant My beloved one. »

16th March 1945.

There is dead silence in the street. In so much silence there is only the noise of a little fountain, the water of which falls into a stone basin. On the eastern side, along the walls of the houses it is still dark, whereas on the other side the tops of houses are beginning

to grow white in the moonlight, and where the street widens out into a little square, the milky silvery moon-beams shine on it, embellishing the stones and the earth of the street. But under the many archivolts linking one house to another, like drawbridges or buttresses supporting the old houses with very few openings on the streets, and which are now all locked and dark as if they had been abandoned, there is complete darkness and the reddish light of the torch held by Simon becomes particularly bright and even more useful.

In the red mobile light faces stand out in neat relief and each shows a different mood. The most solemn and calm is Jesus', although tiredness makes it look older, furrowing it with wrinkles that usually are not there and already show the future image of His face recomposed in death. John, who is beside Him, looks around at everything he can see with a surprised sorrowful countenance. He looks like a child who has been terrorised by a story he has heard or by a frightening promise and implores help from someone who is more experienced than he is. But who can help him? Simon, who is on Jesus' other side, looks reserved, gloomy like a man who is turning over dreadful thoughts in his mind. And he is the only one who, after Jesus, looks dignified.

The others, in two groups that continuously change in formation, are all in a ferment. And now and again the hoarse voice of Peter and the baritone one of Thomas are raised resounding strangely. They are then lowered, as if they were afraid of what they say. They are discussing what is to be done, and some suggest one thing, some another. But all proposals are dropped, because "the hour of darkness" is really about to begin, and the opinions of men are obscure and confused.

« I should have been told earlier » says Peter worriedly.

« But no one has spoken. Not even the Master… »

« Never! He would never have told you. Brother! You do not seem to know Him!… »

« I felt there was some trouble. And I said: "Let us go and die with Him". Do you remember? But, by our Most Holy God, if I had known that it was Judas of Simon… » shouts Thomas in a thunderous threatening voice.

« And what did you want to do? » asks Bartholomew.

« Me? I would do it even now, if you helped me! »

« What? Would you go and kill him? Where? »

« No. I would take the Master away. It is easier! »

« He would not come! »

« I would not ask Him whether He wants to come. I would abduct Him as one abducts a woman. »

« It would not be a wicked idea! » says Peter. And he goes back impulsively, he joins the group of Alphaeus' two sons, who with

Matthew and James are whispering to one another like conspirators.

« Listen, Thomas says that we should take Jesus away. All together. We could… from Get-Samni through Bethphage to Bethany and from there… to some other place. Shall we do that? Once He is in a safe place, we will come back and wipe out Judas. »

« It is useless. The whole of Israel is a trap » says James of Alphaeus.

« And now it is about to go off. It was understandable. Too much hatred! »

« Matthew! You make me angry! You had more courage when you were a sinner! Philip, tell us what you think? »

Philip, who is coming all alone and seems to be talking to himself, looks up and stops. Peter joins him and they whisper to each other. They then arrive at the previous group and Philip says: « I would say that the Temple is the best place. »

« Are you mad? » shout the cousins, Matthew and James. « But it is in there that they want Him dead! »

« Hush! How much clamour! I know what I am saying. They will look for Him everywhere. But not there. You and John have good friends among Annas' servants. A handsome present… and it is all settled. Believe me! The best place to hide one who is wanted is the jailors' house. »

« I will not do it » says James of Zebedee. « But listen also to what the others say. John, first of all. And if they should arrest Him? I don't want anybody to say that I am the traitor… »

« I had not thought of that. So? » Peter is at a loss.

« Well, I would say that it is compassionate to do one thing. The only thing we can do. Take away His Mother… » says Judas of Alphaeus.

« Of course!… But… Who will go? What shall we tell Her? You should go, as you are a relative of Hers. »

« I am staying with Jesus. It is my right. You can go. »

« I?! I have armed myself with a sword to die like Eleazar of Saura. I will pass through legions to defend my Jesus, and I will strike without restraint. If I get killed by a more numerous force, it does not matter. I will have defended Him » proclaims Peter.

« But are you really sure that it is the Iscariot? » Philip asks Thaddeus.

« I am certain. None of us has the heart of a snake. He only… Matthew, go to Mary and tell Her… »

« I? Deceive Her? See Her beside we while She is unaware, and then?… Ah! no. I am ready to die, but not to betray that dove… »

Their voices mingle in a whisper.

« Do You hear? Master, we love You » says Simon.

« I know. I am not in need of those words to know. And if they

give peace to the Christ's heart, they wound His soul. »

« Why, my Lord? They are words of love. »

« Of an entirely human love. Truly, in these three years I have done nothing, because you are even more human than at the first hour. This evening, all the filthiest ferments are rising in you. But it is not your fault… »

« Save Yourself, Jesus! » says John moaning.

« I am saving Myself. »

« Are You? Oh! My God, thank You! » John looks like a flower that had withered through excessive heat and becomes fresh again standing straight on its stem. « I will tell the others. Where are we going? »

« I am going to My death. You to Faith. »

« But did You not say just now that you were going to save Yourself? » The beloved apostle loses heart again.

« Yes, I am in fact saving Myself. If I did not obey My Father, I would lose Myself. I obey Him. So I save Myself. But do not weep so! You are not so brave as the disciples of that Greek philosopher, of whom I spoke to you one day. They remained with their teacher, who was dying having taken a potion of hemlock, and they comforted him with their manly sorrow. You… you look like a little boy who has lost his father. »

« And is it not so? What I am losing is more than the loss of a father! I am losing You… »

« You are not losing Me, because you will continue to love Me. He is lost who is separated from us by oblivion on the Earth and from God's Judgement in the hereafter. But we shall never be separated. Neither by this one or by that one. »

But John will not listen to reason.

Simon comes closer to Jesus and in a low voice confides to Him: « Master… Simon Peter and… I were hoping to do a good thing… But… Since You know everything, tell me: within how many hours do You think You will be arrested? »

« As soon as the moon is at the summit of her arc. »

Simon makes a gesture of grief and impatience, not to say of anger. « Then it was all useless… Master, I will now tell You. You almost reproached Simon Peter and me for leaving You so alone these last days… But we were away on Your behalf… For Your sake. Peter, frightened by Your words, came to me on Monday night while I was sleeping and he said to me: "You and I, I can trust you, must do something for Jesus. Judas also said that he wants to attend to it". Oh! why did we not understand then? Why did You not say anything to us? But, tell me, did You not tell anybody? Really? Perhaps You became aware of it only a few hours ago? »

« I have always known about it. Even before he became a disciple. And I tried in every way to send him away from Me so that his crime might not be perfect, both from the divine and human

points of view. Those who want My death are the executioners of God. This disciple and friend of Mine is also the Traitor, the executioner of man. My first executioner, because he has already killed Me through the effort of having him beside Me, at the table, and having to protect him by Myself against you. »

« And does no one know? »

« John does. I told him at the end of the Supper. But what have you done? »

« And what about Lazarus? Does Lazarus really not know anything? We went to him today, because he came early in the morning, he offered his sacrifice and went back without even stopping at his mansion or going to the Praetorium. Because he always goes there, following a habit of his father. And, as You are aware, Pilate is in town these days… »

« Yes. They are all here. There is Rome: the new Zion, with Pilate. There is Israel with Caiaphas and Herod. There is the whole of Israel, because Passover has gathered the children of this people at the foot of the altar of God… Have you seen Gamaliel? »

« Yes, I have. Why are You asking me? I have to see him again tomorrow… »

« Gamaliel is at Bethphage this evening. I know. When we arrive at Gethsemane, you will go to Gamaliel and say to him: "You will shortly have the sign that you have been awaiting for twenty-one years". Nothing else. Then you will come back to your companions. »

« But how do You know? Oh! my Master, my poor Master, Who has not even the comfort of not being aware of deeds of other people! »

« You are right! The comfort of not knowing! Poor Master! Because evil deeds are more numerous than good ones. But I see also the good ones and I rejoice at them. »

« Then You know that… »

« Simon, it is the hour of My passion. To make it more complete, the Father is withdrawing His light from Me, as it gets nearer. Before long I shall have but darkness and the contemplation of what is darkness: that is, all the sins of men. You cannot, none of you can understand. Nobody, except who will be called by God for this special mission, will understand this passion in the great Passion, and as man is material even in loving and meditating, there will be who will weep and suffer because of the scourging and the torture of the Redeemer, but this spiritual torture that, believe Me you who are listening to Me, is the most atrocious one, will not be measured… So speak, Simon. Guide Me along the paths where your friendship went for My sake, because I am a poor man who is becoming blind and sees ghosts, not real things… »

John embraces Him and asks: « What? Can You no longer see Your John? »

« I can see you. But the ghosts rise from the fogs of Satan. Visions of nightmares and sorrows. This evening we are all enveloped in this hellish miasma. It is striving to create cowardice, disobedience and sorrow in Me. It will create disappointment and fear in you in other people, who are neither fearful nor criminal, it will bring about delinquency and fear. In others, who already belong to Satan, it will give rise to supernatural perversion. I am saying so because their perfection in evil will be such as to exceed human possibilities and achieve the perfection which is always in the supernatural. Speak up, Simon. »

« Yes. As from Tuesday we have done nothing but go around to find out, to prevent, to look for help. »

« And what have you been able to do? »

« Nothing. Or very little. »

« And that little will be "nothing" when fear paralyses your hearts. »

« I became irritated also with Lazarus… It is the first time that it happens to me… I was irritated because he seems to be slothful… He could take action. He is a friend of the Governor. He is always Theophilus' son! But Lazarus rejected every proposal of Mine. I left him shouting at him: "I think that you are the friend of whom the Master speaks. You fill me with horror!" and I did not want to go back to him any more… But this morning he sent for me and he said: "Can you still believe that I am the traitor?" I had already seen Gamaliel and Joseph and Chuza, Nicodemus and Manaen, and finally Your brother Joseph… and I could no longer believe that. I said to him: "Forgive me, Lazarus. But I feel that my mind is more deranged now than when I was condemned myself" And it is so, Master… I am no longer myself… But why are You smiling? »

« Because that confirms what I said just now. The fog of Satan envelops and upsets you. What did Lazarus say in reply? »

« He said: "I understand you. Come today, with Nicodemus. I must see you". And I went, while Peter went to the Galileans. Because Your brother, who is so far away, is more informed than we are. He says that he was informed by chance, speaking to an old friend of Alphaeus and Joseph, a Galilean who lives near the market. »

« Oh!… yes… A great friend of the family… »

« He is there with Simon and the women. There is also the family from Cana. »

« I have seen Simon. »

« Well, Joseph was told by this friend of his, who is also a friend of one of the Temple, who has become his relative on women's side, that they have decided to arrest You, and he said to Peter: "I have always opposed Him. But I did it out of love and while He was still Strong. But now that He has become like a child and is a prey to His enemies, I, a relative who has always loved Him, am with Him.

It's my duty by blood and by love". »

Jesus smiles, showing for a moment the serene face of joyful hours.

« And Joseph said to Peter: "The Pharisees of Galilee are wicked like all the Pharisees. But Galilee is not all Pharisees. And many Galileans are here who love Him. Let us go and tell them to gather together to defend Him. We have nothing but knives. But also clubs are weapons when they are handled properly. And if the Roman troops do not come, we will soon get the better of those cowardly cads of the Temple guards". And Peter went with him. In the meantime I went to Lazarus with Nicodemus. We had decided to convince Lazarus to come with us and to open his house to be with You. He said to us: "I must obey Jesus and remain here. To suffer twice as much… " Is it true? »

« It is true. I gave him that order. »

« But he gave me the swords. They belong to him. One for me, the other for Peter. Chuza also wanted to give me some swords. But… What is the use of two bits of steel against the whole world? Chuza cannot believe that what You say is true. He swears that he knows nothing and that at the court they think of nothing but enjoying the feast… A revelry as usual. So much so that he told Johanna to retire to one of their houses in Judaea. But Johanna wants to remain here, closed in her mansion, as if she were not there. But she will not go away. Plautina, Anne, Nike, and two Roman ladies of Claudia's household are staying with her. They weep, pray and make innocents pray. But it is no time for prayers. It is time for blood. I feel the "zealot" becoming alive in me and I am eager to kill in revenge!… »

« Simon! If I had wanted you to die as a damned soul, I would not have freed you from your desolation!… » Jesus is very severe.

« Oh! forgive me, Master… forgive me. I am like an inebriated raving man. »

« And what does Manaen say? »

« Manaen says that it cannot be true, and if it were, that he would follow You to the scaffold. »

« How you all rely on yourselves!… How much pride there is in man! And what about Nicodemus and Joseph? What do they know? »

« Nothing more than I do. Some time ago in a meeting Joseph was angry with the Sanhedrin, because he called them killers as they wanted to kill an innocent, and he said: "Everything is illegal in here. He is right when He says that there is abomination in the house of the Lord. This altar is to be destroyed because it has been profaned". They did not stone him, because he is Joseph. But since then they have kept him in the dark about everything. Only Gamaliel and Nicodemus have remained friendly with him. But the former does not speak. And the latter… Neither he nor Joseph have

been summoned any more to the Sanhedrin for the really important decisions. It meets illegally here and there, at different hours, for fear of them and of Rome. Ah! I was forgetting!… The shepherds. They are with the Galileans as well. But we are few! If Lazarus had only listened to us and had come to the Praetor! But he would not listen to us… That is what we have done… Much… and nothing… and I feel so depressed that I should like to go around the country howling like a jackal, becoming brutal in an orgy, killing like a highwayman, if only to get rid of this idea that "everything is useless", as Lazarus said, as Joseph and Chuza and Manaen and Gamaliel said… » The Zealot no longer seems himself…

« What did the rabbi say? »

« He said: "I do not exactly know what Caiaphas' purpose is. But I tell you that what you say is prophesied only for the Christ. And as I do not recognise the Christ in this prophet, I see no reason to be excited. A good man, a friend of God will be killed. But of how many like him has Zion drunk the blood?!". And as we insisted on Your divine Nature, he stubbornly repeated: "When I see the sign, I will believe". And he promised to abstain from voting for Your death and, on the contrary, if possible he will try to convince the others not to condemn You. That, and nothing else. He does not believe! He will not believe! If only nothing happened till tomorrow… But You say it is not so. "Oh! what shall we do?! »

« You will go to Lazarus and you will try to take as many as possible with you. Not only the apostles. But also the disciples that you will find wandering about the roads in the country. See if you can find the shepherds and order them to do so. The house in Bethany is more than ever the home in Bethany, the house of kind hospitality. Those who do not have the courage to face the hatred of a whole population, ought to take shelter there. And wait… »

« We will not leave You. »

« Do not part… Divided, you would be nothing. United, you will still be a power. Simon, promise Me that. You are calm, loyal, you can speak to and influence even Peter. And you have a great obligation towards Me. I am reminding you of it for the first time, to make you obedient. Look, we are at the Kidron. From there you, a leper, climbed up towards Me and you departed cleansed. Give Me that, for what I gave you. Give the Man what I gave man. I am the leper now.. »

« No! Do not say that! » say the two disciples moaning.

« It is so! Peter and My brothers will be the most depressed. My honest Peter will feel like a criminal and will have no peace. And My brothers… They will not have the courage to look at their mother and at Mine… I recommend them to you… »

« And what about me, Lord, to whom shall I belong? Are You not thinking of me? »

« O My child! You are entrusted to your love. It is so strong that it will guide you as a mother. I give you neither order nor guide. I leave you on the waters of love. They are such a calm and deep river in you, that they raise no doubt in Me about your future. Simon, have you understood? Promise Me, do promise Me! » It is painful to see Jesus so distressed… He resumes: « Before the others come! Oh! thank you! May you be blessed! »

They all gather together again in a group.

« Let us part now. I am going farther up, to pray. I want Peter, John and James with Me. You, remain here. And if you should be overwhelmed, call us. And be not afraid. Not a single hair of your heads will be hurt. Pray for Me. Lay aside hatred and fear. It will only be a moment… and then it will be full joy. Smile. That I may have your smiles in My heart. And once again, thank you for everything, My friends. Goodbye. May the Lord not abandon you… »

Jesus parts from the apostles and goes ahead, while Peter makes Simon give him the torch after the latter has lit with it some resinous dry twigs, that bum crackling on the edge of the olivegrove, spreading a smell of juniper. It grieves me to see Thaddeus cast such an intense and sorrowful glance at Jesus, that the Latter turns round to see who has been looking at Him. But Thaddeus hides behind Bartholomew biting his lips to control himself.

With His hand Jesus makes a gesture, which is of blessing and farewell at the same time, and goes on His way. The moon, now very high, with her light encircles His tall figure and seems to make it even taller, spiritualising it, making His red garment brighter and His golden hair paler. Behind Him Peter holding the torch and Zebedee's two son hasten their steps.

They go on until they reach the edge of the first escarpment of the rustic amphitheatre of the olive-grove, the entrance to which is a small irregular plain, and the tiers the several escarpments that rise up the mountain in groups of olive-trees. Jesus then says: « Stop, wait for Me here, while I pray. But do not fall asleep. I may need you. And, I ask you this out of charity, pray! Your Master is very depressed. »

He is in fact already in a state of deep depression. He already seems overburdened by a weight. Where is now the virile Jesus Who spoke to the crowds, handsome, strong, with eyes of a ruler, a calm smile, a beautiful resonant voice? He already seems breathless. He is like one who has run or has wept. His voice is tired and exhausted. Sad, sad, sad…

Peter replies on behalf of everybody: « Do not worry, Master. We will keep awake and pray. All You have to do is to call us, and we will come. »

And Jesus leaves them, while the three stoop to gather leaves and twigs and light a little fire to keep them awake, and as a remedy

against the dew that is beginning to fall plentifully.

Turning His back to them He walks eastwards, so that the moons shines on His face. I see that a deep sorrow dilates His eyes even more, perhaps it is the dark rings of tiredness that enlarge them, or it is the shadow of the eyebrows. I do not know. I know that His eyes are more open and deeper set. He climbs with His head lowered, only now and again He raises it with a sigh, as if He had difficulty in doing so and were panting, and then He casts His eyes, that are so sad, around the peaceful olive-grove. He climbs up a few metres, He then goes round an escarpment that thus remains between Him and the three apostles left farther down.

The escarpment, a few centimetres high at the beginning, rises continuously and is soon more than two metres high, so that it protects Jesus completely from being noticed by more or less discreet or friendly eyes. Jesus goes on as far as a huge rock, that at a certain point blocks the path and has probably been put there to support the slope, that on one side descends more steeply and bare as far as a desolate heap of ruins preceding the walls beyond which is Jerusalem, and on the other rises with more escarpments and olive-trees. An olive-tree, all knots and twisted, dangles right above the huge rock. It looks like a bizarre question mark, placed there by nature to ask some questions. The leafy branches on the top of it answer the questions of the trunk, at times saying yes by bending towards the ground, at times no, swinging from left to right, in a light breeze, which blows through the branches, and at times carries the smell of the earth, at times the bitterish scent of olivetrees, at times the mixed perfume of roses and lilies of the valley, that one wonders where it comes from. Beyond the little path and beneath it, there are more olive-trees and one of them, just under the rock, that has survived although split by lightning, or cleft by some other agent unknown to me, of the original trunk has made two trunks that have come up like the two strokes of a huge blockletter V, with the foliage of one appearing on one side of the rock and that of the other on the other side, as if they wished to see or veil it at the same time, or form a peaceful silvery grey base for the rock.

Jesus stops there. He does not look at the town that is visible down there, all white in the moonlight. On the contrary, He turns His back to it and prays with His arms stretched out crosswise, His face towards the sky. I cannot see His face because it is in the shade, as the moon is almost perpendicular over His head, that is true, but there is also the thick foliage of the olive-tree between Him and the moon, that with difficulty filters through the eaves wit tiny rings and needles of light in perpetual movement. A long fervent prayer. Now and again He sighs and utters a word more clearly. It is neither a psalm nor the Our Father. It is a prayer rising from His love and

His need. A true conversation with His Father. I understand it through the few words I grasp: « You know… I am Your Son… Everything, but help Me… The hour has come… I no longer belong to the Earth. Stop all need of help for Your Word… Make the Man satisfy You as the Redeemer, as the Word was obedient to You… As You wish… I ask You to have mercy on them… Will I save them? That is what I ask of You. This I want: that they be saved from the world, from the flesh, from the demon… May I make further requests? It is a fair question, Father. Not for Myself. For man, who was created by You, and who wanted to soil also his soul. I will throw that dirt into My sorrow and into My Blood, so that the incorruptible essence of the spirit, which is pleasing to You, may be reinstated… And it is everywhere. He is the king this evening. In the royal palace and in houses. Among soldiers and in the Temple… The town is full of it, and it will be hell tomorrow… »

Jesus turns round, He leans with His back against the rock and folds His arms. He looks at Jerusalem. Jesus' face becomes sadder and sadder. He whispers: « She looks like snow… and she is all sin. And how many I cured in her! How much I spoke!… Where are those who seemed loyal to Me? »

Jesus lowers His head and looks fixedly at the ground covered with short grass shining with dew. But although His head is lowered, I understand that He is weeping, because some tears shine when falling from His face on the ground. He then raises His head, He unfolds His arms, He joins them holding them above His head, shaking them while they are so united.

He then sets out. He goes back towards the three apostles, who are sitting round the little fire of twigs. And He finds them half asleep. Peter is leaning with his back against a tree trunk, and, with his arms crossed on his chest, he nods in the first drowsiness of a profound sleep. James is sitting, with his brother, on a large root that emerges from the ground and on which they have spread their mantles in order not to feel its ruggedness so much, but although they are not so comfortable as Peter, they are also dozing. James has rested his head on the shoulder of John, who has inclined his on the head of his brother, as if doziness had immobilised them in that posture.

« Are you sleeping? Have you not been able to keep awake for one hour only? And I need your comfort and your prayers so much! »

The three wake up with a start and are utterly confused. They rub their eyes. They murmur an excuse, blaming their poor digestion as the cause of their drowsiness: « It's the wine… the food… But it will soon be over. It was only a moment. We did not feel like speaking, and that made us fall asleep. But we will now pray in loud voices and it will not happen again. »

« Yes. Pray and be on the alert. For your own sake as well. »

« Yes, Master. We will obey You. »

Jesus goes away again. The moon, now shining on His face so brightly in her silvery light, that it makes His red garment seem paler and paler, as if she were spreading it with a veil of white shiny dust, shows me His depressed, sorrowful, aged face. His eyes are still dilated, but they seem clouded. His mouth is twisted with tiredness.

He goes back to His rock more slowly and stooping more. He kneels resting His arms on the rock, which is not smooth, but at half its height it has a kind of protrusion, as if it had been placed there deliberately, and a little plant has grown on it. I think it is a plant of those little flowers, like lilies, that I have seen also in Italy, with small pulpy leaves, round but with indented edges and tiny little flowers on very thin stems. They look like small snowflakes spraying the grey rock and the little dark green leaves. Jesus lays His hands near them, and the little flowers tickle His cheek, because He rests His head on His joined hands and prays. Shortly afterwards He feels the coolness of the little corollas and raises His head. He looks at them. He caresses them. He speaks to them: « You are here as well!… You comfort Me! These little flowers were also in My Mother's little grotto… and She loved them because She used to say: "When I was a little girl, My father used to say: 'You are a little lily like these and you are completely full of heavenly dew'"… My Mother! Oh! My Mother! » He bursts into tears. His head on His joined hands, a little reclined on His heels, I see and hear Him weep, while His hands squeeze His fingers tormenting them. I hear Him say: « Also at Bethlehem… and I brought them to You, Mother. But these ones, who will bring them to You now?… »

He then resumes praying and meditating. His meditation must be really sad, full of anguish rather than sadness, because, to divert His attention, He stands up, He goes backwards and forwards, whispering words that I do not grasp, raising His face, then lowering it, gesticulating, rubbing His eyes and His cheeks with mechanical agitated movements of His hands, running His fingers through His hair, as is typical of one who is in great anguish. To mention it is nothing. To describe it is impossible. To see it is to share His anguish. He makes gestures towards Jerusalem. Then He begins to raise His arms again towards the sky, as if He wanted to invoke help.

He takes off His mantle, as if He were warm. He looks at it… But what does He see? His eyes see nothing but His torture, and everything serves to increase that torture. Even the mantle woven by His Mother. He kisses it and says: « Forgive Me, Mother! Forgive Me! » He seems to be asking it of the cloth spun and woven by motherly love… He puts it on again. He is a prey to torment. He wants to pray to get out of His state. But recollections, concern, doubts,

regrets come back to Him with His prayer… It is an avalanche Of names… towns… people… events… I cannot follow Him because He is fast and desultory. It is His evangelic life that passes in front of Him… and brings Judas, the traitor, back to Him.

His anguish is such that, in order to overcome it, He shouts the names of Peter and John. And He says: « They will come now. They are really loyal! » But "they" do not come. He calls them again. He seems to be terrorised, as if He saw I wonder what.

He runs fast towards the place where Peter and the two brothers are. And He finds them comfortably fast asleep round a few embers, which are now dying out and show only some red zigzags among the grey ashes. « Peter! I have called you three times! What are you doing? Are you still sleeping? Do you not realise how much I am suffering? Pray. That the flesh may not win, that it may not overwhelm you. None of you. If the spirit is willing, the flesh is weak. Help Me… »

The three wake up more slowly, but at last they are successful, and with dull eyes they apologise. They get up, sitting up at first and then standing.

« Just fancy! » murmurs Peter. « It had never happened to us! It must have been that wine. It was strong. And also this cold air. We covered ourselves not to feel it (in fact they had covered also their heads with their mantles), we did not see the fire any more, we were no longer cold, and so we fell asleep. Did You say that You called us? And yet I did not seem to be so fast asleep… Come on, John, let us get some twigs, let us get a move on. We shall soon be wide-awake. Do not worry, Master, because now!… We will stand up… » and he throws a handful of dry leaves on the embers, and he blows until the flame revives, and he tends the fire with the shrubs brought by John, while James brings a big branch of juniper, or of a similar plant, that he cut off a bush not far away, and he adds it to the rest.

The fire blazes gaily, lighting up the poor face of Jesus. A face that is really so sad that one cannot look at it without weeping. All the brightness of that face is cancelled by a deadly tiredness. He says: « I feel an anguish that is killing Me! Oh! yes! My soul is sad even unto death. My friends!… My friends! » But even if He did not say so, His aspect would make one understand that He is really like a man about to breathe his last, and in the most distressing and desolate abandonment. Every word sounds like a sob…

But the three are too heavy with sleep. They almost seem to be drunk, so much they stagger about with their eyes half closed… Jesus looks at them… He does not humiliate them by reproaching them. He shakes His head, sighs and goes away to the place where He was previously.

He prays once again standing, with His arms stretched out

crosswise. Then on His knees, as before, His face bent on the little flowers. He is pensive. Silent… Then He begins to moan and sob loudly, almost prostrated, so much has He relaxed on His heels. He calls His Father, more and more anxiously…

« Oh! » He says. « This cup is too bitter! I cannot! I cannot! It is above My power. I have been able to bear everything! But not this… Father, take it away from Your Son! Have mercy on Me!… What have I done to deserve it? » He then collects Himself and says: « But, Father, do not listen to My voice, if what I ask is against Your will. Do not remember that I am Your Son, but only Your servant. Let Your will be done, not Mine. »

He remains thus for some time. Then He utters a stifled cry and raises His face, looking very upset. Only for a moment, then He drops on the ground, with His face really on the earth, and remains thus. A worn-out man overburdened by all the sins of the world, struck by all the Justice of the Father, oppressed by the darkness, the ashes, the bitterness, by that tremendous, terrible, most dreadful thing that is the abandonment by God, while Satan torments us… It is the asphyxia of the soul, it is to be buried alive in this prison that is the world, when we can no longer feel any tie between us and God, it is to be chained, gagged, stoned by our very prayers, which fall back on us bristling with sharp points and spread with fire, it is to butt against a closed Heaven, which neither the voice nor the appearance of our anguish can penetrate, it is to be the "orphans of God", it is madness, agony, the doubt of having been deceived so far, it is the persuasion of being rejected by God, of being damned. It is hell!…

Oh! I know! and I cannot, I really cannot bear the sight of the cruel suffering of my Christ, knowing that it is a million times more dreadful than the pain that consumed me last year and that still upsets me, when I think of it…

Jesus moans, having the death-rattle in His throat and sobbing like one in agony: « Nothing!… Nothing!… Away!… The will of My Father! His will! Only His will!… Your will, Father. Yours, not Mine… In vain. I have but one Lord: the Most Holy God. One Law: obedience. One love: redemption… No. I no longer have a Mother. I have no life any more. I have no divinity any longer. I no longer have a mission. In vain you tempt Me, devil, through My Mother, My life, My divinity and My mission. Mankind is My Mother and I love it to the extent of dying for it. I am giving My life back to Him Who gave Me it and Who is now asking Me for it, the Supreme Master of all living beings. I assert My Divinity, as it is capable of this expiation. I am fulfilling My mission through My death. I have nothing else, except to do the will of the Lord My God. Be off, Satan! I said so the first and the second time. I repeat it for the third time: "Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass Me by. But let Your

will be done, not Mine". Be off, Satan. I belong to God. »

Then He speaks no more except to say, panting: « God! God! God! », He calls Him at each heart-beat, and at each beat blood seems to flow out of Him. The cloth on His shoulders gets soaked through in it and becomes dark, notwithstanding that the clear moonlight illuminates it completely.

A brighter light appears above His head, hanging about a metre above Him, it is so bright that even the Prostrate Master can see it filter through His wavy hair, already weighed down by blood, and notwithstanding the veil of blood covering His eyes. He raises His head… The moon shines on His poor face, and more brightly shines the angelic light, which is like the white-blue diamond of the star Venus. And all the dreadful agony appears in the blood transuding from His pores. His eyelashes, hair, moustaches, beard are sprinkled and covered with blood. Blood trickles from His temples, blood spouts from the veins of His neck, His hands drip blood, and when He stretches His hands towards the angelic light and His wide sleeves slide back towards His elbows, Christ's forearms can be seen sweating blood. Only His tears draw two neat lines in the red mask of His face.

He takes off His mantle again and wipes His hands, face, neck and forearms. But His sweat continues. He presses the cloth against His face several times, holding it pressed with His hands, and every time He changes its position, clear impressions appear on the dark-red cloth, and as they are damp, they seem to be black. The grass on the ground is red with blood.

Jesus seems on the point of fainting. He unties the neck of His tunic, as if He felt that He was suffocating. He takes His hand to His heart and then to His head and He waves it in front of His face, as if He wanted to fan Himself, with His mouth half open. He drags Himself towards the rock, but closer to the edge of the escarpment, and He leans with His back against it, His arms hanging along His body, as if He were already dead, His head bent on His chest. He moves no more.

The angelic light slowly fades away. Later it seems-to vanish in the clear moonlight. Jesus reopens His eyes. He raises His head with difficulty. He looks around. He is alone. But He is less anguished. He stretches out one hand. He draws to Himself the mantle that He had left on the grass and wipes His face, hands, neck, beard and hair again. He takes a large leaf, which had grown on the edge of the escarpment, and is all wet with dew, and He continues to clean Himself with it, wetting His face and hands and then drying Himself again. And He does the same several times with other leaves, until He wipes out the traces of His dreadful sweat. Only His tunic is stained, particularly on the shoulders and at the folds of the elbows, at the neck, waist and knees. He looks at it and shakes His

head. He looks also at His mantle. But He sees that it is too stained. He folds it and lays it on the rock, where it forms a cradle near the little flowers.

With difficulty, owing to weakness, He turns round and kneels down. He prays resting His head on His mantle, on which He had already laid His hands. Then leaning on the rock He stands up, and still staggering a little, He goes to the disciples. His face is very pale. But it is no longer upset. It is a face full of divine beauty, although it is deadly pale and much sadder than usually.

The three are sleeping soundly, all enveloped in their mantles, lying down near the fire, which is out. They can be heard to breathe deeply as they begin to snore loudly.

Jesus calls them in vain. He has to bend and shake Peter vigorously.

« What is it? Who is arresting me? » the apostle asks as he emerges from his dark green mantle looking bewildered and frightened.

« Nobody. It is I calling you. »

« Is it morning? »

« No. It is almost the end of the second watch. »

Peter is completely benumbed.

Jesus shakes John, who utters a cry of terror when he sees the face of a ghost - it is as white as marble - bending over him. « Oh!… You looked like dead to me! » He shakes James, who, thinking that his brother is calling him, says: « Have they arrested the Master? »

« Not yet, James » replies Jesus. « But get up, now, and let us go. He who is going to betray Me is close at hand. »

The three, still drowsy, get up. They look around… Olive-trees, the moon, nightingales, a light breeze, peace… Nothing else. But they follow Jesus without speaking.

Also the other eight are more or less asleep around a fire that has gone out. « Get up! » orders Jesus in a thunderous voice. « As Satan is arriving, show him, who never sleeps, and his children, that the children of God are not asleep! »

« Yes, Master. »

« Where is he, Master? »

« Jesus, I… »

« But what happened? »

And amid muddled questions and answers they put on their mantles again…

Just in time to appear in order to the guards headed by Judas, as they burst into the little square lighting it up sinisterly with many torches. It is a horde of bandits disguised as soldiers, who look like jail-birds and grin like devils. There is also an odd champion of the Temple.

All the apostles jump to one corner. Peter in front, the others behind him in a group. Jesus remains where He was.

Judas approaches Jesus, enduring the glance of His eyes, which have become the flashing eyes of His best days. And he does not lower his face either. On the contrary, he approaches the Master with the smile of a hyena and kisses His right cheek.

« My friend, what have you come for? Are you betraying Me with a kiss? »

Judas bends his head for a moment, then raises it… insensible to reproach as to every invitation to repent.

Jesus, after the first words uttered with the majesty of a Master, speaks in the sorrowful tone of one who resigns oneself to a misfortune.

The guards, shouting, come forward with ropes and clubs and try to get hold not only of Christ, but also of the apostles, with the exception of Judas Iscariot, of course.

« Who are you looking for? » asks Jesus calmly and solemnly.

« Jesus the Nazarene. »

« I am He. » His voice is thunderous. Before the murderous world and the innocent one, before nature and the stars, Jesus bears this clear, loyal, certain witness to Himself, I should say that He is happy to be able to bear it.

But, if He had thrown a thunderbolt, He could not have done more. They all fall to the ground like mown sheaves of corn. No one remains standing except Judas, Jesus and the apostles, who take fresh heart again at the sight of the overthrown soldiers, so much so that they approach Jesus, threatening Judas so explicitly that the latter makes a leap just in time to avoid a masterly stroke of Simon's sword. In vain pursued by the stones and sticks thrown at him by the apostles not armed with swords, he escapes beyond the Kidron and disappears in a dark lane.

« Stand up. Who are you looking for? I ask you once again. »

« Jesus the Nazarene. »

« I have told you that I am He » says Jesus kindly. Yes, kindly. « So, let these others go. I will come. Put away swords and clubs. I am not a brigand. I have always been among you. Why did you not arrest Me then? But this is Satan's hour and yours… »

But, while He is speaking, Peter approaches the man who is holding out the ropes to tie Jesus and gives a clumsy blow with his sword. If he had struck him with the point, he would have slaughtered him like a ram. Whereas all he does is to cut off part of his ear that remains hanging down shedding much blood. The man shouts that he is dead. There is chaos because some want to come forward, while some are afraid seeing swords and daggers shine. « Put those weapons away. I order you to do that. If I wanted, I could have the angels of My Father to defend Me. And you, be cured. In your soul first of all, if you can. » And before stretching out His hands to be roped, He touches the ear and cures it.

The apostles shout very unbecomingly Yes. I am sorry having to say so, but it is the truth. Some say one thing, some another. Some shout: « You have betrayed us! », and some: « He is mad! », and some say: « And who can believe You? » And those who do not shout run away And Jesus is left all alone He and the guards And His way begins

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15th February 1944.

Jesus says:

« You contemplated the sufferings of My spiritual agony on Thursday evening. You saw your Jesus collapse like a man struck mortally, who feels his life flee through the wounds bleeding him, or like a person overwhelmed by a psychic trauma exceeding his strength. You saw the growing phases of the trauma culminate in the shedding of blood brought about by the circulatory unbalance that had been provoked by the effort of controlling Myself and withstanding the burden that had fallen upon Me.

I was, I am, the Son of the Most High God. But I was also the Son of man. I want this double nature of Mine, equally complete and perfect, to emanate very clearly from these pages.

My word, which has accents that only a God can have, bears witness to My Divinity. My necessities and passions, and the sufferings that I show you and I suffered in My flesh of a true Man, and that I propose to you as an example for your humanity, as I teach your spirits with My doctrine of true God, bear witness to My Humanity.

Both My most holy Divinity and My most perfect Humanity, in the course of ages, through the breaking up action of "your" imperfect humanity, have resulted disparaged and distorted in their explanation. You have made My Humanity appear unreal, inhumane, as you have made My divine figure look small, denying so many parts of it, because it was not convenient for you to recognise them or that you could no longer recognise with your spirits impaired by the tabes of vice and atheism, of humanism, of rationalism.

I am coming, in this tragic hour, a prodrome of universal misfortunes, to call My double figure of God and of Man back to your minds, so that you may know it for what it is, you may recognise it after so much obscurantism, with which you have concealed it from your spirits, and you may love it and go back to it and save yourselves by means of It. It is the figure of your Saviour and he, who knows it and loves it, will be saved.

In these past days I have made you acquainted with My physical sufferings. They tortured My Humanity. I have made you acquainted with My moral sufferings, as connected, interlaced,

blended with My Mother's, as are the inextricable lianas of the equatorial forests, which cannot be parted in order to cut only one, but it is necessary to break them with a single stroke of a hatchet to force one's way through, killing them all together; just like the veins of a body, one alone of which cannot be deprived of blood, because only one liquid fills them all; better still, as it is not possible to prevent the creature that is forming in its mother's womb from dying, if its mother dies, because it is the life, the warmth, the nourishment, the blood of the mother that, with a rhythm responding to the movement of the mother's heart, penetrates through the internal membranes, as far as the baby-to-be, making it a complete living being.

She, oh! She, My pure Mother, bore Me not only for the nine months during which every woman bears the fruit of man, but for all Her life. Our hearts were united by spiritual fibres and they always beat together, and no motherly tear ever fell without leaving a trace of its salt on My heart, and there has never been any internal moaning of Mine that did not resound in Her, awakening Her grief.

You feel sorry for the mother of a son destined to death by an incurable disease, for the mother of a man condemned to death by the rigour of human justice. But think of My Mother Who, from the moment She conceived Me, trembled considering that I was the Condemned One, think of this Mother Who, when She gave Me Her first kiss on the delicate rosy flesh of Her new-born baby, felt the future wounds of Her Child, think of this Mother Who would have given Her life ten, a hundred, a thousand times to prevent Me from becoming a Man and arriving at the moment of the Sacrifice, think of this Mother Who was aware of and had to desire that dreadful hour to accept the will of the Lord, for the glory of the Lord, out of kindness towards Mankind. No, there has been no agony that lasted longer and ended in a greater grief than My Mother's.

And there has been no greater and more complete sorrow than Mine. I was One with the Father. He had loved Me from eternity as God alone can love. He had taken delight in Me and had found His divine joy in Me. And I had loved Him as a God alone can love, and in My union with Him I had found My divine joy. The ineffable relationship that ab aeterno ties the Father to the Son cannot be explained to you even by My Word, because while it is perfect, your intelligence is not, and you cannot understand and know what God is until you are with Him in Heaven. Well, like water that rises and presses against a dam, I felt the rigour of the Father grow hourly towards Me.

As evidence against brute-men, who did not want to understand who I was, during the time of My public life, He had opened Heaven three times at the Jordan, at the Tabor and in Jerusalem on the eve

of My Passion. But He had done that for men, not to give relief to Me. I was already the Expiator.

Many times, Mary, God makes men become acquainted with one of His servants, so that through him they may be roused and dragged to Him, but that happens also through the suffering of that servant. It is he who, by eating the bitter bread of God's rigour, pays personally for the comfort and salvation of his brothers. Is it not so? The victims of expiation know the rigour of God. Then comes the glory. But after Justice has been appeased. It is not the same as happens with My Love, that kisses His victims. I am Jesus, I am the Redeemer, He Who has suffered and knows, by personal experience, how painful it is to be looked at by God with severity and be abandoned by Him, and I am never severe, and I never abandon anyone. I consume just the same, but through the fire of love.

The more the hour of expiation approached, the more I felt the Father move away. The more I was separated from the Father, the less My Humanity felt it was supported by the Divinity of God. And because of that I suffered in every possible way. The separation from God brings fear, attachment to life, languor, tiredness, boredom. The deeper it is, the stronger are its consequences. When it is total, it leads to despair. And the more he who, by God's decree, experiences it, without having deserved it, the more he suffers, because the living spirit feels the excision from God, as live flesh feels the excision of a limb. It is a sorrowful prostrating stupor that one, who has not experienced it, cannot understand.

I experienced it. I had to know everything in order to be able to plead with the Father for everything in your favour. Even for your despair. Oh, I experienced what it means to say: "I am alone. Everybody has betrayed and abandoned Me. Even the Father, even God no longer assists Me". And that is why I work mysterious wonders of grace in poor hearts overwhelmed by despair, and I ask My beloved ones to drink the cup of so bitter an experience, so that they, those who are shipwrecked in the sea of despair, may not decline to accept the cross that I offer as anchor and salvation, but they may grasp at it and I may take them to the blessed shore where only peace reigns.

On Thursday evening, I alone know whether I needed My Father! I was a spirit already in agony because of the effort of having to overcome the two greatest sorrows of a man: to say goodbye to a beloved mother, to have an unfaithful friend close by. They were two sores that scorched My heart: the former with Her tears, the latter with his hatred.

I had to share My bread with My Cain. I had to speak to him in a friendly manner in order not to denounce him to the others, as I was afraid they might react violently, and in order to avoid a crime, which in any case would have been useless, as everything

was already written in the great book of life: both My holy Death and Judas' suicide. Any other death was useless and disapproved of by God. No other blood but Mine was to be shed, and was not shed. The halter strangled that life, shutting up his impure blood, which had been sold to Satan, in the filthy sack of the traitor's body, blood that was not to be mixed, falling on the Earth, with the most pure blood of the Innocent.

Those two sores would have been sufficient to make Me suffer agony in My Ego. But I was the Expiator, the Victim, the Lamb. A lamb, before being sacrificed, experiences the red-hot brand, it suffers blows, it endures being shorn and sold to a butcher. And finally it feels the cold of the knife that cuts its throat, bleeds it and kills it. First it must leave everything: the pasture where it was brought up, its mother at whose breast it was nourished and warmed, the companions with which it lived. Everything. I, the Lamb of God, experienced everything.

That is why Satan came, when the Father was retiring in Heaven. He had already come at the beginning of My mission, to tempt Me in order to divert Me from it. He was now coming back again. It was his hour. The hour of the satanic sabbath.

Crowds and crowds of devils were on the Earth that night, to accomplish the seduction of hearts and make them willing to request the killing of the Christ the following day. Each member of the Sanhedrin had his own, Herod had his, so had Pilate, and every single Judaean who would invoke My Blood upon himself. Also beside the apostles there were their tempters, who made them drowsy while I was languishing, and who prepared them to be cowardly. Take notice of the power of purity. John, the pure disciple, was the first among all of them to free himself from the demoniac claws, and he came at once near his Jesus and understood His unexpressed desire, and brought Mary to Me.

But Judas had Lucifer, and I had Lucifer. Judas in his heart, I beside Me. We were the two main characters of the tragedy, and Satan was attending personally to both of us. After leading Judas to the point from which he could not withdraw, he turned towards Me.

With perfect artifice he showed Me the torments of the flesh with unsurpassable realism. Also in the desert he had started from the flesh. I defeated him by praying. The spirit dominated the fear of the flesh.

He then showed Me the uselessness of My death, and the usefulness of living for My own sake, without worrying Myself about ungrateful men, leading a rich happy life full of love. Living for My Mother, ensuring that She did not suffer. Living so that by means of a long apostolate I could take back to God many men, who, if I had died, would forget Me, whereas, if I had been their Master not for three years, but for many many years, would end up by becoming

one with My doctrine. His angels would help Me to seduce men. Could I not see that the angels of God were not intervening to assist Me? Later, God would forgive Me seeing the crowds of believers that I would lead back to Him. Also in the desert he had tried to convince Me to tempt God through imprudence. I defeated him by praying. The spirit dominated moral temptation.

He showed Me My abandonment by God. He, the Father, no longer loved Me. I was laden with the sins of the world. I disgusted Him. He was absent and was leaving Me to Myself. He was surrendering Me to the mockery of a cruel crowd. And He would not even grant Me His divine comfort. I was alone, all alone. In that hour there was but Satan near the Christ. God and men were absent, because they did not love Me. They hated Me or were uninterested. I prayed to cover the satanic words with My prayers. But My prayer no longer ascended to God. It fell back on Me, like stones of lapidation and crushed Me under its rubble. My prayer, that had always been for Me like a caress given to the Father, a voice that ascended and was answered by a fatherly caress and word, was now dead, heavy, uttered in vain to a closed Heaven.

I then tasted the bitterness of the bottom of the cup. The flavour of despair. It was what Satan wanted: to lead Me to despair, to make Me a slave of his. I overcame despair and I overcame it only with My power, because I wanted to defeat it. Only with My strength of a Man. I was nothing but the Man. And I was nothing but a man no longer helped by God. When God helps you, it is easy to lift even the world and hold it up like a child's toy. But when God does not help us any more, even the weight of a flower is a burden to us.

I defeated despair and Satan, its creator, in order to serve God and you, by giving you the Life. But I became acquainted with Death. Not with the physical death of crucifixion - that was not so dreadful - but with the total conscious Death of the fighter who falls after triumphing, with a broken heart and blood pouring out of him in the trauma of an effort exceeding all endurance. And I sweated blood. I sweated blood to be faithful to God's will.

That is why the angel of My sorrow showed Me the hopes of all those who have been saved through My sacrifice, as a medicine for My dying.

Your names! Each name was a drop of medicine instilled into My veins to invigorate them and make them function, each of them was for Me life coming back, light coming back, strength coming back. During the cruel tortures, to avoid shouting My grief of Man, and in order not to despair of God and say that He was too severe and unjust to His Victim, I repeated your names to Myself, I saw you. Since then I blessed you. Since then I have carried you in My heart. And when the time came for you to be on the Earth, I leaned out of Heaven to accompany your coming, rejoicing at the thought that

a fresh flower of love was born in the world and would have lived for Me.

Oh! My blessed ones! The comfort of the dying Christ! My Mother, the Disciple, the pious Women were present at My death, and you were there as well. My dying eyes saw, with the tormented face of My Mother, also your loving ones, and they closed thus, happy to be closed because they had saved you, who deserve the Sacrifice of a God. »

600. The Various Trials.

16th February 1944.

Jesus says:

« You have by now become acquainted with all the sorrows that preceded the Passion proper. I will now let you know the sorrows of My actual Passion. Those sorrows that affect your minds more when you meditate on them.

But you meditate very little on them. Too little. You do not consider how much you have cost Me and what torture your salvation involved. You complain of a scratch, of knocking against a corner, of a headache, but you do not consider that My body was one big sore, that those sores were envenomed with many things, that things themselves served to torture their Creator, because they tortured the already tormented God-Son, without any respect for Him Who, Father of Creation, had formed them.

But things were not guilty. The guilty one was still and always man. Guilty since the day he listened to Satan in the earthly Paradise. The things of Creation, up to that moment, had no thorns, no poison, no cruelty for man, the chosen creature. God had made that man king, He made him in His own image and likeness, and in His fatherly love He did not want things to be insidious to man. Satan laid the snare. In the heart of man first of all, then, with the punishment of sin, it brought spines and thorns.

So I, the Man had also to suffer things and be grieved not only by people but also by things. The former insulted and tortured Me; the latter served as their weapons.

The hand that God had made for man to distinguish him from brutes, the hand that God had taught man how to use, the hand that God had coordinated with man's mind making it the executor of the commands of the mind, this part, which is so perfect in you and which should have had nothing but caresses for the Son of God, by Whom it had only been caressed and cured, if it was diseased, turned against the Son of God and struck Him with slaps and blows, it armed itself with scourges, it became pincers to tear hair and beard and hammer to drive nails.

Man's feet, which should have run nimbly only to worship the

Son of God, were swift to come to arrest Me, to push and drag Me along the streets towards My executioners, and kick Me in such a way as would be unfair even with a restive mule.

Man's mouth, which should have used words, the endowment given only to man among all animals created, to praise and bless the Son of God, filled with curses and lies and hurled them with its slaver at My person.

Man's mind, the proof of his celestial origin, exhausted itself devising tortures of refined rigour.

Man, the whole man made use of himself, in his individual parts, to torture the Son of God. And he called the earth, with its forms, to assist him in torturing. Of the stones of torrents he made projectiles to wound Me; of the branches of trees, clubs to strike Me; of twisted hemp, ropes to drag Me, cutting into My flesh; of thorns, crown of stinging fire for My tired head; of minerals, an exasperscourge; of a cane, an instrument of torture; of the stones in streets, a snare for the unsteady foot of Him Who was going uphill, dying, to die crucified.

And things of the sky combined with the things of the earth. The cold at dawn for My body already exhausted by the agony in the garden, the wind that irritates wounds, the sun that increases parching thirst and one's temperature and brings flies and dust, that dazzles tired eyes, which fastened hands cannot protect.

And the fibres granted to man to cover his nakedness combine With the things of the sky: with leather, that becomes a scourge, with the wool of a garment that sticks to the sores made by the scourges and causes a rubbing and lacerating torture at each movement.

Everything served to torture the Son of God. He, for Whom all things had been created, in the hour in which He was the Victim offered to God, had everything against Him in a hostile manner. Your Jesus, Mary, had no comfort from anything. Everything that exists turned against Me, like fierce vipers, to bite at My flesh and increase My suffering.

This is what you ought to think of when you suffer, and comparing your imperfection with My perfection and My sorrows with yours, you ought to admit that the Father loves you as He did not love Me in that hour, and therefore, you should love Him with your whole selves, as I loved Him notwithstanding His rigour. »

22nd - 25th March 1945.

The painful journey begins along the stony lane leading from the clearing, where Jesus was arrested, to the Kidron, and thence, along another lane, to town. And gibes and torture begin at once.

Jesus, His wrists and even His waist tied as if He were a dangerous madman, the ends of the ropes entrusted to energumens intoxicated

with hatred, is tugged here and there like a rag abandoned to the rage of a pack of puppies. But, if those who behave thus were dogs, they could still be excused. But they are men, although they only have the appearance of men. And it is to give Him greater pair, that they have thought of tying Him with two opposed ropes, one of which serves only to fasten His wrists and it scratches and cuts into them with its coarse friction, and the other, the one round His waist, compresses His elbows against His thorax, and cuts into and oppresses His upper abdomen, torturing His liver and kidneys, where there is a huge knot and where, now and again, those holding the ends of the ropes, lash Him with them saying: « Gee-up! Away! Trot, donkey! », and they kick Him at the same time, striking the back of the knees of the Tortured One, Who vacillates and does not fall on the ground only because the ropes hold Him up. But that does not prevent Him from knocking against low walls and tree trunks, while He is tugged to the right by the man holding the rope fastening His wrists, and to the left by him holding the rope round His waist, and He falls heavily against the parapet, as a result of a more violent jerk when crossing the little bridge on the Kidron. His bruised mouth is bleeding. Jesus raises His tied hands to wipe away the blood soiling His beard, but does not say anything. He is really the lamb that does not bite its torturer.

Some people in the meantime have gone down to the gravel-bed to get pebbles and stones and from below a shower of stones strikes the easy target. As progress is slow on the narrow insecure little bridge, on which people crowd hindering one another, the stones hit Jesus' head and shoulders. They hit not only Jesus but also His torturers, who react throwing back sticks and the same stones. And it all serves to knock Jesus again on the head and neck. But they are soon on the other side of the bridge and the narrow lane casts shadows on the fray, because the moon, which is beginning to set, does not illuminate the twisted lane and many torches have gone out in the turmoil. But hatred acts as light to see the poor Martyr, Who is exposed to torture also because of His high stature. He is the tallest among all of them, so it is easy to strike Him, to seize Him by the hair compelling Him to throw back His head violently and to fling on it handfuls of filthy stuff, which by force goes into His mouth and eyes, causing nausea and pain.

They begin to go through the suburb of Ophel, in which He dispensed so much good and so many caresses. The shouts of the crowd awake people who rush to their doors, and while women utter cries of sorrow and run away struck with terror seeing what is happening, men, who have also been cured and assisted and have received friendly words from Him, men either lower their heads remaining indifferent, simulating carelessness to say the least, or they pass from curiosity to hatred, to sneering, to threatening gestures or they

follow the procession to join in torturing Him. Satan is already at work…

A man, a husband who wants to follow Him to insult Him, is grasped by his howling wife, who shouts at him: « Coward! You owe Him your life, you filthy man full of rottenness. Remember that! » But the woman is overwhelmed by the man, who beats her in a beastly manner throwing her on the ground and then runs to join the Martyr, Whose head he strikes with a stone.

Another woman, an old one, tries to obstruct the path of her son who is rushing looking like a hyena and holding a stick to strike Him, and she shouts at him: « As long as I live, you shall not be the killer of your Saviour! » But the poor wretch is struck by her son with a brutal kick at the groin and she collapses on the ground shouting: « Deicide and matricide! May you be cursed for rending my womb for the second time and for injuring the Messiah! »

The scene becomes more and more violent the closer they get to town.

Before arriving at the walls - the Gates are already open, and the Roman soldiers, fully armed, are observing where and how the tumult is evolving, ready to interfere should the prestige of Rome be injured - there is John with Peter. I think they have arrived there by a short cut, which they have taken crossing the Kidron upstream of the bridge, and rushing ahead of the crowd, which is proceeding slowly, so much people are hindering one another. They are in the half-light of an entrance-hall, near a little square before the walls. They have covered their heads with their mantles to conceal their faces. But when Jesus arrives, John drops his mantle and shows his wan upset face in the clear moonlight that still shines there, before the moon sets behind the hill, which is beyond the walls and which I hear is named Tophet by the hired ruffians who arrested Jesus. Peter dares not show his face. But he comes forward to be seen.

Jesus looks at them… and He smiles with infinite kindness. Peter turns round and goes back to his dark comer, covering his eyes with his hands, stooping, aged, already in very poor spirits. John remains bravely where he is, and only when the howling crowd has gone by, he joins Peter, he takes him by the elbow and he guides him as if he were a boy leading his blind father, and they both enter into the town behind the clamouring crowd.

I can hear the stupid, derisory sorrowful exclamations of the Roman soldiers. Some of them curse as they had to get out of their beds because of that « stupid blockhead »; some mock the Jews as being able « to arrest a poor little woman »; some pity the Victim Whom « they have always known to be kind »; and some say: « I would have preferred to die a violent death rather than see Him in those hands. He is a great man. I have two objects of veneration in this

world: Him and Rome. »

« By Jove! » exclaims the one of highest rank. « I don't want trouble. I'll go to the ensign. Let him inform who is to be informed. I don't want to be sent to fight against the Germans. These Jews stink and they are snakes and trouble. But life is safe here. And I am about to finish my military service, and near Pompeii I have a girl!… »

I Miss the rest as I follow Jesus, Who proceeds along the street that forms a bend uphill to go to the Temple. But I see and realise that Annas' house, where they want to take Him, is and is not in the labyrinthic aggregation which is the Temple, and covers the whole of the Zion hill. The house is at its extremities, near a series of massive walls, which seem to be the boundaries of the town here, and from this place they stretch along the side of the mountain with porches and yards, until they reach the enclosure of the Temple proper, that is, where the Israelites go for their several celebrations of cult.

A tall iron door opens in the massive wall. Some voluntary hyenas rush towards it and knock loudly. And as soon as the door is slightly opened, they burst inside, almost knocking down and trampling on the maid-servant who had come to open it, and they open it wide, so that the bawling crowd, with the Prisoner in the middle of them, may go in. And as soon as they are in, they close and bolt the door, probably because they are afraid of Rome or of the followers of the Nazarene. His followers! Where are they?…

They go along the entrance hall and then they pass through a wide yard, a corridor, another porch and another yard, and they drag Jesus up three steps, compelling Him almost to run along a porch built onto the yard, in order to arrive sooner at a richly furnished hall, where there is an elderly man wearing the robes of a priest.

« May God comfort you, Annas » says he who seems to be the officer, if the rascal who has been in charge of those brigands can be called so. « Here is the culprit. I entrust Him to your holiness, so that Israel may be cleansed of the sin. »

« May God bless you for your sagacity and your faith. »

Fine sagacity! Jesus' voice had been enough to make them drop to the ground at Gethsemane.

« Who are You? »

« Jesus of Nazareth, the Rabbi, the Christ. And you know Me. I have not acted in darkness. »

« No, not in darkness. But You have led the crowds astray with obscure doctrines. And it is the Temple's right and duty to protect the souls of the children of Abraham. »

« The souls! Priest of Israel, can you say that you have suffered for the soul of the least or greatest person of this people? »

« And what about You? What have You done that may be called suffering? »

« What have I done? Why do you ask Me? The whole of Israel speaks about Me. From the holy city to the poorest village, even stones speak to say what I have done. I have given sight to blind people: the sight of their eyes and of their hearts. I have opened the ears of deaf people: to the voices of the Earth and of Heaven. I have made cripples and paralytics walk, so that they might begin marching from the flesh towards God and then proceed with their spirits. I have cleansed lepers of the leprosy pointed out by the Mosaic Law and of that which makes man polluted in the eyes of God: sin. I have raised the dead, but I do not say that it is a great deed to call a body back to life, but it is a great thing to redeem a sinner, and I have done that. I have helped the poor, teaching greedy and rich Hebrews the holy precept of love for our neighbour and, remaining poor, notwithstanding that a stream of gold passed through My hands, I have wiped more tears by Myself than all of you, who possess riches. And, fin ally, I have given a wealth that has no name: the knowledge of the Law, the knowledge of God, the certainty that we are all equal and that in the holy eyes of the Father tears and crimes are the same, whether they are shed or committed by the Tetrarch and by the Pontiff, or by the beggar and the leper who dies on a cart-road. That is what I have done. Nothing else. »

« Do You realise that You are accusing Yourself? You say: the leprosy that makes one polluted in the eyes of God and is not pointed out by Moses. You are insulting Moses and are insinuating that there are some lacunae in his Law… »

« Not his: God's. It is so. More than leprosy, which is a misfortune of the flesh and comes to an end, I declare grave, and it is so, sin, which is an eternal misfortune of the spirit. »

« Do You dare say that You can remit sins? How can You do it? »

« If with a little lustral water and the sacrifice of a ram it is lawful and credible to cancel a sin, expiate it and be cleansed of it, why will My tears, My Blood and My will not be able to do so? »

« But You are not dead. So where is the Blood? »

« I am not yet dead. But I shall be, because it is written. In Heaven before Zion existed, before Moses existed, before Jacob existed, before Abraham existed, since the king of Evil gnawed at the heart of man and poisoned it in him and in his children. It is written on the Earth in the Book that contains the voices of the prophets. It is written in hearts. In yours, in Caiaphas', in the hearts of the members of the Sanhedrin who do not, no, those hearts do not forgive Me for being good. I have absolved anticipating through My Blood. I will now accomplish absolution with a purifying bath in it. »

« You say that we are greedy and we ignore the precept of love… »

« Is it perhaps not true? Why are you killing Me? Because you are afraid that I may dethrone you. Oh! be not afraid. My Kingdom is not of this world. I leave you the masters of all power. The Eternal

knows when to utter the "Enough" that will make You drop thunder-struck… »

« Like Doras, eh? »

« He died of a fit of anger. Not because he was struck by heavenly lightning. God was waiting on the other side to strike him. »

« And You are repeating that to me? A relative of his? How dare You? »

« I am the Truth. And the Truth is never cowardly. »

« Proud and foolish! »

« No: sincere. You accuse Me of offending you. But do you all not hate? You hate one another. And now your hatred for Me unites you. But tomorrow, when you have killed Me, you will hate one another once again, and more fiercely, and will live with this hyena behind your backs and this snake in your hearts. I have taught love. For the world's sake. I taught people not to be greedy, to have mercy. Of what do you accuse Me? »

« Of preaching a new doctrine. »

« O priest! Israel is swarming with new doctrines: the Essenes have theirs, the Sadochites and the Pharisees have theirs; everybody has his secret one, which for one is named pleasure, for another one gold, for another one power; and everybody has his idol. Not I. I have resumed the down-trodden Law of My Father, of the Eternal God, and I have gone back to repeating the ten commandments of the Decalogue in a simple way, talking Myself hoarse to make them enter the hearts that no longer knew them. »

« Horror! Blasphemy! How dare You say this to me, a priest? Has Israel no Temple? Are we like the exiles in Babylon? Reply to me. »

« That is what you are, and even more. There is a Temple. Yes. A building. But God is not in it. He has fled before the abomination that is in His house. But why ask Me so many questions, since My death has already been decided? »

« We are not murderers. We kill if we have the right to do so for an evident fault. "But I want to save You. Tell me, and I will save You. Where are Your disciples? If You hand them over to me, I will let You go free. The names of all of them, and the secret ones more than the known ones. Tell me: is Nicodemus one of Yours? And Joseph? And Gamaliel? And Eleazar? And… But with regard to this one, I already know… It is not necessary. Speak. Speak up. You know that I can kill You and save You. I am powerful. »

« You are filth. I leave to filth the business of the informer. I am Light. »

A bravo lands a blow in His face.

« I am Light. Light and Truth. I have spoken openly to the world, I have taught in synagogues and in the Temple, where the Judaeans meet, and I have said nothing secretly. I repeat it. Why do you ask Me? Ask those who have heard what I have said. They know. »

Another bravo gives Him a slap in the face shouting: « Is that how you reply to the High Priest? »

« I am speaking to Annas. Caiaphas is the Pontiff. And I am speaking with the respect due to the old man. But if you think that I have said something wrong, prove it to Me. If not, why do you strike Me? »

« Leave Him alone. I am going to Caiaphas. Keep Him here until I tell you otherwise. And make sure He does not speak to anybody. » Annas goes out.

Jesus does not speak. Not even to John, who dares to stay at the door defying the crowd of hired ruffians. But Jesus, without saying a word, must have given him an order, because John, after a sorrowful glance, goes away and I lose sight of him.

Jesus remains with the torturers. Blows with ropes, spittle, insults, kicks, the tearing of His hair, is what is left for Him, until a servant comes to say that the Prisoner is to be taken to Caiaphas' house.

And Jesus, still tied and ill-treated, goes out again under the porch, walks along it as far as a lobby, and then passes through a yard in which many people are warming themselves near a fire, because the night has turned cold and windy in the early hours of the Friday. Peter and John are also there, mingled among the hostile crowd. And they must be really brave to stay there… Jesus looks at them and a faint smile appears on His lips already swollen because of the blows received.

A long walk across porches, halls, yards and corridors. But what kind of houses did these people of the Temple have?

But the crowd does not go into the enclosure of the pontiff's house. It is pushed back into Anna's entrance-hall. Jesus proceeds alone, among bravoes and priests. He goes into a large hall that seems to lose its rectangular shape because of the many seats placed in horse-shoe shape along three sides, leaving an empty space in the middle, beyond which there are two or three seats placed on platforms.

When Jesus is on the point of going in, rabbi Gamaliel arrives at the same time, and the guards give the Prisoner a strong pull, so that He may give way to the rabbi of Israel. But the latter, as stiff as a statue, with a stately attitude slackens his pace and, hardly moving his lips, without looking at anyone, he asks: « Who are You? Tell me. » And Jesus kindly replies: « Read the prophets and you will have the answer. They contain the first sign. The other one will come. »

Gamaliel gathers his mantle and goes in. Jesus enters behind him. While Gamaliel goes to one of the seats, Jesus is dragged to the middle of the hall, in front of the Pontiff: the true figure of a criminal. And they wait until all the members of the Sanhedrin arrive.

Then the session begins. But Caiaphas notices that two or three

seats are vacant and he asks: « Where is Eleazar? And where is John? »

A young man, a scribe I think, stands up, he bows and says: « They refused to come. Here is their letter. »

« Keep it and make a note of it. They will answer for that. What have the holy members of this Council to say with regard to this man? »

« I will tell you. He infringed the Sabbath in my house. God bears witness that I am not lying. Ishmael ben Fabi never lies. »

« Is it true, defendant? »

Jesus is silent.

« I have seen him live with well-known prostitutes. Feigning He was a prophet, He turned His haunt into a brothel, and with heathen women of all people. Sadoc, Callascebona and Nahum Annas' trustee, were with me. Am I telling the truth, Sadoc and Callascebona? Give me the lie, if I deserve it. »

« It is true. Quite true. »

« What do You say? »

Jesus is silent.

« He missed no opportunity to deride us and have us ridiculed, Common people no longer love us through His fault. »

« Do You hear them? You have profaned the holy members. »

Jesus is silent.

« This man is possessed. After He returned from Egypt He has practised black magic. » « How can you prove it? »

« On my faith and on the tables of the Law. »

« A grave charge. Prove Your innocence. »

Jesus is silent.

« Your ministry is illegal, You know that. And liable to death. Speak up. »

« This session of ours is illegal. Stand up, Simeon, and let us go » says Gamaliel.

« Rabbi, have you gone mad? »

« I respect formulae. It is not lawful to proceed as we are doing. And I will make a public charge against it. » And rabbi Gamaliel goes out, as stiff as a statue, followed by a man about thirty-five years old, who looks like him.

There is a little turmoil and Nicodemus and Joseph take advantage of it to speak in favour of the Martyr.

« Gamaliel is right. The time and the place are illicit, and the charges are not consistent. Can anybody accuse Him of having notoriously despised the Law? I am a friend of His and I swear that I have always found Him to be respectful of the Law » says Nicodemus.

« And I, too. And in order not to assent to a crime, I cover my head,

not for Him, but for us, and I go out. » And Joseph is about to come down from his seat and go out.

But Caiaphas shouts: « Ah! Is that what you say? Then let the sworn witnesses come. And listen to them. Then you will go away. »

Then two jail-bird figures come in. Elusive looks, cruel sneers, sly ways.

« Speak up. »

« It is not lawful to listen to both at the same time » shouts Joseph.

« I am the High Priest. I give orders. Be silent! »

Joseph strikes the table with his fist and says: « May the fire of Heaven fall upon you! As from this moment be aware that Joseph the Elder is an enemy of the Sanhedrin and a friend of the Christ. And I am going at once to inform the Praetor that a man is being sentenced to death here without the approval of Rome » and he rushes out giving a violent push to a young thin scribe who would like to hold him back.

Nicodemus goes out more calmly without saying a word. And when going out he passes in front of Jesus and looks at Him…

Another turmoil. They are afraid of Rome. And Jesus is always the expiating victim.

« See, all this is happening through Your fault, You corrupter of the best Judaeans. You have prostituted them. »

Jesus is silent.

« Let the witnesses speak » shouts Caiaphas.

« Yes, He was making use of the… the… We knew… What is the name of that thing? »

« The tetragram, perhaps? »

« That's it! You have said it! He evoked the dead. He taught people to rebel against the Sabbath and to desecrate the altar. We swear it. He said that He wanted to destroy the Temple and rebuild it in three days with the assistance of demons. »

« No. He said: it will not be built by man. »

Caiaphas comes down from his seat and approaches Jesus. Small, excessively fat, ugly, he looks like a huge toad close to a flower. Because Jesus, although wounded, bruised, dirty and unkempt, is still so handsome and solemn. « Are You not replying? What horrible charges they are bringing against You! Speak, to clear Yourself of such shame. »

But Jesus is silent. He looks at him but does not speak.

« Reply to me, then. I am Your Pontiff. I adjure You by the living God. Tell me: are You the Christ, the Son of God? »

« You have said it. I am. And you will see the Son of man, sitting on the right hand of the power of the Father, come on the clouds of the sky. Moreover, why do you ask Me? I have spoken in public for three years. I have not said anything secretly. Ask those who have heard Me. They will tell you what I have said and what I have

done. »

One of the soldiers who is holding Him, strikes His mouth, making it bleed once again, and he shouts: « Is that how you reply, O satan, to the High Pontiff? »

And Jesus replies meekly to this one as He had replied to the previous one: « If I have spoken the truth, why do you strike Me? If I have said something wrong, why do you not tell Me where I am wrong? I tell you once again: I am the Christ, the Son of God. I cannot lie. I am the High Priest, the Eternal Priest. And I alone wear the true Rational, on which it is written: Doctrine and Truth. And I am faithful to both, even to death, ignominious in the eyes of the world, holy in the eyes of God, and until the blissful Resurrection. I am the Anointed One. Pontiff and King I am. And I am about to take My sceptre and with it, as with a winnowing-fan, I will clear the threshing-floor. This Temple will be destroyed and it will rise again, new and holy. Because this one is corrupt and God has abandoned it to its destiny. »

« Blasphemer! » they all shout in chorus.

« Will You do that in three days, You silly possessed man? »

« Not this one. But Mine will rise again, the Temple of the true, living, holy, three times holy God. »

« Anathema! » they howl again in chorus.

Caiaphas raises his clucking voice, he tears his linen garments with affected horror, and he says: « What else have we to hear from witnesses? He has blasphemed. So what shall we do? »

And all in chorus: « He deserves to die. » And with disdainful scandalised gestures they go out of the hall, leaving Jesus to the mercy of the bravoes and of the mob of false witnesses, who with slaps, blows, spitting, blinding His eyes with a rag and then pulling His hair violently, drive Him here and there with His hands tied, so that He knocks against tables, chairs and walls, while they ask Him: « Who hit You? Guess. » And several times they trip Him and make Him fall flat on His face, and they split their sides with laughter seeing how hardly able He is to stand up again, His hands being tied.

Some hours go by so and the tired torturers decide to have a little rest. They take Jesus to a closet, making Him go through many yards among the insults of the mob already numerous in the enclosure of the Pontiff's house.

Jesus arrives in the courtyard where there is Peter near a fire. And He looks at him. But Peter escapes His notice. John is no longer there. I cannot see him. I think he has gone away with Nicodemus…

Dawn is breaking and the sky looks greenish. An order is given: the Prisoner is to be taken back to the Council Hall for a more legal trial. It is just the moment in which Peter for the third time denies that he knows the Christ, when the latter is passing by, already marked by sufferings. And, in the greenish dawn light, His bruises

look even more dreadful on His wan face, and His eyes more sunken and glassy: a Jesus made dull by the sorrow of the world…

A derisory sarcastic mischievous cock-crowing rends the air just beginning to stir at dawn. And at this moment of deep silence brought about by the appearance of the Christ, only Peter's harsh voice is heard to say: « I swear it, woman, I do not know Him »: a resolute decided statement, to which replies at once, like a sneer, the cheeky crowing of the cockerel.

Peter gives a start. He turns round to run away and he finds himself facing Jesus, Who looks at him with infinite compassion, with such sad deep sorrow that breaks my heart, as if after that I should see my Jesus vanish for ever. Peter sobs and he goes out staggering as if he were drunk. He runs away behind two servants, who go out into the street, and he disappears down the semi-dark street.

Jesus is taken back into the hall. In chorus they repeat the captious question: « In the name of the true God, tell us: are You the Christ? » And when they receive the same reply as the previous one, they sentence Him to death and they give orders to take Jesus to Pilate.

Jesus, escorted by all His enemies, except Annas and Caiaphas, goes out, passing once again through those courts of the Temple, in which so many times He had spoken, helped and cured people, and through the embattled enclosure He goes into the streets of the town, and more dragged than led, He descends towards the town, which is turning pinkish in the first announcement of dawn.

I think that for the only purpose of torturing Him longer, they make Him take a long tedious walk round Jerusalem, passing on purpose by the markets, the stablings, the hostels full of people at Passover. And both the waste vegetables in market places, and the excrement of animals in stablings, become projectiles for the Innocent, Whose face shows larger and larger bruises and small bleeding cuts, and is veiled by the various dirty things spread over it. His hair, already weighed down and slightly stretched by blood sweat, looks duller and hangs uncombed, strewn with bits of straw and dirt, falling over His eyes, because they ruffle it to veil His face.

The people at market places, buyers and vendors, leave everything to follow the Poor Wretch, but not out of love. Grooms and inn-servants come out in groups, deaf to the calling and orders of their mistresses, who, to tell the truth, like almost all the other women, are, if not all against the insults, at least indifferent to the tumult, and they withdraw grumbling at being left alone with so many people to serve.

So the howling train grows bigger every moment and minds and features seem to change nature, through a sudden epidemic, as the former become the minds of criminals, and the latter masks of ferocity in faces green with hatred or red with anger; hands become

claws and mouths take the shape and howling of wolves, and eyes look sinister, red, squinted like those of madmen. Jesus only is always the same, although by now He is covered with dirt spread all over His body, and His features are disfigured by bruises and swellings.

At an archivolt that narrows the street like a ring, while everything becomes obstructed and slows down, a cry rends the air: « Jesus! » It is Elias, the shepherd, who tries to make his way by swinging a heavy club. Old, powerful, menacing and strong, he almost succeeds in approaching the Master. But the crowd, defeated by the first assault, closes its ranks and separates, drives back and overwhelms the solitary disciple who struggles against a whole crowd. « Master! » he shouts, while the vortex of the crowd absorbs and rejects him.

« Go!… My Mother… I bless you… »

And the procession passes through the narrow spot. And like water that finds an open space after a dam, it pours uproariously into a wide avenue, built above the hollow between two hills, with wonderful buildings of wealthy people at its ends.

I see the Temple once again on the top of its hill, and I realise that the vicious circle they made the Convict go round, to expose Him to the ridicule of the whole town and allow everybody to insult Him, while the insulters increase at each step, is coming to its end by going back to where it started.

A horse-man comes out of a building at a gallop. The purple caparison on the white Arab horse and the magnificence of its appearance, his sword brandished naked and landed with its flat or edge on backs and heads that begin to bleed, make him look like an archangel. When in a caracole, in a prance of the horse that curvets, using its hooves as a weapon to defend itself and its master, and as the best means to make its way through the crowd, it makes the rider's purple and gold veil fall from his head, where it was held tight by a gold strip, I recognise Manaen.

« Back! » he shouts. « How dare you disturb the Tetrarch's rest? » But that is only an excuse to justify his intervention and attempt to reach Jesus. « This man… let me see Him… Stand aside, or I will call the guards… »

The people, because of the hail of blows with the flat of the sword, of the kicks of the horse and of the threats of the horse-man, open out and Manaen can reach the group of Jesus and of the Temple guards who are holding Him.

« Go away! The Tetrarch is more important than you are, you filthy servants. Back. I want to speak to Him » and he is successful by charging the most ruthless jailor with his sword.

« Master!… »

« Thank you. But go away! And may God comfort you! » And, as

best He can with His tied hands, He makes a gesture of blessing.

The crowds hiss from afar and, as soon as they see Manaen withdraw, they take vengeance for being driven back by throwing a hail of stones and rubbish on the Convict.

Along the avenue, which is uphill and already warm in the sunshine, they go towards the Antonia Tower, the mass of which is already visible in the distance.

The shrill cry of a woman rends the air: « Oh! my Saviour! My life for His, o Eternal! »

Jesus turns His head round and on the high flowery loggia surrounding a beautiful house He sees Johanna of Chuza, among maids and servants and with little Mary and Matthias around her, raise her arms towards the sky. But Heaven does not listen to prayers today! Jesus raises His arms and makes a gesture of farewell blessing.

« Death! Death to the blasphemer, the corrupter, the devil! Death to His friends » and hisses and stones are slung towards the high terrace. I do not know whether anybody is injured. I hear a very shrill cry and then I see the group break up and disappear.

And on, on, going up… Jerusalem displays her houses in the sunshine, empty, emptied by the hatred that drives the whole town, with its real inhabitants and the temporary ones who have come here for the Passover, against a defenceless man.

Some Roman soldiers, a whole maniple, run out from the Antonia with their lances pointed at the mob, who disperse shouting. In the middle of the street there is Jesus left with the guards, the chief of the priests, of the scribes and of the elders of the people.

« This man? This sedition? You will answer to Rome for this » says a centurion haughtily.

« He is liable to death according to our law. »

« And since when has the "jus gladii et sanguinis" been given back to you? » asks once again the senior centurion, a real Roman, with a severe face and a cheek marked by a deep scar. And he speaks with the contempt and disgust with which he would speak to lousy galley-slaves.

« We are aware that we do not have that right. We are loyal subjects of Rome… »

« Ha! Ha! Ha! Listen to them, Longinus. Loyal! Subjects! Rotters! I would reward you with the arrows of my archers. »

« Too noble a death! The backs of mules want nothing but the lash!… » replies Longinus with ironic coolness.

The chief priests, scribes and elders are foaming with poison. But they want to attain their object and are silent, they swallow the insult without showing that they have understood it, and bowing to the two officers, they ask that Jesus be led to Pontius Pilate so that « he may judge and condemn with the well-known honest justice

of Rome. »

« Ha! Ha! Listen to them! We have become wiser than Minerva… Here! Give Him to us! And march ahead of us! One never knows. You are stinking jackals. It is dangerous to have you behind our backs. Go on! »

« We cannot. »

« Why not? When one accuses one must be before the judge with the defendant. That is the rule of Rome. »

« The house of a heathen is unclean in our eyes, and we are already purified for Passover. »

« Oh! poor little things! they become contaminated by coming in!… And the murder of the only Hebrew Who is a man, and not a jackal and a reptile like you, does that not pollute you? All right. Then remain where you are. Not one step forward or you will be pierced by the spears. Let a decury stand round the Defendant. The others against this rabble that smells of badly washed billy-goat. »

Jesus enters into the Praetorium in the middle of the ten soldiers who are armed with lances and form a square of halberds around His person. The two centurions go on. While Jesus stops in a large entrance-hall, beyond which there is a court-yard that can be seen indistinctly behind a curtain moved by the wind, they disappear behind a door.

They come back in with the Governor, who is wearing a snowwhite toga with a scarlet mantle on top of it. Perhaps that is how they dressed when representing Rome officially. He comes in lazily, with a sceptical smile on his shaven face, he rubs some leaves of lemon-scented verbena and smells them voluptuously. He goes to a sun-dial and comes back after looking at it. He throws some grains of incense into the brazier placed at the feet of a deity. He has citron water brought to him and he gargles his throat. He gazes at his hair completely wavy in a mirror of highly polished metal. He seems to have forgotten the Convict, Who is awaiting his approval to be killed. He would make even stones fly into a rage.

Since the front of the hall is completely open and is raised by three high steps with respect to the lobby, which opens onto the street and is three more steps higher than it, the Jews can see everything very well and they are fretting and fuming. But they dare not rebel as they fear the lances and javelins.

At last, after going round and round the large hall, Pilate goes straight towards Jesus, he looks at Him and asks the two centurions: « This one? »

« Yes, this man. »

« Let His accusers come » and he goes and sits on the chair placed on the platform. Above his head the insignia of Rome interlace with the golden eagles and their powerful initials.

« They cannot come. They become contaminated. »

« Phew! Better so. We shall save streams of essences to remove their goatish smell from this place. Make them come nearer, at least. Down here. And make sure they do not come in, as they do not wish to do so. This man could be a pretext for a sedition. »

A soldier departs to take the order of the Roman Procurator. The others draw up in front of the entrance-hall at regular distances, as handsome as nine statues of heroes.

The chief priests, scribes and elders come forward and they bow servilely and stop in the little square which is before the Praetorium, beyond the three steps of the lobby.

« Speak up and be quick. You are already at fault for disturbing the peace of the night and having the Gates opened with violence. But I will have that verified. And principals and mandataries will answer for disobeying the ordinance. » Pilate has gone towards them, remaining in the hall.

« We have come to submit our verdict on this man to Rome, whose divine emperor you represent. »

« What charges do you bring against Him? He seems innocent to me… »

« If He were not an evil-doer, we would not have brought Him to you. » And in their eagerness to accuse Him they come forward.

« Repel this populace. Six steps beyond the three steps in the square. The two centuries to arms! »

The soldiers obey promptly, one hundred draw up on the top outer step with their backs to the entrance-hall, and one hundred in the little square, onto which the main door of Pilate's abode opens. I said main door, I should say huge portal or triumphal arch, because it is a very wide opening delimited by a gate, now wide open, which admits into the hall through the long corridor of the lobby at least six metres wide, so that what takes place in the raised hall is clearly visible. Beyond the wide lobby one can see the beastly faces of the Jews look threateningly and diabolically towards the inside, beyond the armed barrier that, side by side, presents two hundred sharp-pointed spears to the chicken-hearted killers.

« I ask you once again, which charge are you bringing against this man? »

« He has committed crimes against the Law of our forefathers. »

« And have you come to bother me about that? Take him and judge Him according to your laws. »

« We cannot sentence anybody to death. We are not learned. Jewish jurisprudence is a mentally deficient child as compared with the perfect Law of Rome. As ignorant people and subjects of Rome, the mistress, we are in need… »

« Since when have you become honey and butter?… But you have spoken the truth, o masters of falsehood! You are in need of Rome! Yes. To get rid of this man Who causes trouble to you. I see. » And

Pilate laughs, looking at the clear sky that is framed like a rectangular sheet of dark turquoise among the marble snow-white walls of the hall. « Tell me: which crimes has He committed against your laws? »

« We have found out that He was causing disturbances in our country and was preventing people from paying the tribute to Caesar, saying that He is the Christ, the king of the Jews. »

Pilate goes back to Jesus, Who is in the middle of the hall, left there by the soldiers, tied but without escort, so obvious is His meekness. And he asks Him: « Are You the king of the Jews? »

« Are you asking this of your own accord, or through the insinuation of other people? »

« And what do You expect me to care for Your kingdom? Am I a Jew? Your country and its leaders have handed You over to me, that I may judge You. What have You done? I know that You are loyal. Speak. Is it true that You aspire at reigning? »

« My Kingdom does not come from this world. If it were a kingdom of this world, My ministers and my soldiers would have fought to prevent the Jews from arresting Me. But My Kingdom is not of the Earth. And you know that I do not seek power. »

« That is true. I know. I have been told. But You do not deny that You are a king? »

« You assert it. I am a King. That is why I came into the world: to bear witness to the Truth. Those who are on the side of the Truth listen to My voice. »

« What is the Truth? Are You a philosopher? It does not serve when facing death. Socrates died just the same. »

« But it served him in his lifetime, to live honestly. And also to die well. And to enter into the other life without being called a traitor of civic virtues. »

« By Jove! » Pilate looks at Him for some moments full of admiration. Then he resumes his sceptical sarcasm. He makes a gesture of boredom, turns his back on Him and goes towards the Judaeans. « I find no fault in Him. »

The crowd riots, seized with the panic fear of losing the prey and the spectacle of the capital punishment. And they shout: « He is a rebel! », « A blasphemer », « He encourages libertinism », « He instigates people to rebel », « He refuses respect for Caesar », « He feigns that He is a prophet », « He practises magic », « He is a devil », « He stirs up the people teaching all over in Judaea, where He came from Galilee teaching », « Death to Him! », « Death to Him! »

« Is He a Galilean? Are You a Galilean? » Pilate goes back to Jesus: « Do You hear how they accuse You? Prove Your innocence. » But Jesus is silent.

Pilate is pensive… And he decides: « Let a century take Him to Herod to be judged. He is Herod's subject. I acknowledge the right

of the Tetrarch and I assent to his verdict in advance. Tell him. Go. »

And Jesus, surrounded like a rascal by one hundred soldiers, passes through the town again and once more He meets Judas Iscariot, whom He had already met near a market. I forgot to mention this before, disgusted- as I was with the brawl of the populace. The same merciful glance at the traitor…

It is now more difficult to strike Him with kicks and clubs, but there is no shortage of stones and rubbish and, if the stones hit the Roman helmets and armour resounding without injuries, they do leave marks when they hit Jesus, Who is proceeding with only His tunic on, as He left His mantle at Gethsemane.

When entering Herod's sumptuous palace, He sees Chuza… who cannot look at Him and runs away not to see Him in that state, covering his head with his mantle.

He is now in the hall, in front of Herod. And behind Him, there are the scribes and Pharisees, who feel at their ease here, and who come in to make their false charges. Only the centurion and four soldiers escort Him towards the Tetrarch.

Herod descends from his seat and walks round Jesus, while listening to the accusations of His enemies. And he smiles and flouts.

He then feigns compassion and respect, which do not upset the Martyr, as his raillery did not perturb Him. « You are great. I know. I enquired about You and I was pleased that Chuza was Your friend and Manaen Your disciple. I… the worries of the State… But how anxious I was to say that You are great… to ask You to forgive me… John's eyes… his voice accuse me and are always before me. You are the saint who cancels the sins of the world. Absolve me, o Christ. »

Jesus is silent.

« I heard that they accuse You of rebelling against Rome. Are You not the promised rod to strike Assur? »

Jesus is silent.

« They told me that You predict the end of the Temple and of Jerusalem. But is the Temple not eternal as a spirit, since it was wanted by God Who is eternal? »

Jesus is silent.

« Are You mad? Have You lost Your power? Is Satan preventing You from speaking? Has he abandoned You? » Herod is laughing now.

He then gives an order. And some servants rush in carrying a greyhound, which has a broken leg and is yelping sorrowfully, and a stable-man, who is dull-witted, with a big empty head, a slavering mouth, an abortion, the laughing stock of the servants. The scribes and priests run away, shouting at the sacrilege, when they see the stretcher of the dog.

Herod, false and mocking, explains: « It's Herodias pet. A gift of

Rome. It broke its leg yesterday and she is weeping. Order it to be cured. Work a miracle. »

Jesus looks at him severely and is silent.

« Have I offended You? This one, then. He is a man, although he is little more than a wild beast. Give him intelligence, since You are the Intelligence of the Father… Is that not what You say? » And he laughs offensively.

Another more severe glance of Jesus, Who is still silent.

« This man is too abstinent and is now stunned by scorn. Bring wine and women here. And untie Him. »

They untie His hands. And while a large number of servants bring amphorae and cups, some dancers come in… covered with nothing: a many-coloured linen fringe is the only garment girding their thin waists and hips. Nothing else. As they are Africans they are of bronze complexion and are as agile as young gazelles, and they begin a silent lascivious dance.

Jesus refuses the cups and closes His eyes without speaking. Herod's courtiers laugh at His disdain.

« Take the woman You wish. Live! Learn how to live!… » suggests Herod.

Jesus seems a statue. With folded arms, closed eyes, He does not stir even when the lewd dancers touch Him lightly with their nude bodies.

« Enough. I treated You as God, and You did not act as God. I treated You as a man, and you have not acted as a man. You are mad. A white garment. Clothe Him with it so that Pontius Pilate may know that the Tetrarch took his subject to be mad. Centurion, please tell the Proconsul that Herod humbly presents his respect to him and venerates Rome. Go. »

And Jesus, tied once again, goes out, with a linen tunic reaching down to His knees, on top of His red woollen garment.

And they go back to Pilate.

Now, when the century with difficulty squeeze through the crowd, which did not get tired waiting in front of the proconsular building - and it is strange to see so many people in that place and its neighbourhood, while the rest of the town seems to be empty Jesus sees the shepherds in a group and they are all there, that is, Isaac, Jonathan, Levi, Joseph, Elias, Matthias, John, Simeon, Benjamin and Daniel, together with a small group of Galileans, among whom I recognise Alphaeus and Joseph of Alphaeus with two more whom I do not know, but judging by their hair-style, I should say they are Judaeans. And farther away, He sees John, who has slipped into the hall, half-hidden behind a column, with a Roman, who I think is a servant. He smiles at this one and at those… His friends… But what are these few people and Johanna, and Manaen, and Chuza, in the middle of an ocean boiling with hatred?…

The centurion salutes Pontius Pilate and reports.

« Here again?! Phew! Cursed be this race! Make the mob come forward and bring the Accused here. Oh! what a nuisance! »

He goes towards the crowd, stopping again in the middle of the hall.

« Jews, listen. You have brought me this man as an instigator of the people. I have examined Him in your presence and I have not found in Him any of the crimes of which you accuse Him. Herod did not find more than I did. And he has sent Him back to us. He does not deserve death. Rome has spoken. But, in order not to displease you, depriving you of the amusement, I will give you Barabbas. And I will order Him to be given forty lashes. That is enough. »

« No, no! Not Barabbas! Not Barabbas! Death to Jesus! And a dreadful death! Release Barabbas and condemn the Nazarene to death. »

« But listen! I said I will have Him lashed. Is that not enough? I will have Him scourged, then! It is terrible, you know? He may die through it. What wrong has He done? I can find no fault in Him. And I will set Him free. »

« Crucify Him! Crucify Him! Death to Him! You are the protector of criminals! Heathen! You are Satan, too! »

The crowd advances and the first formation of soldiers wavers, as they cannot make use of their lances. But the second line, descending one step, swing their lances and free their companions.

« Let Him be scourged » Pilate orders a centurion.

« How many blows? »

« As many as you like… In any case the matter is over. And I am bored. Go. »

Jesus is led by four soldiers to the court-yard beyond the hall. In the middle of that court-yard, which is all paved with coloured marbles, there is a high column like the one in the porch. At about three metres from the floor it has an iron bar protruding at least a metre and ending with a ring, to which Jesus is tied, with His hands joined above His head, after He has been undressed. He has on only short linen drawers and sandals. His hands tied at His wrists are raised up as far as the ring, so that, although tall, He rests only the tips of His toes on the floor… And even that position is a torture.

I have read, I do not know where, that the column was low and that Jesus was bent over it. That may be. I say what I see.

Behind Him stands one who looks like an executioner, with a clear Jewish profile; in front of Him, another man, looking like the previous one. They are armed with scourges, made of seven leather strips tied to a handle and ending with small lead hammers. They begin to strike Him rhythmically, as if they were practising. One in front and one behind, so that Jesus' trunk is in a whirl of lashes and

scourges. The four soldiers, to whom He has been handed, are indifferent and are playing dice with other three soldiers who have just arrived. And the voices of the players follow the rhythm of the sound of the scourges, which hiss like snakes and then resound like stones striking the stretched skin of a drum. They beat the pool, body, which is so slender and as white as old ivory, and then becomes covered with stripes that at first are a brighter and brighter pink shade, then violet, then it displays blue swellings full of blood, then the skin breaks letting blood flow from all sides. They redouble their cruelty on His thorax and abdomen, but there is no shortage of blows given to His legs, arms and even to His head, so that no fragment of His skin may be left without pain.

And not a moan… If He were not held up by the rope, He would fall. But He does not fall and does not groan. Only His head hangs over His chest, after so many blows, as if He had fainted.

« Hey! Stop! He must be alive when He is killed » shouts a soldier scoffingly.

The two executioners stop and wipe their perspiration.

« We are exhausted » they say. « Give us our pay, so that we may have a refreshing drink… »

« I would give you the gallows! But here you are… » and a decurion throws a large coin to each executioner.

« You have done a good job. He looks like a mosaic. Titus, do you mean that this man was really Alexander's love? We must let him know, so that he may mourn over His death. Let us untie Him. »

They untie Him, and Jesus falls on the floor like a dead body. They leave Him there, pushing Him now and again with their feet shod with caligae, to see whether He moans. But He is silent.

« Is He dead? Is it possible? He is a young man and a handicraftsman, so I am told… and He looks like a delicate lady. »

« I will take care of Him » says a soldier. And he sits Him with His back against the column. Clots of blood appear where He was… He then goes towards a fountain gurgling under the porch, he fills a tub with water and pours it on Jesus' head and body. « That's it! Water is good for flowers. »

Jesus draws a deep sigh and tries to stand up, but His eyes are still closed.

« Oh! good. Come on, darling! Your dame is waiting for You!… »

But Jesus in vain presses His hands against the floor trying to stand up.

« Come on! Quick! Are You weak? Here is some refreshment » says another soldier sneeringly. And with the shaft of his halberd he delivers a blow to Jesus' face striking it between the right cheekbone and the nose, that begins to bleed.

Jesus opens His eyes and looks round. His eyes are veiled… He stares at the soldier who struck Him, wipes the blood with His hand,

and then, with much effort, He stands up.

« Get dressed. It is immodest to stay like that. You lewd man! » They all laugh standing around Him.

And He obeys without speaking. But when He bends - and He alone knows how much He suffers when stooping to the ground, contused as He is, as His wounds open even more when the skin is stretched, and more are formed as the blisters burst - a soldier gives a kick to His garments and scatters them, and every time Jesus reaches them, staggering to where they lie, a soldier pushes them away or throws them in a different direction. And Jesus, suffering bitterly, goes after them without uttering a word, while the soldiers deride Him obscenely.

He can dress Himself again at last. And He can put on also the white tunic, which was left in a corner and is still clean. He seems to wish to conceal His poor red garment, which only yesterday was so beautiful and now is filthy with rubbish and stained with the blood sweated at Gethsemane. Furthermore, before putting on His short vest, He dries His wet face with it, cleaning it of dust and spittles. And the poor holy face looks clean, marked only by bruises and small cuts. And He tidies His hair which is hanging ruffled, and His beard, out of an inborn need to be personally tidy.

Then He squats in the sunshine. Because my Jesus is shivering… Fever begins to torture Him with its cold shivers. And He feels weak because of the blood He has lost, of fasting and walking so much.

They tie His hands once again. And the rope begins to cut into His wrists, where the excoriated skin has left a mark like a red bracelet.

« And now? What shall we do with Him? I am bored! »

« Wait. The Jews want a king. Now we will give them one. Him… » says a soldier.

And he runs out to a court that is in the back, from which he comes back with a bunch of branches of wild hawthorn, still flexible, because springtime keeps the branches relatively tender, whilst the long sharp thorns are hard. With a dagger they remove leaves and buds, they bend the branches forming a circle and they place them on His poor head. But the cruel crown falls down on His neck.

« It does not fit. Make it narrower. Take it off. »

They take it off and scratch His cheeks, risking to blind Him, and they tear off His hair in doing so. They make it smaller. Now it is too small, and although they press it down, driving the thorns into His head, it threatens to fall. They take it off once again, tearing more of His hair. They adjust it again. It now fits. At the front there are three thorny cords. At the back, where the ends of the three branches interweave, there is a real knot of thorns that penetrate into the nape of His neck.

« Do You see how well You look? Natural bronze and real rubies. Look at Yourself, o king, in my cuirass » says the inventor of the torture scoffingly.

« A crown is not sufficient to make a king. Purple and sceptre are required. In the stable there is a cane and in the sewer there is a red chlamys. Get them, Cornelius. »

And once they have them, they put the dirty red rag on Jesus, shoulders, and before putting the cane in His hands, they beat His head with it, bowing and greeting: « Hail, king of the Jews » and they roar with laughter.

Jesus does not react. He lets them sit Him on the « throne »: a tub turned upside-down, certainly used to water horses, He lets them strike and scoff at Him, without ever uttering a word. He only looks at them, casting glances of such kindness and such atrocious sorrow that I cannot bear them without feeling heart-broken.

The soldiers stop sneering at Him only when the harsh voice of a superior orders them to take the guilty prisoner to Pilate. Guilty! Of what?

Jesus is taken back again to the entrance-hall, which is now covered with a precious velarium because of the sun. He still has the crown, the chlamys and the cane.

« Come forward, that I may show You to the people. »

Jesus, although exhausted, straightens Himself up with dignity. Oh! He really is a king!

« Listen, Jews. Here is the man. I have punished Him. But now let Him go. »

« No, no! We want to see Him. Out! That we may see the blasphemer! »

« Bring Him out. And make sure they do not take Him. »

And as Jesus goes out into the lobby and is visible in the square formed by the soldiers, Pontius Pilate points to Him with his hand saying: « Here is the Man. Your King. Is that still not sufficient? »

The sun in a sultry day is shining almost perpendicular, because it is between the third and the sixth hour and it lights up and makes eyes and faces conspicuous: are those people human beings? No: they are rabid hyenas. They shout, they shake their fists, they want His death…

Jesus is holding Himself upright. And I assure you that He never had such a noble bearing as now. Not even when He performed the most wonderful miracles. Nobility of sorrow, but so divine as to suffice to mark Him with the name of God. But, in order to say that Name, it is necessary to be at least men. And Jerusalem has no men today. But only demons.

Jesus looks around at the crowd and in the sea of rancorous faces he looks for and finds some friendly faces. How many? Less than twenty friends among thousands of enemies… And He lowers His

head, struck by such abandonment. A tear falls… and another… and another… The sight of His tears does not engender compassion, but gives rise to fiercer hatred.

He is taken back to the hall.

« So? Let Him go. It is justice. »

« No. Death to Him. Crucify Him. »

« I will give you Barabbas. »

« No. The Christ! »

« In that case, take Him yourselves. And crucify Him by yourselves, because I find no fault in Him to do that. »

« He said that He is the Son of God. Our Law inflicts death on whoever is guilty of such blasphemy. »

Pilate becomes pensive. He goes back in and sits on his little throne. He rests his forehead in his hand and his elbow on his knee and scrutinises Jesus. « Come near me » he says.

Jesus goes to the foot of the platform.

« Is it true? Tell me. »

Jesus is silent.

« Where do You come from? Who is God? »

« He is the All. »

« And then? What does the All mean? What is the All for one who is dying? You are mad… God does not exist. I do. »

Jesus is silent. He has let the great word drop and then He envelops Himself in silence.

« Pontius, Claudia Procula's freedwoman asks permission to come in. She has a note for you. »

« Domine! Women also now! Let her come in. »

A Roman woman comes in and kneels down handing a waxed tablet. It must be the one with which Procula begs her husband not to condemn Jesus. The woman withdraws backwards, while Pilate reads.

« I am advised to avoid Your being put to death. Is it true that You are more than a haruspex? You frighten me. »

Jesus is silent.

« Do You not know that I have the power to free You or to crucify You? »

« You would have no power, if it were not given to you from Above. Therefore, he who handed Me over to you is more guilty than you are. »

« Who is it? Your God? I fear… » Jesus is silent.

Pilate is on tenterhooks. He would like and he would not like to… He is afraid of God's punishment, he is afraid of Rome, he fears Judaean revenges. For a moment he overcomes the fear of God. He goes to the front of the hall and in a thundering voice he shouts: « He is not guilty. »

« If you say so, you are no friend of Caesar's. He who proclaims himself king, is his enemy. You want to free the Nazarene. We will inform Caesar of that. »

Pilate is seized with the fear of man.

« So, you want Him dead? Let it be so. But the blood of this just man is not to stain my hands » and having a basin brought to him, he washes his hands in the presence of the people who appear to be seized with frenzy while they shout: « His blood on us. His blood be on us and on our children. We are not afraid of Him. Crucify Him! Crucify Him! »

Pontius Pilate goes back to his little throne and he calls the centurion Longinus and a slave. He orders the slave to bring him a board on which he places a notice and has the words written on it: « Jesus Nazarene, King of the Jews ». And he shows it to the people.

« No. Not so. Not king of the Jews. But that He said that He is king of the Jews. » Many of them shout so.

« What I have written, I have written » says Pilate severely, and standing upright, he stretches his hand forward with its palm turned down, and he orders: « Let Him go to the cross. Soldier, go. Prepare the cross. » And he descends from his throne without even looking towards the uproarious crowd or at the wan Condemned Man. He leaves the hall…

Jesus is left in the middle of it, guarded by the soldiers, awaiting the cross.

Friday, 10th March, 1944.

Jesus says:

« I want you to meditate on the point concerning My meetings with Pilate.

John, who is the most accurate witness and narrator, as he was almost always present, or at least very close, relates how I was taken to the Praetorium when I left Caiaphas' house. And he specifies "early in the morning". In fact you saw that it was daybreak. He also specifies: "they (the Jews) did not enter in order not to be contaminated and thus be able to eat the Passover". Being hypocritical as usual, they thought that it was dangerous to trample on the dust of a Gentile's house, as they might be contaminated, but they did not consider it a sin to kill an Innocent, and with their spirits satisfied with the crime they had accomplished, they were able to enjoy their Passover even more.

They have many followers even nowadays. All those, who do wrong internally, but externally profess respect for religion and love for God, are like them. Formulae, formulae, but not true religion! I regard them with disgust and disdain.

As the Jews would not go into Pilate's house, Pilate came out to

hear what the bawling crowd wanted and, experienced as he was in governing and judging, at a glance he realised that not I, but that population intoxicated with hatred was guilty. By looking at each other, we read each other's heart. I judged the man what he was. He judged Me for what I was. I felt pity for him, because he was weak. And he felt pity for Me, because I was innocent. He tried to save Me from the very beginning. And as the right to administer justice with regard to criminals was remitted and reserved to Rome, he tried to save Me by saying: "Judge Him according to your Law".

Hypocrites for the second time, the Jews refused to condemn Me. It is true that Rome had the right of justice, but when, for instance, Stephen was stoned, Rome still ruled over Jerusalem and notwithstanding all that, they passed sentence and had the capital sentence executed disregarding Rome. With regard to Me, Whom they hated and feared and did not love - they would not believe ".hat I was the Messiah, but did not want to kill Me materially, in case I were - they acted in a different way and accused Me of being an instigator against the power of Rome (you would say a "rebel") in order to get Rome to judge Me. In their ill-famed court of justice, and several times in the three years of My ministry, they had accused Me of being a blasphemer and false prophet, and as such I should have been stoned or killed in any way. But now, to avoid committing the crime materially, as by instinct they felt they would be punished for it, they made Rome do it, accusing Me of being a criminal and a rebel.

When the crowds are perverted and the leaders have become devils, there is nothing easier than accusing an innocent to give vent to their thirst for ferocity and usurpation, and to get rid of those who are an obstacle and a judgement. We have gone back to those days. The world, after an incubation of perverted ideas, explodes now and again in such displays of perversion. Like a huge pregnant woman, the crowd, after nourishing its monster in its womb with doctrines of wild beasts, gives birth to it so that it may devour. So that it may devour the best people first, and then itself.

Pilate goes back into the Praetorium and calls Me near him. And he questions Me. He had already heard people speak of Me. Among his centurions there were some who repeated My Name with grateful love, with tears in their eyes and smiles in their hearts, and who spoke of Me as of a benefactor. In their reports to the Praetor, when they were questioned about this Prophet, Who attracted the crowds to Himself and preached a new doctrine which mentioned a strange kingdom, inconceivable to a heathen mind, they had always replied that I was a meek kind man who did not seek the honours of the Earth, and that I inculcated and practised respect and obedience to those who are the authorities. More sincere than the Israelities, they saw and witnessed the truth. The previous

Sunday, when his attention was attracted by the shouts of the crowd, he had leaned out of the window and he had seen a disarmed man pass by riding a little donkey and blessing, surrounded by children and women. He had realised that that man could certainly not be a danger to Rome.

So he wants to know whether I am a king. In his ironic pagan scepticism he wanted to have a little laugh at that royalty that rides a donkey, that has bare-footed children, smiling women and common men as courtiers, at that royalty that for three years has preached that it has no interest in riches and power and that speaks of no conquests but those of the spirit and the soul. What is the soul for a heathen? Not even his gods have souls. And can man have it? Also now this king with no crown, with no palace, with no court, with no soldiers, repeats to him that His kingdom is not of this world. So much so that no minister and no army rises to defend their king and free Him from His enemies.

Pilate, sitting on his seat, scrutinises Me, because I am an enigma to him. If he cleared his soul of human cares, of the pride of his office, of the error of heathenism, he would understand at once Who I am. But how can light enter where too many things obstruct the openings preventing light from entering? It is always like that, My children. Even now. How can God and His light enter where there is no more room for them, and doors and windows are closed and defended by pride, by humanity, by vice, by usury, by so many guards at the service of Satan against God? Pilate cannot understand what My kingdom is. And what is more painful, he does not ask Me to explain it to him. To My invitation to know the Truth, he, the untameable heathen, replies: "What is the truth?" and with a shrug of his shoulders he lets the matter drop.

Oh! My children! Oh! My Pilates of the present times! You also, like Pontius Pilate, let the most vital matters drop with a shrug of your shoulders. You consider them useless old-fashioned things. What is the Truth? Money? No. Women? No. Power? No. Physical health? No. Human glory? No. Then forget about it. It is not worth running after a chimera. Money, women, power, good health, comforts, honours are the real useful things that one must love and attain at all costs. That is how you reason. And, worse than Esau, you barter eternal goods for coarse food that is harmful both to your physical health and to your eternal salvation. Why do you not persist in asking: "What is the Truth"? It, the Truth, asks for nothing but to be known in order to teach what it is. It is before you as it was for Pilate, and looks at you with eyes full of suppliant love, imploring you: "Question me. I will teach you". Did you notice how I looked at Pilate? I look at all of you in the same way. And if I look with serene love at those who love Me and ask for My words, I cast glances of sorrowful love at those who do not love Me, do not

seek Me, do not listen to Me. But it is always love, because Love is My nature.

Pilate leaves Me where I am, without asking more questions, and he goes towards the wicked people who speak in coarser voices and impose themselves through their violence. And he, a real wretch, listens to them, whilst he did not listen to Me and shrugging his shoulders he declined My invitation to become acquainted with the Truth. He listens to Falsehood. Idolatry, whatever its form may be, is always inclined to venerate and accept Falsehood, whatever it may be. And Falsehood, when accepted by the weak, leads the weak to crime. And yet Pilate, on the threshold of crime, still wants to save Me and he tries twice. It is at this point that he sends me to Herod. He knows very well that the shrewd king, who keeps in with both Rome and his people, will act in such a way as not to damage Rome and not irritate the Jewish people. But, like all weak people, he puts off for a little while the decision that he does not feel like taking, hoping that the plebeian rising will abate.

I said: "When you speak say 'Yes' if you mean yes, 'No' if you mean no". But he did not hear that, and if somebody repeated it to him, he shrugged his shoulders as usual. In order to succeed in the world, to have honours and profits, it is necessary to be able to make a no of a yes and a yes of a no, according to what common sense (read: human sense) advises. How many Pilates there are in the twentieth century! Where are the Christian heroes who said yes, constantly yes, to the Truth and for the sake of the Truth, and no, constantly no, to Falsehood? Where are the heroes who are able to face danger and events with brave strength and tranquil quickness and do not postpone, because Good is to be accomplished at once and evil shunned at once, without "buts" and "ifs"?

On My return from Herod, there is Pilate's fresh compromise: scourging. And what did he expect? Did he not know that the crowd is a wild beast that becomes merciless when it begins to see blood? But I had to be crushed to expiate your sins of the flesh. And I am crushed. There is not a shred of My body that has not been struck. I am the Man of Whom Isaiah speaks. And to the torture that had been ordered, there is added another that was not ordered, but was created by human cruelty: that of the thorns.

Men, do you see your Saviour, your King, crowned with sorrow to free your heads of so many sins fermenting in them? Do you not consider the pain that My innocent head suffered to expiate, on your behalf, your sinful thoughts that are more and more dreadful and are transformed into deeds? You, who feel offended even when there is no reason for feeling so, look at your offended King, and He is God, with His ironic mantle of torn purple, with a cane as His sceptre and the crown of thorns. He is already dying, and they slap His face with their hands and with mockery. And you are not moved

to pity. Like the Jews, you continue to show Me your fists, shouting: "Away, we have not other God but Caesar", o idolaters, who do not worship God, but yourselves and those who are more overbearing among you. You do not want the Son of God. He gives you no help for your crimes. Satan is more obliging. So you want Satan. You are afraid of the Son of God. Like Pilate. And when you feel Him impend over you with His power, and stir within you with the voices of your consciences that reproach you in His name, like Pilate, you ask: "Who are You?".

You know Who I am. Also those who deny Me, know what and Who I am. Do not lie. There are twenty centuries around Me and they illustrate who I am and they make you acquainted with My miracles. Pilate is more excusable. You are not, as you have a heritage of twenty centuries of Christianity to support your faith or to inculcate it in you, but you will not hear of it. And yet I was more severe with Pilate than with you. I did not reply. I do speak to you. And even so, I do not succeed in persuading you that it is I and that you owe Me adoration and obedience. Even now you accuse Me of being My own ruin in you, because I do not listen to you. You say that you lose your faith because of that. Oh! liars! Where is your faith? Where is your love? When do you pray to Me and live with love and faith? Are you great people? Remember that you are such because I allow it. Are you anonyms in the crowd? Remember that there is no other God but I. No one is greater than I am an no one is ahead of Me. So give Me that cult of love that is due to Me and I will listen to you, because you will no longer be illegitimate children, but the sons of God.

And here is the last attempt of Pilate to save My life, if it were possible to save it after the cruel endless flagellation. He shows Me to the crowd: "Here is the Man!" I arouse human pity in him. He hopes in collective pity. But before the resisting harshness and the advancing threats, he is not capable of accomplishing a supernaturally just deed, and therefore a good one, saying: "I am setting Him free because He is innocent. You are guilty people, and if you do not disperse, you will become acquainted with the severity of Rome". That is what he should have said, had he been a just man, without taking into account the future detriment that would befall him.

Pilate is a false good man. Longinus is good, because although he was less powerful than the Praetor and less defended, in the middle of the street and surrounded by few soldiers and a hostile multitude, he dares to defend Me, help Me, grant Me a rest, to be consoled by the pious women, be assisted by the man from Cyrene and finally to have My Mother at the foot of the Cross. He was a hero of justice and so he became a hero of Christ.

Be aware, o men who worry only about your material welfare,

that God intervenes also in its favour, when He sees you behave faithfully towards justice, which is emanation of God. I always reward those who act righteously. I defend those who defend Me. I love them and succour them. I am always the One Who said: "He who gives a glass of water in My name will be rewarded". To those who give Me love, the water that quenches the thirst of My lips of the divine Martyr, I give Myself, that is protection and blessings. »

601. Death of Judas of Kerioth. The Behaviour of Mary towards Judas Cancels Eve's Bearing towards Cain.

31st March 1944. Friday in Passion Week, 2 a.m.

Here is my very painful vision in these early hours of Passion Friday, as it appeared to me while I was saying the prayers of the Hour of Our Lady of Sorrows; in fact I had thought that spending the night before my Profession in the company of the Virgin of Seven Sorrows was the best preparation for the Profession.

I see Judas. He is alone. He is dressed in light yellow with a red cord round his waist. My internal warner informs me that Jesus has been captured a short time ago and that Judas, who had run away after the arrest, is a prey to contrasting ideas. In fact the Iscariot looks like a furious wild beast hunted down by a pack of mastiffs. Every breath of wind rustling among leaves, any noise in the streets, the gurgling of a fountain make him start and turn round suspiciously and with terror, as if an executioner had caught up with him. He looks round with his head lowered, his neck twisted, rolling his eyes like one who wants to see but is afraid of seeing, and if a play of moonlight forms a shadow with a human appearance, he opens his eyes wide, jumps back, he becomes more livid than he normally is, he stops for a moment and then runs away headlong, retracing his steps, slipping away along other narrow streets, until another noise, another play of light makes him stop or run away in a different direction.

In his crazy running he goes towards the centre of the town. But the clamour of people makes him realise that he is near Caiaphas' house, and then, pressing his head with his hands and stooping as if those shouts were stones lapidating him, he runs away. And in doing so he runs along a lane that takes him straight towards the house where the Supper was consumed. He becomes aware of that when he is in front of it, because there is a little fountain that trickles just there. The drops of water that fall into the small stone basin and the light whistle of the wind, that blowing along the narrow lane produces a kind of repressed groan, must sound to him like the tears and the moaning of the betrayed tortured Master. He covers his ears with his hands in order not to hear and runs away with his eyes closed in order not to see that door, which he had entered

with the Master a few hours earlier, and from which he had come out to go and get the armed guards to arrest Him.

While running so blindly, he bumps against a stray dog, the first dog I have seen since I had visions, a big grey hairy dog that moves to one side snarling, ready to hurl itself upon the disturber. Judas opens his eyes and meets the two phosphorescent ones staring at him, and he sees the white uncovered fangs that seem to be laughing in a diabolic manner. He gives a shriek of terror. The dog, that perhaps takes it for a cry of menace, rushes upon him and they both roll in the dust: Judas underneath, paralysed by fear, the dog or, top of him. When the animal leaves the prey, perhaps considered unworthy of a struggle, Judas is bleeding because of two of three bites, and his mantle is badly torn.

One bite has injured Judas' cheek, exactly where he kissed Jesus. His cheek is bleeding and the blood stains the neck of Judas' yellowish garment. It forms a sort of collar of blood soaking the red cord that fastens the garment round the neck, making it even redder. Judas, touching his cheek with his hand and looking at the dog that is going away, but he looks at it from the opening of a door, whispers: « Beelzebub! », and with a fresh shriek he runs away chased by the dog for some time. He runs as far as the little bridge near Gethsemane. Here, either because it was tired of chasing him or because it was rabid and the water turns it away, the dog abandons the prey and goes back snarling. Judas, who had rushed into the torrent to get stones to throw at the dog, when he sees it go away, looks around and realises that the water reaches half-way up his calves. Without bothering about his garments, which are getting wetter and wetter, he bends down as far as the water and drinks, as if he were parched by fever, and he washes his cheek that is bleeding and must be painful.

In the light of daybreak he climbs out of the gravel-bed, on the other side, as if he were still afraid of the dog and did not dare to go back towards the town. He walks a few metres and finds himself at the entrance to the Garden of the Mount of Olives. He shouts: « No! No! » when he recognises the place. Then, I do not know through which irresistible force or through which satanic criminal sadism, he proceeds in that place. He looks for the place where Jesus was arrested. The earth of the path trampled on by many feet, the grass ruffled at a certain point and some blood on the ground, perhaps Malchus', make him understand that there he pointed out the Innocent to the executioners.

He looks and looks… and then he utters a hoarse cry and jumps backwards. He shouts: « That blood, that blood!… » and he points it out… to whom? with his hand stretched out and his forefinger pointed to it. In the increasing light his face is ashen and ghastly. He looks like a madman. His eyes are wide open and shiny as if he

were delirious, his hair, ruffled by his running and his terror, looks shaggy on his head, his cheek, which is swelling, twists his mouth in a grin. His tunic, torn, covered with blood, wet, muddy, because the dust that had stuck to the wet cloth has become mud, makes him look like a beggar. His mantle, which is also torn and muddy, hangs down from one shoulder like a rag, and he gets caught in it when, continuing to shout: « That blood, that blood! » he steps back, as if that blood had become a sea that rises and submerges.

Judas falls back and hurts the back of his head against a stone. He moans with pain and fear. « Who is it? » he shouts. He must have thought that somebody had made him fall to strike him. He turns round terrified. There is no one! He stands up. Blood is now dripping also at the back of his neck. The red circle widens on his garment. It does not fall to the ground, because there is not much of it. His garment absorbs it. The red halter now seems to be already round his neck.

He walks. He finds the traces of the little fire lit by Peter at the foot of an olive-tree. But he does not know that it is Peter's work and he must think that Jesus was there. He shouts: « Away! Away! » and with both hands stretched out in front of him, he seems to be driving back a ghost that torments him. He runs away, and ends up just against the rock of the Agony.

By now daybreak is clear and one can see well and immediately. Judas sees Jesus' mantle left folded on the rock. He recognises it. He wants to touch it. He is afraid. He stretches out his hand and withdraws it. He wants and does not want. But that mantle fascinates him. He moans: « No. No. » He then says: « Yes, by Satan! Yes. I want to touch it. I am not afraid! I am not afraid! »

He says that he is not afraid, but his teeth are chattering with terror, and the noise made above his head by a branch of an olivetree, that is blown by the wind against the nearby trunk, makes him shout once again. And yet he makes an effort and gets hold of the mantle. And he laughs. The laughter of a madman, of a demon. A hysterical, broken, lugubrious, never ending laughter, because he has overcome his fear. And he says so: « You do not frighten me, Christ. I am no longer afraid. I was so much afraid of You, because I thought that You were a God and a strong man. Now You no longer frighten me, because You are not God. You are a poor madman, a weakling. You did not know how to defend Yourself. You did not reduce me to ashes, neither did You read betrayal in my heart. My fears!… What a fool! When You spoke, even yesterday evening, I thought You knew. But You knew nothing. It was my fear that gave the tone of prophecy to Your common words. You are nothing. You have allowed Yourself to be sold, pointed out, caught like a mouse in its hole. Your power! Your origin! Ha! Ha! Ha! Buffoon! Satan is the strong one! Stronger than You. He defeated You! Ha! Ha! Ha!

The Prophet! The Messiah! The King of Israel! And You subjugated me for three years! With fear always in my heart! And I had lie to deceive You subtly when I wanted to enjoy life! But even if I had stolen and fornicated without all the cunning I used to employ, You would not have done me anything. Faint-hearted! Fool! Coward! Take this! Take this! Take this! I was wrong in not doing to You what I am now doing to Your mantle to revenge myself for the time You kept me the slave of fear. Fear of a rabbit!… Take this! Here! Take this! »

At each « take this! » Judas bites the cloth of the mantle and tries to tear it. He rumples it with his hands. But in doing so, he unfolds it and the stains wetting it appear. Judas stops in his fury. He stares at those stains. He touches them. He smells them. It is blood… He spreads out the whole mantle. The impression left by the two hands stained with blood, when Jesus pressed the cloth against His face, is clearly visible.

« Ah!… Blood! Blood! His… No! » Judas drops the mantle and looks around. Also on the rock, where Jesus leaned with His back when the angel comforted Him, there is a dark mark of blood that is clotting. « There!… There!… Blood! Blood!… » He lowers his eyes in order not to see, and he sees the grass all stained with the blood that has dropped on it. As it has been diluted by the dew, it looks as if it had just dripped. It is red and shines in the early sunshine. « No! No! No! I don't want to see it! I cannot look at that blood! Help! » and he holds his throat with his hands and gropes about, as if he were drowning in a sea of blood. « Back! Back! Leave me! Leave me! Cursed! But this blood is a sea! It covers the Earth! The Earth! The Earth! And on the Earth there is no room for me, because I cannot look at that blood that covers it. I am the Cain of the Innocent! » I think that the idea of suicide entered his heart at this moment. Judas' face is frightening.

He jumps from the terrace and runs away through the olivegrove without going back the way he came. He looks like one chased by wild beasts. He goes back to town. He envelops himself in his mantle as best he can and he tries to cover his wound and his face as much as possible. He turns his steps towards the Temple.

But while going there, at a crossroad he finds himself in front of the rabble who are dragging Jesus to Pilate. He cannot withdraw, because other people press him from behind, as they flock to see. And, tall as he is, he dominates forcibly and sees. And he meets Jesus' eyes… They exchange glances for a moment. Then Jesus, tied and beaten, passes by. And Judas falls on his back, as if he had fainted. The crowds trample on him pitilessly, and he does not react. He obviously prefers to be trodden on by the whole world, rather than meet those eyes.

When the deicide pack has gone by with the Martyr, and the

street is empty, he stands up again and runs to the Temple. He bumps against and almost overthrows a guard on duty at the gate of the enclosure. Other guards run to prevent the frantic man from entering. But like a furious bull, he routs them all. One of them, who clings to him to prevent him from going into the hall of the Sanhedrin, where they are all still gathered discussing, is seized by the throat, strangled and thrown down the three steps, if not dead, certainly at the point of death.

« I don't want your money, may you be damned » he shouts, standing in the middle of the hall, just where Jesus was previously. He looks like a demon who has come out of hell. Bleeding, unkempt, in a state of delirious fury, slavering, his hands like claws, he shouts and seems to be barking, so shrill and hoarse is his howling voice. « I don't want your money, you cursed ones. You have ruined me. You have made me commit the gravest sin. I am cursed like you! I have betrayed innocent Blood. May that Blood and my death fall upon you. Upon you… No! Ha!… » Judas sees the floor stained with blood. « Even here, is there blood even here? Everywhere! His blood is everywhere! But how much blood has the Lamb of God, to cover the whole Earth like this without dying? And I have shed it! Through your instigation. Cursed! May you be cursed for ever! Cursed be these walls! Cursed be this profaned Temple! Cursed be the deicide Pontiff! Cursed be the unworthy priests, the false doctors, the hypocritical Pharisees, the cruel Judaeans, the sly scribes! May I be accursed! Curse me! Keep your money and may it strangle your souls in your throats, as the halter strangles me » and he throws the purse in Caiaphas' teeth and goes away howling, while the coins tinkle spreading out on the floor after striking Caiaphas' mouth and making it bleed. No one dare stop him.

He goes out. He runs along the streets. And he fatally meets with Jesus twice again, as He goes and comes back from Herod.

He departs from the town centre, taking the poorest lanes at random and he ends up again at the house of the Supper. It is all closed as if it were abandoned. He stops. He looks at it. « The Mother! » he whispers. « The Mother!… » He is undecided… « I have a mother as well! And I have killed a son of a mother!… And yet… I want to go in… To see that room again. There is no blood in there… » He knocks at the door.

He knocks again… and again… The mistress of the house comes to open and half-opens the door. Ajar… And seeing the man so agitated and altered beyond recognition, she utters a cry and tries to close the door again. But Judas opens it wide with a push of his shoulder and, knocking down the terrified woman, he goes in.

He runs towards the little door that lets into the Supper Room. He opens it and goes in. A beautiful sunshine enters through the wide-open windows. Judas breathes a sigh of relief. He proceeds.

Everything is calm and silent here. The dishes are still as they were left. One understands that nobody has taken care of them. One might think that they are about to sit at the table.

Judas goes towards the table. He looks whether there is any wine in the amphorae. There is. He drinks greedily out of the amphora itself, lifting it with both hands. Then he sits down and rests his head on his arms folded on the table. He does not notice that he has sat just where Jesus was seated and that in front of him there is the chalice used for the Eucharist. He remains still for some time, until his panting after so much running calms down. He then looks up and sees the chalice. And he realises where he has sat down.

He stands up as if he were possessed. But the chalice enchants him. A little red wine is still in the bottom of it and the sun, shining on the metal (it looks like silver) inflames the liquid. « Blood! Blood! Blood also here! His Blood! His Blood! "Do this in memory of Me!… Take this and drink it. This is My Blood… The Blood of the new testament that will be shed for you… Ha! I am cursed! It can no longer be shed for me to remit my sin. I do not ask to be forgiven, because He cannot forgive me. Away, away! There is no place where the Cain of God may find peace. Death! Death to me!… »

He goes out. He finds himself in front of Mary, Who is standing at the door of the room where Jesus left Her. Hearing a noise, She has looked out, hoping perhaps to see John, who has been away such a long time. She looks as pale as if She had lost all Her blood. Grief has made Her eyes resemble even more those of Her Son. Judas meets those eyes that look at him with the same sorrowful conscious knowledge with which Jesus looked at him in the street, and uttering a frightened « Oh! » he leans against the wall.

« Judas! » says Mary, « Judas, why have you come? » The same words as Jesus'. And they are spoken with sad love. Judas remembers them and shouts.

« Judas » repeats Mary « what have you done? To so much love have you replied by betraying? » Mary's voice is a trembling caress.

Judas is about to run away. Mary calls him with a voice that should have converted a demon. « Judas! Judas! Stop! Stop! Listen! I am telling you in His name: repent, Judas. He forgives… » Judas has run away. Mary's voice, Her appearance, have been the coup de grace, or rather of disgrace, because he resists Her.

He goes away precipitately. He meets John who is going towards the house to get Mary. The sentence has been passed. Jesus is about to go to Calvary. It is time to take Mary to Her Son. John recognises Judas, although there is little left of the handsome Judas of not long ago. « You here? » John says to him with obvious disgust. « You here? May you be cursed, you killer of the Son of God! The Master has been condemned. Rejoice, if you can. But get out of the way. I am going to get the Mother. Do not let Her, the other Victim

of yours, meet you, you reptile. »

Judas runs away. He has enveloped his head in the tatters of his mantle, leaving only a small opening for his eyes. People, the few people who are not near the Praetorium, avoid him, as if they saw a madman. And that is what he looks like.

He wanders about the country. Now and again the wind carries an echo of the clamour made by the crowds who follow Jesus cursing Him. Every time such echo reaches Judas, he howls like a jackal.

I think that he has really gone mad, because he continuously knocks his head against the low stone walls. Or he has become hydrophobic because every time he sees a liquid - water, milk carried in a vessel by a child, oil dripping from a goatskin - he howls and shouts: « Blood! Blood! His Blood! » He would like to drink at streams and fountains. But he cannot, because water seems blood to him, and he says so: « It's blood! It's blood! It is drowning me! It is burning me! I am on fire! He gave me His Blood yesterday, and it has become fire in me! May I be accursed, and You, too! »

He goes up and down the hills around Jerusalem. And his eyes are irresistibly attracted towards Golgotha. And twice from afar he sees the procession wind uphill. He looks and howls.

It is now on the top. Judas also is on top of a little hill covered with olive-trees. He has gone in by opening a rustic paling, as if he were the owner or at least well acquainted with the place. I am under the impression that Judas did not have much consideration for other people's property. Standing uptight under an olive-tree on the edge of a terrace, he looks towards Golgotha. He sees the crosses being erected and he realises that Jesus has been crucified. He cannot bear to see or hear. But his mental derangement or an act of witchcraft by Satan make him see and hear as if he were on the top of Calvary.

He looks and looks like one bewitched. He struggles: « No! No! Don't look at me. Don't speak to me. I cannot bear it. Die, die, You cursed one! Let death close those eyes that frighten me, that mouth that curses me. But I also curse You. Because You did not save me. »

His face is so troubled that one cannot look at it. Two fine streams of slaver run down from his howling mouth. The cheek that was bitten is livid and swollen, and so his face looks twisted. His sticky hair, his very dark beard that has grown on his cheeks during these hours, make his face look dismal. And his eyes!… They roll, are squint and phosphorescent. The eyes of a real demon.

He tears away from his waist the cord of thick red wool that encircles it three times. He tests its solidity by winding it round an olive-tree and pulling it with all his strength. It resists. It is solid.

He chooses a suitable olive-tree. Here it is. This one, protruding beyond the terrace with its ruffled foliage, is all right. He climbs on the tree. He fastens a noose solidly to the strongest branch hanging

out over the empty space. He has already tied a slip-knot. He looks at Golgotha for the last time. He then puts his head into the slip-knot. He now seems to have two red necklaces round the bottom part of his neck. He sits on the terrace. Then with a jerk he lets himself slip into the empty space.

The knot squeezes his throat. He struggles for some moments. He rolls his eyes strangely, he becomes black with suffocation, he opens his mouth, the veins of his neck swell and become black. He kicks the air four or five times in his last convulsions. Then his mouth opens and his dark slobbery tongue hangs out, his eye-balls remain uncovered, protruding, showing the whitish globes stained with blood. The irides disappear in the upper part. He is dead.

The strong wind, that has risen with the impending storm, makes the macabre pendulum swing and whirl like a horrible spider hanging from the thread of a cobweb.

The vision ends thus. And I hope I shall soon forget all this, because I can assure you that it is a dreadful vision.

Jesus says:

« Dreadful, but not useless. Too many people think that Judas did something of little importance. Some even go to the extent of saying that he is well deserving, because Redemption would not have taken place without him, and that 'he is therefore justified in the eyes of God.

I solemnly tell you that, if Hell did not already exist and was not perfect in its torments, it would have been created even more dreadful and eternal for Judas, because of all sinners and damned souls, he is the most damned and the biggest sinner, and throughout eternity there will be no mitigation of his sentence.

Remorse could have also saved him, if he had turned remorse into repentance. But he would not repent and, to the first crime of betrayal, still compatible because of the great mercy that is My loving weakness, he added blasphemy, resistance to the voices of Grace, that still wanted to speak to him through recollections, through terrors, through My Blood and My mantle, through My glances, through the traces of the institution of the Eucharist, through the words of My Mother. He resisted everything. He wanted to resist. As he had wanted to betray. As he wanted to curse. As he wanted to commit suicide.

It is one's will that matters in things. Both in good and in evil. When one falls without the will to follow, I forgive.

Consider Peter. He denied Me. Why? Not even he knew why. Was Peter a coward? No. My Peter was not cowardly. Facing the cohort and the guards of the Temple he had dared to wound Malcus to defend Me, risking his own life thereby. He then ran away, without the will to do so. Then he denied Me, without the will to do it. Later

he did remain and proceed on the bloody way of the Cross, on My Way, until he reached death on a cross. And then he bore witness to Me very efficiently, to the point of being killed because of his fearless faith. I defend My Peter. His bewilderment was the last one of his human nature. But his spiritual will was not present at that moment. Dulled by the weight of his humanity, it was asleep. When it awoke, it did not want to remain in sin, but it wanted to be perfect. I forgave him at once.

Judas did not want. You say that he seemed mad and hydrophobic. He was so through satanic fury. His terror in seeing the dog, a rare animal particularly in Jerusalem, was a consequence of the fact that, from time immemorial, that form was attributed to Satan to appear to men. In books of magic it is stated that one of the forms preferred by Satan to appear to men is that of a mysterious dog or cat or billy-goat. Judas, already a prey to terror brought about by his crime, being convinced that he belonged to Satan because of his crime, saw Satan in that stray animal.

He who is guilty, sees shadows of fear in everything. It is his conscience that creates them. Then Satan instigates such shadows, which might still bring a heart to repent, and turns them into horrible ghosts that lead to despair. And despair leads to the last crime: suicide. What is the use of throwing away the price of the betrayal, when such deprivation is only the fruit of wrath and is not corroborated by a righteous will of repentance? Only in such case the act of divesting oneself of the fruits of evil deeds becomes meritorious. But he did not do that. A useless sacrifice.

My Mother, and She was Grace that was speaking and My Treasurer that was granting forgiveness in My name, said to him: "Repent, Judas. He forgives… " Oh! I would have forgiven him! If he had only thrown himself at the feet of My Mother saying: "Mercy", She, the Merciful Mother, would have picked him up as a wounded man, and on his satanic wounds, through which the Enemy had imbued him with the Crime, She would have shed Her tears that save and She would have brought him to Me, to the foot of the Cross, holding him by the hand, so that Satan might not snatch him and the disciples might not strike him She would have brought him so that My Blood might fall first of all on him, the greatest of all sinners. And She would have been the admirable Priestess on Her altar, between Purity and Guilt, because She is the Mother of virgins and saints, but She is also the Mother of sinners.

But he did not want. Meditate on the power of free will, of which you are the absolute arbiters. Through it you can have Heaven or Hell. Meditate on what persisting in sin means.

The Crucified, He Who is holding His arms stretched out and nailed, to tell you that He loves you, and that He does not want and cannot strike you, because He loves you, and prefers to deprive

Himself of the possibility of embracing you, His only sorrow in His being nailed to the cross, rather than have the freedom to punish you, Christ Crucified, the object of divine hope for those who repent and want to abandon sin becomes for the unrepentant the object of such horror that makes them curse and be violent against themselves. They become the murderers of their spirits and bodies through their persistence in sin. And the sight of the Meek Saviour, Who allowed Himself to be sacrificed in the hope of saving them, takes the appearance of a horrifying ghost.

Mary, you complained of this vision. But, My dear daughter, this is the Friday of Passion Week. You must suffer. To the sufferings you endure because of Mary's sufferings and Mine, you must add your own, caused by the bitterness in seeing sinners remain sinners. That was our suffering. It must be yours. Mary suffered, and still suffers, because of that, as She suffered because of My tortures. So you must suffer that. Rest now. In three hours' time you will be completely Mine and Mary's. I bless you, sweet little violet of My passion and passion-flower of Mary. »

2nd April, 1944. Palm-Sunday.

Jesus says:

« The couple Jesus-Mary is the antithesis of the couple Adam-Eve. It is the one destined to cancel all the behaviour of Adam and Eve and take Humanity back to the point in which it was when it was created: rich in grace and in all the gifts granted to it by the Creator. Humanity has undergone a complete regeneration through the deeds of the couple Jesus-Mary, Who have thus become the new Founders of the Human Family. All the previous time has been cancelled. The time and story of man are reckoned as from this moment in which the new Eve, through a complete change and inversion of creation, and through the deed of the Lord, from Her immaculate womb generates the new Adam.

But in order to cancel the behaviour of the two First Parents, the cause of deadly illness, of perpetual mutilation, of impoverishment, even more: of spiritual indigence - because after their sin Adam and Eve found themselves completely despoiled of everything, and it was infinite wealth, the Holy Father had given them - these two Second Ones had to act in everything in a manner completely opposed to the way of dealing of the two First Parents. So they had to carry their obedience as far as the perfection that lowers itself and sacrifices itself in its flesh, feelings, thoughts and will, in order to accept everything that God wants. So they had to carry their purity to the degree of absolute chastity, whereby the flesh… what was the flesh to Us two pure ones? A veil of water on the triumphant spirit, the caress of the wind on the sovereign spirit, a crystal that isolates the spirit-lord and does not corrupt it, an impulse

that elevates and not a weight that oppresses. That is what the flesh was to Us. Less heavy and sensitive than a linen garment, a light substance placed between the world and the brightness of the ego that had become superhuman, the means to work what God wanted. Nothing else.

Did we possess love? We certainly did. We possessed the "perfect love". Men, the hunger for sensuality that urges you to eagerly glut yourselves with the flesh, is not love. It is lust. Nothing else. So much so that by loving one another thus - you think it is love - you are unable to bear with each other, to help and forgive each other. So what is your love? It is hatred. It is nothing but paranoiac frenzy that drives you to prefer the flavour of putrid meals to the wholesome corroborating food of chosen sentiments. We possessed the "perfect love", We, the perfect chaste ones. This love embraced God in Heaven and, being united to Him, as branches are to the tree trunk nourishing them, it spread and descended lavishing rest, shelter, nourishment, comfort on the Earth and its inhabitants. No one was excluded from this love: neither our fellowcreatures, nor the inferior beings, nor the vegetable nature, nor the waters and stars. Not even the wicked were excluded from this love. Because they also, although dead limbs, were still limbs of the great body of Creation, and therefore we saw in them the holy image, although disfigured and soiled by their wickedness, of the Lord, Who had formed them in His image and likeness.

Rejoicing with good people; weeping over people who were not good; praying (active love that expresses itself by impetrating and attaining protection for those whom one loves) praying for good people that they might become even better in order to be even more able to approach the perfection of the Good Lord, Who loves us from Heaven; praying for those wavering between goodness and wickedness, so that they might be fortified and thus be able to persevere on the holy path; praying for the wicked, that Goodness might speak to their spirits, and might even strike them with the thunderbold of His power, but might convert them to the Lord their God, We loved. As nobody else loved. We carried love to the summits of perfection, so that with our ocean of love we might fill the abyss excavated by the lack of love of the First Parents, who loved themselves more than they loved God, as they wished to have what it was not lawful to have, in order to become superior to God.

So to the purity, obedience, charity, detachment from all the riches of the Earth (sensuality, power, riches: the trinomial of Satan, opposed to the trinomial of God: faith, hope, charity); so to hatred, lust, wrath, pride (the four perverted passions, antitheses of the four holy virtues: fortitude, temperance, justice, prudence), We had to add a constant practice of everything that was the opposite to the way of acting of the couple Adam-Eve. And if it was easy

for us to do quite a lot, through our good limitless wills, only the Eternal knows how heroical it was to fulfil that practice in certain moments and in certain occasions.

I want to speak of one only now. Of My Mother, not of Myself. Of the new Eve, Who since Her most tender years had rejected the blandishments used by Satan to induce Her to bite the fruit and taste its flavour that had made Adam's companion insane; of the new Eve, Who had not confined Herself to rejecting Satan, but had defeated him by crushing him under such a vast will of obedience, love, chastity, that he, the Cursed one, was overwhelmed and subjugated. No! Satan will not rise from under the heel of My Virgin Mother! He slavers and foams, he roars and curses. But his slaver dribbles downwards, and his howling does not touch the atmosphere that surrounds My Holy Mother, Who does not smell the demoniac stench or hear the hellish cachinnation, and does not see, does not even see the revolting slaver of the eternal Reptile, because celestial harmonies and scents dance lovingly around Her beautiful holy person, and because Her eyes, which are purer than lilies and more loving than those of a cooing dove, look fixedly only at Her Eternal Lord, Whose Daughter She is, as well as Mother and Spouse.

When Cain killed Abel, the mouth of their mother uttered curses, that were suggested by her spirit, separated from God, against her closest neighbour: the son of her womb, profaned by Satan and soiled by an indecent desire. And that curse was the stain in the kingdom of human morals, as Cain's crime was the stain in the kingdom of human animals. Blood on the Earth, shed by a brotherly hand. The first blood that like an age-old magnet attracts all the blood shed by man's hand, drawing it from man's veins. Curse on the Earth, uttered by man's mouth. As if the Earth were not sufficiently cursed because of man's rebellion against his God and if it had not had to become acquainted with spines and thorns and the hardness of the soil, with drought, hail, frost, dog-days, whilst it had been created perfect and equipped with perfect elements in order to be a comfortable beautiful abode for man, its king.

Mary has to cancel Eve. Mary sees the second Cain: Judas. Mary knows that he is the Cain of Her Jesus, of the second Abel. She knows that the blood of this second Abel has been sold by that Cain and is already being spread. But She does not curse. She loves and forgives. She loves and calls back.

Oh! Maternity of Mary Martyr! Maternity as sublime as Your virginal divine Maternity! God presented You with the latter! But You, holy Mother, Co-Redeemer, presented Yourself with the former, because You alone, in that hour, with Your heart torn to pieces by the scourges that had torn My flesh to pieces, You alone were able to speak those words to Judas, and You alone, in that hour, when

you felt the cross break You heart, were able to love and forgive.

Mary: the new Eve. She teaches you the new religion, that urges love to forgive him who has killed a son, Do not be like Judas, who closes his heart to this Mistress of Grace and despairs saying: "He cannot forgive me", questioning the words of the Mother of Truth, and consequently My words, which had always repeated that I had come to save and not to lose, to forgive those who came to Me repentant.

Mary, the new Eve, had also a new son from God "in place of Abel killed by Cain". But She did not have Him in an hour of brutal enjoyment that soothes sorrow with the fumes of sensuality and the tiredness of satisfaction. She had Him in an hour of complete sorrow, at the foot of a cross, among the death-rattle of the Dying man Who was Her Son, among the insults of the deicide crowd and an undeserved total grief, because even God no longer comforted Her.

The new life for Mankind and for individual men begins from Mary. Her virtues and Her way of living are your school. And in Her grief, in which all aspects appeared, also that of forgiveness for the killer of Her Son, is your salvation". »

Jesus says:

« One day I will tell you more about Cain and the First Parents. There is much to be said and to be meditated on. »

602. Other Teachings on the First Parents and on the Parallelism between Cain and Judas.

5th April 1944.

Jesus says:

« In Genesis we read: "Then Adam named his wife Eve, because she is the mother of all those who live".

Oh! yes. Woman was born of the "Virago" whom God had formed as a companion for Adam, building her from the rib of man. She was born with her sorrowful destiny, because she had wanted to be born in that way, that is with her sorrowful destiny. Because she had wanted to know what God had concealed from her, reserving for Himself the joy of giving her the joy of posterity without any debasement of sensuality. Adam's companion had wanted to become acquainted with the good concealed in evil, and above all with the evil concealed in good, in apparent good. Because enticed as she was by Lucifer, she had craved for knowledge that God alone could possess without any danger, and she had made herself creatress. But by using such power of good unworthily, she had corrupted it into an evil deed, because it was disobedience to God and malice and greediness of the flesh.

By this time she was the "mother". Infinite lamentation of things

over the innocence of their profaned queen! And desolate lamentation of the queen over her desecration, of which she understands the importance and its impossible annulment! If darkness and cataclysms accompanied the death of the Innocent, darkness and storm also accompanied the death of Innocence and Grace in the hearts of the First Parents. Grief was born on the Earth. But God's providence did not want it to be eternal, as after years of sorrow He gave you the joy of coming out of sorrow to enter joy, if you know how to live with righteous minds.

Woe to man if he had had to make himself the master of life in a human way! And if he had had to live with the memory of his crimes and the continual increase of them, because it is more impossible for you to live without sinning than it is to live without breathing, you creatures who had been created to know the Light and whom Darkness has poisoned making you its victims. Darkness! It circumvents you continuously. It entangles you awakening what the Sacrament has cancelled, and as you do not oppose it with the will of being of God, it succeeds in corrupting you again with its poison, that Baptism had made harmless.

As the signs of man's disobedience were evident, God the Father removed him from the place of heavenly delights, so that he might not sin once again and more gravely by raising his thieving hand to the tree of Life. The Father could no longer trust His children, neither could He feel safe in His Earthly Paradise. Satan had entered it once to lay snares for His dearest creatures, and if he had succeeded in inducing them to sin when they were innocent, with greater ease he would be able to do it again now that they were no longer innocent.

Man had wanted to possess everything, not leaving to God the treasure of being the Generator. Let him therefore go away with his riches acquired through violence, and let him take them with him to the land of his exile to remind him always of his sin, a downcast king despoiled of his gifts. The paradisiac creature had become an earthly creature. And ages of sorrow had to go by, until the Only One, Who could stretch out His hand to the fruit of Life, should come and pick that fruit for all Mankind. And He should pick it with His pierced hands and give it to men, so that they might become again coheirs to Heaven and possessors of the Life that lives for ever.

Genesis says also: "Adam then had intercourse with his wife Eve".

They had wanted to know the secrets of good and of evil. It was fair that now they should also experience the pain of having to reproduce themselves in flesh, having God's direct help only for what man cannot create, the spirit, the spark that departs from God, the breath that is infused by God, the seal that on the flesh affixes the sign of the Eternal Creator. And Eve gave birth to Cain.

Eve was burdened with her sin. At this point I will draw your attention to a fact that escapes most people. Eve was burdened with her sin. And pain had not yet been suffered in a manner sufficient to diminish her sin. Like an organism laden with toxins, she had conveyed to her son what abounded in her. And Cain, Eve's first son, was born hard, envious, quick-tempered, lascivious, wicked, little different from wild animals with regard to instinct, much superior with regard to the supernatural, because in his fierce ego he denied respect to God, Whom he considered an enemy, believing that it was lawful for him not to have a sincere cult for Him. Satan instigated him to deride God. And he who derides God does not respect anybody in the world. Therefore those who are in touch with the deriders of God are acquainted with the bitterness of tears, because they have no hope of respectful love from their offspring, no certainty of faithful love in their consort, no certainty of honest friendship in friends.

Abundant tears streamed down Eve's face and her heart swelled with bitter tears because of the hardness of her son, and those tears sowed the germ of repentance in her heart, and they obtained a diminution of her fault, as God forgives because of the sorrow of those who repent. And Eve's second son had his soul washed in his mother's tears, and he was kind and respectful to his parents, and devout to his Lord, Whose omnipotence he perceived shine from the Heavens. He was the joy of his impoverished mother.

But the way of Eve's sorrow was to be long and painful, proportionate to her way in the experience of sin. In the latter, thrills of senses. In the former, shivers of pain. In the latter, kisses. In the former, blood. From the latter, a son. From the former, the death of a son. Of the one dearest to her because of his goodness. Abel becomes the means of purification for the guilty mother. What a painful purification! With her howling she filled the Earth terrified by the fratricide and she mixed the tears of a mother with the blood of a son, while he, who had shed it out of hatred for God and for his brother loved by God, was running away chased by remorse.

The Lord says to Cain: "Why are you angry?" If you fail in your duty towards Me, why do you grow angry because I do not look at you benignly?

How many Cains there are on the Earth! Their cult for Me is derisory and hypocritical or is non-existent, and yet they want Me to look at them with love and to fill them with happiness.

God is your King. Not your servant. God is your Father. But a father is never a servant, if one judges according to justice. God is just. You are not. But He is. As He exceedingly fills you with His favours, if you only love Him a little, He cannot certainly avoid punishing you, since you deride Him. Justice does not follow two paths. One is its path. As you do, so you receive. If you are good,

you receive good. If you are wicked, you receive evil. And, believe Me, the good you receive is always much more than the bad you should have, for your way of living, rebelling against the divine Law.

God has said: "Is it not true that if you do good you will have good and if you do wrong, sin will be immediately at your door?". In fact good leads to a constant spiritual elevation and makes one more and more capable of performing greater and greater good deeds, till one reaches perfection and becomes holy. Whereas it is enough to yield to evil to degrade oneself and deviate from perfection, becoming acquainted with the power of sin that enters hearts and by degrees makes them descend to greater and greater guiltiness.

"But" God also says "under you lies the desire of it and you must control it". Yes. God did not make you slaves of sin. Passions are under you. Not above you. God has given you intelligence and strength to control yourselves. Also to the first men, struck by God's severity, He left intelligence and moral strength. And now, since the Redeemer has consumed the Sacrifice on your behalf, you have the streams of Grace to assist your intelligence and strength, and you can and must dominate evil desires. Through your will fortified by Grace you must do it. That is why the angels at My Birth sang to the Earth: "Peace to men of good will". I had come to bring Grace back to you, and through its union with your good wills, Peace would come to men. Peace: the glory of God's Heaven.

And Cain said to his brother: 'Let us go out' ". A lie concealing a murderous betrayal under a smile. Delinquency is always mendacious, both with regard to its victims and to the world it tries to deceive. And it would like to deceive even God. But God reads hearts.

"Let us go out". Many centuries later one said: "Hail, Master" and kissed Him. The two Cains concealed their crimes under harmless appearances, and vented their envy, anger, arrogance, and all wicked instincts on the victim, because they had not controlled themselves, but had made their spirits the slaves of their corrupted egos.

In her expiation Eve rises. Cain descends towards hell. Despair seizes him and makes him fall into the abyss. And, with despair, comes the physical cowardly fear of human punishment, the last deadly blow to the spirit already languishing because of its crime. No longer a being mindful of Heaven, man with a dead soul is an animal that trembles with fear for his animal life. Death, whose appearance is a smile for the just, because through it they go to the joy of possessing God, is terrifying for those who are aware that to die means to pass from the hell of one's heart, to the Hell of Satan, for ever. And like people entranced, they see revenge everywhere ready to strike them.

But you must know, I am speaking to the just, you must know that, if remorse and the darkness of a guilty heart allow and foster the hallucinations of a sinner, no one is allowed to set himself up as judge of his brother, and least of all as executioner. Only one is the Judge: God. And if the justice of men has created its law-courts, the task of administering justice is to be remitted to them, and woe to those who profane that name and judge instigated by their own passions or pressed by human powers. Malediction upon him who makes himself the private executioner of one of his fellows! But a greater malediction upon him who, not through the influence of rash wrath, but out of cold human interest, unjustly sends a man to death or to the disgrace of jail. Because, if he who kills a man who has killed, will be given a punishment seven times greater, as the Lord said would happen to anybody who struck Cain, he who condemns without justice, through enslavement to Satan in the capacity of human Overbearingness, will be struck seventy-seven times by God's severity. You should always bear that in your minds, men, particularly at the present moment, since you kill one another to make of those who have fallen the base of your triumph, and you do not realise that you are digging under your feet the pit into which you will fall cursed by God and by men. Because I have said: "You shall not kill".

Eve rises on her way of expiation. Repentance grows deeper in her before the proofs of her sin. She wanted to know good and evil. And the remembrance of the good she had lost is for her like the remembrance of the sun for someone who has become suddenly blind; and evil is in front of her in the mortal remains of her murdered son, and around her because of the void left by her homicide fugitive son. And Seth was born. And Seth begot Enos. The first priest.

Your minds swell with the rivers of your science and you speak of evolution as of a sign of your spontaneous generation. The animal-man, evolving, will become the superman. That is what you say. Yes. It is so. But in My way. In My field. Not in yours. Not by passing from the state of quadrumana to that of men. But passing from the state of men to that of spirits. The more the spirit grows, the more you will evolve.

You who speak of glands, and fill your mouths speaking of hypophysis or of the pineal gland, and place in it the seat of life, taken not in the time in which you live but in the days that preceded and that will follow your present life, must know that your true gland, the one that makes you the eternal possessors of Life, is your spirit. The more it develops, the more you will possess divine lights and will evolve from men to gods, to immortal gods, and so, without contravening God's desire, His order concerning the tree of Life, you will obtain the possession of this Life, exactly as God

wants you to possess it, because on your behalf He created it eternal and bright, a beatific embrace with His eternity that absorbs you in Itself and communicates Its properties to you.

The more your spirits are evolved, the more you will know God. To know God means to love Him and serve Him, and thus be able to invoke Him on your own behalf and on behalf of other people. It means to become the priests who from the Earth pray for their brothers. Because who is consecrated is a priest. But also the convinced, loving, faithful believer is a priest. And a priest above all is the victim soul that sacrifices itself out of an impulse of charity. God does not look at the garment, but at the mind. And I solemnly tell you that My eyes see many tonsured people who have nothing sacerdotal except their tonsures, and they see many laymen in whom the Charity that possesses them and by which they allow themselves to be consumed is the Oil of ordination that makes them My priests, unknown to the world but known to Me, and I bless them. »

603. John Goes to Get Mary.

10.30 a.m. Good Friday 1944 (7th April 1944). My internal warner tells me that that was the time when John went to Mary.

I see the favourite apostle who looks even paler than when he was in Caiaphas' court-yard with Peter. Perhaps because the light of the fire there gave a reflection of heat to his cheeks, which now look hollow, as if he had suffered from a serious disease and were bloodless. His face emerges from his lilac tunic like that of a drowned man, so deathlike is it. His eyes also are dimmed, his hair is dull and ruffled, his beard, which has grown during these hours, lays a veil of a light shade on his cheeks and chin, and as it is very fair, it makes him look even paler. There is nothing left in him of the kind joyful John, or of the angry John who shortly before, his face flushed with indignation, with difficulty restrained himself from manhandling Judas.

He knocks at the door of the house and, as if from inside someone, fearing he might find Judas in front of him again, were asking who was knocking, he replies: « It is I, John. » The door is opened and he goes in.

He also goes into the Supper-room, without replying to the mistress who had asked him: « But what is happening in town? »

He locks himself in and falls on his knees against the seat in which Jesus had sat and he weeps calling Him sadly. He kisses the tablecloth on the spot where Jesus had joined His hands, he caresses the chalice that He held with His fingers… Then he says: « Oh! Most High God, help me! Help me to tell the Mother! I have not got the heart!… And yet, I must tell Her. I must tell Her, because I am the only one

left! »

He stands up and is pensive. He touches the chalice again, as if he wished to draw strength from that object that the Master had touched. He looks around… In the corner in which Jesus had placed it, he sees the purificator used by the Master to dry His hands after washing the apostles' feet, and the other one with which He had girded His waist. He takes them, folds them, caresses them and kisses them.

He stands perplexed in the middle of the empty room. He says: « Let us go! », but he does not go towards the door. On the contrary, he goes back to the table and takes the chalice and the bread, a comer of which had been broken off by Jesus to give a morsel to Judas, after dipping it in the dish. He kisses them, he takes them and with the two purificators he presses them to his heart like relics. He repeats: « Let us go! » and sighs. He walks towards the little staircase and climbs it with stooping shoulders and dragging his reluctant feet. He opens the door and goes out.

« John, you have come? » Mary has reappeared at the door of Her room, leaning on the door-post as if She did not have enough strength to stand up by Herself.

John raises his head and looks at Her. He would like to speak, and he opens his mouth, but he does not manage. Two large tears stream down his cheeks. He lowers his head, ashamed of his weakness.

« Come here, John. Do not weep. You must not weep. You have always loved Him and made Him happy. May that comfort you. »

These words open the floodgates to the tears of John, who cries so loud and noisily, that the mistress appears with Mary Magdalene, Zebedee's wife and the other women…

« Come with Me, John. » Mary departs from the door-post and takes the disciple by the wrist, and drags him into the room, as if he were a little boy, and She closes the door gently, to be alone with him.

John does not react. But when he feels Mary's trembling hand rest on his head, he falls on his knees laying on the floor the objects he was holding against his heart, and with his face on the floor, holding the edge of Mary's mantle pressed on his excited face, he says sobbing: « Forgive me! Forgive me! Mother, forgive me! »

Mary, Who is standing and is utterly distressed, with one hand pressed against Her heart and the other one hanging by Her side, says in a heart-rending voice: « What must I forgive you, My poor son? What? Forgive you! »

John raises his face, showing it as it is, with no longer any trace of manly pride, the face of a poor weeping child, and he shouts: « For abandoning Him! For running away! For not defending Him! Oh! my Master! O Master, forgive me! I should have died, rather than abandon You! Mother, Mother, who will ever rid me of this

remorse? »

« Peace, John. He forgives you, He has already forgiven You. He has never taken your bewilderment into consideration. He loves you. » Mary speaks with pauses between the short sentences, as if She were panting, holding one hand on John's head and pressing the other to Her poor heart that is throbbing with anguish.

« But even yesterday evening I was not able to understand… and I slept while He was asking us to be awake and comfort Him. I left my Jesus all alone! And then I ran away when that cursed man came with the rascals… »

« John, do not curse. Do not hate, John. Let the Father judge that. Listen: where is He now? »

John falls again with his face on the floor, weeping louder.

« Tell Me, John. Where is My Son? »

« Mother… I… Mother, He is… Mother… »

« He has been condemned, I know. I am asking you: where is He just now. »

« I did everything in my power so that He might see me… I tried to apply to the mighty ones to obtain compassion, to make Him… to make Him suffer less. They have not hurt Him very badly… »

« Do not lie, John. Not even out of pity for a mother. You would not succeed. And it would be useless. I know. Since yesterday evening I have followed Him in His sorrow. You cannot see it, but My flesh is bruised by the same scourges as His, the same thorns are piercing My forehead, I felt the blows… everything. But now… I no longer see. Now I do not know where My Son is, Who has been condemned to the cross!… to the cross!… to the cross!… Oh! God, give Me strength! He must see Me. I must not feel My sorrow while He feels His. Then when everything… is over, then let Me die, o God, if You so wish. Not now. No, for His sake. So that He may see Me. Let us go, John. Where is Jesus? »

« He is leaving Pilate's house. This clamour is the crowd shouting around Him, tied as He is, on the steps of the Praetorium, awaiting the cross, or already on His way to Golgotha. »

« Inform your mother, John, and the other women. And let us go. Take that chalice, that bread, those linens… Put them here. We shall find solace in them… later… and let us go. »

John picks up the objects left on the floor and goes out to call the women. Mary waits for him, rubbing Her face with those linens as though She wanted to find the caress of Her Son's hand in them, and She kisses the chalice and the bread, and places everything on a shelf. And She envelops Herself in Her mantle, which She lowers as far as Her eyes, over the veil that wraps Her head and is folded round Her neck. She does not weep, but She is trembling. And She seems to be short of breath, as She pants so much with her mouth open. John comes back in, followed by the weeping women.

« My dear daughters! Be silent! Help me not to weep! Let us go. » And She leans on John, who guides and supports Her as if She were blind.

The vision ends thus. It is 12.30, that is 11.30 solar time.

604. The Way of the Cross from the Praetorium to Calvary.

26th March 1945.

Some time goes by so, not more than half an hour, perhaps even less. Then Longinus, who is entrusted with the task of superintending the execution, gives his orders.

But before Jesus is taken outside, into the street, to receive the cross and set out, Longinus, who has looked at Him twice or three times, with a curiosity that is already tinged with compassion and with the expert eye of one who is accustomed to certain situations, approaches Jesus with a soldier and offers Him a refreshment: a cup of wine, I think. In fact he pours a light blond rosy liquid out of a real military canteen. « It will do You good. You must be thirsty. And the sun is shining outside. And the way is a long one. »

And Jesus replies to him: « May God reward you for your compassion. But do not deprive yourself of it. »

« I am healthy and strong… You… I am not depriving myself… And even if I were… I would do it willingly, to give You some solace… A draught… to show me that You do not hate heathens. »

Jesus no longer refuses and takes a draught of the drink. As His hands are already untied and He no longer has the cane or the chlamys, He can do it by Himself. But He refuses to take more, although the good cool drink should be a great relief to His fever, which is already showing itself in the red streaks that inflame His pale cheeks and His dry lips.

« Take some, take it. It is water and honey. It will give You strength and quench Your thirst… I feel pity for You… yes… pity… It was not You Who was to be killed among the Jews… Who knows!… I do not hate You… and I will try to make You suffer only what is necessary. »

But Jesus does not drink any more… He is really thirsty… The dreadful thirst of those who have lost much blood and are feverish… He knows that it is not a drink with narcotics, and He would drink it willingly. But He does not want to suffer less. But I realise, as I understand what I am saying through an internal light, that the compassion of the Roman is of greater solace to Him than the water sweetened with honey.

« May God reward you with His blessings for this solace » He then says. And He smiles again… a heart-rending smile with His swollen wounded lips, which move with difficulty, also because the severe contusion between His nose and His right cheek-bone, caused by

the blow with a cudgel He received in the court-yard after the flagellation, is swelling considerably.

The two robbers arrive, each surrounded by a decury of soldiers. It is time to go. Longinus gives the last instructions.

A century is set out in two lines, at about three meters from each other, and moves thus into the square, where another century has formed a square barrier to drive the crowd back, so that it may not obstruct the procession. In the little square there are already some mounted soldiers: a cavalry decury with a young non-commissioned officer who commands it and has the ensign. A foot-soldier is holding the bridle of the centurion's black horse. Longinus mounts and goes to his place, about two metres in front of the eleven mounted soldiers.

The crosses are brought. Those of the two robbers are shorter. Jesus' is much longer. I say that the vertical stake is not less than four metres long.

I see that it is already assembled when they bring it. With regard to this matter, I read, when I used to read… that is, years ago, that the cross was assembled on the top of Golgotha and that along the way the condemned men carried only the two poles bundled together on their shoulders. Everything is possible. But I see a true cross, well formed, solid, perfectly mortised at the crossing of the two arms and well reinforced with nails and screw bolts at the junction. And in fact, if one considers that it was destined to support a substantial weight, such as the body of a grown-up person, and had to sustain it also in its last convulsions, one understands that it could not be assembled there and then on the narrow uncomfortable top of Calvary.

Before giving the cross to Jesus, they tie the board with the inscription « Jesus Nazarene King of the Jews » round His neck. And the rope that holds it, gets entangled with the crown, which is moved and scratches where it is not already scratched, and pierces new parts, causing fresh pain and making fresh blood spout. The people laugh with sadistic joy, they abuse and curse.

They are now ready. And Longinus gives the order of march. « First the Nazarene, behind Him the two robbers; a decury around each of them, the other seven decuries positioned on the flank as reinforcements, and the soldier who allows the condemned men to be wounded mortally will be held responsible. »

Jesus comes down the three steps that from the lobby take one into the square. And it is immediately clear that Jesus is in an extremely weak condition. He staggers coming down the three steps, hampered by the cross weighing on His shoulder all covered with sores, by the board of the inscription that sways in front of Him cutting into His neck, by the oscillations caused to the body by the long stake of the cross, which bounces on the steps and on the uneven

ground.

The Jews laugh seeing Him stagger along like a drunk man and they shout to the soldiers: « Push Him. Make Him fall. In the dust the blasphemer! » But the soldiers do only what they have to do, that is, they order the Condemned One to stay in the middle of the road and walk.

Longinus spurs his horse and the procession begins to move slowly. And Longinus would also like to make haste, taking the shortest route to Golgotha, because he is not sure of the resistance of the Condemned One. But the unrestrained mob - and it is even an honour to call it so - does not want that. Those who are more cunning have already run ahead, to the crossroads where the road forks, going towards the walls along one way, and towards the town along the other and they riot, shouting, when they see Longinus try to take the way towards the walls. « You must not do that! You must not! It is not legal! The Law prescribes that condemned men are to be seen in the town where they sinned! » The Jews at the rear of the procession realise that at the front they are trying to defraud them of a right, and they join their shouts to those of their colleagues.

For peace sake Longinus turns along the way that takes towards the town and goes a short distance along it. But he beckons to a decurion to approach him (I say decurion because he is the noncommissioned officer, but perhaps he is what we would call and orderly officer) and he says something to him in a low voice. This man trots back, and as he meets each decury commander, he conveys the order. He then goes back to Longinus to inform him that it has been done. And finally he goes to the place where he was previously, in the line behind Longinus.

Jesus proceeds panting. Each hole in the ground is a trap for His staggering feet, a torture for His shoulders covered with wounds, and for His head crowned with thorns, also because the sun, which is exceedingly warm, although now and again it hides behind a leaden awning of clouds, shines perpendicular on it. So even it is concealed, it still burns. Jesus is congested with fatigue, fever and heat. I think that also the light and the howling must be a torture for Him. And if He cannot stop His ears in order not to hear so much coarse shouting, He half closes His eyes not to see the road dazzling in the sunshine… But He must also reopen them, because He stumbles over stones and holes, and each stumble is painful, as it jerks the cross, which knocks against the crown, which rubs against the wounded shoulder, widening the sores and increasing the pain.

The Jews cannot hit Him directly any longer. But odd stones and blows with cudgels still strike Him. The former, particularly in the little squares crowded with people. The latter, instead, at bends, along the narrow streets with frequent steps going up or down, at times one, at times three, at times more, because of the continuous

variations of the ground. The procession is compelled to slow down at such places, and there is always some volunteer (!) who challenges the Roman lances if only to add a finishing touch to the masterpiece of torture that Jesus is by now.

The soldiers defend Him as best they can. But they strike Him as well, while trying to defend Him, because the long lances waved about in such narrow spaces, knock against Him and make Him stumble. But upon arriving at a certain spot, the soldiers make a perfect manoeuvre and, notwithstanding shouts and threats, the procession deviates abruptly along a street that goes directly towards the walls, downhill, a good short cut to the place of the execution.

Jesus is panting more and more. Perspiration is streaming down His face, together with the blood that trickles from the wounds of the crown of thorns. And dust sticks to His wet face leaving queer stains on it. Because also the wind is blowing now. Continual gusts at long intervals, during which the dust falls after being raised in whirlwinds by each gust, and is blown into eyes and throats.

Many people have already assembled at the Judicial Gate, that is, those who providently and in good time have chosen a good place to see. But shortly before arriving there Jesus almost falls. Only the quick intervention of a soldier, on whom He almost falls, prevents Him from falling on the ground. The rabble laugh and shout: « Leave Him! He used to says to everybody: "Rise". Let Him rise now… »

Beyond the Gate there is a stream and a little bridge. Walking on the uneven boards is a new fatigue for Jesus, as the long stake of the cross bounces on them even more violently. And there is a new mine of projectiles for the Jews. The stones of the stream fly and hit the poor Martyr…

The ascent to Calvary begins. A barren road, without the least shade, paved with uneven stones, that goes straight up the hill. Here again, when I used to read, I read that Calvary was a few metres high. It may be so. It is certainly not a mountain. But it is a hill, not certainly lower than the mount of the Crosses is, with respect to the Lungarni, where the Basilica of Saint Miniato is in Florence. Someone may say: « Oh! not much! » Yes, for one who is healthy and strong it is not much. But it is enough to have a weak heart to feel whether it is much or little!… I know that after I began to suffer from heart trouble, even if only in a mild form, I could no longer go up that hill without suffering a great deal and I was compelled to stop now and again, and I had no load on my shoulders. And I think that Jesus' heart must have been in a very bad state after the flagellation and sweating blood… and I take only these two thing,- into consideration.

So Jesus suffers tremendously in climbing, also because of the

weight of the cross which, being so long, must be very heavy. He finds a protruding stone and as He is exhausted, He can lift His feet only a little, so He stumbles and falls on His right knee, but He can hold Himself up with His left hand. The crowd howls with joy…

He gets up again. He proceeds, bending and panting more and more, congested, feverish… The board that swings in front of Him obstructs His sight; His long tunic, the front part of which trails on the ground, as He now walks bending, hampers His steps. He stumbles again and falls on both knees, hurting Himself where He is already wounded; and the cross, which slips out of His hands and falls, after striking His back violently, compels Him to bend to pick it up and to toil painfully to put it back on His shoulder. While He does so, one can clearly see on His right shoulder the wound made by the rubbing of the cross, which has opened the many sores of the scourges, making them all into one, from which serum and blood transude, so that spot of His white tunic is all stained. The people even applaud for the joy of seeing Him fall so badly…

Longinus urges to make haste and the soldiers, striking with the flat of their daggers, press poor Jesus to proceed. He sets out again more and more slowly, despite all solicitations. Jesus seems completely intoxicated, as He sways so much, knocking against one or the other lines of soldiers, wandering all over the road. And the people notice it and shout: « His doctrine has gone to His head. Look, look, how He staggers! » And others, and they are not of the people, but priests and scribes, say with a grin: « No. It is still the fumes of the banquets in Lazarus' house. Were they good? Take our food now… » And other sentences of the kind.

Longinus, who turns round now and again, feels sorry for Him and orders a few minutes' stop. And the rabble insults him so much that the centurion orders the soldiers to charge them. And the fainthearted crowds at the sight of the shining threatening lances, run away shouting and hurling themselves here and there down the mountain.

It is here that, among the few people who have remained, I again see the small group of the shepherds appear from behind some ruins, probably of a collapsed low wall. They are desolate, upset, dusty, in rags, and with the power of their glances they attract the Master's attention. He turns His head round, He sees them… He looks at them fixedly as if they were the faces of angels, He seems to quench His thirst and fortify Himself with their tears, and He smiles… The order to resume the march is given and Jesus passes just in front of them and He hears their anguished weeping. With difficulty He turns His head round from under the yoke of the cross and He smiles once again… His solace… Ten faces… a rest in the burning sun…

And immediately afterwards, the pain of the third fall, a complete one. And this time He does not stumble. He falls because of

a sudden lack of strength, due to a syncope. He falls headlong, knocking His face on the uneven stones, and He remains in the dust under the cross that falls on Him. The soldiers try to raise Him. But as He seems to be dead, they go and inform the centurion. While they go and come back, Jesus comes to Himself, and slowly, with the help of two soldiers, one of whom lifts the cross and the other helps the Condemned One to stand up, He puts Himself in His Place again. But He is really exhausted.

« Make sure that He dies only on the cross! » shout the crowd.

« If you let Him die beforehand, you will answer to the Proconsul, bear that in your minds. The culprit must arrive alive at the execution Place » say the chief scribes to the soldiers.

The latter cast withering glances at them, but discipline prevents them from speaking.

But Longinus is just as afraid as the Jews that the Christ may die on the road, and he does not want to have troubles. Without needing to be reminded, he knows what is his duty as officer responsible for the execution and he takes action. He takes action disconcerting the Jews who have already ran ahead along the road that they have reached from all over the mountain, sweating, scratching themselves to pass among the few thorny bushes of the bare burnt mountain, falling on the rubble encumbering it as if it were a dump for Jerusalem, without feeling any pain except that of missing the panting of the Martyr, one of His sorrowful glances, a gesture, even an involuntary one, of suffering, and with no other fear but that of not being successful in having a good place. So Longinus gives the order to take the longer road that winds up the mountain and is therefore not so steep.

This road seems a path that by dint of being used by many people has changed into a rather comfortable road. This crossroad is situated about half-way up the mountain. But I see that farther up, the straight road is crossed four times by this one, which climbs with a slighter slope and to compensate for this is much longer. And many people are going up this road, but they do not participate in this shameful uproar of people possessed, who follow Jesus to take delight in His tortures. They are mostly women, weeping and veiled, and some small groups of men, very small ones indeed, who are much ahead of the women and are about to pass from sight, when going on their way, the road turns round the mountain.

Calvary here looks somehow pointed in its odd structure, which is snout-shaped on one side, whilst on the other side it drops sheer. The men disappear behind the stony point and I lose sight of them.

The people following Jesus are shouting with rage. It was more pleasant for them to see Him fall. While hurling obscene imprecations at the Condemned One and at those leading Him, some follow the judicial procession, and some go on almost running up the

steep road, to make up for the disappointment received, by having a very good position on the top.

The women, who are proceeding weeping, turn round upon hearing the shouts, and see the procession turn towards them. Then they stop, leaning against the mountain, lest they should be pushed down the slope by the violent Jews. They lower their veils on their faces even more, and there is one completely covered with her veil, like a Muslim, leaving only her very dark eyes free. They are sumptuously dressed and they have a strong old man to defend them, but all enveloped as he is in his mantle, I cannot see his face clearly. I can only see his long beard, which is more white than dark, stick out of his very dark mantle.

When Jesus arrives near them, they weep more loudly and bow low to Him. Then they move forward resolutely. The soldiers would like to drive them back with their lances. But the one who is all covered like a Muslim moves her veil aside for a moment before the ensign, who has just arrived on horseback to see what it the cause of this new hindrance, and he orders the soldiers to let her pass. I cannot see her face or her dress, because the shifting of the veil is done with the speed of a flash, and her dress is all concealed under a heavy mantle that reaches down to the ground and is completely closed by a set of buckles. The hand that comes out from there for a moment to shift the veil, is white and beautiful. And it is the only thing, in addition to her very dark eyes, that can be seen of this tall matron, who is certainly influential if she is so promptly obeyed by Longinus' adjutant.

They approach Jesus weeping and kneel at His feet, while He stops panting… and yet He still knows how to smile at those compassionate women and at their escort, who uncovers himself to show that he is Jonathan. But the guards do not let him pass. Only the women.

One of them is Johanna of Chuza. And she is more haggard than when she was dying. Only the traces of her tears are red, all her face is snow-white with her kind dark eyes, which, dimmed as they are, seem to have become a very dark violet shade like certain flowers. In her hand she has a silver amphora and offers it to Jesus. But He refuses it. In any case, He is so breathless that He would not even be able to drink. With His left hand He wipes the sweat and blood that trickles into His eyes and that, streaming down His purple face and neck, the veins of which are swollen through the laboured throbbing of His heart, wets all His tunic at the chest.

Another woman, who is accompanied by a young maidservant holding a small casket in her arms, opens it and takes out a square piece of very fine linen cloth, and offers it to the Redeemer. He accepts it. And as He cannot manage by Himself with one hand only, the compassionate woman helps Him to take it to His face, watching

not to knock against His crown. And Jesus presses the cool linen cloth to His poor face and holds it there, as if He felt a great relief. He then hands the linen cloth back and He says: « Thank you, Johanna, thank you, Nike Sarah… Marcella Eliza… Lydia,… Anne Valeria… and you But… do not weep for Me daughters of Jerusalem… But for your sins and for those of Your town… Bless Johanna… for not having more sons… See It is God's mercy not… not to have sons… because… they suffer for this… And you… too, Elizabeth… Better as it was… than among deicides… And you mothers… weep for your sons, because… this hour will not pass without punishment And what a punishment, if it is so for… the Innocent… You will weep then… for having conceived… suckled and for… having more… sons… The mothers… of those days… will weep because… I solemnly tell you… that he will be lucky… who then… will be the first… to fall… under the ruins. I bless you Go… home… pray for Me. Goodbye, Jonathan… take them away »

And in the midst of the loud noise of weeping women and cursing Judaeans, Jesus sets out again.

Jesus is once again completely wet with perspiration. Also the soldiers and the other two condemned men are perspiring, because the sun this stormy day is as burning as flames, and the side of the mountain, very warm by itself, increases the heat of the sun. What this sun must feel like on Jesus' woollen garment placed on the wounds of the scourges, one can easily imagine and be horrorstricken at the idea… But He never moans. But although the road is not so steep as the other one and it is not strewn with uneven stones, which were so dangerous to His feet that He is now dragging, Jesus is staggering more and more, and once again He knocks first into one line of soldiers and then into the other and is bent more than previously.

They decide to overcome the difficulty by passing a rope round His waist and holding the two ends as if they were reins. It does in fact support Him, but it does not make His load any lighter. On the contrary the rope, knocking against the cross, shifts it continuously on His shoulder and makes it strike the crown, which by now has turned Jesus' forehead into a bleeding tattoo mark. Further, the rope rubs against His waist, where there are many wounds, and it certainly makes them bleed again, in fact His white tunic is tinged with pale red at the waist. So, in order to help Him, they make Him suffer more.

The road continues. It goes round the mountain, it comes back almost to the front, towards the steep road. Here, there is Mary with John. I should say that John has taken Her to that shady place, behind the slope of the mountain, to give Her some relief. It is the steepest part of the mountain. There is no other road going round

it. Above and under it the slope rises or descends steeply, and that is why the cruel people have abandoned it. It is shady there, because I should say that it is the north, and Mary, leaning as She is on the mountain side, is protected from the sun. She is leaning against the slope, standing, but already exhausted, panting, as white as death, in Her very dark blue dress, which is almost black. John looks at Her with desolate pity. He has no trace of colour on his face either, and he looks wan, with wide-open tired eyes, unkempt, and his cheeks are sunken as if he were suffering from a disease.

The other women - Mary and Martha of Lazarus, Mary of Alphaeus and Mary of Zebedee, Susanna from Cana, the mistress of the house and some more whom I do not know - are all in the middle of the road looking to see whether the Saviour is coming. And when they see Longinus arrive, they rush towards Mary to inform Her. And Mary, supported by John who is holding Her by the elbow, departs from the hillside, stately in Her grief,, and places Herself resolutely in the middle of the road, moving aside only at the arrival of Longinus, who from the height of his black horse looks at the pale Woman and at Her blond wan companion, whose meek eyes are blue like Hers. And Longinus shakes his head while passing by followed by the eleven soldiers on horseback.

Mary tries to pass through the dismounted soldiers, who, being warm and in a hurry, strive to drive Her back with their lances, all the more that stones are thrown from the paved road, as a protest against so much compassion. It is the Jews, who once again curse because of the halt brought about by the pious women and say: « Quick! It is Easter tomorrow. Everything must be accomplished by this evening! You are accomplices who deride our Law! Oppressors! Death to the invaders and to their Christ! They love Him! Look how they love Him! Well, take Him! Put Him in your cursed Eternal City! We surrender Him to you! We don't want Him! Let rotters be with rotters! And leprosy with lepers! »

Longinus gets tired and followed by the ten lancers he spurs his horse against the reviling pack of hounds, who run away for the second time. And in doing so he sees a cart standing still, which has certainly come up from the vegetable-gardens at the foot of the mountain and is waiting for the crowds to pass, so that it may go down towards the town with its load of greens. I think that curiosity has made the man from Cyrene and his sons go up there, because it was not necessary for him to do so. The two sons, lying on the top of the green pile of vegetables, look and laugh at the fleeing Judaeans. The man, instead, a very strong man, about forty-fifty years old, standing near the little donkey, which is frightened and tries to draw back, looks attentively at the procession.

Longinus looks him up and down. He thinks that he can be useful and says to him in a commanding voice: « Man, come here. »

The man from Cyrene feigns he has not heard. But one cannot trifle with Longinus. He repeats the order in such a way that the man throws the reins to one of his sons and approaches the centurion.

« Do you see that man? » he asks. And in doing so, he turns round to point out Jesus and he sees Mary, Who is imploring the soldiers to let Her pass. He takes pity on Her and he shouts: « Let the Woman pass. » He then resumes speaking to the man from Cyrene: « He cannot proceed further laden as He is. You are strong. Take His cross and carry it in His stead as far as the summit. »

« I cannot… I have the donkey… it is restive… the boys cannot hold it… »

But Longinus says: « Go, if you do not want to lose your donkey and get twenty blows as punishment. »

The man from Cyrene dare no longer react. He shouts to the boys: « Go home and be quick. And say that I am coming at once » and he then goes towards Jesus.

He reaches Him just when Jesus turns towards His Mother, Whom only now He sees coming towards Him, because He is proceeding so bent and with His eyes almost closed, as if He were blind, and He shouts: « Mother! »

Since He began being tortured, it is the first word that expresses His sufferings. Because in that cry there is the confession of everything, and all the dreadful sorrow of His spirit, of His morale, of His body. It is the heart-broken and heart-breaking cry of a little boy who dies all alone, among torturers and the most cruel tortures… and who goes so far as to be afraid of his own breathing. It is the wailing of a raving little boy tormented by nightmare visions… and wants his mummy, his dear mummy, because only her fresh kisses soothe the ardour of his fever, her voice dispels phantoms, her embrace makes death less fearful…

Mary presses Her hand against Her heart, as if She had been stabbed, and She staggers lightly. But She collects Herself, quickens Her step and while going towards Her tortured Son with outstretched arms, She shouts: « Son! » But She says so in such a way that whoever has not got the heart of a hyena, feels it is breaking because of so much grief.

I notice signs of compassion even among the Romans… and yet they are soldiers, accustomed to slaughters, marked by scars… But the words: « Mother! » and « Son! » are always the same for all those who, I repeat it, are not worse than hyenas, they are understood everywhere and they raise waves of compassion everywhere…

The man from Cyrene feels such pity… And as he sees that Mary cannot embrace Her Son because of the cross, and that after stretching Her arms out, She lets them drop, convinced that She is unable to do so - and She only looks at Him, striving to smile with Her smile of a martyr to encourage Him, while Her trembling lips drink

Her tears, and He, turning His head round, from under the yoke of the cross, tries in His turn to smile at Her and send Her a kiss with His poor lips, wounded and split by blows and fever - he hastens to remove the cross, and he does so with the gentleness of a father, in order not to give a shove to the crown or rub against His sores.

But Mary cannot kiss Her Son… Even the lightest touch would be a torture for His torn flesh, and Mary refrains, and then… the most holy feelings have a profound modesty and they exact respect or at least compassion, whilst here there is curiosity, and above all, mockery. Only the two anguished souls kiss each other.

The procession, which sets out again under the pressure of the waves of the furious people, divides them, pushing the Mother against the mountain, to be sneered at by all the people…

Behind Jesus there is now the man from Cyrene with the cross. And Jesus, freed of that weight, is proceeding more easily. He is panting violently, He often presses His hand against His heart, as if He had a great pain or a wound there, in the sternum-heart region, and now, since His hands are no longer tied and He is able to do so, He pushes His hair, which had fallen forward and is sticky with blood and perspiration, behind His ears, to feel some air on His cyanotic face, He unties the cord round His neck, as it makes Him suffer in breathing… But He can walk better.

Mary has withdrawn with the women. She follows the procession once it has passed, and then, along a short cut, She turns Her steps towards the top of the mountain, defying the insults of the cannibalistic populace.

Now that Jesus can walk freely, the last stretch of the road around the mountain is soon covered, and they are already close to the top crowded with shouting people.

Longinus stops and orders his men to inexorably repel everybody farther down, so that the top, the place of the execution, may be free. And one half of the century carries out the order, rushing to the spot and mercilessly driving back whoever is there, making use of their daggers and lances to do so. The hail of blows with the flat of swords and clubs makes the Jews run away from the top, and they would like to stop in the open space below. But those already there do not give in and the people begin to brawl fiercely. They 'I seem to be mad.

As I told you last year, the top of Calvary is shaped like an irregular trapezium, slightly higher on the right side, after which the mountain descends steeply for more than half of its height. In this little open space there are already three deep holes, lined with bricks or slates, that is, built for a special purpose. Near them there are stones and earth ready to prop the crosses. Other holes instead are full of stones. It is obvious that they empty them each time according to the number required.

Under the trapezoidal summit, on the side of the mountain that does not descend steeply, there is a kind of platform that slopes down gently forming a second little open space. Two wide paths depart from it going round the top, which is thus isolated and raised at least two metres in height on all sides.

The soldiers, who have driven the people away from the top, with convincing blows of their lances subdue quarrels and make room, so that the procession may pass without any hindrance on the last stretch of the road, and they remain there forming a double hedge while the three condemned men, surrounded by the soldiers on horseback and protected behind by the other half of the century, arrive at the spot where they are stopped: at the foot of the natural raised platform that is the summit of Golgotha.

While that takes place, I see the Maries, and a little behind them there is Johanna of Chuza with the other four ladies mentioned previously. The others have withdrawn. And they must have gone by themselves, because Jonathan is still there, behind his mistress. The one we call Veronica and whom Jesus called Nike, is no longer there and also her maidservant is absent. And also the one, who was all covered with a veil and was obeyed by the soldiers, is no longer there. I can see Johanna, the old woman named Eliza, Anne (the mistress of the house where Jesus went for the vintage in the first year of His public life), and two more whom I cannot identify.

Behind these women and the Maries I can see Joseph and Simon of Alphaeus, and Alphaeus of Sarah with the group of the shepherds. They have scuffled with those who wanted to repel them insulting them, and the strength of these men, increased by their love and grief, has been so powerful that they defeated their opponents, forming a free semicircle at which the very pusillanimous Jews dare only to hurl cries of death and shake their fists. But nothing else, because the crooks of the shepherds are knotty and heavy, and these valiant men lack neither strength nor the ability to aim accurately. And I am not wrong in saying so. It takes real courage for a few men, known as Galileans or followers of the Galilean Master, to oppose a hostile population. It is the only place on the whole of Calvary in which Christ is not cursed!

The mountain, on the three sides on which the slopes descend gently towards the valley, is all crowded with people. The yellowish barren earth can no longer be seen. In the sun that appears and disappears, it looks like a flowery meadow with corollas of all colours, so numerous and close together are the headgears and mantles of the sadists standing there. More people are beyond the torrent, on the road, and more beyond the walls. And there are more on the terraces, which are closer. The rest of the town is deserted… empty… silent. They are all here. All the love and all the hatred. All the Silence that loves and forgives. All the Clamour that hates and

curses.

While the men responsible for the execution prepare their instruments, finishing emptying the holes, and the men condemned await in the middle of the square formed by the soldiers, the Jews, who have taken shelter in the corner opposite the Maries, insult them. They insult also the Mother: « Death to the Galileans. Death! Galileans! Galileans! Curse them! Death to the Galilean blasphemer. Nail on the cross also the womb that bore Him! Away from here the vipers that give birth to demons! Death to them! Clear Israel of the females who copulate with the billy-goat!… »

Longinus, who has dismounted, turns round and sees the Mother… He orders his men to stop the uproar… The fifty soldiers who were behind the condemned men charge the rabble and clear the second esplanade completely, as the Jews run away along the mountain, treading on one another. Also the other soldiers dismount, and one takes the eleven horses, in addition to that of the centurion, and takes them to a shady spot, behind the ridge of the mountain.

The centurion sets out towards the top. Johanna of Chuza moves forward and stops him. She gives him an amphora and a purse. She then withdraws weeping, and goes towards the edge of the mountain with the other women.

Everything is ready on the summit. They make the condemned men go up. And once again Jesus passes near His Mother, Who utters a groan, which She tries to stifle, by pressing Her mantle against Her lips.

The Jews notice it, they laugh and deride. John, the meek John, who has one arm round Mary's shoulders to support Her, turns round and glares at them. Even his eyes are phosphorescent. If he did not have to protect the women, I think that he would grip one of the cowards by the throat.

As soon as the condemned men are on the fatal platform, the soldiers surround the open space on three sides. Only the one that drops sheer is empty.

The centurion orders the man from Cyrene to go away. And he goes away, unwillingly now, and I would not say out of sadism, but out of love. In fact he stops near the Galileans, sharing with them the insults that the crowds give liberally to these haggard believers of the Christ.

The two robbers throw their crosses on the ground swearing. Jesus is silent.

The sorrowful way has come to its end.

605. The Crucifixion.

27th March 1945.

Four brawny men, who look like Judaeans, and Judaeans more

worthy of the cross than the condemned men, certainly of the same category as the scourgers, jump from a path onto the place of the execution. They are wearing short sleeveless tunics, and in their hands they are holding nails, hammers and ropes, which they show to the condemned men scoffing at them. The crowd is excited with cruel frenzy.

The centurion offers Jesus the amphora, so that He may drink the anaesthetic mixture of myrrhed wine. But Jesus refuses it. The two robbers instead drink a lot of it. Then the amphora, with a wide flared mouth, is placed near a large stone, almost on the edge of the summit.

The condemned men are ordered to undress. The two robbers do so without shame. On the contrary they amuse themselves making obscene gestures towards the crowd, and in particular towards a group of priests, who are all white in their linen garments, and who have gone back to the lower open space little by little, taking advantage of their caste to creep up there. The priests have been joined by two or three Pharisees and other overbearing personages, whom hatred has made friends. And I see people I know, such as the Pharisees Johanan and Ishmael, the scribes Sadoc and Eli of Capernaum…

The executioners offer the condemned men three rags, so that they may tie them round their groins. The robbers take them uttering the most horrible curses. Jesus, Who strips Himself slowly because of the pangs of the wounds, refuses it. He perhaps thinks that He can keep on the short drawers, which He had on also during the flagellation. But when He is told to take them off as well, He stretches out His hand to beg for the rag of the executioners to conceal His nakedness. He is really the Annihilated One to the extent of having to ask a rag of criminals.

But Mary has noticed everything and She has removed the long thin white veil covering Her head under Her dark mantle, and on which She has already shed so many tears. She removes it without letting Her mantle drop and gives it to John so that he may hand it to Longinus for Her Son. The centurion takes the veil without any objection and, when he sees that Jesus is about to strip Himself completely, facing the side where there are no people, and thus turning towards the crowd His back furrowed with bruises and blisters, and covered with sores and dark crusts that are bleeding again, he gives Him His Mother's linen veil. Jesus recognises it and wraps it round His pelvis several times, fastening it carefully so that it may not fall off… And on the linen veil, so far soaked only with tears, the first drops of blood begin to fall, because many of the wounds, just covered with blood-clots, have reopened again, as He stooped to take off His sandals and lay down His garments, and blood is streaming down again.

Jesus now turns towards the crowd. And one can thus see that also His chest, legs and arms have all been struck by the scourges. At the height of His liver there is a huge bruise, and under His left coastal arch there are seven clear stripes in relief, ending with seven small cuts bleeding inside a violaceous circle… a cruel blow of a scourge in such a sensitive region of the diaphragm. His knees, bruised by repeated falls that began immediately after He was captured and ended on Calvary, are dark with hematomas and the kneecaps are torn, particularly the right one, by a large bleeding wound.

The crowds scoff at Him in chorus: « Oh! Handsome! The most handsome of the sons of men! The daughters of Jerusalem adore You… » And in the tone of a psalm they intone: « My beloved is fresh and ruddy, to be known among ten thousand. His head is purest gold, his locks are palm fronds, as silky as the feathers of ravens. His eyes are like two doves bathing in streams not of water, but of milk, in the milk of his orbit. His cheeks are beds of spices, his lips are purple lilies distilling precious myrrh. His hands are rounded like the work of a goldsmith ending in rosy hyacinths. His trunk is ivory veined with sapphires. His legs are perfect columns of white marble on bases of gold. His majesty is like that of Lebanon; he is more majestic than the tall cedar. His conversation is drenched with sweetness and he is altogether delightful »; and they laugh and shout also: « The leper! The leper! So have You fornicated with an idol, if God has struck You so? Have You mumbled against the saints of Israel, as Mary of Moses did, if You have been punished so? Oh! Oh! the Perfect One! Are You the Son of God? Certainly not. You are the abortion of Satan! At least he, Mammon, is powerful and strong. You… are in rags, You are powerless and revolting. »

The robbers are tied to the crosses and they are carried to their places, one to the right, one to the left, with regard to the place destined to Jesus. They howl, swear, curse, particularly when the crosses are carried to the holes, and they hurt them making the ropes cut into their wrists, their oaths against God, the Law, the Romans, the Judaeans are hellish.

It is Jesus' turn. He lies on the cross meekly. The two robbers were so rebellious that, as the four executioners were not sufficient to hold them, some soldiers had to intervene, to prevent them from kicking away the torturers who were tying their wrists to the cross. But no help is required for Jesus. He lies down and places His head here they tell Him. He stretches out His arms and His legs as He told. He only takes care to arrange His veil properly. Now His long, slender white body stands out against the dark wood and the yellow ground.

Two executioners sit on His chest to hold Him fast. And I think of the oppression and pain He must have felt under that weight. A third one takes His right arm, holding Him with one hand on the

first part of His forearm and the other on the tips of His fingers. The fourth one, who already has in his hand the long sharp-pointed quadrangular nail, ending with a round flat head, as big as a large coin of bygone days, watches whether the hole already made in the wood corresponds to the radius-ulnar joint of the wrist. It does. The executioner places the point of the nail on the wrist, he raises the hammer and gives the first stroke.

Jesus, Who had closed His eyes, utters a cry and has a contraction because of the sharp pain, and opens His eyes flooded with tears. The pain He suffers must be dreadful… The nail penetrates, tearing muscles, veins, nerves, shattering bones…

Mary replies to the cry of Her tortured Son with a groan that sounds almost like the moaning of a slaughtered lamb; and She bends, as if She were crushed, holding Her head in Her hands. In order not to torture Her, Jesus utters no more cries. But the strokes continue, methodical and hard, iron striking iron… and we must consider that a living limb receives them.

The right hand is now nailed. They pass on to the left one. The hole in the wood does not correspond to the carpus. So they take a rope, they tie it to the left wrist and they pull it until the joint is dislocated, tearing tendons and muscles, besides lacerating the skin already cut into by the ropes used to capture Him. The other hand must suffer as well, because it is stretched as a consequence, and the hole in it widens round the nail. Now the beginning of the metacarpus, near the wrist, hardly arrives at the hole. They resign themselves and they nail the hand where they can, that is, between the thumb and the other fingers, just in the middle of the metacarpus. The nail penetrates more easily here, but with greater pain, because it cuts important nerves, so that the fingers remain motionless, whilst those of the right hand have contractions and tremors that denote their vitality. But Jesus no longer utters cries, He only moans in a deep hoarse voice with His lips firmly closed, while tears of pain fall on the ground after falling on the wood.

It is now the turn of His feet. At two metres and more from the foot of the cross there is a small wedge, hardly sufficient for one foot. Both feet are placed on it to see whether it is in the right spot, and as it is a little low and the feet hardly reach it, they pull the poor Martyr by His malleoli. So the coarse wood of the cross rubs on the wounds, moves the crown that tears His hair once again and is on the point of falling. One of the executioners presses it down on His head again with a slap…

Those who were sitting on Jesus' chest, now get up to move to His knees, because Jesus with an involuntary movement withdraws His legs upon seeing the very long nail, which is twice as long and thick as those used for the hands, shine in the sunshine. They weigh on His flayed knees and press on His poor bruised shins, while the

other two are performing the much more difficult operation of nailing one foot on top of the other, trying to combine the two joints of the tarsi.

Although they try to keep the feet still, holding them by the malleoli and toes on the wedge, the foot underneath is shifted by the vibrations of the nail, and they have almost to unnail it, because the nail, which has pierced the tender parts and is already blunt having pierced the right foot, is to be moved a little closer to the centre. And they hammer, and hammer, and hammer… Only the dreadful noise of the hammer striking the head of the nail is heard, because all Calvary is nothing but eyes and ears to perceive acts and noises and rejoice…

The harsh noise of iron is accompanied by the low plaintive lament of a dove: the hoarse groaning of Mary, Who bends more and more at each stroke, as if the hammer wounded Her, the Martyr Mother. And one understands that She is about to be crushed by such torture. Crucifixion is dreadful, equal to flagellation with regard to pain, it is more cruel to be seen, because one sees the nails disappear in the flesh. But in compensation it is shorter, whereas flagellation is enervating because of its duration.

I think that the Agony at Gethsemane, the Flagellation and the Crucifixion are the most dreadful moments. They reveal all the torture of the Christ to me. His death relieves me, because I say: « It is all over! » But they are not the end. They are the beginning of new sufferings.

The cross is now dragged near the hole and it jerks on the uneven ground shaking the poor Crucified. The cross is raised and twice it slips out of the hands of those raising it; the first time it falls with a crash, the second time it falls on its right arm, causing terrible pain to Jesus, because the jerk He receives shakes His wounded limbs.

But when they let the cross drop into its hole and before being made fast with stones and earth, it sways in all directions, continuously, shifting the poor Body, hanging from three nails, the suffering must be atrocious. All the weight of the body moves forward and downwards, and the holes become wider, particularly the one of the left hand, and also the hole of the feet widens out, while the blood drips more copiously. And if that of the feet trickles along the toes onto the ground and along the wood of the cross, that of the hands runs along the forearms, as the wrists are higher up than the armpits, because of the position, and it trickles down the sides from the armpits towards the waist. When the cross sways, before being fastened, the crown moves, because the head falls back knocking against the wood and drives the thick knot of thorns, at the end of the prickly crown, into the nape of the neck, then it lies again on the forehead, scratching it mercilessly. At long last the cross is

made fast and there is only the torture of being suspended.

They raise the robbers who, once they are placed in a vertical position, shout as if they were being flayed alive, because of the torture of the ropes that cut into their wrists and cause their hands to turn dark with the veins swollen like ropes.

Jesus is silent. The crowd instead is no longer silent. The people resume bawling in a hellish way.

Now the top of Golgotha has its trophy and its guard of honour. At the top there is the cross of Jesus. At the sides the other two crosses. Half a century of soldiers, in fighting trim, is placed all round the summit; inside this circle of armed soldiers there are the - ten dismounted soldiers, who throw dice for the garments of the condemned men. Longinus is standing upright between the cross of Jesus and the one on the right. And he seems to be mounting guard of honour for the Martyr King. The other half century, at rest, is on the left path and on the lower open space, under the orders of Longinus' adjutant, awaiting to be employed in case of need. The indifference of the soldiers is almost total. Only an odd one now and again looks at the crucified men.

Longinus, instead, watches everything with curiosity and interest, he makes comparisons and judges mentally. He compares the crucified men, and the Christ in particular, and the spectators. His piercing eye does not miss any detail. And to see better, he shades his eyes with his hand, because the sun must be annoying him.

The sun is in fact strange. It is yellow-red like a fire. Then the fire seems to go out all of a sudden, because of a huge cloud of pitch that rises from behind the chains of the Judaean mountains and soars swiftly across the sky, disappearing behind other mountains. And when the sun comes out again, it is so strong that the eye endures it with difficulty.

While looking, he sees Mary, just under the slope, with Her tormented face raised towards Her Son. He calls one of the soldiers who are playing dice and says to him: « If His Mother wants to come up with the son who is escorting Her, let Her come. Escort Her and help Her. »

And Mary with John, who is believed to be Her « son », climbs the steps cut in the tufaceous rock, I think, and passes beyond the cordon of soldiers, and goes to the foot of the cross, but a little aside, to be seen and see Her Jesus.

The crowd showers the most disgraceful abuses on Her at once, associating Her with Her Son in their curses. But with Her trembling white lips, She tries only to comfort Him, with an anguished smile that wipes the tears, which no will-power can refrain.

The people, beginning with priests, scribes, Pharisees, Sadducees, Herodians and the like, amuse themselves by going on a kind

of roundabout, climbing the steep road, passing along the elevation at the end, and descending along the other road, or viceversa. And while they pass at the foot of the summit, on the second open space, they do not fail to offer their blasphemous words as a compliment to the Dying Victim. All the baseness, cruelty, hatred and folly, which men are capable of expressing with their tongues, is amply testified by those infernal mouths. The fiercest are the members of the Temple, with the assistance of the Pharisees.

« Well? You, the Saviour of mankind, why do You not save Yourself? Has Your king Beelzebub abandoned You? Has he disowned You? » shout three priests.

And a group of Judaeans shout: « You, Who not more than five days ago, with the help of the Demon, made the Father say… ha! ha! ha! that He would glorify You, how come You do not remind Him to keep His promise? »

And three Pharisees add: « Blasphemer He said that He saved the others with the help of God! And He cannot save Himself! Do You want us to believe You? Then work the miracle. Hey, are You no longer able? Your hands are now nailed and You are naked. »

And some Sadducees and Herodians say to the soldiers: « Watch His witchcraft, you who have taken His garments! He has the infernal sign within Himself! »

A crowd howls in chorus: « Descend from the cross and we will believe You. You Who want to destroy the Temple… Fool!… Look at it over there, the glorious and holy Temple of Israel. It is untouchable, o profaner! And You are dying. »

Other priests say: « Blasphemous You the Son of God? Come down from there, then. Strike us by lightning, if You are God. We are not afraid of You and we spit at You. »

Others who are passing by shake their heads saying: « He can but weep. Save Yourself, if it is true that You are the Chosen One! »

And the soldiers remark: « So, save Yourself! Burn to ashes this suburra of the suburra! Yes! You are the suburra of the empire, you Judaean rabble. Do so! Rome will put You on Capitol and will worship You as a god! »

The priests and their accomplices say: « The arms of women were more pleasant than those of the cross, were they not? But, look, Your… (and they utter a disgraceful word) are already there waiting to receive You. You have the whole of Jerusalem as Your matchmaker. » And they hiss like snakes.

Others throw stones shouting: « Change these into bread, since You multiply loaves. »

Others mimicking the Hosannas of Palm Sunday, throw branches and shout: « Curses on Him Who comes in the name of the Demon! Cursed be His kingdom! Glory to Zion that cuts Him off the living! »

A Pharisee stands in front of the cross, he raises his hand in an

indecent gesture, and says: « "I entrust You to the God of Sinai" did You say? Now the God of Sinai is preparing You for the eternal fire. Why don't You call Jonah so that he may repay Your kindness? »

Another one says: « Don't ruin the cross with the strokes Of Your head. It is to be used for Your followers. A whole legion of them will die on Your cross, I swear it on Jehovah. And Lazarus will be the first one I'll put there. We shall see whether You free him from death, now. »

« Yes. Let us go to Lazarus. Let us nail him on the other side of the cross » and parrot-like they speak slowly as Jesus did, saying: « Lazarus, My friend, come out! Unbind him and let him go. »

« No! He used to say to Martha and Mary, His women: "I am the Resurrection and Life" Ha! Ha! Ha! The Resurrection cannot drive death back, and the Life is dying! »

« There is Mary with Martha over there. Let us ask them where Lazarus is and let us look for him. » And they come forward, towards the women, asking arrogantly: « Where is Lazarus? At his mansion? »

And while the other women, struck with terror, run behind the shepherds, Mary Magdalene comes forward, and finding in her grief the ancient boldness of her days of sin, she says: « Go. You will already find the soldiers of Rome in the mansion, with five hundred armed men of my land, and they will castrate you like old billygoats destined to feed the slaves of millstones. »

« Impudent! Is that how you speak to priests? »

« Sacrilegious! Filthy! Cursed! Turn round! On your backs, I can see them, you have tongues of infernal flames. »

Mary's assertion sounds so certain that the cowards, who are really struck with terror, turn round; but if they have no flames on their shoulders, they have the sharp-pointed Roman lances at their backs. In fact Longinus has given an order, and the fifty soldiers, who were resting, have come into action and they prick the buttocks of the first Judaeans they find. The latter run away shouting and the soldiers stop to block the entrances to the two roads and protect the open space. The Judaeans curse, but Rome is the stronger.

The Magdalene lowers her veil again - she had raised it to speak to the revilers - and goes back to her place. The other women join her.

But the robber on the left hand side continues to insult from his cross. He seems to have summarised all the curses of the other people and he repeats them all, and ends by saying: « Save Yourself and save us, if You want people to believe You. You the Christ? You are mad! The world belongs to crafty people, and God does not exist. I do. That is true and everything is permitted to me. God?… Nonsense! Invented to keep us quiet. Long live our egos! Man's ego alone is king and god! »

The other robber, who is on the right hand side with Mary almost

near his feet, and looks at Her almost more than he looks at Jesus, and for some moments has been weeping murmuring: « My mother », says: « Be silent. Do you not fear God even now that you suffer this pain? Why do you insult Him Who is good? And His torture is even greater than ours. And He has done nothing wrong. »

But the robber continues to curse.

Jesus is silent. Panting as a result of the effort He has to make because of His position, because of His fever and heart and breathing conditions, the consequence of the flagellation He suffered in such a violent form, and also of the deep anguish that had made Him sweat blood, He tries to find some relief by reducing the weight on His feet, pulling Himself up with His arms and hanging from His hands. Perhaps He does so also to overcome the cramp that tortures His feet and is revealed by the trembling of His muscles. But the same trembling is noticeable in the fibres of His arms, which are constrained in that position and must be frozen at their ends, because they are higher up and deprived of blood, which arrives at the wrists with difficulty and trickles from the holes of the nails, leaving the fingers without circulation. Those of the left hand in particular are already cadaveric and motionless, bent towards the palm. Also the toes of the feet show their pain, especially the big toes move up and down and open out, probably because their nerves have not been injured so seriously.

And the trunk reveals all its pain with its movement, which is fast but not deep, and tires Him without giving any relief. His ribs, wide and high as they are, because the structure of this Body is perfect, are now enlarged beyond measure, as a consequence of the position taken by the body and of the pulmonary oedema that has certainly developed inside. And yet they do not serve to relieve the effort in breathing, all the more that the abdomen with its movement helps the diaphragm, which is becoming more and more paralyzed.

And the congestion and asphyxia increase every minute, as is shown by the cyanotic colour that emphasises the lips, which the fever has made bright red, and by the red-violet streaks, which tinge the neck along the turgid jugular veins, and widen out as far as the cheeks, towards the ears and temples, while the nose is thin and bloodless, and the eyes are sunken in a circle, which is livid where no blood has trickled from the crown.

Under the left costal arch one can see the throbbing imparted by the point of the heart, an irregular but violent palpitation, and now and again, owing to an internal convulsion, the diaphragm has a deep pulsation, which is revealed by a total stretching of the skin, for what it can stretch on that poor wounded dying Body.

The Face already has the aspect we see in photographs of the Holy Shroud, with the nose diverged and swollen on one side; and the

likeness is increased by the fact that the right eye is almost closed, owing to a swelling on this side. The mouth, instead is open, with the wound on the upper lip by now turned into a crust.

His thirst, caused by the loss of blood, by the fever and by the sun, must be burning, so much so that He, with automatic movements, drinks the drops of His perspiration and His tears, as well as those of blood, that run down from His forehead to His moustache, and He wets His tongue with them…

The crown of thorns prevents Him from leaning against the trunk of the cross to help the suspension on His arms and lighten the weight on His feet. His kidneys and all His spine are curved outwards, detached from the cross from His pelvis upwards, owing to force of inertia that makes a body, suspended like His, hang forward.

The Judaeans, driven beyond the open space, do not stop insulting, and the unrepentant robber echoes their insults.

The other one, who now looks at the Mother with deeper and deeper compassion, and weeps, answers him back sharply, when he hears that She also is included in the insult. « Be silent. Remember that you were born of a woman. And consider that our mothers have wept because of their sons. And they were tears of shame… because we are criminals. Our mothers are dead… I would like to ask mine .to forgive me-… But shall I be able? She was a holy woman… I killed her with the sorrow I gave her… I am a sinner… Who will forgive me? Mother, in the name of Your dying Son, pray for me. »

The Mother for a moment raises Her tortured face and looks at him, the poor wretch who through the remembrance of his mother and the contemplation of the Mother moves towards repentance, and She seems to caress him with Her kind gentle eyes.

Disma weeps louder, which raises even more the mockery of the crowd and of his companion. The former shout: « Very well. Take Her as your mother. So She will have two criminal sons! » The latter aggravates the situation saying: « She loves you because you are a smaller copy of Her darling. »

Jesus speaks for the first time: « Father, forgive them because they do not know what they are doing! »

This prayer overcomes all fear in Disma. He dares to look at the Christ and says: « Lord, remember me when You are in Your Kingdom. It is just that I should suffer. But give me mercy and peace hereafter. I heard You speak once and I foolishly rejected Your word. I now repent. And I repent of my sins before You, the Son of the Most High. I believe that You come from God. I believe in Your power. I believe in Your mercy. Christ, forgive me in the name of Your Mother and of Your Most Holy Father. »

Jesus turns round and looks at him with deep compassion, and He smiles a still beautiful smile with His poor tortured lips. He

says: « I tell you: today you will be with Me in Paradise. »

The repentant robber calms down, and as he no longer remembers the prayers he learned when a child, he repeats as an ejaculation: « Jesus Nazarene, king of the Jews, have mercy on me; Jesus Nazarene, king of the Jews, I hope in You; Jesus Nazarene, king of the Jesus, I believe in Your Divinity. »

The other robber continues cursing.

The sky becomes duller and duller. Now the clouds hardly ever open to let the sun shine. On the contrary they cluster on top of one another in leaden, white, greenish strati, they disentangle according to the caprices of a cold wind, which at times blows in the sky, then descends to the ground, and then drops again, and when it drops the air is almost more sinister, sultry and dull than when it hisses, blowing biting and fast.

The light, previously exceedingly bright, is becoming greenish. And faces look strange. The profiles of the soldiers, under their helmets and in their armour, which were previously shining and have now become rather tarnished in the greenish light and under an ashen-grey sky, are so hard that they seem to be chiselled. The Judaeans, the complexion, hair and beards of whom are mostly brown, seem drowned people, so wan are their faces. The women look like statues of bluish snow because of their deadly paleness, which is accentuated by the light.

Jesus seems to be turning ominously livid, because of a beginning of putrefaction, as if He were already dead. His head begins to hang over His chest. His strength fails Him rapidly. He shivers, although He is burning with fever. And in His weakness, He whispers the name that so far He has only uttered in the bottom of His heart: « Mother! Mother! » He murmurs it in a low voice, like a sigh, as if He were already lightly delirious and thus prevented from holding back what His will would not like to reveal. And each time Mary makes an unrestrainable gesture of stretching Her arms, as if She wished to succour Him. And the cruel people laugh at such pangs of Him Who is dying and of Her Who suffers agonies.

Priests and scribes climb up again as far as the shepherds, who, however, are on the lower open space. And as the soldiers want to drive them back, they react saying: « Are these Galileans staying here? We want to stay here as well, as we have to ascertain that justice is done to the very end. And from afar, in this light, we cannot see. »

In fact many begin to be upset by the light that is enveloping the world and some people are afraid. Also the soldiers point to the sky and to a kind of cone that seems of slate, so dark it is, and that rises I like a pine-tree from behind the top of a mountain. It looks like a waterspout. It rises and rises and seems to produce darker and darker clouds, as if it were a volcano belching smoke and lava.

It is in this frightening twilight that Jesus gives John to Mary and Mary to John. He lowers His head, because the Mother has gone closer to the cross to see Him better, and He says: « Woman, this is Your son. Son, this is your Mother. »

Mary looks even more upset after this word, which is the will of Jesus, Who has nothing to give His Mother but a man, He Who out of love for man, deprives Her of the Man-God, born of Her. But the poor Mother tries to weep only silently, because it is impossible for Her not to weep… Tears stream down Her cheeks notwithstanding all the efforts to refrain them, even if on Her lips there is a heartbroken smile to comfort Him…

Jesus' sufferings increase more and more. And the light fades more and more.

It is in this sea-bottom light that Nicodemus and Joseph appear from behind some Judaeans, and they say: « Step aside! »

« You are not allowed. What do you want? » ask the soldiers.

« To pass. We are friends of the Christ. »

The chief priests turn round. « Who dare profess himself friend of the rebel? » ask the priests indignantly.

And Joseph replies resolutely: « I, Joseph of Arimathea, the Elder, and noble member of the Supreme Council, and Nicodemus the head of the Judaeans, is with me. »

« Those who side with the rebel are rebels. »

« And those who take sides with murderers, are murderers, Eleazar of Annas. I have lived as a just man. And now I am old and close to death. I do not want to become unjust, while Heaven is already descending upon me and the eternal Judge with it. »

« And you, Nicodemus! I'm surprised! »

« So am I. And of one thing only: that Israel is so corrupt that you cannot even recognise God any more. »

« You disgust me. »

« Move aside, then, and let me pass. That is all I want. »

« To become even more contaminated? »

« If I have not become contaminated being with you, nothing else will ever contaminate me. Soldier, here is the purse and my pass. » And he gives the decurion who is closest to him, a purse and a waxed board.

The decurion examines them and says to the soldiers:« Let the two men pass. »

And Joseph and Nicodemus approach the shepherds. I do not even know whether Jesus can see them in the thick fog that is getting thicker and thicker, and with His eyes that are already veiled by agony. But they see Him and they weep without any respect for public opinion, although the priests now abuse them.

The sufferings are worse and worse. The body begins to suffer from the arching typical of tetanus, and the clamour of the crowd

exasperates it. The death of fibres and nerves extends from the tortured limbs to the trunk, making breathing more and more difficult, diaphragmatic contraction weak and heart beating irregular. The face of Christ passes, in turns, from very deep-red blushes to the greenish paleness of a person bleeding to death. His lips move with greater difficulty, because the overstrained nerves of the neck and of the head itself, that for dozens of times have acted as a lever for the whole body, pushing on the cross bar, spread the cramp also to the jaws. His throat, swollen by the obstructed carotid arteries, must be painful and must spread its oedema to the tongue, which looks swollen and slow in its movements. His back, even in the moments when the tetanising contractions do not bend it in a complete arch from the nape of His neck to His hips, leaning as extreme points against the stake of the cross, bends more and more forwards, because the limbs are continuously weighed down by the burden of the dead flesh.

The people cannot see this situation very clearly, because the light now is like dark ashes, and only those who are at the foot of the cross can see well.

At a certain moment Jesus collapses forwards and downwards, as if He were already dead, He no longer pants, His head hangs inertly forward, His body, from His hips upwards, is completely detached from the cross, forming an angle with its bar.

Mary utters a cry: « He is dead! » A tragic cry that spreads in the dark air. And Jesus seems really dead.

Another cry of a woman replies to Her, and I see a bustle in the group of the women. Then some ten people go away holding something. But I cannot see who goes away so. The foggy light is too faint. It looks as we are immersed in a cloud of very dense volcanic ash.

« It is not possible » shout some of the priests and of the Judaeans. « It is a simulation to make us go away. Soldier, prick Him with your lance. It is a good medicine to give His voice back to Him. » And as the soldiers do not do so, a volley of stones and clods of earth fly towards the cross, hitting the Martyr and falling back on the armour of the Romans.

The medicine, as the Judaeans say ironically, works the wonder. Some of the stones have certainly hit the target, perhaps the wound of a hand, or the head itself, because they were aiming high. Jesus moans pitifully and recovers His senses. His thorax begins to breathe again with difficulty and His heads moves from left to right, seeking where it may rest in order to suffer less, but finding nothing but greater pain.

With great difficulty, pressing once again on His tortured feet, finding strength in His will, and only in it, Jesus stiffens on the Cross, He stands upright, as if He were a healthy man with all his

strength, He raises His face, looking with wide open eyes at the world stretched at His feet, at the far away town, which one can see just indistinctly as a vague whiteness in the mist, and at the dark sky where every trace of blue and of light has disappeared. And to this closed, compact, low sky, resembling a huge slab of dark slate, He shouts in a loud voice, overcoming with His will-Power and with the need of His soul the obstacle of His swollen tongue and His oedematous throat: « Eloi, Eloi, lamma scebacteni! » (I hear Him say so). He must feel that He is dying, and in absolute abandonment by Heaven, if He confesses His Father's abandonment, with such an exclamation.

People laugh and deride Him. They insult Him saying: « God has nothing to do with You! Demons are cursed by God! »

Other people shout: « Let us see whether Elijah, whom He is calling, will come to save Him. »

And others say: « Give Him some vinegar, that He may gargle His throat. It helps one's voice! Elijah or God, as it is uncertain what this madman wants, are far away… A loud voice is required to make oneself heard! » and they laugh like hyenas or like demons.

But no soldier gives Him vinegar and no one comes from Heaven to give comfort. It is the solitary, total, cruel, also supernaturally cruel agony of the Great Victim.

The avalanches of desolate grief, which had already oppressed Him at Gethsemane, come back again. The waves of the sins of all the world come back to strike the shipwrecked innocent, to submerge Him in their bitterness. And above all what comes back is the sensation, more crucifying than the cross itself, more despairing than any torture, that God has abandoned Him and that His prayer does not rise to Him…

And it is the final torture. The one that accelerates death, because it squeezes the last drops of blood out of the pores, because it crushes the remaining fibres of the heart, because it ends what the first knowledge of this abandonment has begun: death. Because of that, as first cause, my Jesus died, o God, Who have struck Him for us! Because after Your abandonment, through Your abandonment, what does a person become? Either insane or dead. Jesus could not become insane, because His intelligence was divine, and since intelligence is spiritual, it triumphed over the total trauma of Him Whom God had struck. So He became a dead man: the Dead Man, the Most Holy Dead Man, the Most Innocent Dead Man. He Who was the Life, was dead. Killed by Your abandonment and by our sins.

Darkness becomes deeper. Jerusalem disappears completely. The very slopes of Calvary seem to vanish. Only the top is visible, as if darkness held it high up to receive the only and last surviving light, laying it as an offering, with its divine trophy, on a pool of liquid onyx, so that it may be seen by love and by hatred.

And from that light, which is no longer light, comes the plaintive voice of Jesus: « I am thirsty! »

A wind in fact is blowing, which makes even healthy people thirsty. A strong wind that now blows continuously, and is full of dust, cold and frightening. And I think of what pain its violent gusts must have caused to the lungs, the heart, the throat of Jesus, and to His frozen, benumbed, wounded limbs. Everything has really combined to torture the Martyr.

A soldier goes towards a jar, in which the assistants of the executioner have put some vinegar with gall, so that with its bitterness it may increase the salivation of those condemned to capital punishment. He takes the sponge immersed in the liquid, he sticks it on a thin yet stiff cane, which is already available nearby, and offers the sponge to the Dying Victim.

Jesus leans eagerly forward towards the approaching sponge. He looks like a starving baby seeking the nipple of its mother.

Mary Who sees and certainly has such a thought, leaning on John, says with a moan: « Oh! and I cannot give Him even one of My tears… Oh! breast of Mine, why do you not trickle milk? Oh! God, why do You abandon us thus? A miracle for My Son! Who will lift Me up, so that I may quench His thirst with My blood, since I have no milk?… »

Jesus, Who has greedily sucked the sour bitter drink, makes a wry face in disgust. Above all, it must act as a corrosive on His wounded split lips.

He withdraws, loses heart, abandons Himself. All the weight of His body falls heavily on His feet and forward. His wounded extremities are the parts that suffer the dreadful pain as they are torn open by the weight of the body that abandons itself. He makes no further movement to alleviate such pain. His body, from His hips upwards, is detached from the cross, and remains such.

His head hangs forward so heavily that His neck seems hollowed in three places: at the throat, which is completely sunken, and at both sides of the sternum cleido-mastoid. He pants more and more and interruptedly, and it sounds more like a death-rattle. Now and again a painful fit of coughing brings a light rosy foam to His lips. And the intervals between one expiration and the next one are becoming longer and longer. His abdomen is now motionless. Only His thorax still heaves, but laboriously and with difficulty… Pulmonary paralysis is increasing more and more.

And fainter and fainter, sounding like a child's wailing, comes the invocation: « Mother! » And the poor wretch whispers: « Yes, darling, I am here. » And when His sight becomes misty and makes Him say: « Mother, where are You? I cannot see You any more. Are You abandoning Me as well? » and they are not even words, but just a murmur that can hardly be heard by Her Who with Her heart

rather than with Her ears receives every sigh of Her dying Son, She says: « No, no, Son! I will not abandon You! Listen to Me, My dear… Your Mother is here, She is here… and She only regrets that She cannot come where You are… » It is heart-rending…

And John weeps openly. Jesus must hear him weep. But He does not say anything. I think that His impending death makes Him speak as if He were raving and that He does not even know what He says, and, unfortunately, He does not even understand His Mother's consolation and His favourite apostle's love.

Longinus - who inadvertently is no longer standing at ease with his arms folded across his chest, and one leg crossed over the other alternately, to ease the long wait on his feet and is now instead standing stiff at attention, his left hand on his sword, his right one held against his side, as if he were on the steps of the imperial throne - does not want to be influenced. But his face is affected in the effort of overcoming his emotion, and his eyes begin to shine with tears that only his iron discipline can refrain.

The other soldiers, who were playing dice, have stopped and have stood up, putting on the helmets that had served to cast the dice, and they are near the little steps dug in the tufa, looking heedful and silent. The others are on duty and cannot move. They look like statues. But some of those who are closer and hear Mary's words, mutter something between their lips and shake their heads.

There is dead silence. Then in utter darkness, the word: « Everything is accomplished! » is clearly heard and His death-rattle grows louder and louder, with longer and longer pauses between one rattle and the next one.

Time passes in such distressing rhythm. Life comes back when the air is pierced by the harsh breathing of the Dying Victim… Life stops when the painful sound is no longer heard. One suffers hearing it… one suffers not hearing it… One says: « Enough of this suffering! », and then one says: « Oh! God! let it not be His last breath. »

All the Maries are weeping, with their heads leaning against the scarp. And their weeping is clearly heard, because the crowd is now silent again, to listen to the death-rattles of the dying Master.

There is silence again. Then the supplication pronounced with infinite kindness, with fervent prayer: « Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit! »

Further silence. Also the death-rattle becomes fainter, It is just a breath confined to His lips and throat.

Then, there is the last spasm of Jesus. A dreadful convulsion that seems to tear the body with the three nails from the cross, rises three times from the feet to the head, through all the poor tortured nerves; it heaves the abdomen three times in an abnormal way, then leaves it after dilating it as if it were upsetting the viscera, and it drops and becomes hollow as is it were empty; it heaves, swells and contracts

the thorax so violently, that the skin sinks between the ribs which stretch appearing under the skin and reopening the wounds of the scourges; it makes the head fall back violently once, twice, three times, hitting the wood hard; it contracts all the muscles of the face in a spasm, accentuating the deviation of the mouth to the right, it opens wide and dilates the eyelids under which one can see the eye-balls roll and the sclerotic appear. The body is all bent; in the last of the three contractions it is a drawn arch, which vibrates and is dreadful to look at, and then a powerful cry, unimaginable in that exhausted body, bursts forth rending the air, the « loud cry » mentioned by the Gospels and is the first part of the word « Mother »… And nothing else…

His head falls on His chest, His body leans forward, the trembling stops, He breathes no more. He has breathed His last.

The Earth replies to the cry of the murdered Innocent with a frightening rumble. From a thousand bugle-horn giants seem to give out only one sound and on that terrible chord there are the isolated rending notes of lightning that streaks the sky in all directions, falling on the town, on the Temple, on the crowd… I think that some people were struck by lightning, because the crowd was struck directly. The lightning is the only irregular light that enables one to see at intervals. And immediately afterwards, while the volley of thunderbolts still continues, the earth is shaken by a cyclonic whirlwind. The earthquake and the tornado join together to give an apocalyptic punishment to the blasphemers. The summit of Golgotha trembles and quakes like a plate in the hands of a madman, because of the subsultory and undulatory shocks that shake the three crosses so violently that they seem on the point of being overturned.

Longinus, John, the soldiers grab whatever they can, as best they can, not to fall. But John, while grasping the cross with one arm, with the other supports Mary Who, both because or Her grief and the unsteadiness, has leaned on his chest. The other soldiers, and in particular those on the side sloping downhill, have had to take shelter in the centre, to avoid being thrown down the precipice. The robbers howl with terror, the crowd howls even more and would like to run away. But it is not possible. People fall one on top of the other, they tread on one another, they fall into the fissures of the ground, they hurt themselves, they roll down the slope as if they had gone mad.

The earthquake and the tornado recur three times, then there is the absolute immobility of a dead world. Only flashes of lightning, without the rumble of thunder, still streak the sky illuminating the scene of the Jews fleeing in every direction, at their wits' end, their hands stretched forward or raised to the sky, at which they had so far sneered and of which they are now afraid. Darkness is mitigated by a dim light which, increased by the silent magnetic lightning,

enables one to see that many are lying on the ground, I do not know whether they are dead or have fainted. A house is on fire inside the walls and the flames rise up straight in the still air, a bright red spot in the grey-green atmosphere.

Mary raises Her head from John's chest and looks at Her Jesus. She calls Him, as She cannot see Him well in the dim light and Her poor eyes are full of tears. She calls Him three times: « Jesus! Jesus! Jesus! » It is the first time that She calls Him by His name, since She has been on Calvary. Then, as a flash forms a kind of crown over the top of Golgotha, She sees Him, motionless, all bent forward, with His head hanging so much forward and to the right, that His cheek touches His shoulder and His chin rests on His ribs, and She understands. She stretches out Her hands in the dark air and shouts: « My Son! My Son! My Son! » She then listens… Also Her mouth is open, She seems to be wanting to hear also with it, as Her eyes are wide open to see… She cannot believe that Her Jesus is no longer…

John, who has also looked and heard and has understood that everything is over, embraces Mary and tries to take Her away saying: « He no longer suffers. »

But before the apostle finishes his sentence, Mary, who has understood, frees Herself, She turns round, She bends towards the ground, She covers Her eyes with Her hands and shouts: « I no longer have My Son! »

She then staggers and would fall if John did not hold Her against his heart, and he then sits down, on the ground, to sustain Her on his chest, more easily until the Maries, no longer held back by the upper circle of armed soldiers - because, since the Jews have run away, the Roman soldiers have gathered in the open space below, commenting on the event - replace the apostle near the Mother.

The Magdalene sits where John was, and she almost lays Mary on her knees, holding Her between her arms and her breast, kissing Her deadly pale face, which is reclined on her compassionate shoulder. Martha and Susanna, with a sponge and a linen cloth soaked in vinegar, moisten Her temples and nostrils, while Her sister-in-law Mary kisses Her hands calling Her in a heart-rending voice, and as soon as Mary opens Her eyes again and casts a glance that Her grief makes, so to say, dull, she says to Her: « Daughter, my beloved daughter, listen… tell me that You see me… I am Your Mary… Don't look at me so!… » And as the first sob opens Mary's throat and Her first tears begin to fall, the good Mary of Alphaeus says: « Yes, weep… Here with me, as if You were near a mother, my poor holy daughter »; and when she hears Her say: « Oh! Mary! Mary! have you seen? », she moans: « Yes, I have… but… but… daughter… oh! daughter!… » And the elderly Mary can find no other word and weeps. She weeps disconsolately, echoed by all the other women,

that is, Martha and Mary, John's mother and Susanna.

The other pious women are no longer there. I think that they have gone away, and the shepherds with them, when that feminine cry was heard…

The soldiers are speaking in low voices to one another.

« Have you noticed the Judaeans? They were afraid, now. »

« And they were beating their breasts. »

« The priests were the most terrorised! »

« What a fright! I have seen other earthquakes. But never like this one. Look: the ground is full of fissures. »

« And a whole stretch of the long way has slid down over there. »

« And there are bodies under it. »

« Leave them! So many snakes less. »

« Oh! another fire! In the country… »

« But is He really dead? »

« Can't you see? Do you doubt it? »

Joseph and Nicodemus appear from behind the rock. They had certainly taken shelter there, behind the protection of the mountain, to save themselves from the thunderbolts. They go to Longinus. « We want the Corpse. »

« Only the Proconsul can grant it. Go quick, because I heard that the Judaeans want to go to the Praetorium to obtain permission to fracture His legs. I would not like them to disfigure His body. »

« How do you know? »

« A report of the ensign. Go. I will wait. »

The two men rush down the steep road and disappear.

It is at this moment that Longinus approaches John and in a low voice says something to him, which I do not understand. Then he makes a soldier give him a lance. He looks at the women, who are all attending to Mary, Who is slowly recovering Her strength. They have all their backs turned to the cross.

Longinus places himself in front of the Crucified, he ponders carefully how to deal the blow and he strikes it. The lance penetrates deeply from the bottom upwards, from right to left.

John, wavering between the desire to see and the horror of seeing, makes a wry face for a moment.

« It is done, my friend » says Longinus, and he ends: « Better so. As for a knight. And without fracturing bones… He was really a Just Man! »

A lot of water and just a trickle of blood, already tending to clot, drip from the wound. I said drip. They only come out trickling from the neat cut that remains motionless, whereas, had there been any breathing, it would have opened and closed with the movements of the thorax and abdomen…

… While on Calvary everything remains in this tragic situation, I join Joseph and Nicodemus, who are going down along a short cut

to gain time.

They are almost at the bottom when they meet Gamaliel. An unkempt Gamaliel, with no headgear, no mantle, with his magnificent garment soiled with mould and torn by bramble. A Gamaliel who is running, climbing and panting, with his hands in his thin very grizzled hair of an elderly man. They speak to one another without stopping.

« Gamaliel! You? »

« You, Joseph? Are you leaving Him? »

« No, I am not. But how come you are here? And in that state?… »

« Dreadful things! I was in the Temple! The sign! The Temple door unhinged! The purple hyacinth veil is hanging torn! The Holy of Holies is open! There is anathema upon us! » He has spoken while running towards the summit, driven mad by the test.

The two men look at him go… they look at each other… they say together: « "These stones will shudder at My last words!" He had promised him!… »

They hasten their pace towards the town.

In the country, between the mountain and the walls and beyond them, many people looking idiotic are wandering, in the still dim light… They howl, weep and lament… Some say: « His Blood has rained fire! » Some exclaim: « Jehovah has appeared in the midst of the lightning to curse the Temple! » Some moan: « The sepulchres! The sepulchres! »

Joseph gets hold of a man who is striking his head against the walls and calls him by his name, dragging him as he enters the town: « Simon! What are you saying? »

« Leave me! You are dead, too! All dead! All outside! And they curse me. »

« He has gone mad » says Nicodemus.

They leave him and they hasten towards the Praetorium.

The town is a prey to terror. People roam beating their breasts. People who jump backwards or turn round frightened upon hearing a voice or steps behind them.

In one of the many dark archivolts, the apparition of Nicodemus dressed in white wool - because, in order to be quicker, he has taken off his dark mantle on Golgotha - causes a fleeing Pharisee to utter a cry of terror. He then realises that it is Nicodemus and he clings to his neck with a strange effusion, shouting: « Don't curse me! My mother appeared to me and said: "Be cursed for ever!" » and then he collapses on the ground moaning: « I'm afraid! I'm afraid! »

« They are all mad! » say the two men.

They arrive at the Praetorium. And it is only here, while waiting to be received by the Proconsul, that Joseph and Nicodemus understand the reason for so much terror. Many sepulchres had been opened by the earthquake, and there were people who swore that

they had seen skeletons come out of them, and that for a moment they resumed human appearance and were going about accusing and cursing those who were guilty of the deicide.

I leave them in the entrance-hall of the Praetorium, which Jesus' two friends enter without so many stupid horrors and fears of contamination, and I go back to Calvary, joining Gamaliel, who by now exhausted, is climbing the last few metres. He is proceeding striking his breast, and when he arrives at the first of the two open spaces, he throws himself on the ground, face downwards, a long white form on the yellowish ground, and he says moaning: « The sign! The sign! Tell me that You forgive me! A whisper, even only a whisper, to tell me that You hear me and forgive me. »

I understand that he thinks that Jesus is still alive. And he changes his mind only when a soldier, pushing him with his lance, says: « Get up and be silent. It's of no use! You should have thought of that previously. He is dead. And I, a heathen, am telling you: this Man, Whom you have crucified, was really the Son of God! »

« Dead? Are You dead? Oh!… » Gamaliel raises his terrorised face, he tries to see as far up as the top, in the twilight. He cannot see much, but he can see enough to realise that Jesus is dead. And he sees the compassionate group that is consoling Mary, and John standing on the left side of the cross and weeping, and Longinus, standing straight on the right side, solemn in his respectful posture.

He kneels down, stretches his arms out and weeping says: « It was You! It was You! We can no longer be forgiven. We have asked Your Blood upon us. And It cries to Heaven, and Heaven curses us… Oh! But You were Mercy!… I say to You, I, the destroyed rabbi of Judah: "Your Blood on us, for pity's sake". Sprinkle us with It! Because only Your Blood can impetrate forgiveness for us… » and he weeps. And then, in a lower voice, he confesses his torture: « I have the requested sign… But ages and ages of spiritual blindness are upon my interior sight, and against my present will rises the voice of my proud thought of the past… Have mercy on me! Light of the world, let one of Your rays descend on the darkness that did not understand You! I am the old Judaean faithful to what I thought was justice, and it was error. I am now a barren land, no longer with any of the ancient trees of the ancient Faith, without any seed or stalk of the new Faith. I am an arid desert. Work the miracle of making a flower, that has Your name, spring up in this poor heart of an old obstinate Israelite. Since You are the Liberator, come into my poor thought, which is a prisoner of formulas. Isaiah says so: "… He paid for sinners and took upon Himself the sins of many". Oh! also mine, Jesus Nazarene… »

He stands up. He looks at the cross which is becoming neater and neater in the light that is clearing up, and then he goes away, stooping, aged, destroyed.

And on Calvary there is once again silence, just broken by Mary's weeping. The two robbers, worn out by fear, no longer speak.

Nicodemus and Joseph arrive back running and they say that they have Pilate's permission. But Longinus, who is not too trustful, sends a horse-soldier to the Proconsul to learn what he has to do also with regard to the two robbers. The soldier goes and come back at a gallop with the order to hand over Jesus and break the legs of the other two, by will of the Jews.

Longinus calls the four executioners, who are cravenly crouched under the rock, still terrorised by what has happened, and orders them to give the robbers the death-blow with a club. Which takes place without any protest by Disma, to whom the blow of the club, delivered to his heart, after striking his knees, breaks in half, on his lips, the name of Jesus, in a death-rattle. The other robber utters horrible curses. Their death-rattles are lugubrious.

The four executioners would also like to take care of Jesus, taking Him down from the cross. But Joseph and Nicodemus do not allow them. Also Joseph takes off his mantle and tells John to do likewise and to hold the ladders, while they climb them with levers and tongs.

Mary stands up trembling, supported by the women, and She approaches the cross.

In the meantime the soldiers, having fulfilled their task, go away. And Longinus, before descending beyond the lower open space, turns round from the height of his black horse to look at Mary and at the Crucified. Then the noise of the hooves resounds on the stones and that of the weapons against the armour, and fades away in the distance.

The left palm is unnailed. The arm falls along the Body, which is now hanging semi-detached.

They tell John to climb up as well, leaving the ladders to the women. And John, after climbing up where Nicodemus was previously, passes Jesus' arm round his neck and holds it so, hanging completely on his shoulder, embraced at the waist by his arm and held by the tips of the fingers not to touch the horrible gash of the left hand, which is almost open. When the feet are unnailed, John has to make a great effort to hold and support the Body of his Master between the cross and his own body.

Mary has already placed Herself at the foot of the cross, sitting with Her back against it, ready to receive Her Jesus in Her lap.

But the unnailing of the right arm is the most difficult operation. Despite all John's efforts, the Body is hanging completely forward and the head of the nail is deeply sunk in the flesh. And as they do not want to make the wound worse, the two compassionate men work hard. At last the nail is seized with the tongs and pulled out gently.

John has been holding Jesus all the time by the armpits, with His head hanging on his shoulder, while Nicodemus and Joseph get hold of Him, one at the thighs, the other at the knees, and they cautiously come down the ladders.

When on the ground, they would like to lay Him on the sheet that they have spread on their mantles. But Mary wants Him. She has opened Her mantle, letting it hang on one side, and She is sitting with Her knees rather apart to form a cradle for Her Jesus.

While the disciples are turning round to give Her Son to Her, the crowned head falls back and the arms hang down towards the ground, and the wounded hands would rub on the soil, if the pity of the pious women did not hold them up to prevent that.

He is now in His Mother's lap… And He looks like a big tired child who is asleep all cuddled up in his mother's lap. Mary is holding Him with Her right arm round the shoulders of Her Son and Her left one stretched over the abdomen to support Him also by the hips.

Jesus' head is resting on His Mother's shoulder. And She calls Him… She calls Him in a heart-rending voice. She then detaches Him from Her shoulder and caresses Him with Her left hand, She takes and stretches out His hands and, before folding them on His dead body, She kisses them and weeps on their wounds. Then She caresses His cheeks, particularly where they are bruised and swollen, She kisses His sunken eyes, His mouth lightly twisted to the right and half-open.

She would like to tidy His hair, as She has tidied His beard encrusted with blood. But in doing so, She touches the thorns. She stings Herself trying to remove that crown, and She wants to do it by Herself, with the only hand which is free, and She rejects everybody saying: « No, no! I will! I will! » and She seems to be holding the tender head of a new-born baby with Her fingers, so delicately does She do it. And when She succeeds in removing the torturing crown, She bends to cure all the scratches of the thorns with Her kisses.

With a trembling hand She parts His ruffled hair, She tidies it and weeps, speaking in a low voice, and with Her fingers She wipes ,,he tears that drop on the cold body covered with blood and She thinks of cleaning it with Her tears and Her veil, which is still round Jesus' loins. And She pulls one end of it towards Herself and She begins to clean and dry the holy limbs with it. And She continually caresses His face, then His hands and His bruised knees and then reverts to drying His Body, on which endless tears are dropping.

And while doing so Her hand touches the gash on His chest. Her little hand, covered with the linen veil, enters almost completely into the large hole of the wound. Mary bends to see in the dim light which has formed, and She sees. She sees the chest torn open and the heart of Her Son. She utters a cry then. A sword seems to be

splitting Her heart. She shouts and then throws Herself on Her Son and She seems dead, too.

They succour and console Her. They want to take Her divine Dead Son away from Her and as She shouts: « Where, where shall I put You? In which place, safe and worthy of You? » Joseph, all bent in a respectful bow, his open hand pressed against his chest, says: « Take courage, o Woman! My sepulchre is new and worthy of a great man. I give it to Him. And my friend here, Nicodemus, has already taken the spices to the sepulchre, as he wishes to offer them. But I beg You, as it is getting dark, let us proceed… It is Preparation Day. Be good, o holy Woman! »

Also John and the women beg Her likewise and Mary allows Her Son to be removed from Her lap, and She stands up, distressed, while they envelop Him in a sheet, begging: « Oh! do it gently! »

Nicodemus and John at the shoulders, Joseph at the feet, they lift the Corpse enveloped not only in the sheet, but resting also on the mantles which act as a stretcher, and they set out down the road.

Mary, supported by Her sister-in-law and by the Magdalene, goes down towards the sepulchre, followed by Martha, Mary of Zebedee and Susanna, who have picked up the nails, the tongs, the crown, the sponge and the cane.

On Calvary remain the three crosses, the central one of which is bare and the other two have their living trophies, who are dying.

« And now » says Jesus « pay attention. I spare you the description of the burial, which was well described last year: on 19th February 1944. So you will use that one, and P.M. at the end of it will put Mary's lamentation, which I gave on 4th October 1944. Then you will put the new visions you see. They are new parts of the Passion and are to be put very carefully in their places to avoid confusion and lacunae. »

606. The Burial of Jesus and the Spiritual Distress of Mary.

19th February 1944.

It is useless to say what I feel. It would only be a description of my suffering, and therefore with no value as compared with the suffering that I see. So I will describe it, without any comment on myself.

I am present at Our Lord's burial.

The little procession, after descending Calvary, at the foot of it finds the sepulchre of Joseph of Arimathea, hewn out of the limestone of the mountain. The compassionate disciples enter it with Jesus' Body.

I see the sepulchre made as follows. It is a room dug in the stone, at the end of a vegetable garden all in blossom. It looks like a grotto,

but it is evident that it has been dug by man. There is the burial room proper with its loculi (they are different from those of the catacombs). These are like round cavities, that penetrate into the stone, like the cells of a beehive, to give an idea. At present they are all empty. The empty opening of each loculus looks like a black spot on the grey stone. Before this room there is a kind of anteroom, in the middle of which there is a slab of stone for anointing. Jesus is placed on it, enveloped in His sheet.

Also John and Mary go in. But nobody else, because the preparatory room is small, and if more people were in it, they would not be able to move. The other women are near the door, that is near the opening, because there is not a proper door.

The two bearers uncover Jesus.

While they prepare the bandages and spices on a sort of shelf in a corner, in the light of two torches, Mary bends over Her Son weeping. And once again She wipes Him with Her veil, which is still round Jesus' loins. It is the only washing that Jesus' Body has, this one with His Mother's tears, and if they are copious and abundant, they serve to remove the dust, sweat and blood of that tortured Body only superficially and partly.

Mary never tires of caressing those frozen limbs. With even greater delicacy than if She were touching those of a new-born baby, She takes the poor tortured hands, She clasps them in Her own, She kisses the fingers and stretches them, She tries to connect the gaping wounds, as if She wished to doctor them, so that they may not ache so much and She presses those hands, which can no longer caress, against Her cheeks, and moans and moans in Her dreadful grief. She straightens and joins the poor feet, which are so limp, as if they were deadly tired of walking so far on our behalf. But they have been displaced too much on the cross, and the left one in particular is almost flat, as if it had no ankle.

She then reverts to the body and caresses it, so cold and already stiff, and when once again She sees the gash of the lance, which is now wide open like a mouth, as Jesus is lying on His back on the stone slab, and so the cavity of the thorax can be seen more clearly - the point of the heart can be seen distinctly between the breastbone and the left costal arch, and about two centimetres above it there is the cut made by the point of the lance in the pericardium and in the heart, a cut about a good centimetre and a half long, whereas the external one on the right side is at least seven centimetres long - Mary utters a cry again as on Calvary. A lance seems to be piercing Her, so much She writhes in Her pain, pressing Her hands on Her heart, pierced like Jesus'. How many kisses on that wound, poor Mother!

She then attends to Jesus' head again and straightens it, because it is lightly bent back and much to the right. She tries to close His

eyelids, which persist in remaining half-open, and His mouth, which has remained open, contracted and a little twisted to the right. She tidies His hair, which only yesterday was beautiful and tidy, and now has become a tangle heavy with blood. She disentangles the longer locks, She smoothes them on Her fingers and curls them to give them back the form of the lovely hair of Her Jesus, so soft and curly. And She moans and moans, because She remembers when He was a little boy… It is the fundamental reason for Her grief: the recollection of Jesus' childhood, of Her love for Him, of Her carefulness, which was afraid also of the most wholesome air for Her little divine Child, and the comparison with what men have now done to Him.

Her lamentation makes me suffer. And when moaning She says: « What have they done to You, Son? », not being able to Put up with seeing Him thus, naked, rigid, on a stone, She takes Him in Her arms, passing Her arm under His shoulders and pressing Him to Her heart with the other hand and lulling Him, moving exactly as in the grotto of the Nativity, Her gesture makes me weep and suffer, as if a hand rummaged in my heart.

4th October 1944.

The terrible spiritual distress of Mary.

The Mother is standing near the anointing stone caressing, contemplating, moaning, weeping. The flickering light of the torches illuminates Her face now and again, and I see large tear drops stream down the cheeks of Her ravaged face. And I can hear Her words. Every one of them. All of them, very clearly, although whispered between Her lips, a real conversation of a mother's soul with the soul of Her Son. I am told to write them.

« Poor Son! How many wounds!… How much You have suffered! Look what they have done to You!… How cold You are, Son! Your fingers are ice-cold. And how motionless they are! They seem to be broken. Never, not even in the sound sleep of a child, or in the heavy sleep after working as an artisan, were they so inert… And how cold they are! Poor hands! My darling, My love, My holy love, give them to Your Mother! Look how lacerated they are! John, look what a gash! Oh! cruel men! Here, give Me this wounded hand of Yours. That I may dress it. Oh! I will not hurt You… I will use kisses and tears, and I will warm it with My breath and My love.

Caress Me, Son! You are ice-cold, I am burning with fever. My fever will be relieved by Your ice, and Your ice will be mitigated by My fever. A caress, Son! Only a few hours have gone by since You last caressed Me, and they seem ages to Me. For months I was without Your caresses, and they seemed hours to Me, because I was always waiting for You to come back, and I considered each day an hour, and each hour a minute, to say to Myself that You had not

been away for one or more months, but only for a few days, for a few hours. Why is time so long now? Ah! inhuman torture! Because you are dead.

They have killed You! You are no longer on the Earth! No longer! Wherever I send My soul to look for Yours and embrace it, because finding You, having You, feeling You was the life of My body and of My spirit, wherever I look for You with the wave of My love, I no longer find you, I do not find You any more. Nothing of You is left to Me but these cold soulless remains!

O soul of My Jesus, o soul of My Christ, o soul of My Lord, where are You? O cruel hyenas joined to Satan, why have you taken away the soul of My Son? And why have you not crucified Me with Him? Were you afraid of committing a second crime? (Her voice is becoming stronger and stronger and more and more heart-rending). And what was it for you killing a poor woman, since you did not hesitate to kill God Incarnate? Have you not committed a second crime? And is letting a mother outlive her murdered son not the most nefarious crime? »

The Mother, Who with Her voice had raised also Her head, now bends again over the lifeless face and speaks in a low voice, to Him alone: « At least we would have been together in here, in the tomb, as we would have been together in the agony on the cross, and together in the journey beyond life and towards the Life. But if I cannot follow You in the journey beyond life, I can remain here waiting for You. »

She straightens Herself up again and says to those present in a loud voice: « Go away, all of you. I will stay. Close Me in here with Him. I will wait for Him. What are you saying? That it is not possible? Why is it not possible'? If I had died, would I not be here, lying beside Him, waiting to be put in order? I will be beside Him, but on My knees. I was there when He, a delicate rosy baby, cried on a December night. I will be here now, on this night of the world, that no longer has the Christ. Oh! true night' The Light is no longer!… O ice-cold night! The Love is dead' What are you saying, Nicodemus? Shall I be contaminated? His Blood is not contamination. I was not contaminated even when I gave birth to Him. Ah! How you came out, You, Flower of My womb, without tearing any fibre, just like a flower of scented narcissus, that blooms from the soul of the matrix bulb and yields a flower even if the embrace of the earth has not been on the matrix. A virginal blooming that can be compared with You Son, Who came through a heavenly embrace and were born in the Diffusion of heavenly splendour. »

Now the heart-broken Mother bends once again over Her Son, estranged to everything that is not He, and She whispers slowly: « But do You remember, Son, that sublime show of brightness that filled everything when Your smile was born in the world? Do You remember

that beatific light that the Father sent from Heaven to envelop the mystery of Your flowering and to make You find this dark world less repellent, since You were the Light and You were corning from the Light of the Father and of the Paraclete Spirit? And now?… Now darkness and cold… How cold! I am shivering all over. More than that December night. Then there was the joy of having You to warm My heart. And You had two people loving You… Now… Now I am alone and I am dying, too. But I will love You for two: for those who have loved You so little that they abandoned You at the moment of sorrow; I will love You for those who have hated You, I will love You for the whole world, Son. You will not feel the chill of the world. No, You will not feel it. You did not tear My viscera to be born, but I am ready to tear them and enclose You in the embrace of My womb in order not to make You feel cold. Do you remember how My womb loved You, little throbbing embryo?… It is still the same womb. Oh! it is My right and My duty as a Mother. It is My wish. There is no one but the Mother Who can have it, Who can have a love as big as the universe for Her Son. »

Her voice has been rising, and now, with all its strength She says: « Go. I will stay. You will come back in three days' time and we will go out together. Oh! to see the world again leaning on Your arm, Son! How beautiful the world will be in the light of Your risen smile! The world thrilling in its Lord's steps! The Earth trembled when death extirpated Your soul and Your spirit departed from Your heart. But now it will tremble… oh! no longer with horror and spasm, but with a gentle throb, unknown to Me, but apprehended by My feminine insight that thrills a virgin when, after an absence, she hears the step of her bridegroom coming for the wedding. Even more: the Earth will tremble with a holy throb, as I was shaken in the deepest depth when I had the Lord One and Trine in Me, and the will of the Father with the fire of the Love created the seed from which You came, of holy Baby, My Son, all Mine! All of Your Mother! of Your Mother!… »

Every child has a father and mother. Also an illegitimate boy has a father and a mother. But You had only Your Mother to make Your flesh of rose and lily, to make these embroidered veins, as blue as our streams in Galilee, and these lips of pomegranate, and this hair more graceful than the blond fleece of the goats of our hills, and these eyes: two little lakes of Paradise. No, more than that, they are of the water that comes from the Unique and Quadruple River of the Place of Delight, and carries with it, in its four branches, gold, onyx, beryl and ivory, and diamonds, and palms, and honey, and roses, and infinite riches, o Pishon, Gihon, Tigris, Euphrates: way for the angels exulting in God, way for the kings adoring You known or unknown Essence, but Living and Present even in the most obscure heart! Only Your Mother did that for You, by means

of Her "yes"… I formed You with music and love, I made You with purity and obedience, My Joy!

What is Your Heart? The flame of Mine, that split to condense in a crown around the kiss given by God to His Virgin. That is what your Heart is. Ah! (The shout is so heart-rending that the Magdalene hastens to succour Her with John. The other women dare not Move and weeping and veiled, look stealthily from the opening). Ah! they have broken it! That is why You are so cold, and I am so cold! There is no longer inside You the flame of My heart, and I can no longer continue to live through the reflection of that flame, which was Mine and which I gave You to make Your heart. Here, here, here, on My breast! Before death kills Me, I want to warm You up, I want to lull You. I used to sing to You: "There is no home, there is no food, there is nothing but sorrow". O prophetic words! Sorrow, sorrow, sorrow for You, for Me! I used to sing to You: "Sleep, sleep on My heart". Also now: here, here, here… , And sitting on the edge of the stone, She takes Him in Her lap, passing one arm of Her Son round Her shoulders, resting His head on Her shoulder, and bending Her head on His, holding Him close to Her breast, lulling and kissing Him, heart-broken and heart-rending.

Nicodemus and Joseph approach Her, laying vases and bandages, and the clean Shroud, and a basin of water, I think, and what seem lint wads, on a kind of seat, which is on the other side of the stone.

Mary notices it and asks in a loud voice: « What are you doing? What do you want? To prepare Him? For what? Leave Him in the lap of His Mother. If I succeed in warming Him up, He will rise sooner. If I succeed in consoling the Father and in comforting Him for the deicide hatred, the Father will forgive sooner, and He will come back sooner. » The Sorrowful Mother is almost raving.

« I will not give Him to you! I gave Him once, I gave Him once to the world, and the world did not want Him. It killed Him, because it did not want Him. Now I am not giving Him any more! What are you saying? That you love Him? Of course! Then, why did you not defend Him? You have waited, to say that you loved Him, until He could no longer hear you. What a poor love yours is! But if you were so afraid of the world that you did not dare to defend an innocent, you should at least have handed Him back to Me, to His Mother, so that She might defend Her Son. She knew who He was and what He deserved. You!… You have had Him as your Master, but you have learned nothing. Is that not true? Am I perhaps telling lies? But do you not see that you do not believe in His Resurrection? You believe in it? No. Why are you standing there, preparing bandages and spices? Because you consider Him a poor dead man, cold today, putrified tomorrow, and that is why you want to embalm Him.

'Leave your pomades. Come and worship the Saviour with the pure hearts of the shepherds of Bethlehem. Look: in His sleep He is only one who is tired and is resting. How much He worked in His lifetime! He has worked more and more, not to mention these last hours!… Now He is resting. As far as I, His Mother, am concerned, He is nothing but a big Boy who is tired and is sleeping. His bed and room are really miserable! But neither was His first pallet more beautiful, nor was His first dwelling place more cheerful. The shepherds worshipped the Saviour in His sleep as an Infant. Worship the Saviour in His sleep as Triumpher of Satan. Then, like the shepherds, go and say to the world: "Glory to God! Sin is dead! Satan is defeated! Peace be on the Earth and in Heaven between God and man!" Prepare the ways for His return. I am sending you. I, Whom Maternity makes the Priestess of the rite. Go. I said that I do not want it. I have washed Him with My tears. And it is enough. The rest is not necessary. And do not think that you will put it on Him. It will be easier for Him to rise if He is free from those funereal useless bandages.

Why are you looking at Me so, Joseph? And you, Nicodemus? Has the horror of this day made you dull-witted or absent-minded? Do you not remember? "This evil and adulterous generation, which asks for a sign, will be given no other sign but that of Jonah… So the Son of man will be for three days and three nights in the heart of the Earth". Do you not remember? "The Son of man is going to be handed over to the power of men, who will kill Him, but on the third day He will be raised again". Do you not remember? "Destroy this Temple of the true God and in three days I will rebuild it". O men, the Temple was His Body. Are you shaking your heads? Are you pitying Me? Do you think that I am insane? What? He raised the dead and will He not be able to raise Himself? John? »

« Mother! »

« Yes, call Me "mother". I cannot live thinking that I shall not be called so! John, you were present when He raised the young daughter of Jairus and the young man of Nain from the dead. They were really dead, were they not? It was not just a heavy sleep? Tell Me. »

« They were dead. The girl had been dead two hours, the young man a day and a half. »

« And did they rise at His order? »

« The rose at His order. »

« Have you heard that? You two, have you heard? But why are you shaking your heads? Ah! perhaps you mean that life comes back quicker in those who are innocent and young. But My Child is the Innocent! And He is the Always Young One. He is God, My Son! … » With tormented feverish eyes Mary looks at the two preparers, who, depressed but inflexible, are laying the rolls of bandages already soaked in the spices.

Mary takes two steps. She has laid Her Son down again on the stone with the delicacy of one who lays a new-born baby in a cradle. She takes two steps, She bends at the foot of the funereal bed, where the Magdalene is weeping on her knees, She gets hold of her shoulder, shakes her and calls her: « Mary. Tell Me. These people think that Jesus cannot rise from the dead, because He is a man and He died of wounds. But is you brother not older than He is? »

« Yes, he is. »

« Was he not one big sore? »

« Yes, he was. »

« Was he not already putrid before descending into his sepulchre? »

« Yes, he was. »

« And did he not rise from the dead after four days of asphyxia and putrefaction? »

« Yes, he did. »

« So? »

There is a long grave silence. Then an inhuman howl. Mary staggers, pressing a hand against Her breast. They support Her. She repels them. She seems to repel the compassionate people. In actual fact She repels what She alone can see. And She shouts: « Back! Back, you cruel one! Not this revenge! Be silent! I do not want to hear you! Be silent! Ah! he is biting at My heart! »

« Who, Mother? »

« O John! It is Satan! Satan who is saying: "He will not rise. No prophet said that". O Most High God! Help Me all of you, good spirits, and you compassionate men! My reason is wavering! I do not remember anything any more. What do the prophets say? What does the Psalm say? Oh! who will repeat to Me the passages that speak of My Jesus? »

It is the Magdalene who in her melodious voice recites David's psalm on the Passion of the Messiah.

Mary weeps more bitterly, supported by John, and Her tears fall on Her dead Son, wetting Him completely. Mary notices that and wipes Him saying in a low voice: « So many tears. And when You were so thirsty I could not give You even one drop. And now… I am wetting You completely! You look like a shrub under heavy dew. Here, Your Mother will dry You now, Son! You have tasted so much bitterness! Do not let also the bitterness and the salt of Your Mother's tears fall on Your wounded lips!… »

Then in a loud voice She calls: « Mary. David does not say… Do You know Isaiah? Repeat his words… »

The Magdalene repeats the passage on the Passion and she ends saying with a sob: « … He surrendered His life to death and was taken for a sinner, He Who took away the sins of the world and prayed for sinners. »

« Oh! Be silent! Death no! Not delivered to death! No! No! Oh! your

lack of faith, forming an alliance with Satan's temptation, maker, My heart doubt! And should I not believe You, Son? Should I not believe Your holy Word?! Oh! tell My soul! Speak. From the far away shores, where You have gone to free those awaiting Your coming, cast the voice of Your soul to My anxious soul, to Mine which is here, all open to receive Your voice. Tell Your Mother that You are coming back! Say: "On the third day I will rise from the dead". I implore You, Son and God! Help Me to protect My Faith. Satan is crushing it in his coils to strangle it. Satan has removed his mouth of a snake from the flesh of man, because You have torn that prey away from him, and now with his hooked poisonous teeth he is piercing the flesh of My heart paralysing its throbs, its strength and warmth. God! God! God! Do not allow Me to be distrustful! Do not allow doubt to freeze Me! Do not let Satan be free to lead Me to despair! Son! Son! Put Your hand on My heart. It will drive Satan away. Lay it on My head. It will bring the Light back to it. Sanctify My lips with a caress, so that they may be fortified to say: "I believe" even against a whole world that does not believe. Oh! how grievous it is not to believe! Father! Those who do not believe are to be forgiven much. Because, when one no longer believes… when one no longer believes… all horror becomes easy. I tell You… I, Who am experiencing this torture. Father, have mercy on the faithless! Holy Father, for the sake of this Victim Which has been consumed, and of Me, a victim which is still consuming, give them, give the faithless Your faith! »

A long silence.

Nicodemus and Joseph beckon to John and the Magdalene. « Come, Mother. » It is the Magdalene who says so, trying to take Mary away from Her Son and to separate Jesus' fingers which are interlaced with Mary's, Who is kissing them weeping.

The Mother straightens Herself up. She is impressive. For the last time She stretches out the poor bloodless fingers and lays the inert hand along the side of the body. Then She lowers Her arms towards the ground, and standing upright, Her head bent lightly back, She prays and offers. Not a word is heard. But from Her whole appearance it is clear that She is praying. She is really the Priestess at the altar, the Priestess at the moment of the offertory. « Offerimus praeclarae majestati tuae de tuis donis, ac datis, hostiam puram, hostiam sanctam, hostiam immaculatam… »

Then She turns round and says: « You may continue. But He will rise from the dead. In vain you mistrust My reason and are blind to the truth He spoke to you. In vain Satan tries to lay snares to My faith. To redeem the world also the torture given to My heart by Satan defeated is required. I suffer it and I offer it for future men. Goodbye, Son! Goodbye, My Child! Goodbye, My little Boy! Goodbye… Goodbye.. Holy… Good… Beloved and lovable… Beauty…

Joy Source of health… Goodbye On Your eyes on Your lips on Your golden hair on Your frozen limbs on Your pierced heart oh! on Your pierced heart My kiss My kiss My kiss Goodbye Goodbye Lord! Have mercy on Me! »

[19th February 1944].

The two preparers have finished preparing the bandages.

They come to the table and they denude Jesus also of His veil. They pass a sponge, I think, or a linen cloth, on the body in a very rapid preparation of the limbs dripping from countless parts. Then they spray ointments on all the Body. In fact they bury it under a layer of pomade. First they lift it up, cleaning also the stone slab, on which they lay the Shroud, more than half of which hangs from the head of the bed. They lay Him down again, on His chest, and spread the ointments on all His back, thighs and legs, on all the posterior part. Then they turn Him round delicately, watching that the pomade of spices is not removed, and they spread also the front, first the trunk, then the limbs. First the feet, then the hands, which they join on the lower belly.

The mixture of spices must be as sticky as gum, because I see that His hands remain in place, whereas before they always slid because of their weight of dead limbs. His feet do not slide. They remain in position: one is more straight, the other more stretched.

His head is the last. After spreading it diligently, so that its features disappear under the layer of ointment, they tie it with a chin-bandage to keep the mouth closed. Mary moans more loudly.

Then they lift the hanging side of the Shroud and fold it on Jesus. He disappears under the thick cloth of the Shroud. It is nothing but a form covered with a cloth.

Joseph ensures that everything is in order and on the Face he lays another linen sudarium and other cloths of the kind, similar to wide rectangular strips, that pass from right to left, above the Body, making the Shroud adhere to the Body. It is not the typical dressing as seen in mummies and also in Lazarus' resurrection. It is a rudimentary dressing.

Jesus is now annulled. Even His shape is confused under the linens. It looks like a long heap of cloths, narrower at the ends and wider at the centre, laid on the grey stone. Mary weeps louder.

[4th October 1944]

Jesus says:

« And the torture continued with periodic attacks until dawn on Sunday. In My Passion I had only one temptation. But the Mother, the Woman, expiated on behalf of woman, guilty, several times, of every evil. And Satan behaved mercilessly with infinite cruelty towards the conqueress.

Mary had defeated him. The most atrocious temptation for Mary. Temptation against the flesh of the Mother. Temptation against the heart of the Mother. Temptation against the spirit of the Mother. The world thinks that Redemption ended with My last breath. No, it did not. The Mother completed it by adding Her treble torture to redeem the treble concupiscence, struggling for three days against Satan, who wanted to induce Her to deny My word and not to believe in My Resurrection. Mary was the only one who continued to believe. She is great and blessed also because of that faith.

You have become acquainted also with that. A torture corresponding to My torture at Gethsemane. The world will not understand this page. But "those who are in the world without being of the world" will understand it and they will have an increased love for the Sorrowful Mother. That is why I gave it. Go in peace with our blessing. »

607. The Return to the Supper Room.

28th March 1945.

Joseph of Arimathea puts out one of the torches, he has a last look round and goes to the opening of the sepulchre, holding up high the remaining torch still lit.

Mary bends once again to kiss Her Son through His wrappings. And She would like to do so controlling Her grief, to contain it in a form of respect for the Corpse, which, being already embalmed, no longer belongs to Her. But when She is close to the veiled face, She is unable to control Herself and relapses into a new crisis of affliction.

They lift Her with difficulty and with greater difficulty they take Her away from the funereal bed. They rearrange the cloths that had been upset, and carrying Her rather than supporting Her, they take away the poor Mother, Who goes off looking back to see Her Jesus, Who is left alone in the dark sepulchre.

They go into the silent vegetable garden in the evening light. The faint light, that had cleared after the tragedy on Golgotha, is already growing darker, as night is falling. And in there, under the thick branches, although still bare of leaves and just adorned with the white-pink buds of the blossoming apple-trees, strangely late in this orchard of Joseph, whereas elsewhere they are already all covered with open blossoms showing their tiny fruit, it is darker than in any other place.

They roll the heavy sepulchral stone into its lodging. Some long branches of a ruffled rose-bush hanging from the top of the grotto towards the ground seem to be knocking at the stone door saying: « Why are you closing before a weeping mother? » And they also seem to be weeping drops of blood, as they shed their red petals and their

corollas lie along the dark stone, and the closed buds knock against the inexorable door.

But soon more blood stains that sepulchral door and more tears wet it. Mary, Who so far has been supported by John and has been sobbing rather quietly, frees Herself from the apostle and with a cry, which I think makes the very fibres of the plants quiver, throws Herself against the entrance, She gets hold of the protruding stone to shift it, She skins Her fingers and breaks Her nails without being successful and prizes the rough stone even with Her head. And Her cry sounds like the roar of a lioness that wounds herself struggling near the trap in which her little ones are closed, being compassionate and wild out of motherly love.

There is nothing left in Her of the meek virgin of Nazareth, of the patient woman, known so far. She is the mother. Only and simply a mother, attached to her child with all the fibres and nerves of her body and of her love. She is the most true « mistress » of that body, to which She has given birth, the only mistress after God, and She does not want to be robbed of Her property. She is the « queen » who is defending Her crown: Her Son.

All the rebellion and rebellious acts that in thirty-three years any other woman would have had against the injustice of the world for her son, all the holy and lawful fierceness that any other mother would have felt during those last hours to wound and kill the murderers of her son with her own hands and teeth, all such feelings, which out of Her love for mankind She has always subdued, now stir in Her heart, they boil in Her blood and, meek as She is even in Her grief that makes Her rave, She does not curse, She does not rebel. She only asks the stone to move aside, to let Her go in, because Her place is in there, where He is. She only asks men, who are pitiless in their pity, to obey Her and to open the sepulchre.

After striking and staining the unrelenting stone with the blood of Her lips and hands, She turns round, She leans against it with Her arms stretched out, gripping the two edges of the stone once again, and solemn in Her majesty of Our Lady of Sorrows, She orders: « Open it! Do you not want to? Well, I am staying here. Not inside? Well, here, outside. Here is My bread and My bed. Here is My abode. I have no other home, no other purpose. You may go. Go back to the world which is disgusting. I am staying where there is no avidity or smell of blood. »

« You cannot, Woman! »

« You cannot, Mother! »

« You cannot, Mary, my dear! »

And they try to detach Her hands from the stone, while they are frightened of those eyes, which they have never seen before flash in such a way that makes them look hard and irresistible, glassy, phosphorescent.

The meek are not overbearing, and the humble do not persist in pride… And Mary's vehement will and imperious command soon vanish. Her eyes become meek again, like those of a tortured dove, Her gestures are no longer imposing and She lowers Her head in a beseeching attitude, and joining Her hands She begs them: « Oh! Do leave Me! For the sake of your dead relatives, for the sake of the living ones whom you love, have mercy on a poor mother!… Feel… Feel My heart. It needs peace to stop throbbing so fiercely. It began throbbing thus up there, on Calvary. The hammer went bang, bang, bang… and each blow wounded My Child… and each blow resounded in My brain and in My heart… and My head is full of those blows, and My heart is beating fast, as those blows did on the hands and feet of My Jesus, of My little Jesus… My Child! My Child!… »

She is overwhelmed again by Her torture, which seemed to have been appeased after Her prayer to the Father near the anointing table. They are all weeping.

« I need not to hear shouts or bangs. And the world is full of voices and noises. Every voice sounds to Me like the "great cry" that curdled the blood in My veins, and every noise sounds like that of the hammer striking the nails. I need not to see men's faces. And the world is full of faces… For almost twelve hours I have been seeing faces of killers… Judas… the executioners… the priests… the Judaeans… They are all killers, all of them!… Go away! Go away… I do not want to see anybody any more… In every man there is a wolf and a snake. Man disgusts and frightens Me… Leave Me here, under these quiet trees, on this flowery grass… Before long the stars will begin to shine… They have always been His friends and Mine… Yesterday evening they kept us company in our lonely agony… They know so many things… They come from God.. - Oh! God! God!… » She weeps and kneels down. « Peace, My God! I am left with nothing but You! »

« Come, my daughter. God will give You peace. But come. Tomorrow is the Passover Sabbath. We shall not be able to come and bring You food… »

« Nothing! Nothing! I do not want any food! I want My Child! I will appease My hunger with My grief, I will quench My thirst with My tears… Here… Can you hear how that horned howl is weeping? It is weeping with Me, and before long nightingales will be weeping. And tomorrow, in the sunshine, wood-larks and blackcaps and all the birds He loved will weep, and doves will come with Me to knock at this stone and say: "Rise, my love, and come! Love, Who are in the large fissure of the rock, in the hiding-place of the ravine, let me see Your face, let me hear Your voice". Ah! What am I saying! They also, the wicked killers, have called Him with the word of the Canticle! Yes, come, daughters of Jerusalem, to see your King with

the diadem with which His Fatherland crowned Him on the day of His wedding with Death, on the day of His triumph as Redeemer! »

« Look, Mary! The guards of the Temple are coming. Let us go away, so that they may not scorn You. »

« The guards? Scorn? No. They are cowardly. Yes, cowardly. And if I, dreadful in My grief, should march against them, they would flee like Satan before God. But I remember that I am Mary… and I will not strike as I would be entitled to. I will be good… and they will not even see Me. And if they see Me and ask Me: "What do You want?", I will say to them: "The charity of being allowed to breathe the balmy air coming out from this fissure". I will say: "In the name of your mothers". Everybody has a mother… also the pitiful robber said so… »

« But these men are worse than robbers. They will insult You. »

« Oh!… And is there still an insult of which I am not aware, after today's? »

It is the Magdalene who finds a reason capable of bending the Sorrowful Mother to obedience. « You are good, You are holy, and You believe, and You are strong. But what are we?… You are aware of it! The majority have run away. Those who have remained are trembling. The doubt, which is already in us, would overwhelm us. You are the Mother. You have not only duties and rights on Your Son, but also duties and rights on what belongs to Your Son. You must come back with us, among us, to gather us together, to reassure us, to infuse Your faith into us. You said so, after Your just reproach for our timidity and misbelief: "It will be easier for Him to rise, if He is free from these useless bandages". I say to You: "If we succeed in being united in the faith in His Resurrection, He will rise earlier. We will evoke Him with our love… Mother, Mother of my Saviour, come back with us, since You are the love of God, to give us this love of Yours! Do You want poor Mary of Magdala to get lost again, after He saved her with so much pity? »

« No. I would be reproached for that. You are right. I must go back… and look for the apostles… the disciples… the relatives everybody… And say… say: have faith. Say: He forgives you Whom have I already told so?… Ah! The Iscariot… I will have to Yes, I will have to look also for him… because he is the biggest sinner… » Mary remains with Her head bent on Her breast, trembling as if She were disgusted, and then She says: « John, you will look for him. And you will bring him to Me. You must do that. And I must do that. Father, let also this be done for the redemption of Mankind. Let us go. »

She stands up. They leave the half-dark vegetable garden. The guards look at them go out without saying anything.

The road, dusty and thrown into a mess by the stream of people who went along it, striking it with their feet, with stones and

cudgels, runs round Calvary and arrives at the main road, Which is parallel to the walls. And the traces of what has happened are even clearer here. Twice Mary utters a cry and She Stoops to examine the ground in the feeble light, because She seems to see some blood and She thinks it is the blood of Her Jesus. But it is nothing but tatters of cloth torn off, I think, in the confusion of the flight. The little stream, that flows along the road, babbles softly in the deep silence which has fallen everywhere. The town seems to be forlorn, as nothing but silence comes from it.

They are now at the little bridge that leads to the steep Calvary road. And, in front of it, there is the Judicial Gate. Before disappearing in there, Mary turns round to look at the top of Calvary… and She weeps desolately. Then She says: « Let us go. But lead Me. I do not want to see Jerusalem, its streets, its inhabitants. »

« Yes, but let us be quick. They are about to close the Gates and, see?, their guards have been reinforced. Rome is afraid of turmoils. »

« Quite rightly. Jerusalem is a den of tigers! It is a tribe of killers! It is a rabble of robbers! And those usurpers aim with their rapacious fangs not only at property, but also at lives. For thirty-two years they have laid snares for the life of My Child… He was a little lamb of milk and roses, with golden curly hair… He could hardly say "Mummy", and take His first steps, and laugh with His few teeth between His lips of pale coral, when they came to slaughter Him… Now they say that He had blasphemed, and infringed the Sabbath, and incited people to revolt, and aimed at a throne, and sinned with women… But what had He done then? Which blasphemy could He have uttered, if He could hardly call his Mummy? What Law could He infringe, if He, the Eternal Innocent, then was also the little innocent child of man? What revolt could He stir, if He was not even able to be naughty? Which throne could He aim at? He had His throne both on the Earth and in Heaven, and He did not seek any other: in Heaven He had His Father's bosom, on the Earth My lap. He never cast a sensual glance, and you, young beautiful women, can confirm that. But then, but then… His senses were confined to the need of warmth and nourishment, He made love, yes, but to My tepid breast, to lay His little face on it and sleep so, and to My round nipple, from which My love flowed as milk… Oh! My Child!… And they wanted You dead! That is what they wanted to deprive You of: Your life! Your only treasure. They wanted to deprive the Mother of Her Son, and the Son of His Mother, to make us the most miserable and desolate people in the Universe. Why deprive the Living One of His life? Why unduly claim the right to remove this thing that is life: the gift of the flower and of the animal, the gift of man? My Jesus asked nothing of you. Neither money, nor jewels, nor houses. He had a house, a little holy one, and He left it out of love for you, you men-hyenas. For your sake

He had given up what even the young one of an animal has, and poor and alone He had gone through the world, without even the bed that the Just One had made for Him, without even the bread His Mother used to make for Him, and He had slept wherever He could and He had eaten as He was able. In the houses of kind people, like every son of man, or on the grass of meadows, watched over by the stars. Sitting at a table, or sharing the grains of corn or wild blackberries with the birds of God. And He did not ask you for anything. On the contrary, He gave you what He had. He only wanted to live, to give you the Life with His word. And all of you, and you, Jerusalem, have deprived Him of His life. Are you sated and fed with His Blood and His Flesh? Or are you not yet satisfied? And you, a hyena after being a vampire and a vulture, do you want to feed on His Corpse, and not yet satisfied with opprobrium and tortures, do you still want to be pitiless and take delight in disfiguring His remains and seeing once again His spasms, His sobs and convulsions in Me, the Mother of the Murdered One? Have we arrived? Why are you stopping? What does that man want of Joseph? What is he saying? »

Joseph, in fact, has been stopped by one of the rare passersby, and in the dead silence of the deserted town their words are heard very clearly.

« It is known that you have entered Pilate's house. You are a violator of the Law. You will answer for that. Passover is interdicted to you! You are contaminated. »

« And you, too, Helkai. You have touched me and I am all covered with the blood of Christ and with the sweat of His death! »

« Ha! horror! Away, away with that blood! »

« Be not afraid. It has already abandoned and cursed you. »

« And you as well, you cursed one. And now that you are flirting with Pilate, don't think that you can take the Corpse away. We have taken the necessary steps to ensure that the story comes to an end. »

Nicodemus has approached them slowly, while the women have stopped with John, leaning against a closed portal.

« We have seen that » replies Joseph. « Cowards! You are afraid even of a dead body! But of my vegetable garden and of my sepulchre I do what I like. »

« We shall see. »

« We shall see. I will appeal to Pilate. »

« Yes. Fornicate with Rome, now. »

Nicodemus moves forward: « Better with Rome than with the Demon, as you, deicides, do! In any case, tell me: how come you are plucking up courage again? A moment ago you were running away, a prey to terror. Are you recovering already? Is what you had not sufficient yet? Was your house not burnt down? Tremble! The Punishment is not over, on the contrary it is coming. Like the

Nemesis of the heathens it is impending over you. Neither guards or seals will prevent the Avenger from rising and striking. »

« Cursed! » Helkai runs away and goes and knocks against the women. He realises that and utters a dreadful insult against Mary.

John does not say one word. With the leap of a panther he clings to him and knocks him down and, pressing him with knees and holding his hands round his neck, he says to him: « Ask Her to forgive you or I will strangle you, you demon. » And he does not relax his hold until the other, pressed and half choked by John's hands, utters gaspingly: « Forgive me. »

But his cry has attracted the attention of the patrol. « Halt there! What's happening? Further seditions? Stand still, all of you, or you will be struck. Who are you? »

« Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, who have been authorised by the Proconsul to bury the Nazarene Who has been put to death, and we are coming back from the sepulchre with His Mother, a son and women relatives and friends. This man offended the Mother and has been compelled to ask Her forgiveness. »

« Only that? You should have cut his throat. You may go. Soldiers, arrest that man. What else do these vampires want? Also the hearts of mothers? Hail Judaeans! »

« How horrible! But they are no longer men… John, be good to them. Take into consideration the memory of Me and of My Jesus. He preached forgiveness. »

« Mother, You are right. But they are criminals and they make me lose my head. They are sacrilegious, they offend You and I cannot allow that. »

« Yes, they are criminals. And they know that they are. Look how few there are in the streets, and how those few slink away. After committing a crime, delinquents are afraid. It horrifies Me to see them flee thus, enter houses and barricade themselves there, out of fear. I feel that they are all guilty of the Deicide. Look over there, Mary, at that old man. He already has a foot in the grave and yet, now that he is illuminated by the light of that door that has opened, I think I saw him march past accusing My Jesus, up there, on Calvary… He called Him a robber… My Jesus a robber!… That young man, a little more than a boy, uttered obscene blasphemies, invoking His Blood upon himself… Oh! the wretch!… And that man? So brawny and strong, will he have refrained from striking Him? Oh! I do not want to see! Look: the faces of their souls are superimposed on the faces of their bodies and… and they no longer look like men, but like demons… So fearless they were against the Man Who had been tied and crucified… And now they run away, they hide themselves, they shut themselves up. They are afraid. Of whom? Of a dead body. He is nothing but a dead body, as far as they are concerned, because they deny that He is God. So, of what are they

afraid? Upon whom are they shutting their doors? Upon remorse. Upon punishment. It is of no avail. Remorse is within you. And it will follow you for ever. And the punishment is not a human one. And locks and sticks, doors and bars are of no use against it. It descends from Heaven, from God, the avenger of His sacrificed Son, and it penetrates through walls and doors, and with its heavenly flame it marks you for the supernatural punishment awaiting you. The world will come to the Christ, to the Son of God and Mine, it will come to Him Whom you have pierced, but you will be those marked for ever, the Cains of a God, marked as the dishonour of the human race. I, Who was born of you, I, Who am the Mother of everybody, must say that with regard to Me, your daughter, you have been more than step-fathers and that, in the immense number of My children, you are the ones who impose the greatest fatigue on Me in receiving you, because you are soiled with the crime against My Child. Neither do you repent saying: "You were the Messiah. We acknowledge and worship You". Here is another Roman patrol. Love is no longer on the Earth. There is no more Peace among men. And Hatred and War are agitated like those smoky torches. The rulers are afraid of the unrestrained crowd. By experience they know that, when that wild beast named man has tasted the flavour of blood, he becomes avid of slaughter… But be not afraid of these men. They are neither royal lions nor panthers. They are very cowardly hyenas. They rush upon defenceless lambs. But they are afraid of the lion armed with lances and authority. Do not fear these creeping jackals. The sound of your steps with hobnailed boots puts them to flight and your shining lances make them meeker than rabbits. 'Those lances! One of the them slit the heart of My Son! Which of them? Their sight pierces My heart… And yet I should like to have them all in My trembling hands, to see which is the one that still has traces of blood, and say: "It is this one! Give Me it, soldier! Give it to a mother in remembrance of your far away mother, and I will pray for her and for you". And no soldier would deny Me it. Because they, the men on the war-path, were the best during the agony of the Son and of the Mother. Oh! why did I not think of that up there? I was like one whose head had been struck. It was already stunned by those blows… Oh! those blows! Who will grant Me not to hear them any more, here, in My poor head? The lance… How much I would like to have it!… »

« We can look for it, Mother. The centurion seemed to be very kind to us. I do not think that he will deny us it. I will go tomorrow. »

« Yes, John. I am poor. I have only a little money. But I will deprive Myself of it, to the last farthing, to have that lance… Oh! why did I not ask for it then? »

« Mary, my dear, none of us were aware of that wound… When You saw it, the soldiers were far away. »

« That is true… Grief has made Me feeble-minded. And His clothes? I have nothing of what belonged to Him! I would give My blood to have them… » Mary weeps again desolately.

And She arrives thus in the street where is the Supper room. And it is time, because She is exhausted and She drags Herself along like an old decrepit woman. And She says so.

« Pluck up heart. We have arrived now. »

« Arrived? So short the road that this morning seemed so long? This morning? Was it this morning? Not before? How many hours and how many ages have gone by since I came here yesterday evening and since I left it this morning? Is it really I, the fifty-year-old Mother, or a very aged woman, a woman of many years ago, laden with years on My bent shoulders and on My white hair? I seem to have lived all the sorrow of the world, and that it is all on My shoulders, which bend under its weight. An incorporeal cross, but so heavy! Of stone. Perhaps even heavier than My Jesus'. Because I carry My cross and His with the remembrance of His torture and with the reality of My torment. Let us go in. Because we must go in. But it is no consolation. It is an increase of sorrow. My Son came in through this door for His last meal. And He went out through it to face death. And He had to put His foot where His traitor had put it, when he went out to call those who had to capture the Innocent. I saw Judas at that door… I saw Judas! And I did not curse him. But I spoke to him as a mother whose heart was torn apart. Tom apart because of the good Son and of the wicked one… I saw Judas! I saw the Demon in him! I, Who have always held Lucifer under My heel, and looking only at God I never lowered My eyes on Satan, I recognised his face looking at the Traitor, I spoke to the Demon… And he ran away, because he cannot bear My voice. Will he have left him now? So that I may speak to that dead body and I, the Mother, may conceive him again with the Blood of a God and bring him forth to Grace? John, swear to Me that you will look for him and that you will not be cruel to him. I am not, although I should be entitled to… Oh! let Me go into that room, where My Jesus had His last meal. Where the voice of My Child spoke His last words in peace! »

« Yes. We shall go. But now, look, come here, where we were yesterday. Have a rest. Say goodbye to Joseph and Nicodemus, who are withdrawing. »

« Yes, I will say goodbye to them. Oh! I say goodbye to them, I thank them. I bless them! »

« Come, do come. You will do so at Your leisure. »

« No. Here. Joseph… Oh! I have not known anybody with this name who did not love Me… »

Mary of Alphaeus bursts into tears.

« Do not weep… Joseph also… It was out of love that your son was

mistaking. He wanted to give Me peace in a human way… But today!… You saw him… Oh! all the Josephs are kind to Mary… Joseph, I thank you. And you, Nicodemus… My heart prostrates itself under your feet which are tired because of the long way you have gone for Him… for the last honours paid to Him… I have but My heart to give you… and I give it to you, the loyal friends of My Son… and… and excuse a mother with a pierced heart for the words I spoke to you in the sepulchre… »

« Oh! Holy Mother! Do forgive us! » says Nicodemus.

« Be good, now. Rest in Your Faith. We will come tomorrow » adds Joseph.

« Yes, we will come. We are at Your disposal. »

« It is Sabbath tomorrow » objects the mistress of the house.

« The Sabbath is dead. We will come. The Lord be with you » and they go away.

« Come, Mary. »

« Yes, come, Mother. »

« No. Open. You promised to do so after the greetings. Open this door! You cannot close it to a mother. To a mother who is trying to breathe the smell of the breath, of the body of her child in the air of the room. But do you not know that I gave Him that breath and that body? I, Who carried Him for nine months, Who gave birth to Him, suckled Him, brought Him up and took care of Him? That breath is Mine! The smell of that body is Mine! It is Mine, and it has become more beautiful in My Jesus. Let Me smell it once again. »

« Yes, dear. Tomorrow. You are tired now. You are burning with fever, You cannot. You are not well. »

« Yes. I am not well. Because in My eyes I have the sight of His Blood, and in My nose the smell of His Body covered with sores. Let Me see the table on which He leaned when He was alive and healthy, and let Me smell the scent of His youthful body. Open it! Do not bury Him for the third time! You have already concealed Him under spices and bandages, then you have shut Him up under the stone. Why now deny a Mother the possibility of finding again the last trace of Him in the breath He left beyond this door? Let Me go in. On the floor, on the table, on the seats, I will look for the traces of His feet, of His hands. And I will kiss them, I will kiss them until I consume My lips. I will search… I will search… Perhaps I shall find a fair hair of His head. A hair not encrusted with blood. But do you know what a hair of a son means for a mother? You, Mary of Clopas, you, Salome, are mothers. And do you not understand? John? John? Listen to Me. I am your Mother. He has made Me such. He did! You must obey Me. Open the door! I love you, John. I have always loved you, because you loved Him. I will love you even more. But open the door. Open it, I say! Do you not want to? Do you not want to? Ah! So I no longer have a son!? Jesus never

refused Me anything. Because He was My Son. You are refusing. You are not a son. You do not understand My grief… Oh! John, forgive… forgive Me… Open… Do not weep… Open… Oh! Jesus! Jesus!… Listen to Me… Let Your spirit work a miracle! Open to Your Poor Mother this door that nobody wants to open! Jesus! Jesus! »

With clenched fists Mary knocks at the little closed door. It is a paroxysm of torture, until She turns pale and, while whispering: « Oh! My Jesus! I am coming! I am coming! », She collapses without strength into the arms of the weeping women, who support Her to prevent Her from falling at the foot of that door, and they carry Her thus into the room in front of it.

608. The Night of Good Friday.

29th March 1945.

Mary, assisted by the weeping women, comes to Herself and She weeps without having any other strength but that of shedding tears, It really seems that Her life must flow and be consumed completely in Her tears.

They want to give Her some refreshment. Martha offers Her some wine; the mistress of the house would like Her to take at least some honey; Mary of Alphaeus, kneeling in front of Her, offers Her a cup of lukewarm milk, saying: « I milked it myself from little Rachel's goat » (Rachel must be a daughter of the people who live in this house, I do not know whether as tenants or as keepers). But Mary does not want anything. She weeps. She can only weep. And She asks and hears them promise that they will look for the apostles and disciples, for the lance and Jesus' garments, and that at the break of the day, since they do not want to let Her go now, they will let Her go into the Supper room.

« Yes. If You calm down a little, if You rest a little, I will take You there » says Her sister-in-law. « We shall both go in, and on my knees I will look for every trace of Jesus on Your behalf… » and Mary of Alphaeus sobs. « But look! Here You have the chalice and the bread broken by Him and used by Him for the Eucharist. Is there a holier souvenir? See? John brought them for You this morning, so that You might see them this evening… Poor John, he is over there and is weeping and is afraid… »

« Afraid? Why? Come here, John. » John comes out from the shade, because in the room there is only a little lamp placed on the table near the objects of the Passion, and he kneels at the feet of Mary, Who caresses him and asks: « Why are you afraid? »

And John, kissing Her hands and weeping replies: « Because You are not well. You are feverish and worried… And You are not tranquil. And if You continue so, You will die as He did… »

« Oh! I wish it were true! »

« No! Mother! Mama! Oh! It is more pleasant to say: "Mama". As I say to my mother! Let me say so… But, as I find no difference between You and my mother, and I even love You more than I love her, because you are the Mother Whom He gave me and You are His Mother, so do not make too great a difference between the Son born of You, and the son who has been given to You… And love me a little as You love Him… If it were He Who said to You: "I am afraid that You may die", would You reply: "Oh! I wish it were true"? No. You would not say that. On the contrary, You would be sorry to go away and leave Him, Your Lamb, in a world of wolves… And do You not grieve for me?… I am so much more a lamb than He was. Not through goodness and purity, but through stupidity and fear. If I am left without You, poor John will be torn to pieces by wolves without uttering a bleat that speaks of his Master… Do You want me to die so, without serving Him? As stupid in death as in life? No, You do not, do You? So, Mother, try to calm down… For His sake… Oh! do You not say that He will rise from the dead? Yes, You do, and it is true. Then, when He rises, do You want Him to find the house devoid of You? Because He will certainly come here… Oh! poor, poor Jesus, if instead of hearing Your cry of love He should hear our cries of grief, if instead of finding Your breast to rest His tortured glorious head on, He should find Your closed sepulchre… You must live. To greet Him when He comes back… I do not say "to our love". We deserve all kinds of reproach because of our behaviour. But to Your love. Oh! what meeting will it be? And what will He be like? Mother of Wisdom, Mama of the most ignorant John, since You know everything, tell us what He will be like, when He appears after rising from the dead. »

« The sores of Lazarus' legs were healed, but one could see their marks. And He appeared wrapped in bandages full of rottenness » says Martha.

« We had to wash him and wash him over again… » adds Mary.

« And he was weak, and we had to feed him by His order » ends Martha.

« The son of the widow of Nain looked bewildered and he was like a child unable to walk and speak without difficulty, so much so that He gave him back to his mother so that she might teach him to use the gift of life once again. And He Himself guided the first steps of Jairus' little daughter… » says John.

« I think that my Lord will send an angel to us to say: "Come with a clean garment". And my love has already prepared it. It is in the mansion. I could not spin it. But I had it spun by my wet-nurse, who is no longer worried about my future, and does not weep any more. I got the most precious linen and I received the purple from Plautina, and Naomi wove the border; and I made the belt, the bag and the taleth, embroidering them by night not to be seen. I learned

from You, Mother. It is not perfect. But rather than by the pearls forming His name on the belt and on the bag, it is made beautiful by the diamonds of my tears of love and by my kisses. Every stitch is a throb of devoutness for Him. And I will take it to Him. You will allow me, will You not? »

« Oh!… I did not think that they would deprive Him of His garment… I am not familiar with the practises of the world and with its ferocity… I thought that I was aware of it… (and tears once again stream down Her pale cheeks) but I see that I did not know anything yet… And I was thinking: "He will have the garment made by His Mother also afterwards". He liked it so much! He wanted it like that. And He had told Me such a long time ago: "You will make a tunic in such a manner. And You will bring it to Me for Passover… Because Jerusalem must see Me in the purple garment of a king… " Oh! that wool, whiter than snow, while I spun it was becoming red in the eyes of God and Mine, because My heart was wounded once again by that word… The other wounds, after years and months, if they had not healed, had dried up by dripping blood. But this one! Every day, every hour, turned the sword round in My heart: "One day less! One hour less! Then He will be dead!" Oh! Oh!… And the yam on the spindle and on the loom became red… Then it was steeped in the dye for the world… But it was already red… »

Mary weeps again. They try to comfort Her speaking to Her of the Resurrection.

Susanna asks: « What do You say? What will He be like when He rises? And how will He rise? »

And Mary, bewildered and blinded in this hour of redeeming martyrdom, replies: « I do not know… I do not know anything any more… Except that He is dead!… »

She bursts into tears again and kisses the linen cloth that Jesus had round His hips, and She presses it to Her heart and lulls it as if it were a baby… And She touches the nails, the thorns, the sponge and shouts: « These are the things that Your Fatherland gave You! Iron, thorns, vinegar, gall! And insults, insults, insults! And among all the sons of Israel a man from Cyrene had to be chosen to carry the cross for You. That man is as sacred to Me as a spouse. And if I knew another one who has helped My Son, I would kiss his feet. So no one took pity on Him? Go out! Go away! It grieves Me even to see you! Because among all of you, you were not able to obtain even a less cruel torture. Useless and idle servants of your King, go out! » She is dreadful in Her outburst. Standing stiff, She looks even taller, with Her imperious eyes, Her arm stretched out pointing at the door. She commands like a queen on her throne.

They all leave without reacting to avoid exciting Her more, and they sit outside the closed door, listening to Her moaning and to any noise She may make. But after the noise of a chair pushed aside

and of Her knees falling on the floor, because She kneels down with Her-head against the table on which are the objects of the Passion, they can only hear Her weep unceasingly and disconsolately.

She whispers, but in such a low voice that those outside cannot hear Her: « Father, Father, forgive Me! I am becoming proud and bad. But You can see that what I say is true. There were crowds around Him. And all Palestine, during these festivals, is inside the holy walls… Holy? No. No longer holy… They would have remained such, if He had breathed His last within them. But Jerusalem rejected Him like a nauseating regurgitation. So only the Crime is in Jerusalem… Well, of all the people that followed Him, they were not able to gather a handful of men who could impose themselves, I do not mean to save Him, because He had to die to redeem, but to let Him die without so much torture. They remained in the shade, or they ran away… My heart revolts at so much cowardice. I am the Mother. So forgive My sin of proud harshness… » and She weeps…

… Outside the others are on tenter-hooks for many reasons. The master of the house, who had gone out to stroll about curiously, comes back in and brings dreadful news. They say that many people died in the earthquake, many were wounded in scuffles between followers of the Nazarene and the Jews, that many have been arrested and that there will be more executions because of rebellions and threats to Rome; that Pilate has given orders to arrest all the followers of the Nazarene and the leaders of the Sanhedrin who are present in town or had already ran away through Palestine; that Johanna is dying in her mansion; that Manaen has been arrested by Herod, whom he insulted in the presence of all the Court as an accomplice of the Deicide. In brief, a pile of catastrophic news…

The women moan. Not so much out of fear for themselves, but for their sons and husbands. Susanna thinks of her husband, who is known as one of Jesus' followers in Galilee. Mary of Zebedee thinks of her husband, who is the guest of a friend, and of her son James, of whom she has had no news since the previous evening. And Martha says sobbing: « Perhaps they have already gone to Bethany! Who did not know what Lazarus was for the Master? »

« But he is protected by Rome » retorts Mary Salome.

« Oh! protected! Considering how much the chiefs of Israel hate us, who knows what charges they will make to Pilate against him… Oh! God! » Martha, not knowing which way to turn, shouts: « The arms! The arms! The house is full of them… and also the mansion! I know! This morning, at dawn, Levi, the guardian came, and he told me… But you know as well! And you told the Jews on Calvary… Fool! You have put in the hands of the cruel people the weapon to kill Lazarus!… »

« I said so. I did. I spoke the truth without knowing. But be quiet,

you chicken-hearted woman! What I said is the safest guarantee for Lazarus. They will be wary of venturing on searching where they know there are armed people! They are cowards! »

« Yes, the Jews are. But the Romans are not. »

« I am not afraid of Rome. She is just and peaceful in her provisions. »

« Mary is right » says John. « Longinus said to me: "I hope you Will be left alone. But if you are not, come or send someone to the Praetorium. Pilate is benign towards the followers of the Nazarene. He was generous also towards Him. We will defend you". »

« But if the Jews act by themselves? It was they who captured Jesus yesterday evening! And if they say that we are desecrators, they are entitled to capture us. Oh! My sons! I have four of them! Where will Joseph and Simon be? They were on Calvary and later they came down when Johanna was unable to resist. They came down to help and defend the women, they, the shepherds and Alphaeus… all of them! Oh! They will certainly have already killed them. Did you hear that Johanna is dying? It is certainly because she has been wounded. And before the mob could strike a woman, they must have defended her and were killed!… And Judas and James? My little Judas! My darling! And James as kind as a girl! Oh! I have no children left! I am like the mother of the Maccabean children!… »

All the women weep desperately, except the mistress of the house, who has gone to look for a hiding place for her husband, and Mary Magdalene, who is not weeping. But her eyes are full of fire and she has become the authoritative woman of days gone by. She does not speak. But she darts angry looks at her dejected companions and in her eyes one can read an epithet very clearly: « Cowards! »

Some time goes by so… Now and again one stands up, opens the door slowly, casts a glance and closes the door again.

« What is She doing? » ask the others.

And the person who has looked answers: « She is always on Her knees. She is praying »; or: « She seems to be speaking to someone. » And also: « She has got up and She is gesticulating walking up and down the room. »

[No date]

Lament of the Blessed Virgin.

« Jesus! Jesus! Jesus! Where are You? Can You still hear Me? Can You hear Your poor Mother, Who is now shouting Your Name, after keeping it in Her heart for so many hours? Your holy blessed Name that has been My love, the love of My lips, which tasted the flavour of honey repeating Your Name, of My lips, which now, instead, when they mention it, seem to be drinking the bitterness left on Your Lips, the bitterness of the terrible mixture. Your Name,

the love of My heart that swelled with joy, when repeating it, as it had swelled to pour off its blood and receive You and clothe You with it, when You descended into Me from Heaven, so small, so tiny, that You could have rested in the calyx of wild mint, You, so great, the Mighty One, humiliated in the embryo of man for the salvation of the world. Your Name, grief of My heart, now that they have torn You away from the caresses of Your Mother, to throw You into the arms of the executioners, who have tortured You to death!

My heart has been crushed by Your Name, that I had to keep within Me for so many hours and whose cry increased more and more as Your sorrow increased, until it crushed it, as if it had been trodden on by the foot of a giant. Oh! My sorrow is a giant and it crushes Me, it shatters Me, and there is nothing that can alleviate it. To whom shall I mention Your Name? Nothing replies to My cry. Even if I shouted so loud that I split the stone closing Your sepulchre, You would not hear Me, because You are dead. You cannot hear Your Mother any more.

How many times have I called You, Son, during these thirty-four years! Since I learned that I was to be a Mother and that My Little one was to be named "Jesus!" You were not yet born and I, caressing My womb, in which You were growing, used to call in a low voice: "Jesus!", and You seemed to move to say: "Mummy!" to me. I had already given You a voice and I dreamed of Your voice. I could hear it before it existed. And when I did hear it, as faint as that of a new-born lamb, tremble in the cold night in which You were born, I became acquainted with the abyss of joy… and I thought that I had become acquainted with the abyss of sorrow, because it was the weeping of My Baby Who was cold, Who was uncomfortable, Who was shedding His first tears of Redeemer, and I had neither fire nor cradle, and I could not suffer in Your stead, Jesus. I had but My lap as fire and cushion, and My love to worship You, My holy Son.

I thought that I had become acquainted with the abyss of sorrow… It was the dawn of that sorrow, it was the edge of that sorrow. Now it is the broad noon, now it is the bottom. This is the abyss, this which I am touching now, after descending into it during these thirty-four years, driven by so many things and prostrated today in the horrible bottom of Your Cross.

When You were a little baby, I used to lull You singing: "Jesus! Jesus!" Which harmony is there more beautiful and holy than this Name, which makes the angels smile in Heaven? To Me it was more beautiful than the song, so sweet, of the angels the night of Your Birth. I could see Heaven in it, the whole of Heaven I could see through that Name. And now, saying it to You Who are dead and cannot hear Me, and You do not reply to Me, as if You had never existed, I see Hell, the whole of Hell. See, now I understand what

it means to be damned. It is to be no longer able to say: "Jesus!" Horrible! Horrible! Horrible!…

How long will this hell last for Your Mother? You said: "Within three days I will rebuild this Temple". I have been repeating these words to Myself all day today, in order not to drop dead, to be ready to greet You when You come back and go on serving You… But how shall I be able to put up for three days with the knowledge that You are dead? You, My Life, for three days dead?

How come, You, Who know everything, because You are the infinite Wisdom, are not aware of the torture of Your Mother? Can You not imagine it, remembering the day I lost You in Jerusalem, and You saw Me squeeze through the crowd around You, looking like a shipwrecked person that touches the shore, after struggling so much with waves and death, with the countenance of a woman who comes out of a torture exhausted, almost bled to death, aged, heart-broken? And then it was possible for me to think that You were just lost. I could delude Myself that it was only that. But not today. Not today. I know that You are dead. No illusion is possible. I saw You being killed. And even if grief should make Me lose My memory, here is Your Blood on My veil and it says to Me: "He is dead! He is bloodless! These are the last drops that gushed out of His Heart!" Out of His Heart! Out of the Heart of My Child! Of My Son! Of My Jesus! Oh! God, merciful God, do not let Me remember that they split His Heart!…

Jesus! I cannot stay here, alone, while You are there, all alone. I, Who have never loved the roads of the world and crowds, and You know, after You left Nazareth, have more and more frequently followed You, in order not to live far from You. I could not live away from You. I faced oddities and derision, I do not take into account fatigue, because it was obliterated by the joy of seeing You, just to live where You were. And now I am here all alone. And You are there, all alone! Why did they not leave Me in Your sepulchre? I would have sat beside Your chilly bed, holding one hand of Yours in Mine, to make You feel that I was near You… No, to feel that You were close to Me. You do not feel anything any more. You are dead!

How often have I spent the night near Your cradle, praying, loving, taking delight in You! Shall I tell You how You slept, with Your little fists closed like two flower buds near Your holy little face? Shall I tell You how you used to smile in Your sleep and, certainly remembering Your Mummy's milk, You made the gesture of sucking, while sleeping? Shall I tell You how You woke up and opened Your eyes and laughed, seeing Me bent over Your face, and You stretched Your little hands joyfully, as You were anxious to be taken by Me, and how with a little cry as sweet as the trill of a blackcap You claimed Your food? Oh! I was happy when You clung to

My breast and I felt the smooth tepidity of Your cheeks, the caresses of Your little hands on My mamma!

You could not stay away from Your Mother. And now You are alone! Forgive Me, Son, for leaving You alone, for not rebelling for the first time in My life and for not insisting on remaining there. It was My place. I would have felt less desolate, if I had remained near Your funereal bed, to arrange Your clothes, as in days gone by, and change them… Even if You could not have smiled at and spoken to Me, I would have felt as if I had You again as when You were a baby. I would have held You to My heart, in order not to make You feel the chillness of the stone, the hardness of the marble. Did I not hold You also today? The lap of a mother is always capable of holding a son, even if he is grown-up man. A son is always a baby for his mother, even if he is one who has been taken down from a cross, covered with sores and wounds.

How many! How many wounds! How much sorrow! Oh! My Jesus, My Jesus so wounded! So wounded! So wounded! No. No. Lord, no! It cannot be true! I am mad! Jesus dead? I am raving. Jesus cannot die! Yes, He can suffer. But He cannot die. He is the Life! He is the Son of God. He is God. God does not die.

Does He not die? Then, why has He been named Jesus? What does "Jesus" mean? It means… oh! it means: "Saviour"! He is dead! He is dead because He is the Saviour! He had to save everybody losing Himself… I am not raving. No. I am not mad. No. I wish I were! I should suffer less! He is dead. Here is His Blood. Here is His crown. Here are the three nails. They have pierced Him with them!

Men, look with what you have pierced God, My Son! And I must forgive you. And I must love you. Because He has forgiven you. Because He told Me to love you. He made Me your Mother, the Mother of the killers of My Child! One of His last words, struggling against the death-rattle at His agony… "Mother, here is Your son… your sons!" Even if I were not She Who obeys, today I would have had to obey, because it was the order of a dying man.

So, Jesus. I forgive. I love them. Ah! My hearts breaks in this forgiveness and in this love! Do You hear that I am forgiving them and loving them? I am praying for them. Yes, I am praying for them… I am closing My eyes not to see these objects of Your torture, to be able to forgive them, love them and pray for them. Each nail serves to crucify a will of Mine not to forgive, not to love, not to pray for Your executioners.

I must, I want to think that I am near Your cradle. Also then I prayed for men. But it was easy then. You were alive and I, although I thought that men were cruel, I never went so far as to think that they could be so cruel to You, Who had assisted them excessively. I prayed and I was convinced that Your Word would make them better men. In My heart I said to them, looking at them: "You are

bad, diseased, now, brothers. But before long He will speak, before long He will defeat Satan in you. He will give you the Life lost! The life lost! It is You, You, You, Who have lost Your life for them, My Jesus! If, when You were in Your swaddling-clothes, I had seen all today's horror, My sweet milk would have turned into poison through grief!

Simeon said so: "And a sword will pierce Your heart". A sword? A mass of swords! How many wounds did they inflict on You, Son? How many groans did You utter? From how many spasms did You suffer? How many drops of blood did You shed? Well, each of them is a sword in Me. I am a mass of swords. There is not a strip of skin on You without sores. In Me there is not one that has not been pierced. They pierce My flesh and penetrate My heart.

When I was expecting You, I prepared Your swaddling-clothes and napkins, spinning the softest linen on the Earth. I did not mind the price, providing I had the softest cloth. How beautiful You looked in the swaddling-clothes made by Your Mother! Everybody said to Me: "Your Child is beautiful, Donna!" You were lovely! From the white linen there appeared Your rosy little face, Your eyes were bluer than the sky, and Your little head seemed enveloped in a golden mist, so fair and soft was Your hair. It smelt of blossoms of almond-trees. People thought that I put scent on You. No. My Darling had but the scent of the swaddling-clothes washed by His Mother, warmed and kissed by Her heart and lips. I was never tired of working for You…

And now? Now I have nothing more to do for You. For three years You have been away from home. But You were still the aim of My days. I thought of You. Of Your clothes. Of Your food: I kneaded flour and baked bread, I looked after the bees to give You honey, I took care of the trees, so that they might yield fruit for You. How much You loved the things that Your Mother brought You! No food of a rich table, no garment of precious cloth was for You like those woven, sewn, taken care of, picked by the hands of Your Mother. When I came to You, You looked at once at My hands, as You used to do when You were a little boy, and Joseph and I gave You our poor gifts, to make You feel that You were "our" King. You have never been greedy, My Child; it was love that You were seeking, that was Your food, and You found it in our attentions. Even now You found it and were looking for it, poor Son of Mine, so little loved by the world!

Now, nothing more. Everything has been accomplished. Your Mother will not do anything any more for You. You no longer need anything. Now You are alone… And I am alone… Oh! happy Joseph, who has not seen this day! I wish I had never seen it either! But in that case You would not have had even this comfort of seeing Your poor Mother. You would have been all alone on the cross, as You

are alone in the sepulchre. All alone with Your wounds.

Oh! God! God! How many wounds has Your Son, My Son! How was I able to see them without dying, whereas I almost fainted every time You hurt Yourself when You were a child?

Once You fell in the kitchen garden in Nazareth and You hurt Your forehead. Only a few drops of blood. But I, Who felt I was dying when I saw the drops of Your Blood at the Circumcision, and Joseph had to support Me as I was shaking like one who is dying, I thought that that tiny cut would kill You and I cured it more with My tears than with water and oil, and I was not at peace until I saw that it no longer bled. Another time, You were learning to work and You hurt Yourself with a saw. A slight wound. But I felt as if the saw had cut Me in two. I had no rest until six days later, when I saw Your hand healed.

And now? And now? Now You have Your hands, feet, side ripped, now Your flesh is falling in pieces, Your face is bruised, that Face which I did not dare to touch lightly with a kiss, and Your forehead and the nape of Your neck are ulcerated. And no one gave You medicament or comfort.

Look at My heart, God, Who have struck Me in My Child! Look at it! Is it not as covered with sores as the Body of Your Son and Mine? The scourges have come down on Me like hailstones, while He was being lashed. What is distance for love? I suffered the torture of My Son! I wish I alone had suffered it, and that I alone were on the sepulchral stone! Look at Me, God! Is My heart not bleeding?

Here is the circle of thorns, I can feel it. It is a band that squeezes and pierces it. Here is the hole of the nails: three stylets driven into My heart. Oh! those blows! Those blows! How did Heaven not collapse because of those sacrilegious blows on the flesh of God? And not being able to shout! Not being able to rush forward and snatch the weapon from the killers and use it to defend My Child, Who was already dying. But having to hear and hear… and not do anything! A stroke on the nail, and the nail penetrates the living flesh. Another stroke, and it penetrates even more. And another, another one, and bones and nerves break, and the flesh of My Child is pierced, and the heart of His Mother! And when they raised You on Your Cross? How much You must have suffered, Holy Son! I can still see Your hand torn by the shock of the drop. And My heart is torn likewise.

I am bruised, scourged, stung, struck, pierced like You. I was not with You on the cross. But look at Your Mother. Is She different from You? No, there is no difference of martyrdom. On the contrary, Yours is over. Mine is still on. You no longer hear the false charges; I do. You no longer hear the horrible curses. I still hear them. You no longer feel the bites of thorns and nails, You are no longer Parched or feverish. I am full of points of fire and I am like one who

is dying of thirst and delirious fever.

If they had even allowed Me to give You a drop of water. My tears, if the ferocity of men denied the Creator the water created by Him. I gave You suck for a long time, because we were Poor, My Son, and in our flight into Egypt we had lost so much, and we had to get a new house, furniture, clothes and food, and we did not know how long the exile would last, or what we would have found going back to our country. I gave You suck longer than the usual period of time, so that You might not feel the lack of food. Until we got the little goat, I was Your little goat, Child of Your Mummy. You already had so many little teeth, and You used to bite… Oh! what a joy to see You laugh in Your childish games!…

You wanted to walk. You were so healthy and strong. I held You up for hours and hours, and I did not feel My back break being bent over You, Who were taking Your first steps and at each step You would say: "Mummy, Mummy!" Oh! what a beatitude to hear You sing that name! Also today You were saying: "Mother, Mother!" But Your Mother could only see You die! I could not even caress Your feet! Your feet? Ah! even if they had been within reach, I would not have been able to touch them, to avoid increasing Your torture. How much Your poor feet must have suffered, o My Jesus!

If only I could have come up to You and placed Myself between the wood and Your body, and prevented You from rubbing against the wood in the convulsions of the agony! I can still hear Your head knock against the wood in the last gasps. And that sound, that sound drives Me mad. It is in My head… like a hammer.

Come back, come back, My dear holy Son! I am dying. I cannot bear this desolation of Mine. Show Me Your face once again. Call Me again. I cannot think that You have no voice, no eyes, that You are a cold lifeless corpse. Oh! Father, assist Me! Jesus does not hear Me! Is His Passion not over? Is it not all accomplished? Are these nails, these thorns, this blood, the-se tears of Mine not sufficient? Is still more required to heal man?

Father, I am mentioning the instruments of His sorrow and My tears. But that is the least important. What made Him die tortured in a superhuman manner was Your abandonment. What makes Me shout is Your abandonment. I cannot hear You any more! Where are You, holy Father? I was the "Full of Grace". The Angel said: "Hail, Mary, full of Grace, the Lord is with You and You are blessed amongst all women". No. It is not true! It is not true! I am like a woman cursed by You for her sin. You are no longer with Me. Grace has withdrawn, as if I were a second Eve sinner.

But I have always been faithful to You. In what have I displeased You? You have dealt with Me as You liked, and I have always said to You: "Yes, Father. I am ready". So, can angels lie? And Anne, who assured Me that You would give Me Your angel in the hour

of sorrow? I am alone. I no longer have grace in Your eyes, I no longer have You, Grace, in Me. I no longer have an angel. So, do saints lie? In what have I displeased You, if they do not lie and I have deserved this hour?

And Jesus? What wrong has Your pure meek Lamb done? In what have we offended You to deserve the incalculable torture of Your abandonment, in addition to the martyrdom given by men? He, above all, He was Your Son and He called You with that voice that made the Earth shudder and shake in a sob of pity. How could You abandon Him all alone in such a torture?

Poor Heart of Jesus, Who loved You so much! Where is the sign of the wound of His Heart? Here it is. Look, Father, at this sign. This is the impression of My hand that entered the gash of the lance-thrust. Here… Here… It cannot be erased either by the tears or by the kisses of His Mother, Whose eyes are dry through weeping and Whose lips are consumed through kissing. This sign shouts and reproaches. This sign cries to You from the Earth more than Abel's blood. And You, Who cursed Cain and revenged Yourself on him, did not intervene on behalf of My Abel already bled by His Cains, and You allowed this last outrage! Your crushed His Heart with Your abandonment and You allowed a man to strip Him, so that I might see Him and be crushed. With regard to Me, it does not matter. It is for Him, for Him that I ask and call You to answer. You should not have done that…

Oh! forgive Me! Forgive Me, Holy Father! Forgive a Mother Who is mourning Her Child… He is dead! My Son is dead! Dead with His Heart rent! Oh! Father! Father, have mercy! I love You! We have loved You and You have loved us so much. How did You allow the Heart of Our Son to be rent? Oh! Father!… Father, have mercy on a poor woman! I am blaspheming, Father! I, Your servant, Your nonentity, dare reproach You! Have mercy! You have been good. You have been good. The wound, the only wound that did not hurt Him, is this one. Your abandonment served to make Him die before sunset avoiding other tortures.

You have been good. You do everything for a purpose of good. It is we creatures who do not understand. You have been good. You have been good! O My soul, repeat that word, to remove the sting of Your suffering from Your suffering. God is good and has always loved You, My soul. From Your cradle to the present moment, He has always loved You. He has given You all the joy of the time. All of it. He has given You Himself. He has been good. Good. Good. Thank You, Lord. May You be Blessed for Your infinite goodness!

Thank You. Jesus, I say "thank You" also on Your behalf. This wound at least was not felt by You, Son! I only felt it in My Heart, when I saw Yours opened. Your lance is now in My heart and it rummages and tortures. But it is better so! You do not feel it. But, have

mercy, Jesus! A sign from You! A caress, a word for Your Poor Mother, Whose heart is torn to pieces! A sign, a sign, Jesus, if You want to find Me alive when You come back! »

[29th March 1945]

A loud knock at the door makes everyone start. The master of the house bravely runs away. Mary of Zebedee would like her John to follow him and pushes him towards the yard. The other women, with the exception of the Magdalene, press against one another moaning.

It is Mary of Magdala who goes straight and resolutely to the door and asks: « Who is it? »

The voice of a woman replies: « I am Nike. I have something to be given to the Mother. Open! Quick. The patrol is around. »

John, who has freed himself from his mother and has rushed towards the Magdalene, busies himself with the many locks, which are well fastened this evening. He opens the door. Nike comes in with a servant and a brawny man who is escorting them. They close the door.

« I have a thing… » says Nike weeping and she is unable to speak…

« What? What? » They are all around her, full of curiosity.

« On Calvary… I saw the Saviour in that state… I had prepared a loincloth, so that He would not have to use the rags of the executioners… But He was so wet with perspiration, with blood in His eyes, that I thought I should give it to Him to wipe Himself. He did so… And He gave the cloth back to me. I have not used it again… I wanted to keep it as a relic with His perspiration and blood. And seeing the fury of the Jews, shortly afterwards, with Plautina and the other Roman ladies Lydia and Valeria, we decided to come back, for fear they might take this linen cloth from us. The Romans are brave women. They put the servant and me in the middle and they protected us. It is true that they are contamination for Israel… and that it is dangerous to touch Plautina. But one thinks of that in peaceful times. Today they were all drunk… At home I wept… for hours… Then there was the earthquake and I fainted… When I came to myself, I wanted to kiss that linen cloth and I saw… oh!… The face of the Redeemer is on it!… »

« Let us see! Let us see! »

« No. The Mother first. It is Her right. »

« She is so exhausted! She will not be able to resist… »

« Oh! don't say that! On the contrary, it will comfort Her. Tell Her! » John knocks at the door lightly.

« Who is it? »

« It is I, Mother. Nike is here… She came during the night… She brought a souvenir to You… a gift… She hopes to comfort You with it. »

« Oh! one gift only can comfort Me! The smile of His Face… »

« Mother! » John embraces Her lest She should fall, and as if he were confiding the true Name of God, he says: « It is that. The smile of His Face, impressed on a linen cloth with which Nike wiped Him on Calvary. »

« Oh! Father! Most High God! Holy Son! Eternal Love! May You be blessed! The sign! The sign I asked of You. Let her, let her come in! »

Mary sits down, because She cannot stand any longer, and while John beckons to the women, who are peeping into the room, to let Nike pass, She recovers Herself.

Nike goes in and kneels at Her feet with the servant beside her. John, standing near Mary, holds his arm round Her shoulders, as if he wanted to support Her. Nike does not utter one word. But she opens the casket, takes the linen cloth out and unfolds it. And the Face of Jesus, the living Face of Jesus, the sorrowful and yet smiling Face of Jesus looks at His Mother and smiles at Her.

Mary utters a cry of sorrowful love and stretches out Her arms. The women echo Her cry from the door-space where they have crowded. And they imitate Her kneeling before the Face of the Saviour.

Nike cannot find words. She hands the linen cloth over to the motherly hands and she stoops to kiss its edge. She then goes out backwards without waiting for Mary to come out of Her ecstasy.

She goes away… She is already out, in the night, when they think of her… There is nothing to be done except to close the door, as it was before.

Mary is once again alone. In a conversation of Her soul with the image of Her Son, because they all withdraw again.

Some more time goes by. Then Martha says: « What shall we do for the ointments? Tomorrow is the Sabbath »

« And we shall not be able to get anything » says Salome.

« And we should do that Many pounds of aloe and myrrh… but He was so badly washed »

« We ought to have everything ready by dawn on the first day after the Sabbath » remarks Mary of Alphaeus.

« And what about the guards? What shall we do? » asks Susanna.

« We shall tell Joseph, if they do not let us go in » replies Martha.

« We shall not be able to shift the stone by ourselves. »

The Magdalene replies: « Oh! do you think that five of us will not be able? We are all strong… and love will do the rest. »

« In any case I will come with you » says John.

« Certainly not you. I do not want to lose you as well, son. »

« Don't worry about it. We shall be enough. »

« But in the meantime Who will give us the spices? »

They are all depressed Then Martha says: « We could have asked

Nike whether it was true about Johanna… about the rebellions… »

« That is true! But we are dull-witted. We could have taken also the spices then. Isaac was at the doorstep when we came back… »

« In the mansion there are many small vases of essences, and there is some fine incense. I will go and get them. » And Mary Magdalene stands up from her seat and puts on her mantle.

Martha shouts: « You shall not go. »

« I will go. »

« You are mad! They will get you! »

« Your sister is right. Don't go! »

« Oh! what useless howling females you are! Jesus really had a fine group of followers! Have you already used up your reserve of courage? With regard to me, the more I use the more I get. »

« I will go with her. I am a man. »

« And I am your mother and I forbid you. »

« Be good, Mary Salome, and you, too, John. I will go by myself. I am not afraid. I know what it is like going round the streets at night. I have done that thousands of times for sinful reasons… and should I be afraid now that I am going to serve the Son of God? »

« But there is a revolt in town today. You heard what the man said. »

« He is faint-hearted. And you are like him. I am going. »

« And if the soldiers find you? »

« I will say: "I am the daughter of Theophilus, the Syrian, a faithful servant of Caesar". And they will let me go. In any case… A man before a beautiful young woman is a more harmless plaything than a stalk of straw. I know, much to my shame… »

« But how do you expect to find perfumes in the mansion if no one has lived in it for years? »

« Do you think so? Oh! Martha! Do you not remember that Israel forced you to leave it, because it was one of my meeting-places with my lovers? I kept everything there that served to make them even more crazy about me. When I was saved by my Saviour, in a place known only to me, I concealed the alabasters and incenses that I used for my orgies of love. And I swore that only the tears shed on my sins and the adoration of the Most Holy Jesus would be the scented waters and the burning incenses of repentant Mary. And that I would use those signs of a profane cult of senses and of the flesh only to sanctify them on Him and to anoint Him. This is the hour. I am going. Remain here. And be calm. The angel of God will come with me and no harm will befall me. Goodbye. I will bring you news. And do not say anything to Her… You would increase Her worries… » And Mary of Magdala goes out sure of herself and imposing.

« Mother, let that be a lesson for you… And may it say to you: do not let the world say that your son is a coward. Tomorrow, no, today,

because this is already the second watch, I will go looking for my companions, as She wants… »

« It is the Sabbath… you cannot… » objects Salome to detain him.

« "The Sabbath is dead". I also say with Joseph. The new era has begun. Other laws, other sacrifices and ceremonies for it. »

Mary of Salome bends her head on her knees and weeps without protesting any more.

« Oh! I wish we could have news of Lazarus » says Mary of Clopas with a moan.

« If you let me go, you will have news, because Simon the Cananean had instructions to take my companions to Lazarus. Jesus told Simon when I was present. »

« Alas! Are they all there? So they are all lost! » Mary of Clopas and Salome weep desolately.

More time passes while they weep and wait. Then Mary Magdalene comes back triumphantly, laden with bags full of small precious vases.

« See, nothing has happened to me. Here are oils of all kinds, and nard, and olibanum, and benzoin. There is no myrrh and no aloe… I did not want any bitterness… I am drinking it all now… In the meantime we will mix these and tomorrow we will get… oh! if we pay, Isaac will give them also on a Sabbath… We will get myrrh and aloe. »

« Did anyone see you? »

« No one. There is not even a bat around. »

« And the soldiers? »

« The soldiers? I think they must be snoring in their pallets. »

« What about the seditions… the arrests… »

« The fear of that man saw them… »

« Who is in the mansion? »

« Levi and his wife. As peaceful as children. The armed men have fled… ha! ha! fine brave men we have, honestly!… They ran away as soon as they heard of the death sentence. I tell you the truth: Rome is hard and uses the scourge… But by it she makes people fear her and serve her. And she has men, not cowards… Oh! yes! He used to say: "My followers will experience the same destiny as Mine". H'm! If many Romans become followers of Jesus, that may be true. But if there are to be martyrs among the Israelites! He will remain alone… Here. This is my sack. And this one is Johanna's, who… yes. We are not only cowards, but also liars. Johanna is only depressed. She and Eliza felt ill on Golgotha. One is a mother whose son died, and, as she heard the death-rattles of Jesus, she was badly upset. The other is delicate and not used to so much walking and exposure to the sun. But there are no wounds and no agonies. She certainly weeps, as we do. Nothing else. She regrets that she was taken away. She will come tomorrow. And she sends these spices. The ones she

had. As ordered by Plautina, Valeria had remained with her, and now she has gone with the slaves to Claudia's house, because they have much incense. When she comes, because she, too, by the grace of Heaven, is not an ever trembling coward, don't start shouting as if you felt the dagger at your throats-. Come on. Get up. Let us take the mortars and work. Weeping is of no avail. Or at least weep and work. Our balm will be mixed with our tears. And He will feel them upon Himself… He will feel our love. » And she bites her lips, not to weep and to give strength to the others, who are really depressed.

They work eagerly. Mary calls John.

« Mother, what is the matter? »

« Those blows… »

« They are pounding incenses… »

« Ah!… But forgive Me… Don't make that noise… they sound like the hammers… » In fact the bronze pestles striking the marble of the mortars make the exact noise of hammers.

John tells the women, who go out into the yard, in order not to be heard so much. John goes back to the Mother.

« How did they get them? »

« Mary of Lazarus went to her house and to Johanna's… Also some more will be brought… »

« Did anybody come? »

« Nobody after Nike. »

« But look at Him, John, how handsome He is also in His sorrow! » Mary is absorbed in contemplation, with Her hands joined, before the cloth, which She has spread out on a chest holding it with some weights.

« Handsome, yes, Mother. And He is smiling at You… Do not weep any more… Some hours have already gone by. There is less to wait for His return… » and in the meantime John weeps…

Mary caresses his cheek. But She looks only at the image of Her, Son.

John goes out, blinded by his tears.

Also the Magdalene, who has come back to get some amphorae, is in the same state. But she says to the Apostle: « We must not let them see that we are weeping. Because, otherwise, the women over there will not be able to do anything. And we have to do… »

« … and we have to believe » concludes John.

« Yes. We must believe. If one were not able to believe, it would be despair. I believe. And you? »

« I, too… »

« You say so badly. You do not love enough yet. If you loved with your whole self, it would not be possible for you not to believe. Love is light and voice. Also against the darkness of denial and the silence of death it says: "I believe". » Wonderful is the Magdalene,

so great and imposing, authoritative in her confession of faith! Her heart must be torn to pieces. And her eyes inflamed by tears confirm that. But her spirit is undefeated.

John looks at her full of admiration and whispers: « You are strong! »

« Always. I was so much, that I dared to defy the world. And I was, then, without God. Now that I have Him, I feel I know how to defy also hell. You, who are good, should be stronger than I am. Because sin disheartens, you know? More than consumption. But you are innocent… That is why He loved you so much… »

« He loved you as well… »

« And I was not innocent. But I was His conquest and…

There is a loud knock at the door.

It may be Valeria. Open the door. »

John does so without any fear, dominated by Mary's calm.

It is in fact Valeria with her slaves, who are carrying the litter, from which she comes out. She goes in uttering the Latin greeting: « Salve. »

« Peace be with you, sister. Come in » says John.

« May I offer the Mother the homage of Plautina? Claudia also has contributed. But if it is not grievous for Her to see me. »

John goes in to Mary.

« Who is knocking? Peter? Judas? Joseph? »

« No. It is Valeria. She has brought some precious resins. She would like to offer them to You… if that does not grieve You. »

« I must overcome grief. He called the children of Israel and the heathens to His Kingdom. He called everybody. Now… He is dead… But I am here for Him. And I receive everybody. Let her come in. »

Valeria enters. She has taken off her dark mantle and she is all white in her stole. She stoops to the ground. She greets and speaks. « Domina. You know who we are. The first women redeemed from heathen obscurantism. We were dirt and darkness. Your Son has given us wings and light. Now He is… sleeping in peace. We know your customs. And we want also the balms of Rome to be spread on the Triumpher. »

« May God bless you, daughters of My Lord. And… forgive Me if I am not able to say more… »

« Do not make any effort, Domina. Rome is strong. But she can also understand grief and love. She understands You, Sorrowful Mother. Goodbye. »

« Peace be with you, Valeria! My blessing to Plautina, to all of you. »

Valeria withdraws leaving her incenses and other essences.

« See, Mother? The whole world is making offerings to the King of Heaven and Earth. »

« Yes » says Mary. « The whole world. And His Mother will have

been able to give Him nothing but tears.. »

A cock crows joyfully somewhere nearby. John starts.

« What is the matter, John? » asks the Blessed Virgin.

« I was thinking of Simon Peter… »

« But was he not with you? » asks the Magdalene who has gone back into the room.

« Yes. In Annas' house. Then I understood that I had to come here. And I have not seen him again. »

« It will soon be dawn. »

« Yes. Open the windows. »

They open the window coverings, and their faces look even wanner in the greenish dawn light.

The night of Good Friday is over.

609. The Redeeming Value of Jesus' and Mary's Sufferings. John Is the Head of Lovers.

[20th February 1944]

Now, it is already night-time, Jesus says:

« You have seen how much it costs to be Saviours. You have seen it in Me and in Mary. You have become acquainted with all our tortures and you have seen with what generosity, with what heroism, with what patience, with what meekness, with what perseverance, with what strength we have suffered them through our love to save you.

All those who want, who ask the Lord God to make them "saviours", must thoroughly consider that Mary and I are the model and that those are the tortures they must share in order to save. Their torture will not be the cross, the thorns, the nails, the material scourges. They will be different, of a different form and nature. But equally painful and equally consuming. And only by consuming the sacrifice amid those sorrows can you become saviours.

It is an austere mission. The most austere of them all. The one compared to which the life of the monk or of the nun of the strictest rule is a flower compared to a mass of thorns. Because it is not a rule of a human Order. But the Rule of a priesthood, of a divine monastic life, of which I am the Founder, I, Who in My Rule, in My Order, consecrate and receive those elected to it, and impose My habit on them: total Sorrow, even to sacrifice.

You have seen My sufferings. They have been applied to make amends for your sins. No part of My body was excluded from them, because nothing in man is free from sin, and all the parts of your physical and moral egos - that ego that God gave you with the perfection of divine work and that you have depreciated with the sin of your first parent and with your tendencies to evil, with your bad will - are instruments of which you make use to commit sin. But

I have come to cancel the effects of sin with My Blood and My sorrow, washing your individual physical and moral parts in them, to cleanse and strengthen them against culpable tendencies.

My hands were wounded and imprisoned, after they had become tired carrying the Cross, to make amends for all the crimes committed by the hands of man. From the true and proper ones committed holding and operating a gun against a brother, turning yourselves into Cains, to those perpetrated stealing, writing false accusations, making gestures against the respect of your bodies and other people's, and idling in laziness, which is propitious ground for your vices. For the illicit freedom of your hands, I had Mine crucified, nailing them to the cross, depriving them of every movement more than lawful and necessary.

The Feet of your Saviour, after becoming tired and bruised on the stones of the Way of My Passion were pierced and immobilised, to make amends for the evil you do with your feet, making them means to go to your crimes, thefts, fornications. I marked the streets, the squares, the houses, the steps in Jerusalem, to purify all the streets, the squares, the houses, the steps of the earth from all the evil that had grown on and in it, sown in past and future centuries by your bad will, obedient to Satan's instigations.

My Flesh was bruised, contused, torn to punish in Me the exaggerated cult, the idolatry that you give to your flesh and to the flesh of those whom you love out of a sensual whim or also out of fondness, which is not blameworthy in itself, but you make it such by loving a parent, a husband, a son, a brother more than you love God.

No. Above all love and every tie on the earth, there is, there must be the love for your Lord God. No other love is to be superior to it. Love your relatives in God, not above God. Love God with your whole selves. That will not absorb your love to the extent of making you indifferent towards your relatives, on the contrary it will nourish your love for them with the perfection attained from God, because he who loves God has God in himself and, having God, has Perfection.

I turned My Flesh into one sore to remove from your flesh the poison of sensuality, of lack of modesty, of lack of respect, of ambition and admiration for the flesh destined to become dust again. It is not with the cult for the body that one makes it beautiful. It is with detachment from it that one gives it the eternal Beauty in the Heaven of God.

My Head was tortured with countless tortures: with blows, with exposure to the sun, with shouts, with thorns, to make amends for the sins of your minds. Pride, impatience, unbearableness, intolerance spring up like a mushroom-bed in your brains. I turned it into a tortured organ, enclosed in a casket decorated with blood, to make amends for everything that sprouts from your thought.

You have seen the only crown I wanted. The crown that only a madman or a convict can wear. No one, who is sound of mind (speaking from a human point of view) and is free to do what he likes, will put it on. But I was considered mad and mad I was from a supernatural divine point of view, as I wanted to die for you who do not love Me or love Me so little, as I wanted to die to defeat Evil in you, knowing that you love it more than you love God, and I was a prey to man, his prisoner, condemned by him. I, God, condemned by man.

How often you lose your patience over trifles, you become incompatible through trivialities, you are unbearable because of light indispositions! But look at your Saviour. Consider how irritating it must have been to be continuously stung in different parts, to have the locks of My hair entangled in the thorns, to feel the crown move continuously without being able to move My head, and not being able to lean it anywhere without being tortured! But think of what the shouts of the crowds, the blows on My head, the scorching sun were for My tortured, aching, feverish Head! Consider what pain I felt in My poor brain, since I went to the agony of Friday aching all over because of the efforts made Thursday evening, in My poor brain, which was affected by the fever of My tortured Body and of the intoxications brought about by tortures!

And in My Head, My eyes, My mouth, My nose, My tongue, each had their torture. To make amends for your glances, so anxious to see what is evil and so forgetful of seeking God, to redress the too many, too false, filthy and lustful words that you utter, instead of using your lips to pray, to teach, to console; My nose and My tongue suffered their tortures to make amends for your gluttony and your sensuality of olfaction, through which you incur imperfections, which are the ground for graver sins, and you commit sins through the eagerness for superfluous food, without taking pity on those who are hungry, food which you can afford very often by having recourse to unlawful means of profit.

My organs were not exempted from suffering. Not one of them. Suffocation and cough for My lungs, contused by the cruel scourging, and suffering from oedema because of the position on the cross. Breathlessness and heart trouble as My heart was out of its place and had been injured by the merciless flagellation, by the moral grief that had preceded it, by the ascent under the heavy weight of the cross, by anaemia, the consequence of all the blood shed. Liver congested, spleen congested, kidneys bruised and congested.

You have seen the crown of bruises round My kidneys. Your scientists, to give proof to your incredulity with regard to that evidence of My suffering, which is the Shroud, explain how the blood, the cadaveric perspiration and the urea of an overfatigued body, when mixed with the spices, can have produced that natural drawing of

My dead tortured Body.

It would be better to believe without the need of so many proofs to believe. It would be better to say: "That is the work of God" and bless God, Who has granted you an indisputable proof of My Crucifixion and of the tortures preceding it!

But as now you are no longer able to believe with the simplicity of children, but you need scientific proofs - how poor is your faith, that without the support and the spur of science cannot stand up straight and walk - you must know that the cruel bruises of My kidneys have been the most powerful chemical agent in the miracle of the Shroud. My kidneys, almost crushed by the scourges, were no longer able to work. Like those of people burnt by fire, they were unable to filter, and urea accumulated and spread in My blood, in My body, bringing about the sufferings of uraemic intoxication and the reagent that oozed out of My corpse and fixed the impression on the cloth. But any doctor among you, or anyone suffering from uraemia, will realise what sufferings the uraemic toxins caused to Me, as they were so plentiful as to produce an indelible impression.

Thirst. What a torture thirst! And yet you have seen it. Among so many, there was not one who gave Me a drop of water. From the Supper onwards, I had no refreshment. And fever, sunshine, heat, dust, loss of blood, made your Saviour so thirsty.

You have seen that I refused the wine mixed with myrrh. I did not want any lenitive for My suffering. When we offer ourselves as victims, we must be victims without pitiful arrangements, compromises, mitigations. It is necessary to drink the chalice as it is offered. We must relish the vinegar and gall to the very end. Not the spiced wine that deadens pain.

Oh! the destiny of a victim is really severe. But blessed are those who chose it as their fate.

That was the suffering of your Jesus in His innocent Body. And I will not mention the tortures of My love for My Mother and for Her sorrow. That sorrow was required. But for Me it was the most cruel torture. Only the Father knows what His Word suffered in His spirit, His morale, His physique! Also the presence of His Mother, even if it was what My heart most wished, as it needed that comfort in the infinite solitude that surrounded it, infinite solitude coming from God and from men, was a torture.

She was to be there, an angel of flesh, to prevent despair from assailing Me, as the spiritual angel had prevented it in Gethsemane, She was to be there to join Her Sorrow to Mine for your Redemption, She was to be there to receive the investiture of Mother of mankind. But to see Her die at each shudder of Mine was My greatest sorrow. Not even the betrayal, not even the knowledge that My Sacrifice would be useless for so many people, these two sorrows, which shortly before had seemed so great as to make Me sweat

blood, were comparable with this one.

But you have seen how great Mary was in that hour. Her torture did not prevent Her from being by far stronger than Judith. The latter killed. The former allowed Herself to be killed through Her Child. And She did not curse, She did not hate. She prayed, She loved, She obeyed. Always a Mother, to the extent of thinking, among Her tortures, that Her Jesus needed Her virginal veil on His innocent body, to defend His decency, She was able to be at the same time the Daughter of the Father of Heaven and obey His dreadful will in that hour. She did not curse, She did not rebel. Either against God, or against men. She forgave the latter. She said "Fiat" to the Former.

Also later you heard Her say: "Father, I love You and You have loved us!" She remembers and She proclaims that God has loved Her and She renews Her act of love for Him. In that hour! After the Father had pierced Her and deprived Her of Her reason for existing. She loves Him. She does not say: "I do not love You any more because You have struck Me". She loves Him. And She does not grieve over Her sorrow. But over what Her Son suffered. She does not shout because Her heart is broken, but because Mine is pierced. She asks the Father the reason for that, not for Her sorrow. She asks the reason of the Father in the name of their Son.

She is the Spouse of God. It is She who conceived through union with God. She knows that no human contact has generated Her Child, but only the Fire descended from Heaven to penetrate Her immaculate womb and lay there the divine Embryo, the Body of the Man-God, of the God-Man, of the Redeemer of the world. She knows, and both as Spouse and as Mother She asks the reason for that wound. The others were to be given. But why this one, when everything had been accomplished?

Poor Mother! There was a reason, which Your sorrow did not allow You to read on My wound. And it was that men should see the Heart of God. You have seen it, Mary. And you will never forget it.

But, see? Although Mary at that moment did not see the supernatural reasons for that wound, She immediately thinks that it did not hurt Me, and She blesses God for that. She does not mind that that wound hurts Her, poor Mother, so much. It did not hurt Me, and that is enough and serves Her to bless God Who sacrifices Her.

She only asks for a little comfort in order not to die. She is necessary for the dawning Church, of which a few hours previously She was created the Mother. The Church, like a new-born baby, needs the care and milk of a mother. Mary will give it to the Church supporting the Apostles, speaking to them of the Saviour, praying for it. But how would She be able to do so if She breathed Her last tonight? The Church, that only in a few days' time will be left without her Head, would be completely an orphan if also Mary died.

And the destiny of new-born orphans is always precarious.

God never disappoints a just prayer and He comforts His children who hope in Him. Mary proves that through the comfort of Veronica. She, the poor Mother, had the image of My dead Face impressed in Her eyes. She cannot resist that sight. That is not Her Jesus, aged, swollen, with eyes closed not looking at Her, with lips twisted that do not speak to Her or smile. But here is a face that is the face of Jesus alive. Sorrowful, wounded, but still alive. Here His eyes are looking at Her, his lips seem to be saying: "Mother!" Here His smile still greets Her.

Oh! Mary! Look for your Jesus in your sorrow. He will always come and will look at you, He will call you and will smile at you. We will share sorrow, but we shall be united!

John, little John, you have shared sorrow with Mary and with Jesus. Be like John, always. Also in that. I have already said to you: "You shall not be great because of contemplations and dictations. They are Mine. But because of your love. And the deepest love is in the sharing of sorrow". That gives you the possibility to know by insight the least desires of God and to turn them into reality despite all obstacles.

Look at the lively delicate sensitiveness of John's behaviour from the Thursday night to the Friday night. And further. But let us consider it during those hours.

A moment of dismay. An hour of dullness. But after he overcomes sleepiness through the excitement of the arrest, and the excitement through love, he comes, dragging Peter with him, so that the Master may have some comfort seeing the Head of the apostles and the Favourite apostle.

He then thinks of the Mother, to Whom some cruel person may shout that Her Son has already been captured. And he goes to Her. He does not know that Mary is already living the tortures of Her Son and that while the apostles were sleeping, She was awake and was praying, agonising with Her Son. He does not know. And He goes to Her and prepares Her for the news.

Then he goes to and fro from Caiaphas' house to the Praetorium, from Caiaphas' house to Herod's palace, and then again from Caiaphas' house to the Praetorium. And to do so that morning, elbowing his way through a crowd intoxicated with hatred, wearing garments that point him out as a Galilean, is not pleasant. But love supports him, and he does not think of himself, but of Jesus' and His Mother's sorrows. He could be stoned as a follower of the Nazarene. It does not matter. He defies everything. The others have run away, they are hiding, they are led by prudence and fear. He is led by love, and he remains and shows himself. He is pure. Love thrives in purity.

And if his pity and common sense of a man of the people persuade

him to keep Mary away from the crowds and from the Praetorium - he does not know that Mary shares all the tortures of Her Son, suffering them spiritually - when he decides that the time has come when Jesus needs His Mother, and that it is not right to keep the Mother any longer away from Her Son, he takes Her to Him, he supports Her, he defends Her.

What is that handful of loyal people: a man all alone, unarmed, young, with no authority, leading a few women, with respect to a furious crowd? Nothing. A little pile of leaves that the wind can scatter. A small boat on a stormy ocean that can sink it. It does not matter. Love is his strength and his sail. He is armed with it, and with it he protects the Woman and the women until the end.

John possessed the love of compassion as no other person, except My Mother, possessed it. He is the Head of those who love with such love. He is your master with regard to that. Follow him in the example he gives you of purity and love, and you will be great.

Go in peace, now. I bless you. »

610. The Holy Saturday.

30th March 1945.

It dawns with difficulty. And daybreak is strangely delayed, although there are no clouds in the sky. But the stars seem to have lost all their brightness. And the sun, when it appears, is as pale as the moon was during the night. Opaque… Have they perhaps wept as well, as they look so dull, like the eyes of good people who have wept and still weep over the death of the Lord?

As soon as John realises that the Gates are open, he goes out, turning a deaf ear to his mother's entreaties. The women barricade themselves in the house, even more frightened now that also the Apostle has gone away.

Mary, still in Her room, Her hands resting in Her lap, looks fixedly out of the window, which opens on a not very large garden, but quite spacious and full of roses in bloom along the high walls and the bizarre flower-beds. The tufts of lilies, instead, are still without the stalks of the future flowers: thick and beautiful, but with nothing but leaves. She looks and looks, but I think that She does not see anything, except what there is in Her poor tired brain: the agony of Her Son.

The women go backwards and forwards. They approach Her, they caress Her, they beg Her to take some refreshment, and each time, as they come, there is a wave of a heavy, compound, stunning perfume.

And each time Mary thrills. But nothing else. She does not speak. She does not make a gesture. Nothing. She is exhausted. She is waiting. It is only a wait. She is the One Who awaits.

There is a knock at the door… The women rush to open. Mary turns round on Her seat, without standing up, and stares at the halfopen door.

The Magdalene goes in. « Manaen is here… He would like to be useful in some way. »

« Manaen… Let him come in. He was always good. But I did not think that it was he… »

« Who did You think, Mother!… »

« Later… later. Let him come in. »

Manaen goes in. He is not as pompous as usual. He is wearing a very common tunic, of a brown shade which is almost black, and • similar mantle. No jewels and no sword. Nothing. He looks like • well-to-do person, but of the common people. He stoops to greet, first with his hands crossed on his chest, and then he kneels down as if he were in front of an altar.

« Stand up. And forgive Me if I do not reply to your bow. I cannot… »

« You must not. I would not allow that. You know who I am. So I beg You to consider me Your servant. Do You need me? I see that there is no man here. I heard from Nicodemus that they have all run away. There was nothing to be done. That is true. But at least we should have given Him the comfort of seeing us. I… I greeted Him at the Sixtus. And then I was no longer able, because… But it is useless to mention it. That also was wanted by Satan. Now I am free and I have come to put myself at Your service. Give me Your orders, Woman. »

« I should like to know and let Lazarus know… His sisters are worried, and also my sister-in-law and the other Mary. We should like to know whether Lazarus, James, Judas, and the other James are safe. »

« Judas? The Iscariot! But he betrayed Him! »

« Judas, the son of the brother of My spouse. »

« Ah! I will go » and he stands Up. But in doing so he makes a gesture of pain.

« Are you wounded? »

« H'm… yes. Nothing serious. An arm is aching a little. »

« Because of us, perhaps? Is that why you were not up there? »

« Yes. That is why. And that is the only thing I regret. Not the wound. The remainder of Pharisaim, of Hebraism, of Satanism that was in me, because the cult of Israel has become Satanism, has all come out with that blood. I am like a baby, that after the excision of the sacred umbilical cord, has no further contact with his mother's blood, and the few drops still remaining in the excised cord do not flow into him, obstructed as they are by the linen string. But they fall… by now useless. The new-born baby lives with his own heart and his own blood. So do I. Till now I was not yet completely

formed. Now I have come to the end, and I come, and I was born to the Light. I was born yesterday. My Mother is Jesus of Nazareth. And He gave birth to me when He uttered His last cry. I know… Because I ran to Nicodemus' house last night. I should only like to see Him. Oh! when you go to the Sepulchre, let me know. I will come… I do not know His Face as the Redeemer! »

« It is looking at you, Manaen. Turn round. »

The man, who had gone in with his head so lowered and then had had eyes only for Mary, turns round almost frightened and sees the veronica. He throws himself on the floor, worshipping… And he weeps.

He then stands up. He bows to Mary and says: « I am going. »

« But it is the Sabbath. You know. They already accuse us of infringing the Law through His instigation. »

« We are on an equal footing, because they infringe the law of Love. The first and greatest. He said so. May the Lord console You. » He goes out.

Hours go by. How slow they are for those who are waiting…

Mary stands up and, leaning on pieces of furniture, She goes to the door. She tries to walk across the large entrance hall. But when She has nothing to lean on, She staggers as if She were intoxicated.

Martha, who sees Her from the yard, which is beyond the door open at the end of the hall, rushes towards Her. « Where do You want to go? »

« In there. You promised Me. »

« Wait until John comes. »

« Enough of waiting. You can see that I am calm. Since you have had the room locked from inside, go and have it opened. I will wait here. »

Susanna, as all the women have gathered there, goes away to call the master of the house with the keys. Mary in the meantime leans on the little door, as if She wished to open it with the power of Her will. The man arrives. Frightened and downcast, he opens the door and withdraws. And Mary, supported by the arms of Martha and Mary of Alphaeus, goes into the Supper room.

Everything is still as it was at the end of the Supper. The course of events and the instructions given by Jesus have prevented tampering. Only the seats have been put back in their places. And Mary, Who has not been in the Supper room, goes straight to the place where Her Jesus was sitting. She seems to be guided by a hand. And She looks like a sleep-walker, so stiff is She in Her effort to walk… She proceeds. She walks round the couch, She insinuates Herself between it and the table… She remains standing for a moment and then She collapses across the table in a fresh outburst of tears. She then calms down. She kneels down and prays with Her head resting on the edge of the table. She caresses the table-cloth, the seat,

the dishes, the edge of the large tray on which the lamb was, the large knife used to carve it, the amphora placed before that seat. She does not know that She is touching what also the Iscariot has touched. She then remains stupefied, with Her head resting on Her arms crossed on the table.

All the women are silent, with the exception of Her sister-in-law who says: « Come, Mary. We are afraid of the Jews. Would You like them to come in here? »

« No. This is a holy place. Let us go. Help Me… You have done the right thing in telling Me. I would also like a chest, a beautiful large one with a lock, to close all My treasures in it. »

« I will have it brought to You from our mansion tomorrow. It is the nicest one in the house. It is strong and safe. I give it to You with joy » says the Magdalene promising it.

They go out. Mary is really exhausted. She staggers in climbing the few steps. And if Her grief is less dramatic, it is because it no longer has the strength of being so. But in its quietness it is even more tragical.

They go into the room in which they were previously, and before going back to Her seat, Mary caresses the Holy Face of the veronica, as if it were a face of flesh.

There is another knock at the door. The women hasten to go out and close the door.

In Her tired voice Mary says: « If it is the disciples, and in particular Simon Peter and Judas, let them come to Me at once. »

But it is Isaac, the shepherd. He goes in weeping after some minutes and he prostrates himself at once before the veronica and then before the Mother, and he does not know what to say. It is Mary Who says: « Thank you. He saw you and I saw you. I know. He looked at you as long as He could. »

Isaac weeps louder. He can speak only when he has finished weeping. « We did not want to go away. But Jonathan begged us. The Jews were threatening the women… and later we were no longer able to come. It was… it was all over… Where should we have gone then? We scattered through the countryside and at dead of night we gathered together half way between Jerusalem and Bethlehem. We thought we would turn His Death away by going towards His Grotto… But then we felt that it was not right to go there… It was selfishness, and we came back towards the City… And we found ourselves, without knowing how, at Bethany… »

« My sons! »

« Lazarus! »

« James! »

« They are all there. Lazarus' fields at dawn were strewn with people who were wandering and weeping… His useless friends and disciples!… I… went to Lazarus and I thought I was the first… Instead

your two sons were already there, woman, and yours, with Andrew, Bartholomew, Matthew. Simon Zealot had convinced them to go there. And Maximinus, who had gone out in the country early in the morning, had found more. And Lazarus has helped them all. And he is still doing so. He says that the Master had ordered him to do that. And also the Zealot says so. »

« But Simon and Joseph, my other sons, where are they? »

« I don't know, woman. We had been together until the earthquake. Then… I don't know anything else precisely. Amidst the darkness and lightning and the dead who had risen and the quaking ground and the whirlwind, I lost my head. I found myself in the Temple. And I still wonder how I got there, beyond the sacred limit. Consider that between me and the altar of scents there was only a cubit… Imagine! I was where only the priests on duty are allowed to stand!… And… and I saw the Holy of Holies!… Yes. Because the veil of the Holy is torn from top to bottom, as if the power of a giant had torn it… If they had seen me in there, they would have stoned me. But no one could see any more. I met nothing but ghosts of dead and ghosts of living people. Because we looked like ghosts in the light of thunderbolts, in the bright light of fires, and with terror on our faces… »

« Oh! my Simon! My Joseph! »

« And Simon Peter? And Judas of Kerioth? And Thomas and Philip? »

« I do not know, Mother… Lazarus sent me to see you, because they had told him that… they had killed you all. »

« Well, go at once to reassure him. I have already sent Manaen. But you had better go as well and tell him… tell him that He alone has been killed. And I with Him. And if you see any of the other disciples, take them there with you. But I want the Iscariot and Simon Peter here. »

« Mother… forgive us if we did not do more. »

« I forgive everything… Go. »

Isaac goes out. And Martha and Mary, Salome and Mary of Alphaeus overwhelm him with prayers, recommendations, orders. Susanna weeps silently, because nobody speaks to her of her husband. And that reminds Salome of hers. And she weeps as well.

There is silence again, until there is a further knocking at the door.

Since the town is quiet, the women are not so frightened. But when through the half open door they see Longinus' clean-shaven face appear, they all run away as if they had seen a dead body enveloped in its shroud or the Devil himself. The master of the house, who is idling about the hall curiously, is the first to run away.

The Magdalene, who was with Mary, rushes there. Longinus, with an involuntary mocking smile on his lips, has gone in, and has closed

the heavy main door himself. He is not wearing a uniform, but he has on a short grey tunic under a mantle which is also dark.

Mary Magdalene looks at him and he looks at her. Still leaning against the door, Longinus asks: « May I come in without contaminating anybody? And without terrifying anyone? This morning at dawn I saw Joseph, the citizen, and he mentioned the Mother's desire to me. I apologise for not thinking of it myself. Here is the lance. I had kept it as a souvenir of a… of the Saint of Saints. Oh! He is indeed! But it is right that the Mother should have it. With regard to the garments… it is more difficult. Do not tell Her… but perhaps they have already been sold for a few coins… It is the right of the soldiers. But I will try to find them… »

« Come. She is in there. »

« But I am a heathen! »

« It does not matter. I will go and tell Her, if you wish so. »

« Oh! no… I did not think I deserved that. »

Mary Magdalene goes to the Blessed Virgin. « Mother, Longinus is out there… He offers the lance to You. »

« Let him come in. »

The master of the house, who is at the entrance, grumbles: « But he is a heathen. »

« I am the Mother of everybody, man. As He is everybody's Redeemer. »

Longinus goes in and on the threshold he salutes in the Roman way, with his arm (he has taken off his mantle) and then he greets Her saying: « Ave, Domina. A Roman greets you: the Mother of mankind. The true Mother. I would have liked not to be there at… at… at that affair. But it was an order. But, if I serve to give what You wish, I forgive destiny for choosing me for that horrible thing. Here » and he gives Her the lance enveloped in a red cloth. Only the steel head, not the shaft.

Mary takes it and becomes even wanner. Her very lips disappear in the pallor. The lance seems to open Her veins. And Her lips tremble as She says: « May He lead you to Himself. Because of your kindness. »

« He was the only Just Man I ever met in the vast empire of Rome. I regret I only knew Him through the words of my companions. Now… it is late! »

« No, son. He has finished evangelizing. But His Gospel remains. In His Church. »

« Where is His Church? » Longinus is slightly ironical.

« It is here. Today it is struck and scattered. But tomorrow it will gather like a tree that tidies up its foliage after a storm. And, even if there were nobody else, I am here. And the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God and Mine, is all written in My heart. All I need do is to look at My heart in order to be able to repeat it to you. »

« I will come. A religion that has as its head such a hero can but be divine. Ave, Domina! »

And also Longinus goes away.

Mary kisses the lance where there is still the Blood of Her Son… And She does not want to remove that Blood. But She leaves it saying: « A ruby of God, on the cruel lance »…

The day goes by thus, amid clear spells and threats of storms.

John comes back only when the sun shining perpendicularly tells that it is midday. « Mother, I have not found anybody, except… Judas of Kerioth. »

« Where is he? »

« Oh! Mother! How horrible! He is hanging from an olive-tree, all swollen and black, as if he had been dead for weeks. Rotten. Horrible… Above him vultures, crows, I do not know what, are shrieking fighting atrociously… It was their brawling that called me in that direction. I was on the road of the Mount of Olives, and on a hillock I saw ugly black birds wheel round and round. I went… Why? I do not know. And I saw. How horrible!… »

« How horrible! You are right. But above Goodness there was Justice. In fact Goodness is absent, now… But Peter! But Peter!… John, I have the lance. But the garments… Longinus did not mention them. »

« Mother, I want to go to Gethsemane. He had no mantle on when He was captured. Perhaps it is still there. Then I will go to Bethany. »

« Go. Go for the mantle… The others are with Lazarus. So do not go to Lazarus. It is not necessary. Go and come back here. »

John runs away, without taking any refreshment. Mary also is without any. The women, standing, have eaten bread and olives, working all the time at their balms.

Then Johanna of Chuza comes with Jonathan. Her features are disfigured by tears. And as soon as she sees Mary, she says: « He saved me! He saved me and He is dead. Now I wish I had never been saved! »

It is Our Lady of Sorrows Who has to comfort this woman, who was cured but has remained morbidly sensitive. And She consoles and fortifies her saying: « You would not have known and loved Him, and now you would not be able to serve Him. How much there is to be done in future! And we will have to do it, because you can see… We have remained, and the men have run away. The true giver of life is always the woman. In Good. In Evil. We will generate the new Faith. We are full of it, as it was deposited in us by the Spouse God. And we will generate for the Earth. For the welfare of the world. Look how handsome He is! How He smiles and begs for this holy work of ours! Johanna, I love you, you know that. Do not weep any more. »

« But He is dead! Yes. There He still looks as if He were alive. But

He is no longer alive. What is the world without Him? »

« He will come back. Go. Pray. Wait. The more you believe, the sooner He will rise from the dead. That belief is My strength… And only God, Satan and I know how many assaults have been made upon this faith of Mine in His Resurrection. »

Johanna also goes away, weak and bent like a lily too saturated with water.

But once she has gone out, Mary relapses into Her torture. « I have to give strength to everybody. To everybody! And who gives it to Me? » And She weeps, caressing the Face of the image, because She is now sitting near the chest on which the veronica is spread.

Joseph and Nicodemus come. And they spare the women the trouble of going out to buy myrrh and aloe, because they have brought some little bags of them. But their strength yields before the Face impressed on the linen cloth and the ravaged face of the Mother. They sit in a comer after greeting Her and they become silent. They are grave, gloomy… Later they go away.

Mary has no more strength to speak. But the darker it gets, which occurs rather early because of a mass of sultry clouds, the more She is tortured. The shadows of the evening are also for Her, as for all those who suffer, a source of deeper grief.

The other women also become sadder. Particularly Salome, Mary of Alpaeus and Susanna. But at last they have some consolation as Zebedee, Susanna's husband, Simon and Joseph of Alphaeus arrive in a group. The first two remain in the hall, explaining that John found them as he was going through the Ophel suburb. The other two instead were found by Isaac while they were wandering through the countryside, undecided as to whether they should go back to town, or go to their brothers who they supposed were at Bethany.

Simon asks: « Where is Mary? I want to see Her » and preceded by his mother, he goes in and kisses his distressed relative.

« Are you alone? Why is Joseph not with you? Why have you parted? Are you still at variance with each other? You must not. See? The reason of the disagreement is dead! » And She points at the face of the veronica.

Simon looks at it and weeps. He says: « We have never parted again. And we will not part. Yes, the reason of the disagreement is dead. But not as You think. It is dead because Joseph, now, has understood… Joseph is out there… and he dare not come in… »

« Oh! no. I never frighten anybody. I am nothing but mercy. I would have forgiven also the Traitor. But it is no longer possible. He has killed himself. » And She stands up. She walks with a stoop and calls: « Joseph! Joseph! »

But Joseph, overwhelmed with weeping, does not reply.

She goes to the door, as She had done to speak to Judas, and leaning

on the door-post, She stretches the other hand out and lays it on the head of the eldest and most stubborn of Her nephews. She caresses him and says: « Let Me lean on a Joseph! Everything was peace and serenity as long as I had that name as king in My house. Then My holy man died… And all the human welfare of poor Mary died as well. The supernatural welfare of My God and Son has remained… Now I am the Forlorn wretch… But if I can be embraced in the arms of a Joseph I love, and you know whether I love you, I shall be less forlorn. I shall seem to have gone back in time. And that I can say: "Jesus is absent. But He is not dead. He is at Cana, at Nain, working, but He will soon be back… " Come, Joseph. Let us go in together where He is waiting to smile at you. He left His smile to us to tell us that He bears us no ill-will. »

Joseph goes in, held by the hand by Her, and as soon as he sees Her sat down, he kneels in front of Her, with his head on Her lap and sobbing says: « Forgive me! Forgive me! »

« It is not Me, it is Him you must ask. »

« He cannot forgive me. On Calvary I tried to attract His attention. He looked at everybody, but not at me… He is right… I have known and loved Him, as a Master, too late. Now, it is all over. »

« It begins now. You will go to Nazareth and say: "I believe". Your faith will have an infinite value. You will love Him with the perfection of future apostles, who will have the merit of loving Jesus known only through the spirit. Will you do that? »

« Yes! I will! To make amends. But I should like to hear a word from Him. And I shall never hear it again… »

« On the third day He will rise and He will speak to those whom He loves. The whole world is awaiting His Voice. »

« You are blessed, since You can believe… »

« Joseph! Joseph! My spouse was your uncle. And he believed something that is much more difficult to believe than this. He did believe that poor Mary of Nazareth was the Spouse and Mother of God. Why can you, the nephew of that Just man after whom you are named, not believe that a God can say to Death: "Enough!" and to Life: "Come back!"? »

« I do not deserve that faith, because I have been bad. I was unfair to Him. But You… You are the Mother. Bless me. Forgive me… Give me peace… »

« Yes… Peace… Forgiveness… Oh! God! Once I said: "How difficult it is to be the 'redeemers' ". Now I say: "How difficult it is to be the Mother of the Redeemer!". Have mercy, My God! Mercy!… Go, Joseph. Your mother has suffered so much during these hours. Console her… I am staying here… With what I have of My Child… And My solitary tears will obtain Faith for you. Goodbye, My dear nephew. Tell everybody that I want to be silent… to think… to pray… I am… I am a poor woman hanging from a thread over an

abyss… The thread is My Faith… And your lack of faith, because nobody is capable of believing totally and holily, your lack of faith knocks continuously against My thread… And you are not aware of what exhaustion you induce in Me… You do not know that you are helping Satan to torture Me. Go… »

And Mary remains alone… She kneels before the veronica. She kisses the forehead, the eyes, the lips of Her Son and says: « So! So! To have strength… I must believe. I must believe. On behalf of everybody. »

Night has fallen. A starless, dark, sultry night. Mary remains in the shadow with Her sorrow.

The day of the Sabbath is over.

611. The Night of Holy Saturday.

31st March 1945.

Mary of Alphaeus goes in cautiously and listens. Perhaps she thinks that the Blessed Virgin has fallen asleep. She approaches Her and bends over Her. And she sees Her on Her knees, with Her face on the floor against the veronica. She whispers: « Oh! poor wretch! She has stayed like that!)d » She must think that She has fallen asleep like that or She has fainted.

But Mary, ending Her prayer, says: « No, I was praying. »

« On Your knees! In the dark! In the cold! With the window open! See? You are frozen. »

« But I feel so much better, Mary. While I was praying - and only the Eternal knows how exhausted I was after giving strength to so many wavering faiths and enlightening so many minds that not even His death had illuminated - I seemed to smell an angelical scent, a heavenly freshness, a caress of a wing… Only for a moment… Not longer. A drop of pacifying sweetness seemed to be instilled into the sea of myrrh that has been submerging Me furiously for three days now. The closed vault of Heaven seemed to open a little and a beam of bright love seemed to descend upon the Abandoned Mother. And I seemed to hear an incorporeal whisper, coming from an infinite distance, say: "It is really all over". My prayer, so far desolate, has become more peaceful. It became tinged with the bright peace - oh! just a nuance! - with the bright peace that I used to experience in My contacts with God during My prayers… 'My prayers! … Mary, did you love your Alphaeus very much, when you were his virgin bride? »

« Oh! Mary!… I rejoiced at dawn saying: "Another night has gone by. One less to wait". I rejoiced at sunset saying: "Another day is over. Nearer is my entrance into his house". And as the sun set, I used to sing like a skylark thinking: "He will soon be here". And when I saw him come, looking as handsome as my Judas - that is

why Judas is my favourite - but with the eyes of a deer in love like my James, oh! then I no longer knew where I was! And when he greeted me saying: "My sweet bride!" and I was able to say to him: "My Lord", then I… I think that, if at that moment I had been crushed by a heavy cart or struck by an arrow, I would have felt no pain. And later!… When I became his wife… Ah!… » Mary is lost in the ecstasy of recollections. She then asks: « But why that question? »

« To explain to you what My prayers were for Me. Multiply Your feelings by one hundred, raise them to thousands powers, and you will understand what prayer and the wait for the hour of prayer have always been for Me… Of course, I think that, even if I did not pray in the peace of the grotto or of My room, but I was intent on the work of a woman, My soul prayed incessantly… But when I was able to say: "Well, the hour to collect My thoughts in God is coming", My heart would burn throbbing fast. And when I got lost in Him… then… No… I cannot explain this to you. When you are in the light of God you will understand… All that had been lost for three days… And it was even more heart-rending than not having My Son any more… And Satan worked on these two wounds, laid one on top of the other, the death of My Son and the abandonment by God, creating a third wound: the terror of the lack of faith. Mary, I am fond of you and you are relative of Mine. Later, you will tell your sons, the apostles, so that they may persevere in their apostolate and triumph over Satan. I am sure that, if I had accepted the doubt, if I had yielded to Satan's temptation and I had said: "It is not possible for Him to rise from the dead" denying God - because to say that was the same as denying God with His Truth and Power - such a great Redemption would have come to nothing. I, the new Eve, would have bitten once again at the forbidden fruit of pride and of spiritual sense, and I would have destroyed the work of My Redeemer. The apostles will be continuously tempted thus: by the world, by the flesh, by power, by Satan. Let them be firm against all tortures, and the corporal ones will be the lightest, so that they may not destroy what Jesus has done. »

« You, Mary, should tell my sons… What do You expect Your poor sister-in-law to say?! Oh! however! If they had come! That they should run away at first, well!… But later! »

« You know that Lazarus and Simon were ordered to take them to Bethany. Jesus knows everything… »

« Yes… But… Oh! when I see them, I will reproach them severely. They behaved cowardly. That everybody else should behave so is understandable, but not them, my sons! I will never forgive them… »

« Forgive them, forgive them… It was a moment of dismay… They did not believe that He could be captured. He had said so… »

« That is why I will not forgive them. They knew. So they were

already prepared. When one knows something, and believes the person who tells it, nothing surprises any more! »

« Mary, also to all of you He said: "I will rise". And yet… If I could lay your breasts and heads open, on your hearts and on your brains I would see written: "It is not possible". »

« But, at least… Yes… It is difficult to believe… But we remained on Calvary. »

« Through the gratuitous grace of God. Otherwise we would have run away as well. Longinus, did you hear him? He said: "horrible thing". And he is a warrior. We, women, all alone with a boy, we resisted through God's direct help. So do not boast about it. It is no merit of ours. »

« And why was it not given to them? »

« Because they will be the priests of tomorrow. So they must know. They must know, having experienced it themselves, how easy it is for a follower of a Creed to lapse into abjuration. Jesus does not want priests like those who are so little so, that they have been His most obstinate enemies… »

« You speak of Jesus as if He had already come back. »

« See? You also admit that you do not believe. So how can you reproach your sons? »

Mary of Alphaeus does not know what to say in reply. She remains with her head lowered and mechanically moves some objects. She finds the little lamp and goes out with it and comes back in after lighting it, and she puts it in its usual place.

Mary is sitting once again near the stretched out veronica. The veronica, in the yellow flickering little flame of the oil lamp acquires a particular liveliness, and the lips and eyes seem to move.

« Are You not taking anything? » asks Mary's sister-in-law, who is somewhat mortified.

« A little water. I am thirsty. »

Mary goes out and comes back… with some milk.

« Do not insist. I cannot. Some water, yes. There is no more water in Me. I think I have no more blood either. But… »

There is a knock at the door. Mary of Alphaeus goes out. People can be heard talking in low voices in the hall, then John looks into the room.

« John. Have you come back? Still nothing? »

« Yes. Simon Peter… and Jesus' mantle… together… At Gethsemane. The mantle… » John falls on his knees and says: « Here it is… But it is all torn and covered with blood. The marks of the hands are Jesus'. Only He had them so long and thin. But it has been torn by teeth, it is very clear that this is the mouth of a man. I think it must have been… it must have been Judas Iscariot, because near the spot where Simon Peter found the mantle, there was a piece of Judas' yellow tunic. He went back there… later… before committing

suicide. Look, Mother. »

Mary has done nothing but caress and kiss the heavy red mantle of Her Son, but, pressed by John, She opens it and sees the marks of blood, dark against the red of the Blood, and the tears of the teeth. She trembles and whispers: « How much blood! » She does not seem to see anything but that.

« Mother… the ground is red with it. Simon, who ran up there in the early morning hours, says that there was still fresh blood on the leaves of the grass… Jesus… I do not know… He did not seem to me to be wounded… Where did so much blood come from? »

« From His Body. In the bitter anguish… Oh! Jesus total Victim! Oh! My Jesus! » Mary weeps so distressingly, with an exhausted lament, that the women appear at the door and look in and then they go away. « This, this while everybody was abandoning You… What were you doing, while He was suffering His first agony? »

« We were sleeping, Mother… » John weeps.

« Was Simon there? Tell Me. »

« I had gone to look for the mantle. I had thought of asking Jonah and Mark… But they have run away. The house is closed and everything has been abandoned. So I went down to the walls, to go along all the road we had gone on Thursday… I was so tired that evening, and so grieved, that now I could not remember where Jesus had taken off His mantle. It seemed to me that He had it, then that He did not have it… On the spot where He was arrested there was nothing… Where we three were, nothing… I went along the path taken by the Master… And I thought that also Simon Peter was dead, because I saw him there, all crouched against a rock. I shouted. He raised his head… and I thought he had gone mad, so changed was he. He uttered a cry and tried to run away. But he staggered, blinded by his weeping, and I got hold of him. He said to me: "Leave me. I am a demon. I denied Him. As He said… and the cock crowed and He looked at me. I ran away… I ran here and there through the country, and then I found myself here. And, see? Jehovah made me find His Blood here to accuse me. Blood everywhere. Blood everywhere! On the rock, on the ground, on the grass. I had it shed. Like you, like everybody. But I denied that Blood". He seemed delirious. I tried to calm him and take him away. But he did not want. He said: "Here. Here. To guard this Blood and His mantle. And I want to wash it with my tears. When there is no more blood on the cloth, perhaps I will go back among the living, beating my breast and saying: 'I have denied the Lord!' ". I told him that You wanted him. That You had sent me looking for him. But he would not believe me. Then I told him that You wanted also Judas, to forgive him, and that You were suffering as You were no longer able to do so, because of his suicide. Then he wept more calmly. He wanted to know everything. And he told me that there was still fresh Blood

on the grass and that the mantle had been maltreated by Judas, of whose tunic he had found a piece. I let him talk and talk, and then I said: "Come to the Mother". Oh! how much I had to insist to convince him! And when I thought that I had succeeded in convincing him and I got up to come, he did not want to come any more. He came only when it was getting dark. But when he arrived beyond the gate, he hid once again in a desert vegetable garden saying: "I don't want people to see me. I bear written on my forehead the word: Denier of God". Now that it is completely dark, I have succeeded in dragging him here. »

« Where is he? »

« Behind that door. »

« Let him come in. »

« Mother… »

« John… »

« Do not reproach him. He is repentant. »

« Do you still know Me so little? Let him come in. »

John goes out. He comes back. Alone. He says: « He dare not. Try to call him Yourself. »

And Mary calls him kindly: « Simon of Jonah, come. » Nothing. « Simon Peter, come. » Nothing. « Peter of Jesus and Mary, come. » A sharp burst of weeping. But he does not go in. Mary stands up. She leaves the mantle on the table and goes to the door.

Peter is crouched outside. Like a dog with no master. He cries so loud and all curled up, that he cannot hear the noise of the door that opens squeaking or the shuffling of Mary's sandals. He realises that She is there when She bends so low as to take his hand, pressed against his eyes, and She compels him to stand up. She goes back into the room dragging him like a little boy. She closes the door and locks it, and bent with sorrow, as he is with shame, She goes back to Her seat.

Peter kneels at Her feet and weeps without restraint. Mary caresses his grey hair, wet with the perspiration of sorrow. Nothing but such caress, until he calms down.

Then, when at last Peter says: « You cannot forgive me. So do not caress me. Because I have denied Him », Mary says:

« Peter, you have denied Him. That is true. You had the courage of denying Him in public. The cowardly courage of doing that. The others… Everybody, except the shepherds, Manaen, Nicodemus and Joseph and John, has only been cowardly. They have all denied Him: the men and women of Israel, except a few women… I will not mention the nephews and Alphaeus of Sarah. They were relatives and friends. But the others!… And they did not even have the satanic courage of lying to save themselves, or the spiritual courage of repenting weeping, or the more elevated one of acknowledging their error in public.

Your are a poor man. Or rather, you were. As long as you relied on yourself. Now you are a man. Tomorrow you will be a saint. But even if you were not what you are, I would have forgiven You the same. I would have forgiven also Judas, to save his soul. Because the value of a soul, also of one only, deserves every effort to overcome disgust and resentment, to the extent of being crushed thereby. Bear that in mind, Peter. I will repeat it to you: "The value of a soul is such that, at the cost of dying through the effort of suffering to have it close to us, one must hold it so, in one's arms, as I am holding your grey-haired head, if one realises that, by holding it so, it can be saved". So… Like a mother who, after the father's punishment, presses the head of her guilty son to her heart, and more with the words of her distressed heart that beats with love and sorrow, than with the father's blows, reforms and achieves.

Peter of My Son, poor Peter who have been, like everybody, in the hands of Satan in this hour of darkness, and you were not aware of it, and you think that you had done everything by yourself, come, do come here, on the heart of the Mother of My Son's children. Here Satan can no longer harm you. Here storms abate, and while waiting for the sun, My Jesus, Who will rise to say to you: "Peace to you, My Peter", the morning star rises, pure, beautiful, and making everything it kisses pure and beautiful, as happens on the clear waters of our sea in the fresh spring mornings. That is why I have wished so much to have you. At the foot of the Cross, I was tortured because of Him and of you and - how come you did not perceive it? - and I called your spirits so loud that I think they really came to Me. And closed in My heart, or rather, laid on My heart, like the loaves of the offering, I held them under the bath of His Blood and His tears. I was able to do so, because, in John, He made Me the Mother of all His progeny… How much I longed for you!… That morning, in that afternoon, at night and the following day… Why, poor Peter, wounded and trampled on by the Demon, did you keep a mother waiting so long? Do you not know that it is the task of mothers to tidy up, cure, forgive and lead their children? I will lead you to Him.

Mould you like to see Him? Would you like to see His smile, to be convinced that He still loves you? Would you? Oh! then move away from My poor lap of a woman, and lay your forehead on His crowned forehead, your lips on His wounded lips and kiss your Lord. »

« He is dead… I shall never be able. »

« Peter. Reply to Me. Which do you think is the last miracle of your Lord? »

« The Eucharist. No. That of the soldier cured there… there… Oh! do not remind me!… »

« A faithful, loving strong woman met Him on Calvary and wiped

His Face. And He, to tell us how much love can do, impressed the image of His Face on the linen cloth. Here it is, Peter. A woman achieved that, in an hour of hellish darkness and of divine wrath. Simply because she loved. Bear that in mind, Peter, for the hours in which the Demon will seem to you to be stronger than God. God was the prisoner of men, He was already overwhelmed, condemned, scourged, He was already dying… And yet, as God is always God even among the most cruel persecutions, and if the Idea is struck, God Who inspires it is untouchable, so God to deniers, to unbelievers, to the men of the foolish "whys", of the guilty "it cannot be ", of the sacrilegious "what I do not understand is not true ", replies, without any words, with this cloth. Look at it. One day, you told Me, you said to Andrew: "The Messiah showed Himself to you? It cannot be true", and then your human reason had to bend before the power of the spirit, that saw the Messiah where reason did not see Him. On another occasion, on the stormy sea, you asked: "Shall I come, Master?" and then, when you were half way, on the agitated water, you became doubtful saying: "Water cannot hold me" and, with your doubt as ballast, you were almost drowned. Only when the spirit that believed prevailed against human reason, you were able to find the help of God. On another occasion you said: "If Lazarus has been dead four days, why have we come? To die in vain?". Because with your human reason you could not suppose any other solution. And your reason was disproved by the spirit, that by pointing out to you, through the man raised from the dead, the glory of Him Who had raised him, showed you that you had not gone there in vain. Another time, many other times, upon hearing your Lord speak of death, and a cruel death, you said: "That will never happen to You!" And you can see how your reason has been given the lie. I now wait to hear the word of your spirit in this last case… »

« Forgive me. »

« No. Another word. »

« I believe. »

« Another one. »

« I don't know… »

« I love. Peter, love. You will be forgiven. You will believe. You will be strong. You will be the Priest, not the Pharisee who oppresses and has nothing but formalism and lack of active faith. Look at Him. Dare to look at Him. Everybody has looked at Him and venerated Him. Even Longinus… And would you not be able? And yet you were able to deny Him! If you do not recognise Him now, through the fire of My motherly loving sorrow that joins you and reconciles you, you will never be able again. He rises from the dead. How will you be able to look at Him in His new splendour, if you do not know His face in the passage from the Master you know to

the Triumpher Whom you do not know? Because sorrow, all the Sorrow of ages and of the world, has worked on Him with chisel and mallet in the hours from Thursday evening to the ninth hour on Friday. And they have changed His Face. Previously He was only the Master and Friend. Now He is the Judge and King. He has ascended on His throne to judge. And He has put on His crown. He will remain so. The only difference is that after His glorious Resurrection, He will no longer be the Man Judge and King, but the God Judge and King. Look at Him. Look at Him while Humanity and Sorrow veil Him, in order to be able to look at Him when He triumphs in His Divinity. »

Peter at last raises his head from Mary's lap and looks at Her, with his eyes red with weeping, in the face of an old child, who is desolate and surprised at the evil he has done and at all the good he finds.

Mary compels him to look at his Lord. Then while Peter, as if he were before a living face, says moaning: « Forgive me, forgive me! I do not know how it happened. What happened. I was not myself. It was something that made me be not myself. But I love You, Jesus! I love You, my Master! Come back! Come back! Do not go away like that, without telling me that You have understood me! », Mary repeats the gesture already made in the sepulchral room. Standing, Her arms outstretched, She looks like the priestess at the moment of the offerings. And as there She offered the immaculate Host, here She offers the repentant sinner. She is indeed the Mother of saints and sinners!

Then She makes Peter stand up and continues to console him. And She says to him: « I am now happier. I know that you are here. Go now where the women and John are. You all need rest and food. Go. And be good… » as if he were a boy.

And while in the house, which is calmer this second night after His death and is inclined to go back to the human customs of sleep and food, and has the tired resigned appearance of dwellings where the survivors recover slowly from the blow of death, Mary alone wants to stay up, motionless in Her place, awaiting, in prayer. Always. Always. Always. For the living and for the dead. For the just and the guilty. For the return. The return. The return of Her Son.

Her sister-in-law wanted to stay with Her. But now she is sound asleep, sitting in a corner, with her head leaning against the wall. Martha and Mary go in twice, but then, sleepy as they are, they withdraw into a nearby room, and after a few words, they fall asleep as well… And farther away, in a room as small as a plaything, Salome and Susanna are sleeping, while, on two mats laid on the floor, Peter and John are sleeping noisily. The former still sobbing mechanically at intervals in his snoring, the latter with the smile

of a child who is dreaming of a happy vision.

Life resumes its activity and the flesh its rights… Only the Morning Star shines wakefully, with Her love watching near the image of Her Son.

And the night of Holy Saturday passes by thus. Until the crow of a cock, at the first light of daybreak, makes Peter jump to his feet with a shout. And his frightened sorrowful cry awakes those who were sleeping.

The truce is over for them and sorrow begins all over again. As for Mary, it only increases the anxiety of Her wait.

THE GLORIFICATION

612. The Morning of the Resurrection.

1st April 1945.

The women resume working at the ointments, which, during the night, in the cool of the court-yard, have become a thick Pomade.

John and Peter think that they ought to tidy up the Supper-room, cleaning the tableware, but putting everything back, as if the Supper were just over.

« He told us » says John.

« He had also said: "Do not fall asleep"! He had said: "Do not be proud, Peter. Do you not know that the hour of the trial is about to come?" And… and He said: "You will deny Me… " » Peter weeps again, while with deep grief he says: « And I did deny Him! »

« Enough, Peter! Now you have collected yourself. Enough of this torture! »

« No, never enough. If I should become as old as the ancient patriarchs, if I should live the seven hundred or the nine hundred years of Adam and of his first grandchildren, I would never cease having this torture. »

« Do you not hope in His Mercy? »

« Yes, I do. If I did not believe in that, I should be like the Iscariot: a desperate man. But even if He forgives me from the bosom of His Father, where He has gone back, I will not forgive myself. I! I! I who said: "I do not know Him", because at that moment it was dangerous to know Him, because I was ashamed of being His disciple, because I was afraid of being tortured… He was going towards His death… and I thought of saving my life. And to save it, I rejected Him, like a woman in sin, who, after giving birth to a child, rejects the fruit of her womb, which is dangerous to keep, before her unaware husband comes back. I am worse than an adulteress… worse than… »

Mary Magdalene, attracted by their shouts, comes in. « Do not shout like that. Mary can hear you. She is so exhausted! She has no strength left, and everything hurts Her. Your useless unseemly shouts renew Her torture of what you have been… »

« See? See, John? A woman can order me to be quiet. And she is right. Because we, the males sacred to the Lord, have only been able to lie or to run away. The women have been brave. You, a little more than a woman, so young and pure you are, were able to remain. We, the strong ones, the males, have fled. Oh! how the world must despise me! Tell me, tell me, woman! You are right! Put your foot on my lips that lied. On the sole of your sandal there is perhaps a little of His Blood. And only that Blood, mixed with the mud of the road, can give the denier a little forgiveness, a little peace. I

must get accustomed to the scorn of the world! What am I? Tell me: what am I? »

« You are full of pride » replies calmly the Magdalene. « Sorrow? Also. But you must believe that out of ten parts of your sorrow, five, I do not want to offend you by saying six, five are of your sorrow of being one who can be despised. And I will really scorn you if you continue only to moan and get into a frenzy, just like a foolish woman! What is done is done. And no unseemly shouting can repair it or cancel it. It only serves to draw attention and beg for undeserved pity. Be manly in your repentance. Do not shout. Act. I… you know who I was… But, when I realised that I was more despicable than vomit, I did not fall into fits of convulsions. I acted. In public. Without being indulgent towards myself and without asking for indulgence. Did the world despise me? It was right. I had deserved it. The world said: "A new whim of the prostitute"? And it called blasphemy my recourse to Jesus? It was right. The world remembered my previous behaviour that justified such remarks. So? The world had to convince itself that the sinner Mary no longer existed. By means of facts, I convinced the world. Do the same and be quiet. »

« You are severe, Mary » objects John.

« More with myself than with other people. But I admit it. I do not have the light hand of the Mother. She is Love. I… oh! I! I lashed my feelings with the whip of my will. And I will do so even more. Do you think that I have forgiven myself for being lustful? No, I have not. But I only say so to myself. And I will always repeat it to myself. I shall die consumed with this secret regret of having been my own corrupter, with this inconsolable sorrow of having profaned myself and not having been able to give Him but a trampled on heart… See… I have worked more than all the others at the balms… And with greater courage than the others I will uncover Him… Oh! God! what will He be like now! (Mary of Magdala grows pale at the very thought of it). And I will cover Him with fresh balms, removing those which are certainly all tainted on His countless wounds… I will do so, because the other women will look like convolvuli after a downpour… But it grieves me to have to do it with these hands of mine accustomed to caressing lustfully, and to have to approach His Holiness with this stained body of mine… I should like… I should like to have the hand of the Virgin Mother to accomplish this last unction… »

Mary is now weeping silently, without sobbing. How different she is from the theatrical Mary always shown to us! She is weeping noiselessly, as she did on the day of her forgiveness in the house of the Pharisee.

« Are you saying that… the women will be afraid? » Peter asks her.

« Not afraid… But they will be upset seeing His Body, which is certainly already rotten… swollen… black. And then, and this is certain, they will be afraid of the guards. »

« Do you want me to come? With John? »

« Ha! Certainly not! We women are all going. Because, as we were all up there, so it is fair that we should all be round His death bed. You and John will remain here. She cannot remain alone!… »

« Is She not coming? »

« We are not letting Her come! »

« She is convinced that He will rise from the dead… What do you think? »

« I, after Mary, am the one who believes more. I have always believed that that could be. He said so. And He never lies… Never!… Oh! before I used to call Him Jesus, Master, Saviour, Lord… Now, now I feel that He is so great that I do not know, I dare not give Him a name any more… What shall I say to Him when I see Him?… »

« But do you really think that He will rise?… »

« Another one! Oh! By dint of telling you that I do believe and of hearing you say that you do not believe, I will end up by not believing any more myself! I have believed and I do believe. I have believed and a long time ago I prepared a garment for Him. And tomorrow, as tomorrow is the third day, I will bring it here, to have it ready… »

« But if you say that He will be black, swollen, filthy? »

« Filthy, never. Sin is filthy. But… of course! He will be black. So? Was Lazarus not already putrid? And yet he rose. And his body was healed. But, if I say so!… Be quiet, you misbelievers! My human reason says also to me: "He is dead and will not rise". But my spirit, "His" spirit, because I have received a new spirit from Him, shouts resounding like blares of silver trumpets: "He will rise! He will rise! He will rise!". Why do you hurl me like a little boat against the cliffs of your doubts? I believe! I believe, my Lord! Although torn by grief, Lazarus has obeyed the Master and has remained in Bethany… I, who know who Lazarus of Theophilus is, a strong man, not a fearful leveret, can appreciate the sacrifice he made by remaining in the shade and not near the Master. But he obeyed. And by such obedience he has been more heroical than if with weapons he had snatched Him from armed men. I have believed and I believe. And I am staying here. Waiting like Her. But let me go. It is daybreak. As soon as there is enough light, we will go to the Sepulchre… »

And the Magdalene goes away, her face flushed with weeping, but always brave.

She goes back into Mary's room.

« What was the matter with Peter? »

« A nervous fit. But he has got over it. »

« Do not be severe, Mary. He suffers.. »

« So do I. But You know that not even once have I asked a pitying caress of You. He has already been cured by You… On the contrary, I think that You alone, Mother, are in need of a balsam. My holy, beloved Mother! But take heart… Tomorrow is the third day. We shall lock ourselves in here, the two of us: His lovers. You, the holy Lover; I, the poor lover… But I love Him as much as I can, with my whole self. And we will wait for Him… The rest, those who do not believe, we will lock them in over there, with their doubts. And I will put many roses here… I will have the chest brought here today… I will go to the mansion house and I will instruct Levi. All these horrible things must disappear! Our Resurrected Lord must not see them… So many roses… And You will put on a new dress… He must not see You so. I will comb Your hair, I will wash Your poor face disfigured by tears. Eternal maid, I will act as Your mother… I shall have, at last, the joy of taking motherly care of a child more innocent than a new-born baby! Dear!)d » and with her emotional exuberance, the Magdalene presses to her breast the head of Mary Who is sitting, she kisses and caresses Her, she tidies the light locks of Her hair ruffled behind Her ears, with her linen dress she wipes the fresh tears that stream down Her cheeks again, again, always…

The women come in with lights and amphorae and large-mouthed vases.

Mary of Alphaeus is carrying a heavy mortar. « It is not possible to stay outside. There is a weak wind that blows out the lamps » she explains.

They place themselves on one side. They lay all their things on a long narrow table, then they give the final touch to their balms by mixing the already heavy pomade of essences in the mortar with a white powder, handfuls of which they take from a little sack. They mix working with all their energy and then they fill a large-mouthed vase. They place it on the floor. They repeat the same operation with another vase. Perfumes and tears fall on the resins.

Mary Magdalene says: « This is not the unction that I hoped I should be able to prepare for You. » Because it is the Magdalene who, being more skilled than the other women, has controlled and directed the composition of the perfume, which is so strong that they decide to open the door and leave the window ajar over the garden, which is just beginning to appear in the early light of dawn.

They all weep more loudly after the remark made by the Magdalene in a subdued voice.

They have finished. All the vases are full.

They go out with the empty amphorae, the mortar no longer useful, and many lamps. Two only are left in the little room and they tremble, they seem to be sobbing as well, with the flickering of their light…

The women come back again and they close the window, because it is a rather cold dawn. They put on their mantles and they take large sacks into which they put the vases of the balm.

Mary stands up and looks for Her mantle. But they all crowd round Her convincing Her not to come.

« You are not fit to stand, Mary. You have not had any food for two days. Only a little water. »

« Yes, Mother, We will do it quickly and well. And we shall soon be back. »

« Be not afraid. We will embalm Him like a king. Look what precious balm we have prepared! And how much of it!… »

« We will not neglect any part of the body or any wound and we will arrange Him properly with our hands. We are strong and we are mothers. We will place Him like a child in a cradle. And the others will only have to close the place. »

But Mary insists: « It is My duty » She says. « I have always taken care of Him. Only these last three years that He was in the world, I surrendered the care of Him to other people, when He was far away from Me. Now that the world has rejected and disowned Him, He is Mine again. And I am once again His servant. »

Peter, who had approached the door with John, without being seen by the women, runs away upon hearing these words. He runs to some secluded corner to bewail his sin. John remains near the door. But he does not say anything. He would like to go as well. But he makes the sacrifice of remaining with the Mother.

Mary Magdalene takes Mary back to Her seat. She kneels in front of Her, she embraces Her knees raising her sorrowful loving face towards Her, and she promises: « With His Spirit, He knows and sees everything. But with my kisses I will tell His Body Your love and Your wish. I know what is love. I know what spur, what hunger it is to love, what nostalgia of being with whoever is our love. And that applies also to any base love that looks like gold, but is filth. And when she who has sinned can understand what is the holy love for the living Mercy, Whom men did not know how to love, then she can understand better what is Your love, Mother. You know that I know how to love. And You know that He said so, that evening of my true birth, on the shores of our serene lake, that Mary knows how to love much. Now this exuberant love of mine, like water that overflows from a tilted basin, like a flowery rosery that streams down a wall, like a flame that finding timber spreads and grows, has poured onto Him, and from Him-Love has drawn fresh power… Oh! my power of loving was not able to take His place on the Cross!… But what I was not able to do for Him - to suffer, and bleed, and die in His place, amid the mockery of all the world, happy, happy, happy to suffer in His place, and I am certain that the thread of my poor life would have been burnt more by the triumphant

love than by the infamous scaffold, and from the ashes there would have sprung up the fresh snow-white flower of the new virgin life, unaware of everything that is not God - all that I was not able to do for Him, I can still do for You… Mother, Whom I love with all my heart. Rely on me. I, who in the house of Simon, the Pharisee, knew how to gently caress His holy feet, now, with my soul that opens more and more to Grace, with greater gentleness will be able to caress His holy limbs, to dress His wounds embalming them more with my love, with the balm taken from my heart wrung by love and sorrow, than with the ointment. And death will not spoil that body that has loved so much and is so much loved. Death will flee, because Love is stronger. Love is invincible. And I, Mother, with Your perfect love, with my total love, will embalm my King of Love. »

Mary kisses this impassioned woman who, at last, has been able to find so much passion, and She yields to her entreaties.

The women go out taking a lamp. One only is left in the room. The Magdalene is the last to go out, after a last kiss to the Mother Who remains.

The house is all dark and silent. The road is still dark and solitary.

John asks: « Do you really not want me? »

« No. You may be useful here. Goodbye. »

John goes back to Mary. « They did not want me… » he says in a low voice.

« Do not feel mortified. They are with Jesus. You with Me. John, let us pray a little together. Where is Peter? »

« I don't know. Somewhere in the house. But I have not seen him. He is… I thought that he was stronger… I am suffering, too, but he… »

« He has two sorrows. You have only one. Come. Let us pray also for him. » And Mary slowly says the « Our Father ».

Then She caresses John saying: « Go to Peter. Do not leave him all alone. He has been so much in darkness during these hours, that he cannot stand even the feeble light of the world. Be the apostle of your lost brother. Begin your preaching with him. On your road, and it will be a long one, you will always find people like him. Begin your work with your companion… »

« But what shall I say?… I don't know… Everything makes him weep… »

« Mention His precept of love to him. Tell him that he who fears only, does not yet know God sufficiently, because God is Love. And if he says to you: "I have sinned", reply to him that God has loved sinners so much that He sent His Only-Begotten Son for them. Tell him that we must reply with love to so much love. And love makes one trust in the very good Lord. That trust does not make us be afraid of His judgement, because through it we have recognised the divine Wisdom and Goodness, and we say: "I am a poor creature.

But He knows. And He gives me the Christ as guarantee of forgiveness and as a supporting pillar. My misery is overcome by my union with the Christ". It is in Jesus' name that everything is forgiven… Go, John. Tell him that. I am staying here, with My Jesus.. » and She caresses the veronica.

John goes out, closing the door behind him.

Mary kneels down, as She did the previous evening, face to face with the veil of the Veronica. And She prays and speaks to Her Son. While She is strong enough to give strength to other people, when She is alone She bends under Her overwhelming cross. And yet, now and again, like a flame no longer oppressed by the bushel, Her soul rises towards a hope that cannot die in Her. On the contrary it grows as hours pass. And She expresses Her hope also to the Father. Her hope and Her request.

(You can put here the prayer of last year, the lament of this Passover dawn, dated 21st February 1944, leaving it exactly as it is, because no change is to be made to it).

[21st February 1944]

« Jesus, Jesus! Are You not coming back yet? Your poor Mother can no longer put up with the idea that You are lying dead over there. You said it, but no one understood You. But I understood You! "Destroy the Temple of God and I will rebuild it in three days". This is the beginning of the third day. Oh! My Jesus! Do not wait till it ends to come back to life, to Your Mother, Who needs to see You alive in order not to die remembering that You are dead, Who needs to see You handsome, healthy, triumphant, in order not to die remembering You in that state in which I left You!

Oh! Father! Father! Give My Son back to Me! That I may see Him come back as a Man and not as a corpse, a King, not a condemned man. Later, I know, He will come back to You, in Heaven. But I shall have seen Him cured of so much evil, I shall have seen Him strong after so much weakness, I shall have seen Him triumphant after struggling so much, I shall have seen Him God after so much humanity suffered on behalf of men. And I shall feel happy even if I lose the possibility of being near Him. I shall know that He is with You, Holy Father, I shall know that He is for ever free from Sorrow. Now, instead, I cannot forget that He is in a sepulchre, that He is there, killed because of all the sorrow they have given Him, that He, My Son-God, is sharing the destiny of men in the dark of a sepulchre, He, Your Living Son.

Father, Father, listen to Your servant. Because of that "yes"… I have never asked anything of You for My obedience to Your will; it was Your Will, and Your Will was Mine; I did not have to exact anything for the sacrifice of My will to Yours, Holy Father. But

now, but now, for the sake of that "yes" that I said to the messenger Angel, o Father, listen to Me!

He is now free from tortures, because He accomplished everything with the agony of three hours after the tortures of the morning. But I have been for three days in this agony. You can see My heart and You hear its throbs. Our Jesus said that no feather falls off a bird without You seeing it, that no wild flower dies without its agony being consoled by You with Your sunshine and Your dew. Oh, Father, I am dying of this grief! Deal with Me as You do with the sparrow that You reclothe with a new feather, and with the flower that You warm and quench its thirst in Your pity. I am dying frozen by sorrow. I have no more blood in My veins. Once it became all milk to nourish Your Son and Mine; now it has all turned into tears because I have no Son any more. They have killed Him, they have killed Him, Father, and You know how!

I have no more blood! I have shed it all with Him on Thursday night, on the sorrowful Friday. I am as cold as one whose veins have been severed. The sun no longer shines for Me, because He is dead, My holy Sun, My blessed Sun, the Sun born of My womb for the joy of His Mother, for the salvation of the world. I have no more refreshment, because I no longer have Him, the sweetest fountain for His Mother, Who drank His Word, Who quenched Her thirst with His presence. I am like a flower in dry sand. I am dying, I am dying, holy Father.

And I am not afraid to die, because He also is dead. But what will these little ones do, the little herd of My Son, so weak, so frightened, so fickle, if there is no one to support it? I am nothing, Father. But, by the desires of My Son, I am like a formation of armed men. I defend, I will defend His Doctrine and His heritage as a she-wolf defends her wolf-cubs. I, a ewe-lamb, will become a she-wolf to defend what belongs to My Son, and consequently, what is Yours.

You have seen it, Father. Eight days ago this town stripped its olive-trees, stripped its houses, stripped its gardens, stripped its inhabitants and became hoarse shouting: "Hosanna to the Son of David; blessed He Who comes in the name of the Lord". And while He was passing walking on carpets of branches, of garments, of clothes, of flowers, the citizens pointed Him out to one another saying: "He is Jesus, the Prophet from Nazareth in Galilee. He is the King of Israel". And while those branches had not yet withered and their voices were still hoarse through so much singing hosannas, they changed their cries into accusations and curses and requests for death, and of the branches cut off for the triumph they made cudgels to strike Your Lamb, Whom they were taking to His death. If they have done so much while He was among them and spoke to them, and smiled at them, and looked at them with His eyes that melt hearts, and even stones tremble when looked at by them, and

He helped them and taught them, what will they do when He comes back to You?

His disciples, You have seen them. One betrayed Him, the others ran away. He was no sooner struck than they ran away like cowardly sheep, and they did not even stay around Him while He was dying. One only, the youngest, remained. Now comes the elder. But he already denied Him once. When Jesus is no longer here to watch him, will he persist in his Faith?

I am a nonentity, but a little of My Son is in Me, and My love supplies what I lack and annuls it. So I become something useful for the cause of Your Son, for His Church, that will never find peace and needs to strike deep roots in order not to be uprooted by winds. I am the one who will take care of it. Like a diligent gardener I will watch that it grows up strong and straight in its dawn. Then I shall not be worried about dying. But I cannot live if I remain any longer without Jesus.

Oh! Father, Who have abandoned Your Son for the welfare of men, and then You have comforted Him, because You have certainly received Him on Your bosom after His death, do not leave Me any longer in abandonment. I suffer it and offer it for the welfare of men. But console Me, now, Father. Father, mercy! Mercy, Son! Mercy, divine Spirit! Remember Your Virgin! »

[1st April 1945]

Later, prostrated on the floor, Mary seems to be praying with Her attitude as well as with Her heart. She is really a poor crushed thing. She looks like that flower parched to death of which She has spoken.

She does not even notice the shaking of a short but strong earthquake that makes the master and mistress of the house shout and run away, while Peter and John, as white as death, drag themselves as far as the threshold of the room. But as they see Her absorbed in Her prayer, inattentive, unaware of what is not God, they withdraw closing the door, and frightened as they are, they go back into the Supper room.

613. The Resurrection.

1st April 1945.

I see again the joyful and powerful Resurrection of Christ.

In the kitchen garden all is silent and glittering with dew. Above it the sky is becoming a clearer and clearer sapphire shade, after leaving its dark-blue hue studded with stars, that through the whole night had watched over the world. Dawn is driving back, from east to west, these still dark zones, like a wave that during the high tide advances more and more, covering the dark beach and replacing the

grey-dark shade of the damp sand and of the reef with the blue sea water.

A few little stars do not want to die yet and peep more and more faintly through the wave of the white greenish light of dawn, a white shaded with grey, like the leaves of the drowsy olive-trees that form a crown on that not far away hillock. And then it is wrecked, submerged by the wave of dawn, like land overflowed by water. And there is a star less… And then also another one less… and another one, and another one. The sky loses its herd of stars and only over there, to the remote east, three, then two, then one remain to contemplate that daily wonder, which is the rising dawn.

And then, when a pink thread draws a line on the turquoise silk of the eastern sky, a breath of wind passes over leaves and herbs and says: « Wake up. The day has risen. » But it awakes only leaves and herbs, that shiver under their dewy diamonds and rustle gently while the falling drops resound like arpeggios. The birds have not awakened yet among the thick branches of a very tall cypress .hat seems to dominate like a lord in his kingdom, or in the thick entanglement of a laurel hedge that shelters from the north wind.

The guards, weary, cold, sleepy, in various postures are watching over the Sepulchre, the stone of which has been reinforced round its edge, as if it were a buttress, with a thick layer of lime, on the opaque white of which stand out the large rosettes of red wax of the Temple seal, impressed with others directly on the fresh lime.

The guards must have lit a little fire during the night, because there are ashes and half-burnt fire-brands on the ground, and they must have played and eaten, because scattered around there are remains of food and some small clean bones, which have certainly been used for some game, like our dominoes or our children's games of marbles, which are played on a coarse board traced on a path. Then they became tired and left things as they are now, and they tried to find more or less comfortable postures to sleep or to keep watch.

In the clear sky, where to the east there is now a completely rosy zone, which is spreading out more and more widely, but where, however, there are no sunbeams as yet, a very bright meteor appears, coming from unknown depths, and it descends like a sphere of fire of unsustainable splendour, followed by a glowing trail, which perhaps is nothing but the persistence of its brightness in our retinae. It descends at a very high speed towards the Earth, shedding such an intense phantasmagoric light, frightful in its beauty, that the rosy light of dawn vanishes, outshone by such white incandescence.

The guards, astonished, raise their heads, also because with the light there comes a mighty, harmonious, solemn rumble that fills the whole of Creation with its roar. It comes from heavenly depths.

It is the alleluia, the angelical glory, that follows the Spirit of the Christ, which is returning to His glorious Flesh.

The meteor clashes on the useless closure of the Sepulchre, tears it off, throws it on the ground, and it strikes with terror and noise the guards placed as jailors of the Master of the Universe, producing with its return to the Earth a new earthquake, as it had caused one when this Spirit of the Lord fled from the Earth. It enters the dark Sepulchre that becomes all bright with its indescribable light, and while it remains suspended in the still air, the Spirit is infused again into the Body motionless under the funereal bandages.

All this takes place not in a minute, but in the fraction of a minute, so fast have been the appearance, descent, penetration and the disappearance of the Light of God…

The « I want » of the divine Spirit to its cold Body is noiseless. It is uttered by the Essence to the immobile Matter. But no word is perceived by the human ear. The Flesh receives the order and obeys it with a deep sigh… Nothing else for some minutes.

Under the Sudarium and the Shroud, the glorious Body is recomposed in eternal beauty, it awakes from the sleep of death, it comes back from the « nothing » in which it was, it lives after being dead. The heart certainly awakes and gives its first throb, it propels the remaining frozen blood through the veins and at once creates the full measure of it in the empty arteries, in the immobile lungs, in the dark brain, and brings back warmth, health, strength, thought.

Another moment, and there is a sudden movement under the heavy Shroud. It is so sudden that, from the moment He certainly moves His folded arms to the moment He appears standing, imposing, splendid in His garment of immaterial matter, supernaturally handsome and majestic, with a gravity that changes and elevates Him, and yet leaves Him exactly Himself, the eye has hardly time to follow the development. And now it admires Him: so different from what the mind remembers, tidied up, without wounds or blood, only blazing with the light that gushes from the five wounds and issues from every pore of His skin.

When He takes His first step - and in the movement the rays emanating from His Hands and Feet halo Him with beams of light: from His Head haloed with a garland, made with the countless little wounds of the crown, but they no longer bleed but only shine, to the hem of His tunic, when, opening His arms, that were folded across His chest, He uncovers the zone of very bright luminosity that filters through His tunic inflaming it like a sun at the height of His Heart - then it is really the « Light » that has taken a body. Not the poor light of the Earth, not the poor light of the stars, not the poor light of the sun. But the Light of God: all the heavenly brightness that gathers in one Being and grants Him its inconceivable azure as eyes, its golden fire as hair, its angelic whiteness as

garment and complexion and all that exists, but cannot be described by human words, the supereminent ardour of the Most Holy Trinity, that outshines with its ardent power every fire in Paradise, absorbing Him in Itself to generate Him again at each moment of the eternal Time, Heart of Heaven that attracts and spreads His blood, the countless drops of His incorporeal blood: the blessed souls, the angels, everything there is the Paradise: the love of God, the love for God, all this is the Light that is, that forms the Risen Christ.

When He moves, coming towards the exit, and the eye can see beyond His brightness, two most beautiful brilliances, but similar to stars compared with the sun, appear to me, one on this side, the other on the other side of the threshold, prostrated in the adoration of their God, Who passes by enveloped in His light, beatifying with His smile, and He goes out, leaving the funereal grotto and going back to walk on the earth, that awakes out of joy and shines in its dews, in the hues of herbs and roseries, in the countless corollas of apple-trees, that open, by a wonder, to the early sun that kisses them, and to the eternal Sun Who proceeds under them.

The guards are there, shocked… The corrupt powers of man do not see God, whereas the pure powers of the universe - the flowers, herbs, birds - admire and venerate the Mighty One, Who passes by in a halo of His own Light and in an aureola of sunlight.

His smile, His eyes that rest on flowers, on dead branches, that look up at the clear sky, everything becomes more beautiful. And more soft and shaded than a silky rosery are the millions of petals forming a flowery foam on the head of the Conqueror. And brighter are the diamonds of the dew. And of a deeper blue is the sky reflecting His refulgent eyes, and more joyful is the sun that with gladness paints a little cloud blown by a light wind, that comes to kiss its King with scents stolen from gardens and with caresses of silky petals.

Jesus raises His Hand and blesses and then, while the birds sing more loudly and the wind carries its scents, He disappears from my sight, leaving me in a joy that cancels even the slightest remembrance of sadness and sufferings and hesitancy for tomorrow…

614. Jesus Appears to His Mother.

[21st February 1944]

Mary is prostrated with Her face on the floor. She looks like a poor wretch. She looks like that withered flower of which She has spoken.

The closed window is opened with a violent banging of the heavy shutters, and with the first ray of the sun, Jesus enters.

Mary, Who has been shaken by the noise and has raised Her head to see which wind has opened the shutters, sees Her radiant Son:

handsome, infinitely more handsome than He was before suffering, smiling, lively, brighter than the sun, dressed in a white garment that seems woven light, and Who is advancing towards Her.

She straightens Herself up on Her knees and crossing Her hands on Her breast, She says with a sob that is joy and grief: « Lord, My God ». And She remains thus, enraptured in contemplating Him, with Her face all washed by tears, but made serene, pacified by His smile and by the ecstasy.

But He does not want to see His Mother on Her knees, like a servant. And He calls Her, stretching out His hands, from the wounds of which emanate rays that make His glorious Flesh even brighter: « Mother! » But it is not the sorrowful word of the conversations and the farewells before His Passion, or the heart-rending lament of the meeting on Calvary and of the agony. It is a cry of triumph, of joy, of freedom, of rejoicing, of love, of gratitude. And He bends over His Mother, Who dare not touch Him, and He places His hands under Her bent elbows, and He lifts Her up, He presses Her to His Heart and kisses Her.

Oh! Mary realises then that it is not a vision, that it is Her Son Who has really risen, that it is Her Jesus, the Son Who still loves Her as a Son. And with a cry, She flings Her arms round His neck, and She embraces and kisses Him, laughing in Her weeping. She kisses His Forehead, where there are no longer any wounds, His Head no longer unkempt and bloody, His shining Eyes, His healed Cheeks, His Mouth no longer swollen. She then takes His Hands and kisses their backs and palms, their radiant wounds, and She suddenly bends down to His Feet and uncovers them from under His bright garment and kisses them. Then She stands up, looks at Him, but dare not.

But He smiles and understands. He uncovers His chest a little and says: « And this one, Mother, are You not kissing it, this one that grieved You so much and that You alone are worthy to kiss? Kiss My Heart, Mother. Your kiss will cancel the last remembrance of what is sorrowful and will give Me that joy, which My Joy of having risen from the dead still lacks. » And He takes the face of His Mother in His Hands and He lays Her lips on the lips of the wound of His Chest, from which streams of a very bright light are flowing.

Mary's face is haloed by that light, flooded as it is with its beams. She kisses and kisses, while Jesus caresses Her. She never tires kissing. She looks like a thirsty woman whose mouth is attached to a fountain and who drinks from it the life that was escaping her.

Jesus speaks now.

« It is all over, Mother. You no longer have to weep over Your Son The trial is over. Redemption has taken place.

Mother, thanks for conceiving Me, for bringing Me up, for helping Me in life and in death.

I heard Your prayers come to Me. They have been My strength in My grief, My companions in My journey on the Earth and beyond the Earth. They came with Me on the Cross and to Limbo. They were the incense that preceded the Pontiff, Who was going to call His servants and take them to the temple that does not die: to My Heaven. They have come with Me to Paradise, preceding, like an angelical voice, the procession of the redeemed led by the Redeemer, so that the angels should be ready to greet the Conqueror, Who was returning to His Kingdom. They have been seen and heard by the Father and by the Spirit, Who smiled at them, as if they were the most beautiful flower and the sweetest song born in Paradise. They have been recognised by the Patriarchs and by the new Saints, by the new, first, citizens of My Jerusalem, and I bring You their thanks, Mother, together with the kisses of their relatives, with their blessings and with that of Joseph, the spouse of Your soul.

The whole of Heaven sings its hosanna to You, Mother, Holy Mother! A hosanna that does not die, that is not a false one like the one given to Me a few days ago.

I will now go to the Father in My human appearance. Paradise must see the Conqueror in His appearance of Man, by means of which He defeated the Sin of Man. But I will come again. I must confirm in the Faith those who do not yet believe and are in need to believe to lead the others to believe, I must fortify the pusillanimous ones who will need so much strength to resist the world.

Then I will ascend to Heaven. But I will not leave You alone. Mother, can You see that veil? In My annihilation, I still exhaled the power of miracle on Your behalf, to give You that comfort. But for You I will work another miracle. You will have Me, in the Sacrament, as real as when You carried Me.

You will never be alone. But these past days You have been alone. But also that sorrow of Yours was required for My Redemption. Much is continuously to be added to Redemption, because much will be continuously created in the way of Sin. I will call all My servants to this redeeming participation. You are the one who by Yourself will do more than all the others together. But also this long abandonment was required.

Now no longer so. I am no longer separated from the Father. You will no longer be separated from Your Son. And, by having Your Son, You have our Trinity. A living Heaven, You will bring the Trinity to men on the Earth, and You will sanctify the Church, You, Queen of the Priesthood and Mother of the Christians.

Then I will come to get You. And no longer shall I be in You, but You will be in Me, in My Kingdom, to make Paradise more beautiful.

I am going now, Mother. I am going to make the other Mary happy. Then I will ascend to the Father. Thence I will come to those

who do not believe. Mother, Your kiss as a blessing. And My Peace to You as a companion. Goodbye. »

And Jesus disappears in the sunshine that streams down from the early morning clear sky.

615. The Pious Women at the Sepulchre.

2nd April 1945.

The women, in the meanwhile, after leaving the house are walking close to the wall, shadows in the shade. They are silent for some time, all muffled up and frightened in so much silence and solitude. Then, recovering confidence seeing that the town is completely calm, they group and dare to speak.

« Will the Gates be already open? » asks Susanna.

« Certainly. Look over there at the first market-gardener who is going in with vegetables. He is going to the market » replies Salome.

« Will they say anything to us? » asks Susanna again.

« Who? » inquires the Magdalene.

« The soldiers, at the Judicial Gate. There… only few people are going in and even fewer are coming out… We shall rouse suspicion… »

« So? They will look at us. They will see five women going towards the country. We could be also people who, after celebrating Passover, are going back to their villages. »

« But… In order not to attract the attention of any malicious person, why do we not go out by another Gate and then we can go round along the walls?… »

« We would go the long way round. »

« But we shall be safer. Let us take the Gate of the Water… »

« Oh! Salome! If I were you, I should choose the Eastern Gate! You would have to go a longer way round! We must make haste and go back soon. » It is the Magdalene who is so resolute.

« Then another one, but not the Judicial Gate. Be good… » they all beg her.

« All right. Well, since that is what you want, let us call on Johanna. She begged me to let her know. If we had gone straight there, we could have done without seeing her. But since you want to go a longer way round, let us call on her… »

« Oh! yes. Also because of the guards placed there… She is well known and respected… »

« I think we should call also on Joseph of Arimathea. He is the owner of the place. »

« Why not! To avoid attracting people's attention, we will form a procession! What a timid sister I have! Rather, do you know what, Martha? Let us do this. I will go ahead and have a look. You will follow me with Johanna. I will stand in the middle of the road, should there be any danger, and you will see me. And we will come

back. But I can assure you that the guards, seeing this, I thought of it (and she shows a purse full of money) will let us do everything. »

« We will tell Johanna as well. You are right. »

« Go then, and let me go. »

« Are you going all alone, Mary? I will come with you » says Martha, who is afraid for her sister.

« No. You will go with Mary of Alphaeus to Johanna's. Salome and Susanna will wait for you near the Gate, outside the walls. And then you will all come together along the main road. Goodbye. » And Mary Magdalene cuts other possible comments short, as she goes away quickly with her bag full of balms and her money in her breast.

She flies, so fast she goes along the road, which is becoming more delightful in the first pink shade of dawn. She goes in by the Judicial Gate, to be quicker. And no one stops her…

The others watch her go, then they turn their backs to the crossroads where they were, and they take another one, narrow and dark, which near the Sixtus opens out into a wider road, where there are some beautiful houses. They part again, Salome and Susanna proceed along the road, while Martha and Mary of Alphaeus knock at the iron door and show themselves at the little window (judas-hole) half opened by the porter.

They enter and go to Johanna, who already up and all dressed in a very dark violet garment that makes her look even paler, is preparing some oils with her nurse and a maidservant.

« Have you come? May God reward you. But, if you had not come, I should have gone by myself… To find comfort… Because many things have remained upset after that dreadful day. And, in order not to feel alone, I must go against that Stone and knock and say: "Master, I am poor Johanna… Do not leave me alone, You, too… » Johanna weeps silently but with deep desolation, while Esther, her nurse, makes large indecipherable gestures behind the back of her mistress, while putting a mantle on her.

« I am going, Esther. »

« May God comfort you! »

They leave the mansion house to join their companions. It is at this moment that the short but strong earthquake takes place, creating a panic again in the people of Jerusalem, still terrorised by the events of Friday. The three women retrace their steps precipitately, and they remain in the large hall, among maidservants and servants who are howling and imploring the Lord, fearing new shocks…

… The Magdalene, instead, is just on the border of the path that takes one to the kitchen garden of Joseph of Arimathea, when she is caught in the powerful and also harmonious roar of this heavenly sign, while, in the faint rosy light of dawn, that is advancing in the sky, where to the west a persistent star still resists, and that

makes fair the so far greenish light, a very bright light appears and descends like and incandescent wonderful globe, cutting the calm air in a zigzag course.

Mary of Magdala is almost grazed and thrown on the ground by it. She bends for a moment whispering: « My Lord! » and then she straightens up like a stalk after the wind has passed by, and she runs towards the kitchen garden even faster.

She enters it quickly, and goes towards the sepulchre in the rock as fast as a bird that is chased and is looking for its nest. But, no matter how fast she runs, she cannot be there when the heavenly meteor acts as a lever and as a flame on the seal of lime, placed as a reinforcement for the heavy stone, or when with the final crash the stone door collapses, causing such a shake that joins the one of the earthquake, which, although of a short duration, is so violent that it knocks the guards down as if they were dead.

When Mary arrives, she sees the useless jailors of the Triumpher thrown on the ground like a sheaf of mown corn. Mary Magdalene does not associate the earthquake with Resurrection. But looking at the spectacle, she thinks it is a punishment of God for the desecrators of Jesus' Sepulchre, and she falls on her knees saying: « Alas! They have stolen Him! » She is really disconsolate and weeps like a girl who has come, being sure that she would find her father whom she was looking for, and instead finds the house empty.

She then stands up and runs away to go to Peter and John. And as she thinks of nothing but of informing the two, she forgets to go and meet her companions and remain on the road, but as fast as a gazelle she goes back the road she came, she passes through the Judicial Gate, and flies through the streets, which are a little more crowded, and she rushes against the door of the hospitable house and knocks at it furiously. The mistress opens the door to her.

« Where are John and Peter? » asks Mary Magdalene panting.

« There » says the woman pointing at the Supper-room.

Mary of Magdala enters and as soon as she is in, standing before the two astonished men, and in her voice, kept low out of pity for the Mother, there is more anguish than if she had shouted, she says: « They have taken the Lord away from the Sepulchre! I wonder where they have put Him! » and for the first time she staggers and is unsteady, and in order not to fall, she holds on whatever she can.

« What? What are you saying? » ask the two.

And panting she replies: « I went ahead… to buy the guards… so that they would let us go. They are there like dead bodies… The Sepulchre is open, the stone is on the ground… Who? Who did it? Oh! come! Let us run… »

Peter and John set out at once. Mary follows them for a few steps. Then she goes back. She seizes the mistress of the house, she shakes her, violent in her far-sighted love, and she shouts in her face: « Mind

you do not let anybody go to Her (and she points at the door of Mary's room). Remember that I am your mistress. Obey and be silent. » Then she leaves her aghast and joins the apostles, who are striding towards the Sepulchre…

… In the meantime Susanna and Salome, after leaving their companions and reaching the walls, are caught in the earthquake. Frightened, they take shelter under a tree and remain there, torn between their desire to go to the Sepulchre or to run to Johanna's. But love overcomes fear and they go towards the Sepulchre.

They are still frightened when they enter the garden and see the senseless guards… they see a bright light come out of the open Sepulchre. Their fright increases and reaches its climax when, holding each other's hand to pluck up courage, they peep in from the threshold and in the dark sepulchral cave, they see a bright most beautiful creature, that smiling kindly greets them from the place where it is standing: leaning on the right hand side of the anointment stone, which, grey as it is, disappears behind so much incandescent brightness. They fall on their knees, utterly astonished.

But the angel speaks to them gently: « Be not afraid of me. I am ,he angel of the divine Sorrow. I have come to rejoice at its end. The sorrow of the Christ, His humiliation in death is over. Jesus of Nazareth, the Crucified Whom you are looking for, has risen from the dead. He is no longer here! The place where He was laid is empty. Rejoice with me. Go. Tell Peter and the disciples that He has risen and will precede you in Galilee. You will see Him there for a short time, as He said. »

The women fall with their faces on the ground, and when they raise them, they run as if they were chased by a punishment. They are terrorised and they whisper: « We shall die now! We have seen the angel of the Lord! »

They calm down a little in the open country and they consult with each other. What are they to do? If they relate what they have seen, they will not be believed. If they say where they come from, they may be charged by the Judaeans with the murder of the guards. No. They cannot say anything to friends or to enemies…

Fearful, dumbfounded, they go back home along a different road. They go in and take shelter in the Supper room. They do not even ask to see Mary… And in there they think that what they have seen is nothing but a deception of the Demon. Humble as they are, they conclude that « it is not possible that they have been granted to see the messenger of God. It is Satan who wanted to frighten them to send them away from there. »

They weep and pray like two little girls frightened by a nightmare…

… The third group, that of Johanna, Mary of Alphaeus and Martha, when they see that nothing new is happening, decides to

go where their companions are certainly waiting for them. They go out into the streets, where by now there are frightened people, who comment on the new earthquake connecting it with the event of Friday, and see also things which do not exist.

« It is better if they are all frightened! The guards may be so as well and will raise no objection » says Mary of Alphaeus. And they walk fast towards the walls.

But while they are going there, Peter and John, followed by the Magdalene, have arrived at the garden. And John, who runs faster, is the first to arrive at the Sepulchre. The guards are no longer there. Neither is the angel there any more.

John, timid and sorrowful, kneels down at the open entrance to venerate and get some indication from the things he sees. But he only sees, heaped on the floor, the linen cloths placed on the Shroud. « There is really nothing, Simon! Mary has seen accurately. Come, come in, look. »

Peter, who is breathless after so much running, goes into the Sepulchre. On the way he had said: « I will never dare to approach that place. » But now he thinks only of finding out where the Master may be. And he calls Him also, as if He might be concealed in some dark corner.

At this early hour in the morning it is still very dark in the deep Sepulchre, which receives light only from the opening of the entrance, where John and the Magdalene now cast a shadow… And Peter finds it hard to see, and has to help himself with his hands to ascertain what the situation is… He touches, trembling, the table of the anointment, and feels that it is empty…

« He is not here, John! He is not here!… Oh! come here! I have wept so much that I can hardly see in this poor light. »

John stands up and goes in. And while he does so, Peter discovers the sudarium in a comer, folded diligently and within it the Shroud rolled up carefully.

« They have really abducted Him. The guards were not here for us, but to do that… And we have let them do it. By going away, we have allowed that… »

« Oh! where will they have put Him? »

« Peter, Peter! This… is really the end! »

The two disciples come out looking annihilated.

« Let us go, woman. You will tell the Mother… »

« I am not going away. I am staying here… Somebody will come… Oh! I am not coming… There is still something of Him here. The Mother was right… To breathe the air where He was is the only relief left to us. »

« The only relief… Now you also can see that it was nonsense to hope… » says Peter.

Mary does not even reply to him. She crouches on the ground, close

to the entrance, and weeps, while the others go away slowly.

She then raises her head and looks inside, and through her tears she sees two angels, sitting at the head and at the foot of the anointment stone. Poor Mary is so stupefied in her fiercest struggle between hope that is dying and faith that does not want to die, that she looks at them like one whose mind is completely blank, without even being surprised. The strong woman, who has resisted everything like a heroine, has nothing left but tears.

« Why are you weeping, woman? » asks one of the two shining young boys, because they look like very beautiful adolescents.

« Because they have taken away my Lord and I do not know where they have put Him. »

Mary is not afraid to speak to them. She does not ask: « Who are you? » Nothing. Nothing amazes her any more. She has already suffered everything that can astonish a human being. Now she is only a broken thing that weeps without strength or reserve.

The angelical youth looks at his companion and smiles. And so does the other. And in a flash of angelical joy they both look outside, towards the garden all in bloom with millions of corollas that have opened at the first sunshine on the closely planted apple-trees of the orchard.

Mary turns round to see whom they are looking at. And she sees a Man, most handsome, and I do not know how she does not recognise Him at once. A Man Who looks at her pitifully and asks her: « Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for? » It is true that Jesus is dimmed out of pity for the woman, whom emotions have exhausted and who might die from sudden joy, but I really wonder why she does not recognise Him.

And Mary sobbing says: « They have taken my Lord Jesus! I had come to embalm Him while awaiting His resurrection… I gathered all my courage, my hope and my faith around my love… and now I cannot find Him any more… Or rather, I put my love around faith, hope and courage to defend them from men… but all in vain! Men have abducted my Love and with it they have deprived me of everything… O my lord, if you have taken Him away, tell me where you have put Him. And I will get Him… I will not tell anybody… It will be a secret between you and me. Look: I am the daughter of Theophilus, Lazarus' sister, but I am on my knees before you to implore you, like a slave. Do you want me to pay you for His Body? I will do so. How much do you want? I am rich. I can give you as much gold and as many gems as it weighs. But give it back to me. I will not denounce you. Do you want to strike me? Do so. Until I bleed, if you wish so. If you bear Him a grudge, let me expiate it. But give Him back to me. Oh! don't make me wretched with this misery, my lord! Have mercy on a poor woman!… Do you not want to do it on my behalf? Then, do it for His Mother. Tell me! Tell me

where is my Lord Jesus. I am strong. I will take Him in my arms and I will carry Him like a child to safety. Lord… lord… You can see it… for three days we have been struck by the wrath of God for what was done to the Son of God… Do not add Desecration to Crime… »

« Mary! » Jesus shines in calling her. He reveals Himself in His triumphant brightness.

« Rabboni! » Mary's cry is really the « great cry » that-closes the cycle of death. With the first one, the darkness of hatred enveloped the Victim with funereal bandages; with the second, the lights of love increased His brightness. And Mary stands up as her cry fills the garden, she rushes to Jesus' feet and would like to kiss them.

Jesus moves her away, hardly touching her forehead with the tips of His fingers: « Do not touch Me! I have not yet ascended to My Father in this appearance. Go to My brothers and friends, and tell them that I am ascending to My Father and yours, to My God and yours. And then I will come to them. » And Jesus disappears, absorbed by an unsustainable light.

Mary kisses the ground where Jesus was and she runs towards the house. She goes in like a rocket, because the main door is half open, to let the master pass, who is going to the fountain; she opens the door of Mary's room and drops on Her breast shouting: « He has risen! He has risen! » and she weeps happily.

And while Peter and John rush there, and Salome and Susanna, still frightened, come from the Supper room and listen to her narration, Mary of Alphaeus with Martha and Johanna come in, from the street, and out of breath they say « that they have been there as well, and they saw two angels, who said that they were the Guardian of the Man God and the angel of His Sorrow, and ordered them to tell the apostles that He had risen from the dead. » And as Peter shakes his head, they insist saying: « Yes. They said: "Why are you looking for the Living One among the dead? He is not here. He has risen from the dead, as He said when He was still in Galilee. Do you not remember? He said: 'The Son of man is to be delivered into the hands of sinners to be crucified. But on the third day he will rise from the dead' ". »

Peter shakes his head saying: « Too many things during these days! They have been upset. »

The Magdalene raises her head from Mary's breast and says: « I have seen Him! I have spoken to Him. He told me that He is ascending to the Father and then He will come. How handsome He was! » and she weeps as she had never wept, now that she no longer has to torture herself to oppose the doubt rising from every side.

But Peter and John are very doubtful. They look at each other and their eyes say: « Women's fancy! »

Then also Susanna and Salome dare to speak. But the very inevitable

difference in the details of the guards that first are there like dead bodies and then are not there, of the angels that sometimes are one and sometimes are two and did not show themselves to the apostles, of the two versions concerning Jesus' coming here or His preceding His disciples in Galilee, makes the doubt, and more than that, the persuasion of the apostles grow stronger and stronger.

Mary, the blessed Mother, is silent, supporting the Magdalene… I do not understand the mystery of this maternal silence.

Mary of Alphaeus says to Salome: « Let the two of us go back there. Let us see whether we are all intoxicated… » And they run out.

The other women remain there, quietly derided by the two apostles, near Mary Who is silent, engrossed in a thought that each interprets in a personal manner, and no one realises that it is ecstasy.

The two elderly women come back: « It is true! It is true! We have seen Him. He said to us, near Barnabas' kitchen garden: "Peace to you. Be not afraid. Go and tell My brothers that I have risen from the dead, and that they should go within a few days to Galilee. We shall be together again there". That is what He said. Mary is right. We must inform those who are at Bethany, Joseph, Nicodemus, the most faithful disciples, the shepherds, we must go and do, and do… Oh! He has risen!… » and they all weep happily.

« You are mad, women. Grief has upset you. The light has seemed an angel to you. The wind, a voice. The sun, the Christ. I do not criticise you. I understand you, but I can only believe what I have seen: the open empty Sepulchre, and the guards who have run away with the stolen Corpse. »

« But if the very guards say that He has risen! If the whole town is in a turmoil and the Princes of the Priests are mad with rage, because the guards have spoken while running away terrified! Now they want them to say something different and they are paying them for that. But it is already known. And if the Judaeans do not believe in the Resurrection, they do not want to believe, many other people do believe… »

« H'm! Women!… » Peter shrugs his shoulders and is about to go away.

Then the Mother, Who still has on Her heart the Magdalene, who is weeping like a willow-tree in a downpour, for her too great joy, and who kisses Her fair hair, raises Her transfigured face and says a short sentence: « He has really risen. I have had Him in My arms and I kissed His Wounds. » She then bends over the head of the passionate woman and says: « Yes, joy is even stronger than sorrow. But it is only a grain of sand compared to what will be your ocean of eternal joy. You are blessed because you made your spirit speak above reason. »

Peter dare not deny any longer… and with one of those sudden changes of the old Peter, who is coming back to light again, he says

and shouts, as if the delay depended on the others and not on him: « Then, if it is so, we must let the others know. Those spread out in the country look for them take action Come on, get a move on. If He really should come let Him at least find us », and he does not realise that again he confesses that he does not believe blindly in His Resurrection.

616. Comment on the Resurrection.

[21st February 1944]

Jesus says:

« The fervent prayers of Mary have anticipated My Resurrection by some time.

I had said: "The Son of man is about to be killed, but on the third day He will rise from the dead" I died at three o'clock in the afternoon of Friday. Whether you count the days by their names, or you count them by their hours, it was not the dawn on Sunday that was to see Me rise. With regard to the hours, they were only thirty-eight instead of seventy-two, in which My Body had remained lifeless. With regard to the days, it should have been the evening of the third day to say that I had been in the sepulchre three days.

But Mary anticipated the miracle. As when with Her prayers She opened the Heavens a few years in advance of the predetermined time, to give the world its Salvation, so now She obtains some hours in advance to give comfort to Her dying heart.

And I, at the beginning of dawn on the third day, descended like the sun and with My brightness I broke the human seals, so useless before the power of a God, with My power I prized open and overthrew the stone watched over in vain, with My apparition like lightning I knocked down the utterly useless guards placed as guardians of a death that was Life, that no human power could prevent from being such.

By far more powerful than your electric current, My Spirit entered like a sword of divine Fire to warm the cold remains of My Corpse, and in the new Adam the Spirit of God breathed life, saying to Itself: "Live. I want it".

I, Who had raised the dead when I was only the Son of Man, the Victim appointed to be burdened with the sins of the world, should I not have been able to raise Myself, now that I was the Son of God, the First and the Last, the eternal Living Being, He Who holds in His hands the keys of Life and of Death? And My Corpse felt Life go back to It.

Look: like a man who awakes after a sleep brought about by enormous labour, I breathe deeply, and I do not open My eyes yet. Blood begins to circulate again, though not fast yet, in My veins, it brings thought again to the mind. But I come from so far! Look: like a

wounded man, whom a miraculous power heals, blood comes back into My empty veins, it fills My Heart, warms My limbs, heals My wounds, bruises and sores disappear, strength comes back. But I was wounded so badly!

Look: Power works. I am cured. I am awake. I have come back to Life. I was dead. Now I live! Now I rise! I shake the linens of death, I cast off the covering of ointments. I do not need them to appear the eternal Beauty, the eternal Integrity. I clothe Myself with a garment that is not of this Earth, but is woven by Him Who is My Father and Who weaves the silk of the virginal lilies. I am dressed in splendour. I adorn Myself with My wounds, which no longer drip blood, but give off light. The light that will be the joy of My Mother and of the blessed souls, and the terror, the unsustainable sight of the damned and of the demons on the Earth and on the last day.

The angel of My life of man and the angel of My sorrow are prostrated before Me and worship My Glory. Both My angels are here. One to delight in the sight of Him Whom he guarded, and Who now no longer needs angelical protection. The other, who saw My tears, to see My smile; who saw My struggle, to see My victory; who saw My grief, to see My joy.

And I go out into the garden full of flower buds and of dew. And the apple-trees open their corollas to form a flowery arch over My Royal head and the grass makes a carpet of gems and corollas for My Foot, that treads again on the Earth redeemed after being lifted up on it to redeem it. And the early sun, and the sweet April wind, and the light cloud that passes by, as rosy as the cheek of a child, and the birds among branches, they all greet Me. I am their God. They adore Me.

I pass through the stunned guards, a symbol of souls in mortal sin, that do not perceive the passing of God.

It is Passover, Mary! This is really the "Passing of the Angel of God"! His Passing from death to life. His Passing to give Life to those who believe in His Name. It is Passover! It is the Peace that passes through the world. The Peace no longer veiled by the condition of man, but free, complete in its recovered efficiency of God.

And I go to My Mother. It is fair that I should go. It was fair for My angels. It is much more so for Her Who, besides being My guardian and comfort, gave Me life. Before going back to the Father in My glorified appearance of Man, I go to My Mother. I go in the splendour of My paradisiac appearance and of My living Gems. She can touch Me, She can kiss them, because She is the Pure, the Beautiful, the Beloved, the -Blessed Saint of God.

The new Adam goes to the new Eve. Evil entered the world through a woman, and was defeated by the Woman. The Fruit of the Woman has detoxicated men of the slaver of Lucifer. Now, if

they want, they can be saved. She saved woman who had remained so fragile after the mortal wound.

And after showing Myself to the Pure One, to Whom by right of Holiness and Maternity it is just that the Son-God should go, I present Myself to the redeemed woman, to the file-leader, to the representative of all the female creatures, whom I have come to free from the sting of lust. So that she may tell them to approach Me to be cured, to have faith in Me, to believe in My Mercy that understands and forgives, to look at My Body adorned with the five wounds, in order to defeat Satan, who rummages in their flesh.

I do not let her touch Me. She is not the Pure One, who can touch, without contaminating Him, the Son Who goes back to the Father. She has still much to purify through penance. But her love deserves that reward. She was able to rise through her own will from the sepulchre of her vice, to strangle Satan who held her, to defy the world out of love for Her Saviour, she was able to divest herself of everything that was not love, she was able to be nothing but love that is consumed for her God. And God calls her: "Mary". Listen to her replying: "Rabboni!" Her heart is in that cry.

As she deserved it, I entrusted her with the task of being the messenger of Resurrection. And once again she will be somewhat derided, as if she were raving. But the judgement of men is of no importance to her, to Mary of Magdala, to Mary of Jesus. She saw Me raised from the dead and that gives her a joy that appeases all other feelings.

Do you see how I love also who was guilty, but wanted to come out of guilt? Not even to John did I show Myself first. It was to the Magdalene that I showed Myself. John had already received the state of son from Me. He could have it, because he was pure and could be not only a spiritual son, but also one who gave the Pure Mother of God and received from Her those needs and those cares which are connected with the body.

The Magdalene, the one revived to Grace, has the first vision of Grace Risen.

When you love Me to the extent of overcoming everything for Me, I take your diseased heads and hearts in My pierced hands and I breathe My Power on your faces. And I save you, I save you, children whom I love. You become again beautiful, wholesome, free, happy. You become again the dear children of the Lord. I make you the bearers of My Goodness among poor men, to witness My Goodness to them and convince them of it and of Me.

Have, have, have faith in Me. Love. Be not afraid. May what I suffered to save you assure you of the Heart of your God. »

617. Jesus Appears to Lazarus.

3rd April 1945.

The sun of a clear April morning fills the thickets of roses and jasmine in Lazarus' garden with bright scintillation. And the hedges of box and laurel, the tuft of a tall palm-tree swaying gently at the end of an avenue, the very thick bay near the fish-pond, seem to have been washed by a mysterious hand, so neatly the abundant night dew has deterged and sprayed their leaves, which now seem covered with fresh enamel, so glossy and spotless are they.

But the house is silent, as if it were full of dead people. The windows are open, but not even one voice, not even a noise comes from the rooms, which are in a dim light because all the curtains have been lowered.

Inside, beyond the hall, in which there are many doors, now all open - and it is strange to see the halls without any preparation, while they are generally used for more or less numerous banquets - there is a large court-yard, which is paved and surrounded by a porch filled with seats. Many disciples are sitting on them, and some are sitting also on the floor, on mats, or on the marble itself. Among them I see the apostles Matthew, Andrew, Bartholomew, the brothers James and Judas of Alphaeus, James of Zebedee, the shepherd disciples with Manaen, besides some whom I do not know. I do not see the Zealot, Lazarus or Maximinus.

Finally Maximinus comes in with some servants and he gives bread to everybody with various foodstuffs, that is, olives or cheese, or honey, and also new milk to those who want it. But they are not anxious to eat, although Maximinus exhorts everybody to do so. They are all deeply dejected. In a few days their faces have become sunken and ashen under the redness of tears. The apostles in particular, and those who ran away at the very first hours, look downcast, whilst the shepherds and Manaen are less dejected, nay, less ashamed, and Maximinus is only sorrowful in a manly manner.

The Zealot enters almost running and asks: « Is Lazarus here? »

« No, he is in his room. What do you want? »

« At the end of the path, near the fountain of the sun, there is Philip. He has come from the Jericho plain. He is exhausted. And he does not want to come here, because… like everybody, he feels he is a sinner. But Lazarus will convince him. »

Bartholomew stands up and says: « I will come, too… »

They go to Lazarus, who, upon being called, comes out from the half-dark room, where he certainly has wept and prayed, with a downcast face.

They all go out and go across the garden first, then the village, where it descends towards the slopes of the Mount of Olives, they then reach the end of the village, where also the tableland, on which it is built, ends, and they proceed along the only mountain road that

rises and descends along natural flights of steps across the mountains, which slope down towards the plain to the east and rise towards the town of Jerusalem to the west.

There is a fountain here with a large basin, where cattle and men quench their thirst. The place just now is solitary and cool, because there is plenty shade of thick trees around the cistern full of pure water, which is renewed continuously by the spring-water of some mountain, and overflows keeping the ground damp.

Philip is sitting on the upper edge of the fountain, with his head lowered, his hair unkempt, dusty, his broken sandals hanging from his grazed feet.

Lazarus calls him in a pitiful voice: « Philip, come to me! Let us love one another for His sake. Let us be united in His Name. We shall still love Him by doing so! »

« Oh! Lazarus! Lazarus! I ran away… and yesterday, beyond Jericho, I heard that He is dead!… I… I cannot forgive myself for running away… »

« We all ran away. With the exception of John, who remained faithfully with Him, and Simon who gathered us together by His order, after we had cowardly run away. So… of us apostles, no one was faithful » says Bartholomew.

« And can you forgive yourself? »

« No. But I am thinking of making amends, as I can, by not giving myself up to sterile dejection. We must join together. We must join John and learn about His last hours. John followed Him all the time » Bartholomew replies to his companion Philip.

« And not let His Doctrine die. We must preach it to the world. We must keep at least that alive, since we did not take action in time to save Him from His enemies, as we were too slow and late » says the Zealot.

« You could not have saved Him. Nothing could have saved Him. He told me. I repeat it again » says Lazarus resolutely.

« Did you know, Lazarus? » asks Philip.

« Yes, I did. It was my torture to be informed, since the Sabbath evening, of His death by Him, and in detail, to be told how we would act… »

« No. Not you. You have obeyed and suffered. We acted like cowards. You and Simon are the ones who were sacrificed to obedience » exclaims Bartholomew.

« Yes. To obedience. Oh! How hard it is to resist love in order to obey the Beloved! Come, Philip. Almost all the disciples are in my house. You must come, too. »

« I am ashamed of appearing to the world, to my companions… »

« We are all alike! » says Bartholomew moaning.

« Yes. But my heart does not forgive itself. »

« That is pride, Philip. Come. On the Sabbath evening He said to

me: "They will not forgive themselves. Tell them that I forgive them, because I know that they are not acting freely, but it is Satan who is leading them astray". Come. »

Philip weeps more loudly, but he surrenders. And, stooping as if he had aged in a few days, he walks beside Lazarus as far as the court-yard where they are all waiting for him. And the glance he casts at his companions, and the ones his companions cast at him, are the most evident confession of their total dejection.

Lazarus is aware of it and says:

« A new sheep of the herd of Christ, that was frightened by the coming of wolves and had run away after the arrest of the Shepherd, has been received by His friend. To this lost sheep, that has experienced the bitterness of being alone, without even the comfort of weeping over the same error with his brothers, I repeat His testament of love.

In the presence of the heavenly choruses I swear that He said to me, among many other things that your present human weakness cannot bear, because they are so distressing that they have torn my heart during these last ten days - and if I did not know that my life is of some use to the Lord, although it is so poor and faulty, I should give myself up to the wound of this grief of a friend and disciple who has lost everything by losing Him - He said to me: "The miasmata of corrupt Jerusalem will drive also My disciples mad. They will run away and they will come to you". In fact, you can see that you are all here. I could say all of you. Because, with the exception of Simon Peter and of the Iscariot, you have all come towards my house and to my heart of a friend. He said: "You will gather them. You will encourage My scattered sheep. You will tell them that I forgive them. I entrust you with My forgiveness for them. They will not set their minds at rest for having run away. Tell them not to fall into the greater sin of despairing of my forgiveness".

That is what He said. And I have forgiven you on His behalf. And I blushed in giving you in His Name this thing which is so holy, so peculiar of Him, which is Forgiveness, that is, the perfect Love, because he who forgives a guilty person, loves perfectly. This ministry has been a solace to my hard obedience… Because I should have liked to be there, like Mary and Martha, my sweet sisters. And if He was crucified on Golgotha by men, I swear it to you, I am crucified here by obedience, and it is really a heart-rending martyrdom. But if it serves to give solace to His Spirit, if it serves to save His disciples for Him, until He gathers them to bring them to perfection in faith, well, once again I sacrifice my wish to go to at least venerate His corpse before the third day ends.

I know that you doubt. You must not. Of His words at the Passover banquet I know only what you have told me. But the more

I think of them, the more I raise, one by one, these diamonds of His truthful words, and the more I feel that they have a sure reference to the immediate morrow. He cannot have said: "I am going to the Father and then I will come back", if He were not really to come back. He cannot have said: "When you see Me again you will be full of joy" if He had disappeared for good. He has always said: "I will rise from the dead". You told me that He said: "Dew is about to fall on the seeds sown in you and will make them all sprout, then the Paraclete will come and will make them become mighty trees". Did He not say so? Oh! do not allow that to happen only for the last of His disciples, for poor Lazarus, who was with Him only rarely! When He comes back, ensure that all His seed has sprouted under the dew of His Blood.

Since the dreadful hour when He was lifted up on the Cross, there is in me a great glow of light, a mighty outburst of strength. Everything is bright, everything revives and springs up. There is not one word left in me in its poor human meaning. But everything I heard from Him or of Him, now becomes full of life, and my barren land really changes into a fertile flower-bed, where every flower has His Name and every sap draws life from His blessed Heart.

I believe, Christ! But so that these may believe in You, in every promise of Yours, in Your forgiveness, in everything that is You, I offer You my life. Consume it, but do not let Your Doctrine die! Crush poor Lazarus to smithereens, but gather together the scattered members of the apostolic group. Everything You may wish, but in return let Your Word be vivid and eternal, and now and for ever, let those come to it who only through You can possess eternal life. »

Lazarus is really inspired. Love elevates him to a very high sphere and his transport is so strong that it relieves also his companions. Some call him on his right, some on his left, as if he were a confessor, a doctor, a father. The court-yard of Lazarus' rich house, I do not know why, reminds me of the abodes of Christian patricians in the days of persecutions and of heroic faith…

He is bent over Judas of Alphaeus, who can find no reason to appease his anguish for leaving His Master and cousin, when something makes him stand up straight all of a sudden. He turns round and then he says clearly: « I am coming, Lord. » His usual word of prompt assent. And he goes out, as if he were running behind someone who was calling and preceding him.

They all look at one another, seized with astonishment. They consult with one another.

« What has he seen? »

« But there is nothing! »

« Have you heard a voice? »

« I have not. »

« Neither have I. »

« So? Is Lazarus perhaps not well again? »

« May be… He has suffered more than we have, and he has encouraged us so much, we… the cowards! Perhaps he is raving. »

« In fact he looks worn out. »

« And his eyes were inflamed while he was speaking. »

« Perhaps Jesus has called him to Heaven. »

« In fact Lazarus offered Him his life not long ago… He has picked him at once like a flower… Oh! how wretched we are! What shall we do now? »

Comments are desperate and sorrowful.

Lazarus crosses the hall, he goes out into the garden, running all the time, smiling, whispering, and there is his soul in his voice: « I am coming, Lord. » He arrives at a box thicket that forms a green shelter, we would say a green bower, and he falls on his knees, with his face on the ground, shouting: « Oh! my Lord! »

Because Jesus, in His beauty of the Resurrection, is on the threshold of this green bower and smiles at him… and says: « Everything has been accomplished, Lazarus. I have come to thank you, My faithful friend. I have come to ask you to tell our brothers to come at once to the house of the Supper. You - another sacrifice, My dear friend, out of love for Me - will remain here, for the time being… I am aware that you suffer because of that. But I know that you are generous. Mary, your sister, has already been comforted, because I have seen her and she has seen Me. »

« You no longer suffer, my Lord. And that repays me for every sacrifice. I suffered… knowing that You were suffering… and that I was not there… »

« Oh! you were! Your spirit was at the foot of My Cross, and it was in the darkness of My sepulchre. From the depth where I was, you have evoked Me earlier, like all those who have loved Me with their whole selves. Just now I said to you; "Come, Lazarus". As on the day of your resurrection. But for several hours you have been saying to Me: "Come". I have come. And I called you, to draw you out, in My turn, from the depth of your grief. Go. Peace and blessings to you, Lazarus! Grow greater in your love for Me. I will come again. »

Lazarus has remained on his knees all the time without daring to make a gesture. The majesty of the Lord, although mitigated by love, is such that it paralises Lazarus' usual behaviour.

But before disappearing in a flood of light that absorbs Him, Jesus takes a step and with His hand He touches the faithful forehead lightly.

It is at that moment that Lazarus recovers from his blissful astonishment, he stands up and running headlong towards his companions and with brightness of joy in his eyes and on his forehead

barely touched by the Christ, he shouts: « He has risen, brothers! He called me. I went. I have seen Him. He spoke to me. He told me to tell you to go at once to the house of the Supper. Go! Go! I am staying here, because He wants that. But my joy is complete… » And Lazarus weeps in his joy, while he urges the apostles to be the first to go where He orders. « Go! Go! He wants you! He loves You! Be not afraid of Him… Oh! He is more than ever the Lord, the Goodness, the Love! »

Also the disciples stand up… Bethany becomes empty. Lazarus remains with his great heart comforted…

618. Jesus Appears to Johanna of Chuza.

4th April 1945.

In a rich room, where the light hardly filters from outside, Johanna is weeping, completely dejected on a seat near the low bed covered with magnificent covers. She is weeping with her arm resting on the edge and her forehead on her arm, completely shaken by sobs, that must break her breast. When, in the anguish of her tears, she raises her face for a moment to breathe, a large damp spot can be seen on the precious cover, while her face is literally flooded with tears. Then she rests it again on her arm and once again one can see only her very white thin neck, the mass of her brown hair, her very slender shoulders and the top of her trunk. The rest is lost in the dim light, where her body disappears, enveloped in her dark violet dress.

Without moving the curtains or opening the door Jesus goes in, and without making any noise He approaches her. He touches her hair lightly with His Hand and in a whisper He asks:« Why are you weeping, Johanna? »

And Johanna, who must think that it is her angel who has asked her the question, and who does not see anything because she does not raise her head from the edge of the bed, with more desolate tears she expresses her torture: « Because I do not even have the Sepulchre of the Lord any more, to go and shed my tears there and not be alone… »

« But He has risen. Are you not happy? »

« Oh! yes! But all the women have seen Him with the exception of Martha and me. And Martha will certainly see Him at Bethany… because their house is a friendly one. Mine… mine is no longer a friendly house… I have lost everything with His Passion… Both my Master and my husband… and his soul… because he does not believe… he does not believe… and he derides me… and he orders me not to venerate even the memory of my Saviour… in order not to ruin him… Human interests are more important for him… I… I… I do not know whether I should continue to love him or to be disgusted

at him. I do not know whether I should obey him, being his wife, or disobey him, as my soul would like to do, because of the greater nuptial tie of the spirit with the Christ, to Whom I will remain faithful… I… I should like to know… And who will advise me, if poor Johanna can no longer reach Him? Oh!… the Passion is over for my Lord!… But for me it began on Friday, and it lasts… Oh! I am so weak and I have not got the strength to carry this cross!… »

« But if He helped you, would you carry it for His sake? »

« Oh! yes! Providing He helps me… He knows what it means to carry the cross by oneself… Oh! have mercy on my misfortune!… »

« Yes. I know what it is to carry the cross by oneself. That is why I have come and I am beside you. Johanna, do you realise Who is speaking to you? Is your house no longer friendly with the Christ? Why? If he, your earthly husband, is like a star covered with a cloud of human miasmata, you are still Johanna of Jesus. The Master has not left you. Jesus never leaves the souls who have become His spiritual spouses. He is always the Master, the Friend, the Spouse, also now that He has risen. Johanna, raise your head. Look at Me. In this hour of a secret lesson, which is even sweeter than if I had appeared to you as I did to the other women disciples, I will tell you what your future behaviour is to be. The same as that of many sisters of yours. Love your upset husband patiently and submissively. Increase your kindness all the more as he fosters the bitterness of human fears in himself. Increase your spiritual brightness the more he gives off shadows of human interests. Be faithful for two. And be strong in your spiritual nuptial tie. How many women, in future, will have to choose between the will of God and that of their husbands! But they will be great when, above love and maternity, they follow God. Your passion is beginning. Yes. But you can see that every passion ends in a resurrection… »

Johanna has been raising her head little by little. Her sobbing had become less frequent. She now looks and sees, she slides down on her knees, worshipping and whispering: « The Lord! »

« Yes. The Lord. You can see that I have not dealt with any of the women disciples as I have done with you. But I see peculiar needs and I arrange in gradations the assistance to be given to souls that expect help from Me. Climb your Calvary of a wife with the help of My caress and with that of your innocent child. He has entered Heaven with Me and he has given Me his caress for you. I bless you, Johanna. Have faith. I saved you. You will save, if you have faith. »

Johanna now smiles and she dares to ask: « Are You not going to the children? »

« I kissed them at dawn while they were still sleeping in their little beds, and they believed I was an angel of the Lord. I can kiss the innocent whenever I wish. But I did not wake them not to upset them too much. Their souls keep the memory of My kiss… and

in due time, they will transmit it to their minds. Nothing is lost of what is Mine. Always be a mother to them. And always be a daughter of My Mother. Never be completely detached from Her. With motherly gentleness She will perpetuate what was our friendship. And take the children to Her. She needs children to feel less deprived of Her Child… »

« Chuza will not agree… »

« Chuza will let you do. »

« Will he repudiate me, Lord? » It is the cry of a fresh torture.

« He is a dimmed star. Bring him back to light with your heroism of a wife and of a Christian. Goodbye. With the exception of My Mother, do not mention this coming of Mine to anybody else. Also revelations are to be mentioned to those to whom and when it is fair to do so. »

Jesus smiles at her shining brightly, and He disappears in His refulgence.

Johanna stands up, lost in reverie, torn between joy and sorrow, between the fear of having dreamt and the certainty of having seen. But her feelings reassure her. She goes to the little ones, who are playing quietly on the upper terrace, and kisses them.

« Are you not weeping any more, mummy? » asks Mary shyly, no longer the poor wretched little girl, but a delicate gentle girl, well dressed and with tidy hair; and Matthias, swarthy and lean, with the exuberance of a nice little boy says: « Tell me who makes you weep, and I will punish him. »

Johanna embraces them together and presses them to her heart, and says speaking over the brown-haired head of Mary and over the dark hair of Matthias: « I am not weeping any more. Jesus has risen and He blesses us. »

« Oh! so does He not bleed any more? Does He not suffer any longer? » asks Mary.

« Silly girl! You should rather say: He is no longer dead! Then, He is happy now!… Because it must be awful to be dead… » says Matthias.

« So is there no reason to weep any more, mummy? » asks Mary again.

« No. Not for you, innocent children. Rejoice with the angels. »

« The angels!… Last night, I don't know what watch it was, I felt being caressed and I woke up saying: "Mummy!", but I was not calling you. I was calling my dead mother, because that caress was lighter and gentler than yours, and I opened my eyes for a moment. But I saw only a bright light and I said: "My angel has kissed me to console me for my deep grief over the death of the Lord" » says Mary.

« I, too. But I was very sleepy, and I said: "Is it you?" I was thinking of my Guardian angel and I wanted to say to him: "Go and kiss Jesus and Johanna, so that they may no longer be afraid", but I did

not succeed. I fell asleep again and I began to dream, and I seemed to be in Heaven with you and Mary. Then there was that earthquake and I woke up and was frightened. But Esther said to me: "Don't be afraid. It is already all over" and I fell asleep again. »

Johanna kisses them again, and then she leaves them to their peaceful games and she goes to the house of the Supper.

She asks after Mary. She goes into Her room. She closes the door and says her great word: « I have seen Him. I tell You. I am comforted and happy. Love me, because He said that I must be united to You. »

The Mother replies: « I have already told you, on the day of the Sabbath, that I love you. Yesterday. Because it was yesterday… And that day of weeping and darkness seems so far from this day of light and smiles! »

« Yes… Now I remember that You had already said what He has now repeated to me. You said: "We women will have to take action, because we remained and the men ran away… The true giver of life is always the woman… " Oh! Mother, help me to give life to Chuza! He has abandoned Faith!… » Johanna begins to weep again.

Mary takes her in Her arms: « Love is stronger than faith. It is the most active virtue. With it you will create a new soul for Chuza. Be not afraid. But I will help you. »

619. Jesus Appears to Joseph of Arimathea, to Nicodemus and to Manaen.

4th April 1945.

Manaen, with the shepherds, is walking fast along the slopes that from Bethany take one to Jerusalem. A beautiful road goes straight towards the Mount of Olives. And Manaen turns towards it, after leaving the shepherds, who, few at a time, want to enter the town to go to the Supper room.

Shortly before, I gather this from their conversation, they must have met John, who was coming towards Bethany to bring the news of the Resurrection and the order for everybody to be in Galilee in a few days' time. They part precisely because the shepherds want to repeat personally to Peter, what they have already told John, that is, that the Lord, when he appeared to Lazarus, said that they had to gather in the Supper room.

Manaen climbs a secondary road towards a house in the middle of an olive-grove. A beautiful house, with around it a row of cedars of Lebanon, which with their imposing mass dominate the numerous olive-trees of the mountain. He goes in resolutely and to the servant, who has rushed to meet him, he says: « Where is your master? »

« Over there with Joseph. He came not long ago. »

« Tell him that I am here. »

The servant goes away and comes back with Nicodemus and Joseph.

The voices of the three men mingle in the same cry: « He has risen! » They look at one another, surprised that they all know.

Then Nicodemus takes his friend and leads him to a room inside the house. Joseph follows them.

« Have you dared to come back? »

« Yes. He said: "At the Supper room". I do want to see Him now, glorious, to get rid of the grievous memory of Him tied and covered with filth, like a criminal struck by the rage of the world. »

« Oh! we should like to see Him as well… to free ourselves from the horror of remembering Him tortured, of His countless wounds… But He has shown Himself only to the women » whispers Joseph.

« And that is fair. They have always been faithful to Him during these last years. We were afraid. The Mother said so: "A very poor love indeed, if it waited until now to show itself!" » says Nicodemus objecting.

« But to defy Israel, now more than ever opposed to Him, we should really need to see Him!… If you knew! The guards have spoken… Now the Leaders of the Sanhedrin and the Pharisees, not yet converted by so much wrath of Heaven, are looking for those who are aware of His Resurrection, to put them in prison. I have sent little Martial - a child passes unnoticed more easily - to inform the people at home to be on the alert. They have taken sacred money from the Treasury of the Temple to pay the guards, so that they may say that the disciples stole Him, and that what they had said previously about the Resurrection, was a lie, as they were afraid of being punished. The town is in a turmoil. And there are some disciples who are already leaving it out of fear… I mean the disciples that were not at Bethany… »

« Yes, we would need His blessing to have courage. »

« He appeared to Lazarus… It was almost the third hour. Lazarus seems transfigured to us. »

« Oh! Lazarus deserves it! We… » says Joseph.

« Yes. We are still encrusted with doubt and human thoughts, like a leper badly cured… And there is no one but He Who can say: "I want you to be cleansed!" So, now that He has risen, will He no longer speak to us, who are less perfect? » asks Nicodemus.

« And will He not work any more miracles, to punish the world, now that He is the One Who has Risen from death and from the miseries of the flesh? » asks Joseph again.

But their questions can have but one reply. His. And it does not come. The three remain dejected.

Then Manaen says: « Well. I am going to the Supper room. If they kill me, He will absolve my soul and I shall see Him in Heaven,

if I do not see Him here, on the Earth. Manaen is such a useless thing in the group of His followers that, if he falls, he will leave the same void that is left by a flower picked in a meadow crowded with corollas: he will not even be noticed… » and he gets up to go.

But, as he turns towards the door, the latter is brightly illuminated by the Divine Resurrected Lord, Who, with His open hands, in a gesture of an embrace, stops him saying: « Peace to you! Peace to you two! But remain where you are, you and Nicodemus. Joseph may still go, if he wishes so. But you have Me here, and I speak the word you requested: "I want you to be cleansed of what is still impure in your belief". Tomorrow you will go down to the town. You will go to the brothers. This evening I have to speak only to the apostles. Goodbye. And may God be always with you. Thanks, Manaen. You have believed more than these two. So, thanks also to your spirit. I thank you two for your pity. But ensure that it may become something higher through a life of fearless faith. » Jesus disappears behind a dazzling incandescence.

The three are blissful and bewildered.

« But was it He? » asks Joseph.

« And did you not hear His voice? » replies Nicodemus.

« Also a spirit can have… a voice… You, Manaen, since you were so close to Him, what do you think? »

« A real body. Most handsome. He breathed. I could feel His breath. And He emitted heat. And then… His Wounds, I saw them. They looked as if they had been opened then. They did not bleed, but it was living flesh. Oh! do not doubt any more! So that He may not punish you. We have seen the Lord. I mean Jesus, Who has come back as glorious as His Nature wants! And… He still loves us… Truly, if Herod should now offer me his kingdom, I should say to him: "Your throne and crown are dust and dung, as far as I am concerned. Nothing exceeds what I possess. I have the blissful knowledge of the Face of God". »

620. Jesus Appears to the Shepherds.

4th April 1945.

They also walk fast under the olive-trees, and they are so certain of His Resurrection that they converse with the joy of happy children. They go straight towards the town.

« We will tell Peter to look at Him carefully and to tell us how beautiful is His face » says Elias.

« Oh! no matter how beautiful it may be, I shall never be able to forget what He was like when He was tortured » whispers Isaac.

« But do you remember Him when He was lifted up on the Cross? » asks Levi. « And do you all remember Him? »

« I do, and perfectly. The light was still good then. Later, with my

old eyes, I could not see much » says Daniel.

« I instead, saw Him until He seemed to be dead. But I would have preferred to be blind, in order not to see » says Joseph.

« Oh! well. Now He has risen. That must make us happy » says John to comfort him.

« And the thought that we only left Him for an act of charity » adds Jonathan.

« But our hearts remained up there. All the time » whispers Matthias.

« Yes. All the time. Since you have seen the veronica, tell us: what is it like? Does it look like Him? » asks Benjamin.

« As if He were speaking » replies Isaac.

« Will we see that veil? », many ask.

« Oh! the Mother shows it to everybody. You will certainly see it. But it is a sad sight. It would be better to see… Oh! Lord! »

« Faithful servants. Here I am. Go. I will wait for you in Galilee in a few days' time. I want to tell you once more that I love you. Jonah is blissful, with the others, in Heaven. »

« Lord! Oh! Lord. »

« Peace to you of good will. »

The Risen Lord vanishes in the bright midday sunbeam. When they raise their heads, He is no longer there. But there is the joy of having seen Him as He is now: glorious.

They stand up, transfigured with joy. In their humbleness they cannot be persuaded that they deserved to see Him and they say: « To us! To us! How good is our Lord! From His birth to His triumph, always humble and good to His poor servants! »

« And how handsome He was! »

« Oh! He was never so handsome! What majesty! »

« He looks even taller and of riper age. »

« He is really the King! »

« Oh! They called Him the peaceful King! But He is also the terrible King for those who must be afraid of His judgement! »

« Did you see what beams were emitted by His Face? »

« And how His eyes flashed! »

« I did not dare stare at Him. And I would have liked to stare at Him, because I think that perhaps I shall be granted to see Him so only in Heaven. And I want to know Him, so that I shall not be afraid of Him then. »

« Oh! we must not be afraid if we remain as we are: His faithful servants. You have heard Him: "I want to tell you once more that I love you. Peace to you of good will". Oh! not a word too many. But in that little there is His full approval of what we have done so far and His greatest promises for our future lives. Oh! let us intone the song of joy. Of our joy: "Glory to God in the most high Heavens and peace on earth to men of good will. The Lord has really

risen, as He had said through the mouths of the prophets and with His own faultless word. With His Blood He has wiped off the corruption that the kiss of a man had laid on Him, and, as the altar is cleansed, His Body has assumed the inexpressible beauty of God. Before ascending to Heaven He has shown Himself to His servants. Alleluia. Let us go on singing, alleluia! The eternal youth of God! Let us go announcing to the people that He has risen, alleluia! The Just, the Holy Lord has risen, alleluia, alleluia! From the Sepulchre He has risen immortal. And just men have risen with Him. In sin, as in a grotto, the hearts of men were closed. He died to say: 'Rise!' And those who were dispersed have risen, alleluia! Having opened the gates of Heaven, He said to the chosen ones: 'Come'. For the sake of His holy Blood may He grant us to ascend as well. Alleluia!" »

Matthia, the elderly ex-disciple of John the Baptist, goes ahead singing, as perhaps in days gone by David had sung before His people along the streets in Judaea. The others follow him, replying in chorus to each alleluia with holy joy.

Jonathan, who is a member of the group, while Jerusalem is already at the feet of the hillock which they are descending rapidly, says: « Through His birth I have lost fatherland and home, and through His death I have lost the new house where for thirty years I worked honestly. But even if they had taken my life because of Him, I would have died happily, because I would have lost it for Him. I bear him, who is unfair to me, no grudge. Through His death my Lord has taught me perfect meekness. And I am not worried about the future. My abode is not here, but in Heaven. I shall live in the poverty so dear to Him and I will serve Him until He calls me… and… yes… I will offer Him also the fact that I have to abandon… my mistress… This is the most aching pain… But now that I have seen the suffering of the Christ and His glory, I must not weigh my grief, but only hope in the celestial glory. Let us go and tell the apostles that Jonathan is the servant of the servants of the Christ. »

621. Jesus Appears to the Disciples of Emmaus.

5th April 1945.

Along a mountain road two middle-aged men are walking fast turning their backs on Jerusalem, whose mountains are disappearing more and more behind those that follow with uninterrupted undulations of summits and valleys.

They are speaking to each other. The elder one says to the other, who must be about thirty-five years old at most: « Believe me: it was better to do so, I have a family, and you have one, too. The Temple is not joking. They want to have really done with this matter.

Are they right? Are they wrong? I don't know. I know that they clearly intend to put an end to this matter once for all. »

« To this crime, Simon. Give it its right name. Because it is at least a crime. »

« It depends. Love instigates us against the Sanhedrin. But perhaps… who knows! »

« Not at all. Love enlightens. It does not lead to error. »

« Also the Sanhedrin, also the Priests and the Chiefs love. They love Jehovah, Whom all Israel has loved since the agreement was made between God and the Patriarchs. So, love is light also for them and does not lead to error! »

« Their love is not for the Lord. Yes. Israel has been in that Faith for ages. But tell me. Can you say that it is still Faith what the Chiefs of the Temple, the Pharisees, the scribes, the Priests give us? You can see it. With the gold sacred to the Lord - people already knew or at least suspected that it happened - with the gold sacred to the Lord they have paid the Traitor and now they are paying the guards. The former, to make him betray the Christ, the latter to make them lie. Oh! I don't know how the eternal Power has limited Itself to overthrowing the walls and tearing the Veil! I tell you that I would have liked the new Philistines to have been buried under the ruins. All of them! »

« Cleopas! You would be complete vengeance. »

« I would. Because, let us admit that He was only a prophet, is it legal to kill an innocent? Because He was innocent! Have you ever seen Him commit one of the crimes with which they charged Him to kill Him? »

« No. Not even one. But He made one mistake. »

« Which, Simon? »

« He did not show His power from the height of His Cross, to confirm our faith and to punish the incredulous sacrilegious people. He should have accepted the challenge and descended from the Cross. »

« He has done more than that. He has risen from the dead. »

« Is it really true. Risen how? Only with His Spirit or with His Spirit and His Body? »

« But the spirit is eternal! It need not rise! » exclaims Cleopas.

« I know that, too. What I mean is whether He has risen only with His Nature of God, superior to all the snares of man. Because they laid snares to His Spirit through the terror of man. You did hear, didn't you? Mark said that at Gethsemane, where He went to pray against a rock, there is blood everywhere. And John, who has spoken to Mark, said to him: "Do not let that place be trampled on, because it is Blood sweated by the Man-God". If He sweated blood before being tortured, He must have been terrified of the torture! »

« Our poor Master!… » they become silent feeling dejected.

Jesus joins them and asks: « What were you speaking of? In the silence I could hear your words at intervals. Who has been killed? » It is a Jesus veiled under the humble appearance of a poor wayfarer who is in a hurry.

The two do not recognise Him. « Have you come from far away, man? Have you not stopped in Jerusalem? Your dusty tunic and your sandals in that state look like those of an indefatigable pilgrim. »

« I am. I have come from very far… »

« So you must be tired. Are you going far? »

« Yes, very far, even farther than the place from which I come. »

« Are you in business? Markets? »

« I have to purchase an enormous number of herds for the greatest Lord. I have to go round the whole world to choose sheep and lambs, and I have to go also among wild herds, which, however, once they have been tamed, will be better than the ones which at present are not wild. »

« Hard work. And have you gone on your way without stopping in Jerusalem? »

« Why do you ask Me? »

« Because you seem to be the only one who is unaware of what happened there these past days. »

« What happened? »

« You have come from afar and therefore perhaps you do not know. And yet your way of speaking is Galilean. So, even if you are the servant of a foreign king or the son of emigrated Galileans, you must know, if you are circumcised, that for three years in our Fatherland a great Prophet had risen, named Jesus of Nazareth, powerful in deeds and in words before God and before men, and He went preaching all over the Country. And He said that He was the Messiah. His words and His deeds were really those of the Son of God, as He said He was. But only of the Son of God. All Heaven… Now you know why… But are you circumcised? »

« I am the first-born and sacred to the Lord. »

« Then do you know our Religion? »

« I know every syllable of it. I know the precepts and the customs. The Halacha, the midrash and the Haggadah are known to Me like the elements of the air, of the water, of the fire and of the light, that are the first to which tend the intelligence, the instinct and the needs of man, shortly after he is born. »

« Well, in that case you know that Israel was promised the Messiah, but as a powerful king who would re-unite Israel. This one instead was not so… »

« How, then? »

« He did not aim at earthly power. But He said that He was the king of an eternal spiritual kingdom. He did not re-unite, on the

contrary He divided Israel, because the country is now divided between those who believe in Him and those who say that He is a criminal. Really, He was not the stuff kings are made of, because He only wanted meekness and forgiveness. And can one subdue and defeat with such weapons?… »

« So? »

« So the Chiefs of the Priests and the Elders of Israel captured Him and sentenced Him to death… charging Him, really, with crimes of which He was not guilty. His only fault was to be too good and too severe… »

« If He was one, how could He be the other? »

« It was possible, because He was too severe in speaking the truth to the Chiefs in Israel and too good in not working miracles of death on them, striking His unjust enemies dead. »

« Was He as severe as the Baptist? »

« Well… I would not know. He used to reproach scribes and Pharisees very severely, particularly recently, and He threatened those of the Temple, as if they were marked by the wrath of God. But if one was a sinner and repented, and He saw true repentance in that heart, because the Nazarene read hearts better than a scribe can read the text, then He was kinder than a mother. »

« And did Rome allow an innocent to be killed? »

« Pilate condemned Him… But he did not want to, and said that He was "just". But they threatened to report him to Caesar, and he was frightened. In short He was condemned to be crucified and He died on the Cross. And that, together with the fear of the members of the Sanhedrin, has greatly disheartened us. Because I am Cleopas, the son of Cleopas, and he is Simon, both from Emmaus, and relatives, because I am the husband of his oldest daughter, and we were disciples of the Prophet. »

« And are you no longer so? »

« We hoped that He would free Israel and also that, by means of a miracle, He would confirm His words. Instead!… »

« What words had He spoken? »

« We have told you: "I have come to the Kingdom of David. I am the peaceful King" and so forth. And He used to say: "Come to the Kingdom", but, then, He did not give us the kingdom. And He would say: "On the third day I will rise from the dead". Now this is the third day since He died. And it is even finished, because it is later than the ninth hour, and He has not risen. Some women and guards say that He has risen. But we have not seen Him. The guards now state that they said so to justify the theft of the corpse made by the disciples of the Nazarene. But the disciples!… We all abandoned Him out of fear when He was alive… and we certainly did not steal Him now that He is dead. And the women… who believes them? That is what we were talking about. And we wanted to know

whether He intended to say that He would rise only with the Spirit that had become divine again, or also with His body. The women say that the angels - because they say that they saw also angels after the earthquake, and it may be, because on Friday some just people had already appeared out of their sepulchres - they say that the angels said that He is like one who has never died. And in fact that is how the women seemed to see Him. But two of us, two chiefs, went to the Sepulchre. And while they saw it empty, as the women had said, they did not see Him there or anywhere else. And it is a great desolation, because we no longer know what to think! »

« Oh! how foolish you are and hard to understand! And how slow you are in believing the words of the prophets! And had all that not already been said? The error of Israel is this: they have misinterpreted the regality of the Christ. That is why He was not believed. That is why He was feared. That is why you are now in doubt. In high places, in low ones, in the Temple, in villages, everywhere people thought of a king according to human nature. The reconstruction of the Kingdom of Israel was not limited, in the mind of God, in time, in space and in means, as it was in you.

Not in time: no royalty, even the most powerful one, is eternal. Remember the mighty Pharaohs who oppressed the Jews in the days of Moses. How many dynasties have come to an end, and only soulless mummies remain of them at the bottom of secret hypogea! And a remembrance remains, if even that still remains, of their power of one hour, and even less, if we measure their centuries by the eternal Time. This Kingdom is eternal.

In space. It was called: Kingdom of Israel. Because the stock of the human race came from Israel; because in Israel there is, so to say, the seed of God; and therefore, by saying Israel, it was meant: the kingdom of those created by God. But the regality of the King Messiah is not limited to the small space of Palestine, but it stretches from north to south, from east to west, wherever there is a being with a spirit in its body, that is, wherever there is a man. How could one person alone gather under him all the peoples, hostile to one another, and form only one kingdom, without shedding rivers of blood and subjecting them all by means of cruel oppressions of armed men? So, how could He have been the peaceful king mentioned by the prophets?

In means: the human means, I said, is oppression. The superhuman means is love. The former is always limited, because peoples rebel against the oppressor. The latter is unlimited, because love is loved or, if it is not loved, it is derided. But as it is spiritual, it cannot be attacked directly. And God, the Infinite, wants means to be like Himself. He wants what is not finite, because He is eternal: the spirit; what belongs to the spirit; what leads to the Spirit. That has been the error: that men conceived in their minds a Messianic

idea that is wrong in means and form.

Which is the highest regality? God's. Is it not so? Therefore, this Admirable, this Immanuel, this Holy, this sublime Germ, this Strong, this Father of the future century, this Prince of peace, this God like Him from Whom He comes, because so is He named and so is the Messiah, will He not have a regality like that of Him Who generated Him? Of course, He will! A regality which is completely spiritual and eternal, immune from violence and blood, unaware of betrayals and abuse of power. His Regality! That which the Eternal Goodness bestows also on poor men, to give honour and joy to His Word.

But did David not say that this powerful King had all things placed under His feet as a footstool? Did Isaiah not narrate all His Passion, and did David not count, one might say, also His tortures? And is it not said that He is the Saviour and Redeemer, Who with His holocaust will save sinful mankind? And is it not stated, and Jonah is the sign, that for three days He would be swallowed by the insatiable stomach of the Earth, and then He would be ejected as the prophet was by the whale? And was it not said by Him: "My Temple, that is My Body, the third day after being destroyed, will be rebuilt by Me (that is, by God)?" And what did you think? That by magic He would raise the walls of the Temple again? No. Not the walls. But Himself. And God only could make Himself rise from the dead. He has raised the true Temple: His Body of the Lamb. Sacrificed, as Moses received the order and the prophecy, to prepare the "passage" from death to Life, from slavery to freedom, of men, the children of God and slaves of Satan.

How did He rise? you ask each other. I reply: He has risen with His true Body and with His Divine Spirit that dwells in it, as in every mortal body there dwells the soul as queen of the heart. That is how He has risen after suffering everything to expiate everything, and make amends for the primitive Offence and for the countless ones that every day are committed by Mankind. He has risen as it had been said under the veil of the prophecies. He had come at His time, I remind you of Daniel, at His time He was sacrificed. And listen and remember, at the time predicted after His death the deicide town will be destroyed.

I advice you to do this: read the prophets with your souls, not with proud minds, from the beginning of the Book to the words of the Sacrificed Word; remember the Precursor who indicated Him as the Lamb; recall which was the destiny of the symbolic Mosaic lamb. The first-born of Israel were saved through that blood. Through this Blood the first-born of God will be saved, that is, those who with good will have made themselves sacred to the Lord. Remember and understand the Messianic psalm of David and the Messianic prophet Isaiah. Remember Daniel, recall to your minds,

but raising these from the filth of the earth to the celestial blue, recall every word on the regality of the Saint of God, and you will understand that no other more just or more strong sign could be given to you than this victory over Death, than this Resurrection accomplished by Himself. Remember that it would have been contrary to His mercy and to His mission to punish from the height of His Cross those who had put Him on it. He was still the Saviour, even if He was the Crucified scoffed at and nailed to a scaffold! His limbs were crucified, but His spirit and will were free. And with the latter He wanted to wait, to give the sinners time to believe and to invoke His Blood on themselves, not with blasphemous cries, but with groans of contrition.

Now He is risen. He has accomplished everything. Glorious He was before His incarnation. Three times glorious He is now that, having humbled Himself in a body for so many years, He sacrificed Himself, elevating Obedience to the perfection of being able to die on the Cross to do God's Will. Most glorious, with His glorified Body, now that He ascends to Heaven, and enters into the eternal Glory, beginning the Kingdom that Israel has not understood. To this Kingdom, in a more and more pressing manner, through the love and the authority of which He is full, He calls the tribes of the world. As foreseen and predicted by the just of Israel and by the prophets, all peoples will come to the Saviour. And there will no longer be Judaeans or Romans, Scythians or Africans, Iberians or Celts, Egyptians or Phrygians. The land beyond the Euphrates will join the springs of the perennial River. The Hyperborians beside the Numidians will come to His Kingdom, and races and languages will fall away. There will no longer be different customs and different colours of skins and hair, but there will be an immense bright pure people, one language only and one love. It will be the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of Heaven. And eternal Monarch: the Sacrificed Lord Who has risen again from the dead. The eternal subjects: the believers in His Faith. Do believe, in order to belong to it.

Here is Emmaus, My friends. I am going farther. No stop is granted to the Wayfarer Who has to travel so far. »

« Sir, you are more learned than a rabbi. If He were not dead, we should say that He has spoken to us. We should like to hear some more and wider truths from you. Because now, we are like sheep without a shepherd, upset by the storm of Israel's hatred, and we are no longer able to understand the words of the Book. Do you want us to come with you? See, you would go on teaching us, completing the work of the Master Who was taken away from us. »

« You have had Him for such a long time and was He not able to complete your instruction? Is this not a synagogue? »

« Yes, it is. I am Cleopas, the son of Cleopas the synagogue Leader who died in the joy of having become acquainted with the

Messiah. »

« And have you not succeeded yet in believing with clear firm faith? But it is not your fault. After the Blood, the Fire is still missing. And then you will believe, because you will understand. Goodbye. »

« O sir, it is nearly evening and the sun is beginning to set. You are tired and thirsty. Come in. Stay with us. You will speak to us of God, while we share bread and salt. »

Jesus goes in and they serve Him with the customary Jewish hospitality, offering Him drinks and water for His tired feet.

Then they sit at the table and the two beg Him to offer the food for them.

Jesus stands up holding the bread in the palms of His hands, and raising His eyes to the red sky of the evening, He recites the thanksgiving for the food and sits down. He breaks the bread and gives some to His two guests. And, in doing so, He reveals Himself for what He is: the Risen Lord. He is not the bright Risen Lord Who appeared to the others who are dearer to Him. But He is a Jesus full of majesty, with the wounds very clear in His long Hands: red roses against the ivory of His skin. A Jesus fully alive in His recomposed Body. But He is also clearly God in the majesty of His eyes and of all His aspect.

The two recognise Him and fall on their knees… But when they dare to lift their faces, there is nothing left of Him except the broken bread. They take it and kiss it. Each takes his own piece and after enveloping it in a linen cloth, he puts it, like a relic, on his chest.

They weep saying: « It was He! And we did not recognise Him. And yet did you not feel your heart bum within you while He spoke and explained the Scriptures to us? »

« Yes, I did. And now I seem to see Him again. And in the light coming from Heaven. The light of God. And I see that He is the Saviour. »

« Let us go. I am no longer hungry or tired. Let us go and tell Jesus' disciples in Jerusalem. »

« Let us go. Oh! I wish my old father had enjoyed this hour! »

« Don't say that! He has enjoyed it more than we have. Without the veils used out of pity for the weakness of our flesh, he, the just Cleopas, with his spirit has seen the Son of God enter heaven again. Let us go! Let us go! We shall arrive at dead of night. But if He so wishes, He will find a way to let us pass. If He has opened the gates of death, He will certainly be able to open those of the walls! Let us go. »

And in the fully purple sunset, they go speedily towards Jerusalem.

622. Jesus Appears to the Other Friends.

5th April 1945.

The house of the Supper room is full of people. The hall, the court-yard, the rooms, apart from the Supper room and the Virgin Mary's room, show the joyful excited appearance of a place where many people meet, after some time, for a feast. The apostles are there, except Thomas. The shepherds are there. The faithful women are there, and with Johanna, there are Nike, Eliza, Syra, Marcella, Anne. They are all speaking in low voices, but with evident joyful excitement. The house is locked, as if they were afraid, but the fear from outside does not affect the joy inside.

Martha goes backwards and forwards with Marcella and Susanna, preparing the supper of the « servants of the Lord », as she calls the apostles. The other women and men ask one another questions, they confide their impressions, their joys and fears… like many children awaiting something that thrills them and also frightens them a little.

The apostles would like to appear as the most self-confident. But they are the first to become uneasy if a noise seems the knock at a door or sounds like a window that bursts open. Also Susanna, who rushes with two multi-flamed lamps to help Martha, who is looking for some table-linen, makes Matthew jump back shouting: « The Lord! », which causes Peter, who is evidently more excited than the others, to fall on his knees.

A resolute knock at the door cuts all words short and leaves them all in suspense. I think that all their hearts are beating fast.

They look through the spy-hole and open with an « Oh! » of surprise, as they see the unexpected group of the Roman ladies escorted by Longinus and by another man, who like Longinus, is wearing dark clothes. Also the ladies are all enveloped in dark mantles, which cover also their heads. They are not wearing any jewels, in order not to attract attention.

« May we come in for a moment to express our joy to the Mother of the Saviour? » says Plautina, who is the most respected of them all.

« Do come in. She is there. »

They go in, in a group, with Johanna and Mary of Magdala, who gives me the impression that she knows them very well.

Longinus and the other Roman remain, separate in a corner of the hall, as they are looked at somewhat askance.

The women greet with their: « Ave Domina! » and they then kneel down saying: « If previously we admired the Wisdom, now we want to be daughters of the Christ. And we are telling You. You alone can overcome the Jewish distrust towards us. We will come to You to be taught until they (and they point at the apostles standing still in a group near the door) allow us to say that we are of Jesus. » It

is Plautina who has spoken on behalf of everybody.

Mary smiles blissfully and says: « I ask the Lord to cleanse My lips as He did with the prophet, so that I may be able to speak worthily of My Lord. May you be blessed, the first fruits of Rome. » « Longinus also would like to… and the Roman lance, who felt a fire in his heart when… when at the cry of God, Earth and Heaven opened. But if we know little, they know nothing, apart that He was the Saint of God and that they no longer want to belong to the Error. »

« You will tell them to come to the apostles. »

« They are over there. But the apostles distrust them. »

Mary stands up and goes towards the soldiers. The apostles look at Her go, trying to guess Her mind.

« May God lead you to His Light, sons! Come! To meet the servants of the Lord. This is John. And you know him. And this is Simon Peter, chosen by My Son and Lord to be the head of the brothers. This is James and this is Judas, cousins of the Lord. This is Simon and this is Andrew, who is Peter's brother. And this is James, John's brother. And these are Philip, Bartholomew and Matthew. Thomas is absent, still far away, but I mention his name as if he were present. They are the ones who have been chosen for a special mission. But these ones, who are standing humbly in the shade, are the first in the heroism of love. For over thirty years they have been preaching the Christ. Neither persecutions against them, nor the conviction of the Innocent have impaired their faith. Fishermen and shepherds, and you patricians. But in Jesus' name distinctions do not exist any more. Love in the Christ makes us all equal and brothers. And My love calls you sons, including you of another nation. Even more, I say that I find you once again after losing you, because, at the moment of sorrow, you were near My Dying Son. And I will not forget your compassion, Longinus, or your words, soldier. I looked as if I had been killed. But I saw everything. I do not have the possibility of rewarding you. And, really, for holy things there is no money, but only love and prayer. And that is what I will give you, praying our Lord Jesus Himself to reward you. »

« We have received it, Domina. That is why we have dared to come all together. A common impulse gathered us together. Faith has already placed its tie from heart to heart » says Longinus.

They all go near with curiosity. And there is someone who, overcoming the reluctance and perhaps the disgust of contact with heathens, says: « What did you receive? »

« I, a voice, His. And it said: "Come to Me" » says Longinus.

« And I heard: "If you think that I am Holy, believe in Me" » says the other soldier.

« And we » says Plautina « while this morning we were speaking of Him, saw a light, a light! It changed into a face. Oh! you… please

say how bright it was. It was His. And He smiled so kindly at us, that we wanted only one thing, to come and say to you: "Do not reject us". »

Voices whisper making comments. They all speak, telling how they saw it.

The ten apostles are silent, mortified. In order to recover from their unpleasant situation, and not appear as the only ones who had been left without His greetings, they ask the Hebrew women whether they were without a Passover gift.

Eliza says: « He removed from my heart the sword of sorrow for the death of my son. »

And Anne: « I heard His promise concerning the eternal salvation of my relatives. »

And Syra: « I received a caress. »

And Marcella: « I saw a flash and I heard his voice say: "Persevere". »

« And what about you, Nike? » they ask her, since she is silent.

« She had already had her gift » reply others.

« No. I have seen His Face, and He said to me: "That it may be impressed on your heart". How beautiful it was! »

Martha goes backwards and forwards, silently and quickly, and does not speak.

« And what about you, sister? Nothing for you? You are silent and you smile. You smile too sweetly to have no joy of your own » says the Magdalene.

« It is true. Your eyes are closed and your tongue is silent, but your eyes shine so much under the veil of your eyelids, that you seem to be singing a song of love. »

« Oh! speak then! Mother, did she tell You? »

The mother smiles but does not speak.

Martha, who is busy laying the cloth on the table, does not want to reveal her happy secret. But her sister gives her no rest. Then Martha, blushing blissfully, says: « He gave me a rendezvous for the hour of my death and the accomplishment of the nuptials… » and her face lights up with a brighter flush and the smile of her soul.

623. Jesus Appears to the Ten Apostles.

6th April 1945.

They are gathered in the Supper room. It must be late in the evening, because no noise comes from the street or the house. I think that all those, who had come earlier, have withdrawn to their houses or to sleep, tired of so many emotions.

The ten apostles, instead, after eating some fish, some of which is still left on a tray on a sideboard, are conversing in the light of only one little flame of the chandelier, the one closest to the table,

at which they are still sitting. Their conversation is fragmentary, and sounds like monologues, as each seems to be talking to himself, rather than to his companion. And the others let him speak, while they, in turn, speak of something completely different. But one feels that these rambling talks, that give me the impression of the spokes of a broken wheel, deal with one subject only, which is their centre, even if they are so disconnected, and it is Jesus.

« I hope that Lazarus has not misunderstood, and that the women have understood better than he did… » says Judas of Alphaeus.

« At what time did the Roman lady say that she saw Him? » asks Matthew.

No one replies to him.

« I am going to Capernaum tomorrow » says Andrew.

« How wonderful! To arrange things in such a way that Claudia's litter should come out just at that moment! » says Bartholomew.

« We made a mistake in coming away at once this morning, Peter… If we had stayed, we would have seen Him as the Magdalene did » says John with a sigh.

« I don't understand how He could be at Emmaus and at the mansion house at the same time. And how He was here with His Mother, and there with the Magdalene and at Johanna's all at the same time… » says James of Zebedee talking to himself.

« He will not come. I have not wept enough to deserve it… He is right. I say that He will keep me waiting for three days because of my three denials. How was I able to do that? »

« How transfigured was Lazarus! I tell you: he looked like a sun himself. I think that it happened to him as it did to Moses after he had seen God. And immediately after - it's true, isn't it, you who were there? - immediately after he had offered his life! » says the Zealot.

No one listens to him.

James of Alphaeus turns towards John and asks: « What did He say to those from Emmaus? I think that He excused us, did He not? Did He not say that everything happened because we Israelites failed to understand the nature of His Kingdom? »

John does not pay attention to him, and turning round to look at Philip, he says… wasting his breath, because he does not speak to Philip: « It is sufficient for me to know that He has risen. And then… And then that my love may be stronger and stronger. You have noticed this, eh! If you consider things properly, He has gone in proportion to the love we have had: the Mother, Mary Magdalene, the children, my mother and yours, and then Lazarus and Martha… When did He appear to Martha? I say when she intoned David's psalm: "The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing. He has laid me in meadows of green grass, He has led me to waters of repose. He has called my soul to Himself… " Do you remember how

she made our hearts beat violently with that unexpected song? And those words are connected to what she said: "He has called my soul to Himself". Martha, in fact, seems to have found her way again… Previously, she, the strong woman, was lost! Perhaps, when calling her, He told her the place where He wants her. And more than that, it is certain, because, if He gave her a rendezvous, He must know where she will be. What did she mean by: "accomplishment of the nuptials"? »

Philip, who has looked at him for a moment, and then has left him to talk to himself, says moaning: « If He comes, I shall not know what to say to Him… I ran away… and I feel that I will run away. Previously out of fear of men. Now out of fear of Him. »

Everybody says: « He is most handsome. Can He be more handsome than He already was? » asks Bartholomew.

« I will say to Him: "You forgave me without saying one word, when I was a publican. Forgive me also now with Your silence, because my cowardice does not deserve Your Word" » says Matthew.

« Longinus said that he was thinking: "Shall I ask Him to be cured or to believe?" But his heart said: "To believe", and then the Voice said: "Come to Me", and he felt that he wanted to believe and that he was cured at the same time. That is exactly what he told me » states Judas of Alphaeus.

« My mind is always fixed on the idea that Lazarus was rewarded at once because of his offering… I also said: "My life for Your glory". But He has not come » says the Zealot with a sigh.

« What do you think, Simon? As you are a learned man, tell me: what shall I say to Him to make Him understand that I love Him and I ask Him to forgive me? And you, John? You have conversed a great deal with the Mother. Help me. If you are compassionate, you cannot leave poor Peter alone! »

John feels pity for his dejected companion and says: « Well… I would simply say to Him: "I love You". Repentance and the wish for forgiveness are also included in love. But… I don't know. Simon, what do you think? »

And the Zealot: « I would say what was the cry for miracles: "Jesus, have mercy on me!" I would say: "Jesus". Nothing else. Because He is by far more than the Son of David! »

« That is exactly what I think and makes me tremble. Oh! I will hide my head… Also this morning I was afraid of seeing Him and… »

« … and then you were the first to go in. But don't be so afraid. One would think that you do not know Him » says John encouraging him.

The room lightens brightly, as if there were a dazzling flash. The apostles cover their faces, fearing it is lightning. But they hear no noise and they raise their heads.

Jesus is in the middle of the room, near the table. He stretches

out His arms saying: « Peace be with you. »

No one replies. Some look paler, some flush, they all look at Him with fear and embarrassment. They are fascinated and at the same time they are almost anxious to run away.

Jesus takes a step forward, smiling more brightly. « But do not be so afraid! It is I. Why are you so upset? Were you not wishing to see Me? Did I not let you know that I would come? Did I not tell you on Passover evening? »

No one dare open his mouth. Peter is already weeping, and John is already smiling, while His two cousins, with shining eyes and lips that tremble without uttering a word, look like two statues representing desire.

« Why do you have in your hearts thoughts that are in such contrast between doubt and faith, love and fear? Why do you still want to be flesh and not spirit, and only with the latter see, understand, judge, act? Have your old egos not been completely burnt by the flame of sorrow, and have your new egos not risen to a new life? I am Jesus. Your Jesus, Who has risen from the dead, as He had said. Look, John, who have seen My wounds, and you all, who are not aware of My torture. Because what you know is quite different from the exact knowledge that John has. Come, be the first. You are already completely cleansed. So cleansed that you can touch Me without fear. Love, obedience, loyalty had already cleansed you. My Blood, which wetted you completely when you took Me down from the Cross, has finished cleansing you. Look. These are real hands and real wounds. Look at My feet. Can you see that the mark is that of the nail? Yes. It is really I and not a ghost. Touch Me. Ghosts do not have bodies. I have real flesh on a real skeleton. » He lays His Hand on the head of John who has dared to approach Him: « Can you feel it? It is warm and heavy. » He breathes on his face: « And this is My breath. »

« Oh! my Lord! » John whispers in a low voice, so…

« Yes. Your Lord. John, do not weep out of fear and desire. Come to Me. I am always the one who loves you. Let us sit down, as usual, at the table. Have you nothing to eat? Well, give Me it. »

Andrew and Matthew, with the gestures of sleep-walkers, from the sideboards take bread and fish, and a tray with a honeycomb, a corner of which has just been nibbled at.

Jesus offers the food and eats, and gives each of them a little of what He eats. And He looks at them. He is so kind and so majestic that they are paralysed.

James, John's brother, is the first who dares to speak: « Why do You look at us so? »

« Because I want to know you. »

« Do You not know us yet? »

« As you do not know Me. If you knew Me, you would know Who

I am and how I love you, and you would find words to tell Me your torture. You are silent, as if you were before a mighty stranger of whom you are afraid. Not long ago you were speaking… For almost four days you have been talking to yourselves saying: "I will say this to Him… saying to My Spirit: "Come back, Lord, that I may tell You this". Now I have come, and you are silent? Have I changed so much that I no longer seem Myself to you? Or have you changed so much that you no longer love Me? »

John, sitting near his Jesus, makes the usual gesture of laying his head on His chest, while he whispers: « I love You, my God », but he becomes stiff, preventing such abandon out of respect for the shining Son of God. Because Jesus seems to be shedding a light, although His Body is like ours.

But Jesus clasps him to His Heart, and then John opens the floodgates to his blissful tears. And it is the sign for everybody to do the same.

Peter, two seats behind John, falls on his knees between the table and the seat and he weeps shouting: « Forgive me, forgive me! Take me out of this hell in which I have been for so many hours. Tell me that You have seen my error for what it was. Not of the spirit, but of the flesh that overwhelmed my heart. Tell me that You have seen my repentance… It will last until my death. But… but do tell me that I must not fear You as Jesus… and I, and I… I will try to behave so well, as to make also God forgive me… and die… having only a long purgatory to suffer. »

« Come here, Simon of Jonah. »

« I am afraid. »

« Come here. Be no longer cowardly. »

« I do not deserve to come near You. »

« Come here. What did My Mother say to you? "If you do not look at Him on this veronica, you will never have the heart to look at Him again". O foolish man! Did that Face not tell you with its sorrowful look that I understood you and forgave you? And yet I gave that linen as comfort, guide, absolution and blessing… But what has Satan done to you to blind you so much? Now I say to you: if you do not look at Me now, that I have spread a veil on My glory to adapt Myself to your weakness, never again will you be able to come to your Lord without fear. And then what will happen to you? You sinned out of presumption. Do you want now to sin again out of obstinacy? Come, I tell you. »

Peter drags himself along on his knees, between the table and the seats, covering his weeping face with his hands. Jesus stops him when he is at His feet, by laying His Hand on his head. Peter, weeping more bitterly, takes that Hand and kisses it, amid hearty sobs without restraint. He can only say: « Forgive me! Forgive me! »

Jesus frees Himself from his grip and lifting the chin of the apostle

with His hand, He compels him to raise his head, and He stares at his reddened, burnt eyes, tortured by repentance, with His own clear bright Eyes. He seems to be wishing to pierce his soul. He then says: « Come on. Remove the shame of Judas from Me. Kiss Me where he kissed Me. Wash with your kiss the sign of betrayal. »

Peter raises his head, while Jesus bends even more, and he touches His cheek lightly… then he rests his head on Jesus' knees and remains thus… like an old child who has done wrong but is forgiven.

The others, who now see Jesus' kindness, become somewhat daring, and they approach Him, as best they can.

His cousins are the first to come… They would like to say so much, but they do not succeed in saying anything. Jesus caresses them and encourages them with His smile.

Matthew comes with Andrew. Matthew says: « As in Capernaum… », and Andrew: « I… I love You, I do. »

Bartholomew comes moaning: « I was not wise, but foolish. He is wise » and he points at the Zealot, at whom Jesus is already smiling.

James of Zebedee comes and he whispers to John: « You should tell Him… »; and Jesus turns round and says: « You have said it for four evenings, and I have pitied you all that time. »

Philip, the last, comes completely stooped. Jesus compels him to raise his head and says to him:« Greater courage is required to preach the Christ. »

They are all now around Jesus. They pluck up courage little by little. They find again what they had lost or had feared they had lost for good. Confidence and tranquillity come to light again and, although Jesus is so majestic as to make His apostles have a new respect for Him, they at long last find the courage to speak.

It is His cousin James who says with a sigh: « Why have You done this to us, Lord? You knew that we are nothing and that everything comes from God. Why did You not give us the strength to remain beside You? »

Jesus looks at him and smiles.

« Now everything has happened. And You do not have to suffer anything any more. But do not ask this sort of obedience of me any more. I have grown five years older every hour, and Your sufferings, which love and Satan have also increased five times more in my imagination than what they really were, have really consumed all my strength. I have left only what I need to continue to obey, holding, like one who is drowning with his hands broken, my strength with my will, like teeth set on a board, in order not to perish… Oh! do not ask Your leper that any more. »

Jesus looks at Simon Zealot and smiles.

« Lord, You know what my heart wanted. But later I no longer had my heart… as if the rascals who had captured You had torn it off me… and I was left with a hole through which all my previous

thoughts escaped. Why did You allow that, Lord? » asks Andrew.

« I… you say it was your heart? I say that I was one who no longer had his reason. Like one who is struck by a club on the nape of his neck. When, at dead of night, I found myself at Jericho… oh! God! God!… But can a man perish like that? I say that that is what possession is like. Now I realise what is that dreadful thing!… » Philip opens his eyes wide at the recollection of his suffering.

« Philip is right. I was looking back. I am old and not devoid of wisdom. And I did not know anything of what I had known till that hour. "I looked at Lazarus, so tortured but so sure of himself, and I said to myself: "But how can it be possible that he still knows how to find a reason and I can no longer find anything? » says Bartholomew.

« I also was looking at Lazarus. And as I hardly know what You have explained to us, I was not thinking of knowledge. But I said to myself: "If at least my heart were like his!"; instead I felt nothing but grief, grief, grief. Lazarus was grieved but had peace… Why so much peace for him? »

Jesus in turn looks first at Philip, then at Bartholomew and then at James of Zebedee. He smiles and is silent.

Judas says: « I was hoping to get to see what Lazarus certainly saw. That is why I was always close to him… His face!… A mirror. Shortly before the earthquake on Friday he was like a man who is crushed to death. Then all of a sudden he became imposing in his grief. Do you remember when he said: "An accomplished duty gives peace"? We all thought that it was only a reproach for us or an approval for himself. Now I think that he said so referring to You. Lazarus was like a lighthouse in our darkness. How much You have given him, Lord! »

Jesus smiles and is silent.

« Yes. His life. And perhaps with it You have given him a different soul. Because, after all, in what is he different from us? And yet he is no longer a man. He is already something more than a man, and considering what he was in the past, he should have been even less perfect in spirit than we are. But he has made himself, and we… Lord, my love has been empty like certain ears of wheat. I have produced only chaff » says Andrew.

And Matthew: « I cannot ask for anything. Because I have already received so much with my conversion. Of course! I should have liked to have what Lazarus had. A soul given by You. Because I also think as Andrew does… »

« Also the Magdalene and Martha were like lighthouses. It must be their race. You did not see them. One was piety and silence. The other! If we were like a bundle round the Blessed Mother, it is because Mary of Magdala grouped us together with the flames of her courageous love. Yes. I said: the race. But I must say: love. They

have exceeded us in love. That is why they have been what they have been » says John.

Jesus smiles and is always silent.

« But they have received a great reward for it… »

« You appeared to them. »

« To the three of them. »

« To Mary immediately after Your Mother… »

It is clear that the apostles have a regret for these privileged apparitions.

« Mary for so many hours has known that You had risen. And we can only see You now… »

« They are no longer in doubt. With us, instead, well… only now we feel that nothing has come to an end. Why to them, Lord, if You still love us and You do not reject us? » asks Judas of Alphaeus.

« Yes. Why to the women, and in particular to Mary? You also touched her forehead, and she says that she seems to be wearing an eternal crown. And to us, Your apostles, nothing… »

Jesus no longer smiles. His Face is not upset, but He has stopped smiling. He looks gravely at Peter, who was the last to speak, recovering boldness as his fear vanishes, and He says:

« I had twelve apostles. And I loved them with all My Heart. I had chosen them and like a mother I took care to bring them up in My Life. I had no secrets for them. I told them everything, I explained everything, I forgave everything. Their humanity, their thoughtlessness, and their stubbornness… everything. And I had some disciples. Some rich and some poor disciples. I had women with a gloomy past or of a delicate constitution. But the apostles were the favourite ones.

My hour came. One betrayed Me and handed Me over to the executioners. Three slept while I was sweating blood. All of them, with the exception of two, ran away cowardly. One denied Me out of fear, although he had the example of another one, who was young and faithful. And, as if it were not enough, among the twelve I had a desperate suicide and one who doubted My forgiveness so much that only with difficulty and through maternal words he believed in God's Mercy. So that, if I had looked at My group, if I had looked at it with human eyes, I should have said: "With the exception of John, faithful out of love, and of Simon, faithful to obedience, I no longer have disciples". That is what I should have said while I was suffering in the enclosure of the Temple, in the Praetorium, along the streets, on the Cross.

I had some women… And one, the most guilty in the past, has been, as John said, the flame that has joined together the broken fibres of hearts. That woman is Mary of Magdala. You denied Me and you ran away. She defied death to be close to Me. When they insulted her, she uncovered her face, ready to receive spittle and

slaps, considering that by doing so she would resemble her crucified King more. And when people sneered at her from the depth of their hearts because of her firm faith in My Resurrection, she continued to believe. Although tortured, she took action. When she was desolate this morning she said: "I will divest myself of everything, but give me my Master". Can you still dare to ask Me: "Why to her?"

I had some poor disciples: the shepherds. I did not approach them very often, and yet how able they were to acknowledge Me with their faithfulness!

I had some shy women disciples, like all the Hebrew women. And yet they left their homes and amid a tremendous crowd of people that cursed Me, they came to give Me that assistance that My apostles had denied Me.

I had some heathen women who admired the "philosopher". Such I was for them. But the mighty Roman ladies were able to lower themselves to Hebrew customs, to say to Me, in the hour that I was forsaken by a world of ungrateful people: "We are friends of Yours. "

My face was covered with spittle and blood. Tears and perspiration dripped on My wounds. Filth and dust encrusted them. Whose hands cleansed Me? Yours? Or yours? Or yours? None of your hands. This man was near My Mother. This one was gathering together the scattered sheep. You. And if My sheep were scattered, how could they help Me? You were concealing your faces, because you were afraid of the scorn of the world, while your Master was covered with the contempt of all the world. And He was innocent.

I was thirsty. Yes. You had better know also that. I was dying of thirst. I had nothing but a temperature and pain. My Blood had already been shed in Gethsemane, drawn by the grief of being betrayed, forsaken, denied, beaten, overwhelmed by the infinite sins and by God's severity. And it had been shed in the Praetorium… Who thought of giving Me a drop of water for My parched throat? A hand of Israel? No. The pity of a heathen. The same hand that, by an eternal decree, opened My chest to show that My Heart already had a mortal wound, the one made by lack of love, by cowardice and by the betrayal. A heathen. I remind you: "I was thirsty and you gave Me drink". There was not even one person in the whole of Israel who gave Me comfort, either out of lack of possibility to do so, as in the case of My Mother and the faithful women, or because of bad will. And for the Unknown One a heathen found the pity that My people had denied Me. In Heaven he will find the sip he gave Me.

I solemnly tell you that, while I refused all comforts, because when one is a Victim one must not mitigate one's destiny, I did not want to reject the heathen, in whose offer I tasted the sweetness of all the love that will come to Me from the Gentiles, as compensation

for the bitterness Israel gave Me. It did not quench My thirst, but it relieved My dejection. That is why I took that ignored sip. To draw to Me him who was already inclined towards Good. May he be blessed by the Father for his pity!

Are you no longer speaking? Why do you not continue to ask Me why I acted so. Do you not dare ask? I will tell you. I will tell you everything of the whys of this hour.

Who are you? My continuators. Yes, you are, notwithstanding your bewilderment. What are you to do? To convert the world to Christ. Convert it! It is the most delicate and difficult matter, My friends. Indignation, disgust, pride, excessive zeal, are all harmful to success. But, as nothing and nobody would induce you to be kind, complying, charitable with those who are in darkness, it has been necessary - do you understand? - it has been necessary for you, once for all, to crush your pride of Hebrews, of males, of apostles, to make room only for the true wisdom of your ministry: for meekness, patience, compassion, love without ostentation and disgust.

You can see that everybody, among those whom you looked at with scorn or with proud indulgence, has exceeded you in believing and in acting. Everybody. The woman who had sinned in the past. Lazarus, imbued with profane culture, the first who in My Name has forgiven and guided. And the heathen ladies. And Chuza's delicate wife. Delicate? She really surpasses all of you! The first martyr of My faith. And the soldiers of Rome. And the shepherds. And the Herodian Manaen. And even Gamaliel, the rabbi. Do not start, John. Do you think that My Spirit was in darkness? All of you. And I say this so that in future, remembering your error, you may not close your hearts to those who come to the Cross.

I tell you. And I know that, although I tell you, you will not do it until the Strength of the Lord bends you like twigs to My Will, which is to have Christians all over the Earth. I defeated Death. But it is not so hard as old Hebraism. But I will bend you.

You, Peter, instead of weeping dejectedly, since you are to be the Stone of My Church, have these bitter truths engraved in your heart. Myrrh is used to preserve from corruption. So, become imbued with myrrh. And when you want to close your heart and the Church to someone of a different faith, remember that is was not Israel, it was not Israel, it was not Israel, but it was Rome that defended Me and took pity on Me. Remember that not you, but a woman, a sinner, remained at the foot of the Cross and deserved to be the first to see Me. And in order not to be worthy of reproach, be the imitator of your God. Open your heart and the Church saying: "I, poor Peter, cannot despise anybody, because if I do, I shall be despised by God, and my error will become alive once again in His eyes". Woe to you, if I had not broken you so! You would not have become a shepherd, but a wolf. »

Jesus stands up. He looks most imposing.

« My children. I will speak to you again, while I remain among you. But, in the meantime, I absolve you and forgive you. May the peace of forgiveness come to you, after the trial, that, although humiliating and cruel, has been beneficial and necessary. And with this peace in your hearts, become once again My faithful strong friends. The Father sent Me into the world. I send you into the world to continue My evangelization. All kinds of miseries will come to you asking for relief. Be kind, thinking of your misery when you remained without your Jesus. Be enlightened. It is not possible to see in darkness. Be pure to give purity. Be love, to love. Then He will come, Who is Light, Purification and Love. But in the meantime, to prepare you for your ministry, I communicate the Holy Spirit to you. For those whose sins you forgive, they will be forgiven. For those whose sins you retain, they will be retained. May your experience make you just in judging. May the Holy Spirit make you saints, so that you may sanctify. May your sincere wish to overcome your faults make you heroes for the life expecting you. What is still to be said, I will tell you when your absent companion has come. Pray for him. Remain with My peace and without being upset by doubts about My love. »

And Jesus disappears as He had come in, leaving an empty place between John and Peter. He disappears in a flash that is so bright that it makes the apostles close their eyes. And when their dazzled eyes are opened again, they find that only Jesus' peace is left, a flame that burns and cures and consumes the bitterness of the past in one only desire: to serve.

624. The Incredulity of Thomas. Jesus' Warning to the "Thomases" of Today.

7th April 1945.

The ten apostles are in the court-yard of the house of the Supper room. They are talking to one another and then they pray. Later they resume speaking.

Simon Zealot says: « I am really distressed at Thomas' disappearance. I do not know where to look for him any more. »

« Neither do I » says John.

« He is not with his relatives. And no one has seen him. Has he perhaps been arrested? »

« If that were the case, the Master would not have said: "I will tell you the rest when your absent companion is here". »

« That is true. But I want to go to Bethany again. Perhaps he is wandering about those mountains and does not dare show himself. »

« Go, Simon. You gathered us all together… and by gathering us you saved us, because you took us to Lazarus. Did you hear what

words the Master spoke of him? He said: "The first who in My Name has forgiven and guided". Why does He not put him in the place of the Iscariot? » asks Matthew.

« Probably because He does not want to give His perfect friend the place of the betrayer » replies Philip.

« A short while ago, I heard, when I was going round the markets and I spoke to the fishmongers, that… I can trust them, of course, that those of the Temple do not know what to do with Judas' body. I do not know who it was… but at dawn this morning the guards of the Temple found his putrid body inside the sacred enclosure, with the rope still round his neck. I think it must have been some heathens who pulled him down and threw him in there, who knows how » says Peter.

« Instead, yesterday evening at the fountain I was told, I heard them say that since yesterday evening they threw the bowels of the traitor even at Annas' house. Heathens, certainly. Because no Hebrew would touch that body after more than five days. I wonder how rotten it must have been! » says James of Alphaeus.

« Oh! it was horrible since the Sabbath! » says John turning pale at the recollection.

« But how did he end up in that place? Did it belong to him? »

« And who was ever told anything precise by Judas of Kerioth? Remember how reserved and complicated he was… »

« You can say: false, Bartholomew. He was never sincere. He was with us for three years, and we, who had everything in common, before him were like people before the high wall of a fortress. »

« Of a fortress? Oh! Simon! Of a labyrinth! » exclaims Judas of Alphaeus.

« Oh! listen. Let us not speak of him! I get the impression that we are evoking him and that he is to come to give us trouble. I should like to cancel his memory from me and from all hearts, whether they are the hearts of Hebrews or of Gentiles. Of Hebrews, in order not to blush because our race gave birth to that monster. Of Gentiles, so that none of them may say to us one day: "His betrayer was one from Israel".

I am a boy. And I should not be the first one to speak before you. I am the last and you, Peter, are the first. And here is the Zealot and Bartholomew, both learned men, and there are the brothers of the Lord. But, now, I should like to put one in the twelfth place at once, someone who is holy, because, as long as I see that empty place in our group, I shall see the mouth of hell with its stench among us. And I am afraid that it may lead us astray… »

« No, John! You have been struck by the ugliness of his crime and of his hanging body… »

« No, no. The Mother also said: "I saw Satan when I saw Judas of Kerioth". Oh! let us be quick in finding a holy person to put in

that place! »

« Listen, I am not going to choose anybody. If He, Who was God, chose an Iscariot, what will poor Peter choose? »

« And yet you will have to… »

« No, my dear friend. I am not choosing anything. I will ask the Lord. Enough of the sins committed by Peter! »

« We have to ask so many things. The other evening we were like dull-witted people. But we must be taught. Because… How will we be able to understand whether a thing is really a sin? Or whether it is not? You have seen how the Lord speaks of the heathens in a different manner than we do. You have seen how He excuses more cowardice and a denial than the doubt about the possibility of His forgiveness… Oh! I am afraid of doing the wrong thing » says James of Alphaeus disconsolately.

« He has really spoken to us so much. And yet I seem to know nothing. I have been dull-witted for a week » states the other James dejectedly.

« And I. »

« And I. »

« I, too. »

They are all in the same situation and they look at each other utterly bewildered. They have recourse to the solution which is by now customary: « We shall go to Lazarus » they say. « We may find the Lord there… and Lazarus will help us. »

There is a knock at the main door. They all become silent and listen. And they utter an « oh! » of surprise when they see Elias come into the hall with Thomas. Such a strange Thomas that he seems another person.

His companions crowd round him shouting their joy: « Do you know that He has risen and has come? And He is waiting for you so that He may come back! »

« Yes. Also Elias told me. But I do not believe it. I believe what I see. And I see that it is the end for us. I see that we are all scattered. I see that there is not even a known sepulchre where we may mourn over His death. I see that the Sanhedrin wants to get rid of both their accomplice, whose burial they have decreed at the foot of the olive-tree where he hanged himself, as if he were a filthy animal, and of the followers of the Nazarene. On Friday I was stopped at the gates and they said to me: "Were you one of His followers as well? He is dead, now. Go back to beating gold". And I ran away… »

« Where? We have looked for you everywhere. »

« Where? I went towards the house of my sister at Ramah. But I did not dare to go in because… I did not want to be reproached by a woman. So I wandered about the Judaean mountains and yesterday I ended up at Bethlehem, in His grotto. How much I wept… I

fell asleep among the ruins and Elias, who had come there… I do not know why, found me. »

« Why? Because in the hours of too great a joy or too great a sorrow, one goes where God is more felt. Many a time, in these past years, I have gone there by night, like a thief, to feel my soul being caressed by the remembrance of His cries. And then I would run away at sunrise, in order not to be stoned. But I was already comforted. Now I went there to say to that place: "I am happy" and to take what I can from it. That is what we have decided. We want to preach His Faith. And the strength to do so will be given to us by a bit of that wall, by a handful of that soil, by a splinter of those poles. We are not holy, as to dare to take the earth of Calvary… »

« You are right, Elias. We shall have to do that as well. And we will. But Thomas?… »

« Thomas slept and wept. I said to him: "Wake up and stop weeping. He has risen". He would not believe me. But I insisted so much that I convinced him. Here he is. He is now with you and I will go away. I will join my companions who are going to Galilee. Peace to you. » Elias goes away.

« Thomas: He has risen. I am telling you. He was with us. He ate some food. He spoke. He blessed us. He forgave us. He has given us the power to forgive. Oh! why did you not come before? »

Thomas does not shake off his dejection. He stubbornly shakes his head. « I do not believe. You have seen a ghost. You are all mad. The women first of all. A dead man does not rise by himself. »

« A man, no. But He is God. Do you not believe that? »

« Yes. I believe that He is God. But, just because I believe that, I think and say that, no matter how good He is, He cannot be so good to the extent of coming among those who have loved Him so little. And I say that, however humble He may be, He must have had enough of humiliating Himself in our filthy flesh. No. He may be, He certainly is triumphant in Heaven, and, perhaps, He may appear as a spirit. I say: perhaps. We do not deserve even that! But risen in flesh and bones, no. I do not believe it. »

« But we have kissed Him, we have seen Him eat, we have heard His voice, we have felt His hand, we have seen His wounds! »

« Nothing. I do not believe it. I cannot believe. I should see in order to believe. If I do not see the holes of the nails in His hands, and I do not put my finger into them, if I do not touch the wounds of His feet and if I do not put my hand where the lance opened His chest, I will not believe. I am not a child or a woman. I want evidence. I reject what my reason cannot accept. And I cannot accept your word. »

« But Thomas! Do you think that we want to deceive you? »

« No, my poor fellows. On the contrary! May you be blessed since you are so kind as to wish to guide me to that peace, that you have

succeeded in giving yourselves through this illusion of yours. But… I do not believe in His Resurrection. »

« Are you not afraid of being punished by Him? He hears and sees everything, you know? »

« I ask Him to convince me. I am gifted with reason, and I make use of it. Let Him, the Master of human reason, revise mine if it has been led astray. »

« But reason, He said so, is free. »

« All the more reason for not making it the slave of a collective suggestion. I love you and I love the Lord. I will serve Him as best I can and I will stay with you to help you to serve Him. I will preach His doctrine. But I can only believe by seeing. »

And Thomas, obstinate, listens only to himself. They speak to him of all those who have seen Him and how they have seen Him. They advise him to speak to the Mother. But he shakes his head, sitting on a stone seat, more stony himself than the seat. As obstinate as a child, he repeats: « I will believe if I see… »

The big word of unhappy people who deny what is so pleasant and holy to believe, admitting that God can do everything.

Jesus says:

« Little John, the cycle is over. After this you will put My Apparition to incredulous Thomas, as given to you on 9th August 1944. But when all the Gospel has been written, much will still have to added to Palm Sunday, to the Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday morning in Holy Week, as I said at the beginning. The parts to be inserted, taken from what you saw last year, have already been pointed out to you by Me. If Father Migliorini so wishes, he can put the dictations of last year that I now point out to you. […]

And, as I foresee the remarks of too many Thomases and of the too many scribes of the present days on a sentence of this dictation, which seems to be in contrast with the sip of water offered by Longinus… - oh! how happy the deniers of the supernatural, the rationalists of perfection contrariwise, would be, if they could find a fissure in the wonderful complex of this work of divine bounty and of your sacrifice, little John, to make it all collapse, by prizing open such fissure with the pick of their lethal rationalism - to prevent them, I say and explain.

That poor sip of water - a drop in the fire of the fever and in the dryness of the emptied veins - taken out of love for a soul that was to be convinced of love to lead it to the Truth, taken with great difficulty in the severe pain that obstructed My breathing and prevented My from swallowing, so crushed I was by the cruel scourges, gave Me only a supernatural relief. For My body it was nothing, not to say that it was a torture… Rivers would have been required to quench My thirst then… And I could not drink because

of the anguish of the praecordial pain. And you are aware of that pain… Rivers would have been required later… and they were not given to Me. Neither could I have accepted them because of the stronger and stronger suffocation. But how much relief they would have given to My Heart, had they been offered! It was of love that I was dying. Of love not given. Pity is love. And in Israel there was no pity.

When you, good people, contemplate, or you, sceptical philosophers, analyse that "sip", give it the right name: "pity' , not drink. So it can be said, without incurring falsehood, that "from the Supper onwards I had no comfort". Of all the people who surrounded Me there was not one who gave Me any comfort, as I did not want to take the spiced wine. I had vinegar and mockery. I had betrayal and blows. That is what I had. Nothing else.

You asked: "Why did I not see this deed of Longinus last year?" Because you were terrorised by the vision, suffered by you, of My tortures. Because you were not yet capable of describing and seeing. I shortened the times to give you consolation for your impending passion. But you can see that I had to take you again with Me to go back through all My Torture with greater perfection and peace. Is it perfect? Oh! no. A creature, although held in My arms and melted with Me, is still a creature, and will always have the reactions and capabilities of a creature. Being a creature, it will never be able to understand and describe the feelings and sufferings of the Man-God with absolute veracity and perfection.

And, in any case, they would not be understood by most people. Even these are not understood. And, instead of kneeling down and blessing God, Who has granted you this knowledge, the only thing to be done, the majority will take books, new ones and old ones, will check, measure, look against the light, hoping, hoping, hoping. What? To find discrepancies with other similar works, and thus demolish, demolish, demolish. In the name of (human) science, of (human) reason, of (human) criticism, o f the three times human pride. How much of holy works is demolished by man, to build with the ruins edifices that are not holy. You have removed the pure gold, poor men. The simple and precious gold of Wisdom. You have put stucco and plaster, badly painted with gilt dust, that the impact of life, of people, of human storms washes away at once, leaving a pitting of leprosy that soon crumbles, reducing your knowledge to nothing.

Oh! poor Thomases, who believe only what you understand and what you feel in yourselves! But bless God and try to ascend, because I will give you a hand! Ascend in faith and in love. I wanted the mortification of the apostles, so that they may become capable of being the "fathers of souls". I beg you, and I speak in particular to you, My priests. Accept the humiliation of being placed after a

layman, in order to become "fathers of souls". This work is for everybody. But this Gospel is dedicated to you in particular, as in it the Master takes His priests by the hand and leads them through the rows of the pupils, so that they, the priests, may become teachers capable of guiding the pupils, and in it the Doctor takes you among the sick people - every man has his spiritual disease - and He shows you the symptoms and the treatment!

So, take heart. Come and look. Come and eat. Come and drink. And do not refuse. And do not hate little John. The good among you will receive a holy joy from this work. The honest scholars a light. The absent-minded, who are not wicked, a pleasure. The wicked a means to give vent to their evil science. But little John has had only sorrow and fatigue, so that, now, at the end of the work, he is like a person languishing with a disease.

So, what shall I say to his friends and Mine: to Mary of Magdala and John, to Martha and Lazarus and Simon, to the angels who have watched over him in his work? I will say: "Little John, our friend, is languishing. Let us go and take the water of the eternal rivers to him and say: "Come, little John. Look at the Sun and rise. Because many would like to see what you see. But only the favourites are granted to know, in advance, the eternal Lord and His days in the world. Come. The Saviour, with His friends, is coming to your abode, while waiting for you to go, with Him and Them, to His Abode".

Go in peace. I am with you. »

7th April 1945, Five o'clock p.m.

625. Jesus Appears to the Apostles with Thomas. Speech on Priesthood.

[9th August 1944]

The apostles are gathered in the Supper room, around the table where the Passover supper was consumed. But out of respect, the central seat, that of Jesus, has been left empty.

Also the apostles, now that there is no longer One Who groups and distributes them according to His will or by choice of love, have placed themselves differently. Peter is still in his place. But Judas Thaddeus is now in John's place. Then comes Bartholomew, the oldest of the apostles, then James, John's brother, almost at the comer of the table on the right hand side, with respect to me who am looking on. John is sitting near James, but on the narrow side of the table. After Peter, instead, comes Matthew, and after him Thomas, then Philip, then Andrew, then James, Judas Thaddeus' brother, and Simon Zealot on the other sides. The long side in front of Peter is empty, as the apostles are sitting closer than they were at Passover.

The windows are closed and the doors are locked. The lamp, of which only two flames are lit, sheds a feeble light only on the table. The rest of the large room is in a dim light.

As there is a sideboard behind him, John is entrusted with the task of serving his companions with what they wish of their frugal meal, consisting of fish, which is on the table, bread, honey and fresh cheese. As he turns again towards the table, to give his elder brother the cheese he asked for, John sees the Lord.

Jesus has appeared in a very strange manner. The central part of the wall behind the apostles sitting at the table - a wall all of one piece except for the little door in the corner - brightens up at about one metre from the floor, with a feeble phosphoric light, like that shed by certain little pictures, which are luminous only in the dark at night. The light, about two metres high, is oval, like a niche. From the brilliancy, as if He were advancing from behind veils of luminous mist, Jesus emerges with increasing neatness.

I do not know whether I have made myself understood. His Body seems to flow through the thickness of the wall, which does not open. It remains compact, but the Body passes just the same. Light seems to be the first emanation of His Body, the announcement of His approach. The Body at first consists of soft lines of light, as in Heaven I see the Father and the holy angels: immaterial. Then it becomes more and more material, taking the aspect of a real body in everything, that of His Divine glorified Body.

It has taken me a long time to describe this, but it happened in a few seconds.

Jesus is dressed in white, as when He rose and appeared to His Mother. He is most handsome, loving and smiling. He is standing with His arms along the sides of His Body, a little detached from it, but with His Hands towards the floor and the palms towards the apostles. The two wounds of His Hands are like two diamond stars, from which two very bright beams issue. I do not see His Feet, covered by His tunic, or His Chest. But from the fabric of His garment, which is not an earthly one, light emanates where the divine Wounds are concealed. At -the beginning Jesus seems to be nothing but a Body of lunar whiteness, later, when it materialises appearing outside the halo of light, His hair, eyes, skin have their natural colours. In short, it is Jesus, Jesus-Man-God, but looking more solemn now that He has risen.

John sees Him when He is already like that. Nobody else had become aware of the apparition. John jumps to his feet, dropping the plate of the little round whole cheeses on the table and, laying his hands on the edge of the table, he bends a little towards it sideways, as I f he were attracted by a magnet, and in a low subdued voice he utters an intensely expressive « Oh! ».

The others, who had raised their heads from their plates at the

noisy fall of the plate of the cheese and at John's start and had looked at him with astonishment, when they see his ecstatic posture, look in the same direction as he is looking. They turn their heads or they turn round, according to their position with respect to the Master, and they see Jesus. They all stand up, deeply moved and happy, and they rush towards Him, as He, smiling more brightly advances towards them, walking now on the floor like all mortals.

Jesus, Who previously looked fixedly only at John, and I think that the latter turned round because he felt attracted by that glance that caressed him, looks at them all and says: « Peace to you. »

They are all now around Him, some on their knees at His feet, and among these there is Peter with John - and John even kisses the hem of His tunic and presses it to his face as if he wished to be caressed by it - some farther back, standing, but stooping in a respectful attitude.

Peter, to arrive quicker, jumps over the seat without waiting for Matthew to come out first and make room for him. It must be borne in mind that the couch-seat served for two persons at a time.

The only one who has remained a little farther away, somewhat embarrassed, is Thomas. He is on his knees near the table. But he dare not come forward, on the contrary, he seems to be trying to hide behind the corner of the table.

Jesus, while stretching out His Hands to be kissed - the apostles seek them with holy loving eagerness - looks around at the lowered heads, as if He were looking for the eleventh. He has actually seen him from the very beginning and He is behaving so only to give Thomas time to pluck up courage and come forward. When He sees that the incredulous apostle dare not do so, ashamed as he is of his lack of faith, He calls him: « Thomas. Come here. »

Thomas raises his head, embarrassed, almost in tears, but he dare not go. He lowers his head again.

Jesus takes a few steps towards him and repeats: « Come here, Thomas. » Jesus' voice is more authoritative than the first time.

Thomas stands up reluctantly, abashed, and goes towards Jesus.

« Here is the man who does not believe unless he sees! » exclaims Jesus. But in His voice there is the smile of forgiveness.

Thomas feels that, he dares to look at Jesus and sees that He is really smiling, so he musters up courage and walks faster.

« Come here, quite close to Me. Look. Put your finger, if it is not sufficient for you to look, into the wounds of your Master. »

Jesus has stretched His Hands out, then He has opened His tunic on His chest, uncovering the gash on His Side. No light emanates now from the Wounds. It no longer emanates since He began to walk like a mortal Man, when He came out of the halo of lunar light, and the Wounds now appear in their bloody reality: two irregular holes, the left one of which extends as far as the thumb, and they pierce

a wrist and a palm at its base, and a long gash, which in the upper part is lightly curved like a circumflex accent, on His Side.

Thomas trembles, looks but does not touch. He moves his lips, but is not able to speak clearly.

« Give Me your hand, Thomas » says Jesus so kindly. And with His right hand He takes the right one of the apostle, He grasps his forefinger and takes it towards the hole of His left Hand, He thrusts it well into it, to make him feel that His palm has been pierced, and then from His Hand He takes it to His Side. Now He grasps the four fingers of Thomas, at their base, at the metacarpus, and puts those four big fingers into the gash of His Side, making them go in deeply, not limiting Himself to leaning them against its edge, and He holds them there, looking fixedly at Thomas. A severe yet kind look, while he continues to say: « … Put your finger here, put your fingers and also your hand, if you wish so, into My Side and do not doubt, but believe. » That is what He says while doing what I have said previously.

Thomas - it would appear that the closeness of the divine Heart, which He almost touches, has communicated courage to him - succeeds at last in speaking and uttering words, and falling on his knees with his arms raised and bursting into tears of repentance, he says: « My Lord and My God! » He cannot say anything else.

Jesus forgives him. He lays His right hand on his head and replies: « Thomas, Thomas! You believe now because you have seen… But blessed are those who will believe in Me without seeing! Which reward shall I have to give them, if I have to reward you, whose faith has been assisted by the power of seeing?… »

Then Jesus lays His arm on John's shoulder, He takes Peter by the hand and approaches the table. He sits at His place. They are now sitting as they were on Passover evening. But Jesus wants Thomas to sit next to John.

« Eat, My friends » says Jesus.

But no one is hungry any more. Joy fills them. The joy of contemplation.

So Jesus gathers together the little cheeses scattered on the table, He puts them on a plate, He cuts them and hands them out, and He gives the first bit just to Thomas, laying it on a piece of bread and passing it behind John's shoulders; He pours wine from the amphorae into a chalice and hands it to His friends: this time Peter is the first to be served. Then He has some honeycombs given to Him, He breaks them and gives the first bit to John, with a smile which is sweeter than the golden trickling honey. And to encourage them He eats some of it Himself. He tastes nothing but the honey.

John with his usual gesture rests his head on Jesus' shoulder, and Jesus draws him to His Heart and speaks holding him so.

« You must not get upset, My friends, when I appear to you. I am

always your Master, Who has shared with you food and sleep and Who has chosen you because He loves you. I love you also now. » Jesus lays much stress upon these last words.

« You » He continues « have been with Me in the trials… You will be with Me also in the glory. Do not lower your heads. On Sunday evening, when I came to you for the first time after My Resurrection, I infused the Holy Spirit into you… may the Spirit come also to you who were not present… Do you not know that the infusion of the Spirit is like a baptism of fire, because the Spirit is Love, and love cancels sins? Therefore your sin of desertion, while I was dying, is forgiven. »

In saying so Jesus kisses the head of John who did not desert, and John weeps for joy.

« I have given you the power to remit sins. But one cannot give what one does not possess. So you must be certain that I possess this power in a perfect manner and I make use of it for you, who must be pure in the highest degree to purify those who will come to you, soiled with sin. How could one judge and purify, if one deserved to be condemned and were personally impure? How could a man judge another man if he had planks in his own eyes and infernal weights in his heart? How could he say: "I absolve you in the name of God" if, because of his own sins, he did not have God with him?

My friends, consider your dignity of priests.

Before, I was among men to judge and to forgive. Now I am going to the Father. I am going back to My Kingdom. The faculty to judge is not taken off Me. On the contrary, it is entirely in My hands, because the Father has entrusted it to Me. But it is a terrible judgement because it will take place when it is no longer possible for man to obtain forgiveness through years of expiation on the Earth. Each human being will come to Me with his spirit when, through material death, he leaves his body as useless mortal remains. And I will judge him for the first time. Then Mankind will come again clothed with its flesh, resumed by divine order, to be separated into two parts. The lambs with the Shepherd, the wild billy-goats with their Torturer. But how many men would there be, who would be with their Shepherd, if after the Baptismal bath they did not have who can forgive them in My name?

That is why I create priests. To save those who had been saved by My Blood. My Blood saves. But men continue to fall into death. To fall again into Death. It is necessary for them to be continuously washed in It, seventy and seventy times seven, by those who have the authority to do so, so that they may not be a prey to Death. You and your successors will do that. That is why I absolve you of all your sins. Because you need to see, and sin blinds one, because it deprives the spirit of the Light which is God. Because you need to

understand, and sin makes one dull, because it deprives the spirit of the Intelligence which is God. Because it is your ministry to purify, and sin sullies, because it deprives the spirit of the Purity which is God.

Great is your ministry of judging and absolving in My name!

When you consecrate the Bread and Wine for you and make them My Body and My Blood, you will do a great, supernaturally great and sublime thing. In order to accomplish it worthily you must be pure, because you will touch Him Who is the Pure One and you will nourish yourselves with the Flesh of a God. You must be pure in your hearts, minds, limbs and tongues, because with your hearts you must love the Eucharist, and no profane love is to be mixed with this celestial love, as that would be a sacrilege. Pure in your minds, because you must believe and understand this mystery of love, and the impurity of thought kills Faith and Intellect. The science of the world remains, but the Wisdom of God dies in you. You must be pure in your limbs, because the Word will descend into your bosoms, as it descended into Mary's womb by deed of the Love.

You have the living example of how a bosom, which receives the Word Incarnate, must be. The example is the Woman Who, without original sin and without personal sin, bore Me. Look how pure is the summit of the Hermon still enveloped in the veil of winter snow. From the Mount of Olives it looks like a lot of lilies stripped of their petals or like sea-foam, that rises like an offering against the other whiteness of the clouds, blown by the April wind along the blue fields of the sky. Look at a lily that now opens the mouth of its corolla to a scented smile. And yet both purities are not so bright as that of the womb that carried Me. Dust blown by the winds has fallen on the snow of the mountain and on the silk of the flower. Human eyes cannot perceive it, so light is it. But it is there, and it spoils the whiteness. Even more, look at the purest pearl taken from the sea, from the shell where it was born, to adorn the sceptre of a king. It is perfect in its compact iridescence, that is unaware of the desecrating touch of all flesh, as it was formed in the pearly hollow of the oyster, isolated in the sapphire fluid of sea depths. And yet it is not so pure as the womb that bore Me. In its centre there is a grain of sand: a very minute corpuscle, but still an earthly one. In Her Who is the Pearl of the Sea, there is no grain of sin, not even of incentive to sin. The Pearl born in the Ocean of the Trinity to bring the Second Person to the Earth, She is compact around Her fulcrum, which is not the seed of earthly concupiscence, but the spark of the eternal Love. The spark that found correspondence in Her and thus engendered the Divine Meteor, that now calls and draws to Itself the children of God: I, the Christ, the Morning Star. I give you that inviolate Purity as example.

But when, as vintagers do with vats, you dip your hands into the

sea of My Blood and from it you draw what is needed to cleanse the soiled stoles of the poor wretches who committed sin, be perfect, in addition to being pure, in order not to stain yourselves with a greater sin, even more, with several sins, by shedding or touching the Blood of a God in a sacrilegious manner, or by failing in love and justice, denying or giving it with a severity that is not of the Christ, Who was good to the wicked to attract them to His Heart, and three times good with the weak, to encourage them to be trustful. Such severity would be used three times undeservedly, because it would be used against My Will, My Doctrine and Justice. How can one be severe with lambs when one is an idol shepherd?

O My beloved friends, whom I am sending along the roads of the world to continue the work that I began and that will be pursued until the end of Time, remember these words of Mine. I am telling you them so that you may repeat them to those whom you will consecrate to the ministry, to which I have consecrated you.

I see… I look at future ages… Time and the infinite crowds of men that will exist are all in front of Me… I see… massacres and wars, false peace treaties and horrible slaughters, hatred and robbery, sensuality and pride. Now and again a green oasis: a period of return to the Cross. Like an obelisk that indicates pure water among the arid sands of the desert, My Cross will be raised with love, after the poison of evil has made men rabid, and around it, planted on the edges of healthy waters, there will thrive the palms of a period of peace and wealth in the world. Spirits, like deer and gazelles, like swallows and doves will rush to that pleasant, cool, nourishing shelter, to be cured of their sorrows and hope once again. And it will gather its branches close together like a dome as a protection from storms and dog-days and will keep away serpents and wild animals with the Sign that puts Evil to flight. And it will be so, as long as men so wish..

I see… Men and men… women, old people, children, warriors, scholars, doctors, peasants… They all come and pass by with their loads of hopes and sorrows. And I see many stagger, because their sorrow is too great, and their hope has slipped off the load first of all, as the load is too heavy, and their hope has crumbled on the ground… And I see many fall on the roadsides, because they are pushed by others who are stronger, stronger or luckier, as their weights are lighter. And I see many who, feeling that they are abandoned by those who pass by, and they are even trampled on, and feeling that they are about to die, go to the extent of hating and cursing.

Poor children! Among all these, struck by life, who pass by or fall, My Love has deliberately spread some compassionate Samaritans, good doctors, lights in the night, voices in the silence, so that the weak who fall may find assistance, and once again they may see

Light and hear the Voice that says: "Hope. You are not alone. Over you there is God. Jesus is with you". I have deliberately placed this active charity, so that My poor children may not die in their spirits, losing their paternal abode, and they may continue to believe in Me-Love, seeing My reflection in My ministers.

But, o grief that makes the Wound of My Heart bleed as it did when it was opened on Golgotha! But what do My divine eyes see? Are there perhaps no priests among the infinite crowds passing by? Is that why My Heart is bleeding? Are seminaries empty? So does My divine invitation no longer resound in hearts? Is man's heart no longer capable of hearing it? No. Throughout ages there will be seminaries and Levites in them. Priests will come out of them, because in the hour of adolescence My invitation will have sounded with a celestial voice in many hearts, and they will have followed it. But other, other, other voices will have come later with their youth and maturity, and My Voice will have been overwhelmed in those hearts. My Voice that speaks throughout ages to its ministers, that they may always be what you are now: the apostles at Christ's school. The cassock has remained. But the priest is dead. This will happen to too many in the course of ages. Useless dark shadows, they will not be a lever that lifts, a rope that pulls, a fountain that quenches people's thirst, corn that satisfies their hunger, a heart that is a pillow, a light in darkness, a voice that repeats what the Master says to him. But for poor mankind they will be a weight of scandal, a weight of death, a parasite, a putrefaction… Horror! Once again and always I shall have the greatest Judases of the future in My priests!

My friends, I am in My glory, and yet I weep. I take pity on these infinite crowds, herds without shepherds or with too few shepherds. Infinite pity! Well, I swear it on My Divinity, I will give them the bread, the water, the light, the voice that those chosen for this work do not want to give. I will repeat the miracle of the loaves and fish in future ages. With few mean little fish, and with scanty crusts of bread - humble laic souls - I will give food to many people, and they will be satisfied, and there will be some for those of the future, because "I feel sorry for this people" and I do not want it to perish.

Blessed are those who will deserve to be such. Not blessed because they are such. But because they will have deserved it with their love and sacrifice. And most blessed those priests who will remain apostles: bread, water, light, voice, rest and medicine for My poor children. They will shine in Heaven with a special light. I swear it to you, I Who am the Truth.

Let us get up, My friends, and come with Me, that I may teach you again to pray. It is prayer that nourishes the strength of the apostle, because it blends him with God. »

And here Jesus stands up and goes towards the little staircase.

But when He is at its bottom, He turns round and looks at me. Oh! Father! He looks at me! He thinks of me! He looks for His little « voice », and the joy of being with His friends does not make Him forget me! He looks at me over the heads of the disciples, and smiles at me. He raises His hand blessing me and He says: « Peace be with you ».

And the vision ends.

626. At Gethsemane with the Apostles.

11th April 1947.

The apostles put on their mantles and ask: « Where are we going Lord? »

Their language is no longer so familiar as it was before Passover. If I were allowed to say so, I should say that they speak with their souls on their knees. Rather than the posture of their bodies, which are always respectfully somewhat bent before the Risen Lord, rather than their reservedness in touching Him and their trembling joy when He touches, caresses or kisses them, or speaks to some in particular, it is their whole attitude, something that cannot be described but is so obvious, and that says that, more than their humanity, it is their spirits that cannot become again as they were in their relationship with the Master, and pervade all their human acts with their new feelings.

Previously He was « the Master ». The Master Whom their faith believed to be God. But for their senses He was always a man. Now He is « the Lord ». He is God. It is no longer necessary to make an act of faith to believe it. Evidence has abolished such need. He is God. He is the Lord to Whom the Lord has said: « Sit at My right hand, and has proclaimed it by means of His word and of the miracle of His Resurrection. He is God like the Father. And He is the God Whom they abandoned out of fear, after receiving so much from Him… »

They always look at Him with their eyes full of the reverential veneration, with which a true believer looks at the Host glowing in the monstrance, or looks at the Body of Christ raised by the priest in the daily Sacrifice. In their eyes that want to see the beloved face, which is even more handsome than in the past, there is also the expression of one who dare not see, of one who dare not linger to look… Love urges them to set their hearts on their Beloved, fear makes them close their eyes and lower their heads, as if they were dazzled by lightning.

In fact, although Jesus, the Risen Jesus, is really He, it is not He at the same time. If one looks at Him carefully, He is different. The features of His face, the colour of His eyes and of His hair, His size,

hands and feet are identical, and yet He is different. His voice and actions are the same, and yet He is different. His body is a real one, so much so that it now intercepts the light of the setting sun, as its last rays enter the room through the open window. It casts behind Him the shadow of His tall person. And yet He is different. He has not become proud or offish, and yet He is different.

A new perennial majesty has spread where there reigned so much the indefatigable Master's humble modest aspect, at times so modest as to appear disheartened. Now that the emaciation of the last days has disappeared, that the mark of the physical and moral tiredness, which made Him look older, has vanished, that His eyes are no longer sorrowful and imploring, as when He seemed to ask without speaking: « Why do you reject Me? Take Me… », the Risen Christ seems even taller and stronger, free from all encumbrances, sure, victorious, majestic, divine. Not even when He was mighty in His powerful miracles, or imposing in the most important moments of His teaching, was He as He is now that He has risen and is glorified. No light emanates from Him. No. No light emanates as in His transfiguration and in His first apparitions after His resurrection. And yet He seems bright. It is really the Body of God, with the beauty of glorified bodies. He attracts and frightens at the same time.

Perhaps it is those wounds, so clearly visible on His hands and feet, that command such deep respect. I do not know. I know that the apostles, although Jesus is so kind to them and tries to recreate the atmosphere of days gone by, are different. Whilst previously they were so insistent and talkative, now they speak very little, and if He does not reply, they do not insist. If He smiles at them or at one of them, they change colour and do not dare reply, with a smile, to His smile. If, as He is doing now, He stretches out His hand to take His white mantle - He is always dressed in a white garment which shines more than the whitest satin, since He is the Risen Lord - none of them go, as they used to do previously, contending for the joy and the honour of helping Him. They seem to be afraid to touch His garments and His body. And He has to say, as He does now: « Come, John. Help your Master. These wounds are real wounds, and wounded hands are not as agile as they were previously… »

John obeys, helping Jesus to put on His wide mantle, and he seems to be dressing a Pontiff, so careful and diligent are his movements, avoiding to touch His Hands on which are the red stigmata. But, however careful he is, he knocks against Jesus' left hand and he shouts as if he had been hurt, and he looks fixedly at the back of that hand, fearing to see it bleed again. That cruel wound is so sensitive!

Jesus lays His right hand on his head saying: « You had more courage when you received Me as I was taken off the Cross. And

then it was still dripping blood, so much so that your hair was red with it. New dew of the night on the new loving disciple. You had picked Me like a bunch from the stump… Why are you weeping? I gave you My dew of a Martyr. On My Head you shed your dew of compassion. But then you could cry… Not now. And you, Simon Peter, why are you weeping? You have not knocked against My Hand. You did not see Me dead… »

« Ah! my God! That is why I am weeping! Because of my sin. »

« I have forgiven you, Simon of Jonah. »

« But I cannot forgive myself. No. Nothing will put an end to my tears. Not even Your forgiveness. »

« But My glory will. »

« You glorious, I sinner. »

« You glorious, after being My fisherman. Peter, you will have a great, good, miraculous haul. Then I will say to you: "Come to the eternal banquet". And you will not weep any more. But you all have tears in your eyes. And you, James, My brother, are lying in that comer as if you had lost all blessings. Why? »

« Because I was hoping that… So, do You feel Your Wounds? Do You still feel them? I was hoping that all sorrow had come to an end for You, that every sign had been cancelled. Also for us. For us sinners. Those Wounds!… How grievous it is to see them! »

« Yes. Why have You not effaced them? No sign was left with Lazarus… They are a… a reproach those Wounds! They shout in a dreadful voice! They are more dazzling and frightening than the lightning on Sinai » says Bartholomew.

« They shout our cowardice. Because we ran away while You were receiving them… » says Philip.

« And the more we look at them, the more our consciences reproach us and throw cowardice, foolishness and incredulity in our faces » says Thomas.

« For the sake of our peace and that of this people of sinners, as You have died and risen to forgive the world, o Lord, cancel those charges against the world! » begs Andrew.

« They are the Health of the world. It is in them that there is Health. The world that hates, opened them, but the Love has turned them into Medicine and Light. Through them Fault was nailed. Through them all the sins of men were suspended and supported, so that the Fire of Love might consume them on the true Altar. When the Most High ordered Moses to make the ark and the altar of incense, did He not want them pierced with rings, so that they could be lifted and carried wherever the Lord wanted? I have been pierced, too. I am more than ark and altar. I am by far more than ark and altar. I have burnt the incense of My love for God and for My neighbour, and I carried the weight of all the iniquities of the world. And the world must remember that, to remember how much

it cost a God. To remember how a God loved it. To remember what is brought about by sin. To remember that in One only there is salvation: in Him Whom they pierced. If the world did not see the redness of My Wounds, it would really soon forget that a God sacrificed Himself for its sins, it would forget that I really died in the most cruel torture, it would forget which is the balm for its wounds. Here is the balm. Come and kiss it. Each kiss is an increase of purification and grace for you. I solemnly tell you that purification and grace are never sufficient, because the world consumes what is infused by Heaven and it is necessary to counterbalance the ruins of the world by means of Heaven and its treasures. I am Heaven. All Heaven is in Me, and the celestial treasures flow from the open wounds. »

He stretches out His Hands to be kissed by His Apostles. And He has to press His wounded Hands against the eager timid lips, because the fear of increasing His pain prevents those lips from pressing against those Wounds.

« This is not what causes pain, even if it gives stiffness. The pain is a different one!… »

« Which, Lord? » asks James of Alphaeus.

« That I died for too many in vain… But let us go. Or rather, go ahead. We are going to Gethsemane… What? Are you afraid? »

« Not for ourselves, Lord… The fact is that the great ones in Jerusalem hate You more than previously. »

« Be not afraid. Neither for yourselves, as God protects you, nor for Me. With regard to Me the constraints of Mankind are over. I am going to My Mother, and then I will join you. We have to cancel many horrible things of the recent past of sin and hatred. And we will do it through love, through the opposite of sin… See? Your kisses cancel and soothe the pain and consequences of the nails in the live flesh. So, what we do will cancel the horrible signs and will sanctify the places desecrated by sin. So that their sight may not grieve you too much… »

« Are we going also to the Temple? » Everybody's face shows dreadful fear.

« No. I would sanctify it through My presence. And that is not possible. It could have been possible. But it did not want it. There is no more redemption for it. It is a corpse that is decomposing quickly. Let us leave it to its dead people, so that they may bury it. Lions and vultures will really tear the sepulchre and the corpse to pieces and not even the skeleton will be left of the Great Dead One that did not want the Life. »

Jesus climbs the little staircase and goes out. The others follow Him silently. But when they set foot in the corridor that serves as an entrance-hall, Jesus is no longer there. The house is silent and seems desert. All the doors are closed.

John points at the door in front of the Supper room and says: « Mary is there. She is always there. As if She were in continuous ecstasy. Her face shines with ineffable light. It is the joy that irradiates from Her Heart. Yesterday She said to me: "Consider, John, how much happiness has spread through all the kingdoms of God". I asked Her: "Which kingdoms?" I thought that She was acquainted with some wonderful revelation on the kingdom of Her Son, Who had defeated also death. She replied to me: "In Paradise, in Purgatory, in Limbo". Forgiveness to those in Purgatory. Ascent to Heaven of all the just and of all those who had been forgiven. Paradise peopled with blissful souls. God glorified in them. Our ancestors and relatives up there, in jubilation. And happiness also to the kingdom which is the Earth, where the sign is now shining, and the fountain, that defeats Satan and cancels the Sin and sins, is opened. No longer just peace to men of good will, but also redemption and re-election to the rank of children of God. I see the crowds, oh! how many! descend to this Fountain, and plunge into it and come out renewed, beautiful, in wedding-dresses, in royal garments. The wedding of souls with Grace, the royalty of being children of the Father and brothers of Jesus". »

They have gone out into the street, while speaking, and they go away, as it grows dark.

The street is not very crowded, particularly at this time, when people gather round tables for supper. Jerusalem, after the stream of people that flooded it at Passover, and abandoned it after the festivities, which were so tragical this year, looks even more empty than usual. And Thomas notices it and makes the others notice it.

« That's what it is. The foreigners, who were terrorised, left the town precipitately after the Friday, and those who had resisted the great fear of that day, ran away at the second earthquake, the one that certainly took place when the Lord came out of the Sepulchre. And also those who were not Gentiles fled. Many, I am certain of this, did not even consume the lamb and they will have to come back for the supplementary Passover. And also the citizens of this place have fled or run away, some to take their dead relatives away, those who had died in the earthquake on Preparation Day, some out of fear of the wrath of God. It has been a very strong example » says the Zealot.

« And it was a good thing. Lightning and stones on all sinners! » imprecates Bartholomew.

« Don't say that! Don't say that! We deserve the punishments of Heaven more than anybody else. We also are sinners… Do you remember in this place?… How long ago? Ten? Ten evenings… or ten years, or ten hours? So remote and so near my sin seems to me, those hours, that evening… that I never know… I am dull-witted! We were so sure, so bellicose, so heroical! And then? And then?

Ah!… » and Peter strikes his forehead with his hand and points at the little square, where they already are: « There. And I was already afraid there! »

« Enough! Enough, Simon! He has forgiven you. And Mary, before Him. Stop it! You are torturing yourself » says John.

« Oh! I wish I were! You, John, must always support me, you know? Always! It's because you can guide people that He gave you His Mother. It is just. But I, a faint-hearted lying worm, need to be guided more than Mary does. Because I have scales on my eyes and I cannot see… »

« You will really get them if you behave like that. You will really burn your eyes, and the Lord will not be here to cure them… » says John again, embracing his shoulders to comfort him.

« It would suffice me to see well with my soul. And then… my eyes do not matter. »

« But they do matter to many people!! What will sick people do now? Yesterday you saw how desperate was that woman! » says Andrew.

« Yes… » They look at one another and then all together they admit: « And none of us felt worthy of imposing our hands on her… » Humbleness, brought about by the recollection of their behaviour, crushes them.

But Thomas says to John: « But you could have done it. You did not run away, you did not deny, you were not incredulous… »

« I have a sin as well. And it is a sin against love, like yours. Near the arch of Joshua's house, I caught Helkai by the neck and I would have strangled him, because he was abusing the Mother. And I hated and cursed Judas of Kerioth! » says John.

« Be silent! Don't mention that name. It's the name of a demon, and I am under the impression that he is not in hell yet, and that he is wandering about here, around us, to make us sin again » says Peter with real terror.

« Oh! he is in hell all right! But even if he were here, his power is over now. He had everything to be an angel, and he was the demon, and Jesus has defeated the demon » says Andrew.

« All right… But it is better not to mention his name. I am afraid. Now I know how weak I am. As far as you are concerned, John, do not feel guilty. Everybody will curse the man who betrayed the Master! »

« It is right to do so » says Thaddeus, who has always had the same opinion of the Iscariot.

« No. Mary said to me that the judgment of God is enough for him and that we must cherish only one feeling: gratitude for not being the traitors. And if She does not curse, although She is the Mother Who saw the tortures of Her Son, shall we do so? Let us forget… »

« That's foolish! » exclaims his brother James.

« And yet it is the Master's word for Judas' sins… » says John with a sigh and then becomes silent.

« What? Are there others as well? You know… Speak up! »

« I have promised to try and forget, and I am striving to do so. With regard to Helkai… I was guilty of excess… But on that day each of us had his angel and his demon beside him, and we did not always listen to the angel of light… »

The Zealot says: « Do you know that Nahum is crippled and his son was crushed by a wall or a landslip? Yes. On the day of His death. He was found later. Oh! much later, when he already was putrid. He was found by one who was coming to the market. And Nahum was with others like him, and I do not know what happened to him, whether he was struck by a rock or he had a stroke of apoplexy. I know that he looks like shattered and does not even understand. He looks like a beast, he slobbers and howls, and yesterday with his only sound hand he caught by the throat his… master who had gone to him and he shouted and shouted: "Because of you! Because of you!" If the servants had not rushed there… »

« How do you know, Simon? » they ask the Zealot.

« I saw Joseph yesterday he » replies laconically.

« I think that the Master is late in coming. And I am worried » says James of Alphaeus.

« Let us go back… » suggests Matthew.

« Or let us stop here at the little bridge » says Bartholomew.

They stop. But James of Zebedee and the other James, Andrew and Thomas, go back, and pensive, they look at the ground, they look at the houses.

Andrew, growing pale, points at the wall of a house, where a redbrown spot stands out on the white of the lime, and he says: « It is blood! Perhaps Blood of the Master? Was He already losing blood here? Oh! tell me! »

« And what do you want us to tell you, if none of us followed him? » says James of Alphaeus dejectedly.

« But my brother, and above all John, followed Him… »

« Not at once. Not at once. John told me that they followed Him from Malachi's house onwards. There was nobody here. None of us… » says James of Zebedee.

They look, as if they were hypnotised, at the large dark spot on the white wall, a little off the ground, and Thomas remarks: « Not even the rain has washed it away. Not even the hailstones, which fell so heavily these past days, have scraped it… If I knew that it is His Blood, I would scrape that wall… »

« Let us ask the people of the house. Perhaps they know… » suggests Matthew, who has joined them.

« No, you know? They might recognise us as His apostles, they might be enemies of the Christ and… » replies Thomas.

« And we are still cowards… » ends James of Alphaeus with a deep sigh.

Very slowly they have all approached that wall and they look…

A woman passes by, a late-comer who is coming back from the fountain with pitchers dripping cold water. She watches them. She lays her pitchers on the ground and questions them.

« Are you looking at that spot on the wall? Are you disciples of the Master? You seem to be so, even if you are haggard-faced and… even if I did not see you follow the Lord, when He passed by here, captured to be put to death. This makes me feel uncertain, because a disciple, who follows the Master in pleasant hours and is proud to be His disciple, and looks severely at those who are not as prompt as he is to leave everything in order to follow the Master, should follow the Master also in unpleasant hours. He should at least do that. And I have not seen you. No. I have not seen you. And if I did not see you, it means that I, a woman from Sidon, went behind Him Whom His Jewish disciples did not follow. But I received a favour from Him. You… Had He perhaps never favoured you? It seems strange to me, because He helped Gentiles and Samaritans, sinners and also highwaymen, giving them eternal life, if He could no longer give them the life of their bodies. Did He perhaps not love you? Then that means that you were worse than asps and unclean hyenas, although, I really think that He loved also vipers and jackals, not because they are such, but because they were created by His Father. That is blood. Yes. It is blood. The blood of a woman from the shores of the great sea. Once it was the land of the Philistines, and its inhabitants are still somewhat despised by the Hebrews. And yet she was able to defend the Master, until her husband killed her, throwing her there with so much strength, after beating her, that her head was split, and brains and blood squirted out on the wall of the house, where her orphans are now weeping. But she had been helped. The Master had cured her husband, who was unclean with a horrible disease. So she loved the Master. She loved till she died for Him. She preceded Him in Abraham's bosom, as you say. Also Annaleah preceded Him, and she also would have been able to die like that, if she had not died unexpectedly beforehand. And also a mother, further up, has washed the street with her blood, with the blood of her womb opened by her brutal son, to defend the Master. And an old woman died of grief, when she saw Him, Who had given eyes back to her son, pass by wounded and beaten. And an old man, a beggar died, because he stood up to defend Him, and his head was struck by the stone destined to the head of your Lord. Because you believed Him to be such, did you not? The valiant men of a king die around him. But none of you died. You were far away from those who were striking Him. Ah! no! One died. He killed himself. But not out of grief. Not to defend the Master. First he sold Him, then

he pointed Him out with a kiss, then he killed himself. He had nothing else to do. He could not grow any more in iniquity. He was perfect. Like Beelzebub. The world would have stoned him to remove him from the earth. Oh! I think that that compassionate woman, who died to prevent the Martyr from being struck, I think that old Anne, who died of grief seeing Him in that state, and the old beggar and Samuel's mother and the virgin who died and I, who am not able to go up to the Temple, because I feel sorry for the lambs and doves that are sacrificed, I think that we would have had the courage to stone him, and we would not have trembled seeing him torn by our stones… He was aware of that, and he spared the world the trouble of killing him, and he spared us the trouble of becoming executioners to avenge the Innocent… »

She looks at them with contempt. Her contempt has become more and more evident as she has spoken. Her large black eyes have the hardness of the eyes of rapacious animals, while she looks at the group that does not know how to react and cannot react… The last word is hissed through her teeth: « Bastards! », and she picks up her pitchers and goes away, and she is happy that she has spat her scorn on the disciples who abandoned their Master…

They are crushed, with their heads lowered, their arms hanging, enervated… The truth overwhelms them. They meditate on the consequences of their cowardice… They are silent… They dare not look at one another. Even John and the Zealot, the two who are free from this fault, have the same attitude as the others, probably because of their sorrow seeing their companions so mortified and because of their impossibility to cure the wound brought about by the sincere words of the woman…

The road is by now in a dim light. The moon, in her last days, rises late, so twilight deepens quickly. There is dead silence. Not a noise or a human voice. And only the bubbling of the Kidron reigns in the silence. So, when Jesus' voice resounds, it makes them start, as if it were a frightening sound, whilst it is so gentle when it says: « What are you doing here? I was waiting for you among the olive-trees… Why are you contemplating dead things when Life is awaiting you? Come with Me. » Jesus seems to be coming towards them from Gethsemane.

He stops beside them. He looks at that spot, on which are fixed the terrified eyes of the apostles and He says: « That woman is already in peace. And she has forgotten her sorrow. Inactive for her children? No. Twice as active. And she will sanctify them, because that is all she asks of God. »

He sets out and they follow Him, in silence. But Jesus turns round and says: « Why do you ask in your hearts: "And why does she not ask for the conversion of her husband? She is not holy if she hates him… " She does not hate him. She forgave him since the time he

killed her. But, being a soul that has entered the Kingdom of Light, she can see with wisdom and justice. And she sees that there is no conversion and forgiveness for her husband. So she prays for those who may benefit by her prayer. No, it is not My blood. And yet I lost so much of it also on this road!… But the steps of My enemies have spread it, mixed it with dust and filth, and the rain has dissolved and carried it away among the layers of dust. But there is so much of it, still visible… Because so much flowed out of Me that steps and water will not be able to cancel it easily. We will go together, and you will see My Blood shed for you… »

« Where? Where does He want to go? To the place where He wept? To the Praetorium? » they ask each other.

And John says: « But Claudia went away again two days after the Sabbath, and they say that she was indignant and even frightened of being near her husband… The Roman lance told me. Claudia separates her responsibility from her husband's. Because she had warned him not to persecute the Just Man, as it is better to be persecuted by men rather than by the Most High, Whose Messiah was the Master. And neither Plautina nor Lydia are here. They followed Claudia to Caesarea. And Valeria has gone to Bether with Johanna. If they had been here, we could have gone in. But now… I do not know… Longinus is not here either, as Claudia wanted him to escort her… »

« It will be where you saw the grass wet with blood… »

Jesus, Who is ahead of them, turns round and says: « At Golgotha. There is so much of My Blood there, that the dust is like hard ferrous mineral. And there is someone who has preceded you… »

« But it is an unclean place! » shouts Bartholomew.

Jesus smiles compassionately and replies: « Every place in Jerusalem is unclean after the dreadful sin; and yet you feel no other uneasiness to stay there, except that of fear of the crowds… »

Highwaymen have always died there…

« I died there. And I have sanctified it for ever. I solemnly tell you, that until the end of times, there will be no holier place than it, and from all over the Earth and in all ages crowds will come to kiss that dust. And there is already someone who has preceded you, without fearing mockery and revenge, without being afraid of being contaminated. And yet, the person who has preceded you had double reason for being afraid of that. »

« Who is it, Lord? » asks John, whose side Peter prods with his elbow to make him ask the question.

« Mary of Lazarus! As she picked the flowers trampled on by My feet as I entered her house, before Passover, a souvenir of joy that she distributed to her companions, so now she went up to Calvary, and with her hands she dug the earth, hard with My Blood, and she came down with her load and laid it on My Mother's lap. She was

not afraid. And she was known as "the Sinner" and as "the disciple". Neither She, Who in Her lap received that earth of the place of the Skull, thought She would be contaminated. My Blood has cancelled everything, and holy is the clod of earth where it fell. Tomorrow, before the sixth hour, you will go up to Golgotha. I will join you… But who wants to see My Blood, here it is. » He points at the parapet of the little bridge. « My mouth struck here, and blood came out… My mouth had uttered but holy words, and words of love. So why was it struck, and why did no one doctor it with a kiss?… »

They go into Gethsemane. But Jesus first has to open a lock, that now blocks the entrance to the Garden of Olives. A new lock. A strong fence, with sharp points, tall, closed with a strong new lock. Jesus has the key, which is so new that it shines like steel, and He opens the lock in the light of a burning branch that Philip has lit in order to see, as it is now completely dark.

« It was not here… Why?… » they whisper to one another, looking at the enclosure that isolates Gethsemane. « Lazarus certainly did not want anybody here any more. Look over there. Stones and bricks and lime. It is wood now, later it will be a wall… »

Jesus says: « Come. Do not attend to dead things, I tell you… Here. You were here… And here I was surrounded and captured, and you ran away there… If this enclosure had been there at that time… It would have prevented you from running away at once. But how could Lazarus think, since he was so anxious to follow Me, while you were anxious to run away, that you would run away? Am I making you suffer? I suffered previously. And I want to cancel that sorrow. Kiss Me, Peter… »

« No, Lord! No! The gesture of Judas, here, at the same hour, no, no, no! »

« Kiss Me. I want you to make with sincere love the insincere gesture of Judas. Afterwards you will be happy. We shall be happier. You and I. Come, Peter. Kiss Me. »

Peter does not only kiss Him. With his tears he washes the cheek of the Lord and he withdraws, covering his face and sitting on the ground to weep. One after the other, the others kiss Him in the same place. Some more, some less, they all have tears on their faces…

« And now let us go. All together. I separated you from Me that evening after fortifying you with My Body, and for a few hours. But you fell immediately. Always remember how weak you were, and that without the help of God you would not be able to remain in justice for one hour. Here. Here I told those, who considered themselves the strongest, to keep watch, they considered themselves so strong as to ask to drink at My chalice and to proclaim, even at the cost of their death, that they would not deny Me. And I left them, advising them to pray… I left them, and they fell asleep. Remember

this and teach it: he who is left by Jesus, if he does not keep in touch with Him through prayer, is overcome by drowsiness and can be captured. If I had not waked you up, you could really have been killed in your sleep and have appeared at the judgement of God heavily laden with humanity. Come here… There you are! Lower the branch, Philip. There! Who wants to see some of My Blood, should look. Here, in the greatest anguish, like one who is dying, I sweated blood. Look… So much, that the earth is hard with it and the grass is still red, because the rain was not able to melt the clots of blood that had dried up among stalks and corollas. There! And I leaned there and the angel of the Lord hovered here to comfort Me in My will to do the Will of God. Because, remember this, if you always wish to do the Will of God, where the creature cannot persist, God comes with His angel to support the exhausted hero. When you are in anguish, do not be afraid of falling into cowardice or abjuration, if you persist in wanting what God wants. God will make you giants of heroism, if you remain faithful to His will. Remember that! Remember that! I told you once that after the temptation in the desert I was assisted by angels. Now you must know that here also, after the extreme temptation, I was assisted by an angel. And the same will happen to you and to all those who will be My believers. Because I solemnly tell you that what I have had as help, you also will have. I would obtain it for you Myself, if it were not already the Father, in His loving justice, to grant it to you. Only your sorrow will always be inferior to Mine… "Sit down. The moon is rising in the east. She will shed her light on us. I do not think that you will sleep tonight, although you are still so much and only men. No. You will not sleep because an agent, that you did not have previously, has entered into you. It is remorse. A torture, that is true. But it serves to pass to higher stages, both in good and in evil. In Judas of Kerioth, as he moved away from God, it brought about desperation and damnation. In you who have never come away from the closeness to God - I can assure you, because in you there was not the will and the full consideration of what you were doing - it will cause a trustful repentance that will lead you to wisdom and justice. Remain where you are. I am withdrawing over there, within a stone's throw, awaiting dawn. »

« Oh! do not leave us, Lord! You have said what we are, when we are far from You! » implores Andrew on his knees, his hands stretched out, as if he were begging for an offer of pity.

« You have your remorse. It is a good friend in good people. »

« Do not go away, Lord! You told us that we would pray together… » beseeches Thaddeus, who no longer dare take the friendly attitude of a relative towards the Risen Master and is standing with his tall person lightly bent forwards in veneration.

« And is meditation not the most active prayer? And have I not

made you contemplate and meditate and have I not given a subject on which to meditate since I met you on the road, moving your hearts with true acts of holy feelings? This is prayer, men: to get in touch with the Eternal and with the things that help to lead the spirit far beyond the Earth, and from the meditation on the perfections of God and the miseries of man, of one's ego, rouse acts of a will, which is either loving or repairing, but always adoring, even if it is a will rising from a meditation on a fault or a punishment. Evil and good serve for the final purpose, if one knows how to make use of them. I have told you many a time. Sin is an irremediable ruin only if it is not followed by repentance and atonement. In the opposite case, the contrition of a heart makes a solid mortar to keep the foundations of holiness compact and its stones are good resolutions. Could you keep stones joined together without mortar? Without the substance, that is apparently ugly and base, but without which clean stones and polished marbles will not remain united together to form a building? »

Jesus is on the point of going away.

John, to whom his brother and the other James with Peter and Bartholomew have spoken in low voices, stands up and follows Him saying: « Jesus, my God. We were hoping to say the prayer to Your Father with You. Your prayer. We feel that we have been forgiven only a little, if You do not grant us to say it with You. We feel that we need it so much… »

« Where two are united in prayer, I am in the middle of them. So say the prayer together, and I shall be among you. »

« Ah! You no longer judge us worthy of praying with You! » shouts Peter with his face concealed in the grass, not all clean of the divine Blood, and he weeps bitterly.

James of Alphaeus exclaims: « We are unhappy, brot… Lord. » He corrects himself at once, saying: "Lord" instead of "brother".

And Jesus looks at him and says: « Why do you not say brother to Me, you, who are of My blood? A brother to all men, I am so twice, three times to you, as son of Adam, as son of David, as son of God. Complete your word. »

« Brother, my Lord, we are unhappy and foolish, as You know, and the dejection in which we are makes us more foolish. How can we say Your prayer with our souls, if we do not know its meaning? »

« How many times, as to boys under age, have I explained it to you! But more stubborn and obstinate than the most absent-minded pupil "of a pedagogue, you have not remembered My word! »

« That is true! But now our minds are fixed on our torture of not having understood You… Oh! we have understood nothing! I confess it on behalf of everybody! And we do not understand You well yet, Lord. But, I beg You, take the indulgence for our evil from the same evil that makes us dull-witted. You had breathed Your last

and the great rabbi shouted the truth on the dullness of Israel, over there, at the foot of Your Cross. And You, omnipresent God, Spirit of God freed from the prison of the Body, heard those words: "Ages and ages of spiritual blindness are upon the interior sight", and he made this request to You: "Since You are the Liberator, come into my poor thought, which is a prisoner of formulas". O my adored and adorable Jesus, Who have saved us from the original Sin, taking our sins upon Yourself and consuming them in the ardour of Your perfect love, take and consume also our intellects of obstinate Israelites, give us new mentalities, as pure as that of a new-born baby, make us lose our memories, to fill us only with Your wisdom. So many things of the past died on that horrible day. Dead like You. But now that You have risen from the dead, make a new thought come into our minds. Create new hearts and new minds for us, my Lord, and we shall understand You » begs John.

« That task is not for Me, but for Him of Whom I spoke to you at the last Supper. Every word of Mine is lost in the abyss of your thoughts, all or in part, or remains locked and closed in its spirit. Only the Paraclete, when He comes, will draw My words from your abyss and will open them to you, to make you understand the spirit of them. »

« But You have infused Him into us » says the Zealot objectingly.

« But You said that, when You had gone to the Father, He, the Spirit of Truth, would come » objects also Matthew with the Zealot.

« Tell Me: when a baby is born, has he a soul infused in him? »

« Of course he has! » they all reply.

« But has that soul the Grace of God? »

« No. There is the Sin of origin on it and it deprives it of Grace. »

« And where do the soul and Grace come from? »

« From God. »

« Why then does God not give man a soul in grace directly? »

« Because Adam was punished, and we in him. But now that You have become the Redeemer, it will be so. »

« No. It will not be so. Men will always be born impure in their souls, that God created and that Adam's inheritance has stained. But, through a rite that I will explain to you another day, the soul infused into man will be vivified by Grace, and the Spirit of the Lord will take possession of it. But you, who were baptised with water by John, will be baptised with Fire by the Power of God. And then the Spirit of God will really be in you. And it will be the Master, Whom men cannot persecute or drive away, and Who in your interior will explain the spirit of My words to you and many other instructions. I have infused it into-you, because only through My merits everything can be obtained and be valid. God can be obtained and the word of a delegate of God can obtain validity. But the Spirit of Truth is not yet in you as Master. »

« Well, let it be so. In due course it will come. But in the meantime, let us feel that You have forgiven us. Be our Master, my Lord. Again, again, because You said that we must forgive seventy times seven » insists John and he concludes - he is always the most confiding and loving one - daring to take in his own hands Jesus' left Hand, which is hanging down His side and on which the moonlight seems to enlarge the hole of the nail, saying: « Since You are the eternal Light, do not allow Your servants to remain in darkness » and he kisses His fingers lightly, on the tips, these fingers which have remained a little bent just like those of one who has been wounded and is cured, but the nerves are left slightly contracted.

« Come. Let us go farther up and we will say the prayer together » says Jesus obligingly, leaving His hand in those of John, while He already walks towards the highest limit of Gethsemane, towards the higher road which, through the Field of the Galileans, goes to Bethany.

Here also one can see that the delimitation works wanted by Lazarus are in course. Even more, here, farther away from the house of the keeper of the olive-grove, they have built a smooth high wall, that follows the hedge and the winding path that were the limit of Gethsemane.

Jerusalem, below, comes slowly out of darkness, also on the western side, because the moon is now at her zenith and illuminates everything with the white light of her thin crescent, as bright as a diamond flame laid on the dark firmament, where there are palpitating the shining corollas of an incalculable number of stars, of the unbelievable stars of the eastern skies.

Jesus stretches out His arms in His usual attitude of prayer and intones: « Our Father Who art in Heaven. » He stops and comments:

« That He is a Father is proved to you by the fact that He has forgiven you. You, obliged to be perfect more than anybody else, you, who have received so many favours, and so, as you say, unsuited for the mission, which Lord, who were not your Father, would not have punished you? I have not punished you. The Father has not punished you. Because the Son does what the Father does, because the Father does what the Son does, as we are one only Divinity united in Love. I am in the Father, and the Father is with Me. The Word is always near God, Who is without beginning. And the Word is before all things, since always, since an eternity named always, since an eternal present near God, and is God like God, being the Word of the divine Thought.

So, when I shall have gone, and in this manner you will pray our, My, your Father, whereby we are brothers, I the first-born, you, the younger brothers, be always willing to see also Me in My Father and yours. Be willing to see the Word, Who was "the Master" for you, and loved you even to accepting death and beyond death, leaving

Himself to you in food and drink, so that you may be in Me and I in you as long as the exile lasts, and then you and I in the Kingdom, for which I taught you to pray, saying: "Thy Kingdom come", after you have implored that your work may sanctify the Name of the Lord, giving Him glory on Earth and in Heaven. Yes. There would be no Kingdom for you in Heaven, the Kingdom for those who will believe like you, if first you did not want the Kingdom of God in yourselves through the real practice of the Law of God and of My word, which is the perfectioning of the Law, having given, in the time of Grace, the Law of the chosen ones, that is, of those who are, beyond the civil, moral, religious constitutions of the Mosaic time, already in the spiritual Law of the time of Christ.

You see what it is to have the closeness of God, but not God in you; what it is to have the word of God, but not the real practice of that word. Man has committed every crime by having God close to him, but not in his heart; by having the knowledge of the word, but not the obedience to it. Everything! Everything because of that. Dullness and delinquency, deicide, betrayal, tortures, the death of the Innocent and of His Cain, everything has come through that. And yet, who was loved by Me like Judas? But he did not have Me-God in his heart. And he is the damned deicide, infinitely guilty as an Israelite and as a disciple, as a suicide and a deicide, in addition to his seven deadly sins and every other sin of his.

You can now have the Kingdom of God in yourselves more easily, because I have obtained it for you with My death. I have redeemed you with My sorrow. Bear that in your minds. So let no one trample on Grace, because it cost the life and the Blood of a God. So let the Kingdom of God be in you, men, through Grace; let it be on the Earth, through the Church, let it be in Heaven, for the blessed souls who, having lived with God in their hearts, united to the Body of which Christ is the Head, united to the Vine of which every Christian is a branch, deserve to rest in the Kingdom of Him for Whom all things have been made: Me, Who am speaking to you and Who have given Myself to the Will of the Father, so that everything might be accomplished. I can therefore teach you, without hypocrisy, that you must say: "Thy Will be done on Earth as it is in Heaven". How I have done the will of My Father can be told even by the clods of earth, by plants, by flowers, by the stones in Palestine, by My wounded Body and by a whole population.

Do as I did. To the very end. Even unto death on a cross, if God so wishes. Because, remember, I have done it, and there is no disciple who deserves mercy more than I do. And yet I have consumed the greatest sorrow. And yet I have obeyed with perpetual renunciations. You know. You will understand even more in future when you resemble Me drinking a draught at My chalice… Let this thought be constantly present to you: "Through His obedience to the Father,

He saved us". And if you want to be saviours, do what I have done. There will be some who will be acquainted with the cross, some with the tortures of tyrants, some with the torture of love, some with the exile from Heaven, to which they will tend until a very late age before ascending there. Well, in everything let the will of God be done. Consider that the torment of death or the torment of life, while you would like to die to come where I am, are the same in the eyes of God, if they are suffered with cheerful obedience. They are His Will. So they are holy.

" Give us this day our daily bread". Day by day, hour by hour. It is faith. It is love. It is obedience. It is humility. It is hope, this asking for the bread for one day, and accepting it as it is. Sweet today, bitter tomorrow, much, little, with spices or with ashes. Always as it is just. God, Who is a Father, gives it. So it is good.

Another time I will speak to you of the other Bread, which it would be healthy to eat every day, and to pray the Father to keep it. Because woe betide that day and those places where there should be none through the will of men! Now you can see how mighty men are in their deeds of darkness. Pray the Father that He may defend His Bread and give you it. The more darkness will try to suffocate the Light and the Life, as it did on Preparation Day, the more He may give you of it. The second Preparation Day would be without resurrection. Remember that, all of you. If the Word can no longer be killed, His doctrine could still be killed and the freedom and will of loving Him could be extinguished in too many people. But then also Life and Light would come to an end for men. And woe betide that day! Let the Temple be an example for you. Remember, I said: "It is the great Corpse".

"Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us".

Since you are all sinners, be meek with sinners. Remember My words: "Why do you observe the splinter in your brother's eye, if first you do not take the plank out of your own eye?" That Spirit that I infused into you, that order that I gave you, grant you the authority to remit the sins of your neighbour, in the name of God. But how will you be able to do that, if God does not remit them to you? I will speak again of that. For the time being I say to you: Forgive those who offend you, in order to be forgiven and to be entitled to absolve or to condemn. He who is without sin can do so with full justice. He who does not forgive, while he is in sin and feigns to be scandalised, is a hypocrite and Hell awaits him. Because, if there is still mercy for wards, severe will be the verdict against the guardians of wards, guilty of the same or greater sins, although they had the fullness of the Spirit to assist them.

"Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil". That is humility, the fundamental stone of perfection. I solemnly tell you

to bless those who humiliate you, because they give you what is necessary for your celestial thrones.

No. Temptation is not a ruin, if man remains humbly near the Father and asks Him not to allow Satan, the world and the flesh to triumph over him. The crowns of the blessed souls are adorned with the gems of the temptations they overcame. Do not look for them. But do not be cowards when they come. Humble, and thus strong, shout to My Father and yours: "Deliver us from evil", and you will defeat evil. And you will really sanctify the Name of God with your deeds, as I said at the beginning, because every man, when seeing you, will say: "God exists, because they live as gods, so perfect is their behaviour", and they will come to God, multiplying the citizens of the Kingdom of God.

Kneel down, that I may bless you and My blessing may open your minds to meditate. »

They prostrate themselves on the ground and He blesses them, then He disappears, as if He were absorbed by a moonbeam.

Shortly afterwards the apostles raise their heads, surprised at not hearing any more words, and they realise that Jesus has disappeared… They prostrate themselves again with their faces on the ground, in the age-old fear of every Israelite who experiences the sensation of having been in touch with God, as He is in Heaven.

627. The Apostles Go along the Way of the Cross.

14th April 1947.

Jerusalem is already burning hot in the midday sun. A shady archivolt is a relief for one's eyes dazzled by the sun, that blazes down on the white walls of houses and makes the surface of streets exceedingly hot. And the incandescent white of the walls and the dark of the archivolts make Jerusalem a whimsical picture in black and white, a succession of bright lights and dim lights, and the contrast with the bright lights makes the latter look dark, a succession as tormenting as an obsession, because it deprives one of the faculty of sight, because the light is either too strong or too dim. People proceed with half-closed eyes, striving to walk fast in the areas of light and heat, slowing down under the archivolts, where one must go slow, because the contrast between light and darkness prevents one from seeing anything, even if one's eyes are open.

That is how the apostles proceed in a town that the midday heat makes deserted. And they perspire and wipe their faces and necks with their head-coverings and they pant…

But when they have to leave the town, they no longer have the relief of the archivolts. The road that runs along the walls and disappears towards the north and the south like a dazzling ribbon of incandescent dust, gives the impression of a furnace ground. The

heat rising from it is like that of an oven, a heat that dries one's lungs. The little torrent that flows beyond the walls has a thin trickle of water in the centre of its bed of stones, that the sun makes as white as desiccated skulls. The apostles rush towards that stream of water and drink it. They immerse their head-coverings into it, and after washing their faces, they put them on their heads still dripping. They wallow in it, in that thin trickle of water, with their bare feet. Of course, it is a very poor relief. The water is as warm as if it had been poured out of a pot hanging over a fire. And they say so: « It is warm and scanty. It tastes of mud and lye. When it is so little, it tastes of the washing done at dawn. » They begin to climb Golgotha. The scorched Golgotha, where the blazing sun has dried the sparse grass that looked like thin down on the yellowish mountain fifteen days previously. Now only stiff and very rare tufts of thorny plants, all aculei and no leaves, here and there prick up their skeleton-like stems, of a yellowish green because of the dust of the mountain, exactly like bones just taken out of the earth. Yes. They do look like bunches of desiccated bones stuck into the ground. There is one of them, which after a straight stem about two spans long, has a sudden bend that ends in five twigs after a kind of palette. It really looks like the hand of a skeleton, stretched out to catch whoever passes by and hold him in that place of nightmares.

« Do you want to take the long road or the short one? » asks John, who is the only one who has already been up that mountain.

« The shorter one! The shorter one! Let us be quick! One suffocates to death here! » they all say, except the Zealot and James of Alphaeus.

« Let us go! »

The stones of the paved street are as hot as plates taken out of a fire.

« But it is not possible to go on here! It is impossible! » they say after a few metres.

« And yet the Lord climbed up as far as that spot, where that thornbush is, and He was already wounded and was carrying the cross » remarks John, who has been weeping since he has been on Calvary.

They proceed. But they soon throw themselves on the ground, utterly exhausted and gasping for air. Their head-coverings which they had dipped into the stream, have already been dried by the sun, on the other hand their garments are wet with perspiration.

« Too steep and too hot! » says Bartholomew, puffing and blowing.

« Yes. Far too much! » confirms Matthew, who is congested.

« The sun is the same everywhere. But to go uphill, let us take that road. It is longer, but not so toilsome. Longinus also took it to make it possible for the Lord to climb it. See there, where that rather dark stone is? The Lord fell there and we thought He was dead, as we were looking from there, from the north, over there, see? where that

cavity is, before the slope rises steeply. He did not move any more. Oh! the cry of His Mother! It resounds in me here! I will never forget that cry! I will not forget any of Her moaning… Ah! there are things that make one an old man in one hour and they give the measure of the sorrow of the world… Come on, let us go! Our Martyr, the Lord, did not stop here as long as you have done! » says John urging them.

They stand up looking astonished and they follow him as far as the intersection of the paved road with the spiral path, and they go along the latter. Yes. It is not so steep. But as far as the sun is concerned! Its heat is even stronger, as the slope, which the path skirts, reverberates its heat on the wayfarers already scorched by the sun.

« But why make us come up here at this time?! Could He not have made us come up at dawn, as soon as there was enough light to see where we were putting our feet? All the more that we were outside the walls and we could have come without awaiting the gates to be opened. » They complain and grumble among themselves.

Men, still and always men, now, after the tragedy of Good Friday, which is more the tragedy of their proud and cowardly humanity, than a tragedy of the Christ, Who is always the triumphant hero even when dying; men as they were previously, when they were inebriated with the shouts of hosannas of the crowds, and the were overjoyed thinking of the feasts and sumptuous banquets in Lazarus' house… Deaf, blind, dull-minded to all the signs and warning of the impending storm.

James of Alphaeus and the Zealot are weeping silently. Also Andrew no longer complains after John's last words. John speaks also now, remembering, and his recollections are a brotherly admonition, an exhortation not to complain… He says: « This is the hour in which He came up here. And He had already walked for a long time. Oh! I could say that, since He left the Supper room, He did not have a moment's rest! And it was a very warm day! There was the sultriness of the oncoming storm… And He was burning with a high temperature. Nike says that she had the impression of touching fire when she laid the linen cloth on His face. The place where He met the women must be somewhere here… As we were on the opposite side, we did not see the meeting. But, as Nike and the other women told me… Come on. Let us go! Just consider that the Roman ladies, who are accustomed to moving about in litters, walked up this road exposed to the sun from the morning, from the third hour, when He was sentenced to death. Oh! they, the heathen women, preceded everybody, and they sent slaves to warn the others who were absent for some reason… »

They proceed… That road is a burning torture! They even stagger.

Peter says: « If He does not work a miracle, we shall fall struck by the sun. »

« Yes. My heart is burning in my throat » says Matthew in agreement.

Bartholomew no longer speaks. He seems to be inebriated. John holds him by the elbow and supports him, as he did with the Mother on the cruel Good Friday. And to comfort them he says: « Not far from here there is some shade. Where I took the Mother. We will rest there. »

They proceed, more and more slowly…

They are now at the rock where Mary was. And John tells them. There is in fact a little shade. But the air is still and hot.

« If there were at least a stalk of anise, a mint leaf, a blade of grass! My mouth is like parchment placed near a fire. But nothing! Nothing! » moans Thomas, whose veins are swollen at his neck and forehead.

« I would give the rest of my life for a drop of water » says James of Zebedee.

Judas Thaddeus bursts into tears and shouts: « My poor brother, how much You suffered! He said… He said, do you remember? that He was dying of thirst! Oh! now I understand! I had not understood the full meaning of those words! He was dying of thirst! And there was not one who gave Him a drop of water, while He was still able to drink! And He was feverish, in addition to the sun! »

« Johanna had taken Him a refreshment… » says Andrew.

« He was no longer able to drink, by that time! He could not speak any more… When He met His Mother over there, ten steps from here, all He could say was: "Mother!", and He could not even kiss Her, not even from afar, although Simon from Cyrene had relieved Him of the cross. His lips were dry, hardened by the wounds… Oh! I could see Him clearly, from behind the line of legionaries! Because I did not pass here. I would have taken His cross, if they had allowed me to pass! But they were afraid for me… because of the crowd that wanted to stone us… He could not speak… or drink… or kiss… It was almost impossible for Him to look with His painful eyes through the crusts of blood that ran down from His forehead!… His garment was torn near His knee, that one could see wounded, bleeding… His hands were swollen and wounded… He had a wound on His chin and cheek… The cross had made a wound on His shoulder, already cut by the scourging… The ropes had cut into His waist… His hair was dripping with the blood of the wounds made by the thorns… He had… »

« Be quiet! Be quiet! It is not possible to listen. Be quiet! I beg and I order you! » shouts Peter, who seems to be tortured.

« It is not possible to listen to me! You cannot listen to me! But I had to see and hear Him in His torture! And His Mother? What

about His Mother, then? »

They bend their heads, sobbing and they resume going on… They no longer complain. But now they all weep over Christ's sorrows.

They are now at the top. On the first esplanade: a slab of fire. The reflection of the heat is such that the earth seems to be trembling, because of that phenomenon caused by the sun on the burning sands of deserts.

« Come. Let us go up here. The centurion made us pass here. Me as well. He thought I was Mary's son. The women were over there. And the shepherds there. And over there the Judaeans… » John points out the various places and concludes: « But the crowd was below, below, they covered the slope down to the valley, down to the road. They were on the walls, on the terraces near the walls. As far as one could see. I saw that when the sun began to be veiled. Previously it was as it is now, and I could not see… »

In fact Jerusalem looks like a mirage trembling down at the bottom. The excess of light acts as a veil for those who want to see it. And John says: « In other hours - Mary of Lazarus said so, but I did not know when and why she had come here - one can see the black remains of the houses set on fire by lightning. The houses of the most guilty ones… of many, at least, among them… Look! Here (John counts his steps, he reconstructs the scene) Longinus was here and Mary and I here. And here was the cross of the repentant robber and over there the other one. And this is where they cast lots for His garments. And over there the Mother fell when He died… and from here I saw His Heart being pierced (John becomes as white as death) because His Cross was here » and he kneels down on the ground, worshipping with his face on the earth that had been dug along the whole length of earth covered with blood under the transverse bar of the cross and around the vertical stake of it. The Magdalene must have worked hard to dig so much earth, about a good span deep, in a soil so hard, mixed with stones and rubble, that make it a compact crust!

They have all thrown themselves on the ground to kiss the dust, which they now wet with their tears…

John is the first to stand up, and lovingly pitiless, he recalls every episode… He no longer feels the heat of the sun… Nobody feels it… He tells them how Jesus refused the wine with myrrh, how He took His clothes off and put on His Mother's veil, how He appeared so badly scourged and wounded, how He lay down on the cross and shouted at the first nail, and then He no longer shouted, so that His Mother should not suffer so much, and how they lacerated His wrist and dislocated His arm to pull it to the right point and how, when He had been completely nailed, they turned the cross over to hammer in the nails, and it lay heavy on the Martyr, Whose panting could be heard, and the cross was turned over again and raised while

they were dragging it, and it was dropped into the hole and earthed up, and how His Body fell down tearing His hands, and the crown moving tore His head, and the words He spoke to His Father in Heaven, His words asking forgiveness for those who crucified Him and forgave the repentant robber, and His words to His Mother and to John, and the arrival of Joseph and Nicodemus, so openly heroic in defying the whole world, and the courage of Mary of Magdala, and His cry full of anguish to His Father Who had abandoned Him, and His thirst, and the vinegar with gall, and His last agony, and His feeble entreaty to His Mother, and Her words, with His soul already at the point of death because of the torture, the torture… and His resignation and abandonment to God, and His last horrible convulsion and the cry that made the world tremble, and Mary's cry when She saw Him dead…

« Be quiet! Be quiet! Be quiet! » shouts Peter, and he seems to be pierced by the lance. Also the others implore him saying: « Be silent! Be silent!… »

« I have nothing further to say. The sacrifice was over. The burial… our torture, not His. There is no value in it other than the Mother's grief. Our torture! Does it perhaps deserve compassion? Let us give Him it, instead of asking compassion for ourselves. We have always avoided sorrow, fatigue and abandonment too much, leaving all that to Him, to Him alone. We have really been worthless disciples, as we loved Him for the joy of being loved, out of pride of being great in His kingdom, but we did not love Him in His sorrow… Now no longer so. Here. We must swear here, this is an altar, and it is high up, facing Heaven and Earth, that it will no longer be so. Now joy for Him, the cross for us. Let us swear it. It is the only way to give peace to our souls. Here Jesus of Nazareth, the Messiah, the Lord died, to be the Saviour and Redeemer. Let the man, that is, what we are, die here, and the true disciple rise. Rise! Let us swear in the Holy Name of Jesus Christ that we want to embrace His doctrine to the extent of being able to die for the redemption of the world. »

John seems a seraph. While he is gesticulating his, head-covering has fallen off, and his fair hair shines in the sun. He has climbed on some rubble thrown on one side, probably the supports of the crosses of the robbers, and he unintentionally takes the stretchedout arms attitude, that Jesus often took when teaching, and in particular the attitude He had on the cross.

The others look at him, so handsome, so fervent, so young, the youngest of them all, and so mature spiritually. Calvary has made him reach a perfect age… They look at him and shout: « We swear it! »

« Let us pray then, so that the Father may ratify our oath: "Our Father Who art in Heaven… " »

The chorus of the eleven voices becomes confident, more and more

confident as it proceeds. And Peter beats his breast while he says: « forgive us our trespasses » and they all kneel down when they say the last supplication: « deliver us from evil. »

They remain so, bent to the ground, meditating…

Jesus is among them. I have not seen when and whence He appeared. One would say from that part of the mountain that is inaccessible. He shines with love in the bright midday light and He says: « He who remains in Me will have no harm from the Evil One. I solemnly tell you that those who are united to Me in serving the Most High Creator, Whose desire is the salvation of every man, will be able to expel demons, to make reptiles and poisons harmless, to pass among wild beasts and through flames without being hurt, for all the time that God wants them to remain on the Earth to serve Him. »

« When did You come, Lord? » they say raising their heads, but remaining on their knees.

« Your oath called Me. And now, now that the feet of My apostles have trodden on these clods, go down quickly to town, to the Supper room. The women from Galilee will leave in the evening with My Mother. You and John will go with them. We will all meet in Galilee, on the Tabor » He says to the Zealot and John.

« When, Lord? »

« John will know and he will tell you. »

« Are You leaving us, Lord? Will You not bless us? We need Your blessing so much. »

« I will give you it here and in the Supper room. Prostrate yourselves! »

He blesses them, and the brightness of the sun envelops Him as in His Transfiguration, but here it conceals Him. Jesus is no longer there.

They look up. There is nothing but the sun and the parched earth… « Let us get up and go! He has gone! » they say sadly.

« His staying with us is becoming shorter and shorter! »

« But today He looked happier than yesterday evening. Don't you think so, brother? » Thaddeus asks James of Alphaeus.

« Our oath has made Him happy. May you be blessed, John, for making us take it! » says Peter, embracing John.

« I was hoping that He would speak of His Passion! Why did He make us come here and then say nothing? » asks Thomas.

« We will ask Him this evening » says Andrew.

« Yes. But let us go now. It is a long way and we want to spend some time with Mary, before She goes away » says James of Alphaeus.

« Another pleasantness that comes to an end! » says Thaddeus with a sigh.

« We are remaining orphans! What shall we do? » They turn towards John and the Zealot and, with a touch of envy

in their voices, they say: « You, at least, are going with the Mother! And you remain with Her, all the time. »

John makes a gesture, as if to say: « It is so. » But they, whose envy is not malicious but gentle, say at once: « However, it is right. Because you were here with Her and you had to forgo being here out of obedience. We… »

They begin to descend. But as soon as they set foot on the second esplanade, the lower one, they see a woman who arrives there, in the sun, from the steep road, and who looks them up and down without speaking, directing her steps resolutely to the upper esplanade.

« People are already coming here! It is not only Mary who comes. But what is she doing? She is weeping, looking at the ground. Did she perhaps lose something on that day? » they ask one another. In fact it may be so, because one cannot see who she is. The face of the woman is completely covered with her veil.

Thomas shouts in his strong deep voice:« Woman! What have you lost? »

« Nothing. I am looking for the place of the Lord's Cross. I have a brother who is dying and the good Master is no longer on the Earth… » she says weeping under her veil. « Men have driven Him away! »

« He has risen, woman. He exists for ever. »

« I know that He exists for ever. Because He is God, and God does not perish. But He is not among us any more. A world did not want Him and He has gone away. A world has denied Him, even His disciples abandoned Him as if He were a highwayman, and He has abandoned the world. And I have come looking for a little of His Blood. I have faith that it will cure my brother, more than the imposition of the hands of His disciples, because I do not believe that they can work miracles after being unfaithful. »

« The Lord was here not long ago. He has risen in soul and body and is still among us. The perfume of His blessing is still on us. Look, He rested His feet here only a short while ago » says John.

« No. I am looking for a drop of His Blood. I was not here and I do not know the place… » she says, while she is bent, searching the ground.

John says to her: « This is the place of His cross. I was here. »

« Were you? As a friend or as one of those who crucified Him? People say that only one of His favourite disciples was under His cross, and a few more disciples faithful to Him, near here. But I should not like to speak to one of His executioners. »

« I am not, woman. Look, here where the cross was, there is still earth red with His blood, although they have dug it. He lost so much blood that it penetrated deeply. Take this. And may your faith be rewarded. » John with his fingers has dug in the hole where the cross

was, and has taken out some reddish earth, that the woman places in a little linen cloth, and thanking him, she goes away quick with her treasure.

« You did the right thing in not revealing who we are. »

« Why did you not say who you are?. » say the apostles. As usual, human thoughts are contrasting.

John looks at them but does not speak. He is the first to set out down the steep paved road.

If it is easier to descend than to ascend, the sun is still very hot, and when they are down at the foot of Golgotha, they are really very thirsty. But there are some sheep in the stream and some shepherds who have certainly come out of some pen nearby to pasture them before evening. The water is muddy and it is not possible to drink it.

Their thirst is such that Bartholomew addresses a shepherd saying: « Have you a drop of water in your flask? »

The man looks at them severely and is silent.

« A little milk, then. The udders of your sheep are swollen. We will pay for it. We should have liked something cold to drink, but it is enough to have a drink. »

« I have neither water nor milk for those who abandoned their Master. I recognise you, you know? I saw you one day at Bethzur and I listened to you. You, exactly you, who are asking… But I did not see you when I met those who were carrying the killed Master down. Only that one was there. There was no water for Him, I was told by those who were on the mountain. And there is no water for you either. » He whistles to his dog, he gathers the sheep, and goes away northwards, where the ground begins to rise and is covered with olive-trees and strewn with grass.

The depressed apostles cross the bridge and go into town.

They walk close to the walls, their head-coverings lowered over their eyes, stooping a little. Because the roads are becoming busy again with pedestrians, as the great heat of the early afternoon hours is over.

But they must cross the whole town, before arriving at the house of the Supper room, and there are too many people who know the apostles and consequently it is practically impossible for them to pass through without any incident. And they are soon met with a lashing burst of laughter, while a scribe (I really thought I was not going to see any more, which made me happy) shouts to the people, who are numerous in that narrow cross road where a fountain gurgles: « There they are! Look! Here are the remains of the army of the great king! The valiant faint-hearted disciples of the seducer. Contempt and mockery on them. And the pity one has for madmen! »

It is the beginning of a turmoil of sneers. Some shout: « Where were you when He has suffering? »; some: « Are you convinced now that

He was a false prophet? »; and some: « In vain you have stolen and concealed Him. The idea is dead. The Nazarene is dead. Jehovah has struck the Galilean by lightning. And you with Him »; and some with false compassion: « Leave them alone. They have become aware of it and have repented, too late, but still in time to run away at the right moment! »; and some harangue the common people, consisting mainly of women, who seem inclined to side with the apostles, saying: « As you still doubt our justice, let the attitude of the most faithful followers of the Nazarene enlighten you. If He had been God, He would have fortified them. If they had recognised Him as the true Messiah, they would not have run away, considering that no human power could triumph over the Christ. Instead He died in the presence of the people. And in vain His corpse has been stolen, after they attacked the guards who had fallen asleep. Ask the guards whether that is the truth. He is dead, and His people have been scattered, and great in the eyes of God is he who frees the holy soil of Jerusalem from the last traces of Him. Anathema on the followers of the Nazarene! Get stones, o holy people, and let us stone them outside the walls. »

It is too much for the still shaky courage of the apostles! They have already withdrawn a little towards the walls, in order not to instigate the rising with an imprudent challenge to the accusers. But now, rather than prudence, fear is the winner. And they turn round and save themselves by running away towards the gate. James of Alphaeus and James of Zebedee, with John, Peter and the Zealot, are those who, being more calm and having more self-control, follow their companions without running. And an odd stone reaches them before they go out of the gate, and above all they are struck with a lot of dirt.

The guards, who have come out of the guard-room, ensure that they are not followed beyond the walls. But they run and run and take shelter in the apple-orchard of Joseph, where the Sepulchre was.

The place is calm and silent, and pleasant is the light under the trees that in those days have come into leaf, still thin, but so emerald green as to form a veil of a gentle hue under the strong trunks. They throw themselves on the ground, to overcome their palpitation.

At the end of the vegetable garden a man is hoeing and earthing up vegetables, helped by a young man, and he is not aware of them, who are hiding behind a hedge. After scanning the sky and saying in a loud voice: « Come, Joseph, and bring the donkey to tie it to the water-wheel », he directs his steps towards them, where there is a rustic well, hidden in a group of bushes that shade it. « What are you doing? Who are you? What do want in the kitchen garden of Joseph of Arimathea? And you, fool, why do you leave the gate

open, that Joseph wants closed, now that he has put it there? Do you not know that he does not want anybody here, where the Lord was laid? »

I tell the truth when I say that, in the pain of assisting at Jesus, deposition, and in the amazement of His Resurrection, I had never noticed whether the kitchen garden, in addition to the enclosure of a green hedge of boxes and bushes, had a gate or not, but I think it was put there recently, because it is completely new and it is supported by two square pillars, the plaster of which does not look old. Also Joseph, like Lazarus, has enclosed the places sanctified by Jesus.

John stands up, with the Zealot and James of Alphaeus, and without any fear he says: « We are the apostles of the Lord. I am John, this is Simon, a friend of Joseph, and this is James, a brother of the Lord. The Lord had called us to Golgotha and we went. He ordered us to go to the house where His Mother is, and the crowds have chased us. We have come in here, awaiting evening… »

« But are you wounded? And you! and you! Come, that I may help you. Are you thirsty? You are panting. You… quick, draw some water. The first water is pure, afterwards the buckets make it muddy. And give them some to drink, then wash some of that fresh lettuce, and oil them with the oil we use to tie grafts. I have nothing else to give you. My house is not here. But, if you wait, I will take you with me… »

« No. No. We must go to the Lord. May God reward you. »

They have a drink and they let them dress their wounds. They all have wounds on their heads. The Jews are good shots!

« Go out on the road, and look, without drawing people's attention, whether there is any spy » the gardener orders the boy.

« There is no one, father. The road is deserted » says the boy coming back.

« Have a look towards the door and come back quickly. »

He picks some anise stalks and offers them, apologising that he has nothing but legumes and those anises, as the fruit trees have just lost their blossoms.

The boy comes back. « Nobody, father. The road on the other side of the door is deserted. »

« Let us go, then. Harness the donkey to the cart and throw the refuse of the herbs on it. We shall look like men who are coming back from the country. Come with me. You will go the long way round… But it is better than being pelted with stones. »

« We shall always have to enter the town… »

« Yes. But we will go in by a different part, along dark lanes. Come without fear. »

He locks the strong gate with a big key, he makes the older ones get on the cart, he gives hoes and rakes to the others, he puts a bundle

of trimmings on Thomas' back and a bale of hay on John's, and he goes away resolutely, along the walls southwards.

« But your house… It is desert here. »

« The house is over there, on the other side, and will not run away. My wife will wait. First I serve the servants of the Lord. », He looks at them… « Eh! We all make mistakes! I was frightened as well! And we are all hated because of His Name. Even Joseph. But what does it matter? God is with us. People!… They hate and love. They love and hate. And then! What they do today, they forget tomorrow. Of course… If there were no hyenas! But they are the ones who instigate the people. They are furious because He has risen. Oh! if He only showed Himself on the top of a pinnacle of the Temple, so that the people would be certain that He has risen. Why does He not do that? I believe. But not everybody is capable of believing. And they give large sums of money to those who tell the people that He has been stolen by you, when He was already decomposed, and that He has been buried or cremated in a grotto of Josaphat. »

They are now in the southern side of the town, in the Hinnom valley.

« There you are. There is the Zion Gate. Do you know how to get to the house from there? It is not far. »

« We know. May God be with you because of your kindness. »

« As far as I am concerned, you are always the saints of the Master. You are men and I am a man. He alone is more than Man and was able not to tremble. I can understand and pity. And I say that you, who are weak today, will be strong tomorrow. Peace to you. »

He relieves them of the herbs and of the agricultural tools and goes back, while they enter the town as fast as hares and steal away along suburban lanes towards the house of the Supper room.

But the misfortunes of that day are not yet over. A group of legionaries, on their way to a nearby inn, meets them, and one watches them and points them out to the others. And they all laugh. And when the poor ill-treated disciples are compelled to pass before them, one of the soldiers leaning against the door addresses them: « Hey! Calvary did not stone you and men have struck you? By Jove! I thought you were more courageous! And that you were not afraid of anything, since you had the courage to climb up there. Have the stones of the mountain not reproached you for being cowardly? And were you so daring as to go up there? I have always seen guilty people run away from the places that reminded them of their sin. Nemesis pursues them. Perhaps she dragged you up there to make you tremble with horror today, since you did not tremble with pity, then. »

A woman , probably the mistress of the tavern, comes to the door and laughs. She has the frightening face of a rascal and she shouts in a shrill voice: « Hebrew women, look at what your wombs

produce! Vile perjurers, who come out of their dens when the danger is over! Roman wombs conceive nothing but heroes. Come and drink to the greatness of Rome. Choice wines and beautiful girls… » and she goes away, followed by the soldiers, into her dark cave.

A Hebrew woman looks at them - there are some women in the street with amphorae, where one can hear the fountain gurgle near the house of the Supper room - and she takes pity on them. She is an elderly woman. She says to her companions: « They made a mistake… but a whole people did wrong. » She approaches the apostles and greets them: « Peace to you. We do not forget… Tell us only this. Has the Master really risen from the dead? »

« He has risen. We swear to it. »

« Then, be not afraid. He is God, and God will triumph. Peace to you, brothers. And tell the Lord to forgive this people. »

« And we ask you to pray that the people may forgive us and forget the scandal we have given. Women, I, Simon Peter, ask you to forgive me. » And Peter weeps…

« We are mothers and sisters and wives, man. And your sin is that of our sons, brothers and husbands. May the Lord have mercy on everybody. »

These pious women have accompanied them to the house and they knock at the closed door. And Jesus opens the door, filling the dark room with His glorified person, and He says: « Peace to you for your compassion. »

The women are petrified with astonishment. They remain so, until the door is closed on the apostles and on the Lord. They then come to themselves.

« Have you seen Him? It was He. Handsome! More than previously. And alive! Not a phantom! A real man. His voice! His smile! He moved His hands. Did you notice how red were His Wounds? No, I was watching His chest breathe like that of a living person. Oh! let no one come and say it is not true! Let us go! Let us go and tell everybody! Let us knock at the door to see Him again. What are you saying? He is the Son of God, He has risen. It is already a great thing that He has shown Himself to us, poor women! He is with His Mother, the women disciples and the apostles. No. Yes… »

The wise ones win. The group goes away.

In the meantime Jesus has gone into the Supper room with His apostles. He watches them and smiles. They have taken their headcoverings off, which before entering the house they were wearing like bandages, and they put them on again as is customary. So their bruises can no longer be seen. They sit down tired and silent, more grieved than tired.

« You are late » says Jesus kindly.

Silence.

« Are you not going to say anything to Me? Speak up! I am always

Jesus. Has your boldness of today already vanished? »

« Oh! Master! Lord! » shouts Peter, falling on his knees at Jesus feet. « Our boldness has not vanished. But we are destroyed as we realise the harm we have done to Your Faith. We are crushed! »

« Pride dies, humility is born. Knowledge rises, love increases. Be not afraid. You are becoming apostles, now. That is what I wanted. »

« But we shall not be able to do anything any more! The people, and they are right, deride us! We have destroyed Your work. We have destroyed Your Church! » They are all distressed. They shout and gesticulate…

Jesus is solemnly calm. Sustaining His words with a gesture, He says: « Peace! Peace! Not even Hell will destroy My Church. It will not be the unsteadiness of a stone, not fixed properly yet, that will cause the building to perish. Peace! Peace! You will work. And you will do much good, because now you humbly acknowledge what you are, because now you are wise with a great wisdom: the knowledge that every act has very wide repercussions, at times, indelible, and that who is high up - remember what I told you about the lamp that is to be placed high up so that it may be seen, and just because it is seen by everybody its flame must be pure - and that who is high up has the obligation, more than those who are not high up, to be perfect. See, My children? What passes unnoticed or excusable when it is done by a believer, does not pass unnoticed if it is done by a priest, and the judgement of the people is severe. But your future will cancel your past. I did not speak to you on Golgotha, but I let the world speak. I comfort you. Come on, do not weep. Take some refreshment now, and let Me cure you. So. » He touches their wounded heads lightly. Then He says: « But you had better go away from here. That is why I said: "Go to Mount Tabor to pray". You will be able to stay in the nearby villages and go up every morning at dawn awaiting Me. »

« Lord, the world does not believe that You have risen » says Thaddeus in a low voice.

« I will convince the world. I will help you to defeat the world. Be faithful to Me. I do not ask for anything else. And bless those who humiliate you, because they sanctify you. »

He breaks the bread, He divides it into parts, He offers it, hands it out, saying: « This is My viaticum for you who are going away. I have already prepared the food there for My pilgrims. Do the same yourselves, in future, with those among you who will be leaving. Be paternal to all the believers. Everything I do, or I make you do, do it yourselves as well. In future, make also the journey to Calvary, meditating and making people meditate on the stations of the Cross. Contemplate! Do contemplate My sorrows. Because it is through them, not through the present glory, that I have saved you. In the other room there is Lazarus with his sisters. They have come

to say goodbye to the Mother. You may go in, too, because My Mother will be leaving shortly in Lazarus' wagon. Peace be with you. » He stands up and goes out quickly.

« Lord! Lord! » shouts Andrew.

« What do you want, brother? » asks Peter.

« I wanted to ask Him so many things. I wanted to inform Him of those who ask to be cured… I don't know! When He is among us, we are not able to say anything! » and he runs away looking for the Lord.

« It is true! We are like absent-minded people! » they all agree.

« And yet He is so good to us. He called us: "children" with so much kindness that it opened my heart! » exclaims James of Alphaeus.

« But He is so much God, now! I tremble when He is near me, as if I were near the Holy of Holies » says Thaddeus.

Andrew comes back: « He is no longer here. Space, time and walls are subjected to Him. »

« He is God! He is God! » they also say, full of veneration…

628. Jesus Appears to Various People in Different Places.

16th and 17th April 1947.

I. To Annaleah's mother.

Eliza, Annaleah's mother, is weeping disconsolately in her house, closed in a little room, where there is a small bed without any bedclothes, probably Annaleah's bed. Her head is resting on her arms, which, in turn, are lying stretched out on the little bed, as if she wanted to embrace it all. Her body lies heavy on her knees in a languid posture. There is nothing vigorous about her but her tears.

A faint light comes in through the open window. The day has just dawned. But there is a bright light when Jesus enters. I say: enters, meaning that He is in the room, whilst previously He was not. And I will always say so to mean His appearing in a closed place, without repeating myself as to how He shows Himself from behind a great brightness, which recalls that of the Transfiguration, from behind a white fire - allow me the comparison - that seems to melt walls and doors to allow Jesus to enter with His real, breathing, solid, glorified Body: a fire, a brightness that closes itself in Him and conceals Him when He goes away. But afterwards, it takes the beautiful aspect of the Risen Master, but a Man, a real Man, a hundred times more beautiful than He was before His Passion. It is He, but it is He the glorious King.

« Why are you weeping, Eliza? »

I do not know how the woman does not recognise the unmistakable voice. Perhaps sorrow overwhelms her. She replies as if she

were speaking to a relative, who has probably come to her after Annaleah's death. « Did you hear those men yesterday evening? He was nothing. Magic power, but not divine. And I was resigning myself to the death of my daughter, thinking that she was loved by God, in peace… He had told me!… » she weeps more loudly.

« But many have seen Him risen. God only can raise Himself from the dead by Himself. »

« That is what I also told those people yesterday. You heard me. I fought against their words. Because their words were the death of my hope, of my peace. But they - did you hear them? - they said: "It was all a make-believe of His followers, in order not to admit that they were fools. He is dead, dead and buried, and decomposed, they have stolen and destroyed His corpse, and now they say that He has risen". That is what they said… And that is why the Most High sent the second earthquake, to make them feel His wrath for their sacrilegious lie. Oh! I have no more consolation. »

« But if you saw the risen Lord with your own eyes, and you touched Him with your own hands, would you believe?… »

« I am not worthy of that… But I should certainly believe! It would be sufficient for me to see Him. I should not dare touch His Body because, if it were so, it would be a divine body, and a woman cannot approach the Holy of Holies. »

« Raise your head, Eliza, and see Who is standing in front of you! »

The woman raises her white-haired head, her face disfigured by tears, and she sees… She drops even lower on her heels, she rubs her eyes, she opens her mouth to utter a cry that wants to come up, but is stifled in her throat by amazement.

« It is I. The Lord. Touch My Hand. Kiss it. You sacrificed your daughter to Me. You deserve it. And on this hand find again the spiritual kiss of your child. She is in Heaven. She is blessed. You will speak to the disciples about that and about this day. »

The woman is so enraptured that she dare not make the gesture, and it is Jesus Himself who presses the tips of His fingers against her lips.

« Oh! You have really risen!!! Happy! Happy I am! May You be blessed for comforting me! » She stoops to kiss His feet, and she does so, and she remains like that.

The supernatural light envelops the Christ in its brightness and the room is devoid of Him. But the mother's heart is full of unshakeable certainty.

II. To Mary of Simon at Kerioth, with Anne, the mother of Johanna, and old Ananias.

The house of Anne, the mother of Johanna. The country house where Jesus, in the company of Judas' mother, worked the miracle of curing Anne. Here also there is a room and a woman lying on

a bed. A woman who is altered beyond recognition by mortal anguish. Her face is worn out. Fever devours it, inflaming her cheekbones, so sunken are her cheeks. Her eyes, black ringed, red with fever and tears, are half closed under her swollen eyelids. Where there is no reddening caused by fever, her complexion is yellowish, greenish, as if bile were spread in her blood. Her lean arms and thin hands are relaxed on the bedclothes, which are raised by her rapid panting.

Near the sick woman, who is no one else but Judas' mother, there is Anne, Johanna's mother. She wipes perspiration and tears, she waves a fan of palm, she changes the cloths, dipped in spicy vinegar, on the forehead and throat of the sick woman, she caresses her hands and loose hair, that in a short time has become more white than black, and is spread on the pillow, and, wet as it is with perspiration, adheres to her ears, which have become transparent. Also Anne weeps, uttering words of comfort: « Don't, Mary! Don't! Enough! He… he has sinned. But you, you know how the Lord Jesus… »

« Be quiet! That Name… to me… said to me… is profaned… I am the mother… of the Cain… of God! Ah! » Her quiet weeping changes into exhausted heart-rending sobbing. She feels she is choking, she catches hold of the neck of her friend, who assists her while she vomits some bile.

« Peace! Peace, Mary! Don't! Oh! what shall I tell you to convince you that He, the Lord, loves you? I repeat it to you! I swear it on the things which are most holy to me: my Saviour and my child. He told me when you brought Him to me. He had for you words and providence of infinite love. You are innocent. He loves you. I am certain, certain that He would give Himself once again to give you peace, poor martyr mother. »

« Mother of the Cain of God! Can you hear it? That wind, out there… It says so… The voice goes all over the world… the voice of the wind, and it says: "Mary of Simon, the mother of Judas, he who betrayed the Master and handed Him over to His executioners". Can you hear it? Everything says so… The stream out there… The doves… the sheep… The whole Earth shouts that I am… No, I do not want to recover my health. I want to die!… God is just and He will not punish me in the next life. But here, no. The world does not forgive… it does not distinguish… I am becoming mad, because the world howls… : "You are Judas' mother. »

She is exhausted and collapses on the pillows. Anne recomposes her and goes out to take away the dirty linen cloths…

Mary, her eyes closed, deadly pale after the effort she made, moans: « The mother of Judas! of Judas! of Judas! » She pants, then resumes: « But what is Judas? What did I give birth to? What is Judas? What have I… »

Jesus is in the room, which is lit up by a trembling light, because daylight is still too faint to illuminate the large room, in which the bed is at the end, very far from the only window. He calls her gently: « Mary! Mary of Simon! »

The woman is almost delirious and does not attach importance to the voice. Her mind is far away, carried away by the vortex of her grief, and she repeats the ideas that haunt her brain, monotonously, like the tick-tack of a pendulum-clock: « The mother of Judas! What have I given birth to? The world shouts: "The mother of Judas"… »

Two tears well up in the corners of Jesus' very mild eyes. I am surprised at them. I did not think that Jesus could weep also after His resurrection…

He bends. The bed is so low for Him Who is so tall! He lays His hand on the feverish forehead, pushing aside the cloths damp with vinegar, and He says: « A poor wretch. That and nothing else. If the world shouts, God covers the shout of the world saying to you: "Have peace, because I love you". Look at Me, poor mother! Gather your lost spirit and put it in My hands. I am Jesus!… »

Mary of Simon opens her eyes, as if she were coming out of a nightmare and she sees the Lord, she feels His Hand on her forehead, she covers her face with her trembling hands and moans: « Do not curse me! If I had known what I was giving birth to, I would have torn my womb to prevent him from being born. »

« And you would have sinned. Mary! oh! Mary! Do not depart from your justice because of the sin of another person. The mothers who have fulfilled their duty must not consider themselves responsible for the sins of their sons. You have done your duty, Mary. Give Me your poor hands. Be calm, poor mother. »

« I am Judas' mother. I am unclean like all the things that demon touched. The mother of a demon! Do not touch me. » She struggles to avoid the divine Hands that want to hold her.

The two tears of Jesus fall on her face burning once again with fever. « I have purified you, Mary. My tears of compassion are on you. I have not shed My tears on anybody since I consumed My sorrow. But I am weeping over you with all My loving pity. » He has succeeded in getting hold of her hands and He sits, yes, He really sits down on the edge of the little bed, holding her trembling hands in His.

The loving compassion of His bright eyes caresses, envelops and cures the poor wretch, who calms down weeping silently and whispering: « Have You no grudge against me? »

« I have love. That is why I have come. Have peace. »

« You forgive! But the world! Your Mother! She will hate me. »

« She thinks of you as of a sister. The world is cruel. That is true. But My Mother is the Mother of the Love, and She is good. You cannot

go about in the world, but She will come to you when everything is at peace. Time pacifies… »

« Make me die, if You love me… »

« A little longer. Your son was not able to give Me anything. Give Me a period of time of your suffering. It will be a short one. »

« My son has given You too much… Infinite horror he has given You. »

« And you your infinite sorrow. The horror is over. It no longer serves. Your sorrow serves. It joins these wounds of Mine, and Your tears and My Blood wash the world. All sorrows join together to wash the world. Your tears are between My Blood and the tears of My Mother and around them there is all the sorrow of the saints who will suffer for the Christ and for men, for My sake and for the sake of men. Poor Mary! » He lays her down gently, He crosses her hands and watches her as she calms down…

Anne comes back in and stops dumbfounded on the threshold.

Jesus, Who is now standing, looks at her saying: « You have complied with My wish. There is peace for obedient people. Your soul has understood Me. Live in My peace. »

He lowers His eyes again on Mary of Simon, who looks at Him through a stream of tears which are now more calm, and He smiles at her again. And He says to her: « Lay your hope in the Lord. He will give you all His comfort. » He blesses her and is about to go away.

Mary of Simon utters a passionate cry: « They say that my son betrayed You with a kiss! Is it true, Lord? If it is so, allow me to wash it by kissing Your Hands. There is nothing else I can do! I cannot do anything else to cancel… to cancel… » She is struck with deeper grief.

Jesus, oh! Jesus does not give her His hands to kiss, those hands on which the wide sleeve of His snow-white tunic reaches down to half the metacarpus concealing the wounds, but He takes her head in His hands and He bends and with His divine lips He lightly touches the burning forehead of the most unhappy of all women, and standing up again He says to her: « My tears and My kiss! No one has ever had so much from Me. So be at peace, because there is nothing but love between you and Me. »

He blesses her and, after going across the room quickly, He goes out behind Anne, who did not dare to come forward, or to speak, but is weeping deeply moved.

But when they are in the corridor that leads to the main door, Anne dares to speak and to ask the question which she has at heart: « My Johanna? »

« For fifteen days she has rejoiced in Heaven. I did not mention it there, because too big is the contrast between your daughter and her son. »

« It is true! A great torture! I think she will die of it. »

« No. Not soon. »

« Now she will be more at peace. You have consoled her. You! You Who more than anybody… »

« I Who pity her more than anybody else. I am the Divine Pity. I am the Love. I tell you, woman: if Judas had only cast a glance of repentance at Me, I would have obtained God's forgiveness for him… » How sad is Jesus' face!

The woman is struck by it. Words and silence struggle on her lips, but she is a woman, and curiosity is the winner. She asks: « Was it a… an… Yes, I mean: did that wretched man sin all of a sudden, or… »

« He had been sinning for months and no word of Mine, no act of Mine was able to stop him, so strong was his will to sin. But do not tell her that… »

« I will not!… Lord! Because now, when Ananias ran away from Jerusalem, the very night of the Preparation Day, without even completing the Passover, he came in here shouting: "Your son has betrayed the Master and has handed Him over to His enemies! He betrayed Him with a kiss. And I have seen the Master beaten, covered with spittle, scourged, crowned with thorns, laden with a cross, crucified and dead through the action of your son. And our name is shouted with obscene triumph by the enemies of the Master, and they relate the feats of your son, who, for less than the price that a lamb costs, has sold the Messiah and with the betrayal of a kiss has pointed Him out to the guards!", Mary fell on the ground, and became black all of a sudden, and the doctor says that her liver has burst and the bile has flown out and all her blood is corrupted by it. And… the world is bad. She is right… I had to bring her here, because they came near her house in Kerioth to shout: "Your son is a deicide and a suicide! He has hanged himself! And Beelzebub has taken his soul, and Satan has come to take even his body". Is that horrible wonder true? »

« No, woman. He was found dead, hanging from an olive-tree… »

« Ah! And they shouted: "Christ has risen and is God. Your son has betrayed God. You are the mother of the betrayer of God. You are the mother of Judas". At night, with Ananias and a faithful servant, the only one left to me, because no one wanted to stay near her… I brought her here. But Mary hears those cries in the noises of the earth, in everything. »

« Poor mother! It is horrible, indeed. »

« But did that demon not think of all this, Lord? »

« It was one of the reasons I had recourse to, to hold him back. But to no avail. Judas went so far as to hate God, as he had never loved his father and mother or any other neighbour with true love. »

« That is true. »

« Goodbye, woman. May My blessing comfort you to bear the

mockery of the world because of your compassion for Mary. Kiss My hand. I can show it to you. It would have done too much harm to her to see this. » He throws the sleeve back, uncovering the pierced wrist.

Anne utters a groan as with her lips she lightly touches the tips of His fingers.

The noise of a door that is opened and a stifled cry: « The Lord! », A rather old man prostrates himself and remains so.

« Ananias, the Lord is good. He has come to comfort your relative and to comfort us as well » says Anne to console also the elderly man, who is too deeply moved.

But the man dare not move. He weeps saying: « We are of horrible blood. I cannot look at the Lord. »

Jesus goes to him. He touches his head, repeating the same words as He said to Mary of Simon: « Relatives who have done their duty must not consider themselves responsible for the sin of a relative. Take heart, man! God is just. Peace to you and to this house. I have come and you will go where I send you. For the supplementary Passover the disciples will be at Bethany. You will go to them and you will tell them that on the twelfth day from His death, you saw the Lord at Kerioth, alive and true, in Body and Soul and Divinity. They will believe you, because I have already been with them quite a lot. But it will confirm them in their faith on My Divine Nature to know that I am everywhere on the same day. And before that, this very day, you will go to Kerioth to ask the leader of the synagogue to gather the people together, and in the presence of everybody you will say that I came here, and that they are to remember My words of the farewell. They will certainly say to you: "Why did He not come to us?" You will reply so: "The Lord told me to say to you that, if you had done what He told you to do to the innocent mother, He would have shown Himself. You failed in your duty of love, and that is why the Lord has not shown Himself". Will you do that? »

« That is difficult, Lord! It is difficult to do that! They consider us all as heart lepers… The leader of the synagogue will not listen to me, and he will not let me speak to the people. He may beat me… However, I will do it, because You want it. » The elderly man does not raise his head. He speaks bent in deep prostration.

« Look at Me, Ananias! »

The man looks up trembling with veneration.

Jesus is as bright and handsome as He was on Mount Tabor… The light envelops Him, concealing His features and His smile… And the corridor is left without Him, without any door being moved to let Him pass.

The two worship and worship, as they have become all adoration through the divine manifestation.

III. To the children of Juttah with their mother Sarah.

The orchard of Sarah's house. The children who are playing under the leafy trees. The youngest one who rolls on the grass near a thick row of vine-leaves, the other bigger ones who chase one another with joyful cries of swallows, playing at hide-and-seek behind hedges and vines.

Jesus appears near the little one to whom He gave His name. Oh! holy simplicity of the innocents! Jesai is not surprised seeing Him there all of a sudden, but he stretches out his little arms, so that Jesus may take him in His, and Jesus takes him: there is the greatest simplicity in the acts of both.

The others arrive running - and once again the blessed simplicity of children! - and without any astonishment they approach Him happily. Nothing seems to have changed for them. They probably do not know.

But after Jesus has caressed each of them, Mary, the oldest and most sensible one, says: « So do You no longer suffer, Lord, now that You have risen? I was so sorry!… »

« I no longer suffer. I have come to bless you before I ascend to My Father and yours, in Heaven. But also from there I will always bless you, if you are always good. You will tell those who love Me that I have left My blessing with you today. Remember this day. »

« Are You not coming to the house? Mother is there. They will not believe us » says Mary again.

But her brother does not ask. He shouts: « Mummy, mummy. The Lord is here!… » and running towards the house, he repeats that cry.

Sarah rushes, she looks out of the window… just in time to see Jesus, very handsome at the edge of the orchard, disappear in the light that absorbs Him…

« The Lord! But why did you not call me before?… » says Sarah as soon as she is able to speak. « But when? where did He come from? Was He alone? How foolish you are! »

« We found Him here. A moment before He was not here… He did not come from the road or from the kitchen garden. And He had Jesai in His arms… And He told us that He had come to bless us and to give us His blessing for those who love Him in Jutta and to remember this day. And now He is going to Heaven. But He will love us if we are good. How handsome He was! He had wounds in His hands. But they no longer hurt Him. Also His feet were wounded. I saw them among the grass. That flower there touched just the wound of one foot. I will pick it… » they all speak together, excited with emotion. They even perspire in the excitement of speaking.

Sarah caresses them whispering: « God is great! Let us go. Come. Let us go and tell everybody. You, innocents, will speak. You can speak of God. »

IV. To young Jaia, at Pella.

The young man is working with zeal around a cart. He is loading it with vegetables picked in a nearby vegetable garden. The little donkey beats the hard surface of the country road with its hoof.

When he turns round to take a basket of lettuce, he sees Jesus Who smiles at him. He drops the basket on the ground and he kneels down, rubbing his eyes, incredulous of what he sees, and he whispers: « Most High, do not lead me into illusions! Lord, do not allow me to be deceived by Satan by means of false seducing appearances. My Lord is really dead! And He was buried, and they now say that His corpse has been stolen. Have mercy, Most High Lord! Show me the truth. »

« I am the Truth, Jaia. I am the Light of the World. Look at Me. See Me. That is why I gave your sight back to you, so that you may witness My power and My Resurrection. »

« Oh! It is really the Lord! It is You! Yes! You are Jesus! » He drags himself along on his knees to kiss His feet.

« You will say that you have seen Me and have spoken to Me and that I am really alive. You will say that you have seen Me today. My peace and My blessing to you. »

Jaia remains alone. He is happy. He forgets the cart and the vegetables. In vain the restless donkey beats the road and brays, protesting because of the long wait… Jaia is enraptured.

A woman comes out of the house near the kitchen garden and sees him there, wan with emotion, his face with a far-away look. She shouts: « Jaia! What is the matter with you? What happened to you? » She rushes towards him and shakes him. She brings him back to earth…

« The Lord! I have seen the Risen Lord. I have kissed His feet and seen His wounds. They have told lies. It was really God and He has risen. I thought it was a deceit. But it is He! It is He! »

The woman trembles thrilled with emotion and whispers: « Are you quite sure? »

« You are good, woman. For His sake you have taken my mother and me as your servants. Do not refuse to believe!… »

« If you are sure, I believe. But was He really flesh? Was He warm? Did He breathe? Did He speak? Did He really have a voice, or did you think so? »

« I am certain. It was the warm flesh of a living being, it was a real voice, it was breath. As handsome as God, but Man, like me and you. Let us go, let us go and tell those who suffer or are in doubt. »

V. To John of Nob.

The old man is all alone in his house. But he is serene. He is repairing a chair as on one side the nails have come out, and he

smiles at I wonder which dream.

There is a knock at the door. The old man, without leaving his work, says: « Come in. What do you want, you who come? Still one of those? I am too old to change! Even if the whole world shouted to me: "He is dead", I say: "He is living". Even if I had to die to say so. So, come in! »

He gets up to go to the door, to see who knocks without going in. But when he is near it, the door opens and Jesus goes in.

« Oh! Oh! Oh! My Lord! Alive! I believed! And He comes to reward my faith! Blessed! I did not doubt. In my grief I said: "If He sent me the lamb for the banquet of joy, it means that He will rise this day". Then I understood everything. When You died and the Earth was shaken, I understood what I had not yet understood. And they thought that I was mad, at Nob, because at sunset on the day after the Sabbath, I prepared a banquet and I went and invited some beggars saying: "Our Friend has risen!". They were already saying that it was not true. They were saying that they had stolen You during the night. But I did not believe them, because since You died I understood that You were dying to rise again, and that that was the sign of Jonah. »

Jesus, smiling, lets him speak. Then he asks: « And do you still wish to die now, or do you want to stay to witness My glory? »

« Whatever You want, Lord! »

« No. What you want. »

The old man is pensive. He then decides: « It would be lovely to go out of this world, where You no longer are as You were previously. But I forgo the peace of Heaven to say to the incredulous: "I have seen Him!". »

Jesus lays His hand on his head blessing him and He adds: « But it will soon be also peace, and you will come to Me with the rank of confessor of the Christ.. »

And He goes away. In this case, probably out of pity for the old man, He did not appear or disappear in a wonderful way, but He did everything as if He were the Jesus of days gone by, when He used to enter or come out of a house in a normal human way.

VI. To Matthias, the old solitary man near Jabesh-Gilead.

The old man is working at his vegetables and is talking to himself: « All wealth that I have for Him. And He will never taste them again. I have worked in vain. I believe that He was the Son of God, that He died and has risen. But He is no longer the Master, Who sits at the table of the poor or of the rich and shares the food with equal love, perhaps, no certainly with more love with the poor than with the rich. Now He is the Risen Lord. He has risen to confirm us, His believers, in our faith. And they say that it is not true. That no one has ever risen by himself. No one. No. No man. But He did.

Because He is God. »

He claps his hands to drive away the pigeons that come down to steal the seed in the earth that has just been dug and sown, and he says: « It is useless now for you to procreate! He will never relish your little ones again! And you, useless bees? For whom do you produce honey? I was hoping to have Him at least once with me, now that I am not so poor. Every thing has flourished here, after He came… Ah! but with that money, that I have never touched, I want to go to Nazareth, to His Mother, and say to Her: "Make me Your servant, but let me stay here where You are, because You are still He"… » He wipes a tear with the back of his hand…

« Matthias, have you some bread for a pilgrim? » Matthias looks up, but, as he is on his knees, he cannot see who is speaking from behind the tall hedge, that surrounds his small property lost in this green solitary place beyond the Jordan. But he replies: « Whoever you may be, come, in the name of the Lord Jesus. » And he stands up to open the fence.

He finds himself facing Jesus, and he remains with his hand on the latch, unable to make a gesture.

« Do you not want Me as your guest, Matthias? You did once. And you were regretting that you could not do so again. I am here and are you not opening to Me? » says Jesus smiling…

« Oh! Lord… I… I… I am not worthy that my Lord should come in here… I… »

Jesus passes His hand over the fence and opens the lock saying: « The Lord enters wherever He wants, Matthias. »

He goes in, He proceeds along the humble kitchen garden, He goes towards the house and on the threshold He says: « So, you can sacrifice the little ones of your pigeons. Take your vegetables away from the garden and the honey from your bees. We will share the bread together, and your work will not have been useless, and your desire vain. And this place will be dear to you, and you will not have to go where there will soon be silence and abandonment. I am everywhere, Matthias. He who loves Me, is always with Me. My disciples will be in Jerusalem. My Church will arise there. Make sure you are there for the supplementary Passover. »

« Forgive me, Lord. But I could not resist in that place and I ran away. I arrived there at the ninth hour the day before Preparation Day, and the day after… Oh! I ran away as I did not want to see You die. Only for that, Lord. »

« I know. And I know that you went back, and you were one of the first, to weep over My sepulchre. But I was already out of it. I know everything. Here, I will sit here and rest. I have always rested here… And the angels know that. »

The man busies himself, but he seems to be moving in a church, so reverently he moves about. Now and again he wipes a tear, which

is about to mingle with his smile, while he comes and goes to get the little pigeons, kill them, prepare them, poke the fire, pick and wash the vegetables, and put the early figs in a plate, and lay the table with the best tableware. But when everything is ready, how can he sit down and eat? He wants to serve, which seems a great deal to him, and does not want anything else. But Jesus, Who has offered and blessed the food, offers him half of the pigeon, which He has cut, placing the meat on a piece of bread, that He has dipped into the sauce.

« Oh! as to a favourite! » says the man, and he eats, weeping for joy and emotion, without taking his eyes off Jesus, Who eats… drinks, enjoys the vegetables, the fruit, the honey, and offers His chalice to him after taking a sip of wine. Previously He had always drunk water.

The meal is over.

« I am really alive, as you can see. And you are quite happy. Remember that twelve days ago I was dying by the will of men. But nothing is the will of men when the will of God does not agree to it. And more than that, the contrary will of men becomes a servile instrument of the eternal Will. Goodbye, Matthias. As I said that he will be with Me, who gave Me a drink when I was the Pilgrim about Whom every doubt was lawful, so I say to you: you will have part in My celestial Kingdom. »

« But I am losing You now, Lord! »

« In every pilgrim see Me; in every beggar, Me; in every sick person, Me; in everyone needing bread, water and clothes, Me. I am in whoever suffers, and what is done to those who suffer, is done to Me. »

He stretches out His arms blessing and disappears.

VII. To Abraham of Engedi, who dies in His Arms.

The square of Engedi: pillared temple of rustling palm-trees. The fountain: mirror for the April sky. The pigeons: low murmur of organ. Old Abraham passes through it with his working tools on his shoulders. He looks even older, but serene like one who has found relief after a violent storm. He passes also through the rest of the town, and goes to the vineyards near the fountains. The beautiful fertile vineyards, already promising abundant crops. He goes in and begins to hoe, to prune, to tie. Now and again he stands up, he leans on the hoe, he ponders. He smoothes his patriarchal beard, he sighs, he shakes his head, in an inward conversation.

A man, all enveloped in his mantle, comes up the road towards the fountains and the vineyards. I say: a man. But it is Jesus, because it is His garment and His gait. But for the old man it is a man. And the Man asks Abraham: « May I stop here? »

« Hospitality is sacred. I have never denied it to anybody. Come.

Come in. May the rest in the shade of my vines be pleasant to you. Do you want some milk? Some bread? I will give you what I possess here. »

« And what can I give you? I have nothing. »

« He who is the Messiah has given me everything, for every man. And no matter what I give, it is nothing when compared to what He has given me. »

« Do you know that they crucified Him? »

« I know that He has risen from the dead. Are you one of those who crucified Him? I am not allowed to hate, because He does not want hatred. But, if I were allowed, I would hate you if you were. »

« I am not one of His crucifiers. Do not worry. So you know everything about Him. »

« Yes, everything. And Elisha… He is my son, you know? Elisha did not come back any more from Jerusalem, and he said: "Dismiss me, father, because I am leaving all my wealth in order to preach the Lord. I will go to Capernaum to look for John, and I will join the faithful disciples". »

« So your son has left you? So old and alone? »

« What you call abandonment is the joy I have dreamt of. Had leprosy not deprived me of him? And who gave him back to me? The Messiah. And am I losing him because he preaches the Lord? Of course not! I shall find him again also in eternal life. But you speak in a way that makes me suspicious. Are you an emissary of the Temple? Have you come to persecute those who believe in the risen Master? Strike! I will not run away. I will not imitate the three wise men of remote days. I will stay. Because if I fall for Him, I shall join Him in Heaven and my prayer of last year will be answered.) »

« That is true. You then said: "I anxiously waited for the Lord, and He heard me". »

« How do you know? Are you one of His disciples? Were you here with Him when I prayed Him? Oh! if you are such, help me to make my cry reach Him, so that He may remember. » He prostrates himself, thinking that he is speaking to an apostle.

« It is I, Abraham of Engedi, and I say to you: "Come". » Jesus stretches out His arms towards him, revealing Himself, and inviting him to throw himself into them, relaxing on His Heart.

At that moment a boy comes into the vineyard. He is followed by an adolescent and he shouts: « Father! Father! Here we are to help you. »

But the trilling cry of the boy is drowned by the powerful cry of the old man, a true cry of liberation: « Here I am! I am coming! » And Abraham throws himself into the arms of Jesus, shouting again: « Jesus, Holy Messiah! Into Your hands I commit my spirit! »

A blessed death. A death I envy! On the Heart of Christ, in the

serene peace of the April flowery country…

Jesus lays the old man gently on the flowery grass that waves in the breeze, at the foot of a row of vines, and He says to the children, who, astonished and frightened, are about to burst into tears: « Do not weep. He died in the Lord. Blessed are those who die in Him! Go, boys, and tell those of Engedi that their synagogue leader has seen the risen Lord and had his prayer answered by Him. Do not weep! Do not weep! » He caresses them while leading them to the exit.

He then goes back to the deceased man and tidies his beard and hair, He lowers his eyelids, which were half closed, He puts the body in order, and on it He lays the mantle that Abraham had taken off to work.

He remains there until He hears some voices coming from the road. Then He stands up. Wonderful… Those who rush there see Him. They shout. They run faster to reach Jesus. But He disappears from their eyes in the refulgence of beams brighter than the sun.

VIII. To Elijah, the Essene of Mount Cherith.

The harsh solitude of the rough mountain at the bottom of which flows the Cherith. Elijah is praying, even more emaciated and bearded, wearing a coarse woollen garment, which is neither grey nor brown, and makes him look like the rocks surrounding him.

He hears a noise resembling that of wind or thunder. He looks up. Jesus has appeared on a rock hanging balanced over the precipice, at the bottom of which there is the torrent.

« The Master! » He throws himself on the ground, face downwards.

« I, Elijah. Did you not hear the earthquake on Preparation Day? »

« Yes, I did, and I went down to Jericho and to Nike. I did not find any of those who love You. I asked after You. They hit me. Then I felt the earth tremble once again, but not so violently, and I came back here to do penance, thinking that the dam of celestial wrath had opened. »

« Of Divine Mercy. I died and have risen. Look at My wounds. Join the servants of the Lord on Mount Tabor and tell them that I sent you. »

He blesses him and disappears.

IX. To Dorcas and her child in the castle of Caesarea Philippi.

Dorcas' little boy, supported by his mother, is taking his first steps on the rampart of the fortress. And Dorcas, bent as she is, does not see the Lord appear. But when, having left the little boy somewhat free, she sees him walk steadily and fast towards the comer of the rampart, she straightens herself up to run, so that he may not fall and may perish passing through the battlements or openings made on purpose for offensive weapons. And in doing so she

sees Jesus, Who takes up the child, pressing him to His heart and kissing him.

The woman dare not make a gesture. But she utters a loud cry. A cry that makes those of the courts look up and causes faces to lean out of windows: « The Lord! The Lord! The Messiah is here! He has really risen. » But before people can rush there, Jesus has already disappeared.

« You are mad! You were dreaming! Plays of light have made you see a ghost. »

« Oh! He was really alive! See how my son is looking there and how he is holding in his hands an apple as beautiful as his little face. He is gnawing at it with his little teeth. I have no apples… »

« Nobody has ripe apples these days, and so fresh… » they say rather shocked.

« Let us ask Tobias » say some of the women.

« What do you want to do? He can hardly say "mummy"! » say the men mockingly.

But the women bend over the little boy and say: « Who gave you the apple? »

And the lips, that can hardly say the most simple words, in a joyful smile that displays his tiny little teeth and his still empty gums, without any hesitation says: « Jesus. »

« Oh! »

« Hey! you call him Jesai! He can say his name. »

« Jesus you, or Jesus the Lord? Which Lord? Where did you see Him? » insist the women.

« There, the Lord. Jesus the Lord. »

« Where is He? Where did He go? »

« There. » He points at the sky full of sun and smiles happily and bites his apple.

And while the men go away shaking their heads, Dorcas says to the women: « He was handsome. He seemed to be dressed in light. And on His hands He had the signs of the nails, as red as gems against so much whiteness. I saw Him very well, because He held the child so » and she makes the gesture of Jesus.

The superintendent hastens there, he makes them repeat the story, he ponders, and concludes: « The psalm says: "On the lips of children and babes in arms You have placed the perfect praise". And why not the truth? They are innocent. And we… Let us remember this day… No! I am going to the village of the disciples. I am going to see whether the Rabbi is there… And yet… He was dead… Who knows!… »

And with this « who knows! » that ends its conclusion internally, the superintendent goes away, while the women, full of excitement, continue asking questions of the child, who laughs and repeats: « Jesus, there. And then there. Jesus Lord » and he points at the place

where Jesus was, then at the sun where he saw Him disappear, happy, happy.

X. To the people gathered in the synagogue of Kedesh.

The people of Kedesh are gathered in the synagogue and are discussing the last events with Matthias, the synagogue leader. The synagogue is rather half dark, because the doors are closed and the curtains are lowered on the windows, heavy curtains that the April wind hardly moves.

A lightning illuminates the room. It looks like a lightning, but it is the light that precedes Jesus. And Jesus shows Himself, astonishing many people. He stretches out His arms and the wounds on His hands and feet appear clearly visible, because He shows Himself on the last of the three steps that lead to a closed door. He says: « I have risen from the dead. I remind you of the dispute between the scribes and Me. I have given the wicked generation the sign that I had promised. That of Jonah. I give My blessing to those who love Me and are faithful to Me. » Nothing else. He disappears.

« But it was He! Where from? And yet He was alive! He had said so! Well! Now I understand. The sign of Jonah: three days in the bowels of the Earth and then the resurrection… »

A babble of comments…

XI. To a group of rabbis at Giscala.

A poisonous group of rabbis who try to convince some hesitating men of their requests. They would like to get these men to go to Gamaliel, who has closed himself in his house and does not want to see anybody.

These men say: « We tell you that he is not here. We do not know where he is. He came. He consulted some rolls. He went away. He did not say one word »; « He was frightening, so upset and aged he was » reply the others.

With a bad grace the rabbis turn their backs on those who have spoken and they go away saying: « Also Gamaliel is as mad as Simon! It is not true that the Galilean has risen! It is not true! It is not true! It is not true that He is God. It is not true. Nothing is true. We alone are in the truth. » The very pain they take in saying that it is not true, proves that they are afraid that it is true, that they need to be reassured.

They have walked along the wall of the house and they are near Hillel's tomb. Howling their denials all the time, they raise their heads… and they run away shouting. The Jesus extremely kind to good people is there, frighteningly powerful, with His arms opened out as on the cross… The wounds on His hands are as red as if they were still dripping blood. He does not utter one word. But His eyes fulminate them.

The rabbis run away, they fall, they get up, they wound themselves against trees and stones, mad, driven mad by fear. They look like homicides who have been taken back into the presence of their victim.

XII. To Joachim and Mary of Bozrah.

« Mary! Mary! Joachim and Mary! Come outside. »

The two, who are in a quiet room, illuminated by a lamp, one intent on sewing, the other on making up accounts, raise their heads, look at each other… Joachim, growing pale with fear, whispers: « The voice of the Rabbi! It comes from the other life… » The woman, frightened, presses against her husband.

But the call is repeated and the two, holding on tightly to each other, to pluck up courage, dare to go out, in the direction of the voice.

In the garden, illuminated by the crescent of the new moon, there is Jesus, shining in a light much stronger than many moons. The light surrounds Him and makes Him God. His very sweet smile and loving eyes make Him Man: « Go and tell those of Bozrah that you have seen Me, real and alive. And you, Joachim, say so at Tabor, to those who have gathered there. » He blesses them and disappears.

« But it was He! It was not a dream! I… Tomorrow I will go to Galilee. He said at the Tabor, did He not?… »

XIII. To Mary of Jacob, at Ephraim.

The woman is kneading flour to make bread. She turns round, upon hearing that she is being called, and she sees Jesus. She throws herself on the floor, face and hands on the floor, in silent adoration, a little frightened.

Jesus speaks: « You will tell everybody that you have seen Me and that I have spoken to you. The Lord is not subjected to the sepulchre. I rose on the third day as I had predicted. Do persevere, you who are on My way, and do not let yourselves be seduced by the words of those who crucified Me. My peace to you. »

XIV. To Syntyche, at Antioch.

Syntyche is preparing a travelling bag. It is evening, because a little lamp is lit, its faint light flickers, and it is placed on a table near the woman intent on folding some garments.

The room is brightly lit up and Syntyche raises her head, surprised, to see what is happening, what is the source of such a bright light in that room which is completely closed. But before she can see, Jesus forestalls her: « It is I. Be not afraid. I have shown Myself to many people to confirm them in their faith. I am showing Myself also to you, My obedient faithful disciple. I have risen. See? I no longer suffer. Why are you weeping? »

The woman, before the beauty of the Glorified Master, finds no words… Jesus smiles at her to encourage her and He adds: « I am the same Jesus Who gladly received you on the road near Caesarea. Although you were so timid then, you did speak to Me and you did not know Me. And now, can you not say one word to Me? »

« O Lord! I was about to leave… To relieve my heart of so much anxiety and sorrow. »

« Why sorrow? Did they not tell you that I had risen? »

« They told me and denied it. But I have not been upset by their contradictions. I knew that You could not rot in a sepulchre. I wept over Your martyrdom. I believed, even before they told me, in Your resurrection. And I continued to believe when others came to say that it was not true. But I wanted to come to Galilee. I was thinking: I can no longer do Him any harm. He is now more God than Man. I do not know whether what I say is right… »

« I understand what you mean. »

« And I said: I will worship Him, and I shall see Mary. I was thinking that You would not remain long among us, and I was hastening my departure. I used to say: when He has gone back to His Father, as He said, His Mother will be somewhat sad in Her joy. Because She is a soul, but She is also a mother… And I will try to comfort Her, now that She is alone… I was proud! »

« No. You were compassionate. I will inform My Mother of your thought. But do not come there. Remain where you are and continue to work for Me. Now more than previously. Your brothers, the disciples, need the work of everybody to propagate My doctrine. You have seen Me. Mary is entrusted to John. Do not worry any more. You will be able to fortify your spirit with the certainty of having seen Me and with the power of My blessing. »

Syntyche is longing to kiss Him. But she dare not. Jesus says to her: « Come. » And she dares to drag herself on her knees close to Jesus and makes the gesture of kissing His feet. But she sees the two wounds and dare not. She takes the hem of His tunic and kisses it weeping. And she whispers: « What they have done to You! »

Then she asks a question: « And John-Felix? »

« He is happy. He remembers nothing but love and lives in it. Peace to you, Syntyche. » He disappears.

The woman remains in her adoring attitude, on her knees, her face raised, her hands stretched out a little, tears on her face, a smile on her lips…

XV. To Zacharias, the Levite.

He is in a small room. Zacharias, the Levite, is pensive. He is sitting, with his head reclined on one of his hands.

« Do not be in doubt. Do not listen to the voices that upset you. I am the Truth and the Life. Look at Me. Touch Me. »

The young man, who has looked up at the first words and has seen Jesus, and has fallen on his knees, shouts: « Forgive me, Lord. I have sinned. I received in me the doubt concerning Your truth. »

« Those who try to seduce your spirit are more guilty than you are. Do not yield to their temptations. I am a real living body. Feel the weight and the warmth, the solidity and strength of My hand. » He takes him by the forearm and lifts him with His strength, saying: « Rise and walk in the ways of the Lord, out of doubt and fear. And you will be blessed if you can persevere till the end. » He blesses him and disappears.

The young man, after a moment's dumbfounded amazement, runs out of the room shouting: « Mother! Father! I have seen the Master. It is not true what the others say! I was not mad. Do not persist in believing falsehood, but bless the Most High with me, as He has had mercy on His servant. I am going away. I am going to Galilee. I will find some of His disciples. I am going to tell them to believe that He has really risen. »

He does not take a sack with food and garments. He puts on his mantle and runs away, without giving his parents time to recover from their amazement and to be able to intervene to hold him back.

XVI. To a woman of the Sharon plain.

A coast road. Perhaps the one that links Caesarea to Joppa, or another one. I do not know. I know that I see a country on one side and the sea on the opposite side, a deep-blue sea beyond the yellowish line of the shore. The road is certainly a Roman thoroughfare, as is evidenced by its paving.

A woman in tears is going along it in the early hours of a clear morning. The day has just dawned. The woman must be very tired, because now and again she stops and sits down on a milestone or on the road. Then she gets up and proceeds, as if something were urging her to go on, notwithstanding her great tiredness.

Jesus, a wayfarer enveloped in a mantle, sets off beside her. The woman does not look at Him. She proceeds absorbed in her grief. Jesus asks her: « Why are you weeping, woman? Where are you coming from? And where are you going all alone? »

« I am coming from Jerusalem and I am going back home. »

« Far? »

« Half way between Joppa and Caesarea. »

« On foot? »

« In the valley, before Modin, some highwaymen took my donkey and what was on it. »

« It was unwise of you to go all alone. It is not customary to come by oneself at Passover. »

« I did not come for Passover. I remained at home, because I have,' and I hope I still have him, a boy who is ill. My husband had gone

with other people. I let him go ahead and four days later I set off Because I said: "He is certainly in Jerusalem for Passover. I will look for Him". I was somewhat afraid. But I said: "I am not doing anything wrong. God sees. I believe. I know that He is good. He will not reject me, because… " » She stops, as if she were frightened, and casts a quick glance at the man who is walking beside her, and who is so covered up that one can hardly see his eyes, the unmistakable eyes of Jesus.

« Why have you become silent? You are afraid of Me. Do you think that I am an enemy of Him Whom you were looking for? Because you were looking for the Master of Nazareth, to ask Him to come to your house and cure the boy while your husband was away… »

« I see that you are a prophet. It is so. But when I arrived in town, the Master was dead. » Tears choke her…

« He has risen. Do you not believe it? »

« I know. I believe it. But I… But I… For some days I hoped to see Him myself… They say that He has shown Himself to some people. And I delayed my departure… every day a torture, because… my boy is so ill… my heart was divided… whether I should go to comfort him at his death… or stay looking for the Master… I did not expect Him to come to my house, but to promise to cure him. »

« And would you have believed? Do you think that from afar?… »

« I believe. Oh! if He had said to me: "Go in peace. Your son will recover", I should not have doubted. But I do not deserve it, because… » she weeps, pressing her veil against her lips, so as to be prevented from speaking.

« Because your husband is one of the accusers and crucifiers of Jesus Christ. But Jesus Christ is the Messiah. He is God. And God is just, woman. He does not punish an innocent person because of a guilty one. He does not torture a mother because a father is a sinner. Jesus Christ is Mercy alive… »

« Oh! are you perhaps one of His apostles? Perhaps you know where He is? You… Perhaps He sent you to me to tell me this. He has heard, He has seen my grief, my faith, and He has sent you to me as the Most High sent the archangel Raphael to Tobias. Tell me whether it is so, and although I am so tired as to be feverish, I will retrace my steps to look for the Lord. »

« I am not an apostle. But the apostles have remained in Jerusalem for many days after His Resurrection… »

« That is true. I could have asked them. »

« So. They continue the Master. »

« I did not think they could work miracles. »

« They have still worked them… »

« But now… I was told that one only remained faithful, and I did not think… »

« Yes. Your husband told you so, sneering at you in his frenzy of false triumpher. But I tell you that man can sin, because God alone is perfect. And he can repent. And if he does repent, his strength grows, and God increases His graces in him for his contrition. Did the Most High Lord not forgive David? »

« But who are you? Who are you who speak so gently and wisely, if you are not an apostle? An angel perhaps? The angel of my child. He has perhaps breathed his last and you have come to prepare me… »

Jesus lets His mantle fall off His head and face, and passing from the humble aspect of a common pilgrim to His magnificence of God-Man, risen from the dead, with kind solemnity He says: « It is I. The Messiah crucified in vain. I am the Resurrection and the Life. Go, woman. Your son lives, because I have rewarded your faith. Your son is cured. Because, if the Rabbi of Nazareth has finished His mission, the Immanuel continues His until the end of time for all those who have faith, hope and charity in the One and Trine God, of Whom the incarnate Word is one Person, Who through divine love left Heaven to come to teach, to suffer, to die in order to give the Life to men. Go in peace, woman. And be strong in faith, because the time has come when in a family the husband will be against his wife, the father against his sons, and these against him, out of hatred or love for Me. But blessed are those whom persecution will not tear away from My Way. »

He blesses her and disappears.

XVII. To some shepherds on the Great Hermon.

A group of herds and shepherds. They have stopped on some slopes with wonderful pastures. And they are speaking of the events of Jerusalem. And they are distressed, saying to one another: « We shall no longer have the friend of shepherds on the Earth », and they recall the many meetings they had with Him here or there… « Meetings » says an old man « that we shall never have again. »

Jesus appears as if He were setting foot in that place from behind an entangled wood, where the tall trees are embraced by low bushes that conceal the sight of the path.

They do not recognise Him in the solitary man, and seeing Him so enveloped in white garments, they whisper: « Who is it? An Essene? Here? A rich Pharisee? » They are puzzled.

Jesus asks them: « Why do you say that you will never meet the Lord again? Because He, of Whom you are speaking, is the Lord. »

« We know. But do you not know what they have done to Him? Now some people say that He has risen, some say that He has not. But even if He has risen, which we prefer to believe, He will have gone away by now. How can He love and remain among people who have crucified Him? And we, who loved Him, even if not everyone

had made His acquaintance, are sad because we have lost Him. »

« There is still a way to have Him. He taught it. »

« Oh! yes. By doing what He taught us. Then one has the Kingdom of God and is with Him. But one must first live and then die. And He is no longer among us to comfort us. » They shake their heads.

« My dear children, for those who live what He taught, keeping His teachings in their hearts, it is just the same as if they had Jesus in their hearts. Because Word and Doctrine are one thing only. He was not a Master Who taught things that were not as He was. So, he who does what He said, has Jesus alive in himself and is not separated from Him. »

« What you say is correct. But we are poor men and… we want to see also with our eyes to feel our joy properly… I have never seen Him, neither has my son, nor Jacob, nor Melkiah, nor James, nor Saul. See, only among us, how many have not seen Him? We have always looked for Him, but when we arrived, He had left. »

« Were you in Jerusalem on that day? »

« Oh! we were there! But when we heard what they wanted to do to Him, we ran away like madmen up the mountains, and we went back to town after the Sabbath. We are not guilty of His Blood, because we were not in town. But we did the wrong thing in being cowards. We would at least have seen Him and greeted Him. He would certainly have blessed us for our greetings… But we did not really have the courage to look at Him amid tortures… »

« He blesses you now. Look at Him Whose face you wish to know. » He shows Himself, magnificently divine on the green of the meadow. While their amazement throws them on the ground, but glues their eyes to His divine Face, He disappears in a refulgent light.

XVIII. At Sidon, to the little boy born blind.

The little boy is playing all alone under a thick pergola. He hears someone call him and he finds himself in front of Jesus. Not in the least frightened, he asks Him: « But are You not the Rabbi Who gave me my eyes? » and he fixes his limpid eyes of a child, of the same blue hue as Jesus', on the divine sparkling eyes.

« It is I, My child. Are you not afraid of Me? » He caresses his head.

« No, I am not afraid. But my mother and I have wept very much, when my father came back before the time and he told us that he had run away because they had taken the Rabbi to put Him to death. He did not celebrate Passover and now he has to leave again to celebrate it. So, did You not die? »

« I died. Look at My wounds. I died on the cross. But I have risen again. Tell your father to remain for some time in Jerusalem, after the second Passover, and to stay near the Mount of Olives, at Bethphage. He will find there who will tell him what to do. »

« My father was thinking of looking for You. At the Feast of the Tabernacles he did not succeed in speaking to You. He wanted to tell You that he loves You because of the eyes that You have given me. But he was not able to do so, neither then nor now… »

« He will do so through his faith in Me. Goodbye, My dear child. Peace to you and to your family. »

XIX. To Johanan's peasants.

Johanan's fields kissed by the moon. Dead silence. The poor houses of the peasants, in a sultry night that compels people to keep at least a door open in order not to die stifled by the heat in the low rooms, where too many bodies are crammed in comparison with the capacity of the place.

Jesus goes into one large room. The very moon seems to lengthen her beams to form a royal carpet for Him on the floor of beaten earth. He bends over a man who is sleeping, lying face downwards in the heavy sleep of fatigue. He calls him. He passes on to another one, to another one. He calls them all, His poor faithful friends. He passes as lightly and quickly as an angel in flight. He goes into other hovels… Then He goes to wait for them outside, near a group of trees.

The peasants, half asleep, come out of their hovels. Two, three, one only, five together, some women. They are surprised that they have all been called like that, by a known voice, that said the same words to everybody: « Come to the apple-orchard ». They go there, the men finishing to put on their poor clothes, the women to arrange their plaits, and they speak in low voices.

« It sounded like the voice of Jesus of Nazareth to me. »

« Perhaps His spirit. They killed Him. Did you hear that? »

« I cannot believe it. He was God. »

« And yet also Joel saw Him pass under the cross… »

« I was told yesterday, while I was waiting for the bailiff to deal with his market business, that some disciples passed through Jezreel and they said that He has really risen. »

« Be quiet! You know what the master says. Who says that, gets scourged. »

« Is put to death, perhaps. But would it not be better, rather than suffer like this? »

« And now He is no longer here! »

« And they are even more wicked, now that they have succeeded in killing Him. »

« They are wicked, because He has risen. »

They speak in low voices while going to the place pointed out to them.

« The Lord! » shouts a woman, the first to fall on her knees.

« His fantasm! » shout others, and some are afraid.

« It is I. Be not afraid. Do not shout. Come forward. It is really I. I have come to confirm your faith, as I know that other people are laying snares for it. See? My Body casts a shadow because it is a real body. You are not dreaming. My voice is a real one. I am the same Jesus Who shared bread with you and gave you love. And also now I give you love. I will send My disciples to you. And it will be still I, because they will give you what I used to give you and what I have given them in order to be able to communicate with those who believe in Me. Bear your crosses, as I bore Mine. Be patient. Forgive. They will tell you how I died. Imitate Me. The way of sorrow is the way to Heaven. Follow it in peace and you will have My Kingdom. There is no other way beside that of resignation to the will of God, of generosity, of charity towards everybody. If there were another one, I should have pointed it out to you. I have come along this one, because it is the just way. Be faithful to the Law of Sinai, which is immutable in its ten commandments, and to My Doctrine. My disciples will come to teach you, so that you may not be abandoned to the intrigues of wicked people. I bless you. Always remember that I have loved you and that I have come to you before and after My glorification. I solemnly tell you that many people would like to see Me now, and they will not see Me. Many mighty people. But I show Myself to those whom I love and who love Me. »

A man dares to say: « So… Does the Kingdom of Heaven really exist? Were You really the Messiah? They influence us… »

« Do not listen to their words. Remember Mine, and receive those of My disciples who are known to you. They are words of truth. And those who receive them and put them into practice, even if he is a servant or a slave here, will be a citizen and coheir to My Kingdom. »

He blesses them stretching out His arms and disappears.

« Oh! I… I no longer fear anything! »

« Neither do I. Did you hear that? There is a place also for us! »

« It is necessary to be good! »

« To forgive! »

« To have patience! »

« To be able to resist. »

« To look for the disciples. »

« He has come to us, poor servants. »

« We will tell His apostles. »

« If Johanan knew! »

« And Doras! »

« They would kill us so that we could not speak. »

« But we will keep quiet. We will only tell the servants of the Lord. »

« Micah, do you not have to go to Sephoris with that load? Why do you not go to Nazareth and tell… »

« Whom? »

« The Mother. The apostles. They may be with Her… »

They go away, whispering their plans.

XX. To Daniel, a relative of Helkai, the Pharisee, with Simon, the member of the Sanhedrin.

Helkai, the Pharisee, is discussing with some of his peers what to do with Simon, the member of the Sanhedrin, who became insane on Good Friday and now speaks too much and says too many things. There are various proposals. Some say that he should be isolated in some desert place, where his shouting can be heard only by a very faithful servant, who is of their same mind, some, more benignly, feel sure, as it is a transient illness, that it is sufficient to leave him where he is.

Helkai replies: « I brought him here, because I do not know any other place where I can take him. But you know that I mistrust my relative Daniel very much… »

Others, who are even more wicked than Helkai, say: « He wants to run away, to go by sea. Why not please him? »

« Because he is incapable of orderly actions. All alone at sea he would perish, and none of us is capable of steering a boat. »

« And then! Even if we were! What would happen at the landingstage, considering what he says? Let him choose the way… In the presence of everybody, also of your relative, let him say what he wants to do, and let it be done as he wishes. »

This proposal is approved and Helkai calls a servant and orders him to bring Simon and to call Daniel. They both come and, if Daniel looks like a man who feels ill at ease in the company of certain people, the other looks just like an idiot.

« Listen to us, Simon. You say that we are keeping you in prison because we want to kill you… »

« You must. Because that is the order. »

« You are raving, Simon. Be quiet and listen. Where do you think you would recover your health? »

« At sea. At sea. Out in the open sea. Where no voice is heard. Where there are no sepulchres. Because sepulchres open and the dead come out and my mother says… »

« Be silent! Listen. We love you. Like one of our blood. Do you really want to go there? »

« I certainly do. Because the sepulchres here open up and my mother… »

« You will go there. We will take you to the seaside, we will give a boat and you… »

« But you are committing a homicide! He is mad! He cannot go by himself! » shouts honest Daniel.

« God does not do violence to the will of man. Could we do what God does not do? »

« But he is insane! He no longer has a will. He is more foolish than a new-born baby! You cannot!… »

« Be silent. You are a farmer and nothing else. We know… Tomorrow we will leave for the sea. Cheer up, Simon. For the sea, do you understand? »

« Ah! I shall no longer hear the voices of the Earth! No more the voices… Ah! » a long cry, a delirious agitation, eyes and ears close. And another cry, of Daniel, who runs away terrorised.

« Who is it? What is happening? Stop that madman and that fool! Are we all losing our wits? » shouts Helkai.

But he whom Helkai calls a "fool", that is his relative Daniel, after running away a few metres, prostrates himself on the ground, whereas the other one froths at the mouth, where he is, in a frightful convulsion, and shouts, shouts: « Make Him be quiet! He is not dead and He shouts and shouts and shouts! More than my mother, more than my father, more than He did on Golgotha! There, there, can you not see there? » He points at the place where Daniel is, placid, smiling, with his face upwards, after being with his face downwards on the ground.

Helkai reaches him and shakes him violently, furious as he is, without bothering about Simon, who rolls on the ground and foams, uttering beastly shouts amid all the others who look terrified as they surround him. Helkai says to Daniel: « You visionary idler, will you tell me what you are doing? »

« Leave me. Now I know who you are. And I am going away from you. I have seen, benign to me, dreadful to you, Him Who you want me to believe is dead. I am going away. I want to protect my soul rather than money and wealth. Goodbye, you cursed one! And if you can, try to deserve God's forgiveness. »

« But where are you going? Where? I do not want! »

« Are you entitled to keep me prisoner? Who gave you that right? I leave you what you love and I will follow what I love. Goodbye » he turns his back on him and goes away, as fast as if he were drawn by a superhuman power, down the green slope of olive-trees and orchards.

Helkai is livid with rage, and he is not the only one. Rage chokes them all. Helkai threatens to take vengeance upon his relative, upon all those who « with their frenzies, he says, maintain that the Galilean is alive. He wants to say, he wants to do… »

One, I do not know who it is, says: « We will do, we will do, but we shall not be able to close all the mouths, all the eyes, that speak, because they see. We are defeated! The crime is upon us. Now comes the expiation… » and he beats his breast, seized with such anguish, that he looks like one who is climbing the steps of the scaffold. « The revenge of Jehovah » he also says, and all the age-old terror of Israel resounds in his voice.

In the meantime Simon wounded, frothing at the mouth, frightened, raves shouting like a damned soul: « Parricide, He said to me! Make Him keep quiet! Quiet! Parricide! The same word as my mother's! So do all the dead speak the same words?!… »

XXI. To a Galilean woman.

The moon, which is almost on the point of setting, is about to conceal her still thin crescent of a new moon behind the summit of a mountain. And her light is, therefore, very faint, and before long she will no longer shine on the wide country.

And yet a wayfarer is on the solitary road, a small road, a path among the fields, more than anything else. He is walking holding a very simple lantern hanging from a ring, one of those which, being as old as the world, I think are generally used by carters to have light at night. As glass was not a common thing - I think it was completely unknown, as I never happened to see any in any house, such as a drinking glass, or a vase, or as a shelter at windows the flame was protected by something, that could be either mica or parchment. The light that filters is so faint, that it illuminates only a small space around the lantern. But as the moon is completely concealed, the light of the poor lantern seems to grow stronger, forming a clear dancing point in the darkness of the country.

The wayfarer walks, walks… Dawn begins to appear in the sky at the extreme horizon. But it is so feeble, at present, that it does not illuminate anything, and the poor lantern is still needed.

Another wayfarer, all enveloped in a mantle, is waiting or resting near a little bridge.

The one with the lantern, who is making for that bridge, stops in a doubtful attitude. He is uncertain whether he should pass there or go back, where in the gravel-bed of a little torrent, there are large stones that can serve to cross over the little water at the bottom.

The one sitting on the rustic parapet, made of the trunk of a tree with a white-green bark still on it, raises his head, watching the one who has stopped. He stands up and says: « Be not afraid of Me. Come forward. I am a good companion, not a highwayman. » It is Jesus. I recognise Him more by His voice than by His appearance, which is veiled by the deep twilight, that the light cannot penetrate as far as Jesus.

But the person stops, still doubtful.

« Come, woman. Do not be afraid. We shall go together for a stretch of the road and it will be a good thing for you. »

The woman, now I know that it is a woman, comes forward, won over by the kindness of the voice or by a mysterious force and she shakes her head as she proceeds, whispering: « There is no more good for me. »

They now proceed side by side along the path, which is so wide

as to allow only two pedestrians to pass. The advancing dawn shows, on one side of the path, a stiff forest in miniature of ripe corn awaiting the sickle. On the other side the corn has already been cut and is lying in sheaves in the field despoiled of its glory of a ripe harvest.

« May they be cursed! » says the woman in a low voice, casting a glance at the sheaves lying in the field.

Jesus is silent.

The day is advancing. The woman puts out the poor lantern and, to do so, she uncovers her face disfigured by tears. And she raises her head to look eastwards, where a yellow pink line announces the rising of the sun. She shakes her fist eastwards and she says again: « May you be cursed, too! »

« The day? God made it. As He made the corn. They are favours of God. They are not to be cursed… » says Jesus kindly.

« And I curse them. I curse the sun and the crops. And I have a reason for that. »

« Have they not been good to you for so many years? Did the former not ripen your daily bread, the grapes that change into wine, the vegetables and the fruit of the kitchen garden, did it not make the pastures grow to feed sheep and lambs, on whose milk and meat you fed and with whose wool you wove your garments? And did the corn not give bread to you, to your children, to your father and to your mother, to your husband? »

She bursts into tears and shouts: « I no longer have my husband! They have killed him! He went to work as a day-labourer, because we have seven children and the little we have of our own was not sufficient to appease the hunger of ten people. And yesterday evening he came and said: "I am tired and I feel out of sorts" and he threw himself on the little bed, burning with fever. His mother and I assisted him as best we could, as we intended to send for the doctor in town today… But after cock-crow he died. The sun killed him. Yes, I am going to town. To get what is necessary. I will inform his brothers when I come back. I left his mother to watch her son and my children… and I came away to do what is to be done… And should I not curse the burning sun and corn? »

So reserved as she was previously, so much so that I would not have thought she was a woman, and above all a distressed one, she has now broken the barriers to her sorrow, which overflows violently. She says what she did not say at home « in order not to wake up the children sleeping in the next room », what weighed so much on her heart as to give her the sensation that it was about to burst. Recollections of love, dismay for the future, grief of a widow, pass confusedly like rubble carried away by the swollen waves of a river in spate…

Jesus lets her speak. Because Jesus knows how to pity sorrow,

He allows it to give vent to its feelings, so that man may be relieved thereby, and the tiredness itself, that follows the impetuousness of sorrow, may make him capable of understanding who comforts him. He then says kindly: « At Nain and at Nazareth, and in the places between the former and the latter, there are the disciples of the Rabbi of Nazareth. Go to them… »

« And what do You expect them to do? If He were still here!… But they? They are not saints! My husband was in Jerusalem on that day. And he knows… Oh! no! He knew! He knows nothing any more! He is dead! »

« What did your husband do on that day? »

« When the uproar of the street woke him, he ran up to the terrace of the house where he was with his brothers and he saw the Rabbi pass by, as He was taken to the Praetorium, and with other Galileans he followed Him until He died. They pelted him and the others with stones, when they found out that the were Galileans, up there on the mountain, and they repelled them farther down. But they were there until everything was accomplished. Then… they came away… And now he is dead. Oh! if at least I knew that he is at peace because of his compassion for the Rabbi! »

Jesus does not reply to that wish. But He says: « He will then have seen that there were some disciples on Golgotha. Were all the Galileans perhaps like your husband? »

« Oh! no. Many, also from Nazareth, abused Him. It is known. What a shame! »

« So, if many people also from Nazareth showed no love for their Jesus, and yet He has forgiven them, and many will become holy in future, why do you want to judge all the disciples of Christ in the same way? Do you want to be more severe than God is? God grants much to those who forgive… »

« The good Rabbi is no longer! here! He is no longer here! And my husband is dead. »

« The Rabbi has given His disciples the power to do what He did. »

« I am prepared to believe that. But He alone could defeat death. He alone! »

« And do we not read that Elijah gave the spirit back to the son of the widow of Zarephath? I solemnly tell you that Elijah was a great prophet, but the servants of the Saviour, Who died and has risen because He was the Son of the true God and became incarnate to redeem men, have even a greater power, because on the Cross He forgave them their sins, and they were the first to be forgiven, as He was aware, through divine wisdom, of the true sorrow of their contrite spirits, He sanctified them after His resurrection forgiving them again, and He infused the Holy Spirit into them, so that they could represent Me worthily both with their words and their deeds, and the world might not remain desolate after My departure

from it. »

The woman steps back lively, dumbfounded. She throws her veil back to look at her companion. But she does not recognise Him. She thinks that she has misunderstood. But she dare not speak any more…

« Are you afraid of Me? First you thought that I was a highwayman ready to snatch the money you have in your breast and serves to buy what is necessary for the burial. And you were afraid. Are you now afraid to know that I am Jesus? And is Jesus not the One Who gives and does not take? He Who saves and does not ruin? Go back, woman. I am the Resurrection and the Life. Sudarium and spices are not necessary for him who is not dead, who is no longer dead, because I am He Who defeats death and rewards who has faith. Go! Go home! Your husband is alive. Not one faith in Me is left without reward. » He makes the gesture of blessing her and going away.

The woman comes out of her petrification. She does not ask, she does not doubt… Nothing. She falls on her knees, adoring. Then, at last, she opens her mouth and, searching in her breast, she pulls out a small purse, the poor purse of poor people, to whom misery forbids solemn honours for their dead relatives, and offering her purse she says: « I have nothing else… nothing else to tell You my gratitude, to honour You, to… »

« I no longer need money, woman. You will take it to My apostles. »

« Oh! yes. I will go to them with my husband… But what can I give You, my Lord? What? You appeared to me… this miracle… and I did not recognise You… and I so upset… yes, unjust even with things… »

« Yes. And you did not think that they are because I am, and that everything that God made is good. If there had been no sun, if there had been no corn, you would not have had the present grace. »

« But how much sorrow!… » The woman weeps remembering it.

Jesus smiles and shows His hands saying: « This is the least part of My sorrow. And I consumed it all, without complaining, for your welfare. »

The woman stoops to the ground to confess: « It is true. Forgive my lament. »

Jesus disappears in His light, and when she looks up she sees that she is alone. She stands up, looks round. Nothing can prevent her from seeing, because it is broad daylight, and there is nothing but fields of crops around. The woman says to herself: « And yet I have not dreamt! » Perhaps the demon tempts her to make her doubt, because she is in a state of uncertainty for a moment, while she weighs her purse in her hands.

But then faith triumphs, and she turns her back to the place where she was going, retracing her steps, as fast as if the winds were carrying

her without making her fatigue, her face shining with a joy which is greater than any human joy, so peaceful it is. Now and again she repeats: « How good is the Lord. He is really God! He is God! Blessed be the Most High and He Whom He sent. » She cannot say anything else. And her litany mingles with the singing of birds.

The woman is so absorbed that she does not hear the greetings of some reapers who see her pass by and ask her where is she coming from at that early hour… One joins her and says to her: « Is Mark better? Have you been for the doctor? »

« Mark died at cock-crow and has risen from the dead. Because the Messiah of the Lord has done that » she replies, walking fast all the time.

« Sorrow has made her insane! » whispers the man, and he shakes his head joining his companions, who have begun to cut the corn.

The fields are filling with more and more people. But curiosity overwhelms many who decide to follow the woman, who quickens her steps more and more.

She goes on. There is a very poor house, low, solitary, lost in the country. She directs her steps towards it, pressing her hands against her heart.

She goes in. But as soon as she sets foot in it, an old woman throws herself in her arms shouting: « Oh! my daughter, what a grace of the Lord! Take heart, daughter, because what I have to tell you is so great, so happy, that… »

« I know, mother. Mark is no longer dead. Where is he? »

« You know… How? »

« I met the Lord. I did not recognise Him, but He spoke to me and when it pleased Him, He said to me: "Your husband lives". But here… when? »

« I had just opened the window, and I was looking at the first sunbeam on the fig-tree. Yes, just so. The first beam touched the figtree then, against the room… when I heard a deep sigh, like that of one who wakes up. I turned round frightened and I saw Mark sit up and throw behind him the sheet that I had laid on his face, and look up with a face, a face… Then he looked at me and said: "Mother! I am cured!" I… I almost died myself, and he assisted me, and he realised that he had been dead. He does not remember anything. He says that he remembers up to the moment we put him to bed, and then nothing else till he saw an angel, a kind of angel who looked like the Rabbi of Nazareth and who said to him: "Rise!" And he rose.

Just when the sun had completely risen. » « Just when He said to me: "Your husband lives". Oh! mother, what a grace! How much God has loved us! »

Those who come in find them embraced, weeping. And they think that Mark is dead and that his wife, in a moment of clearness of mind, has realised her misfortune. But Mark, upon hearing

the voices, appears, looking serene, with a child in his arms, and the others holding on his tunic, and he says in a loud voice: « Here I am. Let us bless the Lord! »

The newcomers beset him with questions, and as is usual with human things, discrepancies arise. Some believe in a real resurrection, and some, the majority, say that he had only fallen into a torpor, but he had not died. Some admit that Christ has appeared to Rachel and some say that it is a lot of nonsense, because some say: « He is dead » and some: « He has risen, but He is so indignant, He must be, that He works no more miracles for His murderous people. »

« You can say what you like » says the man losing his patience « and say it where you like. As long as you do not say it here, where the Lord has raised me from the dead. And go away, o unfortunate people! And may Heaven enlighten your heads so that you may believe. But go away now and leave us in peace. » He drives them out and closes the door.

He presses his wife and mother to his heart and says: « Nazareth is not far. I am going there to proclaim the miracle. » « That is what the Lord wants, Mark. We will take this money to His disciples. Let us go and bless the Lord. Just as we are. We are poor, but He also was poor, and His apostles will not despise us. »

She busies herself tying the laces of the children's sandals, while her mother puts some provisions in a bag and closes doors and windows, and Mark goes to do I do not know what.

They go out when they are ready and walk fast, the little ones in their arms, the others happy and somewhat bewildered, eastwards, towards Nazareth, obviously. Perhaps this place is still in the Esdraelon plain, but in a different part than that of Johanan's estate.

629. Jesus Appears on the Shores of the Lake. The Mission Conferred to Peter.

19th April 1947.

A calm sultry night. There is not a breath of wind. The stars, large and throbbing, crowd the clear sky. The lake, so calm and still, as to look like a very large basin sheltered from winds, reflects with its surface the glory of that sky that palpitates with stars. The trees along the shores form a block with no rustling. The lake is so calm that its surge on the shore is reduced to a very light lapping. Some boats off-shore, hardly visible as roaming forms, that at times place little stars at a short distance from the waves, with their tiny lights tied to the masts of the sails, to illuminate the interiors of the small hulls.

I do not know which part of the lake it is. I should say the more southern one, where the lake is about to become a river again. At

the outskirts of Tarichea, I should say, not because I can see the town, which is hidden by a group of trees, that stretch on the lake forming a little hilly promontory, but because I am led to think so by the little stars of the lights of the boats, that move away northwards, when they depart from the shores of the lake. I say outskirts, because there is a little group of poor houses gathered there at the foot of the little promontory, but they are so few that they cannot even be considered a village. They are poor houses, almost on the shore, certainly of fishermen.

Some boats are beached on the little shore; others are already prepared to sail, in the water, near the shore, and they are so still as to seem fixed to the ground, instead of floating.

Peter puts his head out of a hovel. The flickering light of a fire lit in the smoky kitchen illuminates the sturdy figure of the apostle from behind, making it show up like a drawing. He looks at the sky, he looks at the lake… He comes forward, as far as the edge of the shore. Then - he is wearing a short tunic and is bare-footed he paddles in the water up to half his thigh, and stretching out his brawny arm, he caresses the gunwale of a boat. Zebedee's sons join him.

« Lovely night. »

« It will soon be moonlight. »

« Fishing night. »

« But with oars. »

« There is no wind. »

« What shall we do? »

They speak slowly, with detached sentences, like men accustomed to fishing and to the manoeuvres of sails and nets, for which attention is required and so, few words.

« We ought to go. We could sell part of the catch. »

Andrew, Thomas and Bartholomew come and join them on the shore.

« What a warm night! » exclaims Bartholomew.

« Will there be a storm? Do you remember that night? » asks Thomas.

« Oh! no! Calm, fog perhaps, but no storm. I… I am going fishing. Who is coming with me? »

« We are all coming. Perhaps it will be cooler out there » says Thomas, who is perspiring, and he adds: « The woman needed that fire, but it was like being at the hot baths… »

« I am going to tell Simon. He is all alone over there » says John.

Peter is already preparing the boat with Andrew and James.

« Shall we go as far as our house? A surprise for my mother… » asks James.

« No. I do not know whether I can get Marjiam to come. Before… before… Well, yes! Before going to Jerusalem - we were still at

Ephraim - the Lord told me that He wanted to celebrate the second Passover with Marjiam. But later He has not said anything to me… »

« I think He said that He would » says Andrew.

« Yes. The second Passover, yes. But I do not know whether He wants the boy to come here first. I have made so many mistakes that… Oh! are you coming, too? »

« Yes, Simon of Jonah. This fishing will remind me of many things… »

« Eh! it will remind everybody of many things… Things that will never come back again… We used to go out on the lake with the Master in this boat… And I loved it as if it were a royal palace, and I thought I could not live without it. But now that He is no longer here, well, I am in the boat and I do not enjoy it » says Peter.

« No one has the joy of past things. It no longer is the same life. And also in looking back… between the hours of the past and the present ones there is always that dreadful period of time… » says Bartholomew with a sigh.

« We are ready. Come. You at the rudder and we at the oars. We are going towards the bend of Hippos. It is a good spot. Pull-ho! Pull-ho! »

Peter sets the rate and the boat slides on the calm water, with Bartholomew at the rudder. Thomas and the Zealot act as servants ready to cast the net, which they have already spread out. The moon rises, that is, she is over the mountains of Gadara (if I am not mistaken) or Gamala, that is, the ones on the eastern shore towards the south of the lake, and the lake is illuminated by her rays that trace a road of diamonds on the still water.

« She will be with us until morning. »

« If there is no mist. »

« The fish leave the bottom attracted by the moon. »

« If we have a good catch, it will be a blessing, because we have no more money. We will buy bread and will take fish and bread to those who are up the mountain. » Words uttered slowly, with long pauses between one voice and the next one.

« You row very well, Simon. You have not lost the stroke!… » says the Zealot admiring him.

« Yes… Damn! »

« What is the matter with you? » the others ask him.

« The… The matter is that the recollection of that man haunts me everywhere. I remember that day when in two boats we competed to see who was the best oarsman, and he… »

« I instead was thinking that one of the first times that I had the vision of his abyss of wickedness, was when we met, or rather, we came into collision with the boats of the Romans. Do you remember? » says the Zealot.

« Eh! we do remember! However!… He defended him… and we… what with the defensive attitude of the Master, what with the double-dealing of… of our companion, we never clearly understood… » says Thomas.

« H'm! I more than once… But He would say: "Do not judge, Simon!" »

« Thaddeus always suspected him. »

« What I cannot believe is that this fellow here never knew anything about it » says James, poking his brother in the ribs.

But John , bending his head, is silent.

« Now he can speak… » says Thomas.

« I am trying to forget. That is what I have been ordered. Why do you want me to disobey? »

« You are right. Let us leave him alone » says the Zealot defending him.

« Cast the net. Slowly. Row. Row slowly. Turn to port, Bartholomew. Haul. Veer. Haul. Veer. Is the net spread? Is it? Oars up and let us wait » orders Peter.

How beautiful is the placid lake in the peace of the night, kissed by the moon! So pure that it is paradisiac. The moon from the sky is fully reflected in it and gives it the appearance of diamonds, her phosphorescence quivers on the hills, it discloses them and makes the towns on the shores as white as snow… Now and again they haul the net. A cascade of diamonds playing arpeggios on the silver of the lake. It is empty. They cast it again. They change place. No luck… Hours go by. The moon sets, while the light of dawn begins to appear, uncertain, green-blue… A heat mist steams towards the shores, particularly towards the southern end of the lake. Tiberias is veiled with it, and Tarichea is also veiled with it. A low fog, not dense, that will melt in the early sun. In order to avoid it they prefer to go along the eastern side, where it is less dense, whilst to the west, as it comes from the marsh beyond Tarichea on the right bank of the Jordan, it thickens as if the marsh were steaming. They row carefully to avoid possible dangers of the depth, familiar as they are with the lake.

« You, on the boat! Have you anything to eat? » shouts a man's voice from the shore. A voice that makes them start.

But they shrug their shoulders, replying in a loud voice: « No »; then they say to one another: « We always seem to be hearing Him! … »

« Cast the net on the right-hand side of the boat and you will find them. »

The right-hand side is off-shore. They cast the net, rather perplexedly. Jerks, weight that makes the boat bend on the side where the net hangs.

« But that is the Lord! » shouts John.

« The Lord, are you sure? » asks Peter.

« And do you doubt it? We thought it was His voice, but this is the proof of it. Look at the net! It is like that time! I tell you that it is He! Oh! my Jesus! Where are You? »

They all open their eyes wide to see through the veils of fog, after fastening the net safely to drag it in the wake of the boat, as it would be a dangerous manoeuvre to try to hoist it and they row to go back to shore. But Thomas has to take the oar of Peter who, after hurriedly slipping on his short tunic over his very short trousers, the only garment he had on, like that of all the others, except Bartholomew, jumps into the water and swims with vigorous strokes in the calm water, preceding the boat. He is the first to set foot on the desert little beach, where on two stones sheltered by a thorny bush, a fire of dry twigs is gaily blazing. And near the fire, there is Jesus, smiling and benign.

« Lord! Lord! » Peter is breathless because of his emotion and is unable to say anything else. Dripping wet, as he is, he dare not even touch the tunic of his Jesus, and prostrated on the sand with his tunic sticking to him, he adores.

The boat rubs on the shingly shore and stops. They are all standing, excited with joy…

« Bring some of those fish here. The fire is ready. Come and have something to eat » orders Jesus.

Peter runs to the boat and helps the others to heave the net, and he gets hold of three big fish in the wriggling heap, he beats them on the gunwale of the boat to kill them and guts them with his knife. But his hands shake, oh! not with cold! He rinses the fish, he takes them where the fire is and puts them on it, and he watches them cooking. The others are worshipping the Lord, a little away from Him, timorous, as always, of Him Who has risen so divinely powerful.

« Here you are. Here is the bread. You have worked all night and you are tired. Now you will take some refreshment. Is it ready, Peter? »

« Yes, my Lord » says Peter in a voice that is more hoarse than usual, bent over the fire, and he wipes his eyes, which are wet with tears, as if the smoke made them weep, irritating them and his throat at the same time. But it is not the smoke that is the cause of that voice and of those tears… He takes the fish, which he has laid on a rough leaf, it looks like the leaf of a gourd, handed to him by Andrew after he had rinsed it in the lake.

Jesus offers and blesses, He breaks the bread and the fish, making eight portions which He hands out, and He tastes some as well. They eat with the respect with which they would fulfil a rite. Jesus looks at them and smiles. But He also is silent, until He asks: « Where are the others? »

« On the mountain. Where You said. And we came to fish, because

we have no more money and we do not want to take advantage of the disciples. »

« You are doing the right thing. But from now on, you apostles will stay on the mountain in prayer, edifying the disciples with your example. Send them fishing. It is better for you to remain there in prayer and to listen to those who are in need of advice or may come to give you information. Keep the disciples in a very united group. I will come soon. »

« We will do that, Lord. »

« Is Marjiam not with you? »

« You did not tell me to make him come so soon. »

« Make him come. The time of his obedience is over. »

« I will make him come, Lord. »

There is silence. Then Jesus, Who had been with His head bent a little, thinking, looks up and fixes His eyes on Peter. He looks at him with the glance of the moments when He worked the greatest miracles or was most authoritative. Peter is startled, almost frightened and he withdraws a little… But Jesus, laying a hand on Peter's shoulder, holds him firmly and while holding him so, He asks him: « Simon of Jonah, do you love Me? »

« Certainly, Lord! You know that I love You » replies Peter decidedly.

« Feed My lambs… Simon of Jonah, do you love Me? »

« Yes, my Lord. And You know that I love You. » His voice is not so bold, and he is rather surprised at the repetition of the question.

« Feed My lambs… Simon of Jonah, do you love Me? »

« Lord… You know everything… You know whether I love You… » Peter's voice trembles, as he is sure of his love, but he is under the impression that Jesus is not sure.

« Feed My sheep. Your treble profession of love has cancelled your treble denial. You are completely pure, Simon of Jonah, and I say to you: put on the pontificals and take the Holiness of the Lord among My flock. Fasten your clothes at your waist and keep them fastened, until from Shepherd you also become lamb. I solemnly tell you that when you were young, you put on your own belt and you went where you liked, but when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands and somebody else will put a belt round you and will take you where you would rather not go. But now it is I Who say to you: "Gird yourself and follow Me on My own way". Stand up and come. »

Jesus stands up and Peter stands up going towards the shore, and the others begin to put out the fire smothering it under the sand.

But John, after picking up the remains of the bread, follows Jesus. Peter hears the shuffling of steps and turns round. He sees John, and pointing him out to Jesus, he asks: « And what will happen to him? »

« If I want him to stay until I come back, what does it matter to you? You are to follow Me. »

They are on the shore. Peter would like to go on speaking, but Jesus' majesty and the words he has heard detain him. He kneels down, imitated by the others and adores. Jesus blesses them and dismisses them. They get on the boat and go away rowing. Jesus looks at them go.

630. Jesus Appears on Mount Tabor to the Apostles and to about Five Hundred Believers.

20th April 1947.

All the apostles are there, all the shepherd disciples, also Jonathan, whom Chuza has dismissed from his service. There is Marjiam and Manaen and many of the seventy two disciples and many more. They are in the shade of trees, which with their foliage mitigate light and heat. They are not up towards the summit, where the Transfiguration took place, but half-way up the hill, where a wood of oak-trees seems to be wanting to veil the summit and support the sides of the mountain with its powerful roots.

Almost everybody is dozing, because of the hour and also because of the inactivity and the long wait. But the cry of a boy - I do not know who he is, because I cannot see him from where I am - is sufficient to make them all stand up, in a first impulsive movement, which soon changes into prostration with their faces among the grass.

« Peace to all of you. Here I am among you. Peace to you. Peace to you. » Jesus passes amid them greeting and blessing.

Many weep, many smile blissfully. But there is so much peace in everybody.

Jesus goes and stops where the apostles and the shepherds form a thick group with Marjiam, Manaen, Stephen, Nicolaus, John of Ephesus, Hermas, and some of the more faithful disciples, whose names I do not remember. I see the man from Korazim who left off burying his father in order to follow Jesus, and another whom I have seen at other times. Jesus takes in His hands the head of Marjiam, who weeps looking at Him, He kisses his forehead and then presses him against His heart.

He then turns round towards the others and says: « Many and few. Where are the others? I know that many are My faithful disciples. Why here there are hardly five hundred people here, without taking into account the children of this one or that one among you? »

Peter, who had remained kneeling on the grass, stands up and speaks on behalf of everybody: « Lord, between the thirteenth and twentieth day from Your death, many people have come here from many towns in Palestine, saying that You were among them. So

many of us, in order to see You sooner, went some with this one, some with that one. Some have just left. Those who came here said that they had seen You and spoken to You in different places, and, what was wonderful, they all said that they had seen You on the twelfth day from Your death. We thought this was a deceit of some of those false prophets, that You said will rise to deceive the chosen ones. You said so, on the Mount of Olives, the evening before… before… » Peter, seized again with grief at that recollection, lowers his head and becomes silent. Two tears, followed by more, fall from his beard on the ground…

Jesus lays His right hand on the shoulder of Peter, who quivers at that contact and, as he dare not touch that Hand with his own, he bends his neck, his face to caress that adorable Hand with his cheek, and touch it lightly with his lips.

James of Alphaeus continues the narration: « And we discouraged people from believing those apparitions, that is those among us who got up to run towards the great sea, or towards Bozrah, or Caesarea Philippi, Pella or Kedesh, to the mountain near Jericho and to the plain, and also to the Esdraelon plain, to the great Hermon and to Beth-horon and Beth-shemesh, and to other places which have no names, as they are isolated houses in the plain near Japhia or Gilead. Too uncertain. Some people said: "We have seen Him and heard Him". Others sent word that they had seen You and had even a meal with You. Yes, we wanted to hold them back, because we thought that they were either snares of those who oppose us, or even phantasms seen by just people, who think of You so much that they end up by seeing You where You are not. But they wanted to go away. Some here, some there. And so we are reduced to less than one third. »

« You were right in insisting to hold them back. Not because I have not really been where those, who came to tell you, said. But because I had ordered you to stay here, united in prayer awaiting Me. And because I want My words to be obeyed, particularly by those who are My servants. If My servants begin to be disobedient, what will the believers do?

Listen all of you who are around here. Remember that in an organism a hierarchy is required, so that it may be really active and wholesome, that is, someone who commands, someone who transmits orders, and those who obey. That is what happens in the courts of kings, as well as in religions. From our Hebrew religion to the others, even if they are so impure, there is always a chief, his ministers, the servants of the ministers, and lastly the believers. A pontiff cannot act by himself. A king cannot act by himself. And their dispositions concern only human contingencies, or the formalism of rites… Yes. Unfortunately, now, also in the Mosaic religion, there is nothing left but the formalism of rites, the continuation of

the movements of a device that goes on making the same gestures, even now that the spirit of the gestures is dead. Dead for ever. Their Divine Enlivener, He Who gave import to the rites, has withdrawn from them. And the rites are gestures, nothing else. Gestures that any histrion could mime on the stage of an amphitheatre.

Woe, when a religion dies, and from a real living power becomes a clamorous exterior pantomime, an empty thing behind a painted scenery, behind pompous garments, the movements of devices performing certain actions, just as a key activates a spring, but neither key nor spring is conscious of what they do. Woe! Ponder! Remember this truth and tell your successors about it, so that it may be known throughout ages. The fall of a planet is less frightening than the fall of religion. If the sky should be depopulated of its stars and planets, it would not be for peoples as bad a misfortune as if they remained without religion. God would provide with provident power for the needs of men, because God can do everything for those who, in a wise way, or in the way that their ignorance knows, seek and love the Divinity in a right spirit. But if the day should come when men no longer loved God, because the priests of every religion had made only an empty pantomime of it, as they were the first not to believe in their religion, woe betide the Earth!

Now, if I say so for those religions that are impure, as some have come through partial revelation to a wise person, some derive from the instinctive need of man to create a faith for himself to nourish his soul to love a god - as this need is the strongest incentive of man, the permanent state of research for Him Who is, and Who is wanted by the spirit even if the proud intellect refuses to pay homage to any god, even if man, unaware of the soul, is unable to give a name to such need that stirs within him - what shall I say for this religion that I have given you, for this one that bears My Name, for this one of which I have created you pontiffs and priests, for this one that I order you to propagate all over the world? For this religion Unique, True, Perfect, Immutable in the Doctrine taught by Me, the Master, completed by the continuous teaching of Him Who will come, the Holy Spirit, the Most Holy Guide for My Pontiffs and for those who will help them, second chiefs in the various Churches created in the various regions where My Word will be asserted. These Churches, although various in number, will not be different in thought, but will be one thing only with the Church, as with their individual parts they will form the great building, greater and greater, the great new Temple, that with its pavilions will reach all the corners of the earth. Not different in thought, nor contrasting with one another, but united, brotherly to one another, all subjected to the Head of the Church, to Peter, and to his successors until the end of time.

And those that for any reason should separate from the Mother

Church, would be members cut off, no longer nourished with the mystic blood that is Grace coming from Me, the divine Head of the Church. Like prodigal sons, separated through their own will from the paternal house, in their short-lived wealth and constant and graver and graver misery, they would be blunting their spiritual intellects by means of too heavy foods and wines, and then they would languish eating the bitter acorns of unclean animals until they returned to the paternal house, saying with contrite hearts: "We have sinned. Father, forgive us and open the doors of your abode to us". Then, whether it is a member of a separated Church, or an entire Church - oh! if it were so, but where, when will so many imitators of Me arise, capable of redeeming these entire separated Churches, at the cost of their lives, to make, to remake only one Fold under only one shepherd, as I ardently wish? - then whether it is only one person or an assembly that comes back, open the doors to them.

Be fatherly. Consider that all of you, for one hour or for many, perhaps for years, were, individually, prodigal sons enveloped in concupiscence. Do not be hard on those who repent. Remember! Remember! Many of you ran away twenty two days ago. And was your running away perhaps not an abjuration of your love for Me? Therefore, as I received you as soon as you, repentant, came to Me, do the same yourselves. Do everything I did. That is My command. You lived with Me for three years. You know My deeds and My thoughts. When, in future, you will find yourselves in front of a case to be decided, look back to the time when you were with Me and behave as I behaved. You will never go wrong. I am the living perfect example of what you have to do.

And remember also that I did not refuse Myself even to Judas of Kerioth… A priest must try to save, by all possible means. And let love always prevail, among the means used to save. Consider that I was not unaware of Judas' horror… But, overcoming all disgust, I treated the wretch as I treated John. You… you will often be spared the bitterness of knowing that nothing is of any use to save a beloved disciple… And you will therefore be able to work without the tiredness that affects one, when one knows that everything is useless… One must work even then… always… until everything is accomplished… »

« But You are suffering, Lord!?! Oh! I did not believe that You could suffer any more! You still suffer because of Judas! Forget him Lord! » shouts John, who does not turn his eyes away from his Lord for one moment.

Jesus opens His arms, in His usual attitude of resigned confirmation of a painful fact, and He says: « It is so… Judas has been and is the deepest sorrow in the sea of My sorrows. It is the sorrow that remains… The other sorrows have come to an end with the end of

the Sacrifice. But this one remains. I loved him. I consumed Myself in the effort to save him… I was able to open the doors of Limbo and bring out the just, I was able to open the doors of Purgatory, and bring out those who were being purified. But the place of horror was closed upon him. In vain I died for him. »

« Do not suffer! Do not suffer! You are glorious, my Lord! Glory and joy to You. You have consumed Your sorrow! » implores John again.

« No one really thought that He could still suffer! » they all say, amazed and moved, whispering to one another.

« And do you not think of how much sorrow My Heart will still have to suffer throughout ages, for every unrepentant sinner, for every heresy that denies Me, for every believer who abjures Me, for every - torture of all tortures - for every guilty priest, the cause of scandal and ruin? You do not know! You do not know as yet. You will never know fully, until you are with Me in the Light of Heaven. Then you will understand… In contemplating Judas, I contemplated the chosen ones whose election is changed into ruin through their wicked will… Oh! you who are faithful, you who will form the future priests, remember My sorrow, grow holier and holier to comfort My sorrow, make them holy so that, as far as possible, there may be no repetition of this sorrow, exhort, watch, teach, fight, be as heedful as mothers, as untiring as teachers, as vigilant as shepherds, as manlike as warriors, to support the priests that will be formed by you. Ensure, oh! do ensure that the sin of the twelfth apostle may not have too many repetitions in future… Be as I was with you, as I am with you.

I said to you: "Be as perfect as the Father in Heaven". And let your humanity tremble at that command, now even more than when I told you. Because now you are aware of your weakness. Well, to encourage you I will say to you: "Be like your Master". I am the Man. What I have done, you can do. Also miracles. Yes, also them. So that the world may know that it is I Who send you, and he who suffers may not weep, disheartened by this thought: "He is no longer among us to cure our sick people and to comfort our sorrows". During these days I have worked miracles to comfort hearts and convince them that the Christ is not destroyed because He was put to death, on the contrary, He is stronger, eternally strong and powerful. But when I am no longer among you, you will do what I have done so far, and what I will still do. But not so much out of the power or working miracles, but because through your holiness the love for the new Religion will grow greater. And it is over your holiness, not over the gift I transmit to you, that you must be jealously watchful. The holier you are, the dearer you will be to My Heart, and the Spirit of God will enlighten you, while the Goodness of God and His Power will fill your hands with the gifts of

Heaven.

A miracle is not a common and essential act for the life in faith. On the contrary, blessed are those who will be able to remain in the faith without extraordinary means to help them to believe! But neither is a miracle an act so exclusively reserved to special times, that it must cease when they cease. There will always be miracles in the world. Always. And the more numerous are the just in the world, the more numerous will the miracles be. When you see that the true miracles are becoming very rare, you can then say that faith and justice are languishing. Because I said: "If you have faith, you will be able to move mountains". Because I said: "The signs that will accompany those, who have true faith in Me, are the victories over demons and diseases, over elements and snares". God is with those who love Him. The sign of how My believers are in Me will be the number and the power of the miracles they will work in My name and to glorify God. To a world without true miracles, it will be possible to say, without slander: "You have lost faith and justice. You are a world without saints".

So, to go back to what I was saying at the beginning, you did the right thing in trying to detain those who, like children seduced by the noise of music or by something glittering strangely, run away absentmindedly from what is certain. But, see? They have their punishment, because they lose My word. But you have been wrong as well. You did remember that I told you not to run here and there at every rumour saying that I was in a certain place. But you did not remember that I also said that, in His second coming, the Christ will be like lightning striking in the east and flashing into the west, in a time shorter than the blinking of an eye. Now this second coming began at the moment of My Resurrection. It will culminate in the apparition of the Christ Judge to all the risen. But before that, how many times I will appear to convert, to cure, to console, to teach, to give orders!

I solemnly tell you: I am about to go back to My Father. But the Earth will not lose My Presence. I shall be watchful and friendly, Master and Doctor, where bodies or souls, sinners or saints, will need Me or will be elected by Me to transmit My words to other people. Because, and this also is true, Mankind will be in need of a continuous act of love from Me because it is so hard to bend, so easy to wane, ready to forget, eager to descend instead of ascending, that if I did not detain it with supernatural means, the law, the Gospel, the divine assistance administered by My Church would be of no avail to keep Humanity in the knowledge of the Truth and in the will to reach Heaven. And I am speaking of the Humanity that believes in Me… Always little when compared to the great mass of the inhabitants of the Earth.

I will come. Let those who will have Me remain humble. Let

those who will not have Me, not be eager to have Me, to be praised thereby. Let no one wish what is uncommon. God knows when and where to give you it. It is not necessary to have extraordinary things to enter Heaven. On the contrary, they are a weapon, that, when it is badly used, may open hell instead of Heaven. And now I will tell you how. Because pride may arise. Because a state of the spirit may intervene, contemptible in the eyes of God, as it is like a torpor in which one may relax to caress the treasure received, considering oneself already in Heaven having been granted that gift. No. In that case, instead of flame and wing, it becomes ice and boulder, and the soul falls and dies. And also: a gift badly used may give rise to the eagerness to have even more, in order to be more praised. Then, in that case, the Spirit of Evil might replace the Lord to seduce the imprudent believers by means of impure prodigies. Always keep away from all kinds of enticements. Avoid them. Be happy with what God grants you. He knows what is useful to you and in what manner. And always consider that every gift is also a trial, in addition to being a gift, a trial of your justice and will. I have given everyone of you the same things. But what improved you, ruined Judas. Was it therefore a bad gift? No. But wicked was the will of that spirit…

The same now. I have appeared to many people. Not only to console and assist, but also to make you happy. You have begged Me to convince the people that I have risen, because the members of the Sanhedrin are trying to convince them of what they think. I have appeared to children and to adults, on the same day, in places so distant from one another, that it would take many days' walk to reach them. But I am no longer subjected to distances. And My simultaneous appearances have puzzled you as well. You have said to one another: "These people have seen phantasms". So you have forgotten part of My words, that is, that from now on I shall be east and west, north and south, wherever I think it is just that I should be, without anything preventing Me from doing so, and as fast as lightning flashing across the sky. I am a real Man. Here are My limbs, My solid warm Body, capable of moving, breathing, speaking, as you do. But I am true God. And if for thirty three years My Divinity, for a supreme purpose, was concealed in My Humanity, now the Divinity, although joined to the Humanity, has overwhelmed the latter, and My Humanity enjoys the perfect freedom of glorified bodies. Queen with the Divinity no longer subjected to what is limitation for Humanity. Here I am. I am here with you and I could be, if I wanted, in a moment at the end of the world to draw to Myself a spirit seeking Me.

And what effect will have the fact that I have been near Caesarea on the Sea and at the high Caesarea, and at the Cherith, and at Engedi, and near Pella and Juttah, and in other places in

Judaea, and at Bozrah, and on the Great Hermon, and at Sidon and at the borders of Galilee? And that I cured a boy, and I brought back to life one who had breathed his last shortly before, and I consoled an anguished person, and I called to My service one who had mortified himself with hard penance, and to God a just man who had begged Me to do so, and I gave My message to some innocents and My orders to a faithful heart? Will that convince the world? No, it will not. Those who believe, will continue to believe, with greater peace, but not with greater strength, because they already really believed. Those who did not believe with true faith will remain doubtful, and the wicked will say that My apparitions are frenzy and falsehood, and that the dead man was not dead, but was sleeping…

Do you remember when I told you the parable of Dives? I said that Abraham replied to the damned soul: "If they do not listen to Moses and the prophets, they will not believe even one who rises from the dead to tell them what they have to do". Did they perhaps believe Me, the Master, and My miracles? What did Lazarus' miracle achieve? My hurried death sentence. And My Resurrection? An increase of their hatred. Even My miracles of these last days among you will not convince the world, but only those who no longer belong to the world, as they have chosen the Kingdom of God with its present fatigue and pains and its future glory.

But I am glad that you have been confirmed in the faith and that you have been faithful to My order, by remaining upon this mountain waiting, without being in a hurry to enjoy things that are also good, but are different from the ones I mentioned to you. Disobedience gives one tenth and takes away nine tenths. They went away and will hear words of men, always those. You have remained and you have heard My Word which, even if it repeats things already said, is always good and useful. The lesson will serve as an example for all of you, and also for them, for the future. »

Jesus looks around at those faces gathered there and calls: « Elisha of Engedi, come here. I have something to tell you. »

I had not recognised the ex-leper, the son of old Abraham. Then he was a ghastly skeleton, now he is a buxom man in the prime of life.

He goes near, prostrating himself at the feet of Jesus, Who says to him: « A question is trembling on your lips since you heard that I have been to Engedi. And it is this: "Have You comforted my father?" I say to you: "I have more than consoled him! I have taken him with Me". »

« With You, my Lord? And where is he, since I do not see him? »

« Elisha, I am still here for a short time. Then I will go to My Father… »

« Lord!… You mean… My father is dead! »

« He died peacefully on My Heart. Sorrow is over also for him. He consumed it all, and by remaining always faithful to the Lord. Do not weep. Had you not left him to follow Me? »

« Yes, my Lord… »

« Well. Your father is with Me. Therefore, by following Me, you still come near your father. »

« But when? And how? »

« In his vineyard, where he heard Me speak for the first time. He reminded Me of his prayer of last year. I said to him: "Come". He died a happy death, because you left everything to follow Me. »

« Forgive me if I weep… He was my father… »

« I do appreciate grief. » He lays His hand on his head to comfort him and says to the disciples: « Here is a new companion. Love him, because I took him from his sepulchre, so that he may serve Me. »

He then calls: « Elias. Come to Me. Do not be shy like one who is a stranger among brothers. All the past is destroyed. And you come, too, Zacharias, who left father and mother for Me, go among the seventy-two with Joseph of Cintium. You deserve it, as you have defied the ways of the mighty ones for My sake. And you, Philip, and you, his companion, who do not want to be called with your name any more, as it sounds horrible to you, so take that of your father, who is a just man, even if he is not yet among those who follow Me openly. Can you all see? I do not exclude anybody of good will. Neither those who followed Me already as disciples, nor those who performed good deeds in My name, even if they did not belong to the groups of My disciples, nor those who belonged to sects, that not everybody loves, as they can always take the right road and are not to be rejected. Do, as I do. I join these to the old disciples. Because the Kingdom of Heaven is open to all those of good will. And, although they are not present, I tell you not to reject the Gentiles either. I have not repelled them, when I knew that they were anxious to know the Truth. Do what I have done. And you, Daniel, who have really come out, not of the pit of the lions, but of the jackals, come and join these. And you, Benjamin. I join you to these (he points to the group of the seventy-two which is almost complete) because the harvest of the Lord will be very rich and many labourers are required. Now let us be united here for a short time, while the day wears on. In the evening you will depart from the mountain and at dawn you apostles and you two, whom I have mentioned separately, will come with Me, with all those who are here of the seventy-two (He points at Zacharias and at this Joseph of Cintium, who is not new to me). The others will remain here, waiting for those who have run away here and there like idle wasps, to tell them in My name that one cannot find the Lord by imitating unwilling disobedient children, and that they all have to be at Bethany twenty days before Pentecost, because later they would

look for Me in vain. Sit down now, and rest. You, come with Me a little aside. »

He sets out, holding Marjiam by the hand all the time, followed by the eleven apostles.

He sits down in the thickest part of a thick wood of oak-trees, and draws to Himself Marjiam, who is very sad. So sad that Peter says: « Comfort him, Lord. He was already sad, now he is even more so. »

« Why, child? Are you not with Me? Should you not be happy to know that I have overcome sorrow? »

Marjiam's only answer is to burst into tears.

« I do not know what the matter is with him. I have asked him in vain. And today I was not expecting these tears! » grumbles Peter, somewhat annoyed.

« But I know » says John.

« So much the better for you! So why is he weeping? »

« He did not begin to weep today. He has been weeping for days… »

« Eh! I have noticed that! But why? »

« The Lord knows, I am sure. And I know that He alone has the word that can comfort him » says John smiling.

« That is true. I know. And I know that Marjiam, a good disciple, is really a little boy just now, a little boy who does not see the reality of things. But, My beloved one among all the disciples, do you not consider that I went to corroborate wavering faiths, to absolve, to receive lives that had come to an end, to annul poisonous doubts with which the weaker ones had been imbued, to reply with pity or severity to those who still want to fight against Me, to testify with My presence that I have risen from the dead, where they were more eager to say that I was dead? Was there any need for Me to come to you, a child, whose faith, hope, charity, whose good will and obedience are known to Me? Should I have come to you for a moment, when I shall have you with Me, as now, much more often? Who will celebrate Passover with Me, except you alone among all the other disciples? Can you see all these? They have celebrated their Passover, and the flavour of the lamb and of the caroset, of the unleavened bread and of the wine became completely like ashes and gall and vinegar for their palates immediately afterwards. But you and I, My dear boy, will consume our Passover joyfully, and it will be like honey that trickles and remains such. Who wept then, will rejoice now. Who rejoiced then, cannot expect to rejoice again. »

« Really… We were not very cheerful that day… » whispers Thomas.

« Yes. Our hearts trembled… » says Matthew.

« And we were boiling over with suspicion and indignation, at least I was » says Thaddeus.

« And so you all say that you would like to celebrate the supplementary

Passover… »

« It is so, Lord » says Peter.

« One day you complained because the women disciples and your son were not taking part in the Passover banquet. Now you complain because who did not rejoice then, must do so now. »

« That is true. I am a sinner. »

« And I am He Who is compassionate. I want you all to be around Me, and not you only, but also the women disciples. Lazarus will give us hospitality once again. I did not want your daughter, Philip, or your wives, I did not want Myrtha, Naomi, and the young girl who is with them, and this boy. Jerusalem, in those days, was not • place for everybody! »

« True! It is a good thing that they were not there » says Philip with a sigh.

« Yes. They would have seen our cowardice. »

« Be quiet, Peter. It has been forgiven. »

« Yes. But I confessed it to my son and I thought that that was why he was so sad. I confessed it, because every time I confess it, it is a relief. It is as if I removed a big stone from my heart. I feel more absolved every time I humiliate myself. But if Marjiam is sad because You have shown Yourself to other people… »

« For that and for nothing else, father. »

« Then, cheer up! He loved you and He loves you. You can see that. But I informed you of the second Passover… »

« I thought that I had done the obedience that Porphirea had given me in Your name not too willingly, Lord. And that, therefore, You were punishing me. And I also thought that You did not show Yourself to me because I hated Judas and those who crucified You » confesses Marjiam.

« Do not hate anybody. I have forgiven. »

« Yes, my Lord. I will not hate my more. »

« And do not be sad any longer. »

« I will not be so any more, Lord. »

Marjiam, like all very young people, is not so timid with Jesus as the others are, and he relaxes confidently in Jesus' arms, now that he is sure that Jesus is not angry with him. And even more, like a chick under its mother's wing, he takes shelter in the arms of Jesus, Who presses Him against Himself, and as the anxiety that had made him sad and upset for so many days ceases, he blissfully falls asleep.

« He is still a boy » remarks the Zealot.

« Yes. But how much he has suffered! Porphirea told me when, informed by Joseph of Tiberias, she brought him to me » Peter replies to him. "Then he says to the Master: « Porphirea also at Jerusalem? » How much eagerness there is in Peter's voice!

« All the women. I want to bless them before I ascend to My Father.

They have served as well, and very often better than men. »

« And to Your Mother? Are You not going? » asks Thaddeus.

« We are together. »

« Together When? »

« Judas, Judas, and do you think that I, Who have always found joy near Her, should not stay with Her now? »

« But Mary is all alone in Her house. My mother told me yesterday. »

Jesus smiles and replies: « Only the High Priest goes behind the Holy of Holies. »

« So? What do You mean? »

« That there are beatitudes that cannot be described and known. That is what I mean. »

He gently moves Marjiam away from Himself and entrusts him to the arms of John, who is the one closest to Him. He stands up. He blesses them. And while they all, with their heads lowered, on their knees, with the exception of John, who has Marjiam's head in his lap, receive His blessing, He disappears.

« He is really like the lightning of which He speaks » says Bartholomew.

They remain meditating, awaiting sunset.

The Lord wants me to take another copy book for the last instructions and visions, as they could not be contained here, the pages being too few.

631. The Last Teachings before Ascension-Day.

I should have begun with a new copy-book. But as Martha is ill, I wrote here and then I copied it on the new one.

22nd April 1947.

They are up on another mountain, which is even more covered with woods, not far from Nazareth, to which a road leads running along the foot of the mountain.

Jesus makes them sit down in a circle, the apostles closer to Him, behind them the disciples (those of the seventy-two who did not go away here and there) with Zacharias and Joseph. Marjiam is at His feet in a privileged position.

Jesus speaks as soon as they are all sitting and quiet, paying attention to His words. He says:

« Pay attention to Me, because I will tell you things of the greatest importance. You will not understand them all, neither will you understand them all well. But He Who comes after Me, will make you understand them. So, listen to Me.

Nobody is more convinced than you are, that without the help

of God man sins easily, as his very weak constitution was debilitated by the Sin. So I should be an imprudent Redeemer, if after giving you so much to redeem you, I did not give you also the means of retaining you in the effects of My Sacrifice.

You know that all the easiness to commit sin derives from the Sin that, by depriving men of Grace, despoils them of their strength: of the union with Grace. You have said: "But You have given Grace to us". No. It was given to the just up to My Death. To give it to future people a means is required. A means that will not be only a ritual figure, but on those who receive it will really impress the real character of children of God, as Adam and Eve were, whose souls vivified by Grace, possessed sublime gifts, given by God to His beloved creatures.

You are aware of what man had and what man lost. Now, through My Sacrifice, the gates of Grace have been reopened and its river can descend on all those who ask it out of their love for Me. Men will therefore have the character of children of God through the merits of the First-Born among men, of Him Who is speaking to you, your Redeemer, your eternal Pontiff, your Brother in the Father, your Master. It will be by Jesus Christ and through Jesus Christ that present and future men will be able to possess Heaven and enjoy God, the last purpose of man. Up to the present time, even the most just among the just, although circumcised as children of the chosen people, were not able to attain that purpose. Although their virtues were taken into consideration by God, and their places were ready in Heaven, the latter was closed and the enjoyment of God was denied to them, because on their souls, blessed flower-beds blooming with every virtue, there was also the cursed tree of Original Sin, and no action, no matter how holy it might be, could destroy it; neither is it possible to enter Heaven with the roots and foliage of so evil a tree.

On Preparation Day the sighs of the patriarchs and prophets, and of all the just of Israel, appeased in the joy of the accomplished Redemption, and their souls, whiter than mountain snow, such was their virtue, lost the only Stain that segregated them from Heaven.

But the world continues. Generations and generations arise and will arise. Peoples and peoples will come to the Christ. Can the Christ die with each new generation to save it, or for each people that comes to Him? No. He cannot. The Christ died once, and He will never die again, for ever. Then, must these generations, these peoples, become wise through My Word, but not possess Heaven and enjoy God, because they are injured by Original Sin? No. It would not be just, neither for them, because their love for Me would be useless, nor for Me, because I would have died for too few. So? How can the different things be conciliated? Which new miracle will the Christ work, and He has already worked so many, before leaving

the world for Heaven, after loving men to the extent of dying for them?

He has already worked one, by leaving you His Body and His Blood as a fortifying and sanctifying food and as a remembrance of His love, by giving you the order to do what I have done in memory of Me and as a sanctifying means for the disciples, for the disciples of the disciples, until the end of time.

But that evening, when you were already purified exteriorly, do you remember what I did? I girded Myself with a towel and I washed your feet, and to one of you, who was scandalised at that too humiliating gesture, I said: "If I do not wash you, you will have no part in common with Me". You did not understand what I meant, of which part I was speaking, which symbol I performed. Well, I will tell you. Besides teaching you humility and the necessity of being pure, in order to enter and take part in My Kingdom, in addition to bringing benignly to your notice that from a man, who is just, and therefore pure in his spirit and intellect, God exacts only a last wash of the part that is necessarily easier to become contaminated also in just people, even only with the dust that the necessary cohabitation among men lays also on clean limbs, on bodies, I have taught you another thing. I washed your feet, the lowest part of body, the one that goes among mud and dust, at times among dirty things, to signify the flesh, the material part of man, which part always has some imperfections, with the exception of those who are without the Original Sin, either through the deed of God or by the Nature of God, and such imperfections are at times so slight that only God can see them, but really, one must watch them, so that they may not grow stronger and turn into natural habits, and fight them to extirpate them.

So I washed your feet. When? Before breaking the bread and wine and transubstantiating them into My Body and My Blood. Because I am the Lamb of God, and I cannot descend where Satan has his mark. So, I washed you first. Then I gave Myself to you. You also will wash with Baptism those who will come to Me, so that they may not receive My Body unworthily and it may not change for them into a dreadful death sentence.

You are dismayed. You are looking at one another. With your eyes you are asking: "And Judas, then?" I say to you: "Judas ate his death". The supreme act of love did not touch his heart. The last attempt of his Master knocked against the stone of his heart, and on that stone, in the place of the Tau, was engraved the horrible initial of Satan, the sign of the Beast.

So I washed you before admitting you to the Eucharistic banquet, before listening to the confession of your sins, before infusing the Holy Spirit into you and consequently the character of both true Christians reconfirmed in Grace, and of My Priests. Let the same

be done to the others whom you will have to prepare for the Christian life.

Baptise with water in the Name of the God One and Trine and in My Name and through My infinite Merits, so that the Original Sin may be cancelled from hearts, sins may be remitted, Grace and the Holy Virtues may be infused, and the Holy Spirit may descend to dwell in consecrated temples, that is, in the bodies of men living in the Grace of the Lord.

Was water necessary to cancel the Sin? Water does not touch the soul. But neither does the immaterial sign touch the sight of man, who is so material in all his actions. I could very well have infused Life also without a visible means. But who would have believed it? How many are the men who can firmly believe if they do not see? So take the lustral water of the ancient Mosaic Law, the water that was used to purify unclean people and admit them again to the camps, after they had become contaminated by a corpse. In actual fact, every man who is born is contaminated, by having contact with a soul dead to Grace. So let it be purified of the unclean contact by the lustral water and made worthy of entering the eternal Temple.

And let water be a dear thing to you… After expiating and redeeming through thirty-three years of laborious life, which culminated in the Passion, after giving all My Blood for the sins of men, then the wholesome waters to wash the Original Sin were drawn from the bloodless consumed Body of the Martyr. By means of the consumed Sacrifice I redeemed you from that stain. If on the point of death a divine miracle of Mine had made Me descend from the cross, I solemnly tell you that with the blood I had shed I would have redeemed the sins, but not the Sin. The full consummation was required for it. Really, the wholesome water of which Ezekiel speaks came out of this Side of Mine. Immerse souls into it, so that they may come out of it spotless, to receive the Holy Spirit Who, in recollection of that breath which the Creator breathed on Adam to give him the spirit and thus the image and likeness of Himself, will come to breathe and dwell in the hearts of men who have been redeemed.

Baptise with My Baptism, but in the Name of the God Trine, because, really, if the Father had not wanted and the Spirit had not acted, the Word would have not become incarnate and you would have had no Redemption. So it is just and fair that every man should receive the Life through Those Who joined together in wanting to give it to him, mentioning the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit in the act of Baptism, which takes the name of Christian after Me, to distinguish it from the others past and future, which will be rites, but not indelible signs on the immortal part.

Take the Bread and the Wine as I did, and bless them, break

them and hand them out in My Name; and let Christians feed on Me. And of the Bread and Wine make an offering to the Father of Heavens, consuming it then in memory of the Sacrifice that I offered and consumed on the Cross for your salvation. I, Priest and Victim, by Myself offered and consumed Myself, as no one, if I had not wanted, could do that of Me. You, My Priests, do that in memory of Me and so that the infinite treasures of My Sacrifice may ascend imploringly to God, and descend propitiously on all those who invoke them with firm faith.

Firm faith, I said. No science is called for to avail oneself of the Eucharistic Food and of the Eucharistic Sacrifice, but faith. Faith that in that bread and in that wine, that one authorised by Me and by those who will come after Me - you Peter, the new Pontiff of the new Church, you James of Alphaeus, you John, you Andrew, you Simon, you Philip, you Bartholomew, you Thomas, you Judas Thaddeus, you Matthew, you James of Zebedee - will consecrate in My Name, is My true Body, My true Blood, and he who feeds on it receives Me in Flesh, Blood, Soul and Divinity and he who offers Me really, offers Jesus Christ, as He offered Himself for the sins of the world. A child or an ignorant person can receive Me, just like a learned man and an adult. And a child and an ignorant person will receive the same advantages from the Sacrifice offered, as those that anyone among you will have. It is sufficient that faith and the grace of the Lord are in them.

But you are about to receive a new Baptism, that of the Holy Spirit. I promised it to you and it will be given to you. The very Holy Spirit will descend upon you. I will tell you when. And you will be replete with It, in the fullness of sacerdotal gifts. You will be able, therefore, as I did with you, to infuse the Spirit with which you are replete, to confirm the Christians in grace and instil the gifts of the Paraclete into them. As a regal Sacrament, little inferior to the Priesthood, it must have the solemnity of Mosaic consecrations with the imposition of hands and the unction with scented oil, which was once used to consecrate Priests.

No. Do not look at one another so frightened! I am not speaking sacrilegious words! I am not teaching you sacrilegious acts! The dignity of a Christian is such, I repeat it, that it is little inferior to a priesthood. Where do priests live? In the Temple. And a Christian will be a living temple. What do priest do? They serve God with prayers, sacrifices and taking care of the believers. That is what they should have done… And a Christian will serve God with prayer and sacrifice and with brotherly love.

And you will listen to the confession of sins, as I listened to yours and to those of many and I forgave where I saw true repentance.

Are you becoming upset? Why? Are you afraid that you may not

be able to distinguish? On other occasions I have already spoken of sin and of the judgement of sin. But remember, when judging, to ponder on the seven conditions whereby an action may or may not be sinful and of different gravity. I will recall them. When one sinned and how many times, who sinned, with whom, with what, which is the matter of the sin, which is the cause, why did one sin. But be not afraid. The Holy Spirit will assist you.

What I implore you with all My heart to observe is a holy life. It will increase the supernatural lights in you to such an extent, that you will succeed in reading the hearts of men without mistaking, and you will be able, with love or with authority, to tell sinners, who fear to disclose their sin or refuse to confess it, the state of their hearts, helping the timid and humiliating the unrepentant. Bear in mind that the Earth is about to lose its Absolver and that you must be what I was: just, patient, merciful, but not weak. I said to you: what you will loose on Earth will be loosed in Heaven and what you bind here will be bound in Heaven. So with measured deliberation judge every man without allowing yourselves to be corrupted by likes or dislikes, by gifts or threats, being impartial in everything and with everybody as is God, bearing in mind the weakness of man and the snares of his enemies.

I remind you that at times God allows also His chosen ones to fall, not because He likes to see them fall, but because a greater future advantage may come from a fall. So offer your hands to those who fall, because you do not know whether that fall is the resolutive crisis of an illness that dies for ever, leaving in the blood a purification that brings about health. In our case: that brings about holiness.

Be instead severe with those who have no respect for My Blood, and with their souls just cleansed by the divine bath, throw themselves into filth one and one hundred times. Do not curse them, but be severe, exhort them, reproach them seventy times seven, and have recourse to the extreme punishment of cutting them off from the chosen people, only when their obstinacy in a fault that scandalises the brothers, compels you to take action in order not to become accomplices of their deeds. Remember what I said: "If your brother has sinned, correct him between your two selves. If he does not listen to you, correct him in the presence of two or three witnesses. If that is not sufficient, inform the Church. If he does not listen even to the Church, consider him as a Gentile and a publican".

In the Mosaic religion matrimony is a contract. In the new Christian religion let it be a sacred indissoluble act, on which may the grace of the Lord descend to make of husband and wife two ministers of His in the propagation of the human race. From the very first moments try to advise the consort belonging to the new religion to convert the consort, who is still out of the number of the

believers, to enter and become part of it, to avoid those painful divisions of thought, and consequently of peace, that we have noticed also among ourselves. But when it is a question of believers in the Lord, for no reason whatsoever what God united is to be dissolved. And when a consort is Christian and is united to a heathen, I advice that consort to bear his/her cross with patience, meekness and also with strength, to the extent of dying to defend his/her faith, but without leaving the consort whom he/she married with full consent. This is My advice for a more perfect life in the matrimonial state, until it will be possible, with the diffusion of Christianity, to have marriages between believers. Then let the bond be sacred and indissoluble, and the love holy.

It would be bad, if owing to the hardness of hearts, what happened in the old faith should happen also in the new one: the authorization of repudiation and dissolution to avoid scandal created by the lust of man. I solemnly tell you that everybody must bear his cross in every state, also in the matrimonial one. And I also solemnly tell you that no pressure is to subdue your authority in saying: "It is against the law" to those who want to marry for the second time before one of the consorts is dead. It is better, I tell you, that a putrid part breaks off, by itself or followed by others, rather than to keep it in the Body of the Church, grant it something contrary to the holiness of marriage, scandalising the humble and making them express thoughts unfavourable to sacerdotal integrity and on the value of wealth and power.

Marriage is a grave and holy act. And to prove that, I took part at a wedding and I worked My first miracle there. But woe if it degenerates into lust and whim. Let marriage, the natural contract between man and woman, be elevated to a spiritual contract, by which the souls of two people who love each other swear to serve the Lord in reciprocal love, offered to the Lord in obedience to His order of procreation to give children to the Lord.

And also… James, do you remember the conversation on Mount Carmel? Since that time I have spoken to you about this. But the others do not know… You saw Mary of Lazarus spread ointment on My limbs at the supper of the Sabbath at Bethany. I then said to you: "She has prepared Me for My burial". In actual fact she did. Not for My burial, because she thought that that sorrow was still far away, but to purify and embalm My limbs from all the impurities of the road, so that I might ascend the throne scented with balsamic oil.

The life of man is a road. The entry of man into the next life ought to be an entry into the Kingdom. Every king is anointed and perfumed before ascending his throne and showing himself to his people. Also the Christian is the son of a king, and he goes along his road, directing his steps towards the kingdom where the Father

calls him. The death of a Christian is nothing but the entry into the Kingdom to ascend the throne that the Father has prepared for him. Death is not frightful for him who is not afraid of God, knowing that he is in His grace. But let the garment of him who is to ascend the throne be purified of all rubbish, so that it may be preserved beautiful for the resurrection, and let his spirit be purified, so that it may shine on the throne that the Father has prepared for him and he may appear in the dignity befitting a son of such a great king. Let the unction given to dying Christians, or rather, to Christians being born, because I solemnly tell you that he who dies in the Lord is born to the eternal life, let that unction be an increase of Grace, the annulment of sins of which the man is fully repentant, the exciter of fervent yearning for Good, the giver of strength for the supreme struggle.

Repeat the gesture of Mary on the bodies of the chosen ones. And let no one deem it unworthy of him. I accepted that balsamic oil from a woman. Every Christian should consider himself honoured by it, as a supreme grace of the Church whose son he is, and should accept it from the priest to be cleansed of the last stains. And every priest ought to be happy to repeat on the body of his dying brother, the gesture of love that Mary made on the suffering Christ. I truly tell you that what you did not do to Me then, letting a woman exceed you, and now you think of it with so much regret, you can do in future and for as many times as you will bend over one who is dying to prepare him to his meeting with God. I am in beggars and in dying people, in pilgrims, in orphans, in widows, in prisoners, in those who are hungry, thirsty or cold, in who is grieved or tired. I am in all the members of My mystic Body, which is the union of all My believers. Love Me in them and you will make amends for your indifference on so many occasions, giving great joy to Me and so much glory to yourselves.

Finally, consider that the world, age, diseases, time, persecutions conspire against you. Therefore do not be avaricious with what you have received and do not be imprudent. For this reason transmit the Priesthood in My Name to the best disciples, so that the Earth may not be left without priests. And ensure that the sacred character is granted after a severe examination, not verbal, but of the deeds of him who asks to be a priest, or of him whom you judge suitable to be one.

Consider what is a Priest. The good he can do. The evil he can do. You have had the example of what can be done by a priest who has lapsed from his sacred character. I truly tell you that this country will be dispersed because of the sins of the Temple. But I also truly tell you that also the Earth will be destroyed when the abomination of desolation will affect the new Priesthood, by leading men to apostasy in order to embrace the doctrines of hell. Then the son

of Satan will arise and peoples will moan in dreadful fright, as only few will remain faithful to the Lord, and also then, after horrible convulsions, the end will come after the victory of God and of His few Chosen ones, and the wrath of God on all the cursed ones. Woe, three times woe if for those few there will still be no saints, the last pavilions of the Temple of Christ! Woe, three times woe, if to comfort the last Christians, there will be no true Priests, as there will be for the first ones. Really the last persecution will be horrible, as it will not be the persecution of men but of the son of Satan and of his followers. Priests? Those of the last hour will have to be more than priests, so wild will be the persecution of the hordes of the Antichrist. Like the man dressed in linen, who is so holy as to be beside the Lord, in the vision of Ezekiel, they will have to be untiring in marking a Tau with their perfection on the spirits of the few faithful ones, so that the flames of may do not cancel that sign. Priests? Angels. Angels swinging the thurible of the incences of their virtues to purify the air of the miasmata of Satan. Angels? More than angels: other Christs, others Myself, so that the believers of the last times may be able to persevere until the end. That is what they will have to be.

But future good and evil have roots in the present. Avalanches begin with a snowflake. A priest who is unworthy, impure, heretic, unfaithful, incredulous, tepid or cold, dull, insipid, lustful, does ten times as much harm as a believer guilty of the same sins, and he drags many more to commit sin. Laxity in the Priesthood, the reception of impure doctrines, selfishness, greed, concupiscence in the Priesthood, you are aware of the result of all that: deicide. Now, in future ages, the Son of God can no longer be killed, but the faith in God, the idea of God, can. So a deicide will be accomplished, which is even more irreparable, because it is without resurrection. Oh! it can be accomplished, yes. I see… It will be possible to accomplish it, because of the too many Judases of Kerioth of future ages. How horrible!…

My Church demolished by its own ministers! While I support it with the help of victims. And they, the Priests, who will have only the garment and not the soul of a Priest, who help the ebullition of the waves agitated by the infernal Snake against your boat, Peter. Stand up! Rise! Transmit this order to your successors: "Hands on the rudder, the lash on the shipwrecked people who wanted to be shipwrecked, and try to founder the boat of God". Strike, but save and proceed. Be severe, because just is the punishment for marauders. Defend the treasure of the faith, Hold the lamp aloft, like a lighthouse above the rough sea, so that those who follow your boat may see and not perish. Shepherd and pilot for the dreadful times, gather, guide, hold My Gospel high, because safety is found in it and in no other science.

The days will come when, as it happened to us in Israel, but even more deeply, the Priesthood will think it is a chosen class, because it knows the superfluous and does not know the indispensable any longer, or is aware of it in the deaf form in which the Priests now know the Law: in its garment, exaggeratedly overburdened with fringes, but not in its spirit. The days will come when all the books will replace the Book, and this will be used only as one, who must use an object by force, handles it mechanically, as a peasant ploughs, sows, harvests, without meditating on the wonderful providence which is that multiplication of seeds that is renewed each year: a seed is thrown into turned soil and it becomes stalk, ear of corn, then flour and then bread through God's paternal love. Who, putting a mouthful of bread in his mouth, raises his spirit to Him Who created the first seed and for ages has made it spring up again and grow, giving the right quantity of rain and heat, so that it may open and grow and ripen without rotting or getting burnt? Likewise the time will come when the Gospel will be taught scientifically well, spiritually badly.

Now, what is science if it lacks wisdom? It is straw. Straw that swells and does not nourish. And I truly tell you that the time will come in which too many among the Priests will be like swollen straw-stacks, proud straw-stacks, that will stand up straight in the pride of being so swollen, as if they had given themselves all those ears of wheat that crowned the straw, as if the ears were still on the summits of the straw, and will think that they are everything because, instead of the handful of wheat, the true nourishment that is the spirit of the Gospel, they will have all that straw: a heap! A heap! But can straw be enough? It is not even sufficient for the stomach of a beast of burden, and if its master does not strengthen the animal with fodder and fresh herbs, the beast of burden nourished only with straw wastes away and may even die. And yet I tell you that the time will come when the Priests, forgetting that with few ears of wheat I taught spirits the Truth, and forgetting also what it cost their Lord that true bread of the spirit, drawn completely and only from the Divine Wisdom, spoken by the Divine Word, dignified in its doctrinal form, indefatigable in its repetitions, so that the truth spoken should not get lost, humble in its form, without the false glitter of human sciences, without historical or geographical completions, will not take care of its soul, but of the garment to be thrown on it, to show the crowds how many things they know, and the spirit of the Gospel will get lost in them, under avalanches of human science. And if they do not possess it, how can they transmit it? What will these swollen straw-stacks give the believers? Straw. What nourishment will the spirits of the believers get from it? Enough to lead a wretched languishing life. Which fruit will ripen from such teaching and from this imperfect knowledge

of the Gospel? The coolness of hearts, the replacement of the only true doctrine with heretical doctrines, with doctrines and ideas that are more than heretical, the preparation of the ground in favour of the Beast for his transient icy dark horrible kingdom.

I truly tell you that, as the Father and Creator multiplies the stars so that the sky may not become depopulated because of those that perish, when their lives end, likewise I shall have to evangelize thousands of times the disciples that I will scatter among men in future ages. And I also truly tell you that the destiny of these disciples will be the same as Mine: the synagogue and proud people will persecute them as they persecuted Me. But both they and I have our reward: that of doing the Will of God and serving Him even to death on a cross, so that His glory may shine and the knowledge of Him may not perish.

But you, Pontiff, and you, Shepherds, watch that the spirit of the Gospel may not get lost in you and in your successors, and pray the Holy Spirit untiringly that the Pentecost may be continually renewed in you - you do not understand what I mean, but you will soon know - so that you may understand all the languages and choose and distinguish My voices from those of the Monkey of God: Satan. And do not allow My future voices to become void. And each of them is an act of mercy of Mine to assist you, and the more are the reasons by which I see that Christianity needs them to get through the storms of times, the more numerous they will be.

Shepherd and pilot, Peter! Shepherd and pilot. It will not be sufficient for you one day to be shepherd if you are not pilot, and to be pilot if you are not shepherd. You will have to be both to keep the lambs gathered together, as hellish tentacles and fierce claws will try to snatch them from you, or music of false impossible promises will seduce you, and to proceed with the boat caught in all the winds blowing from the north, south, east and west, lashed and tossed by the powers of the depths, hit by the arrows shot by the archers of the Beast, burnt by the breath of the dragon, with its edges swept by its tail, so that the imprudent ones will be burnt and will perish, falling into the stormy sea.

Shepherd and pilot in dreadful times. And your compass is the Gospel. In it there is Life and Safety. And everything is said in it. Every article of the holy Code, every answer for the manifold cases of souls are in it. And ensure that Priests and believers do not depart from it, and that no doubts arise about it. And take care that no alterations, changes and adulterations are made to it. The Gospel is I Myself. From My birth to My death. In the Gospel there is God. Because the works of the Father, of the Son, of the Holy Spirit are manifest in it. The Gospel is love. I said: "My Word is Life". I said: "God is Love". So let people know My Word and have love in them, that is, God, to have the Kingdom of God. Because he who is not

in God, does not have the Life in him. Because those who do not receive the Word of the Father will not be able to be one thing with the Father, with Me and with the Holy Spirit in Heaven, and they will not be able to belong to the only Fold, which is as holy as I want it. They will not be vine-shoots joined to the Vine, because he who, wholly or partly, rejects My Word is a member in whom the sap of the Vine no longer flows. My Word is juice that nourishes, makes one grow and yield fruit.

You will do all that in memory of Me, as I taught you. There is still much that I should tell you about what I have now said to you. But I have only sown the seed. The Holy Spirit will make it sprout in you. I wanted to give you the seed Myself, because I know your hearts and I know how you would falter with fear at spiritual immaterial orders. The fear of deceit would paralyse all will in you. So I am the first to speak to you of all things. Then the Paraclete will remind you of My words and will enlarge on them in detail. And you will not be afraid, because you will remember that I gave you the first seed. Allow yourselves to be led by the Holy Spirit. If My hand was kind in guiding you, His Light is very mild. He is the Love of God. So I am going away happy, because I know that He will take My place and will lead you to the knowledge of God. You do not know Him yet, although I have said so much to you about Him. But it is not your fault. You have done everything to understand Me and you are therefore justified, even if in three years you have understood little. The lack of Grace dulled your spirits. Even now you understand little, notwithstanding that the Grace of God descended upon you from My cross. You are in need of the Fire. One day I spoke to one of you about it, while going along the roads near the Jordan.

The hour has come. I am going back to My Father, but I am not leaving you all alone, because I leave you the Eucharist, that is, your Jesus made food for men. And I leave you the Friend: the Paraclete. He will guide you. I pass your souls from My light to His Light, and He will accomplish your formation. »

« Are You leaving us now? Upon this mountain? » They are all desolate.

« No. Not yet. But time flies and it will soon be that moment. »

« Oh! do not leave me on the Earth without You, Lord. I have loved You from Your birth to Your Death, from Your Death to Your Resurrection, and always. But it would be too sad to know that You are no longer among us! You heard the prayer of Elisha's father. You have satisfied so many. Hear mine, Lord! » implores Isaac on his knees with his hands stretched out.

« The life you could still have would be a sermon on Me, perhaps the glory of martyrdom. You have been a martyr out of love for Me, a baby, are you now afraid of being one for Me glorious? »

« It would be my glory to follow You, Lord. I am poor and foolish. What I could give, I gave with a good will. Now this is what I would like: to follow You. But let it be done as You wish, now and always. »

Jesus lays His hand on Isaac's head, and leaves it there on a long caress, while He addresses them all saying: « Have you no questions to ask Me? These are the last lessons. Speak to your Master… See how the little ones are on familiar terms with Me? » In fact also today Marjiam leans his head on Jesus' body, pressing himself against Him, and Isaac did not show any shyness in expressing his wish.

« Really… Yes… We have something to ask… » says Peter.

« Ask then. »

« Well… Yesterday evening, after You left us, we were talking among ourselves of what You had said. Now other words are urging us with regard to what You have said. Yesterday and also today, if one considers them properly, You have spoken as if heresies and separations were to arise, and soon. This makes us think that we shall have to be very prudent with those who will want to come among us. Because the seed of heresy and separation will certainly be in them. »

« Do you think so? And is Israel not already divided in coming to Me? You mean this: that the Israel, that loved Me, will never be heretical and divided. Is that right? But has she ever been united for ages, even in the ancient formation? And has she been united in following Me? I truly tell you that the root of heresy is in her. »

« But… »

« But she has been idolatrous and heretical for ages under the outer appearance of faithfulness. You know her idols. And her heresies. The Gentiles will be better than she is. That is why I have not excluded them, and I tell you to do what I have done. That will be one of the most difficult things for you. I know. But remember the prophets. They prophesy the vocation of the Gentiles and the hardness of the Judaeans. Why would you like to close the gates of the Kingdom to those who love Me and come to the Light that their souls were seeking? Do you think that they are bigger sinners than you, because they have not known God as yet, because they have followed their religion and they will follow it until they are attracted by ours? You must not. I say that many a time they are better than you because, while they have a religion that is not holy, they know how to be just. There is no lack of just people in any country and religion. God observes the deeds of men, not their words. And if He sees that a Gentile, out of the justice of his heart, according to nature does what the Law of Sinai prescribes, why should He consider him contemptible? Is it not more meritorious that a man, who does not know God's command not to do this or that because it is

evil, should take upon himself not to do what his reason tells him is not good and should follow it faithfully, than the very relative merit of him who, knowing God, the scope of man and the Law that enables him to attain it, comes to continuous compromises and designs, in order to adapt the perfect order to a corrupt will? What do you think? That God appreciates the ways out of obedience devised by Israel in order not to sacrifice her concupiscence too much? What do you think? That when a Gentile departs from this world, and is just in the eyes of God as he has followed the right law that his conscience imposed on itself, God will consider him a demon? I tell you: God will judge the actions of men, and the Christ, the Judge of all peoples, will reward those to whom the desire of their souls was a voice of an intimate law to attain the final scope of man, which is to be reunited to his Creator, to the God unknown to the heathens, but to the God Who they feel is True and Holy, beyond the painted scenery of any false Olympus.

Even more, pay attention not to be the cause of scandal to the Gentiles. Too often the name of God has already been derided among the Gentiles because of the deeds of the children of the people of God. Do not consider yourselves the absolute treasurers of My gifts and of My merits. I died for the Judaeans and for the Gentiles. My Kingdom will belong to all peoples. Do not take advantage of the patience with which God has treated you so far, by saying: "We are allowed everything". No. I tell you. There is no longer this or that people. There is My People. And in it the vases used up in the service of the Temple and those that are now being laid on the tables of God have the same value. And more than that, many vases used up in the service of the Temple, but not of God, will be thrown into a corner, and in their stead on the altar will be placed those that do not yet know incense, oil, wine or balm, but are anxious to be filled with them and to be used for the glory of the Lord.

Do not demand too much of the Gentiles. It is enough for them to have faith and to obey My Word. A new circumcision replaces the old one. Man is to be circumcised in his heart, from now on; in his spirit, even better than in his heart, because the blood of the circumcised, symbolising the purification from the concupiscence that excluded Adam from the divine filiation, has been replaced by My most pure Blood. It is valid both for those who are circumcised and for those who are uncircumcised in their bodies, providing the latter have received My Baptism and they renounce Satan, the world, the flesh, out of love for Me. Do not despise the uncircumcised. God did not despise Abraham. Because of his justice God chose him as the head of His People even before circumcision had bitten his flesh. If God approached Abraham uncircumcised, to give him His orders, you can approach the uncircumcised to teach them the Law of the Lord. Consider to how many sins and to what sin

the circumcised have come. So do not be inexorable towards the Gentiles. »

« But shall we have to tell them what You taught us? They will not understand anything, because they do not know the Law. »

« You say so. But did Israel, who knew the Law and the Prophets, understand? »

« That is true. »

« But be careful. You will say what the Spirit advises you to say, verbally, without any fear, without wanting to do it by yourselves. When false prophets arise among the believers, and they profess their ideas as if they were inspired, and they are the heretics, then you will have to fight their heretical doctrines with means firmer than words. But do not worry. The Holy Spirit will guide you. I never say anything that may not happen. »

« And what shall we do with heretics? »

« Fight the heresy itself with all your strength, but with every means try to convert the heretics to the Lord. Never get tired in looking for the sheep that have gone astray in order to take them back to the Fold. Pray, suffer, get people to pray, to suffer, go around begging the pure, the good, the generous believers for sacrifices and sufferings, because these are the means to convert your brothers. The Passion of Christ continues in Christians. I have not excluded you from this great work, which is the Redemption of the world. You are all members of one single body. Help one another, and let those who are strong and healthy work for the weaker ones, and those who are united stretch out their hands and call their brothers who are far away. »

« But will there be any, after they have been brothers in one house? »

« There will be some. »

« Why? »

« For so many reasons. They will still have My Name. And what is even more, they will take pride in that Name. They will work to make it known. They will help in making Me known as far as the extreme boundaries of the Earth. Let them do, because, I remind you, who is not against Me is for Me. But, poor children! their work will always be incomplete, their merits always imperfect. They cannot be in Me if they are separated from the Vine. Their works will always be incomplete. You, I say you, referring to your future successors, must be where they are. Do not say pharisaically: "I am not going in order not to be contaminated". Or lazily: "I am not going, because there already is who preaches the Lord". Or timidly: "I am not going in order not to be driven away by them". Go. I tell you: Go. To all peoples. As far as the boundaries of the world. So that all My Doctrine and My Only Church may be made known and souls may be able to become part of it. »

« And shall we tell them or write all your actions? »

« I have told you. The Holy Spirit will advise you what it is right to say or be quiet about, according to the times. You can see it! What I have done is believed or denied, and at times is used as a weapon against Me, manipulated as it is by hands that hate Me. They have called Me Beelzebub when, as the Master, I worked miracles in the presence of everybody. And what will they say now, when they learn that I have acted in such a supernatural manner? They will curse Me even more. And you would be persecuted before the time. So be silent until it is the time to speak. »

« But if that hour should come when we, the witnesses, are dead? »

« In My Church there will always be priests, doctors, prophets, exorcizers, confessors, people who work miracles or are inspired, as is necessary so that peoples may have from the Church what is necessary. Heaven: the Church Triumphant will not leave the Church Teaching all alone, and the latter will assist the Church Militant. They are not three bodies. They are only one Body. There is no division among them, but communion of love and of purpose: to love Charity and enjoy it in Heaven, its Kingdom. And for this reason the Church Militant will have to provide with love for the suffrages on behalf of that part of it which, already destined to the Church Triumphant, is still excluded from it, because of the satisfactory expiation of faults absolved but not entirely expiated with regard to the Perfect Divine Justice. In the mystic Body everything is to be done in love and through love. Because love is the blood that circulates in it. Assist your brothers who are being purified. As I said that the works of corporal mercy achieve a reward for you, in Heaven, so I told you that also the spiritual ones achieve it for you. And I truly tell you that a prayer for the souls of the dead, that they may enter into peace, is a great work of mercy, for which God will bless you and the souls for whom you have prayed will be grateful. When, at the resurrection of the bodies, you are all gathered before Christ Judge, among those whom I will bless, there will be also those who showed love for their brothers who were being purified, making offerings and praying for their peace. I tell you. Not one of the good actions will be left without fruit, and many will shine brightly in Heaven, without having preached, administered, made apostolic journeys, embraced special states, but only because they-prayed and suffered to give peace to the souls that were being purified, to lead men to conversion. They also, priests unknown to the world, unknown apostles, victims whom God alone sees, will receive the reward of the workers of the Lord, as of their lives they made a perpetual sacrifice of love for their brothers and for the glory of God. I truly tell you that one can arrive at eternal life along many ways, and this is one of them, and it is so dear to My Heart. Have you anything else to ask? Speak up. »

« Lord, yesterday and not only yesterday, we were thinking that You said: "You will sit on twelve thrones to judge the twelve tribes of Israel". But now we are eleven… »

« Elect the twelfth. It is your duty, Peter, to do so. »

« Mine? Not mine, Lord! I ask You to choose him. »

« I elected My Twelve once and I formed them. Then I appointed their chief. Then I gave them Grace and I infused the Holy Spirit into them. It is their turn now to walk, because they are no longer babies unweaned unable to do so. »

« But at least tell us where we are to lay our eyes… »

« Here you are. This is the chosen part of the herd » says Jesus, making a circular gesture on those of the seventy-two who are present.

« Not us, Lord. Not us. The place of the traitor frightens us » they say imploringly.

« Let us take Lazarus. Do You agree, Lord? »

Jesus is silent.

« Joseph of Arimathea?… Nicodemus?… »

Jesus is silent.

« Yes! Let us take Lazarus. »

« And do you want to give the perfect friend that place that you do not want? » asks Jesus.

« Lord, I should like to say something » says the Zealot.

« Speak. »

« I am sure that Lazarus for Your sake would accept also that place and would hold it in such a perfect manner as to make people forget whose place that was. But I do not think it is befitting to do so for other reasons. Lazarus' spiritual virtues can be found in many among the humble people of Your flock. And I think that it would be better to give them the preference, so that the believers may not say that we sought only power and wealth, as the Pharisees do, instead of virtue only. »

« You are right, Simon. And what you said is so much more true, as you have spoken with justice, without letting Lazarus' friendship prevent you from speaking. »

« Then let us appoint Marjiam as twelfth apostle. He is a boy. »

« In order to cancel that horrible empty space, I would accept it, but I am not worthy of it. How could I, a boy, speak to an adult? Lord, You must say whether I am right. »

« You are right. But do not be in a hurry. The time will come and you will be surprised at all being of the same opinion. Pray, in the meantime. I am going away. Withdraw to pray. I dismiss you for the time being. Ensure that you are all at Bethany on the fourteenth of Civ. »

He stands up, while they all kneel down prostrating themselves with their faces on the grass. He blesses them and the light, the maid who announces Him and precedes Him when He comes as she

receives Him when He departs, embraces Him and hides Him, absorbing Him once again.

632. The Supplementary Passover.

23rd April 1947.

Jesus' order has been carried out to the letter, this time, and Bethany is crowded with disciples. Meadows, paths, orchards, Lazarus' olive-groves are full of them and as they are not sufficient to hold so many people, who do not want to damage the property of Jesus' friend, many of them have spread out also among the olivegroves that are between Bethany and Jerusalem along the roads of the Mount of Olives. Closer to the house are the disciples of early days, many others are farther away. Faces not well known or completely unknown. But who can now recognise so many faces and mention their names? I think there are hundreds of them. Now and again, in the medley, a face or a name reminds me of faces seen among those helped and converted by Jesus, even at the last hour. But it is beyond my capability to remember so many faces and names, and to recognise them all. It would be the same as if one expected me to recognise who was among the people that crowded the streets in Jerusalem on Palm Sunday or on Good Friday, or covered Calvary with a carpet of faces, most of which were drawn with hatred.

The apostles go in and out from Simon's house, moving around the people to keep them quiet or to reply to their questions. Also Lazarus and Maximinus help them. At the upper-floor balcony windows of Simon's house one can see all the faces of the women disciples appear and disappear: grey-haired or brown-haired heads, among which shine the fair-haired heads of Mary of Lazarus and of Aurea. Now and again one comes out, looks and withdraws. They are all there, really all of them, the young ones and the old ones, also those who had never come, such as Sarah of Aphek. On the terrace many children are playing, those gathered by Sarah, the grandchildren of Anne of Merom, Mary and Matthias, the little boy Shalem, who was crippled and was the grandchild of Nahum and who is now happy and healthy, and some more. A flock of happy little birds, watched over by Marjiam and by other young disciples, such as the little shepherd of Enon and Jaia of Pella. Among the children I now see also the little boy of Sidon, who was blind. It is obvious that he was brought by his father.

The sun is beginning to set in a very bright clear sky. Peter consults with Lazarus and with his companions.

« I think that it is better to dismiss the people. What do you say? He will not come today either. And many of these people have to consume the little Passover this evening » says Peter.

« Yes. It is better to dismiss them. Perhaps the Lord has wisely decided not to come today. All those of the Temple have gathered in Jerusalem. I do not know how they heard that He was coming and… » says Lazarus.

« And even so? What can they do to Him any more? » says Thaddeus vehemently.

« You are forgetting that they are they. And these words of mine say everything. Even if they can do Him no harm, they can do a lot of harm to these people who have come to worship Him. And the Lord does not want to damage His believers. And then! Do you think that they, blinded by their sin and their thought, which is always the same one, among the contrasting ideas in their heads, do not also have the idea that the Lord has risen, that is, that He never died and He came out from there like one who awakes by himself or with the complicity of many? You do not know what wild confusion of thoughts, what entanglement, what storm of suppositions is in their minds. They have created it all in order not to admit the truth. We can really say that those who were accomplices yesterday are divided today, for the same cause that previously kept them joined together. And some people have been seduced by their ideas. See? Some are no longer among the disciples… » says Lazarus.

« And let them go! Other better ones have come. Certainly, those who have informed the Sanhedrin that the Lord will be here on the fourteenth day of the second month, are to be looked for among those who have gone away. And after the delation they no longer have the courage to come. Come on! Stop it! Enough of traitors! » says Bartholomew.

« We shall always have some, my dear friend! Man!… He yields too easily to impressions and to pressures. But we must not be afraid. The Lord said that we must not be afraid » says the Zealot.

« And we are not afraid. A few days ago we were still frightened. Do you remember? I, as far as I am concerned, was afraid when I thought of coming back here. Now I no longer seem to be so frightened. But I do not trust myself too much, and you as well ought not to trust your Cephas too much. I have already proved once that I am made of clay that crumbles, instead of being of solid granite. Well, let us dismiss these people. It is your duty, Lazarus. »

« No, Simon Peter. It is yours. You are the chief… » says Lazarus kindly, embracing Peter's shoulder with his arm and pushing him thus towards the staircase and up it, as far as the terrace surrounding Simon's house.

Peter makes a gesture meaning that he wants to speak and the people nearby become silent and those farther away move towards him. Peter waits until most of them are near him, then he says: « Men from every part of Israel, listen. I exhort you to go back to town. The sun has already begun to set. So, go. If He comes, we will let

you know at all costs. God be with you. »

He withdraws, going into an airy room where, around the Blessed Virgin, there are all the more faithful women disciples and also the other women who loved the Lord as their Master, although they never followed Him on His pilgrimages. And Peter goes and sits in a corner, looking at Mary Who smiles at him.

The people, outside, slowly part into two groups: that of those who remain and that of those who go back to town. Voices of adults calling the children, the shrill voices of children replying to them. Then the buzzing noise subsides.

« And now » says Peter « we will go as well… »

« Father, but the Lord said that He would come!… »

« Eh! I know! But, as you can see, He has not come. And this is the day He prescribed… »

« Yes, and my brother has already prepared everything for you, and here is Mark of Jonas, who has come to take you there and open the gate to you. But I am coming as well. We are all coming. Lazarus has provided for everybody » says Mary of Magdala.

« And where can we consume the supper with so many people? »

« Gethsemane itself will be the Supper room. Inside the house, the room for those who Jesus said. Outside, near the house, the tables for the others. That is what He wanted. »

« Who? Lazarus? »

« The Lord. »

« The Lord? But when did He come? »

« He came… What does it matter to you when? He came and He spoke to Lazarus. »

« I think that He will come, and even more, that He has come to each of us, even if none of us say so, keeping that joy as his dearest pearl, that he is even afraid to show, fearing it may lose its most beautiful light. The secrets of the King! » says Bartholomew, and he looks at the group of the virgin disciples, whose faces blush as if the beams of the setting sun set them aflame. But it is a spiritual flame of intense joy that lights them.

Mary, the Virgin of the virgins, all white in Her linen dress, a lily dressed in white, lowers Her head smiling, without speaking. How much She resembles, at this moment, the young Virgin of the Annunciation!

« Certainly… He will not leave us all alone, even if He does not appear visibly. I say that it is He Who puts certain thoughts in my poor heart and even more in my poor mind… » admits Matthew.

The others do not speak… They look at one another while they put on their mantles, scrutinising one another. But the very care with which some cover their faces as much as possible, to keep concealed the wave of spiritual joy enlivened by the recollection of the divine secret meetings, reveal them as the most favoured ones.

« Well, say so! » exclaim the others. « We are not jealous! We are not so intrusive as to want to know. But we shall be comforted by the hope that we shall not be deprived of His sight for good! Remember the words of Raphael to Tobias: "It is certainly right to keep the secret of the king, but it is more honourable to reveal and publish the works of God". The angel of God is right! Keep the secret of the words He has given you, but disclose His continuous love for us. »

James of Alphaeus looks at Mary, as if he wished to be enlightened by Her, and realising by Her smile that She agrees, He says: « It is true. I have seen the Lord. » Nothing else. And he is the only one to say so. The other two, who have covered themselves carefully, do not utter one word.

They all go out and in groups, the eleven ahead, then Lazarus with his sisters and the women disciples around Mary, last the shepherds and many of the seventy-two disciples. They set out towards Jerusalem along the upper road that takes one to the Mount of Olives. The children who have stayed run backwards and forwards happily.

Mark shows them a path that avoids the Field of the Galileans and the busier areas and goes directly to the new enclosure of the Garden of Gethsemane. He opens, lets them pass, and closes. Many disciples whisper to one another and some go to ask the apostles, and John in particular, questions. But they make a gesture to wait, as it is not yet the time to do what they ask, and they all remain quiet.

How much peace in the vast olive-grove, still kissed by the last sunbeams in the upper part, whereas the lower ones are already in the shade! A light rustling of the wind among the silver-green leaves and the cheerful chirping of birds greeting the dying day.

Here is the little house of the keeper. On the terrace, which is its roof, Lazarus has had a number of tents put up, so that the terrace has changed into an aerial supper room for the disciples who were not able to consume the Passover the previous month. Downstairs, on the very clean threshing-floor, there are more tables. In the house, in the best room, is the table for the women disciples.

The roasted lambs, lettuce, unleavened bread and the reddish sauce are brought to the various tables of those who have not celebrated the Passover, and the ritual chalice is placed on the tables. But on the table of the women there is no chalice, but as many cups as the people sitting at the table. The women were obviously exempted from that part of the ceremony. On the table of those who have consumed the Passover at the proper time there is the lamb, but there is no unleavened bread and no lettuce with reddish sauce.

Lazarus and Maximinus supervise everything. And Lazarus bends over Peter to tell him something that makes the chief Apostle

shake his head violently in obstinate denial.

« And yet… it is your duty » says Philip, who is beside him.

But Peter points at James of Alphaeus: « It is his duty. »

While they are discussing so, the Lord appears at the beginning of the threshing-floor and says greeting: « Peace to you. »

They all stand up and the noise warns the women of what is happening. They are on the point of going out, but Jesus enters the house greeting them as well.

Mary says: « Son! » and She worships Him more deeply than the others, teaching them by such a gesture that, no matter how Jesus may be a friend, such a friend and relative as to be even Her Son, He is always God, and is to be worshipped as God. Always worshipped, with an adoring spirit, even if His love for us is so full as to urge Him to give Himself with full confidence, as our Brother and Spouse.

« Peace to You, Mother. Sit down and eat. I am going upstairs, where Marjiam is awaiting his reward. »

He goes out to climb the little staircase and He calls in a loud voice: « Simon Peter and James of Alphaeus. Come. »

The two He has called go up behind Him and Jesus sits at the central table, where Marjiam is, and says to the two Apostles: « You will do what I tell you » and to Matthias, who is at the head of the table, He says: « Begin the Passover banquet. » This evening Jesus has Marjiam beside Him, where John was the last time. Peter and James are behind the Lord awaiting His orders.

And the banquet is celebrated with the same ritual of the Passover Supper: hymns, questions, libations. I do not know whether it is the same at the other tables. I look fixedly where Jesus is, unless His will compels me to look elsewhere, and I forget everything to contemplate my Lord, Who is now offering the best morsels of His lamb - He has taken it on His plate but He does not eat any of it, neither does He take any lettuce or sauce, and He does not drink of the Chalice - and He offers the best morsels to Marjiam, who is really blissful.

At the beginning Jesus made a gesture to Peter to bend and listen to Him, and Peter after listening to Him said in a loud voice: « At this moment the Lord offered the chalice for us all, as He was the Father and Head of His Family. »

Now He makes another gesture to Peter, who listens again and then stands up and says: « And at this point the Lord girded Himself to purify us and teach us what we are to do to consume the Eucharistic Sacrifice worthily. »

The supper proceeds until at another sign Peter says again: « At this moment the Lord, after taking the bread and the wine, offered them, and praying blessed them, and after breaking the bread into parts, He handed them to us saying: "This is My Body and this is

My Blood of the new eternal Testament, and it will be shed for you and for many to the remission of sins". »

Jesus stands up. He is most imposing. He orders Peter and James to take a loaf of bread and break it into small morsels and to fill a chalice, the biggest one there is on the tables, with wine. They obey and hold the bread and the wine in front of Him, and Jesus stretches out His hands over them and prays without any other action except His enraptured look…

« Hand out the morsels of bread and offer the brotherly chalice, Every time you do this, you shall do it in memory of Me. »

The two Apostles obey, full of veneration…

While the distribution of the Species takes place, Jesus goes down to the women. I think, but I cannot see, because I do not go in where they are, that Jesus administers Holy Communion to His Mother with His own hands. This is what I think, but I do not know whether it is true. But I cannot understand why He should go there, if it were not to do that.

Then He goes back up to the terrace. He does not sit down any more. The supper is about to end. He asks: « Is it all consumed? »

« It is all consumed, Lord. »

« As I did on the Cross. Stand up. Let us pray. »

He stretches out His arms, as if He were on the cross, and He intones the prayer of the Our Father.

I do not know why I am weeping. I think that it is perhaps the last time that I shall hear Him say it… And, as no painter or sculptor will ever be able to give us the true image of Jesus, so no one, however holy he may be, will ever be able to say the Our Father so manfully and at the same time so gently. I shall always feel a great nostalgia for these Our Fathers as I heard them from Jesus, a real conversation of His soul with the most loved and adored Father of Heaven, a cry of honour, of obedience, of faith, of submission, of humility, of mercy, of wish, of trust… everything!

« Go. And may the Grace of the Lord be in all of you and may His peace accompany you » Jesus says dismissing them. And He disappears in a bright light that by far exceeds the moonlight, as the moon is now full and high over the silent Garden, and the light of the lamps placed on the tables.

Not a voice. Tears on faces, adoration in hearts… and nothing else. The night watches and knows, with the angels, the throbs of those blessed hearts.

633. Farewell to His Mother before Ascension.

22nd February 1944.

I always see the room where Mary lives. The signs of the Passion have disappeared.

The Virgin is sitting and reading. They must be holy books, because She certainly does not read anything else in the scroll She is holding in Her hands. She is no longer tortured. Her face is more grave than before the Passion, more mature. But it is no longer that tragical face. It is stately but serene.

It seems to be morning, because the sun is already shining brightly and through the open window it illuminates the quiet room, but one can see that the garden, surrounded by high walls and on to which the window opens, is still all fresh with dew.

Jesus goes in. He is still wearing the wonderful garment of the morning of the Resurrection. His face sheds brightness and His wounds are like small suns.

Mary kneels down smiling, then She stands up and kisses His right Hand. Jesus presses Her to His Heart and kisses Her forehead, smiling, and asks Her for a kiss, which She also gives Him on His Forehead.

« Mother. The time of My stay on the earth is over. I am ascending to My Father. I have come to say a special farewell to You and to show Myself to You once again as I shall be in Heaven. It was not possible for Me to show Myself to men in this splendid garment. They would not have been able to bear the beauty of My glorified Body. It exceeds by far their possibilities. But to You, yes, Mother. And I have come to gladden You once again with it. Kiss My Wounds, so that in Heaven I may smell the perfume of Your lips and the sweetness of My Blood may remain on them for You.

But be sure, Mother, that I will never leave You. I will come out of Your heart only those few moments necessary for the consecration of the Bread and of the Wine, to return there, after getting detached from You with difficulty, with an eagerness of love like Your own, o My living Heaven of which I am the Heaven. We shall never be so united as from now on. Previously there was My embryonal inability, then My childhood, then the struggle of life and of work, then My mission, and then the Cross and the Sepulchre to keep Me away and to prevent Me from telling You how much I love You. But now I shall be in You no longer as a creature that is being formed, no longer near You among the obstacles of the world that forbids the fusion of two who love each other. Now I shall be in You as God, and nothing, nothing on Earth and in Heaven will be able to separate Me from You, You from Me, Holy Mother. I will speak words of ineffable love to You, I will give You caresses of inexpressible kindness. And you will love Me for those who do not love Me.

Oh! Mother, with Your perfect love, You fill the measure of love that the world will not give the Christ. So, rather than a farewell, Mine is the greeting of one who goes out for a moment, as if I were going to pick roses and lilies in this flowery garden. But from

Heaven I will bring You other roses and other lilies, more beautiful than these that have bloomed here. I will fill Your heart with them, Mother, to make You forget the stench of the Earth, that does not want to be holy, and to give You in advance the air of the blissful Paradise, where You are expected with so much love.

And the Love, Who cannot wait, will come upon You in ten days' time. Make Yourself beautiful with Your most beautiful joy, O Virgin Mother, because Your Spouse is coming. Winter is over… the vineyards in blossom shed their scent, and He sings: "Rise, o most beautiful one. Come, My Bride, you will be crowned". With His Fire He will crown You, o Holy Mother, and will make You happy with His spirit, which will be infused into You with all its magnificence, o Queen of Wisdom, His Queen, Who understood Him since the dawn of Your life and loved Him as no creature in the world ever loved.

Mother. I am ascending to Our Father. Upon You, Blessed Mother, the blessing of Your Son. »

Mary beams with joy in Her ecstasy, in the room that is still bright in the light of Christ.

Jesus says:

« Do not discuss, men, whether it was or was not possible for Me to change garment. I no longer was the Man bound to the necessities of man. I had the Universe as My footstool and all the powers as My obedient servants. And if, while I was the Evangelizer, I was able to become transfigured on the Tabor, should I have not been able to become transfigured for My Mother, when I became the glorious Christ? Or rather, change Myself for men and appear to Her as I was by now, divine, glorious, transfigured, from Man as I showed Myself to everybody in What I really was? And yet She had seen Me, poor Mother, transfigured by tortures. It was fair that She should see Me transfigured by Glory.

Do not discuss whether I could really be in Mary. If you say that God is in Heaven and on the earth and everywhere, why can you doubt whether at the same time I could be in Heaven and in the Heart of Mary, Who was a living Heaven? If you believe that I am in the Blessed Sacrament and enclosed in your ciboria, why can you doubt whether I was in that most pure and ardent Ciborium that was the Heart of My Mother?

What is the Eucharist? It is My Body and My Blood united to My Soul and to My Divinity. Well, when She was pregnant with Me, what else had She in Her womb? Did She not have the Son of God, the Word of the Father with His Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity? Do you, perhaps, not have Me because Mary had Me and She gave Me to you, after carrying Me for nine months? Well, as I left Heaven to dwell in Mary's womb, so, now that I was leaving the Earth, I was electing Mary's womb as My Ciborium. And which ciborium,

in which cathedral, is more beautiful and holy than this one?

Holy Communion is a miracle of love that I worked for you, men. But at the summit of my thought of love, there was shining the thought of infinite love of being able to live with My Mother and make Her live with Me until we should be reunited in Heaven. I worked the first miracle for the joy of My Mother, at Cana in Galilee. The last miracle, or rather, the last miracles, for the consolation of Mary, in Jerusalem. The Eucharist and the veil of the veronica. The latter, to give a drop of honey to the bitterness of the Desolate Mother. The former, to prevent Her from feeling that Jesus was no longer on the Earth.

Everything, everything, everything, but try and understand this once and for all, you have through Mary! You ought to love and bless Her at each breath of yours.

The veil of veronica is also a goad to your sceptical souls. Since you, o rationalists, o tepid people vacillating in your faith, proceed through arid examinations, compare the face of the veronica with that of the Holy Shroud. One is the Face of a living person, the other of a dead one. But length, width, somatic types, form, distinctive features, are identical. Superimpose the images. You will see that they correspond. It is I. I Who wanted to remind you how I was and how I had become out of love for you. If you had not gone astray, if you were not blind, those two Faces should be enough to bring you to love, to repentance, to God.

The Son of God leaves you, blessing you with the Father and with the Holy Spirit. »

634. Farewell and Ascension of the Lord.

24th April 1947.

As the day dawns the eastern sky is tinged with a light rosy hue. Jesus is walking with His Mother along the slopes of Gethsemane. No words are spoken, only glances of indescribable love are visible. Words have probably already been spoken. Perhaps they were never uttered. The two souls have spoken: Christ's and Christ's Mother's. Now it is loving contemplation, reciprocal contemplation. The dewy nature, the pure morning light are acquainted with it, the kind creatures of God: the herbs, flowers, birds, butterflies are acquainted with it. Men are absent.

I feel even ill at ease being present at this farewell. « Lord, I am not worthy! » I exclaim among the tears falling from my eyes, as I look at the last hour of the earthly union of the Mother and Her Son, and I consider that we have come to the end of the loving fatigue, that is Jesus, Mary and the poor, little unworthy child, whom Jesus wanted as witness of all the Messianic time, and whose name is Mary, but whom Jesus loves to call « little John » or also the « sweet

violet of the Cross. »

Yes. Little John. Little, because I am a nonentity. John, because I am really the one to whom God has done great favours, and because, in an infinitesimal measure - but it is all I possess, and by giving everything that I possess I know that I give in a perfect measure that pleases Jesus, because He is the « all of my nothing - and because in an infinitesimal measure, I, as the great beloved John, have given all my love to Jesus and to Mary, sharing tears and smiles with them, following them, anguished at seeing them distressed and at not being able to defend them from the hatred of the world at the cost of my very life, and now palpitating with the throbs of their hearts for what ends for ever… »

Yes, sweet violet. A sweet violet that has tried to remain hidden among the grass so that Jesus should not avoid it, as He loved all created things so much, since they are the work of His Father, but He should press me under His divine foot, and I might die exhaling my light scent in the effort to sweeten His contact with the rough hard earth. Yes, sweet violet of the Cross. And His Blood filled my calyx even to make it bend on the ground…

Oh! my Beloved Who, first, filled me with Your Blood, making me contemplate Your wounded feet, nailed to the wood « … and at the foot of the cross there was a little plant of sweet-smelling violets in bloom, and drops of the divine Blood were falling on the little plant of sweet-smelling violets in bloom… » A remote recollection, and always so close and present! A preparation to what I was later: Your mouthpiece who is now completely besprinkled with Your Blood, with Your perspiration and tears, with the tears of Mary Your Mother, but who also knows Your words, Your smiles, everything, everything about You, and no longer smells of sweet-smelling violets but of You alone, my One and Only Love, of that divine perfume that yesterday evening lulled my sorrow, and comes to me, as sweet as a kiss, as comforting as Heaven itself, and makes me forget everything to live only in You…

I have Your promise in me. I know that I shall not lose You. You have promised me and Your promise is sincere: it is the promise of God. I will still have You, for ever. Only if I sinned of pride, falsehood, disobedience, I should lose You, You said so, but You know that, with Your Grace supporting my will, I do not want to sin, and I hope that I will not sin, because You will support me. I am not an oak-tree. I know. I am a sweet violet. A frail stalk that can be bent by the foot of a little bird and also by the weight of a scarab. But You are my strength, o Lord. And my love for You is my wing.

I shall not lose You. You have promised me. You will come, entirely for me, to give joy to Your dying sweet violet. But I am not selfish, Lord. You know. You know that I should like You to be seen no longer by me, but to be seen by many more people, whom

I should like to believe in You. You have already given me so much, and I am not worthy of it. You have really loved me as You alone know how to love Your beloved children.

I think of how pleasant it was to see You « live » as Man among men. And I think that I shall no longer see You so. Everything has been seen and said. I also know that You will not be cancelled out of my thought in Your actions of Man amongst men, and that I shall need no books to remember You as You really were: it will be enough for me to look within myself, where all Your life is fixed with indelible letters. But it was sweet, sweet…

Now You are going to ascend… The Earth will lose You. Mary of the Cross will lose You, Master Saviour. You will remain for her the most sweet God, and You will no longer pour Blood but celestial honey into the violet calyx of Your sweet violet… I am weeping… I have been Your disciple with the other women disciples along the roads of mountains and forests, along the barren dusty roads of the plains, on the lake and near the lovely river of Your Fatherland. You are now going away and only in my memory I shall see Bethlehem and Nazareth on their hills green with olive-trees, and Jericho burning in the sun and with its rustling palm-trees, and friendly Bethany, and Engedi, a pearl lost in the deserts, and beautiful Samaria, and the fertile plains of Sharon and Esdraelon, and the strange tableland beyond the Jordan, and the nightmare of the Dead Sea, and the sunny towns on the Mediterranean coasts, and Jerusalem, the town of Your sorrow, its roads uphill and downhill, the archivolts, the squares, the suburbs, the wells and cisterns, the hills and even the sad valley of the lepers, where so much of Your mercy was effused… And the house of the Supper room… the little fountain weeping nearby… the little bridge on the Kidron, the place where You sweated blood… the court-yard of the Praetorium…

Ah, no! everything that is Your sorrow is here. It will remain for ever… I shall have to look for all the souvenirs to find them, but Your prayer at Gethsemane, Your scourging, Your ascent to Golgotha, Your agony and death, and the sorrow of Your Mother, no, I shall not have to look for them: they are always present. I may forget them in Paradise… and it seems impossible to me that they can be forgotten even there… I remember everything of those dreadful hours. Even the shape of the stone on which You fell. Even the bud of a red rose that knocked against the stone that closed Your sepulchre, and looked like a drop of blood on the granite… My most divine Love, Your Passion lives in my mind… and it breaks my heart…

The day has dawned completely. The sun is already high and the voices of the apostles can be heard. It is a signal for Jesus and Mary. They stop. They look at each other, One in front of the Other, then

Jesus opens His arms and presses His Mother to His chest… Oh! He was really a Man, the Son of a Woman! To believe it is enough to watch this farewell! Love overflows in a shower of kisses for the beloved Mother. Love covers the beloved Son with kisses. They seem unable to part. When they seem to be on the point of doing so, another embrace joins them again and among the kisses words of reciprocal blessings are uttered… Oh! it is really the Son of Man Who is leaving Her Who gave birth to Him! It is really the Mother Who, in order to give Him back to the Father, dismisses Her Child, the Token of the Love for the Most Pure Mother… God Who kisses the Mother of God!…

Finally the Woman, as a creature, kneels at the feet of Her God, Who is also Her Son, and Her Son, Who is God, imposes His hands on the head of the Virgin Mother, of the Eternal Beloved, and blesses Her in the Name of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and then He bends and lifts Her up, with a last kiss on Her forehead, which is as white as a petal of a lily under Her golden hair still so young-looking…

They go once again towards the house, and no one, seeing how calmly they proceed One beside the Other, would think of that wave of love that overwhelmed them shortly before. But how much difference there is also, in this farewell, from the sadness of other farewells of the past and from the torture of the farewell of the Mother to Her Son Who had been killed and was to be left all alone in the Sepulchre!… In the present case, although their eyes are shining with the natural tears of those who depart from their Beloved ones, their lips smile out of joy knowing that this Beloved is going to the Abode befitting His Glory…

« Lord! Out there, between the mountain and Bethany are all those that You told Your Mother You wanted to bless today » says Peter.

« All right. We will go to them now. But come first. I want to share the bread once again with all of you. »

They go into the room where ten days previously were the women for the supper of the fourteenth day of the second month. Mary accompanies Jesus so far, then She withdraws. Jesus remains with the eleven.

On the table there is some roasted meat, some cheese and small black olives, a small amphora of wine and a larger one with water, and some broad loaves of bread. A simple table, not set for an important ceremony, but only for the necessity of taking some food.

Jesus offers and makes the portions. He is in the centre between Peter and James of Alphaeus. He has called them to those places. John, Judas of Alphaeus and James are in front of Him, Thomas, Philip and Matthew are on one side, Andrew, Bartholomew and the Zealot are on the other. So everybody can see Jesus… A quick, silent meal. The apostles, who are at their last day with Jesus, notwithstanding

that the subsequent apparitions, both collective and individual, from the Resurrection onwards, have been full of love, have never got out of that reserve and veneration that have characterised their meetings with the Risen Jesus.

The meal is over. Jesus opens His hands over the table, with His usual gesture when facing an unavoidable fact, and says:

« Well. The hour has come when I have to leave you to go back to My Father. Listen to the last words of your Master.

Do not go away from Jerusalem during these days. Lazarus, to whom I have spoken, has seen to the fulfilment of the desires of his Master, and he gives you the house of the Last Supper, so that you may have a residence where to hold meetings and concentrate in prayer. Remain there during these days and pray assiduously to be prepared for the coming of the Holy Spirit, Who will complete you for your mission. Remember that I, although I was God, prepared Myself with severe penance for My ministry of evangelizer. Your preparation will be easier and easier and shorter and shorter. But I do not exact anything else from you. It is sufficient that you pray assiduously, together with the seventy-two and under the guide of My Mother, Whom I entrust to you with the concern of a Son. She will be for you a Mother and Teacher of love and perfect wisdom.

I could have sent you elsewhere to prepare yourselves to receive the Holy Spirit, instead I want you to remain here, because it is Jerusalem, the denier, that must be astonished at the continuation of the divine prodigies, which are given in reply to its denials. Later, the Holy Spirit will make you understand the necessity that the Church should arise just in this town, that from a human point of view is the most unworthy of having it. But Jerusalem is always Jerusalem, even if sin overwhelms it and the deicide was accomplished here. Nothing will be of avail to it. It is condemned. But if it is condemned, not all its citizens are condemned. Remain here for the few just people who are in its bosom, and remain here because this is the royal town and the town of the Temple, and because, as predicted by the prophets, here, where the King Messiah has been anointed and acclaimed and raised, here is to begin His kingdom over the world, and here again, where the synagogue received the libel of repudiation from God for its too many horrible crimes, the new Temple is to arise, and the peoples of all countries will come to it. Read the prophets. Everything is predicted in them. My Mother first, the Spirit Paraclete later, will make you understand the words of the prophets for this period of time.

Remain here until Jerusalem repudiates you as it repudiated Me, and hates My Church as it hated Me, brooding over plots to exterminate it. Then take the see of this beloved Church of Mine elsewhere, because it must not perish. I tell you: not even hell shall

prevail against it. But if God gives you the assurance of His protection, do not tempt Heaven by exacting everything from Heaven. Go to Ephraim as your Master went there because it was not the hour for Him to be caught by His enemies. I say Ephraim, meaning the land of idols and heathens. But it is not Ephraim in Palestine that you must choose as the see of My Church. Remember how many times, I spoke of this to you, all united or to one individually, foretelling you that you would go along the roads of the Earth to arrive at the heart of it and establish My Church there. It is from the heart of man that blood circulates through all the members. It is from the heart of the world that Christianity must spread all over the Earth.

At present My Church is like a creature that has already been conceived but is still forming in the matrix. Jerusalem is its matrix, and inside it the still tiny heart, around which the few members of the dawning Church gather, gives its small waves of blood to these members. But, when the hour marked by God comes, the stepmotherly matrix will expel the creature that formed in its womb, and it will go to a new land, and it will grow there becoming a great Body spread all over the Earth, and the throbs of the strong heart of the Church will propagate to all the great Body. The throbs of the heart of the Church, freed from all ties with the Temple, eternal and victorious over the ruins of the perished and destroyed Temple, living in the heart of the world, will tell Hebrews and Gentiles that God alone triumphs and wants what He wants, and that no hatred of men or group of idols can stop His will.

But this will happen later, and at that time you will know what to do. The Spirit of God will lead you. Be not afraid. For the time being hold the first meeting of the believers in Jerusalem. Then more meetings will take place as their numbers grow. I truly tell you that the citizens of My Kingdom will increase rapidly like seeds sown in very good soil. My people will spread all over the Earth. The Lord says to the Lord: "Because you have done this, and for My sake you have not spared yourself, I will bless you and I will make your descendants as many as the stars of heaven and the grains of sand on the seashore. Your descendants shall gain possession of the gates of their enemies and in your descendants all the nations of the Earth shall be blessed". My Name, My Sign and My Law are blessings, wherever they are known as sovereigns.

The Holy Spirit, the Sanctifier is about to come and you will be replete with Him. Ensure that you are as pure as everything that is to approach the Lord. I also was Lord like Him. But I had put on a garment over My Divinity to be able to stay among you, and not only to teach you and redeem you with the organs and the blood of that garment, but also to bring the Holy of Holies among men, without it being unbecoming that every man, even an impure one,

could lay his eyes on Him, Whom the Seraphim are afraid of looking at. But the Holy Spirit will come without the veil of flesh, and will alight on you and will descend in you with His seven gifts and will advise you. Now, the advice of God is such a sublime thing, that it is necessary to be prepared for it with a heroic will of a perfection that may make you resemble your Father and your Jesus, and your Jesus in His relationship with the Father and with the Holy Spirit. Therefore, perfect charity and perfect love in order to be able to understand the Love and receive Him on the thrones of your hearts.

Get lost in the eddy of contemplation. Strive to forget that you are men and strive to change into Seraphim. Throw yourselves into the furnace, into the flames of contemplation. The contemplation of God is like a spark that flashes from the friction of steel on flintstone and gives fire and light. The fire that consumes the opaque and always impure matter and transforms it into bright and pure flame is purification.

You will not have the Kingdom of God in you, if you do not have love. Because the Kingdom of God is the Love, and appears with the Love, and through the Love it is established in your hearts in the brightness of a huge light, that penetrates and fecundates, removes ignorance and gives wisdom, devours man and creates the god, the son of God, My brother, the king of the throne that God has prepared for those who give themselves to God, in order to have God, God, God, God alone. So be pure and holy through fervent prayer that sanctifies man, because it plunges him into God's fire, which is charity.

You must be holy. Not in the relative meaning that this words has had so far, but in the absolute meaning that I gave it, as I proposed the Holiness of the Lord as its example and limit, that is, perfect Holiness. Among us the Temple is called holy, holy the place where the altar is, the Holy of Holies the veiled place where the ark and the propitiatory are kept. But I truly tell you that those who possess the Grace and live in holiness out of love for the Lord, are more holy than the Holy of Holies, because God does not only alight on them, as on the propitiatory that is in the Temple, to give His orders, but He lives in them to give them His love.

Do you remember My words of the Last Supper? I promised you the Holy Spirit. Well, He is about to come to baptise you, not with water, as John did with you, preparing you for Me, but with fire to prepare you to serve the Lord, as He wants you to do. So he will be here, within a few days. And after His coming your capabilities will increase immeasurably, and you will be able to understand the words of your King, and do the deeds that He told you to do, to spread His Kingdom all over the Earth. »

« So will You rebuild the Kingdom of Israel then, after the coming

of the Holy Spirit? » they ask interrupting Him.

« There will no longer be a Kingdom of Israel, but My Kingdom. And it will be accomplished when the Father said. It is not for you to know the times and the moments that the Father has reserved for Himself in His power. But you, in the meantime, will receive the virtue of the Holy Spirit Who will come upon you, and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, in Judaea and in Samaria and as far as the boundaries of the Earth, establishing meetings where men meet in My Name; baptising peoples in the Most Holy Name of the Father, of the Son, of the Holy Spirit, as I told you, so that they may have the Grace and they may live in the Lord; preaching the Gospel to everybody, teaching what I taught you, doing what I ordered you to do. And I shall be with you every day until the end of the world.

And I want also this: James, My brother, to preside over the meeting in Jerusalem. Peter, as head of all the Church, will often have to set out on apostolic journeys, because all the neophytes will wish to meet the Pontiff Supreme Head of the Church. But great will be My brother's ascendancy over the believers of this first Church. Men are always men and they see as men. They will think that James is a continuation of Me, only because He is My brother. I truly tell you that he is greater and more like the Christ because of his wisdom than through relationship. But it is so. Men, who did not look for Me while I was among them, will now look for Me in him who is a relative of Mine. And you, Simon Peter, are destined to other honours… »

« That I do not deserve, Lord. I told You when You appeared to me and I tell you again now in the presence of everybody. You are good, divinely good, besides being wise, and You rightly judged me, who denied You in this town, ill-suited to be its spiritual head. You want to spare me so many just derisions… »

« We were all the same, except two, Simon. I also ran away. Not because of this, but because of the reasons that He mentioned, the Lord has destined me to this place; but you are my Chief, Simon of Jonah, and I acknowledge you as such, and in the presence of the Lord and of all my companions I profess obedience to you. I will give you what I can to help you in your ministry, but I beg you, give me your orders, because you are the head and I the subject. When the Lord reminded me of a conversation of long ago, I bent me head saying: "Let Your will be done". I will say the same to you, because, once the Lord has left us, you will be His Representative on the Earth. And we will love each other, helping each other in the sacerdotal ministry » says James, bowing from his place to pay homage to Peter.

« Yes. Love one another, helping one another reciprocally, because that is the new commandment and the sign that you really belong

to Christ.

Do not be upset for any reason. God is with you. You can do what I want of you. I would not impose things on you if you could not do them, because I do not want your ruin, on the contrary I want your glory. Well. I am going to prepare your places beside My throne. Remain united to Me and to the Father in love. Forgive the world that hates you. Call sons and brothers those who come to you, or are already with you out of love for Me.

Be at peace knowing that I am always ready to help you to carry your crosses. I will be with you in the work of your ministry and in the hours of persecutions, and you will not perish, you will not succumb even if those who see with the eyes of the world think so. You will be oppressed, grieved, tired, tortured, but My joy will be in you, because I will help you in everything. I truly tell you that, when you have the Love as a Friend, you will understand that everything suffered and lived for My love becomes light, even if it is a heavy torture of the world. Because for him who clothes all his actions, whether they are voluntary or imposed, with love, the yoke of life and of the world changes into a yoke given to him by God, by Me. And I repeat to you that My load is always proportioned to your strength and My yoke is light, because I help you to carry it.

You know that the world does not know how to love. But from now on you are to love the world with a supernatural love, to teach it how to love. And if seeing you persecuted, they should say to you: "Is that how God loves you? Making you suffer, grieving you? Then it is not worth while being of God", reply: "Sorrow does not come from God. But God allows it, and we know the reason and we are proud of having the part that Jesus Saviour, the Son of God, had". Reply: "We are proud of being nailed to the cross and of continuing the Passion of our Jesus". Reply with the words of Wisdom: "Death and sorrow were brought into the world by the envy of the demon, but God is not the maker of death and sorrow and He does not take delight in the sorrow of creatures. Everything coming from Him is life and wholesome". Reply: "At present we seem persecuted and defeated, but on the day of God, when lots have changed, we just people, who were persecuted on the Earth, will stand gloriously in front of those who oppressed and despised us". But also say to them: "Come to us! Come to the Life and Peace. Our Lord does not want your ruin, but your salvation. That is why He sent His beloved Son, so that you all might be saved".

And rejoice at taking part in My sufferings, so that later you may be in the glory with Me. "I shall be your exceedingly great reward" the Lord in Abraham promised all His faithful servants. You know how the Kingdom of Heaven is conquered: by strength, and one arrives there through many tribulations. But he who perseveres as I persevered will be where I am. I have told you which is the way

and which is the door that lead to the Kingdom of Heaven, and I was the first to walk along it and I have gone back to the Father by it. If there had been another one, I would have taught you it, because I take pity on your weakness as men. But there is no other one… And pointing it out to you as the only way and the only door, I also tell you, I repeat to you which is the medicine that gives strength to go along it and enter. It is love. Always love. Everything becomes possible when there is love in us. And the Love Who loves you will give you all the love, if in My Name you ask for so much love as to become athletes in holiness.

Now let us give each other the parting kiss, My beloved friends. »

He stands up to embrace them. They all imitate Him. But, while Jesus smiles peacefully, a smile really divinely beautiful, they weep, they are all upset, and John, throwing himself on Jesus' chest, shaken by all the sobs that are so violent as to break his chest, on behalf of everyone, as he realises everybody's wish, asks:« Give us at least Your Bread, that it may fortify us in this hour! »

« Let it be so! » Jesus replies to him. And taking a piece of bread, He breaks it, after offering and blessing it, repeating the ritual words. And He does the same with the wine, repeating then: « Do this in memory of Me » and He adds: « Who have left you this pledge of My love, to be still and always with you until you will be with Me in Heaven. » He blesses them and says: « And now let us go. »

They come out of the room, of the house…

Jonah, Mary and Mark are there outside, and they kneel down worshipping Jesus.

« May peace remain with you. And may the Lord reward you for what you have given Me » says Jesus, blessing them while passing by.

Mark stands up saying: « Lord, the olive-groves along the Bethany road are full of disciples awaiting You. »

« Go and tell them to go to the Field of the Galileans. »

Mark darts away with all the speed of his young legs.

« So, they have all come » say the apostles to one another.

Further aside, sitting between Marjiam and Mary of Clopas, there is the Mother of the Lord. And She stands up when She sees Him coming, worshipping Him with all the palpitations of Her heart of Mother and believer.

« Come, Mother, and you too, Mary… » says Jesus inviting them, when He sees them stand still, immobilised by His majesty that blazes as in the morning of the Resurrection. But Jesus does not want to overwhelm with His majesty, and He kindly asks Mary of Alphaeus: « Are you alone? »

« The other women… the others are ahead… With the shepherds and… with Lazarus and all his family… But they left us here, because… »

« Oh! Jesus! Jesus! Jesus!… How shall I put up with not seeing You any more, blessed Jesus, my God, I who loved You even before You were born, I who wept so much over You when I did not know where You were after the slaughter… I who had my sun in Your smile after You came back, and all, all my blessings?… How many blessings! How many You have given me!… Now I am really becoming poor, a widow, all alone!… While You were here, there was everything!… I thought I had experienced all sorrow that evening… But the very grief, all the sorrow of that day had dulled my mind and… yes, it was not so deep as it is now… And then… there was the fact that You were going to rise. I seemed as if I could not believe it, but now I realise that I did believe it, because I did not feel what I am feeling now… » she says weeping and panting, so much do her tears choke her.

« My good Mary, you are worrying just like a little boy, who thinks that his mother does not love him and has abandoned him, because she has gone to town to buy him presents that will make him happy, and who will soon go back to him to cover him with kisses and gifts. And am I not doing so with you? Am I not going to prepare joy for you? Am I not going to come back and say to you: "Come, My dear relative and beloved disciple, mother of My beloved disciples"? Am I not leaving you My love? Shall I give you My love, Mary? You know whether I love you! Do not weep so, but rejoice, because you will no longer see Me despised and fatigued, no longer chased and rich only in the love of few people. And with My love I leave you My Mother. John will be like a son to Her, and I ask you to be a good sister to Her, as you have always been. See? My Mother is not weeping. She is aware that, if Her nostalgia for Me is the file that will consume Her heart, the wait will be always short as compared to the great joy of an eternal union, and She also knows that this parting of ours will not be so absolute as to make Her say: "I no longer have My Son". That was Her cry of sorrow on that day of sorrow. Now hope sings in Her heart: "I know that My Son is ascending to His Father, but He will not leave Me without His spiritual love". That is what you believe, and everybody… Here are the other men and women. Here are My shepherds. »

The faces of Lazarus and of his sisters among all the servants of Bethany, the face of Johanna like a rose under a veil of rain, and those of Eliza and of Nike, already marked by age - and wrinkles are now deepened by pain, always pain for creatures, even if the soul rejoices because of the triumph of the Lord - the face of Anastasica, the lily-like faces of the first virgins, and the ascetic face of Isaac, the inspired one of Matthias, and the virile face of Manaen, and the severe ones of Joseph and Nicodemus… Faces, faces, faces…

Jesus calls to Himself the shepherds, Lazarus, Joseph, Nicodemus,

Manaen, Maximinus and the others of the seventy-two disciples. But He particularly keeps the shepherds close to Himself saying: « Here. You were near the Lord Who had come from Heaven, bent over His annihilation, You are to be near the Lord Who is going back to Heaven, with your souls rejoicing because of His glorification. You have deserved this place, because you did believe notwithstanding that all the circumstances were unfavourable, and you were able to suffer for your faith. I thank you for your faithful love. I thank all of you. You, My friend Lazarus, you, Joseph, and you, Nicodemus, who took pity on the Christ when to do so might have been very dangerous. You Manaen, who despised the filthy favours of an unclean man to follow Me on My way. You, Stephen, flowery crown of justice, who left what was imperfect for what was perfect and will be crowned with a garland, with which you are not yet acquainted, but will be announced to you by the angels. You John, for a short period of time brother to the most pure breast and who have come more to the Light than to the sight. You, Nicolaus, who, as a proselyte, have been able to console Me for the grief of the sons of this Nation. And you, good women disciples, stronger, in your kindness, than Judith. And you, Marjiam, My child, and from now on you will be called Martial, in remembrance of the Roman boy killed on the road and laid at Lazarus' gate with the defying script: "And now tell the Galilean to bring you back to life again, if He is the Christ and has risen from the dead", the last of the innocents who lost their lives in Palestine to serve Me also unconsciously, and first of the innocents of every Nation who, having come to the Christ, will be hated for that and extinguished prematurely, like buds of flowers torn off the stems before blooming. And may this name, o Martial, show you your future destiny: be the apostle in barbarian countries and conquer them to your Lord, as My love conquered the Roman boy to Heaven. You are all blessed by Me in this farewell, as from the Father I invoke the reward for those who have comforted the sorrowful journey of the Son of Man. Blessed be Mankind in the chosen part there is among Hebrews and Gentiles, and that has manifested itself in its love for Me. Blessed be the Earth with its herbs and flowers, and its fruits that have given Me pleasure and refreshment so many times. Blessed be the Earth with its waters and its tepidness, for its birds and its animals that many a time exceeded man in giving relief to the Son of Man. May you be blessed, sun, and you, sea, and you, mountains, hills, plains. Blessed you, stars, My companions in My night prayers and in My sorrow. And you, moon, who illuminated Me as I wandered around in My pilgrimages of the evangelizer. May all you creatures be blessed, the works of My Father, My companions in this mortal hour, friendly to Him Who had left Heaven to relieve tortured Mankind of the troubles of the Sin that separates from God. And

may you also be blessed, you innocent instruments of My torture: thorns, metals, wood, twisted hemp, because you have assisted Me in fulfilling the will of My Father! »

How thundering is Jesus' voice! It spreads through the tepid calm air, like a bronze gong that has been struck, it propagates in waves over the sea of faces looking at Him from all directions.

I say that there are hundreds of people around Jesus as He goes up, with His more beloved ones, towards the top of the Mount of Olives. But when Jesus arrives at the Field of the Galileans, in which there are no tents in this period of time between two festivities, He says to His disciples: « Stop the people where they are, and then follow Me. »

He climbs farther up, as far as the highest summit of the mountain, the one closer to Bethany, which it dominates from above, than to Jerusalem. Close to Him are His Mother, the Apostles, Lazarus, the shepherds and Marjiam. Farther away, in a semicircle, are the other disciples to hold the people back.

Jesus is standing on a large stone, that protrudes a little and stands out in its whiteness among the grass of a clearing. He is brightly illuminated by the sun that makes His garment shine as white as snow and His hair like gold. His eyes sparkle in a divine light. He opens out His arms in the gesture of an embrace. He seems to be wishing to press to His chest the multitudes of the Earth, whom His spirit sees represented in that crowd. His unforgettable inimitable voice gives the last order: « Go! Go in My Name to evangelize the peoples as far as the ends of the Earth. God be with you. May His Love comfort you, may His Light guide you, may His Peace dwell in you until you reach eternal life. »

He becomes transfigured in beauty. Handsome! As handsome and even more so than He was on Tabor. They all fall on their knees worshipping. While He is already rising from the stone on which He is standing, He looks once again for the face of His Mother, and His smile reaches a power that no one will ever be able to express… It is His last goodbye to His Mother. He rises, rises… The sun, now more free to kiss Him, as no foliage, not even a thin leaf, intercepts its beams, brightens with its splendour the God-Man, Who with His most Holy Body is ascending to Heaven, and displays His glorious Wounds that shine like living rubies. The rest is a pearly smile of light. And it is really the Light that is revealing itself for what it is, at this last moment as on Christmas night. Creation sparkles in the light of the Christ Who is ascending. A light exceeding that of the sun. A superhuman and most blissful light. A light descending from Heaven to meet the Light ascending to it… And Jesus Christ, the Word of God, disappears from the sight of men in this ocean of brightness…

On the earth, only two noises in the deep silence of the ecstatic

crowd: the cry of Mary when He disappears: « Jesus! », and the weeping of Isaac. The others are struck dumb with religious astonishment, and they remain there, as if they were waiting, until two snow-white angelical lights, in human form, appear repeating the words mentioned in the first chapter of the Acts of the Apostles.

635. The Election of Matthias.

26th April 1947.

It is a placid evening. The light is fading gently and the sky so far purple, is becoming a delicate amethystine velarium. It will soon be dark, but at present there is still light, and this faint evening light is pleasant after so much burning sunshine.

The court-yard of the house of the Supper room, a large yard among the white walls of the house, is crowded with people as in the evenings after Resurrection. And a harmonious whispering of prayers, interrupted now and again by pauses of meditation, rises from these people engrossed in thought.

As the light becomes fainter and fainter in the court-yard, surrounded as it is by the high walls of the house, some people bring lamps and place them on the table, close to which the apostles are gathered: Peter in the centre, James of Alphaeus and John beside him, and then the others. The flickering light of the small flames shines upwards on the faces of the apostles, making their features stand out and showing their expressions: concentrated the expression of Peter, as if he were overstrung in the effort to perform these first functions of his ministry in a worthy way; ascetically mild that of James of Alphaeus; serene and dreaming that of John, and beside him the pensive face of Bartholomew, followed by the countenance full of life of Thomas, and then Andrew's, veiled by his humility that makes him stay with his eyes almost closed, his head slightly bent: he seems to be saying: "I am not worthy"; close to him Matthew, one elbow resting on the hand of the other arm, his cheek leaning on the hand of his raised arm; and then James of Alphaeus, Thaddeus, with his authoritative face and his eyes that remind one so much of the eyes of Jesus, with their colour and expression: a real ruler of crowds.

Even now he is keeping the meeting quiet, under the fire of his eyes, more than all the rest together; and yet, from his involuntary regal magnificence, the feeling of his heart filled with compunction can be seen to emerge, particularly when it is his turn to intone a prayer. When he says the psalm: « Not to us, Lord, not to us, but to Your Name give glory for Your mercy and loyalty, so that the nations may not say: "Where is their God? » he really prays with his soul prone before Him Who chose him, and the strongest feeling within him vibrates in his voice; with all his praying he also says:

« I am not worthy of serving You, Who are so perfect. »

Philip, beside him, his face already marked by age, although he is still in full manhood, looks like a man who is contemplating a sight known to him alone, and is standing with his hands pressed against his cheeks, a little bent and somewhat sad… whereas the Zealot is looking up, far away, with an intimate smile that embellishes his face, which is not beautiful, but is charming because of its austere distinction. James of Zebedee, impulsive and quivering, says his prayers as if he were still speaking to his beloved Master, and the twelfth psalm is uttered impetuously by his inflamed spirit.

They end with the long and beautiful psalm one hundred and eighteen, of which they say a strophe each, in two turns to complete the number of the strophes. Then they all become absorbed in silence until Peter, who had sat down, stands up, as if he were urged by an inspiration, praying in a loud voice with his arms stretched out as the Lord used to do: « Send Your Spirit to us, o Lord, so that we may see in His Light. »

« Maran atha » they all say.

Peter collects his thoughts in an intense silent prayer, but perhaps he listens more than he prays, or at least he waits for words of light… Then he raises his head again and once again he stretches out his arms, which he had folded across his chest, and as he is small as compared to the majority of his companions, he climbs on his seat to dominate the little crowd thronging the court-yard, and to be seen by everybody. And everybody, realising that he is going to speak, becomes silent and looks at him paying attention.

« My brothers, it was necessary that the Scripture predicted by the Holy Spirit through the mouth of David and concerning Judas should be accomplished, Judas in fact was the guide who led those who captured the Lord and our Blessed Master: Jesus.

He, Judas, was one of ours, and was entrusted with this ministry. But his election changed into ruin for him, because Satan entered into him through many ways and from apostle of Jesus made him the traitor of his Lord. He thought he would triumph and rejoice and thus revenge himself on the Holy Master, Who had disappointed the unclean hopes of his heart full of every concupiscence. But when he thought he was going to triumph and rejoice, he realised that the man who makes himself slave of Satan, of the flesh, of the world, does not triumph, on the contrary he bites the dust like one who is defeated. And he learned that the taste of food given by man and by Satan is very bitter and completely different from the sweet simple bread that God gives His children. He then became acquainted with despair and he hated the whole world after hating God, and he cursed everything the world had given him and he killed himself by hanging himself from an olive-tree in the olivegrove that he had bought with his iniquities, and on the day that

the Christ rose gloriously from the dead, his putrid and already verminous body burst and his bowels were scattered on the ground at the foot of the olive-tree, making that place unclean.

The redeeming Blood rained on Golgotha and purified the Earth, because it was the Blood of the Son of God, Who had become incarnate for us. On the hill near the place of the ill-famed Council, not blood, not tears of good remorse, but the filth of rotten bowels rained on the dust. Because no other blood could be mixed with the Most Holy Blood in those days of purification, in which the Lamb was washing us in His Blood, and less than ever was it possible for the Earth, that was drinking the Blood of the Son of God, to drink also the blood of the son of Satan.

The fact is well known. And it is also known that Judas, in his fury of a damned soul, took the money of the infamous transaction back to the Temple, striking with it, unclean as it was, the face of the High Priest. And it is known that with that money, which had been taken from the Treasury of the Temple, but could no longer be put back into it, because it was the price of blood, the princes of the Priests and the Elders, after consulting with one another, have bought the field of the potter, as the prophecies had said, specifying even its price. And the place will be handed down to posterity under the name of Hakeldama. So everything about Judas has been said, and let even the memory of his face vanish from us, but let us bear in mind the ways through which, from being called by the Lord to the Heavenly Kingdom, he descended to being prince in the Kingdom of eternal darkness, so that we ourselves may not tread on them imprudently, becoming other Judases for the Word that God has entrusted to us and which is still the Christ, the Master among us.

But it is written in the book of Psalms: "Let their house become desert, let no one live in it and let his office be taken by somebody else". So it is necessary that one of these men, who have been with us all the time that the Lord Jesus was with us, coming and going, beginning from the Baptism by John until the day in which from the middle of us He ascended to Heaven, is appointed to be witness with us of His Resurrection. And it is necessary to do so quickly, so that he may be present with us at the Baptism of Fire, of which the Lord has spoken to us, so that he, who did not receive the Holy Spirit from the Master, may receive it directly from God and be enlightened and sanctified by it, and he may have the virtues that we shall receive, and he may judge and remit and do what we shall do, and his actions may be valid and holy.

I would suggest to choose him among the most faithful of the faithful disciples, those who have suffered for Him remaining faithful also when He was the One Unknown to the world. Many of them come to us from John, the Precursor of the Messiah, spirits modelled

throughout years for the service of God. The Lord was very fond of them, and the most fond among them was Isaac, who had suffered so much because of the child Jesus. But you know that his heart broke during the night that followed the Ascension of the Lord. Let us not mourn him. He has joined his Lord. It was the only desire of his heart… And also ours… But we have to suffer our passion. Isaac had already suffered it. So you are to suggest some names among these, so that the twelfth apostle may be elected according to the usages of our people, leaving the power of indicating, in the gravest circumstances, to the Lord, to Him Who knows. »

They consult with one another. After a short time the most important disciples (among the non-shepherds), by mutual consent with the ten apostles, inform Peter that they propose Joseph, the son of Joseph of Saba, to honour his father, a martyr for Christ, by means of his son, a faithful disciple, and Matthias, for the same reasons as for Joseph, and, further, to honour also his first master: John.

And as Peter agrees to their advice, they make the two come forward to the table and in the meantime they pray with their arms stretched forward in the usual attitude of the Hebrews: « Most High Lord, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, the Only and Trine God, Who know the hearts of all men, show us which of these two You have chosen to take in this ministry and apostolate the place of Judas, who prevaricated, and go in his stead. »

« Maran atha » they all reply in chorus.

As they have no dice or anything else with which to cast lots, and as they do not wish to use coins for this purpose, they take some small stones spread about the yard, some poor little stones, as many white as dark, and they decide that the white ones are for Matthias, the others for Joseph. They put them in a bag, after emptying it of its contents, they shake it and they offer it to Peter who, after making a blessing gesture on it, puts his hand in it, praying with his eyes at the sky, strewn with stars, and pulls out a little stone: as white as snow. The Lord has indicated Matthias as Judas' successor.

Peter goes to the front of the table and embraces him « to make him like himself » he says. Also the other ten make the same gesture amid the applause of the little crowd.

At the end Peter, after going back to his place holding by the hand the chosen apostle who is beside him - so Peter is now between Matthias and James of Alphaeus - says: « Come to the place that God has reserved for you and with your justice cancel the memory of Judas, helping us, your brothers, to accomplish the deeds that Jesus told us to do. May the grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ be always with you. »

He addresses all the others, dismissing them…

While the disciples disperse slowly through a secondary exit, the

apostles go back into the house taking Matthias to Mary, Who is engrossed in prayer in Her room, so that the new apostle may receive the word of greeting and election also from the Mother of God.

636. The Descent of the Holy Spirit. End of the Messianic Cycle.

27th April 1947.

No voices or noises can be heard in the house of the Supper room. None of the disciples are present, at least I cannot hear anything that can authorise me to say that people are gathered in the other rooms of the house. There is only the presence and the voices of the Twelve and of the Most Holy Virgin gathered in the hall of the Supper.

The room looks wider, because the furniture is placed differently and leaves all the centre of the room and also two of the walls free. The large table used for the Supper has been pushed against the third wall, and between them and the wall, and also at the two narrower sides of the table, they have placed the couch-seats used for the Supper and also the stool that Jesus used for the Washing of feet. But the couch-beds are not vertical to the table, as they were for the Supper, but parallel to it, so that the apostles can sit down without occupying all of them, and they have left one, the only one placed vertically to the table, all for the Blessed Virgin, Who is at the centre of the table, in the place that Jesus occupied at the Supper.

There are no table-cloths or tableware on the table, there is nothing on the sideboards, and the ornaments have been taken off the walls. Only the chandelier in the centre is lit, but only one flame is lit, the other small flames on the circle forming a corolla to the strange chandelier are out.

The windows are closed and barred with heavy metal bars placed across them. But a sunbeam penetrates boldly through a tiny hole and like a long thin needle it descends on the floor forming a round spot of sunshine.

The Blessed Virgin, sitting all alone on Her seat, has Peter and John at Her sides, on their seats, Peter on Her right, John on Her left hand side. Matthias, the new apostle, is between James of Alphaeus and Thaddeus. In front of Her, Our Lady has a large low chest of dark wood, which is closed. Mary is dressed in deep blue. Her hair is covered with a white veil, over which is placed the edge of Her mantle. All the others are bare-headed.

Mary is reading slowly in a loud voice. But as the light that arrives there is very faint, I think that rather than read She is repeating by heart the words written on the scroll that She is holding

spread out. The others follow Her in silence, meditating. Now and again they reply, when it is appropriate.

Mary's face is transfigured by an ecstatic smile. I wonder what She sees, that is capable of inflaming Her eyes, like two clear stars, and make Her ivory cheeks blush, as if a rosy flame reflected on Her! She is really the mystic Rose…

The apostles bend forward, sitting a little sideways, to see Her face, while She smiles so gently and reads and Her voice sounds like the song of and angel. And Peter is so deeply moved that two large tears fall from his eyes, and stream down along wrinkles on both sides of his nose to get lost in the thicket of his grey beard. But John reflects the virginal smile and is inflamed like Her with love, while he follows with his eyes what the Virgin is reading on the scroll and, when he hands Her a new scroll he looks and smiles at Her.

The reading is over. Mary's voice stops. The rustling of the parchments rolled and unrolled comes to an end. Mary concentrates in secret prayer, joining Her hands on Her breast and leaning Her head on the chest. The apostles imitate Her…

A very loud and harmonious roar, that resembles the wind and the harp, as well as human singing and the sound of a perfect organ, suddenly resounds in the silence of the morning. It comes near, more and more harmonious and loud, and with its vibrations it fills the Earth, propagates them and impresses them on the house, on the walls, on the furniture. The flame of the chandelier, so far immobile in the peace of the closed room, flickers as if a wind were blowing and the little chains of the chandelier tinkle vibrating under the wave of the supernatural sound that strikes them.

The apostles raise their heads frightened, and as that most beautiful rumble, in which are all the loveliest notes that God gave the Heavens and the Earth, approaches them more and more, some stand up ready to run away, some crouch on the floor covering their heads with their hands and mantles, or beat their breasts asking God to forgive them, some press against Mary, too frightened to keep the reserve they always have for the Most Pure Mother. Only John is not frightened, because he sees the bright peace of joy that is accentuated on the face of Mary, Who raises Her head smiling at a thing known to Her alone, and Who then slides down on Her knees opening Her arms, and the two blue wings of Her mantle so opened stretch out on Peter and John, who have imitated Her, kneeling down. But all this, which took me some minutes to describe, has taken place in less than one minute.

And then the Light, the Fire, the Holy Spirit enters, with a last melodious loud noise, in the form of a very shining burning globe, into the closed room, without any door or window being moved, and remains hovering for a minute over Mary's head, about three palms

above Her head, which is now uncovered, because Mary, upon seeing the Fire Paraclete, has raised Her arms to invoke Him and has thrown Her head back with a cry of joy, with a smile of boundless love. And, after that moment in which all the Fire of the Holy Spirit, all the Love, is collected in His Spouse, the Most Holy Globe splits into thirteen canorous very bright flames, of so bright a light that no earthy comparison can describe, and it descends to kiss the forehead of each apostle.

But the flame that descends upon Mary is not a tongue of a straight flame on Her forehead that it kisses, but it is a crown that embraces and encircles the virginal head like a wreath, crowning as Queen the Daughter, the Mother, the Spouse of God, the Incorruptible Virgin, the Wholly Beautiful, the Eternally Loved, the Eternally Maiden Whom nothing can humiliate, and in nothing, Whom sorrow had aged but Who has revived in the joy of the Resurrection, sharing with Her Son an accentuation of beauty and freshness of bodies, of looks, of vitality… having already an advance of the beauty of Her glorious Body received into Heaven to be the flower of Paradise.

The Holy Spirit makes His flames shine round the head of His Beloved. Which words does He speak to Her? Mystery! Her blessed face is transfigured with supernatural joy and smiles with the smiles of Seraphim, while blissful tears shine like diamonds on the cheeks of the Blessed Virgin, struck as they are by the Light of the Holy Spirit.

The Fire remains so for some time… Then it vanishes… In memory of its descent there remains a fragrance that no earthly flower can exhale… The Perfume of Paradise…

The apostles collect themselves… Mary remains in Her ecstasy. She only folds Her arms across Her breast, closes Her eyes, lowers Her head… Her conversation with God continues… insensible to everything… No one dare disturb Her.

John, pointing at Her, says: « She is the altar. And the Glory of the Lord has rested on Her glory… »

« Yes. Let us not upset Her joy. But let us go and preach the Lord and let His works and His words be known to peoples » says Peter with supernatural impulsiveness.

« Let us go! Let us go! The Spirit of God is burning in me » says James of Alphaeus.

« And it is urging us to act. All of us. Let us go and evangelize the peoples. »

They go out as if they were pushed or attracted by a wind or by a vigorous force.

Jesus says:

« And here the Work, that My love for you has dictated and that

you have received through the love that a creature has had for Me and for you, is over. It ended today, the day of the Commemoration of Saint Zita from Lucca, the humble maid who served her Lord with charity in this Church of Lucca, where I, from remote places, have brought My little John, so that he should serve Me with charity and with the same love that Saint Zita had for all unhappy people. Zita used to give bread to the poor, remembering that I am in each of them, and that blessed will they be, who, side by side with Me, give bread and drink to the hungry and thirsty. Mary-John has given My words to those who languish in ignorance or in tepidness or in doubt about Faith, remembering that Wisdom said that those who work hard to make God known, will shine like stars in eternity, giving glory to their Love by making it known and loved, and to many people.

And, further, it ended today, the day in which the Church raises the pure lily of the fields Mary Theresa Goretti to the altars, the lily whose stem was broken while its corolla was still a bud. And by whom was it broken if not by Satan, envious of that purity that shone more than his ancient angelic aspect? Broken because it was sacred to the Divine Lover. Mary, virgin and martyr of this century of disgrace, in which also the honour of the Woman is held in contempt, by spitting the slaver of reptiles to deny the power of God to give an inviolate dwelling to His Word, Who was becoming incarnate by the Holy Spirit, in order to save those who believe in Him. Also Mary-John is martyr of the Hatred, who does not want My wonders to be celebrated by the Work, the weapon capable of snatching so many preys from him. But also Mary-John knows, as Mary Theresa knew, that martyrdom, whatever its name and aspect are, is the key that without delay opens the Kingdom of Heaven to those who suffer to continue My Passion.

The Work is finished. And with its end, with the descent of the Holy Spirit, ends the Messianic cycle, that My Wisdom has enlightened from its dawning: the Immaculate Conception of Mary, to its setting: the descent of the Holy Spirit. All the Messianic cycle is the work of the Spirit of Love, for those who see properly. It was therefore right to begin it with the mystery of the Immaculate Conception of the Spouse of the Love, and finish it with the seal of the Fire Paraclete on the Church of Christ.

The revealed works of God, of the Love of God, end with Pentecost. From then onwards the intimate mysterious work of God continues in His believers, united in the Name of Jesus in the One, Holy, Catholic, Apostolic, Roman Church; and the Church, that is, the assembly of the believers - shepherds,- sheep and lambs - can proceed without erring because of the continuous spiritual operation of the Love, the Theologian of theologians, He Who forms the true theologians, that is', those who are lost in God and have God in themselves - the life of

God in them through the direction of the Spirit of God that guides them - that is, those who really are the "children of God" according to the concept of Paul.

And at the end of the Work, once again I have to put the complaint that I have put at the end of each evangelical year, and in My grief seeing My gift despised, I say to all of you: "You shall not have anything else, because you have not received this that I have given you". And I say also that about which I had you informed last summer (21.5.46) to call all of you on the right path: "You will not see Me until the day comes when you will say: 'Blessed is He Who comes in the name of the Lord' ". »

The Work was finished today 27th April 1947.

Viareggio, Via Fratti 113 - Maria Valtorta.

637. Peter Celebrates the Eucharist in a Meeting of the First Christians.

Conclusion of the Work, that is: From Pentecost to the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary. 1st episode (3-6-1944). Peter, no longer a coarse fisherman, in his new capacity of Pontiff.

3rd June 1944.

It is one of the very first meetings of Christians, in the days immediately after Pentecost.

The twelve apostles are once again twelve, because Matthias, already elected in the place of the traitor, is among them. And the fact that all twelve are there proves that they had not yet parted to go and evangelize, according to the order of the Master. So it must have been Pentecost only a short time ago, and the persecutions of the Sanhedrin against the servants of Jesus Christ have not yet begun. Because if they had begun, they would not celebrate with so much calm, and without taking any precautions, in a house even too well known to those of the Temple, that is in the house of the Supper room, and exactly in the room where the Last Supper was consumed, the Eucharist was instituted, and the true and total betrayal as well as the Redemption began.

The large room, however, has undergone a modification, necessary for its new function as a church, and required by the number of the believers. The large table is no longer near the wall of the little staircase, but it is near, or rather against the wall facing it, so that even those who cannot go into the Supper room, already crowded with people - in the Supper room, the first church of the Christian world - can see what is happening there, thronging the entrance corridor, near the little door, completely open, that admits to the room.

In the room there are men and women of all ages. In a group of

women, near the large table, but in a corner, there is Mary, the Mother, surrounded by Martha and Mary of Lazarus, by Nike, Eliza, Mary of Alphaeus, Salome, Johanna of Chuza, in short, by many of the women disciples, both Jewish and not Jewish, whom Jesus had cured, comforted, evangelized, and who had become sheep of His fold. Among the men there are Nicodemus, Lazarus, Joseph of Arimathea, a large number of disciples, among whom there are Stephen, Hermas, the shepherds, Elisha the son of the leader of the synagogue of Engedi, and many more. There is also Longinus, not in his military uniform, but as if he were an ordinary citizen, with a long plain greyish tunic. Then many more, who have certainly entered the flock of Christ after Pentecost and the first evangelization of the Twelve.

Peter speaks also now, evangelizing and teaching the people present. He speaks once again of the Last Supper. Again, because from his words it is clear that he has already spoken of it.

He says: « I tell you once again » and he stresses these words very much « of this Supper in which, before being sacrificed by men, Jesus the Nazarene, as He was called, Jesus Christ, the Son of God and our Saviour, as He is to be called and believed with all our hearts and minds, because our salvation is in this faith, sacrificed Himself of His own free will, and out of excess of love, giving Himself in Food and Drink to men and saying to us, His servants and continuators: "Do this in memory of Me". And that is what we do. But, o men, as we, His witnesses, believe that in the Bread and in the Wine, offered and blessed, as He did, in His memory and out of obedience to His divine order, there is His Most Holy Body and His Most Holy Blood, that Body and that Blood that are of a God, of the Son of the Most High God, and that they have been crucified and shed for the sake and the lives of men, so you also, all of you, who have come to be part of the true, new, immortal Church, predicted by the Prophets and founded by the Christ, must believe it. Believe and bless the Lord Who to us - His crucifiers, if not materially, certainly morally and spiritually, because of our weakness in serving Him, because of our dullness in understanding Him, because of our cowardice in abandoning Him running away in His supreme hour, in our, no, in my personal betrayal of a man fearful and cowardly to the extent of disowning and denying Him and denying that I was His disciple, and more than that, the first among His servants (and large tears stream down Peter's face) shortly before the first hour, there, in the Court of the Temple - believe and bless, I was saying, the Lord, Who leaves this eternal sign of forgiveness to us. Believe and bless the Lord, Who allows those, who did not know Him when He was the Nazarene, to know Him now that He is the Word Incarnate reunited to His Father. Come and take it. He said: "He who eats My Flesh and drinks My Blood will have eternal

Life". And we did not understand then (and Peter weeps again). We did not understand because we were slow in understanding. But now the Holy Spirit has brightened our intelligence, has fortified our faith, has infused charity into us, and we understand. And in the name of the Most High God, of the God of Abraham, of Jacob, of Moses, in the most high name of the God Who spoke to Isaiah, to Jeremiah, to Ezekiel, to Daniel and to the other Prophets, we swear to you that this is the truth and we beseech you to believe, so that you may have eternal Life. »

Peter is full of stateliness while speaking. There is no longer anything in him of the rather coarse fisherman of not long ago. He has climbed on a stool to speak and to be seen and heard better, because, small as he is, if he had remained standing on the floor of the room, he could not have been seen by those farther away, whereas he wants to dominate the crowd. He speaks moderately, in an appropriate voice, with the gestures of a true orator. His eyes, always expressive, are now more eloquent than ever. Love, faith, authority, contrition, everything shines through his eyes anticipating and reinforcing his words.

He has finished speaking now. He comes down from the stool and passes behind the large table, in the space between the table and the wall, and waits.

James and Judas, that is the two sons of Alphaeus and cousins of the Christ, now lay a white table-cloth on the table. To do so they lift the large low chest, which is on the centre of the table, and they spread a very fine linen cloth also on its lid.

The apostle John goes now to Mary and asks Her something. Mary slips off from Her neck a kind of a small key and gives it to John. John takes it, goes back to the chest, opens it, letting down the front panel, which is laid on the table and covered with a third linen cloth.

Inside the chest there is a horizontal partition that divides it into two sections. In the lower section there is a chalice and a metal plate. In the upper section, in the centre, the chalice used by Jesus at the Last Supper and for the first Eucharist, the remains of the bread broken by Him, laid on a small plate as precious as the chalice. On the sides of the chalice and of the small plate laid on it, on one side there is the crown of thorns, the nails and the sponge. On the other side one of the shrouds, rolled up, the veil with which Nike wiped Jesus' Face, and the one that Mary gave Her Son to gird up His loins. At the bottom there are other things, but as they remain rather concealed and no one speaks of them or shows them, it is not known what they are. The other ones, instead, and which are visible, are shown to the people present by John and Judas of Alphaeus, and the crowd kneels in front of them. But neither the chalice nor the small plate of the bread are touched or shown, nor is the Shroud unfolded, but only the rolled cloth is shown, saying what it is.

Perhaps John and Judas do not unfold it in order not to awake in Mary the sorrowful memory of the cruel tortures suffered by Her Son.

When this part of the ceremony is over, the apostles in chorus intone some prayers, I should say some psalms, because they are sung as the Hebrews used to do in their synagogues or in their pilgrimages to Jerusalem for the solemnities prescribed by the Law. The chorus of the apostles is joined by the crowd and so it becomes more and more impressive.

At the end they bring some bread that is laid on the small metal plate, which was in the lower section of the chest, and also some small amphorae, which are also of metal.

John, who is kneeling on the other side of the table - whereas Peter is always between the table and the wall, but facing the crowd - hands the tray with the bread to Peter, who raises it and offers it. He then blesses it and lays it on the chest.

Judas of Alphaeus, who is also kneeling beside John, in his turn, hands Peter the chalice of the lower section and the two amphorae that were previously near the small plate of the bread, and Peter pours their contents into the chalice, which he then raises and offers, as he had done with the bread. He blesses also the chalice and lays it on the chest beside the bread.

They say more prayers. Peter breaks the bread into many morsels, while the people prostrate themselves even more, and he says: « This is My Body. Do this is memory of Me ».

He comes out from behind the table, taking the tray full of the morsels of bread, and as first thing he goes to Mary and gives Her a morsel. Then he goes to the front of the table and hands out the consecrated Bread to all those who approach him to have it. A few morsels are left over, and still on their tray, they are laid on the chest.

He now takes the chalice and offers it, always beginning from Mary, to those who are present. John and Judas follow him with the small amphorae and they add the liquids when the chalice is empty, while Peter repeats the elevation, the offering and the blessing to consecrate the liquid.

When all those who asked to be nourished with the Eucharist are satisfied, the apostles consume the bread and wine left over. Then they sing another psalm or hymn and after it Peter blesses the crowd who, after his blessing, go away little by little.

Mary, the Mother, Who has always remained on Her knees during the whole ceremony of the consecration and the distribution of the species of the Bread and Wine, stands up and goes to the chest. She bends across the large table and with Her forehead She touches the upper section of the chest, where the chalice and the small plate used by Jesus at the Last Supper are laid, and She kisses the edges

of them. A kiss that is also for all the relies gathered there. Then John closes the chest and hands the key back to Mary, Who puts it again round Her neck.

638. The Blessed Virgin Takes up Her Abode at Gethsemane with John, Who Foretells Her Assumption.

21st August 1951.

Mary is still in the house of the Supper room. All alone in Her usual room, She is sewing some very fine linen cloths, like long narrow table-cloths. Now and again She raises Her head to look at the garden and ascertain thus the time of the day by the position of the sunshine on its walls. And if She hears a noise in the house or in the street, She listens carefully. She seems to be waiting for someone.

Some time goes by so. Then there is a knock at the door of the house, followed by the rustling of sandals of someone who rushes to open it. Voices of men resound in the corridor and they become louder and louder and closer and closer.

Mary listens… Then She exclaims: « Are they here?! What on earth has happened?! » While She is still uttering these words, somebody knocks at the door of Her room. « Come in, brothers in Jesus, My Lord » replies Mary.

Lazarus and Joseph of Arimathea enter, and greeting Her with deep veneration they say: « Blessed are You among all mothers! The servants of Your Son and our Lord greet You », and they prostrate themselves to kiss the hem of Her dress.

« The Lord be always with you. For what reason, and while the ferment of the persecutors of the Christ and of His followers has not yet ceased, have you come to Me? »

« First of all, to see You. Because seeing You is still seeing Him, and thus we feel less distressed because of His departure from the Earth. And then to propose to You what we have resolved to do, after a meeting in my house of the more loving and faithful servants of Jesus, Your Son and our Lord » Lazarus replies to Her.

« Tell Me. It will be your love that speaks to Me, and with My love I will listen to you. »

Joseph of Arimathea now begins to speak and says: « Woman, You know and You have said so, that the ferment, and what is even worse, still last against all those who have been close to Your Son and God's, either through relationship, or faith, or friendship. And we are aware that You do not intend to leave these places, where You have seen the perfect manifestation of the divine and human nature of Your Son, His total mortification, and His total glorification, through His Passion and Death as true Man, through His glorious Resurrection and Ascension, as true God. And we also

know that You do not want to leave the apostles all alone, as You wish to be a Mother and guide to them in their first trials, You, the See of Divine Wisdom, You, the Spouse of the Spirit Revealer of the Eternal Truths, You, eternally beloved Daughter of the Father Who from eternity chose You as Mother of His Only-Begotten Son, You, the Mother of this Word of the Father, Who certainly taught You His infinite and most perfect Wisdom and Doctrine, even before He was in You, as a creature that was forming, or He was with You as a Son Who grows in age and wisdom to such an extent as to become the Master of masters. John told us the day after the first astonishing sermon and apostolic manifestation, which took place ten days after the Ascension of Jesus to Heaven. You, in turn, know, as You saw it at Gethsemane on the day of the Ascension of Your Son to His Father and as You were told by Peter, John and other apostles, that Lazarus and I, immediately after the Death and Resurrection, began to build a wall around my kitchen garden near Golgotha and at Gethsemane on the Mount of Olives, so that those places, sanctified by the Divine Martyr's Blood, that dropped, alas!, warmed by fever at Gethsemane, and frozen and clotted in my garden, may not be profaned by Jesus' enemies. The work has now been completed, and both Lazarus and I, and his sisters with him and the apostles, who would suffer too much not having You here any longer, say to You: "Take up Your abode in the house of Jonah and Mary, the keepers of Gethsemane". »

« And Jonah and Mary? That house is a small one, and I love solitude. I have always loved it. And I love it even more now, because I need it to get lost in God, in My Jesus, so that I may not die of anguish, not having Him here any longer. It is not fair that human eyes should be laid on the mysteries of God, because He is God now more than ever. I Woman, Jesus Man. But our Humanity was, and is, different from every other one, both because of our immunity from sin, also from the original one, and because of our relationship with God One and Trine. We are unique in these things among all creatures past, present and future. Now man, even the best and most prudent one, is naturally and inevitably curious, particularly if he is near an extraordinary manifestation. And only Jesus and I, as long as He was on the Earth, know what sufferings… yes, also shame, uneasiness, torture is experienced when human curiosity pries into, watches, spies upon our secrets with God. It is the same as if they placed us naked in the middle of a square. Think of My past, how I have always sought secrecy, silence, how I have always concealed, under the appearance of the common life of a poor woman, the mysteries of God in Me. Recall how, in order not to reveal them even to My spouse Joseph, I almost made of him, a just man, an unjust one. Only the angelic intervention avoided that danger. Think of the life so humble, hidden, common, led by Jesus for thirty-three

years, how easily He would withdraw and become isolated when He was the Master. He had to work miracles and teach, because that was His mission. But, He told Me Himself, He suffered - one of the many reasons for the severity and sadness that flashed in His large powerful eyes - He suffered, I was saying, because of the exaltation of the crowds, because of the more of less good curiosity with which they watched every action of His. How many times did He order His disciples and those He had cured miraculously, saying: "Do not mention what you have seen. Do not mention what I have done for you"!… Now I should not like human eyes to inquire into the mysteries of God in Me, mysteries that have not ceased with the return to Heaven of Jesus, My Son and My God, no, on the contrary they last, and I should say that they increase, thanks to His goodness, and to keep Me alive, until the hour comes, for which I have longed so much, of joining Him for ever. I would like only John with Me. Because he is prudent, respectful, loving with Me like another Jesus. But Jonah and Mary will know… »

Lazarus interrupts Her: « It has already been done, o Blessed Mother! We have already seen to it. Mark, Jonah's son, is among the disciples. Mary, his mother and Jonah, his father, are already at Bethany. »

« But the olive-grove? It needs to be taken care of! » Mary replies to him.

« Only when it is time to prune, to plough and pick the olives. So, only a few days each year and which will be even fewer, because in those periods I will send my servants from Bethany with Mark. You, Mother, if You want to make us happy, my sisters and me, will come to Bethany in those days, to the Zealot's solitary house. We shall be close to one another, but our eyes will not be indiscreet with regard to Your meetings with God. »

« But the oil-mill?… »

« It has already been transferred to Bethany. Gethsemane, completely enclosed, the property even more reserved of Lazarus of Theophilus, is awaiting You, Mary. And I assure You that the enemies of Jesus, out of fear of Rome, will not dare to violate its peace and Yours. »

« Oh! since it is so! » exclaims Mary. And She presses Her hands against Her heart, and looks at them, with a countenance that is almost ecstatic, so blissful it is, with an angelic smile on Her lips and tears of joy on Her fair eyelashes. She continues: « John and I! Alone! We two all alone! I shall seem to be once again at Nazareth with My Son! Alone! In peace! In that peace! Where My Jesus gave forth so many words and so much spirit of peace! Where, it is true, He suffered so much that He sweated blood and received the supreme moral sorrow of the infamous kiss and the first… » A sob and a very painful recollection interrupt Her words and upset Her

face that, for a few moments, has once more the sorrowful expression it had on the days of the Passion and Death of Her Son. She then collects Herself and says: « There, where He went back to the infinite peace of Paradise! I will soon send Mary of Alphaeus instructions to look after My little house in Nazareth, which is so dear to Me, because the mystery was accomplished there and My spouse, so pure and holy, died there, and Jesus grew up in it. So dear! But never as much as these places where He instituted the Rite of rites, and He became Bread, Blood, Life for men, and He suffered and redeemed, and He founded His Church and, with His last blessing, He made all the things of Creation good and holy. I will remain. Yes. I will remain here. I will go to Gethsemane. And from there, walking along the outside of the walls, I shall be able to go to Golgotha, and to your kitchen garden, Joseph, where I wept so much, and I shall be able to come to your house, Lazarus, where I have always had so much love, in My Son first, and then for Myself. » « But I should like… »

« What, Blessed Mother? » they both ask Her.

« I should like to come back here as well. Because together with the apostles, we had decided, providing Lazarus allows us… » « Everything You want, Mother. Everything I have, is Yours. Previously I used to say so to Jesus. Now I say it to You. And if You accept My gift, it is always I who receive a grace. »

« Son, let Me call you so, I should like you to allow us to make of this house, that is of the Supper room, a place for meetings and for the brotherly agape. »

« It is just. In this place Your Son instituted the new eternal Rite, He founded His new Church, elevating His apostles and disciples to a new Pontificate and Priesthood. It is just that that room should become the first temple of the new religion: the seed that tomorrow will be a tree, and then a huge forest, the embryo that tomorrow will be a complete vital organism, and that will grow more and more in height, depth and width, spreading all over the Earth. Which table and altar are holier than the ones on which He broke the Bread and laid the Chalice of the new Rite, that will last as long as the Earth? »

« That is true, Lazarus. And, see? For it I am sewing clean tablecloths. Because I believe, as no one will believe with equal strength, that the Bread and Wine are He, in His Flesh and in His Blood; Most holy and innocent Flesh, Redeeming Blood, given in Food and Drink of Life to men. May the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit bless you, o good wise men, who have always been compassionate to the Son and to His Mother. »

« So it is decided. Take this. It is the key that opens the various gates of the enclosure of Gethsemane. And this is the key of the house. And be happy, as much as God grants You to be and as much

as our poor love would like You to be. »

Now that Lazarus has finished speaking, Joseph of Arimathea in turn says: « And this is the key of the enclosure of my kitchen garden. »

« But you… you are quite entitled to go in! »

« I have another one, Mary. The market-gardener is a just man, and so is his son. You will find only them and me there. And we will be prudent and respectful. »

« May God bless you again » repeats Mary.

« Thanks to you, Mother. Our love and the peace of God to You, always. » They prostrate themselves after this last greeting, they kiss the hem of Her dress once again and they go away.

They have just gone out of the house, when another moderate knock is heard at the door of the room in which Mary is.

« Come in » says Mary.

John does not make Her repeat it twice. He goes in and closes the door, somewhat worried. He asks: « What did Joseph and Lazarus want? Is there any danger? »

« No, son. There is only the satisfaction of a wish of Mine. A wish of Mine and of other people. You know how Peter and James of Alphaeus, the former the Pontiff, the latter the head of the church of Jerusalem, are desolate at the thought of losing Me, as they are afraid they will not know what to do without Me. James in particular. Not even the special apparition of My Son to him, and his election by the will of Jesus, comfort and fortify him. But also the others!… Lazarus is now satisfying this general wish and makes us the masters of Gethsemane. You and I. All alone there. Here are the keys. And this is the key of Joseph's kitchen garden… We shall be able to go to the Sepulchre, to Bethany, without going through the town… And to go to Golgotha… And come here every time there is the brotherly agape. Lazarus and Joseph are granting us everything. »

« They are really two just men. Lazarus received a lot from Jesus. That is true. But, even before receiving, He always gave everything to Jesus. Are You happy, Mother? »

« Yes, John. So much! I will live, as long as God wants, helping Peter and James and all of you, and I will help the first Christians in every way. If the Judaeans, the Pharisees and the priests are not wild animals also towards Me, as they were for My Son, I shall be able to breathe My last where He ascended to His Father. »

« You will ascend as well, Mother. »

« No. I am not Jesus. I was born in a human way. »

« But without stain of origin. I am a poor ignorant fisherman. With regard to doctrines and scriptures I know only what the Master taught me. But I am like a boy, because I am pure. And so, perhaps I know more than the Rabbis of Israel, because, He said so, God

hides things from the wise and reveals them to the little and pure ones. And that is why I think, or better, I feel that You will have the destiny that Eve would have had, if she had not sinned. And even more, because You have not been the spouse of an Adam-man, but of God, to give the Earth the new Adam faithful to Grace. The Creator, when He created our first Parents, did not destine them to die, that is to the corruption of the most perfect body created by Him, and made the most noble among all the bodies created, because it is endowed with a spiritual soul and with the gratuitous gifts of God, whereby they could be called "adoptive sons of God", but what He wanted for them was only a passage from the earthly Paradise to the celestial one. Now You have never had any stain of sin on Your soul. Not even the great common sin, the heritage of Adam to all human beings, affected You, because God preserved You from it by a singular unique privilege, as from ever, You had been destined to become the Ark of the Word. And the Ark, even the one that, alas!, contains nothing but cold, arid, dead things, because, really, the people of God do not put them into practice as they should, is and must always be most pure. The Ark is, yes. But among those who approach it, Pontiff and Priests, who is really as pure as You are? No one. That is why I feel that You, the second Eve, and Eve faithful to Grace, are not destined to death. »

« My Son, the second Adam, Grace itself, always obedient to His Father, to Me, in a perfect manner, died. And of what death! »

« He had come to be the Redeemer, Mother. He left His Father, Heaven, He took Flesh upon Himself, in order to redeem men, through His Sacrifice, give Grace back to them, and then elevate them once again to the rank of adoptive sons of God, heirs to Heaven. He had to die. And His Most Holy Humanity died. And You died in Your heart seeing His cruel torture and His Death. You have already suffered everything to be the redeemer with Him. I am a poor foolish boy, but I feel that You, the true Ark of the true living God, will not be, You cannot be subject to corruption. As the cloud of fire protected and guided the Ark of Moses towards the promised Land, so the Fire of God will attract You to its Centre. As the branch of Aaron did not wither, did not perish, on the contrary, although detached from the tree, it put forth buds, leaves and yielded fruit and lived in the Tabernacle, so You, chosen by God among all the women who lived and will live on the Earth, will not die like a plant that withers, but You will live for ever, with Your whole Self, in the Tabernacle of Heaven. As the waters of the Jordan opened to let the Ark, its bearers and all the people pass in the days of Joshua, so the barriers that the sin of Adam placed between Heaven and Earth will open for You, and from this world You will pass to the eternal Heaven. I am sure of that. Because God is just. And the decree issued by God for those who have neither hereditary

nor voluntary sin on their souls applies to You. »

« Has Jesus revealed that to you? »

« No, Mother. The Spirit Paraclete tells me, He Who the Master informed us would reveal future things and all truth to us. The Comforter is already telling me in my spirit, to make less bitter for me the thought of losing You, blessed Mother, Whom I love and venerate as much and even more than my own mother, because of what You have suffered, because You are good and holy, inferior only to Your Most Holy Son among all present and future Saints. The greatest Saint. » And John, deeply moved, prostrates himself venerating Her.

639. The Blessed Virgin and John in the Places of the Passion.

8th September 1951.

It is dawn. A clear summer dawn. Mary, with faithful John, leaves the little house at Gethsemane and walks quickly through the silent desert olive-grove. Only the singing of some birds and the chirping of nestlings break the deep silence of the place.

Mary without any hesitation directs Her steps towards the rock of the Agony. She kneels against it, She kisses where some thin fissures in the rock still show rusty-red traces of Jesus' Blood, that penetrated into the fissures and coagulated there, She caresses them, as if She were still caressing Her Son or part of Him. John, standing behind Her, watches Her and weeps silently, wiping his eyes quickly when Mary makes the gesture of standing up, he even helps Her to do so, and he does it with so much love, veneration and compassion.

Mary now goes down to the open area where Jesus was captured. Also there She kneels down and She bends to kiss the earth, after asking John: « Is this exactly the place of the horrible ill-famed kiss, that contaminated this place even more than the filthy corrupting conversation of the Serpent with Eve disgraced the earthly Paradise?) » She then stands up saying: « But I am not Eve. I am the Woman of the Ave. I turned things upside down. Eve threw what belonged to Heaven into the filthy mud. I have accepted everything: incomprehension, criticism, suspicion, sorrow - how many sorrows and of how many kinds, before the supreme grief - to remove from the filthy mud what Eve and Adam had thrown into it, and elevate it again towards Heaven. The demon was not able to speak to Me, although he tried to, as he tried with My Son, to destroy the redemption plan definitively. He was not able to speak to Me, because I closed My ears to his voice and My eyes to his sight, and above all I closed My heart and My spirit against every attack of what is not holy and pure. My limpid ego, but which, like a pure diamond, cannot

be scratched, opened only to the announcing Angel. My ears listened only to that spiritual voice, and so I repaired and rebuilt what Eve had damaged and destroyed. I am the Woman of the Ave and of the Fiat. I restored the order upset by Eve. And now I can remove and wash with My kiss and My tears the impression of that cursed kiss and of that contamination. The greatest of all of them, because it was done not by a creature to a creature, but by a creature to his Master and Friend, to his Creator and God. »

She then goes towards the gate, which John opens. They come out together from Gethsemane, they go down to the Kidron, they cross the little bridge, and there also Mary kneels down to kiss the rustic parapet of the bridge, on the spot where Her Son fell on it. She says: « Every place where He suffered supreme sorrows and abuse is sacred to Me. I should like to have everything in My little house. But it is not possible to have everything! »

She sighs and then says: « Let us go on quickly, before people get about. » And She takes to the road again with John.

She does not go into town. They go along the Hinnom valley and the caves where the lepers live. She raises Her eyes towards those caverns of sorrow. She gives John a nod and he at once lays on a rock some foodstuffs that he had in a bag, uttering a cry at the same time to call them. Some lepers look out and come towards the rock thanking them. But none of them ask to be cured. Mary notices it and says: « They know that He is no longer here and shocked as they are at His horrible Death, they can no longer have faith in Him and in His disciples. Twice unhappy! Twice lepers! Twice? No, even more, completely unhappy, lepers, dead! Both on the Earth and in the next world. »

« Shall I try and speak to them, Mother? »

« It is useless! Peter, Judas of Alphaeus, Simon Zealot have tried… And they derided them. Mary of Lazarus came, as she always assists them in memory of Jesus, and she was derided as well. Lazarus also went, with Joseph and Nicodemus, to convince them that He was the Christ, telling them of his resurrection worked by Jesus, after being for four days in the sepulchre, and of that of the Man-God, through His own power, and of His Ascension. It was all to no avail. They replied: "Lies. Those who know the truth say that they are lies". »

« And they are certainly the Pharisees and the priests. They are the ones who are working to destroy faith in Him. I am sure it is they! »

« It may be, John. It is certain that the lepers who were not converted before, in the face of Jesus' miracles, will not be converted any more. No more. A sign and symbol of all those who, throughout ages, will not be converted to the Christ, and by their free will, will be lepers of sin, dead to the Grace, which is Life, the symbol

of all those for whom He died in vain… And in that manner!… » and She weeps, quietly, without sobbing, but with a real flood of tears.

John takes Her by the arm when Mary, to conceal Her tears from some passersby who are watching Her, covers Her face with Her veil. John, while leading Her lovingly, says to Her: « It is not possible for Your tears, for Your prayers, for Your, even more, for Your and Jesus' love for all men - Yours, because Yours is active, as active, perfectly active as Jesus' glorious in Heaven, and Your sorrow, because of the deafness of men, and His, because of the obstinate sinning of too many people - not to yield fruit. Have hope, Mother! Men have given You and will still give You much sorrow, but they will also give You love and joy. Who will not love You, when he hears about You? Now here You are not known, the world is unacquainted with You. But when the Earth knows, because it has become Christian, how much love will come to You! I am sure, o holy Mother. »

Golgotha is now close at hand, and Joseph's kitchen garden is even closer. When they reach the latter, Mary does not go in. She goes to Golgotha first. And in the places where particular episodes took place during the Passion, that is, in the places of His falls, of His meeting with Nike and with Her as well, She kneels down and kisses the ground.

When She arrives at the summit, Her kisses become more frequent at the place of the Crucifixion. Kisses and tears, the former almost convulsive, the latter calm, but as thick as rain, fall on the yellowish earth wetting it and making its yellowish colour darker.

A little plant has come up just where the earth was moved to plant the cross there, a humble wild little plant, with heart-shaped leaves and little flowers as red as rubies. Mary looks at it, She becomes pensive, then She removes it delicately from the soil with a little loose earth, She lays it in the hem of Her mantle, saying to John: « I will put it in a vase. It looks like His blood, and it has come up in the earth made red by His Blood. It is certainly a seed carried by the whirlwind of that day, it came from who knows where and fell there who knows why, to take root in the dust fertilised by that Blood. I wish it were so for all the souls! Why is the majority of them more reluctant than the arid and cursed earth of Golgotha, the place of torture for highwaymen and killers, and of the deicide of a whole people? Cursed? No. He has sanctified this dust. Cursed by God are those who turned this hill into the place of the most horrible, unjust, sacrilegious crime that will ever be on the Earth. » Now Her sobs are joined to Her tears.

John embraces Her shoulders with his arm, to make Her feel all his love, and he convinces Her to leave that place, which is too sorrowful for Her.

They go down to the foot of the hill again. They go into Joseph's

kitchen garden. The Sepulchre shows its inside with a wide opening, no longer closed by the stone, which is still lying overturned on the ground among the grass. It is empty inside. All traces of the Deposition and of the Resurrection have disappeared. It looks like a sepulchre that has never been used.

Mary kisses the stone of the unction, She casts loving glances at the walls. Then She asks John: « Tell Me once again how you found things here, when you came here with Peter at dawn of the Resurrection. »

And John, moving here and there, outside and inside the Sepulchre, describes how the things were and what he and Peter did, and he ends by saying: « We should have collected the linens. But we were so upset by all the events of those days, that we did not think about it. When we came back here, the linens were no longer here. »

« Those of the Temple must have taken them, to desecrate them » says Mary interrupting him and weeping. And She concludes: « Not even Mary of Magdala thought that they should have been taken away to be given to Me. She was too upset as well. »

« The Temple? No. I think that Joseph has taken them. »

« He would have told Me… Oh! Jesus' enemies must have taken them for a last insult! » says Mary moaning.

« Do not weep, do not suffer any more. He is now in His glory. In infinite perfect love. Hatred and insults can no longer touch Him. »

« That is true. But those linens… »

« They would be the cause of sorrow to You, as is the first Shroud, that You have not the strength to spread out, because besides the traces of His Blood, there are those of the filthy things thrown on that Most Holy Body. »

« That shroud, yes. But these linens, no. They absorbed what trickled from Him when He no longer suffered… Oh! you cannot understand! »

« I see, Mother. But I did not think that You, Who are certainly not separated from Him God, as we are, and even more are the simple believers in Him, felt so strong the desire, even more, the need to have something of Him, the tortured Man. Forgive my stupidity. Come… We will come back here again. Let us go now, because the sun is rising more and more, it is strong, and long is the road we have to take in order to avoid the town. »

They come out of the Sepulchre, and then of the kitchen garden, and along the same road by which they came, they go back to Gethsemane. Mary walks quickly and silently, all enveloped in Her mantle. She has only a sensation of disgust and horror when She passes near the olive-grove where Judas hanged himself and near the country house of Caiaphas, and She whispers: « Here he completed

his damnation of an unrepentant soul in despair, and there he finalised the deal. »

640. The Two Shrouds of the Lord.

5th October 1951.

It is night-time. The moon, at her highest point, with her silvery light illuminates the whole of Gethsemane and the little house of Mary and John. Everything is silent. Even the Kidron, which has become a fine stream of water, makes no noise.

All of a sudden a rustling of sandals can be heard in the deep silence and it becomes more and more distinct and closer, and with it the whispering of some deep masculine voices. Then three people appear from the clump of trees and they direct their steps towards the little house. They knock at the door.

A lamp is lit and a faint flickering light filters through a fissure in the door. A hand opens, a head looks out, a voice, John's, asks: « Who are you? »

« Joseph of Arimathea. And with me are Nicodemus and Lazarus. The hour is indiscreet. But prudence has forced it on us. We have brought something for Mary and Lazarus has escorted us. »

« Come in. I will go and call Her. She is not sleeping. She is praying up there, in Her little room, on the terrace. She likes it so much! » says John, and he quickly climbs the little staircase leading to the terrace and to the room.

The three, who have remained in the kitchen, speak to one another in low voices, in the faint light of the lamp, gathered near the table, still enveloped in their mantles, with the exception of their heads, which they have uncovered.

John comes back in with Mary, Who greets the three saying: « Peace to all of you. »

« And to You, Mary » they reply, bowing.

« Is there any danger? Has anything happened to the servants of Jesus? »

« Nothing, Woman. We have decided to come to give You a thing that - now we know for a certainty, but we had already had a foreboding of it - You wished to have. We did not come sooner, because there has been a contrast of ideas among us, and also between us and Mary of Lazarus. Martha has not declared her opinion on the matter. She only said: "The Lord, either directly, or by inspiring other people to speak, will tell you what to do". And, actually, we have been told what to do. And that is why we have come » explains Joseph.

« Has the Lord spoken to you? Has He come to you? »

« No, Mother. He has not come any more, after His ascension to Heaven. Previously yes. He appeared to us, and we told You, in a

supernatural way, after His resurrection, in my house. On that day He appeared to many people, at the same time, to give proof of His Divinity and of His Resurrection. Then we have seen Him again while He remained among men, but no longer in a supernatural manner, but as the apostles and disciples saw Him » says Nicodemus replying to Her.

« So? How did He show you the way you had to follow? »

« Through the words of one of His favourites and successors. »

« Peter? I do not think so. He is still too frightened, both of his past and of His new mission. »

« No, Mary, not Peter, who, however, is really becoming more and more confident and, now that he knows for which purpose Lazarus has used the house of the Supper room, has decided to begin regular agapes and to celebrate the mysteries regularly on the day after each Sabbath. Because he says that that is now the day of the Lord, as on that day He rose from the dead and appeared to many people to confirm them in their faith in His eternal Nature of God. There is no longer the Sabbath, as it has been for the Hebrews perhaps since the Shabuoth. There is no longer the Sabbath, because there is no longer the synagogue for Christians, but the Church, as predicted by the prophets. But there is still, and there will always be, the day of the Lord, in memory of the Man-God, of the Master, Founder, eternal Pontiff, after being the Redeemer, of the Christian Church. So from the day after the next Sabbath there will be the agapes among Christians, and there will be many of them, in the house of the Supper room. Which was not possible before, both because of the hatred of Pharisees, Priests, Sadducees and scribes, and of the temporary dispersion of many followers of Jesus, shaken in their faith in Him and frightened of the hatred of the Judaeans. But now those who hated us, both because of their fear of Rome, that has found fault with the behaviour of the Proconsul, and of the crowds, and because they consider the "excitement of the fanatics" to be over - that is how they define the faith of the Christians in Christ, owing to the momentary scattering of the believers, truly of a short duration and now completely over, because all the sheep have gone back to the Fold of the true Shepherd - are not keeping such a watchful eye on us, I should say that they take no interest in it, as if it were a dead matter that had come to its end. And that allows us to assemble for the agapes.

We want You to be able, also with regard to the previous one, to have this souvenir of Him to be shown to the believers, in order to confirm them in their faith, without it grieving You too much. » And Joseph hands Her a bulky roll, that enveloped in a dark red cloth, he had held so far concealed under his mantle.

« What is it? » asks Mary, growing pale. « His garments, perhaps? The one I made for Him for… Oh!… » She says weeping.

« At no price could we find them any more. Who knows how and where they ended up! » replies Lazarus. And he adds: « But this is also His garment. His last one. It is the clean Shroud in which the most pure Lord was enveloped after His torture and after the purification, although hurried and relative, of His members soiled by His enemies, and the summary embalming. When He rose, Joseph took both away from the Sepulchre and brought them to us at Bethany to avoid any sacrilegious abuse of them. Jesus' enemies will not dare too much in Lazarus' house. And less than ever since they heard that Rome censured the action of Pontius Pilate. Then after the first days, the most dangerous ones, we gave You the first Shroud, and Nicodemus got the other and took it to his country house. »

« Really, Lazarus, they belonged to Joseph » remarks Mary.

« That is true, Woman. But Nicodemus' house is out of town, so it does not strike the eye so much and it is safer for other reasons » Joseph replies to Her.

« Yes, particularly since Gamaliel with his son pays frequent visits to it » adds Nicodemus.

« Gamaliel!? » exclaims Mary much surprised.

Lazarus cannot help smiling sarcastically while he replies to Her: « Yes. The sign, the famous sign that he was waiting for, to believe that Jesus was the Messiah, has shaken him. No one can deny that the sign was such as to crush even the hardest heads and hearts and make them surrender. And Gamaliel was shaken, crushed and demolished by the most powerful sign, more than the houses that collapsed on Preparation Day, while the world seemed to perish with the Great Victim. Remorse has torn him, more than the veil of the Temple was torn, the remorse for never having understood Jesus for what He really was. The closed sepulchre of his spirit of an old pig-headed Jew has opened, like the tombs that let the bodies of the just appear, and he is now anxiously seeking truth, light, forgiveness, life. The new life. The one that only through Jesus and in Jesus can be obtained. Oh! He will still have to work hard to clear his ancient ego completely of the rubble of his past way of thinking! But he will succeed. He is seeking peace, forgiveness and knowledge. Peace for his remorse and forgiveness for his stubbornness. And full knowledge of Him Whom, when he could, he did not want to know fully. And he goes to Nicodemus to reach the aim that he is now determined to reach. »

« Are you sure that he will not betray you, Nicodemus? » asks Mary.

« No. He will not betray me. After all he is a just man. Remember that he dared to impose himself on the Sanhedrin, during the infamous trial, and that he openly showed his disdain and disgust towards the unjust judges, by going away and by ordering his son to go away in order not to be an accomplice, not even by a passive presence, in that supreme crime. That with regard to Gamaliel.

Then, with regard to the Shrouds, since I am no longer a Hebrew and consequently no longer subject to the prohibition of Deuteronomy concerning carved images and castings, I was thinking of making a statue of Jesus crucified, as best I can - I will use one of my gigantic cedars of Lebanon - and of concealing one of the Shrouds inside it, the first one, if You, Mother, will give it back to us. It would always distress You too much to see it, because the filthiness with which Israel struck the Son of its God is visible on it. Further, certainly because of the shocks it received when descending from Golgotha, shocks that continuously shifted that tortured Head, the image is so confused that it is difficult to distinguish it. But that cloth, although the image is confused and it is dirty, is always dear and sacred to me, because on it there is always some of His blood and perspiration. Hidden in that sculpture it will always be safe, because no Israelite of the high castes will ever dare to touch a sculpture. But the other one, the second Shroud, which was on Him from the evening of Preparation Day until the dawn of the Resurrection, must come to You. And - I am warning You so that You may not be too deeply moved in seeing it - and you must be informed that the more the days passed, the more clearly His image appeared, as He was after being washed. When we collected it from the Sepulchre, it seemed that it simply retained the impression of His members covered with the oils, and, mixed with them, the drainage of blood and serum from the many wounds. But either through a natural process or, which is much more certain, by a supernatural will, a miracle of Him to give joy to You, the more time passed, the more precise and clear the impression has become. He is there on the cloth, handsome, imposing, even if wounded, serene, peaceful, also after so many tortures. Have You the courage to see it? »

« Oh! Nicodemus! That was My supreme desire! You say that His appearance is peaceful… Oh! to be able to see Him thus, not with the tortured expression that is on Nike's veil! » replies Mary, joining Her hands against Her heart.

Then the four shift the table to have more room; then, as Lazarus and John stand on one side, Nicodemus and Joseph on the other, they slowly unfold the long cloth. The dorsal side appears first, beginning from the feet; then after the quasi-junction of the heads, the front side. The lines are very clear, and clear are the signs, all the signs of the scourging, crowning with thorns, rubbing of the cross, bruises caused by blows received or by falls, and the wounds of the nails and of the lance.

Mary falls on Her knees, She kisses the cloth, She caresses those impressions, She kisses the wounds. She is distressed, but visibly happy to be able to have that supernatural miraculous image of Him.

When She finishes venerating it, She turns and says to John, who

cannot be near Her, compelled as he is to hold one comer of the cloth: « It was you who told them, John. You alone could tell them, because you alone were aware of this desire of Mine. »

« Yes, Mother, it was I. And I did not even have time to inform them of Your desire, that they agreed to it. But they have had to wait for a suitable moment to do so… »

« That is, a very clear night, in order to be able to come without torches or lamps, and a period of time without the festivities that assemble crowds and notables here in Jerusalem and nearby places. And that out of prudence… » explains Nicodemus.

« And I have come with them for greater safety. As the owner of Gethsemane, I was able to come and see this place without shocking the eyes of anyone… commissioned to watch everything and everybody » says Lazarus concluding.

« May God bless you all. But you have spent the money for the Shrouds… And that is not fair… »

« It is fair, Mother. I, from the Christ, Your Son, have received a gift that no money can buy: life given back to me after four days in a sepulchre, and before that, the conversion of my sister Mary. Joseph and Nicodemus have had from Jesus the Light, the Truth, the Life that does not die. And You… You, with Your sorrow of a Mother and Your love of the Most holy Mother for all men, have purchased for God, not a cloth, but the whole Christian world that will always be greater and greater. There is no money that can compensate You for what You have given. So take this, at least. It is Yours. And it is just that it should be so. Also Mary, my sister, thinks so. That has always been her opinion, since the moment that He rose and even more since He left You to ascend to His Father » Lazarus replies to Her.

« Then let it be So. I will go and get the other one. It in fact grieves Me so much to see it… This one is different. This one gives peace! Because here He is serene, in peace by now. In His mortal sleep, He already seems to be feeling the Life that is coming back and the glory that no one will ever be able to strike and demolish. I now wish nothing else, apart from being reunited to Him. But that will happen when and as God has predisposed. I am going. And may God give you one hundred times as much joy as you have given Me. »

She takes the Shroud reverently, after the four have folded it, She goes out of the kitchen and quickly climbs the little staircase… And She soon comes down again and comes in with the first Shroud, which She hands to Nicodemus, who says to Her:« May God reward You, Woman. We are going now, as it is almost dawn, and it is wise to be home before its light spreads and people come out of their houses. »

The three venerate Her before going out, and then with quick steps, going back along the road by which they came, they go

towards one of the gates of Gethsemane, the one closest to the Bethany road.

Mary and John remain at the door of the little house until they see them disappear, they then go back into the kitchen and close the door speaking to each other in low voices.

641. The Martyrdom of Stephen. Saul and Gamaliel.

7th August 1944.

The hall of the Sanhedrin, identical, both with regard to disposition and to people, to what it was in the night between Thursday and Friday, during Jesus' trial. The High Priest and the others are sitting on their seats. In the middle, in front of the High Priest, in the empty space where, during the trial Jesus was, there is now Stephen.

He must have already spoken professing his faith and bearing witness to the true Nature of the Christ and to His Church, because the tumult is at its climax and in its violence it is similar to the one that raged against the Christ in the fatal night of the betrayal and deicide. Blows, curses, horrible oaths are hurled against the deacon Stephen who, under the brutal blows, staggers and totters while they savagely tug him here and there.

But he keeps his calm and dignity, and even more. He is not only calm and dignified, but he is even blissful and almost ecstatic. Disregarding the spittles streaming down his face and the blood running from his nose, that has been violently struck, at a certain moment he raises his inspired face and his bright smiling eyes to stare at a vision known to him alone. He stretches his arms out crosswise, he raises them up as if he wished to embrace what he sees, then he falls on his knees exclaiming: « Here, I can see the Heavens thrown open, and the Son of Man, Jesus, the Christ of God, Whom you have killed, standing at the right hand of God. »

Then the tumult loses even that least part that it still retained of humanity and legality and, with the fury of a pack of wolves, of jackals, of rabid wild beasts, they all hurl themselves on the deacon, they bite him, they trample on him, they grasp him, they raise him lifting him by his hair, they drag him, letting him drop again, while fury opposes fury, because in the rush those who try to drag the martyr outside are hindered by those who pull him in another direction to strike him and tread on him again.

Among the most furious ones there is a young short ugly looking man, named Saul. The fierceness of his face is indescribable.

In a comer of the hall there is Gamaliel. He has never taken part in the brawl, neither has he ever addressed Stephen or any mighty person. His disgust for the unfair wild scene is manifest. In another comer there is Nicodemus, who is also disgusted and does not take

part in the trial or in the brawl, and is looking at Gamaliel, whose countenance is clearer than any word. But suddenly, and precisely when he sees Stephen being lifted by his hair for the third time, Gamaliel envelops himself in his very wide mantle and he goes towards an exit in the opposite direction to that towards which the deacon is being dragged.

His action does not pass unnoticed to Saul who shouts: « Rabbi, are you going away? »

Gamaliel does not reply.

Saul, fearing that Gamaliel has not understood that the question was made to him, repeats and specifies it: « Rabbi Gamaliel, are you evading this judgement? »

Gamaliel turns round all of one piece and, looking furious, disgusted as he is, dignified and frigid, he replies only: « Yes. » But his « yes » is worth more than a long speech.

Saul understands everything that that « yes » implies, and leaving the wild pack, he rushes towards Gamaliel. He reaches him, stops him, says to him: « You are not going to tell me, o rabbi, that you disapprove of our condemnation. »

Gamaliel does not look at him, neither does he reply to him.

Saul insists: « That man is doubly guilty, as he denied the Law, following a Samaritan possessed by Beelzebub, and for doing so after being your disciple. »

Gamaliel continues to look away from him and to be silent.

Saul then asks him: « But are you perhaps, you as well, a follower of that criminal named Jesus? »

Gamaliel now speaks and says: « I am not yet. But if He was what He said, and truly many things prove that He was, I pray God that I may become one. »

Horrible shouts Saul.

« There is nothing horrible. Every man has an intelligence to make use of it, and a freedom to apply it. So let everybody make use of it according to that freedom that God has given to every man and to that light that He has put in everybody's heart. The just, sooner or later, will use these two gifts of God, for Good purposes, and the wicked, for Evil purposes. » And he goes away, directing his steps towards the court where the Treasury is, and he goes and leans against the same column against which Jesus spoke of the poor widow who gave the Treasury of the Temple everything she had: two farthings.

He has not been there long when Saul joins him again and places himself in front of him. The contrast between the two is very strong.

Gamaliel is tall, of a noble bearing, handsome in his strong Semitic features, with a high forehead, with eyes which are very dark, intelligent, piercing, long and deeply sunken under his thick

straight eyebrows, on the sides of his nose which is also straight, long and thin, and reminds one a little of Jesus' nose. Also his complexion, his thin-lipped mouth remind one of Jesus'. But Gamaliel's beard and moustache, once very dark, are now grizzled and longer.

Saul instead is short, thickset, almost rickety, his legs are short and thick, a little apart at the knees, which are clearly visible because he has taken his mantle off and he has on only a short greyish tunic. His arms are short and brawny like his legs, his neck is short and thickset, supporting a big brown head with short rough hair, with rather protruding ears, snub nose, thick lips, with high big cheek-bones, bulging forehead, dark rather bulging eyes, neither mild nor kind, but very intelligent under his very arched, thick, ruffled eyelashes. His cheeks are covered with a very thick beard, as bristly as his hair, but cut short. Perhaps because of his very short neck he seems to be slightly hunchbacked or to have very round shoulders.

He is silent for a moment, staring at Gamaliel. Then he says something to him in a low voice.

Gamaliel replies to him in a clear loud voice: « I do not approve of violence, for any reason whatsoever. You will never obtain my approval for any violent plan. I have told also all the Sanhedrin, in public, when Peter and the other apostles were arrested for the second time and brought before the Sanhedrin to be judged. And I repeat the same things: "If it is the plan and work of men, it will perish by itself; if it comes from God, it cannot be destroyed by men, on the contrary they may be struck by God". Bear that in mind. »

« Are you the protector of these blasphemous followers of the Nazarene, you, the greatest rabbi in Israel? »

« I am the protector of justice. And justice teaches us to be prudent and just in judging. I repeat it to you. If the thing comes from God, it will last, if not, it will fall by itself. But I do not want to stain my hands with blood that I do not know whether it deserves death. »

« Is that how you, a Pharisee and doctor, speak? Are you not afraid of the Most High? »

« More than you are. But I ponder. And I remember… You were only a little child, not yet a son of the Law, and I was already teaching in this Temple with the wisest rabbi of our days… and with others, wise, but not just. Within these walls our wisdom received a lesson that made us ponder for the rest of our lives. The eyes of the most wise and just man of our times closed on the recollection of that hour, and his mind on the study of those truths, heard from the lips of a child, who was revealing himself to men, particularly if just. My eyes have continued to watch and my mind to think, coordinating events and things… I have had the privilege of hearing the Most High speak through the mouth of a child, who later was

a man just, wise, mighty, holy, and who was put to death, just because of these qualities of his. His words of that time have afterwards been confirmed by events that happened many years later, at the time mentioned by Daniel… Poor me, as I did not understand sooner! As I awaited the last terrible sign to believe, to understand! Poor people of Israel, who did not understand then and does not understand even now! The prophecy of Daniel and those of other prophets and of the Word of God continue, and will be fulfilled for Israel stubborn, blind, deaf, unjust, as it continues to persecute the Messiah in His servants! »

« Damn! You are blaspheming! There will really be no salvation for the people of God, if the rabbis of Israel blaspheme and deny Jehovah, the true God, to exalt and believe in a false Messiah! »

« I am not blaspheming, but all those are, who insulted the Nazarene and continue to despise Him, by scorning His followers. You, yes, you are blaspheming, because you hate Him, in Himself, and in His followers. But you were right when you said that there is no more salvation for Israel. Not because there are Israelites who have passed into His flock, but because Israel has struck Him to death. »

« You fill me with horror! You are betraying the Law, the Temple! »

« Denounce me, then, to the Sanhedrin, that I may share the lot of him who is about to be stoned. It will be the beginning and the happy conclusion of your mission. And I shall be forgiven, through this sacrifice of mine, for not having recognised and understood the God Who was passing, as Saviour and Master, among us, His children and His people. »

Saul, with an angry gesture, goes away, rudely, to the court facing the hall of the Sanhedrin, the court in which the crowd is still shouting in exasperation against Stephen. In this court Saul joins the torturers who were waiting for him, and with the others he comes out of the Temple and then out of the town walls. Abuse, jeers continue to be shouted at, and blows to be dealt to the deacon, who already tired out and wounded, proceeds staggering towards the place of the execution.

Outside the walls there is a stretch of waste land covered with stones, completely desert. When the executioners arrive there, they spread out forming a circle, leaving the condemned man all alone in the centre with his torn garments and his body bleeding in many parts as a result of the wounds already inflicted on it. They tear his garments off him before moving away from him. Stephen is left with a very short tunic. They all take their long garments off and remain with their tunics only, as short as the one worn by Saul, to whom they entrust their garments, as he does not take part in the lapidation, either because he has been upset by Gamaliel's words, or because he knows that he is not good at hitting the mark.

The executioners pick up some large pebbles and some sharp stones, in which the place abounds, and they begin the lapidation.

Stephen receives the first blows standing, and with a smile of forgiveness on his wounded lips which, a moment before the beginning of the lapidation, have shouted to Saul, intent on gathering the clothes of the lapidators: « My friend, I will wait for you on the way of the Christ. »

To which Saul replied: « Pig! Possessed! » adding to the insults a mighty kick on the shin-bone of the deacon, who almost falls because of the blow and of the pain.

After some blows with stones, that strike him from all directions, Stephen falls on his knees, supporting himself with his wounded hands, and certainly recollecting a remote episode, he whispers, touching his temple and his wounded forehead: « As He foretold me! The crown… The rubies… O my Lord, Master, Jesus, receive my spirit »

Another hail of blows on his already wounded head makes him collapse on the ground that becomes impregnated with his blood. While he lies on the stones, always under hails of more of them, on the point of breathing his last, he whispers: « Lord… Father… forgive them… bear them no grudge for this sin of theirs… They do not know what… » Death breaks the sentence on his lips, a last start makes him curl himself up, and he remains so. Dead.

The executioners approach him, they throw another volley of stones on him, and almost bury him under them. They then put their clothes on, and they go away back to the Temple, intoxicated with satanic zeal, to report what they have done.

While they are speaking to the High Priest and other mighty people, Saul goes in search of Gamaliel. He does not find him at once. Inflamed with hatred against the Christians, he goes back to the Priests, he speaks to them, he convinces them to give him a parchment with the seal of the Temple, authorising him to persecute the Christians. The blood of Stephen must have made him as furious as a bull that sees red, or a generous wine given to an alcoholic.

He is about to come out of the Temple when he sees Gamaliel under the Porch of the Gentiles. He goes to him. Perhaps he wants to begin a dispute or a justification. But Gamaliel goes across the court, he enters a hall and closes the door in the face of Saul, who, offended and furious, runs out of the Temple to persecute the Christians.

[Jesus says:]

« I have shown Myself many times and to many people, also in extraordinary manifestations. But My manifestation did not produce the same effect in everybody. We can see how to each manifestation of Mine corresponds a sanctification of those who possessed the good will required of men to have Peace, Life, Justice.

So, Grace worked in the shepherds for the thirty years of My concealed life, then it flowered yielding a holy ear of corn when it was the time in which the good parted from the wicked to follow the Son of God, Who was passing along the ways of the world, uttering His cry of love to assemble the sheep of the eternal Flock, scattered and dispersed by Satan. Present among the crowds that followed Me, they were My messengers, because with their simple and convincing reports, they proclaimed the Christ saying: "It is He. We recognise Him. The lullabies of the angels descended upon His first wailing. And we were told by the angels that men of good will will have peace. Good will is the desire of Good and Truth. Let us follow Him! Follow Him! We shall all have the Peace promised by the Lord".

Humble, ignorant, poor, My first messengers among men, rushed like sentries along the road of the King of Israel, of the King of the world. Faithful eyes, honest mouths, loving hearts, thuribles exhaling the perfume of their virtues to make less corrupt the air of the Earth around My Divine Person, that had become incarnate for them and for all men, and I found them even at the foot of the Cross, after blessing them with My eyes along the sanguinary road of Golgotha, the only ones, with very few more, who did not curse Me among the unrestrained crowd, but who loved, believed, still hoped, and looked at Me with compassionate eyes, thinking of the remote night of My Birth and weeping on the Innocent, Who slept His first sleep on an uncomfortable piece of wood, and His last one on an even more painful one. That because My manifestation to them, who were righteous souls, had sanctified them.

And the same happened to the three Wise Men from the East, to Simeon and Anne in the Temple, to Andrew and John at the Jordan, and to Peter, James and John at Tabor, to Mary of Magdala at dawn on Easter Sunday, to the eleven when on the Mount of Olives, and even before that, at Bethany, they were forgiven their bewilderment… No, John, the pure apostle, did not need to be forgiven. He was the faithful ever loving hero. His most pure love, his purity of mind, of heart, of body, preserved him from all weakness.

Gamaliel, and with him Hillel, were not as simple as the shepherds, as holy as Simeon, as wise as the three Wise men. In him, and in his master and relative, there was the tangle of Pharisaic lianas to suffocate the light and the free expansion of the tree of faith. But in their being Pharisaic there was purity of intentions. They thought they were in the right and they wished to be so. They wished it by instinct, because they were just, and by intellect, because their spirits shouted out of discontent: "There are too many ashes mixed with this bread. Give us the bread of the real Truth".

Gamaliel, however, was not so strong as to have the courage to break these Pharisaic lianas. His humanity enslaved him still too

much, and with it, the considerations of human esteem, of personal danger, of family welfare. Because of all these things Gamaliel had not been able to understand "the God that was passing among His people", or to use "that intelligence and that freedom" that God has given every man so that he may use them for his own good. Only the sign awaited for so many years, the sign that had demolished and tortured him with never ending remorse, would provoke in him the recognition of the Christ and the change of his ancient thought, whereby, from the rabbi of error - as the scribes, Pharisees and the doctors had corrupted the essence and the spirit of the Law, suffocating the simple bright truth that had come from God under a large quantity of human precepts, which were often wrong, but always to their advantage - he would become a disciple of the divine Truth, after a long struggle between his ancient ego and his present ego.

In any case he had not been the only one to be uncertain in deciding and strong in acting. Also Joseph of Arimathea, and even more Nicodemus, did not trample on the Judaic customs and lianas at once and embrace the new Doctrine openly, so much so that they used to come to the Christ "secretly", out of fear of the Judaeans, or they used to meet with him by chance, and mainly in their country houses, or in Lazarus' house at Bethany, as they knew that it was safer and more feared by Christ's enemies, who were well aware of the protection of Rome for Theophilus' son. However, they were certainly always much more advanced in Good and braver, when compared to Gamaliel, to the extent that they dared to take the compassionate action on Good Friday.

Rabbi Gamaliel was less advanced. But you, who are reading, pay attention to the power of his upright intention. Through it, his very human justice, becomes tinged with a superhuman hue. Saul's instead, gets soiled with something demoniac, when the unchecked fury of evil compels him and his master Gamaliel to face the alternative choice between Good and Evil, justice and injustice.

The tree of Good and Evil stands straight in front of every man to present its fruits of Evil to him, in the most alluring and attractive appearance, while among the foliage in a deceitful voice of a nightingale, the tempting Serpent hisses. It is up to man, a creature gifted with reason and with a soul given to him by God, to be able to distinguish and want the good fruit among the many, which are not good and cause damage and death to the spirit; and to pick that one, even if it is prickly and difficult to pick, bitter to taste and miserable looking. Its metamorphosis, by which it becomes so much smoother and softer to the touch, sweeter to the taste, more beautiful to the sight, takes place only when, through justice of spirit and reason, one chooses the good fruit and feeds on its juice, which is bitter but holy.

Saul stretches out his greedy hands to the fruit of Evil, of hatred, of injustice, of crime, and he will stretch them out until he is struck with lightning, crushed, deprived of human sight, so that he may achieve the superhuman sight and may become not only just, but an apostle and confessor of Him, Whom he previously hated and persecuted in His servants.

Gamaliel breaking the persistent lianas of his humanity and of Hebraism, to let spring up and bloom the remote seed of light and justice, not only human but also superhuman, that My fourth epiphany, or manifestation, which is perhaps a word clearer and more comprehensible to you, had put in his heart, in his heart with upright intentions, the seed that he had preserved and defended with honest fondness and noble eagerness to see it spring up and bloom, stretches out his hands to the fruit of Good. His will and My Blood broke the hard husk of that remote seed, that he had preserved in his heart for dozens of years, in that heart of rock that split with the veil of the Temple and the earth of Jerusalem, and shouted its supreme desire to Me, Who could no longer hear him with human hearing, but I could hear him well with My divine spirit, when he was there, prostrated on the ground, at the foot of the cross. And under the sunny fire of the apostolic words and of the best disciples, and the shower of the blood of Stephen, the first martyr, that seed takes root, becomes a tree, blossoms and yields fruit. The new tree of his Christian Faith, which had come up where the tragedy of Good Friday had overthrown, uprooted and destroyed all the ancient trees and herbs.

The plant of his new Christian faith and of his new holiness has come up and grown before My eyes. Forgiven by Me, although guilty of not understanding Me previously, because of his justice that refused to take part in My condemnation or in Stephen's, his desire to become My follower, the son of the Truth, of the Light, is blessed also by the Father and by the Sanctifying Spirit, and from desire it becomes reality, without the need of powerful violent lightning, as was necessary for Saul on the Damascus road, for the arrogant man, who with no other means could have been subdued and led to Justice, to Charity, to Light, to Truth, and to the eternal glorious Life in Heaven. »

642. Deposition of Stephen's Body.

8th August 1951.

It is the dead of night, and a very dark night, because the moon has already set, when Mary comes out of the little house at Gethsemane with Peter, James of Alphaeus, John, Nicodemus and the Zealot.

Because of the dark night, Lazarus, who is waiting for them in

front of the house, at the beginning of the path that leads to the lower gate, lights an oil lamp, which he has fitted with a protection of thin sheets of alabaster or other transparent material. The light is faint, but when the lamp is held low towards the ground, as it is now, it always helps to see stones and obstacles that may be found on the way. Lazarus goes beside Mary, so that She, above all, may see clearly. John is on the other side and supports the Mother by the arm. The others are behind them, in a group.

They go as far as the Kidron and proceed along it, so that they are half-hidden by the wild bushes that grow near its banks. Also the murmur of the water serves to conceal and confuse the noise of the sandals of the wayfarers.

Going along the outer side of the walls all the time as far as the Gate closest to the Temple, and then proceeding into the barren desert area, they arrive at the place where Stephen was stoned. They direct their steps towards the pile of stones under which he is half buried, and they remove the stones until his poor body appears. It is by now deathly pale, both because of death and because of the blows it received during the lapidation, it is hard, stiff, all curled up as it was when he breathed his last.

Mary, Who has been mercifully kept away a few steps by John, frees Herself and runs towards that poor body, which is lacerated and covered with blood. Without worrying about the stains that the clotted blood leaves on Her dress, Mary, helped by James of Alphaeus and John, lays the body on a cloth stretched on the ground, in a spot devoid of stones, and with a linen cloth, that She dips in a small amphora handed to Her by the Zealot, She cleans, as best She can, the face of Stephen, She tidies his hair, trying to bring it round to his temples and wounded cheeks, in order to cover the horrible marks left by the stones. She cleans also the other parts of the body and She would also like to arrange them in a less tragical posture. But the chill of death, which had taken place many hours previously, allows that only partially. Also the men try, stronger as they are both physically and morally than Mary, Who looks once again like the Sorrowful Mother of Golgotha and of the Sepulchre. But they also have to resign themselves to leave him in the position they have succeeded in placing him after so many efforts. They dress him again with a clean long tunic, because his has been lost or stolen, in contempt, by the lapidators, and the short tunic they have left on him is all torn and stained with blood.

Having done that, always in the faint light of the lamp that Lazarus holds very close to the poor body, they lift him and lay him on another clean cloth. Nicodemus picks up the first cloth, wet with the water used to wash the martyr and with the clotted blood, and places it under his mantle. John and James at the head, Peter and the Zealot at the feet, lift the cloth containing the body, and they

set out on the way back, preceded by Lazarus and Mary. But they do not go back along the same way they came, on the contrary, going into the country and going round at the foot of the Mount of Olives, they reach the road that goes to Jericho and Bethany.

They stop there to rest and to speak. And Nicodemus, who having been present at Stephen's condemnation, although in a passive manner, and being one of the elders of the Judaeans, was more acquainted than the others with the decisions of the Sanhedrin, warns those present that the persecution against the Christians has been ordered and has broken-out, and that Stephen is only the first of a long list of names indicated as followers of the Christ.

The first cry of all the apostles is: « Let them do what they like! We will not change, either because of threats or out of prudence! »

But the more judicious ones among the people present, that is Lazarus and Nicodemus, point out to Peter and to James of Alphaeus that the Church has only few priests of the Christ, and that if the more important ones of them were killed, that is Peter the Pontiff and James the Bishop of Jerusalem, the Church would survive with difficulty. They remind also Peter that their Founder and Master had left Judaea for Samaria, in order not to be killed before He had formed them properly, and how He had advised His servants to follow His example until the shepherds are so many that one will not have to fear the dispersion of the believers because of the death of the shepherds. And they conclude saying: « You ought to scatter as well through Judaea and Samaria. Get proselytes there, many more shepherds, and from there scatter through the Earth, so that, as He ordered you to do, all the peoples may become acquainted with the Gospel. »

The apostles are perplexed. They look at Mary, as if they wanted to know Her opinion on the matter.

And Mary, Who understands their looks, says: « It is a good piece of advice. Take it. It is not cowardice, but prudence. He taught you: "Be as simple as doves and as prudent as snakes. I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Beware of men… »

James interrupts Her: « Yes, Mother. But He also said: "But when they hand you over and you will be dragged before governors, do not worry about what you have to answer. It is not you who will be speaking, but the Spirit of the Father will be speaking for you and in you". And I am staying here. A disciple is to be like his Master. He died to give life to the Church. Every death of ours will be a stone added to the great new Temple, an increase in life for the great immortal body of the universal Church. Let them kill me, if they wish so. Living in Heaven I shall be happier, because I shall be beside my Brother, and even more powerful. I am not afraid of death. But of sin. By abandoning my place I seem to be imitating the gesture of Judas, the perfect betrayer. James of Alphaeus will

never commit that sin. If I have to fall, I will fall like a hero, at my place of action, where He wanted me to be. »

Mary replies to him: « I will not pierce into your secrets with the Man-God. If that is what He inspires you with, do so. He alone, Who is God, is entitled to give orders. We are all only entitled to obey Him always, in everything, to do His Will. »

Peter, less heroic, is chatting with the Zealot to hear his opinion on the matter.

Lazarus, who is close to the two and hears them, suggests: « Come to Bethany. It is close to Jerusalem and to the road to Samaria. The Christ left from there many a time to avoid His enemies… »

Nicodemus in turn suggests: « Come to my country house. It is safe and close both to Bethany and to Jerusalem, and it is on the road that takes one to Ephraim, via Jericho. »

« No, mine is better, as it is protected by Rome » insists Lazarus.

« You are already hated too much, since Jesus raised you from the dead, asserting so, powerfully, His divine Nature. Consider that His destiny was decided just because of that. Watch that you do not decide yours » Nicodemus replies to him.

« And what about my house? It is really Lazarus'. But they still call it mine » says Simon Zealot.

Mary intervenes saying: « Let Me ponder, think, decide which is the best thing to do. God will not leave Me without His light. When I know, I will tell you. For the time being, come to Gethsemane with Me. »

« Seat of all Wisdom, Mother of the Word and of the Light, You are always the Star that guides us safely. We obey You » they all say together, as if the Holy Spirit had really spoken in their hearts and on their lips.

They stand up from the grass on which they had sat at the edge of the road, and while Peter, James, Simon and John go with Mary towards Gethsemane, Lazarus and Nicodemus lift the cloth in which the body of Stephen is enveloped, and at the first light of dawn, they set out towards the Bethany and Jericho road.

Where are they taking the martyr? A mystery.

643. Gamaliel Becomes a Christian.

1st November 1951.

Some years must have gone by, because John seems to be in full manhood, more sturdily built, with a more mature appearance, while his fair hair, beard and moustache are of a much darker colour.

Mary, Who is spinning, while John is tidying up the kitchen of the little house at Gethsemane, the walls of which have been recently whitewashed, while wooden items have been painted - stools,

door, a cabinet that serves also as a shelf for the lamp - does not appear at all changed. Her aspect is fresh and serene. All traces left on Her face by the sorrow for the death of Her Son, for His return to Heaven, for the first persecutions against the Christians, have disappeared. Time has not engraved its traces on that kind face. And age has not had the power to alter its fresh pure beauty.

The lamp, lit on the shelf, casts its flickering light on the small industrious hands of Mary, on the snow-white wool wound round the distaff, on the thin thread, on the twirling spindle, on Her golden hair gathered in a thick knot on the nape of Her neck.

Through the open door a very limpid moon-beam penetrates into the kitchen, laying a kind of silver strip from the threshold to the feet of the stool on which Mary is sitting, so that Her feet are illuminated by the moon-beam, and Her hands and head by the reddish light of the lamp. Outside, on the olive-trees surrounding the house of Gethsemane, some nightingales are singing their songs of love.

They suddenly become silent, as if they were frightened, and after a few moments, the shuffling of steps can be heard, and it becomes closer and closer, until it stops on the threshold of the kitchen, at the same time making the white lunar strip disappear, that previously silvered the coarse dark bricks of the floor.

Mary raises Her head and looks towards the door. John, in turn, looks towards the door and an « oh! » full of wonder is uttered by their lips, while, with one movement only they both rush towards the door, on the threshold of which Gamaliel has appeared and stopped. A very old Gamaliel by now, ghastly, so thin is he in his white garments, which the moon, shining on him from behind, makes almost phosphorescent. A Gamaliel crushed, overwhelmed by events, by his remorse, by so many things, even more than by age.

« You here, rabbi? Come in! Come! And peace be with you » John says to him, as he is in front of him and very close to him, while Mary is a few steps behind.

« If you will guide me… I am blind… » replies the old rabbi, in a voice that is trembling more because of secret tears, than because of his age.

John, dumbfounded, asks, with emotion and compassion in his voice: « Blind?! Since when? »

« Oh!… Since long ago! My sight began to grow weaker immediately after… after… Yes. After I did not recognise the true Light that had come to enlighten men, until the earthquake tore the veil of the Temple and shook the mighty walls, as He had said. Really a double veil, that covered the Holy of the Holies of the Temple and the even truer Holy of Holies, the Word of the Father, His eternal Only-Begotten, concealed by the veil of a most pure human flesh, that only His Passion and His glorious Resurrection revealed to the

most dull-minded people, and to me first of all, for what He really was: the Christ, the Messiah, the Immanuel. Since that moment darkness began to descend upon my eyes, becoming thicker and thicker. A just punishment for me. For some time I have been completely blind. And I have come… »

John interrupts him asking him: « Perhaps to ask a miracle? »

« Yes. A great miracle. I am asking it of the Mother of the true God. »

« Gamaliel, I do not have the power that My Son had. He was able to give life and sight to blind eyes, word to dumb people, movement to those who were paralysed. But not I » Mary replies to him. And She continues: « But come here, near the table, and sit down. You are tired and old, rabbi. Do not tire yourself any more » and pitifully, with John, She leads him towards the table and makes him sit on a stool.

Gamaliel, before leaving Her hand free, kisses it with veneration, then he says to Her: « I am not asking of You, Mary, the miracle to see once again. No. I am not asking this material thing. What I ask of You, o Blessed amongst all women, is the sight of an eagle for my spirit, so that I may see all the Truth. I do not ask of You the light for my blind eyes, but the supernatural divine true light that is wisdom, truth, life, for my soul and my heart torn by and exhausted with the remorse that gives me no rest. I have no desire to see with my eyes this Hebrew world, so… Yes. So stubbornly rebellious to God, Who has been and is so compassionate towards it, as we really did not deserve that He should be. On the contrary I am glad that I do not have to see it any more, and that my blindness has exempted me from all engagements with the Temple and with the Sanhedrin, who have been so unfair to Your Son and to His followers. What I wish to see, with my mind, my heart, my spirit, is He, Jesus. To see Him in me, in my spirit, to see Him spiritually, as You certainly, o Holy Mother of God, and John, so pure, and James, as long as he lived, and the others, for support in their grave and hampered ministry, see Him. To see Him in order to love Him with my whole self, and through this love, be able to make amends for my sins, and be forgiven by Him, to have the eternal Life, that I failed to deserve… » He bends his head on his arms that are folded on the table and he weeps.

Mary lays Her hand on his head shaken by sobs and replies to him: « No, you have not failed to deserve to have eternal Life! Those who repent their past errors are forgiven everything by the Saviour. He would have forgiven even His betrayer, if he had repented his horrible sin. And the sin of Judas of Kerioth is immense as compared with yours. Consider. Judas was the apostle received by the Christ, instructed by the Christ, loved by the Christ more than anyone else, if one considers that, although He knew everything about

him, Christ did not reject him from the group of His Apostles, on' the contrary, up to the very last moment, He resorted to every expedient, so that they might not understand who he was and what he was planning. My Son was the Truth itself, and for no reason whatsoever did He ever lie. But when He saw the other eleven be suspicious and they asked Him questions about the Iscariot, without lying, He was able to divert their suspicious and not reply to their questions, ordering them not to be inquisitive, out of prudence and out of charity for a brother. Your fault is by far smaller. And what is more, it cannot even be called a fault. Yours is not incredulity, on the contrary it is excess of faith. You believed so much in the twelve-year-old Boy Who spoke to you in the Temple that, obstinately, but with upright intention, based on your absolute faith in that Boy, on Whose lips you had heard words of infinite wisdom, you awaited the sign to believe in Him and see the Messiah in Him. God forgives those who have such a strong loyal faith. Even more He forgives whoever, although still in doubt about the true Nature of a man, unjustly accused, does not want to take part in his condemnation, which he feels is unjust. Your spiritual seeing the Truth has been growing and growing since you left the Sanhedrin in order not to agree to that sacrilegious deed. And it increased even more when, being in the Temple, you saw the fulfilment of the sign, so longed for, that marked the beginning of the Christian era. It increased further when at the foot of the cross of My Son, already cold and dead, you prayed with those mighty anguished words. It has become almost perfect every time that, either with your words, or by withdrawing aside, you defended the servants of My Son or you refused to take part in the condemnation of the first martyrs. Believe Me, Gamaliel, every act of sorrow, of justice, of love of yours, has increased your spiritual sight in your. »

« All that is still not enough! See, I had the rare grace of becoming acquainted with Your Son as from His first public manifestation, when He came of age. I should have seen since then! I should have understood! I was blind and foolish… I did not see and I did not understand. Neither then, nor in other occasions, when I had the grace of approaching Him, by that time a Man and Master, and I heard His ever more just and powerful words. I was stubbornly awaiting the human sign, the shaken stones… And I did not see that everything in Him was a sure sign! And I did not see that He was the corner Stone predicted by the Prophets, the Stone that was already shaking the world, all the Hebrew and Gentile world; the Stone that shook the stones of hearts with His Word, with His prodigies! I did not see on Him the clear sign of His Father in everything He did or said! How can He forgive so much stubbornness? »

« Gamaliel, can you believe that I, Who am the Seat of Wisdom, the Full of Grace, Who, both because of the Wisdom Who took Flesh

in Me, and of the Grace He gave Me, have the fullness of knowledge of supernatural matters, can give you good advice? »

« Oh! of course I believe it! Just because I believe that that is what You are, I have come to You to receive light. You, Daughter, Mother, Spouse of God, Who certainly since Your conception filled You with His sapiential lights, can but show me the way that I must take to have peace, to find the truth, to conquer the true Life. I am so aware of my errors, so crushed by my spiritual misery, that I am in need of help to dare to go to God. »

« What you consider a hindrance is instead a wing to elevate you to God. You have demolished yourself, you have humiliated yourself, you were a mighty mountain, you have made yourself a deep valley. Bear in mind that humility is like a fertilizer of the most arid soil, to prepare it to give plants and rich crops. It is a step to climb. Even more, it is a ladder to ascend to God, Who, upon seeing a humble man, calls him to Himself to exalt him, to inflame him with His Love, and enlighten him with his lights, so that he may see. That is why I say to you that you already are in the Light, on the right Way, towards the true Life of the children of God. »

« But in order to receive the Grace I must enter the Church, receive Baptism that cleanses us from sin and makes us once again the adoptive sons of God. I am not against that. On the contrary! I have destroyed the son of the Law in myself, I can no longer esteem and love the Temple. But I do not want to be nothing. So I must rebuild the new man and the new faith on the ruins of my past. But I think that apostles and disciples are mistrustful and prejudiced against me, the great stubborn rabbi… »

John interrupts him saying: « You are wrong, Gamaliel. I am the first who loves you and I should mark the day, on which I could call you a lamb of the flock of Christ, as a day of an extremely great grace. I should not be His disciple if I did not put into practice the teachings of the Christ. And He ordered us to have love and understanding for everybody, and especially for the weaker people, the sick, those who have been misled. He ordered us to follow His examples. And we saw that He was always full of love for repentant sinners, for prodigal sons returning to the Father, or for lost sheep. From the Magdalene to the Samaritan woman, from Aglae to the highwayman, how many He redeemed through mercy! He would have forgiven even Judas his supreme crime, if he had, repented. He had forgiven him so many times! I alone know how much He loved him, although He was aware of every action of his. Come with me. I will make you a son of God and a brother of the Christ Saviour. »

« You are not the Pontiff. Peter is the Pontiff. And will Peter be good to me? He is, I know, quite different from you. »

« He was. But since he has realised how weak he was, to the point

of being a coward and a denier of his Master, he no longer is what he was, and he has mercy on everybody. »

« Then take me to him at once. I am old and I have delayed too long. I felt that I was too unworthy, and I was afraid that all the servants of Jesus judged me in the same manner. Now that Mary's words and yours have comforted me, I want to enter the Flock of the Master at once, before my old heart, crushed by so many things, stops. Lead me there, because I dismissed the servant who brought me here, so that he might not hear anything. He will come back at the first hour. But I shall be already far away then. And in two ways. From this house and from the Temple. For ever. First I, a rebel son, will go to the house of the Father, I, a lost sheep, to the true Fold of the eternal Shepherd. Then I will go back to my far away house, to die there in peace and in the grace of God. »

With a spontaneous impulse Mary embraces him saying: « May God give you peace. Peace and eternal glory, because you have deserved them by showing your real thoughts to the mighty leaders of Israel, without fearing their reactions. May God be always with you. May God give you His blessing. »

Gamaliel searches for Her hands again. He takes them in his own and kisses them, he kneels down begging Her to lay those blessed hands on his old tired head.

Mary satisfies him. She does even more. She traces the sign of the cross on his bent head. Then, with John, She helps him to stand up, She takes him to the door and remains looking at him go away, led by John, towards the true Life: a man, humanly finished, but supernaturally re-created.

644. Peter Converses with John.

4th November 1951.

Peter and John are on the terrace of Simon's house, which is all lit up by the moon at her summit. They are speaking in low voices, pointing towards Lazarus' house, which is all closed and silent. They speak for a long time, walking backwards and forwards on the terrace. Then, for I wonder which reason, the discussion becomes more animated, and their voices, previously subdued, become higher in tone and very clear.

Peter, striking the parapet with his fist, exclaims: « But do you not understand that we must act so? I am speaking to you in God's name, so listen to me and do not be obstinate. It is better to act as I say. Not out of cowardice and fear, but to avoid a total destruction, which would be deleterious to the Church of Christ. They now watch every move of ours. I noticed that, and Nicodemus has confirmed that I am right. Why could we not remain at Bethany? Just for that reason. Why is it not more prudent to stay in this house,

or in Nicodemus', or in Nike's, or in Anastasica's? Always for the same reason. To prevent the Church from dying, because of the death of its leaders. »

« The Master assured us many a time that not even hell will be able to exterminate it and prevail against it » John replies to him.

« That is true. And hell will not prevail, as it did not prevail against the Christ. But men will. As they prevailed against the Man-God, Who defeated Satan, but was not able to gain a victory over men. »

« Because He did not want to win. He had to redeem, and so he had to die. And of that death. But if He had wanted to defeat them! How many times He avoided the snares of all kinds they set for Him! »

« Snares will be laid also for the Church, but it will not perish completely, providing we shall have so much prudence, as to prevent the present leaders from being exterminated, before many more Priests of His, of all ranks, are created by us, His first ones, and prepared for their ministry. Do not deceive yourself, John! Pharisees, scribes, priests and members of the Sanhedrin, are doing everything to kill the shepherds, so that the flock may be dispersed. The flock which is still weak and fearful. Above all, this flock in Palestine. We must not leave it without shepherds, until many lambs, in turn, become shepherds. You have seen how many have already been killed. Think of what a large part of the world is awaiting us! His order was clear: "Go and evangelize all the nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe what I ordered you". And on the shore of the lake, for three times He ordered me to pasture His sheep and His lambs, and He prophesied that only when I am old I will be tied and led to confess the Christ with my blood and my life. And quite far from here! If I have understood one of His speeches properly, before Lazarus' death, I have to go to Rome and found there the immortal Church. And did He Himself not judge that it was right to withdraw to Ephraim, because His evangelization had not yet been accomplished? And only at the right moment He came back to Judaea to be arrested and crucified. Let us imitate Him. No one can certainly say that Lazarus, Mary and Martha were fearful people. And yet, you can see that, although with deep sorrow, they have gone away from here, to take His divine Word elsewhere, as here it would have been suffocated by the Judaeans. I, chosen by Him as His Pontiff, have decided. And with me the others, apostles and disciples, have equally decided. We will scatter. Some will go to Samaria, and some towards the great sea, and some towards Phoenicia, pushing on and on, to Syria, to the islands, to Greece, to the Roman Empire. If in these places here, darnel and Judaean poison make the fields and the vineyards of the Lord sterile, let us

go elsewhere and sow other seeds in other fields and vineyards, so that there may be not only a harvest, but it may be a rich one. If in these places the hatred of the Jews poisons the waters and infects them, so that I, a fisher of souls, and my brothers cannot catch souls for the Lord, let us go to other waters. We have to be prudent and shrewd at the same time. Believe me, John. »

« You are right. But I was insisting because of Mary. I cannot, I must not leave Her. We should both suffer too much. And it would be an evil deed, on my side… » John replies to him.

« You will stay. And She will stay, because it would be absurd to tear Her away from here… »

« And Mary would never agree to it. I will join you later. When She is no longer on the Earth. »

« You will come. You are young… You have still a long time to live. »

« And Mary a very short one. »

« Why? Is She ill, suffering, weak, perhaps? »

« Oh! no! Time and sorrows have had no power over Her. She is always young, in appearance and in spirit. Serene, even more, I should say blissful. »

« Then why do you say… »

« Because I realise that Her flourishing in beauty and joy is the sign that She feels already close at hand Her reunion with Her Son. I mean a total reunion. Because the spiritual one has never ceased. I will not lift the veils on the mysteries of God. But I am sure that She sees Her Son daily, in His glorious appearance. And that is Her beatitude. I think that in contemplating Him, Her spirit is enlightened and is able to know all the future, as God knows it. Also Her own. She is still on the Earth with Her body, but I could almost say, without fear of mistaking, that Her spirit is almost always in Heaven. Such is Her union with God that I do not think that I speak a sacrilegious word saying that God is in Her, as when She carried Him in Her womb. Even more. As the Word was united to Her to become Jesus Christ, so now She is so united to the Christ as to be a second Christ, as to have taken on a new humanity, that of Jesus Himself. If what I say is heresy, may God let me know my error and forgive me for it. She lives in love. This fire of love inflames Her, nourishes Her, enlightens Her, and that fire of love will also abduct Her from us, at the destined moment, without any pain for Her, without decomposition for Her body… We alone will be grieved… I in particular… We shall no longer have our Teacher, our Guide, our Comforter… And I shall be really all alone… » And John, whose voice was already trembling striving to repress his tears, is seized with a fit of heart-rending sobbing, such as he never experienced before, not even at the foot of the Cross or in the Sepulchre.

Peter also, although more calmly, begins to weep and in a tearful voice he implores John to inform him, if he can, so that he may be present at Her passage or at least, at Her burial.

« I will do so, if I can. But I doubt it very much. Something within me tells me that as it happened to Elijah who was abducted by a celestial whirlwind on a chariot of fire, so it will happen to Her. I shall not have time to become aware of Her imminent passage that She will already be in Heaven with Her soul. »

« But Her body at least will remain here. Also the Master's remained. And He was God! »

« It was necessary for Him that it should be so. But not for Her. With His Resurrection He had to give the lie to the Judaean slanders, with His apparitions He had to convince the world, that had become doubtful, and even negatory, because of His death on the Cross. But She does not need that. If, however, I can do so, I will let you know. Goodbye, Peter, my Pontiff and my Brother in the Christ. I am going back to Her, as She is certainly waiting for me. God be with you. »

« And with you. And tell Mary to pray for me and to forgive me once again for my cowardice in the night of the Trial, a memory that I cannot cancel from my heart, and gives me no peace… » and tears stream down the cheeks of Peter, who concludes: « May She be a Mother to me. A Mother of love for Her miserable prodigal son… »

« I need not tell Her. She loves you more than a mother by blood. She loves you as the Mother of God, and with the love of the Mother of God. If She was ready to forgive Judas, whose sin was incommensurable, consider whether She has forgiven you! Peace to you, brother, I am going. »

« And I will follow you, if you allow me. I want to see Her once again. »

« Come. I know which road to take to go to Gethsemane, without being seen. »

They set out and walk quickly and in silence towards Jerusalem, but passing along the upper road, that arrives at the Mount of Olives on the side farthest from town. When they arrive it is already daybreak. They go into Gethsemane, and descend towards the little house.

Mary, Who is on the terrace, sees them coming and, uttering a cry of joy, She goes down to meet them.

Peter really falls at Her feet, with his face on the ground, saying to Her: « Mother, forgive me! »

« For what? Have you perhaps sinned in anything? He Who reveals everything to Me, has only revealed to Me that you are His worthy successor in the Faith. I have always found you to be a just man, even if at times impulsive. So what have I to forgive you? »

Peter weeps and is silent.

John explains: « Peter cannot set his mind at rest for having denied Jesus, in the Court of the Temple. »

« That is a thing of the past and it has been cancelled, Peter. Has Jesus perhaps reproached you? »

« Oh! no! »

« Was He less loving to you than previously? »

« No. Not really. On the contrary!… »

« And does that not tell you how He, and I with Him, have understood you and forgiven you? »

« That is true. I am always the same fool. »

« Then go and be at peace. I tell you that we shall all be together, you, I, the other apostles and deacons, all in Heaven, near the Man-God. For what is given to Me, I bless you » and as She did with Gamaliel, Mary lays Her hands on the head of Peter and traces a sign of the cross on it.

Peter bends to kiss Her feet, he then stands up, much more serene than before, and still in the company of John, he goes back to the upper gate, passes it, and goes away, while John, after closing that entrance, goes back to Mary.

645. The Blissful Passage of the Blessed Virgin.

21st November 1951.

Mary, in Her solitary little room, on the high terrace, all dressed in white linen, both in the dress that covers Her body, and in the mantle that, fastened at the nape of Her neck, falls down Her back, and in the very thin veil that hangs from Her head, is arranging Her garments and Jesus', which She has always kept. She picks the best ones. And they are few. Of Her own She takes the dress and the mantle She had on Calvary; of Her Son's, a linen tunic that Jesus used to wear on summer days, and the mantle that was found at Gethsemane, still stained with the blood He shed with the bloody perspiration of that dreadful hour.

After folding these garments carefully and kissing Jesus' mantle stained with blood, She goes towards the chest, in which for years have been gathered and kept the relics of the Last Supper and of the Passion. She gathers all these things in one compartment, the upper one, and She lays the clothes in the lower one.

She is closing the chest when John, who had gone up to the terrace silently and had looked in to see what Mary was doing, perhaps worried because of Her long absence from the kitchen, as She had gone upstairs to spend the morning hours, makes Her turn round suddenly by asking Her: « What are You doing, Mother? »

« I have put straight what is to be kept. All the souvenirs… Everything that is witness to His infinite love and sorrow. »

« Why, Mother, do You reopen the wounds of Your heart by looking again at these sad things? You are pale and Your hand is trembling… So You suffer seeing them » John says to Her, approaching Her, as if he were afraid that, wan and trembling as She is, She might feel ill and fall on the floor.

« Oh! that is not why I am wan and I am trembling. It is not because they reopen My wounds… They, in fact, have never been closed completely. And yet peace and joy are in Me, and they have never been so complete as they are now. »

« Never as now? I do not understand… The sight of those things, full of cruel memories, awakens in me the anguish of those hours. And I am only a disciple. You are the Mother… »

« And you mean that as such I should suffer more. And from a human point of view, you are right. But it is not So. I am accustomed to enduring the sorrow of being separated from Him. It was always sorrowful, because His presence and closeness were My Paradise on Earth. But I always suffered them willingly and serenely, because every action of His was wanted by His Father, it was obedience to the divine Will, and so I accepted it, because I also have always obeyed the will and plans of God for Me. Every time Jesus left Me, I suffered. Certainly. I felt lonely. Only God has measured in its most real intensity My sorrow when He, a boy, left Me secretly, for the dispute with the doctors of the Temple. And yet, with the exception of the fair question that I, His mother, asked Him, as He had left Me in that manner, I did not say anything else to Him. Likewise I did not hold Him back when He left Me to become the Master… and I was already a widow, and therefore all alone, in a town that, with the exception of a few people, did not love Me. And I showed no surprise at His reply at the banquet in Cana. He was doing the will of His Father. And I was leaving Him free to do it. I could dare make a suggestion or a request. A suggestion for His disciples, a request for some poor wretch. But more than that, no. I suffered every time He left Me to go into the world, hostile to Him and so sinful that to live in it was a great suffering to Him. But how much joy every time He came back to Me! It was really, so intense that it recompensed Me seventy times seven for the sorrow of the separation. The sorrow of the separation following from His Death was heart-rending, but with which words could I describe the joy I felt when He, risen from the dead, appeared to Me? Immense was the pain of the separation, which would end only when My earthly life would be completed, when He ascended to His Father. I am now rejoicing, immense is My joy as immense was My pain, because I feel that My life is completed. I have done what I had to do. I have completed My earthly mission. The other one, the celestial one, will have no end. God has left Me on the Earth until I also, like My Jesus, have accomplished everything of what

I had to do. And I have in Me that secret joy, the only drop of balm in His extreme tortures full of bitterness, that Jesus had when He was able to say: "Everything is accomplished". »

« Joy in Jesus? At that moment? »

« Yes, John. A joy incomprehensible to men. But comprehensible to the spirits that already live in the light of God and see the deep things hidden under the veils that the Eternal spreads over His secrets as King, thanks to that Light. I, so distressed, so upset by those events, associated with Him, My Son, in the abandonment of the Father, did not understand then. The Light was extinguished for the whole world in that hour, for the whole world that had not wanted to receive it. And also for Me. Not as a just punishment, but because, as I had to be the Co-Redeemer, I also had to suffer the anguish of the abandonment of divine comforts, the darkness, the desolation, the temptation of Satan of not making Me believe any longer that what He had said was possible, everything that He also suffered, in His spirit, from Thursday to Friday. But later I understood. When the Light, that had risen for ever, appeared to Me, I understood. Everything. Also the secret extreme joy of the Christ, when He was able to say: "I have accomplished everything that the Father wanted Me to accomplish. I have filled the measure of divine charity by loving the Father even unto the sacrifice of Myself, by loving men even unto dying for them. I have accomplished everything that I had to accomplish. I am dying happily in My spirit, although lacerated in My innocent flesh". I also have accomplished everything that, ab aeterno, was written I should accomplish. From the generation of the Redeemer, to the help given to you, His priests, for your perfect formation. The Church is now formed and strong. The Holy Spirit enlightens it, the blood of the first martyrs cement it and multiply it, My assistance has cooperated in making It a holy organism, that the love towards God and the brothers nourishes and fortifies more and more, and in which hatred, ill-feelings, envy, slander, wicked plants of Satan, take no root. God is pleased with that, and He wants you to know that from My lips, as He wants Me to tell you to continue to grow in love in order to grow in perfection, and so also in number of Christians and in power of doctrine. Because the doctrine of Jesus is the doctrine of love. Because the life of Jesus, and also Mine, have always been guided and urged by love. We rejected nobody, we forgave everybody. One only we did not forgive, because he, already a servant to the Hatred, did not want our love that had no limits. Jesus in His last farewell before His death, gave you the commandment to love one another. And He also gave you the measure of the love that you had to have for one another, saying: "Love one another as I have loved you. From this it will be known that you are My disciples". The Church in order to live and grow, needs charity.

Charity above all in its ministers. If you did not love one another with all your strength, and likewise you did not love your brothers in the Lord, the Church would become sterile. And difficult and scanty would be the restoration an the super restoration of men to their rank of children of the Most High and coheirs to the Kingdom of Heaven, because God would cease helping you in your mission. God is love. Every action of His has been an action of love. From creation to the Incarnation. From this to the Redemption. And from this to the foundation of the Church. And finally from this to the celestial Jerusalem, that will assemble all the just so that they may rejoice in the Lord. I am telling you these things, because you are the Apostle of love and you can understand them better than the others… »

John interrupts Her saying: « Also the others love and love one another. »

« Yes. But you are preeminently the Loving One. Each of you had his peculiarity, as, after all, is the case of every creature. You, among the twelve, were always love, pure and supernatural love. Perhaps, no, certainly because you are so pure, you are so loving. Peter, instead, was always the man, the genuine impetuous man. His brother, Andrew, was as silent and timid as the other was not. James, your brother, was the impulsive one, so much so that Jesus called him the son of thunder. The other James, Jesus' brother, the just and heroical one. Judas of Alphaeus, his brother, the noble and loyal one, always. The Davidic extraction was obvious in him. Philip and Bartholomew were the traditionalists. Simon Zealot, the prudent one. Thomas, the peaceful one. Matthew, the humble one, who mindful of his past, strove to be unnoticed. And Judas of Kerioth, alas! the black sheep of the flock of Christ, the snake warmed by His love, was the satanic liar, always. But you, who are all love, can understand better and can become the voice of love for all the others, for those who are far away, to give them this last piece of My advice. You will tell them that they are to love one another and everybody, also their persecutors, in order to be one thing with God, as I was, so as to deserve to be elected spouse of the Eternal Love, in order to conceive the Christ. I gave Myself to God without limit, although I understood at once how much sorrow would come to Me for that. The prophets were present in My mind, and the divine light made their words very clear to Me. So from My first "fiat" to the Angel I knew that I was consecrating Myself to the greatest sorrow a mother can suffer. But nothing placed a limit to My love, because I know that it is, for those who make use of it, strength, light, magnet that attracts upwards, fire that purifies and beautifies what it burns, transforming and transhumanising those caught in its embrace. Yes. Love is really a flame. The flame, that although it destroys what is perishable, be it a wreck, some rubble, a poor wretch,

makes a purified spirit of it, worthy of Heaven. How many wrecks, how many men stained, corroded, worn out you will find on your ways of evangelizers! Do not despise any of them. On the contrary, love them, so that they may reach love and be saved. Infuse love into them. Many a time man becomes wicked, because no one ever loved him or loved him badly. Do love them, so that the Holy Spirit, after the purification, may come to dwell again in those temples, that many things made empty and filthy. God, to create man, did not take an angel or choice materials. He took some mud, the most worthless material. Then infusing His breath into it, that is, His love again, He elevated the worthless material to the sublime rank of adoptive son of God. My Son, on His way, found many wrecks of men who had fallen into filth. He never trampled on them despisingly. On the contrary He gathered them and received them and He changed them into chosen souls of Heaven. Always bear that in your minds. And do as He did. Remember everything, the actions and the words of My Son. Remember His kind parables. Live them, that is, put them into practice. And write them, so that they may remain for future generations, to the end of time, and they may always serve as a guide for men of good will, to achieve life and eternal glory. You will certainly not be able to repeat all the bright words of the Eternal Word of Life and Truth. But write as many of them as you can. The Spirit of God, Who descended upon Me so that I might give the Saviour to the world, and Who descended also upon you a first and a second time, will help you to remember, and when you speak to the crowds, in order to convert them to the true God. You will continue that spiritual maternity that I began on Calvary to give many children to the Lord. And the same Spirit, speaking in the recreated children of the Lord, will fortify them so that it will be pleasant for them to die among tortures, to suffer exile and persecutions, to confess their love to Christ and join Him in Heaven, as Stephen and James, My James, have already done, and others as well… When you are the only one left, save this chest… »

John, growing pale and becoming upset, even more than he blanched since Mary said that She felt that Her mission was accomplished, interrupts Her exclaiming and asking: « Mother! Why do You say that? Are You not well? »

« No. I am well. »

« Do You want to leave me, then? »

« No. I shall be with you until I am on the Earth. But, My dear John, prepare yourself to be alone. »

« Then You are not well, and You want to conceal it from me!… »

« No, believe Me. I have never felt so strong, at peace, joyful, as I do now. But I have such a jubilation, such a fullness of supernatural life, that… Yes, that I think that I shall not be able to endure it while continuing to live. I am not eternal, on the other hand. You

must understand that. My spirit is eternal. My body is not. And it is subject, like the flesh of every man, to death. »

« No! No! Don't say that. You cannot, you must not die! Your immaculate body cannot die like that of a sinner! »

« You are wrong, John. My Son died! And I shall die as well. I shall not suffer the disease, the agony, the pang of death. But as far as dying is concerned, I shall die. In any case, bear in mind, son, that if I have a desire, all Mine and only Mine, and that lasts since He left Me, it is just this one. This is My first, mighty desire, entirely Mine. I can even say: My first will. Everything else in My life was nothing but the consent of My will to the divine will. The will of God, put in My heart of a little girl by God Himself, the will to be a virgin. His will: My marriage with Joseph. His will: My virginal divine Maternity. Everything in My life was done by the will of God and by My obedience to His will. But this desire, of wanting to join Jesus, is a will entirely Mine. To leave the Earth for Heaven, to be with Him for ever and continuously! My desire of so many years! And now I feel it is on the point of becoming reality. Do not be so upset, John! Listen instead to My last wishes. When My body, deprived of the vital spirit, will lie in peace, do not subject Me to the customary embalmment of the Hebrews. Because I am no longer a Jewess, but a Christian, the first Christian, if one considers the situation properly, because I was the first to have Christ, Flesh and Blood, in Me, because I was His first disciple, because I was Co-Redeemer with Him and His continuator here, among you, His servants. No living being, with the exception of My father and mother, and those who assisted at My birth, has seen My body. You often call Me: "The living Ark that contained the divine Word". Now you know that the Ark can be seen only by the High Priest. You are a priest, and much holier and purer than the Pontiff of the Temple. But I want only the Eternal Pontiff to see My body at the right time. So, do not touch Me. In any case, see? I have already purified Myself, and I have put on a clean dress, the dress of the eternal wedding… But why are you weeping, John? »

« Because the storm of sorrow is stirring up in me. I know that I am about to lose You. How shall I be able to live without You? I feel my heart being torn to pieces at this thought! I shall not be able to stand this grief! »

« You will stand it. God will help you to live, and for a long time, as He helped Me. Because, if He had not helped Me, on Golgotha and on the Mount of Olives, when Jesus died and ascended, I would have died, as Isaac died. He will help you to live and to remember what I have told you before, for the welfare of everybody. »

« Oh! I will remember. Everything. And I will do what You wish, also for Your body. I understand as well that the Hebrew rites no longer serve for You, a Christian, and for You, the Most Pure

Mother, Who, I am sure, will not be subjected to the corruption of the flesh. Your body, deified as no other mortal body, both because You have been exempted from the Sin of Origin, and even more because in addition to being the full of Grace, You contained in You Grace itself, the Word, whereby You are His most true relic, Your body cannot experience the decomposition, the rottenness of all dead flesh. This will be the last miracle of God on You, in You. And you will be preserved as You are… »

« Do not weep, then! » exclaims Mary looking at the upset face of the apostle, all washed by his tears. And She adds: « If I am preserved as I am, you will not lose Me. So, do not worry! »

« I shall lose You just the same, even if You remain incorrupt. I feel it. And I feel as if I were caught in a hurricane of sorrow. A hurricane that breaks me and knocks me down. You were everything for me, particularly since my relatives died, and the other brothers, both by blood and by mission, are far away, also beloved Marjiam, whom Peter has taken with him. I shall now be left alone, and in the strongest storm! » and John falls at Her feet, weeping even more bitterly.

Mary bends over him, She lays Her hand on his head shaken by sobs and She says to him: « No. Not so. Why are you grieving Me? You were so strong under the Cross, and it was an incomparable scene of horror, both because of the cruelty of His martyrdom and of the satanic hatred of the people! And you were so strong in comforting Him and Me, then! And today, or rather, this Sabbath evening, so serene and calm, and in front of Me Who am rejoicing for an imminent happiness of which I have a premonitory feeling, you are so upset?! Calm yourself. Imitate, even more, join what is around us and in Me. Everything is peaceful. Be at peace as well. Only the olive-trees, with their gentle rustling, break the absolute calm of this hour. But this gentle noise is so pleasant, that it sounds like the flight of angels around the house. And they are, perhaps, really here. Because angels, one or many, have always been near Me, when I have been in a special moment of My life. They were at Nazareth, when the Spirit of God made My virginal womb prolific. And they were with Joseph, when he was upset and uncertain about My state and how to behave with Me. And at Bethlehem a first and a second time, when Jesus was born, and when we had to flee to Egypt. And in Egypt when they ordered us to come back to Palestine. And - if not to Me, because the King of the angels Himself had come to Me, as soon as He had risen - and angels appeared to the pious women at the dawn of the first day after the Sabbath and gave them the order to tell you and Peter what you had to do. Angels and light always at the decisive moments of My life and of Jesus'. Light and ardour of love that, descending from the Throne of God to Me, His maid, and ascending from My heart to go God,

My King and Lord, united Me to God and Him to me, so that what was written that was to be accomplished, should be accomplished, and also to create a veil of light spread over the secrets of God, so that Satan and his servants should not be aware of the accomplishment of the sublime mystery of the Incarnation, before the right time. Also this evening I feel the angels around Me, although I do not see them. And I feel a Light, an unsustainable light, grow within Me, like the light that enveloped Me when I conceived the Christ, when I gave Him to the world. A light that comes from an impetuosity of love more powerful than usual. Through a similar power of love, I snatched the Word from Heaven before time, so that He might become the Man and the Redeemer. Through a similar power of love, as the one that assails Me this evening, I hope that Heaven will abduct Me and carry Me where I long to go with My spirit to sing My imperishable "Magnificat" to God, for the things He has done to Me, His maid, with the people of the saints and the choruses of the angels, for ever and ever. »

« Probably not only with Your spirit. And the Earth will reply to You, and with its peoples and nations will glorify and honour and love You until the end of the world, as rightly Tobias predicted of You, although covertly, because You are really the One Who carried the Lord in Herself, and not the Holy of Holies. You have given God, by Yourself, as much love as all the High Priests and all the others of the Temple have not given Him throughout ages. Ardent most pure love. Because of that God will make You Most blessed. »

« And He will satisfy My only wish, the only thing I want. Because love, when it is so complete as to be almost perfect, as the love of My Son and God, achieves everything, even what, according to human opinion, would seem impossible to achieve. Remember that, John. And inform also your brothers of that. Men will fight against you so much! All kinds of obstacles will make you be afraid of defeat, massacres by persecutors and defections of Christians of… Iscariotic morality will dishearten your spirits. Be not afraid. Love, and be not afraid. In proportion to how you love, God will help you and will make you triumph over everything and everybody. Everything can be achieved, if one becomes a seraph. Then the soul, this wonderful eternal thing, which is the very breath of God, infused by Him into us, hurls itself towards Heaven, falls like a flame at the foot of the Divine Throne, speaks and is listened to by God, and obtains from the Almighty what it wants. If men knew how to love as is prescribed by the ancient Law, and how My Son loved and taught people to love, they would obtain everything. I love thus. That is why I feel that I shall cease to be on the Earth, I through excess of love, as He died through excess of sorrow. Well! The measure of My capacity of loving is full. My soul and My body are no longer able to contain it. Love overflows from it, it submerges Me

and raises Me at the same time towards Heaven, towards God, My Son. And His voice says to Me: "Come! Come out! Ascend to our Throne and to our Trine embrace!" The Earth, what surrounds Me, disappears in the bright light that comes to Me from Heaven! Noises are drowned by this celestial voice! My moment for the divine embrace has come, My dear John! »

John, who had calmed down a little, although still somewhat upset, listening to Mary, and who at the last part of Her speech was looking at Her ecstatically, and almost enraptured as well, as pale in his face as Mary, Whose pallor, however, changes into a very white light, rushes towards Her to support Her, and in the meantime he exclaims: « You are like Jesus when He became transfigured on Tabor! Your flesh is shining like the moon, Your garments are as bright as a diamond sheet placed before a very white flame! You are no longer human, Mother! The heaviness and opacity of the flesh has disappeared! You are light! But You are not Jesus, He, being God, besides being Man, could stand also by Himself, there, upon Tabor, as He did here, on the Mount of Olives, when He ascended. You cannot. You cannot stand. Come. I will help You to lay Your tired blessed body on Your little bed. Rest. » And he lovingly leads Her towards the poor bed, on which Mary lies, without taking off even Her mantle.

Folding Her arms across Her breast, closing Her eyelids on Her kind eyes, bright with love, She says to John who is bent over Her: « I am in God. And God is in Me. While I contemplate Him and feel His embrace, say the psalms, and any other pages of the Scriptures becoming Me, particularly in this hour. The Spirit of Wisdom will point them out to you. Then say the prayer of My Son, repeat the words of the announcing Archangel and of Elizabeth to Me, and My hymn of praise… I will follow you with what I still have of Myself on the Earth…

John, struggling against the tears that rise from his heart, striving to control the emotion that upsets him, in his beautiful voice, which, as years have gone by, has become very like Jesus'- which Mary notices with a smile, saying: I seem to have My Jesus beside Me! » - intones psalm one hundred and eighteen, which he says almost entirely, then the first three verses of psalm forty-one, the first eight of psalm thirty-eight, psalm twenty-two and psalm one. He then says the Our Father, the words of Gabriel and Elizabeth, the canticle of Tobias, the twenty-fourth chapter of Ecclesiasticus, from verse eleven to forty-six. Lastly he intones the "Magnificat". But when he arrives at verse nine, he notices that Mary does not breathe any more, although She is still natural in Her posture and appearance, smiling, peaceful, as if She had not noticed that life had stopped.

John, with a heart-rending cry throws himself on the floor against

the edge of the bed, and calls and calls Mary. He cannot convince himself that She is no longer able to reply to him, that Her body is now deprived of the vital soul. But he has to surrender to evidence! He bends over Her face, still fixed in an expression of supernatural joy, and tears stream copiously from his eyes on that sweet face, on those pure hands so gently folded on Her breast. It is the only washing that Mary's body had: the tears of the Apostle of love and of Her son of adoption by Jesus' will.

When the first transport of sorrow is over, John, remembering Mary's wish, picks up the edges of Her wide linen mantle, which were hanging from the sides of the little bed, and those of the veil, which were also hanging from the pillow, and he spreads the former over Her body, and the latter on Her head. Mary is now like a statue of white marble, laid on the cover of a sarcophagus. John contemplates Her at some length, and more tears fall from his eyes as he does so.

Then he rearranges the room, removing all superfluous furniture. He leaves only the bed, the little table against the wall and he places the chest with the relies on it, a stool, that he places between the door leading to the terrace and the bed on which Mary is lying, and a shelf, on which there is a lamp that John lights, as it is beginning to get dark.

Then he hurries down to Gethsemane, to pick as many flowers as he can, and some branches of olive-trees, with olives already on them. He goes back up to the little room, and in the light of the lamp he arranges the flowers and the branches around Mary's body, as if it were in the centre of a huge wreath.

While doing so, he speaks to the body on the bed, as if Mary could still hear him. He says: « You have always been the lily of the valley, the sweet rose, the beautiful olive-tree, the fruit-bearing vineyard, the holy ear of wheat. You have given us Your perfumes, and the Oil of Life, and the Wine of the strong, and the Bread that preserves the spirits from death, for those who worthily feed on it. These flowers look lovely here around You, as they are simple and pure like You, adorned with thorns like You and peaceful like You. Now let us put this lamp closer. So, near Your bed, that it may watch over You and keep me company while I watch You, while awaiting for at least one of the miracles that I am expecting and for whose fulfilment I pray. The first one is that, according to his wish, Peter, and the others, whom I will get Nicodemus' servant to inform, may see You once again. The second one is that You, as in everything You had the same lot as Your Son, may wake up, like Him, within the third day, in order not to leave me an orphan twice. The third is that God may give me peace, if what I hope may happen to You, as it happened to Lazarus, who was not like You, should not take place. But why should it not happen? Jairus' daughter, the

young man from Nain, Theophilus' son, came back to life… It is true that then the Master acted… But He is with You, even if not in a manifest way. And You did not die of a disease like those who were raised by the deed of Christ. But are You really dead? Dead as every man dies? No. I feel it is not so. Your spirit is no longer in You, in Your body, and in that respect we could say it is death. But by the way Your passage took place, I think that Yours is only a temporary separation of Your soul, without sin and full of grace, from Your most pure and virginal body. It must be so! It is so! How and when the reunion will take place and life will come back to You, I do not know. But I am so certain of this that I will remain here, beside You, until God, either with His word, or with His action, will show me the truth on Your destiny. »

John, who has finished arranging everything, sits on the stool, placing the lamp on the floor, near the little bed; and he contemplates the body lying on it, praying.

646. The Assumption of Our Lady.

8th December 1951.

How many days have gone by? It is difficult to ascertain it. If one judges by the flowers that form a crown around the dead body, one should say that only a few hours have gone by. But if one judges by the olive branches on which the fresh flowers are lying, branches with leaves already withered, and by the other withered flowers lying like relics on the cover of the chest, one must conclude that some days have by now gone by.

But Mary's body is exactly the same as it was when She breathed Her last. There is no trace of death on Her face or on Her little hands. There is no unpleasant smell in the room. On the contrary an undefinable scent like that of incense, of lilies, of roses, of lilies of the valley, of mountain herbs, all mixed together, hangs in the air of the room.

John, who I wonder for how many days has been awake, has fallen asleep, overcome by tiredness, sitting on the stool, his shoulders leaning against the wall, near the open door that leads to the terrace. The light of the lamp, which from the floor shines upwards on him, allows one to see his tired face, which is also very pale, except around his eyes, red with weeping.

It must be already dawn, because in its faint light the terrace and the olive-trees surrounding the house are visible, a light that becomes stronger and stronger and that, penetrating through the door, makes more distinct also the objects in the room, of which, being far from the little lamp, it was previously possible to catch only a glimpse.

All of a sudden a strong light fills the room, a silvery light,

shaded with blue, almost phosphoric, and it becomes more and more intense, making the light of dawn and of the lamp vanish. A light like the one that flooded the Grotto in Bethlehem at the moment of the divine Nativity. Then in this paradisiac light, angelic creatures show themselves, a light even brighter in the already strong light that appeared first. As it already happened when the angels appeared to the shepherds, a dance of sparks of all shades bursts forth from their gently moved wings, which emit a harmonious murmur, as sweet as if it were played by a harp.

The angelic creatures place themselves around the little bed, they bend over it, they lift the immobile body, and flapping their wings more vigorously, which increases the sound existing previously, through a passage opened miraculously in the roof, as miraculously Jesus' Sepulchre was opened, they go away, taking with them the body of their Queen, a Most Holy Body, it is true, but not yet glorified, and therefore still subject to the laws of matter, to which the Christ was not subject, because He was already glorified when He rose from the dead. The sound made by the angelic wings increases and it is now as powerful as the sound of an organ.

John, who, although still asleep, had moved twice or three times on his stool, as if he had been disturbed by the strong light and by the sound of the angelic wings, awakes completely because of that powerful sound and because of a strong current of air that, descending from the opened roof and going out through the open door, forms a vortex that shakes the covers of the bed, by now empty, and John's garments, blowing out the lamp and closing the door with a loud bang.

The apostle looks around, still half asleep, to realise what is happening. He notices that the bed is empty and that the roof is open. He understands that a wonderful event has taken place. He runs out on the terrace, and as if by spiritual instinct, or by a heavenly call, he raises his head, shading his eyes from the sun, in order to see, without being prevented from doing so by the rising sun.

And he sees. He sees the body of Mary, still deprived of life, and completely identical to that of a person asleep, that ascends higher and higher, supported by the angelic group. As a last gesture of farewell, a hem of the mantle and of the veil are agitated, probably by the wind caused by the rapid assumption and by the movement of the angelic wings; and some flowers, the ones that John had placed and renewed round the body of Mary, and that have certainly remained among the folds of the garments, rain on the terrace and on the ground of Gethsemane, while the mighty hosanna of the angelic group moves farther and farther away and thus becomes fainter.

John continues to stare at that body that rises towards Heaven and, certainly through a prodigy granted to him by God, to comfort

him and to reward him for his love for his adoptive Mother, he distinctly sees Mary, enveloped now in the beams of the sun that has risen, come out of the ecstasy that had separated Her soul from Her body, become alive, stand on Her feet, as She also now enjoys the gifts typical of bodies already glorified.

John looks and looks. The miracle granted to him by God enables him, against all natural laws, to see Mary as She is now, while She rapidly ascends towards Heaven, surrounded, but no longer helped to ascend, by the angels singing hosannas. And John is enraptured by that vision of beauty that no pen of man, or human word, or work of artist will be ever able to describe or reproduce, because it is of indescribable beauty.

John, still leaning against the low wall of the terrace, continues to stare at that splendid shining form of God - because Mary can really be said to be so, formed in a unique manner by God, Who wanted Her immaculate, so that She might be the form for the Word Incarnate - while it ascends higher and higher. And the God-Love grants a last supreme prodigy to His perfect loving disciple: to see the meeting of the Most Holy Mother with Her Most Holy Son, Who splendid and shining as well, handsome with indescribable beauty, descends rapidly from Heaven, arrives at His Mother, presses Her to His heart, and together, more refulgent than two major planets, returns with Her whence He came.

John's vision is over. He lowers his head. On his tired face are visible both his sorrow for the loss of Mary and his joy for Her glorious destiny. But by now joy exceeds sorrow.

He says: « Thanks, my God! Thanks! I foresaw that this would happen. And I wanted to be awake, in order not to lose any episode of Her Assumption. But I had not slept for three days now! Sleep, tiredness, joined to sorrow, overcame and defeated me just when Her Assumption was imminent… But perhaps You wanted that Yourself, o God, so that I should not upset that moment and I should not suffer too much… Yes. You certainly wanted it, as now You wanted me to see what, without a miracle of Yours, I could not have seen. You have granted me to see Her again, although already so far, already glorified and glorious, as if She were close to me. And to see Jesus again! Oh! most happy, unhoped for and not to be hoped for vision! O gift of the gifts of Jesus-God to His John! Supreme Grace! To see my Master and Lord again! To see Him near His Mother! He like a sun, She like a moon, both most splendid, because they were glorious and happy to be reunited for ever! What will Paradise be like now that You both shine in it, You major planets of the heavenly Jerusalem? What is the jubilation of the angelic choruses and of the saints? It is such the joy that the vision of the Mother with Her Son has given me, a thing that cancels every pain of His, every pain of theirs, even more, also mine ceases, and peace

takes over in me. Of the three miracles that I had asked of God, two have been accomplished. I have seen life come back to Mary, and I feel peace come back to me. All anguish of mine ends, because I have seen You reunited in glory. Thanks for that, o God. And thanks for having made it possible for me to see, even for a most holy creature, but still human, what is the lot of saints, what it will be after the last judgement; and the resurrection of the bodies, and their rejoining, their fusion with their spirits, that have ascended to Heaven at the moment of their death. I did not need to see to believe. Because I have always firmly believed every word of the Master. But many will doubt that, after ages and thousands of years, the flesh, that has become dust, can become a living body. I shall be able to tell them, swearing on the most sublime things, that not only the Christ became alive again, by His own divine power, but that also His Mother, three days after Her death, if death it can be called, came to life again, and with Her flesh joined to Her soul took up Her eternal abode in Heaven, beside Her Son. I shall be able to say: "Believe, o Christians, in the resurrection of bodies, at the end of time, and in the eternal life of souls and bodies, a blissful life of saints, horrible for unrepentant guilty people. Believe and live as saints, as Jesus and Mary lived, in order to have their same lot. I have seen their bodies ascend to Heaven. I can bear witness to that. Live as just people, so that one day you may be in the new eternal world, in body and soul, near Jesus-sun, and near Mary the Star of all stars". Thank You again, o God! And now let us put together what is left of Her. The flowers that fell from Her garments, the olive branches left on the bed, and let us keep them. They will serve… Yes, they will serve to assist and comfort my brothers, whom I have awaited in vain. Sooner or later I will find them… »

He picks up the petals of the flowers that had been shed in falling, he goes back into the room, holding them in a fold of his tunic. He then looks more carefully at the opening in the roof and exclaims: « Another miracle! And another wonderful proportion in the prodigies of the lives of Jesus and Mary! He, God, rose by Himself, and by His own will He overturned the stone of His Sepulchre, and only with His own power He ascended to Heaven. By Himself. Mary, the Most Holy Mother, but a daughter of man, by means of angelic help had the passage opened for Her assumption to Heaven, and always through angelic help She ascended there. In the Christ the spirit came back to animate His Body while it was still on the Earth, because it had to be so, to silence His enemies and to confirm all His followers in their faith. In Mary the spirit came back when Her most holy body was already at the threshold of Paradise, because there was no other need for Her. Perfect power of the Infinite Wisdom of God!… »

John now gathers in a piece of cloth the flowers and branches that

were still on the little bed, he adds to them those that he had gathered outside, and lays them all on the cover of the chest. He then opens it and puts the little pillow of Mary and the coverlet of the little bed into it; he goes down into the kitchen, he collects other utensils used by Her - the spindle and distaff and Her kitchenware - and adds them to the other things.

He closes the chest and sits on the stool exclaiming: « Now everything is accomplished also for me! Now I can go freely wherever the Spirit of God will lead me. I can go! And sow the Divine Word that the Master gave me so that I may give it to men. And teach Love. Teach them so that they may believe in Love and in its power. Let them know what the God-Love has done for men. His Sacrifice and His perpetual Sacrament and Rite, by means of which, until the end of time, we shall be able to be united to Jesus Christ in the Eucharist and renew the Rite and the Sacrifice as He ordered us to do. All the gifts of the perfect Love! Make them love the Love, so that they may believe in Him, as we believed and believe. Sow the Love so that the harvest and the catch may be abundant for the Lord. Love achieves everything, Mary told me in Her last conversation with me, whom She justly defined, in the Apostolic College, the one who loves, the preeminent loving one, the antithesis of the Iscariot, who was hatred, as Peter was impetuousness, and Andrew meekness, the sons of Alphaeus holiness and wisdom joined to nobility of manners, and so forth. I, the loving disciple, now that I no longer have the Master and the Mother to love on the Earth, will go and spread love among the nations. Love will be my weapon and my doctrine. And be means of it I will defeat the demon, heathenism and will conquer many souls. I will thus continue Jesus and Mary, Who were perfect love on the Earth. »

647. On the Passage, the Assumption and Royalty of the Blessed Virgin.

18th April 1948.

[Mary says:]

« Did I die? Yes, if you call death the separation of the choice part of the spirit from the body. No, if by death you understand the separation of the vivifying soul from the body, the corruption of the flesh no longer vivified by the soul, and before that, the lugubrious sepulchre, and before all these things, the pangs of death.

How did I die, or better, how did I pass from the Earth to Heaven, first with My immortal part, then with the perishable one? As it was fair for Her Who did not become acquainted with the stain of sin.

That evening, the Sabbatic rest had already begun, I was speaking to John. About Jesus and His things. The evening hour was full

of peace. The Sabbath had abated all noises of human works. And the hour was abating every voice of man and bird. Only the olivetrees around the house were rustling in the evening breeze, and a flight of angels seemed to graze the walls of the solitary house.

We were speaking of Jesus, of the Father, of the Kingdom of Heaven. To speak of Love and of the Kingdom of Love, is to become lit with the living fire, consuming the bonds of matter to let the spirit free for its mystic flights. And if the fire is contained within the limits fixed by God to preserve creatures on the Earth, at His service it is possible to live and bum, finding in the ardour not the consumption, but the completion of life. But when God removes the limits and gives freedom to the divine Fire to assail and attract the spirit to Itself without any measure, then the spirit, replying in turn without measure to the Love, detaches itself from matter and flies where the Love urges and invites it. And it is the end of the exile and the return to the Fatherland.

That evening, the incontainable ardour, the measureless vitality of My spirit was joined by a sweet languor, by a mysterious sensation that matter was moving away from what surrounded it, as if My body, tired, were falling asleep, whilst My intellect, even livelier in its reasoning, was sinking, into the divine brightness.

John, the loving prudent witness of every action of Mine, since he had become My adoptive son, according to the will of My Only-Begotten Son, kindly convinced Me to rest on the little bed and he watched Me praying. The last sound I heard on the Earth was the murmur of the words of John, the virgin apostle. They were for Me like a lullaby of a mother near a cradle. And they accompanied My spirit in its last ecstasy, too sublime to be describe. They accompanied Me as far as Heaven.

John, the only witness of this sweet mystery, arranged Me by himself, enveloping Me in My white mantle, without changing My dress or veil, without any washing or embalming. The spirit of John, as is evident from his words of the second episode of this cycle that goes from the Pentecost to My Assumption, already knew that I would not decay, and it taught the Apostle what to do. And he, chaste, loving, prudent with regard to the mysteries of God and his remote companions, decided to keep the secret and to wait for the other servants of God, so that they could see Me again, and draw comfort and assistance from that sight for the pains and hardships of their mission. He waited, as if he were certain of their coming.

But the decree of God was different. Good as always for the Favourite. Just as usual for all the believers. He made the eyes of the former heavy with sleep, so that he might be spared the torture of seeing also My body abducted from him. He presented the believers with a further truth that would encourage them to believe in the resurrection of the flesh, in the reward of an eternal blissful

life granted to the just, in the most mighty and pleasant truths of the New Testament: My Immaculate Conception, My Divine virginal Maternity, in the divine and human Nature of My Son, true God and true Man, born not by human will but through divine nuptials and divine seed laid in My womb, and lastly, that they might believe that in Heaven there is My Heart of the Mother of all men, palpitating with anxious love for everybody, just people and sinners, eager to have you all with It in the blessed Fatherland for ever.

When I was taken out of the little house by the angels, had My spirit already come back to Me? No. My spirit was not to descend again on the Earth. It was, adoring, before the Throne of God. But when the Earth, the exile, the time and the place of the separation from My One and Trine Lord were left for ever, My spirit came back to shine in the centre of My soul, drawing the flesh from its sleep. So it is just to say that I ascended to Heaven in body and soul, not through My own capability, as it happened for Jesus, but through angelic help. I awoke from that mysterious and mystic sleep, I rose, I flew finally, because by now My flesh had achieved the perfection of glorified bodies. And I loved. I loved My Son, Whom I found again, and My Lord, One and Trine, I loved Him as is the destiny of all the eternal living beings. »

5th January 1944.

[Jesus says:]

« When Her last hour came, like a tired lily that, after exhaling all its scents, bends under the stars and closes its snow-white calyx, Mary, My Mother, lay on Her little bed and closed Her eyes on everything surrounding Her, to collect Her thoughts in a last serene contemplation of God.

Bending over Her rest, the angel of Mary was anxiously waiting for the climax of the ecstasy to separate that spirit from the flesh, for the time decreed by God, and to separate it for ever from the Earth, while the sweet inviting command of God was already descending from Heaven.

John, an earthly angel, bent, in his turn, over that mysterious rest, was watching the Mother Who was about to leave him. And when he saw that She had breathed Her last, he continued to watch Her, so that, not violated by profane curious eyes, She should remain, even beyond death, the Immaculate Spouse and Mother of God, so placid and beautiful in Her sleep.

A tradition says that only flowers were found in the urn of Mary, when it was opened by Thomas. It is a sheer legend. No sepulchre swallowed the corpse of Mary, because there never was a corpse of Mary, according to human sense, because Mary did not die as whoever lived dies.

By divine decree, She was only separated from Her spirit, and

Her most holy flesh once again joined the spirit that had preceded it. By inverting the habitual laws, according to which an ecstasy ends when the rapture ceases, that is, when the spirit returns to its normal state, it was Mary's body that went to join the spirit, after a long rest on the funereal bed.

Everything is possible to God. I came out of the Sepulchre with no other help than My own power. Mary came to Me, to God, to Heaven, without experiencing the sepulchre with its horror of lugubrious rottenness. It is one of the most refulgent miracles of God. Not the only one, really, if we remember Enoch and Elijah who, being dear to the Lord, were abducted from the Earth, without experiencing death, and translated elsewhere, to a place known only to God and to the celestial inhabitants of Heaven. They were just, but always nothing as compared with My Mother, inferior, in holiness, only to God.

That is why there are no relics of the body or of the sepulchre of Mary. Because Mary had no sepulchre, and Her body was brought to Heaven. »

8th and 15th July 1944.

[Mary says:]

« The conception of My Son was an ecstasy. A greater ecstasy to give birth to Him. The ecstasy of ecstasies My passage from the Earth to Heaven. Only during the Passion no ecstasy made My cruel suffering endurable.

The house, from which I was abducted to Heaven, was one of the countless generosities of Lazarus, for Jesus and His Mother. The little house of Gethsemane, near the place of His Ascension. It is useless to look for its remains. In the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, it was devastated, and its ruins were scattered in the course of ages. »

18th December 1943.

[Mary says:]

« As the birth of My Son was an ecstasy to Me, and from the rapture in God that seized Me in that hour, I came to Myself and to the Earth with My Child in My arms, so My improperly called "death" was a rapture in God.

Relying on the promise I had received on the bright morning of Pentecost, I thought that the approaching of the last coming of the Love, to abduct Me with Him, should manifest itself with an increase of the fire of love that always burnt in Me. And I was not wrong.

As far as I was concerned, the more time passed, the more My desire to blend with the Eternal Love increased. I was urged by the desire to join My Son and by the certainty that I could never do so

much for men as when I was at the foot of the Throne of God, praying and operating on their behalf. And with a motion more and more inflamed and rapid, I used to cry to Heaven with all the strength of My soul: "Come, Lord Jesus! Come, Eternal Love!".

The Eucharist, that was for Me like dew for a parched flower, was indeed life, but the more time passed the more it became insufficient to satisfy the irrepressible eagerness of My heart. It was no longer sufficient for Me to receive My Divine Creature in Me and carry Him within Me in the Sacred Species, as I had carried Him in My virginal body. My whole self wanted the God One and Trine, but not under the veils chosen by My Jesus to hide the ineffable mystery of the Faith, but as He was, is, and will be in the centre of Heaven. My Son Himself, in His Eucharistic transports, inflamed Me with embraces of infinite desire, and every time He came to Me, with the power of His love, He almost eradicated My soul at first, then He remained calling Me with infinite fondness: "Mother!", and I felt that He was anxious to have Me with Him.

I longed for nothing else. Even the desire to protect the newborn Church was no longer in Me, in the last days of My mortal life. Everything was cancelled by the desire to possess God, as I was convinced that one can do everything when one possesses Him.

Endeavour, o Christians, to arrive at such total love. Let all earthly things be of no value. Aim only at God. When you are rich in this poverty of desire, which is an immeasurable wealth, God will bend over your spirits, to teach them first, to take them later, and you will ascend with them to the Father, to the Son, to the Holy Spirit, to know them and love them for the blessed eternity and to possess their riches of graces for your brothers. Men are never so active for their brothers as when they are no longer among them, but they are lights reunited to the Divine Light.

The approach of the Eternal Love had the sign that I expected. Everything became devoid of light and colour, voice and presence in the brightness and the Voice that, descending from Heaven, open to My spiritual sight, were coming down upon Me to take My soul. People say that I would have rejoiced at being assisted, in that hour, by My Son. But My sweet Jesus was indeed present with the Father when the Love, that is the Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the Eternal Trinity, kissed Me for the third time in My life, with a kiss so powerfully divine that My soul exhaled, becoming lost in contemplation, like a drop of dew absorbed by the sun in the calyx of a lily. And I ascended with My spirit singing hosannas to the feet of the Three, Whom I had always worshipped.

Then, at the right moment, like a pearl in a setting of fire, assisted at first, then followed by the procession of the angelic spirits who had come to assist Me in My eternal celestial birth, expected by My Jesus even before the threshold of Heaven, and on its threshold by

My just earthly spouse, by the Kings and Patriarchs of My stock, by the first saints and martyrs, I entered as Queen, after so much grief and so much humility of the poor maid of God, into the kingdom of infinite delight. And Heaven closed again on the joy of having Me, of having its Queen, Whose flesh, the only one among all mortal flesh, was acquainted with glorification before the final resurrection and the last judgement. »

1st May 1946.

[Jesus says:]

« There is difference between the separation of the soul from the body, through real death, and the temporary separation of the spirit from the body and from the vivifying soul, through ecstasy or contemplative rapture. While the separation of the soul from the body brings about death, the ecstatic contemplation, that is, the temporary flight of the spirit outside the barriers of senses and matter, does not bring about death. And that because the soul does not become completely detached and separated from the body, but it does so only through its better part, that plunges into the fire of contemplation.

All men, as long as they live, have a soul within themselves, dead or alive as it may be, through sin or justice; but only the deep loving souls of God arrive at real contemplation.

This proves that the soul, that keeps the body alive while it is united to it - and this peculiarity applies to all men in the same way - has in itself a more noble part: the soul of the soul, or spirit of the spirit, which in just people is very strong, whereas in those who cease to love God and His Law, even if only through their tepidness and venial sins, it becomes weak, depriving the person of the capability to contemplate and know God and His eternal truths, as far as a human creature can do so, according to the degree of perfection achieved. The more a creature loves and serves God with all its strength and power, the more the nobler part of its spirit increases its capacity to know, to contemplate and penetrate the eternal truths.

Man, gifted with a rational soul, is a capacity that God fills with Himself. As Mary, after the Christ, was the most holy of all creatures, She was a capacity so full of God, of His graces, charity and mercy, as to overflow on the brothers in Christ of all ages and until the end of time.

She passed away submerged by the waves of love. Now, in Heaven, where She has become an ocean of love, She overflows Her waves of charity on Her sons faithful to Her and also on Her prodigal ones, for their universal salvation, as She is the universal Mother of all men. »

December 1943.

[Mary says:]

« My humility could not allow Me to think that so much glory was reserved for Me in Heaven. In My mind there was the almost certainty that My human flesh, made holy by carrying God, would not have experienced decay, because God is Life, and when He sates and fills a creature with Himself, this action of His is like an aroma that preserves from the corruption of death.

I had remained not only immaculate, not only I had been united to God with a chaste prolific embrace, but I was sated, even as far as My innermost recesses, with the emanations of the Divinity concealed in My womb and intent on being veiled with mortal flesh. But that the kindness of the Eternal Father had reserved for His maid the joy of feeling again the touch of My Son's hand on My body, His embrace, His kiss, and of hearing again His voice with My ears, of seeing His face with My eyes, I could not think that this would be granted to Me, neither did I wish it. It would have been sufficient if these beatitudes had been granted to My spirit, and that would have filled My ego with blissful happiness.

But, in witness of His first creative thought concerning man, whom He, the Creator, had destined to live, passing away without death, from the earthly Paradise to the celestial one, in the eternal Kingdom, God wanted Me, the Immaculate, in Heaven, in body and soul, as soon as My earthly life ended.

I am the certain witness of what God had thought and wanted for man: an innocent life and unaware of sin, a placid passage from this life to eternal Life, whereby, like one who passes over the threshold of a house to enter a palace, man with his complete being, made of a material body and a spiritual soul, would pass from the Earth to Paradise, increasing the perfection of his ego, given to him by God, with the complete perfection, both of the body and of the spirit, which was, in the divine mind, destined to every creature who had remained faithful to God and to Grace. Man would have reached this perfection in the full light that is in Heaven and fills it, coming from God, the eternal Sun Who illuminates it.

God placed Me, elevated in body and soul to the glory of Heaven, before the Patriarchs, the Prophets, the Saints, the Angels and the Martyrs and He said:

Here is the perfect work of the Creator. This is what I created in My truer image and likeness among all the sons of man, the fruit of a divine creative masterpiece, the wonder of the Universe that sees closed in one only being the divine, in the eternal spirit like God and like Him spiritual, intelligent, free, holy, and the material creature in the most holy and innocent body, to which every other living being, in the three kingdoms of creation, is compelled to bow. This is the witness of My love for man, for whom I wanted a perfect

organism and a blissful destiny of eternal life in My Kingdom. This is the witness that I have forgiven man whom, by will of the Trine Love, I granted to be reinstated and recreated in My eyes. This is the mystic stone of comparison, this is the link of junction between man and God, it is She Who takes the times back to the early days and gives My divine Eyes the joy of contemplating an Eve as I had created her, and now made even more beautiful and holy, because She is the Mother of My Word, and because She is the Martyr of the greatest forgiveness. For Her Immaculate Heart that never knew any stain, not even the lightest, I open the treasures of Heaven, and for Her head, that never knew pride, I make a wreath of My brightness and I crown Her, because She is most holy to Me, so that She may be your Queen".

There are no tears in Heaven. But in place of the joyful tears, that the spirits would have shed, if they were granted to weep - the liquid that trickles squeezed by an emotion - there was, after these divine words, a sparkling of lights, a changing of splendours into more vivid splendours, a burning of charitable fires in a more ardent fire, an unsurpassable and indescribable playing of celestial harmonies, which were joined by the voice of My Son, in praise of God the Father and of His Maid for ever blissful. »

The Reasons for the Work. Farewell to the Work.

[28th April 1947.]

Jesus says:

« The reasons that have induced Me to enlighten and dictate episodes and words of Mine to little John are, in addition to the joy of communicating an exact knowledge of Me to this loving victim-soul, manifold.

But the moving spirit of all of them is My love for the Church, both teaching and militant, and My desire to help souls in their ascent towards perfection. The knowledge of Me helps to ascend. My Word is Life.

I mention the main ones:

I. The reasons mentioned in dictation dated 18th January 1947 and which little John will put here integrally. This is the most important reason because you are perishing and I want to save you.

The most profound reason for the gift of this work is that in the present time, when modernism, condemned by My holy Vicar Pius X, becomes corrupted in more and more harmful doctrines, the Church, represented by My Vicar, may have further material to fight against those who deny:
the supernaturalness of dogmas;
the divinity of the Christ;
the Truth of the Christ God and Man, real and perfect both in the faith and in the history that has been handed down on Him (Gospel, Acts of the Apostles, Apostolic Letters, tradition);
the doctrine of Paul and John and of the councils of Nicaea, Ephesus and Chalcedon, as My true doctrine verbally taught by Me.
My unlimited science, as it is divine and perfect;
the divine origin of the dogmas of the Sacraments of the Church One, Holy, Catholic, Apostolic;
the universality and continuity, until the end of time, of the Gospel given by Me and for all men;
the perfect nature, from the beginning, of My doctrine that has not been formed, as it is, through successive transformations, but was given as it is: the Doctrine of the Christ, of the time of Grace, of the Kingdom of Heaven and of the Kingdom of God in you, divine, perfect, immutable. The Gospel for all those thirsting for God.

To the red dragon with seven heads, ten horns and seven diadems on its head, which with its tail drags a third of the stars from the sky and drops them - and I solemnly tell you that they drop even lower than the earth - and persecutes the Woman; to the beasts of the sea and of the earth that many, too many worship, allured as they are by their appearance and prodigies, I ask you to oppose My Angel flying in the middle of the sky, holding the Eternal Gospel well open, also at the Pages so far closed, so that men, through its light, may be saved from the coils of the huge serpent with seven jaws, that wants to drown them in its darkness, and upon My return I may find again faith and charity in the hearts of those who persevere, and they may be more numerous than the work of Satan and of men allow one to hope they may be.

II. To rouse a keen love for the Gospel and for everything pertaining to the Christ in Priests and in laymen. First of all, renewed love for My Mother, in Whose prayers lies the secret of the salvation of the world. She, My Mother, is the Conqueress of the cursed Dragon. Assist Her power by means of your renewed love for Her and of your renewed faith and knowledge of what pertains to Her. Mary has given the Saviour to the world. The world will receive salvation again from Her.

III. To give spiritual masters and directors assistance in their ministry, by studying the different souls of the world in which I lived and the different methods used by Me to save them.

Because it would be foolish to have only one method with all the souls.

The way to attract to Perfection a just person who spontaneously tends to it, is different from that to be used with a believer in sin, and from that to be used with a Gentile. You have many of them also among you, if you succeed in judging, as your Master did, as Gentiles the poor people who have replaced the true God with the idols of power and arrogance, or of gold, or of lust, or with the idol of the pride of their knowledge. And different is the method to be used to save modern proselytes, that is those who have accepted the Christian idea, but not the Christian citizenship, as they belong to separated Churches. No one is to be despised, and these lost sheep less than everyone. Love them and try to lead them back to the Only Fold, so that the desire of the Shepherd Jesus may be fulfilled.

Some people, when reading this Work, will object: "It does not appear from the Gospel that Jesus was in touch with Romans and Greeks, and consequently we reject these pages". How many things do not appear from the Gospel, or can just be detected behind thick curtains of silence, drawn by the Evangelists on episodes, of which they did not approve, because of their unbreakable Jewish frame of mind! Do you think that you know everything I did?

I solemnly tell you that not even after reading and accepting this illustration of My public life will you know everything about Me. I would have killed My little John, in the fatigue of reporting all the days of My ministry and all the actions performed on each day, if I had made him acquainted with everything so that he might transmit everything to you! "Then there are other things done by Jesus, which, if written one by one, I think that the world would not be able to contain the books that should be written" says John. Apart from the hyperbole, I solemnly tell you that if all My single actions had to be written, all My particular lessons, My penances and prayers to save a soul, it would have taken the halls of one of your libraries, and one of the largest, to contain the books speaking of Me. And I also solemnly tell you that it would be much more advantageous for you to burn so much useless dusty poisonous science, to make room for My books, than to know so little of Me and worship so much that press that is almost always soiled with lust and heresy.

IV. To reinstate in their truth the figures of the Son of Man and of Mary, true children of Adam by flesh and blood, but of an innocent Adam. The children of the Man were to be like us, if our First Parents had not depreciated their perfect humanity - in the sense of man, that is of a creature in which there is the double nature, spiritual, in the image and likeness of God, and the material nature - as you know they did. Perfect senses, that is, subject to reason even in their great efficiency. In the senses I include both the moral and the corporal ones. Therefore total and perfect love both for Her spouse, to whom She is not attached by sensuality, but only by a tie of spiritual love, and for Her Son. Most loved. Loved with all the perfection of a perfect woman for the child born of Her. That is how Eve should have loved: like Mary: that is, not for what physical enjoyment her son was, but because that son was the son of the Creator and out of obedience accomplished to His order to multiply the human race.

And loved with all the ardour of a perfect believer who knows that that Son of Hers is not figuratively but really the Son of God. To those who consider Mary's love for Jesus too affectionate, I say that they should consider who Mary was: the Woman without sin and therefore without fault in Her love towards God, towards Her relatives, towards Her spouse, towards Her Son, towards Her neighbour; they should consider what the Mother saw in Me besides seeing the Son of Her womb, and finally that they should consider the nationality of Mary. Hebrew race, eastern race, and times very remote from the present ones. So the explanation of certain verbal amplifications, that may seem exaggerated to you, ensues from these elements. The

eastern and Hebrew styles are flowery and pompous also when commonly spoken. All the writings of that time and of that race prove it, and in the course of ages the eastern style has not changed very much.

As twenty centuries later you have to examine these pages, when the wickedness of life has killed so much love, would you expect Me to give you a Mary of Nazareth similar to the arid superficial woman of your days? Mary is what She is, and the sweet, pure, loving Girl of Israel, the Spouse of God, the Virgin Mother of God cannot be changed into an excessively morbidly exalted woman, or into a glacially selfish one of your days.

And I tell those, who consider Jesus' love for Mary too affectionate, to consider that in Jesus there was God, and that God One and Trine received His consolation by loving Mary, Who requited Him for the sorrow of the whole human race, and was the means by which God could glory again in His Creation that gives citizens to His Heavens. And finally, let them consider that every love becomes guilty when, and only when it causes disorder, that is, when it goes against the Will of God and the duty to be fulfilled.

Now consider: did Mary's love do that? Did My love do that? Did She keep Me, through selfish love, from doing all the Will of God? Through a disorderly love for My Mother, did I perhaps repudiate My mission? No. Both loves had but one desire: to accomplish the Will of God for the salvation of the world. And the Mother said all the farewells to Her Son, and the Son said all the farewells to His Mother, handing the Son to the cross of His public teaching and to the Cross of Calvary, handing the Mother to solitude and torture, so that She might be the Co-Redeemer, without taking into account our humanity that felt lacerated and our hearts that were broken with grief. Is that weakness? Is it sentimentalism? It is perfect love, o men, who do not know how to love and who no longer understand love and its voices!

And the purpose of this Work is also to clarify certain points that a number of circumstances has covered with darkness and they thus form dark zones in the brightness of the evangelic picture and points that seem a rupture and are only obscured points, between one episode and another, indecipherable points, and the ability to decipher them is the key to correctly understand certain situations that had arisen and certain strong manners that I had to have, so contrasting with My continuous exhortations to forgive, to be meek and humble, a certain rigidity towards obstinate, inconvertible opponents. You all ought to remember that God, after using all His mercy, for the sake of His own honour, can say also "Enough" to those who, as He is good, think it is right to take advantage of His forbearance and tempt Him. God is not to be derided. It is an old wise saying.

V. To have an exact knowledge of the complexity and duration of My long passion, that culminates in the sanguinary Passion accomplished in few hours, that had consumed Me in a daily torture that lasted for years and years, and that had increased more and more, and with the passion of My Mother, Whose heart was pierced by the sword of sorrow for the same length of time. And urge you, through this knowledge, to love us more.

VI. To show the power of My Word and its different effects according to whether the person receiving it belonged to the group of men of good will, or to that of those who had a sensual will, which is never righteous.

The Apostles and Judas. Here are the two opposed examples. The former, very imperfect, rough, ignorant, violent, but with good will. Judas, learned more than most of them, refined by living in the capital and in the Temple, but of evil will. Watch the evolution of the former in Good, their ascent. Watch the evolution of the latter in Evil, and his descent.

This evolution in perfection of the Eleven good ones should be watched above all by those who, through a visual mental fault, are accustomed to perverting the nature of the reality of saints, making of the man who reaches holiness by means of a hard, very hard struggle against heavy obscure powers,

an unnatural being without incentives and emotions, and therefore without merits. Because merit is really consequent on the victory over disorderly passions and temptations, a victory achieved through love for God and to attain the final aim: to enjoy God for ever. It should be watched by those who claim that a conversion should come only from God. God gives the means to be converted, but He does not do violence to the will of man, and if man does not want to be converted, in vain he has what serves other people to become converted.

Let those who examine the situation consider the manifold effects of My Word not only on the human man, but also on the spiritual man. Not only on the spiritual man, but also on the human man. My Word, when it is received with good will, transforms both, leading to external and internal perfection.

The apostles who through their ignorance and My humility treated the Son of Man with excessive familiarity - a good master among them, nothing more, a humble and patient master with whom it was permissible to take liberties at times excessive; but it was not irreverence on their part: it was ignorance, and it is to be excused - the apostles quarrelsome with one another, selfish, jealous of their love and of Mine, impatient with the people, somewhat proud of being "the Apostles", eager for stupendous capacities, which point them out to the crowds as gifted with an extraordinary power, slowly but continuously change into new men, bridling their passions first to imitate Me and make Me happy, then, as they became more and more acquainted with My true Ego, changing manners and love so much as to see Me, love Me and treat Me as the divine Lord. At the end of My life on the Earth, are they still perhaps the superficial merry companions of the early times? Are they, above all after the Resurrection, the friends who treat the Son of Man as a Friend? No, they are not. They are the ministers of the King, first. They are the priests of God, later. They are completely different and completely transformed.

This should be considered by those who will find the apostles' nature, which was as it is described, strong, and will judge it unnatural. I was not a difficult doctor and a proud king, I was not a master who judges other men unworthy of him. I was indulgent to people. I wanted to form using raw materials, and fill empty vases with all kinds of perfections, proving that God can do everything, He can raise a son of Abraham from a stone, a son of God, and from a nonentity a master to confuse masters proud of their science, which has very often lost the scent of Mine.

VII. Finally: to make you acquainted with the mystery of Judas, that mystery which is the fall of a spirit that God had favoured in an extraordinary manner. A mystery that is repeated too often and is the wound that aches in the Heart of your Jesus.

To let you know how people fall changing from servants and sons of God into demons and deicides, who kill the God in them by killing Grace, so that such knowledge may prevent you from setting foot on the paths from which one falls into the Abyss, and it may teach you how to behave when trying to hold back the imprudent lambs that push on towards the abyss. Apply your intelligence to study the horrible and yet common figure of Judas, a complex in which are agitated like snakes all the capital vices that you find and have to fight in this or that person. It is the most important lesson to be learned by you, because it is the one that will be more useful to you in your ministry of spiritual masters and directors. How many people, in every state of life, imitate Judas giving themselves to Satan and meeting eternal death!

Seven reasons, as seven are the parts:

I. The Hidden Life (from the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary to the death of Saint Joseph).

II. The first year of the Public Life.

III. The second year of the Public Life.

IV. The third year of the Public Life.

V. Preparation for the Passion (from Tebeth to Nisan, that is from the agony of Lazarus to the supper at Bethany).

VI. The Passion (from the farewell to Lazarus to My Burial and following days until dawn on Easter Sunday).

VII. From the Resurrection to Pentecost.

This division of the parts is to be kept as indicated above, because it is the right one.

And now? What do you say to your Master? You are not speaking to Me. But you are speaking in your hearts, and only if you may be able to do so, you speak to little John. But in neither of these two cases you speak with the justice that I should like to see in you. Because you speak to little John to grieve him, trampling on the charity for the Christian sister and the instrument of God. I truly tell you once again that to be an instrument of Mine is not a placid joy: it is continuous fatigue and effort, it is sorrow in everything, because the world gives the disciples of the Master what it gave the Master: sorrow; and at least priests, and in particular confreres, ought to help these little martyrs who proceed under their crosses… And because in your hearts, speaking to yourselves, you utter a complaint of pride, of envy, of incredulity and other things. But I will give you a reply to your complaints and to your scandalised surprise.

In the evening of the Last Supper, I said to the Eleven who loved Me: "When the Comforter comes, He will remind you of everything I told you". When I spoke I always bore in mind, in addition to those who were present, all those who would be My disciples in spirit, and with truth and a will to want. The Holy Spirit, Who already with His Grace instils the faculty of remembering God into you, freeing souls from the hebetude of the Original Sin and relieving them of the obscurities that, because of the sad inheritance of Adam, envelop the brightness of the spirits created by God to enjoy His sight and spiritual knowledge, completes His work of Master by "reminding" the hearts of those who are led by Him and who are the children of God, of what I said, and which constitutes the Gospel. To remind here means to enlighten the spirit of it. Because it is nothing to remember the words of the Gospel if its spirit is not understood.

And the spirit of the Gospel, which is love, can be made understood by the Love, that is, by the Holy Spirit, Who, as He has been the true Writer of the Gospel, is also its only Commentator, because only the Author of a work knows the spirit of it and understands it, even if he does not succeed in making its readers understand it. But where a human author fails, because every human perfection is rich in deficiencies, the Most Perfect and Wise Spirit succeeds. So only the Holy Spirit, the author of the Gospel, is also He Who remembers and comments and completes it in the inmost parts of the souls of God's children.

"The Comforter, the Holy Spirit, Whom the Father will send you in My Name, will teach you everything, will remind you of everything I told you". (John, 14:26).

"When that Spirit of Truth comes, He will teach you all the truth: because He will not speak by Himself, but will say everything He has heard and will announce you the future. He will glorify Me, because He will take what is Mine and will announce it to you. Everything the Father has is Mine; that is why I said that He will receive what is Mine and will announce it to you". (John 16:13-14-15).

Then if you object that, as the Holy Spirit is the true Author of the Gospel, one fails to understand why He did not remember what is mentioned in this work and what John makes one understand did happen, in the last words

that close his Gospel, I reply to you that the thoughts of God are different from those of men, and are always just and not liable to criticism.

Further: if you object that the revelation was closed with the last Apostle, and there was nothing further to add, because the same Apostle says in Revelation: "If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to him every plague mentioned in the book" (22:18) and that can be understood for all the Revelation, the last completion of which is the Revelation by John, I reply to you that with this work no addition was made to revelation, but only the gaps, brought about by natural causes and by supernatural will, were filled in. And if I wanted to take pleasure in restoring the picture of My Divine Charity, as a restorer of mosaics does replacing the tesserae damaged or missing, reinstating the mosaic in its complete beauty, and I have decided to do it in this century in which Mankind is hurling itself towards the Abyss of darkness and horror, can you forbid Me from doing so?

Can you perhaps say that you do not need it, you whose spirits are dull, weak, deaf to the lights, voices and invitations from Above?

You ought really to bless Me for increasing with new lights the light that you have and that is no longer sufficient for you "to see" your Saviour. To see the Way, the Truth and the Life, and feel that spiritual emotion of the just of My time rise in you, attaining through this knowledge a renewal of your spirits in love, that would be your salvation, because it is an ascent towards perfection.

I do not say that you are "dead", but sleeping, drowsy. Like plants during their winter sleep. The divine Sun gives you its refulgence. Awake and bless the Sun that gives itself, receive it with joy so that It may warm you, from the surface to deep inside you, it may rouse you and cover you with flowers and fruits.

Rise. Come to My Gift.

"Take and eat. Take and drink" I said to the apostles.

"If you only knew the gift of God and who it is that is saying to you: 'give me a drink', you would have been the one to ask, and he would have given you living water" I said to the Samaritan woman.

I say that also now: to doctors and to Samaritans as well. Because both extreme classes need it, and also those need it, who are between the two extremes. The former not to be underfed and deprived of strength also with regard to themselves, and of supernatural nourishment for those who languish with lack of knowledge of God, of the God-Man, of the Master and Saviour. The latter because souls need living water, when they perish far away from the springs. Those in the middle, between the former and the latter, the great mass of those who are not big sinners, and also of those who are static in not making any progress, through laziness, tepidness, because of a wrong concept of holiness, those who are scrupulous of not being damned, of being observant, of becoming entangled in a labyrinth of superficial practices, but dare not take a step on the steep, very steep road of heroism, so that from this work they may receive the initial incentive to come out of that immobility and set out on the heroic way.

I tell you these words. I offer you this food and this drink of living water. My Word is Life. And I want you in the Life, with Me. And I multiply My word to counterbalance the miasmata of Satan as they destroy the vital strength of the spirit.

Do not reject Me. I am anxious to give Myself to you, because I love you. And My anxiety is inextinguishable. I ardently wish to communicate Myself to you to make you ready for the banquet of the celestial nuptials. And you need Me in order not to languish, to dress yourselves with dresses adorned for the Wedding of the Lamb, for the great feast of God after overcoming the affliction in this desert full of snares, of brambles and snakes, which is the Earth, to pass through flames without suffering damage, to

tread on reptiles and have to take poisons without dying, as you have Me in you.

And I also say to you: "Take, do take this work and 'do not seal it', but read it and have it read 'because the time is close'" (John, Revelation, 22:10) and let those who are holy become holier" (ib. 22:11).

May the grace of your Lord Jesus Christ be with all those who in this book see an approach of Mine and urge it to be accomplished, to their defence, with the cry of Love: "Come, Lord Jesus!". »

And to me in particular then Jesus says:

« As introduction to the Work you will put the first chapter of the Gospel by John, from verse one to eighteen inclusive, integrally, as it is written. John wrote those words, as you have written all those related in the Work, from dictation of the Spirit of God. There is nothing to be added or to be taken away, as there was nothing to be added or taken away from the prayer of the Our Father and from My prayer after the Last Supper. Every word of these points is a divine gem and is not to be touched. There is only one thing to be done with regard to these points: ardently pray the Holy Spirit that He may enlighten them to you in all their beauty and wisdom.

When you arrive at the point where My public life begins, you will copy the first chapter of John, also integrally, from verse nineteen to verse twenty-eight inclusive and the third chapter of Luke from verse three to verse eighteen inclusive, one after the other, as if they were only one chapter. There is all the Precursor, an ascetic of few words and hard discipline, and there is nothing else to be said. Then you will put My Baptism and you will go on as I told you from time to time.

And your fatigue is over. Now love remains and the reward to be enjoyed.

My soul, and what should I say to you? With your spirit lost in Me you ask Me: "And now, Lord, what will You do with me, Your servant?"

I could say: "I will break the clay vase to extract its essence and take it where I am". And it would be the joy of both. But I need you for a short while, and a little more, here, to exhale your perfumes which are still the scent of the Christ dwelling in you. So I will say to you as I said to John: "If I want you to stay until I come to get you, what does it matter to you to remain?"

Peace to you, My little untiring voice. Peace to you. Peace and blessings. The Master says to you: "Thanks". The Lord says to you: "May you be blessed". Jesus, your Jesus, says to you: "I will always be with you because it is pleasant to Me to be with those who love Me".

My peace, little John. Come and rest on My Chest. »

And with these words also the suggestions for the drawing up of the work have come to an end and the last explanations have been given.

Viareggio, 28th April, 1947.

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